Une discographie de

Robert Wyatt



ARCHIVE 6
au 1er juin 2026

Discographie
Interviews & articles
Abécédaire



UNE DISCOGRAPHIE DE Robert Wyatt

Archive 6 au 1er juin 2026

RADIO ROBERT

THE LAST 10 UPDATES

- LES ANNÉES BEFORE
- SOFT MACHINE
- MATCHING MOLE
- SOLO
- INTERVIEWS & ARTICLES
- LYRICS
- SCORES/PARTITIONS
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Last Update :25/05/2026





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Liste des ajouts et des modifications de l'archive 6 du 1er juin 2026

L'archive 6 du site au 01/06/2026 comporte au total **4 977** pages pdf.
De nombreuses corrections et modifications ont été apportées tout au long de l'année ainsi que les principaux ajouts suivants :

Discographie

49 nouvelles références discographiques :

- Word Of Mouth (15 Recommended New Songs For Autumn 2004) - 2004 (Various Artists)
- Now Yearbook '80-'84 (The Final Chapter) - 2022 (Various Artists)
- Stelline ft. Libby Leist - Sea Song - 2017 (Reprises)
- Autarkic - Terms & Conditions - 2020 (Reprises)
- Emi Sounds Aime Tricatel - 2010 (Various Artists)
- Orchestra SMS - Musica Sparpagliata - 2025 (Reprises)
- Bruce Brubaker - Eno Piano - 2023 (Reprises)
- Berlin Musicians in Solidarity with Palestine - Loud & Clear - 2025 (Reprises)
- Bruce Brubaker - Eno Piano 2 - 2024 (Reprises)
- Hatfield And The North - O.R.T.F. January 2, 1973 - 2024 (With Friends)
- Stray Signals - Dedicated To Palestine - 2024 (Various Artists)
- NkCz - Sea Song (a Robert Wyatt cover) - 2020 (Reprises)
- L'esprit Woodstock - 2009 (Various Artists)
- Middle Earth - The Soundtrack Of London's Legendary Psychedelic Club 1967-1969 (Various Artists)
- Kevin Ayers - All This Crazy Gift Of Time - The Recordings 1969-1973 - 2024 (With Friends) (Reprises)
- Eiko Ishibashi & Tatsuya Yoshida - Slip Beneath The Distant Tree - 2007 (Reprises)
- Cloudland Blue Quartet - Variation on Brian Eno's 'Music For Airports' - 2021 (Reprises)
- In Dark Trees - Under Cover - 2012 (Reprises)
- Ex Norwegian - Something Unreal: The Best Of Ex Norwegian - 2019 (Reprises)
- Jet Stream: Autumn Flight - 2003 (Various Artists)
- Mésange - Signed Curtain - 2019 (Reprises)
- Unknowns Psychedelic Music Vol.1 - 2000 (Various Artists)
- Soft Machine - Turns 'On 67 - 2025 (Soft Machine)
- Tears For Fears - Songs From The Big Chair (Deluxe Edition) - 2006 (Reprises)
- Kevin Ayers - Bananamour (Reissue) - 2003 (With Friends)
- Edmund John - Robert Wyatt's Sea Song - 2013 (Reprises)
- Anaïd - Orchestra : Live - 2025 (Reprises)
- Church Chords - Otherly Love Presents 01: Tribute to Robert Wyatt - 2024 (Reprises)
- Group Listening - Clarinet & Piano Selected Works Vol. 1 - Remixed - 2019 (Reprises)
- Pick'n'Mix - 15 tracks from the Rough Trade Vaults - Compiled by Pulp - 2025 (Various Artists)
- 391 - The Experience Machine - 2015 (Reprises)
- The Jimi Hendrix Experience - TTG Studios October 1968 (Bootlegs)
- Glass & Friends - Canterburied in Seattle 2002 - 2022 (Reprises)
- Glass & Friends - Progman 2003 - 2022 (Reprises)
- Richard Sinclair Trio - Le Triton - 2025 (Reprises)
- Soft Machine - MoonJune Years 2002-2018 (Sampler) - 2018 (Reprises)
- Matching Mole - Kings Cross Cinema 1972 - 2025 (Bootlegs)
- Soft Works - Abracadabra In Tokyo - 2025 (Reprises)
- Cassiber - 1982-1992 (30th Anniversary Cassiber Box) - 2013 (Reprises)
- Richard Sinclair Band - SchioLife - 2024 (?) (Reprises)
- Ben Varian - Funny Souls Singles Series - 2020 (Reprises)
- Hatfield And The North Le Triton - 2024 (?) (Reprises)
- WMWM - London April 14, 1973 - (?) (Bootlegs)
- WMWS - One Night Stand (Reissue) - (2015) (With Friends)

- Richard Sinclair - Century 21 - 2024 (Reprises)
- Get The Blessing - Rarer Teas - 2020 (With Friends)
- Tears For Fears - The Collection - 2003 (Reprises)
- Luciano Margorani - Nan True's Hole - 2026 (Reprises)
- La 1919 - Giorni Felici - 1997 (Samples)

Interviews & articles - Vol. 1 (in english)

25 nouveaux articles :

- Soft Machine man's switch - Melody Maker - July 18, 1970
- The Mike Ratledge Interviews - Facelift - N° 2 - September 1999
- 'Matching Mole : the beginning of an other ear' - Time Out - June 16th-22nd 1972
- Soundtrack of my life: Robert Wyatt - The Guardian - 26 October 2014
- Soft Machine - looking for more complicated musical ideas... - Record Mirror - October 25, 1969
- New Model Army - Mojo - N° 88 - March 2001
- When In Rome... - Sounds - July 12, 1975
- Mantler paints it black + Gorey stories - Melody Maker - April 17, 1976
- No thing can stop him - Option #39 - July-August 1991
- East / West - Collusion - #2 - February-April 1982
- Robert Wyatt : Whistling in the dark - New Sounds New Styles - June 1982
- Soft Machine album - an MM preview - Melody Maker - May 30, 1970
- 'Other' Music - The Village Voice - October 23, 2007
- Max Remembered - Modern Drummer Magazine - December, 2007
- Canterbury Scene Pioneers 1 : The Soft Machine - Audion - Issue #54 - August 2008
- This Is What Happens - Shindig ! - January-February 2011
- Two pound notes must copulate - Bath Festival of Blues and Progressive Music '70 Program
- 'I've no idea what's next' - The Guardian - 22 September 2003
- Who, Wyatt, Where - The Amazing Pudding - June 1993
- Q&A: Robert Wyatt - The Birth Of The Cool - Stop Smiling - July, 12 2006
- His Master's Voice - Strange Fruit - Freedom - Vol:43 No 22 - 13th November 1982
- Nothing to kill or die for - New Musical Express - March 10, 1984
- Pink Floyd in Wyatt Charity at Rainbow - Record & Radio Mirror - November 3, 1973
- 2500 Ball at IT-Launch - The International Times - October 31 - November 13, 1966
- Interview: Robert Wyatt The only way is up when you've hit rock bottom - Independent - 30 September 1997

Interviews & articles - Vol. 2 (en français)

7 nouveaux articles :

- La résurrection de la douce machine de Robert Wyatt - Mad -17 mars 1999
- Wyatt Hotel - crisscross-jazz.com - décembre 2010
- Mike Ratledge, l'homme-moustache de Soft Machine - Gonzaï - 9 février 2025
- Mike Ratledge 1943-2025 - Rock & Folk - N° 692 - avril 2025
- Robert Wyatt: tout ce que vous ne deviniez pas ! - Jazzmania.be - 8 août 2022
- Chute et ascension de Robert Wyatt - Aide-mémoire - N° 77 - juillet - août - septembre 2016
- Byg Records - Le magnifique catalogue - Rock & Folk - juillet 2023

Interviews & articles - Vol. 3 (autres langues)

9 nouveaux articles :

- Rock Bottom, al habla con la directora María Trenor - Ruta 66 - 19 diciembre, 2024
- Soft Machine - Raropiù - N° 71 - Settembre 2019
- Io E Robert - Faremusica - N° 202 - 1998
- Robert Wyatt. Maestro de maestros - Heraldo de Aragon - 1 de Junio de 2024
- La Magia Di Rock Bottom - Prog Italia - Ottobre-Novembre 2024
- Muzakoncerto - Muzak 4 - Luglio 1975
- Heavy Mental - Ciao 2001 - N. 5 - 4 Febbraio 1992
- Jimi Hendrix feat. Robert Wyatt Studio Recordings Guide - Alla Ricerca del Vinile Perfetto - 5 gennaio, 2013
- Robert Wyatt - Ci fidiamo di lui - Rockerilla - 15 Ottobre/15 Novembre 2007

Abécédaire

4 nouvelles sections :

- Toucher le fond
- Mary Halvorson's Turning Point: "Robert Wyatt’s able to incorporate the weird with the beautiful in such a nice way” - Jazzwise - May 22, 2025 *in* Rock Bottom section
- Rock Bottom sorti en salles le 9 juillet 2025
- Robert Wyatt et le cinéma

Books :

- Rock psychédélique - un voyage en 150 albums de David Rassent - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2025)
- Electrosound: Storia ed estetica della musica elettroacustica di Giacomo Fronzi - EDT (2013)
- Jazz Rock - Esprits libres et fusion des genres de Marc Alvarado - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2019)
- Underground 2 - Derviches Tourneuses & punks cosmiques de Arnaud Le Gouëfflec (texte) et Nicolas Moog (dessins) - Glénat (2025)
- Rock City Guide - Les villes qui ont changé le cours de la musique de JD Beauvallet (auteur) et Frédéric Peltier (illustrateur) - GM éditions (2025)
- Jean-Jacques Lebel - Galerie Louis Carré & Cie - catalogue d'exposition publié à l’occasion de l’exposition 'Recycler, détourner' (2012)
- L'âge d'or du rock progressif anglais 1965 - 1979 - tome 3 de Didier Gonzalez - Camion Blanc (2025)
- Encyclopédie illustrée du rock de Nick Logan et Bob Woffinden - RTL Edition (1980)
- Rock Graphic - 10 ans d'affiche de rock'n'roll de Mike Farren - Editions Henry Veyrier (1976)
- Rock'n'roll - tome 2: La discothèque rock idéale. 101 disques à écouter avant la fin du monde de Philippe Maneuvre - Editions Rock & Folk / Albin Michel (2011)
- Rock'n'Roll : la discothèque idéale : 101 disques qui ont changé le monde de Philippe Maneuvre - Editions Rock & Folk / Albin Michel (2005)
- Anthologie du rock progressif - Voyages en ailleurs de Jérôme Albérola - Camion Blanc (2010)
- Mountains Come Cut of the Sky - The illustrated history of prog rock by Will Romano - Backbeat (2010)
- Listening to the Future - The time of progressive rock 1968-1978 by Bill Martin - Open Court (1998)
- Synths, Sax & Situationists (The French Musical Underground 1968-1978) by Ian Thompson - Round Table Books (2025)

Archives & concerts :

- Orchestra SMS - Sea Song - Excerpt from MUSICA SPARPAGLIATA 2015-2025 (Concerts & clips)
- Concert Rock Bottom de l'Ateleier Play It Again ! à Paris 8 - 12 juin 2024
- Dondestan for Palestine - 2025
- Delta Saxophone Quartet with Hugh Hopper - 2007 & 2008
- Odeia - Alifib - 2017 & 2025
- University Of Errors Play The Soft Machine - 2006
- 3 Degrees of Robert Wyatt - 2015
- John Greaves & Friends - Piacenza - 5 Agosto 2023
- Berlin Jazz Festival - 1971

In conversation :

- Retour de plage ... Robert Wyatt, un ange à la table - France Musique - 18 juillet 2024
- Mark Boyle on meeting Soft Machine at UFO in 1967
- Midweek with Libby Purves - 1999
- Laurenzo Mattotti sur Robert Wyatt - 2025
- Éloge de Kevin Ayers, poète de l’âge psychédélique - A Very Good Trip - 2024
- Les chemins de la musique de Alain Dister et Christian Rosset - 1997
- Le rêve aquatique de Robert Wyatt - 2024

Words :

- Mike Ratledge - A tribute
- Richard Sinclair about Matching Mole and Rock Bottom - 2022

- Nicolas Klotz - Derives.tv - 2020

Critiques/reviews :

- Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom/Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard in BLAH BLAH NEWS juillet-août 1998
- Dondestan in BLAH BLAH NEWS - février 1999
- Matching Mole in SHUNDIG!- May 2025
- Robert Wyatt - Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt in THE WIRE N°125 - July 1994
- Robert Wyatt in Rivista Anarchica - #201 - giugno-luglio '93
- Hot Chip with Robert Wyatt and Geese in Les Inrockuptibles - N° 694 - 17 mars 2009
- Robert Wyatt - Old Rottenhat in Spex - Dezember 1985
- Robert Wyatt - Comicopera in The Observer - October 14, 2006
- Matching Mole - Little Red Recod in A FACEBOOK POST BY CRAIG RUNYON - May 2025
- Robert Wyatt - Shleep in FACELIFT - May 1998

DVD & videos :

- Rock Fieber - 2004
- Soft Machine - Other Doors - Tour 23/24
- Rock Bottom, un film de Maria Trenor - 2025

Scores :

- Stefano Giannotti - Sea Song arrangements
- Serge Wodrascka - Muddy Mouth

Prochain archivage : version 7 au 1er juin 2027 .

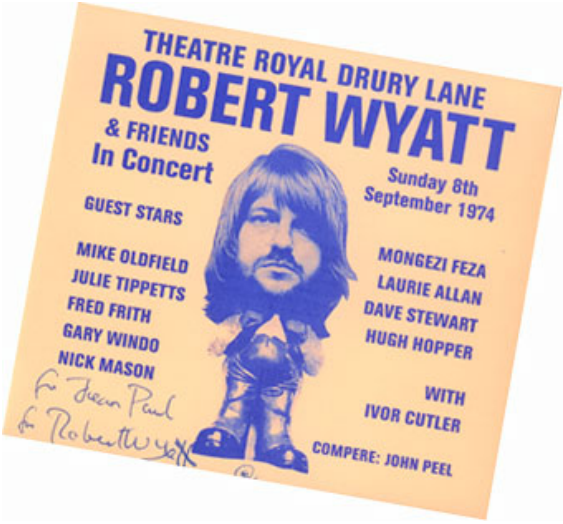
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Précisions

Mettre en ligne une discographie de Robert Wyatt, alors qu'il existe de nombreuses pages consacrées à ce musicien ne s'imposait peut-être pas. J'avais initialement l'intention de réaliser une sorte de juke-box, quelques pages illustrées des pochettes d'albums que j'aurais installées sur mon PC à partir desquelles je souhaitais pouvoir "jouer" mes morceaux préférés.

Du juke-box au site web, l'idée s'est imposée rapidement et je me suis pris au jeu du recoupement d'informations, du plaisir de découvrir un album inconnu, de pister une reprise ou un bootleg à travers des moteurs de recherche du monde entier. Les premiers messages d'encouragements (merci à Jean-Philippe et Chris, mes deux premiers visiteurs) m'ont incité à continuer même si je vérifie chaque jour l'adage "plus on en sait, moins on en sait" sur Robert Wyatt comme sur le reste...



Quelques précisions sur la manière dont j'ai construit ce site :

LA DISCOGRAPHIE

- Le classement des disques est chronologique selon leur première date de parution (et non leur réédition en CD ou leur date d'enregistrement) à l'exception des bootlegs (disques pirates) dont je ne connais pas toujours la date de sortie. Dans ce dernier cas, j'ai adopté un classement basé sur la date (probable) de l'enregistrement.

- Bien qu'intitulé "Une discographie de Robert Wyatt..." ce site n'a pas la prétention de rendre compte de manière exhaustive des références discographiques de chaque album. Les codifications divergent d'un pays à l'autre et les catalogues de Robert Wyatt, de Soft Machine ou de Matching Mole sont passés entre les mains de nombreux labels et compagnies ce qui allonge la liste des références de chaque disque. J'ai noté les références les plus courantes, parfois les plus récentes, pour faciliter les recherches.

- Le format des albums, s'il est différent de CD, est mentionné à la suite de leur référence (LP, EP, K7, Digital...).

- Dans la discographie, les titres auxquels Robert Wyatt a participé en tant qu'interprète et/ou compositeur sont en **[noir/gras]**. Les morceaux sans Robert Wyatt sont affichés en [gris/maigre].

Parfois, il n'a pas été possible d'identifier précisément le ou les morceaux auxquels Robert Wyatt est associé. Dans "Thank You For... " de Bridget St. John, Robert Wyatt confirme y avoir joué des percussions mais ignore quels morceaux en ont finalement bénéficié. Et dans "La Via Negativa" et "Shadows" de Lorenzo Brusci, ce dernier ne se souvient plus quelles séquences comportent les samples de RW (parmi les centaines d'artistes samplés pour ces deux oeuvres). Dans ces rares cas très rares, tous les morceaux de l'album sont en [noir/maigre].

- Si l'oeuvre de Robert Wyatt est au centre de mon projet, j'ai voulu y associer les reprises de ses morceaux car c'est toujours avec gourmandise que je découvre de nouvelles interprétations de ces "classiques" que sont pour moi *Moon In June, Gloria Gloom*, *Sea Song* ou *Gharbzadegi...* J'espère vous les faire découvrir et je vous invite à m'en faire connaître de nouvelles. Ces reprises sont à prendre au sens le plus large possible: certains morceaux ne sont pas signés Robert Wyatt mais sont considérés dans la base comme des reprises de R. W. (c'est le

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cas des reprises de morceaux de Hugh Hopper ou Kevin Ayers initialement interprétés par Soft Machine ou de certains morceaux de Matching Mole par exemple...).

Certaines reprises peuvent d'ailleurs faire l'objet d'un débat. J'ai en effet choisi de mentionner des albums ou des morceaux qui ne sont pas à proprement parler des reprises de Robert Wyatt car celui-ci n'en est pas l'auteur ou le compositeur mais qui ont bien un lien avec lui.
C'est par exemple le cas lorsque Robert Wyatt en est l'interprète ou un des interprètes de référence (les morceaux de Soft Machine écrits par Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge ou Hugh Hopper par exemple), mais aussi des morceaux dont la reprise s'inspire surtout de l'interprétation qu'a pu en faire R. Wyatt.
A titre d'exemples :
- *I'm Believer* et *Locomotive* dans Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt (2010) qui sont deux morceaux repris par Robert Wyatt (mais traités par Mop Meuchiine comme des reprises de Robert Wyatt).
- Les nombreuses reprises de *Shipbuilding* (d'ailleurs parfois signé" *E. Costello*, parfois *C. Langer/D. MacManus* : en règle générale je reproduis ce qui est mentionné sur le support).
- *Del Mondo* dans l'album de l'ONJ Around Robert Wyatt (2009)
- Tous les morceaux d'H. Hopper de l'album du Delta Saxophone Quartet (2007)
- Certains morceaux signés K. Ayers ou H. Hopper de University of Errors (2004) et bien d'autres encore...

j'ai cependant considéré que ces morceaux avaient un lien indirect mais réel avec Robert Wyatt qui d'une manière ou d'une autre y est associé et qu'ils méritaient d'être cités. C'est une position subjective mais ne pas les référencer m'aurait gêné encore plus.

De même, j'ai choisi de classer les albums de Soft Machine *post-Fourth* dans la rubrique "Reprises" lorsqu'ils contiennent des morceaux créés à l'époque où Robert Wyatt jouait dans ce groupe. C'est le cas par exemple de Live in France ou de Drop, a fortiori les albums de Soft Machine Legacy, Soft Bunds etc.

Avec l'essor du streaming et des plateformes de diffusion de type *Bandcamp* ou *Soundcloud*, les choses se compliquent : les notions d'album et de label s'estompent au profit d'un format digital omniprésent mais pas toujours bien référencé. C'est ainsi que les mentions *NO LABEL* et *Digital Format* sont parfois les seules indications accompagnant un titre publié sur ces plateformes.

A partir des années 2010 (environ), une version numérique est quasi systématiquement publiée en complément des versions CD ou vinyl, qu'il s'agisse de nouveautés ou de rééditions. C'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de ne mentionner la version numérique ("Digital Format") que lorsque l'album n'est publié que sous ce seul format.

L'ABÉCÉDAIRE

Cette rubrique a été mise en ligne plus tardivement (printemps 2004). Elle s'enrichit progressivement, le concept d'Abécédaire me permettant de créer autant de thèmes que je le souhaite. J'y traite différents aspects de l'oeuvre et de la personnalité de R.W. au gré de mes envies et des informations que je collecte, en ne m'interdisant pas un point de vue subjectif et arbitraire... Depuis le printemps 2005 j'ai entamé le référencement et la publication des très nombreux articles et interviews de Robert Wyatt parus dans la presse internationale. Tâche herculéenne que je mène au rythme de mes recherches et des informations que me transmettent des aficionados du monde entier.

ASTUCE...

La page "Pochettes" présente toutes les pochettes de la discographie. Celles-ci s'affichent dans l'ordre de leur mise en ligne. Pour connaître les derniers disques répertoriés, il suffit de consulter cette rubrique et de

owner.

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En tant que site à but non lucratif et non générateur de revenus, disco-robertwyatt.com fournit son contenu sous forme de service gratuit, éducatif et informatif pour ses lecteurs. Le contenu protégé par le droit d'auteur sur ce site ne peut pas être utilisé à des fins lucratives sans l'autorisation écrite expresse et le consentement du titulaire du droit d'auteur.

découvrir les albums affichés en fin de page.

THE LAST 10 UPDATES

Une nouvelle page créée en 2024 "The last 10 updates" permet de découvrir les 10 derniers nouveautés du site.

EN CONCLUSION



Je compte sur les visiteurs de ce site pour m'aider à l'enrichir. Parfois une pochette ou un détail me manque, parfois une référence est erronée ou incomplète... N'hésitez pas à me les signaler et à m'envoyer toute information utile. De même, analyses ou coups de coeurs pour un album, un morceau, trouveront leur place sur le site s'ils me paraissent intéressants/séduisants: je serai heureux d'en faire profiter les internautes qui me font l'honneur de le visiter régulièrement.

A bientôt

Jean-Paul Marillier

Le site a été ouvert à la mi-octobre 2003. Il était optimisé pour une résolution 800 x 600 (afin de permettre une impression papier optimum) avec un navigateur Microsoft Internet Explorer pour version 4 et plus, affichage "taille du texte" moyenne.

Téléchargez toute la discographie au format PDF

La discographie est mise à la disposition des personnes souhaitant conserver une trace du site au format PDF sur leur propre ordinateur.
Ce fichier est annuellement mis à jour pour tenir compte des nouvelles entrées.

Post Scriptum:
j'ai également réalisé le site lafondation-paris.com dédié aux archives sonores et visuelles de LA FONDATION, collectif parisien créé avec quelques amis aux débuts des années 80.



Et aussi : lesot.space, une station spatiale sonore en hommage à Bertrand Mérino-Péris, vidéaste et musicien iconoclaste, créateur et animateur de Haute-Tension avec Alain Burosse et Michel Éli, agent actif de l'Oeil du Cyclone et de bien d'autres aventures aventureuses. Et ami, trop tôt parti.

Et depuis le 10/07/2019, **Radio Robert** :



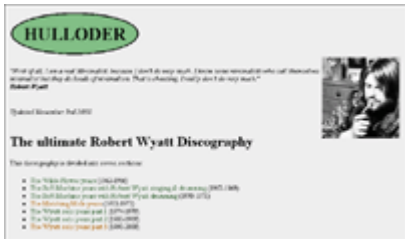
...une sorte de jukebox automatique et aléatoire plein de surprises et d'enchainements inattendus... la radio dont j'ai toujours rêvé...

... a kind of automatic and random jukebox full of surprises and unexpected sequences ... the radio I've always dreamed of ...

Crédits

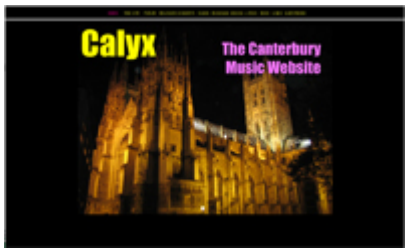
Deux sites et un livre m'ont apporté une aide décisive dans la réalisation du présent site. Je veux les citer ici et remercier leurs auteurs :

- Hulloder - The ultimate Robert Wyatt Discography qui répertorie également les enregistrements des autres musiciens fondateurs du Soft Machine.
  N'est malheureusement plus mis à jour depuis novembre 2000.
  Hébergé depuis 2019 sur le site Calyx.



- Calyx est l'encyclopédie la plus complète sur "l'école de Canterbury" qu'on puisse trouver sur le web.

  Ce site, très agréable à consulter est une mine d'informations sur les musiques et les musiciens de cette mouvance anglaise des seventies qui continuent à jouer et à enregistrer...





- Faux mouvements est un journal qui rapporte fidèlement la carrière de Robert Wyatt, depuis ses années d'enfance et sa découverte du jazz jusqu'à la sortie de *Shleep* en 1997.

  Ponctué par des extraits d'interview de R.W. ou d'amis musiciens, cette biographie est complétée par un index discographique très complet.

  Faux mouvements de Michael King aux éditions Camion blanc (1998).

- Depuis le lancement de ce site (octobre 2003), de nombreuses personnes m'ont contacté pour m'encourager, me signaler des omissions ou me faire des suggestions. Parmi celles-ci je souhaite spécialement remercier:

Hélène Collon	**Dominique Fellmann**	**Philippe Renaud**
Jan van Driel	**François Grapard**	**Svenn Sivertssen**
Michel Ramond	**Jean-Philippe Ramos**	**Ferdinando Faraò**
Philippe Paye	**Daniel Mercurin**	**Alessandro Achilli**
Aymeric Leroy	**Bernard Tuyttens**	**David Greenberger**
Chris Steyer	**Olivier Fromentin**	**Alexis Reisenhofer**
Stéphane Fougère	**Frederic Janosy**	**Todd Beasley**
Jean-Philippe Cimetière	**Xavier Béal**	**Paul Feary**
Marc-Olivier Waintraub	**David Fenech**	**Tony Grippo**
Jérôme Lefdup	**Alan Bershaw**	

  ... qui ont contribué à enrichir le site depuis son lancement.

- Crédits des photos de la page d'accueil :
  - Robert Wyatt avec cigarette > photo sur note de pochette de The End Of An Ear
  - Soft Machine en concert > Jochen Mönch (pochette de Virtually)

- Robert Wyatt de face > Famiglia Trentotto (in Musiche n°17 - Primavera 1996)
- Robert Wyatt "à la casquette" > pochette de Bananamoon

Une discographie de

Robert Wyatt



ARCHIVE 6
au 1er juin 2026

Discographie



> Zoom



> Booklet

Tales Of Canterbury
1994

The Wilde Flowers

- Impotence (69) [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Those Words They Say (66) [H. Hopper]
- Memories (66) [H. Hopper]
- Don't Try To Change Me (65) [H. Hopper + G. Flight & R. Wyatt (words - second and third verses)]
- Parchman Farm (65) [B. White]
- Almost Grown (65) [C. Berry]
- She's Gone (65) [K. Ayers]
- Slow Walkin' Talk (65) [B. Hopper]
- He's Bad For You (65) [R. Wyatt]
- It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind) (65) [H. Hopper]
- Memories (Instrumental) (66) [H. Hopper]
- Never Leave Me (66) [H. Hopper]
- Time After Time (66) [H. Hopper]
- Just Where I Want (66) [H. Hopper]
- No Game When You Lose (66) [H. Hopper]
- Impotence (66) [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Why Do You Care (With Zobe) (68)
- The Pieman Cometh (With Zobe) (68)
- Summer Spirit (With Zobe) (68)
- She Loves To Hurt (69) [H. Hopper]
- The Big Show (69) [B. Hopper]
- Memories (69) [H. Hopper]

- Robert Wyatt - drums and voice

- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Pye Hastings - guitar
- Brian Hopper guitar, voice, alto saxophone
- Richard Coughlan - drums
- Graham Flight - voice
- Richard Sinclair - guitar
- Kevin Ayers - voice
- Dave Lawrence - voice, guitar, bass guitar
- Bob Gilleson - drums
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ, flute.

Enregistrements de 1965 à 1969.

Une édition spéciale - tirage limité à 2000 ex. - intitulée *The Wilde Flowers Story - Brian's Tale* publiée à la même date avec un livret de 13 pages retrace la génèse du groupe par Brian Hopper et comprend de nombreuses photos et documents.

- VOICEPRINT (VP 123) CD
- VOICEPRINT (VPB 123CD) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.1
1998

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.1

- Feelin',Reelin',Squealin' (Caravan)
- Mummie [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Da-Da-Dee & Bolivar [T. Monk]
- Orientasian [B. Hopper]
- You Really Got Me [R. Davies]
- Thinking Of You Baby [D. Clark]
- Man In A Deaf Corner [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- If I Ever Leave You (Zobe)
- Stop Me And Play One
- Piano Standards 1 (Mike Ratledge)
- Belsize Parked [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Summertime [G. Gershwin]

Dans l'ordre des morceaux :

- Caravan
- Robert Wyatt & Brian Hopper
- Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt
- Brian Hopper & Robert Wyatt
- Wilde Flowers
- Wilde Flowers
- Brian & Hugh Hopper, M. Ratledge & R.Wyatt
- Zobe - Brian's band
- Robert Wyatt and A Guitarist
- Mike Ratledge
- Brian & Hugh Hopper with R. Wyatt
- Caravan

Enregistrements de 1962 à 1964.

- VOICEPRINT (VP 201) CD

An Introduction To Canterburied Sounds

- That's Allright Mama
- Interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- Tanglewood Tails

Extraits de morceaux tirés des 4 volumes de Canterburied Sounds entrecoupés de commentaires de Brian & Hugh Hopper et Pye Hastings.



> Zoom

An Introduction To
Canterburied Sounds
1998

- Interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- **Thinking Of You, Baby**
- Interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- **Man In A Deaf Corner**
- Interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- **Summertime**
- Interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- **Esther's Nose Job**/interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- Feelin', Reelin', Squealin'
- Interview Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pye Hastings
- Austin Cambridge (Caravan)

- VOICEPRINT (VPPROMO1) CD



> Zoom

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.2
1998

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.2

- Carazobe (Caravan & Zobe)
- **Instant Pussy** [R. Wyatt]
- **Esther's Nose Job** [M. Ratledge]
- **Moorish** [R. Wyatt/B. Hopper]
- **Summertime** [G. Gershwin]
- Indian Rope Man (Zobe)
- **Drums Solo** [R. Wyatt]
- Mirror For The Day (Pye Pastings)
- **Love Song With Cello**
- As I Feel I Die (Caravan)
- Where But For Caravan Would I? (Caravan)

Dans l'ordre des morceaux :

- Caravan & Zobe
- Robert Wyatt
- Soft Machine
- Robert Wyatt & Brian Hopper
- Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt
- Zobe - Brian Hopper's outfit
- Robert Wyatt
- Pye Hastings
- Robert Wyatt plus others
- Caravan
- Caravan

Enregistrements de 1963 à 1969.

- VOICEPRINT (VP 202) CD



> Zoom

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.3
1998

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.3

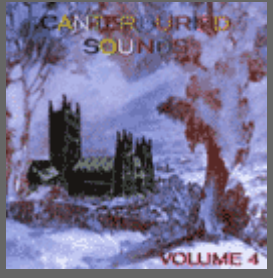
- **Slow Walkin' Talk (68)** [B. Hopper]
- **Frenetica (63/64)** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **Idle Chat** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **1/4 Blues Thing In F** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- More Idle Chat Tape (Zobe)
- The Pieman Cometh (Zobe)
- **Llu-Ba (63)** [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Kansas City/Rip It Up (B. & H. Hopper)
- That's Alright Mama (B. & H. Hopper)
- **Tanglewood Tails** [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- The Big Show/Central Park West/Songs (Zobe)
- If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You (Caravan)

Dans l'ordre des morceaux :

- Robert Wyatt & Jimi Hendrix
- Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt
- Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt
- Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt
- Zobe
- Zobe
- R. Wyatt, Hugh & Brian Hopper + (?) guitarist
- Brian & Hugh Hopper with Pete Lawson
- Brian & Hugh Hopper
- Robert Wyatt, Brian & Hugh Hopper - Zobe
- Caravan

Enregistrements de 1963 à 1968.

- VOICEPRINT (VP 203) CD



> Zoom

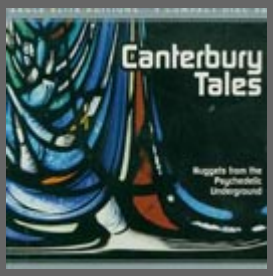
Canterburied Sounds - Vol.4

- Slow Walkin' Talk (Zobe)
- **Some Of The Time** [M. Ratledge, B. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- **Ghosts** [A. Ayler]
- With An ear To The Ground You Can Make It (Caravan)
- **Dalmore Rode** [B. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Piano Standards 2 (64) (Mike Ratledge)
- **Johnny B. Goode (64)** [C. Berry]
- **Cecillian (62)** [M. Ratledge, B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Austin Cambridge (Caravan)

Dans l'ordre des morceaux :

- Zobe
- B. Hopper, M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt & Guitarist
- M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt & Guitarist
- Caravan
- Robert Wyatt and Brian Hopper
- Mike Ratledge
- Wilde Flowers
- B. & H. Hopper, M. Ratledge and R. Wyatt
- Caravan

Canterburied Sounds - Vol.4
1998



> Zoom

Canterbury Tales
2001

Canterbury Tales/Nuggets From The Psychedelic Underground

- Portrait Of A Shrinking Man (National Health)
- The Hands Of Che Quevara (Jakko)
- The Piano Player (Dave Sinclair)
- A Potted History (Richard Sinclair And Hugh Hopper)
- Wise Man In Your Heart (Extract) (The Magik Brothers)
- **Unmasked** [Robert Wyatt]
- Strawberry Fields Forever (Pip Pyle And Friends)
- Leeway (Brian Hopper And Robert Fenner)
- Pack Light (Hugh Hopper And Lisa Klossner)
- Pot-Head Pixies (Gong)
- Jocelyn (Pip Pyles Equipe Out)
- If I Could Do It All Over Again Id Do It All Over You (Caravan)
- Golden Section (Hugh Hopper Band)
- **Those Words They Say** [Wilde Flowers]
- **Memories** [Wilde Flowers]
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still (Jakko Dave Stewart Hugh)
- Lizard On A Rock (Rick Biddulph)
- Sometimes It Is (Brian Hopper)
- **Was A Friend**
- **Esthers Nose Job (Extract)**
- When Your Love Falls Down (The Happy Accidents)
- Midnight Judo (Pip Pyles Equipe Out)
- Time After Time (Wilde Flowers)
- Zep-Tepi (Elton Dean)
- Arriving Twice (National Health)
- I Never Glid Before (Gong)
- A Million Reasons Why (Phil Manzanera)
- Foetal Fanfare Fandango (Pip Pyles Equipe Out)
- **Slow Walkin Talk** [B. Hopper]
- Tales Of A Damson Knight (National Health)
- I Wanted A Child (Jakko)
- Moon Over Man (Dave Sinclair)
- Scat Up A Tree (Hugh Hopper)
- Old Chrome Moon (Hugh Hopper)
- I See You (Hugh Hopper And Lisa Klossner)
- Kew Rhone (John Greaves)
- Herbaceous Border (The Magick Brothers)
- **The Big Show** [Wilde Flowers]
- Its Flotsam And Jetsam Foreshore (Brian Hopper And R Fenner)

Enregistrements de 1962 à 1964.

- VOICEPRINT (VP 204) CD



- EAGLE RECORDS (EEECD006) 3xCD



> Zoom

The Wilde Flowers
2001

The Wilde Flowers (Vinyl Reissue)

- **Impotence**
- **Those Words They Say**
- **Don't Try To Change Me**
- **Parchman Farm**
- **Almost Grown**
- **She's Gone**
- **Slow Walkin' Talk**
- **He's Bad For You**
- **It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind)**
- **Never Leave Me**
- **Just Where I Want**
- **Time After Time**
- **No Game When You Lose**



- VINYL LOVERS (900723) LP



> Zoom

Canterburied Sounds
4 CD Box Set
2013

- Why Do You Care
- The Pieman Cometh
- Summer Spirit
- **She Loves To Hurt**
- **The Big Show**
- **Memories**

Canterburied Sounds 4 CD Box Set

Disc 1
- **Feelin',Reelin',Squealin' (Caravan)**
- **Mummie** [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Da-Da-Dee & Bolivar** [T. Monk]
- **Orientasian** [B. Hopper]
- **You Really Got Me** [R. Davies]
- **Thinking Of You Baby** [D. Clark]
- **Man In A Deaf Corner** [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- If I Ever Leave You (Zobe)
- **Stop Me And Play One**
- Piano Standards 1 (Mike Ratledge)
- **Belsize Parked** [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- **Summertime** [G. Gershwin]

Disc 2
- Carazobe (Caravan & Zobe)
- **Instant Pussy** [R. Wyatt]
- **Esther's Nose Job** [M. Ratledge]
- **Moorish** [R. Wyatt/B. Hopper]
- **Summertime** [G. Gershwin]
- Indian Rope Man (Zobe)
- **Drums Solo** [R. Wyatt]
- Mirror For The Day (Pye Pastings)
- **Love Song With Cello**
- As I Feel I Die (Caravan)
- Where But For Caravan Would I? (Caravan)

Disc 3
- **Slow Walkin' Talk (68)** [B. Hopper]
- **Frenetica (63/64)** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **Idle Chat** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **1/4 Blues Thing In F** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- More Idle Chat Tape (Zobe)
- The Pieman Cometh (Zobe)
- **Llu-Ba (63)** [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Kansas City/Rip It Up (B. & H. Hopper)
- That's Alright Mama (B. & H. Hopper)
- **Tanglewood Tails** [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- The Big Show/Central Park West/Songs (Zobe)
- If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You (Caravan)

Disc 4
- Slow Walkin' Talk (Zobe)
- **Some Of The Time** [M. Ratledge, B. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- **Ghosts** [A. Ayler]
- With An ear To The Ground You Can Make It (Caravan)
- **Dalmore Rode** [B. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Piano Standards 2 (64) (Mike Ratledge)
- **Johnny B. Goode (64)** [C. Berry]
- **Cecillian (62)** [M. Ratledge, B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Austin Cambridge (Caravan)

4 CD Box Set - Réédition des 4 CD parus en 1998.

- FLOATING WORLD/VOICEPRINT (7201012) 4xCD

The Wilde Flowers (Reissue)

Disc 1
- **Impotence** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Those Words They Say** [B. Hopper]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- **Don't Try To Change Me**

Disc One
1. Impotence
- Robert Wyatt - drums & voice
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

The Wilde Flowers (Reedition)
2015

[H. Hopper + G. Flight & R. Wyatt (words - second and third verses)]
- **Parchman Farm** [B. White]
- **Almost Grown** [C. Berry]
- **She's Gone** [K. Ayers]
- **Slow Walkin' Talk** [B. Hopper]
- **He's Bad For You** [R. Wyatt]
- **It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind)** [H. Hopper]
- **Memories (Instrumental)** [H. Hopper]
- **Never Leave Me** [H. Hopper]
- **Time After Time** [H. Hopper]
- **Just Where I Want** [H. Hopper]
- **No Game When You Lose** [H. Hopper]
- **Impotence (alt. version)** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Why Do You Care (With Zobe)
- The Pieman Cometh (With Zobe)
- Summer Spirit (With Zobe)
- **She Loves To Hurt** [H. Hopper]
- **The Big Show** [B. Hopper]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]

Disc 2
- **The Pieman Cometh** [B. Hopper]
- **Mummie** [R. Wyatt/B. Hopper]
- That's Alright Mama [A. 'Big Boy' Crudup]
- **Orientasian** [B. Hopper]
- **Frenetica** [M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- **3/4 Blues Thing in F** [M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- **Slow Walkin' Talk** [B. Hopper]
- **Man in a Deaf Corner**[B. & H. Hopper/M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- **Summertime** [G. Gershwin]
- **Belsize Parked** [B. & H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Where But For Caravan Would I? [B. Hopper/P. Hastings/R. Sinclair/ R. Coughlan/D. Sinclair]
- **Hope For Hapiness** [B. Hopper]

- Pye Hastings - guitar
Recorded Regent Sound Studios - London. 6th August 1969

2. Those Words They Say
- Robert Wyatt - voice & tambourine
- Brian Hopper - guitar & backing vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Coughlan - drums
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1968

3. Memories
- Robert Wyatt - voice
- Brian Hopper - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Coughlan - drums
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1968

4. Don't Try To Change Me
- Robert Wyatt - drums & percussion
- Graham Flight - voice
- Brian Hopper - lead guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
Recorded:Sellindge, Kent. Automn 1965

5. Parchman Farm
- Robert Wyatt - drums & percussion
- Kevin Ayers - voice
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
- Brian Hopper - alto saxophone
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. 16th March 1965

6. Almost Grown
- Robert Wyatt - drums & backing vocals
- Brian Hopper - lead guitar & vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Kevin Ayers - backing vocals
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. 16th March 1965

7. She's Gone
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Kevin Ayers - voice
- Brian Hopper - lead guitar
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. 16th March 1965

8. Slow Walkin'Talk
- Robert Wyatt - drums & percussion
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
- Graham Flight - voice
- Brian Hopper - lead guitar
Recorded:Sellindge, Kent. Summer/Automn 1965

9. He's Bad For You
- Robert Wyatt - voice & drums
- Graham Flight - voice
- Brian Hopper - alto saxophone
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
Recorded:Sellindge, Kent. Summer/Automn 1965

10. It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind)
- Robert Wyatt - drums & backing vocals
- Richard Sinclair - voice & guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Brian Hopper - guitar & backing vocals
Recorded:Sellindge, Kent. Summer/Automn 1965

11. Memories (Instrumental)
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Brian Hopper - lead guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. 16th March 1965

12. Never Leave Me
- Robert Wyatt - voice & tambourine
- Brian Hopper - guitar & backing

vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Richard Sinclair - rhythm guitar
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1966

13. Time After Time
- Robert Wyatt - voice
- Brian Hopper - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Richard Coughlan - drums
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1966

14. Just Where I Want
- Robert Wyatt - voice
- Brian Hopper - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Richard Coughlan - drums
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1966

15. No Game When You Lose
- Robert Wyatt - voice & tambourine
- Brian Hopper - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Richard Coughlan - drums
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1966

16. Impotence (alt. version)
- Robert Wyatt - voice
- Brian Hopper - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Richard Coughlan - drums
Recorded: Wout Steenhuis Studio, Broadstairs, Kent. Spring 1966

20. She Loves To Hurt
- Robert Wyatt - drums & backing vocals
- Pye Hastings - voice & 12 string guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Brian Hopper - guitar
Recorded Regent Sound Studios - London. 6th August 1969

21. The Big Show
- Robert Wyatt - voice & drums
- Brian Hopper - soprano saxophone & guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Mike Ratledge - flute
Recorded Regent Sound Studios - London. 6th August 1969

22. Memories (alt. version)
- Robert Wyatt - voice & drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar & acoustic guitar
- Mike Ratledge - piano & organ
Recorded Regent Sound Studios - London. 6th August 1969

Disc Two
1. The Pieman Cometh
Performed by Brian Hopper and Robert Wyatt
Recorded 2003

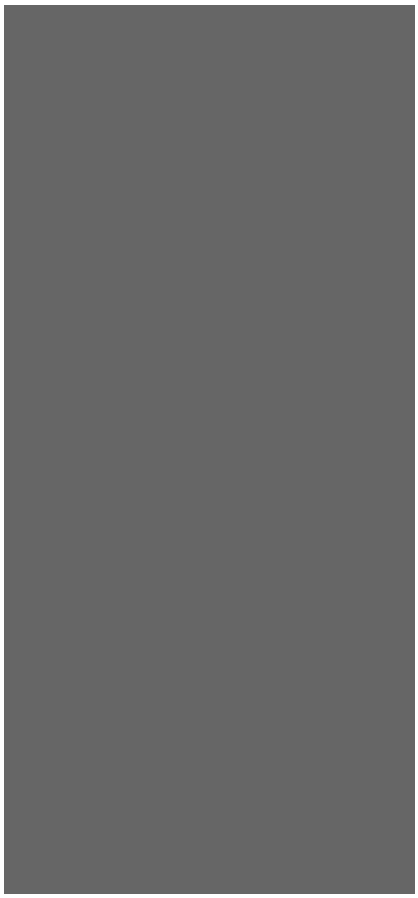
2. Mummie
Performed by Robert Wyatt and Brian Hopper
Recorded 1962

4. Orientasian
Performed by Brian Hopper and Robert Wyatt
Recorded 1963

5. Frenetica
Performed by Mike Ratledge and Robert Wyatt
Recorded 1963

6. 3/4 Blues Thing in F
Performed by Mike Ratledge and Robert Wyatt
Recorded 1963/64

7. Slow Walkin' Talk
Performed by Robert Wyatt and friends
Recorded 1968



8. Man in a Deaf Corner
Performed by Brian & Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt
Recorded 1963/64

9. Summertime
Performed by Mike Ratledge and Robert Wyatt
Recorded 1962/63

10. Belsize Parked
Performed by Brian & Hugh Hopper & Robert Wyatt
Recorded 1963/64

12. Hope For Happiness
Performed by Brian Hopper & Robert Wyatt
Recorded 2003

Personnel:
- Robert Wyatt - vocals, drums, percussion, cornet, piano, keyboards,
- Brian Hopper - guitar, soprano, alto and tenor saxes, flute, keyboards, audio-programming & backing vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar, cello,
- Mike Ratledge - piano

- FLOATING WORLD RECORDS (FLOATD6250) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3

1967

Love Makes Sweet Music

- Love Makes Sweet Music [K. Ayers]
- Feelin 'Reelin Squeelin' [K. Ayers]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- David Allen - guitar, whistle
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass, guitar, vocals

On B-side Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' is credited to Ellidge (Robert Wyatt) and not Ayers !

- POLYDOR (BM 56151) S

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom 1 2 3

1967 (or 1969 ?)

Shadows In The Sun (Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin') / Beautiful (Soft Machine)

- Shadows In The Sun [The Beautiful]
- Walter's Dream

"Los Angeles-based producer and impresario Kim Fowley came to London in 1967 and managed to insert himself behind the controls for the first recordings of the Soft Machine, darlings of the nascent London psychedelic music scene.

Sneaking the tapes, still piping hot, back to Los Angeles, Fowley released *Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'* (renamed *Shadows in the sun*) under the fabricated name Beautiful on the one-off Cyclops label."

- CYCLOPS RECORDS (CS-71X) S



> Zoom 1 2 3

Why Are We Sleeping?

- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Joy Of A Toy

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass, guitar, vocals

Promo Version.

- PROBE (CP-452) S
- HIT (1647) S



> Zoom

1968





> Zoom 1 2



> Zoom 1 2 3

1968

The Soft Machine

- Hope For Happiness [B. Hopper, K. Ayers, M. Ratledge]
- Joy Of A Toy [K. Ayers, M. Ratledge]
- Hope For Happiness (Reprise) [B. Hopper, K. Ayers, M. Ratledge]
- Why Am I So Short? [H. Hopper, K. Ayers, M. Ratledge]
- So Boot If At All [K. Ayers, M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]
- Save Yourself [R. Wyatt]
- Priscilla [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]
- Lullabye Letter [K. Ayers]
- We Did It Again [K. Ayers]
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle [K. Ayers]
- Why Are We Sleeping? [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]
- Box 25/4 Lid [M. Ratledge, H. Hopper]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - bass
- Mike Ratledge, organ
- Hugh Hopper (on Box 25/4)
- Cake - backing vocals (on *Plus Belle qu'Une Poubelle*)

Enregistré à Record Plant, New York City, avril 1968.

Hope For Happiness est signé par Hugh Hopper, Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge alors que les versions de Daevid Allen - Brainville Live In The UK et If Ever I Am sont signées par Brian Hopper qui a effectivement composé et déposé les droits de ce morceau.

- PROBE (CPLP4500) LP
- PROBE (CPLP4500X) LP
- BIG BEAT (WIKA 57) LP
- PROBE (4500HLP) (Reissue) LP
- BIG BEAT (WIKC57) Cassette
- SUNDAZED MUSIC (SC6305) CD
- POLYDOR (532 050-5) CD
- ELEMENTAL MUSIC (700198) LP

Critiques/Reviews

Vidéos

Lyrics



> Zoom



Autographes (Mike & Hugh)

> Zoom



> Zoom

Edition française du 1er album Volume One.

- BARCLAY FRANCE (920082) LP

Vidéos



> Zoom

1968

Edition japonaise du 1er album Volume One.

Réédition en 2006 par Universal/Geffen.

- PELOV (SR303) LP
- UNIVERSAL/GEFFEN (UICY-9687) CD



> Zoom

1968



> Zoom

1969



> Zoom 1 2 3



> Zoom

1969

The Soft Machine - Volume Two

- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 1** [R. Wyatt]
- **Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 1** [H. Hopper-arr R. Wyatt]
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 2** [H. Hopper-arr R. Wyatt]
- **Hulloder** [H. Hopper-arr R. Wyatt]
- **Dada Was Here** [H. Hopper-arr R. Wyatt]
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire** [H. Hopper-arr R. Wyatt]
- **Have You Ever Bean Green?** [H. Hopper-arr R. Wyatt]
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2** [R. Wyatt]
- **Out Of Tunes** [M. Ratledge, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening** [H. Hopper]
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging** [M. Ratledge]
- **Pig** [M. Ratledge]
- **Orange Skin Food** [M. Ratledge]
- **A Door Opens And Closes** [M. Ratledge]
- **10:30 Returns To The Bedroom** [M. Ratledge, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]

Edition hollandaise du 1er album Volume One, réservée aux abonnés du Record Club.

- EMI (D 109/5) LP

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax, acoustic guitar
- Brian Hopper - tenor sax, soprano sax

Enregistré à Olympic Sound, février-mars 1969.

- PROBE (SPB 1002) LP
- PROBE (CPLP 4505) LP
- BARCLAY (921 019) LP
- BIG BEAT (WIKA58) LP
- ONE WAY RECORD (22065) CD
- POLYDOR (532 050-6) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Vidéos

Lyrics



> Zoom

The Soft Machine (Dutch Edition - Horzu)

- **Hibou Anemone And Bear**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Out Of Tunes**
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Hope For Happiness**

Edition hollandaise comportant des morceaux des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.

- STATESIDE (5C054-91600) LP
- HORZU (SHZE 908 BL) LP



> Zoom

1969

- **Joy Of A Toy**
- **Hope For Happines**
- **Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle**
- **Why Are We Sleeping?**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**



> Zoom

1969 (?)

The Soft Machine (Dutch Edition - SR)

- **Hibou Anemone And Bear**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Out Of Tunes**
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Hope For Happiness**
- **Joy Of A Toy**
- **Hope For Happines**
- **Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle**
- **Why Are We Sleeping?**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**

Edition hollandaise comportant (sous réserve) des morceaux des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.

- SR INTERNATIONAL (20165) LP



> Zoom 1 2

1969

Volumes One And Two

Disc 1
- **Hope For Happiness**
- **Joy Of A Toy**
- **Hope For Happiness (reprise)**
- **Why Am I So Short?**
- **So Boot If At All**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Save Yourself**
- **Priscilla**
- **Lullabye Letter**
- **We Did It Again**
- **Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle**
- **Why Are We Sleeping?**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**

Disc 2
- **Pataphysical Introduction-Pt. I**
- **A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. I**
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear**
- **A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. II**
- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green?**
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. II**
- **Out Of Tunes**
- **As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**
- **A Door Opens And Closes**
- **10:30 Returns To The Bedroom**

Réédition des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.

- PROBE (GTSP204) LP
- BIG BEAT (CDWIKD 920) 2xCD

Volumes One And Two (Italian Edition)

Disc 1
- **Hope For Happiness**

Réédition italienne des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.



> Zoom

1970

- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (Reprise)
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Box 25/4 Lid

Disc 2
- Pataphysical Introduction-Pt. I
- A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. I
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. II
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. II
- Out Of Tunes
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom

- PROBE (C154-50185/86) 2xLP



> Zoom 1 2 3

Third

Disc 1
- Facelift [H. Hopper]
- Slightly All The Time [M. Ratledge]

Disc 2
- Moon In June [R. Wyatt]
- Out-Bloody-Rageous [M. Ratledge]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals, piano, organ, bass

- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Rab Spall - electric violin

Enregistré à I.B.C. Recording Studio, mai 1970.

- CBS (66246) 2xLP
- SONY (SONP 50336-7) 2xLP
- BARCLAY (0920 224/225) 2xLP
- COLUMBIA (CGK 30339) CD
- COLUMBIA (471407 2) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Vidéo1 et Vidéo 2

Lyrics



> Zoom

1970



Flyer published upon the release of Third

> Zoom



> Zoom

1971

Fourth

- **Teeth** [M. Ratledge]
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- **Fletcher's Blemish** [E. Dean]
- **Virtually, Pt. 1** [H. Hopper]
- **Virtually, Pt. 2** [H. Hopper]
- **Virtually, Pt. 3** [H. Hopper]
- **Virtually, Pt. 4** [H. Hopper]



> Zoom

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
  +
- Roy Babbington - double bass
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Alan Skidmore - tenor sax
- Jimmy Hastings - bass
  clarinet
- Marc Charig - cornet

Enregistré à Olympic Studios, London, 16, 17, 18 novembre 1970.

- COLUMBIA (30754) LP
- CBS (64280) LP
- ONE WAY (26254) CD
- SONY (ESCA 5417) CD

Critiques/Reviews

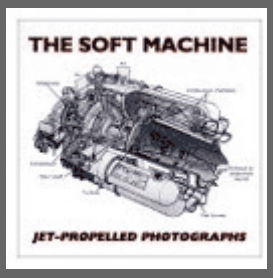


> Zoom

Jet-Propelled Photographs (At The Beginning)



> Zoom



> Zoom





> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom 1 2 3

- That's How Much I Need You Now [R. Wyatt]
- Save Yourself [R. Wyatt]
- I Should've Known [H. Hopper]
- Jet-Propelled Photograph [K. Ayers]
- When I Don't Want You [H. Hopper]
- Memories [H. Hopper]
- You Don't Remember [R. Wyatt/ D. Allen]
- She's Gone [K. Ayers]
- I'd Rather Be With You [K. Ayers]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Daevid Allen - guitar
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals

Titres enregistrés à Londres en avril 1967 et produits par Giorgio Gomelsky. Antérieurs au 1er album "officiel", ils seront très souvent réédités à partir de 1971 sous différentes appellations.

- CHARLY (CR30196) LP
- CHARLY (2933 212) LP
- CHARLY (CD 197) CD
- GET BACK (GET560) LP
- VARESE SARABANDE (302061264) CD
- ATLAS (RKCD442)
- PICCADILLY (PIC 3331) LP
- NEON (NE 34531) CD
- BYG (529 907) LP
- METRONOME (200 137) LP
- DRESSED TO KILL (METRO380) CD
- BROOK (1037) CD

Vidéos

Lyrics







> Zoom



> Zoom 1 2



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

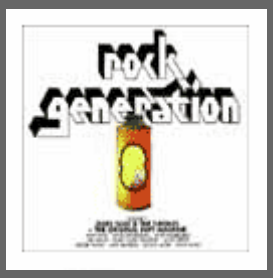


> Zoom 1 2



> Zoom





> Zoom 1 2

1971

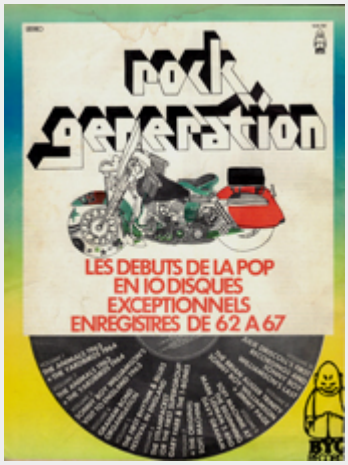
Rock Generation - Vol. 7

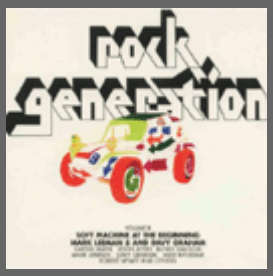
Side 1
GARY FAR & THE T-BONES
- How Many More Times
- I'm A Lover Not A Fighter
- Dearest Darling
- You Don't Love Me
- Quit Teasing Me Baby
- Louisiana Red

Side 2
THE ORIGINAL SOFT MACHINE
- That's How Much I Need You Now
- Save Yourself
- I Should've Known
- Jet-Propelled Photograph

Reprises des titres de la 1ère face de l'album Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- BYG (5529.707 T) LP
- SPALAX (14556) CD





> Zoom 1 2

1971

Rock Generation - Vol. 8

Side 1
SOFT MACHINE AT THE BEGINING
- When I Don't Want You
- Memories
- You Don't Remember
- She's Gone
- I'd Rather Be With You

Side 2
MARC LEEMAN 5 AND DAVID GRAHAM
- Portland Fair
- When Did You Leave Heaven
- Blues Raga

Reprises des titres de la seconde face de l'album Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- BYG (5529.708 T) LP
- SPALAX (14557) CD



> Zoom

1973

The Soft Machine (US Reissue)

Disc 1
- Hope For Happiness
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (reprise)
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping
- Box 25/4 Lid

Disc 2
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 1

Réédition américaine des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.

- ABC COMMAND (RSSD 964-2)
  2xLP

- **Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 1**
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear**
- **Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 2**
- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green?**
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2**
- **Out Of Tunes**
- **As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**
- **Door Opens And Closes**
- **10:30 Returns To The Bedroom**



> Zoom

1973

The Soft Machine Vol.1 (Record Bazaar)

- **Hope For Happiness**
- **Joy Of A Toy**
- **Hope For Happiness (reprise)**
- **Why Am I So Short?**
- **So Boot If At All**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Save Yourself**
- **Priscilla**
- **Lullabye Letter**
- **We Did It Again**
- **Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle**
- **Why Are We Sleeping**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**

Réédition du premier album Volume One.

- ABC RECORDS (70-RB73) LP



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

1975

Architects Of Space Time

Disc 1
- **Hope For Happiness**
- **Joy Of A Toy**
- **Hope For Happiness (reprise)**
- **Why Am I So Short?**
- **So Boot If At All**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Save Yourself**
- **Priscilla**
- **Lullabye Letter**
- **We Did It Again**
- **Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle**
- **Why Are We Sleeping**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**

Disc 2
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 1**
- **Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 1**
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear**
- **Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 2**
- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green?**
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2**
- **Out Of Tunes**
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**
- **Door Opens And Closes**
- **10:30 Returns To The Bedroom**

Réédition française des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.

- ATLANTIC (60113) 2xLP

Milestones



> Zoom

1975

Disc 1
- Hope For Happiness
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (reprise)
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping
- Box 25/4 Lid

Disc 2
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 1
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 1
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 2
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2
- Out Of Tunes
- As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom

Réédition hollandaise des deux premiers albums Volume One et Volume Two.

- PROBE (SC-184-50) 2xLP



> Zoom 1 2

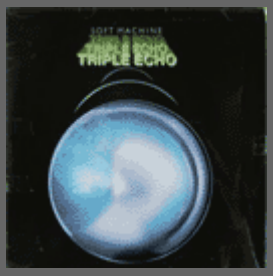
1976

We Did It Again

- Hope For Happiness
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (reprise)
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Box 25/4 Lid

Réédition hollandaise du 1er album Volume One sous le titre *We Did It Again*.

- ABC RECORDS (27 135ET) LP



> Zoom

1977

Triple Echo

Disc 1
- Love Makes Sweet Music
- Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'
- Memories
- She's Gone
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- A Concise British Alphabet - Part 2
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Grean?
- Pataphysical Introduction - Part 2
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening

Disc 2
- The Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Slightly All The Time

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, electric piano
- Phil Howard - drums
- John Marshall - drums
- Karl Jenkins - sax, oboe, piano, keyboards
- Roy Babbington - bass, double bass
- Allan Holdsworth - guitar
- John Etheridge - guitar
- Alan Wakeman - saxes

Compilation.

- HARVEST (SHTW800) 3xLP

- Out Bloody Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews

Disc 3
- Teeth
- Kings And Queens
- All White
- Bone
- Stanley Stamps Gibbon Album
- Carol Ann
- Hazard Profile - Part 1
- The Tale Of Taliesin



> Zoom

1977

Soft Machine - Volume Two

- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 1
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 1
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 2
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2
- Out Of Tunes
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom

Réédition hollandaise du second album Volume Two.

- ABC RECORDS (28601XAT) LP



> Zoom

1978

The Soft Machine - Vol. 2

- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 1
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 1
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. 2
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2
- Out Of Tunes
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroomf

Réédition italienne du second album Volume Two.

- RECORD BAZAAR (RB 159) LP



> Zoom

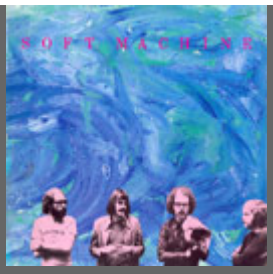
1982

Memories

- I Should Have Know
- Jet Propelled Photograph
- When I Don't Want You
- She's Gone
- Memories
- You Don't Remember
- That's How Much I Need You
- Save Yourself

Cet album reprend les morceaux de Jet-Propelled Photographs dans un ordre différent.

- ACCORD (SN-7178) LP



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

1987

Soft Machine (Spanish Compilation)

- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Slightly All The Time
- Teeth
- Kings And Queens
- All White

Compilation espagnole.

Tracks 1 à 4:
Mousetrap, *Noisette*, *Backwards* et *Mousetrap (reprise)* sont identiques aux morceaux éponymes parus en 2003 sur le disc 2 de BBC Radio 1967-1971.

Track 5:
Slightly All The Time est identique au morceau éponyme paru en 2003 sur le disc 1 de BBC Radio 1967-1971.

Tracks 6 et 7:
Teeth et *Kings And Queens* sont extraits de Fourth.

Cet album recèle plusieurs anomalies surprenantes :
- Robert Wyatt n'apparait pas sur les photos de la pochette alors qu'il joue sur tous les morceaux sauf le dernier.
- Certains morceaux indiqués au verso ne sont pas présents sur le disque (*Out Bloody Rageous* et *Eamonn Andrews*)
- Le morceau *Teeth* est orthographié *Peeth*.
- Kevin Ayers (orthographié Ayres) est crédité au verso de la pochette alors qu'il n'est aucunement concerné par cette publication.

- PDI (30.1384) LP



> Zoom

1988

Live At The Proms

- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- Esther's Nose Job: Pig|Orange Skin Food|A Door Opens And Closes|Pigling Bland|10-30 Returns To The Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice

- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards

Recorded August 13th, 1970 at Henry Wood Promenade Concert, Royal Albert Hall.

- RECKLESS (RECK5) CD

The Proms Concerts Program



The Peel Sessions

Disc 1
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job
- Mousetrap|Noisette|Backwards Mousetrap (reprise)
- Slightly All The Time
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews

- Robert Wyatt - drums, piano, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano, flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax



> Zoom

1990



1991

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Virtually Pigling Bland
- Neo Cariban Grides
- Drop
- As If
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening

- Brian Hopper - soprano sax on 1
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello on 2-4, 6-7
- Nick Evans - trombone on 2, 3
- Mark Charig - cornet on 2, 3
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax on 2, 3

BBC Top Gear sessions recorded at Maida Vale on :
- June 10, 1969
- November 10, 1969
- May 4, 1970
- December 15, 1970
- November 15, 1971

- STRANGE FRUIT (SFRLP201) 2xLP
- STRANGE FRUIT (SFRCD201) 2xCD
- WMD RECORDS (672009) 2xCD



> Zoom

1991

As If ...

- As If
- Drop
- Slightly All The Time
- Facelift
- Chloe And The Pirates
- Kings And Queens

- Robert Wyatt - drums, percussion

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Karl Jenkins - piano, electric keyboards
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, electric piano
- John Marshall - drums, percussion
- Phil Howard - drums
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Mark Charig - cornet
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax
- Roy Babbington - double bass
- Jimmy Hastings - flute, bass clarinet

Compilation de morceaux extraits de Third, Fourth, *Fifth* et *Six*.

- ELITE (006) CD



> Zoom

1993

BBC Radio One Live In Concert

- Blind Badger
- Neo Caliban Grides
- (continuous medley) Out Bloody Rageous|Eamonn Andrews|All White| Kings and Queens|Teeth
- Pigling Bland

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Elton Dean - sax
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ
- Nevill Whitehead - bass
- Phil Howard - drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Paul Nieman - trombone
- Roy Babbington - bass

Recorded March 11th, 1971 at The Paris London Theatre.

- WINDSONG INTERNATIONAL (WINCD 031) CD



> Zoom

1996

Spaced

- **Spaced One** [H.Hopper/M. Ratledge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Spaced Two** [H.Hopper/M. Ratledge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Spaced Three** [H.Hopper/M. Ratledge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Spaced Four** [H.Hopper/M. Ratledge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Spaced Five** [B.Hopper/M. Ratledge]
- **Spaced Six** [H.Hopper/M. Ratledge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Spaced Seven** [H.Hopper/M. Ratledge/ R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax
- Brian Hopper - saxes

Enregistré en 1969.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 90) CD

Critiques/Reviews





> Zoom

1996

Live At The Paradiso

- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green**
- **Pataphysical Introduction**
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging**
- **Hibou Anemone And Bear**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Sking Food**
- **10:30 Returns To The Bedroom**

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards

Enregistré Live At Paradiso, 29 mars 1969.

- BLUEPRINT (BP193CD) CD
- MOVIEPLAY GOLD (74033) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

1998

Live 1970

- **Facelift (excerpt)**
- **Moon In June (excerpt)**
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous**
- **Facelift**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**
- **A Door Opens And Closes**
- **10-30 Returns To The Bedroom**

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Lyn Dobson - saxes on 1 & 2
- Elton Dean - saxes on 3-8

Tracks 1 & 2:
recorded live at Swansea or at London School of Economics on February 13 or 14, 1970.

Tracks 3-8:
recorded at Henry Wood Promenade Concert, Royal Albert Hall on August 13, 1970.

- BLUEPRINT (BP290CD) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Virtually



> Zoom

1998

- Facelift
- Virtually
- Slightly All the Time
- Fletcher's Blemish
- Neo Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White
- Kings And Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano

Enregistré le 23 mars 1971 à Gondel Filmkunst Theater, Bremen, Allemagne.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 100) CD



> Zoom

1999

Fourth/Fifth

- Teeth
- Kings And Queens
- Fletcher's Blemish
- Virtually Part 1
- Virtually Part 2
- Virtually Part 3
- Virtually Part 4
- All White
- Drop
- M C
- As If
- Lbo
- Pigling Bland
- Bone

Réédition CD des albums Fourth et *Fifth*.

- COLUMBIA (COL 4933412) CD



> Zoom

2000

Noisette

- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Moon In June
- 12/8 Theme
- Esther's Nose Job
- We Did It Again

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, flute, vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano,

Enregistré le 4 janvier 1970 à Fairfield Hall Craydon, Angleterre.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 130) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

2001

Turns On - Vol. 1

- I Should've Known
- We Know What You Mean [K. Ayers]
- I'm So Low
- Clarence In Wonderland [K. Ayers]
- Hope For Happiness
- I Should've Known
- We Know What You Mean
- She's Gone
- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- I Should've Known
- Certain Kind
- Clarence In Wonderland
- May I? (instrumental version)
- We Know What You Mean
- Hope For Happiness

- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocal

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass guitar & vocal
- David Allen - guitar, voice on 1, 3, 6, 8

- Tracks 1, 3 : recorded April 1967 at DeLane Lea Studios, London UK. [only "Various UK studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 2, 11: Recorded 22 September 1967, at Vitus Studio, Bussum (Netherlands). [only "European studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 4, 5, 7, 12 : recorded 5 December 1967 at BBC Radio Studios, London UK. [only "Various UK studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 6, 8 : recorded June 1967

at Sound Techniques, Chelsea, UK. [only "Various UK studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 9, 10, 13 to 16: recorded 10 November 1967 at Middle Earth, London, UK. [also "Speakeasy Club" in the liner notes]
- Track 14 - This is an instrumental interpretation by Mike Ratledge based on the chord sequence of the middle section of the Kevin Ayers song 'May I?'.

- VOICEPRINT (VP231) CD



> Zoom

2001

Turns On - Vol. 2

- Moon In June
- I Should've Known
- Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- Organistics
- Lullaby Letter|Priscilla
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope for Happiness
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job

- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocal

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass guitar & vocal

- Tracks 1 to 5 - Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Netherlands 10th December 1967.
- Track 6 - Middle Earth, London, UK, 10th December 1967
- Tracks 7 to 14 - Col Ballroom, Davenport, Iowa, USA - 22th August, 1968.

Track 2-1 and 2-13 wrongly titled "Moon in June" are in fact respectively "That's How Much I Need You Now" and "You Don't Remember".
Track 2-14 wrongly titled "Esther's Nose Job" is in fact an Improvisation followed by "10:30 Return To The Bedroom".

- VOICEPRINT (VP234) CD





> Zoom

2001

Man In A Deaf Corner - Anthology 1963-1970

Disc 1
- Belsize Parked
- Dear Olde Benny Green Is A-turning In His Grave
- Frenetica
- Orientasia
- Da- Da Dee Bolivar Blues
- Man In A Deaf Corner
- We Know What You Mean
- I Shouldve Known
- Hope For Happiness

Disc 2
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green
- Pataphysical Introduction Part II
- Hibou Anmone And Bear
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10 30 Returns To The Bedroom
- Fadelift
- Moon In June
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still

Enregistrements live dont une partie du concert donné au Paradiso d'Amsterdam en 1969.

- MOONCREST RECORDS (CRESTDCD 062) 2xCD



> Zoom

2002

Backwards

- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job
- Facelift
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Moon In June (demo version)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals (+ all instruments on the first half of track 6)

- Mark Charig - trumpet
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, tenor sax
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ

Tracks 1-3:
recorded in late May, 1970 in London, England

Tracks 4-5:
recorded in late November, 1969 in Paris, France.

The first part of track 6 was recorded in October and November, 1968 in the USA, while the second part was recorded in mid 1969 in England.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 170) CD



> Zoom

2002

Facelift

Disc 1
- Slightly All The Time
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Moon In June
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou Annemone And Bear

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Eamonn Andrews
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Bland
- I Should've Known
- Esther's Nose Job (reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

Enregistré le 26 avril 1970 au Fairfield Halls, Croydon.

- VOICEPRINT (VP233) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2

2003

BBC Radio 1967-1971

Disc 1
- Clarence In Wonderland
- We Know What You Mean
- Certain Kind
- Hope For Happiness
- Strangest Scene (aka Lullaby Letter)
- Facelift|Mousetrap|Noisette| Backward|Mousetrap (reprise)
- The Moon In June
- Instant Pussy
- Slightly All The Time|Out Bloody Rageous

Disc 2
- Virtually
- Fletcher's Blemish
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Eamonn Andrews|All White
- Mousetrap|Noisette|Backwards| Mousetrap (reprise)|Esther's Nose Job

- Robert Wyatt - drums, piano, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals, guitar on 1-5
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano, flute on 1-7
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax on 6-7, 9-12, 14-15
- Brian Hopper - soprano sax on 6
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello on 9-12, 14-15
- Nick Evans - trombone on 15
- Mark Charig - cornet on 15
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax on 15

Enregistrements de la BBC pour l'émission de John Peel Top Gear. Ce disque comprend également des sessions réalisées en 1967 avec Kevin Ayers.

BBC Top Gear sessions recorded at:
- Aeolian Hall on December 5, 1967
- Maida Vale on June 10, 1969 - November 10, 1969 - May 4, 1970 - December 15, 1970 -

June 1, 1971.

- HUX RECORDS (HUX037) 2xCD





> Zoom

2003

Kings Of Canterbury

Disc 1
FROM LIVE AT THE PARADISO
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction Pt II
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine (reprise)
FROM LIVE 1970
- Facelift
- Moon in June

Disc 2
FROM FACELIFT
- Slightly All The Time
- Mousetrap
- Noisette|Backwards
- Mousetrap
- Eamonn Andrews
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Bland
- I Should've Known
- Esther's Nose Job
- Reprise
FROM LIVE 1970
- Pig|Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens and Closes
- 10-30 Returns To The Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ,
  electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
  (disc 2)
- Lyn Dobson - sax
  (disc 1>10-11)

Enregistrements live tirés des 3 albums suivants : Live At The Paradiso, Facelift et Live 1970.

- SNAPPER MUSIC (SMD456)
  2xCD



2004

Live In Concert

Disc 1
- Blind Badger
- Neo CalibanGrides
- (continuous medley)
Out Bloody Rageous|Eamonn Andrews|
All White|Kings and Queens|Teeth
- Pigling Bland

Disc 2
- Fanfare
- All White
- Slightly All The Time
- M.C.
- Drop
- Stumble
- L.B.O.
- As If
- Riff

Le disque 1 reprend les enregistrements de l'album BBC Radio One Live In Concert.

- STRANGE FRUIT (SFRSCD126)
  2xCD



> Zoom

2004

Somewhere In Soho

Disc 1
- Slightly All The Time
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Bland

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice

- Mike Ratledge - Lowey organ,
  electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

Recorded at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club between 20 & 25 April 1970.

- VOICEPRINT (VP262CD)
  2xCD

- Cymbalism
- Esther's Nose Job (reprise)



> Zoom

2005

The Story Of Soft Machine

Disc 1
THE SOFT MACHINE
- I Should've Known (version 1)
- We Know What You Mean (version 1)
- I'm So Low
- Clarence In Wonderland (version 1)
- Hope For Happiness (vVersion 1)
- I Should've Known (version 2)
- We Know What You Mean (version 2)
- She's Gone
- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- I Should've Known (version 3)
- Certain Kind
- Clarence In Wonderland (version 2)
- May I?
- We Know What You Mean (version 3)
- Hope For Happiness (version 2)

Disc 2
ROBERT WYATT
- Short Break
- Tubab
- Kutcha
DAVID ALLEN WITH HUGH HOPPER
& PIP PYLE
- Fohat Digs Holes In Space
- Who's Afraid?
- Flowers Gone
- Hope For Happiness
HUGH HOPPER & LISA S KLOSSNER
- As I Turn
- Visitors
- Still

- DEJAVU RETRO (R2CD 43-01)
  2xCD



> Zoom



> Zoom

2005

Breda Reactor

Disc 1
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- 12/8 Theme
- Drum Link
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Bland
- Cymbalism
- Out-Bloody-Rageous (excerpt)
- Esther's Nose Job (reprise)
- We Did It Again

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice

- Mike Ratledge - Lowery organ,
  electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - tenor & soprano
  saxes, flute, harmonica, voice

Recorded live on 31st January 1970 in
Het Turfschip, Breda, Netherlands.

- VOICEPRINT (VP345CD)
  2xCD

Out Bloody Rageous
(An Anthology 1967-1973)



> Zoom

2005

Disc 1
- Feelin' Reelin' Squelin'
- Love Makes Sweet Music
- Hope Of Happiness
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (reprise)
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Pataphysical Introduction - Part One
- Concise British Alphabet - Part One
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Concise British Alphabet - Part Two
- HulloDer
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Moon In June

Disc 2
- Teeth
- Virtually Part 4
- Kings & Queens
- All White
- Pigling Bland
- Drop
- Gesolreut
- Soft Weed Factor
- Chloe & The Pirates
- Penny Hitch
- Down The Road

- SONY (5200392) 2xCD



> Zoom

2005

BBC In Concert 1971 (Soft Machine & Heavy Friends)

- John Peel Introduction
- Blind Badger
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out Bloody Rageous (excerpt)| Eamonn Andrew|All White|Kings And Queens| Teeth|Pigling Bland|10.30 Returns To The Bedroom
- Slightly All The Time (excerpt)| Noisette

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Elton Dean - sax
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ
- Nevill Whitehead - bass
- Phil Howard - drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Paul Nieman - trombone
- Roy Babbington - bass
- Ronnie Scott - tenor sax

Recorded March 11th, 1971
at The Paris London Theatre

Réédtion du BBC Radio One Live In Concert publié en 1993, enrichi de *John Peel Introduction* et *Slightly All The Time*.

- HUX RECORDS (HUX067) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

2005

Orange Skin Food

Disc 1
- Slightly All The Time
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Moon In June
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou Anemone AndBear
- Eamonn Andrews
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Band

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Pig

Compilation allemande.
Versions non identifiées : il est possible que Robert Wyatt ne joue pas sur tous les morceaux.

- AMBITIONS (223135) 2xCD

- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10 30 Returns To The Bedroom
- Pigling Bland
- 10 30 Returns To The Bedroom (reprise)
- I Should've Known



> Zoom 1 2

2006

Grides

FIRST SET
- Facelift
- Virtually
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Neo-Caliban Grides

SECOND SET
- Teeth
- Slightly All The Time
- Eamonn Andrews
- Esther's Nose Job

ENCORE
- Slightly All The Time|Noisette

The CD war recorded on October 25, 1970 at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

The DVD was recorded on March 23, 1971 at Radio Bremen's TV studio/Bremen, Germany.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 230/231) CD/DVD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

2006

Middle Earth Masters

- Clarence In Wonderland
- We Know What You Want
- Bossa Nova Express
- Hope For Hapiness
- Disorganisation
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- I Should've Known
- That's How Much I Need You Now
- I Should've Known
- A Certain Kind
- We Did It Again *(bonus track)*

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass, vocals,
- Mike Ratledge - organ

Tracks 1-8:
Middle Earth, Covent Garden, London, UK, September 16, 1967

Tracks 9 & 10:
Middle Earth, Roundhouse, Chalk Farm, London, UK, May 1968

Tracks 11 & 12:
Unknown, (11= Autumn 1967)

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 235) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2007

Fourth (Remastered)

- Teeth
- Kings And Queens
- Fletcher's Blemish
- Virtually, Pt. 1
- Virtually, Pt. 2
- Virtually, Pt. 3
- Virtually, Pt. 4

Reissue of Fourth remastered from original tapes.

Booklet includes new sleeve notes and photographs.

- SONY-BMG (82876872912) CD

Third (Remastered)

Disc 1
THE ORIGINAL ALBUM
- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time

Reissue of Third remastered from original tapes.

Includes Bonus Disc recorded at the



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2007

- **Moon In June**
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous**

Disc 2
BONUS
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous**
- **Facelift**
- **Esther's Nose Job | Pig | Orange Skin Food | A Door Opens And Closes | Pigling Bland | 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom**

Promenade Concert at The Royal Albert Hall for BBC Radio Three on 13th August 1970.

- SONY-BMG (82876872932) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3

2008

Grides (Japanese Version)

FIRST SET
- **Facelift**
- **Virtually**
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous**
- **Neo-Caliban Grides**

SECOND SET
- **Teeth**
- **Slightly All The Time**
- **Eamonn Andrews**
- **Esther's Nose Job**

ENCORE
- **Slightly All The Time|Noisette**

Japanese version of Grides released in 2006.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 230/231) CD/DVD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

2009

The Soft Machine (Remastered)

- **Hope For Happiness**
- **Joy Of A Toy**
- **Hope For Happiness (Reprise)**
- **Why Am I So Short?**
- **So Boot If At All**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Save Yourself**
- **Priscilla**
- **Lullabye Letter**
- **We Did It Again**
- **Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle**
- **Why Are We Sleeping?**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**

(Bonus)
- **Love Makes Sweet Music**
- **Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'**

Reissue of The Soft Machine (Vol. 1) remastered with enhanced packaging and 2 Bonus Tracks.

- POLYDOR (532 050-5) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3

2009

The Soft Machine - Volume Two (Remastered)

RIVMIC MELODIES
- **Pataphysical Introduction-Pt. I**
- **A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. I**
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear**
- **A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. II**
- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green?**
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. II**
- **Out Of Tunes**

ESTHER'S NOSE JOB
- **As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**

Reissue of The Soft Machine Volume Two digitally remastered with enhanced packaging.

- POLYDOR (532 050-6) CD

- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom



> Zoom 1 2 3

2009

Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre 1971

Disc 1
FIRST SET
- Facelift
- Virtually
- Slightly All The Time
- Fletcher's Blemish

Disc 2
SECOND SET
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White
- Kings and Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland
- Noisette

- Robert Wyatt - Ludwig maple drums, cow bell, voice

- Michaël Ratledge - Lowrey Holiday Deluxe organ, Hohner pianet, Fender Rhodes Stage piano Mark1
- Hugh Hopper - Fender Jazzman bass guitar
- Elton Dean - Selmer alto sax, saxello, Hohner pianet

Performing two continuous sets of compositions, improvisations and dynamisme. All instruments, except saxes, variously processed with electronic effect devices.
A Cd- Rom including extensive notes and concert photographs is included.

Live at the Henie Onstad Art Centre, Oslo Norway, February 28th, 1971

- REEL RECORDINGS (RR014/015) 2xCD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

2010

Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre 1971 (LP)

Disc 1
- Facelift
- Virtually
- Slightly All The Time
- Fletcher's Blemish

Disc 2
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White
- Kings and Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland

Version vinyl du concert édité par Reel Recordings.

Live at the Henie Onstad Art Centre, Oslo Norway, February 28th, 1971

- SMALLTOWN SUPERJAZZ (STSJ187) 2xLP



> Zoom

2010

Original Album Classics

Disc 1
THIRD
- Facelift
- Slightly
- Moon In June
- Out-Bloody-Rageous

Disc 2
FOURTH
- Teeth
- Kings And Queens
- Fletcher's Blemish
- Virtually Part 1
- Virtually Part 2
- Virtually Part 3
- Virtually Part 4

Disc 3
FIFTH
- All White

Rééditione en boxset des 5 albums de Soft Machine suivants : Third , Fourth, Fifth, Six, Seven.

- LEGACY (88697781442) 5xCD
- COLUMBIA (88697781442) 5xCD
- SONY (88697781442) 5xCD

- Drop
- M C
- As If
- L B O
- Pigling Bland
- Bone
- All White (Take Two) *(bonus track)*

Disc 4
SIX
- Fanfare (Live)
- All White (Live)
- Between (Live)
- Riff (Live)
- 37½ (Live)
- Gesolreut (Live)
- E.P.V. (Live)
- Lefty (Live)
- Stumble (Live)
- 5 From 13 (Live)
- Riff II (Live)
- The Soft Weed Factor
- Stanley Stamps Gibbon Album (For B.O)
- Chloe And The Pirates
- 1983

Disc 5
SEVEN
- Nettle Bed
- Carol Ann
- Day's Eye
- Bone Fire
- Tarabos
- D.I.S.
- Snodland
- Penny Hitch
- Block
- Down The Road
- The German Lesson
- The French Lesson



> Zoom

2011

Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club

Disc 1
- Slightly All The Time/Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap *medley* (including: Mousetrap / Noisette / Backwards / Mousetrap - Reprise)

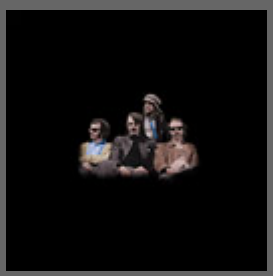
Disc 2
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job *medley* (including: Esther's Nose Job / Pigling Bland Cymbalism / Esther's Nose Job - Reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice

- Mike Ratledge - Lowery organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

Recorded at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club between 20 & 25 April 1970.

- VINYL LOVERS (901226) 2xLP



> Zoom

2011

Live At Het Turfschip

Disc 1
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Facelift

Disc 2
- Moon In June
- 12/8 Theme
- Drum Link
- Hibou Anemone & Bear
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Bland
- Cymbalism
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Esther's Nose Job (reprise)
- We Did It Again

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocal

- Mike Ratledge - Lowery organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lynn Dobson - tenor & soprano saxes, flute, harmonica & voice

Recorded live at Het Turfschip, Netherlands, 31 January 1970.

- VINYL LOVERS (901240) 2xLP



> Zoom

2013

The Soft Machine (Featuring Kevin Ayers) - London 1967

- That's How Much I Need You Now
- Save Yourself
- I Should've Known
- Jet-Propelled Photograph
- When I Don't Want You
- Memories
- You Don't Remember
- She's Gone
- I'd Rather Be With You

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Daevid Allen - guitar
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals

La sortie de cette nième édition de l'album Jet Propelled Photographs - quelques jours après le décès de Kevin Ayers survenu le 18 février 2013 - explique sans doute la mention "Featuring Kevin Ayers" ajoutée par Charlie Records.
Version digitale diffusée uniquement sur les plateformes de téléchargement.

- CHARLY DIGITAL - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6

2014

Soft Machine Live In 1970

Disc 1
- Slightly All The Time
- Out Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou Anemone & Bear

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Band
- Cymbalism
- Esther's Nose Job (reprise)

Disc 3
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Hibou Anemone & Bear

Disc 4
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- 12/8 Theme
- Drum Link
- Esther's Nose Job
- Pigling Bland
- Cymbalism
- Out-Bloody-Rageous (excerpt)
- Esther's Nose Job (reprise)
- We Did It Again

Disc One and Two recorded at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club between 20 & 25 April, 1970 :

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Mike Ratledge - Lowery organ and electric piano
- Elton Dean - alto sax and saxello

Disc Three and Four recorded at Het Turfship, Breda, Netherlands on 31st January, 1970:

- Robert Wyatt - drums and voice
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Mike Ratledge - Lowery organ and electric piano
- Elton Dean - alto sax and saxello
- Lyn Dobson - tenor and soprano saxes, harmonica and voice

- FLOATING WORLD RECORDS (SOFT163) 4xCD



Soft Machine - Turns On (An Early Collection)

Disc 1
- I Should've Known
- We Know What You Mean
- I'm So Low
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Hope For Happiness
- I Should've Known
- We Know What You Mean
- She's Gone

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano (on disc 1 : pistes 1 à 16)
- Kevin Ayers - bass, guitar, vocals
- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals (disc 1 : piste 1, 3, 6 et 8)

Disc 1

> Zoom

2014

- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- I Should've Known
- Certain Kind
- Clarence In Wonderland
- May I? (instrumental version)
- We Know What You Mean
- Hope For Happiness

Disc 2
- Moon In June
- I Should've Known
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- Organistics
- Lullaby Letter|Priscilla
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope for Happiness
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job

- Tracks 1, 3 : recorded April 1967 at DeLane Lea Studios, London UK. [only "Various UK studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 2, 11: Recorded 22 September 1967, at Vitus Studio, Bussum (Netherlands). [only "European studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 4, 5, 7, 12 : recorded 5 December 1967 at BBC Radio Studios, London UK. [only "Various UK studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 6, 8 : recorded June 1967 at Sound Techniques, Chelsea, UK. [only "Various UK studio" in the liner notes]
- Tracks 9, 10, 13 to 16: recorded 10 November 1967 at Middle Earth, London, UK. [also "Speakeasy Club" in the liner notes]
- Track 14 - This is an instrumental interpretation by Mike Ratledge based on the chord sequence of the middle section of the Kevin Ayers song 'May I?'.

Disc 2
- Tracks 1 to 5 - Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Netherlands 10th December 1967.
- Track 6 - Middle Earth, London, UK, 10th December 1967
- Tracks 7 to 14 - Col Ballroom, Davenport, Iowa, USA - 22th August, 1968.

Track 2-1 and 2-13 wrongly titled "Moon in June" are in fact respectively "That's How Much I Need You Now" and "You Don't Remember".
Track 2-14 wrongly titled "Esther's Nose Job" is in fact an Improvisation followed by "10:30 Return To The Bedroom".

Reissue of two separate Voiceprint releases from 2001 : Soft Machine Turns On Volume 1 and Soft Machine Turns On Volume 2.

- FLOATING WORLD RECORDS (FLOATD6217) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

2014

The Soft Machine - Tanglewood Tails

Disc 1
- Tanglewood Tails [R. Wyatt, H. Hopper, B. Hopper]
- Drum Solo [R. Wyatt]
- 3/4 Blues Thing In F [Wyatt, M. Ratdledge]
- Cecilian [H. Hopper, B. Hopper, R. Wyatt, M. Ratdledge]
- I'm So Low [K. Ayers]
- Clarence In Wonderland [K. Ayers]
- Hope For Happiness [B. Hopper]
- She's Gone [K. Ayers]
- Save Yourself [Wyatt]
- Lullaby Letter [K. Ayers]
- We Know What You Mean [K. Ayers]
- I Should've Known [H. Hopper]

Disc 2
- We Did It Again [K. Ayers]
- Why Are We Sleeping [K. Ayers, R. Wyatt, M. Ratdledge]
- Moon In June [R. Wyatt]
- Esther's Nose Job [M. Ratledge]
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still [R. Wyatt, M. Ratdledge]
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging [M. Ratdledge]
- Eamonn Andrews [M. Ratledge]
- Esther's Nose Job [M. Ratledge]
- Pigling Bland [M. Ratledge]
- Moon In June [R. Wyatt]
- Hibou Anemone And Bear [R. Wyatt,

Disc One - Track 1:
- Robert Wyatt - cornet & drums
- Brian Hopper - alto sax & cello
- Hugh Hopper - cello
1963 - Home Recording

Disc One - Track 2:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
1963 - Home Recording

Disc One - Track 3:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - piano
1963/64 - Home Recording

Disc One - Track 4:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Brian Hopper - alto sax
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - piano
1963 - Home Recording

Disc One - Track 5:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Daevid Allen - guitar
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals
1967 - Studio Recording

Disc One - Track 6:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals

M. Ratdledge]

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass & vocals
1967 - Studio Recording

Disc One - Track 7:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass
1967 - Studio Recording

Disc One - Track 8:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ & piano
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals
- Daevid Allen - guitar
1967 - Studio Recording

Disc One - Tracks 9 & 10:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass
1967 - Livre Recording at Middle Earth

Disc One - Track 11:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals
1967 - Studio Recording

Disc One - Track 12:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals
- Daevid Allen - guitar
1967 - Studio Recording

Disc Two - Tracks 1 to 4:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals
11 August 1968 Live recording. Col Ballroom, Davenport, Iowa, USA

Disc Two - Track 5:
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
1969 Live Recording. Paradiso, Amsterdam, Holland

Disc Two - Track 6:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals
1969 Live Recording. Paradiso, Amsterdam, Holland

Disc Two - Track 7 to 11:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
(+ vocals on 7)
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton dean - alto sax & saxello
26th April 1970 Live Recording. Fairfield Halls, Croydon, UK

- SECRET RECORDS (SECDD102)
2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3

2014

Memories - Hugh Hopper - Volume 1

- Memories - Hugh Hopper's Demo with Soft Machine
- Was A Friend - Hugh Hopper Franglo Band
- Shuffle Demons - North & South
- Playtime - Hugh Hopper Interprets Alan Gowen
- Debonaire - Hugh Hopper Franglo Band
- MGH - Hugh Hopper & Nigel Morris
- Long Piece - Hugh Hopper Computer Collage

A Retrospective of Rare Tracks as Introduced by Hugh.

1. Memories
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar, acoustic guitar
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
Recorded August 6th, 1969. Regent Studios, London UK.

2. Was A Friend
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar,
- Patrice Meyer - electric guitar
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - saxes
- François Verly - drums
Recorded May 29th, 2004. St. Jean-aux-



> Zoom

2015

Anatomy Of A Facelift - Hugh Hopper - Volume 9

- Hugh's Preface
- Le Bataclan - Paris - 1969
- Actuel Festival- Amougies - 1969
- Fairfield Halls - Croydon -1970
- Henie Onstad Art Centre - Oslo - 1971
- Turfchip - Breda - 1971

Evolution of Hugh's Signature Composition.

1. Hugh's Preface: Workshop Session, Cremona, Italy, March 3rd, 2007.

2. Soft Machine:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar

Recorded at Le Bataclan, Paris, June 25th, 1969
(mono source).

3. Soft Machine:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper, bass guitar
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - tenor sax, flute
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Mark Charig - cornet

BYG/Actuel Festival, Amougies, Belgium, Oct. 28th, 1969
(mono off-air radio recording).

4. Soft Machine:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper, bass guitar
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - tenor sax, flute

Fairfield Halls, Croydon, Sussex, England. January 4th 1970
(ambient stereo reel).

5. Soft Machine:
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper, bass guitar

Henie Onstad Art Centre, Oslo, Norway. February 27th 1971
(ambient stereo reel).

6. Soft Machine:
Bois, France

3. Shuffle Demons
- Hugh Hopper -bass guitar
- Steve Kettley - tenor saxophone
- Paul Flush - keyboards
- Mike Travis - drums, percussion

Recorded August 23rd, 1995. Aberdeen, Scotland

4. Playtime
- Hugh Hopper, computer programming

Recorded circa 2002. Whistable, UK.

5. Debonaire:
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar,
- Patrice Meyer - electric guitar
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - saxes
- François Verly - drums

Recorded May 29th, 2004. St. Jean-aux-Bois, France

6. MGH:
- Hugh Hopper - fuzz bass
- Nigel Morris - drums, percussion

Recorded circa 2002. California and Whistable, U.K.

7. Long Piece:
- Hugh Hopper + Many friends = Many Surprises

Recorded circa 2002.Whistable, U.K.

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST240CD) CD

- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper, bass guitar

Turfchip, Breda, The Netherlands. March 28th 1971
(board stereo reel).

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA
(HST260CD) CD



> Zoom

2015

Third (Vinyl Reissue)

- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June
- Out-Bloody-Rageous

180 gram audiophile vinyl.

Limited pressing of 1000 numbered copies on transparent vinyl.

- MUSIC ON VINYL
(MOVLP183) LP



> Zoom

2015

Wonderland

- I'm So Low
- Clarence In Wonderland
- She's Gone
- Save Yourself
- We Know What You Mean
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Esther's Nose Job
- Moon In June

Limited edition LP (500 copies).
Record Store Day exclusive release.
180 gram vinyl.

- Tracks 1 to 5 : previously released on Soft Machine Turns On Vol. 1
- Tracks 6, 7 : previously released on Live At The Paradiso 1969
- Tracks 8 & 9 : previously released on Facelift

- SECRET RECORDS LIMITED
(SECLP117) LP



> Zoom 1 2

2015

Live At The Paradiso (Reissue)

- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green
- Pataphysical Introduction (Pt. 2)
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Pig
- Orange Sking Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom

Recorded Live At Paradiso, March 29, 1969.

- FLOATING WORLD
(FLOATM6245) CD

Fourth (Vinyl Reissue)

- Teeth]
- Kings And Queens
- Fletcher's Blemish
- Virtually, Pt. 1
- Virtually, Pt. 2
- Virtually, Pt. 3
- Virtually, Pt. 4

180 gram audiophile vinyl.

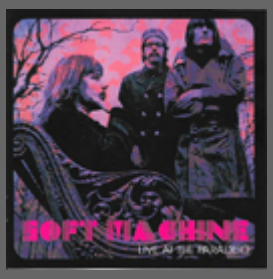
Limited pressing of 1000 numbered copies on transparent vinyl.

- MUSIC ON VINYL
(MOVLP1602) LP



> Zoom

2016



> Zoom 1 2

2017

Live At The Paradiso (LP Reissue)

- Dada Was Here
- Hulloder
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green
- Pataphysical Introduction (Pt. 2)
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging (Reprise)
- Pig
- Orange Sking Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom

Recorded Live At Paradiso, March 29, 1969.

Purple vinyl limited to 1000 copies.

Même front cover que la version CD de 2015, mais *Dada Was Here* ouvre le concert à la place de *Hulloder* et une reprise de *Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging* démarre la seconde face du disque.

- REAL GONE MUSIC (RGM-0517) LP



> Zoom

2018

We Did It Again Plus

Disc 1
SOFT MACHINE LIVE IN PARIS 1970
- Plain Tiffs
- All White
- Slightly All The Time
- Drop
- M.C.
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- And Sevens

Disc 2
- Feelin',Reelin',Squealin' (Caravan)
- Mummie [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Da-Da-Dee & Bolivar [T. Monk]
- Orientasian [B. Hopper]
- You Really Got Me [R. Davies]
- Thinking Of You Baby [D. Clark]
- Man In A Deaf Corner [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- If I Ever Leave You (Zobe)
- Stop Me And Play One
- Piano Standards 1 (Mike Ratledge)
- Belsize Parked [B. Hopper, H. Hopper, R. Wyatt]
- Summertime [G. Gershwin]

Les morceaux du CD1 proviennent du concert de Paris du 2 mai 1972 et non pas en 1970 comme indiqué sur la pochette.

Le CD2 reprend les morceaux de Canterburied Sounds - Vol.1.

- FLOATING WORLD RECORDS (FLOATM63670) 2xCD



Paradiso '69

- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green
- Pataphysical Introduction (Pt. 2)
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging (Reprise)

Recorded Live At Paradiso, March 29, 1969.

Numbered black vinyl edition, 500 copies

- TONEFLOAT RECORDS (TF204) LP

> Zoom

2021

- Pig
- Orange Sking Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom



> Zoom

2022

Virtually (Live) - The classic Berlin and Brussells Broadcasts from 1971

LIVE NOVEMBER 7, 1971
BERLINER JAZZ TAGE (GERMANY)
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- All White
- Slightly All The Time
- Drop
- M.C.
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Pigling Bland

LIVE JUNE 19, 1971
- Improvisation
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Kings And Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland
- Slightly All The Time/10:30 Returns To The Bedroom
- Mousetrap
- Noisette

LIVE OCTOBER 17, 1971 DONAUESCHINGER MUSIKTAGE FESTIVAL (GERMANY)
- All White
- Slightly All The Time
- Drop
- M. C.
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- As If
- Dark Swing
- Intropigling
- Pigling Bland

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

Tracklisting fantaisiste et date erronée : la seconde partie avec Robert Wyatt concerne le concert du 15 janvier 1971 au Théâtre 140 de Bruxelles.

La mention *(Live)* a été ajoutée au titre de l'album par les plateformes de téléchargement.

- LO-LIGHT RECORDS - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2022

Facelift France & Holland

Disc 1
MARCH 2, 1970 - THEATRE DE LA MUSIQUE, PARIS, FRANCE
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June / Vocal Improvisation
- Esther's Nose Job / Pigling Bland

Disc 2 - DVD
MARCH 2, 1970 - THEATRE DE LA MUSIQUE, PARIS, FRANCE
+ audio bonus materia (entire concert - audience recording :
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June
- 12-8 Theme
- Vocal Improvisation
- Esther's Nose Job / Pigling Bland

Disc 3
JANUARY 17, 1970 - CONCERTGEBOUW AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job / Pigling Bland

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Hohner pianet, Lowrey Holiday Deluxe organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano and tenor sax, flute, harmonica, vocals

The DVD was recorded on March 2, 1970 at Théâtre de la Musique, Paris, France.

Contact print images by Mark Ellidge.

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS/INA (RUNE 495/496/497) 2xCD/DVD



> Zoom

2023

Facelift France & Holland (vinyl edition)

Disc 1
MARCH 2, 1970 - THEATRE DE LA MUSIQUE, PARIS, FRANCE
- Facelift
- Backwards /- Mousetrap (Reprise) / Out-Bloody-Rageous

Disc 2
MARCH 2, 1970 - THEATRE DE LA MUSIQUE, PARIS, FRANCE
- Eamonn Andrews / Esther's Nose Job / Pigling Bland

JANUARY 17, 1970 - CONCERTGEBOUW AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS
- Facelift / Moon In June / 12-8 Theme / Drum Solo

Vinyl edition of Facelift France & Holland. + same DVD as the CD edition.

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS/INA (RUNE 495) 2xLP/DVD



> Zoom

2023

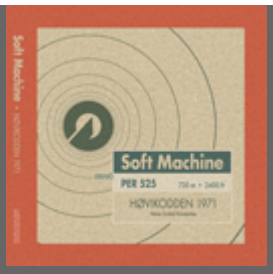
Soft Machine Essentials

- Aubade
- Priscilla
- Hazard Profile, Pt. 4 (2022 Remaster)
- The French Lesson (Remastered 2006)
- Out of Season
- Why Am I So Short?
- The Man Who Waved At Trains (2022 Remastered)
- Carol Ann (Remastered 2006)
- The Tale of Taliesin
- Joy Of A Toy
- Bundles (2022 Remaster)
- Slightly All The Time (Remastered 2006)
- Song of Aeolus
- We Did It Again
- The Floating World (2022 Remaster)
- Pataphysical Introduction Pt. 2 (Live)
- Song of the Sunbird
- A Certain Kind
- Hazard Profile, Pt. 5 (2022 Remaster)
- Etika
- Day's Eye (Remastered 2006)
- Hope For Happiness
- Hazard Profile, Pt. 1 (2022 Remaster)
- Second Bundle
- Penny Hitch (Remastered 2006)
- Virtually Part 4 (Remastered 2006)
- Behind The Crystal Curtain
- Moon In June (Remastered 2006)
- Bone Fire (Remastered 2006)
- Kings And Queens (Remastered 2006)
- Pigling Bland (Remastered 2006)
- Facelift (Live - Remastered 2006)
- Snodland (Remastered 2006)
- As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still
- Stumble (Live) (Remastered 2006)
- Virtually Part 1 (Remastered 2006)
- Over 'N' Above
- Hulloder (Live)
- Between (Live) (Remastered 2006)
- All White (Remastered 2006)
- Isle Of The Blessed
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire (Live)
- Riff (Live) (Remastered 2006)
- Teeth (Remastered 2006)
- Heart off Guard
- Gesolreut (Live) (Remastered 2006)
- Virtually Part 2 (Remastered 2006)
- Odds Bullets and Blades (Part I)

Playlist diffusée sur différentes plate-formes numériques, comportant un nombre variable de morceaux (de 11 à 48).

- APPLE MUSIC - Digital Format

Høvikodden 1971



> Zoom 1 2

2024

Disc 1
FEBRUARY 27, 1971 - FIRST SET
- Facelift
- Virtually
- Slightly All The Time
- Fletcher's Blemish

Disc 2
FEBRUARY 27, 1971 - SECOND SET
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Vocal Improvisation
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White
- Kings and Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland

Disc 3
FEBRUARY 28, 1971 - FIRST SET
- Facelift
- Virtually
- Slightly All The Time
- Fletcher's Blemish

Disc 4
FEBRUARY 28, 1971 - SECOND SET
- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Vocal Improvisation
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White 02:38
- Kings and Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland
- Slightly All The Time [encore]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Hohner pianet, Lowrey Holiday Deluxe organ, Fender Rhodes
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, Hohner pianet

Original recordings at the Henie-Onstad Art Center, Høvikodden, Norway, February 27-28, 1971.

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (RUNE530V) 4xLP
- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (RUNE530) 4xCD

↑



> Zoom

2024

De Doelen, Rotterdam, Holland 1970

- Teeth
- Slightly All the Time > Kings and Queens
- Esther's Nose Job

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

October 24th 1970.

- HOMESPUN/DAMP MUSIC - Digital Format

↑



> Zoom

2024

Live In Europe 1970

Disc 1
POP 2 - THEATRE DE LA MUSIQUE - PARIS - FRANCE MARCH 2nd 1970 ORTF
- Eamon andrews
- Mousetrap
- So Real
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June

Disc 2
DE DOELEN - ROTTERDAM - NETHERLANDS - OCTOBER 24th 1970 VPRO
- 18-8 Theme
- Vocal Improvisation
- Esthers Nose Job
- Teeth
- Slightly All The Time
- Esthers Nose Job

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyne Dobson - saxes, flutes (only on disc 1)

- HOMESPUN (HSP2CD2059) 2xCD



> Zoom

2025

Turns On '67

- That's How Much I Need You Now
- Save Yourself
- I Should've Known
- Jet-Propelled Photograph
- When I Don't Want You
- Memories
- You Don't Remember
- She's Gone
- I'd Rather Be With You

Turns On '67 présente les toutes premières démos de The Soft Machine, enregistrées en avril 1967 par Giorgio Gomelsky.
Restaurée pour le Record Store Day 2025, cette édition se présente sous la forme d'un vinyl transparent avec effet fumé.

- CHARLY (RSD 2025) LP

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



> Zoom

1972

Matching Mole

- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- **Instant Pussy** [R. Wyatt]
- **Signed Curtain** [R. Wyatt]
- **Part Of The Dance** [P. Miller]
- **Instant Kitten** [R. Wyatt]
- **Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening** [R. Wyatt]
- **Beer As In Braindeer** [R. Wyatt]
- **Immediate Curtain** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice. piano, mellotron

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- Bill McCormick - bass
  Guest Super Star)
- David Sinclair - piano, organ

- CBS (S 64850) LP
- EPIC/SONY (ESCA 5425) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom



Une pochette "collector"- front
(sans impression du texte)

> Zoom



Une pochette "collector"- back
(sans impression du texte)

> Zoom



> Zoom

1972

O Caroline/Signed Curtain

- O Caroline
- Signed Curtain

Promo Version.

- CBS (S 8101) S



> Zoom

Little Red Record

- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away
[D. McRae/R. Wyatt]
- Marchides [D. McRae]
- Nan True's Hole [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Righteous Rhumba [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Brandy As In Benj [D. McRae]
- Gloria Gloom [B. MacCormick/ R. Wyatt]
- God Song [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Flora Fidgit [B. MacCormick]
- Smoke Signal [D. McRae]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice, lyrics

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano, organ
- Bill McCormick - bass
- Brian Eno - Vcs3 (on *Gloria Gloom*)

- CBS (S 65260) LP
- COLUMBIA (KC-32148) LP
- COLUMBIA (CT 32148) K7
- COLUMBIA (471488-2) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Vidéos

Lyrics



> Zoom

1972



> Zoom



BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert

- Instant Pussy
- Lything And Gracing
- Marchides
- Part Of The Dance
- Brandy As In Benge

> Zoom

1994

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- Bill McCormick - bass

Enregistré à The Paris Theatre, London le 27 juillet 1972

- WINDSONG (WINCD 063) CD



Smoke Signals

- Intro
- March Ides I
- Smoke Rings
- Nan True's Hole
- Brandy As In Benji
- Electric Piano Solo
- March Ides II
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signal
- Lything And Gracing

> Zoom 1 2

2001

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- Bill McCormick - bass

Divers live gigs in Europe.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 150) CD



March

- March
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signal
- Part Of The Dance
- No 'Alf Measures
- Lything And Gracing
- Waterloo Lilly

> Zoom 1 2 3

2002

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- Bill McCormick - bass

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 172) CD

On The Radio



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

2007

- Marchides | Instant Pussy | Smoke Signal
- Part Of The Dance
- No 'Alf Measures
- Lithing And Gracing
- Immediate Kitten
- Instant Pussy
- Lithing And Gracing
- Marchides
- Part Of The Dance
- Brandy As In Benj

- Robert Wyatt - custom Ludwig drums

- Phil Miller - Gibson SG special electric guitar, effects pedals
- Dave McRae - modified Fender Rhodes electric piano, wha-wha pedal
- Bill McCormick - Gibson EB3 bass guitar, fuzz pedal
- Dave Sinclair - Hammond A100 organ

Track 1:
John Peel Session recorded 17.04.1972 - First broadcast 09.05.1972

Tracks 2 & 5:
John Peel Session recorded 17.01.1972 - First broadcast 25.01.1972

Tracks 3 & 4:
John Peel Session recorded 06.03.1972 - First broadcast 24.03.1972

Tracks 6-10:
BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert 27.07.1972

- HUX RECORDS (HUX083) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

2012

Matching Mole (Expanded Edition)

Disc 1
THE ORIGINAL ALBUM REMASTERED
- O Caroline
- Instant Pussy
- Signed Curtain
- Part Of The Dance
- Instant Kitten
- Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening
- Beer As In Braindeer
- Immediate Curtain
BONUS TRACKS
A & B sides of single:
- O Caroline (Single version)
- Signed Curtain (Single edit)
Previously unreleased:
- Part Of The Dance Jam

Disc 2
ALBUM SESSION RECORDINGS DECEMBER 1971 / JANUARY 1972
Previously unrealised:
- Signed Curtain (Take two)
- Memories Membrane
Previously unrealised:
-Part Of The Dance (Take One)
Previously unrealised:
- Horse
BBC RADIO ONE (SESSIONS)
John Peel Show, January 1972
- Immediate Kitten
John Peel Show, April 1972
-Marchides/Instant Pussy/Smoke Signal

Disc1
- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice, piano, mellotron

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill McCormick - bass guitar
- David Sinclair - piano, organ
- Dave McRae - electric piano on *Instant Pussy*, *Part Of The Dance*, *Dedicated To Hugh But You Weren't Listening*, *Beer As In Braindeer*

Disc 2
Tracks 1 & 2:
- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice, piano, mellotron
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill McCormick - bass guitar
- David Sinclair - piano, organ

Tracks 3 - 5:
- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice, piano, mellotron
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill McCormick - bass guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- David Sinclair - piano, organ

Track 6:
- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice, piano, mellotron
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill McCormick - bass guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano

- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (ECLEC 22311) 2xCD

Little Red Record (Expanded Edition)

Disc 1
THE ORIGINAL ALBUM REMASTERED
- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away - Marchides

- Robert Wyatt - drums, mouth (and the extremely silly voice parts were composed and performed by R.W.)



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 9 10 11

2012

- Nan True's Hole
- Righteous Rhumba
- Brandy As In Benj
- Gloria Gloom
- God Song
- Flora Fidgit
- Smoke Signal

Disc 2
BBC RADIO ONE "IN CONCERT" SESSION
Recorded at the Paris Theatre, London on 27th July 1972 - Introducing by Mike Harding
- Instant Pussy Lithing And Gracing
- Marchides
-Part Of The Dance/Brandy As In Benj

RECORDED AT CBS STUDIO, LONDON IN AUGUST 1972 - Previously Unreleased
- Smoke Signal (Take Four)
- Flora Fidget (Take Eight)
- Mutter

- Phil Miller - guitars
- Bill McCormick - bass
- Dave McRae - grahnd piano, electric piano Hammond organ and Eno's synthesizer keyboard (on *Flora Fidgit*)

- This Summer's guest Super-Star Brian Eno - V.C.S.3 Synthesizer (on *Gloria Gloom*)

- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (ECLEC 22312) 2xCD



Matching Mole (Japanese Reissue)

> Zoom 1 2

2014

- O Caroline [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Instant Pussy [R. Wyatt]
- Signed Curtain [R. Wyatt]
- Part Of The Dance [P. Miller]
- Instant Kitten [R. Wyatt]
- Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening [R. Wyatt]
- Beer As In Braindeer [R. Wyatt]
- Immediate Curtain [R. Wyatt]
Bonus
- O Caroline (Single Version)
- Signed Curtain (Single Edit)
- Signed Curtain (Take Two)
- Part Of The Dance (Take One)
- Memories Membrane
- Horse
- Sandwich

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice. piano, mellotron

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- Bill McCormick - bass
Guest Super Star)
- David Sinclair - piano, organ

Cette réédition comporte 7 bonus tracks.

- SONY RECORDS INTERNATIONAL (SICP 30321) CD BLU-SPEC



Matching Mole (Expanded Edition - RSD 2024)

> Zoom

2024

Disc 1
- O Caroline [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Instant Pussy [R. Wyatt]
- Signed Curtain [R. Wyatt]
- Part Of The Dance [P. Miller]
- Instant Kitten [R. Wyatt]
- Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening [R. Wyatt]
- Beer As In Braindeer [R. Wyatt]
- Immediate Curtain [R. Wyatt]

Disc 2 **-** *Bonus*
- O Caroline (Single Version)
- Signed Curtain (Single Edit)
- Signed Curtain (Take Two)
- Part Of The Dance (Take One)
- Memories Membrane
- Horse
- Sandwich

Limited edition of 1000 individually numbered copies on yellow & orange marbled vinyl.

- RECORD STORE DAY 2024 (MOVLP3366) 2LP



> Zoom

1970

The End Of An Ear

- **Las Vegas Tango Part 1 (Repeat)** [G. Evans]
- **To Mark Everywhere** [R. Wyatt]
- **To Saintly Bridget** [R. Wyatt]
- **To Oz Alien Daevyd And Gilly** [R. Wyatt]
- **To Nick Everyone** [R. Wyatt]
- **To Caravan And Brother Jim** [R. Wyatt]
- **To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye)** [R. Wyatt]
- **To Carla, Marsha And Caroline (For Making Everything Beautifuller)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Las Vegas Tango Part 1** [G. Evans]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, mouth, piano, organ

- Mark Ellidge - piano
- Cyril Ayers - assorted percussion
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Elton Dean - alto sax/saxello
- Neville Whitehead - double bass
- David Sinclair - organ

- CBS (31846) LP
- CBS (64189) LP
- COLUMBIA (COL 473005-2) CD
- COLUMBIA (COL 493342-2) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2

1974

Rock Bottom

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **A Last Straw** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifie** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - voice, keyboards, James' drum

- Richard Sinclair - bass guitar
- Laurie Allan - drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Ivor Cutler - voice
- Mongezi Feza - trumpet
- Alfreda Benge - voice
- Gary Windo - bass clarinet, tenor sax
- Fred Frith - viola, piano
- Mike Oldfield - guitar

- VIRGIN (840 043) LP
- WARNER or VIRGIN USA (VR 13-112) LP
- VIRGIN (ORL 8307) LP
- VIRGIN (V 2017) LP
- VIRGIN (CDV 2017) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD40) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP40) LP

Critiques/Reviews

Abécédaire

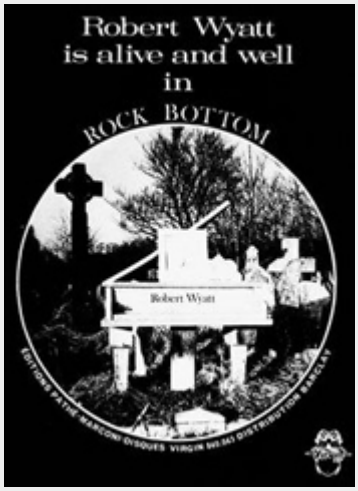
Vidéos

Lyrics

Robert Wyatt on Rock Bottom



> Zoom



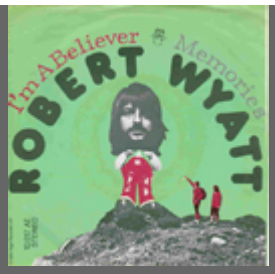
> Zoom





Une curiosité: Rock Bottom sans titre imprimé sur la pochette

I'm A Believer/Memories



> Zoom

Germany



> Zoom

UK



> Zoom

Spain



> Zoom

US



> Zoom

- I'm A Believer [N. Diamond]
- Memories [H. Hopper]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, keyboards

- Dave MacRae - piano on *I'm A Believer*
- Fred Frith - guitar, violin
- Richard Sinclair - bass
- Nick Mason - drums

- VIRGIN Germany (13617 AT) S
- VIRGIN UK (VS 114) S
- VIRGIN US (56000) S
- VIRGIN Spain (13617 A) S
- VIRGIN France (640040) S
- VIRGIN Australia (K5681) S
- VIRGIN Netherlands (13591AT) S
- VIRGIN Yugoslavia (S53881) S
- COLUMBIA Japan (YK-3-VR) S

Vidéos

Critiques/Reviews

Australia



> Zoom

Yugoslavia



> Zoom

France



> Zoom

Netherlands

1974



> Zoom 1 2 3

Japanese promo edition
1975

Yesterday Man/I'm A Believer



> Zoom

1974

- **Yesterday Man** [C. Andrews]
- **I'm A Believer** [N. Diamond]

- VIRGIN France (640 059) S



> Zoom

1975

Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

- **Soup Song** [B. Hopper:R. Wyatt]
- **Sonia** [M. Feza]
- **Team Spirit** [B. MacCormick/ P. Manzanera/R. Wyatt]
- **Song For Che** [C. Haden]
- **Muddy Mouse [a]** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **Solar Flares** [R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse [b]** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **5 Black Notes And 1 White Note** [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse [c]** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouth** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]

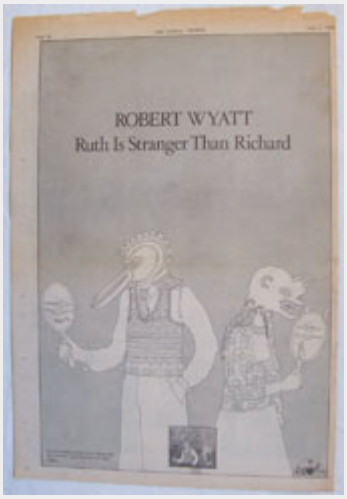
- Robert Wyatt - drums, mouth, piano, keyboards, imitation electric piano

- Laurie Allan - drums
- Nisar Ahmad "George" Khan - baritone sax
- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Gary Windo - tenor sax
- Mongezi Feza- trumpet
- John Greaves - bass
- Brian Eno - direct inject anti-jazz ray gun, guitar, synthetiser
- Fred Frith - piano, violin

- VIRGIN (V 2034) LP
- VIRGIN (840 079) LP
- VIRGIN (CDV 2034) CD

Lyrics

Critiques/Reviews



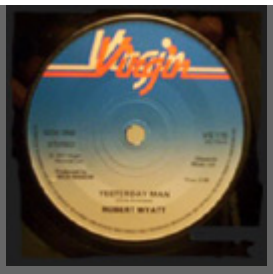
> Zoom

Yesterday Man/Sonia

- **Yesterday Man** [C. Andrews]
- **Sonia** [M. Feza]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, drums

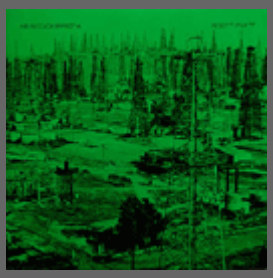
- Gary Windo - alto sax, tenor sax, bass clarinet
- Mongezi Feza - trumpet



1977

- John Greaves - bass

- VIRGIN (VS 115) S



> Zoom

1980

Arauco/Caimanera

- Arauco [V. Parra]
- Caimanera [Trad.]

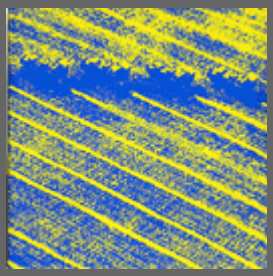
- Robert Wyatt - keyboards, piano, guitar, vocal, percussion

- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Harry Beckett - flugelhorn

- ROUGH TRADE (RT037) S



> Zoom



> Zoom

1980

At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit

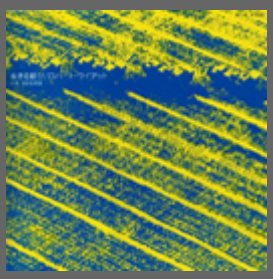
- At Last I'm Free [Edwards/Rodgers]
- Strange Fruit [Lewis]

- Robert Wyatt - keyboards, vocals, percussion on *At Last I'm Free*

- Frank Roberts - piano
- Mogotsi Mothle - double bass

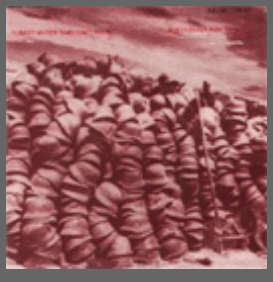
- ROUGH TRADE (RT052) S

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2

Japanese Edition
1980



Stalin Wasn't Stalling/ Stalingrad

- Stalin Wasn't Stalling'[B. Johnson]
- Stalingrad [P. Blackman]



Présentoir chez un disquaire
avec les slogans
"Rough Trade, le Quartier
réservé de la Musique"
3x45 tours - Robert Wyatt
"à des prix pas trop rough"

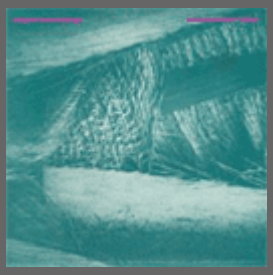
- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Peter Blackman - vocals on *Stalingrad*

- ROUGH TRADE (RT046) S

> Zoom

1981



1981

Grass/Trade Union

- Grass [I. Cutler]
- Trade Union [A. Salique]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Kadir Durvesh - shehnai
- Esmael Shek - tabla
- Abdul Salique - vocals (?) and several unknown members

- ROUGH TRADE (RT081) S



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6

1982

> Zoom 1 2 3

1993

The Animals Film

- The Animals Film [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, keyboards, percussion

La version originale a une durée de 28 minutes 11.
(side A = 15 minutes 15
side B = 12 minutes 56).
La version CD a été ramenée à 20 minutes 01.

La réédition CD japonaise de 1993 comporte 4 bonus tracks : *The Wind Of Change* 7 inch version, *The Wind Of Change* 12 inch version, *Namibia* 7 inch version and *Namibia* 12 inch version.

- ROUGH TRADE (40) EP
- ROUGH TRADE (R3172) CD
- ROUGH TRADE JAPAN (TDCN-5025) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Rock Bottom/Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Reissue LP - CD & K7)

Disc 1
- Sea Song
- A Last Straw
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road

Réédition des deuxième et troisième albums solo de Robert Wyatt.

Virgin Records a republié à plusieurs reprises (1981, 1983, 1989...) ces deux albums en même temps.



> Zoom







> Zoom 1 2 3 4

1983

- **Alifib**
- **Alifie**
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road**

Disc 2
- **Soup Song**
- **Sonia**
- **Team Spirit**
- **Song For Che**
- **Muddy Mouse [A]**
- **Solar Flares**
- **Muddy Mouse [B]**
- **5 Black Notes And 1 White Note**
- **Muddy Mouse [C] Muddy Mouth**

- VIRGIN (60017) 2xLP
- VIRGIN (VGD 3505) 2xLP
- VIRGIN (VGDC 3505) K7
- VIRGIN (301645) 2xLP
- VIRGIN (CDV 2017 0777 7 87712 2 7) 2xCD
- VIRGIN (CDV 2034 0777 7 87716 2 3) 2xCD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

1982

Nothing Can Stop Us

- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- **Caimanera** [Trad.]
- **Grass** [I. Cutler]
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin** [B. Johnson]
- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello] *(titre présent à partir de l'édition de 1983)*
- **Red Flag** [Trad.]
- **Strange Fruit** [Lewis]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **Trade Union** [A. Salique]
- **Stalingrad** [P. Blackman]

- ROUGH TRADE (ROUGH35) LP
- ROUGH TRADE (CD35) CD
- HANNIBAL (1433) CD
- RYKODISC (VACK-1227) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD42) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP42) LP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom



> Zoom

1982

Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- Memories Of You [E. Blake]
- 'Round Midnight [T. Monk]
- Shipbuilding [E. Costello]

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, vocal

- Clive Langer - organ
- Steve Nieve - piano
- Mark Bedford - double bass
- Martin Hughes - drums
- Elvis Costello - backing vocals
- Dave MacRae - piano and synthesizer on *Memories Of You* and *'Round Midnight*

- ROUGH TRADE (RT115T) EP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom

Shipbuilding/Memories Of You

- Shipbuilding [E. Costello]
- Memories Of You [E. Blake]

Il y a 4 versions différentes de pochette d'après une illustration de Stanley Spencer pour ce Single.

- ROUGH TRADE (RT115) S
- STUNN (BFA 1076) S

Vidéos



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

1982



> Zoom

1982



> Zoom

1984



> Zoom 1 2

1984



> Zoom

1984

Work In Progress

- **Biko** [P. Gabriel]
- **Amber And The Amberines** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Yolanda** [P. Milanes]
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda** [V. Jara]

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, keyboards, vocals

- ROUGH TRADE (RTT149) EP
- ROUGH TRADE/VIRGIN (80125) EP

Lyrics

Biko/Amber And The Amberines

- **Biko** [P. Gabriel]
- **Amber And The Amberines** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, keyboards, vocals

White label pressing with stickers identifying A & B tracks.

- ROUGH TRADE (RTT149) EP

4 Tracks EP

- **I'm A Believer** [N. Diamond]
- **Yesterday Man** [C. Andrews]
- **Team Spirit** [B. MacCormick/ P. Manzanera/R. Wyatt]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]

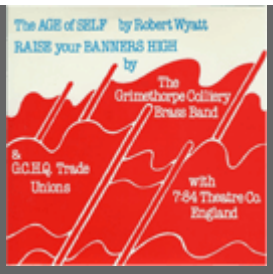
- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, drums, keyboards

Reprise des titres parus en 1974 (*I'm a Believer*,*Memories*), 1975 (*Team Spirit*) et 1977 (*Yesterday Man*).

- VIRGIN (WYATT1) EP

Lyrics

The Age Of Self



> Zoom 1 2

1984

- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Raise Your Banners High
  (The Grimethorpe Colliery Brass Band)

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, keyboards, vocals

Disque réalisé en soutien aux luttes des mineurs (*All proceeds from the sale of this record will go to the TUC MINERS HARDSHIP FUND*).

- ROUGH TRADE (TUC784) S



Old Rottenhat

> Zoom 1 2

1985

- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **United States Of Amnesia** [R. Wyatt]
- **East Timor** [R. Wyatt]
- **Speechless** [R. Wyatt]
- **Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- **Vandalusia** [R. Wyatt]
- **British Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Mass Medium** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, keyboards, vocals

- ROUGH TRADE (ROUGH 69) LP
- ROUGH TRADE (70406) LP
- ROUGH TRADE (CD69) CD
- HANNIBAL (1434) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD43) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP43) LP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



Shipbuilding/At Last I Am Free

Zoom

1986

- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]

Promo version.

- GRAMAVISION (18-1212-1) LP



Nothing Can Stop Us (US Edition)

> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5

1986

- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin** [B. Johnson]
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- **Caimanera** [Trad.]
- **Grass** [I. Cutler]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake]
- **Red Flag** [Trad.]
- **Strange Fruit** [Lewis]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **Trade Union** [A. Salique]
- **Round Midnight** [T. Monk/C. Williams/B. Hanighen]

Some (presumably early) copies included an A6 double sided insert with info about Dishari on one side and the Trade Union lyrics on the reverse.

- GRAMMAVISION (18-8614-1) LP



> Zoom 1 2 3

1986

Late '70's-Early '80's + Old Rottenhat

Disc 1 -
LATE '70's-EARLY '80's
- Red Flag
- Strange Fruit
- Arauco
- Born Again Cretin
- At Last I Am Free
- Caimanera
- Grass
- Stalin Wasn't Stallin'
- Shipbuilding
- Yolanda
- Te Recuerdo Amanda
- Biko
- Amber And Amberines
- Memories Of You
- Round Midnight

Disc 2
OLD ROTTENHAT
- Alliance
- United States Of Amnesia
- East Timor
- Speechless
- Age Of Self
- Vandalusia
- British Road
- Mass Medium
- Gharbzadegi
- P.L.A.

Japan Double Pack CD.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Compilations.

-JAPAN RECORD (TOKUMA JAPAN COMMUNICATIONS) 2xCD



> Zoom

1987

Chairman Mao

- Chairman Mao [C. Haden/R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards

Single italien en vinyl rouge, enregistré sur une seule face et publié avec un recueil de textes et d'interviews consacrés à Robert Wyatt.

- STAMPA ALTERNATIVA (SCONC-002) S

Abécédaire

Lyrics



> Zoom

The Peel Sessions

- Alifib [R. Wyatt]
- Soup Song [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- I'm a Believer [N. Diamond]

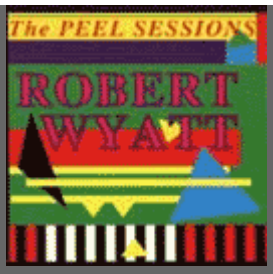
- Robert Wyatt - voice, piano, marimba on 2, BBC's organ and Leslie on 2 & 3

- STRANGE FRUIT (SFPS037) EP
- STRANGE FRUIT (DEI 8336-2) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom



1987 - 1991



> Zoom

1991

Dondestan

- **Costa** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **The Sight Of The Wind** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **Catholic Architecture** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **Worship** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **Shrinkrap** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **CP Jeebies** [R. Wyatt]
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]
- **Lisp Service** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **N.I.O. (New Information Order)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards, piano, percussion, acoustic guitar on Shrinkrap, melodica on *Left On Man*

- ROUGH TRADE (ZN 017) LP
- ROUGH TRADE (30870) CD
- ROUGH TRADE (R2742) CD
- HANNIBAL RECORDS (HNCD 1436) CD
- RYKODISC (VACK-1229) CD
- GRAMAVISION (79469) CD
- DOMINO (REWIGLP44) LP
- DOMINO (REWIGCD44) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom



> Zoom

1991

The Peel Sessions 1974

- **Soup Song** [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **I'm A Believer** [N. Diamond]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

Réédition de l'album The Peel Sessions de 1987.

- STRANGE FRUITS (WMD672005) CD-S

A Short Break

- **Short Break** [R. Wyatt]
- **Tubab** [R. Wyatt]
- **Kutcha** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion, piano, keyboards

Recorded on 4-Track at home, summer



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5

1992

- **Venti Latir** [R. Wyatt]
- **Unmasked** [Tutti/Carter/Wyatt]

1992.
The photographs were taken forty years ago.

"This Compact-Disc is approximately 21 minutes of new music. Please do not confuse this with either a full lenght CD or a CDSingle. It has been sold to your retailer with this in mind".

Un coffret Collector en édition limitée comprenant un livret d'une vingtaine de pages est sorti en même temps que la version CD de 1992.

- VOICEPRINT (VP108CD) CD
- VOICEPRINT (VP 108 CD) (Box Set Collector) CD
- VINYL LOVERS (VL900686) EP (re-edit 2009)

Lyrics

Critiques/Reviews

Booklet



1994

Rock Bottom/Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (CD Reissue)

Disc 1
- **Sea Song**
- **A Last Straw**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road**
- **Alifib**
- **Alifie**
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road**

Disc 2
- **Soup Song**
- **Sonia**
- **Team Spirit**
- **Song For Che**
- **Muddy Mouse [A]**
- **Solar Flares**
- **Muddy Mouse [B]**
- **5 Black Notes And 1 White Note**
- **Muddy Mouse [C] Muddy Mouth**

- VIRGIN (France) (7243 8 39752 2 8) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2

1997

Shleep

- **Heaps Of Sheeps** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt/ arr B. Eno]
- **The Duchess** [R. Wyatt]
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- **Was A Friend** [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/Kramer]
- **September The Ninth** [A. Benge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Alien** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Out Of Season** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **A Sunday In Madrid** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Blues In Bob Minor** [R. Wyatt]
- **Whole Point Of No Return** [P. Weller]
- **September In The Rain** [A. Dubin/ H. Warren] *(titre bonus réservé à l'édition japonaise)*

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards, bass, percussion, Polish fiddle, trumpet

- Brian Eno - synthesizer, backing vocals, synth bass
- Jamie Johnson - guitar
- Evan Parker - soprano sax, tenor sax
- Philip Catherine - guitar
- Chikako Sato - violin
- Chucho Merchan - double bass, percussion, bass, bass drum
- Alfreda Benge - voice of the apparition
- Paul Weller - guitar, acoustic guitar, backing vocals
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Gary Adzukx - djembe
- Jamie Johnson, Alfreda Benge, Charles Rees - chorus

- HANNIBAL (HNCD 1418) CD
- RYKODISC (VACK-1230) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD45) CD

- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP45) 2xLP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom

1997

Free Will And Testament/The Sight Of The Wind

- Free Will And Testament
- The Sight Of The Wind

- Robert Wyatt - voice, keyboard, percussion on *Free Will And Testament* and voice and all instruments on *The Sight Of The Wind*

- Paul Weller - guitar, harmony vocals

- ISLAND/TRADE2 (TRDSC010) S



> Zoom

1997

Heaps Of Sheeps

- Heaps Of Sheeps
- A Sunday In Madrid

- HANNIBAL (VHCD1418) S



> Zoom

1998

Rock Bottom (Hannibal Reissue)

- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- A Last Straw [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib [R. Wyatt]
- Alife [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]

Reédition de l'album paru en 1974. A noter que le morceau *Alifie* est désomais nommé *Alife*.

- HANNIBAL (HNCD 1426) CD



Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Hannibal Reissue)

Side RICHARD
- Muddy Mouse [a] [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- Solar Flares [R. Wyatt]
- Muddy Mouse [b] [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- 5 Black Notes And 1 White Note [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- Muddy Mouse [c] [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- Muddy Mouth [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]

Side RUTH

Reédition de l'album paru en 1975.

Les morceaux ne sont pas présentés dans le même ordre.

De nombreuses rééditions seront ensuite publiées au fil des ans en particulier suite à la reprise du catalogue de Robert Wyatt par le label Domino en 2007.

> Zoom 1 2 3

1998

- **Soup Song** [B. Hopper:R. Wyatt]
- **Sonia** [M. Feza]
- **Team Spirit** [B. MacCormick/ P. Manzanera/R. Wyatt]
- **Song For Che** [C. Haden]
-

- HANNIBAL (HNCD 1427) CD
- THIRSTY EAR (THI 57044.2) CD
- HANNIBAL (VACK-1139) CD
- RYKODISC (VACK-1226) CD
- DOMINO (REWIGLP41) LP
- DOMINO (REWIGCD41) CD
- DOMINO (DNO 201) CD + LP Deluxe limited edition



> Zoom

1998

Dondestan (Revisited)

- **CP Jeebies**
- **N.I.O. (New Information Order)**
- **Dondestan**
- **Sight Of the Wind**
- **Shrinkrap**
- **Catholic Architecture**
- **Worship**
- **Costa**
- **Left On Man**
- **Lisp Service**

- Robert Wyatt - all instruments

- HANNIBAL (HNCD 1436) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD44) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP44) LP



> Zoom

2002

Airplay

- **Fridge** [R. Wyatt]
- **When Access Was A Noun** [R. Wyatt]
- **Salt/Ivy** [R. Wyatt]
- **Signed Curtain** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - voice, keyboards, percussion, cornet, bass guitar, piano

Edition japonaise. Ce CD était offert en bonus avec l'achat d'un coffret de 6 albums solo de Robert Wyatt.

Ces morceaux seront repris en 2003 sur le CD qui accompagne le recueil M4W de Jean-Michel Marchetti.

- RYKODISC (SVAM 0064) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3

2003

Solar Flares Burn For You

- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **Soup Song** [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **I'm A Believer** [N. Diamond]
- **Blimey O'Riley** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Solar Flares Burn For You** [R. Wyatt]
- **God Song/ Fol De Rol** [P. Miller/ R. Wyatt]
- **Little Child** [A. Petrov/I. Kostal/ T. Harrison]
- **We Got An Arts Council Grant** [R. Wyatt]
- **Righteous Rhumba** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- **'Twas Brillig** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **The Verb** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion, cornet, keyboards

- Francis Monkman - synthesizer, piano, electric piano, backing vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass, loops

Les titres 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 et 8 ont été enregistrés à Langham 1, London, BBC Top Gear Recording.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 175) CD

Cuckooland

PART ONE 'NEITHER HERE...'
- **Just A Bit** [R. Wyatt]
- **Old Europe** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Tom Hay's Fox** [R. Wyatt]
- **Forest** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Beware** [K. Mantler]
- **Cuckoo Madame** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Raining In My Heart** [Bryant and

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards, cornet, percussion, trumpet

- Brian Eno - last note (on 3)
- Jamie Johnson - bass
- Alfreda Benge - voice of



> Zoom

2003

Bryant]
- Lullaby For Hamza [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

Silence
A suitable place for those with tired ears to pause and resume listening later

PART TWO 'NOR THERE'
- Trickle Down [R. Wyatt]
- Insensatez [A.C. Jobim/V. Demoraes]
- Mister E [K. Mantler]
- Lullaloop [A. Benge]
- Life Is Sheep [K. Mantler]
- Foreign Accents [R. Wyatt]
- Brian The Fox [R. Wyatt]
- La Ahada Yalam [N. Zreik]
- La Cancion De Julietta [R. Wyatt/G.G. Lorca] *(titre bonus réservé à l'édition japonaise)*

Lullaloop
- Paul Weller - guitar, acoustic guitar, backing vocals
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Phil Manzanera - voice
- David Gilmour- guitar
- Gilad Atzmon
- Yaron Stavi
- Karen Mantler
- Tomo Hayakawa
- Tomo Noro
- Michael Evans
- Jennifer Maidman

- HANNIBAL/RYKODISC (HNCD 1468) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD47) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP47) 2xLP

Critiques/Reviews

Abécédaire

Vidéos

Lyrics



> Zoom 1 2 2bis 3 4

2005

Theatre Royal Drury Lane - Robert Wyatt & Friends In Concert - 8th September 1974

- Introduction by John Peel
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening [H. Hopper]
- Memories [H. Hopper]
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- A Last Straw [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]
- Alife [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib [R. Wyatt]
- Mind Of A Child [J. Tippetts]
- Instant Pussy [R. Wyatt]
- Signed Curtain [R. Wyatt]
- Calyx [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]
- I'm A Believer [N. Diamond]

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Dave Stewart - keyboards
- Laurie Allan - drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Fred Frith - violin, guitar, viola
- Mongezi Feza - trumpet
- Mike Oldfield - guitar
- Julie Tippetts - keyboard, voice
- Nick Mason - drums
- John Peel - voice
- Ivor Cutler - voice

A noter une intrigante double version du texte de Robert Wyatt sur le verso du CD : voir les visuels 2 et 2bis du Zoom...

Un montage "Please Smile" constitué de bandes mixées à l'envers et à l'endroit (voix-guitare-batterie) défile après le dernier morceau (I'm A Believer) et les applaudissements du public suivis d'un silence de plusieurs minutes.

- HANNIBAL/RYKODISC (HNCD 1507) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD48) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP487) 2xLP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2007

Comicopera

ACT ONE LOST IN NOISE
- **Stay Tuned** [Anja Garbarek]
- **Just As You Are** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **You You** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **A.W.O.L** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Anachronist** [R. Wyatt]

ACT TWO THE HERE AND THE NOW
- **A Beautiful Place** [R. Wyatt/B. Eno]
- **Be Serious** [R. Wyatt]
- **On The Town Square** [R. Wyatt]
- **Mob Rule** [R. Wyatt]
- **A Beautiful War** [R. Wyatt/B. Eno]
- **Out Of The Blue** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

ACT THREE AWAY WITH THE FAIRIES
- **Del Mondo** [Ferreti/Zamboni/Maroccolo/ Magnelli/Canali]
- **Cancion De Julieta** [G. Lorca/R. Wyatt]
- **Pastafari** [O. Robinson]
- **Fragment** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Hasta Siempre Comandante** [C. Puebla]



> en savoir plus

- Robert Wyatt - voice, piano, percussion, trumpet, cornet, old metronome, keyboard, karenotron (i.e. voice of Karen Mantler), Enotron (i. e. voice of Brian Eno), pocket trumpet, monicatron (i.e. voice of Monica Vasconcelos)

- Robert Wyatt, Jamie Johnson - electrical interference

- Brian Eno - keyboards, effects
- Seaming To Voice - clarinet
- Annie Whitehead - trombone, baritone horn
- Yaron Stavi - bass violin
- Monica Vasconcelos - voice
- Paul Weller - guitar
- Gilad Atzmon - saxophones, tenor saxophone, clarinet
- Jamie Johnson - bass guitar
- David Sinclair - piano
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Del Bartle - guitar
- Orphy Robinson - steelpan, vibraphone
- Chucho Merchan - bass violin
- Maurizio Camardi - saxophones
- Alphonso Santimone - piano, keyboards
- Alessandro Fedrigo - bass guitar
- Paolo Vidaich - percussion
- Gianni Bertoncini - drums

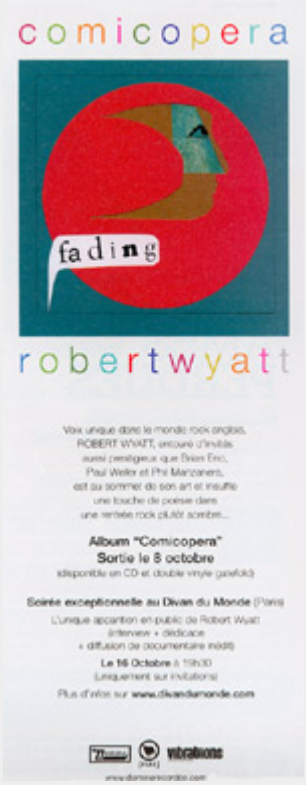
- Alfreda Benge - art and design

La 4ème face du double LP ne comporte pas de sillon mais un poème gravé dans le vinyl (voir ci-contre Zoom 7 et 8).

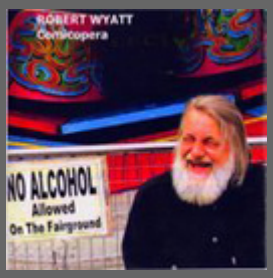
- DOMINO RECORDS (WIGCD202) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (WIGLP202) 2xLP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom



> Zoom 1 2

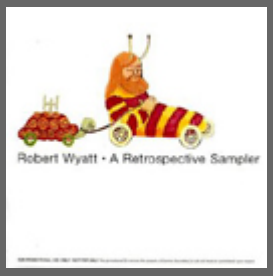
2007

Comicopera Sampler

- Just As You Are
- A Beautiful War
- Hasta Siempre Comandante

CD-R Promo Edition

- DOMINO RECORDS



> Zoom 1 2

2008

A Retrospective Sampler

- Introduction By John Peel
- Sea Song
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road
- Solar Flares
- Soup Song
- At Last I Am Free
- Stalin Wasn't Stallin'
- Memories (Live)
- I'm A Believer (Live)

CD-R Promo Edition

- DOMINO RECORDS

Shleep (LP Domino Reissue)

Disc 1
- Heaps Of Sheeps
- The Duchess

Réedition de Shleep en double-vinyl avec les morceaux supplémentaires



> Zoom

2008

- **Maryan**
- **Was A Friend**
- **Free Will And Testament**
- **September The Ninth**
- **Alien**

Disc 2
- **Out Of Season**
- **A Sunday In Madrid**
- **Blues In Bob Minor**
- **The Whole Point Of No Return**
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda**
- **Yolanda**
- **When Access Was A Noun**
- **Fridge**
- **Salt/Ivy**
- **Signed Curtain (Plus Cornet)**
- **September In The Rain**
- **I Wonder How Your Breath Can Last** [R. Wyatt/Trad. & G. Atzmon]

suivants :

- *Te Recuerdo Amanda* et *Yolanda* extraits de Work In Progress

- *When Access Was A Noun, Fridge, Salt/Ivy* extraits de Airplay.

- *Signed Curtain* (version inédite avec R. Wyatt - voice, cornet, keyboards)

- *September In The Rain* (version inédite avec R. Wyatt - voice, cornet, keyboards & Paul Weller - guitar)

- *I Wonder How Your Breath Can Last* (nouveau morceau avec R. Wyatt - voice, keyboards & Gilad Atzmon - tenor saxophone).

- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGLP45) 2xLP



> Zoom 1 2 3

2009

Radio Experiment Rome, February 1981

- **Opium War** [R. Wyatt]
- **Heathens Have No Souls** [R. Wyatt]
- **L'Albero Degli Zoccoli** [R. Wyatt]
- **Holy War** [R. Wyatt]
- **Revolution Without "R"** [R. Wyatt]
- **Billy's Bounce** [Ch. Parker]
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- **Prove Sparse** [R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, keyboards, objects, jew's harp, percussion

Programme réalisé par Robert Wyatt pour la RAI italienne en février 1981. Plusieurs versions non officielles circulent depuis plusieurs années sur internet.

- TRACCE (RTPJ 0014) CD
- TRACCE (RTPJ 0014) LP

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

2010

Rock Bottom / Comicopera (Double CD Reissue)

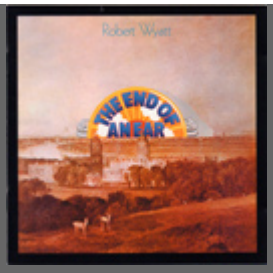
ROCK BOTTOM
- **Sea Song**
- **A Last Straw**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road**
- **Alifib**
- **Alife**
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road**

COMICOPERA
Act One - Lost In Noise
- **Stay Tuned**
- **Just As You Are**
- **You You**
- **A.W.O.L.**
- **Anachronist**

Act Two - The Here And The Now
- **A Beautiful Peace**
- **Be Serious**
- **On The Town Square**
- **Mob Rule**
- **A Beautiful War**
- **Out Of The Blue**

Act Three Away With The Fairies
- **Del Mondo**
- **Cancion De Julieta**
- **Pastafari**
- **Fragment**
- **Hasta Siempre Comandante**

- DOMINODOUBLES (DOMDBL06CD) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2012

The End Of An Ear (Remastered)

- **Las Vegas Tango Part 1 (Repeat)**
- **To Mark Everywhere**
- **To Saintly Bridget**
- **To Oz Alien Daevyd And Gilly**
- **To Nick Everyone**
- **To Caravan And Brother Jim**
- **To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye)**
- **To Carla, Marsha And Caroline (For Making Everything Beautifuller)**
- **Las Vegas Tango Part 1**

This reissue has been newly remastered from the original master tapes and features a booklet that restores all original album artwork.

- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (ECLEC 2324) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2013

Robert Wyatt '68

- **Chelsa** [Robert Wyatt/Kevin Ayers*]
- **Rivmic Melodies** [Robert Wyatt]
- **Slow Walkin' Talk** [Brian Hopper]
- **Moon In June** [Robert Wyatt]
- **Rivmic Melodies - Radio Edit** [Robert Wyatt] *(bonus on digital version)*

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, electric piano, Hammond organ, bass, drums, percussion

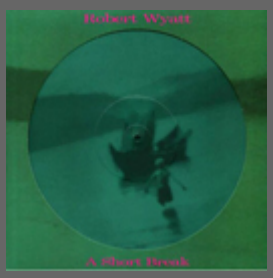
- Jimi Hendrix - bass (*Slow Walkin Talk*)
- Hugh Hopper - bass (second half of *Moon In June*)
- Mike Ratledge - Lowrey organ (second half of *Moon In June*)

Recorded in October-November 1968 at T.T.G. Studios, Hollywood , CA and The Record Plant, New-York City, NY, USA. The second half of *Moon In June* was recorded in mid-1969 in England.

*Aymeric Leroy qui a fait l'interview de Robert Wyatt publié dans le booklet m'a écrit (25/12/2013) :
"Les crédits d'écriture du morceau *Chelsa* attribuent à tort le texte à Kevin Ayers (c'était le souvenir - erroné - de Robert), alors qu'il est en réalité de Daevid Allen.
Il existe d'ailleurs une version de cette chanson (musique différente car signée elle aussi d'Allen) sur le CD d'archives de Gong "Camembert Eclectique" paru dans les années 90."

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (375) CD
- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (375-V) LP USA (375-VE) LP outside USA

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2

2020

A Short Break (Picture disc reissue)

- **Short Break** [R. Wyatt]
- **Tubab** [R. Wyatt]
- **Kutcha** [R. Wyatt]
- **Venti Latir** [R. Wyatt]
- **Unmasked** [Tutti/Carter/Wyatt]

Vinyl reissue of the 1992 version. Single Sided, EP, Picture Disc, Remastered.

One sided picture disc.

- TIGER BAY (TB 6468 & TB6508) EP



> Zoom

Love Is
1968

Eric Burdon & The Animals

Disc 1
- River Deep, Mountain High
- I'm an Animal
- I'm Dying, Or Am I?
- Ring Of Fire
- Colored Rain

Disc 2
- To Love Somebody
- As the Years Go Passing By
- Madman
- Gemini

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *River Deep, Mountain High* (uncredited)

- Eric Burdon - vocals
- Zoot Money - organ, piano, bass, vocals
- Andy Summers - guitar, vocals
- John Weider - bass, guitar, vocals
- Barry Jenkins - drums

- MGM US (SE-4591/92) 2xLP
- MGM UK (C-8105) LP (3 morceaux de moins que sur l'édition US)
- ONE WAY (OW 30338) CD



> Zoom

Sun Rise
1969

Eire Apparent

- Yes, I Need Someone
- Got To Get Away
- The Clown
- Mr. Guy Fawkes
- Someone Is SureTo (Want You)
- Rock & Roll Band
- Morning Glory
- Magic Carpet
- Captive In the Sun
- Let Me Stay
- 1026

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *The Clown*

- Ernie Graham - rhythm guitar, vocals
- Eric Stewart - bass
- David Lutton - drums
- Jimi Hendrix - guitar
- Noel Redding backing vocals on *The clown*

- BUDDAH RECORDS (203 021) LP

↑



> Zoom

River Deep, Mountain High
1969

Eric Burdon & The Animals

- River Deep, Mountain High
- White Houses

River Deep, Moutain High est extrait de Love Is.

- MGM SPAIN (MGM 61.026) S

↑

Kevin Ayers

- Joy Of A Toy Continued
- Town Feeling
- The Clarietta Rag

- Robert Wyatt - drums & tambourine on 1-2-3-5 and 8



> Zoom

Joy Of A Toy
1969

- Girl On A Swing
- Song For Insane Times
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- Lady Rachel
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong
- All This Crazy Gift Of Time

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar, bass, piano
- David Bedford - piano, arrangements
- Rob Tait - drums
- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano, flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Jeff Clyne - double bass
- Paul Minns - oboe
- Paul Buckmaster - cello
- Cyrille Ayers, Sean Murphy, Jean & Mary - backing vocals

- HARVEST (SHVL 763) LP



> Zoom

The Madcap Laughs
1970

Syd Barrett

- Terrapin
- No Good Trying
- Love You
- No Man's Land
- Dark Globe
- Here I Go
- Octopus
- Golden Hair
- Long Gone
- She Took A Long Cold Look
- Feel
- If It's In You
- Late Night

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Syd Barrett - guitar, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano on *Love You*
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- HARVEST (C 062-04261) LP



> Zoom

Shooting At The Moon
1970

Kevin Ayers And The Whole World

- May I
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine
- Colores Para Dolores
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans Un Violon
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Underwater
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Red Green And You Blue
- Shooting At The Moon

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals

- Kevin Ayers - guitar, vocals
- David Bedford - piano, organ, accordion
- Lol Coxhill - saxes
- Mike Oldfield - guitar, bass
- Mick Fincher - percussion, bottles, ashtrays
- Bridget St. John - vocals on *The Oyster And The Flying Fish*

- HARVEST (SHSP 4005) LP
- BGO (CD 13) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Garden Of Love
1970

Kevin Ayers, Mike Oldfield, Robert Wyatt, David Bedford, Lol Coxhill

- Garden Of Love (words by William Blake, music by David Bedford)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, percussion

- David Bedford - organ, electric piano
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, vocals
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax, tenor sax
- Mike Oldfield - bass

Augmented by The London Sinfonietta:

- Sebastian Bell - flute
- Anthony Pay - clarinet

- Antonia Cook -horn
- Peter Reeve -trumpet
- Daryl Runswick- double bass
- David Atherton - conductor

26/9/1970, London Sinfonietta, Queen Elizabeth Hall, BBC Radio 3 recording

- VOICEPRINT (VP180) CD



> Zoom

Piknik Radio Broadcast 1970 (?)

Kevin Ayers And The Whole Wide World

- Interview Kevin Ayers
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- **We Did It Again**
- Hat Song
- Audience
- If You've Got Money
- **Clarence In Wonderland**
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine ~ Colores Para Dolores
- Why Are We Sleeping
- Lady Rachel

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- Mike Oldfield - bass
- David Bedford - piano, organ
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax, bird whistle, flute
- Bridget St.John - vocals

Live At Driebergen, Gemeendecentrum, The Netherlands July 30, 1970

- DEAFMUSIC AND LONETAPES PRODUCTION
- HIGHLAND PROJECT (HP164)

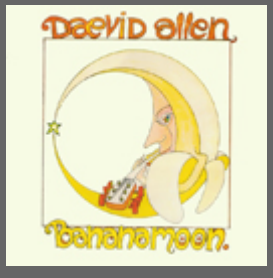
Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Bootlegs.



> Zoom



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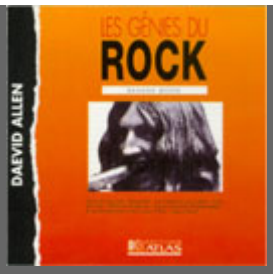
Gong

- Time Of Your Life
- **Memories**
- **All I Want Is Out Of Here**
- **Fred The Fish**
- **White Neck Blooze**
- **Stoned Innocent Frankenstein**
- **& His Adventures In The Land Of Flip**
- **I Am A Bowl**

- Robert Wyatt - drums, guitar, and vocals on *Memories* and on *All I Want Is Out Of Here*

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Archie Leggett - bass, vocals
- Gary Wright - piano
- Gerry Fields - violin
- Maggie Bell, Barry St. John - backing vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums on *Time Of Your Life*
- Christian Tritsch - rhythm guitar and bass on *Time Of Your Life*
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Gilli Smyth - space whisper

- BYG (529 345) LP
- SPALAX (SPA 14945) CD
- ATLAS (1993) (RK CD152) CD
- CHARLY RECORDS (SNAP238CD) CD



Banana Moon
1970



> Zoom

Ear Of The Beholder
1971

Lol Coxhill

Disc 1
- Introduction
- Hungerford
- Deviation Dance
- Two Little Pigeons
- Don Alfonso
- Open Piccadilly
- Feedback
- Vorblifa - Exit
- Insensatez
- Conversation With Children / Jamaican Rumba
- Picadilly With Goofs

Disc 2
- Rasa - Moods
- **A Collective Improvisation**
- I'm The Walrus
- The Rhytmic Hooter
- Lover Man
- Zoological Fun
- Little Triple One Shot
- That's Why Darkies Were Born
- A Series Of Superbly Played Mellotron Codas

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Kevin Ayers - guitar (?)
- Mike Oldfield - bass (?)
- Lol Coxhill - sax
- David Bedford - organ

Recorded July 7th, 1970 at Blackhill's Garden Party, Hyde Park.

- DANDELION (69001/DSD 8008) 2xLP
- SEE FOR MILES RECORDS (SEECD414) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Centipede

- Side I
- Side II
- Side III
- Side IV

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Keith Tippett - piano
- John Marshall - drums, percussion
- Tony Fennell - drums
- Roy Babbington - double bass, bass guitar
- Jeff Clyne - double bass
- Jill Lyons - double bass
- Harry Miller - double bass
- Dave Markee - double bass
- Brian Belshaw - double bass
- Brian Godding - guitar
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Dave Amis - trombone
- Dave Perrottet - trombone
- Paul Rutherford - trombone
- Karl Jenkins - baritone sax, oboe
- Dave White - baritone sax, clarinet
- John Williams - bass sax, soprano sax
- Brian Smith - tenor sax
- Larry Stabbins - tenor sax
- Gary Windo - tenor sax
- Alan Skidmore - tenor sax
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Jan Steele - alto sax, flute
- Ian McDonald - alto sax
- Dudu Pukwana - alto sax
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Mongesi Feza - pocket cornet
- Ian Carr - trumpet, flugel horn



> Zoom

Septober Energy
1971

- Peter Parks - trumpet
- Mick Collins - trumpet
- Maggie Nichols - vocal
- Julie Tippett - vocal
- Mike Patto - vocal
- Zoot Money - vocal
- Boz - vocal
And a 19-piece string section

- RCA (VICTOR DPS 2054) 2xLP
- BGO RECORDS (CD-485) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Dedicated To You,
But You Weren't Listening
1971

The Keith Tippett Group

- This Is What Happens
- Thoughts To Geoff
- Green And Orange Night Park
- Gridal Suite
- Five After Dawn
- Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
- Black Horse

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals on *Five After Dawn*

- Keith Tippett - piano, electric piano
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Gary Boyle - guitar
- Neville Whitehead - double bass
- Roy Babbington - double bass, bass
- Tony Uta - congas, cow bell
- Bryan Spring - drums
- Phil Howard - drums

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- VERTIGO (6360 024) LP
- AKAMA-COMET RECORDS (AK227) CD
- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (ECLEC 2367) CD



> Zoom

Whatevershebringswesing
1972

Kevin Ayers

- There Is Loving/Among Us/There Is Loving
- Margaret
- Oh My
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well
- Whatevershebringswesing
-Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Champagne Cowboy Blues
- Lullaby

- Robert Wyatt - harmony vocals on *Whatevershebringswesing*

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar, piano, bass
- Mike Oldfield - bass & lead guitar on Whatevershebringswesing
- David Bedford - keyboards,
- Didier Malherbe - sax, flute
- Dave Dufort - drums
- Gerry Fields - violin
- Johnny Van Derek - violin
- Tony Carr - drums, percussion
- William Murray - drums, percussion

- HARVEST (SHVL 800) LP

Critiques/Reviews

Bridget St. John

- Nice
- Thank You For...
- Lazarus
- Goodbaby Goodbye
- Love Minus Zero, No Limit
- Silver Coin
- Happy Day
- Fly High

- Robert Wyatt - percussion

- Bridget St. John - vocals, twelve-string guitar, guitar
- John Martyn - acoustic guitar, electric guitar
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Gordon Huntley - steel guitar,



> Zoom

Thank You For...
1972

- To Leave Your Cover
- Every Day
- A Song Is As Long As It Wants To Go On

pedal steel
- Rick Kemp - bass, drums
- Dave Mattacks - drums
- Tim Renwick - electric guitar
- Andy Roberts - guitar
- Richard Sanders - guitar
- Rick Sanders - acoustic guitar
- Bruce Thomas - bass
- Ian Whiteman - keyboards, piano
- John Wilson - drums

Robert Wyatt plays percussion on some of the tracks on this album but is not credited (information confirmed by him).

The titles are displayed in black and light characters because RW doesn't remember which titles he has played on.

- DANDELION RECORDS (2310 193) LP
- POLYDOR (2310 193) LP
- TRADING PLACES (TDP54043) LP (Reissue)
- 4 MEN WITH BEARDS (4M190) LP (Reissue)
- ARCANGELO (ARC-7122) CD



> Zoom



> Zoom

New Violin Summit
1972

New Violin Summit

Disc 1
- Valium
- Got My Mojo Working
- Nuggis
- Horizon

Disc 2
- Flipping
- Astrorama
- Violin Summit Nr. II

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Don "Sugar Cane" Harris - violin
- Jean-Luc Ponty - violin
- Nipso Brantner - violin
- Michal Urbaniak - violin
- Terje Rypdal - guitar
- Wolfgang Dauner - keyboards, electric device
- Neville Whitehead - electric bass

Recorded live at the Berlin Jazz Festival, Berlin Philharmonic Hall, November 7, 1971.

- MPS RECORDS (MPS 15 081) 2xLP
- MPS/BASF (2222 720-0)
- TAKE (35006) 2xLP



Sugar Cane's Got The Blues
1972

Don 'Sugar Cane' Harris

- Liz Pineapple Wonderful
- Sugar Cane's Got The Blues
- Song For My Father
- Where's My Sunshine

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Don Harris - electric violin, vocals
- Volker Kriegel or Terje Rypdal - guitar
- Wolfgang Dauner - keyboards
- Neville Whitehead - bass

Recorded live at the Berlin Jazz Festival, Berlin Philharmonic Hall, November 7, 1971

- POLYDOR (20878) LP
- MPS (68027) LP
- MPS (15 333) LP
- PROMISING (SPV 441022) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Sugar Cane's Got The Blues
(Réédition)
2008



> Zoom

Bananamour
1973



> Zoom 1 2 3

Soft Machine_Gong
1973

Kevin Ayers

- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- **Hymn**
- Beware Of The Dog Bath

- Robert Wyatt - harmony vocals

- Kevin Ayers - guitar, vocals
- Archie Leggett - bass, harmony vocals
- Eddie Sparrow - drums, percussion
- Ronnie Price - piano
- Doris Troy, Liza Strike, Barry St. John - backing vocals
- Howie Casey - tenor sax
- Dave Caswell - trumpet
- Lyle Jenkins - baritone sax
- Tristram Fry - cymbal

- HARVEST (SHVL 807) LP
- HARVEST (EMS 1124) LP
- EMI (07243-584351-2-2) CD

Soft Machine_Gong - Complete Family - Daevid Allen - Kevin Ayers - Robert Wyatt - Gary Wright

Disc 1
- **That's How Much I Need You Now**
- **Save Yourself**
- **I Should've Known**
- **Jet-Propelled Photograph**
- Squeezing Sponges Over Policemens Heads
- Fohat Digs Holes In Space
- Tried So Hard
- Tropical Fish : Selene
- Gnome The Second

Disc 2
- **Time Of Your Life**
- **Memorie**
- **All I Want Is Out Of Here**
- **Fred The Fish**
- **White Neck Blues & Codein Coda**
- Ego
- Gongsong
- Princess Dreaming
- 5 & 20 Schoolgirls
- Cos You Got Green Hair

Les 4 premiers morceaux du 1er disque sont extraits de Jet-Propelled Photographs et les 4 premiers morceaux du second disque sont extraits de Banana Moon.

- BYG (DOUBLE ACTUEL 529-201) 2xLP

Hatfield & The North

- The Stubbs Effect
- Big Jobs (poo Poo Extract)
- Going Up To People And Tinkling
- **Calyx**

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Phil Miller - guitars



> Zoom 1 2 3

Hatfield & The North
1973

- Son Of There's No Place Like Homerton
- Aigrette
- Rifferama
- Fol De Rol
- Shaving Is Boring
- Licks For The Ladies
- Bossa Nochance
- Big Jobs N 2 (By Poo And The Wee Wees)
- Lobster In Cleavage Probe
- Gigantic Land Crabs In Earth Takeover Bid
- The Other Stubbs Effect

Bonus 1992
- Let's Eat (Real Soon)
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath

Bonus 2009
- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut Incorporating + Oh What A Lonely Lifetime

- Dave Stewart - organ, electric piano, piano, tone generator
- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Amanda Parsons, Barbara Gaskin, Ann Rosenthal - vocals
- Jeoff Leigh - saxes, flute
- Jeremy Baines - pixiephone

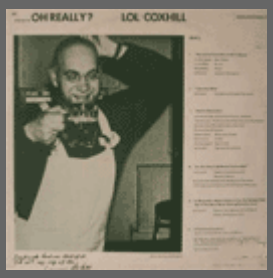
Réédition 1992 (Virgin CDV2008) avec 2 bonus tracks :
- Let's Eat (Real Soon)
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath (A & B sides of single released as Virgin VS 116 in November 1974)

Réédition remasterisée 2009 (Esoteric ECLEC2139) avec 2 bonus tracks supplémentaires :
- Your Majesty Is Like a Cream Donut
- Oh What a Lonely Lifetime

- VIRGIN (V2008) LP
- VIRGIN (900 501) LP
- VIRGIN (VR 13-110) LP
- VIRGIN (CDV2008) CD
- TOSHIBA EMI (VJCP-68685) CD
- CAROLINE (CAROL 1833-2) CD
- ESOTERIC (ECLEC2139) CD

Critiques/Reviews

Vidéos



The Story So Far...Oh Really
1974

Lol Coxhill/Steve Miller

- In Memoriam: Meister Eckhart
- **Soprano Derivato/Apricot Jam**
- The Greatest Off-Shore Race In The World
- Reprise For Those Who Prefer It Slower
- G-Song
- F-Bit
- Songs Of March
- More G-Songs
- Does This

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, voice

- Kevin Ayers - acoustic guitar
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Archie Leguett - bass

Live at the Twist Cha-Cha Rooms, Camden over 40s Club by Sunny Sax and the Sunshine Orchestra.

- CAROLINE RECORDS (C1507) LP



> Zoom

June 1, 1974
1974

Kevin Ayers/John Cale/Eno/Nico

- **Driving Me Backwards**
- **Babys On Fire**
- **Heartbreak Hotel**
- The End
- **May I ?**
- **Standing In A Bucket Blues**
- **Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes**
- Everybodys Sometime And Some Peoples All The Time Blues
- **Two Goes Into Four**

- Robert Wyatt - percussion

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- John Cale - vocals, piano
- Eno - vocals, synthetizer
- Nico - vocals, harmonium
- Mike Oldfield - guitar
- John Bundrick - keyboards
- Archie Legget - bass
- Eddie Sparrow - drums
- Irene Chanter - vocals
- Doreen Chanter - vocals
- Liza Strike - vocals

- ISLAND (ILPS 9291) LP
- ISLAND (842 552-2) CD



> Zoom



> Zoom

Taking Tiger Mountain
(By Strategy)
1975

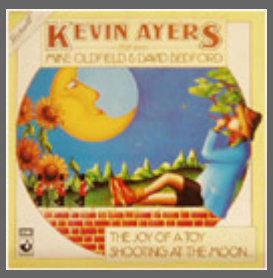
Brian Eno

- Burning Airlines Give You So Much More
- Back In Judy's Jungle
- The Fat Lady Of Limbourg
- Mother Whale Eyeless
- The Great Pretender
- Third Uncle
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- The True Wheel
- China My China
- Taking Tiger Mountain

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, vocals on *Burning Airlines Give You So Much More*, *Put A Straw Under Baby* and *The True Wheel*

- Eno - vocals, electronics, snake guitar, keyboards
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Brian Turrington - bass guitar
- Freddie Smith - drums

- ISLAND (ILPS 9309) LP
- EG (EGCD17) CD



> Zoom

The Joy Of A Toy
Shooting At The Moon
1975

Kevin Ayers Featuring Mike Oldfield & David Bedford

Disc 1
- Joy Of A Toy Continued
- Town Feeling
- The Clarietta Rag
- Girl On A Swing
- Song For Insane Times
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- Lady Rachel
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong
- All This Crazy Gift Of Time

Disc 2
- May I
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine
- Colores Para Dolores
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans Un Violon
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Underwater
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Red Green And You Blue
- Shooting At The Moon

Réédition des deux premiers albums de Kevin Ayers, Joy Of A Toy et Shooting At The Moon.

- HARVEST (C184-52277/78) 2xLP

Phil Manzanera

- Frontera
- Diamond Head
- Big Day
- The Flex
- Same Time Next Week
- Miss Shapiro

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion

- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- John Wetton - bass



> Zoom

Diamond Head
1975

- East Of Echo
- Lagrima
- Alma Cape

- Paul Thompson- drums
- Eno - synthesizer, vocals, backing vocals
- Eddie Jobson - keyboards
- Dave Jarrett - keyboards
- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Charles Hayward - drums
- Ian MacCormick - vocals
- Andy Mackay - saxophone

- ISLAND (ILPS 9315) LP
- POLYDOR UK (2302062) LP

Lyrics



> Zoom

Frontera
1975

Phil Manzanera

- Frontera
- Same Time Next Week

Single allemand sorti en même temp que l'album Diamond Head.

- ISLAND (16213AT) S



> Zoom

Voices And Instruments
1976

Jan Steele/John Cage

- All Day
- Distant Saxophones
- Rhapsody Spaniel
- Experiences No.1
- Experiences No.2
- The Wonderful Widow Of Eighteen Springs
- Forever And Sunsmell
- In A Landscape

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- OBSCURE RECORDS (OBS5) LP
- OBSCURE RECORDS (EGED 25) LP
- ANTILLES RECORDS (AN 7031) LP

Lyrics



> Zoom

Concerts
1976

Henry Cow

Disc 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- Ottawa Song
- Gloria Gloom
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins

Disc 2
- Oslo
- Groningen
- Udine
- Gronigen Again

- Robert Wyatt - vocals on *Bad Alchemy & Little Red Riding Hood Hits the Road*

- Dagmar Krause - voice, piano on *Ruins*
- Lindsay Cooper - bassoon, flute, oboe
- Tim Hodgkinson - organ, clarinet, alto saxophone
- Fred Frith - guitar, piano
- John Greaves - bass, voice, celeste, piano on *Little Red Riding Hood Hits the Road*
- Chris Cutler - drums

Tracks 6 & 7:
Recorded at the New London Theatre on 21.5.1975.

Album réédité en CD en 1995 et en

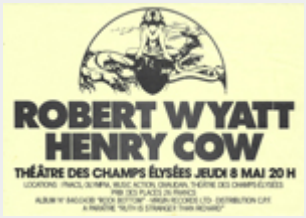
2006.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- COMPENDIUM (FIDARDO 1) 2xLP
- L'ORCHESTRA (OLD 01-02) 2xLP
- LTM (LM 1011-12) 2xLP
- ARIOLA (800-345-346) 2xLP
- CAROLINE (CAD 3002) 2xLP
- BROADCAST RECORDS (BC2) 2xLP



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

The Happless Child
(And Other Inscrutable Stories)
1976

Michael Mantler

- The Sinking Spell
- The Object-Lesson
- The Insect God
- The Doubtful Guest
- The Remembered Visit
- The Hapless Child

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Carla Bley - piano, clavinet, synthesizer
- Terje Rypdal - guitar
- Steve Swallow - bass
- Jack De Johnette - drums, percussion
- Alfreda Benge - speaker
- Nick Mason - speaker
- Albert Caulder - speaker

- WATT (4) LP
- ECM RECORDS (831 826-2) CD

Lyrics

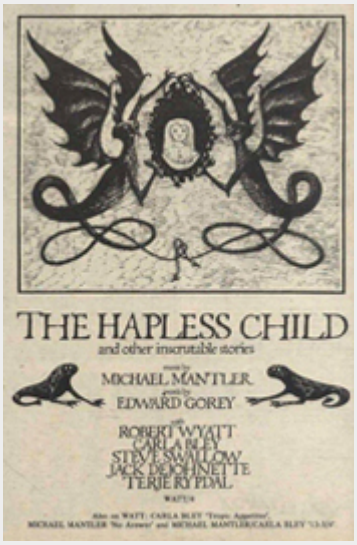


> Zoom

Odd Ditties
1976

Kevin Ayers

- Soon Soon Soon
- Singing A Song In The Morning
- Gemini Child
- Puis-je
- Butterfly Dance
- Stars
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Jolie Madame
- Lady Rachel
- Connie On A Rubber Band
- False Mexican Tourist Blues
- Dont Sing No More Sad Songs
- Take Me To Tahiti
- Caribbean Moon
- Star (Single Version)



> Zoom

- Whack Skins (Robert Wyatt) - drums

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar, bass
- David Bedford - piano
- The Ladybirds - backing vocals

- HARVEST (SHSM 2005) LP
- HARVEST (TOCP 65968) CD



> Zoom

"The Madcap Laughs"
And "Barrett"
1976

Syd Barrett

THE MADCAP LAUGHS
- Terrapin
- No Good Trying
- Love You
- No Man's Land
- Dark Globe
- Here I Go
- Octopus
- Golden Hair
- Long Gone
- She Took A Long Cold Look
- Feel
- If It's In You
- Late Night

BARRETT
- Baby Lemonade
- Love Song
- Dominoes
- It Is Obvious
- Maisie
- Gigolo Aunt
- Waiting My Arms In The Air/ I never Lied To You
- Wined And Dined
- Wolfpack
- Effervescing Elephant)

Réédition des deux premiers albums solo de Syd Barrett, The Madcap Laughs et Barrett.

- HARVEST-EMI (2C184-50. 351) 2xLP

Michael Mantler



> Zoom

Silence
1977

- I Walk With My Girl
- I Watch The Clouds
- It Is Curiously Hot
- When I Run
- Sometimes I See People
- Around Me Sits The Night
- She Was Looking Down
- For Instance
- A Long Way
- After My Work Each Day
- On Good Evenings

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion

- Carla Bley - piano, organ, vocals
- Kevin Coyne - vocals
- Chris Spedding - guitar
- Ron McClure - bass, double bass
- Clare Maher - cello

Words by Harold Pinter
(an adaptation of the play 'Silence')

- WATT (5) LP



> Zoom



> Zoom

Whatevershebringswesing
Bananamour
1977

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
- There Is Loving/Among Us/ There Is Loving
- Margaret
- Oh My
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Champagne Cowboy Blues
- Lullaby

Disc 2
- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Hymn
- Beware Of The Dog Bath

Réédition française de Whatevershebringswesing et Banamour.

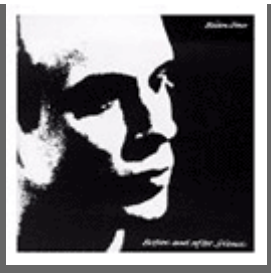
- PATHE MARCONI (2C 150-52507/8) 2xLP

Brian Eno

- No One Receiving
- Backwater
- Kurt's Rejoinder
- Energy Fools The Magician
- King's Lead Hat
- Here He Comes

- Robert Wyatt (alias Shirley Williams) - brush timbales, time

- Brian Eno - vocals, backing vocals, jazz piano,



> Zoom

Before And After Science
1977

- Julie With...
- By This River
- Through Hollow Lands
- Spider And I

synthesizer, keyboards, bells, melody guitar, Moog
- Kurt Schwitters - vocals (from the *Ur Sonata*)
- Percy Jones - analogue delay bass
- Dave Mattacks - drums
- Fred Frith - cascade guitars
- Bill MacCormick - bass

- ISLAND (ILPS 9478) LP

↑



> Zoom

Ambient 1 Music For Airports
1978

Brian Eno

- 1/1 [B. Eno/R.Wyatt/R. Davies]
- 2/1
- 1/2
- 2/2

- Robert Wyatt - piano

- Brian Eno - guitar, keyboards, devices
- Christa Fast, Christine Gomez, Inge Zeininger - vocals

All tracks were composed by Eno except *1/1*, which was co-composed by Eno with Robert Wyatt and Rhett Davies.

- AMBIENT EG (AMB 001) LP
- EDITIONS EG (EEGCD 17) CD

↑



> Zoom

Sanity Stomp
1980

Kevin Coyne

Disc 1
- Fat Man
- The Monkey Man
- How Strange
- Somewhere In My Mind
- When (See You Again?)
- Taking On The World
- No Romance
- Too Dark (One For The Hero)
- Admit You're Wrong
- Formula Eyes

Disc 2
- New Motorway
- A Loving Hand
- Fear Of Breathing
- In Silence
- Taking On The Bowers
- Wonderful Wilderness
- My Wife Says
- The World Speaks
- You Can't Kill Us

- Robert Wyatt - drums, keyboards, co-composer of *Taking On The Bowers*

- Kevin Coyne - guitar, keyboards, vocals
- Brian Godding - guitar, keyboards
- Bob Ward - guitar

- VIRGIN (VGD 3504) 2xLP

↑



> Zoom

Afters
1980

Hatfield & The North

- Lets Eat (Real Soon)
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath
- Mumps
- Share It
- Lounging There Trying
- The Stubbs Effect
- Big Jobs (Poo Poo Extract)
- Going Up To People And Tinkling
- Calyx
- (Big) John Wayne Socks Psychology On The Jaw
- Chaos At The Greasy Spoon
- Halfway Between Heaven And Earth
- Oh Len's Nature!

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Stewart - keyboards
- Pip Pyle - drums and noise

Compilation.

Calyx est extrait de Hatfield And The North.

- VIRGIN (VR5) LP

- Lything And Gracing
- Prenut
- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut





> Zoom

Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports
1981

Nick Mason

- Can't Get My Motor To Start
- I Was Wrong
- Siam
- Hot River
- Boo To You Too
- Do Ya ?
- Wervin'
- I'm A Mineralist

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Karen Kraft - vocals
- Carla Bley - keyboards
- Michael Mantler - trumpet
- Gary Windo - tenor sax, bass clarinet, flute
- Gary Valente - trombone
- Howard Johnson - tuba
- Chris Spedding - guitar
- Steve Swallow - bass
- Nick Mason - drums, percussion
- Terry Adams - piano, harmonica, clavinet

Recording at Grog Kill Studio, NYC in October 1979.

- HARVEST (SHSP 4116) LP
- HARVEST (2C070-64216) LP
- CBS (25AP 2047) LP
- COLUMBIA (A 37307) LP
- SONY (SRCS 6408) CD

Lyrics



Fictitious Sports Promotional
1981

Nick Mason

- Hot River
- Can't Get My Motor To Start

Promo version.

Hot River est extrait de Fictitious Sports.

- COLUMBIA (AS 964) EP



> Zoom

Odyshape
1981

The Raincoats

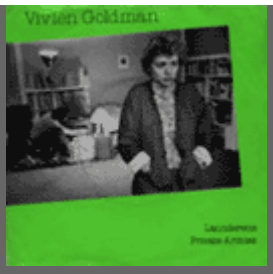
- Shouting Out Loud
- Family Treet
- Only Loved At Night
- Dancing In My Head
- And Then It´s O.K.
- Baby Song
- Red Shoes
- Go Away

- Robert Wyatt - drums on *And Then It's OK*

- Gina Birch - bass, balaphone
- Vicky Aspinall - guitar, vocal
- Ana da Silva - guitar
- Ingrid Weiss - finger cymbal

- ROUGH TRADE (ROUGH13) LP

Vivien Goldman



> Zoom 1 2

Launderette/Private Armies
1981

- Launderette
- Private Armies

- Robert Wyatt - percussion,

- Vivien Goldman - vocals
- Keith Levene - guitar
- Vicky Aspinall - violin
- George (Oban) Levi - bass - percussion
- Steve Beresford - toy piano
- Shooz - drum bits

Digital reissue in 2020 (Staubgold/Bandcamp) + a Limited Edition Single of 500 copies.

- WINDOW WIND (9999-05) S
- STAUBGOLD (155) S

↑



> Zoom 1 2

Dirty Washing
1981

Vivien Goldman

- Launderette
- Private Armies
- P.A. Dub

Réédition du single *Launderette/Private Armies* complété par le morceau P.A. Dub

- 99 RECORDS (99-05) EP

↑



> Zoom

Popular Classical
1981

Epic Soundtracks

- Jelly, Babies
- A 3-Acre Floor
- Pop In Packets

- Robert Wyatt (Robert Ellidge) - (muddy) mouth

- Epic Soundtracks - piano, bass, drums, harmony vocal
- Vicky Aspinall - violin
- Georgie Born - cello
- Flossie (Robert & Alfie's dog) - barks

- ROUGH TRADE (ROUGH084) S

↑



> Zoom

Music For Airplay
1981

Brian Eno

- Baby's On Fire
- Dead Finks Don't Talk
- The Great Pretender
- Third Uncle
- St. Elmo's Fire
- I'll Come Running
- Everything Merges With The Night
- No One Receiving
- Backwater
- King's Lead Hat

Promo Version.

The Great Pretender et *Third Uncle* sont extraits de l'albumTaking Tiger Mountain.

- EG RECORDS (ENO DJ) LP

↑

Shiny Men



Again
1981

- One Of The Big Shiny Men
- To A Spaceman
- **Dream Pussy**
- Secret Monkeys
- Ape Ship
- C Jam Bop Larrence Funka-Monk-a Blues
- Cheap Emotion
- Too Wonderful
- Back Back
- Institution
- Model Citizen

- Robert Wyatt - singing, scat gurgling

- Chris Lavelle - vocal, guitar
- Chris O'Neill - keyboards
- Jerry Soffe - bass
- Frank Hockney - drums, percussion

- UNITED DAIRIES EXPERIMENTAL (EX 02)



> Zoom

The Sweetest Girl
1981

Scritti Politti

- The Sweetest Girl
- Lions After Slumbers

- Robert Wyatt - keyboards

- Green - vocals, guitar
- Joe Gang - bass
- Nial Jinks - bass
- Lorenza, Mae, Jackie - chorus
- Tom Morley - Linn drums

- ROUGH TRADE (RT 091) S
- ROUGH TRADE (RT 11) S
- ROUGH TRADE (TRADE 2/12) EP



> Zoom

The Sweetest Girl
German Edition
1981

Scritti Politti

- The Sweetest Girl
- Lions After Slumbers

-German Edition of The Sweetest Girl.

- ROUGH TRADE (6005 140) S



> Zoom 1 2

The Sweetest Girl
French Edition
1981

Scritti Politti

- The Sweetest Girl
- Confidence

-French Edition of The Sweetest Girl.

- ROUGH TRADE (100 162) S

Ben Watt



> Zoom

Summer Into Winter
1982

- Walter And John
- Aquamarine
- Slipping Slowly
- Another Conversation With Myself
- A Girl In Winter

- Robert Wyatt - piano & vocal on *Walter And John*, piano on *A Girl in Winter*

- Ben Watt - vocals, guitar

- CHERRY RED (12 CHERRY 36)
  EP



> Zoom 1 2

Man To Woman
1982

Marsha Hunt

- Call Me Bitch
- Nu Age Shuffle>
- All She Wanted Was Marlon Brando
- A Million Tears Ago

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Marsha Hunt - vocal
- Jeanette Landrey - vocal
- Eddie Kemp - vocal
- Christine Ellerbeck - vocal
- Other musicians uncredited

- VIRGIN (single non
  commercialisé)



Songs To Remember
1982

Scritti Politti

- Asylums In Jerusalem
- A Slow Soul
- Jacques Derrida
- Lions After Slumber
- Faithless
- Sex
- Rock A Boy Blue
- Gettin Havin And Holdin
- The Sweetest Girl

- Robert Wyatt - keyboards

- Green - vocals, guitar
- Joe Gang - bass
- Nial Jinks - bass
- Lorenza, Mae, Jackie - chorus
- Tom Morley - Linn drums

- ROUGH TRADE (ROUGH20) LP



> Zoom

Asylums In Jerusalem
1982

Scritti Politti

- Asylums In Jerusalem
- Jacques Derrida

As*ylums In Jerusalem* et *Jacques Derrida* sont extraits de Songs To Remember.

- ROUGH TRADE (RT 111) EP

Ben Watt



> Zoom

North Marine Drive
1983

- On Box Hill
- Some Things Don't Matter
- Lucky One
- Empty Bottles
- North Marine Drive
- Waiting Like Mad
- Thirst For Knowledge
- Long Time No Sea
- You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go
- Walter And John
- Aquamarine
- Slipping Slowly
- Another Conversation With Myself
- Girl In Winter

Réédition CD des albums North Marine Drive et Summer Into Winter.

Walter And John et *Girl In Winter* sont extraits de Summer Into Winter.

- CHERRY RED (BRED 40) CD



> Zoom

The Kevin Ayers Collection
1983

Kevin Ayers

- The Lady Rachel
- May I?
- Puis-Je?
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Caribbean Moon
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- After The Show
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Once Upon An Ocean
- City Waltz
- Blue Ayers
- Star Ayers
- Blaming It All On Love
- Strange Song
- Miss Hanagal
- Money, Money, Money

Compilation.

The Lady Rachel est extrait de l'album Joy Of A Toy.

- SEE FOR MILES (LP)
- SEE FOR MILES (SEECD 117) CD



> Zoom

Working Backwards
1983-1973

1983

Brian Eno

Disc 1
APOLLO - ATMOSPHERES & SOUNDTRACKS
- Under Stars
- The Secret Place
- Matta
- Signals
- An Ending (ascent)
- Under Stars II
- Drift
- Silver Morning
- Deep Blue Day
- Weightless
- Always Returning
- Stars

Disc 2
ON LAND
- Lizard Point
- The Lost Day
- Tal Coat
- Shadow
- Lantern Marsh
- Unfamiliar Wind (Leeks Hills)
- A Clearing
- Dunwich Beach, Autumn, 1960

Disc 3
MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS
- 1/1
- 2/1
- 1/2
- 2/2

Disc 4
MUSIC FOR FILMS
- Aragon
- From The Same Hill
- Inland Sea
- Two Rapid Formations
- Slow Water
- Sparrowfall 1
- Sparrowfall 2
- Sparrowfall 3
- Alternative 3

Coffret-compilation de 11 albums (Rareties est un maxi 12") avec extraits de Music For Airports, Before and After Science et Taking Tiger Mountain.

- EG RECORDS (EGBS 002) 11xLP

- Quartz
- Events In Dense Fog
- 'There Is Nobody'
- Patrolling Wire Borders
- A Measured Room
- Task Force
- M386
- Strange Light
- Final Sunset

Disc 5
BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE
- No One Receiving
- Backwater
- Kurt's Rejoinder
- Energy Fools The Magician
- King's Lead Hat
- Here He Comes
- Julie With...
- By This River
- Through Hollow Lands
- Spider and I

Disc 6
DISCREET MUSIC
- Discreet Music
- Three Variations On The Canon In D Major By Johann Pachelbel
  I) Fullness Of Wind
  II) French Catalogues
  III) Brutal Ardour

Disc 7
ANOTHER GREEN WORLD
- Sky Saw
- Over Fire Island
- St. Elmo's Fire
- In Dark Trees
- The Big Ship
- I'll Come Running
- Another Green World
- Sombre Reptiles
- Little Fishes
- Golden Hours
- Becalmed
- Zawinul/Lava
- Everything Merges With The Night
- Spirits Drifting

Disc 8
TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN
- Burning Airlines Give You So Much More
- Back In Judy's Jungle
- The Fat Lady Of Limbourg
- Mother Whale Eyeless
- The Great Pretender
- Third Uncle
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- The True Wheel
- China My China
- Taking Tiger Mountain

Disc 9
HERE COME THE WARM JETS
- Needles In The Camel's Eye
- The Paw Paw Negro Blowtorch
- Baby's On Fire
- Cindy Tells Me
- Driving Me Backwards
- On Some Faraway Beach
- Blank Frank
- Dead Finks Don't Talk
- Some Of Them Are Old
- Here Comes The Warm Jets

Disc 10
MUSIC FOR FILMS VOLUME 2
- The Dove
- Roman Twilight
- Matta
- Dawn, Marshland
- Climate Study
- The Secret Place
- An Ending
- Always Returning (I)
- Signals
- Under Stars
- Drift Study
- Approaching Taidu
- Always Returning (II)

Disc 11
RARITIES
- Seven Deadly Finns

- The Lion Sleeps Tonight (Wimoweh)
- Strong Flashes Of Light
- More Volts
- Mist/Rythm



> Zoom

Venceremos
1984

Working Week

- Venceremos (We Will Win)
- Bottom End

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Simon Booth - guitars
- Larry Stabbins - soprano sax, tenor sax, flute
- Harry Beckett - trumpet, flugelhorn
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Stuart Matthewman - tenor sax
- Dave Bitelli - clarinet, baritone sax
- Chuchow Mercham - double bass
- Kim Burton - piano
- Mark Taylor - drums
- Dawson - percussion
- Bosco D'Oliveira - percussion
- Tracey Thorn - vocal on 1
- Claudia Figueroa - vocal on 1

- PALADIN/VIRGIN RECORDS (VIN45144) EP

Lyrics



> Zoom

Storm Of Light / Venceremos
1984

Working Week

- Storm Of Light
- Venceremos - We Will Win (Bossa)

- VIRGIN RECORDS (106 818) S



> Zoom

The Last Nightingale
1984

Various Artists

- Moments Of Delight
- In The Dark Year
- Back In The Playground Blues
- Bittern Storm Revisited
- On The Beach At Cambridge

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Lindsay Cooper - piano, electric piano, bassoon, sopranino sax
- Chris Cutler - drums, etc.
- Bill Gilonis - guitar, bass
- Tim Hodgkinson - piano, Moog, baritone sax, alto sax

SUPPORT THE MINERS & THEIR FAMILIES

- RE RECORDS (RE1984) EP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom

The Wind Of Change
1985

Robert Wyatt With The SWAPO Singers

- The Wind Of Change
- Namibia

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Jerry Dammers - piano, synthesizers, guitar
- Ben Mendelsohn - guitar
- Lynval Golding - rhythm guitar
- Mark Lockheart - soprano sax
- Claire Hurst - saxophone
- Dick Cuthell - cornet
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Ernest Mogotsi Mothle - double bass
- Roy Dodds - drums
- Bience Gawanas - vocal
- Vaino Shivute - vocal
- Lohmeier Angula - vocal
- Theo Angula - vocal
- Clarina Simbwayi - vocal
- Richard Muzira - vocal

- ROUGH TRADE (RT168) S
- VIRGIN/ROUGH TRADE (80 222) EP

Critiques/Reviews

Lyrics



> Zoom



> Zoom

So Long Trouble
1985

Akimbo

- So Long Trouble
- The Machine
- G & G Blues
- The Criminal
- Kalimbo

- Robert Wyatt - vocal on *The Machine* and Human Wood Block on *The Criminal*

- Akimbo
- Louis Colan - double bass

- FSIF RECORDS (LP003) EP

Brian Eno



> Zoom

More Blank Than Frank
1986

- Here He Comes
- Everything Merges With The Night
- On Some Faraway Beach
- I'll Come Running (To Tie Your Shoe)
- Taking Tiger Mountain
- Backwater
- St Elmo's Fire
- No One Receiving
- The Great Pretender
- King's Lead Hat

- Robert Wyatt - percussion on *Taking Tiger Mountain*

Taking Tiger Mountain est extrait de Taking Tiger Mountain.

- EG (EGLP 65) LP

↑



> Zoom

Desert Island Selection
1986

Brian Eno

- Here He Comes
- Everything Merges With the Night
- I'll Come Running (To Tie Your Shoes)
- On Some Faraway Beach
- Spirits Drifting
- Back In Judy's Jungle
- St. Elmo's Fire
- No One Receiving
- Julie With...
- Taking Tiger Mountain
- 1/1

- Robert Wyatt - percussion on *Taking Tiger Mountain*, piano on *1/1*

Taking Tiger Mountain est extrait de TakingTiger Mountain et *1/1* est extrait de Ambiant # 1.

- EG (CD65) CD

↑



> Zoom

Letters Home
1986

News From Babel

- Who Will Accuse ?
- Heart Of Stone (Megalopolis)
- Banknote
- Moss
- Dragon At The Core
- Dark Matter
- Waited/Justice
- Fast Food
- Late Evening

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Lindsay Cooper - piano, keyboards, bassoon, sopranino sax, alto sax
- Chris Cutler - drums, percussion
- Zeena Parkins - harp, accordion
- Bill Gilonis - guitar, bass
- Dagmar Krause - vocals
- Sally Potter - vocals
- Phil Minton - vocals

- ReR RECORDS (1.14) LP

Lyrics

↑



> Zoom

1987

Claustrofobia

- Repulsión
- Carlove
- Tu Traición
- La Sombra Sabe
- ¡Algo En El Amor Tiene Un Sabor Tan Amargo!
- Velvet Nights
- Mis Noches Con Sherezade
- Mamma Winnie
- La Elegancia De Tus Lágrimas
- Sex Machine
- Seppuku

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, backing vocals

- Pedro Burruezo - guitars, vocal
- Maria Jose Pena - piano
- Antoni Baltar - drum programming, bass synthesizer

Une réédition du LP a été publiée la même année avec la même référence et un morceau supplémentaire: *Los Milicianos*.

- JUSTINE SUMMER RECORDS (C-012) LP



> Zoom

Repulsion (Reissue)
1987

Claustrofobia

- Repulsión
- Carlove
- Tu Traición
- La Sombra Sabe
- ¡Algo En El Amor Tiene Un Sabor Tan Amargo!
- Los Milicianos
- Velvet Nights
- Mis Noches Con Sherezade
- Mamma Winnie
- La Elegancia De Tus Lágrimas
- Sex Machine
- Seppuku

Cette réédition de Repulsion a été publiée la même année avec la même référence et un morceau supplémentaire: *Los Milicianos*.

- JUSTINE SUMMER RECORDS (C-012) LP



> Zoom

Good Times - Die Katze
1987

Eric Burdon

- Good Times
- River Deep, Mountain High
- Sky Pilot

River Deep, Mountain High est extrait de Love Is.

- POLYDOR (887 349-1) EP



> Zoom

Guitarissimo (1975-1982)
1987

Phil Manzanera

- K-Scope
- Frontera
- TNK
- Criollo
- Diamond Head
- You Are Here
- Rude Awakening
- Listen Now
- Caracas
- Lagrima
- Europe 70-1
- Island
- That Falling Feeling
- Big Dome, Pt. 1
- City Of Light
- Initial Speed
- Big Dome, Pt. 2

Compilation.

Frontera est extrait de Diamond Head.

- EG RECORDS (EGLP69) LP



Syd Barrett

- Opel
- Clowns And Jugglers
- Rats
- Golden Hear
- Dolly Rocker
- Word Song
- Wined And Dined
- Swan Lee (Silas Lang)
- Birdie Hop
- Let's Split
- Lanky (Part One)
- Wouldn't You Miss Me (Dark Globe)
- Milky Way
- Golden Hair

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Syd Barrett - vocal, guitar
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- HARVEST (SHSP4126) LP
- HARVEST (CDGO 2055) CD



Opel
1988



Pay Check
1988



> Zoom

Many Have No Speech
1988

Working Week

- Venceremos (We Will Win)
- Storm Of Light
- Sweet Nothing
- I Thought I'd Never See You Again
- Soul Train
- South Africa
- Friend (Touche Pas A Mon Pote)
- Strut
- Largo

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Simon Booth - guitars
- Larry Stabbins - soprano sax, tenor sax, flute
- Harry Beckett - trumpet, flugelhorn
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Stuart Matthewman - tenor sax
- Dave Bitelli - clarinet, baritone sax
- Chuchow Mercham - double bass
- Kim Burton - piano
- Mark Taylor - drums
- Dawson - percussion
- Bosco D'Oliveira - percussion
- Tracey Thorn - vocal on 1
- Claudia Figueroa - vocal on 1

- VIRGIN (2-90997) CD

Michael Mantler

- Intro
- Just As Someone
- Ce Qu'a De Pis
- Alles Scheint Rand
- Imagine
- In The End
- Vieil Aller
- Rien Nul
- Tant De Temps
- En Face
- Chaque Jour
- Pss
- En Cadence
- Something There
- Comrade
- Den Atem Ausget Ausget
- A L'abattoir
- And What
- D'ou La Voix
- Fous Qui Disiez
- Merk, Jetzt
- Son Ombre
- Reve
- Life Connects
- Prisonniers
- Silence
- Viele Haben Keine Sprache

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- The Danish Radio Concert Orchestra
- Michael Mantler - trumpet
- Rick Fenn - guitar
- Marianne Faithfull - vocals
- Jack Bruce - vocals

- WATT RECORDS (19) LP
- ECM RECORDS (835 580-2) CD

Lyrics

Jimi Hendrix Experience

- Stone Free
- Radio One Theme
- Day Tripper
- Killing Floor

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *Day Tripper*



Radio One
1988

- Love Or Confusion
- Drivin' South
- Catfish Blues
- Wait Until Tomorrow
- Hear My Train A Comin'
- Hound Dog
- Fire
- Hoochie Koochie Man
- Purple Haze
- Spanish Castle Magic
- Hey Joe
- Foxy Lady
- Burning Of The Midnight Lamp

- Jimi Hendrix - guitar, vocals
- Noel Redding - bass, backing vocals
- Mitch Mitchell - drums, backing vocals

Recorded in December 15, 1967 at The Playhouse Theatre, London (BBC Top Gear recording).

- WMD (432012) CD



> Zoom

Core
1988

A Conspiracy International Project

- Feeder
- Trapezoid
- Future Shock
- **Unmasked**
- Overabyss
- Guest + Host=Ghost
- **Core**

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Chris Carter - keyboards, percussion, vocals
- Cosey Fanni Tutti - keyboards, percussion, vocals

- NETTWERK/CAPITOL RECORDS (NTL 30022) LP
- PLAY IT AGAIN SAM (BIAS 95) LP
- PLAY IT AGAIN SAM (BIAS 95-CD) CD



> Zoom

The Peel Sessions
1988

Jimi Hendrix Experience

- Radio One Theme
- **Day Tripper**
- Wait Until Tomorrow
- Hear My Trai A Comin'
- Spanish Castle Magic

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *Day Tripper*

- Jimi Hendrix - guitar, vocals
- Noel Redding - bass, backing vocals
- Mitch Mitchell - drums, backing vocals

Recorded in December 15, 1967 at The Playhouse Theatre, London (BBC Top Gear recording).

- STRANGE FRUIT RECORDS (SFPS065) EP
- STRANGE FRUIT RECORDS (SFPSCD065) CD-S



Radio Radio
1989

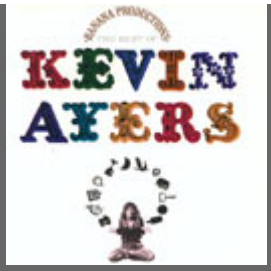
Jimi Hendrix Experience

- **Day Tripper**
- Hoochie Koockie Man
- Hound Dog
- Hear My Train A Comin'
- Stone Free

Promo Version.

Recorded in December 15, 1967 at The Playhouse Theatre, London (BBC Top Gear recording).

- RYKO (PRO-00785) CD



> Zoom

The Best Of
1989

Kevin Ayers

- Butterfly Dance
- Girl On A Swing
- Soon Soon Soon
- Sweet Deceiver
- Caribbean Moon
- Irreversible Neural Damage
- Gemini Child
- Lady Rachel
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- There Is Loving/Among Us/There Is Loving
- Clarietta Rag
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine**/Colores Para Dolores**
- Stars
- Hat Song
- Singing A Song In The Mornng
- Ballad Of ASalesman Who Sold Himself
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Diminished But Not Finished
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well

Compilation.

Soon Soon Soon est extrait de Odd Ditties ; *Clarietta Rag* est extrait de Joy Of A Toy ; *Colores Para Dolores* et *Clarence In Wonderland* sont extraits de Shooting At The Moon.

- HARVEST (EM 2032) 2xLP
- HARVEST (CDP 7 92618 2) CD
- HARVEST (CZ 176) CD



> Zoom 1 2

The Early Years
1989

Brian Eno

Disc 1
ANOTHER GREEN WORLD
- Sky saw
- Over Fire Island
- St. Elmo's Fire
- In Dark Trees
- The Big Ship
- I'll Come Running
- Another Green World
- Sombre Reptiles
- Little Fishes
- Golden Hours
- Becalmed
- Zawinul/Lava
- Everything Merges With The Night
- Spirits Drifting

Disc 2
BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE
- No One Receiving
- Backwater
- Kurt's Rejoinder
- Energy Fools The Magician
- King's Lead Hat
- Here He Comes
- Julie With...
- By This River
- Through Hollow Lands
- Spider and I

Disc 3
APOLLO
- Under Stars
- Secret Place
- Matta
- Signals
- Ending (Ascent)
- Under Stars II
- Drift
- Silver Morning
- Deep Blue Day
- Weightless
- Always Returning
- Stars

Disc 4
THE EARLY YEARS
- The Court Of The Crimson King (King Crimson)
- Lucky Man (Emerson Lake & Palmer)
- Get It On (T.Rex)
- Virginia Plain (Roxy Music)
- St. Elmo's Fire (Brian Eno)
- Love Is The Drug (Roxy Music)
- Miss Shapiro (801)
- Let's Stick Togheter (Brian Ferry)
- In The Dead Of Night (UK)
- Dance Away (Roxy Music)
- Northstar (Robert Fripp & Daryl Hall)

Coffret de 4 CD publié à l'occasion du 20ème anniversaire d'EG records.
4 CD box issued in celebration of the 20th anniversary of EG Records.

Kurt's Rejoinder et *Through Hollow Lands* sont extraits de Before And After Science.

- EG RECORDS (EGBC 7)
  4xCD

- America Is Waiting (Brian Eno & David Byrne)
- Elephant Talk (King Crimson)
- Love Like Blood (Killing Joke)
- Is Your Love Strong Enough ? (Bryan Ferry)
- Perpetuum Mobile (Penguin Cafe Orchestra)



The Mystery And The History Of The Planet Gong
1989



> Zoom

The Mystery And The History Of The Planet Gong
2000

Gong

Disc 1
- Concert Intro
- Captain Shaw And Mr. Gilbert
- **Love Makes Sweet Music (Live)**
- DLT Interview
- Riot 1968
- Dreaming It
- I Feel So Lazy
- And I Tried So Hard
- Radio Gnome Pre-Mix
- Pot Head Pixies
- Majick Brother
- Line Up
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Breakthrough Interview

Disc 2
- Where Have All The Hours Gone?
- Gong Poem
- Deya Goddess
- Opium For The People
- Red Alert
- 13/8
- Gliss U Well
- Future
- The Dream
- Chernobyl Rain
- Let Me Be One

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Daevid Allen - guitar

- DEMI-MONDE (DMLP 018) 2xLP
- GET BACK (GET-577) 2xLP
- NMC MUSIC (PILOT67) 2xCD



Beauty
1990

Ryuichi Sakamoto

- You Do Me
- Calling From Tokyo
- Rose Music
- Asadoya Yunta
- Futique
- Amore
- **We Love You**
- Diabaram
- Pile Of Time
- Romance
- Chinsagu No Hana

- Robert Wyatt - lead vocal

- Dali Kimoko-N'Dala - guitar
- Paco Ye - percussion, vocal
- Sibiri Outtara - percussion, vocal
- Seidou 'Baba' Outtara - percussion, vocal
- Pino Palladino - bass
- Milton Cordona - shekere
- Yoriko Ganeko - vocal
- Misako Koja - vocal
- Kazumi Tamaki - vocal
- Ryuichi Sakamoto - keyboards, vocal
- Brian Wilson - vocals

- VIRGIN (CDVUS 14) CD

Ryuichi Sakamoto

- You Do Me
- **We Love You Remix**
- Amore (piano version)

Version alternative de *We Love You* extrait de Beauty.

- VIRGIN (VJCP-1404) EP



> Zoom

You Do Me
1990



We Love You
1990

Ryuichi Sakamoto

- We Love You (Remix # 2)
- Strong Relax
- Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence - Drives R.S.)

Version alternative de *We Love You* extrait de Beauty.

- VIRGIN AMERICA (VJCP-1417) CD-EP



> Zoom

Good Times
1990

Eric Burdon

- House Of The Rising Sun
- Good Times
- Hey Gyp
- When I Was Young
- I'm An Animal
- Ring Of Fire
- See See Rider
- San Franciscan Nights
- Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood
- Winds Of Change
- Sky Pilot
- Don't Bring Me Down
- We've Gotta Get Out Of This Place
- Paint It Black
- River Deep, Mountain High
- It's My Life
- Closer To The Truth

Compilation.

River Deep, Mountain High est extrait de Love Is.

- POLYSTAR (835 677-2) CD



Turn Things Upside Down
1990

The Happy End

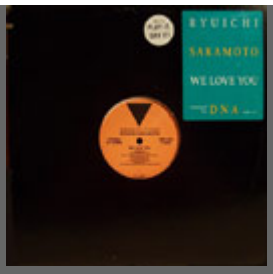
- The Oakey Strike Evictions
- Turn Things Upside Down
- What Keeps Mankind Alive?
- Nkosi Sikelelei' Afrika/ANC
- Starstruck
- Sailing The Seas (Depends Upon The Helmsman)
- The Big Rock Candy Mountain
- Rhumba Por Nicaragua
- The Red Flag

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- 22 pieces big band

- COOKING VINYL (033) LP
- COOKING VINYL (033) CD

Ryuichi Sakamoto



> Zoom

We Love You
Remixed By D.N.A.
1991

- We Love You (12" Mix) Remix DNA
- We Love You (Instrumental) Remix DNA
- Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence

Version alternative de *We Love You* remixé par D.N.A. extrait de Beauty.

- VIRGIN (DMD 1597) LP

↑



> Zoom

The Best Of Eric Burdon
1991

Eric Burdon And The Animals

- Don't Bring Me Down
- See See Rider
- Inside Looking Out
- Hey Gyp
- Help Me Girl
- When I Was Young
- Girl Named Sandoz
- San Franciscan Nights
- Good Times
- Anything
- Winds of Change
- Monterey
- Sky Pilot
- White Houses
- River Deep, Mountain High

River Deep, Mountain High est extrait de Love Is.

- POLYDOR (849 388-2) CD

↑



Calling Long Distance
1992

Jimi Hendrix

- The Burning Of the Midnight Lamp
- Little Miss Lover
- Foxy Lady
- Catfish Blues
- Oh Man, Is This Me or What ?
- Purple Haze
- Fire
- Getting my Heart Back Together Again
- Spanish Castle Magic
- Slow Walkin'Talk
- Instrumental improvisation
- Hey Baby (The Land Of The New Rising Sun)
- Red House

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals, piano, organ

- Jimi Hendrix - bass on *Slow Walkin'talk*

Recorded in October 1968.

- UNIVIBES RECORDS (UV 1001) CD

↑



> Zoom

Octopus
The Best of Syd Barrett
1992

Syd Barrett

- Octopus
- Swan Lee
- Baby Lemonade
- Late Night
- Wined and Dined
- Golden Hair
- Gigolo Aunt
- Wolfpack
- It Is Obvious
- Lanky, Pt. 1
- No Good Trying
- Clowns & Jugglers
- Waving My Arms In The Air
- Opel

Compilation

No Good Trying est extrait de The Madcap Laughs.

- CLEOPATRA (CLEO 57712) CD

↑





> Zoom 1 2

Darn It!
1993

Paul Haines

Disc 1
- Threats That Matter
- **Curtsy**
- What This Was Going To Suppose To Mean
- Funnybird Song
- Outside The City
- Art In Heaven
- Rawalpindi Blues
- Sticks In The Mud
- There Aren't These Things
- Paramedicaux Erotiques
- Jubilee
- On The Way To Elsewhere And Here
- Inexplicably
- Poem For Gretchen Ruth

Disc 2
- Just When I Thought
- This Dedication
- Threats That Count
- What This Was Going To Suppose To Mean
- Breakfast
- Snow Variations On Darn It!
- Darn It
- Route Doubt
- Ask Me If You Know
- Those Sweet Blue Olives Of Bombay
- Hello
- Mrs. Dressup
- Third World Two Medley: She Was Showing Me/Boint Liver
- Breakfast (Late)
- Please Fasten Your Seatbelt Sign
- Testing Testing
- Darn It! (Down In Back) (Reprise)
- Threats That Can't Read
- C'Etait Dans La Nuit

- Robert Wyatt - voices, keyboards, percussion

- Evan Parker - soprano sax

- AMERICAN CLAVE (1014/1018) 2xCD

Lyrics

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Live 1963
1993

Daevid Allen Trio

- Love Is A Careless Sea
- My Head Is A Nightclub
- Capacity Travel
- The Song Of The Jazzman
- Dear Olde Benny Green Is A Turning In His Grave
- Ya Sunne Wot
- Fred Le Poisson Avec Une Frite Sur Le Dos

- Robert Wyatt - drums, homemade trumpet, backing vocals

- Daevid Allen - vocals
- Mike Ratledge - piano
- Kevin Ayers - bass on "Fred le poisson"
- Hugh Hopper- bass

Recorded at The Marquee Club, London, 1963, with one microphone on a Philips monophonics domestic tape recorder).

- VOICEPRINT (VP122) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Box I - Instrumental
1993

Brian Eno

Disc 1
- Another Green World
- Energy Fools The Magician
- Dover Beach
- Slow Water
- Chemin De Fer
- Empty Landscape
- Reactor
- Secret
- Don't Look Back
- Marseilles
- Two Rapid Formations
- Sparrowfall #1
- Sparrowfall #2
- Sparrowfall #3
- Events in Dense Fog
- 'There Is Nobody'
- Patrolling Wire Borders

Coffret-compilation de 3 albums avec la présence de Robert Wyatt sur un titre extrait de Music For Airports.

- VIRGIN (ENOBX1) 3xCD

- Measured Room
- Task Force
- M386
- Final Sunset
- Dove
- Roman Twilight
- Dawn, Marshland
- Always Returning I
- Signals
- Drift Study
- Approaching Taidu
- Always Returning II
- Asian River

Disc 2
- Theme From Creation
- Saint Tom
- Warszawa (David Bowie)
- Chemistry
- Courage
- Moss Garden (David Bowie)
- Tension Block
- Strong Flashes Of Light
- More Volts
- Mist/Rhythm
- Ho Renomo - Cluster
- Stream With Bright Fish
- Fleeting Smile
- Arc Of Doves (Harold Budd)
- Stars
- Index of Metals

Disc 3
- 1/1
- Ikebukuro
- Lost Day
- Thursday Afternoon
- Discreet Music
- Dunwich Beach, Autumn 1960
- Neroli



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Box II - Vocal
1993

Brian Eno

Disc 1
- Needle In The Camel's Eye
- Baby's On Fire
- Cindy Tells Me
- On Some Faraway Beach
- Blank Frank
- Dead Finks Don't Talk
- Some Of Them Are Old
- Here Come The Warm Jets
- Seven Deadly Finns
- Burning Airlines Give You So Much More
- Back In Judy's Jungle
- The Great Pretender
- Third Uncle
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- The True Wheel
- Taking Tiger Mountain
- The Lion Sleeps Tonight

Disc 2
- Sky Saw
- Over Fire Island
- St. Elmo's Fire
- In Dark Trees
- The Big Ship
- I'll Come Running
- Sombre Reptiles
- Golden Hours
- Becalmed
- Zawinul / Lava
- Everything Merges
- Spirits Drifting
- No One Receiving
- Backwater
- Kurt's Rejoinder
- King's Lead Hat
- Here He Comes
- Julie With...
- By The River
- Through Hollow Lands
- Spider & I

Disc 3
- R.A.F.
- America Is Waiting

Coffret-compilation de 3 albums avec la présence de Robert Wyatt sur des titres extraits de Before and After Science et Taking Tiger Mountain.

- VIRGIN (ENOBX2) 3xCD

- Regiment
- Jezebel Spirit
- Wireshock
- Ali Click
- Spinning Away
- Empty Frame
- The River
- The Soul Of Carmen Miranda
- The Belldog
- I Fall Up
- Stiff
- Are They Thinking Of Me?
- Some Words
- Under
- Over



> Zoom

United Kingdoms
1993

Ultramarine

- Source
- Kingdom
- Queen Of The Moon
- Prince Rock
- Happy Land
- Urf
- English Kitten
- Instant Kitten
- Badgers
- Hooter
- Dizzy Fox
- No Time

- Robert Wyatt - vocals on *Kingdom* and *Happy Land*, backing vocals on *Queen of the Moon*, *Urf*, *Badgers* and *Dizzy Fox*

- Ian Cooper - acoustic guitar, keyboards, programming
- Paul Hammond - bass, keyboards, programming

- SIRE/GIANT (9 24528-2) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

Lyrics



> Zoom

Kingdom (Extended Mix)
1993

Ultramarine

- Kingdom
- Goldcrest
- Kingdom Extended Mix

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Ian Cooper - acoustic guitar, keyboards, programming
- Paul Hammond - bass, keyboards, programming

- BLANCO Y NEGRO (NEG65T) EP



> Zoom

Kingdom (Promo)
1993

Ultramarine

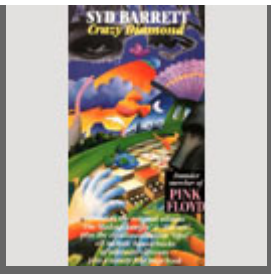
- Kingdom (Radio Edit)
- Kingdom
- Goldcrest (Radio Edit)

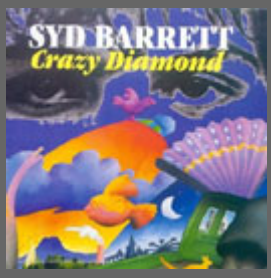
- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Ian Cooper - acoustic guitar, keyboards, programming
- Paul Hammond - bass, keyboards, programming

Promo Version.

- BLANCO Y NEGRO (NEG 065CDDJ) EP





> Zoom

Crazy Diamond
1993

Syd Barrett

Disc 1
THE MADCAP LAUGHS
- Terrapin
- No Good Trying
- Love You
- No Man's Land
- Dark Globe
- Here I Go
- Octopus
- Golden Hair
- Long Gone
- She Took A Long Cold Look
- Feel
- If It's In You
- Late Night
- Octopus - (take takes 1 & 2, bonus track)
- It's No Good Trying - (take 5)
- Love You - (take 1, bonus track)
- Love You - (take 3, bonus track)
- She Took A Long Cold Look - (take 4)
- Golden Hair - (take 5, bonus track)

Disc 2
BARRETT
- Baby Lemonade
- Love Song
- Dominoes
- It Is Obvious
- Rats
- Maisie
- Gigolo Aunt
- Waving My Arms In The Air
- I Never Lied To You
- Wined And Dined
- Wolfpack
- Effervescing Elephant
- Baby Lemonade - (take 1, bonus track)
- Waving My Arms In The Air - (take 1)
- I Never Lied To You - (take 1)
- Love Song - (take 1, bonus track)
- Dominoes - (take 1, bonus track)
- Dominoes - (take 2, bonus track)
- It Is Obvious - (take 2, bonus track)

Disc 3
OPEL
- Opel
- Clowns And Jugglers
- Rats
- Golden Hair
- Dolly Rocker
- Word Song
- Wined And Dined
- Swan Lee (Silas Lang)
- Birdie Hop
- Let's Split
- Lanky (Part One)
- Wouldn't You Miss Me (Dark Globe)
- Milky Way
- Golden Hair
- Gigolo Aunt - (take 9, bonus track)
- It Is Obvious - (take 3, bonus track)
- It Is Obvious - (take 5, bonus track)
- Clowns And Jugglers - (take 1)
- Late Night - (take 2, bonus track)
- Effervescing Elephant - (take 2)it

Coffret comprenant les 3 albums "officiels" de Syd Barrett et un livret de 24 pages. Robert Wyatt est présent sur The Madcap Laughs et Opel.

Réédition en 2005 sous la forme d'un 3xCD.

- HARVEST (0777 7 81412 2 8)
  3xCD



> Zoom

Faubert
1993

Serge Faubert

- C'est De L'Amour
- Aime-Moi
- Je Ne Dirai Plus
- Ce monde Sauvage
- Pour Que Mes Nuits Soient Plus Belles
- Primitif
- Notre Monde Est Beau
- Des R êves Bleus
- Insomnie
- Le Centre Du Monde
- Un Jour Sans Nuit

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *Primitif* and *Insomnie* + vocals after *Un jour sans nuit*

- Serge Faubert - guitar, bass, vocal, programming
- Claude Samblancat - harmonica, vocal
- Simon Hale - piano, arrangements and direction of strings, oboe
- John Mackenzie, Nicolas Fiszman - bass
- Geoff Dugmore, Jean-Pierre Onraedt, Graham Ward - drums



> Zoom

Coffret 3 Compact Discs
1994

Brian Eno

Disc 1
HERE COME THE WARM JETS
- Needles In the Camel's Eye
- Paw Paw Negro Blowtorch
- Baby's On Fire
- Cindy Tells Me
- Driving Me Backwards
- On Some Faraway Beach
- Blank Frank
- Dead Finks Don't Talk
- Some Of Them Are Old
- Here Come the Warm Jets

Disc 2
ANOTHER GREEN WORLD
- Sky Saw
- Over Fire Island
- St. Elmo's Fire
- In Dark Trees
- Big Ship
- I'll Come Running
- Another Green World
- Sombre Reptiles
- Little Fishes
- Golden Hours
- Becalmed
- Zawinul/Lava
- Everything Merges With The Night
- Spirits Drifting

Disc 3
BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE
- No One Receiving
- Backwater
- Kurt's Rejoinder
- Energy Fools The Magician
- King's Lead Hat
- Here He Comes
- Julie With...
- By This River
- Through Hollow Lands
- Spider and I

Réédition française des trois premiers albums de Brian Eno dont Before and After Science.

- VIRGIN (TPAK 36-8306852)
  3xCD



> Zoom

L'Expérience Acoustique
1994

François Bayle

Disque 1
THEMES-SONS
- Figure
- Déchirure
- Frémissement
- Respiration
- Cri / Silence

L'AVENTURE DU CRI
- L'Inconscient de La Forme
- Match nul
- Solitioude

LE LANGAGE DES FLEURS
- Substance Du Signe
- Métaphore
- Métaphore/Lignes Et Points
- Journal

Disque 2
LA PREUVE PAR LE SENS
- La Langue Inconnue
- Intervalles Bleus
- Uirapuru
- L'Ecriture Acoustique

- Luis Jardim - percussion
- Jan Maebe - oboe
- Jean-Paul Dessy, Georges Van Dam, Veronique Gilis, Guillermo Cervino Wood, Yves Teicher, Benoit Paquay, Mario Palacio Glez, Eric Gerstmans, Eric Mathot - vocals

- BMG FRANCE (74321137062)
  CD

- Robert Wyatt - vocals on *It* (based on the ostinato *We Did It Again*

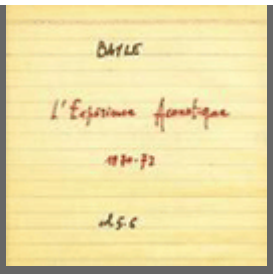
- François Bayle - all instruments, electronics
- Kevin Ayers - vocals

Enregistré en décembre 1968 à l'O.R.T.F. Paris France

- MAGISON (MGCB694)
- INA-GRM (M10 275042) 2xCD

Réédition en décembre 2014 dans la collection REGRM.

- RECOLLECTION GRM
  (REGRM 010) Digital Format



1994



2014

It [F. Bayle/R. Wyatt]
L'EPREUVE PAR LE SON
Transparence Du Purgatoire
La Philosophie Du Son
Energie Libre, Energie Liée

↑

Ultramarine



> Zoom

Barefoot
1994

- Happy Land (Remixed By Drummie Zeb)
- Hooter (Remixed By Carl Craig)
- The Badger (Remixed By Richard H. Kirk)
- Urf (Remixed By Fila Brazillia)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Ian Cooper - acoustic guitar & programming
- Paul Hammond - bass guitar & programming
- Jimmy Hastings - clarinet & soprano sax
- Phil James - trumpet
- Paul Johnson - additional percussion
- Simon Kay - hammond organ

Happy Land lyrics adapted from a parody of the patriotic victorian song of the same name.

- BLANCO Y NEGRO (NEG67T) EP & (NEG67CD) CD

↑

Brian Eno



> Zoom

Sampler 1 & 2
1994

- Stiff
- Baby's On Fire
- Backwater
- Spinning Away
- I'll Come Running
- No One Receiving
- Third Uncle
- Blank Frank
- Patrolling Wire Borders
- A Measured Room
- M386
- Another Green World
- Sparowfall (1)
- Stars

Promo Version.

Third Uncle est extrait de l'album Taking Tiger Mountain.

- VIRGIN (DPRO-14130) CD

↑

Jimi Hendrix

- Izabella
- Stepping Stone
- Angel
- Day Tripper

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *Day Tripper*



> Zoom

Rareties On Compact Disc
1994

- Little Drummer
- Auld Lang Syne
- 51st Anniversary
- Stars That Play With Laughing Sams Dice
- Fire
- Gloria
- My Diary
- Utee
- Have You Ever Been To Electric Ladyland
- Come On (Part 1)
- All Along The Watchtower
- Drifters Escape
- Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band
- Sunshine Of Your Love
- Come Down Hard On Me Baby
- Blue Suede Shoes
- Hound Dogs

- Jimi Hendrix - guitar, vocals
- Noel Redding - bass, backing vocals
- Mitch Mitchell - drums, backing vocals

Recorded in December 15, 1967 at The Playhouse Theatre, London (BBC Top Gear recording).

CD Promo.

- RADIO ON THE BROADCASTING (VOL. 1) CD



> Zoom

Jo Fletcher
1994 (?)

Jo Fletcher

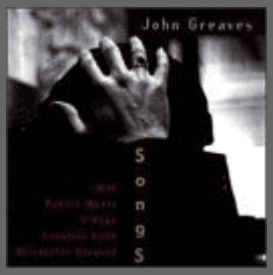
- Dare
- Drums
- Wait For Me
- Aladdins Cave
- Follow My Heart
- Must Be Love
- This Is My Heart
- Crazy Love
- Heart And the Shield
- Candle
- I Can Go On
- Treat You Right

- Lucky Day

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

Réédition CD en 2003 sur le label *Voiceprint*.

- VOICEPRINT (VP270CD) CD



> Zoom

Songs
1995

John Greaves

- Old Kinderhook

- The Song
- Swelling Valley
- Green Fuse

- Kew. Rhone.
- Eccentric Waters
- Silence
- Price We Pay
- L'Aise Aux Ex-Sans-Trique
- Back Where We Began

- Gegenstand

- Robert Wyatt - vocal and percussion

- John Greaves - vocals, accordeon, piano, bass
- Francois Ovide - guitar
- Sophia Domancich - piano
- Paul Rodgers - double bass
- Susan Belling - vocals
- Kristoffer Blegvad - vocals
- Caroline Loeb - vocals
- Elton Dean - saxello
- Mireille Bauer - vibes
- David Cunningham - guitar
- Peter Kimberley - backing vocals
- Benoit Blue Boy - harmonica

- RESURGENCE (RES112CD) CD
- LE CHANT DU MONDE (274 1198) CD

Lyrics

Critiques/Reviews

Fish Out Of Water

- Just Like In The Movies (Part 1)

- Once In A Lifetime
- Take It easy

- Cry From The City
- Belfast Boy
- Her Old Man
- Parisienne Prelude
- Persistence Of Memory

- Robert Wyatt - scat vocals on *Once in a lifetime*, scat vocals + piano on *Cry from the city* (4 & 12)

- Genie Cosmas - piano, vocals
- Gerry Hunt - alto & soprano saxophones, flute



Lucky Scars
1995

- MS Madness
- He Like A Drink
- Take It Easy (1)
- Cry From The City (dub)
- Lucky Scars
- Just Like The Movies (Part 2)

- Ganine Edwards - viola
- Donovan Carpenter - double bass
- Ewan Stewart - drums
- Dian - vocals
- Steve Manolias - double bass

- STREAM RECORDS (SRCD 004) CD

↑



> Zoom

Virgin Tracks
1995

Ryuichi Sakamoto

- We Love You (Edited Talking Drums Mix)
- You Do Me
- Calling From Tokyo
- Amore
- Asadoya Yunta
- Rose
- Diabaram
- Lulu
- Sayonara
- Triste
- Cloud #9
- High Tide (English Version)
- Rap The World
- Heartbeat (Club Mix)

Version alternative de *We Love You* extrait de Beauty.

- VIRGIN JAPAN (VJCP 3110) CD
- VIRGIN (VJCP-28160) CD

↑



> Zoom

A Remark Hugh Made
1995

Hugh Hopper & Kramer

- Free Will & Testament
- A Streetcar Named Desire
- We Can Work It Out
- The Twelve Chairs
- This Island Earth
- Superthunderstingercar
- John Milton Is Dead
- All In My Head
- Sliding Dogs
- His Wife For A Hat
- Lenny Bruce Sings
- His Hat For A Wife
- Our Final Remark

- Robert Wyatt - words and vocals on *Free Will & Testament*

- Hugh Hopper - bass, fuzz bass, piccolo bass
- Kramer - piano, organ, melltron, voices, tapes, guitar, slide guitar, percussion, bass on 3
- Bill Bacon - drums, percussion
- Gary Windo - tenor sax, voice

- SHIMMY DISC (076) CD

↑



> Zoom

Music For Crying
1995

Kramer

- We Can Work It Out
- Stupid Summer
- Tears Come Down
- The Juliete Mail
- Palm Wine Of Palm Sunday
- You Don't Know
- Slowly
- Nine Minus Seven Is Two
- The Raven
- Thinking Thoughts
- Birth
- Strings
- Subterranean Homesick Blues
- End
- Rain
- Next Time, Try Compassion
- Tatto Of Blood
- Free Will & Testament
- I Can Watch

Compilation.

La date de parution n'est pas certaine (1994, 1995, 1996 ?).

Free Will & Testament est extrait de l'album A Remark Hugh Made.

- CREATIVEMAN (CMDD 00011) CD

↑



> Zoom

A Civilised Word
1995

Millennium

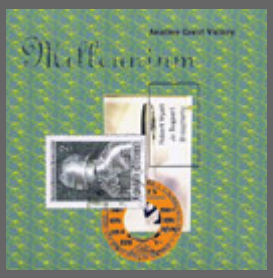
- Another Great Victory
- Too Much Heaven
- Prey
- The Cross
- A Thousand Years
- Igor Mortis
- Digest Of A Paperheart
- Erup/Peru
- Everything Will Change
- Kill Me Softly

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Jo Bogaert - program. computer
- Blissphemy - vocals
- Chikato Sato - violin
- Michael Brook - guitar
- Geert Maesschalk - bass

- CNR MUSIC (200 23 22) CD

Lyrics



> Zoom

Another Great Victory
1995

Millennium

- Another Great Victory - Radio Version
- Another Great Victory - Trip Hop Remix
- Another Great Victory - Instrumental

Versions alternatives de *Another Great Victory*, extrait de A Civilised Word.

- CNR MUSIC - CD-S



> Zoom

Dark End Of The Street
1995

Barbara Dickson

- Fine Horseman
- Love Hurts
- Love Needs A Heart
- Brother Can You Spare A Dime?
- Ballad Of Springhill
- Who Knows Where The Time Goes
- First Time Ever I Saw Your Face
- All The Pretty Little Horses
- Dark End Of The Street
- Sandman's Coming
- Just One Smile
- Young Man Cut Down In His Prime

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *Dark End Of The Street* and perhaps (?) on *Love Hurts*

- Barbara Dickson - vocals
- Ian Lynn - keyboards except Hammond
- Danny Thompson - acoustic bass
- Dave Mattacks - drums
- Jerry Stevenson - guitars
- Troy Donockley, Uilleann Pipes, Pete Zorn - saxes, flutes, percussion
- John (Rabbit) Bundrick - Hammond
- Tom McConville - fiddle
- Barbara Dickson, Pete Zorn - vocals on 3
- Pip Williams - guitars on 6 and rythm guitar on 11

- TRANSATLANTIC (TRACD 117) CD
- CASTLE COMMUNICATIONS (GAS 0000117) CD

The Raincoats

- Fairytale In The Supermarket
- In Love
- Lola
- Adventures Close To Home
- The Void
- You're A Million
- No Looking

Compilation.
And Then It's O.K. est extrait de l'album Odyshape paru en 1981.



> Zoom

Fairytales
1995

- No Side To Fall In
- Only Loved At Night
- And Then It's O.K.
- Baby Song
- Overheard
- Rainstorm

- TIM/KERR RECORDS
  (TK9412087) LP



> Zoom

Concerts (1995 Reissue)
1995

Henry Cow

Disc 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners|Nirvana For Mice|Ottawa Song|Gloria Gloom|Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy|Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Gronigen Again

Disc 2
- Oslo
- Off the Map
- Cafe Royal
- Keeping Warn In Winter|Sweet Heart Of Mine
- Udine

Version CD du double-album publié en 1976.

Bonus tracks pour cette réédition CD : *Off the Map*, *Cafe Royal* et *Keeping Warn In Winter|Sweet Heart Of Mine*

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- EAST SIDE DIGITAL (80822)
  2xCD



> Zoom

Manzanera Collection
1995

Phil Manzanera

Disc 1
- Tomorrow Never Knows-801 Live
- Over You-Roxy Music
- Out Of The Blue-Roxy Music
- Fat Lady Of Limbourg-801 Live
- Impossible Guitars-Roxy Music
- Charlie-Tim Finn
- Take A Chance With Me-Roxy Music
- Frontera-Phil Manzanera
- Diamond Head-801 Live
- Needle In A Camel's Eye-Eno
- Miss Shapiro-801 Live
- The End-Nico
- Gun-John Cale
- Europe 70-1 -Phil Manzanera

Disc 2
- Leyenda-Guitar Legends '91
- Frontera '91-Guitar Legends '91
- Southern Cross-Guitar Legends '91
- Sphinx-Guitar Legends '91
- Amazona-Roxy Music
- A Million Reasons Why-Phil Manzanera
- Fifth Wheel-Tim Finn
- It's Just Love-Wetton/Manzanera
- Talk To Me-Wetton/Manzanera
- Suzanne-Wetton/Manzanera
- Black Gang Chine-MacKay/Manzanera
- Lorelei-The Explorers
- Criollo-Phil Manzanera
- Mama Hue-Mancada/Manzanera
- Corazon Corazon-Mancada/Manzanera
- Flor De Azalea-Tania Libertad
- Espiritu-Sergio Dias/Manzanera

Compilation.

Frontera est extrait de l'album Diamond Head.

- CAROLINE (1798-2) 2xCD
- VIRGIN (CDVDM9033) 2xCD



> Zoom

Sirens & Silences / Work Resumed On The Tower / Letters Home
1995

News From Babel

SIRENS AND SILENCES
- Odysseus
- Auschwitz/Babel
- Klein's Bottle
- Black Gold
- Devils
- Dry Leaf

WORK RESUMED ON THE TOWER
- Arcades (of Glass)
- Victory
- Anno Mirabilis

LETTERS HOME
- Who Will Accuse ?
- Heart Of Stone (Megalopolis)
- Banknote
- Moss
- Dragon At The Core
- Dark Matter
- Waited/**Justice**
- Fast Food
- Late Evening

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Lindsay Cooper - piano, keyboards, bassoon, sopranino sax, alto sax
- Chris Cutler - drums, percussion
- Zeena Parkins - harp, accordion
- Bill Gilonis - guitar, bass
- Dagmar Krause - vocals on *Late Evening*
- Sally Potter - vocals
- Phil Minton - vocals

Bien que représentant la pochette du 1er album de *News From Babel* dans lequel R. Wyatt n'intervient pas, ce CD est une réédition des 2 albums *Work Resumed On The Tower* (1984) et *Letters Home* (avec RW) (1986).

- ReR MEGACORP (RëRNfBCD) CD



> Zoom

Singing The Bruise
The BBC Sessions 1970-72
1996

Kevin Ayers

- Why Are We Sleeping?
- You Say You Like My Hat
- Gemini Chile
- Lady Rachel
- Derby Day
- Interview
- We Did It Again
- Oyster And The Flying Fis
- Butterfly Dance
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Falling In Love Again
- Queen Thing

- Robert Wyatt - drums, backing vocals

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- David Bedford - piano
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, harmonica
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- BAND OF JOY RECORDS (BOJCD 019) CD
- STRANGE FRUIT (7243 8 45208 2 3) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.



> Zoom

The Peel Sessions (reedit. 96)
1996

Jimi Hendrix Experience

- Radio One Theme
- Day Tripper
- Wait Until Tomorrow
- Hear My Trai A Comin'
- Spanish Castle Magic

Réédition de l'album The Peel Sessions paru en 1988.

- STRANGE FRUIT RECORDS (SFPSCD035) CD-S

Michael Mantler

Disc 1
- Prelude
- Introductions

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Jack Bruce - vocals



School of Understanding
Sort-Of-An-Opera
1996

- First Lesson
- News
- Love Begins
- War
- Pause
- Understanding

Disc 2
- Health And Poverty
- Love Continues
- Platitudes
- Intolerance
- Love Ends
- What's Left To Say
- What Is The Word

- Per Jorgensen - vocals
- Mona Larsen - vocals
- Susi Hyldgaard - vocals
- Karen Mantler - vocals
- John Greaves - vocals
- Don Preston - vocals, synthesized drums
- Michael Mantler - trumpet, conductor
- Roger Janotta - clarinet, bass clarinet, flute, oboe
- Bjarne Roupé - guitar
- Marianne Sorensen - violin
- Mette Brand - violin
- Mette Winther - violin
- Helle Sorensen - cello
- Kim Kristensen - piano, synthesizer
- Tineke Noordhoek - vibraphone, marimba
- The Danish Radio Concert Orchestra
- Giordano Bellincampi - conductor

- ECM RECORDS (1648/49) 2xCD

↑

Gary Windo



> Zoom

His Master's Bones
1996

- Ntu
- Minipax 1
- Funky Boots March - The Brotherhood Of Breath
- Standfast
- You Ain't Gonna Know Me, 'Cause You Think You Know Me
- Watch Out For The Bones
- Letting Go
- Is This The Time?
- [Untitled Track]
- Baby Fatele
- Anglo-American
- Peaches
- Sun And The Moon
- Radio Improved
- Dumb Waiter
- Ghosts
- Patience

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Terri Quaye - backing vocal
- Pam Windo - backing vocal, piano
- Gary Windo - tenor sax, gong
- Richard Brunton - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Nick Mason - drums

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 89) CD

↑

The Amazing Band



> Zoom

Roar
1997

- Roar Part I
- Roar Part II

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, voice, synthesizer on Part 2

- Mal Dean - trumpet
- Veleroy (Rab) Spall - violin, accordion & flute on Part 1
- Mick Brannan - alto sax, piano on Part 2
- Miriam Spall - voice
- Jim Mullen - double bass, harmonica on Part 1

Enregistré en 1970, Pathway Studios.

- FUTURE MUSIC (CD40-L0797) CD

↑

Jean-Michel Marchetti/Robert Wyatt

- The British Road (Lu En Anglais)
- The British Road (Lu En Français)
- Blues In Bob Minor (Lu En Anglais)

- Robert Wyatt - voice

Ce CD accompagne l'ouvrage *M2W* de J.M. Marchetti publié par les éditions



M2W
1998

- Entretien Avec R. Wyatt (En Français)

Ænckrages& Co.

- AENCRAGES & Co/IN POLY SONS - CD



> Zoom

The Different You
1998

Robert Wyatt e noi

- Sea Song
- Re-born Again Cretin
- O Caroline
- Alifib
- Gharbzadegi
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
- Memories
- Left On Man
- Maryan
- Yolanda
- A Sunday In Madrid
- Amber And The Amberines
- Free Will And Testament
- Dondestan
- A Last Straw
- **Del Mondo**
- Chairman Mao
- Five Black Notes And One White Note

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards

Les autres titres sont des reprises de R. Wyatt à l'exception du sample de *Born Again Cretin*.

Cet album est également présent dans les rubriques Reprises et Samples.

- CPI (300 496-2) CD
- MERCURY (300 496-2) CD



Nostra Patria È Il Mondo Intero
1998

Maurizio Camardi

- Viaje
- Danse
- Matisse
- Milonga de un triste
- Landscape
- Managua
- Tecne
- Ninna nanna da levante
- **Hasta Siempre Comandante**
- Terre del nord
- Radio sahara
- Ikebana

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- IL MANIFESTO (CD 032) CD



> Zoom

The Greatest
1998

Ryuchi Sakamoto

- Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence (live)
- The Sheltering Sky - Theme (Piano version)
- **We Love You (edited Talking Drums Mix)**
- You Do Me
- Calling From Tokyo
- Amore
- Heartbeat (original mix)
- Sayonara (English version)
- High Tide (English version)
- Triste
- Cloud #9
- Heartbeat (Club mix)

Compilation uniquement diffusée au Japon. Version alternative de *We Love You* extrait de Beauty.

- TOSHIBA EMI JAPAN (VJCP-51051) CD

Jimi Hendrix Experience



> Zoom

BBC Sessions
1998

- Foxy Lady
- Alexis Korner Introduction
- Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?
- Rhythm And Blues World Series
- (I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man
- Traveling With The Experience
- Driving South
- Fire
- Little Miss Lover
- Catfish Blues
- Stone Free
- Love Or Confusion
- Hound Dog
- Hey Joe
- Killing Floor
- Manic Depression
- Driving South
- Hear My Train A Comin'
- Purple Haze
- Radio One
- Wait Until Tomorrow
- **Day Tripper**
- Introducing The Experience
- The Burning Of The Midnight Lamp
- Spanish Castle Magic
- A Brand New Sound
- Hey Joe
- Jammin'
- I Was Made To Love Her
- Hear My Train A Comin'
- Foxy Lady
- Driving South
- A Happening For Lulu
- Voodoo Child (Slight Return)
- Lulu Introduction
- Hey Joe
- Sunshine Of Your Love

- Robert Wyatt -backing vocals on *Day Tripper*

- Jimi Hendrix - guitar, vocals
- Noel Redding - bass, backing vocals
- Mitch Mitchell - drums, backing vocal

Additional personnel:
- Alexis Korner - slide guitar
- Stevie Wonder - drums

- EXPERIENCE HENDRIX (MCA3-11742) 3xLP
- MCA RECORDS (MCAD2-11742) 2xCD



> Zoom

The Radio Sessions
1999

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
- **Why Are We Sleeping?**
- **You Say You Like My Hat**
- Gemini Chile
- Lady Rachel

Disc 2
- Derby Day
- The Interview
- We Did It Again
- Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Butterfly Dance
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Falling In Love Again
- Queen Thing

- Robert Wyatt - drums & backing vocals

- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass & vocals
- David Bedford - piano
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - flute
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ

Tracks 1 & 2: 'Top Gear' - Recorded February, 2, 1970 at Maida Vale 4

Why Are We Sleeping? et *You Say You Like My Hat* sont extraits de Singing The Bruise - The BBC Sessions 1970-72.

- TURNING POINT (TPM99203V) 2xLP



> Zoom

Les TresOrs (1982-1999)
1999

Claustrofobia

- Rito Zíngaro (recreación de "Rito Gitano")
- Nana Del Amor Amargo
- Carlove
- El Enjambre
- Los Milicianos
- Lluvia Dorada En Tu Boca
- Soledad y Pobreza
- Morir Contigo
- Solas Las Dos (recreación de "Encadenadas")
- Escalofrío
- Sudor y Espuma
- No Olvido
- La Elegancia de Tus Lágrimas
- Encadenados
- **Tu Traición**
- Diablura
- El Cuento Se Acabó

- Robert Wyatt - voice, percussion

- Antoni Baltar - drum, programming, bass synthesizer
- Maria Jose Pena - piano
- Pedro Burruezo - guitars, vocal

Tu Traición est extrait de l'album Repulsion.

- K INDUSTRIA (K 019) CD



> Zoom

Vozero
1999



> Zoom

Vozero
2005

Phil Manzanera

- Vozero
- Mystic Moon
- Verdadero
- Tuesday
- Rayo De Bala
- Art Of Conversation
- Vida
- Golden Sun
- Mundo Con Paz
- Hymn
- Vida Moderna
- Tropical *(titre bonus réservé à l'édition de 2005)*

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, backing vocals, trumpet, piano, and percussion, vox percussion, drums, keyboards on *Tropical*

- Phil Manzanera - guitar, vocals, loops, synths
- Billy Nicholls - backing vocals
- Livingstone Brown - bass
- Ash Howes - drum programming
- Nigel Butler - loops, bass, treatments, programming
- Chucho Merchan - double bass
- Yaron Stavi - double bass on *Tropical*
- Enriques Bunbury - sampled voice, backing vocals
- Jamie Johnson - bass
- Dan Chiorboli - congas, percussion
- Ravi - birimbao, kora, kavel
- Claire Singers - backing vocals
- African Gypsies Choir - backing vocals
- Mundo Choir - backing vocals
- Andy Mackay - oboe

Réédition en 2005 avec un douzième titre bonus : *Tropical*.

- EXPRESSION (EXVP 12CD) CD
- EXPRESSION RECORDS/ RYKODISC (HNCD 1474) CD



Nido
1999

Cristina Donà

- Nido
- Goccia
- Qualcosa Che Lasci Il Segno
- Così Cara
- L'ultima Giornata Di Sole
- Volo In Deltaplano
- Brazil
- Mi Dispiace
- Deliziosa Abbondanza
- Volevo Essere Altrove
- Cibo Estremo
- Terapie
- Mangialuomo

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, vocal percussions, whistle, chorus

- MESCAL (508827 2) CD



> Zoom

The Legendary
MPS Sessions
1999 (?)

Volker Kriegel

Disc 1
- Mather
- Vian-De
- Teaming Up
- Riff For Rent
- The Secret Mystery of Hensh
- Big Schlepp
- Country Shit
- Inside Crime
- Suspicious Child
- Soul-Eggs
- Four Reasins/Sitting On My Knees
- Baiafrock/Volker
- Q
- Where's My Sunshine
- From Harp Revolution

Where's My Sunshine est extrait de Sugar Can Got The Blues.

- MPS (559-909-2) 2xLP

Disc 2
- Zoom
- More About D
- Ach Kina
- Slums On Wheels
- Für Hector
- Lift!
- Mindwill
- Saturnalia
- Und schön ist die Fahrt
- Ghana Marathon
- Resonanceo



Parabolic Versions
2000

Hugh Hopper

- Long Lingers Autumn Time
- The Moon In A Bottle
- There You Were
- Oldest Story Ever Told
- C'Est Grâce
- The Painter's Birthday
- Indeterminacy
- Iron Lady
- Kate Come Late
- When I've Grown Old
- Red Poppies In The Corn
- **Was A Friend**

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano

- Hugh Hopper - bass, keyboards
- John Atkinson - vocals, harmonica
- Lisa S.Kloessner - vocals
- Richard Sinclair - vocals, bass
- Mike Travis - vocals
- Rick Biddulph - guitar, backing vocals
- Dionys Breukers - keyboards
- Frank van der Kooij - bcl, s
- Patrice Meyer - guitar
- Mic Mure - guitar
- Muriel Natale - backing vocals

Enregistrements de 1983 à 1998.

- VOICEPRINT (VP209) CD



> Zoom

September Song
2000

Pascal Comelade

- **September Song**
- Signed Curtain
- Come Prima
- The Sheik Of Araby
- 24 Mila Baci
- Knockin' On Heaven's Door
- L'Italiano

- Robert Wyatt - voices percussion, trumpet

- Pascal Comelade - pianos, accordion, ukulele, e. guitar

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER/DELABEL (7243 8496562 4) CD
- DELABEL (7243 8496562 4) CD

Lyrics



M3W
2000

Jean-Michel Marchetti/Robert Wyatt

- **Robert (Robert Wyatt)**
- P.L.A. (Toupidek, Limonade et J. Tagu)
- Alifib (R. Robert, G. Tordjman)
- Toledo Texas (J.M. Montera, E. Martusciello, F.Y Lugli-Martinez)
- Dondestan (Look de Book)
- Sea Song (Klimperei)
- Born Again Cretin (Dominique Répécaud)
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Jaggernaut)
- To The Old World (Dominique Grimaud)
- Left On Man (L'Ensemble Rayé)
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (J. Bogaert, An Pierlé, J. Snauwaert)
- Caroline (D. Fellmann, J. Goetz)

- Robert Wyatt - all instruments

Ce CD édité par les éditions Ænc rages& Co accompagne l'ouvrage *M3W* de J.M. Marchetti.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises et Samples.

- AENCRAGES & Co/IN POLY SONS (IPS 08 00) CD

- Mass Medium (Ph. Fretun, M. Benita)
- Alifib (Pascal Comelade)
- Heli Plop (Alain de Filipis)
- Toledo Texas (Jean-François Pauvros)
- For R.W. (Ch. Cutler, T. Buck, J.M. Montera, J.F. Pauvros)
- Alifib (Le Piano De La Rue De Vergennes) (Jean-Michel Marchetti



Anthology - Volume 1
2000

Don Sugarcane Harris

Disc 1
- Keep On Driving
- Blues On The Moon
- Which Way Is The Bathroom?
- Desiree
- Almost Broke
- Coitus Interruptus
- Remember The Past
- Liz Pinapple Wonderful
- Song For My Father
- Where's My Sunshine

Disc 2
- Eleanor Rigby
- I'm Gonna Miss You
- The Buzzard's Cousin
- The Pig's Eye
- So Alone
- No Inspiration
- Runnin' Away
- Hatties Bathtub
- Cup Full Of Dreams
- Generation Of Vipers

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Don Harris - electric violin, vocals
- Volker Kriegel or Terje Rypdal - guitar
- Wolfgang Dauner - keyboards

Recorded live at the Berlin Jazz Festival, Berlin Philharmonic Hall, November 7, 1971.

Liz Pinapple Wonderful, Song For My Father et *Where's My Sunshine* sont extraits de Sugar Can Got The Blues.

- PAST & PRESENT RECORDS (CD002) 2xCD



> Zoom

No Answer & Silence
2000

Michael Mantler

Disc 1
NO ANSWER
- Number Six (Parts One/Two/Three/Four)
- Number Twelve (Parts One/Two/Three/Four)

Disc 2
SILENCE
- I Walk With My Girl
- I Watch The Clouds
- It Is Curiously Hot
- When I Run
- Sometimes I See People
- Around Me Sits The Night
- She Was Looking Down
- For Instance
- A Long Way
- After My Work Each Day
- On Good Evenings

Réédition CD des deux albums vinyl *No Answer* et Silence parus en 1973 et 1976.

- WATT (2/5) 2xCD



> Zoom

The Gathering
2000

Annie Whitehead

- Mist
- The Gathering
- Blue Note Bounce
- This Affects That
- The Lonely Heart (Part 1)
- The Lonely Heart (Part 2)
- Before We Knew
- Afro Blue
- Remembering

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, trumpet, drums and cymbales

- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Ian Maidman - guitar, ukelele, moog, percussion
- Steve Lodder - piano, prepared piano, keyboards
- Steve Lamb - bass
- Liam Genockey - drums, percussion

- PROVOCATEUR RECORDS (PVC1022) CD



> Zoom

Tandem
2000

Ricky Gianco &

- Il Tramonto
- Il Vento Dell'Est
- Cesarini
- Ai Fili Romentick
- Navigare
- E L'Ora Dei Cani Sciolti Come Noi
- Rock Della Solitudine
- Tandem
- Camion
- Parigi Con Le Gambe Aperte
- Te Has Quedado Sola (Sei Rimasta Sola)
- **Hasta Siempre Comandante (Con Robert Wyatt)**

Lyrics

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Ricky Gianco - vocals
- Maurizio Camardi- sax tenore
- Alfonso Santimone - pianoforte-tastiere
- Alessandro Fedrigo - basso
- Gianni Bertoncini - batteria
- Paolo Vidaich - percussioni

COLUMBIA (COL 497529) CD



Goccia
2000

Cristina Donà

- **Goccia**
- Fireworks
- Terra Blu
- Genesis
- **Traccia Rom: Video "Goccia"**

Goccia est extrait de Nido.

- MESCAL RECORDS (562842-2) CD-S



> Zoom

The Manzanera
Expression Sampler
2000

Phil Manzanera

- **Vozero**
- **Mystic Moon**
- Trot
- **Frontera**
- East Of Asteroid
- Flight 19
- Law And Order
- Out Of The Blue (801 Live 1977)
- Hot Spot
- Bogota
- Free Yourself
- The Great Leveller
- Yolanda
- Hasta Siempre
- The Beat Goes Off
- Remote Control (Demo)

Vozero et *Mystic Moon* sont extraits de Vozero.
Frontera est extrait de Diamond Head.

- EXPRESSION (EXP22CD) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Hide And Seek
2001

Michael Mantler

- Unsaid (Pts. 1 & 2)
- **What Did You Say?**
- Unsaid [2] [Alternate Take]
- **It's All Just Words**
- **If You Have Nothing to Say**
- Unsaid [3] [Mix]
- **What Do You See?**
- **Absolutely Nothing**
- Unsaid [4] [Mix]
- **What Can We Do?**
- Unsaid [5] [Mix]
- **It All Has to End Sometime**
- Unsaid [6] [Alternate Take]
- **I Don't Deny It**

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Susi Hyldgaard - voice
- Roger Jannotta - flute, oboe, clarinets
- Michael Mantler -trumpets
- Martin Cholewa - French horn
- Vincent Nilsson - trombones
- Bjarne Roupé - guitars
- Susi Hyldgaard - accordion
- Tineke Noordhoek - vib, marimba
- Per Salo - piano
- Marianne Sørensen - violins

- I'm Glad You're Glad
- Do You Think We'll Ever Find It
- It Makes No Difference To Me

- Mette Winther - violas
- Helle Sørensen - cellos

A Suite of Songs and Interludes
for 2 Voices
and Chamber Orchestra
Words by Paul Auster

- ECM RECORDS (1738) CD



> Zoom

MW Pour Robert Wyatt
2001

MW pour Robert Wyatt

- Some Words Of Introduction (Robert Wyatt)
- P.L.A. (Toupidek, Limonade et J. Tagu) [R. Wyatt]
- Toledo Texas (J.M. Montera, E. Martusciello, F.Y Lugli-Martinez) [R. Wyatt-J.M. Montera]
- En Dondekistan (Look de Book) [R. Wyatt]
- Sea Song (Klimperei) [R. Wyatt]
- Born Again Cretin (Dominique Répécaud)[R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Jagger Naut) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib (R. Robert, G. Tordjman) [R. Wyatt]
- To The Old World (Dominique Grimaud) [R. Wyatt]
- Left On Man (L'Ensemble Rayé) [R. Wyatt]
- Robert et André (Kafka) [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (J. Bogaert, An Pierlé) [R. Wyatt]
- Caroline (D. Fellmann, J. Goetz) [R. Wyatt-D. Sinclair]

- Blues In Bob Minor (read by Robert Wyatt) [R. Wyatt]

- The British Road (read by Robert Wyatt & Michel Benita) [R. Wyatt]
- Mass Medium (Ph. Fretun, M. Benita) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib (Pascal Comelade) [R. Wyatt]
- Heli Plop (Alain de Filipis) [R. Ryatt-A. de Filipis]
- Toledo Texas (Jean-François Pauvros) [R. Wyatt-J.F. Pauvros]
- For R.W. (Ch. Cutler, T. Buck, J.M. Montera, J.F. Pauvros) [R. Wyatt-J.M. Montera]
- Alifib (Le Piano De La Rue de Vergennes) (Jean-Michel Marchetti) [R. Wyatt]

- Some Words Of Conclusion (Robert Wyatt) [Robert Wyatt]

Ce CD est une réédition des 2 CDs M2W et M3W réalisés pour les éditions Ænerages& Co dans le cadre des projets MW.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises et Samples.

- IN POLY SONS (IPS 0401) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Noi Non Ci Saremo (Vol. 1)
2001

C.S.I. Consorzio Suonatori Indipendenti

- A Tratti
- Intimismo
- Noi Non Ci Saremo
- Tutti Giù Per Terra
- E Ti Vengo A Cercare
- Forma e Sostanza
- Depressione Caspica
- IlGorgo
- Ederlezi
- Fuochi Nella Notte Di S. Giovanni
- Sogni e Sintomi
- Unità di Produzione
- Il Resto

- Del Mondo
- Velluto Rosso

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards

Del Mondo est également présent sur l'album The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi.

- BLACK OUT (548 574-2) CD
- MERCURY (548 574-2) CD



> Zoom

Smiling And Waving
2001

Anja Garbarek

- Her Room
- Gown
- Spin The Context
- Stay Tuned
- You Know
- Big Mouth
- **The Diver**
- That's All
- And Then
- It Seems We Talk

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Anja Garbarek - vocal percussion
- Laurence Pendrous - piano
- Chris Laurence - bass
- Melinda Maxwell - oboe
- Martin Ditcham - percussion

- VIRGIN (850 622 23) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Surrealistic Pilot
2001

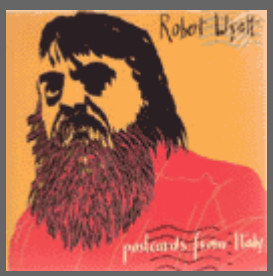
X-Ray Pop

- L'espace D'Un Instant
- Les Petits Mammifères
- We Can't Funk
- Mauve
- Les Bras Dans Le Vide
- Sors La Tête
- **Smakeluk** [Robert Wyatt/Doc Pilot]
- Tgv'n Roll
- Shabbes Tsevainik
- Gloria Suckita
- Le Pull Péruvien
- Braguettes
- Ma Jet Set
- Eskual Eria
- Chabada Chatte
- L'Horizon
- La Maman Du Clone
- Je Brûle Déjà
- Elle Aura Craché Sur Dali
- Entre Toi Et Moi
- Un Loup
- Alone
- Oh Belle Nuit!
- Surrealistic

- Robert Wyatt - lyrics

- Zouka Dzaza - lead vocals, keyboards
- Doc Pilot - lead and slide guitars, keyboards
- Patrick Gicquel - bass
- Olivier Gicquel - drums
- Laurent Couliou - saxophone
- Charlotte Bärfuss - volcals
- Fran Zosha - harmonica
- Eric Desfour - violin

- EASTWEST FRANCE (8573-88553-2) CD



> Zoom

Postcards From Italy
2001

Walter Prati & Robert Wyatt

- Variation On The Duchess #1
- Variation On The Duchess #2
- Variation On The Duchess #3

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Walter Prati - tape, electric guitar, electric bass

- SONIC BOOK (028) CD



Bruno Coulais

- To Be By Your Side
- **Masters Of The Field**
- Vers Le Nord
- La Traversée
- **The Highest Gander**
- Tambour Battant
- Le Retour Des Grues
- Le Fil Bleu
- **La Forêt Rouge**
- Comme Un Souffle
- [Pas De Titre]
- Dans La Fumée Des Usines

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- VIRGIN (7243 8115724 4) CD

Lyrics



> Zoom





> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

Travelling Birds
2001

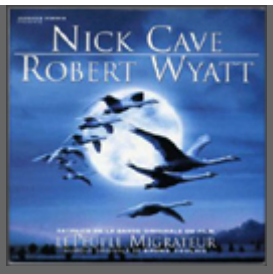
- Le Planeur
- Après La Chasse
- Les Haras En Papier
- Le Vol Des Cygnes
- A Tête Barrée
- La Colombe Poignardée
- Hors Champ

Bruno Coulais/Nick Cave/Robert Wyatt

- To Be By Your Side (Nick Cave)
- Masters Of The Field (Robert Wyatt)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- VIRGIN (SA6744) CD-S



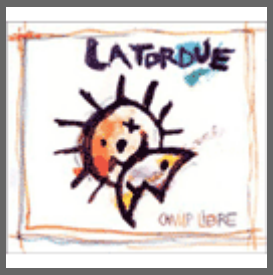
> Zoom

Le peuple migrateur/Promo Version
2001



> Zoom

Jazzloops
2002



Champ Libre
2002



Hugh Hopper

- T3
- Afrik
- Garrisoi
- Sfrankl
- Acloop
- Calmozart
- Aintpo
- 1212
- **Digwot**
- L4
- Nigepo

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano

- Hugh Hopper - guitar, bass, keyboard, voice, sampling
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - saxophone

- BURNING SHED - CD

La Tordue

- L'Heureux Mix
- Une Chanson
- Paranoya
- La Vie C'est Dingue
- La Muerte
- Captain Naimo
- Compte-In
- Isgodadog ?
- Le Zèle Des Iles
- Contre Vous
- Je Tombe
- **Le Pétrin**

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

avec :

- Mme Wang Fu Qumin
- La Tordue
- Ernest Ahippah
- Sabine Cissé
- Danyel Waro
- Serge Dafreville
- Laurent Dalleau
- Yamina et nadia Nidel Mourid
- Slawek Wojnarowski
- Dézoriental
- Olivier Leroy
- Samy Bimbach
- Yt Kha
- Marguerie Morel et Ninon Le Poul
- Dierdre Dubois Haddad
- les Femmouzes T.
- Bruno Garcia
- Jerry
- Magyd Cherfi

- EPIC (EPC5094732) CD

La Tordue

- **Le Pétrin**

Le Pétrin est extrait de Champ Libre.

CD interdit à la vente distribué dans le cadre d'une action militante contre la "double peine" inscrite dans la législation française.

- SONY MUSIC/EPIC - CD-S

> Zoom 1 2

Le Pétrin
2002



> Zoom

13 Minutes De Champ Libre
2002

La Tordue

- Le Making Of de l'enregistrement
- Le Pétrin En Images

Aucune image de Robert Wyatt sur ce DVD promotionnel mais participation vocale au morceau *Le Pétrin*.

Le Pétrin est extrait de Champ Libre.

- SONY (SAMPD12228) DVD



M4W
2003

Jean-Michel Marchetti/Robert Wyatt

- Afghanistan's A Country Or At Least Used To Be
- Fridge
- When Access Was A Noun
- Salt /Ivy
- Signed Curtain
- Afghanistan... Alix

- Robert Wyatt - all instruments, voices

- Jean-Michel Marchetti - piano inversé
- Alix Marchetti - voice

Ce CD est édité avec l'ouvrage *M4W* de J.M. Marchetti.

- AENCRAGES & Co - CD



> Zoom

Joy Of A Toy (Reissue)
2003

Kevin Ayers

- Joy Of A Toy Continued
- Town Feeling
- The Clarietta Rag
- Girl On A Swing
- Song For Insane Times
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- Lady Rachel
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong
- All This Crazy Gift Of Time
Bonus
- Religious Experience (Singing A Song In The Morning)
- Lady Rachel
- Soon Soon Soon
- Religious Experience (Singing A Song In The Morning)
- Lady Rachel
- Singing A Song In The Morning

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée de l'album paru en 1969, enrichie de plusieurs bonus.

Les titres bonus de la réédition ne sont pas crédités. Il est possible que Robert Wyatt joue sur les 5 autres titres.

- EMI/HARVEST (07243-582776-2-3) CD

Brian Eno

- Mother Whale Eyeless
- I'll Come Running
- Delta Rain Dream
- King's Lead Hat
- Sparrowfall
- Here He Comes

Compilation.
Disc Promo (Not For Resale).

1/1 est extrait de Ambient #1 Music For Airports.



> Zoom

Brian Eno
2003

- The Jezebel Spirit
- **1/1** [B. Eno/R. Wyatt/R. Davies]
- Third Uncle
- Another Green World
- Here Come The Warm Jets
- Mountain Of Needles
- Taking Tiger Mountain
- Becalmed

- BMG (BMG PUB038) CD



> Zoom

Bananamour (Reissue)
2003

Kevin Ayers

- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- **Hymn**
- Beware Of The Dog Bath

Bonus
- Connie On A Rubber Band
- Decadence (Early Mix - Previously Unreleased)
- Take Me To Tahiti
- Caribbean Moon

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée de l'album paru en 1973, enrichie de plusieurs bonus.

- EMI/HARVEST (07243-582780-2-6) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

The World Of Daevid Allen And Gong
2003

Daevid Allen And Gong

Disc 1
THE WORLD OF GONG 1970-1973
Magick, Camembert & Radio Gnome
- Glad To Hear Say To Say
- Rational Anthem
- Gong Song
- Foghat Digs Holes In Space
- Tried So Hard
- Tropical Fish
- Radio Gnome Invisible
- Flying Teapot
- Pot Head Pixies
- Octave Doctors And The Crystal Machine
- Zero The Hero And The Witches Spell
- Witches Song
- I Am Your Pussy
- Other Side Of The Sky
- Sold To The Highest Buddah

Disc 2
THE WORLD OF GONG 1973-1974
The Radio Gnome Invisible Trilogy - Part Two
- Castle In The Clouds
- Prostitute Poem
- Givin' My Love To You
- Selene
- Flute Salad
- Oily Way
- Outer Temple
- Inner Temple
- Love Is How You MakeIit
- I Niver Gild Before
- Eat That Phone Book Coda
- Thoughts For Naught
- PHP's Advice
- Magick Mother
- Invocation
- Master Builder
- Sprinkling Of Clouds
- Perfect Mystery
- Isle Of Everywhere
- You Never Blow Your Trip Forever

Disc 3

Save Yourself et *You Don't Remember* sont extraits de Jet-Propelled Photographs.
Memories, Stoned Innocent Frankenstein, Fred The Fish et *White Neck Blooze* sont extraits de Bananamoon.

- CHARLY (SNAJ725CD) 3xCD

THE WORLD OF DAEVID ALLEN
Before & After Gong 1967-1980
- Save Yourself (Soft Machine)
- You Don't Remember (Soft Machine)
- Time Of Your Life - Daevid Allen
- Memories
- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein
- Fred The Fish
- White Neck Blooze
- Tony And Orlando Meet The Cockpit Pixie
- Why Do We Treat Ourselves Like We Do
- Poet For Sale
- I Am
- Floatin' Anarchy
- New Age Transformation
- Opium For The People
- Allex Ali
- It's A Fine Air For Fliss
- 333
- Rashnish With Thanks
- Much Too Old



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

Sixteen Haiku & Other Stories
International Project
2003

Sigmatropic

- [Intro] ON STAGE, 2 (Robert Wyatt)
- Haiku One (Laetitia Sadier)
- Haiku Two (Martine Roberts)
- Haiku Three IN THE MUSEUM GARDEN (Mark Mulcahy)
- Haiku Four (Alejandro Escovedo)
- Haiku Five (Carla Torgerson)
- Haiku Six (Carla Torgerson & Akis Boyatzis)
- Haiku Seven (Akis Boyatzis)
- Haiku Eight (Edith Frost)
- Haiku Nine YOUNG FATE (Mark Eitzel)
- Haiku Ten (Cat Power)
- Haiku Eleven (Simon Joyner)
- Haiku Twelve UNPROFITABLE BOAT LINE (Lee Ranaldo)
- Haiku Thirteen SICK FURY (Alex Gordon)
- Haiku Fourteen A (SUNG IN GREEK) Akis Boyatzis
- Haiku Fourteen B (John Grant)
- Haiku Fifteen (James William Hindle)
- Haiku Sixteen (Lee Ranaldo)
- Dead Sea (LOGBOOK II) (James Sclavunos)
- Water Warm (PLANS FOR A SUMMER) (Pinkie Maclure)
- This Human Body (Howe Gelb)
- The Jasmine (Steve Wynn)

- Robert Wyatt - voice

Album réalisé à partir de poèmes de George Seferis.

- TONGUE MASTER (TMAST 002) CD

Sigmatropic

Disc 1
- [Intro] ON STAGE, 2 (Robert Wyatt)
- Haiku One (Laetitia Sadier)
- Haiku Two (Martine Roberts)
- Haiku Three IN THE MUSEUM GARDEN (Mark Mulcahy)

- Robert Wyatt - voice

Edition limitée avec un second disque en bonus.



> Zoom

Sixteen Haiku & Other Stories
Limited Edition
2003

- Haiku Four (Alejandro Escovedo)
- Haiku Five (Carla Torgerson)
- Haiku Six (Carla Torgerson & Akis Boyatzis)
- Haiku Seven (Akis Boyatzis)
- Haiku Eight (Edith Frost)
- Haiku Nine YOUNG FATE (Mark Eitzel)
- Haiku Ten (Cat Power)
- Haiku Eleven (Simon Joyner)
- Haiku Twelve UNPROFITABLE BOAT LINE (Lee Ranaldo)
- Haiku Thirteen SICK FURY (Alex Gordon)
- Haiku Fourteen A (SUNG IN GREEK) Akis Boyatzis
- Haiku Fourteen B (John Grant)
- Haiku Fifteen (James William Hindle)
- Haiku Sixteen (Lee Ranaldo)
- Dead Sea (LOGBOOK II) (James Sclavunos)
- Water Warm (PLANS FOR A SUMMER) (Pinkie Maclure)
- This Human Body (Howe Gelb)
- The Jasmine (Steve Wynn)

Disc 2
- Intro (Rhodes Mix)
- Haiku 1 (Voice: Edith Frost)
- Haiku 2 (Voice: Carla Torgerson & Akis Boyatzis) (Vangelis Zisis Mix)
- Haiku 13 (Voice: Carla Torgerson)
- This Human Body (Voice: Howe Gelb) (Antonis Liveratos Mix)
- Dead Sea (Original Signatropic Version)

- TONGUE MASTER (TMAST 002) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Shooting At The Moon (Reissue)
2003

Kevin Ayers And The Whole World

- May I
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine
- Colores Para Dolores
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans Un Violon
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Underwater
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Red Green And You Blue
- Shooting At The Moon

Bonus
- Gemini Child
- Puis-Je?
- Butterfly Dance
- Jolie Madame
- Hat

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée de l'album paru en 1970, enrichie de plusieurs bonus.

- EMI/HARVEST (07243-582777-2-2) CD



> Zoom

Anglo American
2004

Gary Windo

- Round Ginkie
- Standfast
- Carmus
- Spiderman
- Take Off
- Anglo American
- Is This The Time
- Quick Steps
- Free To Go
- Sun & The Moon
- Radio Improved
- Baxter
- Lassie Breaks Out
- Red River Valley

Standfast
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Gary Windo - tenor saxophone
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Mongezi Feza - pocket trumpet
- Steve Florence, guitar
- Roy Babbington - bass guitar

Recorded live in London, 1971.

Carmus & *Spiderman*
- Robert Wyatt - drums, percussion, organ, mouth
- Gary Windo - tenor saxophone
- Ron Mathewson - bass, bass guitar
- Dave MacCrae, piano, electric piano

Recorded live in London, April 1973.



> Zoom

The Stolen Hour
2004

Hugh Hopper

- Craig's Distended Train Ride
- Complications At Work
- An Inescapable Encounter With Mrs Pry
- Yearning For The Stolen Hour
- The Long Drive
- An Unregulated Sunset
- A Sideways Peek At Dreamtime
- Snide Wisdom Involving The Immateriality Of Time
- The Stuff He Sees
- Mia's Timely Emergence From The East
- Compatibility
- Sharing The Stolen Hour

Rétrospective 1971-1981.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 189) CD

↑

- Robert Wyatt - cornet on 1, 6 & 10, voice loops on 10

- Hugh Hopper - guitar, bass guitar and rhythm loops
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - sax on 1

Initialement réalisé pour accompagner une BD de Matt Howarth, le CD contient un fichier PDF permettant de consulter ses travaux graphiques.

- BURNING SHED (0204) CD

↑



> Zoom

Original Master
Early Works Selection
2004

Brian Eno

- Non One Receiving
- Taking Tiger Mountain
- Back In Judy's Jungle
- Here Come The Warm Jets
- On Some Far Away Beach
- By This River
- Everything Merges With The Night
- Another Green World

Promo version comportant 2 morceaux de chacun des 4 premiers albums.

Taking Tiger Mountain est extrait de Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy).

- VIRGIN (ENOPROMO1) CD-S

↑



Original Master
Ambient Work Section
2004

Brian Eno

- Excerpt From Discreet Music
- Excerpt From 1/1
- Wind In Lonely Fences
- The Chill Air
- Lizard Point
- Dunwich Beach, Autumn 1960

Promo version comportant 6 morceaux accompagnés d'un dossier de presse de 6 pages.

Excerpt From 1/1 est extrait de Ambient # 1.

- VIRGIN (ENOPROMO2) CD

↑



> Zoom

Phil Manzanera

- Broken Dreams
- Green Spikey Cactus
- Love Devotion
- Wish You Well
- 6pm
- Waiting For The Sun To Shine
- Manzra
- Cissbury Ring
- Porlock
- Shoreline
- Always You
- Sacred Days

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet on 8, 9 & 11, drums on 8, 11 & 12

- Phil Manzanera - vocals on 8, 11 & 12, guitar on 8, 9, 11 &, 12, piano on 8 & 11, hammond on 12
- Jamie Johnson - bass on 8, 11 & 12
- Yarron Stavi - double bass on 8, 9 & 11
- David Gilmour - guitar on 11

6pm
2004



> Zoom



> Zoom

Didn't Feel Lonely
Till I Thought Of You
2004

Kevin Ayers - The Island Records Years

Disc 1
- Day By Day
- See You Later
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Everybody's Sometime And Some People's All The Time Blues
- It Begins With A Blessing
- Once I Awakened
- But It Ends with A Curse
- Ballbearing Blues
- The Confessions Of Dr. Dream: Part One: Irreversible Neural Damage Part Two: Invitation Part Three: The One Chance Dance Part Four: Dr. Dream Theme
- Two Goes Into Four
- Observations
- Guru Banana
- City Waltz
- Toujours La Voyage
- Sweet Deceiver
- Diminished But Not Finished
- Circular Letter
- Once Upon An Ocean
- Farewell Again (Another Dawn)

Disc 2
- The Up Song
- After The Show
- Thank You Very Much
- **Driving Me Backwards**
- **Baby's On Fire**
- **Heartbreak Hotel**
- The End
- **May I?**
- **Shouting In A Bucket Blues**
- **Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes**
- Everybody's Sometime And Some People's All The Time Blues
- **Two Goes Into Four**

& 12
- Claire - backing vocals on 8 & 11

- HANNIBAL (HNCD1471) CD

Réédition de 3 albums de Kevin Ayers chez Island (*The Confessions Of Dr. Dream*, *Sweet Deceiver* et *June 1st 1974* + 3 bonus tracks au début du disc 2).

Robert Wyatt apparaît sur 7 morceaux de June 1st 1974.

- EDSEL (MEDCD749) 2xCD



> Zoom

Medulla
2004

Björk

- Pleasure Is All Mine
- Show Me Forgiveness
- Where Is The Line
- Vokuro
- Oll Birtan
- Who Is It
- **Submarine**
- Desired Constellation
- Oceania
- Sonnets / Unrealities Xi
- Ancestors
- Mouth's Cradle
- Midvikudags
- Triumph Of A Heart
- Komid *(titre bonus réservé à l'édition japonaise)*

- Robert Wyatt - vocals on *Submarine*

- Björk - vocals on *Submarine*
- Valgeir Sigurdsson - programming on *Submarine*

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Samples.

- POLYDOR (9867589) CD

Gong

Disc 1
- Gong Concert Intro
- Captain Shaw
- **Love Makes Sweet Music**
- Riot 1971

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ



> Zoom

Histories & Mysteries
Of Planet Gong
2004

- Radio Gnome Premix
- Pothead Pixies
- Line Up
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Soft Machine Radio Interview
- Catspin
- French Radio Introduction + Gong Poem
- Moonfield
- Where Have All The Flowers Gone
- Herbacious Border
- Thirteen Eight
- Oo La La
- Deya Goddess

Disc 2
- Radio Brainwave
- Chinese Puzzle
- Afraid
- Hypnotize You
- Gliss U Well
- Radio Oversoul
- Opium For The People
- Dreaming It
- Auburn Mary
- Are You Ready?
- Hypothetical
- Crazy Town
- Muruoa
- Red Alert
- Chernobyl Rain
- Water
- Jaminji
- Hanging Future
- Heart Song

- Daevid Allen - guitar

- VOICEPRINT (VP279CD) CD

↑



> Zoom

Chansons
2004

John Greaves/Elise Caron

- Effilochée
- Mélange
- Trois Fois Rien
- Chanson De L'Orphelinat
- Nez À Nez
- Patience
- Les Fourmis
- Kiev
- Bestiaire
- Nabuchodonosor
- Infini
- Les roseaux
- Prière
- Les p'tits bateaux
- Limbo
- Impatience

- Robert Wyatt - cymbals, snare, mouth percussion & certain vocals

- Elise Caron - voice
- John Greaves - piano & acoustic bass guitar
- David Venitucci - accordion
- Louis Sclavis - clarinets & soprano sax
- Vincent Courtois - cello

- LE CHANT DU MONDE (274 1261) CD

↑



> Zoom

Rééditions
2004

John Greaves

FROM KEW RHONE
- Good Evening
- Twenty-Two Proverbs
- Seven Scenes From The Painting "Exhuming The First American Mastodon"
- Kew. Rhone.
- Pipeline

FROM SONGS
- Old Kinderhook
- Song
- Swelling Valley
- Green Fuse
- KewRhone

FROM TROUBLE WITH HAPPINESS
- Lucky Day
- Trouble With Happiness
- Deck Of The Moon

Promo Version.

Song et *KewRhone* sont extraits de Songs.

- LE CHANT DU MONDE - CD

↑

Cristina Donà



> Zoom

Cristina Dona - UK Version
2004

- Ultramarine
- Yesterday's Film
- Invisible Girl
- Wherever Finds You
- Truman Show
- Triathlon (Casasonica remix)
- Give It Back (To Me)
- How Deep Is Your Love
- Milly's Song
- One Perfect Day
- Goccia (featuring Robert Wyatt)

Goccia est extrait de Nido.

- MESCAL/RYKODISC (RCD10659) CD



> Zoom

Musik
2004

Gilad Atzmon & The Orient House Ensemble

- Joven, Hermosa Y Triste
- Surfing
- Liberating The American People
- It Takes Tutu Tango
- Musik
- Re-Arranging The 20th Century
- Lili Marlene
- And She Is Happy

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, trumpet

- Gilad Atzmon - soprano and alto saxophone, clarinet, so , trombone, shabbaabeh flute, piccolo
- Frank Harrison - piano
- Yaron Stavi - double bass
- Asaf Sirkis - drums, bandir, riqq
- Romano Viazzani - accordion
- Dumitru Ovidiu Fratila - violin, trumpet-violin

- ENJA (TIP-888 848) CD



> Zoom

If Ever I Am
2005

Brian Hopper

- Blowit
- The Pieman Cometh
- Two To Tutu Tooo
- Sometimes It Is
- Akamalaka
- Hope For Happiness
- Tarzapark Rarka
- For Freedom
- Modality
- If Ever I Am
- Blewit

- Robert Wyatt - vocals and trumpet on *The Pieman Cometh*, vocals and cornet on *Hope For Happiness*

- Brian Hopper - piano synthesizers, sequencing, bass, drum programming on *The Pieman Cometh*, soprano saxophone, midi wind controler, sampling, synthesisers, sequencing, drum programming on *Hope For Happiness*

Hope For Hapiness est signé par Brian Hopper (qui a effectivement composé et déposé les droits de ce morceau) alors que la version du Soft Machine vol.1 est signée par Hugh Hopper, Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Samples.

- VOICEPRINT (VP338CD) CD

Scritti Politti

- Skank Bloc Bologna
- Is And Ought The Western World
- 28/8/78
- Scritlocks Door
- Opec - Immac
- Messthetics
- Hegemony
- Bibbly-O-Tec

The Sweetest Girl est extrait de Songs To Remember.

- ROUGH TRADE (30054) CD



> Zoom

Early Years (1978-1980)
2005

- Doubt Beat
- Confidence
- P.A.S.
- The "Sweetest Girl"
- Lions After Slumbera



> Zoom

The BBC Sessions
1970 - 1976
2005

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
- Clarence in Wonderland
- Stop This Train
- Why Are We Sleeping
- You Say You Like My Hat
- Gemini Chile
- Lady Rachel
- Shooting At The Moon
- Derby Day
- Interview
- We Did It Again/Murder In The Air
- Lunatic's Lament
- Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Butterfly Dance
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Falling In Love Again
- Queen Thing

Disc 2
- Interview
- Oh What A Dream
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- Another Whimsical Song
- Lady Rachel
- Stop This Train
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Mr Cool
- Love's Gonna Turn You Round
- Star
- Ballad Of Mr Snake

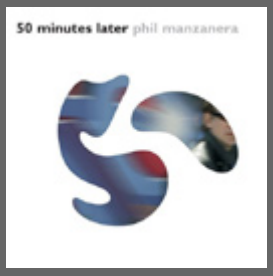
- Robert Wyatt - drums & backing vocals

- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass & vocals
- David Bedford - piano
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - flute
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ

Tracks 1-4 : 'Top Gear' - Recorded February, 2, 1970 at Maida Vale 4

Why Are We Sleeping et *You Say You Like My Hat* sont extraits de Singing The Bruise - The BBC Sessions 1970-72.

- HUX RECORDS (HUX 073) 2xCD



> Zoom

50 Minutes Later
2005

Phil Manzanera

- Revolution
- Technicolor UFO
- That's All I Know
- 50 Minutes Mas Tarde
- Desaparecido
- Dusza
- One Step
- Swimming
- Bible Black
- Till The End Of The Line
- Enotonik Bible Black

- Robert Wyatt - keyboards, cornet, vocals, percussion, voice

- Phil Manzanera - vocals, guitars, keyboards
- Paul Thompson - drums
- Jamie Johnson - bass, treatments
- Brian Eno - percussions, keyboards, treatments
- Claire Singers - vocals
- Andy Mackay - sax, oboe
- Yaron Stavi - acoustic bass
- Paddy Milner - piano
- Nigel Simpson - piano
- Brendan Jury - alto violin
- Romano Viazzani - accordion

- HANNIBAL (HNCD 1503) CD

Bruno Coulais



> Zoom

Stabat Mater
2005

- Ya Man - Invocation
- Fac Ut Ardeat Cor Meum
- Quis Non Poset Contristari
- Quis Est Homo Qui Non Fleret
- Prélude : Dolente
- Dolente
- Juxta Crucem Tecum Stare
- O Quam Tristis Et Afflicta
- Sous Les Fouets, Meurtri
- Christe, Cum Sit Hinc Exire
- Fac Ut Portem Christi Mortem
- Pro Peccatis Suae Gentis
- Debout Avec Toi
- Vidit Suum Dulcem Natum
- Wa Zadi Qalilun
- Eia Mater, Fons Amoris
- Chemin
- Stabat Mater Dolorosa
- Virgo Virginum Praeclara
- Quando Corpus Morietur
- Ya Habiba i-Qalbi

- Robert Wyatt - voix off enregistrée

- Aïcha Redouane - chant
- Laurent Korcia - violon solo
- Guillaume Depardieu - chant
- Marie Kobayashi - mezzo-soprano
- Claire Désert - clavecin, piano
- Slim Pezin - guitare
- Marc Chantereau - percussions
- Christophe Guiot - violon 1
- Elisabeth Pallas - violon 2
- Françoise Gneri - alto
- Jean-Philippe Audin - violoncelle
- Choeur de chambre Mikrokosmos
- Loïc Pierre - direction

Création le 28 juin 2005 en la Basilique de St-Denis (France).

- NAIVE (V5038) CD



> Zoom

On An Island
2006

David Gilmour

- Castellorizon
- On An Island
- The Blue
- Take A Breath
- Red Sky At Night
- This Heaven
- Then I Close My Eyes
- Smile
- A Pocketful Of Stones
- Where We Start

- Robert Wyatt - cornet, voice, percussion

- David Gilmour – guitars, bass harmonica, cumbus
- BJ Cole – Weissenborn guitar
- Phil Manzanera – piano
- Andy Newmark – percussion
- Caroline Dale – cello
- Alasdair Malloy – glass harmonica

- EMI RECORDS (3556952) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Concerts Remastered
2006

Henry Cow

Disc 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- The Ottawa Song
- Gloria Gloom
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Groningen Again

Disc 2
- Oslo
- Off The Map
- Cafe Royal
- Keeping Warm In Winter
- Sweet Heart Of Mine
- Udine

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée du CD paru en 1995.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- RERMEGACORP (HC5 & 6) 2xCD



News From Babel

Disc 1
SIRENS AND SILENCES
- Odysseus
- Auschwitz/Babel
- Klein's Bottle
- Black Gold
- Devils
- Dry Leaf
WORK RESUMED ON THE TOWER
- Arcades (of Glass)
- Victory

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée des CDs parus en 1995. Le 3ème CD est la réédition d'un one-sided single paru en 1984.

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR NfBOX) 3xCD

Critiques/Reviews

> Zoom

Sirens & Silences / Work Resumed On The Tower / Letters Home (Reedition)
2006

- Anno Mirabilis

Disc 2
LETTERS HOME
- Who Will Accuse ?
- Heart Of Stone (Megalopolis)
- Banknote
- Moss
- Dragon At The Core
- Dark Matter
- Waited/**Justice**
- Fast Food
- Late Evening

Disc 3
BONUS
- Contraries



> Zoom

The Man From Gong
The Best Of Daevid Allen
2006

Daevid Allen

- You Don't Remember
- Chainstore Chant & Pretty Miss Titty
- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein
- Fred The Fish
- White Neck Blooze/Codein Coda
- Tried So Hard
- Floatin' Anarchy
- Opium For The People
- Why Do We Treat Ourselves Like We Do ?
- Only Make Love If You Want To
- Poet For Sale
- It'S A Fine Air For Fliss
- No Other Than My Mother Is The Song
- Much Too Old
- Strong Woman
- Pearls
- Bananareggae
- Are You Ready

- Robert Wyatt - drums, backing vocals (vocal on *You Don't Remember*)

You Don't Remember est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.
Stoned Innocent Frankenstein, Fred The Fish & White Neck Blooze/Codein Codae sont extraits de Banana Moon.

- CHARLY RECORDS (SNAP264CD) CD



> Zoom

Surrounded
2006

Björk

Disc 1
DEBUT

Disc 2
POST

Disc 3
HOMOGENIC

Disc 4
SELMASONGS

Disc 5
VESPERTINE

Disc 6
MEDULLA

- Pleasure Is All Mine
- Show Me Forgiveness
- Where Is The Line
- Vökuró
- Öll Birtan
- Who Is It (Carry My Joy On The Left, Carry My Pain On The Right)
- Submarine
- Desired Constellation
- Oceania
- Sonnets/Unrealities XI
- Ancestors
- Mouth's Cradle
- Midvikudags
- Triumph Of A Heart

Disc 7
DRAWING RESTRAINT 9

y

This boxset contains the first 7 remastered Bjork albums, including Medulla released in 2004.

Discs come packaged in a metallic-pink box.

All seven discs include the original release on the CD side, with the DVD side presenting the original album remastered in Dolby 5.1 and DTS 96/24 Surround Sound (Vespertine only 48 kHz), plus all the videos released from the album (a total of 26 videos in the box).

- RHINO RECORDS (R2 73212) 7xCD + 7xDVD)
- ONE LITTLE INDIAN (TPLP730CDBOX) 7xCD + 7xDVD



> Zoom

Songs From Before
2006

Max Richter

- Song
- Flowers For Yulia
- Fragment
- Harmonium
- Ionosphere
- Autumn Music 1
- Time Passing
- Sunlight
- Lullaby
- Autumn Music 2
- Verses
- From The Rue Vilin

- Robert Wyatt - readings

- Max Richter - piano, mixing
- Natalia Bonner - violin
- Ian Burdge - cello
- Chris Worsey - cello

Robert Wyatt lit des textes de Haruki Murakami.

- FAT CATS RECORDS (CD13-05)
CD



> Zoom

Les TresOrs (1982-1999)
(Reissue)
2006

Claustrofobia

- Rito Zíngaro (recreación de "Rito Gitano")
- Nana Del Amor Amargo
- Carlove
- El Enjambre
- Los Milicianos
- Lluvia Dorada En Tu Boca
- Soledad y Pobreza
- Morir Contigo
- Solas Las Dos (recreación de "Encadenadas")
- Escalofrío
- Sudor y Espuma
- No Olvido
- La Elegancia de Tus Lágrimas
- Encadenados
- Tu Traición
- Diablura
- El Cuento Se Acabó

Réédition de l'album Les TresOrs (1982-1999) paru en 1999.

- K INDUSTRIA (K 019) CD



> Zoom

Henry Cow Box
2006

Henry Cow

Disc 1
LEGEND
- Nirvana For Mice
- Amygdala
- Teenbeat (Introduction)
- Teenbeat
- Nirvana (Reprise)
- Extract From "With The Yellow Half-Moon And Blue Star"
- Teenbeat (Reprise)
- Tenth Chaffinch
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King
- Bellycan

Disc 2
UNREST
- Bittern Storm Over Ulm
- Half Asleep; Half Awake
- Ruins
- Solemn Music
- Linguaphonie
- Upon Entering The Hotel Adlon
- Arcades
- Deluge
- Glove
- Torchfire

Disc 3
IN PRAISE OF LEARNING
- War
- Living In The Heart Of The Beast
- Beginning: The Long March
- Beautiful As The Moon | Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Morning Star
- Lovers Of Gold

Disc 4
DESPERATE STRAIGHTS

Coffret de 8 Cds en tirage limité dont une nouvelle réédition remasterisée du CD *Concerts* paru en 1976 et 1995.

Le 8ème CD est un CD bonus réservé aux 200 premiers souscripteurs du coffret.

Ce coffret est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- RER MEGACORP (RER HCBOX)
8xCD

- Some Questions About Hats
- Owl
- Worm Is At Work
- Bad Alchemy
- Europa
- Desperate Straights
- Riding Tigers
- Apes In Capes
- Strayed
- Giants
- Excerpt From The Messiah
- In The Sickbay
- Caucasian Lullaby

Discs 5 et 6
CONCERTS
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- The Ottawa Song
- Gloria Gloom
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Groningen Again

- Oslo
- Off The Map
- Cafe Royal
- Keeping Warm In Winter Sweet Heart Of Mine
- Udine

Disc 7
WESTERN CULTURE
- History And Prospects: Industry
- History And Prospects: The Decay Of Cities
- History And Prospects: On The Raft
- Day By Day: Falling Away
- Day By Day: Gretel's Tale
- Day By Day: Look Back
- Day By Day: Half The Sky
- Viva Pa Ubu
- Look Back [Alternate Take]
- Slice

Disc 8 (bonus)
UNRELEASED ORCKESTRA EXTRACT
- Untitled
- Would You Prefer Us To Lie?



> Zoom

Bar Elèctric (1975-2005)
2006

Pascal Comelade

Disc 1
- Fluence (PC) + Richard Pinhas
- Sequencia (PC)
- Sequencia (PC)
- Automne (PC) + Gavin Bryars
- Ready Made (PC)
- Bar Electric (PC/VN) + Victor Nubla
- Pluie Japonaise (PC) + David Cunningham / D.D.A.A.
- Chanson (PC) + Cathy Claret
- Petit Ballet Mécanique (PC)
- Dancin' On My Sofa (PC)
- Park Güell (PC)
- Rue des Soeurs Noires (PC)
- Valse de la Demoiselle aux Yeux Verts (PC)
- Honky Tonk Women (Jagger-Richards) + GAT
- Your Labios As Tulips (PC)
- Memories (Wyatt/Hopper) + Laurent Sinclair
- It Hurts Me Too (Elmore James) + Pierre Bastien/Marc Dufourd
- Tango Del Rosselo (PC)
- La Crasse du Tympan (Marcel Duchamp) Enric Casasses/Mark Cunningham
- Patafisiskal Polska (PC)

Disc 2
- The Skatalan Logicofobism (PC) + Bel Canto Orquestra
- 4 Roses pour Maris (PC)
- Arthur Cravan Was A Flor Fina (PC)

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- G3G RECORDS (G3PC9) 4xCD

- The Way I Walk (Jack Scott) + OTH
- Danse Du Valseur Callipyge (PC)
- Retrat De L'Enric Amb Xapo (PC)
- Sunny Afternoon (R. Davies)
- Put A Straw Under Babies (Eno)
- Chanson De Charme Pour Faux-Nez (PC)
- The Lolobrigidada Fox-Trot (PC)
- Your Eyes Like Juan Gris Cubist Guitar (PC)
- Le Fakir de la Chapelle (PC)
- A Tombouctou sans Mariachis (PC)
- La Catedral d'Escuradents (PC)
- Betty Page A Go-Go (PC)
- Back To Schizo (PC) + Richard Pinhas
- L'Homme Dibuixat (Sisa)

Disc 3
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir (PC)
- Dona'M Corda (EC/PC) + Enric Casasses
- Souviens-Toi De Ces Douces Soirées (PC)
- The Sad Skinhead (J.H. Peron) + Jean-Hervé Péron
- Domisiladoré (PC) + Général Alcazar
- Teresa (O. Montillor) + Toti Soler
- Love Too Soon (P.J. Harvey/PC) + P.J. Harvey
- Featherhead (P.J. Harvey/PC) + P.J. Harvey
- I Love Joan Jett (Diverses Authors)
- Cadillac (Vince Taylor) + Jac Berrocal
- Springman (PC)
- L'Argot Del Soroll

Disc 4
- Aigua De Florida (PC)
- 13 à Table (PC)
- September Song (Anderson/Weil) + Robert Wyatt
- Tobe Dammit Ornette To Be (PC)
- The Blank Invasion Of Shizofonics Bikinis (PC)
- Si (PC)
- Gégène (PC)
- Egyptian Reggae (J. Richman)
- Numero très (PC)
- La Placa Del Diamant (PC) + Quicu Samso
- Vals Robat (PC)
- Noies Boniques Amb Vestits Bonics (PC)
- Una Aigua Dolca D'Estar Bé (PC)
- Come Prima (Panzer/Taccani/Di Paola)
- The Sheik Of Araby (Snyder/Wheler/Smith)
- Ramona (Autor Desconegut)
- Lo Pardal (Trad.)
- Smoke'n'Cadillac (Deep Purple/ V. Taylor) + Roy Paci
- Lumpen Harmony (PC)



> Zoom

Review (1968-2000)
2007

Michael Mantler

- Unsaid (6)
- I'm Glad You're Glad
- One Symphony - Part 3 (excerpt)
- Introductions
- Love Ends (excerpt)
- Understanding
- Solitudine / Lontano / L'Illuminata Rugiada / Proverbi
- Speechless
- Folly Seeing All This (excerpt)
- PSS
- Comrade
- A L'Abattoir
- When I Run
- Alien - Part 1 (excerpt)
- Twenty
- Movie Two
- Sometimes I See People (excerpt)
- The Sinking Spell
- 13 (excerpt)
- Number Six - Part Four
- Preview
- It Makes No Difference To Me

Compilation de compositions crées entre 1968 et 2000, dont les albums suivants réalisés avec Robert Wyatt :

- Hide and Seek
- The School Of Understanding
- Many Have No Speech
- Silence
- The Hapless Child

- ECM RECORDS (1813) CD



> Zoom

Welcome To The Voice
2007

Steve Nieve

- Prologue Of Dionysos
- Song Of The Ghost Of Carmen
- Grand Grand Freedom
- Unfailing Welcome To The Voice
- Song Of The Ghost Of Butterfly
- Song Of The Ghost Of Norma
- To Be Is Strong
- Perfume Song
- The Desire Of Dionysos
- Troublemaker
- Don't Touch Him
- Distanciation
- Happiness
- Despair
- The Unlikely Duet

Opéra contemporain.

Track 3:
Robert Wyatt – vocal, pocket trumpet
Sting – vocal
The London Voices – choir
Les Amis Francais – choir
Steve Nieve – piano, mini Moog
Ned Rothenberg – saxophones, clarinets
Marc Ribot – guitars
Antoine Quessada – cymbals
Brodsky Quartet

Track 10:
Robert Wyatt – voice
Elvis Costello – voice
The London Voices – choir
Les Amis Francais – choir
Steve Nieve - piano
Ned Rothenberg – bass clarinet, bass flute

Track 12:
Robert Wyatt – pocket trumpet
Nathalie Manfrino – voice
Sara Fulgoni - voice
The London Voices – choir
Les Amis Francais – choir
Steve Nieve – piano
Sting – electric bass guitar
Brodsky Quartet

Track 13:
Robert Wyatt – voice
Sting – voice
Steve Nieve – piano
Ned Rothenberg - clarinet
The Brodsky Quartet

Track 14:
Robert Wyatt – voice, pocket trumpet
Elvis Costello – voice
Sting – voice
Barbara Bonney – voice
Amanda Roocroft - voice
Nathalie Manfrino - voice
Sara Fulgoni – voice
Steve Nieve - piano, mini Moog

Track 15:
Robert Wyatt – voice
Sting – voice
Barbara Bonney - voice
Amanda Roocroft - voice
Nathalie Manfrino - voice
Sara Fulgoni – voice
The London Voices – choir
Les Amis Francais – choir
Steve Nieve - piano, mini Moog
Ned Rothenberg - saxophones, clarinets
Marc Ribot – guitars
Antoine Quessada - cymbals
Brodsky Quartet

- DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON (4776524) CD



Pascal Comelade

- Pim Pam Poum Al Concepte
- The Blank Invasion Of Schizofonics Bikinis
- Lumpen-Harmony
- Sense El Resso Del Dring
- Encore Le Semi-Nerf DéJà Claquant
- To Be Dammit Ornette To Be
- A Tombouctou Sans Mariachis
- Domisiladoré
- Le Fakir De La Chapelle

Compilation.

September Song est extrait de September Song.

- BECAUSE MUSIC (3124232) CD

> Zoom

Monofonicorama
Best-Off (?) 2005-1992...
2007

- Love Too Soon
- L'Esquella De La Torratxa
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir
- September Song
- Patafisiskal Polska
- Arthur Cravan Was A Flor Fina
- Un Train Direct Pour Charenton
- La SociéTé Du Piano Obstacle
- 4 Roses Pour Marie
- Face Au Toril
- Chanson De Charme Pour Faux-Nez
- The Skatalan Logicofobism
- Mother Of Earth
- Portrait D'Enric Avec Son Chapeau
- Sardawa Dels Desemparats
- L'Argot Du Bruit



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

The Story So Far...
... Oh Really? (Reissue)
2007

Steve Miller/Lol Coxhill

Disc 1
MILLER/COXHILL
- Chocolate Field
- One For You
- Portland Bill
COXHILL/MILLER
- Will My Thirst Play Me Tricks/The Ant About To Be Crushed Ponders Not The Where Withal Of Boot Leather
- Maggots
- Bath 72
- Wimbledon Baths
- Gog Ma Gog
Bonus
DELIVERY
- Betty (You Pays Your Money, You Takes Your Chances)
- God Song
- Bossa Nochance/Big Jobs
STEVE MILLER
- Big Jobs No. 2
- God Song

Disc 2
Bonus
STEVE MILLER
- Chocolate Field
- One For You
THE STORY SO FAR...
- G Song
- F Bit
- Songs Of March
- More G Songs
- Does This
- The Greatest Off-Shore Race In The World
...OH REALLY?
- Reprise For Thos Who Prefer It Slower
- Tubercular Balls
- Soprano Derivativo/Apricot Jam
- Oh, Do I Like To Be Beside The Seaside?
- In Memoriam: Meister Eckhart, From The Welfare State Epic Of The Same Name Starring Randolph Scott
- A Fabulous Comedian
Bonus
- Coo-Coo-Ka-Chew [Collective Improvisation]

- Robert Wyatt - percussion & vocals

- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Kevin Ayers - acoustic guitar
- Archie Legget - bass guitar

"Joined at a later date by Kevin Ayers's sequence Apricot Jam. Performed live at the Twist Cha-Cha Rooms, Camden Over 40's Club by Sunny Sax and The Sunshine Orchestra."

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée de l'album paru en 1974, enrichie de nombreux bonus.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 253/254) 2xCD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2

Bertrand Burgalat

- Balises pour centre d'écoute
- Une Nuit À Taverny
- Nous étions Heureux
- Right Side Up with The World
- This Summer Night
- Mal De Bright
- Anonyme Amour
- Out Of Touch
- Ragle Gumm
- Grande remise
- J'ai Quelque Chose À Dire
- Un Sogno Di Televizione

- Robert Wyatt - voix

- Hervé Bouétard - batterie
- David Forgione - basse
- Stéphane Salvi - guitare
- Bertrand Burgalat - claviers, flûte, choeurs, voix

- TRICATEL (TRICDFR031) CD

Chéri B.B.
2007

- I've been A Bad, Bad Boy
- Happy Inbetween



> Zoom

This Summer Night
2007

Robert Wyatt & Bertrand Burgalat

- This Summer Night
- This Summer Night (Solenzara Mix)

This Summer Night est extrait de Chéri B.B.

- TRICATEL (SP5) S
- DOMINO (RUG283CDP) CD-S



> Zoom 1 2 3

Hyde Park Free Concert 1970
2007

Kevin Ayers & the Whole World

- Clarence In Wonderland
- Red Green And You Blue
- May I?
- Hat Song
- Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Kevin Ayers - electric guitar, vocals
- David Bedford - electric piano, organ
- Lol Coxhill - tenor, soprano saxophone, gibson maestro, slide whistle, percussion
- Mike Oldfield - bass guitar

- REEL RECORDINGS (RR002) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Yellow Gauze
2007

Bibi Tanga Et Le Professeur Inlassable

- Ayo
- Groovyland
- This Is How It's Going To Be
- Pain In My Chest
- Yellow Gauze
- Wade In The Water
- Crazy Funny Story
- Keep That Groove Away
- Ladybird
- Au fil du temps
- Talking Nigga Brothaz
- It's The Earth That Moves
- At War
- Nzapa a bata mo

- Robert Wyatt - lyrics

- Nicolas Repac - guitar
- Olivier Lesolliec - guitar

- L'INLASSABLE DISQUE (INL001) CD



Clear Frame

- Clean Slate
- Tin Plate
- Noise Gate
- Void Crate
- High Rate
- Better Late
- Paperweight
- Figure Eight

- Robert Wyatt - cornet

- Lol Coxhill - soprano saxophone
- Charles Hayward - drums, keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Orphy Robinson - vibraphone, steel pan, percussion, FX

- CONTINUITY RECORDS (TINU001) CD

> Zoom

Clear Frame
2007



> Zoom 1 2

J'Irai Au Paradis
2007

Daniel Darc

- J'Irai Au Paradis
- Ça Ne Sert À Rien

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals

- Daniel Darc - chant
- Frédéric Lo - basse, Beat Box Korg KR-55, guitare, Yamaha CS-50, trompette

Edition promo limitée et numérotée.

- MERCURY (882377-7) S
- MERCURY (11677) CD-S



> Zoom

Amours Suprêmes
2008

Daniel Darc

- Les Remords
- J'irai Au Paradis
- L.U.V.
- Un An Et Un Jour
- La Seule Fille Sur Terre
- Ça Ne Sert À Rien
- Amour Suprême
- La Vie Est Mortelle
- Serais-Je Perdu
- Environ

- Robert Wyatt - voix, respirations

- Daniel Darc - chant
- Frédéric Lo - basse, Beat Box Korg KR-55, guitare, Yamaha CS-50, trompette

- MERCURY (530545 9) CD



> Zoom

Mr Love & Justice
2008

Billy Bragg

- I Keep Faith
- I Almost Killed You
- M for Me
- The Beach Is Free
- Sing Their Souls Back Home
- You Make Me Brave
- Something Happened
- Mr. Love & Justice
- If You Ever Leave
- O Freedom
- The Johnny Carcinogenic Show
- Farm Boy

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals

- Billy Bragg - vocals, acoustic and electric guitar
- Ben Mandelson - mandolin, baritone bouzouki, harmonica, lap steel, electric bouzouki, national tenor guitar, electric guitar,
- Lu Edmonds - ud, saz, cümbüs, electric guitar
- Ian McLagan - Hammond B3, piano, Würlitzer
- Simon Edwards - double bass, electric bass, marimbula, handclaps
- Martin Barker - hang drum, exp cymbal, drums, handclaps, shaker, snare, bass drum, bongos,reco reco, ride cymbal, tambourine, cajon, mazhar, calabash

- COOKING VINYL (COOKCD452) CD

Billy Bragg

- I Keep Faith (Single Edit Version)
- Like Soldiers Do (Acoustic Version)

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals

- COOKING VINYL (FRY341) EP



> Zoom

I Keep Faith
2008

- COOKING VINYL (FRY341P) CD-S





> Zoom

Hih
2008

Mônica Vasconcelos

- Nega Deleite
- Arquitetura
- Coisa De Fome
- **Out Of The Doldrums** [Philipps/Benge/ Wyatt]
- Fogo E Sal
- Hih
- Lâgrimas Negras
- Disritmia
- Sunshine Vignette
- **Still In The Dark (You're Not My Sunshine)** [Lodder/Wyatt/Benge]
- Pedro
- Oraçao
- Salt Meets Fire (Fogo E Sal) (bonus track)

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals

- Mônica Vasconcelos - vocals, guitar
- Steve Lodder - keyboards, piano, harmonium
- Dudley Phillips - electric bass, double bass
- Adriano Adewale - percussion
- Dudu Fonseca - drums on 4
- Ingrid Laubrock - soprano saxophone on 4

- MOVAS (003) CD





> Zoom

22 Dreams
2008

Paul Weller

- Light Nights
- 22 Dreams
- All I Wanna Do (Is Be with You)
- Have You Made Up Your Mind
- Empty Ring
- Invisible
- **Song for Alice**
- Cold Momets
- Dark Pages of Septemberto the New Leaves Of Spring
- Black River
- Why Walk When You Can Run
- Push It Along
- Dream Reprise
- Echoes Round the Sun
- One Bright Star
- Lullaby Fur Kinder
- Where'er Ye Go
- God
- 111
- Sea Spray
- Night Lights

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet, piano

- Paul Weller - guitar
- Steve Cradock - guitars, piano
- Simon Dine - orchestration, percussion

- ISLAND (1773157) CD
- ISLAND (1769350) 2xLP





> Zoom

What More Can I Say...
2008

Kevin Ayers

- Unfinished
- This Song Isn't Called Anything
- **Crying**
- Clarence In Oyster Land
- Dreaming Doctor
- What More Can I Say...

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Kevin Ayers - guitars, voice, piano
- Mike Oldfield - bass
- David Bedford - organ

- REEL RECORDINGS (RR009) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Songs For Insane Times:
An Anthology 1969-1980
2008

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
- Town Feeling
- Song For Insane Times
- Girl On A Swing
- The Lady Rachel
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Wich Ate Her)
- Religious Experience (Singing A Song In The Morning)
- Soon Soon Soon
- Rheinhardt & Geraldine/**Colores Para Delores**
- May I?
- Clarence In Wonderland
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Shooting At The Moon
- Butterfly Dance
- Gemini Child
- Stars
- There Is Loving/Among Us/There Is Loving

Disc 2
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well
- Oh My
- Margaret
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Interview
- Caribbean Moon
- The Up Song
- The Confessions Of Doctor Dream: Irreversible Neural Damage
- It Begins With A Blessing/Once I Awakened/But It Ends With A Curse
- See You Later
- Ballbearing Blues

Disc 3
- After The Show
- Thank You Very Much
- Observations
- Toujours La Voyage
- Diminished But Not Finished
- Farewell Again (Another Dawn)
- Yes I Do
- Love's Gonna Turn You Round
- Ballad Of Mr. Snake
- Blue
- Ballad Of A Salesman Who Sold Himself
- A View From The Mountain
- Beware Of The Dog II
- Hat Song
- Money, Money, Money
- Super Salesman
- Where Do The Stars End ?

Disc 4
'AFTER THE SHOW' LIVE AT THE QUEEN ELISABETH HALL 1973
- Banana Introduction
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Interview
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- Caribbean Moon
- Don't Let It Get You Down
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping ?
- After The Show

Compilation.

Town Feeling, Songs For Insane Times et The Lady Rachel sont extraits de Joy Of A Toy ; *Soon Soon Soon* est extrait de Odd Ditties ; *Colores Para Dolores* et *Clarence In Wonderland* sont extraits de Shooting At The Moon ;
et *Whatevershebringswesing* est extrait de Whatevershebringswesing

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- HARVEST (521 5570) 4xCD

Robert Wyatt & Bertrand Burgalat

- This Summer Night
- This Summer Night (Hot Chip remix)

This Summer Night est extrait de Chéri



> Zoom

This Summer Night
2008

B.B.
Réédition avec un remix de Hot Chip en face B.

- DOMINO RECORDS
  (RUG283) S



> Zoom

Losing My Reality
2008

Runningstill

- My House
- Ordinary
- **Come Away**
- Sun Goes Down
- On My Side
- Fly
- Waiting For You
- Wake Up
- Something Is Wrong
- Float

- Robert Wyatt - vocals & cornet

- Asi Meskin - vocals, acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards
- Ben Zwerin - bass
- Raed El-Khazen - electric guitar
- Zach Jones - drums

- COMFORTABLY NUMB
  (CFN2-512178) CD



> Zoom

The No Dancing
2008

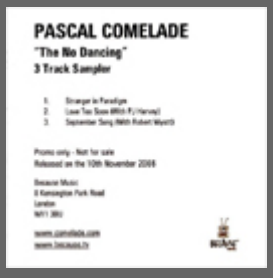
Pascal Comelade

- The Blank Invasion of Schizofonics Bikinis
- Stranger In Paradigm
- Jours Tranquilles A Rodez (feat. J. Liebezbt)
- Elvis Loved Dogs
- The Sad Skinhead (feat. J.-H. Péron)
- Sunny Afternoon
- Love Too Soon (feat. PJ Harvey)
- Contre Le Style
- Mother Of Earth
- Cadillac (feat. J. Berrocal)
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- The Indian Of the Group
- Via-Crucis Del Rocanrol
- Don't Touch My Blue Oyster Shoes
- Betty Page A-Go-Go
- Sense El Resso Del Dring
- **September Song (feat. R. Wyatt)**
- Barman de Satan
- L'U
- Psicotic Music Hall

September Song est extrait de September Song

Compilation.

- BECAUSE MUSIC
  (BEC5772397) CD



> Zoom

The No Dancing Sampler
2008

Pascal Comelade

- Stranger In Paradigm
- Love Too Soon (feat. PJ Harvey)
- **September Song (feat. R. Wyatt)**

September Song est extrait de September Song

Promo Version.

- BECAUSE MUSIC - CD-S



> Zoom

Bm
2008

Barbara Morgenstern

- Driving My Car
- Come To Berlin
- Reich & berühmt
- Deine Geschichte
- Für Luise
- **Camouflage**
- Hochhaus
- My Velocity
- Morbus Basedow
- Monokultur
- Jakarta
- Meine Aufgabe
- Hustefuchs

- Robert Wyatt - vocals and lyrics

- Barbara Morgenstern - vocals, piano
- Julia Kent - cellio
- Chor der Kulturender Welt - choir

- MONIKA ENTERPRISE (64) CD



> Zoom

Everything That Happens
Will Happen Today
2008

David Byrne & Brian Eno

- Home
- My Big Nurse
- I Feel My Stuff
- Everything That Happens
- Life Is Long
- The River
- **Strange Overtones**
- Wanted For Life
- One Fine Day
- Poor Boy
- The Lighthouse

- Robert Wyatt - frame drum solo

- David Byrne - vocals, rhythm guitar
- Brian Eno - backing vocals, organ solo, Omnichord piano, keyboards, programming
- Leo Abrahams - guitars, bass, Dubreq stylophone, programming
- Steve Jones - delay guitar
- Mauro Refosco - bongo, conga, tambourine
- Seb Rochford - live drums

- TODOMUNDO (TODO 002) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Everything That Happens
Will Happen Today (Limited Edition)
2008

David Byrne & Brian Eno

- Home
- My Big Nurse
- I Feel My Stuff
- Everything That Happens
- Life Is Long
- The River
- **Strange Overtones**
- Wanted For Life
- One Fine Day
- Poor Boy
- The Lighthouse

CD Bonus
- **Never Thought**
- Walking Along The River
- The Eyes
- The Painting

On *Strange Overtones*:
- Robert Wyatt - frame drum solo
- David Byrne - vocals, rhythm guitar
- Brian Eno- backing vocals, organ solo, Omnichord piano, keyboards, programming
- Leo Abrahams - guitars, bass, Dubreq Stylophone, programming
- Steve Jones - delay guitar
- Mauro Refosco - bongo, conga, tambourine
- Seb Rochford - live drums

On *Never Thought* :
- Robert Wyatt - drum [handsonic]
- David Byrne - vocals, guitar, E-Bow
- Brian Eno - backing vocals, guitar, bass, piano [inhauman], programmed by,
- Leo Abrahams - acoustic guitar, piano, percussion, E-Bow
- Melanie Hall QC - backing vocals

Limited Deluxe Package edition design by Sagmeister Inc. includes:
- An enhanced CD featuring four exclusive bonus songs, a short film about the album by Hillman Curtis, Holding Pattern screensaver app customized for this release.
- Everything That Happens miniature hardbound book
- a red and white pill
- a dice with six sentences

- TODOMUNDO (TODO 002) 2xCD



> Zoom

Rétrospective
2008

Bruno Coulais

Disc 1
- La Planète Blanche : Coups D'Ailes Sous La Mer
- Le Fils Du Requin : Quatuor N°2
- Le Fils Du Requin : Le Fils Du Requin (Orchestre)
- Don Juan : Des Masques
- Truands : Générique Début
- **Le Peuple Migrateur : The Highest Gander (Bruno Coulais & Robert Wyatt)**
- L'Enfant Qui Voulait Etre Un Ours : Vers La Ville
- Déjà Mort : Les Armes
- Genesis : Genesis
- Le Peuple Migrateur : To Be By Your Side (Bruno Coulais & Nick Cave)
- Le Fils Du Requin : Quatuor N°1
- Don Juan : Les Jeux De La Séduction
- Harrison'S Flowers : La Route
- Les Choristes : In Memoriam
- Le Peuple Migrateur : Hors Champ
- Microcosmos : L'Amour Des Escargots
- Agents Secrets : La Traque
- Le Deuxième Souffle : La Fourmi Rouge
- Don Juan : Don Juan Générique
- L'Enfant Qui Voulait Etre Un Ours : Thème
- Microcosmos : L'Abeille Et Les Fleurs
- Le Peuple Migrateur : Le Retour Des Grues
- De L'Amour : La Cabine

Disc 2
- Comme Un Aimant : Is It Really Home ? (Bruno Coulais & Isaac Hayes)
- Mr73 : Le Cauchemar De Justine
- Les Equilibristes : L'Equilibriste
- Himalaya : Opéra
- Himalaya : La Nuit
- Himalaya : Le Lac
- Déjà Mort : Déjà Mort
- Comme Un Aimant : Affrescu (A Filetta & Bruno Coulais)
- L'Enfant Qui Voulait Etre Un Ours : Le Trou Dans La Neige
- Microcosmos : Microcosmos
- Genesis : La Fanfare De La Vie
- Genesis : Désir, Mon Beau Désir
- Les Rivières Pourpres : Générique Début
- Ulzhan : Générique Fin
- Les Choristes : Les Choristes
- Serial Lover : River Of Love
- Don Juan : La Mort De Don Juan
- Le Fils Du Requin : Le Quatuor De La Mer
- Le Deuxième Souffle : Fin De Partie
- Belphégor : La Pyramide
- Comme Un Aimant : Dir Yassin (Bruno Coulais & Millie Jackson)

Compilation des musiques de film de Bruno Coulais.

The Highest Gander est extrait de Travelling Birds (Le Peuple Migrateur)

- NAIVE (K1643) 2xCD



> Zoom

Hot Chip With Robert Wyatt And Geese
2008

Hot Chip With Robert Wyatt And Geese

- **Made In The Dark**
- **Whistle For Will**
- **We're Looking For A Lot Of Love (remixed by Geese)**
- One Pure Thought

- Robert Wyatt - additional vocals, new mix, cornet, Jew's harp, on *Made In The Dark*

- Robert Wyatt - additional vocals, new mix, whistling, percussion on *Whistle For Will*

- Robert Wyatt - additional vocals, effects, on *We're Looking For A Lot Of Love*

- EMI RECORDS CD-EP



> Zoom

Anthologie Du Projet MW
2009

Anthologie Du Projet MW

- September Song (Robert Wyatt + Pascal Comelade)[K. Weill]
- Signed Curtain (P. Comelade) [R. Wyatt]
- O Caroline (P. Comelade) [D. Sinclair / R. Wyatt]
- Memories (P. Comelade) [H. Hopper]
- Alifib 1 (P. Comelade) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib 2 (P. Comelade) [R. Wyatt]
- Heaps Of Sheep (Rik Van Den Bosch - guitare et chant & Marrijn Slager - guitare avec les voix de A. Marchetti, L. Marchetti, B. Demonet et J.M. Marchetti) [B. Eno - P. George - R. Wyatt / A. Benge]

- Entretien avec Robert Wyatt et lectures de The British Road en français par Philippe Fretun et de The British Road + Blues in Bob Minor en anglais par Robert Wyatt

Ce CD est édité avec l'ouvrage Anthologie du projet MW de J.M. Marchetti publié en mars 2009 aux éditions Ænc rages & Co.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- ÆNCRAGES & Co - CD



> Zoom 1 2 3

1974-5
Volume 2 Of The Henry Cow Anniversary Box Set
2009

Henry Cow

- Introduction
- Ruins I
- Half Asleep, Half Awake
- Ruins II
- Heron Shower Over Hamburg
- Nix

HALSTEREN
- Halsteren 1
- Solo 1
- Solo Extension 1
- Halsteren 2
- Extension 1
- Halsteren 3
- First Suspension
- Extension 2
- Extension 3
- Solo 2
- Solo Extension 2
- Halsteren 4
- Second Suspension
- Extension 4
- Solo 3
- Solo Extension 3
- Hasteren 5

- Living In The Heart Of The Beast

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Chris Cutler - drums
- Lindsay Cooper - oboe, bassoon, piano
- Fred Frith - guitar, xylophone
- John Greaves - bass
- Tim Hodgkinson - organ, alto sax
- Dagmar Krause - voice

Living In The Heart Of The Beast recorded at Theatre des Champs-Elysées, Paris on May 8 1975 - probably to cassette, by unidentified hand.

- RER MEGACORP (RER HC8) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3

Hamburg
Volume 3 Of The Henry Cow Anniversary Box Set
2009

Henry Cow

- Fair As The Moon
- Nirvana For Rabbits
- Ottawa Song
- Twilight Bridge
- Gloria Gloom
- Hamburg 1
- Hamburg 2
- Red Noise10
- Hamburg 3
- Hamburg 4
- Hamburg 5
- Terrible As An Army With Banners
- A Heart

- Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road
- We Did It Again

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Chris Cutler - drums
- Lindsay Cooper - oboe, bassoon
- Fred Frith - guitar
- John Greaves - bass
- Tim Hodgkinson - organ, alto sax
- Dagmar Krause - voice

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- RER MEGACORP (RER HC9) CD

Pascal Comelade



> Zoom

La Catedral d'Escuradents
2009

Disc 1
ANEMIC CINEMA (1992-1996)
- Patafisiskal Polska
- Tango Del Rosselló
- Arthur Cravan Was A Flor Fina
- The Skatalan Logicofobism
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- Rue Des Soeurs Noires
- I Put A Barbara Steele On You
- Records De Vernet
- Danse Du Valseur Callipyge
- Clair De Lune À Pampelune
- Chanson De Charme Pour Faux-Nez
- The Lolobrigidada Fox-Trot
- Toti Al Soler
- Dali's Mustaches with Gitano's Chaussures
- Your Eyes Like Juan Gris Cubist Guitars
- Le Fakir De La Chapelle
- Chanson Triste Pour Ventriloque Aphone
- Back to Schizo

Disc 2
PIANISTA DEL ANTIFAZ (1996 - 2002)
- L'Argot Del Soroll
- Via-Crucis Del Rocanrol
- Domisiladoré
- Marie, Un Faux-Cil Dans La Transmission
- Love Too Soon
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir
- Un Train Direct Pour Charenton
- To Be Dammit Ornette To Be
- The Blank Invasion Of Schizofonics Bikinis
- Lo Misteri Del Triangle Del Vermut
- Sense El Ressó Del Dring
- Aigua De Florida
- Don't Touch My Blue Oyster Shoes
- Lumpen-Harmony
- A Figueres
- Al Pianista Della Bodega Bohemia
- Gégéne
- Un la minimal Nu

Disc 3
SUB-VERSION DE SALON
- September Song
- Brown Sugar
- Come Prima
- The Sheik Of Araby
- Prime Of Life
- The Letter
- Smoke On The Water
- The Way I Walk
- Egyptian Reggae
- Proud Mary
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- Like A Rollin' Stone
- Sunny Afternoon
- Let Me Try
- The Sad Skinhead
- Lonely Woman
- Johnny Guitar
- Sweet Little Sixteen
- Teresa
- Dali's Car

Disc 4
HIPARXIOLOGI DEL PLAT COMBINAT (CONCEPTE ULTRALOCALISTA DE LA MÙSICA POP CATALANA)
- L'Entrellissada
- Ball De L'Arengada
- Ball De Ceret
- Ball De La Candela
- Ball De Sant Blai
- Ball De La Corranda Alta
- Lo Pardal
- Ball De La Post
- Ball De L'ós
- Cançó De Lladre
- Ball De Gegants
- La Gala De Campdevanol
- Contrapás
- La Contradansa D'Alentorn
- La Dansa De Castellterçol
- Ball De L'Aliga
- Ball De Majorales
- La Santa Espina

Compilation.

September Song est extrait de September Song.

- DISCMEDI (DM 4695-02) 4xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Around Robert Wyatt
2009

Orchestre National de Jazz

Disc 1
- **The Song (Robert Wyatt, chant)**
- Alifib (Rokia Traoré, chant)
- Just As You Are (Yael Naïm, Arno, chant)
- O Caroline (Daniel Darc, chant)
- **Kew Rhone (Robert Wyatt, chant)**
- Shipbuilding (Yael Naïm, chant)
- Line
- Alliance (Camille, chant)
- **Vandalusia (Robert Wyatt, chant)**
- Del Mondo (Irène Jacob, chant)
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda (Robert Wyatt, chant)**

Discc 2
BONUS
- P L A (Rokia Traoré, chant)
- **Gegenstand (Robert Wyatt, chant)**
- **Rangers In The Night (Robert Wyatt, chant)**
- Just As You Are (Yael Naïm, chant)

- Robert Wyatt - chant

- Daniel Yvinec - direction artistique
- Vincent Artaud - arrangements

- Arno - chant
- Camille - chant
- Daniel Darc - chant
- Irène Jacob - chant
- Yael Naïm - chant
- Rokia Traore - chant
- Eve Risser - piano, piano préparé, flûtes & objets sonores
- Vincent Lafont - claviers & électronique
- Antonin-Tri Hoang - saxophone alto, clarinettes & piano
- Matthieu Metzger - saxophones, systalk-box & traitements électroniques
- Joce Mienniel - flûtes & électronique
- Rémi Dumoulin - saxophones & clarinettes
- Guillaume Poncelet - trompette, piano, synthétiseurs & électronique
- Pierre Perchaud - guitare & banjo
- Sylvain Daniel - basse électrique, cor d'harmonie & effets électroniques
- Yoann Serra - batterie

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- BEE JAZZ (BEE 030) 2xCD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2

A Season In Hell
2009

A Season In Hell

- Radio Intro
- **A Season In Hell**
- Radio Outro

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Carl Prekopp – narration
- Elisabeth Purnell – soundtrack

BBC Radio 3
Broadcast: sat 14 Nov 2009

"An abridged radio reworking of Rimbaud's intense masterpiece of spiritual disillusionment, narrated by Carl Prekopp with a soundscape by Bristol composer Elisabeth Purnell and poems sung by Robert Wyatt...

Elisabeth Purnell's soundtrack for the work includes composed music, field recordings and processed sound in a raw response to the words; she set the poems specifically for Wyatt, whose voice in its high, delicate register suggests a beyond-the-grave alter-ego to the young Rimbaud."

- DIME - Digital Format

Bibi Tanga & The Selenites

- The Moon
- Red Wine

- Robert Wyatt - lyrics



> Zoom

Dunya
2009

- Swing Swing
- Dunya
- Pasi
- Let Them Run
- Gospel Singers
- Bê Africa
- Shine
- Bonjour Mon Ami Jean
- Goodbye

BONUS
- It's The Earth That Moves

It's The Earth That Moves est extrait de Yellow Gauze publé en 2007.

- NAT GEO MUSIC (NGM 004) CD



> Zoom

Attitude & Orbit Control
2009

Jeanette Lindström

- We Would
- All We Have Is Now
- Morning
- River
- You Say
- Scenery
- Scenery Postludium
- Blue Room Yellow Tree
- Lament
- River (Feat. Robert Wyatt)
- Spacetalk
- Spacewalk

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, trumpet

- Jeanette Lindström – vocals, grand piano, Fender Rhodes
- Andreas Hourdakis – guitars, banjo, mandolin
- Jonas Östholm – grand piano, Wurlitzer, Fender Rhodes, organ, voice
- Thobias Gabrielson – electric bass
- Magnus Öström – drums, percussion, electronics, vibraphone, guitars, synthesizers, voice

Lyrics of *Morning* by Jeanette Lindström and Robert Wyatt

- DIESEL MUSIC (C-40) CD



> Zoom

River Remix
2010

Jeanette Lindström

- River (Lidbo Remix Feat. Robert Wyatt)
- River
- River (Feat. Robert Wyatt)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, trumpet

River (Feat. Robert Wyatt) est extrait de Attitude & Orbit Control.

- DIESEL MUSIC - Digital Format



> Zoom

An Introduction To Syd Barrett
2010

Syd Barrett

- Arnold Layne (Pink Floyd)
- See Emily Play (Pink Floyd)
- Apples and Oranges (Pink Floyd)
- Matilda Mother (Pink Floyd)
- Chapter 24 (Pink Floyd)
- Bike (Pink Floyd)
- Terrapin
- Love You
- Dark Globe
- Here I Go
- Octopus
- She Took A Long Cool Look
- If It's In You
- Baby Lemonade
- Dominoes
- Gigolo Aunt

Compilation.

Love You est extrait de Madcap Laughs.

- HARVEST (TOCP-70882) CD

- Effervescing Elephant
- Bob Dylan Blues



> Zoom

Corroncho
2010

Phil Manzanera And Corroncho

- Lowrider
- Complicada
- **Rosa**
- **Para Ti Nengon**
- Suavecito
- Angeles Y Lobos
- Esta Vida Prestada
- Cancion Para La Que Sea
- **Noche De Putas**
- Tu Juventud
- Coyote
- Diario

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet

- Phil Manzanera - guitar, vocals
- Paul Thompson - drums
- Roberto Pla - percussion
- Jamie Johnson - bass
- Ricardo Fernandez - bass
- Yaron Stavi - bass
- Aldo López-Gavilán - piano
- Gilad Atzmon - alto, baritone and tenor saxophone
- Annie Lennox - vocals
- Chrissie Hynde - vocals
- Enrique Bunbury - vocals
- Claire Singers - vocals
- Quimi Portet - vocals

- EXPRESSION RECORDS (EXPCD27) CD



> Zoom

Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
2010

Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt

- **Locomotive**
- Sea Song
- Instant Pussy
- The British Road
- **To The Next Track**
- Gharbzadegi
- I'm A Believer
- Anachronist; A.W.O.L.
- Calyx
- **Big Bang Theory**
- Five Black Notes And One White Note
- Muddy Mouse

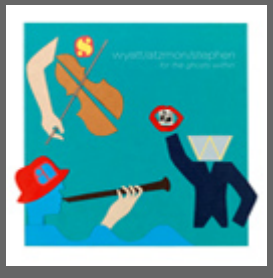
- Robert Wyatt - voix, interview

- Pascal Maupeu - guitare, banjo
- Jean-Baptiste Réhault - saxophone baryton, accordéon, saxhorn alto
- Hugues Vincent - violoncelle
- Cedric Piromalli - piano, fender rhodes, korg ms20
- Nicolas Le Moullec - basse électrique, voix
- Bertrand Hurault - batterie électronique

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- LE CHANT DU MONDE (274 1869) CD

Critiques/Review



> Zoom 1 2 3

...For The Ghosts Within'
2010

Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen

- **Laura**
- **Lullaby For Irena**
- **The Ghosts Within**
- **Where Are They Now?**
- **Maryan**
- **Round Midnight**
- **Lush Life**
- **What's New?**
- **In A Sentimental Mood**
- **At Last I Am Free**
- **What A Wounderful World**

- Robert Wyatt - voice, brushes, trumpet, percussion, whistling, backing vocals

- Gilad Atzmon - alto sax, clarinets, soprano sax, bass clarinet, accordion,Palestinian shepherd's flute,
- Ros Stephen - violin, viola, backing vocals
- Richard Pryce - double bass
- Yaron Stavi - double bass, electric bass
- Frank Harrison - keyboards
- Sigamos String Quartet:
  Ros Stephen - violin
  Tom Piggot-Smith - violin
  Rachel Robson - viola
  Daisy Vatalaro - cello
- Julian Rowlands - bandoneon

- Stormtrap (Abboud Hashem) - voice
- Tali Atzmon - backing vocals

Artwork by Alfreda Benge

- DOMINO RECORDS (WIGCD263)
- DOMINO RECORDS (WIGLP263) LP
- DOMINO RECORDS (WIGCD263X) CD+DVD (limited edition)

Critiques/Review

Vidéo

Lyrics



> Zoom

What A Wonderful World
2010

Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen

- What A Wonderful World

Promotional CD for...For The Ghosts Within'.

- DOMINO RECORDS (RUG388CDP) CD-S



> Zoom

Snakes And Ladders
2010

Sophia Domancich

- Goodnight Instrumental
- High Tide On The Ebb
- In The Box
- S&S
- The Island
- Est-ce L'Heure Du Thé ?
- Tea Time
- Mis manos Te Acarician
- Wilderness Instrumental
- Wilderness
- Lucky Day
- ...Of Night
- Goodnight Instrumental
- Goodnight
- Five O'Clock

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Sophia Domancich - keyboards, piano, Fender Rhodes, samplers
- Jef Morin - guitar
- Louis Winsberg - guitar
- Simon Goubert - cymbals & brushes
- Jocelyn Moze - keyboards, drums
- Raphaël Marc - samplers, electronics
- Ramon Lopez - percussions, palmas

- CRISTAL RECORDS (CR162) CD

Lyrics



> Zoom

Cry From The City

Genie Cosmas

- Song For Satie Part 1
- Song For Satie Part 2
- MS Madness
- Cry From The City Part 1
- Cry From The City Part 2
- Once In a Liftime
- Take It Easy
- Prisoner's Lament
- Germanic Lullaby
- Clear Spring
- Just Like In The Movies Part 1
- Just Like In The Movies Part 2
- Her Old Man

- Robert Wyatt - scat vocals, piano

- Genie Cosmas - piano
- Gerry Hunt - soprano sax, flute
- Jim Gilbert - tenor sax
- Ricky Edwards - flute
- Janine Edwards - viola
- Tom Jones - violin
- Jonathan Stallick - cello
- Steve Manolias - double bass
- Donovan Carpenter - double bass
- Roger Cole - bass
- Pete Eckford - drums &

Music 4 Film, TV & Radio
2010

- Red Sunset
- Persistence Of Memory
- He Likes A Drink
- Parisienne Prelude
- Lucky Scars
- Domestic Bliss

percussion
- Ewan Stewart - drums & percussion
- Leon Maurice-Jones - drums & percussion
- Xandra Williams - scat vocals

- STREAMS RECORDS (SRCD006) CD



> Zoom

Satellite Sweetheart
2010

Dave Formula

- Elvis In Space
- Satellite Sweetheart
- Saddest Quay
- Via Sacra
- Bison Heard (at the scene)
- A Kiss To The Stars
- The World Behind Your Eyes
- Rhythm For Your Soul
- Parade
- The Reno
- Do It, One More Time
- Major Kong Goes Down
- The Anti-Hero

- Robert Wyatt - cornet, vocals

- Dave Formula - pianos, Hammond
- Andrew Amey - tenor sax
- Andy Gammon - guitars
- John Doyle - percussion, kit
- Keith Angel - kit, percussion
- Warren Jolly - bass
- Josh McArdle - vocals

- WIRE-SOUND (WIRED11) CD



> Zoom

Fan No.2
2010

Barbara Morgenstern

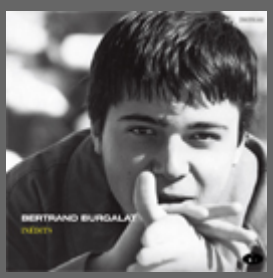
Disc 1
FAN No.2
- Ein Versuch
- Das Wort
- Der Augenblick (Mix Expansion)
- Eine Verabredung
- Aus Heiterem Himmel
- Nichts Muss
- The Operator (Piano Version)
- Juist-
- Camouflage (Featuring Robert Wyatt)
- Come To Berlin (Single Version)
- Mountainplace
- Wegbereiter
- Blackbird

Disc 2
ENTER THE PARTYZONE / PLASTIKREPORT
- Am Rand
- Die Liebe
- Im Flug
- Im Wiederhall
- Spiegel & Ich
- Der Morgentau
- Ein Fixpunkt
- Über Uns Liegt Ein Traum
- Mein Zeitbergriff
- Ein Tag Auf Dem Balkon

Compilation + Historic Bonus CD.

Camouflage est extrait de Bm.

- MONIKA ENTERPRISE (MONIKA70) 2xCD



> Zoom

Inédits
2011

Bertrand Burgalat

- Vision Of Love
- This Summer Night (Solenzara Remix)
- If You Never Come To Me
- Winney - Sonata For 3 Fingers
- Citroën BB
- Bertone
- Biscarosse
- Albo
- Kim
- Les Amplis De Mayence
- Haute Volupté
- Gaumont 95
- Sexy Boy
- Pour La Vie

Compilation

Remix du titre *This Summer Night (Solenzara Remix)* paru en 2007 sur Robert Wyatt & Bertrand Burgalat

- TRICATEL (TRICDFR030) CD

- Dr Timsit Laser
- Citra Hawaï
- Arc En Ciel Rue D'Ulm
- Vice Versa
- Ningette
- Jalousies Et Tomettes
- Holidays



> Zoom

Stream
2011

Dave Sinclair

- Sad Eyes
- Man Is The Child
- Always There
- Where I Long To Be
- The Only Thing We Need To Know
- Springwater
- So Beautiful
- Island
- Distant Star
- Between Us
- Stream

- Robert Wyatt - vocals on *Sad Eyes* and vocals, whistling and cornet on *Stream*

- Dave Sinclair - keyboards
- Jimmy Hastings - flutes, clarinets, soprano sax
- Andy Latimer - electric lead guitar
- Annie Haslam - vocal
- Barbara Gaskin - vocal
- Doug Boyle - acoustic & electric guitar
- Fred Baker - bass
- Morgan Fisher - keyboard
- Derby Cathedral - choir
- Yoshitaka Enomoto - drums, percussion

Japan only.

- CRESCENT (CRSCNT 002) CD



> Zoom

Absolute
2011

Scritti Politti

- Wood Beez (Pray Like Aretha Franklin)
- Absolute
- The Word Girl (Flesh And Blood)
- Perfect Way
- Hypnotize (Short Version)
- Oh Patti (Don't Feel Sorry For Loverboy)
- Boom! There She Was (US Mix)
- Umm
- Tinseltown To The Boogiedown (Radio Edit)
- Die Alone
- Brushed With Oil, Dusted With Powder
- Skank Bloc Bologna
- The "Sweetest Girl"
- Asylums In Jerusalem
- Jacques Derrida
- She's A Woman (Little Way Different 7")
- A Day Late And A Dollar Short
- A Place We Both Belong

Compilation

- VIRGIN (CDV 3078) CD



> Zoom

The Music 1972-2008
2011

Phil Manzanera

Disc 1
- Amazona (Roxy Music)
- Needles In The Camel's Eye (Brian Eno)
- Out Of The Blue (Roxy Music)
- Prairie Rose (Roxy Music)
- Frontera (Phil Manzanera)
- Diamond Head (Phil Manzanera)
- Miss Shapiro (801)
- East Of Asteroid (801)
- Manifesto (Roxy Music)
- Over You (Roxy Music)
- Running Wild (Roxy Music)
- Criollo (Phil Manzanera)
- Take A Chance With Me (Roxy Music)
- Big Dome (Phil Manzanera)

Disc 2
- La Vida Moderna (Phil Manzanera)
- Mystic Moon (Phil Manzanera)
- Hymn (Phil Manzanera)

Compilation

Frontera est extrait de Diamond Head.

The DVD contains a documentary report and rare footage.

- EXPRESSION RECORDS (EXPCD28) 2x CD + DVD

- Green Spikey Cactus (Phil Manzanera)
- Broken Dreams (Phil Manzanera)
- 6pm (Phil Manzanera)
- Love Devotion (Phil Manzanera)
- Wish You Well (Phil Manzanera)
- Technicolor Ufo (Phil Manzanera)
- Desaparecido (Phil Manzanera)
- Enotonik Bible Black (Phil Manzanera)



> Zoom

The EMI Album Collection
2011

Cristina Donà

Disc 1
TREGUA
- Ho Sempre Me
- L'aridità Dell'aria
- Stelle Buone
- Labirinto
- Raso E Chiome Bionde
- Le Solite Cose
- Piccola Faccia
- Senza Disturbare
- Ogni Sera
- Risalendo
- Tregua

Disc 2
NIDO
- Nido
- Goccia
- Qualcosa Che Ti Lasci Il Segno
- Così Cara
- L'ultima Giornata Di Sole
- Volo In Deltaplano
- Brazil
- Mi Dispiace
- Deliziosa Abbondanza
- Volevo Essere Altrove
- Cibo Estremo
- Terapie
- Mangialuomo

Disc 3
DOVE SEI TU
- Nel Mio Giardino
- Invisibile
- In Fondo Al Mare
- Triathlon
- The Truman Show (Lui Riprende Dall'Alto)
- Dove Sei Tu
- Il Mondo
- L'Uomo Che Non Parla
- Give It Back (To Me)
- Salti Nell'Aria (Milly's Song)
- Un Giorno Perfetto
- Nel Mio Giardino (Reprise)
- Triathlon (Casasonica Remix)

Disc 4
CRISTINA DONA (UK VERSION)
- Ultramarine
- Yesterday's Film
- Invisible Girl
- Wherever Finds You
- The Truman Show
- Triathlon (Casasonica Remix)
- Give It Back (To Me)
- How Deep Is Your Love
- Milly's Song
- One Perfect Day
- Goccia (Featuring – Robert Wyatt)

Disc 5
LA QUINTA STAGIONE
- Settembre
- Universo
- L'Eclisse
- I Duellanti
- Migrazioni
- Come Le Lacrime
- Non Sempre Rispondo
- Niente Di Particolare (A Parte Il Fatto Che Mi Manchi)
- Laure (Il Profumo)
- Conosci

Disc 6
PICCOLA FACCIA
- Piccola Faccia
- L'Aridità Dell'Aria

Box Set 6 CD remastered, compilation, limited edition.

Goccia est extrait de Nido.

- EMI (50999-029146-2-6) 6xCD

- Goccia
- Salti Nell'Aria
- Settembre
- Sign Your Name
- Mangialuomo
- Stelle Buone
- I'm In You
- Dove Sei Tu
- Nel Mio Giardino
- Universo



> Zoom

The Poppy-Seed Affair
2011

G.F. Fitz-Gerald & Lol Coxhill - Featuring Ian Hinchcliffe

Disc 1 (DVD)
- Soundtrack By Lol Coxhill With Robert Wyatt And Archie Leggett

Disc 2
- 1 10:59
- 2 11:52
- 3 9:19
- 4 9:54
- 5 9:40
- 6 11:35

Disc 3
- Listen Collage: Cameos By Count Simon De La Beyodere Stable, Mouseproof, Simon Sandwich, Various Records, Portobello Rd Sounds... London, Spring 1969
- Fractal One: Solo Improvisation For Electric Guitar And Effects Foot Pedals
- Fractal Two: Solo Improvisation For Electric Guitar And Distorion Box - Band In My Head: Dual TapeLoop For Voice, Guitar, Radio Sampling
- The Team: Tape Collage For Matchbox Purveyors Theatricals

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals, [chicken cluks]

- Lol Coxhill - soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, voice, electronics
- Archie Leggett - bass

Disc One (DVD) - The Matchbox Purveyors: The Poppy Seed Affair. (NTSC All region).
Starring: Ian Hinchcliffe, Mark Long, Dawn Archibal, Foxy, G.F. Fitz-Gerald, Lol Coxhill.
Narration by Jeff Nuttall.
Directed , looesely speaking, by Robin Thornburn.
UK. 1981.
Soundtrack by Lol Coxhill with Robert Wyatt and Archie Leggett.

Disc Two (CD) - G.F. Fitz-Gerald & Lol Coxhill: An Intimate Concert
Spectro Arts Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, October 22nd, 1981.

Disc Three (CD) - G.F. Fitz-Gerald: Solo Electric Guitar, Tape Collage & Loops (CD). Mid 70's.

Limited edition of 500 copies

- REEL RECORDINGS (RR021/022/023) CD



> Zoom

Working Nights
2012

Working Week

Disc 1
- Inner City Blues
- Sweet Nothing
- Who's Fooling Who
- Thought I'd Never See You Again
- Autumn Boy
- Solo
- Venceremos
- No Cure No Pay

BONUS TRACKS
- Stella Marina (Main Mix)
- Storm Of Light
- Bottom End
- Venceremos (We Will Win) (Jazz Dance Special 12" Edit)

Disc 2 -
BONUS TRACKS
- Venceremos (We Will Win) (Jazz Dance Special 12" Version)
- Afoche
- Murphy's Law (Live)
- Pepe's Samba (Live)
- Inner City Blues (Urban Guerrilla Mix)
- Storm Of Light (Instrumental)
- Who's Fooling Who
- Sweet Nothing
- Where's The Bridge (Longer Mix)
- Venceremos (We Will Win) (7" Bossa Version)
- Stella Marina (Full Rap)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Dawson Miller - percussion
- Joao Bosco De Oliveira - percussion
- Kim Burton - piano
- Larry Stabbins - soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, flute
- Chucho Merchan - bass
- Mark Taylor - drums
- Louis Moholo - drums (track: 2-1)
- Juliet Roberts - vocals
- Tracey Thorn - vocals
- Claudia Figueroa - vocals (tracks 2-1, 2-10)

Réédition remasterisée avec bonus tracks de l'album éponyme paru chez Virgin en 1985 (sans Robert Wyatt).

- CHERRY RED (CDBRED 538) 2xCD



> Zoom

Point Barre
2012

Philippe Barbot

- Pour Te Plaire
- J'Veux Qu'On M'Aime
- Ta Tenue d'Ève
- Poème Paumé
- Pour Tout
- G-LA-N
- **La Valse Des Regrets (Raining In My Heart)** [Bryant and Bryant]
- Tes C ôtés
- 1-2-C-4
- Qui T'Es
- Même Pas Mal
- Suite à Cet Esclandre
- Dis

Philippe Barbot pose ses mots et sa voix sur le morceau instrumental *Raining In My Heart* de l'album Cukooland. t

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom 1 2

Keep Yourself Alive
2012

Sulo With Friends

- 2-4-6-8 Motorway (Tom Robinson)
- Hot Swagger In The Big Smoke (Billy Bremner)
- Borstal Breakout (Dave Tregunna)
- Green And Grey (Justin Sullivan)
- Roxette (Wilko Johnson)
- How Long (Paul Carrack)
- **Enjoy The Risk (with Robert Wyatt)**
- Teenage Depression (Dave Higgs)
- Poor, Poor Heart (Billy Bremner)
- Roses And Rings (Spike Gray)
- The Power And The Glory (Mick Geggus)
- 100 Degrees In The Shade (Terry Chimes & Anita Chellamah)
- I Saw Her Standing There (Dennis Stratton & Dave Edwards)
- Keep Yourself Alive (Sulo & Idde Schultz)

Ce CD accompagne le livre éponyme publié en suédois en 2012 aux éditions Lind & Co.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Various Artists.

- LEGAL RECORDS - CD



> Zoom

The Harvest Years 1969-1974
2012

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
JOY OF TOY
- **Joy Of A Toy Continued**
- **Town Feeling**
- **The Clarietta Rag**
- Girl On A Swing
- **Song For Insane Times**
- Stop The Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- **Lady Rachel**
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong 5:36
- All This Crazy Gift Of Time 3:50

Bonus Tracks
- Singing A Song In The Morning (Single Version)-
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Stop This Train-
- Why Are We Sleeping
- You Say You Like My Hat

Disc 2
SHOOTING AT THE MOON
- May I?
- **Rheinhardt & Geraldine / Colores Para Delores**
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans Un Violon
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Underwater
- **Clarence In Wonderland**
- Red Green And You Blue
- Shooting At The Moon

Bonus Tracks
- Butterfly Dance
- Puis Je? 3:38
- Gemini Child 3:11

Box Set compilation.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- HARVEST (956 5092) 5xCD
- EMI (956 5092) 5xCD

- The Lady Rachel
- Shooting At The Moon
- Derby Day
- The Interview
- We Did It Again / Murder In The Air

Disc 3
WHATEVERSHEBRINGSWESING
- There Is Loving / Among Us / There Is Loving
- Margaret
- Oh My
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Champagne Cowboy Blues
- Lullaby
Bonus Tracks
- Stars
- Fake Mexican Tourist Blues
- Lunatic's Lament
- Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Butterfly Dance
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Falling In Love Again
- Queen Thing

Disc 4
BANANAMOUR
- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Hymn
- Beware Of The Dog
Bonus Tracks
- Connie On A Rubber Band
- Caribbean Moon
- Take Me To Tahiti
- The Interview
- Oh! What A Dream
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues

Disc 5
THE CONFESSIONS OF MR DREAM AND OTHER STORIES
- Day By Day
- See You Later
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Everybody's Sometime And Some People's All The Time Blues
- It Begins With A Blessing / Once I Awakened / But It Ends With A Curse
- Ballbearing Blues
- The Confessions Of Dr Dream
- Part One: Irreversible Neural Damage
- Part Two: Invitation
- Part Three: The One Dance Chance
- Part Four: Doctor Dream Theme
- Two Goes Into Four
Bonus Tracks
- The Up Song
- After The Show
- Thank You Very Much
- Another Whimsical Song
- The Lady Rachel
- Stop This Train
- Didn't Feel Lonely Until I Thought Of You



> Zoom

OCDC
2012

Get The Blessing

- OCDC
- American Meccano
- Torque
- Adagio In Wot Minor
- Between Fear And Sex
- The Waiting
- Low Earth Orbit
- Pentopia

- Robert Wyatt - voice birdsong

- Jim Barr - bass guitar, baritone guitar
- Clive Deamer - drum sets and zildjians
- Pete Judget - trumpet, flugelhorn, melodica, flutes, synth effects
- Jake McMurchie - saxophones, vibraphone, piano (OCDC) effects
- Adrian Utley - guitar

- NAIM JAZZ (NAIMCD170) CD



> Zoom

Unearth
2012

Grasscut

- Cut Grass
- Pieces
- Blink In The Night (East Coker Version)
- Reservoir
- Stone Lions
- A Mysterious Disappearance
- From Towns And Fields
- Lights
- We Fold Ourselves
- **Richardson Road**

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, piano, cornet

- Andrew Phillips - songs, vocals, instruments
- Marcus O'Dair - double bass

- NINJA TUNE (ZENCD185) CD
- NINJA TUNE (ZEN185) LP



> Zoom

Unearth (Shadow Version)
2012

Grasscut

- Cut Grass
- Pieces
- Blink In The Night (East Coker Version)
- Reservoir
- Stone Lions
- A Mysterious Disappearance
- From Towns And Fields
- Lights
- We Fold Ourselves
- **Richardson Road**

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, piano, cornet

- Andrew Phillips - songs, vocals, instruments
- Marcus O'Dair - double bass

Alternative versions of each track of Unearth.

- NINJA TUNE (ZENDNL185SW) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Cinéma El Mundo
2012

Lo'Jo

- **At The Beginning**
- **Tout Est Fragile**
- La Marseillaise En Créole
- Deux Bâtons
- Magnétik
- Au Temps Qui Passe
- **Cinéma 'El Mundo'**
- Zetwal
- Alger
- Lila
- El Cabo Blanco
- Comète Algébrique
- Vientiane
- African Dub Crossing The Fantôms Of An Opera
- Au Début

- Robert Wyatt - voix, chant, voix samplées sur *Tout est fragile*

- Denis Péan - chant
- Richard Bourreau - violon
- Nadia Nid El Mourid - chant
- Yamina Nid El Mourid - chant, kayanm
- Kham Meslien - basse, basse synthé
- Baptiste Brondy - calebasse, batterie, piano Fender Rhodes
- Vincent Ségal - violoncelle
- Guo Gan - erhu

- WORLD VILLAGE (WVF 479068) CD



> Zoom 1 2

François Bayle

CD #01 / 1963-1971

CD #02 / 1969-1971

CD #03 / 1971-1972
L'Expérience Acoustique III - IV - V
III. La Preuve Par Le Sens
8/ La Langue Inconnue
- 3-1
- 3-2
9/ Intervalles Bleus
- 3-3
- 3-4

- Robert Wyatt - vocaliste

- Kevin Ayers - vocaliste
- François Bayle - musique concrète

Coffret 15 CDs.

- INA GRM - 15xCD

50 ans d'acousmatique
2012

10/ Uirapuru
- 3-5
11/ L'Écriture Acoustique
- 3-6
- 3-7
12/ It [Bayle-Wyatt]
- 3-8

CD #04 /1972

CD #05 / 1973-1974

CD #06 / 1976-1982

CD #07 / 1978-1980

CD #08 / 1980-1981

CD #09 / 1981-1983

CD #10 / 1985-1988

CD #11 / 1989-1991

CD #12 / 1994-1996

CD #13 / 1999-2001

CD #14 / 2003-2005

CD #15 / 2006-2012



> Zoom 1 2

Live @ The Roundhouse (London) With The Soft Machine Family 1971
2012

Daevid Allen & Gilly Smyth With The Soft Machine Family

- Introduction
- What Do You Really Want?
- Prostitute Poem: Rational Anthem
- Poet For Sale
- Love Is A Careless Sea
- I Am Your Animal
- Capt. Shaw & Mr. Gilbert
- I Am Your Fantasy
- Fred The Fish
- Death Of Rock

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Daevid Allen - guitar, spoken word, tape loops
- Gilly Smyth - spoken word, vocal impro
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - sax

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST115CD) CD



> Zoom 1 2

British Jazz 1960-1975
2012

Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers And Free Fusioneers

- Phrygie
- Scarpo
- Number Three
- An Idea
- Shadow
- Joyce County
- Standfast (Gary Windo's Symbiosis)
- Beer Garden
- For Those Who Prefer It Mid tempo
- Singing For The Small Change

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Gary Windo - tenor sax
- Mongezi Feza - trumpet
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Steve Florence - guitar
- Roy Babbington - bass guitar

Recorded January 11th, 1971.

- REEL RECORDINGS (RR026) CD

Epic Soundtracks

Disc 1
- You Can Be My Baby
- Emily May (You Make Me Feel So Fine)
- Fallen Down
- Farmer's Daughter
- Wishing Well
- Something's Wrong

Compilation of the Best of the Studio Albums (CD1) and from unreleased material (CD2).

Jelly Babies from Epic's first solo release, the Popular Classical EP of 1981



> Zoom

Wild Smile (An Anthology)
2012

- Something New Under The Sun
- Big Apple Graveyard
- Meet Me On The Beach
- Sweet Sixteen
- Waiting For The Train
- House On The Hill
- There's A Rumour
- I'll Sing A Hymn
- Caroline
- Night Time
- You Better Run
- I Do Declare
- There's A Light Up In The Sky
- Popular Classical Piano Piece

Disc 2
- C'mon Daddy [Live, Knust, Germany 21.10.97]
- Teenage Heart [Sleeping Star Sessions]
- I'll Be Back [Live, Normandy Festival, St. Lo, France]
- Something New Under The Sun [BBC Word Service, France 4.5.95]
- The House On The Hill [Maison Rouge Studio 31.8.96]
- Fade Away [Live, Knust, Germany 22.10.97]
- Meet Me On The Beach [BBC World Service, France 4.5.95]
- King Of Everything [Studio Demo 15.1.94]
- Hear The Whistle Blow [Strings] [Chiswick Peach Studio 1.94]
- I Wanna Be Free (As The Lizards)
- Midnight [4-Track Recording 1984]
- I Wish I Had A Girlfriend [Bernard Lenoir Radio Show 12.1.92]
- Stack-O-Tracks, Pt. 2: She Sleeps Alone [Wake The Dead 5/92]
- I'm Your Puppet [Live, Knust, Germany 22.10.97]
- Bicycle Rider Havoc [4-Track Recording 1984]
- Don't Go To School [A Capella] [Revolution Radio 20.11.84]
- I Have Seen The Light [Wake The Dead 19.5.93]
- Downbound Train [Early 1980's Home Recording]
- Teenage Heart [Vocals] [Sleeping Star Sessions]
- Sad Song Strings [Wake The Dead 4.92]
- Unfaithful Arms [Live, Knust, Germany 22.10.97]
- **Jelly, Babies**

(Rough Trade RT084) with Robert Wyatt (credited as Robert Ellidge) on lead vocals.

Epic Soundtracks talks about *Jelly, Babies* in Morrocci Klung! and here in YouTube...

- TROUBADOUR (TRBCD012)
  2xCD



> Zoom

Together
2013

Steve Nieve

- Save The World
- Conversation
- You Lie Sweetly
- What A Holiday
- Tender Moment
- Up
- Vertigo
- Life Preserver
- Halloween (Bonfire Night)
- I Do Not Miss You (Nostalgia #2)
- **La Plus Jolie Langue (duet with Robert Wyatt & Muriel Teodori)**
- La Crise
- Voué à l'Oubli
- Burn The Past
- Summer Song

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Muriel Teodori - vocal
- Steve Nieve - all electronic instruments

- VERYCORDS (6022046029) CD

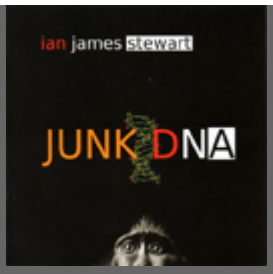
Lyrics

Ian James Stewart

- Junk DNA
- Phosphorus
- Big White Monkey
- One More Time
- Path Of Lightning
- Charlie Parker

- Robert Wyatt - backing vocals on *No Water*, lead vocal and horn on *When U Love Somebody*

- Ian James Stewart - guitars, vocals, keyboards, bass



> Zoom 1 2 3

Junk DNA
2013

- So Far So Good
- No Water
- Heaven knows
- If This Is Life

Bonus tracks
- When U Love Somebody
- Slow Burn Dance

- Warren Jolly - double-bass on *When U Love Somebody*
- Sonti Ramirez - backing vocals on *No Water*
- Jim Drummond - drums, percussion

- DANGEROUS DOGS RECORDS (DDRCD02002) CD



> Zoom

Steam Radio Tapes
2013

Gary Windo

- Ginkie
- Come Into My Garden
- Night Train
- Stand Fast
- Sweetest Angel
- Letting Go
- Is This The Time?
- Missy
- Red River Valley

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Gary Windo - tenor sax, gong
- Pam Windo - piano, vocals
- Nick Mason - drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Terri Quaye - vocals
- Richard Brunton - guitar

Is This The Time (1976) est également présent sur la compilation Flotsam Jetsam parue en 1994.

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST190CD) CD

↑



> Zoom

One Doz.
2013

Mr. Swing

- Faddy
- Lumpit (feat. Robert Wyatt)
- Skary
- Howdoyoudo
- I Don't Wannabe in Vogue
- Please Say
- Hunky Funk
- Moreorless
- Night Trukin
- Mr Mangler
- Black Cap
- You Got the Love

- JT MUSIC UK - Digital Format

↑



> Zoom

Fingers Pointing At The Moon
2014

Dworniak Bone Lapsa

- Mortal Man
- Home
    I See Through You
    Conversations In My Head
    Justify
    Home (Slight Return)
- It Only Takes A Second
- Funny Farm
- Finger Pointing At The Moon

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet

- Joe Dworniak - bass guitar, Spanish guitar, EMS VCS3, Arp 2600, Solina String Ensemble & backing vocals
- Greg Bone - lead and rhythm guitars, 12 string electric and acoustic guitars & backing vocals
- Chris Lapsa - lead vocals, rhythm, 12 string electric & acoustic guitars, Moogs & synths

- PLATINUM PURSUITS LIMITED 2012 (PPLFPATM0912) CD
- PLATINUM PURSUITS LIMITED 2012 (DBL-JL-1-1963) LP

↑



> Zoom

Bananamour (obi-strip)
2014

Kevin Ayers

- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Interview
- Internotional Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- **Hymn**
- Beware Of The Dog

Bonus

- Decadence (Early Mix)
- Interview (BBC Bob Harris Session)
- Oh! What A Dream (BBC Bob Harris Session)
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues (BBC Bob Harris Session)
- Didn't Feel Lonely 'Til I Thought Of You (BBC In Concert)
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes (BBC In Concert)
- Interview (BBC In Concert)

Edition limitée et remasterisée de l'album Bananamour comprenant 5 morceaux et 2 interviews en bonus.

- PARLOPHONE (WPCR-15527) CD



> Zoom

Rarities (Volumes 1 & 2)
2014

Lindsay Cooper

Disc 1

I. OUTTAKES FOR OTHER OCCASIONS
From The Play The Execution
- Tsar's Band (Lindsay Cooper)
- The Assassination (Lindsay Cooper)
- The Evening Before (Lindsay Cooper)
- Give Us A Smile: Film Score (Lindsay Cooper)

From The Film Green Flutes
- Washing Lines (Lindsay Cooper)
- Against The Current: Film Score (Lindsay Cooper)
- The Times Of Their Lives: Curtain Music (Lindsay Cooper)
- Trih's Song (Lindsay Cooper)

II. THE SMALL SCREEN. MUSIC FOR TELEVISION.
Songs From 5 Short Films Made By Lis Rhodes And Jo Davis (Four Corners, For Channel 4)
- The Song Of The Goose And The Common (Lindsay Cooper)
- Off The Fence (Lindsay Cooper)
- Fair Exchange (Lindsay Cooper)
- Windscale (Lindsay Cooper)
- The Number 8 Bus (Lindsay Cooper)

Music For Green Flutes, A Film About A Republican Flute Band In Glasgow, Directed By Nancy Schierasi For Channel 4
- Belfast (Lindsay Cooper)
- Fanfare (Lindsay Cooper)
- Flute Tune (Lindsay Cooper)
- Priesthill (Lindsay Cooper)

From Domestic Bliss, A Comedy Drama Directed By Joy Chamberlain, Newsreel Collective, For Channel 4
- Domestic Bliss: End Credits (Lindsay Cooper)

From With Our Children, A Film About Lesbian Mothers Directed By Melanie Chait, Luisa Films, For Channel 4
- Court Entry (Lindsay Cooper)
- Lord Wilberforce (Lindsay Cooper)
- Home Movie 1 (Lindsay Cooper)
- Open Letters (Lindsay Cooper)
- Linda B (Lindsay Cooper)
- Home Movie 2 (Lindsay Cooper)
- Three Heads (Lindsay Cooper)
- Julia: End Credits (Lindsay Cooper)

III. LINDSAY COOPER AND ORCHESTRA
- Extract From Concerto Per Sax Sopranino E Archi

IV. A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO NOMANSLAND
Pieces Originally Written For The Films Das Nächste Jahrhundert Wird Unseres Sein, And Wir Wollen Lieber Fliegen Als Kriechen, Directed By Claudia Von Allemann For Hessicher Rundfunk Television
- In The Archive (Lindsay Cooper)
- Mainz (Lindsay Cooper)
- Paulskirche (Lindsay Cooper)

Compilation.

In The Dark Year est extrait du EP The Last Nightingale sorti en 1984.

- ReR MEGACORP (RER LC2/3)
2xCD

Disc 2
- Le Detroit (Trio Trabant)
- De Breede En De Smalle Weg (Trio Trabant)
- Le Cadran Bleu 3 (Trio Trabant)
- State Of Retrograd (Trio Trabant)
- Vigilanz (Trio Trabant)
- Le Cadran Bleu 5 (Trio Trabant)
- Pictures From The Great Exhibition (Lindsay Cooper)
  - Fingers Weary And Torn
  - Canal Towpath
  - Musical Box
  - Regent Street
  - Women's Wrong
  - Cholera Morbus
  - The Housewife's Nightmare
  - Spitalfield
- **In The Dark Year** [L. Cooper / C. Cutler / B. Gilonis / R. Wyatt]
- Piano Roulette (Lindsay Cooper)
- Petrified (David Thomas And The Pedestrians)
- Education (C. Bauer / L. Cooper / C. Cutler / B. Gilonis /S. Potter)



> Zoom 1 2

Then & Now
2014

Christof Kurzmann

Disc 1
- I Never Knew (Extended Versions (1992) (Alternate Take)
- **Noah's Song (2000) (Ch. Kurzmann/ O. Stotz/R. Wyatt)**
- You're My Thrill (2006) (M. Kammerer)
- Alone (2006) (The Year Of)
- Rooms (2004) (Ch. Kurzmann)
- Till The Rain Will End The Drama (2009) (Kammerflimmer Kollektief & Ch. Kurzmann)
- Places (2004) (Ch. Kurzmann)

Disc 2
- Te Recuerdo Amanda (2010) (El Infierno Musical)
- Track 1 (2010)(E. Carrasco & Ch. Kurzmann)
- She (2011) (S. Jernberg & Ch. Kurzmann)
- Something (2012) (The Magic I.D. & J. Butcher)
- Track 2 (2013)(K. Vandermark & Ch. Kurzmann)
- Live at Musikprotokoll (2012) (L. Kaplan & Ch. Kurzmann)
- Live at Klingt.org Gala (2014) (M. Gustafsson & Ch. Kurzmann)
- Everyday I Write A Book (2014) (B. Fleischmann & Ch. Kurzmann)

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet

- Oliver Stotz - electric guitars
- Christof Kurzmann - vocals

- TROST RECORDS (TR 120) 2xLP



> Zoom

Hai Paura Del Buio?
2014

Afterhours

Disc 1
ORIGINAL VERSION - REMASTERED
- Hai Paura Del Buio? (Afterhours)
- 1.9.9.6. (Afterhours)
- Male Di Miele (Afterhours)
- Rapace (Afterhours)
- Elymania (Afterhours)
- Pelle (Afterhours)
- Dea (Afterhours)
- Senza Finestra (Afterhours)
- Simbiosi (Afterhours)
- Voglio Una Pelle Splendida (Afterhours)
- Terrorswing (Afterhours)
- Lasciami Leccare L'adrenalina (Afterhours)
- Punto G (Afterhours)
- Veleno (Afterhours)
- Come Vorrei (Afterhours)
- Questo Pazzo Pazzo Mondo Di Tasse (Afterhours)
- Musicista Contabile (Afterhours)
- Sui Giovani D'oggi Ci Scatarro Su (Afterhours)

- Robert Wyatt - The Friendly Ghost of Robert Wyatt

Robert Wyatt e Cristina Donà – Televisione

"È stata una sfida perché avevo già lavorato con questa squadra più di 15 anni fa, ai tempi dell'album di Cristina Donà, Nido. Robert Wyatt aveva messo voci, tromba e altre parti ritmiche sul brano Goccia e quindi volevo rimettere in piedi quel team con Cristina alla voce, Wyatt alla strumentazione e noi come musicisti aggiunti per rifare Televisione. Cristina è stata impeccabile, come sempre, ha cantato in maniera emozionante ma senza sforzarsi, in modo naturale; Wyatt invece ha collaborato in un modo particolare: lui non incide più e non suona più, non in pubblico almeno; il suo studio, come dice lui, 'è una stanza polverosa piena di

- Mi Trovo Nuovo (Afterhours)
- Televisione (Afterhours)

Disc 2
RELOADED
- Hai Paura Del Buio? (Afterhours, Featuring Damo Suzuki)
- 1.9.9.6. (Afterhours, Featuring Edoardo Bennato)
- Male Di Miele (Afterhours, Featuring The Afghan Whigs)
- Rapace (Afterhours, Featuring Negramaro)
- Elymania (Afterhours, Featuring Luminal)
- Pelle (Afterhours, Featuring Mark Lanegan)
- Dea (Afterhours, Featuring Il Teatro Degli Orrori)
- Senza Finestra (Afterhours, Featuring Joan As Policewoman)
- Simbiosi (Afterhours, Featuring Der Maurer, Featuring Le Luci Della Centrale Elettrica)
- Voglio Una Pelle Splendida (Afterhours, Featuring Samuel Romano)
- Terrorswing (Afterhours, Featuring John Parish)
- Lasciami Leccare L'adrenalina (Afterhours, Featuring Eugenio Finardi)
- Punto G (Afterhours, Featuring Bachi Da Pietra)
- Veleno (Afterhours, Featuring Nic Cester)
- Come Vorrei (Afterhours, Featuring Piers Faccini)
- Questo Pazzo Pazzo Mondo Di Tasse (Afterhours, Featuring Fuzz Orchestra, Featuring Vincenzo Vasi)
- Musicista Contabile (Afterhours, Featuring Marta Sui Tubi)
- Sui Giovani D'oggi Ci Scatarro Su (Afterhours, Featuring Ministri)
- Mi Trovo Nuovo (Afterhours, Featuring Rachele Bastreghi)
- **Televisione (2014) (Afterhours, Featuring Cristina Dona', Featuring Robert Wyatt)**
- Male Di Miele (Afterhours, Featuring Piero Pelù)

ricordi', però ci ha proposto, quando gli abbiamo chiesto se voleva suonare sul pezzo, di usare tutto quello che potevamo trovare su di lui in giro: pezzi musicali, improvvisazioni. Abbiamo fatto una ricerca e più che utilizzare dei campionamenti dalle sue canzoni, cosa che ci sembrava scontata, abbiamo preso delle improvvisazioni dalle sue esibizioni dal vivo, vocali e strumentali, che non appartenevano a delle canzoni in particolare. In una di queste improvvisazioni, fatte per una radio francese, fa il ritmo della batteria con la voce e magicamente quel ritmo è lo stesso di Televisione. Abbiamo sovrapposto la sua voce alla batteria ed è stato perfetto. Poi abbiamo aggiunto anche altre sue parti musicali e gliel'abbiamo spedito. Ci ha dato alcuni consigli ma è stato entusiasta. Per me è stato fantastico. Con la mia ritrosia, se avessi saputo prima che non suonava più non lo avrei mai contattato. Sbagliando".

Manuel Agnelli

- UNIVERSAL
(UPC 00602537757565) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2

Different Every Time
Benign Dictatorships
2014

Robert Wyatt - Different Every Time

- The River (Jeanette Lindstrom)
- The Diver (Anja Garbarek)
- We're Looking For A Lot Of Love (Hot Chip)
- Jellybabies (Epic Soundtracks)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Richardson Road (Grasscut)
- Turn Things Upside Down (Happy End)
- Still In the Dark (Monica Vasconcelos)
- Venceremos (We Will Win) - (Jazz Dance Special 12" Version) - (Working Week)
- Frontera (Phil Manzanera)
- La Plus Belle Langue (Steve Nieve/Robert Wyatt/Muriel Teodori)
- Goccia (Cristina Dona)
- Slam (Nick Mason)
- A L'Abbattoir (Michael Mantler)
- Sinking Spell (Michael Mantler)
- Submarine (Bjork)
- Experiences No. 2 (John Cage)

Benign Dictatorships est une compilation réalisée par Marcus O'Dair - auteur de la biographie de Robert Wyatt Different Every Time -, qui regroupe des raretés, inédits et collaborations enregistrées avec d'autres musiciens et compositeurs.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Compilations.

- DOMINO RECORDS
(WIGCD347) 2xCD
(WIGLP347-2) LP (*Benign Dictatorships*)

Max Richter

Disc 1
THE BLUE NOTEBOOKS
- The Blue Notebooks
- On The Nature Of Daylight
- Horizon Variations
- Shadow Journal
- Iconography
- Vladimir's Blues

Réédition sous l'appellation "Retrospective" de 4 albums de Max Richter dont Songs From Before avec Robert Wyatt. A noter que le morceau *Harmonium* est une version différente de l'original, sans Robert Wyatt.



> Zoom

Retrospective
2014

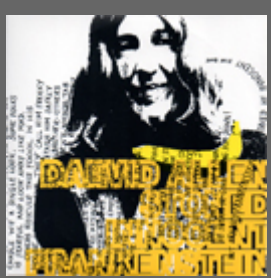
- Arboretum
- Old Song
- Organum
- The Trees
- Written On The Sky
- On The Nature Of Daylight

Disc 2
SONGS FROM BEFORE
- Song
- Flowers For Yulia
- Fragment
- Harmonium
- Ionosphere
- Autumn Music 1
- Time Passing
- Sunlight
- Lullaby
- Autumn Music 2
- Verses
- From The Rue Vilin
- Leo

Disc 3
24 POSTCARDS IN FULL COLOUR
- The Road Is A Grey Tape
- H In New England
- This Picture Of Us. P.
- Lullaby From The Westcoast Sleepers
- When The Northern Lights / Jasper And Louise
- Circles From The Rue Simon - Crubellier
- Cascade NW By W
- A Sudden Manhattan Of The Mind
- In Louisville At 7
- Cathodes
- I Was Just Thinking
- A Song For H / Far Away
- Return To Prague
- Broken Symmetries For Y
- Berlin By Overnight
- Cradle Song For A (Interstate B3)
- Kierling / Doubt
- From 553 W Elm Street, Logan Illinois (Snow)
- Tokyo Riddle Song
- The Tartu Piano
- Cold Fusion For G
- 32 Via San Nicolo
- Found Song For P.
- H Thinks A Journey
- Hope Strings Eternal
- So Long Orpheus
- Thermodynamics

Disc 4
INFRA
-- Infra 1
- Journey 1
- Infra 2
- Infra 3
- Journey 2
- Infra 4
- Journey 3
- Journey 4
- Journey 5
- Infra 5
- Infra 6
- Infra 7
- Infra 8
- Sub Piano

- DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON (0289 479 3065 5) 4xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Daevid Allen

Disc 1
- It's The Time Your Life (alt. mix)
- Memories (alt. mix)
- Out Of Here (alt. version)
- Fred The Fish (alt. mix)
- White Neck Blooze (alt. version)
- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein (Too Much For You) (alt. version)
- And His Adventures In The Land Of Flip (alt. version)
- I Am A Bowl (alt. version)

Disc 2
- Poet In The Land Of Flip
- Instrumental In The Land Of Flip

- Robert Wyatt - drums, guitar, vocals on *Memories*, and on *Out Of Here*

Stoned Innocent Frankenstein is a double album of unreleased alternative versions and different mixes of Banana Moon (Daevid Allen´s first solo album).

- GAS RECORDS (ARC003CD) 2xCD

Stoned Innocent Frankenstein
2014

- Flips From The Loophouse
- Bass Flip



> Zoom 1 2

One Night Stand
2015

W M W S

- One Night Stand (side A & B)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Dave MacRae - electric/acoustic piano
- Gary Windo - tenor saxophone
- Richard Sinclair - bass guitar

A Performance of Improvised Music-Making *Upstairs at Ronnie Scott's April 14th, 1973*

Tirage limité à 300 exemplaires.

- IMPROJAZZ (PRMK LP003) LP

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom 1 2

One Night Stand (Reissue)
2015

W M W S

- A Performance Of Improvised Music Making

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Dave MacRae - electric/acoustic piano
- Gary Windo - tenor saxophone
- Richard Sinclair - bass guitar

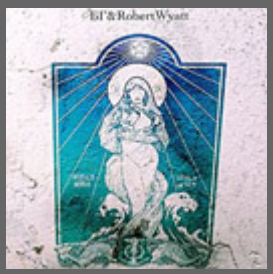
A Performance of Improvised Music-Making *Upstairs at Ronnie Scott's April 14th, 1973* .

Comporte les deux mentions suivantes :

- "Dedicated To You; Because You Were Listening - RIP Mike King"

- "Limited Edition Vinyl Album available from Improjazz / Improjazz Mag"

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST310CD) CD
- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST310LP) LP



> Zoom 1 2

Stella Maris
2015

БГ & Robert Wyatt

- Stella Maris

- Robert Wyatt - voice, tenor horn, cornet

- Boris Grebenshikov - voice, keyboards, mandoline, ocarina
- Natalya Vergey - voice
- Boris Rubekin - mellotron, flute, piano
- Mitchell Froom - OP1, organ
- Valeria Kurbatova - harp

String quartet:
- Patrick Kiernan - violin
- Bruce White - viola
- Ian Burdge - cello
- Oli Langford - viola
- David Arch - arrangements

Choir:
- Edward Burnaby-Atkins
- Augustus Howland



> Zoom

Was A Friend - Volume 10
2015

Hugh Hopper

- Was A Friend
- Full Flight
- Flight Full
- Dim_04
- Was A friend

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano

- Hugh Hopper - keyboards,
  bass samples

Bresse-sur-Grosne, November 1983 &
Elsewhere Studios, Kent, April 1995.

" The first (collaboration) actually over a decade in the making, the backing track produced during the sessions for Hugh's duo album with Richard Sinclair in 1983 - which remained unfinished at the time. "Robert thought about writing some words for it and then decided not to" Hugh later explained.
The vocal-less backing track was recycled for Hugh's 1983 album *Hooligan Romantics* with vocals and lyrics by John Atkinson (as C'est Grace), until Robert finally wrote lyrics and added his voice to the 1983 recording. Thus completed in 1995, the track only saw release on the *Parabolic Versions* compilation in 2000, three years after Robert Wyatt had released his own version on Shleep. "

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA
  (HST261CD) CD



> Zoom

Tales For Sunrise
2015

Mojomakerz

- Sacred Tree
- Blue Stars
- Ship Of Fools
- Death By Disco
- Sahara
- Pigs Balls N'You
- I Am No-One
- Zayed
- Weirdiful You
- The Scorpion And The Frog
Youth Mixes
- Sacred Tree
- Blue Stars
- Weirdiful You
- Sahara

- Robert Wyatt - vocalists (on
  Ship Of Fools and *Weirdiful You*)

- Charlotte Hubbard - keyboards,
  vocalists
- Jim Drummond - drums,
  percussion, mouth drums
- Adel Adoula Karane - hip hop
- BJ Cole - steel guitar
  rapper (on *Ship Of Fools*)
- Santi Ramirez - vocalists (on *Ship Of Fools*)

- WEIRDIFUL YOU RECORDS
  (WYRCD01001) CD
  (WYRDLP01001) 2xLP

Tracey Thorn

Disc 1
- Oh, The Divorces! (Tracey Thorn)
- Under The Ivy (Tracey Thorn)
- Small Town Girl (Tracey Thorn)
- Plain Sailing (Tracey Thorn)

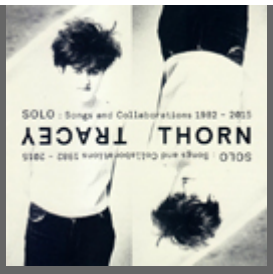
Compilation.

- CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL
  (CAROLR024CD) 2xCD

- George Laing (Summerfields)
- Shaunak Desai
- Alessandro D'Orazio
- Theo Nash
- Nicolas Veal-Baschwitz (London
  Russian Music School)
- Pavel Timofejevsky - director

A single CD version was released as a limited edition in 2016 on the label Misteriya Zvuka.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format (2015)
- MISTERIYA ZVUKA
  (CD-M+385-2) CD-S (2016)



> Zoom

Solo : Songs And Collaborations 1982-2015
2015

- Hands Up To The Ceiling (Tracey Thorn)
- Follow Me Down (Tracey Thorn)
- Goodbye Joe (Tracey Thorn)
- Hormones (Tracey Thorn)
- Taxi Cab (Tracey Thorn)
- Sister Winter (Tracey Thorn)
- Overture (The Unbending Trees Featuring Tracey Thorn)
- Kentish Town (Tracey Thorn)
- By Piccadilly Station I Sat Down And Wept (Tracey Thorn)
- The Paris Match (The Style Council Featuring Tracey Thorn)
- Venceremos (We Will Win) (7" Bossa Version) (Working Week Featuring Robert Wyatt, Tracey Thorn, Claudia Figueroa)
- How Wild The Wind Blows (Tracey Thorn)
- Singles Bar (Tracey Thorn)
- The Book Of Love (Tracey Thorn)
- Late In The Afternoon (Tracey Thorn)
- Joy (Tracey Thorn)

Disc 2
- Protection (7") (Massive Attack Featuring Tracey Thorn)
- Easy (Tracey Thorn)
- Better Things (Massive Attack Featuring Tracey Thorn)
- Night Time (Tracey Thorn)
- Raise The Roof (Beyond The Wizard's Sleeve Re-Animation)(Tracey Thorn)
- You Are A Lover (Clock Opera Remix) (Tracey Thorn)
- It's All True (Escort Extended Mix) (Tracey Thorn)
- Grand Canyon (Ada Remix) (Tracey Thorn)
- Why Does The Wind? (Morgan Geist Remix) (Tracey Thorn)
- Damage (Tiefschwarz Featuring Tracey Thorn)
- Without Me (Tevo Howard Radio Edit) (Tevo Howard Featuring Tracey Thorn)
- King's Cross (Hot Chip Remix) (Tracey Thorn)
- Swimming (Visionquest Remix) (Tracey Thorn)
- The Tree Knows Everything (Adam F Featuring Tracey Thorn)

↑



> Zoom

Summer Into Winter/
North Marine Drive
2015

Ben Watt And Robert Wyatt

- Walter And John
- Aquamarine
- Slipping Slowly
- Another Conversation With Myself
- A Girl In Winter
- Long Time No Sea
- You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go
- On Box Hill
- Some Things Don't Matter
- Lucky One
- Empty Bottles
- North Marine Drive
- Waiting Like Mad
- Thirst For Knowledge

Réédition vinyl des albums North Marine Drive et Summer Into Winter.

Walter And John et *Girl In Winter* sont extraits de Summer Into Winter.

White virgin vinyl - 140 gram.
Limited to 500 numbered copies.

- MIRU-MIR (MIR100742) LP

↑



Bertand Burgalat

- Balises Pour Centre D'écoute
- Une Nuit À Taverny
- Nous Étions Heureux
- Right Side Up With The World
- This Summer Night
- Mal De Bright
- Anonyme Amour
- Out Of Touch
- Ragle Gumm

Editions vinyl de l'album sorti en 2007.

Il en existe apparemment 2 versions avec la même référence:
- version 1 - 12 titres
- version 2 avec les bonus *I've Been A Bad, Bad Boy* et *Happy Inbetween*.

- TRICATEL (TRILPFR031) LP



> Zoom

Chéri B.B. (vinyl edition)
2015

- Grande Remise
- J'ai Quelque Chose À Dire
- Un Sogno Di Televizione

Bonus
- I've Been A Bad, Bad Boy
- Happy Inbetween



> Zoom

L'Argot Del Soroll
2015

Pascal Comelade

- L'Argot Del Soroll (Versió Directe / Barcelona)
- Via Crucis Del Rocanrol
- The Sad Skinhead
- Domisiladoré
- Marie, Un Faux-cil Dans la Transmission
- Love Too Soon
- To The Last Of Imaginery Solutions
- The Great Ricardo Solfa (Versió Directe / Barcelona)
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir / O Gran Paralelo (Versió Directe / Lisboa)
- Teresa
- Si / La Societat Del Piano-Obstacle
- Green Eyes (Versió Ampliada)
- Sardana Dels Desemparats (Versió Ampliada)
- Dona'm Corda
- Toti Al Soler
- **September Song** [K. Weil/M. Anderson]
- Betty Page A-Go-Go
- La Societat Del Piano-Obstacle (Versió Directe / Barcelona)
- Cadillac
- L'Argot Del Soroll

Edition espagnole de L'Argot Du Bruit.

Plusieurs morceaux - dont *September Song* - sont absents de la version initiale française de 1998 (Les Disques Du Soleil Et De L'Acier - CDSA 54058) et réciproquement.

- DISCMEDI BLAU (DM5200-02) CD



> Zoom

Rattle That Lock
2015

David Gilmour

- 5 A.M
- Rattle That Lock
- Faces Of Stones
- A Boat Lies Waiting
- Dancing Right in Front Of Me
- In Any Tongue
- Beauty
- **The Girl In The Yellow Dress**
- Today
- And Then…

DVD (only with DeLuxe Edition)
- Barn Jam 01
- Barn Jam 02
- Barn Jam 03
- Barn Jam 04
- The Animators, Alisdair + Jock
- Rattle That Lock
- The Animators, Danny Madden
- **The Girl In The Yellow Dress (Music Video)**
- Polly Samson And David Gilmour At The Borris House Festival Of Words And Ideas
- The Making Of The Rattle That Lock Album
- Rattle That Lock (Extended Mix)
- **The Girl In The Yellow Dress (Orchestral Version) [Audio Only]**
- Rattle That Lock (Youth Mix - 12" Extended Radio Dub)
- Rattle That Lock (Radio Edit)
- Rattle That Lock Album In 5.1 Surround

- Robert Wyatt - cornet

- David Gilmour - guitar, vocals
- Chris Laurence - double bass
- Martin France - drums
- John Parricelli - guitar
- Rado Klose - guitar
- Jools Holland - piano
- Colin Stetson - saxophone

Box Set et Bonus DVD avec la Deluxe Edition.

- COLUMBIA RECORDS (88875123272) CD
- COLUMBIA RECORDS (88875123291) LP
- COLUMBIA RECORDS (88875123272 DC1) BOX-SET Deluxe Edition



> Zoom

Ibrahim
2016

The Great Divide featuring Robert Wyatt

- Ibrahim (featuring Robert Wyatt)
- World (price Of Love)
- The Gone-Away World

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, tenor horn

- Gerald Clark - piano
- Sam Lasserson - bass
- Jon Scott - drums

- THE INTERRUPTING SHEEP (BAA003) LP



> Zoom 1 2

L'Argot Du Bruit
2016

Pascal Comelade

- L'Argot Du Bruit
- Via Crucis Del Rocanrol
- The Sad Skinhead
- Marie, Un Faux-cil Dans la Transmission
- Love Too Soon
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir
- The Great Ricardo Solfa
- Green Eyes
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- Toti Al Soler
- September Song [K. Weil/M. Anderson]
- Featherhead

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, trompette, percussions
- Pascal Comelade - instrumentsn

Ré-édition de l'album du même nom paru en 1998 (mais qui ne contenait pas le morceau *September Song*).

- BECAUSE MUSIC (BEC5156514) LP & CD



> Zoom 1 2 3

Rocanrolorama 1974-2016
2016

Pascal Comelade

Disc 1
MY DEGENERATION (1974-1986)
Fluence
- Fluence (a few reasons to stay, a few reasons to split)
- Séquences Paiennes 77/78
- Séquence 1
- Séquence 2
- Séquence 3
- Séquence 4
- Séquence 5
- Séquence 6
- Séquence 7
- Séquence 7
- Séquence 9
- Séquence 10
- Séquence 11
Ready Made
- Eclairage Sur L'eau
- Distant Piano
- Ready Made 4
- Carré
- Bruits De Fond
- Bar Électric
Paralelo
- Mouvement Décomposé D'un Coup De Marteau
- Via Laietana
- Paralelo 1
- Vertical
- Politico
- Automne
- Musique Pour Les Ascenseurs (Paralelo 6)
- A Vacuum Cleaner (Paralelo 7)

- CD 4 - *September Song*
- Robert Wyatt - vocal, trompette, percussions
- Pascal Comelade - instruments

Coffret de 6 CD + livret de 72 pages et lithographie originale.
Édition de 1000 exemplaires numérotés et signés.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- BECAUSE MUSIC (BEC5156515) 6xCD

- Erratum Musical 1
- Erratum Musical 2

Sentimientos
- A Noise In My Nose (Sentimientos 2)

Précis De Décomposition Bruitiste (1980/1986)
- Karl Marx Alla Romana
- Irregular Organs
- A Perfect Crime
- Scène De Musique Ralentie

15 Minutes De Sonoto-Luddisme
- 15 Minutes De Sonoto-Luddisme

Disc 2

SLOW MUSICS (1980-1997)

Slow Musics (1974-1984)
- Barcelona Tango
- We Did It Again [Kevin Ayers]
- Chanson Pop
- 13 À Table
- The No-Dancing
- Logique Du Sens
- The Curious Sofa
- Un Enemic Del Swing

Détails Monochromes
- Fragments
- Park Guell
- Chanson
- Bel Canto
- Des Yeux Au Bacon
- Dancin' On My Sofa
- Beyrouth 1966

Palimpsestes Sonors
- Blue Afternoon
- Third Eye Of Lya Lys
- Un La Minimal Nu
- Souvenir De Vernet-les-Bains

El Primitivisme
- Valse De Le Demoiselle Aux Yeux Verts
- Honky Tonk Women
- Rue Des Soeurs Noires
- Jac B. And His Dancing Dogs
- It's Hurt Me Too
- Memories [H. Hopper/R.Wyatt]
- Your Labios As Tulips

33 Bars
- Ze Wiski Twist (à Cliff Gallup, inventeur du Rocanrol)
- Vals En Diagonal (à C.R.)
- Rock Del Veneno
- Valse À L'aiguille Creuse
- A Glass Of Gaz
- Patafisiskal Polska

Disc 3

PATAFISISKAL POLSKA (1992-1996)
- 4 Rroses Pour Marie
- Egyptian Reggae
- Dansa Del Sombre Fakir D'Alcoi
- 96 Tears
- Societé Anonyme Du Frisson Rétinien
- Sunny Afternoon
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- Dali's Car
- Arthur's Caravan Was A Flor Fina
- The Skatalan Logicofobism
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- I Put A Barbara Steele On You
- A La Recherche Du Baron Corvo
- Danse Du Valseur Callipyge
- L'Home Dibuixat
- Also Sprach Ed Marimba
- Like A Rolling Stone

El Cabaret Galàctic
- Chanson De Charme Pour Faux-Nez
- The Lolobrigida Foxtrot
- Your Eyes Like Juan Gris Cubist Guitars
- Le Fakir De La Chapelle (À François Cadarec)
- Tokyo Bay Blues
- On Se L'Hegel En Enfer
- L'Espinosa Ética De La Santa Espina

Musiques Pour Films, Vol. 3
- Toti Al Soler
- Betty Page A-Go-Go
- Sheena Is A Punk Rocker

Les Places De Gràcia
- L'Esquella De La Torratxa
- Paganini Paga Tot A Nono

Flip-Side Of Sophism
- Back To Schizo

Disc 4

MUSIQUE DEGENXRE (1996-2000)
- L'Argot Du Bruit
- The Sad Skinhead

- Marie, Un Faux-Cul Dans La Transmission
- Love Too Soon
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir
- La Société Du Piano-Obstacle
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- Green Eyes

Muzak De Genre
- Dóna'm Corda
- Cadillac
- Aigua De Florida
- The Great Ricardo Solfa
- To The Last Imaginary Solutions
- **September Song** [K. Weil/M. Anderson]
- Brown Sugar
- Smoke On The Water
- Ma Gueule
- Ramblin' Rose
- Souviens-Toi De Ces Douces Soirées
- Psycho (Ma Non) Troppo
- Despintura (A) Fònica
- L'Argot Du Bruit

Disc 5

ESPONTEX SINFONIA (2000-2008)

Psicòtic Music'Hall
- The Blank Invasion Of Schyzofonics Bikinis
- Sense El Ressó Del Dring
- Don't Touch My Blue Oyster
- Contre Le Style
- Un Train Direct Pour Charenton
- Mieux Vaut Que Ses Seins Ses Bas Se Tiennent (al pianiste de la Bodega Bohemia)
- Gégène
- A Figueres

Espontex Sinfonia
- Pim Pam Pum Al Concepte
- Mother Of Earth
- The Halucinogenic Espontex Sinfonia
- Com Un Rossinyol Amb Mal De Queixal

Mètode De Rocanrol
- Stranger In Paradigm
- The Indian In The Group (to Jimmy Carl Black)
- Il Luna Park Galactico
- L'Enterrament Des Sardines
- Sans Les Mains! (Zappambarretina)
- Vals Burlesco
- Satisfacció

I Scream Ice Cream (Krazy Kat)
- The Nothing Twist
- Why Are We Sleeping [K. Ayers/ M.Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- A Wall Of Perukes
- One Of Us

La Catedral D'Escuradents
- Sardana Mecànica
- To Be Damnit Ornette To Be
- Ha Passat Un Àngel

Disc 6

FRIKI SERENATA (2008-2016)

Friki Serenata
- A Freak Serenade
- The Return Of Lux Interior The Magician (El Bolero Del Raval)
- Two Maniaco-Depressive Beatnicks Squabbing Over A Jane Russell Mozzarella's Stereokini
- El Misteri Del Triangle Vermut
- Europe Change Bad

El Pianista Del Antifaz
- O Dancing Del Gran Fumisme (to Albert Pla)
- Hydropathes Marchant Sur Les Os
- Friki Serenata (à Max)
- Flan Sin Nata Inzenight
- Spinoza Was A Soul Garagist
- El Pianista Del Antifaz (Born In Candolle)
- Portrait De L'Artiste Avec Des Lunettes Pour Voir Les Femmes À Poill
- La Bella Dorita

Les Mémoires Du Chanteur Masqué
- En Maison
- Russian Roulette
- Suzanne
- New York 09
- Ha Passat Un Àngel
- The Train Creep' A Looping
- Sex Machine



> Zoom

Songs From Before (Reissue)
2016

Max Richter

- Song
- Flowers For Yulia
- Fragment
- Harmonium
- Ionosphere
- Autumn Music 1
- Time Passing
- Sunlight
- Lullaby
- Autumn Music 2
- Verses
- From The Rue Vilin
- Leo

Réedition de l'album Songs From Before sorti en 2006.
Contient un 13ème titre bonus: *Leo*.

- DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON
(479 5566) CD



> Zoom

Archivos Vol. 1 Tributos Y BSOs
2016

Bunbury

Disc 1
- Hada Chalada (Versión Bossa)
- Vete De Mí
- Voy A Perder La Cabeza Por Tu Amor
- Con El Alma En Los Labios
- Frío
- Afuera
- Corre Por La Jungla
- Candela
- Sí
- Dies Irae

Disc 2
- Hada Chalada
- Papel De Regalo
- Eres Bellísima
- Vámonos
- Como Una Mujer (Just Like A Woman)
- El Botón Del Pánico
- El Jinete

Disc 3
- Tú Eres Mi Destino
- No Quiero Ni Sé Olvidarte
- El Hijo Del Pueblo
- Es Sólo Un Día Más
- Vida (Viure)
- Come Together
- Nada (Shacky Carmine)
- Necesito
- El Tiempo Se Va

Disc 4
- Annabel Lee
- Una Décima De Segundo
- Réquiem Por Un Cabrón
- La Vida Moderna (Featuring – Phil Manzanera, Robert Wyatt)
- Tabú
- Que El Amor No Admite Cuerdas Reflexiones (A La Manera De Santa Fé)
- Un Caballo Llamado Muerte
- Fregonas
- Who By Fire
- Nana De Los Peces Muertos

Compilation.

La Vida Moderna est extrait de Vozero.

- WARNER MUSIC SPAIN
(9029590446) 4xLP



Vivien Goldman

- Launderette (Vivien Goldman)
– Private Armies (Vivien Goldman)
– P.A. Dub (Vivien Goldman)
– Her Story (The Flying Lizards)
– The Window (The Flying Lizards)
– It's Only Money (Chantage)
– Same Thing Twice (Chantage)
– Tu M'Fais Rire (Chantage)
– Interview With Vivien Goldman

Réédition des EP de Vivien Goldman publiés en 1981 (Launderette et Dirty Washing) complétée par des morceaux des deux groupes auxquels Vivien Golman participa (The Flying Lizards et Chantage).

Les crédits des morceaux varient d'une édition à l'autre:

> Zoom 1 2 3

Resolutionary
(Songs 1979-1982)
2016

- sur la première version Launderette/Private Armies, Robert Wyatt n'est crédité que pour le 1er morceau *Launderette (*voir ici*)*.

- sur la seconde version Dirty Washing éditée la même année, Robert Wyatt semble crédité sur tous les morceaux du EP. (voir ici)

- sur la présente réédition Resolutionary, Robert Wyatt n'est plus du tout crédité dans les notes de pochette. (voir ici)

Il semble néanmoins qu'il ne joue des percussions que sur le premier morceau (*Launderette*).

Digital reissue in 2020 (Staubgold/Bandcamp) + a Limited Edition Single of 500 copies.

- STAUBGOLD (141) LP
- STAUBGOLD (141) CD



> Zoom

Corroncho 2
2017

Phil Manzanera - Lucho Brieva

- Caballo Blanco
- Arepa
- Palo Santo
- Tus Pies En El Verano
- El Reencuentro
- El Tango Infinito
- Parasiempre
- El Sol
- Aguita Fresca
- Aleluya
- El Ray De Los Caminos
- Bala De Plata
- **Volvi**

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet

- Phil Manzanera - vocals, guitar, keyboards
- Lucho Brieva - vocals
- Javier Weyler - drums
- Chucho Merchan - bass guitar
- Yaron Stavi - electric and double bass
- Ivan Hidalgo - trombone

- EXPRESSION RECORDS (EXPCD36) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Sulo's Full English
2017

Sulo

- Lady Jane
- Something About That Girl
- Sorry For The Young
- Among The Angels
- Run For Your Life
- Hit Me With Your Rock N' Roll
- Lightning Strikes Twice
- Stand On The Rock
- Is It Love On Your Mind
- Finest Words
- Life's Work
- My Bounty From Above

Bonus
- Hot Swagger In The Big Smoke
- Roxette
- **Enjoy The Risk (with Robert Wyatt)**
- Poor Poor Heart
- Borstal Breakout
- Roses & Rings
- Teenage Depression

Enjoy The Risk est extrait de Keep Yourself Alive.

- CARGO RECORDS - LIVEWIRE (LW050-2) CD

Ian James Stewart

- March To The Right
- Who Knows Where
- Arcticana

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, voice percussion, piano



> Zoom

Arcticana
2017

- Your Love
- End Of The World
- Blue Alice
- Funny
- **So Wrong**

- Ian James Stewart - vocals, guitars, keys
- David Stewart - bass and drum programming
- Alice Barnard - backing vocals

- DANGEROUS DOG RECORDS (DDRLP03003) LP



> Zoom

A Kind Revolution
2017

Paul Weller

- Woo Sé Mama
- Nova
- Long Long Road
- **She Moves With The Fayre**
- The Cranes Are Back
- Hopper
- New York
- One Tear
- Satellite Kid
- The Impossible Idea

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, trumpet

- Paul Weller - electric guitar, bass guitar, mellotron
- Jan Stan Kybert - bass, handclaps, synth ARP
- Charles Rees - drums
- Ben Gordelier - percussion
- Amy Stanford - strings
- Jessica Cox - strings
- Laura Stanford - strings
- Paloma Deike - strings
- Steve Pilgrim - backing vocals

- PARLOPHONE (0190295830601) CD
- PARLOPHONE (0190295845261) LP



> Zoom

A Kind Revolution - Special Edition
2017

Paul Weller

Disc 1
- Woo Sé Mama
- Nova
- Long Long Road
- **She Moves With The Fayre**
- The Cranes Are Back
- Hopper
- New York
- One Tear
- Satellite Kid
- The Impossible Idea

Disc 2
INSTRUMENTAL VERSIONS
- Who Sé Ma
- Nova
- Long Long Road
- **She Moves With The Fayre**
- The Cranes Are Back
- Hopper
- New York
- One Tear
- Satellite Kid
- The Impossible Idea

Disc 3
REMIXES, ALTERNATE VERSIONS AND PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED TRACK
- Alpha
- **She Moves With Fayre (Villagers Remix)**
- New York (Nightwatch - Prof. Kybert)
- Nova (Toy Remix)
- One Tear (Club Cut - Prof. Kybert)
- Hopper (White Label Remix)
- Satellite Kid (Syd Arthur Remix)
- **She Moves With Fayre (Breakdown Inst. - Prof. Kybert)**
- Woo Sé Mama (E&TC Remix)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, trumpet

Special Edition 3CD Set includes album instrumentals, remixes, alternate versions and previously unreleased bonus track Alpha.

- PARLOPHONE (0190295830595) 3xCD



> Zoom

Hallelujah!
2018

Frédéric Lo

- La Clairière
- Cet Obscur Objet Du Désir
- Le Bruit Qui Court
- Dire
- Come
- Eno Song
- En Temps Et En Heure
- Mary
- Ami
- Égaré Dans La Nuit
- Sortez Les Clowns

- Robert Wyatt - voix, bugle

- Frédéric Lo - cristal Baschet, guitare, claviers, voix
- Nicolas Fiszman - basse, guitare
- François Poggio - guitare

- WARNER MUSIC (WM00005CD)
CD



> Zoom 1 2

Unattended Luggage
2018

Nick Mason

Disc 1
FICTITIOUS SPORTS
- Can't Get My Motor To Start
- I Was Wrong
- Siam
- Hot River
- Boo To You Too
- Do Ya ?
- Wervin'
- I'm A Mineralist

Disc 2
PROFILES
- Malta
- Lie For A Lie
- Rhoda
- Profiles Part 1 / Profiles Part 2
- Israel
- And The Address
- Mumbo Jumbo
- Zip Code
- Black Ice
- At The End Of The Day
- Profiles Part 3

>*Disc 3*
WHITE OF THE EYE
- Goldwaters
- Remember Mike?
- Where Are You Joany?
- Dry Junk
- Present
- Thrift Store
- Prelude And Ritual
- Globe
- Discovery And Recoil
- Anne Mason
- Mendoza
- A World Of Appearances
- Sacrifice Dance
- White Of The Eye

Réédition remasterisée des trois albums *Fictitious Sports* (1981), *Profiles* (1985) et *White Of The Eye* (1987).

Box set compilation.

- PARLOPHONE
(0190295660147) 3xCD

- WARNER MUSIC GROUP
(0190295660222) 3xLP



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6

7 8 9

Henry Cow

Disc 1
LEGEND

Disc 2
UNREST

Disc 3
DESPERATE STRAIGHTS
(Slapp Happy / Henry Cow)

Disc 4

CONCERTS 1
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Roads et Bad Alchemy (avec Robert Wyatt): 21 mai 1975, New London Theatre

HAMBURG
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (avec Robert Wyatt): 27 juin 1975, Piazza Navona, Roma
- We Did It Again (avec Robert Wyatt): 8 mai 1975 Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris

This box set contains re-mastered versions of all the studio CDs and the

The Henry Cow Box Redux
The Complete Henry Cow
50th Anniversary
2019

IN PRAISE OF LEARNING

Disc 5
WESTERN CULTURE
History & Prospects

Disc 6
CONCERTS 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- The Ottawa Song
- Gloria Gloom
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Groningen Again

Disc 7
CONCERTS 2

Disc 8
BEGINNINGS

Disc 9
1974-5

Disc 10
HAMBURG
- Fair As The Moon
- Nirvana For Rabbits
- Ottawa Song
- Twilight Bridge
- Gloria Gloom
- Hamburg 1
- Hamburg 2
- Red Noise10
- Hamburg 3
- Hamburg 4
- Hamburg 5
- Terrible As An Army With Banners
- A Heart
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road
- We Did It Again

Disc 11
TRONDHEIM 1

Disc 12
TRONDHEIM 2

Disc 13
STOCKHOLM & GOTEBORG

Disc 14
LATER & POST-VIRGIN

Disc 15
BREMEN

Disc 16
LATE

Disc 17
VEVEY 1976 (DVD)

Disc 18
A COW CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Disc 19
EX BOX COLLECTED FRAGMENTS 1971-1978
(bonus reserved for subscribers of the boxset).

rare bonus CD (Cabinet of Curiosities);

Subscribers to this boxset received an additional limited edition free bonus CD: Ex Box Collected Fragments 1971 - 1978.

Ce boxset est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR HCBRX)
  17xCD + DVD



> Zoom

Tutti Shruti
2019

Future Pilot AKA

- Tutti Shruti
- Version

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Sushil K Dade - bass, tape, electronics, drums [drum kit], esraj

- GLASS MODERN (GLAMSD001) Digital Format



> Zoom

Orkestra Digitalis
2019

Future Pilot AKA

- Morning Prayers (Ashes At My Guru's Feet)
- The Art Of Good Breathing
- Tutti Shruti
- Hetookherhand / Intuition Told Me Pt.1
- Holy Water
- The Sound Of Jura
- Music Like A Vitamin
- Jai Gopala
- Tu Par Ka Sagar Hai
- The Slave's Lament
- Mingus Take Your Bow And Paint My Heartstrings With Sunshine

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Sushil K Dade - bass, tape, electronics, drums [drum kit], esraj

- GLASS MODERN (GLAMLP015) LP



> Zoom 1 2

Last1 And Last2
2019

Caroline Kraabel

- Last1 (For Large Ensemble)
- Last2 (For Small Ensemble)

- Robert Wyatt - voices

Last1 (for large ensemble)
Pre-recorded song by Caroline Kraabel
Sung by Robert Wyatt

- Caroline Kraabel - composer, conductor
- Veryan Weston - piano
- Philipp Wachsmann - viola
- Hannah Marshall - cello
- Neil Metcalfe - flute
- Alex Ward - clarinet
- Tom Ward - bass clarinet
- Jackie Walduck - vibes
- Roland Ramanan - trumpet
- Caroline Hall - trombone
- David Jago - trombone
- Sue Lynch - tenor sax, 2nd conductor
- Cath Roberts - baritone sax
- Seth Bennett - double bass
- Guillaume Viltard - double bass
- Mark Sanders - percussion

2016 March 12 Cafe Oto, London.

Last2 (for small ensemble)
Pre-recorded song by Caroline Kraabel
Sung by Robert Wyatt

- Richard E. Harrison - percussion
- John Edwards - double bass
- Maggie Nicols - voice
- Caroline Kraabel - alto sax, musical director

2017 December 11 Cafe Oto, London.

- EMANEM (5048) CD



> Zoom

Les mémoires d'un ventriloque
Chansons 1981-2018
2019

Pascal Comelade

- We Did It Again (with Sissi)
- The Sad Skinhead (with Jean-Hervé Péron & Faust)
- Cadillac(with Jac Berrocal)
- **September Song (with Robert Wyatt)**
- Green Eyes (with PJ Harvey)
- Satisfaccio (Satisfaction) (with Sergi Lopez)
- En Maison (with Alex Barbier)
- Ja Som la Foca (I am The Walrus) (with Enric Casasses)
- Cadillac (with Roy Paci)
- Yo Soy Bueno (with Accidents Polipoètics)
- Don't Let Go (with Les Vierges)
- Ma Gueule (with Miossec)
- Larme Secrète (with Marc Hurtado)
- Société Anonyme Du Frisson Rétinien (with Enric Casasses & Mark C.)
- Cares D 'Arguiles (with Pau Riba)
- Suzanne (with Albert Pla)

September Song est extrait de September Song

"Les Mémoires d'un Ventriloque" ("memories of a ventriloquist") is the long-awaited anthology of Comelade's collaborations with singers, recorded between 1981 and 2018.

Limited edition of 500 copies, hand-numbered and signed by Pascal Comelade himself.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- STAUBGOLD (STAUB153)
  2 x LP



> Zoom

Artlessy Falling
2020

Mary Halvorson's Code Girl

- **The Lemon Trees**
- Last-Minute Smears
- **Walls And Roses**
- Muzzling Unwashed
- **Bigger Flames**
- Mexican War Streets (Pittsburgh)
- A Nearing
- Artlessy Falling

- Robert Wyatt - voice on tracks 1, 3 & 5

- Amirtha Kidambi - voice
- Maria Grand - tenor saxophone, voice
- Adam O'Farrill - trumpet
- Mary Halvorson - guitar
- Michael Formanek - bass
- Tomas Fujiwara - drums, beer cans on track 2

- FIREHOUSE RECORDS
  (FH12-04-01-034) CD & 2xLP



> Zoom

Return To Y'Hup The World
Of Ivor Cutler
2020

Citizen Bravo, Raymond Mac Donald and Friends

- Here's A Health For Simon
- Latitude and Longitude (with Phyllis King)
- Size Nine And A Half (with Emma Pollock)
- Mary's A Cow (with Malcolm Benzie)
- Instance The Yam (with Alex Kapranos)
- Pickle Your Knees (with Karine Polwart)
- Gravity Begins At Home (with Rick Redbeard)
- A Cowpuncher And A Bird (with Zoe Graham)
- Boo Boo Bird (with Heather Leigh)
- Vitamin P (with Duglas T. Stewart)
- Green Rain (with Sarah Hayes)
- A Tooth Song (with Adam Stafford)
- Sh Chi (with Stuart Murdoch)
- Women Of The World (with Tracyanne Campbell)
- A Real Man (with James Yorkston)
- Yellow Fly (with Kris Drever)
- Shoplifters
- The Path (with Stuart Braithwaite)
- Muscular Tree (with Megan Airlie)
- Who Tore Your Trousers James? (with Rachel Sermanni and Chris Thomson)
- I Got No Common Sense
- When I Stand On An Open Cart (with Kapil Seshasayee)
- I Believe In Bugs (with Jo Mango)
- Good Morning! How Are You? Shut Up! (with Pictish Trail)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND RECORDS (CHEM255) LP
- CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND RECORDS (CHEM255CD) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Various Artists.

- **Out Of Decency (with Robert Wyatt)**
- Beautiful Cosmos (with Anna Miles)



> Zoom

Transe de Papier
2020

Lo'Jol

- Pas Pareil
- Permettez Majesté
- Bal La Poussière
- Minuscule
- Transe de Papier
- Sépale
- Black Bird
- Jeudi d'Octobre
- Séoul
- Hôtel du Souvenir
- **Kiosco**
-La rue passe

- Robert Wyatt - voix

- Denis Péan - piano

- LO'JO/ YOTANKA RECORDS
  CD & LP (édition vinyle blanc)



> Zoom

Rarer Teas
2020

Get The Blessing

- Toggle Buttons
- Hayk (Orchestral version)
- Tarp (Aesoteric mix)
- Cornish Native (Live at Rich Mix)
- **Ulysses Frigidair**
- The Word for Moonlight is Moonlight
  (Orchestral version)
- Moot
- Viking Death Moped (Thought Forms mix)
- Sunwise (Orchestral version)
- Poem de Terre
- Conch
- Life's too short to be shy
- The Unnameable
- Corniche (Live at Rich Mix)
- Pentopia (Patrick's Dream)
- Curve
- OCDC (Orchestral version)

Marc Gauvin pose sa voix sur *American Meccano* (de l'album OCDC) qui devient *Ulysses Frigidair*.

"To mark 20 years together, Get The Blessing is proud to invite you to sample RARER TEAS: a selection of brews, infusions, and cordials drawn from our various recordings, collaborations, and live performances across the years. Steeped in Bristol rainwater, with a dash of the city's notorious cleaning-fluid for additional preservative properties, these previously unreleased tracks from the archives feature special guests including Robert Wyatt, Marc Gauvin, Viv Albertine, John Hegley and more..."

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

The Sleeping Girl - Soundtrack
2021

The Sleeping Men

- Everybody I Know
- Red Mercury Ball by Blackelit (Sleeping
  Men 's 71 Version)
- Too Far T o o C l o s e
- Die Dinge Dazwischen
- **Around The Corner**
- Flutwelle
- Stupid Me Stupid You (Too)
- Heisenberg
- Vom Himmel Gefallen
- 1000 Times Away
- Wie Wenn Ich Aus Mamor Wäre
- Someone I Knew
- Himmelsbuch
- Kein Wunder
- Ein Bild Von Ihr
- Selbstporträt
- Lieber Beuys
- Everybody I Know

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Toni Schifer - bass
- Daniel Paul Behnemann - pianett

The Sleeping Men is a group of musicians who recorded in 2012 the music of the movie score ‚Das schlafende Mädchen' (The Sleeping Girl) by the director Rainer Kirberg.

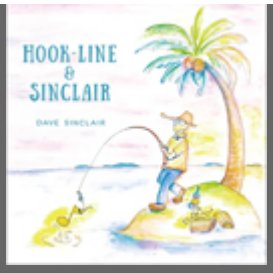
- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Dave Sinclair

- Yuge'Ve
- Message To My Heart
- Love Of My Life
- Eyes On You

- Robert Wyatt - lead vocal

- Dave Sinclair - backing vocals &
  keyboards



> Zoom

Hook-Line & Sinclair
2021

- The Only Words
- Missin'You
- Reason To Know (For Luke & Elin)
- Always There (Dedicated To Bob Clarke)
- Absent Friends
- Heart Of Gold (For Our Mothers)
- Sweet Breath Of Morning - Makinations

- Richard Sinclair - lead vocal
- Jimmy Hastings - flute
- Billie Bottle - bass guitar - programming
- Derby Cathedral Choir conducted by Tom Corfield

Selection of 12 new and unreleased home and studio recordings. from 1981 to 2019.

About *Always There* :

Written in 2002, my spiritual reflection after returning to Japan for the second time, and hoping that Japan would always be there to welcome me back. Although this song has already appeared on some previous releases, this particular one I would say is the ultimate 'Canterbury' version, with myself and cousin Richard Sinclair, Jimmy Hastings and Robert Wyatt, Billie Bottle, Derby Cathedral Choir, and orchestration by Neil Saunders.

This version is also dedicated to my long-time friend Bob Clarke, who, for the final five years of my piano shop in Herne Bay Kent, assisted in my piano restoration, shop keeping, and transportation of pianos etc, for no reward except the enjoyment of being around pianos. He himself had one of my pianos and played this song, 'Always There', every single day, it was his favourite piece of music. After he passed away in 2017 his wife Pat organised the playing of this song during his service.

Dave Sinclair

- DSINCS-MUSIC - CD



> Zoom

Extinction!
2022

Vanderwolf

- When the Fire Grows Cold (feat. Robert Wyatt)
- Extinction feat. Daevid Allen with Last Man Standing

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Sam Sallon - piano
- Chris Cordoba - guitars
- Chris Wyles - electronics

Robert Wyatt recorded in The Chapel Studio in Lincolnshire, UK.

- VANDERWOLF (V34802)
Digital Format (EP)



> Zoom

It Makes Sense To Me
A Selection From the Public Record
1972-2022
2022

Chris Cutler

Disc 1
- Amygdala (Extract) (Henry Cow)
- Deluge (Henry Cow)
- The Messiah (Slapp Happy/Henry Cow)
- Beginning the Long March (Henry Cow)
- The Labyrinth (Art Bears)
- The Winter Wheel (Art Bears)
- The Slave (Art Bears)
- Knokke (Cinema, Section 3, Extract) (Aksak Maboul)
- Song of the Martyrs (Art Bears)
- State Room (The Work)
- Live in Prague (Extract) (Chris Cutler/Fred Frith)
- The Address (Duck and Cover)
- Dunkle Wolken (Duck and Cover)
- Fragments (Duck and Cover)
- On Suicide (Duck and Cover)

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Chris Cutler - drums, percussion
- Lindsay Cooper - piano, bassoon, sopranino saxophone
- Zeena Parkins - harp, accordion
- Bill Gilonis - bass

Compilation.
Ce double-CD constitue les voolumes 4 et 5 du coffret Compositions and Collaborations 1972-2022 publié début 2023.

Ce double-CD est également présent (CD4 et CD5) dans le coffret Compositions And Collaborations |

- Und Ich Werde nicht mehr Sehen (Duck and Cover)
- In Eine Minute (Cassiber)
- Heart of Stone (News From Babel)
- Menuet No.2 Motown Version (René Lussier, Jean Derome, Tom Cora, Chris Cutler)
- Not Weak Enough (Peter Blegvad)
- This Was the Way It Was (Intro) (Cassiber)
- Philosophy (Cassiber)
- Gut (Cassiber)

Disc 2
- Final Solution (Pere Ubu)
- Last Cigar Before New York (Les Quatre Guitaristes de l'Apocalypso Bar)
- Glandien - None Are Disbarred (Cutler)
- Delta (The (EC) Nudes)
- Platser Sömm Och Fortsättning (Songs Between)
- Shark (Extract) (Chris Cutler/Zeena Parkins)
- Daughter (Peter Blegvad)
- p53 (Extract) (p53)
- Cinema (NORMA)
- Event Horizon (The Science Group)
- On All 4s (Peter Blegvad)
- Floating Plates / Do not Drink (Chris Cutler/Tom Dimuzio)
- Uncanny Haversack (Vril)
- Impossible Cana (Vril)
- North Car Roulette (Chris Cutler)
- Who's Afraid (Brainville III)
- The New Apocathary (Chris Cutler/Steve MacLean)
- King of Straw (Peter Blegvad)
- Schoenberg U41 (Yumi Hara)
- Nothing (Nobody)
- Encore (Chris Cutler/Fred Frith)

1972-2022 de Chris Cutler paru en 2023.

Heart of Stone est extrait de Letters From Babel.

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR CC4/5) 2xCD



> Zoom

Jazzloops / The Stolen Hour
2023

Hugh Hopper

Disc 1
JAZZLOOPS
- T3
- Afrik
- Garrisoi
- Sfrankl
- Acloop
- Calmozart
- Aintpo
- 1212
- Digwot
- L4
- Nigepo

Disc 2
THE STOLEN HOUR
- Craig's Distended Train Ride
- Complications At Work
- An Inescapable Encounter With Mrs Pry
- Yearning For The Stolen Hour
- The Long Drive
- An Unregulated Sunset
- A Sideways Peek At Dreamtime
- Snide Wisdom Involving The Immateriality Of Time
- The Stuff He Sees
- Mia's Timely Emergence From The East
- Compatibility
- Sharing The Stolen Hour

-
Reedition of these two albums:

- Jazzloops released in 2002.
- The Stolen Hour released in 2004.

- CHERRY RED RECORDS / EXPLORE RIGHTS MANAGEMENT LTD (EXM029) 2xCD

Hatfield And The North

- Intro O.R.T.F.
- God Song / Fol De Rol / Rifferama / A-Mewsing
- Richard talks about the O.R.T.F. recordings

- Robert Wyatt - vocal

- Richard Sinclair - bass & vocal
- Phil Miller - guitar



> Zoom

O.R.T.F.
Office de Radiodiffusion - Télévision Française
Janaury 2, 1973
2024



> Zoom

Compositions and Collaborations 1972-2022
2023



> Zoom

Volume 4 of the box



> Zoom

Volume 10 of the box

Chris Cutler

Disc 1
SOLO

Disc 2
TWICE AROUND THE EARTH (An Experiment In Listening)

Disc 3
THERE AND BACK AGAIN (Volume 2: On Memory)

Disc 4
IT MAKES SENSE TO ME (A Selection From The Public Record | 1972-2022) - CD 1
- Amygdala (Extract) (Henry Cow)
- Deluge (Henry Cow)
- The Messiah (Slapp Happy/Henry Cow)
- Beginning the Long March (Henry Cow)
- The Labyrinth (Art Bears)
- The Winter Wheel (Art Bears)
- The Slave (Art Bears)
- Knokke (Cinema, Section 3, Extract) (Aksak Maboul)
- Song of the Martyrs (Art Bears)
- State Room (The Work)
- Live in Prague (Extract) (Chris Cutler/Fred Frith)
- The Address (Duck and Cover)
- Dunkle Wolken (Duck and Cover)
- Fragments (Duck and Cover)
- On Suicide (Duck and Cover)
- Und Ich Werde nicht mehr Sehen (Duck and Cover)
- In Eine Minute (Cassiber)
- **Heart of Stone (News From Babel)**
- Menuet No.2 Motown Version (René Lussier, Jean Derome, Tom Cora, Chris Cutler)
- Not Weak Enough (Peter Blegvad)
- This Was the Way It Was (Intro) (Cassiber)
- Philosophy (Cassiber)
- Gut (Cassiber)

Disc 5
IT MAKES SENSE TO ME (A Selection From The Public Record | 1972-2022) - CD2

Disc 6
MAJESTIC THEATRE (Box recording 1972-2022 | Volume 6)

Disc 7
BOX RECORDINGS 1972-2022 | Volume 7

Disc 8
BOX RECORDINGS 1972-2022 | Volume 8

- Dave Sinclair - organ, electric piano
- Pip Pyle - drums & percussion

Recorded live January 2, 1973 at Studio de L'O.R.T.F. des Buttes-Chaumont, Paris and broadcast live (the same day) on "Rock en Stock" TV programme.

In this other album, the recording is dated differently.

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format

Box Set. Compilation. Limited Edition.

VOLUME 4 - track 18 : **Heart Of Stone** (L. Cooper/C. Cutler) :

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Chris Cutler - drums, percussion
- Lindsay Cooper - piano, bassoon, sopranino saxophone
- Zeena Parkins - harp, accordion
- Bill Gilonis - bass

Heart of Stone est extrait de Letters From Babel.

Ce Volume 4 (+ le volume 5) ont été publiés sous la forme d'un double-CD fin 2022 sous le titre It Makes Senese To Me.

VOLUME 10 - track 1 : **Moments Of Delight** (C. Cutler/T. Hodgkinson)

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Lindsay Cooper - sopranino saxophone
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Bill Gilonis - bass, guitar
- Tim Hodgkinson - piano, electric piano, Moog synthesizer, baritone saxophone, alto saxophone

VOLUME 10 - track 2 : **In The Dark Year** (C. Cutler/L. Cooper)

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Lindsay Cooper - piano, electric piano, sopranino saxophone, bassoon
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Bill Gilonis - bass, guitar
- Tim Hodgkinson baritone saxophone, alto saxophone

Moments Of Delight et *In The Dark Year* sont extraits de The Last Nightingale.

- ReR MEGACORP (RERCCBOX) 10xCD + DVD

Disc 9
HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL (Box Recordings 1972-2022 | Volume 9)

Disc 10
BOX RECORDINGS 1972-2022 | Volume 10
- Moments Of Delight (Chris Cutler/Tim Hodgkinson/Robert Wyatt)
- In The Dark Year (Chris Cutler/Lindsay Cooper/Robert Wyatt)
- Education (Chris Cutler/Lindsay Cooper/Sally Potter)
- Charm Offensive (Chris Cutler/Antonio Duarte/Vitor Rua)
- Golden Rendezvous (Kalahari Surfers)
- Plan For Peace (Kalahari Surfers)
- Free State Fence (Kalahari Surfers)
- For Faust (Chris Cutler)
- Dystopian Fantasy (Brian Woodbury)
- The Sign Of Three (Lutz Glandien/Chris Cutler
- Somewhere In Germany (Chris Cutler/Fred Frith)
- Inaudible (The Electrons)
- After Hours: The Colour Of Blood (Chris Cutler/Shelley Hirsch/Jon Rose)

DVD 1
INSIDE BROADCAST (A Day In Other People's Ears | Volume 11)

Disc 11
COMPOSITIONS AND COLLABORATIONS BOX | 2022



> Zoom

Cœur Sacré!
2023

Cœur Sacré - Un hommage de Frederic Lo à Daniel Darc

- Cœur sacré (Daniel Darc)
- Je suis déjà parti (feat. Etienne Daho)
- Chercher le garçon (feat. Elli Medeiros & Benjamin Biolay)
- La pluie qui tombe (feat. Jean-Jacques Burnel)
- I remember Oh so well (Daniel Darc feat. Bill Pritchard)
- Les armées de la nuit (feat. Dominique A.)
- Mes amis (feat. Jane Birkin & Daniel Darc)
- Without use & all used up (feat. Peter Doherty)
- Paris (feat. Stupeflip)
- Rouge rose (feat. Alex Beaupain)
- What's the point (feat. Lou Doillon & Robert Wyatt)
- Jamais Jamais (Frédéric Lo)

- Robert Wyatt - respirations

- Lou Doillon - chant
- Frederic Lo - tous les instruments

Reprise en anglais du titre *Ca ne sert à rien* extrait de Amours Suprêmes.

- UNIVERSAL MUSIC (556 272-B) (CD)



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

The Complete Obscure Records Collection 1975-1978
2023

The Complete Obscure Records Collection 1975-1978

Disc 1
GAVIN BRYARS - THE SINGING OF THE TITANIC

Disc 2
CHRISTOPHER HOBBS/JOHN ADAMS/GAVIN BRYARS - ENSEMBLE PIECES

Disc 3
BRIAN ENO - DISCREET MUSIC

Disc 4
DAVID TOOP/MAX EASTLEY - NEW AND REDISCOVERED MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Disc 5
JAN STEELE/JOHN CAGE - VOICES AND INSTRUMENTS

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Richard Bernas - piano duet (on *The Wonderful Widow Of Eighteen Springs*).

10 CD Edition first ever repress of the complete series. All albums produced by Brian Eno between 1975 and 1978.

Limited and Numbered Edition.

Ensemble Pieces was originally released in 1976.

- DIALOGO (DIACD926BOX) 10xCD
- DIALOGO (DIALP926BOX) 10xLP

JAN STEELE
- All Day
- Distant saxophones
- Rhapsodie Spaniel
JOHN CAGE
- Experiences No 1
- Experiences No 2
- The Wonderful Widow Of Eighteen Springs
- Forever And Sunsmell
- In A Landscape

Disc 6
MICHAEL NYMAN - DECAY MUSIC

Disc 7
MUSIC FROM THE PENGUIN CAFE - PERFORMED BY MEMBERS OF THE PENGUIN CAFE ORCHESTRA

Disc 8
JOHN WHITE/GAVIN BRYARS - MACHINE MUSIC

Disc 9
IRMA - AN OPERA BY TOM PHILLIPS

Disc 10
HAROLD BUDD - THE PAVILLON OF DREAMS



> Zoom 1 2

50 years Of Music
2024

Phil Manzanera

Disc 1
DIAMOND HEAD (1975)
- Frontera
- Diamond Head
- Big Day
- The Flex
- Same Time Next Week
- Miss Shapiro
- East Of Echo
- Lagrima
- Alma
Bonus Tracks
- Carhumba (previously released on 2011 re-issue)
- Corazon Y Alma (previously released on 2011 re-issue)

Disc 2
LISTEN NOW (801) (1977)

Disc 3
K-SCOPE (1978)

Disc 4
PRIMITIVES GUITARS (1982)

Disc 5
SOUTHERN CROSS (1990)

Disc 6
VOZERO (1999)
- Vozero
- Mystic Moon
- Verdadero
- Tuesday
- Rayo De Bala
- The Art Of Conversation
- Vida
- Golden Sun
- Mundo Con Paz
- Hymn
- La Vida Moderna
- Tropical

Compilation

About *The Unknown Zone* :

- Robert Wyatt - keyboards
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Brian Eno - drums [chaos drums], bass [synth bass]
- Yaron Stavi - double bass

"A few years ago when Robert Wyatt was recording Cuckooland at my studio Eno popped round for dinner, a chat, and an overdub or two and after a few bevvies we had a jam. This track, The Unknown Zone grew out of that night's improvisations, as did my track 50 Minutes Later' [released on the album 50 Minutes Later]."
Phil Manzanera.

- UNIVERSAL MUSIC RECORDINGS (5523617) 11xCD

Disc 7
6PM (2004)
- Broken Dreams
- Green Spikey Cactus
- Love Devotion
- Wish You Well
- 6PM
- Waiting For The Sun To Shine
- Manzra
- Cissbury Ring
- Porlock
- Shoreline
- Always You
- Sacred Days
Bonus Tracks
- For You (previously only available on 2016 Japanese reissue)

Disc 8
50 MINUTES LATER (2005)
- Revolution
- Technicolor UFO
- That's All I know
- 50 Minutos Mas Trade
- Desaparecido
- Dusza
- One Step
- Swimming
- Bible Black
- Til The End Of The Line
- Enotonik Bible Black (Mainstream Version)

Disc 9
FIREBIRD V11 (2008)

Disc 10
THE SOUND OF BLUE (2015)

Disc 11
THE MANZANERA ARCHIVES RARE TWO
- Que Fera Fera demo with Nfaly Kouyarte (Previously Unreleased)
- Spanish (Previously Unreleased)
- The Unknown Zone (previously only available as a download 2009)
- Manz 2 (One Slip demo) (Previously Unreleased)
- Tre Amore (Previously Unreleased)
- Chan Chan (previously only available on Japan Live CD)
- Otra Vuelta (Previously Unreleased)
- All the While (Live at Hospital Club, London) (Previously Unreleased)
- Impossible Guitars (Live at Frejus with Roxy Music)
- Bala de Plata (Live at The CCK Buenos Aires) (Previously Unreleased)
- East of Asteroid (Live at Ronnie Scott's) (Previously Unreleased)
- El Vlaje Demo (Previously Unreleased)



> Zoom

All This Crazy Gift Of Time
The Recordings 1969-1973
2024

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
JOY OF A TOY
- Joy of a Toy Continued
- Town Feeling
- The Clarietta Rag
- Girl on a Swing
- Song for Insane Times
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- The Lady Rachel
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong
- All This Crazy Gift of Time
Bonus
- Religious Experience (feat. Syd Barrett)
- Soon Soon Soon
- Religious Experience (Take 103)
- Clarence in Wonderland (BBC Session

- Robert Wyatt on drums: Disc 1 (1-3 ; 5 ; 8), Disc 2 (1-8)

- Robert Wyatt on backing vocals: Disc 1 (14-17), Disc3 (3 ; 8)

- Robert Wyatt on harmony vocals: Disc 5 (1-8) ; Disc 8 (8)

- Robert Wyatt on piano : Disc 1 (13)

Deluxe 9 CD - 1 Blu-Ray limited edition - Box-set of the complete recordings by Kevin Ayers from 1969-1973, with 140 tracks newly remastered from the

10.02.1970)
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It) (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (feat. Soft Machine) (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- You Say You Like My Hat (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- Singing a Song in the Morning (single)

Disc 2
LIVE AT HYDE PARK JULY 1970
- Clarence in Wonderland (live)
- The Lady Rachel (live)
- Rheinhardt and Geraldine /Colores Para Delores (live)
- May I? (live)
- Hat Song (live)
- We Did it Again (live)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (live)
Bonus
- The Garden of Love (live Queen Elizabeth Hall 1970)

Disc 3
SHOOTING AT THE MOON
- May I?
- Rheinhardt and Geraldine / **Colores Para Delores**
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans un Violin
- The Oyster and the Flying Fish
- Underwater
- Clarence in Wonderland
- Red Green and You Blue
- Shooting at the Moon
Bonus
- Hat (recorded May 1970)
- Gemini Child (recorded June 1970)
- Butterfly Dance (A-side of single)
- Puis Je? (B-side of single)
- Jolie Madame (recorded November 1970)

Disc 4
BBC SESSIONS - MAY 1970-NOVEMBER 1971
- Love Is (John Peel Concert 17.05 1970) (previously unreleased)
- We Did It Again (John Peel Concert 17.05 1970) (previously unreleased)
- Gemini Child (BBC Session 20.05.1970)
- Lady Rachel (BBC Session 20.05.1970)
- Shooting at the Moon (BBC Session 20.05.1970)
- Derby Day (BBC Session 09.06.1970)
- The Interview (BBC Session 09.06.1970)
- We Did it Again / Murder in the Air (BBC Session 09.06.1970)
- Jolie Madame (with Bridget St. John) (In Concert 31.01.1971)
- The Spider and the Fly (with Bridget St.John) (In Concert 31.01.1971)
- The Oyster and the Flying Fish (with Bridget St. John) (In Concert 31.01.1971)
- Clarence in Wonderland (feat. Gong) (BBC Session 09.11.1971)

Disc 5
WHATEVERSHEBRINGSWESING
- There is Loving / Among Us / There is Loving
- Margaret
- Oh My
- Song from a Bottom of a Well
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes
- Champagne Cowboy Blues
- Lullaby
Bonus
- Watching the Sun Go Down (recorded May 1971)
- Whatevershebringswesing (first version) (recorded May 1971)
- Stars (B-side of single)
- All This Crazy Gift of Time (1972 remake)
- The Lady Rachel (1972 remake)
- Sad and Lonely Faces (with David Bedford)
- (Don't Sing No More) Sad Songs
- Fake Mexican Tourist Blues (recorded September 1972)

Disc 6
BBC SESSIONS - JANUARY-MAY 1972
- May I? (In Concert Jan 1972)
- There is Loving / Among Us / There is

original master tapes.

- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (QECLEC102888)9xCD + 1 BLU-RAY

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

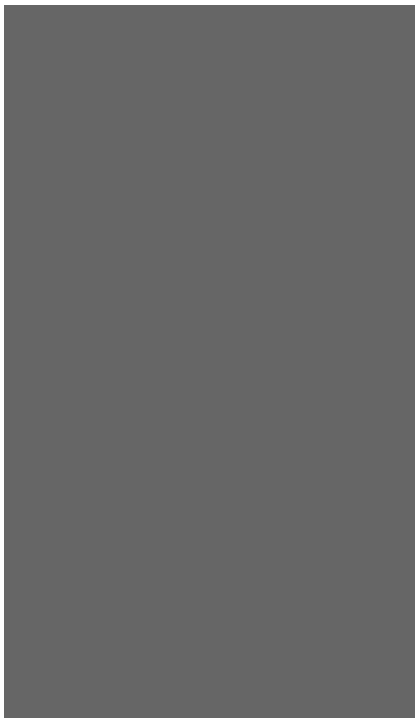
Loving (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Margaret (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Whatevershebringswesing (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Clarence in Wonderland (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Colores Para Delores (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Lady Rachel (In Concert Jan 1972)
- All This Crazy Gift of Time (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (In Concert Jan 1972)
- The Oyster and the Flying Fish (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Butterfly Dance (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Whatevershebringswesing (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Falling in Love Again (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Queen Thing (BBC session 17.05.1972)

Disc 7
BBC SESSIONS - SEPTEMBER 1972-APRIL 1973
BANANA FOLLIES IN CONCERT - SEPTEMBER 1972
- Introduction (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- (Don't Sing No More) Sad Songs (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Pretty Little Girl (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Two Pigeons (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Murder in the Air (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- 'Orrible Orange (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Whatevershebringswesing (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Take Me to Tahiti (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Marlene (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Ball Bearing Blues (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Fake Mexican Tourist Blues (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Interview (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- You Say You Like My Hat (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Falling in Love Again (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- The End (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Interview (BBC session 11.04.1973)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (BBC session 11.04.1973)
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues (BBC session 11.04.1973)

Disc 8
BANANAMOUR
- Don't Let it Get You Down
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go to Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot a Dream
- Hymn
- Beware of the Dog
Bonus
- Connie on a Rubber Band (B-side of single)
- Caribbean Moon (A-side of single)
- Take Me to Tahiti (B- side of single)
- Decadence (early mix) 14 We Did it Again (live Mile End 1972) (previously unreleased)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (live Mile End 1972) (previously unreleased)

Disc 9
AFTER THE SHOW
LIVE AT QUEEN ELISABETH HALL - MAY 1973
- Banana Introduction (live 1973)
- Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes (live 1973)
- Interview (live 1973)
- Whatevershebringswesing (live 1973)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (live 1973)
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues (live 1973)
- Caribbean Moon (live 1973)
- Don't Let it Get You Down (live 1973)
- We Did it Again (live 1973)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (live 1973)
- After the Show (live 1973)

Disc 10 - BLU-RAY
VIDEO VAULTS 1970-1973
- Clarence in Wonderland (Pop Deux ORTF



France 31.03.1970)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Pop Deux ORTF France 31.03.1970)
- Oh My (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- May I? (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Pop Deux ORTF France 13.01.1973)
- Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes (Rockenstock ORTF France 30.01.1973)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Rockenstock ORTF France 30.01.1973)
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 12.06.1973)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 12.06.1973)
- Caribbean Moon (Promotional film 1973)

Bonus
- Oh My (take 2) (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- May I? (take 2) (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- Oh My (take 4) (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)



> Zoom

Every Man And Woman Is A Star
1992

Ultramarine

- Discovery
- Weird Gear
- Pansy
- Honey
- Stella
- Geezer
- Panther
- British Summertime
- **Saratoga**
- Nova Scotia
- **Lights In My Brain**
- Gravity
- Canoe Trip
- Skyclad

- Robert Wyatt - sampled vocals from *Esther's Nose Job* (Soft Machine - Vol.2) and *A Certain Kind* (Soft Machine - Vol.1)

- Ian Cooper - acoustic guitar, keyboards, programming
- Paul Hammond - bass, keyboards, programming

- ROUGH TRADE / DALI STAR RECORDS (61443-2) CD



> Zoom

Giorni Felici
1997

La 1919

- Jingle Jungle
- **This Life**
- Le Rapide
- Aha!
- Giorni Felici
- Alexia
- Carla
- La Lunga Marcia Dei Lemmings
- Vivace!
- Play It Again, Henry!
- Crimini Di Guerra
- The Puppet Parade

- Robert Wyatt - voice sampled at the 29th second of the track

- Luciano Margorani - sampler, guitar, drum programming
- Piero Chianura - drum programming

- MATERIALI SONORI (MASOCD90094) CD



> Zoom

The Different You
1998

Robert Wyatt e noi

- Sea Song
- **Re-born Again Cretin**
- O Caroline
- Alifib
- Gharbzadegi
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
- Memories
- Left On Man
- Maryan
- Yolanda
- A Sunday In Madrid
- Amber And The Amberines
- Free Will And Testament
- Dondestan
- A Last Straw
- Del Mondo
- Chairman Mao
- Five Black Notes And One White Note

- Robert Wyatt - voice sampled on *Re-born Again Cretin* (Nothing Can Stop Us).

- CPI RECORDS - CD

Cet album est également présent dans les rubriques Reprises et With Friends.

Kahimi Karie

- **Good Morning World**
- Candyman

Good Morning World contient un sample de *So Boot If At All* (Soft Machine -



> Zoom

Kahimi Karie
1998

- Elastic Girl
- Mike Alway's Diary
- Le Roi Soleil
- Take It Easy My Brother Charlie
- Zoom Up!
- Serieux Comme Le Plaisir
- Lolitapop Dollhouse
- Dis-Moi Quelque Chose Avant De Dormir
- The Way You Close Your Eyes

Vol.1).

- MINTY FRESH - CD



> Zoom

Aqua Necromancer
1998

Masami Aquita

- Aqua Necromancer
- Contrapuntti Indian
- **Soft Drums**
- Contrapuntti Patto
- Farsa Del Buen Vivir

Soft Drums utilise des samples du jeu de batterie de Robert Wyatt - période Soft Machine.

- ALIEN8 RECORDINGS (ALIEN10) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Shadows
1998

Timet & Lorenzo Brusci

- Sospensione

L'Attesa
- Il Ricordo
- L'Indolenza
- I Presagi

Il Messaggero
- La Corte
- L'Orgoglio

La Prezensa
- Il Rifiuto
- Le Maniere
- La Sapienza
- Piccole Cose

I Tentatori
- Il Potere
- La Rinuncia
- L'Ambizione

La Comunità
- Il Terore
- L'Accusa
- La Pesantezza

- Autocoscienza
- Santità

Ultima Lotta
- L'Ordine
- Il Pentimento
- L'Abbandono

Morte
- Il Pericolo
- Il Tempo
- Il Traditore

- Requiem

II lavoro si ispira allo spettacolo teatrale *Thomas Becket* di e con Andrea de Luca.

- Lorenzo Brusci - suoni, metacomposizione, composizione non lineare
- Andrea de Luca - voce

Il lavoro si inspira allo spettacolo teatrale "Thomas Beckett" di e con Andrea de Luca.

La voce di Andrea non è elaborata digitalmente; le sue esecuzioni sono il risultatol di sessioni d''improvvisazione libera o guidata.

Non potendo riprodurre i frammenti di *Murder in the Cathedral* di T.S. Eliot a cui sia *Shadows* che lo spettacolo teatrale *Thomas Becket* si riferiscono, suggeriamo un confronto tra il testo originale e le elaborazioni testuali / musicali compiute.
Si ringrazia il Teatro di Leo per la collaborazione.

Robert Wyatt is one of the many artists sampled in this album (see the full list) but it is not possible to identify the track(s) involved (Lorenzo Brusci himself no longer has this information).

- I DISCHI FORMA (04) CD



> Zoom

Re-Born Again Cretin
1999

Almamegretta

- Re-Born Again Cretin (Radio Edit.)
[R. Wyatt]
- Re-Born Again Cretin (Album Version) [R. Wyatt]

Promo Version.

Re-born Again Cretin est également présent sur la compilation A Different You.

- CPI/MERCURY (5002-542) CD



> Zoom

Somnifer/Transit
(?)

Various Artists

- Somnifer
- Transit

Somnifier is a mix tape using fragments from Albert Ayler, Milton Babbitt, The Beatles, Pat Benetar, Marion Brown, Buffalo Springfield, Captain Beefheart, Bruce Cockburn, Country Joe and the Fish, Donovan, The Doors, Bob Dylan, Electric Flag, Fairport Convention, Jimi Hendrix Experience, Last Poets, Pagliaro, Elvis Presley, Rolling Stones, Ravi Shankar, Stealers Wheel, Steppenwolf, Velvet Underground, Robert Pete Williams, Steve Winwood, and **Robert Wyatt**.
The mix ranges from being a single thing playing at a time to at least three recordings simultaneously with additional processing.

Robert Wyatt's excerpt : Sea Song

- CONGLOMERATE RECORDS
Cassette



> Zoom 1 2

La Via Negativa
1999

Timet & Lorenzo Brusci

--> *E*
- E. Sofferma e.
- e. Disorienta E. 1:12
- E. Beve e
- e. Insolve E.

--> *Compresenze e popsibilità:*
- La Corsa
- La Lettura
- L' Invenzione
- Restituzioni Parte. I
- La Riconduzione
- L' Incontro
- L' Esibizione Dell' Interno
- Aprire E Versare
- Le Ipotesi Fisicominime
- Presunzioni
- È Carne Cruda
- Carne Diffusa
- Decadenze
- Pensiero Cosa n te
- Restituzioni Parte II

- Lorenzo Brusci - suoni, metacomposizione, composizione non lineare
- Préot Buxton - voce maschile
- Beppe Mangione - consulenza elettronica + suoni elettronici per 'E'
- Paolo rollo Mariani - consulenza discografica
- Mirio Cosottini - contributi teorici + improvvisazione di tromba su 'E'
- Ingegnere Paolo Frasconi - sintesi elettronica + coproduzione 'E'
- Andrea Melani - batteria su 'restituzioni parte II'
- Riccardo Onori - chitarra el. su 'restituzioni parte II'
- Brian Mcmahon - voce maschile su 'carne diffusa' + 'pensiero cosa n te'
- Nami Payapackan - voce femminile su 'E'

Robert Wyatt is one of the many artists sampled in this album (see the full list) but it is not possible to identify the track(s) involved (Lorenzo Brusci himself no longer has this information).

- I DISCHI FORMA (05) CD



M3W
2000

Jean-Michel Marchetti/Robert Wyatt

- Robert (Robert Wyatt)
- P.L.A. (Toupidek, Limonade et J. Tagu) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib (R. Robert, G. Tordjman) [R. Wyatt]
- Toledo Texas (J.M. Montera, E. Martusciello, F.Y Lugli-Martinez) [R. Wyatt]
- Dondestan (Look de Book) [R. Wyatt]
- Sea Song (Klimperei) [R. Wyatt]
- Born Again Cretin (Dominique Répécaud) [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Jaggernaut) [R. Wyatt]
- To The Old World (Dominique Grimaud)
- Left On Man (L'Ensemble Rayé) [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (J. Bogaert, An Pierlé, J. Snauwaert) [R. Wyatt]
- Caroline (D. Fellmann, J. Goetz) [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Mass Medium (Ph. Fretun, M. Benita) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib (Pascal Comelade) [R. Wyatt]
- **Heli Plop (Alain de Filipis)**
- Toledo Texas (Jean-François Pauvros)[R. Wyatt]
- For R.W. (Ch. Cutler, T. Buck, J.M. Montera, J.F. Pauvros)
- Alifib (Le Piano De La Rue De Vergennes) (Jean-Michel Marchetti) [R. Wyatt]

Heli Plop est constitué d'extraits des 3 premiers albums de Soft Machine et de plusieurs albums de Robert Wyatt (Rock Bottom, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard - et peut-être d'autres encore...).

- AENCRAGES & Co/IN POLY SONS (IPS 08 00) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises et With Friends.



> Zoom 1 2

Robert Et André
2001

Kafka

- La Brave Fille Des Abattoirs (Original De 1947)
- La Brave Fille Des Abattoirs
- Left On Man
- Robert Et André
- **Noisy Moon In Trashy June**
- **Samples Salad**
- La Finale

Samples Salad contient un sample de *Hibou Anemone And Bear* (Soft Machine).

Noisy Moon In Trashy June contient un sample de *Moon in June*.

Enregistré au Studio Victoria Compoint. Décembre 2000/Janvier 2001.

- KK PROD - CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.



> Zoom

MW Pour Robert Wyatt
2001

MW pour Robert Wyatt

- Some Words Of Introduction (Robert Wyatt)
- P.L.A. (Toupidek, Limonade et J. Tagu) [R. Wyatt]
- Toledo Texas (J.M. Montera, E. Martusciello, F.Y Lugli-Martinez) [R. Wyatt-J.M. Montera]
- En Dondekistan (Look de Book) [R. Wyatt]
- Sea Song (Klimperei) [R. Wyatt]
- Born Again Cretin (Dominique Répécaud) [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Jagger Naut) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib (R. Robert, G. Tordjman) [R. Wyatt]
- To The Old World (Dominique Grimaud) [R. Wyatt]
- Left On Man (L'Ensemble Rayé) [R. Wyatt]
- Robert et André (Kafka) [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (J. Bogaert, An Pierlé) [R. Wyatt]
- Caroline (D. Fellmann, J. Goetz)

Heli Plop est constitué d'extraits des 3 premiers albums de Soft Machine et de plusieurs albums de Robert Wyatt (Rock Bottom, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard - et peut-être d'autres encore...).

- IN POLY SONS (IPS 0401) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises et With Friends.

Critiques/Reviews

[R. Wyatt-D. Sinclair]
- Blues In Bob Minor (read by Robert Wyatt) [R. Wyatt]
- The British Road (read by Robert Wyatt & Michel Benita) [R. Wyatt]
- Mass Medium (Ph. Fretun, M. Benita) [R. Wyatt]
- Alifib (Pascal Comelade) [R. Wyatt]
- Heli Plop (Alain de Filipis) [R. Wyatt-A. de Filipis]
- Toledo Texas (Jean-François Pauvros) [R. Wyatt-J.F. Pauvros]
- For R.W. (Ch. Cutler, T. Buck, J.M. Montera, J.F. Pauvros)[R. Wyatt-J.M. Montera]
- Alifib (Le Piano De La Rue De Vergennes) (Jean-Michel Marchetti) [R. Wyatt]
- Some Words Of Conclusion (Robert Wyatt) [Robert Wyatt]



> Zoom

Medulla
2004

Björk

- Pleasure Is All Mine
- Show Me Forgiveness
- Where Is The Line
- Vokuro
- Oll Birtan
- Who Is It
- Submarine
- Desired Constellation
- Oceania
- Sonnets / Unrealities Xi
- Ancestors
- Mouth's Cradle
- Midvikudags
- Triumph Of A Heart
- Komid *(bonus réservé à l'édition japonaise)*

- Robert Wyatt - vocals samplers on *Oceania*

- Björk - vocals on *Oceania*, programming on *Oceania*
- The London Choir - vocals on *Oceania*
- Shlomo - beats on *Oceania*
- Nico Muhly - piano on *Oceania*
- Mark Bell - programming on *Oceania*
- Valgeir Sigurdsson - programming on *Oceania*

- POLYDOR (9867589) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

L'Information
2004

Les Productions De L'Invisible

- Petits Guerriers.
- Ne Vous Flattez Pas…
- Uzi 1
- Les Vaches Qui Puent
- Ground Zéro
- Les Chaussons Rouges
- Parking
- Oussama's Blues
- Silence
- Scène De Chasse I
- Les Singes Rouges
- L'Information
- Strange/Krazy
- Uzi 2
- Chasseur
- Scène De Chasse II
- Les Artistes
- Soyons Heureux !
- Portrait De Florence En Vert Et Vermillon
- All Is Loneliness Pour Moi
- C'Est Plus Froid
- La Chansonnette Du Négatif
- Lawrence d'Arabie
- La Lumière Http//
- Dopper's Dream
- Pi's Blues
- Sa Bite à Lui
- Soumission
- La Sexualité, Marielle
- Il Est Trop Tôt Encore
- Habibi
- Ceux Qui Inventent…

Scène de chasse II contient un sample de *Sight Of The Wind* (Robert Wyatt - Dondestan (revisited).

La mélodie du premier morceau *Petits guerriers* est inspirée du même morceau *Sight Of The Wind*.

- TRACE LABEL (018) CD



> Zoom

If Ever I Am
2005

Brian Hopper

- Blowit
- The Pieman Cometh
- Two To Tutu Tooo
- Sometimes It Is
- Akamalaka
- Hope For Happiness
- Tarzapark Rarka
- **For Freedom**
- Modality
- If Ever I Am
- Blewit

- Robert Wyatt - vocal samples on *For Freedom*

- Brian Hopper - drum programming on *For Freedom*
- Gary Flight - processed keyboard on *For Freedom*

- VOICEPRINT (VP338CD) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

Outside Closer
2005

Hood

- Int
- The Negatives...
- Any Hopeful Thoughts Arrive
- End Of One Train Working
- Winter 72
- **The Lost You**
- Still Rain Fell
- L. Fading Hills
- Closure
- This Is It, Forever

The Lost You contient un sample de *Gharbzadegi* (Robert Wyatt - Old Rottenhat).

- DOMINO (WIGCD148) CD
- DOMINO (WIGLP148) LP



> Zoom

The Lost You
2005

Hood

- **The Lost You**
- You Can't Breathe Memories
- The Rest Of Us Still Care
- By Island Lake (excerpt)
- Over The Land Over The Sea

The Lost You - extrait de Outside Closer - contient un sample de *Gharbzadegi* (Robert Wyatt - Old Rottenhat).

- DOMINO (RUG187) EP
- DOMINO (RUG187CD) CD



> Zoom

Sound Sensation
2005

Biggabush

- Sign Of The Dub (The Kode9 & Space Ape)
- Dub an FX (Bigga Bush)
- Popcorn (Lightning Head)
- Ageisheka (the Ogyatanaa Show Band)
- Addis Ababa (Zafari)
- Roll Call (Pablo)
- Hairy Fruit (In Flagranti)
- Little More Oil (DJ /rupture)
- Knok Knok (Soundsystem Version) (Pressure Drop)
- O Canto Da Ema (Carlos Malta e Pife Muderno)
- Get Carter (Peak)
- Que Pasa / Me No Pop I (BiggaBush Re-edit) (Coati Mundi)
- Zuzuku's People (Lightning Head Version) (Up, Bustle & Out)
- Sister Let Him Go (Los Chicharrons Mix) (Junkyard Productions)

Caimanera est un remix de Arauco/Caimanera.

- STEREO DELUXE (SD136-2) CD

- Give It Again (Inverse Cinematics Remix) (Overtone 2)
- Midnight Marauders (Lightning Head Version) (Joe Dukie and DJ Fitchie)
- Caimanera (BiggaBush Re-edit) Remix - Lightning Head (Robert Wyatt)
- Take Me Back To Piaui (Dubben Mix) (Juca Chaves)



> Zoom 1 2

The Unfairground
2007

Kevin Ayers

- Only Heaven Knows
- Cold Shoulder
- Walk On Water
- Friends And Strangers
- Shine A Light
- Wide Awake
- Baby Come Home
- Brainstorm
- Unfairground
- Run Run Run

- Robert Wyatt - The Wyattron

- Kevin Ayers – vocals and guitar
- Gary Olson (Ladybug Transistor) - trumpet
- Jeff Baron (Ladybug Transistor) - guitar
- San Fadyl (Ladybug Transistor) - drums
- Bill Wells (Bill Wells Trio) - bass
- Joe McGinty (baby steps) - keyboards
- Julian Koster (Neutral Milk Hotel/Music Tapes) – singing saw
- Tucson Philharmonia string section

- LO-MAX RECORDS (LOMAX024CD) CD



> Zoom

Keep It Slow
2008

Low Motion Disco

- Intro
- Born On The Low Side
- Things Are Gonna Get Easier
- Talk Low When In Space
- Love Knows Low
- Frantic Low Moment
- Love Love Love
- The Low Murderer Is Out At Night
- Low Italian Déssert (Try It Out)
- East Mountain Low
- People Come In Slowly
- At Last I Am Low
- Keep It Low
-

Long sample de la version de Robert Wyatt *At Las I'm Free*.

- ESKIMO RECORDINGS (541416 501887) CD & LP



> Zoom

Filling Up The City Skies (Disc 1)
2008

Pretty Lights

- Change Is Gonna Come
- The Time Has Come
- My Other Love
- Cold Feeling
- Solamente
- Fill Your Eyes
- Something's Wrong
- Evening Sun
- Double Love
- Pop Quiz
- At Last I Am Free
- Make You Feel
- Summer's Gone
- Maybe Tomorrow

- PRETTY LIGHTS MUSIC Digital format

Alain De Filippis

- Burn Out
- Héli Plop (Robert Wyatt & Alain De

Heli Plop est constitué d'extraits des 3 premiers albums de Soft Machine et de



> Zoom

Musicien Improbable
2015

Filippis)
- Guggle Bum

plusieurs albums de Robert Wyatt (Rock Bottom, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard - et peut-être d'autres encore...).

Cette version digitale reprend le titre d'un album paru en 2009 chez InPolySons, mais qui ne comporte pas le morceau écrit initialement pour la compilation M3W.



- INPOLYSONS
  Digital Format



> Zoom

Sheep (Hood By Air FW 15)
2015

Arca

- Matriarch
- Pity
- Drowning
- En
- Sifter
- Submissive
- Umbilical
- Hymn
- Don't / Else
- **At Last I Am Free (Interlude)**
- Immortal

All the parts of the mixtape is not separated, all the mixtape released as one single file.

Score for Hood By Air's show at Pitti Uomo 87 fashion event in Florence, Italy.

Interlude contains a sample of At Last I Am Free.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

KiTsuNe
2015

Robert Wyatt & The Future Eve

- **KiTsuNe 01.01 - First version (Feat. The Future Eve)**
- **KiTsuNe 02.03 - Instrumental Version (Feat. The Future Eve)**
- **KiTsuNe 03.01 - Short Version (Feat. The Future Eve)**

- Robert Wyatt - vocal & keyboard

- The Future Eve - instruments & mix

Ces 3 morceaux samplent *Brian The Fox,* extrait de Cuckooland.
Un quatrième morceau *04.01-08 - Ring version* sortira ultérieurement en 2015.

"Received a tape from Robert Wyatt in 1998. The title was "Brian The Fox" and four takes were recorded. We chose one take from it and started working on it. I first dubbed layers of sounds to it and Takaaki Han-ya took over the piece afterwards. The piece was dramatically changed and completed after a total of two years.

I became aware of more possibilities for the piece sometime after we finished the work. That was the beginning of this long journey. The second one was an instrumental version and the third one was a short vocal version. Then, I completed a suite with a story (eight takes) and the new version is still developing at the moment."

- T&R - Digital Format



> Zoom

Dreamland
2017

Jennifer Maidman

- Conspiracy of Dreamers
- Hinterland
- Outside
- Red Heart
- This Man is Dangerous
- The Letting Go
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R.Wyatt]
- Over My Head
- No Man's Land
- Bird Dreams
- Open The Door
- Land Of Dreams
- Here
- Home
- The Magic Voice
- Higher Than Life?
- Crow Dance (for Simon)

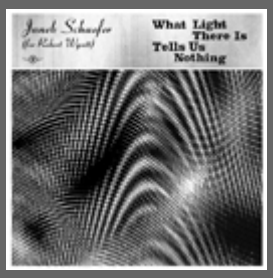
- Robert Wyatt - trumpet wails and vocal samples

- Jennifer Maidman - vocals, acoustic guitar, bass, ukulele, Wyattotron
- David Torn - electric guitar, loops
- Annie Whitehead - trombones
- Paul Brady - whistle

"This song originally appeared on the 1972 Matching Mole album. It was written by Robert Wyatt and Dave Sinclair. It's a haunting song of love and longing, which I've been singing for many years as part of Annie's Soupsongs project, a band which plays Robert's music, and which accompanied him for the live performances featured in the BBC documentary 'Free Will and Testament'. I originally heard the first line 'David's on piano' as 'Dave sits on piano' , and have sung it like that ever since. It's a reference to Dave Sinclair of course, keyboard player with Matching Mole. Although there's no piano on our version, David (Torn) was next to the piano as he played guitar on the track at Dreamland, albeit not quite actually sitting on it. The vocal, acoustic guitar and creaky stool were recorded live at Dreamland.I had a dreadful sore throat but when I listened to it back I liked the result. Matthew working his magic with the API desk and a Neumann U47. Annie, inspired by the Mellotron on the original, came up with a beautiful trombone arrangement. Paul Brady sent some wonderful whistle all the way from Dublin. I called Robert to tell him what we were up to and back home in Sawkill flew in some trumpet and vocal samples, using the 'Wyatttron'."

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.



> Zoom

What Light There Is
Tell Us Nothing
(For Robert Wyatt)
2018

Janek Schaefer

- **What Light There Is Tell Us Nothing (For Robert Wyatt)**
- Tree At The End Of The World
- Round In Circles
- Corah I
- Corah II
- Battlestar Kaempfert
- Corah III
- To Row Against The Tide

Track 1 is an original soundtrack to the installation "Clouds from Cuckooland". Commissioned by Artistic Director Matt Wright for the Sounds New Festival, Canterbury 2014.

Contains only material sampled from the album Cuckooland performed by Robert Wyatt, licensed courtesy of Domino Recording Company Ltd.
Film & doculmentation at the Janek Schaefer website.

- TRR (305) CD

Eric Lareine - Pascal Maupeu - Wyatt - Marchetti

- Signed Curtain
- **Pigs...(in there)**
- First Batch / Before We Knew / Un

- Eric Lareine - voix
- Pascal Maupeu - guitare, bandes (claviers et samples)



> Zoom

How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
2018

Roman Sportif
- The Age Of Self / The United States Of Amnesia
- Catholic Architecture
- Lullaloop
- Just As You Are

- Jean-Michel Marchetti - traductions

- Samples from Soft Machine in *Pigs... (in there)* and *Lullaloop*.

- Sample from Robert Wyatt in *The Age Of Self.*

Enregistrement live à Saint-Quentin la Tour des morceaux 3 et coda 7.

Ce disque n'est plus disponible et n'est plus référencé.

- MOPDAQUEENPROD (#2) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.



> Zoom 1 2

KiTsuNe / Brian The Fox
2019

The Future Eve featuring Robert Wyatt

Disc 1
- 01.01
- 02.01
- 02.02
- 02.03
- 03.01

Disc 2
RING VERSION
- 04.01
- 04.02
- 04.03
- 04.04
- 04.05
- 04.06
- 04.07
- 04.08

- Robert Wyatt - vocal and keyboard

- The Future Eve | Takaaki Han-ya & Th - instruments

Disc 1 (1998-2002)
- Rinko - Voice
- Th - violin, guitar
- Takaaki Han-ya - instruments, mix

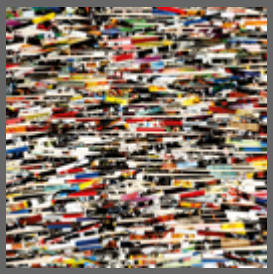
Disc 2 (2006)
- Th - voice, chours, instruments, mix

The track *02.02* is only available in vinyl.

Summer 2013
Towards the end of the 20th century, Th sent me a message asking something like;
"do you have any piece of new material we could work on"-----?
I did have. Brian the Fox was an un-placed, un-worked basic idea I had. unusual for me in that it had no strict tempo, and the words were an attempt to write a text even shorter than a Haiku!
(I just recorded it directly onto tape at home, on cassette, no 'production'.)
the music ending was improvised – the delay before the final chords was me trying to choose the final few chords…
I sent this to Th and Rinko.
they have enhanced the idea beautifully.
Robert Wyatt

- FLAU RECORDS (FLAU61) 2xCD & 2x LP

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

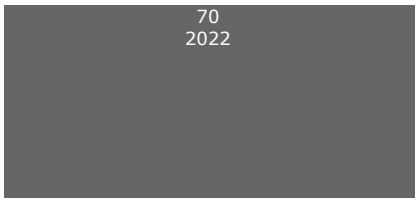
RG Rough

- 70 71 72 73 74
- 75 76 77 78 79

A musical jigsaw made out of sounds from the 70s, ripped to shreds, reshaped, reassembled and coerced into fitting.

Limited edition of 300 copies.

A short extract from *Sonia* (Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard) is used on the second side of the disc.



- BAM BALAM RECORDS (BBLP089) LP
- BAM BALAM RECORDS (BBCD089) CD Promo



> Zoom

1981

Arauco

- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **Caimanera** [Trad.]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- **Strange Fruit** [Lewis]

- ROUGH TRADE GERMANY (6005 139) EP



> Zoom

1981

Compilation (Italy)

- **Caimanera** [Trad.]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin'** [B. Johnson]
- **Grass** [I. Cutler]
- **Strange Fruit** [Lewis]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- **Trade Union** [A. Salique]
- **Stalingrad** [P. Blackman]

- BASE RECORD (RT 0007) LP

↑



> Zoom

1984

1982-1984

- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- **Round Midnight** [T. Monk]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake]
- **Amber And Amberines** [R. Wyatt]
- **Biko** [P. Gabriel]
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda** [V. Jara]
- **Yolanda** [P. Milanes]

- ROUGH TRADE (RTSP25) LP

↑



> Zoom

Late '70's - Early '80's

- **Red Flag** [Trad.]
- **Strange Fruit** [Lewis]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **Born Again Cretin**
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rogers]
- **Caimanera** [Trad.]
- **Grass** [I. Cutler]
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin'** [B. Johnson]
- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- **Yolanda** [P. Milanes]
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda** [V. Jara]

- JAPAN RECORD (32JC-109) LP

1985

- **Biko** [P. Gabriel]
- **Amber And Amberines** [R. Wyatt]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake]
- **Round Midnight** [T. Monk]



> Zoom 1 2 3

1986

Late '70's-Early '80's + Old Rottenhat

Disc 1 -
LATE '70's-EARLY '80's
- **Red Flag**
- **Strange Fruit**
- **Arauco**
- **Born Again Cretin**
- **At Last I Am Free**
- **Caimanera**
- **Grass**
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin'**
- **Shipbuilding**
- **Yolanda**
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda**
- **Biko**
- **Amber And Amberines**
- **Memories Of You**
- **Round Midnight**

Disc 2
OLD ROTTENHAT
- Alliance
- United States Of Amnesia
- East Timor
- Speechless
- Age Of Self
- Vandalusia
- British Road
- Mass Medium
- Gharbzadegi
- P.L.A.

Japan Double Pack CD.

-JAPAN RECORD (TOKUMA JAPAN COMMUNICATIONS) 2xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Solo.



> Zoom

1990

Compilation

- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin'** [(B. Johnson]
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rogers]
- **Caimanera** [Trad.]
- **Grass** [I. Cutler]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake]
- **Red Flag** [Trad.]
- **Strange Fruit** [Lewis]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **'Round Midnight** [T. Monk]
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **The United States Of Amnesia** [R. Wyatt]
- **East Timor** [R. Wyatt]
- **Speechless** [R. Wyatt]
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- **Vandalusia** [R. Wyatt]
- **Mass Medium** [R. Wyatt]
- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]

- GRAMAVISION (R2-79459) CD



> Zoom

Mid-Eighties

- **Yolanda** [P. Milanes]
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda** [V. Jara]
- **Biko** [P. Gabriel]
- **Amber And The Amberines** [R. Wyatt]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake]
- **'Round Midnight** [T. Monk]
- **Pigs... (In There)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Chairman Mao** [C. Haden/R. Wyatt]
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **The United States Of Amnesia** [R. Wyatt]
- **East Timor** [R. Wyatt]
- **Speechless** [R. Wyatt]

- ROUGH TRADE (31093) CD
- GRAMAVISION (R2-79488) CD

Lyrics

Critiques/Reviews

1993

- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- **Vandalusia** [R. Wyatt]
- **The British Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Mass Medium** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gharbzadezi** [R. Wyatt]
- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]
- **You're Wonderin' Now (This Is The End)** [R. Wyatt]



> Zoom



> Zoom

1994

Flotsam Jetsam

- **Slow Walkin' Talk** [B. Hopper]
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]
- **Standfast** [G. Windo]
- **No 'Alf Measures** [K; Ayer/arr R. Wyatt]
- **God Song - Fol De Rol** [P. Miller/ R. Wyatt - R. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- **Soprano Derivitavo - Apricot Jam** [L. Coxhill/K. Ayers]
- **A Little Something** [P. Blegvad]
- **Now Is The Time** [P. Windo/P. & G. Windo]
- **Now't Doin** [L.S. Baker]
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- **Billie's Bounce** [C. Parker]
- **Locomotive** [T. Monk/P. Brown]
- **War Without Blood** [R. Wyatt]
- **Obert Tancat 1** [R. Wyatt]
- **Tu Traicion** [P. Burruezo]
- **Obert Tancat 2** [R. Wyatt]
- **Turn Things Upside Down** [J.B. Glasier/Mat Fox]
- **The Wind Of Change** [Jackson/ M. Kaujeua]

- ROUGH TRADE (8399142) CD

Lyrics

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

1994

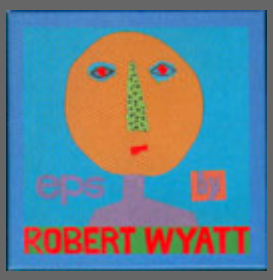
Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt

Disc 1
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]
- **To Caravan And Brother Jim** [R. Wyatt]
- **O Caroline** [R. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- **Gloria Gloom** [B. MacCormick/ R. Wyatt]
- **God Song** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- **Calyx** [R. Wyatt/P. Miller]
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifie** [R. Wyatt]
- **Last Straw** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Soup Song** [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]

Disc 2
- **I'm A Believer** [N. Diamond]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- **Yesterday Man** [C. Andrews]
- **Sonia** [M. Feza]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Five Black Notes And One White Note** [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- **Team Spirit** [R. Wyatt/P. Manzanera/ B. MacCormick]
- **Song For Che** [C. Haden]
- **The Dubtful Guest** [E. Gorey/ M. Mantler]
- **The Object Lesson** [E. Gorey/ M. Mantler]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **A L'abattoir** [P. Soupault/M. Mantler]
- **I'm A Mineralist** [C. Bley]
- **Rangers In The Night** [R. Wyatt]
- **All She Wanted** [M. Hunt]
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]
- **Lisp Service** [R. Wyatt]
- **The Internationale** [E. Pottier/P.C. Degeyter]

- VIRGIN (CDVDM 90 31) 2xCD

Critiques/Reviews





> Zoom

1999



> Zoom

Disc 1



> Zoom

Disc 2



> Zoom

Disc 3

EP's

Disc 1
- **I'm A Believer [Extended Version]** [C. Andrews]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- **Yesterday Man** [C. Andrews]
- **Sonia [Alternate Version]** [M. Feza]
- **Calyx [Live]** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]

Disc 2
- **Shipbuilding [Remastered]** [C. Langer/E. Costello]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake/ A. Razafinkeriefo]
- **'Round Midnight** [T. Monk/Williams/Hanighen]
- **Pigs... (In There)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Chairman Mao** [C. Haden]

Disc 3
- **Yolanda** [P. Milanes/Arias]
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda** [V. Jara-Martinez]
- **Biko** [P. Gabriel]
- **Amber And the Amberines** [R. Wyatt/ H. Hopper]

Disc 4
- **Animals' Film** [R. Wyatt]

Disc 5
- **Was A Friend [Remix]** R. Wyatt/ H. Hopper]
- **Maryan [Remix]** R. Wyatt/ P. Catherine]
- **Sunday In Madrid [Remix]** A. Benge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Free Will And Testament [Remix]** R. Wyatt/Kramer]

Disc 2 : this disc is enhanced with the original Shipbuilding promo video.

Disc 4 / Animal's Film : alors que la version d'origine parue en 1982 a une durée de 28 minutes 11 secondes, cette version rénovée ne dure que 19 minutes 40 secondes.

- HANNIBAL (HNCD 1440) 5xCD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD46) 5xCD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Disc 4



> Zoom

Disc 5



> Zoom

1999

Boxerpts

- **I'm A Believer** [C. Andrews]
- **Shipbuilding** [C. Langer/E. Costello]
- **Yolanda** [P. Milanes/Arias]
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]

Promo Version.

Les 4 titres proviennent de EP's sauf *I'm A Believer* qui est la version originale du single (celle de EP's est une *extended version*).

- HANNIBAL (VHNCD 1440) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

2002

Japan Promo Boxes - 6 Mini-LP Cds

- **ROCK BOTTOM** (1974)
- **RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD** (1975)
- **NOTHING CAN STOP US** (1982)
- **OLD ROTTENHAT** (1986)
- **DONDESTAN** (1991)
- **SHLEEP** + September In The Rain (Bonus track) (1997)

Japan Promo box - 6 mini-LP Cds.
2 different boxes: Rock Bottom Box & Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard Box.
Limited Edition.

- VIDEOARTS (VACK1225)
- VIDEOARTS (VACK1226)
- VIDEOARTS (VACK1227)
- VIDEOARTS (VACK1228)
- VIDEOARTS (VACK1229)
- VIDEOARTS (VACK1230)
  6xCD

His Greatest Misses

- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]
- **Worship** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **Heaps Of Sheeps** [R. Wyatt/ A. Benge/arr B. Eno]
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]

Compilation supported by Strange Days (Japanese music magazine).

Reedition vinyl en 2020 sur Domino Records (Limited edition coloured double



> Zoom 1 2 3

2004



2020

- **I'm A Believer** [C. Andrews]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Solar Flares** [R. Wyatt]
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- **Arauco** [V. Parra]
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alien** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Shipbuilding** [C. Langer/E. Costello]
- **Memories Of You** [E. Blake/ A. Razafinkeriefo]
- **Muddy Mouse** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **Mister E** [K. Mantler]
- **Foreign Accents** [R. Wyatt]

vinyl).

- HANNIBAL RECORDS (VACK1282) CD
- DOMINO RECORDS (REWIGCD73) CD (REWIGLP73X) 2xLP

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom



> Zoom 1 2 3

2009

Box Set

- **ROCK BOTTOM** (1974)
- **RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD** (1975)
- **NOTHING CAN STOP US** (1982)
- **OLD ROTTENHAT** (1986)
- **DONDESTAN (REVISITED)** (1998)
- **SHLEEP** (1997)
- **EPS** (1999)
- **CUCKOOLAND** (2003)
- **THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE** (2005)
- **COMICOPERA** (2007)

Robert Wyatt Box Set contains all 9 studio albums plus the eps set.

- DOMINO RECORDS (DOMRW1CDX) 14xCD



Different Every Time

Disc 1
EX MACHINA
- **Moon In June (Soft Machine)**
- **Signed Curtain (Matching Mole)**
- **God Song (Matching Mole)**
- **A Last Straw**
- **Yesterday Man**
- **Team Spirit**
- **At Last I Am Free**
- **The Age Of Self**
- **Worship**
- **Free Will And Testament**
- **Cuckoo Madame**
- **Beware**
- **Just As You Are**

Disc 2
BENIGN DICTATORSHIPS
- **The River (Jeanette Lindstrom)**

Cette double compilation réalisée par Marcus O'Dair - auteur de la biographie de Robert Wyatt *Different Every Time* - est constituée de *Ex Machina* (morceaux extraits de l'oeuvre solo de R. Wyatt) et de *Benign Dictatorships* qui regroupe des raretés, inédits et collaborations enregistrées avec d'autres musiciens et compositeurs. .

- DOMINO RECORDS (WIGCD347) 2xCD (WIGLP347-1) LP (*Ex Machina*) (WIGLP347-2) LP (*Benign Dictatorships*)



> Zoom 1 2 3

2014

- **The Diver (Anja Garbarek)**
- **We're Looking for a Lot of Love (Hot Chip)**
- **Jellybabies (Epic Soundtracks)**
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- **Richardson Road (Grasscut)**
- **Turn Things Upside Down (Happy End)**
- **Still in the Dark (Monica Vasconcelos)**
- **Venceremos (We Will Win) - (Jazz Dance Special 12" Version) - (Working Week)**
- **Frontera (Phil Manzanera)**
- **La Plus Belle Langue (Steve Nieve/ Robert Wyatt/Muriel Teodori)**
- **Goccia (Cristina Dona)**
- **Slam (Nick Mason)**
- **A L'Abbattoir (Michael Mantler)**
- **Sinking Spell (Michael Mantler)**
- **Submarine (Bjork)**
- **Experiences No. 2 (John Cage)**

Benign Dictatorships est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends



> Zoom

The Command Revolution
1969

The Spirited Sounds

- Topless Dancers Of Corfu (Dick Hyman)
- Beautician Blues (The Mystic Number National Bank)
- Both Sides Now (Ray Charles Singers)
- Theme From The Killing Of Sister George (Richard Hayman & His Orchestra)
- Knowing When To Leave (Doc Severinsen)
- Excerpt from Fourth Movement of Shostakovich Symphony No 1 (William Steinberg / Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)
- Sound Of Music (William Steinberg / Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)
- A Certain Kind (Soft Machine)
- Wichita Lineman (Glenn Miller Orchestra)
- Bamba (Digno Garcia)
- First Movement, Brucker Symphony No. 7 (William Steinberg / Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)

A Certain Kind est extrait de Soft Machine - Volume One.

- COMMAND-PROBE (COM 20 SD) LP



> Zoom

Revolution
1969

The Spirited Sounds Of 1969

- Topless Dancers Of Corfu (Dick Hyman)
- Beautician Blues (The Mystic Number National Bank)
- Both Sides Now (Ray Charles Singers)
- Theme From The Killing Of Sister George (Richard Hayman & His Orchestra)
- Knowing When To Leave (Doc Severinsen)
- Excerpt from Fourth Movement of Shostakovich Symphony No 1 (William Steinberg / Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)
- Sound Of Music (William Steinberg / Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)
- A Certain Kind (Soft Machine)
- Wichita Lineman (Glenn Miller Orchestra)
- Bamba (Digno Garcia)
- First Movement, Brucker Symphony No. 7 (William Steinberg / Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)

A Certain Kind est extrait de Soft Machine - Volume One.

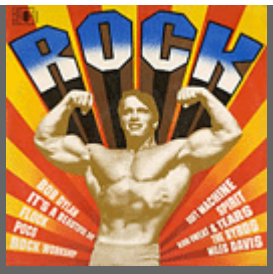
Belgian edition of The Command Revolution.

- COMMAND-PROBE (RS 16 802) LP

Rock Buster

Disc 1
- Don And Dewey (It's A Beautiful Day)
- Somethin' Comin' On (Blood Sweat & Tears)
- Excerpt from Out Bloody Rageous

Out Bloody Rageous est extrait de Third.
To Mark Everywhere est extrait de The End Of An Ear.



> Zoom

Rock Buster



> Zoom

Superb Super
Pop Session N°3
1970

(Soft Machine)
- Miles Runs The Voodoo Down (Miles Davis)
- Uranian Sircus (Flock)
- Black Magic Woman (Santana)
- You Better Think Twice (Poco)
- Time Machine (Mick Softley)
- All Things (Byrds)
- The Days of '49 (Bob Dylan)
- Polly On The Shore (Trees)
- In The Mud (Gary Farr)

Disc 2
- Where Are We Going Wrong? (Argent)
- Primrose Hill (Rock Workshop)
- Mr. Skin (Spirit)
- Mary Clarke (Black Widow)
- Queen Of Bad Intentions (Skin Alley)
- **To Mark Everywhere (Robert Wyatt)**
- Crazy Cajun Cakewalk Band (Redbone)
- Guess I'll Go Away (Johnny Winter)
- Bootie Cooler (Shuggie Otis
- Don't Wait Too Long (New York Rock & Roll Ensemble)
- An Awful Lot Of Woman (Skid Row)
- Staggolee (Pacific Gas & Electric)
- Tobacco Road (Edgar Winter)
- Country Road (Al Kooper)

Cet album a été réédité sous l'appellation *Superb Super Pop Session N°3*.

- CBS RECORDS (SPR 48/49)
  2xLP



> Zoom

Different Strokes
1971

Different Strokes

- Blackpatch (Laura Nyro)
- Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo (Johnny Winter)
- Going To The Mill (The Chambers Brothers)
- A Man Like Me (Poco)
- Mr. Natural (Big Brother And The Holding Company)
- Saturday Miles (Miles Davis)
- Merrimac County (Tom Rush)
- Soapstone Mountain (It's A Beautiful Day)
- Fields Of Joy (The New York Rock Ensemble)
- Big Bird (The Flock)
- Don't Fight It (Feel It) (Elvin Bishop)
- New York (Dreams)
- Found A Child (Ballin' Jack)
- Morning Will Come (Spirit)
- Too Young To Be Married (The Hollies)
- Nothing At All (Bill Puka)
- **Out Bloody Rageous (Soft Machine)**
- All This Paradise (Fraser & Debolt)
- Maggie (Redbone)

Out Bloody Rageous est extrait de Third.

- COLUMBIA (AS 12) LP



> Zoom

Together
1971

Together (16 Great Tracks From 16 Great CBS Albums)

- Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo (Johnny Winter)
- Found A Child (Ballin' Jack)
- Move Over (Janis Joplin)
- Se A Cabo (Santana)
- Cast Your Spell Uranus (Argent)
- Mr. Natural (Big Brother And The Holding Company)
- New York City (Dreams)
- **Teeth (Soft Machine)**
- A Man Like Me (Poco)
- Merrimac County (Tom Rush)
- Lover Of The Bayou (The Byrds)
- Waterfall (Mick Softley)
- Fool (Trees)
- Morning Will Come (Spirit)
- Beads Of Sweat (Laura Nyro)

Teeth est extrait de Fourth.

- CBS (SPR 52) LP

- Going To The Mill (The Chambers Brothers)



> Zoom

PlayBack Promo Version
1972

Matching Mole/Mott The Hoople

- One Of The Boys
- All The Young Dudes
- O Caroline
- Signed Curtain

O Caroline et *Signed Curtain* sont extraits de Matching Mole.

Promo Version.

- PLAYBACK (AS-39USA) EP



> Zoom

Popmusik Im Unterricht Nr. 2/3
1972

Popmusik Im Unterricht Nr. 2/3

Disc 1
- Bridget The Midget (Ray Stevens)
- Suffer To Sing The Blues (David Bromberg)
- Summertime (Janis Joplin)
- I Washed My Hands In Muddy Waters (Stonewall Jackson)
- And When I Die (Blood, Sweat And Tears)
- Cry Baby (Janis Joplin)
- I Can't Turn You Loose (The Chambers Brothers)
- Johnny B. Goode (Johnny Winter)
- Me And Bobby Mcgee (Janis Joplin)
- Black Magic Woman (Santana)
- Bridge Over Troubled Water (Simon & Garfunkel)
- Bridge Over Troubled Water (Ray Conniff)
- Eleanor Rigby (Percy Faith)
- Hey Jude (Don Ellis)

Disc 2
- Tired Of Waiting (The Flock)
- Virtually Part 4 (Soft Machine)
- Fire And Rain (Andy Williams)
- Fire And Rain (Blood, Sweat And Tears)
- The Preacher Said (Johnny Cash)
- God Bless The Child (Blood, Sweat And Tears)
- The Partisan (Leonard Cohen)
- Singin' In Viet Nam (Johnny Cash)
- 'Indian Reservation (The Raiders)
- Save The Country (Laura Nyro)
- Strange In The World (Niemen)
- It Better End Soon (Chicago)
- Where Do We Go From Here (Chicago)

Virtually Part 4 est extrait de Fourth.

- CBS (LSP 601)
- BREITKOPF & HARTEL (LSP 601) 2xLP



> Zoom

British Sounds

- All The Young Dudes (Mott The Hoople)
- Hold Your Head Up (Argent)
- Going Down (Jeff Beck Group)
- Drop (Soft Machine)
- O Caroline (Matching Mole)
- Night Of The 4th Of May (Al Stewart)
- From The Land Of The Crab (Mick Softley)
- Earth Mother (Lesley Duncan)
- Market Place (Alun Davies)
- Misty Roses (Colin Blunstone)

O Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole.

Promo Version.

- CBS/EPIC (ECPF-2) LP

British Sounds
1972



> Zoom

Musica Alternativa Europea - Inghilterra
1972

Musica Alternativa Europea - Inghilterra

- Creep, Creation, Gipsy Escape (Arthur Brown's Kingdom Come)
- Terrapin (Syd Barrett)
- **Starting In The Middle... (Matching Mole)**
- Being It As You Really Me (Hawkwind)
- Mystic Sister-Magic Brother (Gong)
- **Las Vegas Tango (Robert Wyatt)**
- Love Your Neighbor (Global Village Trucking Co.)
- Death Of Electric Citizen (The Edgar Broughton Band)
- Nirvana For Mice (Henry Cow)

Starting In The Middle.. est extrait de Little Red Record.

Las Vegas Tango est extrait de The End Of An Ear.

- NO LABEL - Cassette

↑



> Zoom

The progressives
1973

The Progressives

Disc 1
- You Know You Know (The Mahavishnu Orchestra)
- Country Lane (Walter Carlos)
- Living Time - Event V (Bill Evans)
- Unknown Soldier (Weather Report)
- Pigling Bland (Soft Machine)
- Jump Monk (Charles Mingus)

Disc 2
- Put It Where You Want It (Don Ellis)
- Icarus (Paul Winter/Winter Consort)
- Haida (Paul Horn)
- Knots (Gentle Giant)
- The Men Who Live In The White House / Love Life (Ornette Coleman)
- Compost Festival (Compost)
- Sundance (Keith Jarrett)
- **Marchides (Matching Mole)**

Marchides est extrait de Little Red Record.

- COLUMBIA (KG 31574) 2xLP

↑



> Zoom

BBC TV's Best Of ...
Top Of The Pops - Vol.1
1974

BBC TV's Best Of ... Top Of The Pops - Vol.1

- Kung Fu Fighting (Carl Douglas)
- I Shot The Sheriff (Eric Clapton)
- The Night Chicago Died (Paper Lace)
- Hello, Hello, I'm Back Again (Gary Glitter)
- Remember (Bay City Rollers)
- Laughter In The Rain (Neil Sedaka)
- Tonight (Rubettes)
- Sad Sweet Dreamer (Sweet Sensation)
- Hey Rock And Roll (Showaddywaddy)
- **I'm A Believer (Robert Wyatt)**
- My Coo-ca-choo (Alvin Stardust)
- Dancing On A Saturday Night (Barry Blue)
- Slip And Slide (Medicine Head)
- If Tou Go Away (Terry Jacks)

I'm A Believer est extrait du single I'm A Believer/Memories.

- SUPER BEEB RECORDS (BELP 001) LP

↑

3 Virgins



> Zoom

3 Virgins
1974

- You Never Blow Yr Trip Forever (Gong)
- The Isle Of Everywhere (Gong)
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Robert Wyatt)**
- **Sea Song (Robert Wyatt)**
- Star's End (David Bedford)

Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road et *Sea Song* sont extraits de Rock Bottom.

Promo Version.

- VIRGIN (PR-225) EP



Rare Tracks (UK Version)
1975



> Zoom

Rare Tracks
(Australian Version)
1975

Rare Tracks

- **Love Makes Sweet Music (Soft Machine)**
- Anyone For Tennis (Cream)
- To Fly Away (Kevin Godley)
- If I Had A Ribbon Bow (Fairport Convention)
- You Turned My Bitter Into Sweet (Linda Lewis)
- Sunshine Day (Jethro Tull)
- Mister Pleasant (Nicki Hopkins & The Whistling Piano)
- Zoot Suit (The High Numbers)
- I'm Gettin' Tired (Jack Bruce)
- Rootin' Tootin' (Jack Bruce)
- Just A Little Bit (Stu Brown And Bluesology)
- Aeroplane (Jethro Tull)
- Desdemona (John's Children)
- Take My Advice (Sly and The Family Stone)
- Dolly Dagger (Jimi Hendrix)
- Ain't That Just Too Bad (Alex Harvey and his Soul Band)
- **Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' (Soft Machine)**

Love Makes Sweet Music et *Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'* sont extraits du single Love Makes Sweet Music.

- POLYDOR (2482 274) LP
- POLYDOR (2475 711) LP



> Zoom 1 2

Virgin Sound
1975

Virgin Sound

- Tubular Bells (Mike Oldfield)
- **I'm A Believer (Robert Wyatt)**
- Movement Of A Visionary (Tangerine Dream)
- Isle Of Everywhere (Gong)
- Teenbeat Reprise (Henry Cow)
- Lauft... Heisst Das Es Lauft Oder Es Kommt Band... Lauft (Faust)
- Going Up To People And Thinking (Hatfield & The North)
- Touch Down (Comus)
- Aqua time (Edgar Froese)
- Hergest Ridge (Mike Oldfield)
- Orchestral Tubular Bells (Mike Oldfield)

I'm A Believer est extrait de Yesterday Man/I'm A Believer.

Promo Sample.

- VIRGIN/NIPPON COLUMBIA (Y 96) LP

La Storia Del Rock - Rock Jazz E West Coast - Vol. 5

- Your Mama Don't Dance (Loggins & Messina)
- High And Dry (Poco)

- CBS (SPR 105) LP



> Zoom

La Storia Del Rock - Rock Jazz
E West Coast - Vol. 5
1975

- Hold Man Noll (New Riders Of The Purple Sage)
- Peace On You (Roger McGuinn)
- Sylvia's Mother (Dr. Hook & The Medicine Show)
- Spinning Wheel (Blood, Sweat & Tears*–
- Moon In June (Soft Machine)
- Tombo In 7/4 (Airto)



> Zoom

Viaje Com A Excelsior
A Máquina Do Som - Volume 3
1975

Viaje Com A Excelsior - A Máquina Do Som - Volume 3

- Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds (Elton John)
- Tu Vas Devenir Musicien (Pierre Groscolas)
- Happy People (The Temptations)
- It's Alright (The Peanut Butter Conspiracy)
- Looking For Love (Moon Williams)
- I'm A Believer (Robert Wyatt)
- Save Me (Silver Convention)–
- Derrière Les Barreaux (Frédéric François)
- Bella Senz' Anima (La Nuova Messaggeria)
- California Rain (The Armstrong Brothers)
- I'm Prisioner (Paul Jones)
- Chico And The Man (Sammy Davis Jr.)

I'm A Believer est extrait de Yesterday Man/I'm A Believer.

- SOM LIVRE (404.7059) LP



> Zoom 1 2

V
1975

Compilation Virgin

- Yesterday Man (Robert Wyatt)
- Don Alfonso (Mike Oldfield and Kevin Ayers)
- Go And Sit Upon The Grass (Ivor Cutler)
- Overture (Edgar Froese, Chris Franke, Peter Baumann)
- Marjory Razorblade (Kevin Coyne)
- Looking For The River (Kevin Coyne)
- Mirror Man (live) (Captain Beefheart)
- Upon The My-O-My (Captain Beefheart)
- Extract From The Messiah (Slapp Happy)
- A Worm Is At Work (Henry Cow)
- Sad Sing (Tom Newman and Mike Oldfield)
- Super Man (Tom Newman)
- Charles Semba (Chili)
- Baile / They Are Gone (Jabula)
- Extract From Part 1 (Clearlight Symphony)
- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut (Hatfield And The North)
- White Noise II / Extract (White Noise II)
- Pentagramaspinn (Steve Hillage)

Yesterday Man est extrait du single Yesterday Man/I'm A Believer.

L'édition espagnole de cette compilation s'intitule *Las Cosas Del Virgin Sound.*

- VIRGIN FR (940 801/2) 2xLP
- VIRGIN GER (88588XBT) 2xLP
- VIRGIN IT (2502) 2xLP
- VIRGIN UK (TVCD 2502) 2xLP
- VIRGIN SP (88588 XH) 2xLP

Virgin Compilation

- Keep On (Camelo Pardalis)
- Hey God (Camelo Pardalis)
- Sea Song (Robert Wyatt)
- Little Red Robin Hood Hits The Road (Robert Wyatt)
- War (Henry Cow/Slapp Happy)
- Living In The Heart Of The Beast (Henry Cow/Slapp Happy)

Japanese Promo Edition.

Sea Song et *Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road* sont extraits de Rock Bottom.

- VIRGIN JAP (LWG-1184~5) 2xLP



> Zoom 1 2

Virgin Original Series
1979

- Movement II (White Noise)
- Ergotrip (Clearlight)
- Narcisse Et Goldmund (Clearlight)
- International Disaster (Wigwam)
- Lucky Golden Stripes And Starpose (Wigwam)
- Good Morning (Daevid Allen)
- Wise Man In Your Heart (Daevid Allen)
- Penelope's Shroud (i) (David Bedford)
- King Aeolus (David Bedford)
- Hands Straighten The Water (Pekka Pohjola)
- The Consequences Of Head Bending (Pekka Pohjola)
- Only Reflect (Fred Frith)

↑



> Zoom

Rough Trade New Release Compilation
No. 2
1980

Rough Trade Compilation

- Heart & Soul (Joy Division)
- Health & Efficiency (This Heat)
- Nothing (The Prats)
- TV set (The Prats)
- **Strange Fruit (Robert Wyatt)**
- Jazz Is The Teacher, Funk Is The Preacher (James Blood Ulmer)
- Stay Out Of It (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Interview (Joe & Jowe)
- Rich Man (Barry Brown)
- Joke (Joe & Jowe)
- Good Consumers (The Gist)
- World Is Africa (Black Uhuru)
- Medley & Comment (NON)
- Big Maz... (Swell Maps)
- Big Empty Field (Swell Maps)
- Mining Villages (Swell Maps)
- Atmosphere (Joy Division)
- Born In Flames (The Red Crayola)
- Stomp (Well Maps)
- Forest Fire (Well Maps)
- Isolation (Joy Division)
- City Hobgoblins (The Fall)
- Martian Man (Essential Logic)
- Big City, Bright Lights (Missing Scientists)
- Horses (Pere Ubu)
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin' (Robert Wyatt)**
- Deha (Glaxo Babies)
- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- Instrumental (Joy Division)

Promo version - *C90.*

Strange Fruit est extrait de At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit
Stalin Wasn't Stallin' est extrait de Stalin Wasn't Stalling/ Stalingrad.

All tracks recorded prior to release on disc from cassette, acetate, test pressings etc.

- ROUGH TRADE RECORDS - Cassette

↑



> Zoom

Miniatures
1980

Morgan Fisher

- Bum Love (Ollie Halsall & John Halsey)
- We're A Happy Family + Bali Ha'ithe (Residents)
- The Wreck Of The Hesperus (Roger Mcgough)
- Green And Pleasant (Morgan Fisher)
- Mine Tonight (John Otway)
- My Way (Pete Challis & Phil Diplock)
- **Rangers In The Nights (Robert Wyatt)**
- Opus (Stinky Winkles)
- Body Language (Mary Longford)
- Andy The Dentist (Andy 'Thunderclap' Newman)
- Wagner's Ring In One Minute (David Bedford)
- The Entire Works Of Henry Cow (Fred Frith)
- Look Beneath The Surface (Maggie Nicols)
- Week-End (Joseph Racaille)
- With Wings Pressed Back (The Work)
- Cum On Feel The Noize (Neil Innes & Son)
- Toscany In Blue (Last Minute)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- Morgan Fisher - tape manipulation

Rangers In The Nights a été initialement composé pour cet album.

- CHERRY RED RECORDS (PIPE 2) 2xP (CDBRED361)

Réédition CD en 1994:
- BLUEPRINT (BP159CD) CD



Miniatures
1994

(Herbert Distel)
- An End To The Matter (Lol Coxhill)
- One Minute In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich (Ken Ellis)
- Alice (Steve Miller)
- Sings The Blues Badly (Norman Lovett/John Peel)
- Serrons Nous Les Coudes (Patrick Portella)
- Sounds That Saved My Life (George Melly)
- Miniature (Robert Fripp)
- The History Of Rock'n'roll (Andy Partridge-XTC)
- Breather (Phantom Captain)
- Enterbrain Exit (Ron Geesin)
- An Imaginary Orchestrina (Alejandro Viñao)
- Stop The Music For A Minute (Quentin Crisp)
- Tetrad (Simon Desorgher)
- Sweetest Love (Lament After A Broken Sashcord - On A Theme Of John Donne) (Ralph Steadman)
- Tipperary (R.D.Laing & Son)
- Beach Double (Trevor Wishart)
- Scene De Ballet (John White)
- Brooch Boat (Ivor Cutler)
- Do Tell Us (Hector Zazou)
- A Miniaturization Of Bartok's Sonata For Two Pianos & Percussion - 3rd Movement (Michael Bass & Ellen Tenenbaum)
- A Swift One (Martin Chambers - The Pretenders)
- Refreshment Break (Bob Cobbing & Henri Chopin)
- Night Touch (Dave Vanian-The Damned)
- Racing Poodles (Metabolist)
- After Mendelssohn/137 Years (Gavin Bryars)
- Paint It Black (1/2 Japanese)
- Arthur's Treat (Simon Jeffes)
- Talking World War Iii Blues (Mark Perry)
- 89-90-91-92 (Michael Nyman)
- Index Of Ends (David Cunningham - The Flying Lizards)
- James, Mark & Me (In The Manner Of Tom Waits) (Kevin Coyne)
- Hep! (Etron Fou Leloublan)
- The Minute Warp (Neil Oram & Ken Campbell)
- Chorale From Beethoven's 9th Symphony (Pete Seeger)



> Zoom

Wanna Buy A Bridge ?
1980

Wanna Buy A Bridge ?

- Alternative Ulster (Stiff Little Fingers)
- Mind Your Own Business (Delta 5)
- Man Next Door (The Slits)
- Aerosol Burns (Essential Logic)
- Part Time Punks (T.V. Personalities)
- Read About Seymour (Swell Maps)
- We Are All Prostitutes (The Pop Group)
- Soldier Soldier (Spizzenergi)
- Ain't You (Kleenex)
- Nag Nag Nag (Cabaret Voltaire)
- In Love (The Raincoats)
- Final Day (Young Marble Giants)
- Skank Bloc Bologna (Scritti Politti)
- **At Last I Am Free (Robert Wyatt)**

Rough Trade Compilation

- Politics (Girls At Our Best!)
- This Is Love (The Gist) (ex-Young Marble Giants)
- Blue Boy (Orange Juice)
- Pretty (Mark Beer)

At Last I Am Free est extrait du single At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

- ROUGH TRADE
  (ROUGH-US 3) LP

Stalin Wasn't Stallin est extrait du single Stalin Wasn't Stallin/ Stalingrad.

- ROUGH TRADE GERMANY
  (RT6435 086) LP



> Zoom

Rough Trade Compilation
1981

- Fanfare In The Garden (Essential Logic)
- Born In Flames (Red Crayola)
- Not Happy (Pere Ubu)
- How I Wrote Elastic Man (The Fall)
- Work (BLUE ORCHIDS) (ex-Fall)
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin (Robert Wyatt)**
- Pablo Meets Mr. Bassie (Augustus Pablo & Rockers All Stars)
- Final Day (Young marble Giants)
- Seconds Too Late (Cabaret Voltaire)
- I Know Where Syd Barrett Lives (Televison Personalities)



> Zoom

Gap Tracks 1
1981

Gap Tracks 1

- Transmission (Joy Division)
- What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted (Dave Stewart)
- No Word From China (Pel Mel)
- Non-Alignment Pact (Pere Ubu)
- This Is Love (The Gist)
- Sketch For Summer (The Durutti Column)
- Kneel To The Boss (Cabaret Voltaire)
- She's Lost Control (Joy Division)
- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- Totally Wired (The Fall)
- In A Lonely Place (New Order)
- Mumbo Jumbo (Woodhead Monroe)
- Modern Dance (Pere Ubu)
- Shadowplay (Joy Division)
- Seconds Too Late (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Warm Leatherette (The Normal)
- Sketch For Winter (The Durutti Column)
- **At Last I Am Free (Robert Wyatt)**
- Isolation (Joy Division)
- Papa's Got A Brand New Pig Bag (Pig Bag)
- Shabby Abbott (Essential Logic)
- Ceremony (New Order)

At Last I Am Free est extrait du single At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

Promo compilation.

- GAP RECORDS (Australia) - Cassette



> Zoom

History Of Rock Vol.4
1981

History Of Rock Vol.4

- Tubular Bells (Mike Oldfield)
- Stratosfear (Tangerine Dream)
- **Yesterday Man (Robert Wyatt)**
- A Worm Is At Work (Henry Cow)
- Smoke On The Water (Gillan)
- New Electric Ride (Captain Beefheart)
- Hurdy Gurdy Man (Steve Hillage)
- Full Moon On The Highway (Can)
- Bicentennial Present (Peter Baumann)
- Marlene (Kevin Coyne)

Yesterday Man est extrait du single Yesterday/Believer.

Greece compilation.

- VIRGIN RECORDS (2473 814) - LP



> Zoom

Morrocci Klung !

- Academy One Interview (Michael French)
- Birds With Ears (Mark Beer)
- Quentin Crisp
- Poem By Andrew Darlington
- Epic Soundtracks Introduces New Album
- Eyeless In Gaza Interview
- Joseph Garret
- Vivian Goldman Interview
- The Story Of Len
- Some Recent Records
- Jambo

Cassette-magazine publiée en septembre 1981, présentée dans une enveloppe cartonnée - Cassette

Complete interview

One Hour Of Talk And Music
1981

- Robert Wyatt Interview Part 1
- Robert Wyatt Interview Part 2
- Robert Wyatt Interview Part 3



> Zoom

Le Quartier Réservé
De La Musique
1981

Le Quartier Réservé De La Musique - Best Rough Trade

- Sweetest Girl (Scritti Politti with Robert Wyatt)
- Fanfare In The Garden (Essential Logic)
- Blue Boy (Orange Juice)
- This Is Love (The Gist)
- Fit And Working Again (The Fall)
- Twenty Tens (Virgin Prunes)
- Shouting Out Loud (The Raincoats)
- Work (Blue Orchids)
- Milkmaid (The Red Crayola)
- Pretty (Mark Beer)
- Young Marble Giants (Final Day)
- Strange Fruit (Robert Wyatt)
- Magnificent Dreamer (The Personalities)

Cassette diffusée avec un numéro du magazine *Best.*

Strange Fruit est extrait du single At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

- ROUGH TRADE France (HS 88) Cassette



> Zoom

Clear Cut
1981

Clear Cut

- Kind Of Funny (Josef K)
- City Hobgoblins (The Fall)
- Simply Thrilled Honey (Orange Juice)
- This Is Love (The Gist)
- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- Born In Flames (The Red Crayola)
- In Love (The Raincoats)
- You (Delta 5)
- Health And Efficiency (This Heat)
- Music Is A Better Noise (Essential Logic)
- Skank Bologna (Scritti Politti)
- At Last I Am Free (Robert Wyatt)

At Last I Am Free est extrait du single At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

- ROUGH TRADE Japan (RTL-5) LP



> Zoom

Japan Program 2
1981

Japan Program 2

- Feed The Hungry (The Pop Group)
- Obsession (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Include Me Out (Young Marble Giants)
- Rounder (Pere Ubu)
- Simply Thrilled Honey (Orange Juice)
- This Is Love (The Gist)
- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- In Love (The Raincoats)
- You (Delta 5)
- Kind Of Funny (Josef K)
- Music Is A Better Noise (Essential Logic)
- At Last I Am Free (Robert Wyatt)

At Last I Am Free est extrait du single At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

A Promotional sampler album compiling the first five LPs released by Japan Record.

- JAPAN RECORD (PROG-2) Cassette
- ROUGH TRADE () Cassette



Recommended Records Sampler

Disc 1
- Flaschenzug (Vogel)
- Extract 5 From Faust Party 3. (Faust)
- All Hail! (Art Bears)
- Reparto Novita (Stormy Six)
- Walk Before Imitate (The Homosexuals)
- On ne peut plus compter sur ses

The Internationale a été initialement enregistré pour cet album les 28 et 29 août 1981.

Cet album sera réédité au format 2xCD au Japon en 2008 avec 4 nouveaux morceaux.

> Zoom 1 2

Recommended Records Sampler
1982

doigts (Joseph Racaille & Patrick Portella)
- * (Feliu Gasul)
- Strangelove (The Black Sheep)
- Influences (Univers Zero)
- Boss de crosses dans le doulos (Aksak Maboul/Honeymoon Killers)
- Slice (Henry Cow)
- Viva Pa Ubu (Henry Cow)
- Radio extract (Decibel)

Disc 1
- Simulacres (Art Zoyd)
- 2 from 'chronometers (The Muffins)
- Berlin Ku Damm I2/4/8I (Heiner Goebbels)
- Steer Clear Of England (Amos)
- Commerce Nostalgigue (Conventum)
- Vera C (Hector Zazou)
- Pool (This Heat)
- Walker Westinghouse (The Residents)
- Pedestrian Hop & Copy Me (R. Steve Moore)
- I Talk To My Haircut (Ron Pate)
- Ucoellin del Bosco (Picchio Del Pozzo)
- **The Internationale (Robert Wyatt)**

Il sera également réédité en 2009 au format 2xCD sous le titre "The Recommended Sampler 1982 · 25th Anniversary Edition" (même contenu que la présente version de 1982, sous le label R&R MEGACORP).

- RECOMMENDED RECORDS (RR8&9) 2xLP

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR 25 A/B) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Feature Mist
1982

Touch - Feature Mist

- Last Poem/Mayakovski
- New Order
- Soliman Gamil
- **Robert Wyatt Interviewed Lebanon Park, early 1982**
- The Death And Beauty Foundation
- Hans Eisler/Mayakovski
- **Contagion**
- Eric Random
- Simple Minds
- Tuxedomoon
- Shostakovich
- New Order
- Flesh
- The Rozztox Manifesto
- Thv Temple Of Psychick Youth
- Video Column

Première réalisation d'une série de six cassettes produites par *Touch Magazine* et distribuées par *Rough Trade* - Cassette

Contagion est probablement la plus courte interview que Robert Wyatt ait jamais donnée (13 secondes!).



> Zoom 1 2

C81
1982

NME - Rough Trade Compilation

- **The Sweetest Girl (Scritti Politti with Robert Wyatt)**
- Twist And Crawl Dub (The Beat)
- Misery Goats (Pere Ubu)
- 7 000 Names Of Wah ! (Wahi Heat)
- Blue Boy (Orange Juice)
- Raising The Count (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Kebab Traume (DAF Live)
- Bare Pork (Furious Pig)
- Raouf (Specials)
- I Look Alone (Buzzcocks)
- Fanfare In The Garden (Essential Logic)
- **Born Again Cretin (Robert Wyatt)**
- Shooting Out Loud (Raincoats)
- Endless Soul (Josef K)
- Low Profile (Blue Orchids)
- Red Nettle (Virgin Prunes)
- We Could Send Letters (Aztec Camera)
- Milkmaid (Red Crayola)
- Don't Get In My Way (Links)
- The Day My Pad Went Mad (The Massed Carnaby St John Cooper Clarkes)
- Jazz Is The Teacher, Funk Is The Preacher (James Blood Ulmer)
- Close To Home (Ian Dury)
- Greener Grass (Gist)
- Parallel Lines (Subway Sect)

The Sweetest Girl est extrait de Songs To Remember.
Born Again Cretin est extrait de Nothing Can Stop Us.

- NME-ROUGH TRADE COMPILATION (001) Cassette



> Zoom

Long Distance
1982

Long Distance

- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- Born In Flames (Red Crayola)
- Final Day (Young Marble Giants)
- Seconds Too Late (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Totally Wired (The Fall)
- Try (Delta)
- I Know Where Sid Barrett Lives (TV Personalities)
- **Caimanera (Robert Wyatt)**
- Pretty (Mark Beer)
- Our Swimmer (Wire)
- Not Happy (Pere Ubu)
- Are You Glad To Be In America (James Blood Ulmer)

Compilation Rough Trade.

Caimanera est extrait du single Arauco/Caimanera.

- NUEVOS MEDIOS (43-010L) LP



> Zoom

Compilation
Rough Trade Deutschland
1982

Compilation Rough Trade Deutschland

- Pillar to Post (Aztec Camera)
- Past Meets Present (Weekend)
- Love At First Sight (The Gist)
- No-One's Little Girl (The Raincoats)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Hammer The Hammer (The Go-Betweens)
- I'm On This Rocket (The Panther Burns)
- A Hard Day's Night (Shockabilly)
- More Trouble Coming Every Day (Zounds)
- El Salvador (Mofungo)
- Pagan Lovesong (Virgin Prunes)
- Yashar (Cabaret Voltaire)

Compilation Rough Trade Deutschland.

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- ROUGH TRADE (RTD 5) LP



> Zoom 1 2

Mighty Reel
1982

Mighty Reel

- Town Cryer (Elvis Costello & The Attractions)
- Calling Captain Autumn (Haircut 100)
- Loving You Made A Fool Out Of Me (Spanish Rap) (Kid Creole & The Coconuts)
- A Day In The Life Of... (Weekend)
- Umkumbane (MUSIC from Soweto / Elfas Zondi)
- Dib-Be-Dib-Be-Dize (Brother "D" with Collective Effort)
- White Stuff (The Unfinished) (Fashion)
- Sensation (No More Words) (Yello)
- Petit Matin (The Honeymoon Killers)
- Secret Life Of Arabia (Billy Mackenzie / British Electric Foundation)
- Are You There (With Another Girl) (Mari Wilson)
- Kita Kita O Mo La (King Sunny Ade & The African Beats)
- Sleep Talk (Ornette Coleman)
- **'Round Midnight (Robert Wyatt)**
- Futility (The Ravishings Beauties)
- Now Dance (The Three Courgettes)
- Walking On Sunshine (Rockers Revenge featuring Donnie Calvin)
- The Alibi (Fun Boy Three)
- Loosen The Clamp (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Dancibar (Liaisons Dangereuses)
- Forget The Cost (Ub40)
- Trainer (Michael Smith)

Cassette diffusée gratuitement avec le magazine *New Musical Express*, accompagnée d'un mini-booklet de 32 pages.

'Round Midnight est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- NME COMPILATION (NME004) Cassette



Zoom

Old Playfellows
1982

Ben Watt/Tracey Thorn/ Marine Girls/Robert Wyatt

- Walter And John
(Ben Watt & Robert Wyatt)
- Aquamarine (Ben Watt)
- Slipping Slowly (Ben Watt)
- Another Conversation With Myself (Ben Watt)
- A Girl In Winter (Ben Watt & Robert Wyatt)
- Goodbye Joe (Tracey Thorn)
- On My Mind (Marine Girls)
- The Lure Of the Rockpools (Marine Girls)
- Cant (Ben Watt)
- Tower Of Silence (Ben Watt)
- Aubade (Ben Watt)

Walter And John et *A Girl In Winter* sont extraits de l'album Summer Into Winter

- TRIO (AW-25043) LP



Zoom

Wave News 2
1982

Wave News 2

- Kind Of Funny (Josef K)
- City Hobgoblins (The Fall)
- Simply Thrilled Honey (Orange Juice)
- This Is Love (The Gist)
- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- Born In Flames (The Red Crayola)
- In Love (The Raincoats)
- You (Delta 5)
- Health And Efficiency (This Heat)
- Music Is A Better Noise (Essential Logic)
- Skank Bologna (Scritti Politti=
- At Last I Am Free (Robert Wyatt)

At Last I Am Free est extrait du single At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit

- INTERCORD (INT 145.061) LP



Zoom

Radio Twelve
Sample Compilation
1983

Radio Twelve Sample Compilation

- The View From Her Room (Weekend)
- Drumbeat For Baby (Weekend)
- Fool For A Valentine (The Gist)
- Trees And Flowers (Strawberry Switchblade)
- The Pelican Songs (Discobolisk)
- Love Is... (Troy Tate)
- I'm Mad (Troy Tate)
- Walkout To Winter (Aztec Camera)
- Rank And File (Rank And File)
- Queens Tattoo (Aztec Camera)
- Memories Of You (Robert Wyatt)
- Round Midnight (Robert Wyatt)

Memories Of You et *'Round Midnight* sont extraits du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- ROUGH TRADE JAPAN (RTL3) LP



Zoom

Clear Cut 5 - Second Lenght
1983

Clear Cut 5 - Second Lenght

- Cattle And Cane (The Go-Betweens)
- Set The Killing Free (Aztec Camera)
- The Man Whose Head Expanded (The Fall)
- Three Wishes (T.V. Personalities)
- Jell, Babies (Epic Soundtracks)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Once More With Feeling (Jazzateers)
- A Fool For Valentine (The Gist)
- More Trouble Coming Every Day (Zounds)
- Pagan Love Song (Virgin Prunes)
- Burnt To the Grount (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Second Length (Our Swimmer) (Wire)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- ROUGH TRADE JAPAN (RTL35) LP



Zoom

MNW
1983

Rough Trade Records - MNW

- Pillar To Post (Aztec Camera)
- Baby Turns Blue (Virgin Prunes)
- Wonderful Offer (Lora Logic)
- Put It On (Cosmetic)
- Love At First Sight (The Gist)
- Drumbeat For Baby (Weekend)
- No Ones Little Girl (The Raincoats)
- Agents Of Change (Blue Orchids)
- Cattle And Cane (The Go-Betweens)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- ROUGH TRADE SWEDEN (MNWX3) LP





> Zoom

Pillows & Prayers
1984

Cherry Red 1982-1984

Disc 1
- Portrait (Five Or Six)
- Eine Symphonie Des Grauens (The Monochrome Set)
- All About You (Thomas Leer)
- Plain Sailing (Tracey Thorn)
- Some Things Don't Matter (Ben Watt)
- Love In Your Heart (Kevin Coyne)
- Modi 2 (Piero Milesi)
- Compulsion (Joe Crow)
- Lazy Wars (Marine Girls)
- My Face Is On Fire (Felt)
- No Noise (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Xoyo (The Passage)
- On My Mind (Everything But The Girl)
- A Bang And A Wimpy (Attila The Stockbroker)
- I Unseen (The Misunderstood)
- Don't Blink (The Nightingales)
- Stop The Music For A Minute (Quentin Crisp)

Disc 2
- Place In The Sun (Marine Girls)
- It's A Fine Day (Jane)
- Feathering The Nest (Kevin Hewick)
- If She Doesn't Smile (Fantastic Something)
- New Risen (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Jet Set Junta (The Monochrome Set)
- Une Homme Et Une Femme (Morgan Fisher)
- Penelope Tree (Felt)
- The Watery Song (Maurice Deebank)
- This Brilliant Evening (In Embrace)
- I'm Used Now (Grab Grab The Haddock)
- **Water And John (Ben Watt And Robert Wyatt)**
- The Look Of Love (Martyn Bates)
- Chenko (Red Box)

Water And John est extrait du EP Summer Into Winter.

- CHERRY RED RECORDS (CDMRED169) 2xCD



> Zoom

Rough Streets
1983

Rough Streets

- True Love (Zounds)
- The Flood (Blue Orchids)
- General Davis (The Prats)
- Pagan Lovesong (Virgin Prunes)
- We Are All Prostitutes (The Pop Group)
- Jazz The Glass (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Mega City 3 (Spizzenergi)
- Fanfare In The Garden (Essential Logic)
- Love At First Sight (The Gist)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Final Solution (Pere Ubu)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- ROUGH TRADE GREECE (ROUGH035) LP



> Zoom

The Harvest Story - Vol. 1
1984

The Harvest Story - Vol.1

- Singing A Song In The Morning (Kevin Ayers)
- Love You (Syd Barrett)
- Taking Some Time On (BJH)
- American Boy Soldier (Edgar Broughton Band)
- Druid One (Third Ear Band)
- Things May Come (Peter Brown)
- The Good Mr. Square (Pretty Things)
- Look At Me Now (ELO)
- Down On The Bay (The Move)
- Wring That Nect (Deep Purple)
- Hell's Angels (Roy Harper)

Love You est extrait de The Madcap Laughs.

- HARVEST (EG 26 0097) LP



> Zoom

A Singles Selection
1984

This is Rough Trade

- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- Cattle And Cane (The Go-Betweens)
- Drumbeat For Baby (Weekend)
- Show Me (Dislocation Dance)
- Animal Rhapsody (The Raincoats)
- Are You Glad To Be In America? (James Blood Ulmer)
- Hand In Glove (The Smiths)
- The Man Whose Head Expanded (The Fall)
- A Sense Of Belonging (Television Personalities)
- Pagan Lovesong (Virgin Prunes)
- October (Lovesong) (Chris And Cosey)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- ROUGH TRADE (RTRANZ 005) LP



> Zoom

Lost Romance
1984

Lost Romance

- Pillar To Post (Aztec Camera)
- If She Doesn't Smile (Fantastic Something)
- Femme Fatale (Tracey Thorn)
- Love At First Sight (The Gist)
- The End Of The Affair (Weekend)
- Changing Station (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Messidor (The Durutti Column)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Cattle And Cane (The Go-Betweens)
- Night And Day (Everything But The Girl)
- A View From Her Room (Weekend)
- Some Things Don't Matter (Ben Watt)
- One By One (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Never Known (The Durutti Column)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- ROCK-IN-RECORD (ROCKLP3) LP



> Zoom

Raindrops Pattering On Banana Leaves And Other Tunes
1984

A Womad Benefit L.P.

- Raindrops Pattering On Banana Leaves (Tian Jin Song & Dance Group)
- Nuca Llacta/Coraza (Bolivia Manta & Nanda Manachi)
- Zimbo (Echo & The Bunnymen with the Drummers Of Burundi)
- Song Of Greeting (Drummers Of Burundi)
- Lead A Normal Life (Peter Gabriel)
- Excerpt from 'Ya Mohammed Bula Lo' (Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan)
- Grass (Robert Wyatt)
- Mother & Child (Jean Bosco Mwenda)
- Too Nice To Talk To (The Beat)
- Ekipe (Kanda Bongo Man)
- You're My Kind Of Climate (Rip Rig & Panic)

Grass est extrait du single Grass/Trade Union.

- WOMAD (WOMAD1) LP



> Zoom

Tendenz Zur Auflösung Des Rhythmus
(Parallel Zum Punk)
1984

Tendenz Zur Auflösung Des Rhythmus

- Starsailor (Tim Buckley)
- Modern Lesson (Aksak Maboul)
- Fleuve et les manteau (Etron Fou)
- Inte Margarita (Zamla Mammaz Manna)
- La Pointe de tes Seins (ZNR)
- Musique pour L'Odyssée (Art Zoyd)
- Volo Vivace (Tuxedomoon)
- Rats & Monkeys (Art Bears)
- Satisfaction (Residents)
- Paint it Black (Half Japanese)
- Toilet (L. Voag)
- Conspirator's Oath (Red Crayola)
- Frenzy (Peter Blegvad)
- **Stalin Wasn't Stalling (Robert Wyatt)**
- When It's War (People In Control)
- Only Loud At Night (Raincoats)
- Makeshift Swahili (This Heat)
- I Hate America (Work)

Cassette parue à Zurich en 1984 en édition limitée accompagnée d'un petit livret de 5 pages de Veit F. Stauffer, un des fondateurs/ directeurs du label suisse RecRec Music.

Stalin Wasn't Stalling est extrait du single Stalin Wasn't Stalling'/ Stalingrad.

- EDITION UNBEIRRT C - Cassette



> Zoom

Requiem By Rough Trade
1984

Requiem By Rough Trade

- **Red Flag (Robert Wyatt)**
- Voice Of America/Damage Is Done (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Makeshift Swahili (This Heat)
- Red Tent 2 (Dome)
- Red Plains (Weekend)
- Nostalgia (Weekend)
- **Biko (Robert Wyatt)**
- Decline And Fall (Virgin Prunes)
- Justice (The Pop Group)
- Go Ahead (Wire)
- Dreaming In The Past (The Raincoats)
- Please Please Let Me Get What I Want (The Smiths)

Red Flag est extrait de Nothing Can Stop Us.
Biko est extrait de Work In Progress.

- ROUGH TRADE/JAPAN RECORD/TOKUMA (35JC-104) CD



> Zoom

3ª Compilación Rough Trade
1984

3ª Compilación Rough Trade

- Castle And Cane (The Go-Betweens)
- A Sese Of Belonging (Television Personalities)
- Jeane (The Smiths)
- Hand In Glove (Sandie Shaw)
- Pillar To Post (Aztec Camera)
- Animal Rapsody (The Raincoats)
- Mr Soul (The Dream Syndicate)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Show Me (Dislocation Dance)
- The Man Whose Head Expanded (The Fall)
- Ugly (Violent Femmes)
- Dolly (Microdisney)
- Women Of The World (Ivor Cutler & Linda Hirst)
- 19th Nervous Breakdown (Shockabilly)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- NUEVOS MEDIOS (43-091) LP

Rock 80's

- The Order Of Death (Public Imag Limited)
- All You Pretty Girls (XTC)
- In The Ghetto (Nick Cave)
- Sex Machine (The Flying Lizards)
- Drive My Car (Gina X)
- A Million Miles Away (Positive Noise)
- Listen To Your Father (Feargal Sharkey)

Biko est extrait du EP Work In Progress

Venceremos (We Will Win) est extrait du EP Venceremos

- VIRGIN (062-VG 50094) LP



> Zoom

Rock 80's Vol 5
1984

- Biko (Robert Wyatt)
- Venceremos (We Will Win) (Working Week)
- Tenderness (General Public)
- This Is Mine (Heaven 17)
- Lorelei (Explorers)
- Red Guitar (David Sylvian)
- Five Miles Of You (Tom Verlaine)



> Zoom

The New Rock'n'Roll
The A-Z Of Rock In The 80's
1984

The New Rock'n'Roll - The A-Z Of Rock In The 80's

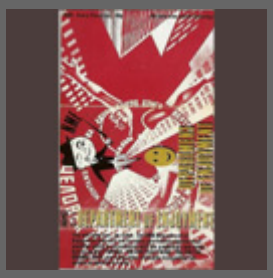
Disc 1
- Fallout (Police)
- Bactrack (Squeeze)
- Antmusic (Adam And The Ants
- Love Will Tear Us Apart (Paul Young)
- Love My Way (Psychadelic Furs)
- I Could Be Happy (Altered Images)
- (Lets All) Turn On (Hoodoo Gurus)
- You Fool You (David Johansen)
- No Word From China (Pel Mel)
- Release The Bats (The Birthday Party)
- Totally Wired (The Fall)
- Sodium Pentathol Negative (Fashion)
- Hammer The Hammer (The Go-Betweens)
- Never Say Never (Romeo Void)
- I'm On Fire (Chelsea)
- Seconds Too Late (Cabaret Voltaire)

Disc 2
- Hepnobeat (The Dynamic Hepnotics)
- Uranium Rock (The Cramps)
- Only A Lad (Oingo Boingo)
- Hip, Shake, Jerk (The Quick)
- Be Cool Be Smart (The Mighty Guys)
- I Married A Monster From Outer Space (John Cooper Clarke)
- African Reggae (Nina Hagen Band)
- Dancing On The Floor (Hooked On Love) (Third World)
- Cant Make Love (Wall Of Voodoo)
- Cold, Cold, Shoes (Fleshtones)
- Jukebox (Payolas)
- Another Girl, Another Planet (The Only Ones)
- Valley Girl (Frank And Moon Zappa)
- Voodoo (Rachael Sweet)
- Shouting Out Loud (The Raincoats)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

Ce double album a été publié à la suite de l'ouvrage éponyme de Glenn A. Baker, Stuart Coupe et Andy Yavasis édité en 1983 aux éditions St. Martin's Press (New-York).

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- CBS PRODUCTIONS (P/L) 2xLP



> Zoom

Department Of Enjoyment
1984

Department Of Enjoyment

- Perfect Skin (Llyod Cole & The Commotions)
- Girl Afraid (The Smiths)
- A Place In My heart Dub Mix 2 (Orange Juice)
- Get Your Feet Out Of My Shoes (The Boothill Foot Tappers)
- Lonely So Long (Paul Young & The Royal Family)
- Millimillenary (The Cocteau Twins)
- Pagan Place (The Waterboys)
- Come Back (Wah)
- I Put A Spell On You (Nick Cave & The Cavemen)
- Reaching My Head The Prisoners)
- Some Kinda Jones (The Moodists)
- Real World (Husker Du)
- Amber & The Amberines (Robert Wyatt & Hugh Hopper)

Dedicated to the Fond Memory of Barney Bubbles.

Amber & The Amberines est extrait du EP Work In Progress.

- NME COMPILATION (011)
Cassette

- Kick Over The Statues ! (The Redskins)
- Fear Is A Man's Best Friend (Billy Bragg)
- Litlle red Rooster (Bourgie Bourgie)
- Dorothy (Dr John)
- The Star Spangled Banner (Wynton Marsalis)
- C'est La Danse (African Connexion)
- Mi God-My King (Papa Levi)
- Wildstyle (Time Zone)
- Beatbox Diversion (The Art Of Noise)



> Zoom

A Rough Trade
1985

A Rough Trade

- Miserable Lie (The Smiths)
- Ain't That Always The Way (Easterhouse)
- Well Well Well (The Woodentops)
- Horse Overboard (Microdisney)
- Forever Party (Float Up C P)
- Bun On The Oven (Princes Tinymeat)
- Mr Somewhere (The Apartments)
- Circle J (Jonathan Richman)
- **The Age Of Self (Robert Waytt)**
- Whale Head King (David Thomas)
- Stolen Kisses (Chris + Cosey)
- Elementary (Horace Andy)

The Age Of Self est extrait du single The Age Of Self.

- ROUGH TRADE/MEGADISC (MD7982) LP



> Zoom

The Liberator
1986

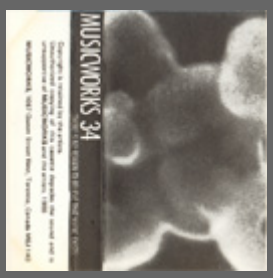
Artists For Animals

- **Pigs... (In There) (Robert Wyatt)**
- Animal Farm (Madness)
- Monkey In A Bin (Attrition)
- The Aftermath (Durrutti Column)
- Suffer Dog (Shelleyan Orphan)
- Rain Forest (Kalima)
- When The Last Ship Sails (The Entire Population Of China)
- The Abbatoir (Carla Lane)
- The Boyne Hunt Saboteurs (Gone To Earth)
- I Believe (Pop, Dick And Harry)
- One Million Hamburgers (The Franck Chicken)
- All Cats Are Grey (The Cleaners From Venus)
- Blood Sports (Style Council)
- Toros (Anne Clark & Patrick Fitzgerald)
- Knit Your Own Balaclava (Chumbawamba)
- Hear The Animals Cry (Josi Without Colours)
- Lies (T.V. Smith)
- A Sporting Life (Captain Sensible)

Pigs... a été initialement composé pour cet album.

- DELTIC RECORDS (DELT LP3) LP
- DELTIC RECORDS (DELT CD3) CD
- JIMCO RECORDS (JIM 0039) CD

Lyrics



> Zoom 1 2

There's No Reason To Believe That Music Exists
1986

Musicworks 34

- Just When I Thought... (Paul Haines)
- Making Ends Meet (John Oswald)
- Now... Those Sounds... (Mystery Tape Laboratory)
- Music Lovers, Even You (Mystery Tape Laboratory)
- Third World Two (Davey Williams)
- Porky's Garden (Carl Stallings)
- What's This (Bill Smith)
- Starting With Maya (Larry Wendt)
- **Third World Two (Robert Wyatt)**
- Collage #1 (James Tenney)
- Third World Two (Jerry Simpson)
- WX (Excerpts) (Mystery Tape Laboratory)

Robert Wyatt lit *Third World Two*, un texte de Paul Haines. Ce morceau a été initialement réalisé pour cette cassette.

- MUSICWORKS (MW 34) Cassette



> Zoom

Artists For Animals
1986

Artists For Animals

- Blood Sports (Style Council)
- Toros (Anne Clark & Patrick Fitzgerald)
- The Cart Horse (Kevin Hewick)
- The Wool To Live (Ralph Steadman)
- Pigs... (In There) - (Robert Wyatt)
- Animal Farm (Madness)
- Monkey In A Bin (Attrition)
- The Aftermath (Durrutti Column)

- SLIP RECORDS (SD003) LP



> Zoom

Volume 1 N°3
1986

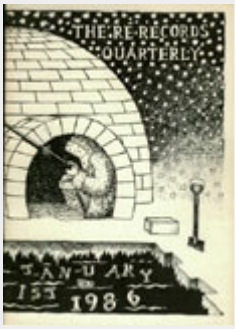
Ré Records Quaterly

- Card To Bernard (The Big Guns)
- Early Rest Home (Biota)
- Pigs (Robert Wyatt)
- Sprung from Traps (Roger Turner)
- Little Red Bombadier (Kontroll Csoport)
- Woman Of Water (Adrian Mitchell)
- Coste (Cassix)
- Criota (Cassix)
- Religion (Cassix)
- The Stanislavsky Method (Cassix)
- Tempo Di Pace, Bari (Cassix)
- Copy Machine (Cassix)
- Finta Di Nulla (Cassix)
- Nadja (Nazca)

Ce LP accompagnait le magazine édité par Chris Cutler "*Ré Records Quarterly Magazine Volume 1 Number 3* ".

Pigs a été initialement composé pour la compilation Artists For Animals

- RE RECORDS (0103) LP



> Zoom



> Zoom

And Suddenly It's Evening
1986

Cherry Red Records Present

- Night And Day (Everything But The Girl)
- On My mind (Marine Girls)
- Geneva (Morgan-Fisher)
- Walter And John (Ben Watt + Robert Wyatt)
- Plain Sailing (Tracey Thorn)
- For All We Know (Grab Grab The Haddock)
- It´s A Fine Day (Jane)
- Esperansa (Anthony Phillips)
- This Brilliant Evening (In Embrace)
- Primitive Painters (Felt)
- Welcome Now (Eyeless In Gaza)
- The Mating Game (The Monochrome Set)
- Die Liebe (Laibach)

Water And John est extrait du EP Summer Into Winter.

- CHERRY RED (VAP 35506-15) LP

Clear Cut Final

- Remote Control (Red Guitars)
- Simply Thrilled Honey (Orange Juice)
- The View From Her Room (Weekend)
- Sixteen Reasons (Jazzateers)
- Trees And Flowers (Strawberry

The Age Of Self est extrait de Old Rottenhat.

- ROUGH TRADE (32JC-206) CD



> Zoom

Clear Cut Final
1986

Switchblade)
- Orchid Girl (Aztec Camera)
- Cattle & Cane (The Go-Betweens)
- Ambition (Vic Godard & The Subway Sect)
- Inspiration (Easterhouse)
- Travelling Man (The Woodentops)
- Tell Me When It's Over (The Dream Syndicate)
- I'll Keep It With Mine (Susanna Hoffs) (The Bangles)
- Birthday Girl (Microdisney)
- Alphaville (The Monochrome Set)
- Skank Block Bologna (Scritti Politti)
- Man Next Door (The Slits)
- Pagan Love Song (Virgin Prunes)
- We Are All Prostitutes (The Pop Group)
- The Age Of Self (Robert Wyatt)
- Stretch Out And Wait (The Smiths)

↑



> Zoom

Alternativa 2
1987

Alternativa2

- Dying On The Vine (John Cale)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- My Heart Is Empty (Nico)
- All The Birthdays (The Apartments)
- The Boy With The Thorn In His Side (The Smiths)
- The Moon Is Blue (Colourbox)
- Revolution (The Cult)
- It Will Come (The Woodentops)
- Birthday Girl (Microdisney)
- Ignore The Machine (Alien Sex Fiend)
- Welcome Now (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Free Yourself (The Untouchables)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- DIAMOND REKORD (R012) LP

↑



> Zoom

Afrodisiak Vol.2
1987

Afrodisiak Vol.2

- Namibia (Robert Wyatt & SWAPO Singers)
- Happiness (Führs + Fröhling)
- Charm (Tony Banks)
- Paraguay (Jorge Ben)
- Salone De Musique (Sapho)
- Donkeys Bearing Cups (Eek-A-Mouse)
- Wa do dem (Eek-A-Mouse)
- Iko iko (The Belle Stars)

Namibia est extrait du EP The Wind Of Change.

- CBS (26995-1) LP

↑



> Zoom

Mixed Peel
The John Peel Sessions
1987

Mixed Peel - The John Peel Sessions

- Here Comes Summer (The Undertones)
- I Am The Fly (Wire)
- I'm A Believer (Robert Wyatt)
- Bed & Breakfast Man (Madness)
- At Home He's A Tourist (Gang Of Four)
- 5-8-6 (New Order)
- Love And Romance (The Slits)
- Love Gets Dangerous (Billy Bragg)
- Gary Golmore's Eyes (The Adverts)
- Release The Bats (The Birthday Party)
- Two Sevens Clash (Culture)
- Sus (The Ruts)
- Ink Runs Dry (The Folk Devils)
- Ride A White Swan (T-Rex)
- Put Away (The Fall)
- Basement Blues - The Story Of The Blues (Mighty Wah!)
- Mega Armageddon Death/'Chickens'

I'm A Believer est extrait de The Peel Sessions.

- NME/STRANGE FRUIT (NMEPRO6) LP
- NME/STRANGE FRUIT (NME 033) Cassette

(The Electro Hippies)
- New Rose (The Damned)
- Can't Stop (That Petrol Emotion)



> Zoom

Barcelona - Ciudad Abierta
1987

Barcelona - Ciudad Abierta

- Sangre Cristiana (El Ultimo Eslabon)
- Techos Altos (Los Elasticos)
- Claustrofobia/Tu Traicion (Robert Wyatt)
- Nino Bueno (Adhesivo)
- Deseo (Rocker Band)
- Esto Se Esta Hundiendo (El Intante)
- Carlov (Claustrofobia)
- Blanco De Leche (Desperdicis Clinics)
- La Piedra Filosofal (Crimen Pasional)

- Robert Wyatt - vocal and percussions (?)

- Antoni Baltar - drum programming, bass synthesizer
- Maria Jose Pena - piano
- Pedro Burruezo - guitars, vocal

Compilation espagnole.
Claustrofobia est extrait de Repulsion.

- JUSTINE (C-033) LP



> Zoom

Incantations And Elucubrations
1987 (?)

Incantations And Elucubrations

- Namibia (SWAPO Singers)
- Holdin' On (Tony Rallo & The Midnite Band)
- Funky Boogie (John Ozila)
- Mister Blunt (Kissing The Pink)
- Natural Colour (State Of Play)
- Choronzon (Tangerine Dream)
- Transamazonica (Mythos)
- Dju Ya Feza (Zazou, Bikaye and CY1)
- Ya Na Ho (Jim Pepper)I)

Compilation italienne "non-officielle"

Namibia est extrait de The Wind Of Change - Robert Wyatt With The SWAPO Singers.

- COSMIC COMMUNICATIONS (DP-MF 02) EP



> Zoom

Light And Shade
1987

Light And Shade

- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- Love At First Sight (The Gist)
- Sacred Heart Hotel (Stars Of Heaven)
- Clock (Young Marble Giants)
- Strange Fruit (Robert Wyatt)
- Holocaust (Rainy Day)
- Harmony Drone (Shelleyann Orphan)
- I Don't Owe You Anything (Sandie Shaw)
- Walk Out To Winter (Aztec Camera)
- This Liberal Love (Microdisney)
- That Summer Feeling (Jonathan Richman)
- The View From Her Room (Weekend)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

Strange Fruit est extrait de At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- ROUGH TRADE (VIL-28080) LP



> Zoom

Ré Records Quarterly

- In Life's Hands (5 uu's)
- Chairman Mao (Robert Wyatt)
- Yeah Mom (John French)
- From Suite Koradi (Arturo Meza)
- Suite (Resume 84-86) (Intellectual Cabaret)
- Christi Crucifixi Ultima Verba (Jocelyn Robert)
- Dance (Hunk Hai!)
- The Barking Dogs Versus The Minimalists (Henry Kaiser)

Ce LP accompagnait le magazine édité par Chris Cutler "*Ré Records Quarterly Magazine Volume 2 Number 2*".

Chairman Mao a été initialement composé pour le livre-disque de Stampa Alternativa.



> Zoom

Vol. 2 N° 2
1987



> Zoom

Mimi 86
1987



> Zoom

Back On The Road
1988



- RE RECORDS (0202) LP

Festival M.I.M.I 86

- Big Be Big (Purely Purgative Blues) (The Remotobs)
- Blanc (Etron Fou Leloublan)
- Trente Et Un (Joseph Racaille et l'Ensemble Guillaume de Rachaux)
- Making Seek And Hide (Fred Frith)
- The Way Things Fall (Skeleton Crew)
- Idyllic Rhythms (part II) (Regular Music)
- Trahi Ton Secret (Virgule IV)
- Post-Polar (Les Batteries)
- **Chanson Pop (= Alifib) (Pascal Comelade Et Le Bel Canto Orquestra)** [R. Wyatt]
- Park Güell (Pascal Comelade et le Bel Canto Orquestra)

Premier Festival MIMI aux Arènes Coinon à Saint-Rémy-de-Provence entre le 3 et le 6 juillet 1986

- DISQUES INOUI/OBLIQUES MUSIQUE (06910 4680) LP

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

Back On The Road - 32 Tracks Of The Very Best Of Progressive Underground

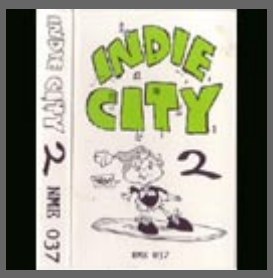
Disc 1
- All Right Now (Free)
- All Along The Watchtower (Jimi Hendrix)
- Living In The Past (Jethro Tull)
- Hocus Pocus (Focus)
- Eight Miles High (The Byrds)
- Rainbow Chaser (Nirvana)
- America/2nd Amendment (Nice)
- Northern Sky (Nick Drake)
- On The Road Again (Canned Heat)
- Paranoid (Black Sabbath)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Mona (Quicksilver Messenger Service)
- My White Bicycle (Tomorrow)
- Love Really Changed Me (Spooky Tooth)
- Race With The Devil (Gun)
- **10.30 Returns To The Bedroom (Soft Machine)**

Disc 2
- Strange Brew (Cream)
- Silver Machine (Hawkwind)
- Meet On The Ledge (Fairport Convention)
- Fire (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- Woodstock (Matthews Southern Comfort)
- Paper Sun (Traffic)
- Do It (Pink Fairies)
- Tom Tiddler's Ground (Roy Harper)
- Black Night (Deep Purple)
- Out Demons Out (Edgar Broughton Band)
- Loves Like A Man (Ten Years After)
- Venus In Furs (Velvet Underground)
- Fresh Garbage (Spirit)
- One And One Is One (Medicine

10.30 Returns To The Bedroom est extrait de Soft Machine - Volume Two.

- STYLUS RECORDS (SMR 854) 2xLP

Head)
- Change Song (Blodwyn Pig)



> Zoom

Indie City 2
1988

Indie City 2

- Shine (House Of Love)
- Up The Hill And Down The Slope (The Loft)
- Dark streets Of London (The Pogues)
- Wide Open Road (The Triffids)
- Hand In Glove (The Smiths)
- Stalin Wasn't Stallin' (Robert Wyatt)
- There Goes Concord Again (And The Native Hipsters)
- Human Fly (The Cramps)
- Radio free Europe (REM)
- Gangsters (The Special AKA)
- Holiday In Cambodia (Dead Kennedys)
- Fat Man (The Southern Death Cult)
- Spiritwalker (The Cult)
- Really Stupid (The Primitives)
- Roadrunner Twice (Jonathan Richman)
- Hymn For The Village (James)
- Rowche Rumble (The Fall)
- Black Country Chain Massacre (Pop Will Eat Itself)
- Song To The Siren (This Mortal Coil)
- Murder (New Order)

Stalin Wasn't Stalling est extrait du single Stalin Wasn't Stalling/ Stalingrad.

- NME COMPILATION (037)
Cassette



> Zoom 1 2



100 Jahre Die Internationale
1988

100 Jahre Die Internationale

- Pete Seeger
- Delegierte des Berliner Vereinigungsparteitages der KPD und SPD, 1946
- Schalmei-Kapelle des R.F.B. Berlin-Cöpenick 16, Abteilung, 1929
- Matthias Kiessling (DDR) Bearbeiter:Matthias Kiessling
- Chor und Orchester des Rundfunks der UdSSR
- Balalaïkaorchester der Neuen Truppe, 1929
- Blasorchester der Staatkapelle Berlin. Bearbeiter: Hanns Eisler vermütlich 1933
- Ernst Busch (DDR) (Hans-Beimler-Lied, Text Ernst Buch, 1937)
- Teilnehmer der Trauerzuges für Pablo Neruda, 1973
- Ein Kubanisches Ensemble
- Rob van de Meeberg (Niederlande) Bearbeiter: Herman Schonnderwalt, Carl Schulze
- Robert Wyatt (Grossbritannien) Bearbeiter: Robert Wyatt
- Socialist Victory Choir (Grossbritannien) Bearbeiter: Fred Tomlinson
- Sogenanntes Linksradikales Blasorchester (BRD) ("Rote Sonne" - Bearbeiter: Heiner Goebbels)
- Eine Spieluhr
- Banda Musicale Della Città Di Collegno e gli Imputati el Processo dei "56" al Tribunale Di Torino, 1971 Bearbeiter: Aldo Costa
- Hannes Wader (BRD)
- Marc Ogeret (Frankreich)

The Internationale est extrait de l'album The Recommended Records Sampler.

- ETERNA (815171) LP

The Watt Works Family Album

- Fleur Carnivore (Carla Bley)
- Best Of Fields (Karen Mantler)
- Walking Batteriewoman (Carla Bley)
- L'Abattoir, A (Michael Mantler with Robert Wyatt)

L'Abattoir est extrait de Many Have No Speech.
Doubtful Guest est extrait de The Hapless Child.



The Watt Works Family Album
1989

- Crab Alley (Steve Swallow)
- When I Run (Michael Mantler)
- I Can't Stand Another Night Alone (In Bed With You) (Steve Weisberg)
- Allen (part 2) (Michael Mantler)
- Talking Hearts (Carla Bley)
- Twenty (Michael Mantler)
- I Hate To Sing (Carla Bley)
- Movie Six (Michael Mantler)
- Ad Infinitum (Carla Bley)
- **Doubtful Guest (Michael Mantler with Robert Wyatt)**
- Funnybird Song (Carla Bley)

- ECM RECORDS (3122-2) CD



Zoom

Old Playfellows (Reedit.)
1989

Ben Watt/Marine Girls/ Robert Wyatt

- **Walter And John (Ben Watt & Robert Wyatt)**
- Aquamarine (Ben Watt)
- Slipping Slowly (Ben Watt)
- Another Conversation With Myself (Ben Watt)
- **A Girl In Winter (Ben Watt & Robert Wyatt)**
- On My Mind (Marine Girls)
- The Lure Of The Rockpools (Marine Girls)
- Cant (Ben Watt)
- Tower Of Silence (Ben Watt)
- Aubade (Ben Watt)

Réédition japonaise (sans le titre de Tracey Thorne *Goodbye Joe*) de la compilation Old Playfellows parue en 1982 .

Walter And John et *A Girl In Winter* sont extraits de l'album Summer Into Winter

- VAP (85052-25) CD



> Zoom

Diving For Pearls - Volume 1
1989

Diving For Pearls

- Is Vic There (Department S)
- Sally Cinamon (The Stone Roses)
- Pale Blue Eyes (Edwyn Collins and Paul Quinn)
- A New England (Kirsty MacColl)
- Night And Day (Everything But The Girl)
- Good Technology (Red Guitars)
- Birthday (The Sugarcubes)
- Hypnotized (Spacemen 3)
- Cry Me A River (Mari Wilson)
- Jet Set Junta (The Monochrome Set)
- It's Obvious (The Au Pairs)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- DINO ENTERTAINMENT (INDLP 1) LP
- DINO ENTERTAINMENT (DINCD 1) CD



> Zoom

Promo Version
1990

Cooking Vinyl

- **Turn Things Upside Down (The Happy End With Robert Wyatt)**
- Wondering Where The Lions Lions Are (Bruce Cockburn)
- Moyasta Junction (Davy Spillane)
- Mhorag's Na Horo Gheallaidh (Clannad)

Turn Things Upside Down est extrait de Turn Things Upside Down.

- COOKING VINYL - EP

Galaxy

- Diamonds In The Sky (Vangelis)
- The Passage (Seiler/Lorenz)

1/1 est extrait de Music For Airport.



> Zoom

Galaxy - Vol. 2
1990

- Bayreuth Return (Klaus Schulze)
- Ocean Of Tenderness (Ashra)
- Electronic Universe (Software)
- Sun And Moon (Michael Hoenig)
- Mount Teide (Mike Oldfield)
- 1/1 (Brian Eno With Robert Wyatt)
- A Fragile Landscape (Kit Watkins)
- Spacelab (Mind Over Matter)
- Syn-Code-Sunset (Software)
- Meditation (R.Wahnfried)

- INNOVATIVE (IC-710108) CD



> Zoom

A Constant Source
Of Interruption
1990

A Constant Source Of Interruption

- How Soon Is Now ? (Smiths)
- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- Lions in My Own Garden (Prefab Sprout)
- That Summer Feeling (Jonathan Richman & the Modern Lovers)
- Anatomy Of Love (Shelleyan Orphan)
- Politics (Girls At Our Best)
- I'll Keep It With Mine (Rainy Day)
- The Lights Of Tetouan (The Stars of Heaven)
- Move Me (Woodentops)
- Let's Go Swimming (Arthur Russell)
- Whistling In The Dark (Easterhouse)
- Stop That Girl (Vic Godard)
- View From Her Room (Weekend)
- River (Daniel Binttii)
- No-One's Little Girl (Raincoats)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- ROUGH TRADE (LCD6004) CD



> Zoom

Oh Boy... The Compilation
1990

Oh Boy... The Compilation

- Twistin' The Night Away (from "That's all you need") (The Faces)
- It's A Plain Shame (from "Humble Pie + Peter Frampton Live in '73") (Peter Frampton)
- Ride Sally ride (from "What ever happened to Dick and Steve?") (LouReed)
- The Rake (from "It's not you") (Edgar Broughton Band)
- Superstitious (from "Let me love you") (Beck, Bogart & Appice)
- Wishing Well (from "Free or dead") (Free)
- Hymn 43 (from "A new day yesterday") (Jethro Tull)
- Children Of The Grave (from "Metal mess") (Black Sabbath)
- Whole Lotta Love (from "1st April (A Paris affair)") (Led Zeppelin)
- Hard Monkeys (from "Live in the Bronx") (Ten Years After)
- Dixie Chicken / Triple face Boogie (from "When the shit hits the fan") (Little Feat)
- Meeting Of The Spirits (from "Live") (Mahavishnu Orchestra)
- Moon In June (from "Live") (Soft Machine)
- Many Are Called - But Few Get Up (from "Brazilian cucumber meet Deke's new nose") (Man)

An edition promo sampler of the bootleg label Oh Boy, limited to 1000 copies.

Live recordings from various sources and dates.

Moon In June est extrait de Soft Machine Live.

- OH BOY (1-9000) CD



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

Ambition Vol.1 & 2
1991

The History Of Cherry Red Records - Vol.1 & 2

Disc 1
- Bored
- Right Now
- Holiday In Cambodia
- Too Drunk To Fuck
- What Stanley Saw
- You Scare Me To Death
- History Of Rock & Roll
- Rangers In The Nightst (Robert Wyatt)
- Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?
- Celebration
- Hungry So Angry
- Four Corners Of the Earth
- It's A Fine Day
- Sunbursts In
- Chenko
- Johnny Du Lump
- Die Liebe
- Girl
- This Brilliant Evening
- Primitive Painters
- Look Of Love
- Psych-Out
- World
- What's In Your Mind (Mexico 70)

Disc 2
- Jet Set Junta (The Monochrome Set)
- Night and Day (Everything But The Girl)
- From A to B (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Something Sends Me To Sleep (Felt)
- Plain Sailing (Tracey Thorn)
- If She Doesn't Smile (It'll Rain) (Fantastic Something)
- Letter from America (Thomas Leer)
- Xoyo (The Passage)
- Walter And John (Ben Watt With Robert Wyatt)
- Your Holiness (Kevin Coyne)
- On My Mind (Marine Girls)
- Mating Game (The Monochrome Set)
- Spain (Kevin Hewick)
- Talking Glamour (Marc Bolan)
- Foreign Correspondent (Morgan Fisher)
- Penelope Tree (Felt)
- Taboos (The Passage)
- Simply Couldn't Care (Tracey Thorn)
- You Frighten (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Paraffin Brain (The Nightingales)
- Departure (Ben Watt)
- How To Die With Style (Quentin Crisp)
- English Rose (Everything But The Girl)

Rangers in the Nightst est extrait de Miniatures.
Water And John est extrait du EP Summer Into Winter.

- CHERRY RED (CD BRED140)
  2xCD



> Zoom

Before The Fall
1991

Peel Sessions 1967-1977

- Spanish Castle Magic (Jimi Hendrix)
- Songs Of Yesterday (Free)
- Doin' Alright (Queen)
- Ballad Of A Well-Known Gun (Elton John)
- Lady Eleanor (Lindisfarne)
- Rosalyn (Pretty Things)
- Fire (Arthur Brown)
- I'd Rather Go Blind (Chicken Shack)
- Marlene (Kevin Coyne)
- Pictures In The Sky (Medicine Head)
- Sun Eye (T Rex)
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening (Soft Machine)
- Geheim (Can)
- Check Out (Family)
- Dancing In The Moonlight (Thin Lizzy)
- Once I Was (Tim Buckley)
- The Fiddle And The Drum (June Tabor)
- Sofa Head (Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band)
- Baby Lemonade (Syd Barrett)
- Janitor of Lunacy (Nico)

Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening est extrait de Soft Machine - Volume Two.

- STRANGE FRUIT (SFRLP 203)
  2xLP
- STRANGE FRUIT (SFRCD 203)
  CD



> Zoom

A Historical Debt
1991

A Historical Debt

- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- Push Me Shove Me (Live) (Erasure)
- Halo (Depeche Mode)
- Possible Worlds (The Shamen)
- Pump Up The Volume (Marrs)
- **The Sweetest Girl (Scritti Politti)**
- Birthday (The Sugarcubes)
- Phobia (Flowered Up)
- The Only One I Know (The Charlatans)
- Sleep Well Tonight (Inspiral Carpets)
- Well Well Well (The Woodentops)
- Godlike (The Dylans)
- All My Dreams Are Dead (Television Personalities
- Jeane (Sandie Shaw)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Skin Storm (Bradford)
- Let's Kiss And Make Up (The Field Mice)
- I Wonder Why (The Heart Throbs)
- Arc-Lite (Loop)
- Gods Zoo (Death Cult)

The Sweetest Girl est extrait de Songs To Remember.
Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- BEECHWOOD RECORDS (HIST1 CD) CD
- BEECHWOOD RECORDS (HIST1 LP) 2xLP



Selections From Vol.2
1991

The ReR Quaterly

- **Chairman Mao (Robert Wyatt)**
- Wedding (Iva Bittova/Pavel Fajt)
- Tra le Due Inghiltterre (LA 1919)
- Christi Crucifixi Ultima Verba (Jocelyn Robert)
- Pageant For Blinking Signal (James Grigsby)
- Flaubears Dancing (J. Lachan)
- Barking Of Dogs Vs. The Minimalists (Henry Kaiser)
- Picasso's Last Stand (Increase The Angle)
- All Thumbs (Bill Gilonis)
- Eggs And I (David Thomas)
- Pegase (Jospeh Racaille)
- Klangfarbenprobe (John Oswald)
- Warsong (Musci/Venosta)
- Ridens/Orbiston/Parva (Luciano Margiorani)
- In Life's Hands (5UU'S)
- Warheads (James Grigsby)
- Under The X-Mas Tree (When)
- Usa Intolerance (Jean Derome)

Chairman Mao a été initialement composé pour le livre-disque de Stampa Alternativa

- RECOMMENDED RECORDS (RERQCD2) CD



> Zoom

The Indie Scene 1982
1992

The Indie Scene 1982 : The Story Of British Independent Music

- Pillar To Post (Aztec Camera)
- Revolutionary Spirit (The Wild Swans)
- Things That Have Learnt to Walk That Ought to Crawl (The Room)
- Night and Day (Everything But the Girl)
- Marching On (The Alarm)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Temptation (New Order)
- Saturday Night Special (Fad Gadget)
- Lonely Spy (Lori and the Chameleons)
- On Interstate 15 (Wall of Voodoo)
- All About You (Thomas Leer)
- My Spine Is The Bassline (Shriekback)
- Conspiracy (The Higsons)
- More Than A Dream (The Farmers Boys)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- CONNOISSEUR COLLECTION (IBM CD 82) CD

- On My Mind (The Marine Girls)
- Beat the Beat (Mari Wilson With The Wilsations)
- Viva la Revolution (The Adicts)
- Open Your Eyes (The Lords Of The New Church)
- Shaving My Neck (Gene Loves Jezebel)
- Pagan Love Song (Virgin Prunes)
- Xoyo (The Passage)
- Nellie The Elephant (The Toy Dolls)



> Zoom

The Indie Scene 1985
1992

The Indie Scene 1985 : The Story Of British Independent Music

- The Wind Of Change (Robert Wyatt)
- Ball Of Confusion (Love & Rockets)
- Cruisers Creek (The Fall)
- A New England (Billy Bragg)
- It Will Come (The Woodentops)
- Be With Me (Red Guitars)
- Ironmasters (Men They Couldn't Hang)
- Action Paintings (The Blue Aeroplanes)
- Up The Hill And Down The Slope (The Loft)
- You Are My Friend (Rain Parade)
- Ambassadors Of Love (Milkshakes)
- I'm Alright With You (Pastels)
- What's Happening (Jasmine Minks)
- Don't Slip (Meat Whiplash)
- VP (That Petrol Emotion)
- When It All Comes Down (Icicle Works)
- Death Valley '69 (Sonic Youth)
- Crawfish (Johnny Thunders & Patti Paladin)
- Desire (Gene Loves Jezebel)
- Diving For Pearls (1000 Mexicans)

The Wind Of Change est extrait du EP The Wind Of Change.

- CONNOISSEUR COLLECTION (IBM CD 85) CD



> Zoom

Ptolemaic Terrascope Magazine #9
1992

Ptolemaic Terrascope Magazine

- Emily Grace (Green Pajamas)
- Intro And Outro (Robert Wyatt)
- Bluff (Mandragora)
- Ragana (Mick Hutchinson)

- Robert Wyatt - piano

Single diffusé avec le n° 1 - Vol.3 de janvier 1992 de la revue anglaise *Ptolemaic Terrascope* - EP



American Clavé
1993

American Clavé

Disc 1
- Salute To Elegua
- Tanguedia III
- "...When I Lose Myself In The Darkeness Of Love, No, This Love..."
- ...She Turned So That Maybe a Third Of Her Face Was In This Fuckin'
- 'sputin
- Jes' Grew
- Make Love 2
- Ah, Intruder! (Female)
- Prelude to the Cyclical Night, Pt. 1
- First And Last To Love Me (2, December)
- Ebioso

Curtsy est extrait de Darn It.

- AMERICAN CLAVE RECORDS (AMCL 1020/26 2) 2xCD

- Author Reflects On His Thirty-Fifth Birthday
- Curtsy (Paul Haines with Robert Wyatt)
- At The Moment Of the Serve

Disc 2
- Meaning A Visa
- Two (Still in Half Light)
- Soledad
- Fool-Ology (The Song)
- Lover Divides Time (To Hear How It Sounds)
- India Song
- Poem For Gretchen Ruth
- New Fast
- Velasquez
- There Aren't These Things)



> Zoom

Weird And Wonderful
1993

Weird And Wonderful

- Hello Or Goodbye (The Magnolias)
- Grid Of Absence (Brick Supply)
- Endless Fall (Lydia Lunch & Rowland S. Howard)
- The Ghost Of Lonnie Mack (The Beat Poets)
- He's Dead (Suede)
- Light Of Life (The Celibate Rifles)
- God Cries (Zuzu´s Petals)
- Everytime (Sofahead)
- Slack (Bivouac)
- Loretta's Scars (Pavement)
- Worship (Robert Wyatt)
- While You Were Out (Carter USM)
- Sennen (Ride)
- Jigsaw Blues (Nikki Sudden)
- Here's Johnny (Blaggers ITA)
- Springtime (Leatherface)
- Buffalo Bill (The Boo Radleys)
- Burning Hole (Crane)
- My Right (Unsane)

Worship est extrait de Dondestan.

- ROUGH TRADE (JAC-001) CD



> Zoom

Mr Collector Turns You On
1993

Mr Collector Turns You On

- Why Dontcha (West, Bruce & Laing)
- Stone County (Johnny Winter)
- Sweet Burgundi (Tommy Bolin)
- Mean Old Frisco Blues (Muddy Waters)
- Priceless (Ronnie Wood)
- Coo-Coo (Big Brother & The Holding Company Featuring Janis Joplin)
- Let's Go Home (John Hammond)
- For Yasgur's Farm (Mountain)
- Slow Blues (Mick Taylor)
- Stompin' At The Savoy (The Charlie Watts Orchestra)
- E.P.V. (Soft Machine)
- To Carla, Marsha And Caroline (Robert Wyatt)

Promo Version.

To Carla, Marsha And Caroline est extrait de The End Of An Ear.

- COLUMBIA (SAMPCD 1733) CD



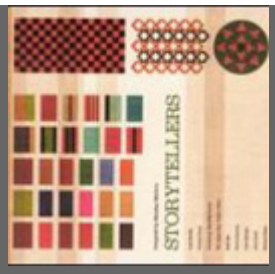
> Zoom

16 Tracks By The Great Singersongwriters Of Today

- Fisherman's Blues (The Waterboys)
- Sunshine On Leith (The Proclaimers)
- This Beautiful Pain (Runrig)
- Candle In The Wind (Elton John)
- Anchorage (Michelle Shocked)
- Don't Go (Hothouse Flowers)
- My Old Friend The Blues (Eddi Reader)
- Copperhead Road (Steve Earle)
- Walk On The Wild Side (Lou Reed)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- War Baby (Tom Robinson)
- Cry Cry (Oysterband)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- NECTAR (NTRCD 012) CD



Storytellers
1994

- Find My Love (Fairground Attraction)
- River Boat Song (J.J. Cale)
- All The Way From America (Joan Armtrading)
- Hawaiian Island World (World Party)



> Zoom

Twilight Notes
1995

Twilight Notes

- Beginn Musik der Zwitter CD (Max Goldt)
- Youth (Spartak)
- Venice Shoes (The Bathers)
- Cheerio (Malaria)
- Drifting Monsters (Rain On Bamboo)
- Sunrise (And Also The Trees)
- Simple Mind (The Pachinko Fake)
- Being In Light (Twice A Man)
- Monsoon (Dissidenten)
- Ship Of Fools (The Residents)
- **Gloria Gloom (The More Extended Versions)** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Lass und ein Wunder sein (Ton Steine Scherben)
- A Better Place (The Setters)
- From Temptation To You (Jeffrey Lee Pierce)
- Down By The Drum (The Vision)

Compilation

- INDIGO (3001-2) CD



Red Heaven
1995

Red Heaven - 20 Of Best From The Cherry Red Label

- It's a fine day (Jane)
- An mp speaks (Mc Carthy)
- Plain sailing (Tracey Thorn)
- Everybody's problem (Pulp)
- On my mind (Marine Girls)
- Sunbursts in (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Xoyo (The Passage)
- All about you (Thomas Leer)
- Nicky (Momus)
- Cat black (the wizard's hat) (Marc Bolan)
- Watery Song (Maurice Deebank)
- Trial of doctor Fancy (King Of Luxembourg)
- Night and day (Everything But The Girl)
- If she doesn't smile (Fantastic Something)
- **Walter And John (Ben Watt & Robert Wyatt)**
- Jet set junta (The Monochrome Set)
- Parafin brain (The Nightingales)
- This brilliant evening (In Embrace)
- You mary you (Louis Phillipe)
- Reach for your gun (Bid)

Water And John est extrait du EP Summer Into Winter.

- CHERRY RED (NTMCD 520) CD

Raccolta Differenziata 2

- Wait Until Tomorrow (Caetano Veloso/Gilberto Gil)
- Trombonik Tanz (Don Byron)
- Swedish Reggae (Piirpauke)
- Al Fin Te Vi (Cachao)
- Street Music (Dr Didg)
- Our Spanish Love Song (Charlie Haden Quartet West)

Compilation produite par Radio Popolare de Milan (Italie).

A Little Something est extrait de Flotsam Jetsam.

- MERCURY (525 833-2) CD



> Zoom

Raccolta Differenziata 2
1995

- Babuji Dheere Chalna (Geeta Duit)
- Boeves Psalm (Lars Hollmer)
- Zamba del Che (Daniele Sepe)
- Flor Formosa (Travadinha)
- Rah Yabki (Cheika Remitti)
- Agolo (Angelique kidjo)
- A Countess From Hong Kong (Thomas Beckmann)
- **A Little Something (Robert Wyatt & Friends)**
- Bella Ciao (Tony Coe)



> Zoom

Progressive Rock
1995

Progressive Rock

- America (Nice)
- Time Of Your Life (Daevid Allen)
- **Moon In June (Soft Machine)**
- You Can't Kill Me (Gong)
- **Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening (Matching Mole)**
- Hurricane Fighter Plane (Red Krayola)
- Intermezzo For Karelia Suite (Nice)
- Urban Guerrilla (Hawkwind)

Moon In June est extrait de Third.

Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening est extrait de Matching Mole.

- HOBBY & WORK ITALIANA EDITRICE (GRH0018) CD



Ambitious ?
1996

A Collection Of Some Of Britain's Most Influential Alternative Artists

- Holiday in Cambodia (Dead Kennedys)
- What Stanley Saw (Matt Johnson)
- You Scare Me To Death (Marc Bolan)
- On My Mind (Everything But The Girl)
- History Of Rock 'n' Roll (Andy Partridge)
- **Rangers In The Nightst (Robert Wyatt)**
- D'ya Think I'm Sexy (Hybrid Kids)
- Celebration (Morgan-Fisher)
- Hungry, So Angry (Medium, Medium)
- Jet Set Junta (The Monochrome Set)
- Die Liebe (Laibach)
- Serpico (Prolapse)
- Chenko (Red Box)
- Goodbye Joe (Tracey Thorn)
- Primitive Painters (Felt)
- World (Blow-Up)
- The Look Of Love (Martyn Bates)
- The Sadness Of Things (Momus)

Rangers in the Nightst est extrait de Miniatures.

- CBS RECORDS (CS-8529-2) CD



Resurgence

- The Hands Of Che Guevara (Jakko)
- Wildlife Choir (Anthony Phillips)
- Then And Now (Jakko)
- Crimsworth (Extract) (Bill Nelson)
- Lonely Swan (Holi)
- The Tin Man (Boon)
- Eastern Cool (Bj Cole)
- No. 1 (Extract) (Peter Knight And Danny Thompson)
- Ingenuity (Ultravox)

Kew Rhone est extrait de Songs.

CD distribué avec le magazine *"The Wire"* de mars 1996.

- RESURGENCE (RES001CD) CD

Resurgence
1996

- Dangerous Dreams (Jakko)
- Begin To Burn (Bill Nelson)
- Kew Rhone (John Greaves And Robert Wyatt)
- Luna Park (Culturemix With Bill Nelson)
- Flipside (Bill Nelson)
- Babyship Blue (No-Man)
- Angeldust (No-Man With Robert Fripp)



> Zoom

20 Years Of Resistance To Genocide In East Timor
1996

20 Years Of Resistance To Genocide In East Timor

Disc 1
- Amnesty International Appeal For East Timor (Peter Gabriel)
- Fourteen Black Paintings (Peter Gabriel)
- Hands Touching Earth (Paul Moran)
- Kolele Mai (Midnight Oil)
- Priests Of The Golden Bull (Buffy Sainte-Marie)
- East Timor (Ginger Baker)
- Esquadrao Da Morte (Xutos & Pontapés)
- Mothers Of The Disappeared (U2)
- Minha Mae Timor Esta Chorando (Abe Ho Aloz)

Disc2
- Timor From Overseas (MacDonald / Gang)
- Breaking The Silence (Loreena McKennitt)
- Soldado Java (Agio Pereira)
- An Indonesian Appeal (Anonymous)
- Jiwaku Jiwaku (Abe Ho Aloz)
- Casualties Of War (Susan Aglukark)
- Timor (Yothu Yindi)
- O Hele La (Abe Ho Aloz)
- Self-Determination Day (Aloz)
- Em Portugues Vos Amamos (Bonga)
- East Timor (Robert Wyatt)

East Timor est extrait de Old Rottenhat.

- HANDS FREE RECORDS HANDS20CD) 2xCD



> Zoom

Best Of Acid Jazz
1996

Best Of Acid Jazz

Disc 1
- Cantaloop (Us3)
- Space Cowboy (Jamiroquai)
- Midnight At The Oasis [Radio Version] (The Brand New Heavies)
- Everyday [Bluey's 7" Mix] (Incognito)
- Turn On, Tune In, Cop Out [Radio Mix] (Freak Power)
- People In Tha Middle (Spearhead)
- Feel So High (Des'ree)
- Rebirth Of Slick [Cool Like Dat] (Digable Planets)
- Feel The Music (Guru)
- Been Thinking About You [Original Opaz Mix] (Martine Girault)
- So What! (Ronny Jordan)
- Real Love [Nush Glamour Mix] (Drizabone)
- Never Stop [Radio Edit] (The Brand New Heavies)
- Spiritual Love [Natural 7"] (Urban Species)
- Green Screen (New Jersey Kings)
- Mission Impossible (The James Taylor Quartet)
- Keep Steppin' (Omar) 3:50
- Heavy Vibes (Vibraphonic)
- Boundaries [Radio Edit] Leena Conquest & Hip Hop Finger
- Take The L Train [To 8th Avenue] (Brooklyn Funk Essentials)

Disc 2
- Whole Lotta Love (Goldbug)
- Apparently Nothin' [Edit] (Young Disciples)
- Masterplan (Diana Brown & Barrie K Sharpe)
- Something In My Eye (Corduroy)
- Venceremos (Working Week)
- Whirl Keeps Turning [Radio Edit] (Jhelisa)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

This 5:08 version mix is exclusive to this CD.

- GLOBAL TV (RADCD 35) 2xCD

- Dream Come True (The Brand New Heavies)
- D'Influence [Wow Original] [Dance Energy Edit] (Good Lover)
- Promise Me Nothing [Album Version] (Repercussions)
- The Creator Has A Masterplan (Brooklyn Funk Essentials)
- Now Is The Time [Original Version] (D*Note)
- Find Our Love (City Lix)
- 24 For Betty Page (Snowboy)
- Follow That Arab (Corduroy)
- Turn It All Around (This I Dig)
- Watcha Gonna Do (Xan)
- Whatchugot (Groove Collective)
- Funky Guitar [Sure Shot Deep Mix] (TC 1992)
- Jesse (Mother Earth)
- Let It Last (Carleen Anderson))



> Zoom

Ocean Of Sound 2
1996

Crooning On Venus

- Rangers In The Nightst (Robert Wyatt)
- Time (Sly And The Family Stone)
- Yet So Beautiful (Laurel Macdonald)
- Cais (Milton Nascimento)
- I Still Love Albert Einstein (Earthling)
- Mercury (Royal Tree)
- See Through Love (Arthur Russell)
- My Ideal (Chet Baker)
- I See You Again (Stina Nordenstam)
- Take Me As I Am (John Lee Hooker)
- Starsailor (Tim Buckley)
- Singing Before Hunting (Yanomani Young Men)
- Rain (Tenko/Ikue Mori)
- Taita Inty (Yma Samac)
- Scott walker
- White Jam (Captain Beefheart)
- Young And Supernatural (Lilacs)
- Falling (Judee Cruise)
- Martyn Bates And Mick Harriss
- Autumn Leaves (Coldcut)
- Prelude/Lawns Of Dreams (Nico)
- Protection (Massive Attack)
- Cronica Da Casa Assassinanda (Tom Joblin)
- Diabarum (Ryuichi Sakatmoto)
- Wind Chimes (Beach Boys)
- Honey Moon (Haruomi Hosono)
- You Will Be Loved Again (Mary Margaret O'Hara)
- Twilight Zone (Dr John)
- Higher Than The Sun (Primal Scream)
- Brilliant Trees (David Sylvian)
- Small Hours (John Martyn)
- Ever So Lonely/Eyes/Ocean (Sheila Chandra)
- Lifeforms (The Future Sound Of London)

Rangers in the Nightst est extrait de Miniatures.

- VIRGIN (7245 8 41718 2.7) 2xCD



> Zoom

Untitled
40 Amazing Tracks
One Brilliant Album
1996

Untitled

Disc 1
- Live Forever (Oasis)
- Stupid Girl (Garbage)
- Girls & Boys (Blur)
- Wake Up Boo! (The Boo Radleys)
- Ladykillers (Lush)
- Change (Lightning Seeds)
- King Of The Kerb (Echobelly)
- Waking Up (Elastica)
- Uh Huh Oh Yeh (Paul Weller)
- A Girl Like You (Edwyn Collins)
- Countdown (Pulp)
- Waterfall (The Stone Roses)
- Movin' On Up (Primal Scream)
- Creep (Radiohead)
- Stay Together (Suede)
- Can U Dig It? (The Mock Turtles)
- Weak (Skunk Anansie)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- GLOBAL TELEVISION (RADCD32) 2xCD

- Neighbourhood (Space)
- You & Me Song (The Wannadies)
- Dizzy (Vic Reeves & The Wonder Stuff)

Disc 2
- Regret (New Order)
- Get The Message (Electronic)
- This Charming Man (The Smiths)
- Made Of Stone (The Stone Roses)
- Can't Be Sure (The Sundays)
- I'll Stand By You (The Pretenders)
- Road To Nowhere (Talking Heads)
- I Scare Myself (Thomas Dolby)
- Love Shack (The B-52's)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Just The One (The Levellers)
- Fishermans Blues (The Waterboys)
- Message In The Box (World Party)
- Mary's Prayer (Danny Wilson)
- Like Lovers Do (Lloyd Cole)
- Somewhere In My Heart (Aztec Camera)
- Don't Go (Hothouse Flowers)
- King Of Rock N' Roll (Prefab Sprout)
- Twist And Shout (Deacon Blue)
- Missing (Blanco / Eternal Radio Edit)(Everything But The Girl)



> Zoom

Dead & Gone
1997

Dead & Gone - Trauermärsche/Funeral Marches

- Leichenzug mit Blaskapelle
- Tres Marias (Banda De Tontontepec)
- Our Prayer (Albert Ayler)
- Song For Che (Robert Wyatt)
- A Village Funeral (Brass Band And Village Drummers In The Fantio Area)
- Nearer Ma God To Thee (Tuxedo Brass Band)
- Trauer-Sturmmarsch (Begräbniskapelle Aus Saigon)
- Hymn (Vrieze's, Jopie Klein Bazuin)
- West Lawn Dirge/Just A Closer Walk With Thee (Buck Funk & Reverend Anthony W. Reves)
- Karfreitagsprozession (Banda Musicale Vucciria,Palermo)
- Begräbnismelodie (Serbische Blaskapelle)
- Marche funèbre (Central Band Of The Raf)
- In The Sweet Bye And Bye (Olympia Brass Band)
- Ases Death (Willem Breuker Kollektief)
- Trauermarsch (Sogenanntes Linksradikales Blasorchester)
- Free As A Bird (Mike Westbrook Orchestra)
- Just A Closer Walk With Thee (George Lewis Eureka Brass Band)
- The Old Rugged Cross (Treme Brass Band)
- Anywhere I Lay My Head (Tom Waits)

Song For Che est extrait de Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard.

- TRIKONT RECORDS (CD 02342) CD



> Zoom

Never Been Higher! - 16 Musical Encouters Of A Different Kind

- All The Way From Memphis (Mott The Hoople)
- Once Bitten Twice Shy (Ian Hunter)
- God Gave Rock And Roll To You (Argent)
- Moon In June (excerpt) (Soft Machine)
- When The Train Comes (Sutherland Brothers, Quiver)
- Fresh Garbage (Spirit)
- Cosmic Wheels (Donovan)–

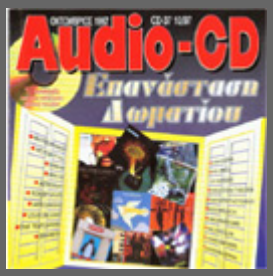
Promotion CD giveaway forming part of a Sony Rewind campaign by Sony Music and Andy's Records.

Duration of the excerpt from *Moon In June* : 4:12 (!)

- COLUMBIA (XPCD2172) CD

Never Been Higher!
1997

- Edward (Nicky Hopkins)
- Ain't No Love In The Heart In The City (Café Jacques)
- Killing Floor (The Electric Flag)
- Black Magic Woman (Fleetwood Mac)
- I'd Rather Go Blind (Christine Perfect)
- Stoned Soul Picnic (Laura Nyro)
- Statesboro' Blues (Taj Mahal)
- No Regrets (The Walker Brothers)
- Beasley Street (John Cooper Clarke)



> Zoom

Audio-CD 37
1997

Audio-CD

- Revolution In Apt 29 (Wayne Kramer)
- Master Celebrator (Not Fun At All)
- If You Say So (Samiam)
- With Automatic Shut Off (Man Or Astroman ?)
- **Free Will And Testament (Robert Wyatt)**
- Mando Civilizado (Arto Lindsay)
- Mi Nuera / Estando Padre Cura (Louis Delgado)
- In Search Of My Rose (The Tear Garden)
- Indigo (Brainbox)
- Garden Of Fascination (Tom Kazas)
- Fall (Single Gun Theory)
- Eerie Woman (Fantasyy Factoryy)
- Crazy Water (Bokomolech)
- Seen Enough (Kingdom Come)
- Twenty Two (Millencolin)
- Timora (Homo Sapiens)
- *[caractères grecs* = Diaphana Krina (Kat'archen)*]*

CD distribué avec le magazine grec *Audio Fanzine*.

Free Will And Testament est extrait de Shleep.

- AUDIO-CD (CD 37) CD



> Zoom

Une Rentrée 97
1997

Les Inrockuptibles

- Sonnet (The Verve)
- Dream (Forest For The Trees)
- Seven Months (Portishead)
- All Is Full Of Love (Björk)
- Supreme I (Finley Quaye)
- Sounds Of Time (Pressure Drop)
- Good Shit (Cornershop)
- Miss Modular (Stereolab)
- Egérie (Sylvain Vanot)
- On S'attache (Zézé Mago)
- Station Coffee (Jonathan Fire Easter)
- Turn It On (Sleater-Kinney)
- Je Ne Veux Pas Mourir (Mendelson)
- Modern Style (Jean Bart)
- Slim (Alpha)
- **Heaps Of Sheeps (Robert Wyatt)**
- Talisman (Air)
- Weather Storm (Craig Armstrong)

CD distribué avec le N° 118 de septembre 97 du magazine français Les Inrockuptibles.

Heaps Of Sheeps est extrait de Shleep.

- LES INROCKUPTIBLES - CD



A Progressive And Art Rock Primer
1997

A Progressive And Art Rock Primer

- Germ Patrol (Egg)
- **Soup Song (Robert Wyatt)**
- How Beautiful You Are (Peter Blegvad)
- Wingful Of Eyes (Gong)
- Spectral Mornings (Steve Hackett)
- My Experience (Peter Hammill)
- Theme One (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Hang On To A Dream (Nice)
- TNK (Tomorrow Never Knows) (Phil Manzanera)
- Out In The Sun (Patrick Moraz)
- Casablanca Moon (Slapp Happy)
- In The Dead Of Might (UK)
- Nothing To Lose (John Weston)

Soup Song est extrait de Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard.

- VIRGIN (CDOVD 497) CD



> Zoom

Earful Sampler
1997

Earful Sampler

- Main Theme (Joey Altruda With The Cocktail Crew)
- Say That Then (Mark Shannon)
- O Grande Lance... Fazer Romance (Viniclus Cantuaria)
- **Free Will And Testament (Robert Wyatt)**
- Fourth Of July - This Is Our Music (Galaxie 500)
- Q Samba (Arto Lindsay)
- Cripple Creek (Mr Hobart Smith)
- Down Where The Drunkards Roll (Maura O'Connell)
- Mar V Tierra (iCubanismol starring Jesus Alemaffy)
- That's Alright (Kelly Joe Phelps)
- A Song From Madocsa (Marta Sebstyen And Muzsikas)
- Fast Tenintu
- This Is As Close As We Get (Lullaby For The Working Class)
- Tongues Of Kali (Martyn Bennett)
- Seretonality (Mr Didg)
- The Mermaid (Paul Clayton)
- The Coming Rains (Bruce Cockburn)
- Hand In Hand (Bruce Cockburn)

Free Will And Testament est extrait de Shleep.

- EARFUL (EARCD001) CD



> Zoom

Strani Frutti
1997

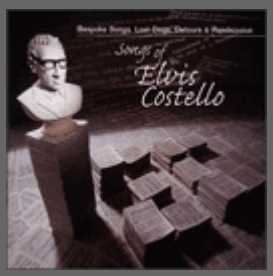
Strani Frutti

- Chimes of Freedom (Youssou'n'Dour)
- Inner City Blues (Working Week)
- Hasta Siempre Comandante (Tony Coe)
- Strange Fruit (Nina Simone)
- I Fought The Law (The Oyster Band)
- El Paso Del Ebro (Henry Lowther)
- Grandola Villa Morena (Charlie Haden)
- **Te Recuerdo Amanda (Robert Wyatt)**
- A Change Is Gonna Come (Neville Brothers)
- Thulasizwe/I Shall Be Released (Miriam Makeba)
- Working Class Hero (Marianne Faithfull)
- In Kamf (The Klezmatics)
- Nkosi Sikelel 'i Africa - Amampondo + Solid Brass Quintet (Intsholo)
- The Internationale (Billy Bragg)
- We Shall Overcome (Charlie Haden Liberation Music Orchestra)

Compilation produite par Radio Popolare de Milan (Italie).

Te Recuerdo Amanda est extrait de Work In Progress.

- POLYDOR/POLYGRAM ITALIA (555 284-2) CD



> Zoom

Bespoke Songs, Lost Dogs, Detours & Rendezvous
1998

Songs Of Elvis Costello

- Girls Take (Dave Edumnds)
- Unwanted Number (Fro Real)
- My Brave Face (Paul McCartney)
- Hidden Shame (Johnny Cash)
- All Grown Up (Tasmin Archer
- Miss Mary (Zucchero)
- Shadow & Jimmy (Was(Not Was)
- Upon A Veil Of Midnight Blue (Mary Coughlan)
- Deep Dead Blue (Anuna)
- The Comedians (Roy Orbison)
- The Deportees Club (Christy Moore
- Punishing Kiss (Annie Ross & The Low Note Quintet)
- Shamed Into Love (Ruben Blades)
- Shatterproof (Billy Bremner)
- Dirty Rotten Shame (Ronnie Drew)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- The Birds Will Still Be Singing (Norma Tabor)
- I Want To Vanish (June Tabor)
- The Other End Of The Telescope (Til Tuesday)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- RHINO RECORDS (R2 75273) CD

- Indoor Fireworks (Nick Lowe & His Cowboy Outfit)
- Almost Blue (Chet Baker)



Further Mutations
1998

Lo Recordings, Vol. 4: Further Mutations

- Feeling Brown, Pt. 1 (Twisted Science)
- Pooo (Peter Kraut)
- Spiegels
- Blasted Wook (Luke Vibert)
- See Sawing Sea (David Kristian)
- Clockwork (Cujo)
- Time's T-Bone
- We Can't Play for Shit E (Wormhole)
- DMN97
- Wooden League (Voafose)
- Feelin' Brown, Pt. 2 (Twisted Science)
- Lo-Band-Width
- My Name Is Sugar Caine (Barbed)
- Space Notes (The Mellowtrons)
- **Cry From the City (2 Player Widescreen Mix) (Fish Out Of Water + Robert Wyatt)**
- Cloaking Device
- Scratch (Ganger)
- Itch You Can't Fucking Scratch (Richard Thomas)
- Epicycle
- Eternal Boy (Bedouin Ascent)
- I'm Going to Hit the Ground Running (Richard Thomas)
- Careful With That Rake Eugene (Thurston Moore)
- White Painted Roads (2 Player)
- Demo (Freezer)

Cry from the City est extrait de Lucky Scars.

- LO RECORDINGS (LCD 05) CD



> Zoom

Celestial Voyagers
1998

New Visions/Celestial Voyagers

- Flightpath (Jonn Serrie)
- The Velocity of Love (Suzanne Ciani)
- Full Moon (Tim Wheater)
- Tubular Bells [excerpt] (Mike Oldfield)
- Crystal *White *Fire *Light [excerpt] (Iasos)
- Prelude (Vangelis)
- Harry's Game [From Patriot Games] (Clannad)
- Sacred Heart (Patrick OHearn)
- Starflight 1 (Kevin Braheny)
- On the Way [Space Caravan] (Michael Stearns)
- Courage (Ed VanFleet)
- Touchwood (Tangerine Dream)
- Novus Magnificat: Through the Stargate, Pt. 2 [excerpt] (Constance Demby)
- Shining by the River (Richard Burmer)
- **1/1 [Excerpt] (Brian Eno + Robert Wyatt)**
- Crystal Cathedral (Steven Halpern)

1/1 est extrait de Music For Airport.

- RHINO (75266) CD



Alternative Press

-- Kitty Kat Max (1,000 Clowns)
- From Your Mouth (God Lives Underwater)
- Everybody's Free (Baz Luhrmann)
- Public Access Girls (Truly)
- Selections From Tossing A Friend (Muckafurgason)
- Closing Time (Semisonic)
- It's Over, It's Under (Dolls Head)
- Velvet Pants (Propellerheads)
- Make Up Your Mind (The Interpreters)

Compilation.

Heaps Of Sheeps est extrait de Shleep.

- ALTERNATIVE PRESS (APCD18) CD

> Zoom

Spring A.P. Sampler
1998

- Single Orphan First Year Camel (Loop Guru)
- Tell The Time (Eclectics)
- Heaps Of Sheeps (Robert Wyatt)
- Head First, Feet First (Telegraph)
- Burnout (Walk On Water)
- Planet Sweet Planet (Kevin Michaels)
- Ud The Doudouk (Martyn Bennett)
- Come On (Don't Come On) (Fig Dish)
- Friend Island (godheadSilo)



> Zoom

Tête/Head
1998

Compilation Philippe Starck

- Hard Boiled Dub (Hiroshi Fujiwara)
- My Things (Alpha)
- Maryan (Robert Wyatt)
- The Promise (Michael Nyman)
- Sleep (Marianne Faithfull)
- Secret Agent (Philip Glass)
- Regiment (David Byrne/Brian Eno)
- Lament, extrait de Night Song (Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan/Michael Brook)
- Bird's Lament (Moon Dog)
- A Dream (Lou Reed/John Cale)
- The Night Flight From Houston (Laurie Anderson)
- Oh Caroline (Pascal Comelade)

Maryan est extrait de Shleep.

- LES TROIS SUISSES/VIRGIN (8466182) CD



> Zoom

Coeur/Heart
1998

Compilation Philippe Starck

- Sea Song (Robert Wyatt)
- Femme Fatale (The Velvet Underground with Nico)
- Hello It's Me (Lou Reed & John Cale
- Everybody's Talkin' B.O. Midnight Cowboy (Nilsson)
- Love Too Soon (PJ Harvey/Pascal Comelade)
- Street Hassle (Lou Reed)
- Yeh Jo Halka Saroor Sae (Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan)
- Times Square (Marianne Faithfull)
- Who Changed The Order (Manna)
- Al Veiven De MiCarreta (Nico Faquito)
- Mona ki n'Gixica (Bonga)
- Ti Amo (Pascal Comedale)

Sea Song est extrait de Rock Bottom.

- LES TROIS SUISSES/VIRGIN (8466152) CD



De Granada A La Luna
1998

Garcia Lorca Tribute

Disc 1
- Tierra y luna (Martirio)
- La luna asoma (Santiago Auseron)
- Daybreak (John Cale)
- Balad, Balad, Balad Caretas (Los Enemigos)
- El regreso (Enrique Morente)
- La canción de la mariposa (Amancio Prada)
- Casida del herido por el agua (Lagartija Nick Y Step Murray)
- Cancioncilla del primer deseo (Santiago Auseron)
- El llanto de la guitarra (Enrique Morente)
- Son de negros en Cuba (Compay Segundo)
- Canción de la muerte pequeña (Chucho Merchan)

Disc 2
- Landscape of a pissing multitude (Neneh Cherry)
- Oda a Salvador Dalí (Jordi SabateS Y Maria Del Mar Bonet)
- De Granada a la Luna (Michael Nyman)
- Nana de Sevilla (Imperio Argentina)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards, percussion, trumpet

Canción de Julieta a été initialement composé pour cet album.

- SOMBRA RECORDS (SRCD002) 2xCD

- Preludio (Imperio Argentina)
- Pequeño poema infinito (Jordi Sabates Y Josep palau I Fabre)
- Canción De Julieta (Robert Wyatt)
- Las Gacelas (Lagartija Nick)
- El diálogo del amargo (Mauricio Sotelo)



> Zoom

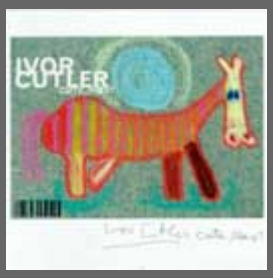
Hot Rock
1998

Hot Rock

- I Can Water My Plants (Monk & Canatella)
- Bete Noir (Bill Cargill)
- Disenchanted (Eric Wood)
- Are You Happy Now (Sophia)
- L'aridità Dell'aria (Cristina Dona')
- Maryan (Robert Wyatt)
- On Approach (Pell Mell)
- Up River (Jeff Tarlton)
- No Long At Ease (Thanatos)
- The Creeps (Luna)
- Sugar Helping (Long Fin Killie)
- Claister (The Sonora Pine)
- Lullaby Of The Moths (Heliun)
- There Ain't No Sweet Man... (Norma Waterson)

Maryan est extrait de Shleep.

- EDIZIONI OLI (OM0016) CD



> Zoom

Cute (H)ey?
1999

Ivor Cutler

- Shout For Joy (Albert Ammons)
- I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free (Nina Simone)
- 6 Romanian Folk Dances (Bartók)
- Beatus "7 Magnificat-Antiphonen, First Movement - Weisheit" (Arvo Pärt)
- Beatus "7 Magnificat-Antiphonen, Third Movement - Spross Aus Isais Wurzel" (Arvo Pärt)
- Turkish Mambo (Lennie Tristano)
- Drum Rhythms (South African Traditional)
- Kilimanjaro (Miriam Makeba)
- I Believe In Bugs (Ivor Cutler)
- Miyagi Mago Uta (Japanese Traditional)
- Didn't It Rain (Mahalia Jackson)
- Mabandla Dance (Chopi Musicians)
- Madoscai Szölö-Orzö (Marta Sebestyen)
- Edesanyam Rozafaja (Marta Sebestyen)
- Grass (Robert Wyatt)
- Beatus "7 Magnificat-Antiphonen, Second Movement - Adonai" (Arvo Pärt)
- Beatus "7 Magnificat-Antiphonen, Seventh Movement - Immanuel" (Arvo Pärt)
- I'm Walkin' To A Farm (Ivor Cutler)

Grass est extrait du single Grass/Trade Union.

- EMI (7243 4 96610 2 8) CD



Live & Direct
In Nottinghamshire
1999

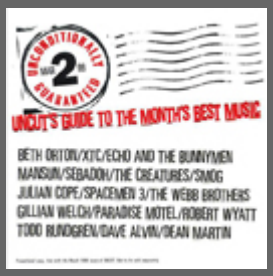
Live & Direct In Nottinghamshire

- Winds Of Change (Byron Wallen)
- Cameo (Septpiece)
- Yolanda (Phil Manzanera)
- September The Ninth (Robert Wyatt)
- Tall Stories (Mark Lockheart And Scratch Band)
- Extracts From 18 Guitars (Regular Music)
- The Snoid Trucks Up Broadway (David Starobin)
- Jigsaw (Noh Ground)

Free CD with The Wire issue 187, September 1999.

September The Ninth est extrait de Shleep.

- NOTTS (002) CD



> Zoom

Unconditionally Guaranteed 2
1999

Unconditionally Guaranteed 2 (Uncut's Guide To The Month's Best Music)

- River of Orchids (XTC)
- Abilene (Dave Alvin)
- Trampoline (Julian Cope)
- Tree (Sebadoh)
- Prettiest Thing (The Creatures)
- I'm a Believer (Robert Wyatt)
- My Morphine (Gillian Welch)
- Hollywood Landmines (The Paradise Motel)
- Forgiven (Echo & The Bunnymen)
- Beyond the Biosphere (The Webb Brothers)
- I Care (Mansun)
- Couldn't Cause Harm (Beth Orton)
- Zen Archer (Todd Rundgren)
- I Could Drive Forever (Smog)
- Revolution (Spacemen 3)
- Ain't That a Kick in the Head (Dean Martin)

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *Uncut* de mars 1999.

I'm A Believer est extrait de Boxerpts.

- UNCUT (UG-3 9) CD



> Zoom

La Casa Del Rock Naciente
1999

La Casa Del Rock Naciente

- Good Morning Little Schoolgirl (Live) (Johnny Winter)
- Subterranean Homesick Blues (Bob Dylan)
- Eight Miles High (The Byrds)
- Summertime (Big Brother & The Holding Company)
- Dance To The Music (Sly & The Family Stone)
- Superstition (Beck, Bogert & Appice)
- Mannish Boy (Muddy Waters)
- O Caroline (Matching Mole)
- The Magnificent Seven (The Clash)
- Talking In Your Sleep (The Romantics)
- Voodoo Child (Slight Return) (Stevie Ray Vaughan)
- She's In Fashion (Suede)
- Whatever (Oasis)
- Tranquillizer (Geneva)
- The Everlasting (Manic Street Preachers)
- Angel (Footsteps) (Jeff Beck)

O Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole.

- COLUMBIA (2-493529) CD



> Zoom

The Second Earful Sampler
1999

The Second Earful Sampler

- I'm A Believer (Robert Wyatt)
- Confucious (Jazz Jamaica)
- Superthruster (Sly & Robbie)
- That Wasn't Me (The Robert Cray Band)
- Keys (Golden Smog)
- Extremely Cool (Chuck E Weiss)
- Cumbia En Do Menor (Lito Barrientos)
- Heaven @ 12:07 (Mocean Worker)
- Jamming In Nijmegen (Cubanismo!)
- Clear Spot (Pernice Brothers)
- Up On The Downstroke (Ernest Ranglin)
- Mama Don't Allow (Alvin Youngblood Hart)
- Hope (Sweet Honey In The Rock)
- Time Has Told Me (Kelly Willis)
- Gaviota (Jimmy Bosch)
- One From Your Head (Hank Dogs)
- Cheikhna Demba (Toumani Diabate)

I'm A Believer est extrait du single I'm A Believer/Memories.

- RYKO (EARCD 002) CD



> Zoom

Fear Of A Red Planet
1999

Fear Of A Red Planet

- Thinking Of You (The Indestructible Beat)
- This Funeral Is For The Wrong Corpse (The Mekons)
- The Immortal Rich (T.V. Smith)
- Train On The Move (Barb Jungr)
- Not A Bad Week For The People (Robb Johnson)
- Sarajevo (Attila the Stockbroker)
- Rechem (L.L.)
- One Flag (Red Alert)
- Cut Me Loose (Dave Brown)
- Chog And McGog (Stephen Wells)
- Ghost Story (Roy Bailey)
- Stockpile (D.M.S.)
- Vanity (WOB)
- Days Like These (Red London)
- **Hasta Siempre Commandante (Robert Wyatt)** [Carlos Puebla]
- Blackleg Miner (The Angelic Upstarts)
- Song Of The Old Communist (Leon Rosselson)
- Xplosive TV (Spizz Energi)
- Westminster And Wandsworth (Blyth Power)
- Militant Red (Alistair Hulett)

Compilation éditée en soutien au quotidien communiste *The Morning Star*.

- RED PLANET RECORDS (RPRCD1) CD



> Zoom

Unconditionally Guaranteed
Volume 6
1999

Unconditionally Guaranteed - Volume 6

- Hey Self Defeater (Mark Mulcahy)
- Kick Out The Jams/Empty Heart (The MC5)
- Burn The Light (Cast)
- Fair (Remy Zero)
- Shake Off (The Fall)
- Golden Hair (Syd Barrett)
- The Hexx (Pavement)
- Les Nuits [radio edit] (Nightmares On Wax)
- Que Bueno Baila Usted (Ibrahim Ferrer/Buena Vista Social Club)
- **Whatevershebringswesing (Kevin Ayers)**
- Break Dance/Electric Boogie [edit] (West Street Mob)
- Johannah (Mishka)
- Born On A Sunday (Art Of Noise)
- Finder's Keepers (Chairmen Of The Board)
- Anno Domini No 2 (Regular Fries)
- Whenever You Are Around (Nadine)
- Minas De Cobre [extend-o-mix] (Calexico)

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *Uncut* de juillet 1999.

Whatevershebringswesing est extrait de Whatevershebringswesing.

- UNCUT (UG 7-13) CD



> Zoom

Of The Suburbs
1999

John Peel's Sounds Of The Suburbs

Disc 1
- Sound Of The Suburbs (The Samurai Seven)
- Lazy B (High Fidelity)
- Everything Goes Around The Water (Delgados)
- Real Ghost Town (Radio Sweethearts)
- Cough Cap Kitty Cat (Nought)
- Remembering (Pat Thomas)
- Reformation II (Lab 4)
- Dioddef Amdanat (Lucie Chivers)
- Strap Me Up (Gene Reviver)
- Baby Says Yeah (60ft Dolls)
- In C (Blew)
- That Booze Magic (Cheggars mix) (Jones Machine)

Disc 2
- **Free Will And Testament (Robert**

Free Will And Testament est extrait de Shleep.

- SHIFTY DISCO (SHIFTY9901) 2xCD

Wyatt)
- Holy Roller (Solid Doctor)
- Electric Eye (Crown Yourself King mix) (Back To Base)
- Blue (Mr. Ed)
- Cosy (Lianne Hall)
- Ja Sha Taan (Fun-Da-Mental)
- Desert Song (Exploding Thumbs)
- Ye Mariners All (Waterson & Carthy)
- Don't Go To Darlington (Twosheds)
- Clear (Myormay)
- Turtles Head (Comatose)



> Zoom



> Zoom

English Folk Collection
2000

World Music: English Folk Collection

- Step Back (Bert Jansch)
- Spring Is Returning/Dosvedanya (Rory McLeod)
- Manchester Rambler (Ewan MacColl)
- **Turn Things Upside Down (The Happy End with Robert Wyatt)**
- Doctor Calls (June Tabor)
- Byker Hill (Barely Works)
- Raining (My Eyes Are Filled With Clouds) (Ancient Beatbox)
- Seventeen Years Of Sorrow (Maddy Prior)
- Rhythm Of Time (Waz)
- Whistle Daughter Whistle (Gods Little Monkeys)
- Promises (Wired To The Moon)
- Hal-An-Tow (The Oyster Band)

Turn Things Upside Down est extrait de Turn Things Upside Down.

- COOKING VINYL (GUMBO CD 015) CD



> Zoom

Canterbury and Beyond...
2000

Selected Runes From The Cuneiform Catalogue

- **Was A Friend (Hughscore)**
- Voilà Pük (Volapük)
- Surprise! Surprise! (George Cartwright)
- Home Made Ruin (Delivery)
- **Moon In June (Soft Machine)**
- Neo-Caliban Grides (Elton Dean)
- L'Oubli (Univers Zero)
- At Last The Hand, Shifting (Doctor Nerve)
- Half-Akin To Gladsome (Dave Kerman 5UU'S)
- Lady And Friend (Gilgamesh)
- Volti Riflessi (Piero Milesi)
- Dead Silence (Thinking Plague)
- The Picture Book- X-Rated (Happy Family)
- One Pair (Blast)
- Patience (Gary Windo)
- 8:15-No Safe Place (Djam Karet)
- Train (Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Co.)

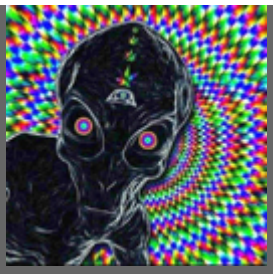
- *Was A Friend* est extrait de Delta Flora.
- *Moon In June* est extrait de Noisette.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 9001) CD

Unknowns Psychedelic Music Vol.1

- The Hands of Che Guevara (Jakko M Jakszyk/Richard Barbieri)

- *Unmasked* est extrait de A Short



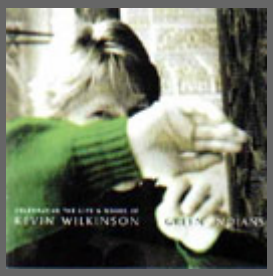
> Zoom

Unknowns Psychedelic Music Vol.1
2000

- A Potted History (Hugh Hopper & Richard Sinclair)
- Wise Man in Your Heart
- **Unmasked (Robert Wyatt)**
- Leeway
- Pack Light
- Pot-Head Pixies (Gong)
- Jocelyn (Pip Pyle's Equipe Out)
- If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You (Caravan)
- Golden Section (Hugh Hopper)

Break.

- Europe'72 - Digital Format



> Zoom

Green Indians
2000

Celebrating The Life & Works Of Kevin Wilkinson

Disc 1
- What Nature Intended (Tim Fitzgerald)
- The Light (The Proclaimers)
- A Hole (Gary Clark)
- Farming The Right Acres (Anthony Thistlethwaite)
- Fruit (Live) (Restaurant For Dogs)
- Sacred Ground (King Strut)
- And Then In Death (Bruce McRae)
- Allelujah (Fairground Attraction)
- White Trees (Live) (David Marx)
- Arizona Sky (China Crisis)
- I Will, I Won't (The Peter Bruntell Combination)
- Balls Explode (The Hamsters From Hell)
- The Sky Falls (Robert Fripp)
- Dark Horses (The Caretakers)
- Exhilarating Sadness (The Saw Doctors)
- Fields Of Fire (Midge Ure)
- Lock'n'Chain (Nicky James)
- A Honeydreamer's Spell (The Pagan Fringe)
- The Tyger (Nick Harper)
- October's Carousel (Dave Gregory)
- Somewhere A Drummer Is Drumming (Bruce McRae)
- Where The Green Grass Grows (Eric Bibb)

Disc 2
- Happy Thrashing (Tim, Pinhead & Kev)
- Pearl In The Shell (Howard Jones)
- Unsong (Shriekback)
- Help (Totally Bald Head)
- The Alchemist (The Whales)
- One Week (Gary Mortimer)
- Bernard & The Blinding Light (Gary Daly)
- Suicide Is Not For The Faint Hearted (Bruce McRae)
- Walk Away (Squeeze)
- Invisible (Illuminati)
- Don't You Forget About Me (Live) (Simple Minds)
- When The Sun Comes (Davie Paton)
- I Am A Lion (John Otway)
- Five Years (Live) (Fish)
- Pride & Joy (Nick Robertson)
- Proffered (Robin Boult)
- Sleek White Schooner (The Waterboys)
- Your Love Is Killing Me (The Refugees)
- Sunny Came Home (Josie Wilkinson)
- Kev (Bruce McRae)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**

"Kevin Wilkinson, drummer with many bands including the Shriekback-related League Of Gentlemen, Restaurant For Dogs, The Caretakers, Illuminati and The Refugees, took his own life on the 18th of July 1999.

He left behind a rich legacy of music and a lot of friends, and one of them, David Marx, has put together this 2CD compilation as a tribute to Kevin.

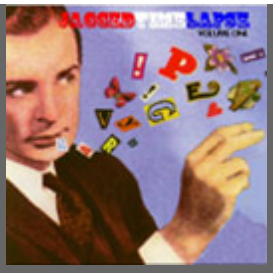
All proceeds go to the Green Indians Trust, set up on behalf of Kevin's children.

The compilation was released on 18th December 2000, and contains many previously unreleased tracks."

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- REVOLVER (RR110658CD) 2xCD

Jagged Time Lapse

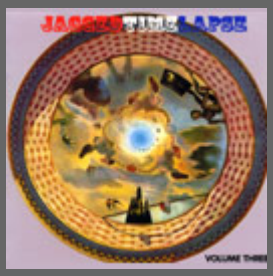


Volume One
2000

- Get Out Your Rock 'N' Roll Shoes (The Crocheted Doughnut Ring)
- Gone (The Factory)
- Head For The Sun (The Movement)
- Love's Immortal Fire (Leviathan)
- Ex Kay One Lx (Nashville Teens)
- Concentration Baby (The Dave Clark Five)
- The Dog Presides (Paul Jones)
- Where Wll You Be Tonight (Freedom)
- It (The Excelsior Spring)
- Fly With Me Forever (Pandamonium)
- Summer Sun Shines (Fresh Windows)
- Is It Love (Jon)
- Magic Mirror (Aphrodite's Child)
- I Won't Hurt You (Neo Maya)
- **Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' (The Soft Machine)**
- Little Boy (The Beatstalkers)
- Loving Sacred Loving (The End)
- 53 Summer Street (Turquoise)
- Gypsy Fred (The Koobas)
- I Can See Through You (Episode Six)
- Postcard (Blossom Toes)

Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' est extrait du single Love Makes Sweet Music.

- FLASHBACK PRODUCTIONS (FBCD01) CD



Volume Three
2000

Jagged Time Lapse

- Happy New Year (Beverley)
- Ride On (The Rokes)
- Junk (The Roulettes)
- Hold On (Chris Andrews)
- Sweet Bacon (Jumian Covey & The Machine)
- Maze Of Love (The Dave Clark Five)
- The Sun Goes Down (Dave Dee Dozy Beaky Mick & Titch)
- Remember The Times (Leviathan)
- Love Me Two Times (New York Public Library)
- Camera Man (Cats' Pyjamas)
- Search For The Sea (The Stoics)
- Flowerman (The Syn)
- You're My Girl (Manfred Man)
- You're My Mother (Mud)MUD
- Whenever You're Ready (Loot)
- We're Not What We Appear To Be (The Bunch)
- Fashion Conscious (The Fresh Windows)
- My New Day And Age (The Mindbenders)
- It's Only The Dog (The Nightrides)
- I Don't Need Your Kind (The Rocking Vickers)
- The Skies Above (The Equals)
- Thread Of Time (The Scenery)
- **Love Makes Sweet Music (The Soft Machine)**
- Stoned Out Of It (John Fitch & Associates)
- Straight Down To The Bottom (The Vip's)
- The Train (The Kinetic)

Love Makes Sweet Music est extrait du single Love Makes Sweet Music.

- FLASHBACK PRODUCTIONS (FBCD03) CD



> Zoom

The Rock Machine Turns You Back On
2000

The Rock Machine Turns You Back On

- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Sunshine Superman (Donovan)
- I Had To Tell You (13th Floor Elevators)
- America (The Nice)
- **I'd Rather Be With You (The Soft Machine)**
- California Dreamin' (The Mamas & The Papas)
- Purple Haze (Jimi Hendrix)
- Scarborough Fair (Ocean Drive)
- West Coast Idea (Eric Clapton)
- Heart Full Of Soul (The Yardbirds)
- Acapulco Sunrise (Santana)
- Love Taker (Peter Frampton)
- Questions 67 And 68 (Chicago)
- House Of The Rising Sun (Eric Burdon)
- Love Is All Around (The Troggs)
- Imagine (Jacqui McShee)

I'd Rather Be With You est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- DRESSED TO KILL
- METRODOME (METRO501) CD

- A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall (The Crazy World of Arthur Brown)



> Zoom

Wildlife Supersampler
2000

Wildlife Supersampler

- The Forbidden Zone (Pure Indigo)
- Pimp Funk (Buena Ventura)
- PmFf Muzik (PmFf)
- See Saw (Lightfoot)
- The Force (K)
- Pimp Funk (Buena Ventura)
- Shakin' (Skeewiff Mix) (Manuka)
- Millennium (PmFf)
- 7/8 (Pure Indigo)
- Ain't No New Thing (The Bob Bhamra Project)
- **Sunday In Madrid (PmFf Remix) (Robert Wyatt)**
- Once In Our Lifetime (The Bombdroppers)
- Weird Piano (Lightfoot)
- Area 51 (Gould, Brown & Black)
- Electric Boogie (K)

Cette version remixée de *A Sunday In Madrid* est également présente dans la compilation eps parue en 1999 (Disc 5).

This is a dual format CD. When placed into a computer drive it will auto-boot an 'interactive soundtrack' allowing the user to build-up tunes from the parts of the first 5 tracks. When placed in a standard CD player it will play the remaining 10 audio tracks.

- WILDLIFE (WILD CD1) CD



> Zoom



> Zoom

Jazzactuel
2000

A Collection Of Avant Garde/Free Jazz/Psychedelia From The BYG/Actuel Catalogue Of 1969-1971

Disc 1
- Red Cross (Sunny Murray)
- Blasé (Archie Shepp)
- Note (Steve Lacy)
- **Memories (Gong with Robert Wyatt)**
- Soon (Sonny Sharrock)
- Exploration (Grachan Moncur III)
- Pan-African Festival (Clifford Thornton)
- Black Suite, Part 2 [Excerpt] (Jacques Coursil)
- Echo (David Burrell)

Disc 2
- The Utter-Nots (Sun Ra & His Solar-Myth Arkestra)
- Brother B (Arthur Jones)
- From "Out Of Bartok" (Burton Greene Ensemble)
- Get In Line (Art Ensemble Of Chicago)
- Pioneering (Andrew Cyrille)
- Ramblin' (Paul Bley)
- One For John/China, Part 2 (Frank Wright)
- Cello Discordato (Acting Trio)
- Tarik (Dewey Redman)

Disc 3
- Teo-teo-can [Excerpt] (Don Cherry)
- B-Xo NO147a [Excerpt]) (Anthony Braxton)
- Premonitions (Jimmy Lyons)
- Africanasia, Part 1 [Excerpt] (Claude Delcloo/Arthur Jones)
- The Sound Pool, Part 1A [Musica Elettronica Viva]
- Blessing (Kenneth Terroade)
- Squeezing Sponges Over Policemen's Heads/ Foghat Digs Holes In Blessing (Gong)
- The Seasons, Part 6 (Alan Silva & The Celestrial Communication Orchestra)

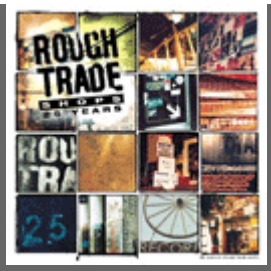
Memories est extrait de Banana Moon.

Boxset.

Reédition remasterisée en 2013 par Charly Records.

- BYG/ACTUEL (GETBACK 300) 6xLP
- CHARLY (CDNEW 137-2) 3xCD
- CHARLY (SNAJ 707) 3xCD
- CHARLY (CHARLY 707 J) 3xCD

Rough Trade Shops



25 Years
2001

Disc 1
- 30 Seconds Over Tokyo (Pere Ubu)
- Boredom (Buzzcocks)
- Fisherman (The Congos)
- Nag Nag Nag (Cabaret Voltaire)
- T.V.O.D. (The Normal)
- Suspect Device (Stiff Little Fingers)
- United (Throbbing Gristle)
- Ambition (Subway Sect)
- Part Time Punks (Television Personalities)
- Fairytale In The Supermarket (The Raincoats)
- Reality Asylum (Crass)
- Transmission (Joy Division)
- People Say (The Go-Betweens)
- Let's Build A Car (Swell Maps)
- Final Day (Young Marble Giants)
- How I Wrote 'Elastic Man' (The Fall)
- Mr. Clarinet (The Birthday Party)

Disc 2
- There Goes Concorde Again (And The Native Hipsters)
- The Sweetest Girl (Scritti Politti)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Gums Bleed (Foetus)
- Hand In Glove (The Smiths)
- Sugar Hiccup (Cocteau Twins)
- Krieg In Den Stadten (Einstürzende Neubauten)
- Tupelo (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds)
- Raod To Nowhere (Talking Heads)
- Death Valley ' 69 (Sonic Youth featuring Lydia Lunch)
- Hard Left (Tackhead)
- Jungle (Dub Syndicate, Lee Perry)
- Birthday (The Sugarcubes)

Disc 3
- Bone Machine (The Pixies)
- Touch Me I'm Sick (Mudhoney)
- Revolution (Spacemen 3)
- Different Drum (Lemonheads)
- Further Back And Faster (Coil)
- The Light That Will Cease To Fail (Stereolab)
- Her Jazz (Huggy Bear)
- Fade Into You (Mazzy Star)
- Song To The Siren (The Chemical Brothers)
- Pink Frost (The Chills)
- Soaky In The Pooper (Lambchop)
- Sciew Spoc (Gescom)
- Plastique (Video Mix) (Plastikman)
- Gak 4 (Gak)

Disc 4
- Gam Jullandar Shere (Cornershop)
- Presha III (Studio Pressure)
- Everything You Do Is A Ballon (Boards Of Canada)
- Flashlegs - Suite (Echoboy)
- As The Rain (Adrian Sherwood On-U Sound Remix) (Jeb Loy Nichols)
- Monkey On Your Back (Clinc)
- Hot Topic (Le Tigre
- To You (I Am Kloot)
- In The Bath (Lemon Jelly)
- Fuck The Pain Away (Peaches)
- My Winding Wheel (Ryan Adams)
- Talk To Me / 91 Version) (Tindersticks)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- MUTE RECORDS - 4xCD



Summer Of Love

Disc 1
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Sunshine Superman (Donovan)
- I Had To Tell You
- America
- I'd Rather Be With You (The Soft Machine)
- California Dreamin'
- Purple Haze (Jimi Hendrix)
- Scarborough Fair
- West Coast Idea (Eric Clapton)

I'd Rather Be With You est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.
Jet-Propelled Photographs est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- DRESSED TO KILL - 3xCD

> Zoom

Summer Of Love
2001

- Heart Full Of Soul (The Yardbirds)
- Acapulco Sunrise (Santana)
- Love Taker (Peter Frampton)
- Questions 67 And 68 (Chicago)
- House Of The Rising Sun
- Love Is All Around (The Troggs)
- Imagine
- Hard Rain's Gonna Fall (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)

Disc 2
- Angel Of The Morning (P.P. Arnold)
- Don't Do It No More (Julie Driscoll)
- Lay Lady Lay (Melanie)
- Dream A Little Dream Of Me (Mama Cass)
- White Rabbit
- Terry (Twinkle)
- Woodstock
- First Cut Is The Deepest (P.P. Arnold)
- Oh No Not My Baby (Maxine Brown)
- California Dreamin'
- What Have They Done To My Song Ma (Melanie)
- My Best Friend (Grace Slick)
- Flight Tonight
- I Don't Want To Have To Do It (Julie Driscoll)

Disc 3
- Straight Shooter [Live]
- Every Reason
- Baby Blue
- We Shall Overcome
- Voodoo Child (Slight Return) (Jimi Hendrix)
- Turn Turn Turn (Pentangle)
- **Jet Propelled Photographs [A.K.A. Shooting At the Moon] (The Soft Machine)**
- Choler (Eric Clapton)
- Don't Send Me No Flowers (Jimmy Page)
- When I Was Young (Eric Burdon)
- Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is (Chicago)
- Coconut Grove (Santana)
- For Emily
- All Our Yesterdays (The Small Faces)
- Madame - Peter Frampton
- 3/5 Of A Mile In 10 Seconds (Jefferson Airplane)
- Shadows Of You (Brian Auger)
- War And Peace



> Zoom

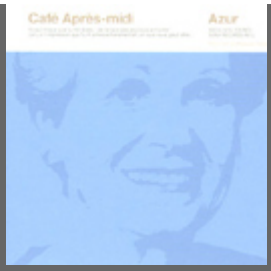
To Be Someone
2001

To Be Someone

- Ballad of Tom Jones (Space & Cerys Matthews)
- I Get the Sweetest Feeling (Jackie Wilson)
- Route 66 (Sandie Shaw)
- Wichita Lineman (Glen Campbell)
- Sunday Girl (Blondie)
- Sitting in Limbo (Jimmy Cliff)
- N.I.T.A. (Young Marble Giants)
- Oliver's Army (Elvis Costello & The Attractions)
- There There My Dear (Dexys Midnight Runners)
- Ghosts (Japan)
- To Be Someone (didn't we have a nice time) (The Jam)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Love Song (The Cure)
- Kinky Afro (Happy Mondays)
- I'll Be Home (Randy Newman)
- Safe From Harm (Massive Attack)
- I Can't Stand the Rain (Ann Peebles)
- This is a Low (Blur)
- Here's Where the Story Ends (The Sundays)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- VIRGIN (CDV2933) CD



> Zoom

Cafe Apres-Midi Azur
2001

Cafe Apres-Midi Azur

- Sexy Mama (Laura Nyro)
- Aguas De Marco (Stan Getz)
- I Use Her (Tony Kosinec)
- Oh! Caroline (Matching Mole)
- There Is Nothing More To Say (The Millennium)
- Snow Queen (The City)
- Pelas Ruas Do Recife (Cynara E Cybele)
- It Doesn't Matter Anymore (The Cyrkle)
- The More I See You (Salena Jones)
- Everlasting Love (The Love Affair)
- Quase Maluco (Milena)
- Saia Rota (Edson Conceicao)
- My World Feel Down (Sagittarius)
- I Love To Love (Tina Charles)
- More Today Than Yesterday (Spiral Starecase)
- Peaceful (Georgie Fame)
- La La La (Mongo Santamaria)
- Vou Morar No Teu Sorriso (Trio Ternura)
- Rio (Paul Winter)
- Blue Lou (Art Van Damme Quintet)
- There's A Samll Hotel (Claude Thornhill Orchestra)
- Wild World (Bobby Scott)
- Vamonos (Elkin & Nelson)
- Suicide Is Painless (Johnny Mandel)
- Waltz Bossa Nova (Ennio Morricone)

Oh ! Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole.

- SONY (SRCS-2476) CD



Storytellers - Vol.1
2001

Storytellers

- At Seventeen (Janis Ian)
- Penny To My Name (Eva Cassidy)
- May You Never (John Martyn)
- Jerusalem Tomorrow (Emmylou Harris)
- Walking On A Wire (Richard & Linda Thompson)
- Galway Girl, The (Sharon Shannon)
- Whirly Whorl (Eliza Carthy)
- To Ramona (Sinead Lohan)
- Galway To Graceland (Sean Keane)
- Who Knows Where The Time Goes (Fairport Convention)
- No Mermaid (Joan Baez)
- Northern Sky (Nick Drake)
- Thorn Upon The Rose, The (Mary Black)
- Midnight On The Water (Waterson Carthy)
- Our Town (Kate Rusby)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- GRAPEVINE (GRACD 298) CD



> Zoom

Freedom Of Art
2001

Il Grande Rock - Freedom Of Art

- If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You (Caravan)
- Fohat Digs Hole In Space (Gong)
- Maahnt (Magma)
- O Caroline (Matching Mole)
- Antarctica Stars Here (John Cale)
- Everybody's Sometimes And Some People All The Time Blues (Kevin Ayers)
- Baby's On Fire (Brian Eno)
- Square Dance (Material)
- Little Wing (Paolo Lotti)
- Mingle (Percy Howard, Charles Hayward, Fred Frith, Bill Laswell)
- Bitter Bark (Joeboy In Mexico)
- Erzindjian (Alesini & Andreoni)
- Mother London (Steve Jansen & Richard Barbieri)

O Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole. *Everybody's Sometimes And SomePeople All The Time Blues* est extrait de June 1, 1974.

- DeAGOSTINI (R09936-2) CD

Hannibal Records 20 Years Of Rich And Rare Music



> Zoom

Music Fall Out The Sky
2001

- Rio Longe (Moreno + 2)
- Marie Laveaux (Cubanismo In New Orleans)
- Ol' Georgie Buck (Taj Mahal & Toumani Diabate)
- Deus Do Fogo E Da Justiçainia Rodrigues (Virginia Rodrigues)
- Cheikhna Demba (Toumani Diabate with Ballake Sissoko)
- Máramarosi Táncok (Muszikas with Márta Sebestyén)
- Maryan (Robert Wyatt)
- Wall Of Death (Richard & Linda Thompson)
- The Hoochi Coochi Coo (The Taj Mahal & Phantom Blues Band)
- What'll I Do (Kate & Anna McGarrigle)

Maryan est extrait de Shleep.

- HANNIBAL RECORDS (HNCD 1460) CD



> Zoom

Anti NY
2001

Anti NY

Disc 1
- Launderette (Vivien Goldman)
- If I Gave You A Party (Sexual Harassment)
- Drum Mode (Gray)
- Girl's Imagination (The Dell/ Byzanteens)
- Love Attack (Konk)
- N.C.R. (Ike Yard)
- Exterior St. feat. Rammellzee (Death Comet Crew)

Disc 2
- Drum Mode (Gray/Paul Mogg Remix)
- Launderette (Vivien Goldman/Munk Remix)
- If I Gave You A Party (Sexual Harassment/Syrup Remix)
- Exterior St. feat. Rammellzee (Death Comet Crew/Protein Remix)
- N.C.R. (Ike Yard/Funkstorung Remix)

Launderette est extrait du single Launderette/Private Armies.
Le second titre est une version alternative du même morceau.

- GOMMA (013) 2xLP



> Zoom

Strange Daze
The Psychadelic Sixties
2001

Strange Daze - The Psychadelic Sixties

- Straight Shooter (Live) (Mamas & Papas)
- Every Reason (Donovan)
- Baby Blue (13th Floor Elevators)
- We Shall Overcome (Maggie Willow Steadman)
- Voodoo Chile (Jimi Hendrix)
- Turn Turn Turn (Pentangle)
- Jet-Propelled Photographs (Aka Shooting At The Moon) (Soft Machine)
- Choker (Eric Clapton)
- Don't Send Me No Flowers (Jimmy Page)
- When I Was Young (Eric Burdon)
- Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is (Chicago)
- Coconut Grove (Santana)
- For Emily (Dreams
- All Our Yesterdays (The Small Faces)
- Madame (Peter Frampton)
- 3/4 Of A Mile In Ten Seconds (Jefferson Airplane)
- Shadows Of You (Julie Driscoll & Brian Auger)
- War & Peace (The Nice)

Jet-Propelled Photographs est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- DRESSED TO KILL (METRO504) CD

Uncut - A Tribute To John Lennon



> Zoom

A Tribute To John Lennon
2002

- John Lennon (Hammell On Trial)
- Instant Karma (Paul Weller)
- Jealous Guy (Ian McCulloch)
- Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except For Me And My Monkey (Kristin Hersh)
- Working Class Hero (Marianne Faithfull)
- The Ballad Of John And Yoko (Teenage Fanclub)
- Bless You (The Pretenders)
- Happiness Is A Warm Gun (The Breeders)
- Come Together (Ike and Tina Turner)
- **Love (Robert Wyatt)**
- Gimme Some Truth (Generation X)
- Isolation (Mercury Rev)
- Cold Turkey (Icicle Works)
- Give Peace A Chance (Toots And The Maytals)
- Gimme Some Truth (Ash)
- Happy Xmas (War Is Over) (John Holt)
- I Am The Walrus (Spooky Tooth)
- In My Life (Roddy Frame)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboard

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *Uncut* (11/2002).

Love a été initialement interprété pour cet album.
Recorded exclusively for this compilation.



- UNCUT RECORDS (2002 11) CD

Lyrics





Cherry Red for Cafe Apres-Midi
2002

Cherry Red For Cafe Apres-Midi

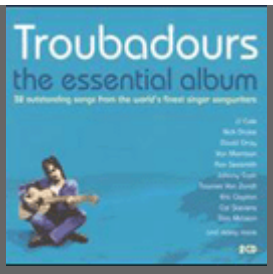
- Each and Everyone (Everything But The Girl)
- On Box Hill (Ben Watt)
- Place in the Sun (Marine Girls)
- Femme Fatale (Tracey Thorn)
- North Marine Drive (Ben Watt)
- Goodbye Joe (Tracey Thorn)
- 1000 Guitars of St. Dominiques (Fantastic Something)
- You're a Queer One, Les Mun (The Hepburns)
- I'm Used Now (Grab Grab The Haddock)
- Bittersweet (Everything But The Girl)
- If She Doesn't Smile (Fantastic Something)
- I Saw the Light (Mood Six)
- Changing Stations (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Shouting in Cafes (In Embrace)
- New Risen (Eyeless In Gaza)
- Homme et une Femme (Morgan Fisher)
- **Walter And John (Ben Watt & Robert Wyatt)**
- It's a Fine Day (Jane)
- Lazy Ways (Marine Girls)
- Love in Your Heart (Kevin Coyne)
- I'll Scry Instead (The Monochrome Set)
- Portrait (Five Or Six)
- Compulsion (Joe Crow)
- Preacher in England (Felt)
- You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome (Ben Watt)
  When You Go (Everything But The Girl)
- Night and Day (The Florentines)

Water And John est extrait du EP Summer Into Winter.

- CHERRY RED RECORDS (VICP-61760) CD



Troubadours - The Essential Album



> Zoom

Troubadours - The Essential Album
2002

- Hold On Baby (Jj CALE)
- Everybody's Talking (Harry Nilson)
- Vincent (Don Mc Lean)
- Time of No Reply (Nick Drake)
- Gutters Full of Rain (David Gray)
- New Train (John Prine)
- Pancho and Lefty (Townes Van Zandt)
- Another Long Story (Kevin Montgomery)
- Sweetness (Don Bern)
- Tell Me Again (Ron Sexsmith)
- Therapy (Loudon Wainwright III)
- Song for You (Leon Russel)
- Juliana (Michael Nesmith)
- I Walk the Line (Johnny Cash)
- Tell It Like It Is (Aaron Neville)
- Time in a Bottle (Jim Croce)
- Brown Eyed Girl (Van Morrisson)
- Let It Grow (Eric Clapton)
- Bell Bottom Blues (Bobby Whitlock)
- Long Goodbye (Paul Brady)
- Father and Son (Cat Stevens)
- Hidden World of She (Jackie Leven)
- Universal Soldier (Donovan)
- Breathing In (Gordon Haskell)
- Just When I Needed You Most (Randy Vanwarmer)
- Strolling Down the Highway (Bert Jansch)
- Streets of London (Ralph Mctell)
- Harry Stone (Hearts of Coal) (John Tams)
- Hambledon Hill (Gordon Haskell)
- Put You Down (Alejandro Escovedo)
- Levi Stubbs Tears (Billy Bragg)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- MANTECA RECORDS (MANTDCD207) CD



> Zoom

Thrice Upon A Time
(Nothing Is Real)
2002

Thrice Upon A Time (Nothing Is Real)
Rubble - Vol. 20)

- What on Earth (Blossom Toes)
- Buffalo Billycan (Apple)
- **Love Makes Sweet Music (The Soft Machine)**
- Which Dreamed It (Boeing Duveen & The Beautiful Soup)
- Light of Your Mind (The David)
- Don't Make a Sound (Kate)
- Mr. Boyd (Argosy)
- Winston Built a Bridge (The Bump)
- Iekk! I'm a... Freak (Adjeef the Poet)
- The Sun Shines From His Eyes (Pandemonium)
- In My Life (Chapter Four)
- Mud in Your Eye (Les Fleur de Lys)
- Devil's Grip (The Crazy World of Arthur Brown)
- Walter's Dream (The Beautiful)
- Supernatural Fairytales (Art)
- Silver Tree Top School for Boys (The Beatstalkers)

Love Makes Sweet Music est extrait de Love Makes Sweet Music/Feelin 'Reelin Squeelin'.

- PAST & PRESENT RECORDS (PAPRLP020) LP



> Zoom

Electroclash : Massive 19 Track Mix From Miss Kittin

Miss Kittin

- Who I Am (Vocal Intro) Miss Kittin
- Wireless Internet (Arpanet)
- Drugs Work (System 01)
- Fool's Gold (With Miss Kittin Background Vocals) (Mateo Murphy)
- Love Is Stronger Than Pride (Michael Mayer)
- Vicious Game (David Carretta)
- House Of God 2000 (DHS)
- Substance (Felix Da Housecat Remix With Miss Kittin Background Vocals) (Dot Allison)
- Energiekriese (T Raumschmiere)
- Estress Audio (Audible)
- Teurastamo (Pan Sonic)

La reprise de *A Certain Kind* est extrait de A Certain Kind.

- MUZIK MAGAZINE (MUZIKMAG87) CD

2002

- Rippin' Kittin (Ellen Allien Remix) (Goldenboy)
- Shari Vari (Ectomorph Remix) (A Number Of Names)
- Frank Sinatra 2001 (Miss Kittin & The Hacker)
- **A Certain Kind (Carsten Jost)**
- Stadtkind (Barbara Morgenstern Remix) (Ellen Allien)
- A16 (Ultra-Red)
- Living In A Magazine (Paper Faces Remix) (Zoot Woman)
- Klicks (Thomas Brinkmann)
- Berlin Is Burning (Vocal Outro) (Miss Kittin)



> Zoom

10 Corso Como
2002

10 Corso Como

Disc 1
THE SOUND OF IDA
- New Ghosts (Albert Ayler)
- Death Letter (Cassandra Wilson)
- Inexile (Capercaillie)
- Mosaik (Ductia)
- In Ainm An Athar Le Bua (Hector Zazou)
- Rahamana (Consuelo Luz)
- To A Beloved (Shweta Jhaveri)
- To The River (Djivan Gasparyan)
- Ashkabad (Anouar Brahem)
- Arcana (Roberto Cacciapaglia)
- Black Lotus (Bill Laswell)
- Lam Saravane (Jah Wobble)

Disc 2
THE SOUND OF PINGALA
- Afro Blue (Abbey Lincoln)
- Bilebo (Baka Beyond)
- Theme For Lester Young (Charles Mingus)
- **Caimanera (Robert Wyatt)**
- Brigitte Bardot (Mike Westbrook Brass Band)
- Ne Me Quitte Pas (Natacha Atlas)
- Saida (Cheikha Rimitti)
- Dea Del Mare (Cecilia Chailly)
- Karmakamo (Feel Good Productions)
- Ayena (Nuclearte)
- Siip Siie (Ekova)
- Boogie Chilin N.2 (John Lee Hooker & Canned Heat)

Caimanera est extrait de Nothing Can Stop Us.

- NUN ENTERTAINMENT (NUN0136232) 2xCD



> Zoom

Cuneiform Records
2002

An Introduction To Cuneiform Records

- The Man Of The Past Future [excerpt] (Deus Ex Machina)
- Cineme 1920 (NeBeLNeST)
- No Man's Land (Djam Karet)
- The Fly-Toxmen's Land (Univers Zéro)
- Kongi's Theme [excerpt] (Brotherhood Of Breath)
- Dear Mona (The Muffins)
- Belexes (Proto-Kaw/Kansas)
- Space Flight Cat (Curlew)
- Spacetime 3 (Mujician)
- Excerpt From "Plook The Asbestos Lobster" (Michael Gulezian)
- **Instant Pussy (Matching Mole)**
- **Facelift [excerpt] (Soft Machine)**
- Mine Of Nothingness (Miriodor)
- Malstrom Part 3 (Sotos)
- Oklahoma (Curlew)
- Couple #3 Is A Solo (Dave Kerman /5 uu's)
- Tight Trousers [excerpt] (Arkham)
- Efrim [excerpt] (Richard Pinhas)

Instant Pussy est extrait de March.
Facelift est extrait de Backwards.

- CUNEIFORM (9002) CD





Rebellious JukeBox
2003

Rebellious JukeBox

- Santa Ana River Delta Blues (Wiskey Biscuit)
- Moving Up Country, Roaring The Gospel (James Yorkston & The Athletes)
- Heart String Blues (Thea Gilmore)
- **Sea Song (Robert Wyatt)**
- American Music (The Blasters)
- Tightly (Neko Case)
- Dance To The Underground (Radio 4)
- Gold In Them Hills (Ron Sexsmith)
- To Love Somebody (Slobberbone)
- Eisler On The Go (Billy Bragg)
- Rebellious Jukebox (The Fall)
- Steps Into Miles (Hayden)
- Rumba De Barcelona (Manu Chao)
- Born Out Of Your Mouth (Andy Partridge)
- Trafalgar Square (Chris Difford)
- What Presence?! (Orange Juice)
- Three Questions (Bonnie 'Prince' Billy)
- The War (Bill Hicks)

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *Uncut*.

Sea Song est extrait de Rock Bottom.

- UNCUT RECORDS (2003 02) CD



> Zoom

The Best Prog Rock Album
In The World Ever
2003

The Best Prog Rock Album In The World Ever

Disc 1
- Theme 1 (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Dancing With The Moonlit Knight (Genesis)
- Roundabout (Yes)
- Joybringer (Manfred Mann's Earthband)
- Back Street Luv (Curved Air)
- Silver Machine (Hawkwind)
- Locomotive Breath (Jethro Tull)
- Hocus Pocus (Focus)
- Hoedown (Emerson, Lake and Palmer)
- Tomorrow Night (Atomic Rooster)
- Child In Time (Deep Purple)
- Valentyne Suite (Colosseum)

Disc 2
- Here Comes The Flood (Peter Gabriel)
- Tubular Bells (Part 1) (Mike Oldfield)
- Winter Wine (Caravan)
- May I? (Kevin Ayers & The Whole World)
- Sympathy (Rare Bird)
- A Salty Dog (Procol Harum)
- Mocking Bird (Barclay James Harvest)
- Which Way The Wind Blows (Anthony Phillips with Mike Rutherford & Phil Collins)
- Lucky Man (Emerson, Lake And Palmer)
- In Every Dream Home A Heartache (Roxy Music)
- 10538 Overture (Electric Light Orchestra)
- Mumps (Hatfield & The North)

Disc 3
- Peaches En Regalia (Frank Zappa)
- Rhayader (From The Snow Goose) (Camel)
- Pantagruel's Nativity (Gentle Giant)
- Germ Patrol (Egg)
- **O Caroline (Matching Mole)**
- Bedside Manners Are Extra (Greenslade)
- Meditation Of The Snake (Steve Hillage)
- Spectral Mornings (Steve Hackett)
- Ships In The Night (Be Bop Deluxe)
- Keep On Crinting (Man)
- Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers (Van Der Graaf Generator)

O Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole.

- VIRGIN (VTDCD533) 3xCD



> Zoom

Piece Of Cake
20 Years Of Ryko
2003

Piece Of Cake/20 Years Of Ryko (MOJO Magazine)

- Thank You Friends (Big Star)
- Slaveship (Josh Rouse)
- Numb As A Statue (Warren Zevon)
- Chain (The Fire Theft)
- Chrome Plated Suicide (The Flaming Lips)
- I'm The Slime (Frank Zappa)
- Cure For Pain (Morphine)
- Barrio Superstarrio (Pilot to Gunner)
- PLateau (Meat Puppets)
- Jarabi (Tourmani Diabate)
- **Lullaby For Hamza (Robert Wyatt)**
- Mama Guela (Spanish Harlem Orchestra)
- I Will Dare (The Replacements)
- Freaks (Soul Asylum)
- Crooked Frame (Alejandro Escovedo)
- Still Alive (Joe Jackson Band)
- Fourth Of July (Galaxie 500)
- Untitled #1 (Spain)
- Wait Until Dark (Kelly Willis)
- Window Grin (Kelly Joe Phelps)

The November 2003 issue of Mojo Magazine included a Rykodisc sampler.

Lullaby For Hamza est extrait de Cuckooland.

- MOJO MAGAZINE (NOV. 2003) CD



> Zoom

No More (No Mouroir)
2003

No More (No Mouroir)

- Un train direct pour Charenton Part I (Pascal Comelade)
- Un train direct pour Charenton Part II (Pascal Comelade)
- Une souris verte (Pierre Bastien & Klimperei)
- Que Lindo Meu Amor (Oedipus)
- River Dart (Oedipus)
- Georges va au plumard Part I (Toupidek Limonade)
- Depuis que (Toupidek Limonade)
- Heaven Help Yourself (Les Batteries)
- Un do l'enfant do (Look de Bouk)
- La marionnette du Chinois (Look de Bouk)
- Flamme & Co II (L'Ensemble Rayé)
- Dog's God (Pierre Bastien)
- Clear The Cumb (Klimperei)
- Ma copine (Klimperei)
- Pour mon Papa (Klimperei)
- La nuit (Klimperei)
- Le baluchon (Klimperei)
- La vieille carriole (Klimperei)
- Crisis As Usual (AA Kismet)
- Oscilloscope (AA Kismet)
- "... Je vous prédis la fin du monde." (Jean-François Pauvros)
- **Dondestan (Alix Marchetti, Robert Wyatt & Jean-Michel Marchetti)**

- INPOLYSONS (IPS 1301) CD



Une rentrée 2003 - Vol.1
2003

Les Inrocks

- Echoes (The Raptures)
- We Don't Play Guitars (Chicks On Speed)
- Beastmaster (Relaxed Muscle)
- Follow (Bang Gang)
- No Reason To Cry Your Eyes Out (Hawksley Workman)
- Fall Dog Bombs The Moon (David Bowie)
- People (Alfie)
- Suicide Is Painless (Lady & Bird)
- **Forest (Robert Wyatt)**
- Trying To Find A Balance (Atmosphere)
- Some Thing's Coming (I Monster)
- Where Is My Mind (Placebo)

CD distribué avec le magazine français Les Inrockuptibles.

Forest est extrait de Cuckooland.

- LES INROCKUPTIBLES (CD LI 03 75) CD

- Little Electric Chair (Iggy Pop)
- Shake The Dope Out (The Warlocks)
- Lighthouse (Joe Henry)
- End Of May (Keren Ann)



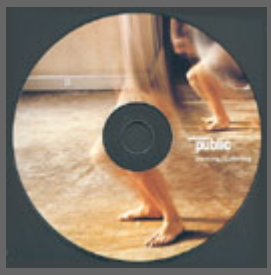
Indétendances 15
2003

Indétendances 15

- Opearte (Peaches)
- Spinach Girl (Agoria)
- A Moscou (Le Tone)
- La vie en communaute (I:Cube)
- Old Europe (Robert Wyatt)
- Let It Blow (Hector Zazou)
- En d'autres circonstances (La Tropa)
- Le racheteur d'ardoise (Les hurlements de Léo)
- Les abeilles (Jérémie Kisling)
- Je me réveille (Mendelson)

Old Europe est extrait de Cuckooland.

- FNAC (INDÉ 144) CD



> Zoom

Dancing/Listening
2003

Dancing/Listening

- Steve's Big Organ (Steve Blake)
- Kir (The Tractor's Revenge)
- Tunnel (Julian Swales)
- Reuben's Train (Martin Simpson)
- Dancing Machine (Borut Krzisnik)
- Biped Part IV (Gavin Bryars)
- Nemesis (extract) (Scanner)
- Underwater, Rooftop (Stomp)
- Left On Man (Robert Wyatt)
- Demons (David O'Higgins
- The Lost Dances Of Egon Schiele (extract) (Steve Blake)
- String Quartet N° 2, movement 1 (Lyric Quartet)
- String Quartet N° 2, movement 6 (Lyric Quartet)
- Bacalao Sala'o (Sidestepper)
- Numbers 1-4 (Penguin Cafe Orchestra)

Left On Man est extrait de Dondestan (revisited).

Le CD accompagne un ouvrage illustré de 40 pages consacré à des chorégraphies contemporaines et à leur environnement sonore.



- UNKNOWN PUBLIC (UP15) CD



> Zoom

1983-2003
2003

Ryko 20

- Thank You Friends (Big Star)
- Love Vibration (Josh Rouse)
- Window Grin (Kelly Joe Phelps)
- Chrome (Joe Jackson Band)
- Cure For Pain (Morphine)
- Chrome Plated Suicide (The Flaming Lips)
- Tonight We Dine On Fumes (The Carlsonics)
- What You Gon' Do (Stiffed)
- Put It In The Post (Pilot To Gunner)
- I'm The Slime (Frank Zappa)
- X-Ray Gun (Mink Lungs)
- A Sunday In Madrid (Robert Wyatt)
- I Will Dare (The Replacements)
- If I Left You (Kelly Willis)
- Jarabi (Toumani Diabate)
- Mama Gueia (Spanish Harlem Orchestra)
- Think Twice (Detroit Experiment)
- Black Buddah (Dj Logic)
- Walk Alone (Sky City)
- Poverty (Ennio Morricone)

Sunday In Madrid est extrait de Shleep

- RYKO (RCD 10646) CD



> Zoom

All Time Greatest Hits
Of The 70's Disco
2003

All Time Greatest Hits Of The 70's Disco

Disc 1
- Dancing On A Saturday Night (Barry Blue)
- Rhinestone Cowboy (Glen Cambell)
- Yellow River (Christie)
- Good Grief Christina (Chicory Tip)
- Love Grows (Edison Lighthouse)
- Goodbye Mr Love (Glitter Band, The)
- Rock Your Baby (George McCrae)
- Sugar Baby Love (The Rubettes)
- Tiger Feet (Mud)
- Fell The Need (The Detroit Emeralds)
- The Last Farewell (Roger Whitaker)
- Sandy (John Travolta)
- Just My Imagination (Temptations)
- Heaven Must Be Missing An Angel (Tavares)
- He's The Greatest Dancer (Sister Sledge)
- Wishing On A Star (Rose Royce)
- Patches (Clarence Carter)

Disc 2
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Sunshine Superman (Donovan)
- I Had To Tell You (13th Floor Elevators)
- America (The Nice)
- I'd Rather Be With You (Soft Machine)
- California Dreaming (Mamas & Papas)
- Purple Haze (Jimi Hendrix)
- Scarborough Fair (Ocean Drive)
- West Coast Idea (Eric Clapton)
- Heart Full Of Soul (Yardbirds)
- Acapulco Sunrise (Santana)
- Love Taker (Peter Frampton)
- Question 57 & 58 (Chicago)
- House Of The Rising Sun (Eric Burdon)
- Love Is All Around (Troggs)
- Imagine (Jacqui McShee)
- A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall (Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)

Disc 3
- Juke Box Jive (The Rubettes)
- In The Summertime (Mungo Jerry)
- One Nation Under A Groove (Funkadelic)
- Son Of My Father (Chicory Tip)
- Let's Get It On (Marvin Gaye)
- Angel Face (Glitter Band, The)
- It's Been So Long (George McCrae)
- Superfly (Curtis Mayfield)
- Oh Boy (Mud)
- I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing (The New Seekers)
- Ring My Bell (Anita Ward)
- Greased Lightnin' (John Travolta)
- Papa Was A Rollin' Stone (Temptations)
- Never Had Love Like This Before (Tavares)
- Lost In Music (Sister Sledge)
- Love Don't Live Here Anymore (Rose Royce)
- Bridge Over Troubled Water (Linda Clifford)

I'd Rather Be With You est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- TRILOGIE RECORDS (205858) 3xCD



> Zoom

15 Masters Of British Rock
2003

British Rock Legends

- Heart Full Of Soul (The Yardbirds)
- Season Of The Witch (Donovan)
- Natural Born Boogie (Humble Pie)
- L.A. Breakdown (The Allstars/Jimmy Page)
- Boom Boom (The Animals)
- Man Of The World (Fleetwood Mac)
- Paint It Black (Chris Farlowe)
- I Should've Known (Soft Machine)
- It's My Life (Eric Burdon)
- Diary Of An Empty Day (The Nice)
- Train Kept A Rollin' (The Yardbirds)
- So Much To Say (Rod Stewart)
- Cold Blooded Woman (Savoy Brown)

I Should've Known est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- FUEL 2000 RECORDS (302 061 368 2) CD

- I'm Your Witch Doctor (John Mayall's Bluesbreakers)
- Afterglow (The Small Faces)



> Zoom

The Composer's Cut
2003

Maurizio Marsico

- Light My Firebird (M. Marsico/A. Tich)
- **1st Variation on "The Duchess" (W. Prati/R. Wyatt)**
- Piece For 4 Pianos (Morton Feldman)
- New-York Dresser (Excerpt From) (Daniele Cavallanti)
- Revealing The Commas (M. Harrison)
- A Penguin Is A Penguin (M. Marsico/ A. Tich)
- Tommaso Leddi: Veli Alba (T. Leddi)
- Song From "Endings" (G. Harries/Zelda)
- Nei Puri Silenzi (Massimo Mariani)
- Mr. Jack Russell (D. Bailey/L. Margorani)
- The Farmer's Wife (M. Marsico)
- The Kings Of Edom, Whose Crowns Are Not (R. Chatham)

1st Variation on "The Duchess" est extrait de Postcards From Italy.

- AUDITORIUM (AUD 01303) CD



> Zoom

Jet Stream: Autumn Flight
2003

Jet Stream: Autumn Flight

- Beyond The Rainbow (Jose Luis Gonzalez)
- Someday The Prince (Pim Jacobs with Roger van Autello)
- Only Two (Louis Lewis Van Dyke)
- Goldberg Variations BWV988-Aria (Glen Gould)
- Dream (Paul Crossley)
- Moonlight In Vermont (Rita Rice & Pim Jacobs)
- Harry To Me (Ennio Morricone)
- Jamaican Song (Booker T)
- **Oh Caroline (Matching Mole)**
- Demon Called Love (Anne Burton)
- Milongita (Astor Piazzolla)
- Waltz For Debbie (Pim Jacobs with Roger Van Autello)
- Lonely Night (Sonia Rosa With Yuji Ono)
- Frank Lloyd Wright Song Dedicated To (Simon & Garfunkel
- Quiet Moments (Ronnie Liston Smith)
- Favela (Pete Jolie)
- You And Me (Paul Winter with Carlos Lila)
- Feel Like Makin' Love (Johnny Mathis)
- Brazilian Rhyme(Earth Wind & Fire)
- Cruel (Prefab Sprout)
- Corcovado (Tony Bennett) (
- Wild World (Bobby Scott)
- Aguas de Marco (Stan Getz)

Compiled by Tohru Hashitomo from a Japanese radio show Jet Stream.

- SONY MUSIC (MHCP-90) CD



> Zoom

Impossible But True
2003

The Kim Fowley Story

- Animal Man (Kim Fowley)
- Bubblegum (Kim Fowley)
- Justine (The Rangers)
- To Die Alone (The Bush)
- Alley-Oop (The Hollywood Argyles)
- Reputation (The Rangers)
- Nut Rocker (B. Bumble And The Stingers)
- Popsicles & Icicles (The Murmaids)
- Shush-Boomer (Alpinestars)
- Trip (Kim Fowley)
- Comedown Song (Spider)
- Security (The 'N Betweens)
- Daydreaming Of You (Hellions)
- Portobello Road (Cat Stevens)
- Satan's Holiday (The Lancasters)
- Charge! (The Renegades)
- You Been Torturing Me (The Hollywood Argyles)
- Like Long Hair (Paul Revere & the Raiders)

Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' est extrait du single Love Makes Sweet Music.

- ACE RECORDS (CDCHD 888) CD

- Heads Up, High Hopes Over You (The Pharoahs)
- Gloria's Dream (The Belfast Gypsies)
- Ski Storm, Pt. 1 (Snowmen)
- No More (Little Victor and the Vistas)
- Louisiana Teardrops (Elfstone)
- Wild Thing (Cathy Rich)
- Space Odyssey (Kim Fowley)
- Fallin' Off the Edge Of My Mind (The Seeds)
- Rainbow At Midnight (Gene Vincent)
- **Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' (The Soft Machine)**
- People! Let's Freak Out (Freaks of Nature)
- Pink Dominos (Crescents)
- Honest I Do (The Innocents)
- Papa-Oom-Mow-Mow (The Rivingtons)





The Anthology
2004

Ryko

Disc 1
- Changes (Sugar)
- This Magic Moment (Misfits)
- Honey White (Morphine)
- Looking Forward To Seeing You (Golden Smog)
- Happiness Is Drumming (Rhythm Band)
- Satisfaction (Devo)
- Put Your hand Inside (They Might Be Giants)
- Take Me Down (Kelly Willis)
- I Will Dare (Replacements)
- Wicked World (Osaka Popstar)
- Tied To The Tracks (Soul Asylum)
- Valentine (Nils Lofgren)
- Pink Moon (Nick Drake)
- Ai Du (Ry Cooder, & Ali Farka Toure)
- Not So Far To Go (Kelly Joe Phelps)
- 24/7 (Robert Cray)
- Day After Day (Badfinger)
- **Lullaby For Hamza (Robert Wyatt)**
- Thank You Friends (Big Star)
- Even The Clouds Get High (James 'Superstar' Kochalka)

Disc 2
- Chain (Fire Theft)
- Joe's Garage (Frank Zappa)
- Tear Stained Letter (Richard Thompson)
- Come Back (Light Therapy) (Josh Rouse)
- Walking On Thin Ice (Yoko Ono)
- Bubblehouse (Medeski, John & Billy Martin/Chris Wood)
- Ain't No End (Jayhawks)
- Academy Fight Song (Mission Of Burma)
- Fire (Jimi Hendrix)
- Crooked Frame (Alejandro Escovedo)
- Awkward Age (Joe Band Jackson)
- Descarga De Hoy (Cubanismo)
- Pacing The Cage (Bruce Cockburn)
- Paris 1919 (John Cale)
- Cougar Run (Mickey Hart)
- Confession Time (Cops) (Bill Hicks)

The Tapestry Of Delights

- Fanfare/Fire Poem (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- Black Snake (Atomic Rooster)
- First Intro
- Misleading Colours (The Gods)
- Second Intro
- **Why Are We Sleeping? (Soft Machine)**
- Brain (Action)
- The Joke (High Tide)

Lullaby For Hamza est extrait de Cuckooland.

- RYKO (RCD 105551) CD

Why Are We Sleeping? est extrait de Soft Machine - Volume One.

- BLACK WIDOW RECORDS (BWR054) 2xLP & CD



> Zoom

The Tapestry Of Delights
2004

- Rumbling Spires (Tyrannosaurus Rex)
- Evil Woman (Black Sabbath)
- Uncle Harry (Pink Fairies)
- We Took the Wrong Step Years Ago (Hawkwind)
- Red Sun (Janus)
- Poor Lady (Arcadium)
- Jewel (T.Rex)
- Evening Over Rooftops (Edgar Broughton Band)
- Soul Thing (Arzachel)



> Zoom

Out Of The Darkness...
2004

Out Of The Darkness...

- Let It Be Love (Craig Armstrong)
- K56 (Cranes)
- This Time Is Goodbye (Perry Blake)
- Let's Go Out To Night (Blue Nile
- Hallelujah (Live Version) (John Cale)
- No Romance (Kevin Coyne)
- Angeline (John Martyn)
- **Unmasked (Robert Wyatt)**
- Home (Gramophone)
- Tides Of The Moon (Mercury Rev)
- Stay Human (Michael Franti)
- Postscript (Terry Lee Hale)
- Very Near A Cliff (Felix Hans)
- Fragile (Cranes)
- Free Light Of The Day (Neal Casal)
- Into My Arms (Sarah-Jane Morris)

Track 12, 13 & 14 are reversed.
In reality:
12 = Very Near A Cliff (Felix Hans)
13 = Fragile (Cranes)
14 = Postscript (Terry Lee Hale)

- M10 (323962) CD



> Zoom

Winter 2004
2004

Rykomusic - New Releases - New Signings

- Summertime (The Fire Theft)
- How The Stars Got Crossed (Radio 4)
- Oh Boy (Transcargo)
- We Drink On The Job (Earlimart)
- Contact (The Beatnuts)
- Get Swamba (Garage A Trois))
- Smooth Sailing (Isley Brothers)
- Call Me Diamond (Mike Heron)
- Yala (Oumou Sangare)
- My Heart's In New South Wales (Dave Swarbrick)
- **Cuckoo Madame (Robert Wyatt)**
- Unan (Didier Squiban)

Cuckoo Madame est extrait de Cuckooland

- RYKOMUSIC (PRCD VRC014) CD



> Zoom

Monster 8
2004

Rock & Folk

- Mars A-Z (Blues Explosion)
- Last Post On The Bugle (The Libertines)
- Shake The Foundation (Radio 4)
- Kick Out The Chairs (Munk)
- Chicken Payback (The Bees)
- Glimpse At The Good Life (Dogs Die In Hot Cars)
- Don't Make Promises (Paul Weller)
- Will My Lord Be Gardening (Lilys)
- Green Spikey Cactus (Phil Manzanera)
- **Goccia (Cristina Donà Featuring Robert Wyatt)**
- Hello Halo, Goodbye Glands (Les Savy Fav)
- Feel These Blues (The Flash Express)
- Love Has Got Me Crying Again (Denise James)
- Willamette (Richmond Fontaine)
- Eli Said (Don Nino)
- Comets (Piano Magic Avec Angèle David-Guillou)

CD distribué avec le n° 446 d'octobre 2004 du magazine français *Rock & Folk.*

Goccia est extrait de Cristina Dona - UK Version

- ROCK'N'FOLK (CD8) CD



> Zoom

Monster 9
2004

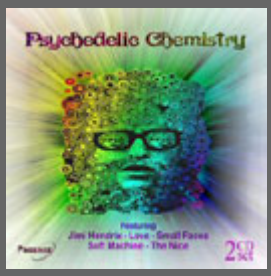
Rock & Folk

- NYC Of Time (Giant Sand)
- The Irish Keep (The Thrills)
- After Dark (Le Tigre)
- I Found Out (Nathaniel Mayer)
- No Cities Left (The Dears)
- The Sure Ain't Right (The Datsuns)
- Goodbye (The Czars)
- Mean Man (The Detroit Cobras)
- Sugarcoated (Aimee Mann)
- LSF (Lost Soul Forever)(Kasabian)
- From Cayman Islands With Love (Stina Nordenstam)
- 7 heures du matin (Jacqueline Taïeb)
- Si Haut (Jenifer Jackson)
- Turning Inside Out (The Methadones)
- Hold Me Now (The Polyphonic Spree)
- Love Or A Lesson Midnight Movies)
- P.L.A. (Robert Wyatt)
- Dreaming (...Again) (Polmo Polpo)
- Broken (Motherkingdom)
- Closer To You (Honky Stomp)

CD distribué avec le n° 449 de janvier 2005 du magazine français *Rock & Folk.*

P.L.A. est extrait de Old Rottenhat.

- ROCK'N'FOLK (CD9) CD



> Zoom

Psychedelic Chemistry
2004

Psychedelic Chemistry

Disc 1
- Shapes Of Things (The Yardbirds)
- Purple Haze (Jimi Hendrix)
- You're Gonna Miss Me (The 13th Floor Elevators)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Soul Sacrifice (Santana)
- Hot Smoke & Sassafras (Bubble Puppy)
- San Franciscan Nights (Eric Burdon)
- When I Was Young (Eric Burdon)
- Alone Again Or (Love)
- Man Of The World (Fleetwood Mac)
- America (The Nice)
- Madame George (Van Morrison)
- 7 & 7 Is (Love)
- Circles (The Fleur De Lys)
- Light My Fire (Jose Feliciano)
- I Should've Known (Soft Machine)

Disc 2
- California Dreamin' (The Mamas & Papas)
- Brown Eyed Girl (Van Morrison)
- Itchycoo Park (Small Faces)
- Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack (The Nice)
- Creeque Alley (The Mamas & Papas)
- Marbles (John McLaughlin)
- Somebody To Love (Jefferson Airplane)
- Wild Thing (Jimi Hendrix)
- Fire Engine (The 13th Floor Elevators)
- Jingo (Santana)
- Sherlock Holmes (The Red Krayola)
- Magick Brother (Gong)
- Stroll On (The Yardbirds)
- I'm Your Witchdoctor (John Mayall's Bluesbreakers Featuring Eric Clapton)
- Tell Me/Have You Ever Seen Me (Apostolic Intervention)
– On The Road Again (Canned Heat)

I Should've Known est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- PAZZAZZ (2PAZZ027) 2xCD

Nationwide Mercury Prize 2004

- Good Luck (Basement Jaxx)
- Dark Of The Matinee (Franz Ferdinand)
- Superstar (Jamelia)
- I'm A Cuckoo (Belle & Sebastian)
- Stronger Than Me (Amy Winehouse)

Old Europe est extrait de Cuckooland.

- MERCURY PRIZE LTD (MMP CD13) CD



> Zoom

Album Of The Year
2004

- Can't Stop Now (Keane)
- Super Duper Love (Joss Stone)
- Ha Ha (Ty)
- Run (Snow Patrol)
- **Old Europe (Robert Wyatt)**
- Fit But You Know It (The Streets)
- You Will You Won't (The Zutons)
- Jus A Rascal (Dizzee Rascal)



> Zoom



> Zoom

Exclusive Tracks
From Uncut's Top
15 Albums Of 2003
2004

Exclusive Tracks From Uncut's Top 15 Albums Of 2003

- Oughta Go Around (Hamell On Trial)
- Things (John Cale)
- Prison Grove (Warren Zevon)
- Crackle & Drag (Paul Westerberg)
- Here I Am (Emmylou Harris)
- Soft Hand (Willard Grant Conspiracy)
- Far From Any Road (The Handsome Family)
- Two Fat Feet (The Fiery Furnaces)
- **Foreign Accents (Robert Wyatt)**
- The Train (Tahiti 80)
- Tour De France (single edit) (Kraftwerk)
- Rise (Josh Rouse)
- Slow Jam (Four Tet)
- Get Down Moses (Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros)
- Universal Hall (The Waterboys)

CD distribué avec le n° de janvier 2004 du magazine anglais *Uncut*.

Foreign Accents est extrait de Cuckooland.

- UNCUT RECORDS (2004 01) CD



> Zoom

Rock Suite
50 Anni Di Rock – 14
2004

Rock Suite - 50 Anni Di Rock – 14

- Aqualung (Jethro Tull)
- Roundabout (Yes
- Killer (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Stop Swimming (Porcupine Tree)
- Marie Antoniette (Curved Air)
- Baby's On Fire (Brian Eno)
- All White (Soft Machine)
- You're Gone (Marillion)
- **O' Caroline (Matching Mole)**
- Lucky Man (Emerson, Lake & Palmer)

Edizione non in Vendita Separatamente dalle Testate del Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso.

O' Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole.

- GRUPPO EDITORIALE L'EXPRESSO (50ROCK14) CD



> Zoom

Clean (BOF)
2004

Clean (Music From The Motion Picture Soundtrack)

- An Ending (Ascent)
- Strawberry Stain
- **Taking Tiger Mountain**
- Breakaway
- Down In The Light
- Dead Disco
- Spider And I
- Neon Golden
- Wait For Me
- Knives From Bavaria
- She Can'T Tell You
- Dead Disco (Bonus Track)

Taking Tiger Mountain est extrait de Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy).

- NAIVE (NV 802111) CD

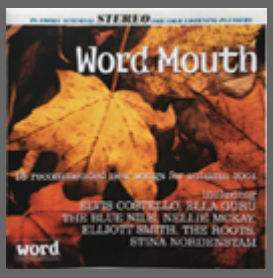


> Zoom

Sound Concierge
#401: Do Not Disturb
2004

Sound Concierge Selected And Mixed By Fantastic Plastic Machine

- Daddy's Delight (FPM Talker Vocal Mix) (Kenji Jammer)
- Something (Chet Baker)
- Climb (Nikakoi)
- Eple (Röyksopp)
- Literature Is Fluff (Hight Llamas)
- A Love Song (Ego-Wrappin')
- La Sombra (Dionisio De Jesús Valdés)
- Moments In Love (Beaten) (Art Of Noise)
- Natural Born Dub (Riverside Christmas Remix) (Hiroshi Fujiwara)
- Love To Share (Carlton And The Shoes)
- Komm Und Spiel Mit Mir (Manfred Krug)
- Pranto De Poeta (Cartola)
- Sentimental Walk (Vladimir Cosma)
- **Strange Fruit (Robert Wyatt)**
- Brazilian Suite (Michel Petrucciani)
- Baby (Os Mutantes)
- If You Don't Want My Love (Bobby Womack)
- Girl In Black-Tango (Para Mi Negra) (Gato Barbieri)



> Zoom

Word Of Mouth
(15 Recommended New Songs For Autumn 2004)
2004

Word Of Mouth (15 Recommended New Songs For Autumn 2004)

- With Arms Outstretched (Rilo Kiley)
- The Delivery Man (Elvis Costello & The Imposters)
- Sweetwater (Tres Chicas)
- Stand In The World (Marjorie Fair)
- Manhattan Avenue (Nellie McKay)
- Augustus Golden (Ella Guru)
- Nobody's Sleeping (Anne McCue)
- Somebody's Gotta Do It (The Roots)
- **Goccia (Cristina Donà Featuring Robert Wyatt)**
- Weightlifting (Trashcan Sinatras)
- Get On With Your Life (Stina Nordenstam)
- Soul Boy (The Blue Nile)
- Banjo #1 (James Yorkston & The Athletes)
- Come Undone (The Delgados)
- Twilight (Elliott Smith)



> Zoom 1 2 3

Archives GRM
2004

Archives GRM

Disc 1
LES VISITEURS DE LA MUSIQUE CONCRETE
- Jazz et Jazz (Andre Hodeir)
- Etude 1 (Pierre Boulez)
- Etude 2 (Pierre Boulez)
- Etude (Jean Barraque)
- La rivière endormie (Darius Milhaud)
- L'amen de verre (Roman Haubenstock-Ramati)
- Aspect Sentimental (Henri Suguet)
- Désert - Interpolation 1 (Edgar Varese)
- Texte 2 (Andre Boucourechilev)
- Points-Mouvements (Claude Ballif)
- Concret PH (Iannis Xenakis)
- Timbres Durées (Olivier Messiaen)

Disc 2

↑

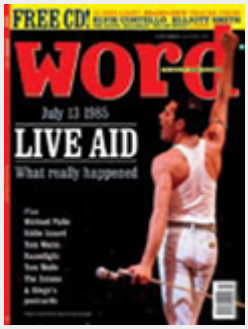
Strange Fruit est extrait de At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

- CUTTING EDGE (CTCR-14292) CD

↑

Goccia est extrait de Cristina Donà.

Free with issue 21 of Word magazine (November 2004).



- WORD MAGAZINE - CD

↑

It est extrait de L'Expérience Acoustique.

- INA (C 1030) 5xCD

L'ART DE L'ETUDE
- Etude Pathétique (Pierre Schaeffer)
- Etude Vocale (Monique Rollin)
- Etude no 1 (Michel Phillippot)
- Boite à musique (Phillppe Athuis)
- Etude aux allures (Pierre Schaeffer
- Etude aux sons tendus (Luc Ferrari)
- Etude Floue (Luc Ferrari)
- Etude aux accidents (Luc Ferrari)
- Prelude (Francois Bernard-Mache)
- Etude aux objets, 1st mvt. (Pierre Schaeffer)
- Etude 1 (Mireille Chamass-Kyrou)
- Reflets (Ivo Malec)
- Phonologie (Phillippe Carson)
- Etude no 2 (Akira Tamba)
- Mer d'Azov (Beatriz Ferreyra)
- Etude aux sons réalistes (Alain Savouret)
- Etude numérique (Alain Savouret)

Disc 3
LE SON EN NOMBRES
- Eros Bleu (Francois Bayle)
- Voyage au Paradis (Dieter Kaufmann)
- Sud (Jean-Claude Risset)
- Week-end (Ivo Malec)
- Wind Chimes (Denis Smalley)
- Anamorphées (Gilles Racot)
- Variations didactiques (Yann Geslin)
- Affleurements (Benedict Mailliard)
- Quatre saisons (Hiver) (Jean Schwarz)
- Novars (Francis Dhomont)

Disc 4
LE TEMPS DU TEMPS REEL
- Exercisme (Bernard Parmegiani)
- Les objets obscurs (Ake Parmerud)
- Pli de perversion (Denis Dufour)
- Ash (Horacio Vaggione)
- La complainte du bossue (Alain Savouret)
- Mimameta (Francis Bayle)
- Subgestuel (Gilles Racot)
- Daniel Teruggi
- De la distance (Ramon Gonzales Arroyo)
- Appel d'air (Michel Redolfi)

Disc 5
LE GRM SANS LE SAVOIR
- Indicatif Roissy (Bernard Parmegiani)
- It (Robert Wyatt/Francois Bayle)
- Indicatif France Culture (Bernard Parmegiani)
- Valse molle (Alain Savouret)
- Indicatif Stade 2 (Bernard Parmegiani)
- II était une fois (Jean Schwarz pour Carolyn Carson)
- Sonal France Culture (Jean Schwarz)
- Chantakoa (Michel Portal/Jean Schwarz)
- L'alcool tue (Boris Vian/Bernard Parmegiani)
- Les Shadoks (Robert Cohen-Solal)
- Canon sur une trompe africaine (Guy Reibel)
- Rengaine à pleurer (Edgardo Canton)
- La roue Ferris (Bernard Parmegiani)
- Sonal Ratp (Christian Zanesi)



> Zoom

Ars Longa Vita Brevis
2005

A Compendium Of Progressive Rock 1967-1974

Disc 1
- The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack (The Nice)
- Aeroplane (Jethro Tull)
- The Wheel's On Fire (Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- Song Of A Baker (Small Faces)
- Fire (Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- America (The Nice)
- One Inch Rock (Tyrannosaurus Rex)
- Road To Cairo (Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- The Sky Is Burning (Sam Gopal)
- Xoanan Bay (Woody Kern)
- I Keep Singing That Same Old Song

Hibou, Anemone And Bear est extrait de Soft Machine - Volume Two.

- CASTLE MUSIC (CMETD727)
3xCD

(Heavy Jelly)
- Walking In The Park (Colosseum)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear (Soft Machine)
- Man Of The World (Fleetwood Mac)
- Sinnin' For You (Live) (Keef Hartly Band)
- Seen Through A light (The Mooche)
- Mrs. Moon And The Thatched Shop (Mike Oldfield)
- Natural Born Bugie (Humble Pie)
- Shangri-La (The Kinks)

Disc 2
- Billy The Monster (The Deviants)
- Spunk Box (Man)
- Who Do You Love? (Juicy Lucy)
- Kings And Queens (Renaissance)
- Down The Dustpipe (The Status Quo)
- Come To The Sabbat (Black Widow)
- The Green Manalishi (Fleetwood Mac)
- All In Your Mind (Stray
- Bath Sister (Jody Grind)
- The Answer (Pete Bardens)
- Tomorrow Night (Atomic Rooster
- Junior's Wailing (Status Quo)
- Follow You Home (UFO)
- Money Can't Save Your Soul (Savoy Brown)
- Lucky Man (Emerson Lake & Palmer)
- Levinia (Streamhammer)
- Diana (Comus)

Disc 3
- Prelude To The Arena (Marsupilami)
- Blind To Your Light (Carol Grimes/Delivery)
- Devil's Answer (Atomic Rooster)
- Mice And Rats In The Loft (Jan Dukes De Grey)
- Wishful Thinking (Hiroshima)
- Gone With The Mouse (Fuchia)
- Eternal Messenger (Kingdom Come)
- Daughter Of The Hillside (Chicken Shack)
- Easy Livin' (Uriah Heep)
- Skin Alley Serenade (Skin Alley)
- Buffalo (Writing On The Wall)
- Sad Go Round (Groundhogs)
- Karn Evil 9 (1st Impression Part 2) (Emerson Lake & Palmer)
- Starlight Starbright (Gravy Train)
- Funeral Empire (Tempest)
- Opening Move (Gryphon)
- The Seventh Secret (Fruupp)



> Zoom

John Peel - A Tribute
2005

John Peel - A Tribute

Disc 1
- Lost John (Lonnie Donegan)
- Debora (T-Rex)
- Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun (Pink Floyd)
- Spanish Castle Magic (Jimi Hendrix Experience)
- Sweet Thing (Van Morrison)
- Life On Mars (David Bowie)
- Five To One (The Doors)
- Song For A Siren (Tim Buckley)
- Stay With Me (Faces)
- I Can Take You To The Sun (The Misunderstood)
- Not So Sweet Martha Lorraine (Country Joe & The Fish)
- Meet On The Ledge (Fairport Convention)
- Big Eyed Beans From Venus (Captain Beefheart)
- Be Careful There's A Baby In The House (Loudon Wainwright III)
- I Am A Lonesome Fugitive (Roy Buchanan)
- Mr Apollo (The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band)
- I Don't Want To Walk Around With You (Ramones)
- Complete Control (The Clash)
- Love Will Tear Us Apart (Joy Division)
- Ceremony (New Order)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- WSM (WSMCD226) 2xCD

Disc 2
- Teenage Kicks (The Undertones)
- Happy Birthday (Altered Images)
- How Soon Is Now? (The Smiths)
- Pearly Dewdrops' Drops (The Cocteau Twins)
- Sidewalking (The Jesus & Mary Chain)
- Song 2 (Blur)
- Lion Rock (Culture)
- New England (Billy Bragg)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Brassneck (The Wedding Present)
- Sheila Na Gig (Pj Harvey)
- Common People (Pulp)
- Theme From Sparta F.C. #2 (The Fall)
- Something For The Weekend (Super Furry Animals)
- Bird Of Cuzco (Nina Nastasia)
- Pull The Wires From The Wall (The Delgados)
- Lazy Line Painter Jane (Belle & Sebastian)
- Two Seconds (Laura Cantrell)
- Chime (Orbital)
- Dust My Blues (Elmore James)



> Zoom

John Peel's Festive 15
2005

John Peel's Festive 15

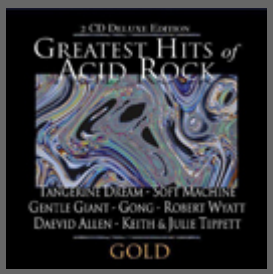
- The Trumpton Riots (Half Man Half Biscuit)
- Take The Skinheads Bowling (Camper Van Beethoven)
- Where's Captain Kirk? (Spizzenergi)
- Remember (Mighty Wah!)
- Birthday (Sugarcubes)
- Well Well Well (Woodentops)
- The Saturday Boy (Billy Bragg)
- Sensitive (Field Mice)
- Foolish Harp/Waerera (Bhundu Boys)
- Gold Soundz (Pavement)
- Primative Painters (Felt featuring Elizabeth Fraser)
- Destroy The Heart (House Of Love)
- Everyone Thinks He Looks Daft (Wedding Present)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Eat Y'self Fitter (Fall)

CD distribué avec le n° de janvier 2006 du magazine anglais *Uncut.*



.*Shipbuilding* est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

- UNCUT RECORDS (2006 01) CD



> Zoom

Greatest Hits Of Acid Rock
2005

Greatest Hits Of Acid Rock

- Two Bunch Palms (Tangerine Dream)
- Floating Into A Birthday Gig (Gong)

- Slightly All The Time (Soft Machine)
- Rain-Bow (Keith & Julie Tippett)
- Free Hand (Gentle Giant)
- Magic Brother (Daevid Allen)
- Tubab (Robert Wyatt)
- The Menu (Code Black)
- Augment & Lady (Mother Gong)
- Eamonn Andrews (Soft Machine)
- Weather (Mother Gong)
- Graffiti Street (Tangerine Dream)
- Funny Ways (Gentle Giant)
- Have You Seen My Friend? (Daevid Allen)
- Radio Gnome 25 (Gong)
- Die In Disneyland (Code Black)
- Purple Haze (Tangerine Dream
- Poet & Peasant (Beggars Opera)

Slightly All The Time et *Eamonn Andrews* sont des versions mono Live (de qualité sonore très médiocre).

Tubab est extrait de A Short Break.

- DEJAVU RETRO GOLD COLLECTION (R2CD 43-03) 2xCD



> Zoom

The Best Of British Rock
...And More
2005

The Best Of British Rock ...And More

Disc 1
- All Day And All Of The Night (The Kinks)
- Do Wah Diddy Diddy (Manfred Mann)
- I'm A Man (The Spencer Davis Group
- Here Comes My Baby (The Tremeloes)
- Bus Stop (The Hollies)
- Time Of The Season (The Zombies)
- Paint It Black (Chris Farlowe)
- Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying (Gerry & The Pacemakers)
- Have I The Right? (The Honeycombs)
- I'm Telling You Now (Freddie & The Dreamers
- Heart Full Of Soul (The Yardbirds)
- Hippy Hippy Shake (The Swinging Blue Jeans)
- Sitting On A Fence (Twice As Much)
- Little Children (Billy J. Kramer/The Dakotas)
- World Without Love, A (Peter & Gordon)
- Hush (Deep Purple)
- Pictures Of Matchstick Men (Status Quo)
- Itchycoo Park (The Small Faces)
- King Midas In Reverse (The Hollies)
- Hurdy Gurdy Man (Donovan)

Disc 2
- For Your Love (Yardbirds)
- Season Of The Witch (Donovan)
- Couldn't Get It Right (Climax Blues Band)
- L.A. Breakdown (The Allstars featuring Jimmy Page)
- Boom Boom (The Animals)
- Man Of The World (Fleetwood Mac)
- Long Cool Woman (The Hollies)
- I Should've Known (Soft Machine)
- It's My Life (Eric Burdon)
- Diary Of An Empty Day (The Nice featuring Keith Emerson)
- Train Kept A Rollin' (The Yardbirds)
- So Much To Say (Rod Stewart)
- Cold Blooded Women (Savoy Brown)
- I'm Your Witchdoctor (Bluesbreakers)
- Afterglow (The Small Faces)

.I Should've Known est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs.

- FUEL 2000 RECORDS - 2xCD



> Zoom

Rykodisc Summer 2005 Sampler
A Rykodisc State Of Mind
2005

Rykodisc Summer 2005 Sampler

Disc 1
NEW AND UPCOMING RELEASES
- So Lonely (Waltham)
- Conversations (The Posies)
- Whoever (J-Live)
- Don't Slander Me (Roky Erickson)
- My Love Has Gone (Josh Rouse)
- All Right (Aight) / Interlude (Ali Shaheed Muhammad)
- Escape From The Island (Ralph Myerz & The Jack Herren Band)
- Better Days (Perfect)
- Sink My Teeth In (Jess Klein)
- Mine Exclusively (Big Star)
- Madness (The Beatnuts)
- Wicked World (Osaka Popstar)
- Friends (Dumptruck)
- Everyday Is Halloween (Ministry)
- No Regrets (SVT)
- You Can't Say No To Hell (Tara Angell)
- Bang It! (The Frontline)

Disc 2
GEMS FROM THE CATALOG
- Hit And Run Holiday (My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult)
- Thursday (Morphine)
- I'm The Slime (Frank Zappa)
- Pacing The Cage (Bruce Cockburn)
- Sixteen Blue (The Replacements)
- Not Forgotten You (Kelly Willis)
- Adios Mi Vida (Cesar Rosas)
- Taboo Tu (Arthur Lyman)
- Mambo UK (¡Cubanismo!)

CD Promo.

Heaps Of Sheeps est extrait de Shleep.

- RYKODISC (PRCD V0627) 2xCD

- Think (Medeski, Martin & Wood)
- Down Here (Lori Carson)
- Heaps Of Sheeps (Robert Wyatt)
- I Got Kinda Lost (Chris Bell)
- Baby's Arms (Robert Cray)
- Walking On A Wire (Richard & Linda Thompson)
- Airstream (Fastball)
- Dance Of The Hunter's Fire (Mickey Hart)
- I'll Fly Away (The Kossoy Sisters With Additional Banjo And Guitar Accompaniments By The Kossoy Sisters With Erik Darling)



> Zoom

Nanas Contemporáneas / Contemporary Lullabies
2005

Nanas Contemporáneas / Contemporary Lullabies Canciones De Ternura En Los Tiempos Del Rencor

- L' inexorable pas del temps (Ramon Civit)
- Nacer (Fernando Mas)
- Christmas lullaby (Montserrat Figueras)
- La princesita de la caja de música quiere volar (Lea Shalom & Bohemia Camerata)
- La lluna, etc. (Pascal Comelade)
- Cançó de bressol (Maria del Mar Bonet)
- My love (Marlango)
- Nacimiento (Esperanza Fernández)
- Un cuento para mi niño (Lole y Manuel)
- El noi de la mare (Toti Soler)
- El niño inseminado (Vainica Doble)
- La Teresita mira a la luna (Cathy Claret)
- My Love Goes With You (The Innocence Mission)
- Lullaby for Hamza (Robert Wyatt)
- El círculo (Kevin Johansen)
- Birdy (Velure)
- Un niño que llora en los montes de María (Petrona)
- Libre como el viento (Muchachito)
- Berta ((Marc Parrot)
- Nana del amor amargo (Claustrofobia)

.

Lullaby for Hamza est extrait de Cuckooland.

- K INDUSTRIA (K054CD) CD



> Zoom

La Biennale Takes A Trip
2005

Fred Elalouf Aka Oof

- Grace (Country Joe And The Fish)
- Eastern Light (Mad River)-
- In The Time Of Our Lives (Iron Butterfly)
- The Season Of The Witch (Vanilla Fudge)
- No Quarter (Led Zeppelin)
- Fearless (Pink Floyd)
- Mommy, What's A Funkadelic? (Funkadelic)
- Le Roi Des Mouches Et La Confiture De Rose (Jean-Claude Vannier)
- Venus In Furs (Amon Tobin Vs Velvet Underground)
- Hummous (Salaryman)
- Ravi Shankar (Dub Syndicate)
- Nero's Expedition (Moondog)
- Love Without Sound (White Noise)
- All Is Loneliness (Big Brother & The Holding Company Feat. Janis Joplin)
- Fragrance (Holger Czukay)
- The Black Regent (Add N To (X))
- Gloria Gloom (Matching Mole)
- The Isle Of Everywhere (Gong)
- Cielo Drive / 17 (Dashiell Hedayat)
- Devil Woman (Manfred Mann)
- Hornets (Herbie Hancock)
- Sirens Of Salo (Jimi Tenor)
- E.V.A. (Jean-Jacques Perrey)
- Kolumbo (Dick Hyman)
- A Rainbow In Curved Air (Terry Riley)
- The Anguish Of Space Time (Apparat Organ Quartet)
- Pendulum (Broadcast)
- House At Pooneil Corners (Jefferson Airplane)
- The Dream Machine (Sukia)

.

Gloria Gloom est extrait de Little Red Record.

Soundtrack for a psychedelic art exhibition of the famous 'Biennale de Lyon' from September to December 2005 at Le Fort de St-Jean.
Mixed live without computer! Selection made out of 3000 tracks...

Promo version.

- PING PONG (DJOOF005) CD

- The Psychedelic Warlords (Hawkwind)
- Ruckzuck (Kraftwerk)
- Trippin' With The Birds (Stereolab/Nurse With Wound)
- Spoon (Can)
- Kosmos (Lynch Mob Bonus Beats) (Paul Weller)
- I Walk The Earth (King Biscuit Time)
- Orbit Around The Moon (Joe Meek & The Blue Men)
- Sailor's Tale (King Crimson)
- Exposition (Deep Purple)
- The Lamb (Aphrodite's Child)
- Surge (Funki Porcini)
- Spirit Fingers (Fourtet)
- Memory Of A Free Festival (David Bowie)
- Voyage 34 (Porcupine Tree)



> Zoom

Monster 13
2006

Rock & Folk

- Juicebox (The Strokes)
- Fuck Forever (Baby Shambles)
- Pattern Skies (The Greenhornes)
- You Could Have It So Much Better (Franz Ferdinand)
- Velvet (The Lords Of Altamont)
- Seer (The Brian Jonestown Massacre)
- The Purple Bottle (Animal Collective)
- Rocket (El Presidente)
- America's Boy (Broadcast)
- Fake Tales Of San Francisco (Arctic Monkeys)
- Afterburner (The Accidents)
- The Only One (Readymade)
- Sugar (Made Out Of Babies)
- A Spoonful Blues (Charley Patton)
- Time Attack (New Black)
- Greenland (The Kingsbury Manx)
- Technicolor Ufo (Phil Manzanera)
- **Memories (Robert Wyatt)**
- Catch Electrique (We)
- Last Exit To Paradise (Hubert-Felix Thiefaine)
- Going To Brazil (Green Dollar Colour)
- Kill Rock'n'Roll (System Of A Down)

CD distribué avec le n° 465 de janvier 2006 du magazine français *Rock & Folk.*

Memories est extrait de Theatre Royal Drury Lane - Robert Wyatt & Friends In Concert - 8th September 1974.

- ROCK'N'FOLK (CD13) CD



> Zoom

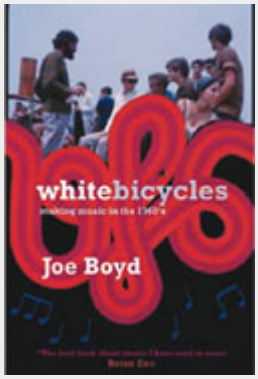
White Bicycles:
Making Music in the 1960s
2006

White Bicycles: Making Music in the 1960s - The Joy Boyd Story

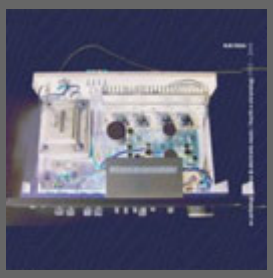
- Crossroads (Eric Clapton & The Powerhouse)
- Way Back In The 1960s (The Incredible String Band)
- Because It Wouldn't Pay (Johnny Handle)
- Spanish Ladies Medley (Dave Swarbrick, Martin Carthy & Diz Disley)
- Arnold Layne (Pink Floyd)
- Granny Takes A Trip (The Purple Gang)
- **She's Gone (Soft Machine)**
- If I Had A Ribbon Bow (Fairport Convention)
- Seven Yellow Gypsies (Shirley Collins)
- Chinese White (The Incredible String Band)
- Autopsy (Fairport Convention)
- The Deserter (Fairport Convention)
- Poor Boy (Nick Drake)
- The Sea (Fotheringay)
- Flowers Of The Forest (Mike Heron)
- Come Wind Come Rain (Vashti Bunyan)
- Primrose Hill (John & Beverley Martyn)
- I Don't Mind (The New Nadir)
- Church Mouse (Dudu Pukwana & Spear)
- Andromeda (Chris Mcgregor's Brotherhood Of Breath)
- Afraid (Nico)
- Way To Blue (Nick Drake)
- Brazil (Geoff & Maria Muldaur)

Ce CD a été publié en même temps que l'ouvrage éponyme de Joe Boyd, paru chez Serpent's Tail en octobre 2007.

She's Gone est extrait de Triple Echo.



- FLEDG'LING RECORDS (FLED 3061) CD



> Zoom



> Zoom

An Anthology Of Noise And Electronic Music - Vol. 4
2006

An Anthology Of Noise And Electronic Music - Vol. 4

Disc 1
- Wire Recorder Piece (El Balh, Halim)
- Piece Electronique 3 (Ligeti, Gyorgy)
- Mutations (Risset, Jean-Claude)
- Demeures Aquatiques (Ferreyra, Beatriz)
- Bounce (Ratkje, Maja)
- Sediment (Spiegel, Laurie)
- Pendulum Music (Reich, Steve)
- Marfa Mix (Vitiello, Stephen)
- Ressac 4 (eRikm)
- Sea Food (Changcun, Wang)
- Ungoya (Chlorgeschlecht)
- Funktion Grau (Koenig, Michael)

Disc 2
- Broken Music Composition (Knizak, Milan)
- Fucked Up And Naked (Denudes, Ralizes)
- Weaving The Magic (Vibrocathedral Orchestra)
- Nine Tails (Hawkins, Andy)
- Still And Moving Lines Of Silence In Families Of Hyperbolas (Lucier, Alvin)
- Circa 1901 (Loop Orchestra)
- Still Warm (Watermann, John)
- **It (Bayle, Francois & Robert Wyatt)**
- Present Time Excercise (Burroughs, William S.)
- Air Attack Over Kabul Airfield (Whitehead, James)
- Aerobruitisme Dynamique (Vivenza, Jean-Marc)
- Oraison (Messiaen, Olivier)

.It est extrait de L'Expérience Acoustique.

- SUB ROSA (SR 250) 2xCD



> Zoom

2003 (Ein Jahr Und Seine 20 Songs)
2006

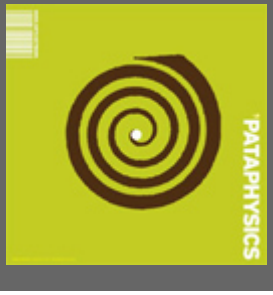
2003 (Ein Jahr Und Seine 20 Songs)

- Rock Me (Liz Phair)
- Hey Ya! (Outkast)
- Darts Of Pleasure (Franz Ferdinand)
- Go With The Flow (Queens Of The Stone Age)
- **Insensatez (Robert Wyatt)**
- Things I Miss The Most (Steely Dan)
- Bank Holiday Monday (Stephen Duffy & The Lilac Time)
- I Don't Know What It Is (Rufus Wainwright)
- Are You Gonna Be My Girl (Jet)
- I Believe In A Thing Called Love (The Darkness)
- Jessica (Adam Green)
- When I See You (Macy Gray)
- Indian Flute (Timbaland & Magoo)
- Carta (Toranja)
- Don't Look Back Into The Sun (The Libertines)
- I Need Your Love (The Rapture)
- Denkmal (Wir Sind Helden)
- Trouble (Pink)
- The New Year (Death Cab For Cutie)
- I Don't Blame You (Cat Power)

Book + CD. Part of the Süddeutsche Zeitung Diskothek Series (1955-2004).

Insensatez est extrait de Cuckooland.

- SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG DISKOTHEK (2003) Book + CD



Pataphysics

- Marche Funèbre Composée Pour Les Funérailles D'un Grand Homme Sourd (Alphonse Allais)
- Hanson Du Décervelage (Alfred Jarry, Charles Pourny, Claude Terrasse)
- Hymne Des Palotins (Alfred Jarry, Charles Pourny, Claude Terrasse)
- Erratum Musical (Marcel Duchamp)
- Kangaroo-Pouch Machine (Percy Grainger)

Patasoft est une version totalement remixée de *A Pataphysical Introduction* et *The British Alphabet* du Soft Machine Vol. 2

- SONIC ARTS NETWORK (SAN2005) CD

> Zoom

Pataphysics
2006

- Le Déserteur (Boris Vian)
- Harpo Boogie-Woogie (Harpo Marx)
- L'apres-Midi D'un Magnétophone: Palindromes Phonétiques (Luc Etienne)
- Gai Savoir (Jean Dubuffet)
- **Patasoft (R.Wyatt/H.Hopper)**
- Ponukélian Melody (Gavin Bryars)
- The Man With The Axe (Nigey Lennon)
- L'auteur Se Retire (Christopher Hobbs)
- Nicholas Through The Mist (Andrew Hugill)
- D'un Jet (Frédéric Inigo)
- Einsiedler (Gullibloon)
- Pataphonic Studies 1 (John Levack Drever)
- Pataphonic Studies 2 (John Levack Drever)
- Pataphonic Studies 3 (John Levack Drever)
- Interior/Interior (Neil Salley)
- Just To Be Clear (Ramuntcho Matta)
- Bam_Haha (Marc Battier)
- To End, Caruso Sang Figure 1 Moto Perpetuo (Andrew Hugill)



> Zoom

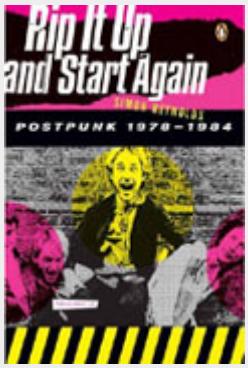
Rip It Up And Start Again
2006

Rip It Up And Start Again (Postpunk 1978-1984 - Compiled By Simon Reynolds)

- Fiery Jack (Fall)
- Praying Hands (Devo)
- Devil Lives In My Husbands Body (Pulsallama)
- Sluggin' Fer Jesus (part 1)(Cabaret Voltaire)
- Sense Of Guilt (Josef K)
- PAs (Scritti Politti)
- Spend Spend Spend (Slits)
- Violence Grows (Fatal Microbes)
- **Grass (Robert Wyatt)**
- Slowdive (Siouxsie & The Banshees)
- Only Loved At Night (Raincoats)
- Choci Loni (Young Marble Giants)
- Dancevision (Human League)
- Tight As A Drum(Thomas Leer)
- White Car In Germany (Associates)
- Give Me Back My Man (B-52's)
- Beasley Street (John Cooper Clarke)
- Friday Night Saturday Morning (Specials)
- I'm Your Money (Heaven 17)
- Dumb Magician (Blue Orchids)

Ce CD a été publié en même temps que l'ouvrage éponyme de Simon Reynolds, paru chez Penguin Books en janvier 2006.

Grass est extrait du single Grass/Trade Union.



- V2 (VVR1040352) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Plague Songs
2006

Plague Songs

- Blood (Klashnekoff) (The Plague Of Blood)
- Relate the Tale (King Creosote) (The Plague Of Frogs)
- The Meaning of Lice (Stephin Merritt) (The Plague Of Lice)
- **Flies (Brian Eno With Robert Wyatt) (The Plague Of Flies)**
- The Fifth Plague (Laurie Anderson) (The Death Of Livestock)
- Boils (Cody ChesnuTT) (The Plague Of Boils)
- Hailstones (The Tiger Lillies) (The Plague Of Hail)
- Glittering Cloud (Imogen Heap) (The Plague Of Locusts)
- Darkness (Scott Walker) (The Plague Of Darkness)
- Katonah (Rufus Wainwright) (The Death Of The Firstborn)

- Bobby "Buzzer" Wyatt - fly

- Hannah Eno - high voice
- Steve Jones - second guitar
- Brian Eno - all other intruments and voices

Flies a été initialement composé et interprété pour cet album.

- 4AD/ARTANGEL (CAD2616CD) CD



> Zoom

Classics From John Peel's All-Time Festive Fifty
2006

Classics From John Peel's All-Time Festive Fifty

- Teenage Kicks (The Undertones)
- White Man In Hammersmith Palais (The Clash)
- Common People (Pulp)
- True Faith (New Order)
- Another Girl Another Planet (The Only Ones)
- French Disko (Stereolab)
- Going Underground (The Jam)
- Sheela-Na-Gig (PJ Harvey)
- Visions Of Johanna (Bob Dylan)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Northern Sky (Nick Drake)
- Song To The Siren (Tim Buckley)
- Can't Be Sure (The Sundays)
- Heroin (The Velvet Underground)
- Brassneck (Wedding Present)
- New Rose (The Damned)
- How I Wrote Elastic Man (The Fall)
- This Charming Man (The Smiths)
- New Dawn Fades (Joy Division)

- UNIVERSAL MUSIC (984 345-2) CD



> Zoom

Cuneiform Promo 4
2006

Cuneiform Records

- Family Affair [Excerpt] (Harry Miller's Isipingo)
- Gnat Prong [Excerpt] (Hugh Hopper)
- Ready 4 Luv (Hamster Theatre)
- Someplace Else (Bill Brovold & Larval)
- Creature Council [Excerpt] (Far Corner)
- The Old Ones (Nebelnest)
- The Fabulous Story of Tigroo and Leloo [Excerpt] (Richard Pinhas)
- **Bossa Nova Express (Soft Machine)**
- Xenantaya (Univers Zéro)
- Scherzo #C (Zaar)
- Second Avenue (Microscopic Septet)
- There's No Going Back Now [Excerpt] (Mujician)
- Brooklyn in the Fifties (Microscopic Septet)
- **Slightly All the Time/Noisette (Soft Machine)**
- Amen - Birdsongs of the Mesozoic with Oral Moses

Promo Edition.

Bossa Nova Express est extrait de Middle Earth Masters.

Slightly All the Time/Noisette est extrait de Grides.

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (PROMO4) CD



> Zoom

Dirty Diamonds III
2006

Dirty Diamonds III

Disc 1
- Walking In The Rain (Flash & The Pan)
- Morning Wonder (The Earlies)
- Spiders (Kidsmoke) (Wilco)
- Leaf House (Animal Collective)
- Red Tape (Brooks)
- **Shrinkrap (Robert Wyatt)**
- Bees (Caribou)
- Derrick Starter (Turzi)
- **Soon Soon Soon (Kevin Ayers)**
- California Shake (Margo Guryan)
- She's My Baby (Mazzy Star)
- Smalltown Boy (André Herman Düne)

Disc 2
- Plongée De Glace (François De Roubaix)
- Somewhere In The Waves, We Will Find You (Cristian Vogel)
- How To Build A Super Computer (The Emperor Machine)
- So (Extended) (Soft Cell)
- Lovemachine (Supermax)
- Enrico (Isolée)
- Afraid (Nico)
- Symphonie Pour L'Attentat (Ennio Morricone)
- The End Of The World (Skeeter Davis)

Shrinkrap est extrait de Dondestan.

Soon Soon Soon est extrait de Odd Ditties.

- DIAMOND TRAXX (DIAM052CD) 2xCD



> Zoom

Girlmonster
2006

Girlmonster

Disc 1
- Girlmonster Intro
- Fine As Fuck (Scream Club Vs. Ben Adorable Feat. Peaches)
- Demons Of Love (Mignon)
- Hot Topic (Le Tigre)
- Mountain Place (Barbara Morgenstern)
- G. G. (Gaudy Good) (Angie Reed)
- Honeyland (Pam Hogg)
- Speedometer (Rhythm King And Her Friends)
- Get It Back (Hanin Elias)
- Me Saw Me Momma (Kevin Blechdom)
- Full Moon (Ana da Silva)
- Virtual Leisure (Anat Ben David)
- Super Hero (Sir Alice)
- Plastic Surgery (Chicks On Speed)
- **Launderette (Vivien Goldman)**
- Incognito (Tina Weymouth)
- Down To The Underground (Client)
- Break Dance Hunx (Market Value Mix) (Kids On TV)
- School Of Etiquette (Boyskout)
- Dust (Erase Errata)
- No Woman No Crime (No Bra)

Disc 2
- Ungawa Pt. 2 Remix (Pulsallama)
- Typical Girls (Live) (The Slits)
- Mind Your Own Business (Delta 5)
- Nameless Dogs (Cherry Sunkist)
- Get The Picture (Japanese Intelligence Mind Control)
- Anchors Away (Autonervous)
- Mr. Chang (Cobra Killer)
- Changes (Planningtorock)
- Pita Pata (Hanayo)
- Storm (Björk)
- Panic Of The Square (Tobi Vail)
- We Shall Overcome (Gustav)
- Our Inventions (Bonnie Vs. Hunter)
- You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory (Françoise Cactus)
- Die Matrosen (LiliPUT)
- Your Girlfriend (Katastrophe)
- Sedition (Lesbians On Ecstasy)
- Sheets (Electric Indigo & Dorit Chrysler)
- Licking The Juice (Cosey Fanni Tutti)

Disc 3
- Sucker Man (Hotel Motel)
- Girl Boogie (Gudrun Gut)
- Godzilla (Siouxsie And Budgie's Girl Monster Mix) (The Creatures)
- Maybe A Dog (Soffy O)
- New Year's Eve (Ella Bandita)
- Somos Las Perras (Las Perras Del Infierno)
- You're Speaking My Language (Juliette And The Licks)
- Pinkitan (Miss Le Bomb)
- Sexy (Cat5)
- Get RID! (Robots In Disguise)
- Fom Fom (People Like Us)
- Manifesto (Michaela Melián)
- Heroes (History Mix) (Susanne Brokesch)
- International (Scream Club Vs. Leonard DeLeonard)
- Crystal Cookie (Lesson 1) (Crystal Cookie)
- Say Trees (Caro Snatch)
- Your Turn To Run (Malaria!)
- Shouting Out Loud (The Raincoats)
- Seven Days (Vivien Goldman w/ Andy Caine & Manasseh Sound)
- Baby Mother (Toxicgirl Strip Mix) (Ari Up)
- Sell It 2 The Kids (Megaphone Version) (Miss Pain)

Launderette est extrait de Launderette/Private Armies.

- CHICKS ON SPEED RECORDS (COSR33CD) 3xCD

Girlmonster EP 1

- Fine As Fuck (Scream Club Vs. Ben Adorable Feat. Peaches)

Launderette est extrait de



> Zoom

Girlmonster EP 1
2006

- Break Dance Hunx (Market Value Mix) (Kids On TV)
- Plastic Surgery (Chicks On Speed)
- G. G. (Gaudy Good) (Angie Reed)
- **Launderette (Vivien Goldman)**
- Down To The Underground (Client)

Launderette/Private Armies.

- CHICKS ON SPEED RECORDS (COSR34CD) EP



> Zoom

Late Night Tales: Air
2006

Late Night Tales: Air

- All Cats Are Grey (The Cure)
- Planet Caravan (Black Sabbath)
- O' Venezia Venaga Venusia (Nino Rota)
- I Shall Be Released (Band & Bugles Of The Light Division/Owen)
- Camille (Georges Delerue)
- Ghosts (Japan)
- Old Man's Back Again (Scott Walker)
- Come Wander With Me (Jeff Alexander)
- Metal Heart (Cat Power)
- Loving You (Minnie Riperton)
- For The World (Tan Dun)
- Long De La Riviere Tendre (Sebastien Tellier)
- My Autumn's Done Come (Lee Hazlewood)
- **P.L.A. (Robert Wyatt)**
- Let's Get Lost (Elliott Smith)
- Cousin Jane (The Troggs)
- Musica (Air/Alessandro Baricco)
- Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte (Ravel/Cleveland Orchestra)

Cet album fait également partie de la compilation de 27 CD *LateNightTales (TheDecadeBox)* éditée en 2011 en tirage limité numéroté.

P.L.A. est extrait de Old Rottenhat.

- AZULI RECORDS (ALNCD15) CD



> Zoom

Singer Songwriter - Vol.1
2006

Rough Trade Shops

Disc 1
- Beneath The Rose (Micah P. Hinson)
- Calendar Hung Itself (Bright Eyes)
- I've Changed My Number (Plush)
- Irony Engine (Franklin Bruno)
- Girl From The Estuary (Adrian Crowley)
- Metal Heart (Cat Power)
- Come Down Slowly (James William Hindle)
- Take Courage (Mark Eitzel)
- Plain Sailing (Tracey Thorn)
- Waving (Bevis Frond)
- 1952 Vincent Black Lightning (Richard Thompson)
- Dress (PJ Harvey)
- I Want You (Elvis Costello)
- Little Boy Blue (Tom Waits)
- Scissors (Barbara Manning)
- Needle In The Hay (Elliott Smith)
- Alabaster (Simon Joyner)
- Where Do We Go Now But Nowhere (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds)
- Someplace Simple (James Yorkston)
- Snow Falls In November (Julie Doiron)

Disc 2
- Summer Of Drugs (Victoria Williams)
- Hotel Room (Richard Hawley)
- Easy To Be Around (Diane Cluck)
- Danny Carlisle (Vic Chesnutt)
- Way That She Really Is (Mark Mulcahy)
- Number One (Matthew Hattie Hein)
- Is Everyone Happy (Jane Weaver)
- Forever Instant (Lou & His Sentridoh Barlow)
- **Blues In Bob Minor (Robert Wyatt)**
- Don't Let The Record Label Take You Out To Lunch (Jeffrey Lewis)
- Sundrops (Kristin Hersh)
- Just After 11 She Left (Creosote King)
- To A Scrapyard Bustop (Charlie Parr)

Blues In Bob Minor est extrait de Shleep.

- MUTE RECORDS (CD STUMM 273) CD

- Dear Darling (Mary Margaret O'Hara)
- Cripple And The Starfish (Antony & The Johnsons)
- Masher (Mountain Goats)
- Endless Sleep (Nick Lowe)
- Speeding Motorcycle (Daniel Johnson)
- Woodrow (Tom Russell)



> Zoom

Une rentrée 2007 - Vol. 3
2007

Les Inrocks

- Nantes (Beirut)
- Let's Dance To Joy Division (The Wombats)
- Melody Day (Caribou)
- Shake Your Limbs (Mattafix)
- Pumpkin Soup (Kate Nash)
- High (Brisa Roché)
- **A Beautiful War (Robert Wyatt)**
- Afterglow (Arthur & Yu)
- What Would Wolves Do? (Les Savy Fav)
- Cinema (Twisted Charm)
- Like Dancing (Syd Matters)
- Légère (soulève-moi) (Pauline Croze)
- Cunnilingus Mon Amour! (Dyonisos)
- Le Loup (Fear Not) (Le Loup)
- Grand Jumble Army (Flexa Lyndo)
- Le Frigo Est En Panne (L'épicier)

A Beautiful War est extrait de Comicopera.

- LES INROCKUPTIBLES (CD LI 07 153) CD



> Zoom

Real Life Permanent Dreams
2007

Real Life Permanent Dreams (A Cornucopia Of British Psychedelia 1965-1970)

Disc 1
SOWING THE SEEDS
- My Friend Jack (The Smoke)
- No More You And Me (The Tornados)
- Cheat (Lord Sutch)
- Doctor Doctor (Frame)
- Day And Night (The Drag Set)
- Fancy (The Kinks)
- I Don't Want You (Traffic Jam)
- Breaking Up Scene (Honeybus)
- Snow White (Winston's Fumbs)
- I Like It - Christian (Neil & The Crusaders)
- Black Sheep RIP (The Australian Playboys)
- Circles (Fleur De Lys)
- Lilac Hand Of Menthol Dan (Marc Bolan & John's Children)
- You're Holding Me Down (Buzz)
- I Take It That We're Through (The Riot Squad)
- Come On Back (Paul & Ritchie aka The Cryin' Shames)
- It's A Crime (Kirkbys)
- Love Me 'Til The Sun Shines (The Kinks)
- Hippy Gumbo (Marc Bolan)
- Gently Tender (The Incredible String Band)
- Sunny Goodge Street (Donovan)
- Linda Loves Linda (Floribunda Rose)
- Up On The Wooden Hills To Bedfordshire (The Small Faces)
- Rubber Monkey (Santa Barbara Machine Head)
- You've Got To Hold On (The Deviants)
- Season Of The Witch (Julie Driscoll with Brian Auger & The Trinity)

Disc 2
PLANT A FLOWER CHILD TODAY
- Loving Sacred Loving (The End)
- All Day All Night (Blonde On Blonde)
- Crazy One (Ramases & Selket)
- Man In Black (Skip Bifferty)
- Yellow Balloon (Icarus)
- Real Life Permanent Dream (The Orange Machine)
- Clown (Eire Apparent)
- When The Wind Arises (Rokes)
- I'm Flying (Serendipity)
- Trip On An Orange Bicycle (The Orange Bicycle)
- Utterly Simple (Smoke)

Compilation - Remastered - Box-set.

Thank You Pierrot Lunaire/Have You Ever Been Green/Pataphysical Introduction 2 sont extraits de Volume 2.

- CASTLE MUSIC (CMXBX1239) 4xCD

- London Social Degree (Billy Nicholls)
- Golden Lion (Lomax Alliance)
- Sunshine Day (Jethro Tull)
- Boy Meets Girl (Paper Blitz Tissue)
- Cave Of Clear Light (Bystanders)
- I Wonder Where My Sister's Gone (Anan)
- Man In A Shop (Marmalade)
- Lord John (Bobcats)
- Mazy (Peep Show)
- Bakerman (Moon's Train)
- Love Hate Revenge (Episode Six)
- Good Evening (Tickle)
- It (Excelsior Spring)
- Night Is A Comin' aka Lindyloo) (Warm Sounds)
- Fire (Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)

Disc 3
HAPPYDAYSTOYTOWN
- Pictures Of Matchstick Men (Status Quo)
- Five White Horses (Sun Dragon)
- Riding A Wave (Turnstyle)
- I Know She Believes (Picadilly Line)
- Hey Mr Carpenter (Fox)
- Bitter Thoughts Of Little Jane (Timon)
- Disappear (Gilbert)
- Encapsulated Marigold (Our Plastic Dream)
- Henry Long (Epics)
- Lullaby: Grapefruit)
- I've Seen To Dream (Harmony Grass)
- Nodnol (Spectrum)
- Colour Sergeant Lilywhite (West Coast Consortium)
- Seeing Things Green (Yellow Bellow Room Boom)
- Golden Apples (The Californians)
- Don't Turn Around (Loot)
- Silver Tree Top School For Boys (Beatstalkers)
- Give Him A Flower (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- Fade Away Maureen (Tony Hazzard)
- Yellow Rainbow (Rockin' Berries)
- Sylvie (Hill)
- Fool From Upper Eden (Andy Ellison)
- Love And Best Wishes (Uglys)
- Sunshine (Gun)
- Green Circles (Twice As Much)
- Mr Job (Alan Bown Set)
- Happydaystorytown (The Small Faces)

Disc 4
CIRCUS DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN
- Circus Days (Junior's Eyes)
- No Home Today (Kult)
- Lady Caroline (Velvett Fogg)
- Go Your Way (Andromeda)
- Diamond Hard Blue Apples Of The Moon (The Nice)
- Horse (Sam Gopal)
- Candlelight (Eddie Hardin & Pete York)
- How Can I Live (Fat Mattress)
- Tarot (Andy Bown)
- Light Of Love (Humble Pie)
- On A Meadow Lea (Bobak Jons Malone)
- Open Ground (Pussy)
- Fair Maiden (Woody Kern)
- Empty Room (Man)
- Venus (Samson)
- My Gration Or (Opal Butterfly)
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire/Have You Ever Been Green/Pataphysical Introduction 2 (The Soft Machine)**
- Felix (Andwella's Dream)
- Born In A Trunk (Spice)
- All In Your Mind (Stray)



> Zoom

Burning Shed Free Sampler

- **Craig's Distended Train Ride (Hugh Hopper & Matt Howarth)**
- Another World (A Marble Calm)
- Angling (Roger Eno)
- White House, Blach Ash (UXB)
- Goodbye Honeypot (Pedaltone)
- Black Sun (Andrew Keeling)
- Brave Dreams (Tim Bowness)
- Howling for the Highway Home (Terry Stamp)
- Cellosphere (Marvin Ayres)

Craig's Distended Train Ride est extrait de The Stolen Hour.

- BURNING SHED (0702) CD

Sampler 3
2007

- Inside World (Allan Mostert)
- Take it All (The Lost Levels)
- Europa II (Europa String Choir)
- Empty Space (Peter Chilvers)
- Spirit of the Void (Cipher)
- Thin Air (Michael Bearpark & Peter Chilvers)
- Fiery Pyre (William D. Drake)



> Zoom 1 2

Eutsi!
2007

Gose, Potemkin + 12 abesti zutik irauteko

- Eutsi (Gose)
- Comunicado Empresarial Para la Concordia Y El Bienestar Social (Gose)
- Dena Ongi Dabil (Potemkin)
- Eutsi Gogor (Hertzainak)
- Ustela (Itoiz)
- After Boltxebike (Kortatu)
- Ezin Leike (Delirium Tremens)
- **The Age Of Self (Ruper Ordorika) [R. Wyatt]**
- Maiatzaren Lehena (Zarama)
- No Future (Baldin Bada)
- Langile Baten Galderak Liburu Baten Aurrean (Mikel Laboa)
- Euskadi (Jotakie)
- Callejon Sin Salida (Barricada)
- La Clase Obrera (Potato)
- Un Rayo De Sol (La Polla Records)

- OIHUKA (PC-365) CD



> Zoom

In Search Of Syd
2007

In Search Of Syd: MOJO Presents 15 Mind-Bending Freak-Outs!

- Things'll Never Be the Same (Spacemen 3)
- She is Death (Flaming Lips)
- If You Don't Give Me What I Want (Blind Boy Fuller and Floyd Council)
- C. C. and O. Blues (Pink Anderson)
- Humanoid Boogie (Bonzo Dog Band)
- Oh! Wot A Dream (Kevin Ayers)
- Take My Hand (Jennifer Gentle)
- Who Are the Brain Police? (Mothers Of Invention/Frank Zappa)
- 5 and 20 Schoolgirls (Gong/Daevid Allen)
- Portobello Man (The Bevis Frond)
- Cymbaline (Hawkwind)
- SOL 07 Pt 1 (Wooden Shjips)
- **I Should've Known (Soft Machine)**
- Ailantus Glandulosa (AMM)
- Crystal Rainbow Pyramid (Acid Mothers Temple & Melting Paraiso UFO)

CD distribué avec le n° d'octobre 2007 du magazine anglais *MOJO.*

I Should've Known est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs (At The Beginning).

- MOJO MAGAZINE (OCTOBER 2007) CD



> Zoom

Blitz Aprova
Os Melhores De 2007
2007

Blitz Aprova Os Melhores De 2007

- North American Scum (LCD Soundsystem)
- She's A Go-Go Dancer (Wraygunn)
- Fake Empire (The National)
- Sexto Andar (Clã)
- Bamboo Banga (M.I.A.)
- Silent Void (David Fonseca)
- Heart Of Hearts (!!!)
- Love Is A Loosing Game (Amy Winehouse)
- Heretics (Andrew Bird)
- Atlas (Battles)
- Black Skin Blue Eyed Boys (Map Of Africa)
- Take Pills (Panda Bear)
- You've Got Yr. Cherry Bomb (Spoon)
- Doing It Right (The Go! Team)
- Books From Boxes (Maxïmo Park)
- Heimdalsgate Like A Promethean Curse (Of Montreal)
- **Hasta Siempre Comandante (Robert**

Hasta Siempre Comandante est extrait de Comicopera.

- SONY BMG (88697224702) CD

Wyatt)
- The Prayer (Bloc Party)
- Dashboard (Modest Mouse)



> Zoom

Independent Innovative Creative 19
2007

Independent Innovative Creative 19

– Twenty Five Sins (iLiKETRAiNS)
- Cost I (Black Dog)
– Shine Shine (Boys Noize)
– Crocodile (Pete Heller Mix) (Underworld°
- Like Something For Porno! (Felix Da Housecat)
- Militant Style (Border Crossing)
– Witness (Roots Manuva)
– That Kind Of Man (The Heavy)
- Ex Guru (The Fiery Furnaces)
– Giving Your Gifts (Buen Chico)
– Stay Tuned (Robert Wyatt)
– Little Blue Mailbox - Radio Edit (Fink)
– After Wanda (Paris Motel)
– Penalty (Beirut)
– Arabesque (Harmonia)

CD promo.

Stay Tuned est extrait de Comicopera.

- VITAL SALES & MARKETING (INDIECREATIVE 19) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Nova 1956-1980
2007

Nova 1956-1980/Les Racines De Nova En 25 CD Et 300 Titres

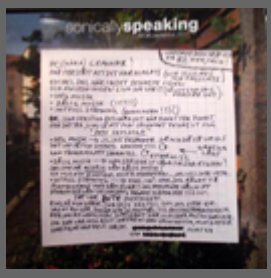
Disc n° 16 (1971)
- Rock Steady (Aretha Franklin)
- The Pusher (Hoyt Axton)
- Freedom To The People (Heptones)
- Chrysler Rose (Dashiell Hedayat)
- The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (Gil Scott Heron)
- La Libertad Logica (Eddie Palmieri)
- 80 A B (Pierre Barouh)
- Moment Of Truth (Earth, Wind & Fire)
- Virtually Part 1 (Soft Machine)
- Thiely (Star Band)
- Cloud Nine (Live At Montreux) (Mongo Santamaria)
- Loss (Don Ellis)
- Ostinato (Suite For Angela) (Herbie Hancock)

Disc n° 17 (1972)
- Woman To Woman (Joe Cocker)
- Che Che Cole (Willie Colon)
- Do The Dirt (The Meters
- Instant Pussy (Matching Mole)
- Give It Everything You Got (Edgar Winter)
- Too Much Time (Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band)
- Ali Baba (Louie Ramirez)
- Communication (Bobby Womack)
- Sail Away (Randy Newman)
- Clean Up Woman (Betty Wright)
- Fohat Digs Holes In Space (Gong)
- Brasil (Gato Barbieri)
- Waka / Jawaka (Frank Zappa)

Coffret de 25 CD édité par Radio Nova.

Virtually Part 1 est extrait de Fourth.
Instant Pussy est extrait de Matching Mole.

- NOVA (3128692) 25xCD



> Zoom

Sonically Speaking Vol. 36
2007

Sonically Speaking Vol. 36 - September 2007

- Won´t Back Down (Jonas Game)
- Tristeza Maleza (Manu Chao)
- Mary Jane (Dieter Schöön)
- A Beautiful War (Robert Wyatt)
- The Opposite Of Hallelujah (Jens Lekman)
- Englar Og Dárar (Ólöf Arnalds)
- You Finally Said Something Good (When You Said Goodbye) (Teddy Thompson)
- Little Lovin´ (Irene)
- And I Still Blush (Josef Och Erika)
- Boy With A Coin (Iron And Wine)
- Entrapped (Kissey Asplund)
- Ice Cream (New Young Pony Club)
- Little Bit (Lykke Li)
- Peacebone (Animal Collective)

A Beautiful War est extrait de Comicopera.

- SONIC MAGAZINE (SONIC 036) CD

- Our Life Is Not A Movie Or Maybe (Okkervil River)
- Cheer Me Up Thank You (New Buffalo)



> Zoom

Un-Herd Volume 6
2007

Un-Herd... Volume 6

- Heartsong (Maggie Reilly)
- Every Angel (All About Eve)
- Dealer (John Martyn)
- Fast Approaching (Gordon Giltrap / Rick Wakeman)
- Right By You (Martin Stephenson & The Daintees)
- **A Short Break (Robert Wyatt)**
- I Hear You Now (Jon Anderson)
- Ritt Mickley (Refugee)
- Magick Brother (Daevid Allen & Euterpe)
- **Dare (Jo Fletcher)**
- Tilted Cross (Fish)
- Hell's Bells (Bruford)
- Spirit Of The Age (Hawkwind)

Free CD on the cover of *Rock n Reel Magazine*'s November/December 2007 edition.

A Short Break est extrait de A Short Break.

Dare est extrait de Jo Flechter.

- R2 (R2-06) CD



> Zoom

Now Hear This!
2007

Now Hear This!

- Why Do Men Fight? (Carbon/Silicon)
- Rainin' In Paradize (Manu Chao)
- Go To Hell (David Ford)
- To The Dogs Or Whoever (Josh Ritter)
- Fool That I Am (Kula Shaker)
- **A Beautiful War (Robert Wyatt)**
- Cold Shoulder (Kevin Ayers)
- High Shelf Booze (Eilen Jewell)
- While You Where Sleeping (Elvis Perkins)
- Heavy Sigh (Edwyn Collins)
- Cockle Shell (King Creosote)
- A Sunday Smile (Beirut)
- Stepping Out In Front Of Cars (Morning Bride)
- Pagan Angel And A Borrowed Car (Iron & Wine)
- Intruder (Susanna)

A Beautiful War est extrait de Comicopera.

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *The Word* (N° 56 - 10/2007).



- WORD MAGAZINE (CD36) CD



> Zoom

Recommended Records Sampler (Japanese Reissue)
2008

Recommended Records Sampler (Japanese Reissue)

Disc 1
- Flaschenzug (Vogel)
- Extract 5 From Faust Party 3. (Faust)
- All Hail! (Art Bears)
- Reparto Novita (Stormy Six)
- Walk Before Imitate (The Homosexuals)
- On ne peut plus compter sur ses doigts (Joseph Racaille & Patrick Portella)
- * (Feliu Gasul)
- Untitled - No Artist
- Strangelove (The Black Sheep)
- Influences (Univers Zero)
- Boss de crosses dans le doulos (Aksak Maboul/Honeymoon Killers)
- Houdini (The Work) - Slice (Henry Cow)
- Viva Pa Ubu (Henry Cow)
- Radio extract (Decibel)

Réédition japonaise du CD (avec 4 nouveaux morceaux en fin de CD2) paru initialement en 1982.

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR 25 A/B) 2xCD

Disc 2
- Simulacres (Art Zoyd)
- 2 from 'chronometers (The Muffins)
- Berlin Ku Damm I2/4/8I (Heiner Goebbels)
- Steer Clear Of England (Amos)
- Commerce Nostalgigue (Conventum)
- Vera C (Hector Zazou)
- Pool (This Heat)
- Walker Westinghouse (The Residents)
- Pedestrian Hop & Copy Me (R. Steve Moore)
- I Talk To My Haircut (Ron Pate)
- Ucoellin del Bosco (Picchio Del Pozzo)
- The Internationale (Robert Wyatt)
- Frenzy (Peter Blegvad)
-Total Drop (Homosexuals)
- Extract VI (Faust) - What Are You Looking At! (R. Stevie Moore)
- Flowers Sleep Into The Night (R. Stevie Moore)



> Zoom

Give Peace A Chance
2008

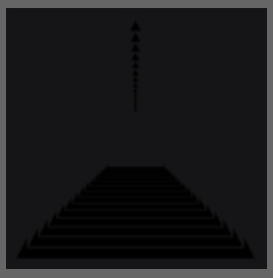
Give Peace A Chance

- Songdog (Days Of Armageddon)
- The Sons Of The Pioneers (Old Man Atom)
- Robert Plant & The Strange Sensation (Another Tribe)
- The Sound (Missiles)
- David Rovics (The Draft Is Coming)
- Purple Tree (I Don't Wanna Be A Soldier)
- The Long Ryders (Masters Of War)
- Marah (Round Eye Blues)
- Bob Frank & John Murry (Doc Cunningham)
- Eric Bogle (The Band Played Waltzing Matilda)
- Richard Thompson (Dad's Gonna Kill Me)
- Robert Wyatt (A Beautiful War)
- Julian Cope (Can't Get You Out Of My Country)
- Steve Earle (Steve's Hammer [For Pete])
- Roy Harper (I Hate The White Man)

A Beautiful War est extrait de Comicopera.

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *Uncut* (01/2008).

- UNCUT RECORDS (2008 01) CD



> Zoom

Rvng Prsnts Mx5.5: Purple Pills For Sleepless Nights
2008

Tim Sweeney

- Sea Song (Robert Wyatt)
- Hypnotized (Spacemen 3)
- 2069: A Spaced Oddity (US69)
- This Is How We Walk On The Moon (Arthur Russell)
- Get Thy Bearings (Donovan)
- Dream Baby Dream (Suicide)
- Dream (Phew)
- In Heaven (Lady In The Radiator Song (David Lynch & Peter Ivers)
- Fire (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- Circle Sky (The Monkees)
- Trapezoid (The Mickey Bliss Band)
- I Walk On Guilded Splinters (Dr. John)
- Jungle Taitei (Laughter Robot's Hemp Mix) (Boredoms)
- It Was A Robot (Yura Yura Teikoku)
- The House Of The Rising Sun (The Animals)
- The Orchids (Psychic TV)
- Ohayo (P-Model)

"Rvng's resident recluse Tim Sweeney compiled this superb, 17 track mix for an exclusive version of the Beats In Space t-shirt printed for the shops Colette (Paris) and Jet Set (Tokyo)"..

For Promotional Purposes Only.
Limited to 150 copies.

- RVNG INTL. (RVNGMX5.5) CD

Cocktail Mol6t8v : La Bande Son De La R évolte

Disc 1
- Intro : Cocktail molotov
- Things Are Going To Get Better (The Small Faces)
- Voeux du Général de Gaulle : Que sera 1968

I Should've Known est extrait de Jet-Propelled Photographs (At The Beginning).



> Zoom

Cocktail Mol6t8v
2008

- 7h du matin (Jacqueline Taieb)
- Nature du mouvement du 22 mars (Daniel Cohn-Bendit)
- Who Do You Love (Quicksilver Messenger Service)
- Petits précis d'instruction civique (Red Noise) + Du ragoût & des couleurs (Barricade)
- Satisfaction Guaranteed (The Morning Reign)
- Occupation de la Sorbonne
- Il pleut (Brigitte Fontaine)
- Ca y'est ils chargent...
- Stroll On (The Yardbirds)
- Un spectacle extraordinaire (Jean-Claude Bourret & Jean-Pierre Elkabbach)
- Dance To The Music (Sly & The Family Stone)
- La violence face à la violence (Daniel Cohn-Bendit)
- Run Run Run (The Velvet Underground)
- Vertebrate Twist (Red Noise)
- Somebody To Love (Jefferson Airplane)
- Spirits Rejoice - La Marseillaise (Albert Ayler)
- Rational Anthemn (Gong)
- Les anarchistes + Il est interdit d'interdire (Léo Ferré)
- Drapeau rouge sous les barricades + Mirror Mozarts (Red Noise)
- Too fortiche (Pierre Henry)
- Star Spangled Banner + Smashing Of The Amps (Jimi Hendrix)
- Ambiance à Colombey-Les-Deux-Eglises
- Section 43 (Country Joe & The Fish)

Disc 2
- Judy In Disguise (with Glasses) (John Fred & Playboy Band)
- Slip Inside This House (13th Floor Elevators)
- Cohn-Bendit juif allemand ?
- Born To Be Wild (Steppenwolf)
- Bulletin d'info - Parlons peu parlons pop (Barricade)
- Stranger In A Strange Land (Blackburn & Snow)
- Allo Pierre Lantenac - Sirènes mourantes (Barricade)
- Fais pas ci fais pas ça (Jacques Dutronc)
- Pierre Lantenac Live Again
- Get together [The Youngbloods)
- Occupation des usines
- Glue (The Are Of Cups)
- Sartre à Billancourt
- Priez pour St Germain-Des-Prés (Jacques Higelin)
- Festival de Cannes 68
- Fall Of Another Year (Can)
- Amour gel (Fille qui mousse) + Head Of Night (Mahogany Brain)
- Vous n'aurez pas ma fleur (François Béranger)
- La réforme oui, la chienlit non + See You Soon Beefoon (Barricade)
- **I Should Have Known (The Soft Machine)**
- Réouverture des usines - Plus de congé payé pour les ouvriers
- I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag (Country Joe & The Fish)
- Paris mai (Claude Nougaro)

- LE SON DU MAQUIS (LM54122) 2xCD



> Zoom

Spirit Of Joy
Tales From The Polydor Underground
1967-1974
2008

Spirit Of Joy - Tales From The Polydor Underground 1967 - 1974

Disc 1
- Prelude - Nightmare Fire Poem Fire (Arthur Brown)
- Fire Poem (Arthur Brown)
- Fire (Various Artists)
- How Does It Feel To Feel (The Creation)
- **Feelin', Reelin', Squealin' (The Soft Machine)**
- Good Times (Eric Burdon & The Animals)
- It's Alright Ma, It's Only Witchcraft (Fairport Convention)
- We're Going Wrong (Cream)
- This Wheel's On Fire (Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity)

Feelin', Reelin', Squealin' est extrait de Love Makes Sweet Music.

- POLYDOR UK (5307992) 3xCD

- Sunshine Day (Jethro Tull)
- Born On The Wrong Side Of Time (Taste)
- People You Were Going To (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Dogs (The Who)
- Grandma's Lawn (Caravan)
- Reality (Second Hand)
- All Is One (Eric Burdon & The Animals)
- Road To Cairo (Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- Magic Mirror (Aphrodite's Child)
- Firebrand (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Deserted Cities Of The Heart (Cream)

Disc 2
- Amazing Journey (The Who)
- Weird Of Hermiston (Jack Bruce)
- Banquet (Audience)
- Break-Out (Julie Driscoll)
- Something In The Air (Thunderclap Newman)
- Extrapolation (John McLaughlin)
- She Was Naked (Supersister)
- One Word (Tony Williams)
- Sinner Boy (Taste)
- Gypsy Escape (Arthur Brown's Kingdom Come)
- Let Me Ride (Ginger Baker's Air Force)
- Can't Believe Its True (Rory Gallagher)
- No Tree Will Grow (On Too High A Mountain) (Supersister)
- War Girl (The Pink Fairies)
- Time Is Passing (Pete Townshend)
- Sunrise In The Third System (Tangerine Dream)
- Spirit Of Joy (Arthur Brown's Kingdom Come)

Disc 3
- Prologue (The Pink Fairies)
- Right On, Fight On (The Pink Fairies)
- Naked Eye (The Who)
- There's A Forest (Jack Bruce)
- Morning Story (Jack Bruce)
- A Better Land (Brian Auger's Oblivion Express)
- I Spider (The Web)
- Meadow Meal (Faust)
- Epic Forest (Rare Bird)
- Rising Sun (Medicine Head)
- Are You Receiving Me (Golden Earring)
- The Great 1974 Mining Disaster (Barclay James Harvest)
- Hocus Pocus (Focus)



> Zoom

Les Miniatures - vol. 12
2008

Les Miniatures

Disc 1
- Prologue (People)
- I've Got My Car and My TV (Faust)
- Arcades (Henry Cow)
- Junkie Chase (Curtis Mayfield)
- Eintrachtkreis-Paranoia (Seesselberg)
- Two Goes Into Four (Kevin Ayers)
- Wurlitzer & Celeste (Sun Ra)
- Ah! Melody (Serge Gainsbourg)
- Drums on Phasing No. 6 (Joe Ufer)
- Hobo's Blues (Paul Simon)

Disc 2
- Saidas E Bandeiras No. 1 (Milton Nascimento)
- Mouvement pour Arcet (Raymond Vincent)
- Mother Beautiful (Sly & The Family Stone)
- Korkulu Ruya (Erkin Koray)
- Wild Luck (Orchester Fritz Maldener)
- Billy Green is Dead (Gil Scott-Heron)
- Electronic News No. 3 (Sammy Burdson Group)
- New York Telephone Conversation (Lou Reed)
- Dog's Heart (Franco Bixio)
- **Muddy Mouse (A) (Robert Wyatt)**
- Days of Steam (John Cale)

Muddy Mouse (A) est extrait de Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard.

Cette compilation "à la manière d'un LP" est un mix circulant sur internet (mp3) sans avoir fait l'objet d'une publication discographique.

- MUSIQUE DU MONDE
  (MDM-1005) - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2

Rebel Music
Songs Of Protest And Insurrection
2008

Rebel Music - Songs Of Protest And Insurrection

- Tommy Gun [Live from Shea Stadium] (The Clash)
- MPLA (Tapper Zukie)
- Soul Rebel (Bob Marley)
- There Is Power In A Union (Billy Brag)
- This Land Is Your Land (Woody Guthrie)
- Choice Of Colors (The Impressions)
- Backlash Blues (Nina Simone)
- When The Revolutions Comes (The Last Poets)
- H20gate Blues (Gil Scott-Heron & Brian Jackson)
- **Out Of The Blue (Robert Wyatt)**
- Rock El Casbah (Rachid Taha)
- More Bread To The People (The Action 13)
- Leggo Violence (Dillinger)
- Clampdown [Live from the Levisham Odeon] (The Clash)

Out Of The Blue est extrait de Comicopera.

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *Mojo* (11/2008).



- MOJO MAGAZINE (NOVEMBER 2008) CD



> Zoom

Disco Not Disco
Post Punk, Electro & Leftfield Disco Classics - 1974-1986
2008

Disco Not Disco - Post Punk, Electro & Leftfield Disco Classics - 1974-1986

- **Launderette (Vivien Goldman)**
- Mind Your Own Business (Delta 5)
- My Spine Is The Bassline (12" Edit)(Shnekback)
- Your Life (Konk)
- Crunch Cake (Isotope)
- Contort Yourself (August Darnell Remix) James White & The Blacks)
- Love Tempo (Remix) (Quango Quango)
- Seoul Music (Gina X Performance)
- Don't Lose Control (Material)
- Binary (Kazino)
- Los Niños Del Parque (12" Mix) (Liaisons Dangereuses)
- Sharevari (Instrumental) (A Number Of Names)
- Beat 'Em Right (Six Sed Red)
- Silent Street/Silent Dub (Maximum Joy)

Launderette est extrait de Launderette/Private Armies.

- STRUT (STRUT032CD) CD



Miniatures One + Two
2008

Miniatures One + Two

Disc 1
- Bum Love (Ollie Halsall & John Halsey)
- We're A Happy Family + Bali Ha'ithe (Residents)
- The Wreck Of The Hesperus (Roger Mcgough)
- Green And Pleasant (Morgan Fisher)
- Mine Tonight (John Otway)
- My Way (Pete Challis & Phil Diplock)
- **Rangers In The Nights (Robert Wyatt)**
- Opus (Stinky Winkles)
- Body Language (Mary Longford)
- Andy The Dentist (Andy 'Thunderclap' Newman)
- Wagner's Ring In One Minute (David Bedford)
- The Entire Works Of Henry Cow (Fred Frith)
- Look Beneath The Surface (Maggie Nicols)

Réédition du premier et du second album "Miniatures" parus respectivement en 1980 et 2000.

Rangers In The Nights a été initialement composé pour l'album Miniatures 1.

- CHERRY RED RECORDS (CDBRED361) 2xCD

- Week-End (Joseph Racaille)
- With Wings Pressed Back (The Work)
- Cum On Feel The Noize (Neil Innes & Son)
- Toscany In Blue (Last Minute) (Herbert Distel)
- An End To The Matter (Lol Coxhill)
- One Minute In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich (Ken Ellis)
- Alice (Steve Miller)
- Sings The Blues Badly (Norman Lovett/John Peel)
- Serrons Nous Les Coudes (Patrick Portella)
- Sounds That Saved My Life (George Melly)
- Miniature (Robert Fripp)
- The History Of Rock'n'roll (Andy Partridge-XTC)
- Breather (Phantom Captain)
- Enterbrain Exit (Ron Geesin)
- An Imaginary Orchestrina (Alejandro Viñao)
- Stop The Music For A Minute (Quentin Crisp)
- Tetrad (Simon Desorgher)
- Sweetest Love (Lament After A Broken Sashcord - On A Theme Of John Donne) (Ralph Steadman)
- Tipperary (R.D.Laing & Son)
- Beach Double (Trevor Wishart)
- Scene De Ballet (John White)
- Brooch Boat (Ivor Cutler)
- Do Tell Us (Hector Zazou)
- A Miniaturization Of Bartok's Sonata For Two Pianos & Percussion - 3rd Movement (Michael Bass & Ellen Tenenbaum)
- A Swift One (Martin Chambers - The Pretenders)
- Refreshment Break (Bob Cobbing & Henri Chopin)
- Night Touch (Dave Vanian-The Damned)
- Racing Poodles (Metabolist)
- After Mendelssohn/137 Years (Gavin Bryars)
- Paint It Black (1/2 Japanese)
- Arthur's Treat (Simon Jeffes)
- Talking World War Iii Blues (Mark Perry)
- 89-90-91-92 (Michael Nyman)
- Index Of Ends (David Cunningham - The Flying Lizards)
- James, Mark & Me (In The Manner Of Tom Waits) (Kevin Coyne)
- Hep! (Etron Fou Leloublan)
- The Minute Warp (Neil Oram & Ken Campbell)
- Chorale From Beethoven's 9th Symphony (Pete Seeger)

Disc 2
- Jump Time (Jean Houston
- It's Coming 'A Fanfare For The Millenium' (John Paul Jones)
- Beacon Of Hope (Peeni Wali & Linton Kwesi Johnson)
- Chakras (Talitha MacKenzie)
- 2000 Lights (Hugh Cornwell)
- Minute Quartet (Piero Milesi)
- Atoms And Stars (Howard Jones)
- One Minute Blackout (Kazufummi Miyazawa)
- Jodler (Klaus Trabitsch)
- Newgrange Aeon Fragment (BJ Cole)
- A Dog Barks At Midnight (Terry Riley)
- Here's To The Next One (Michael Nyman)
- Panda Chant Ii (Meridith Monk)
- Last Christmas (Sainkho Namtchylak)
- The Healing Voice (Jill Purce)
- Little Orchestra Of Disaster And Hope (Dagmar Andrtova)
- Solo No. 3 (Wolfgang Mitterer)
- Garland Hirschi's Cows (Philip K. Bimstein)
- Red (Piano Circus)
- Blast (Robert Fripp & Trey Gunn)
- A Un (Isao Osada)
- Oxalis (David Cunningham)
- A Pythagorean Roll (Penguin Café Orchestra)

- One Call (Shizuru Ohtaka)
- Feira De Asakusa 'Asakusa Market' (Hermeto Pascoal)
- Shaka Shaka Shaka (Chris Hughs)
- Light Of Love (Dissidenten)
- Hunter's Dream (Christos Hatziz)
- Timeless (Baka Beyound)
- Freedom 'Universal Mix' (Ottmar Liebert)
- Qui Sait? (Mamadou Doumbia)
- Ashtanga (Tananas)
- (Sae Koto) Vortex
- Invisible Guides (Michael Shrieve & Jeff Greinke)
- Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet 'Miniature' (Gavin Bryars)
- The Narrow Bridge (Jane Siberry)
- Soundtrack For Sandin (Laurie Spiegel)
- Ghu Zu Jun (Cheng Gongliang)
- Another 21st Century Day (John Fiddler)
- Islands (Nastya)
- The Lighthouse (Geoffrey Richardson)
- Gurdjieff / De Hartman Music (Thomas De Hartman)
- Seascad Siocand I Dtreo Millenium 'Sixty Seconds Towards A Millenium' (Peadar O Riada)
- Fail Better (Daniel Figgis)
- Theme For The Peaceful Revolution (The Deep Season)
- Takeda No Komori Uta 'Lullaby Of Takeda' (Heat Wave)
- Passion Sauce (Woof Woof)
- 5 Cam Saw Stayed (Minus)
- Flowers Of Silence (Morgan Fisher)
- Gutan Yerg (Komitas Vardapet)
- Introspection (David Darling)
- Six To Four (Lol Coxhill)
- Dead Dog Of Kairouan (Trans Global Underground)
- Hope Street 'Rain Chant Remix' (The Levellers)
- Have A Nice Century! (Chris Butler)
- Cosmicode (Moondog) (Louis Hardin)
- Snow (Ashtik Peter Lynch)
- Toorina (Tokiko Kato)
- Passionless Moments (Jane Campion)
- Alala Das Marinas (Milladoiro)



> Zoom

This Is Not A Folk Song
Protestlieder Nach Punk
(Rare Trax Vol. 56)
2008

This Is Not A Folk Song - Protestlieder Nach Punk (Rare Trax Vol. 56)

- Give the Anarchist a Cigarette (Chumbawamba)
- Ideology (Billy Bragg)
- Johnny Miner (Mekons)
- Ironmasters (The Men They Couldn't Hang)
- Stonestampers Song (The Ex)
- Gebt den Faschisten keine neue Chance (Die Mimmi's)
- Take the Skinheads Bowling (Camper Van Beethoven)
- Pearly Blues (Live in Greenwich Village) (Roger Manning)
- Fogtown (Michelle Shocked - featuring MDC)
- Butcher's Death Parade (A Subtle Plague)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
(Bonus)
- [Talking Books Presentation]
- Die Hörbuch-Hörprobe: Benjamin Kunkel "Unentschlossen"
- "Die Österreichische Methode" (Kinofilm-Trailer/Quicktime Video

↑

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

CD distribué avec l'édition allemande du magazine *"Rolling Stone"* de mars 2008.

- ROLLING STONE GERMANY (03/2008) CD

Il Gesto Del Suono

- The Creative Act [Frammento] (Marcel Duchamp)
- Music for Marcel Duchamp (Marcel Duchamp)
- December Train (Steve Jansen)
- Flautofonie e l'altro (Demetrio Stratos)

↑

1st Variation on "The Duchess" est extrait de Postcards From Italy.

- AUDITORIUM EDIZIONI (AUD03308) CD



> Zoom

Il Gesto Del Suono
2008

- Studio 2A (Emanuele Casale)
- My Brother Called (Robert Ashley)
- Postkarten 7 (Edoardo Sanguineti & Stefano Scodanibbio)
- Atom and Cell (Nine Horses)
- **1st Variation On "The Duchess" (Walter Prati & Robert Wyatt)**
- The Border (Fred Frith)
- IV Frammento de Heterodyne (Massimiliano Viel)
- Epitaffio (Picchio dal Pozzo)



> Zoom

14 Tracks That Rock The Modfather's World
2008

The Paul Weller Jukebox

- He Doesn't Know Why (Fleet Foxes)
- I Came Out Of The Wilderness (Pete Molinari)
- 100 Years (Dr. Dog)
- Are You Trying To Be Lonely? (Paul Weller & Andy Lewis)
- **Free Will And Testament (Robert Wyatt)**
- Memphis, Tennessee (Chuck Berry)
- Jesse (Mother Earth)
- Trouble (The Rakes)
- The Big Man Set (John McCusker)
- Good Golly Miss Molly (Little Richard)
- Never Say Never (Ian McLagan & The Bump Band)
- Bony Moronie (Larry Williams)
- Pay To Join (Little Barrie)
- Danny Boy (Slim Whitman)

Free Will And Testament est extrait de Shleep.

CD distribué avec le n° de décembre 2008 du magazine anglais *Uncut*.

- UNCUT (UK 2008 12) CD



> Zoom

Monster 27
2009

Rock & Folk

- Dinosaur (SSM)
- My Balloon (Men Without Pants)
- Carnival Of Crows (The Parlor Mob)
- Bells (Cirkus)
- The Chancer (The Von Bondies)
- This Train (Whomadewho)
- The Noise It Makes (Barth)
- Coco (Powersolo)
- Put Us Down (The Redwalls)
- Love Has Left The Room (A Camp)
- Complicated Shadows (Elvis Costello)
- Aux Yeux De L'Univers (Brats)
- The Reason Why Mr Heart's In Misery (Lat low)
- Tail & Mane (Cryptacize)
- Two-Headed Coin (Orbits)
- **Alliance (Orchestre National de Jazz featuring Camille)** [R. Wyatt]
- Rezo Zero (Kap Bambino)
- Throught My Gloves (Forest Fire)
- J'Etais Perdu (Papercuts)
- J'Etais Perdu (Asyl)
- The Man In Me (Vandaveer)
- Pilchard (Jarvis Cocker)

CD distribué avec le n° 503 de juillet 2009 du magazine français Rock & Folk.

Alliance est extrait de Around Robert Wyatt .

- ROCK'N'FOLK (CD27) CD



> Zoom

Big Sounds International

- Bad Stuff (Shona Foster)
- **The Summer Night** (with Robert Wyatt) **(Bertrand Burgalat)**
- I've Been A Bad, Bad Boy (cover) (Bertrand Burgalat)
- Freedom (The Boxing Lesson)
- Atomic bomb (NSM PSM)
- Easy Answers (Jump Back Jake)
- Paper Float (Cassettes Won't Listen)
- The Remix (RAC Maury Remix) (Wallpaper)
- Everytime We Do It (RAC Maury Remix) (Wallpaper)
- Go There With You (Chin Chin)

The Summer Night est extrait de Chéri BB.

- BIG SOUNDS INTERNATIONAL (DISC 2) CD

Winter Sampler 2009
2009

- Halfway Gone (Dead Heart Bloom)
- Farther Than You (Dead Heart Bloom)
- Make A Difference (Blind Melon)
- I Gotta Know (Jackopierce)
- White Doors (Wallabies)
- Dirty Old T Shirt (The Priscillas)
- Paper Boat (Cocoon)
- On My Way (Cocoon)
- Dark Side Of The Moog (The Boxing Lesson)



> Zoom

The BYG Deal
2009

The BYG Deal

- Que Pouvons-Nous Faire Ensemble ? (Alice)
- L'Automne (François Wertheimer)
- Ca Va Faire Un Hit (Brigitte Fontaine And Areski)
- Hip Hypnotise You (Gong)
- Ny Change Rien (Alan Jack)
- Mademoiselle Marie (Coeur Magique)
- Si Ma Chanson Pouvait (Valerie Lagrange)
- Astral Abuse (Alpha Beta)
- Rockers En Liberté (Jacques Barsamian)
- Je Veux Juste Dire (Ame Son)
- Rock Out (Art Ensemble Of Chicago)
- Rational Anthem (Gong)
- Dirty Water (Freedom)
- Stuffed Tomato (Vangelis)
- Eclosion (Marie Aux Quatre Vents) (Ame Son)
- Mon Petit Garçon (Paul Semama)
- Floating (Inter-Groupie Psychotherapeutic Elastic Band)
- All I Want Is Out Of Here (Banana Moon)
- Viens (Alice)
- Pacha (Coeur Magique)
- Bloody Rockers (Joachim And Rolf Kuhn)
- Mister Long Shanks (Oh Mother I Am Your Fantasy) (Gong)

All tracks comes from records produced by BYG Records between 1969 and 1978.

All I Want Is Out Of Here est extrait de Banana Moon.

- FINDERS KEEPERS RECORDS (FKR025CD) CD
- FINDERS KEEPERS RECORDS (FKR025LP) 2xLP



> Zoom

Momentos 2007 Volumen I Canciones Internacionales
2008

Momentos 2007 Volumen I Canciones Internacionales

- Comfy in Nautica (Panda Bear)
- Ghost Hardware (Burial)
- Heart of Hearts (!!!)
- It's the Beat (Simian Mobile Disco)
- Hunting for Witches (Bloc Party)
- Books From Boxes (Maxïmo Park)
- By Your Side (Irene)
- Tonight the Streets Are Ours (Richard Hawley)
- And I Was a Boy From School (Portastatic)
- Those Dancing Days Are Gone (Carla Bruni)
- Nantes (Beirut)
- Dans la Merco Benz (Benjamin Biolay)
- Saltbreakers (Laura Veirs)
- Open Your Heart (Lavender Diamond)
- Snakes and Ladders (Basia Bulat)
- Napalm Love (AIR)
- Stay Close Sit Tigh (Malcolm Middleton)
- A Beautiful War (Robert Wyatt)
- The Air Is Thin (Jesse Sykes & the Sweet Hereafter)
- Nobody Knows My Name (Rickie Lee Jones)

A Beautiful War est extrait de Comicopera.

CD distribué avec le n° de janvier 2008 du magazine espagnol *Rockdelux*.

- SINEDIN MUSIC (SM-110) CD

The Man Machine

- The Robots (Kraftwerk)
- 45:33 (Pilooski Remix) (LCD Soundsystem)
- Slow Motion (Ultravox)
- We Own The Sky (M83)
- Growls Garden (Clark)
- Roberta Flack (Flying Lotus)
- Dazzle Ships (Parts II, III And VII) (Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark)

We're Looking For A Lot Of Love est extrait de Hot Chip With Robert Wyatt And Geese.

CD distribué avec le n° de novembre 2009 du magazine anglais *Mojo*.

- MOJO MAGAZINE (NOVEMBER 2009) CD



> Zoom

The Man Machine
Mojo Celebrates
The Electronic Revolution
2009

- Sequent C (Tangerine Dream)
- **We're Looking For A Lot Of Love (Hot Chip With Robert Wyatt And Geese)**
- Goosebumps (Fujiya & Miyagi)
- Oxygène Part IV (Jean Michel Jarre)
- Outlands (the Orb)
- My Angel Rocks Back And Forth (Four Tet)
- Mouth To Mouth (Audion)
- Like A Bird (Komputer)o)



> Zoom

No Coast #1
2009

No Coast Collective

- **Ashdod (3alef)**
- Dean M (Amir Bolzman)
- Feed My Paranoia Live (220v)
- Domino Rali (Avivit Israelof)
- Zugzuf (Lior Gekler)
- Above The Ground (Dana Joe)
- A Num Ber (dd/mm/yy)
- Shhhhhh1111 (Wizard Ashdod
- אשכרה מתים-מעצבן את הקיץ
- Woman Screaming (Yaniv Schonfeld)
- Murder Song (Tamar Weiss)
- רייסקינדר - מבעבע
- Politically Correct (Ori)
- אני (--------)
- Witch (The Postinorz)
- If (Uri Pezias)
- Slow Down (Dirty Hands On A Trash Like You)
- קרן עופר -אדם

A collection of new music from Jerusalem.

Ashdod = East Timor cover.

- NO COAST (#1) Digital Format



> Zoom

15 Tracks From Uncut's
150 Albums Of the Decade
2009

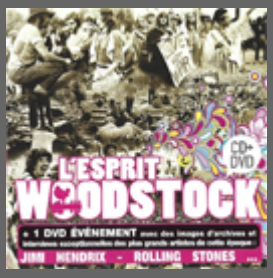
Uncut 150

- Just As Was Told (Lift To Experience)
- Why Do They Leave? (Ryan Adams)
- Hold Your Breath (The Acorn)
- Two Broken Hearts (Richmond Fontaine)
- Our Life Is Not A Movie Maybe (Okkervil River)
- Don't Wake The Scarecrow (The Felice Brothers)
- Up With People (Lambchop)
- Lua (Bright Eyes)
- First Night (The Hold Steady)
- Let It Blow (Richard Thompson)
- Black Heart (Calexico)
- Lookout Mountain (Drive-By Truckers)
- **Lullaloop (Robert Wyatt)**
- Beyond The Shore (Willard Grant Conspiracy)
- Spiders (Kidsmoke) (Wilco)

Lullaloop est extrait de Cuckooland.

CD distribué avec le n° de novembre 2009 du magazine anglais *Uncut*.

- UNCUT (UK 2009 11) CD



> Zoom

L'esprit Woodstock
2009

L'esprit Woodstock

- Soul Sacrifice (Santana)
- Somebody To Love (Jefferson Airplane)
- Voodoo Chile (The Jimi Hendrix Experience)
- Ball & Chain (Big Brother & The Holding Company Feat. Janis Joplin)
- For Your Love (The Yardbirds)
- On The Road Again (Canned Heat)
- River Deep Mountain High (Ike And Tina Turner)
- Lazy Sunday (The Small Faces)
- Spill The Wine (Eric Burdon)
- California Dreamin' (The Mamas And The Papas)
- Foxy Lady (The Jimi Hendrix Experience)

Contient également un DVD de 75 mn - VF "*avec des images d'archives et interviews exceptionnelles des plus grands artistes de cette époque !*"

- LM MUSIC - CD + DVD

- Brown Eyed Girl (Van Morrison)
- I Want To Take You higher (Ike And Tina Turner)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Wild Thing (The Troggs)
- Jingo (Santana)
- Frankenstein (Edgar Winter)
- Man Of The World (Fleetwood Mac)
- Choker (Eric Clapton & Jimmy Page)
- Natural Born Bugie (Humble Pie)
- **Memories (Soft Machine)**
- On The Top Of The World (John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers)



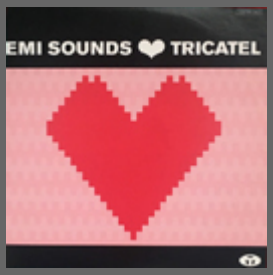
> Zoom

Ashes To Ashes
2010

Series 3 Original Soundtrack

- Alex Drake (No Artist/Dialogue)
- Opening Titles (Edmund Butt)
- Let's Dance (David Bowie)
- Mad World (Tears For Fears)
- True (Spandau Ballet)
- Only You (Yazoo)
- Wake Up (No Artist/Dialogue)
- Gene Undercover (Edmund Butt)
- Town Called Malice(The Jam)
- Golden Brown (The Stranglers)
- Uptown Girl (Billy Joel)
- All In My Head (No Artist/Dialogue)
- Get Me Home (Edmund Butt)
- Promised You A Miracle (Simple Minds)
- Electric Avenue (Eddy Grant)
- Girls Just Wanna Have Fun (Cyndi Lauper)
- Video Killed The Radio Star (The Buggles)
- Couldn't Love You More (John Martyn)
- The Kiss (Edmund Butt)
- I'm In A Mess (No Artist/Dialogue)
- The Lovecats (The Cure)
- The Cutter (Echo & The Bunnymen)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- War Baby (Tom Robinson)
- Rockit (Herbie Hancock)
- Two Tribes (Frankie Goes To Hollywood)

- SONY MUSIC (8697675222) CD



> Zoom

Emi Sounds Aime Tricatel
2010

Emi Sounds Aime Tricatel

- Aux Cyclades Electroniques (Bertrand Burgalat, A.S Dragon)
- **This Summer Night (Bertrand Burgalat, Robert Wyatt)**
- Somewhere Up Above (April March)
- What Makes You So Special (Count Indigo)
- Mafia Croco (Bertrand Burgalat)
- Foolin' Around (Hypnolove Remix) (Showgirls)
- Célibataires (Michel Houellebecq)
- 95C (Valérie Lemercier)
- Bertone (Bertrand Burgalat)
- Chunky Monkey (Allegra)
- Bröder Kung (Bertrand Burgalat)
- Passons L'Eté (Etienne Charry)
- Zero Zero (April March)
- Sasha Pop (Bertrand Burgalat)
- Le Temps Presse (Les Shades)
- Mais Pas Chez Moi (A.S Dragon)
- Sunshine Yellow (Bertrand Burgalat)
- Bombe A (Etienne Charry)

- TRICATEL (EDITRI 003) CD



> Zoom

Best Of 2010 -15 Tracks From Uncut's Albums Of The Year

- We Want War (These New Puritans)
- Crazy Car (Ólöf Arnalds)
- Shaky (The Duke & The King)
- In Your Eyes (Edwyn Collins)
- It's Easier (John Grant)
- Burn It Down (Los Lobos)
- Go Long (Joanna Newsom)
- Jarabi (AfroCubism)
- The Burning Of Auchindoun (Alasdair Roberts & Friends)

Maryan est extrait de ...For The Ghosts Within'.

CD distribué avec le n° de janvier 2011 du magazine anglais *Uncut*.

- UNCUT (UK 2011 01) CD

Best Of 2010
2011



> Zoom

4 Cds Of The Greatest
Psychedelic Rock Music
2011

- Next Girl (The Black Keys)
- Adieu, England (Trembling Bells)
- **Maryan (Robert Wyatt, Gilad Atzmon, Ros Stephen)**
- Sabu Yerkoy (Ali Farka Toure And Toumani Diabate)
- I Can't Stand (Zola Jesus)
- Set Fire To The Forest (Voice Of The Seven Thunders)

Pure... Psychedelic Rock

Disc 1
- Rainy Day Woman #12 & 35 (Bob Dylan)
- Get Together (The Youngbloods)
- Summer in the City (The Lovin' Spoonful)
- San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair) (Scott McKenzie)
- Eight Miles High (The Byrds)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Sure 'Nuff 'n' Yes, I Do (Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band)
- Wild Child (Lou Reed)
- Teenage Head (Flamin Groovies)
- Journey to the Center of the Mind (The Amboy Dukes)
- Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian) Paul Revere & the Raiders
- Green Tambourines (The Lemon Pipers)
- Groupie (Superstar) (Delaney & Bonnie)
- Different Drum (Michael Nesmith)
- Ruby Tuesday (Melanie)
- Fresh Garbage (Spirit)
- Soul Sacrifice (Santana)

Disc 2
- (Don't Fear) The Reaper (Blue Öyster Cult / Sly & the Family Stone)
- I Want to Take You Higher (Zager & Evans / Sly & the Family Stone)
- In the Year 2525 (Exordium & Terminus) (Zager & Evans / Moby Grape)
- Omaha (Moby Grape / Gun)
- Race with the Devil (Randy California / Gun)
- Day Tripper (The Chambers Brothers / Randy California)
- Time Has Come Today (The Chambers Brothers / Al Kooper)
- It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry (The 5th Dimension / Al Kooper / Stephen Stills)
- Sweet Blindness (The 5th Dimension)
- Madame George (Van Morrison / Laura Nyro)
- Stoned Soul Picnic (Argent / Laura Nyro)
- Hold Your Head Up (Argent / Pavlov's Dog)
- Julia (Pavlov's Dog / Skip Spence)
- War in Peace (Tim Hardin / Alexander Spence)
- Hoboin' (Tim Hardin)
- John McLaughlin (Miles Davis)
- Ball and Chain (Big Brother & the Holding Company)

Disc 3
- Frankenstein (The Edgar Winter Group)
- American Woman (The Guess Who)
- Two Heads (Jefferson Airplane)
- Red Chair Fade Away (The Cyrkle)
- Kicks (Paul Revere & the Raiders)
- Coming Down (The United States of America)
- Theme from an Imaginary Western (Mountain)
- When the Wind Arises (The Rokes)
- Road (Trees)
- Garden of Eden (New Riders of the Purple Sage)
- Sittin' in Circles (Electric Flag)
- Mind Gardens (The Byrds)
- Abba Zaba (Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band / Captain Beefheart)
- **Las Vegas Tango, Pt. 1 (Repeat) (Robert Wyatt)**
- Singing Winds, Crying Beasts (Santana)
- Waterfall (Weather Report)
- Meeting of the Spirits (Mahavishnu

- SONY MUSIC (88697753132)
4xCD

Orchestra)

Disc 4
- The Letter (The Box Tops)
- I Got a Line on You (Spirit)
- Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo (Johnny Winter)
- Hush (Love Affair)
- Love Psalm (Stone Country)
- So You Say You Lost Your Baby (Gene Clark)
- 8:05 (Moby Grape)
- Albatross (Fleetwood Mac)
- Say You Don't Mind (Colin Blunstone)
- Strawberry Letter 23 (Shuggie Otis)
- The Witch Queen of New Orleans (Redbone)
- Spinning Wheel (Blood, Sweat & Tears)
- Up, Up and Away (The 5th Dimension)
- Simon Says (1910 Fruitgum Company)
- Witchi-Tai-To (Brewer & Shipley)
- Daydream Nightmare (Grace Slick & the Great Society)
- Glass (Sagittarius)
- Lay Down (Candles in the Rain) Melanie



> Zoom

15 Tracks Of Riotous '80s Indie Insurrection
2011

Panic

- Blue Skinned Beast (Madness)
- **Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)**
- Which Side Are You On? (Billy Bragg)
- The World Of The Workers Is Wild (The Three Johns)
- Getting Nowhere Fast - Girls At Our Best!
- National Shite Day (Half Man Half Biscuit)
- The Day That Margaret Thatcher Dies (Wah! / Pete Wylie)
- Lean Period (Orange Juice)
- First My Job (The Nightingales)
- Paradise Estate (Television Personalities)
- Grey Streets (Felt)
- Abernant 1984/5 (Mekons)
- Lev Bronstein (Redskins)
- Red Sleeping Beauty (McCarthy)
- The Band Of Holy Joy (Who Snatched The Baby?)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

CD distribué avec le n° 209 d'avril 2011 du magazine anglais *Mojo*.

- MOJO MAGAZINE (APRIL 2011)
  CD



> Zoom

The Old Grey Whistle Test (40th Anniversary Album)
2011

The Old Grey Whistle Test (40th Anniversary Album)

Disc 1
- Trampled Under Foot (Led Zeppelin)
- Baba O'Riley (The Who)
- My Brother Jake (Free)
- Whiskey in the Jar (Thin Lizzy)
- The Killing of Georgie (PT 1 & 2) (Rod Stewart)
- Oh! You Pretty Things (David Bowie)
- Do the Strand (Roxy Music)
- It's So Easy (Linda Ronstadt)
- Short People (Randy Newman)
- Fire or Rain (James Taylor)
- Stuck in the Middle with You (Stealers Wheel)
- Feel Like Makin' Love (Bad Company)
- Listen to the Music (The Doobie Brothers)
- Hocus Pocus (Focus)
- Cheap Sunglasses (ZZ Top)
- Jessica (The Allman Brothers Band)
- Just What I Needed (The Cars)
- Psycho Killer (Talking Heads)

Disc 2
- Tiny Dancer (Elton John)
- Hurricane (Bob Dylan)
- Let It Grow (Eric Clapton)
- Go Your Own Way (Fleetwood Mac)
- Free Bird (Lynyrd Skynyrd)
- Ventura Highway (America)
- Cold As Ice (Foreigner)
- 25 or 6 to 4 (Chicago)
- Burning Down One Side (Robert Plant)
- I'm Just a Singer (In a Rock & Roll Band)

- RHINO RECORDS (WMTV173)
  3xCD

(Moody Blues)
- Owner of a Lonely Heart (Yes)
- Born to Be Wild (Steppenwolf)
- Radar Love (Golden Earring)
- Solid Air (John Martyn)
- I Have to Say It in a Song (Jim Croce)
- American Pie (Don McLean)
- Personality Crisis (New York Dolls)
- One Way or Another (Blondie)

Disc 3
- Stand By Me (John Lennon)
- Under My Wheels (Alice Cooper)
- Driver Seat - (Sniff 'N' the Tears)
- Life in a Day (Simple Minds)
- Give Me Everything (Magazine)
- A Day's Wait (Altered Images)
- Walk Out to Winter (Aztec Camera)
- Small Change (Tom Waits)
- Hungry Eyes (Sad Cafú)
- Love & Affection (Joan Armatrading)
- Stars (Janis Ian)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Sweet Mystery (Ralph McTell)
- Rock & Roll Doctor (Little Feat)
- So Into You (Atlanta Rhythm Section)
- Guitar Street (Chris Rea)
- I Wanna Be Your Dog (Iggy Pop)
- Rock & Roll High School/ Rock & Roll Radio (Ramones)



> Zoom

Rare Trax Vol. 71 - Round Midnight
A Compilation of Quiet Songs
2011

Round Midnight - A Compilation Of Quiet Songs

- Fall Aside (The Hope Sandoval & Warm Inventions)
- The False Husband (Isobel Campbell & Mark Lanegan)
- Prowler (Bohren & Der Club Of Gore)
- Free Will And Testament (Robert Wyatt)
- Fires P.G.R. (Songs Of Green Pheasant)
- Svíf Birki (Òlöf Arnalds)
- Waxwing (Alasdair Roberts)
- Jag Vet En Dejlig Rosa (Helena Espvall & Masaki Batoh)

Free Will And Testament est extrait de Shleep.

CD distribué avec le n° de mars 2011 du magazine allemand *Rolling Stone*.

- ROLLING STONE - CD



> Zoom

Come On Let's Go!
A Modern Day Jukebox
2012

Come On Let's Go! A Modern Day Jukebox

- Come On Let's Go (Broadcast)
- Free Will And Testament (Robert Wyatt)
- Young Bride (Midlake)
- Isabel (Baxter Dury)
- The Ride (Joan as Police Woman)
- Night All Night (Diagrams)
- Map Of An Englishman (Erland and the Carnival)
- Sarah (Declan O'Rourke)
- Black Harvest (Cow)
- White Winter Hymnal (Fleet Foxes)
- Alter Ego (Tame Impala)
- Coleen (Joanna Newsome)
- A Case For Vinyl (Tim Burgess)
- River Man (Paul Weller)
- Love Is A Losing Game - Live (Amy Winehouse)

Free Will And Testament est extrait de Shleep.

CD distribué avec le n° d'avril 2012 de la revue *Mojo*.

- MOJO MAGAZINE (APRIL 2012) CD



I Want The Beatles To Play At My Art Center!

Disc 1
- A Forum Of The Arts (Arne Nordheim)
- Excerpts From Blikk (Sigurd Berge)
- The Space Concerto For Piano And Tape (Bjørn Fongaard)
- Teeth (Soft Machine)
- Norway Spontaneous Music Ensemble)
- Excerpts From Requiem For Janis Joplin

Teeth est extrait de Fourth.

- PRISMA RECORDS (P004) 2xLP

> Zoom

I Want The Beatles
To Play At My Art Center!
2012

(Paal-Helge Haugen & Kåre Kolberg)
- Olga (Svein Finnerud Trio)
- Monkey And Organ Grinder (Hal Clark)

Disc 2
- Dans Til Musikken (The Aller Værste!)
- Excerpts From Muoyce (John Cage)
- Music For Marcel Duchamp (Magne Hegdal)
- Ear Era 7 (Lasse Marhaug)
- Aunt Esther (Jim O'Rourke)
- Studio (Deathprod)
- Improvisations For Karin (Håkon Kornstad)
- You Sign Your Name (Jenny Hva)



> Zoom 1 2

Keep Yourself Alive
2012

Sulo With Friends

- 2-4-6-8 Motorway (Tom Robinson)
- Hot Swagger In The Big Smoke (Billy Bremner)
- Borstal Breakout (Dave Tregunna)
- Green And Grey (Justin Sullivan)
- Roxette (Wilko Johnson)
- How Long (Paul Carrack)
- Enjoy The Risk (with Robert Wyatt)
- Teenage Depression (Dave Higgs)
- Poor, Poor Heart (Billy Bremner)
- Roses And Rings (Spike Gray)
- The Power And The Glory (Mick Geggus)
- 100 Degrees In The Shade (Terry Chimes & Anita Chellamah)
- I Saw Her Standing There (Dennis Stratton & Dave Edwards)
- Keep Yourself Alive (Sulo & Idde Schultz)

Ce CD accompagne le livre éponyme publié en suédois en 2012 aux éditions Lind & Co.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

- LEGAL RECORDS - CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5

The Dutch Woodstock 1970
2013

The Dutch Woodstock 1970

DVD
- Gumbo (Santana)
- Zero She Flies (Al Stewart)
- Human Condition (Canned Heat)
- The World's In Tango/So Sad (Canned Heat)
- Giants (Quintessence)
- Won't You Try Saturday Afternoon (Jefferson Airplane)
- Bulgaria (It's A Beautiful Day)
- By The Light Of The Magical Moon (T.Rex)
- Old Blue (The Byrds)
- Big Bird (The Flock)
- Esther's Nose Job (Soft Machine)
- White Rabbit/The Ballad Of You And Me And Pooniel (Jefferson Airplane)
- Savor/Jingo (Santana)
- A Saucerful Of Secrets (Pink Floyd)

Disc 1
- Dust My Blues (Cuby & The Blizzards)
- Human Condition/So Sad (Canned Heat)
- Big Road Blues (Livin' Blues)
- Zero She Flies (Al Stewart)
- Giants (Quintessence)
- The Sun Of East/Irish Theme (East of Eden)
- Freedom (Country Joe)
- Mardis Gras Day (Dr John)
- Drowned In Wine (Family)

Disc 2
- Gumbo/Savor/Jingo (Santana)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- The Ballad Of You And Me And Pooneil (Jefferson Airplane)
- Wasted Union Blues/Bulgaria (It's a Beautiful Day)
- By The Light Of The Magical Moon (T.Rex)
- Old Blue (The Byrds)
- Big Bird (The Flock)
- Esther's Nose Job (Soft Machine)
- Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun (Pink Floyd)
- A Saucerful of Secrets (Pink Floyd)

Holland Pop Festival At Kralingse Bos - Rotterdam (The Netherland) / from 26 to 28 June 1970.

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (GZ0102CD) 2xCD & DVD



> Zoom 1 2 3

Sounds Of Silence - The Most Intriguing Silences
In Recording History!
2013

Sounds Of Silence - The Most Intriguing Silences In Recording History!

- Single Side (Unknown Artist)
- Disco Party Part 2 (Son Of Pete)
- Companion To TV (Unknown Artist)
- Silence (Copyright 1932) (Andy Warhol)
- B-Side (Unknown Artist)
- The B-Side (Count Backwards)
- Disque De Silence, A-Side (Unknown Artist)
- Two Minutes Silence (John Lennon &Yoko Ono)
- A-Side (Unknown Artist)
- A Minute Silence (Unknown Artist)
- Excerpt (Unknown Artist)
- The Sound Of The One Hand Clapping (Unknown Artist)
- Le Crochet (Œuvre Sup) (Maurice Lemaître)
- (Silence) (Ciccone Youth)
- There's A Riot Goin' On (Sly & The Family Stone)
- The Sound Of Free Speech (Crass)
- Testpressning (Sic) (Unknown Artist)
- Excerpt (Unknown Artist)
- Birthdeath Experience (Whitehouse)
- The Ballad Of Richard Nixon (John Denver)
- 9-11-01 (Soulfly)
- Anniversary Of World War III (The West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band)
- **Silence (Robert Wyatt)**
- Nutopian International Anthem (John Lennon)
- Are We Here? (Criminal Justice Bill?) (Orbital)
- A One Minute Silence (The Planets)
- Pensées Et Maximes De V.G.E (Thoughts And Sayings Of V.G.E) (Valerie Gee's Car Band)
- Beware (The Funk Is Everywhere) (Silent Version) (Afrika Bambaataa & Family)
- Prince Of Space (Excerpt) (Yves Klein, Charles Wilp)
- Silent Grooves (Unknown Artist)

La plage de 30 secondes (de) *Silence* de Robert Wyatt, issue du disque Cuckooland (version LP), est située entre *Lullaby For Hamza* et *Trickle Down.*

Coproduction Alga Marghen et le FRAC de Franche Comté.

Edition limitée à 500 exemplaires.

ALGA MARGHEN (ALGA046) LP



> Zoom

Losing Our Virginity
The First 4 Years '73-'77
2013

Losing Our Virginity

Disc 1
- Tubular Bells (Two Sides Excerpt) (Mike Oldfield)
- Krautrock (Faust)
- The Pot Head Pixies (Gong)
- I'll Be Home (Steve York's Camelo Pardalis) - Woman's Lib Song (Steve York's Camelo Pardalis)
- Marlene (Kevin Coyne)
- Teenbeat (Reprise) (Henry Cow)
- Giggy Smile (Faust)
- Eastbourne Ladies (Kevin Coyne)
- I'm So Glad, I'm So Proud (Link Wray)
- I Never Glid Before (Gong)
- Upon The My O My (Captain Beefheart)
- Some Velvet Phasing (Klaus Schulze)

Disc 2
- **I'm A Believer (Robert Wyatt)**
- Down (Like A Movie Star) (Comus)
- Glass c/w Steel (Fred Frith)
- **Yesterday Man (Robert Wyatt)**
- Let's Eat (Real Soon) (Hatfield & The North)
- An Extract From 'Star's End' (David Bedford)
- Wring Out the Ground (Loosely Now) (The Egg)
- I Believe In Bugs (Ivor Cutler)
- Mirror Man (Live) (Captain Beefheart)
- Road To Morocco (Mallard)
- Sad Sing (Tom Newman)
- Extract From Clearlight Symphony Part One (Clearlight)
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath (Hatfield & The

- VIRGIN RECORDS (CDV4001) 3xCD

North)
- Hip Kiss (Boxer)

Disc 3
- The Salmon Song (Steve Hillage)
- An Extract From White Noise II (White Noise)
- War (Henry Cow)
- Freddie Are You Ready (Wigwam)
- Epsilon In Malaysian Pale (Edgar Froese)
- The Rio Grande (From 'The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner') (David Bedford)
- Don't Treat Your Woman Bad (Tom Newman)
- The Dirty Dinner (Ivor Cutler)
- Wise Man In Your Heart (Daevid Allen)
- First Excursion (Mike Oldfield)
- It's All Too Much (Steve Hillage)
- Silent Night (Can)
- Don't Say No (Can)



> Zoom

Lost & Rare Tracks
2014

Rare Trax Vol. 84 - Lost & Rare Tracks

- Tonight (Sibylle Baier)
- Strange Stairway (Bill Fay Group)
- Rivmic Melodies (Excerpt) (Robert Wyatt)
- Extraordinary Machine (Fiona Apple)
- The Sound Of Rain (The Go-Betweens)
- A Fond Farewell (Elliott Smith)
- Jack Of Diamonds (Me And My Uncle) (John Phillips)
- Crazy (Neu!)
- Empty Pocket Waltz (Connie Converse)
- Paraphernalia (Miles Davis)

Rivmic Melodies est extrait de Robert Wyatt '68 .

CD distribué avec le n° de mars 2014 de la revue *Rolling Stone (Germany)*.

- ROLLING STONE (RARE TRAX VOL.84) CD



> Zoom

Perpendicular Green Hearts
2014

WASP

- Rock 'n Roll is Killing My Life (Sonic Boom)
- Hanging out and Hung Up To Dry (Julian Cope)
- Erotic City (Prince)
- Thank You (The Pale Fountains)
- Punish Me With Kisses (The Glove)
- Summertime Blues (Blue Cheer)
- Don't Make Me Over (Burt Bacharach)
- Mari (Martin Rev)
- Grass (Robert Wyatt)
- Going Up (Echo and the Bunnymen
- VCI XI (OMD)
- Electric Chair (Chrome)
- Lady Friend (The Byrds)
- Denomination Blues Part 1 (Washington Phillips)
- ESP (The Buzzcocks)

Grass est extrait du single Grass/Trade Union.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

David Gilmour & Friends
2015

David Gilmour & Friends

- Don't Dig Here (David Crosby & Graham Nash)
- Everybody's Been Burned (Ulver)
- Sacred Days (Phil Manzanera)
- Here, There & Everywhere (David & Joe Gilmour)
- When Your Life Is Your Own (David Courtney)
- The Levels (Ben Watt)
- Steven Wilson (Lazarus)
- Forest (Robert Wyatt)
- Akt Dit (Dungen)
- Nevada (Richard Barbierei)
- The Interloper (BJ Cole)
- Moon Quake 6 (The Orb)
- Changa Masala (Ozric Tentacles)
- Old Man Going (The Pretty Things)

Forest est extrait de Cuckooland.

"In the studio | felt like a rabbit in the headlights but David was very graceful about it," says Robert Wyatt of his appearance on Then | Close My Eyes from Gilmour's On An Island, on which he plays cornet. Wyatt resumes cornet duties on Rattle That Lock's The Girl In The Yellow Dress. The pair's friendship is also evident on this finely-crafted tune from Robert's magnificent 2003 album, Cuckooland which features Gilmour's guitar.

CD distribué avec le n° d'octobre 2015 de la revue *Mojo*.



> Zoom

Tricatel XX
2015

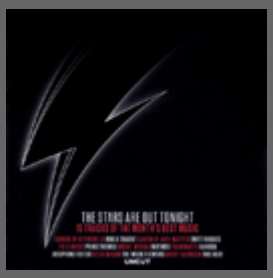
Tricatel XX Compilation

- Sugar (April March)
- Bungalow (Valérie Lemercier)
- Atomiquement vôtre (Etienne Charry)
- (Come Potrei) Scordare (Bertrand Burgalat)
- He took her to a movie (Bertrand Burgalat version) (Ladytron)
- Derniers temps (Michel Houellebecq)
- 1 tapez 2 (Symphony)
- Coral Bracelet (April March)
- Mais pas chez moi (A.S Dragon)
- Trinity (Count Indigo)
- Chunky Monkey (Allegra)
- Froide (A.S Dragon)
- **This Summer Night (Bertrand Burgalat & Robert Wyatt)**
- Electrique (Les Shades)
- Foolin' Around (Showgirls)
- Wersailles (Planeur) (Chassol)
- La rose de sang (Bertrand Burgalat)
- I know I'm late (Jef Barbara)
- La route de la trace (Chassol)
- My little princess (Générique fin) (Bertrand Burgalat)

This Summer Night est extrait de Cheri BB.

Compilation éditée à l'occasion du 20ème anniversaire de Tricatel.

- DISQUES TRICATEL (TRICDFR048) CD
- DISQUES TRICATEL (TRILPFR048) LP



> Zoom

The Stars Are Out Tonight
2016

The Stars Are Out Tonight (15 Tracks Of The Month's Best Music)

- Open Your Eyes (School Of Seven Bells)
- Tu Voles (Rokia Traoré)
- Tardis Cymbals (Uncut Edit) (Cavern Of Anti-Matter)
- Rainbow Ends (Emitt Rhodes)
- Disappointed (Field Music)
- A2 (Prins Thomas)
- Cardinal Cross (Mount Moriah)
- Ultimate Care II Excerpt Eight (Matmos)
- The Asp And The Albatross (Freakwater)
- To Melt The Moon (Rangda)
- The Garden Of Earthly Delights (Josephine Foster)
- Planet Sizes (Steve Mason)
- **Memories (The Wilde Flowers)**
- Evil Kind (Barry Adamson)
- Twilight Furniture (This Heat)

Memories est extrait de The Wilde Flowers.

CD distribué avec le n° de mars 2016 de la revue *Uncut*.

- UNCUT (2016 03) CD

Le GRM Sans Le Savoir

- Indicatif Roissy (Bernard Parmegiani)
- **It (Robert Wyatt/Francois Bayle)**
- Indicatif France Culture (Bernard Parmegiani)
- Valse molle (Alain Savouret)
- Indicatif Stade 2 (Bernard Parmegiani)
- Il était une fois (Jean Schwarz pour Carolyn Carson)

It est extrait de L'Expérience Acoustique.

Version digitale du 5ème CD de la compilation Archives Grm.



- MOJO MAGAZINE (OCTOBER 2015) CD



> Zoom

Le GRM Sans Le Savoir
2016

- Sonal France Culture (Jean Schwarz)
- Chantakoa (Michel Portal/Jean Schwarz)
- L'alcool tue (Boris Vian/Bernard Parmegiani)
- Les Shadoks (Robert Cohen-Solal)
- Canon sur une trompe africaine (Guy Reibel)
- Rengaine à pleurer (Edgardo Canton)
- La roue Ferris (Bernard Parmegiani)
- Sonal Ratp (Christian Zanesi)

- INA MUSIQUE(S) - Digital Format



> Zoom

A Découvrir Absolument
Volume 40
2016

A Découvrir Absolument Volume 40

- Bird on the Wire (Yo&Liz) [Leonard Cohen/1969]
- The Man Who Sold The World (Nico&Liz) David Bowie/1970]
- Godevin le Vilain (John Trap) [Ange/1974]
- Johnny and Mary (Witold Bolik) [Robert Palmer/1979]
- Chose Molle (Arnaud Le Gouëfflec + Jorge Bernstein & the pioupioufuckers) [Sublime De Luxe/1979]
- Temporary Secretary (Nicolas Godin) [Paul McCartney/1980]
- Stop The Cavalry (Marianne Dissard) [Jona Lewie/1980]
- A Forest (Arnane) [The Cure/1980]
- When You Were Mine (Watoo Watoo) [Prince/1980]
- Cold (My Imaginary Loves) [The Cure/1982]
- Golden Brown (De Laurentis) [The Stranglers/1982]
- Love Song (this is not a) (Poppy No Good) [P.I.L./1983]
- This Charming Man (Mensch) [The Smiths/1983]
- I've Been Losing You (Garden With Lips) [A-ha/1986]
- Blue Hotel (Séve Duo) [Chris Isaak/1986]
- There Is A Light That Never Goes Out (Grout/Grout) [The Smiths/1986]
- Ne me Laisse Pas Tomber vf de Never Let me Down Again (Centredumonde) [Depeche Mode/1987]
- Summertime Rolls (Kramies) [Janes Addiction/1988]
- Maman (idwan) [Dorothée/1988]
- No Words no More (Lufdbf) [love and rockets/1989]0.
- 18 And Life (Dark Wooden Cell) [Skid Row/1989]
- Merry Christmas (Helluvah) [The Ramones/1989]
- Wicked Game (Chasseur) [Chris Isaak/1989]
- Twin Peaks Theme (My Tiger Side) [Angelo Badalamenti/1990]
- Apprécie Le Silence, Tout Ce Que Je Veux vf de Enjoy The Silence (Glace_9) [Depeche Mode/1990]
- **Unmasked (David Fenech)** [Robert Wyatt/1992]
- Sister (Serpent) [Sebadoh/1993]
- Rouge est Mon Sommeil (Gu's Music) [Jean-Louis Murat/1993]
- Nuages (La Rive) [Jean Bart/1995]
- Bipolar (Mona Kazu) [Blonde Redhead/1997]
- À l'Ouverture des Miroirs (Thomas Aussenac) [Bertrand Betsch/1997]
- If I Think Of Love (Dyl) [Lisa Germano/1998]
- Garçon Glaçon (Arnaud Le Gouëfflec et John Trap) [April March/1999]
- Et les Filles (Gontard !) [Jean-Luc le Ténia/2000]
- Tue-le (1=0) [inspiré de "A prayer to god" Steeve Albini/2000]

- WEBZINE A DECOUVRIR ABSOLUMENT - Digital Format

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- Que Sera Votre Vie (M.Lo) [Kat Onoma/2001]
- Mon Hublot (Betrand Betsch) [Rémi Poncet/2005]
- km 83 (Melicoton) [Françoise Breut/2005]
- Lift Trip To Mars (Old Mountain Station) [Angil and the Hiddentracks/2007]
- July Flame (Willskott) [Laura Veirs/2010]
- Finlande (post Humanism) (Angil and The Hiddentracks) [Francis Bourganel/2010]
- Diamond (Emboe) [Rihanna/2012]
- Myth (Uniform Motion) [Beach House/2012]
- Bouche à Lévres (Philémone) [Odezenne/2015]
- John My Beloved (Benjamin Fincher) [Sufjan Stevens/2015]



> Zoom

The Krautrock & Progressive Box Set 2016

The Krautrock & Progressive Box Set

Disc 1
LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER IN THE SKY
- Watcher Of The Skies (Steve Hackett)
- I Talk To The Wind (Giles, Giles & Fripp)
- God If I Saw Her Now (Anthony Phillips Feat. Phil Collins)
- Friday The 13th (Atomic Rooster Feat. Carl Palmer)
- The Mission (Rick Wakeman)
- The Hunter (GTR)
- Pedro's Party (Dave Greenslade)
- Teatime (Stackridge)
- **Unmasked (Robert Wyatt)**
- Om Riff (Gong)

Disc 2
THE UNANSWERABLE PASSION OF THE STRANDS
- Lifetime (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Santa Maria - (Fission Trip)
- Gypsy - Arthur Brown's Kingdom Come
- Heaven Was An Island (Audience)
- Great Equatorial (Part III) (David Bedford)
- Gog And Magog (Third Ear Band)
- The House Is Not The Same (Mother Gong)
- Rabbit Run (Ginger Baker)

Disc 3
VISIONS AND MARMALADE THOUGHTS
- To Play Your Little Game (Cressida)
- Death May Be Your Santa Claus (Second Hand)
- No Chance (Warhorse)
- Beyond Winter (Bodast Feat. Steve Howe)
- Poet (Audience)
- Field Of Eternity (Anthony Phillips)
- The Rut (Blonde On Blonde)
- Scarred For Life (Slapp Happy)
- Stroking The Tail Of The Bird (Daevid Allen)
- Clouded Vision (Hawkwind)
- No (Arthur Brown & Vincent Crane)
- Where One Is (Dick Heckstall-Smith)

Disc 4
PHOSPHORESCENT CREATURES ON GERMAN SKIES
- Hey You Over There (Walpurgis)
- Stop Little Lady (Birth Control)
- He's Got A Gun In His Hand (Atlantis)
- Troubluhs El E Isch (Annexus Quam)
- Schmetterling (Bröselmaschine)
- Requiem Für Einen Wicht (Hölderlin)
- Ich Klage An (Jerry Berkers)
- Die Reise (Emtidi)
- Osmose I (Annexus Quam)
- The Work Is Done (Birth Control)
- Change My Mind (Atlantis)

Disc 5
TRIPPIN' ON KRAUTROCK LANDS
- Got No Time (Embryo)
- Dedicated To Wernher Von Braun

Unmasked est extrait de A Short Break.

- MUSIC BROKERS (MBB7237) 6xCD

(Mythos)
- Die Weisse Alm (Sergius Golowin)
- Die Hohepriesterin (Walter Wegmüller)
- Galactic Joke (Cosmic Jockers)
- Meeting In The Studio (Anima)
- Die Sterne (Walter Wegmüller)
- Hero's Death (Mythos)

Disc 6
ISOLATED MANSIONS ON FARAWAY WEEKENDS
- Stepping Stone (Carmen)
- Choose Your Masques (Hawkwind)
- Mother Universe (Wallenstein)
- Elegy (Mogul Thrash)
- The Hymn (Arthur Brown's Kingdom Come)
- Potted History (Hugh Hopper & Richard Sinclair)
- Celebration (Chillum)
- Sad Song For An Easy Lady (Blonde On Blonde)
- Silver Arms (Wallenstein)
- Der Traum Von Julius (Guy Evans Feat. David Jackson)



> Zoom

Jon Savage's 1967
(The Year Pop Divided)
2017

Jon Savage's 1967 (The Year Pop Divided)

Disc 1
- So You Want To Be A Rock 'N' Roll Star (The Byrds)
- I'm A Man (The Spencer Davis Group)
- The Beat Goes On (Sonny & Cher)
- Try It (The Attack)
- Levitation (Thirteenth Floor Elevators)
- The Behemoth (The Shadows Of Knight)
- Never Ever (The Action)
- Take Me In Your Arms And Love Me (Gladys Knight & The Pips)
- Believe It Or Not (Rex Garvin & The Midnight Cravers)
- **Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' (Soft Machine)**
- I Can Hear The Grass Grow (The Move)
- Show Me (Joe Tex)
- Groovin' (The Young Rascals)
- So You Say You Lost Your Baby (Gene Clark)
- Western Union (The Searchers)
- Soul Finger (The Bar-Kays)
- Respect (Aretha Franklin)
- The Hand Don't Fit The Glove (Terry Reid With Peter Jay's Jaywalkers)
- Night Of The Long Grass (The Troggs)
- I'm Five Years Ahead Of My Time (The Third Bardo)
- So Sharp (Dyke & The Blazers)
- Cold Sweat Pt 1 (James Brown & The Famous Flames)
- Mr Soul (Buffalo Springfield)
- Alternate Title (aka Randy Scouse Git) (The Monkees)

Disc 2
- At The Third Stroke (The Picadilly Line)
- Hold On (Sharon Tandy)
- Lazy Life (William E)
- Reflections (Diana Ross & The Supremes)
- The idol (The Fortunes)
- Dream Machine (Svensk)
- I See The Rain (The Marmalade)
- You Keep Running Away (Four Tops)
- Yellow Brick Road (Captain Beefheart And His Magic Band)
- Slim Jenkins Place (Booker T & The MG's)
- Revolution (Tomorrow)
- Stop And Listen (The Shag)
- Psyche Rock (Les Yper Sound)
- Look At Me I'm You (The Blossom Toes)
- Love Power (The Sandpebbles)
- The Wind Blows Your Hair (The Seeds)
- Suzannah's Still Alive (Dave Davies)
- The One I Love (Ken Boothe)
- Can't Stand Myself (When You Touch Me) (James Brown & The Famous Flames
- Chain Of Fools (Aretha Franklin)
- Garden Of My Mind (The Mickey Finn)
- Vacuum Cleaner (Tintern Abbey)
- It's Been A Long Time (Andy Ellison)

Compilation.

- ACE (CDTOP2 1495) 2xCD

- The Music Goes Round My Head (The Easybeats)



> Zoom

English Weather
2017

Bob Stanley & Pete Wiggs

- Love Song With Flute (Caravan)
- Moon Bird (The Roger Webb Sound)
- Early Morning Eyes (The Parlour Band)
- Pamela (Scotch Mist)
- Cloud Home (The Orange Bicycle)
- JLT (T2)
- 'Til The Christ Come Back (Bill Fay)
- Refugees (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Very Nice Of You To Call (Aardvark)
- Big White Cloud (John Cale)
- Bottles (Belle Gonzalez)
- Watching White Stars (The Way We Live)
- Windfall (Offspring)
- Never Let Go (Camel)
- Wise Man In Your Heart (Daevid Allen)
- **O Caroline (Matching Mole)**
- Edge Of The Sea (Prelude)
- Evening Shade (Alan Parker & Alan Hawkshaw)

- ACE (CDCHD 1484) CD



> Zoom

Only #s One - 25
2018

Only #s One - 25

- Trouble up the Road (Jackie Brenston)
- Come Rain or Come Shine (Ray Charles)
- Elmer's Tune (Glenn Miller & His Orchestra with Ray Eberle and the Modernaires)
- **Slow Walkin' Talk (Robert Wyatt)**
- Our Winter Love (Bill Pursell)
- Louisiana (Percy Mayfield)
- Gone (Ferlin Husky)
- Lovers Who Wander (Dion)
- He's Right on Time (Dorothy Love Coates)
- Boppin' the Rock (Clifton Chenier)
- More Than I Can Say (Bobby Vee)
- I'm Gonna Love You Too (Buddy Holly)
- It's Been a Long, Long Time (Bing Crosby & The Les Paul Trio)
- My Funny Valentine (Tony Bennett)
- Are You Real? (Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers)
- Hanky Panky (Tommy James And The Shondells)
- You Don't Know Me (Ray Charles)
- The Ghetto (The Staple Singers)
- Please Mr. Postman (The Marvelettes)
- Alfie's Theme (Sonny Rollins)

- QIMBAYA ENTRETENIMIENTO S.A.S. - Digital Format



Zoom > 1 2

15 Rare & Unreleased Tracks
From Our Legendary Friends
2018

The Mojo Anthology

- Lights Of Home (U2)
- You're So Dark (Artic Monkeys)
- Alone On The Rope (Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds)
- **Invisible (Robert Wyatt)**
- Green Light (Beck)
- Slow Slow Disco (St. Vincent)
- What Would He say? (Paul Weller)
- A Song With No Name (Norah Jones)
- Changing World (Jim James)
- Pocahontas (Gillian Welch)
- Middle Of The Road (Teenage Fanclub)
- Exit Connection (Johnny Marr)
- Needle Boy (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds)
- I Never Stopped Loving (Anohni)
- No More Tangles (John Grant)

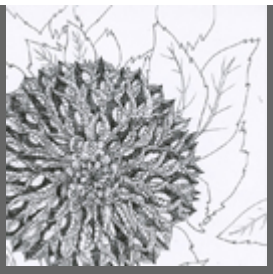
CD distribué avec le n° 300 de novembre 2018 de la revue *MOJO*.

- MOJO MAGAZINE (NOVEMBER 2018) CD

DJ****

A SIDE
- L'Opéra des girafes (Jacques Prévert)
- Heure au bourdon et alerte (Renaud

Little Child est extrait de Solar Flares Burn For You



Zoom > 1 2

Phénomènes Suprasegmentaux
2018

Gagneux)
- Ethiopie (Ensemble Tigre)
- L'Opéra des girafes [suite] (Jacques Prévert)
- Geien sei in shvarze (Colette Magny avec Sarah Gorby)
- Arkham (Raein Sønntag)
- Téléchat
- Temps distillé (Semprun & Christodoulides)
- Djevdet Bey [Nazim Hikmet] (Le Groupe Organon)
- Kuuki onna no uta (J. A. Seazer)
- Ici a commencé l'histoire
- Chant avec battements de mains (Iles Hébrides)
- Little Child (Spike Jones)

B SIDE
- Lauréats du concours 1980 "Les meilleurs poèmes à dire"
- Mama Vagina (Péloquin & Sauvageau)
- The Cryptosphere (Steve Lacy)
- Poupée mannequin
- Monotony (The Four Horsemen)
- Nature Death (Edouard Scotto)
- High Fidelity (Spike Jones)
- Robotic (Jean-Pierre Drouet)
- Dans la jungle des villes [Bertold Brecht] (Jean Prodomidès)
- J'suis cool dans mes chaussures (J-P Mas)
- Ode à l'affaire (L'Infonie)
- La Saga du saca (Toubab K)
- Intime panique (Captain Tarthopom)
- Le Conseil de guerre (La Bamboche)
- Little Child (Robert Wyatt)

Mixtape UJNSQ #3 performed by DJ****

Limited Edition Cassette. 50 copies.

- UN JE NE SAIS QUOI
(UJNSQ-024) Cassette



> Zoom

Lullabies For Catatonics:
A Journey Through The British Avant-Pop/Art Rock
Scene 1967-74
2019

Lullabies For Catatonics: A Journey Through The British Avant-Pop/Art Rock Scene 1967-74

Disc 1
SPONTANEOUS UNDERGROUND
- I Should've Known (The Soft Machine)
- I'm Waiting For The Man (The Riot Squad Featuring David Bowie)
- Conquistador (Procol Harum)
- Bypass The By-Pass (The End)
- World War Three (Dantalian's Chariot)
- Butcher's Tale (Western Front 1914) (The Zombies)
- I Talk To The Wind (Giles, Giles & Fripp)
- Tramcar To Frankenstein (The Liverpool Scene)
- The Battle (The Strawbs)
- Xoanan Bay (Woody Kern)
- In The Beginning (Genesis)
- Wasted Ground (Memento Mori) (The Velvet Frogs)
- Beyond And Before (Yes)
- Druid One (Third Ear Band)
- Through The Eyes Of A Child (Bachdenkel)
- All Over The Country (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- Merry Go Round (Eyes Of Blue)

Disc 2
TEA ON THE LAWN
- Egyptian Tomb (Mighty Baby)
- Banquet (Audience)
- To Play Your Little Game (Cressida)
- Parachute (Pretty Things)
- Crystallised Petard (Rustic Hinge)
- Vivaldi (Curved Air)
- World Of Ice (Sweet Slag)
- Mockingbird (Barclay James Harvest)
- The Prisoner (Comus)
- Home (Reconstruction) (Nirvana)
- Death May Be Your Santa Claus (Second Hand)
- The Prisoner (Eight By Ten) (Spring)
- Don Alfonso (The Coxhill-Bedford Duo)
- Grande Piano (Stackridge)
- Saving It Up For So Long (Samurai)
- No. 2 Psychological Decontamination Unit

- GRAPEFRUIT RECORDS
(CRSEGBOX056) 3xCD

(Blonde On Blonde)
- Me And My Kite (Fuchsia)

Disc 3
THE WIND SINGS WINTER SONGS
- Welcome For A Soldier (Deep Feeling)
- Can I See You? (Open Road)
- O Caroline (Matching Mole)
- Unhinged (9.30 Fly)
- The Machine Grinds On (Gnome Sweet Gnome)
- No More Sunshine Till May (As You Like It)
- A Winter's Tale (Jade Warrior)
- C.F.D.T. (Colonel Frights' Dancing Terrapins) (Bond & Brown)
- Ship (Gnidrolog)
- Anvils In Five (Rupert Hine)
- Upon Composition (Ron Geesin)
- Growing Up And I'm Fine (Mick Ronson)
- Adventures In A Yorkshire Landscape (Be-Bop Deluxe)
- Somewhere In Hollywood (10cc)
- Mother Russia (Renaissance)



> Zoom

Best Of 2007
2019

Les Inrockuptibles présentent

- Time To Get Crazy (LCD Soundsystem)
- 1234 (Van She Remix) (Feist)
- The City, The Airport (Loney, Dear)
- Everything I am (Kanye West)
- Heimdalsgate Like A Promethean Curse (Of Montreal)
- Winter Wonder Land (Animal Collective)
- Hall Of Records (Klaxons)
- Dance Live Au Zenith De Paris (Justice)
- La Chance De Ta Vie (Florent Marchet)
- The Storm (Patrick Watson)
- Standing In The Way Of Control (Gossip)
- Hang Me Up To Dry (Cold War Kids)
- Fans (Kings Of Leon)
- Hasta Siempre Commandante (Robert Wyatt)
- Put The Sun Back (The Coral)

Hasta Siempre Commandante est extrait de Comicopera

Offert avec le N° 24 des Inrocks 2.

- LES INROCKUPTIBLES (CD LI 07156) CD



> Zoom

Further Perspectives & Distortion
An Encyclopedia Of British Experimental And Avante-Garde Music 1976-1984
2019

Further Perspectives & Distortion – An Encyclopedia Of British Experimental And Avante-Garde Music 1976-1984

Disc 1
- Trail Of Traps (Alterations)
- The Force Is Blind (Alternative TV)
- Convergence (AMM III)
- Hang Ten (...And The Native Hipsters)
- Rats And Monkeys (Art Bears)
- Intellectual Stance (A Tent)
- Overspreading Art Genius (Blancmange)
- Positive Paranoid/The City In The Sea (Bodhi Beat Poets)
- After Mendelssohn (137 Years) (Gavin Bryars)
- LMC 1979 (Paul Burwell And David Toop)
- The Giant's Feet (Chris And Cosey)
- Exercise In Magnetic Tape No 4 (Clock DVA)
- Refreshment Break (Bob Cobbing)
- General Strike (Lindsay Cooper)
- Vase (Lol Coxhill And Morgan Fisher)
- Error System (BAGFGAB) (David Cunningham)
- Her Master's Voice (Deux Filles)
- Brighton, Pt. 1 (Doof)
- John Of Patmos (Eyeless In Gaza)

Disc 2
- Burning Feet (Faction)
- Think (Five Or Six)
- Miniature (Robert Fripp)
- The Boy Beats The Rams (Fred Frith)
- Blades Spin Notions (Ron Geesin)
- Mzui (Extract)

- CHERRY RED (CRCDBOX84) 3xCD

(BCGilbert/GLewis/RussellMills)
- Night By The Sea (Bill Gilonis And Tim Hodgkinson)
- Procession (Martin Hannett And Steve Hopkins)
- Wooden Heartthrob Of Peking (Kevin Harrison)
- Industry (Henry Cow)
- Music For the Hanging Of A Minister (Het)
- Junshi (Hula)
- Sounds That Saved My Life (Homage To K.S.) (George Melly)
- Extract From The Compassion And Humanity Of Margaret Thatcher
- Down The Sink (Nocturnal Emissions)
- I Was No Longer His Dominant (Alternate Version) (Nurse With Wound)
- Death Looks Down (Mark Perry)
- In The Nursery (Psychic TV)

Disc 3
- Paralysis (Robert Rental)
- Japanese Headset (Second Layer)
- Scene X (Will Sergeant)
- Scattered Strategies/Oblique References (Nigel Simpkins)
- Kayoo (Soft Machine)
- Opus (Stinky Winkles)
- Robot Factory (Swell Maps)
- WWBC (Test Dept)
- Nostradamus (The Door And The Window)
- Changez Les Blockeurs/Extract (The New Blockaders)
- Amnesty International Report (The Pop Group)
- Crossover (The Wildings)
- Brickyard (The Work)
- 24 Track Loop (This Heat)
- Zyklon B Zombie (Throbbing Gristle)
- Banishing (23 Skidoo)
- Pale Yellow (Two)
- Drinking And Hooting Machine (John White)
- Musical Box (Trevor Wishart)
- Rangers In The Night (Robert Wyatt)
- Baptism Of Fire (Zos Kia)



> Zoom

Return To Y'Hup
The World Of Ivor Cutler
2020

Citizen Bravo, Raymond Mac Donald and Friends

- Here's A Health For Simon
- Latitude and Longitude (with Phyllis King)
- Size Nine And A Half (with Emma Pollock)
- Mary's A Cow (with Malcolm Benzie)
- Instance The Yam (with Alex Kapranos)
- Pickle Your Knees (with Karine Polwart)
- Gravity Begins At Home (with Rick Redbeard)
- A Cowpuncher And A Bird (with Zoe Graham)
- Boo Boo Bird (with Heather Leigh)
- Vitamin P (with Duglas T. Stewart)
- Green Rain (with Sarah Hayes)
- A Tooth Song (with Adam Stafford)
- Sh Chi (with Stuart Murdoch)
- Women Of The World (with Tracyanne Campbell)
- A Real Man (with James Yorkston)
- Yellow Fly (with Kris Drever)
- Shoplifters
- The Path (with Stuart Braithwaite)
- Muscular Tree (with Megan Airlie)
- Who Tore Your Trousers James? (with Rachel Sermanni and Chris Thomson)
- I Got No Common Sense
- When I Stand On An Open Cart (with Kapil Seshasayee)
- I Believe In Bugs (with Jo Mango)
- Good Morning! How Are You? Shut Up! (with Pictish Trail)
- Out Of Decency (with Robert Wyatt)
- Beautiful Cosmos (with Anna Miles)

- Robert Wyatt - vocals

- CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND RECORDS (CHEM255) LP
- CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND RECORDS (CHEM255CD) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

Think I’m Going Weird: Original Artefacts From The British Psychedelic Scene 1966-68
2021

Think I’m Going Weird: Original Artefacts From The British Psychedelic Scene 1966-68

Disc 1
- I Think I'm Going Weird (Art)
- My Clown (Single Mix) (July)
- The View (Gary Walker & the Rain)
- Utterly Simple (Traffic)
- A Woman of Distinction (Caleb)
- Like the Sun, Like the Fire (Simon Dupree & the Big Sound)
- Lazy Old Sun (Alternative Version, Stereo) (the Kinks)
- Plastic Daffodils (Atlanta Roots)
- Psychedelia (Ron Geesin)
- Dream Starts (Elmer Gantry's Velvet Opera)
- Tell Me What You See in Me (Strawbs)
- Funniest Gig (Manfred Mann)
- Sunny Cellophane Skies (the Status Quo)
- Mrs Grundy (Plastic Penny)
- Buffalo Billycan (Apple)
- Charles Brown (Sweet Feeling)
- Rosie Can't Fly (Sleepy)
- I Know, She Believes (the Picadilly Line)
- The Lobster (Fairport Convention)
- Yellow Brick Road (the Mindbenders)
- The Story of David (Granny's Intentions)
- The Devil Rides Out (Icarus)
- Is Anybody Home? (the Mirage)
- Why (Eyes of Blond)

Disc 2
- World War III (Dantalian's Chariot)
- See Through Windows (Family)
- Salad Days (Are Here Again) (Procol Harum)
- The Truth Is Plain to See (Freedom)
- Sun Sing (Force Four)
- Mr Small the Watch Repairer Man (Kaleidoscope)
- Image Blown Out (Genesis)
- Life Is Just Beginning (the Creation)
- Taking Out Time (the Spencer Davis Group)
- That Man (Small Faces)
- You're Haunting Me (the Hi-Fis)
- Mrs Gillespie's Refrigerator (Sands)
- Please Return (Rust)
- Last Minute (the Nashville Teens)
- All Along the Watchtower (the Alan Bown!)
- The Touchables (All of Us) (Nirvana)
- Halliford House (the Virgin Sleep)
- Catherine's Wheel (Denny Laine)
- Girl in the Mirror (Christopher Colt)
- Elevator (Single Mix) (Grapefruit)
- World in My Head (Mike Stuart Span)
- Ufo (Neo Maya)
- The Laughing Man (John Carter & Russ Alquist)
- Floatin' (Vamp)
- Life Does Not Seem What It Seems (Tinsel Arcade)
- Scene of the Lemon Queen (One Step Beyond)

Disc 3
- Happenings Ten Years Time Ago (the Yardbirds)
- Have Some More Tea (the Smoke)
- Walk Upon the Water (the Move)
- Jabberwock (Boeing Duveen and the Beautiful Soup)
- The Mad Hatter's Song (the Incredible String Band)
- Shoplifters (Ivor Cutler Trio)
- Look Out There's a Monster Coming (the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band)
- Sara, Crazy Child (Extended German 45 Version) (John's Children)
- Beyond the Rising Sun (Tyrannosaurus Rex)
- Hey Girl (JP Sunshine)
- Mr Sunshine (Film Version) (Barclay James Harvest)
- Tick Tock (Shyster)
- Cheadle Heath Delusions (Felius Andromeda)
- The Incredible Journey of Timothy Chase (Tomorrow)

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Daevid Allen - guitar
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass & vocals

I'm So Low est un morceau "démo" composé par Kevin Ayers et enregistré en 1967. Il n'est jamais sorti sur un disque officiel de Soft Machine.

On le retrouve sur plusieurs compilations des *early years* telles que Turns On - Vol. 1 (2001) ou The Soft Machine - Tanglewood Tails (2014).

- GRAPEFRUIT RECORDS (CRSEGBOX100) 5xCD

- The Birthday (the Idle Race)
- How Can We Hang on to a Dream? (the Moody Blues)
- Yes Is a Pleasant Country (Circus)
- Summer Sun Shines (the Fresh Windows)
- The Blue Man Runs Away (Crystal Ship)
- What's Happening? (the Crazy World of Arthur Brown)
- Mother's Magazine (Mother's Pride)
- Flying Machine (Turquoise)
- In the Park (the Cortinas)
- Hung Up on a Dream (the Zombies)
- We Are the Moles Part 1 (the Moles)
- We Are the Moles Part 2 (the Moles)

Disc 4
- Armenia City in the Sky (the Who)
- Fredereek Hernando (One in a Million)
- Flowerman (the Syn)
- I Can Hear Colours (the Motives)
- Green (the Lion & the Fish)
- I'm So Low (Aka Jet-Propelled Photograph) (the Soft Machine)
- Jeanetta (Mabel Greer's Toyshop)
- Come Over Stranger (Canto)
- Children of the Sun (Demo Version) (the Misunderstood)
- Brother Can You Spare a Dime (St. Valentine's Day Massacre)
- (I'm So) Sad (the Magic Mixture)
- You've Gotta Have Love Babe (the Graham Bond Organisation)
- Rumble of Mersey Square South - Wimple Winch)
- Cosmic Trip (Third Ear Band)
- I Bring the Sun (John Bryant)
- Police Is Here (a New Generation)
- Spicks and Specks (the Bee Gees)
- Death of the Seaside (the Human Instinct)
- Boys and Girls Together (Friday's Chyld)
- Charge of the Light Brigade (Jason Crest)
- Toymaker's Shop (Louise)
- Plastic Aeroplane (Medium Rare)
- Venusian Moonshine (Live at Middle Earth) (117)

Disc 5
- Path Through the Forest (the Factory)
- Freedom for You (the Attack)
- Walking Through My Dreams (Pretty Things)
- Don't Go 'Way Little Girl (the Shame)
- My Prayer (Tintern Abbey)
- Phantom I (Jade Hexagram)
- Cover Girl (Perfumed Garden)
- Rose Coloured Glasses (the Tickle)
- Amy Peate (the Orange Bicycle)
- Dream in My Mind (Rupert's People)
- Spider (Downliners Sect)
- What on Earth (Single Mix) (Blossom Toes)
- Building Up a Dream (the End)
- The Cat (the Merseys)
- Pandemonium Shadow Show (Mandrake Paddle Steamer)
- Waterways (Demo Version) (East of Eden)
- Which Way (the Sorrows)
- Bun (the Deviants)
- Another Vincent Van Gogh (the 23rd Turnoff)
- Smile at the Sad Sun (Champagne)
- Tales of Brave Ulysses (the Zany Woodruff Operation)
- Sitting on a Blunestone (Tales of Justine)
- Brain (the Action)



> Zoom

Modern Classics

- I'm The Man Who Loves You (Wilco)
- Jubilee Street (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds)
- Man Is Not A Bird (Broadcast)
- White Winter Hymnal (Fleet Foxes)
- Everything Is Free (Gillian Welch)
- The Spark That Bled (The Flaming Lips)
- Rich Woman (Robert Plant And Alison Krauss)
- Pagan Poetry (Björk)
- Just As You Are (Robert Wyatt)
- Red Dirt Girl (Emmylou Harris)

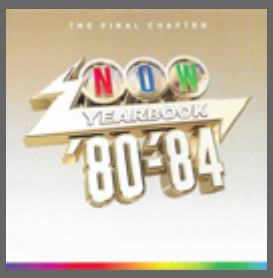
Just As You Are est extrait de Comicopera

Included with the May 2022 issue of Uncut magazine.

- UNCUT (2022 05) CD

Modern Classics (15 Tracks From The Greatest Albums Of Uncut's Lifetime)
2022

- Eid Ma Clack Shaw (Bill Callahan)
- Andromeda (Weyes Blood)
- I Think I'm In Love (Spiritualized)
- Concerning The UFO Sighting Near Highland, Illinois (Sufjan Stevens)
- Nashville Parent (Lambchop)



> Zoom

Now Yearbook '80-'84 (The Final Chapter)
2022

Now Yearbook '80-'84 (The Final Chapter)

Disc 1
- Freedom (Wham!)
- Love Is A Stranger (Eurythmics, Annie Lennox, Dave Stewart)
- O Superman (Laurie Anderson)
- Sat In Your Lap (Kate Bush)
- What Difference Does It Make? (The Smiths)
- Absolute (Scritti Politti)
- Why? (Bronski Beat)
- When Am I Going To Make A Living (Sade)
- War Baby (Tom Robinson)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Round And Round (Spandau Ballet)
- Take A Chance With Me (Roxy Music)
- So Lonely (Single Version) (The Police)
- Nelson Mandela (The Specials)
- Our Lips Are Sealed (Fun Boy Three)
- Kiss The Bride (Elton John)
- The Longest Time (Billy Joel)
- Love On The Rocks (Neil Diamond)
- We All Stand Together (Paul McCartney)

Disc 2
- Na Na Hey Hey (Kiss Him Goodbye) (Bananarama)
- Desperate But Not Serious (Adam Ant)
- Water On Glass (Kim Wilde)
- Thunder In The Mountains (Toyah)
- We Are Glass (Gary Numan)
- Hymn (Ultravox)
- Living On The Ceiling (Blancmange)
- Talk Talk (Talk Talk)
- Tesla Girls (Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark)
- Hyperactive! (Thomas Dolby)
- Crushed By The Wheels Of Industry (Edit) (Heaven 17)
- Someone Somewhere (In Summertime) (7" Promo Single Edit) (Simple Minds)
- Where The Heart Is (7" Single Version) (Soft Cell)
- Louise (DJ Edit) (The Human League)
- Hide And Seek (Howard Jones)
- Human Racing (Nik Kershaw)
- Lay Your Hands On Me (Thompson Twins)
- Hang On Now (Kajagoogoo)
- The Medal Song (Culture Club)
- Move Over Darling (Tracey Ullman)

Disc 3
- Run To The Hills (Iron Maiden)
- Modern Girl (Meat Loaf)
- Day After Day (Pretenders)
- Human Touch (Rick Springfield)
- The Lucky One (Laura Branigan)
- Hard Habit To Break (Chicago)
- Say It Isn't So (Daryl Hall & John Oates)
- Better Be Good To Me (Tina Turner)
- One Thing Leads To Another (The Fixx)
- Grey Day (Madness)
- Cherry Oh Baby (UB40)
- A Solid Bond In Your Heart (The Style Council)
- Just Got Lucky (Jo Boxers)
- We Got The Beat (The Go-Go's)
- D-Days (Hazel O'Connor)
- Miss The Girl (The Creatures)
- Just Who Is The 5 O'Clock Hero? (The Jam)
- 11 O'Clock Tick Tock (U2)
- Everything's Gone Green (New Order)
- Silver (Echo And The Bunnymen)
- 18 Carat Love Affair (Associates)
- Cantonese Boy (Japan)

Disc 4
- Running With The Night (Single Version)

Shipbuilding est extrait de Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- SONY MUSIC (CDYBNOW8084) 4xCD
- EMI (CDYBNOW8084) 4xCD

(Lionel Richie)
- Love Is In Control (Finger On The Trigger) (Donna Summer)
- Friends (Shalamar)
- I'm So Excited (The Pointer Sisters)
- Waiting For A Train (Flash And The Pan)
- Forget Me Nots (Single Version) (Patrice Rushen:04
- Fresh (Single Version) (Kool & The Gang)
- Stay With Me Tonight (Jeffrey Osborne
- Treat Her Like A Lady (Single Version) (The Temptations)
- Intuition (Linx)
- Mr. Solitaire (Animal Nightlife)
- Don't Stop That Crazy Rhythm (Modern Romance)
- Abba Medley (Stars On 45/Starsound)
- Piece Of The Action (Bucks Fizz)
- Words (F.R. David)
- When He Shines (Sheena Easton)
- Coward Of The Country (Kenny Rogers)
- Susanna (The Art Company)
- Seven Tears (Goombay Dance Band)
- Save Your Love (Renée & Renato)



> Zoom

Very Good Trip
Une histoire intime de la musique
2022

Michka Assayas présente

Disc 1
- This Time Tomorrow (The Kinks)
- The Days Of Pearly Spencer (David Mcwilliams)
- Alone Again Or (Love)
- Refugees (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- O' Caroline (Matching Mole)
- It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding) (Bob Dylan)
- Heroin (The Velvet Underground, Nico)
- Virginia Plain (Roxy Music)
- This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us (Sparks)

Disc 2
- Pinball Wizard (The Who)
- Roadrunner (Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers)
- C'mon Let's Go (The Paley Brothers/The Ramones)
- Teenage Kicks (The Undertones)
- Love Comes In Spurts (Richard Hell & The Voidoids)
- Love Goes To Building On Fire (The Talking Heads)
- On The Road Again (Canned Heat)
- No Face (Traffic)
- Lilac Wine (Jeff Buckley)
- It's A Wonderful Life (Sparklehorse)
- It's Over (Roy Orbison)

O' Caroline est extrait de Matching Mole

"J'ai rembobiné le film de ma vie d'amateur dans un livre de conversations avec Maud Berthomier que nous avons sous-titré Une hist*oire intime de la musique*. Mon existence, comme celle de bien des gens de mon âge, a été bouleversée par la découverte de tout un nouveau monde musical. J'ai senti que le moment était venu de plonger au cœur de cette révélation afin de livrer mon propre témoignage.

Michka Assayas (animateur et programmateur de l'émission Very Good Trip sur France Inter).

Recorded August 16, 17 & 18, 2002 at the Moore Theatre, Seattle WA

- GM PRODUCTIONS - 2xLP



> Zoom

Canterburied in Seattle 2002
2022

Glass & Friends

- Rattlin' in Seattle (Richard Sinclair & David Rees-Williams)
- Was A Friend (Hughscore)
- John's Fragment (Pip Pyle's Bash)
- Vermillion Hue Over Lake Lausanne (Hamster Theatre)
- Bartholomew's Kite (Kopecky)
- Freeworld (Phreeworld)
- Set 2: The Catch / Patrice Mersault's Dream / The War Song / For Ursula Major and Sirius The Dog Star (Glass)
- Oh What A Lonely Lifetime / **Nan True's Hole** / Felafel Shuffle **(Richard Sinclair)**
- Disassociation (Richard Sinclair & David Rees-Williams)
- Little Sunflower (David Rees-Williams)
- Good To Meet You (Richard Sinclair)
- Yaman (Azigza
- Tungusta (Stinkhorn)
- Green & Purple Extract (Phil Miller's In Cahoots)

"The 2002 Progman Cometh festival was held in Seattle to bring together some of the "cream of the crop" of Canterbury musicians.

Sadly, twenty years later many of these incredible musicians have passed on, making it all the more important to support those still with us. We are indeed fortunate that their music will live on forever."

"The compilation was mixed and edited under Jerry Cook's supervision in 2003 with the hope of this being released as a double-CD souvenir set, but it never happened." (A. Leroy)

More information on
philmillerlegacy.com

- Miles, Monk, Elton & Mom (Jeff Sherman & Elton Dean)
- Dirty Microphone / **Hope For Happiness (Daevid Allen's University of Errors)**
- Hymn (Kevin Ayers)
- Introduction (Soft Ware)

Bonus Tracks

- Ratlift (Elton Dean, John Marshall & Hugh Hopper)
- Stick Connections (Jerry Cook, Pip Pyle, Mark Fletcher & John Marshall)

- GLASS - Digital Format



> Zoom

Progman 2003
2022

Glass & Friends

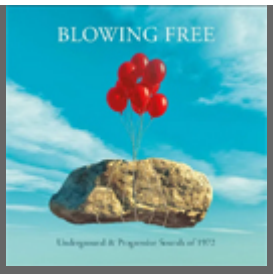
- Welcome (Jerry Cook)
- Big Sur 9-14-2000 (Jeff Sherman & Friends)
- Give The Man A Hand (Glass)
- For Birgit (Fred Baker)
- Seattle Samba (Fred Baker)
- Toccata in D minor (Bach) (Fred Baker)
- Bonneville Blues (Fred Baker)
- Loop Bass Piece (Fred Baker)
- Underdub (Phil Miller, Richard Sinclair & Fred Baker)
- **God Song (Phil Miller, Richard Sinclair & Fred Baker)**
- Eastern Region (Phil Miller, Richard Sinclair & Fred Baker)
- Willy The Knee (Elton Dean & Alex Maguire)
- **Kings and Queens (Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Jerry Cook, Alex Maguire & Paul Black)**
- Wanglosaxon (Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Jerry Cook, Alex Maguire & Paul Black)
- Share It (Phil Miller, Richard Sinclair, Alex Maguire, Greg Sherman, Jerry Cook & Paul Black)
- **Calyx (Phil Miller, Richard Sinclair, Alex Maguire, Elton Dean, Greg Sherman, Jerry Cook & Paul Black)**
- First Trane (Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Jerry Cook & Paul Black)
- Long Lingers Autumn Time (Richard Sinclair, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker)
- John's Fragment (Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Jerry Cook, Alex Maguire & Paul Black)
- Psychic Warrior (Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Richard Sinclair, Jerry Cook, Alex Maguire & Paul Black
- In The Land of Grey and Pink (Richard Sinclair)
- Going For A Song (Richard Sinclair)
- Keep On Caring (Richard Sinclair)
- What's Rattlin' (Richard Sinclair & Paul Black)
- "Latiny Tune" (Richard Sinclair, Paul Black & Greg Sherman)
- Oh What A Lonely Lifetime / Disassociation (Richard Sinclair)
- Out There (Phil Miller & Fred Baker)
- Upside (Phil Miller & Fred Baker)
- Europa (Glass)
- Baker's Treat (Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Jerry Cook & Paul Black)
- **Facelift / Nan True's Hole /** Green & Purple **(Phil Miller, Hugh Hopper, Fred Baker, Elton Dean, Jerry Cook, Paul Black, Alex Maguire & Richard Sinclair)**

In August 2003, Glass hosted a who's-who of Canterbury Music for a second, two-day "Progman Cometh" festival at the Moore Theatre in Seattle:
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Richard Sinclair - guitar, bass & vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - saxello & alto saxophone
- Fred Baker - guitar & bass
- Alex Maguire - keyboards

More information here

- GLASS - Digital Format

Blowing Free - Underground & Progressive Sounds of 1972



> Zoom

Blowing Free
Underground & Progressive
Sounds of 1972
2022

Disc 1
- Aaron Copeland (Emerson, Lake & Palmer)
- Time Take My Life (Atomic Rooster)
- Get Out Of Bed / There's Nobody There / Side By Side (Edgar Broughton Band)
- Medicine Man (Barclay James Harvest)
- Marie Antoinette (Curved Air)
- Skin Valley Serenade (Skin Alley)
- Swamp Fever (Open Road)
- Don't Ask Me (Lindisfarne)
- Songs Out Of Clay (Al Stewart)
- Sheep Season (Mellow Candle)
- Epic Forest (Rare Bird)
- My Friend The Sun (Family)
- Do You Believe In Magic (Nektar)
- Seven By Seven (Hawkwind)
- And You And I (Yes)

Disc 2
- Time Was (Wishbone Ash)
- A Winter's Tale (Jade Warrior)
- The Love In Your Eye / To Catch Me A Brother / Subsultus / Debouchment / Tilbury Kecks (Caravan)
- Brainstorm (Hawkwind)
- Theme One (Van Der Graaf Generator)
- Reaffirmation (Help Yourself)
- Burlesque (Family)
- **O Caroline (Matching Mole)**
- Conquistador (Live) (Procol Harum)
- Lost Tribe (Bond & Brown)
- Speed Queen Of Ventura (Vinegar Joe)
- Wishing Well (Free)

Disc 3
- The Wizard (Uriah Heep)
- Prologue (Renaissance)
- Chilly Morning Mama – (Edgar Broughton Band)
- American Mother (Help Yourself)
- Love Is Good (Pretty Things)
- Turn It All Around (Rare Bird)
- Blowin' Free (Wishbone Ash)
- Bananas (Man)
- Blue Angel (Dave Cousins)
- See the World (Through My Eyes) (Vinegar Joe)
- Lady Of The Lake (Jade Warrior)
- Stranded (Khan)
- Whiskey In The Jar (Thin Lizzy)

Disc 4
- Two Weeks Last Summer (Dave Cousins)
- Nick's Seven (Skin Alley)
- Choo Choo Mama (Ten Years After)
- Hellbound Train (Savoy Brown)
- Peter (Pretty Things)
- Rip Off Train (Pretty Things)
- **Instant Kitten (Matching Mole)**
- The Boys In The Band (Gentle Giant)
- Midnight Moses (Sensational Alex Harvey Band)
- Walk Don't Run (Pink Fairies)
- Ricochet (Jonesy)
- When The City Sleeps (Bombadil)
- Desolation Valley/Waves (Nektar)
- Melinda More Or Less (Curved Air)
- Hollow Stone (Khan)

O Caroline et *Instant Kitten* sont extraits de Matching Mole.

Box Set.

- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (ECLEC42799) 4xCD



> Zoom

Now 80s Alternative
2023

Now 80s Alternative

Disc 1
- Thieves Like Us (New Order)
- Beethoven (I Love to Listen To) (Eurythmics)
- Love Will Tear Us Apart (Joy Division)
- Red Guitar (David Sylvian)
- Party Fears Two (The Associates)
- Stories Of Johnny (Marc Almond)
- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- Come Back (Pete Wylie & The Mighty WAH!)
- Broken Land (The Adventures)
- Shades (Iggy Pop)
- Talk Of The Town (The Pretenders)
- So. Central Rain (R.E.M.)
- Monkey Gone To Heaven (Pixies)
- President Gas (The Psychedelic Furs)
- Planet Claire (The B-52's)

Shipbuilding est extrait du EP Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight.

The Sweetest Girl est extrait de Songs For Remember.

- SONY MUSIC (CDNNNOW141) 4xCD

- Mad Eyed Screamer (The Creatures)
- The Cutter (Echo And The Bunnymen)
- That's Entertainment (The Jam)
- Atmospherics: Listen To The Radio (Tom Robinson)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

Disc 2
- O Superman (Laurie Anderson)
- I'm In Love With A German Film Star (The Passions)
- European Female (The Stranglers)
- Getting Away With It (Electronic)
- Dr. Mabuse (Propaganda)
- Vicious Games (Yello)
- No Memory (Scarlet Fantastic)
- Suddenly Last Summer (The Motels)
- Always Something There To Remind Me (Naked Eyes)
- I Got You (Split Enz)
- Lawnchairs (Our Daughter's Wedding)
- Whip It (Devo)
- After A Fashion (Midge Ure & Mick Karn)
- Gentlemen Take Polaroids (Japan)
- Dreams Of Immigrants (Sandii & The Sunsetz)
- African And White (China Crisis)
- The First Picture of You (The Lotus Eaters)
- Flowers (Zaine Griff)
- He! Stranger (Anne Pigalle)

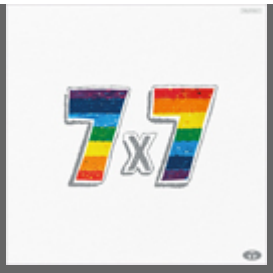
Disc 3
- This Corrosion (Sisters Of Mercy)
- Peek-A-Boo (Siouxsie And The Banshees)
- Kick In The Eye (Bauhaus)
- A Forest (The Cure)
- Atmosphere (Joy Division)
- Birthday (The Sugarcubes)
- David Sylvian (Pop Song)
- Snobbery & Decay (Act)
- The American (Simple Minds)
- Down In The Subway (Soft Cell)
- There's A Ghost In My House (The Fall)
- Grimly Fiendish (The Damned)
- Liberator (Spear Of Destiny)
- Do You Believe In The Westworld? (Theatre Of Hate)
- This Is England (The Clash)
- Edie (Ciao Baby) (The Cult)
- Tower Of Strength (The Mission)
- Martha's Harbour (All About Eve)
- Hit The Ground (The Darling Buds)
- Head Over Heels (The Go-Go's)
- I Know What Boys Like (The Waitresses)

Disc 4
- Hand In Glove (The Smiths)
- Love Is A Wonderful Colour (The Icicle Works)
- Driving Away From Home (Jim's Tune) (It's Immaterial)
- The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades (Timbuk 3)
- Mexican Radio (Wall Of Voodoo)
- Senses Working Overtime (XTC)
- Remembrance Day (B-Movie)
- The Last Film (Kissing The Pink)
- I Love A Man In A Uniform (Gang Of Four)
- Der Kommissar (After The Fire)
- Dead Pop Stars (Altered Images)
- Ieya (Toyah)
- Car Trouble (Adam & The Ants)
- World Shut Your Mouth (Julian Cope)
- Crash (The Primitives)
- Sonic Boom Boy (Westworld)
- Def Con One (Pop Will Eat Itself)
- Medicine Show (Big Audio Dynamite)
- Radio Africa (Latin Quarter)
- The Sweetest Girl (Scritti Politti)

7x7 Project

Disc 1
- Red (Robert Wyatt)
- Green (Mulatu Astatke)
- Orange (Archie Shepp)
- Azul (Kassin)

Tirage limité à 777 exemplaires numérotés.



Zoom > 1 2 3 4 5 6

7x7
2023

Disc 2
- Yellow (Sean O'Hagan)
- Indigo (Nile Rodgers)
- Violet (Terry Riley)

Les deux disques sont accompagnés d'un livret de 64 pages qui illustre le projet que Jean-Pierre Müller a mené en 2012 avec 7 artistes dont Robert Wyatt.

Alhambra Moon, le morceau de Robert Wyatt dans le projet initial de 2012 change de nom et devient *Red* dans cette production.

- TRICATEL (TRILPFR077)
  2xLP



> Zoom

Happy Land
(A Compendium Of Alternative Electronic Music From The British Isles 1992-1996) (Volume 1)
2023

Happy Land (A Compendium Of Alternative Electronic Music From The British Isles 1992-1996) (Volume 1)

Disc 1
- Soul Vine (70 Billion People) (Cabaret Voltaire)
- **Happy Land (Ultramarine Feat. Robert Wyatt – Remix Drummie Zeb)**
- True Romance (Thunderhead)

Disc 2
- Carceres Ex Novum (Xeper)
- Housewife (Matthew Herbert)
- Big Decision (Liquid Son)
- Meditation (Syzygy)

- ABOVE BOARD PROJECTS
  (HLLP1) 2xLP



> Zoom

Dedicated To Palestine
2024

Stray Signals

- Lo que hiciste ayer - (Àgata)
- **Dondestand - (Andrea Belfi plays Robert Wyatt)**
- رثاؤنا ثائر Our Grief Is Revolutionary - (Jessika Khazrik)
- Viva - (Boniface)
- Forte - (WSR)
- Ve - (Herva)
- Butte I - (Mitchell Keaney)
- Enabler Interpreter - (Forster)
- Dark Red (Lacquered) - (EPRC)
- Untitled 229 - (Notte Infinita)
- Supermoon23 - (Augmented Aural)
- In Spirit - (Noumeno)
- Remo - (Gustavo Infante)
- Untitled - (Victor Negri)
- Big Bugs Travelling Band - (Omen)
- Counterpoise Part 1 - (Dylan Kerr + Boniface)
- De Voir De Mémoire - (Rhone Poulenc)
- process nr3 - (Gola)
- Mirage - (XIX (feat. Martina Brandorff)
- Goodnight Moon - (Dorthy Jackson)
- Collapse of Meaning (Absent Intelligence)
- MATERDOLOROSA - (Alga)

This compilation is dedicated to Palestine.

Looking at the oppressive political climate in Germany and the structures of racialised policing that enable it, we urgently recognise that, in whatever we do, a commitment to anti-colonial and pro-Palestinian politics must be upheld. This is how we can cultivate an effective anti-fascist movement locally and internationally. We stand together with the Palestinian people against the genocidal aggression of the Israeli war machine and its enablers.

We will be donating all revenue raised from this compilation 50/50 to the NGOs 'Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost' and 'Palästina Kampagne'. Both organisations are doing important work, from planning demonstrations to panels, as well as providing legal support for all those affected by the state led censorship and oppression.

- STRAY SIGNALS - Digital Format

Forever Young - The Best Of 1974

- Commune (Roy Harper)
- The Times They Are A-Changin' (Live 14/2/74) (Bob Dylan)
- Feats Don't Fail Me Now (Little Feat)
- The Psychedelic Warlords (Disappear In

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *MOJO* - n° 371 (10/2024).



> Zoom

Forever Young
The Best Of 1974
2024

Smoke) (Hawkwind)
- Dizzy Dizzy (Single Version) (Can)
- The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face (Marcia Griffiths)
- Sea Song (Robert Wyatt)
- $1000 Wedding (Gram Parsons)
- Darkness (L'Immoraliste) (Be-Bop Deluxe)
- Dino (Harmonia)
- Instrumentals Volume 1 (Part 1) (Arthur Russell)
- Something There Is About You (Live 30/1/74) (Bob Dylan & The Band)
- Git In There (Betty Davis)
- I No Get Eye For Back (Fela Kuti)
- Red (King Crimson)



- MOJO MAGAZINE (OCTOBER 2024) CD

↑



> Zoom

Point Me At The Sky
(15 Flashbacks To The Golden Age Of British Psych)
2024

Point Me At The Sky (15 Flashbacks To The Golden Age Of British Psych)

- Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' (Soft Machine)
- You Thought You Had It Made (Rust)
- Brain (The Action)
- A Prologue To A Magic World (Rupert's People)
- Emily Small / The Huge World Thereof) (Picadilly Line)
- Mr. Evasion (The Pretty Things)
- The Otherside (Apple)
- UFO (Neo Maya)
- The Truth Is Plain To See (Freedom)
- Never Care (Eyes Of Blue)
- Postcard (Blossom Toes)
- Freedom For You (The Attack)
- The Devil Rides Out (Icarus)
- A Little Bit Of Shangrila (Our Plastic Dream)
- Tell You A Story (Fire)

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *MOJO* - n° 372 (11/2024).



- MOJO MAGAZINE (NOVEMBER 2024) CD

↑



> Zoom

Middle Earth - The Soundtrack Of London's Legendary Psychedelic Club 1967-1969
2025

Middle Earth - The Soundtrack Of London's Legendary Psychedelic Club 1967-1969

Disc 1
- A Good Friend Of Mine (Family)
- I Should Have Known (Soft Machine)
- Am I Glad To See You (The In Crowd)
- A Kind Of Love-in (Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- Salisbury Plain (Elmer Gantry's Velvet Opera)
- Time Will Show The Wiser (Fairport Convention)
- Grey Man (Paper Blitz Tissue)
- Devil's Grip (The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- I'm Waiting For My Man (The Riot Squad ft David Bowie)
- House Of Love (The Flies)
- She's a Witch (Keith Dangerfield & The Way Ahead)
- Strange Times, Sad Times (Graham Bond)
- Monday Morning (Tales Of Justine)
- Too Much In Love (Denny Laine)
- How Could You Say You're Leaving Me (Piccadilly Line)
- Raga No. 1 (Third Ear Band)
- Images of You and Me (Mabel Greer's

- CHERRY RED RECORDS (CR3JAMBX39) 3xCD

Toyshop)
- Climbing Up The Wall (See Me) (The Action)
- Telegram Tuesday (Blossom Toes)
- Prodigal Son (Eyes Of Blue)
- Canyons Of Your Mind (The Bonzo Doo Dah Dog Band)

Disc 2
- Way Back In The 1960s (The Incredible String Band)
- Feeling Alright? (Traffic)
- Portable People (Ten Years After)
- (The Man From The) Marriage Guidance< And Advice Bureau (The Knack)
- Balloon Burning (The Pretty Things)
- Long Day's Flight (The Electric Prunes)
- Pet Cream Man (Dr. K's Blues Band)
- Mark Time (Eclection)
- Soma (Parts 1 & 2) (Dantalian's Chariot)
- All Day, All Night (Blonde On Blonde)
- Drinking Muddy Water (The Yardbirds)
- Garbage (The Deviants)
- Yellow Brick Road (Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band)
- Sunshine Help Me (Spooky Tooth)
- Black Magic Woman (Fleetwood Mac)
- I Got A Loneliness (Tim Rose)
- I Haven't Done No-One No Harm (Champion Jack Dupree)
- Wings (Tim Buckley)
- Prayer For Peace (Amalgam)
- Up to Earth (The Chris Mcgregor Septet)

Disc 3
- Artificial Energy (The Byrds)
- Uncle Joe, The Ice Cream Man (The Mindbenders)
- Yesterday Today and Tomorrow (Small Faces)
- I'm A Mover (Free)
- Black Snake (Junior's Eyes)
- Evil (Edgar Broughton Band)
- Forget It! (Killing Floor)
- Crown Of Creation (Jefferson Airplane)
- The Week Looked Good On Paper (Pete Brown & His Battered Ornaments)
- On The Road Again (Canned Heat)
- Worried About My Woman (Chicken Shack)
- Crystal Liaison (The Fugs)
- Magic Bus (The Who)
- Baby (The Liverpool Scene)
- Maybelle Rag (John James)
- Sweetness (Yes)
- Love's Immortal Fire - Sleepy
- Sunshine (The Gun)
- Woman Of A Thousand Years (Arcadium)
- Poor Wages (Barclay James Harvest)
- Wang Dang Doodle (Love Sculpture)
- Lost You Too (Steamhammer)
- Floatin' (Vamp)



> Zoom

Pick'n'Mix - 15 tracks from the Rough Trade Vaults - Compiled by Pulp
2025

Pick'n'Mix - 15 tracks from the Rough Trade Vaults - Compiled by Pulp

- Final Day (Young Marble Giants)
- Totally Wired (The Fall)
- I Couldn't Say It To Your Face (Arthur Russell)
- Undertow (Warpaint)
- At Last I Am Free (Robert Wyatt)
- You Made Me Like It (1990s)
- Nag, Nag, Nag (Cabaret Voltaire)
- The Neighbors (Jonathan Richman)
- Blue Thunder (Galaxie 500)
- Women Of The World (Ivor Cutler & Linda Hirst)
- She's The One That Got It (Tav Falco)
- It Must Change (ANOHNI)
- Be Brave (The Strange Boys)
- I Know You Know (Honey Hahs)
- Chelsea Hotel Oral Sex Song (Jeffrey Lewis)

At Last I Am Free est extrait de At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit.

CD distribué avec le magazine anglais *UNCUT* - (11/2025).





- UNCUT (202511) CD



> Zoom

Proto
Soft Machine Live In London
(Earliest Recordings)
(2012)

Soft Machine

- **Da Da Dee** (1)
- **Frenetica**(2)
- **Belsize Parked**(3)
- **Man In A Deaf Corner**(4)
- **Bolivar Blues**(5)
- **Orientasian**(6)
- **Dear Olde Benny Green is A-turning In His Grave** (7)

- Robert Wyatt - drums (1-2-4-5-7) cornet & voice (3) & guitar (6)

- Mike Ratledge - piano (1-2-4-5)
- Hugh Hopper - bass (4-7) & cello (3)
- Brian Hopper - alto sax (3-4) & soprano sax (6)
- Daevid Allen - guitar (7)

Recorded Live in London in the early sixties.

Limited edition (500 copies).

- B13 (B159) LP



> Zoom

Live In London
In The Early Sixties
2019

The Soft Machine

- **Da Da Dee** (1)
- **Frenetica** (2)
- **Belsize Parked** (3)
- **Man In A Deaf Corner** (4)
- **Bolivar Blues** (5)
- **Orientasian** (6)
- **Dear Olde Benny Green is A-turning In His Grave** (7)

Version identique à l'album Proto paru en 2012.

- DBQP (DBQP15) LP



> Zoom 1 2

Sweet Music - Volume 1
2004 (?)

The Soft Machine

- **Contusions**
- **Another Lover Has Gone**
- **Fred The Fish**
- **Love Makes Sweet Music**
- **Feelin Reelin Squeelin**
- **She's Gone**
- **I Should've Known**
- **Soon Soon Soon**
- **I Should've Known**
- **I Should've Known**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Save Yourself/Lullaby Letter**
- **Clarence In Wonderland**
- **Soft Machine Jam**

Tracks 1 & 2:
Acetate copies from original demo disc. Summer 1966, Kevin Ayers sessions for Anim Publishing demos (studio unknown)
- Robert Wyatt - drums, harmony vocals on 2
- Kevin Ayers - rhythm guitar
- Larry Nolan - guitar
- Daevid Allen - bass, vocals

Track 3:
12/1/1966 and 1/1/1967 -Mr Head or Soft Machine (?) sessions, CBS studios, London, for *Fred The Fish/Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'*
NB. *Frederique La Poisson avec frite sur le dos*, is the song's original title and as such was released on the Voiceprint CD Daevid Allen



> Zoom 1 2

The Soft Machine

- Joy Of A Toy
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Lullaby Letter
- Hope For Hapiness
- Save Yourself
- My Mother's Gone To India|Hare Krishna|Time Of The Green Banana| Remember The Name
- Slow Walkin'Talk
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Hapiness (reprise)
- Hope For Hapiness

Tracks 1 & 2:
Mono single releasedin early '69

Tracks 3 & 7:
1968 live and studio recordings by Banana Moon.
- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Patrick Fontaine - bass
- Marc Blanc - drums
- Gilly Smith - vocals on M*y Mother's Gone To India*. Released (and now sadly out of print) by Trio 1963.
- Robert Wyatt - drums, homemade trumpet, backing vocals,
- Daevid Allen - vocals
- Mike Ratledge - piano
- Kevin Ayers - bass

Tracks 4 & 5:
Direct monaural copies from the original master, 1st Gen. 5/2/1967, Soft Machine, Olympic Sound, London.
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals on 4
- Kevin Ayers - bass, guitar on 4, vocals on 5
- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano on 5
- Daevid Allen - guitar, whistle, backing vocals on 5

Tracks 6 & 7:
6/1/1967, Soft Machine, Sound Techniques, London. Produced by Joe Boyd.
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Daevid Allen - guitar
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass

Tracks 8 & 9:
Direct from the Laser disc Psychomania (they also appear on Turns on vol.1 but they are in much better quality here). Vitus Studio, Bussum, Holland, Hoepla TV Filming 9/22/67 (broadcast date is Oct 9th 67.)
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals on 8, backing vocals on 9
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass on 8, guitar on 9

Track 10:
Direct from VHS, Scopitone filmed in France 6/8/67)
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Daevid Allen - guitar, flute (piccolo?)
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass

Tracks 11-13:
Fall' 67 Unknown concert recording.
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals on 11 & 12
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals on 13

Track 14:
1/67-2/67. Origin unknown, musicians unknown, date unknown. This track appears on Hendrix's Sotheby Reels (or Southeby Reels) along with two other purpoted Soft Machine Jams whose authenticity is more than dubious...

- DISTRIBUTED BY THE LAUGHING MADCAPS - CD

Sweet Music - Volume 2
2004 (?)

- Clarence In Wonderland
- You Don't Remember
- Esther's Nose Job|10:30 Returns To Bedroom

Legend Music (KZLM 1505-1) in France in 1992.

Tracks 4-6:
Oops versions of the 1968 released tracks.

Track 8:
Jimi Hendrix and Robert Wyatt recorded in October 1968 at TGG in Hollywood, Cal. Released on Wyatts Flotsam Jetsam.
- Robert Wyatt - vocals, piano, organ, drums
- Jimi Hendrix - bass

Tracks 9-14:
Live at Post Merry Weather pavillon (Columbia, MD) August 16,1968 - 8:30 PM.
Andy Summers was supposed to be in the band at this time. He wasn' there that night, though!
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals

- DISTRIBUTED BY THE LAUGHING MADCAPS - CD



> Zoom 1 2

Sweet Music - Volume 3
2004 (?)

The Soft Machine

- Moon In June
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Moon In June
- Medley: Pigling Band|Facelift|Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Moon In June
- Eammon Andrews
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear (excerpt)

Track 1:
Recorded in October and November 1968 at TGG in Hollywood and the Record Plant in NYC and overdubbed in approximately April 1969. Released as a bonus track on *Backwards* (Cuneiform-rune 170)
- Robert Wyatt - vocals, drums, organ, piano, electric piano, flexitones and on second half:
- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Track 2:
Studio out-take from March 1969
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ, flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax
- Brian Hopper - tenor sax

Track 3:
Recorded on August 8, 1969 live at the 9th National Jazz & Blues Festival at Plumton Rarecourse, in Lewes, England.
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Brian Hopper - tenor sax

Tracks 4 & 5:
Supposedly on October 1969 recording. The origin is unknown (possibly the septet or maybe the sextet).

Tracks 6 & 7:
Recorded on October 28, 1969, live at the Actuel Festival in Amougies (Belgium).
On track 6:
- Robert Wyatt - vocals, drums
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
On track 7:
- Marc Charig, Elton Dean, Lyn Dobson, & Nick Evans - horns

Track8:
Live in Europe 1 Studios (radio broadcast) Paris November 28, 1969. Same line-up.



> Zoom 1 2

Middle Earth
1999

Soft Machine

- Love Makes Sweet Music
- Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'
- I Should've Known
- We Know What You Mean
- I Should've Known
- Clarence In Wonderland
- We Know What You Mean
- Hope For Happiness
- Certain Kind
- She's Gone
- I Should've Known
- Save Yourself|Lullabye Letter
- Hope For Happiness

- DISTRIBUTED BY THE
  LAUGHING MADCAPS - CD

↑

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocal
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Daevid Allen - guitar

Tracks 1-3:
  Southeby Reel 1967

Tracks 4 & 5:
  European TV 1967

Tracks 6-9:
  BBCTop Gear Dec.5 1967

Tracks 10 & 11:
  London Demo

Tracks 12 & 13:
  Middle Earth Club London 1967.

- NO LABEL - CD

↑



> Zoom

Live At Clark University
1999

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

- Jimi Hendrix|Pre-Concert Interview
- Fire
- Red House
- Foxey Lady
- Purple Haze
- Wild Thing
- Noel Redding|Post-Concert Interview
- Mitch Mitchell|Post-Concert Interview
- Jimi Hendrix|Post-Concert Interview

Beyond the concert performances, *Live At Clark University* provides a further treat in the form of extended interviews with Jimi, Mitch, and Noel. Seven minutes into Jimi's interview, one can hear the opening strains of the second set by the Soft Machine.

Live At Clark University was recorded on March 15, 1968 in the Atwood Hall at Clark University (Worcester, Massachusetts).

- DAGGER RECORDS
  (088 12033-2) CD

↑



> Zoom 1 2 3

Live 1967'-69
2021

Soft Machine

Disc 1
CE SOIR ON DANSE - AUGUST 25TH 1968 ORTF
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- Hope For Happiness

Disc 2
LE BATACLAN, PARIS FRANCE, June 25th 1969 ORTF
- Introduction
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Improvisation
- Esther's Nose Job
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap (Reprise)

CD1
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass guitar, backing vocals

CD2
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Recordings of two French radio broadcasts featuring Soft Machine, dating back to 1967 and '69 respectively.

- LONDON CALLING
  (LC2CD0005083) 2xCD

↑



> Zoom

Ce Soir On Danse
2021

Soft Machine

- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Lullaby Letter
- Hope For Happiness

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Kevin Ayers - bass guitar, backing vocals

Recorded in October 1967 for Guy Beart's Bienvenue Show (ORTF) broadcast on August 25th, 1968.

Limited hand-numbered white vinyl 10" + insert.

- LONDON CALLING (LCLPC5083A) LP



> Zoom

Voodoo Jam - Vol. 4
1967-1970 Studio And Live Jams
(?)

Jimi Hendrix Experience

- Tomorrow Never Knows
- Backwards Guitar Experiment
- Three Little Bears Jam
- Robert Wyatt Jam No. 2
- Jungle Jam
- This Flyer
- Electric Indians
- Cherokee Mist
- New Rising Sun/Villanova Junction Jam
- Izabella (piano session)
- Jam Messenger
- Easy Blues
- Funky Jam
- Ain't Too Proud To Beg
- Star Spangled Banner

Audio CD mini LP sleeve.

- EYE OF THE STORE - CD



> Zoom

I Miti Del Rock Live
Live In London & Amsterdam 69
1993

Soft Machine

- Moon In June (Live In London 10/6/1969)
- Thenthirty Returns To The Bedroom (Live in Amsterdam 2/2/1969)
- Esther's Nosejob (Live in London 10/6/1969)
- Slightly All The Time (Live in London 10/6/1969)

Production italienne de la série *I miti del rock live* (Les mythes du rock Live).

- FABBRI EDITORI (MRL 083) - CD



> Zoom

The ORTF Archives:
Broadcasts And Live

Soft Machine

- I Should've Known
- We Know What You Mean
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- Hope For Happiness
- Esther's Nose Job
- Eamonn Andrews
- Hibou, Anemone and Bear
- Pigling Bland
- Facelift
- Hibou, Anemone and Bear

Bonus tracks:
- Contusions (demo 1966)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards on 1-13, 16
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass, vocals on 1-7, 14-15
- Hugh Hopper - bass on 8-13, 16
- Daevid Allen - guitar, flute, vocals on 1, 14-15
- Elton Dean - saxophone on 11-13
- Lyn Dobson - saxophone on 11-13
- Mark Charig - cornet on 11-13
- Nick Evans: trombone on 11-13
- Larry Nowlin: guitar on 14-15
- Brian Hopper: saxophone on 16

Recordings 1967-1969
(?)

- Another Lover Has Gone (demo 1966)
- Hibou, Anemone and Bear (studio outtake 1969)

Track 1 : ORTF TV studios, Paris, France, June 8, 1967.

Track 2 : Palais des Sports, Paris, France, November 17-18, 1967.

Tracks 3 to 7 : ORTF TV studios, Paris, France, August 25, 1968.

Track 8 : Ronnie Scott's, London, England, April 25 1969.

Track 9 & 10 : Théâtre National, Strasbourg, France, December 1, 1969.

Tracks 11 to 13 : ORTF TV Studios, Paris, France, December 7, 1969.

All Performances originally broadcasted by ORTF

- EYE OF THE STORM (EOS 500) CD



> Zoom

Live At The Bataclan
(2021)

Soft Machine

- Introduction
- Facelift
- Moon in June
- Clarence in Wonderland
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Hibou Anemone & Bear
- Improvisation
- Esther's Nose Job
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap (Reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Live at Le Bataclan, Paris 25th June 1969.

Turquoise Vinyl.
Numbered Housed Gatefold Sleeve.

- LONDON CALLING (LC2LPC5083B) 2xLP



> Zoom

1969-12-08
Theater De La Goutte Paris France
(?)

Soft Machine

- Facelift
- Eamonn Andrews
- Backwards
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Pig
- Out-Bloody-Rageous (reprise)
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- A Door Opens And Closes

Il s'agit en réalité du concert donné au Théâtre de la Musique à Paris le 2 mars 1970.

- GALAXY RECORDS (T-417) - CD



> Zoom

Live Archives 1969
2020

Soft Machine

Disc 1
FESTIVAL ACTUEL, AMOUGIES, BELGIUM 1969
- Moon In June
- Facelift
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap / Noisette / Backwords / Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Esther's Nosejob (inc. Pigling Bland)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear

Disc 2
LYCEUM, LONDON, U.K. 1969
- Moon In June
- Facelift
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap / Noisette / Backwords / Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Esther's Nosejob

Disc 1 : Live At Festival Actuel - Amougies, Belgium - October 28th 1969

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Lovery organ, Hohner pianet
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Nick Evans - trombone

Disc 2 : Live At The Lyceum, London, UK, October 5th 1969

- Improvisation / Facelift (Reprise)
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- We Did It Again
- Noisette (Reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Lovery organ, Hohner pianet
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- GALAXY (GX136A/B) 2x CD



> Zoom

The Same Night
2007

Soft Machine

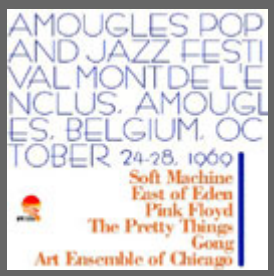
Disc 1
LE BATACLAN - PARIS
JUNE 25, 1969
- Moon In June Introduction
- Facelift
- Moon In June
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear

Disc 2
ROYAL ALBERT HALL - LONDON
FEBRUARY 18, 1969
- A Concise British Alphabet (Pt. 2)
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction (Pt. 2)
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Belle Clanging
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom
LYCEUM THEATRE - LONDON
OCTOBER 5, 1969
- Moon In June
- Facelift
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Esther's Nosejob
- Facelift (Reprise)
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- We Did It Again
- Noisette (Reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- AYY (216/217CD) CD



> Zoom

Amougies Pop And Jazz Festival Mont De l'Enclus. Belgium,
October 24-28 1969
(?)

Soft Machine

- Moon In June (Soft Machine) / Rondo (The Nice)
- Confusion (East of Eden)
- Green Is The Colour/Careful With That Axe, Eugene (Pink Floyd)
- Blow Your Mind (The Pretty Things)
- Rational Anthem / ? - ? / ? - ? (Gong)
- Jig-A-Jig (East Of Eden)
- ? (Art Ensemble of Chicago)
- ? - ?
- Eamon Andrews (Soft Machine)
- Alexander (The Pretty Things)
- ? (The Pretty Things)
- Bathers (East Of Eden)
- Hibou, Anemone and Bear (Soft Machine)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- ELASTIC ROCK (ER125) Digital Format

Soft Machine



> Zoom

John Peel's Top Gear '67 & '69
2012

John Peel's Top Gear Show 1967
- Clarence In Wonderland
- We Know What You Mean
- A Certain Kind
- Hope For Happiness
- Strangest Scene

John Peel's Top Gear Show 1969
- Facelift/Mousetrap/Noisette/ Backwards
- Moon In June

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric & flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass & alto saxophone
- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar & bass - Brian Hopper - soprano sax

Side one ; recorded for John Peel's Top Gear Show 05/12/1967 (with Kevin Ayers).

Side two : recorded for John Peel's Top Gear Show 10/06/1969 (with Hugh and Brian Hopper).

Limited edition (500 copies).

- B13 (B171) LP



> Zoom

Live At Top Gear BBC,
10 June 1969
2021

Soft Machine

- Moon In June
- Esther'S Nose Job
- Slightly All The Time

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar

Recorded For John Peels Top Gear / 10.06.1969

- NO KIDDING (NK202106) LP



> Zoom

Top Gear UK
2010

Soft Machine

- Clarence In The Wonderland
- We Know What You Mean
- Certain Kind
- Hope For Happiness
- Strangest Scene
- Facelift/Mousetrap/Noisette/ Backwards/Moustrap Reprise
- The Moon In June

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano, flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax
- Brian Hopper - soprano sax

1-5 : Recorded For John Peels Top Gear / 05.12.1967
6 & 7: Recorded For John Peels Top Gear / 10.06.1969

- KINSHIP RECORDS (KIN001) LP



> Zoom

Volume One And Volume Two
1999

The Soft Machine

- Hope For Happiness
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (reprise)
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Box 25/4 Lid
- Pataphysical Introduction-Pt. I
- A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. I
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- A Concise British Alphabet-Pt. II

- Réédition pirate russe des deux premiers albums de Soft Machine : Volume One et Volume Two.

- ARSNOVA (AN99-0414) CD

- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green?**
- **Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. II**
- **Out Of Tunes**
- **As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**
- **A Door Opens And Closes**
- **10:30 Returns To The Bedroom**



> Zoom

Top Gear Live In London
1967-1969
2019

The Soft Machine

- **Clarence In Wonderland**
- **We Know What You Mean**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Hope For Happiness**
- **Strangest Scene**
- **Facelift**
- **Mousetrap**
- **Noisette**
- **Backwards**
- **Moon In June**

Nouvelle édition *non-officielle* des concerts enregistrés pour l'émission Top Gear de john Peel.

- DBQP (DBQP25) LP



> Zoom

Moon In June Live 1969
2005

Soft Machine

- **Moon In June**
- **Facelift**
- **Eammon Andrews**
- **Facelift**
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear**
- **Moon In June**

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Tracks 1-3:
Recorded at "Actue Festival, Amougies, Belgium-October 28,1969.

Tracks 4-6:
Unknown October 1969 Show?

Track 7:
Recorded August 8, 1969 at Plumpton cecourse, Lewes, England. Soft Machine suffered from a loss of power during their set. So *Moon In June* was the only song they played that day.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Live 1969 Part 1

Soft Machine

- **Hulloder**
- **Dada Was Here**
- **Thank You Pierrot Lunaire**
- **Have You Ever Bean Green**
- **Pataphysical Introduction Part II**
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear**
- **Pig**
- **Orange Skin Food**
- **A Door Opens And Closes**
- **10-30 Returns To The Bedroom**
- **Moon In June (Robert Wyatt Demo)**

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Tracks 1-10:
Recorded live at Paradiso, Amsterdam, 29/3/1969.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

(Canterbury Anthology - Vol. 5)
2005



> Zoom

Live 1969 Part 2
(Canterbury Anthology - Vol. 6)
2005

Soft Machine

- Moon In June (Actuel Festival, Belgium 10-28-69)
- Facelift (Actuel Festival, Belgium 10-28-69)
- Eammon Andrews (Actuel Festival, Belgium 10-28-69)
- Pigling Band (October 1969)
- Facelift (October 1969)
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear (October 1969)
- Moon In June (Plumpton 8-8-69)
- Moon In June (BBC Top Gear 6-10-69)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Just For Old Times Sake
1996

Kevin Ayers

- The Hat Song
- Stop This Train
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Why Are We Sleeping
- Derby Day
- Interview
- We Did It Again
- Lunatic's Lament
- Lady Rachel
- Stop This Train
- Another Whimsical Song
- O! Wot A Dream
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- Interview
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- (announcement)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass, vocals
- Lyn Dobson - flute
- David Bedford - piano
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ

Tracks 1-4:
BBC Top Gear - 10 février 1970.

- GOLD STANDERD (GS-96004) CD



> Zoom

Piknik Radio Broadcast 1970
(?)

Kevin Ayers And The Whole Wide World

-- Interview Kevin Ayers
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- We Did It Again
- Hat Song
- Audience
- If You've Got Money
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine ~ Colores Para Dolores
- Why Are We Sleeping
- Lady Rachel

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- Mike Oldfield - bass
- David Bedford - piano, organ
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax, bird whistle, flute
- Bridget St.John - vocals

Live At Driebergen, Gemeendecentrum, The Netherlands July 30, 1970

- DEAFMUSIC AND LONETAPES PRODUCTION - CD
- HIGHLAND PROJECT (HP164) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

Kevin Ayers And The Whole Wide World

-- Interview Kevin Ayers
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish



> Zoom



> Zoom

Piknik Broadcast 30th July 1970
2023

- We Did It Again
- Hat Song
- Audience
- If You've Got Money
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine ~ Colores Para Dolores
- Why Are We Sleeping
- Lady Rachel

Réédition du CD publié sur le label DEAFMUSIC AND LONETAPES PRODUCTION.

A noter qu'il existe 2 versions du nom du groupe :
KEVIN **AYERS** AND THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD
et
KEVIN **AYRES** AND THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD.

- FM CONCERTS (FMGZ189CD) CD

↑



> Zoom 1 2 3

Paris 1970
2021

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards
- Mousetrap [reprise]
- Out-Bloody-Rageous

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June [organ solo]
- 18-8 Theme
- Vocal improv.
- Esther's Nose Job

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Lowrey organ, Hohner pianet
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, flute, voice, harmonica

Soft Machine, live from the Théâtre de la Musique, Paris on March 2nd 1970.

- LONDON CALLING (LC2CD5084) 2xCD

↑



> Zoom

Théâtre De La Musique, Paris, 1970
2016

Soft Machine

- Facelift
- Vocal improv
- Esther's Nose Job
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- Backwards/Mousetrap [reprise]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, Hohner pianet
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, flute, harmonica, voice

Recorded from TV broadcast.

- ANÖKUMENA (11) K7

↑

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Eamonn Andrews
- Mousetrap
- Noisette
- Backwards

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass



> Zoom

Complete Live In Paris 1970
2021

- Mousetrap [reprise]
- Out-Bloody-Rageous

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June [inc. organ solo]
- 18-8 Theme
- Vocal improvisation
- Esther's Nose Job

- Elton Dean - saxophones
- Lyn Dobson - soprano saxophone, harmonica, flute, voice.

Soft Machine, live from the Théâtre de la Musique, Paris on March 2nd 1970.

- GALAXY (GX143A/B) 2xCD



> Zoom

Joyful Lunacy
2016

Syd Barrett

Disc 1
THE JOHN PEEL 'TOP GEAR' SHOW. BBC RADIO ONE BBC MAIDA VALE 4 STUDIO, MAIDA VALE, LONDON RECORDED: FEBRUARY 24, 1970 TRANSMITTED: MARCH 14, 1970. + MAY 30, 1970 [THE PEEL SESSIONS. STRANGE FRUIT CASSETTE. 1989]
- Gigolo Aunt
- Terrapin
- Baby Lemonade
- Effervescing Elephant
- Two Of A Kind

PETER JENNER EMI REFERENCE REEL 6604Z STUDIO 3. EMI STUDIOS, ABBEY ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD. LONDON COMPILED: AUGUST 13, 1974 [FIRST GENERATION PHILIPS C120 CASSETTE. 1975]
- Milky Way [Take 5. June 7, 1970]
- Wouldn't You Miss Me (Dark Globe) [Take 1. July 26, 1969]
- Silas Lang [Take 1. May 6, 1968]
- Opel [Take 9. April 11, 1969]
- Untitled (Words) [Take 1. July 21, 1970]
- Birdy Hop [Take 1. June 7, 1970]
- Silas Lang (Swan Lee) [Take 5. May 21/28, June 8/20/27, 1968]
- Scream Thy Last Scream [Take 4. August 7, 1967]
- Vegetable Man [Unknown Take. October 9-12, 1967]

PETER JENNER EMI REFERENCE REEL 5896-8T STUDIO 3. EMI STUDIOS, ABBEY ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD. LONDON RECORDED: AUGUST 12, 1974 COMPILED: AUGUST 13, 1974 [FIRST GENERATION PHILIPS C120 CASSETTE. 1975]
- Boogie #1
- Boogie #2
- Boogie #3
- If You Go #1
- Ballad (Unfinished)
- Chooka-Chooka Chug Chug
- If You Go #2
- Untitled
- Slow Boogie
- John Lee Hooker
- Fast Boogie
- Silas Lang [Take 1. May 6 /13, 1968. RM1]

JOHN PEEL 'TOP GEAR' SHOW. BBC RADIO ONE BBC MAIDA VALE 4 STUDIO, MAIDA VALE, LONDON RECORDED: FEBRUARY 24, 1970 [TOP OF THE POPS ? 280/WEEK 14. BBC TRANSCRIPTION SERVICE LP]
- Brian Matthew Introduction
- Gigolo Aunt
- Effervescing Elephant
- Terrapin

Released on Syd Barrett - The Peel Sessions (Strange Fruit).

Disc 2
EXTRAVAGANZA '70 MUSIC AND FASHION FESTIVAL EXHIBITION HALL, OLYMPIA, KENSINGTON, LONDON RECORDED LIVE: JUNE 6, 1970 [SPEED CORRECTED RESTORATION]
- Terrapin
- Gigolo Aunt
- Effervescing Elephant
- Octopus

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Syd Barrett - guitar, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - organ, piano on *Love You*
- Hugh Hopper - bass

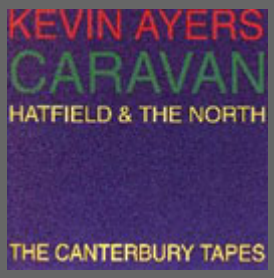
Edition limitée et numérotée.

- SIGMA (SIGMA169) 4xCD

THE MALCOLM JONES TAPE COMPILED: EARLY 1980S. [SECOND GENERATION CASSETTE. SOURCE #1]
- Love You [Take 1. April 11, 1969]
- Love You [Take 2. April 11, 1969]
- Long Gone [Take 1. July 26, 1969]
- Lanky (Part 2) [Take 1. May 14, 1968]
- Clowns And Jugglers [Take 1. July 20, 1968]
- Clowns And Jugglers [Take 3. April 25/ May 3, 1969]
- Opel [Take 9. April 11, 1969]
- Silas Lang (Swan Lee) [Take 1. June 8/July 20, 1968]
- Swan Lee [Take 5. April 10, 1969]
- Untitled Instrumental [Unknown Take. Unknown Date]
Second Generation Cassette. Source #2
- Love You [Take 1. April 11, 1969]
- Love You [Take 2. April 11, 1969]
- Long Gone [Take 1. July 26, 1969]
- Lanky (Part 2) [Take 1. May 14, 1968]
- Clowns And Jugglers [Take 1. July 20, 1968]
- Octopus [Take 11. June 12, 1969]
- Clowns And Jugglers [Take 3. April 25/ May 3, 1969]
- Opel [Take 9. April 11, 1969]
- Swan Lee [Take 1. June 8/July 20, 1968]
- Swan Lee [Take 5. April 10, 1969]
- Untitled Instrumental [Unknown Take. Unknown Date]
MALCOLM JONES ROUGH MIXES. EMI REEL 76037Z STUDIO 3. EMI STUDIOS, ABBEY ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD. LONDON COMPILED: AUGUST 18, 1987 [FIRST GENERATION CASSETTE. 1987]
- Wouldn't You Miss Me [Take 1. July 26, 1969]
- Swan Lee (Silas Lang) [Take 5. May 28, June 8, 1968, April 10, 1969]
- Scream Thy Last Scream [Take 4. August 7, 1967]
- Vegetable Man [Unknown Take. October 9-12, 1967]
- She Took A Long Cold Look At Me [Take 5. July 26, 1969]

Disc 3
BOB HARRIS 'SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES'. BBC RADIO 1. STUDIO S1, BBC TRANSCRIPTION SERVICE, KENSINGTON HOUSE, SHEPHERD'S BUSH LONDON RECORDED: FEBRUARY 16, 1971 TRANSMITTED: MARCH 1, 1971 [SPEED CORRECTED RESTORATION]
- Baby Lemonade
- Dominoes
- Love Song
PHIL SMEE / BRIAN HOGG 'OPEL' REMIXES ROOM 77A, EMI STUDIOS, ABBEY ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD. LONDON COMPILED: AUGUST 17, 1988 [SECOND GENERATION ABBEY ROAD REAL TIME CASSETTE COPY. 1988]
- Opel [Take 9. April 11, 1969]
- Clowns And Jugglers [Take 2. July 20, 1968, April 10. 1969.
Take 3. April 25, 1969, May, 3, 1969]
- Swan Lee (Silas Lang) [Take 5. May 28, June 8, 1968, April 10, 1969]
- Untitled (Words) [Take 1. July 21, 1970]
- Birdy Hop [Take 1. June 7, 1970]
- Rats [Take 1. June 7, 1970]
- Wined And Dined [Take 1. June 7, 1970]
- Wined And Dined [Take 1. June 7, 1970]
- Milky Way [Take 5. June 7, 1970]
- Golden Hair [Remake Take 6. June 12, 1969]
- Golden Hair [Remake Take 6. June 12, 1969. More Echo]
- Lanky (Part One) [Take 1. May 14, 1968]
- Golden Hair [Take 1. May 14, 1968]
- Golden Hair [Take 1. May 14, 1968]
- Dolly Rocker [Take 1. July 14, 1970]
- Let's Split [Takes 1/2. July 14, 1970]
- Wouldn't You Miss Me (Dark Globe) [Take 1. July 26, 1969]
BOB HARRIS SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES. BBC RADIO 1. STUDIO S1, BBC TRANSCRIPTION SERVICE, KENSINGTON HOUSE, SHEPHERD'S BUSH. LONDON RECORDED: FEBRUARY 16, 1971 TRANSMITTED: MARCH 1, 1971 [ALTERNATE SOURCE]
- Love Song

Disc 4
EMI STUDIOS, ABBEY ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD. LONDON, 24TH NOVEMBER 1992 [THE 'CRAZY DIAMOND' REMIXES]
- Baby Lemonade [Take 1. February 26, 1970]
- Baby Lemonade [Take 1. February 26, 1970. Edit Section For End]
- Maisie [Take 1. February 26, 1970]
- Maisie [Take 2. February 26, 1970]
- Gigolo Aunt [Take 9. February 27, 1970]
- Waving My Arms In The Air / I Never Lied To You [Take 1. April 2, 1970]
- It Is Obvious [Take 1. July 22, 1970]
- It Is Obvious [Take 2. July 22, 1970]
- It Is Obvious [Take 3. July 22, 1970]
- It Is Obvious [Take 5. July 22, 1970]
- Love Song [Take 1. July 14, 1970]
- Dominoes [Take 1. July 14, 1970]
- Dominoes [Take 2. July 14, 1970]
- Clowns And Jugglers (Octopus) [Take 1. July 20, 1968]
- Late Night [Take 2. May 21, 1968]
- Golden Hair [Take 2. May 14/28, 1968. Renumbered Take 5. June 8/20/27, July 20, 1968]
- Octopus [Take 1. June 12, 1969]
- Octopus [Take 2. June 12, 1969]
- Love You [Take 1. April 11, 1969]
- Love You [Take 3. April 11, 1969]
- It's No Good Trying [Take 3. April 11, 1969]



> Zoom

The Canterbury Tapes
1994

Kevin Ayers/Caravan/ Hatfield & The North

Disc 1
KEVIN AYERS
- M16
- There Goes Johnny
- Something In Between
- Irene Good Night
HATFIELD & THE NORTH
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath|Calyx
- Let's Eat (Real Soon)
- Do The Lethargy Shuffle (yea yea)| Your Majesty is Like a Cream Donut
- Oh, What A Lonely Lifetime
- Shaving Is Boring|Licks For The Ladies
- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut|Going Up to People and Tinkling|Calyx|Your Majesty Is Like a Cream Donut (Loud)

Disc 2
CARAVAN
- Hello Hello
- If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You
- As I Feel I Die
- Love Song Without Flute
- Love To Love You
- In The Land Of Grey And Pink
- Memory Lain, Hugh
- L'auberge Du Sanglier (A Hunting We Shall Go/Backwards)
KEVIN AYERS
- Shooting At The Moon
- Gemini Child
- Derby Day
- Another Whimsical Song
- The Hat Song
- I'm Gonna Cry For You (Trying Hard To Know)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

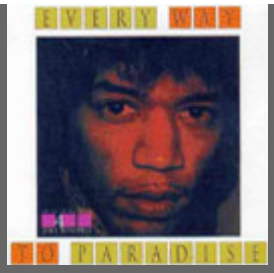
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, bass, vocals
- Lyn Dobson - flute
- David Bedford - piano
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ

Top Gear - 10 février 1970.

- OH BOY (2-9031) 2xCD

Jimi Hendrix

- The Thing I Used To Do
- Untitled Jam
- Ain't Too Proud To Beg



Every Way To Paradise - Vol. IV
(?)

- Shame Shame Shame1
- Jungle Jam
- Jazz Jimi Jazz
- Little One (Take One)
- Little One (Take Two)
- **Demo Outtake (With Robert Wyatt)**
- Gloomy Monday (Takes 1 & 2)



> Zoom

Colours Of The Day
1994

Kevin Ayers And The Whole Wide World

- **Oyster And the Flying Fish**
- **Lady Rachel**
- **We Did It Again**
- **Hat Song**
- **Clarence In Wonderland**
- **Rheinhardt And Geraldine|Colores Para Dolores**
- **Why Are We Sleeping**
- **Garden Of Love**
- Gemini Child
- Trying Hard To Know
- **Hat Song**

Tracks 1-6:
Gemeendecentrum, Drijbergen, Hollande - 30 juillet 1970
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, vocals
- David Bedford - keyboards
- Lol Coxhill - saxos ,vocals
- Mike Oldfield - bass, guitar
- Bridget St. John - vocals on *Oyster and the Flying Fish*
- Unidentified audience member - flute, vocals on *Rheinhardt And Geraldine/Colores* and *Para Dolores*

Track 8:
Queen Elizabeth Hall, Londres 26 septembre 1970
- Robert Wyatt - drums, percussion
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, vocals
- David Bedford - keyboards
- Lol Coxhill - saxos
- Mike Oldfield - bass
- The London Sinfonietta

Version complète jouée dans *Garden Of Love*.

Track 11:
Top Gear - 10 février 1970
(même formation)

- NO LABEL (KA-17-94-01) CD



> Zoom

Southeby Reel
(?)

Soft Machine/Jimi Hendrix

- **Soft Machine Jam 1**
- Castles Made Of Sand
- Spanish Castle Magic
- Instrumental Jam 1
- Have You Ever Been (Electric Ladyland) (inst)
- Wait Until Tomorrow
- Instrumental Jam 2
- Instrumental Jam 3
- One Rainy Wish
- **Soft Machine Jam 2**
- **Soft Machine Jam 3**
- She's So Fine
- Bold As Love
- Belly Button Window
- Instrumental Jam 4

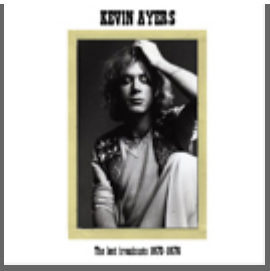
Soft Machine and Jimi Hendrix recorded in the studio 1967/68.

La présence de Soft Machine (et donc de Robert Wyatt) sur cet album est très controversée.

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
31 MARCH 1970 TAVERNE DE L'OLYMPIA, PARIS, FRANCE. RECORDED AND FILMED FOR "POP 2"

- Robert Wyatt - drums



> Zoom

The Lost Broadcats 1970-1976
(2013 ?)

TV PROGRAM
- Eleonor's Cake Which Ate Her
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Improvisation
- Clarence Reprise
- Why Are We Sleeping
20 MAY 1970 ALAN BLACK SHOW, BBC STUDIOS, LONDON
- Rheinhardt And Geraldine (cut)
31 JANUARY 1971 BBC RADIO ONE IN CONCERT BRIDGET ST JOHN SESSION WITH GUEST KEVIN AYERS
- Jolie Madame
- The Spider And The Fly
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
20 MARCH 1972 "MUSIC ALIVE", EDUCATION TV STUDIOS, LONDON
- Hymn
- Collective Improvisation
04 APRIL 1972 "OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST" TV SESSION, BBC STUDIOS, LONDON
- May I
- Oh My

Disc 2
20 SEPTEMBER 1972 BBC IN CONCERT, RECORDED AT HAMPSTEAD THEATRE, LONDON. EXTRACT FROM THE "BANANA FOLLIES" SHOW
- Marlene
14 DECEMBER 1972 FACULTE DE NANTERRE, FRANCE RECORDED FOR "ROCKENSTOCK"* AND "POP 2"# TV PROGRAMS
- Stranger In Blue Suede shoes* (soundcheck, with fake applause at the beginning)
- Why Are We Sleeping* (soundcheck)
- Why Are We Sleeping# (in concert - with the guitar solo at the end taken from another unidentified song)
18 MAY 1973 OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST TV SESSION, BBC STUDIOS, LONDON
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- Oh What A Dream
9 JULY 1974 JOHN PEEL SHOW, BBC STUDIOS, LONDON
- Thank You Very Much
AUGUST 1974 LONDON CAPITOL RADIO
- Thank You Very Much
- Piano Duet With Brian
- Lady Rachel
- Goodnite

Disc 3
24 FEBRUARY 1975 SALLE WAGRAM, PARIS. FRANCE INTER RADIO BROADCAST
- La Ville De Paris
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- The Hat Song
- Interview
- The Confessions Of Doctor Dream (a) Invitation b) The one chance dance c) Doctor Dream theme)
19 AUGUST 1976 POSTAULA, BREMEN, WEST GERMANY. RADIO BREMEN BROADCAST
- May I ?
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- Observations
- The Lady Rachel
- Blue
- Mr Cool

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- David Bedford- keyboards
- Lol Coxhill - sax

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Guest Experience
(?)

Jimi Hendrix

- Rock And Roll Band
- Yes I Need Someone
- The Clown
- Morning Glory
- Mr Guy Fawkes
- Captive In The Sun
- Let Me Stay
- Someone Is Sure To (Want You)
- So Much
- Ex Art Student
- Doriella Du Fontaine
- The Everlasting First
- Slow Walking Talk
- Live And Let Die

The Clown est extrait de Sun Rise.

- WESTWOOD ONE (77) CD



> Zoom

TTG Studios October 1968
(?)

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

Disc 1 - 16 or 17 October 1968
- (JS 10) Jam #5 (12 Bar in E)
- (JS 11) Jam #6 in E
- (JS 12) I Just Wanna Make Love To You
- (JS 6) Jam #1 - 12 Bar Blues In D
- (JS 7) Jam #2 in D
- (JS 8) Jam #3
- Sunshine Of Your Love
- (JS 9) Jam #4 in D
- Sunshine Of Your Love

Disc 2 - October 1968
- (JS 31) Jam #4
- (JS2) Isabella (18 Oct.)
- (JS1) Jam
- (JS 4) Jam
- Calling All Devil's Children (21 Oct.)
- Calling All Devil's Children (21 Oct.)
- Calling All Devil's Children (21 Oct.)
- (JS 14) (21 Oct.)
- Hear My Freedom (21 Oct.)
- Electric Church (21 Oct.)
- Look Over Yonder (22 Oct.)
- The New Rising Sun (23 Oct.)

Disc 3 - October 1968
- Peace In Mississippi (24 Oct.)
- Slow Walkin' Talk (25 Oct.)
- (JS 28) Jam #1 (27 Oct.?)
- **(JS 29) Jam #2 (27 Oct.?)**
- **(JS 30) Jam #3 (27 Oct.?)**
- **Everything's Gonna Be Alright**
- Lover Man (Intro) (29 Oct.)
- Lover Man (29 Oct.)
- Lover Man (29 Oct.)
- Session Thing (29 Oct.)

Disc 4 - October 1968
- Gloria (29 Oct.)
- Red House (29 Oct.)
- Let Me Stay
- Magic Carpet
- Morning Glory
- Mr. Guy Fawkes
- Yes I Need Someone
- Someone Is Sure To (Want You)
- The Clown
- Captive In The Sun

Alternate Mixes
- Look Over Yonder (Rainbow Bridge LP Mix)
- Gloria (The Jimi Hendrix Experience LP Boxset Mix)
- Red House (:Blues CD Mix)
- Gloria (Unedited)

DISC 3 - Jam #2 + Jam #3 + Everything Gonna Be Alright :
- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Jimi hendrix - guitar
- Zoot Money - piano
- Andy Summers - bass

All tracks recorded at Studio B, TTG Studios, 1441 N. McCadden Street, Hollywood, California, USA.

- NO LABEL (ATM180 - ATM181 - ATM182 - ATM183) 4xCD



> Zoom

Old Machine
1988

Soft Machine

- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White
- King And Queens
- Teeth
- LBO
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom (Esther's Nose Job)
- Facelift
- Love Makes Sweet Music
- Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Mike Ratledge - piano, organ, keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass on 1-8
- Elton Dean - sax, electric piano on 1-8
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocal on 9-10
- David Allen - guitar on 9-10

Tracks 1-8:
Bremen, 23 mars 1971

Tracks 9 & 10:
Debut single 1967

Les 8 premiers titres sont présents sur *Virtually.*



> Zoom

Col Ballroom
1983 (?)

Soft Machine

- Lullaby Letter|Priscilla|Lullaby Letter (reprise)
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Moon In June
- Esthers Nose Job
- Excerpt ? (edit)
- New York City Radio Improv (1)
- New York City Radio Improv (2)

- COLLECTOR RECORD LTD - LP & CD

1968 August 11 - Col Ballroom, Davenport, Iowa, Usa,

These recordings are presented with these comments :
Improv (1) is an impro on the theme *We Did It Again*.
Improv (2) is certainly not live. Mislabeled thus. This is actually an early version of *The Moon In June*, which is itself based on an early unreleased demo song from 67 called *That Is How I Love You*.
From the vynil pops and the barely audible lyrics, I'd guess this is from an untouched rip of the acetate version. Wyatt plays all instruments on the first part [NY session], the second part attached is from a London session with the whole band.

NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Queen Of The Moon
2001

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness
- Clarence In Wonderland
- You Don't Remember
- Organ solo|Collective Improvisation
- 10.30 Returns To Bedroom (inc. "Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle")
- We Know What You Mean
- Hope For Happiness
- Certain Kind
- I Should've Known

Disc 2
- Clarence In Wonderland
- We Know What You Mean
- Untitled Instrumental
- Hope For Happiness
- Organ Solo
- That's How Much I Need You Now
- I Should've Known
- Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Lullabye Letter

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals
guitar on *You don't Remember* (?)

Recorded at:

Disc 1 / 1-7:
Col Ballroom, Davenport, Iowa, USA, 11 août 1968

Disc 1 / 8-10:
Aeolian Hall, BBC Top Gear Recording, 5 déc. 1967

Disc 1 / 11:
De Lane Lea, UK, Apr.1967

Disc 2 / 1-5:
Middle Earth, London, 10 novembre 1967

Disc 2 / 6-10:
Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Holland, 10 déc. 1967.

- PEACE FROG (PF-126D) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3

Soft Machine '69

Soft Machine

- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green
- Pataphysical Introduction
- As Long As She Perfectly Still
- Hibou Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine Passing
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Recorded live at Paradiso, Amsterdam, 29/3/1969.

- PRISCILLA RECORDS (4505) LP

Limited Edition
(1971 or 1972 ?)



> Zoom

1994

Soft Machine (Live & Demos)

- Hulloder
Dada Was Here
Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
Have You Ever Bean Green 5
Pataphysical Introduction
As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
Hibou Anemone And Bear
Fire Engine Passing
Pig
Orange Skin Ood
Door Opens
10:30 Returns To The Bedroom
- Soon, Soon, Soon *(bonus)*
- So Boot If At All *(bonus)*
- That's How Much I Need You Now *(bonus)*
- Save Yourself *(bonus)*
- When I Don't Want You *(bonus)*
- You Don't Remember *(bonus)*

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Hugh Hopper - bass on 1
- Mike Ratledge - organ piano
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocals on 2-7
- Daevid Allen - guitar on 4-7

40 Minutes Live Set enregistré au Paradiso, Amsterdam en 1969, plus Six Demo Tracks datant de 1967 :

Track 1:
recorded live At Paradiso, March 29, 1969 (tous les morceaux du Paradiso sont enchaînés sur une seule plage du CD)

Tracks 2 & 3:
recorded at Vitus Studios, Bussum, Holland on September 22, 1967

Tracks 4-7:
recorded at De Lane Lee Studios in April 1967 (Jet Propelled sessions)

- MPG RECORDS (MPG74033) CD



> Zoom

Turn On Paradiso
1988

The Soft Machine

- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction Pt2
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging (reprise)
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10.30 Returns To Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Recorded live at Paradiso, Amsterdam, 29/3/1969.

- AMAZING DISCS (CDLP4505) CD



> Zoom

Live At The Paradiso
2002

Soft Machine

- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction Pt2
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging (reprise)
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10.30 Returns To Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Recorded live at Paradiso, Amsterdam, 29/3/1969.

- TURNING POINT (TMP-02212) LP



> Zoom

William
1991

Soft Machine

- Pig,
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- 10.30 Returns To Bedroom
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction Pt2,
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging (reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass

Enregistré Live au Paradiso Amsterdam, Hollande,, 29 mars 1969.

- AULICA (CT203) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Moon In June
1989

Soft Machine

- Moon In June
- Esther's Nose Job
- Slightly All The Time|Out Bloody Rageous|Eamonn Andrews

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello (2 & 3)

Enregistrés Live à :
- Maida Vale, London, 10 juin 1969 (1)
- Maida Vale, London, 10 nov. 1969 (2)
- Maida Vale, London, 4 mai 1970. (3).

- AULICA (A104) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Transition
2020

Soft Machine

- Ester's Nose Job
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Slightly All The Time
- Hazard Profile
- Eamonn Andrews
- As If
- Improvisation / Teeth
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Spaced 2
- Pigling Bland / Facelift / Hibou, Anemone And Bear

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Lowrey organ, Hohner pianet
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax
- Mark Charig - cornet
- Nick Evans - trombone

Track 8 - Hibou Anemone and Bear : March 1969

Track 9 - Space 2 : June 1969 from Mark Boyle film Beyond Image.

Track 10 - Pigling Bland... : November 28, 1969 - Europe 1 Studios, Paris.

Studio Outtakes and Lives Broadcats Compilation.

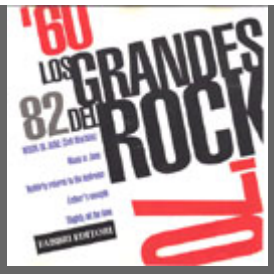
- HIGHLAND PROJECT (HLP-183) CD

Soft Machine

- Moon In June
- Tenthirty Returns To The Bedroom
- Esther's Nose Job
- Slightly All The Time

Track 1:
Londres, 10-6-1969 (BBC version)

Track 2:



> Zoom

Los Grandes Del Rock
1993

Amsterdam, 2-2-1969

Tracks 3 & 4:
Londres, 10-6-1969

Material extraido de colecciones privadas, grabadas durante actuaciones en publico.

- FABBRI EDITORI - CD



> Zoom

Live
1990

Soft Machine

- Moon In June
- Facelift
Mousetrap
Backwards
Mousetrap (Reprise)
- Slightly All The Time
Out Bloody Rageous
Eamonn Andrews

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano, flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass, alto sax
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello (3)
- Brian Hopper, soprano sax (2)

Enregistrés Live à :
- Maida Vale, London, 10 juin 1969 (1 et 2)
- Maida Vale, London, 4 mai 1970 (3).

- OH BOY (1-9025) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Kralingen Pop Festival
(?)

Soft Machine

- Mardi Gras Day (Dr. John)
- Drowned In Wine (Family)
- Human Condition (Canned Heat)
- So Sad (Canned Heat)
- Giants (Quintessence)
- Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun (Pink Floyd)
- Saucerful Of Secrets (Pink Floyd)
- Esther's Nose Job (Soft Machine)
- Saturday Afternoon (Jefferson Airplane)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Ballad of You & Me & Pooneil (Jefferson Airplane)
- Big Bird (Flock)
- Bulgaria (It's a Beautiful Day)
- Wasted Union Blues (It's A Beautiful Day)
- Freedom is a... (Country Joe McDonald)
- Savor/Jingo (Santana)

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - sax

Kralingen Pop Festival, Rotterdam, Hollande - 28 juin 1970.

- MATRIX (SCH-1/P-1970) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Uncle Sam Blues (Hot Tuna)
- Instrumental, Black Magic Woman (Santana)
- Somebody To Love (Jefferson Airplane)
- Air (Exception)
- The Pentangle
- Tyrannosaurus Rex

Disc 2
- You Ain't Going Nowhere, My Back Pages, Doing What You Want Me To Do, Jesus Is Just Alright, All The Things,

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - sax

Kralingen Pop Festival, Rotterdam, Hollande - 28 juin 1970.

- WILD THING RECORD (KRCD17-7753) 3xLP

Kralingen
(?)

Rock 'N' Roll Star (The Byrds)
- When The Saints Come Marching In (Dr John)
- Country Joe McDonald
- It's A Beautiful Day

Disc 3
- Out-Bloody-Rageous (Soft Machine)
- Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun, Atom Heart Mother (Pink Floyd)



> Zoom

Stamping Ground Festival
1990

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Dust my blues (Cuby & The Blizzards)
- Human Condition (Canned Heat)
- So Sad (Canned Heat)
- Big Road Blues (Livin' Blues)
- Zero She File (Al Stewart)
- Giants (Quintessence)
- The Sun Of East (East of Eden)
- Irish Theme (East of Eden)
- Freedom (Country Joe McDonald)
- Mardi Gras Day (Dr. John & The Night Trippers)
- Drowned In Wine (Family)

Disc 2
- Gumbo (Santana)
- Savor (Santana)
- Jingo (Santana)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- Ballad Of You And Me & Poonell (Jefferson Airplane)
- Wasted Union Blues (It's a Beautiful Day)
- Bulgaria (It's a Beautiful Day)
- Pavillons Of Sun (T.Rex)
- Old Blue (Byrds)
- Big Bird (The Flock)
- Easter's Nose Job (Soft Machine)
- Set The Control To The Heart Of The Sun (Pink Floyd)
- A Saucerful Of Secrets (Pink Floyd)

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - sax

Kralingen Pop Festival, Rotterdam, Hollande - 28 juin 1970.

- AULICA (A-2102/2) 2xCD



> Zoom



> Zoom

Live at Royal Albert Hall in London
on 13th August 1970
2014

Soft Machine

- Out-Bloody Rageous
- Facelift
- Esther's Nosejob
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- Pigling Bland
- 10-30 Returns To The Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto saxophone, saxello

Live At Royal Albert Hall In London On 13th August 1970.

Limited edition (500 copies).
Existe en vinyl vert - édition limitée.

- B13 (B218) LP



> Zoom

Live At Royal Albert Hall In London
On 13th August 1970
2019

The Soft Machine

- Out-Bloody Rageous
- Facelift
- Esther's Nosejob
- Pig
- Orange Skin Food
- A Door Opens And Closes
- Pigling Bland
- 10-30 Returns To The Bedroom

- Robert Wyatt - drums, voice

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto saxophone, saxello

Live At Royal Albert Hall In London On 13th August 1970.

- DBQP (DBQP29) LP



> Zoom

In Concert
1990

Soft Machine

- Blind Badger
- Neo-Caliban
Out-Bloody-Rageous,
- Eamonn Andrews
All White
Kings And Queens
Teeth
Pigling Bland,
- Feelin'Reelin'Squeelin'
- I'm So Low (Jet Propelled Photographs aka Shooting At The Moon)

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - organ, electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Mark Charig - cornet
- Ronnie Scott - tenor sax
- Paul Nieman - trombone
- Roy Babington - bass

Tracks 1-3:
Paris Theatre, London,
11 mars 1971

Track 4:
Olympic Sound, 5 février 1967

Track 5:
Demos sessions, avril 1967.

- OH BOY (1-9018) CD



> Zoom

Roundhouse 1971
(?)

Soft Machine

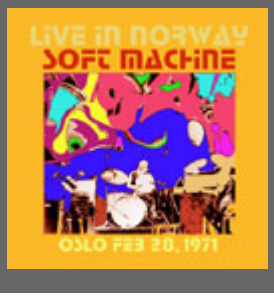
- Improv
- Facelift
- Virtually,
- Slightly All The Time
- Fletcher"s Blemish/Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Hope For Happiness
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White/Kings And Queens/Teeth
- Pigling Bland,
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom/Noisette

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - saxophones, piano

Live At The Roundhouse, Camden, London, UK - 7th February 1971.

- WINDMILL (080) ?



Soft Machine

Part 1
- Facelift|Virtually|Slightly All The Time|Fletcher's Blemish
Part 2
- Neo-Caliban Grides|Out-Bloody-Rageous|Eamonn Andrews|All White|Kings And QueensTeeth|Pigling Bland

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - Hohner pianet, organ & electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, electric piano, piano

Hovikodden, Oslo Feb 28, 1971.

> Zoom

Live In Norway
(?)

- ELASTIC ROCK (ER008)
  Digital Format



> Zoom

Breda 1971
2008

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Facelift
- Virtually,
- Slightly All The Time
- Fletcher"s Blemish

Disc 2
- Neo Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Vocal Improvisation
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White
- Kings And Queens
- Teeth
- Pigling Bland
- Noisette

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards, piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - saxophones, piano

Live At Turfschip, Breda, Netherlands - 21st March 1971.

- GRAVY TRAIN (001) ?



> Zoom

Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre Oslo
1971
2022

Soft Machine

- Facelift/Virtually
- Slightly All The Time/Fletcher"s Blemish

Excerpt from the concert Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre Oslo - Norway, February 28th, 1971.

- DBQP (52) LP



> Zoom

Live At The Berliner Jazztage Festival, November 4, 1971
(?)

Don SugarCane Harris

- Liz Pineapple Wonderful
- Sugar Cane's Got The Blues
- Song For My Father
- Where's My Sunshine
- It's Not My Fault
- Moog Solo
- Been Down So Long

- Robert Wyatt - drums

- Don Harris - electric violin, vocals
- Volker Kriegel - guitar
- Terje Rypdal -guitar on *Song for My Father*
- Wolfgang Dauner - keyboards
- Neville Whitehead - bass

Recorded live at the Berlin Jazz Festival, Berlin Philharmonic Hall, November 4, 1971.

Les 3 derniers morceaux sont absents de l'album "officiel" Sugar Cane's Got The Blues.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

SugarCane Harris - Jean-Luc Ponty

- Lost Sunshine
- Sugar's Blues

- Robert Wyatt - drums on tracks 1, 2 and 3



> Zoom

Absolutely Live
(?)

- Rock My Soal
- Freak Out Violin

- Don "Sugarcane" Harris - electric violin on tracks 1,2 and 3
- Jean-Luc Ponty - electric violin on track 4
- Nipso Brantner - electric violin on track 3
- Volker Kriegel - guitar on tracks 1 and 2
- Terje Rypdal -guitar on track 3
- Wolfgang Dauner - keyboards on tracks 1, 2 and 3
- Neville Whitehead - bass on tracks 1, 2 and 3.

Recorded at Berlin Jazz Festival, Germany, November 1971.

- Track 1 is actually Where's My Sunshine
- Track 2 is actually Sugar Cane's Got the Blues
- Track 3 is actually Got My Mojo Working
- Track 4 is actually Flipping

- BOOTS PRODUCTIONS (Ru1/Ru2) LP



> Zoom

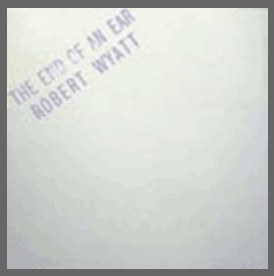
The End Of An Ear
1980

Robert Wyatt

- Las Vegas Tango Part 1 (Repeat)
- To Mark Everywhere
- To Saintly Bridget
- To Oz Alien Daevyd And Gilly
- To Nick Everyone
- To Caravan And Brother Jim
- To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye)
- To Carla, Marsha And Caroline (For Making Everything Beautifuller)
- Las Vegas Tango Part 1s

Première édition pirate vinyl (d'origine italienne ?) du 1er album solo de R. Wyatt.

NO LABEL - LP



The End Of An Ear (2)
(?)

Robert Wyatt

- The End Of An Ear (side A)
- The End Of An Ear (side B)
- Soprano Derivativo/Apricot Jam
- Shipbuilding
- Love Makes Sweet Music
- Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'

Shipbuilding a été enregistré le 3 juin 1983 au "The Old Grey Whistle Test " avec:

- Robert Wyatt - voca
l
- Clive Langer - organ
- Mark Bedford - bass
- Kiernan O'Connor - drums
- Nick Clyfus - piano

NO LABEL - LP



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt

- Las Vegas Tango Part 1 (Repeat)
- To Mark Everywhere
- To Saintly Bridget
- To Oz Alien Daevyd And Gilly
- To Nick Everyone
- To Caravan And Brother Jim
- To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye)
- To Carla, Marsha And Caroline (For Making Everything Beautifuller)
- Las Vegas Tango Part 1

- RACE RECORDS (1001) LP

The End Of An Ear (3)
1979



> Zoom

Pataphysical Machine
1995

Matching Mole

- Lything And Gracing (Brandy As In Benj|Marchides
- Marchides|Instant Pussy
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signal
- Part Of The Dance

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Macrae - electric piano
- Bill Maccormick - bass

Olympia, Paris. 15 mai 1972.

- CANTERBURY DREAM (CTD-019) CD



Paris 72
2001

Matching Mole

- Improvisation
- Nan True's Hole
- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away
- Marchides
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signal
- Part Of The Dance
- Robert Wyatt Interview

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Dave McRae - electric piano

Enregistré Live à l'Olympia, Paris, France, 15 mai 1972.

- ECLIPSE (EC006) ?



> Zoom 1 2

May 15, 1972 - Olympia, Paris
2010 (?)

Matching Mole

- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away
- Marchhides
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signals
- Part Of The Dance

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Dave McRae - electric piano

1972-05-15 - Olympia, Paris.

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

Live 1972
2003

Matching Mole

- Part Of The Dance
- March Ides
- March Ides 2
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signals
- Instant Kitten
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Instant Pussy
- Lything And Gracing
- Organ Solo
- March Ides
- Part Of The Dance
- Untitled Track

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Macrae - electric piano
- Bill Maccormick - bass

- PHAT CAT RECORDS (?)

- Nan True's Hole
- Brandy As In Benj



> Zoom

Kings Cross Cinema 1972
2025

Matching Mole

- Improvisation 1
- Improvisation 2
- Improvisation 2
- Jazz Improvisation

Sous des intitulés paresseux *Improvisation* (?) se cachent en réalité : *Gloria Gloom*, *Part of the Dance*, *Marchides*, *Instant Pussy* et *Smoke Signal* suivis par ce qui ressemble à une jam en rappel.

Recorded Live at Kings Cross Cinema - London, UK, July 8th 1972.

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

Canterbury Anthology - Vol. 10
2006

Matching Mole

- Marchides
- Gloria Gloom
- March Ides 2
- Instant Pussy
- March
- Instant Pussy
- Lything And Gracing
- Organ Solo
- March Ides
- Part Of The Dance
- God Song
- Gloria Gloom
- Nan True's Hole

Track 1:
BBC 1972

Track 2 & 11:
From Little Red Record

Tracks 3 & 4:
BBC 4-17-72

Track 5:
Europe-March 1972

Tracks 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10:
BBC In Concert 7-27-72

Tracks 12 & 13:
BBC 7-21-72

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Une version CD sans label est publiée en 2025 avec une pochette presque identique.



> Zoom

Version 2025



So Many Of You
2000

Matching Mole

- Brandy As In Benj
- Smoke Signal
- Groria Gloom
- Nan True's Hole
- Righteous Rhumba
- Brandy As In Benj
- Marchides
- Instant Pussy
- Part Of The Dance
- Brandy As In Benj

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Macrae - electric piano
- Bill Maccormick - bass

Bilzen Jazz Festival,
Bilzen - Belgique - 18 août 1972.

NO LABEL - CD



London 72
2001

Matching Mole

- God Song
- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away
- Flora Fidgit
- Smoke Signal
- Gloria Gloom
- Nan True's Hole
- Instant Pussy
- Righteous Rumba
- Part Of The Dance
- Brandy As In Benji

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill MacCormick - bass
- Dave McRae - electric piano

Enregistré Live au Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7 septembre 1972.

- ECLIPSE (EC005) ?



I'm Only Joking
2002

Matching Mole

Disc 1
- Gloria Groom
- Nan True's Hole
- Brandy As Benj
- Marchides
- Instant Pussy
- Smoke Signal
- Instant Kitten
- Dedicated Hugh, But You Weren't Listening

Disc 2
- God Song
- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away
- Flora Fidgit
- Smoke Signal
- Gloria Gloom
- Nan True's Hole
- Instant Pussy
- Righteous Rumba
- Part Of The Dance
- Brandy As In Benji

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, drums

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- Bill Maccormick - bass

Disc 1:
MaidaVale, London, England - 21 juin 1972
Kensington House, London, England -17 avril 1972
Playhouse Theatre, 17 janvier 1972

Disc 2:
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, England - 7 septembre 1972

- PEACE FROG (PF-221D) 2xCD



> Zoom

Live At The BBC 1972
2013

Matching Mole

- Marchides/Instant Pussy/Smoke Signal
- Immediate Kitten
- Instant Pussy/Lithing And Gracing
- Part Of The Dance/Brandy As In Benj

- Robert Wyatt - mellotron, piano, drums & voice

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill McCormick - bass guitar
- Dave McRae - electric piano
- David Sinclair - piano & organ (on *Immediate Kitten*)

Marchides / Instant Pussy / Smoke Signal: John Peel Show - 17th April 1972

Immediate Kitten : John Peel Show - 17th January 1972

Instant Pussy / Lithing And Gracing and *Part Of The Dance / Brandy As In Benj* : Paris Theatre, London, 27th July 1972

180gm white vinyl, limited edition of 500.

- BB RECORDS (B202) LP

Matching Mole

- Marchides/Instant Pussy/Smoke Signal
- Immediate Kitten
- Instant Pussy/Lithing And Gracing
- Part Of The Dance/Brandy As In Benj

- Robert Wyatt - mellotron, piano, drums & voice

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Bill McCormick - bass guitar



> Zoom 1 2

Live At The BBC 1972
2019

- Dave McRae - electric piano
- David Sinclair - piano & organ
(on *Immediate Kitten*)

Marchides / Instant Pussy / Smoke Signal: John Peel Show - 17th April 1972

Immediate Kitten : John Peel Show - 17th January 1972

Instant Pussy / Lithing And Gracing and *Part Of The Dance / Brandy As In Benj* : Paris Theatre, London, 27th July 1972

All tracks taken from the official 2006 album On The Radio.
Instant Pussy/Lithing And Gracing and *Part Of The Dance/Brandy As In Benj* were also released on a 1994 mini-album BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert.

- DBQP (DBQP20) LP



Matching Mole

- Lything And Gracing [R. Wyatt]
- Instant Kitten [R. Wyatt]
- Marchides [D. McRae]
- Instant Pussy [R. Wyatt]
- Smoke Signal [D. McRae]
- Part Of The Dance [P. Miller]

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave MacRae - electric piano
- Bill MacCormick - bass

Enregistré à l'Olympia (Paris - France) le 15 mai 1972.

Edition spéciale publiée à l'occasion du 20ème anniversaire du site *Une discographie de Robert Wyatt*.

Tirage limité à 100 exemplaires numérotés.

Mention "Can't be sold".

- NO LABEL - USB Key

> Zoom 1 2 3

Live In France 1972
2023





> Zoom



Robert Wyatt/Richard Sinclair/Dave MacRae/Gary Windo

- Improvisationi

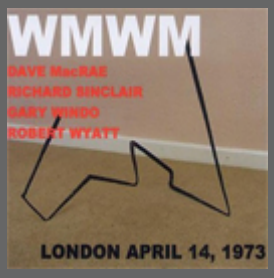
- Robert Wyatt - voice, vocoder, drums, percussions, organ

- Richard Sinclair -electric bass
- Dave Macrae - electric piano
- Gary Windo - tenor sax

1973-04-14 - London, UK - Ronnie Scott's .

> Zoom

WMWM
(?)



> Zoom

London April 14, 1973
(?)

WMWM

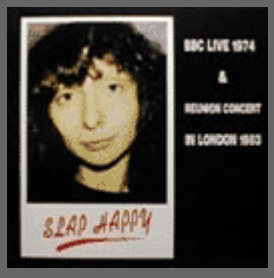
- Improvisation

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals

- Richard Sinclair - bass guitar
- Dave MacRae - electric piano, acoustic piano
- Gary Windo - tenor saxophone

1973-04-14 - London, UK - Ronnie Scott's .

- BLUE (867) CD



BBC Sessions Live
(?)

Slapp Happy

- Europa
- A Little Something
- War Is Energy Enslaved
- Me And Parvati

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion

- Anthony Moore - harpsichord, piano, vocals
- Peter Blegvad - guitar & acoustic guitar, vocals
- Dagmar Krause - vocals
- Lindsay Cooper - bassoon, oboe
- Geoff Leigh - soprano sax, flute
- Jeff Clyne - double bass
- Fred Frith - guitar

The Peel Sessions, BBC Langham Studios, London UK - June 25, 1974

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom



> Zoom

Henry Cow

Disc 1
- Unreleased Title 1
- Unreleased Title 2
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King 1
- Nirvana For Mice
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King 2
- Unreleased Title 3

Disc 2

- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- Ottawa Song ~ **Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- (improvisation) | Ruins | (improvisation)
- Beautiful As The Moon (reprise)

Disc 1 (demos 1973)
- Geoff Leigh - sax, flute, vocal
- Fred Frith - guitar, violin ,cl, vocal
- Chris Cutler - drums, vocal
- John Greaves- bass, piano, vocal
- Tim Hodgkinson - keyboards, saxophon, clarinet, vocal

Disc 2 (DR Jazz Workshop, Hamburg 1976.3.26)
- Fred Frith - guitar, violin, piano, etc.
- Tim Hodgkinson - keyboards, saxophon, clarinet
- John Greaves - bass, vocal
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Lindsay Cooper - bassoon, oboe, flute
- Dagmar Krause, vocal

- CANTERBURY DREAM (CTD-025) 2xCD

Ruins
1995



> Zoom

Stand Up "Full Metal Amour"
Live At The BBC 1971-1977
2006

Henly Cow *(sic)*/Slap Happy/Fred Frith/John Greaves and Peter Blegvad

Disc 1
HENRY COW
- Hieronyme's Mad Again
- Poglith Drive's A Vauxhall Viva
- I Came To See You
- Rapt In A Blanket
- Teenbeat
- Guider Tells Of Silent Airborne Machine
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King
- Bee

Disc 2
HENRY COW
- Pidgeens: Ruins
- Half Awake
- Bittern Storm Over Ulm

SLAPP HAPPY
- Europa
- Me And Parvati
- A Little Something
- War Is Energy Enslaved

FRED FRITH
- Please Give It Back
- My Need Is Greater Than Yours
- Noise Carruthers Pure Bloody Noise
- In Wich Case The Anxiety
- Warrow Road

JOHN GREAVES AND PETER BLEGVAD
- Mestly Twins And Tries
- From The Trees To The Wheel
- Actual Frenzy

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion

- Anthony Moore - harpsichord, piano, vocals
- Peter Blegvad - guitar & acoustic guitar, vocals
- Dagmar Krause - vocals
- Lindsay Cooper - bassoon, oboe
- Geoff Leigh - soprano sax, flute
- Jeff Clyne - double bass
- Fred Frith - guitar

The Peel Sessions, BBC Langham Studios, London UK - June 25, 1974

- AYY (121-122) 2xCD



> Zoom

More Cambridge Than Canterbury
(Canterbury Anthology Vol. 7)
2005

Henry Cow

- Bittern Storm Over Ulm
- Half Asleep Half Awake
- Teenbeat
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King
- I Came To See You (BBC 2-28-72)
- With The Yellow Half Moon & Blue Star (BBC 10-17-72)
- Gloria Gloom-BBC Studios (BBC Peel Sessions 8-5-75)[R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- History & Prospects 1. Industry
- Day By Day Falling Away
- Deluge
- The Glove
- Untitles Sontg (7-13-78)

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2

June 1, 1974 - Outtakes
(?)

Kevin Ayers/John Cale/Eno/Nico With Special Guests Mike Oldfield And Robert Wyatt

Disc 1
- Baby's On Fire
- Buffalo Ballet
- Gun
- Das Lied Der Deutschen
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Everybody's Sometime And Some People
- All The Time Blues

Disc 2

- Robert Wyatt - percussion

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- John Cale - vocals, piano, viola
- Eno - vocals, synthetizer
- Nico - vocals, harmonium
- Mike Oldfield - guitar
- Ollie Halsall - guitar
- John Bundrick - keyboards
- Archie Leggett - bass
- Eddie Sparrow - drums, tympani

- Kevin Ayers/Interview
- Kevin Ayers/See You Later
- Kevin Ayers/It Begins With A Blessing-Once
- I Awakened-But It Ends With A Curse-Dr Dream
- Kevin Ayers/Two Goes Into Four
- I've Got A Hard On For You Baby
- Eno/Baby's On Fire

- Irene Chanter - vocals
- Doreen Chanter - vocals
- Liza Strike - vocals

Enregistré au Rainbow Theatre, London le 1er juin 1974.

- NO LABEL - 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2

June 1, 1974 - The Outtakes (?)

Kevin Ayers/John Cale/Eno/Nico

- Introduction by Ian Tilbury
- Buffalo Ballet
- Gun
- Das Lied Der Deutschen
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Interview
- See You Later
- It Begins With A Blessing / Once I awakened / But it ends with a curse
- Dr Dream theme
- I've Got A Hard On For You Baby
- Baby's On Fire

- Robert Wyatt - percussion, backing vocals

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- John Cale - vocals, piano, viola
- Eno - vocals, synthetizer
- Nico - vocals, harmonium
and The Soporifics
- Ollie Halsall - guitar
- John 'Rabbit' Bundrick - organ
- Archie Leggett - bass
- Eddie Sparrow - drums, percussion
with special guests
- Mike Oldfield - guitar
- Robert Wyatt
and three nice lady singers
- Irene Chanter - backing vocals
- Doreen Chanter -backing vocals
- Liza Strike -backing vocals

Recorded Live At The Rainbow Theatre, London on June 1,1974.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2 3

The BBC Archives: 1971-1977 2008

Henry Cow

Disc 1
HENRY COW
- Hieronymo's Mad Again
- Poglith Drives a Vauxhall Viva
- I Came To See You
- Rapt In A Blanket
- Teenbeat
- With The Yellow Half Moon & Blue Star
- Guider Tells Of Silent Airborne Machine
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King
- Nirvana For Mice

Disc 2
- Pidgeons: a) Ruins b) Half Awake, Half Asleep c) Bitter Storm Over Ulm

SLAPP HAPPY AND FRIENDS
- Europa
- Me & Parvati
- A Little Something
- War Is Energy Enslaved

FRED FRITH
- Please Give It Back
- My Need Is Greater Than Yours
- Noise Carruthers Pure Bloody Noise
- In Which Case The Anxiety
- Narrow Road

JOHN GREAVES & PETER BLEGVAD
- Mostly Twins And Trios
- From The Trees To The Wheel
- Actual Frenzy

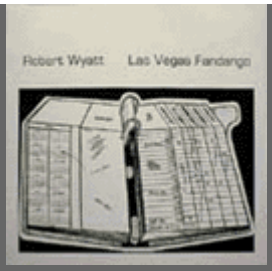
- Robert Wyatt - percussion - tracks 11 to 14.

- Anthony Moore - harpsichord
- Peter Blegvad - guitar
- Dagmar Krause - vocals
- Fred Frith - guitar
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Lindsay Cooper - bassoon
- Geoff Leigh - soprano saxophone
- Jeff Clyne - double bass

June 25, 1974 - BBC Top Gear
(1st broadcast: July 16, 1974).

EYE OF STORM (EOS-117) 2xCD

Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8 sept. 1974



> Zoom

Las Vegas Fandango
1981

- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Memories**
- **Sea Song**
- **A Last Straw**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road**
- **Alifib**
- **God Song**
- **Behind The Eyes**
- **Instant Pussy**
- **Signed Curtain**
- **Calyx**
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road**
- **I'm A Believer**

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, keyboards, percussion

- Dave Stewart - keyboards
- Mike Oldfield - guitar
- Fred Frith - guitar, violin
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Laurie Allen - drums
- Nick Mason - drums
- Gary Windo - bass clarinet, tenor saxophone
- Mongezi Feza - trumpet
- Julie Tippett - vocals
- Ivor Cutler - vocals
- John Peel - percussion

Las Vegas Fandango
- PENGUIN RECORDS (EGG FOUR) LP (9 titres) - tirage limité 500 exemplaires
- ARCHIVE RECORDINGS (ARC 002) CD

Critiques/Reviews



Mercy Me
(?)



> Zoom

Top

Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8 sept. 1974



> Zoom

Sea Song
(?)

- **Hopper Tunity Box**
- **Memories**
- **Sea Song**
- **Last Straw**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road**
- **Alifib**
- **Instant Kitten**
- **Instant Pussy**
- **Signed Curtain**
- **Starlight**
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road**
- **I'm A Believer**

- ASTEROID RECORDS (AR-10) CD

Top

Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8 sept. 1974



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt In Concert
2003

Disc 1
- Introduction by John Peel
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Memories**
- **Sea Song**
- **Last Straw**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road**
- **Alifie|Alifib**
- **God Song**

Disc 2
- Child Again

Cet enregistrement du concert mythique du 8 septembre 1974 contient l'introduction de John Peel et les trois titres chantés par Julie Tippett.

- T-399 - 2xCD

- Human Kind
- Dear Friend
- Voices
- Instant Pussy
- Signed Curtain
- Calyx
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road
- I'm A Believer



> Zoom

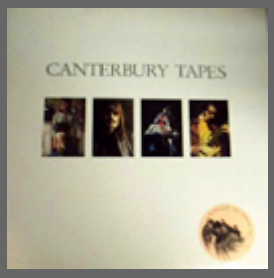
Robert Wyatt With Friends In Concert 2010 (?)

Robert Wyatt With Friends In Concert - 1974-09-08 Theatre Royal Drury Lane

- Introduction By John Peel
- Ivor Cutler
- Phyllis April King
- Ivor Cutler
- Introduction By John Peel
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Memories
- Intro
- Sea Song
- A Last Straw
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
- Alife
- Alifib
- Mind Of A Child
- Flute Solo
- Human Unkind
- Behind The Eyes
- Stuff
- Instant Pussy
- Nightclub Smokes
- Signed Curtain
- Calyx (*small cut at start*)
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road
- I'm A Believer (*fades out*)

"This installment of the Sonic Residue Recordings brings us a real treat! even thou this show has been released officially this one sounds A LOT better, plus it includes lots of material not on the official release, plus longer versions of some of the officially released tracks... So the next question you might ask is: Can I throw away my official CD... The answer is NO... because this version has a small cut at the beginning of Calyx and I'm A Believer is not complete, it fades out halfway... so download this one and buy the official one and you will have the most complete possible version of this show!"

- SONIC RESIDUE RECORDINGS (SBD MASTER 116.22) Digital Format



> Zoom

Canterbury Tapes 1983 ou 1984 (?)

Canterbury Tapes

Disc 1
SOFT MACHINE
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Been Green
- Pataphysical Introduction
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Hibou Anemone & Bear

Disc 2
KEVIN AYERS
- Dedicated To You
- Piano Duet
- Lady Rachel
- Goodnite

ROBERT WYATT
- God Song
- Fol De Rol
- Alifib
- I'm A Believer
- Muddy Mouse

- Soft Machine Live At Paradiso, Amsterdam 3/29/69.

- Kevin Ayers And The Whole World on The BBC 11/17/71 & with Brian Eno on Capitol Radio 8/74.

- Robert Wyatt with Francis Monkman, BBC 12/5/72 (*God Song* + *Fol de Rol*)
- Robert Wyatt on BBC 9/10/74 (*Alifib* + *I'm A Believer*)
- Robert Wyatt with Henry Cow (*Muddy Mouse*) Live At Théâtre des Champs Elysées Paris 5/8/75.

- PORCUPINE (FOUR/FIVE) 2xLP



Hatfield And The North

- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut
Big Jobs (Poo Poo Extract)
Shaving Is Boring
Licks For Ladies
Bossa Nochance
Big Jobs No.2 (By Poo And Wee Wee)
To Mum & The Gongs
Gigantic Land Crabs In Earth
Takeover Bid

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, percussion

- Dave Stewart - organ
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocal
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Alan Gowen - keyboard
- Steve Miller - keyboard
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax,

> Zoom

Calyx
2001

- Fol De Rol
Going Upto People And Tinkling
Jamming
Calyx
- Son of "THere's No Place Like Homerton"
Aigrette
Rifferama
- Lobster In Cleacage Probe
Prenut
Your Majesty Is Like A Crean Donuts

flute
- Jimmy Hastings - alto sax, flute
- Jeremy Baines - flute
- The Northettes (Amanda Persons, Barbara Gaskin, Ann Rosenthal)

Enregistré Live au Roundhouse, London - 13 avril 1974.

- LE MATANGO (LM 01010) CD



Hatfield And The North

January 12th, 1973
- Rifferama
- Fol de Rol / Lick for the Ladies
- Finesse Is for Faries / **Nan True's Hole** / Lything & Gracing

March 19th 1974
- Shaving Is Boring / Lick for the Ladies
- Your Majesty Is Like a Cream Donut
- Aigrette / Rifferama
- Top Gear Commercial

November 21st, 1974
- Do the Lethargy Shuffle (Yeah Yeah)
- Let's Eat Again (Real Soon)
- Fitter Stoke Has a Bath / **Calyx**

- Dave Stewart - organ, piano, electric piano
- Phil Miller - electric guitar
- Richard Sinclair - bass guitar, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums

Remastered - Numbered edition limited to 100 copies.

- NOT ON LABEL - CD

> Zoom

Heaven On The BBC
Top Gear Sessions
2004



Hatfield And The North

- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath ~ Calyx
- Let's Eat (Real Soon)
- Do The Lethargy Shuffle (yea yea) ~ Your Majesty is Like a Cream Donut
- Oh, What A Lonely Lifetime
- Medley With Robert Wyatt
- Amsterdamage
- Shaving Is Boring ~ Licks For The Ladies
- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut (Quiet)~Going Up to People and Tinkling~
- Nan True's Hole

Tracks 1-4:
John Peel Show 11-21-74

Track 5:
Paris, France "Rockenstock" 1972

Track 6:
Amsterdam, 1974

Track 7:
BBC Top Gear 3-19-74

Tracks 8 & 9:
Kloojenberg,Netherlands 7-7-73

NO LABEL - Digital Format

> Zoom

Canterbury Anthology - Vol. 12
2006



Brian Wilson

- Intro
- Turning Point
- Heavenly Bodies
- Black Widow
- In The Nightime
- Love & Mercy
- Walkin The Line
- Melt Away
- Baby Let Your Hair Grow long
- Little Children
- One Of The Boys
- Up In The Sky (There's So Many)
- Meet Me In My Dreams Tonight
- He Couldn't Get His Poor Body To Move
- Don't Let Her Know She's An Angel
- Someone To Love
- Water Builds Up
- Don't Let Her Know She's An Angel
- Lets Get Together
- Smart Girls
- We Love You

- Robert Wyatt - lead vocal

Version alternative de *We Love You* extrait de Beauty.

- VIGOTONE (VIGO125) LP

> Zoom

Come Back Brian !
1988 (?)

- Fantasy Is Reality|Bells Of Madness
- Outro



In The Name Of A Freedom
(?)

Henry Cow Featuring Robert Wyatt

Disc 1
- Beautiful As the Moon; Terrible As An Army With Banners| Nirvana For Mice| Ottawa Song|Gloria Gloom|Ruins| Moon Reprise|
- Muddy Mouse (a)|Solar Flares|Muddy Mouse (b)|5 Black Notes And 1 White Note|Muddy Mouse (c)|Muddy Mouse
- Improvisation
- Bad Alchemy|Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road

Disc 2
- Living In The Hearts Of The Beast
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners|Nirvana For Mice|Ottawa Song|Gloria Gloom|Ruins| Moon Reprise
- Muddy Mouse (a)| Solar Flares|Muddy Mouse (b)|5 Black Notes And 1 White Note|Muddy Mouse (c)|Muddy Mouse
- Bad Alchemy|Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road

Disc 3
- Living In The Hearts Of The Beast
- Muddy Mouse (a)|Solar Flares|Muddy Mouse (b)|5 Black Notes And 1 White Note|Muddy Mouse (c)|Muddy Mouse
- Improvisation
- Bad Alchemy|Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Living In The Hearts Of The Beast
- We Did It Again

- Robert Wyatt - voice, piano

- Dagmar Krause - voice, piano
- Lindsay Cooper - flute, oboe, bassoon
- Tim Hodgkinson - organ, clarinet, alto sax
- Fred Frith - guitar, violin, xylophone, piano
- John Greaves - bass, piano
- Chris Cutler - drums

Disc 1 à Disc-2.1
New London Theater, London, England. May 21st 1975

Disc 2.2 à Disc-3.1
Piazza Navoa, Roma. Italy, June 27th 1975

Disc 3.2 à 6
Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris, France. May 8th 1975.

- LE MATANGO (LM00007/008/009) 3xCD



> Zoom

Paris Sept. 25 1973
2008 (?)

Hatfield & The North

- God Song [P. Miller-R. Wyatt]
- Big Jobs (extract)
- Part Of The Dance
- Going Up To People And Tinkling
- Calyx [P. Miller]
- There's No Place Like Homerton
- Shaving Is Boring
- Big Jobs
- Htnp
- Aigrette
- Rifferama
- Lything And Gracing
- Nan True's Hole [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Tone Generator Improv
- Fol De Rol
- Bossa Nochance
- Big Jobs
- Lobster In Cleavage Probe
- The Laughing Policeman

- Dave Stewart - keyboard
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals

Hatfield & The North Live At Theatre Present de La Villette , Paris , France
25th Sep. 1973.

(ER073) - Digital Format



Hatfield & The North

LIVE AT STUDIO ORTF DES BUTTES CHAUMONT (PARIS - FRANCE)
- **God Song**
- Fol de Rol
- For Robert
- A-Music
LIVE AT THEATRE PRESENT (PARIS - FRANCE) SEPTEMBER 25th 1973
- Blane Over Paris / **Nan True's Hole** / Big Jobs No.2
- Going Up To People And Tinkling /

- Robert Wyatt - vocals (tracks 1-4)

- Dave Stewart - keyboards
- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals, guitar
- Phil Miller - guitar (tracks 1-6)
- Pip Pyle - drums (tracks 1-6)
- Mont Campbell - bass, vocals (tracks 7~9)
- Clive Brooks - drums (tracks 7~9)

> Zoom

Live 1973
2020

Lobster Extract / Gigantic Land In Earth
Takeover Bid
Bonus Track
EGG - BBC IN CONCERT - FEBRUARY 4th 1971
- A Visitto Newport Hospital
- Long Piece No.3 (Pt2 /Pt3)
- Long Piece No.3 (Pt4)

Tracks 1 to 4 with Robert Wyatt : Live at Studio ORTF des Buttes Chaumont, Paris, France (diffusée le 2 janvier 1973 mais enregistrée fin 1972).

In this other album, the recording is dated differently.

- KING STREET (KINGCD4194) CD



> Zoom

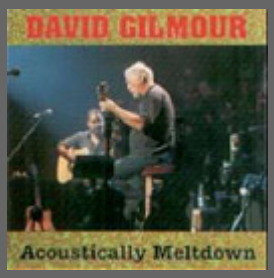
Tread Upon The BBC
2004

Hatfield & The North

- The Stubbs Effect
- Rifferama
- **Calyx** [P. Miller]
- Fol de Rol
- Finesse Is For Fairies
- **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- **Lying And Gracing** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt/D. MacRae]
- Shaving Is Boring
- Licks For The Ladies
- Your Majesty
- Aigrette
- Rifferama
- Top Gear Advert
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath
- Let's Eat (Real Soon)
- Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut
- Oh, What A Lonely Lifetime

- Dave Stewart - organ, electric piano
- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Pip Pyle - drums

- TACHIKA RECORDS (HFNCD 018) CD



> Zoom

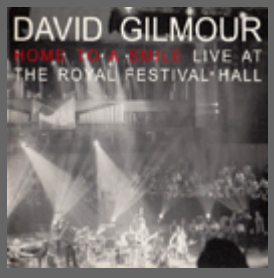
Acoustically Meltdown
2001

David Gilmour

- Shine On You Crazy Diamond (Pts.1-5)
- Terrapin
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- Je Crois Entendre Encore
- Smile
- Wish You Were Here
- **Comfortably Numb (With Robert Wyatt)**
- The Dimming Of Tthe Day
- Shine On You Crazy Diamond (Pts.6, 7)
- A Great Day For Freedom
- Hushaby Mountain

Robert Wyatt's Meltdown Festival Hall, London.
06/22/2001.

- HIGHLAND (HL579) CD



> Zoom

Home To A Smile
At The Royal Festival Hall
(June 22 2001)
(?)

David Gilmour

- Shine On You Crazy Diamond I - IV
- Terrapin
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- Je Crois Entendre Encore
- Smile
- Wish You Were Here
- **Comfortably Numb (with Robert Wyatt)**
- The Dimming Of The Day
- Shine On You Crazy Diamond VI - IX
- A Great Day For Freedom
- Hushabye Mountain

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, June 22, 2001 as part of Robert Wyatt's Meltdown 2001.

- NO LABEL - CD

David Gilmour



> Zoom

Coming Back To London
2001

- Shine On You Crazy Diamond
- Terrapin
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- Je Crois Entendre Encore
- Smile
- Wish You Were Here
- **Comfortably Numb (With Robert Wyatt)**
- The Dimming Of Tthe Day
- Shine On You Crazy Diamond
- A Great Day For Freedom
- Hushaby Mountain

Robert Wyatt's Meltdown Festival Hall, London.
06/22/2001.

- NORTH STAR RECORDS - CD



> Zoom



> Zoom

Top Gear, BBC
2004

Henry Cow... And Company

- Guider Tells Of Silent Airborne Machine
- 9 Funerals Of The Citizen King
- Bee
- Pidgeons: Ruins|Half Awake Half Asleep|Bittern Storm Over Ulm
- Please Give It Back
- My Need Is Greater Than Yours
- Noise Carruthers Pur Bloody Noise
- In Which Case The Anxiety
- Narrow Road
- Mostly Twins And Trios
- From The Trees To The Wheel
- Actual Frenzy
- **War Is Energy Enslaved**
- **Little Something**

- Robert Wyatt - vocal, percussion

- Anthony Moore - piano
- Peter Blegvad - guitar, vocal
- Dagmar Krause - vocal
- Fred Frith - guitar
- Lindsay Cooper - oboe, bassoon
- Geoff Leigh - saxophone
- Jeff Clyne - double bass

Recorded June 25, 1974.

Pressage "Audiophile Remastered Limited Edition" très limité (100 exemplaires numérotés) qui réunit 5 Top Gear Sessions :

Tracks 1-3:
Henry Cow en 1973

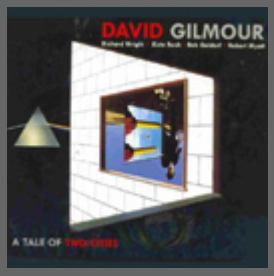
Track 4:
Henry Cow en 1974

Tracks 5-9:
Fred Frith en 1974

Tracks 10-12:
John Greaves-Peter Blegvad en 1977

-Tracks 13 & 14:
Slapp Happy avec Robert Wyatt en 1974

NO LABEL - CD.



> Zoom

A Tale Of Two Cities
2002

David Gilmour

Disc 1
RECORDED LONDON, ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, 17, JANUARY 2002
- Shine On Your Crazy Diamond Pt.1
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back to Life
- Coming Back To Life (Reprise)
- Dominoes
- High Hopes
- High Hopes (Reprise)
- Je Crois Entendre Encore
- Smile
- Breakthrough
- Wish You Were Here
- Comfortably Numb

Disc 2
RECORDED LONDON, ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, 17, JANUARY 2002
- Dimming Of The Day
- Shine On Your Crazy Diamond Pt.6
- Great Day For Freedom
- Hushabye Mountain

- TWO CERTAIN SOMEBODIES (SLUT001 A/B) 2xCD

RECORDED LONDON, ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, 16, JANUARY 2002
- Breakthrough
- Comfortably Numb (With Robert Wyatt)
RECORDED LONDON, ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, 18, JANUARY 2002
- Comfortably Numb
RECORDED PARIS, 24, JANUARY 2002
- Je Fair Pipi
- Comfortably Numb



> Zoom

Acoustically Pink
2002

David Gilmour

Disc 1
- Shine On Your Crazy Diamond Pt.1-5)
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back to Life
- Dominoes
- High Hopes
- Je Crois Entendre Encore
- Smile

Disc 2
- Breakthrough
- Wish You Were Here
- Comfortably Numb (With Robert Wyatt)
- Dimming Of The Day
- Shine On Your Crazy Diamond Pt.6-9)
- Great Day For Freedom
- Hushabye Mountain

Royal Festival Hall, London - 16 janvier 2002.

- HIGHLAND RECORDS (HL606-603) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3

Un Certo Discorso



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt

- The Opium War
- Parlato
- L'Albero Degli Zoccoli
- Parlato
- Heathen Heaven Of Souls
- Parlato
- Holy War
- Parlato
- Revolution Without "R"
- Another Song
- Parlato
- Billy's Bounce [Charlie Parker]
- Parlato
- Born Again Cretin
- Parlato
- Prove Sparse I
- Prove Sparse II

- Robert Wyatt - vocals, percussion, piano, jews harp

Programme réalisé par Robert Wyatt pour la RAI italienne en février 1981 (diffusé au printemps 81 puis rediffusé en septembre 2002 à l'occasion d'une *Wyatt Notte* sur RadioTre Rai).

Les morceaux parlés (*Parlato*) sont des lectures de textes de Robert Wyatt sur la musique, le processus créatif, l'improvisation, la politique etc.

La première version présentée ci-contre comporte une illustration originale de l'auteur de la création graphique du CD A Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi.

A noter que la 3ème pochette rend hommage au présent site en piratant sans vergogne le montage photo des visuels de sa page d'accueil... (!).

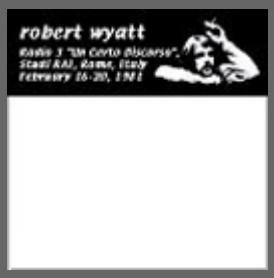
Une version "officielle" est sortie en juin 2009 sur le label italien Tracce.

NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

(?)



2007

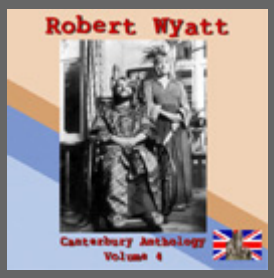
Rome February 16-20, 1981

Robert Wyatt

- The Opium War
- L'Albero Degli Zoccoli
- Heathen Heaven Of Souls
- Holy War
- Revolution Without "R"
- Another Song
- Billy's Bounce [Charlie Parker]
- Born Again Cretin
- Prove Sparse I
- Prove Sparse II

Enregistrement identique aux deux précédents, moins les passages parlés.

BLUE.U-045.1CD - Digital Format ?



> Zoom

Canterbury Anthology - Vol. 4
2004 (?)

Robert Wyatt

- The Whole Point Of No Return
- Soup Song
- Sea Song
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Memories
- Sea Song
- The Duchess
- Righteous Rhumba
- Instant Pussy
- Trickle Down
- Team Spirit
- Heathens Have No Souls
- Billy's Bounce
- Gharbzadegi
- The Verb
- Free Will & Testament

Track 1:
From *Shleep*

Track 2:
BBC Top Gear 9-10-74

Track 3:
From 'Free Will And Testament'- 1997 BBC4 Documentary

Tracks 4-6:
Royal Drury Lane 9-8-74

Track 7:
From *Shleep*

Track 8:
BBC Top Gear 12-5-72

Track 9:
Maida Vale-BBC Top Gear 11-10-69

Track 10:
From *Cuckooland*

Track 11:
From *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*

Tracks 12-13:
AI Studios, Rome, Italy-February,1981

Track 14:
From *Old Rottenhat*

Track 15:
Recorded At Home 2003

Track 16:
From 'Free Will And Testament'- 1997 BBC4 Documentary

NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Soft Works
Live At The Garden Hall,
Tokyo, 10th August 2003
2004

The Soft Machine Legacy

- Seven Formerly
- Alphrazalian
- Baker's Treat
- K-Licks
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- First Trane
- Willie's Knee/As If
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]
- First Trane

– Hugh Hopper, bass
– John Marshall, drums
– Allan Holdsworth, guitar
– Elton Dean, saxophone

Garden Hall, Tokyo, 10th August 2003.

- AYANAMI ULTIMATE SERIES
(254) 2xCD



> Zoom

A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
2007 (?)

Annie Whitehead's Soupsong

- **A Sunday In Madrid** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse Suite** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood/Alifib/Alfie** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sight Of The Wind** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]
- **Soupsong** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]

- Annie Whitehead - trombone dir., arr., backing vocals
- Julie Tippets - vocal
- Harry Beckett - trumpet, flugelhorn
- Ian Maidman - guitar, vocals
- Larry Stabbins - tenor & soprano saxes, flute
- Janette Mason - piano, keyboards
- Steve Lamb - bass
- Liam Genokey - drums

Milano, Teatro Dal Verme, 24 settembre 2001
Broadcast Recording.

(ER010) - Digital Format



> Zoom

Comicoperando - A Tribute
To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
?

Comicoperando - A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt

- Intro
- **Pataphysical Introduction (arr. Alex Maguire)** [R. Wyatt]
- **September The Ninth (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road (arr. Cristiano Calcagnile)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Just as You Are (arr. Gilad Atzmon)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Calyx (arr. Phil Miller)** [R. Wyatt/P. Miller]
- **Memories (arr. Michel Delville)** [H. Hopper]
- **Alifib (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [R. Wyatt]
- Double Bass Solo (arr. John Edwards)
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [R. Wyatt]
- Guitar Noise (arr. Michel Delville)
- **God Song (arr. Phil Miller)** [R. Wyatt/P. Miller]
- **Maryan (arr. Cristiano Calcagnile)** [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- **Alliance (instrumental)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [R. Wyatt]
- Sax Medley (arr. Gilad Atzmon)
- **O Caroline (arr. Dave Sinclair)** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Band Presentation
- **Forest (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Soup Song** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]

- Richard Sinclair - vocals, bass guitar
- Dagmar Krause - vocals
- Gilad Atzmon - reeds and flutes
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Alex Maguire - piano and keyboards
- Michel Delville - guitars, electronics
- John Edwards - double bass
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Cristiano Calcagnile - percussion

Recorded Sunday March 1st, 2010 at Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti, Modena, Italy for
L'ALTRO SUONO festival 2010

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

David Gilmour



> Zoom

Silence Drifting
2006

Disc 1
- Speak To Me
- Breathe
- Time
- Breathe (Reprise)
- Castellorizon
- On An Island
- The Blue
- Red Sky At Night
- This Heaven
- **Then I Close My Eyes** [D. Gilmour]
- Band Introduction
- Smile
- Take A Breath
- A Pocketful Of Stones
- Where We Start

Disc 2
- Shine On You Crazy Diamond
- Fat Old Sun
- Arnold Layne
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- The Great Gig In The Sky
- Echoes

Disc 3
- Wish You Were Here
- Find The Cost Of Freedom
- Comfortably Numb

- Robert Wyatt - cornet on *Then I Close My Eyes*

- David Gilmour - guitar, vocal
- Richard Wright - keyboards
- Guy Pratt - bass, guitar
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Jon Carin - keyboards
- Dick Perry - saxophone
- Steve DiStanislao - drums

Concert at Royal Albert Hall, London - 30th May 2006.

- SIRENE RECORDS (158) 3xCD





> Zoom

Aimlessly So Blue
2006

David Gilmour

Disc 1
- Speak To Me
- Breathe
- Time
- Breathe (Reprise)
- Castellorizon
- On An Island
- The Blue
- Red Sky At Night
- This Heaven
- **Then I Close My Eyes** [D. Gilmour]
- Smile
- Take A Breath
- A Pocketful Of Stones
- Where We Start

Disc 2
- Shine On You Crazy Diamond
- Wot's... Uh The Deal
- Band Introduction
- Wearing The Inside Out
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- Echoes

Disc 3
- Wish You Were Here
- Find The Cost Of Freedom
- Arnold Layne
- Comfortably Numb

- Robert Wyatt - cornet on *Then I Close My Eyes*

- David Gilmour - guitar, vocal
- Richard Wright - keyboards
- Guy Pratt - bass, guitar
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Jon Carin - keyboards
- Dick Perry - saxophone
- Steve DiStanislao - drums

Concert at Royal Albert Hall, London - 29th May 2006.

- SIRENE RECORDS (157) 3xCD



> Zoom

Milton Keynes 2017
2017

Soft Machine

Disc 1
- Intro
- Bundles
- In The Back Room
- Band Introduction
- Chloe And The Pirates
- Voyage Beyond Seven
- Song Of Aeolus
- Grape Hound

Disc 2
- The Tale Of Taliesin
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous** [M. Ratledge]
- The Man Who Waved At Trains
- Gesolreut
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]

- John Etheridge - guitar
- Roy Babbington - bass
- Theo Travis - saxophone, flute keyboards
- John Marshall - drums, percussion

Stables Theatre, Milton Keynes, UK 2nd November 2017

- AMITY (AMITY421) 2xCD

- Out Of Season
- The Relegation Of Pluto (Including John Marshall Drum Solo.)
- Tarabos
- Hazard Profile



> Zoom

Maiden Sailing
????

Soft Machine Legacy

-- Ash
- Save For Lee
- Baker's Treat
- 1212
- **Kings & Queens** [H. Hopper]/ Big Creese / **Facelift** [H. Hopper]

- John Marshall - drums
- Hugh Hopper - electric bass
- John Etheridge - electric guitar
- Elton Dean - saxello, alto saxophone, keyboards

- NO LABEL (CLL-001CD) CD



> Zoom

Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte
Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Jazz & Wine Of Peace
2020

Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte

- **The Duchess** [R. Wyatt]
- **You You** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hits the Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Cuckoo Madam** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Band Introduction & Spoken Interlude
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hits the Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **N.I.O. (New Information Order)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Grass** [I. Cutler]
- Spoken Interlude
- **Instant Kitten** [R. Wyatt]
- **Starting in the Middle of the Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away** [D. McRae/R. Wyatt]
- **At Last I am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]

- Johannes Schleiermacher - sax tenore, flauto, sintetizzatore
- Cansu Tanrikulu - voce
- Jörg Hochapfel - organo, chitarra, voce
- Tobias Hoffmann- chitarra
- James Banner - contrabbasso
- Max Andrzejewski - batteria, voce, arrangiamenti

Registrato a Cormòns (Italy), Teatro Comunale, il 22.10.2020.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Going Going Live
(?)

Going Going

- Where But For Caravan Would
- Video Shows
- In The Land of Grey and Pink
- Keep On Caring
- Led It Lay
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers] / Miniluv
- Going For A Song
- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper, K. Ayers, M. Ratledge]
- **We Did It Again [encore]** [K. Ayers]

- Richard Sinclair - guitar & vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mark Hewins - Casio guitar-synth (organ, flute & vibes sounds)
- Vinny Clarke - percussion
- Andy Ward - drums

Recorded Sunday October 14th, 1990 at The Fridge in Brixton, London.

"Going Going was the precursor to Caravan Of Dreams, which consisted of Richard Sinclair on vocals and bass, Mark Hewins on guitar and Andy Ward on drums."
Aymeric Leroy

"This is a "recording of indeterminate origin," i.e. a bootleg. If you buy it from me it'll be the first time anyone in the band has seen a quid from it "
Richard Sinclair.

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format



> Zoom

Wyattando
2022

Wyattando

- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Left of Man** [R. Wyatt]
- **Forest** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Gloria Gloom** [B. MacCormick/R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **God Song [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]**
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- **Beware [K. Mantler]**
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **September the Ninth** [A. Benge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Life Is Sheep** [K. Mantler]
- **The United States Of Amnesia** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- **Team Spirit** [B. MacCormick/ P. Manzanera/R. Wyatt]
- **The Official Robert Wyatt Fun Song Club** [K. Mantler]

- Annie Whitehead - trombone, voce
- Heidi Heidelberg - voce, chitarra
- Mauricio Velasierra - flauto, effetti, cori
- Karen Mantler - organo, voce
- John Greaves - basso, voce
- Chris Cutler - batteria

Registrato presso l'Anfiteatro della Pace, Bari, il 26.8.2022.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Reprises.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME

Reprises ? Covers ?

More information...

AN ALPHABETICAL LIST OF COVER VERSIONS



> Zoom

Elton Dean
1971

Elton Dean

- Ooglenovastrome
- Something Passed Me By
- Blind Badger
- **Neo-Caliban Grides** [E. Dean]
- Part: The Last

- Elton Dean - alto saxophone, saxello, electric piano
- Roy Babbington - bass
- Mark Charig - cornet
- Phil Howard - drums
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ

Recorded live at Advision Studios, London, May 1971.

- CBS (64539) LP
- EPIC (ECPL-46) LP



> Zoom

Bloodrock 3
1971

Bloodrock

- Jessica
- Whiskey Vengeance
- Song For A Brother
- You Gotta Roll
- Breach Of Lease
- Kool-Aid-Kids
- **A Certain Kind** [H. Hopper]
- America, Americ

- Jim Rutledge - lead vocal
- Ed Grundy - bass, vocals
- Rick Cobb - drums, vocals
- Lee Pickens - guitar
- Steve Hill - keyboards, vocals
- Nick Taylor - guitar, vocals

- CAPITOL RECORDS (ST-765) LP



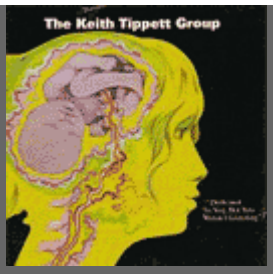
> Zoom 1 2

A Certain Kind/Jessica
1971

Bloodrock

- **A Certain Kind** [H. Hopper]
- Jessica

- CAPITOL RECORDS (2C 006-80.867 M) S



> Zoom 1 2

Dedicated To You,
But You Weren't Listening
1971

The Keith Tippett Group

- This Is What Happens
- Thoughts To Geoff
- Green And Orange Night Park
- Gridal Suite
- Five After Dawn
- **Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening** [E. Dean/H. Hopper/M. Charig]
- Black Horse

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
  on *Five After Dawn*

- Keith Tippett - piano, electric
  piano
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Marc Charig - cornet
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Gary Boyle - guitar
- Neville Whitehead - double
  bass
- Roy Babbington - double
  bass, bass
- Tony Uta - congas, cow bell
- Bryan Spring - drums
- Phil Howard - drums

- VERTIGO (6360 024) LP
- AKAMA-COMET RECORDS
  (AK227) CD
- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS
  (ECLEC 2367) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

A Certain Kind/You Gotta Roll
1971

Bloodrock

- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]
- You Gotta Roll

- CAPITOL RECORDS (3089) S



> Zoom

A Certain Kind/A Certain Kind
1971

Bloodrock

- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]
- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]

Promo edition.

- CAPITOL RECORDS
  (SPRO-6187) S



Zapata

- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]
- Make It All Go [C. Dusey/E. Millis]

- METRO-DOME RECORDS
  (ME-45-1005) S

> Zoom

A Certain Kind/Make It All Go
1972



> Zoom

For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night
1973



> Zoom

Fluence
1975



> Zoom

Concerts
1976

Caravan

- Memory Lain, Hugh
- Headloss
- Hoedown
- Surprise, Surprise
- C'Thlu Thlu
- The Dog, The Dog, He's At It Again
- Be All Right
- Chance Of A Lifetime
- L'Auberge Du Sanglier / A Hunting We Shall Go / Pengola / **Backwards** [M. Ratledge] / A Hunting Shall We Go (Reprise)

- DERAM (SDL-R 12) LP
- DERAM (8829802) CD
- DERAM (UICY-76079) CD

Fluence

- A Few Reasons To Stay - A Few Reasons To Split
- **Barcelona Tango**
- Schizo

Composé par Pascal Comelade, *Barcelona Tango* est un hommage très inspiré aux albums *The End Of An Ear* et *Rock Bottom*.

Album réédité en 2014 sur la compilation de Pascal Comelade My Degeneration Electronics 1974-1983.

Réédition vinyl en 2020 à 750 exemplaires (tirage limité numéroté) sur le label ETATS-UNIS.

- PÔLE RECORDS (PÖLE 0008) LP
- TAPIOCA (TP10012) LP
- ETATS-UNIS (ETAT14) LP

Henry Cow

Disc 1
- Beautiful As the Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- Ottawa Song
- **Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Beautiful As The Moon (reprise)
- Bad Alchemy|Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins

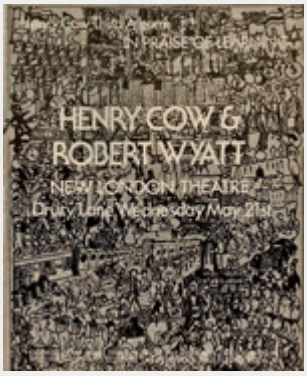
Disc 2
- Oslo
- Groningen
- Udine
- Gronigen Again

- Dagmar Krause - voice, piano on *Ruins*
- Lindsay Cooper - bassoon, flute, oboe
- Tim Hodgkinson - organ, clarinet, alto saxophone
- Fred Frith - guitar, piano
- John Greaves - bass, voice, celeste, piano on *Little Red Riding Hood Hits the Road*
- Chris Cutler - drums

Album réédité en CD en 1995 et en 2006.

- COMPENDIUM (FIDARDO 1) 2xLP
- L'ORCHESTRA (OLD 01-02) 2xLP
- LTM (LM 1011-12) 2xLP
- ARIOLA (800-345-346) 2xLP
- CAROLINE (CAD 3002) 2xLP
- BROADCAST RECORDS (BC2) 2xLP

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

↑



> Zoom

Monster Band
1979

Hugh Hopper

- Golden Section
- Sliding Dogs
- Churchy
- Lily Kong
- **12-8 Theme** [H. Hopper]
- Sliding Dogs
- Lily Kong
- Nozzles Tecalemit
- Get Together
- Nicaragua
- Mediterraneon

Tracks 1-5 (side one)
Recorded 1973 - Conyer, Kent, G.B.

- Hugh Hopper plays all instruments.

Tracks 6-9 (side two)
Recorded live 20.3.1974 - Bordeaux France.

- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - saxello
- Mike Travis
- Jean-Pierre Carolfi - keyboards
- Jean-Pierre Weiller - bass

Album réédité par Culture Press en 1985 (LP) puis en 1996 (CD) et par Gonzo Multimedia en 2013 (CD).

- ATMOSPHERE (IRI 5003) LP
- CULTURE PRESS (CP 2002) LP
- CULTURE PRESS (CP 2002) CD
- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST128CD) CD

↑



> Zoom

Paralelo
1980

Pascal Comelade

- Mouvement Décomposé D'un Coup De Marteau
- **Good-Bye Wyatt Hat**
- Via-Laietana
- Paralelo
- Vertical
- Musique Ridicule
- Politico
- Automne
- Musique Pour Les Ascenseurs
- Erratum Musical
- Nicaragua
- Mediterraneon

- Pascal Comelade - tous les instruments

Good-Bye Wyatt Hat est non seulement un hommage à Robert Wyatt mais également au musicien américain Charles Mingus - très apprécié de R.W. - qui a composé le fameux morceau *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*.

Edition limitée à 1 000 copies.

Album réédité en 2014 sur la compilation de Pascal Comelade My Degeneration Electronics 1974-1983.

Album réédite en 2017 chez Because Music.

- PARASITE (PAR 002) LP
- BECAUSE MUSIC (BEC5543159) 2xLP & CD

↑

Caravan



> Zoom

The Best Of Caravan "Live"
1980

Disc 1
- Introduction - Memory Lain Hugh
- Headloss
- Virgin On The Ridiculous
- Be All Right
- The Love In Your Eye
- Hoedown (Encore)

Disc2
- Introduction - L'Auberge Du Sanglier
- A Hunting We Shall Go
- Backwards [M. Ratledge]
- A Hunting We Shall Go (Reprise)
- Introduction: The Dog, The Dog Is At It Again
- For Richard

- Mike Wedgwood - bass guitar, congas
- Richard Coughlan - drums
- Pye Hastings - guitar, vocals
- David Sinclair - organ, synthesizer Minimoog
- Geoff Richardson - electric viola, guitar, glockenspiel, voice

Recorded at The Fairfield Halls, Croydon, September 1st 1974.

- KINGDOM RECORDS (426002) 2xLP
- VOGUE (426002) 2xLP



> Zoom

Ready-Made
1980

Pascal Comelade

- Again [K. Ayers]
- Éclairage Sur L'Eau
- Again [K. Ayers]
- Canço De Bressol
- Distant Pianos
- San-Salvador

- Pascal Comelade - tous les instruments
- Sissi - voice

Bien que signé "Pascal Comelade", *Canço De Bressol* est une libre adaptation d'Alifib.

Deux adaptations de *Wid Did It Again* présent sur l'album de Soft Machine Vol.1.

Edition limitée à 500 copies.

Album en partie (une seule des deux versions de *Again*) réédité en 2014 sur la compilation de Pascal Comelade My Degeneration Electronics 1974-1983.

- PARASITE (PAR 004) EP



> Zoom

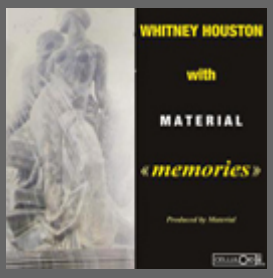
We Dit It Again/And Again
1981

The Modernaires

- We Dit It Again [K. Ayers]
- And Again

- Hugh Hughes - bass
- Dave Baynton-Power - drums
- Phil Bradley - guitar
- Phil Lucking - percussion
- Lea Minshull - Saxophone

- ILLUMINATED RECORDS (ILL4) S



> Zoom 1 2

Memories
1982

Material & Whitney Houston

- Memories [H.Hopper]
- For A Few Dollars More

- Whitney Houston - vocals
- Archie Shepp - tenor saxophone
- Raymond Jones - piano
- Michael Beinhorn -synthesizer
- Bill Laswell - bass
- Yogi Horton - drums

Versions françaises éditées en Single en 1983 puis en EP en 1987 (même référence).

- CELLULOID NEW YORK (CEL NY 193) EP



> Zoom

Memories
1982

Material

- Take A Chance
- I'm The One
- Time Out
- Let Me Have It All
- Come Down
- Holding On
- **Memories** [H.Hopper]
- Don't Lose Control

- Whitney Houston - vocals
- Archie Shepp - tenor saxophone
- Raymond Jones - piano
- Michael Beinhorn -synthesizer
- Bill Laswell - bass
- Yogi Horton - drums

- CELLULOID (CEL 6633) LP
- ELEKTRA (96 02061) LP



> Zoom

Sentimientos
1982

Pascal Comelade

- White Light
- Approximative But Fair
- **Wyatt Ah Um**
- Lettre De Mozart À Sa Petite Cousine
- Still Life With Goldfish
- The Grey Velvet Gentleman
- From DC By PC
- Taking Tiger Mountain
- Habanera
- Carmen
- Avant-Midi
- Sicilia
- **Again**
- White Heat
- Distant Pianos
- Paralelo
- **In A Lebanon Park**
- Courant D'Air Sur Le Pommier Du Japon
- La Opera
- Barretor

- Pascal Comelade - tous les instruments
- Sissi - voice on *Again*

Wyatt Ah Um est un hommage au premier album solo de Robert Wyatt The End Of An Ear. Le titre du morceau est aussi un clin d'oeil à l'album de Charles Mingus Ah Um paru en 1959.

Again est une adaptation de *Wid Did It Again* présent sur l'album de Soft Machine Vol.1.

In A Lebanon Park est une adaptation d'*Alifib* de Rock Bottom.

Edition limitée à 1000 copies.

Album réédité en 2014 sur la compilation de Pascal Comelade My Degeneration Electronics 1974-1983.

Réédition vinyl en 2020 à 750 exemplaires (tirage limité numéroté) sur le label ETATS-UNIS.

- DYS (DYS 05) LP
- ETATS-UNIS (ETAT15) LP



> Zoom

Material & Witney Houston

- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- Take A Chance

Edition française du EP publié à New-York en 1982 avec un morceau différent en face B.

- CELLULOID (CEL1927) S



> Zoom

Memories
1983



> Zoom

Milano Enarmonisto
1984

Pascal Comelade & Bel Canto Orchestra

LIVE 1983
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)
- [Untitled] (Bel Canto Orchestra)

SOLO 1982/1983
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- **[Untitled]** [P. Comelade]
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)
- [Untitled] (Pascal Comelade)

Ce 7ème morceau de la seconde face de la cassette est très inspiré de *Alifib*.

- ADN (TAPES 05) K7



> Zoom

Détail Monochrome
1984

Pascal Comelade

- Fragments
- Park Guell
- Chanson
- Instants Au Bord De La Mer
- Ritmos Del Fedayin
- Bel Canto
- Bolero Cubiste
- Nature Morte Aux Maracas
- **Moment** [P. Comelade]
- Dancing On My Sofa
- Mecano Musical
- Pluie Japonaise
- Note Bleue
- Petite Mélodie

Bien que signé Pascal Comelade, *Moment* est une libre adaptation de *Alifib*.

- LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER (540002) LP



> Zoom

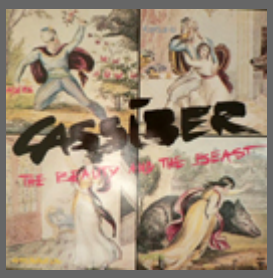
Beauty & The Beast
1984

Cassiber

- Six Rays
- Robert
- Last Call
- Ach Heile Mich
- Haruspices
- Under New Management
- Vengeance Is Dancing
- In Einer Minute
- Und Ich Werde Nicht Mehr Sehe
- Prendre La Lune Avec Les Dents
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]

- Alfred Harth - bass clarinet, trombone, trumpet [pocket], jew's harp, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone
- Chris Cutler - drums, electronic drums, noises, other objects
- Heiner Goebbels - grand piano, synthesizer, bass, electric guitar, tape
- Christoph Anders - synthesizer [Korg], organ, electric guitar, tape [prepared], sequencer, percussion [metal sheets]

- RE RECORDS (Re0110) LP



> Zoom

The Beauty & The Beast
(German Edition)
1984

Cassiber

- Six Rays
- Robert
- Last Call
- Ach Heile Mich
- Haruspices
- Under New Management
- Vengeance Is Dancing
- In Einer Minute
- Und Ich Werde Nicht Mehr Sehe
- Prendre La Lune Avec Les Dents
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]

Edition allemande de l'album sorti la même année chez Re Records.

- RISKANT (RISKANT 4010) LP



> Zoom

Mercy Dash
1985

Hopper / Dean / Tippett / Gallivan

- Intro
- **Calyx** [P. Miller]
- Waffle Dust
- Brass Wind Bells
- Anguishy
- Waffling Again
- Punkom

- CULTUR PRESS (CP 2001) LP
- CULTUR PRESS (3012802) CD
- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST130CD) CD



> Zoom

I Believe
1985

Tears For Fears

- I Believe (A Soulful Re-Recording)
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

- MERCURY (IDEA11) S



> Zoom

The Icicle Works

- Up Here In The North Of England
- It Makes No Difference
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Nature's Way
- Waylaid

- SITUATION TWO (SIT45T) EP

Up Here In The North Of England
1986



> Zoom



> Zoom

Mothers Talk
1986

Tears For Fears

- Mothers Talk
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

- MERCURY (884 638-7) S



> Zoom

Bel Canto
1986

Pascal Comelade

- Blue Afternoon
- Une Andalouse Sur La Pelouse
- La Lluna. Etc...
- Petit Ballet Mécanique
- **Chanson Pop (= *Alifib*)** [R. Wyatt]
- Ricard Vines Sings The Blues
- Peluqueria Futurista
- Giulietta
- Souvenirs De Vernet-Les-Bains
- 96 Tears At Jazz Colon
- Sardane Ralentie
- Sophisticated Zazie
- Opérette De 2 Notes
- Fragment D'Un Concerto Pour Triangle
- Bésame Mucho
- Rayures Venitiennes
- L'air Des Bijoux
- Still I'm Sad

- Pascal Comelade - instruments

- Laurent Churet - guitars, drums
- Cathy Claret - flutes, toy drums, marimba
- Patrick "Alcazar" Chenière - guitars, violin
- Fabrice Pialet - tenor sax (3,11)
- Bruno Leguen - drums (3)
- Pierre Bastien - cello, trombone, violin, trumpets
- Bérénice Levy - clarinet (14)

- LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER (DSA54006) LP
- G3G RECORDS (G3PC7) CD couplé avec Détail Monochrome (2002)

Critiques/Reviews

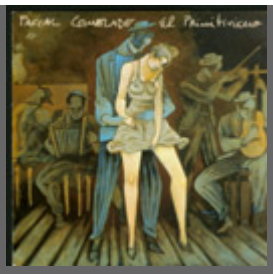


> Zoom

Détail Monochrome
Bel Canto
2002

Pascal Comelade

- Valse De La Demoiselle Aux Yeux Verts



> Zoom

El Primitivismo
1987

- Syldavian Rapsodie
- Petenera
- La Dansa De Castellterçol
- Rue Des Soeurs Noires
- La Notte Di Blu (Standard)
- Les Dimanches Au Palmarium
- Jac B. And His Dancing Dogs
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Amarcord
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- Your Labios As Tulips
- Brune On Brune
- Sweet Little Sixteen
- Ball De l'Aliga
- Lieberslied
- El Cant Dels Ocells
- Volando Voy
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]

- Pascal Comelade - guitare, plastic accordéon, violon, mandoline sur *O Caroline* (9), tous les instruments sur *Memories* et grand piano sur *O Caroline* (19)

- Laurent Sinclair - piano (11)
- Noémi Martinez - guitare (19)
- Gat - tambourin, verre en cristal (19)
- Jordi Agelaga - hautbois, cromone (19)
- Victor Nubla - clarinette basse, clarinette (19)
- Juan Creek - saxophones barytons (19)

Les titres *O Caroline* (9), *Amarcord* (10) et *Memories* (11) sont présents seulement sur le CD paru en 1992.

- LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER (DSA54011) LP
- LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER (CDSA54011) CD



> Zoom

Mimi 86
1987

Festival M.I.M.I 86

- Big Be Big (Purely Purgative Blues) (The Remotobs)
- Blanc (Etron Fou Leloublan)
- Trente Et Un (Joseph Racaille et l'Ensemble Guillaume de Rachaux)
- Making Seek And Hide (Fred Frith)
- The Way Things Fall (Skeleton Crew)
- Idyllic Rhythms (part II) (Regular Music)
- Trahi Ton Secret (Virgule IV)
- Post-Polar (Les Batteries)
- **Chanson Pop (= Alifib) (Pascal Comelade Et Le Bel Canto Orquestra)** [R. Wyatt]
- Park Güell (Pascal Comelade et le Bel Canto Orquestra)

Premier Festival MIMI aux Arènes Coinon à Saint-Rémy-de-Provence entre le 3 et le 6 juillet 1986

- DISQUES INOUI/OBLIQUES MUSIQUE (06910 4680) LP

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Various Artists .



> Zoom

Impressionnismes
1988

Pascal Comelade

- Blue Afternon
- La Lluna etc.
- Brune On Brune
- Petit ballet mécanique
- Sophisticated Zazie
- La Dansa De Castellterçol
- Syldavian Rapsodie
- Ricardo Vines Sings The Blues
- Peluqueria Futurista
- 96 Tears At Jazz Colon
- Sardane Ralentie
- Ball De L'Aliga
- Liebeslied
- Giulietta
- Penetera (Honky Tonk Women)
- La Notte Di Blu
- Besame mucho
- Jac B. And His Dancing Dolls
- **O, Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Stazione Termini
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]

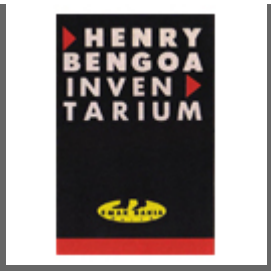
Compilation japonaise.

- EVA/WAVE (29 EVA 2004) CD

Ruper Ordorika

- Antzinako Lekuetan
- Hung Up
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Ana Juanixe

- Ruper Ordorika - guitar, voice
- Nando de la Casa - rhythm K & keyboards
- Alberto de la Casa - bass



> Zoom 1 2

Henry Bengoa Inventarium
1988

- Bernardo Atxaga & Jose Mari Iturralde - readers

Performance based on scripts and lyrics by Bernardo Atxaga as well as music sections and songs.

- ELKAR (k-192) Cassette



> Zoom

The Early Years
1988

Bon Scott With The Valentines

- To Know You Is To Love You
- She Said
- Every Day I Have To Cry
- I Can't Dance With You
- Peculiar Hole In The Sky
- **Love Makes Sweet Music** [K. Ayers]
- I Can Hear Raindrops
- Why Me
- Sooky Sooky

- Bon Scott , vocals
- Bruce Abbott - bass
- Warwick Finlay - drums
- Wyn Milson - guitar
- Ted Ward - guitar, bass
- Vince Lovegrove - vocals

Compilation.

- C5 RECORDS (C5-520) LP



> Zoom

Live À Victoriaville
1988

Heiner Goebbels /Alfred 23 Harth

- Los Campesinos
- The Ballad Of The Durable Grey Goose / Ballade Von Der Haltbaren Graugans
- The Laughing And The Crying Man / Der Lachende Und Der Weinende Mensch
- Lightning Over Moscow / Blitze Über Moskau
- Imagine You're A Dolphin / Stell Dich Vor, Du Bist Ein Dolphin
- On Suicide / Über Den Selbsmord
- Le Rappel Des Oiseaux
- The Peking Opera / Peking Oper
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]

- Heiner Goebbels - piano, synthesizer, clarinet, tenor saxophone, chinese violin, percussion, voice
- Alfred 23 Harth - tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, bass clarinet, trombone, clarinet, trumpet

Enregistré Live au 5ème Festival de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville, le vendredi 2 Octobre 1987 par Radio-Canada.

- LES DISQUES VICTO (VICTO04) LP
- LES DISQUES VICTO (VICTOcd04) CD



> Zoom

Double Bummer
1988

Bongwater

Disc 1
- Lesbians Of Russia
- Frank
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]
- Homer
- Joy Ride
- Decadent Iranian Country Club
- David Bowie Wants Ideas
- Rock & Roll Part 2
- Just May Be The One
- There You Go
- Shark
- Jimmy
- Crime
- Pornography
- Pew

- Kramer - vocals, instruments
- David Licht - drums
- Ann Magnuson - vocals, instruments
- Dave Rick - guitar

- SHIMMY DISC (011) 2xLP

Disc 2
- Dazed & Chinese
- Bullaby
- So Help Me God
- His Old Look
- Stone
- Number
- Love You Too
- Reaganation
- Double Birth
- Bruce
- Pool
- Rain



> Zoom

Double Bummer +
1989

Bongwater

Disc 1
FIRST BUMMER
- Lesbians Of Russia
- Frank
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]
- Homer
- Joy Ride
- Decadent Iranian Country Club
- David Bowie Wants Ideas
- Rock & Roll Part 2

SECOND BUMMER
- Just May Be The One
- There You Go
- Shark
- Jimmy
- Crime
- Pornography
- Pew

THIRD BUMMER
- Dazed & Chinese
- Bullaby
- So Help Me God
- His Old Look
- Stone
- Number

Disc 2
FINAL BUMMER
- Love You Too
- Reaganation
- Double Birth
- Bruce
- Pool
- Rain

DOUBLE BUMMER EPILOGUE
-Havana
- Pentagon
- Trtuh

BREAKING NO NEW GROUND
- Ride My See-Saw
- Barely Coping
- 4 Sticks
- U.S.O.
- His New Look
- Julia

THE 7'' SINGLE
- You Don't Love Me Yet
- The Porpoise Song

- Kramer - vocals, instruments
- David Licht - drums
- Ann Magnuson - vocals, instruments
- Dave Rick - guitar

Compilation avec des inédits.

- SHIMMY DISC EUROPE
  (SDE 8901/DCD) 2xCD



> Zoom

Songs From Home
1989

Dimthingshine

- Tra La
- Ten Feet Off The Ground
- The Core
- A Example
- B Example
- Alicia
- Rain Song (Frog Opera)
- Escalate
- Duet Song
- **Amber And The Amberines** [R. Wyatt]
- Swan Dive
- It's Nice To Be With You
- Zenaida
- Lava
- Elunde

All music recorded between 1983-1988.

- THINGSFLUX MUSIC
  (TF-8889CASS) Cassette

- Cave Pep
- A Cane And A High Starched Collar
- Sun Baked Pee Stains And Puevic Hair
- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]
- Unreleased Zep
- Chun-Taryon
- The Model
- A Long Introduction
- Popular Poles / Worthy Opponents
- LMC3
- In Heaven
- Street Poems I & II
- Zerefunk



> Zoom

Too Much Sleep
1990

Bongwater

- The Living End
- The Drum
- Mr. and Mrs. Hell
- Too Much Sleep
- Talent Is a Vampire
- The Bad Review
- Ill Fated Lovers Go Time Tripping
- Psychedelic Sewing Room
- Splash I
- He Loved the Weather
- Teena Stays the Same
- One Hand on the Road
- Then the Babies Return
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- Khomeini Died Tonight
- One So Black
- No Trespassing

- Kramer - backing vocals, instruments
- Ann Magnuson - lead vocals, instruments
- Dave Rick - guitar

- SHIMMY DISC (031) LP & CD
- SHIMMY DISC EUROPE (SDE 9017 CD) CD



> Zoom

Double Bummer /
Breaking No New Ground
1990

Bongwater

Disc 1
FIRST BUMMER
- Lesbians Of Russia
- Frank
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]
- Homer
- Joy Ride
- Decadent Iranian Country Club
- David Bowie Wants Ideas
- Rock & Roll Part 2

SECOND BUMMER
- Just May Be The One
- There You Go
- Shark
- Jimmy
- Crime
- Pornography
- Pew

THIRD BUMMER
- Dazed & Chinese
- Bullaby
- So Help Me God
- His Old Look
- Stone
- Number

Disc 2
FINAL BUMMER
- Love You Too
- Reaganation
- Double Birth
- Bruce
- Pool
- Rain

DOUBLE BUMMER EPILOGUE
-Havana
- Pentagon
- Trtuh

BREAKING NO NEW GROUND
- Ride My See-Saw
- Barely Coping
- 4 Sticks
- U.S.O.
- His New Look
- Julia

THE 7'' SINGLE

- Kramer - backing vocals, instruments
- Ann Magnuson - lead vocals, instruments
- Dave Rick - guitar

- SHIMMY DISC (001/012) 2xCD

- You Don't Love Me Yet
- The Porpoise Song



> Zoom

Ez Da Posible
1990

Ruper Ordorika

- Urtaroa
- Ez Da Posible
- Zaldiak Negarrez
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Baltsean
- Ene Begiek
- Ene Herrian
- Gizona
- Benetan
- On Gizona Naiz
- Aspaldian
- Fas Fatum

Réédition CD en 1996 puis en 2005.

- GASA (4GA-0414) LP
- GASA (0630158672) CD



> Zoom

September Songs
1990

Horse Latitudes

- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- What Is More Than Life
- Baby Don't Go
- Harvest Days
- Thrown Away
- Building Mansions (That Will Fall)
- Northen Country Lie
- I Can't Stop Loving You
- [Untitled]

- Robert Grace - drums
- Derek Parker - acoustic guitar
- Chris Clarke - bass
- Wilson N. Scott -electric guitar

Last track is an unlisted/untitled instrumental reprise.

- CHERRY RED (LP MRED 90) LP
- CHERRY RED (LP BRED 90) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Haunted Chateau 1969
1990 (?)

Gong

- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein Jam
- Hello There
- Tropical Fish
- Bloomdido's Rap
- Dreaming It
- Hypnotize Yer
- Mama Maya Mantrum
- **Why Are We Sleeping** [K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- I Am Your Fantasy
- Gongsong
- Est Que Je Suis
- Ali Ba Ba
- Big City Cat
- Zero And The Spell Of The Good Witch

- Daevid Allen
- Gilli Smyth
- Didier Malherbe
- Rachid Houari
- Christian Tritsch
- Daniel Laloux (left March 1970)

+ possibly

- Dieter Gewissler? (left end of 1969)
- Gerry Fields? (from Jan 1970)
- Barre Phillips?
- Tasmin Smyth?

Live 1969 & Réhearsals in Haunted Chateau.

December 1969 : "Gong (minus Gerry Field, who moves to London) settle in Château du Thiel (nicknamed "haunted château") near Bernay in Normandy (France), family seat of the Laperrousaz family, offered to Gong as temporary winter accommodation after the festival of Amougies.
They rehearse there over Christmas and "despite the unsympathetic presence of the ancestral ghost", create "Est-Ce Que Je Suis?", "Hyp Hyp Hypnotise Ya", and "It's The Time Of Your Life".
They also shoot additional sequences for the Amougies film." *[calyx-canterbury.fr]*

- OFFERSONGS/ GAZ RECORDS - Cassette



> Zoom

Haïkus De Pianos
1991

Pascal Comelade

- Tango Del Rossello
- Smoke On The Water
- Egyptian Reggae
- Let Me Try
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- Rue Des Soeurs Noires
- Your Labios As Tulips
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- C'Era Una Volta Il West
- Love Theme From Ben-Hur
- Mexican Theme From Rio Bravo
- Nocturn, A Joan Salvat-Papasseit
- Souvenir De Vernet-Les-Bains
- The Sad Skinhead
- Good-Bye Pork-Pie-Hat
- Greenlands
- Abril 74
- Valse De L'Aiguille Creuse
- 4 Roses Pour Marie
- Marcha Mora
- Amarcord
- I Surrender
- Besame Mucho
- 96 Tears
- Les Humeurs De Catherine

- Pascal Comelade - grand piano, toy piano

- EVA/WAVE (WWCX 2038) CD
- LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER (CDSA 54020) CD



Dedicated To You,
But You Weren't Listening
1992

The More Extended Versions

- **Dedicated To You But You Weren´t Listening|Why Are We Sleeping** [H. Hopper-K. Ayers/M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **Stalin Wasn´t Stalling** [B. Johnson]
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- **The British Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Chairman Mao** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- **Justice** [C. Cutler / L. Cooper]
- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]

- Sigrid Ecker - voc
- Christof Kurzmann - voc, ss, as, omnichord, samp, (git on 1)
- Helmut Heiland - git, bass, loop, dr-computer program
- Mex Wolfsteiner - drums

- NOT ON LABEL (EV0003) CD



> Zoom

Je Ne Fum' Pas Des Bananes
1992

Daevid Allen/Banana Moon Band/Gong

- Intro (Daevid Allen)
- Pretty Miss Titty (Banana Moon Band)
- Rich Girl (Banana Moon Band)
- Un Œuf For You (Banana Moon Band)
- My Mother's Gone To India / Hare Krishna / Time Of The Green Banana / Remember The Name (Banana Moon Band)
- La Belle Cérébrale (Daevid Allen/François Bayle)
- Est-Ce Que Je Suis (Garçon Ou Fille) (Gong)
- Hyp Hypnotise You (Gong)
- Goldilox (Daevid Allen)
- Why Do You Come Knocking At My Door ? (Daevid Allen)
- Rock'N'Roll Angel (Daevid Allen)
- **Why Are We Sleeping? (Banana Moon Band)** [K. Ayers/R. Wyatt/M. Ratledge]
- French Garden (Banana Moon Band)
- French Garden (Banana Moon Band)
- Pretty Miss Titty (Daevid Allen)
- Pretty Miss Titty (Banana Moon Band)
- Gong Song (Daevid Allen)
- Je Ne Fume Pas Des Bananes (Banana Moon Band)
- Je Ne Fume Pas Des Bananes (Daevid Allen)

- Daevid Allen - guitar, lead vocals
- Patrick Fontaine - bass
- Marc Blanc - drums
- Gilli Smyth - vocals

- LEGEND MUSIC (KZLM15011)CD
- LEGEND MUSIC (LM 9013) CD
- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST188CD) CD



> Zoom

BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert
1992

Kevin Ayers And The Whole World

- Lady Rachael
- May I
- **Clarence In Wonderland** [K. Ayers]
- Whatevershebringswesing
- There Is Loving
- Margaret
- Colores Para Dolores
- Crazy Gift Of Time
- **Why Are We Sleeping** [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]

une version vinyl existe en bootleg (No Label) qui indique la date d'enregistrement par la BBC le 6/1/1972 au Paris Theatre London. Ces précisions sont absentes des notes de la version CD.

- WINDSONG INTERNATIONAL (WIN CD 018) CD



> Zoom

Double Up
1992

Phil Miller/Fred Baker

- Above & Below
- Underdub
- For Christine
- Second Sight
- Eastern Region
- Loggerheads
- **Calyx** [P. Miller]
- Green & Purple
- **God Song** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]

- CRESCENT DISCS (CD1CD) CD



> Zoom

More Sad Hits
1992

Damon & Naomi

- E.T.A.
- Little Red Record Co.
- Information Age
- Laika
- This Car Climbed Mt. Washington
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- Astrafiammante
- Boston's Daily Temperature
- (Scene Change)
- Sir Thomas And Sir Robert
- Once More
- This Changing World

- Damon, Naomi and Kramer - all intsruments and vocals

- SHIMMY DISC (SHIMMY 058) LP
- SUB POP (SPCD 385) CD
- RYKODISC (RCD 10439) CD
- 20|20|20 (202020.06) CD
- 20|20|20 (202020.06LP) LP





> Zoom

United Kingdoms
1993

Ultramarine

- Source
- Kingdom
- Queen Of The Moon
- Prince Rock
- Happy Land
- Urf
- English Kitten
- **Instant Kitten** [R. Wyatt]
- Badgers
- Hooter
- Dizzy Fox
- No Time

- BLANCO Y NEGRO
  (4509-93425-2) CD
- WARNER MUSIC (WMC5-643) CD
- SIRE/GIANT (9 24528-2) K7

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

Live
1993

Short Wave

- The Fox
- Saiseyes
- Frankly Speaking
- The Balladin
- 2 P.M.
- Partout
- Midnight Judo
- Shuffle Demons
- **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller]
- VZG
- Et Alors...

- Didier Malherbe - alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Phil Miller - guitar, guitar synthesizer

Recorded at Studio de Chennevières, New - Morning, A l'Ouest de la Grosne, Perpignan & Lille Jazz Festival (October 1992).

- GIMINI MUSIC (GM 1003) CD



> Zoom

An Evening Of Magic
1993

Richard Sinclair's Caravan Of Dreams

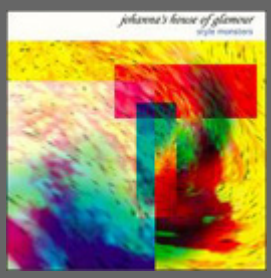
Disc 1
- In The Land Of Grey And Pink
- Only The Brave / Plan It Earth
- Share It
- Videos
- Heather
- Going For A Song
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Nine Feet Underground

Disc 2
- Felafel Shuffle
- Keep On Caring
- Cruising
- Emily
- Halfway Between Heaven & Earth
- It Didn't Matter Anyway
- Golf Girl

- Richard Sinclair - vocals, guitar
- Andy Ward - drums
- Rick Biddulph - bass, backing vocals
- Dave Sinclair - Korg M1, B3 Hammond organ

Recorded at Teatro Verdi, Genova, 26th March 1993

- MELLOW RECORDS (MMP 160)
  2xCD
- HTD RECORDS (HTD CD 17)
  2xCD



> Zoom

Style Monsters
1993

Johanna's House Of Glamour

- When You Do
- Industrial Beach
- Don't Believe In Miracles
- Incognito
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Slow Verse And Rhyme
- Liquid Treasure
- I Wonder If You Ever Wonder
- Love
- What's So Wrong About The Truth
- Tumbling Down
- Fresh And Tense
- Not In The Least
- Thick And Thin
- How Little It Takes

- C'EST LA MORT RECORDS
  (CLM 045-2) CD



> Zoom

Ce Monde Sauvage
1993

Faubert

- Ce monde sauvage
- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]

Single accompagnant la sortie du LP Faubert.

- BMG (74321143942) S



> Zoom

Ce Monde Sauvage (RCA Edition)
1993

Faubert

- Ce monde sauvage
- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]

Single accompagnant la sortie du LP Faubert.

- RCA (74321143942) S



> Zoom

Moon In June/Cowboy Song
1993

John Wesley Harding And The Monks Of Doom / Junk Monkeys

- Moon In June [R. Wyatt]
- Cowboy Song

- David Immerglück - guitar, vocals
- Victor Krummenacher - bass, vocals
- Greg Lisher - guitar
- Chris Pedersen - drums

Promo Version.

Cowboy Song by Junk Monkey is a Thin Lizzy cover.

- SIRE RECORDS (5965) S



> Zoom

Pascal Comelade

- Honky Tonk Women (Jagger/ Richards)
- The Way I Walk (Scott Jack)
- Let Me Try (Mc5)
- It's All Over Now, Baby Blue (Dylan Bob)
- Brand New Cadillac (Taylor Vince)
- Yo Quiero (Cooder Ry)
- Egyptian Reggae (Richman Jonathan)
- Les Yeux Noirs (Traditionnel)
- Sunny Afternoon (Davies Ray)
- Le Sacre Du Printemps (Stravinsky Igor/Duchamp Marcel)
- L'été Indien (Dassin Joe)

- LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER (DELABEL 394272) CD



Danses Et Chants
De Syldavie
1994

- The Third Man Theme (Karas Anton)
- C'est Un Parc (Manset Gerard)
- Mexican Theme From Rio Bravo (Tiomkin Dimitri)
- Zuhalter Ballade (Weill Kurt)
- Le Temps Des Cerises (Clément Jean-Baptiste)
- Ti Amo (Tozzi Umberto)
- Amapola (Chamfleury/Lacallo/ Cauvat)
- The Godfather Waltz (Rota Nino)
- La Bella Ciao (Traditionnel Italien)
- Besame Mucho (Velasquez Consuelo)
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- The Sad Skinhead "Faust"
- Moulin Rouge (Buckley Tim)
- Put A Straw Under Baby (Eno)
- I Surrender (Suicide)
- L'air Des Bijoux "Igor Wagner"
- Dali's Car (Van Vliet Don)
- It Hurts Me Too (James Elmore)
- The Midnight Special (Traditionnel)



> Zoom

Round About Wyatt
1994

Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions

- **Round Midnight** [T. Monk/Williams/ Hanighen]
- How We Could Just Kill A Man
- Racist Friend
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- **Born Again Cretin!** [R. Wyatt]
- **Jelly, Babies** [R. Wyatt]
- Kingdom
- Moments Of Delight
- **Venti Latir** [R. Wyatt]

- WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT (SF142) CD



> Zoom

Tatay
1994

Gorky's Zygotic Mynci

- Thema o gartref
- Beth sy'n digwydd i'r buwch
- Tatay
- Y Ffordd Oren
- Gwres Prynhawn
- Amsermaemaiyndod/cinema
- **O, Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Naw. E. Pimp
- Kevin Ayers
- When you Hear the Captain Sing
- O, Caroline
- Tatay (moog mix)
- Anna Apera
- Gegin Nos
- Silff Ffenest
- Backward Dog

Bonus Tracks Japanese Release

- Suzanne
- Monica
- Electric Sailor
- Cinemair

- ANKST (047) CD

Soft Machine

- Fanfare
- All White
- **Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]
- M.C.
- Drop
- Stumble
- L.B.O.
- As If
- Riff

- Mike Ratledge - electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - electric bass
- John Marshall - drums
- Karl Jenkins - saxophone, keyboards, electric piano

Recorded on July 20, 1972 at The Paris Theatre - London.



> Zoom

BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert
1994

- WINDSONG INTERNATIONAL (WINCD056) CD



> Zoom

'Live 73
1995

Paragong

- Camembert Psilocybin Flashback
- **Porquoi Dormons Nous? (The Gnome Rock Dispensation)** [Blake, Hillage, Howlett, Malherbe, Moerlin]

- Tim Blake - synths, harmonica, vocals
- Setve Hillage - guitar, vocals
- Mike Howlett - bass
- Didier Malherbe - saxophones
- Pierre Moerlin - drums, percussion

Bien que crédité [Blake, Hillage, Howlett, Malherbe, Moerlin], ce morceau est une (très) libre adaptation de *Why Are We Sleeping?* de [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt].

- GAS RECORDS (A GAS CD 002) CD



> Zoom

Caveman Hughscore
1995

Caveman Hughscore

- A Rabbit Or A Lemon
- More Than Nothing
- Maja Raja
- Dee Dum
- Scooter Trash
- Dust My Mind
- Splinter Cat / Edorian
- A Small Seed
- **Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening** [H. Hopper]
- Virtual Cats
- Oregon Transplant
- Freak Control
- Extra Lung
- Sasquatch Elevator
- Panic

- Hugh Hopper - double speed bass
- Fred Chalenor - double speed bass
- Elaine DiFalco - vocals

- TIM/KERR (TK95CD093) CD



> Zoom

1971-1974 - Pre-Modernist Wireless On Radio :
The Peel Sessions
1995

Gong

- Magick Brother
- **Clarence In Wonderland** [K. Ayers]
- Tropical Fish / Selene
- You Can't Kill Me
- Radio Gnome Direct Broadcast
- Crystal Machine
- Zero The Hero And The Orgasm Witch
- Captain Capricorns Dream Saloon / Radio Gnome Invisible
- Oily Way

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Kevin Ayers - guitar, vocals
- Christian Tritsch - bass
- Gilli Smyth - vocals
- Didier Malherbe - saxophone
- Pip Pyle - drums

Session recorded on 9 November 1971 for John Peel on the Sounds of the Seventies show on BBC Radio 1 (broadcast on the 17th november 1971).

- STRANGE FRUIT (SFR CD 137) CD



> Zoom

Unsettled Scores
1995

Various Artists

Disc 1
- The True Wheelbase / Coco Boudakian (Medley) (Forever Einstein)
- Hobart Got Burned (Kit Watkins & Coco Roussel)
- Onde Crepusculaire (Doctor Zero)
- Ubik (Peter Frohmader)
- Enfield In Summer (Piero Milesi)
- Transsibérien (Philharmonie)
- Unna (Hugh Hopper)
- A Moral Dilemma For Our Times (Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic)
- Promenade Sous Zéro (Miriodor)
- Meccano Pelorus (Phil Miller)
- The March (Or Ornette Went To Cecil's House, But Left After About 10 Minutes) (Henry Kaiser & Friends)

Disc 2
- Bulgarian Flying Spirit Dances (Happy Family)
- Dedicated To K.C. (Djam Karet)
- Pain Waits Till 5pm (Present C.O.D. Performance)
- They Walk Among Us (Richard Pinhas & John Livengood)
- Miniluv (David Borden)
- Three Curiously Insubstantial Duets, No. III (Volapük)
- Summer Walk (Rattlemouth)
- Piége (PFS)
- Complainte (George Cartwright)
- **Carousel, Dedicated To Hugh (U Totem)** [P. Meyer/H. Hopper]
- Get Moose And Squirrel (Virgil Moorefield)
- She Wears Her Dead Mother's Hat (The Muffins)
- Dyed (C.W. Vrtacek)

- James Grigsby - bass, guitar
- Eric Johnson-Tamai - bassoon
- Emily Hay - flute, voice
- Sanjay Kumar - keyboards
- David Kerman - percussion

Dedicated To Hugh is a cover of *Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening.*

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (RUNE 75/76) 2xCD



Live 14th December 1994
1995

Mirage

Disc 1
- The Great Marsh
- Rhayader|Rhayader Goes To Town
- Song Within A Song
- Speed Of Light
- In Dreams
- Tell Me
- Skylines
- Nine Feet Underground (excerpt)
- Caravan Medley (includ. Wraiks And Ladders)
- All Aboard
- Where But For Caravan Would I
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- The Love In Your Eye
- Backwards
- A Hunting We Shall Go

Disc 2
- Never Let Go
- Lizard On A Rock
- The Sleeper
- Timepiece
- For Richard
- Journey
- Freefall
- Lunar Sea
- Gunblasters

- Pete Bardens - keyboards, vocals
- Andy Ward - drums, percussions
- Dave Sinclair - keyboards
- Jimmy Hastings - saxes, flute
- Pye Hastings - guitars, vocals
- Rick Biddulph - bass, vocals
- Steve Adams - guitar, vocals

Recorded at the Manchester Apollo on 14/12/1994.

- MIRAGE MUSIC (MM001CD) 2xCD

Henry Cow

Disc 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners|Nirvana For Mice|

Version CD du double-album publié en 1976.



> Zoom

Concerts (1995 Reissue)
1995

Ottawa Song|**Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick] |Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy|Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Gronigen Again

Disc 2
- Oslo
- Off the Map
- Cafe Royal
- Keeping Warn In Winter|Sweet Heart Of Mine
- Udine

Bonus tracks pour cette réédition CD : *Off the Map*, *Cafe Royal* et *Keeping Warn In Winter|Sweet Heart Of Mine*

- EAST SIDE DIGITAL (80822) 2xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

Fanfare
1995

Eric Matthews

- Fanfare
- Lids, Nails, Screws
- **A Certain Kind** [H. Hopper}
- Distant Mother Reality (S.H. Mix)

- Eric Matthews - organ, bass, voice, piano
- Tony Lash - drums

- SUB POP (SP 319) EP



> Zoom

Live In France
1995

Soft Machine

- Plain Tiffs
- All White
- **Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]
- Drop
- M.C.
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous** [M. Ratledge]
- **Facelift** [M. Ratledge]
- And Sevens
- As If
- LBO
- Pigling Bland
- At Sixes

- Elton Dean - saxello, alto sax Rhodes piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- John Marshall - drums
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ

Recorded at L'Olympia, Paris, on 1972-05-02.

- ONE WAY RECORDS (OW 31445) 2xCD



> Zoom

Llanfwrog
1995

Gorky's Zygotic Mynci

- Miss Trudy
- Eira
- Methu Aros Tan Haf
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]

- ANKST (CD 056) CD
- ANKST (ANKST 056) EP

Cassiber



> Zoom

Beauty & The Beast (Reedition)
1995

- Six Rays
- Robert
- Last Call
- Ach Heile Mich
- Haruspices
- Under New Management
- Vengeance Is Dancing
- In Einer Minute
- Und Ich Werde Nicht Mehr Sehe
- Prendre La Lune Avec Les Dents
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- (silence)
- Time Running Out

Reedition de l'album Beauty & The Beast paru en 1984, enrichi du morceau *Time Running Out*.

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR CCD3) CD
- ReR MEGACORP (ReR CCD2) CD

↑



> Zoom

Clapham Junction
1996

Serious Solid Swineheard Is Better Than Homecooked

- Terry in the bass
- Chamber Music (Along The River)
- Häppi Huberts Potpürree Ensemble
- Buddy & Soul
- Krach
- Words Of Dylan Thomas
- Same procedure
- **Memories** [H. Hopper}
- Sultan Sinhan
- Englische Besonderheiten In Form Eines halben Walzers
- God Bless The (trigger-gate) Piano
- Straßenzustandsgericht

- AMF MUSIC (AMF 1046) CD

↑



> Zoom

Singing The Bruise
The BBC Sessions 1970-72
1996

Kevin Ayers

- Why Are We Sleeping?
- You Say You Like My Hat
- Gemini Chile
- Lady Rachel
- Derby Day
- Interview
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]
- Oyster And The Flying Fis
- Butterfly Dance
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Falling In Love Again
- Queen Thing

- Robert Wyatt - drums, backing vocals

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- David Bedford - piano
- Mike Ratledge - organ
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Elton Dean - alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, harmonica
- Nick Evans - trombone
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- BAND OF JOY RECORDS (BOJCD 019) CD
- VIRGIN (72438 45208 2 3) CD
- STRANGE FRUIT (72438 45208 2 3) 2xLP

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

↑



Saturnine, Marshall, & Lunatic
1996

Tears For Fears

- Johnny Panic And The Bible Of Dreams
- Big Chair
- Schrodinger's Cat
- My Life In The Suicide Ranks
- When in Love With A Blind Man
- Pharaohs
- Deja Vu & The Sins Of Science
- Marauders
- Tears Roll Down
- New Star
- Body Wah
- Lord of Karma
- Bloodletting Go
- Always In The Past

- FONTANA (528 114-2) CD

- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- Ashes To Ashes
- Empire Building
- Way You Are



> Zoom

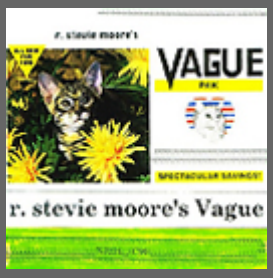
Introducing
Gorky's Zygotic Mynci
1996

Gorky's Zygotic Mynci

- Merched Ya Neod Gwalt Eu Gilydd (Girls Doing Each Other's Hari)
- If Fingers Were Xylophones
- Pentree Wrth y Mor (Village by the Sea)
- Game of Eyes
- Kevin Ayers
- Miss Trudy
- Why Are We Sleeping? [K. Ayers/M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- Y Ffordd Oren (The Orange Way)
- Meth Aros Tan Haf (Can't Wait Till Summer)
- Era
- Lechyd Da (Good Health)
- Moon Beats Yellow

Compilation 1994-1995.

- MERCURY (314 532 816-2) CD
- MERCURY (MECT 114) K7



> Zoom

Vague
1996

R. Stevie Moore

Disc 1
WANDERING, UNCLEAR AND NEBULOUS
- Introduction
- Objectivity
- Love Is Dead, Pal
- Tom Wasted
- Hypotenuse #1
- Precious and Few
- My Girlfriend Rules
- Vague
- Hypotenuse #2
- No Flat Cola
- Mama Remembers
- Glee Club
- Displeasure Leisure
- Torture Us
- So Young
- Str Trk (Ng)

Bonus tracks
- Red Chair Fade Away (inst)
- Red Chair Fade Away (vcl)
- What's Happening?? (alt version)
- Electric Guitar Lesson #2
- God Song (live WFMU) [P. Miller/ R. Wyatt]
- Carey (inst)
- Rose Garden (dub version)
- Love Is A Hurtin' Thing (inst)
- Love Is A Hurtin' Thing (vcl extract)
- Love Is A Hurtin' Thing

Disc 2
WOOLY, LAX OR NAIVE
- Profound Trivia
- Red Chair Fade Away
- God Song [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Sleepwalking
- Obj
- Painted Plaque
- Carey
- Mickey Dismantled (Maris the Spider)
- In And Of Itself
- That Said....
- I Don't Want To Be With You (When You're Like This)
- Vague
- Mind Your Own Business D5
- Mind Your Own Business HW
- Cathy's Clown
- Cool Daddio (by Grinknon Band)
- Letterhead (to my house)

Bonus tracks
- Objectivity Megamix Pt. 1
- Objectivity Megamix Pt. 2
- So Young (Students take 1)
- Who's That Knockin' On My Door?
- My Girlfriend Rules (inst)

- (NJ224) 2xCD & K7 (C100)

- My Girlfriend Rules (vcl)
- Precious And Few (inst)
- Byrd Bed
- Roger calls
- Silly Love (vcls)



> Zoom

Negative Capability...
Check It Out!
1996

Urinals

- Dead Flowers
- Hologram
- Last Days Of Man Earth
- Surfin' With The Shah
- Black Hole
- I'm White And Middle Class
- I'm A Bug
- Ack Ack Ack Ack
- Sex
- Go Away Girl
- U
- Scholastic Aptitude
- I Hate
- She's A Drone
- Male Masturbation
- Return Of Jake Boodler, The
- Presence Of Mind
- Sex - (Acousitc)
- I'm Like You
- Orange Anal Sin
- Salmonella
- I'm A Bug
- Ack Ack Ack Ack
- Mr. Encore
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- Shape Of Things To Come
- You're Gonna Miss Me
- Hologram
- Jetsons Main Theme
- Don't Make Me Kill Again
- You Piss Me Off

- AMPHETAMINE REPTILE (045) CD
- WARNING LABEL RECORDS (WLR003) CD



> Zoom

Forever
1997

Dune

- Who Wants To Live Forever
- 9 Pm Abbey Road
- Somebody
- One Moment
- Against All Odds
- The Promise
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Little Princess
- The Power Of Love
- Works
- Nothing Compares 2 U
- Variations
- Hide And Seek
- Forever
- Winter Kills
- Reprise

- ORBIT RECORDS (8427942) CD



> Zoom

Jacopo Andreini

- Rivers And Plains
- Song For Che
- Washer
- Keith Jarreth In Jamaica
- The Model
- **To Nick Everyone** [R. Wyatt]
- Django
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- L'Accolita Dei Rancorosi
- Evidence
- So Real

- FRIGORIFERO PROD. - K7

Cover Me Now
1997



> Zoom

Colonial Recordings
1997

Colonial Recordings

- Horrible Pink Legs
- Lady Porconio
- Doggerel
- Fumatori Contro Non Fumatori
- Check
- Scomposti
- Jazz
- Trio Di Corde
- To Be Naked It's Just An Attitude
- Ondoso
- T'ho Visto!
- Please Be Gentle
- Doggerel
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]

- Mat Pogo - vocals
- Edoardo Ricci - alto sax, bass clarinet, cornet, performer [megaphone],
- Nicotina - electric guitar
- Helmut - bass
- Pippo Pedol - electric upright bass
- Jacopo Andereini - drums, alto saxophone, tuba, acoustic guitar

- FRIGORIFERO PRODUCTION - CD



> Zoom

Forever Limited
1997

Dune

Disc 1
INSTRUMENTAL EDITION
- Who Wants To Live Forever
- Somebody
- Against All Odds
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- The Power Of Love
- Nothing Compares 2 U
- Hide And Seek
- Winter Kills

Disc 2
PIANO WORKS
- 9pm Abby Road
- One Moment
- The Promise
- Little Princess
- Works
- Variations
- Forever
- Reprise

Edition limitée à 2000 exemplaires.

-ORBIT RECORDS - 2xCD



> Zoom

Objectivity
1997

Yung & Moore

- Objectivity
- Norway
- Love Is Dead, Pal
- I Like My Life
- Tom Wasted
- **God Song** [R. Wyatt/Ph. Miller]
- Where We Are Right Now

Bonus Tracks
- Objectivity (BA megamix)
- Norway (rsm)
- I Like My Life (orig dub)
- **God Song** [R. Wyatt/Ph. Miller]
- Where We Are Right Now (orig)
- Promo Flexidisc
- I Wish Marvin Gaye's Father Had Shot Me Instead (chrysanthemums)
- The Holocaust Parade (rsm/chrysanthemums)

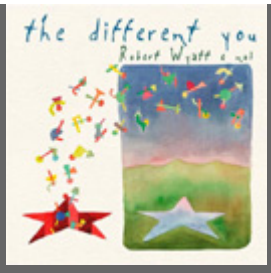
- R. Stevie Moore - bass
- Yukio Yung - lead vocal, vibes

- JAR MUSIC (JAR 014) CD

Robert Wyatt E Noi (Tribute)

- **Sea Song (Ci S'ha)** [R. Wyatt]
- Re-born Again Cretin

Cet album est également présent dans



> Zoom

The Different You
1998

(Almamegretta) [R. Wyatt]
- **O Caroline (Max Gazze)** [Dave Sinclair/Robert Wyatt]
- **Alifib (S. Cosentino / F. Battiato)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gharbzadegi (Marco Parente/La Crus)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (Estasia)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Memories (In Circolo/M. Spinosa)** [H. Hopper]
- **Left On Man (G. Onorato/Madaski)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Maryan (G. Di Marco/Cristina Dona')** [R. Wyatt/Ph. Catherine]
- **Yolanda (L. Cherubini/Jovanotti)** [P. Milanes]
- **A Sunday In Madrid (Area)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Amber And The Amberines (M. Pagani)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Free Will And Testament (A. Chimenti/M. Redeghieri)** [R. Wyatt/Kramer]
- **Dondestan (G. Canali/U. Bator)** [R. Wyatt]
- **A Last Straw (M. Kuntz/M. Nikaido/ P. Hamilton)**[R. Wyatt]
- Del Mondo (Robert Wyatt)
- **Chairman Mao (C.S.I.)** [R. Wyatt, Charlie Haden]
- **Five Black Notes And One White Note (Dissoi Logoi)** [Offenbach/ R. Wyatt]

les rubriques With Friends et Samples.



> Zoom

- C.P.I./MERCURY (300496-2) CD

↑



A Robert
1998

Perdio

- A Robert
- Non Lontano Molto Tempo Fa
- Fermati Fermati
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- For Love
- Cerca Dentro Te
- Caleidoscopio
- Che Strano Amore
- Deve Esserci
- Magiche Melodie

- Titta Colleoni - keyboards, vocals
- Fulvio Monieri - bass, guitar, vocals
- Michele Capogrosso - drums, vocals
- Diego Valtorta - guitar

- GALLIO (SAF 033) CD

↑



> Zoom

Just Us
1998

Elton Dean

- Ooglenovastrome
- Something Passed Me By
- Blind Badger
- **Neo-Caliban Grides** [E. Dean]
- Part: The Last
- Banking On Bishopsgate
- Fun Cup

Japanese Bonus Verion
- A.N.1.

- Elton Dean - alto saxophone, saxello, electric piano
- Roy Babbington - bass
- Mark Charig - cornet
- Phil Howard - drums
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ

Reedition of the album release in 1971, including 2 new tracks and a name change "Just Us".

The Japanese version published by Arcàngelo Records contains an extra track.

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (RUNE 103) CD
- ARCANGELO (ARC-7235) CD (Japanese Version)

↑

Caravan

- HUX RECORDS (HUX 002) CD



> Zoom

Songs For Oblivion Fishermen
1998

- Hello Hello
- If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You
- As I Feel I Die
- Love Song Without Flute
- Love To Love You
- In The Land Of Grey And Pink
- Memory Lain Hugh
- A Hunting We Shall Go**/Backwards** [M. Ratledege]
- Love In Your Eye
- Mirror For The Day
- For Richard
- Virgin On The Ridiculous



> Zoom

Dark Gift Of Time
1998

Christine Collister

- The Whole Night Sky
- Dirt In The Ground
- Deeper Well
- I Want To Vanish
- Black Eyed Dog
- Point Scarlett
- God Bless The Child
- Lowish Time
- Always There
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]
- Sad & Beautiful World

- FLEDG'LING FLED (3016) CD
- KOCH RECORDS (KOC 8022) CD



> Zoom

Eppur Non Basta
1998

Marco Parente

- Eppur Non Basta (intro)
- Eri
- L'Ultima Cena
- Oio
- Il Mare Si e' Fermato
- Sopra Sopra
- Buone Prestazioni
- Musica Per
- Eppur non Basta
- I Fuochi di Fine Millennio
- L' Aggio Scritt'a Canzone
- Eppur Non Basta (ripresa)
- Oggi Si Ride
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]

Les deux derniers morceaux (dont *Gharbzadegi*) n'apparaissent que sur la version *Edition Spéciale* de ce CD.

Gharbzadegi est également présent sur la compilation A Different You.

- SONICA/CPI - CD



> Zoom

Monochromatic Adventure
1998

Ultra Living

- Monochromatic Adventure
- Sweetest Pleasure
- Freeze, Die & Revive
- (Fire Is The) Ultra Living
- Traves
- Cosmo Vittelli
- **God Song** [R. Wyatt/Ph. Miller]
- Homesick
- The Sky Is High Enough To Fly
- Mr. Freedom

- CREATION RECORDS (CRECD 211) CD
- CREATION RECORDS (CRELP 211) LP

Bang On A Can



> Zoom

Music For Airports
A 20th-Anniversary Version Of Brian Eno's Ambient Classic
1998

- 1/1 (Arranged By Michael Gordon) [Eno, Wyatt, Davies]
- 1/2 (Eno, arranged by David Lang)
- 2/1 (Eno, arranged by Julia Wolfe)
- 2/2 (Eno, arranged by Evan Ziporyn)

- POINT MUSIC (314 536 847-2) CD

↑



> Zoom

Disinformation
1999

Tin Huey

- Cheap Mechanics
- The Tin Huey Story Part 2
- Otis Says No
- Closet Bears
- Lovely Little Thing
- Missing Persons
- Reliable Sources
- Blow 'em Away
- Robert Takes The Road To Liebernawash + Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]
- Wise Up
- Almost Transparent Blue
- Seeing(live)
- Living With Strangers
- Sick Jones
- The Tin Huey Story

- Michael Aylward - guitar, vocals
- Stuart Austin - drums, percussion
- Chris Butler - guitar, vocals
- Ralph Carney - Horns (lots of) and the occasional sneeze
- Harvey Gold - keyboards, bass, guitar, vocals
- Ralph Legnini - guitar, vocals
- Mark Price - bass, vocals

- FUTURE FOSSI (DIG3-CDFF) CD

↑



> Zoom

NoTvDoo
1999

Dissòi Logòi

- NoTvDoo
- DHX 119
- Sequenze
- La luna e Venere
- Tagete
- 5 Black Notes [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- Absimi
- Baba Yaga
- Glory
- Notturno

- Franco Parravicini - electric and acoustic guitar, electric bass, adungo (ethnical harp from Uganda), programming, tapes and feedbacks
- Alberto Morelli - piano, keyboards, ethnical instruments (zurna, shurnay, soz, choncs), percussions, vibe, voice-chonc, programming, tapes and feedbacks
- Stefano Scarani - zapping man
- Ettore Castagna - lira calabra (ethnical violin from south Italy)
- Steve James - violin and sarod (ethnical string from India)
- Giuditta Colombo - violin
- Piero Milesi - cello
- Daniele Sala - double bass
- Gerardo Cardinale -recorder and programming
- Roberto Mazza - oboe
- Mario Arcari - clarinet
- Gabriele Coltri - biniou kozh (french bagpipe)
- Moni Ovadia - voice
- Eric Wood - voice
- Laura Fedele - voice
- Muna Amari - voice
- Amelia Cuni - voice
- A Mysterious Tibetan Monk - voice
- Federico Sanesi - ethnic percussion (tabla, req, dhol, dumbbek, kangjra, darabuka)
- Giorgio Gallo - percussions
- Francesco D'Auria -drums

5 Black Notes est également présent sur la compilation The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi.

- COMPAGNIA NUOVE INDYES (LDL 11126) CD



> Zoom

Different
1999

Hopper/S.Klossner

- Lying There
- Pack Light
- And The Rain Falls
- 20th Year
- The Story
- Clouds
- Dream Sequence
- **Was A Friend** [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- Otherworld
- Yr Protection
- Strawberry Back
- Come, Come
- 20th Year (Reprise)

- Hugh Hopper - cubase programming, keyboards, bass
- Lisa S. Klossner - vocals
- Christine Janet - trompet
- Chrystelle Blanc-Lanaute - flute

- BLUEPRINT (BP303CD) CD



> Zoom

Le Nozze Chimiche
1999

Giancarlo Onorato

- Le Nozze Chimiche
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]
- Io Sono L'Angelo
- **Left On Man (Interferenze)** [R. Wyatt]

- Giancarlo Onorato - voce, chit. ac., organizer crumar, basso
- Enrico Manera - batteria, cembalo
- Riccardo Torri - basso
- Marco Congiu - chitarra fuzz, pianoforte, organo
- Gabriele Mazzei - pianoforte

- LILIUM PRODUZIONI (LILLIUM022/668402 2) - CD-S





> Zoom

Una musica può fare
1999

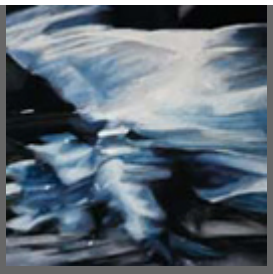
Max Gazzé

- Una musica può fare
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]

Promo Version.

O Caroline est également présent sur la compilation The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi.

- VIRGIN (8957172) CD-S



To Canterbury And Beyond
1999

A Tribute To The Canterbury Scene

Disc 1
- The Isle Of Everywhere (Zoo Lunaire)
- Crumble/Didn't Matter Anyway (Chameleon)
- The Bryden 2-Step/For Amphibians (Phil Mercy)
- Ride (Arbogast)
- Radio Gnome Invisible (Marco Masoni)
- **Echec Naturel** [R. Wyatt](Patrick Forgas/France)
- **Sea Song (Hostsonaten/Italie)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening (Ashqelon Quilt/Israel)** [H. Hopper]
- The Soft Weed Factor (Synthetic Block)
- Hell's Bells (David Bagsby)
- Hello Hello (Notturno Concertante)

Disc 2
- Wring Out The Ground/Loosely Now (The Underground Railroad)
- Can't Be Long Now/Francoise/For Richard (Tilion)
- The Collapso/Squarer For Maud (L'Imbroglio)
- **A Last Straw/Box 25/4 Lid (Mary Newsletter/Italie)** [R. Wyatt]
- **At Last I'm Free (Nostalgia/Italie)** [R. Wyatt version]
- **Deconstructing Wyatt (Algebra/Italie)**
- **Alifib/Alife (Dono Celeste/Italie)** [R. Wyatt]
- Spring Any Day Now (Phil Beane)
- Sasquatch (Moonmadness Of Divae)
- Place Of My Own (Rotters' Club)
- Unevensong (Trama)

Track 6 (for information):
including *Hope For Happiness* and *Joy Of A Toy* from *The Soft Machine Vol. 1*.
- Patrick Forgas - vocals, keyboards, programming

Track 7:
- Fabio Zuffanti - vocals, guitar, moog)
- Osvaldo Giordano - organ, synth-bass, programming

Track 8 (for information):
from *The Soft Machine Vol. 2*.
- Ori Hendel - vocals, guitar
- Shachar Hendel - keyboards, drums, bass-programming
- Corinne Schlomovitch - violin

Track 15:
- Mario Valentino Brame - drums, vocals
- Massimiliano Galbani - vocals
- Marco Gusberti - keyboards, piano
- Massimo Necchi - bass
- Davide Pisi - guitar

Track 16:
- Massimo Mazzeo - guitar, backing vocals
- Andrea Romano - keyboards, programming
- Paola Buscaglia - lead-vocal

Track 17:
including *The British Road, The Age of Self*, *Speechless*, *Gharbzadegi* from *Old Rottenhat.*
- Rino Pastore - synthetizer, vocals
- Roberto Polcino - keyboards
- Maria Giammetti - flute, sax, vocals
- Franco Ciani - drums, percussion
- Mario Giammetti - vocals, guitar, bass)

Track 18:
- Antony Graham Milner - vocals
- Ignazio Serventi - guitar
- Alessandro Buzzi - drums, percussion
- Giampaolo Piras - bass
- Enrico Ghezzi - keyboards

- MELLOW RECORDS (MMP 361 A/B) 2xCD

Ce double album a fait l'objet d'une réédition au format digital en 2018.



> Zoom

Songbird
1999

Christine Collister

- Kicking In My Stall
- How Far To The Horizon
- Guilty
- Can't Cry Hard Enough
- Black Eyed Dog
- Driving Past
- How Will I Ever Be Simple Again
- Starting All Over
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt Kramer]
- Broken Bicycles
- Cornfield
- Point Scarlett
- I Keep Forgetting

Compilation.

Free Will And Testament est extrait de l'album Dark Gift Of Time.

- FLEDG'LING FLED (3025) CD

- Tracks Of My Tears
- Songbird



> Zoom

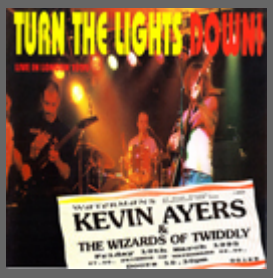
Delta Flora
1999

Hughscore

- **Was A Friend** [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]
- November
- Ramificatios
- Robohop
- Remind Me
- Spacelift
- Based On
- Tokitae

- Fred Chalenor - guitar, bass
- Elaine Di Falco - vocal accordion, organs, keyboards
- Tucker Martine - drums, percussions
- Chrystelle Blanc-Lanaute - flute
- Jon Hide - pedal steel
- Dave Carter - trompet
- Robert Jarvis - trombone
- Craig Flory - saxophone tenor
- Elton Dean - saxophone alto

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 110) CD



> Zoom

Turn The Lights Down
(Live in London 1995)
1999

Kevin Ayers & Wizards of Twiddly

- There Goes Johnny
- See you Later
- Didn't Feel Lonely ('Till I Thought of You)
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Lady Rachel
- Super Salesman
- Am I Really Marcel ?
- Everybody's Sometime And Some People's All The Time Blues
- Beware of The Dog II
- Ballad of Mr. Snake
- May I ?
- **Why Are We Sleeping ?** [K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- Stranger in The Blue Suede Shoes

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- Carl Bowry - guitar, vocals
- Andy Delamere - drums, vocals
- Andy Frizell - vocals, bass
- Martin Smith - trumpet, horn, vocals
- Simon James - vocals, flute, tenor saxophone, keyboards

Recorded live at the Waterman's Art Centre, West London, March 10 1995.

- MARKET SQUARE (MSMCD105) CD
- MSI (MSIF 7913) CD
- MSI (MSIL 059) CD



> Zoom

MW3
2000

Robert Wyatt/Jean-Michel Marchetti

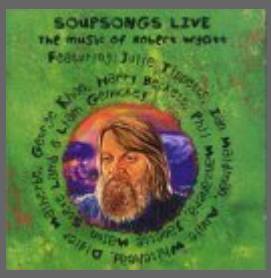
- Robert (Robert Wyatt)
- **P.L.A. (Toupidek, Limonade et J. Tagu)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib (R. Robert, G. Tordjman)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Toledo Texas (J.M. Montera, E. Martusciello, F.Y Lugli-Martinez)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Dondestan (Look de Book)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song (Klimperei)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Born Again Cretin (Dominique Répécaud)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Jaggernaut)** [R. Wyatt]
- To the Old World (Dominique Grimaud)
- **Left On Man (L'Ensemble Rayé)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (J. Bogaert, An Pierlé, J. Snauwaert)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Caroline (D. Fellmann, J. Goetz)** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- **Mass Medium (Ph. Fretun, M. Benita)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib (Pascal Comelade)** [R. Wyatt]
- Heli Plop (Alain de Filipis)
- **Toledo Texas (Jean-François Pauvros)** [R. Wyatt]
- For R.W. (Ch. Cutler, T. Buck, J.M. Montera, J.F. Pauvros)
- **Alifib (Le Piano De La Rue De**

Ce CD édité par les éditions Ænc rages& Co accompagne l'ouvrage *M3W* de J.M. Marchetti.

- AENCRAGES & Co/IN POLY SONS (IPS 08 00) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends et Samples.

Vergennes) (Jean-Michel Marchetti)
[R. Wyatt]



> Zoom

Soupsongs Live
2000

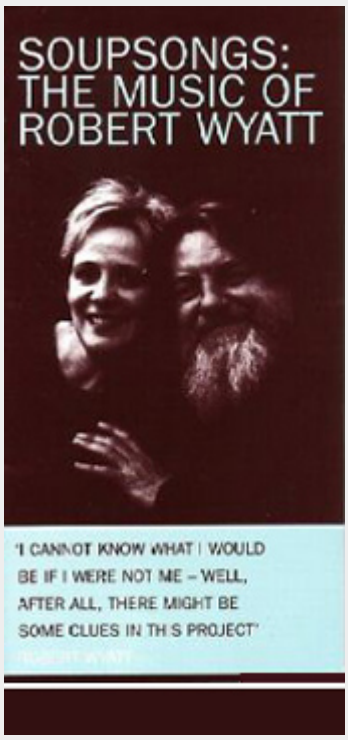
Soupsongs Live
The Music Of Robert Wyatt

Disc 1
- Sonia [M. Feza]
- **Sunday In Madrid** [A. Benge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **September The Ninth** [A. Benge/ R. Wyatt]
- **Duchess** [R. Wyatt]
- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse [A] [Version]** [F. Frith/ R Wyatt]
- **Solar Flares** [R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse [B] [Mix]** [F. Frith/ R Wyatt]
- **5 Black Notes And 1 White Note** [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse [C] [Edit]**[F. Frith/ R Wyatt]

Disc 2
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]
- **Team Spirit** [B. MacCormick/ R. Wyatt/P. Manzanera]
- **Vandalusia** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib/Alife** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sight Of the Wind** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- **Soup Song** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]
- **Heaps Of Sleeps** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt B. Eno]

- Julie Tippetts - voice
- Ian Maidman - voice, electric and acoustic guitars, ukulele, accordion
- Annie Whitenead - trombone, voice, arrangements
- Didier Malherbe - flutes, alto & soprano saxophones, doudoux, ocarina
- Georges Khan - tenor & baritone saxophones
- Harry Beckett - trumpet, flugelhorn
- Phil Manzanera - electric guitar
- Janette Mason - keyboards, piano
- Steve Lamb - bass
- Liam Genockey - drums

- JAZZPRINT (JPVP101) 2xCD





> Zoom

September Song
2000

Pascal Comelade

- September Song
- **Signed Curtain** [R. Wyatt]
- Come Prima
- The Sheik Of Araby
- 24 Mila Baci
- Knockin' On Heaven's Door
- L'Italiano

- Pascal Comelade - pianos

- DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER/DELABEL (7243 8496562 4) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

I Just Shot Myself
In The Foot Again
2000

Mark Mulcahy

- I Just Shot Myself In The Foot Again
- 900 Yards Away
- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello/C. Langer]
- Frisky Said

- Mark Mulcahy - vocal, guitar
- Jane Scarpantoni - cello
- Doug Wieselman - clarinet

- MEZZOTINT - CD-S



> Zoom

Surround
2000

Incroyable Jungle Beat

- Surround
- July
- The Sun
- The Red Light
- **Pigs** [R. Wyatt]
- Wait
- Medicine Man
- Prélude
- The Long March
- Amusement
- Song Of The Idiot
- Agnus Dei
- Body-guard
- Surround dub

- Cyril Atef - voix lead & batterie
- Noël Ekwabi - basse
- Doumé - orgue, Wurlitzer et choeurs
- Christophe Denis - programmation

- FAIRPLAY PUBLISHING (FAI 340) CD



> Zoom

Incommunicado
2000

Kammerflimmer Kollektief

- Nachtwach
- Gras
- Rand
- **Venti Latir** [R. Wyatt]
- Kissen
- Holler

- Dietrich Foth - saxophone
- Johannes Frisch - double bass
- Michael Ströder - drums
- Anne Vortisch - synth
- Thomas Weber - guitar
- Heike Wendelin - violin

- PAYOLA/COMMUNITY/ VIRGIN E4 (Germany) CD



> Zoom

Primiitive Guitars
(1982/2000)
2000

Phil Manzanera

- Riollo
- Caracas
- La Nueva Ola
- Bogota
- Ritmo de Los Angeles
- Europe 70-1
- Impossible Guitar
- Big Dome
- Europe 80-1
- Criollo (French Re-mix)
- **Frontera (instrumental)** [P. Manzanera/ B. Mac Cormick/R. Wyatt]

Réédition de l'album paru en 1982 enrichi de 2 bonus dont *Frontera* en version instrumentale, cosigné par Phil Manzanera, Bill. Mac Cormick et Robert Wyatt.

- Phil Manzanera- all instruments

- EDITIONS EG (EGED 14) LP
- VIRGIN/EXPRESSION RECORDS (EXPCD 19)CD



> Zoom

MW Pour Robert Wyatt
2001

MW Pour Robert Wyatt

- Some Words Of Introduction (Robert Wyatt)
- **P.L.A. (Toupidek, Limonade et J. Tagu)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Toledo Texas (J.M. Montera, E. Martusciello, F.Y Lugli-Martinez)** [R. Wyatt-J.M. Montera]
- **En Dondekistan (Look de Book)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song (Klimperei)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Born Again Cretin (Dominique Répécaud)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Jagger Naut)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib (R. Robert, G. Tordjman)** [R. Wyatt]
- **To The Old World (Dominique Grimaud)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Left On Man (L'Ensemble Rayé)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Robert Et André (Kafka)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (J. Bogaert, An Pierlé)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Caroline (D. Fellmann, J. Goetz)** [R. Wyatt-D. Sinclair]
- Blues In Bob Minor (read by Robert Wyatt) [R. Wyatt]
- The British Road (read by Robert Wyatt & Michel Benita) [R. Wyatt]
- **Mass Medium (Ph. Fretun, M. Benita)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib (Pascal Comelade)** [R. Wyatt]
- Heli Plop (Alain de Filipis) [R. Wyatt-A. de Filipis]
- **Toledo Texas (Jean-François Pauvros)** [R. Wyatt-J.F. Pauvros]
- **For R.W. (Ch. Cutler, T. Buck, J.M. Montera, J.F. Pauvros)**[R. Wyatt-J.M. Montera]
- **Alifib (Le Piano De La Rue De Vergennes) (Jean-Michel Marchetti)** [R. Wyatt]
- Some Words Of Conclusion (Robert Wyatt) [Robert Wyatt]

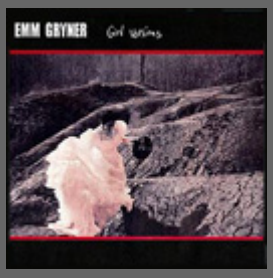
Ce CD est une réédition des 2 CDs M2W et M3W réalisés pour les éditions Ænc rages& Co dans le cadre des projets MW.

Seule la reprise de *O Caroline* par D. Fellmann et J. Goetz est une version différente de celle présente dans M3W.

- IN POLY SONS (IPS 0401) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends et Samples.

Critiques/Reviews



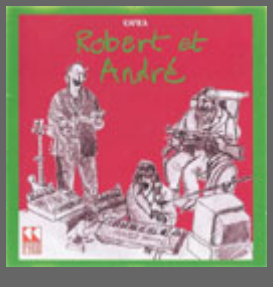
> Zoom

Girl Versions
2001

Emm Gryner

- Waiting Room
- Crazy Train
- Pour Some Sugar On Me
- For What Reason
- Straight To Hell
- Song 2
- Straight To You
- Big Bang Baby
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- The Day We Hit The Coast

- DEAD DAISY RECORDS (DDR 005) CD



Kafka

- La Brave Fille Des Abattoirs (original de 1947)
- La Brave Fille Des Abattoirs
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]
- Robert Et André
- **Noisy Moon In Trashy June** [R. Wyatt]
- Samples Salad
- La Finale

Noisy Moon In Trashy June est une reprise de *Moon In June*.

Enregistré au Studio Victoria Compoint. Décembre 2000/Janvier 2001.

- KK PROD - CD

> Zoom 1 2

Robert Et André
2001

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Samples.



The Muffins

- These Castle Children
- Under Dali's Wing
- Walking The Duck
- **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller]
- Sam's Room
- QSL
- But Not For Others
- Knitting Factor Blues
- Captain Boomerang Excerpt

- Thomas Frasier Scott - alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet, flute
- Billy Swann - bass, guitar
- Paul Sears - drums
- Dave Newhouse - piano, organ, baritone saxophone, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, flute

Nan True's Hole Live at Villa Celimontana Jazz Festival, Rome, Italy, July 28, 2000.

- CoNtOrTeD (CON6) CD

> Zoom

Loveletter #1
2001



Bill Rieflin/Chris Connelly

- Largo
- Pray'r
- Strayed
- Close Watch
- Wake 1
- Rondo
- The Call Girls
- Salt of Joy
- Wake 2
- Wake 3
- Prayer
- Y
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

- Chris Connelly - guitar, vocals, string arrangements
- Bill Rieflin - piano, keyboards, vocals, string arrangements
- Caroline LaVelle - cello
- Fred Chalenor - bass

- FIRST WORLD (FWG 01.10) CD

> Zoom

Largo
2001



C.S.I. Consorzio Suonatori Indipendenti

- Maledirai
- Finistère
- Linea Gotica
- Irata
- **Chairman Mao** [R. Wyatt, Ch. Haden]
- Brace
- Buon Anno Ragazzi
- Polvere
- Non Torna
- Vicini
- Nessuno Fece Nulla
- Mongolishet

- *Chairman Mao* est également présent sur la compilation A Different You.

- BLACK OUT/UNIVERSAL MUSIC ITALIA - CD

> Zoom

Noi Non Ci Saremo (Vol. 2)
2001



The Married Monk

- Greyhound
- Stuck
- Roma Amor
- Holiday
- Death In Savannah
- Life of Ease
- Painful Summer
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Sparro
- Ola Mujeres
- All I Have

- Philippe Lebruman- bass
- Christian Quermalet - vocal
- Cyril Quermalet - keyboards
- Jean-Michel Pires - drums
- Fabio Viscogliosi - guitar
- Yann Tiersen - strings

- ICI D'AILLEURS (IDA 2001) CD

Rocky
2001

- Ancora Tu
- Cyro's Request



> Zoom

Nouvelles
2001

Jean-Marc Foussat

- [caractères arabes]
- Se Questo è Un Uomo
- a/2 (i. e.)
- b (i. e.)
- **Gloria Gloom's Breath** [R. Wyatt/ B. McCormick]
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]
- Better Than A Garbage Can
- La Cachette
- Basic Thought
- [caractères grecs]
- Longum Iter
- Singuliers - Pluriel
- [caractères chinois ?]
- Usure
- Attente
- Réflexion
- Choix
- Décision
- **Gloria Gloom's Meat** [B. McCormick]
- Petit Paysage Urbain Avec Fumeur

- Jean-Marc Foussat : souffle sur *Gloria Gloom' Breath*
- Roger Turner : voix sur *Gloria Gloom's Meat*

Enregistrements de 1973 à 2001. Comporte une partie Cd-Rom *Eye Way* de 25 mn.

- POTLACH (P301) CD

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Jazzprint Sampler 2001
2001

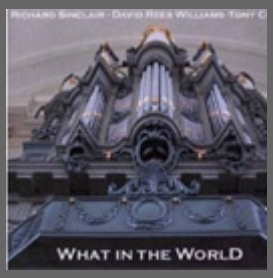
Jazzprint Sampler 2001

- **P.L.A. (Various Artists - Soupsongs Live)** [R. Wyatt]
- Venerable Bede (John Etheridge)
- Things Ain't What They Used To Be (Jim Mullen)
- Power Of Three (Jim Mullen)
- Conditions (Harry Beckett Quintett)
- Interchange (Howard Riley & Keith Tippett)
- Riding Down To Platterback (Westbrook & Company)
- Project (Howard Riley)
- Introduction (Howard Riley)
- Alien Style (Annie Whitehead)
- Theme From Lumpy Gravy (Zappatistats)

Compilation.

P.L.A. est extrait de l'album Soupsongs Live - The music of Robert Wyatt

- JAZZPRINT (JPVP999CD) CD



> Zoom

What In The World
2002

Richard Sinclair/David Rees/Tony Coe

- Out Of The Shadows
- For Absent Friends
- What's Rattlin'?
- Barefoot
- Canterbury Song
- Long Lingers Autumn Time
- Felafel Shuffle
- What In The World
- Fol De Rol
- **Calyx** [Ph. Miller]

- Richard Sinclair - vocals
- David Rees - C1760 Heinz organ
- Tony Coe - clarinet

- SINCLAIR SONGS (RSS 004) CD

King Size

- King Kong Size
- War Zone
- Paralysed
- Robert Zimmerman
- White Lie

- Philippe - bass, vocals
- Christophe - guitar, vocals
- Stéphane - drums



! White Lies, White Beats !
2002

- Heavy Soul
- For Sale
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Cosmic Trip
- I Got Nothing
- Another World
- Nursery Rhyme
- July
- How Old Do We Have To Get Before It Stops ?

- NO LABEL/MOSAIC DISTRIBUTION - CD

↑



> Zoom

A Night's Tale
Live In The USA
2002

Caravan

- All The Way / A Very Smelly Grubby Little Oik
- Nine Feet Underground
- Medley: Dabsong Conshirtoe / All Aboard / Where But For Caravan Would I / **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt] / The Dabsong / Love In Your Eye / **Backwards** [M. Ratledge]/ A Hunting We Shall Go
- Nightmare
- I Know Why Your're Laughing
- For Richard

- Jim Leverton - bass, vocals
- Richard Coughlan - drums, percussion
- Doug Boyle - guitar
- David Sinclair - keyboards –
- Simon Bentall - percussion
- Geoff Richardson - viola, flute
- Pye Hastings - vocals, guitar

Recorded at Patriots Theater, Trenton, New Jersey, on 2002-06-29.

- CLASSIC ROCK PRODUCTIONS (CRP1013) CD

↑



> Zoom

The Amos House Collection
Vol II
2002

The Amos House Collection - Vol II

- Test Tones (Wheat)
- Remix for Discos (Spoon Everything Hits at Once)
- Right Into The Arms Of The Queen (Kleenex Girl Wonder)
- Down In Virginia (Emily Sparks)
- Entry Way Song (Bright Eyes)
- Strange Empty Hollow (Jr Corduroy)
- **Free Will And Testament (Elf Power)** [R. Wyatt/Kramer]
- Stockholm (Skating Club)
- Pretty Things (The Gentle Waves)
- Aporia (James William Hindle)
- Jubilee (Ida)
- The Red Door (Aden)
- One Way (Drew 0'Doherty)
- Saras Song (The Aislers Set)
- Don't You Know (Clairvoyants)
- Bottle Up & Explode (Alternative Version)(Elliott Smith)
- Rise (Deadverse Mix)(Azure Ray)
- Two Girls (Son, Ambulance)
- Chocolat Noir (Misc)

- WISHING TREE RECORDS (WTR-11) CD

↑



Be In The No-Air
2002

A Tribute To Robert Wyatt

Disc 1
- **Muddy Mouth** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **The Song** [P. Blegvad/J. Greaves]
- **A Little Something** [P. Blegvad]
- **God Song** [P. Miller-R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gloria Gloom** [B. McCormick]
- **A Last Straw** [R. Wyatt]

Disc 2
- **Was A Friend** [R. Wyatt/Kramer]
- Daevid Allen
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/

Bootleg enregistré le 8 septembre 1998 à The Knitting Factory, New York, avec :

- Fred Frith
- John Greaves
- Peter Blegvad
- Karen Mantler
- Pip Pyle
- Hugh Hopper
- Daevid Allen
- Mark Kramer

Kramer]
- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper/ K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]

- PEACE FROG (PF-157D) 2xCD



> Zoom

Private Lines
2002

Manishevitz

- Back In The Day
- Private Lines
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]
- Backwards Deck
- 2HB

- Adam Busch - vocal, guitar

- JAGJAGUWAR (JAG49) EP



> Zoom

A Certain Kind
2002

Carsten Jost

- Black Axis
- **Why Are We Sleeping**
- **A Certain Kind**
- **Save Yourself**

Pas exactement des reprises (les 3 morceux ne sont d'ailleurs pas crédités) mais plutôt un hommage, j'imagine, aux musiciens de la Soft Machine.

- KLANG ELECTRONIK (67) EP



> Zoom

Look Of Joy
2002

Veranda Music

- **O Caroline** [R. Wyatt]
- Maria Bethania
- Water Of Love
- Father And Son
- Mother Of Earth
- Hey
- Dallas
- Opportunity
- Riding
- Shake The Disease

- Nicolai von Schweder-Schreiner - vocals, guitar
- Christoph Kähler - drums, mandoline, keyboards
- Lars Precht - bass

- XXS (9962-2) CD



Caravan

- Green Bottles For Marjorie
- Place Of My Own
- **Feelin', Reelin', Squealin'** [K. Ayers]
- Ride
- Nine Feet Underground
- In The Land Of Grey And Pink
- **Feelin', Reelin', Squealin'** [K. Ayers]
- The Love In Your Eye

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Richard Coughlan - drums, percussion
- Pye Hastings - guitar, vocals
- Dave Sinclair - keyboards

Track 3 : Top Gear session - Recorded 31st December 1968.

Track 7 : Radio One In Concert -

> Zoom

Green Bottles For Marjorie
(The Lost BBC Sessions)
2002

Recorded and first broadcast 16th May 1971.

- BBC MUSIC (CARAV 001) CD
- BELLE ANTIQUE (MAR-02758) CD



Caravan

- Memory Lain, Hugh / Headloss
- Virgin On The Ridiculous
- Be Alright / Chance Of A Lifetime
- The Love In Your Eye
- L'Auberge Du Sanglier / A Hunting We Shall Go / Pengola / **Backwards** [M. Ratledge]/ A Hunting We Shall Go (Reprise)
- The Dog, The Dog, He's At It Again
- For Richard
- Hoedown

> Zoom

Live At The Fairfield Halls, 1974
2002

- Richard Coughlan - drums
- Pye Hastings - guitar, vocals
- David Sinclair - organ, synthesizer Mini Moog
- Geoffrey Richardson - electric viola, guitar, glockenspiel
- Mike Wedgwood - bass guitar, congas, vocals

Recorded at The Fairfield Halls, Croydon, September 1st 1974.

- DECCA (8829022) CD



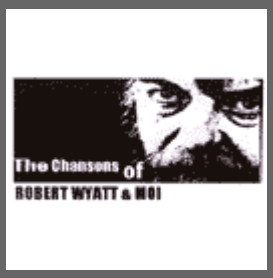
Contrepoints Cardinaux
2002

L'Ensemble Rayé

- Gengis K.
- Le Moulin À Histoires
- Crocodiles
- L' Envol Du Pingouin
- La Pluie (Huguenin)
- La Grande Ritournelle
- Le Hérisson
- Madulain
- Après La Pluie
- Course À Pied, Course À Patte
- **Left On Man** [R. Wyatt]
- Evergreen
- 32 Bis, Rue Des Muguets
- Cumbada

- Pippin Barnett - drums
- Cédric Vuille - guitar, percussion, piano, arranger, bass, ukulele, kalimba, cuatro, bandurria
- Momo Rossel - guitar, mandolin, violin
- Daniel Spahni - drums
- Jean 20 Huguenin - guitar, piano, sitar, sampling, E-Bow, guitar (nylon string), guitar (tenor)
- Pierre Kaufmann - clarinet, arranger, clarinet (bass), sax (alto), sax (tenor)
- Yann Altermath - horn (alto)
- Julien Baillod - guitar, keyboards
- Catherine Trottmann - piano
- Shirley Anne Hofmann - piano, accordion, euphonium
- Raphaël Pedroli - keyboards

- KEIN & ABER (23259) CD



The Chansons
Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
2003

Jean-Philippe Ramos

- **Muddy Mouse** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouth** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]
- **Dedicated To You But You We're Not Listening** [H. Hopper]
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- **Gloria Gloom** [B. McCormick, R. Wyatt]
- **Rivmic Melodies** [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper/ M. Ratledge]
- **Sonia** [M. Feza]
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]
- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifie Medley** [R. Wyatt]
- Jazz Medley
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]
- **Seasong** [R. Wyatt]

- Jean-Philippe Ramos - saxos, voices, arrangements

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

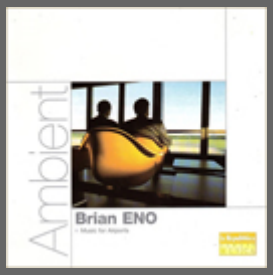
Ugly Music.4.Monica
2003

Daevid Allen's University Of Errors

- Skulls Of Our Enemies
- Wage Slave
- Mystico Fanatico
- Rich Men Eat My Voice
- So What?
- PHP 2032
- Earthbound
- Moo?
- If You Die
- **Clarence In Wonderland** [K. Ayers]
- Patapan

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Michael Clare - bass
- Josh Pollock - guitar, megaphone, piano, bass, percussion
- Jason Mills - drums, piano, percussion
- Nic Stephanz - Theremin
- Tony Maimone - keys

- UNIVERSITY OF ERRORS (ERRZ CD03) CD
- WEED (WEED 7912) CD



> Zoom

Music For Airports - Ambient/Brian Eno
2003

Bang On A Can

- **1/1** [B. Eno/R. Davies/R. Wyatt]
- 1/2
- 2/1
- 2/2

Not for sale separately from the newspaper La Repubblica.

- LA REPUBLICA/SABATO MUSICA - CD



> Zoom

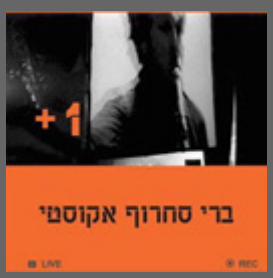
The Collection
2003

Tears For Fears

- Pharaohs
- Shout
- Mad World
- Mothers Talk
- The Working Hour
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- I Believe
- Ideas As Opiates
- Year Of The Knife
- Break It Down Again
- Memories Fade
- Empire Building
- Brian Wilson Said
- Sowing The Seeds Of Love
- Always In The Past
- Change
- Advice For The Young At Heart

Compilation.

- SPECTRUM MUSIC (063 358-2) CD



> Zoom

אקוסטי (Acoustic Live)
2003

Berry Sakharof

- יוסי כמה
- באוויר
- 77
- רגעים
- Heroes
- אל-פלס
- עבדים
- פנים שתי
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- לבן רעש

- NANA DISC (6152) - CD



> Zoom

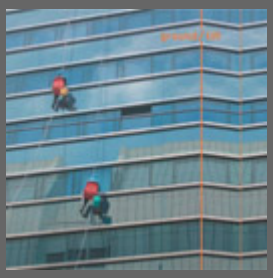
Full Circle
2003

Dave Sinclair

- Thru The Night
- Forever Through The Years
- Best Life Of All
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Outside Of Your Love
- Like To Know
- Without You
- Nowhere To Hide
- That Day
- Sancti
- Peace In Time
- And When The Sun Sets

- Dave Sinclair - keyboards, percussion, vocal, backing vocals
- Roxane - vocals and backing vocals
- Marcus Bishop - main drums, percussion, backing vocal, electric & acoustic guitar
- Richard Sinclair - vocals, bass

- POSEIDON RECORDS (PRE-001) CD



> Zoom

Ground/Lift
2003

Ground/Lift

- Besser Ei
- Humbom
- Mskstck
- Beware Of
- Klagit
- +F
- Grant
- A Long Spoon
- Bad Timing
- **Unmasked** [Tutti/Carter/R.Wyatt]

- Christoph Pajer - guitar, vocals, keys
- Oliver Stotz - guitar, vocals, samples

- KARATE-JOE RECORDS (KJ012) CD



> Zoom

Double Standards
2003

Lea Delaria

- Dancing Barefoot
- Kiko And The Lavender Moon
- Call Me
- Philadelphia
- Just A Girl
- Been Caught Stealing
- Black Hole Sun
- People Are strange
- Tattooed Love Boys
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- Longview

- Lea Delaria - vocal
- Gil Goldstein - piano, accordion
- Christian Mc Bride - bass
- Bill Stewart - drums
- Adam Rogers - guitar
- Bill Hayes - glass harmonica
- Bashiri Johnson - percussion

- WARNER JAZZ (093624827429) CD



> Zoom

Tribute To Soft Machine
(Live At Le Triton 2002)
2003

Polysoft

- **Facelift Intro** [Hugh Hopper]
- **Facelift** [Hugh Hopper]
- Chloe And The Pirates
- Gesolreut
- Pig
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening** [Hugh Hopper]
- As If
- **Kings & Queens** [Hugh Hopper]
- **Slightly All The Time** [Mike Ratledge]
- **Noisette 1** [Hugh Hopper]
- **Backwards** [Mike Ratledge]
- **Noisette 2** [Hugh Hopper]

- François Merville - drums, percussion
- Serge Adam - trumpet, flugelhorn
- Jean-Rémy Guédon - tenor sax, flute
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - baritone sax, saxello

Guests :
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Elton Dean - alto sax , saxello
- Emmanuel Bex - Hammond organ

Recorded live at Le Triton on september 13th and 14th 2002.

- LE TRITON (TRI-03506) CD



> Zoom

Jet Propelled Photographs
2004

University of Errors

- **That's How Much I Need You Now** [R. Wyatt]
- **Save Yourself** [R. Wyatt]
- **I Should've Know** [H. Hopper]
- **Shooting At The Moon (aka Jet Propelled Photographs)** [K. Ayers]
- **When I Don't Want You** [H. Hopper]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- **You Don't Remember** [R. Wyatt/ D. Allen]
- **She's Gone** [K. Ayers]
- **I Rather Be With You** [K. Ayers]
- **Love Makes Sweet Music** [K. Ayers]
- **Feelin' Reelin' Squealin'** [K. Ayers]
- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper]
- **We Know What You Mean (Soon Soon Soon)** [K. Ayers]

- Daevid Allen - vocals
- Michael Clare - bass
- Josh Pollock - guitar
- Warren Heugel - drums

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 188) CD



> Zoom

Crlustraude
2004

Crlustraude

- Petit Peter
- Mon Ami Pigeon
- Sisters Of Mercy
- Mmh Auchan
- Irascible
- Crlustraude
- Iskedyl
- Rompre
- **Alifie Alifib** [R. Wyatt/Arr. P. Maupeu]

- Pascal Maupeu - guitare, banjo
- Stéphane Decolly - basse électrique
- Nicolas Larmignat - batterie

- YOLK (CDJ2018) CD



> Zoom

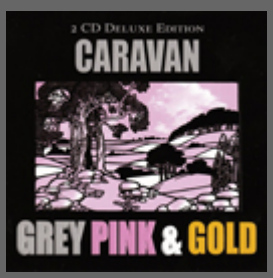
Standard
2004

>bréchet>denizet>ponthieux

- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Bolivia
- Brake's Sake
- Swing Café
- Twenty Small Cigars
- Pas De Trois
- Zones Sensibles
- Milord Blues
- Frère Jacques
- Blues Toujours
- Valse Triste
- Sweet Georgia Brown

– Pascal Bréchet - electric guitar
- Manuel Denizet - drums
- Jean-Luc Ponthieux - double bass, electric bass

- MUSIVI (MJB 011 CD) CD
- MUSIVI (20058 2) CD



> Zoom

Caravan

- Videos Of Hollywood
- Nine Feet Underground
- Winter Wine
- If I Could Do It All Over Again
- For Richard
- All The Way/A Very Smelly Grubby Little Oik
- Dabsong Conshirtoe/All Aboard/Where But For Caravan Would I/**O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]/The Dabsong/Love In Your Eye/Backwards/ A Hunting We Shall Go
- Nightmare

Compilation.

- DEJAVU RETRO (R2CD 42-73) 2xCD

Grey Pink & Gold
2004

- I Know Why You're Laughing
- Liar
- The Dog, The Dog, He's At It Again
- Nowhere To Hide
- Memory Lain, Hugh/Headloss
- If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You



> Zoom

Café Completo
2004

Pascal Comelade

- L'argot Du Bruit
- Un Train Direct Pour Charenton, 1
- Un Train Direct Pour Charenton, 2
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- Spring-Man
- La Phonométrie Châtiant Les Hérétiques
- Patafisikal Polska
- Si
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- L'homme Dibuixat

CD distribué avec "G : Utopia" de la revue espagnole Matador.



> Zoom

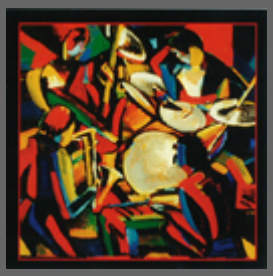
Desert Heat
2004

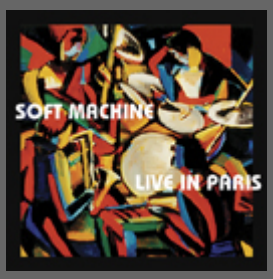
Dar Nahmias's Project

- a70's
- Mr Wilson
- If I Look Back
- Dive & Fall
- Desert Heart
- Angel
- Ur Love Is Getting Clear
- Burroughs
- Whisper
- Retro
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- Jame

- Dar Nahmias - piano, vocals, samples

- NO LABEL - CD





> Zoom

Live In Paris
2004

Soft Machine

- Plain Tiffs
- All White
- **Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]
- Drop
- M.C.
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous** [M. Ratledge]
- **Facelift** [M. Ratledge]
- And Sevens
- As If
- LBO
- Pigling Bland
- At Sixes

Réédition de l'album Live In France paru en 1995, renommé *Live In Paris.*

La seconde pochette comportant le nom du groupe et le titre de l'album est celle de la version digitale publiée sur Bandcamp.

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (RUNE 195/196) 2xCD



> Zoom

Back To Schizo (1975-1983)
2004

Pascal Comelade

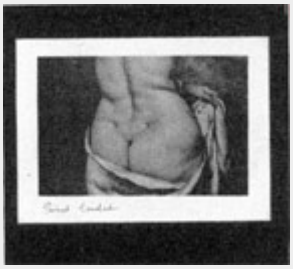
- Fluence
- Séquence Un
- Séquence Deux
- Séquence Trois
- Séquence Quatre
- Séquence Cinq
- Séquence Six
- Mouvement Décomposé D'Un Coup De Marteau
- Paralelo Deux
- Paralelo Trois
- Paralelo Quatre
- Automne
- Paralelo Six
- Paralelo Sept
- Paralelo Huit
- Paralelo Neuf
- Paralelo Dix
- Ready-Made One
- **Ready-Made Two**
- Ready-Made Three
- Ready-Made Four
- Sentimientos Un
- **Sentimientos Deux**
- Sentimientos Trois
- Logique Du Sens
- A Perfect Crime

Bien que signé "Pascal Comelade", *Ready Made 2* est une libre adaptation d'*Alifib*, initialement publié en 1980 sur l'album Ready Made sous le titre *Canço De Bressol.*

Sentimientos Deux est signé "Pascal Comelade d'après Robert Wyatt et Jacques Thollot."

Ce titre est très inspiré de The End Of An Ear et Quand Le Son De La Girafe.

Sentimientos 2 a précédemment été édité sur le LP Sentimientos paru en 1981 sous la dénomination (probable) *Wyatt Ah Um* (DYS RECORDS).



Sentimientos 1982

- GAZUL/MUSEA (GA 8679.AR) CD



> Zoom

Live In The UK
2004

Brainville - Daevid Allen With Hugh Hopper & Pip Pyle

- Fohat Digs Holes In Space
- Who's Afraid?
- Flowers Gone
- Shadow
- Thinkin' Thoughts
- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper]
- Bullshit & Be

- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Daevid Allen - guitar, voices

Hope For Hapiness est signé par Brian Hopper (qui a effectivement composé et déposé les droits de ce morceau) alors que la version du Soft Machine vol.1 est signée par Hugh Hopper, Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge.

- BANANAMOON OBSCURA (BMOVP002CD) CD



> Zoom

My Favorite Songs
2004

Éric Barret Septet

- Syracuse
- Suzanne
- Islands
- Quand Maman Reviendra
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- La Vieille Pèlerine
- L'Amour Fou
- Le Temps Du Tango
- E.P. Love

- Éric Barret - saxophone ténor
- Airelle Besson - trompette, bugle
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - saxophone alto, clarinette basse
- Éric Löhrer - guitare
- Benjamin Moussay - piano, piano électrique
- Joe Quitzke - batterie
- Éric Surmenian - contrebasse

Enregistré les 9 et 10 juin à La Fenêtre - Paris.

- BLUE MARGE (1008) CD



> Zoom

Hatwise Choice
2005

Hatfield And The North

- Absolutely Wholesome
- La Barbe Est La Barbe
- Sober Song
- Hattitude
- Strand On The Green
- Hotel Luna
- The Lonely Bubbling Song
- Stay Jung And Beautiful
- Dave Intro
- Take Your Pick
- Son Of Plate Smashing Dog
- Thanks Mont!
- Amsterdamage 11/19
- May The Farce Be With You
- Finesse Is For Fairies
- **Ethanol Nurse** [P. Miller]
- Writhing And Grimacing
- For Robert
- Blane Over Paris
- Laundry Soup
- Effing Mad Aincha
- Top Gear Commercial

Bonus Track

- **K Licks** [P. Miller]

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums, percussion
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Stewart - keyboards, tone generators

Archive recordings - 1973-1975, Volume 1.

Ethanol Nurse is actually *Nan True's Hole* ("Ethanol Nurse" is a kind of an anagram of "Nan True's Hole"!).

Only Phil Miller is credited for *Ethanol Nurse* instead of P. Miller and R. Wyatt.

K Licks is another name for *Calyx*.

This track is from BBC Radio 1 sessions ("Sounds Of The '70s" - January 22nd 1973).

- HATFIELD & THE NORTH AUTOPRODUCTION (HATCO -CD73-7501) CD



> Zoom

Live In Zaandam
2005

Soft Machine Legacy

-- Ash
- 1212
- Baker's Street
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- Two Down
- Big Creese

- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - alto saxophone, saxello, electric piano [Fender Rhodes]
- John Etheridge - guitar
- John Marshall - drums

Recorded live in Zaandam (Holland), May 10, 2005.

- MUSEA (FGBG 4617.AR) CD
- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR006) CD



> Zoom

Streamer
2005

Régïs Boulard

- Streamer
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]
- Overlord
- Radio Londres
- A.M.G.O.T.
- Radio Paris
- Over Overlord
- Code Talkers
- Chien Vert
- Lèvre Supérieure Rigide
- U.S. Go Home

- Régïs Boulard - batterie
- Denis Deygout - mellotron, Prophet
- Marc Gauvin- guitare
- Noël Akchoté- guitare
- Jean-François Vrod - électronique, violon-bidon

- SIGNATURE (SIG 11031) CD



Soft Bounds

- La part des anges
- Gimlet abides on the wagon
- Le retour d'Emmanuel
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]

- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Elton Dean - alto sax & saxello
- Simon Goubert - drums
- Sophia Domancich - Fender Rhodes & acoustic piano

Recorded live at Le Triton on june 17th 2004.

> Zoom

Live At Le Triton 2004
2005



- LE TRITON (TRI-05511) CD

↑



La 1919

- Out To Dinner
- Il Fantasma Della Balera
- L'Occhio Di Clara
- In Televisione, Ogni Sera...
- Unhappy Hour
- Spettri Per Le Allodole
- A Metà Strada Tra Terra E Cielo
- **Instant Pussy** [R. Wyatt]
- Instant Pussyfooting
- Winter Song
- Ici On Ne Dance Pas !
- Calcio Totale
- Amis De Viàgg

> Zoom

Freepopjazzrock
2005

- LC - bass, percussion [metal bar]
- Fabrizio Spera - drum [opening drumloop]
- PC - sampler, drum [drum patterns]

- AUDITORIUM EDIZIONI (AUD 02104) CD

↑



Ruper Ordorika

- Urtaroa
- Ez Da Posible
- Zaldiak Negarrez
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Baltsean
- Ene Begiek
- Ene Herrian
- Gizona
- Benetan
- On Gizona Naiz
- Aspaldian
- Fas Fatum

> Zoom

Ez Da Posible (Reissue)
2005

Réédition rematerisée de l'album *Ez Da Posible* paru en 1990.

- METAK (M067CD) CD

↑



Short Wave

- The Fox
- Saiseyes
- Frankly Speaking
- The Balladin
- 2 P.M.
- Partout
- Midnight Judo
- Shuffle Demons
- **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller]
- VZG
- Et Alors...

> Zoom

Live (Reissue)
2005

Réédition de l'album *Short Wave Live* paru en 1993.

- VOICEPRINT (VP347CD) CD

↑

Soft Machine



> Zoom

Softstage - BBC In Concert 1972
2005

- Fanfare
- All White
- **Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]
- M.C.
- Drop
- Stumble
- One Across
- As If
- Riff
- Gesolreut

- Mike Ratledge - electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - electric bass
- John Marshall - drums
- Karl Jenkins - saxophone, keyboards, electric piano

Recorded on July 20, 1972 at The Paris Theatre - London.

Reissue in 2011 at HUX RECORDS with the same reference.

- HUX RECORDS (HUX 070) CD
- MSI (MSIG 0226) CD



> Zoom

Hattitude
2006

Hatfield And The North

- Grosso Lavoro
- Drowning In The Bathroom
- **K Licks (Long)** [P. Miller]
- The Crest
- Pink & Green Machine
- Further Dances
- La Barbe Extract
- Confiture De La Barbe
- Born Again Crustacean
- Elevenses
- Farce Majeure
- Spaces Not Notes
- Song For All Our Mums
- Extract
- The Mens One-Metre Dash
- **K Licks (Short**) [P. Miller]
- One Of Wildes
- Blane Over The Low Countries
- Drowning Reprise
- Goodbye For Now

Bonus Track

- Al Clark Presents

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums, percussion
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Stewart - keyboards, tone generators

Archive recordings - 1973-1975, Volume 2.

K Licks is another name for *Calyx*.

"This album is a collection of hitherto unreleased material performed exclusively by the classic '70s Hatfield libne-up."

- HATFIELD & THE NORTH AUTOPRODUCTION (HATCO -CD73-7502) CD



> Zoom

La Manera Més Salvatge
2006

Enric Casasses/Pascal Comelade

- Canço
- Sextina
- Allò
- Les Cases Del Meu Carrer
- Sense El Ressò Del Dring
- La Manera Més Salvatge & Mags
- Amèrica
- Plus Ultra
- Rim
- Terminal B
- **Cortina Firmada** [R. Wyatt, trad. E. Casasses]
- Uh
- Orfeu [Boira Lila]

- Enric Casasses - voix
- Pascal Comelade - pianos électriques, toy piano Kawai

Cortinada Firmada est la traduction de *Signed Curtain*.

- DISCMEDI BLAU (DM 4148 02) CD



> Zoom

Nuccio D'Angelo

- La leggenda di Astor
- Electric Suite
- **Reflections on Amber" (H. Hopper - N. D'Angelo)**
- Introduzione e Aria
- **Reflections on Sea Song (R. Wyatt - N. D'Angelo)**
- CafË 1930
- Tre Invenzioni Liriche
- Canarios

"*Reflections on Amber* and *Reflections on Sea Song*, respectively by Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt, are both an affectionate homage to these two fine artists as well as to the group "Soft machine" founded by them. The original themes ("Amber and Amberines" and "Sea Song") are employed sometimes integrally, sometimes developed and transfigured with extreme freedom. "

- Nuccio D'Angelo - chit. classica e chit. synth

Homages
2006

- Pietro Horvath - violino
- Stefano Agostini - flauto e ottavino
- Paolo Nardi - oboe
- Pietro Scalvini - viola
- Maria Grazia Dalpasso - pianoforte e synth
- Franco Perfetti - fagotto
- Lello Pareti - c. basso in *Reflections on Amber*"
- Alessio Riccio percussioni

- MAGIE RECORDS - CD



> Zoom

Bise de Buse Joue Sa Musique
2006

Bise de Buse

- Dodécaféiné
- Valse À 5 Temps
- Triton Diabolique
- Les Lumières De La Nuit
- Chocolate Fields
- Sax-Cello
- Gambang
- Lola
- Valse À 5 Temps
- Appelez-Moi Tex
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- Errance
- You Can't Kill Me

- Pierre Michel - saxophone alto
- Laurent Spielmann - piano, synthesizer
- Gérard Dosdat - guitare
- Jean-Louis Heitz - guitare basse
- Maxime Malka - batterie

Enregistré en 1979 (?) à Strasbourg (France).

- MUSEA (FGBG 4684AR) CD



> Zoom

Black Forest/Black Sea
2006

Black Forest/Black Sea

- Sevastopol
- Blackbird On Gray Sky
- Middle Song
- Banjo Song
- Beautiful Here
- Sunday Market
- Lumpin Throat

REISSUE BONUS TRACKS
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Lump In Throat

- Jeffrey Alexander - guitar
- Miriam Goldberg - cello

Album publié en 2003 et réédité en 2006 avec 2 titres bonus dont *Sea Song (Live On Wmbr Cambridge 2003)*

- ASPHALT DUCHESS (AD002) CD
- LAST VISIBLE DOG (LVD049) CD



> Zoom 1 2

Market Rasen
(Dedicated To The Music Of Robert Wyatt)
2006

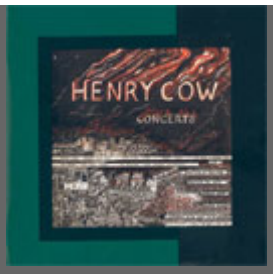
Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker

- Fatty
- **5 Black Notes And 1 White Note** [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- **Alliance** [R. Wyatt]
- Jane's Wallet
- **CP Jeebies** [R. Wyatt]
- Louth Mouth
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- **Box 25/4 Lid** [M. Ratledge/H. Hopper]
- A Saturday In Ny
- **The British Road** [R. Wyatt]
- Rebos
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]

- Max Nagl - alto saxophone, clarinet, samplings
- Clemens Wenger - synthetizor
- Herbert Pirker - drums

- HANDSEMMEL RECORDS (1107CD) CD

Henry Cow



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Concerts Remastered
2006

Disc 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- The Ottawa Song
- **Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Groningen Again

Disc 2
- Oslo
- Off The Map
- Cafe Royal
- Keeping Warm In Winter Sweet Heart Of Mine
- Udine

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée du CD paru en 1995.

- RER MEGACORP (HC5 & 6) 2xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

What's Left For Kicks?
2006

Monks Of Doom

- The 15th
- Light In The Sky
- Forever
- New Saigon
- No Looking Back
- The Calvary Cross
- Oh Well pt.1
- Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
- "La Dolce Vita" Suite: a)The Black And Crazy Blues b)Parlami di me c)La Dolce Vita
- Hurricane Fighter Plane
- Calvary
- Poison
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]
- Für Immer

Moon In June est extrait du single Moon In June/Cowboy Song.

- MAGNETIC (MAG0026) CD



> Zoom

Flower Power
2006

Aldo Romano/Rémi Vignolo/Baptiste Trotignon

- Love Me, Please Love Me
- Say It Ain'T So
- Valse De Melody - Je t'aime moi non plus
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt] - Crying Song
- Black Dog
- Don'T Let Me Be Lonely
- Mr Tambourine Man
- Bridge Over Troubled Water
- C'est Extra
- Your Song
- The End

- Aldo Romano - batterie
- Rémi Vignolo - contrebasse
- Baptiste Trotignon - piano

- NAIVE (NV810911) CD



> Zoom

Live At The Fleece,
Bristol, England, 6 June 2003
2006

University Of Errors

- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper]
- Wage Slave
- Money Doesn't Make It
- Involve Me
- Rich Men Eat My Voice
- So What?
- Mystico Fanatico
- PHP 2032
- Earthbound
- Chainstore Chant/Pretty Miss Titty
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein
- Shooting At The Moon
- Patapan
- Outro

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Josh Pollock - guitar, samples, megaphone
- Warren Heugel - drums, vocals
- Michael Clare - bass

Recorded Live at The Fleece, Bristol, England on 6 June 2003.

- SUBSALT RECORDS (SUBLIVERRZ 1) CD



> Zoom

Common Difference
2006

Sim & Moe Kamura

- 6:4:6
- Along the River
- Sis
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Roota
- Arm Connect
- Keep The Altitude

- Teruyuki Oshima - guitar, computer
- Yoshio Otani - computer, electronics
- Masahiro Uemura - drums
- Moe Kamura - vocals

- MIDI CREATIVE (CXCA-1199) CD



> Zoom

Henry Cow Box
2006

Henry Cow Box

Disc 1
LEGEND
- Nirvana For Mice
- Amygdala
- Teenbeat (Introduction)
- Teenbeat
- Nirvana (Reprise)
- Extract From "With The Yellow Half-Moon And Blue Star"
- Teenbeat (Reprise)
- Tenth Chaffinch
- Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King
- Bellycan

Disc 2
UNREST
- Bittern Storm Over Ulm
- Half Asleep; Half Awake
- Ruins
- Solemn Music
- Linguaphonie
- Upon Entering The Hotel Adlon
- Arcades
- Deluge
- Glove
- Torchfire

Disc 3
IN PRAISE OF LEARNING
- War
- Living In The Heart Of The Beast
- Beginning: The Long March
- Beautiful As The Moon | Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Morning Star
- Lovers Of Gold

Disc 4
DESPERATE STRAIGHTS
- Some Questions About Hats
- Owl
- Worm Is At Work
- Bad Alchemy
- Europa
- Desperate Straights
- Riding Tigers
- Apes In Capes
- Strayed
- Giants
- Excerpt From The Messiah
- In The Sickbay
- Caucasian Lullaby

Discs 5 et 6
CONCERTS
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- The Ottawa Song
- **Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy

Coffret de 8 Cds en tirage limité dont une nouvelle réédition remasterisée du CD *Concerts* paru en 1976 et 1995.

Le 8ème CD est un CD bonus réservé aux 200 premiers souscripteurs du coffret.

- RER MEGACORP (RER HCBOX) 8xCD

Ce coffret est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Groningen Again

- Oslo
- Off The Map
- Cafe Royal
- Keeping Warm In Winter
  Sweet Heart Of Mine
- Udine

Disc 7
WESTERN CULTURE
- History And Prospects: Industry
- History And Prospects: The Decay Of Cities
- History And Prospects: On The Raft
- Day By Day: Falling Away
- Day By Day: Gretel's Tale
- Day By Day: Look Back
- Day By Day: Half The Sky
- Viva Pa Ubu
- Look Back [Alternate Take]
- Slice

Disc 8 (bonus)
UNRELEASED ORCKESTRA EXTRACT
- Untitled
- Would You Prefer Us To Lie?



> Zoom

The Bruised Romantic Glee Club
2006

Jakko M. Jakszyk

Disc 1 - NOW
- The Bruised Romantic Glee Club
- Variations On A Theme By Holst
- Catleys Ashes
- Peggy Comes Home
- Highgate Hill
- Forgiveness
- No One Left To Lie To
- The Things You Throw Away
- Doxy, Dali And Duchamp
- Srebrinica
- When We Go Home

Disc 2 - HERE
- As Long As We Lie Perfectly Still
[M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- That Still And Perfect Summer
- Astral Projection In Pinner
- Pictures Of An Indian City
- Nirvana For Mice
- Islands
- 9 Funerals Of The Citizen King
- Soon After

On *As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still:*

- Jakko M. Jakszyk - vocals, guitars, mellotron
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Dave Stewart - piano, organ
- Clive Brooks - drums
- Gary Barnacle - alto flute, flute, bass flute, piccolo, tenor & soprano saxes

Cette version de *As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still* est extraite de la compilation de Soft Machine Man In A Deaf Corner.

- ICENI RECORDS (INCD 2007)
  2xCD



> Zoom

Bar Elèctric (1975-2005)
2006

Pascal Comelade

Disc 1
- Fluence (PC) + Richard Pinhas
- Sequencia (PC)
- Sequencia (PC)
- Automne (PC) + Gavin Bryars
- Ready Made (PC)
- Bar Electric (PC/VN) + Victor Nubla
- Pluie Japonaise (PC) + David Cunningham / D.D.A.A.
- Chanson (PC) + Cathy Claret
- Petit Ballet Mécanique (PC)
- Dancin' On My Sofa (PC)
- Park Güell (PC)
- Rue des Soeurs Noires (PC)
- Valse de la Demoiselle aux Yeux Verts (PC)
- Honky Tonk Women (Jagger-Richards) + GAT
- Your Labios As Tulips (PC)
- Memories [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper] + Laurent Sinclair
- It Hurts Me Too (Elmore James) + Pierre Bastien/Marc Dufourd
- Tango Del Rosselo (PC)
- La Crasse du Tympan (Marcel Duchamp) Enric Casasses/Mark Cunningham

A noter que P. Comelade attribue *Memories* à [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper] alors que Hugh Hopper en est le seul auteur-compositeur.

- G3G RECORDS (G3PC9) 4xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

- Patafisiskal Polska (PC)

Disc 2
- The Skatalan Logicofobism (PC) + Bel Canto Orquestra
- 4 Roses pour Maris (PC)
- Arthur Cravan Was A Flor Fina (PC)
- The Way I Walk (Jack Scott) + OTH
- Danse du Valseur Callipyge (PC)
- Retrat De L'Enric Amb Xapo (PC)
- Sunny Afternoon (R. Davies)
- Put A Straw Under Babies (Eno)
- Chanson de Charme pour Faux-Nez (PC)
- The Lolobrigidada Fox-Trot (PC)
- Your Eyes Like Juan Gris Cubist Guitar (PC)
- Le Fakir de la Chapelle (PC)
- A Tombouctou sans Mariachis (PC)
- La Catedral d'Escuradents (PC)
- Betty Page A Go-Go (PC)
- Back To Schizo (PC) + Richard Pinhas
- L'Homme Dibuixat (Sisa)

Disc 3
- Le Soir du grand Soir (PC)
- Dona'M Corda (EC/PC) + Enric Casasses
- Souviens-toi de ces douces Soirées (PC)
- The Sad Skinhead (J.H. Peron) + Jean-Hervé Péron
- Domisiladoré (PC) + Général Alcazar
- Teresa (O. Montillor) + Toti Soler
- Love Too Soon (P.J. Harvey/PC) + P.J. Harvey
- Featherhead (P.J. Harvey/PC) + P.J. Harvey
- I Love Joan Jett (Diverses Authors)
- Cadillac (Vince Taylor) + Jac Berrocal
- Springman (PC)
- L'Argot Del Soroll

Disc 4
- Aigua De Florida (PC)
- 13 à Table (PC)
- September Song (Anderson/Weil) + Robert Wyatt
- Tobe Dammit Ornette To Be (PC)
- The Blank Invasion Of Shizofonics Bikinis (PC)
- Si (PC)
- Gégène (PC)
- Egyptian Reggae (J. Richman)
- Numero très (PC)
- La Placa Del Diamant (PC) + Quicu Samso
- Vals Robat (PC)
- Noies Boniques Amb Vestits Bonics (PC)
- Una Aigua Dolca D'Estar Bé (PC)
- Come Prima (Panzer/Taccani/Di Paola)
- The Sheik Of Araby (Snyder/Wheler/Smith)
- Ramona (Autor Desconegut)
- Lo Pardal (Trad.)
- Smoke'n'Cadillac (Deep Purple/ V. Taylor) + Roy Paci
- Lumpen Harmony (PC)



> Zoom

Eventually, All At Once
2006

Joan Of Arc

- Eventually, All At Once
- I'm Calling Off All Falls From Grace
- Miss Cat Piss And Peppermint
- You Can't Change Your Mind
- Living Out In The Sea Of Umbrellas
- Many Times I've Mistaken
- Words Have Cast Their Spells
- If All These People Can Understand Money
- Scratches A Pencil
- **Free Will And Testament** [R. Wyatt/Kramer]

- RECORD LABEL (RL17) CD
- RECORD LABEL (RL17) LP



> Zoom

New Morning - The Paris Concert
2006

Soft Machine Legacy

- Ash
- Seven For Lee
- 1212
- Baker's Treat
- Has Riff
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- Sideburn
- Two Down
- Kite Runner
- Strange Comforts

- Hugh Hopper - bass
- John Marshall - drums
- John Etheridge - guitar
- Elton Dean - saxello, alto saxophone, electric piano (Fender Rhodes)

- IN-AKUSTIK (INAK9076) 2xCD



> Zoom

Lover Album
2006

Clammbon

- Prayer
- That's the Spirit
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still** [M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- Gaishutsuchuu
- Nami Yosete
- Summer Nude
- Across the Universe
- Night Cruising
- Ikokoro Denshin / You've Got To Help Yourself
- I Am Not A Know It All
- Kahlua Milk
- Odayakana Kurashi
- I Shall Be Released

- Ikuko Harada - vocals, keyboards
- Daisuke Ito - drums, percussions
- Mito - bass, keyboards, rhythm box, percussions, vocal

-TRIAD (COCP-50924) CD



> Zoom

Songs From The Big Chair
(Deluxe Edition)
2006

Tears For Fears

Disc 1
SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR
- Shout
- The Working Hour
- Everybody Wants To Rule The World
- Mothers Talk
- I Believe
- Broken
- Head Over Heels / Broken (Live)
- Listen

The Working Hour (Piano Version)

THE B-SIDES
- The Marauders
- Empire Building
- The Big Chair
- Pharaohs (Single Version)
- When In Love With A Blind Man
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Broken Revisited

Disc 2
RARITIES 1983-1985 - THE 7'' SINGLES
- The Way You Are (7" Version)
- Mothers Talk (Short Version)
- Shout (Edit)
- Everybody Wants To Rule The World (7" Version)
- Head Over Heels (Dave Bascombe 7" N. Mix)
- I Believe (A Soulful Re-Recording)
- Mothers Talk (U.S. Mix)

THE 12" SINGLES
- Shout (U.S. Remix)
- Shout (U.S. Dub Version)
- Everybody Wants To Rule The World (Urban Mix)
- Mothers Talk (Beat Of The Drum Mix)
- Broken / Head Over Heels / Broken (Preacher Mix)

- Roland Orzabal - keyboards, vocals, guitar
- Curt Smith - bass guitar, vocals
- Ian Stanley - keyboards
- Manny Elias - drums

Reissue. Remastered.
DELUXE EDITION includes a 24 page booklet.

- MERCURY (983 073-9) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

The Story So Far...
... Oh Really? (Reissue)
2007

Steve Miller/Lol Coxhill

Disc 1
MILLER/COXHILL
- Chocolate Field
- One For You
- Portland Bill

COXHILL/MILLER
- Will My Thirst Play Me Tricks/The Ant About To Be Crushed Ponders Not The Where Withal Of Boot Leather
- Maggots
- Bath 72
- Wimbledon Baths
- Gog Ma Gog

Bonus
DELIVERY
- Betty (You Pays Your Money, You Takes Your Chances)
- **God Song** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Bossa Nochance/Big Jobs

STEVE MILLER
- Big Jobs No. 2
- God Song

Disc 2
Bonus
STEVE MILLER
- Chocolate Field
- One For You

THE STORY SO FAR...
- G Song
- F Bit
- Songs Of March
- More G Songs
- Does This
- The Greatest Off-Shore Race In The World

...OH REALLY?
- Reprise For Thos Who Prefer It Slower
- Tubercular Balls
- Soprano Derivativo/Apricot Jam
- Oh, Do I Like To Be Beside The Seaside?
- In Memoriam: Meister Eckhart, From The Welfare State Epic Of The Same Name Starring Randolph Scott
- A Fabulous Comedian

Bonus
- Coo-Coo-Ka-Chew [Collective Improvisation]

Nouvelle réédition remasterisée de l'album paru en 1974, enrichie de nombreux bonus.

- CUNEIFORM (RUNE 253/254)
  2xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

The Bairns
2007

Rachel Unthank And The Winterset

- Felton Lonnin
- Newcastle Lullaby
- Blue Bleezing Blind Drunk
- I Wish I Wish
- Blue's Gaen Oot O'the Fashion
- My Lad's a Canny Lad
- Blackbird
- Minor Place
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Whitehorn
- Can't Stop It Raining
- My Donald
- Ma Bonny Lad
- Fareweel Regality
- Newcastle Lullaby

- EMI (5099950438020) CD

Mind Capsule

- Stares
- Soft Nine

- CDBABY (122132) CD



> Zoom

The Space Between
2007

- Organism
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]
- Clockwork
- 734



> Zoom

Canción Del Océano (Sea Song)
2007

Honduras

- Canción Del Océano (Sea Song) [R. Wyatt]

- Alex Kodric - guitarra, percusión y cuerno boliviano
- Alejandro Leonelli - bajo, percusión y flauta
- Nicolás Kodric - órgano y sintetizador
- Gabriel Falciola - batería y percusión
- Hernán calvo Pardo (músico invitado) - guitarra slide

- IAJERO INMOVIL RECORDS (VIRD109HONDU) S



> Zoom

Still Living In The Desert
2007

Eyes Like Saucers

- Ideas Of Reference
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Delusion Of Reference
- Still Living In The Desert (And Mostly Inside My Own Head)
- I Want To Believe
- Fruhling Der Seele
- Numinosity
- Desert Song (Where land And Water Meet)

- LAST VISIBLE DOG RECORDS (LVD 117) CD



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

El Primitivismo / Sentimientos
2007

Pascal Comelade

Disc 1
EL PRIMITIVISMO
- Valse De La Demoiselle Aux Yeux Verts (Pascal Comelade)
- Ojos Negros (Tradicional)
- Honky Tonk Women (Jagger, Richards)
- La Dansa De Castellterçol (Tradicional)
- Rue Des Soeurs Noires (Pascal Comelade)
- It's Hurt Me Too (Elmore James)
- Les Dimanches Au Palmarium (Pascal Comelade)
- Jac B. And His Dancing Dogs (Pascal Comelade)
- **O, Caroline PART 1** [R. Wyatt/D. Sinclair]
- Amarcord (Nino Rota)
- **Memories** [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- Your Labios As Tulips (Pascal Comelade)
- Antonico (I. Silva)
- Sweet Little Sixteen (Chuck Berry)
- Ball De l'Àliga (Tradicional)
- Cançó VI (Frederic Mompou)

- Pascal Comelade - òrgan, piano, percussió, guitarra
- Pierre Bastien - violí, violoncel
- Marc Dufourd - guitarra
- Gat - baix
- Laurent Sinclair - piano
- Noémi Martínez - guitarra
- Jordi Argelaga - oboe
- Victor Nubla - clarinet
- Juan Crek - saxo
- Cathy Claret - flauta
- El guitarrista del antifaz - guitarra
- Laurent Churet - saxo
- Jean-Albert Achille - saxo
- Christophe Darmanté - saxo
- Sissi - veu
- Armando Miralles guitarra

Cette réédition réunit les 2 albums El Primitivismo (1987) et Sentimientos

- El Cant Dels Ocells (Tradicional)
- Volando Voy (Veneno)
- O, Caroline PART 2 [R. Wyatt/D. Sinclair]
- Greenlands (Richard Pinhas)
- Onliyu (Pascal Comelade)
- Un Enemic Del Poble (Pascal Comelade)

Disc 2
SENTIMIENTOS
- Irregular Organs (Pascal Comelade)
- Logique Du Sens (Pascal Comelade)
- A Perfect Crime (Pascal Comelade)
- Liebeslied (Pascal Comelade)
- The Curious Sofa (Pascal Comelade)
- Sentimientos, 3 (Pascal Comelade)
- Moments De Bruits Pendant Le Naufrage (Pascal Comelade)
- Sentimientos, 2 [R. Wyatt/J. Thollot]
- From Dc By Pc (David Cunningham)
- Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy (Brian Eno)
- We Did It Again [K. Ayers]
- Collision (Pascal Comelade)
- Automne (Pascal Comelade)
- Ready-Made (Pascal Comelade)

(1982) avec la même pochette que El Primitivismo sans mention du second disque (à l'exception de la tranche du boîtier CD et des pages intérieures du leaflet).

- G3G RECORDS (G3PC10) 2xCD



> Zoom

Songs From The Beginning
2007

Alain Blesing

- Slightly All The Time [M. Ratledge]
- Beautiful As The Moon
- California
- Mumps (Extracts)
- 1983
- Behind Blue Eyes
- Fracture

- Alain Blesing - guitar
- Hugh Hopper- bass
- John Greaves - voice
- Nicolas Fargeix - clarinet
- Catherine Delaunay - clarinet, bass clarinet, accordion –
- François Verly - piano, keyboards, percussion
- Jean-Luc Landsweerdt - drums
- Yves Rousseau double bass
- Philippe Botta - tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute

Enregistré les 2, 3 et 4 octobre 2006 au Triton (Les Lilas/France).

- MUSEA (FBGB 4655.AR) CD



> Zoom

Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening
The Music Of Soft Machine
Featuring Hugh Hopper
2007

Delta Saxophone Quartet

- Dedicated
- Facelift [H. Hopper]
- Somehow With The Passage Of Time...
Kings And Queens [H. Hopper]33 Years Later
- Mousetrap [H. Hopper]
Everything Is You
- To
- Outrageous Moon [M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt/ Fisher]
- Aubade
- Noisette [H. Hopper]
- Floating World
- You
- The Tale Of Taliesin
- Dedicated To You [H. Hopper]
- Epilogue
- Facelift (live) *(titre bonus uniquement dans la version de 2012)*

- Graeme Blevins - soprano sax
- Peter Whyman - alto & soprano sax
- Tim Holmes - tenor & soprano sax
- Chris Caldwell - baritone & soprano sax
with special guest:
- Morgan Fischer - vocals, hurdy gurdy, background electronics (on Outrageous Moon)

Re-packaged in 2012 with one bonus live track, "*Facelift*", recorded live at Etna Jazz Festival in Catania, Italy in 2007, featuring one and only, Hugh Hopper.

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR017) CD

Eiko Ishibashi & Tatsuya Yoshida

- Sanctuary
- Festival Of Teeth
- Twilight Furniture

- Tatsuya Yoshida - vocals, drums, programmed by, keyboards, acoustic guitar



> Zoom

Slip Beneath The Distant Tree
2007

- Classic Medley
- Hospital
- The Invention Of Parachute
- Time Table
- Across The Storm
- Forgipaska
- Doctor Gradus Ad Pernassum
- Poet And Peasant
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- Planet Of Reverberation

Bonus (Mini-CD)
- Untitled
- Untitled

- Eiko Ishibashi - vocals, piano, keyboards, flute

There are no titles on the bonus mini-CD, but track 1 is a cover of *A New Kind of Water* by This Heat.

- RHYTHM TRACKS (TRACK-008) CD
- RHYTHM TRACKS (TRACK-003) Mini-CD



> Zoom

Live At The BBC
1968-1975
The Show Of Our Lives
2007

Caravan

Disc 1
- Place Of My Own
- Ride
- If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You
- Hello Hello
- As I Feel I Die
- Love To Love You
- Love Song Without Flute
- In The Land Of Grey And Pink
- Nine Feet Underground
- Feelin', Reelin', Squealin' [K. Ayers]
- A Hunting We Shall Go
- Waffle Part One: Be Alright & Chance Of A Lifetime

Disc 2
- Memory Lain Hugh
- Headloss
- The Love In Your Eye
- Mirror For The Day
- Virgin On The Ridiculous
- For Richard
- The Dabsong Conshirtoe
- Stuck In A Hole
- The Show Of Our Lives

Feelin', Reelin', Squealin' recorded for John Peel's "Sunday Concert" at the Paris Theatre, London 6th May 1971.

A Hunting We Shall Go est un medley constitué de plusieurs morceaux dont *Backwards* composé par Mike Ratledge pour Soft Machine (sera édité pour la 1ère fois en 2000 sur l'album Noisette par Cuneiform).

Ce medley, enregistré pour la BBC au Paris Theatre de Londre le 2 août 1973 comprend les morceaux suivants : *L'Auberge Du Sanglier*|*A Hunting We Shall Go*|*Backwards* et *A Hunting We Shall Go (reprise).*

- DERAM (5301443) 2xCD



> Zoom 1 2

En Direte A La Plaça Del Sol
22-08-1985
2008

Bel Canto Orchestra

Tracklisting non-identifié mais le premier morceau est une reprise d'**Alifib.**

Live at Plaça del Sol, Barcelona - 22 August 1985.

Tirage limité 200 exemplaires.

- PARASITE (008) CD



Brainville 3

- Trial By Headline
- Dedicated To PQ But She Couldn't Hear It [D. Allen/H. Hopper]
- Ocean Mother
- Who's Afraid?
- I Bin Stoned Before
- Basement Suite
- Return To Basement
- The Rubiyat Of Honorium Tonsilitisk

– Hugh Hopper - bass
- Chris Cutler - drums
– Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR BV3-1) CD

> Zoom

Trial By Headline
2008

- Hours Gone
- **Dididtagin** [C. Cutler/D. Allen/ H. Hopper/K. Ayers]



Humi (Hugh Hopper & Yumi Hara Cawkwell)

- Long Dune
- Shiranui
- Seki no Gohonmatsu
- Circular Dance
- Scattered Forest
- **Hopeful Impressions Of Happiness** [B. Hopper/H. Hopper/Y. Hara Cawkwell]
- Awayuki
- Awayuki II
- Distant Dune
- Futa

– Hugh Hopper - bass guitar, loops, electronics
- Yumi Hara Cawkwell - voice, keyboards, percussion

Hopeful Impressions Of Happiness est une évocation de *Hope For Happiness* (on The Soft Machine Vol. One)

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR019) CD

> Zoom

Dune
2008



Brainville 01 - Daevid Allen/Pip Pyle/Hugh Hopper/Kramer

- Brainvilla
- Who's Afraid
- Hours Gone
- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper]
- Bullshit & Be
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Hugh Hopper - Bass
- Pip Pyle - drums

Hope For Hapiness est signé par Brian Hopper (qui a effectivement composé et déposé les droits de ce morceau) alors que la version du Soft Machine vol.1 est signée par Hugh Hopper, Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge.

Recorded at Knitting Factory NYC on September 5th, 1998.

- VOICEPRINT (VP427CD) CD

> Zoom

Live In NYC '98
2008



Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
- Town Feeling
- Song For Insane Times
- Girl On A Swing
- The Lady Rachel
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Wich Ate Her)
- Religious Experience (Singing A Song In The Morning)
- Soon Soon Soon
- Rheinhardt & Geraldine/ Colores Para Delores
- May I?
- Clarence In Wonderland
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Shooting At The Moon
- Butterfly Dance
- Gemini Child
- Stars
- There Is Loving/Among Us/There Is Loving

Disc 2
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well
- Oh My
- Margaret
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Don't Let It Get You Down

Compilation.

Le 4ème CD de cette compilation est un enregistrement du concert du 25 mai 1973 au Queen Elizabeth Hall de Londres, avec :

- Kevin Ayers - vocals, guitar
- Archie Leggett - bass
- Cal Batchelor - guitar
- Gerry Fitzgerald - guitar
- Henry Crallan - keyboards
- Henry Smith - drums
- Liza Strike - backing vocals
- Doris Troy - backing vocals
- Barry St. John - backing vocals

- HARVEST (521 5570) 4xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

> Zoom

Songs For Insane Times: An Anthology 1969-1980
2008

- Interview
- Caribbean Moon
- The Up Song
- The Confessions Of Doctor Dream: Irreversible Neural Damage
- It Begins With A Blessing/Once I Awakened/But It Ends With A Curse
- See You Later
- Ballbearing Blues

Disc 3
- After The Show
- Thank You Very Much
- Observations
- Toujours La Voyage
- Diminished But Not Finished
- Farewell Again (Another Dawn)
- Yes I Do
- Love's Gonna Turn You Round
- Ballad Of Mr. Snake
- Blue
- Ballad Of A Salesman Who Sold Himself
- A View From The Mountain
- Beware Of The Dog II
- Hat Song
- Money, Money, Money
- Super Salesman
- Where Do The Stars End ?

Disc 4
''AFTER THE SHOW' LIVE AT THE QUEEN ELISABETH HALL 1973
- Banana Introduction
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Interview
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- Caribbean Moon
- Don't Let It Get You Down
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers]
- **Why Are We Sleeping ?** [K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- After The Show



> Zoom

Timemazine #3
2008

Timemazine #3

- Tahitian Melody [Live] (The Salvage Resurrection)
- Drivin Sideways (Merrell Fankhauser & H.M.S. Bounty)
- Ballad of the Hip Death Goddess [Live] (Ultimate Spinach)
- Open Your Eyes [Lost Version] (Hunger!)
- Mystery Ship [Live] (Vibravoid)
- White (Atomic Workers)
- News From The Sun (No Mans Land)
- **Thats How Much I Need You Now [Demo]** [R. Wyatt] **(The Lysergics)**
- The River (Dragontears)
- I See (Obskuria)
- My Queen (King Arthurs Court)

Psychedelic Greek Fanzine in English with free CD.

- Issue #3 - Autumn 2008. - CD



> Zoom

Parallel Dune
2008

Humi (Hugh Hopper & Yumi Hara Cawkwell)

- Dune Original Version
- Awayuki (Light Snow) Original Version
- **Hopeful Impressions Of Happiness Original Version** [B. Hopper/H. Hopper/Y. Hara Cawkwell]
- Nowaki (Wind that Divides the Wild Field) - Egasumi (The Shape Of A Haze)
- Seki no Gohonmatsu (Five Pine Trees Of Seki) Integral Version
- Shiranui MySpace Version
- Awayuki (Light Snow) MySpace Version
- Dune MySpace Version
- Seki no Gohonmatsu (Five Pine Trees Of Seki) MySpace Version

- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar, electronics, loops
- Yumi Hara - keyboards, vocals

Includes alternative versions of tracks from album 'Dune' (hence 'Parallel' Dune) and live recordings.

Track 3 recorded on 19 September 2007.

Compiled and made available as limited edition CDr for HUMI Japan Tour 2008 which Hugh couldn't make due to his sudden illness, and which was replaced by solo gigs by Yumi Hara between

September and November 2008. The CDr was sold at these shows. It was also later available for purchase online through Yumi's bandcamp page.

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

Music For Airports (Live)
2008

Bang On A Can

- 1/1 (B.Eno/R. Wyatt/R. Davies - arr. Michael Gordon)
- 1/2
- 2/1
- 2/2

- CANTALOUPE MUSIC (CA21045) CD



> Zoom

Jazz Italiano Live Festival 2008 Omaggio Ai Progressive Rock
2008

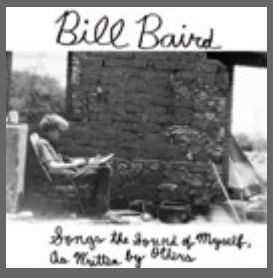
Roberto Gatto

- Watcher Of The Skies (Rutherford, Gabriel, Collins, Hackett, Banks)
- Matte Kudasai (Belew, Bruford, Fripp Levin)
- Money (Waters)
- Episode One (Gatto)
- Sea Song [Robert Wyatt]
- Talk To The Wind (McDonald , Sinfield)
- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away [D. McRae, R. Wyatt]
- Progressivamente (Gatto)
- Trilogy (Lake, Emerson)

- Roberto Gatto - drums
- Francesco Puglisi - bass, double bass
- Roberto Cecchetto - electric guitar
- Danilo Rea - piano, keyboards
- Maurizio Giammarco - saxophone [tenor], flute
- Gianluca Petrella - trombone (tracks: 2 to 5, 8)
- Fabrizio Bosso - trumpet, flugelhorn (tracks: 1, 6, 7, 9)
- John De Leo - vocals (tracks: 4, 5)

Registrato alla Casa dell Jazz di Roma il 07.04.2008.
Released in the Jazz Italiano Live 2008 series (radio Capital)

Sold with the weekly magazine L'Espresso. - CD



> Zoom

Songs the Sound of Myself, As Written By Others
2008

Bill Baird

- The Dirt (Mark David Ashworth)
- Sea Song [Robert Wyatt]
- Last Fall (Jared Van Fleet)
- Shady Grove (Traditional)
- The Ballad of Sammy Mudd (Sam Sanford)
- I'll Be Here In the Morning (Townes Van Zandt)
- Rake and Rambling Boy (Traditional)
- Hot Burrito 2 Digit (Flying Burrito Brothers)
- Expecting to Fly (Neil Young)
- Walking After Midnight (Searching for Me)
- Be Not So Fearful (Bill Fay)
- Diamond Deserts (Bill Baird)
- This Land Is Your Land (Woody Guthrie)

- TIRED TRAILS
Digital format

Soft Machine



> Zoom

Drop
2008

- Neo Caliban Grides
- All White
- **Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]
- Drop - Part 1
- Drop - Part 2
- M.C.
- **Out-Bloody-Rageous** [M. Ratledge]
- As If
- Dark Swing
- Intropigling
- Pigling Bland

- Mike Ratledge - Lowrey organ, Fender Rhodes electric piano
- Elton Dean - saxello, alto saxophone, Fender Rhodes Electric piano
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Phil Howard - drums

Recorded live during the German tour in the Fall of 1971.

Dedicated to the memory of Elton Dean (1946-2006).

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR023) CD
- SIREENA RECORDS (SIR4025) LP, limited edition.



> Zoom

Covers
2008

Chris Kunkel

- Centerfield (John Fogerty cover)
- Her Majesty (Spin Cycle cover)
- In the Pines (Leadbelly cover)
- Pay No Mind (Beck cover)
- Feel (Syd Barrett cover)
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Black Angel's Death Song (VU cover)

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Anthologie du Projet MW
2009

Anthologie du Projet MW

- September Song (R. Wyatt, P. Comelade) [K. Weill]
- **Signed Curtain (P. Comelade)** [R. Wyatt]
- **O Caroline (P. Comelade)** [D. Sinclair / R. Wyatt]
- Memories (P. Comelade) [H. Hopper]
- **Alifib 1 (P. Comelade)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib 2 (P. Comelade)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Heaps Of Sheep (Rik Van Den Bosch - guitare et chant & Marrijn Slager - guitare avec les voix de A. Marchetti, L. Marchetti, B. Demonet et J.M. Marchetti)** [B. Eno - P. George - R. Wyatt / A. Benge]
- Entretien avec Robert Wyatt et lectures de The British Road en français par Philippe Fretun et de The British Road + Blues in Bob Minor en anglais par Robert Wyatt

Ce CD est édité avec l'ouvrage Anthologie du projet MW de J.M. Marchetti publié en mars 2009 aux éditions Ænc rages & Co.

- ÆNCRAGES & Co - CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

Stere0types
2009

Cantastorie Sintetico

- **Funcia Da Carrua | Soup Song** [B. Hopper:R. Wyatt]
- Matri Chi Aviti I Figghi A La Batia (Trad.)
- Lu Libbru Di L'infami (Trad.)
- Sta Bedda Libbirtà (Trad.)
- Tarantella Vietnamita

Funcia Da Carrua | *Soup Song* is Robert Wyatt's song translated in Sicilian.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2 3

Hamburg
Volume 3 Of The Henry Cow Anniversary Box Set
2009

Henry Cow

- Fair As The Moon
- Nirvana For Rabbits
- Ottawa Song
- Twilight Bridge
- **Gloria Gloom** [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Hamburg 1
- Hamburg 2
- Red Noise10
- Hamburg 3
- Hamburg 4
- Hamburg 5
- Terrible As An Army With Banners
- A Heart
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road
- We Did It Again

- Robert Wyatt - voice

- Chris Cutler - drums
- Lindsay Cooper - oboe, bassoon
- Fred Frith - guitar
- John Greaves - bass
- Tim Hodgkinson - organ, alto sax
- Dagmar Krause - voice

- RER MEGACORP (RER HC9) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom 1 2 3 4

Around Robert Wyatt
2009

Orchestre National de Jazz

Disc 1
- The Song (Robert Wyatt, chant)
- **Alifib (Rokia Traoré, chant)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Just As You Are (Yael Naïm, Arno, chant)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **O Caroline (Daniel Darc, chant)** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Kew Rhone (Robert Wyatt, chant)
- **Shipbuilding (Yael Naïm, chant)** [Mac Manus/Langer]
- Line
- **Alliance (Camille, chant)** [R. Wyatt]
- Vandalusia (Robert Wyatt, chant)
- **Del Mondo (Irène Jacob, chant)** [Zamboni/Maroccolo/Magnelli]
- Te Recuerdo Amanda (Robert Wyatt, chant)

Disc 2 - Bonus
- **P L A (Rokia Traoré, chant)** [R. Wyatt]
- Gegenstand (Robert Wyatt, chant)
- Rangers In The Night (Robert Wyatt, chant)
- **Just As You Are (Yael Naïm, chant)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - chant

- Daniel Yvinec - direction artistique
- Vincent Artaud - arrangements

- Arno - chant
- Camille - chant
- Daniel Darc - chant
- Irène Jacob - chant
- Yael Naïm - chant
- Rokia Traore - chant
- Eve Risser - piano, piano préparé, flûtes & objets sonores
- Vincent Lafont - claviers & électronique
- Antonin-Tri Hoang - saxophone alto, clarinettes & piano
- Matthieu Metzger - saxophones, systalk-box & traitements électroniques
- Joce Mienniel - flûtes & électronique
- Rémi Dumoulin - saxophones & clarinettes
- Guillaume Poncelet - trompette, piano, synthétiseurs & électronique
- Pierre Perchaud - guitare & banjo
- Sylvain Daniel - basse électrique, cor d'harmonie & effets électroniques
- Yoann Serra - batterie

- BEE JAZZ (BEE 030) 2xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

Critiques/Reviews



Comicoperando
A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt

- Intro
- **Pataphysical Introduction (arr. Alex Maguire)** [R. Wyatt]
- **September The Ninth (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road (arr. Cristiano Calcagnile)** [R. Wyatt]

- Dagmar Krause - voce
- Richard Sinclair - voce, basso elettrico
- Gilad Atzmon - ance
- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Michel Delville - chitarra synth

> Zoom

Comicoperando
A Tribute To The Music
Of Robert Wyatt
2010

- **Just as You Are (arr. Gilad Atzmon)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Calyx (arr. Phil Miller)** [P. Miller]
- **Memories (arr. Michel Delville)** [H. Hopper]
- **Alifib (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [R. Wyatt]
- Double Bass Solo (arr. John Edwards)
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road** [R. Wyatt]**(arr. Annie Whitehead)**
- Guitar Noise (arr. Michel Delville)
- **God Song (arr. Phil Miller)** [P. Miller/ R. Wyatt]
- **Maryan (arr. Cristiano Calcagnile)** [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- **Alliance (instrumental)** [R. Wyatt]
- **Sea Song (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [R. Wyatt]
- Sax Medley (arr. Gilad Atzmon)
- **O Caroline (arr. Dave Sinclair)** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Band Presentation
- **Forest (arr. Annie Whitehead)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Soup Song** [B. Hopper/R. Wyatt]

- Alex Maguire - pianoforte e tastiere
- John Edwards - contrabbasso
- Chris Cutler - batteria
- Cristiano Calcagnile - percussioni

L'ALTRO SUONO festival 2010 Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti, Modena 2010 March, 1st

- PRODUZIONE EXB - Digital Format



> Zoom

Mop Meuchiine Plays
Robert Wyatt
2010

Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt

- **Locomotive** [T. Monk/P. Brown]
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Instant Pussy** [R. Wyatt]
- **The British Road** [R. Wyatt]
- To The Next Track
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- **I'm A Believer** [N.Diamond]
- **Anachronist** [R. Wyatt]**; A.W.O.L.** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Calyx** [P. Miller]
- Big Bang Theory
- **Five Black Notes And One White Note** [Offenbach/R. Wyatt]
- **Muddy Mouse** [F. Frith/R. Wyatt]

- Robert Wyatt - voix, interview

- Pascal Maupeu - guitare, banjo
- Jean-Baptiste Réhault - saxophone baryton, accordéon, saxhorn alto
- Hugues Vincent - violoncelle
- Cedric Piromalli - piano, fender rhodes, korg ms20
- Nicolas Le Moullec - basse électrique, voix
- Bertrand Hurault - batterie électronique

- LE CHANT DU MONDE (274 1869) CD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

Go
2010

Annemarieke Coenders & Wim Sebo

-- No Friend Of Mine
- Go
- Lake Greenhouse
- Your Side Of The Road
- Do Not Keep
- I'm A Whale
- Keyhole
- Black Ink
- **Costa** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- Another World
- I Want To Go To
- His Way Back
- Rain Coming Down
- Sandman
- November Remains

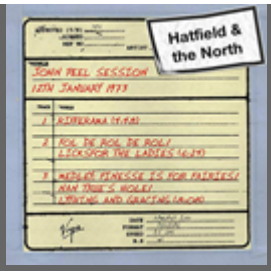
- Annemarieke Coenders - vocals, guitar
- Wim Sebo - drums, electronic drums
- Sido Martens - electric guitar
- Obed Brinkman - trombone
- Hans Battenberg - violin

- CRS (CECD 34) CD

Hatfield & The North

- Rifferama
- Fol De Rol / Licks For The Ladies
- Finesse Is For Fairies / **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt] / Lything And Gracing

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums, percussion
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Dave Stewart - keyboards, tone



> Zoom

John Peel Session
(12th January 1973)
2010

generators

It seems that the recording took place on January 22, not on January 12.

- VIRGIN RECORDS
  Digital format



> Zoom

What's Rattlin' On The Moon?
A Personal Vision Of The Music
Of Mike Ratledge
2010

Beppe Crovella

... RATTLIN' ALL THE TIME
- Tarabos
- Chloe And The Pirates
- All White
- The Man Who Waved At Trains
- As If
- **Hibou, Anemone And Bear** [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- **Out Bloody Rageous** [M. Ratledge]
- **Pig** [M. Ratledge]
- **Esther's Nose Job** [M. Ratledge]
- **Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]

... BEFORE THE MOON
- Leonardo's E-mail
- Moonvision
- Many Moons, Many Junes

...AFTER THE MOON
- Lunar Impression
- Circular Lines In The Air
- Moon Geezers (To Elton & Hug)

- Beppe Crovella - organ, piano, electric piano, clavinet, mellotron

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR030)
  CD



> Zoom

Everlasting
2010

Rebecca Barnard

- Born in a Shirt
- Age 14
- Everlasting
- Fall And Walk
- Give Away
- Own Time
- Closer To You
- **Seasong** [R. Wyatt]
- Little Ruffy
- You Are Loved)

- SHOCK RECORDS (LADYBIRD2)
  CD



> Zoom

UFO Planante
2010

Invisible Opera Company Of Tibet

- First Contact
- Sal Paradise
- Stars
- Spirits
- Landing in Shambhala
- **Moon in June (Live)** [R. Wyatt]

- Fabio Golfetti - guitarra, vocal
- Gabriel Costa - baixo
- Fred Barley - bateria, vocal

- VOICEPRINT BRAZIL
  (VPB125CD) CD



> Zoom

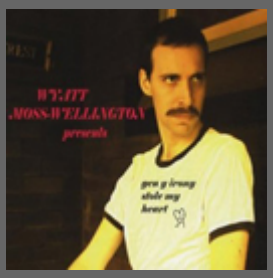
The Covers Album
2010

Harbour

- California Dreaming
- How To Fight Loneliness
- You Turn Me On (I'm a radio)
- **Sea Song** [Robert Wyatt]
- River
- The Book Of Love
- A Heart Needs A Home
- I Am Lonely
- Into My Arms

A collection of cover versions of favourite songs recorded at home on 8 track in December 2010.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Gen Y Irony Stole My Heart
2010

Wyatt Moss-Wellington

- Intro
- Coming Down
- Spencer
- PSA: Sour Visits Sonic Chemical Plant in Dark Castle
- Arguments
- Portnoy's Sanction (Sex is Pretty Good)
- Hammond Song
- Wyatt's Gangsta Rap Yea Pwned
- Screaming for Some Peace
- 40th Anniversary
- Love Song Louise vol. 2
- Prelude to a Sanitary Apocalypse
- The Suicide Bomber
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]

- CD BABY RECORDS /INDYS (386311) CD



> Zoom

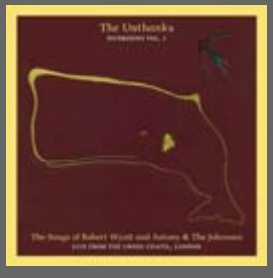
Meat Das Tirol !
2010

Tirol

- Les Enfant Terribles
- Los Niños Del Maiz
- Nursery Crimes
- El Yogurt De Alburquerque
- Me Voy Scoutt
- Amiguitos Del Interior
- **We Did It Again (Soft Machine)** [K. Ayers]

- Andrés Toro - guitarra, voz
- Andrés Smith - guitarra
- Martín Sandoval - bajo
- Luis Maria Ducasse - bateria

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons

The Unthanks

- Bird Gerhl
- Man Is The Baby
- You Are My Sister
- For Today I Am A Boy
- Paddy's Gone
- Spiralling
- **Stay Tuned** [A. Garbarek]
- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]
- **Lullaby For Hamza** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Lisp Service** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- **Free Will And Testament** [Kramer/R. Wyatt]
- **Out Of The Blue** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- **Cuckoo Madame** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

- Rachel Unthank - voice, percussion [feet], dulcitone
- Becky Unthank - voice, percussion [feet]
- Ros Stephen - violin, voice
- Niopha Keegan - violin, accordion, voice
- Becca Spencer - viola, voice
- Lizzie Jones - trumpet, voice
- Adrian McNally - piano
- Adrian McNally - harmonium, voice - Chris Price - drums
- Dean Rivera - double bass
- Jo Silverston - cello, voice

Live From The Union Chapel, London
2011

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Forest (Excerpt)** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

Recorded at the Union Chapel, Islington, London on December 8th and 9th 2010.

- RABBLE ROUSER MUSIC (RRM009) CD



> Zoom

Garden Parti & Caroline, Yes !
2011

Caroline

Disc 1
- El Mito
- Run
- The Killers (a Juan)
- Hier Soir Un DJ M'a Sauvé la Vie
- Horses
- L'Indocile
- Comme Tout Le Monde
- La Chaize
- Geranium

Disc 2
- Le portrait de tante Caroline
- Caroline, Yes
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Roses
- Carolina Hard-Core Ecstasy
- Caroline, No
- I Did Acid With Caroline
- Elle s'appelle Caroline
- Sweet Caroline
- Caroline Says I
- Carolyn "Keki" Mingus
- Caroline's a Victim
- Caroline Says II
- Carolina in the Morning
- Caroline

- Brad Scott - vocal on *O Caroline*
- Sarah Murcia - double bass, keyboards
- Olivier Py - saxophones, flute
- Gilles Coronado - guitars
- Franck Vaillant - drums

- ZIG-ZAG TERRITOIRES (ZZT 110104) 2xCD



> Zoom

The Chansons Of
Robert Wyatt Et Moi...
2011

Jean-Philippe Ramos

- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]
- **Free Will And Testament** [Kramer/ R. Wyatt]
- **Amber And The Amberines** [H. Hopper/ R. Wyatt]
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]
- **P.L.A.** [R. Wyatt]

- Jean-Philippe Ramos - saxophones - voix - palimpseste

- NO LABEL - LP



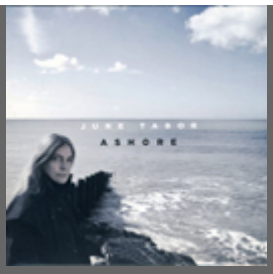
> Zoom

El Firichinio
2011

Maxi Trusso

- King Of Sad
- You Got It
- Discovermen
- Lithium
- Let The Motion
- **Oh Caroline** [R. Wyatt]

- NO LABEL - EP



> Zoom

Ashore
2011

June Tabor

- Finisterre
- The Bleacher Lassie Of Kelvinhaugh
- The Grey Funnel Line
- Le Vingt-Cinquième Du Mois D'Octobre
- **Shipbuilding** [C. Langer/D. MacManus]
- Jamaica
- The Great Selkie Of Sule Skerry
- Winter Comes In / Vidlin Voe
- The Oggie Man
- I'll Go And Enlist For A Sailor
- The Brean Lament
- Le Petit Navire
- Across The Wide Ocean

- June Tabor - voice
- Huw Warren - piano
- Tim Harries - double bass
- Andy Cutting - accordion
- Mark Emerson - viola, violin

- TOPIC RECORDS (TSCD577) CD
- VINYL 180 (VIN180LP133) 2xLP



> Zoom

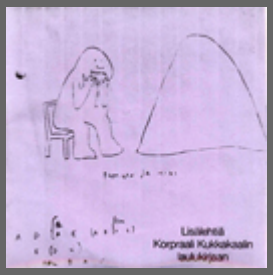
Live Adventures
2011

Soft Machine Legacy

- Has Riff II
- Grapehound
- The Nodder
- In The Back Room
- Song Of Aeolus
- The Relegation Of Pluto / Transit
- Gesolreut
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]
- The Last Day

- John Etheridge - guitar
- Theo Travis - tenor sax - flute
- Roy Babbington - bass guitar
- John Marshall - drums - saxophones - voix - palimpseste

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR036) CD



> Zoom

Lisälehtiä Korpraali Kukkakaalin Laulukirjaan
2011

Suonna Kononen

- Marilyn Monroe & Henry Miller (Marilyn)
- Jumala oli mies
- Parmenldes
- Voi kun teillä olis silmät
- Rallikuskin kuolema
- Taivaan kultavaunut
- Taivaanrannan maalarit
- Planet waves III
- Zyrtec blues
- Anus mundi
- Satamavarasto
- **Voi Helena (O Caroline)** [D. Sinclair/ R. Wyatt + suom. san. Suonna Kononen]
- Lobsang Rampa
- Riemukas Rabelals

- Suonna Kononen - laulu, akustinen kitara, huuliharppu
- Arto Laitinen -basso, mandoliini
- Aapo Ruuttunen - taustalaulu
- Pasi Rytinki -6- ja 12-kielinen sähkökitara, ukulele

Limited edition of 40 copies to celebrate SK's 40th birthday.

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

I Will Never Do Cover Versions! (expanded)
2011

VVAA (Finisterre, La Maschera Di Cera, Höstsonaten, Fabio Zuffanti)

- Harlequin (Genesis) - Finisterre
- Refugees (Van Der Graaf Generator) - Finisterre
- Nimrodel (Camel) - Finisterre
- Alta Loma (Premiata Forneria Marconi) - Finisterre
- Darkness (11-11) (Van Der Graaf Generator)- La Maschera Di Cera
- In The Wake Of Poseidon (King Crimson) La Maschera Di Cera
- Vorrei Incontrarti (Alan Sorrenti) - Höstsonaten
- **Sea Song** [Robert Wyatt] - Höstsonaten
- Julia Dream (Pink Floyd) - Fabio Zuffati
- Astronomy Domine (Pink Floyd) - Fabio Zuffati
- Chapter 24 (Pink Floyd) - Fabio Zuffati

Taken from "To Canterbury and Beyond (A tribute to Canterbury Scene)", Mellow Records 1999.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

- Sequenze E Frequenze (Franco Battiato) - Fabio Zuffati



> Zoom

[Peaux d'âmes]
2012

Mahieux "Family Life" Quartet

- Flip
- 45 Angle
- Mank De Monk
- **Be Serious** [R. Wyatt]
- Mirrors
- Station Debout Pénible
- Pee Wee
- Punt
- Jack's Blues

- Géraldine Laurent - saxophone
- Olivier Benoit - guitar
- Nicolas Mahieux - double-bass
- Jacques Mahieux - drums, vocals
- Jérémie Ternoy - Fender Rhodes

- CIRCUM DISC (CIDI1001) CD



> Zoom

Under Cover
2012

In Dark Trees

- Mathilda Mother
- Space Oditty
- Perfect Day
- **Sea Song** (R. Wyatt]
- May I ?
- Song For Europe
- Alabama Song
- I Keep a Close Watch
- Let's Go Away For a While
- Old Man
- Fruit Tree
- A Singer Must Die
- Today
- Venus In Furs
- In the Court of the Crimson King

- Nicolas DENIS - guitar/voice
- Philippe ONFRAY - accordeon/voice
- Denis SOTINEL - guitar/voice

Recorded live au Bas Chemin, Quessoy
03 july 2011

- NO LABEL - Digital format



> Zoom

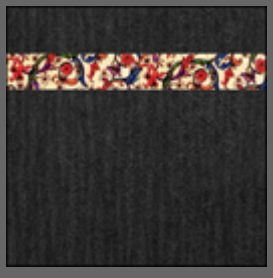
Field Music Play...
2012

Field Music

- Terrapin
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- Heart
- If There Is Something
- Suzanne
- Don't Pass Me By
- Fear Is A Man's Best Friend
- Rent

- David Brewis - all instruments
- Peter Brewis - all instruments

- MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES (MI0248CD) CD



> Zoom

Monsieur Benjamin

- Crime Parfait
- Jolianne
- Les Rêves Tristes
- Toes
- Chromantic Song
- Comme Un Printemps
- **Lisp Service** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Histoires De Noyées
- Consoler Les Cachalots
- No-No
- Le Geste à La Parole
- Undertoes
- Waiting For Your Call Part 2

- Benjamin Croizy - voice and all instruments

- NO LABEL
Digital Format

Marottes
2012



> Zoom

The Harvest Years 1969-1974
2012

- La Scop
- Fabrice De Tourcoing
- Virgule, Point.

Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
JOY OF TOY
- Joy Of A Toy Continued
- Town Feeling
- The Clarietta Rag<
- Girl On A Swing
- Song For Insane Times
- Stop The Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- Lady Rachel
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong 5:36
- All This Crazy Gift Of Time 3:50

Bonus Tracks
- Singing A Song In The Morning (Single Version)-
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Stop This Train-
- **Why Are We Sleeping** [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]
- You Say You Like My Hat

Disc 2
SHOOTING AT THE MOON
- May I?
- Rheinhardt & Geraldine / Colores Para Delores
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans Un Violon
- The Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Underwater
- Clarence In Wonderland
- Red Green And You Blue
- Shooting At The Moon

Bonus Tracks
- Butterfly Dance
- Puis Je? 3:38
- Gemini Child 3:11
- The Lady Rachel
- Shooting At The Moon
- Derby Day
- The Interview
- **We Did It Again** [K. Ayers] / Murder In The Air

Disc 3
WHATEVERSHEBRINGSWESING
- There Is Loving / Among Us / There Is Loving
- Margaret
- Oh My
- Song From The Bottom Of A Well
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes
- Champagne Cowboy Blues
- Lullaby

Bonus Tracks
- Stars
- Fake Mexican Tourist Blues
- Lunatic's Lament
- Oyster And The Flying Fish
- Butterfly Dance
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Falling In Love Again
- Queen Thing

Disc 4
BANANAMOUR
- Don't Let It Get You Down
- Shouting In A Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go To Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot A Dream
- Hymn
- Beware Of The Dog

Bonus Tracks
- Connie On A Rubber Band
- Caribbean Moon
- Take Me To Tahiti
- The Interview
- Oh! What A Dream

Box Set compilation.

- HARVEST (956 5092) 5xCD
- EMI (956 5092) 5xCD

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

- Shouting In A Bucket Blues

Disc 5
THE CONFESSIONS OF MR DREAM AND OTHER STORIES
- Day By Day
- See You Later
- Didn't Feel Lonely Till I Thought Of You
- Everybody's Sometime And Some People's All The Time Blues
- It Begins With A Blessing / Once I Awakened / But It Ends With A Curse
- Ballbearing Blues
- The Confessions Of Dr Dream
- Part One: Irreversible Neural Damage
- Part Two: Invitation
- Part Three: The One Dance Chance
- Part Four: Doctor Dream Theme
- Two Goes Into Four

Bonus Tracks
- The Up Song
- After The Show
- Thank You Very Much
- Another Whimsical Song
- The Lady Rachel
- Stop This Train
- Didn't Feel Lonely Until I Thought Of You



> Zoom

Paris Short Stories Saison 1
2012

Joce Miennel

- Box 25/4 LID I [M. Ratledge, H. Hopper]
- Mozambic 2. Mozambic
- The Band Over The Clouds
- The Pirate Of Penance
- Box 25/4 LID II [M. Ratledge, H. Hopper]
- Max mon amour
- Big Swifty
- Immature
- Continuum
- Box 25/4 LID III [M. Ratledge, H. Hopper]
- The Modern Things
- Turkish Mambo

- Joce Mienniel - flute, flute basse, flute en UT et alto, guimbarde, traitements
- Aymeric Avice - trumpet, traitements
- Sylvain Rifflet - clarinette, traitements
- Vincent Lafont - Fender Rhodes, traitements
- Antonin Rayon - orgue Hammond B3 & clavinet
- Eve Risser - piano préparé
- Philippe Gordiani - guitares folk & électrique, traitements

- DRUGSTORE MALONE (DM001)
CD



> Zoom

Love Me Oh Please Love Me
2012

Bullion

- It's All Sound
- The Age Of Self [R. Wyatt]
- Collision
- Save Your Lubb
- Family

- Juliano Fiori - percussion
- Wayne Francis - saxophone
- Nathan Jenkins - vocals, acoustic guitar, synth

- DEEK RECORDINGS (DEEK001)
EP



Sharon Gal

- Summer Candy Winter Magic
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
Bonus Track
- Black Lolly

- Sharon Gal - voices & electronics

Bonus added to the digital version of the album on Bandcamp.

- AMERICAN TAPES (AM930) EP

> Zoom

Melancoholic
2012



> Zoom

Covers
(?)

Witold Bolik

- It's only a paper moon - take 3 - Siel PX (Arlen-Harburg/Rose)
- Ça n'effraie personne (Nobody's scared) - Vic Godard/Subway sect
- Jje suis venu te dire que (S. Gainsbourg)
- Somebody that I used to know (Lyrics Eliott Smith)
- Shakespeare City - fragment (Moondog)
- **O Caroline (update) (Matching Mole)**
- Mandy make up your mind (piano/vx)
- Jazz me blues take 1
- Mandy make up your mind (laidback proposal)
- Jazz me blues take 2
- Mandy make up your mind (weird notes)
- Jazz me blues (Delaney, 1921)
- Blue moon (rodgers/hart)
- Monica (The Kinks)
- Brazil (Barroso)
- I'm gonna sit right down... (Young/ahlert)
- Goodbye July (Margo Guryan)
- Chega de saudade (Jobim) - 2015 #1
- Toccatta (Jaga jazzist)
- Qui c'est celui-là (Buarque/Vassiliu)
- One note (and less than a minute) samba (Jobim) - from "Comment j'ai conquis Broadway"
- Magnet's coil (Sebadoh)
- Loser (Beck)
- The glory of love (Billy Hill)
- Chega de saudade (Jobim/Moraes)
- Mandy make up your mind (jugbandism)
- Shakespeare city - Moondog #3
- Rapper's moderate delight (Sugar Hill)
- Ronds de cuir (F. Lalanne)
- Magnet's coil (forgotten attempt, 2011)
- We shall overcome
- Tex Avery round of people to make the world go kind (after R. Palmer)
- I don't intend to spend xmas without you (Margo Guryan)
- Shakespeare City (Moondog)
- Shakespeare City (Moondog) #4
- Thou Tun'st this world (Brady/Purcell - 1692)
- Thou tun'st this world (Brady/Purcell) #2
- Tocatta #2 (Jagga Jazzist)
- Thou tun'st this world (Purcell/Brady) #3
- Coisa Nº 5 (Nanã) - Moacir Santos 01:10
- Jim (Jean-Louis Murat)
- Chega de saudade PO version (Jobim)
- (there's danger in your) glitchy eyes waltz
- Shakespeare City - PO's version (Moondog)
- El Vito (Trad - Coltrane)
- Surfboard (Jobim)
- Pop music (R. Stevie Moore) - work in progress
- Pop music (R Stevie Moore) - take 2
- Smoke on the water theme (Deep Purple)
- Johnny and Mary (Robert Palmer)
- **Round about Alifib - 2012 (Robert Wyatt)**
- **Round 2 about Alifib - 2012 (Robert Wyatt)**
- Chega de saudade (Jobim) - 2016
- I'm gonna sit right down (unreleased swing edit, circa 2013)
- Looking for an echo (Kenny Vance) - first take
- Looking for an echo (K Vance) - take 2
- Looking for an echo (K. Vance) - Minibrute cover
- Je suis Louise (Breanna Jones - Library Siesta)
- Let's sing another song, boys (L. Cohen)
- Here I go (Syd Barrett)
- I believe in (P. Shelley - Buzzcocks)
- Parapluies de Cherbourg (Legrand/Demy) finale - take 1
- Les parapluies de Cherbourg - finale (Legrand/Demy) - take 2

Discipline de la nostalgie.

Date de parution mentionnée sur la setlist digitale : 14 avril 2035.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

- Looking for an echo (K. Vance) - pianos
- I don't mind if you forget me (Morrissey)
- Speakin'out (Neil Young)
- It's only a paper moon (Arlen/Harburg/Rose)
- Speakin' out (Neil Young) - (take 2 - 2019)
- Chega de saudade (2019)
- Monica (The Kinks) - take 2 - 2019
- My favorite things (Rodgers/ Hammerstein)
- Metronomic underground (Stereolab)
- I'm gonna sit right down (Ahlert, Young) - 2019
- Gonna sit right down and write myself a letter (Ahlert, Young) - 2019, take 2
- Chega de saudade (Jobim/Moraes) - 2020
- Chega de saudade (Jobim/Moraes) - piano/uke/vcl
- Misty (Eroll Garner/Johnny Burke)
- Thirteen (Big Star)
- Stand by me (Ben E. King)
- An Irish Blessing (Trad - arr. J. E. Moore)
- Os Buzios (Jorge Fernando)
- Close to you (Bacharach)
- Ballad of big nothing (E. Smith) - take 1
- Ballad of big nothing (Elliott Smith) - take 2
- Between the bars (Elliott Smith)
- Some day my prince will come (Churchill/Morey)
- Some day (live Eminent take)
- Some day, toy and co
- Maniac (M. Sembello)
- E preciso perdoar (Coqueijo/Luz)
- Kimiwaina'17 (Atarashii Gakko!)
- Misty (Garner) - Standard take
- Fly me to the moon (Bart Howard) - Standard take
- Février (Dominique A)
- Chega de saudade std
- Paper moon
- Everybody's got to learn sometimes (The Korgis)
- Petite Fleur (Sydney Bechet)



> Zoom

I/II
2013

Dans Dans

- Au Hasard
- Ancient Aiethopia
- Yesterday Is Here
- Gazelle
- Mothers Of The Veil
- The Sicilian Clan
- Muskiet
- De Su Propia Raíz O De Un Dios Disperso
- Meditation (For A Pair Of Wire Cutters)
- Some Are
- **East Timor** [R. Wyatt]

- Bert Dockx - guitar
- Fred Lyenn - bass
- Steven Cassiers - drums

- UNDAY (UNDAY018D)
  Digital Format



> Zoom

Horfes Turn'd Jockies
2013

Graham Brice

- China Sea (Marc Laurick)
- Splendid Isolation (Casey Ruff)
- In the Heat of the Night (Rory Gannon)
- Evening of Light (Jon Rooney)
- Guess I'm Falling in Love (Phil Gammage)
- No End of Love (Skip Heller)
- **Sea Song (Graham Brice)** [R. Wyatt]
- Holocaust (Colin J Nelson)
- It Never Entered My Mind (David Guilbault & Jason Goessl)

- THE CHINA SEA RECORDINGS CONCERN
  Digital Format



> Zoom

The Magnetic Sound Of Hobocombo Presents Moondog Mask
2013

Hobocombo

- Theme and Variations (Moondog)
- Desert Boogaloo
- **East Timor** [Robert Wyatt]
- Utsu (Moondog)
- Canon #6 (vivace) (Moondog)
- Canon #18 (adagietto) (Moondog)
- Baltic Dance
- Response
- The Old Serge And the Flutes
- To A Sea Horse (Moondog)
- Five Reasons

- Andrea Belfi - drums, vocals
- Rocco Marchi - guitar, synth and vocals
- Francesca Baccolini - double bass, vocals

- TROVAROBATO PARADE (TRB P 10) CD
- LINERIA (LIN000) LP



> Zoom

Spirits Of Marine Terrace
2013

One Lick Less

- Unkind Folktale
- HK
- Perishing In The Bathtub
- **Alifib** [Robert Wyatt]
- Eyes Want
- Wiegendlied

- Julien Bancilhon - guitars, vocals
- Basile Ferriot - drums, backing vocals, piano
- Francesca Baccolini - double bass, vocals

LP (+ CD) 200 ex + pochette sérigraphiée par Brian Cougar

- LES DISQUES DE PLOMB (LDDPHS007) (LP + CD inclued)
- WHOSBRAIN RECORDS (WHB-48) (LP + CD inclued)
- VLA RECORDS (VLA 005) (LP + CD inclued)
- NOTHING TO THE TABLE (NTTT03) (LP + CD inclued)



> Zoom

Lover Album 2
2013

Clammbon

- 呼び声
- Goldwrap
- Nothing Brings Me Down
- U&I
- The Postman
- Desire
- Tokyo No 1 Soul Net
- Lady Madonna
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- ぎやまん
- 何も言わないで
- 雲のいびき
- 幸せ願う彼方から
- I'm Getting Ready

- Ikuko Harada - vocals, keyboards
- Daisuke Ito - drums, percussions
- Mito - bass, keyboards, rhythm box, percussions, vocal

- COLUMBIA JAPAN (COCP-37939) CD
- COLUMBIA JAPAN (COCP-39406) CD



Clare Louise - Le Yéti

- **Sea Song** [Robert Wyatt]
- La Moisson

- Clare Louise - voix, guitare

Clare Louise est seulement présente sur la face "Sea Song".

- HUMPTY DUMPTY RECORDS (HMPTY022) EP

> Zoom

Sea Song/La Moisson
2013



> Zoom

Burden Of Proof
2013

Soft Machine Legacy

- Burden Of Proof
- Voyage Beyond Seven
- Kitto
- Pie Chart
- JSP
- **Kings And Queens** [Hugh Hopper]
- Fallout
- Going Somewhere Canorous?
- Black And Crimson
- The Brief
- Pump Room
- Green Cubes
- They Landed On A Hill

- John Etheridge - guitar
- Theo Travis - tenor sax, flute, Fender Rhodes piano
- Roy Babbington - bass guitar
- John Marshall - drums, percussion

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR052) CD



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt's Sea Song
2013

Edmund John

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2 3

Kiss you so many times, you can't count my love
2013

Phipps pt.

- Salty Earth
- Would And ...
- While You Work
- Wwearhythm
- **Sea Song** [Robert Wyatt]
- ... What With The Blunders
- A Kestral For A Knave
- The Rites Of Time

Cassette C36. Limited Edition.

- SANITY MUFFIN (SM/32) K7



Carmine

- Be There
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]

- Julien Retaillaud - voix, guitares, claviers
- Théo Jarrier - batterie
- Olivier Roueff - saxophone

Recorded in 2000 by Alex Melis originally planned to les Disques Mange-Tout.

- BEKO -S

> Zoom

Be There/Gharbzadegi
2013



> Zoom

1982-1992
(30th Anniversary Cassiber Box)
2013

Cassiber

Disc 1
MAN OR MONKEY

Disc 2
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
- Six Rays
- Robert
- Last Call
- Ach Heile Mich
- Haruspices
- Under New Management
- Vengeance Is Dancing
- In Einer Minute
- Und Ich Werde Nicht Mehr Sehen
- Prendre La Lune Avec Les Dents
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- Time Running Out

Disc 3
A FACE WE ALL KNOW

Disc 4
PERFECT WORLDS

Disc 5
COLLABORATIONS

Disc 6
THE WAY IT WAS

Disc 7 (DVD)
ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING
- Our Colourful Culture (18 Deutsches Jazz Festival, Frankfurt Am Main, October 1982)
- Man Or Monkey (18 Deutsches Jazz Festival, Frankfurt Am Main, October 1982)
- O Cure Me (18 Deutsches Jazz Festival, Frankfurt Am Main, October 1982)
- Not Me (18 Deutsches Jazz Festival, Frankfurt Am Main, October 1982)
- Floor In The Grand Design (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- Prisoners Chorus (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- Robert (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- Survivor Kit Fragments (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- Red Shadow (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- Ach Heile Mich (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- On We Go (Sao Paulo, July 1984)
- **At Last I Am Free (Sao Paulo, July 1984)**
- Cassiber's Landing (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- This Was The Way It Was (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- Heiner Goebbels (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- Old Gods (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- Chris Cutler (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- Gut (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- Christoph Anders (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)
- They Have Begun To Move (Akademie Der Künste Der DDR 1989)

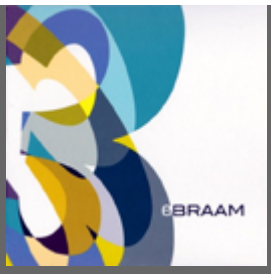
Box Set -Limited Edition.

- ReR MEGACORP (ReR CBOX)
  6xCD + DVD

eBraam

- 1B44, Please
- The Pindaric Ode
- Augmented Seconds

- Michiel Braam - keyboards
- Pieter Douma - bass guitar, vocals
- Dirk-Peter Kölsch - drums



> Zoom

3
2013

- Pythagorean Theorem
- Triple Jump
- Triad
- The Mind
- 3 Sheets To The Wind
- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]

- Ulrike von Meier - harp
- Marcel Van De Beeten - vocals

- BBB - (BBBCD15) CD



> Zoom 1 2

The Plough & The Stars
2013

Speed The Plough

THE PLOUGH & THE STARS - CD
- Veszprém
- Lock And Key
- The Roof Is Off (The Stars Are There And It's Mighty Cold)
- Hemlock Tree
- Tommy's House
- Big Bus
- Trains
- Written Each Day
- Aeroplane
- The Tide Won't Tire
- Oh, The Paradise
- A Saint Restored
- In The Atmosphere
- Late Birds
- Said And Done
- The Plough & The Stars
- Cutting Branches For A Temporary Shelter

BONUS SPLIT - LP
Tag Sale, 2013
- The Ballad Of Peggy Oki
- Perfect North
- Labyrinth
- Regrets (I've Had A Few)
- Mansion
- Jane

Live On WFMU's Live Music Faucet, 1993
- Cutting Branches For A Temporary Shelter (Live)
- Love Song (Live)
- Centerville (Live)
- Book Of Reason (Live)
- Final Day (Live)

THE DOWNLOAD CARD
- Blue Bicycle (Live)
- Napoleon (Live)
- Story Of The Moon (Live)
- Lock And Key (Live)
- The British Road (Live) [R. Wyatt]
- Everyday Needs (Live)
- Deepest Brown (Live)
- Hemlock Tree (Live)
- Screen Door (Live)
- You Ain't Goin' Nowhere (Live)

- John Baumgartner - keyboards, vocals
- Ed Seifert - guitar
- Marc Francia - guitar
- Michael Baumgartner - guitar
- Richard Barnes - guitar
- Christopher O'Donovan - drums
- Ian Francia - drums
- Stanley Demeski - drums
- Daniel Francia - bass, vocals
- Brenda Sauter - bass
- J Toni Baumgartner - vocals

"...The Plough and The Stars is a retrospective of the band's 30 year history of music making and includes a 17-song "Best Of" CD, a split 12" album with six brand new songs and a download card entitling you to digital versions of all of the above, along with 10 additional live tracks from Mountain Stage, WFMU, and Maxwell's, and an interactive version of the booklet with links to more songs and videos..."

The Robert Wyatt cover (recorded at Maxwell's, Hoboken, New-Jersey, in 1989) is one of the bonus tracks available for download.

- BAR/NONE RECORDS (BRN-LP-224) CD + LP + 10 files to download



Schnauser

- Astral Traveller
- 'As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still' [M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]

- Alan Strawbridge - guitar, vocals
- Duncan Gammon - keyboards, vocals
- Holly McIntosh - bass, vocals
- Jasper Williams - drums

Limited-pressing coloured vinyl (1000 ex.)

> Zoom

Herne Bay
2014



> Zoom 1 2

Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra
play Soft Machine
2014

Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra Play Soft Machine

- Facelift: Prelude
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- **Noisette** [H. Hopper]
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening** [H. Hopper]
- **Mousetrap** [H. Hopper]
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]



- FRUITS DE MER RECORDS (CRUSTACEAN-46) EP

ARTCHIPEL ORCHESTRA
- Marco Fior - trombe
- Marco Mariani - trombe
- Giovanni Sansone - trombe
- Francesca Petrolo - trombone
- Alex Sabina (1,2,3) - sax soprano
- Felice Clemente - sax soprano
- Paolo Profeti (6,7) - sax contralto
- Massima Falascone - sax contralto
- Rosarita Crisafi - sax tenore
- Germano Zenga - sax tenore
- Rudi Manzoli - sax baritono
- Simone Mauri - clarinetto basso
- Carlo Nicita - flauto
- Eloisa Manera - violino
- Paolo Botti - viola
- Beppe Barbera (4,6) - piano elettrico
- Massimo Giuntoli - organo e piano elettrico
- Mariangela Tandoi (3,4) - fisarmonica
- Giampero Spina - chittara elettrica
- Flavio Minardo - chittara elettrica e sitar
- Gianluca Alberti - basso elettrico
- Stefano Lecchi - batteria
- Lorenzo Gasperoni - percussioni
- Naima Faraò - voci
- Giusy Lupis - voci
- Serena Ferrara - voci
- Filippo Pascuzzi - voci
- Ferdinando Faraò - direzione

Registrato a Milano, Officine Meccaniche studio A, 23 diecembre 2013.

CD Sold with Italian magazine Musica Jazz [settembre 2014].



- MUSICA JAZZ (MJCD 1283) CD



> Zoom

Studio Rehearsal Tapes 1977 &
Live In The UK
2014

Daevid Allen With Euterpe - & With Brainville

With Euterpe - Studio Rehearsal Tapes 1977
- Mystic Sister
- Magick Brother
- Sittin In A Teashop
- Have You Seen My Friend
- I Am The Rapist
- Brothasista Invocation
- Wee Bit More
- Prostitute Poem
- 5 & 20
- Time Of The Bananamoon
- Deya Goddess

With Brainville - Live In The UK
- Foghat Digs Holes In Space
- Who's Afraid?
- Flowers Gone
- Shadow
- Thinkin Thoughts
- **Hope For Happiness** [B. Hopper]
- Bullshit & Be

- Daevid Allen - guitar, voice
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Pip Pyle - drums

Reissue of the number 1 and 2 of the limited Bananamoon Obscura series: Daevid Allen & Euterpe - Studio Rehearsal Tapes 1977 and Brainville, Daevid Allen With Hugh Hopper & Pip Pyle - Live In The UK.

Hope For Hapiness est signé par Brian Hopper (qui a effectivement composé et déposé les droits de ce morceau) alors que la version du Soft Machine vol.1 est signée par Hugh Hopper, Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge.

- VOICEPRINT (VPD603) CD
- FLOATING WORLD RECORDS (VPD603) 2xCD



> Zoom

Catholic Architecture/Beacon
2014

Grasscut

- **Catholic Architecture** [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- Beacon

- Andrew Phillips - vocals, glockenspiel, dulcitone, vibes, piano, moog, programming, cymbals
- Rory Simmons - trumpet

Produced and mixed by Andrew Phillips

- LO RECORDINGS (LO115DS) Digital Format



> Zoom

Frangloband - Volume 2
2014

Hugh Hopper

- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]
- Lonely Sea And The Sky
- Mr. Syms
- Sliding Dogs
- Shuffle Demons
- Horny Brownie
- Miniluv

- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Patrice Meyer - guitar
- Pierre-Olivier Govin - baritone, alto saxophones
- Francois Verly - drums, tabla
- Didier Malherbe - bamboo flute, soprano saxophone (on track 7)

Track 2 is wrongly titled "Lonely Sky And The Sea" on back cover.
Track 6 is listed as "Wanglo Saxon" but is really a Patrice Meyer's tune called "Horny Brownie"

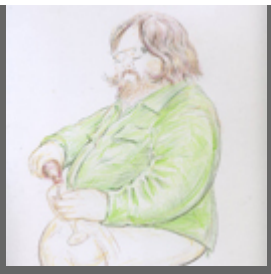
Le Triton, Paris, France, March 13th, 2003.

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST241CD) CD

Bob Bucko Jr

- Themselves (Minutemen)
- St. Elmo's Fire (Eno)
- Danny Carlisle (Vic Chesnutt)
- Somewhere In the Night (Smog)
- Heaven (Pere Ubu)
- LR72 (Silkworm)

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Covers
2014

- Paradise Is for the Blessed (Television Personalities)
- Final Day (Young Marble Giants) 02:22
- This Must Be the Place (Naive Melody) (Talking Heads)
- **Venti Latir (Robert Wyatt)**
- Trains Across the Sea (Silver Jews)
- Blue Line Swinger (Yo La Tengo)
- Sending (The Sea & Cake)
- Katrina and the K-Hole (Lifter Puller)
- Walking With Jesus (Spacemen 3)
- The World is Full of Fools (Kevin Coyne)
- Love Knows (No Borders) (Howe Gelb)
- C F (Jandek)
- Sooprize Package for Mr. Mineo (Supercharger)
- I Heard Her Call My Name (Velvet Underground)
- As Vast As You (Dear Nora)
- Plainsong (The Cure)
- Cure for Pain (Morphine)
- Motor Away (Guided By Voices)
- Up On the Sun (Meat Puppets)
- All the Umbrellas in London (The Magnetic Fields)
- Bury the Hammer (Beat Happening)
- Unreal Is Here (Chavez)
- Take Care (Big Star)



> Zoom 1 2

Live At Roma
2014

Dans Dans

- Meditation (For A Pair Of Wire Cutters)
- Waterpoort
- Yesterday Is Here
- **East Timor** [R. Wyatt]
- Gazelle
- Muskiet
- Au Hasard/Ancient Aiethopia/Mothers Of The Veil
- The Sicilian Clan
- Some Are/River Man

- Steven Cassiers - drums and percussion
- Bert Dockx - guitar and cassette player
- Frederic Lyenn Jacques - bass and synths

Recorded live at Roma Antwerp October 2013
Limited tape, 100 numbered copies.

- UNDAY RECORDS (UNDAY034CAS) K7



> Zoom

My Degeneration Electronics
1974-1983
2014

Pascal Comelade

Disc 1
FLUENCE
- A Few Reasons To Stay - A Few Reasons To Split
- **Barcelona Tango**
- Schizo

Disc 2
PARALELO
- Mouvement Décomposé D'un Coup De Marteau
- **Good-Bye Wyatt Hat**
- Via-Laietana
- Paralelo
- Vertical
- Musique Ridicule
- Politico
- Automne
- Musique Pour Les Ascenseurs
- Paralelo 7
- Erratum Musical 1
- Erratum Musical 2
- Nicaragua
- Mediterraneo

Disc 3
SENTIMIENTOS
- White Light
- Approximative But Fair
- **Wyatt Ah Um**
- Lettre De Mozart À Sa Petite Cousine
- Still Life With Goldfish
- The Grey Velvet Gentleman
- From DC By PC
- Taking Tiger Mountain

Compilation comprenant :



Fluence (1974-75) (VOD130.1)



Paralelo (1980) (VOD130.2)



- Habanera
- Carmen
- Avant-Midi
- Sicilia
- We Did It Again
- White Heat
- Distant Pianos
- Paralelo
- In A Lebanon Park
- Courant D'Air Sur Le Pommier Du Japon
- La Opera
- Barrett

Disc 4
SEQUENCES PAÏENNES
- Séquence 1
- Séquence 2
- Séquence 3
- Séquence 4
- Séquence 5
- Séquence 6 (33t Et/Ou 45t)

Ready Made
- Again
- Éclairage Sur L'Eau
- Chanson Pop
- Distant Pianos
- San Salvador
- El Wiski Twist

Irregular Organ
- Irregular Organ

Musique Par Correspondance
- Musique Par Correspondance 1
- Musique Par Correspondance 2
- Musique Par Correspondance 3
- Musique Par Correspondance 4
- Musique Par Correspondance 5

Disc 5
BEL CANTO ORQUESTRA EN CONCERT, MONTPELLIER, 28TH OF OCTOBER 1983
- The Curious Sofa
- Moments De Bruits Pendant Le Naufrage

Slow Musics
- John Cage Descendant Un Escalier
- Slow Music

Sentimientos (1982) (VOD130.3)



Sequences Paiennes - Ready-Made - Musique Par Correspondance (1979-80)
(VOD130.4)



Bel Canto Orquestra En Concert, Montpellier, 28th Of October 1983 / Slow Musics (1983-81)
(VOD130.5)

- VINYL-ON-DEMAND (VOD130) 5xLP



> Zoom

Bananamoon Band
2014

Bananamoon Band

- Pretty Miss Titty (1st Version)
- Rich Girl
- Un Oeuf For You
- My Mother's Gone To India / Hare Krishna / Time Of The Green Banana / Remember The Name
- Why Are We Sleeping ? [K. Ayers, M. Ratledge, R. Wyatt]
- French Garden (1st Version)
- French Garden (2nd Version)
- Pretty Miss Titty (2nd Version)
- Je Ne Fume Pas Des Bananes

- Daevid Allen - guitar, lead vocals
- Patrick Fontaine - bass
- Marc Blanc - drums, vocals
- Gilli Smyth - vocals

Limited Edition 1000 copies, numbered.

Tracks 1, 2, 3, 4 recorded in Studio CBE in March 1968.
Track 6 recorded at Antibes in July 68.
Tracks 5, 7, 8, 9 recorded at Deia in August 1968 at the Banamoon Observatory.

Includes a map of 6 photographs + an insert (A4), numbered by hand, with a bit of history on one side and a 'Daevid Allen Family Tree (1961-1972) on the other side + an insert (A5) with 2 reproduced letters by Daevid to Marc.

- MONSTER MELODIES RECORDS (MMLP02) LP

Grasscut - Single

- Catholic Architecture [R. Wyatt/A. Benge]
- Beacon

- Andrew Phillips - vocals, glockenspiel, dulcitone, vibes, piano, moog, programming, cymbals
- Rory Simmons - trumpet

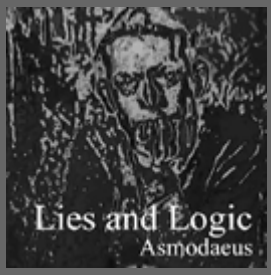
Produced and mixed by Andrew Phillips



> Zoom

Catholic Architecture/Beacon
2014

- LO RECORDINGS (LO115DS) S



> Zoom

Lies And Logic
2014

Asmodaeus

- Radiation Dance
- Car Creature
- Second Time Is Different
- Enraged
- The Loved One
- Warsaw
- Happy Days
- The Peeping Tom
- Buchenwald
- Slut
- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Lost
- Photographic
- Thanks A Lot
- Meet You In Poland

Limited Edition of 500 copies.
First 50 copies come with a handnumbered insert signed by the artist.
Pressed on 180 gr vinyl.

- WALHALLA RECORDS (WR009)
  LP



> Zoom

Miss Elianus
2014

Tagubu

- **Robert Wyatt's dilogy: Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road** [R. Wyatt]
- Robert Wyatt's dilogy: Nostalgia
- Amanda trilogy: Furniture Music
- Amanda trilogy: L'Amant d'Amanda
- Amanda trilogy: Ses Purs Ongles...

- NO LABEL -Digital Format

In Tribute To Robert Wyatt (Live)
2014

Grey Lotus

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- **Memories** [H. Hopper]
- **Out Of The Blue** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

- Daan Arisz - guitar
- Joost Verhagen - vocals
- Judith Wesselius - vocals
- Otto de Boer - double bass
- Niels van der Weiden - piano & synthesizer
- Lars van der Weiden - drums
- Eoin Roberts - violin
- Roelof Ruis - accordeon

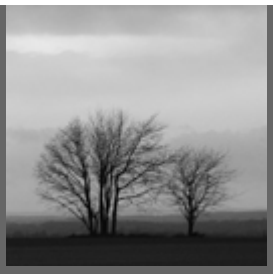
Released October 16, 2014.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Sine

- Sine 1
- Sine 2

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Sine
2014

- Sine 3
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]



> Zoom

Place Of My Own - The Collection
2014

Caravan

- In The Land Of Grey & Pink
- Golf Girl
- Winter Wine
- The Dog, The Dog, He's At It Again
- Hoedown
- If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You
- Place Of My Own
- Grandma's Lawn
- As I Feel I Die
- Virgin On The Ridiculous
- Feelin', Reelin', Squealin' [K. Ayers]
- Love Song With A Flute
- The World Is Yours
- Stuck In A Hole
- Waterloo Lily

Compilation.

- SPECTRUM MUSIC (SPEC2164) CD
- UNIVERSAL UMC (SPEC2164) CD



> Zoom

Je Ne Fuim' Pas Des Bananes
2014

Daevid Allen / Banana Moon Band / Gong

- Intro (Daevid Allen)
- Pretty Miss Titty (Banana Moon Band)
- Rich Girl (Banana Moon Band)
- Un Œuf For You (Banana Moon Band)
- My Mother's Gone To India / Hare Krishna / Time Of The Green Banana / Remember The Name (Banana Moon Band)
- La Belle Cérébrale (Daevid Allen/François Bayle)
- Est-Ce Que Je Suis (Garçon Ou Fille) (Gong)
- Hyp Hypnotise You (Gong)
- Goldilox (Daevid Allen)
- Why Do You Come Knocking At My Door ? (Daevid Allen)
- Rock'N'Roll Angel (Daevid Allen)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Banana Moon Band) [K. Ayers/R. Wyatt/M. Ratledge]
- French Garden (Banana Moon Band)
- French Garden (Banana Moon Band)
- Pretty Miss Titty (Daevid Allen)
- Pretty Miss Titty (Banana Moon Band)
- Gong Song (Daevid Allen)
- Je Ne Fume Pas Des Bananes (Banana Moon Band)
- Je Ne Fume Pas Des Bananes (Daevid Allen)

- Daevid Allen - guitar, lead vocals
- Patrick Fontaine - bass
- Marc Blanc - drums
- Gilli Smyth - vocals

Réédition de l'album sorti en 1992 sur le label Legend Music sous le titre Je Ne Fum' Pas Des Bananes (noter la subtile modification du titre et de la pochette).

- GONZO MULTIMEDIA (HST188CD) CD

Pascal Comelade + Les Limiñanas

LP - FACE A: TRAITÉ DE GUITARRES TRIOLECTIQUES
- Stella Star
- Carnival Of Souls
- The Nothing-Twist

- Pascal Comelade - pianos, organs,plastic guitars, instruments
- Lionel Limiñana - guitars , bass, voices, instruments
- Marie Limiñana - drums, percussions, voices,



> Zoom

Traité de Guitarres Triolectiques
(À l'Usage des Portugaises Ensablées)
2015

- (They Call Me) Black Sabatta
- You're Never Alone With A Schizo
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [K. Ayers/ R. Wyatt/M. Ratledge]
- El Vici Birra-Crucis

LP - FACE B : À L'USAGE DES PORTUGAISES ENSABLÉES
- Green Fuz
- T.B.Jerk
- Wunderbar
- A Wall Of Perrukes
- One Of Us, One Of Us, One Of Us
- Dick Dale N'était Pas De Bompas
- Lord Of Flashington

CD - TRAITÉ DE GUITARRES TRIOLECTIQUES
- Stella Star
- Carnival Of Souls
- The Nothing-Twist
- (They Call Me) Black Sabatta
- You're Never Alone With A Schizo
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- El Vici Birra-Crucis
- Green Fuz
- T.B.Jerk
- Wunderbar
- A Wall Of Perrukes
- One Of Us, One Of Us, One Of Us
- Dick Dale N'était Pas De Bompas
- Ramblin' Rose
- **Yesterday Man**

L'album LP contient un bonus track : *Lord Of Flashington*.

Le CD contient 3 bonus tracks: *Ramblin' Rose*, *Yesterday Man* et *I'm Dead*. *Yesterday Man* est une reprise de la reprise de Robert Wyatt.

- BECAUSE MUSIC (BEC5156006)
- BECAUSE MUSIC (BEC5156017) LP



> Zoom

Pagodes
2015

Jono McCleery

- This Idea Of Us
- **Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Since I
- Painted Blue
- Ballade
- Clarity
- Halfway
- Bet She Does
- Fire In My Hands
- Desperate Measure
- Pardon Me
- So Long

- Jono McCleery - guitar

- IF MUSIC RECORDS (IFMRCD001) CD
- IF MUSIC RECORDS (IFMRLP001) LP



> Zoom

Transgression
2015

Theo Travis' Double Talk

- Fire Muontain
- Transgression
- Smokin' At Klooks
- Song For Samuel
- Everything I Feared
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt]
- A Place In The Queue
- The Call

- Theo Travis - tenor and soprano saxes, flute, Fender Rhodes piano
- Mike Outram - guitar
- Pete Whittaker - Hammond organ
- Nic France - drums

- ESOTERIC ANTENNA (EANTCD 1052) CD

The Fiction Aisle

- Craig Chapman - trumpet



> Zoom

Live At Lick
2015

- Blue (Live at Lick)
- Each & Every One (Live at Lick)
- The Colour Of Morning (Live at Lick)
- **Lullaby For Hamza** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

- Jordan Duggie - bass
- Holly Fitzgerald - clarinet
- Alan Grice - keys
- Adam Kidd - guitar
- Louis MacGuillivray - guitar
- Thomas White - vocal, guitar
- Gemma Williams - clarinet
- Iain Worral - drums

Limited Edition 50 copies, numbered.

- NO LABEL - K7



> Zoom 1 2

Primo
2015

Improgressive

- The Illusion
- Caravan Medley
- You Can't Kill Me
- **Dedicated To You but You're Weren't Listening** [H. Hopper]
- Dice
- Sixa 35
- **Calyx** [P. Miller/arrt. A. Popolla]
- Radio Gnome Invisible
- The Lady Rachel
- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R.Wyatt/arrt. A.Popolla]
- **Soft Machine Medley**

- Errico De Fabritiis - alto and soprano sax
- Alberto Popolla - clarinet, alto and bass clarinet

O Caroline recorded live at Alterazioni 2013 Lainate (MI) October 20 2013.

Soft machine Medley : a popolla including fragments of *Orange Skin Food*, *A Door Opens ans Closes*, *Pig*).

- SLAM PRODUCTIONS (SLAMCD 564) CD



> Zoom

Piacenza
2015

John Greaves

- The Price We Pay
- Summer On Ice
- Earthly Powers
- The Thunderthief
- The Green Fuse
- La Lune Blanche
- Chanson D'Automne
- Walking On Eggshells
- The Same Thing
- Dead Poets
- The Trouble With Happiness
- Bad Alchemy
- Kew.Rhône
- How Beautiful You Are
- **The Song** [J.Greaves]

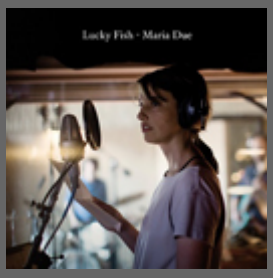
Rehearsals Bonus Track

- **Sea Song** [R.Wyatt]

- John Greaves - Steinway Grand Piano, vocals
- Annie Barbazza - vocals, piano

Limited edition 980 handmade and individually hand numbered copy.

- DARK COMPANION RECORDS (DC003) CD



Maria Due

- **Alliance** [R.Wyatt]
- Fire in Cairo (The Cure)
- My Room, Waiting For Wonderland (Van der Graaf Generator)
- Martine (Louis Philippe)
- In The Year 2525 (Zager & Evans)
- New World In The Morning (Roger Whittaker)
- Going Up The Country (Canned Heat)
- Groovin (Young Rascals)
- PS I Love You (The Beatles)

– Maria Due - vocals
– Eirik Øien - bass, guitar, lead vocals
– Martin V. Langlie - drums, percussion, harp, lead vocals
– Bård Ingebrigtsen - guitar, keyboards, harp, lead vocals
– Hans Petter Gundersen - guitar, lead vocals
– Marita Vårdal Igelkjøn - piano, keyboards, melodica, autoharp,

> Zoom

Lucky Fish
2015

- Waterloo Sunset (The Kinks)
- On The Road Again (Canned Heat)
- Silence Is Golden (The Tremeloes)

lead vocals

- ROCK'N'ROLL MUSIC
(RRMLP1502) LP



391

> Zoom

The Experience Machine
2015

- The Experience Machine
- Still Falls The Rain - The Raids 1940, Night And Dawn
- Stupidity (Runs Through Everything)
- Blitzkrieg Bop
- Casualties of the Welfare State
- Refugee Blues
- Clementine Reverie
- Bloodless Guns
- Long Black Veil
- The Shoes of Revenge
- ...Because The Voices Told Me To
- Thirteen Nights
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



Uwe Oberg

> Zoom

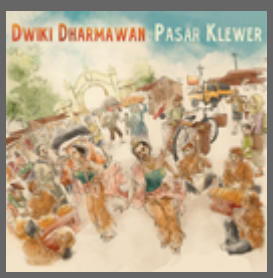
Work
2015

- Hill (Uwe Oberg)
- Fable Of Faubus / W.R.U. (Charles Mingus/Ornette Coleman)
- Kelvin / Cresent (Uwe Oberg / John Coltrane)
- Pannonica (Thelonious Monk)
- Ole Olo / **Muddy Mouse** [Uwe Oberg / Fred Frith, R. Wyatt]
- Work (Thelonious Monk)

- Uwe Oberg - piano

Recorded at Sommermusik Saarbrücken 2008

- HAT HUT RECORDS
(hatOLOGY 740) CD



Dwiki Dharmawan

> Zoom

Pasar Klewer
2015

Disc 1
- Pasar Klewer
- Spirit Of Peace
- Campuhan
- **Forest** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- London In June

Disc 2
- Lir Ilir
- Bubuyu Bulan
- Frog Dance
- Life Itself
- Purnama
- **Forest (Instrumental)** [R. Wyatt]

- Dwiki Dharmawan - acoustic piano
- Mark Wingfield - guitar
- Boris Savoldelli - vocals
- Yaron Stavi - upright bass
- Asaf Sirkis - drums

- MOONJUNE RECORDS
(MJR081) 2xCD



> Zoom

What Song I Should Sing?????? //
An Ongoing Covers Project
2015

Aaron M Olson

- Emma (Milhaud)
- Lo The Rose Cease To Bloom (Pajo)
- When It Was Done (Webb)
- Old Enough To Know (Nitzsche)
- Everybody's Alone (Young)
- **A Beautiful Peace** [R. Wyatt/B. Eno]
- I Walk Along Darkened Corridors (Linnell/Flansburgh)
- Think I'll Run Away (Kaylan/Volman)
- I Don't Want To Talk About It (Whitten)
- Lady O (Sill)
- A World Without Love (McCartney)
- Celeste (Marcuse/Leitch)
- Cutter's Way / Cuckoo's Nest Medley (Nitzsche)
- Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet (Bryars/Tramp)

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Concepte General De La
Quincalla Catalana
2015

Pascal Comelade

- O Dancing Del Gran Fumisme
- Hydropathes Marchant Sur Les Os
- The Nothing Twist
- Friki Serenata
- Flan Sin Nata Inzenight
- Spinoza Was A Soul Garagist
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [K. Ayers/ M. Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- El Pianista Del Antifaz
- Swing Slang Song
- La Bella Dorita
- Carnival Of Souls
- Sheena Was A Punk Rocker
- One Of Us, One Of Us...
- A Wall Of Perrukes
- Despintura (A)fònica
- Sardana Mecànica
- I Put A Barbara Steele On You
- **Barcelona Tango**
- The Halucinogenic Espontex Sinfonia
- Ha Passat Un Angel

- Pascal Comelade - piano, guitar, organ [electric], instruments
- Lionel Limiñana - bass, guitar
- Marie Limiñana - drums

Composé par Pascal Comelade, *Barcelona Tango* est un hommage très inspiré aux albums *The End Of An Ear* et *Rock Bottom*.

- DISCMEDI BLAU (DM5201-02) CD



> Zoom

Memory Box
Archive Treasures (2005-2015)
2015

The Unthanks

- 2000 Miles
- On A Monday Morning
- I Wish, I Wish
- Blue Bleezin Blind Drunk
- Close The Coalhouse Door
- **Alifib/Alifie** [R. Wyatt]
- The Gallowgate Lad
- Felton Lonnin
- Tar Barrel In Dale
- Queen Of Hearts
- Sexy Sadie
- A Dream Of A Tree In A Spanish Graveyard
- Oak, Ash And Thorn
- The Unthank Family Band

- Becky Unthank - Voice, tap dance (feet)
- Rachel Unthank - Voice, tap dance (feet)
- Anna Jenkins - violin
- Niopha Keegan - violin
- Becca Spencer - viola
- Lizzie Jones - trumpet
- Adrian McNally - piano
- Chris Price - drums
- Dean Ravera - double bass
- Jo Silverston - cello

Alifib/Alifie live from Brighton Dome 2012.

Ce disque est également présent dans le Box Set Memory Box qui comprend un 7'' Single ainsi qu'un DVD - paru en édition limitée numérotée.

- RABBLE ROUSER MUSIC (RRM015) CD



> Zoom

Live At The Fasano Jazz Festival
2015

Artchipel Orchestra

- Radio Intro (by Pino Saulo)
- Arriving Twice
- Moeris Dancing
- Big Orange
- **Moon In June** [R. Wyatt]
- **Facelift** [Hugh Hopper]
- **Mouse Trap** [Hugh Hopper]
- **Kings And Queens** [Hugh Hopper]
- **Noisette** [Hugh Hopper]
- Cider Dance
- Happy Birthday
- Radio Outro

- Arrangements and conduction by Ferdinando Faraò
- Marco Mariani - trumpet
- Gianni Sansone - trumpet
- Francesca Petrolo - trombone
- Massimo Cavallaro - soprano saxophone
- Paolo Profeti - alto saxophone
- Rosarita Crisafi - tenor saxophone
- Massimo Falascone - baritone saxophone
- Simone Mauri - bass clarinet
- Carlo Nicita - flutes
- Eloisa Manera - violin
- Paolo Botti - viola
- Keith Tippett - pianoforte (from track05 onward only)
- Beppe Barbera - pianoforte and electric piano
- Massimo Giuntoli - electric piano and organ
- Mariangela Tandoi - fisarmonica [accordion]
- Giampiero Spina - electric guitar
- Gianluca Alberti - bass
- Stefano Lecchi - drums
- Lorenzo Gasperoni - percussion
- Giusy Lupis, Serena Ferrara, Filippo Pascuzzi, Naima Faraò, and Julie Tippetts - vocals

Live at the Fasano Jazz Festival, Teatro Kennedy, Fasano (Brindisi), Italy; June 7, 2014.

This is an orchestra run by Fernando Faraò (brother of pianist Antonio), originally all dedicated to Mike Westbrook and Alan Gowen, then to Canterbury jazz in general. Here, with the presence of Keith Tippet, almost become some kind of Softs tribute act, or better, Soft Machine as played by Hatfield and The North. Keith and Julie Driscoll only enter from Track 05 onwards.

"As far as we can ascertain, these tracks have never been officially released on CD".

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Kinfolk
2015

Kinfolk

- If Truth Be Told
- Come & Go
- **Free Will & Testament** [R. Wyatt]
- I Would've Liked To Know You
- Poison Arrow
- Minor Difficulty

- Peter Conner - vocals, guitar, programming
- Charlotte Hubbard - vocals, accordion, piano
- Harriet Feaver - vocals, violin

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Zacht Automaat

- Fugue In Dmin (Cabaret Version) (J.S. Bach)
- Do You Remember Walter? (The Kinks)
- Piece For Alice Coltrane

- Carl Didur - organ, piano, drums
- Michael McLean - bass guitar

- PLANET OF THE TAPES



> Zoom

Cover Tape
2015

- Enlightenment (Sun Ra)
- Ann (The Stooges)
- Fire Poem (Arthur Brown)
- Once Upon A Time (Sonny Sharrock)
- Piece For Daphne Oram
- Here Comes The Sun (The Beatles)
- **As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still (Soft Machine)**
- Iron Man (Black Sabbath)
- At The House Of Elrond (The Ring Goes South) (Bo Hansson)
- Night Of The Assassin (Les Rallisez Denudes)
- After All (David Bowie)

(POTT013) K7



> Zoom

Alifib
Robert Wyatt Cover By Epitimia 2015

Epitimia

- **- Alifib (Robert Wyatt cover)**

- I. - Acoustic Guitar, Vocals
- A. - Solo guitar

- NO LABEL (Digital Format)



> Zoom 1 2

Sea Song
2016

Daevid Allen's University Of Errors

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Ocean In The Distance

- Daevid Allen - vocals, glissando guitars
- Josh Pollock - guitars, backing vocals
- Michael Clare - bass guitar

Limited Edition.

- GAS RECORDS
  (GAS 7ERRZ11-11) EP



> Zoom

The Nothing Twist
2016

Pascal Comelade + Les Limiñanas

- Stella Star
- Carnival Of Souls
- The Nothing-Twist
- (They Call Me) Black Sabata
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [K. Ayers/R. Wyatt/M.Ratledge]
- El Vici Birra-Crucis
- Green Fuz
- T.B.Jerk +++
- Wunderbar
- A Wall Of Perukes
- One Of Us, One Of Us, One Of Us
- Dick Dale N'était Pas De Bompas
- Yesterday Man
- Lord Of Flashington

- Marie Limiñana - drums, percussion, voice
- Lionel Limiñana - guitars, bass, voice, Instruments –
- Pascal Comelade - piano, electric organ, plastic guitar, instruments

Limited edition to 500 copies
Canary yellow vinyl version.

Originally released in 2015 in Europe/UK with a slightly different track list as Traité de Guitarres Triolectiques.

- TROUBLE IN MIND (TIM090) LP



> Zoom

Psychic Temple Plays
Music For Airports
2016

Psychic Temple

- Music For Airports 1/1 [B.Eno/R. Wyatt/ R. Davies]
- Music For Bus Stops

- David Tranchina - double bass
- Tabor Allen - drums
- Sheridan Riley - drums, percussion
- Mike Watt - electric bass
- Paul Masvidal - electric guitar
- Philip Glenn - electric organ (Hammond)
- Cathlene Pineda - electric piano (Wurlitzer)
- Danny T. Levin - trombone, euphonium, horn (marching baritone), valve trombone
- Kris Tiner - trumpet

Limited edition of 475 hand-numbered copies.

- JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS (JNR188) LP



> Zoom

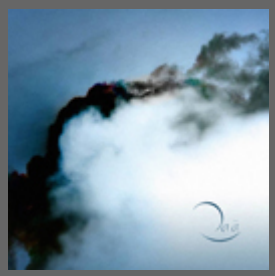
Sarah Murcia & Noël Akchoté
2016

Sarah Murcia & Noël Akchoté

- Play #101
- May 20th
- Juste Un Moment
- Aberlied
- Dunja
- Partido Alto
- Goodbye
- Oh Caroline [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- The Bat
- San
- Home
- Belle-île-en-Mer
- Play #202
- Estery
- Happy House(s)
- Aline
- Play #303

- Noël Akchoté - acoustic guitar
- Sarah Murcia - double bass

- NOEL AKCHOTE DOWNLOADS
- (SMNA-002) Digital Format



> Zoom

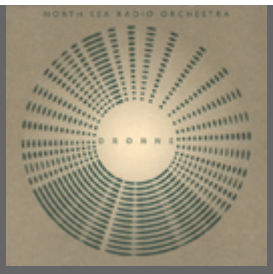
Qaä
2016

Qaä

- Koalus
- Kuru Kuru
- Qaäris Von Gul
- Додзё
- Mayim
- Sea Song [Robert Wyatt]

- Denis Dedieu - vocals, synths, guitars,
- Sam Barbier - piano

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Dronne
2016

North Sea Radio Orchestra

- Arcade
- Vishnu Schist
- **The British Road** [R. Wyatt]
- Guitar Miniature No.4
- Queen Of All The Day And Night
- Dronne
- Alsace Lorraine
- Dinosaurus Rex Pt 1
- Dinosaurus Rex Pt 2

- Nicola Baigent - bb/bass clarinet
- Luke Crookes - bassoon
- Harry Escott - cello
- Craig Fortnam - guitars, organ, synth, percussion, vocals
- Sharron Fortnam - vocals
- James Larcombe - piano, organ, synth
- Hugh Wilkinson-Hunt - vibes, percussion
- Brian Wright - violin, viola

- THE HOUSEHOLD MARK (THM004) CD
- THE HOUSEHOLD MARK (THM004LP) LP - Limited edition to 300 copies.



> Zoom

The British Road
(Robert Wyatt Cover)
2016

North Sea Radio Orchestra

- **The British Road (Radio Edit)** [R. Wyatt]
- **The British Road (Full Version)** [R. Wyatt]

Promo version.
Taken from the new album Dronne.

- THE HOUSEHOLD MARK (THM004) CD-S



> Zoom

7
2016

Adjabel

- Les mêmes pas
- Congo Flowers
- Chanson traditionnelle
- Dèvè Devan
- Courage
- L'Italie
- Piti Piti
- **Solar Flares** [R. Wyatt] / Soley Lévé
- Sur le pont Mirabeau
- Salué
- Balancé
- Kisa
- Mèsi-Merci
- Les beaux jours

- Atissou Loko - tambours, percussions, électronique, basse
- Peter Corser - Lambis
- Yann Sury - violon

- ADJABEL RECORDS - CD



John Trap

- Driving my car
- I will wash the water
- Final Clashes
- No time
- The same experience
- Touch me, I am alive
- Lady Blue
- Babble of the child
- Wait inside
- **Free Will (Robert Wyatt cover)** [R. Wyatt]
- Trust in my dreams

- L'ÉGLISE DE LA PETITE FOLIE FACE B - Digital Format

> Zoom

Inédits (1996/1998)
2016 (?)

- It will be summer
- The meaning of the dream
- Seduction (Acoustique)
- So why (Acoustique)
- Les beaux jours



> Zoom

So Much More
2016

Loïs Le Van

- The Circular Stone
- Redwood Meadow
- False Cocoon
- The Old Father And The Polaroid
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- The Messenger
- So Much More
- Two Elder Sisters
- Spinal Chords And Vertabrae
- Fighting waves

- Loïs Le Van - voice
- Sylvain Rifflet - tenor saxophone, clarinet
- Bruno Ruder - piano
- Chris Jennings - contrebasse

- HEVHETIA (HV 0121-2-331) CD



> Zoom

Kot
2016

Zapmachine

- Twang, Tweet & Weep
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- Kings & Queens [H. Hopper]
- Kot #1
- Entree Brussels
- Arjen's Bag
- Deadzy
- Kot #2
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Niets
- Rolfie

- Herman te Loo - soprano, alto and tenor saxophone, vocals
- Paul van der Velde - electric guitars, 11 strings fretless guitar, Raagini digital tanpura, vocals
- Jaap Prummel - fretless bass guitar, vocals
- Rob Hendriks - drums, percussion, vocals

Recorded live at Studio Groen, Zandaam, The Netherlands, on 23 and 24 January and 13 March 2016. Additional recording on 16 April 2016.

- KOT RECORDS - CD
  info@hermanteloo.nl



> Zoom

A Découvrir Absolument
Volume 40
2016

A Découvrir Absolument Volume 40

- Bird on the Wire (Yo&Liz) [Leonard Cohen/1969]
- The Man Who Sold The World (Nico&Liz) David Bowie/1970]
- Godevin le Vilain (John Trap) [Ange/1974]
- Johnny and Mary (Witold Bolik) [Robert Palmer/1979]
- Chose Molle (Arnaud Le Gouëfflec + Jorge Bernstein & the pioupioufuckers) [Sublime De Luxe/1979]
- Temporary Secretary (Nicolas Godin) [Paul McCartney/1980]
- Stop The Cavalry (Marianne Dissard) [Jona Lewie/1980]
- A Forest (Arnane) [The Cure/1980]
- When You Were Mine (Watoo Watoo) [Prince/1980]
- Cold (My Imaginary Loves) [The Cure/1982]
- Golden Brown (De Laurentis) [The Stranglers/1982]

- WEBZINE A DECOUVRIR ABSOLUMENT
  Digital Format

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Various Artists.

- Love Song (this is not a) (Poppy No Good) [P.I.L./1983]
- This Charming Man (Mensch) [The Smiths/1983]
- I've Been Losing You (Garden With Lips) [A-ha/1986]
- Blue Hotel (Séve Duo) [Chris Isaak/1986]
- There Is A Light That Never Goes Out (Grout/Grout) [The Smiths/1986]
- Ne me Laisse Pas Tomber vf de Never Let me Down Again (Centredumonde) [Depeche Mode/1987]
- Summertime Rolls (Kramies) [Janes Addiction/1988]
- Maman (idwan) [Dorothée/1988]
- No Words no More (Lufdbf) [love and rockets/1989]0.
- 18 And Life (Dark Wooden Cell) [Skid Row/1989]
- Merry Christmas (Helluvah) [The Ramones/1989]
- Wicked Game (Chasseur) [Chris Isaak/1989]
- Twin Peaks Theme (My Tiger Side) [Angelo Badalamenti/1990]
- Apprécie Le Silence, Tout Ce Que Je Veux vf de Enjoy The Silence (Glace_9) [Depeche Mode/1990]
- **Unmasked (David Fenech)** [Robert Wyatt/1992]
- Sister (Serpent) [Sebadoh/1993]
- Rouge est Mon Sommeil (Gu's Music) [Jean-Louis Murat/1993]
- Nuages (La Rive) [Jean Bart/1995]
- Bipolar (Mona Kazu) [Blonde Redhead/1997]
- À l'Ouverture des Miroirs (Thomas Aussenac) [Bertrand Betsch/1997]
- If I Think Of Love (Dyl) [Lisa Germano/1998]
- Garçon Glaçon (Arnaud Le Gouëfflec et John Trap) [April March/1999]
- Et les Filles (Gontard !) [Jean-Luc le Ténia/2000]
- Tue-le (1=0) [inspiré de "A prayer to god" Steeve Albini/2000]
- Que Sera Votre Vie (M.Lo) [Kat Onoma/2001]
- Mon Hublot (Betrand Betsch) [Rémi Poncet/2005]
- km 83 (Melicoton) [Françoise Breut/2005]
- Lift Trip To Mars (Old Mountain Station) [Angil and the Hiddentracks/2007]
- July Flame (Willskott) [Laura Veirs/2010]
- Finlande (post Humanism) (Angil and The Hiddentracks) [Francis Bourganel/2010]
- Diamond (Emboe) [Rihanna/2012]
- Myth (Uniform Motion) [Beach House/2012]
- Bouche à Lévres (Philémone) [Odezenne/2015]
- John My Beloved (Benjamin Fincher) [Sufjan Stevens/2015]



> Zoom 1 2 3

Rocanrolorama 1974-2016
2016

Pascal Comelade

Disc 1
MY DEGENERATION (1974-1986)
Fluence
- Fluence (a few reasons to stay, a few reasons to split)
- Séquences Paiennes 77/78
- Séquence 1
- Séquence 2
- Séquence 3
- Séquence 4
- Séquence 5
- Séquence 6
- Séquence 7
- Séquence 7
- Séquence 9
- Séquence 10
- Séquence 11

Ready Made

- CD 2 - *We Did It Again*
- Pascal Comelade - instruments
- Sissi - chanteuse

- CD 2 - *Memories*
- Pascal Comelade - electric piano, imitation clarinette, plastic accordéon, toy pianos, orgues, batterie, plastic guitar, violon, cyclophone, concertine thermo-mécanique, pianos
- Laurent Sinclair - vertical piano

- CD 5 - *Why Are We Sleeping ?*
- Pascal Comelade - electric organs, instruments
- Lionel Limiñana - electric bass, soviet fuz gtrs

- Eclairage Sur L'eau
- Distant Piano
- Ready Made 4
- Carré
- Bruits De Fond
- Bar Électric

Paralelo
- Mouvement Décomposé D'un Coup De Marteau
- Via Laietana
- Paralelo 1
- Vertical
- Politico
- Automne
- Musique Pour Les Ascenseurs (Paralelo 6)
- A Vacuum Cleaner (Paralelo 7)
- Erratum Musical 1
- Erratum Musical 2

Sentimientos
- A Noise In My Nose (Sentimientos 2)

Précis De Décomposition Bruitiste (1980/1986)
- Karl Marx Alla Romana
- Irregular Organs
- A Perfect Crime
- Scène De Musique Ralentie

15 Minutes De Sonoto-Luddisme
- 15 Minutes De Sonoto-Luddisme

Disc 2

SLOW MUSICS (1980-1997)

Slow Musics (1974-1984)
- Barcelona Tango
- **We Did It Again** [Kevin Ayers]
- Chanson Pop
- 13 À Table
- The No-Dancing
- Logique Du Sens
- The Curious Sofa
- Un Enemic Del Swing

Détails Monochromes
- Fragments
- Park Guell
- Chanson
- Bel Canto
- Des Yeux Au Bacon
- Dancin' On My Sofa
- Beyrouth 1966

Palimpsestes Sonors
- Blue Afternoon
- Third Eye Of Lya Lys
- Un La Minimal Nu
- Souvenir De Vernet-les-Bains

El Primitivisme
- Valse De Le Demoiselle Aux Yeux Verts
- Honky Tonk Women
- Rue Des Soeurs Noires
- Jac B. And His Dancing Dogs
- It's Hurt Me Too
- **Memories** [H. Hopper/R.Wyatt]
- Your Labios As Tulips

33 Bars
- Ze Wiski Twist (à Cliff Gallup, inventeur du Rocanrol)
- Vals En Diagonal (à C.R.)
- Rock Del Veneno
- Valse À L'aiguille Creuse
- A Glass Of Gaz
- Patafisiskal Polska

Disc 3

PATAFISISKAL POLSKA (1992-1996)
- 4 Rroses Pour Marie
- Egyptian Reggae
- Dansa Del Sombre Fakir D'Alcoi
- 96 Tears
- Societé Anonyme Du Frisson Rétinien
- Sunny Afternoon
- Put A Straw Under Baby
- Dali's Car
- Arthur's Caravan Was A Flor Fina
- The Skatalan Logicofobism
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- I Put A Barbara Steele On You
- A La Recherche Du Baron Corvo
- Danse Du Valseur Callipyge
- L'Home Dibuixat
- Also Sprach Ed Marimba
- Like A Rolling Stone

El Cabaret Galàctic
- Chanson De Charme Pour Faux-Nez
- The Lolobrigida Foxtrot
- Your Eyes Like Juan Gris Cubist Guitars
- Le Fakir De La Chapelle (à François Cadarec)

- Marie Limiñana - drums

Coffret de 6 CD + livret de 72 pages et lithographie originale.
Édition de 1000 exemplaires numérotés et signés.

A noter que P. Comelade attribue *Memories* à [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper] alors que Hugh Hopper en est le seul auteur-compositeur.

- BECAUSE MUSIC (BEC5156515)
  6xCD + livre

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

- Tokyo Bay Blues
- On Se L'Hegel En Enfer
- L'Espinosa Ética De La Santa Espina

Musiques Pour Films, Vol. 3
- Toti Al Soler
- Betty Page A-Go-Go
- Sheena Is A Punk Rocker

Les Places De Gràcia
- L'Esquella De La Torratxa
- Paganini Paga Tot A Nono

Flip-Side Of Sophism
- Back To Schizo

Disc 4

MUSIQUE DEGENXRE (1996-2000)
- L'Argot Du Bruit
- The Sad Skinhead
- Marie, Un Faux-Cul Dans La Transmission
- Love Too Soon
- Le Soir Du Grand Soir
- La Société Du Piano-Obstacle
- Sardana Dels Desemparats
- Green Eyes

Muzak De Genre
- Dóna'm Corda
- Cadillac
- Aigua De Florida
- The Great Ricardo Solfa
- To The Last Imaginary Solutions
- September Song [K. Weil/M. Anderson]
- Brown Sugar
- Smoke On The Water
- Ma Gueule
- Ramblin' Rose
- Souviens-Toi De Ces Douces Soirées
- Psycho (Ma Non) Troppo
- Despintura (A) Fònica
- L'Argot Du Bruit

Disc 5

ESPONTEX SINFONIA (2000-2008)
Psicòtic Music'Hall
- The Blank Invasion Of Schyzofonics Bikinis
- Sense El Ressó Del Dring
- Don't Touch My Blue Oyster
- Contre Le Style
- Un Train Direct Pour Charenton
- Mieux Vaut Que Ses Seins Ses Bas Se Tiennent (al pianiste de la Bodega Bohemia)
- Gégène
- A Figueres

Espontex Sinfonia
- Pim Pam Pum Al Concepte
- Mother Of Earth
- The Halucinogenic Espontex Sinfonia
- Com Un Rossinyol Amb Mal De Queixal

Mètode De Rocanrol
- Stranger In Paradigm
- The Indian In The Group (to Jimmy Carl Black)
- Il Luna Park Galactico
- L'Enterrament Des Sardines
- Sans Les Mains! (Zappambarretina)
- Vals Burlesco
- Satisfacció

I Scream Ice Cream (Krazy Kat)
- The Nothing Twist
- **Why Are We Sleeping** [K. Ayers/ M.Ratledge/R. Wyatt]
- A Wall Of Perukes
- One Of Us

La Catedral D'Escuradents
- Sardana Mecànica
- To Be Damnit Ornette To Be
- Ha Passat Un Àngel

Disc 6

FRIKI SERENATA (2008-2016)
Friki Serenata
- A Freak Serenade
- The Return Of Lux Interior The Magician (El Bolero Del Raval)
- Two Maniaco-Depressive Beatnicks Squabbing Over A Jane Russell Mozzarella's Stereokini
- El Misteri Del Triangle Vermut
- Europe Change Bad

El Pianista Del Antifaz
- O Dancing Del Gran Fumisme (to Albert Pla)
- Hydropathes Marchant Sur Les Os
- Friki Serenata (à Max)

- Flan Sin Nata Inzenight
- Spinoza Was A Soul Garagist
- El Pianista Del Antifaz (Born In Candolle)
- Portrait De L'Artiste Avec Des Lunettes Pour Voir Les Femmes À Poill
- La Bella Dorita

Les Mémoires Du Chanteur Masqué

- En Maison
- Russian Roulette
- Suzanne
- New York 09
- Ha Passat Un Àngel
- The Train Creep' A Looping
- Sex Machine



> Zoom

Places Names Numbers
2016

Giovanni Ferrario Alliance

- Soweija
- He Fell
- Bristol
- Goose 4
- Where To Go
- Oaxaca
- Brush
- Wish 33rd
- Cecina

Bonus CD & Digital Format

- Costa [R. Wyatt / A. Benge]

- Giovanni Ferrario - acoustic and electric guitar, bass guitar, piano, keyboards, vocals, percussion
- Beppe Mondini - drums, percussion
- Stefano Pini - drums, percussion
- Fabio Rondanini - drums, percussion
- Giacomo Papetti - bass
- Andrea Faccioli - guitar
- Simone Piccinelli - piano
- Georgeann Kalweit - speech
- Engineers: Lorenzo Caperchi, Simone Piccinelli, Alessandro Paderno, Marco Tagliola.

Seules les versions CD et digitale comportent la reprise de Robert Wyatt *Costa*.

- WE WERE NEVER BEING BORING (WWNBB#081) Digital Format



> Zoom

Sciences Politiques
2017

Mendelson

- Les Peuples
- Le Soulèvement
- La Nausée
- La Guerre
- La Panique
- La Carrière
- Les Héritiers
- Le Capitalisme
- Les Loisirs

- La Liberté [R. Wyatt]

- La Décence
- La Dette

- Pascal Bouaziz - guitares, voix
- Sylvain Joasson - batteries, percussions, boîtes à rythme
- Pierre-Yves Louis - basses, guitares, filtres
- Charlie O. - orgues, pianos
- Jean-Michel Pires - batteries, percussions, synthés
- Quentin Rollet - saxophones, synthés

La Liberté est une "libre adaptation" de *Left On Man* des albums Dondestan et Dondestan (revisited).

- ICI D'AILLEURS (IDA129) CD
- ICI D'AILLEURS (IDA129LP) LP



> Zoom

PRF Monthly Tribute Series

- 1/1 (Version) (four o'clocker 2) [B.Eno/R. Wyatt/R. Davies]

- Needle in the Camel's Eye (four o'clocker 2
- Driving Me Backwards (Not four o'clocker 2
- Third Uncle (four o'clocker 2
- 2/2's On Fire (Situations)
- I'll Come Running (The Five Mod Four)
- My Big Nurse (Situations)
- Sombre Reptiles (four o'clocker 2)
- Golden Hours (four o'clocker 2)
- Bleak Strategies (Brian Pno)
- Bleak Ambient (Brian Pno)

- PRF MONTHLY TRIBUTE SERIES! - Digital Format

Tribute 35 - Brian Eno
2017

- Music For Drone Hangars (VaticanShotglass)
- On Some Faraway Beach (Leonids)
- Needle in the Camel's Eye (Photo-Curio)
- By This River (etch)
- Deep Blue Day (Andre Wrench)
- Warm Jest (Brain Eno)
- Regiment (FNO)
- Becalmed (Dead Man's Spelling)
- 1/1 (basinski international airport) (hench)
- Come with Us (The Jumping Cat Bunnies
- Strip It Down (Dead Man's Spelling
- Spider & I (Randy & The Eternities
- Mother Whale Eyeless (Peer Review)
- King's Lead Hat (Ani Boner)
- Wo-blique Strategies (The Jumping Cat Bunnies Featuring Bri-town E-wo)
- Warm Jets Disintegration (sleepkid)
- More Warm Jets (French Goodbye)
- Lay My Love (The Bashful Vigilantes
- The Great Pretender (Mirror Walled City)
- Proud of yourself, little man? (Batty Comes Alive!
- St. Elmo's Fire (Sam Miell)
- Spinning Away (Hilarity Ensues)
- Uncle's Third (Garbage Plate) (Technical Commentaries)
- Dead Finks Don't Talk (four o'clocker 2)



> Zoom

Live In Japan
2017

Phil Manzanera and The Sound of Blue Band

Disc 1
- Lagrima
- TNK
- 6PM
- Out Of The Blue
- In Every Dreamhome A Heartache
- I Want You Back
- Magdalena
- Sozinho
- Bala De Plata
- More Than This
- High Atlas

Disc 2
- East Of Asteroid
- Amazona
- I Cant Help Falling In Love With You
- **Frontera** [P. Manzanera/R. Wyatt]
- Diamond Head
- Stormy Weather
- Take A Chance With Me
- Love Is The Drug
- No Church In The World
- Lets Stick Together
- Chan Chan
- Bonus Track Chan Chan (Studio Version)

- Phil Manzanera - guitar, vocals
- Yaron Stavi - bass, vocals
- Javier Weyler - drums
- Hotei - guitar, guest
- Lucas Polo - guitar, vocals
- Sónia Bernardo - guitar, vocals
- Andres Mesa - keyborads, vocals
- Joao Mello - saxophone, keyboards, vocals

Recorded Live at Billboard Live, Tokyo, 2nd July 2017.

- EXPRESSION RECORDS (EXPCD 39) 2xCD



> Zoom

Heaps Of Sheeps
2017

The Hunt Saboteurs

- **Heaps of Sheeps** [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]

Solo project by V. J. Clarke, featuring guest musicians and session players.

- NO LABEL
  Digital Format



> Zoom

Sea Song
2017

Stelline ft. Libby Leist

- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]

- NO LABEL
  Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2

Sea Song(e)s.
2017

Bruno Tocanne - Sophia Domancich - Antoine Läng - Rémi Gaudillat

- Aimez Le
- C(arla) Song
- Du Clair Au Sombre
- Back Where We Began
- Sea Dance
- Nuits Désarmées
- I Danced
- Ressac + Léo Colas
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

- Bruno Tocanne - batterie, percussions
- Sophia Domancich - piano, Fender Rhodes
- Antoine Läng - voix, effets, clavier
- Rémi Gaudillat - trompette, bugle

L'univers du" Rock Bottom" de Robert Wyatt sert de fil conducteur à cet album dont chaque morceau explore cette "source inépuisable d'émotion".
A ce titre, si *Sea Song* est la seule "vraie" reprise, tous les morceaux empruntent de manière plus ou moins explicite au vocabulaire et à la *cosmogonie wyattienne...*

- CRISTAL RECORDS (CR257) CD

Plus / More



> Zoom

Retrospective My Eye
2017

TNHCH

- Un Pour Le Russe
- Dancing Sober
- Macedonia
- Grand Tourisme
- Fourth Of June
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]

- Arthur Beuvier - synths, drum programming, vocals
- Corentin Canesson - guitars, rainstick
- Tim Defives - drums, marimbas, drum programming, vocals
- Damien Le Dévédec - lead vocals, bass guitar, additional synths

First TNHCH's LP released in a 100 limited copies with original custom painted artwork for each.

- NO LABEL - LP

Nadia Szachniuk

- A La Nanita
- Canción De Cuna Para Un Niño Ansioso
- Y Aún
- Confesión Del Viento
- Luna Atrás

- Nadia-Szachniuk - voice
- Bruno Moguilevsky - piano
- Alejandro Starosielski - guitar
- Facundo Guevara - percussion
- Nicolás Arroyo - percussion,



> Zoom

Luna Atrás
2017

- Canción Para Despertar A Un Negrito
- Greta
- Oruga
- Nani Nani
- Canción De Cuna Para El Vino
- Upa Negrito
- Canción de Cuna para Lautaro
- Lullaby For Hamza [R. Wyatt]
- Llevame Afuera

drums
- Santiago Segret - bandoneon
- Ignacio Vidal - choirs

- NADIA SZACHNIUK
Digital Format



> Zoom

Dreamland
2017

Jennifer Maidman

- Conspiracy of Dreamers
- Hinterland
- Outside
- Red Heart
- This Man is Dangerous
- The Letting Go
- O Caroline [D. Sinclair/R.Wyatt]
- Over My Head
- No Man's Land
- Bird Dreams
- Open The Door
- Land Of Dreams
- Here
- Home
- The Magic Voice
- Higher Than Life?
- Crow Dance (for Simon)

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet wails and vocal samples

- Jennifer Maidman - vocals, acoustic guitar, bass, ukulele, Wyattotron
- David Torn - electric guitar, loops
- Annie Whitehead - trombones
- Paul Brady - whistle

"This song originally appeared on the 1972 Matching Mole album. It was written by Robert Wyatt and Dave Sinclair. It's a haunting song of love and longing, which I've been singing for many years as part of Annie's Soupsongs project, a band which plays Robert's music, and which accompanied him for the live performances featured in the BBC documentary 'Free Will and Testament'. I originally heard the first line 'David's on piano' as 'Dave sits on piano' , and have sung it like that ever since. It's a reference to Dave Sinclair of course, keyboard player with Matching Mole. Although there's no piano on our version, David (Torn) was next to the piano as he played guitar on the track at Dreamland, albeit not quite actually sitting on it. The vocal, acoustic guitar and creaky stool were recorded live at Dreamland.I had a dreadful sore throat but when I listened to it back I liked the result. Matthew working his magic with the API desk and a Neumann U47. Annie, inspired by the Mellotron on the original, came up with a beautiful trombone arrangement. Paul Brady sent some wonderful whistle all the way from Dublin. I called Robert to tell him what we were up to and back home in Sawkill flew in some trumpet and vocal samples, using the 'Wyatttron'."

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Samples.

Weyes Blood

- A Certain Kind [H. Hopper]
- Everybody's Talkin'

- Natalie Mering - voice
- Ben Babbitt - bass guitar
- Booker Stardrum - drums
- Walt McClements - organ

A Certain Kind was recorded live at ZDB in Lisbon.



> Zoom 1 2

A Certain Kind Of Everybody
2017

- MEXICAN SUMMER (MEX241) S



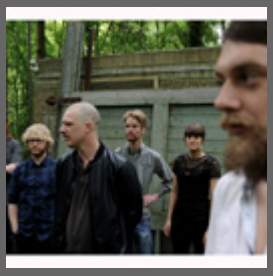
> Zoom

MoonJune Years 2002-2018
(Sampler)
2018

Soft Machine

-- Fourteen Hour Dream (Hidden Details)
- Black & Crimson (Burden Of Proof)
- The Nodder (The Live Adventures)
- Elsewhere (Abracadabra)
- The Steamer (Steam)
- Arianna Blue (unreleased)
- Kings & Queens (Live In Zaandam)
- Kite Runner (Soft Machine Legacy)

- MOONJUNE RECORDS - Digital Format



> Zoom

Songs By Wyatt (Live)
2018

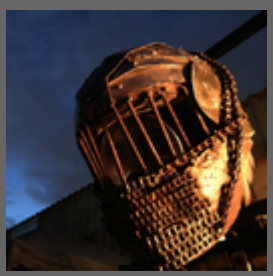
Grey Lotus

- Out Of The Blue [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Alifib [R. Wyatt]
- Memories [R. Wyatt]
- Forest [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Blues In Bob Minor [R. Wyatt]
- Shipbuilding [E. Costello]
- Free Will & Testament [R. Wyatt/Kramer]
- The Ghosts Within [A. Benge/G. Atzmon]
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]

- Daan Arisz - guitar
- Joost Verhagen - vocals
- Judith Wesselius - vocals
- Otto de Boer - double bass
- Niels van der Weiden - piano & synthesizer
- Lars van der Weiden - drums
- Eoin Roberts - violin
- Roelof Ruis - accordeon

Recorded at Pletterij during a live concert featuring Otto de Boer, Michel Duijves and Robert Bakker.

- NO LABEL
Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2

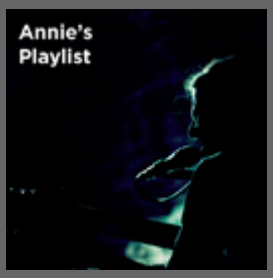
Hobby Horse

- Helm
- Salsa Claiente
- The Go Round
- Cascade
- Buckle
- **Born Again Cretin** [R. Wyatt]
- Amundsen
- Evidently Chickentown

- Dan Kinzelman - tenor saxophone, clarinets, electronics, voice
- Joe Rehmer - basses, electronics, voice
- Stefano Tamborrino - drums, electronics, voice

- AUAND (AU9069) CD

Helm
2018



> Zoom

Annie's Playlist
2018

Annie Barbazza

- Dancing With The Moonlit Knight/Working Class Hero (Genesis/Lennon)
- Across The Universe (Lennon-McCartney)
- Bensonhurst Blues (Kaplan)
- Girls From The North Country (Dylan)
- Echoes/While My Guitar Gently Weeps/The Sage (Pink Floyd/Harrison/Lake)
- House With No Door (Hammill)
- Pink Moon (Drake)
- Casablanca Moon (Moore-Blegvad)
- Faust (Williams)
- How Beautiful You Are (Greaves-Blegvad)
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Horizon (Hackett)
- Space Oddity (Bowie)
- Moonage Daydream/Epitaph (Bowie/King Crimson)
- Prince Rupert's Awake-Moonchild (King Crimson)
- Astronomy Domine (Barrett)
- Scarborough Fair/John Barleycorn (Traditional)
- Volo Magico n°1/Locomotive Breath (Rocchi/Anderson)
- Song To The Siren (Buckley)
- Amado Mio (Fischer-Roberts)
- A Case Of You (Excerpt bonus track from rehearsals) (Mitchell)

- Annie Barbazza - vocals, piano, acoustic guitar
- Lorenzo Trecordi - flute, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, backing vocals

- UNIFAUN PRODUCTIONS EPHEMERALS (UPE001) CD



> Zoom

Centro Cultural São Paulo, 18/09/2010
2018

Band Of Pixies

- **Hope for Happiness** [B. Hopper]
- Clouds
- First Contact
- Interstellar Space
- Angel
- Sal Paradise

- Fabio Golfetti - guitar, vocal
- Gabriel Costa - bass
- Fred Barley - drums, vocal

Recorded Live at Centro Cultural São Paulo - 18 Sept 2010

- INVISIVEL RECORDS Digital Format



> Zoom

Concert Anniversaire 30 Ans
2018

Orchestre National de Jazz

- Jazz Lacrymogène (1986 ONJ François Jeanneau)
- Desert City (1987-1989 ONJ Antoine Hervé)
- Real Politik (1989-1991 ONJ Claude Barthélemy)
- À Plus Tard (1991-1994 ONJ Denis Badault)
- In Tempo (1994-1997 ONJ Laurent Cugny)
- Out Of (1997-2000 ONJ Didier Levallet)
- Argentiera (2000-2002 ONJ Paolo Damiani)
- Oud-Oud (2002-2005 ONJ Claude Barthélemy)
- Valse 2 (2005-2008 ONJ Franck Tortiller)

Shipbuilding featuring Yael Naim.

Concert enregistré à la Cité de la musique le 2 septembre 2016 dans le cadre du festival Jazz à la Villette.

- ONJ RECORDS (464444) CD

- **Shipbuilding (2008-2013 ONJ Daniel Yvinec)**[E. Costello]
- Paris V (2014-2018 ONJ Olivier Benoit)



> Zoom

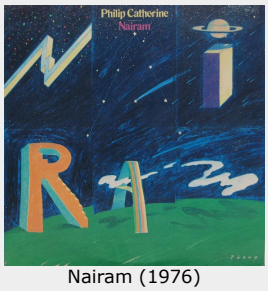
Clarinet & Piano:
Selected Works Vol. 1
2018

Group Listening

- Wenn Der Südwind Weht
- The Dog
- Snow Cannon
- Happy Whistler (Edit)
- Julie With
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- A Little Lost
- Jay

- Stephen Black - clarinet, electronics
- Paul Jones - piano, electronics

Maryan est une composition instrumentale de Philip Catherine parue en 1976 sous le nom de *Nairam* (sur l'album éponyme édité par Warner Bros).



Nairam (1976)
Philip Catherine

Robert Wyatt en a écrit les paroles du morceau publié sur Shleep sorti en 1997.

- PRAH RECORDINGS (PRAH013D) LP



> Zoom

Al Silencio
2018

Carolina Katún

- Paloma Negra
- Au fil de l´eau
- El Curruchá
- La Llorona
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Automne
- Alfonsina y el mar
- Arenita Azul
- Dos Cruces
- When I am Laid
- Zamba de los humildes
- Al silencio
- Pajarillo verde

- Carolina Katún - voice
- Pierre Perchaud - guitars
- Nicolas Moreaux - double bass
- Arthur Alard - percussion

- JAZZLAND RECORDINGS (377 907 9) CD



> Zoom

Delta Saxophone Quartet

- Speed Of Life
- Heroes
- Breaking Glass
- Hunky
- Alabama Song
- Art Decade
- Dory
- The Laughing Gnome
- Warszawa
- Shades III
- Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence
- Swan
- **Music for Airports** [B. Eno/R. Wyatt/R.

- Peter Whyman - alto saxophone, clarinet
- Chris Caldwell - baritone saxophone, bass clarinet
- Graeme Blevins - sopranino saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet
- Tim Holmes - tenor saxophone, clarinet

- FMR RECORDS (FMRCD473-0418) CD

Bowie, Berlin & Beyond
2018

Davies]
- Subterraneans



> Zoom

Life Size
2018

John Greaves

- Air De La Lune
- The Same Thing
- In Te
- **God Song** [P. Miller-R. Wyatt]
- Kew Rhône Is Real
- Earthly Powers
- Still Life
- La Lune Blanche
- Sweetheart Goodbye
- Hôtels
- How Beautiful You Are
- Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed

- John Greaves - voice, bass guitar piano, sequences, string arrangements
- Vincent Courtois - cello
- Matthieu Rabaté - drums
- Jakko Jakszyk - electric guitar
- Camillo Mozzoni - oboe

- MANTICORE (MAN003) CD
- MANTICORE (MANLP003) LP



> Zoom

Nostalgia Progressiva
2018

Maurizio Brunod, Giorgio Li Calzi & Boris Savoldelli

- Formentera Lady (Fripp/Sinfield)
- Matte Kudusai (Belew/Fripp/Levin/Bruford)
- Tomorrow Never Knows (Lennon/ McCartney)
- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello/C. Langer]
- Radio Activity (Hütter/Schneider/Schult)
- Medley: I Talk To The Wind (Fripp/Giles/ Lake/McDonald/Sinfield) - Roots (Carr) - Starless (Fripp/Bruford/Cross/ Wetton)
- Taranaki (Smith)
- Moonchild (Fripp/Giles/Lake/McDonald/ Sinfield)
- Gioco Di Bimba (Reverberi/Tagliapietra/ McDonald/Pagliuca)

- Maurizio Brunod - acoustic and electric guitar, live sampling
- Giorgio Li Calzi - trumpet, flugelhorn, keyboards, electronics
- Boris Savoldelli - voices, electronics, vocal synth 3D prototype

Recorded on 11th July 2017 at Il Pollaio Recording Studio, Ronco Biellese (Biella) Italy.

- CALIGOLA RECORDS (2241) CD



> Zoom

Parlami
2018

Odeia

- Tha Pethάno Glykiá Mou Agápi
- Ola Se Thimizoun
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- Mandole 1
- Nu Poco 'e Sentimento
- Plainte
- Parlami D'amore Mariù
- Non Parliamone Più
- I Pirati A Palermu
- Le Vent Se Tait
- Mandole 2
- O Maharagias
- **Venti Latir** [R. Wyatt]
- Chanson d'Hélène

- Elsa Birgé - voix
- Lucien Alfonso - violon, guitare
- Karsten Hochapfel - violoncelle, guitare, guitare portugaise, guitare bulgare
- Pierre-Yves Le Jeune - contrebasse, percussions

- WOPELA (00337961793/2) CD

CE François Couture

- Ballade (pour elle)
- August & September
- Go
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]

- CE François Couture - voix, instruments, traitements, arrangements



> Zoom

Ballades Pour Elle
2018

- This Side of the Looking Glass
- I Scare Myself

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

↑



> Zoom

Hidden Details
2018

Soft Machine

- Hidden Details
- The Man Who Waved At Trains
- Ground Lift
- Heart Off Guard
- Broken Hill
- Flight Of The Jett
- One Glove
- **Out Bloody Intro** [T. Travis/M. Ratledge]
- **Out Bloody Rageous, Part 1** [M. Ratledge]
- Drifting White
- Life On Bridges
- Fourteen Hour Dream
- Breathe
- Night Sky *(Bonus Track)*

- John Etheridge - electric and acoustic guitars
- Theo Travis -tenor and soprano saxophones / flutes / Fender Rhodes piano
- Roy Babbington - bass guitar
- John Marshall - drums and percussion

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR093)
- TONEFLOAT (TF185) 2xLP

↑



> Zoom

How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
2018

Eric Lareine - Pascal Maupeu - Wyatt - Marchetti

- **Signed Curtain**
- **Pigs...(in there)**
- **First Batch / Before We Knew / Un Roman Sportif**
- **The Age Of Self / The United States Of Amnesia**
- **Catholic Architecture**
- **Lullaloop**
- **Just As You Are**

- Eric Lareine - voix
- Pascal Maupeu - guitare, bandes (claviers et samples)
- Jean-Michel Marchetti - traductions

Enregistrement live à Saint-Quentin la Tour des morceaux 3 et coda 7.

Ce disque n'est plus disponible et n'est plus référencé.

- MOPDAQUEENPROD (#2)

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Samples.

↑



North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **A Last Straw** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- **Alifie** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]

- Annie Barbazza - lead vocal, Farfisa organ
- John Greaves - bass guitar, vocal (track 4 and 11), spoken Word (track 3, 5 and 6)
- Nicky Baigent - Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, spoken word (track 5)
- Luke Crookes - bassoon

> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6

Folly Bololey
Songs From Robert Wyatt's
Rock Bottom
2019

Bonus tracks
- The British Road [R. Wyatt]
- Maryan [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- Shipbuilding [P. MacManus/C. Langer]
- O Caroline [R. Wyatt/D. Sinclair]

- William D. Drake - piano, Farfisa organ, vocal (track 2, 3 and 5)
- Harry Escott - cello
- Craig Fortnam - guitar, Farfisa organ, vocal (track 7 and 9)
- Tommaso Franguelli - vibes, percussion
- Cheb Nettles - drums
- Laurent Valero - violin, viola, recorder, bass recorder

Recorded live, mixed and mastered by Alfredo Callegari at Elfo Recording Studios, Tavernago, Italy during "Musiche Nuove a Piacenza Festival", November 30th, 2018.

- DARK COMPANION RECORDS (DC012)
  (DCLP012) Limited hand numbered first edition coloured vinyl (500 ex.) with bonus golden CD.

Critiques/Reviews



> Zoom

An Evening With Manuel Agnelli
2019

Manuel Agnelli Featuring Rodrigo D'Erasmo

- Martha
-Ti Cambia Il Sapore
- Video Games
- Male Di Miele
- Shipbuilding [E. Costello/C. Langer]
- Strategie
- Ballata Per La Mia Piccola Iena
- Quello Che Non C'è
- Perfect Day

- ISLAND RECORDS (0602508493737) LP



> Zoom

Smith
2019

The Winstons

- Mokumokurwen
- Ghost Town
- Around The Boat
- Tamarind Smile / Apple Pie
- A Man Happier Than You
- No Dosh For Parking Lot
- The Blue Traffic Light
- Blind
- Impotence [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Soon Everyday
- Sintagma
- Rocket Belt

- Enrico Gabrielli - keyboards, woodwind, drums, vocals
- Roberto Dell'Era - bass, classical & 12-string guitars, piano, vocals
- Lino Gitto - drums, keyboards, vocals
- Richard Sinclair - vocals

- SONY MUSIC (19075958352) CD
- SONY MUSIC (190759586013) LP

Julie Constantine

- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- Jusqu'A Ce Que La Force De T'Aimer Me Manque

- Badou Ortega - voix
- Philippe Haurio - guitares, synthés

Limted 100 copies.

- UBAHN (SP07/1) SP



> Zoom

A Tribute Collection - Part One
2019



> Zoom

Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests
Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
2019

Max Andrzejewski's Hütte

- The Duchess [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road [R. Wyatt]
- You You [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hits The Road [R. Wyatt]
- Cuckoo Madam [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Grass [R. Wyatt]
- N.I.O [R. Wyatt]
- Instant Kitten [R. Wyatt]
- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Awaye [D. McRae/R. Wyatt]

- Johannes Schleiermacher - saxophone, flute, synth
- Tobias Hoffmann - guitar
- Andreas Lang - double bass
- Max Andrzejewski - drums, vocals, arrangements
- Cansu Tanrıkulu -vocals, fx
- Jörg Hochapfel -organs, guitars, vocals on The Duchess

Recorded on 13. & 14. December 2018 at LowSwing Studio Berlin.

- WHYPLAYJAZZ (WPJ052) CD



> Zoom

A Tribute Collection - Part Two
2019

Julie Constantine

- Green Is The Color
- Alifib [R. Wyatt]

- Badou Ortega - voix
- Philippe Haurio - guitares, synthés

Limited edition 100 copies.

- UBAHN (SP08/1) SP



> Zoom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The Henry Cow Box Redux

Henry Cow

Disc 1
LEGEND

Disc 2
UNREST

Disc 3
DESPERATE STRAIGHTS (Slapp Happy / Henry Cow)

Disc 4
IN PRAISE OF LEARNING

CONCERTS 1
- Gloria Gloom : 5 août 1975, BBC

HAMBURG
- Gloria Gloom : 26 mars 1976, NDR Jazz Workshop, Hamburg

This box set contains re-mastered versions of all the studio CDs and the rare bonus CD (Cabinet of Curiosities);

Subscribers to this boxset received an additional limited edition free bonus CD: Ex Box Collected Fragments 1971 - 1978.

The Complete Henry Cow
50th Anniversary
2019

Disc 5
WESTERN CULTURE - History & Prospects

Disc 6
CONCERTS 1
- Beautiful As The Moon|Terrible As An Army With Banners
- Nirvana For Mice
- The Ottawa Song
- Gloria Gloom [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Beautiful As The Moon (Reprise)
- Bad Alchemy
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road
- Ruins
- Groningen
- Groningen Again

Disc 7
CONCERTS 2

Disc 8
BEGINNINGS

Disc 9
1974-5

Disc 10
HAMBURG
- Fair As The Moon
- Nirvana For Rabbits
- Ottawa Song
- Twilight Bridge
- Gloria Gloom [R. Wyatt/B. McCormick]
- Hamburg 1
- Hamburg 2
- Red Noise10
- Hamburg 3
- Hamburg 4
- Hamburg 5
- Terrible As An Army With Banners
- A Heart
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road
- We Did It Again

Disc 11
TRONDHEIM 1

Disc 12
TRONDHEIM 2

Disc 13
STOCKHOLM & GOTEBORG

Disc 14
LATER & POST-VIRGIN

Disc 15
BREMEN

Disc 16
LATE

Disc 17
VEVEY 1976 (DVD)

Disc 18
A COW CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Disc 19
EX BOX COLLECTED FRAGMENTS 1971-1978
(bonus reserved for subscribers of the boxset).

- ReR MEGACORP (ReRHCGK)
17xCD + DVD

Ce boxset est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.



> Zoom

Les Mémoires D'Un Ventriloque
Chansons 1981-2018
2019

Pascal Comelade

- We Did It Again (with Sissi) [K. Ayers]
- The Sad Skinhead (with Jean-Hervé Péron & Faust)
- Cadillac(with Jac Berrocal)
- September Song (with Robert Wyatt)
- Green Eyes (with PJ Harvey)
- Satisfaccio (Satisfaction) (with Sergi Lopez)
- En Maison (with Alex Barbier)
- Ja Som la Foca (I am The Walrus) (with Enric Casasses)
- Cadillac (with Roy Paci)
- Yo Soy Bueno (with Accidents Polipoètics)
- Don't Let Go (with Les Vierges)
- Ma Gueule (with Miossec)
- Larme Secrète (with Marc Hurtado)
- Société Anonyme du Frisson Rétinien (with Enric Casasses & Mark C.)
- Cares d'Arguiles (with Pau Riba)
- Suzanne (with Albert Pla)

"Les Mémoires d'un Ventriloque" ("memories of a ventriloquist") is the long-awaited anthology of Comelade's collaborations with singers, recorded between 1981 and 2018.

Limited edition of 500 copies, hand-numbered and signed by Pascal Comelade himself.

- STAUBGOLD (STAUB153)
  2 x LP

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends .



> Zoom

pRéCis.AiMaNt
2019

Carla Diratz & Pascal Vaucel

- Brain Waves
- Questing Dawn
- Dharma Song
- Ancora Pier Paolo
- Blue Drops
- Sea Song [Robert Wyatt]
- Septentrional
- Movoid Blues
- What It Is Not
- Head Bending

- Carla Diratz - chant
- Pascal Vaucel - guitare, batterie, traitements

Tirage limité - 300 exemplaires.

- NO LABEL (CDPV001/1) LP



> Zoom

Clarinet & Piano Selected Works
Vol. 1 - Remixed
2019

Group Listening

- A Little Lost (Robert Stillman Remix)
- Wenn Der Südwind Weht (C.A.R.'s 'Becoming Strangers' Vocal Rehash)
- The Dog (Intimately Tommy Remix)
- Snow Canon (Tony Chuckies Remix)
- Happy Whistler (Raven Remix)
- Julie With (Ed Dowie Remix)
- Maryan (Haiku Salut Remix) [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- A Little Lost (Hiro Ama Remix)
- Jay (Thomas Ragsdale Remix)
- Wenn Der Südwind Weht (Bryce Hackford Nur Ihre Zehe Remix)
- Wenn Der Südwind Weht (Povoa Remix)

- Stephen Black - clarinet
- Paul Jones - piano

Remix du morceau paru l'année précédente.

- PRAH - Digital Format

Anaïd

- White Nature
- I Have a Dream
- Ikebana
- Sweet Memories [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- Imbahé
- Migration
- Papaye
- Bonus

- Emmanuelle Lionet - vocal
- Jean-Max Delva - drums, vibraphone
- Damien Thebaud - keyboards
- Alexis Delva - guitars

Sweet Memories est une reprise de *Was*



> Zoom 1 2

I Have A Dream
2019

A Friend (avec des paroles différentes de celles composées par R. W. pour l'album Shleep).
Plus exactement, cette version d'Anaïd reprend le texte initialement écrit par Robert Wyatt pour Hugh Hopper.
En 1997, Robert Wyatt écrira un nouveau texte pour l'enregistrement de Shleep.

"A tribute... To our friend, Hugh Hopper, but also to the legendary ubiquitous figure of canterburian music, Robert Wyatt..."

- NO LABEL (JMEC2019/1/1) CD



> Zoom

Something Unreal: The Best Of Ex Norwegian
2019

Ex Norwegian

- Life
- Something Unreal
- Original Copy
- Sudeki Lover
- Jet Lag
- Making Deals
- Unstoppable
- Pure Gold
- Initiative Rock
- Triggered Weeknd
- Song of Many
- It's Too Late
- Feelin' It
- Not A Mouse
- Mind Down
- Fresh Pit
- Team No Sleep
- All The Time
- All Hips No Waists
- Upper Hand
- Be There
- Aventura
- Tell Me Your Plans
- My Name Is Paul
- Love Is
- International Feel
- So Fine (It's Frightening)
- Ebenezer Beaver
- I Like The Way
- Trap
- **Signed Curtain** [R. Wyatt]
- Lord Up Above
- Winter
- Smashing Time (Live)
- Turn Left (Live)
- First Time (Live)
- Much Rooms (Live)
- Life (Live)
- Something Unreal (Live)
- Ice (Live)
- I'm A Fighter, Not A Lover (Live)
- Count On Me
- Tired Of Dancing
- Funny Zipper
- Hold Please
- Riot Of Love
- Something Unreal II
- Aruba Morn II

Limited edition of 300 copies.

- THINK LIKE A KEY RECORDS (TLAK1115) 2xCD

Fabio Zuffanti

- Sinfonia della Luna (Mugen)
- Chapter 24 (Pink Floyd)
- Nimrodel (Camel)
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Refugees (VDGG)
- Vorrei incontrarti (Alan Sorrenti)
- Harlequin (Genesis)

- MELLOW LABEL PRODUCTIONS (TRIB002) Digital Format



> Zoom

Tributes
2019

- Remember you (Cinderella Search)
- Alta Loma Five Till Nine (PFM)





> Zoom

Positive Feedback
2019

Some Things

- Simultaneity
- Again Blues
- Dreams
- Bowie, Boulez And Nana Vasconcelos
- Now Is The Cool Of The Day
- Flowers of the Nation
- **Dondestan** [R. Wyatt]
- Hen Harrier
- You Are What This Day Is All About
- The Happenings
- Lullabite
- No Worries
- Worries

- Chris Dowding - trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet
- Ben Higham – trumpet, flugelhorn, tuba

- NO LABEL - Digital Format





> Zoom

That's How Much I Need You
2019

The Lysergics

- That's How Much I Need You [R. Wyatt]

- Fabio Mongelli - guitar, vocals
- Sarah Gonputh - organ, vocals
- Danilo Villafranca – bass
- Javier Sanchez Jr. – drums

Recorded at 'Sausage Studio', London, 2016.

- MOON JELLY RECORDS - Digital Format





> Zoom

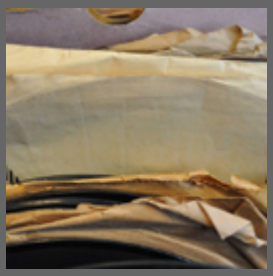
The Bonus Tracks From Monsterverse
2019

The Hellmask

- Under The Moon (Demo Version)
- **Signed Curtain** (Robert Wyatt)
- Curse Of The Pharaoh (Cavernous Acapella)
- Cheri Cheri Lady (Modern Talking Cover)
- Halloween (The Misfits Cover)
- Vermillion Pt 2 (Slipknot Cover)
- Possession (Live)

- Joseph Stones - vocals
- Camilo Borges - electric guitar
- Diego Évora - bass
- Rufus - Drums

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Signed Curtain
2019

Mésange

- Signed Curtain (Robert Wyatt)

- Claire Mathieu - vocals, keyboard
- Maud Perez - vocals, harp
- Matthieu Demourgues - electric bass, guitar

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Return To Center
2019

Kirin J Callinan

- Life Is Life
- The Homosexual
- The Whole Of The Moon
- It Takes A Muscle To Fall In Love
- Pretty Boy
- Return To Center
- Rise
- Signed Curtain [R. Wyatt]
- You Weren't In Love With Me
- Vienna

- Kirin J Callinan - lead vocals, guitar
- Benji Lysaght - guitars
- Drew Erickson - most synths & keys
- Vicky Nguyen - additional synth & keys
- Stella Mozgawa & Dave Elitch - drums & percussion
- Zach Dawes, Jasper Leek & Kelsey Gonzalez - The Electric Bass

- TERRIBLE RECORDS (7766194) LP



> Zoom 1 2 3

Le Rien Illustré - Sub-versions de salon vol. 2
2020

Pascal Comelade

- I Love Joan Jett (Medley: Allright Now / Paranoid / The Letter / Gloria)
- C'mon Everybody
- Honky Tonk Women
- Sweet Little Sixteen
- 96 Tears
- The Way I Walk
- Let Me Try
- Sunny Afternoon
- Like a Rollin' Stone
- Egyptian Reggae
- Sheena Is a Punk Rocker
- Brown Sugar
- Smoke on the Water
- Ramblin' Rose
- Paranoid
- Mood Indigo
- Lonely Woman
- Memories [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- Egyptian Reggae
- Proud Mary
- Mother of Earth
- Why Are We Sleeping? [K. Ayers/ R. Wyatt/ M. Ratledge]
- Russian Roulette
- Dali's Car

Monographie "Le Rien Illustré" consacrée à l'oeuvre graphique de Pascal Comelade comportant 150 reproductions couleurs + un CD de 25 titres de reprises.

A noter que P. Comelade attribue *Memories* à [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper] alors que Hugh Hopper en est le seul auteur-compositeur.

- LES FONDEURS DE BRIQUES Livre + CD



> Zoom 1 2

Truly Yours
Musiche Di Phil Miller
2020

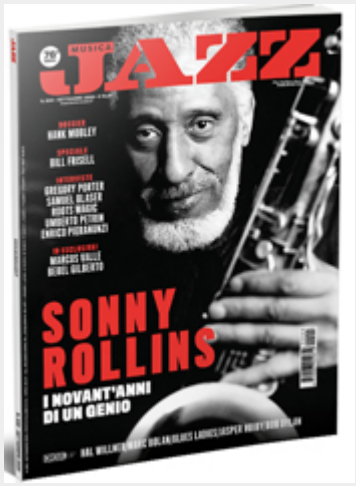
Artchipel Orchestra

- Above & Below
- **Calyx** [P. Miller]
- Eastern Region
- **Nan True's Hole** [Ph. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- **God Song** [Ph. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Second Sight
- Truly Yours
- Esprit Merveilleux

ARTCHIPEL ORCHESTRA
- Marco Fior - trumpet
- Marco Mariani - trumpet
- Michele Marrano - French horn
- Alberto Bolettieri - trombone
- Rudi Manzoli - soprano saxophone - Andrea Ciceri - alto saxophone
- Germano Zenga - tenor saxophone
- Rosarita Crisafi - baritone saxophone
- Alberto Zappalà - bass clarinet
- Carlo Nicita - flute, piccolo
- Stefano Montaldo - violin
- Luca Pedeferri - piano, accordion
- Andrea Serino - synthesizers
- Luca Gusella - vibraphone
- Giuseppe Galluci - electric guitars
- Gianluca Alberti - bass guitar
- Stefano Lecchi - drums
- Naiama Faraò- vocals
- Serena Ferrara - vocals
- Francesca Sabatino - vocals
- Francesco Forges - arrangement (5), co-conduction (5), vocals (2, 5, 7)
- Ferdinando Faraò - arrangements, conduction, game sections

Recorded at Officine Meccanische, Milano, on January 12 th 2020

CD Sold with Italian magazine Musica Jazz [settembre 2020].



- MUSICA JAZZ (MJCD 1372) CD

Article



> Zoom

Abracadabra In Osaka
2020

Soft Works

Disc 1
- Seven Formerly
- Alphrazallan
- Elsewhere
- Baker's Treat
- **Calyx** [Ph. Miller]
- **Kings & Queens** [H. Hopper]

Disc 2
- Abracadabra
- Madam Vintage Suite
- Has Riff
- First Train
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]

- Elton Dean - saxello, alto sax, Fender Rhodes piano
- Allan Holdsworth - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- John Marshall - drums

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR 112) 2xCD



> Zoom

At Brunch With Satan
2020

Alexander De Large

- In Every Dream Home A Heartache (Roxy Music)
- Man In The Long Black Coat (Bob Dylan)
- Bite It You Scum (G.G. Allin)
- Hurt (Nine Inch Nails)
- Nerorgasmo (Nerorgasmo)
- Space Is Deep (Hawkwind)
- Tomorrow Never Knows (The Beatles)
- Corona (Minutemen)
- The Bed (Lou Reed)
- Ace Of Spades (Motörhead)
- Long Gone (Syd Barrett)
- Matando Güeros (Brujeria)
- Black Metal (Venom)
- Moon Over Montana (Jimmy Wakely)
- Sweet Thing (David Bowie)
- Bela Lugosi's Dead (Bauhaus)
- Don't Let It Bring You Down (Neil Young)
- Despair Came Knocking (Daniel Johnston)
- Kakkole (Skiantos)
- Isolation (John Lennon)
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Waitin' Around To Die (Townes Van Zandt)
- I Like To Stay Home (R. Stevie Moore)
- Funeralopolis (Electric Wizard)
- You Suffer (Napalm Death)

"Recorded during lockdown with the shitty built-in laptop mike, this collection of covers clumsily arranged for ukulele and voice features incidental yelling of my daughter, barking of my neighbour's dogs, passing cars and ambulances, you name it... 88 minutes of desperation for you to enjoy! So... enjoy!"

Limited edition, 25 copies.

- LEPER WITHOUT A CAUSE (005) Cassette



> Zoom

There Isn't A Window That I Won't Look Out Of
2020

M.T. Hadley

- Suddenly
- You Know When To Laugh
- Pardon Me
- **Signed Curtain** [R. Wyatt]

- M.T. Hadley - vocal
- Joe McGrail - piano:
- Gam Traynor - cello
- Will Harvey - Viola
- Alicia Berendse - violin
- Twm Dylan - double bass

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Gharbzadegi
2020

Visual Orchestra

- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]

- Gal Amoyal - vocal, monkey
- Yael Sady - keyboard
- Adi Shmulevitch - vocal
- Doron Gallia - vocal
- Reut Ezrony - piano
- Charlotte Oeken - keyboard
- Gabreala Hazon - bells and shakers
- Avri Manor - percussion
- Romi Ginsburg - vocal
- Lilla Weisselberg - vocal
- Gai Sherf - surdo, percussion

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte
Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Jazz & Wine Of Peace
2020

Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte

- The Duchess [R. Wyatt]
- You You [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Riding Hood Hits the Road [R. Wyatt]
- Cuckoo Madam [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Band Introduction & Spoken Interlude
- Little Red Robin Hood Hits the Road [R. Wyatt]
- N.I.O. (New Information Order) [R. Wyatt]
- Grass [I. Cutler]
- Spoken Interlude
- Instant Kitten [R. Wyatt]
- Starting in the Middle of the Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away [D. McRae/R. Wyatt]
- At Last I am Free [Edwards/Rodgers]

- Johannes Schleiermacher - sax tenore, flauto, sintetizzatore
- Cansu Tanrikulu - voce
- Jörg Hochapfel - organo, chitarra, voce
- Tobias Hoffmann- chitarra
- James Banner - contrabbasso
- Max Andrzejewski - batteria, voce, arrangiamenti

Registrato a Cormòns (Italy), Teatro Comunale, il 22.10.2020.

Cet enregistrement circule sur internet (mp3) sans avoir fait l'objet d'une publication discographique.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Bootlegs.



> Zoom

Untried Ways
2020

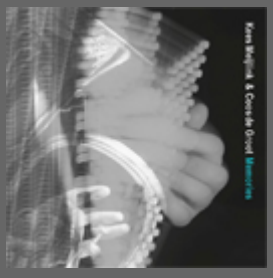
Solaris Great Confusion

- My Bottom Line
- Untried Ways
- The Age Of Self [R. Wyatt]
- She Kissed My Forehead
- So Close To Me Marlene
- Inside A Hollow Tree
- Traffic Jam
- I Wish I Was Blind
- That Fellow's Got To Swing

- Élise Humbert - cello
- Yves Béraud - accordion
- Jérôme Spieldenner - drums
- Foes Von Ameisedorf - bass
- Aurel Troesch - electric & acoustic guitars
- Jacques Speyser - voice

Special guests:
- Zeynep Kaya - voice
- Emmanuel Boch - piano & organ

- MEDIAPOP RECORDS (MPR028) LP & CD



> Zoom

Memories
2020

Kees Meijlink & Coos de Groot

- Islands
- 't Rooie Dorp
- Zeelied [R. Wyatt]
- Was A Friend [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- Memories [H. Hopper]
- Child Then
- Teken Voor Altijd
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]

- Kees Meijlink - vocals, guitar, bass guitar, trombone, tuba, Weissenborn lap steel guitar
- Coos de Groot - accordion, soprano saxophone, keyboards

Zeelied = Sea Song (in Dutch)

- NO LABEL - Digital Format

Autarkic

-- UX
- Trancelate
- Keyboard Riot
- Solid States
- Terms And Conditions
- The Exploiter
- Simplify, Reduce [R. Wyatt]

Simplify, Reduce is an electro cover of *Left On Man*.

- LIFE AND DEATH (LAD050) LP



> Zoom

Terms And Conditions
2020

- St. Satan
- A Curveball That Doesn't Quite Land
- Shut Down Nation



> Zoom

Anaïd In Parïs
2020

Anaïd

- La Louve
- I Have A Dream
- Ikebana
- **Sweet Memories** [R. Wyatt/H. Hopper]
- Libertad
- La Libanaise
- Clémentine
- Kate
- Migration
- Papaye
- Imbahé
- Heart Break
- Vêtue De Noir

- Emmanuelle Lionet - vocals
- Jean-Max Delva - drums, vibraphone
- Alexis Delva - guitar, ukulele
- Damien Thebaud - keyboards
- Théo Ferrari - saxophone

Recorded Live - February 22, 2020, at Le Triton (France)

- NOT ON LABEL (JMEC2020/2/2) 2xCD



> Zoom

Live At The Baked Potato
2020

Soft Machine

- **Out Bloody Intro** [T. Travis/M. Ratledge]
- **Out Bloody Rageous, Part 1** [M. Ratledge]
- Sideburn
- Hazard Profile Part 1
- **Kings And Queens** [H. Hopper]
- The Tale Of Taliesin
- Ground Lift
- Heart Off Guard
- Broken Hill
- Fourteen Hour Dream
- The Man Who Waved At Trains
- Life On Bridges
- Hidden Details

- John Etheridge - guitar
- Theo Travis - sax, flute, Rhodes
- Roy Babbington - bass
- John Marshall - drums

Recorded at the Los Angeles jazz Club on 1 February 2019.

- MOONJUNE RECORDS (MJR102) CD
- DYAD RECORDS (DY 031) CD



> Zoom

Funny Souls Singles Series
2020

Ben Varian

- **O Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]

- FUNNY SOULS STUDIO - Digital Format



> Zoom

Le Piano Confit
2020

Red Banjo

- While You're Waiting (Ron Sexsmith)
- Sunday Morning (The Velvet Undergroud)
- Heartbreak Hotel (Elvis Presley)
- Tango Till They're Sore (Tom Waits)
- Orpheus (David Sylvian)
- Norwegian Wood [the bird has flown] (The Beatles)
- **Alifib** [R. Wyatt]
- By This River (Brian Eno)
- Fantastic Voyage (David Bowie)
- Baby Come On Home (Led Zeppelin)
- Playboys And Playgirls (Bob Dylan)

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Sea Song (a Robert Wyatt Cover)
2020

NkCz

- **Sea Song** [R.Wyatt]

- Nicolas Fantin - lead vocal & guitar

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Wind Songs
2020

Dana Gavanski

- Talk To The Wind
- **At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- Never Too Far
- Jano Mome
- The Kiss

"Originally written and performed by Chic, I first heard it covered by Robert Wyatt not long ago. It's in part a break up song, but it goes beyond that. There's something beautiful about the ambiguity of the song. The verses are quite personal, and then there's this huge, ecstatic yet melancholy chorus. I love Robert Wyatt's version of it too. His wizardly voice and that lead synth line that give it a special edge. It's a big tune."

12" black vinyl, cut at 45rpm. Limited to 500 copies worldwide.

- NO LABEL - EP

Squid

- **Pigs (in there)** [R. Wyatt]
- Clapping Music

- Ollie Judge – vocals, electronics
- Louis Borlase – piano
- Arthur Leadbetter – keyboards
- Laurie Nankivell – trompet
- Anton Pearson – guitar



> Zoom

Natural Resources
2020

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

The End Of Words
2020

Tim Hawthorn & the Archetypes

- Sea Song [R.Wyatt] - Song to the Siren
- Certain Things
- The Snow It Melts The Soonest
- She Who Makes The World Go Round
- No Trouble
- Nothing Serious
- Lowlands
- Samsara
- Truth - Box of Rain - The End of Words

Bonus
- She Lives in a Time of Her Own - Mining for Starlight - Love Chant - Music is Love

- Will Greenwood - lead guitar
- Jim Peters - keys, D whistle, vocals
- Harmony Davies - violin, flute
- Laura Iseley - vocals
- Tim Hawthorn - guitar, vocals

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Sea Song
2020

Bill Callahan & Bonnie Prince Billy

- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]

Feat. Mick Turner

- DRAG CITY (DC820) Digital Format



> Zoom

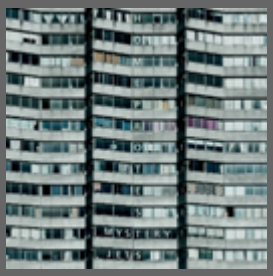
Alliance
2020

Michael Albert

- Alliance [R. Wyatt]

- Michael Albert - vocals, keyboards, bass, drum programming, percussion
- Ayanna Woods - backing vocals
- Dustin Laurenzi - saxophones

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Home Protests
2021

The Mystery Jets

- You Are The Generation That Bought More Shoes And You Get What You Deserve
- Freedom
- Big Yellow Taxi
- **Shipbuilding** [E. Costello]
- Short People
- Oxygen
- **The Age Of Self** [R.Wyatt]
- Don't Give Up
- Jesus' Blood Never Failed

- Blaine Harrison - vocals, percussion, keys, guitar
- Kapil Trivedi - drums
- Jack Flanagan - bass, vocals
- Henry Harrison - guitar, keys, backing vocals

- BLOOD RECORDS - LP



> Zoom

Manifestua
2021

Ekida Arte Ekimen Sozialista

- Agurra
- Gaua heltzen da eta
- **The Age of Self** [R. Wyatt]
- Afalosteko eztabaidaren alegoria
- **Aliantza** [R. Wyatt]
- Zalditeria gorriaren kanta
- Bizitza joan, bizitza ihes (Jacques Marchais)
- Langile baten galderak liburu baten aurrean (Mikel Laboa)
- Gu nor garen
- Manifestua (Victor Jara)

«Manifestua» EKIDA kultur ekimen sozialistak sustatutako diziplinarteko ikuskizuna da, 2021eko martxotik uztailera taula gainean eskainia. «Manifestua» ikuskizunerako berariaz egindako testuak erabili ziren, eta horiek dakartzagu grabaketa honetan. Besteren testu eta kantak ere erabili eta moldatu ziren, arte iraultzailearen tradizioa errebisitatzeko saiakeran. Hor dakartzagu, hurrenez hurren, Robert Wyatt, Jacques Marchais, Mikel Laboa eta Victor Jararen kantak.
Kantak eta poemak 2021eko ekainaren 19an grabatu ziren, zuzenean, Azkoitiko Baztartxo Antzokiko emanaldian.

The lyrics of *The Age Of Self* are translated into basque by Ruper Ordorika.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

She Gave Him Oleander
2021

She Gave Him Oleander

- Dimming Of The Day
- Lassie Lie Near Me
- Together Apart
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Valley Of Souls
- Earl Grey
- The Lads In Their Hundreds
- State Of The Union

- Chris Martin - piano
- John Aué - bass
- Lauren Henderson - voice
- Derek Pascoe - saxophone

- WIZARD TONE RECORDS (WTR20211) CD

Nick Hudson



> Zoom

K69996ROMA:EP
2021

- The Ballad of K69996 Roma
- We Darken Horses
- You Eat With Your Eyes
- If I Get Killed It's 100% The Fault Of Alain Delon And His Godfather Francois Marcantoni
- **Amber And The Ambergrines** [H. Hopper/R. Wyatt]
- A Congregation Of One
- Asymmetric: A Forgery
- The Florist

Amber And The Ambergrines is a cover of *Amber And The Amberines*.

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

Wyndow
2021

Wyndow

- Never Alone
- All Cameras Gone
- Take My Picture
- **Free Will and Testament** [M. Kramer/ R. Wyatt]
- Third Tea of the Day
- Two Strong Legs
- Pulling on a String
- Flattened by the Wind
- Woven in Thread
- When Winter Comes Shadowing In
- Tidal Range

- Laura J Martin - flute, vocals, clarinet, synth, piano, beats, lead vocals
- Lavinia Blackwall - lead vocals, keyboards, autoharp
- Marco Rea - guitar, backing vocals, bass guitar, bouzouki, mandolin, synth, drum
- Gillian Wood - cello, strings
- Mike Lindsay - percussion

- SUMMER CRITICS (SC001) LP



> Zoom

Salmoni
2021

Salmoni

- Discesa
- Supra
- Ancora
- Tu Sei Fuori
- Homo
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt]

- Filippo Gillono - acoustic guitar, prepared piano, objects, field recording, vocals, tapes
- Zevi Bordovach - harmonium, prepared piano, objects, field recording, vocals

- ESC.REC. (ESC.REC 92) K7



> Zoom

The Age Of Self
2021

Ulgebräk

- **The Age Of Self** [R. Wyatt]

- NO LABEL - Digital Format - S



> Zoom

Cover Versions
2021

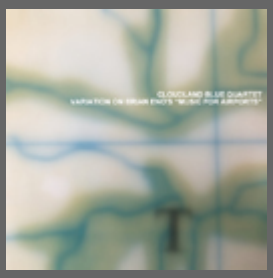
Squid

- America!
- Clapping Music
- **Pigs... (In There)** [R. Wyatt]
- Blue Crystal Fire

'Pigs' (In There) performed at End Of The Road Festival 2019 as part of The Line Of Best Fit's Piano Stage programme.

Limited edition of 1500 exclusive to Rough Trade shops.

- WARP RECORDS (WAP463) EP



> Zoom

Variation on Brian Eno's
'Music For Airports'
2021

Cloudland Blue Quartet

- **Variation on Brian Eno's "Music For Airports" Pt 1** [B. Eno/ R.Wyatt/R. Davies]
- Variation on Brian Eno's "Music For Airports" Pt 2

'Based on "2/1" and "1/2" from "Music For Airports", composed by Brian Eno. Arrangement, chance and additional guitarscapes by David Reilly.

Source material comprises replica choir and piano loops, based on the pieces "2/1" and "1/2" by Brian Eno, with treated guitarscapes by David Reilly, "The Crucifixion (1515)" from "Disquietmusik", "Reservoir (1961) (Backwards) (16 RPM)" and "Smiling Landscape (1967) (Backwards) (16 RPM)" from "Disquietmusik III" by Cloudland Blue Quartet

Recorded at Crispycat Studio, Edinburgh, UK, 23, 24 September 2021. Guitars recorded at Crispycat Studio, Edinburgh, 8, 9 July 2017 and 10 November 2019.

- CRIPSYCAT RECORDINGS
  Digital Format



> Zoom

Remix
2021

Null Object

- DJ Ding - Deepest Regrets
- Orchestral Manouvers In The Dark - The Lights Are Going Out
- Clive Powell - Ca The Horse Me Marra
- Ankle Pants - Mammalian
- Sean & Dev - Splifflam
- **Robert Wyatt - Stalingrad** [P. Blackman]
- Ankle Pants - Moï'nk Wuï'n
- Sean & Dev - Splifflam
- Shiny Toy Guns - Speaking Japanese
- Neneh Cherry - Buffalo Stance
- Ankle Pants - Moï'nk Wuï'n (Not Everyone Has A Big Nose Remix)
- Simo Soo - Worse
- Lesley Wood - Electric Smoke
- Black Sorrows - Chained To The Wheel
- Prince - Controversy
- U2 - I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For

'- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Five
2022

Hofmann Family Blues Experience

- Tell Me Why
- Revolution Song
- Man Of Constant Sorrow
- Meaning Of Life
- Hope Song
- Worried Life Blues
- Get Away
- Roll On Down The Road
- How Long
- My My Hey Hey
- **O' Caroline** [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Come on Into my Kitchen
- The Prophet

- Vincent Hofmann - lead acoustic 12 strings guitar, lead vocal
- David Hofmann - lead electric guitar, back vocals
- Etienne Callac - basse, back vocals
- Patrick Boileau - batterie

- NO LABEL -CD & 2xLP



> Zoom

Turn The Tide
2022

Ruben Block

- Turn The Tide
- Niets Is Voor Altijd (Live @ Gebouw T)
- There Isn't Time (Live @ De Roma)
- **Sea Song (Live @ De Roma)** [R. Wyatt]

- Ruben Block - vocals , guitar
- Teun Verbruggen - drums
- Geoffrey Burton - guitar
- Gilles Vandecaveye-Pinoy - keyboards

- PIAS - EP



> Zoom

Psychic Temple Plays
Music For Airports (Reedition)
2022

Psychic Temple

- **Music For Airports 1/1** [B.Eno/R. Wyatt/ R. Davies]
- Music For Bus Stops

Reedition of the album released in 2016. Limited edition of 500 numbered copies.

- BIG EGO RECORDS (BIG021) LP



> Zoom

The Muffins

- Walking the Duck
- These Castle Children
- World Maps/Down From The Suntower/Impossible John/Military Road
- Under Dali's Wing
- Horsebones
- Dear Mona
- People In The Snow
- Out Of The Boot/**Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller]
- East Of Diamond/The Adventures Of Captain Boomerang
- Silence

- Dave Newhouse - keyboards, woodwinds, harmonica
- Tom Scott - saxes, clarinets, flutes, keyboards, programming, percussion
- Paul Sears - drums
- Billy Swann - bass, guitar

Tracks 1–9
recorded July 27, 2001 at The Knitting Factory, New York, NY by Carl Merson.

Baker's Dozen 10
2022



> Zoom

The Muffin 'Baker's Dozen
Box Set

- Writing Blind
- Combo

Track 11
recorded October 2, 2004 at Orion Studios, Baltimore, MD by Mike Potter.

Track 12 recorded in 2002 at Tom's mom's house, Madison, VA.

10th CD [2001-2004] of The Muffin 'Baker's Dozen Box Set (12xCD / 1xDVD / 1xBook).

- CUNEIFORM RECORDS (RUNE 509) CD



> Zoom

Inner Core
2022

Gaia Mattiuzzi

- Calyx [P. Miller]
- The Way of Memories
- About the End of Love
- From Dewy Dreams
- The Last Flower in my Hair
- Riding a Photon
- Winds of May (0517_05_re0417_03)

- Gaia Mattiuzzi - vocals
- Alessandro Lanzoni - piano
- Gabriele Evangelista - double bass
- Enrico Morello - drums
- Alfonso Santimone - electronics

- AUT RECORDS - CD



> Zoom

Démos
2022

Julien Retaillaud

- Tout oublié (peut-être enfin bientôt)
- Par les grèves
- Nouan
- Vers le soir
- Caroline
- Bonne époque
- Regarde-les
- Gharbzadegi [R. Wyatt]
- Ian
- Aujourd'hui
- Nick
- Rue Saint-Sébastien
- A la Tombe Issoire
- Le froid
- En suspens
- Delta du vide

- Julien Retaillaud - voix, claviers, guitare
- Théo Jarrier - batterie
- Olivier Roueff - saxophone

- NO LABEL - CD



> Zoom

Wyattando

- Alifib [R. Wyatt]
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road [R. Wyatt]
- Left Of Man [R. Wyatt]
- Forest [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Gloria Gloom [B. MacCormick/R. Wyatt]
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- God Song [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Maryan [R. Wyatt/P. Catherine]
- Beware [K. Mantler]
- Alliance [R. Wyatt]
- September The Ninth [A. Benge/

- Annie Whitehead - trombone, voce
- Heidi Heidelberg - voce, chitarra
- Mauricio Velasierra - flauto, effetti, cori
- Karen Mantler - organo, voce
- John Greaves - basso, voce
- Chris Cutler - batteria

Registrato presso l'Anfiteatro della Pace, Bari, il 26.8.2022.

Cet enregistrement circule sur internet

Wyattando
2022

R. Wyatt]
- **Life Is Sheep** [K. Mantler]
- **The United States Of Amnesia** [R. Wyatt]
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road** [R. Wyatt]
- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]
- **Team Spirit** [B. MacCormick/ P. Manzanera/R. Wyatt]
- **The Official Robert Wyatt Fun Song Club** [K. Mantler]

(mp3) sans avoir fait l'objet d'une publication discographique.

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique Bootlegs.

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom

Brian Eno Performed By
Dedalus Ensemble
2023

Dedalus Ensemble

- Thursday Afternoon
- Discreet Music
- **Music For Airports - Part One** [B. Eno/ R.Wyatt/R. Davies]
- Music For Airports - Part Two
- Music For Airports - Part Three
- Music For Airports - Part Four

- Didier Aschour - guitare
- Amélie Berson - flûte
- Cyprien Busolini - alto
- Eric Chalan - contrebasse
- Denis Chouillet - piano
- Stéphane Garin - vibraphone
- Thierry Madiot - trombone
- Pierre-Stéphane Meugé - saxophone
- Christian Pruvost - trompette
- Silvia Tarozzi - violon
- Fabrice Villard - clarinette
- Deborah Walker - violoncelle

Recorded at The Abbaye De Sylvanes, in Aveyron, France, on November 2ns, 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2020,

- SUB ROSA (SR540) 2xLP
- SUB ROSA (SR540CD) 2xCD



> Zoom

Other Doors
2023

Soft Machine

- Careless Eyes
- Penny Hitch
- Other Doors
- Crocked Usage
- **Joy Of A Toy** [K. Ayers, M. Ratledge]
- A Flock Of Holes
- Whisper Back
- The Stars Apart
- Now! Is The Time
- Fell To Earth
- The Visitors At The Window
- Maybe Never
- Back In Season

Bonus Bandcamp
- **Backwards** [M. Ratledge]
- Out Of Interest
- Alice Clar
- Look You Know

+ Bonus Vinyl
- On This Day
- When Frost Melts
- Fell To Earth (Alternative Take)

- John Marshall - drums, percussion
- John Etheridge - guitars
- Fred T. Baker - fretless bass
- Theo Travis - tenor and soprano saxophones, flutes, Fender Rhodes, piano, electronics
- Roy Babbington - bass guitar (guest on tunes 2 and 9)

The Bandcamp digital version includes 4 additional titles and the vinyl version (2xLP) includes 3 titles in addition to the Bandcamp version.

- DYAD RECORDS (DY032) CD
- TONFLOAT (TF205) 2xLP



John Greaves, Annie Barbazza

- **God Song** [Ph. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Bad Alchemy
- Proverbs
- Kew Rhone
- Swelling Valley
- **The Song** [J. Greaves]
- How Beautiful You Are
- Walking On Eggshells
- Dead Poets

- Annie Barbazza - vocals
- John Greaves - vocals, piano

Limited edition.

- DARK COMPANION (CD018) CD

> Zoom

Earthly Powers
2023

- The Price We Pay
- Summer on Ice
- The Green Fuse
- To Make You Feel My Love
- In Hell's Despite
- Avalanche
- Earthly Powers
- In Te
- Lotus Flower
- Time



> Zoom

Fünfzig
2023

Mezz Gacano 50th Birthday Party

- Elf Dance (Moondog cover)
- Azriel (John Zorn cover)
- Tema Principe (Tabù I)
- Fünfzig
- NONSIDORME
- **Calix** [P. Miller]
- Kompà Natiko
- Il Vigile Innamorato (15-18 cover)
- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- **O' Caroline** [Matching Mole cover]
- **...At Last I Am Free** [Edwards/Rodgers]
- Pomoflower 50th
- Gargios 50th
- Strategia n.1 50th
- Proshanjie 50th
- Set Me Down 50th
- Buonagiornata a voialtri 50th
- Mongoloid (Devo cover)

Calyx is played by the" New MG's Combo" :

- Antonio Tralongo - viola
- Andrea Ardizzone - trumpet
- Marco Ardizzone - tenor sax
- Amedeo Mignano - piano, synths
- Mezz Gacano - guitar, voice
- Luca La Russa - bass
- Giulio Scavuzzo - drums

Sea Song, O'Caroline and *...At last I Am Free* are played by "Memories" :

- Dario D'Alessandro - voice
- Davide Di Giovanni - piano
- Mezz Gacano - guitar, voice
- Rodan Di Maria - bass
- Daniele Di Giovanni - drums

Bien que crédité Chic, *...At Last I Am Free* sonne plutôt comme une reprise de la reprise de Robert Wyatt.

- SASIME RECORDS - Digital Format



> Zoom

Live In Lyon
December 14th 1972
2023

Gong

Disc 1
- Gnome Intro
- Pot Head Pixies
- Zero The Hero & The Witch's Spell
- I Am Your Pussy
- **Why Are We Sleeping?** [M. Ratledge, K. Ayers, R. Wyatt]
- Radio Gnome Invisible
- I Feel So Lazy
- It's The Time Of Your Life
- Tropical Fish
- Dreaming It
- Flying Teapot – Improvisation

Disc 2
- More Teapot
- Lawrence The Alien
- Blues For Findlay
- Teapot Jam

- Daevid Allen -guitar, vocals
- Gilli Smyth - space whisper
- Didier Malherbe - saxophone, flute
- Francis Moze - bass
- Tim Blake - synthesizer, vocals
- Christian Tritsch - guitar
- Laurie Allen - drums
- Raschid Houari - drums

Recorded Live in Lyon, le théâtre du 8ème, December 14th, 1972.

- CULTURE FACTORY (783653) 2xCD
- CULTURE FACTORY (783564) 3xLP

Baptiste Trotignon

- Drive My Car (The Beatles)
- Message In A Bottle (The Police)
- Money (Pink Floyd)
- Here Comes The Sun – Norwegian Wood (The Beatles)

- Baptiste Trotignon - piano
- Matt Penman - bass
- Gregory Hutchinson - drums

- NAÏVE (BLV8147) CD



> Zoom

Brexit Music
2023

- Karma Police (Radiohead)
- Misty Moutain Hop – Four Sticks – Whole Lotta Love (Led Zeppelin)
- Almost Blue (Elvis Costello)
- Mother's Little Helper (The Rolling Stones)
- Interstellar Overdrive (Pink Floyd)
- Life On Mars? (David Bowie)
- **Maryan** [R. Wyatt]
- We Are the Champions (Queen)
- Fake Plastic Trees (Radiohead)

- NAÏVE (BLV8148) 2xLP



> Zoom

You Are Here
2023

Kevin Figes

- Thoughts to Geoff
- **Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening** [H. Hopper]
- Sweet F.A.
- Improvisation #1
- Cat food
- I wish there was a nowhere
- Improvisation #2
- Traumatic experience
- Improvisation #3
- Mra
- Dedicated to Mingus
- Improvisation #4
- Cider dance
- Echoes

- Kevin Figes - alto & soprano saxophone,
- Pete Judge - trumpet
- Raphael Clarkson - trombone
- Jim Blomfield - piano
- Riaan Vosloo - double bass
- Tony Orrell - drums, percussion

- JAZZ NOW (JN02SCD) CD



> Zoom

W-Ouvert
2023

Map Towan

- **Sea Song** [R. Wyatt]
- Au creux de tes bras (répétition)

- Agatha Collin - chant
- Philippe Laherse - guitare
- Mathieux Wanatabe - guitare

- NO LABEL - Digital Fotrmat



> Zoom

Eno Piano
2023

Bruce Brubaker

- **Music For Airports, 1/1** [B. Eno/R. Davies/R. Wyatt]
- Music For Airports, 2/1
- The Chill Air
- By This River
- Music For Airports, 2/2
- Emerald and Stone

- Bruce Brubaker - piano
- Florent Colautti - electro-magnetic bows

- INFINÉ (IF1088) CD



> Zoom

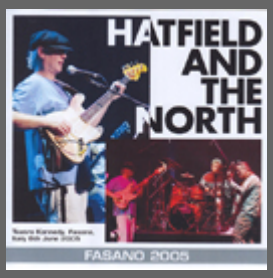
The Dew At Dawn
(Slightly) Slightly All The Time
2024

Soft Machine

- The Dew At Dawn
- **(Slightly) Slightly All The Time** [M. Ratledge]

- Theo Travis - soprano saxophone, flute
- John Etheridge - guitar
- Fred Thelonious Baker - bass
- Asaf Sirkis - drums

- MY ONLY DESIRE RECORDS (MOD007) EP



> Zoom

Fasano 2005
2024

Hatfield And The North

- Licks for the Ladies
- Take Your Pick (incl. The Yes-No Interlude)
- Share It
- Keep On Caring
- Seven Sisters
- **Calyx** [Ph. Miller] / Underdub
- Disassociation
- **God Song** [Ph. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- **Lything and Gracing** [Ph. Miller]
- What's Rattlin
- What In The World
- Psychic Warrior
- Richard Sinclair announcement
- The Book
- Halfway Between Heaven and Earth / Didn't Matter Anyway
- Encore: **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt] / Felafel Shuffle

- Richard Sinclair - bass & vocals
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Alex Maguire - keyboards
- Pip Pyle - drums
  with:
- Theo Travis - tenor sax & flute
- Mark Fletcher - drums

Recorded on Wednesday June 8th, 2005 (cover is wrong) at the Fasano Jazz Festival, Atrio del Bali, Teatro Kennedy, Fasano, Italy

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format



> Zoom

Gharbzadegi
2024

Music From A Mailing List

- **Gharbzadegi** [R. Wyatt]

- Luciano Margorani - bass and guitars
- Stefano Zorzanello - flutes, electronics, radio
- Jacopo Costa - vibraphone
- Lello Colombo - tenor sax
- Luca Zarbano - drums

Cover photo from a painting by Alfreda Benge.

- LUCIANO MARGORANI - Digital Format - S

Delivery



> Zoom

BBC in Concert
2024

- Introduction by Pete Drummond
- The You-Know Song [Bossa Nochance / Big Jobs No.2]
- **God Song** [Ph. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Drummond's Dilemma, or Betty [early version of For Robert]
- Richard talks about how Delivery became Hatfield ... and a bunch of other stuff

- Richard Sinclair - vocals
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Steve Miller - electric piano
- Roy Babbington - bass
- Lol Coxhill - soprano sax
- Pip Pyle - drums

Recorded Thursday 23 November 1972 at The Paris Theatre for BBC In Concert. Broadcast 9 December 1972.

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format



> Zoom

Free Will And Testament
2024

Kabusacki Band featuring Alessandro Bruno & Uma Kabusacki

- Free Will And Testament [R. Wyatt/Kramer]

- Alessandro Bruno - voz y guitarra eléctrica
- Uma kabusacki - voz
- Fernando Kabusacki - guitarra eléctrica
- Ahmed Isa Juan Ravioli - piano y bajo
- Matías Mango - teclados
- Lucas Herbin - batería

- LA COCINA DE BETI - Digital Format



> Zoom

Annie's Playlist 3
The Streaming Concerts
2024

Annie Barbazza

- Les Ruines Du Sommeil
- Jumbee
- By This River
- Frame By Frame
- Children Of The New World
- Phantoms
- June
- Time Has Told Me
- Heaven
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- Volo Magico
- Nebulae
- Lotus Flower
- Anatomy Of Love
- Islands
- In Te
- Boîte À Tisane
- Ys

The recordings are taken from two shows in streaming held by Annie during the lockdown from the Elfo studio in Tavernago; others from a show always streamed due to lockdown that Eugenio Finardi held from the Teatro Manzoni in Monza, in which Annie participated and opened solo.

- DARK COMPANION (DCE06) CD



Richard Sinclair

- Piano Variations on What's Rattlin' / Psychic Warrior (Hatfield and the North)
- Over From Dover (RS - David Rees Williams - Theo Travis Trio)
- That Day (with Dave Sinclair)
- Good To Meet You / Raga of D Pieces (with Chizuko Ura)
- Corale di San Luca (with Alex Maguire's douBt)
- Long Lingers Autumn Time (with David Rees Williams)
- O Caroline (with Dave Sinclair & choir)

A collection of live collaborations and band performances by Richard in the 25 years since the turn of the millennium. These were chosen to shine some new colour on old standards, not including any of his already well-documented solo performances.

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format

> Zoom

Century 21
2024

[D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Latiny Tune (with Glass)
- What In The World (with PropheXy)
- Felafel Shuffle (RS Band)
- Nan True's Hole (with The Rayonhoofden)
[P. Miller]
- Keep On Caring (RS Quintet)



Michele Sperandio Quartet

- The Water Is Wide
- Island
- Formentera Lady
- Song to Siren
- Goccia
- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- Shipbuilding [C. Langer/D. MacManus]
- La casa in riva al mare
- Place to Be

- Michele Sperandio - batteria, percussioni, effetti
- Marta Giulioni - voce, effetti
- Simone Maggio - pianoforte, synt. Fender Rhodes
- Lorenzo Scipioni- contrabbasso, basso elettrico

- BARLY RECORDS (BD 1818) CD

> Zoom

The Sea Of Music
2024



Bruce Brubaker

- Music For Airports, 1/1 (Radio Mix)
[B. Eno/R. Davies/R. Wyatt]
- Music For Airports, 1/2 (Bows Version)
- Failing Light
- The Big Ship
- Music For Airports, 1/2

- Bruce Brubaker - piano
- Florent Colautti - electro-magnetic bows

- INFINÉ (IF3148) Digital Format

> Zoom

Eno Piano 2
2024



Marianne Dissard & Raphael Mann

- Ghost Town (overture)
- Love My Way
- Passion Of Lovers
- Smalltown Boy
- Ghost Town (melodica) - transition -
Shipbuilding (inst.)
- Souvenir Of Love
- Dread Lion
- Shipbuilding [E. Costello/C. Langer]
- Totally Wired
- Ghost Town (transition)
- Metal
- God Save The...

- Raphael Mann - vocals, organ, melodica, clavinet, kalimba, bass guitar, drums, percussion, metal

Raphael Mann's haunting take on the Clive Langer/Elvis Costello song 'Shipbuilding', originally recorded by Robert Wyatt in 1982, was a late addition to his soundtrack to Marianne Dissard's theatre production, Souvenir Of England.

- FRIZZ RECORDS - Digital Format

> Zoom

Souvenir Of England
music from the stage production
2024

Raphael Mann



> Zoom

Shipbuilding
2024

- Shipbuilding [E. Costello/C. Langer]

- Raphael Mann - vocals, organ, melodica, clavinet, kalimba, bass guitar, drums, percussion, metal

Taken from the album, 'Souvenir Of England: music from the stage production' by Marianne Dissard & Raphael Mann

- FRIZZ RECORDS - Digital Format



> Zoom

Villanova II
2024

Richard Sinclair - Taranterbury Bossa Nova

- Introduction
- Disassociation
- Keep On Caring
- O Caroline [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Oh What A Lonely Lifetime / **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller] / Felafel Shuffle
- Calyx [P. Miller] / Share It / Halfway Between Heaven and Earth
- Didn't Matter Anyway / What In The World
- Out of the Shadows
- In The Land of Grey and Pink
- Hello Hello (Caravan)

- Richard Sinclair - guitar, bass & vocals
- Angelo Losasso - congas (tracks 6-9)

Recorded Friday 18 July 2003 at Villanova Pulsano, Italy.

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format



> Zoom

New Information Order
2024

Aquaserge

- NIO (New Information Order) [R. Wyatt]
- Escalade

Lyrics in french by Audrey Ginestet.

Aquaserge got in touch with Robert Wyatt to present their cover version project, here's a loose transcript of their phone conversation
:
"— Allo Robert, what do you think of our adaptation of the lyrics for N.I.O?
— You've perfectly understood the spirit of the song which, for me, is even more relevant today than when I wrote it.
— The world is marvellous, isn't it?
— Well… there's an escalation in progress… Isn't this a mantra which is comforting as much as it's scaring?
*— indeed, le monde amer est feu *… "*

- CRAMNED DISCS -EP- Digital Format



Richard Sinclair Band

- Licks For The Ladies
- Share It
- Nan True's Hole [P. Miller] / Felafel Shuffle
- What In The World
- Keep On Caring
- Disassociation
- Golf Girl

- Richard Sinclair - guitar, bass, whistling & vocals
- Diber Benghi - keyboards
- Gabriele Martelli - guitar
- Alessandro Valle - flute
- Stefano Vaccari - drums

Recorded 17 March April 2012 at the SchioLife Festival of Contemporary Music, Teatro San Sebastiano, Valli del Pasubio, Italy

> Zoom

SchioLife
2024 (?)

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format



Church Chords

- Just As You Are [A. Benge/R. Wyatt]
- Free Will And Testament [R. Wyatt/ Kramer]

> Zoom

Otherly Love Presents 01:
Tribute to Robert Wyatt
2024

Just As You Are:
- Macie Stewart - voice
- Ricardo Dias Gomes - voice, piano, electronics, bass, drum programming
- Peter Evans - trumpet

Free Will And Testament:
- Macie Stewart - voice, violin
- Kenny Wollesen - vibraphone, drums
- Benjamin Lazar Davis - pump organ
- Steven Bernstein - trumpet

:
"There has been heavy rotation of Robert Wyatt's music these past couple of years. His life seems to reflect his music's commitment to justice and total exposure. To celebrate his birthday, I put together versions of both "Just As You Are" and "Free Will and Testament." The former was co-written with Alfie Benge, whose artwork is an essential presence and influence on the music."

- CHURCH CHORDS (OLR007) Digital Format



Hatfield And The North

- Sober Song (Licks For The Ladies)
- Take Your Pick / The Yes-No Interlude
- Share It
- Keep On Caring
- Seven Sisters
- Calyx [P. Miller] / Underdub
- God Song [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Lything and Gracing [P. Miller]
- What's Rattlin'?
- What In The World
- Piano Variations on What's Rattlin' / Psychic Warrior
- Halfway Between Heaven and Earth / Didn't Matter Anyway
- Felafel Shuffle / band introduction
- Nan True's Hole [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Disassociation

> Zoom

Le Triton
2024 (?)

- Richard Sinclair - bass & vocals
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Alex Maguire - piano & keyboards
- Pip Pyle - standing percussion
- Mark Fletcher - sitting drums

This was just the second concert after Pip's back surgery in April, so Mark Fletcher again assists Pip on drums making Hatfield - however briefly - a quintet, firing masterfully on all five cylinders.

Recorded Wednesday June 15th, 2005 at Tritonales Festival, Le Triton, Les Lilas, France

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format



Kevin Ayers

Disc 1
JOY OF A TOY
- Joy of a Toy Continued
- Town Feeling
- The Clarietta Rag
- Girl on a Swing
- Song for Insane Times
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It)
- Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)
- The Lady Rachel
- Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong
- All This Crazy Gift of Time
Bonus

> Zoom

Deluxe 9 CD - 1 Blu-Ray limited edition - Box-set of the complete recordings by Kevin Ayers from 1969-1973, with 140 tracks newly remastered from the original master tapes.

- ESOTERIC RECORDINGS (QECLEC102888)9xCD + 1 BLU-RAY

All This Crazy Gift Of Time
The Recordings 1969-1973
2024

- Religious Experience (feat. Syd Barrett)
- Soon Soon Soon
- Religious Experience (Take 103)
- Clarence in Wonderland (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- Stop This Train (Again Doing It) (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (feat. Soft Machine) (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- You Say You Like My Hat (BBC Session 10.02.1970)
- Singing a Song in the Morning (single)

Disc 2
LIVE AT HYDE PARK JULY 1970
- Clarence in Wonderland (live)
- The Lady Rachel (live)
- Rheinhardt and Geraldine /Colores Para Delores (live)
- May I? (live)
- Hat Song (live)
- We Did it Again (live)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (live)

Bonus
- The Garden of Love (live Queen Elizabeth Hall 1970)

Disc 3
SHOOTING AT THE MOON
- May I?
- Rheinhardt and Geraldine /Colores Para Delores
- Lunatics Lament
- Pisser Dans un Violin
- The Oyster and the Flying Fish
- Underwater
- Clarence in Wonderland
- Red Green and You Blue
- Shooting at the Moon

Bonus
- Hat (recorded May 1970)
- Gemini Child (recorded June 1970)
- Butterfly Dance (A-side of single)
- Puis Je? (B-side of single)
- Jolie Madame (recorded November 1970)

Disc 4
BBC SESSIONS - MAY 1970-NOVEMBER 1971
- Love Is (John Peel Concert 17.05 1970) (previously unreleased)
- **We Did It Again (John Peel Concert 17.05 1970) (previously unreleased)**
- Gemini Child (BBC Session 20.05.1970)
- Lady Rachel (BBC Session 20.05.1970)
- Shooting at the Moon (BBC Session 20.05.1970)
- Derby Day (BBC Session 09.06.1970)
- The Interview (BBC Session 09.06.1970)
- **We Did it Again** / Murder in the Air **(BBC Session 09.06.1970)**
- Jolie Madame (with Bridget St. John) (In Concert 31.01.1971)
- The Spider and the Fly (with Bridget St.John) (In Concert 31.01.1971)
- The Oyster and the Flying Fish (with Bridget St. John) (In Concert 31.01.1971)
- **Clarence in Wonderland (feat. Gong) (BBC Session 09.11.1971)**

Disc 5
WHATEVERSHEBRINGSWESING
- There is Loving / Among Us / There is Loving
- Margaret
- Oh My
- Song from a Bottom of a Well
- Whatevershebringswesing
- Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes
- Champagne Cowboy Blues
- Lullaby

Bonus
- Watching the Sun Go Down (recorded May 1971)
- Whatevershebringswesing (first version) (recorded May 1971)
- Stars (B-side of single)
- All This Crazy Gift of Time (1972 remake)
- The Lady Rachel (1972 remake)
- Sad and Lonely Faces (with David Bedford)
- (Don’t Sing No More) Sad Songs
- Fake Mexican Tourist Blues (recorded September 1972)

Cet album est également présent dans la rubrique With Friends.

Disc 6
BBC SESSIONS - JANUARY-MAY 1972
- May I? (In Concert Jan 1972)
- There is Loving / Among Us / There is Loving (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Margaret (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Whatevershebringswesing (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Clarence in Wonderland (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Colores Para Delores (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Lady Rachel (In Concert Jan 1972)
- All This Crazy Gift of Time (In Concert Jan 1972)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (In Concert Jan 1972)
- The Oyster and the Flying Fish (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Butterfly Dance (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Whatevershebringswesing (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Falling in Love Again (BBC session 17.05.1972)
- Queen Thing (BBC session 17.05.1972)

Disc 7
BBC SESSIONS - SEPTEMBER 1972-APRIL 1973
BANANA FOLLIES IN CONCERT - SEPTEMBER 1972
- Introduction (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- (Don't Sing No More) Sad Songs (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Pretty Little Girl (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Two Pigeons (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Murder in the Air (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- 'Orrible Orange (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Whatevershebringswesing (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Take Me to Tahiti (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Marlene (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Ball Bearing Blues (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Fake Mexican Tourist Blues (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Interview (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- You Say You Like My Hat (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Falling in Love Again (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- The End (In Concert Sept. 1972)
- Interview (BBC session 11.04.1973)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (BBC session 11.04.1973)
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues (BBC session 11.04.1973)

Disc 8
BANANAMOUR
- Don't Let it Get You Down
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues
- When Your Parents Go to Sleep
- Interview
- International Anthem
- Decadence
- Oh! Wot a Dream
- Hymn
- Beware of the Dog
Bonus
- Connie on a Rubber Band (B-side of single)
- Caribbean Moon (A-side of single)
- Take Me to Tahiti (B- side of single)
- Decadence (early mix) 14 We Did it Again (live Mile End 1972) (previously unreleased)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (live Mile End 1972) (previously unreleased)

Disc 9
AFTER THE SHOW
LIVE AT QUEEN ELISABETH HALL - MAY 1973
- Banana Introduction (live 1973)
- Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes (live 1973)
- Interview (live 1973)
- Whatevershebringswesing (live 1973)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (live 1973)
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues (live 1973)
- Caribbean Moon (live 1973)
- Don't Let it Get You Down (live 1973)
- We Did it Again (live 1973)

- Why Are We Sleeping? (live 1973)
- After the Show (live 1973)

Disc 10 - BLU-RAY
VIDEO VAULTS 1970-1973
- Clarence in Wonderland (Pop Deux ORTF France 31.03.1970)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Pop Deux ORTF France 31.03.1970)
- Oh My (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- May I? (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Pop Deux ORTF France 13.01.1973)
- Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes (Rockenstock ORTF France 30.01.1973)
- Why Are We Sleeping? (Rockenstock ORTF France 30.01.1973)
- Shouting in a Bucket Blues (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 12.06.1973)
- Oh! Wot a Dream (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 12.06.1973)
- Caribbean Moon (Promotional film 1973)
Bonus
- Oh My (take 2) (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- May I? (take 2) (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)
- Oh My (take 4) (BBC Old Grey Whistle Test 04.04.1972)



> Zoom

Musica Sparpagliata
2025

Orchestra SMS

- Sea Song [R. Wyatt]
- La Metro Eccetera
- Venus In Furs
- Water
- Some Guys
- Molecole
- Choci Loni
- Sysyphus Part. 1
- Sysyphus Part. 2
- Sysyphus Part. 3
- Sysyphus Part. 4
- Il Re del Mondo
- Mistero
- Nostalgia
- Memory of a Free Festival

- Stefano Giannotti - arrangements, conduction, guitar, percussion, harpsichord

- Eva Bartolucci - flutes
- Domenico Piegaia - clarinet, bass clarinet
- Tommaso Barattini - clarinet
- Riccardo Santabarbara - violin
- Giada Del Grande - voice
- Elisa Cheng - electric guitar, voice
- Jacopo Di Grazia - banjo, guitar, voice
- Gabriele Stefani, Nicolò Paganucci, Franco Cheng - guitars, voices
- Enrico Giuntini - piano, voice
- Francesca Pezzuti - keyboards, voice
- Sofia Paterni - harp
- Duccio Nieri - bass guitar, voice
- Edgar Gomez - drums, voice
- Matteo Lucchesi - percussion

The SMS Orchestra is a chamber orchestra project founded in 2012 by the artistic director Stefano Giannotti.

[...] " Despite the title and its genesis, a record was born that is homogeneous in quality and above all in the atmosphere created, played a lot on the rarefaction of the rhythms, embellished by careful and wise inserts of guitar and drums. Among all the songs that stand out are "Molecole" by Lavezzi/Mogol, sweet and introspective like the original, the beautiful and almost ambient "Nostalgia" from Sylvian's post-Japan debut album and the little-known psychedelic-flavored song "Memory of a free festival" by Bowie, introduced by a delightful keyboard that improves the original intro that was entrusted to a Rosedale electric organ for children. But the revisitations of the very famous "Venus in furs" by Lou Reed, from the famous "banana" album by The Velvet Underground, and the wavering "Sea Song" by Wyatt that maintains the hypnotic slowness of the original and the Canterbury flavor so dear to the artist, also intrigue. "

- MARACASH RECORDS (ALT065)
  CD



> Zoom

Loud & Clear
2025

Berlin Musicians in Solidarity with Palestine

- Palestine - Somewhere Over The Rainbow (Molly Nilsson)
- 2000 (Gorgette)
- Herr Prof. Dr. - Antideutsch Anthem (Glassberg)
- **Shipbuilding - live Robert Wyatt cover) (Areamanners)**
- A New Dawn (live from Berlin) Plattenbau
- YABA (Jamila & The Other Heroes)
- Leave It - demo) (Matching Outfits - solo)
- Ballad for an Ex-Teenage Revolutionary (Early Labyrinth)
- Abundance - live (Ruth Mac)
- Yellow Duck (Sean Nicholas Savage)
- Pieces of Peace (Sean Armstrong)
- The Woman That Fell From The Sky (Miss Noyd)
- Everything is a Chair (Ken Chic)
- El Silencio (Ultrabonus)
- Infinity Set (Discovery Zone)
- Grow Nearer Still (Alexandra Gruebler x Ham Hima)

Benefit Compilation for Palestine Music Expo (PMX).

"Proceeds will go to Palestine Music Expo, a non-profit organisation launched in Ramallah in 2016 with the aim of bringing Palestinian music to a wider international audience. Until 2022, they hosted festivals in Gaza and the West Bank, providing much-needed performance opportunities to local musicians."

- NO LABEL - Digital Format



> Zoom 1 2

Orchestra : Live
2025

Anaïd

CD
- Belladonna
- White Nature
- Farid
- Blue Moon
- Migration
- Imbahé
- Epilogue
- Vétue de Noir

DVD
- Belladonna
- White Nature
- So Long
- Blue Moon
- I Need You
- Sophia
- Migration
- **Sweet Memories**
- I'm Loving Grace
- Clémentine
- Vétue de Noir

- Emmanuelle Lionet - chant
- Jean-Max Delva - batterie, vibraphone, piano
- Alexis Delva - guitare
- Théo Ferrari - saxophone, batterie
- Enguerran Dufour - trompette, basse
- Sébastien Husson - basse
- Sophia Domancich - piano
- Ludovic Bougouin - cor, trompette
- Jean-Nicolas Richard - violoncelle
- Mélinda Bressan - flûte traversière
- Dominique Vincent - clarinette
- Stéphanie Cuq - alto
- Carole Frèrebeau - violon
- Gabrielle Martel - danse
- Arthur Bordage - danse

Captation audio et vidéo du concert unique donné au Gallia Théâtre de Saintes le 13 avril 2025 avec les artistes-enseignants du Conservatoire de Musique de Saintes.

- LES VOYAGES D'ANAID
  (JMEC2022/2/2/2) CD & DVD



Richard Sinclair Trio

- Introduction
- Sober Song (Licks for the Ladies)
- Barefoot
- What's Rattlin'
- Keep On Caring
- Out of the Shadows
- Disassociation
- Felafel Shuffle
- Over From Dover
- Long Lingers Autumn Time

- Richard Sinclair - bass & vocals
- David Rees-Williams - piano
- Theo Travis - sax & flute

Recorded off the soundboard Tuesday 3 June 2003 at Le Triton (France)

- SINCLAIRSONGS CLUB - Digital Format

> Zoom

Le Triton
2025

- Halfway Between Heaven and Earth / Didn't Matter Anyway
- Golf Girl
- **Calyx (Dry Martini Version)** [P. Miller]



> Zoom

Abracadabra In Tokyo
2025

Soft Works

- Seven Formerly
- First Trane
- Alphrazallan
- Baker's Treat
- Madam Vintage
- Has Riff
- **Facelift** [H. Hopper]

- Elton Dean - saxello, alto sax, Fender Rhodes
- Allan Holdworth - guitar
- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- John Marshall - drums

Dedicated to Elton (1945-2006), Allan (1946-2017), Hugh (1945-2009), John (1941-2023).

Recorded live at Ebisu Garden Hall, Tokyo, Japan, August 10, 2003.

- MOONJUNE RECORDS - Digital Format



> Zoom

Nan True's Hole
2026

Luciano Margorani

- **Nan True's Hole** [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]

- Roberto Bartolini - electric guitar
- Federico Zenoni - drums

Instrumental version.

- LUCIANO MARGORANI - Digital Format - S

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME

Une discographie de

Robert Wyatt



ARCHIVE 6
au 1er juin 2026

Interviews & articles - vol.1 (en anglais)

Interviews & articles

ABÉCÉDAIRE



- In English
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- In Italiano
- Auf deutsch
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- En español
- 日本語
- Em Português
- στα Ελληνικά
- Türkçe

My Wantlist

***

IN ENGLISH

On visiting a friend - thebluemoment.com - July 1, 2024

Robert Wyatt's son shares health update: 'He's being well looked after' - NME.com - 7th February 2024

An Austr-Alien In Paris - Shindig ! - May 2022

Robert Wyatt - interview with a reclusive legend - Witchdoctor - March 8, 2021

In Conversation : Robert Wyatt - Clash - October 14, 2020

Team Spirit - Mojo - September 2020

Deeply personal - Internationaltimes.it - September 19, 2020

'I'm so somewhere else now...' - Uncut - March 2020

'Always finding nice things in a tragic situation' - Robert Wyatt at 75 - Morning Star - January 28, 2020

Robert Wyatt and Alfie Benge - Luncheon - Autumn-Winter 2019-20



"He has a real life" - Mojo The collector's Series Paul Weller Modern Classics 1991-2019 - 2019

Robert Wyatt : The Matching Mole interview - Popgruppen - January 28, 2019

Soft Machine - Prog Rock Uncut The Archive Collection - 2019

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"It's a magical thing" - The best of NME 1970-1974 - August 2018

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'Robert Wyatt and Nick Mason on 'I'm A Believer': "We made our own rules and did what we liked" - Uncut - 27th January 2017

A conversation with Robert Wyatt - Swench.net - August 07, 2016

Robert Wyatt Interview - Hi Fi + - March 31, 2016

The Wilde Flowers + Robert Wyatt on how The Wilde Flowers blossomed - Uncut - March 2016

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Robert Wyatt interviewed: "I'm not a born rebel…" - Uncut - January 28, 2015

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End of an Ear - Uncut - December 2014



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Robert Wyatt - Spectral Voices - Jazzwise - November 2010

Haunted by ghosts - Haaretz - October, 15 2010

Robert Wyatt and "The Merry Dance of Shared Creativity" - A Necessary Angel - July 14, 2010

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Robert Wyatt - Revelatory Revolutionary - Artrocker - January 2009

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- Robert Wyatt - Clash Q&A - 28.11.2008
- Songs of experience - Plan B - November 2008
- 'Staying Open to Possibilities': An Interview with Hugh Hopper - Eartrip Magazine - September 2008
- Canterbury Scene Pioneers 1 : The Soft Machine - Audion - August 2008

"I'm a big fan of the Style Council" by Robert Wyatt - Mojo - June 2008

- Wyatt cities blues - Record Collector- January 2008
- Max Remembered by Robert Wyatt - Modern Drummer - December 2007
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- Robert Wyatt : Web Exclusive Interview - Modern Drummer Magazine - November, 1 2007
- Trebles all round - Mojo - November 2007
- Kevin Ayers and Robert Wyatt - The Guardian - October 24th, 2007
- Human nature - Jazzwise - October 2007
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- Saturday night and Sunday morning - Wire - October 2007
- 'Other' Music - Robert Wyatt gets subversive and operatic - The Village Voice - October 23, 2007

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- Wyatting (vb): when Jukeboxes go mad - The Guardian - July 10, 2006
- Robert Wyatt - Beard - Winter 2005
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At last I'm old - The Village Voice - November 17, 2003

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Robert Wyatt: Cuckoo In The Nest - Independent - 12 September 2003

Robert Wyatt learns the value of cheap music from a Ray Charles ballad - Wire - September 2003

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Robert Wyatt in his own words - Get Rhythm - August 2001

A-Shleep at the Wheel: Robert Wyatt - Ways of Hearing - 2001

The jazz singer - Mojo collections - 2001

The great Wyatt hope - The Observer - May 27, 2001

Epiphanies - Wire - April 2001

New Model Army - Soft Machine - Mojo - March 2001

Robert Wyatt and Annie Whitehead: Songs In The Key Of Louth - The Independent - 25 October 2000

Christmas *(Lindsay Cooper on Robert Wyatt)* - Tone Clusters - Mar/Apr 2000



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Singer/instrumentalist (& ex-Soft Machine drummer) Robert Wyatt reveals the secret world of dreams with Shleep - U.S. Rocker Magazine - June'98

Who is Robert and Wyatt matters - Pulse ! - May 1998

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- Mole on Hold, an interview with Bill MacCormick - Facelift - January 1997
- A space for - Facelift - January 1997
- Interview by Richie Unterberger on November 18, 1996

Very nearly heaven - The Observer - July 28, 1996

- Invisible jukebox - The Wire - December 1995
- An interview with Mike Ratledge - Facelift - June 1995
- The Wilde Flowers - Record Collector - February 1995
- Memories From the Purple Jumper - Why Are We Sleeping ? - February 1995
- *Old Rottenhat's Journal - Autumn 1994 in Abécédaire*
- Robert Wyatt speaks - Canterbury Nachrichten - August 1994
- Wrong Movements - A Robert Wyatt history - Facelift - August 1994
- "Hear this man do it, and take courage" (Bob Dylan album review by Robert Wyatt) - Mojo - December 1993
- Who, Wyatt, Where - The Amazing Pudding - June 1993

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- Tough Guys Don't Dance - Bill Nelson meets Robert Wyatt - originally appeared in the August, 1992 edition of Musician magazine (US)
- Robert Wyatt - Record Collector - June 1992
- Communist celluloïd - New Musical Express - January 18, 1992
- Robert Wyatt - Ptolemaic Terrascope - January 1992
- Hugh Hopper interview - Canterbury Nachrichten - Winter 1991
- Comrade softy - Q - October 1991
- The born-again politico - The Guardian - September 26, 1991
- Wheelie saying something - New Musical Express - September 21, 1991



- There's a Wyatt going on - The Wire - September 1991

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- Nothing can stop him - Option - July-August 1991

Robert Wyatt's Peel sessions - Facelift - June 1989

- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening, The Concise Soft Machine Handbook - Strange Things - June 1989

- Things you should know about Robert Wyatt - Creem - January 1987

Nothing can stop Robert - Rockbill - November 1986

- Robert Wyatt - Record Collector - April 1986

From hippy underground to the Communist Party - Morning Star - January 13, 1986

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- English as a foreign language - New Musical Express - December 14, 1985

- Wyatt & Dammers - Sounds - November 2, 1985

- Chewing on Chomsky - City Limits - November 1-7, 1985

- Rocking the Botha - New Musical Express - October 26, 1985

Sun City - Melody Maker - September 28, 1985

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To the Fidel few - Melody Maker - August 11, 1984

- Robert Wyatt - OP Independant Music Magazine - May-June 1984

- Nothing to kill or die for - New Musical Express - March 10, 1984

- The Wyatt life - The Face - July 1983

- Diving for pearls - Melody Maker - June 4, 1983

- When the boat comes in - New Musical Express - 4th June, 1983

- His Master's Voice - Strange Fruit - Freedom - 13th November 1982

- Portrait of the artist as a consumer - New Musical Express - June 12, 1982

- Robert Wyatt : Whistling in the Dark - New Sounds New Styles - June 1982

- East West - Collision - Feb./April 1982



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A Wyatt of his own - Hot Press - April 17th-May 1st 1981

Robert Wyatt looks Back - Comstock Lode - Winter 1981

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Of dogs and underdogs - Melody Maker - January 24, 1981

Quiet Wyatt breaks his silence - New Musical Express - August 16, 1980

Up from rock bottom - Melody Maker - March 15, 1980

The wild spume of his hair broke over my bowsprit - New Musical Express - June 26, 1976

The Flowers That Grow On The Compost Heap: a cock-eyed optimist's diary - Liquorice - 1976

Mantler paints it black + Gorey stories - Melody Maker - April 17, 1976

The real Back to Africa movement starts here - Street Life - April 2, 1976

The Evolving Hymn: Illustrated by Her, Words by Robert Wyatt - Paintings by Alfreda Benge - Street Life - January 10-23, 1976

The Roman spring of Mr. Wyatt - New Musical Express - July 19, 1975

Robert Wyatt Devious tactics - Melody Maker - July 12, 1975

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Robert Wyatt, Henry Cow - New Musical Express - July 7, 1975

Ruth, Richard And Robert - Melody Maker - June 14, 1975

The essence of team spirit - New Musical Express - June 7, 1975

Wyatt singles are out - Sounds - May 31, 1975

Mantler paints it black - Melody Maker - April 17, 1975

Lookin' Back - The Soft Machine Part 2 - New Musical Express - February 1, 1975

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Soft Machine Man : Up from Rock Bottom - Rolling Stone - January 16, 1975

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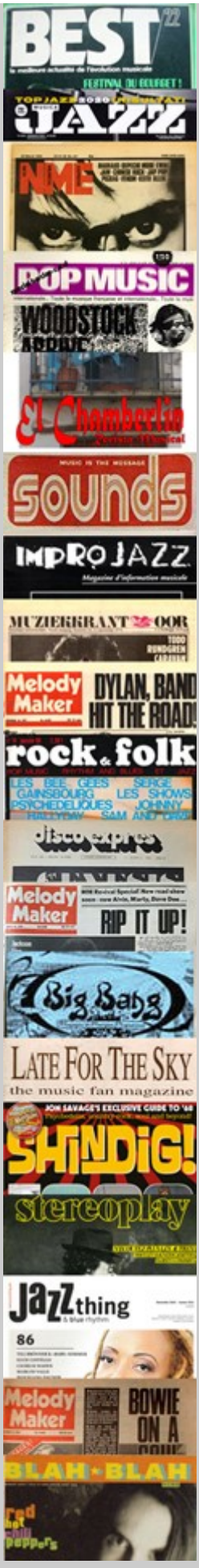
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On visiting a friend - thebluemoment.com - July 1, 2024

thebluemoment.com

A blog about music by Richard Williams



> Zoom

On visiting a friend

The front of the home of Robert Wyatt and Alfie Benge, a pretty Georgian house on a quiet street close to the centre of the Lincolnshire market town of Louth, was bathed in sunshine as I pressed the bell one day last week. The door was opened by Dee, Robert's daughter in law, who took me inside to see him.

I've known Robert since the end of the '60s, when he was still with the Soft Machine. He and Alfie tell the story of how I officiated at their marriage one night at Ronnie Scott's in the early '70s, before his accident, using a twisted-up piece of silver paper from a cigarette packet as an improvised wedding ring. A couple of years later they were formally married at Sheen register office on the day of the release of the extraordinary *Rock Bottom*, his great 1974 album of songs expressing fathomless emotions.

Alfie was in London for attention to her eyes on the day I visited, to see Robert for the first time since before the pandemic. She'd warned me that, following his recovery from a near-fatal encounter with something nasty called Lewy Body Dementia, his memory was impaired, although "he's far less away with the fairies than he was." And his sight had improved after long-awaited double cataract surgery.

His eyes were bright as we started to talk, his conversation just about as animated and every bit as surreally funny as I remembered. A mention of that first informal wedding ceremony prompted him to talk about how he had been 10 years old when he first met Ronnie Scott, when they were both guests at Robert Graves's famous house in Mallorca (Robert's mother, Honor Wyatt, was a friend of the poet, and may have named her son after him). He loved Ronnie and his co-director Pete King — whose name provoked a chuckling mention of "The great smell of Brut!" — and the whole vibe of the club, where Alfie had worked behind the bar. He remembered young Henry, who looked after the cloakroom and saw the ageing Ben Webster safely home every night during the great and hard-drinking tenorist's residencies.

We talked about a little about how Robert had enjoyed contributing vocals to three tracks on *Artlessly Falling*, Mary Halvorson's second Code Girl album in 2020, about Duke Ellington, and about Gil Evans, another venerated figure whose "Las Vegas Tango" Robert turned into a mesmerisingly wayward two-part invention on his first solo album, *End of an Ear*, in 1970. And about the 1971 Berlin jazz festival, where Robert — having just left the Softs — was selected by the festival director, Jo Berendt, for the rhythm section accompanying a Violin Summit starring Don "Sugarcane" Harris, Jean-Luc Ponty, Michal Urbaniak and Nipso Brantner ("I don't think they liked my playing — I was either too rock or too jazz"). When I remarked that a mutual acquaintance perhaps "fell in love too easily", he picked up the cue, hummed the opening of "I Fall in Love Too Easily" and talked about how much he still enjoyed listening to Chet Baker singing such songs.

I stayed an hour and a half, longer than expected. On the long drive home I listened to *Comicopera* and *…for the ghosts within*, two late masterpieces. All in all it had been a joy to find that Robert is still entirely himself, one of the most original and loved figures of his generation, still living his "improvised life", not making music any more but continuing to incarnate his socialist principles and thereby justifying his friend Brian Eno's description of him (in Marcus O'Dair's excellent authorised biography) as living without "any glaring inconsistencies between what he claims to believe in and what he does as a person and as an artist."

Alfie wanted to leave me a copy of *Side by Side*, the book of poems, lyrics and drawings that she and Robert published in 2020. "It came out during the lockdown," she said, "so it didn't get much notice." I told her I'd already bought one. If it escaped your attention, this might be the time to rectify that omission — maybe as a way of celebrating their the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding (the official one), which falls on July 26**: a milestone in a remarkable, wonderfully creative and happily enduring partnership.

* Side by Side *by Robert Wyatt and Alfie Benge is published by Faber & Faber. Marcus O'Dair's* Different Every Time: The Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt *was published by Serpent's Tail in 2014. The photograph of Robert and me was taken by his son, Sam Ellidge.*

*** Correction: the piece originally said that the anniversary is on July 24. It's the 26th. Alfie also points out that that they originally chose the date to coincide with the first day of Fidel Castro's first attempt to start the Cuban Revolution: the attack on the Moncada garrison in 1953.*

Read the post on thebluemoment.com

Ten years ago, Richard wrote this post on the same blog after reading that Robert Wyatt had decided to retire from music.

Pieces of Robert Wyatt - thebluemoment.com - October 30, 2014

Pieces of Robert Wyatt

When I read, in the new issue of *Uncut* magazine, that Robert Wyatt has decided to stop making music, I felt an immediate pang of dismay. So I rang him up to see if he really meant it. His reply was to tell me a little story about the novelist Jean Rhys, who, after a long period of inactivity, responded to her publisher's gentle suggestion that she might like to write another book by asking him if he'd enjoyed her last one. "Yes, of course," he answered. "Well, read it again," Rhys said.

We could all do a lot worse than work our way through Robert's albums, starting with 1970's *End of an Ear*, which includes his fabulous deconstruction of Gil Evans's "Las Vegas Tango", and concluding with 2010's magnificent *'…for the ghosts within'*, on which he shares the credit with the saxophonist Gilad Atzmon and the violinist/arranger Ros Stephen. And we could cherish memories of live performances stretching, in my case, from the Soft Machine at Croydon's Fairfield Halls in 1970 to Robert's guest appearance — singing and whistling on "Rado de Nube" and playing cornet on "Song for Che" — with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra as part of Ornette Coleman's Meltdown season at the Festival Hall in 2009.

We can also read Marcus O'Dair's *Different Every Time*, an "authorised biography" of Robert, published today. Diligently researched and sympathetically told, it gives us the best all-round view we're likely to get of the man who came to attention baring his torso behind a drum kit with Soft Machine everywhere from UFO to the Proms before the accident in 1973, at the age of 28, that cost him the use of his legs and propelled him into a different sort of existence, the one that produced *Rock Bottom*, "I'm a Believer", *Ruth is Stranger than Richard*, "Shipbuilding", "At Last I Am Free", *Old Rottenhat*, *Dondestan*, *Shleep* and *Comicopera*, as well as collaborations with the likes of Carla Bley, Brian Eno, the Raincoats, Scritti Politti, Hot Chip and many others, most of them listed in O'Dair's discography.



> Zoom

I say "most of them" because I've noticed an omission: a 1970 session with the Amazing Band, featuring the great cartoonist/illustrator Mal Dean on trumpet, Rab Spall on violin and accordion, Maia Spall on voice, Mick Brennan and Chris Francis on alto saxophones, Jim Mullen on bass and harmonica and Wyatt on drums and voice. Soon after they recorded it, Robert gave me an acetate of the proposed album, with a sleeve he'd made up himself, featuring the collage you see above. It wasn't until 1997 that the music — just under 40 minutes of free improvisation — finally saw the light of day, released under the title *Roar* on the FMR label.

I listened to the acetate again last night and it remains a lovely example of the kind of open-minded, non-idiomatic, anti-materialistic music that was in the air back then. And still is, if you look hard enough. I'm sorry, of course, that seemingly there won't be any more of it from Robert himself. But what he's given us is quite enough to be going on with.

* Different Every Time *is published by Serpent's Tail (£20). Robert Wyatt will be talking to Marcus O'Dair at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on November 23, as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival*.

Read the post on thebluemoment.com

Robert Wyatt's son shares health update: 'He's being well looked after' - NME.com - 7th February 2024



Robert Wyatt, 2004. CREDIT: Yui Mok/PA Images/Getty

NME

Robert Wyatt's son shares health update: "He's being well looked after"

The musician retired 10 years ago

By Tom Skinner

Robert Wyatt's son has shared an update regarding his father's health, saying he is "being well looked after".

The musician and composer, 78, was a founding member of Soft Machine and Matching Mole, serving as a drummer and vocalist in both bands. He later embarked on a 40-year solo career after becoming paraplegic following an accidental fall from a window in 1973.

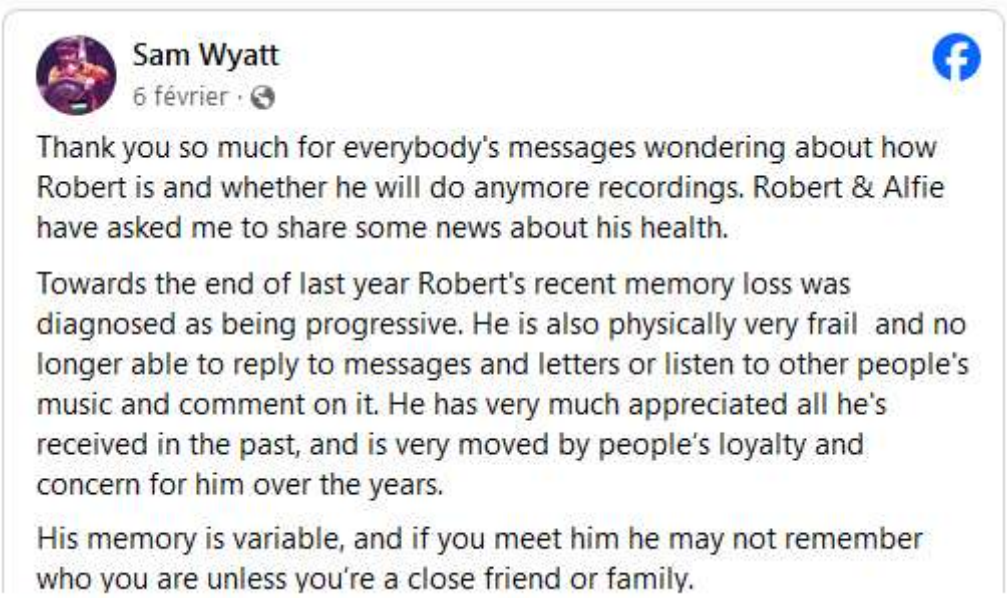
Wyatt branched out to other instruments and became an important name during the formative years of British jazz fusion, psychedelia and progressive rock. His final studio album, 2007's 'Comicopera', features contributions from Brian Eno, Paul Weller and more.

He retired from music in 2014, telling Uncut: "I would say I've stopped, it's a better word

than retired. Fifty years in the saddle, it's not nothing. It's completely unplanned, my life, and it's just reached this particular point.

"Other things have happened – I'm more taken up by politics, to be honest, than music at the moment. Music tags along behind it. There is a pride in [stopping], I don't want it to go off."

Posting on Facebook yesterday (February 6), Wyatt's son Sam thanked his followers for their recent "messages wondering about how Robert is and whether he will do any more recordings".



He went on to say that Robert and his wife Alfreda Benge had asked him "to share some news about his health", writing: "Towards the end of last year Robert's recent memory loss was diagnosed as being progressive.

"He is also physically very frail and no longer able to reply to messages and letters or listen to other people's music and comment on it. He has very much appreciated all he's received in the past, and is very moved by people's loyalty and concern for him over the years."

Sam explained that Robert's memory is currently "variable, and if you meet him he may not remember who you are unless you're a close friend or family".

"Thankfully, he's coping well, as he always has with physical adversity, and he's being well looked after," the message concluded. You can see the post above.

According to Setlist.FM, Robert Wyatt's final live performance took place as part of the 2014 EFG London Jazz Festival.

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An Austr-Alien in Paris - Shindig! - Issue 127 - May 2022

AN AUSTR-ALIEN IN PARIS



DAEVID ALLEN's journey from guitarist in Soft Machine to big cheese in **GONG** took in art happenings, deportation, gynaecological instruments, teddy bears and a haunted castle along the way. This culminated in the Australian's triumphant return to the UK, leading his French band onstage at the second Glastonbury Festival.

IAN THOMPSON speaks to many of the cast of thousands involved in this leg of Allen's long, strange trip





Allen with Daniel Laloux
on hunting horn, early '70

Soft Machine arrived in France at the beginning of July 1967 with a booking to play all summer long at a "psychedelic discotheque" near St Tropez. When "all summer long" became "for three nights only", the band found themselves stranded in paradise with a truck full of gear and no money. However, a chance beach-side encounter with a Parisian antique dealer would quickly turn things around. Bob Benamou, who would soon become Gong's manager, tells *Shindig!* "They were playing on the beach at a beer festival; it was a horrible place and nobody was there. I said, 'You can't stay here,' so I installed the whole group in a villa in St Tropez. We became very close. Daevid Allen was so creative, so poetic, and so surrealistic: an amazing person."

Benamou was organising a series of happenings with underground artist Jean- Jacques Lebel. Lebel offered Soft Machine the opportunity to perform during a staging of Picasso's play *Desire Caught By The Tail*. The band leapt at the chance, immersing themselves in the Dadaist production for three weeks. Lebel told writer Aymeric Leroy, "Daevid said to me several times afterwards, and Kevin [Ayers] too, that this experience had really allowed them to 'bloom' as artists, to differentiate themselves from what was around them."

Soft Machine also scored an invitation to play at a party organised by the owner of Barclay Records, where they impressed a large crowd of movers-and-shakers with a 40-minute rendition of 'We Did It Again'. These performances created a buzz among the Parisian artistic elite who'd flocked to the Côte d'Azur that summer, which gave the band a real foothold in France. They would consolidate this position by returning to the country every month for the remainder of 1967.



Soft Machine in London just prior to Allen's enforced Paris sojourn.
L-R: Allen, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Kevin Ayer

However, Soft Machine would make these trips as a three-piece. An expired visa saw Allen turned back at Dover, and even worse, banned from entering the UK for three years. Not wanting to return to Australia, he had little choice but to install himself in Paris. His time in Soft Machine was brutally cut short.

Once in Paris, Allen leapt into action, quickly gathering a collective of improvising musicians around himself. These included his long-term collaborator and partner Gilli Smyth, vocalist Ziska Baum and flautist Loren Standlee. For their first show they took the name Gong Full Moon Fantastickal, and soon landed a 10-week residency at underground hotspot La Vieille Grille. Their sets of freely improvised music caused a sensation in Paris's nascent underground

scene. A long segment filmed for French TV in early ’68 (available on YouTube) is revelatory, showing the genesis of the idiosyncratic styles that Allen and Smyth would later perfect in Gong.

Allen has always given Syd Barrett credit for inspiring his “glissando” guitar technique. In *Gong Dreaming 1* he writes: “I saw Syd playing a curious sort of slide guitar with the Floyd at Ally Pally in ’67 and he looked rather embarrassed by it. But out front it sounded spectacularly Wagnerian! I was impressed.” Armed with a box of antique gynaecological instruments and a delay unit, Allen learned to coax a galaxy of sound from his Telecaster guitar. While Allen was able to explain the origin of his style, he was at a loss when it came to describing Smyth’s “space whisper” vocals. “It didn’t come from any outside influence that I know of. She just immediately began to sing like that... Ziska Baum and Gilli were magical together. The two of them just created that style together out of thin air.”

Allen made many contacts at the Vieille Grille, the most important being with the young filmmaker Jérôme Laperrousaz. His support would prove incredibly important to Allen over the next few years. When Allen told him he was looking to put together a new group to play more traditionally structured songs, the filmmaker put him in touch with Marc Blanc and Patrick Fontaine. They were the rhythm section of a band whose guitarist had just been called up for national service, and as fate would have it were already ardent fans of Soft Machine.

The trio clicked immediately, playing their first gig together in January ’68. Blanc told Shindig!, “We had just enough time to rehearse two tracks [‘Why Are We Sleeping’ and ‘We Did It Again’]. We played three sets that were basically freakouts. The audience was stunned, enjoying it without realising it was Soft Machine’s guitarist playing.” Allen christened the new band Bananamoon. While it would only play a score of gigs and record a handful of demos that were unreleased until decades later, its impact on French music would be enormous. It spawned the bands Gong and Ame Son, and in bringing the first flush of real psychedelia to France, helped shape the country’s emerging musical underground.

Laperrousaz worked on the TV programme *Bouton Rouge*, and used his influence to organise a spot for Bananamoon. Arrangements were made to meet in the Latin Quarter to shoot a clip for their version of ‘Why Are We Sleeping?’. The chosen day turned out to be during the worst street fighting of the May ’68 protests. The band arrived in what looked like a war zone: hastily erected barricades, burned-out vehicles, and uprooted trees everywhere, and the air electric with tension. Bravely or foolishly, Laperrousaz leapt at the chance to use this as his backdrop. “We were filmed climbing the barricades with our instruments, against a background of total chaos”, recalls Fontaine. Filming continued for the entire day, with Laperrousaz truly pushing his luck at times. Allen relates in *Gong Dreaming 1* that with cameras in tow, “I wandered down a block to find a menacing black battle-truck full of super tough paracommandos. From somewhere Jérôme miraculously conjured up a large paper bag full of toy teddy bears. So I danced up to the wagon, and bowed to the stonefaced paratroopers... ‘Les compliments de Winnie le Pooh...’ I cried solemnly and handed each of them a wee teddy bear. Stern jawlines cracked open with amazement and then delight. They’d all abruptly turned into little boys. I left behind a truckload of human laughter...”

The paras may have been left laughing, but once news of this filmed escapade reached the authorities, they were not amused. Laperrousaz was dismissed from his job, but worse potentially lay in store for Allen. Informed that he was on an arrest list of undesirable aliens, he and Smyth fled France. They headed for Deya on the island of Mallorca, with Blanc and Fontaine following soon after. Fontaine remembers these months spent together on their island refuge as an extraordinary time. Living in community, they grew closer both personally and musically.

In their absence Laperrousaz worked to gain the interest of several record labels, and in December ’68 Bananamoon clandestinely returned to Paris to record demo tapes, which ultimately failed to secure a signing. To evade the attention of the Paris police, the band relocated to a property owned by Bob Benamou in the tiny town of Montaulieu, near Avignon – a place that would also be significant in Gong’s story. There Allen began writing the songs that would form the core of his *Magick Brother* album.

Unfortunately, Marc Blanc was finding less inspiration in Allen’s new music. When Blanc’s former guitarist returned from the army in April ’69, it didn’t take long for him to float the idea of starting a new band. Two months later Blanc and Fontaine split amicably with Allen to form Ame Son.

From this point things moved very quickly. Within months both Ame Son and Daevid Allen had signed to BYG Records, recorded their debut albums, and shared the stage at the legendary Amougies Festival. Well before Bananamoon split, Allen had nurtured the vision of

a different kind of band. Central to his plan was a flute and sax player he had encountered in Paris, and then, in a bizarre twist of fate, met again in Deya just weeks later. Didier Malherbe told *Shindig!*, "I went to spend the summer in Deya and Daevid was there! Summer of '68 was pretty amazing, one of the best times I've had in my life. We were seeing a lot of each other and playing music, and eventually we kind of decided to set up Gong… not immediately, it came little by little."



> Zoom

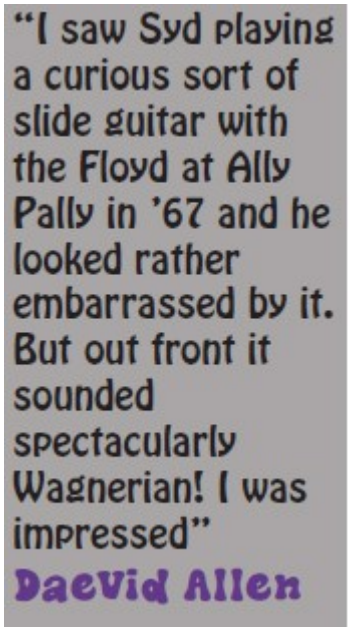
Bananamoon, Balearic Islands, 1968. L-R: Patrick Fontaine, Daevid Allen, Gilli Smyth, Marc Blanc.

With an album to record for BYG, Allen called on Malherbe, who would be the one constant musician at his side for the next five years. According to Bob Benamou, "After Daevid, Didier Malherbe was the most important person in Gong: a great, great musician." Malherbe makes the point that *Magick Brother*, recorded in September '69, isn't a Gong record, but a Daevid Allen solo album with guest musicians: himself, Gilli Smyth, and drummer Rachid Houari – who would all become members of Gong – along with a number of American jazzmen. The LP is a fine set of psychedelic pop songs leavened with flourishes of free-jazz. Most significant in foreshadowing the sound of Gong-tocome are the bookending tracks. 'Mystic Sister' points towards the glissando guitar/space whisper vocal passages of classic Gong, while 'Cos You Got Green Hair' is a more earthy taster of the floating stoned-ambient interludes of the Radio Gnome Invisible trilogy.

Immediately after completing the recording, the group was augmented with bassist Christian Tritsch, violinists Gerry Field and Dieter Gewissler, and the wildcard figure of Daniel Laloux on vocals, hunting horn, and marching drum. This was the line-up that played at The Amougies Festival in October '69.

Because of Allen's relationship with BYG, the band had a feature slot at the festival, headlining the Sunday night lineup of French bands. However, a series of delays and over-runs pushed their appearance into the wee hours of Monday morning. Gerry Field, who left the band immediately after the festival, informs *Shindig!* they were billed as The Daevid Allen Group, and he can't recall the name Gong being used during his tenure. Malherbe relates that it was 5am when they finally took the stage, and shock tactics were needed to energise the fading audience. "People were lying like corpses, half asleep. Daniel Laloux was playing a military drum from the Napoleonic period. So Daniel pounded on his drum, and recited a famous Victor Hugo poem about Napoleon and Waterloo,which was only a couple of kilometres from Amougies." The crowd responded enthusiastically. The remainder of the set featured songs from *Magick Brother* interspersed with a good deal of free improvisation. In

his review for *Rock & Folk* Paul Alessandrini called it an "indisputable success", impressed by the band's perfect balance of "musical delirium" and "devastating humour".



Jérôme Laperrousaz had filmed the festival, but the sound recording of Allen and co's performance proved unusable. To recreate their music for the film, he invited Gong (as they were now known) to move into his family's chateau in Normandy. The band would stay there for the next five months, rehearsing and recording. The tapes from the "haunted chateau" reveal Gong's progression from a psychedelic pop sound to a much harder psych-rock featuring long passages of free improvisation. By the time *Magick Brother* was released in March '70, Gong's music had progressed far beyond it. In fact, Allen is surprisingly dismissive of the album in an early interview. "It doesn't represent the current group. It was a kind of masturbation, or rather the result of massive constipation. In short I relieved myself."

Only a month later Gong's new sound was revealed on the single 'Garçon Ou Fille' which exhibited a new-found aggression: an almost punk energy courtesy of Allen's fuzzed-out guitar and violently delirious vocal. This was just one side of the coin, though. The more esoteric, improvisational aspect of the band can be heard in a performance of 'Dreaming It' filmed at about the same time (and available on YouTube) which brings Malherbe's and Gewissler's contributions to the fore.

Surveying the band's evolution for *Rock & Folk* in '71, Paul Alessandrini was clearly biased towards this era's divergent but oddly cohesive melange of music. He described it as "sonic madness, a kind of violence, with so many original components asserted to excess, without any search for formal perfection". Alessandrini singled out Daniel Laloux, praising his contribution to Gong's "comedic and derisive theatrical side". This first era would be closed when Laloux and Gewissler both departed in May '70. Bob Benamou also highlighted Laloux's early contribution. "He didn't stay long, less than a year, but he was great, completely surrealistic, a fantastic artist." Benamou had been installed as Gong's manager a few months earlier and offered his property in Montaulieu as the band's home base for the summer. Before heading there Gong spent two months in Paris, rehearsing in the cellar below Benamou's antique shop.



> Zoom

The catalyst needed to accelerate Gong's development was discovered just before they left Paris, in the person of Francis Linon, aka Venux De Luxe. Linon admits to *Shindig!* that he blagged his way into the band. "Daevid told me they were on their way to the south and that he needed people to help with the equipment. Without any knowledge at all on what was required, I said, 'I'm the man you're looking for!' and my whole life suddenly changed."

A few days later, he was in Montaulieu with the rest of the band. "It was a typical small village at the top of a hill, where the road ends. Bob owned practically all of it. Behind the village, on a plateau in the wilderness, there was an ancient sheepfold. The electricity had just been connected. This is where we moved in with the equipment. It took us more than a week just to clean up the goat droppings covering the floor. After putting rugs all over, we put the gear in the middle and around the walls some mattresses separated by stretched fabric for a little

privacy. A stove in a corner, the toilets outside, the bathroom in the river... The Gong community was born."

In the three months Gong spent there, Montaulieu became their spiritual home. It was there that communal living became an essential part of their lives, and it was there that Gong's music made a quantum leap; when Linon massaged their sound through his effects processors, a truly cosmic music emerged.

With winter approaching, life in the sheepfold was becoming harder and harder. After a year of nomadic wanderings, Gong needed a permanent base. They found it at Pavillon du Hay, an abandoned hunting lodge 120 km southeast of Paris and supposedly discovered by Gilli Smyth randomly placing her finger on a map. This would be their home until they quit France for the UK three years later.

The passage across '70 had been a formative year for Gong. They had honed their idiosyncratic music style and developed a strong community ethos. They entered '71 with only one seveninch to their name, but with the foundations laid for an incredible creative explosion. The first fruit was Daevid Allen's sophomore solo record. Keen to capitalise on Soft Machine's fame, BYG wanted Allen to record with some of his former bandmates. With the end of his three-year ban, Allen was finally free to travel to the UK and do just that. In February '71 he recorded the *Banana Moon* LP with Robert Wyatt guesting on vocals and drums. Other players on the session included violinist Gerry Field from the Amougies band and drummer Pip Pyle. During the sessions Allen met a young studio engineer who was experimenting with a new EMS synthesiser.



"I met Daevid at Marquee Studios," Tim Blake tells *Shindig!* "He was having trouble finishing *Banana Moon*, so I helped out with the mixing. Daevid invited me to go back with him to France the next day." Blake relocated to Pavillon du Hay, bringing his EMS synth with him. If all had gone according to plan, *Camembert Electrique* would have had a more electronic edge, but a change in drummers put a spanner in the works.

Rachid Houari's wife had never felt at ease in the Gong community, and he finally made the decision to leave the band in spring '71. Allen called in Pip Pyle from the *Banana Moon* sessions to take over. Unfortunately, he and Blake had history. "Pip and I knew each other, but I don't think we liked each other very much!" Pyle particularly hated Blake's synthesiser, claiming that it sounded "like a flock of deranged psychedelic chaffinches". He put his foot down, saying it was either him or Blake. Exit Tim Blake (at least for now).

Pyle's first few months in Gong were a baptism of fire. Continuing its creative streak, the band entered the Chateau d'Herouville studio – Elton John's "Honky Chateau" – in May '71 to record two albums in quick succession. First up was the soundtrack to Jerôme Laperrousaz's film *Continental Circus*. For Allen this was an important opportunity to pay Laperrousaz back for his immense support. In *Gong Dreaming 2* he writes, "We went into the studio clean and clear. With Pip on drums and no rehearsal whatsoever, we completed the soundtrack/album in a series of perfect first takes... recorded, overdubbed and mixed in two days. Jérôme was delighted."

It was Francis Linon's first experience in a recording studio. "Everything was done almost live, I was operating the echo chambers like in a concert. Everything went very quickly and everyone was pleased with the result. What happiness!"

Gong were back in Herouville almost immediately, backing poet Dashiel Hedayat on his album *Obsolete*. Allen was a fan of Hedayat's poetry and was very happy to provide the music for his songs and poems. The album was completed in another whirlwind two-day session and has gone on to be recognised as a classic of the French underground scene. While these albums are overshadowed by *Camembert Electrique*, they are both essential parts of Gong's discography. The longer tracks gave the band the chance to stretch out, showcasing the improvisational power they had developed – most notably on 'Cielo Drive/17' from *Obsolete* and 'Blues For Findlay (instrumental)' from *Continental Circus*.



With two albums under their belt, Gong entered Herouville studios yet again in June '71. This was the main event: a 10-day session to record their debut album. According to Linon, they entered the studio primed to bring the past 12 months to a culmination. "The recording of Camembert Electrique was the concretisation of everything that happened before, the perfect way of life at Montaulieu, and Pavillon du Hay." In Gong Dreaming 2 Allen writes, "The band was right on its own cutting edge so the results were satisfying. Within 10 days we had completed the backing tracks and most instrumental overdubs."

La Planète Gong débarque en France

At their very first encounter in June 1968, Didier Malherbe recalls Daevid Allen spinning tales of the Planet Gong. "We spent quite a few hours that night with Daevid playing his guitar and telling all his funny stories about Pot Head Pixies and The Octave Doctors. He already had all that in his head."

Francis Linon has a similar fond memory of his own first meeting with Allen. "At the end of the night Daevid told me I was from Venus, and he welcomed me to The Planet Gong. He had the revelation of my name 'Venux De Luxe'."

Gong's music may have come of age at Montaulieu, but it was at Pavillon du Hay that the band's mythology was elaborated. Over the long winter nights, the tales became more and more intricate. "It was Daevid's story," Linon told *Shindig!*, "evolving night after night with whoever was present around the table after dinner. At the end of a big delirium, Daevid went back to his room to put it together."

In *Gong Dreaming 2* Allen notes, "A great deal of discussion took place, and much outrageous story-telling. In this company wild flights of fancy were encouraged to the max... On one such night I spontaneously became Bert Camembert, Christian became The Submarine Captain and Gilli became The Good Witch Yoni. The precise design of Flying Teapots was discussed at length and in depth." Malherbe was happy to take part. "To be honest it was mainly Daevid's thing, but I played along with the game. Everyone had a nickname, so I chose my own: Bloomdido, from a tune by Charlie Parker. Then the Anglo-Saxon people translated Malherbe into Bad de Grasse, and Daevid added Count. So I became this character in the Gong mythology: Count Bloomdido Bad de Grasse."

The story of the Pot Head Pixies and The Planet Gong had only been briefly introduced on the *Magick Brother* and *Camembert Electrique* albums, most notably on the incredible graphical and lexical creations gracing their covers. The world would have to wait until Flying Teapot arrived in '73 to learn the whole tale.

There was a two-month gap before the mixing sessions took place in September '71. Allen recalled listening to the final playback. "I felt a deep sense of completion and I was very happy. For the moment, we had already won. I had the feeling that this album would be around for a long time." Between the two sessions Allen had led the band across the channel to play at the '71 Glastonbury Festival, and for him their first gig in England was also a homecoming. Francis Linon's account of the event is striking. "Glastonbury was like a vortex. No one could stop us doing it. We went through customs without any papers, just a smile on our faces and Gilli driving. We were real aliens, not speaking the same language, going home to this magic place." The band had just kicked off their afternoon set when disaster seemed to strike." As soon as we started, in a climax going up, the generator broke down." This setback actually ended up being a godsend.

Allen picks up the story in *Gong Dreaming 2*. "By the time we resumed it was that magic sunset time and we were now in the glow of stage lights. We had barely started when I looked up to see a pied piper line of a thousand or so dancing people snaking down the hill to gather at the front of the stage cavorting and rejoicing to the music of this odd French band called Gong... This was the kind of audience that Gong had been created for, and the gathering awareness of this was running both ways at once. This was our English spiritual family."

A certain Richard Branson was in the audience that day, and very soon he would be making overtures to the band. Gong would continue to live in France for some time, but their interplay with England would increase. The next album would be recorded at Virgin's Manor studio, and over time more English musicians would be added to the line-up. Gong would never lose its French influence, but after Glastonbury it would never be quite as strong. A new chapter had begun.

Ian would like to thank Bob Benamou, Marc Blanc, Patrick Fontaine, Didier Malherbe, Gerry Field, Francis Linon, Tim Blake, and Aymeric Leroy for their generous contributions.

Gong tour later this year and a box set is due soon.
For news visit planetgong.co.uk

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Robert Wyatt - interview with a reclusive legend - Witchdoctor - March 8, 2021

witchdoctor
Shiny New Things

Robert Wyatt – interview with a reclusive legend

March 9, 2021 · Gary Steel · Albums·Interviews·Music·Recordings

Fresh from soaking up Robert Wyatt's newish book of lyrics and illustrations, GARY STEEL thought the time was right to disinter and publish - for the first time ever - his complete interview with the reclusive legend.



Note: This interview was conducted on August 23, 2007, around the then-

imminent release of his Comicopera album. I was nervous as anything because Robert Wyatt means a lot to me. His music has been a constant in my life, from the early psychedelic explorations of Soft Machine to his idiosyncratic early '70s group Matching Mole and on to an ever-evolving solo career that touches me so personally and so deeply that it's hard to critique or explain. Recently, Wyatt - now 76 - announced his retirement from recording projects.

Robert Wyatt – Hello.

Gary Steel – Hi, I'm Gary from New Zealand.

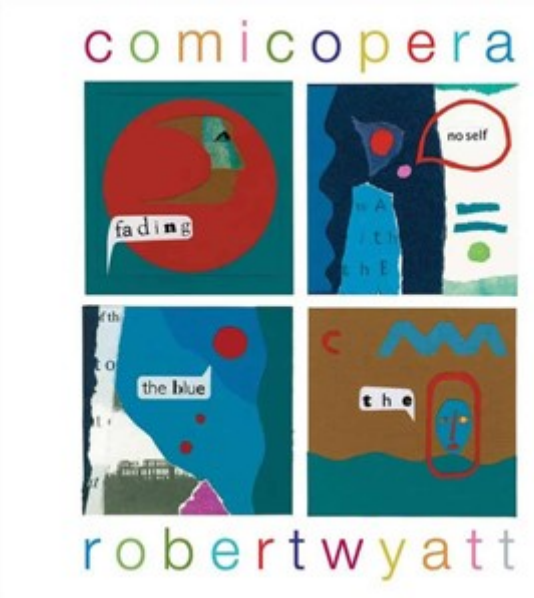
Robert – Yeah, I've been trying to work out… it must be very early morning there or something.

Gary – It's not too bad, it's 9am.

Robert – Okay, I'm relieved to hear that, I couldn't work it out, because I know Japan is about eight hours different, I thought it must be something about that, maybe more I suppose, I don't know.

Gary – We're normally about a full day… you'd be about 9 o'clock at night?

Robert – We're 10 o'clock in the evening.



Gary – We're about 12 hours ahead of you.

Robert – It's quite convenient in a way but it's just upside-down. How very Antipodean.

Gary – The complication is that we have daylight savings, and so it changes at certain times of the year.

Robert – Well we do that too. I thought Britain was the only place that did that. We change twice a year, we change the time as well.

Gary – Anyway I don't want to waste your time!

Robert – Yeah, it's just interesting.

Gary – The record company said they'd try to get me a copy of Comicopera to listen to, but it hasn't turned up, so you're going to have to help me a little bit.

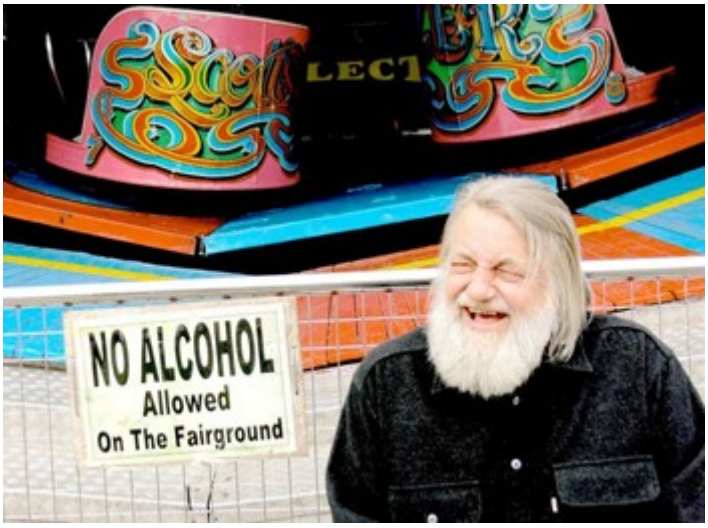
Robert – You're going to have to write from a different dimension.

Gary – It's not, I take it, an actual opera.

Robert – No, what can I say. I made a record a few years ago called Cuckooland, and this record has got much the same core of people on it. So it's me with three or four musicians that are sort of imitation family. I say "imitation", because we don't actually go on the road and live together in a van like a real band. But in fact, they're so desperate… if we were a proper band they wouldn't have me in it anyway.

But they're mostly jazz musicians, and just for a day or two in the studio, I've found the people who really help me do my songs right. A bloke called Yaron Stavi on double bass, and Gilad Atzmon on saxophone, reeds and clarinet, and a woman called Annie Whitehead who plays trombone, and that's the basic add-ons to me, and I do a bit of percussion, a bit of singing, obviously, and a bit of trumpet, and we've got a few guests. I got a couple of rock and roll guitarists in, but they don't really play rock and roll on my record. I just like what they do and they're friends.

Gary – Phil Manzanera and Paul Weller?



Robert – Phil did a wheel-on part on one track on this one, and he did one on the last, and Paul did two songs on this one and two songs on the last one, and two songs on the one before I think. He always comes up with something nice, and I love him. It's basically a bunch of jazzers not playing jazz is what it is. It's a bit more "bandy" than the last one. On the last record, I had my songs and I do this, I take stuff in as if I was going to make a solo LP with keyboards and beef it up with guests, but in this case, I actually planned it more with these elementary musicians in mind, so it's more upfront with the trombones and stuff like that playing a bit more "in there" like a band sort of thing. And that's about it really, it's not an opera, you're dead right there (laughs).



Paul Weller with Robert Wyatt

Gary – You described them as jazz musicians as though you're not. I would have called you a jazz musician in many ways.

Robert – Well, that's my music but… it's what I'm based in. There are such a lot of squabbles that go on in the jazz community about what is jazz and who is jazz and what it isn't. I'd rather keep out of it and use jazz musicians.

A lot of how I work and what inspired me to be a musician… when I was a schoolboy, was jazz. I mean I listened to lots of other stuff, my Dad had lots of 20th Century classical music and I had pop records and I liked all these things, but the thing that completely grabbed me and took my heart was jazz, and it still does really, and the same records too. Old Duke Ellington things and Charles Mingus and Coltrane and, the usual suspects.

Annie Whitehead, who is the perfect trombonist but like a lot of us struggles to write tunes, said 'where do you get 'em from'? She's very nice about my tunes and says she likes playing my tunes. I said I've got a really, really good record collection. I don't consciously nick stuff, it's just that I get so many ideas. Like in one Sonny Rollins solo, there's about 18 really good ideas for a tune, if you slow those little bebop lines down. If you hear what they're doing, on any chord sequence, even if it's just a well-known song or a blues, they're showing you how to get so many different notes out of any given situation,

and I'm just so grateful to them for that.



Robert Wyatt in the early '80s

So in that sense, jazz is my roots and my sustenance and everything like that. But on the other hand jazz musicians I know, they can all read music properly and have some kind of virtuosity on a musical instrument, and the only thing I ever really got to grips with was the drum kit, and of course, I stopped playing that 30 years ago.

Gary – There are many so-called jazz musicians out there who do interpretations of jazz standards and even their own tunes, but they sound just like carbon copies of what went before. In your case, every single record you do is just uniquely you to the naked ear. Do you feel that you're in your own way interpreting your influences? I guess what I'm trying to say is that when I listen to your records, they sound like a new vocabulary of music in a sense.

Robert – I'm glad you hear it like that. As far as I'm concerned, especially since I stopped drumming, I've had to invent a kind of music that I can do, that suits me, and has elements of other kinds. But I've had to invent a one-person genre in a way. It's not a deliberate attempt to be different, or anything like that, it's how I find I can work.

One of the things about being a singer is that any sort of American influence shows up very strongly in people's accents… (mimics 'I want to go' in both English and American accents). Everybody becomes a sort of ersatz American and I find that slightly embarrassing. English popular musicians were so drenched in black music that it's quite natural that singers all the way through rock and jazz history have sung in American accents. Joss Stone now is brilliant at it or English blues singers in the '60s or whatever. That was alright when I was doing other people's material, but when I write songs the words are so English really, and they just don't come out like that. The only thing that works for me is to sing more or less how I talk, it's nothing like anybody who invented jazz talks, really, it's not deliberate, I wasn't born in New Orleans.

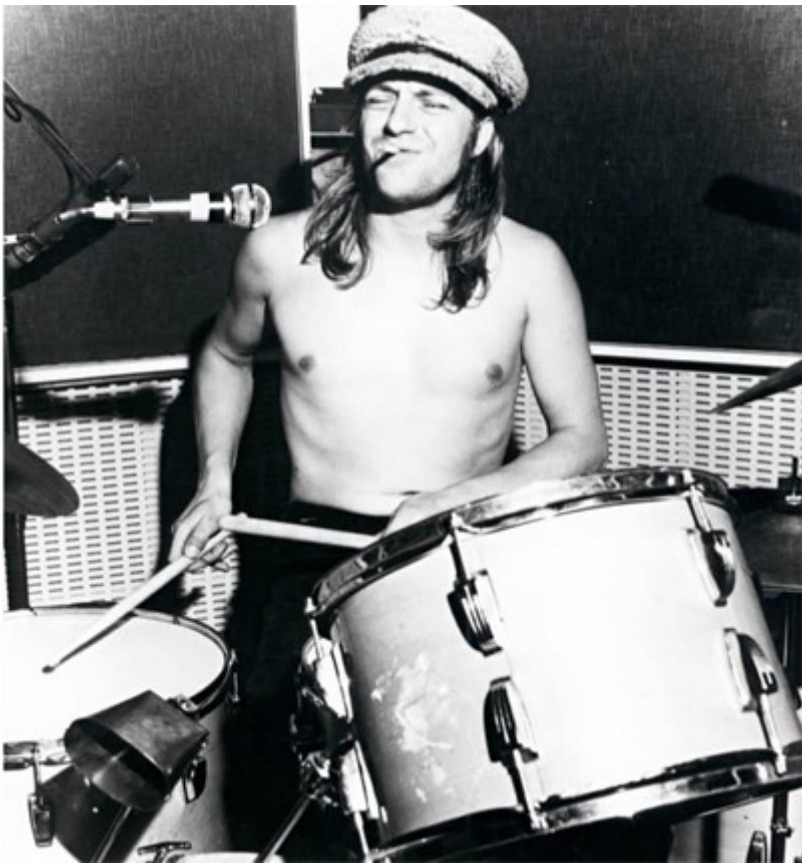
Gary – Was there any great flash of inspiration when you came up with your vocal style? Of course nobody sounds like you do, or can turn a tune on its head the way you do. Is that just the way it came out when you started singing, or was there some thought process going on?

Robert – Just an instinctive flinching when things went wrong, and trying not to do that again, whatever it was. There's a sort of… really I don't think particularly like a singer so I don't particularly sort of listen to other singers for guidelines. Not now, when I was younger I used to listen to… well because I had a high voice, I couldn't sing like any of the blokes, so I used to try and sing like Dionne Warwick or something. That was a good place to start, because she hits good notes and had some fantastic material to sing and that nailed it; how to do good songs with a true but soulful voice.

But I just found that… some French person once said to me it's so sad, the English, you haven't got any great operas, because nobody can sing in English, and I knew what she meant. Latin languages are much more conducive to singing, somehow, the way words flow. And English, being Germanic, is more guttural. We've got strange little grunty noises that don't turn easily into long notes. There are so many things I tried to do that just don't feel right coming out of my mouth, they sound like I'm a bad actor. And getting rid of all that stuff, I just use what I've got left really, and my influences how to phrase tunes come as much from listening to Coltrane doing a ballad, or something like that, as much as any singer.

The main thing I'm trying to do is hit the right note for about the right length of time, and have the vowels and consonants in the correct order, and the rest of it is just being really careful what material I choose to sing in the first place, so that it's got a good chance of coming out the way that it's meant to be. And the rest is just professional technique… I've learnt quite a lot about breathing and all that, common sense stuff like if you're going to

do a long note, take a deep breath first, get one in you know? [laughs]



Wyatt drumming for Soft Machine in the '60s

Gary – Have you ever thought of doing a whole album of covers? Like years ago you did 'At Last We Are Free' and of course, 'I'm A Believer'.

Robert – I guess you could put an album together of all my covers. I really like singing other people's songs because it makes you do things you might not think of yourself. All I'm really interested in in a record is making a kind of record that I would like to hear that doesn't already exist. Simple as that.

Preferably I'd probably always put on an old Charles Mingus record, but I'm not going to make one of those, I'm going to make a record that I want to listen to that ISN'T a Charles Mingus record. [laughs]. I sort of nailed that one.

I'm more interested in the whole record, the totality of the record. My singing, I take the responsibility for the voice and having to carry it, but I also like parcelling out the sound, because even a good singer can get monotonous.

So one of the things about the 'opera thing' was to split it up into three 20-minute chunks. It's over an hour long, and 20 minutes is a reasonable length of time to listen to a piece of music. The last one I split it up into two halves, and this one three thirds. And then I bunched the pieces together roughly in a sort of either atmosphere, or what the words might be about.

There's one song on it which is very difficult to sing because the words are written by my wife, a song called 'Out Of The Blue', just about what it might be like having your house bombed from an aeroplane. And you can't put after that a little comedy song about walking down the street… so you have to be careful where you put things. So the first third is more personal songs about love and lust and stuff, the second lot is walking around the streets seeing things that go on, and then it goes to this bombing thing, and then I go off into singing in foreign languages, speaking in tongues, and there's a bit more improvisation and kind of general alienation. The last third I get totally fed up with being English altogether actually, and pretend I'm not. You sing in a foreign language and it's a nice feeling, it's a bit like putting on ladies underwear or something… it doesn't make you foreign but it gives you that frisson of difference.

Gary – You've done a lot of collaborations over the years and going back to the

'70s you seem to have friends who were in bands like Gong and Henry Cow and Hatfield & The North, and you worked with Mike Mantler and so forth. Of course, on your latest output all those musicians are long gone from your musical world. Is that just a kind of natural attrition from your musical fraternities or is it more a friendship thing.
Members of Soft Machine with Wyatt in the middle

Robert – I've forgotten what attrition means. Well, some of the early collaborations, they split into two sorts. One is where they ask me and the other is where I ask them. And so some of them I didn't seek out but they just arrived. For example I would never have dreamt of saying to Mike Mantler or Carla Bley 'can I sing some of your music?' It wouldn't have occurred to me. So it was an amazing thing that just cropped up, and I've stayed friends with that little family; and I've been working with Mike and Carla's daughter, and she's on the last record and she's the same age as Carla when I first worked with Carla. A cycle of events really. However, Mike lives in Denmark and Karen lives in New York and her mother lives in upstate New York so there's not much. Karen is on the record I've just done, I used Karen's voice which I'd recorded last time she was in England, put it onto keyboard, sampled it and used it a bit. I like doing that.



But I always look for musicians who are a combination of really good friends, people I really like, and some ways unique, and have a voice that's really distinct. Again, that's something I learnt from jazz, like Duke Ellington, where everyone in the band had a character, so you'd have a trumpet section but Harold Baker didn't play many solos but had a very distinctive lead sound, they all had character, and I thought that's what distinguished Duke Ellington from bands where you just had a sax section or a trumpet section.

And I always wanted everyone on my records to be an identifiable human being and not just a clever noise. I wanted that, and I wanted to be friends with them because I'm fed up with playing with people that were clever but we didn't get on that well. I'm not doing that anymore. But also musicians that are really good but… don't patronise me but are comfortable working with me because I can't really read music, and I know they will understand the chords without me having to say what they are. A lovely bunch. And Annie Whitehead can read anything. But also modern jazz musicians now are more broad-minded, because everyone's used to playing with people from different parts of the world, and you get all these jazz experiments with Africans and Indians and people with completely different traditions, and it's taken on board now much more than the old days.

I don't really feel very associated with a lot of the musicians I did happen to work with in the '60s and '70s. I dunno, although what I do isn't pop music, it's not deliberately extra clever or anything like that. I don't know how to put it. I try to be pretty clear and emotionally direct in what I'm doing. I don't really like being deliberately obscure or taking pride in the fact that people can't understand what I'm doing. I get embarrassed by that. It's hard enough to get across to people anyway without putting obstacles… I found the musicians I work with now more comfortable. It's changed a lot since I was a drummer as well. And I just really like these people, and I really like working at Phil Manzanera's studio, and I like his engineer Jamie. And I've also got some guests on this one. I like getting a few, because I don't do live gigs or anything.



I don't live in London or near London anymore, I live in a small country town which is very nice, but I do miss cosmopolitan things, so on the first track I think it is, I've got a young woman of I think Chinese origin, who plays clarinet and sings like a theremin, and there's a Brazilian singer called Monica Vasconcelos, who sings on the second one, and a bloke called Orphy Robinson who plays vibes and steel pans on another… he's of Jamaican ancestry. It just keeps the pot boiling for me, you know? It shifts the colours around a bit, but it still ends up just another Robert Wyatt record really.
Robert Wyatt interview
Wyatt out and about

Gary – Well it's quite a good work rate, only three years since the last one.

Robert – Yeah, I think it's because everything about the setup of the last one seemed good, so I wanted to carry on really. I thought this is really great, with Annie and Yaron on bass. He's lovely, we get on really well, and Jamie the engineer is terrific, and we've watched him grow from novice adolescence to… in a few years he's become a married man and a dad. In fact, his father's a member of parliament, he's got much grander, and he's just engineered the Razorlight record, so I have to pay him more now. But he's not flash with it, he's really nice and funny.

Phil Manzanera's studio in Kilburn is really friendly. Phil's a great friend, and Brian Eno lives just a bicycle ride around the corner, and it's like 'I'm really enjoying this, I want to do it again'. In the past when I've tried to make records I've thought 'if I have an idea, how am I going to do it, who am I going to do it with'. This time I knew, so it encouraged the process of getting all my bits and pieces together. That, and finding myself in my sixties and thinking 'blimey, I'd better get some more stuff done before I'm completely ga-ga'.

Gary – Well you've outlasted Top Of The Pops.

Robert – I've outlived Top Of The Pops, you're right! Blimey, what do you know.

Gary – So what do you make of youngsters who would debate the merits of a Soft Machine live reissue?

Robert – Well, I'm very grateful. In fact, there's a French magazine called Improjazz which, as the title suggests, starts off with the Ornette Coleman area, and Sun Ra and stuff. But they also deal with a lot of the music I was involved in when I was a kit drummer, and they do indeed go through that stuff. I don't think about it much, but I have been shown a couple of videos people have dug up of when I was beardless and drumming. And it's so long ago it's like someone else, but I find it quite poignant really, and I'm grateful that people hold onto some of that. All the acrimony that went on in the band at the time, young men too much testosterone stuff, that's all just evaporated and I can appreciate what we were trying to do. Wincing at the mistakes, but realising it wasn't a complete waste of time.

I mean I'm still listening to Duke Ellington for god sake, you don't only have to listen to the stuff of your time. I find it difficult to listen to, but some of it is much better than I realised at the time, and does in fact involve a musician of New Zealand origin, which is Dave MacRae. He ended up with us in Matching Mole. There's a Matching Mole On The Radio put out by Hux records, and Dave's such a knockout on it on electric piano. He was married to a woman called Joy, a session singer, who's also a New Zealander. I think they

now both work in Australia, but I miss Dave, I'd certainly work with Dave if he were available. He was one of the first jazz musicians I knew who was a cracking technician, but so confident that he didn't mind at all playing with people like me. He actually did quite a bit of session work with people who knew less about music than I did. But he was always very nice and wasn't at all snobbish about his skill, he would just use it where it was appropriate.

People go away and move around. Some of the people I used to work with I have no idea where they are really.



Wyatt in the '70s

Gary – Are you familiar with this saying 'Wyatting'?

Robert – Yeah, it means clearing a room quickly by putting on an intolerable record, and I was chosen.

Gary – I don't know if it meant terrible, just weird I think.

Robert – I'm very sad and I feel very sorry for myself.

Gary – I thought you'd see it as a great honour.

Robert – I don't because I'm not like that. I would never put on a record if I thought somebody in the room didn't like it, and I never even send people my CDs and say 'this is my CD'… I'd be too embarrassed. I wouldn't impose what I do on anybody, because I know it's not everybody's taste, and so the idea that other people would impose my music on people who didn't like it I find a bit… I would never do 'Wyatting', put it that way.

Gary – I was thinking that the first time you hear something that's out of the envelope, your reaction tends to be in the negative. Anything that's good you tend to go 'I don't know if I like this', and then you play it again.

Robert – Yeah, well I've done that, that's true. When I first hear what used to be called modern jazz, bebop, in the '50s when I was still at school, they were playing so fast I just couldn't think why they were playing so fast, I couldn't tell the difference between one note and another, it just sounded like they were beating a bottle, I didn't see the point of what they were doing at all. It took me quite a lot of work to actually hear the underlying chord sequence that they were playing variations on, by listening out for what the piano and bass were doing, and I realised that it was in fact a chord sequence based on some popular song, and I'd sing along to it, and I'd realise the amazing skill and ingenuity of what they were doing. It baffled me at first, it was just like people shouting at you in a foreign language. But I stuck with it because it seemed to have such an authority to it. These people really know what they're doing, but I can't work out what it is. But I was just intrigued. My Dad had brought me up listening to Stravinsky and everybody, I don't need 'easy', but I just didn't know what they were doing. So I can see that maybe some of the stuff we've been involved in might have been a bit like that.

Gary – A lot of your older records seem to be out of print at the moment.

Robert – [I hope] Domino will take over the back catalogue and put them out, because there's a heap of a few thousand records there, and we certainly don't want them scrapped just because they haven't got the right record label now. So, they're a bit dubious about it, but we're hoping they will do that, but apart from that, they will be doing the back catalogue.

The Ryko thing… Ryko sort of got asset-stripped by some vast anonymous conglomerate and lost their bearings. They were surprised that we left and very pissed off, but my wife is my manager and she's very canny, and she had a clause in the contract that said we can't be used as collateral in takeover stuff in record companies. We want to choose the record company we're with and know who they are, and Domino turned up and they're great, I like them very much.



Gary – Yes well, it's interesting that in little old New Zealand Domino is being distributed by EMI, so you're back with the same company that distributes Virgin.

Robert – There's no escaping monopoly capitalist society as old lefties like me already knew. There you go. It still means I know who I'm talking to, and it's not some anonymous Texan who hasn't got a clue what I do. I'm too old for that crap.
Robert Wyatt

Gary – Robert, I could talk with you for hours but I should let you go.

Robert – I hope you think it's alright [the record]. It's not that surprising, it's what I usually do, my wife wrote half the words as usual, and then a few songs by other people… with an old Cuban folk song, and the rest is the usual stuff really with a bit more instruments in it. You don't have to hear it now, do you? [laughs].

Gary Steel

Selected Lyrics by Robert Wyatt & Alfie Benge – Side By Side is out now. Get it from Schrödinger's Books.

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"I'm so somewhere else now..." - Uncut N° 274 - March 2020



"I'm so **somewhere else** now..."

Many happy returns, **ROBERT WYATT**! As he celebrates his 75th birthday, a national treasure invites *Uncut* round for a chat. Over carrot cake, Tom Pinnock hears tales of the Soft Machine, Pink Floyd and Wyatt's own wide ranging musical appetites. But will he ever make new music again? "Occasionally I hit the piano and go, 'Ah, that would be good, I must remember that!'..."

Photo by JEREMY GRAYSON

THE tea is made, the carrot cake is ready to be sliced and Robert Wyatt has just slid his electric wheelchair under the edge of the dining table when he realises he's forgotten the cake knife. *Uncut* offers to fetch it from the kitchen.

"No, it's all right," Wyatt says, reversing his chair. "I can get it without standing up, mate."

He returns with a huge knife - "It's a bit Agatha Christie" - and proceeds to slice the cake. "It's great, I can sit anywhere in town," he adds, detailing one of the advantages of being wheelchair-bound, "while everyone else has to sit on a bench. It's a bit toytown round here, like one of those imaginary places in train sets, but that's no bad thing."

The town in question is Louth in the Lincolnshire Wolds, where Wyatt and his wife Alfreda Benge have lived for over 30 years. Their house, situated right in the hilly centre, is deceptively large, its ground floor stretching back through room after room. The space facing the street is Wyatt's music room, complete with a baby grand piano and woven Tunisian wall hangings, while other areas are decorated with prints and paintings by the likes of Oblique Strategies co-creator Peter Schmidt. While Wyatt might have retired from making his own records after 2oo7's *Comicopera*, music still plays a huge part in his life and Benge's: indeed,

when *Uncut* arrives, *Who Is In Love?*, by Iranian singer Shahram Nazeri, is blasting through the large dining room stereo.

"A friend of mine just came back from the Iranian film festival," Wyatt explains, adjusting his yellow-and-pink glasses. "Apart from being irritated that she couldn't wear her designer clothes there, she brought back some records for me. What I really like is Iranian singing, it's just beautiful, so I've been playing this."

On January 28, Robert Wyatt turns 75. It's a milestone he didn't expect to reach. To discover how retirement is treating one of our musical national treasures, *Uncut* has travelled to Lincolnshire for an afternoon with the singer, songwriter and musician; during our time in Louth, Wyatt regales us with tales of Soft Machine and The Wilde Flowers, of Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Nick Mason and Brian Eno, of hanging out with Robert Graves in Majorca, and of his own shape-shifting musical passions. He explains how he and his wife's health problems are inevitably changing their lives, but also why putting together a forthcoming book of their lyrics for Faber has revitalised them.

"It's a great thing that's happened in terms of tidying up who we are, me and Alfie. They gave us a couple of months to sort it out, with Alfie's stuff too - we're doing it together. Alfie keeps diaries which is lucky, but we had to remember the situations in which certain records were made, which was a good exercise for elderly, forgetful people. The timing was fantastic - just as we were finishing the book, Alfie started to get seriously ill to the point where we couldn't have carried on doing it. She's being taken care of, having operations and scans, and she will be for months. We'll see how that goes."

Wyatt's son Sam is sleeping upstairs. He's a nurse at a nearby hospital, and often stops in at their house to rest after night shifts. It's been more than helpful, considering their health issues, to have him there, and Wyatt seems to take huge pleasure in spending time with him.



"I was very lucky": At the piano soon after the release of *Rock Bottom*, september 1974

"By the time he was 19 and he'd delivered his first baby, I thought, 'He's already done something much more important than I will ever do in my life.' I wasn't there for him as a dad, but he doesn't seem to be resentful at all. It's great having him here because, well, he's a nurse, but he's also very kind and very clever. You can't look anywhere in the house without seeing something he fixed.

"One of the things that changes as you get older is the past," Wyatt adds, pondering life as he approaches his 75th birthday, free of alcohol or cigarettes but as lucid, frank, modest and wryly funny as ever. "It's like you're born in a village at the bottom of a valley and it's all you know. Then your life is spent climbing up this mountain and you're looking back down, and you see your village is just one of many villages. Then you see there's a whole landscape and you see the horizon - you can still see your little village, you know where it is, but you're

seeing it from this strange height. It just looks so different. That was one of the weirdest things about putting these lyrics together for the book. 'Did I really write that?'"

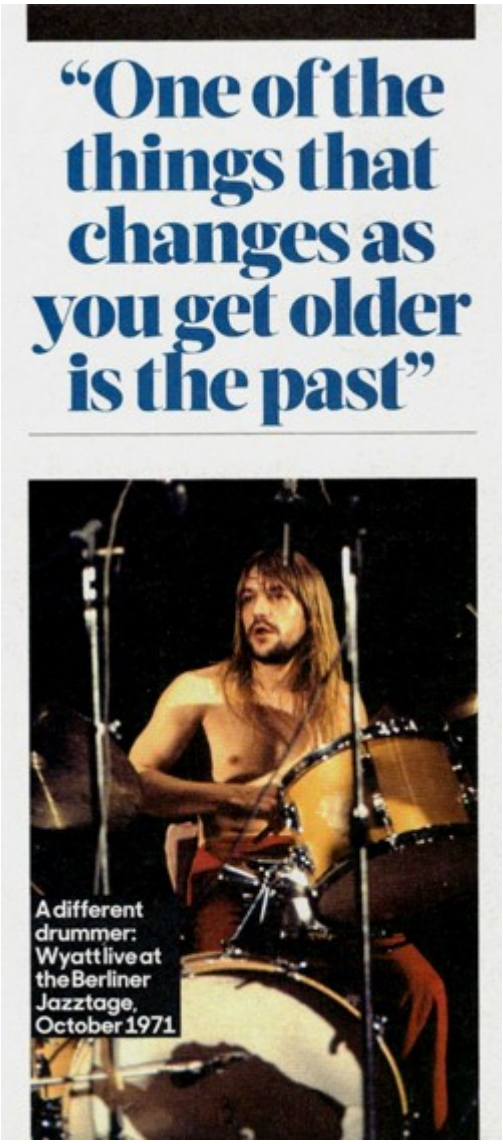
Cutting another slice of cake, Wyatt gestures to *Uncut*'s recording gear. "Are you sure you're getting this? John Walters came up and recorded me for the BBC once, and none of it came out. I don't mind, I can just do it again. But the alarming thing is I always seem to say something quite different to the previous time."

UNCUT: It sounds like you never imagined yourself getting to 75.

WYATT: Absolutely not, no. As far as I'm concerned, every surge of activity in my life was a sprint, which is a particular kind of energy. But then I'd get to the end of the sprint and fuck me, there's another one! If only I'd have known that, in retrospect, it was a fucking marathon! Nobody told me - if they had I'd have taken care of myself better and paced myself, instead of living in a panic all the time.

In 2014, you told *Uncut* that you'd retired from music. Your last few albums were so well received, I guess it was the perfect run to go out on?

One reason I stopped was that my dad had died long before my age, so I didn't know how to behave older than that. But I did find that [2007's] *Comicopera* was exactly how I wanted it to be, and it was partly thanks to this great engineer Jamie Johnson; I also got Alfie to do half the [*lyric*] writing. There were also the people I got to play in my imaginary band, like Annie Whitehead, Phil Manzanera, Paul Weller and Yaron Stavi. The trouble with proper groups is I can't follow and I can't lead, so I'm a bit stuck really.



Obviously, there's some great Soft Machine and Matching Mole stuff, but it does seem like you flourished, creatively, almost immediately after you had your accident and could no longer play drums in a group.

It's tough being in a band. All that diplomacy, and testosterone-fuelled young men. I actually really liked doing a few records entirely on my own, like [1991's] *Dondestan*. Somebody once said to me, "It's amazing you could do all that on your own." And I said, "You're amazed?! I'm fucking stunned! How the fuck did I do that?" I always just tried to make a good record, by any means I could; but I got to the point where I was trying to do something different, then I'd listen to it and think, 'Oh, it's another fuckin' Robert Wyatt record, isn't it? How can I break out of this cage?'

Many people would be quite happy to hear you in that particular cage.

Well, I just stopped in the end.

Do you miss it?

It's hard to say. I'm so somewhere else now, because me and the missus have our life now and it's just not built around making records any more. I'd rather sit around chatting with Alfie, really. If I'm thinking about happy memories, I wouldn't remember this gig or that gig - but what I do remember is getting into Alfie's little car, getting the wheelchair in the back, going off down the road and stopping at those little caravans where you can get a fried egg sandwich, and just sitting there for a bit in the layby. Alfie nips out and gets a sandwich and a cup of tea, we'll open the windows, have a fag. They're moments of

utter happiness that I remember, and I feel quite tearful about it now, because it will never happen again.

They're the most important things in life, tough, aren't they, love and companionship?

Getting older, the saddest thing I've had to give up is going down to London - I was invited to George Galloway's book launch, and I couldn't go. I think they thought it was because I didn't want to go, but I would absolutely have loved to. He's a brilliant man. Of course, not everybody thinks so - but I do. Then Nick Mason asked me if I could do an encore with *A Saucerful Of Secrets* singing "I'm A Believer", and I thought, 'That is a wonderful idea!" But I had to say no. I felt quite tearful about that too, because I would have loved to be with him again on a big occasion.



Wyatt in his music room in Louth, February 16, 2014

Couldn't they at least have sent a car up to take you London, though?

They offered all that, but I just can't. Being quite so disabled as I have become really does sometimes mean "disabled". It's nice that people don't think that, though, that I don't come across first and foremost as a cripple! *[laughs*] When we first met Ian Dury, his band were quite misshapen, the drummer was on a crutch, so Alfie jokingly said, "You could have Robert in your group." And Ian said, "Got enough fuckin' cripples in the band already!" He had a point. It would have been a fuckin' business carting us lot about. Alfie's imminently 80, and she needs physical comfort and peace - and I just don't do things without Alfie. You might think, 'What's the point of living older?' Well, one thing having lived this long is that we have this bunch of stuff we've done - if you look downwards from one end [*of my years*] to the other, it seems like a lot of stuff, more than I realised. So putting this book of lyrics together

has been a good feeling, and a good mental exercise. I'm glad we've lived long enough to do it, frankly.

How did you find the process of looking back over your work?

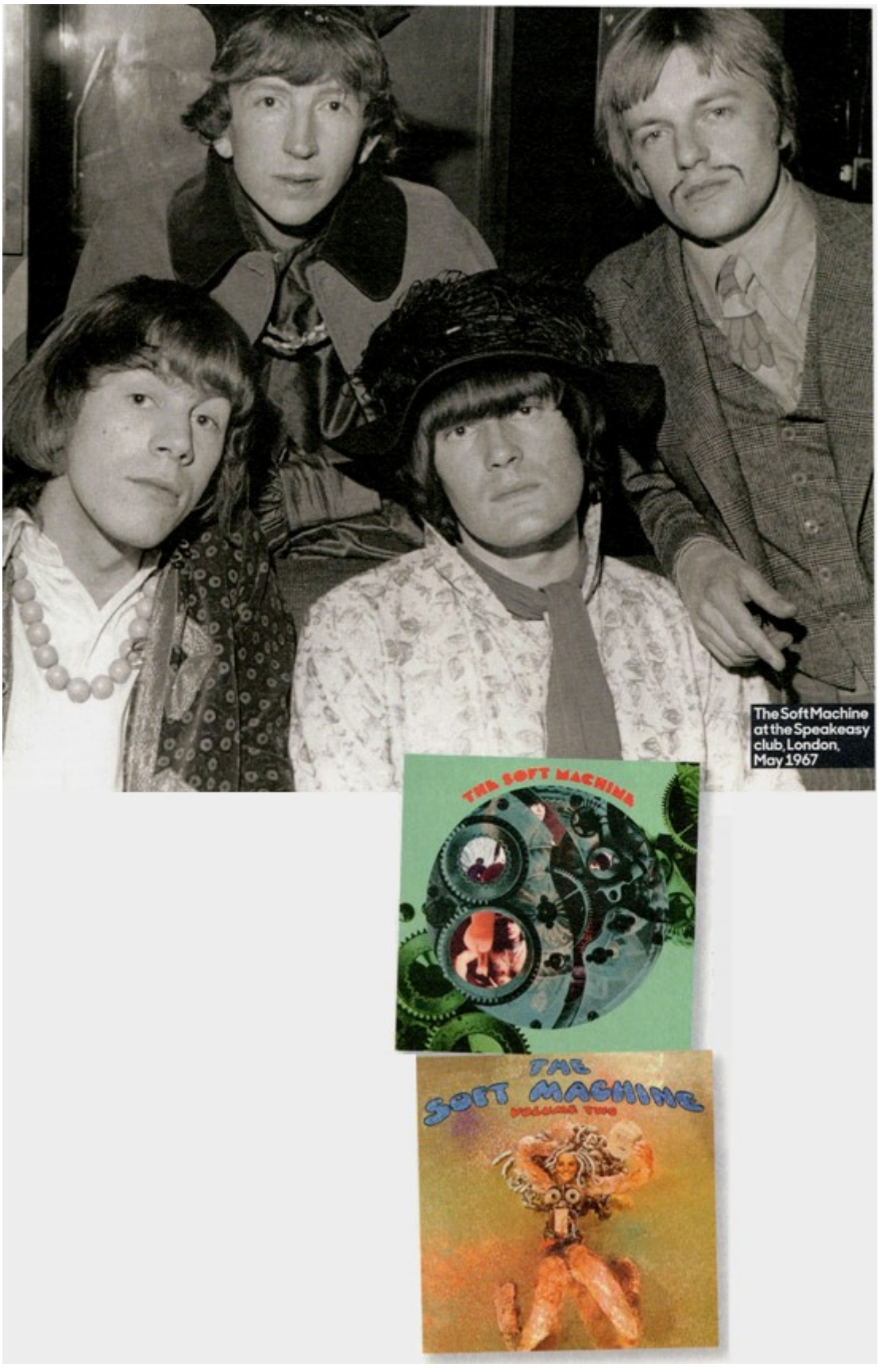
It caused quite a few sleepless nights. When I first tried to get some stuff together, I thought, 'I've only got enough for about 20 pages, this isn't gonna work.' I was thinking of Van Morrison - in his book he just put in 100 long things he'd done, and I was thinking, 'Bloody hell...' I do a lot of other people's tunes, and if you pick out the ones that I wrote without Alfie, it's not much.

You found enough for more than 20 pages, then?

Alfie and I are doing it together, and we also picked some funny little wordy things we'd done. There's a bit of annotation too. All my stuff was in these messy notebooks, but I think I got everything - oh, apart from one short lyric, a take on "Freight Train": "*Coltrane, Coltrane, going so fast/Wonder how your breath can last/I don't know what mode you're in/They all sound Greek to me.*" I forgot to put it in the book! So now you've got it [*laughs*]. When I made those records, everything went into each one, and that was the end of that journey. It wasn't played live.

That was quite a turnaround, considering the amount of gigging you did before your accident.

An amazing amount! That was a whole life there, even two. Before '68, we were this English grammar school band, a bit shaky, but we did our thing. That was a really friendly little band, with Daevid Allen and Kevin Ayers, just friends. We were also not like each other, which is why it couldn't have lasted. But to be young with, they were great. The early years playing in bands like The Wilde Flowers was the most fun - if I'd only ever done that, I'd be quite happy.



Once Soft Machine took off, though, you were playing all the time, from UFO and Middle Earth to touring America with Jimi Hendrix.

Playing the gigs required such concentration, listening to each other and keeping it all flowing, that I'd hardly register where we were, exactly. Talking of places like UFO, I remember that us and Pink Floyd and used to watch each other when we played the same venues, and there was just total mutual respect - you couldn't be rivals when you were trying to do completely

different things. I'm just grateful to the brilliant musicians I got to play for. Supporting Hendrix was very scary - if you're in an aircraft hangar with 5,000 Texans in it, you've gotta fuckin' get on with it and not stop until your half-hour is up. But it meant we came back to the UK really able to hit the ground running.

You'd lost Kevin Ayers somewhere along the way, though...

Yeah, without Kevin, of course. He'd had enough, and quite rightly he wanted to go and write his songs. I do get upset when he'd say later that he "wasn't technical enough" for the band - he was very good! I loved drumming with his bass playing, I loved his deep *sprechgesang* singing, a good contrast to mine, and I loved doing his songs.



When did everything start for you? I imagine it must have been a huge moment when Daevid Allen first turned up to lodge with your family in Lydden.

I'd already got into a lot of music through my brother Mark - he brought home the first Mingus and Ornette Coleman - but Daevid showed me how to live another way. Lydden was a little village then, there was just a post office, a few houses, a pub, and Daevid used to take his dog out for a walk, up and down... his dog being a tin on a long string. I was very impressed by that. When I first played music with Daevid, it was jazz and poetry. He would read out this poetry and Hugh Hopper and I would fiddle-fiddle, toodly-boodly behind him. I was at school and doing worse as the years went by, but one of the people who said "you don't have to approach life like that" was Daevid. He was the person who was doing what we assumed Dadaists did, which was inventing their own lives, writing their own scripts. That became a way out for me.

Did you already know Robert Graves, a similar free spirit, when you met Daevid?

Oh yeah, I think so. My parents had been in Majorca before the war, and I visited him there in the early '6os, and he was wonderful, a kind man, a patrician. He had a head you might see on a Roman coin, and his family were great to me. They still are. Robert had a little cottage on his plot halfway down the mountain, and he let me stay there. I was invited up to the house occasionally to hang around, but if you dined with Robert you had to do something, a turn or a poem or a joke or a song. Robert's son-in-law Ramon and I would sit opposite each other and imitate timbales for about five minutes! Simple things about living there were so exotic to me, like fig trees with great purple figs hanging there. But you didn't bite into them, because they'd probably got wasps inside! A perfect symbol of life itself. Kevin came with me once too, and I know that Kevin and Daevid went out there together too, and wrote some great songs there, which should have been the basis of the first Soft Machine LP, but it never got made. I think it would have been very good.

Were you aware of any of Graves' famous "muses" back then?

The muse thing was a bit over my head at the time. Most of that stuff is just retrospective understanding of who he was. It sounds a bit old-fashioned, doesn't it? Alfie doesn't like this muse thing - sometimes she gets called my muse: "I'm not your fuckin' muse. I'm Alfie, fuck off!"

That sounds a little like some of Alfie's lines on Rock Bottom - "*I'm not your larder/I'm Alife your guarder...*"

There was a feeling of relief about that record. It was the first time I hadn't had to be a drummer, so I could just take charge of the whole record. I was very lucky, because I had nearly a year to write it in my head and not have to do anything else. People don't think of it as a luxury, but if you're in hospital and someone is making your bed, turning you over, everything, then it is possible, with the scraps you had before, to conjure up 40 minutes of music and go over and over it in your head. I'd never had the opportunity to do that before. I still wasn't taking myself that seriously, though, I was still a bit "that'll do", which has always driven Alfie crazy. "Robert, that will not do. Do it again!" Another good thing was that there was no pressure, people didn't know if I was even going to live. I could have any combination of musicians on each track - like Fred Frith, Gary Windo, Mongezi Feza, Laurie Allan, Richard Sinclair. It was a wonderful feeling.



Man and knife: with Alfie, around the release of *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, 1975

One of your collaborations that's sometimes overlooked is your work on Brian Eno's Ambient 1: *Music For Airport*. How did that come about?

I was first introduced to him by [*Matching Mole bassist*] Bill MacCormick; he played on our song "Gloria Gloom" and then I did some stuff on a terrific record called *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*. I love his singing, and his songs and his words. When some elephants get rejected from their herds, they sometimes get together in a rogue elephant herd - so I think in a sense me and Brian were kind of rogue elephants. We were free, because we weren't in groups. I didn't know about the "music as wallpaper" theory then - Brian just said, "Can you play some piano?" I played and played and then he took out a section that he thought could repeat ad infinitum, and then he did everything else you hear on it. Working with Brian is great, because we don't have the same music in our heads, but his sheer presence makes me do things differently in the studio, and it's just great talking about music, politics, everything.



You still seem so fired up by music, it's hard to imagine that you're not coming up with new ideas.

I sing to myself. Occasionally I hit the piano and go, "Ah, that would be good, I must remember that!" But it's quite a cumbersome business, recording and making records. Now I'm investigating other music, a lot of it made by people who are demonised, politically.

How do you mean, demonised?

Well, if I'm sad about anything now, being 75, it's that colonialism hasn't disappeared at all; how it's done has just got more subtle. This thing of fake benevolence, like, "Oh, we want to rescue you from your tyranny, and then you can just live in a happy land of McDonald's and Coca-Cola with us..."

It reminds me of the spread of Christianity: "Don't worship your false idols, they're terrible. Witch doctors? Dreadful people. You want our Jesus, here's the Bible - now get on with the work." Our economic systems are the new Bible, to which people are meant to aspire, and relinquish their old gods. It's the same old trick. On YouTube I now look out for ways to reverse the demonisation of people we're told to hate or feel sorry for.

What have you been into recently?

I've found some lovely clips of school choirs in Syria, it's a joy to watch them. There's a saxophonist called Sophia Tyurina - they like child prodigies in Russia, but this girl's really something. Traditional Moldovan dance music is my current favourite thing - it's a knockout!

You're exploring hidden corners of the world from Louth!

That is my sense of adventure now, these people are taking me somewhere else. It's so much more fun than making records now. I still feel like the same person, but I'm looking for

something else.

Robert Wyatt and Alfreda Benge's collected lyrics will be published by Faber this year

Ear defining

Robert Wyatt's finest work

SOFT MACHINE
THIRD CBS, 1970

A double album of just four side-long tracks, with the only non-instrumental being Wyatt's 19-minute "Moon In June". It's a lot less austere than the rest of *Third*, and in many ways opened the door to the rest of his work. **7/10**

MATCHING MOLE
MATCHING MOLE'S LITTLE RED RECORD
CBS, 1972

Produced by Robert Fripp, the second album by Wyatt's revolving group (try saying "Soft Machine" in French) contains its fair share of heavy jazz rock; there are fine songs here too, though, such as the baffled, angry "God Song" and the shifting "Gloria Gloom", named after a nickname for Benge and featuring Brian Eno on synth. **8/10**

ROBERT WYATT
ROCK BOTTOM
VIRGIN, 1974

Mostly conceived in Wyatt's head while he recovered from his life-changing accident, *Rock Bottom* still sounds like nothing else: a watery, melancholy mix of jazz, ambient, rock and the avant-garde, with star turns from Mike Oldfield and Ivor Cutler. **10/10**

ROBERT WYATT
RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD
VIRGIN, 1975

The mercurial follow-up, with the more playful *Ruth* side balanced by the darker churnings of *Richard*. With its versions of Charlie Haden and Mongezi Feza tunes, it introduced Wyatt's predilection for covers, but would turn out to be his last proper album for 10 years. **8/10**

ROBERT WYATT
NOTHING CAN STOP US
ROUGH TRADE, 1982

A compilation of singles that surpasses most standalone albums – highlights include versions of "Strange Fruit", "The Red Flag" and Chic's "At Last I'm Free", along with the sole original, "Born Again Cretin". **9/10**

ROBERT WYATT
SHLEEP
HANNIBAL, 1997

The beginning of Wyatt's masterful final trilogy, *Shleep* featured guests such as Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno, Annie Whitehead and Evan Parker. As with 1991's *Dondestan*, the lyrics were all co-written with Benge. **9/10**

ROBERT WYATT
COMICOPERA
DOMINO, 2007

The final chapter in Wyatt's recording career, this three-act, hour-long opus starts off with icy jazz and slowly moves around the globe, eventually banishing the English language completely with the revolutionary "Hasta Siempre, Comandante". **9/10**



"His songs have a unique sound to them"

Jarvis Cocker explains why he loves the music of Robert Wyatt

I'VE been asked to write the introduction to the collected lyrics, and I was excited to be asked. I remember first seeing Robert on *Top Of The Pops* when he covered 'I'm A Believer' by The Monkees, and I always loved his version; then a few years back somebody heard 'Running The World' and gently accused me of ripping off his song 'The Age Of Self', so they played it to me and I thought it was brilliant. Absolutely there are some similarities in the lyrical content. Robert's very good at doing that, in covering dark subjects but doing it in a very direct way and accessible way. You could say we probably inhabit the same area of the political spectrum. Musically, his songs have a very unique sound to them, and you can recognise that it's a Robert Wyatt song immediately. Generally, I go more for a lower voice than a higher voice, but I make an exception in his case! His version of Chic's 'At Last I'm Free' is amazing. I was DJing in Cologne once and we'd been told we had to stop, so I put that track on, thinking, 'It's quite mellow, so that'll be the end of the party.' But it was a lovely moment – all these people in Germany at three o'clock in the morning singing a Robert Wyatt song at the top of their lungs."

> Zoom

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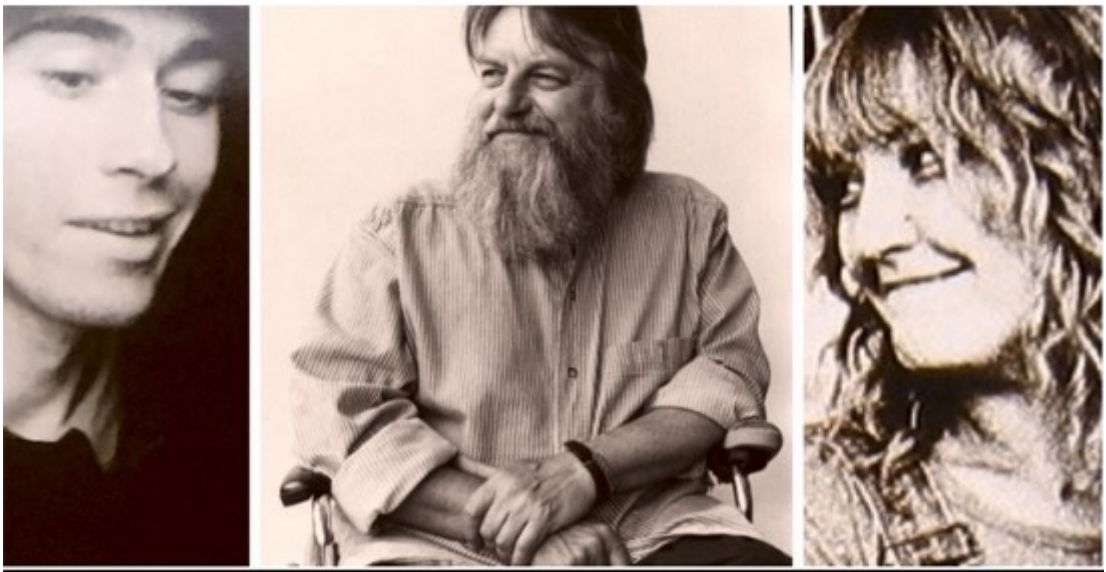
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'Always finding nice things in a tragic situation' - Robert Wyatt at 75 - Morning Star - January 28, 2020

for Peace and Socialism
Morning Star

'Always finding nice things in a tragic situation' - Robert Wyatt at 75

MILES ELLINGHAM meets the unique left-wing singer with his partner and muse Alfreda Benge at their Lincolnshire redoubt



MS Robert Wyatt: 50 years of uncompromisingly political music that soundtracked apartheid, the miners' strike and the Palestinian struggle.

PULLING into the market town of Louth after a two-hour bus ride through the green speckled Lincolnshire countryside, you feel thrown back in time to an earlier England, one that feels very far from the "music industry."

It seems fitting that for the past two decades this has been the home of avant-garde cult musician Robert Wyatt and his partner Alfie Benge.

Today Wyatt will be 75 — which is something to celebrate, after a six-decade musical career that began as a teenager in the so-called "Canterbury scene."

The scene (posthumously titled or, as Wyatt would have it, invented) was formed around Wyatt's group, Soft Machine, who, with Pink Floyd, were the resident bands at London's legendary hippie club UFO and went on to tour the US with Hendrix.

Wyatt was the drummer (he learnt to play in Robert Graves's garden in Mallorca) and shared vocal duties with Kevin Ayers and, for a time, Daevid Allen.

But that is distant history. Wyatt has been a solo artist since a life-changing accident in 1973 that left him in a wheelchair and led to a shift in direction to vocalist-composer.

The following year saw his extraordinary, mesmeric record, Rock Bottom, which still makes any 100 best albums lists worth their salt.

And then came nearly 50 years of uncompromisingly political music that soundtracked international concerns from apartheid and the miners' strike to Palestinian rights, through reinterpretations of such songs as Strange Fruit and Chic's At Last I Am Free and, most famously, Shipbuilding (written for him by Elvis Costello), as well as seven further albums of his own compositions.

I can remember when I first heard Wyatt's music. It was always present in the house as I grew up, as, like some kindly ghost, Wyatt's lilting cadence would haunt my musical education, always stranger than the rest, always different.

Arriving in Louth, it was Wyatt who opened the door to me and took me through into his study, where we chatted over cups of tea and a big bowl of soup.

"I really identified with the painters of the early 20th century," begins Wyatt, leaning forward in his electric wheelchair, "and I grew to envy how they worked: just make something in the studio, put it up in the exhibition and bugger off. I felt I was trying to change the musical idiom and make it more like painting."

Wyatt's a wonderful interviewee and you get the feeling that he's always approaching an answer for the first time — he'll sit in silence with a pained look until he finds his words.

However, his meandering train of thought is more difficult to render in print, and, this being an interview at 75, I nudge him back in time, asking how he had experienced the 1960s, forming Soft Machine and touring the US with Hendrix.

"I look back very fondly on that time, you know. Kevin [Ayers] wrote these lovely songs and Daevid [Allen] was a beatnik, so he brought all the literary and philosophical influences.

"We were very interested in the work of Alfred Jarry and the self-aware humour of pataphysics. We became instrumentalists but we weren't comfortable with the hippy consensus, we preferred to use jazz musicians as a guide."

Why was that?

"Well, the hippies came from this folkloric tradition, and I always thought that they tended towards a dismissal of black culture at the time. I got the feeling they sneered at stuff like Gloria Gaynor or Motown.

"Not all of them, of course — and Dylan was great … but I just saw a load of people who were so stoned that they thought the Grateful Dead was a good band."

But what was it like living that way, among what we might call "rock stars?"

"Well it's funny you should say that, actually one of the papers came to interview Soft Machine just before the America tour and when they saw us, they said: 'Oh, you're just some little hobbits…'

"So, I'm not sure we were ever really accepted. We played for people who were much more into the goal of 'far-outness' than we were in our lifestyles. We — well I, at least — spent most of the '60s oddly domesticated, in my little Dulwich back-to-back."

Did you sense any rebellion in the 1960s counterculture overall?

"Not rebellion, really. More like what the French would call 'epater la bourgeoisie' — a shock to the system, yes, but no systemic change, not where it mattered."

Did you really punch [legendary US music promoter] Bill Graham in the face?

Wyatt laughs with a childlike sheepishness. "Well, I wasn't used to that kind of ballsy American 'get your ass over here' and 'You'll never play in this town again!' I don't think we had a fight but there was certainly a disagreement.

"I told him that I didn't give a shit about playing at his silly little club [San Francisco's Fillmore] and that made him upset."

I get the feeling Wyatt doesn't enjoy confrontation but is plagued with a sense of justice.

Alfreda Benge, known to all as Alfie, is more than just a partner to Wyatt.

She has been his collaborator for 50 years, designing every album cover of his solo career and often writing lyrics for his songs. While she taps away, talking politics on Twitter, at her laptop, I ask her if she remembers how they met.

"I liked musicians," she says, squinting. "They didn't have to get up in the mornings, you see. As to how I met Robert, I got to know a young drummer who ended up with Robert's wife.

"And I ended up seeing Robert play at [London's] Rainbow Theatre.

"We didn't really notice each other," she goes on, ignoring protestation from Wyatt, "and Robert was always with these tall, glamorous women, so I never really considered him — because I thought I wasn't, you know, one of them.

"Anyway, I ended up leaving him a note that said: 'Dear Robert, how about it?' and we went off to see The Kinks together. Things just went along from there, really."

Benge's arrival on the scene marked a change in Wyatt's career. Not only would she radically galvanise his politics but much of his post-accident album Rock Bottom was addressed to her: the otherworldly Sea Song, notably, and the paired songs Alife and Alifib (so-named, said Wyatt, because one was in E and the other was in B).

Wyatt's accident, he says, changed not just how he made music — he could no longer be a drummer with a band (leaving Soft Machine he had formed Matching Mole) — but resulted in a whole shift in consciousness.

This is readily apparent in the faraway dreamscape of Rock Bottom, which he'd started writing earlier in the year in Venice — accompanying Benge, who was working on Nicholas Roeg's classic film Don't Look Now — and subsequently finished in hospital.

"I was always finding nice things in what it meant to be in a tragic situation," says Wyatt. "I found that lying in bed in hospital with somebody else making the beds and bringing the breakfast was an ideal way to write without the pressures of daily life."

And no longer having to lead a band was liberating, too.

"Just getting people to come in and play — it isn't like getting married to them, but they can do nice things for you on the spot."

How did you find that "daydream" sound? It's quite an aesthetic departure from the earlier work.

"Well, I think I do live in a sort of daydream. When I was writing it, I kept picturing these early 20th-century paintings that I always loved, landscapes and things, then I found myself mapping the sonic equivalent to these paintings. Also, Alfie introduced me to Astral Weeks, by Van Morrison, which really influenced me."

And after that you went on to cover the Monkees' I'm a Believer. How did that happen?

"Again, I didn't like the class snobbery of how the rock world looked at pop music. I have a great admiration for pop music. I see it as industrial-era folk music really — despite the perniciousness of the industry. Though I should say Rough Trade was very good to me with

all those singles they wanted."

Wyatt produced an array of singles for Rough Trade throughout the 1980s and his recording of Shipbuilding, written for him by Elvis Costello and Clive Langer, is both timeless and redolent of its age: a profoundly political song about making battleships for the Falklands war.

Those years also saw him cover songs by Cuban and Latin American revolutionaries, singing in Spanish as naturally and idiosyncratically as in English, and another memorable partnership: with Jerry Dammers of The Specials, on The Wind of Change.

They were followed by his own hyperpoliticised album Old Rottenhat (1985), a reaction to hearing one of his songs on Radio Europe or Voice of America — what Wyatt calls "one of those propaganda channels" — and wanting to write songs that could not be misinterpreted.

It was this period in which Wyatt and Benge became active members of the Communist Party.

As Benge explains: "We were very pissed off with the Labour Party at the time. It was just before the Iranian revolution, when David Owen was still being nice about the Shah.

"My dad was a member of the Communist Party but I was always more of an anarchist — it was Robert who joined first."

Why did he join?

Wyatt, thinks for a second. "I think I saw it as a haven from any kind of racism. There was still a lot of racism among left-leaning middle-class dinner parties.

"It seemed to me that the Communist Party was ideologically anti-racist at its core. The Communist Party were also doing good work in South Africa."

You didn't consider joining the Socialist Workers Party, or something like that?

"No," says Benge, "I mean, we did know lots of Trots and got a lot of Trot newspapers. They would say they were internationalist but they weren't — because they think no-one has got it right, and end up hating all the same governments that Nato hates. That being said, during the miners' strike they did wonderful work."

So why did you leave the Communist Party?

"We left when we moved to Lincolnshire. It just wasn't feasible any more, we couldn't get to any of the meetings and I think we were two of the three communists in Lincolnshire. And we were disappointed with the Blair administration: how they'd pushed the left to the sidelines. All the New Labour stuff — about which there was nothing new."

When Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party, however, Benge and Wyatt became enthusiastic supporters. Wyatt even overcame his long history of stage fright to perform at a Momentum benefit, accompanied by Paul Weller, another serendipitous musical collaborator, at which he was introduced on stage by Corbyn.

We were talking only a week after Labour's disastrous election defeat and Benge and Wyatt were clearly feeling the pain. Nonetheless, Wyatt's take was, as usual, left-field. "We've witnessed a real phenomenon," he says. "I am not a current affairs chap — I get too hurt by it — but I'd like to stress that I didn't vote for Corbyn because I thought he could win, but because he was right.

"Honestly, he's one of the bravest Englishmen since Captain Oates. He reflected the urgent desire to take that humanitarian spirit to the top and he held fast in the face of a really pernicious smear campaign. I'll always be immensely proud that my last-ever gig was a fundraiser for his movement. It was a great honour to bow out that way."

So Robert, having retired, is there any new music that gives you hope for the future?

"There are some great young jazz groups that I listen to. There's this one group, Nerija, that I enjoy. And I've been finding Russian bands on YouTube — like Otava Yo, who make these wonderful music videos.

"But I think the idea of newness is jaded and, as an 'avant-garde singer' I often feel that the prefix is overrated. I'm more concerned with preventing things from vanishing, to be honest. Maybe It's just my age, my Time Team attitude."

Miles Ellinghame

>> L'interview sur le site du Morning Star

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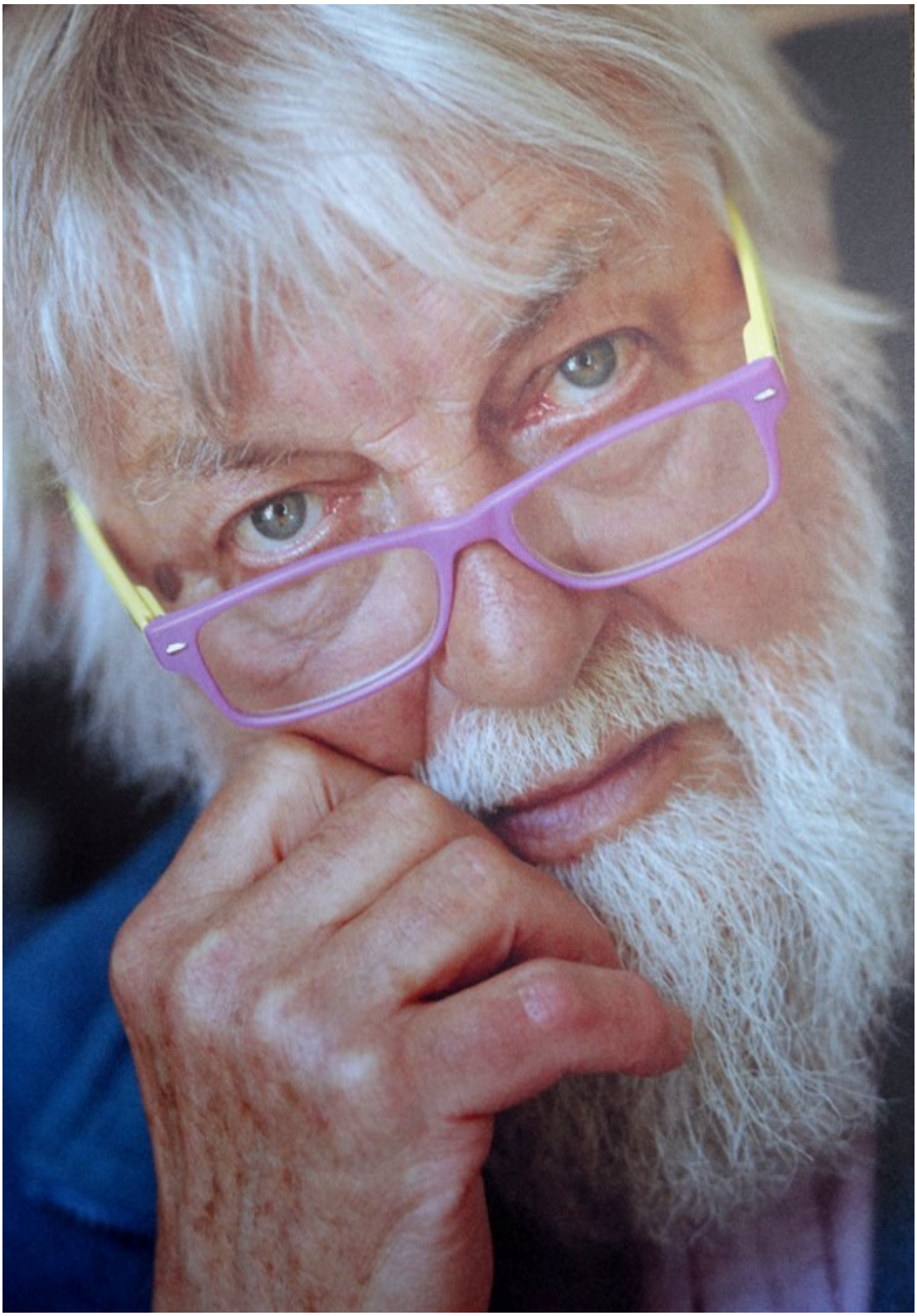


ROBERT WYATT AND ALFIE BENGE

***By* MARTIN CLARK**
Photographs by
KUBA RYNIEWICZ

Robert Wyatt is a musician and was a founding member of legendary British rock bands Soft Machine and Matching Mole. Since an accident in 1973 in which he was paralysed from the waist down, he has focused on his solo career, which has now spanned more than 40 years. He has collaborated with artists including Syd Barrett, Brian Eno, Bjork and Hot Chip and has released 13 studio albums and numerous EPs and singles. Martin Clark, Director of Camden Arts Centre, Luncheon's editor Frances von Hofmannsthal and photographer Kuba Ryniewicz took a train to Lincolnshire to have lunch in the home of Robert and his wife, Alfreda (Alfie) Benge, who has produced the artwork for all of his albums since 1974. Over a delicious fish pie cooked by Robert's friend and neighbour Jane Vincent, they discuss Robert's life, music and close working relationship with camera shy Alfie. Martin Clark is Director of Camden Arts Centre, London. Previously he was Director of Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; Artistic Director of Tate St Ives; and Curator of Exhibitions at Arnolfini, Bristol. He is an avid record collector and in a previous life worked in record shops, club promotion and as a DJ in Sheffield. He has been listening to Robert Wyatt for 25 years.





> Zoom

MARTIN CLARK: It's very nice to be here Robert, thank you for having us for lunch. I know Alfie is going to join us later, but I wanted to start by asking about your relationship with her, both personally and creatively. It's a partnership that has spanned more than 40 years now. How did you meet?

ROBERT WYATT: Well, actually, she knew some of my family before I knew her. I'd been married before and had a couple of kids, and she knew them. But when I first really took to her, we were in the Roundhouse, I think; I might have been playing, or in the audience. And I was wandering around in the back, and a lot of people were doing this kind of dance... I

can't do it now - a hippy, waving arms about thing. And there was this one girl - not dancing at, or to, anybody -just doing all this little footwork stuff, *tch, tch, tch*, and I was enchanted by this person. I thought, 'Blimey!' So, that's how we met. I think I said, 'Hello'.

MARTIN: What year was that?

ROBERT: It would have been late... oh, 1970?

MARTIN: Was she at art school then?

ROBERT: No. She was teaching film part-time, had made a film for the BBC about the Royal Academy and worked at IBM helping produce films. She'd also recently worked on dialogue for a Robert Altman film and was doing various freelance jobs too. She'd been to three art schools - painting at Camberwell, typography and graphics at the London College of Printing, and film at the Royal College of Art. Ten years altogether. She'd loved to have stayed on at art school forever.

She switched from painting because at Camberwell in the late 1950s, pure colour, which she always like using, tended to be looked down on. It tended to be browns and greys. She was doing these beautiful paintings and a teacher suggested, 'The colours would be okay if you were Eastern European.' She said, 'Well, I am', which shut him up. But she thought perhaps graphics would suit her better.

MARTIN: Did she know your music at that time? And how interested had she been in music over the years?

ROBERT: Alfie's actually contributed so much to my music since we've been together, I think of it as our music anyway... But even before our work together we were able to talk about everything for hours and hours. I could tell early on that this could be an endless conversation. I was interested in similar things to her - things she read and knew about -politics, music art ..

MARTIN: So you were interested in art as well?

ROBERT: Very. In fact, when I was a teenager I assumed I'd become a painter. That was my thing. We had art books at my home near Dover, in Kent. You know, modern art - all the usual suspects - and I just got lost in that, and I started trying to paint. I think my hero was Paul Klee, but I also liked a lot of the Futurists and De Chirico, that sort of thing. And another book we had, which I haven't seen since: a great, thick, fat book of Van Gogh drawings, just black-and-white things.

MARTIN: His drawings are amazing.

ROBERT: What I find interesting is that, at the time, people thought, 'These paintings are so modern - I can't stand it!' But now they just seem so sweet and old-fashioned, partly because of what they're of, the subject - never mind how it's done. It's very hard to think that those Impressionists were revolutionary at the time.

MARTIN: Its true. And it's become a cliché now of course, but there's a great quote from Wyndham Lewis that I always remember when I'm thinking about this. He said: 'The artist is always engaged in writing a detailed history of the future, because he is the only person aware of the present.'

ROBERT: I've always been interested in the idea of the avant-garde, and there are various words related to that, some of which are pejorative, like 'trendy', 'ephemeral', but also 'cutting edge'. I'd take 'avant-garde' back to the original meaning of the word - it actually means the front end of an army. But the thing I don't like about the connotation, especially in terms of the music I was involved in, rock and roll, is that it fancies itself as rebellious or dangerous.



Record covers from left to right: Shleep 1997, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard 1975, for Dennis and Ronnie. Courtesy of Domino Recording Co. Ltd.

I'm not at all hoping to be either of those things. What avant-garde means to me is seeing the beauty in things that people might not have noticed before. That's all. I'm not trying to get at anybody.

MARTIN: It happens with art as well. People think modern and contemporary art is all about trying to shock, trying to make something outrageous or provocative for the sake of it. But that's not what most artists are trying to do. They are simply trying to say something real and true, but in a way that is free of the received ideas or languages of the past, that somehow avoids disappearing into a kind of familiarity or bourgeois idea of good taste. So it may shock people because it's unfamiliar, but eventually it all gets assimilated - it usually takes a generation.

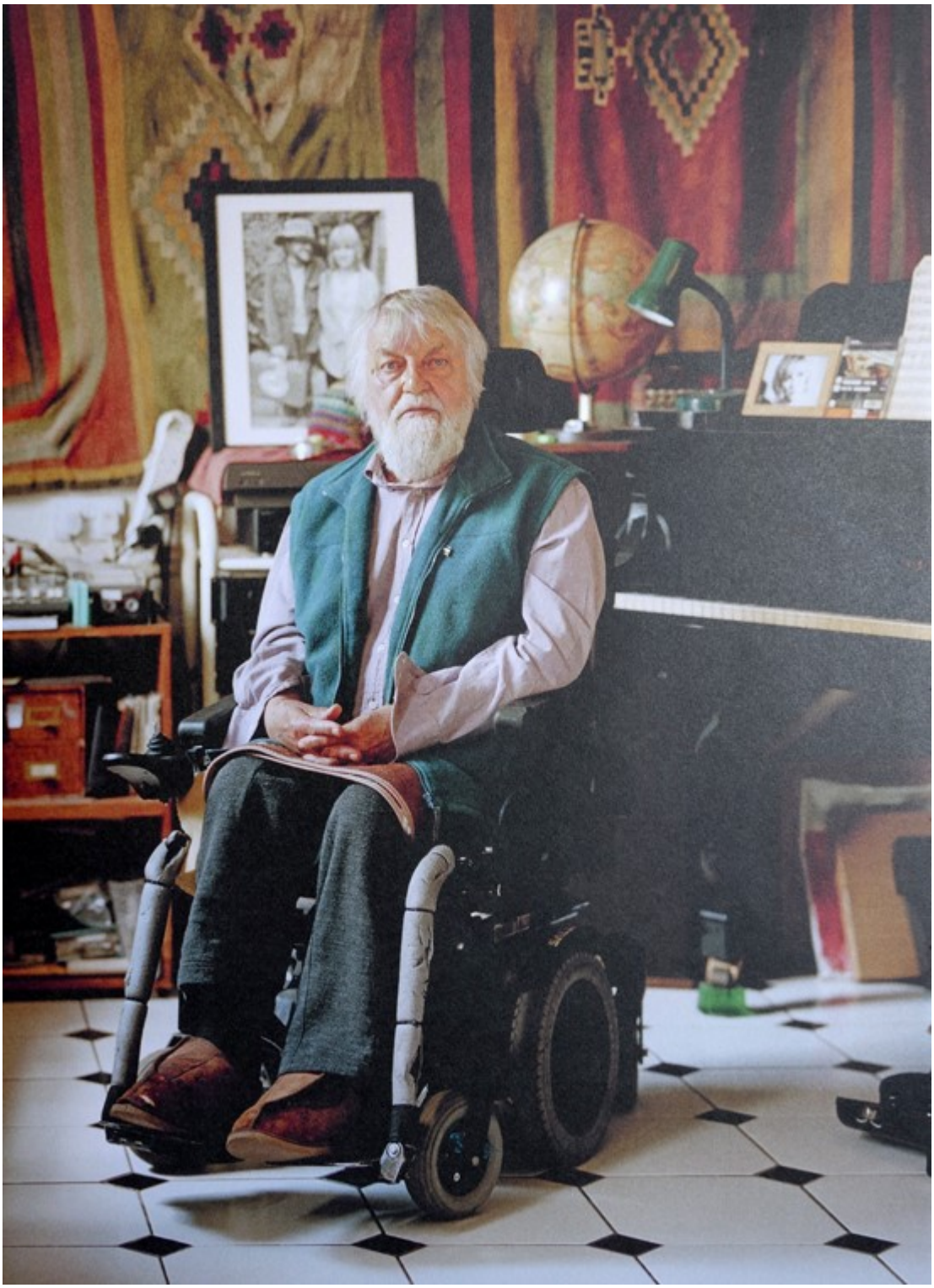
ROBERT.- I remember, Hendrix, when he did 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and was quizzed on television about it - 'Why did you make this ugly noise out of it?' - he said, 'I thought it was beautiful.'

MARTIN: Did you stop making paintings?

ROBERT: My parents let me draw and paint things on the wall and all that stuff- but I didn't paint on canvases. It was expensive, for a start. I painted on old doors and bits of hardboard, and I thought, 'Blimey. This is it.' But then, when I was 16 or so I went to art college and heard this tutor say to some gloomy students, 'I'm afraid you've got to learn to draw.' Oh fuck, I thought. But the great thing about that time was... I thought, Okay, where don't you have to be able to do anything? Beat music! If you're a drummer or a singer, you really don't have to learn anything. You just sit down and do it, or you open your mouth.

MARTIN: So, your route into music was through beat and rock and roll?

ROBERT: Playing it.



> Zoom

MARTIN: And what about jazz?

ROBERT: I would listen to loads of jazz, simultaneously with painting - but it seemed impossible to play. I just thought they were magicians. I couldn't see how it was possible to do what they were doing - especially between the late 1940s and the late '50s - they were dazzling. So, I traipsed around; saw Charles Mingus live, twice. It was a golden era. The best concert I ever saw in my life was Coltrane playing with Eric Dolphy. It makes me cry to think of it. It was so beautiful. I always liked playing drums, and I had a couple of drumming lessons. But they don't really apply - if its proper jazz technique no one will hear you in a rock and roll band. It's all crash, bang, wallop.

MARTIN: Did you see that amazing BBC documentary on Ginger Baker?

ROBERT: I did! He's a monster, but he's absolutely right. He's the proper drummer and the others don't really know what they're doing. I have to say that, and I didn't even like rock music. I saw him when he was playing with The Graham Bond Organisation at LSE - he was stonking.

MARTIN: He was playing in these massive rock bands with Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood and Jack Bruce, but all he really cared about was being taken seriously by the jazz drummers and African musicians like Fela Kuti...

ROBERT: That's right. Art Blakey ducted with him eventually. He may have been a frightening geezer, but he was a master, he had a feel.

MARTIN: Getting back to you and Alfie - she made the artwork for all of your solo albums, from *Rock Bottom* (1974) onwards. And those sleeves feel so intimately connected to my experience of your music over the years. I guess it's something we're losing now, with streaming and Spotify and whatnot, that thing of holding the sleeve in your hand while you listened to the record, almost living inside it for days and days. Were those paintings Alfie used for the artwork things she had made already, were they around the house or in the studio?

ROBERT: No.

MARTIN: So she made them specifically for the record sleeves?

ROBERT: She did. I wouldn't call them collaborations, but she knows the music backwards because she's had to hear it being done. She was with me all the time during recording, so she could pick up on images in the songs that someone at a record company, someone in the art department, might not have had the time to do.

MARTIN: Was she making her own work outside of that?



> Zoom

Herbert the Elephant and Herbert the Chicken, written by Ivor Cutler, illustrated by Alfreda Benge (both Walker Books, 1984)

ROBERT: She'd studied art, but when we met her trajectory was going to be in film. But she didn't like the way the film industry worked and she didn't like being censored. She was doing a thing for IBM about the Sixties and they took [the parts about] the Black Power movement out - not suitable for showing to IMB South Africa. And then, fortunately, I came along and broke my back, so she said, 'I'm not made for the real world, I'll retire and look after you instead.' Anyway, after that she thought she could use her skills in painting and

drawing - that this was something she could do here at home. She didn't really like the psychedelic record covers of the era. I know she thought she would deliberately do the opposite.

MARTIN: They have such a beautiful relationship to the music - a simplicity and depth and naivety and absurdity, and a sort of surreal, childlike charm - but there is an edge to them too. But for me your music has a very visual quality already. You can talk about a lot of music like that of course, but it's not just the images and characters that are conjured up through the lyrics or the song titles; there's also something about the way your songs are constructed. There's a sort of blocky quality to music - these drones in the background, like flat blocks of colour, and then these figures that are the melodies that sit on top of them, set against the ground. And I think Alfie's paintings work a bit like that as well.

ROBERT: I think in pictures. I listen in pictures. And so there does tend to be a landscape, which will be the chord sequence. There do tend to be things on it, which will be instrumentation; and there will be people in it, which is the voice. Composers like Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus are very pictorial, they take you places. I like that.

MARTIN: The other thing about them is the lyrics. Alfie writes as well, doesn't she?

ROBERT: The last half of everything I've done, and all of the things I've done here, she's written *at least* half my lyrics. Partly because I'm writing more music than I could think of words for.

MARTIN: So, for you it starts with the music?

ROBERT: Yeah, but even then - like, I had a little tune, *te de de de te de de duh* (sings), and I thought, I don't know what that is. And she said, it's a lullaby. And I said, 'Oh, right!' And she wrote a thing called 'Lullaby'. She was just able to do that. She'd listen to the tune until she heard the words. If the tune is organic, it's often very amenable to speech patterns. They can go together if you allow them to.

MARTIN: Were there any records that you made, perhaps with other collaborators, where you were looking at, or thinking about, other artists?

ROBERT: Visually, you mean?

MARTIN: Yeah.

ROBERT: No, except when I did 'Shipbuilding' [in 1982]. Alfie wasn't particularly connected to the making of that - it was written and produced by Clive Langer and Elvis Costello - but she had just seen Stanley Spencer's *Shipbuilding* paintings at an exhibition and thought they would be perfect. It turned out they were owned by the Imperial War Museum, who let us see the paintings for free. He was a war artist, and he painted a series in the 1940s called *Shipbuilding on the Clyde*, all these different panels showing riggers and riveters, all that stuff. So we used that on the single. The song was about the Falklands War.

MARTIN: I'd forgotten you'd used a Stanley Spencer on that sleeve. But it's interesting you mention him, because I was thinking about some of those other neo-Romantic artists in relation to your music, people like Paul Nash, Cecil Collins, John Craxton. I always think your songs have a kind of English pastoral quality. And the lazy interpretation of that is that it's a romantic, backward-looking, sentimental thing; but actually the neo-Romantics used the idea and the image of the English landscape to speak of a much more political, troubled, almost apocalyptic moment - coming out of the First World War with the threat of fascism, the atom bomb, and another war looming. They found a way to collapse the past, the present and the future into their pictures. I think your music is a bit like that - right from your early years with Soft Machine, and your association with the Canterbury Sound. And like their work it's also underpinned by a very radical, working-class socialism and critique.

ROBERT: Well, there are two separate things there: one is that things like Lewis Carroll and Hilaire Belloc and so on are very, very far out. They go a long way - particularly *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. They're pretty fierce looks at how things are run, the absurdity of bureaucrats and the madness of politicians - turning into a pack of cards and all that stuff. There's a lot going on there. But the other thing is about your earlier idea of being ahead or behind. I don't think, really, in chronological time. I think that when you discover a thing, that's when it's new to you. I think it's got something to do with the age you are. In your late teens and early twenties, things hit you; you're ready for them. And that stays with you. You can enjoy and appreciate things after that, but the things that really mean something to you, they hit you at that time - and it can be anything.

It can be old English churches, it can be Bach, it can be jazz. So, when I was a schoolboy, in the late 1950s, what I was looking at in those art books was early 2oth-century stuff, but it was revelatory, it was dazzlingly new to me, it was like the paint was still wet.

MARTIN: Your music is like that for me. It somehow speaks really immediately, in the absolute present, as well as drawing on something much more timeless. Some music sounds so much of its time - it can still sound great when we listen to it now, but it's very easy to place it or date it. But your songs aren't like that; they seem to exist in this other sort of time. Frances and I were talking on the train here this morning about just that kind of moment - and the first song of yours that each of us heard.

FRANCES VON HOFMANNSTHAL: The first song that I heard was'Pigs... (In There)'(1986).

ROBERT: (*Chuckling*) John Peel used to like that one.

FRANCES: I love that song so much! I think I've listened to is 945,000 times.

ROBERT: Funnily enough, it was more or less totally improvised. It just came out exactly as you might think it did -just thinking about it. What the fuck was that?

MARTIN: It's like a picture again, isn't it, or a movie. It's so visual. You can see the whole scene when you're listening to it, the landscape, the farm...

ROBERT: The music just came out, and then I found this drum machine device... it's no particular rhythm, it's actually random, but the beat stays the same. I thought, that'll do - you know, just three chords, add a bit of olive oil, a squeeze of lemon... (*Martin laughing*)

FRANCES: I thought you couldn't cook!

ROBERT: I cannot cook to save my life! That's why my friend Jane Vincent has made us this fish pie. I just had to do the salad! Alfie said, just chop up some tomatoes and onions and some of those green leafy things, put olive oil and lemon on it - so I did that. You don't have to eat it.

FRANCES: Where were the pigs?

ROBERT: A long, low, flat farm in Wiltshire. My older brother - my half-brother and his wife - lived there, and she used to take us about. You hardly notice it, the structure, because it's so low to the ground. And I thought, what on earth could you keep in there? It's not like you can store grain in it. So I just asked him what on earth it was for.

MARTIN: Pigs! In there?!

FRANCES: My children and I, we've listened to it so many times!

ROBERT: I'm very honoured. I'm very pleased.






FRANCES: And 'Soup Song' (1975). They've made a little stop-frame animation to that one, about all the ingredients! I'll have to send it to you.

ROBERT: I'd love that! I was a vegetarian as a child - but not by principle. It sounds posher than it is. It basically means bread and butter sandwiches with sugar poured on top - not healthy, nothing noble. Cornflakes and bananas and bread; Horlicks, boiled eggs, things like that. I always think eggs is the politest way to intervene in an animal's life cycle. (*Laughter*)

MARTIN: Did you record those songs here in this house?

ROBERT: No - I do work here, but I'm not technically proficient; I need a good engineer. I have recorded bits and pieces here, something that's got a feel, that I can take into the studio - but no, I go to a studio.

MARTIN: There is a kind of intimacy to your records; they feel very immediate, very close. Is that a deliberate thing, to take those - almost like sketches - into the studio, and then not overproduce them, not overdo them? To keep that immediacy, that simplicity.

ROBERT: I do overproduce them, but... Dolly Parton said, 'It takes an awful lot of money to look this cheap.' (*Laughter*) Well, it takes a lot of hard work to make it sound as straightforward. They are actually very, very worked. Somebody said to me once: 'What I like about 'Shipbuilding' is you just sang it from the heart and that was it - in one go.' But it wasn't like that. It was a lot of work.

I've thought a lot about the craft of singing. I listen to other singers and hear what they do. I wanted the songs to be [like] how I talk, because that's going to be the easiest to sing. I wanted it to sound like you almost couldn't tell which came first, the words or the tune. That was the thing I was aiming for. In fact, over the years, working with Alfie, that really became the thing. She started out listening to my tunes and coming up with words, and then eventually she'd come up with the words, and I would add the tunes.

MARTIN: I sometimes think of your songs as a kind of folk music. Not so much the sound but the directness and clarity, and the authenticity of your voice. And there's also the strong political and social aspect of the lyrics.

ROBERT: Well, a lot of folk people have done my songs - The Unthanks... a whole bunch of them. But it's also to do with acting. I really like Robert Mitchum - but he just says the lines; he just says the words. I find that so much acting is over the top; over-emoting, in one way or another - sadness, anger. That happens in songs too. I feel that, sometimes, people acting out songs are interfering in some way between you and the song. The thing is the song. So I thought, I don't want to sing like that. I never try and put anything across - it's got to be in the music.



> Zoom

The music has got to be solid enough. And then the words have got to be solid enough. If you get the music right, and the words right, it should just work. It's really a *non-thing* that I'm doing.

MARTIN: I talk to painters, and for them, often, the thing is knowing when to stop. How not to do too much. I did a show with a painter recently, and she was talking about the problem of pushing a painting too far, not being able to press a button and go back a couple of stages like you can in Photoshop. In the end, she said that the paintings were finished when the truck pulled up outside the studio to pick them up for a show.

ROBERT: Well, actually, I think I do know, in the end. What I'm looking for is something that, in a parallel universe, would be a living thing. I want a tune to be alive in some way - an organic thing. When I'm writing something, that's what I pursue. You can do a really nice chord pattern or a nice sequence of notes, or a nice rhythm, but on their own they're just ingredients - it's not yet anything, actually.

MARTIN: You've said very publicly that you're retired. And I know Alfie has a problem with her eyes, so she finds it difficult to work...

ROBERT: Yeah. [Hans] Arp said he never finished a painting, he just stopped. I thought, I'm having that! So yes, I've stopped. And Alfie, she's having a rest too, she's Tweeting now. *Alfie wasn't able to join us for lunch but we caught up with her later in the afternoon.*

MARTIN : I asked Robert about this earlier, but I want to ask you as well: what was your relationship to the music? Would you listen to those records and then think about the artwork, or was it more coming out of your interests and your own work?

ALFIE: I was present at every note of every recording. I mean, obviously, because I was Robert's carer - so, wherever he was, I was. And music was always there. Things would occur to me when it was being recorded; I'd just get an image, I'd do some scribbles. Some were more difficult than others. Some had subjects, like *Nothing Can Stop Us* (1982); *Rock Bottom*. But *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975) didn't have a subject - that was me in the studio, and I kept drawing a bird-man and a cow-woman. So they sort of emerged. *Old Rottenhat* (1985) was very political, it was hard to pick any image, so I just painted while listening to the music, and this abstract thing came out.

MARTIN: That's my favourite sleeve: *Old Rottenhat*. I think it's fantastic. And I can think of sleeves that I've seen since, and designers, who've clearly been influenced by it.

ALFIE: *Cuckooland* was also hard to choose an image for, there's so much variety in the subject matter and music. Robert has no normal musical notation. He does diagrams and notes for himself, which get added to during recording. I just watched what he was doing and based the cover on pages from his - ever-changing notebook and added a bit of colour here and there.





> Zoom

MARTIN: And what about *Shleep* (1997)?

ALFIE: He recorded that just as he came out of a really, really extreme depression and hadn't slept for months. He got over the hump - that bit where he's going to kill himself, into... when it's not plain-sailing, but he was suddenly able to sleep again. So, that's why we called it *Shleep*. A lot of the titles are mine as well.

MARTIN: He said you wrote a lot of the lyrics. I knew that you wrote lyrics, but I didn't know that you wrote so many of Robert's.

ALFIE: Since he started using them on *Dondestan* (1991), about half of the lyrics on each record are mine.

MARTIN: And when you were writing, was it because you thought they might end up as lyrics for Robert?

ALFIE: No, he had a thing about the music always coming first. The chords matter; the words don't. He was never going to write things to words - never. And so I wrote things. I wrote a diary, and out of the diary came little poemy things. We made a little book of them and just put them in a drawer - in 1983 or '84. Then, in 1990, he got them out because he couldn't think of any words. I think they really helped him to open up new musical possibilities.

MARTIN: He was able to hear the music in them?

ALFIE: Yes - so, things like 'Sight of the Wind' [from *Dondestan*]. I think it culminates in 'Cuckoo Madame', which, I think, is musically quite sophisticated. I think it comes from responding to the rhythm of the sentences, which is less predictable because they hadn't been written for music.

MARTIN: I asked him how you two met.

ALFIE: I was 32 or 32, and he'd left Soft Machine. I'd seen Soft Machine, but I didn't know

him then. I had a boyfriend. During the rip-roaring Sixties, I spent most of my time with drummers, as an official drummers' moll. One of the drummers was a pick-up in a speakeasy when I was about 27. It was very dark. Anyway, he came for the night and then wouldn't go away. It turned out he was only 17. It was a few months before I could get rid of him - but, in the meantime he'd made friends with a friend of mine, and he eventually hooked up with Robert's wife. So I got to know Robert's wife and his son through... (*Laughing*)

MARTIN: ...this 17-year-old drummer!

ALFIE: So, I knew them first. [Robert and I] didn't take much notice of each other at first. He had kind of glamorous women at the time. Purple hot-pants, I seem to remember! And usually a bit taller than him. I was still wearing high heels back then. When we met we were the same height; I stopped the high heels! But I didn't assume he was anything to do with me - I mean, my drummers were jazz drummers (apart from the speakeasy guy!), jazz drummers who knew what they were doing.

MARTIN: (*Laughing*) Proper drummers.

ALFIE: Serious people. Proper people. I'm joking. He was a very serious drummer! But I just kind of got to know him, and I thought, 'He's quite intelligent, I quite like that.' One day, he rang up. I think it was Pam, his wife, who encouraged him, because she thought I was probably a good idea. He wasn't having very much fun... I think his women were a bit glamorous, but a bit difficult. She thought I might be better for him. So he rang up, and that night I already had a ticket to go to the Rainbow [Theatre] to see The Kinks, so I said, 'Would you like to come along?' So we went to see The Kinks, and he stayed the night, and that was it, forever and ever. His excuse, at first, was that he had to go through my record collection.

MARTIN: (*Laughing*) That took some time!

ALFIE: I had a lot of records that girls didn't have at the time - sort of boys' records.

MARTIN: So that was immediately attractive!

ALFIE: Well, he just wanted to hear them. We had our ups and downs. We were together a year and a bit before the accident. After that it was, do I take this on? For me there was no question - and if so, it would probably be an idea to get married, so then we know where we are, and he knows where he is, and all of that. I've been really lucky.



MARTIN: And your studio is upstairs here in the house, above Robert's.

ALFIE: Yes, but I don't use it anymore. It's complete and utter ...it's like one of those films on the telly about hoarders. (*Laughter*) It's disgraceful, I'm so ashamed of it.

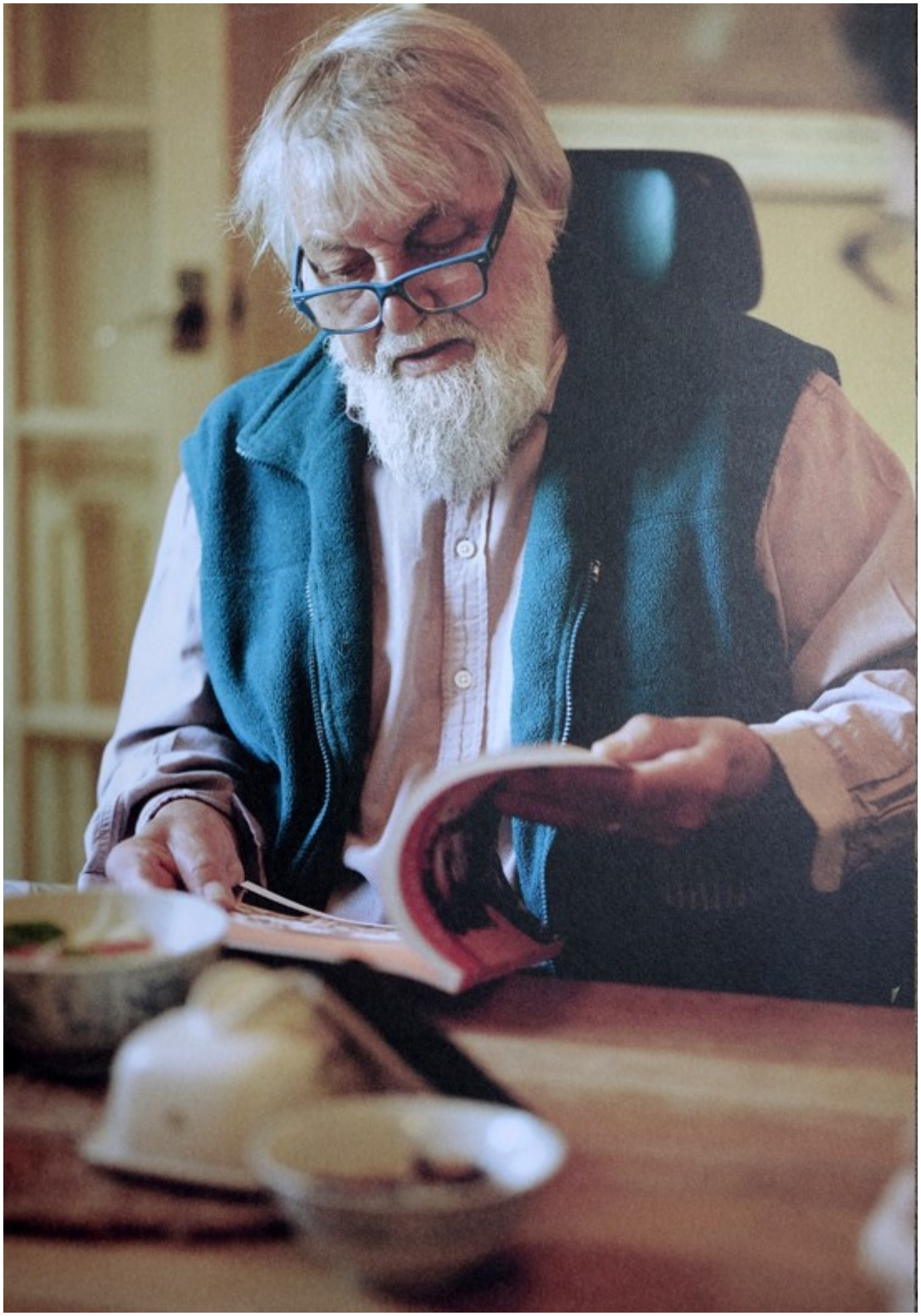
MARTIN: It's a studio! It's allowed to be. But tell me, what were the things that you were driven by when you were making your work?

ALFIE: The job in hand. Nothing else. The task. It's the same with everything. It's the same with making anything: What is it, this thing? With a cover you want to represent the person, you the subject. You try to make it a precious object. And you need a certain amount of information. I'm very hot on adding information. All the sleeve notes are by me. I think people want to learn a bit.

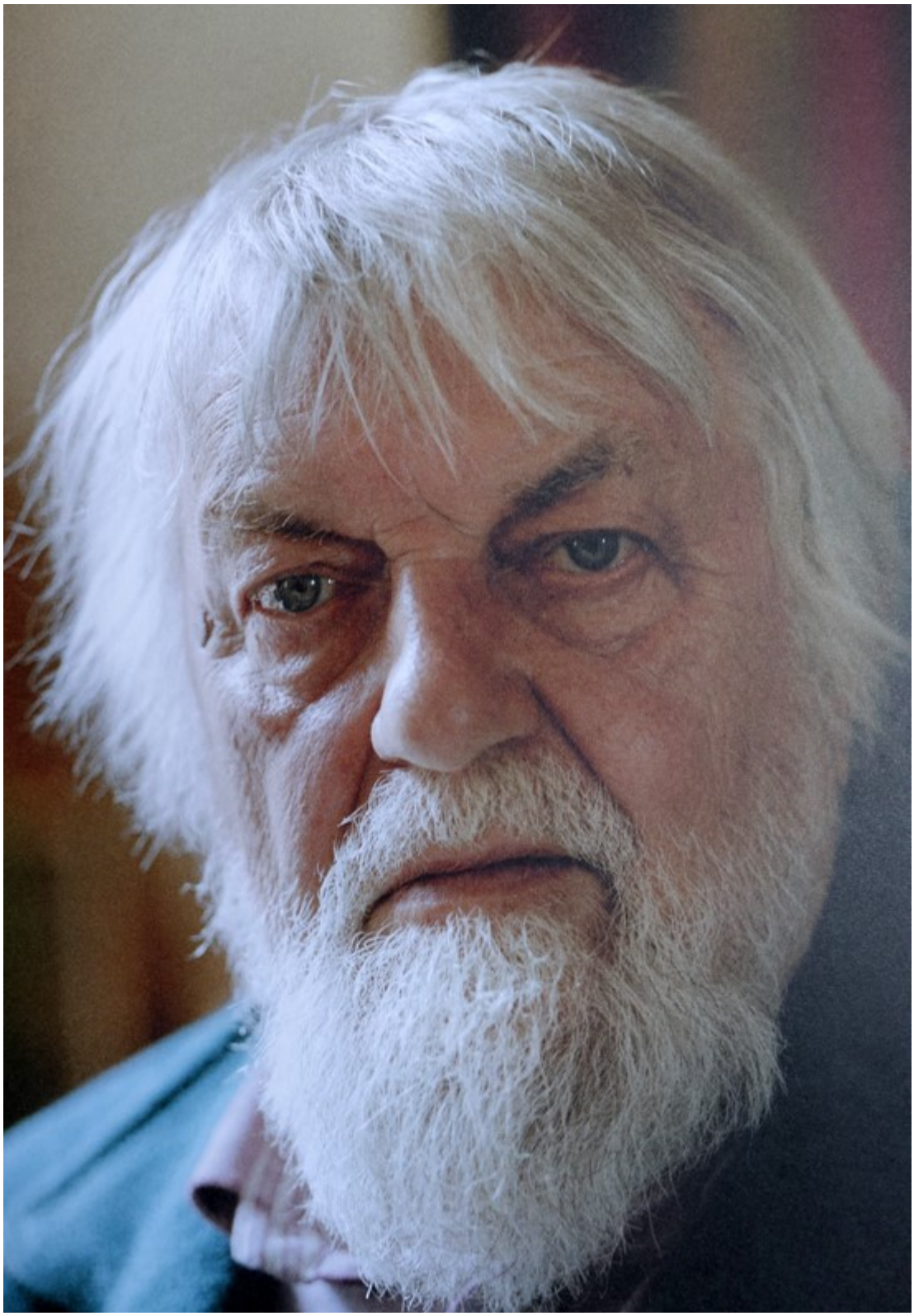
MARTIN: Were you asked by any other musicians to do sleeves and artwork?

ALFIE: I've done a couple for Fred Frith. And Annette Peacock; Gorky's Zygotic Mynci. Not a lot; I mean, you couldn't call us 'prolific'. We just about did the job. I find it hard to call

myself anything, really. I illustrated a couple of books for Ivor Cutler, like *Herbert the Chicken*. I think I've got a musical ear - so I loved lyric writing. I loved doing it to the music because of all the little nuances that you have to think about - like, does he want an 'oo' or an 'ee' here, in which case, do I have to change that word, because it really would sound nicer if it was 'oo'. I enjoyed that much more than painting when I started doing it. I've done some lyrics for Bertrand Burgalat as well, a French musician. But in the end, I think Robert and I go well together. His stuff is abstract, and mine generally always has pictures - so, without the pictures, this might be a bit... I mean he's very good; I really like his stuff- but I think both of us together, it works, just by accident.

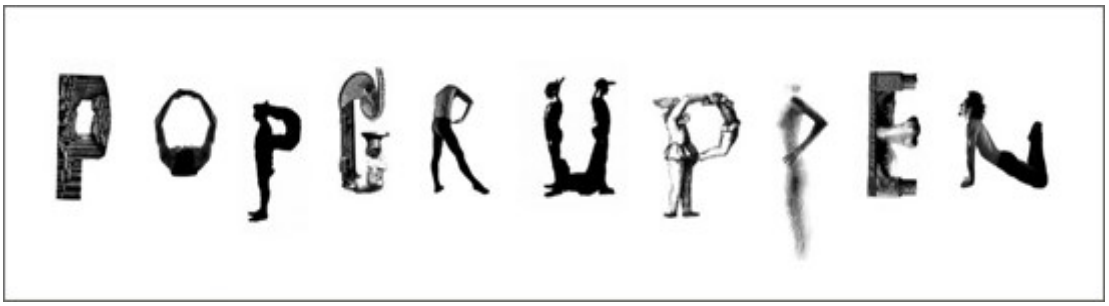


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Robert Wyatt: the Matching Mole interview - Popgruppen - January 28, 2019



In celebration of Robert Wyatt's birthday, we here republish an interview with Robert focusing on Matching Mole. This is a pretty long piece, but rather interesting too, I would say!

The article was written by Michael Björn and originally published in Japanese music magazine **Strange Days #166, pages 14-25, September 2013***.

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* Please note that this is the original English article manuscript submitted for publication, and eventual differences to the Japanese translation made to make the article fit in the allotted space are not accounted for.



The first time I interviewed Robert Wyatt was in my late teens. I was invited to his London suburb home and was totally overwhelmed to meet this great rock star who had carefully prepared the visit with a selection of Swedish jazz records. For me – a teenage school kid. He has remained a great hero ever since, musically as well as on a human plane.

However, when I contact him about this article, I get

a categorical refusal and a ”No more to say.” Period.

Robert is very unhappy about how recent reissues have heaped bonus tracks on the originals. And just like he sings on ”Gloria Gloom”, he still has his ”doubts about how much to contribute to the already rich” – in this context represented by the record companies.

But during the course of some e-mails, Robert thaws and agrees to the interview. I get the feeling that his frustrations are overcome by a warm pride over the original albums, unique and masterly as they are. The last few e-mails are adorned with rhythmic references, a ding-ching here and an oobop sh’bam there. When we finally hook up, Robert is in a very good mood, full of friendly laughter. Again, I feel like that teenage school kid, totally charmed by his kind and thoughtful attitude.



My idea is that I would like to do an interview and send you the text before we publish.

Robert: You said that before. I don’t like the idea that I would have any kind of censorship role. I will tell you whatever I think and you write whatever you write.

OK, fair enough!

Robert: You should, however, be clear that it was your idea to talk about these things. There's a joke about a bishop who arrives in a city and a journalist asks him: "Are you going to visit the red light district in our city?" The bishop replies: "Is there a red light district in your city?" And the front page of the newspaper the next day is: "Bishop asks: Is there a red light district in your city?"

So, I would like to talk about Matching Mole and that is my idea then and not yours!

Robert: Yes, that's right, ha ha!

Matching Mole is a pun on the French translation of Soft machine, "machine molle".

Robert: Yes, that is what the French call Soft Machine. So I just thought I'd carry on with that. I didn't see why I should lose the name completely.

When you were in France with Soft Machine, they actually called the group "Machine Molle" then?

Robert: Yes, they did that anyway, so that is my little joke, that's all. Nobody owns the name, so in fact anybody can call themselves Soft Machine. I thought it would be quite funny to just call the Matching Mole records Soft Machine 5, Soft machine 6 et cetera and so on. But then I thought: "Oh, never mind, I won't do that." He he he!

How did the band come about, originally?

Robert: I can't remember… I can't remember how I knew Bill MacCormick. He knew me because he was a school friend of Phil Manzanera, and they used to come to Soft Machine concerts, apparently, when they were young. But apart from that, I don't really know. Dave Sinclair I knew from Caravan of course. And Dave MacRae, how on earth did I hear Dave MacRae? … I can't remember, that's ridiculous.

I started earning a living from music about 50 years ago. And for about ten years, I was working live, playing drums non-stop just every day. From 1973 until now obviously not on drums – but there's been so much stuff, it is hard to remember.

How did you approach making music with Matching Mole?

Robert: As a child, the music I listened to was my father's music, classical music basically. Then my big brother came home with his jazz records, and the LPs were pretty long too. I got used to that… in fact, to me, the innovative thing to do is to make short songs of three or four minutes, like pop records. I wasn't interested in if they were commercial, but just the idea of completing a piece of music in two or three minutes. It is the opposite way around, I think, from a lot of what people call progressive musicians do. They start out as rock musicians and then go on to do grand works afterwards, you know.

So the progression is in the other direction, from long to short.

Robert: It is in the other direction. It is interesting where we meet, but I wasn't going that way. And to me, the dramatic discovery in the 50s was pop music. I had never listened to it as a child. So I thought "Well, that is really interesting! You just do a song and stop after three minutes, wow!" Ha ha ha!

Ha ha!

Robert: My dad had things like Hindemith, Stravinsky stuff and Bartok. To me that was how long music was. And then my brother had stuff like Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Gil Evans, which were quite extended sort of things. So that was how I started thinking about music. It wasn't trying to be clever.

I didn't like the fact that people thought very carefully about the beginning to get people listening, but they would put the weakest track at the end. In fact, I think that the impact of a record ending is as strong as a record beginning. The last notes of a record – just like it did with a symphony – that's the thing that is hanging in the air when it stops.

About the first Matching Mole record

Even though you are going in the other direction, on the first record you don't end with the pop song 'O Caroline', you start with it.

Robert: No, I hadn't gotten around to that yet. But often I would play Dave Sinclair's advocate. When I was with people who looked down on pop music, I would be very defensive and say: "Well, you try and do that. It is not so easy." But when I am surrounded by people who think anything that isn't pop music is just pretentious and boring, that upsets me too. I don't see why there had to be battles. Instead one should enjoy the differences.

How did you go about putting the music together?

Robert: We lived in a place called 'All Saints Road' – a short attempt of having my own place, it was disastrous. But we had an upstairs and a downstairs – and downstairs, we had all the instruments. It was a very run down, poor area at that time. We could make a lot of noise and there weren't any neighbours who would make a fuss so that was OK. So there we were.

And really, it was about playing. Like jazz, it is about playing instruments as opposed to anything else. I wanted to reverse the process that happens in jazz, whereby you start with a plan but the improvisation is sort of the last thing.

On the first record we used themes, mostly by Phil Miller and myself: not songs or tunes really, just kind of patterns. But there can be endless variations on how to deal with these patterns. You keep the rhythmic pattern going or the harmonic pattern, and everything else changes. It was very influenced by free jazz, but I wanted to be based on a kind of rock sound. I wanted that kind of freedom in a rock context and I think that was what was unusual at that time.

The thing is then to turn it into something, and that is done in the editing of the recording. We would go through the routines for hours, but the process was to find the ones were it all kind of worked coherently, and to throw away all the bits that didn't work. That is what upset me with the CD reissue of this record. They put in all the stuff that didn't work with all the stuff that did work. And I feel… that it upsets me, frankly. Because although the original LP may sound random to a casual listener, it is not.

I really like things to sound as if people have just thought of it and it is totally easy and they don't have to think about it. What we call "artless". I like artless art. People think it's random; it is not random. There's a nice quote, I think it is Cezanne: "People think my paintings look as if they are done too quickly. That is because they are looking too quickly." Ha ha ha!

I suppose you want to put musicians in situations that they are not accustomed to, in order to make them grow?

Robert: It is more selfish. I want to hear music that I have not heard before!

I think Dave Sinclair really did feel that he was in a different context than he was used to.

Robert: He was uncomfortable; he wanted to do straightforward songs. He would be quite happy doing that and he does it beautifully. Personally, I found that he was a lovely improviser but it made him so anxious that I couldn't to it to him after a while. Nobody would let him down a groove; Bill didn't lay him down a groove, and I didn't lay down a groove. Phil chooses completely unlikely notes on guitar, there's absolutely no telling what notes Phil is going to play, or when and where – and Dave was completely unnerved by it, I think. Nevertheless, he did some terrific stuff on the album, and so I am very happy with that. We were very good friends, you know, he didn't have to do it. I don't think he regrets the experience, I hope he doesn't.

Dave Sinclair told me that you called him back from Portugal. You had really decided that you wanted to have him in the group?

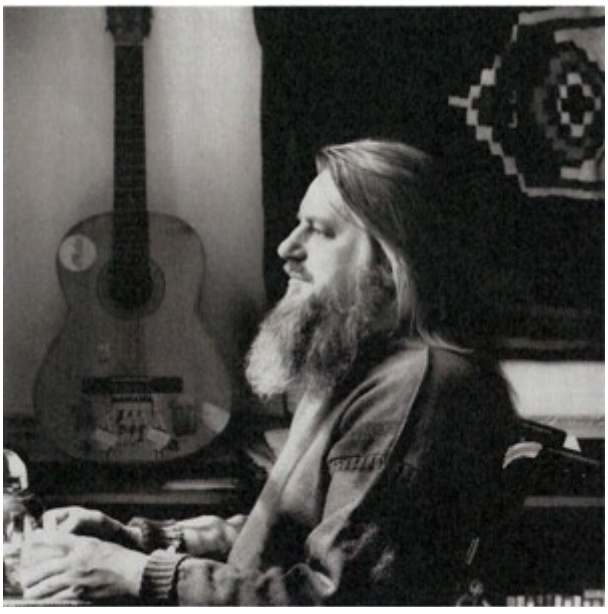
Robert: Absolutely, I knew some very good organists like Zoot Money and so on, but on the whole, the keyboard players I knew were either jazz players or jazzy blues players – which is a wonderful thing, but it is an idiom that exists already. Or, there were marvellous keyboard players who worked from a classical tradition who were interested in improvising. But I found that they had not a very strong concept of what I considered as swing or groove at all.

So there was difficulty finding musicians to play with. I didn't want people whom you can identify as belonging to any particular idiom.

I didn't get these certain ideas from music first; I got them from paintings. Bonnard is nothing like Degas and Degas is nothing like van Gogh and van Gogh is nothing like Kandinsky. They don't seem to be trying to fit into a… thing. They are developing their own… language. And I just wanted people who would do that and not just think: "Oh, this is a jazz thing" or something. I was really looking for something that hadn't been done before.

About 'Little Red Record'

On 'Little Red Record', the other musicians have a bigger role in the development of the music.



Robert: That's right. They were more familiar with each other, and they were more familiar working with me, so they knew what they were writing for.

This also means that 'Little Red Record' was more ramshackle because, although the playing on the first had been democratic, I had been totally autocratic on the editing. I felt that on the next record we made, I really must let everybody else do his thing. Whatever they want to do. So Dave MacRae does tunes, Bill MacCormick does tunes, Phil Miller does stuff and so on. By its very nature, it is less coherent in that way.

The title seems less ramshackle…?

Robert: It is not seriously political, although people think it was. I wasn't particularly interested in politics at that time, it was just my joke, you know. Everyone thinks we mean the little red book, but it could easily mean 'Little Red Engine' which is the name of a children's book in England, about a train.

There was some very simplistic socialist rhetoric on the record. I have no idea if I meant it; probably I had no idea what I was talking about. But the idea of the imitation Maoist cover was entirely the record company's, not mine. Nothing to do with us. And I would be embarrassed about that cover because poor Dave MacRae who's the gentlest man in the world has been given a frightening looking gun, which is very unfair on him because he wouldn't hurt a fly.

Some of the songs are nicknames.

Robert: Yes, if anybody is interested in those things 'Gloria Gloom' is my Alfie and 'Flora Fidgit' is Julie Christie, the actress.

And together with Dave Gale, they are Der Mutter Korus.

Robert: Absolutely. I only met Dave gale again recently, he made films and so on. In fact, it was he who was a friend of the Pink Floyd. When I broke my back, it was he who said: "Why don't you do a concert for Robert?" So I have lots to thank Dave for, he is a friend of Alfie's from, I think, art college.

Alfie and Julie are both talking on the record.

Robert: That is true. Then again Dave Gale is on there. He is making very funny little things, if you can hear them, about wanting to wear his woolly. He always likes to wear his woolly; it makes him feel more secure; some strange neurotic stuff. Julie for some reason decided to become a prostitute with a first-time customer. And Alfie wonders what on earth they are talking about. Anyway, we kept all of it on there. We really had good fun with that.

It seems that Julie's first-time customer is a woman?

Robert: Yeah, that's an implication there; Dave Gale certainly is not interested is he? He is too busy with his woolly. But really, I don't think it was thought through, I think they were improvising as much as musicians do. Then again: in a way that they would never normally do. It was very interesting and fun to try and work out how to keep instrumental coherence and allow some of the voices to come through, but not always.

Given that the record is a bit chaotic, Robert Fripp seems like an unlikely producer.

Robert: Yes, I know! I think he didn't quite know why I asked him. Funnily enough my son came over yesterday, he had found a photograph of Fripp and me, at some festival I think, talking to each other. It is a very merry little photograph and I don't remember it at all. I don't remember listening to his band or him listening to mine, or anything. When we were working in England in -67, there weren't really any other bands that I knew out there.

Phil Miller found it difficult to record in the studio, since he was in awe of Fripp.

Robert: Yeah, Bill MacCormick mentions that. Phil is in fact always like that. He is almost chronically shy and never seen in person. But if that was the case, I am ashamed to say I didn't really notice. I had been on the road with Hendrix, so it was very hard for me to imagine being awestruck by the presence of a terrific guitarist after a year of that.

Brian Eno is also on the album.

Robert: Yes, that was because Bill MacCormick knew him since he was a friend of Phil Manzanera's. Bill asked him for an introduction to 'Gloria Gloom', but he did it in his own studio and just brought it in and we worked it into the thing.

He did bring his synth into the studio, I think Dave MacRae is using it on the record as well.

Robert: Yeah, that is possibly quite right. I had completely forgotten that! Yeah, that's right. Eno contributes to the record in a way that is so discreet you often don't know he is doing it. Dave MacRae himself is very inventive on keyboards, using the fuzz box and pedals in a kind of crazy way anyway. But certainly, he would be very happy for Brian to be trying stuff.

There was a CD release of 'Little Red Record' on BGO in 1993 where the A-sides and B-sides where switched. I read that this is the way you originally wanted the album to be.

Robert: That is true. I wasn't sure about that. In the end I decided that it meant starting the album with Brian's introduction to 'Gloria Gloom' basically. And I thought it took too long to come in. And I thought: "Get some food on the table" you know.

Ha ha ha!

Robert: So I abandoned that after a while. I had exactly the same idea when I did 'Ruth is stranger than Richard', I swapped the sides around on different versions.

You were thinking loud about the track composition so to speak?

Robert: I was, yeah. I took responsibility for that because… somebody had to. I didn't really know anybody, not even Fripp, who was thinking like that; every track in terms of the complete piece of music, where it was in it and so on. Which is always a thing I like to think about.

Comparing 'Matching Mole' and 'Little Red Record'

The two Matching Mole records sound fundamentally unlike each other, how did that happen?

Robert: For the 'Little Red Record', I decided for some reason in my head at that time, that I would play without a snare on the snare drum all the way through. If you take the snare off, it doesn't just affect the snare drum, it affects the bass drum and it affects the rest of the band. It makes it more kind of translucent, if you like.

The moment you have the snare on, it affects the bass and you get those thumps without notes: boom-da, boom-da. The moment you take that off, a lightness comes through. Dave MacRae's playing is full of light, and I wanted that. It is not rock & roll, it is much more fluid. I wanted to play drums more fluidly to see if I could stick with Dave when he was playing.

The other thing is, I like to try and have sustained pieces so that one piece flows into another and it is some sort of journey going through. That is consistent on both albums, but the thing which is different is that Dave MacRae came with his tunes, like that lovely 'Smoke Signal' thing, and Bill came with his rather Soft Machine influenced stuff.

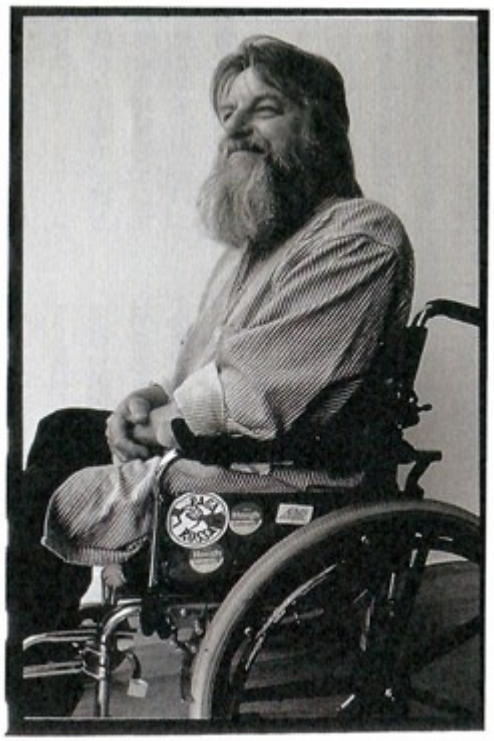
For the first record, CBS was closing their studio and you were the last band in there – and then on 'Little Red Record' you are actually more or less the first band in the new studio.

Robert: Yeah! You know, I had forgotten that, you are quite right! Poor Dave Sinclair in that cold studio, I had completely forgotten that. But you know, even so, it didn't influence us much. When you are young, you can sleep in fields you know. Ha ha ha!

With it being so cold in the studio, you had developed all the musical patterns before you came to the studio then, I suppose?

Robert: Not necessarily, because it is recorded and we didn't record at home. So I think it must have been quite a lot of it trying out stuff in the studio. We did rehearse it for ours to get everyone familiar enough with the patterns to not have to think about them.

I used to prefer the first Matching Mole record because it sounds more like other Canterbury records. But the more I listen, the more I like the 'Little Red Record' because it doesn't!



Robert: I have exactly the same reaction! I have been listening to them since you got in touch. The first one is totally coherent; I understand what we are trying to do and we did it. The second one is much more reckless, but because of that I find it very interesting. And I don't mind hearing the variations, the different takes, because they show different aspects.

In the case of the CDs, definitely it is the CD of the 'Little Red Record' that has more listening stuff on it. I am more comfortable with it now. I completely agree: I reversed on that. On the first one, I am very unhappy with the extra tracks and the repeats of the single and, I don't know, I just find it's a mess.

So yes, I agree. It is exactly what happened to me, listening to them.

About reissues

You are obviously not happy with the Matching Mole CD reissues.

Robert: I really like the idea of two sides, whether is on the original 78 rpm records or eventually on vinyl LPs. And I always find it very interesting that there are two sides on an LP of about 20 minutes each. This sounds very pretentious and I am very pretentious, mind you, but I find that a lot of life is about two unequal halves. Just the fact that so much is binary: eyes, arms, men and women, everything. If you watch a sprout growing, very often the first thing you see is leaves alternating one side and another, they are not quite the same.

I like the idea of one side of a record being about the same thing as the other side but quite different. There is no literary equivalent, I can't say this in words, I just have a feeling that the A-side and B-side meant something to me. Particularly on the first Matching Mole record but then again on the later ones, on 'Rock Bottom' and 'Ruth is Stranger than Richard'. Even when it became CDs, I tend to divide things in two parts at least. To have different parts, whatever kind of shape, parts that are about 20 minutes long, that seems

to be a good length for listening to a piece of music without having to go and have a piss or get another drink or something. So that was the idea here.

But there again, I am not happy with putting them all together in a big lump, because I want to make records that you can leave on until the end. If you make records where you have alternative takes, the same thing again and so on, it is OK for archives, for historical record, but it no longer serves the original function: A record you could put on and leave on until the end. So that was the idea of the original thing.

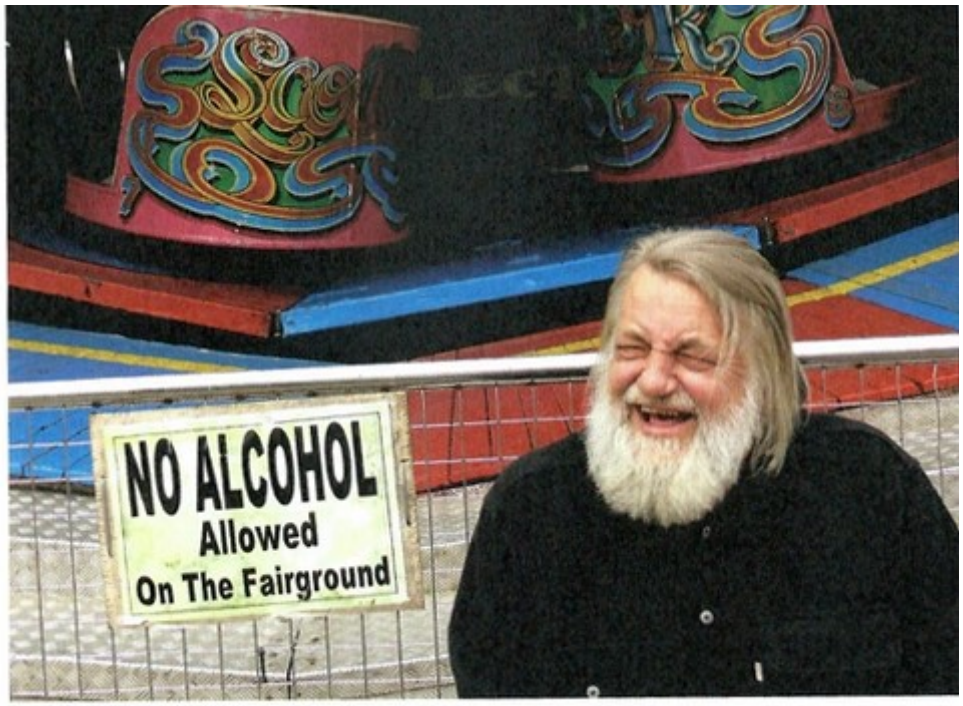
Live performances

You managed to play quite a lot of live shows during the short lifespan of the band.

Robert: We did, yeah! And they were very good fun to play. I used to like changing the themes, like… on the original 'Marchides', Dave wanted the improvisation completely out tempo, rubato or whatever the word would be, and I wasn't comfortable with that live. So I started to put some sort of a pulse underneath it. As much as I love free jazz, I am never really comfortable with too much out of tempo stuff. One of the things I really liked about jazz and rock music was that kind of physical movement. So, I tended to put that in, or change the time signatures slightly.

Did playing so much live influence the way the second album turned out?

Robert: Yes, I think that is possibly absolutely right.



Robert Wyatt ／写真提供：HosTess Entertainment

Splitting up

Do you have any memories from when you decided to split up the band?

Robert: I realised that in Soft Machine, I couldn't be a follower. And in Matching Mole, I

found out that also I couldn't be a leader. So I was left with these two things. And then it occurred to me! My inspirational light bulb moment was: "You don't have to be in a band, Robert! It is not a law."

For all that time, because rock groups started about the time conscription in the army ended, I always saw it as an extension of going into the army. In the early 60s all young men went into the army to occupy foreign countries for a few years and sit around drinking beer, and picking up local girls and so on. And when they stopped recruiting soldiers, the Beatles went to Germany and did exactly the same thing! Ha ha ha!

I always thought that you have to be in a sort of gang, but no you don't. You don't have to do it! I was liberated in the end by – people think I am being ironic – but, I was liberated by being in a wheelchair. A band was no longer a possibility. It is a paradox, but I am totally happy that it happened now.

But there was talk of a new incarnation of Matching Mole?

Robert: Dave MacRae wanted to form a jazz-rock trio. And I didn't really want to go that jazz-rock way. I don't really like what came to be known as jazz-rock. There are some very nice people playing it, but it seems a bit opportunistic. Jazz musicians who are jealous of rock musicians doing so well and thinking: "Well I can play instruments better than them. Let's grow our hair, give ourselves a mystical name, get rid of our horn player and get a guitar player and we can play rock better than them."

So, I didn't want to be in a jazz-rock band. I was trying to think about a keyboard player, really. And the one I came up with, who was lovely, was a man called Francis Monkman who played with Curved Air. He had no jazz in him, but I worked with him on a radio broadcast that was later put out on American label Cuneiform. He was brilliant, very imaginative also, from a classical background.

But I just didn't know what to do and I thought: "Well I want a jazz player, but someone like Gary Windo who just doesn't play like a session musician. And Bill again maybe." I was working on that, and I could imagine a few tunes with that, but I couldn't imagine spending a year just with that. So… I was sort of saved from all of it by just falling out of a window. Into another planet, ha ha! Into another world.

So as a solo artist, you have been a leader of yourself for the rest of your career.

Robert: Yeah, that's right. I boss myself around. There are no bad feelings that way.

The Italians of the East

I saw on Youtube that you did a kind of a workshop at pub last year, where there was some playback of your music and you were talking in-between.

Robert: Yeah, there have been a couple of those. One for Wire magazine, and then for Cafe Oto in London, they have a music venue over there, run by a Japanese person.

Would you be at all interested in doing something like that in Japan?

Robert: I would have been, but in fact I am not travelling anymore. I don't go on airplanes anymore. The thing is, my wife is older than me. She is in her 70s and she is not very well. She has been struggling with her health. Having been fairly selfish most of my life and just doing my thing, I am trying now to be more just kind of domestic.

I would love to go to Japan in the sense that they are wonderful. I get lovely letters from Japan, and beautiful gifts, lovely things. Somebody asked me to name their new

restaurant, and I did that, it is called ”Happy Mouth”. And I’ve got Japanese neighbours here. But I can’t travel anymore.

Certainly, musicians who play there love it, and I feel sad that I am missing that, but I can’t deal with it any more. I am not interested in talking about my disability, because as you gather, mostly it has been almost an advantage, making me concentrate and simplify my life. But that said, next year will be my 70th year, and I am getting health problems. I just can’t do things I used to be able to do.

I am so grateful to Japan, in some way they are kind of the Italians in the East. Because the two places I get the most alive and lively, understanding and friendly responses: in the West is Italy and in the East it is of course Japan. And those two areas of people listening have been my best encouragement over the years, absolutely no question.

Thank you for talking to me today!

Robert: I am sorry I gave you a bit of a hard time in the beginning… Temperamental musicians, what can you say!!

* * *

>> The interview on the Popgruppen website.

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Soft Machine - Uncut - The Archive Collection - 2019

SOFT MACHINE

Psychedelia, prog, rock and jazz fusion, all lightly brushed with absurdism – Wyatt's undulating crew proved an endlessly pliable sonic machine. *By John Lewis*

SOFT MACHINE have been several different groups over the course of their existence – a freakbeat combo who morphed into pioneers of psychedelic whimsy; an experimental prog band who eventually became a rigorous jazz rock act. The bulk of their output has been instrumental, but they still managed to spawn three distinctive vocalists – Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers and Daevid Allen – who questioned the fundamental nature of Anglo-American rock music.

Uniquely among prog-rock bands, Soft Machine tended not to use guitars, but they've still managed to feature several of Britain's top guitarists – Andy Summers from The Police, fusion guru Allan Holdsworth and jazz luminary John Etheridge. And the band has been the seedbed for dozens of other hugely successful musicians – film composer Karl Jenkins, big-name saxophonists Elton Dean, Ray Warleigh and Theo Travis, and drummers John Marshall and Gary Husband have all passed through the band's ranks over the past half century.

The band formed in 1966, from the ashes of the Daevid Allen Trio and the Wilde Flowers, featuring drummer Wyatt, bassist Ayers, Aussie guitarist Allen and organist Mike Ratledge. The only recording made by this quartet would be the February 1967single, "Love Makes Sweet Music" – a piece of charming freakbeat, not quite poppy enough for *Ready Steady Go!*, yet not quite freaky enough for the Summer of Love. Its flipside, "Feelin', Reelin', Squealin'", is closer to the hippie ideal, a piece of flute-drenched psychedelia featuring a growling baritone-voiced Kevin Ayers on the verses and a tenor-pitched



Dadaist chorus from Wyatt. It would also be the last recording that the band would release featuring a guitar for nearly a decade.

An early live engagement saw them on the French Riviera, playing in a production of Picasso's outrageous, erotic play *Desire Caught By The Tail* and already displaying a fondness for jazz-inspired improvisation. Allen left the band on the way home – denied re-entry to the UK for overstaying the terms of his initial visa from Australia, he stayed on the Continent to form the Anglo- French outfit Gong – but his surrealist vision lived on for the first two Soft Machine albums. In particular was Allen's interest in the teachings of the French "pataphysicist" Alfred Jarry, an eccentric, proto-Dadaist prankster who counted Picasso, Gauguin, Duchamp and Oscar Wilde as friends.

The three-piece band's debut album, 1968's *The Soft Machine*, is a wonderfully endearing collection of skewed pop songs. It was played with a certain rigour that owed much to the band's contemporaries the Jimi Hendrix Experience (whom the band would support on a mammoth US tour that year), but Wyatt, Ayers and Ratledge all wore their experimentalism lightly – like Alfred Jarry, this was a band who were very consciously not taking themselves too seriously. "Why Am I So Short?" is a hymnal piece of Wyatt whimsy, "So Boot If At All" has a certain heavy rock swagger, with organist Mike Ratledge playing like a metal guitarist; "Why Are We Sleeping" prefigures early Blur; while "We Did It Again" is a hypnotic one-chord groove that anticipates the motorik krautrock that Can would be making a few years later. The album's highlight might be "Lullaby Letter", an angular proto-punk miniature with unusual chord changes that sounds oddly reminiscent of Nirvana, with Ratledge again playing a heavy metal solo on his Lowrey organ.



After the US tour with Hendrix (when Andy Summers briefly joined the band), Ayers left, to be replaced by the band's roadie Hugh Hopper, and the band regrouped to create the 1969 LP *Soft Machine Volume Two*, which takes the Jarry-esque absurdism of the first album into an almost symphonic dimension. The influence of the band's friends Pink Floyd is strong (Wyatt, Ratledge and Hopper had backed Syd Barrett on his 1968 solo debut, *The Madcap Laughs*). But the band also take a conceptual direction that owes much to Frank Zappa (apparently, on Zappa's recommendation, they split the album's two dominating suites into a shorter series of segued tracks to maximise on publishing income).



















THE SOFT MACHINE
ABC PROBE/ BARCLAY, 1968
8/10

VOLUME TWO
PROBE, 1969
8/10

THIRD
CBS, 1970
9/10

FOURTH
CBS, 1971
6/10

FIFTH
CBS, 1972
7/10

SIX
CBS, 1973
7/10

SEVEN
CBS, 1973
6/10

BUNDLES
HARVEST, 1975
8/10

SOFTS
HARVEST, 1976
7/10



The first of these, "Rivmic Melodies", is a 17-minute suite filled with compelling shorter pieces. "*Good evening, we now have a choice selection of rhythmic melodies from the Official Orchestra of the College of Pataphysics*," announces Wyatt over a jazzy, loping groove, before launching into a *Sesame Street*-style recitation of the alphabet over a quirky melody (track four, "A Concise British Alphabet, Pt II", repeats the track with the alphabet recited in an entirely random order). Anchored by Ratledge playing suspended chords on the piano, often with him overdubbing buzzsaw organ riffs over the top, it's a thoroughly appealing album, and a fine vehicle for Wyatt's plaintive, mischievous choirboy tenor voice. "Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening" is a lovely baroque ballad, while "Hibou Anemone And Bear" and "Orange Skin Food" both spin out into the kind of territory explored by Frank Zappa on *Hot Rats*, with Hugh's brother Brian Hopper playing harmonised solos on multiple reed instruments. Best of all might be "Hulloder", presumably written in the States, where Wyatt checks his privilege over the course of a lengthy, stream-of-consciousness ramble ("*If I was black and I lived here/I'd want to be a big man in the FBI… but as I'm not/And because I'm free, white and 21/I don't need more power than I've got/Except sometimes when I'm broke*").

The entire album is a cornucopia of ideas, any one of which could have seen them moving in a dozen different directions. The direction that they did end up taking, like many other jazz-loving rock musicians, was inspired by Miles Davis's album *Bitches Brew*. At the end of 1969, Wyatt visited a London jazz club where the pianist Keith Tippett was performing with his eight-piece, one that would later feature on his 1970 Polydor album *You Are Here... I Am There*. Wyatt was impressed by the horn frontline that lurched between tightly written harmonies and free improvisation. "We asked if we could borrow them to add spice to our distinctive but inflexible 'bees-in-abottle' sound and they generously agreed to help out," says Wyatt.

Elton Dean (alto saxophone), Marc Charig (cornet) and Nick Evans (trombone), along with Lyn Dobson (flute and alto) and Jimmy Hastings (flute and bass clarinet), were added to the Soft Machine lineup, forming a short-lived septet (Soft Machine weren't alone in their admiration of Tippett's band – King Crimson also hired Tippett, Charig and Evans around this time).

The resulting album, 1970's *Third*, turned out to be the way station between psychedelic prog and full-on jazz rock. Hugh Hopper's composition "Facelift" is a challenging and intriguing mix of ambient free improvisation and jazzy, high-pressure rock. It is a blend of two live performances recorded at Croydon's Fairfield Halls and then manipulated in the studio, Teo Macero-style, and subject to post-production tape loops. Ratledge's "Slightly All The Time" starts as a playful swing groove that moves into several stages and shifting time signatures; while the closing track, "Out-Bloody-Rageous", starts and ends with a nod to Terry Riley's *A Rainbow In Curved Air*, with overdubbed layers of organ creating a ghostly, hypnotic quality for the first and last five minutes of the track, sandwiching a jagged 7/4



groove that features one of Mike Ratledge's best fuzz-organ solos.

The album's penultimate track, Wyatt's "Moon In June", might be the band's masterpiece, but it was one that Ratledge and Hopper didn't particularly like. Wyatt sings a highly self-referential lyric that provides a running commentary of the recording process (the words would change when he performed the song live, at BBC Radio sessions, or at the Prom concert that Soft Machine headlined that summer). Wyatt plays drums, bass and keyboards for most of the track, his sparse approach reminiscent of his forthcoming solo albums like *Rock Bottom*. "Moon In June" could have augured a new era for the band as a Wyatt-esque conceptual pop group, but instead it became the band's last vocal track. 1971's *Fourth* sidelines Wyatt and it would be his last with the band. Hugh Hopper is the dominant songwriter, and many of the textures explored by the band start to become self-consciously jazzier. Roy Babbington joins the band on four tracks to play upright bass, complementing Hopper's bass guitar, while Ratledge puts his electric piano through a ring modulator – an FX unit popular with the likes of Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea. Elton Dean's first songwriting contribution, "Fletcher's Blemish", is a series of tightly written cued passages that are linked by free improvisation, consciously referencing *Bitches Brew*. Ratledge writes the bitty, fiddly "Teeth", while Hopper's "Virtually" is a four-part suite that moves between gentle harmonies and free-jazz freakouts. The waltzing "Kings And Queens" is a rare point of meditative peace on the album.

By the time of *Fifth* (1972), Soft Machine had fully morphed into a fusion outfit, broadly along the lines of Chick Corea's Return To Forever or John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra. Wyatt had been replaced by two jazz drummers – Phil Howard on side one, John Marshall on side two – both playing with a weird degree of restraint. Ratledge had ditched his Hohner pianet, the clunky-sounding electric piano he'd used on previous albums, and started using a Fender Rhodes, feeding it through numerous effects units and enjoying its glossy, ethereal qualities on tracks like "M C" and the aqueous ambient jazz of "Drop". "All White" is a rigorous modal groove in 7/4, "Pigling Bland" is an episodic funk ballad, while "As If" is a fidgety and idiosyncratic piece of collective improvisation written by Ratledge.



(Above) *Third*-era lineup – (l–r) Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt and Elton Dean – before their concert at the Albert Hall, August 13, 1970

What becomes apparent is that, for all the meretricious playing, there is no-one in the band capable of acting as a Chick Corea or a Herbie Hancock. Ratledge is great at texture and at "comping" (providing inventive backing for others), and he could get away with playing simple fuzz-rock riffs on his wheezy, buzzy Lowrey organ in earlier incarnations of the band. But, as a classically trained pianist dabbling in jazz, his limitations as an improviser become apparent. Even the band's strong instrumentalists, like Elton Dean, seemed reluctant to really take the lead.

Dean left after *Fifth* to be replaced by multireedist Karl Jenkins from Ian Carr's Nucleus, who started to dominate the band on 1973's *Six*, a double album that mixes live and studio recordings. A voyage through enjoyably disorientating time signatures, "37 ½" features some impressive drumming from John Marshall; "EPV" and "Lefty" are both interesting ambient explorations featuring an FX-laden Fender Rhodes; while the funky groove of Ratledge's "Gesolreut" recalls Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance", the soul-jazz standard covered by Miles Davis. The most memorable track on the studio album is "Stanley Stamp's Gibbon Album" a propulsive groove set around Ratledge's fugal piano riff. But it's the angular "Stumble" that sets out Jenkins' stall as a songwriter, and sets the tone for how the band would continue on 1973's *Seven*.

By now Hopper had left, to be replaced by Roy Babbington, and the writing is dominated by Jenkins, who pens seven of the tracks, specialising in simple, static and rather repetitive grooves like " Nettle Bed". "Carol Ann" is a pretty, spartan ballad, "Day's Eye" is a rigorous workout in 9/8, while Ratledge introduces a synth to the band for the first time – a modular analogue EMS model called the AKS.

It's tempting to see subsequent albums as an afterthought, but *Bundles* (1975) is a fascinating change in direction. Ratledge is increasingly sidelined – Jenkins is even starting to overdub keyboards – but the real USP is that the band have introduced guitar for the first time since their debut single. Where the sonic space usually occupied by guitar was

filled by Ratledge's FX-laden keyboards, here Allan Holdsworth starts to dominate proceedings, playing with a John McLaughlin swagger on "Hazard Profile", showing an ECM delicacy on "Gone Sailing" and telling a compelling narrative tale on "Land Of The Bag Snake". Holdsworth would soon be lost to America (to join The Tony Williams Lifetime), to be replaced by the more introspective John Etheridge on the rather reflective and ambient 1976 album *Softs*.

Soft Machine have continued to exist, on and off, since then, as a legacy project – also known, variously, as Soft Ware, Soft Works and Soft Machine Legacy – drawing from an alumni of around 50 people and often featuring some very big names in British jazz (including John Taylor, Dick Morrissey and Theo Travis). But their repertoire concentrates almost exclusively on the mid 1970s incarnation of the band. There are dozens of fascinating iterations of Soft Machine that could provide fruitful territory for exploration.

(Below) *Bundles* lineup, 1975 – (c/wise from top left) Roy Babbington, Ratledge, John Marshall, Allan Holdsworth and Karl Jenkins



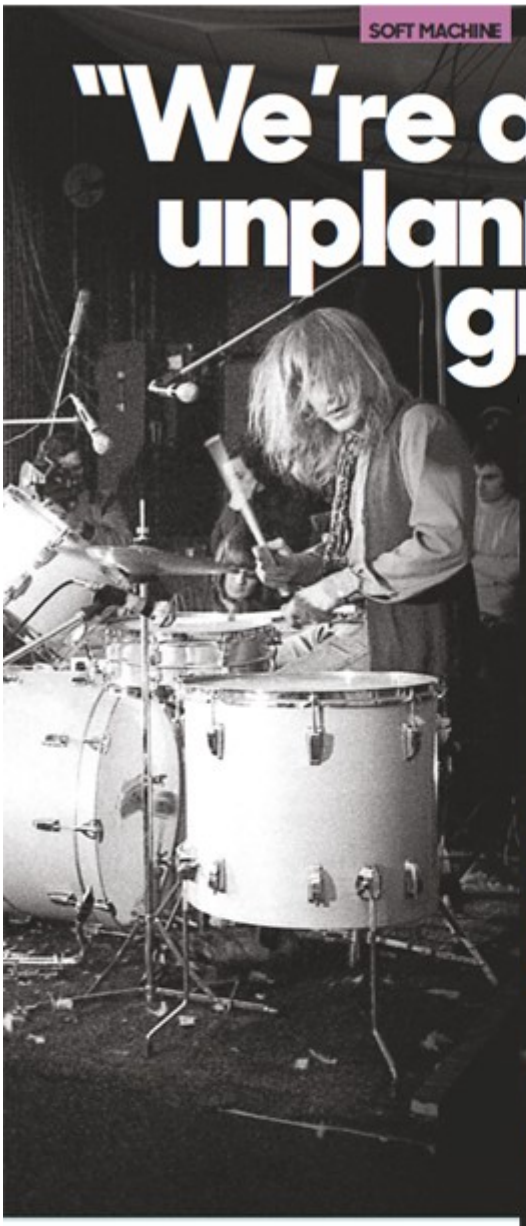
HULTON-DEUTSCH/HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES; TONY RUSSELL/REDFERNS



[Below : this interview is also published here]

SOFT MACHINE

"We're a very unplanned group"



MELODY MAKER JANUARY 2,1971


Melody Maker
RADIO 1 TO DIE?

1970 was a very good year for Robert Wyatt. It was the year in which he established himself as a major drummer in contemporary British music; the year in which he experimented outside the confines, unrestrictive though they are, of The Soft Machine, dallying briefly with Kevin Ayers, then concentrating more strongly on his role inside the Keith Tippett Centipede project, with whom he has played so impressively on their three initial outings.

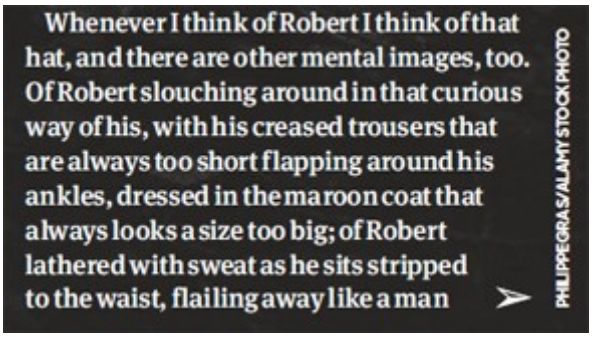
And then, as the year has drawn to an end, he has further established his own identity by becoming a prime mover in Symbiosis, that excitingly impromptu, free-blowing band, and finally topping off the proceedings by producing his own album – you believe he produced it, too?

He has called it *The End Of An Ear*, which is quite a funny pun, I suppose. But then, Robert it quite a funny person with his huge fur French hat crammed down over his untidy lank hair.

Whenever I think of Robert I think of that hat, and there are other mental images, too. Of Robert slouching around in that curious way of his, with his creased trousers that are always too short flapping around his ankles, dressed in the maroon coat that always looks a size too big; of Robert lathered with sweat as he sits stripped to the waist, flailing away like a man

PHILIPPE GRAS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"I STILL FEEL LOST. SOMETIMES I'M BACK WHERE I STARTED SIX YEARS AGO"
ROBERT WYATT



possessed under the hot lights of the Albert Hall during the Softs' televised concert; and then there is Robert sitting with bitter tears in his eyes in a dressing room in Rotterdam because he hates the performance he has just given.

Because, you see, he's nothing if not an emotional person. He is also nothing if not a nice person, and niceness is not an excessively common quality among musicians and entertainers. Much of the secret of his success is that people respond so readily to his spontaneity and generosity of spirit. Everybody wants to work with him, and when they have made the gig they come back for more. There was nobody happier and more elated amongst those 50 people in Centipede than Wyatt, and no one more brought down when the band received reviews that were generally cautious and, in one instance, bitterly hostile.

"I'm upset, not for my own sake," he explained later, "but for Keith and Julie." And he meant it.

How do you feel about interviews, Robert? "

I regret most I've done when I see what's happened, but then I regret most performances on records, too. I think one of the big difficulties is that written words and spoken words aren't the same thing. You actually think different things in print – I do. Things I say, words I use in speech, if I was writing down the same thought, I actually wouldn't use the same word. There's nothing anybody can do about that, really. It's misleading. I find I say things just to pad some things out, or to be clever for a minute while I'm trying to think what I really think. I can see the value of them, but I still find it makes demands... It upsets me sometimes, put it like that. But that's true of anything."

But Hugh [*Hopper*] and Mike [*Ratledge*] don't like interviews, do they?

"Well, Hugh is pathologically shy. Very. The fact that he goes on stage is part of it. You don't get up on your own, you get up with equipment and amplifiers and volume. It's very private on stage; it's not an exhibitionistic thing to do at all.

"People are often surprised at musicians and performers being introverts but it doesn't surprise me. What surprises me is that people who are extroverts are musicians. What amazes me is when a brilliant musician is an extrovert, because if they're extrovert it probably means that they spent their time in their teens rushing round coffee bars meeting people, and I'm surprised that they had the time to learn to play anything at the same time.

"Whereas I find that introverts are less social people, are very often the ones who learn to play instruments properly. The one way you can hide is to be a performer, because it's really a false identity to be on stage. You can really feel untouchable and private.

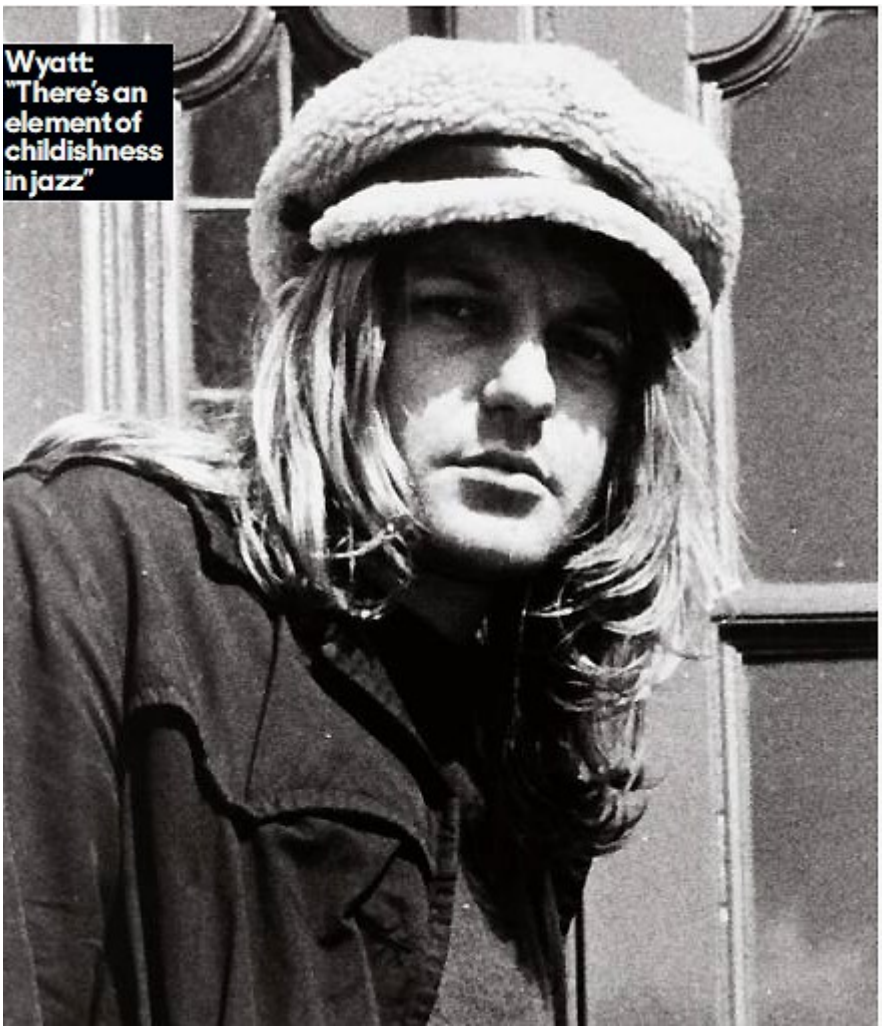
"The group has become primarily instrumental, for instance, because of our characters, in a way. We're a very unplanned group in our direction. We just sort of drift from whatever area seems to excite us at the moment to whatever other area seems to excite us. Even the simple things, like the gaps, the lack of gaps, is because we are embarrassed, I think, to have a silence on stage where the audience is expected to react back to us. I just find that totally embarrassing – ending a number, bang, then straight into the next one, all that business. I can't bear it."

You don't always appear happy with the group... What do you think it's doing wrong for you personally?

[Long pause] "All the things you can talk about in music we agree on. We all share similar

ideas on the possibilities of freedom and the different types of freedom, and structure, and discipline, and what use they are, and when they're useful and when they are not, and how to cooperate, and still express yourself. But music isn't, like, conscious ideas, concepts, if you had them; the real music is the way you play, the actual note that you put after the note before.

"And quite simply, sometimes we aren't playing the same piece of music – the drumming isn't the drumming for the bass line that Hugh's using, or there's another bass line that isn't being played, or the rhythm section thing that should be with Mike's organ solo isn't because Hugh and I are somewhere else. The idea, after all, is not to create four pieces of music but one piece of music, and I'm upset on nights when we create four pieces of music."



GEMS/GETTY IMAGES

So what have you gained musically from the Symbiosis?

"Since the summer, since I've started playing with Kevin, I've realised that in other contexts there are things in me which come out and never seem to come out when I play with Soft Machine. It's not a question of quality at all, it's just a question of different situations demand different skills, and I hadn't realised just how much you do adapt and just play what seems necessary. I would be very loath to put a word to it and think of a concept which fits what I mean.

"All I know is that when I get on a kit, and there's Roy Babbington on me left and whoever it might be, Neville Whitehead or someone, and Gary [*Windo*] and Nick [*Evans*], that a whole different thing happens. I just lift up me sticks and immediately something else happens and different situations arise that would never arise with Soft Machine. I just play completely different things.

"Symbiosis is different people. All music is a cooperative thing, you see. Beyond all people's

individual talent is a shared talent, which the music has. How to pin down the best relationship... European music sort of solidified in a way into an almost military hierarchy of composer, conductor and orchestra.

"What happens is, there's a kind of assumption that the type of person who conceives the music is a different kind of person from a performer – that's what European music assumes, although many great European composers have been virtuoso performers of their own work, and many great composers are great conductors. But generally speaking, this is a hierarchy that's accepted, and the fact is that in my opinion the most vital influence on music has been the black music of the past 50 years.

"The most interesting thing it seems to me, that has been suggested by black music, is that, as in, say, painting, the person who conceives of it and the person who plays it can be one and the same – combine both skills in one person. And this seems to me the most interesting, challenging thing that jazz music has come up with that European music doesn't really like to get to grips with. And what Symbiosis is, is a complete imbalance; in other words, we're all blowers without any of the composers, or when we do have composers – like Keith was with us the other night – he's not in a composing or controlling role at all.

"And so it's an incredible risk, Symbiosis every night, because we just turn up and play. The responsibility is enormous; you've got to be on form then and there because you're going to be doing all the composing and all the performing at the same time, and so is everybody else."

Would you agree that this seems to be a very interesting period for young jazz musicians and the thinking rock musicians? They really seem to be coming together.

"Well, Centipede is directly responsible for Symbiosis and so on. Yeah, I think so. For me, I find it staggering, and a bit scary, because it seems to me there's so much to do and so little to hide behind.

"There's a lot of knowledge and wisdom that's been spread around in the last four or five years. There's no excuse for certain types of musicians not knowing about other types. The standards are so high now! And the area of information you are expected to cope with! I think there's bound to be a lot of messy stuff of journalistic interest – interesting but disposable – but I think it's incredibly exciting. Short answer to your question – yes."

What do you think jazz people can learn from those musicians with rock references?

"That's interesting. Before I talk about it I think that if you think of it as a blanket thing you're in trouble; a band created out of generalised theories sounds like one to me, always. And a band made out of people who've met and work together well sounds like that as well. There can be as much difference in worlds between two so-called rock musicians working together, they can bring more completely different things to each other than a rock musician and a classical musician.

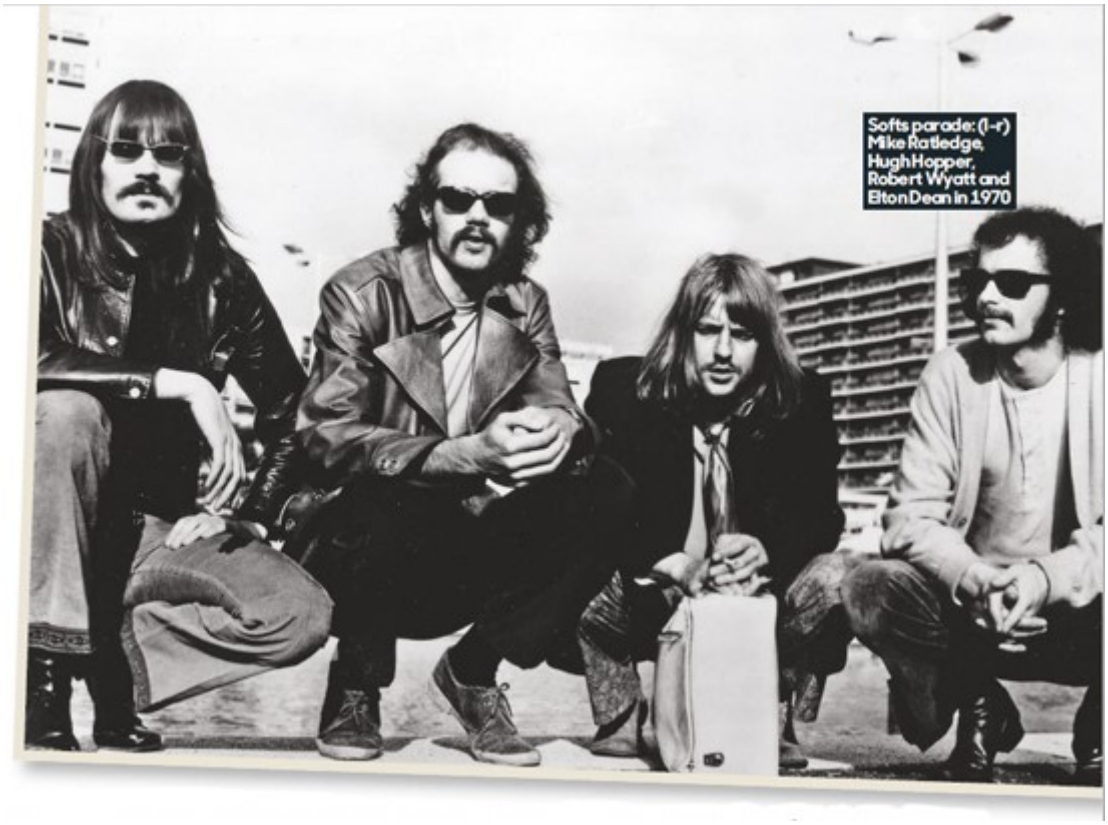
"If there are any general things, I think they're the obvious ones. Jazz musicians are now realising that there's nothing mature about consistently drowning out your bass player and pianist. There's nothing childish about getting your bass player and pianist heard, even if it means they have to play crude instruments such as bass guitar and electric piano. There's nothing essentially immoral or immature about it. The fact that rock musicians assume that you've got to hear the bass line – although very often they overdo it – seems to me an actual element of musical maturity in rock. There's an element of childishness in jazz. There's an assumption that jazz musicians can do all the teaching and rock musicians all the learning.

"If the soloist, for instance, is doing a development upon a harmonic sequence and you can't hear the harmonic sequence, so you don't know what the solo lines are referring to, then you lose the point of reference; you lose the lovely cosmic hum, if you'll pardon the expression; you lose the sense of well-being, you lose, actually, the music, and you just leave the ideas. It's an important thing in rock, the amplifiers and that, and instead of being rude about them, I think jazz musicians are realising more and more that they've got a very important function and that they're solving problems that can't be solved in any other way in the immediate future.

"And I think rock musicians can learn from jazz musicians. The most important thing they

learn is that you can get a lot more out of music and put a lot more into it if you learn to play properly. Quite simply, jazz musicians are showing rock musicians that there's an awful lot of things you can do on a guitar and drum kits that aren't unnecessary or just technical fiddle bits – they just expand your language.

"In practice, most jazz musicians tend to me to be very involved in what they play – actually, the relationship between them and their instrument; and they've developed that to a very high extent – a man and his bass, a man and his alto, a man and his piano. And what rock has spent a lot more time doing than most of jazz is studying the actual effect and balance of what all these instruments sound like from the outside on a stage."



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What do you think your strengths are as a drummer?

"Well, I suppose it's a bit late to say this, but I don't primarily think of myself as a drummer. I think of myself as a catalyst for the real musicians. How I see myself being most useful is getting people at it slightly more than if I wasn't there, or even getting them together and at it. If I was really into drums as an end I'd be sitting here practising. But I haven't got a practice pad! So long as I can play well enough to pin down what's going on and to emphasise the pace that's necessary.

"From the technical point of view I'm just nowhere, really. I've always felt a bit uncomfortable since we started. Basically, I came up to London to sing songs with Kevin [Ayers]. Five, six years ago. I'd done a lot of things before then that were instrumental, but by instrumental I don't mean jazz or rock. In fact, the funny way these discussions come to jazz and rock is that I don't see them as the two great sources from which musicians are drawing.

"A lot of my richest sources of inspiration come from not one musical idiom or the other but from paintings, and theatre and people's characteristics that you haven't seen come through in music."

But everybody is affected to a greater or lesser extent by every experience they encounter. Didn't you once tell me you'd learnt a lot by being told by Robert Graves, the poet, to leave home at 16 and make your own way in the world?

"Well, I lived with him in Majorca for a while, and he became my Mediterranean father in a way. He's happy to have me there, and I hadn't left school when I first went there, but he

didn't want me to loaf about in the sun and just have a nice time and groove, which is virtually the state he's got to now, because he has the traditional attitude that he's done his homework, built up something, and now he's out in the sun finishing it off, so to speak.

"I hadn't earned it yet, somehow, and though there was great love abounding it wasn't one which had to be constantly backed up by me being there all the time or him coming here, just that he felt I had to go out and do it, and then when I'd got something that I'd done, maybe go back and see him again. And I haven't been back yet because I don't feel I've done anything yet that would stand up to his kind of standards."

So how did the tie-up with Graves originate?

"There's a bunch of friends there in the early '30s who'd gone out there – poets and writers – and their children, their grandchildren, got invited out there by the people who stayed on there – you know, the children of the people who went back to England during the war. And I'm one of them. He's no relation, though my father's first wife was his secretary.

"There's a kind of family of thinkers that my parents belonged to, and to a certain extent Robert Graves could be called the head of that family. He's a kind of distant tribal chief, though it's several generations removed. He had various fights with me dad, who died some years ago. My father at that time, he was a sort of brilliant young Communist layabout, really [*laughs*].

"He'd done various things. He'd got a degree in law at Liverpool, and then he did modern languages at Oxford, and then he got on to do psychology at Cambridge. A very bright bloke.

"He lived just long enough to realise that I wasn't going into university, which really disappointed him. He died in a state of anger at me, I'm afraid. But he was also a pianist, and that's definitely where I got my ideas from. The house was full of music.

"And Graves, he's incredible. There's a colony, a set, around him there. Mind you, I'm talking about when I was there, which was before The Soft Machine. I've got lots of friends who have gone back there. Kevin spent some time there. He got into Majorca as a place to live much more than I did."

So when you came up to London you were going to sing with Kevin?

"Yes, I think that was the idea; I didn't really know. I'd been through a period in my head very much like the stuff I'm doing now, although not technically, probably. The music I was listening to – had been listening to – was Sunny Murray, Milford Graves and Cecil Taylor, essentially. And Eric Dolphy, and Elvin Jones, of course. And I arrived at the point where I decided the simplicity of Kevin's songs, and the rightness and charm of them, had a fantastic appeal to me after a couple of years of Sunny Murraying and freak-out. And I'm now, I think, at a similar stage. I'm likely now to get into the stage that Chris Spedding has been through on his album. I haven't heard it, but what he's said about it I recognise, and I think a lot of us do.

"In fact, it's becoming a long syndrome in music – people going from complexity to simplicity. But I still feel very lost, actually. Sometimes I'm back where I started six years ago. I've to go through the cycle all over again now."

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HOME

"I'm not concerned with whining" - The Best of NME 1970-1974 - August 2018



NME OCTOBER 26, 1974



Post accident, **ROBERT WYATT** unveils his album Rock Bottom, and a chart hit, "Daydream Believer". "The accident didn't in fact haunt me or in fact have half the effect on me that people might suppose." "You've got to think of something to sing..."



> Zoom

THERE'S something extra special about green suede boots. A certain devil-maycare attitude, a touch of fearless dandyism combined with a sense of the earthy and an instinct for style that just don't quit. Robert Wyatt weareth green boots. They go very nicely with the blue plastic stopwatch around his neck.



Nick Mason, Very Famous Drummer and Producer De Luxe, peers eloquently through the plate-glass barrier between the Shop Floor and Ground Control at CBS studios. On the other side, Gary Windo (fetchingly ceilinged by a little white cap) and Mongezi Feza are adding the horn lines to Mr. Wyatt's Next Teenage Smasheroonie.

"Great," opines Wyatt from his mobile command-post at the doorward end of the console.

"It does a bit, doesn't it?" replies Mason.

Wyatt groans elaborately. "You and your Pink Floyd in-jokes."

The song is another golden great from the sizzlin' Sixties, Chris Andrews' "Yesterday Man". Where Andrews' original was aggressively petulant, Wyatt's is wistfully surreal. He performs on assorted bits of percussion (including a bass-drum whomped by hand) and what sounds like a harmonium, but plays around the beat while the main rhythmic push comes from Windo and Feza. A modestly clad young man with an air of amiable vagueness that instantly pegs him as a member of Henry Cow wanders in, identifies himself by the highly improbable name of John Greaves, overdubs a positive humdinger of a bass line, inquires how long it takes to get from here to Liverpool Street, and wanders out again.

"Yeah, but could Pan's People dance to it?" inquires Windo.

It looks as if they may have to, because after a minor fracas with *Top Of The Pops'* resident plenipotentiary Robin Nash, Wyatt will probably not be gracing their studios for some little time to come.

It seems that Nash considered Wyatt's appearing in his wheelchair to be somewhat "distasteful", both to the audience and to the production team. Wyatt retorted, with ample justification, that if being in a wheelchair didn't hang him up, he saw no reason why it should offend anybody else. Exeunt fuming in opposite directions.

Meanwhile, there's a groovy little ditty entitled "Sonia" to go on the B-side, and for this one Wyatt whips it out on a specially prepared mellotron programmed with sound effects, tuned percussion, voices, xylophones and a whole circus of other foolishnesses. As he gets to work on the track (which already features him on piano and percussion) jaws sag and people run serious risks of falling off their chairs.

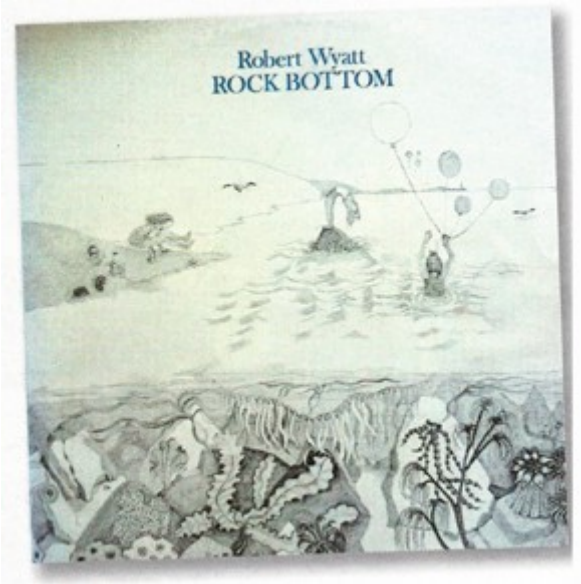
"He could do a show by himself with two or three of those," murmurs his wife Alfie.

"Can we hear the other one again?" asks Windo.

Mason spins around in his chair, face frozen in well-simulated disgust. "What do you think this is?" he asks icily. "A bleedin' discotheque or something?"

As the studio disintegrates once more into cackles of braindamaged hilarity, we fade out into a different time phase; : two weeks previously in Twickenham, playground of the Elder Deities. We'll give Wyatt one paragraph's start to make it back to his residence in time to admit the writer.

OK, Robert-go!



WHILE we're waiting, let's sling in a few thoughts on Mr Wyatt's album, *Rock Bottom*, which is being received in the nation's record stores with the proverbial storm of indifference. First of all, it's an easy album to listen to and a hard one to come to terms with. (Jeez, two clauses ending in prepositions. If my English teacher could see me now.)

As Ian MacDonald pointed out in his original review of the album, rock-star-as-paraplegic is a whole different ball game to the flood of spiritual hypochondriacs currently laying their bummers on paying customers, especially when Wyatt has triumphed over his particular slice of adversity, leaving others (like John Lennon, Lou Reed and pre-*Beach* Neil Young) staggering under comparatively featherweight burdens.

I don't want to pull any sanctimonious Oxfam there's-a-lesson-to-be-learned-by-all-of-us routines, but nevertheless, the point does have to be made. Not to dwell overlong, either, on the fact that the music and lyrics are a prime vindication of tile theory of lateral thinking as applied to rock music (ie, many of the conventional criteria of what constitutes a "good rock lyric" or a "good rock melody" are effortlessly short-circuited).

EYEWITNESS!



NICK MASON: "I first met Robert at UFO, then we probably did some gigs together – we certainly spent time together in New York when Soft Machine were touring with Hendrix. We were all holed up in the same hotel in New York in 1968. Then of course I produced Robert's *Rock Bottom*.

"Producing Robert didn't entail an enormous amount of hard work. He really just wanted a bit of assistance in the technical side. But I certainly didn't need to tell him anything about how the music went.

"Recording didn't take long, we probably did the backing tracks in an hour or so. We spent longer putting [*guitarist*] Fred Frith's stuff on than anything else, putting the violin part on and so on. That was all Fred's idea, we let him loose on it.

"It was probably faster than all the Pink Floyd tempos throughout history. We always kept to about 70bpm max. My doctor told me never to play faster than my pulse rate... But I was a lot younger and fitter, then, so it was fine.

"Pink Floyd had been on *Top Of The Pops* in '67. *Top Of The Pops* hardly changed at all from its first to last show as far as I remember. The same sort of slightly uncomfortable dancing and some DJ shouting. We appeared with Robert two weeks running, and the second week they didn't want us to show the wheelchair.

"Drury Lane was the only time the song was performed – unless you count by The Monkees. I remember it being fun.

There, now. I've gone on for five paragraphs when I only meant to write one, and poor old Robert's waiting for me two weeks ago in Twickenham - so into the conveniently located time/space reducer (cleverly disguised as an ordinary London taxi) and...

Lo and behold, here we are at the Wyatt residence, a large, airy house - reputedly donated by admirer Julie Christie - and here's Mr. Wyatt himself to open the door.

The living room window is adorned with a communist sticker (you just knew that he was a dirty Red, didn't you? Now he'll definitely never get back on *Top Of The Pops*). Beaming and kaftan-draped, he skids around the kitchen organising coffee ("We don't have any sugar, so is condensed milk all right? You don't look like a hippie, otherwise I'd offer you honey"), before transferring the discussion to the Principal Living Area, which, he claims, "has a totally spurious and extremely temporary air of tidiness."

He produces a reminder list for himself of things that he specifically wanted to talk about. A remark made by the author, to the effect that he never listens to the radio because he likes to programme his own listening, sparks Wyatt off on one of his ready-made topics.



"But the logical extension of that is why not get a piano so that then you can programme your own notes. It's like singing; everybody thinks that it's a case of some people have a voice and some people haven't. Everybody's got an equally good voice. Just like everybody's got two arms and two legs. It's just a matter of using it.

"People who get praised for doing it are the people who actually bother. It's incredible cheek, actually. There's nothing easier than putting on layer after layer of any instrument that you find lying around." Take that, Mike Oldfield. Still, that does presuppose that you can actually play the goddamn things in the first place.

"No, not assuming that you can play it. In fact, Dave MacRae had a much harder time putting down Mellotron than I did, because he knows much more about possibilities. I'm so delighted if I can get a note which sounds nice that I don't get too flash with it.

"Blokes don't like to admit that many of their heroes became heroes because a lot of girls fancied them"

Dave can do so much that it's almost a drawback. The people who make the best rock records are the people who can't really play that well at all."

"It must be very tantalising for someone like Keith Jarrett, because he can do so much. It's

like an athlete: there's such a real joy in doing it. His fingers are so fast that his brain can't keep up half the time.

"People with a fantastic amount of facility have a hard time controlling it for a specific musical event. In fact, amazing soloists tend to play different versions of Their Solo in everything they play. Jazz guitarists have a much harder time playing solos that are relevant to a particular tune than, say, George Harrison would, who can't move that fast. This is my theory, which is my theory and which belongs to me.

"Now what else is on my list... there's a few things that I'd kick myself for if I didn't mention. One of which is the growing antipathy among *NME* readers - and writers - towards boring old snobs left over from flower power, such as myself being given precedence over... no, not precedence, but... taking music away from the people or something... if I'm wrong I'll apologise... actually, I think I am wrong.

"Anyway, I'd just like to say that I heard Noddy Holder this morning, and I think he's one of the best singers I've ever heard. He's one of the only singers I've ever heard who's consistently done amazing vocals on everything since the first record his group did. I think he's an absolutely... fantastic singer.

"Now, what else do I think?"

What else does he think?

Heavens to albatross, gentle reader, the foregoing represents about four minutes of a four-hour conversation. The ideas-per-minute quotient of a Wyatt conversation rivals that of Groucho Marx in his prime. You'd need a "Wyatt Remembers"-type paperback to do justice to it all.

Anyway, let me just sling in a few random excerpts from our extravarapperama:

"Oh, another thing that I think is... see, Alfie liked the Sparks single straight off an' I didn't and she suggested that a lot of blokes miss the point that rock's based on. All us blokes claim Mick Jagger, or whoever it might be, as our sort of male hero, but in fact the basic reason that a lot of these geezers get famous is because they're sex symbols for girls.



Chairing proceedings: Wyatt in the studio, October 16, 1974

"The male rock fan takes over in terms of who's supposed to be good and who isn't - and I was wondering about this tendency towards sourness on the part of all blokes when they talk about rock'n'roll and the disillusion that they feel about rock'n'roll.

"It's because they don't like to admit that a large number of the heroes actually became heroes not as earthy rock-music-for-the-people people but simply because an incredible number of girls fancied them.

"I reckon you ought to have Elkie Brooks and Lyndsey De Paul and people doing singles reviews, because as far as I can remember it's been all blokes doing 'em. A lot of singles are to do with male sex objects, so it's very odd that it's largely men writing about it."

Two more minutes and counting...

ANOTHER bit, mainly about that Drury Lane gig of a month or so back. Gonna do anymore?

"No. I knew it was gonna be quite good, because Laurie Allan, Hugh Hopper and Dave Stewart are basically my dream rhythm section. I felt that no matter how bad it was, those people and Fred Frith and so on would be able to pull something out of the hat.

"There's some misleading things put out about me, actually, about my dislike of live performances. All I'm talking about is me and what suits me.

"I get things together in live performances that I wouldn't get together normally and there's certainly a certain magic to it if it's working right, but the sheer cost and the whole organisation of getting a live group working and the solid responsibilities of getting other people paid -there's just so many things that can go wrong that the percentages are all against you.

"But people like me aren't basically quick thinkers and we work best without people... staring at us.

"I've got a sort of composer mentality - not that I actually do much composing. If I wasn't watching telly I'd be composing most of the time, and this is how my brain operates.

"Performance is something else altogether. Performance is taking on people who've come out for a lift after their day, so that they feel good for a couple of hours, and there's therefore a temptation to get into the exciting bits. Whereas most of the music I like is... pretty boring, actually! Performing live gives you a cheap thrills consciousness."

On to the album, and its graphic depiction of Wyatt's life before, during and after the accident.

"The accident didn't in fact haunt me or in fact have half the effect on me that people might suppose. It was a useful bunch of symbols of what I think life's like anyway, but even then I'm not really concerned with whining.

"You've got to think of something to sing, and something that comes off the tongue quite easily, so obviously you draw on what's around you, just like a person who's going out to sketch. The sketch is just the sketch.

"What they are interested in is their control of their fingers. The subject that they use is really quite accidental. It's just one of the tools, part of the simulating stuff that sets things off. Nothing to do with the quality of what comes out. It doesn't matter if at the end you know nothing more about houses or trees. The words are just tools for me to make pleasant sounding songs out of."

Charles Shaar Murray



LIVE

"From the sublime to the ridiculous..."

Theatre Royal Drury Lane, September 8, 1974

NME SEPTEMBER 14, 1974



EVEN though the gig was due to start at 8.30, Drury Lane had started to clog up with earnest-looking hippies nearly two hours before the event. Mind you, it all adds to the sense of occasion, but the regrettably prosaic explanation was that someone had neglected to inscribe the precise time of showing on either the tickets or the ads.

So it goes.

Things kicked off with a brief monologue by the newlywed John Peel, clad in his most glam rock outfit. Undeterred by shouts of "Boring" from certain sections of the audience – all right then, from me – he intoned for a few moments and then vacated the stage to Ivor Cutler and Phyllis April King, who provided a highly amusing interlude of deadpan poesies and brief songs, which were received with great merriment by the assembled company.

So it goes.

After a discreet intermission, Peel cartwheeled dynamically back onto the stage. Through mobile, well-shaped lips he enunciated (rather devastatingly, it must be admitted) "For Robert Wyatt of Twickenham, opportunity knocks!"

Mr Wyatt perambulated rapidly to a strategic area between a small mixer ("These knobs don't actually do anything – they just give me the first trickles of the mighty wave of superstars that was soon to swamp the stage. (The preceding sentence comes to you courtesy of 36 back numbers of *Conan The Barbarian*).

Most of the material from Wyatt's *Rock Bottom* found its way into the front half of the set (and in case you need to be re-told, it's a wondrous LP indeed). Towards the end of "A Last Straw", a diffident young man with an unmistakable "I-am-a-junior-roadie" demeanour wandered on, played a bit of synthesiser and wandered off.

It wasn't until he reappeared half an hour later with a Gibson SG strapped around him, that the audience sussed that this dynamic figure was in fact none other than Mike Oldfield, the man with Britain's two best-selling albums to his name, one of which had been blasted through the PA during the intermissions. However, it was undoubtedly Wyatt's show, despite the superstars who wandered on and off – y'know, yer Nick Masons, Gary Windos, that bunch.

Swaying in his wheelchair playing ghost drums, fiddling with the dials of his mixer with one hand, clutching a mike with the other and his eyes squeezed tight shut, he was unquestionably the focal point of the proceedings, and folks, he's singin' better than ever.

Unfortunately Julie Tippett's contribution to the festivities rather derailed things. After joining Wyatt and co for one song, she was left alone tootling merrily on a recorder and humming into it occasionally.

This was followed by two songs at de piano, performed extremely nervously, and a number with Wyatt, Windo and trumpeter Mongezi Feza, which could well have been called "Dedicated To You But You Ran Out Of The Room Screaming for Aspirin". Ms Tippett's voice is still as compelling as ever, but her stiff, uncertain piano playing and the lugubriousness of her songs provided a rather dead area in the middle of the set, which

RSTOCK; JAK KILBY

something to do with my hands") and a keyboard set-up ("At rehearsals I couldn't find a position from where I could play these, so I probably won't play them. Still, they look good.").

He ran through a good-naturedly rickety version of Hugh Hopper's "Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening", backed up by Hopper himself on bass, Laurie Allan on drums, Fred Frith on violin and Dave Stewart on keyboards, eventually climaxed with a thoroughly berserk version of "I'm A Believer" with some singularly dirty rhythm guitar from Oldfield.

Generally, the show veered from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the sublime firmly in the lead... 80 per cent of it was very fine indeed, and the more gigs Robert Wyatt feels like undertaking the better. Wheel meet again. ●

CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY

NICK ROGERS/DAILY MAIL/REX/SHUTT

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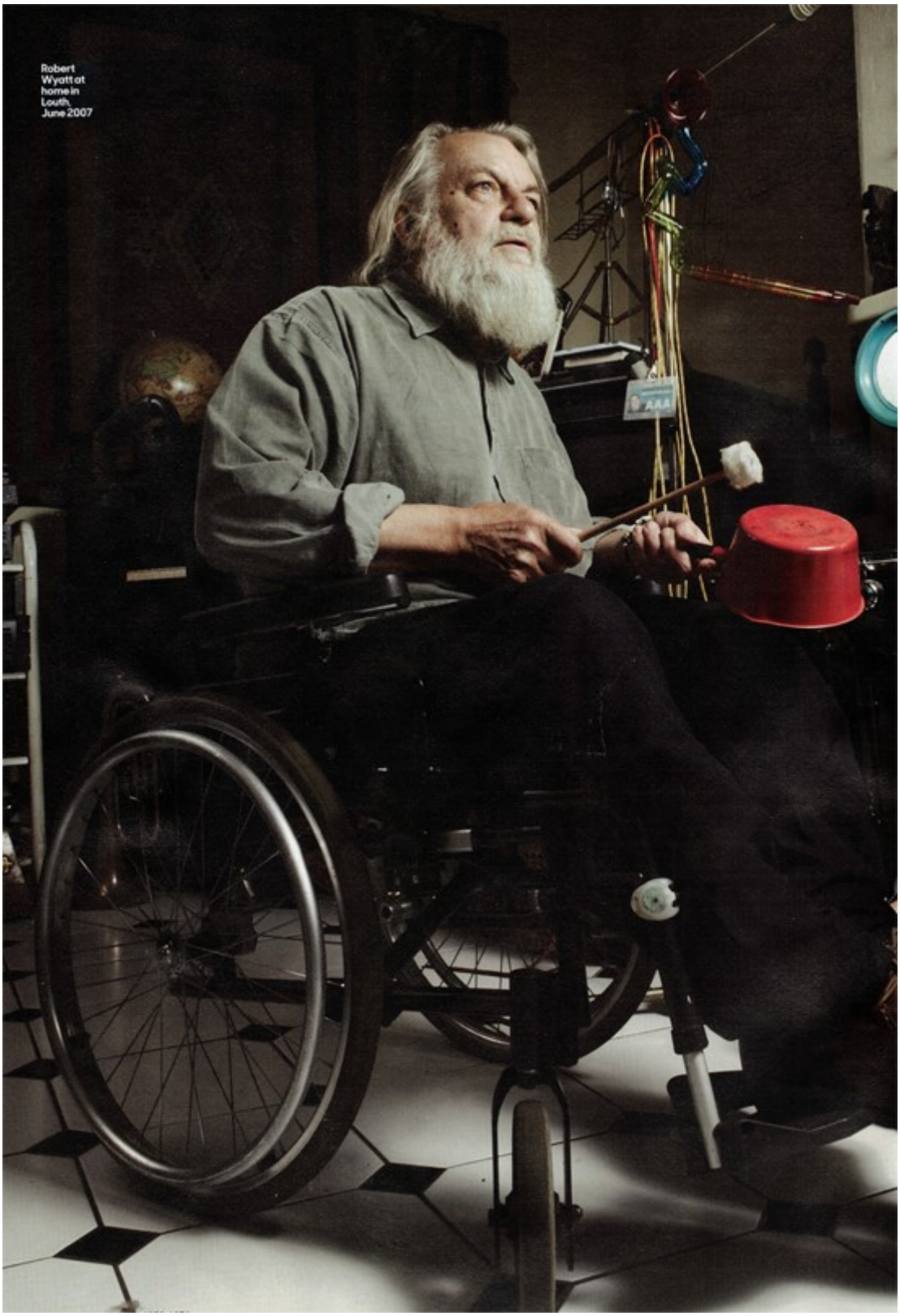
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HOME

"It's a Magical Thing" - The Best of NME 1970-1974 - August 2018





> Zoom

With his own magnificent work, and far-reaching connections, **ROBERT WYATT** is the spiritual godfather of NME GOLD 1970-74. In an exclusive interview, JOHN LEWIS hears the retiree expound on the period: Slade, Floyd, policemen's moustaches, Eno, and the art of the song. "I'm biased in favour of Floyd," he says, "because I get on so well with them..."



IT'S fair to say that Robert Wyatt had an eventful time between 1970 and 1974. "I got chucked out of a band," he says today, down the phone from his home. "I formed another. I fell out of a window. I spent seven months in hospital. I turned into a singer-songwriter. I played at the Proms, and I appeared on *Top of The Pops*. Oh, and more importantly, I met Alfie [*Wyatt's partner, artist Alfreda Benge*], and we're still together."

His orbit included key figures of the period - from Hendrix to Mike Oldfield, from Phil Manzanera to Eno, from Pink Floyd to Henry Cow. "Some of these friends ended up phenomenally successful," he says. "But none of them feel famous when you're in their company. It's all quite random, how you end up knowing these people."

Wyatt's life was changed forever on June 1, 1973 when, at a party for Gong's Gilli Smyth and "Lady" June Campbell Fraser in Maida Vale, he fell from a fourth-floor window while heavily drunk. He's still not entirely sure if it was an accident or a suicide attempt, but it's something that he remains incredibly positive about. "Alfie says I've coped with it by being in denial," he says. "It's been a successful strategy."

Friends rallied around. Pink Floyd played a benefit for him, John Peel asked listeners to send regards, the model Jean Shrimpton gave Robert and Alfie a car. The actress Julie Christie bought them a house in Twickenham, which they lived in for more than 15 years.

Today he and Alfie live in Louth, Lincolnshire. After an Indian summer to his career - including the Mercury-nominated album *Cuckooland* in 2007 - he announced his retirement from music in 2014. "Me and Alfie bumble around town. We watch telly together. It's all very civilised."

How the devil are you?
Well, the correct answer to that question should always be "I'm absolutely fine, thank you". The actual answer is that we tend to fall apart in our seventies, and I've made things more difficult for myself by breaking my back 40 years ago, ha ha. And I've had to consider that, for all the benefits of breaking my back, there are drawbacks that I hadn't anticipated. But I'm fine, I'm well looked after and well fed, and Alfie's just made me some fantastic fish paste, so what more can I ask for?

The period between 1970 and 1974 was a pretty eventful and turbulent one for you..
Yes. For me, it ends happily with the Drury Lane concert in September 1974. This was a fundraiser for me, after my accident, and it does sum up the story so far for me in a very happy way, so I have a great nostalgia and affection for it. Because of the occasion it very

vividly conjures up all the people I worked with during that period. The introduction is by John Peel, and there's all these wonderful musicians working on it - Nick Mason from Pink Floyd and Laurie Allan on drums, Mike Oldfield and Fred Frith on guitars, Dave Stewart on keyboards, Ivor Cutler, the trumpeter Mongezi Feza and the saxophonist Gary Windo. It's a great window into a whole musical scene at that point in the 1970s, and snapshot of my life. I didn't really do live gigs after that, so there is the nostalgia of that too.

How did that gig come about?
Luckily, other people did all the work for me. A key figure on that project was Dave Stewart, from National Health and other bands. He is absolutely brilliant at scoring things for people who couldn't write music, for publishers. He went through *Rock Bottom* and arranged the entire thing. We played the album, in its entirety, then added some other bits and pieces to make it a full, proper-length concert. It was a frighteningly good bunch of musicians. What I liked about it was, if you form a group, it becomes a thing, an entity. Whereas, doing a one-off thing like that, it's a bit like making a film. So we'd have Laurie Allan on drums for one thing, Nick Mason on drums for another, or Mike Oldfield and Fred Frith sharing the guitars. We had that variety of noises available.

You go back a long way with Pink Floyd...
Oh yes. We didn't really tour with them, but we shared the bill with them in lots of London gigs in the early days, and then they took off, quite rightly, with two great pop singles - "See Emily Play" and "Arnold Layne" - and entered a different league. Soft Machine bashed around, we got gigs, but it was on a different scale. Occasionally on the continent we'd be put together on bills. But we were so different that we weren't at all competitive, because there was no rivalry. We got along exceptionally well. We had little in common, musically, but I know that Kevin Ayers and Daevid Allen were both very influenced by Syd Barrett, his guitar approach, that slide guitar thing. And I was very much inspired by Pink Floyd's lovely organ player, Richard Wright. He really knew how to play organ in a way that you're not trying to do Jimmy Smith, you're just playing a wash, creating an atmosphere that enhances an instrumental. I thought he was absolutely brilliant at that, and I credit him for that unobtrusive but utterly essential role he had in the band. And Nick [*Mason*] is a wonderful, funnyman, and a terrific producer.

I'm biased in favour of Floyd, because I get on so well with them, and they've been lovely to me. When I had my accident, I think they found out about it through a mutual friend, David Gale, a friend of Alfie's, I think it was Roger Waters who said, we must do a charity concert for Robert and Alfie. Alfie and I didn't have any money at the time. So it was a fantastically helpful thing for them to do. It took away the panic from coming out of hospital and so on. I always liked Floyd. They were great people, funny, generous, and they always make stunning records.

Prog rock was becoming massive around the first half of the 1970s. What did "prog" mean to you initially?
The first time I heard the term "prog rock", I assumed it was short for "programmatic rock", ha ha. In the way that classical music purists believe that rot started in the 19th century when composers in Russia, England, Spain, France, Brazil, and so on started weaving folk songs and narrative themes into their music, and called it "programme music". I thought that was quite wonderful, but a lot of people were very snobbish about it. So the first time I heard the phrase "prog rock" was when Soft Machine came back to England having been in the States for all of 1968. I thought, 'Oh that's nice, music that refers to other things and weaves narrative themes into music.' I was baffled to discover it was used to describe bands like us! It was like when I heard about a "Canterbury scene". I thought, 'Oh, that's nice, I'd like to hear some of these bands who come from up the road.' I later discovered that it meant us! Prog started to develop all these weird connotations - references to Arthurian legend, pig Latin names, all that business. And, as Paul Weller might say, "I'm not having that!" So, for me, it was back to writing about cups of tea and real things, however trivial and silly. I've been a bit nasty about prog rock in the past, but I should stress that every
one I met in that world was absolutely lovely. It was just a different world from mine.

There was a lot of overlap between your work with Soft Machine and End Of An Ear and the jazz-rock of bands like Lifetime and Return To Forever. What did you think of that?
I can see why people would say that but, to be honest, I don't even like jazz rock, not very much. That self-conscious jazz thing of, ooh, let's grow our hair, get some electric guitars, give ourselves a name with mystical, cosmic connotations rather than being the Fred Bloggs Quintet. I found it very embarrassing, the jazz musicians were trying to get in on this scene, thinking, 'Oh, it's not fair, we can play better than these rock musicians.' They always reminded me of the police in disguise at rock festivals, looking out for druggy

people to arrest. The long hair was a bit too coiffed, the moustaches a bit too neatly clipped, the shoes a giveaway, the flares just a bit out of date. They always stood out a mile.

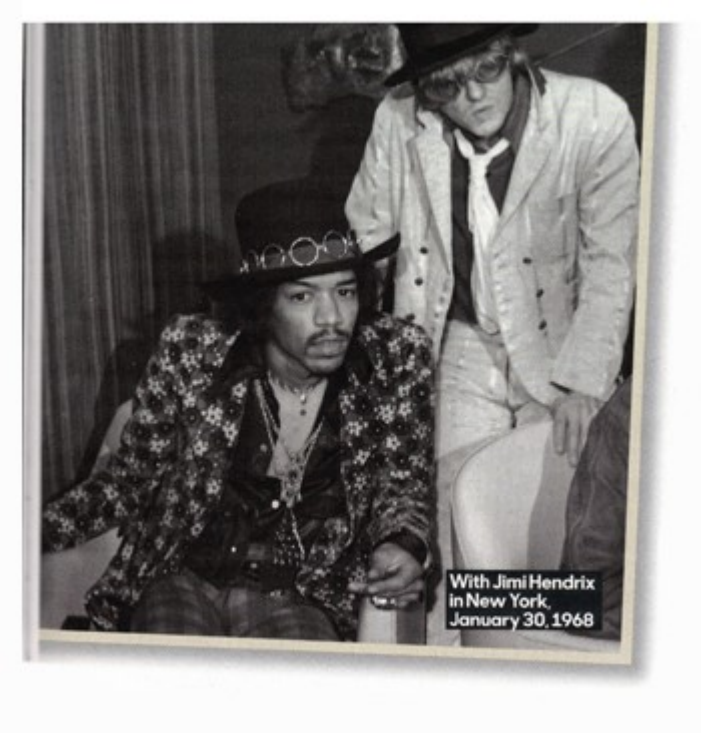


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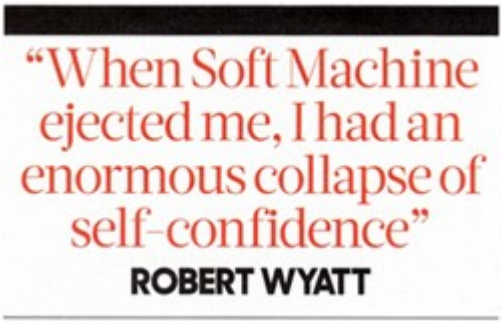
You've always had an interest in the song...
Much as I love free improv and all that stuff, song and dance is absolutely the basis of music. There's a quote from Charles Mingus that the further music gets from song and dance, the further it gets from really *mattering* in some way. Obviously, I love listening to every kind of experimental music, in the classical world, in the jazz world, in the avant garde world, rock'n'roll, pure noise, all of that, and it's all very exciting. But, to me, music is based in some kind of social function, and that's song and dance. I think it was Stravinsky who said that the song is the one thing in music for which there is no other equivalent in any other artform. So, compositional structure you can compare with architecture, for example, and you can compare timbral effects with, say, brushstrokes in painting. And so on. But the thing that makes a tune a tune - there is no equivalent, it's a magical thing. If you can hold one down and capture it long enough to put it on record, that's a wonderful thing.

Is that what inspired your version of "I'm a Believer"?
Part of the decision to record that was sociological mischief. I've always said that the only difference between pop and rock was that pop was for girls and they changed the name to rock for boys. It's like calling perfume "after shave"! I didn't like the emergence of a kind of class hierarchy of genre in music. I hated it in the old days, when classical critics would say that jazz isn't proper music, blah blah blah. I've never believed that any idiom is any intrinsically superior or inferior to any other. It's like a really good fried-egg sandwich can be much better than the worst posh French meal.

So, with "I'm A Believer", not only is it a Monkees tune - it's by Neil Diamond. Very good entertainer, catchy songs, but had no status at all outside that world. At the same time, I liked the chords I heard on jazz records, so I thought it would be fun if the pianist Dave MacRae played the kind of chords that McCoy Tyner might play. He's a very classy musician, he played with Sarah Vaughan, for fuck's sake!



At the start of the 1970s, you were living in a house in Hampstead with some interesting characters...
Yes. The singer-songwriter Linda Lewis was one of them, God bless her. She had an electric piano, and would sit there like a little bird, singing away, which was lovely. The flat actually belonged to Ian "Sammy" Samwell, who wrote "Whatcha Gonna Do About It" for the Small Faces, among many other songs. There was a lovely young American women, very unkindly called Toad - I don't know why so many lovely women get these ridiculous nicknames, like John Peel's Pig. There was Jeff Dexter, the quintessential underground DJ. And there was also the artist and writer Caroline Coon - her thing at the time was running Release, a legal organisation supporting people who were doing drugs and being harassed by the police. She, of course, inspired the Matching Mole song "0 Caroline", but it was also about other things. It was a fascinating environment, but a dark time for me.



This was around the time you got kicked out of Soft Machine?
Yes. I was very, very unhappy. I mean, it had to happen, but I had taken the Soft Machine for granted as a little family. It had formed from friendships that dated back to infancy, from 10 or 11 years old. You can fall out with your family, but you can't divorce them. So, when Soft Machine ejected me from that family, I had the most enormous collapse in self-confidence from which I've never really recovered, to be honest. And I always think they were right, looking back on it, to throw me out. I was too drunk, they were more grown up, more sophisticated, everything. But nevertheless, it felt like being exiled from a country, to somewhere where nobody spoke your language. I was very disorientated, and nervous, and anxious. I had been a rotten dad - my son had been born in 1966 and I wasn't being a proper dad to him, so in many ways it was a good thing when Pip Pyle took over my role in the family when he moved in with my ex-wife, Pamela. So it was a dark time, but I was very grateful to have a place to stay, and immensely grateful to the people in that house who put up with me and helped me get through it.

With Matching Mole, did you find it difficult to run a band?
Well, I found out that I can't be told what to do, which is what annoyed Soft Machine, but at the same time I can't tell other people what to do! I'd end up telling people to do what they like, which is ridiculous, really. The thing is that musicians always need direction. As it happened, I was lucky to be working with such great musicians - Bill MacCormick on bass, Dave Sinclair and then Dave MacRae on keyboards, Phil Miller on guitar - who wrote some wonderful bits and pieces. But part of the problem was that we were dead broke. Me and Alfie hadn't accumulated enough money for us to put down the deposit on somewhere to live - all that money immediately went into Matching Mole, and I never did get enough

money to buy a place to live. I've been dossing ever since. I'm now dossing in my wife's house!

You also started working with Brian Eno at around this time...
Yes, I've been pondering what we have in common. With elephant herds, when an unruly and aggressive male gets ejected from a family or a herd, it's called a rogue elephant. Sometimes these rogue elephants get together. And I see me and Brian Eno as like that -a couple of rogue males, misfits from bands who didn't know what to do with them, who left those bands slightly unhappily. We got on really well, still do. What I loved about him is we have absolutely opposite tastes, musically. I don't think he likes what I do at all! For him, jazz is appallingly cluttered and filled with too many notes. But we get on well talking theoretical and discussing things. He was the perfect person to hang around with in the studio. I found him absolutely invaluable. I also used to like hanging around his place, sometimes I'd join in on different things. He did a record called *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*, on which I did bits and pieces, and then there was *Another Green World*. I seem to remember doing a little on that, and changing my name to that of a female Labour MP on the credits, just because I thought there should be more women involved in this music. Anyway, I'm there doing some percussion and vocal things. Brian is very underestimated as a singer. I wish he'd sing more. I've got him singing this century on a record called *Cuckooland*.



***Rock Bottom* was actually written before your accident, wasn't it?**
It was. I had just started going out with Alfie. She was working on films - she'd studied filmmaking and editing and so on - and she had a modest role, working with her friend Julie Christie, who was doing a film with Nicolas Roeg in Venice, which turned out to be *Don't Look Now*. It was too early in our relationship to risk being apart, so I went with her, even though I never usually take holidays. She was on set all day, and I didn't have much to do, so Alfie found a little keyboard in a little Venice shop - an organ called a Riviera. I found a stop on it that just so went wonderfully with the water around me in Venice. So there I was, on the island of Guidecca, just off one of the big canals, with this rippling water dancing around me, making sounds on this Riviera organ. Once I got the sound, the songs just wrote themselves. So most of it was written before the accident. There were bits I finished while I was in hospital - the ending of "Sea Song" I wrote on a piano in the hospital - it was based on "Red Is The Colour" by Nina Simone.

What are your memories of performing "I'm A Believer" on *Top Of The Pops*?
I had a run-in with the producer of *Top Of The Pops*, Robin Nash. Anyway, he's dead and I'm not, so I won. Ha ha! He said, do you have to sit in the wheelchair? It doesn't look nice on a family programme. He wanted to put me in some wicker armchair. I told him to fuck off, and he told me I'd never work on the programme again. I should have said that I'm too

posh to care. Which I am. Ha ha.

There was a similar issue when the rest of the band, before the Drury Lane concert, were photographed in wheelchairs, in solidarity with me, on the front cover of the *NME*. Some people thought that was tasteless. I quite liked it.

I mean, I could make more of it and become a disabled rights activist. I get into trouble with disabled groups for not being militant about disabled rights. My answer is that I can't be an everything activist! One person kindly said, well, the fact that you've done more since your accident than you did before should be encouraging enough for disabled people! It shows you that the world doesn't come to an end.

The accident did change your career: do you think it pushed you in directions you might not have explored?



Absolutely. I cannot regret it, I honestly can't. I mean, it's possible that the next incarnation of Matching Mole could have been a really great band, had we made a third album. Particularly the brilliant Francis Monkman on keyboards - he was an incredible musician, so much better than was necessary in that context, and I'm proud of what came out of our short collaboration.



But yes, I was pushed into a new career. I'm very bad at repairing and looking after things. I always thought, as a drummer, when my drum kit falls apart, I'll just stop drumming. And that pretty much happened with my kit sometime around 1973 or '74, which was actually one that Mitch Mitchell had given me at the end of a Hendrix tour in 1968, so it had already had a bit of a battering. But, being Mitch Mitchell, it was a wonderful kit. So everything I played on after 1968 was on Mitch Mitchell's drum kit, which might interest some drum anoraks!

Did your inability to play the drums push you into singing and songwriting?

Definitely. I first got interested in songwriting while writing a long piece for Soft Machine's *Third* (1970), called "Moon In June", made up of lots of fragments of songs I'd written. Previous to that, on the second Soft Machine LP, *Volume II* (1969) I'd got lots of fragments of Hugh Hopper's pop songs, and turned them into a kind of suite on the first side of the album called "Rivmic Melodies". The one with the alphabet song and "Pataphysical Introduction" and so on. I enjoyed that so I thought I'd do that with my own songs. "Moon In June" was a revelation for me. Playing most of the songs by myself for about 10 minutes, then the others join in. Of course, being a drummer, in a band, you can't spend a lot of time playing the keyboard live. So it wasn't until I was actually physically unable to play the drums that I actually started to explore that side of things. And I always enjoyed singing. Originally, when I started singing, I tried to be like Van Morrison, but I realised this wasn't going to happen. I'd try and sing like that wonderful singer in the Small Faces, Steve Marriott - " Whatcha Gonna DO About It"! - but I just couldn't do that mid-Atlantic thing convincingly at all. So I dropped all of that pretence and I took the risk of just singing how I talked.

What were your inspirations as a songwriter?

The trombonist Annie Whitehead once asked me where I got my tunes from. I said, I have a very good record collection! Ha ha. In each of my songs you might find fragments of, say, a Curtis Fuller solo, or a Duke Ellington tune, or something. People who don't listen to jazz won't see how disgracefully plagiaristic I am! So many jazz records are just so rich in arrangements. Listen to the way that Gil Evans arranges for Miles Davis, for instance, how

he finds places to go and things to do. Listen to his arrangement of "Porgy And Bess" and hear what he gets out of the tunes when he rearranges. It is remarkable. That's how I try to make music in my head, though it rarely comes out like that.

But, as I say, if you can hold one down and capture it long enough to put it on record, that's a wonderful thing, and that can be enough. There are pop musicians who can just play well enough to accompany themselves playing their own song, and that's absolutely fine. That's pretty much what I do.





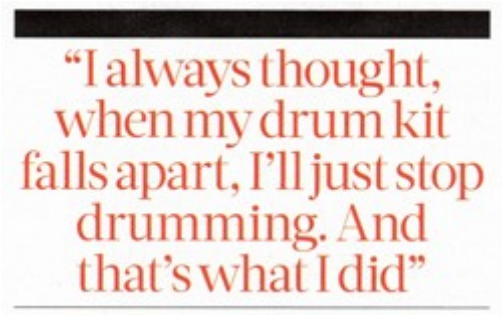
> Zoom

Have you heard that John Peel apparently had two pictures up in his kitchen - one of the Liverpool manager Bill Shankly, and one of you?
Someone told me that recently and I was quite tearful. I really loved Peel. Like Brian Eno, we didn't always agree about music, but he played tons of interesting stuff and, as people, we got on great. I do remember once that we were at his place once, and Alfie started watching an Arsenal match on telly, and he walked straight out for a walk and came back in a bit of a huff! But that's the only difficult moment with him. I got on really well with him and with his producer John Walters, a very funny man. I didn't spend as much time with them as I'd have liked - I'd always back off from getting to know people on that side of the music business. It felt a bit like payola, a bit of emotional blackmailing. I'd worry that they might feel obliged to play your record even if they don't want to. It felt unethical to me. But now he's dead I think, 'Oh fuck, why were you so silly?' But Alfie and I did used to go to visit him, we went to his wedding, and we got on great with Sheila. She's great, lovely family. And I love hearing his son on BBC6Music, sounding exactly like him.

Did you ever read the music press at the time?
I appreciate what they do. Brian Eno always says, jazz is just about faith - he reckons how much you enjoy it depends entirely upon how much you believe in it, especially with free jazz. My answer to that was always that rock is just about sociology. It's a lot to do with young men bonding, being a gang that audiences can identify with. The temperamental

singer, the mad drummer, the taciturn bass player, and so on. The music weeklies were great at that sociological thing. Plus, as the editor of *NME* once said, there's got to be a great new band every week because there's got to be a cover each week!

What do you do with your retirement now?
Scandalously little. You know what? Any highfalutin' ideas about being an artist have been shattered. Now that I've had to give up smoking and drinking, I can't be bothered. I lived entirely on artificial stimuli. So I now just hang out with Alfie doing absolutely nothing, while she keeps us alive. But I like my little town. I go around, get a coffee, and me and Alfie we watch telly together. I loved watching the World Cup, it was fantastic. I still watch the latest comedies - whereas the music I listen to is very global and often outside the Anglo-American world, my favourite comedy is all British. I'm a big fan of Stewart Lee's TV show, which you'd probably expect. I love *Would I Lie To You?*, I love anything with David Mitchell and Bob Mortimer. Milton Jones is a tremendous stand-up. I love his stupid one-liners. I watch old episodes of *The IT Crowd* and *Spaced*, and the comedies with that lovely woman who co-wrote *Spaced*, Jessica Hynes, you know, W1A and Twenty Twelve. I always look out for new sitcoms on Channel 4 and the BBC, and check out the comedy on Radio 4.



How was playing live, with Paul Weller, last year?
I was completely caught off guard by that request. And I was completely caught off guard by how long it was since I'd done it. I was pleased to be asked. Paul's been so great. He'd be like, come on Rob, you can do Glastonbury. I certainly couldn't even consider doing that. I'm a bit like, the less I do, the less I do wrong at the moment. I've had a wheel-on part when I helped produce a Brazilian record for Monica Vasconcelos, revolutionary songs from the 1960s. So, I keep my hand in with things like that.

What music are you listening to?
I used to buy old remaindered CDs from the Woolies in Louth. Since that shut down, I've lost that physical contact! But I'm always finding interesting stuff on YouTube. I'm a bit of a Russophile and I came across an enchanting Russian choir called White Gold who just make YouTube videos on the streets and in cafes around Moscow. They use these wonderful, full-throated Slavic harmonies. A bit like that amazing Bulgarian choir, Le Mystère Des Voix Bulgares, remember them? And I like reinvestigating stuff I liked in the early '70s. There's a terrific old Soviet jazz musician called Vagif Mustafa Zadeh, an Azerbaijani pianist, his daughter Aziza is also brilliant. But Vagif, he was amazing. A very florid pianist, a bit like McCoy Tyner, he plays piano like a cimbalom. I remember hearing him on Radio Moscow in the 1970s. If I'd know he sold records here at the time I would have championed him! I've also been listening to Julia Boutros, a Lebanese Christian diva, I love that Arabic singing - the power and the passion, blimey.

"I'm not concerned with whining" in the same issue

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The World spins - Shindig! - Issue 75 - January 2018



THE WORLD spins

The pace of social change during the '60s was too fast for some and too slow for others. Conflict was rife as teenagers all over the world enjoyed newfound freedoms just as political events surrounding The Vietnam War, Civil Rights and the threat of nuclear holocaust began to shape the music they were listening to. After 1968, rock'n'roll would never sound the same, as **JOHNNIE JOHNSTONE** discovers



In political terms, 1968 was an extraordinary year. American youth had beengalvanised by the Washington demonstration of October '67, before The Tet Offensive in the first month of the new year heightened opposition towards The Vietnam War. Civil rights protests escalated into full-scale riots in the urban ghettos following the assassination of Martin Luther King in April, and the killing of RFK in June only intensified a mood of overwhelming despair. Protest in popular music had been largely confined to folk music but bands like The Fugs and Country Joe & The Fish had already made overtly political statements on record.

But it was in '68 that rock and radicalism became inextricably intertwined. In Detroit and Ann Arbor, the rise of John Sinclair's White Panther Party was soundtracked by The MC5, and African-American music would change beyond recognition, becoming infused with righteous indignation and a growing pride in black consciousness. The era of Soul Power had arrived. That radicalism wasn't simply the preserve of American youth. In Europe too the barricades were shaking, and music had a part to play in events winch saw huge anti-war demonstrations in London and wliich would bring France and Czechoslovakia to the brink of revolution.

If, during the '60s, London (via Liverpool) had become the epicentre of the music and fashion world, Britain was still by and large a fairly conservative country and the counterculture rarely provided any substantial threat to the establishment. Young people may have joined marches but the records they bought gave little encouragement to their subversive dreams. They seemed more content to take pills and dance 'til the early hours of the morning. When Lennon sang about 'Revolution' and the Stones of "fighting in the street", the sentiments were not only non-combative but unmistakably sardonic.

But on the continent things were different. In West Germany, '68 proved to be year zero for rock music, with the birth of krautrock. This was partly fuelled by German teens' rejection of the values of their forefathers. Their country had an unspeakable past, so much so that more often than riot, German bands opted to articulate their feelings without using words at all. What could one say? The touch paper was lit by the killing of West Berlin student Benno Olmesorg by a police officer, triggering the '68 protests, and after The Essen Rock Festival that year trie musical revolution would follow. Meanwhile in France, the political situation had reached boiling point. France was a unique proposition. There was — particularly amongst more radical elements — an uneasy relationship with rock 'n' roll and consumerism.

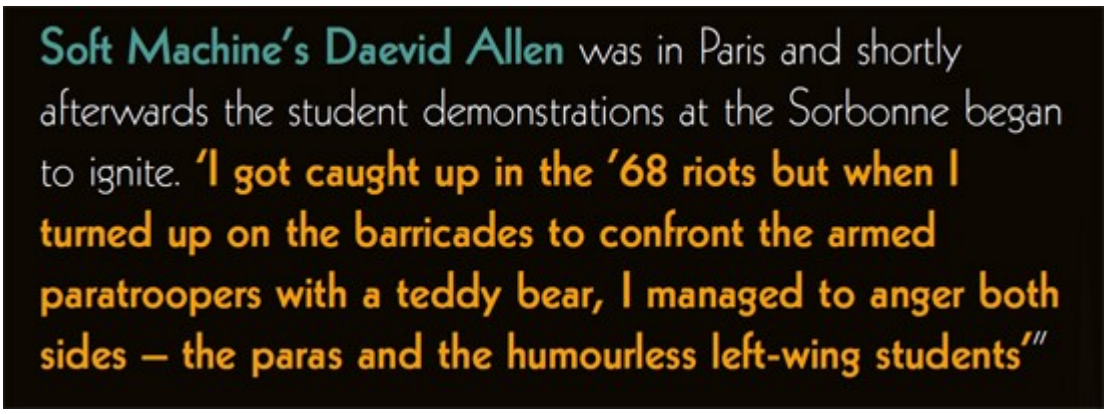


Sure, teenagers bought Beatles records like anyone else, but rock music was often considered symptomatic of the problem rather than the antidote to it. The writings of Sartre and de Beauvoir were *de rigeur*, and the French ideology of high culture contributed to a uniquely anti-American mindset, so that cultural protest was more likely to be found in university, cafes and street theatre than at rock concerts.

The French pop charts were a peculiar mix of traditional chansons, easy listening and pop, with the odd aberration. For instance Greek band Aphrodite's Child enjoyed a 14-week stint at the top of the charts with the mildly baroque 'Rain And Tears', 10 weeks longer than 'Hey Jude' managed, but at the moment the shit hit the fan in May, almost surreally it was Tom Jones' 'Delilah' at the summit. In many ways rock and radicalism were separate entities in France, but one British rock band would manage to penetrate the cultural barriers, to find themselves caught up in the May events: Soft Machine.

Before Aussie-born Daevid Allen arrived in the UK, he had spent time in Paris nurturing a love for the jazz lie heard there in the city's cafes. It would be to Paris he would return after forming Soft Machine with

fellow jazz lover Robert Wyatt, Canterbury scenester Mike Ratledge and Kevin Ayers, whom he had first encountered in Ibiza. Ayers' more commercial sensibilities counterbalanced the more experimental *avant-garde* dimension to the band's sound, concocting a perfect potpourri for goatee-scratching French students. The Ayers-penned 'Love Makes Sweet Music' was one of the first British psychedelic releases (February '67) and Soft Machine toured Europe soon after, performing trance-inducing 40-minute renditions of 'We Did It Again' in St Tropez and the capital, thus making them darlings of the Parisian hipsters. Upon their return to the UK, Daevid Allen was refused entry to the country and returned to France where lie formed Gong with his partner Gilli Smyth, a poet and teacher at Sorbonne University. While Soft Machine toured the States in early '68 supporting The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Allen was in Paris and shortly afterwards the student demonstrations at the Sorbonne began to ignite. Strikes had brought the economy to a virtual standstill and as the events unfolded on television screens across the globe, Allen instinctively was drawn to the heart of the action. "I got caught up in the '68 riots but when I turned up on the barricades to confront the armed paratroopers with a teddy bear, I managed to anger both sides — the paras and the humourless left-wing students," he told Aidan Smith in 2009.



Allen was ridiculed as "a beatnik" and decanted to Majorca for a time before eventually returning to Paris where he would work on Gong's debut album *Magick Brother* in '69. His former band-mates had beaten him to the punch with their own landmark debut, made without their founding member, and released in October '68. Soft Machine returned to play Paris after the threat of revolution had subsided, but if the political aspirations of French youth had been quashed, the country was in the midst of huge social upheaval, which transformed attitudes towards rock music. By the end of '68, France's most celebrated cinematographer and auteur Jean-Luc Godard had filmed *One Plus One*, a film featuring images of The Rolling Stones recording 'Sympathy For The Devil' juxtaposed with footage of The Black Panther Party's military manoeuvres. By '69, the French musical landscape had been transformed by the events of '68 and the influence of Soft Machine and Gong was not hard to discern in the new progressive sounds of Magma and Ange. The Western influence had been be insidious but France's social revolution softened attitudes and the music would win out in the end. The revolution would not be televised, so what could a poor boy do, 'cept sing in a rock 'n' roll band?

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All His Thoughts In Focus - Shindig! - Issue 74 - December 2017





songbook

All His Thoughts In Focus

SPENSER TOMSON examines **MATCHING MOLE'S 'O CAROLINE'** and wonders why, 20 years after it was released, this oft-overlooked classic was the perfect cover for a bunch of weirdy Welsh wonder kids

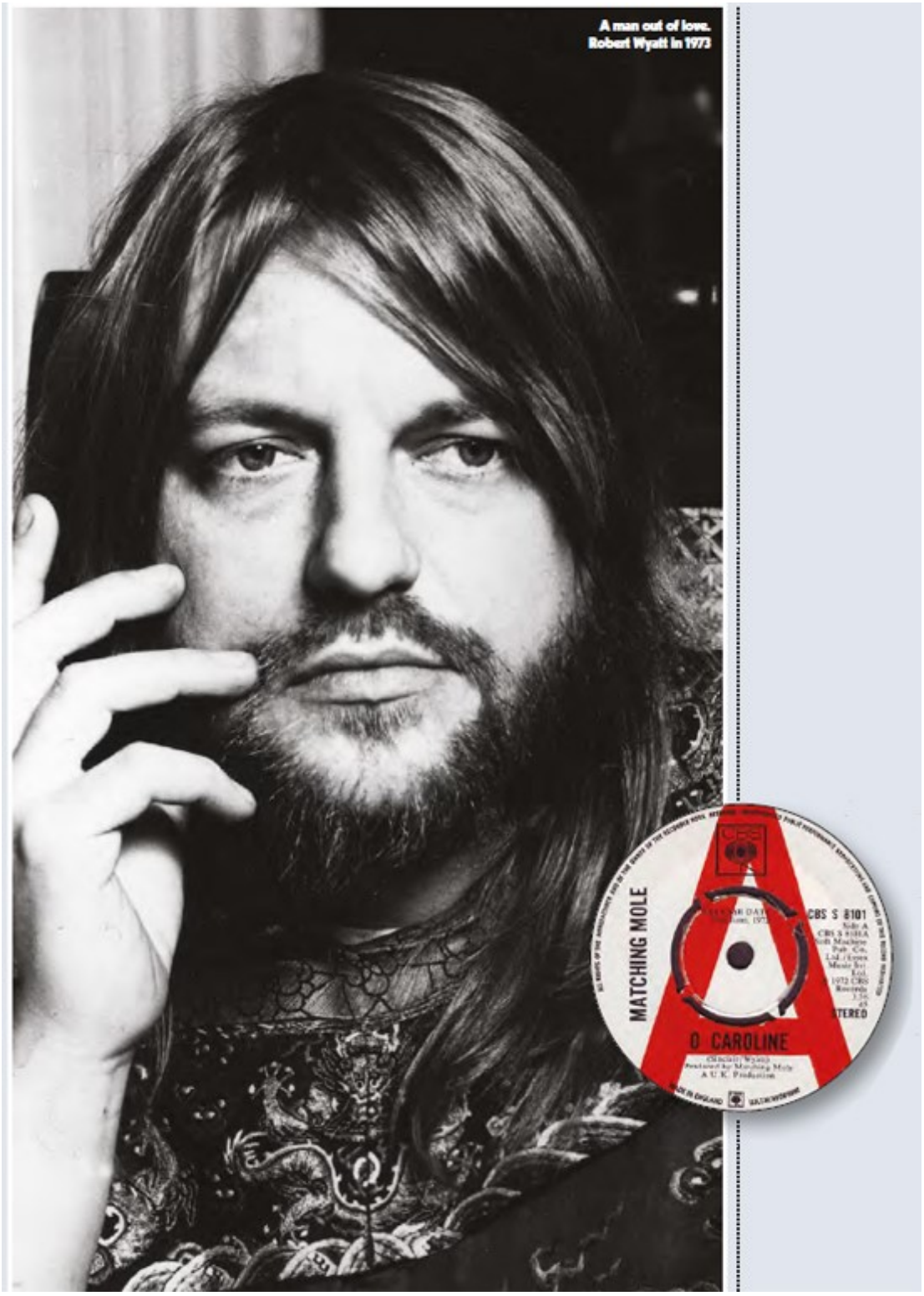
Written in 1971 and released as a single the following year,'O Caroline' is the musical product of Robert Wyatt and Dave Sinclair, the latter having left Caravan (for the first time), only to be coaxed back from his travels via a telegram from the former. While playing various bits and pieces to each other in the early days of Matching Mole, Wyatt heard Sinclair's tune and asked if he could provide the lyrics. Listening now to their self-tided album, it's almost unimaginable that the words were ever separate from melody — they seem bound together, wrought from the

same emotion, destined for the same fate.

On the surface, it appears to describe Wyatt's love for Caroline Coon, an artist and activist with whom he was sharing a tempestuous relationship. Marcus O'Dair's superb biography *Different Every Time* makes it clear that the early '70s were an incredibly difficult period for the ex-Soft incredibly difficult period for the ex-Soft Machine man. Wyatt's gradual ejection from the band resembled a love affair turning cold, each party a magnet twisting from its attracting pole towards the repellent. Kevin Avers had left, (albeit amicably, to pursue his solo projects) and this indicated the direction the rest of the band was headed. While Daevid Allen and Mike Ratledge were aiming for a more complex, jazzier sound, Wyatt was very much into developing his "pop" voice.

"When you form a band like Robert did", suggests Coon, "you are in love with your band, you *are* the band. It is your identity. And when the band fractures, your heart breaks and your identity is pulverised. It can feel like the most crucial, fecund years of your life are reduced to nothing". Wyatt himself describes the song as "totally metaphorical" and like "looking at an old tattoo". Indeed, if one were to remove the chorus or replace Caroline's name with that of his old outfit, it would read like a letter of unrequited love to Soft Machine, their name instead of hers etched on Wyatt's arm below anchor or skewered heart. Indeed, the very name Matching Mole grasps at two opposing emotions; as a phonetic pun on the French translation of Soft Machine, Wyatt is reforming that outfit under his own terms, a move possibly designed to needle at his former collaborators. But at the same time, it barely disguises his longing and loss — a loving nod back to the creative bond they once shared.

There have been surprisingly few covers of the song, possibly because of Soft Machine's relatively niche appeal or perhaps because the stark sentiment of its lyrics is just too personal — perhaps a cover of the song would be like going for a drink with your best friend's ex — to put it mildly, a little bit awkward. But one or two brave souls have given it a try; besides a nice version from early '90s indie kids Horse Latitudes and a niiiiiiiice take by France's Orchestra National de Jazz, a lo-fi beauty of a thing appears on the Gorky's Zygotic Mynci album, *Tatay*.



It is a dazzling, weird and utterly bonkers collection of songs; released on Ankst in '94, it comprises a heady mix of Welsh-language pop and wonky psych, some parts of which were unaltered from home-recorded versions of the previous two years. Alongside the Matching Mole cover there is, confusingly, another piece named 'O Caroline'which is entirely different. "Euros' 'O Caroline' might be a way of showing he could write a song as beautiful as any of Wyatt's," says Emyr Glyn Williams, co-founder of Ankst Records. She continues, "I remember them saying that Kevin Avers' *Shoot At The Moon* was the best record ever made — so clearly they had a strong love for the Canterbury/Soft Machine/Kevin Ayers period."

That fact that *Tatay* includes a cover of'O Caroline', their own tune of the same title and a song named'Robert Wyatt' could be interpreted as an attempt to construct their own version of Soft Machine. Williams continues. "Importantly, their first producer Alan Holmes was a very knowledgeable musician who loved all these bands as well, and that led to a lot of freedom in

expressing ideas and experimenting with recording techniques. It gave a sense of total freedom for the band whilst recording at Gorwel Owen's studio - so maybe they fed on the 'perceived' historical notion of group freedom they imagined would have existed in the original Canterbury Scene."



> Zoom

When asked about the appeal of Gorky's version, Williams says, "The effect it physically has on me — from the first drum machine to the woozy organ, I'm helplessly in thrall to it. I also love it because it's the original cassette demo version (done at home) with minimal studio polishing — as they couldn't replicate the 'feel' and also the specific quality of the vocal sound."

Where Matching Mole lead the listener up the garden path, Mellotron flute and piano unfolding in the shade while an irregular metronome beat flutters like a heart being squeezed, Gorky's version begins with a recording of the band bickering at what might be some ungodly hour. Perhaps it's a tour bus, a recording studio or in the ethanol haze of an early, post-party morning. Either way, its beauty stems from the fact that it seems to concern the decision to boil a kettle.

Alan Holmes (the producer of *Tatay* mentioned previously by Williams) describes how he came to be involved. "One day in '92, Euros Childs phoned me to ask if I would produce their new album. Of course I jumped at the chance to work with them and Euros sent me a cassette of demos that included a version of Matching Mole's 'O Caroline'. I was taken aback that these young people had recorded a version of a song that was one of my very favourites when I was their age, but had thought to be long forgotten."

'O Caroline' appears on **Bob Stanley & Pete Wiggs Present English Weather**, out now on Ace and *Shindig!*'s best compilation of 2017

So, just as the original lyrics could be a coded love letter to his old band members, Gorky's cover version of'O Caroline' is itself a love letter to Wyatt, Ayers, The Soft Machine and Matching Mole, all of whom are owed a huge creative credit by GZM. By covering the song, they are not only highlighting the aesthetic connections to which they aspire, but revealing an honesty, purity and wit that would come to define their work up until their split in

2006.

Spencer Tomson

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Shaping the '70s: Simon Draper and the Story of Virgin Records - Red Bull Music Academy - October 12, 2017

Shaping the '70s: Simon Draper and the Story of Virgin Records

Virgin Records was the most popular and avant-garde record label of the '70s. But it wasn't Richard Branson that signed the Human League, Can and Mike Oldfield. This is the untold story of the man who did – and changed music forever

October 12, 2017
By Simon Reynolds



Mention the name "Virgin" today and most people will think of travel: by airplane, or, if you live in Britain, by train. There's also Virgin Mobile, the wireless communications company. Older music fans recall the Virgin Megastores. Those have long gone, but Virgin Records –

the retail chain's sister company – lingers still, albeit in a half-life state, as a division within the conglomerate EMI, itself now swallowed by the Universal Music Group.

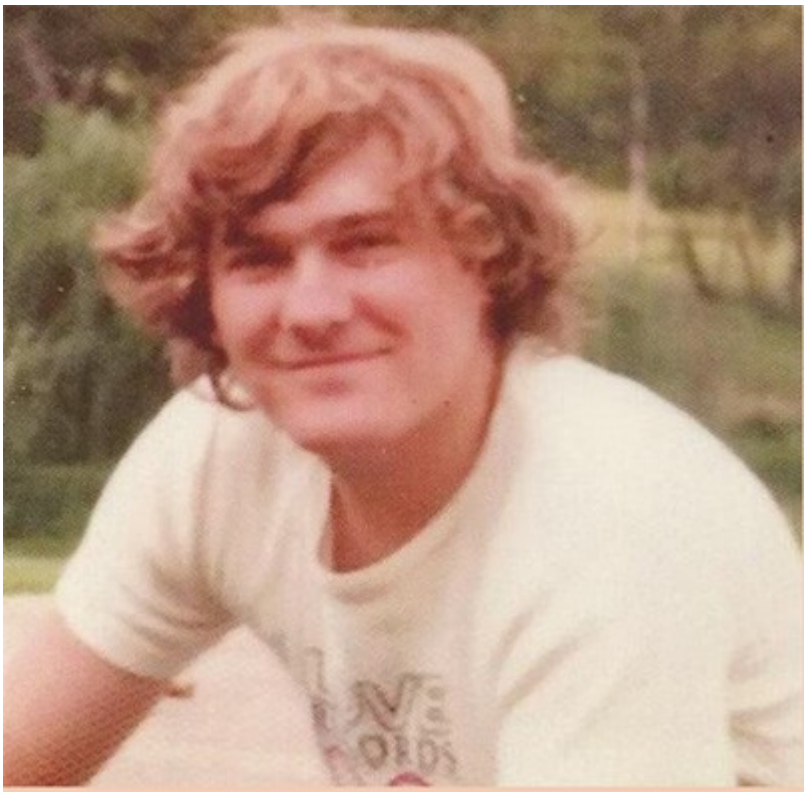
Whichever of the 150 or so Virgin Group companies you're talking about, the brand has always been synonymous with a man and a face: the preternaturally youthful-looking, perpetually grinning Richard Branson. Assiduously cultivated but not wholly without basis, his image is that of an anti-Establishment entrepreneur, a risk-addicted maverick. Alongside his billion-dollar business empire, Branson is famous for his trademark beard and casual sweaters, his dangerous escapades in high-altitude ballooning and for having bought one of the Virgin Islands. In recent years, much of his energy has gone into a bid to pioneer commercial spaceflight with Virgin Galactic.

Back at the beginning, though, Virgin was identified not with space tourism but with space rock. And the record company was really the brain child of someone whose un-Branson-like reserve and lack of flash has ensured he's always kept a low profile. Simon Draper – the 20-year-old virtual stranger to whom Branson handed the aesthetic helm of Virgin Records at their first meeting in 1971 – is a name known to industry insiders and serious scholars of rock biz history. But few of the music fiends who cherish landmark albums like Robert Wyatt's *Rock Bottom*, Faust's *The Faust Tapes* and Public Image Ltd's *Metal Box*, or who had their young minds blown by avant-pop Brit hits like Flying Lizards' "" and Japan's "," know about Draper's role in nurturing these artists.

During the first decade of its existence, Virgin could stake a strong claim to being the coolest record label in the world.

In its first phase of existence, Virgin put out some of the most uncompromisingly experimental music ever to loiter on the outskirts of the rock mainstream, including records by Can, Henry Cow, Gong, Tangerine Dream, Hatfield and the North, Ashra's Manuel Göttsching, Steve Hillage, Lol Coxhill and Slapp Happy, to name a few. From 1973-1976, the label operated as kind of "audio Arts Council," in the words of Al Clark, rock critic turned early Virgin press officer – a reference to the British institution that subsidizes minority-interest artists. In Virgin's case, the funding resources came not from the government and taxpayers, but from the general public's enthusiasm for Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells, the label's early, unexpected blockbuster hit. Then came punk: Virgin quickly adapted to the new wave and post-punk climate, signing Sex Pistols (and their breakaway offshoot Public Image Ltd.), Magazine, Devo, XTC, OMD, the Human League, Simple Minds and more.

During the first decade of its existence, Virgin could stake a strong claim to being the coolest record label in the world. And that was all down to the taste and vision of Simon Draper.



Simon Draper © Courtesy of Simon Draper

Phoning Draper at the London office of his book publishing company Palawan, which he founded after leaving Virgin in the early ’90s, what’s immediately striking is how *young* he sounds. Clear and well-spoken, with a hint of shy hesitancy, Draper’s voice makes it easy to imagine him as the 20-year-old student who arrived at Branson’s fledgling record mail-order company Virgin in early 1971 to ask for a job.

Draper had just finished an English and Politics degree in his native South Africa and came to England planning to embark on another bout of undergraduate study. He and Branson were second cousins but had never met before; in fact, Branson didn’t even know of Draper’s existence until he turned up at the Virgin office in West London. All that Draper was looking for was temporary work to tide him over until the start of the next academic year. Instead, he got a job that would last 20 years and make music history.

Two of the hallmarks of a great businessman are a knack for spotting talent and an ability to delegate responsibility to those who know better. Over lunch at a Greek café in Paddington, Branson quickly realised that Draper was the music fiend his company desperately needed. “He discovered that I knew a lot about music,” says Draper. “I was an avid collector of records and I’d had my own radio program when I lived in Durban.” Impetuously, but with uncanny clairvoyance, Branson offered the task of forming Virgin Records to his cousin. This was to be just one component of a planned empire that would also encompass a recording studio, music publishing, management, a retail chain: a vertical slice across almost every layer of the record business. “Richard’s vision was to be involved in every aspect of it,” recalls Draper. “He told me at that first meeting: ‘we’ll do the lot.’”

In ’71, though, this was just big Branson talk, and Draper’s initial role was as chief buyer for Virgin Mail Order. Branson had formed the company after the UK’s Retail Price Maintenance system was abolished, clearing the way for retailers to offer discounted goods. Hawking its wares through full-page adverts in the country’s leading weekly music paper *Melody Maker*, Virgin established a reputation for its cheaper prices and – as Draper’s influence kicked in – for stocking cool imports from America and Europe. “In those days things would often get released in America first and there’d be a long gap – six or eight weeks, maybe even longer – before they came out in the UK. That gave us a window for selling tons of stuff – Zappa, Captain Beefheart, Little Feat. Then there was the krautrock – things like Tangerine Dream.”

Virgin Mail Order wasn’t Branson’s first enterprise venture. In 1968, aged 18, the aspiring mogul launched a national magazine targeted at college kids, *Student*. Selling progressive

rock was a logical extension of the student connection, for the UK's university venues were the principal live circuit for the post-psychedelic scene then known as the Underground. Asked about Virgin's links to the new university-educated market for expansive long-form rock that had consolidated by 1970, Draper says, "*We were* the market, ourselves. Not Richard, because he wasn't really interested in music – he had the long hair but that was about it. But everyone else who worked at Virgin was passionate about it. More often than not after work we'd all go straight out to listen to live music. And smoke a lot of dope!"

Some accounts of the company's early days say that it was all set to be named Slipped Disc, but then one of the team suggested Virgin, on the grounds that the staff were all "complete virgins at business." Draper remembers it differently: "virgin" was meant to suggest "brand-new," counteracting any assumptions consumers might have that the cheaper prices indicated that the records were used. "I don't think 'virgin' was about lacking business experience. Although we all did. Richard and I were both 20."

The label logo, created by Roger Dean, who was soon to become the leading album cover designer of the prog era, latched onto another meaning of "virgin." The naked girl-child with long flowing tresses, turned into Siamese twins by a mirroring effect, evoked Garden of Eden innocence, and further identified Virgin with the long-hair underground of serious music heads. Now cheesy and distinctly suspect, but at the time thoroughly attuned to the post-hippie zeitgeist, the Virgin girl appeared at the top of the full-page mail-order ads and before long would be swirling on turntables as the label at the center of the platters.

Draper's A&R approach emerged organically out of his activity on the retail side of the company, which in addition to the mail-order company included the early Virgin record shops, one of which was located on the main drag of the boho neighborhood Notting Hill Gate. In line with the company's laid-back aura, which projected the idea that Virgin came from the same generation as their clientele, the shop encouraged customers to hang out, providing bean bags to sprawl on and spliff up. "To shop at Virgin was an experience rich with the ambience, and often the aroma, of an evening relaxing over Red Lebanese or Afghan black in one's pad," the journalist Mick Brown once recalled. "Not surprisingly some people stayed all day and never got 'round to buying a thing."

After a hard week's work running the mail-order company, Draper would work in the Notting Hill Gate shop on Saturdays. From his conversations with customers, from request letters sent in by the mail-order clientele and from his own ardent record-buying, Draper developed a sense of where the gaps in the music market were that could allow Virgin to develop a distinctive identity as a record label in an already crowded progressive music market: "Customers would write in and say, 'Can you get us this record?' All the krautrock groups that we signed, like Faust and Tangerine Dream, came about that way, because we were getting so many enquiries about weirdly named groups from Germany."



You will probably have discovered by now from Music Week or your Island and EMI rep that we are about to launch our own independent label. We thought that we would let you know clearly what will be happening with our label before you get snowed under by all the leaflets, brochures and general publicity that the reps will thrust upon you.

Naturally, we shall be doing our best to promote and publicise our records. As retailers ourselves, however, we have often been painfully reminded that even the best publicised records are not fully backed by a grass roots sales service. We are confident that Island's excellent distribution, backed up by EMI, will get you the records you want. But, if by chance, you're having difficulties, or just want more information, please get in touch with us direct, by phone or letter, and tell us your problems.

In case this is the first thing you've heard about the label, we shall be releasing four albums on May 25th: Mick Oldfield's Tubular Bells V2001; Gong's Radio Gnome Part 1.The Flying Teapot V2002; Steve York's Camelo Pardalis V2003, all at a recommended price of £2.19 (with the price structure of a normal Island ILPS album). The fourth album, Faust Tapes by Faust VC501, will be selling for 48p, but your mark-up will stay at 33 1/3%. In any event, you can get all the immediately relevant details from your rep.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Branson

VIRGIN RECORDS, 130 NOTTING HILL GATE, LONDON W11 TELEPHONES: 01 229 0131/3208

Courtesy of Simon Draper

Faust's *The Faust Tapes* was among the first four releases that launched Virgin in May 1973. There was also *Flying Teapot* by Gong, the trippy outfit formed by ex-Soft Machine member Daevid Allen, and *Manor Live*, a jam session involving motley prog and Brit-blues journeymen captured at Virgin's residential recording studio in the village of Shipton-on-Cherwell. But the record that really counted, putting Virgin on the map and making its adventurous signing policy financially viable, was Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*.

"When I started to look around to see what you could sign to a record label, it was a bit frightening really," recalls Draper. "We had no track record, so we couldn't really poach any of the bigger names. All we had to offer was the image of the record shops, which was sort

of charismatic. One day I was down at the Manor, and one of the engineers – Tom Newman or Simon Hayworth – played me a demo." Being a connoisseur of weirdo music, Draper recognized the name Mike Oldfield from the credits of solo albums by Kevin Ayers, formerly the frontman of the Soft Machine. He'd been obsessed with the Softs since reading an article about them in the jazz magazine *Downbeat* and had followed what ex-members like Ayers, Daevid Allen and Robert Wyatt had done afterwards.

Draper's knowledge of out-jazz and experimental music also enabled him to hear an affinity between the hypnotic patterns of *Tubular Bells* and minimalist composer Terry Riley, whose work he'd loved since being initiated in the wonders of *In C* by a Durban architecture professor. "That first 15-minute demo of *Tubular Bells* was extraordinary – and Mike had played all the instruments himself, overdubbing by putting bits of cardboard over the recording head of his Akai tape machine. So when finally the button was pushed on the record label and Richard said 'You've got to come up with some acts,' Mike was the first person I called. And at that point he was working in the pit orchestra for *Hair*, as reserve guitarist! He'd been trying to get a deal and been turned down by everybody, so he was astounded when we said 'Would you like to go and start recording the album? You can use the Manor.'"

A virtually all-instrumental album, divided into two parts that lasted 25 and 24 minutes each, didn't seem like an obvious commercial smash waiting to happen. But the sales team of Island, who had agreed to distribute Virgin, responded with a spontaneous ovation when Draper played them *Tubular Bells*. The support of John Peel, BBC Radio's resident champion of the underground, was crucial. Invited to dinner at Branson's houseboat, which was moored in the canals of Little Venice in West London, Peel was wowed by the album and four days later played the whole of side one on his late night radio show *Top Gear*. He introduced the record with a list of all the instruments played by Oldfield – "grand piano, glockenspiel, a couple of different kinds of organs, bass guitar, electric guitar, speed guitar, taped motor-driven amplifier organ chord, mandolin-type guitar, fuzz guitar, assorted percussion, acoustic guitars and a variety of other things" – and at its conclusion 25 minutes later described *Tubular Bells* as "certainly one of the most impressive LPs I've ever had the chance to play on the radio – really a remarkable record," and further hailed it as "an incredible start" for the new Virgin label.



Mike Oldfield - Tubular Bells (Live at the BBC 1973)

As the record took off in the UK, Oldfield was arm-twisted into performing its live premiere at Queen Elizabeth Hall on June 25th, 1973. Fearful that *Tubular Bells* couldn't be recreated onstage, even with a cast of dozens, Oldfield agreed only when Branson offered him a bribe:

his own Bentley. Then Tubular Bells was picked up for the soundtrack of *The Exorcist*. The album was licensed to Atlantic in America and they put out an edit from the LP's first side as a single, reaching #7 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. Oldfield followed up his multiplatinum global hit with adventurous but commercially successful albums like *Hergest Ridge* and *Ommadawn*. A year before punk, he was voted Britain's Best Guitarist by the readership of *Melody Maker*, and many serious pundits believed the Oldfield approach – long-form, quasi-classical instrumental music – was set to be the future for rock. Over the next several years, there was a major label flood of similarly large-scale albums – epic in conception, dense in texture and narratively themed – from artists like Jeff Wayne, Vangelis, Godley & Crème, Alan Parsons Project and Dave Greenslade. Virgin naturally entered the fray with long-players from David Bedford, who had played alongside Oldfield in Kevin Ayers' band, the Whole World, and would arrange a symphonic version of *Tubular Bells* recorded with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the new middlebrow represented by *Tubular Bells* – exquisitely played, cleanly produced, intelligent but unchallenging, eminently usable as background music – was *The Faust Tapes*, also one of the first four Virgin releases and a legend in its own right. Picking up on the most hallucinatory studio practices developed by the Beatles and Zappa, combining them with Velvet Underground levels of abrasion and attack and infusing the whole with a spirit of absurdist tomfoolery equal parts Dada and Fluxus, Faust had already released two gloriously out-there albums via the German branch of Polydor. For their Virgin debut, the bright idea arose to release the album priced at 48 pence – the cost of a single, and less than a third the price of a regular LP. Neither Virgin nor Faust would make a penny, but a potentially huge number of listeners could be turned on.

Draper isn't sure whether it was Faust's charismatic producer/spokesman Uwe Nettelbeck who came up with this marketing ruse, or Richard Branson himself. The latter had a fixation on the discount concept that ran through his whole career, from the mail-order company to Virgin Atlantic, which took as its model the low-fare approach pioneered by Laker Airways. The marketing ploy was also used in 1974 with Virgin's Crisis Tour, a name that played on the feeling that Britain was on the verge of collapse, beset with strikes, inflation, shortages in shops, rising unemployment and dark whispers of national decline and a possible military coup to restore order. To cheer up young rock fans feeling the pinch, Virgin offered bargain-rate admission to a series of concerts around the country featuring acts like Henry Cow and Hatfield and the North – all you had to do was cut out the coupons in the *NME*.

Whoever came up with *The Faust Tapes* pricing scheme, it worked wonderfully: somewhere in the region of 50,000 copies were sold. Admittedly, many purchasers played the record just once; there are tales of spontaneous Frisbee-throwing contests using Faust's most avant-garde statement ever. Nonetheless, the record was an aesthetic triumph, both sonically and in terms of its design. "Nettelbeck was a fan of Bridget Riley," says Draper, referring to the pioneer of Op Art: swirling, geometrically intricate paintings that disoriented and played tricks on the eye. Although she disliked the association of her deeply cerebral and rather solemnly motivated work with the faddish foppery of psychedelia, Riley agreed to permit the reproduction of her canvas "Crest" on the cover of *The Faust Tapes*.



Then, in the autumn of 1973, Faust toured the UK in the company of Henry Cow, whose spiky and severe prog rock had a bracingly anti-capitalist edge. "Those concerts were amazing," recalls Draper. "For the gig at the Rainbow Theatre in London, Faust bought about 30 television sets and stacked them up, all showing the same thing – an opera singer, I think - and then they had this guy that they'd picked up doing roadwork near the venue and he was jackhammering away at this huge lump of concrete onstage."

Somewhere between Faust's absurdist cacophony and Oldfield's accessibility lay the serenely pulsing electronic mindscapes of Tangerine Dream. Virgin's alliance with the band was sound business logic: the mail-order company had been selling something like 15,000 copies of their early albums like *Atem* on the German label Ohr. Speaking just a few years before he passed away in 2011, Edgar Froese recalled Draper phoning him in Berlin "to say John Peel was playing *Atem* to death. Two days later I sat on the stairs of the Virgin record shop in Notting Hill and signed a contract which was in power from 1973 to 1983. Ten years of roller-coaster experiences began!



Tangerine Dream's Virgin debut *Phaedra* marked the group's full-blown shift into a purely electronic trance-rock sound, propelled by Moog-bass pulsations and undergirded with metronomic drum machines. As with Oldfield's music, the influence of Terry Riley and Steve Reich was audible; Philip Glass, another maven of minimalist systems-music, would actually release several albums on Virgin. But with Tangerine Dream and their spiritual kinsman and

German compatriot Klaus Schulze (who also soon signed to Virgin), the mesmerizing patterns were inextricably tied up with post-psychedelic rock culture. Their albums, which generally consisted of four long tracks or sometimes just a pair of side-long epics, were meant as eyelid-movies for stoned immersion. *Phaedra* went Top 15 in the UK on its February 1974 release and a flurry of follow-up albums and Froese solo efforts swiftly followed, while Tangerine Dream became a fixture of the UK concert-hall circuit and successfully toured Europe and America.





Courtesy of Simon Draper

Draper reckons Virgin actually coined the term "krautrock" as the name of an imports section in the mail-order catalogues and full-page ads, further pinpointing its author as John Varnom, who wrote advertising copy for the label. If Germany was a strong contender for Virgin's spiritual homeland, its main rival was Canterbury, a university town in the South of England. That was where the Soft Machine hailed from and out of which spawned the Canterbury Sound: a rubric for an incestuous cluster of post-psychedelic jazz rock outfits

who were sometimes endearingly whimsical and sometimes forbiddingly abstruse, and generally had either a direct connection to or a marked affinity with the Softs.

Matching Mole was the band Robert Wyatt formed after his bitter expulsion from the Soft Machine. Matching Mole themselves dissolved after two albums for CBS, and Wyatt started to form a new group involving prog luminary Francis Monkman of Curved Air and various Canterbury-aligned musicians. "We were trying to sign that band," recalls Draper. "We spent time with Robert and he came to the Manor and did some canoeing on the river Cherwell." But then, during a party at the mansion-block flat of socialite and Virgin recording artist Lady June, Wyatt tumbled out of the window of the bathroom when attempting to evade his enraged wife Alfie. The accident left him paralyzed below the waist, unable to play drums again or participate in a touring rock band. So instead of signing the planned Canterbury supergroup, Virgin took on Wyatt as a solo artist. *Rock Bottom*, his 1974 debut for the label, is a heartbreakingly poignant allegory of Wyatt's emotional regression and gradual self-rebuilding during his recovery from the accident, couched in a blurry oceanic sound that recalls Miles Davis's *In A Silent Way* and Jimi Hendrix's "1983... (A Merman I Should Turn To Be)."

After this avant-pop triumph, Virgin managed to turn Wyatt into a pop star – albeit a minor one, and only briefly – when they badgered him into releasing a cover version of the Monkees' "I'm A Believer" as a single. "Robert had mentioned in an interview that he'd love to record that song and I thought, 'Wow, fantastic idea,' and we kept on at him about it," recalls Draper. The single became a hit and Wyatt was invited to perform on *Top of the Pops*. "That's when the producer of the show said that terrible thing about, 'Couldn't they have something more attractive on the stage than a wheelchair?'" Wyatt was on the verge of storming out but was cajoled into going through with the performance, which went out to 10 million-plus viewers in September 1974.



Robert Wyatt - I'm A Believer (Top Of The Pops 1974)

By 1975, Virgin had established a distinct niche in the British progressive market as the premier home for European cosmic rock and the Canterbury style of jazz-tinged English eccentricity. For Draper, this strategy had an Oedipal undercurrent insofar as it was necessary to distinguish Virgin from the label he most admired, Island, then widely considered the best record company around. "To me they were the epitome of what a label should be," says Draper. But Island had already cornered the market in a certain kind of British folk/jazz/blues troubadour (Nick Drake, John Martyn, Richard Thompson, et. al), so Virgin had look elsewhere to create an identity.

"We didn't want to sign people who were with other companies or had been with other companies," Draper recalls. "We thought we knew better. It was extreme arrogance!" He immediately goes on to say that in the early days Virgin had no idea what they were doing.

"I look back and the people we were signing – like Robert Wyatt – were all older than us." He recalls going to see Hatfield and the North play at the Royal College of Art and being picked up by a female friend of the band who thought he was simply a cute student. "When I turned up in the dressing room backstage later, it was very embarrassing for them. People in those days had stereotyped ideas of what a record executive should look like, and it wasn't me."

One thing Virgin had in common with Island was location: Both companies were based in London's equivalent to Haight-Ashbury, the Ladbroke Grove / Notting Hill Gate area. Rife with head shops and macrobiotic restaurants, the neighborhood had been home at different points to Marc Bolan, Jimi Hendrix, Nick Drake and Hawkwind; it was where you could find the offices of underground press papers like *International Times*. Draper lived in Ladbroke Grove pretty much from the minute he arrived in the UK. After a period on the houseboat in Little Venice, Branson also moved to a side street off Portobello, the most bustling and bohemian road in the Grove, buying a bright red house off Peter Cook (the comedian who would later record for Virgin a series of legendarily obscene albums with Dudley Moore). Then Virgin itself moved its offices to a building in Vernon Yard, another road just off Portobello. "Pretty soon, a lot of the people in the company moved to the area because it made sense to live close to where you were working."

Portobello and its environs are nowadays almost completely the preserve of the monied: the Saturday street fair continues, and retains here and there its old flea market quality, but the streets are otherwise dense with boutiques, delicatessens, fancy restaurants, chic bars and organic Fair Trade cafes. Back in the early '70s, though, it was a scuzzy and edgy area, teeming with squatted houses and unlicensed venues. "There were lots of big houses, but they were divided up into flats," recalls Draper. "Whereas in recent times, they've been turned back into houses for rich people. Back then, though, it was a really hip area to live. And then you had the whole reggae connection with so many of the people who lived there coming from the Caribbean originally."

Virgin would follow Island's footsteps in signing up Jamaican artists. Along with enthusiasm for the music, another impetus was discovering that U-Roy's talk-over records sold hugely well in Nigeria as exports, which offered a quick fix to Virgin's cash-flow problems. "We signed some more artists and soon we were chartering planes to take stuff out to Nigeria, loaded with albums. Then we started our own reggae imprint, the Front Line."

Another area where Virgin built on Island's innovations was the creation of a label aura through record design and advertising. Whether witty and playful or trippy and mysterious, the album covers, concert posters and adverts worked through an inclusion/exclusion effect. A good example would be the series of label samplers Island released at the end of '60s and start of the '70s, such as *El Pea*, which featured a close-up photograph of a legume in ultra-vivid green. The stoned-to-say-the-least humor of such visual puns offered a generationally-targeted code to be decrypted by turned-on cognoscenti. Hipgnosis, the name of the company that rivaled Roger Dean as the prog era's leading designer, spells out how it worked: "hip" as in hipster, "gnosis" as in secret knowledge. "We had a lot of fun with the advertising," says Draper. "My favorite out of the ones I came up with was the campaign for Tangerine Dream with the melting vinyl records – inspired by Salvador Dali's 'soft watches,' obviously."

From the marketing to the label's logo, from the far-out sounds engraved in the vinyl platters to the enigmatic artwork wrapped around them, from the roster's lank locks to the company's Ladbroke location, Virgin could not have been more quintessentially early '70s.

And then punk happened.



© Zawodsky / The Sex Pistols / Virgin Records

Initially, punk seemed like an inexplicable affront to everything that Virgin represented. "Indescribable noise" is how Draper once described the sound of the Sex Pistols. "We all went to see them at the 100 Club," he recalls now. "That was the gig where Sid Vicious bottled someone. I found the aggression really off-putting."

Like most denizens of the progressive realm represented by labels such as Island, Harvest, Charisma and others, Draper had assumed music would continue on its ever-upward path of sophistication. Fusion was the prevailing ethos at the mid-decade mark: rock's destiny was to keep on hybridizing and hyphenating itself with classical, jazz, folk and world influences. "*Music Week* was doing a series of interviews with A&R people in 1976, asking what they were listening to," Draper recalls. "I said 'Keith Jarrett's *Arbour Zena* and Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*.'"

Punk erupted in the midst of all that maturity and musicianship, a teenage rampage of crude energy stomping on the prevailing ideals of subtlety and sensitivity. Skinning up and drifting off to album-side-long dreamscapes suddenly seemed decadent and disengaged, a retreat from the political urgencies of the present. The crisis time demanded not discounted admission to a Hatfield and the North concert, but proper crisis music.

It was Branson – always more attracted to rock for its ability to cause a social commotion than to sonic voyages of discovery – who realised Virgin simply *had* to sign the Sex Pistols to stay relevant. Draper came around to the idea after hearing the debut single "Anarchy In The UK," which was released on EMI: "I realised I'd made a huge error." He'd also seen and liked the Buzzcocks when they played at the Screen on the Green, and by the end of 1977 had signed lead singer Howard Devoto's new band, Magazine.



Having the Sex Pistols on the label proved to be a trial for someone used to dealing with genial, easy-going longhairs. Because of the company's hippie image, Virgin was anathema to manager Malcolm McLaren, for whom "liberal" was a pejorative and who feared that Branson's tolerance would effectively defuse the threat posed by the Pistols. So he kept coming up with ever-more outrageous stunts – like recording the single "Nobody Is Innocent" with convict-on-the-run Ronnie Biggs, an exile in Brazil, and further pretending escaped Nazi Martin Bormann also appeared on the record – all in the hope of getting dropped by Virgin, just like EMI and A&M had previously done. "Malcolm was testing us all the time," Branson recalled years later. "He would come in with an advert that was pushing it to the extreme to see if we'd run it. And we would!" That only infuriated McLaren further. Draper in particular found McLaren's aggressiveness hard to deal with.

Having the most controversial and talked-about band in the world – *the* public face of punk – on the label did serve to totally and almost instantly change Virgin's image. The old Roger Dean logo was swiftly replaced by a new wave-compatible one based around a signature, which would become the enduring icon for the company, appearing on the tail fins of its airplanes to this day. The Virgin roster was ruthlessly purged of its least commercial pre-punk oddballs and restocked with short-haired, angular-sounding signings like Devo, XTC and the Skids. Mike Oldfield naturally retained an honorary prominence, but grew increasingly resentful of the upstart newcomers. The final straw, according to Draper, came when Virgin only managed to get one of Oldfield's later albums licensed in America because the label in question really wanted XTC. "It was a bargaining tool. Mike went really berserk – I think he decided then and there that he was leaving us whenever he could."



XTC - Go 2 Hipgnosis / XTC / Virgin Records

XTC were easily Draper's favorites of the new breed. "I had to fight tooth and nail against other record companies to get them. But the whole of Virgin loved XTC as people because they were so entertaining and creative – everyone became friends with them." Public Image Ltd, the band John Lydon formed after leaving Sex Pistols and shedding the "Rotten," were more problematic. "They felt obliged to be antagonistic. Keith Levene, the guitarist, was really difficult to deal with." Yet before punk, Lydon had been an avid listener to Virgin-aligned music, loving artists like Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band (who Draper had signed for a run of return-to-form albums in the late '70s), and even outright proggers like Pete Hammill and his band Van Der Graaf Generator, who were on Charisma. These kind of avant-rock influences were audible in Lydon's piercing vocals for PiL, in the tripnotic grooves churned up by Can-worshipping bassist Jah Wobble and the fractured abstraction of the guitar work from Levene, a secret admirer of Steve Howe from Yes.

Lydon and Draper would eventually bond over that least punk of things: hi-fi. "In my office I had this massive pair of towering Buckingham speakers, about four feet tall. They belonged to me, not the company, and John loved listening to them. Eventually I sold them to him." Another reason Lydon might have warmed to Draper was that he bankrolled the recording, in top-of-the-line studios, of three of the most uncompromisingly avant-garde albums ever released by a mainstream rock label: *First Issue, Metal Box* and *Flowers Of Romance*.

"I can remember when PiL presented us with the debut single, 'Public Image' – it was just dynamite, and you thought: 'This is going to be a #1 hit. Here we go, this is the Sex Pistols, reincarnated, better. Onward!' But then they brought us *Metal Box* and you thought, 'We're getting something else.'" As it happens, buoyed by awestruck reviews and Lydon's stature as a post-punk prophet, *Metal Box* sold surprisingly and reassuringly well, despite the hefty price charged on account of the striking tin canister in which it was encased. "Death Disco," the single that preceded the album and appeared on it renamed "Swan Lake," was actually a Top 20 hit, and even the unhinged "Flowers Of Romance" – a tribal stampede of drums overlaid with scraping violin and shrieking Lydon – secured PiL a *Top of the Pops* appearance.



Public Image Ltd.- The Flowers Of Romance (Top Of The Pops) 1981

By the end of the ’70s, Branson’s focus – never very tethered to music – had drifted away to other ventures, including an ultimately doomed attempt to establish a rival London listings magazine to *Time Out* called *Event*. He left Virgin Music entirely in the charge of Draper, who swapped his earlier title A&R Director for Managing Director. The label then entered its most prosperous period yet, with the worldwide breakthrough of the Human League and Culture Club, the rise of Simple Minds from an art-rock curio to stadium conquerors and Virgin’s acquisition of its prog-era friendly rival Charisma, which gave them three of the most successful acts of the ’80s: Phil Collins, Peter Gabriel and the band they both came from, Genesis.

In their very early days, when they went by the name the Future, the Human League sounded like Virgin wannabes: a shoestring Tangerine Dream, recording a 97-minute track titled “Last Man On Earth” and experimenting with computerized systems for random lyric generation. Even after shifting towards short songs and tunefulness, their first two albums for Virgin – *Reproduction* and *Travelogue* – had a geeky science-fiction-fan air that promised “cult group” status at best. But when the group fissured owing to irresolvable personal friction, with one faction keeping the original Human League name and the other half forming Heaven 17, Draper suddenly found he had two pop groups on his hands. Martin Rushent, the producer who’d honed the Stranglers and Buzzcocks into pop-punk hit machines, showed Human League how to tighten their dance grooves and sharpen their hooks, and suddenly they were topping international charts with “Don’t You Want Me” and “(Keep Feeling) Fascination.”

“That’s one of those miracle moments when it all takes off,” remembers Draper. “Dare started taking shape and you suddenly realise, ‘There’s not one hit on this record, there’s five or six.’ You’ve just struck gold. That was very exciting – but a completely different thing from what we’d had before at Virgin.”

The company kept expanding all through the ’80s, opening branches in European countries and then launching Virgin America. It was solid business sense, but it meant a loss of aesthetic control for Draper. “Suddenly you’ve got all these companies saying, ‘We can’t get bigger just on the product that you supply us with. We need to have French acts, German acts.’ So they’re signing Eurovision Song Contest-type acts. Or the Canadian label wants to sign a heavy metal group. Suddenly the criteria became not musical excellence or excitement anymore. We became more of a mainstream record company. Virgin America had a brilliant A&R guy, Jordan Harris, and they did some wonderful things, like reviving Roy Orbison’s career. But in the States it’s very much all about the bottom line. So the days were really long gone of us being the cutting-edge record company.”

In a sign that Virgin had become a major label, capable of sparring with the most

heavyweight music corporations around, Branson pulled off his long-running dream of signing the Rolling Stones (something he'd tried before in the early '70s). Janet Jackson was another high-profile, huge-advance signing. Then, in 1992, Branson sold Virgin Music Group to EMI for a figure just shy of $1 billion. Draper stayed on for half a year or so to smooth the transition, but he had lost interest in the music business long before that.

Shrewdly, at a much earlier stage of the company's existence, Draper had pressed for and secured a 20% share in Virgin Music, using the truthful expedient of informing Branson that he was seriously considering moving with his Chilean girlfriend to her homeland. That fateful stake made him a very wealthy man following the EMI deal. Draper was free to pursue his other passions – modern art and motor racing – to the hilt. He built up valuable collections of paintings and cars. He launched Palawan Press, a publisher dedicated to deluxe, expensive photo books about cars. Like Virgin in its earliest days, the company sells by mail-order only. "We do the books in a way that's never been done before. People like them."



The Human League - (Keep Feeling) Fascination

The bygone informality of the '70s record biz is encapsulated in the odd couple partnership between Richard Branson and Simon Draper. During Virgin's golden age, they managed to maintain a marriage between the usually opposed imperatives of enterprise and aesthetics, meshing Branson's dynamism and ambition with Draper's taste and sensitivity to the needs of the artists.

In our conversations, Draper repeatedly stresses that Branson didn't have a clue about music and in fact didn't particularly like music, or even listen to it. When he did intervene in the decision-making process at Virgin, Branson's impulses were sometimes spectacularly misguided.

"With *Tubular Bells*, we took it to Cannes for the music business trade fair Midem and played it to various people. Most people in the industry didn't get it, because it had no vocals. And one record executive actually said 'It's great – but you've got to put vocals on it.' And when we got back Richard tried to get Mike to put some vocals on it – missing the point entirely!"

Other legendary tales of Branson's misconceived gambits include an alleged attempt to get Lydon to abandon PiL and reunite with Steve Jones and Paul Cook by playing him the sub-Pistols tunes that his erstwhile bandmates were recording for Virgin as the Professionals. Branson is also said to have tried to persuade Devo that they should take Johnny Rotten as their new frontman, even going so far as to engineer a meeting between both parties in Jamaica, where the ex-Pistol had flown out with the Virgin boss to help him pick reggae

artists for the Front Line imprint.

Draper doesn't recall either of those stories, but he does say that Branson "had certain things, bees in his bonnet, that would tend to recur. For instance, after 'I'm A Believer' was this sort of interesting hit single for Robert Wyatt, Richard would often suggest to other people that they should record 'I'm A Believer.' You have to understand, Richard knew *zilch* about music. When he did *Desert Island Discs*" – the long-running BBC radio show in which a famous guest discusses their all-time favorite pieces of music – "we had to tell him what records he liked!

"The music thing with Virgin was just accidental – it wasn't because Richard liked music particularly. He could have been doing anything – and he can do anything. He's an entrepreneur." Branson, for his part, has admitted as much, telling *The Face* magazine in 1984 that "I'm more cynical than 99 percent of the people who work for Virgin. Simon loves records and his whole involvement is through that. With me it's different. It's not a love of music."

"Our relationship worked well," Draper continues, "because it was his drive and ambition – his lack of fear – propelling it, but he needed someone else to make the label credible. There was this tension between doing things that were exciting and interesting, and being successful. I had a lot of freedom to do what I wanted, but equally Richard would keep me on my toes, because he wanted the success. I was constantly having to fight against him wanting to sign things I considered rubbish."

The Branson/Draper symbiosis was a prime example of an archetype that flourished from the late '60s onwards, made the '70s a rich and teeming-with-possibility decade for music and only really faded in the hard-headed '80s: the aesthete-entrepreneur. Draper and Branson split those functions and faculties across two chalk-and-cheese individuals, but in other record-biz figures of that era the two impulses coexist in the same body. Just like the kind of upper middle class, well-educated bands that started coming through with Pink Floyd and Soft Machine and their ilk, most of these art-minded businessmen came from posh backgrounds. They loved the music and loved elements of the counter-culture (the sex, the drugs, the hair), but they weren't looking for a revolutionary transformation of society. They enjoyed the buzz of making deals and breaking bands, the hustle and hype. Some pretty much learned the biz on the job; others had picked up a sense of how worldly things worked from their monied backgrounds. For a surprisingly long period, these operators were able to sustain the fiction that the record business was not really a business at all. That somehow Art and Money, boundary-busting masterpieces and the bottom line, could coexist fruitfully.

"I had no business experience when we started," recalls Draper. "My mother and father are teachers and really I should have ended up in academia or in the media. But the music business in those days... I remember an article in the *Financial Times* during the '70s that said music publishing was the easiest way to make money known to man. We saw that with Virgin Publishing, when we signed Sting. This was before the Police, when he was in a band called Last Exit, who weren't that great – but we could see that he was great. You can't fail to make a lot of money out of something like that."

"The atmosphere was great back then – the fact that you didn't need to be a professional, it was all intuitive," Draper continues. "And the record business attracted people of that sort really, driven mainly by love of music."

Draper says that since he left Virgin a quarter-century ago he's never once been tempted to go back into the music industry. When he talks to his friends who are still involved, he finds that they are struggling. "They don't like the record business as it is," Draper says in his mild, understated way. "So many aspects of it aren't... great."

(Header image © Courtesy of Simon Draper)

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A conversation with Robert Wyatt - Swench.net / Tales from the East Pier - August 7, 2016

A conversation with Robert Wyatt

Tales from the East Pier

This is an unpublished interview with Robert Wyatt, perhaps best known for his cover of 'Shipbuilding' by Elvis Costello and being a member of Soft Machine. I spoke to Robert in 2007 about his album Comicopera. We had a fascinating and lovely chat.

Robert Wyatt-Ellidge is one of the last true enigmas left in British music. In an age when generic conservatism is frighteningly rife and the onslaught of tacky celebrity culture has tarnished creativity, Wyatt is like a beacon of hope from a lost era, defiantly soldiering on and still releasing remarkable and unclassifiable solo records since 1970.

The latest inimitable slice of Wyatt is *Comicopera* – an ambitious and diverse album divided into three acts. Recorded at home in Louth, Lincolnshire, it's also his first with Domino Records, which means Wyatt is now an unlikely label mate of the likes of Franz Ferdinand and Arctic Monkeys.

Born during the final few months of the Second World War in Bristol, Wyatt grew up near Dover and was taught the drums by a visiting American jazz drummer called George Neidorf. After stints in the Daevid Allen Trio and the Wilde Flowers, Wyatt formed Soft Machine with Kevin Ayers and Allen. Soft Machine blended psychedelia with jazz fusion, becoming one of the most revered acts in prog-rock while Pink Floyd were bringing it to a wider audience. They were briefly managed by Damon Albarn's father Keith. After four years of touring and three albums, Robert recorded his first solo album entitled *The End of an Ear*.

Fusion groups such as Centipede and Matching Mole followed, but in 1973 at a party in Maida Vale, London, Robert fell from a third floor window. Paralysed from the waist down, Wyatt was confined to a wheelchair. Pink Floyd staged two benefit concerts compered by John Peel and raised in the region of £10,000. Meanwhile, Wyatt decided that his days as a band member were over.

His first solo album since his accident, *Rock Bottom*, is a far more accomplished work than The End of an Ear. Indeed, he has often said since that he doesn't even consider his debut as part of his "canon." Ivor Cutler contributed to a track called "Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road" and a lot more people listened up and paid attention. He married the poet, lyricist and illustrator Alfreda Benge in 1973, whom he still lives with in Lincolnshire and

affectionately refers to as Alfie.

Wyatt scored chart success with covers of "Shipbuilding" by Elvis Costello and "I'm a Believer" by the Monkees. When he appeared on *Top of the Pops*, a BBC producer maintained that a man singing in a wheelchair was not suitable for family viewing. Famously, Wyatt "lost his rag but not the wheelchair" and the appearance continued without pandering to any ludicrous demands.

In 2001, Wyattt curated a Meltdown extravaganza that included Ivor Cutler, Baaba Maal, David Gilmour, Elvis Costello, Tricky and the Raincoats. In 2003, he received a Mercury Music Prize nomination for the whimsical *Cuckooland*, an album that ranks with *Rock Bottom*, *Shleep* and *Ruth is Stranger than Richard* as one of his best works.

His oeuvre is one of the most dazzling and uncategorisable in modern music and free of any token nods to eclecticism or fusion for its own sake. His work is also consistently brilliant. The release of *Comicopera* is thrilling news, further accentuating the magical and mercurial brilliance of the one and only Robert Wyatt.



One of the most interesting things about Comicopera is how well it functions as a complete piece. The art of album listening has been somewhat adversely effected by downloading culture, so I'd be curious to know if this in any informed your ambitions and intentions for this album?

I've got used to wearing comfortable set of clothes even if they're not very fashionable clothes. I was brought up with the old two-sided LPs and I like that format. On my last record (*Cuckooland*) I split it in two. I still think in 20 minute chunks. I'm glad that you noticed that it is meant to be listened to as a whole, because it's a kind of a journey or some sort of idiot's pilgrimage.

In *Act III – Away with the Fairies*, you stop singing in English.

Well, that's one of the ways that I'm away with the fairies! I'm very English. I'm very happy with so many things here and I like a cup of tea. What irritates me are boring council meetings and boring streets to walk down, but that's nothing to go to war about. I do enjoy the cosmopolitan music scene which is why there is an instrumental track on there celebrating that called "The Town Square". However, I can't really wallow in happiness when we're fighting our wars against defenceless people to the East. As a taxpayer, it irritates me and that's putting it very mildly indeed. It's a very odd idea to spread democracy by going around and bombing people.

As a British citizen, does Gordon Brown's appointment as Prime Minister make you feel in any way more hopeful or optimistic?

It's bit too late for me to shift my opinions on governments. It seems to me that the purpose of a Labour government is to look after the shop while the Conservatives go off on grouse-shooting holiday for five years. The basic problem remains that we're still relying on the control of other countries for the supply of basic resources in one way or another. In Iraq, they'll have a terrible dilemma of withdrawing without it looking like they've been defeated. We're being beaten in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's the unbearable truth and we should have learnt that a hundred years ago. You can't just eradicate other people and replace them with replicas of yourself with impunity. However, it's reassuring to have an adult speaking on behalf of the country rather an adolescent retard from pre-school, but that's just a personal opinion. I don't analyse things politically. I suppose I do view them artistically. It's like looking at the sea. The journalist looks at the ships on the sea and what happens to them. What the artist has to do is look at the undercurrents and shifting waters. While I'm sifting around in the gloom, somebody else is looking at all the chopping and changing on the top.

Even though there is a lot of love, loss and war on *Comicopera*, I don't find it a depressing album.

There are a few comic moments on this record although they probably escape most people's attention. People think I'm depressing because of the beard and the wheelchair. If they could see me as I really am in my head, which is some kind of reckless little monkey scampering around in the trees, they'd be much closer to the mark quite frankly. I get pissed off like we all do. I get puzzled and frightened. Tragedy isn't funny, but I do think the best way to see life is as some kind of vast cosmic joke. People who perpetuate evil don't tend to be monsters, they're just hideous people who shouldn't be allowed at the controls. We haven't worked that one out yet, as wonderful as human civilisation is. We haven't learnt how to get the right fucker at the controls. Countries like England have always had empires and are always prone during a weak moment to suddenly think they have to do all that again. I have to distance myself from that aspect of England and that's what the third act is all about. Both my son and my daughter have married into families of Irish descent and I'm delighted. My son has married a Birmingham-Irish woman and my daughter has married a Canadian Irishman called Patrick Burke. I've got got four grand-daughters, sorry, I mean three and a grandson! I think. Well, four of those little pinky things that squeak. Now, they're all being brought up as Catholics, which is a bit of laugh considering their Granddad doesn't believe in anything! But I don't have too much of a problem with religion. I suppose it brings a sense of security, community and continuity in the face of a difficult world. I'm glad that my son and daughter have extended the gene pool. I'm not worried about immigration. This is an island, so I'm more worried about in-breeding. So that's my connection with Ireland, apart from being a big fan of Samuel Beckett and Oscar Wilde, but I'm sure everyone says that.

This is your first album on Domino which is an extremely well-respected and label. Does this new relationship excite you?

I can't believe my luck. We had to leave the last record company because it was taken over by a vast anonymous gang from across the Atlantic so we scuttled off. I'm glad they've got a great reputation. I don't follow music as closely as you do, but I can tell you that as people they're just terrific. They're bright, funny, intelligent and they work really hard. They have a similar spirit to Geoff Travis and Rough Trade. They've struck gold a couple of times lately, which has given them a profile that good people don't always get. I'm so lucky to be able to benefit from that.

I came across an interesting quote on a blog that claims you are the one performer in England that everyone respects and loves; the punks, the art-rockers – everyone…

I don't quite understand that to be honest. I don't mean to be falsely modest, but I have great difficulty doing what I do. Heath Robinson used to draw all these mad machines that wouldn't work and sometimes I feel my records are a bit like that. I do the best I can. Whenever I hear one of my records on the radio, I wince with embarrassment. I think, "Take that off and put on a proper record!" I'm baffled really, but it's nice when people say nice things about me. Some of my contemporaries got terribly paranoid about punk, but I thought Johnny Rotten was great. He made me laugh out loud and I thought he was a wonderful singer. I just couldn't see the problem people had with him. When people get older, they sometimes forget that every generation will find its own subculture and these tribal divisions make life interesting. I've always welcomed it and they never had me

waving their finger at them in some kind of school-masterly way. So, maybe there isn't this feeling that I'm some disapproving elder looking down upon them. I know exactly how they feel. I felt that way too.

That's funny when you say you feel uncomfortable hearing your music. Of course, your name has become a verb, as "Wyatting" refers to the practice of putting weird music on a jukebox with the aim of clearing a pub.

If someone put on one of my records in a pub it would certainly alienate me. I'd be straight out of there. Put on Girls Aloud or James Brown. Anything else. For fuck's sake, who wants to hear an old man with a beard when they're trying to have a drink? However, I do try and make tunes and I don't go out of my way to be obscure. Most of tunes tend to be light pop songs, they just tend to go on a bit. I like jazz solos and I like moments of complete anarchy and freedom, but it's always anchored in songs for me.

I don't know exactly what the Cuban track "Hasta Siempre Comadante" at the end of the album, is all about as I don't know any Spanish, but I believe it is concerned with Che Guevara?

That's right. The instrumental part was recorded by some Italian musicians. It's a remix of a piece I did some years ago for a fundraising CD for the Italian equivalent of The Morning Star (English socialist newspaper) called Il Manifesto. I resurrected it and remixed it with new vocals. They play it so beautifully.

The last track on *Ruth is Stranger than Richard* is called "Song for Che".

Yes. This is my second song for Che and the second one I've done by the songwriter Carlos Puebla. He only died recently. He was a Cuban folk legend of the post-revolutionary years.

One of the most beautiful tracks is "Just As You Are". Monica Vasconcelos' voice is amazing. Who is she?

Isn't she lovely? She is an amazing Brazilian lady and she has a record of her own called *Hih*. We did a swop. Instead of payment, we appeared on each other's records, which is something I do from time to time. I used to do that with David Gilmour and Brian (Eno). She got Alfie to write her some music and I wrote some lyrics. She normally sings in Portuguese so when she sings on "Just As You Are" there is a touch of innocence in the way she sings and a real sensual knowingness. She was the yin to my yang! *(chuckles)*

Brian Eno pops up too. You've been working with him for a long time and you played on *Music for Airports*.

Yeah, he plays keyboard on the first track and sorted out the cymbal sounds. I used his voice as an 'Enotron' on "Out of the Blue". Incidentally, on the very first copies of the CD, I left out Beverly Chadwick's name who played baritone sax, which was my mistake entirely. There was so much going on that I just slipped up and forgot. I'm not so good at all the practical stuff afterwards.

I love "Out of the Blue". I think it's my favourite track on the album.

It's a nice example of how me and Alfie can work together in a way that is almost spooky. She just came in with the words and they just matched. You'd think we had it prepared. I suppose we've been preparing for it in living together for 35 years.

I believe you did a live show recently in Lincoln.

Oh look, I don't know how that one got out. There is a young bee-bop drummer called Dylan Howe who is brilliant. The nearest he came to us was Lincoln which is an hour and a bit up the road. He persuaded me to play for a little bit, but it wasn't my show. All I did was mutter a chorus. It's no big deal. I didn't even get onstage. I haven't sung onstage since 1982. The only other time I did something like that was with David Gilmour a couple of years ago, but again I just skulked in the corner and did a bit of grunting and muttering.

Is making albums more important to you than playing live? It certainly seems to be that way for Kate Bush and Scott Walker.

I suppose it is. When David Gilmour plays, people appreciate what it is but some people come up to him and they can get quite abusive about the fact that it's not Pink Floyd. Ray Davies goes crazy because anytime he appears audiences just want him to do 'Waterloo

Sunset'. I don't have that problem. I do my songs and people expect and respect that. Then I move on to something else. I enjoyed playing live and I loved live drumming in particular. Sure, there is a buzz involved but I don't envy people who have to go on tour. I work more like a painter. I like working with small groups within this domestic intimacy.

I believe you're very inspired by painters.

I'm married to someone who has an M.A. and went to art college for ten years. I like doing little cartoons and stuff. I look at paintings all the time. Right in front of me now is a Basquiat print that Alfie bought me for my birthday. It's beautiful. I'm also looking at the cover of *Comicopera* and that's beautiful too. I still love art. As a teenager, the only thing that I found interesting that grown ups did was painting. The painters of the first half of the 20th century were my bread and butter really. I love sculpture too. More recently, I could spend a whole other life only looking at older painters – from Caravaggio right back to Giotto. They're gob-smacking. There is just so much. I'm quite happy with my little art books because I find art galleries a bit difficult. Plus, you're not allowed to smoke in them, which I know is sensible so I'm not complaining. I find the luminosity of wet paint comes back when you see paintings reproduced on television. I went to see a contemporary Japanese art exhibition in the Hayward Gallery in London recently. It was wonderful and full of witty and bright ideas. I was entranced by it. I also saw some David Hockney portraits of his mother lately which were fantastic. They were the best series of portraits of someone getting older that I've seen since Rembrandt. I get a lot of brain food from painting, but it's not what I do.

What was it like to work with Bjork on her *Medulla* album?

I just think she's magical. What can I say? It was like being visited by an angel from the top of a Christmas tree who comes down for while, sits on your shoulder and has a chat. I was completely in a daze. She is a beautiful bit of magic that floats about the earth like Stevie Wonder or Nina Simone. Me and the missus were thrilled to have her in the house. I don't listen to much rock music, but someone like that cuts right through. I still think I'll wake up one day and realise it was all just a dream.

You've worked with a lot of amazing people throughout your career, such as Mike Oldfield and Ivor Cutler.

It's amazing. It's been my life really. It's like she came out of nowhere and went back to nowhere. Well, not nowhere because she went back to Iceland obviously! I knew Ivor so well. He used to come round every week. We'd have some food and have a laugh and he'd potter off. Occasionally, we worked together, but to me he was just Ivor. It's the same with anyone else. I've been lucky to have these great friends independent of their stature in the outside world. Personally, I'm more concerned to work with people who aren't well known enough such as Monica. Some people are lucky enough to have struck some kind of common chord that resonates around the world, but other people haven't. How people have resonated around the world means very little to me. What I'm concerned with is whether they have some kind of gift that they can share with me even just for one song. To me, Paul (Weller) is just Paul. He is such a smart dresser, even when there is no one around to see! I love him. They're just people. Like Brian Eno with his bicycle. He just makes me laugh. You should hear his jokes. Actually, you shouldn't because they're disgraceful. Most of the time I hang around in our little town which is miles away from any media-attended event. I spent most of my time talking to Alfie, my Mother in Law Loreanna and Stan, who sells sausages in a bun with a cup of tea from his van for £1.20 in the market square up the road. We go to supper with our friends Alan and Patricia and Jane and Martin. None of them are musicians. Real life is anonymous. It just happens that a few of my friends are dead famous. It puts me off asking sometimes. I asked Paul's missus Sharon if he could play and she told me he was off on tour. I felt a bit shy about asking him after hearing that, but she just said, "Come on Robert, don't be a moron! Paul would love to do it!"

Your hometown sounds amazing. It must be a very conducive environment for creativity.

It is because there is no pressure to do anything. It's a homely market town. It's easy to live in and I can get around with great ease in my wheelchair within a ten minute spin around the block. In a place that might seem to have everything like London, I can't really do that. It's like toy town. It's like a toy train set with the butcher, the baker and candle-stick maker. It's got a few thousand people in it and a few industries that make cardboard packaging and plastic spoons. The people are friendly and very nice. There is a plumber next door and a shopkeeper on the other side. It's more than good enough for me.

Do your neighbours know who you are?

There is a woman down the pub called Maureen who said to me, "Robert, I know you're a celebrity, but I don't think anyone knows what you do." I just said, "Let's leave it at that Maureen. Don't worry about it. I'm celebrity for sure. Give us another drink." They've got a vague feeling that I must be something or other, but nobody really knows what it is because I'm not on *Emmerdale* or anything like that so they're a bit puzzled. There is a little record shop up the road called Off the Beaten Track and they know what I do. It's really nice little shop. I wheel up there and get my old jazz records. They feed the local youth their rock records and I just sit there having a cup of tea.

Thanks so much for the chat Robert. Sorry, I've just realised that I've ran way over time.

Oh, that's alright. I've still got my cup of tea going.

>> L'interview sur le site de Swench

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Robert Wyatt - Record Collector N° 449 - January 2016

ROBERT WYATT



The Wilde Flowers 2CD is on Retroworld, 8 January, and *RC* asked the prog supergroup's mainstay, **Robert Wyatt,** if there are any other projects that he did that fans may not be aware of? "I tried writing a song for Paul Weller, which never surfaced, and I recorded a 10-minute instrumental for Jean-Pierre Muller's art installation, 7 By 7, which he asked us not to release separately."

With whom would you like to make a split 7"?
Archie Shepp.

What was your favourite record shop when you started out?
Collet's, on London's Shaftesbury Avenue. It had Ray Charles records on the jukebox, and a box marked "Rare as hen's teeth" in which I found a Japanese Blue Note LP of Kenny Dorham's *Whistle* Stop.

What was your first record?
Louis Armstrong's Skokiaan, maybe.

Did you ever *write songs under the influence?*
Goodness me, yes. When *didn't* I would be a much shorter list! Wine's a nice way to kickstart work. Brandy, one long solitary weekend, led to Blues In Bob Minor.

Are your family musical?
My pa, George Ellidge, played piano, and I started singing Christmas carols and funny songs like Little Brown Jug with him. My grandma, Annie Morgan, sang songs such as Come Into The Garden, Maud.

What would you ask your music hero?
Archie Shepp. I've met him several times and asked him about jazz saxophonists from the 40s and 50s that he listened to, such as Ben Webster and Al Sears, I'd ask more about that.

What record are you looking for?
Anything by Syrian vocalist George Wassouf, and the renegade concert pianist, Valentina Lisitsa. Culture from the front-line.

Which band *would you most like to see in reality TV?*
The Unthank Sisters, *if* it was on the BBC. The only channel that I tune into regularly with adverts now is Russia Today.

Which* of your songs *is the most personally meaningful?
Old Europe. Just me and Gilad Atzmon playing a nostalgic song about Paris. More poignant than ever.

What *backstage incident makes you laugh or cringe most?*
In New York, my friend Caroline Coon tried to take a quick photo of Miles Davis backstage, and he hissed, "tell that bitch to get that thing outta my face".

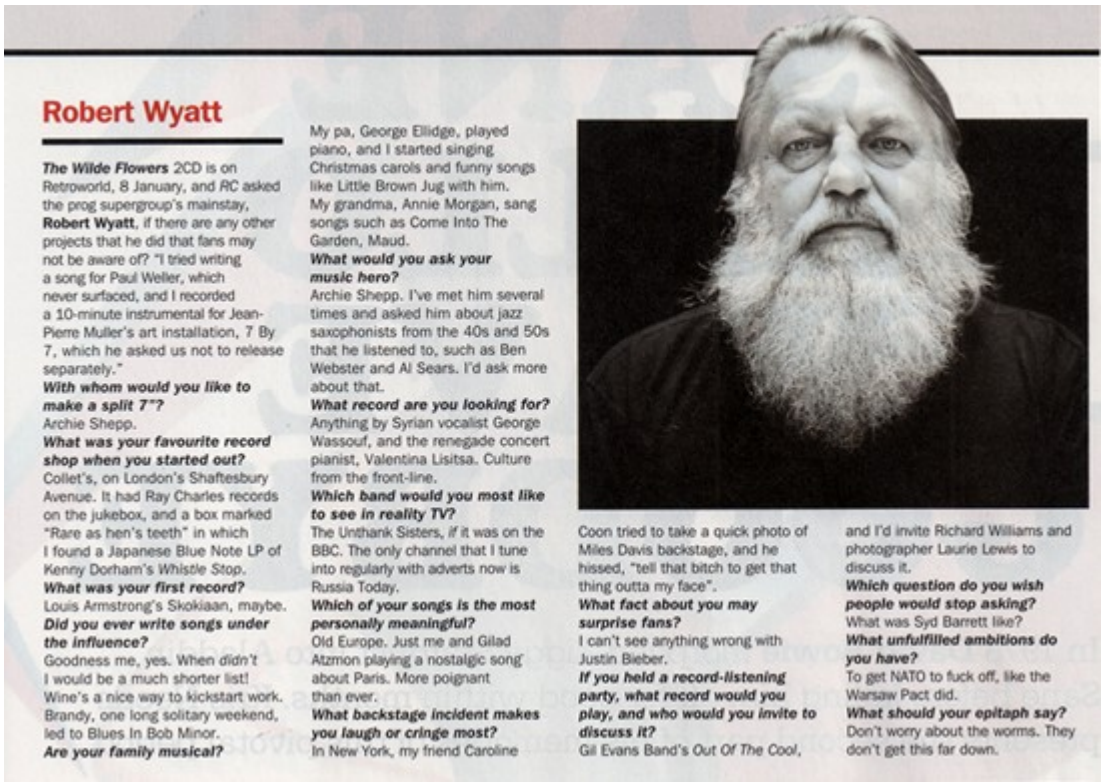
What fact about you may *surprise fans?*
-1 can't see anything wrong with Justin Bieber.

If you held a record-listening party, what record would you play, and who would you invite to discuss it?
Gil Evans Band's Out Of The *Cool,* and I'd invite Richard Williams and photographer Laurie Lewis to discuss it.

Which question do you wish people would stop asking?
What was Syd Barrett like?

What *unfulfilled ambitions do you have?*
To get NATO to fuck off, like the Warsaw Pact did.

What should your epitaph say?
Don't worry about the worms. They don't get this far down.



Robert Wyatt

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Archie Shepp.
What was your favourite record shop when you started out?
Collet's, on London's Shaftesbury Avenue. It had Ray Charles records on the jukebox, and a box marked "Rare as hen's teeth" in which I found a Japanese Blue Note LP of Kenny Dorham's *Whistle Stop*.
What was your first record?
Louis Armstrong's Skokiaan, maybe.
Did you ever write songs under the influence?
Goodness me, yes. When didn't I would be a much shorter list! Wine's a nice way to kickstart work. Brandy, one long solitary weekend, led to Blues In Bob Minor.
Are your family musical?
My pa, George Ellidge, played piano, and I started singing Christmas carols and funny songs like Little Brown Jug with him. My grandma, Annie Morgan, sang songs such as Come Into The Garden, Maud.
What would you ask your music hero?
Archie Shepp. I've met him several times and asked him about jazz saxophonists from the 40s and 50s that he listened to, such as Ben Webster and Al Sears. I'd ask more about that.
What record are you looking for?
Anything by Syrian vocalist George Wassouf, and the renegade concert pianist, Valentina Lisitsa. Culture from the front-line.
Which band would you most like to see in reality TV?
The Unthank Sisters, *if* it was on the BBC. The only channel that I tune into regularly with adverts now is Russia Today.
Which of your songs is the most personally meaningful?
Old Europe. Just me and Gilad Atzmon playing a nostalgic song about Paris. More poignant than ever.
What backstage incident makes you laugh or cringe most?
In New York, my friend Caroline Coon tried to take a quick photo of Miles Davis backstage, and he hissed, "tell that bitch to get that thing outta my face".
What fact about you may surprise fans?
I can't see anything wrong with Justin Bieber.
If you held a record-listening party, what record would you play, and who would you invite to discuss it?
Gil Evans Band's *Out Of The Cool*, and I'd invite Richard Williams and photographer Laurie Lewis to discuss it.
Which question do you wish people would stop asking?
What was Syd Barrett like?
What unfulfilled ambitions do you have?
To get NATO to fuck off, like the Warsaw Pact did.
What should your epitaph say?
Don't worry about the worms. They don't get this far down.

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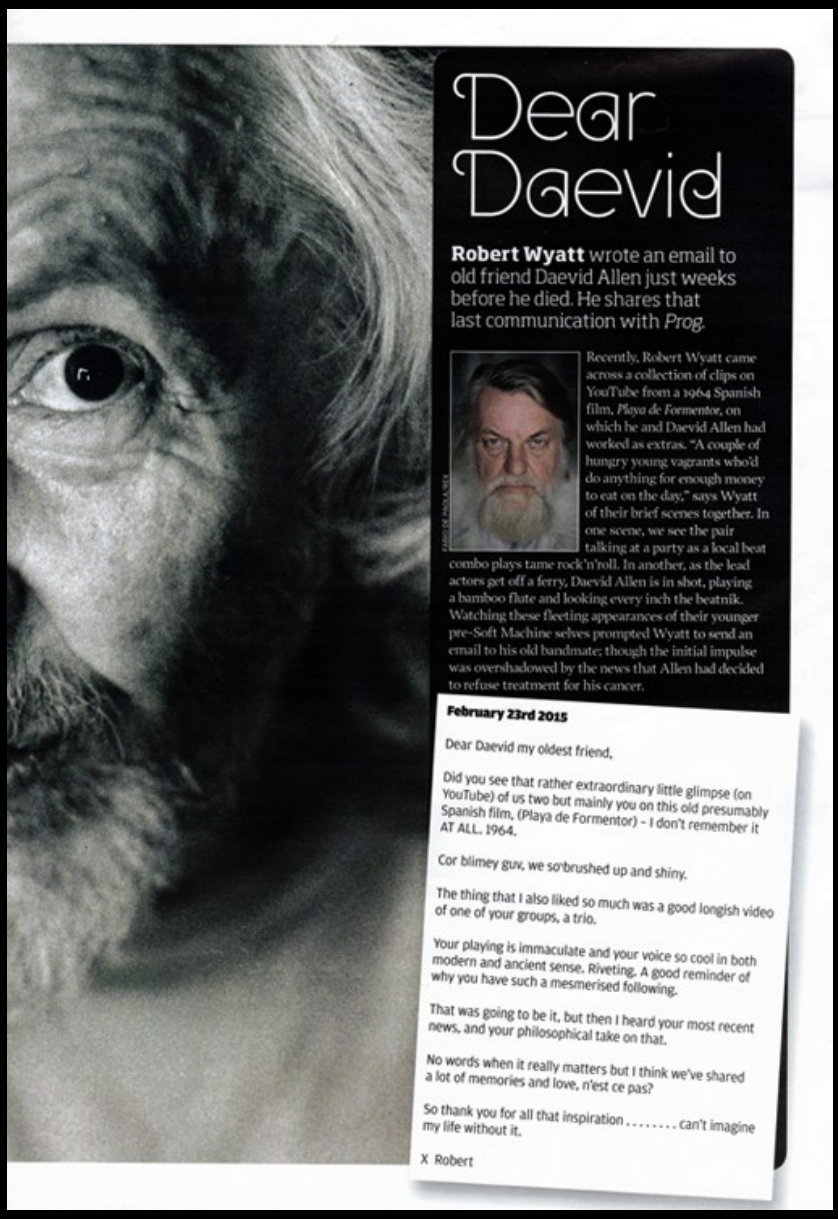
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Dear Daevid - Prog - April 2015

DEAR DAEVID



Dear Daevid

Robert Wyatt wrote an email to old friend Daevid Allen just weeks before he died. He shares that last communication with *Prog*.

Recently, Robert Wyatt came across a collection of clips on YouTube from a 1964 Spanish film, *Playa de Formentor*, on which he and Daevid Allen had worked as extras. "A couple of hungry young vagrants who'd do anything for enough money to eat on the day," says Wyatt of their brief scenes together. In one scene, we see the pair talking at a party as a local beat combo plays tame rock'n'roll. In another, as the lead actors get off a ferry, Daevid Allen is in shot, playing a bamboo flute and looking every inch the beatnik. Watching these fleeting appearances of their younger pre-Soft Machine selves prompted Wyatt to send an email to his old bandmate; though the initial impulse was overshadowed by the news that Allen had decided to refuse treatment for his cancer.

February 23rd 2015

Dear Daevid my oldest friend,

Did you see that rather extraordinary little glimpse (on YouTube) of us two but mainly you on this old presumably Spanish film, (Playa de Formentor) - I don't remember it AT ALL. 1964.

Cor blimey guv, we so brushed up and shiny.

The thing that I also liked so much was a good longish video of one of your groups, a trio.

Your playing is immaculate and your voice so cool in both modern and ancient sense. Riveting. A good reminder of why you have such a mesmerised following.

That was going to be it, but then I heard your most recent news, and your philosophical take on that.

No words when it really matters but I think we've shared a lot of memories and love, n'est ce pas?

So thank you for all that inspiration ..... can't imagine my life without it.

X Robert

> Zoom

A Life Less Ordinary - Prog - April 2015

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY





Whether with prog-jazz pioneers Soft Machine or on his own dreamlike solo albums, **Robert Wyatt** has always followed his instincts. Recently retired, he looks back on an "improvised life" in music.


A Life Less Ordinary

Whether with prog-jazz pioneers Soft Machine or on his own dreamlike solo albums, **Robert Wyatt** has always followed his instincts. Recently, as he looks back on his "improvised life" in music

Words: Rob Hughes

"The music I heard in my head didn't really exist in the real world," says Robert Wyatt, trying to explain the unique otherness of his recorded work. "Elements of my ideas were already out there — an attraction to hummable tunes, for example — so I was neither trying to be different, nor trying to sound familiar. I'm not interested in following a tradition, but nor am I interested in being esoteric. I just follow my undirected instinct wherever it leads me."

> Zoom

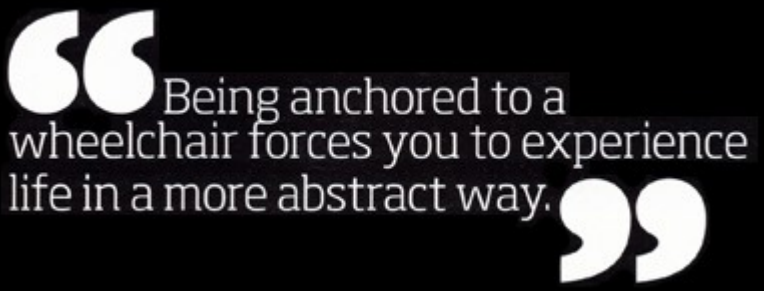
Wyatt's instinct has rarely let him down. In a career that he brought to an unexpected close in 2014 with the announcement that he was retiring from music, Wyatt has produced some of the most strikingly original work of the past half century. His, he says, is "an improvised life". One fuelled by jazz, socialism and an absurdist slant on the world around him.

It's an approach that first found expression with prog-jazz pioneers Soft Machine in the mid-60s. Though he's keen to dismiss the notion that they were part of a broader Canterbury Scene. "There were a few musicians I played with from around there, but I don't remember a 'scene'," posits Wyatt, who turned 70 in January. Instead, he feels, Canterbury was more emblematic of a very English variant on freeform jazz and psychedelia. Referring to their countercultural days at London's Roundhouse and UFO Club, Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason described the Softs and Pink Floyd as "the twin house bands of the London underground". "I always found the underground a more realistic place to be," says Wyatt, recalling. UFO. "There'd be bodies all over the floor, film projections on various surfaces, and a right old racket coming from the stage. There was a timeless feel, altogether rather dreamlike."

Wyatt's memories as singer/ drummer of Soft Machine, for whom he contributed such stellar moments as *Moon In June*, are bittersweet. By his own admission, he'd become a liability by the time of 1971's *Fourth*. An obstinate boozer and wild stage presence (flailing, shirtless, from behind his kit), he was utterly at odds with the restrained disposition of fellow Softs, bassist Hugh Hopper and keyboard player Mike Ratledge. In autumn '71, Wyatt quit to form Matching Mole. Though, as Hopper admitted later, Wyatt was effectively "pushed out of what he felt was his own group".

The episode forms one of the most moving passages in Marcus O'Dair's recent

book, *Different Every Time: The Authorised Biography Of Robert Wyatt*. In it, Wyatt confesses that he still has nightmares about being squeezed out of Soft Machine. "It is strange, even to me," he says, trying to make sense of the residual trauma. "Something to do with the humiliation of rejection, when it's rejection from the people you got together with in the first place, I guess."



Post-Soft Machine, two events changed him forever. In early 1972 he met artist Alfreda Benge, who was to become his wife, muse and lyricist. It also coincided with the beginning of Wyatt's devotion to Communism, with politics serving as "the missing protein" in his music. Then, in 1973, came the drunken fall from a window that left Wyatt paralysed from the waist down. The effect, he says, was truly liberating, in that it narrowed his career choices and made him concentrate on being a singer. He calls the accident a neat dividing line between adolescence and the rest of his life: "Your youth is a period of maximum physical potential. Suddenly being anchored to a wheelchair forces you to experience life in a more abstract way. You become more reflective."

Aside from his expressionistic blend of free jazz, folk, classical and world music, what truly sets Wyatt apart is his exquisite voice. Reedy and tremulous, there's a haunted vulnerability and disarming candour to his singing, which his friend Brian Eno compares to "a poor innocent cast into a complicated world".

There are very few precedents for Wyatt's singing voice. "I try to make the most of what's doable with it," he offers plainly. But one chief inspiration was the late English tenor and Benjamin Britten collaborator Sir Peter Pears. "I didn't warm to opera singing, but Peter Pears had a gentler vibrato, which suited Britten's adaptations of folk songs in particular. They were probably the first records that got to me as a toddler."

The sheer breadth of Wyatt's solo work is dizzying. As an extension of his modus operandi — "I do like to rummage around what's been done in the past and find a different take on it" — he has reworked pieces by such disparate artists as John Cage and The Monkees, and recorded with Henry Cow, Eno, Phil Manzanera, Syd Barrett, Björk and Ryuichi Sakamoto, to name but a few. "I think of it as alternating dictatorships," he says of his myriad collaborations. "On my records, I hope the musicians I invite will trust me to put it all together in my own way. Conversely, when employed by others, I try to do what they would like me to do."

Stick a pin anywhere you like, from 1974's *Rock Bottom* to 2OO7's *Comicopera*, from Soft Machine's 1968 debut to 2010's three-way alliance with Gilad Atzmon and Ros Stephen, *For The Ghosts Within*, and all of these albums are freighted with Wyatt's rare brilliance. For all the genre-hopping, Wyatt's work occupies a distinct corner entirely of its own. "My identity doesn't feel threatened by cultural variety," he says. "Such differences as there are seem to me to highlight the specialness of each. Underneath, what we have in common with others warms the heart even more. My heart, anyway."

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Robert Wyatt - Q N°343 - February 2015





No sooner has Robert Wyatt welcomed Q into his home than he's apologising for the long journey. Since he and his wife Alfie moved to the Lincolnshire market town of Louth more than 20 years ago, he's felt like he's a world away from the heart of the music industry so he greets visitors with a mixture of gratitude and surprise.

"I can't believe Björk was sat where you are," he says, marvelling across his dining table, cup of tea in hand. "We sat and played Sun Ra records. I was truly starstruck. She has magic to me."

The house is as welcoming and characterful as its inhabitants. The walls are decorated with Alfie's designs for Wyatt's album covers and a picture of Che Guevara with a sticker reading "Smoking cures stress". On the mantelpiece near the table there's a ruby wedding anniversary card and a Russian doll of sour-faced former Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev.

Wyatt's song with Björk, Submarine, is one of several collaborations that he's collated on the second disc of a new compilation called Different Every Time. "I like the sense of being employable," he says cheerfully. "It's reassuring."

A companion to Marcus O'Dair's new authorised biography of Wyatt ("big and thick, like me," says the singer). Different Every Time winds a typically unorthodox path through Wyatt's unique career but still can't do it justice. In the 40 years since an accident confined him to a wheelchair, the former drummer has created a soundworld where surrealist whimsy coexists with fierce political conviction, English eccentricity with globetrotting curiosity, good humour with fathomless sadness, audacious experimentation with pop clarity, a big brain with a warm heart. His friend Brian Eno has compared Wyatt's unmistakable voice to "a poor innocent cast into a complicated world".

In person, the 69-year-old is as intriguingly paradoxical as his music. Despite his accomplishments, he's modest to the point of masochism. He's effortlessly erudite about anything from Picasso to Palestine, but merrily describes himself as "thick as shit". He projects wisdom and optimism, with a jovial chuckle that convinces you all's right with the world, yet he's suffered from depression and anxiety. You can tell some subjects are still painful from the way he chain-smokes Chesterfields and tugs at a fleecy white beard, which suggests both Karl Marx and Santa Claus. His life has been fascinating but not easy.

"When people say they like my records," he says, "I think, 'If you knew how hard it was to make those records you'd be even more impressed than you are!'"



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt-Ellidge's childhood was both blessed and cursed. His parents, a music-loving industrial psychologist and a freelance journalist, were unusually cosmopolitan for post-war Britain. They took young Robert to continental Europe, schooled him in modernism and jazz, and ran a nurturing, bohemian household: one of Robert's four half-siblings, Julian Glover, is an actor who currently plays Grand Maester Pycelle in Game Of Thrones. "I was never a rebel against my parents," says Wyatt. "I liked them very much."

When Wyatt was 10, however, his father developed multiple sclerosis (he died eight years later), and his enforced retirement meant they needed lodgers to keep their ramshackle Kent house going. Life at a rural grammar school didn't suit him at all. "I know people where education was their introduction to the outside world," he says, thoughtfully puffing away. "Perhaps for me it was a narrowing down. I got cultural claustrophobia."

He dropped out at 16, the same year his parents emigrated, leaving him to fend for himself with various menial jobs, a failed attempt at painting and "dossing" around Europe, where he got "a real sense of what it's like being a nobody, an alien, and how you're treated." He found his calling playing drums in what he quaintly calls "beat groups".

"There was no great weight of historical precedent saying what it should be like," he says. "To that extent I think all British rock music is punk music: fools rushing in where angels fear to tread."

In 1966, after a short spell fronting The Wilde Flowers, Wyatt formed Soft Machine, who became popular with the "heads" thanks to their endless jazz-rock odysseys. Alfie once described them as "too much happening all at once for too long."

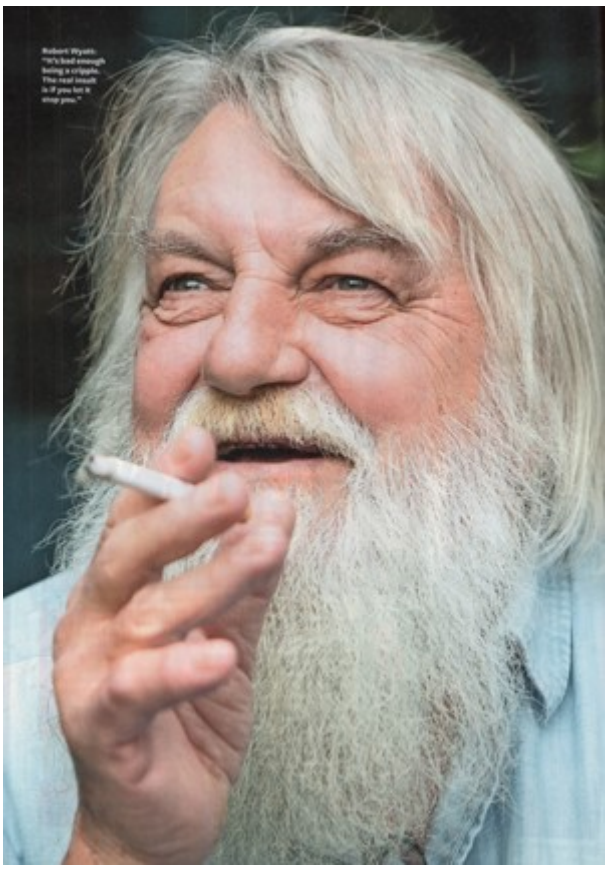
"Yeah," Wyatt laughs. "Well, it's a phase to go through. I did get carried away on drums. Every time I had an idea I would play it. I've regretted that since. The drummers I listen to now are the ones that leave space."

Soft Machine toured America with The Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1968. Wyatt was drinking with Hendrix when the news broke that Martin Luther King had been assassinated. "We were playing in Newark and Hendrix dedicated a song to 'a friend of mine who just died,'" he says, his voice trembling. "I'm getting tearful now. It was just... fucking hell. They were such a kind bunch. What I liked about Hendrix was he was almost embarrassed by his apparently effortless superiority."

Wyatt, for his part, was embarrassed by the term "progressive rock". His journey as a music fan, from the avant-garde to pop, was the reverse of most prog-rockers'. "My discovery wasn't the obscure or the esoteric. It was the joy of playing for dancers and the idea of music as a service, like a restaurant or a caff. So I always found the *[progressive*] idea presumptuous. And also there was something vaguely racist in the idea that what Little Richard and Chuck Berry did was rock'n'roll but then it progresses. Well, actually, fuck you! "

Soft Machine burned through members fast and in 1971 it was Wyatt's turn to get ousted by bandmates who hated both his singing and his drinking. He admits he was "getting right out of order" but at the time he was traumatised. "It's amazing how it recurs in nightmares," he says heavily. "It was that sense of having given my youth to developing this thing and then being rejected by it. It was emotionally shattering."

Wyatt formed a new band, Matching Mole, whose name was a barbed pun on the French translation of Soft Machine, and his love life was looking up. After breaking up with Caroline Coon, the artist and activist who inspired Matching Mole's beautiful O Caroline, he met Alfie. Born Alfreda Benge in Nazi-occupied Poland in 1940, she was an artist and aspiring film-maker. Wyatt soon realised she was "the one".



> Zoom

In 1972, the film director Nic Roeg invited Alfie to Venice to work on the thriller Don't Look Now, which co-starred her old friend Julie Christie. Alfie bought Wyatt a toyshop keyboard so that he could compose while she was on set. He thought the Venice songs, inspired by his new love, would comprise the third Matching Mole album but Robert Wyatt has led a life of two halves and the first half was about to come to a violent end.

On 1 June, 1973, Robert and Alfie went to a party at a West London flat. Wyatt proceeded to get drunk and fall four storeys while trying to climb down a drainpipe. He can remember hearing a distant scream after he hit the ground. Later, a friend told him, "That was you." Submerged by painkillers for

six weeks, Wyatt awoke to learn that he'd broken his 12th vertebra, paralysing him from the waist down, at the age of 28. After three months, he was finally allowed out of bed and began playing the piano in the visitors' room, fleshing out the Venice songs to match the visions in his head. "It's a landscape," he says. "There are rivers spreading out into deltas, there's mountainous bits, there's rough terrain. It's embarrassingly literal."

Wyatt agrees that it's strange that this injury set him back less than being fired from Soft Machine. "Alfie says, 'Robert lives in denial and who'd be so cruel as to knock him out of it?'" he laughs. "There was a pride element. It's bad enough being a cripple. The real insult is if you let it stop you." (Later, Alfie tells me, "I think the one thing missing from the book is the incredible aggravation of being paraplegic. Because he doesn't make a fuss about it, nobody notices.")

On a pragmatic level, Wyatt needed to earn a living and he couldn't drum any more so he became a reluctant singer-songwriter. His Rock Bottom album was released in 1974, on Robert and Alfie's wedding day. Produced by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, it's an extraordinary piece of work: dreamlike, playful and deeply moving. Mason also produced Wyatt's first detour into the Top 40, a strangely intense version of the Monkees hit I'm A Believer.

Wyatt is a passionate pop fan who watches The Voice and tried to book Hear'Say for his 2001 Meltdown festival. He wanted to make a point with I'm A Believer.

"I was very uncomfortable with having fans who said, Tour music is so much better than all that banal pop music.' It sounds like a socialist thing to say but pop music is the music of the people. It's the folk music of the industrial age. If you don't respect popular culture you don't respect people, in which case your political opinion is of no great value."



Wyatt has always been well-loved.

Friends such as Pink Floyd, Christie and her boyfriend Warren Beatty all offered financial support after the accident, and many more have collaborated with him over the years, including Brian Eno. "Old male elephants who get rejected after a tussle can sometimes form little gangs of their own," says Wyatt. "That's what rogue elephant means. I think me and Brian became rogue elephants. I love him, I really do. He's all heart."

Never a prog-rocker in spirit, Wyatt immediately loved punk ("funny and terrific") and 2-Tone ("much more interestingly politically than anything in the "60s"), and found a new generation of people to work with, including The Raincoats and Scritti Politti. In 1982, Madness producer Clive Langer asked Elvis Costello to help him out on a song with Wyatt in mind and Costello came up with Shipbuilding, a heartbreaking vignette of a working-class community affected by the Falklands War.

When the demo tape landed on Wyatt's doormat, he responded with his usual humility. "I thought, 'What is it they think I do that makes them think I could do this?'" His low-key vocal, which made Langer burst into tears, made Shipbuilding one of the most tender protest songs ever recorded.

Politics consumed Wyatt during the '80s. He guested on benefit singles such as Working Week's Venceremos (We Will Win) and the SWAPO Singers' The Wind Of Change, composed the soundtrack for an animal rights documentary, joined Labour-supporting musicians collective Red Wedge, and recorded an LP of protest songs, Nothing Can Stop Us. On Matching Mole's Gloria Gloom he had asked, "How long can I pretend that music's more relevant than fighting for a socialist world?" Now he had his answer.

"I had been a leftist musician but I became a singing leftie," he says. Having once believed

that art was "the point of life", he now fretted that it was a decadent luxury. "I think I'm going to be worrying about this for the rest of my life," he says. "At worst, I think it's decorative and the more of a sewer society is, the more gloriously distracting the art has to be. That's part of what human inventiveness is - trying to make something lovely out of shit. The world as compost."
He also joined the Communist Party of Great Britain when it was at its lowest ebb. He takes time to explain his complicated reasons for signing up to a lost cause. "It's partly nostalgic affection for the loser," he says. "I couldn't have joined it when they thought they were winning. I wanted to give these ideas a decent burial at least." When the young modernisers drifted towards what became New Labour, Wyatt stuck with the old guard. "I thought, I'd rather sink in your ship than stay afloat in theirs."'



5 ROBERT WYATT
AT LAST I AM FREE
Single (1980)
Wyatt greeted the '80s with a slew of politicised cover versions, including this haunting reading of Chic's veiled protest song.

6 ROBERT WYATT
SHIPBUILDING
Single (1982)
Elvis Costello and Clive Langer created an anti-war song like no other. Wyatt's empathy and intimacy made it a heart-shaking masterpiece.

7 ROBERT WYATT
THE AGE OF SELF
Old Rottenhat (1985)
"They say the working class is dead, we're all consumers now." Wyatt's communist principles ring out clear and strong on this tense riposte to Thatcherism.

8 ROBERT WYATT
HEAPS OF SHEEP
Shleep (1997)
Insomnia drove Wyatt to despair but he explored it with typical good humour on this warm and playful collaboration with Brian Eno.

9 BJÖRK
SUBMARINE
Medúlla (2004)
Björk travelled to Louth to fully immerse herself in Wyattworld and join forces on this disorientating collage of multi-tracked voices.

10 ROBERT WYATT
JUST AS YOU ARE
Comicopera (2007)
Co-written with Alfie, a touching, country-inspired duet with Monica Vasconcelos about a long, imperfect marriage.

This period ended with 1991's Dondestan, whose title track called for a Palestinian state. It's a subject about which he is still fiercely passionate, at the cost of some "desolately sad" rifts with Jewish friends. "Nobody's called me anti-Jewish that I know of but there is a sense that you cannot support these people." Years later, a music snob ruined a night in his local pub by playing Dondestan on the digital jukebox and christened this sonic trolling "Wyatting". The staunchly anti-elitist Wyatt was dismayed. "I would never do that. It would be so rude! How could you enjoy it? It would cut you off from the communal thing."

After Dondestan and his move from London to Louth, Wyatt was floored by the most devastating depression of his life. "I had something of a nervous breakdown," he says quietly. "And for once Alfie said, 'Look, I can't deal with this. I've done everything I can for you.' It was really bad. I went quite mad from sleep deprivation."

With help from an NHS counsellor, he threw himself into a new album, 1997's Shleep, like it was a life raft. It was the first of a remarkable trilogy, followed by 2003's Mercury-nominated Cuckooland and 2007's Comicopera. With the help of Alfie and friends such as Eno, David Gilmour, Paul Weller, Roxy Music's Phil Manzanera and saxophonist Gilad Atzmon, he created the most wondrous music of his life. Then he gave up the alcohol that had given him the courage to make it.

"I think the recklessness that had fired me in the past began to dwindle," he explains. "Alcohol took me back to my reckless youth and the further away I was from *real* reckless youth, the more alcohol I needed just to get that level of chutzpah." So he quit. He hasn't made a record since.

While Wyatt poses for Q's photographer, I talk with Alfie. She discusses his new compilation ("If I did a Robert collection, it would be all the things that irritated everybody"), his politics ("He's a good communist; he doesn't underestimate people's intelligence") and his creative lull since Comicopera. "It's strange because I've never known him not to be fussing over a tune in his head. It's as if he's got it all out."

Does Wyatt think he'll ever make another album?

"No," he says. "I'm just amazed that at last I got records made that I can really live with, that don't make me wince."

Having played just one solo concert, 40 years ago, he thinks stage fright and logistics would make a Kate Bush-like concert resurrection even more unlikely. "It would be undoable," he shudders. "It's appalling, just the thought of it."



So Wyatt's career, apart from his occasional guest appearances, seems to be over. This is very sad for his fans, but less so for the man who never expected to achieve as much as he has.

"I can't believe my luck that with my attitude problem I nevertheless got all that done," he says, tugging his beard. "The extraordinary thing is that at the age where rock musicians are meant to die of a drug overdose I almost died." That was a trajectory he could've imagined. What he could not imagine was the life that he ended up living, wheelchair-bound. It was a "marathon" he couldn't think of enduring. "I'm a sprinter."

Dorian Lynskey
Portraits : Michael Clement

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Robert Wyatt at 70: happy birthday, Old Rottenhat! - The Guardian - 27 January 2015



Marcus O'Dair

The Guardian

"It'll probably knock 10 years off your life, 20 if you smoke." This is how Robert Wyatt recalls his consultant's brusque verdict after he fell from a fourth-storey window in 1973 and, at the age of 28, found himself paralysed from the waist down.

Wyatt does smoke – or rather, he is forever giving up: he must have quit five times or more in the time it took me to write his biography. And yet, on Wednesday, he turns 70 – and, apart from the fact that he still has to keep one leg extended parallel to the floor, after breaking an ankle in the summer, he seems to be in rude health.

No one else occupies Wyatt's cultural co-ordinates. There's the sheer diversity of musicians he's worked with: Brian Eno and Paul Weller, David Gilmour and Jerry Dammers, but also contemporary artists including Björk and Hot Chip and such avant-garde jazz luminaries as Evan Parker and the late Charlie Haden.

In non-musical terms, too, he sits in the centre of a singular Venn diagram: Marxism, paraplegia, alcoholism (or, as he prefers, dipsomania – though he's been sober for the best part of a decade) and the surrealist pseudoscience of 'pataphysics make up just some of the interlocking circles. Not least for his 1974 solo effort Rock Bottom, which still regularly features in lists of the greatest albums ever made, it has been an extraordinary career, and an extraordinary life. I interviewed a lot of musicians for the book, but there were also cameo roles for Julie Christie, Jean Shrimpton, William Burroughs, Richard Branson, Robert Graves and Georges Braque. I don't think the last two, in particular, appear in many popular music biographies.

Eno puts Wyatt in his top two musicians, while Weller names him his favourite ever collaborator. Alexis Taylor from Hot Chip is such a fan that he wrote the press release for Wyatt's most recent solo album, 2007's Comicopera. What's particularly remarkable is that Wyatt has achieved all this while scoring only two top-40 hits, neither of which he wrote himself. There was I'm A Believer, written by Neil Diamond and made famous by the Monkees, in 1974, and then Shipbuilding, written for Wyatt by Elvis Costello and the producer Clive Langer, and released in the wake of the Falklands war. He hasn't played a headline gig since 1974. And to state that his singing is a long way from the traditional

"good voice" is putting it mildly: reedy, forlorn and high-pitched, even if years of smoking have shifted his range downwards, Wyatt himself says he sounds like "Jimmy Sommerville on Valium".



Prolific and prodigiously talented ... Robert Wyatt. Photograph: Richard Saker

Unlike so many of his contemporaries, Wyatt hasn't drifted to the right politically as he has got older. Also unusually, he has found himself perhaps more recognised than ever in the past decade and a half. Like David Bowie, Patti Smith and Ornette Coleman, he has curated a Meltdown festival in that period. He has also been nominated for a Mercury prize and guest-edited the Today programme on Radio 4. Although he dropped out of school before completing his A levels, Wyatt boasts two honorary doctorates.

Although he describes his own creative gestation period as elephantine – 18 months rather than nine – Wyatt has in fact amassed a sizable body of work over his 50-year career. There are four studio albums with Soft Machine, two with his subsequent band, Matching Mole, and, depending on how you count them, about 10 albums as a solo artist, not to mention any number of live albums and radio sessions.

He has also been a prolific collaborator, which is why we decided to accompany the book with a compilation album, also entitled Different Every Time. Wyatt says now that he has retired, although he has made a guest appearance on at least one record that has still to be released. But even if there are no more albums under his own name, we can be grateful for the catalogue already amassed – and for the fact that, back in 1973, the consultant got it wrong. Many happy returns, Old Rottenhat.

Marcus O'Dair is the author of Different Every Time: the Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt, published by Serpent's Tail

>> L'interview sur le site de The Guardian

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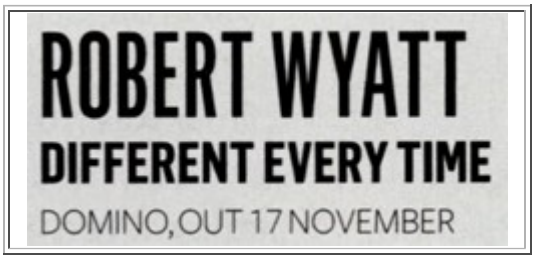
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Soft Touch - Q N°341 - December 2014







Anyone embarking on a survey of post-war bohemia wouldn't have to look too hard among the hand-thrown pots and off-grid esoterica before they came across the distinctive figure of Robert Wyatt. The Mallorca commune of poet Robert Graves; the pastoral prog hideouts of the Canterbury Scene; London's psychedelic hotspots; the greatcoated milieu of '80s political radicalism: the 69-year-old former drummer of Soft Machine has been present at them all. A fall from a window in 1973 left him in a wheelchair, diverting his career further into here-be-dragons territory. He emerged as a powerfully idiosyncratic and influential solo artist, becoming a totemic figure to avant-gardists and art-rockers, sought out by Brian Eno or Elvis Costello, Björk or Hot Chip.

This compilation is divided into two parts: the first is an overview of his work from Soft Machine through to his last solo album, 2007's Comicopera, while the second documents his extensive collaborations. It might not be the very best place for the uninitiated to start - first track, Moon In June, from Soft Machine's 1970 album Third, is a tremendous burst of lusty experimentation but 19 minutes of labyrinthine jazz-prog doesn't exactly roll out the welcome mat. It's also a shame there's not more from Wyatt's 1974 masterpiece Rock Bottom, represented here only by a mercurial live version of A Last Straw - but everything included adds another piece to Wyatt's singular puzzle.


Q Review REISSUES

SOFT TOUCH

Singular art-rock outlier's career compiled.

ROBERT WYATT

HIS WONDERFUL VOICE HAS AN ANCIENT, FOLKLORIC QUALITY TO IT.

His wonderful voice has an ancient, folkloric quality to it, something of the hedgerow and the milk-pail. It can also be intimately conversational, or eerily abstract. On 1972's Signed Curtain - recorded with Matching Mole, the band he formed after leaving Soft Machine - he sings "this is the chorus or perhaps it's a bridge/Or just another part of the song I'm singing". It's not just arch whimsy: it underlines his voice's status as an instrument in its own right. His appeal to Björk, who worked with him on Medulla's Submarine, or Hot Chip, who join him on We're Looking For A Lot Of Love, is clear: that flickering, ethereal timbre could, at times, be lifted from Aphex Twin or Boards Of Canada's unsettling sonic arsenal.



Despite the unmistakably English vowels, though, Wyatt often takes a global perspective - Brazilian jazz singer Monica Vasconcelos appears on Comicopera's love song Just As You Are, for example - while a jazz-born ability as an interpreter of other people's work is also shown brilliantly on his stately spiritual treatment of Chic's At Last I Am Free. Once a member of the Communist Party, his political convictions chime out too. "They say the working class is dead/We're all consumers now," he sings on the mournful pattering of 1985's The Age Of Self, and he appears alongside Tracey Thorn on Working Week's

Venceremos (We Will Win), a none-more-'8Os track drawing attention to the political situation in Chile. Most famously, there's Shipbuilding, written by Elvis Costello and Clive Langer. It's a protest song of rare humanity, largely due to the ominous stormy thump of the bass bearing down heavily on Wyatt's frail vocal.



> Zoom

In the middle of Moon In June, Wyatt smacks down the fourth wall and addresses the listener across the years. Music-making, he sings, is "Background noise for people scheming, seducing, revolting and teaching." That's the pragmatic view, but as this compilation once more confirms, Wyatt demands, deserves and ultimately abundantly repays, the fullest attention.

Victoria Segal



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End Of An Ear + Robert Wyatt - Album By Album - Uncut N° 211 - December 2014



ROBERT WYATT calls a halt to his musical career. " We're just getting through the day now..."



SOME SAD NEWS this month - Robert Wyatt has revealed to *Uncut* that "after 50 years in the saddle" he won't be making any more music. Wyatt puts the decision down to declining health and a desire not to tarnish his legacy, but he admits he feels "a bit weird" about stopping.

"I thought, train drivers retire when they're 65, so I will, as well," Wyatt, now 69, tells *Uncut*. "I've stopped, I don't really know why actually. And I do feel a bit... weird about it, but life is physically much harder for me and for [*Wyatt 's wife*] Alfie. It's getting a bit scary, and I can't sit around, messing around, thinking up new tunes in that, really. We're just getting through the day now, and trying to have bits of fun when we can. "At the moment, I've broken my foot and I'm sitting on a bed with my foot up. It happens, these things."

Though he hasn't released a solo album since 2007's acclaimed *Comicopera*, Wyatt has remained active with collaborations, most notably on *For The Ghosts Within*, a 2010 album he made with Ros Stephen and Gilad Atzmon.

"I've had 50 years in the saddle, I've enjoyed them, and I've enjoyed the stuff I did towards the end, in this century, at least as much as anything I've done before. So I don't feel like I've done nothing... I always felt, in quite an old-fashioned way, you've got to do stuff. Not just have a nice time out, but actually get stuff down, accumulate material. I was

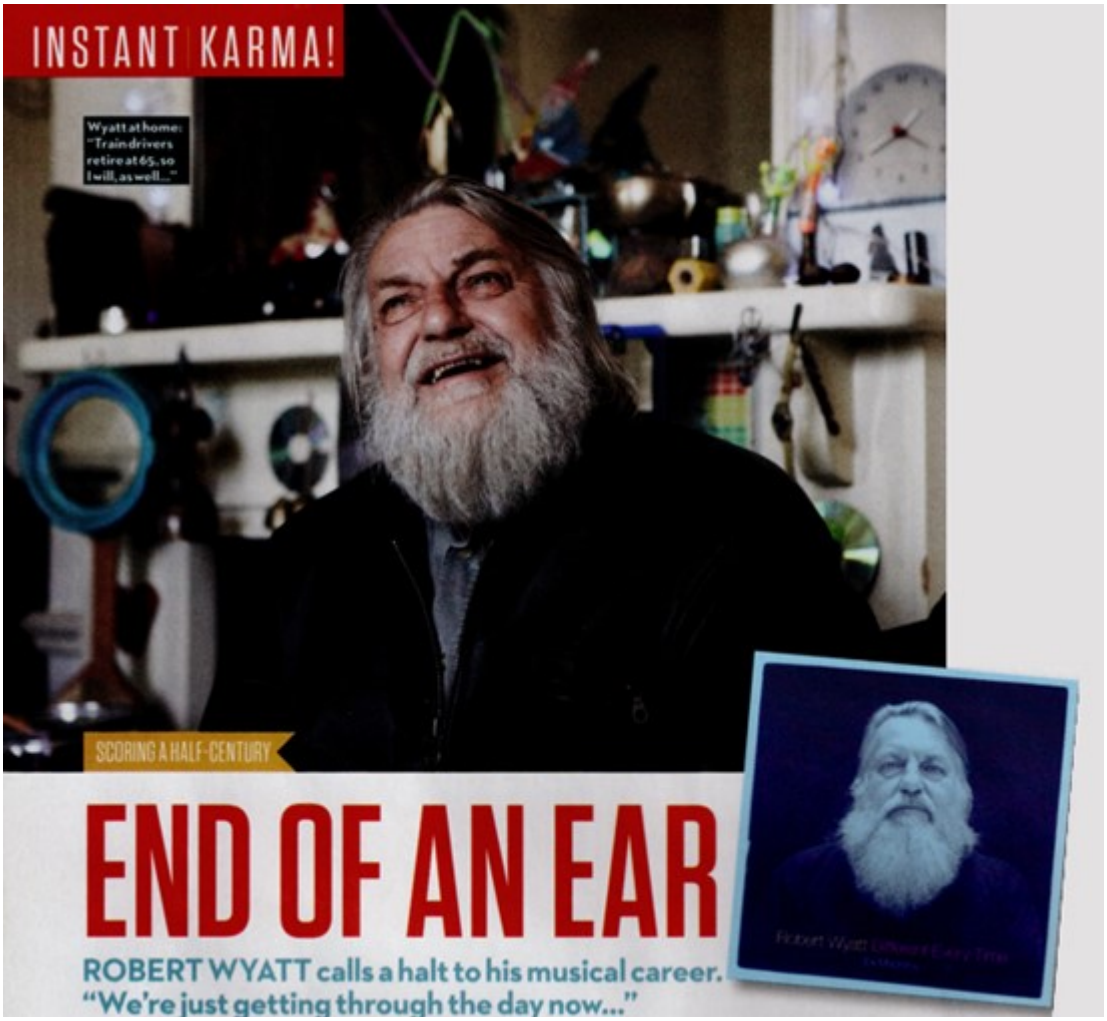
only 28 when I broke my back, [*so*] I didn't know if I would still be able to work in a decade's time. So I did want to work and get stuff done. I've always had that, 'til very recently."

The news makes the release of compilation *Different Every Time* later this month more poignant - it seems the two-disc set now truly spans his entire career, from drumming in Soft Machine and Matching Mole, to his solo work after being paralysed from the waist down in 1973. The second disc features Wyatt's collaborations with the likes of Björk, Nick Mason, Hot Chip and Phil Manzanera.

"I'm very surprised I'm in this state, it isn't a state I imagined being in, but I nevertheless here I am," Wyatt says. "I never really got the hang of [*music*] as a job, to be honest. I just sort of kept trying to do stuff. But faculties are failing, and I don't want to churn out stuff that isn't quite right."

Wyatt is keen to stress that he has "stopped" rather than retired, and now plans to focus even more on his interest and involvement in left-wing politics. "I would say I've stopped, it's a better word than retired. Fifty years in the saddle, it's not nothing. It's completely unplanned, my life, and it's just reached this particular point. Other things have happened - I'm more taken up by politics, to be honest, than music at the moment. Music tags along behind it. There is a pride in [stopping], I don't want it to go off. Performers say leave the stage five minutes before they want you to leave, rather than five minutes after!"

TOM PINNOCK





SINCE SHOOTING FROM sleepy Canterbury to the clubs of London's '6os psychedelic underground as drummer and occasional vocalist with Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt has remained one of England's most idiosyncratic, thoughtful and fascinating artists. "When you're working I as a musician, you're in a dream world that's beyond rational explanation," he tells us, outlining a unique approach that has over the years seen him feted and assisted by rock royalty, including various members of Pink Floyd and Roxy Music. "So what comes out comes out." Though it sadly looks unlikely that we'll see any new music from him (see page 8), Wyatt is delighted to talk us through his varied catalogue -from Soft Machine and Matching Mole to his acclaimed solo records - with his customary wry humility still very much intact.
"I'm an old man now... But it's very, very nice for me that you take an interest and you think other people want to read about this!"

TOM PINNOCK



Wyatt in furs: Soft Machine in 1968, with Kevin Ayers, left, and Mike Ratledge, right

SOFT MACHINE
THE SOFT MACHINE

PROBE/BARCLAY, 1968



The toast of London's underground scene, Wyatt, bassist and vocalist Kevin Ayers and organist Mike Ratledge bashed out their debut while on tour with Hendrix in the US.

Robert Wyatt: Although we were a rock band, all the music we'd listened to live had been jazz, so the idea of extending songs with improvisations seemed totally natural to us. The original intention was to get together and do Kevin's songs. He was the only one in the group who wrote proper songs – I think he could easily have been up there, in terms of success, with people like Donovan and maybe Ray Davies. But he got landed with us and waylaid a bit, though I think he enjoyed the ride for a year or so. We weren't really a recording band until we made an obligatory first record in the middle of a tour of the United States. It was just done in quite a rush. How long did it take to record? About as long as it sounds. We had a few weeks off in New York, around when we toured with Hendrix, before getting back on the road again, so we went into the studio and did a live gig, really. It's pretty ramshackle for a debut record by an aspiring band. Our management had offered us a record producer who had guaranteed hits, he'd done The Yardbirds and Donovan. But they said, he will decide what tunes you'll do and how you'll do them. We thought, well, what's the fun in that? So we turned that down. After that the management were really pissed off with us, so they just let us carry on in our own way.

SOFT MACHINE
THIRD

CBS, 1970



Wyatt's last album with the increasingly complex Soft Machine featured his first foray into solo work, the 20-minute, multi-part "Moon In June".

Kevin had left at the end of '68 to do what he should have been doing, and Mike surfaced as the voice of the group as he developed his organ playing skills. Mike or [*bassist*] Hugh Hopper had started writing pieces more directly influenced by the jazz of the day. The difference was that we were incredibly loud, and there's no way I know how to play drums like a jazz musician and be heard at that volume, so what came to my rescue was watching Keith Moon and thinking, 'That's the way, yeah.' Just fucking get on with it! We experimented with tape on *Third*, there were people we knew who'd been doing tape stuff – Terry Riley, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and Delia Derbyshire. We took it in and used it in our context. Artists and musicians are just trying to stave off boredom really, so we tried to do stuff that interested us, whatever it was. I'd been working on my own when I could. 'Cause I can't write music, it's easier to just play it yourself rather than showing it to someone else. On "Moon In June", I used all the keyboards that happened to be in the studio, to try to keep it varied. It was my attempt to do an extended piece that wasn't just about improvisation, but was composed all the way through. So it was a bit of a mountain climb for me, but it turned out to be useful for later on in my life. It was the start of what I would later do.

MATCHING MOLE
MATCHING MOLE

CBS, 1972



The first of two LPs that year from Wyatt's new "democratic" group, originally featuring his Wilde Flowers bandmate Dave Sinclair on keys, guitarist Phil Miller and bassist Bill MacCormick.

I thought I could carry on as the drummer in Soft Machine and as a vocalist and songwriter doing stuff in recording studios, but I think I'd become too drunk and irresponsible to work with, frankly. What was humiliating was that I sort of agreed with them. But I look back on it and think it sort of worked out. I didn't go straight to solo stuff after Soft Machine as I didn't think you could have a full life's work just writing songs. I thought, working life as a musician is being in a group. I thought it was the law, you know, all young men must go into a beat group. Just like 10 years before that, young men had to go into the army, then they cancelled national service and invented beat groups, so they could carry on the tradition of sending young men over to conquer Hamburg. With Matching Mole, there was an attempt to be a democratic unit, though I did take it over with my bloody Mellotron at the end of things. Phil Miller wrote lovely pieces, but they weren't completed, so they were perfect vehicles as launch pads for improvisation. Dave Sinclair was uncomfortable, he just wanted to do songs, but I really liked what he did on organ, I thought he was lovely on it. So he only lasted for that record. I thought it was a good band, but we had no money, and the business was ramshackle. It was very hard to develop, we really were poor.



Wyatt's desk job: recording his solo work in 1974

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



ROBERT WYATT
ROCK BOTTOM

VIRGIN, 1974

After 1970's jammy, uneven *The End Of An Ear* came Wyatt's solo debut proper, and the first he made after being paralysed when drunkenly falling from a third-storey window. Features a host of guests, including Mike Oldfield, Hugh Hopper, Ivor Cutler and Mongezi Feza.

People say, it must have been awful when you broke your back, and I say, not really. It just set me on another more fruitful path. Alfie [*Benge, now Wyatt's wife*] and I hadn't been together long when she got this job of going to Venice and making *Don't Look Now*. I was still a biped and tagged along. They hired a flat on Giudecca, one of the non-touristy islands, and plonked me there. Alfie got me a little keyboard to keep me busy whilst they were. Then I had my accident, and for the first time ever I had to spend a lot of time just sitting back and going over ideas in my head as opposed to desperately trying to make something happen immediately. So I was primed by the time I came out of hospital. It's partly therapy in a way, because when people become disabled they can become very internalised and feel cut off from the world. I'm not brave, I just pretend it's not happening and think about something else. So that's what *Rock Bottom* enabled me to do. [Richard] Branson came up to the hospital, bless him, and said if you want to make a record when you come out you can record one for us, so that gave me a specific thing to come out and do. I thought because I don't have to work in a group I can ask different musicians to be on each track. It was a kind of freedom I hadn't thought of before. Nick Mason was great as producer, he was very funny. I've always got on with other drummers, we can speak to each other really. We were quite used to our lowly place in the hierarchy. Alfie thought the music I'd made before was too congested, so she got me to listen to things like *Astral Weeks* by Van Morrison and said look how he leaves the space. So *Astral Weeks* was an influence on the sheer spaciness of *Rock Bottom*. I wanted to make the most enjoyable, rich records I could make, and if that means me doing something then I'll do it, but if I think someone else could do it instead, I'll get them to do it. My voice is one of many, it's got some things it can do and other things it can't do. So just find somebody else who can, no problem. I say no problem, but when you have to find people who have their own character, their own way of doing things, but also don't mind having a go at your own stuff, that does narrow it down.

ROBERT WYATT
RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD

VIRGIN, 1975



***Rock Bottom*'s jazzier, more playful follow-up, with Wyatt co-writing with numerous collaborators including Phil Manzanera, Bill MacCormick and Fred Frith.**

Rather like with the second Matching Mole one, with the second solo one I felt I should hand it over to the other musicians, I thought it'd be fairer. So there's a long piece on it, "Muddy Mouth", which is basically Fred Frith's piano piece which I really loved, so I put words to that. It's lighter than *Rock Bottom* because I was hanging about with people in a studio and having a laugh. It just sort of lightens you up a bit, takes the weight off things. And unexpected accidents of a delightful nature can happen. On "Team Spirit", George Khan, a wonderful tenor player, does the solo, and I got Brian Eno in, who hates jazz, to try and fuck it up as it went on. George plays so beautifully, and Eno's definitely trying to drown it out with computer noise and echo, but it's a battle that neither of them wins, so you get the best of both worlds. I think it's amazing, that bit. Laurie Allen [*on drums*] is pure jazz on that, and Bill MacCormick is very nimble, so aside from me just playing the piano chords, my favourite bit is the bit I'm not really on at all. It makes me laugh every time I hear it.



ROBERT WYATT
NOTHING CAN STOP US

ROUGH TRADE, 1982



A compilation of Wyatt's politically aware Rough Trade singles, including the Elvis Costello-written "Shipbuilding" and a cover of Chic's "At Last I Am Free".

Virgin put me on a retainer so I could write, but I thought, 'This is dishonorable as I'm not sure I'm ever going to come up with anything, I'm just accumulating a debt.' So I said, "Look, I'm knocking it on the head." Branson was really cross and upset. It took us over a decade to pay off the debts, which is why Virgin wouldn't let me make an LP for anybody else during that time. It wasn't 'til Rough Trade said let's just do some singles that we found a way out of that. During that time, I found that there's more authentic and real things happening in politics than in music. While rock musicians were posing as victims of the establishment, there were people out there who really were victims, in Africa or South America, so I thought I would celebrate those people. Things like that overwhelm me, in terms of what goes on in my head, more than, you know, thinking up a nice little tune or something. I didn't plan to put these on an LP, they're quite topical and throwaway. Around that time, Swell Maps, Ben Watt and Scritti Politti came along and asked me to do a couple of things for them. Very nice people. So that surprised me – apparently, I had been heard! I certainly didn't feel guilty when I was charged as being a rock dinosaur, because I hadn't been successful enough to be a rock dinosaur. My records are all quite scruffy, so I already had a lot in common with punk when it came along.

ROBERT WYATT
SHLEEP

HANNIBAL, 1997



After releasing two more albums sparsely recorded on his own, and battling depression in the early '90s, Wyatt returns with a host of guests, and a new lyrical collaborator...

People said to me, why don't you get other musicians on your records? And I said, well, I can't afford to hire them. And they said, just ask people, there'd be people who wouldn't mind playing. I didn't really know who, but people turned up, old friends like Brian Eno and some wonderful new ones like Paul Weller. And then the trombonist Annie Whitehead and saxophonist Evan Parker came along. It was a treat. It became a sort of imaginary group in the end. I was recording at Phil Manzanera's studio. That was a breakthrough. I'd always been clockwatching, as it's very expensive, recording. But Phil said, "Look, we'll set a price for it, I still did have ideas, you know, and I wanted to try stuff out. But the key thing that came up in the last of my solo things was that Alfie – who had already been doing my covers – started writing these poems and verses. She'd always done that, but I started using them because I found I came up with much more music than I had words. And her words were a revelation for me, they completely expanded what I could do. Singing words from outside that weren't standards by other people, but nor were they devices I had come to rely on, they had a completely different approach. That became my group, me and Alfie, and without that I don't really know what I'd have done.

ROBERT WYATT
CUCKOOLAND

HANNIBAL, 2003



Wyatt's surprising rejuvenation continued with this synth-led LP, inspired by jazz drumming and the finest painters.

Billy Higgins came up with the avant-garde in the '50s, but he always liked to swing. His beat got lighter and lighter – there were some gossamer-light cymbal things he was doing, just a gentle swing. So that gave me ideas. Plus you could do a lot only using the top of the kit, without the use of legs. So I started using cymbals again. I know a lot of rock people thought, 'Well, there's the problem right there, Robert, if you cut out all those jazzy cymbals, and just had a rock steady beat there, you'd have sold loads more.' And I thought, yeah, but of what? It was lovely that Dave Gilmour was on this. I always think of Floyd as real aristocrats of music, not just a group who are up for a blowing session here and there. Paul Weller put the idea in my head, and David was up for it. But I was a bit embarrassed, 'cause at one point he said, "Robert, what's that chord?" And I had to say, "I

then just do it as long as it takes", which was a fantastically generous thing to do. I found that don't know, David!" He was lovely, a gentleman. I was interested in becoming a painter long

before I was interested in becoming a musician. If you think of painters like Turner, his work is awash with smoky effects which you can only just see things through, and I was impressed by that. I do a bit of that myself on *Cuckooland*.

ROBERT WYATT
COMICOPERA

DOMINO, 2007



Perhaps his final solo album, this three-part epic moves from hazy introspection to political disenchantment, ending in a celebratory, foreign-language finale.

I didn't start with a concept, I start doing stuff I want to do and look at the shape of it afterwards. And having got these bits and pieces, I thought I'd put them into three sections. So it did end up as a concept but it wasn't devised as one. This is the album of mine that I least wince to when I'm playing it back. I managed to remember what made me wince about my previous records, and studiously avoid doing those particular things, including not burying the voice – thank you, David [*Gilmour*], for that advice! I think it helped that the musicians I worked with, although there were some new ones, had really got the hang of what I'm on about. Jamie Johnson, who was starting out when I first worked with him on *Shleep*, had become a very experienced and skilled engineer and was very quick and very funny too. Dave Sinclair was on this too – it was lovely, a link with the past. I still think it's terribly difficult to focus political ideas into songs. What's on my mind will come through in the lyrics, but that doesn't suddenly make me a frontline activist. I salute people like Billy Bragg, who has put himself out there to talk to people, but I haven't done that. There's nothing in my music that reaches out to people who wouldn't normally listen to it. It's like dreaming about politics, in a way.

Wyatt's ***Different Every Time*** *compilation is out on Nov 17; the biography of the same name is out now*

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I'm A Believer - Jazzwise - Issue 191 - November 2014

I'm A Believer



Throughout Robert Wyatt's prolific, often profound, musical life, a deep love of jazz has been the conduit between his own celebrated jazz-rock legacy with Soft Machine and Matching Mole, his individualistic, highly imaginative solo career and the deep world of jazz music and musicians he has become involved with along the way. Inspired by its inherently rebellious, left-leaning nature, jazz has also fuelled his political beliefs as well as his music's magpie-like eclecticism, while his distinctly melancholic, engagingly forlorn vocal style has won him a legion of die-hard fans outside the mainstream. Marcus O'Dair's newly published book - *Different Every Time: the Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt* - explores his jazz inspirations and continues here as Wyatt reveals how jazz has been with him from childhood onwards

I first interviewed Robert Wyatt for a national newspaper podcast in 2008. When I later contacted him to ask whether he would let me write his biography, he left a voicemail in response. He agreed to the proposal, he said, for two reasons. *I hadn't asked* whether Syd Barrett was mad. And I had asked about jazz. Wyatt is not a jazz musician in any strict sense of the term, and his influences stretch from pop (sometimes mischievously mainstream) to South American folk. Yet jazz, in particular, has been fundamental to his half-century of making music.

Born in Bristol in 1945, Wyatt was introduced to the music of Fats Waller and Duke Ellington by his dad, George; an interest in more contemporary, avant-garde artists, meanwhile, came via his older half-brother, Mark. He was soon bashing away on pots and pans, before moving onto a full trap kit. Through the poet Robert Graves, a family friend,

Wyatt met Ronnie Scott in the early 1960s, and was soon visiting the saxophonist's eponymous club in Soho to watch the likes of Charles Mingus and Sonny Rollins. "As an atheist," he declares, of Mingus, Rollins and their ilk, "they're the nearest to Gods I've ever had."

This secular reverence has informed almost Wyatt's entire output, even as far back as 1963. That was the year he emerged, playing Beatnik-style jazz with the Daevid Allen Trio (fronted by Allen, who had previously lodged with Wyatt's family in Kent, and featuring former schoolmate Hugh Hopper on bass). The Wilde Flowers, with whom Wyatt played during the mid-1960s alongside the likes of singer-songwriter Kevin Ayers, were a very different act, aimed more squarely at the dancefloor. But even then, Nat Adderley and Herbie Hancock numbers began to creep in alongside the Small Faces and Kinks covers.

It was from 1966 that Wyatt began to achieve prominence, as drummer and sometimes vocalist with Soft Machine -alongside Allen, Ayers, and keyboard virtuoso Mike Ratledge (another former schoolmate). The band originally played soul-infused psychedelia but, during gigs, their 'freak-out' sections drew on jazz. As Soft Machine's line-up evolved, as it did at an unusually fast pace, the jazz element increased: there was a power trio era, featuring Hugh Hopper and reminiscent of Tony Williams, John McLaughlin and Larry Young in Lifetime. Then the band borrowed Keith Tippett's horn section, including alto saxophone and saxello player Elton Dean, and moved further towards jazz-rock fusion. Soon Soft Machine became entirely instrumental. Wyatt - odd one out due to his continuing interest in song, as well as in alcohol - departed in 1971, but not before the group had supported the likes of Roland Kirk, Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis.

Wyatt's next band, Matching Mole, began with a definite move towards song, but jazz arrived with the recruitment of New Zealander Dave MacRae, whose rippling electric piano was reminiscent of Joe Zawinul. In his various extracurricular projects, meanwhile, Wyatt was already playing with a number of other jazz musicians, including Lol Coxhill, Keith Tippett and South African exiles including Mongezi Feza.

Paraplegic from 1973, when he fell from a fourth-floor window, Wyatt was obliged to musically reinvent himself. No longer able operate hi-hat or bass drum, he morphed from singing drummer into a singer who also played keyboards, percussion and, more recently, trumpet and cornet too. *Rock Bottom*, released in 1974 and regularly cited as one of the finest albums of all time, showcased this new mix of jazz - Gary Windo on tenor sax and bass clarinet, Mongezi Feza on trumpet - with the dour surrealism of Scottish poet Ivor Cutler.

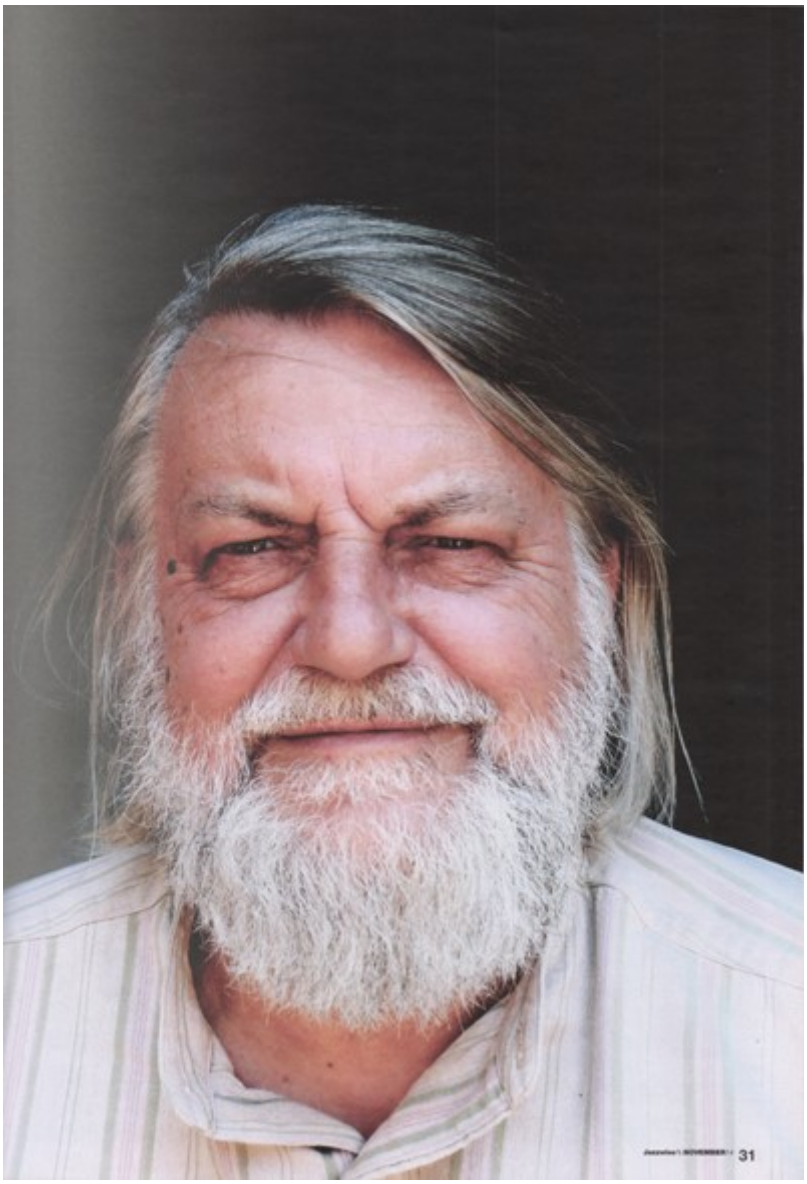
A similar mix has been evident on Wyatt's subsequent releases: 1975's *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* featured Mongezi Feza and saxophonist George Khan, and a Charlie Haden number appeared in the track list. *Nothing Can Stop Us*, released in 1982, featured bassists Peter Ind and Ernest Mothle and trumpeter Harry Beckett - and featured a version of 'Strange Fruit'. *Cukooland*, which was shortlisted for the Mercury prize in 2004, found Robert namechecking Parisian jazz haunts Le Chat qui Peche and Rue St Benoit (home of Club St Germain) and covering Antônio Carlos Jobim. *Comicopera*, released in 2007, featured bossa nova vocalist Monica Vasconcelos and steelpan/vibraphone player Orphy Robinson. And so on.



"Just being there, being on stage with Charlie Haden, with Carla (Bley) there to hold my hand and surrounded by these brilliant youngsters – Shabaka Hutchings and Jason Yarde and so on – being allowed there. It was a transcendental moment."

'Shipbuilding', a top 40 hit in the wake of the Falklands War, drew on jazz too. Clive Langer, who co-wrote the tune with Elvis Costello, had been inspired by Wyatt's version of 'Strange Fruit'. "'Shipbuilding' is an odd song in that sense," explains the producer. "Pop people think it's jazz, and jazz people think it's pop."

A number of jazz musicians have been particularly important to Wyatt over the years: players of the calibre of Evan Parker, Annie Whitehead and Gilad Atzmon appear more than once in his discography. As a guest musician, meanwhile, Wyatt has worked on several occasions with composer/pianist Carla Bley and composer/trumpeter Mike Mantler. Along the way, he has worked with everyone from Steve Beresford to Larry Stabbins. As recently as 2012, to the enduring delight of drummer Clive Deamer, Wyatt popped up on the Get The Blessing track 'American Meccano'.



> Zoom

Much of Wyatt's favourite jazz is as old as he is. "In 1945, the year I was born, Miles Davis made his first record with Charlie Parker," he reflects. "As much as I love everything beforehand in jazz, from Duke Ellington back to Louis Armstrong, I feel that these are my people; this is where I come in. And it *is*, actually, where I come in. Almost to the month, from the moment I'm born, stuff happens. I can trace my life through it, and I still do."

As a fan, however, Wyatt's tastes extend both forwards and backwards from that point. He is currently going through "a period of almost weepy nostalgia" for British trad: Acker Bilk, Ken Colyer, even Temperance Seven. Yet he also keeps up with newer artists. When he curated the Southbank Centre's prestigious Meltdown festival, back in 2001, Wyatt's line-up included Orphy Robinson and Matthew Shipp as well as John Surman, Jack DeJohnette,

Keith Tippett and the veteran Max Roach. "That was virtually one of the last gigs he did," recalls Wyatt of the bebop pioneer, "and he was obviously really struggling. Once he sat at the drumkit he was all right - but even then, he was struggling. The poignancy of that, for me, cannot be overestimated."

Jazz has been important in Wyatt's relationship with his wife and creative partner Alfreda Benge, better known as Alfie, who worked behind the bar at Ronnie Scott's while an art student in the 1960s. Jazz was also important in Wyatt's politicisation: records such as Roach's *We Insist!*, as well as *Freedom Suite* by Sonny Rollins, 'Fables of Faubus' by Charles Mingus and 'Alabama' by John Coltrane, paved the way for his membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The "quite unnecessary" death of Mongezi Feza in 1975 was also a key turning point in this regard.

Musicians who shared his love of jazz and his politics - those who represent "the voice of the oppressed, to put it crudely" - have always had a particular appeal. One such was the late Charlie Haden, who told me in 2010 that Wyatt was "a musical genius". The feeling was mutual: the previous year, Wyatt overcame his severe stage fright to join Haden (and other musicians including Carla Bley) for an extremely rare guest appearance at the Royal Festival Hall.



projects, meanwhile, Wyatt was already playing with a number of other jazz musicians, including Lol Coxhill, Keith Tippett and South African exiles including Mongezi Feza.

Paraplegic from 1973, when he fell from a fourth-floor window, Wyatt was obliged to musically reinvent himself. No longer able operate hi-hat or bass drum, he morphed from singing drummer into a singer who also played keyboards, percussion and, more recently, trumpet and cornet too. *Rock Bottom*, released in 1974 and regularly cited as one of the finest albums of all time, showcased this new mix of jazz – Gary Windo on tenor sax and bass clarinet, Mongezi Feza on trumpet – with the dour surrealism of Scottish poet Ivor Cutler.

A similar mix has been evident on Wyatt's subsequent releases: 1975's *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* featured Mongezi Feza and saxophonist George Khan, and a Charlie Haden number appeared in the track list. *Nothing Can Stop Us*, released in 1982, featured bassists Peter Ind and Ernest Mothle and trumpeter Harry Beckett – and featured a version of 'Strange Fruit'. *Cukooland*, which was shortlisted for the Mercury prize in 2004, found Robert namechecking Parisian jazz haunts Le Chat qui Peche and Rue St Benoit (home of Club St Germain) and covering Antônio Carlos Jobim. *Comicopera*, released in 2007, featured bossa nova vocalist Monica Vasconcelos and steelpan/vibraphone player Orphy Robinson. And so on.

'Shipbuilding', a top 40 hit in the wake of the Falklands War, drew on jazz too. Clive Langer, who co-wrote the tune with Elvis Costello, had been inspired by Wyatt's version of 'Strange Fruit'. "'Shipbuilding' is an odd song in that sense," explains the producer. "Pop people think it's jazz, and jazz people think it's pop."

A number of jazz musicians have been particularly important to Wyatt over the years: players of the calibre of Evan Parker, Annie Whitehead and Gilad Atzmon appear more than once in his discography. As a guest musician, meanwhile, Wyatt has worked on several occasions with composer/pianist Carla Bley and composer/trumpeter Mike Mantler. Along the way, he has worked with everyone from Steve Beresford to Larry Stabbins. As recently as 2012, to the enduring delight of drummer Clive Deamer, Wyatt popped up on the Get The Blessing track 'American Meccano'.

Much of Wyatt's favourite jazz is as old as he is. "In 1945, the year I was born, Miles Davis made his first record with Charlie Parker," he reflects. "As much as I love everything beforehand in jazz, from Duke Ellington back to Louis Armstrong, I feel that these are my people; this is where I come in. And it *is*, actually, where I come in. Almost to the month, from the moment I'm born, stuff happens. I can trace my life through it, and I still do."

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Robert Wyatt mid-1960s; Topless drumming with Soft Machine 1967; Soft Machine with Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge and Robert Wyatt 1969; Soft Machine with L-to-R Elton Dean, Wyatt, Hugh Hopper and Mike Ratledge in 1970. Photos courtesy Robert Wyatt and Cuneiform Records

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"Just being there, being on stage with Charlie Haden, with Carla there to hold my hand and surrounded by these brilliant youngsters - Shabaka Hutchings and Jason Yarde and so on - that was a moment in heaven for me," recalls Wyatt. "I have no idea what it sounded like, whether it was any good. But I don't care. Just being there, being allowed

there. It was a transcendental moment." Haden, says Wyatt, is one of his "undying allegiances", a phrase he also applies to Roland Kirk and Archie Shepp. So it was a particular delight to join the latter (alongside Anthony Braxton, Arvo Part and Tim Berners-Lee) to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Liege in 2009.

Jazz has also been an important influence on Wyatt's own musical voice, not least in his use of percussion following the accident, when he has tended to use either the flick of brushes on snare or a vocal 'tch' to replace the sound he can no longer make by stepping on the hi-hat pedal. "If you ever watch Billy Higgins on film," says Wyatt of the man who played on the original recordings of both Herbie Hancock's 'Watermelon Man' and Lee Morgan's The Sidewinder', "the older he got, the less he compressed the hi-hat to make it snap - to the point where, in fact, the two hi-hat cymbals don't seem to be hitting each other at all. He just seems to press his foot down and they squash air. When people think of drum technique," Wyatt goes on, "they think of people playing very, very fast, or clever little tricks. But these touches of pure class, craftsmanship, these are the elements of drumming I've got interested in as a paraplegic, because they're not about the full kit. They're closing in on a much more close, intimate side of drumming."

As a singer, meanwhile, Wyatt talks of the influence of horn players - and of the vocalese of Mimi Perrin and Les Double Six, who set lyrics to horn melodies previously played by artists such as John Coltrane. "I've often said I'm more influenced by the way Coltrane plays ballads than by the way anybody sings, and people might think it's a bit unlikely," says Wyatt. "But if you hear Mimi Perrin sing 'Naima' you'll think, 'Oh yeah, I can see why'. It's not how I think anyone else should sing, but how / should sing."



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This jazz influence, which has bubbled away for 50 years, came most fully to the surface on Wyatt's most recent album, *For The Ghosts Within* – credited to a trio of Wyatt, Gilad Atzmon and violinist Ros Stephen from Tango Siempre and Sigamos String Quartet. Here Wyatt tackled several standards head-on, his approach sometimes unorthodox – he whistled '"Round Midnight' and hummed 'In a Sentimental Mood' – but utterly sincere.

Having loved the modernism of bebop and the potency and politics of free jazz, and been delighted to join younger musicians such as Shabaka Hutchings and Jason Yarde for the Liberation Music Orchestra gig, Wyatt has more recently warmed to the vocal jazz of an earlier era. "Somebody said to me a few years ago," he recalls, "'How would you like to end up?' I said, 'Sitting in a piano bar playing old standards'. I can't, but I seem to be drifting that way on my cornet. I just sit in my front room, just finding the notes, accompanying a really slow singer, to accommodate my technique – like Nat 'King' Cole and Julie London. When all the other brain cells have died off, I hope to be left with enough to do that. And I'll die happy."

Different Every Time: the Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt **by Marcus O'Dair will be published by Serpent's Tail on 30 October. An accompanying compilation album, also entitled *Different Every Time*, will be released by Domino Records on 17 November. Robert is also appearing in conversation with Marcus at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London on 23 November, as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival.** ■

From top:
Robert And Alfreda Benge; Robert with Gilad Atzmon and Ros Stephen 2010; At the fair 2010; Receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Liege with L-to-R Tim Berners-Lee, Dutch musician Dick Annegarn, Anthony Braxton and Archie Shepp 2009. Photos courtesy Robert Wyatt

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Soundtrack of my life: Robert Wyatt - The Guardian - 26 October 2014

The Guardian

Interview

Soundtrack of my life: Robert Wyatt

Interview by Jude Rogers

The prog-rock pioneer on his love of jazz, falsetto singing, the thrill of meeting Bulgarian folk singers and why Pharrell Williams is as good as any of the 60s soul greats

Robert Wyatt was born in Bristol in 1945 to a psychologist father and BBC producer mother. At 21, he joined prog pioneers Soft Machine; at 25 formed his own group, Matching Mole; at 29, he fell out of a fourth-floor window while drunk, at a party, permanently paralysing himself from the waist down. His solo career proper began a year later, with 1974's dreamlike *Rock Bottom*. He has had two top 40 hits: a cover of the Monkees' I'm a Believer, which he fought to sing in his wheelchair on *Top of the Pops,* and the song Elvis Costello wrote for him, Shipbuilding, which became Rough Trade's first top 40 hit. In recent years, he has collaborated with Björk, Paul Weller, Hot Chip and Brian Eno, continuing a relationship that began when he co-wrote 1/1, the piano track on Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*. Wyatt's authorised biography, *Different Every Time*, is published next week by Serpent's Tail, and a compilation of the same name follows in November on Domino. He celebrates his 70th birthday in January.



Singer/musician Robert Wyatt at his home in Louth. Photograph: Fabio De Paola



THE SONG THAT PROVES I'M NO REBEL

Every Day I Have the Blues by Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Williams with Count Basie (1956)

In the 50s, young people were rebelling against their mothers and fathers. Not me. I inherited a love of mainstream jazz from my father, whose youth was rudely interrupted by having to serve in the second world war. He loved Fats Waller, Duke Ellington and Count Basie's band, who I thought were wonderful. His arrangements weren't complicated or sophisticated, because most of his band couldn't read music, but their simplicity was fantastic. This is from the first EP I bought, four tracks on a piece of plastic. I still think this is a knockout duet.



THE TRACK THAT MADE ME REALISE IT WAS FINE TO SING HIGH

Ooo Baby Baby by the Miracles (1965)

I used to have a very high range, but not any more. That's the cigs and so on. But in the 1960s, even someone as quintessentially English as me loved Motown. I'd play this in breaks between rehearsals with Soft Machine, probably on my Dansette. I found it nice to hear songs and how they were done. Also, there were so many testosterone-fuelled voices back then, mainly because of the influence of the blues, but Smokey's light falsetto was different. It came from a line of African-American music that's gentler, but just as crucial – from the tenderness of doo-wop, and from gospel, to which so many things return. I have so little testosterone that I'm verging on being a different sex altogether. Ooo Baby Baby's got no guitars in it either and I love that. English rock is all about beer and guitars. That's why I don't really fit in. I'm much more wine and keyboards.



THE ONE THAT REMINDS ME OF MY WIFE

You Are the Sunshine of My Life by Stevie Wonder (1974)

The reason that I stayed with Alfie [his wife, English artist Alfreda Benge] more than one night was that there wasn't enough time to play her record collection! We celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary this year, so I suppose we'll have to divorce when it finally runs out. When we were first together, we both loved Sly and the Family Stone's *Stand!* – it had a bit of Hendrix about it, but mixed more with jazz. It was so fantastically inventive. Then came our love of Stevie Wonder, who was such a wonderful musician from day one. So many blind musicians are, because education at specialist schools in America is often more advanced and sophisticated. Also, those musicians are just concentrating on sound. This song reminds me of mine and Alfie's honeymoon and the feeling you get when you finally find a friend. It makes you realise how lonely you were before.



THE RECORD THAT TURNED ME INTO A FANBOY

Ostana Kera, Kleto Sirache by Kalinka Vulcheva (1974)

In the 70s, being a communist basically meant going to charity fundraisers all the time, for striking Turkish miners, striking British miners, anti-apartheid. I remember going to one for [socialist newspaper] the *Morning Star*, and you'd get records at these things from eastern Europe and Cuba. My favourites were by a Bulgarian folk singer called Kalinka Vulcheva, who had an extraordinary voice and style of singing, very beautiful and unusual. I met her after the cold war, at a folk concert in Whitby, quite by chance. Alfie spotted her – Robert! It's Kalinka Vulcheva! – and I shivered at the thrill of meeting her. She panicked when I asked for her autograph because she could only write it in Cyrillic. To hear things from across the world, and then meet the person with that voice, was quite something.



THE RECORD THAT MADE ME THINK ABOUT POSSIBILITIES IN MUSIC

Folk song arrangements by Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears (1948)

This was something in my dad's collection again, on a 78. A 78! His was of Scottish songs, from recordings Britten did with the tenor Peter Pears. The tunes in them are wonderful, but the chords sound so strange to us now – and that strangeness is what interested Britten. The thing about avant-garde musicians is they're not just about looking forward. They also look back, far beyond that which other people do. It's like looking at primitive paintings and trying to speak their language.



THE RECENT SONG THAT IS AS GOOD AS THE 60S CLASSICS

Happy by Pharrell Williams (2013)

When I'm not watching Russia Today, obviously, I'm watching pop TV. Even my son's embarrassed by the infantilism of my tastes, but there's some good stuff out there now. Pharrell Williams's Happy– that's absolutely fucking knockout. Williams is as good as any 60s soul singer and the song is brilliantly put together. It's a great drum track, and there are only four chords or so, but they're just enough. It's really subtly done, absolutely spot-on. My granddaughter tells me I should totally disapprove of that other song he did, though. With someone else... something lines?

Blurred Lines! That’s the one. Take it from me that I don’t like that one at all.

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Robert Wyatt Reflects on the Making of ’68 - Downbeat.com - April, 26 2014

ROBERT WYATT REFLECTS ON THE MAKING OF '68

In his almost 50-year career, British multi-instrumentalist Robert Wyatt has been involved in a stunning variety of projects. His recently unearthed album ’68 (Cuneiform Records) is a four-song psychedelic journey, recorded in 1968 in Hollywood and New York. Wyatt used studio space provided by guitarist Jimi Hendrix and multi-tracked his parts on piano, organ, bass, drums, percussion and vocals. One song, “Slow Walkin’ Talk,” even features Hendrix on bass.

Wyatt first came to prominence in the late ’60s on both sides of the pond as a founding member of the band Soft Machine. In 1968, the group opened for The Jimi Hendrix Experience for two extensive tours in the U.S., and later that year Wyatt began recording the demos and musical sketches that would eventually become ’68.

In the years that followed, half of the album surfaced; the other half, thought lost until recently, has been brought together with the other material for the first time and is now available on CD and limited-edition blue vinyl (a white vinyl version of the LP has sold out).

In recent years, Wyatt has worked with contemporaries like saxophonist Evan Parker, the Sigamos String Quartet, trombonist Annie Whitehead and the always mercurial Brian Eno. His 2010 collaboration with saxophonist Gilad Atzmon and violinist Ros Stephen, ... for the ghosts within’ (Domino), mixes standards and original songs, illustrating Wyatt’s idiosyncratic way of bringing different musical worlds together.

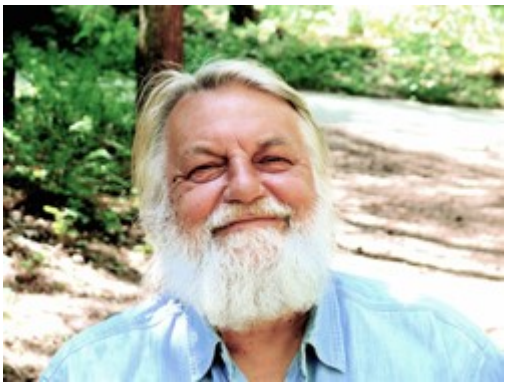
Wyatt recently spoke with DownBeat about his lifelong interest in jazz, as well as the creative period that produced his 1968 sessions.

DownBeat: In 1968, you went into studios in both Hollywood and New York City to record some demos, creating sketches that would eventually include two long suites. And now we have ’68.

Robert Wyatt: I don’t know about the importance exactly, but it certainly took me by surprise to hear it all. I hadn’t remembered how much I’d obviously worked over the material before it emerged in public in the following years. I’m relieved to find that, if anything, I erred on the side of spontaneity during these forgotten—by me, at least—workouts.

DB: What about working with Hendrix and his playing at these sessions?

RW: I do, unsurprisingly, remember that I was awestruck by Jimi Hendrix. We'd heard him play night after night on those long tours around North America. He was much more considerate of his audiences than his public image suggests, a real professional who wanted to make sure that even the listeners far at the back of the venue got their money's worth. In some ways, he was even too modest. For example, he didn't rate his own wonderful singing … "Somebody's got to do it" seemed to be his attitude! So shy, behind the pyrotechnics. But every single time he dropped the tempo to sing, "There's a red house over yonder," it brought tears to my eyes. I was thunderstruck when he dropped in on my demo sessions to lay down a bass line on a little blues track I was recording, Brian Hopper's "Slow Walkin' Talk." I was so grateful that my modest attempt was so magically enhanced by his presence. I should add: This has only become apparent thanks to the conscientious cleanup work on the original dusty acetates by Canadian Mike King.

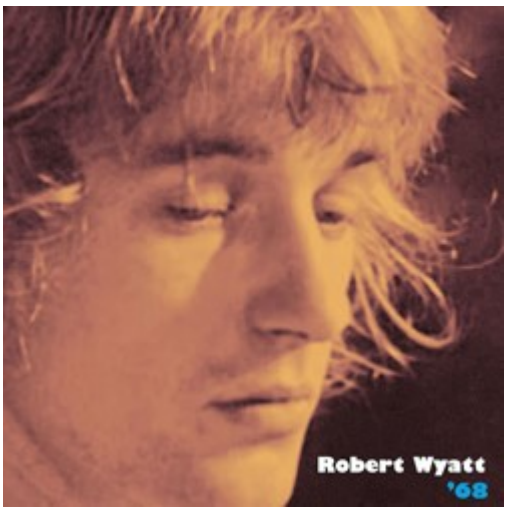


Multi-instrumentalist Robert Wyatt has an idiosyncratic way of bringing different musical worlds together. (Photo: Alfreda Benge)

DB: This was your first real solo outing.

RW: After the tour, I stayed with the Experience in Los Angeles, in a rented spread in Benedict Canyon. Hendrix had hired a studio complex nearby, with more capacity than he needed, so he invited me to use a spare studio to try things out. I had no group around by then, and used the opportunity to work alone on new material, multi-tracking on drums, voice and the instruments available—piano, organ and the occasional bass guitar. Hendrix, perhaps taking a break from his own work, dropped by one day to see how I was getting on, offering to play some bass on the thing I was working on. When I returned via New York back to England, those recordings got lost in the shuffle—only to have been unearthed recently. Steve Feigenbaum, who had already released some of my retrieved experiments on his adventurous Cuneiform label, took on the task of having those recordings cleaned up and released. So, '68: The title refers both to the recording date and to the funny coincidence that it was released last year, when I was, in fact, 68.

DB: How did Soft Machine approach the studio?



Robert Wyatt's '68 (Cuneiform) was recorded in Hollywood and New York and features Jimi Hendrix on one track

RW: The combined sound was not predetermined. It really did become a journey into uncharted territory. To this day, when I invite musicians to help me make a record, it's their uniqueness that I want. I still like to celebrate the special character of each participant. That may be why, even when I'm starting off with a simple pop-song framework, the result rarely fits into some preordained marketing category.

DB: In the July 11, 1968, issue of DownBeat, contributor and musician Mike Zwerin covered the emergence of Soft Machine with a band interview and story. What do you remember about Zwerin the writer?

RW: Michael Zwerin, who became a great friend, was an expat working for the International Herald Tribune in France, and had seen [Soft Machine] play in St. Tropez. He also took me to lunch with the wonderful saxophonist Paul Desmond, which was, for me, a mind-blowing occasion. I think Mike was maybe just relieved to meet a British rock musician who loved jazz.

DB: John Coltrane was a big influence then, and still is.

RW: The year Soft Machine was launched was the year John Coltrane died [1967]. Saint John, as far as I'm concerned. And I'm reminded of what happens in the forest when a really giant tree falls. Suddenly, there's a clear patch in the undergrowth, where lots of little saplings busily take over the space, hurrying towards the sunlight: life reaffirming itself. But such giant trees don't spring up overnight. So our emergence into the sunlight was always haunted, in my mind, even in the irreverent gush of youth, by the incomparable beauty of what we had lost.

John Ephland

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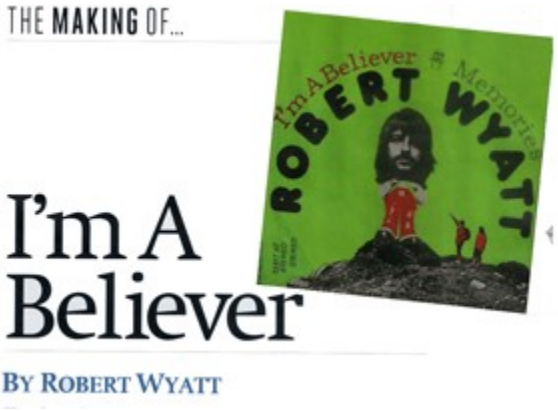
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The Making of... I'm A Believer - by Robert Wyatt - Uncut N° 201 - February 2014





How Canterbury's jazz adventurer turned out a hit Monkees cover, tiring out Pink Floyd's drummer and battling *Top Of The Pops* in the process... "The show side of pop? I can't be bothered!"

FROM THE PSYCH pop of early Soft Machine to the cerebral jazz-fusion of Matching Mole, by 1974 Robert Wyatt was intent on following his own singular muse. You would imagine, though, that even Wyatt's closest collaborators were shocked when he decided to release a cover of The Monkees' Neil-Diamond-penned "I'm A Believer" as his debut solo single. "No, Robert has always been most peculiar," laughs Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, who produced and played drums on the recording, "so nothing very much surprises me with him." Wyatt has been in a wheelchair since June 1, 1973, when he fell out of a window at a Maida Vale party. But rather than hindering him creatively, his paralysis allowed the drummer to put down his sticks and concentrate on singing, keyboards and songwriting, crafting the experimental, pastoral *Rock Bottom*, produced by Mason and featuring Fred Frith and Richard Sinclair. Far from starting a more commercial era in his career, though, things didn't run smoothly after the release of "I'm A Believer". An appearance on Top Of The Pops led to arguments with the show's producer and threats of a ban, then Virgin refused to release his follow-up single. The irrepressible Wyatt wouldn't have had it any other way, though - the only reservation he has about the track is his own "jigging about" when miming on TV. "If you're going to do it, do it properly, like Wilko Johnson... I just thought, note to self, don't do that anymore. "But we all learn from our mistakes," he says, mock-philosophically. "That well-known saying - well, not that well-known, because I made it up - 'we live and learn, but in that order, unfortunately.'"

TOM PINNOCK

ROBERT WYATT: I'd said in NME or *Melody Maker* that I really liked pop music - to me, it's the folk music of the industrial age, it's what people sing and dance to on a Saturday night. Simon Draper at Virgin, he saw this and he called my bluff, saying "Would you do a pop song?" I'd intended to do "Last Train To Clarksville", 'cause I like that, but I got

muddled up.

NICK MASON: I met Robert at UFO, then we did some gigs together - we certainly spent time together in New York when Soft Machine were touring with Hendrix. We were all holed up in the same hotel there in 1968. Then I produced *Rock Bottom*.

DAVE MACRAE: Was I surprised Robert was doing a Monkees song? Working with Robert, surprises were the norm! He has great mental energy always looking for new ways to express his ideas.



RICHARD SINCLAIR: In The Wilde Flowers with Robert, I remember doing things like Chuck Berry numbers, so "I'm A Believer" wasn't anything unusual from Robert. He always wanted to be a popular singing artist. Blond-haired quite good-looking, bouncing about - he liked that idea of entertainment, still does!

WYATT: One of my friends said, "But Robert, is it a great song?" In one exhibition, Peter Blake had a lot of paintings by monkeys, and somebody said to him, "Oh, they're not very good paintings." He said, "Well, they're pretty good for monkeys! " So for a Monkees song, it's a pretty good song. I don't feel the need for any hierarchies [*in music*] and there was a slight statement I was making about that. Not being in a group you can do one-off things, have a particular band for a particular thing. And for "I'm A Believer" it was the right group.

FRED FRITH: Robert used to show up at Henry Cow gigs and never failed to say nice things about us. Bill McCormick and Francis Monkman approached me about joining the reforming Matching Mole, but then Robert had his accident and that was the end of that. I visited him in hospital and we became close. Henry Cow had opened for Pink Floyd on numerous occasions between 1969 and 1972, so Nick and I had brushed shoulders. I'd had the unnerving experience of David Gilmour sitting at my feet checking me out while performing... I think Robert and I felt an affinity on many levels, musical, political and especially a shared enjoyment of life's absurdities.

WYATT: I did take the liberty of buggering around with the chords to "I'm A Believer". I played the piano part to Dave, and he played what I played him really. Dave's great like that, he can just sort of do anything. Amazing man.

MACRAE: Robert would certainly have indicated what he wanted played and I may have thrown in an idea. I think the arrangement was largely osmotic and a natural process.

Robert has great mental energy, and this energy acted as a catalyst in generating ideas from others involved.

WYATT: I wouldn't have thought the recording took any longer than a day, maybe another day for mixing? I would have thought I'd have done the vocals after, especially as there is some double-tracking there. I remember there was a bloke from Neil Diamond's publisher who hung around all the time, not doing anything at all, and I thought, "That's an easy job.' He just traipsed around after us. "I'm from the publishing company." Just helping himself to the freebies knocking about...

MASON: Producing Robert didn't entail an enormous amount of hard work. He really just wanted a bit of assistance in the technical side. But I certainly didn't need to tell him anything about how the music went.

WYATT: Nick made some crucial decisions. He's also funny. He used to come out of a take and you'd say, "That's great." And he'd say, "Yes, it does a bit, doesn't it." A very funny man!

MASON: We probably did the backing tracks in an hour or two. We spent longer putting Fred's stuff on than anything else, the violins and so on. That was all Fred's idea, we let him loose on it.

FRITH: There was the instrumental break which they didn't have a plan for, so I wrote the string arrangement on the spot and recorded it. Then I finished up with the lead guitar stuff, which was a first take, just doing whatever came to me in one pass of the song, using my 1958 Gibson 345, volume pedal and Electro Harmonix Big Muff distortion - that was pretty much all I had. I remember Nick being super-complimentary about it and me feeling like a million bucks!

WYATT: Nick used to make this joke about a "Pink Floyd tempo". We said, " We're going to do it a bit faster," and it was the first time he broke into a bit of a sweat!



Moving away from Rock Bottom: Robert Wyatt in 1974

MASON: It was probably faster than all the Pink Floyd tempos throughout history. We always kept to about 70bpm max. My doctor told me never to play faster than my pulse

rate... But I was a lot younger and fitter, then, so it was fine.

WYATT: It hit No 29, did it? I'm too posh to think about charts... It's not the chart side of pop music that interests me, it's the music itself and what it means to people. There's a competitive edge to charts which I find very tiresome. Most of the records I liked, jazz records, probably sold about 5,000 tops, ever. I remember somebody advising me, "DJs would rather have the chorus first, if they're going to play it on the radio." I thought, "Hang on, wait a minute, music should be about expanding your freedoms and possibilities, not about contracting them."

FRITH: My brother [*sociomusicologist and journalist*] Simon was impressed when we appeared on *Top Of The Pops*! But my memory of it is mostly around the sadness and futility. Seeing The Tremeloes buttoned into awkward-looking satin suits and looking sulky and resentful as their manager told them what to do, just observing the pop game from close up. We had to be in the studio at 11am on call for rehearsal. We were hustled onstage at about 5.40pm and when we were supposed to run it through, everyone disappeared - union-mandated break - so we never actually rehearsed or had any idea what was going on.

SINCLAIR:I'd been on with Caravan in 1970, playing"If ICould Do It All Over Again...". It was funny doing it for Robert and his pop tune!

MASON: Pink Floyd had been on TOTP in '67. It hardly changed from its first to last show as far as I remember. The same slightly uncomfortable dancing and some DJ shouting. We appeared with Robert two weeks running, and the second week they didn't want us to show the wheelchair.

WYATT: The producer said, "I'm embarrassed by that wheelchair, it's not entertaining, can you go and sit in this wicker-work thing?" I told him to fuck off, and he said, "You will never work on this programme again" - but as I just told you, I am too posh to care, frankly. I mean, I can't wheel a wicker chair, and I need to be able to get out quick in case the cops are coming, for fuck's sake!

FRITH: Richard Branson went out and bought an antique wheelchair, and insisted that if the BBC was going to object to Robert's wheelchair, they surely couldn't object to this beautiful antique version. The whole thing was irrational to the point of absurdity, but Richard insisted and won the day, making the BBC look extremely foolish in the process. And, of course, Ian MacDonald made sure there was a picture in the NME afterwards.

WYATT: We were on the cover of the *NME*, all in wheelchairs, it looked great - most of us who played at my Drury Lane concert are on there, Mongezi Feza's just behind Julie Tippetts, and Mike Oldfield is there. Nick Mason's face is stuck on. It was a real laugh doing it, although there were, I believe, people who wrote to the NME saying it was a bit tasteless... I can't think why. I thought it was a very good idea.



Robert Wyatt with producer
Nick Mason in CBS, London 1974

Especially on steps - wheelchairs on steps are dangerous, they're rubbish! There are people in wheelchairs and with other disabilities, who I know from letters and so on, who were very encouraged that far from my career as a musician being over, it actually got much stronger in terms of my contribution to it. But there were others who thought that I should have been more militant and proactive in terms of disability rights and so on. And I accept that, but the fact is I'm not a professional cripple, I'm still just a musician.

FRITH: I remember almost nothing about Drury Lane [*Sept 8,1974*], except being told which movie stars were in the audience. But listening to it now, I almost prefer the live version of "I'm A Believer"!

WYATT: It made a good encore, it was a good laugh. We had Julie Tippetts singing, Mike Oldfield and Fred fiddling away at guitars, two drummers, Laurie Allan and Nick Mason, and Hugh Hopper on bass. And Gary Windo and Mongezi Feza doing little horn parts. Dave Stewart was on the organ, and he came up with that live fairground coda, and it's funny, because it was Drury Lane which, of course, 150 years beforehand, had music exactly like that.

MASON: That was the only time the song was performed - unless you count The Monkees. I remember it being fun, there were a lot of people who were fond of Robert there. It was very much a one-off show, and they're difficult as they're always under-rehearsed, but it was fun.

WYATT: My follow-up single was "Yesterday Man", a song by Chris Andrews. We never pretended to be reggae but it was obviously influenced by that feel, which was very much the heartbeat of London around that time.

MASON: Did I produce that? Right. I can't remember what happened to that.

WYATT: The boss of Virgin said it was a bit "lugubrious". I thought, 'Oh, that sounds good,' and I looked in the dictionary, and it isn't. He wouldn't put it out. I wouldn't have minded, but I had to pay for the recording. If you sold millions like dear Mike Oldfield did, then you still got a lot of money, but if you only sold, what did I sell in the end? 50,000? I'd never get any of that back because of the cost of the second LP and so on... So I just said I can't do this stuff with Virgin anymore. So they said, "Well, you're not doing anything with anyone else." So I didn't for a while, I just went into politics. But there's no money in that, of course - it's mostly charity donations at the *Morning Star* bazaar, so that's not making a living, is it?

I like pop music, but that show side of it, I can't be bothered. When you get to a certain profile in pop, you're told what to do and you have to fit into a format, and that was completely alien to me. So I couldn't have been a pop musician, really. I started out playing pop songs, but we made our own rules and did what we liked. No-one was gonna be pushed around by any of these people.



FACT FILE

- **Recorded at:** CBS Studios, London
- **Released:** September 1974
- **Personnel:** Robert Wyatt (vocals), Fred Frith (guitar, violin), Richard Sinclair (bass), Dave MacRae (keyboards), Nick Mason (drums)
- **Label:** Virgin
- **UK chart position:** 29
- **US chart position:** N/A

June 1, 1973: Wyatt falls out of a window at a party and is paralysed **July 26, 1974:** His second album *Rock Bottom*, produced by Nick Mason, is released – sessions for the "I'm A Believer" single begin after **September 8, 1974:** Wyatt plays an all-star concert at London's Drury Lane Theatre **September 20, 1974:** Wyatt and those featured on the song, with Andy Summers on guitar, appear on *Top Of The Pops* **September 28, 1974:** "I'm A Believer" hits No 29 – Wyatt's highest ever chart position

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Robert Wyatt - Bomb N° 115 - Spring 2011

ROBERT WYATT by Shadia Mansour

Robert Wyatt's story is as compelling as the endlessly imaginative music that it yielded. Like that of the best songwriters, his work is a world unto itself, instantly recognizable, not least of all due to his high, quavering vocals and almost cubist approach to lyrics. Involved in every avant-garde of British music since the '60s—from prog rock to punk and postrock—Wyatt began his career as the drummer and vocalist for the Canterbury band Soft Machine, a seminal prog-rock outfit heavily into jazz time-signatures and modal drift. In 1973, Wyatt fell from the fourth-floor window of a friend's home, becoming paralyzed from the waist down. While recuperating, he began work on what would become *Rock Bottom*, a haunting album that relied heavily on keyboards and multitracked vocals as opposed to the full-band workouts of his earlier music. This is a sound that Wyatt has cultivated to this day, one composed of complex blends of pop, jazz, and world music in miniature, a la Brian Wilson's "pocket symphonies" even, though more immediate and British in their foregrounding of Wyatt's sophisticated and eccentric sensibility.



A better comparison might be to the concise, wildly surreal work of arty punk bands like the Swell Maps or The Homosexuals, groups with an obvious debt to Wyatt. By the early '80s, Wyatt had begun recording for the underground label Rough Trade, releasing a series of beautiful singles that reflected a newly found, fervent political awareness. In the '90s, he became something of a hero of underground musicians with the albums *Shleep* (1997) and *Dondestan* (*Revisited*) (1998) receiving rave reviews in publications like The *Wire* magazine and the sadly now-defunct *Popwatch*. His work since that time has been clever, restless, and typically brilliant. His latest record, *For the Ghosts Within*, a collaboration with Ros Stephen and Gilad Atzmon, is his first since 2007's politically charged *Comicopera*. Wyatt is an international

treasure whose work, though highly political, never ceases to function as musical art of the highest order. His wit, both sonic and lyrical, is boundless.

Recently, Domino Records reissued Wyatt's entire catalog, introducing his work, which sounds as current as it did the day it was recorded, to a new generation of ears. Wyatt and British-Palestinian rapper Shadia Mansour, who guests on *For the Ghosts Within*, communicated over email about the development of political consciousness, the song-writing process, and how an understanding of history informs one's creative practice.

————Clinton Krute

Robert Wyatt Good morning, Shadia. First, thank you for taking time out from what is probably a pretty active time in New York. I hope talking by email isn't going to make it too difficult.

Shadia Mansour Salam, Robert! Thank you for making this happen. Congratulations on your latest masterpiece *For the Ghosts Within*. It's an honor for me to be a part of it—it's inspirational to listen to. I want to apologize for my delayed response; I just got back from Detroit and did not want to answer your email in between shows.

You have been a loyal supporter of the Palestinian people and have expressed (metaphorically) your solid and principled stance against anything apartheid through your music for years. What has been more effective: music or activism?

RW I came to politics via my love of an earlier Black American idiom, jazz, which led me to the antiapartheid movement. I was born in 1945, when the relieved assumption was, I think, that Fascism, experienced as institutionalized racism, and the colonialist assumptions that depended on such hubristic delusions were totally discredited. But by the 1970s it became apparent to me—thanks, in part, to meeting Alfie, now my wife, who was much more politically inquisitive than I had been—that the victors of World War II, having neutered the competition, were at it again, inventing more devious rhetoric to cover their (our) traces. But I was always steeped in my parents' quasireligion: art. The rising tide of racism in England was simply ugly: racial pride in itself is natural enough, but the racist mindset promotes racially exclusive elites, and that's what gives me cultural claustrophobia. The art I loved most—jazz—was the fruit of the feverishly fertile cross-pollination of extremely diverse communities interacting in the United States. Racism was clearly a serious threat to the regenerating nourishment that the art I loved fed on. Not just jazz, of course. By then, there was no "either/or" about it: music and politics merged into one stream running through my life.

To me, a musician can be a witness, a more subjective one than a political activist. It's not for us to say what use we are to anybody, really. We can hope to encourage the wind behind the sails, but we are not the sailing ship. There are musicians and artists who generally feel disengaged from the human conflicts around them—some great ones, too. And there are those of us who feel impelled to participate in some way. Among painters, for example, Matisse worked his way through the rise of Fascism like a distant monk, his focus on living entirely through painting as an end in itself. By contrast, his friend Picasso got engaged publicly in the resistance, most famously with his painting commemorating the victims of the Fascist bombing of Guernica. I do think that Picasso's aesthetic activism was a valuable contribution to the war effort. But he had to live in exile from his beloved Spain to do it.

As for us musicians, it varies so much too, doesn't it? What we're trying to do in the first place… In my case, my exasperation about the cowardly evasiveness of our mainstream press drives me to think that if people in general knew more about history they'd be more likely to demand more honorable governments. I don't have any illusions about the effect of my making simple references to under-reported events and the people involved in them in my songs. For example, the sabotage of the democratically elected, secular government of Iran by the US and British governments in the early '50s, or the collusion by France, Britain, and the US in helping establish Israel's nuclear-weapons industry. If mainstream political writers aren't bothering to mention these things, who will? But I'm more convinced about your value in this respect than I am of my own.

I was raised in an "art is the fruit; the rest is the tree" sort of home. My father had been a pianist—he played Mozart, Debussy, adaptations of folk music, and 20th-century music, including Thomas Waller and Duke Ellington. But, professionally, he was what was called an industrial psychologist. My mother was a journalist and BBC producer/broadcaster. Most appealing to me as a boy were their art books: from Cézanne and Manet to Braque, Picasso, Chagall, and Paul Klee. And, crucially, I was stunned by what I saw at museums and art galleries bringing us non-European artifacts from Mexico, the Pacific, Near-and-Far-Eastern Asia—the world beyond.



Photo by Alfie Wyatt.

There's a nice quote from Auden, something like "We are all recruits of our time," and although in a decent world, I think I could happily live my life like a pleasure-seeking child, I find that the ugliness of so much reality puts my personal search for pure beauty in a rather inadequate light. So I reach out to others not because I think I can change reality but simply to find comfort out there, the warmth of fellowship in adversity. It sounds a bit pretentious, perhaps, but it's very simple, really: I do what I do because that's all I can do.

I'm interested in the bridges you cross, not only by being bilingual, but also, for example, between rap culture, Black Roots, and your Arabic-British life, the inspiration of Lauryn Hill [a former member of the Fugees] and Palestinian survivors. Was it the sound or the political implications that hit you first?

SM If I'm totally honest, I'd have to say I was primarily driven by politics, especially with what had gone on and was going on in Palestine and the rest of the Arab world. I got into music at an early age, singing at the peaceful rallies I attended, protesting against the daily abuse of the Palestinian population. And I got into Arabic hip-hop around the same time that 9/11 happened. That event changed the face of what "Arab identity" represented and gave birth to what I describe as a newly dignified Arab. A new form of resistance and

determination was blossoming in the West, and I was part of the early days of that change. I found discipline in Public Enemy's music, their form of resistance was intellectual, and they managed to speak in a universal language. Hip-hop was a shelter that became a community and which has now become almost a religion in its own right.

RW BBC Four did an open-university documentary series about schools in Syria, a country with communities of Palestinian refugees. In one of two episodes focusing on Palestinian schoolchildren, a couple of girls were fighting for the right to rap to cautious older Palestinians. How easy is it for you to reassure more traditional Arabs of your relevance?

SM I would want them to be reassured of the importance of equality and respect between males and females, first and foremost. How can we ask for a free Palestine if we are not free from each other? Having said that, Arabic hip-hop is still young and is a lot to digest for the more conservative figures in our community. With reason and patience we can get to that point in which we can give each other a chance to use our voices in a productive and effective way without holding ourselves back.

RW Rap liberated the language used in songs—there's been Black American song for years, but rap allowed street vernacular, as well as the real concerns of "the street," a big new space. Do you find that by extending song into "speaksong" your Arab vocabulary is somehow liberated?

SM Two of the most crucial elements in hip-hop, in my opinion, are what you are saying and how are you saying it. Arabic hip-hop has played a huge role in bringing the Arab vocabulary down from its high horse and more level with ordinary people who want certain things to be "told how it is." I think we have also liberated ourselves in the process.

RW Is there any tradition within Arab poetry or song/music that connects with rap? Rap in Arabic sounds so natural.

SM Absolutely, I learned about the beauty of our culture mostly through song and poetry. If you take a look back at sixth-century pre-Islamic poetry, you will notice many familiar elements which hip-hop shares today: resistance, pride, passion, knowledge. Our roots are a part of who we are, even though we are not always aware of it.

What is your approach to writing lyrics, Robert?

RW Two ways: if the tune comes first, I try to imagine words that seem to belong to it. Occasionally, I have some words that seem to need music. I have no reliable approaches or methods for this. It just has to come to me; I work on the assumption that if I do what feels right instinctively, there'll be an organic coherence to it. I don't work from plans, theories, manifestos. They're retrospective. There is no explanatory equivalent to making what I do.

You have achieved something rather rare, a joined-up working life; your vocal talent matches your message organically. Many artists struggle with this: the (apparently contradictory?) pursuits of trying to be a true witness of real life "out there" and the impulse to make magic through the freedom of the imagination to invent. Do you consciously struggle to reconcile the truth (which can be ugly) and beauty?

SM Anyone who is not actually living under the circumstances they preach about will be taken less seriously than if they were. I have borne witness to the truth and have tasted the realities of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. You only need to cross an Israeli checkpoint to know what sheer humiliation feels like, or wake up to house demolitions in Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, or visit children in youth centers in camps without electricity or clean water. But more importantly, truth is truth, no matter who spreads it. The bottom line is, it's not about us artists, it's not about where we are from, it's bigger than all of us…It's the message and the impact.

RW Tell me about your performance with Lowkey for the Norman Finkelstein events. How did the writer and activist find you?

SM Norman Finkelstein's support of my and Lowkey's work has only motivated us more. We were invited to perform alongside him for the launch of his book *This Time We Went Too Far* in New York last May. It was a very diverse crowd, but nonetheless, very welcoming. I have to be honest: I never thought for one minute that I'd ever see Mr. Finkelstein waving his hands side to side and rocking out to Arabic hip-hop.

How did you discover Arabic hip-hop and what inspired you to add it to the song "Where Are They Now"?

RW It was Gilad Atzmon [an Israeli-born reed-playing musician; antiracist and anti-Zionist, now a Londoner], who for a while had been working on the little ditty "Dondestan" (an imaginary state whose name comes from the Spanish for "where are they/you") that I'd done on an eponymous solo record.

His inspired idea to ask you to bring it to life gives *For the Ghosts Within* an extra dimension, especially following Tali Atzmon's [Gilad's wife] title track. We talk about rap, but what terrific singing you both come up with. Not for the first time, I have a lot to thank Gilad for, including his work on my previous couple of records.

SM How was it to work with Gilad?

RW Lovely. *For the Ghosts Within* is an extension of a project that Ros Stephen and Gilad had worked on before, based on an old Charlie Parker with strings record. They wanted to extend the format with voices. It's their project and I'm simply a guest. I'm very happy to have been asked! Gilad keeps me on my toes—he's a fast worker and doesn't sit around wondering what's next. It's great for me because, not doing live work, I miss that sense of urgency. He seems to live every second to the hilt, but unlike some action men, he's constantly updating his philosophical take on things.

SM How do you feel about the current state of the music industry today (dating back to when you began)? Do you think artists and musicians are starting to speak out more? Which direction do you see it going?

RW I don't know enough about the state of the music industry to speak much about it. There'll always be music, and people listening to it, so I don't fret too much about it! I've only remained connected to the "industry" via a few specific individuals who work in the independant part of it, who for some reason empathize with what I'm up to and try and make it possible for me to operate. (Without them I'd be sunk.) My lack of academic refinement means I'm not really eligible for most arts funding, so I've had to make a living via the music marketplace; but my dealings have been with these few sympathetic people—the "industry" itself has always seemed some distant, foreign thing.

Inevitably I get to hear recent music, but I don't search for it. My record collection hasn't changed a lot in 50 years. It's more a museum than a fashion display. I'm basically fueled by the ghosts within… I really admire a young Palestinian couple known as Tashweesh: Ruanne Abou-Rahme (film) and Basel Abbas (soundscapes). I witnessed them not long ago; Ruanne's shifting, semiabstract images work perfectly with Basel's multilayered sound effects. And I like the American guitarist Mary Halvorson. There's a wittiness in her approach that reminds me of my jazz hero, Thelonious Monk.

SM The birth of hip-hop was hugely inspired by jazz. Do you think there is still that bond between the two?

RW My missus, Alfie, suggested to me that the blues and such folk idioms are closer ancestors of rap than jazz, although you could say jazz liberated notes like rap liberates words—the way they can tumble free of their formal structures. My favorite art usually has that tension between geometry and chaos.

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This Is What Happens - Shindig ! - January-February 2011

The Soft Machine

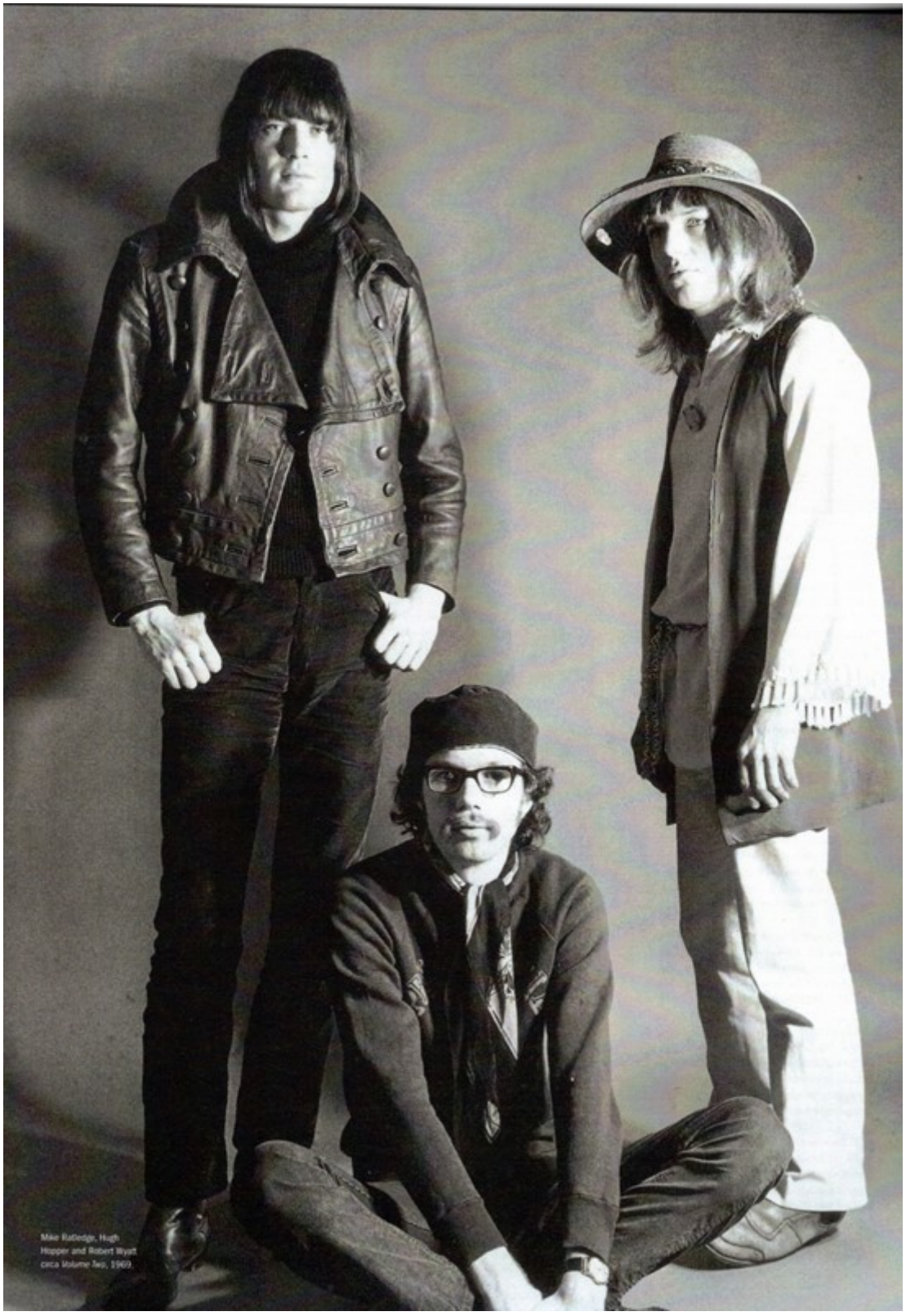
Is it jazz ?

Is it psych ?

Is it pop ?



Article complet (PDF)



Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt circa Volume Two, 1969.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS

They outgrew their humble beginnings as Canterbury beatniks to become one of Britain's two most important and iconic underground bands of the late '60s before embarking on a singular jazz-rock odyssey that imploded in the mid-70s with not one of their original members intact.

"We could have made a really good LP," said Robert Wyatt. "Been in the charts and been in those films about the '60s – and we blew it."

LINDSAY BENSLEY delicately traces the evolution of THE SOFT MACHINE

It's sometime in 1967 (nowadays it's always sometime in '67 in my head) and I'm in our living room listening to our Pye transistor radio, tuned into one pirate station or another, when I should be doing my homework. Luckily, my sister is in the front room spinning her Dionne Warwick platters, while mother is away with the fairies in the garden tending her rose bushes, so I'm able to listen to whatever illegal station I choose. Suddenly, I hear 'Love Makes Sweet Music' crackling through the ether, a godsend to flaming youth if ever I heard one. While the name of the group makes little impression at this stage, the song receives frequent airplay and eventually lodges itself firmly in the junk room of my mind.

Nowadays it sounds like a lost anthem for that unforgettable summer, though at the time I thought it an energising atomic particle of pop that made me want to jump and shout and tell the world. But I was soon to learn that such danceable ditties were rarely encountered in The Soft Machine songbook. This was a band intent on reinventing the world in their own image, who would become the *wunderkinds* of the underground; whose "out there" musical musings prompted Phil Manzanera to claim: "Soft Machine were the grooviest, coolest psychedelic band of the era".

And behind their artistic ambitions there lurked an intelligence to match even impressed music critic and ribald raconteur, George Melly: "Soft Machine for a start are not only verbally precise but exceptionally literate, with a keen and specialised interest in pataphysics, Dada and surrealism." Soft Machine lived life while others like myself looked on in dumbstruck awe.

Formed in '66, the group were briefly called The Bishops Of Canterbury, before guitarist Daevid Allen suggested they should change their name to Soft Machine after the drug culture novel by William S Burroughs. Besides Australian-born Allen, already an intergalactic guru, the line-up also comprised Kevin Ayers and Robert Wyatt, who were soon joined by Mike Ratledge upon his return from Oxford University after gaining an honours degree in psychology – a qualification that would come in useful during his tenure, if only for self-analysis.





In September of that year they played the notorious Star Club in Hamburg, and though they had secured a three-night booking, a hostile audience ensured the contract was never fulfilled. Back in London they began to make regular appearances at The Marquee Club before a more receptive crowd, often supporting The Pink Floyd Sound, while also securing regular gigs at The UFO Club in Tottenham Court Road. In December they went into CBS Studios in London to record with Kim Fowley. Little came from this session except 'Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'', a lugubrious ditty penned by Kevin Ayers, whose deadpan delivery became his trademark.

A month later they entered Advision Studios to record 'Love Makes Sweet Music' with producer Chas Chandler, who thought the band had some degree of commercial potential. Released at the end of February '67 on Polydor, 'Love Makes Sweet Music' was coupled with 'Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'' to become a favourite among pirate DJs including John Peel, who featured the single frequently on his *Perfumed Garden* slot for Radio Caroline. Although it missed the hit parade by miles, it did make #26 in the Radio London chart.

In April, they again returned to the studio, this time to De Lane Lea under the guidance of Russian-born impresario Giorgio Gomelsky. These sessions, though funded by Gomelsky, were never released until Charly Records did so in the '70s. And while Allen has always expressed his displeasure with his contributions, these are nevertheless the most comprehensive recordings of the original line-up that survive.

The band at this stage of their development were still a wayward creation, and while Gomelsky – a multi-media visionary – had failed to coax the best from them, he fared far better with The Brian Auger Trinity and the heavenly-blessed Blossom Toes, both of whom he signed to his own Marmalade label.

Undeterred, Soft Machine accepted an invitation to appear in The 14 Hour Technicolor Dream at Alexandra Palace at the end of April. This sight and sound extravaganza, which also featured The Pink Floyd, The Move, The Pretty Things and The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown among others, brought the group to the attention of the media.

Mike Ratledge and Kevin Ayers at an early Softs gig.



The band spent the summer of '67 performing in France, mostly around St. Tropez, though usually without any noticeable financial gain. Half-starved and sleeping rough on the beaches, they were on the verge of quitting when a local theatre promoter secured them a series of gigs including two weeks at Eddie Barclay's Psychedelic Night where they even managed to perform Ayers' one-line mantra, 'We Did It Again', for over an hour, and also played in the nude at Jean-Jacques Lebel's Sunlove Happening on the Cote d' Azur.

Towards the end of August the band returned to England minus Daevid Allen, who was refused entry on the grounds that his visa had expired. Allen, unfazed, formed the intergalactic Gong who still record and tour the solar system and beyond to this day, attracting universal praise.

The Softs continued to perform as a three-piece and the following February an enthusiastic Chandler encouraged the group to embark upon a two-month American tour supporting The Jimi Hendrix Experience. While the band had already established a rapport with Hendrix – Wyatt and Ayers having previously guested on 'Stone Free' back in November '66 – American audiences did not always feel the same empathy, and were not averse to booing and heckling to express their impatience to see The Man With The Guitar!

It was an ill-conceived tour, set up by Jimi's manager, Mike Jeffery, who paid little attention to anyone's interests but his own. A dubious character who claimed affiliations with The Secret Service, Jeffery is alleged to have defrauded both The Animals and Hendrix of substantial earnings, and to have frequently used threatening behaviour with the aid of a handgun to make his point. Though it is almost impossible to say anything positive about Jeffery, he nevertheless secured Soft Machine a

recording contract with ABC/Probe Records.

So in April, at the end of their 50-date tour, they entered Record Plant Studios in New York to record their first album. With Tom Wilson as producer, the band spent four days recording a selection of their songs interspersed with a smattering of improvisations. Wilson, known for his work with The Mothers Of Invention and The Velvet Underground, appears to have been somewhat diffident and allowed the band a free hand, and they were not afraid to experiment with the studio technology to hand.

The resulting album was however an uneven affair. There are perusable moments; 'Hope For Happiness', 'Why Am I So Short?', 'Save Yourself' and 'We Did It Again', but the instrumental duets between Wyatt and Ayers on 'Joy Of A Toy' and 'Why Are We Sleeping?' provide the highlights. If nothing else, the album displays how sharp the interplay between these musicians had developed, and is often cited as an example of proto-jazz-rock come prog, even if some of the outings here do not reach a satisfactory conclusion.

In May the band returned to England and immediately enlisted guitarist Andy Summers, fresh from his stint with the short-lived Dantalian's Chariot (known by band members as Charabanc), Zoot Money's earnest riposte to psychedelia. Though they were briefly the darlings of the London underground scene, Summers was keen to engage with more non-traditional music makers on their own terms.

Taking up residence with Wyatt in his mother's house in West Dulwich, a sort of commune of extended family and friends, Summers recounts in his forthright autobiography, *One Train Later*: "The atmosphere in the house is a mix of cultured bohemianism and tribal village. Eating, shagging, smoking and drinking, and making music are all laced with scathing remarks to one another about diminished intellect."

Summers, however, soon adapted to the lifestyle and the group spent several weeks in rehearsals. "In its best moments the music of The Soft Machine at this time is a swirling rush of dense, washy keyboards, repeated vocal lines, and drum patterns that fall outside any traditional song formats. In the vernacular of the moment, it would be called 'trippy'." These rehearsals often went on long into the night, usually ending with Wyatt and Summers smoking too much hash and falling on the floor in a fit of giggles. They made indeterminate progress.

In July they returned to America to headline a few shows before joining Hendrix for a second US tour together. As before, because of the *avant-garde* stance, their set would sometimes attract hostility from both audience and promoters alike, especially when Ayers insisted upon performing 'We Did It Again' *ad nauseam*.

After this fractious short tour they ended up at The Chelsea Hotel in New York, where it fell to Wyatt to inform Summers that Ayers insisted he quit the band. Ayers claimed that he wanted to return to the three-piece format, though Summers has always believed – and with good reason – that Ayers resented his superior musical ability.

Supporting Hendrix, with whom they struck up a close friendship, they embarked upon an intense two-month tour, finishing up at Los Angeles. The unrelenting touring took its toll upon Ayers, who also expressed his dislike of the jazz-based workouts they now favoured. Without a hint of animosity, the rather louche Ayers decamped to Ibiza whereupon he set about forging a solo career and nurturing his predilection for the fruit of the vine.

In December the first Soft Machine album was finally released in the US and soon after in France and Holland where it gained good reviews and healthy sales, though its release in the UK was indefensibly delayed until the early '70s. After a brief hiatus, the band reconvened at the beginning of '69, drafting in their long-suffering roadie, Hugh Hopper, to replace Ayers on bass.

"The atmosphere in the house is a mix of cultured bohemianism and tribal village. Eating, shagging, smoking and drinking, and making music are all laced with scathing remarks to one another about diminished intellect."

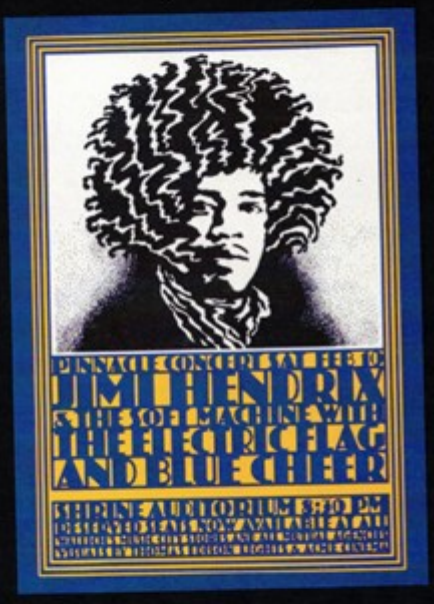
Hopper, a more than capable replacement, already had a long association with Wyatt. Both had been part of the Canterbury scene since the early '60s. In '63 they formed The Wilde Flowers with Hugh's elder brother, Brian Hopper on guitar and sax, Richard Sinclair on rhythm guitar and Ayers as vocalist. Later additions included Richard Coughlan and Pye Hastings, who would later team up with Sinclair to form Caravan.

Like Wyatt and Ratledge, Hopper had a yearning for jazz, and in particular that of the post-war era of Mingus, Monk, Davis, Coleman and Coltrane *et al*, and with the departure of Ayers these influences began to permeate their playing more frequently.

Under contractual obligation to ABC/Probe, they entered Olympic Studios throughout February and March '69 to record their second album. More cohesive than the debut, it is underpinned by Wyatt's off-the-wall witticisms, though you can't help wondering if he's making them up as he goes along.

Divided into two segments, 'Rivmic Melodies' and 'Esther's Nose Job', there are moments that capture their budding musical maturity and give some indication of the direction they intended to pursue, with 'Hibou, Anemone And Bear', 'Dada Was Here', 'Pig' and '10:30 Returns To The Bedroom' noticeably signposting their intentions.

Volume Two was released in April '69 to favourable reviews, and the band began to attract more attention from the media and public alike. Jazz-rock music was the fad at this point in time and Soft Machine were fast gaining distinction as one of its most competent exponents. Back on the road, gigging with renewed enthusiasm, they were seen at London's 100 Club by an equally enthusiastic Syd Barrett, who invited them to partake in recording sessions for his first solo album, *The Madcap Laughs*. In May '69, they joined Barrett at Abbey Road to record 'No Good Trying', 'Love You' and 'Clowns And Jugglers' (later retitled 'Octopus').



In June, The Softs recorded their first *Top Gear* session for Radio One at Maida Vale, and in between regular gigs – including dates at Ronnie Scott's – they also assisted Ayers on sessions for his début album (which many justifiably regard as his best), *Joy Of A Toy* for the nascent Harvest label, before forming Kevin Ayers & The Whole World with fellow earthlings Mike Oldfield, Lol Coxhill and David Bedford.

Gradually The Softs' poppy proclivities gave way to more malleable jazz-rock fusions – much lengthier workouts with titles such as 'Mousetrap', 'Backwards', 'Eamonn Andrews', 'The Moon In June'. In October they expanded the line-up to a seven-piece with the addition of Marc Charig (cornet), Nick Evans (trombone), Lyn Dobson (soprano,

tenor sax and flute) and Elton Dean (alto sax and saxello). Their gigs were well received as they toured across England, France and Belgium, building up a strong following, while major record labels began to take an interest and they were eventually signed to CBS.

But the logistics of touring as a seven-piece outfit soon proved financially unrewarding. Electrical amplification also proved a bugbear for the horn section, who found if difficult to balance their sound with a powerhouse drummer and dominant keyboard player. Increasingly disenchanted, Charig and Evans left at the end of the year to join Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath.

In early January '70, the band were recorded at Fairfield Halls, Croydon and at Mothers Club, Birmingham by CBS, and this material would be used on their next album. By March, Dobson – his nerves now frazzled thanks to the lunatic lifestyle – also quit,

Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper and Mike Ratledge standing by the dock of the bay.



"I resented it for a while... I got cross... I used to feel about Soft Machine the way Palestine feels about Jerusalem – this once was mine."

finding brief solace in The Keef Hartley Band.

Reduced to a quartet, it would not have been unreasonable to presume this would have limited The Softs' possibilities, but nothing could have been further from the truth. This unexpected turn of events gave the band a renewed impetus, and created the legendary line-up that would produce some of the most enthralling and innovative music of the band's long and convoluted history. "I think we all soon realised the chemistry was right," recalled Dean.

Hopper, with an ear for a metallic riff, was now composing some of his best material, though Ratledge was the most prolific, and relished writing in complex time signatures that challenged both band and audience alike. The interplay between each member now gave the group a definable sound, which fortuitously coincided with the British jazz scene reaching its peak at the beginning of the '70s.

A trad jazz enthusiast in his teens, Dean later secured work as a member of Bluesology with Marc Charig, alongside numerous alumni including singers Marsha Hunt and Long John Baldry, guitarist Neil Hubbard and a struggling pianist named Reg Dwight, who would later pinch Dean's Christian name and Baldry's middle name (and his vocal mannerisms) to invent an entirely new persona. Unhappy with the pop music scene and backing talentless acts like The Paper Dolls, Dean and Marc enrolled at The Barry Jazz Summer School in South Wales at the height of the psychedelic movement of '67. Here they met Keith Tippett and Nick Evans, and the four discovered much common ground – and thus formed The Keith Tippett Group.

Tippett, already a formidable jazz pianist, had gained a grant from The Arts Council to compose a new work that ultimately resulted in the group's début album, *You Are Here... I Am There* for Polydor, under the watchful eye of the far-sighted Gomelsky. Something of a hidden horde of bright baubles, it is a brash and determined musical statement by four of the best jazz players the UK has ever produced, and while quoting from Stan Tracey to The Beatles and all points in between, it possesses much original input. Dean, it must be said, would probably have been content to continue along this path had not Ratledge intervened and offered him the chance of playing in a more commercial jazz-rock outfit. In April '70 Soft Machine entered IBC Studios, London to commence work on their next album. Recording continued into May and the album was eventually released in June as a double album entitled *Third*. At a time when only established names such as The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix or Pink Floyd released double albums, *Third* was indeed an ambitious project, made more so by daringly featuring one grand opus per side. Hopper contributed 'Facelift', an energetic workout cut and spliced from the two live concerts recorded earlier that year – it's The Modern Jazz Quartet, Spontaneous Music Ensemble and Liberation Orchestra rolled into one nation under a gleeful groove: mesmerising stuff!

'Facelift' was also remarkable for being the first time that most people, like myself, encountered Dean playing the saxello. A variant of the soprano sax, to which it is physically similar – but for an upturned bell – its tone is not dissimilar to that of the Indian shehnai – which is in itself derived from the pungi, that stock-in-trade instrument of the snake charmer.

Wyatt's sole contribution, 'The Moon In June', is an effervescent eulogy from the illegitimate son of Mr G Chaucer (droll-teller), wherein by turn he confesses to being homesick and lovesick from his "hair to his heels". It was an almost entirely solo effort by Wyatt, who began work on the suite back in '67 and recorded some parts in New York at the end of their second American tour. Hopper and Ratledge make but minimal contributions to the piece (Wyatt mans the keyboards and bass for the most part), although jazz violinist Rab Spall provides a solo – doctored by Wyatt the Fizzy Wizard to resemble an out-take from Clanger Land – which makes a fitting coda.

Both the remaining compositions were furnished by Ratledge. 'Slightly All The Time' is one of his most compelling pieces – Zappaesque in parts with occasional quotes from Kirk and Coltrane, it interweaves tortuous time signatures to stunning effect. Ratledge and Dean produce some truly hair-raising solos throughout – and is that Wyatt playing the hi-hat with his hands? – while Jimmy Hastings (brother of Pye) offers support on flute and bass clarinet.

'Out-Bloody-Rageous' is no less arresting. Influenced by Terry Riley's hypnotic *Rainbow In Curved Air*, Ratledge employs tape loops to introduce another series of discursive solos by both himself and Dean before fading out in another tape collage.

Impressively tall, impossibly lean, his eyes invariably hidden behind a pair of modish sunshades, Ratledge looked every inch The King Of Cool – yet Warhol he wasn't. Reserved, reticent to the point of being monosyllabic, he never looked at ease in the spotlight and disliked touring intensely. Irrespective of his long-term involvement with Soft Machine and his undeniable musical contributions to the band, Ratledge remains something of an enigma entangled in a conundrum and wrapped up in a Gordian Knot of emotions. Nothing about him was ever predictable. Unlike his contemporaries Keith Emerson, Brian Auger and Dave Greenslade, who all preferred Hammond, Ratledge opted for a Lowrey Deluxe organ. When this was fed through a fuzzbox, he was forced to play legato to avoid intervals that would otherwise produce feedback. And so, more by accident than design, he invented his own distinctive sound, even if it frequently resembled a Stylophone on steroids.

Lauded on all sides upon its release, *Third* was the nearest the group ever came to anything approaching commercial success,

yet cracks were beginning to appear in the band's facade. Wyatt's sing-along songs were being increasingly sidelined in favour of hard-nosed instrumentals. Dadaism was dead and the Goon age was gone: they would never play vox pop again. However, unvoiced musical differences within the band did not disrupt the touring schedule. They continued to play regular dates at Ronnie Scott's and also found time to appear at The Holland Pop Festival ("the Dutch Woodstock") with the likes of Dr John, Canned Heat, Santana, Tyrannosaurus Rex *et al* – the resulting movie was later released as *Stamping Ground*.

In August they became the first "pop" band ever invited to play The Proms at The Royal Albert Hall. The rock press saw this as a prestigious gig and fawned at their feet, though the classical establishment were by and large appalled by the decision to allow a pop group to defecate upon their sacred turf. The straight-laced and stuffed shirt brigade of Radio 3 didn't like them, but ignoring their detractors, The Softs commenced recording their next album, *Fourth*, in October '70 at Olympic Sound Studios, with sessions continuing into November. Released the following March to favourable reviews, the album includes guest appearances by the ever-dependable Nick Evans, Marc Charig and Jimmy Hastings, with the addition of Roy Babbington on double bass and Alan Skidmore on tenor saxophone.

The bulk of the material was contributed by Hopper via the stately 'Kings And Queens' and 'Virtually', a four-part suite that took up all of side two. 'Teeth', the sole offering from Ratledge, is perhaps the best-conceived piece here. With fine structured and improvised contributions from both band and guest musicians, it sounds like a blueprint for what British jazz-rock fusion could and should have become.

A few weeks prior to the release of *Fourth*, I was finally able to catch the band in concert. A chance to see the classic line-up of Wyatt, Ratledge, Hopper and Dean was an unparalleled pleasure, and remains one of my most memorable gigs. In the absence of a stage, the band set up on the dance floor, with the audience seated all around. Granted an opportunity to watch the band at such close quarters proved a rare treat, and this level of intimacy contrarily enhanced their mystique.

Stripped to the waist, his long blonde hair flying as he pummelled the drum kit, Wyatt was the only animated figure, reminiscent of The Wild Man of Borneo (minus the necklace of fingers), while you could easily have mistaken the other band members for serious Zapata lookalikes or the Plymouth Brethren. Yet these four just men were the component elements who could make music to soothe or stir the senses in equal measure. One lanky youth in the crowd stood up and began idiot dancing; a relatively new pastime then, and I had never witnessed such a spectacle before. I even bought a pint of Adnams Best Bitter (a Suffolk ale for a Norfolk swain?) – it was that sort of evening.



Hopper, Wyatt, Elton Dean and Ratledge not long before the drummer's departure.

Oddly enough, the band's vigorous live performances did not in any way reflect their internal strife at the time. Even Dean admitted he was once removed from the unspoken discord. "I was too busy concentrating on the music to fully comprehend the personality issues going on around me. It was never discussed – there were no blazing rows. I got on well with Robert most of the time, we were good mates for a while, although we did have a bit of a disagreement during a tour of the States shortly before he quit. It's funny, but some of the best improvisation we did was during the period leading up to Robert's departure. If he wanted to carry on with the songs he never really said so. We didn't rehearse much or discuss direction, we would go on tour and things would happen, pieces would be written by Mike and Hugh and we would play them."

Depending on which version of events you care to believe, Wyatt was either sacked or quit the band in August '71. "Towards the end there was no collective identity," adds Dean. "The others didn't see the same things as I in the band. I was more interested in absurdity as a liberating element than them." Wyatt expressed bitterness over his departure for several years afterwards, but on the BBC's recent *Prog Britannia* he appeared more philosophical. "I resented it for a while... I got cross... I used to feel about Soft Machine the way Palestine feels about Jerusalem – this once was mine." For whatever reasons, it is certain that the band's more studious approach to music did not suit a loose-limbed drummer like Wyatt who longed to sing the body electric. "We could have made a really good LP. Been in the charts and been in those films about the '60s – and we blew it."

Wyatt wasn't wrong. Soft Machine made jazz-rock fusion that was both accessible and listener-friendly, a rare feat in itself that others of their ilk were unable to accomplish. Wyatt's exit signalled the end of an earful of amazing music and sounds. Soft Machine had the potential to become a household name – like Fray Bentos or Threadgold's Throughgrip Garterettes. Ah, the sawdust and horses, the roar of the greasepaint, the smell of the crowd, it should all have been theirs, in that brief shining moment, there and then. If only the engine of time had a stop button... SI



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HAARETZ

Haunted by ghosts

Self-proclaimed anti-Israeli saxophonist Gilad Atzmon and prog rock legend Robert Wyatt have joined forces to make musical magic and "political noise."

By Yaron Frid Oct. 15, 2010



Robert Wyatt and Gilad Atzmon, Ros Stephen

In 1963 a baby was born in Israel. In 1972 a man fell from the third floor (or the fourth - views are divided) in England in the middle of the night. Both of them took off on the wings of music, and life would one day organize a surprising encounter between them.

This is a sad story with a jolting soundtrack made of the howl of a saxophone and the wail of a clarinet. It's a story of displaced persons who have no other country, featuring war criminals, Nazi-hunters and God in a cameo role, tempered by large daubs of irony and a few crumbs of hope.

Morning. Rain. Rail strike. Soho, London. Who is the huge chuckling fellow in the Italian cafe who is polishing off a schnitzel sandwich (washed down with tea) and welcomes me with comments like "There is no light at the end of the Israeli tunnel"? Or, "I think there is something untenable, simply untenable in the fact that the Jews, who suffered so much

racial discrimination, should establish a state that is founded on race laws." And, topping the charts, "I am dead against the existence of the Jewish state." It's still early in the morning, let me remind you. I-am-dead-against-the-existence-of-the-Jewish-state-and-pass-the-sweetener-please. Good morning to you, too, Gilad Atzmon.

The fact that the cafe is across from Ronnie Scott's famous jazz club offers a subtle hint about Atzmon's identity. He is one of the most acclaimed and in-demand jazz musicians in the world and he only enhances his glory - or totally destroys it, it depends whom you ask - when his mouth isn't otherwise occupied with a saxophone (or a schnitzel).

Atzmon says he is dealing not with politics, but with ethics. Maybe in his case it really isn't just a matter of semantics. Or cosmetics. But we're here to talk about music. And about beauty. "This beauty which simply spills out of you," he says, "effortlessly, unconsciously, in the most wonderful moments of creativity, and when that happens you understand that you are only the carrier of the spirit, of something bigger than you, over which you have absolutely no control. I have no connection with that beauty, I just eat schnitzels. I am only the messenger. I don't look for the beauty, the beauty finds me and through me finds its way into the world."

And plenty of beauty finds its way into the world in "For the Ghosts Within," the new album by Atzmon and his musical partners, which has already earned rave reviews in the British music press, with praise such as "the surprise of the year" and ecstatic descriptions of angels entering the listener's heart. On the album Atzmon joins forces, as performer, composer, arranger and musical producer, with Ros Stephen and Robert Wyatt.

This is the great Robert Wyatt himself. Cult figure, one of the fathers and pioneers of progressive rock. The one calls the other a genius ("We have a mutual genius pact," Atzmon chuckles), while Wyatt says, "It's a huge honor for me and not at all self-evident that Gilad agreed to work with me. He is an amazing musician, amazing." But judging by the people Wyatt has worked with - Jimi Hendrix, Mike Oldfield, David Gilmour, Paul Weller, Syd Barrett, Brian Eno, Bjork (a "heavenly creature," Wyatt sighed) among others - it's clear that the honor is also definitely Atzmon's. He has performed with Paul McCartney, but the collaboration with Wyatt, 65, a unique object of admiration who cuts across tastes, generations and categories (just ask Radiohead's Thom Yorke), is something of a step up and a certificate of honor that further cements Atzmon's status in the British music industry.

Wyatt is the hippie enfant terrible who became a white-bearded guru, a kind of secret national treasure, a genuine survivor who is almost unclassifiable. A drummer in Soft Machine (from which he was thrown out - to this day he maintains "there is nothing worse in life than humiliation") and in Matching Mole, he was reborn as a singer-songwriter after falling out of that London window during a drinking binge that lurched out of control. (Pink Floyd immediately rallied to the cause and organized a benefit concert for him.) The fall left him in a wheelchair for life.

Few musicians have done all he has done - psychedelic, punk, post-punk, avant-garde, fusion and now "clean" jazz with his own twists.

Wyatt is married to Alfreda (Alfie) Benge, who came to England from Poland as a childhood war refugee. She does the artwork for his album covers, once wrote a searing song about his alcoholism (he has since kicked the habit, or maybe not) and calls him an "overgrown baby," while he calls her "the dark side of my moon." He records his albums, which are like nothing else and are always received as an "event," in a studio in his home. He has a distinctive tremulous voice (a kind of trademark), which the composer and musician Ryuichi Sakamoto called "the saddest sound in the world." Wyatt has survived periods of bottomless, suicidal depression, and for entire decades avoided performing live. ("I think it's stage fright," Atzmon says.)

In an interview with the Guardian in June 2009, Wyatt selected Atzmon as the "greatest living artist" and noted that he was "born in Israel, which I prefer to call occupied Palestine." Atzmon, for his part, says Wyatt is "a genius of the kind that Kant described so well - a genius who seemingly has no part in his own genius, who creates beauty as though ex nihilo. Everything he touches sounds new and completely different and utterly his own. He is totally transparent and through him you see the light."

Tranquillity of the storm

Their love story began "about 10 years ago," Atzmon says. "At some festival, a woman named Alfie came over and said her husband is a musician but is very shy and loves my music and would like to talk to me. 'Sure, no problem,' I said. Robert approached, said he

was an amateur musician or a crappy musician, something like that, he's very modest, and gave me his card. I had no idea it was him and I put the card in my pocket without looking. Afterward someone asked me what I'd talked about with Robert Wyatt and I said, 'Fuck! That was Robert Wyatt? I grew up on his music!'"

They invited each other to guest on their respective albums, including Wyatt's acclaimed "Cuckooland" (2003) and "For the Ghosts Within." (The song "The Ghosts Within" contains more than a hint to Palestinians sitting under olive trees, awaiting redemption, on the banks of the River of Shame.) The album is on the trendy Domino label - its bands include Arctic Monkeys. Wyatt takes the role of the house singer, performing thrilling covers of jazz standards such as "In a Sentimental Mood" together with new material written and arranged by Atzmon and the violinist Ros Stephen. The result is almost a family affair (Gilad's wife, Tali, sings a marvelous solo, Bob's wife, Alfie, wrote powerful lyrics and Ros's partner is one of the musicians). Tender and melancholy, the album is only part of the panoply of illusive and elusive contradictions of Atzmon, who is haunted by ghosts and demons, filled with gentleness and rage, naivete and depth, stubbornness and openness, storminess and tranquillity.

"The first time I invited him to play on an album of mine," Wyatt recalls, "Gilad warned me that it could be trouble. I don't think he deliberately looks for trouble, it finds him. That didn't scare me. I have been called a 'Stalinist' and a 'traitor' and worse, simply because I didn't agree with the British government's foreign policy. But that's nothing compared to the systematic character assassination being done on Gilad. He takes so many risks with his remarks, most of which are then taken out of context or presented in a twisted way so that his true intention isn't understood correctly.

"I sometimes feel a need to protect him," Wyatt continues, "an almost paternal instinct - after all, he's my son's age. The friendship with him is one of the most important and meaningful things that have happened to me in life. I truly love him. And I admire his courage. Some will call it reckless or uninhibited, but he dares to say things that no one else would. I would die of fright. He gets threats to his life, but I hope they are not serious. He doesn't enjoy the manifestations of hatred toward him but he doesn't care if he causes grief or anguish, because that's his truth, and contrary to politicians or diplomats he is committed to his truth. He's so sweet, really, he wouldn't hurt a fly, and I like his chutzpah, I think it's fantastic. There's something about him from the tradition of the great Jewish comics, like Lenny Bruce, who were never afraid to make people angry."

It would be a big mistake to assume that Atzmon's music is marginal and negligible compared with all the other noise he manages to make nonstop as a popular and prominent pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist activist. The music is important, superb, surpassingly sublime and acknowledged as such by international awards.

"My shows are always sold out, wherever I appear in the world," says the busiest jazz artist in Britain, almost drily. But in the same breath, who are we kidding? Even when Robert Wyatt sings "At Last I Am Free" on the new album, not to mention the Arabic rap ("People dying of thirst / People are dying of hunger / We haven't forgotten / And we won't forget until the day we return") which leaves no room for doubt, or the "Palestinian shepherd's flute," one of the instruments Atzmon plays on the album according to the liner notes, the noise always penetrates, if not through the door then through the window - not that Atzmon goes out of his way to expel it.

Pathetic and absurd

Gilad Atzmon was born in Tel Aviv in 1963 and grew up in Jerusalem. "It was a regular secular childhood," he says, "with a right-wing Jabotinskyite grandfather. I wasn't ashamed of him, no way. I understood where he was coming from. I understood where I was coming from." Most of his military service was spent in the Air Force orchestra, after a stint as a combat medic. "In the first week of the Lebanon war in 1982 I saw a lot of wounded soldiers, but contrary to the rumors, that was not the turning point in my life. I think the big change actually started in the orchestra, when we went to Ansar, that concentration camp" - a prison built by the Israeli army in Lebanon - "and then I realized that I was in the wrong army."

In Israel he played and was a musical producer with the singers Yardena Arazi - talk about diversity: chapter one Arazi, chapter two Wyatt - Si Himan and Yehuda Poliker, among others.

"Poliker opened my ears to Greek music and influenced me musically. My music is popular in Greece - more than his, I'd say - but Greece, like the whole world, is falling apart, so it doesn't help me very much."

In 1994 Atzmon planned to study abroad, in New York or Chicago, but in the end found a university in England with an interesting program combining psychoanalysis, philosophy and art history. "I didn't have some five-year plan to leave the country or anything like that," he recalls. "The truth is that I was worn out from everything: from the country, from music, from life. Everything wore me out. I didn't want to play or produce anymore. I thought of starting a new career as a commercial pilot. I wanted to be like the El Al pilots, who bow to the applauding passengers after landing [he chuckles]. I liked flying planes but I wasn't good enough at it.

"I was 30, and thought I would focus on an academic career. But then I fell in love with London, which was like a small village - it has changed completely since, and not for the better - and the local music scene gave me so much love. So I said to myself: We'll play jazz for the jazz, we'll live for art. We don't need a lot of money, we have everything we need. So we'll stay. And we stayed."

"We" is Atzmon and his wife, Tali, a fine singer and a stage actress with a burgeoning career. They met - we promised you irony, we deliver - at the Hasidic Song Festival in Israel. "I didn't like Israel and what was happening there but I wasn't politically involved in any way. I also didn't understand the Palestinian idea, the true story. Somehow things happened and I started to speak and write in all kinds of forums, and suddenly I was all over the place. I was a private person with all kinds of private opinions who suddenly became public because people wanted to hear what I had to say. I think people feel that I am telling the truth, that I am not rewriting facts for anyone, that I don't have to lie because I am not part of any political body. I am Gilad Atzmon who represents Gilad Atzmon and that's all. At first I was seen as a nice Jew who was badmouthing Israel, which the goyim liked. But it didn't take me long to understand that I am not a nice Jew, because I don't want to be a Jew, because Jewish values don't really turn me on and all this 'Pour out Thy wrath on the nations' stuff doesn't impress me."

So you are pouring out your wrath on the Jews.

"I saw 'Metzitzim' a few days ago. You know where Uri Zohar is today [Zohar, the director, actor and screenwriter, is now an ultra-Orthodox rabbi and teacher], and he was the ultimate secular person, the absolute ultimate. Why are secular Israelis afraid of Uri Zohar? Because he left them alone in the dark to cope with questions like Why am I here? Why do I live on lands that are not mine, the plundered lands of another people whose owners want to return to them but cannot? Why do I send my children to kill and be killed, after I myself was a soldier, too? Why do I believe all this bullshit about 'because it's the land of our forefathers' and 'our patrimony' if I am not even religious? What the fuck? That is something the secular Jews simply cannot cope with. They are deathly afraid of those questions. I see more truth among the settlers than among the biggest secular Jews in the country.

"The Israelis can put an end to the conflict in two fucking minutes. Netanyahu gets up tomorrow morning, returns to the Palestinians the lands that belong to them, their fields and houses, and that's it. The refugees will come home and the Jews will also finally be liberated: They will be free in their country and will be able to be like all the nations, get on with their lives and even salvage the bad reputation they have brought on themselves in the past 2,000 years. But for Netanyahu and the Israelis to do that, they have to undergo de-Judaization and accept the fact that they are like all peoples and are not the chosen people. So, in my analysis this is not a political, sociopolitical or socioeconomic issue but something basic that has to do with Jewish identity.

"Think for a minute about the dialectics of Jewish identity, about 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Who is your neighbor? Another Jew, of course. In other words, from the moment you were chosen to be the 'chosen people' you lost all respect for other peoples and for the other as such.

"Take, for example, the way gays are treated in Israel. It smacks so much of 'Look how liberal we are, we have homosexuals in Israel.' Max Nordau [Zionist leader, 1849-1923] wrote about the emancipation of the Jews, about how the Europeans don't really like Jews but like themselves for supposedly liking Jews. I find a lot of similarity between Jews and gays as separatist, marginal philosophies. It's very interesting.

"There are interesting values in Judaism, and the proof is that the Palestinians' greatest supporters are the Jews of the Torah, Neturei Karta [an ultra-Orthodox sect]. Our problem - and it took me time to understand this - lies with the secular Jews, and even more with the left-wing Jews. The idea of left-wing Jews is fundamentally sickening. Totally. It contains an absolute internal contradiction. If you are leftists it doesn't matter whether you're Jewish or not, so on principle when you present yourselves as leftist Jews you are

accepting the idea of national socialism. Nazism. That is pathetic. That is why the Israeli left has never succeeded in doing anything for the Palestinians. The absolute absurdity is that it's actually the right wing that is leading toward a one-state solution and a final-status agreement."

Illogic and wonder

Atzmon played into the hands of politicians such as Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who in a debate with President Shimon Peres quoted Atzmon by name, to the effect that "Israeli barbarism is greater than [regular] cruelty." Atzmon has been accused from every possible platform of disseminating vitriol against Jews. He, though, maintains that he "hates everyone in equal measure." He's also been accused of self-hatred, but he is the first to admit this, and in comparison with Otto Weininger - the Austrian Jewish philosopher who converted to Christianity and of whom Hitler said, "There was one good Jew in Germany, and he killed himself" - he is even proud. "Otto and I are good friends."

Seriously, though?

"What seriously? I am married to a Jew, I work and play in a band with Jews. I have adopted a Palestinian identity, true, but to accuse me of anti-Semitism is ridiculous. Part of my success derives from the recognition that I am 'from there.' I do not try to hide that or blur it or deny it. I look, speak and behave like someone from there."

I address him in Hebrew and he replies in English with a distinctly Israeli accent, interspersed with Hebrew. He is sometimes amazed at some of the excellent Hebrew words he comes out with.

The hybrid language is intermittently amusing. Asked, for example, if he misses Israel, he replies, "I don't miss the medina [the state], I miss the eretz [the land/country], and elaborates: "When I started missing the soil, the landscapes, the scents, I understood that what I actually miss is Palestine. Palestine is the land and Israel is the state. It took me time to realize that Israel was never my home, but only a fantasy saturated in blood and sweat."

He speaks of "sweat" but really means "tears." It's a sad story, as we noted.

His children, Mai, 14, and Yan, 10, have no Jewish friends. Yan was not circumcised and bar or bat mitzvahs are out of the question. Atzmon's computer does not have Hebrew. He says he writes, thinks and dreams in English. He will not set foot in Israel until it is again Palestine.

Doesn't it hurt to cut yourself off like that? To burn all the bridges?

"No, but maybe it's true what all my girlfriends before Tal said when they dumped me."

What did they say?

"That I'm an emotional cripple."

Is that true?

"Maybe, but I didn't dump myself. I live at peace with myself." He apparently reserves his emotional intelligence for his art. There are no cripples of any sort in "For the Ghosts Within." In the music, they all fly to the highest places possible, perhaps touching the divine. Genuine talent, like passion, can't be faked. The problem is, then, only the grating noises - that's how they sound to many people - that the man haunted by ghosts and demons produces outside the recording studio.

Wyatt, playing the Dalai Lama, expresses amazement at "Gilad's struggle against racism and oppression of all kinds, and in his life's work, the search for the meaning of Jewish identity. Gilad is a traumatic but optimistic example of a widespread phenomenon of migrants who try to push aside their tribal circumstances and try to reconnect to the world and to humanity. That is what the Jews in the Diaspora have always done. Look at their contribution to world culture. Ronnie Scott was from a Jewish immigrant family from Russia, and there are also the Gershwin brothers and Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen and Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein, not to mention Jesus and Karl Marx, two nice Jews who made a bit of a mess in the world.

"Gilad's point of departure is humanitarian, not real estate. Thanks to him I learned to be more tolerant of religion, every religion, and show it respect. Thanks to him, for example, I have no problem with the fact that Evyatar Banai, a terrific musician whom I met a few

years ago, became religiously observant, just as I hope he has no problem with my political opinions. Gilad believes that religion is a spiritual affair and not a license to plunder olive groves from someone else, and that is something I can connect to.

"The problem," Wyatt continues, "arises when religion's illogic becomes the basis for politics. Religion is based on illogical legends: Jesus' mother was a virgin and Father Christmas comes down the chimney bringing toys. That's all very nice but it cannot be a serious foundation for politics that is supposed to make the real world run. It is unthinkable to take lands that are not yours only because it's written in the Bible - meaning the Old Testament, which is based on tribal mercilessness - that God said they are yours. And what about the other peoples? What were they told? Which God distributed what land to them? And what if they read a different book? There's no way out of it.

"People use every excuse to screw the Middle East, visit colonialist guilt feelings on the Palestinians and compare them to Nazis, which is outrageous. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the toughest knot to undo that there is, but people like Gilad are truly dreaming of a solution and fighting to realize it in their lifetime."

You once called him "Don Quixote." Do you think he is fighting a lost battle?

"I called him Don Quixote in humor, and he has a great sense of humor. I knew he wouldn't take offense. Possibly his battle is lost, but the war on crime, for example, is also lost, yet I still want the police to go on fighting it. Gilad is an artist who is trying to find meaning in a chaotic and insane world. For him, as for me, politics is the most personal thing there is. He and I cannot remain silent in the face of wrongs, injustice and inequality. Not all artists feel a need to express themselves or act politically, and you can't force anyone to do that. During the Second World War, Picasso chose to sound his voice and Matisse chose to remain silent and disappear, and both were and remain great artists who enriched the world. Gilad likes to shock and surprise in everything he does, and his very existence enriches the world."

And that world, however broken and ruined and complicated, is the same world that stars in the song that ends "For the Ghosts Within" as well as Atzmon's concerts: "What a Wonderful World."

"The newscasts report only disasters and wars, and that's natural," Wyatt notes. "I was born at the end of the Second World War, and since then the world has not stopped fighting and falling apart before our eyes. But if we forget the existence of beauty and joy and love and all the rest, what's the point of staying alive at all? To say that the world is only screwed up is an insult to those who go to work every day and build homes for their children and cook meals for their friends. It's important to sing this song with full intentionality and seriousness. I can't sing it any other way. To sing it is to remember what we're actually doing here."

In praise of the spark

Atzmon, who has appeared and recorded with artists such as Sinead O'Connor, Ian Dury and Robbie Williams, this month is also launching "The Tide Has Changed," the latest album by his jazz group, the Orient House Ensemble, now celebrating its 10th anniversary. (The other members are Frank Harrison, Eddie Hick and Yaron Stavi, the son of Zissi Stavi, the legendary former editor of Yedioth Ahronoth's literary supplement). Among the instrumental tracks are "London Gaza" and "We Lament." Surprised?

Atzmon has even been accused of Holocaust denial.

"That is very imprecise," he says. "But I am fighting against all the disgusting laws and persecutions of those so-called Holocaust deniers - a categorization I don't accept. I think the Holocaust, like any historical episode, must be open to research, to examination, to discussion and debate. I am sorry that Hitler did not live to write a summary of the events in his own words. And I am not sorry that people throw eggs at the war criminal Tony Blair, who in the Nuremberg trials of the Iraq war will be brought to trial, inshallah, along with all those who fostered and financed that benighted and unnecessary war. And at the same opportunity, it might be a good thing if the Nazi hunters hunt down [Shaul] Mofaz and [Ehud] Barak, for example, and not all kinds of 96-year-olds who are barely alive. It's pathetic."

Atzmon can be sharp, focused and trenchant, and at the same time nonsensical and diffuse, so much "pro" but also so much "con" - coarse and refined, raucous and subdued, pedantic and professional to an extreme, making declarations like "I never did homework. I wrote my two books in two weeks each, vomited them onto the page, and the first one began as a joke."

The novels - "A Guide to the Perplexed" (2001; set in 2052, in the Palestinian state that has succeeded Israel) and "My One and Only Love" (2005; about a trumpeter who chooses to play one note only and also about Nazi-hunters; spot the obsession ?) - have been translated into 27 languages. There is something childlike, if not childish, in the guide for the perplexed being someone who is himself occasionally perplexed, who radiates personal charm, frequently chuckles and acts the smart aleck and the provocateur, with a proven ability to electrify and to hypnotize an audience.

"There is a spark in Gilad, a passion and a natural joy of the kind found in children," Robert Wyatt sums up. "His joy of creation is utterly pure. Picasso said that he tried his whole life to paint the way he painted as a child. Gilad hasn't lost that, I think. He remains filled with curiosity and filled with life in the most positive and delightful way."

"Let me make it perfectly clear," says Atzmon. "There is a war of liberation of the Palestinian people and I support it unreservedly. I also have guilt feelings. I tried to communicate with Israelis and I failed, and it's important for that to be said. I no longer know how to communicate with Israelis."

For someone who is so cut-off, Atzmon ("I'm a voluntary exile, but also a DP and a refugee from my homeland") sounds quite connected. Never mind "Metzitzim"; he also heard, for example, that Poliker came out of the closet and that Miri Aloni is busking on the street (though he'd like to know whether for ideological reasons or "only for the money").

Why don't you make a distinction between individuals and governments? For example, what happened with the Gaza flotilla was not "us."

"It was you."

It's not me.

"It is you. Unequivocally. When you live in a democracy, every crime committed by your government is a crime committed by you."

Even if I didn't vote for that government?

"Absolutely. In a dictatorship the dictator takes responsibility, in a democracy all citizens bear equal responsibility."

So what do we do? How do we fix it?

"That's the big question."

What do you want me to do, shoot Netanyahu?

"You said it, not me. And by the way, Netanyahu is a lot better for the Palestinians than Barak or Peres. I, too, as a British citizen, share in the crime of the Iraq war. But the British public at least expressed opposition to the war all along, whereas in Israel 94 percent of the nation supported Operation Cast Lead. On the one hand, you want to behave like a post-enlightenment state and talk to me about individualism, but on the other hand you surround yourselves with a wall and remain attached to a tribal identity. That's a cake you can't eat and have, too. There is a price to be paid and everyone is paying it, including me."

But Atzmon, who has been crowned successor to Charlie Parker, doesn't dwell on the price.

"Sometimes I ask myself what I need all these headaches for. And Tali says she married a musician and now she has a prime minister in her home."

You might not be sad that you lost us, but I'm sad that we lost you.

"That's all right, there's a place in the world for sentimental people. I know I have many readers in Israel and they know how to contact me."

I think about Gilad Atzmon the way that Arik Einstein thought about the girl he saw on her way to school in the iconic song: that to us, he is lost. Israeli public diplomacy lost someone who could have been one of its finest voices: articulate, charismatic, brilliant. The score, for now: 1-0, Palestine leading.

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Robert Wyatt and "The Merry Dance of Shared Creativity" - A Necessary Angel - July 14, 2010

ROBERT WYYATT AND "THE MERRY DANCE OF SHARED CREATIVITY"

Robert Wyatt is that rare musician who has been making individualistic, quirky soulful music for years that has managed to resonate across a broad spectrum of listener, and engage some population of more youthful listeners with each successive generation. This is a good formula for making art live. Wyatt's songs have been covered by artists such as Elvis Costello (Shipbuilding), and he can count Brian Eno, Bjork, and Fred Frith amongst his collaborators over the years. For me, Wyatt's music has always hovered in the same beautiful universe inhabited by Scott Walker's muse. Always singular, by times poignant, wistful, infused with wonder, and delivered with the direct nature and good humor of a man who probably sleeps quite well at night.

Wyatt has long collaborated with his wife Afreda (Alfie) Benge, a noted artist, lyricist and poet, who has penned the words to many of Wyatt's tunes over the years. Our mutual friend Rob Ayling, noted photographer and Voiceprint records owner (the wonderful patron of a label that releases my work…. buy all thier stuff!) put us in touch for the interview. I was glad to have this discussion, if even only over e-mail, with one of the great singular talents of this or any age.



PH Robert, you have become known as an *artist's artist*, in that there are many prominent artists in mainstream pop culture that like to state you as an influence, and who view your work as seminal and essential to their own development. What do you think about that?

RW Percy, my record collection is more like a dusty museum than a 21st century update. I'm embarrassed to say, I know little about what younger musicians are up to. But of course it's reassuring to hear that some of them have heard what I've been trying to do…..and I'm especially grateful to those who've used my material. Most recently the *Orchestre National De France*, *Mop Meu Machiine* (also French) and the heavenly *Unthank*

Sisters, not to mention *Annie Whitehead's* band featuring *Julie Tippetts and Jennifer Maidman*, *Karen Mantler with John Greaves* (that last project not yet available on record), and several other kind hearted people.

PH I've been listening to your recording ***Comicopera***, and with each listen, come away with another layer of emotional connection. The story telling is rich, filmic, poignant, lyrical, and comical at times. Can you tell me a little bit about the creative process concerning the writing and recording of this album?



RW
Comicopera has several geneses. From scraps of paper with momentary thoughts onto recorded equivalents, scattered around my room-sometimes for years! The coherence comes in the editing. More than with previous records, I assumed that the pieces would take on a life of their own, without my interfering with a plan. The eventual sequence to become apparent in the studio (mostly in the last few years with the engineer I met at Phil Manzanera's studio, Jamie Johnson). And, perhaps from enjoying so many very old records, this time I really asked a lot of the musicians, I wanted to make a record of total music, not just "vocal with instrumental accompaniment", although the final order was guided by the lyrics, by what is being said. For a long time I've felt right making records with two 'sides' like records used to be. But for Comicopera, I found myself turning to the idea of music in three parts, like posh symphonies. But not very, eh?

PH It seems to me that it is often a perfect storm of circumstances that creates an audience for "difficult" artists. Pop culture is a fickle mistress, who is difficult to serve. How do you see the "canon" of your work fitting into the overall universe of all things "pop"?

RW Pop(ular) music is to me a great resource, and even One Hit Wonders can make at least one terrific record-But I'm not in the market competing for mass attention; I just have to shift enough records to earn a living. So a more apt comparison would be with a little local cafe, or baker's shop. (i.e. not the kind of retail outlet that depends on media saturation.) So when I was told that the most powerful disc-jockeys might not like Fred Frith's solo on I'm a believer my automatic reaction was, "who gives a fuck?")

PH Your particular musical gift always brings to mind our friend Fred Frith. Fred has a unique way of bending the strange around to the poignant when you least expect it. He does it through a sort of frenetic worrying torrent of sounds that break out at once into lyrical atmospherics and whimsy. You come to the poignant through seemingly indirect, observant, lyrical revelations. How do you conceive of a lyric like: ***"Cuckoo Madame with your teddy bear eye, yellow fingers clinging to the chain link fence. Bombers above you. Bombers behind you."*** ("Cuckoo Madame, from the album Cuckooland). I'm not sure what it means, but it makes me want to cry….

AB (This question was answered by Robert's Wife and Collaborator, Alfreda (Alfie) Benge)

All I can do is explain how this poem happened. The line you quote from ***Cuckoo Madame*** *was a totally accurate description of what my eyes saw. While watching from the window of a seaside chalet with no-one else around. She was, as described, grasping the wire on a fence with her yellow finger-like claws. Her eyes just like a teddy bear's glass eyes. Exactly the same colours. The first time Isaw her there was a bomber exercise going on in the air. The lovely peace shattered by horrible noisy low-flying jets. She sat there with bombers swooping overhead. She came regularly twice a day for over a week. I was on my own, and she was my only visitor. My first instinct was antagonistic. I knew there was a meadow pipit nesting nearby, and I knew cuckoos often used meadow pipits nests to plant their eggs. She was the villain.*



Then, I started to think about her and her life. She never saw her chick, had never seen her parents. A really solitary madam. Soon she'd be off to Africa , and later her chick would make the same journey all alone. No-one to guide it. What a lonely life. And what had happened in cuckoo history to condemn her to such a life? So I imagined being her. And remembering my first reaction, was reminded of the way people are judged without any attempt to understand them. It had recently happened to me, (it was quite traumatic) and no doubt happened to all the outsiders, strangers, foreigners that become hate figures. People who often have tragedies in their lives that we're oblivious to. Most of the stuff I do when words come first happen in a similar way. I try and look hard. That's how it starts. I try to pay real attention to something in the physical world, and often that will spark off thoughts about other things. It's like nature study with added daydreaming. But basically my eyes are OPEN. When the music comes first, I write with my eyes very SHUT, and my ears very OPEN. I Just dive into the music and try and drag out the words that are hiding in there. What film am I watching? 'Old Europe' for instance was definitely a black and white French film. The music absolutely dictates the subject matter. In Lullaby for Hamza, three notes just said 'lullaby' to me. So I wrote one for someone who needed one.

PH What has been the effect upon you of the almost total collapse of the music industry? Has your way of working, your audience, and the way your work reaches your audience helped you escape the carnage somewhat?

RW The record industry, like the leisure industry and the food industry, may boom, bust, do the hoochie-coochie, whatever, people still listen, play and eat. Been doing it for tens of thousands of years. Widespread 'free' downloading is a bit scary for us though, like all theft, naturally)

PH I am curious to know what young artists (if you listen to any) you think are creating significant work.

RW I'm well aware that there are lots of terrific musicians out there, young (and not so…) In all genres. Here and around the planet. And mass-market pop music seems as entertaining as ever- I've listened to Timbaland and Cheryl Cole, and think they're really good at what they do.(I'm not interested in the various snobberies around show-business.) It's all just people trying to do their best. There's room for all of us, I'd like to think..

PH Much like Scott Walker, you are an artist that the pop culture is always in the process of "catching up to"…it's a brilliant historical comment, but may mean that some potential benefits of the catching up will not be available until you are gone! What is your take on this phenomenon?

RW See 1 again! Plus, I know that I myself am still catching up on music from before MY time, from Plainchant (a liturgical chant form) to Paul Robeson. Even the 'originators' of British popular music as a global phenomenon based most of their original material on that of (mainly Black American) predecessors. Made it 'New', as every generation does. Or they simply spread the word, just with a different accent; it's all part of ***the merry dance of shared creativity.***

PH Your music is quite filmic and imagistic to me. Are you a film lover? How does the imagery of life as found in film, affect your work if at all? Have you had much music placed in film?



RW Yes indeed, I admire lots of film makers, and have been particularly affected by John Cassavetes (Shadows), Eisenstein, Ozu, Eric Rohmer– and many of the more widely known film makers from early Hitchcock to Mike Leigh. And Alfie (a qualified film editor and Robert's Wife) introduced me to the wonders of many films from around the world. Um…….where were we? Oh yes. Your actual question! I see my transition from live performance to making records as like the transition from live theatre to making films, Necessity being the mother of invention in my case.

PH I've always wanted to hear a duet between you and Marianne Faithful, this may seem wacky to some, but I think it would be fantastic! What artists would you like to collaborate with that you have not thus far?

RW I choose collaborators that the piece I'm working on seems to want. There are still people I'd like to do music with though, but I don't wish to embarrass them by naming them in, as it were, public! Oh, alright then, Sinead O'Connor.

>> L'interview sur le site de A Necessary Angel

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HOME

Captain Bob - The Word Issue 79 - September 2009



ROBERT WYATT'S HOUSE IS RIGHT IN the middle of the Lincolnshire town of Louth, yet it's protected enough by its thick walls and beautifully tended garden to feel like it's in the middle of nowhere. It's only when I spot the tiny ceramic head - complete with a pair of glasses and a badge (Robin - The Boy Wonder!) - that sits almost unnoticed by the front door that I know for sure I have the right place. I can't imagine many other residents displaying a similar sense of the absurd. Inside the front door, just to the left, is Wyatt's studio. There's a crisply melodic jazz record playing, keyboards dotted around and a grand piano in the corner. A soft breeze rolls in from the road, rustling the curtains. Wyatt rolls down the corridor dressed all in black, his hair long and swept back, his beard trimmed and white as snow. Around him, every wall is covered with paintings - his wife Alfie is an artist and lyricist - and drawings and artworks. A cushion embroidered with the cover of his 1984 EP collection sits by the telephone. In the breakfast room there's a stack of vinyl under the CD player that I'm powerfully drawn to but never get to flick through as we move swiftly on to the garden where we sit around a big table under a cherry tree. Alfie's mother, Irena, who lived here too, died suddenly a few days ago and a huge bunch of white lilies has been placed on her favourite chair.

"There's some of me that absolutely wishes I'd either had a lobotomy or not gone to bloody grammar school," Wyatt says, a cup of tea at his elbow. "Those schools are meant to be such great institutions, but I hated the whole experience. Provincial grammar-school boys are absurdly pretentious creatures. I've always tried to match up to the art that I loved, to get that into my music. Had it not been for that desire I would have very, very happily picked up from Eddie Cochran and Neil Sedaka and just done the very best, simplest pop songs I could. I love Ray Davies and Pete Townshend and I think if I could have not thought about it all so much I would have had a very happy life."

Wyatt loves a well-crafted popular song, so I ask if he can't write them or simply doesn't want to.

"Oh, I do *try* to make normal records," he says. "I get very crestfallen when



> Zoom

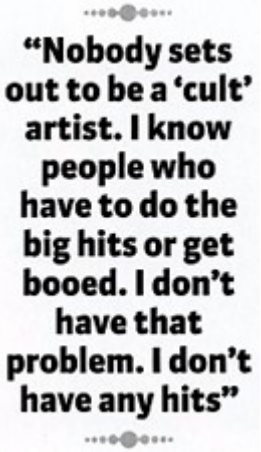
people say, 'That's a lovely song, Robert, it's just not pop as we know it...'"

NOW 64, WYATT IS A TRUE CULT FIGURE, SOMEONE who stands for more than just the music he makes. His parents were interested in art and politics and music - "They had garlic and pasta and olive oil *years* before it was popular!" - and he grew up with the idea that art was something that would repay the time you invested in understanding it.

"I didn't understand modern jazz or modern art," he says, "but I was *open* to it all." The first music he loved was on his parents'78s of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears ("He had a *lovely* light vibrato"); later he bunked off school to listen to Indian classical music and bebop. Music was always pointing the way forward.

"Ornette Coleman said there was no such thing as a wrong note," he laughs. "That *really* excited me! What *was* a wrong note? What would it sound like?"

Wyatt has been making his own music for the past 46 years, ever since he joined the Daevid Allen Trio in 1963. A year later he formed The Wilde Flowers with Kevin Ayers. In 1966 the two went on to form that most delicately prog of all prog legends, Soft Machine. Eighteen months later they were touring America with Jimi Hendrix.



"Oh God, that ridiculous late-'60s idea that there was 'progressive' music," he says now, half grinning, half frowning. "How stupid to think you could be *better*, more progressive than Haydn or Charlie Parker or John Lee Hooker. What *twats* these people were. There is no progression in music or art. There's change and different people being happy in different ways, but that's it."

In June 1973, aged 28, Wyatt fell from a third-floor window during a party for Gong's Gilli Smyth. He broke his back, meaning his career as a drummer was over (when he finds out the WORD photographer Sham is the same age, Wyatt immediately counsels him on staying on the ground floor at drunken parties), but a year later he recorded a performance of his hit version of The Monkees' *I'm A Believer* in his wheelchair and wearing what appears to be a denim dashiki for *Top Of The Pops*. Before it could be broadcast the footage was "lost" by the BBC and only found 30 years later.

"I wanted that record to make it plain that I wasn't part of any movement that thought it had grown out of pop music," he says.

Touring was over - his last major live appearance in London was recorded and finally released as *Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8 September 1974* a full 31 years after it happened. The years in between have seen seven albums - and as many compilations - of Wyatt's songs, each one endlessly inventive and full of incredible, individual ideas about how rock and pop and jazz might have sounded if history had only worked out differently, been kinder *or* crueller. Though the records feature friends like Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera and Paul Weller, he works primarily at home, on his own.

"I find being in any specialist group a bit claustrophobic," he says. "But sitting around with musicians is better than sitting around with other people in wheelchairs talking about urinary problems. What's really happened is as I've *physically* retreated I've mentally gone out into the world, but I'm not broadminded musically, I plough a furrow the same as anybody does. Making the music is a lonely place, but even more so in a group than on your own. In a group you have to negotiate the traffic otherwise you'll crash, but if it's an empty road then you don't need to worry."



> Zoom

Do you know where this music comes from, I ask.

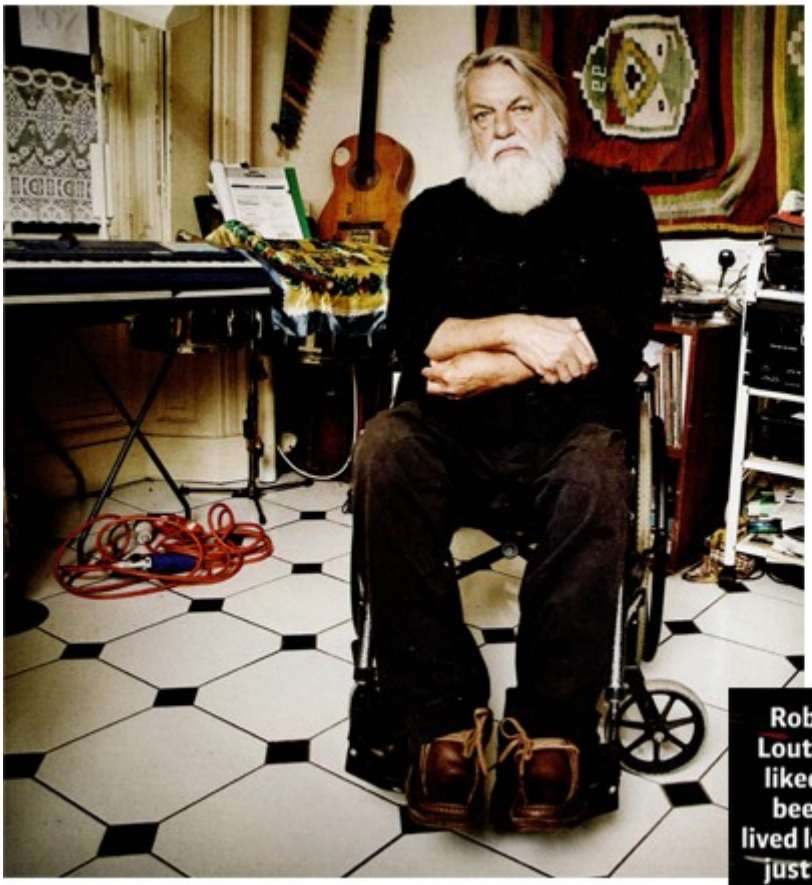
"Not really," he says, turning the now empty cup over in his hands. "It's doesn't feel like self-expression or invention. It's more like turning on a rusty tap and seeing what happens. But then you have to monitor it, editing what comes out until you don't wince when you hear it. You are on your own just as you are when you dream - you might meet people in your dreams but you can't get to them when you wake up. There is a *landscape*, a place I go, it's an aural landscape. There are harmonic skies of different hues, violet and green and blue. I hear harmonies like that and I see melodic lines as little sort of Giacometti, wiry things, drawings, but it's a living place, the whole place is alive and specific to me."

IT HAS BEEN 26 YEARS SINCE WYATT LAST TROUBLED the pop charts. *Shipbuilding* - later described by Elvis Costello as "the best lyrics I've ever written" - was a brilliant choice of song, a political folk piece given a jazz treatment, with this beautiful waver of a voice, this tremulous tenor, floating over the top. An *Old Grey Whistle Test* clip from 1983 shows Wyatt looking like Fidel Castro, his eyes pulled tight shut as he sings this "piece of completely escapist light entertainment". He has never rubbed up as close to the mainstream again. "

"No!" he laughs. "But as a democrat I accept that people like stuff I don't like. I always used to think you can like what you like, but if you like Cliff Richard you're *wrong* - but not any more. I was completely wrong about that; I think he's a very nice man, a good guy and he's managed his career immaculately. I saw him at the Royal Command show with The Shadows [in December 2008] doing *Move It* and they were just *terrific*. I'm glad I've lived long enough to realise how good that stuff is. Same with Chuck Berry - I never liked him at all, but he's wonderful. Wherever I've not liked mainstream culture I've been wrong. I've learned that, on the whole, people are right - if they like something it's because it's *good*".

In 2001 Wyatt curated the Meltdown season at the Royal Festival Hall. Brett Anderson, Elvis Costello, The Residents and Gorky's Zygotic Mynci all appeared. This summer he was back on stage at his hero Ornette Coleman's own event. "Jazz is a magical idiom," he says. "It has the visceral physicality of dance music, but it features people from other cultures let loose on European instruments - pianos, trumpets, trombones, saxophones -

doing things with them they weren't designed to do. Fats Waller reinvented the piano. Louis Armstrong reinvented the trumpet. Jazz has this incredible *richness*..."



Robert Wyatt at home in Louth: "Wherever I've not liked the mainstream I've been wrong. I'm glad I've lived long enough to realise just how good people like Chuck Berry actually are."

> Zoom

Meltdown is the perfect platform for someone like Wyatt, somewhere that every interest can be pursued. In the garden I mention how much I enjoyed the clip of him on stage with David Gilmour, reading Roger Waters' part from *Comfortably Numb* from a sheet of paper, like he'd never heard the song before. Gilmour looked delighted. "Ha! Well, David's *free*" Wyatt says. "He can do all the old hits, just not as we know them, but he does them. That works for him, he sees his history as a good thing, it gives him a secure base to go wherever he wants."

Would you have liked to have been in a huge band like his?

"I don't know," he says. "I'm glad the way things have worked out. I'm not on the road, so I can concentrate on new songs. I have time to work and I enjoy the freedom I have now, unencumbered by entourage and career structure."

"That *ridiculous* '60s notion of 'progressive' music. How can you be more progressive than Hayden or John Lee Hooker?"

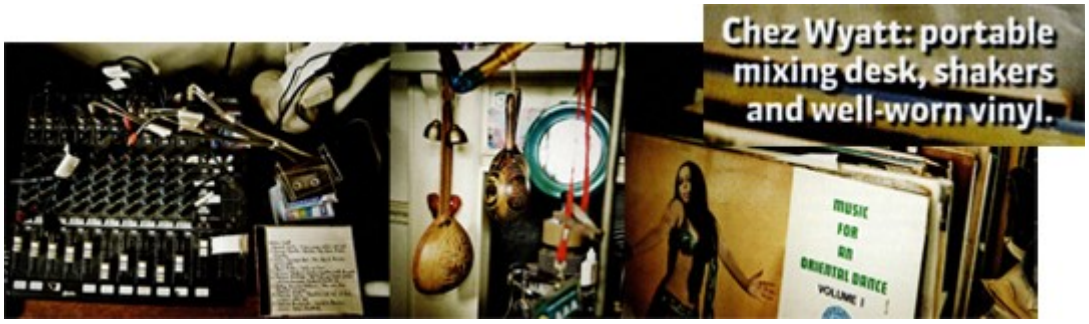
"Whatever it is they want," he says, "I'm very careful to try to thwart them at every step of the way. I don't want to be cornered. People say they can always tell my voice, so one day I'll release a record called something like *The Lost Tapes Of East Van Solihull* and I'll do a series of songs in other people's voices. I'll start with PJ Proby and move out from there. But nobody sets out to be a 'cult' artist - I certainly didn't. I know people who go on the road and if they don't do the big hits they get booed, and that must be terrible. I don't have that problem as I don't have any big hits, but that's OK. That's freed me up."

THE SUN HAS DROPPED AND THE TAXI TAKING US back to Market Rasen station sits idling outside. What is it that keeps you going, I ask as I pack up my bag.

"I suppose I always want another try at getting it right," he says, pulling on his white beard. "There are all these ideas left in the head - that's what keeps me going. I was brought up to think artists should behave badly because they were artists, but that's crap. Coltrane and Eric Dolphy behaved impeccably. I thought that behaving badly, getting drunk and being appalling and embarrassing was part of the licence that went with the musician's gig. Well, I was wrong and in my life I have had to learn first, then live. Even now there is lots of stuff I regret about how I am as a person, but, y'know, I'm not dead yet. There's still time to get it right."

A box-set of all nine Robert Wyatt albums plus his EPs is available now on Domino.

Story by Rob Fitzpatrick - Portrait by Shamil Tanna.



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An Audience with... Robert Wyatt - Uncut N° 242 - March 2009

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

ROBERT WYATT

The multi-talented former Soft Machinist answers back about war, whisky, Red Wedge and 'Wyatting'. *Interview by John Lewis*





Robert Wyatt is sitting in the front room of his townhouse in Louth, Lincolnshire. He's slightly exhausted after having some of his grandchildren over for Christmas. 'What kind of granddad am I?' he ponders. 'Well, I can be jumped on and forced to do anything. I just sort of sit there and I hope to accumulate gravitas by not showing resistance.'

But the 64-year-old is certainly not entering his dotage; instead he's enjoying what he describes as 'an Indian summer of work'. In the past 18 months he's collaborated with Billy Bragg, Hot Chip, Mike Skinner, David Gilmour, French pop god Bertrand Burgalat, Brazilian singer Monica Vasconcelos, German electronica maverick Barbara Morgenstern, David Byrne/Brian Eno and his old Soft Machine sidekick Kevin Ayers (the last two virtual collaborations in cyberspace). Oh, he's also released the acclaimed *Comicopera*, and found time to oversee the re-release of almost his entire back-catalogue on Domino.

"Still, it all feels so silly being an artist when the Israeli army are sending tanks into Gaza," he says, in a rare moment of glumness. "It seems such a whimsical occupation. What did you do in the war, daddy? Oh, I expressed my deep melancholy. Yeah, right. Fuck off!"

You always seem to have a cigarette on the go. How has it affected your voice?
Garry, Manchester
Oh yeah, they've probably knocked out about half an octave from my top range. But I'm quite happy now singing at the lower end. It's nice down there. The weird thing is that, although people say I've got a high voice, it's never actually been that high-pitched. Technically, I'm a baritone [starts playing a middle C on the piano and sings along]. I can get to about a fifth above middle C. But it's a light voice. It's a bit like Gerry Mulligan, he plays the baritone sax so lightly that you don't notice how deep the notes are. Same with Lester Young on the tenor- people think he's playing alto. It's very deceptive.

You were at the launch of Red Wedge in 1985, which surprised a lot of people. Why?
Sam, Swansea
I thought the people involved were really nice. Billy Bragg, Paul Weller, Jerry Dammers, Jimmy Sommerville - I like them all very much and I wanted to express solidarity with them. Billy is a practical person. He deals with what can be done in the real world with the real House of Lords, and so on.

Politically, I'm somewhere else, in some strange dreamland. But, occasionally, I live in the real world, too, and I also want to make things better. My involvement was counterproductive, of course. I think it was *The Sun* who discredited Red Wedge, saying, "It pretends to be a reasonable: democratic organisation, but it's supported by that communist Robert Wyatt..." So, sorry lads! I'll get back to Twickenham and twiddle my knobs...

When was the last time music made you cry?
Bertrand Burgalat
The tenor sax solo on "Stolen Moments" by Oliver Nelson had me hot behind the eyes when I heard it the other day. It's such an angelic and singing thing. Actually, Bertrand's music gets me a bit

STAR QUESTION



You covered the Chic song, "At Last I Am Free". How did you come across that?
Paul Weller
In the late '70s, the only radio station I listened to, apart from Radio Moscow, was Radio London, because they used to play a lot of black dance music, and I was just staggered by how good it was. Most people who listen to dance music do so communally, on a dancefloor, but I was listening on my own, in isolation, on headphones. There was much beauty in that stuff, even the ballads like "At Last I Am Free", which some people regarded as album fillers. Sometimes the production on those disco tracks was so polished that you can miss that it was actually a very human music with a lot of frailty. So my version of Chic is a bit like, say, Cilla Black doing Bacharach – it's done in a much more gauche way, but it brings out something else in the tune.

teary sometimes. He contacted Alfie to write some lyrics for him, which was great. Then I ended up singing on one of his tracks. Bertrand is a real one-off. It's not an English phenomenon, the Serge Gainsbourg-style writer, producer, auteur, but he's brilliant at it.

What's your favourite Dionne Warwick song?
Evan Parker
People will be surprised that Evan, a great, avant-garde saxophonist, is also a big Dionne Warwick fan, someone who filled in some of the gaps in my Bacharach collection. But the thing about musicians is that they're not corralled into ideological ghettos the way their fans are. "You'll Never Get To Heaven (If You Break My Heart)" comes to mind [*starts singing the entire chorus*}. It's an absolute knockout, a real bossa nova thing, but with wonderful harmonies. There aren't many song writers who match up to the great days of Cole Porter and Gershwin and so on, but Bacharach does.

There was a rumour that you were working with Mike Skinner - is that happening?
Jamaal, New York
We did record some stuff, but I don't think it was finished in time to go on his album. He came up to Lincolnshire, just him and his box of tricks. We went into the studio where I recorded Dondestan and other things, and sang on a track he'd written, which was really good I met him when we were both shortlisted for the Mercurys - along with Franz Ferdinand, Amy Winehouse, that nice English blues singer Joss Stone and The Croutons, or whatever they're called. They're all very good, but I thought he should win, as he'd already reached a mature, innovative musical identity. Even the way he speaks on record betrays a wonderful sense of musicality.

STAR QUESTION



I often recall something we would from time to time discuss over cups of tea in our happy little Dulwich home that, in our dreams of when pop success might come our way, we would all buy houses in warm and sunny spots abroad. I was the only one to do this. I wonder why? ***Kevin Ayers***
Kevin was born in Malaya and spent his childhood swimming in idyllic rock pools, so I can understand that he wanted to move somewhere hot and Mediterranean. I never did. Alfie [*Benge, Wyatt's wife*] would quite like to move to Spain, but I'm never really aware of my surroundings. I'm quite happy here. It's not that I'm particularly proud of being English, although I'd happily counteract any idiotic BNP notion of Englishness with a list of things that I love that just happen to be English, be it our love of nature or Winnie The Pooh or The Beatles or The Unthank Sisters or TV comedies like *The IT Crowd*. But geography really isn't that important to me.

What was your tipple of choice when you were a drinker?

Simon, Nottingham
Towards the end of my drinking career, I'd moved on from vodka and whisky. I think, stuck on my own, with nothing to live for, my desert island barrel would be very, very good whisky. But, about a year-and-a-half ago, I was advised to go to AA meetings, which I did. In terms of ticking the boxes, I'd definitely become an alcoholic, which means that when you start drinking you can't stop. I went for months and months of meetings, and I've completely stopped now. I do miss it, but I also apologise profusely if I have behaved appallingly to anyone over the last 50 years when I was drunk.

What do you love about Winnie The Pooh?
Pierre, Bournemouth
I maintain that the greatest crime committed by America - with the possible exception of the carpet-bombing of Laos - was the Disneyfication of Winnie The Pooh. But the characters in those original books are wonderful. I relate to Pooh, the way you can almost hear his brain struggling, the pleasure he gets from articulating such simple thoughts. Then there's Eeyore, who is such a splendidly depressive figure, the kind of person Hollywood would never create. Most of all, I like the sly dig at people who profess to be wise in the form of Owl, or "Wol", as he spells it. I think that anybody, whenever they look at a silly judge or priest or mullah or rabbi or politician, or any stupid bearded git who gives himself gravitas - including myself! - should remember that there's a bit of Wol there.


With Billy Bragg at the Red Wedge launch, 1985

With Loudon Wainwright III circa '74, and *(inset above)* with Brian Eno and Jools Holland at the Mercury Music Prize awards, September 2004

British rock'n'roll drummers - Charlie Watts, Keith Moon, Mitch Mitchell, Ginger Baker, yourself - were always frustrated jazz drummers. Discuss.
Charley, Dundee
Well, I'm not sure. I don't think they need or should go together. I think that rock musicians tend to make clunky and old-fashioned jazz drummers, and jazz drummers tend to make rather effete and precious rock drummers. I don't think they're that good at each other's jobs, on the whole. Ringo Starr was happy doing whatever he was happy doing, and was all the better for it. However, Ginger Baker was a jazz drummer who crossed over: I saw him play with the Graham Bond Organisation, featuring Dick Heckstall-Smith, and it was an absolutely phenomenal band. Same with Mitch Mitchell: I'm a bit biased because we were quite close friends, but he sailed perfectly from playing in Georgie Fame-style jazz bands to heavy rock with Hendrix. But with, say, John Bonham and Alan White - I don't hear much jazz in either of them but, gosh, you don't get too many better rock drummers than either of them.

STAR QUESTION



Which jazz musician influenced you the most?

Phil Manzanera, Roxy Music

Melodically, it's Miles Davis. Whenever I'm writing a tune or improvising, I think, 'Would Miles think that's a stupid note?' And if he would, I won't use it. That's the Miles in my head, of course, a tiny figure compared to the giant in real life. I also love Charlie Mingus' drummer, Dannie Richmond. But Jimmy Cobb is my biggest influence as a drummer. He plays on *Kind Of Blue*, and his style is essential to why that LP achieves lift-off. He formed a way of playing ride cymbals with the Count Basie band that was very even, no fucking around, just 1, 2, 3, 4. He'll put in the odd Roy Haynes-style crack or wallop, but his skill was, as Philly Joe Jones said, about "appreciating the length of the note you're playing". That sounds odd for a drummer to say, but it's very profound.

What was Ivor Cutler like?

Karen, Tooting, London

I'd known him for some time - we'd often get solo artists to support us at Soft Machine gigs, so it would be Loudon Wainwright or John Williams or Ivor. We became great friends. He used to visit us, almost weekly, when we lived in Twickenham, as he used to visit Kew Gardens with his mate, Phyllis, and they used to stop off at our place for sandwiches and cups of tea and listen to Bulgarian folk music, then off they'd go. He was wonderful company, funny, clever, very entertaining. He did me a big favour by singing on *Rock Bottom*, as he never usually sings other people's words. The song he sang required a kind of Scots Jamaican accent, which only he could do. He was very polite about it. He only left out one syllable.

How do you feel about inspiring the concept of "Wyatting" - where pranksters hijack pub jukeboxes and play "difficult" records to baffled patrons?

Richard, Crosby, Merseyside

I wouldn't do it. I've never tried to get myself heard where I'm not wanted. I just make records for the kind of people who like the kind of records I make. It's as simple as that. I've never had any need to reach beyond that or to make people listen to me or to expand my audience. There's plenty of music for everybody. If I was in a pub I'd put on a Girls Aloud record, or whatever anyone else wanted to hear. The last time I put stuff on a jukebox. I put on some Ray Charles. I wouldn't have thought that was offensive to anybody!

STAR QUESTION



What approach were you taking to music-making while making *Old Rottenhat* and the "Work In Progress" EP?

Alexis Taylor, Hot Chip

By that time, towards the mid-'80s, I was listening to Radio Moscow and going to Kurdish and Palestinian Liberation meetings. I was unsure if other musicians would go along with where I'd got to, politically and didn't want to embarrass them into playing tunes where they disapproved of the lyrics. We were short of funds and I was trying to do things almost entirely on my own. There may have been a bit of paraplegic politics in it, in honesty, to see what I could do unaided. So the music was simple, reduced to bare bones, and ideas and lyrics were distilled to their essence.

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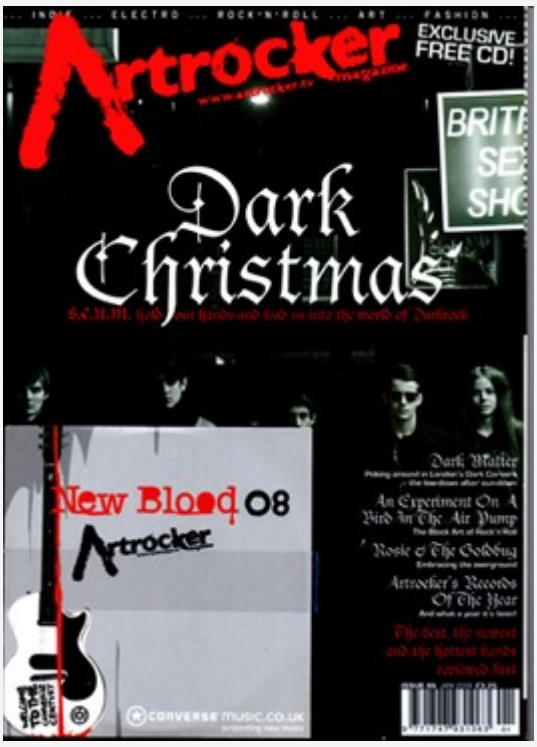
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Robert Wyatt Revelatory Revolutionary - Artrocker - issue 85 - January 2009

ROBERT WYATT REVELATORY REVOLUTIONARY



Robert Wyatt was born in the south of England at the end of the Second World War and therefore probably qualifies to be your grandad. He may be the oldest living and currently recording credible artist to be featured in this column. The bulk of his albums have just been reissued by the cool folks at Domino Records, home of Franz Ferdinand and a ton of other Artrocker faves. Presented with nine albums (plus more not on Domino but equally as vital), how do you decide which ones to buy / blag / download / steal / ignore?? Ain't no search engine can help you better than the living breathing Hauser O'Brien who analyses Robert Wyatt's glittering career below.

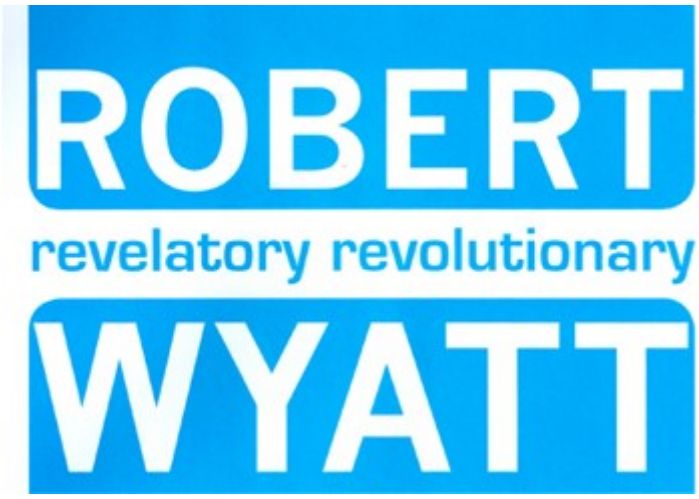
The Soft Machine (1968-1970) **The End Of An Ear** (1970)

In the late 1960s (mainly) English psych jazz rock avant gardeners Robert Wyatt (drums, vox), Kevin Ayers (bs, vox), Mike Ratledge (kybds), Hugh Hopper (bs) phoned up obscure cult deadpan cut-up author William S. Burroughs and asked him if they could nick the title of his abstract sci-fi novel follow up to Naked Lunch for the name of their band (which is more than I ever did). 'Yes' said Uncle Bill.

The first two Soft Machine albums featured a rapidly changing dreamscape mixture of out-of-step yet prescient pop songs from another world. Their curious melanges of music hall Beatles chansons, sad beatific balladeering, psychedelic rock, squeaky free improvised noise and far out jazz stylings, recorded mainly at the bottom of a muddy pond, fit right in there with the early Brits Floyd and kosmiches Faust. But with no guitar.

By the time of the cunningly titled 'Third' and, ahem, 'Fourth', they had lost pop monster Kevin Ayers and moved on to (vinyl) side-long improvisations, things of strangeness, beauty (and charm). Still with no guitar. Wyatt's incredibly rhythmic timekeeping backlined a driving pileup of revolution and beauty. The band inevitably became a self-indulgent wankfest - or an essential cog in the wheel of British progressive jazz fusion, depending on

how you look at it, after Wyatt left in 1970 to follow up work on his 'side project' solo album, 'The End Of An Ear'.



There's a reason he billed himself as an 'out of work pop singer' you know. Removed from the apparently stifling band scenario Wyatt produced a stunning recording of great beauty, a collision of strange furry creatures, children's piano, wordless vocal cornets, spiralling ecstatic ritual, tension, release and full on tribute poems to his roots. Thudding stomping jazz-rock instrumentals, soundtracks to journeys into the back of his mind, 'The End Of An Ear' is a bridge between an age rooted in itself, the 1960s, and a body of work that is timeless and fruitful. While The Soft Machine created noise art, this bridge takes Wyatt's music into a world of weird pop. Join us. Still no guitars by the way.

Rock Bottom (1974)

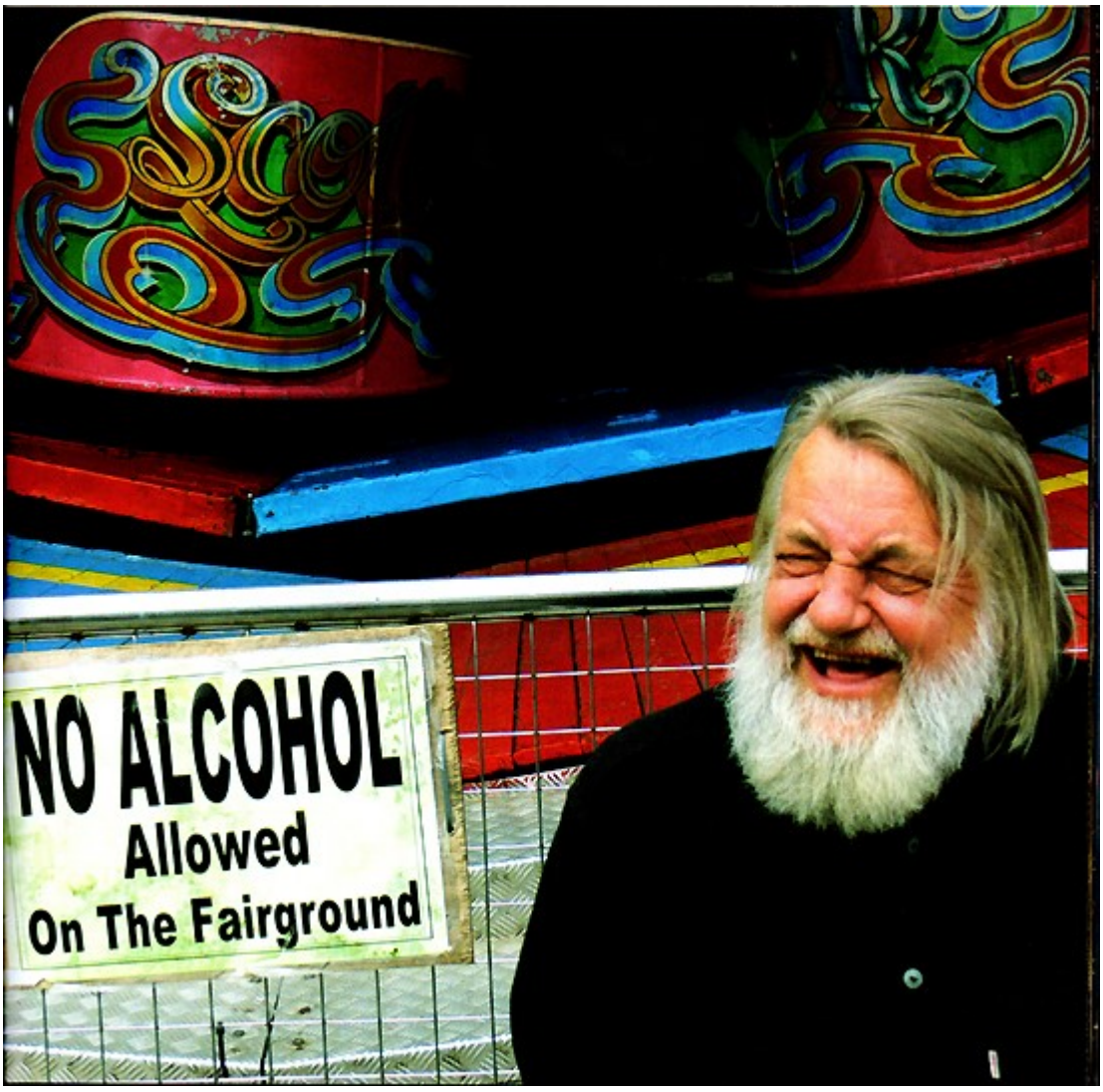
As any schoolboy knows, Robert Wyatt fell out of a window at a party in 1973 and has ever since been in a wheelchair. This would normally be a problem as using one's feet is usually considered to be integral to the process of drumming. However Mr Wyatt knows that drumming is not always about drums. As The Slits squawked, 'silence is a rhythm too'. And a piano is a set of 88 tuned drums. And a voice don't need no legs. And what a voice. We have to go on about his voice. Wyatt's voice. His unique timbre (you can always tell it's him). His southern accent. The way it swirls and dips and dives and wanders. The journeys around the world of music it takes, nabbing ideas from freeform doowop, sliding up a helter skelter to the stars, snatching a hook from a choirboy and swerving thru a muttering homeless hostel, ending up in a blues bar in the deep South with a chanting audience of African jazzers. Flying free, escaping the rules of normal vocalising. There before Bjork, a jazz voice made Artrock. This conceptual piece of communal personal exploration and grounds all Robert Wyatt's future work in a one-off template that probably is one of the closest examples of'art' representing 'life'. Or something. And one guitar, courtesy of hairy Tubular Bell Mike Oldfield, on one track, the stunning six minute closer, 'Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road', segueing away into the curious poetic Highland meanderings of Ivor Cutler. Rock Bottom also heralds the appearance of his muse, sleeve artist and co-worker Alfreda Benge, an unbroken thread throughout his work. If you want to know about how to make a personal statement, get this album. In the great seventies rock tradition, most of this album can be found in extended wild live versions on Domino release, Theatre Royal Drury Lane'.

Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (1975)

A game of two halves, 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard' comprises mostly a collection of covers. One of Wyatt's skills throughout his career is in reinterpreting other people's work (gotta be different - or better - or both). It doesn't matter a jot if you don't know the original version of Mongezi Feza's 'Sonia'. Just dig Wyatt's beatific shining vocal and the song's loping twisting rhythms. Kind of world art jazz rock. Not such an exciting personal experiment as it's predecessor, but still worthy nonetheless. And you can read into the word 'worthy' whatever you please.

Nothing Can Stop Us (1981)

And then it went on hold for a while. Wyatt wasn't to release another solo elpee until the middle 1980s. The only thing to keep the rabid fans at bay was a series of singles on Rough Trade cunningly created and curated to give credibility to this wonderful secret of English crumbling culture commentary. Wyatt cast off his vision and seer hat of the seventies and truly donned his political ideologue hat. The offkilter a capella (plus harmonium)barbershop quartet in a freaky hall of mirrors of 'Born Again Cretin' was a swerveball recognised by the artier postpunks. Chic's 'At Last I Am Free' is a weepy fragile eggshell. 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin", hails how the Bear beat former ally, the Beast of Berlin and heralds a multitude of left wing songs to come throughout Wyatt's future work including 'Red Flag' in case you didn't quite get the drift. 'Nothing Can Stop Us' is a primer in student revolution. In the eighties every student home had to have one. Now it's almost a missive from ancient history. During this period he had a hit with Elvis Costello's anti-Falklands War protest song, 'Shipbuilding', which can be found amongst a collection of EPs in this reissue frenzy.



Old Rottenhat (1985) **Dondestan** (1991) **Dondestan [Revisited]** (1993)

'Old Rottenhat' is a serious collection of perfect iron fist/velvet glove works. His gentle falsetto rides over undulating keyboards, singing of a message of revolution, anti-Western sentiment, left wing hooks all tied up with a bow of comradely whisting. Casio keyboards and drum machines wind down the road of excess, pointing out its failings and our duties. Every note, every harmony, every melody vital and pure. If you want church music but don't want religion, this is your bag.

'Dondestan (Revisited)' is a revised version of a previous album, released when the money ran out and then revisioned and reversioned by the revelatory revolutionary. Some

melancholia, some plangent loneliness, some agitation, a lot of ... space. Every note a winner, if you want to sit and weep to a ballad to the fallen, a paean to freedom, or a dark journey through your very soul. Still no guitars, by the way. Sorry about that.

Shleep (1997) **Cuckooland** (2003) **Comicopera** (2007)

And so, to the part where Captain Bob cheers up a bit, drops some of the revolutionary styling, and makes some darn pop music. With guitars. Really. Naturally not everything on his most recent three albums is upful and jumpin'. 'Shleep' passes like a dream, not surprisingly given old ambient pal and Artrocker hero Eno's involvement amongst a tribe of famous friends. Quite possibly the funniest Dylan tribute ever appears, in 'Blues In Bob Minor'. 'Cuckooland' is an excursion around the bars and musical styles of the world, smoky jazz, synth'd chorale, dramatic compositions that would happily sit amongst the characters of a David Lynch movie, while 'Comicopera' is perhaps one of the most, ahem, accessible albums of his lengthy career. Much more could, and should, be said about this incredible body of work. All you can do is go and explore. Pick up a smash hit collection ('His Greatest Misses' is a pretty good catch-all) or raid your local library. Smash and grab your cool friend's collection. Give Wyatt a listen. You'll be converted, convinced, or feel conned. Whichever way, every path is worth following.

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Robert Wyatt Interviewed: The Quietus Salutes An English Treasure - Thequietus.com - December 19th, 2008

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Quietus Artists Of 2008

Robert Wyatt Interviewed: The Quietus Salutes An English Treasure

In an in-depth interview, Robert Wyatt talks to Jonny Mugwump about his life and political beliefs, getting nervous when recording with Bjork, and the importance of imperfection in music

One of the highlights of the Quietus' year was Domino's reissuing of the entire Robert Wyatt solo back catalogue, an almighty treasure trove of delights from one of Britain's truly outstanding and unique artists. He is, of course, gifted with one of the most sublime and idiosyncratic voices that was a real pleasure to hear wafting from my telephone receiver bright and early one morning...

Are you an early riser Robert?

"As a matter of fact yes. I was up at 5 this morning."

What do you do - do you go straight to work?

"Oh, I'm just panicking. Dawn panic is my speciality. Then I get up and watch strange late night drifting into morning TV programs and then maybe I try and go to sleep again for another couple of hours, but I'll still be up at 7 or 8."

So what are your working hours then?

"Early to rise, early to bed - I work peasant hours. The first job I ever had was working in a forest where you have to be in the forest at 4.30 or 5 in the morning and you have to

get up in the dark. Obviously you have to finish when the light goes which in the winter can be as early as 3.30, and then lunchtime used to be about 9.30 in the morning. That's my time still. In them olden days [laughs] before artificial light, then people had to live by the daylight - I feel that I'm a throwback to more primitive times anyway."

Wyatt could be nothing other than English. He is a product of ancient traditions and the industrial revolution. His voice feels part of the landscape; of sweetly melancholy open fields and moorland. I offer that the English landscape is at its finest in the morning.

"Yes, it's quite a secretive place. The world is so very different in the morning. In cities, if you're coming home from somewhere you can hear echoing streets and when you see the first commuters going to work and you're totally distant from that - you feel part of a different world and that can be very magical."



And the voice, your singing style seems plugged into those older cultures that sometimes can become apparent in these moments...

"I try and strip away various habits and mannerisms which popular singing has acquired. Accidents and habits occur and so styles change, which is of course necessary. But the first songs I ever sang were Victorian adaptations of folk songs which isn't the same thing as folk songs themselves but this is what I grew up with. We had a friend called James Reeves who collected these kinds of songs and there was a political element to it in the first part of the 20th century, you know reclaiming people's culture and that kind of thing. It wasn't so overtly political, though, more implied in the mere fact of taking this culture seriously.

"When I try and sing it's like a process of elimination and I try and avoid doing anything that I don't think is necessary. I feel like I work in a very primitive way. I like to know what the notes are, what the words are and what the most effective way of getting them across is. It's important that I try not to perform in an actorly kind of way and obviously some people must find that easy to work with. I try and recede as a character and almost disappear behind the note and the word rather than stand in the front trying to wave myself at everybody."

I suggest that this might partly be down to rock being the more minor influence in Robert's history. Even when touring with Hendrix, Soft Machine at their loudest were at the very least one half jazz outfit and that's certainly the closest

that he's ever sailed to those shores.

"Well, In the mid 60s I was in a dance band, singing and drumming and I was actually trying to sound like Van Morrison. When I hear these tapes if it wasn't for the fact that my name was on it I really wouldn't know it was me. I did try and do that stuff and never very convincingly and I didn't start finding me own voice until I started singing my own songs and it's not even a decision, it's just what happens after that."

And, going back to your voice, you've collaborated with many artists from quite a range of genres.

"I never seek collaborations other with than the musicians who play on my own records. I get asked often but I don't always say yes but I am surprised by some of the people who ask me to work with them. And I don't see any barriers between genres as such. You know, if you compare John Lennon to Mendelssohn it's quite simple that Lennon is a better composer and I just like him more. It doesn't matter that one is classical and the other is pop. But I'm always surprised at who wants to work with me, always flattered. And it's strange as I don't feel like a particularly flexible musician but it obviously suits some people and it's always nice for me as it stretches me and puts me into musical situations that I wouldn't have been able to think of myself."

One of my favourite vocals of yours was with mid the mid 90s pastoral techno outfit Ultramarine - the 'Kingdom' single and then further vocals on the sadly forgotten but truly excellent United Kingdoms album.

"Oh yes. Geoff Travis from Rough Trade introduced them to me and they gave me some lyrics that they had found which is in fact one of the earliest songs I'd ever sung. They were from the middle of the nineteenth century, early industrial revolutionary songs which was funny as what Ultramarine were doing was so new. I came up with a tune that would work with them and sang it and just thought I would give it a go and they put it out on their record."



And you had a recent notable collaboration with Bjork on the Medulla album. She's somebody who I feel you have many similarities with. You both tap into older traditions and skim across genres and manage to make highly idiosyncratic pop music that no matter what more experimental influences are at work still remains pop.

"Well thank you, yes. I was very touched and amazed that Bjork got in touch with us and that she came down here to record for a weekend. I just sang everything I could and put it all down on tape and in some ways wish I had sung less but I was very nervous so I just sang my little socks off. And it was lovely to have her in the house, it was very magical and she was everything you could have wished for. Her approach to things is just so entirely unlimited and open."

I think something that marks out your career is a sense of intimacy and the feel of them having a home-recorded quality Does this go back to Rock Bottom and the situation you were forced into because of the accident [when Robert fell out of a window and broke his back leaving him permanently wheelchair-bound] or was this a more conscious decision and change in style anyway form your previous work with both Soft Machine and Matching Mole?

"Well, Alfie was working in Venice on a film set [Don't Look Now] and I went with her and she had a keyboard which is what I wrote the majority of Rock Bottom on and then we got home and I was living in her little flat and I just had a notebook, a tape recorder and a

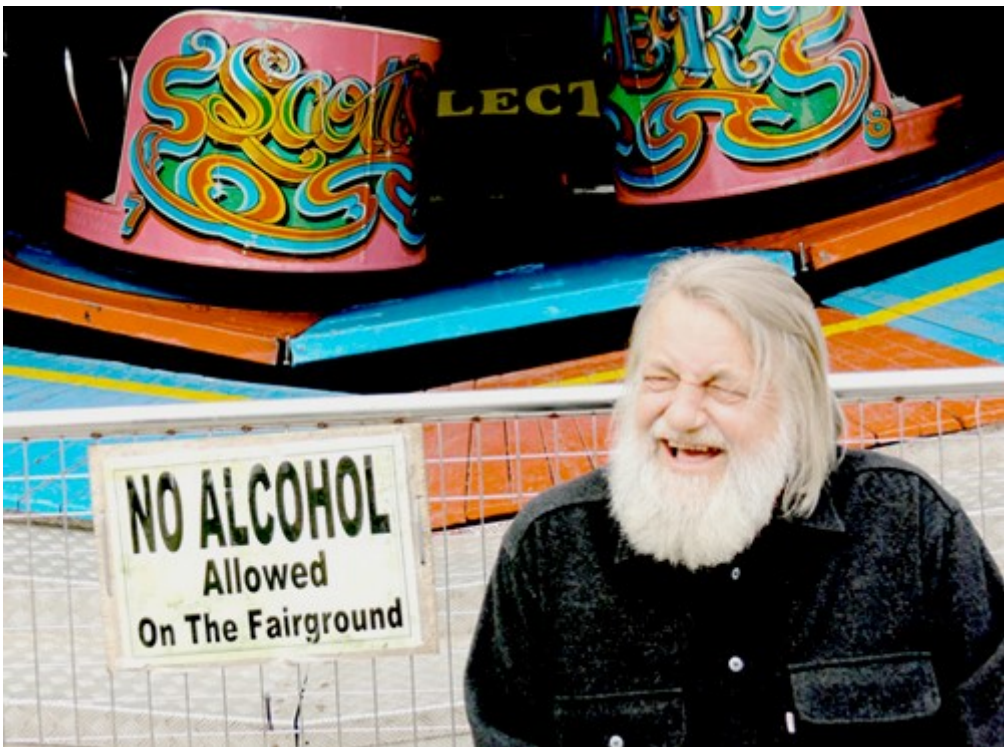
keyboard, music was much simpler those days [laughs]. People assume it was written after the accident but that's not the case at all. But essentially, I can't remember which parts were written when but it's a lot more detached in my mind from the real life circumstances. People tend to think its a lot more anecdotal than it actually is and that it was about my physical circumstances but its not as straightforward as that. I was only affected in the obvious sense of not being able to play drums or have a band anymore and in the end it was liberating as I had the freedom of not being in a group. And this is all good for the record, as you have to pay attention to the keyboard, the singing and the songs.

"Paul Klee has this analogy of a tree taking root in the soil and taking up water and chemicals and it comes out with whatever plants and leaves its going to come out with, depending on the chemicals. But also if the tree is an apple tree then it's going to come out with apples. The hospital experience and coming out of there was a mind over matter thing, though, and in the end I felt like it was just another silly practical thing I had to deal with. Obviously I had to get used to being in a wheelchair and everything, but otherwise I didn't let it get to me."

In the 70s your music began to become more explicitly political (although not entirely so). Why did this come about?

"Well I had always been politically motivated anyway but in the 70s I found a vicious drift to the right in the press and in politics. I'd been brought up in Post War Britain and this felt like a very positive time as it seemed that fascism had been beaten and we had a free health service and free education systems. I was born into this, so to see this return of nastiness and racism shocked me quite a bit. As things drifted more to the right I drifted more to the left.

"On the whole, I feel that the right wing forces have won and the left wing failed or fell into self-contradiction or whatever but I still feel a lot of victories were won for what we were fighting for. There's much less colour prejudice now, more tolerance and things like fair trade are a lot more prominent - animal welfare and things like that are no longer the preserve of fringe academia and are part of a daily debate. A person like Nelson Mandela being released was very important. But the fact is that the world is still run by rich investors and the old colonial countries in their guise of super-powers are still screwing the Third World and hiding behind this façade of bringing democracy to the heathen masses, which is obviously really depressing."



Did you hear about the recent BNP thing when all their identities were revealed online?

"Yeah I found that quite entertaining in a way. I mean they're not a serious political force but they were very scary in the 80s. I love the way that the bloke who runs it suddenly says: 'Well now you can see that we're in all in respectable jobs like teaching and the police', and everybody else is 'Well yeah, that's actually the problem mate' and they're bizarrely trying to show that they're not just working class or something. What a funny bunch. I mean they like to be exclusive in the old-fashioned sense and you know if they want to set up some peculiar incestuous whites-only enclave [laughing] then let them y'know, just don't let them anywhere near any kind of governmental system."

Your music is always in motion. It is always you but you restlessly play around, using familiar and unfamiliar musicians.

"I don't play live once I've done a song and 'cos I don't perform it over and over again for another six months, it's one way to keep myself interested. Even though I record in Phil's [Manzera] studio, the albums are homemade; they're not machine-tooled to the point of mechanical abstracts. I like paintings and I like seeing sticky marks on the painting so you can see the physical reality within the canvas. That can be a huge problem within classical music where the perfection becomes clinical. It's almost counter-productive to clean off every little speck of dust. Music doesn't come from a conscious narrative thing – it's not an analytical thing or at least it isn't for me - it comes from somewhere different like the world of dreams. You see, I like the fact that you're a person in sound trying to reach somebody else through sound and if you lose the imperfections you lose that human touch I think."

Jonny Mugwump

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Art-Rock's Grumpy Comedian - Mojo - december 2008



ART-ROCK'S GRUMPY COMEDIAN

By his own admission, Robert Wyatt's career has been a summation of his influences, from the outer reaches of jazz, to Ray Charles, Buddy Holly, and music from across the globe. "The underlying ideology of the kind of rock I was involved in was that we started out simple and we got dead clever" he says. "But I was brought up with dead clever. Since then I've been trying to get really simple."

As a child, Wyatt was encouraged to explore literature and music by his left-leaning, culturally enlightened parents. As a young drummer and singer he played in Canterbury band The Wilde Flowers and established himself in Soft Machine from 1966 until 1971. When he fell while climbing out of a window at a party in 1973 and became paralysed from the waist down, it spelt the end for the new line-up of his band Matching Mole, and his career as a kit drummer.

But luckily he was also a talented vocalist, keyboard player and songwriter, which he demonstrated on his first post-accident solo album, *Rock Bottom*, in 1974. Since then, his output has been a source of delight and fascination; his left-wing politics have never been far from the surface, but his consternation at human behaviour has been balanced by a peculiar *Joie de vivre*, and since the'90s an increasing number of his lyrics have been written by his partner - and album sleeve designer - Alfreda Benge. His choice of musical collaborators has included Ivor Cutler, Paul Weller, Annie Whitehead and Hugh Hopper, and he has additionally guested with such artists as Ben Watt, Ultramarine and, most recently, French popster Bertrand Burgalat.

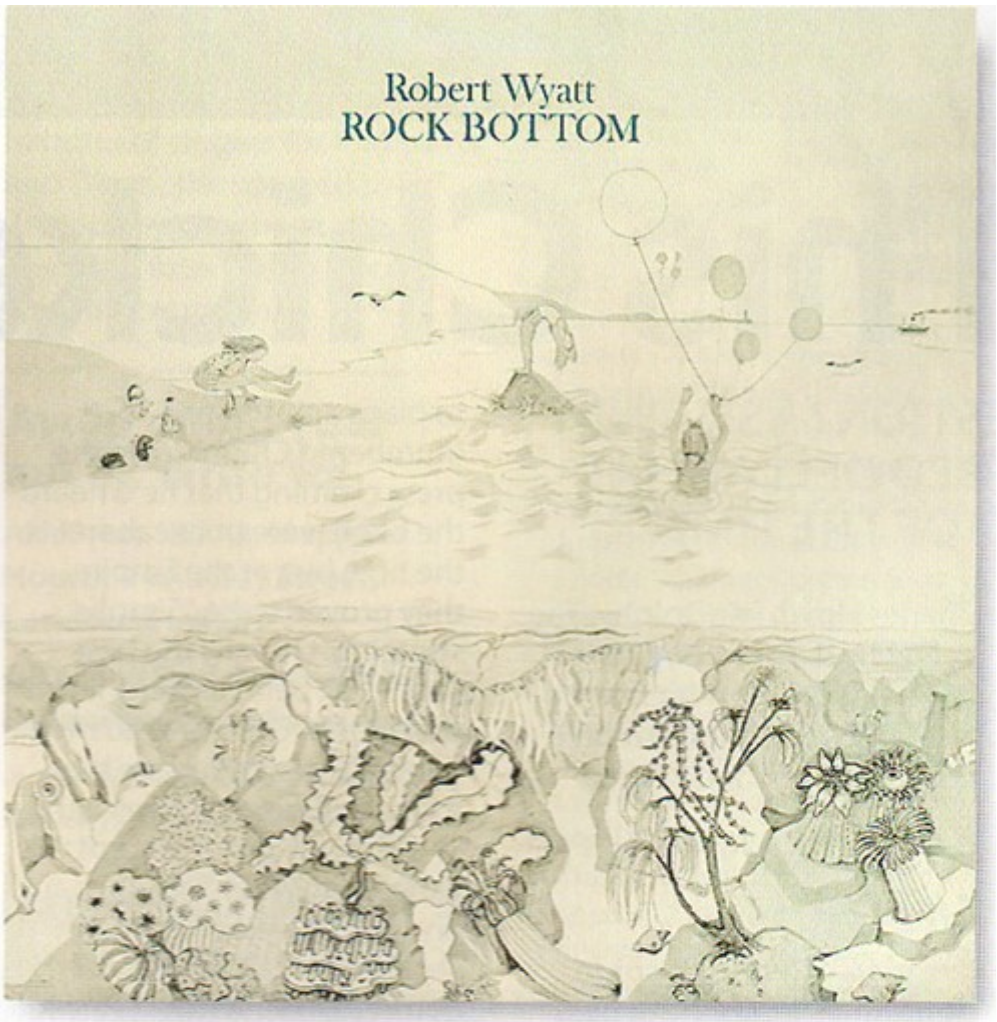
With his back catalogue reissued this month by the Domino label, it's time again to listen to Wyatt's lisping, pure-toned vocal style, memorably described by Ryuichi Sakamoto as the "saddest voice in the world".



Broadcasting from the gnome service: Robert Wyatt, one of the good guys.

Robert Wyatt

ART-ROCK'S GRUMPY COMEDIAN.
BY MIKE BARNES



1 Robert Wyatt
Rock Bottom

VIRGIN 1974, REISSUE DOMINO REWIGCD40 2008, £12

You say: "It's a musical trip into neverland and beyond." Mystic, mojo4music

An album of great originality, freewheeling musical invention and broad emotional range – albeit fed through Wyatt's allusive lyrical lexicon – and with some lovely tunes, *Rock Bottom* is a desert island disc for the Wyatt aficionado and deserves to be heard by everyone. Although inextricably linked to, and recorded after, Wyatt's accident, all the songs were composed beforehand. Produced by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, it's a luxuriant world of childlike innocence – going back even further on the pre-speech syllables of Alifib – evoking a peculiar mix of joy and unease. Mike Oldfield, bass guitarist Richard Sinclair and drummer Laurie Allen all make telling contributions.



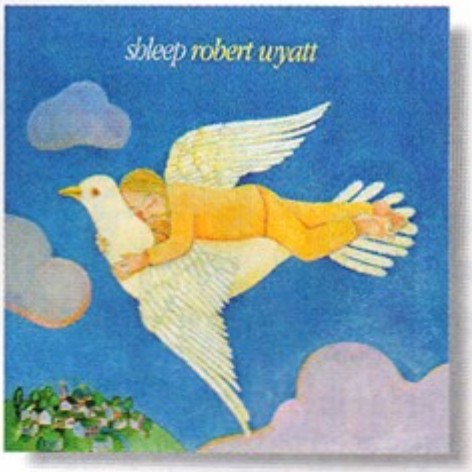
3 Robert Wyatt

Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

VIRGIN 1975, REISSUE DOMINO REWIGCD41 2008, £12

You say: "A blissful record, a favourite since its release." David Squires, mojo4music

Darker than *Rock Bottom*, *Ruth* is hallmarked by brooding, melancholy songs and instrumentals. On Soup Song, the hapless protagonist hopes a "tummy ache will bring you to your knees" as Gary Windo spits out an acidic tenor solo. The violent, symbiotic relationship between the characters in Team Spirit reads like Samuel Beckett, while Brian Eno's treatments and George Khan's wig-lifting sax solo create an energised, blasted soundscape. Respite comes with trumpeter Mongezi Feza's joyous instrumental, Sonia, and the hypnotic, incantatory Solar Flares.



2 Robert Wyatt

Shleep

HANNIBAL 1997, REISSUE DOMINO REWIGCD45, £12

You say: "Beautiful, powerful collection, cohesively satisfying." WyattHarp, mojo4music

Wyatt's first for six years, *Shleep* was a revelation, a warm-blooded collection of songs, and lighter in mood than much of his '80s work. There was more of a pop sensibility on show, especially on Heeps Of Sheeps, written with Alfreda Benge and Brian Eno, and an unusually upbeat song about insomnia. The Duchess is a deliciously droll portrait of Benge featuring improvising saxophonist Evan Parker, and Blues In Bob Minor is a nod of sorts to Dylan's Subterranean Home-sick Blues. Wyatt had rediscovered the cornet, which he plays in animated fashion on September The Ninth.



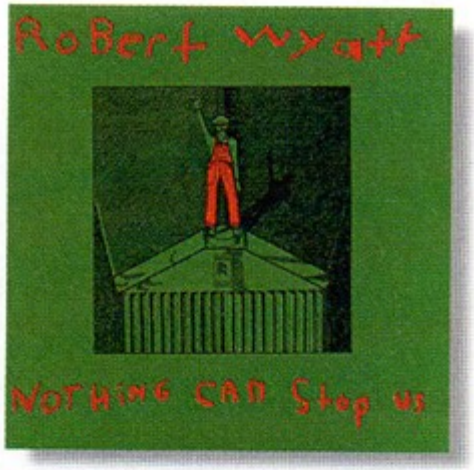
4 The Soft Machine

Vols. 1&2

PROBE 1968/9, REISSUE CHISWICK CDWIKD920 1989 £12.48

You say: "The Softs at their best, I love his drumming." Matt Harvey, via e-mail

Given his later solo career, it's fairly easy to overlook Wyatt's standing as one of the most exciting British drummers of his generation. But on the psychedelic jazz-pop of The Soft Machine's first two LPs his swinging, hyperactive style placed him somewhere between Elvin Jones and Keith Moon. On *Vol. 1* his vocals carry some naïve but charming inflections dating back to the soul covers he sang with Wilde Flowers. The more experimental *Vol. 2* finds him adopting his matey, vernacular style on Pataphysical Introduction and Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening.



5 Robert Wyatt

Nothing Can Stop Us

ROUGH TRADE 1982, REISSUE DOMINO REWIGCD42 2008, £12

You say: "Best communist pop album ever. Still relevant." Stakhanov, via e-mail

Recently, Wyatt has opined that musicians shouldn't be expected to be political – instead, politicians should stop acting like rock stars. But as a communist activist in Thatcher's '80s, he was galvanised into recording a series of singles for Rough Trade, including Elvis Costello's Shipbuilding, Chilean socialist folk singer Violet Parra's Arauco, Billie Holiday's Strange Fruit and Stalin Wasn't Stallin', the wartime gospel paean to America's short-lived ally. The album, with its poignant reading of The Red Flag, proved political music need not be clichéd.



7 Robert Wyatt
Cuckooland

HANNIBAL 2003, REISSUE DOMINO REWIGCD47 2008, £12

You say: "One song will convince, a sad and beautiful record." Svenn, mojo4music

Cuckooland was created amid the rumblings of the Iraq war, which informs Alfreda Benge's lyrics to the poignant Lullaby For Hamza, about an Iraqi child traumatised by bombing during the 1990/91 Gulf War. A lengthy, varied collection – with a break of 30 seconds in the middle to give the listener breathing space – *Cuckooland* finds Wyatt in fine voice, despite self-deprecating claims that it was reduced to a "wino's mutter". His first duets on his own albums, with Karen Mantler, yield the brooding Beware and a bittersweet take on Antonio Carlos Jobim's Insensatez.



6 Matching Mole
Matching Mole

CBS 1972, REISSUE COLUMBIA 505478 IMPORT 2002, £10.49

You say: "Tight music-making, songs about songwriting!" Garth, mojo4music

After being ousted from Soft Machine in 1971, Wyatt formed Matching Mole with guitarist Phil Miller, bassist Bill McCormick and former Caravanner David Sinclair on keyboards, although the group's debut was ostensibly a Wyatt solo album. Instant Pussy sees the first outing of his trademark wordless scat singing, and the bittersweet O Caroline finds him wondering aloud about the efficacy of addressing her in song. Signed Curtain goes even further with its famous meta-lyric ("This is the first verse/ This is the chorus"). The full group numbers are an idiosyncratic mix of jazz and rock.

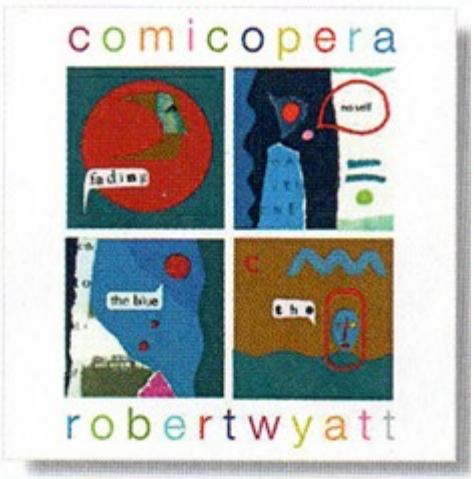


9 Robert Wyatt
His Greatest Misses

HANNIBAL VACK1282 2005, £9.05

You say: "Superb overview for the lucky newby. Excellent!" Carl Linge, via e-mail

With 17 tracks covering nearly 30 years from *Rock Bottom* to *Cuckooland*, *His Greatest Misses* is currently the newcomer's best point of entry. It's endorsed, though not compiled, by the man himself, but like a number of previous Wyatt compilations, it's heading for deletion – *Going Back A Bit* and *Flotsam And Jetsam* are now pricey and near unobtainable, a great shame as they contain a number of Wyatt's singles and collaborations, which often slip under the radar. Also available, the *EPs* box set is a curious mixture of singles, LP tracks and remixes.

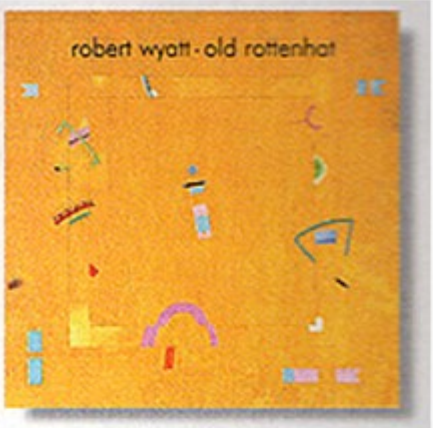


8 Robert Wyatt
Comicopera

DOMINO WIGCD202 2007, £12

You say: "Uneasy subject matter and lovely sounds – typical Wyatt." N Robinson, via e-mail

Wyatt's most conceptually bizarre album, *Comicopera* moves through a set of love songs into a series of slice-of-life tableaux that start out jocular and end up with the hatred felt by a victim of bombing in the Iraq war. It ends with a batch of brooding songs sung in Italian and Spanish as Wyatt was avoiding his native language in protest against Anglo-US warfare. So, no amusing denouement, then, but nevertheless it's one of his most accessible albums, for the most part full of melody and space. Just As You Are, a duet with Monica Vasconcelos, is disarmingly tender.



10 Robert Wyatt
Old Rottenhat

ROUGH TRADE 1985, REISSUE DOMINO REWIGCD43 2008, £12

You say: "His most melodic, well sung collection of tunes." Charlie Tokyo, via mojo4music

Horrified to hear that his music had been played on Radio Free Europe, Wyatt recorded songs that would be banned by all such right-wing media. His lyrical entrenchment was also reflected in his most musically and politically concentrated venture, a set of solo songs comprising voice, keyboards and percussion. Wyatt's assertion that his music is essentially funny might raise eyebrows when faced with songs critiquing liberal hypocrites and the US and Australian roles in supporting Indonesia's military presence in East Timor. But the luminosity of his melodies remains.

AvoidTHESE!

Robert Wyatt's debut 1970 solo album, the rambling, sketchy instrumental collection, *The End Of An Ear*, is definitely the odd one out in his back catalogue. There are also a huge number of Wyatt-era Soft Machine live sets, radio sessions and demo albums available on CD, but as the quality of these varies from the brilliant to the decidedly very ropey, all but the most devoted fans are advised to seek guidance here. The series titled *Canterburied Sounds* showcases rehearsal material of a widely varying sonic and musical quality dating back to the era of The Wilde Flowers and is consequently for religiously devoted fans only.



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The Inner Sleeve - Wire N° 297 - November 2008

THE INNER SLEEVE



ARTWORK SELECTED THIS MONTH BY ROBERT WYATT

Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln and others Angolan Refugee Rescue Committee benefit concert poster 1963

Design by St Clair Clement

I've had this poster for a benefit concert at the Town Hall, West 53rd St, New York City, 7 September 1963, for over 40 years. It's precious, and hangs on my wall.

I didn't get to New York until nearly five years after this concert, when my jazz heroes and heroines became sidelined. When the rock invasion took centre stage. So this poster creates an aching nostalgia for the jazz years that I grew to love from a great distance. Time and space having had no effect on the connection I experienced.

It's for a concert on behalf of the Angolan Refugee Rescue Committee, featuring the most authoritative modern jazz drummer and mentor, Max Roach, with his jazz ensemble (plus a 16 voice choir conducted by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson - how I'd love to have witnessed that!) and the gritty but utterly sophisticated vocalist Abbey Lincoln.

The journey these two had already made in music is so interesting to me. Abbey Lincoln stepped into the limelight as a statuesque torch singer (appearing in *The Girl Can't Help It* I seem to remember), and even Max Roach had a glamorous movie moment (as the drummer duetting with Pearl Bailey in *Carmen Jones*). Then, just a few years later, with *We Insist!* - Freedom Now Suite, they emerged as perhaps the Malcolm X and Angela Davis of jazz culture.

I love this poster for the content, and for what it evokes, the tantalising prospect of a concert that I can only imagine, the culmination of an extraordinary era in the history of music, and the heyday of the civil rights movement.

Also, the form and style of the poster really appeal to me. The already archaic hand-set printing process, the use of wood letters, half tone blocks, and so on. The printer would very soon afterwards have been put out of business by new technology. And the vividness of the addresses for buying tickets, in the Bronx, Queens, Lexington Avenue - evocative stuff. Unlikely there's even a trace of those shops now.

This 1963 poster epitomises everything that came to matter to me as a fledgling musician, a poignant souvenir of what I still consider to be the Real Thing.

Robert Wyatt's back catalogue is reissued this month by Domino



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Robert Wyatt - Clash Q&A - 28.11.2008

Robert Wyatt - Clash Q&A

The celebrated musician talks to Clash

A staunch humanitarian with a high, keening voice that explores the outer reaches of both rock and jazz – it's safe to say that Robert Wyatt is an almost unique figure in modern music.



After a tragic accident left him wheelchair bound in 1973, Wyatt picked himself up and embarked upon a singular solo career. Sometimes flirting with the charts, but more often than not a lone voice crying in the wilderness, Wyatt seems to embody the curious eccentricity that makes English pop music so endearing.

The recent Domino re-issuing of his back catalogue has provided a new generation with an entry point into the work of this wonderful songwriter. From 'Rock Bottom', recorded in the aftermath of his accident, to 2007's double album 'Comicopera', the 63-year-old Wyatt remains a confusing, probing and above all engaging talent.

ClashMusic.com spent some time with this personable maverick. Here's what we discovered…

What is it about jazz that you find so enticing?

Well my parents used to listen to a lot of classical music and stuff, so what I liked about jazz was the motion, the urgency to it. Classical music I always think is like a lake or a sea or something, whereas jazz is more like a fast moving river.

What came first, the drumming or the singing?

Well it was drumming really. I was basically a drummer, and I only sang because somebody had to, really! Sometimes we had a singer and sometimes we didn't. There were some things that you could sing and play drums at the same time on. Like James Brown's 'I Feel Good', you know (sings) "I Feel Good!". One bar of singing and one bar of drumming! The harder the music got, the more jazzy it got. I mean when we started out we played club music and I sang, but then later on I concentrated more on drumming. Then in the '70s I mainly concentrated on singing, basically because I couldn't really drum anymore anyway.

And a visiting American soldier taught you how to play the drums?

He wasn't a soldier but he was a jazz drummer. He stayed at our house for a bit, and he taught us a bit of stuff. He was a bit of a drifter really. He taught me things like how to hold the sticks and that sort of thing. I didn't take him up on a lot of it but I was glad to know what I should be doing, if I wanted to do it.

The Soft Machine moved to progressive music, how did that come about?

Well, it happened because we were a live band really. I would have liked to have recorded more stuff in the studio, singles and stuff, but we didn't have the opportunity to do that, so we developed a live set where the improvisation aspect was extended. Eventually it just got longer and longer, until the songs were just points for starting off, and finishing. The type of audience we were playing to in the late '60s, I mean there was a really wide gap between the sort of people who listened to radio and the people who went to rock festivals and stuff. Almost like two different tribes, and we were playing to the type of people who went to festivals, outdoor stuff and things that went on for hour and hours. And the bands played accordingly. In retrospect there was a lot of space to be allowed to do new stuff, and in the venues we played there was no need to play songs that people recognised or anything like that. The idea was to just keep working out new ideas, and that just seemed to be allowed. We just played in places where that was welcomed, and when we played in places where it wasn't welcome we didn't get any work again.

'Rock Bottom' is regard as your first solo record. Could you describe the circumstances of this album?

What it was, simply, is that I spent about a year in hospital, and it gave me time to think about what I wanted to think about. In a way, oddly enough, the pressure was off. Having a band, and do we have enough money to keep going? Of course in hospital you don't have any of that stuff to think about, you think more abstractly. When I came out I was full of music, but I didn't really need a band as most of it I could just do on my own. So that's what I did. Then I got a few friends in to play the other bits, just adding bits and pieces. It was kind of liberating in a way not to have to put everything into a group format.

You have had hit singles, such as 'I'm A Believer' and 'Shipbuilding' – what emphasis do you put on this?

Neither of those really made money, so they weren't commercial successes in that sense; I just found myself in that situation. I mean, I've always liked pop music – I've got friends who don't but I always did. When you're a teenager and discover girls, pop songs are inexplicably linked to girls and wistful songs about them. I've always had nice sentimental, romantic things in my head when I think about pop records, and I've always wanted to have a go at them. I'm not a serious contender in the pop world though, as I don't look right and I don't sound right.

You mention your voice, is it true you can sing across multiple octaves?

It depends! Certainly when I was young I could get amazingly high and I can now get very low, but no longer get very high. So at no particular time have I been able to reach all those octaves, but I've been lucky in that as I get older I can reach the lower ones. So I can't do all those girl songs any more, but I can now do Johnny Cash songs that I couldn't do when I was younger.

You frequently work in a collaborative way – how does this work in the studio?

Well, I always try and do as much as I can by myself. I try to create the atmosphere of the songs and then invite musicians in. I sort of have an idea of the theme of the songs, how they're going to be, because if you get a band in and they have no idea of how it's going to work in their head then they won't really know how to play. I can't really write music well enough to tell people 'well just play that B flat and everything will be alright'. They have to be able to hear what it is. I do as much as I can, basic keyboards, bit of percussion put a vocal on and then I invite musicians in. Actually, mostly one by one, and then I put it together afterwards to make it sound like a group. I prefer working with musicians one to one, in a more intimate way. I mean, every musician works in a different way – jazz musicians are different than rock musicians. For example, if I'm working with a double bass player he might want it a bit quiet, but if you've got Paul Weller coming into the studio he likes everything incredibly loud. You'd have everything really loud for Paul, just for a day or so.

You seem to record sporadically, on your own terms – what prompts this?

Well, what I like about this bunch of records is that when you add it up there's quite a lot of stuff there. But I've still kept doing stuff on and off for 40 years, even if not all of it is very high profile. I've done lots of stuff that's not under my own name, working for other people. Even last year a record came out – I did a bit of harmony singing with Billy Bragg, which was nice, just to work with other people rather than preparing stuff for my own record. I don't earn a lot of money for my records so I can't just sit around making my own records unless I'm really ready. I have to really know that I've got enough material.

I'm not like Elvis Costello or something, one of these people who can just sit down and write songs, like Pete Townshend. These people can just come out with torrents of wonderful stuff. I don't find that I do – I have lots of ideas but I find that they're not always in recordable forms. You can compare it with something like the gestation period of elephants. You know, elephants are pregnant for 18 months – they have the same process, it just takes twice as long as humans.

You recorded an album of political covers called 'Nothing Can Stop Us' – what prompted this?

Well I'm quite interested in looking outside yourself. Not just yourself and your own concerns, but look at the world around you. One of the ways you can do this if by doing songs that might not get heard in a rock context – South American songs, or songs in a political context that don't get heard in one way or another. Billy Bragg does this brilliantly, he finds songs you'll never have heard of and does them in a way that makes you listen to them.

It's a way of showing off: I like singing songs in another language and quite a lot of political songs are Spanish. I'm not very good at it apparently, but I still like doing it. There are times in my life when it seems to me that the battle for justice is very intense, and music doesn't seem sometimes to be helping very much in this battle against injustice at all. So that comes out in my songs a lot. It used to always worry me, and still does now, that after Iraq and Afghanistan we are battering Pakistan. I know we're going after Al Qaeda but I bet we're still killing thousands of Afghan and Pakistani peasants at the same time. It just makes me feel a bit ill, you know. It just seems like there should be a better way of doing things sometimes.

Is it true you joined the Communist Party in the '80s?

It's true that I was a member of the Communist Party throughout the '80s, yeah. It sort of disintegrated towards the end. As a mass movement it was a failure but it was based on some great insights and I'm still very grateful for what I got from that. There were a lot of brave and good people who fought under the Communist banner, though you wouldn't know that from watching Hollywood films. But there were. In the Second World War it was the Communists who bore the brunt of the fascist onslaught, and they helped in other areas, in other countries. In Italy and France and so on they were the hardcore basis of the underground resistance movement. But anyway, I'm grateful to Communist Party for what I learnt from it – and the mistakes are so obvious they are hardly worth pointing out. But I think that it has to be said that the Communist Party came about for a reason – that the capitalist system around the world just wouldn't do, and still won't as far as I am concerned. There are still trade unionists being killed all around the world, from Columbia to the Philippines, and people are still being forced to work for the big companies. I still think its wrong, and it may be slightly old fashioned of me but I still think it's completely out of order - so I still stay on the left, while that problem remains. I think the fact is

there's an immense amount of wealth in the world, but the people who seem to do the hard work to make all that money always seem to be the last in the queue to get any of the benefits. And I think that's wrong.

'Comicopera' uses many different languages, why is this?

Well I always worry about sounding samey, so I like my records to kick against this one way or the other so its not just the same old thing with every release. And one of the ways I can do that is by using other languages. Some of the material is just unique to that language, the Cuban song and so on, just have a resonance as a language. The music itself is Spanish anyway.

That album also uses one of Lorca's lyrics – why did you choose this?

It's an excerpt from a play, but it is certainly a poem as all his writing was really poetry anyway. I was asked to do it, originally, the Lorca centenary people got in touch. Lorca comes from Grenada in Spain, a very Arabic town in its day, a thousand years ago, and he was working against Fascism in the early part of the last century. He wasn't involved with political groups but he did side with the Republic against the Fascist onslaught. The tribute record was full of people singing in Spanish, and so they asked me, but all the poems had already been snaffled by other musicians so I took this text from a play and just seemed to put the imagery – which is about underwater sea-scapes, nightmares – into the kind of thing I do anyway. There's a Columbian exile bass player on it, and he did some wonderful playing that sounds like whales underwater. I was very happy with that.

Do you view your own lyrics as poetry?

No, I wouldn't make those claims as there are people who write poetry who are experts in their language and I'm not. I never went to university. I mean, I was good at it at school but I never went on to study it at university. I wouldn't consider myself to be well read, even. I wouldn't claim to be a writer, as such, but I do work on it and try to make them singable. Going back a bit, but writers in ancient times used to chant their poems, which is just the same as singing really. There was a crossover between poetry and song, this ambiguous crossover – the Psalms for example. When you sing things you can change how they sound. You can sing things that work as songs but wouldn't necessarily work on the written page. Like 'Tutti Frutti' by Little Richard – it doesn't sound great, but it's a wonderful song! It works as something to sing. Quite a lot of Stevie Wonder, as well – if you write them down they are very sentimental and wouldn't work as poems but they just sing beautifully. (Wyatt's wife) Alfie is brilliant at writing stuff that, particularly for me as a singer, is just easy to turn into music. I find it very natural, and that's what I look for. And hopefully it means something as well.

Your wife creates the artwork, and you sometimes take an elaborate approach to packaging. How are these aspects linked?

One of the things I like about these re-releases is just seeing the amount of ideas she has come up with, when you see them all together. I'm very lucky. Ideally, Alfie in her mind knows that people can get free downloads and stuff from the net, so she wants to make people know that if they buy one of my records they will get added value in it in a way. A record won't just be a bit of plastic in a cardboard box with sound on it, but something that's actually a pleasure to have, just as a physical object. The extent that happens is a credit to Alfie, as an artist.

What is it that keeps you writing?

There still seems to be a frustration sometimes that I haven't said something right. Or Alfie sometimes says, "Why don't you do songs that people can dance do?" And I'm thinking, "Yeah, I ought to!" There's always stuff that I haven't done, or sometimes I'm sitting tootling on the cornet and a bunch of notes will pop into my head and I'll think, "Oh nice!" And that's it, really. I mean, I can't really do that much around the house apart from the washing up for Alfie, or washing potatoes. I don't pull my weight at home really, so if I don't make records I'm going to get in big trouble!

Is there anything new in the pipeline?

I've got bits and pieces, but to be honest we've been having a rough year to be honest. Alfie has had a lot of eye trouble, which has required regular visits to the hospital, and that's really frightening. Nothing you have to concern yourself with, but her mother's been

unwell and has been staying with us. So domestic stuff has taken up quite a lot of thought and time, we can't just sort of wing it and live for the music. We've got real life stuff to get through. I always find that to make music you have to be in this sort of zone, a particular place, I need to clear the ground, the air, the horizons. But our domestic situation is a bit muddy. There's always ideas in the air, you know, but nothing definite.

Robert Wyatt's back catalogue is reissued via Domino – get 'Rock Bottom', 'Old Rottenhat', 'Drury Lane' and more at all good retailers.

>> L'interview sur le site de Clash

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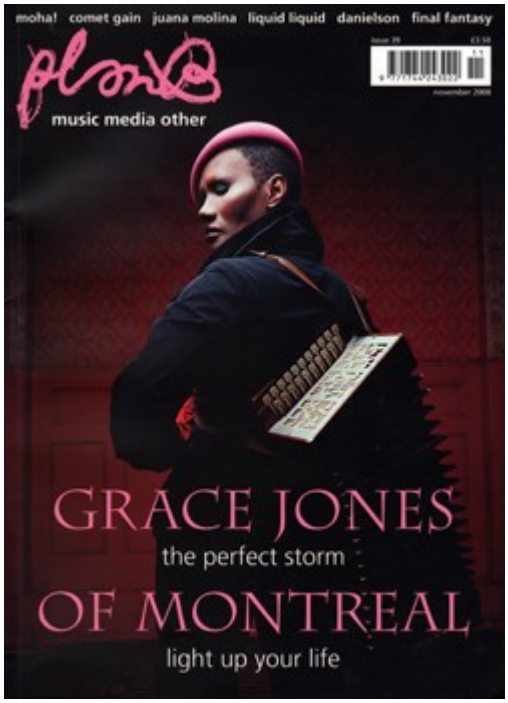
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Songs of experience - Plan B - issue 39 - november 2008

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE



Words: **Jon Dale**
Illustration: **Hanna Wieslander**

Robert Wyatt

Rock Bottom/Ruth Is StrangerThan Richard/Nothing Can Stop Us/Old Rottenhat/Dondestan Revisited/Shleep/EPs/ Cuckooland/Live At Drury Lane (Domino)

OK. Robert Wyatt. The first thing you should know is, every note on these records is a note you should hear. The second thing you should know is, Wyatt's masterpiece, *Rock Bottom*, heads up this canon: a gorgeously unsettling underwater song suite, it's limber, loving, sweet, turbulent, adrift on seesawing drones and deeply affecting. Got that? Good.

The legend of Wyatt rests on his first group, Soft Machine, and on ', but ultimately, this new reissue series highlights Wyatt's few truly solo records *Old Rottenhat* and *Dondestan*. Recorded entirely alone, they document his struggle with the global politics of the time and his discomfort with the grim reality of 'being English' under Thatcher's rule. They're knitted together with knotty piano, cheap keyboards and Wyatt's pattering percussion, which lends them the air of homespun arts and crafts; they frame Wyatt's sharpest invective against the global reach and repercussions of capital and Empire.

The Age Of Self, for example, is eerily prescient of neo-liberalism's rule (*"There's people doing 'frightfully well", there's others on the shelf/But never mind the second kind, this is The Age Of Self"*). But Wyatt's not partisan - he's aware of the hard left's internal struggles. The Age of Self mentions media magnate Robert Maxwell and *Marxism Today,* editor Martin Jacques in the same breath; Dondestan's 'CP Jeebies' comments on factional behaviour in the Communist Party.



Borrowing from Coltrane's 'A Love Supreme', *Old Rottenhat's* Gharbzadegi 'tackles cultural imperialism: listening to Wyatt's Eighties records, it struck me that here Wyatt performs 'solo' but assembles a cast of absent collaborators whose songs he interprets in response to cultural imperialism. I can think of few other performers with Wyatt's reach: who else has taken in songs from Peter Gabriel (on activist Steve Biko), or Elvis Costello and Clive Langer (on the everyday impact of the Falklands War), alongside songs written by La Nueva Canción singers Violeta Parra and Victor Jara, and Cuban folk singer Pablo Milanes? Who else would write a beautifully mournful song named 'Amber And The Amberines' after the US's dress rehearsal for full-scale invasion of Grenada and the Grenadines, in part hymning Grenadian Marxist political party, the New Jewel Movement?

If this is heady stuff, it's because these were heady times. But what times *aren't*? Listening back to this music can feel eerie, not just because Wyatt's voice is so close in your ear, but because the songs are reminders, rejoinders, diary entries - *journalism*, but not pejoratively so. If you need a crash course (or a hard lesson) in how to do politics in pop properly, here you have it - and if anyone tells you the writing is simplistic, the messages dated, then remind them that clarity communicates, and that in the Eighties, Wyatt was rare in his address of the 'wounds of Empire' via a clutch of songs and a wheezy old keyboard.



After these moments of loneliness, *Shleep* and *Cuckooland* return Wyatt to communal creation: with figures like Brian Eno, Annie Whitehead, Paul Weller and Phil Manzanera on board, it's a good crew. The politics are still there, but there's more address of the personal, the domestic. They're essential, of course.

But for now, I keep returning to Wyatt's Eighties period, for its sharpness, its sadness, and its political fury. Because these records contain songs that, in their baldness and honesty about the conditions of humanity, about the things people do to one another, about the abuse metered out in the name of Empire, tell you more about the world - *your world* - than most any other music I've heard. And Wyatt's found a way to navigate this world with a grace and an intelligence that's directly reflected in his songs: in their generosity and character and wit, but also in their unflinching, unsparing commentary.

So hear them all, and live a better life.

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'Staying Open to Possibilities': An Interview with Hugh Hopper - Eartrip Magagzine - Issue 2 - September 2008



"Staying Open to Possibilities": An Interview with Hugh Hopper

Bass-player and composer Hugh Hopper was one of the key members of the so-called 'Canterbury Scene': a loose, and disparate set of musicians who made up some of the leading prog-rock bands in the 1960s and 70s, such as Caravan, Gong, and the group in which Hopper was the bassist, Soft Machine. As well as appearing on some of the Softs' best known recordings, and in subsequent off-shoots such as Soft Machine Legacy, he played with the likes of Syd Barrett and Elton Dean, and has also been active in improvised and experimental music, often incorporating electronic textures into his work. In February 2008, he played a concert with the Delta Saxophone Quartet and drummer Simon at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge, and we took the opportunity to interview him about his career and his current musical activities.



DG: *Perhaps we could begin at the beginning: how you started out, your early influences and musical experiences.*

HH: My parents were the usual middle-of-the-road classical: they both played piano, but just at home, as people did in those days. I was really influenced a lot by my brother, who was two years older than me. He started playing clarinet and then got into playing guitar, so I took up the bass, and a lot of my influence is from my brother, because, being two

years ahead, he heard things earlier than I did, and then I picked up on those.

So early days was rhythm and blues – Chuck Berry and stuff like that. And then I got involved in jazz, through Robert Wyatt and Daevid Allen. Really those have been the two threads of my life – rhythmic stuff and freer stuff as well, and also some modern classical and contemporary stuff.

DG: *What kind of modern classical?*

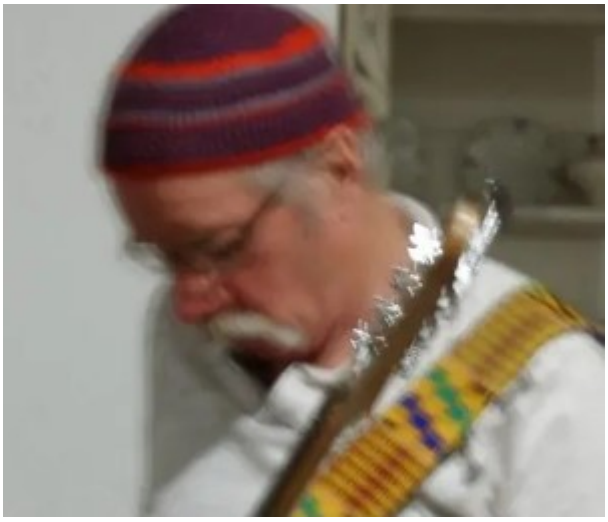
HH: Well, my brother exposed me to anything from Hindemith and Bartok to some of the more freaky stuff – Stockhausen and some of the more early electronic music.

NCT: *Which was really just emerging at that time…*

HH: Yeah, and of course it was really laborious in those days – you couldn't do it on a laptop. Nowadays Stockhausen could do in half an hour what it took him six months to construct from tapes.

DG: *That's get us onto compute technology I read that you and so on at the age of 13*

HH: No, that's a bit early, I would say a bit later than that. I got into loops and stuff when I was about 18, through Daevid Allen. I was living with him in Paris and he'd been working with Terry Riley and people who were working with the French Radiophonic workshop. So I learned a lot of that kind of stuff – soundscapes, loops, that kind of hypnotic stuff – from him. That was another important thread in my musical influences.



Hugh Hopper playing at Kettle's Yard. Cambridge in 2008

NCT: *Daevid Allen was also involved with some of the work of William S Burroughs. What was that relationship?*

HH: Well, Daevid met Burroughs and we were involved in playing some shows, like the ICA in London, where he was doing a reading and I was playing with David and Robert Wyatt. I think Daevid knew Burroughs really from Paris and we were just interested in that whole flow of things – the cut-up idea of Burroughs. I was 18 years old and that was a very important time for me, being surrounded by Beat poetry and the cut-up idea – completely different ideas of writing. I haven't read a Burroughs book now for thirty years, but at the time it was really a strong thing, and Daevid had actually worked with Burroughs – he used his voice, and that of Lawrence Ferlenghetti and some of the other Beat Poets, on some of his soundscapes.

NCT: *And he was influential enough for you to name the band The Soft Machine [after Burroughs' novel].*

HH: In fact, before I was in the band, they went through several names, and then somebody thought of Soft Machine. Daevid spoke to Burroughs and asked if that was OK and he said 'ah, I guess it's OK' – he didn't really care either way.

DG: *Well that bring us up to the beginnings of Soft Machine – maybe you could talk a bit about the Wilde Flowers?*

HH: Yeah, Wilde Flowers was our first semi-pro band in Canterbury. Like all semi-pro bands, we played about two gigs in our first year, and there was more hope involved than actual gigs, but we rehearsed a lot, as you do when you start a band. That was really the foundation of Soft Machine, Caravan, and Gong – those three bands started from the people who were in the Wilde Flowers. We started off trying to be creative, playing all sorts of new stuff – we all listened to Indian music and jazz – and it was a mixture of that with some things like the Stones and the Kinks. Eventually what happened was that it became smoother and smoother, and became a soul band and lost it creativity, but by

then people had left and it carried on without the originals.

NCT: *There seems to have been a really interesting trajectory, if you look at all the Soft Machine albums, partly because of these creative tensions.*

HH: Yeah, every album was different, depending on who was in the band. I think for just about every album there was a personnel change – at least one person had left. The first one was psychedelic songs. Really, there's an album missing, because there should be an album with Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Robert [Wyatt] and Mike Ratledge, but Daevid had already left the band before the first main album was made in the States, so it was just a trio. Kevin Ayers wanted to be a poet and songwriter more than a musician; he got lumbered with playing the bass because nobody else would do it. After Kevin left, I joined, and Mike Ratledge, the keyboard player, became much more influential in the music – it was a lot jazzier and less psychedelic and folky. That was the way it flowed really – it became more and more jazzy with each album, and finally became a jazz-rock thing.

NCT: *By 'Third' and 'Fourth'?*

HH: Well, there was still a bit of the earlier spirit [on those two albums]. 'Fifth' was a weird one because it was very black – it had a black cover and it was a very dark record – and by 'Sixth' Elton Dean had left and Karl Jenkins was introducing more jazz-rock things. That was the last one I was on, and after that it became more of a Karl Jenkins thing.

NCT: *Whether you intended it or not, 'Third' is the most popular Soft Machine album.*

HH: Yeah, it's the one everybody always mentions. When we recorded it, it was right at the height of when we were really playing a lot of concerts, doing a lot of gigs, touring everywhere. For the actual sound of it, it's not that well produced – the stuff I've been doing since then has been much better produced. But, what it can say, it's just one of those things, it's a classic thing. When I'm in Germany, guys still come up to me and say 'this record changed my life' – it happens every time, which is great.



Part of the inside cover at for "Third": Elton Dean on the left and Hopper on the right.

DG: *What would you say is your favourite of all the Soft Machine albums?*

HH: I like bits of some of them. I like 'Third', obviously, and 'Fourth' – there's some good stuff on 'Fourth' – different things, I don't often listen to them. What I prefer really is listening to some of the live things which come out much later, because the studio

records…They're OK, they're interesting, but they don't have the real spirit of the band as it was live, because it was real hooligan band, it wasn't a quiet, polite band on stage. Sometimes I listen back to some of the tapes – terrible sound, but the energy is fantastic. There's this idea that it was a cerebral band, but it wasn't that all – we used to play through Marshall stacks on eleven, basically. We had earplugs, and everyone was deaf by the end – I still have tinnitus now. So yeah, I was glad when, in about the 80s, some of these archive records, the live ones, started to come out, even as bootlegs, which didn't have good enough sound; it was nice to hear what the actual energy of the band was like.

EARTRIP MAGAZINE
"A Journey For Your Ears."

DG: *There's this whole generic crossover thing we've touched on a bit earlier; I was interested in the fact that you played the Royal Albert Hall, at the Proms. It's hard to imagine something like that happening now – musicians associated with rock performing in a setting associated with the mainstream classical sphere.*

HH: It was one of the late night concerts after the main prom, and it was actually a concert of Tim Souster, who was a classical composer and knew Mike Ratledge, so he invited us to play as well. Before we played there was a whole piece with, I think, five pianos playing Steve Reich. So it wasn't the real mainstream prom, it was a late night one, but it is still quite rare.

DG: *Do you think people were more open to that sort of thing at the time?*

HH: Yeah, well people were more open to having a band like Soft Machine playing anywhere – we played in all the big halls several times. We played…I mean, you name it – Manchester, Leeds Town Hall – you couldn't do that now, people just aren't interested. So, yeah, it was a different atmosphere in those days.



L-R: Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge

DG: *Also, as well as the relationship that Soft Machine had with classical music, there was quite a strong relationship with jazz.*

HH: Yeah, well it was because were interested in all those things, Mike Ratledge in particular. He didn't come up through rock groups, he learned to play classical piano and then became interested in jazz later. He wasn't a guy who'd learned through being in a pop or rock or blues band – he didn't know anything about that, it wasn't part of his life at all. So we had all those influences and that's the stuff we wanted to listen to – things like John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman.

DG: *And this was part of a wider trend.*

HH: There was a great crossover then: before that you were either a jazzer or you were a rocker and that was it, but in about 1969/70, there really was a possibility, people were putting on gigs that mixed things – it could be ethnic music or classical music or whatever, mixed – there were all kinds of experiments.

DG: *So the 60s was the time when it opened up.*

HH: Yeah, from 66/67 onwards – that was the time when things seemed possible.

DG: *Do you think there was any specific reason for that?*

HH: It was the time – politically things were changing , there was a lot more freedom, and suddenly you're allowed to do things which before people hadn't thought of doing. There was a feeling of liberty.

DG: *Moving on to prog-rock itself – do you think there was anything specifically English about it? I'm thinking of that very whimsical strain…*

HH: Yeah, you can't imagine many American bands sounding like that. Americans tend to be much harder, and probably play better, but not so whimsical and not so creative, in a sense. I think that's right, it is a very English thing.

NCT: *As you were saying, you started off in R & B and stuff like that. I was curious – who really influenced you as a bass player; who did you listen to?*

HH: Strangely enough, I've been more influenced by acoustic jazz players than electric players. Because I listened to all of those earlier things – rhythm and blues things, Fats Domino, Little Richard, James Brown and his bass players – it's all in there. But when I think about it, the people I would actually name are all jazz bass players – Charles Mingus, Ron Carter, people like that.

NCT: *How has being a bassist influenced your compositional approach?*

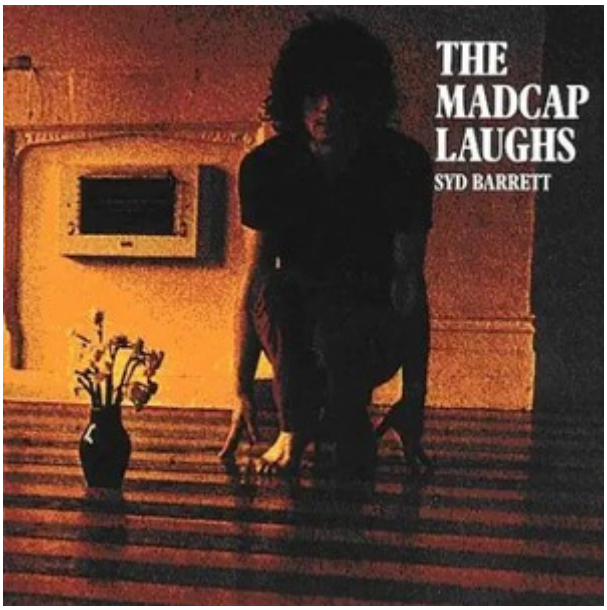
HH: It's hard to say, because they're both part of the same thing. The bass is important to me – when I hear music, I couldn't really imagine writing much music without writing something for the bass at the bottom of it. And also I see my role as a bass player not as a flashy soloist, and for me that's important, to actually be 'the bass player'.

NCT: *How in terms of how your compositions might have differed from those of someone like Mike Ratledge, or Elton Dean?*

HH: Well, they're simpler, for a start: I haven't got that kind of technical facility on the instrument. Of course, now, on a computer, you can write anything you like, at any speed you care to name. But yeah, it has been important.

DG: *I wanted to ask about Syd Barrett particularly, because you played on a couple of tracks on his album 'The Madcap Laughs', and because, despite only being there at the beginning, he was such a pivotal, influential figure. What was your experience of him?*

HH: I didn't know him very well. Because Soft Machine and Pink Floyd started when they did – '66, '67 – they were playing a lot of the same gigs, at the Roundhouse in London, and the U.F.O, so they were quite friendly: they were kind of rivals but it was a friendly rivalry. I came in later, so I didn't know him that well, but he came along to a gig we were doing in London in '69, and saw us afterwards and said, 'I'm doing a record at Abbey Road, do you want to come and play on the record?' So we went along, and he'd got the guitar and voice tracks down already. Of course he was very erratic, so it's not 4 bars, 4 bars, it's one and half, two –whoops – start off in another key! We're sitting there trying to learn this in the studio in Abbey Road, and we're still working on it when Syd pokes his head round the door and says, 'thanks, fine, that's it', and we were still learning it, but he was happy…He was very chaotic, and even then he was drifting a bit. It was a nice record, it couldn't be anyone else – he had his own total planet.



DG: *What do you think of this whole idea of the 'Canterbury Scene'?*

HH: Well, it's a journalistic thing. In fact, there was nothing much going on; we couldn't wait to leave Canterbury and move to London and have a real career. But it's a useful label – I use it myself. But ask different people what it means and it means completely different things. For me it means people like Caravan, Soft Machine and Gong, but then they're very different anyway: Caravan is songs and Soft Machine became much more jazzy, so what does it mean? It's a useful label, it's a journalistic label, which was applied after the event – Ian McDonald, of NME, actually thought of the label in about 1971, well after it had all happened.

DG: *Someone else I wanted to ask about was Elton Dean: obviously a very important figure but not that well known outside of particular circles.*

HH: He was a great jazz player, he really was. His real love was free jazz – he would have been perfectly happy freely improvising all his life, but he wrote some great tunes as well and was a great player in Soft Machine, In Cahoots, lots of bands – he did a lot of stuff with Keith Tippett. He lived the real jazz life, he drank and he smoke and he died as you do if you drink too much, but he lived it to the full, he was totally committed. And he was a good mate of mine – I was in lots of projects and did lots of tours with him. It wasn't a surprise when he died, because for the last ten years of his life he was on that path, but I'm happy to have played with him.

DG: *Thinking about free improv – we were talking with Mike Westbrook about free improv and how it relates to other genres. So, players you'd think of as, say, a straight-ahead jazz player or something, could play free improv as well, but a divide had opened up that wasn't there before – people had gone off into camps and so you had the free improve players…*

HH: I think that was always there, to be honest. There's always been a lot of snobbery within the jazz world, as there is in every other musical genre. Elton could do both things, he was a natural player, a very natural musician.

DG: *Perhaps you could tell us a little bit about 'Numero D' Vol' [Hopper's recent recording, from 2007, with saxophonist Simon Picard and others].*

HH: I was down in London with a guitarist called Mark Hewins. I was immediately knocked out by his sound, his melodicism, and I thought it would be nice to invite Simon [Picard] down to Canterbury to record, and the same with the other players. I've played with Charles Hayward in a couple of things, and Steve Franklin with In Cahoots. I just had the idea to get together with a group of players. It was completely improvised and cleaned up a bit later – we chose the best bits.

DG: *The project with the Delta Saxophone Quartet, how did that come about?*

HH: They weren't particularly into Soft Machine, but I had a book of sheet music, of some

of my tunes from Soft Machine, which was published in 1970, and somebody gave it to Pete Whyman, the alto player, and he just started playing with it. Then they farmed it out to arrangers to arrange these pieces, not necessarily from the music, but just that they had the idea of Soft Machine, so some of the music was very close to the originals and some of the pieces are completely re-interpreted. When they were near to recording they asked me if I'd like to play on one track, and since then we've done a couple of gigs and the album's come out [['Dedicated To You…But You Weren't Listening' (Moonjune, 2007)]. What's amazing is that they're not blasé jazz musicians – they love music, they love playing it, it's a real pleasure being with them. They're keen for me to play with them – it's nice. It's just one track on the record', but now we've worked on three or four new pieces – well, old Soft Machine pieces, but reworked.

DG: *Are there any other plans for the future? Any projects?*

HH: Lots, yeah. Yumi Hara, the Japanese piano player – I've done one gig with her, completely improvised, and there's a tour of Japan in June. There's also Clearframe, another improvised thing with Charles Hayward, Orphy Robinson and Lol Coxhill. I do this thing called Brainville with Daevid Allen and Chris Cutler; we played a few gigs last year, and we're playing in Italy this year. And there's also Soft Machine Legacy, which is ex-members of Soft Machine. So there's four or five different things going on. It's always up and down – I never know what I'm going to do in a years' time, but I like to stay open to possibilities.



Hugh Hopper at the Downtown Music Gallery in 2008

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Canterbury Scene Pioneers 1 : The Soft Machine - Audion - Issue #54 - August 2008 (new edition in PDF format in October 2020)



Whoever it was that coined the term "The Canterbury Scene" was a lazy journalist, but it's a term that's been banded around so much that it's gained a meaning all of its own. At least to fans of progressive rock and jazz-fusion that is. In Canterbury, there is no definitive scene as such. Most people that live there would never have heard of it. Yet Canterbury was the hub where much of this scene came together. The"scene" largely stemmed from a band called The Wilde Flowers, and involved the bands Soft Machine, Caravan and Egg, and all the various offshoots and related projects that came out of these, amounting an enormous fertile world of music bridging many different genres.

THE SOFT MACHINE

Canterbury Scene pioneers 1: written by Alan Freeman

My introduction to The Canterbury Scene all happened by accident, and it's hard to recall exactly what came first. I know that I saw the Danish band Secret Oyster on The Old Grey Whistle Test on TV, and was immediately hooked by them. Scarcely a week or so later (so I recall) I chanced upon a concert at the Montreux Jazz Festival that sounded like Secret Oyster to me but obviously wasn't. It turned out to be Soft Machine, circa album number 8: BUNDLES. So, looking for a live album by them I bought Soft Machine SIX first, which surprised me I can tell you! That was the start of a rocky trail of discovery, covering an extremely wide range of musical styles, dozens of classics, some perplexingly bizarre challenges, and alas some pitiful disappointments.
But that's all part of musical exploration!



Wilde Flowers: Hugh Hopper, Richard Coughlan, Robert Wyatt, Brian Hopper

Wilde Flower years

So, way back in 1959 it all started in Canterbury with an unnamed quartet initiated by the brothers: Brian and Hugh Hopper. By late 1962 these had become The Wilde Flowers comprising: Brian Hopper (guitar, vocals, alto saxophone), Hugh Hopper (bass), Robert Wyatt (drums, guitar, vocals) and Mike Ratledge (piano) originally, with Richard Sinclair and Richard Coughlan (both later of Caravan) also featuring, as well as Kevin Ayers and one Graham Flight. In parallel to that, Australian Daevid Allen had a Canterbury based trio/quartet featuring the likes of Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge and Robert Wyatt. Recordings from some of these line-ups much later gained release on a few archive CD releases, and reveal their jazz roots.

Birth of the Soft Machine

I guess it was a surprise to all that knew of their early musical exploits, as when Soft Machine was formed in 1966 they'd moved away from jazz altogether to a "prog" psych-beat sound. Incidentally, they got their name from a William Burroughs novel, the "soft machine" being a euphemism for the human body. The original band was fronted by two songwriters: Kevin Ayers (bass, vocals) and Daevid Allen (guitar, vocals), with Robert Wyatt (drums) and Mike Ratledge (keyboards), and they soon relocated to London, becoming one of the hottest live bands around.

The original Soft Machine sound was borderline pop really, and they debuted with their one and only non-album single: *Loves Make Sweet Music* / *Feelin', Reelin', Squeelin'* (recorded in January 1967) a really dated record nowadays, if you ask me. It did however capture the spirit of the time. Gaining the attention of producer Giorgio Gomelsky they next recorded a number of demos at DeLane Lea Studios in London. The hoped for record deal never happened though, and the tapes remained in the Gomelsky vault for some time. These recordings later surfaced on two compilations on the French Byg records (later compiled as the album AT THE BEGINNING, which has since been issued with various other titles), but it's best to talk about them here. These recordings saw the distinctive Soft Machine sound taking form, but in small morsels, largely song-based, but with some early versions of what were later to become classics. Still a touch borderline pop to my ears, but also with some excellent moments, I deem it of curiosity interest only.

The Soft Machine were now getting quite a reputation on the London "underground scene" with regular gigs the UFO Club and The Roundhouse, and they also played at the celebrated "14 Hour Technicolor Dream" featuring their friends The Pink Floyd.

Now things take a weird turn. With a commission to provide the music for an avant-garde theatre project in St. Tropez (on the French Riviera) during the summer of '67, they stay a while in France. In September, on the way back to London, disaster - due to some irregularities with Daevid Allen's Visa, he was refused re-entry to England. So Soft Machine had no option but to return to England without him. Daevid thus remained in France, forming Bananamoon in Paris, and later the band that was to become his most famous project: Gong. But that's another story!

Back in London, Ayers, Ratledge and Wyatt decide to carry on as a trio. A wise move really, as there were really too many songwriters in the band with Daevid around, and with Robert Wyatt also flexing his vocal chords more, it could have become a bit much. Even without an album, their reputation was such that in February 1968, they went on a three month USA tour, as a regular support to the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Obviously a huge success, they soon secured a US record deal, recording their debut LP in New York in just four days in April.

The psychedelic years



The Soft Machine 1968: Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper & Mike Ratledge

Already Robert Wyatt was starting to steal the lead role from Kevin Ayers, with Robert's distinctly slightly off-key vocals greeting us on *Hope For Happiness*, a song which started the trend in Soft Machine for tracks to lead one into another, to meld, flow and juxtapose, breaking the rules of standalone track or song, sometimes with no pause, or merely a breather. Although, that said *Save Yourself* is an unashamed pop number that sticks out like a sore thumb! But it all fits together, especially so with the segued run of tracks that bring the album to a close. Yes, even with their album debut Soft Machine had it honed to a fine art. Remarkably one doesn't miss the lack of lead guitar. This is down to another key facet of the "Canterbury Sound" the distortion/overdrive organ and electric piano, giving such instruments the power usually associated with the lead guitar. When I first encountered it (Steve had bought a cheap second-hand copy doubleback, with the second album) I didn't quite know what to make of it. I know Robert's vocals threw me at first, and even then it seemed to be rather dated. But, how perspectives change, 30 years on it sounds no more dated, but more a fresh vital step to a now loved sound/style/genre of music. The only real Kevin Ayers song is the last but one track *Why Are We Sleeping?* the quirkiest psych-pop number on the album. Almost everything about THE SOFT MACHINE is engaging, amazingly crafted, with all sorts of neat tricks and surprises, the musicianship is also quite dazzling. Nowadays it is rightly regarded as a landmark classic.

Although the guitarless formula had worked well on the debut, they drafted in one Andy Summers (yes, the guy later in The Police) for the July-September US tour, although he never stayed around long, and also a rift set in, apparently with Kevin Ayers wanting to take the band in one direction, and Wyatt-Ratledge wanting to go elsewhere. In his place came their old friend Hugh Hopper, a much more explorative experimental musician, who would blossom during his tenure with Soft Machine. Kevin Ayers, on the other hand, would later embark on a solo career, debuting in 1970 with JOY OF A TOY (named after the second track on Soft Machine 1) which musically steps back to 1967 Ayers fronted Soft Machine sound, ranging from whimsical pop through to pure avant-garde. His band: Kevin Ayers And The Whole World was the starting place for two major solo talents, namely David Bedford and Mike Oldfield, whose instrumental work was the highlight of many a Kevin Ayers album. But, I digress, back to Soft Machine...

After only a month of rehearsals and a prestigious gig at the Royal Albert Hall, Soft Machine had already got an album's worth of material together. Aptly called VOLUME TWO it was much more experimental than the debut, an amalgam of half sung songs, joke diversions and many rip-roaring instrumentals, it all felt like a big album-long opus. Expanding the instrumentation, and further the Wilde Flowers roots was the Hugh's brother Brian Hopper guesting on saxophones, bringing a bit of jazz back into the mix. Although I said the album feels like one big opus, there is an odd track out midway through side two *Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening* penned by Hugh Hopper (on acoustic guitar here) with Mike Ratledge on poignantly dainty harpsichord, with Robert singing in that fashion he was later to become famous for. After that, the final few segued tracks, starting with *Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging*, pretty much hints at the Soft Machine sound to come, heading to more experimental jazzy realms..

Shortly before the release of VOLUME TWO Soft Machine did a promotional concert at The Paradiso in Amsterdam, Holland. It was broadcast on the radio, and consequently a high quality bootleg LP appeared on the market. By high quality, I mean good radio mono, with some slight radio drift and noise, rather good for the time, but pressed on lousy cheap vinyl, and the bootleg CD that later appeared was transferred from an LP. Eventually it gained a proper master tape release on CD via Voiceprint. This gig just goes to show how intensely creative and finely honed they were as performers. It's basically a prequel to the album, with lots of little diversions, extra quirks and kinks in the arrangements, and a bit more

instrumental too. In all, a vital piece of early Soft Machine history.



SOFT MACHINE VOLUME TWO SPACED THIRD

It's all going weird

But now, with time on their hands, and in between record label contracts, the trio, aided by Hugh's brother guest/semi-member Brian Hopper (soprano/tenor saxes), spent a good few months experimenting with new ideas. The use of reverse tapes, echo and delay effects, etc., had all played a big role in the complexity of their recordings to date, but they wanted to take that aspect further. Mike Ratledge had been hooked by the experimental organ and tape delay works of Terry Riley and began to develop his own twist on that. This all led to SPACED a specially commissioned work created for a London multi-media event at the Roundhouse, involving ballet dancers, gymnasts and such-like, all purely avant-garde and abstract, it needed music to match. Unreleased until 1996 the CD booklet describes the use of lengthy tape loops spooled around their rehearsal rooms, days of work spent tape splicing and editing, all to make 1½ hours of music. It perplexed audiences, especially those that were expecting a Soft Machine concert, but it is weird even by today's standards! A music of dissonant organ/piano, bass and percussion, Robert Wyatt's larynx has a rest here, and instead he often seems to be destroying his drum-set, and the only real soloing is courtesy of Brian Hopper's sax, or the noises from Mike Ratledge's electric piano and organ, which he similarly seems to be abusing. Add to all that Hugh Hopper's bass on demented fuzzed and frazzled overload, it's enough to make the speakers groan and writhe! There are more melodic moments and rhythmic/looping bits too. SPACED certainly lives up to its name, it is really out there!

From Autumn 1969, a brass section was drafted in to supplement the band on stage. Many of these musicians came from Keith Tippett's band: Elton Dean (saxophones), Nick Evans (trombone) and Marc Charig (trumpet). There was also Lyn Dobson (flute, saxophone) from Keef Hartley's band. Of these Elton Dean became a permanent member for several years, changing the band's sound considerably.

January 1970 heralded what many class as the ultimate Soft Machine album, and in fact one of the all-time greats of the Canterbury Scene, namely THIRD, a landmark double LP, with just one track per side...

Hugh Hopper's *Facelift* is a collage of live recordings, and strongly features the winds section. Although who exactly is featured where, I don't know. Caravan's Jimmy Hastings (flute, bass clarinet) also guests on the album, and he's heard here. *Facelift* has the new patent of "the Softs" sound, namely Hugh's fuzz bass strongly featured, and also starts the album on a very weird footing. First we hear a subdued drone, joined by strangely mangled electric piano and dissonantly garbled organ, and whilst other instruments amble in the background a variety of winds (mostly processed electronically) writhe and splutter, leading into a vaguely drunken phase that then lurches into a patent Soft Machine riff, gaining focus, moving to a relaxed phase for a moment before going on to an almost Miles Davis like fusion drive, before returning to an organ/winds refrain heard earlier, added to and complicated by lots of clever backwards/wrong-speed tape work. In all, a patchwork flow of ideas that sew up into a complex suite.

Mike Ratledge's *Slightly All The Time* starts with another new aspect to the Soft Machine sound, a cool breezy ambling jazzy groove (based around various interlocked rhythmic patterns) topped by a variety of winds, changing, growing in momentum, gaining focus, changing again and so on. It includes the inset of Hopper's *Noisette* (not easy to identify where it is exactly until one hears later live versions) a work of similarly counterpointed themes, all put together like a complex jig-saw puzzle. This is all a hint of what they would take further on albums SIX and SEVEN.

According to a recent Robert Wyatt interview on BBC Radio 6's "Freak Zone" the first half of side 3's *The Moon In June* is Robert Wyatt solo. This would mean that Robert must also be

playing organ and guitar uncredited, as well as singing and playing drums. The song is indeed one of his strongest, and with very clever lyrics to boot, which he would famously rewrite from concert to concert to fit the venue, country, weather, time of year etc., the most famous being the BBC John Peel "Top Gear" session version. After the song, 9 minutes in, it's allchange, in fact several all-changes that bounce to and from the song theme until it's time to let-rip, quintessential Canterbury this, close to Egg or Caravan, with that patent keyboard sound, with Robert adding wordless vocal expressions. At 15 minutes, it's time to go weird again, and some, with strange pitch-shifting effects on the organ, scuttling violin. "Edgard Varese meets Sun Ra" is one description I've read!

The boldly named *Out-Bloody-Rageous* has never actually struck me as such, although it was pretty much ahead of its time, with even greater use of backwards tapes, tape delay, loops, deft editing, etc. It opens very slowly, with Mike Ratledge doing his own twist on the Terry Riley organ dervish style, which kind of cleverly steps into another slice of Soft Machine riffing (the type of thing the Dutch based Supersister also did) topped by a myriad of solos, which without warning drops into a decaying pattern of organ tones, before again gaining focus as a tripped-out space-jazz, that eventually storms along before returning to a Riley-esque phase as the finalé.

Innovative through and through. But, as you may have sussed, instead of titling loads of pieces and sewing them together, they had instead cut apart various pieces and then sewn them together in a cleverly jumbled fashion to make four suites. Because of this, the many live versions of THIRD material heard since are all quite different, as they went on to develop the compositions, with new musicians adding new ideas, and even some totally unexpected surprises. Material from THIRD can be heard on a good few excellent quality Cuneiform releases.



After this, Robert's role of lead singer became less and less part of the Soft Machine sound. Instead he started to experiment with the voice as an instrument, using electronic gadgetry, echo machines, ring modulator, etc., all taking a Soft Machine concert even further "out there!". One such gig was their unlikely inclusion at the BBC Proms, a classic concert indeed of quintessential Soft Machine.

Robert took all these experimental techniques to the next level with his "solo" debut THE END OF AN EAR on which Robert played drums, vocals, piano, and organ, aided by Soft Machine / Canterbury friends: Mark Charig, Elton Dean, David Sinclair (from Caravan) and others. Although the cover bears the words "out-of-work pop singer" it is certainly no pop album. THE END OF AN EAR is a weird outing from start to finish! I guess a lot of people, like myself, at first thought they'd put the record on at 45 rpm by mistake, as that's what it sounds like, and it still throws many that I've played it to in the UT shop. Elsewhere the record lurches into big band fusion, prog and totally twisted angular rock with clanking drums and avant-garde scat vocals to the fore. Amazing stuff, and still unique.

The jazz phase

album that I've personally never rated as one of their better ones. This is largely due to musical allergy of mine, I can't stand squawky free-jazz type sax playing, and it's an album on which Elton Dean was given far too much freedom for my liking. There's one track I don't like at all. But I won't harp on about it. The strange thing though is that much of the material is documented live as excellent versions elsewhere. Maybe that's down to Elton also playing electric piano giving him less time to idly burble rude screeches on the sax (witness the excellent "Beat Club" DVD included as a bonus with the GRIDES CD for proof of this). For me, FOURTH is the only low point in an otherwise almost flawless run of 9 albums. For some jazz fans, I know that this is their favourite!

The gradual "all change"

With a music more and more based around solos, and an increase in jazziness, it seems that Robert Wyatt had had enough, and he left in 1971 forming his own new outfit Matching Mole (the name comes from a play on "Machine Molle" the French for Soft Machine), featuring Bill McCormick from Quiet Sun, Dave Sinclair of Caravan, and Phil Miller from Delivery, amounting to a veritable supergroup where Robert could again flex his vocal chords. They released two fine albums, essential for fans of early Soft Machine, and later Robert became a successful soloist, releasing at least one classic along the way, the wonderful ROCK BOTTOM.

1971 also saw Elton Dean release his first solo album, which no doubt meant he got the jazz anguish out of his system, and hereon his playing in Soft Machine is quite different. Making use of effects and reverb, there's an air of Charlie Mariano and Klaus Doldinger to his playing on the next Soft Machine album FIVE. With former Nucleus drummer John Marshall joining, Soft Machine became much more tight and vibrant, inventing a whole new jazz-rock vocabulary of cross-genre rock and jazz innovation that was uniquely Soft Machine. The music on FIVE just rattles along, solo after solo, on top of infectious rhythmic drives that avoid the sterility of most jazz of the era. There are pauses and diversions, and lots more that keeps the music fresh even today. Unique black print on black cover too!

Yet, after lots of touring, radio concerts and sessions, Elton decided to leave and form his own band. In fact, he went on to work in all sorts of genres, from free-jazz and avant-garde through to prog. He also featured for a short while with the Dutch band Supersister, who no doubt thought of him when they were left in the lurch without a winds player. Most of his bands and projects have involved other members of the larger "Canterbury Scene" family.

Apparently invited by John Marshall was fellow ex-Nucleus multiinstrumentalist Karl Jenkins. Playing oboe, baritone and soprano saxophones, electric piano, grand piano, and celeste, he was much more than a replacement for Dean, and he had a completely different style that started to draw his aspect of early Nucleus into the Soft Machine sound. Hopper and Marshall were now becoming almost symbiotic, and a wealth of new ideas were brewing, so much so that it became time for another double. SIX ALBUM could be seen as their equivalent to Pink Floyd's UMMAGUMMA, coupling a live LP with an experimental studio LP. Live, Soft Machine had become so technically precise and flawless that they could perform a whole album length suite of segued compositions so that it felt like one big symphonic opus. Lots more keyboards, lots more electronic gadgetry, innovation was the key. The studio LP had 4 very different works: *The Soft Weed Factor* penned by Jenkins, prophesying where Soft Machine were to go next, *Stanley Stamps Gibbon Album (for B.O.)* and *Chloe And The Pirates* by Ratledge revisiting the atmospheric and Riley-esque elements of THIRD, and finally Hopper's weird and fuzz bass dominated 1983.

But, let's step back a moment, Hugh Hopper had just released his debut "solo" album 1984 before this. It was as though the Soft Machine number 1983 was a kind of advert for this. George Orwell's poignant novel couldn't really have inspired a weirder album, with Hugh's fuzz bass to the fore and clanking percussives dominating much of the album, punctuated by a few Soft Machine like diversions. It still challenges many. Seemingly Hugh wanted to do more music like this, and explore other avenues, and he left the band in May 1973. Roy Babbington, who had worked with Soft Machine before (known as a double-bass player with the likes of Michael Gibbs and Keith Tippett) also from Nucleus, was a good choice as replacement.

Roy, in keeping with the increasingly electric focus of Soft Machine, took up 6-string bass guitar, adding a smoother bass underpinning. This meant that although SEVEN was like a development on the live LP from SIX it was a much smoother flowing excursion, again with even more keyboards to the fore, and the inevitable introduction of synthesizer! It was another step away from the jazzy sound of a few years earlier.

Return of the guitar hero!

We may never know quite why, but after all those years without a guitarist (since Daevid Allen's exile) it was now decided that Soft Machine needed a guitar lead. Well, nearly all other fusion bands at the time had a guitar whiz in the band, and SEVEN had been criticised for lacking any real lead focus. So, enter Allan Holdsworth (originally from the eclectic Igginbottom's Wrench) who'd also played with Nucleus and featured on Ian Carr's BELLADONNA album. He joined in December 1973 at a time when the band were also

between labels, which meant a whole new repertoire had time to gel and develop before they got to record an album. BUNDLES recorded summer 1974 was even more so Karl Jenkins' show, taking those patent early Nucleus style riffs of his, pitting them against Ratledge's fuzzed keyboards and Holdsworth's guitar. It's a sizzler, and still a favourite, all a complex segue of tracks sewn together as a huge complex suite. It took some time to appear on the market though, not until spring 1975. But, Allan Holdsworth was never one to stay anywhere long, and he absconded to Tony Williams Lifetime just as the band were about to go on tour to promote BUNDLES! Allan suggested John Etheridge as a replacement. John was the first Soft Machine member to not have a Nucleus connection for some time. He was from Darryl Way's Wolf, where he'd proven his talent as one of the hottest guitarists around. Based on live material from this time he fitted into Holdsworth's role almost seamlessly.

In March 1976 the "all-change" was completed as the sole original member Mike Ratledge departed. Karl Jenkins pretty much took over Ratledge's role, with Alan Wakeman stepping-in on saxophones. The final classic Soft Machine SOFTS was recorded in Spring 1976 (it still had Ratledge featured, playing synthesizer on two track) and was amongst the most powerful sizzlers of Soft Machine. Some dismiss as not real Soft Machine. They could have called themselves ex-Nucleus really. It would have been one hell of a way to end the story!



Alive and well? Not really!

After embarking on an extensive European tour there were yet more changes to the line-up: first Alan Wakeman departed with violinist Ric Sanders filling his role, then Babbington also left replaced briefly by Percy Jones (from Brand X) and then Steve Cook (of Gilgamesh and Mirage). The live album documenting this line-up ALIVE AND WELL, RECORDED IN PARIS recorded in July 1977 is an odd one in that it starts as classic SOFTS styled fusion, with some welcome new twists, but somehow gets lost in the middle, ending up as a type of synthispace-disco music at the end.

Quite where this "electro" element came from wasn't apparent at the time, as a version of Soft Machine under the guises of Rubber Riff and Rubba had been making music for the DeWolfe library label incognito for a couple of years. The album RUBBER RIFF had the line-up of: Karl Jenkins (keyboards, flute, saxophone), John Etheridge (guitars), Roy Babbington (bass), John Marshall (drums) and Karl's wife: Carol Barratt (keyboards). It amounted to what sounded like safe sanitised Soft Machine, in small chunks, with the accent on tunes and dramatic themes instead of solos. The two albums by Rubba PUSH BUTTON and MOVEMENT are occasionally nice, but are chiefly quirky/cheesy commercial music with dodgy synths to the fore! The compositions are credited to Jenkins and Ratledge, but there's no documentation as to who the band actually were.

Anyway, I digress, as Soft Machine eventually ran out of steam after this. Whether they split up or just became an occasional "back burner" project I'm not sure. Their last gig of the 1970s is said to be December 1978, in Bremen, Germany. The 1981 album LAND OF COCKAYNE saw Jenkins, Marshall and Holdsworth together again, with former Cream bassist Jack Bruce. It's not an album I can honestly comment on though, as I've never been able to play it all! Over-produced, schmaltzy and just plain bad, it's a shame that it was ever released if you ask me. A much more interesting album is Second Vision's FIRST STEPS, with Etheridge and Sanders from 1980, which sounds much more like a logical sequel to SOFTS, albeit a more mellow affair.

Apparently a version of Soft Machine got together for a series of gigs at the Soho Ronnie Scotts club in the summer of 1984, with a line-up of Jenkins, Marshall, Etheridge, with Dave MacRae (keyboards) and Paul Carmichael (bass). The Karl Jenkins' Soft Machine saga ends there, sadly as a rather wet whimper.

The legacy

As told above, there have been a number of attempts at Soft Machine "reformations" with various line-ups. There are also related projects of note that I should mention here.

1n the 1970s there were the "illegitimate" Soft Machine modelled outfits: Soft Head and Soft Heap involving Hugh Hopper and Elton Dean, which were semi-successful, except that Elton was given too much room to squawk on the sax at will, which ruined them for me. Many other such incarnations existed, although they were largely in the avant-garde jazz field.

The most Soft Machine like albums of the 1970s that are not Soft Machine all have Hugh Hopper as a key player. There are two Hopper solo albums: HOPPER TUNITY BOX which features a luminary cast of Canterbury talent, patent Soft Machine riffs, diversions, and some new inventions, and the even more explorative MONSTER BAND which had one side with his band live in France (very much in the Soft Machine FIVE vein) and a side of Hugh in multi-tracking mode developing a unique twist on his "1983"/"1984" works. They both feature Dean, but in a more controlled mode, in fact on these he's excellent! There's also the second Isotope album ILLUSION. Gary Boyle's fusion outfit Isotope were often a mite too fiddly for my taste, but on ILLUSION Hugh seemed to weld it all together, his fuzz bass playing a key role. It's a classic! Hugh has tried out many other styles since, and still occasionally surprises. His discography is vast!

As I said earlier in this article, Kevin Ayers went on to be quite prolific as a soloist. Generally his albums become more diverse and patchy, and more lyrical, which is a big minus if too much of Ayers singing grates on the senses, especially with pop pastiche playing an all the more important role in his work. Okay in small doses, but... Anyway, because of this I cut-off his work in the "Related of interest" listing (below) after CONFESSIONS OF DR. DREAM, arguably his last good one, which in some ways is his most experimental. Kevin's career proves to me that his leaving Soft Machine was indeed a good thing, else they'd never have been able to explore and go where they did! I'd have to say that my favourite album involving Kevin Ayers is the wonderfully eccentric album by poetess Lady June. Not at all like Soft Machine in any way, but a real fun one!

Robert Wyatt, as you may know, had a big career change after an accident which left him wheelchair bound. That hiatus gave him plenty of time to come up with the exceptionally creative and unique ROCK BOTTOM, an album with a superb cast and a very clever twisting and reinventing of his early Soft Machine work. After that Robert tried his hand as a pop singer, before he found a new vocation as a left-field experimental protest singer (?), having success on the fringe of the newwave, and has sporadically remained active through to today.

Mike Ratledge also did some session work with other bands in the 1970s, but since leaving Soft Machine he's largely worked in the studio together with Karl Jenkins. Besides the Rubba albums he and Karl Jenkins had been doing TV and soundtrack work. They also both featured with the band Planet Earth (who later turned into Sky), did much in the way of session work and other such things that led to the commercially successful Adiemus.

Eventually though a serious attempt at Soft Machine reformation bore fruit in 2002 under the guise of "Soft Works" with the line-up of: Elton Dean (alto saxophone, saxello, electric piano), Allan Holdsworth (guitar, synthaxe), Hugh Hopper (bass), John Marshall (drums), releasing the album ABRACADABRA (Universal, Japan 2003) a lineup that I don't ever recall playing together before, and it didn't really work for me either. Too polished, I guess Allan had been working in the USA too long! Apparently the project soon folded after Allan Holdsworth pulled-out, and again in his place came John Etheridge (sometimes history uncannily repeats itself) for the much more successful "Soft Machine Legacy" project. They've issued at least four albums to date: LIVE IN ZAANDAM (2005), SOFT MACHINE LEGACY (2006), NEW MORNING (2006), and STEAM (2007) with the latter featuring Gong's Theo Travis as replacement for the late Elton Dean. Soft Machine Legacy tend to do a mixture of old and new material, including a good few old classics as well as many new ideas. At least now the Soft Machine story doesn't end with a whimper but with a rebirth that's well-worth experiencing live so I'm told. The story goes on!

Discography...

This discography lists only the original LPs, other British and notable European pressings and European CD reissues

Soft Machine

Love Makes Sweet Music / Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'
7" Polydor BM56151 (1967)

THE SOFT MACHINE
LP Probe CPLPS 4500 (USA, 1968), Probe PLP 4500 (1968),
ABC 602 (1973), Big Beat WIKA57 (198?)

Joy Of A Toy / Why Are We Sleeping?
7" Probe 452 (USA, 1968)

VOLUME TWO
LP Probe CPLPS4505 (USA, 1969), Probe SPB 1002 (1969),
Big Beat WIKA58 (198?)

THIRD
2LP CBS 66246 (1970), CBS Embassy 30339 (197?)
CD Beat Goes On BGOCD180 (1993) *slightly edited*
CD Columbia Rewind 471407 2 (199?)

FOURTH
LP CBS 64280 (1971), CBS Embassy 30754 (197?)
CD Columbia Rewind 473003 2 (1993)

FIFTH
LP CBS 64806 (1972), CBS Embassy 31748 (1979)
CD Columbia Rewind 473002 2 (1993)

SIX ALBUM
2LP CBS 68214 (1973),
CD Columbia Rewind 473001 2 (1993)

SEVEN
LP CBS 65799 (1974)
CD Columbia Rewind 473004 2 (1993)

BUNDLES
LP Harvest SHSP 4044 (1975), Harvest 064 96356 (Germany, 1975)
CD See For Miles SEE CD 283 (1990)

SOFTS
LP Harvest SHSP 4056 (1976)
CD See For Miles SEE CD 285 (1990)

ALIVE AND WELL - RECORDED IN PARIS
LP Harvest SHSP 4083 (1978)
CD See For Miles SEE CD 290 (1990)

Soft Space
7" Harvest SPSR 419 (1978), Harvest HAR5155 (?)

LAND OF COCKAYNE
LP EMI EMC3348 (1981)
CD One Way Records S21-18936 (USA, 199?)

Compilations

SOFT MACHINE / GONG: COMPLETE FAMILY
2LP Byg Records 529.201 (1971) *inc. 1 side of 1967 Soft Machine*

VOLUMES ONE & TWO
2LP ABC ABCL5004 (1974)

CD Big Beat CDWIKD 920 (1989) *2LPs on 1CD*

TRIPLE ECHO
3LP Harvest SHTW 800 (1977) *inc. debut single & Peel sessions 1969/70*

UNTOUCHABLE
CD Castle CCSCD 281 (1990) *Harvest selection*

AS IF
CD Elite 006CD (1991) *CBS selection from 3/4/5/6*

FOURTH / FIFTH
CD Columbia Rewind 493341 2 (1999) *2LPs on 1CD*

MAN IN A DEAF CORNER
2CD Sanctuary CMDDD897 (2004)

KINGS OF CANTERBURY
2CD Snapper/Recall SMCD 740 (2003)

SIX / SEVEN
CD Edsel MEDCD740 (2004) *3LPs on 2CD*

OUT-BLOODY RAGEOUS (ANTHOLOGY 1967-1973)
CD Sony/Columbia 520039 2 (2005)

Archives...

CANTERBURIED SOUNDS (1962-64)
series featuring: The Wilde Flowers, Robert Wyatt,proto-Soft Machine, etc...
VOLUME 1 - CD Voiceprint VP201CD (1998)
VOLUME 2 - CD Voiceprint VP202CD (1998)
VOLUME 3 - CD Voiceprint VP203CD (1998)
VOLUME 4 - CD Voiceprint VP204CD (1998)

THE DAEVID ALLEN TRIO - LIVE 1963 (1963)
CD Voiceprint VP122CD (1993)

THE WILDE FLOWERS - TALES OF (1964/65)
CD Voiceprint VP123CD (1993)

AT THE BEGINNING (1967)
the Ayers, Allen, Ratledge & Wyatt, DeLane Lea Studios sessions
on **ROCK GENERATION 7** - LP Byg Records 529 707 (France, 1971) 1 side
on **ROCK GENERATION 8** - LP Byg Records 529 708 (France, 1971) 1 side
FACE AND PLACE VOL. 7 - LP Byg Records 529 507 (France, 1972)
SOFT MACHINE - LP 2001 Metronome 200.137 (Germany, 1973)
AT THE BEGINNING - LP Charly CR300014 (1977)
JET PROPELLED PHOTOGRAPHS - LP Decal LIK36 (1988), CD Spalax 14816 (France, 1995), CD Charly SNAP133CD (1997)

MIDDLE EARTH MASTERS (16/9/1967)
CD Cuneiform RUNE235 (2006)

SOFT MACHINE TURNS ON VOLUME 1 (1967/1968)
from Middle Earth & Speakeasy clubs, & early demos
CD Voiceprint VP231CD (2001)

SOFT MACHINE TURNS ON VOLUME 2 (1967/1968)
Amsterdam 10/12/67, Middle Earth 10/11/67, Iowa USA 11/8/68
CD Voiceprint VP234CD (2001)

LIVE AT THE PARADISO 1969 (29/3/1969)

CD bootleg (198?), Voiceprint VP193CD (1994)

SPACED (5/1969)
CD Cuneiform Records RUNE 90 (1996)

BACKWARDS (11/1969+5/1970)
CD Cuneiform Records RUNE 170 (1998)

NOISETTE (4/1/1970)
CD Cuneiform Records RUNE 130 (2000)

BREDA REACTOR 1971 (31/1/1970)
CD Voiceprint VP345CD (2005)

SOMEWHERE IN SOHO (20-25/4/1970)
2CD Voiceprint VP262CD (2004)

FACELIFT (26/4/1970)
CD Voiceprint VP233CD (2003)

LIVE AT THE PROMS 1970 (13/8/1970)
LP Reckless Records RECK 5 (1988)

aka **LIVE 1970** - *inferior version, but also includes 2 extra tracks (2/1970)*
CD Blueprint BP290CD (1998)

GRIDES (25/10/1970+23/3/1971)
CD+DVD Cuneiform Records RUNE 230/231 (2006)

BBC RADIO 1 LIVE IN CONCERT (11/3/1971)

aka **SOFT MACHINE AND HEAVY FRIENDS**
CD Hux Records HUX067 (2005)

VIRTUALLY (23/3/1971)
CD Cuneiform Records RUNE 100 (1998)

LIVE IN FRANCE (2/5/72)

aka **LIVE IN PARIS**
2CD Cuneiform Records RUNE 195/196 (2004)

BBC RADIO 1 LIVE IN CONCERT (20/7/1972)

aka **SOFTSTAGE**
CD Hux Records HUX 070 (200?)

FLOATING WORLD (29/1/1975)
CD Moonjune Records MJR 007 (2006)

BRITISH TOUR 75 (10/1975)
CD MLP10CD (2005)

The original note here about Voiceprint and Blueprint reissues is no longer relevant as all such titles are now deleted

Radio sessions...

T**HE PEEL SESSIONS [SOFT MACHINE TURNS ON]**
2LP Strange Fruit SFRLP 201 (1990)
2CD Strange Fruit SFRCD 201 (1990)

BBC RADIO 1967-1971
2CD Hux Records HUX 037 (2003)

BBC RADIO 1971-1974
2CD Hux Records HUX 047 (2003)

Incognito...

RUBBER RIFF

LP DeWolfe 3331 (197?)
CD Blueprint BP190CD (1994)

RUBBA - PUSH BUTTON
LP DeWolfe (19??)

RUBBA - MOVEMENT
LP Rouge (19??)

DE WOLFE SESSIONS
2LP Turning Point Music (Italy, 2002) *compilation*

Related of interest...

Musician key...

Kevin Ayers **KA**, Roy Babbington **RB**, Elton Dean **ED**, Hugh Hopper **HH**, Karl Jenkins **KJ**, John Marshall **JM**, Mike Ratledge **MR**, Robert Wyatt **RW**

Kevin Ayers - JOY OF A TOY - LP Harvest SHVL 763 (1969), CD BGO BGOCD78 (1990) **KA HH MR RW**

J**ulie Driscoll - 1969** - LP Polydor 2480 074 (1969) **ED KJ**

Kevin Ayers - Singing A Song In The Morning / Eleanors Cake - 7" Harvest HAR 5011 (1970) **KA**

Kevin Ayers - Butterfly Dance / Puis Je? - 7" Harvest HAR 5027 (1970) **KA**

Kevin Ayers - SHOOTING AT THE MOON- LP Harvest SHSP 4005 (1970), CD BGOCD13 (1990) **KA MR RW**

Syd Barrett - THE MADCAP LAUGHS - LP Harvest SHVL 765 (1970) **HH MR RW**

Carol Grimes with Delivery - FOOLS MEETING - LP B&C CAS 1023 (1970) **RB**

Nucleus - ELASTIC ROCK - LP Vertigo 6360 008 (1970) **KJ JM**

Nucleus - WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER - LP Vertigo 6360 027 (1970) **KJ JM**

Keith Tippett - BLUE PRINT - LP RCA SF 8290 (1970) **RB**

Keith Tippett - YOU ARE HERE... I AM THERE - LP Polydor 2384 004 (1970) **ED**

Daevid Allen - BANANA MOON - LP Byg Records 529.345 (France, 1971) **RW**

Kevin Ayers - Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes / Stars - 7" Harvest HAR 5042 (1971) **KA**

Centipede - SEPTOBER ENERGY - 2LP Neon NE9 (1971), RCA DPS5042 (1974), CD BGO CD485 (2000) **RB ED KJ JM RW**

Lol Coxhill - EAR OF THE BEHOLDER - LP Dandelion 69 001 (1971) **KA RW**

Elton Dean - ELTON DEAN - LP CBS 64539 (1971) **ED RB MR**

Don 'Sugar Cane' Harris - SUGAR CANE GOT THE BLUES - LP MPS/BASF 21 21283-1 (Germany, 1971) **RW**

Heads Hands & Feet - SAME - Island ILPS 9149 (1971) **ED**

New Violin Summit - LIVE AT BERLIN JAZZFESTIVAL - LP MPS 33 21285-8 (Germany, 1971) **RW**

Nucleus - SOLAR PLEXUS - LP Vertigo 6360 039 (1971) **KJ JM**

Keith Tippett Group - DEDICATED TO YOU, BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING - LP Vertigo 6360 024 (1971) **RB ED RW**

Robert Wyatt - THE END OF AN EAR - LP CBS 64189 (1971), CBS Embassy 31846 (1978), CD Columbia Rewind 473005 2 (1993) **ED RW**

Neil Ardley - SYMPHONY OF AMARANTHS - LP Regal Zonophone SLRZ 1028 (1972) **KJ**

Kevin Ayers - Oh! What A Wet Dream / Connie On A Rubber Band - 7" Harvest HAR 5064 (1972) **KA**

Kevin Ayers - WHATEVERSHEBRINGSWESING - LP Harvest SHVL 800 (1972), CD BGO BGOCD11 (1989) **KA RW**

David Bedford - NURSES SONG WITH ELEPHANTS - LP Dandelion 2310 165 (1972) **KA**

Volker Kriegel - INSIDE: MISSING LINK - 2LP MPS 33 21431-1 (Germany, 1972) **JM**

Matching Mole - MATCHING MOLE - LP CBS 64850 (1972), CBS Embassy 32105 (1982), CD BGOCD175 (1993), Columbia Rewind 471489 2 (199?) **RW**

Kevin Ayers - BANANAMOUR - LP Harvest SHVL 807 (1973), CD BGO BGOCD142 (1992) **KA MR RW**

Michael Gibbs - JUST AHEAD - LP Polydor 2683 011 (1973) **RB JM**

Hugh Hopper - 1984 - LP CBS 65466 (1973), Atmosphere IRI 5010 (France, 1980), CD Mantra 051 (France, 1996), Cuneiform RUNE 104 (1998) **HH JM**

Volker Kriegel - LIFT! - LP MPS 21 21753-1 (Germany, 1973) **JM**

Matching Mole - LITTLE RED RECORD - LP CBS 65260 (1973), CBS Embassy 32148 (1982), CD BGOCD174 (1993), Columbia Rewind 471488 2 (199?) **RW**

Nucleus - LABYRINTH - LP Vertigo 6360 091 (1973) **RB**

Ovary Lodge - OVARY LODGE - LP CBS SF 8372 (1973) **RB**

John Surman - MORNING GLORY - LP Island ILPS 9237 (1973) **JM**

Stomu Yamash'ta & East Wind - **FREEDOM IS FRIGHTENING** - LP Island ILPS 9242 (1973) **HH**

Kevin Ayers - CONFESSIONS OF DR. DREAM - LP Island ILPS 9263 (1974), CD BGO BGOCD86 (1991) **KA MR**

Ayers/Cale/Eno/Nico - JUNE 1, 1974 - LP Island ILPS 9291 (1974) **KA RW**

Coxhill/Miller - THE STORY SO FAR / OH... REALLY - LP Caroline C1507 (1974) **KA RW**

Hatfield & The North - HATFIELD & THE NORTH - LP Virgin V2008 (1974) **RW**

Lady June - LINGUISTIC LEPROSY - LP Caroline C1509 (1974) **KA RW**

Robert Wyatt - ROCK BOTTOM - LP Virgin V2017 (1974), CD Virgin CDV 2017 (1989) **HH RW**

Stomu Yamash'ta & East Wind - ONE BY ONE - LP Island ILPS 9269 (1974) **HH**

Robert Wyatt - I'm A Believer / Memories - 7" Virgin VS114 (1974) **RW**

Brian Eno - TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN (BY STRATEGY) - LP Island ILPS 9309 (1975) **RW**

Isotope - ILLUSION - LP Gull GULP 1006 (1975) **HH**

Phil Manzanera - DIAMOND HEAD - LP Island ILPS 9315 (1975) **RW**

Julie Tippetts - SUNSET GLOW - LP Utopia UTS601 (1975) **ED**

Robert Wyatt - RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD - LP Virgin V2034 (1975), CD Virgin CDV 2034 (1989) **RW**

Henry Cow - CONCERTS - 2LP Caroline CAD3002 (1976) **RW**

Hopper/Dean/Tippett/Gallivan - OH FOR THE EDGE - LP Ogun OG 900 (1976) **ED HH**

Isotope - DEEP END - LP Gull GULP 1017 (1976) **HH**

Michael Mantler - THE HAPLESS CHILD - LP Watt WATT4 (1976) **RW**

Jan Steele/John Cage - VOICES AND INSTRUMENTS - LP Obscure 5 (1976) **RW**

Elton Dean Quartet - THEY ALL BE ON THIS OLD ROAD - LP Ogun OG410 (1977) **ED**

Elton Dean & Alan Skidmore - EL SKID - LP Vinyl VS103 (1977) **ED**

Dean/Wheeler/Gallivan - THE CHEQUE IS IN THE MAIL - LP Ogun OG610 (1977) **ED**

Hugh Hopper - HOPPER TUNITY BOX - LP Compendium FIDARDO7 (Norway, 1977), CD Cuneiform RUNE 240 (2007) **ED HH**

Hopper/Dean/Tippett/Gallivan - CRUEL BUT FAIR - LP Compendium FIDARDO4 (Norway, 1977) **ED HH**

Intercontinental Express - LONDON - LP Compendium FIDARDO 8 (Norway, 1977) **ED**

Michael Mantler - SILENCE - LP Watt WATT5 (1977) **RW**

Dudu Pukwana - DIAMOND EXPRESS - LP Freedom FLP 41044 (1977) **ED**

Robert Wyatt - Yesterday Man / Sonia - 7" Virgin VS115 (1977) **RW**

Carla Bley - EUROPEAN TOUR 1977 - LP Watt WATT8 (1978) **ED HH**

Elton Dean's Ninesense - HAPPY DAZE - LP Ogun OG910 (1978) **ED**

Brian Eno - AMBIENT #1 MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS - LP Ambient AMBC001 (1978) **RW**

Planet Earth - PLANET EARTH - LP Pye NSPL 18556 (1978) **KJ RW**

Soft Head - ROGUE ELEMENT - LP Ogun OG527 (1978) **ED HH**

S**oft Heap - SOFT HEAP** - LP Charly WATT8 (1978) **ED HH**

Keith Tippett's Ark - FRAMES - 2LP Ogun OGD0034 (1978) **ED**

Gilgamesh - ANOTHER FINE TUNE YOU'VE GOT ME INTO - LP Charly CRL 5009 (1979) **HH**

Hugh Hopper - MONSTER BAND - LP Atmosphere IRI 5003 (France, 1979), CD Culture Press 3012782 (1996) **ED HH**

Elton Dean Quintet - BOUNDARIES - LP Japo 60033 (1980) **ED**

Hopper/Gowen - TWO RAINBOWS DAILY - LP Europa/Red ROUGE1 (1980), CD Cuneiform RUNE 77 (USA, 1995) **HH**

Matching Mole - BBC RADIO 1 LIVE IN CONCERT (27/7/72) - CD Windsong WINCD 063 (1994) **RW**

Matching Mole - SMOKE SIGNALS (1972) - CD Cuneiform RUNE 150 (USA, 2001) **RW**

Matching Mole - MARCH (3/1972) - CD Cuneiform RUNE 172 (USA, 2001) **RW**

*The above listing is **not** a complete discography!*



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Auricle Music -> **Ultima Thule** (UK)
Gregorio Bardini, Via Delle Querce 15, 39011 Lana (BZ), Italy
Barking Green / Buzzle, Tim Story, P.O. Box 415, Maumee, Oh 43537, USA [storypod@aol.com]
Enrico Bassi, c/o Via Ungheria 109, 36025 Movent Vil, VI - Italy
Neil Campbell [www.neilcampbellcollective.com]
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Cuneiform Records, P.O. Box 8427, Silver Spring, MD 20907-8427, USA. [www.cuneiformrecords.com]
Cyclops Records, P.O. Box 834a, K-O-T & Surbiton, Surrey, KT1 9BZ. [Fax. 020 8397 2998] [www.gft-cyclops.co.uk] ☐ Pinnacle Records (UK)
DiN, 38 Church Lane, Ormesby, Middlesbrough. TS7 9AP, England. [01642 327 482] [www.din.org.uk] [email: info@din.org.uk]
ECM [www.ecmrecords.com] -> **New Note** (UK)
Eternity's Jest / Quarkspace, PMB 212, 1487 West Fifth Avenue, Columbus, OH 43212, USA. [www.quarkspace.com] [pwdood@quarkspace.com]
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Musea Productions & Distribution, 138, rue de Vallières, 57070 Metz, France. [Fax: +33 387 366473] [www.musearecords.com] [data@musearecords.com]
Points Of Friction, c/o Spagyric, 19241 Kenya St., Northridge, CA 91326, USA [www.pointsoffriction.com]
Brendan Pollard [brendon.pollard@ntlworld.com]
Poseidon/Vital etc. -> **Musea Distribution**
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Nachtricht/Rixongs [rick@rcrane7.fsnet.co.uk]
September Gurls, Sigmundstrasse 92, 90431 Nürnberg, Germany.

[Fax. +49 911 318233] [www.septembergurlsrecords.com]
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Synkronos P.O. Box 22, Upper Darby, PA 19082-0022, USA.
[www.synkronosmusic.com] [info@synkronosmusic.com]
Synthetic Symphony -> **SPV (Germany** -> **Cadiz/Pinnacle (UK)**
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[www.heavyzenjazz.de] [www.trigon.in] [rainer@trigon.in]
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Ultima Thule [the retail arm and publisher of Audion] can supply many titles reviewed in Audion, or at least may be able to help you locate them. Phone and ask for Alan if you have an enquiry, and I'll see what I can do. Ultima Thule offer a specialist mail-order service dealing with the types of music you'll find in Audion, but are not able to stock everything.

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Distributors (i.e. Pinnacle, EMI, Universal, BMG) generally only work through retailers, and will not deal directly with the public, you will need to order their products through a record retailer! These days, most businesses have easy to find web-sites, and can be contacted by e-mail.

-> denotes who distributes the label (enquire with a retailer, i.e. Ultima Thule, Wayside Music, Musea, HMV, Fnac).

When no contact address is given it usually means one of two things...
1) there is no address given on the album.
2) the reviewer didn't supply any such information to Audion.

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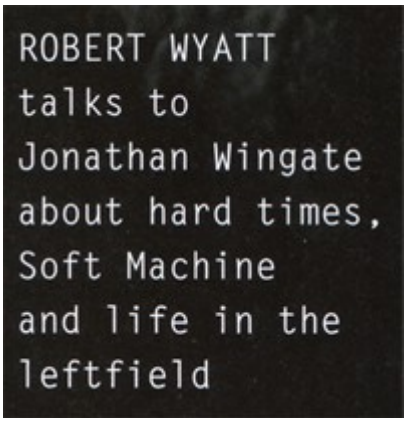
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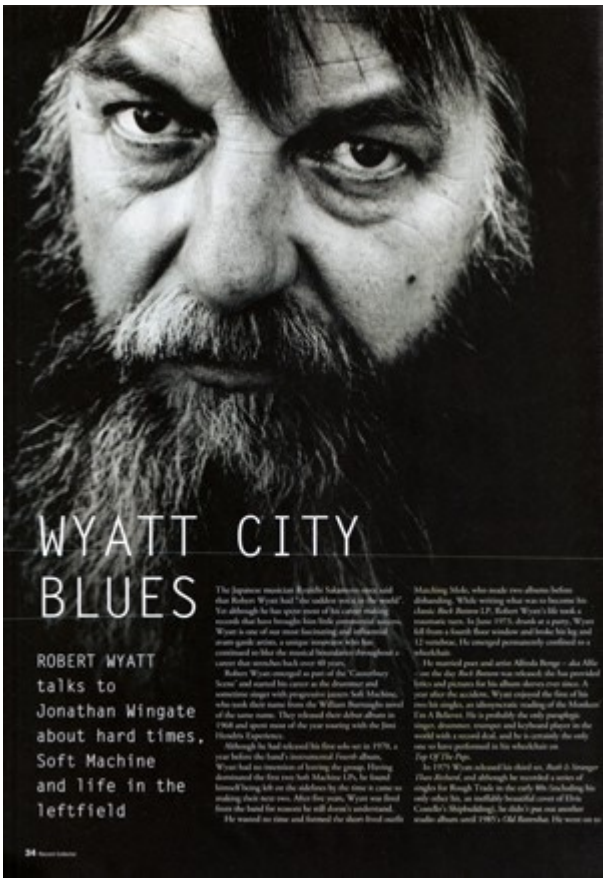
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Wyatt City Blues - Record Collector N° 345 - January 2008

WYATT CITY BLUES







The Japanese musician Ryuichi Sakamoto once said that Robert Wyatt had "the saddest voice in the world". Yet although he has spent most of his career making records that have brought him little commercial success, Wyatt is one of our most fascinating and influential avant-garde artists, a unique innovator who has continued to blur the musical boundaries throughout a

Robert Wyatt emerged as part of the 'Canterbury Scene' and started his career as the drummer and sometime singer with progressive jazzers Soft Machine, who took their name from the William Burroughs novel of the same name. They released their debut album in 1968 and spent most of the year touring with the Jimi Hendrix Experience.
Although he had released his first solo set in 1970, a year before the band's instrumental *Fourth* album, Wyatt had no intention of leaving the group. Having dominated the first two Soft Machine LPs, he found himself being left on the sidelines by the time it came to making their next two. After five years, Wyatt was fired from the band for reasons he still doesn't understand.
He wasted no time and formed the short-lived outfit Matching Mole, who made two albums before

career that stretches back over 40 years.

disbanding. While writing what was to become classic *Rock Bottom* LP, Robert Wyatt's life took a traumatic turn. In June 1973, drunk at a party, Wyatt fell from a fourth floor window and broke his leg and 12 vertebrae. He emerged permanently confined to a wheelchair.

He married poet and artist Alfreda Benge - aka Alfie - on the day *Rock Bottom* was released; she has provided lyrics and pictures for his album sleeves ever since. A year after the accident, Wyatt enjoyed the first of his two hit singles, an idiosyncratic reading of the Monkees' I'm A Believer. He is probably the only paraplegic singer, drummer, trumpet and keyboard player in the world with a record deal, and he is certainly the only one to have performed in his wheelchair on *Top Of The Pops*.

In 1975 Wyatt released his third set, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, and although he recorded a series of singles for Rough Trade in the early 80s (including his only other hit, an ineffably beautiful cover of Elvis Costello's Shipbuilding), he didn't put out another studio album until 1985's *Old Rottenhat*. He went on to records a series of groundbreaking records including *Dondestan*, *Shleep* and his last L.P, *Cukooland*, which earned Wyatt more mainstream attention than any of his previous albums and featured illustrious guests such as Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera, David Gilmour and Brian Eno.

Wyatt's new set, *Comicopera*, is an astonishing 16-song concept album in three acts. Much like most of his work, it is not what you would call a jazz alb that could only have been created by a jazz man. Recorded at Wyatt's house in Louth and at Manzanera's Gallery Studio, *Comicopera* again features Weller, Manzanera and Eno alongside a crack horn session that includes Annie Whitehead and Gilad Atzmon.

Although Wyatt has suffered from periodic bouts of depression throughout his life, he is in fine form when we meet in the member's bar on the top floor of the recently refurbished Festival Hall on a muggy autumn morning. Having declined his publicist's offer of a pre-interview breakfast ("Alfie nicked a couple of croissants from the hotel for me to have on the journey here"), Wyatt is fizzing with so much enthusiasm that he doesn't stop talking for over two hours.

C*omicopera* sounds very different to your last few albums.

Well, I try not to repeat myself, but although the voice is the same old thing, it gets lower and lower, and as I sink into the abyss, I grab out for other musicians and singers to help me do the high notes. Over the last 30 years, I've probably lost about an octave at the top and added one at the bottom. It's old age...that and the fags.

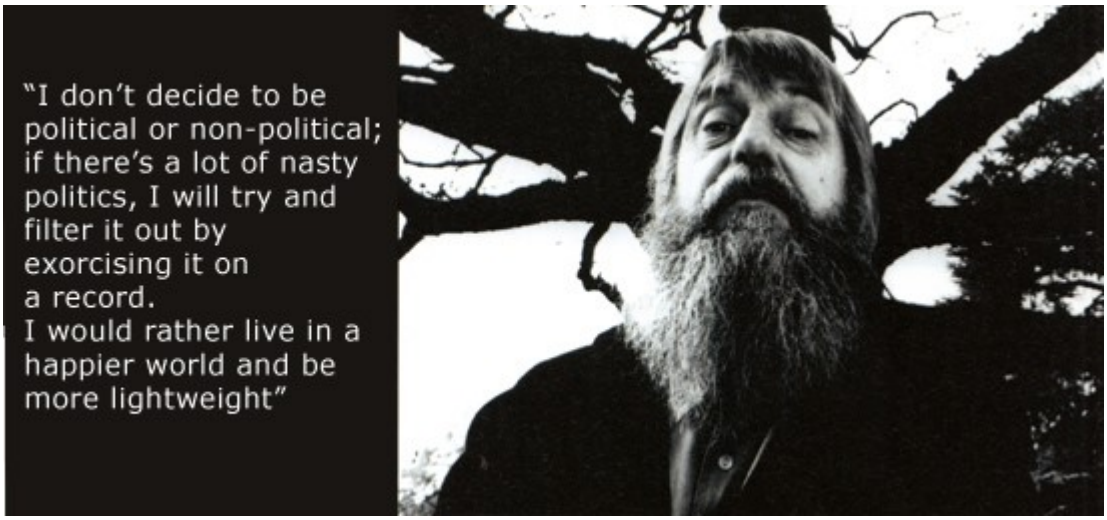
Can you take us through *Comicopera's* three sections?

The first third seems to fall into relationship stuff, man and woman losing each other, foggy things that happen between people and attempts at love between people where it's quite hard for one reason or another. The second bit leaves that kind of enclosed space, and it's just me pottering about England, which I see as a kind of rather scrappy, unkempt Methodist chapel. It's not that I sit there deliberating, choosing metaphors; it just seems to come out like that. But there's merriment in there in the second bit. I like comedy myself.

When I was in the studio with Monica Vasconcelos - who sings on Just As You Are — she said "You're so playful in the studio." And that's the nicest thing anybody has ever said about me. I just really like having fun. I hate to say this joke, but deep down, I'm shallow. It sort of sums it up, really. It's a bit like Ivor [Cutler]; deep down he was utterly trivial, just a sort of childish joke thing, but the legacy of being Jewish and the tragedy of his people sat with him very uneasily, and it was almost like carrying a great weight. My great weight is English-speaking people, the Empire.

Does that weigh heavily on you? It really does, and as an artist, I feel un-entertained by it. There are people who are poor and old fashioned, but they always seem to wear fantastic clothes and cook fantastic food. The further Western civilisation has gone, they get Anglicised and they go around wearing horrible sports clothes, eating hamburgers and getting fat watching fucking Britney Spears on telly.

For hundreds of years, I think we have absolutely lowered the tone of every neighbourhood we've gone into, and we think we're elevating. I just feel ashamed and offended at what my tax money is being spent on. For example, we're being told to watch our carbon footprint. How much carbon footprint does the average bombing raid on Basra use up compared with me and my refuse? Fuck off.



There are two particularly moving songs that address the situation, told from the perspective of the person doing the bombing and the person being bombed.
The narrator actually shifts. At the end of the second section I'm both the euphoric bomber (A Beautiful War), and the apoplectic bombed person (Out Of The Blue). It shifts about in a way that I haven't consciously done in the past.

The third section sees a shift from songs in English to Italian and Spanish. Did you decide not to sing in English as a protest against the war in Iraq?
Sort of. After the bombing it's to do with feeling completely alienated from Anglo-American culture, just sort of being silent as an English-speaking person because of this fucking war. Now I'm in my 60s, I know I'm never gonna see a world in which the English-speaking people are not thumping round the world telling Johnny Foreigner what to do, and that did hit me with a sort of thud. The last thing I sing in English is: "You've planted all your everlasting hatred in my heart."

Do you find it difficult articulating these quite complex political issues in your music without feeling a little clumsy?
I do find it difficult, because clumsy and diatribal aren't things I want to be. In fact, I really don't think what I sing makes any difference anyway, because I know enough about politics to know that politics is just about power, guns and money. I just don't think politics is about artists. I wouldn't trust most of us as far as you could throw us anyway. Artists are like cheerleaders at a football match; you can scream "Arsenal" until your head falls off, but it won't get them another goal. I'm mostly concerned with making a really nice sounding record and how to have a little fun in the studio. I'd be happy not to write about this stuff, it's just these are the things that come to the surface. I'd much rather live in a kinder world or one where I was ignorant to it. Matisse never addressed the issues in the world around him, but Picasso did. They're both great painters, it's just how it worked for them.

Are you still a card-carrying communist?
No, because there is no such thing as a communist. It's like saying are you still Yugoslavian? The thing I probably feel most affectionate about is the old left-wing revolutionary romantic sort of moments which caught my imagination in the 70s and 80s. As anachronistic as that is, it's probably even more deeply imbedded in me than all the art and music stuff. It's stayed with me, and it means a lot to me.

Were you conscious of trying to capture the sound of a band playing together in a room for this album?
Yes, it's like a fantasy band, and even though that band could not exist, it does exist for a couple of weeks when we're making the record. Everything the musicians play is fairly spontaneous. We're not playing together in the studio, because I actually work with musicians individually and then put it all together layer by layer afterwards.

Did you miss being in a band after Soft Machine?
Well, I never missed being in a group after them, I missed being in a group after Matching Mole. That was a very merry little band, although we only made a couple of LPs and then I fell out of a window before the third. It never settled, really, but then to be fair to the others, I don't think any band I was with ever could have settled.
I just can't imagine a group which could do all the different things that there are to do,

which is why I prefer the way I work now, which is to get appropriate people for each particular project. On the second track on this record, it's me with Yaron Stavi doing most of it along with Paul Weller on guitar and Monica and me doing the vocals. Well, that particular group isn't appropriate to do any other song on the record.

Would you say you are still learning at this stage in your career?
I think age is nothing but a good thing, because I just keep on learning stuff and working out how to do things. It's just a continuous, bigger, better, brighter world for me in terms of working musically. I can't believe I get to do this stuff, and I've now got the courage to ask these musicians to do things and then they do other stuff beyond it. What I like from the best jazz is the fact that the colours aren't just an instrument, they're the person who plays it. So it's not just a tenor sax or trombone, it's Gilad Atzmon and Annie Whitehead.

Can you take us through your writing process?
It varies. On the whole, I just fiddle around with chords on the keyboard and then if I've got a chord shift that can be quite arresting, I'll just record it and then keep working on it or put it away. I don't even sit down and try to do it, I just have to get things out and write things down. My room is a mess of bits of paper and notebooks with comments and drawings and observations, some of which turn into words for songs. The reason I don't write many songs is because the words don't often match the music, unless you sort of lever it in; I don't like doing that. I like to find a phrase that just sits on to the tune like it was made for it.



In the past, you have compared the way you write to an animal hunting.
That's right, just snuffling about, and if it smells good, I'll go towards it. I do that with chords and with words. I honestly have no idea what it means, I'm just drawn along by my nose. The only trouble with interviews is that it sounds like everything is the result of some kind of intellectual deliberation, whereas the deliberation and analysis comes afterwards and before, but not while I'm doing it. I work entirely by instinct.

Do you spend most of your time thinking about music?
I don't know about that. I don't think about music in terms of me making it, but I am very interested in it, and I listen to acres of music every day. My record collection goes from around the time I was born right through to about Coltrane dying, which is also, funnily enough, about the time I started making money when playing in London in '67, when all us boy-next-door types started to get into pop groups and rock groups. It's all very merry, but it ain't Coltrane.

How do you look back on those times now?
I think of those times as just murky and uncomfortable and lonely, always being the wrong person in the wrong place with the wrong people. It's just a very uncomfortable period for me, the late 60s. I tend not to think about that period very much. I go into the tunnel sort of around then, and I come out around '73 with Alfie, working towards *Rock Bottom*. Then I can sort of pick up the pieces from there.

Coming out of that live-fast-die-young era of the 60s, did you expect to die before you reached middle age? Oh yeah, absolutely. I actually attempted suicide when I was 16, not out of sadness, but because I'd sort of had enough already. I just watched what grown-ups did and I thought - I'm not sure I could ever be bothered to do any of that. Indeed, I haven't bothered to do much of it. At that very moment, the

"How much carbon

eternal infantilism of rock music suddenly presented itself to me, and I could be a kid for the rest of my bloody life, and here I still am. It does surprise me that I've lived this long, because I'm very careless really. I'm not interested in health or anything.

footprint does the average bombing raid use up compared with me and my refuse? F * * * o f f . "

Would you say you have suffered from long bouts of depression throughout your life? Yes, I have done and still do. I don't know what the word means, but if "I really wish I was dead and had never been born" is depressed, then yes. I like life, but I cannot imagine thinking - Oh, it's great to be alive. I just think life is something you've got to get through. I envy the dead, quite honestly. It's not that I'm tragic, I just find it very hard.
Meanwhile, the best substitute for death is sleep, which I love greatly. Nod off and you don't have to respond to anything. I never want to do anything apart from dream, and Alfie makes it pretty easy for me to live like that, so I'm quite happy. In fact, I've never been better than I am now.

Do you see your music as a sort of collage?
Yes, that's exactly how it works. I just keep doing it, add bits and tear bits off. That's one thing that's easier than painting, 'cos if you've painted all the layers of paint on, it's hard to peel them off again; in the studio you can put down layers and layers of instruments and just start stripping them off in different orders to see what's left.

Do you generally prefer the music you're making now to your earlier work?
On the whole, yes, but on the other hand, sometimes I'm taken by surprise if somebody plays me something I did years ago that I'd forgotten. Sometimes I've just been a guest on some little project I've forgotten, and I've had to come up with something that I wouldn't have come up with on my own, and that's really nice.

Would you say *Comicopera* harks back to your political albums of the 70s and 80s?
It seems to, but that's simply a response to the times we live in. I don't decide to be political or non-political; if there's a lot of nasty politics, I will try and filter it out by exorcising it on a record. I would rather live in a happier world and be more lightweight in response, but there's still a war on right now, we are part of it, and the tug of that affects everything I do. I live in this world, so that's how it comes out on the record. But it's the old cliché - us blondes just wanna have fun. I'm no different you know. I've always aspired that way, but I've just got to face reality, 'cause it's never gonna happen, is it?

Do you find it harder to write as you get older? It's the same really. It's sporadic. I do write all the time anyway, so it's just a question of whether anything I come up with is appropriate for what I do. There's a lot of stuff that goes on in my life outside music. I've got a son and a daughter, they've got children, I've got Alfie, and we've got her mother living at our house. We're having a life, if shopping and washing potatoes is having a life. I don't just sit there being an artist. I love peeling potatoes and going to the shops. I don't often have long periods where I'm not working on any music at all, but I don't want to give the impression that I'm a particularly useful domestic animal... I'm not that either.

How do you look back on the time you spent with Jimi Hendrix?
I think of him with nothing but love, affection and admiration. I was just very lucky to have been there. Rock musicians can be a terribly arrogant, bolshy lot, but Hendrix was always a grown-up and a real gent who never threw his weight around. He was always riveting on stage, but he wasn't always on top of it and he'd sometimes get a bit lost. We saw him nearly every night for a year throughout 1968, but I was there as another musician playing a concert that evening, so I can't say I was concentrating on Hendrix every night. I don't particularly like rock music, and I always felt most rock bands were a bit bombastic for me, but there was a fluidity about what Hendrix did which I really liked.

What do you think makes *Rock Bottom* and *Ruth is Stranger Than Richard* so timeless?
I don't know, maybe it was the fact that I had to invent a whole new way of doing music. Necessity is the mother of invention... I'd worked in a group before, and I had to work out a new way of making music, the way I made it on those records. I couldn't really use much of what I'd learned before, so I had to come up with something new, so maybe those albums have got some of that fresh angle and that feel. Most of the music that I like certainly doesn't come and go with the traffic of the day. I mean, the whole point about art really is that it's something that lives beyond the moment that it was created. A caveman

makes a mark on a cave wall, something that will be there the next morning. Art is about making a mark.



Would you say that music is a less important force than it was?
I really couldn't care less. I've got a job doing it, but in terms of how the business suffers or doesn't suffer in the current climate, it just doesn't matter to me.

But the music business is so fast moving; don't you think you have to ask yourself where the next Charlie Parker is going to come from?
Well, I'm still quite happy with the fîrst one, thank you. I'm more concerned not to lose his memory in an age of novelty, so I don't want the Charlie Parkers of this world to get buried under great heaps and racks full of the latest thing.

Which artists have had the biggest influence on you?
Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Ray Charles and Dionne Warwick. Individually, there's nothing I can do that gets anywhere near Charlie Parker in terms of a sequence of notes, but I mention Ellington and Mingus because they're about the organisation of more than one person into a sound picture — how to make a bunch of notes and different colours like an organic whole swirling along together. It's such a valuable thing to me, and I don't think any other form of music has ever quite been able to do that.

How do you look back on the music you made with Soft Machine?
It's difficult to say because when I was thrown out of the band, I threw every single Soft Machine record into the dustbin, and I never listened to them again. If I am forced to think about it, I try and tell myself it wasn't a complete waste of time, and that interesting things happened and that young men can survive anything. There is some good music there, and I suppose it's all part of an apprenticeship, my equivalent of doing National Service or something like that... it builds your muscles up and teaches you stuff about how to live in the grown-up world if you eventually get there.

Do you still feel bitter about the whole thing?
Well, I do think it's a bit cheeky that I didn't get any money, so we had to struggle with nothing to try and make ends meet. It still makes me very angry how I got treated by the record company, the manager and the group. People say that all musicians get exploited by

managers, but musicians can be just as bad. It was interesting music, but I also learned that for a human life, interesting isn't enough in art. When art works best, it's about a moment of human contact on a lonely planet, and it's not just a question of being impressed by cleverness and brilliant ideas.
Everybody feels this stuff. I don't feel any more than anyone else and I'm no deeper than anyone else, so my job is simply to get a craft which channels it and lets it out in a sort of clear way that other people can latch on to. So in that sense, my job is only technical, because people do the emotional stuff themselves when they listen. Everybody's got heart, otherwise it wouldn't work.

Is the idea of your musical legacy important to you?
It's a nice idea, but it's a bit grand. I see it more as constant attempts to get it right from a different angle, just to get an hour of music that I can put on without getting bored and without wincing. It's not a question of trying to make a masterpiece, it's much less than that; it's just a question of damage limitation, endlessly trying to make a record without the mistakes on it.

Having barely paused for breath during our time together, Wyatt is shattered and in desperate need of a cigarette. As he weaves his wheelchair past the hordes of people in the foyer at breakneck speed, nearly knocking over a table or two along the way, he suddenly comes to a halt and points up excitedly at the sign above the Festival Hall doors. "Way Out," exclaims Robert Wyatt with a boyish grin. "Two of my favourite words."

Comicopera *is out now on Domino*

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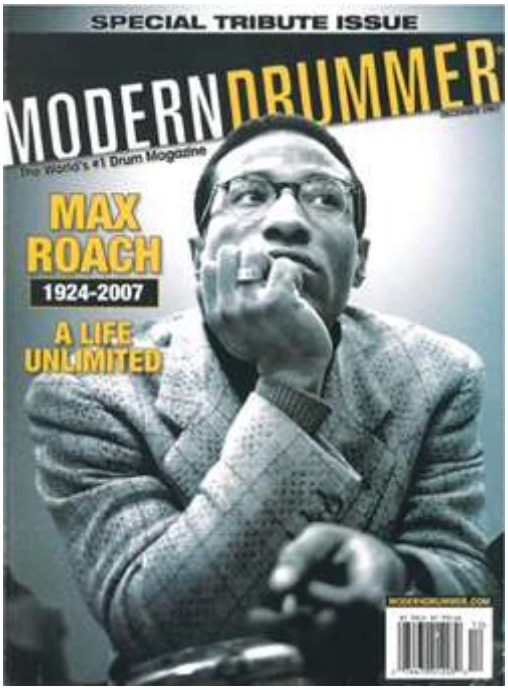
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Max Remembered - Modern Drummer Magazine - December, 2007



MAX REMEMBERED

by Robert Wyatt

MAX REMEMBERED



Robert Wyatt
Soft Machine, Syd Barrett, Brian Eno

Max really was important. And not just the records, but the whole dimension of his political fire. My god. The " Freedom Now Suite" —wonderful stuff.

Long before I had a drumkit, and I was just sitting at a table with rolled up pieces of paper, trying to simulate the sound of brushes, I sort of bit off more than I could chew, because the first record I played to was Jazz At Massey Hall, with Max, Mingus, Bud Powell, and Charlie Parker. That' s the one that got me, one of the greatest records I' ve heard in my lifetime. It' s kind of the summation of bebop—gob-smacking creativity, from beginning to end.

I met Max in 2001, when he came to England to play a concert with a trio with a Chinese pianist. I had the opportunity to say hello in the dressing room. You could tell he was ill, but once he started playing, he was still Max Roach. But I had to say to him, " You got me into a lot of trouble." Because when I was at school and I was trying to do my schoolwork, after a half hour of trying to do math, I would just think, " I can' t do this," and I' d just go and play Jazz At Massey Hall or my favorite, Thelonious Monk' s Brilliant Corners. And I told him, " The reason it was better to listen to you was because when Sonny Rollins or someone would leave off, you' d carry on and I could still follow the tune all the way through the solo, until the others came back in." That was such a clear and helpful and conscientious way to play a drum solo. So I was very glad to get that in.

We have a fairly left-wing mayor in London, and during his early days, they did all sorts of scandalous things. One of those things was, there was this tiny little patch of green in a part of London—just big enough to call a park. And somebody on the council said, " Let' s call it Max Roach Park," and they did. So they invited Max over for the dedication, and he came. And the only time they ever used the local council offices for an expensive banquet—because the socialists are all, " We don' t do that sort of thing" —was for a reception for Max Roach. And it' s still there: Max Roach Park.

> Zoom

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The Rhythm Interview Robert Wyatt - Rhythm - December 2007



THE RHYTHM INTERVIEW

Robert Wyatt

Hailed as a pioneer for his solos with '60s legends The Soft Machine, written off when he broke his back and reborn as a solo percussion visionary, Robert Wyatt knows all about highs and lows. He tells Henry Yates his story

There's a clear line in the sand when it comes to the career of Robert Wyatt. Specifically, it was drawn in the small hours of June 1,1973, as a West London party thrown by the luminaries of the psychedelic scene brought the first phase of the drummer's life to a disastrous close. A heavy drinker since the '60s due to his pathological fear of crowds, the 28-year-old Wyatt had spent the night consuming punch and whisky in sufficient quantifies that when he fell out of a third-floor window onto the pavement below, he didn't immediately feel any sensation other than "a slight awkwardness at being unable to stand up".

Six weeks later, Wyatt regained consciousness in hospital to learn that he had broken his back, would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life and, by implication, would never drum again. This last bombshell hit hardest. As sticksman and singer in '60s psychedelic trailblazers The Soft Machine, Wyatt's inspired fills and improvised free-form solos had marked him out as a unique talent amongst the beat generation. After an acrimonious sacking in 1971, he had rebounded with new band Matching Mole, and at the time of his accident was writing material for their third album. Now, after one moment of madness, it seemed he was doomed to dine out on past glories.

The medical report rang true: now 62, Wyatt remains in a wheelchair and has not performed behind a full drum kit for three decades. And yet, rather than bow to his physical limitations, the veteran musician has spent his prolific solo career adapting to them, developing percussion techniques that are arguably as adventurous as his early beats, and draping his compositions with his haunting multi-octave vocal delivery. And now, he is basking in the recent release of his new album *Comicopera*.

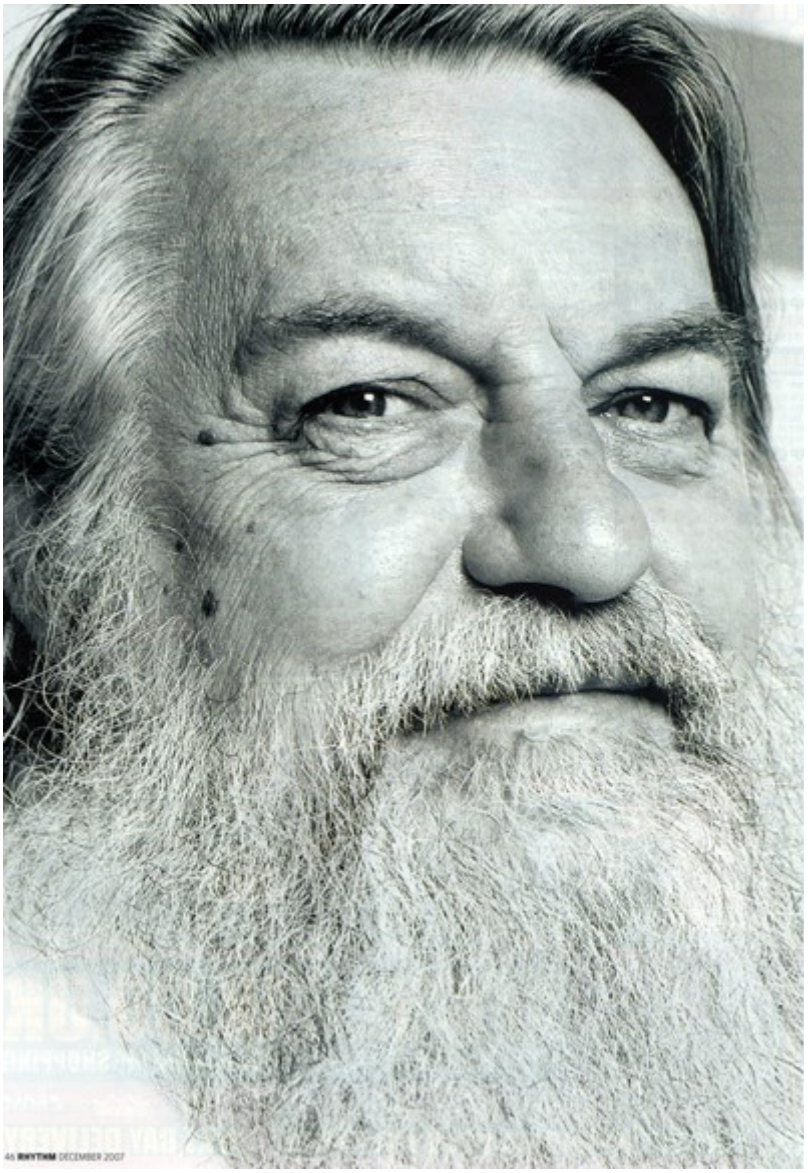
Starting at the beginning, the story goes you were taught by an American jazz drummer...

"His name was George Neidorf and he was staying at my parents' house near Dover in the '50s. He had a real drum kit, which was a novelty. Before that, my kit consisted of an ammunition box, which was my snare, my mother's typewriter as my hi-hat - you'd stamp on it and the keys would clatter back - and an old metal clothes hanger that functioned as a rhythm cymbal. I seem to remember hitting it with cutlery.

"Anyway, George had been taught by Joe Morello, but what he tried to impress upon me was how wonderful Philly Joe Jones was. Then I had another teacher called Ramon Farran when I moved to Majorca in the '60s. He was an old-school jazzer; strict about holding the sticks correctly and elbows being the right distance from the ribcage. It's good to know the rules, even if you ignore them later on."

Who did you take inspiration from?

"People think the white drummers of the '60s were listening to each other, but we were actually listening to black music. The other beat drummers were just boys nextdoor to us; the thing was to get the sound you heard on Stax records. The New Orleans drummers were the bedrock for all of us. Even drummers in bands that don't sound like they play black music learnt how to handle the kit from those bands."



> Zoom

You formed The Soft Machine in 1966 - what were you trying to do with the drums?

"I wasn't trying to be revolutionary - I was trying to get people to dance. Before then, I'd been in a band called The Wilde Flowers, and when we played the local dances in Canterbury, you'd drum in a way that made people dance. When the floor started heaving, you knew you were doing your job.

"I can't think of anyone who was doing what I was, but that's partly because of the nature of the band. The Soft Machine wasn't a proper rock band, apart from the fact we played very loud and had long hair. You needed to be able to deal with any time signature, and you also needed endurance, because once we started pushing the solos, each piece could last over 20 minutes."

Were those improvised solos ever performed sober?

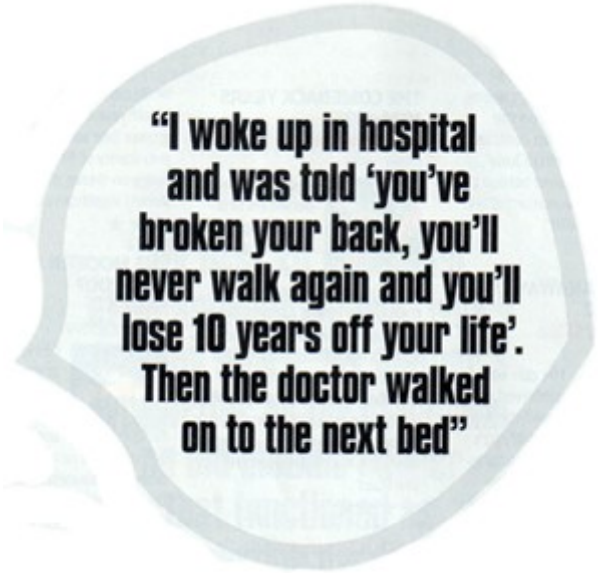
"I can't remember ever being sober once we got going, but that was because I've always had incredible stage fright. I developed my love of music in a solitary state and, to tough it out live, I'd drink recklessly."

What was your approach in the studio?

"Each piece we played in The Soft Machine had its own distinct character - I mean, Kevin Ayers wrote songs that were like Donovan or Ray Davies - so I tried to do appropriate drumming for each. The only thing I couldn't bear was to do the same beat over and over again, so I was a rubbish metronome. I was always having fun on the kit. I'd trick people; go silent when you expected it to go bang and vice-versa."

Is it fair to say you invented the notion of the singing drummer?

"I honestly don't know. As to how it interacted with the drums, it depended on the music. In The Wilde Flowers, we'd work out songs where I could do them together, or you'd just lay down very regular chops and go onto automatic on the kit and concentrate mainly on the vocals - and sometimes completely fuck it up."



You've said you didn't consider yourself part of the 'Canterbury scene' of the '60s...

"That term was invented by someone who liked drawing up imaginary family trees. I make the analogy with astronomers who look at a random set of stars and say it's a horse or a plough. It's inevitable that you start playing with people around you, but I didn't feel any particular musical connection with them. I felt much closer to the people I ended up working with later on."

Such as?

"A wonderful drummer, who I watched every night on tour in 1968 and still think is woefully under-praised, is Mitch Mitchell. Bloody wonderful. Because Jimi Hendrix was so riveting, people didn't realise just how important Mitch was. He knew his jazz and, like me, he was trying to apply it to the new circumstances.

"At the end of our tour together, I still had a little Premier kit and Mitch knew I couldn't afford a better one, so he gave me his own custom-built maple kit. So from the second Soft Machine album onwards, I was using the same kit as on Hendrix's late recordings. I've still got the cardboard boxes with 'JH Experience' printed on them, which I could probably sell on eBay, but I need them to keep the drums in."

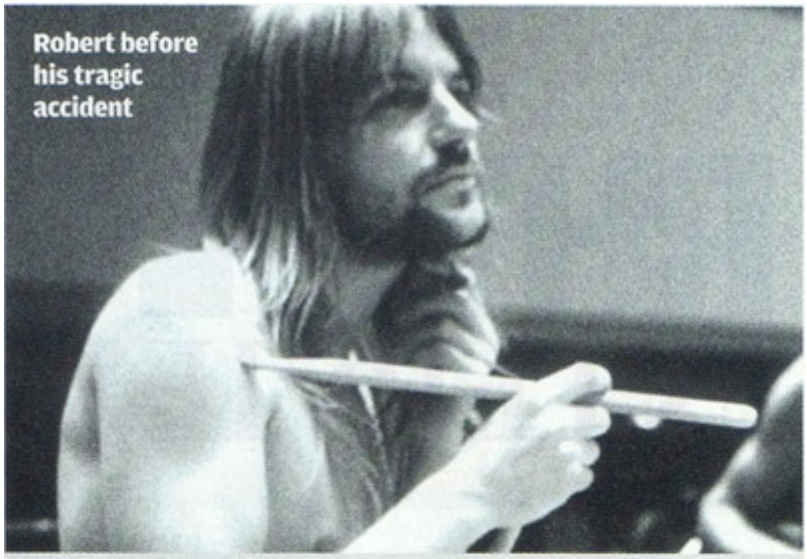
When you were fired from The Soft Machine in 1971, at the time you said it was "humiliating"...

"An experimental band like that is bound to have a lifespan, but yeah, the end was

humiliating, because I'd got them together and they democratically got rid of me. But I was asking for it. There's live footage of those last nights, and there's a real tension, I'm just playing faster and faster, and people are looking at me out of the corner of their eyes. It was untenable."

How did your drumming evolve in Matching Mole?

"That was nice, because it took me back to the happier days of The Soft Machine, so when one of us went dancing off in the opposite direction the others would just laugh and join in. It was more of a fun band, not so solemn. We'd trip each other up, but because we were friends we didn't get the stern glances."



Robert before his tragic accident

MY PROUDEST MOMENT

"It was definitely in 1970, when The Soft Machine was playing as an expanded band including Ronnie Scott on tenor saxophone. For a couple of minutes at one show, I'm actually playing drums under Ronnie Scott's solo. That's a dream for me. If you can find the tape, you can tell by my drumming – I'm in a state of euphoria, a trance-like state of pleasure. I can't judge if I did okay, but I was thrilled to be doing it. It was a tough piece with a difficult time signature, and the bit I'm playing under Ronnie is a fast 6/8. I think it's steaming, myself, but then I'm not a critic – what would I know?"

Can you talk us through your accident in 1973?

"That night I'd been drinking punch, then someone got out a bottle of whisky and I was just gone. I was flying - quite literally, in the end, out of the window. I didn't lose consciousness when I hit the ground, but I don't remember anything about the six weeks after that, because they pump you so full of drugs. Then you wake up in hospital and they tell you what's happening, which in my case was 'you've broken your back, you'll never walk again and you'll lose 10 years off your life'. Then the doctor walked on to the next bed."

Was losing your ability to drum the least of your worries?

"Actually, I did think about that pretty early on. I'd been working on a third Matching Mole album, and I thought 'fucking hell - I won't be able to play drums'. Later, I realised I could still sing, then I decided I could still work the top of the kit, and if I needed a bass drum I could prop it up and play it by hand, and I could just replicate the hi-hat by singing it into the microphone. So that made me realise I could record, even if I couldn't play live."

What's your approach to percussion on *Comicopera*?

"I can still play each bit of the kit separately, so I'll do the cymbal part, the ride part and so on, and then percussion separately. I often revert to how I played when I didn't have a proper kit, and I often don't use a kit at all. On 'A Beautiful War', the off-beat is provided by a Lebanese biscuit tin. Then there's an instrumental called 'On The Town Square', where I used a bodhran [an Irish drum], but with brushes, because I hadn't heard that before. Again, on 'A Beautiful War' the bass drum is me whacking the side of the mattress I was sleeping on in the studio. So I played mattress and biscuit tin on that track - just with a couple of cymbals over the top."

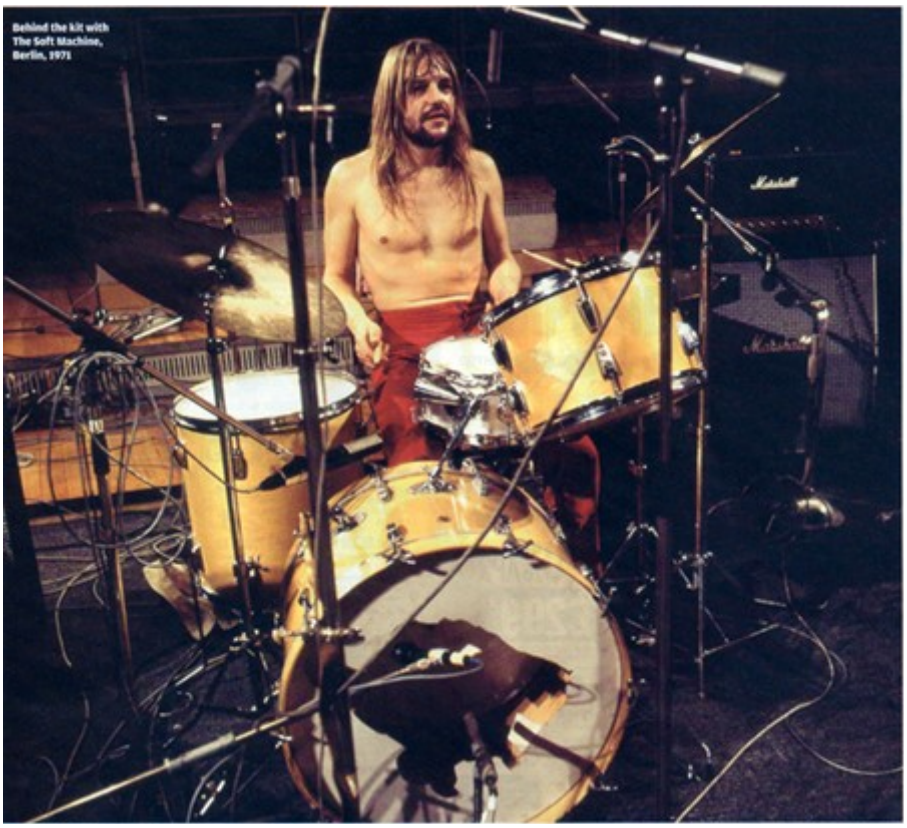


Don't you ever miss flailing at the kit, as you were renowned for doing with The Soft Machine?

"Having seen clips of my old drumming days, going back 40 years in some cases, I do remember the buzz. But I'm now in my 60s, and I think anyone of that age has twinges remembering their youth. I expect old cricketers remember their bowling when they were in their 20s and think 'fuck, I wish I could still do that'. But you have different stages in your life, and I really enjoy working the way I do now with percussion, instead of being an upfront drummer. Where there's a will there's a way."

www.strongcomet.com/wyatt
www.myspace.com/robertwyatt

Comicopera is out now on Domino Records


Behind the kit with The Soft Machine, Berlin, 1971



Wyatt on Record

THE EARLY YEARS 1968-1970

The Soft Machine

(ABC/Probe) 1968

Recorded in a few snatched days on their virgin tour of America, The Soft Machine's eponymous debut bottled the musical anarchy of the band's concerts and patented the concept of psychedelic rock at a stroke. Wyatt would grow more eloquent as a songwriter, but his fills and solos since have rarely fizzed with such a fresh-out-of-the-traps enthusiasm as here.

★★★★

Third

(Columbia) 1970

Unimaginative of title but grandiose of musical scope, The Soft Machine's *Third* double-album probed the themes of the emerging jazz-fusion movement over four sprawling tracks (one per side on the original vinyl). Wyatt contributes the haunting 'Moon in June', but his best moment behind the kit arrives in the masterful 7/4 section of 'Facelift'.

★★★★

THE BREAKAWAY YEARS 1971-1972

Matching Mole

(CBS) 1972

The title was conceived as a round-the-houses dig at Wyatt's ex-bandmates (Matching Mole sounds like 'machine molle' – the French for 'soft machine') and the content of the drummer's breakaway record was similarly whimsical. 'O Caroline' aside, you'll find more solid collections of tunes with Wyatt's hand on the tiller, but as a snapshot of the charm and wit of the Canterbury scene, this takes some beating.

★★★

THE COMEBACK YEARS 1974-1975

Rock Bottom

(Virgin) 1974

Wyatt has always denied his first post-plunge album was directly inspired by the accident, but it's hard to ignore the musical calling cards of a man clinging to sanity by his fingernails. Still, it's not all doom and gloom as, assisted by a cast of friends including Nick Mason of Pink Floyd, the drummer starts to find his flair for percussive invention on tracks like 'Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road'.

★★★★

Ruth is Stranger than Richard

(Virgin) 1975

The lukewarm response to *Ruth*... was doubtless a factor in Wyatt's decade-long withdrawal from his solo career. While patchy in parts, revisiting the album reveals a quirky and eclectic grower that swings from the pub shanty of 'Soup Song' to the heart-on-sleeve 'Solar Flares'. Only Robert Wyatt can do this.

★★★

THE MODERN AGE 1997-2007

Shleep

(Thirsty Ear) 1997

Gloriously out of step with the prevailing music scene, *Shleep*'s soporific title was a perfect reflection of the dreamlike soundscapes within. Certainly, Wyatt sounded sharper, while the assistance of luminaries including Brian Eno and Paul Weller underlined his continued relevance on the rock scene.

★★★★

Comicopera

(Domino) 2007

With recording split between Phil Manzanera's Gallery Studio and

his own bedroom in Louth, Wyatt's new collection finds his melodic and percussive instincts firing on all cylinders, from the shadowy 'Stay Tuned' to the biscuit tin-led ballad 'A Beautiful War'. The most adventurous record you'll hear all year.

★★★★

> Zoom

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Robert Wyatt : Web Exclusive Interview - Modern Drummer Magazine - November, 1 2007

ROBERT WYATT : Web Exclusive Interview

Since leaving the groundbreaking British psychedelic band Soft Machine in 1971, Robert Wyatt has released a succession of remarkable solo albums filled with artfulness and surprise. His latest, Comicopera, is a worldly, three-part meditation on modern profundities. MD chatted with the always-gracious musician to learn what's fueling his art these days.

MD: Congratulations on your new album, Robert. I'm always happy to recommend your latest album to newcomers, though that isn't always the case with other artists.

Robert: People think growing older is a bad thing, but what I like about it is, you get time to learn more about what works and what doesn't, and fine-tune it.

MD: I suppose we get used to people having their "formulas."

Robert: Yeah, I wish I had one of those. *[laughs]* God, life would be so much easier. Every time I go into the studio, I think, How on earth do you do this? I start to write a tune and think, What do I know about writing a tune?

MD: Do you eventually find something that you latch onto?



Robert: Well, I've got triggering devices, that's another thing you learn as you get older. My current device is sort of "karaoke cornet playing" with old jazz records. Of course I can't really play it like a craftsman, but I can pick up notes that I might sing. I can't play bebop speeds, but I find classics like Gershwin tunes, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan—things that I didn't even listen to when I was younger—and just find other appropriate notes. This works well for lubricating the inside of my head, gives me lift-off. It's a way of finding lots of different melodic threads off of one chord sequence. I still get astonished at how much Sonny Rollins can get out of one chord sequence. Now, I'm not a jazz soloist, but it seems to me a good way to start out finding tunes. I know some people start by setting up a beat on a drum machine or something, but I find that gets me absolutely nowhere—partly because I don't hear things in beats. I still hear things in an anachronistic ride cymbal swing thing.

MD: As you're improvising melodies, I imagine some kind of rhythmic element is already there from the beginning.

Robert: I suppose that's right. That element of jazz 4/4, which is in fact a 12/8 with a triplet feel, is a basic rhythm for me. Even if I'm working on something with more of a New Orleans, Bo Diddley thing, I won't do it like Eddie Cochran or whoever—though I love the way he'd do it—but I like it when it's more overlaid with a swing thing, that sort of feel.

MD: That's the beauty of music from New Orleans, there are so many possible directions….

Robert: Yeah, you can take it anywhere. It's such a wonderful way to start out. When I'm looking for melodic lines, though, I need some sense of a harmonic landscape.

MD: There was an interesting thing that happened when I first saw your new album's title. Maybe I had in the back of my mind your past references to Latin music, but I read it as "Comicopera," like some Spanish word I was unfamiliar with, rather than Comic-opera. Has anyone else made that mistake?

Robert: No, it's not a mistake. One of the things I like about putting that word together is you can sort of make various other words out of it. I'm very happy when that happens. The album isn't an academic exercise in modern comic opera, though it has allusions to the genre. And the word "pera" means "pear," the fruit, so to be "a funny pear" sets up a whole other, rather nice kind of meaning.

MD: You were talking about musical trigger points. How about lyrically?

Robert: I tend to have more musical ideas than lyrical ones in terms of what I'd put on a record. So sometimes I'll have pieces lying around dormant because I'll only have one element or the other, and there's no way I can artificially put some words to music or some piece of music to words. Sometimes I'll even use other people's tunes. I begin this record with a tune by Anja Garbarek and end it with a song by Carlos Puebla, and bits and pieces in between are based on a tune by Brian Eno, beautiful stuff that he had knocking around but didn't know what to do with. For the words, I just have to strike lucky, and I don't often, which is why having my wife, Alfie, around is good. There's a lot of imagery in what she does, sometimes quite direct, sometimes indirect. But she sort of comes to my rescue with the words. We've known each other long enough where she knows what would be convincing for me to sing.

MD: In my mind your songs often seam to have been prompted by some conversation you've had with her.

Robert: That's exactly right, indeed they are, to the extent that with some songs, I don't know which one of us came up with which line. But on the whole it sort of pans out…with this record, for instance, in the first third of it, apart from the opening Anja Garbarek song, the lyrics are Alfie's, then they're mostly mine, and then it ends with this song "Out Of The Blue," which is Alfie's again. Then I go abroad and do songs from all over the place—by a group of Italian musicians, by Garcia Lorca, by Carlos Puebla…. But that was just because it's great fun singing in other languages, and I like pretending I'm not from England. It makes me feel less, um, embarrassed. *[laughs]* English-speaking people have these hubristic moments of ruling the world, and I get so embarrassed by that stuff.

MD: Do you see yourself as the "leader" of your projects?

Robert: I don't know if leader is the right word. It's more like, "The buck stops here." I have to take responsibility in the end for how it's all put together. And the other musicians are there, God bless them, to help me get my songs out right. It's only for a few days in a year. It doesn't necessarily mean we'll be in a group on the road together—in fact, it's very unlikely. I can't imagine Brian Eno in a jazz band, or Paul Weller playing guitar with Brian Eno. So it's kind of an imaginary get-together, people with different elements that are important to me.

But I have thought a lot about the issue of musical leadership, because I've been both a band member and a sort of conductor of the band. I had this group called Matching Mole *[Robert's short-lived post–Soft Machine band, which put out two albums in 1972]*. A little record company called Hux has recently found some BBC stuff we'd done that I forgot about. The CD is called Matching Mole On The Radio. Anyway, I remember that business of having that role as a drummer and a leader, and there's one obvious problem, and that's

too many drum solos. *[laughs]* It's one way to be, but I was always concerned as a drummer with the fact that we're in the engine room, and that whatever I was playing was relying on the melodic gifts and inventiveness of the other musicians. It was simply my job to keep it on the boil. I found this an interesting thing to do. I think of the role as that of an audible conductor—organizing the pace and the dynamics in such a way as to keep it alive and flowing.

The drummer/leader I've been listening to recently that's most effective is Kenny Clarke. I got a box set of his—it's sort of classic '50s hard bop—and he's such a discreet sounding drummer that most people would think he was kind of a nightclub drummer: keeps time, uses brushes…. He might be better known in Europe, because he left the States in the mid-'50s and came to work in France where he became a central figure in the French jazz scene, of course along with Bud Powell. With Kenny, you have to go through hours of stuff to guess that the drummer is the leader. But there is something in common, which is that everything just moves with such a sweet groove. You can hear that everyone can relax, that he'll take care of them. And it's a lovely feeling. I get that, funny enough, with Blakey. There's a lovely Hank Mobley record I've got from I suppose the late '50s, and he's such a wonderful accompanist. He's not very complex for a modern jazz drummer, he just sort of swings. But the way he changes the pace throughout the solo, and gathers it together, and helps the next soloist get off the ground—it's just so beautiful, such a high level of generous craftsmanship.

MD: There are Elvin records where he's not "being Elvin" so much, too.

Robert: Yes. We're talking about helping the other musicians get off the ground. That was the job: Get off the ground, and stay off the ground. Of course, it's not the only role. Tony Williams played alongside people, and that's pretty good too.

A very underestimated drummer of my era who I shared a lot with and learned a lot from, was Mitch Mitchell with Jimi Hendrix. I watched them night after night for most of 1968. [Soft Machine opened for The Jimi Hendrix Experience on their American tours.] I knew Mitch before he was with The Experience. He was the drummer with a really good R&B band in England called Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames. That was basically jazz musicians playing a kind of big band blues, closer to the Jimmy Smith era of danceable jazz. And Mitch negotiated going through that to working with Hendrix with great aplomb and great inventiveness. A lot of people thought Jimi should have had a heavier drummer, and eventually he did with Buddy Miles. But I thought Mitch was the most appropriate because he was so fluid. From jazz he got this fluidity and speed of thought.

MD: The changes in popular music at that time—and you were right in the middle of that—seem so extreme from a vantage point in 2007. I wonder, if Hendrix had stayed alive, where he would have been musically even four or five years after Band Of Gypsys. What would the drummer in that band…

Robert: …What would he have to be able to do, yeah. But there was the sense that people made mistakes and knew it. I know Noel Redding, the bass player in The Experience, said that sometimes when Mitch and Jimi were really flying, he actually didn't know where the beat was and had to stop playing. This reminds me of Coltrane. He'd go off with Elvin where the piano and bass couldn't follow, and nobody is more secure with the beat than McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison. But in the end they'd just leave Coltrane and Elvin to go to it. So there's a perfectly respectable antecedent to what Jimi and Mitch were doing.

MD: You can almost hear John Cage saying, "That's fine; it's good that you were confused and had to stop."

Robert: *[laughs]* Yes, right! I mean, these are the moments where you have to think fast and where a lot of creativity can come through. "You didn't expect this to happen…so what are you gonna do now? Come up with something quick."

MD: Or if not, just chill out.

Robert: That's right, sit this one out. I used to do that a lot. I'd be playing and think, You know, this would sound really good without the drums, and I'd stop playing. Eventually the musicians around me would get used to the fact that I might well do this *[laughs]*, but in a sense it was a compliment to them.

MD: I've got twenty CDs by drummer/leaders here at my desk, and I would bet there aren't four songs total without drums on them.

Robert: Yeah, I won't use them unless I think they're an integral part of the song. I mean, when I'm recording I get a whole pile of stuff on, but then I strip it away to what I need to keep the thing going. Like on the second track, "Just As You Are," I have a really upfront ride cymbal thing going. But then there's other songs, like "You You." I tried to add an appropriate drum thing to that, and to me it just made it a bit more pedestrian, a bit more obvious…a bit more normal. I thought, No, I'll just leave it with the bass guitar strumming along, that'll do it.

MD: One of the nice things about coming to a new album of yours is not having a preconception of what the arrangements are going to be like on each song. I love that you might be thinking, "Well, we don't need red in this picture."

Robert: Absolutely. I took this to an extreme at one point. There's a song on there called "Be Serious," which is about being envious of people who have a religion. Paul Weller did several tracks of guitar, and I liked what he did so much that I took nearly everything else away except the voice, Paul's guitar patterns, and a cymbal. That's all the song needed, all of the information was there. Some of my favorite moments in recording are in the editing. For instance, the vibes duet toward the end—Orphy Robinson double tracked himself, and we treated one of the tracks and left the other alone—but this originally had a rhythm section accompaniment to it, a 7/4 figure. We took everything away to hear what Orphy was doing, and I really liked the fact that the time seems uncertain, and it gathers momentum and then sort of spreads and comes back again…. It seemed much more interesting rhythmically than when it had the rhythm section in the mix. It was a difficult moment because I'd really liked what I'd played on drums. But I thought, Robert, that's not the point. *[laughs]* The point is, What works here? I'd done my job as a drummer, which was to set the pace for him to play to. He'd done that, and now he didn't need me anymore.

MD: The process of elimination doesn't seem to be thought of enough. We're always thinking, What can I add here, what kind of harmonies can go here…?

Robert: I do have dense moments sometimes, when I really layer it on. But I really mean to do that then. It just depends on the song. The only difficulty I used to have with jazz musicians is that they would wait for their moment where they could do their thing, and what I really want is musicians who can play as well as jazz musicians, but think in terms of, What does this song really need? And that's why I'm so grateful to the musicians; that's why I used the same ones as I did on the last record—Gilad Atzmon on reeds, Yaron Stavi on bass, Any Whitehead on trombone, for instance. Technically they're really shit-hot, but they only play what's appropriate. I'm so grateful for that. It's taken years to find these people.

Photo by Alfreda Benge.

>> L'interview sur le site de Modern Drummer Magazine

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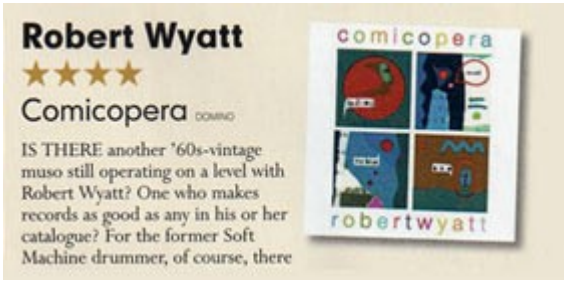
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Trebles All Round - Mojo - November 2007



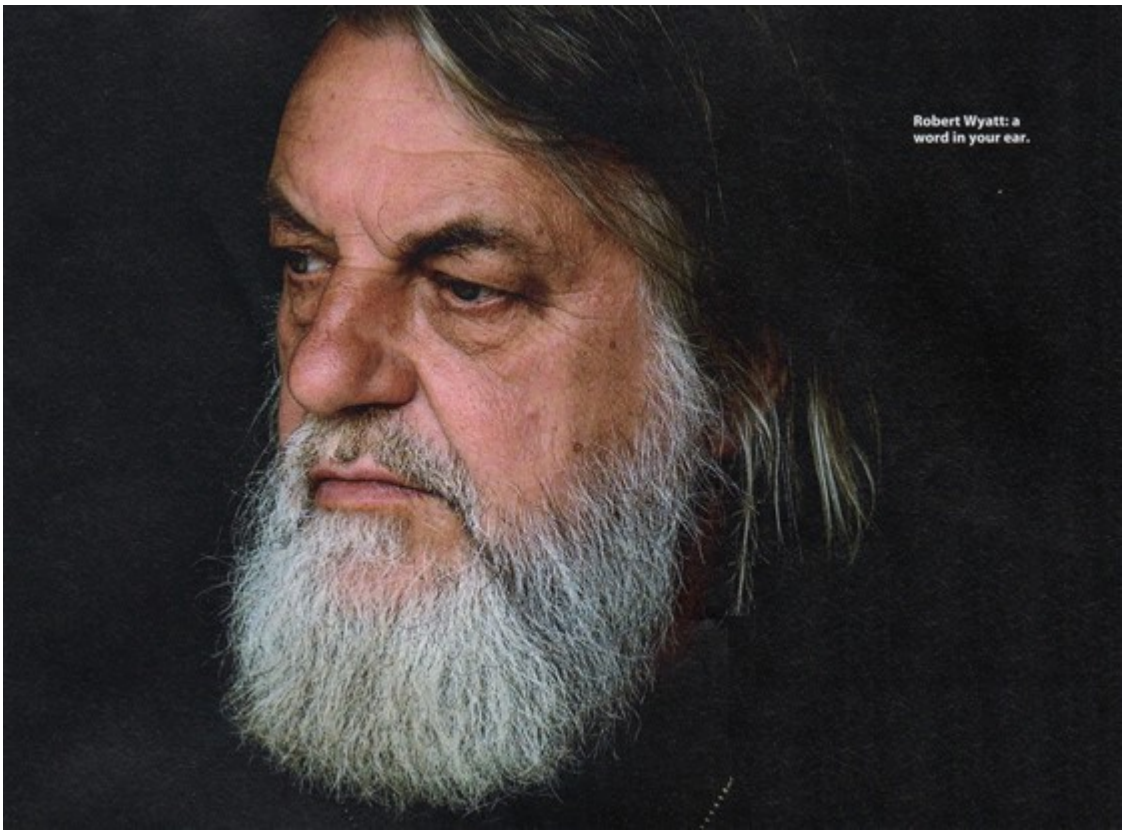


TREBLES ALL ROUND

Moving, sparkling triptych from the 62-year-old who just keeps getting better. By Danny Eccleston.

IS THERE another '60s-vintage muso still operating on a level with Robert Wyatt? One who makes records as good as any in his or her catalogue? For the former Soft Machine drummer, of course, there was no moment of transfiguring pop stardom, no place in some illusory pantheon to preserve — and you sense it is, in part, his humility that keeps his music on the straight and narrow.

Comicopera is typical Wyatt in the way it sits next to you and whispers in your ear, sharing often uncomfortable ideas in that friendly, melancholy voice. In other ways, it's all-new Wyatt, sharing personnel with 2003's *Cuckooland* (notably, Gilad Atzmon on tenor sax and Paul Weller on guitar) but lacking its predecessor's nuages of keyboards and sounding more immediate, live and quirkily melodic.



And while *Cuckooland* split into two parts (with 30 seconds of silent intermission) *Comicopera* divides into three.

Act 1 — subtitled Lost In Noise — is domestically inclined, incorporating a ravishing, mordant account of a long-term love affair (Just As You Are), with vocals shared by Wyatt and Brazilian chanteuse Mônica Vasconcelos, and lyrics ("It's that look in vour eyes/I know your despise/Me for not being stronger") that bear poet wife Alfreda Benge's trademark lack of sentimentality.

It may yet prove Wyatt and Benge's best claim to have written a "standard".

Part 2 - The Here And Now -gruffly engages with the world. There are deadpan jokes ("It's a beautiful day... but not here") amid simply serendipitous moments of music, especially where Atzmon's tenor, Orphy Robinson's steel pans and Wyatt's plashy percussion interact. In a brilliant gambit, the segment ends with a song from the perspective of a bomber pilot, happily blitzing the crap out of an unspecified Arab homeland, and another from the p.o.v. of the victim, whose hellish disorientation is uncannily summoned in the desperate, repeated refrain: "Something unbelievable is happening to the floor!"

Wyatt says this apocalyptic punctuation mark made an immediate return to Anglophone pop seem a betrayal.

So Act 3 — Away With The Fairies — goes Latin. It's pretty enough, with a moving Hasta Siempre Commandante saluting Che Guevara with help via a swinging Italian combo, and a dense Orphy Robinson vibe instrumental providing variety. But after the in-your-face engagement and subversive pop of Acts 1 and 2, it feels superfluous and defocusing.

Concluding circumlocution aside, *Comicopera* gets to you quicker and stays with you longer than any previous Wyatt album. Moreover, it's hard to imagine a record more original or full of life, from any artist of any age, emerging this year. It's that damn good.



"I can be a girl, a boy, anything."

Robert Wyatt talks to Danny Eccleston.

Trebles all round

Moving, sparkling triptych from the 62-year-old who just keeps getting better. By Danny Eccleston.

Robert Wyatt

★★★★

Comicopera

"I can be a girl, a boy, anything."

Robert Wyatt talks to Danny Eccleston.

I love the gloomy English high street scene of A Beautiful Peace.

"Yes, well you have those moments, don't you, when the grimness of England seems overwhelming. At the same time, England to me is the feeling of Gilad and Orphy merrily duetting in the middle of an imaginary street somewhere. That's my happy England, what draws me back to London, that burst of sunshine."

What does Paul Weller bring to your records?

"He always comes up with something appropriate. I like his texture and percussion, the grunts and growls. We're both rooted in black music – it's just that he starts at Marvin Gaye and I start with Roland Kirk – and both of us are just so… English. Everything gets filtered through that."

The three-act structure gives you a lot of options…

"This is a record. I can be what I like. I can be a girl, a boy, anything. So I decided I wouldn't be English at all for the last third and go away with the fairies. So that's why it's called that."

You do Carlos Puebla's Hasta Siempre Commandante. It's a subject that's obviously still close to your heart…

"I did one of his songs in the early '80s, with Harry Beckett on trumpet. I like his style, it's earthy – almost like one of those Cape Verdean singers, and the song, like Che Guevara T-shirts, has gone through kitsch and come through the other side unscathed. It still makes my skin prickle a bit, just the hope against hope."

Subject matter aside, I think the melodies on this record are your strongest ever…

"Jazz is my daily gruel and it's a great place to find melodies – you'll get eight in a good Sonny Rollins solo for a start! Recently I've started listening to the jazz singers – I was never into them so much before I turned 60, they weren't rough enough for me. But now I'm really listening to Nat 'King' Cole and Sarah Vaughan, amazed at how they hold a tune. I just think I want to be in that place where they go, but I'm afraid I've smoked too many fags!"

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Kevin Ayers and Robert Wyatt - The Guardian - 24 October 2007

KEVIN AYERS AND ROBERT WYATT

Simon Reynolds

The Guardian

"I COULD HARDLY recognise him at first," says Kevin Ayers. "But there, under that great beard, was Robert and he hadn't changed a bit." The singer is recalling his reunion after over thirty years' separation, with Robert Wyatt, his former band mate in The Soft Machine. "As wonderful as it was odd", the meeting took place in the summer of 2006 while Ayers was recording his comeback album, *The Unfairground*, his first record since 1992. In odd, wonderful synchrony. it came out last month only weeks before Wyatt's own *Comicopera*.

Intense friendships always seem like they'll last forever, but time and the way of the world wears them away. Suddenly, decades have passed since you last saw that inseparable soul-mate. Wyatt and Ayers were co-founders of The Soft Machine, in their heyday second only to Pink Floyd as a psychedelic trip band at the swirling kaleidoscopic heart of Swinging' London. But after their debut album and a gruelling tour of America supporting the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Ayers went off to start a solo career. Many thought he was set to be a big star, his tousled blonde mane and debonair charm making him the missing link between Syd Barrett and Bryan Ferry. "I think Kevin got waylaid by us nutters," says Wyatt, meaning The Soft Machine and its anarcho-surrealist mish-mash of jazz and acid rock. "There was a window there, a moment when Kevin, with his songs, could have been up there in the charts, as a Donovan type figure." Ayers is bemused by this notion that he was diverted from his true destiny. "Donovan? Good heavens. I am glad that I ended up as Kevin Ayers! And the people from Soft Machine were a big part of that."

Wyatt and Ayers originally met in 1961. "Someone had told Kevin, `oh there's one other bloke in East Kent with long hair," says Wyatt. "You'd get on." They did. "Robert is an incredibly important figure in my life," says Ayers. "He got me started. I liked him and he was doing music so I wanted to do music too. Robert was extraordinary, full of ideas and able to talk about art and books. I had never been in that sort of atmosphere." Daevid Allen, a wandering Australian beatnik, was lodging with Robert's mother – the infinitely tolerant and artistically supportive Honor Wyatt, a journalist. He befriended the teenagers, precociously turning them on the hippie values of drugs, sex and free spirited nomadism. He whisked Ayers off to Balearic bohemian paradise of Ibiza, where "one could get by with absolutely no money." Recalls Ayers, "we hitchhiked down there and lived off fruit from the trees and fish we would catch."

Allen, Ayers, and Wyatt formed the Soft Machine with Mike Ratledge, a keyboard-playing prefect Wyatt had known at school in Canterbury. One of the great myths of The Soft Machine is that they were the product of a progressive school favored by Canterbury's artists and intellectuals. "Actually, the Simon Langton School is a totally respectable, conservative grammar school," says Wyatt, who remembers struggling academically and getting regular canings. He left at sixteen with no qualifications, having swallowed a whole bottle of his father's multiple sclerosis pills because he was "terrified of having to go back to school". Still it is true that the Soft Machine came from highbrow, arty backgrounds.

"Robert was very lucky to have had parents who were interested in ideas and very open, you could talk with them about anything and they would listen," recalls Ayers, describing the Wyatt household in Lydden as "an absolute refuge." Later, after Wyatt's father died, his mother bought a small semi-detached house in West Dulwich and the entire band – plus girlfriends – lived there. "It was when the group were starting out," recalls Wyatt. "I don't how we all fitted in there. But we did and we made our racket and my mum was fine about it." Says Ayers, "There were plenty of dishes piling up in the sinks and unmade beds. But everyone was being creative in one way or another, or being intellectual or questioning and this came out in various forms such as poetry or art, but most of all music. Soft Machine was the only family I felt I ever had. We were a group of middle class boys from literate backgrounds, into jazz and beat writers, and we went off together on this incredible ride."

The Soft Machine weren't the first scions of the haute bourgeoisie to enter the rock world. But crucially, they were the first not to conceal their education or their accents. Indeed, alongside the equally well brought up Syd Barrett, Ayers was the first English rock vocalist not to sing in an American accent. Wyatt, who sang as well as drummed, followed suit on the group's second album. "At first I was all, "waaugh, bab-eee," he says, mimicking a standard American rock voice. But then Wyatt developed his own idiosyncratic style of falsetto singing, a wondrous blend of frailty and agility, melancholy and whimsy. "It sounded like me talking, only with notes."

The Soft Machine immediately became central figures on the London psychedelic scene. Yet in many ways their orientation was always jazz rather than rock. Wyatt even describes himself as a Fifties person who felt "bemused because the `rich flowering of culture' in the '60s was really just the mainstreaming of all these things that had been underground in the Fifties, like drugs." Beyond specific ideas to do with harmony, rhythm and improvisation, what they derived from jazz was "a kind of recklessness", a spirit of discovery captured in Miles Davis's instruction to his musicians: "play beyond what you know". This freeform approach, combined with rock-derived but unheard-of-in-proper-jazz techniques like distortion and effects, made The Soft Machine ideal for the sensory overload aesthetic of clubs like UFO, where they played seemingly every other week in 1966-67.

But Ayers's pop sensibility was increasingly at odds with where the Soft Machine's music was going, which was long, abstract pieces. ""Kevin had bravely soldiered on as bass guitarist in what had become really an instrumental band," says Wyatt. "He'd accumulated this stash of songs, but there really wasn't room for them in the band anymore." The tour of America with Hendrix divided the band further: Wyatt enjoyed going on the piss and the pull with Mitch and Noel of the Experience, Ayers found the whole rampage of buses, booze and birds a gruelling affront to his sensibilities. The group split up on its return. When they reformed, they invited Hugh Hopper, another alumnus of Simon Langton, to be the bass player. Wyatt enjoyed drumming in a wild, freeform style unsuitable for backing pop songs and happily went along with the jazz-rock direction. But after three more albums, he too was squeezed out as the Soft Machine became an increasingly uptight fusion outfit with little room for playfulness.

As important as the Soft Machine was to their development, few would disagree that Wyatt and Ayers came into their own as solo artists. Initially, Wyatt formed his own Softs in the form of Matching Mole, but after a drunken tumble from a high window left him paralysed below the waist, he had to give up drumming and the gang mindset of the performing band, and reinvent himself as a studio-bound artist. Started before the accident but finished and informed by that shattering trauma, 1973's *Rock Bottom* is Wyatt's masterpiece. From "Sea Song" (an oblique portrait of his new love and lifelong partner-to-be Alfreda Benge, a.k.a Alfie) to 'Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road' (which exorcised his post-paralysis anguish via bathos-laden turns of phrase like "oh dearie me"), the album combines experimentation, emotion and melody with an exquisite delicacy.

Meanwhile, starting with 1969's *Joy of A Toy*, Ayers launched an equally enthralling career, his output ranging from light-hearted ditties like 'Clarence In Wonderland' to nihilistic noise-scapes like 'Song from the Bottom of A Well'. Another highpoint was 'Decadence', a rippling, rhapsodic paean to his friend and fellow-traveler in hedonism, Nico, an ice queen "suffering from wear and tear" who perpetually slips back into "liquid night" despite the out-stretched arms of her lovers. "I never kiss and tell," he says tartly when asked if he and Nico were ever involved.

Ayers and Wyatt belonged to a milieu of English mavericks who recorded for "progressive" labels like Harvest, Island, Charisma, and Virgin. Sharing a similar sensibility of gentle

humour and genteel experimentalism, this was an incestuous scene, the musicians frequently collaborating or guesting on each other's albums. The labels, similarly, exuded a longhaired, we're-only-playing-at-being-a-record-company vibe. Virgin seemed more like an arts council for weirdos than the Industry. "It wasn't really that idealistic," says Wyatt. It's just that "the Railway Enthusiast" – his nickname for Branson – "had noticed there was a market for bands who could sell albums without hit singles, based around the college gig circuit." Ironically, Virgin would later maneuver Wyatt into recording a single – a cover of the Monkees' 'I'm A Believer' – which actually did become a hit and got the wheelchair-bound singer onto Top of the Pops.

Ayers, who'd left the laidback Harvest, was facing similar pressures. His new label Island were convinced they could turn him into a big star. "It really messed me up and I lost complete confidence in what I was doing." It was the start of an unhappy period of desultory recordings and feeling disconnected from the music scene, with Ayers alternating between his houseboat in Maida Vale and long sojourns abroad.

When punk arrived, the progressive scene was deemed the domain of "boring old farts". The new dogma declared that rock had been enfeebled by its attempts at maturity and sophistication. It was time for a rejuvenating jolt of teenage proletarian energy. The Fall's Mark E. Smith singled out the Canterbury Scene – the Soft Machine and all the welter of bands and solo artists it spawned – when he declared "rock was ruined when the students took it over". Wyatt sympathizes with this attitude, which with typical kindliness he interprets as "a sincere attempt to reassert that rock music was a music whose vitality came from the bottom up in terms of social power structures". Still, there was a moment there in 1976-77 when the mellow meandering of a whole generation of artists – everyone from Brian Eno to John Martyn – was deemed irrelevant.

A few years later, the middle class cadres within punk stopped worrying so much about maintaining their fake-prole accents and hiding their Hatfield and the North albums. Punk turned into postpunk and the students took over again (had they ever really been dislodged?). Many of the new bands looked back to the music they'd been listening to before The Ramones and "Anarchy in the UK". These groups, such as Scritti Politti (whose vocalist Green was hugely indebted to Wyatt's "English soul"), wanted to move beyond straightahead punk, beyond rock itself, and the Canterbury Sound was a suggestive example of a concerted attempt to un-rock rock. Wyatt was coaxed back into recording by Geoff Travis, the boss of Rough Trade (home to Scritti). "Virgin were cross and said I couldn't do albums for another label, so we decided to do a series of singles, cover versions."

During his period of disengagement from music, Wyatt had become politically engaged: he started tuning into foreign radio stations, including Radio Moscow, and reading the *Morning Star*. Eventually he joined the Communist Party because its internationalism fit his own "xenophilia". He explains, "if anybody starts to build up a heat against Johnny Foreigner, sort that chap out, my instincts are to take sides with Johnny Foreigner. They used to call it being a traitor but actually I'm just a xenophile." The Rough Trade singles included versions of Latin American revolutionary songs, a pro-Stalin ditty from 1940s America, a tune called "Trade Union" by a Bengali group based in Brick Lane, and most famously, Elvis Costello and Clive Langer's anti-Falklands War ballad "Shipbuilding".

Ayers is a xenophile if anybody is. He spent his early childhood in Malaysia, "running around a beach and completely lost in my own world ". When his family returned to Herne Bay, the twin culture shock of England's grey-skied, grey-faced repression and being plunged into boarding school aged 12 was a massive trauma. Ironically, for an artist who is regarded as quintessentially English, Ayers has spent most of his life since that "homecoming" trying to escape England, traveling all over the world and eventually settling in France. "Sunnier climes have always been more compatible to me – people there are so much more relaxed and have time for the good things in life like good food and wine."

IN 1992 AYERS declared, "Between the ages of 17 and 40 I had a great time, no grounds for complaint whatsoever. My problem is just that I don't know what to do with the rest of my life." For both of the ex-Softs, the Eighties and Nineties were…. variable. Wyatt alternated between sporadic recording and periods of depression, partly induced by "the political weather… you can get a very cold draught sometimes." Both artists have had struggles with alcohol, culminating this year with Wyatt going sober and quitting the potions he'd always seen as essential to loosening his creativity. *Comicopera*'s first "act" partly concerns the deleterious effects of his drinking on his relationship with Alfie (who

wrote a lot of lyrics on the album), a syndrome she has described as "bereavement within a marriage."

Both *Comicopera* and *The Unfairground* deal with aging, that sense of twilight memorably captured by Dylan a few years ago with the lines "it's not dark yet/but it's getting there." Serenity and wisdom have eluded both artists. In one song, Wyatt sings, at once wry and deadly earnest, of envying Christians and Moslems for their certainty, their confidence that God has got their back. After the first act dealing with personal relationships, and a second moving out into the real world of politics and war, the final section sees Wyatt casting around for "solutions" via a series of cover versions that touch on spirituality, revolution, surrealism, and free improvisation. *The Unfairground*, meanwhile, exudes a worldweary confusion distilled in the line "I don't understand anything as I grow older/Nothing seems to be any clearer".

"When you get to a certain age the inevitable crumbling becomes very real," Ayers admits. "It's how you deal with that is the challenge. Robert said to me a very long time ago that I was the sort of person who would end up an old man on a park bench feeding ducks and wondering why people weren't nicer to each other!" Yet for all its bleakness, *The Unfairground* sounds sprightly and spring-heeled: falling in love was a major catalyst for Ayers even making a record again. And *Comicopera*'s sheer delight in strange and marvellous combinations of sounds is a tonic. In the end, there aren't answers but there are consolations, the highest (and healthiest) being music and friendship. Both *The Unfairground* and *Comicopera* involved a company of musician pals: Ayers called on 26talents, among them folk singer Bridget St. John and Hugh Hopper, while Wyatt's "imaginary gang" contained such seeming incompatibles as Brian Eno and Paul Weller. "I say imaginary cos they were never in the same room at the same time," he chuckles. "I do believe in doing that, but I've found that often grumpiness ensues."

Parts of *The Unfairground* were recorded at the same studio, owned by Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera, where Wyatt recorded *Comicopera*. Hence the reunion last summer. "It was really great to see him again," says Wyatt. "He's gone through a lot of problems, battling the demons. And he's looking battered, but he's survived. And it was nice because I had the opportunity to say `Look, Kevin thanks very much for your tunes at the beginning'. Without his natural ability to write proper songs, The Soft Machine would have been hard pressed to cobble together much convincing original material of our own."

Wyatt actually appears briefly on his old friend's record, albeit as a disembodied vocal texture, sampled and listed in the credits as The Wyattron. "It's not Robert, but it is a memory of Robert," says Ayers. "And that makes a lot of sense to me, as that is what I have."

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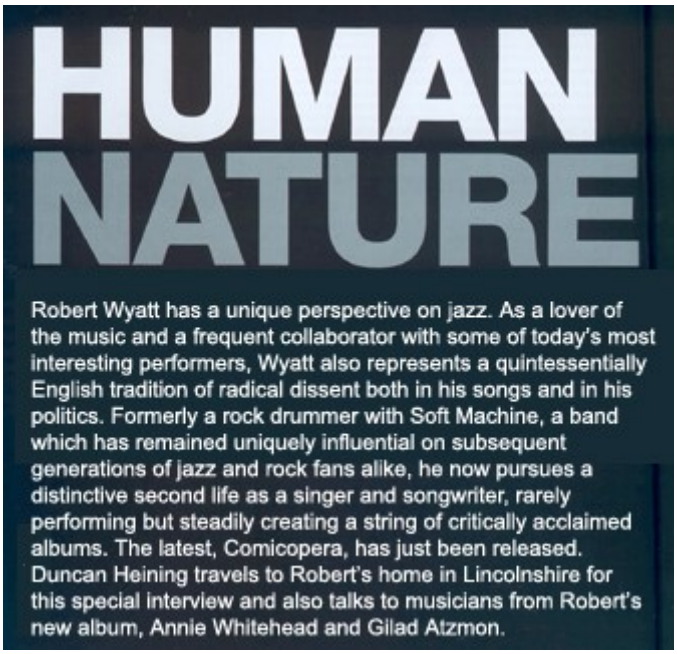
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Human Nature - Jazzwise - Issue 113 - October 2007





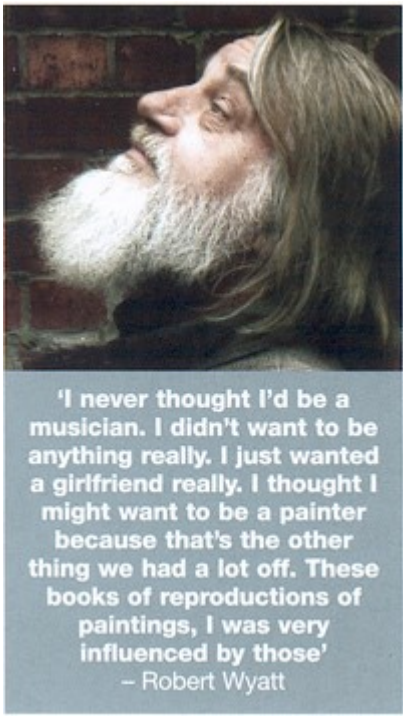
How do you describe Robert Wyatt? Musician? Clearly. Song-writer?

That goes without saying. Activist? Fair enough. But beyond stating the obvious, it gets increasingly difficult to define what he does. As if bemused by their own appeal, his songs defy easy categorisation and yet their charms communicate across generations and genres. Robert has just signed with Domino, the hippest of young independent labels and home of the Arctic Monkeys, Franz Ferdinand and more oddball talents like Stephen Malkmus and Jim O'Rourke. Oh, and he's about to release his latest album, *Comicopera*.

Louth in Lincolnshire, where Robert and partner Alfie Benge live, is about 200 miles and three decades from London. Piles of books, records and musical instruments clutter their rambling Georgian house close to the town's centre. Photos, political posters and Alfie's art on the walls. In the hall two carrier bags full of paperbacks, unclear whether they are coming in or going out. Two lives lived to the full. Outside in Louth itself, Robert and Alfie seem well-known to the town's other residents.

In the local hippy shop, all patchouli oil, josticks and Indian prints, Robert chats with the owner, pointing me out to her, "This is Duncan, he's up from London to do an interview. I just thought I'd show him your lovely shop." And in the record shop, Off The Beaten Tracks, they quickly work out what I'm doing here, "Yeah, Robert comes in quite a lot, mostly to order CD's he's seen reviewed in *Jazzwise*."

The sun is warm over Louth today and we chat over a sausage bun outside Stan's on the market. Robert had been at Ryko for years but a recent take-over led to sackings of trusted friends, people like Andy Childs whom they'd known since Robert had been on Rough Trade records.



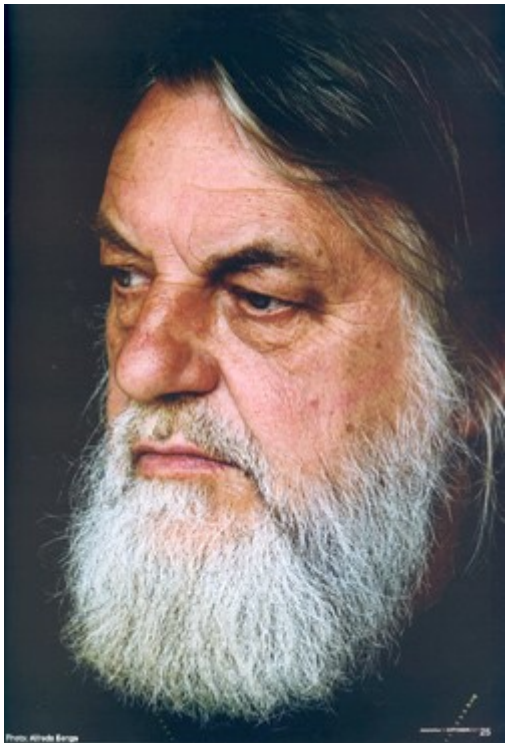
If they really cared about the music they'd be pleased they'd got somebody like Andy. It just didn't feel right. So, we left and they were a bit surprised and a bit cross. But Alfie cleverly got it built into our contract that we weren't collateral for deals like that." Alfie took on the task of sorting out Robert's business affairs some years ago. "This wasn't by choice," she tells me. "This is by seeing how chaotic some things are and how Robert signs things that are not in his best interests. Like signing songs to a publisher, who's totally hopeless, for eternity instead of checking him out first."

I turn to Robert, who has a Stan Laurel-like look on his face: "You should have been a jazz musician, Robert". He laughs, "I've got the makings, haven't I? 'Jazzwise' being a contradiction in terms." "Yeah, technically and brain-wise," Alfie chips in. "I come from a long line of jazz musicians. Also, there's been quite a lot of crooks involved in Robert's life. It seemed sensible to keep it in the family but it's not my chosen metier. I find it really irritating."

Back at the house, I ask Robert if he minds if I take a couple of photos. "No, not at all," he says, "though I am having a bit of a bad hair life." I explain that I'm using two tape machines for the interview, as in the past machines have stopped working without my realising. It turns out such things have happened with Wyatt interviews before.

"The thing that's confusing for people, if they've had to do it again, is that for every question I have a completely different answer. So, it's very hard for them to sync up an interview. Like, 'How are the 60s?' 'Great!' 'How are the 60s?' 'Crap!' 'Are you happy?' 'Yeah!' 'Are you happy?' 'Am I fuck!' So, that was just a warning."

Robert's politics, however, remain more consistent. Like his albums they're intensely personal and derive from a strong moral sense. Anti-racist, due to his love of jazz and black music. Anti-imperialist and socialist, due both to his parents' example and to his own anti-racism. These values are steadfast and infuse Robert's songs, not in any crude agit-prop way, but because they arise naturally from the processes of contemplation and reflection. Is he glad to see the back of Blair? Obviously. But does he have any sense that Brown may be any better?



> Zoom

"Actually, I'm grateful that, by association, two of the most unpleasant Western prime ministers had to go. Tony Blair dragged them down with him. The whole of Europe breathed a sigh of relief at getting rid of fucking Berlusconi and the equally odious Aznar. So, thank you Tony for that. I don't like doing reverse personality cults. I agree with Tony Benn about that. But on an emotional level I feel slightly less ashamed having a grown-up going around talking on behalf of the British people as opposed to a prep school tosser.

But that's a personal opinion rather than a deeply political analysis."

Sometimes, it's only the laughing that keeps you from crying, isn't it? But somehow Robert, and Alfie, stay optimistic. Of course, the joy, energy and camaraderie that goes into the creation of a work like *Comicopera* must surely help. And the making of a Robert Wyatt album is a painstaking process. Much of it takes place at home. Though he's used other people to produce his records in the past, notably
Nick Mason on *Rock Bottom* and Clive Langer on *Shipbuilding*, Robert is essentially his own producer these days. Advice, however, from Alfie, engineer Jamie Johnson and friends like Brian Eno and Phil Manzanera also feed in.

"Jamie Johnson is such an intelligent engineer that we can work as a team when I'm putting stuff together. Then I get a lot of vocal advice, and 'vocal' advice, from Alfie. Basically, consisting of, 'You could do that again, only better.' [chuckles] Actually, Alfie has ideas, like, 'why don't you try this?' or 'why don't you come in on that set of notes?' Nick Mason was great because he wasn't a professional producer. I asked him, partly in gratitude to the Floyd because they were so nice to us and because I thought that if anyone knows about sitting in a studio and getting a good sound out, it's got to be one of this lot and that turned out to be the case."

Actually, when Robert injured his back in 1973, the Floyd jumped in and did a couple of benefits at the Rainbow for him raising over ten grand to help out. They're still friends and it was in part a suggestion from David Gilmour, that encouraged greater emphasis on Robert's voice in the mix on *Comicopera*.

"Alfie used to get worried that my voice was getting lost in my own production of it. Also Gilmour said that. He said, 'People want to hear the voice.' Meaning he wanted to hear the voice. I thought, 'OK. You can hear it now'. But I also like it as just something else in there."

I suspect that the attraction of Robert's music, for artists as different as David Gilmour, Brian Eno, Elvis Costello, Paul Weller and Björk, comes from the fact that there is no separation between the art and the man. It is that which gives it integrity, in both senses. As ever, songs off the new album, like the beautiful 'Out Of The Blue', don't grab the attention even where their Iyrics are at their most pointed. They sail into view and touch you even before you're fully aware and they still have that emergent, improvised quality of his best work. That, I'm sure, derives from his love of jazz and is why he chooses such strong players to interact with on his records. Trombonist, Annie Whitehead is there again, as are Gilad Atzmon and bassist Yaron Stavi as well as Orphy Robinson. All three have become crucial to Robert in his music.

He's known Annie since the 70s, having met through shared friendships with musicians like Mongezi Feza, Dudu Pukwana and Keith Tippett. "We actually recorded together the first time on a record Jerry Dammers put together - *Wind of Change*, on behalf of the Namibia liberation movement, SWAPO. I particularly liked the way she was listening to what everybody else was doing. She's just utterly lovable, very, very quick and got an awful Lot of soul."
Annie has also put together a group to play Robert's music, Soupsongs, which has played gigs in the UK and continues to perform in Europe. As for Gilad, Robert describes himself as a "sort of Gilad groupie" and he asked the saxophonist very hesitantly if he'd play on *Cuckooland*, his last album for Ryko. "He had no idea who I was or what I had done or anything like that. I realised he just loves to play. Whatever I'd asked him to do, if it involved playing, he'd have said, 'yes'. He was such a joy to work with. He was just such an enthusiastic collaborator and so fast at hearing what was required. Yaron Stavi and Gilad, I regard as like Sancho Panza and Don Quixote and I love them both. It's very hard to talk about people when it goes beyond professional admiration to that sort of kind of love and I have it for various people, Phil Manzanera and Paul Weller being another two but that's really that."

Singer, Mônica Vasconcelos, is another artist who appears on *Comicopera* and is heard to stunning effect on 'Out Of The Blue'. Robert has recently been working on the singer's new album.

"She got Alfie involved because she wanted to do more stuff in English and Alfie had a go at some words for tunes Steve Lodder and Dudley Phillips had written for her. I did a bit of singing on it and chipped in a few ideas. I think I was invited. [Long pause) Oh, god, I hope so. I think Dudley or Steve would...



‘A musician, inside and out’

Saxophonist **Gilad Atzmon** appears on Robert Wyatt’s new album. He tells **Duncan Heining** how they first met

“You probably wouldn’t believe this but I’m a pretty shy person. It won’t come up when I’m on stage but sometime I would even start to play and it would take me four tunes to warm up and it was really when I come up with a joke and people laugh and then I can move on. Robert is apparently at times more shy than myself. I was playing one time in Grimsby and his wife Alfie came to me and told me there is a singer here that really wants to talk to you and I said, ‘For sure. Of course.’ Then this person came in a wheelchair and approach me. He said to me, very shy, very nervous, ‘I’m kind of a musician and really like your playing.’ But did not introduce himself or anything. Then he said, ‘And I really love your clarinet playing and I’m dying to have you play on one of my albums. Will you record with me?’ I said, ‘What a question. Sure give me a call.’ Then Annie Whitehead rang me, she said, ‘I hear you met Robert Wyatt yesterday, Wow. Great. Blah, Blah. Blah.’ I said, ‘Oh shit! Yeah?’ This is the way I was introduced to Robert Wyatt. I didn’t even know it was him. So, then I called him and said, ‘Oh, my god man, I heard your music when I was a kid.’

Anyway that's the forthcoming Mônica Vasconcelos album and I really like her voice. It's so true. And I use her on a monicatron towards the end."

That's where Robert records somebody - Brian Eno, Karen Mantler or, here, Monica - singing all the notes of the scale. Then Jamie Johnson transfers it to computer and from there to keyboard, "So I have a keyboard of that person's voice and I can play chords of it. I love doing that. I tried it on my own voice but it was rubbish. It was all out of tune."

As far as singers go, Robert's own tastes are diverse. "I've been listening to stuff that was very dependant on the idiosyncrasies of the voice like Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan together. Like this ultrasmart, ultra-educated Jewish intellectual from the North and this pure moral, country boy musician and I find their friendship really moving for some reason. It's all in there with their record. I thought this is serious here."

Joni Mitchell is also important to Robert, as is Peter Pears (Benjamin Britten's partner), mainly because of specific qualities in their voices. "There's also people in jazz I like but I can't say they've influenced me. I find Betty Carter gob-smacking and I like musicians who sing sometimes in jazz. I like Dizzy Gillespie's 'Oo Bop Sh' Bam' stuff or Jimmie Smith doing 'Got My Mojo Workin", which is really kind of rough stuff."

I ask about Chet Baker. There's something in that wispy, waif-like sound that has parallels with Robert's voice.

As a saxophonist, as a woodwind player, I played with so many people on many, many albums of so many famous people. And I would turn up and play for 20 minutes or an hour, three hours at most, but with Robert it was very special because working with him he is one of the last organic musicians, sitting there with headphones listening to you closing his eyes and he fills you with his own spirit just being with you in the room.
For me, you know I worked with the late Ian Dury, Ian was very different but somehow these wordsmiths, the English ones, are very special. Their output is turned into a very effective input when you are playing with them.
I love the man like crazy him, and his wife. He played on my album as well, *Musik*. It was so great. I sent him the music and he prepared so much stuff, you know. He is just consummately a musician inside and out."



"Well, I suppose that's so built in. I mean Chet Baker's biggest influence on me is the fact that I really like this thing of a bit of vocal, a bit of trumpet and I think one of the reasons I took up the trumpet again was because I was so haunted by that thing of moving backwards and forwards between those two.
Although I can't play trumpet like a musician, I'm able to play it like a singer or at least like I sing."

And what about Billie Holiday?

"What I like most about her, it's a bit of a cliché, but what not to sing. What actually goes naturally with a voice and in her case if you've got good enough music around you just let it come through and just ride it like a yacht. And I really like her later stuff too. Jazz people say her voice had gone to pieces by then but as far as I'm concerned that's rock 'n' roll. What did they know? It's like late period Johnny Cash, it's got 50 much soul."

Robert never set out to be a singer, a fact that still guides his approach, as he tells me chuckling to himself. "I've got this completely negative approach to singing - try not to make too many mistakes, try to hit the right note, be grateful for that and move discreetly on to the next one." Early Soft Machine bootlegs, in fact, suggest that Robert had a pretty

fine white soul voice.

"I really got into that classic English beat group thing which was taking black American records from Sue and Motown and replacing the backing they had with a more skiffle-based thing. That's what the English Beat Group scene really was, Black Music played by skiffle groups. And I was absolutely part of that and with the Wilde Flowers live gigs, that's what it was."

At the same time, however, Robert's father and mother were both great music lovers. The majorily of records they had were classical, though quite a few of those featured 20th century composers like Stravinsky, Ravel and Debussy who were inspired by jazz. It was a remark made by his father, that prompted Robert to start listening to jazz.

"My dad mentioned he really liked Duke Ellington and Fats Waller because he'd seen this seminally important film Stormy Weather, that celebrated black culture albeit in that sort of ersatz way. So, I got Duke's *Such Sweet Thunder* when I was 11 or 12, which he sort of approved of because it was a Shakespearean Suite, and I was off. I was just completely, as they say, blown away."

The other thing that Robert mentions as being important was his parents collections of art books. "I never thought I'd be a musician. I didn't want to be anything really. I just wanted a girlfriend really. I thought I might want to be a painter because that's the other thing we had a lot off. These books of reproductions of paintings, I was very influenced by those." It's there perhaps in the painterly attention Robert brings to his work but also in the collage-like impression his songs leave. It's entirely fitting that Alfie, herself an ex-student of art and film, brings those same skills to the covers and typography of a Wyatt record. "We are absolutely a team, me and Alfie. She has all these skills she acquired from art school and because she gets involved sometimes with the music and the lyrics and we do so much together, she's naturally part of everything I do. She's the one who really took control of how things are done, like cover art and presentation and typography.
Ever since Rock Bottom, she's been in charge of that. She's particularly conscious that now people can download, the whole thing should be worth having as an object.

The drums were obviously an early



Interpreting Wyatt



Annie Whitehead explains to **Duncan Heining** the genesis of her Robert Wyatt-based song project

"Soupsongs began when Robert was approached by this promoter in Lincolnshire called Dave Broom who wanted to do a project of his songs. Robert doesn't do gigs and he suggested me. Robert's very shy when it comes to asking musicians to do what he wants. He has so much respect for them, he finds it hard to say what he wants them to do. I thought Robert was going to be involved in the project as well and I was just going to be a kind of translator or bossy person (laughs) to save him having to do it. But then it became clear we were going to get singers and instrumentalists to do his music. So, we decided what we were going to do and how we were going to do it and Robert was very much a part of it, as I was. It's been wonderful doing his music, first of all because everybody loves it, the musicians love it. You can really ask anybody to be a part of this project and they'll say, 'Yes, please!'
Robert was like, 'This is your project really.' He thought my band should be the core. So, I decided I'd ask people who either had a connection with Robert or had worked with me. Originally, Julie Tippetts did it but she had to drop out. Robert had sung on one of Italian singer Cristina Donà's records, so she's come in. And Sarah Jane Morris was with my band for a while but was also with Happy End, which is politically around Robert's area as well. The other thing was I thought Sarah Jane has such a low voice for a woman and Robert has such a high voice for a man, that it kind of appealed to me. It's great to

enthusiasm and Robert's first drum kit consisted of the usual mix of household objects, which he'd use to play along with Max Roach "Bit ambitious that'. His first proper kit, the cheapest Premier set he could buy, lasted him through his early professional career. He had lessons with a visiting American drummer and summers were spent on Mallorca living near Robert Graves, a friend of both Robert's parents. Graves' son-in-law owned the Indigo Jazz Club and Robert got to practise and even jam at the club. His first group with Kevin Ayers, Hugh and Brian Hopper and Richard Sinclair was The Wilde Flowers and when that disintegrated, Robert formed Soft Machine with Ayers and Mike Ratledge. Sharing the same management as the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the group toured the States with Hendrix. The downside of that was that Robert began to develop a big liking for alcohol and it was whilst under the influence that Robert fell from a window in June 1973 and ended up paralysed from the waist down. The upside, however, was that he learned a great deal personally and musically from playing America, not least from Hendrix's drummer, the sadly underrated Mitch Mitchell.

"Going from Beat group gigs to bigger gigs, Mitch really taught me a lot about how to handle that musically. In fact, he gave me his kit when the tour ended because he said, 'Robert, I can't bear the thought of you playing on that crap kit you've been playing'." Robert laughs his body quivering at the memory. He still has the kit. Both he and Mitchell shared an enthusiasm for jazz drummers, Elvin Jones and Tony Williams. "Me and Mitch used to listen to a particular track by Miles Davis with Tony on it, 'Stuff', but I've liked Tony Williams ever since he was with Jackie McLean. Elvin, we loved because the momentum and the weight of what he did was very useful information because of the volume at which rock groups played. He actually matched that sort of depth and volume of rock."

Inevitably, the shock of hearing Hendrix for the first time has stayed with Robert. "I still remember first hearing Hendrix get into gear in rehearsal. You just thought, 'What the fuck is that?' This sensaround thing of controlled feedback. There were people like Jeff Beck and to a certain extent Pete Townshend who were controlling feedback but this sustained landscape at a certain volume and absolutely controlling. It was blinding. It was like a great living, breathing river of sound."

There was opposition in some quarters

hear Robert's things that were done so high and delicately being growled out by Sarah Jane. And Jennifer of course. Jennifer [Maidman] was always in the band because she has that kind of deadpan kind of delivery almost kind of speaking the words at times.

We have a great promoter in Italy and they really love the music over there. There doesn't seem to be anybody here who wants to do it, unfortunately. We did do a tour for Serious a few years ago and Robert came to quite a few of the gigs. As a musician when you play live you experience the audience enjoying what you do and it plays a really big part in you continuing doing what you do. Robert never gets that because he doesn't play live. So, it was really nice for me when he was in the audience knowing that he was experiencing all these people enjoying his music and seeing it have an emotional effect on them. It's very special when Robert's there."

Photos: above, Duncan Heining

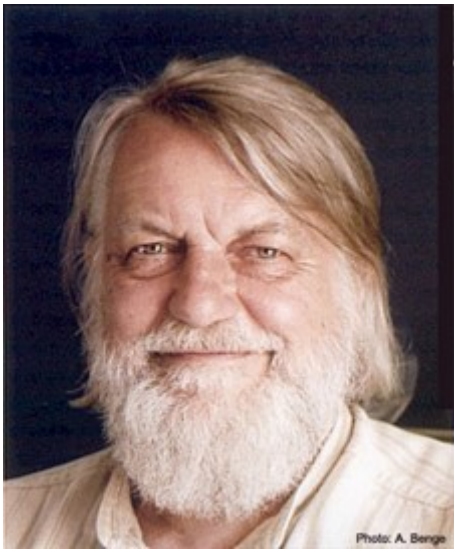


Photo: A. Benge

LISTEN UP!//

Essential Wyatt



Soft Machine
Third Sony BMG
The easy one. A brilliant album. Great drumming and 'Moon In June' (though I prefer the John Peel *Top Gear* version). Recently reissued with *Live At The Proms 1970* tracks. A must-have.

Matching Mole
On The Radio Hux



Just preferred over the two CBS records for its breadth of material. Essential to hear what happened next.

to the Softs doing the tour but Hendrix supported them. "Some people thought, 'Soft Machine? They're not very poppy. He's playing stadiums. He's got hit records.' But I'm very grateful to Hendrix because he stuck up for us, and the band did, and Hendrix didn't like pop groups that much. He wanted people who were trying something different and didn't want people copying him. And, of course, we weren't. We were trying to do something else. He was very respectful about what we were trying to do and (laughing) very polite about our ability to do it. Real gent."

Though he's put in the occasional guest stage appearance with friends from Annie Whitehead to David Gilmour, Robert stopped doing gigs not long alter his accident. People would love to see him live, as he knows. "I feel a bit sheepish about it because normally the gigs are the promotion for the LP. The difficulty with gigs is that I don't really think like that. So much of what I do now depends on a kind of Beach Boys-isation of the voice, of double octaves and so on. It's all in the editing. I tried to do a sort of imitation of a live gig with Annie's band. A couple of songs came out all right. But I wasn't really comfortable and some of them were so not right and there was nothing I could do about it. I just don't have that kind of confidence to do it live in front of a band. I did drumming and drunk but voice and sober, it's just not going to happen. I don't have that chutzpah."

Maybe Domino and Robert's many friends might someday persuade him. It would be wonderful to see him do a short residency at somewhere like Ronnie's. Somewhere he'd be appreciated but also somewhere intimate, where the warmth of the man could come across. Till then, there's *Comicopera* and Robert's back catalogue to keep us happy.



An Evening Chat with Robert Wyatt takes place at the Purcell Room. London on 15 October.

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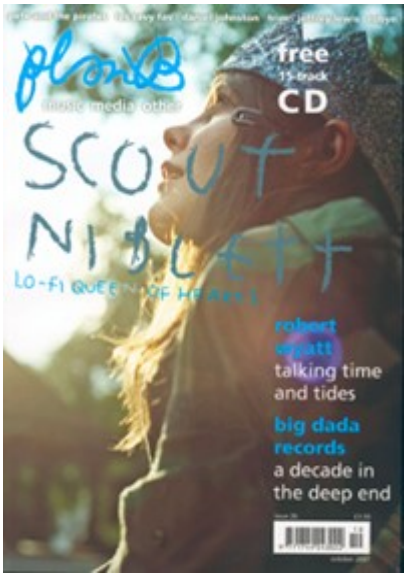
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Lost and Found - Plan B N°26 - October 2007

LOST AND FOUND



Words **Frances Morgan**
Photography **Simon Fernandez**

" For better or for worse, when you put on one of my records, you're getting me, " says **Robert Wyatt**. *Plan B* was only too happy to spend an afternoon in the company of the reluctantly iconic songwriter - and his bewilderingly beautiful new album, *Comicopera*

"About 10 minutes ago I said, you've probably got some questions," says Robert Wyatt. "And then I kept talking. Look, go through your questions.
Eat. Eat and drink and smoke, "he urges, proffering a light and some cake. "Otherwise, life, you know, just dries up..."

I'm fine with the latter three. Cup of tea, Drum Mild, a Danish pastry with custard in it. I'm fine sitting in a light front room full of *stuff* - instruments, records, pictures - and talking about Cecil Taylor and William Parker. Maybe we could just do that. I could do that all day, probably. It's what I do a lot anyway. Talk, smoke, listen, talk some more; the outside world driving around doing whatever it is it does on the other side of the curtains.



But the room I'm in belongs to Robert Wyatt, and I'm here to talk to him about his new album, *Comicopera*. I've travelled to Louth, in Lincolnshire, by train and replacement bus and a drive through big-skied cloud-blown countryside with Wyatt's wife, artist and writer Alfreda Benge, who says right away she's glad that photographer Simon

Fernandez and I are smokers. This is a relief to me too because, throughout the journey, > Zoom
I've veered between making conscientious, illegible notes, gazing camera-eyed at an unfamiliar part of England, and getting nervous to the point of missing I'd wished the train this morning, and I could do with a fag. I don't think the weight of expectation has ever sat upon my head with quite such ominous heft as it has today.

Of course, the expectation budges as soon as I'm welcomed into Wyatt's room, greeted with an enormous smile and the offer of a cuppa from an instantly recognisable voice - a voice that, when singing, seems full of quiet concern for or knowledge of its listeners.

To be honest, that weight of expectation dissipates whenever I actually hear Wyatt's music, which is why I'm here in the first place. From the playful art rock of his early bands Soft Machine and Matching Mole, through 1974's revelatory, harrowing solo album *Rock Bottom* and the early Eighties singles that further defined his sweet, weird, drifting, impressionistic, committed and heartfelt free-pop, to the meditative and eclectic *Shleep* of 1997, and beyond, Robert's Wyatt's music asks a lot of the listener, but does not *demand*. Rather, it suggests, via dreamlike timbres, open chords, gentle percussion and an almost unbearable emotional honesty, nothing less than the map of a human spirit, sketched out in sound. But what that means is, it's music that means so much to so many people, in a quiet private way that they hold close to themselves. I'm one of those people, too, so I don't want to let us down.

So I gesture at my notes.

Yeah, I wrote some questions. I find asking them quite difficult.

"Just give it a go. I'm on your side, do you know what I mean ? It's your gig now. I've done my gig, I've made my fucking record."

All right, we'll talk about the record to start with. Tell me some stuff.
"Playing it back I realised that I do play very loud cymbals all the time..." Wyatt reflects, referring to the ripply, brittle scatters of cymbal that have punctuated his percussion since his early days as a jazz drummer "I won't abandon what I do just to be fashionable, so I keep going 'Tssh! Tssh ! Tssh !'. I feel a bit embarrassed sometimes that I'm drowning out all these wonderful musicians with my splashy cymbal noises."

That wasn't the first thing I would have noticed about the album.
"Thank you. But I just listen to it and get so embarrassed. It's like old people who get hairs growing out of their faces in weird places and you're having a conversation with them and thinking, 'Fucking hell, he's got a black hair growing out of his nose'... But no, it's just weird stuff," he laughs, describing the record's mood, or possibly his own on listening to it: "'I'm lost, I'm somewhere. But wherever that is, that's here'. The first track does it on this record. Thank you, Anja Garbarek, for writing it."

'I always work backwards from chaos into order'

Comicopera's opener, 'Stay Tuned', is a slowburning, beautifully simple tilt between uncertainty and surety. The questioning verses - "*In between, lost in noise, somewhere, somewhere, somewhere*" - settle into encouragement and resolution, steady bass bolstered by trombone and trumpet: "*Don't start searching, I'll get back to you*."

You mean that state of not really being sure where you are, but being OK with that?
"Yeah, thank you for saying that. You've pinned it down exactly."

That sense of drift in your music is one of the things I like most about it.
"My physical response to what I'm doing is... Once I start making noise it's a bit like jumping into water and sometimes I'm in a pond, which I would call a pop song, and sometimes I think, 'Oh fucking hell, this isn't a pond, this is the ocean'. I'm somewhere bigger than a pond, and it gets a bit more scary."

Is that something that you can't really plan?
"You cannot plan it. If you do, you're being a cynical media bastard and it will always show up."

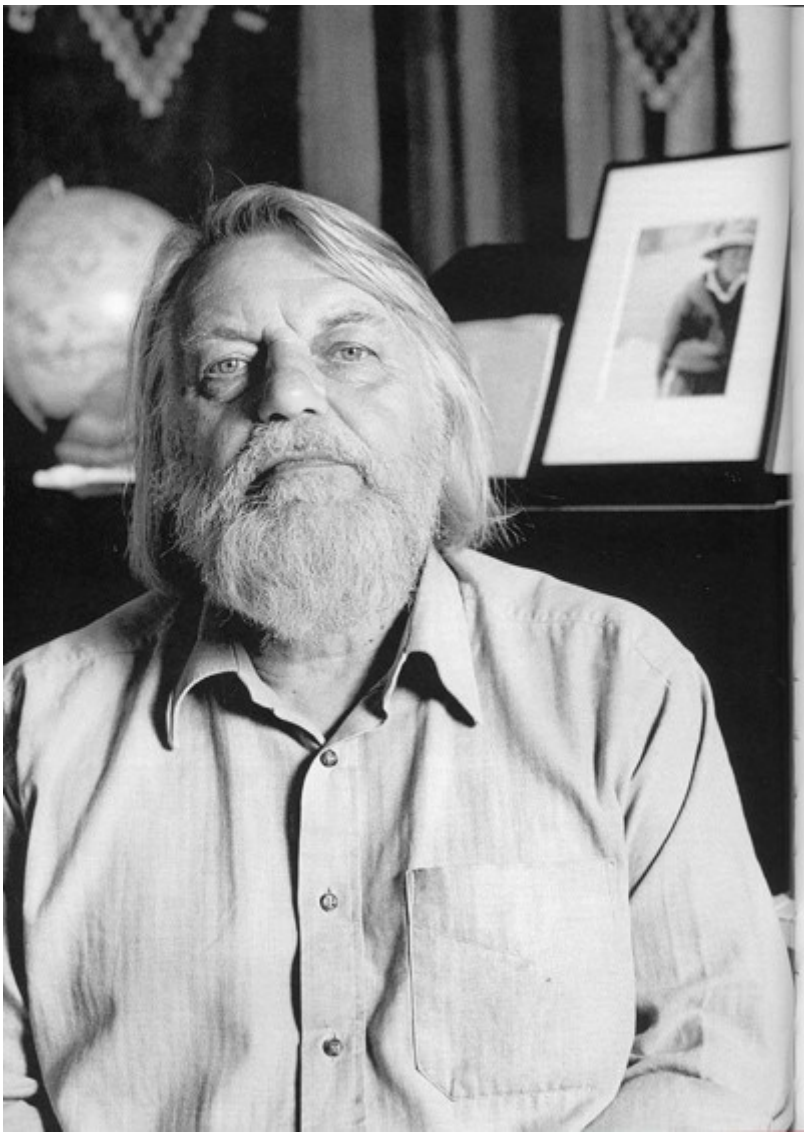
SIGNPOSTS TO SOMEWHERE

In a roundabout way, this is how we talk about *Comicopera*, an album that's both immediate and a bit unfathomable, like all Wyatt's records. It is an album in three discrete parts, 'acts', but I'd argue you could listen to it without knowing that. You would, however, notice how it deepens and changes: locationally, from domestic/internal to a confusing but familiar outside, to - suddenly and devastatingly - a world beset by conflict and chaos and thence back inside again into a rich, almost desperate imagination. Sonically, you'll hear the familiar washes of plangent chord and lilting, patchworked songwriting pick up speed into quirky, rhythmic energy, into an electronically charged, almost apocalyptic peak with the devastating, Enoenhanced 'Out Of The Blue'. The album's final section knits together songs in Italian and Spanish with loose, multicoloured arrangements of free jazz vibraphone, minimalist synth, distant trumpet, and all around a spaciousness that recalls, if anything, bands of the Brazilian Tropicalia movement, whose psychedelic bossa nova whimsy masked deeper metaphysical concerns and a wry, committed criticism of the status quo.

But at every signpost, there's a derailment or a surprise: with Wyatt, consistent as his vocal presence remains, the unexpected is, you feel, central to every song'Just As You Are', at first listen a soft love song, taps into the compromises, co-dependency and insecurity present in every relationship. The loping, lush 'Beautiful War', turns around and strangles you when the subject matter comes clear: its airiness is the methodical efficiency of a bomber destroying an anonymous settlement far below, safe in his cloudless sky. The stately, waltz-like 'Cancon de Julieta' fragments into the call-and-answer swoops of Chucho Merchan's bass violin and a weird noise undertow that befits its setting of Garcia Lorca's words.

Wyatts previous album, 2003's *Cuckooland*, navigated a similar journey between familiar and alien; internal and political-like *Comicopera*, songs gently whisked you from wry ontological questioning to cinematic evocations of 'Old Europe', from drifting, legato laments to jazzy scuttle. *Comicopera* is wider in frame, somehow; delirious with ideas, but with a settled assuredness of vision. How did it all come together? Did the structure come before or after the songs?

"It came out of the process. Things separate into chunks of preoccupation. I'm sort of floating about all the time, and it's quite disparate and quite chaotic. And then when I've got an hour and a half's worth I gather it together, then I sort it out in terms of what state of mind I was in when I wrote this song or that song, or nicked somebody else's song, or stopped singing altogether and let someone else play their instrument. Because I get bored, you know, of my voice sometimes. Anyway, then you sort it all out, and in this case it fell into three sort of categories, really.



> Zoom

"I'm on an animal level, using instinct most of the time, which is what I like most. But let's sort it out, help the listener here a bit. Cut it up a bit. This is one train of thought, that's another. It turned out it took three trains of thought".

It's a weird listen. You start off feeling quite safe but then as it goes on it starts to become a much darker record. It's quite disorientating.
"It's just that, having got past 60, I've done all the business of trying to tailor things to what people can digest. You get quite selfish at this age. You just think, 'I've got one last go, possibly, so I'm just going to throw it out the way it happens'.

"What I do remember is that youth always anticipates death as quite a dramatic, black and white thing. They romanticise it, and simplify it and cut it down. But it's a weirder and stranger journey. You start off, and you know roughly what's going on. Even if it's strange for you it's marked out. You become a teenager and think, 'OK, there's sex'. Then you get a job, and you think, that's adulthood and you've got there, to a sort of plateau. But *then* you could have another 20, 30, 40, 50 years of 'what then ?' Then you're in danger and in the wilderness, much more than teenagers ever understand about wilderness - they fantasise about 'weird', but they have no idea what weird really is. Weird is *really fucking weird*.

"When you're 50, life is just as unknown to you and unliveable, difficult and strange, as it is for a 12 year old. But then, I say all that stuff which sounds really pretentious, but all I've tried to do is make a really nice record. I've tried to string nice notes together. And if somebody's got any patience they will hear them. I don't put the beats in to help, I just say 'Look, the notes are there, believe me. Trust me, I've got a beard. How can you not trust me?'"

I don't know if I trust beards...

"No, well, I would never play a record with a person with a beard on the front, other than myself. This is why Alfie never, ever does album covers with me on the front, because it would put everybody right off."

Ever since I first heard it, I've found your music very comforting, even when it sounds unsure or sad or critical. But with this new album I feel more than ever this sense of you looking at the awfulness of things.

"If it's a bit distressing where I go, hang on in there because it's quite friendly in the end. I've just tried not to avoid the nastiness, but say that although the nastiness is unbelievable, it's not unbearable. That's what I hope. I would hope that in the end it would be some kind of comfort because god, there's just so much pain. But you've got to dig a bit deeper, not to come on all serious, but just to provide any comfort at all. Beyond the immediate comforts of orgasm and getting pissed and loud music and stuff. Life lasts longer than all those three events, which are crucial, but there's got to be a deep fun going on as well that survives all the tragedy."

In some ways I'm looking forward to getting older, getting past a lot of that stuff.
"I'll tell you, it's a lot to look forward to. It's really nice. It's kind of like climbing up the slippery bits out of an ocean and getting up to dry bits, and looking down into the valley you just crawled from of teeming activity and agony and sleepless nights and all the awful, well, wonderful things. Both. It's really nice. You think, wow, I've been allowed to live long enough to have a look at what's been going on in my lifetime. It's a great privilege."

I didn't mean to bring up the comfort thing so soon in the interview. It felt a little creepy somehow;
a little too familial. But what the hell: many of my generation are at odds with the idea of family, at odds with the media and government's current idealised view of love and domestic life, but also unsure about the countercultural values our own parents might or might not have tried to live up to, all at sea as to how and when and where we'll find our real homes and real connections. It is easier to look for the idea of 'family', of closeness, outside our own, and some of us find it in music, of course.

If we feel rootless, songs like Robert Wyatts (all at once steadfast and sharp, yet fragile and ambiguous) give us some tentative roots. While I am sure he'd laugh, embarrassed, at such a notion, there are people my age to whom his tremulous, conversational croon has an oddly mentor-like quality, a cipher for their own feelings about vulnerability, independence, where to put themselves in this world.

But let's not get too sentimental here.

This is music we're talking about, and much of the reassuring quality of Wyatts music derives, paradoxically, from his removal of himself from the songwriting process and his ability to set the listener afloat in sound. Even when his lyrics are heavy on the polemic, there's something sonically *selfless* about the way he approaches the idea of the song, which often emerges from shifting sands of resolved and unresolved melody as if you've unearthed it yourself. And this fluidity, this oceanic quality that's reflected in the timbres he works with, reassures by its assurance that some things are bigger than you and all you can do is cast yourself adrift in them.



> Zoom

DOTS AND LOOPS

Really, there's only one thing I came here to ask, and that's how Robert Wyatt makes such music.

So I do. And he scoots around the room, energised, demonstrating, sounding out notes on piano, trumpet and voice. "It's very, very simple how I work. I've got a room here; four walls like anybody else's and a door going through to where I make tea. Facing me is a CD player and a cassette recorder. On the left of the mixer is an eight-track recording machine. Right in front of me I can look out onto the car park and watch people driving into town and people driving out. On my right, I've got a baby grand piano. On the right of that there's a disused fireplace, and then I'll take you back to where we started; about a thousand vinyl LPs and some photos of my wife, including one of her smacking her previous husband in the face, just as a kind of warning to me. Look at that! That's actually from a film, two stills. Tha'ts Alfie when she was a little girl. And that's her now.

"This is where I work I just had to cut music down to very simple things. There are beats in my stuff, it's just that they're buried. There's a grid, in other words. I'm very old-fashioned. I want a beat and a tune. There are two kinds of music really, there's music to dance to and music to sing. You can have singing music, which has no beat. You can have dance music which has no tune. The intriguing exercise which I've embarked on for the last 50 years is to try and combine the two. I think, if I've made mistakes, I've erred on the side of tune, and let the beat be buried a bit; like the skeleton of a fish. It's there, but it doesn't look like a great bony animal.

"Then I work out the piano. About *there* I can hit it with my voice" He strikes a key. "Now, 20 years ago I could get up to there, but I can't anymore, so I have to do all that stuff on something else; trumpet, or something like that. So, that's notes. Then, I've got this metronome, which is fantastic;
it's Victorian, I think. Now then, that metronome is
a wonderful thing. It doesn't even rock steady, and there's a track on the new album where this is the only rhythm section, the one about 'Hattie in the at tic' [AWOL]. That's all I used. That's the drumkit.
So, I've got a beat, and the notes, and the trumpet, and then I've got heaps and heaps of bits of paper with words on... and I just try and stick them all together, my dear; that's all I do."

Do you do it every day?
"I play trumpet every day."

Do you write words every day?
"There I hit the buffers, because words and music don't always fit. The bit where you think about words is a whole different bit of your brain. It's that lovely transition zone between words and music that's got some sort of biological roots in humans. I don't know enough about human biology to know what the link is".

Is it about finding a balance between what you want to say and the musical words that will say it?
"Well, I actually think that way round, and I write more than I sing, because mostly what I write, I write. That's the form it takes. With music, I don't start with words; I start with noise, with sound. If it turns into words then I've struck lucky. You can't force it, though.

"I only make one LP about every five years because of that. It's not that I only have that many ideas. You've got to be so lucky. It's like panning for gold: every day you stick your thing in the water and drag up a bit of mud and leaf through it. Occasionally you pick something out and you think, 'Oh, that's really nice. There's a bit of mineral
there'. You put it in your bag to take home, and music's like that. Fishing about among all the notes and occasionally one will turn into a word or a phrase, and then you'll take it home.

"Singing and talking aren't the same thing. They absolutely are not. I remember a dreadful moment at a friend's house about five years ago. A bloke pulled out his guitar and Alfie rushed into the kitchen saying, 'Oh no, he's going to sing a song, it's going to kill the conversation dead! We're going to have to sit and listen to him now.'
He started singing some ballad and you could see everyone's metabolism slowing down. It's an awfully cruel thing to say, but people when they're singing gentle ballads think they're being gentle, but they're being quite interventionist, actually."

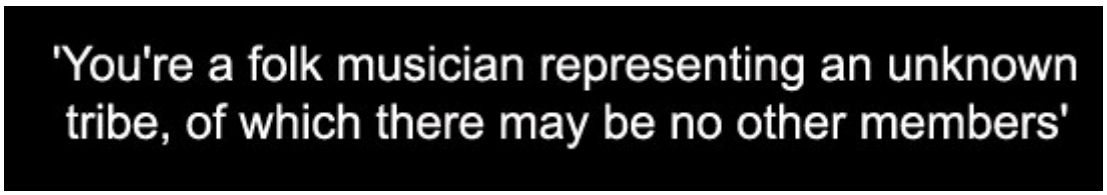
They're forcing you to enter their world.
"It's that kind of ersatz church mode. I much prefer making records to live gigs now, for that reason, because I don't want anyone to listen to me when they don't have to, or don't want to."

So you don't like the idea of reverence...
"I think it's appalling."

Do you still improvise with people?
"Yeah, I do a lot. In fact, even on my records I do. Most people start with the notes, and the beats, and fix which ones are going to work and expand on it. I tend to work backwards in a way. My brain is sort of a cross between Oxford Circus and a Cecil Taylor concert. Then I just keep cutting stuff out until I'm left with a followable thread - reduce it right down to a few words or a few notes. To me, songwriting is incidental to making music. What I'm trying to do is make *records* and I want them to be complete meals; vitamins, proteins, trace elements, the lot. "But I always work backwards from chaos into order. That's really the only thing I do that's totally not jazz and it's totally... well, I haven't learnt that from anybody. That's just the way I work."

It's probably an accumulation of all the music you've listened to.
"Yes, there's just an overwhelming amount of stuff that you can't deny or chuck in the bin, and it's irreconcilable so you just have to let it ferment in your brain, and then your brain will inevitably because you're only one little pathetic person - will reduce it down to the things that work for you and keep pushing everything else away and you're left with the utter simplicity of a Buddy Holly song - or you're left back with actually being a kind of folk musician representing an unknown tribe, of which there may be no other members! Just your own little one-person tribe."

You know, you've probably summed up there one of the best reasons I can think of to make music.



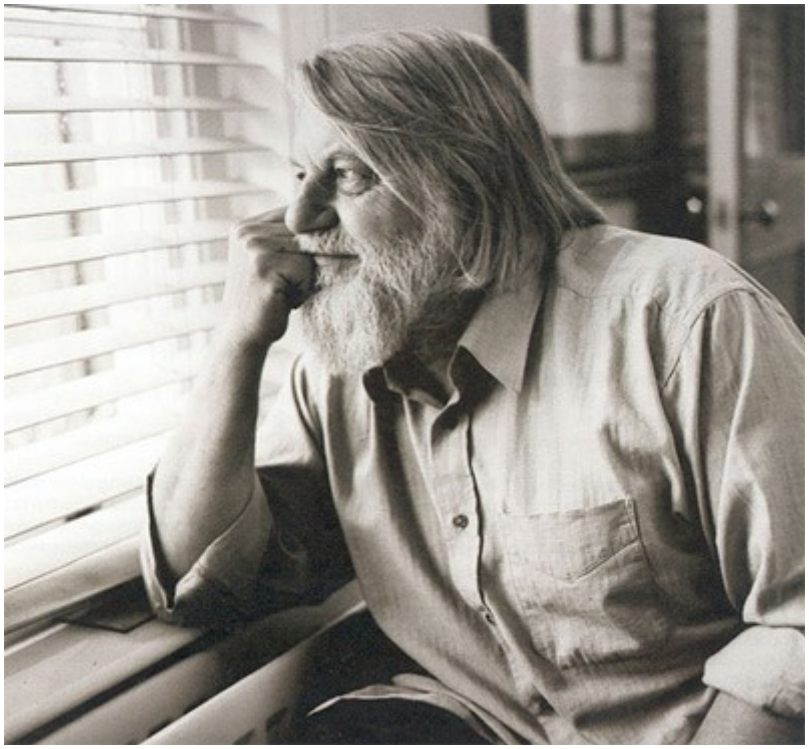
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

The most obvious, and pleasurable, evidence of Wyatt's eschewal of singer-songwriter egotism is the long-standing relationship he has with collaborating musicians - from rock notables like Paul Weller and Brian Eno, to jazz musicians such as trombonist Annie Whitehead, vocalist Karen Mantler, percussionist Orphy Robinson and loads more. It's not unusual that an admired musician should be able to cherry-pick others to work with them, but Wyatt's collaborative recordings stand out through giving the impression, always, of real musical dialogues, necessary and organic. *Comicopera* marshals a large cast that feels particularly able to draw Wyatt's compositions in odd, exuberant and atmospheric directions.

"I've given up working with people I don't like," he says. "I used to, because I thought they were really brilliant or clever, but I can't be bothered with that anymore. Because in the end, musically it's better - people open out. There's this illusion that confrontation brings out stuff that's exciting, like on *Big Brother*-no it doesn't. It's sort of all right, but you get further and deeper with empathy."

When Wyatt asked singer Seaming To, who provides the soprano vocal on *Comicopera*'s 'Stay Tuned', to add clarinet, "She said, 'I haven't played the clarinet for a while', and I said, 'Look, it's not fucking Mozart, it's just a few notes'. I thought she did lovely on it. I know I could look through the Musicians' Union phonebook and get brilliant clarinetists, but I wanted someone I could connect with as a human being."

I get the impression you're open to people having their own take on your songs.
" Absolutely. I don't tell them what to play. The buck stops with me when I'm editing. They know that. So it's not in that sense a free-for-all. I will take responsibility for the end result, which is arrogant but also I don't want them to get the blame for the wrong notes. It's got to stop somewhere, because when you listen to a record it's partly for sound, but also for company. You want some kind of coherent sense of another person in the room when you play a record. So for better or for worse when you put on one of my records you're getting me. I get all the help I can to make it sound good."



> Zoom

Do you feel like you learn a lot from your collaborators?
"I couldn't do without them. I left school at 16 and I can't really read music. I rely on people like [saxophonist] Gilad Atzom and [bassist] Yaron Stavi and Annie Whitehead, who are fantastically well-schooled musicians, to hear what I'm doing and make coherent sense of it. I'm not really an individualist."

Wyatt's most significant collaborator, though, must be his wife, Alfie. As well as writing a great many of the lyrics to his songs, her paintings and collages have been the visual representation of Wyatt's music over the past few decades, and are almost inseparable from

its sound.

Like Wyatt's songs, her designs are deceptively simple, their bright colours and irregular shapes belying a complex fluidity. What I regret most about this day spent with both of them is that I didn't record the conversation Alfie and I had on our drive back, an exchange about writing, feminism, war and families - and probably most of all, how lyrics and music work together. I remember it, though. It was great.

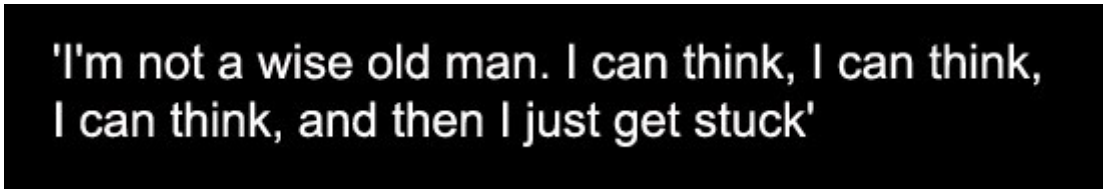
Do you tell her what you want her to do with the artwork?
"I wouldn't say a word. I let her get on with it. She knows what the songs are about because she wrote half of them. I know from doing stuff myself I don't need someone looking over my shoulder. I can get there myself, otherwise it's not a journey. I don't always know what's going in Alfie's head."

Do you ever disagree?
"I never disagree with Alfie."

Some of Benge's most moving lyrics on *Comicopera* are those of 'Out Of The Blue', which was provoked by the Israeli bombing of Lebanon last year. Focusing in on the domestic, it tries to express the sheer sudden horror of a house - a simple, safe place - destroyed by an anonymous enemy. Wyatt's turning to other languages for the remainder of the album after this is no coincidence.

"It's after the line, '*You have planted everlasting hatred in my heart*'. It follows a woman whose house has been bombed to bits by some clever dick in an aeroplane - 'You've come to my door but you've blown it apart, so you might as well come in through the roof or the ceiling. You've fucked up my house - fuck you. There's nothing I can do, I haven't got a bombing aeroplane myself.' What do you do? What Palestinian women do is they do encourage their sons to and fight back, but of course that leads to more tragedy. But at the same time you can't just wipe people out by bombing them.

"Alfie was reflecting on the cycle of violence, where you may not intrinsically feel violent, but if great violence is done to you then one of the responses is to be violent back, and it's the point at which all these philosophies about trying to be nice just collapse in the face of that excessive rape of a soul. And I'm just not clever enough to know what to do next, so I just sang in foreign languages and did a bit of free jazz..."



Did you feel like there was nothing you could say?
"I just felt completely ill-equipped to come up with an appropriate response. So then I do what artists do, which is drift off into some kind of fairyland. The whole last section of the record is about trying on different alien guises: foreign language or a revolutionary rhetoric or a bit of free jazz, Orphy Robinson on vibes going bonkers, or surrealist dream-world stuff. I just turn back to my original craft, which is to try and make a nice sequence of notes that don't ignore reality. It sounds so pathetic. I'm not a wise old man. I can think, I can think, I can think, and then I just get stuck.

"I can't compete intellectually in words with where I've got to musically. I do feel like I've got much further... when I try and catch up with words it's sort of a bit clumsy...

He picks up a weathered-looking brass instrument.

"Annie Whitehead, who plays trombone on the record, on the fourth track of the album ['AWOL] she plays this. Alfie got it in a car boot sale. It's got the wrong mouthpiece on it. It's called a baritone horn. I tried to play it, but I can't fix the notes! The reason I mention that is because I said to Annie, 'I'm having trouble with Concert B - how do you hit that?' And she said, 'Robert, there's no short cut." Annie's been practising hours a day for 40 years, and she was politely telling me there were some things you just can't get to straight away. " He laughs. There's no short cut to a low Concert B."

FREE WILL AND TESTAMENT

Do people still ask you a lot about your politics?
"It still comes up a lot. The moment I joined the Communist Party I knew it was something I'd have to deal with for the rest of my life and it would be a real obstacle for some people, a point of interest for others or a point of contempt for others."

How do you feel about it now?
"I'm always nervous about sounding like Cliff Richard talking about his Christianity, but it's just that I personally have found a way of understanding the world that makes sense to me and I get more sheer intelligence - applicable ways of looking at the world -than I do from Marxists than I do from religion as the world is commonly used. I do see the power shifts and politics in the world in terms of military and economic power. Not in terms of an answer, but just an understanding of the process as we're living through it. That's all I'd say about it."

Would you say all your music is political?
"I would go further than that. I would say I'm more consistently a political animal than I am a musical one. In other words, who I am and the privileges I have come from political reality. And the fact that I've chosen to be a musician out of the various occupations I could do is sort of secondary, actually, to me. I love music. But I did anyway, long before I was a musician. As a teenager, music saved my life. But as a teenager I thought I'd be a painter.

" Thank god for rock music for one thing: that it went back to basics. Rock music is about a return to folk music. You don't have to know anything. You just have to get an instrument in your hand that plays a note, and sing, and anyone can do it.

"I started out from there. I was really grateful, because in the Fifties when I was listening to jazz or Stravinsky or something, it didn't occur to me that I'd ever be able to play it. There's no short cut to that stuff. But with rock'n'roll there *is* a short cut - you just sort of... do it. So that's what I latched onto. First of all, it wasn't very philosophical, it was more like, how do you get to dances, and one way was being the drummer. So that sort of thing - very simple."

Is it still very simple?
"It has to be. Any information I get, I try to take it all on, but in terms of processing it, I have to reduce everything back to all those teenage things - is there a beat somewhere, is there a tune somewhere? That sort of thing."

He pauses.

"Are you hungry? You must be hungry."





songs in the key of life: ten wyatt classics

Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
(from *Rock Bottom*, 1974)
Spirited free jazz with reversed trumpet, giving way to spellbinding song with fabulously shifting chords.

Maryan (from *Shleep*, 1997)
More water imagery in a song whose dreamlike melody meanders along icy tributaries. Mesmerised, we drown therein.

Signed Curtain (from Matching Mole's *Matching Mole*, 1972)
A resigned sigh of a song that feels like it's being made up ad hoc, yet whose very lethargy and inherent humour belie a lively human heart.

Moon In June
(from Soft Machine's *Third*, 1970)
Hotwire into young Wyatt's brain and sample the psychotropic delights of his playful Canterbury art-rock band; become a medieval child without the pestilence for a hazy 19 minutes.

Left On Man
(from *Dondestan*, 1991)
Ten years before Bush threw down the gauntlet, to question the cost of *"What we call freedom in the north"* still met with disapproval from one's compatriots, so this song still stands.

Sea Song (from *Rock Bottom*, 1974)
All top tens of Robert Wyatt ever listed will include this song for the simple reason that it is one of the best songs in the world.

Alifib/Alife
(from *Rock Bottom*, 1974)
Nonsense love-songs are rare but this one is a treat and homage to Wyatt's creative partner and 'other half'.

Lullaby For Hamza
(from *Cuckooland*, 2003)
Hamza was born during the onset of the Gulf War in 1991 – the bombing campaigns and climate of fear have left indelible scars on many children.

Beautiful Peace
(from *Comicopera*, 2007)
Wittily illustrates the acceptance of the banal and the turning of a blind eye towards ugliness in English towns and attitudes.

Pigs... (In There) (from *EPs 1999*)
Without resorting to a preachy approach to animal rights, Wyatt's naïve yet incredulous repetition of *"Pigs...? In THERE?"* says it all.
Crayola Lectern

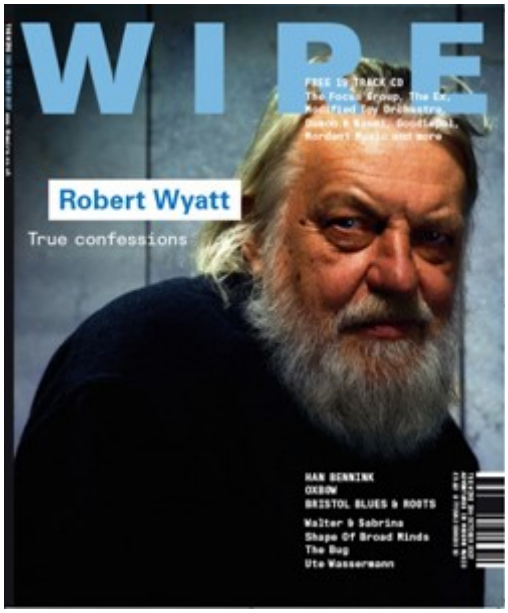
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Saturday night and Sunday morning - Wire N° 284 - October 2007

SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING



> Zoom

Saturday night and Sunday morning

Whether drunk on the dance or in sober reflection, Robert Wyatt finds optimism even in his darkest hours via his ragged examinations of human foibles. In a frank interview, Wyatt and his longtime partner and co-creator Alfie discuss the troubled backdrop to his latest album *Comicopera*.

Words: David Toop. Photography: Jack Walters.

An abandoned caravan, black inside and empty as a dead tooth, lies wedged into trees on the edge of green Lincolnshire flat lands - main event; figure and ground - and I am on my way to see Old Rottenhat, ranger in the night.

Alfreda Benge, better known as Alfie, has been Robert Wyatt's partner in life, lyrics and artistic production since 1971. She collects me from the nearest railway station to their house in Louth, and during the car ride we talk about mothers haunted by waltzes and away with the fairies in their old age, so touching accidentally on subject matter relevant to songs composed by Alfie and Robert for the new album *Comicopera*, it's called, which is not indicative of operatic knockabout so much as the stumbling efforts of humanity to be more human. Maybe this jumps too quickly into the work; perhaps better to ask, who is this anomalous person with the convoluted history, with the unique voice, aching, plain and worldly, that can penetrate the emotions not just of greying hippies and Prog rockers but one-time punks, post-punk entryists, soul boys, folkies, improvisors, jazzers, technocrats and many other tribes of music's post-war fallout?

Thanks to bassist Hugh Hopper's Website, with its Soft Machine gig list, I can identify exactly my own first encounters with Wyatt as drummer and vocalist with one of the most enduring, still influential British groups of the late 1960s. There was Christmas On Earth at Olympia in December 1967, where I took photographs of Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, The

Graham Bond Organisation and Soft Machine (films long since lost with only one print surviving, a blurred shot of Kevin Ayers in black vest silhouetted against a whiteout of light show); their taped music for Peter Dockley's *Spaced* event at the Roundhouse; York University and London's King's Theatre, both in 1969, and then the Queen Elizabeth Hall as a quartet with Elton Dean in May 1970.



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Once Robert was ousted from the group I lost interest, both in the records and the concerts, and like a lot of people, transferred my allegiance to his solo career.

The interest, after all, came from an uneasy but productive balance of contradictory elements: a sweet yearning pop sensibility informed by jazz balladry; the new electronic minimalism of Terry Riley; influences from Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and other pioneers of extended black music; a very earthy application of the inexplicable doctrine of equivalence known as 'pataphysics. That is to say, a reading of the alphabet or a geographical placement of the BBC tea machine as meaningful as uncountable time signatures and fractured compositional structures.

But enough of that, for the moment; I'm in the front door, turning left into Robert's place of work with the piano, the keyboard, the record collection, the antique globe, the photos of Alfie and the LP of music from Syria propped up on the record player, and Robert is looking fitter and younger than he has for many years. In public his persona is customarily gentle and self-deprecating, but at the moment he's twitching with energy, buzzing about the room, beard trimmed, impatient to get on with this ritual we've agreed to enact, and presenting a strong reminder of what an inexhaustible drummer he was before the accident that put him in a wheelchair.

I tell him a story about an academic conference on 20th century music at Sussex University. In 2005 I was invited to give the second of two keynote lectures. The first was given by musicology professor Gianmario Borio of Cremona, who spoke on "Avant-garde As A Plural Concept: Music Around 1968". This is a tricky area, a *Saxondale* trap for professors of a certain age, radical left politics and progressive music from their youth suddenly assuming a significance that in other circumstances would be taken for twilight nostalgia. After speaking at length about Nono, Kagel and Evangelisti, soixante-huitards and all that, Borio concluded by playing the first few tracks from Soft Machine's *Volume Two*: "Pataphysical Introduction - Pt 1 " "A Concise British Alphabet - Pt 1 " and a snatch of "Hibou, Anemone And Bear". They begin with this trashy music, he opined, and then abruptly toss it aside in favour of something more challenging. Neat as the metaphor appeared - a suffocating complacency in repressive European society rejected for a more progressive future - I was dubious. Had he been in the audience, would Robert have challenged this dismissal of the pop sensibility in Soft Machine?

"Well, David, to be honest I'm more of a slapper than that," he says, now that I'm asking him. "If somebody likes anything we've done enough to play it in public..."

"You're pathetically grateful?"

"... I'm pathetically grateful. The struggle people had with Gershwin - is he just a posh folk composer or is he a new...? This struggle has been going on for a long time.

"Say a fantastic meal you have, it's not rejecting fried egg sandwiches. Without the basic thing, the apple off the tree or the glass of water, there's nothing to develop. I think Charles Mingus said that if music loses its roots in song and dance it loses all importance or value. I certainly feel that. If music hasn't got song and dance in it, even with a *search*, it's decorative, but it's deeply trivial. I'm a Darwinist. Song and dance, they're so biologically wired in to what humans do. People have been dancing on a Saturday night for a long time. But there is a Sunday morning, when you have to listen to church music. That's why they invented Saturday and Sunday."

There's a lot of laughing to go with these words, so don't necessarily take them at face value. Robert hasn't become a Christian. He's an unashamed admirer of Richard Dawkins, despite a growing feeling abroad that Dawkins would be Witchfinder General if only the job could be reinstated. *"I really envy Christians, and I envy Muslims too, it must be great to be so sure..."* he sings on *Comicopera's* "Be Serious", a strangely cheering gospel shuffle for atheists featuring Paul Weller on guitar. "*I've got no one to turn to when I'm sinking in the shit, feel so sad and lonely no one to tell me what to do*."

"At the tail end of a digressive response to the Italian professor, Robert turns the argument on its head. "I love pop music to death," he says. "Most great composers rely on folk music. I rely on pop music. I'm not saying I'm a great composer or that pop music is folk music. There's a whole endless thing going on out there. You make your little pond but if your pond isn't connected to the river, which isn't connected to an ocean, it's just going to dry up. It's just a little piss pool, I've lived too long to be happy in a pond."

"This was, more or less, Barbara Ehrenreich's argument in her recent book, *Dancing In The Streets: A History Of Collective Joy*. "So if we are looking for a common source of depression, on the one hand and the suppression of festivities, on the other," she wrote, "it is not hard to find. Urbanisation and the rise of a competitive, market-based economy favoured a more anxious and isolated sort of person - potentially both prone to depression and distrustful of communal pleasures."

"Wyatt music, by inclination on the slow raggedy side, vulnerability voiced, leaning towards doleful in the reeds and brass, and in its frank examination a questioning of what he calls "human foibles" has more than a touch of chapel and colliery band about it, yet the effect is uplifting, as if we were hearing the more anxious and isolated sort of person transmit a gift of great generosity, optimism and fortitude.

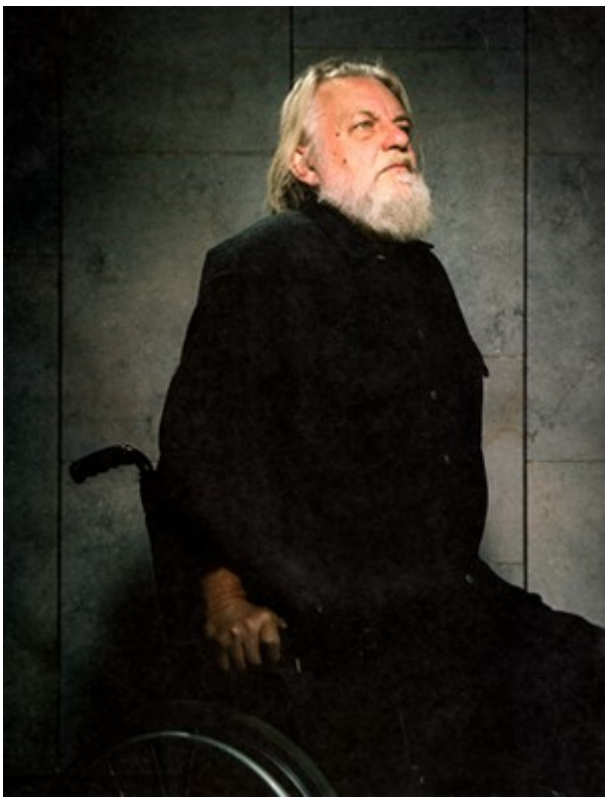
If this makes him Sound too saintly, let's talk about Mingus. When I listen to Robert's music I'm reminded of the sombre beauty of Jazz Composers Workshop records made by Charles Mingus and John LaPorta in 1954-55, or the hushed sadness of Duke Ellington "Mood Indigo". *Comicopera* shares common ground with the ambitious projects of Carla Bley, Paul Haines, Mike Mantler and Charlie Haden, themselves building on the innovations of Mingus and Ellington. Orchestral suites, song suites, jazz operas, chronotransductions and sort-of-an-operas; all of these terms have been used to describe their method of bringing together distinctive voices, contemporary composition and jazz improvisation as a vehicle for powerful ideas and political commitment.

Robert sang on Mantler's *Many Have No Speech, The School Of Understanding, The Hapless Child, Silence and Hide And Seek*, so is steeped in this oeuvre. We begin to talk about what the idea of opera might mean and he tells me a story of being taken to the opera for one of Mozart's earliest attempts at the form. "I was just completely astonished," he says.

"It was such a beautiful shock to go into a place where an attempt at archaic things are happening. So that may have interested me. My mother in law, Irena, she had a dog and she used to take this dog for walks. She used to meet other people who had dogs, the way you do. She met somebody's dog and said, 'What's his name?'

"'Amadeus'.

"She said, 'I would call a dog Sebastian; Mozart was so frivolous, Bach was serious', and she went on her way. My mother in law was a Polish refugee - like refugees must all be burning with a sense of... 'You think I'm an ignorant person to be patronised. I know stuff you haven't even thought about.' "I'm not just going round the houses. I just want to establish that when I sing of tragic things, the way it comes out, which is fairly deathly, sometimes I'm not tragedy, I don't do tragedy, I'm not ready for tragedy, I don't understand tragedy. I'm still just a long-winded pop musician. This isn't false modesty. It's just how I see it. But, my songs aren't pop songs. I go on and on for longer than pop songs do. I get bored with hearing the voice so I put in noise stuff, sound stuff. So it's like the voice keeps re-occurring and has to be the main event because I'm a singer, but the songs are not the be-all and end-all of what I'm doing. I'm just trying to string bits of music together."



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"I don't know how to mature. I'm constantly being bombarded by images of proper grown-ups and reprimanded by the various headmasters of the world."

Later he talks about the songs as sketches or caricatures, none of which represents a whole person or any sort of completion. Getting older adds up to an accumulation of loose ends.

Salves, illusions and utopias aside, is there such an entity as a whole person, or any such state as completion or closure? This question makes him quite agitated and defensive. "I don't know how to mature," he says. "I don't know. I'm constantly being bombarded by images of proper grown-ups and constantly being reprimanded by the various headmasters of the world. I don't know enough yet to even have an opinion about anything. I don't now how to argue with that."

Opera is a word meaning work, or labour, as in "do not operate heavy machinery", and this business of musical work is one way in which an isolated and anxious sort of person with no safety net of religion can stay out of the doldrums. Unfortunately, it can also land the same person in the doldrums, decent music being an elusive bastard to pin down.

Alfie enters the room at my request. Since she as so often been at the heart of Robert's work - the subject of one of his finest tracks, "Sea Song" on *Rock Bottom,* co-author of many compositions, painter of album artworks, *a* constant presence in photographs, companion, support and shield - I'm surprised she is so rarely asked for her opinion. She laughs, people asking Robert what a song means, what does he know, he didn't even write it.

"You're half of it," he says.

"Well, not half."

So this is the moment to confess that my understanding of words in songs is poor. In general, unless the subject is ostensibly transparent, I have a tenuous grasp, verging on stupidity, of what many singers are on about. Give me the lyrics of an average white guitar band and I'm better off with the sheer surface of a Jeremy Prynne poem. There are songs on *Comicopera* that seem angry, or disillusioned, perhaps deeply personal, about love or bombs, lost, loss, lossy. Is it me who's lost?

"Words are usually about a few things," Alfie says. "I don't feel satisfied if they're about what they seem to be about. There has to be another possibility. And also people find things in them, which is great. I find things which are there later, and I suddenly realise what I meant, and strange connections. For years I didn't know that "Sea Song" was for me, and Robert thought it was really obvious. I've just written some lyrics for Monica Vasconcelos and they were all about Robert. He didn't know that at all. Then this morning he said, 'You're right, it's all about me.' How music saves you from the doldrums. How it's his lifeline, basically. I thought it was so obvious."

Alfie wrote lyrics for four songs: "Just As You Are", "You You", "AWOL" and "Out Of The Blue". Three of them are grouped together early in the album. Like a mysterious rock in the hallway, they squat in their place, emotional weight, demanding engagement.

"They're all about loss of some sort," she says, "loss of trust, loss of husband, loss of memory. It's about grieving, actually. It's not anger really. We know a lot of widows at the moment. There's a lot of people like Sheila Peel, Helen Walters, Paul Haines's wife, Jo. People who've been part of a partnership, absolutely solid, and their husbands have died. It's really horrible, tragic. So there's thinking about them in "You You "and "AWOL".

"But the other one, "Just As You Are", the one that Robert sings as a duet, it's not exactly disillusionment." She laughs, sighs, looks at Robert.

"Can I say what it's about?"

"Of course," he says. "It's about bereavement during a relationship."

"It seems as if it might be about some kind of unfaithfulness but it's not about that all. It's about one of you..."

"Let's say, for the sake of argument," he says, "the bloke..."

"... deciding it might be rather fun to become an alcoholic, and the other one, who has quite a lot in their life to deal with - a mum whose mind is drifting, lives in a place not surrounded by friends, relies very, very hard on the one thing she married her husband for, which is intelligent conversation, and finds that the only time they ever meet, early evening when they've all done their work, he's downed another little bottle of vodka and says he hasn't. She can tell out of the corner in a microsecond whether he's had a drink or not. Then he becomes totally and utterly boring all evening and then she thinks, God, life is so fucking lonely. You've tricked me. I thought for the last 30 years you would provide me with the one thing that I need in my life - an intelligent pal, and look what you're doing now, you arsehole. There's a lot of anger there. But there may come a day when he's weak and he's stupid no longer and that day seems to have almost come, because he's now for five months..."

"Sober," he says.

"All my anger and rampaging and complaining seems to have worked," she says, "and I've got my old Bertie back."

Rather unfairly, I suggest to Robert that his remark of 20 minutes past, that he is unable to mature as an artist, has just been disproved by this painful revelation of very adult themes: bereavement, alcoholism, loneliness, deception, abandonment and acceptance.

"It's not abstract art," he says, "Abstract art would just be endlessly working out ideas. I'm trying to live through what I do. You do grow older and you do learn stuff, and if you let it, it will get into your music."

One of the advantages of getting older, I venture.

"Yes," he says, "there are several and that's probably the main one. Going back to that Italian bloke you were talking about, it's a useful though and it's exactly the same as my dad's thought, that pop culture is just not enough. Without knowing why, as a youth, I was always looking for an extension, what happens next, where does this go? The explosive moment of excitement, then what? Anticipating adulthood, in that sense. I know it sounds impossibly pretentious but it's just a fact. Being taken to lots of very grown-up concerts as a child, I didn't know why they were going on and on and now I do, because life does."

In the current era of all-ages concerts, pre-18s festivals and pensioner crèches at Glastonbury, the notion of popular music as a teenage moment has become hopelessly muddled.



> Zoom

"If you want to see youth still wet from the womb in its sylph-like prancingness," he says, "you have to go to ballet or a classical music concert. It's all upside down. I feel, clumsily, just trying to take on the extra equipment I find I need when what started out as a sprint turns into a marathon. So these great weights my parents put on me, of museums and operas, after a few more decades I'm really glad they said to me, 'You must take a woolly and a handkerchief and a change of underwear.' I now know why they did that and I'm grateful. A sprint won't get you through."

That was how I remember you playing the drums, I say, 100 metres dash, stripped to the waist, voice, arms and legs, words and 13/8 or whatever time, simultaneous and full tilt.

"For about two fucking hours," he says, "soaking wet with sweat. Like a lot of jazz it was a combination of aesthetics and athletics. For ten years, more or less every night, I did it like a sprint."

Later, in a moment when Robert has left the room, Alfie joins me, sits down, makes her decision to be absolutely clear.

"I can't do unconditional love," she says. "Robert can." How to accept human frailty when the sprint is over and done? That's the question.

"Some hours later, driving me back to the spot where I pick up my transport to London, she explains in more detail about Robert's drinking, how it came to a head during the making of the album because of his fear that the spirit of the music could only emerge through the spirit of the bottle. The song, "Just As You Are", came about during a session at which the engineer, Jamie Johnson, had come down with a stomach bug. Brian Eno had dropped by, and this is his genius, pushed them both to use time otherwise lost. Write a Country song, he said; play some piano Robert, write a line Alfie. Desperate in the headwind of this oblique strategy, they wrote a song that blew the cover of their central problem. Since then, Robert has been going to Alcoholics Anonymous, and perhaps as a consequence of his new sobriety, looks about as fit and strong as I have ever seen him.

But the subject troubles me, generates feelings of disloyalty, is the gist of what I say.

To speak about such secrets in public, making hidden addictions common property, can

transform them into tangible, negotiable conditions, is the gist of what she says.

Certain relationships are described in terms of records, I notice. When Robert and Alfie met, at the beginning of the 1970s, he was impressed by her record collection: John Coltrane, Sly And The Family Stone, alto saxophonist John Handy's *Recorded Live At The Monterey Jazz Festival*. Later, he talks about his current listening habits, which have moved back into the 1940s, to Ellington, Glenn Miller even, and Eddie Haywood, the pianist who accompanied Billie Holiday.

"I seem to be going back to the 40s in tandem with Alfie," he says, "who has become terrifically interested in finding photographs of her middle European ancestors. She's got extraordinary roots in Slovenia, Roland, Trieste, Austria. She spent the first seven years being carted around Europe by her mother before being brought to England in 1947. I've been doing a strange parallel thing.

"I was born at the end of the war. My dad had Vera Lynn records - they were some of the few pop records that he allowed that had an importance that transcended what he considered their merit, as a trained musician that he aspired to having been. Professionally he was a psychologist, but as a young man in the 1930s he'd been a pianist and had in fact made a few 78s accompanying some Italian tenor, playing a few arias. He played Debussy and Ravel, though only on record by the time I knew him. I didn't meet him until I was six and within two or three years he developed multiple sclerosis and couldn't read music any more, hadn't learnt any and couldn't improvise. He was with his first family until I was about six and he didn't join my mother until I was about six. He left his first family behind and joined his second one. I have no idea what that was about, really. He was married to somebody else when I was born. By the time I knew him the only things he could play by memory were folk tunes and Christmas songs, so he'd play "Little Brown Jug Don't I Love Thee" and "Away In A Manger" and at Christmas I would sing those with him. That's what I remember."

There's an uncomfortable parallel here: two men, father and son, prevented by disability from pursuing their music, except for the fact that Robert has taken that initial loss as a form of liberation, rebuilding it into music that is deeply personal yet speaks to listeners of all generations, all proclivities, all allegiances. Just run through a partial list of collaborators: Jimi Hendrix, members of Pink Floyd, Scritti Politti, Mongezi Feza, Ivor Cutler, Elvis Costello, Paul Weller, The Raincoats, Evan Parker, Ultramarine, Mike Mantler, Björk, Anja Garbarek, Brian Eno. Just his minimal piano part on Brian Eno's *Music For Airports* has launched a thousand Ambient, post-Ambient, television and movie soundtracks.

"I never thought I'd be a musician when I was a teenager," he says. "I tried to learn a couple of instruments when I was younger - violin and trumpet - but couldn't read music and left school in disgrace when I was 16."

What did you hope to be?

"A painter, an artist," he says. "I thought it'd be great if you had a tube of toothpaste the size of a lamppost all bent on a lawn with stuff like squeezed toothpaste coming down the side. Eventually pop artists did that so I thought, there you go, I'll be a conceptual artist. René Magritte had a composer brother who never bothered to compose anything at all and I thought that was so fucking Zen. So this was my idea of being a truly conceptual artist. I think it may be why I got on so well with Brian Eno later on. We'd Just sit around thinking of things that could be done. I'm not a great believer in individualism. I think things are around to be done and if one person doesn't do it another will."

You like your songs to sound unfinished, I say, a bit rough round the edges, a bit abrasive in the mix, like everybody is in the room, air stiff with fags, the playing is in the moment, and what is left suspended after the event can take its Darwinian chances out in the world.

"I got that a lot from painting," he says. "From the late 19th century, painters stopped finishing things off. Before photographs, the ideal painter finished. I Just grew up with post-Cezanne artwork where the brushstrokes are fairly scruffy. As long as you got the structure right."

You like a thick sound, I say, a kind of wheezing, wall to wall, portative organ meets harmonium earth to sky privet hedge seething with bees.

"That's Cezanne as well," he says. "A lot of it comes from painters. In Cezanne you don't have many clear horizons or skies. It's texture to all four edges. It's like looking at a text,

or something; you're not going to get a landscape or even a person out of it. You've just got this dense, arbitrarily hacked-out oblong of texture. It's taken to its extremes on *Comicopera* - the semi-instrumental - "Anachronist" - it's floor to ceiling stuff. I like Cezanne, I like Vuillard. That's what I like.

"It's difficult if you're a singer because singers make very clear landscapes, the backing, the ground and the sky, then the voice is a person in it and maybe the other instruments are the trees in this landscape. I always feel that an awful lot of music has done that - you've got the bedrock and then you've got these people standing up in it - the voice and the soloist. I just got used to the idea of an almost underwater thing, of great swirling mixtures without a horizon, without a top or a bottom, just a great churning mix of stuff. I would do that a lot more than I actually do, but being a singer I feel obliged to identify the singer and say yeah, hands up, I'm the singer. Otherwise how could I put 'Robert Wyatt' on front of the record? Otherwise ideally I'd just disappear in with the mesh."

He moves into the hallway, by the front door, where a reproduction of Samuel Palmer's astonishing brown ink and sepia drawing, *Early Morning*, is fixed to the wall. Teeming with life, picked out with microscopic details, full to the edges with mystic intensity, it portrays a woodland as seen by a travelling knight, "When that misty vapour was agone and cleare and faire was the morning". In the foreground quivers a rabbit, fixed as the fallen log, and at a central point to which the eye is drawn, almost hidden in the shade of a mushrooming oak tree, sits a group of four people, perhaps praying.

"In a painting," Robert says, back to me and looking into the image, "if there is a person in it you scan it in a much more detailed way. There's this drawing out here, Samuel Palmer. It's extraordinary for the era, 1825, way before the impressionists. There's a little huddle in the middle. There's no question that for a human being looking at the painting that huddle becomes the main event. Next is the rabbit. There is no objective animal that can look at that. Presumably if you were a member of the tree race, the thing you would notice is that log down there and think, that's awful, like a dismembered arm.

"The equivalent of that is hearing a voice on a record. You cannot help but pick it out and to the extent you get into the record what that voice is doing and to the extent that you can recognise it as a fellow human and what it's asking of you. There's no avoiding that. On this record most of the time I've stuck the voice fairly up front. I listened to a lot of Johnny Cash, thinking, yeah, better or worse, that is how people communicate with the voice. You are not Mozart after all, old son."

This leads to a conversation about Palmer and William Blake (and I'd add writer John Cowper Powys), in which Robert talks about the romantic local sensibility of Britain. "You don't have to go to Italy for romance," he says. "It was here all along. I feel really in tune with that." The subject of folk music has emerged at various points during the day, with Robert and I both admitting our struggles and changing attitudes regarding English folk. In the 1960s, like me, he rejected most of it, James Brown's brand new bag being far more immediate. James Brown is still up there, but for the rest of it, now he's not so sure. I ask if he and Alfie had heard Rachel Unthank & The Winterset's new album, *The Bairns*, with its deeply moving version of Robert's "Sea Song"? The room explodes for a moment, yes and yes, Robert in wonderment that she has captured the core of his song so completely.

The ghost of James Brown having entered the room, I mention a concert I watched on television earlier this year, one of Brown's last performances before his death. I was puzzled by his frequent mentions of Wes Montgomery, who probably meant nothing to the audience. "I'm so glad about that" Robert says, "because Wes Montgomery is someone I'd been listening to on my own. That's when you know you really like music, when you don't expect anybody else to be interested." We listen to a track from one of Robert's recent acquisitions, Montgomery playing "Twisted Blues", live in Belgium, 1965, the drive and economy of the solo making both of us realise why this guitarist who looked like a middleweight boxer meant so much to James Brown. A little bit later we listen to a record of alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, with strings. I'd like to hear you record an album with string, I say, like Ray Charles, "Lucky Old Sun", Chet Baker, "Grey December", Charlie Parker, "Just Friends". He laughs, tells me certain people ask him why he can't just make easy music.

We've been talking for quite a few hours. Are you tired of this, bored, fed up?

"No, I'm all right," he says. "I've just run out of fags."

Comicopera is released this month on Domino. Robert Wyatt will appear in conversation at

London Purcell Rooms on 15 October: see Out There.



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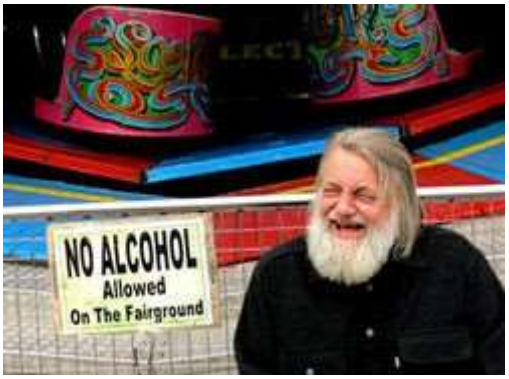
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'Other' Music - The Village Voice - October 23, 2007

'Other' Music
Robert Wyatt gets subversive and operatic



Inexplicably, Robert Wyatt finds this sign hilarious.

"Hullo?"

Alfreda Benge's sleepy voice answers from the other side of the Atlantic, her English accent wool-thick. It takes all of my effort not to reply by bursting into song: "Allllllifi, my larder," the refrain to "Alifib," Canterbury legend Robert Wyatt's sweet if strange ode to his muse–partner, taken from his sublime 1974 solo album, *Rock Bottom*. In my mind's eye I see that famous photo of the couple from around that time, scant months after Wyatt's wine-sodden plunge from a third-story window rendered the once octopus-like prog-rock drummer of Soft Machine and Matching Mole a paraplegic. Wheelchair-bound, Wyatt bears a shaggy, sheepish smirk in the pic, while Alfreda stands beside him, a stern look on her face, a gleaming butcher knife in her hand. I have but a nervous five-word exchange with her before strains of some lost bebop recording come onto the line and Wyatt issues his own warm "Hullo."

. He has agreed to discuss the release of *Comicopera*, his ninth studio album in 30-plus years. Just don't call it an "opera" in the literal sense. "I find the blank canvas of a CD with the potential to be 80 minutes daunting," Wyatt divulges from his home in Louth, Lincolnshire, saying that superimposing three dramatic acts helped organize the album: "The dramatic structure was simply because there were different songs on there. They're not all singer-songwriter me-me-me things in the sense that there are quite different characters on it. There's someone whose idea of happiness is going on a successful bombing run. There's a nihilist who feels alone cuz he doesn't have religion. There's a woman telling a man off. There's all kinds of emotions in there."

As on previous efforts, Wyatt still builds songs up on his keyboard (with what the Voice once deemed "some of the most god-awful synthesizer presets ever") at a pace part jazz-shuffle, part somnambulism, with horns, violins, and the sonority of friends gently accruing around his sage voice. Wyatt again draws on a remarkable group of musical conspirators for *Comicopera*, including the likes of Brian Eno, Paul Weller, Annie Whitehead, singer Monica Vasconcelos, and Alfie herself. (FYI: She portrays that woman telling a man off.) The two trade verses on Act I's painfully honest "Just As You Are," both attempting to love despite infuriating shortcomings on either side. That personal rift widens over the course of the album, expanding outward to comment on worldly conflicts as well. If lovers can't understand the person beside them, then how could a bombardier and the bombarded?

"[It's] something Susan Sontag said quite late on," Wyatt explains. "The question is not

just compassion, but to really *empathize* with the Other. . . . It's that kind of thing . . . to distance myself from that with the slogan 'Not in my name.'" So while the middle part of the album has Wyatt, in his words, "bemused by little country towns and boring council meetings" in the English countryside, the bombing of helpless civilians on "A Beautiful War" is the last indignation. Amid the eerie intonations of Eno's voice on "Out of the Blue" at the end of Act II, Wyatt's character rasps about his house being blown apart, that "you've planted your everlasting hatred in my heart." For the remainder of the album, that Other is present, eschewing English altogether and singing instead in Italian and Spanish throughout Act III.



It's not an unfamiliar stratagem for Wyatt. Even while releasing curious Top 40 fare like "Shipbuilding" and his take on the Monkees' "I'm a Believer," he also sang Spanish tunes like "Yolanda" and "Te Reuerdo Amanda" (all collected on his CD *EPs*). A lifelong admirer of figures like Federico García Lorca and Che Guevara, he now sets Lorca's surrealistic imagery to song and sings Carlos Puebla's ode to the fallen revolutionary, "Hasta Siempre Comandante," at the end of *Comicopera*. "They're all bits of me," Wyatt realizes. "When you got different characters in a sort of sequence and there's music and singing, it's kinda like an opera." He pauses. "But it's not a serious opera."

Andy Beta

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The freewheelin' Robert Wyatt - Uncut N° 125 - October 2007

The freewheelin' Robert Wyatt

"What I do," he says, "just doesn't come out normal." One of British music's great eccentrics leads us through a life of drink and cigarettes, Hendrix, Moon and Syd, strange records and terrible accidents...

INTERVIEW by **JOHN MULVEY**
PHOTOGRAPHS by **DEAN CHALKLEY**



Robert Wyatt's home is in the centre of Louth, a quiet town in the Lincolnshire, hinterlands. A swift, wheelchair ride down the road from his house, there's the Co-Op where Robert was shopping when the first of the summer's floods arrived. Nearer still, there's the market square where he goes for sausage sandwiches a few lunchtimes a week. "Tea 40p. Not bad, is it?" he notes approvingly.

It's a strange place to find a man like Robert Wyatt. He has, after all, followed an idiosyncratic and cosmopolitan musical path for over 40 years, with Soft Machine, Matching Mole and on his own rare and lovely solo records. He has consorted with musical legends - from Hendrix, Moon and Syd to Weller, Eno and Phil Manzanera. He has been steadfastly radical in his politics, and global in his outlook. By the end of his new album *Comicopera*, in fact, Wyatt is so disgusted with the behaviour of the British and American governments, he abandons his mother tongue and sings in Italian and Spanish instead.

For such a committed internationalist, you'd imagine Lincolnshire would be a little too parochial and conservative. But Wyatt and his wife, Alfie Benge, have lived in Louth for some two decades. This is where Alfie, an artist, found a house that they could afford and which was big enough to accommodate her husband - wheelchair-bound since he fell out of a window in 1973- on the ground floor.

Robert's lair is the front room, just past the step with "**R ♥ A**" drawn into the cement and the door decorated with a photograph of Picasso. Here, he plays Gil Evans albums, makes tea, smokes endlessly and records his impressionistic, entrancing songs. Here, too, he welcomes us for a leisurely amble through an extraordinary career.
"I have no agenda, as they say on *Big Brother*,"he says, arranging cigarettes, two pouches of tobacco, papers, matches and lighter on the table in front of him. "Gameplan? Me? No, I'm just here for the crack, man."

Do you watch Big Brother, then?
Alfie watches it, I see it. I can't believe how rude people are to each other. Andy Warhol

would absolutely love it.

Did you ever meet Warhol?
No, although I met Warhol's associates in 1967 when we [*Soft Machine*] were playing in the south of France, adjacent to a German beer festival, basically living on the beach... Grey, actually. People always think beaches are pinky orange, but this was grey with dirt. Or was it pine needles? I don't remember. Rubbish for sex, actually.

Anyway, yeah, we were doing music for a play: written by Picasso, I think. And among the people involved were Factory stars and starlets. They were very nice, very funny.

There were few people you didn't meet...
Well, I haven't gone out of my way to meet people. It's because I've been at it a long time now. I'm in my sixties and my first paid job as a drummer was in 1963, so it's been getting on for 35 years, hasn't it?

Forty-four.
Is it really? For the first 10 years I was going round drumming, and it's a social activity. Drumming is like being the engine of a car. Somebody else has to be the car.

Your parents seemed to be quite bohemian, being friends with the poet Robert Graves and all. What was your childhood like?
My dad was an industrial psychologist, my mum was a journalist, and it was a fairly straight upbringing. We just had a lot of nice artbooks around the house. I struggled through grammar school, which I absolutely hated. I got caned a lot when I was at school. I think that's what put me off.

Why were you caned?
We lived near Canterbury Cathedral, we used to sing there and once, in a casual moment of hubris, I wrote "Jesus Christ" in a visitor's book. I was caned for that. Then, when we got to the fifth form, the headmaster gave us boaters, because he fancied we were a public school. I steamed mine up into a sort of cowboy hat, and I was caned for letting the school image down. Blimey, my bum was sore by the end of all that.

All the way through Soft Machine you seem to have been a bit of a troublemaker, as well.
I was always getting into trouble, but I'm not sure that's the same thing. I was never a born rebel. I think there's something utterly meaningless about that, it's totally posey. I liked my parents, I tried to fit in. Half my recording is an attempt to make normal records, seriously, but what I do just doesn't come out normal. That's not deliberate troublemaking.

When I joined the Communist Party, someone said, "Don't you mind being told what to do?" and I said,"No, not at all."

I thought that the band [*Soft Machine*] was being taken in a direction to compete with American jazz rock and I couldn't or didn't want to do that. I remember the organist [*Mike Ratledge*] once said to me, "Why don't you learn to read music?" and I answered, "So that you can't tell me what to play." That was probably the nail in my coffin as far as that band was concerned.



> Zoom

What about the drinking? Weren't you on a slightly different social path to the other Softs?
Well we all know that young drunken men are a terrible pain, and the others didn't really drink. They weren't always kind, but they were well-behaved, and I wasn't.

Didn't you end up spending time in Laurel Canyon with Hendrix at the end of the second Hendrix/Soft Machine American tour?

That's true. The whole of'68, we were there with the Experience, and at the end of it, our group broke up, basically. I hung on because Noel and Mitch and Hendrix said, "We've got this place and there's a spare room if you want to stay." I'd hung out more with them than with the members of the band I was in, as they were all drinkers like me.
Listening to Hendrix play every night, he was absolutely wonderful, and I knew it then.
What he did was just eyewateringly magical. He would transform hotel rooms into magic little rooms, turn them into some curious little temple of a hitherto unknown sect. He was very shy and polite; courteous to a Victorian extreme.

Did you do drugs with him?
I didn't take drugs, no, I just drank. Since you can get completely out of your brain on legal drugs, why bring the law into it?

More proof that you're not a rebel, I guess.
I don't like breaking the law; it embarrasses me. The idea of hanging round policemen is dull.

So you never took acid?
I don't think so. I think I took some substitute - was it TCP? No, that's what you cure cuts with. Knowing me, I probably did take TCP! I didn't like it at all. I associate certain conversations with rooms full of drugs, like [*adopts whiney American voice*], "What sign are you?" and "Do you like The Doors?" And the record would be The Grateful Dead, always. Was it always the same record? Who could tell? I got claustrophobia in that atmosphere. The thing I didn't understand about white American rock was that they were loud folk bands, whereas the English scene was much blacker. Even before rock'n'roll, the tradjazz musicians had this fantasy New Orleans they took around in their heads. The modernists had an imaginary Harlem - which I still have.

You recorded with Syd Barrett...
Well he asked us. We were two bands [*Soft Machine and The Pink Floyd*] that played in the same places and who weren't playing "In The Midnight Hour" because neither of us could play it very well, probably. I liked working with people from the Floyd, because they were so different from us. We would play 100 notes, as many as possible, and they would play as few as possible. I was fascinated by that, and I was very pleased to go and do [*Barrett's first solo LP*] The Madcap Laughs. It's a lovely record.

What was he like at the time?
I didn't know he was meant to be mad or disturbed or anything. He just seemed very well brought-up and polite. Jolly good songs, that's all I knew.

Did you play the UFO Club a lot with the Floyd?
We did. I remember the dressing room at UFO was very small, with benches either side. The Pink Floyd had incredibly long legs, so their legs would come across and cross each other in the middle, like the giant scissors they did in *The Wall*. They were very kind to us. We had crap equipment that tended to blow up, they had good equipment - they were never poor - and they would let us use their gear - actually quite unusual in those days.

What about Keith Moon? You drank with him?
He took me down the blissful road to hell, several steps at once. Hendrix and I used to go down to the Scene Club in New York, and there would be Keith at the bar. His arm would go around your neck and say,"What are you drinking? Look, try this Southern Comfort." I'd go,"It's a bit sweet." He'd say,"Yes it is, so what you need now is a tequila." We'd do it with the salt and lemon. I'd say,"Oh, that's a bit salty. "He'd say, "Yes it is, so what you now need is another shot of Southern Comfort." He taught me how to get completely blasted very quickly, so within 40 minutes you were on another planet. Thanks, Keith, I enjoyed it, but it probably wasn't good for me in the long run, and it certainly wasn't good for you, old son.

Was that what you were drinking the night of your accident in l973?
What I remember is mostly punch - what on earth is that'? - but Kevin [Ayers], I think, brought out a bottle of scotch whisky, and then I felt like I was flying out of the window. Turned out I was [*laughs*]. That's all I remember.

Did that stop you drinking?
No. The first time I got out of hospital, Alfie wheeled me off to the pub. We were really broke - we had about £15, and then the Pink Floyd did a benefit for us for a few thousand. We'd just heard about it and it was fantastic for us. So we went out and got drunk, and when we got back in, Alfie was reprimanded for being drunk in charge of a wheelchair. No, it didn't stop me at all. We both used to drink a lot, me and Alfie.



> Zoom

When did you calm down?
About two months ago. I finished this record and then I stopped. I've had about six relapses, which sounds like a lot, but it's fantastic for me. I tried to write a tune the other day, and I can't remember writing a tune sober ever before. I couldn't imagine normally even sitting down at a keyboard Without the bottle of wine on the left hand side and the packet of fags on the right hand side.

Did you have a drink problem all that time?
It seems like I had, yeah. Answering the questionnaire for alcoholics, it turns out I'm one of the unlucky ones who's an alcoholic, so I can't drink moderately or anything. We'll see how it goes.

It's incredible that, looking through 40 years of photos, you're smoking in nearly all of them.
People ask how many I smoke and I say, "As many as possible." If there was a mile-long cigarette that I could have suspended in front of my mouth, it would go straight into my mouth in the morning and come out at night before I go to sleep.

It's interesting that Rock Bottom [*Wyatt's second, greatest solo LP, from'74*] was partially written before the accident, because it's so often stereotyped as your post-traumatic record.
It's a funny thing, I always feel embarrassed to say this, but I don't mind being in a wheelchair. There are aspects of it that I find quite novel and entertaining. I didn't see it as a record about a tragic trauma. It's actually quite euphoric, to me it's more like the phoenix out of the ashes. Having the nerve to play my own keyboards, having played with all those brilliant keyboards players - trying to get away with it was exciting.

I think Rock Bottom is about the possibilities of love: what someone who loves you will do, and the gratitude that comes in response.
That's much more I like it. I'd been with Alfie a couple of years, and I'd been quite rotten to her while I was in hospital. Me and Alfie had already been married before, we'd had about three decades each of bipedal life. I say it was all right for me, but a lot of people come out of hospital and it's not all right at all. I had Alfie, and Alfie with her friends really helped. I felt like life was making more sense afterwards than it had done before. I was actually very unhappy through the'60s. Being thrown out of Soft Machine, the damage it did to my confidence was far greater than the physical damage of breaking my back. It was like being washed up on a really nice desert island from a ship that had come from a port in a grubby cold northern town. It's terrible but it's not that terrible [*Laughs*]. Alfie has suggested that I'm much sadder and more traumatised than I allow myself to think. I don't know. How can I know if I'm kidding myself?

You seem to flourish as a collaborator with friends, but not as a bandmember.
That's exactly right. The trouble with a band is I can't take orders and I can't give orders. The people I choose vary enormously because it's not for the instrument they play or their style but what kind of company they are. With the final record I believe in a sort of benign dictatorship. I will edit ruthlessly'til every thing sounds good to me, simple as that, 'cos my name's on the cover.

With the last three records [*Shleep, Cuckooland and Comicopera*] I found my imaginary band. It's a lovely band because it's not any band that could exist in real life on the road or any thing like that. It's a basic team; there's Annie Whitehead [*trombone*], Yaron Stavi on bass, Gilad [*Atzmon, saxophone*], that's the core. Then people like Phil Manzanera, Eno and Paul Weller do cameo roles. It's like a little musical family.

There's something incredibly English about your music, even when you sing in Italian or Spanish...

I am totally English. I love the lyrics of Noel Coward, I even like Gilbert & Sullivan. But the point I would make, to the BNP and people who go on about their culture being threatened by alien things, is that no one has allowed and welcomed non-English cultures so wholeheartedly into their lives and into their brains and into their food more than I have. Yet I don't feel the slightest bit compromised or diluted as a human being. I'm as English as my Staffordshire great-grandparents. As my Lancashire dad would say, what the fuck are you all scared of? What kind of wimps are you that if the man standing behind you in the checkout queue is wearing a turban, how does that threaten your identity, you twats? Get over it, for fuck's sake.



> Zoom

On *Comicopera*, there's a song called "Something Unbelievable" where you voice the anger of a bombed Palestinian. The last lyric is, "*You have planted an everlasting hatred in my heart,*" and after that you refuse to sing in English for the rest of the album. Why is that?

Susan Sontag said that people can moralise in politics, but in the end morals in politics are about empathising with the other. Instinctively, that's what I've always done. It's to do with a craving - it's not so much a principled stance, it's much more primitive than that - for cultural biodiversity, and a fear of cultural incest.

During my lifetime, the English-speaking people have bombed about 25 countries. It seemed to me legitimate that anyone who had been bombed like that might be feeling that they're going to hate the bombers for the rest of their lives. The children and the families of your victims will rise up, and they won't like you. I wanted to disassociate myself from the English-speaking trajectory abroad.

The middle chunk of this record is England, and it's not all bad. There's nice tunes, a good laugh, scepticism and grumbling. But at the end I think, 'Oh fuck, I'm off', and the last chunk is all about different ways of getting away from the mainstream, whether it's the avant garde or singing in a foreign language or singing surrealist songs.

It seems very odd that you should end up in a county as conservative as

Lincolnshire.
Henry VIII called it this "brute and beastly shire", hanged a few recalcitrant Catholics and went back home. He's not entirely wrong, but he's not entirely right. There's a village up the road where they're saying,"We don't need any Kosovans here," and I'm looking at the women thinking, "Yes, you do!"

I miss London life, the cosmopolitan thing, and we do go back there several times a year. It's a local joke that life is cheap in Lincolnshire, and we can have a house here for the price of a flat in the south. I can make all the racket I like and no one's going to bother about it. I can get everything I want just around the corner, it's like the imaginary community in a child's train set.

Everyone here seems to know you.
Well, I like buzzing about town, it takes me away from the prison of the keyboard. I'm just one of the local derelicts.

Comicopera is released on October 8 on Domino

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"Sing like you speak" - The Word - n°55 - september 2007



"SING LIKE YOU SPEAK"

Unimpeachable vocalist, jazz journeyman, storm-tossed philosopher and political sage, Robert Wyatt looks back at what life has taught him

INTERVIEW BY TOBY MANNING
PORTRAIT BY MUIR VIDLER

ROBERT WYATT is BOTH A disarmingly ordinary bloke and a figure of extraordinary charisma. Not many interviewees include Richard Dawkins, Kropotkin and Benjamin Britten in their discourse; fewer still ring you up afterwards to check you got home safely.

The son of liberal parents, Wyatt left school at 16, because "I was fed up of being caned. I'd no ideological objection - it just fucking hurt." He became the drummer and singer of progressive jazz voyagers Soft Machine, lords of misrule of London's psychedelic revels. Wyatt was the Softs' heart and soul. With his Kentish vowels, forlorn falsetto and conversational lyrics, he was a deliberate antidote to countercultural whimsy. He describes being kicked out of the band as one of the most painful experiences of his life. As painful as the drunken fall from a window in 1973 that brought his drumming career to an abrupt halt and has consigned him to a wheelchair ever since. Back broken, spirit anything but, Wyatt married artist Alfreda Benge, who became his cover artist, manager, and - since 1991's *Dondestan* - co-lyricist. His work took on new energy, from 1974's *Rock Bottom* through unlikely hits *I'm A Believer* and Elvis Costello's *Shipbuilding* right up to his forthcoming, magically eccentric *Comicopera* - a wonderful body of work. He's also pursued an astonishing array of collaborations: who else could get Brian Eno and Paul Weller into the same studio?

"Exiled" in a delightful market town in Lincolnshire, in a Bohemian house stuffed with art, percussion instruments and jazz records, Wyatt has only very recently given up alcohol, and says ruefully, "It's very hard to write sober. Sundown's the difficult thing. What are you going to do? Have another cup of tea?"

Well in this case, yes. Alongside a roll-up, a pensive tug of his Lenin beard, and the offer of his wisdom for THE WORD.

"NEVER PRESUME"

"Presumption is the biggest cause of human traffic accidents. Never assume you know what's going on in someone else's mind. Because as far as I can see no one knows why we're here at all, so we all have to invent a reason and everyone will have invented a slightly different one. Even if a relationship has a name like son, daughter, wife, that doesn't give you the right to trample over each others' private dreams and fantasies. Treat other people's minds with respect. Even your nearest and dearest have a silent solitary part of themselves that's as inviolable to you as if they were a complete stranger."

"LOVE IS THE BRAKE TO YOUTH'S RECKLESSNESS"

"As a young man I lived rather recklessly and just about half got away with it. I say only half obviously 'cos I'm in a wheelchair. One of the corollaries to thinking I'd have been quite happy not being born is that the concept of danger changes completely. The only enemy becomes boredom. And the only limits to what you do about that are an education - and I'd like to think, via Kropotkin [Russian anarcho-communist], an inner desire to not cause harm to other people. Whereas I'm quite likely to -and indeed did - jump out of a window just to see what it was like, I don't think I'd have ever *pushed* anybody else out of a window. Because it might not have suited them as an activity.

"Did I jump or fall? Well, I was so drunk... But it's not kind of normal, is it, climbing on to a window ledge. But I didn't give up drinking afterwards. The thought that I might drink myself to death seemed a good way to go. I've never been interested in my health. I'm very touched that someone else wants me to keep healthy for as long as possible and as that's as good a motive as any I could cook up for myself. Alfie tends to guide me from obvious harm. So out of respect for that I try to look after myself.



Before the "horrible crash": (clockwise from left) Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Andy Summers and Kevin Ayers in Soft Machine.

"I've been more at ease since I've been in a wheelchair and more clear what on earth to do with myself than I was before. It coincided with marrying Alfie - maybe it was just that that was the just right team I needed all along rather than being in the testosterone-fuelled nightmare of an avant-garde boy band. So when I hit rock bottom, it was anything but rock bottom - it was like being washed up on a really nice desert island. With me and my mate. And it was a pleasant surprise that the kind of people who previously regarded long-haired jazzers with suspicion and hostility suddenly started treating me with courtesy and consideration - I made a smooth transition to a kind of Winnie the Pooh-like harmlessness, which disarmed hostility all around me.

"I'm perfectly alright in a wheelchair. I find it...interesting. It's another place to be. I had 28 years as a biped. I've had much longer now in a wheelchair. And apart from my childhood I've never really been happier than I am now."

"SING LIKE YOU SPEAK"

"Songs work best when they seem to resonate with conversational patterns. You go back to Ogden Nash and Noel Coward and find kindred spirits. My goodness what a beautiful voice Noel Coward has got - and utterly and totally English. I extended the same thing to lyric writing. I prefer to use phrases I would use anyway. One of the Englishnesses I was brought up on was Edward Lear, Hilaire Belloc and Lewis Carroll. Gobbledegook. That sort of game is also part of what I draw on - before conscious thought. Dada too, of course, follows straight on. The surrealists said do an intellect bypass and get straight to what's going on in the head without monitoring it."

"RULES ARE PRACTICAL, NOT MORAL"

"It's been a very great preoccupation of the extreme right to establish the existence of evil: they think the trouble with liberal thinking is that comparative moralities give people no guidance. So I say call it evil then, but then what? If someone's actually born evil, wouldn't that mean they'd be completely blameless? To make murder illegal is just a practical issue, like driving on a certain side of the road. That's not a moral question, it's practical."



> zoom

"BEING MARRIED TO A TOURING ROCK MUSICIAN IS LIKE BEING MARRIED TO A SAILOR"

"I was not a conscientious father. I put my music and drumming first. And it's not at all surprising that someone took over [fellow bury drummer Pip Pyle married Wyatt's first wife Pam, bringing up his son, Sam]. And as far as I know there's no ill feeling among any of us. "I've been punished, it's that Sam doesn't have anything in common with me in terms of cultural pursuits. But we love each to death.

"Shared tastes have nothing to do with empathy. As a youth I remember voluntarily ghettoising myself into various gangs, whether it was avant garde or jazz or the new rock and roll, and getting terribly het up if people didn't want to heart Stockhausen. But some

of the nicest people I know never listen to anything apart from Gilbert and Sullivan, and I know some people with terrific taste whose behaviour strikes me as really misanthropic. »

"I was wheeling through Soho Square, early on in my wheelchair. And I slipped out of the chair right forward into the road into the traffic. A lot of people ignored it, but one bloke ran across from the *other* side of the road, picked me up, helped Alfie get me back in the chair and disappeared into the night. I didn't say, "You look like a jazz musician, but if you only like country and western then I don't want your help.' Kindness can't be legislated."



"RECORDS ARE LIKE FADING TATTOOS"

"My biggest influence is records I don't like. Including my own. It's a bit like if you have tattoos saying I Love Ann. Then she dumps you a month later and you're going out with Mandy. You think, 'If I add an M and a Y...' and it all gets a bit scratchy. Records are like fading tattoos. They're eradicable more or less, and if you knew that when you were making them you'd have been much more circumspect.

"Writing lyrics is one thing, writing tunes another, singing songs another. I try to do each one as well as if it was the only thing I did. But I find it a challenge to get all three in one place for three or four minutes, and if my words won't fit the music I don't use them. I like not to be able to spot the join. I can sometimes tell with Joni Mitchell that there was a bunch of lyrics here and the music came after. It's even worse with Benjamin Britten - phenomenal musical ideas, but too much recitative! It's hard work - I don't listen to verbal narrative with the same brain muscles as I fall into music."

"THE PAST IS A REFERENCE POINT FOR WHAT NOT TO REPEAT"

"For a long time my biggest regret - apart from being born, I wouldn't have done *that* if I'd thought it through beforehand! - was going to school in East Kent and meeting the Soft Machine guys. For a long time afterwards it felt like a complete waste of time. It's like a train journey - you can't think of it without thinking of the horrible crash that ended it. But I'm glad I'm not nostalgic, because I find some people sort of trapped in nostalgia. I'm still trying to get things right. Just an *hour's* music that I wouldn't change. I don't think I'll ever manage it, but it's an exercise that's taken up most of my life. The past is a useful reference point for what not to do again."

COMICOPERA is out on October 8 on Domino

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Q&A: Robert Wyatt - The Birth Of The Cool - Stop Smiling - July, 12 2006

THE BIRTH OF THE COOL

The Stop Smiling Interview with Robert Wyatt
By Anthony Reynolds



The following piece originally appeared in The U.K. Issue. Presented here is the unabridged, 5,700-word Q&A.

I arrive around five. Being England in January it's dark and raining. The house is fronted by black railings to which bicycles are chained. There are two gates. I ring the bell and Robert Wyatt appears. We shake hands and he leads me into the warm, low-lit front room that has the feeling of a well-heeled bedsit. It's tidy but lived in, with a hotplate beside a baby grand piano. There is a basic recording setup in the corner: a microphone, small mixing desk, a keyboard and various percussion instruments. On the wall is a Basquiat and smaller framed portraits are around the room.

Robert offers tea, but I pull two bottles of Bordeaux from my bag. He tells me to take a seat in the dining room while he finishes his business in the music room. Alone, I scan the bookshelves: Picasso, Beuys, Hockney.

Wyatt's wife, Alfreda Benge, joins me. "Alfie" is also Wyatt's professional collaborator, providing occasional lyrics and record art. She has just written lyrics for four tracks of Parisian DJ Bertrand Burgalat's most recent album, Portrait Robot. It's her first writing gig for someone other than her husband. As Alfie disappears into the back of the house, I am joined by Robert, who decides to take up smoking again. (He had given up three days previously.)

Wyatt was a founding member of the Soft Machine, (named after the William S. Burroughs book, although he no longer recalls why). Along with Pink Floyd, the group transformed the late '60s psychedelic scene of the U.K. into a new and valid form of musical expression. They soon evolved into a jazz-rock fusion group, punctuated by Wyatt's passionate, disciplined drumming and unique vocals. A substantial cult following bloomed across Europe. After countless sessions, extensive touring (including a 1971 trip to the States with the Jimi Hendrix Experience), Wyatt was sacked. He immediately assembled the improv fusion combo Matching Mole. (The name was a pun on machine mole, which is

Soft Machine in French). They released two critically acclaimed LPs before splitting in 1972.

In 1973, after consuming considerable amounts of alcohol at a party in London, Wyatt fell from a third floor window, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. After recuperating in the hospital for a year, Wyatt married Alfie and embarked on a solo career. He emerged as a vocalist with a singing style that was both refined and haunting. (Ryuichi Sakamoto has called Wyatt's voice "the saddest sound in the world.")

In 1997, a new audience was introduced to Wyatt with the release of a long-awaited album, titled Shleep. Though self-produced, Wyatt benefited from the participation of friends like Brian Eno, Paul Weller, Evan Parker and Phil Manzanera. Another critically acclaimed album, Cuckooland, was released in late 2003, preceding a collaboration with Björk on Medulla in 2004. Wyatt is presently recording his next solo album.



Robert Wyatt in his home, photographed by Anthony Reynolds

Stop Smiling: Tell me about getting older.

Robert Wyatt: Getting older gives you a long time to think. If you're a slow thinker, you need that time. I was lucky with music. It's a humble aspiration to find a way to make a living. When I was a child my parents used to get me to sing along with Christmas carols and I thought, I can hear the difference between this note and that note. It was a thrilling moment. Like when you learn to ride a bicycle. To me, that's what all music is. I thank God for it, because it gave me a living. When people would say, "What motivates you? Did you want to be a rock star, a pop star, an artist?" I said, "I want to earn a fucking living."

I can't read music. I know the names of the notes. I know the wrong note from a right note, even on a fast bebop solo. I know music aurally, not orally. Listening to music is instinctive, enjoying it is instinctive. But as a writer I approach it as craftsmanship. I might have a drum part on tape for 10 years before I hear a bassline that will go with it. I don't like to force tunes into existence before they are ready to come alive. They come out right if you wait for the tune. You can't say, "I want a baby a month from now." It takes time. But even then, the only reason I'm creative publicly is because we need the money. If I didn't have to earn a living I would sit around listening to jazz records and never write a tune in my life. There are a lot of things the world is short of — for instance, enough fresh water for everyone to drink. But it's not short of songs. I'm embarrassed about that, in a way. I could spend the rest of my life listening to music that already exists.

As far as I'm concerned about music, the last thing that really mattered to me, that could save my life, ended when John Coltrane died in 1967. But when I started, I was so bloody lucky the beat scene came along. The standards were so low that even someone who had no idea what they were doing could actually earn a living.

SS: Some would say, with your voice, that you're gifted.

RW: I don't know. When I open my mouth, I do the best I can. That's all I can tell you. But compared to the people that inspire me, I know fuck all. And that's not a choice. That's why I wonder about the idea of free will.

I think it's particularly hard for people brought up in the Western individualist tradition to accept the fact that ecstasy comes from losing yourself within something else. The simplest way you can do this is through sex — when you lose yourself in someone else. That contradicts the intellectual tradition of finding yourself. Instead, you surrender yourself and become a voice in the choir, where the choir is going on and you can't even tell which voice is your voice and which voice is that of the person next to you. That to me is ecstasy. This isn't something that's available only to artists, although they may articulate it more expressly. But it's the same thing that makes advertisers realize why they should do these kitsch little dreamscapes of some kind of pinky, bluey dreamy landscape that adverts are full of. To me it's the only possible explanation as to why people yearn for the utter idiocy of religion, for example. It's so tiring to carry the physical weight of your body.

This will probably be the last interview I'll do as a 60 year old. I suppose I'm now entering the land of Old Man. It disappoints and frightens me that a lot of the things we thought we'd do never happened — I mean, you never expected to win the war. But we thought we'd win a few little battles along the way. Against racism, for instance. And we haven't really because it just gets transferred to Arabs or immigrants, Gypsies or something or other. I mean, I understand it. I don't expect a great deal from humans. The only thing I'm prepared to stand by are the actual lyrics and tunes of my songs. The only times I think, I'm going to hang this on the hook and leave it to dry, are when I actually write a song and put it on the washing line. I would defend any song I've written. If someone says, "Well, that's an anachronism," I think, "Good, because any song I've sung that is no longer necessary means there's a battle that has in some way been won." I've written songs about Nelson Mandela being in prison, which is where I assumed he'd spend his life. But I was wrong about that. I'm happy that song is an anachronism. Another song is "Born Again Cretin" [from the *Nothing Can Stop Us* album] which is about the blatantly idiotic Christian movement in North America. Which now, in fact, runs America. I was writing about the mindset that somehow means that if you're attracted to Christianity, the people who represent it are basically arseholes. You think, "Well, if Jesus was such a nice man, did he need this kind of help?" [*Laughs*]

SS: Did you have a university education?

RW: No. People are quite shocked when they find out about the number of people I haven't heard of — people who are terribly important to know about. There are a few people I've read who really helped me when I've felt I was getting intellectual claustrophobia. These people tend not to be artists at all. People like Noam Chomsky. I'm not very good at repertoire. It takes me ages to think through what anybody says, which is why I wouldn't stick by anything that is said in a conversation of this nature. I react quickly, and I'm just as stupid as everybody else. I've found this magical area where if I've written 20 or 30 songs. Those songs, from the last 30 years or so, will certainly stand up. I'll defend them. But I won't defend all the bullshit I've talked in the middle.

SS: As an American voice, I suppose Chomsky is unique.

RW: Oh yes. There was a wonderful period, from the American Civil War, or even before that, from the war with the British Empire. That's an interesting one — it's the one that

seems to be dead and buried. It's neither dead nor buried, to the extent that Americans retain an extraordinary envy not of Britain as a democracy, but as an empire. They are more intrigued by our imperialist past than by our democratic modern era. Whenever they make films about the European past they always romanticize royalty over the mob.

Orson Welles's *The Magnificent Ambersons*, for example. Even when they romanticize the [American] upper classes as evil, they are still considered much more interesting than the people they were oppressing. Even American intellectuals are quite unable, it seems to me, to transcend this crazy lust for imperial status, which you get from being Greek or Roman or British. People say, "Robert, everything you do is based on what happened on the American continent." I don't accept that there's such a thing as the American people.

Speaking about this is so hard. I do it much better in songs. I get embarrassed by the differences between English culture and American culture when I'm trying to communicate with American intellectuals. The problem I have with intellectuals is that they start from a level of expectation so unutterably precious that it reminds me of the old French aristocracy. So, while seeming pluralistic, American culture has so far presented toward us a fake conflict between the squirearchy and the mob. They play this delightful game among themselves and it's none of my business. They've got a democracy, they can vote for whom the hell they like and they can buy the books they like. But what I don't like is when they apply this to everybody else.

There's one great thing about me being as old as I am: I remember a wonderful thing that happened with the 20th century avant-garde. It blew the century off course, and I hope future centuries will be grateful. I sort of depend on the idea, intellectually, that they will be grateful, because something happened to European art when it transferred itself to America. It mixed with the rest of the world, particularly Africa. Constantin Brancusi was a sculptor from Eastern Europe. He was one of the late 19th century sculptors who set up the possibilities in his studios for the entire 20th century European art movement. He set up giant quasi-African sculptures and he turned the perception of the third world as a source of cheap materials, like oil and cotton, into a continent of peoples who had great imaginations. In the process of discovering and using these people, we have destroyed their imaginations. This gave me my political angle. And maybe it's a given now, but the first person to whom this change of awareness occurred, so far as I know, was Brancusi. He started looking at these little artifacts that grave robbers and gold diggers had brought back from Africa.

The history of European art in relation to the third world is basically scalp-hunting. "Look at this nice pretty curved shape we have here. Turn it upside down and you have a little bowl." What is it? Someone's head. The history of scalping is that in fact, the Europeans in America basically used it. American soldiers were rewarded and praised for their conquest against the indigenous inhabitants. That is the origin of scalping. And then the American Indian picked up on that.

The most important thing in my life is the inspiration of black music in America. I was saying that this black music, which is dismissed as a kind of black underground, it's the survival in the only way it knows how to survive, of the black culture which gave you the only valuable thing your civilization has come up with. So you can sit and snigger if you like but say thank you once in a while. I also have to like the tune. A piece of music can't just be a bit of polemic for me. I can't just make a speech and put music to it — that's bollocks. I hate that. That's why I don't really like a lot of stuff that's called folk music, just speeches set to music. Boring. I like music. Songs. Tunes.

Whenever critics put something down it's because they don't understand it. The only thing I would want to be noted for are the things I praised and loved and take no notice of things I hate — because they're just things I don't understand. And I'm burying myself here because I'm almost immediately discrediting everything I've just said. But I don't care. I don't have hubris. I stumble across occasional bits of beauty and truth. So if I describe myself as the quintessential anti-American, then I have to qualify that by saying, "Ah, but Chomsky, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk!" But then again, I don't know the half of it. Like a lot of revolutionaries, I'm conservative in a hopeless way. I think that all the things I fought for have already been killed. So, I live in a strange twilight world. A ghostland.

SS: You sound quite alive on your records.

RW: It's that Dylan Thomas thing: Go out whimpering or raging. I will go out fucking angry. All that beauty, all those different ways of living. Turning it into some kitsch shit, a cola-and-hamburger culture. How dare you? How fucking dare you!

SS: Yet you've covered many songs by American songwriters. Why?

RW: Many great Americans were anti-capitalist or involved with the left, like the lyricist of "Autumn Leaves," Joseph Kosma. Or Yip Harburg, who wrote "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" and "Over the Rainbow." Or Abel Meeropol, who wrote the lyrics to "Strange Fruit." Many of them had sympathy with the left. It's amazing how many of the young American Jewish and Italian radicals in the '30s were against capitalism. During the Depression, it looked like capitalism had failed. Communism was a legitimate alternative until it was wiped out in the '50s by Joseph McCarthy.

This is a good moment to ask, "Am I grateful that America exists at all?" I think if it weren't for jazz, I would say it would have been better if America had not existed at all. But because jazz existed, personally I'm grateful for it. Because I don't see how the rest of us would have quite broken through to that level of intense beauty without the existence of jazz. I think what the best people do is lose themselves in the greatness of everything else. It's a pluralistic thing and it's not a Western thing. The Western thing is the individual dominating the landscape. The greater thing is to lose yourself within the greater incomprehensible vastness, a collective majesty.

SS: You started as a drummer. Miles Davis said all white drummers play slightly behind the beat.

RW: I conquered my fear of what jazz fans would compare white drummers with by watching Keith Moon, who didn't give a shit. He wasn't sitting there thinking, "Am I reaching some standard set by somebody else?" Keith freed me from trying to think about standards set by someone else. Moon sustained a kind of momentum on the kit, plus a kind of human uncertainty about what was going to happen next. Which is what I wanted to do with my drumming. So, while I got my inspiration from black drummers, I got my confidence from Keith Moon. As for my own music, there's nothing I've really done since the mid-'70s that I haven't done because I needed to make a living. Saying that, I'm thrilled and amazed that there were other things yet to come out of my head after the mid-'70s. Creatively, I felt a terrific sense of relief about that because, since the mid-'70s, I've felt a weird resignation, a feeling of depression that relates to the political climate and the state of the world. And the triviality and silliness of being a musician or even an artist in that world. Politically, I'm one of the last survivors of a lost war.

SS: You recently worked with Björk on her *Medulla* album. How was that collaboration?

RW: Björk came here in the spring of 2004. It was a surprise visit for a night or two. She was working on a vocal album and she asked if she could come and stick my voice on a couple tunes. She sent me a few tunes she hadn't completed. I had a listen and thought that I'd like to do as much as I could on all of them, but in particular the first track, "Submarine." So I threw everything I could at it on a demo and played it to her over the phone. And she said, "Yeah, we'll have a go with that." So she came along with her engineer and I was so shy of her hearing me trying to stumble through doing a vocal that I sent her away. I made her go for a walk. When she came back I still hadn't finished, so I sent her out again. The poor woman had to spend several hours walking around. I sang every note I knew. We sampled them all so she could play them through a keyboard. I threw everything at the track on the assumption they would pick out two or three bleating notes to go with hers. The engineer kept everything I did on it, to my great embarrassment. I myself would have cut most of it out. She ended up sampling my voice on another track too, "Oceania," which ended up being the tune that opened the Olympics. My voice is just in there at the beginning. That was my little anonymous moment, opening the 2004 Olympics. But we spent an evening here as we have, drinking wine and playing records and talking. I thought she was charming, funny and intelligent. She came and went. It was an absolute fizzing buzz to have her around. I was honored that she wanted to come here. She's one of the greats. I'd put her up there with Nina Simone.

SS: Did you and Björk sing together while she was here? You know, a few bottles of wine and then around the piano for a singsong?

RW: That would never occur to me. A singsong? Blimey! You're kidding, son. I'm not a singer.

SS: Did you go to many gigs when you lived in London?

RW: Alfie and I used to frequent Ronnie Scott's a lot in the '60s. It was a place you'd go to after you'd done a rock gig and wanted to hear some decent music after all the rubbish you'd been playing. One night, someone was complaining because Spike Milligan [of "The Goon Show"] decided to stand on his head on a table. Some fat old Tory was moaning and Ronnie told him: "Shut up. You come for music, Spike comes to stand on his head."

That night, Bill Evans was playing the piano with his head. You know when you're having a meal with someone and they're eating a bowl of soup and their hair is actually in the soup? When they are totally out of it? Bill Evans sat at the piano like a man dead drunk. He played piano with his hands way above his head because his face was dipped in a bowl of piano. I don't know how he lived as long as he did.

Ronnie's place was like the London equivalent of the Village Vanguard. Ronnie was a great host. He was so out of it, he blew so many rules. I loved Ronnie. I cried for Ronnie's death. And I still do sometimes. I've got a photo of him propped up on my piano at the moment. He's one of my reasons to live. Even though it was rumored that his death — at 70 — was suicide, he didn't want to be a bad saxophonist. He realized that once he'd got his false teeth in, which they were about to fix for him, he wouldn't be quite a good saxophonist because his mouth wouldn't be as sensitive anymore. He didn't want to be a second rate saxophonist. So many of my heroes have done this. Roland Kirk, who was always a regular at Ronnie's, had a stroke. He could play with only one arm, which is quite hard on a saxophone. He was told, "Stop playing or you'll die." He said, "What will I do if I stop playing?" He just laughed it off. And he played and he died.

SS: I'd like to ask you about a few specific songs.

RW: Sure. Go ahead.

SS: Where did you get the nerve to sing "Strange Fruit"?

RW: Alfie asked me that same thing. But, you know, why not? I first heard it as a teenager in the '50s. The words were written by a young Jewish radical, a white guy, Lewis Alan. I did feel tentative about singing it, but at the time black music was the Three Degrees and glitzy showbiz stuff. I thought, Hang on, white kids think they've invented the protest song. Disco was part of the mainstream then. I wanted to point out that protest music wasn't just saying fuck on a record — there's a long history of this stuff, way back before World War II. There's some advanced protest poetry coming out of America long before the folk movement of the '60s kicked in. An example of this was "Strange Fruit." I was representing a piece of black and communist history to a generation that didn't associate black culture with protest music anymore. And although the lyrics were written by a white guy [Abel Meeropol] it was written specifically for Billie Holiday, who wrote the actual music. She didn't have to sing it. But she sang it a lot, especially during her old age — and a few people picked up on it, like Nina Simone. Musically, it's extraordinary. If you write music to words that aren't really written for music, you have to make strange music to fit the words, because the words are untidy rhythmically. "Strange Fruit" is an odd piece of music; there's this interlude before the piece begins and then there's this tune that doesn't really repeat itself. It's such a unique, odd shape. There's no real repetition, it's one thread that starts and carries onto the end.

SS: John Lennon's "Love" (From an Uncut magazine Lennon Tribute album, 2003)

RW: I was asked to sing a John Lennon song, and I thought the one that I could sing was that. I didn't know afterward that it was one of his own favorite songs. I just tried to sing it as faithfully as I could, according to what I felt it meant to be. I thought the Beatles were okay. I would never have bought their records. As white musicians go, I found some of them the least embarrassing. I did buy Lennon's Imagine album at the time.

SS: "Soup Song" (From Ruth is Stranger than Richard, 1975)

RW: I was singing about being some bacon in that song. What I'm complaining about is the way bacon was used as mere wobbly bits in other meals. It was also used in quiches, which I thought, What the fuck was that all about? If you're going to eat a slice of pig, then eat a slice of pig. Don't piss me about with your little wibbly, wobbly bits of bacon.

SS: "Memories of You" (B-side of Shipbuilding, 1982)

RW: This is a song by Eubie Blake, an American pianist born around the beginning of the 20th century. He died at 102. He invented a lot of the stuff before jazz, like the Charleston. He wrote this tune and I wanted to do it, but I didn't really understand the chords. So we got the sheet music and Alfie played them to me. I couldn't have got my head around it if Alfie wasn't able to read the sheet music.

SS: "At Last I Am Free" (From Nothing Can Stop Us, 1982)

RW: Around that time there was something happening, historically, that was quite wrong.

There was a pattern forming where young white singers were singing serious stuff — political stuff, punk. Black people were assigned the role of popular entertainers who just did disco music. This was not my experience when I was a youth. It was the other way around. The whole idea of music — of opposition, of music, of seriousness — that rock inherited, actually came from black music. So the idea that the historical consciousness of the history of popular music was so short that young white punks could claim seriousness as their own. Any white group who grew their hair long and wore jeans when they could actually afford corduroy is acting poor. Whereas black people at that time weren't doing that because young black people weren't hoping, like young whites, to drop out of the system. They were people from working class origins aspiring to belong. So the idea was to get away from the raggedy ass stuff of the blues and to present a more sophisticated veneer. So they would wear shiny suits, ties, nice haircut, smart stuff. Chic. It was an aspiration toward what 19th century white people aspired toward. A kind of chic European, end-of-empire poshness. This was completely against the grain of what white kids were going through, which was to ostentatiously behave in a vulgar fashion that didn't glorify their parents' postwar aspirations toward suburban respectability. So the great white thing was: Fuck our great suburban ancestors, we're going to grow our hair, not bathe, we're going to say swear words in public, we're going to try and look like the Rolling Stones and all that kind of stuff.

So this absurd Alice in Wonderland contradiction had arrived in pop music whereby black pop musicians as epitomized by say Michael Jackson were respected bourgeoisie. They were respectable people to be laughed at by the rebels, who were the white long-haired people. This is a complete reversal of the historical truth of their music. I didn't want to lose my grip on the fact that the only reason America is any more significant culturally than New Zealand and Tasmania is thanks to the black American contribution. I wanted to say even in the degrading position of having to be circus performers in Las Vegas, they come out with better tunes than you lot. Here's one. ["At Last I Am Free"] It was filler track on one of Chic's LPs. A throwaway. I thought, What a lovely phrase. I was a kind of hangover from a Martin Luther King-era consciousness transmuted into a smooth love ballad. It's something that only a black person of that time would have written that time and in that way. So you have that chorus: "At last I am free / I can hardly see in front of me." That struck me as one of the most moving couplets I'd ever heard. It's like a fantastic blues couplet, and it doesn't sound like much unless for years you've been in some kind of struggle where for ages you've longed to be free. Then suddenly you were and you think, "What the fuck do I do now?" It had been constructed from various mindsets that had been going on in the battle for the brains of young Americans at the time. I'm not saying that this is what they intended, but this is what it meant to me. Their version was so clean and neat — it wasn't presented in a rebellious way. It was presented in a kind of way that aspiring pop wannabes presented themselves in — and still do — which is, "We don't want to be drop-outs, we want to be allowed to drop in." It was a completely different mindset than punk. I wanted to take a thread out of that.

SS: "Raining In My Heart" (From Cuckooland, 2003)

RW: I did try and sing this, but it wasn't good enough. The reason I put it out as an instrumental was because — say you did a tribute to the Mona Lisa, and you couldn't paint it, you couldn't pull it off. Well then, maybe do a reproduction of the frame it was in and left it blank just to say, "I remember that painting." Plus, the piano I used was from an old ship from the '30s and it was designed to play background music. I tried to imagine the two people who wrote it. She was a lift operator and he was a jazz violinist. I was trying to imagine the early rock and roll atmosphere from when they wrote that song, when they would have met. They would have been horrified by rock and roll — all that sex and nastiness. But they were deeply conservative, weird and children of immigrants — respectable working class provincials. But they wrote nice little tunes that you'd play in a Victorian parlor. They were covered by people like Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers. So I wanted to go before that to this little couple from almost pre-rock and roll American history. The kind of people you might see in the background in a film with Katharine Hepburn. So I did it as an instrumental. But it's my little piece in the middle of my record — my little thought about my roots. I have a reputation for being knowledgeable about Bartok and Stravinsky and Charlie Parker and all that. I wanted to point out that it wasn't the roots of my music. My roots are simple, popular, pre-rock and roll rebel songs. But there's nothing perverse or ironic about it. I'm not like that.

SS: "Heaps Of Sheeps" (From Schleep, 1998)

RW: Alfie wrote the words to that one.

Alfie Benge: "I realized my fists were clenched / I stretched my fingers to relax / Still not

sleeping / I tried counting sheep." I'm not an insomniac. It was written one morning in Spain after I'd spent the night trying to get to sleep, and I tried counting sheep and the fuckers were just piling up in some terrible heap. I thought it was funny, so I wrote it down. It's one of many poems I wrote in Spain. When Robert started getting word-starved as it were, he pinched my poetry book and started doing things to them. I thought it was so banal and trivial that it was beneath him to actually do that song. I always felt it was a bit vulgar.

RW: It's my job as a songwriter to find things that will work.

AB: He's the insomniac, and he hasn't written about that.

RW: That piece took years. The actual piece of music was a piano exercise, which I had on bits and pieces of tapes for years and then I combined it with a drum exercise I'd had — a Bo Diddley thing. I took it from there. The only battle was with Alfie, who is quite posh about which of her words get used for lyrics. That's one of the two or three times when I've taken words she's written from her notebooks.

AB: My notebooks only exist when I'm somewhere else. I don't get a lot from home. When we're in Spain and Italy, I take bits from my diaries, have a few brandies and make little poems. I had about 20 or 30 from Spain. The fait accompli was that some of them got turned into songs. But he didn't ask me. That was the beginning of it. I thought you'd hear it once, laugh, and then not want to hear it again.

RW: Yes, but when Brian Eno came into the studio and read your lyrics, he laughed and laughed and laughed. I thought, It's nice to see Brian laughing. It was a happy moment for me. He came in and got really stuck in. So, that's a trio performance at the end.

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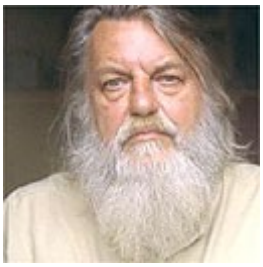
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Wyatting (vb): when jukeboxes go mad - The Guardian - July 10, 2006

WYATTING (VB): WHEN JUKEBOXES GO MAD

Ned Beauman
Monday July 10, 2006
The Guardian



Robert Wyatt: the perfect way to clear a pub

Just as the best way to judge an adult is by his or her record collection, the best way to judge a pub is by the albums on its jukebox. Or it was, until the 21st-century caught up with the noisy machine in the corner. There are now nearly 2,000 internet-connected jukeboxes in the UK, each of which can access as many as 2m tracks - and with them has come Wyatting, which is either a fearless act of situationist cultural warfare or a nauseatingly snobbish prank, depending on who you ask.

The phenomenon was first identified in the New York Times by Wendy McClure. She was in a grimy rock bar when someone pulled up Brian Eno's Thursday Afternoon, which consists of a single distant piano phrase repeated for more than an hour, and found herself too mesmerised to leave. "Imagine replacing the brass cylinder in a music box with a Möbius strip made from nerve endings," she wrote. The rest of the bar's patrons , however, were soon in revolt.

This wasn't to be an isolated incident. After music critic Simon Reynolds linked to McClure's article on his weblog, several of his readers wrote in to confess that this is a game they regularly play. Carl Neville, a 36-year-old English teacher from London, coined the term "Wyatting" because sticking on Dondestan, the 1991 avant-garde jazz-rock LP by ex-Soft Machine singer Robert Wyatt, is the perfect way to disrupt a busy Friday night in a high street pub. Other favourites are free-jazz clarinetist Evan Parker and surrealist Japanese noise producer Merzbow. In theoretical terms, Wyatting has been explained as enacting the theories of Adorno, who believed that subverting pop music would help to bring down capitalism. Alternatively, if you listen to Neville, it's simply "childish, futile, but finally hilarious".

Inevitably a backlash has arrived with other bloggers claiming Wyatting is just a way for those who feel superior, both in terms of class and musical taste, to bait those beneath them. But Inspired Broadcast Networks, which run most of the internet jukeboxes in the UK, insists it has not unleashed a monster.

"Most people won't spend money on making the pub an irritating environment," says Anne de Kerckhove, Inspired's chief operating officer. If landlords do have problems with inappropriate selections, she says, it is usually hip-hop with lots of swearing and in that case, "they can kill a track while it's playing and reimburse the customer". Has she thought of limiting the available tracks to those appropriate for drinking and socialising? "The minute we say, 'You can't play that,' then people want to play that. We're all a bit contrarian in nature."

Perhaps Wyatting will be added to flicking peanuts and talking loudly about your sex life as

Adorno behaviour. But what about the man after whom this controversial sport was named? "I think it's really funny," says the 61-year-old Robert Wyatt, whose most recent album, Cuckooland, was nominated for the 2004 Mercury music prize. "I'm very honoured at the idea of becoming a verb." Would he ever try it himself? "Oh no. I don't really like disconcerting people. Although often when I try to be normal I disconcert anyway".

>> The original interview

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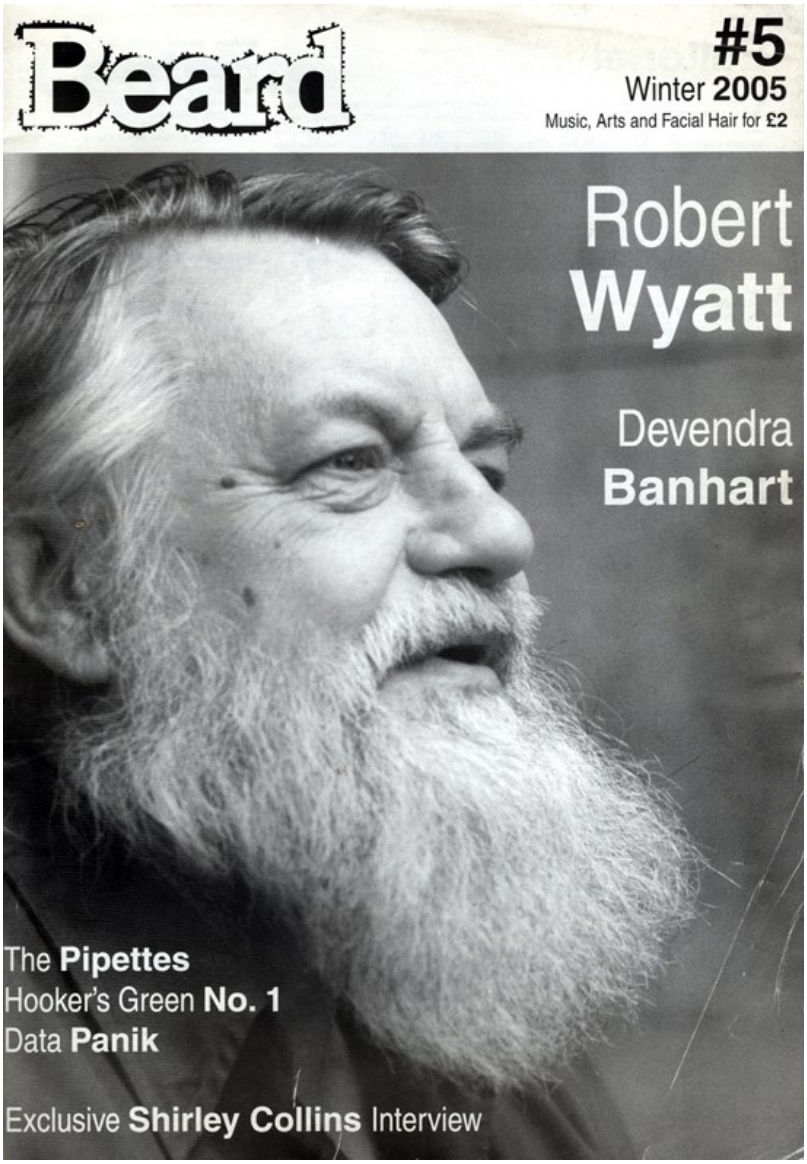
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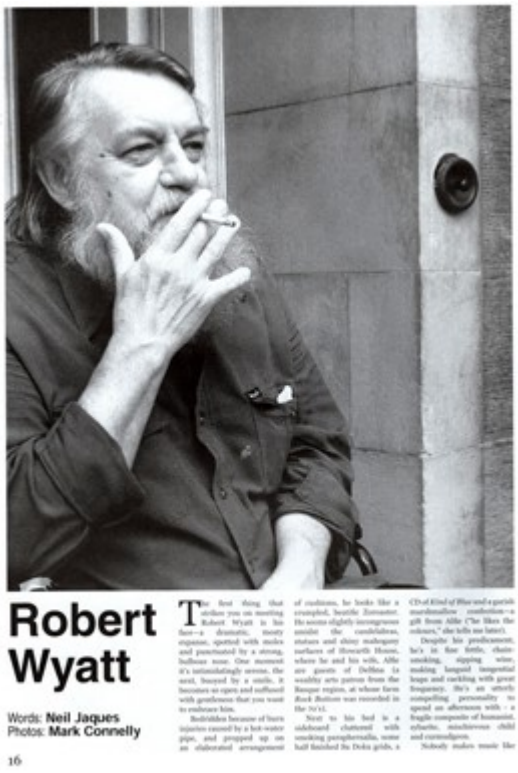
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Robert



Robert Wyatt

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Photos: Mark Connelly

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Wyatt

Words : **Neil Jaques**
Photos : **Mark Connelly**

The first thing that strikes you on meeting Robert Wyatt is his face - a dramatic, meaty expanse, spotted with moles and punctuated by a strong, bulbous nose. One moment it's intimidatingly serene, the next, buoyed by a smile, it becomes so open and suffused with gentleness that you want to embrace him.

Bedridden because of burn injuries caused by a hot-water pipe, and propped up on an elaborated arrangement of cushions, he looks like a crumpled, beatific Zoroaster. He seems slightly incongruous amidst the candelabras, statues and shiny mahogany surfaces of Howarth House, where he and his wife, Alfie are guests of Delfina (a wealthy arts patron from the Basque region, at whose farm Rock Bottom was recorded in the 70's).

Next to his bed is a sideboard cluttered with smoking paraphernalia, some half finished Su Doku grids, a CD of *Kind of Blue* and a garish marshmallow confection - a gift from Alfie ("he likes the colours," she tells me later).

Despite his predicament, he's in fine fettle, chain-smoking, sipping wine, making languid tangential leaps and cackling with great frequency. He's an utterly compelling personality to spend an afternoon with - a fragile composite of humanist, sybarite, mischievous child and curmudgeon.

Nobody makes music like Robert Wyatt. Since he became a paraplegic in 1973 the former drummer with the effeminate singing voice has hewn a musical vision that defies the parameters of musical logic. With a dizzying amalgam of jazz, soulful ascetic prog, the avant-garde, melody and unpretentious poetry, he always threatens to make no sense. But somehow, and with a disarming directness, always does. He's never released a bad album (some of his best have come in what most would consider the twilight years of an artist's life), and he has never sounded anything less than startlingly relevant. You would have a hard time convincing him of this though.

"I'm not particularly tuned into my times," he says, eventually, following a lengthy attempt at positioning himself in the contemporary musical landscape.

"Except you always know what the latest sylph-like black ladies are up to," interjects Alfie.

"One of the joys of music is that it is beyond pinned-down sex. I feel that in music I have the right to be any fucking sex I like!"

"Yeah, I do like black ladies," he retorts, flashing her a seraphic smile. "Sylph-like. Preferably in very short skirts - I think they're terribly good!"

"In fact, the only LP I really sang along with all the way through was a Dionne Warwick record. And Dionne Warwick had a very long skirt so I'm y'know, very broad-minded about skirt lengths!"

I'm half-way through asking him if that could account for the femininity of his own vocals, when he stops me short:

"One of the joys of music is that it is beyond pinned-down sex. I feel that in music I have the right to be any fucking sex I like!"

As an adolescent, Robert Wyatt Ellidge's mindset was, in his own words, "unreconstructed 1940's Harlem". A jazz obsessive, he was able to hum labyrinthine solos verbatim, and spent hours beating out Jimmy Cobb rhythms on a drum kit constructed from a typewriter, clothes rail and an old ammunition box. He even gave illustrated jazz lectures for anyone who would listen during school lunch breaks.

He's wary of calling his upbringing bohemian, but his home - a 14 room Georgian home (known as Wellington House), populated by a cavalcade of lodgers - was at least somewhat anomalous against the staid backdrop of 1950'$ Canterbury.

One of the Wellington House lodgers was an Australian beatnik called Daevid Allen (briefly a member of Soft Machine, and later, Gong). Allen had hung out with William Burroughs, smoked a lot of pot and owned a sizable collection of jazz records. He influenced Robert immensely, turning him on to the Beats, and, crucially, introduced him to George Niedorf, an American jazz drummer, who offered drumming lessons in lieu of rent.

Predictably, school paled by comparison.

"I just hated it, provincial English grammar school life. I really hated it. It was absolutely dismal," he says angrily.

"I should have been sent to a secondary modern and learned carpentry and would have been happy as you like. My big mistake was to pass my 11 plus. I should have just failed it and I think I would have been a happy adolescent."

"I just thought I don't want to be in this world. I just don't want to do any of the things they're teaching me."

It was an existential crisis that led to a suicide attempt at the age of 16, using Allen's stash of sleeping pills. He left school with no qualifications. Instead, he followed George Niedorf drifting around Europe, at one point staying with his mother's friend Robert Graves in Majorca. On his return to England he became involved in some brief, though inspired, tomfoolery with Canterbury band The Wilde Flowers (alongside Hugh Hopper and Kevin Avers) and by 1966, he was Soft Machine's singing drummer.

Soft Machine's lunatic blend of jazz, homegrown British whimsy and Wyatt's propensity for a good tune had them pegged as the ultimate cult band, earned them a place on tours with Hendrix ("Courteous, considerate and witty") and opening stints for Miles Davis ("I think rock n' roll made him really cross. He felt, y'know, 'who are these kids?'"). Nevertheless, it's not a time he recalls fondly.

"I found that, to me, the 6o's thing was a bit ostentatious. I mean, I got drunk and did it but I could see why people didn't like it," he says flatly.

"People are surprised about that, they always think I'm a sort of classic 60's person. I'm not: I was a so's person and then I became a 7o's person. The 60's were just the thing in the middle between childhood and adulthood. To me it's just excruciating adolescence, that's how I'd sum it up. Deeply embarrassing. "

Objectively he's got nothing to be embarrassed about—he'd become one of the most imaginative drummers around (a single listen to Why Are We Sleeping dispels any doubts), an accomplished songwriter and an integral part of two indisputably essential recordings (Soft Machine *Vols. I & II*).

Towards the end of the decade, however, Wyatt's idiosyncratic vocals and pop

sensibilities were being marginalised in favour of a purer jazz sound, and his heavy drinking habit had begun to annoy the stoic Ratledge and Hopper. He recorded his first album, the much overlooked *End of an Ear* (1971), as an outlet for his suppressed creative urges, emblazoning the sleeve with the legend "Out of Work Pop Singer Currently on Drums with Soft Machine." After four albums he walked out. Any conversation about those final days is met with uncharacteristic reticence.

"I don't like bands; I think they're too bloke-ish for me. I can't give orders, I can't take orders, so it doesn't leave you much option in a group—you've got to be able to do one or the other and I could never do either," he says, by way of summation.

It was somewhat surprising then that his next move was to form another group, Matching Mole (a cheeky French pun on Soft Machine), who produced two, equally overlooked, albums in their short lifespan. They were about to reform in 1973 when, drunk out of his mind at a party, Wyatt fell from a third storey window, paralyzing himself from the waist down. "This was how the accident went: in order, wine, whiskey, Southern Comfort then the window," he remarked in Michael King's biography, *Wrong Movements*. His doctor informed him that if he hadn't been so drunk and had fallen more rigidly, he would have been dead.

I feel apprehensive discussing the circumstances surrounding the accident, but Robert is comfortable and candid.

"I'm missing the moderate gene. I don't understand moderation," he says simply. "My dad, wicked chap, lovely man, used to come out with sayings like 'if a thing's worth doing, it's worth overdoing!' Lovely saying. And I've always thought that. I've never understood this thing about drinking in moderation. I thought, what's the fucking point of *that*?"

Was alcohol always your vice?

"I stick to the legal drugs. I found a wonderful thing—which is don't worry about breaking the law. You can get completely smashed out of your brain on legal drugs. Just don't worry about it. Believe me, the right combination of serious amounts of wine and brandy and vodka and then a bit of Tia Maria and lots of fags...believe me, you're sailing. You're out there."

He gives a raucous laugh and adds solemnly: "You have to know where to draw the line. There's this thing called a line, which we have to draw apparently. You just have to know where it is - and I'm crap at that."

Following a lengthy, painful recuperation he recorded arguably his finest work, *Rock Bottom* (1974). Through a precarious morass of hypnotic drones, Wyatt's uninhibited singing, which at times is reduced to high-pitched yelps and percussive, rhythmic breathing patterns, becomes the sound of expiation, of coping with the aftershocks of paraplegia, and a tear-inducing expression of his love for Alfie (whom he married that year).



> Zoom

There's a dense, dreamlike quality to the sound, lyrics and imagery—a common theme in much of his later work.

"Partly it's a negative thing because my dreams are much more physically active and varied than my waking life can possibly be," he explains.

"I think they're extraordinary little journeys— the stories that happen and all the things you can do....

He pauses, dragging heavily on his cigarette.

"...and find yourself doing and if it's a nightmare, that's alright 'cause you wake up and think, well that's not true! Fantastic! And if it's a nice dream, it's a nice dream. Gravity has gone. Being awake is like you're being anchored and when you're asleep it's like 'anchor's away!' Off you go, just let the wind blow you wherever," he says, making wave-like movements with his hand.

Outside of music, Robert Wyatt is probably best known for his politics. After a fallow period in the late 70's and early 80's, he began explicitly fusing his political beliefs—an ideological strain of communism—with music, releasing the musical call to arms *Nothing Can Stop Us* (a compilation of overtly politicised covers). He also had his biggest hit with the intensely moving anti-Falklands song Shipbuilding, which was penned especially for him by Elvis Costello and Clive Langer.

These days you're not likely to see Wyatt - still a communist cardholder - handing out copies of *The Morning Star* in the rain. He's aware of the flaws of socialism but still clings to it as distant, symbolic hope. Talking to him about politics, he doesn't seem as trenchant as before. For instance, he doesn't follow current affairs that closely.

"I don't get my sense of the world from journalism," he says. "I always come up with these crap analogies, but I wouldn't get my knowledge of the oceans from surfers and speedboat drivers.

"I'd get my knowledge of the ocean from deep-sea oceanographers, not from people just endlessly zooming around the waves at the top, which is what I think news journalism is. I am actually interested in the undercurrents, the stream of history. My reference points tend to be more cultural and how people treat each other."

The calmness in his voice comes to an abrupt halt when I mention Blair et al.

"I find that our government is a completely alien collection of horrible monsters," he spits building up a vituperative momentum:

"I scarcely recognise them as being members of the same species - let alone the same country! I just think that we haven't got the hang of this leadership business at all. We keep clinging on to a kind of 'Boy's Own' mentally retarded leadership, like boy scouts charging off into the wilderness to sort out Johnny Foreigner, I think 'Oh, for fuck's sake! I thought we finished all of that in the 19* century.

"My dad, wicked chap, lovely man, used to come out with sayings like 'if a thing's worth doing, it's worth overdoing!' Lovely saying."

"I'm just too vain, intellectually vain, to even take much interest really. I think fuck it, there's nothing I can do about it."

What about the responsibility of art?

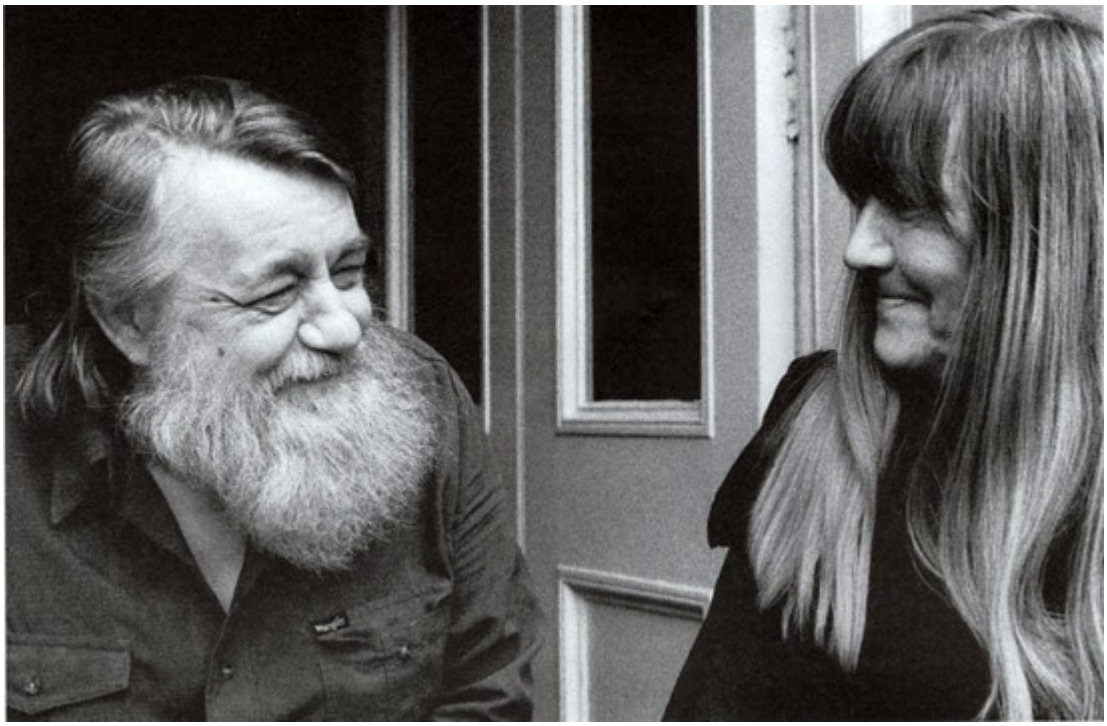
"I don't think art should have any more responsibility than anything else," he replies, sounding irritated.

"I think it's quite vain of artists to think that they are the engine of anything. There is a relationship between art and politics, but it's a response to politics. I'm not in the business of making people feel bad about being apolitical and I think it's none of my business to tell people what to do at all!"

He stops himself and sighs wearily:

"I say things and read them in interviews and it looks so sort of bleak and I think 'I was only fucking joking!'. I think if you make certain commitments like joining the communist party the automatic assumption is that I must be incapable of levity and there must be some kind of utter solemn groove but it just happens to be...I mean, I looked at all the various analyses of the world and it seemed to me about right, y'know. I read the Marxist analysis and thought yeah, that's the world I recognise. Well, that must be what I am."

What he is when he's back home in semi-rural Louth, Lincolnshire, is a fairly unassuming man. He fills his time with music, ephemeral entertainments such as TV - he's a huge comedy fan, effusively praising everyone from Chris Morris, Victoria Wood, *Spaced* and "that amazing guy off *Green Wing*" (Mark Heap) - the occasional drink, and quiet domesticity. He'll trundle around anonymously, pop into Woollies for Janet Jackson albums ("Some people feel guilty about liking Janet Jackson, not me mate. I think she's terrific"), and socialise with neighbours. Generally, within Alfie's limits, he does what he likes, when he likes.



> Zoom

Alfie's influence is inestimable. She designs his album covers, writes some of his lyrics (they've written 20 songs together) and looks after him, loves him and protects him. Without her a combination of procrastination, perfectionism and fear would prevent him from achieving anything. He'd rather listen to jazz all day.

When he first met her she came across like a "Mongolian princess", who didn't throw herself at him like the usual groupies, instead remaining coolly aloof.

"She had a very stately way of going about things. I was dead impressed. She had all these books on politics and stuff and, y'know, she was much better educated than me, reading all sorts of philosophers I hadn't heard of. We'd go a see long foreign films with subtitles. It was a great adventure for me. It's just the best company I've ever had really."

When I ask him to identify the point at which he is happiest, he begins mumbling something vague about finishing a record before he pinpoints the exact moment:

"Drunken evenings with Alfie," he says assertively.

"She doesn't really do it as a habit as I would, but occasionally she does and she remembers all these old songs and gets out her singles starts dancing around to Motown classics or whatever and old jazz records and the brandy keeps flowing and then it gets heavier and heavier and she starts getting out the flamenco and then she gets back to her people and it'll be Polish things [Alfie is of Polish descent] and Neapolitan songs and the candles are burning and I love that. That's the most fun I can think of."

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Robert Wyatt & Friends + Q&A Robert Wyatt - Record Collector - issue 318 - Christmas 2005

ROBERT WYATT & FRIENDS + Q&A ROBERT WYATT

In Concert - Theatre Royal, Drury Lane 1974

★★★★

Hannibal HNCD 1507/ADV (76:07)

Wyatt's first and last solo gig gets a proper release at last

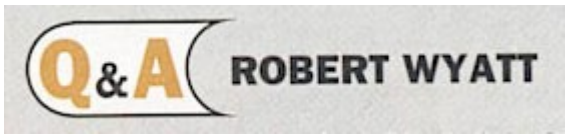


"And now, for Robert Wyatt of Twickenham... Opportunity Knocks!" So Robert's old mate John Peel rounds off his amiable, rambling intro, welcoming onstage yet more of the headliner's extended family of Canterbury Scene musos and art-rocking mukkas.

Just a year after Wyatt's fall from a fifth-floor window left him permanently wheelchair-bound, he bravely took to the stage for this debut solo gig, understandably surrounding himself with characters who would offer great support in every sense. The now-former drummer roped in his 'dream rhythm section' of Laurie 'Gong' Allen, Hugh 'Soft Machine' Hopper and Dave 'Hatfield' Stewart, plus an all-stars cast including Nick Mason, Mike Oldfield, Fred Frith, Julie Tippetts and Ivor Cutler.

Kicking off with a couple of Soft Machine oldies, Wyatt feels his way through all of his classic *Rock Bottom* LP, heading off into uncharted territory as he warbles, yodels and breaks in his brandnew heartbreaking voice of a child over his own piano and tumbling waves of psychprog jazz. The triumphally shambling party climaxes with I'm A Believer breaking down into Knees Up Mother brown.

Full minutes of encore calls are captured on the CD. But there would be no more.



What are your memories of that night 31 years ago?

All I remember was a euphoric feeling of a whole band who were just going to play my

tunes and help me get my songs right, instead of being a bit-part player in other people's musical projects.

This must be one of the most bootlegged gigs ever.
Some of the stuff that went out simply shouldn't have. It's a bit like Dylan complaining about people rummaging around in his dustbin! I didn't want mislead people into thinking that this was a new or perfectly formed recording - I always think it's unfair when it only says in small print 'oh, by the way, this was recorded in a club'.

Back in '74, people must have thought you'd be playing live with this band for years to come.
Yeah, I wish.

Did you know this was the beginning of the end, live-wise?
I can't remember. I don't think ahead like that. I don't think I even knew how to spell 'career'. I left school at 16 and did washing up jobs, I was just amazed you could get a job playing drums in a beat group. I was grateful to string it out for 10 years. After I did *Rock Bottom*, I thought 'that's all I've got, the tank is now empty - I've now got to sign on and I hope there's a good disability allowance'. But other things cropped up, and other little tunelets appeared in [my] head. I just kept trundling on and, fuck me, 30 years later, I'm still trundling on - extraordinary!

Do I sense a note of regret?
Yes, you do. I'm sure I could have done more gigs than that, and I do wish I had. What I love is that, although it's no a jazz session, they have that jazz sensibility, and they're reacting quite spontaneously to me and to each other, and you can tell every night it would have been different. I would have enjoyed to hear how they dealt with it, different nights at different places. I'm pretty hard on myself and curse the mistakes I've made in my life, but I'm really happy to hear this gig - that it happened at all. And I do think 'blimey, that could've been a whole new thing in the 70's...


ROBERT WYATT & FRIENDS
In Concert – Theatre Royal, Drury Lane 1974

Q&A ROBERT WYATT

> Zoom

Would it have been difficult in reality?
One of the things I do blank out is the difficulties I might have had getting around the world in a wheelchair. To be honest, although I don't think it's tragic, it's bloody inconvenient - going to a place and then finding that you can't get on and off stage without four people to help you, and that you can't fit into the toilet. I realised fairly early on that a regular touring life was out of the question. I'd done that in the 60s and the result was the disintegration of my first marriage - I was just on the road all the time, and that was a plant that collapsed through lack of watering, really. I was already in my late 20s by the time of that concert, and the most exciting thing happening at that time was the fact that Alfie had just married me. My private life started to become the main event in my life...

Derek Hammond

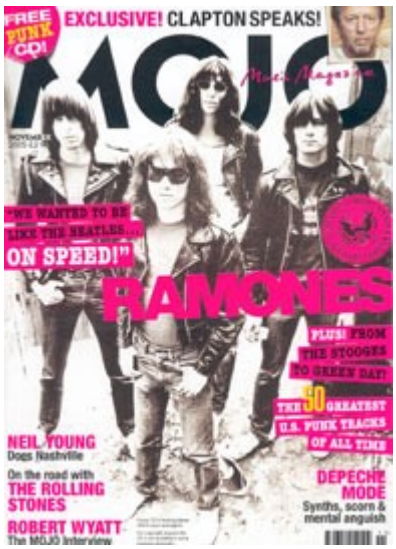
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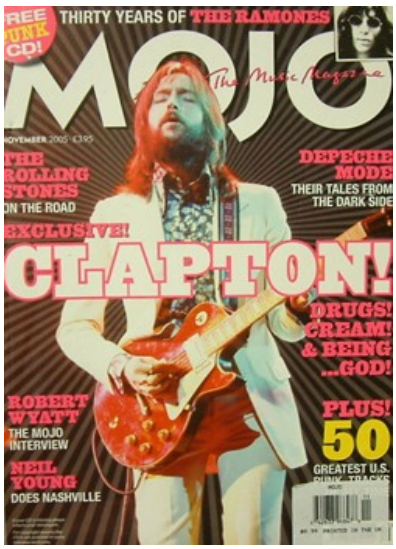
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The MOJO Interview - Mojo N° 144 - November 2005

THE MOJO INTERVIEW





alternative cover

Soft Machine made him **miserable**. Falling from a **window** in 1973 was **"a good career move"**. Enter the topsy-turvy world of rock's **reluctant Mr Nice Guy**, **Robert Wyatt**.

Interview by **MARK PAYTRESS**
Portrait by **ROSS HALFIN**

ROBERT WYATT IS MAKING HIS WAY TO THE nearest mirror. "My wife goes mad if it looks crap," he says, teasing unruly strands of silvery hair away from his face. It doesn't seem to make much difference. As he poses affably in his small front garden, oblivious to the bustle of the Lincolnshire market town passing by his gate, this softly-spoken god of small things still sports the unkempt 19th century Russian thinker look he's maintained for over a decade. He's all facial hair and kind, youthful eyes, and no 10-second makeover can alter that.

Inside, across a wooden dining table, Wyatt discusses everything that's thrown at him with generosity and insight. Moving effortlessly from Richard Dawkins to Don Covay, from father of anarchism Peter Kropotkin to flamenco siren La Niña de la Puebla over wine, fags and omelette, Wyatt is fascinated equally by musicians and ideas. Especially those, such as Hendrix and Miles Davis as well as innumerable unnamed fighters
for economic and social justice, who push themselves a bit beyond what we know.

Wyatt, too, inhabits the realm of the

unthinkable. Less than two years after the singing sticksman had been unceremoniously dumped by The Soft Machine, on June 1,1973 he fell from a fourth-floor window ("I'd always been a bit reckless," he explains) during a party, which turned his life round for a second time. Left paralysed and wheelchair-bound, he insists he simply got on with the job. But when he leaves the room, his wife Alfie helpfully suggests that "the trick has been denial". Ostensibly, MOJO is here to discuss the release of *Theatre Royal Drury Lane*. This September 1974 set chronicles his one and only solo live show, including his masterpiece, *Rock Bottom*, in its entirety. Since then, he's become a cherished institution, thanks to a string of inimitable and idiosyncratic, keyboard-led solo records. Unafraid to speak up for the common people, Wyatt won the respect of punk audiences, who loudly applauded his integrity. But most cherished of all is his voice, the most plaintive, deeply affecting in popular music. Refreshingly unassuming, Robert Wyatt is rock's most reluctant legend.


We're not WORTHY

"He's unique," says Roxy Music's Phil Manzanera

"Robert makes entertainment matter. He's got a unique British voice. The minute you hear him you know it's him, his voice touches you. He's like Dylan in that respect. His personality is in the music he makes. It's a testament to his life. He'll hate me for saying it, but it's very real."

This latest archive release [*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane*] was your coming out a year on from the accident in 1973. Was it difficult to listen to?

No. It's the sound of freedom compared with my previous responsibilities as a drummer. What I hear are the technical things, the purely musical things. The content I have to take for granted.I don't listen like a listener.I would have loved to have taken that band on the road, though with Fred Frith, Mike Oldfield and Nick Mason involved, that was clearly never gonna happen. And John Peel's intro is one of the best solos on the record. He sets up an atmosphere that a good MC would have done opening a 19th century music hall show - very light and easy.

Privately, it must have been a different matter. How low did you go?

The truth is I wasn't low after the accident. I may have had the bends coming up too fast, so I may have been a bit deranged, but I can't call it sadness. I'd just got together with Alfie. For the first time I had people helping me do my own tunes. Being rejected by the burgeoning jazz-rock community [dismissal from The Soft Machine] was far more humiliating. That was when I was miserable, before I broke my back, before I met Alfie, before I started a new year zero in '74. It's actually quite a celebratory moment for me.

So, contrary to popular opinion, Rock Bottom wasn't a direct response to your new state?

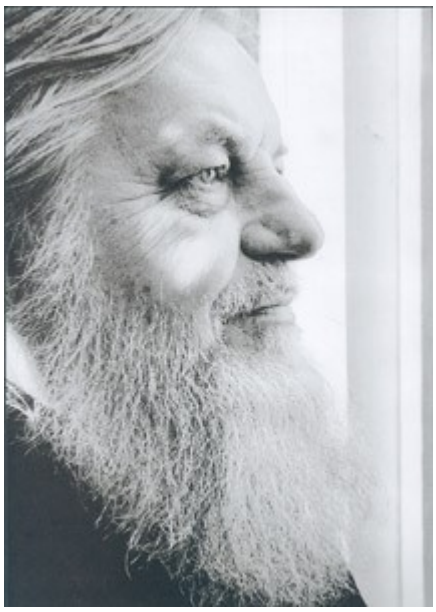
My overall view of life, not my circumstances, is that I am rather sad. I think life is wonderful, but my tendency is towards great sadness about things. I don't know why. While that may come out, it's not something I consciously put in. I operate like an animal - I just go for what feels right. People say humans have a fantastic ability for selective memory, that they erase pain because a certain amount can't be lived with. So it may be possible I was more distressed than I remember. But when you've fallen down a hole, and are scrambling out, you're not really sad.

One night, you're a well-known party animal. The next you're sobering up in a hospital bed and have just been told you've lost the use of your legs. What was your first thought?

I thought it was interesting, odd. It was a bit like being lifted up by helicopter off a street and dumped on a beach in Java. You think, Where am I? Is anybody here? I don't know the language. The world looks the same, but you're so different in a wheelchair that you have to re-learn how to live, the oddness of being in the same place but not being able to participate in the same way. I must emphasise that I was very unhappy in the late '60s, deeply uncomfortable. It's not as if I'd lost something that was very precious to me.

Did you tell yourself: I'm gonna beat this?

No, I'm too short term for that. I thought, Blimey, I think I might have enough material here for another record - that'll be good. But I only had about three or four chords I liked.



> Zoom

I wanted to expand the repertoire... to about six.

Where did you look for inspiration ?

Alfie taught me how to look at films in a more educated way, and though we had a lot of music in common - Sly Stone, Mingus - she listened to flamenco, Bulgarian folk music and so on, which had an enormous effect on me. To discover that the spirit of soul music is all over the world was a revelation.

From a young age, you'd cherished outsiders through your admiration of jazz musicians and bohemian culture. Did this help?

I hadn't thought of it like that, but the answer is yes. If you're feeling lonely with the world because it seems to be made for somebody else but not for you, then to find other people that it's not made for either, who are uncomfortable in their own ways, you get a certain fraternal sense of relief from that.

What did music, especially your early passion for jazz, first mean to you. Escape? Intoxication? Removal from the humdrum?

You've nailed it!

There's a childlike sense of wonder to your work, and hints of Christmas carols and nursery rhymes in your melodies.

The first songs I sang were with my dad round the piano at Christmas - Away In A Manger and Silent Night. It's folk music, but like a lot of folklore, it survives as children's music and stories. It's not a deliberate, 'Life is complicated, I'm going back to my childhood' thing. It's simply that when you're a child you experience things for the first time, and a lot of things are astonishing. And it's that astonishment that's the basis of the art I like. That's what I try and release when I turn my [creative] tap on. But you can be made to feel a bit of a fool. I had an LP once, and the back cover was just a blank blue piece of shiny cardboard. And I said to the person I was with at the time, "Isn't this beautiful?" She said, "Not really, it's just a bit of blue cardboard." That made me feel a bit sheepish about it. I don't know if that's right or wrong. Maybe I'm retarded.

Your parents both knew the writer Robert Graves, were well travelled and seemed to provide you with an aestheticised world view.



> Zoom

Yes. The only thing that doesn't ring true is that it's always described as if there was something luxurious about my upbringing. But my parents were fairly poor and we lived a fairly scruffy life, as most people did after the war. It wasn't as grand or precious as the word 'aesthetic'

makes it sound. As far as my dad was concerned, the world revolved around wine, women and song. If that's aesthetics, then I'm an aesthete!



> Zoom

I sense you had a smell under your nose when beat music arrived in 1963.

Beat music was a bit too boy-next-door to get romantic about. But it was encouraging to think that there was something I could do. I'd been interested in Eric Dolphy and Dada and Picasso, and I didn't want to work in an idiom that closed that off.

In fact, you have a quite jaundiced view of the entire '60s decade.

There's this surrealist map of the world where they made some places very big, like Africa. My surrealist calendar of the 20th century would go straight from 1959 to 1971. People say that life was so boring in the '50s, and thank goodness for the '60s. My life wasn't boring in the '5Os. As a young teenager, the whole business of beats and beatniks, and the music, these incomprehensible French films, the berets and the wines and the strange back alleys of Soho and Paris that went with it, was so exotic and romantic. I didn't need the breakthrough the '60s provided for others.

You were a significant part of The Soft Machine, an adventurous pop group doing something unprecedented. Thrilling, surely?

We were just trying to harness the various things that came into our heads and make something of it. That's all remember. Only recently when some labels started digging up old concerts from the late '60s and early '70s, I'd listen to them and think, Blimey, we weren't half going at it. It's a relief that it's not always as embarrassing as I thought it might be, though some of it is. There's an awful one that should be burned, destroyed, but you know how perverse people are, they'll go and buy it! It's like having a tattoo on your arm that you can't get rid of.

You were with The Soft Machine musicians in various guises for the best part of a decade. You must have believed in what you were doing.

It was important for me to be with musicians that might not normally play together, rather like putting garlic on cornflakes. The people I played with wouldn't try to play like somebody else. I liked the idea that what they played came out of themselves, and was not prompted by wanting to make, say, a jazz-rock record. I remember thinking it was better to be original and get it wrong than be derivative and get it right. It was an adventure to the point of recklessness.

You're very open in interviews yet always profess near total amnesia when discussing Soft Machine. Can the collapse of relationships in a pop group really have been of more significance to you than the accident?

I once asked Nick Mason why the Pink Floyd keep going. He said, 'We haven't finished with each other yet." But we had, obviously. Well, they'd finished with me. It's silly to talk about a group. It's not a living thing, just a word to put on a concert bill or a record cover. I'd rather work the way they do in cinema, where you get a bunch of people together for a particular project. But I'm grateful for the discipline and the training that being in a young group gave me.

"**Harmless** is as good as I dare aspire

to. Beyond that I'm totally **self-indulgent** and **hedonistic."**

Your gorgeous, side-long solo epic, Moon In June, on [Soft Machine's] *Third* must have suggested a possible way out.

The only way to play that was for me to do it virtually myself. The dominant thing in my head was to take responsibility. I was doing more and more things that were quite incompatible with the band I was with, that weren't really rock band things at all. Moon In June was the second of two things I'd done myself. The first was taking these fragments of tunes that Hugh Hopper had written which I stitched together on the second Soft Machine record. The next was my stitching my own bits and pieces into a sustained sequence which became Moon In June.

By calling your next band Matching Mole, which roughly translates as "Soft Machine" in French, was that a case of not letting go?

It was me saying I was still in that band in my head. I could have called it Soft Machine. I can now announce to the public that in fact we were never allowed to register the name. Anyone can call themselves Soft Machine if they want a quick shufti to the top of the bill!

How did you cope now you were the boss?

To my dismay, just as I wasn't very good at being told what do to, neither could I tell other people what to do. I now think that everything was leading to me making my own records. But the musicians I worked with were terrific. Phil [Miller] wrote the tune for God Song. O Caroline was basically a duet with David Sinclair. But we didn't have any money or resources. The others took all that. It was very hard.

The title and cover of Matching Mole's *Little Red Record* clearly suggests you'd become politicised by the early '70s.

The cover was actually chosen by someone at CBS who'd heard the lyrics, found this poster of the imaginary liberation of Taiwan, and put our faces on it. However, the world drifting to the right took me by surprise. I thought the era of moustached racist colonels in their mock Tudor houses in Whitstable was becoming a thing of the past, but to see whole new generations picking up on those ideologies, that imperial nostalgia, made my skin prickle. I thought my parents' generation sorted all this. It was quite clear. Are we on the side of the rich, trying to stay exclusive, engineering this endless character assassination against less lucky people? When the guns are firing, there is no middle ground. My tendency is always to err on the side of the exploited.

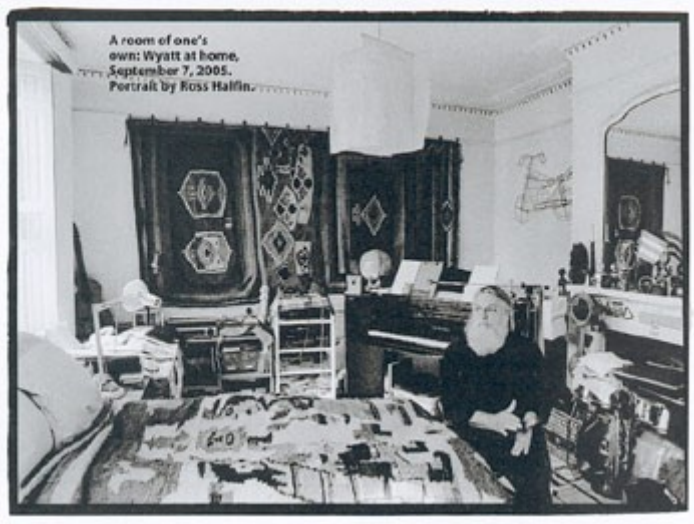
Did the accident make you more militant?

Not directly. I've disappointed some disabled people by not using my work as a platform to fight for our rights of access. But if it hasn't caught your imagination, you can't pretend it has. Yet having to yield control of the situation you're in, a dilemma most severely disabled people know well, I can recognise in a lot of the battles going on in the world.

Do you need to be a good man?

I want to be harmless. That's as good as I dare aspire to. Beyond that, I'm totally self-indulgent and hedonistic.

You're famous for your postcards, written on the back of cereal packets, sent to friends and admirers. My sister still has one from the early '80s where you complain



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about your nice guy image and sign off as "Bolshie Bertie". Are you uncomfortable with the Mr Nice reputation?

Sometimes I have to work at a compassionate view towards what other people have done. I can get very impatient and angry as an initial reaction. But ideally the goal would be, to understand all is to forgive all. It's a magical phrase.

But when a population votes in a government hellbent on destroying their livelihoods, as in the case of Thatcher, you must despair.

Well, I'm quite happy to sing a song like Shipbuilding by Costello, who felt exactly that, a rage that had to be exorcised in some way. That kind of rage can give you energy. But it's different from the cool mantle of wisdom that judges assume, which is almost inevitably bullshit. It seems to me that a nice person wouldn't have such a battle with all this stuff.

Earlier on, you mentioned hedonism. Is intoxication important to you?

I do have an intense greediness for stimuli. I get bored quickly. But I'm really scared of breaking the law. Pathetic, isn't it? Some musicians blast themselves with stimuli in order to blast their own rockets off to go into outer space. I wouldn't be alive if I were on my own. Alfie's kept me alive. My ideal state is to do absolutely nothing in a complete stupor listening to Charlie Mingus records very loud in a candle-lit room - with Alfie.

So your fall in 1973 saved you?

Yes, that's the way it looks to me. It was a good career move.

Keith Moon apparently taught you how to drink heavily. What is it with drummers?

I learnt how to get very drunk very quickly with him in New York. Drummers are hopeless; we don't get our things together. Maybe because it is extremely physical, it's possible you get into a certain state, that some chemical thing happens.

It's obvious that Alfie is your inspiration, your sounding-board, your collaborator. And, as she says, also "your guarder". Do you ever yearn to nip out and have a few sneaky beers?

I do. The trouble is it's hurtful for Alfie. If I'm left to my own devices, I do seem to be amazingly irresponsible, so I have to be grateful for someone who points these dangers out in advance. I'm not quite sure how to function safely in the world. I would be much better for her if I looked after myself better.

You survived punk. Did you feel a genuine affinity with it?

Yeah, the working methods, the attitude and



Solar flares for YOU...

How to buy Robert Wyatt.
By Mark Paytress.

THE SINGING DRUMMER ALBUM

Out-Bloody-Rageous 1967-73
★★★★ Sony 2005

An instant guide to the 'pre-history', this recent primer documents The Soft Machine's mutation from psychedelicised soul boys (Love Makes Sweet Music) to the instrumental wastelands of the post-Wyatt era. Includes phased drumming, a recitation of the British alphabet and Wyatt's landmark epic Moon In June, the template for his future solo career.

THE MASTERPIECE

Rock Bottom ★★★★★ Virgin 1974

Serene, melancholy and very occasionally sinister, this first post-accident LP is classic Wyatt. Assisted by a cast of British jazz-rock luminaries, and produced by Nick Mason, he assembles a seamless suite of songs that allude both to his new circumstances and to Venice, where the album was partly written, hence the aquatic subtext.

THE ELDER STATESMAN ALBUM

Cuckooland ★★★★ Rykodisc, 2003

An unlikely mix of nostalgia (Old Europe), quiet indignation (Lullaby For Hamza) and ageing (Lullaloop) lends a lovely dignity to Wyatt's most recent studio set. Brian Eno, Karen Mantler and David Gilmour confirm the singer's gift for the well-chosen cameo, but it's his continued quest for simplicity with sophistication that astonishes most.

the tunings. It was a very witty movement, an autonomous one that wasn't invented by fashion stylists. I thought they were very moral young people. A lot of people were thinking hard about the rise of the National Front, and the relationship between young rastas and punks was very ahead of its time. Some cracking records too.

In the '80s you spent quite a bit of time in Spain and Italy. Then you moved from west London to Lincolnshire. Is this indicative of a make-the-world-go-away philosophy?

We had a busy life abroad, recording, doing television and attending ANC meetings. I didn't need to be part of the rock world back here. But sometimes a certain distance is required. If you create a comfortable distance between yourself and the world you have to deal with, you can keep control of your own bit of it. But if I'm asked my ethnic group, I always say "Soho". In my heart I'm still hanging round Ronnie Scott's foyer. I could spend the rest of my life there, and I do in my head, just by choosing the right records.

Over the past 20 years, you've released a record roughly once every five years. The curse of perfectionism, perhaps?

I'd love to be a perfectionist. I always think I am until I hear the results, then I realise I'm not.

***Cuckooland*, the title of your last album is such a Wyatt word, vaguely archaic, full of echoes.**

I'm really amused by words that have some sort of folk memory, and I love half making up words, because that's how they came to be in the first place. Cuckooland is ambiguous. Either the world is really as mad as it looks to me, or because that's how my brain is, it's me that's in Cuckooland.

John Peel was a long-time friend. How did his death affect you?

Terrible. A death in the family. I was asked at the time to respond in the media and I couldn't. Me and Alfie, John and Sheila, and John and Helen Walters became friends over the years quite apart from the professional connection that brought us together. Sheila is putting together a CD for the anniversary of his death. I was asked yesterday if they can have Shipbuilding for it, and as far as I'm concerned, Sheila can have anything of mine she likes. The world seems to be filling up with so many friendly ghosts. As long as you have people in your head, that's the nearest thing I understand to immortality. People live on through the people who loved or remember them.

So death is not something you worry about.

Not at all. It is difficult for the people that are left. The people who are dead are at peace.

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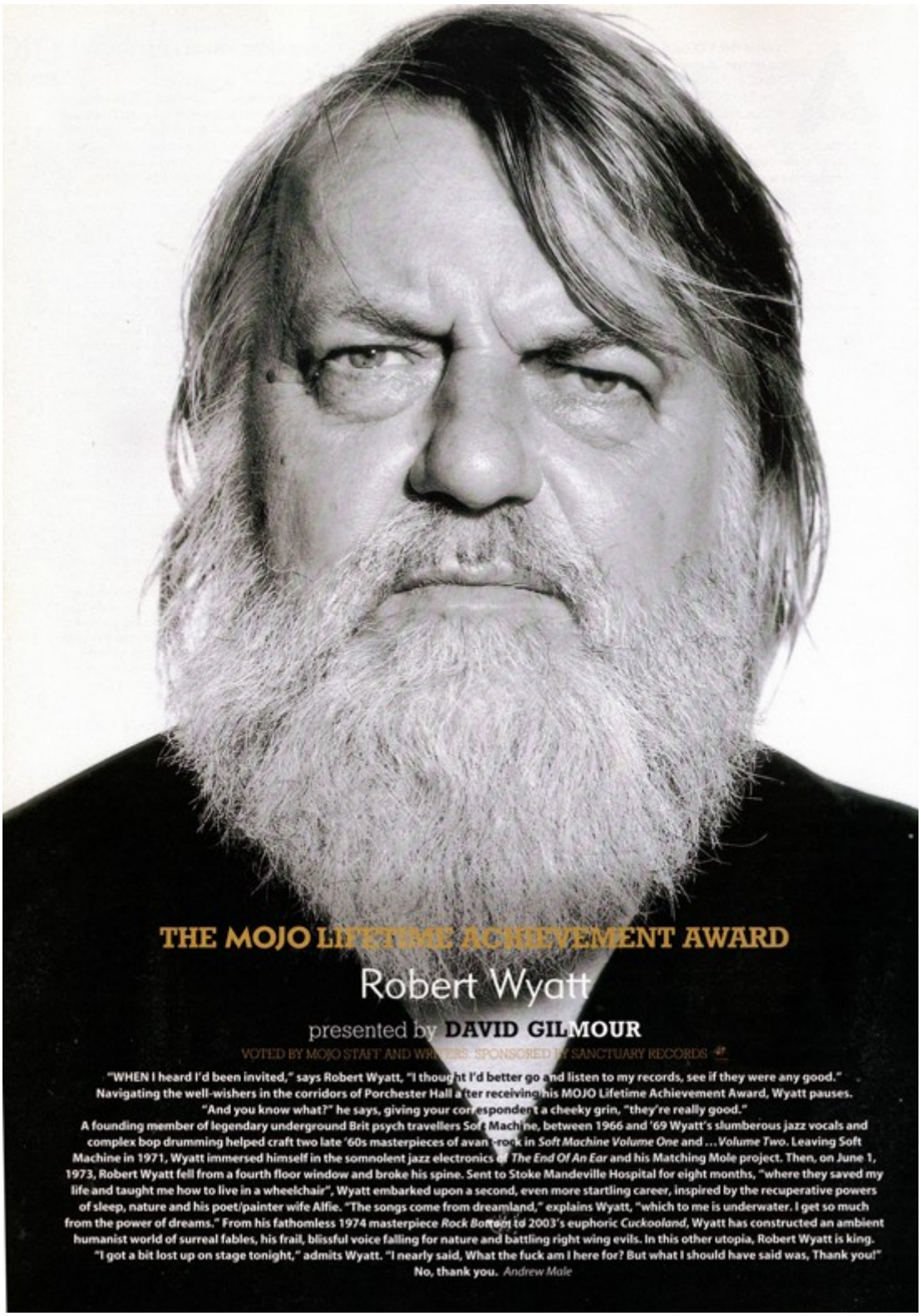
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Robert Wyatt presented by David Gilmour - Mojo - August 2005

THE MOJO LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD





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Robert Wyatt & Alfreda Benge - Dream Magazine #5 - Spring 2005

ROBERT WYATT & ALFREDA BENGE



It was a rare treat to speak to Robert Wyatt by phone for this interview, I'd like to gratefully acknowledge Joyce at Cuneiform Records for kindly setting this up. When I first dreamt of doing Dream Magazine, Robert Wyatt's name was near the top of the list of folks I wanted to talk to. I've been tuned into his stuff since the first Soft Machine album, though he had recorded as early as 1962 as a member of The Wilde Flowers, and as a solo artist, continues to this day as one of the most artistically vital avant pop composer/singers of his, or any generation since. His angelic lighter than air voice is one of the most unique and lovely ever recorded, his continuing creative flow reveals some of the finest work in a forty-plus year career. His open armed embrace of jazz, folk, pop, socialist politics, intelligence, wit, minimalism, progressive rock, compassion, psychedelia, several different international musical forms, and his own distinctive vision is a singular contribution to the history of recorded music. He's worked with folks that range from Jimi Hendrix, Syd Barrett, and Brian Eno, to newer artists like Björk, and Hood. It was also great to get to talk to Alfreda Benge, who is: illustrator, instigator, inspiration, coconspirator, often lyricist, and painter wife of Robert Wyatt, (also the subject of many of his songs). Robert and Alfreda deserve a book, not just this truncated chat; though we talked for over an hour, I felt like we were only scratching the surface.

G.P.: *Hello Robert.*
R.W.: Can you hear me OK?
G.P.: *Yeah.*
R.W.: This is a different phone. Maybe it's because a blizzard is coming, or maybe it's just weather stuff going on.
G.P.: *Could be. I'm hoping we can also talk to your wife and frequent collaborator Alfreda later on, if that's possible.*
R.W.: A good idea. She's upstairs right now, but will be down later. I'll ask her if she's up for it when she comes down.
G.P.: *You've worked repeatedly with certain folks; you worked with Michael Mantler, and Carla Bley, and now their daughter Karen.*
R.W.: Right. (laughter)
G.P.: *She contributed quite a bit to Cuckooland. What is it about those folks that you found such an affinity with?*
R.W.: Well they're a great family. I think each of them is really unique; you can't really describe the genre of music they're into. It's really fascinating; the parents are very disciplined for jazz players, and it's interesting to see Karen coming out of that background.

Although I'm of the same musical generation as her parents; the fact that Karen makes her music out of recognizable notes, and songs and like that; makes her music much more like mine, than her parent's is. But, she brings that kind of careful and astute knowledge of music to it.
G.P.: *Her pieces work really well on **Cuckooland**.*
R.W.: Well I'm glad you think so. The other thing is she's so... I mean Karen went through a punk period, kind of as a teenager. But the fact is she's learned a lot of discipline compared to me; and I was sort of interested in playing the role of kind of wicked uncle; and kind of messing it all up a bit. (laughter) Getting some of that dirty noise in there.
G.P.: *It also feels like you're sort of a member of the extended Pink Floyd family.*
R.W.: Well, I don't know. It's actually rather distant, the thing about Pink Floyd is that it's actually another planet really; the planet "rich" for a start. Not the undeserving rich, they're rich because other people buy their records.
G.P.: *You have worked with most of those people though. Can you tell me a bit of what Syd Barrett was like as a person?*
R.W.: Well, he was very nice.
G.P.: *Not a loon huh?*
R.W.: In those days how could you possibly tell? (laughter) I mean what would have been unusual about that?
G.P.: *(laughter) That's true. What did you work on together?*
R.W.: I played drums on a few tracks of **A Madcap Laughs**.
G.P.: *I really enjoyed the album **Songs** by John Greaves, it featured you on three tracks. How did that collaboration come about?*
R.W.: I've known John a long time, and Peter Blegvad is one of the great wordsmiths of our time.
G.P.: *Oh yeah.*
R.W.: Anyway they just asked me if I would sing a few things. [Lengthy response that is inaudible].
G.P.: *Who or what are some of your conscious songwriting influences?*
R.W.: You know I have no idea, I can tell you what I enjoy. American writer Ogden Nash for one, the best songwriter that I can think of is Randy Newman.
G.P.: *Ah, he's incredible.*
R.W.: There are a lot of people that kind of get to me and John Lennon was one of them, but for the rest I don't really know. I can't separate influences from things that I've enjoyed. I forget to mention this but a great deal of what used to be called , the "hep talk" of the 40s and 50s, like Cab Calloway and Slim & Slam, maybe you don't remember that.
G.P.: *Sure I do.*
R.W.: Alright then, you'll know what I'm talking about. Like the mad lyrics that Dizzy Gillespie used to do like "sh'bam, a gloog a mop" which I think is a very good line.
G.P.: *(laughter)*
R.W.: (laughing) I think that's as good as anything Little Richard came up with.
G.P.: *I really enjoyed your contributions to the **Winged Migration** film; how did your participation happen on that project?*
R.W.: They pretty much just asked. Composer Bruno Coulais does music direction for that filmmaker's (Jacques Perrin) various subjects. This time they wanted to do the thing you're not meant to do; which is to anthropomorphize the subjects. So in other words it's not a straight nature film. The original title in French is "**Migrating People**".
G.P.: *Oh really?*
R.W.: And I think that's a good title really. And uh, so anyway they wanted some singing on it and they asked. And I said "I don't normally do things like this." They said: "It would really only be your voice and our lyrics". And when I heard it they had me.
G.P.: *Well, they really sound like pieces that you might have written.*
R.W.: Yeah, well that's what he was trying to do. It was part of his way of getting me to do it.
G.P.: *What did you think of the finished film?*
R.W.: Oh, it was very nice. The words were originally written in French, and had to be translated into English in a singable way; so Alfie; as is often the case; uncredited, but she's really shy about getting credit. But on the other hand she does all this stuff. She actually rewrote the whole thing to make it singable for me. I couldn't have done it.
In fact when I first got the lyrics, I said "I can't sing this." But she reworked is so that could. So she's the hidden ingredient there; the catalyst that made that work.
G.P.: *You have long been a supporter of animal rights, what would you say to someone to raise their awareness regarding animals and their treatment?*
R.W.: Well, not to proselytize; but as far as I'm concerned we're all animals. And anything that's got a beating heart, it's just trying to live like you are. So if you're going to eat it or use it, go ahead. But just sort of think about that for a moment. Try to be nice to it while it's alive at least.
G.P.: *Tell me about your album **Cuckooland** and how it came into being?*
R.W.: Well more than anything, as you may know about the last couple albums; were sort

of kick-started by taking some of Alfie's lyrics and putting them to music, or occasionally; as is the case with **Alien**, from my previous album **Shleep**, where she actually wrote words to my music. But in this case I don't think the record would have interested me without Alfie's words. I just haven't got enough coherent material, I had sort of scraps of tunes knocking about for years literally. And Alfie said we had to just get on with it, and do it. It's how we earn our living for a start; I get a pension, but this a large part of our income.

G.P.: *Well it's interesting how it feels so coherent; it doesn't seem put together it feels like a piece.*

R.W.: Well I think that's why it takes me so long to get things together. Everything has to be sort of re-tailored and remade so that it feels natural and organic. But I think in this case; the musical ideas I had, reduced the lyrics to sort of mantras and things, and I really was getting nowhere. And Alfie just went through stuff of mine. I dug out some tapes; pre-digital stuff that I'd done. And she wrote words to things, and came up with words for **Old Europe**, and **Forest**, and **Lullaby for Hamza**. And then she had some poems that she was working on that became songs. Alfie's here at the moment; she's been upstairs, she's been working on all kinds of stuff, but just came down for a bowl of soup. So if you did want to speak to her, this would be a good moment.

G.P.: *Yeah, I would like to.*

R.W.: OK, I'll hand you over to Alfie.

A.B.: Hello.

G.P.: *Hello, well I kind of wanted to talk to you about your part of the musical thing and your paintings too. Who were some of your influences as a painter, or do you have them?*

A.B.: Well I wouldn't call most of what I do for Robert paintings really; they're sort of illustrations. Ever since I've done paintings and drawings, I draw from life and I paint out of my head. So all these images are out of my head really. They're kind of narrative, most often, sometimes they're more graphic, because I was into graphic design. So I sort of apply various bits of my training, according to what I think or feel the subject is. So, in that sense they're illustrations.

G.P.: *There seems to be a sort of surrealist sensibility to some of them.*

A.B.: Well, I don't know. They're not surrealist; they're more jokey. They're almost paintings of cartoons really.

G.P.: *Uh huh.*

A.B.: My favorite painters don't paint like me at all.

G.P.: *Well, who are they?*

A.B.: (laughing) Well, I like Bonnard. I like the use of paint by Matisse and Bonnard; all the old, boring old masters of the 2Oth century really. I like Kurt Schwitters. I like painters that use paint to paint what they see. I like painters that use space nicely.

G.P.: *Lately I've been obsessed with Charles Burchfield.*

A.B.: I don't know him.

G.P.: *Oh, try to find something by him. He did some wonderful watercolors, he's unlike anybody else.*

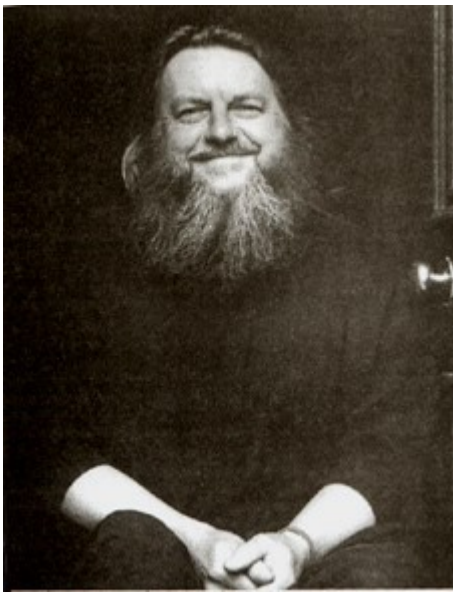
A.B.: Alright.

G.P.: *When you work on lyrics for Robert; is it a poem set to music, or do you hear the music first?*

A.B.: Well they vary. On **Dondestan** they all already existed and Robert just set them to music. They were from a sort of diary, and he thought they had music in them. And the same with the stuff on **Shleep**; except for **Alien** which is the first one actually where he got stuck for lyrics. For **Alien** he actually gave me the music, and I sat about and listened to it for a few days. I shut my eyes and tried to think what the story of the music was. So bits of words would come in with the music. With the music I think where am I in this picture, and sometimes a series of notes will suggest a word, like **Lullaby for Hamza**; I just heard 'lullaby'.



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G.P.: *Have you ever thought about doing an album of your own ?*
A.B.: (laughter) Well, I'd love to do that, yeah. I'm a musical ninny; I could get the odd tune, the lyrical tune, but I think, no. I have actually just been asked by a French producer to write some lyrics for him, so I'm branching out. I'm becoming the Grandma Moses of lyrics.
G.P.: *(laughter)*
A.B.: (laughter) I find it extreme fun, I've never found anything more enjoyable actually. Because it's not like dealing with a piece of blank paper. With a painting you've got this big white space and have to put something on it. But to be given a piece of music and to try to find the words in that is real fun!
G.P.: *It's like somebody's done half of the work for you sort of.*
A.B.: Yeah, yeah. They've done all the work really, so the rest is just absolute fun. It's like if you do a painting and get half the way through, and you know you've got it, from then on it's plain sailing; it's that kind of fun.
G.P.: *Yeah, but you've gotta go in there and find that thing.*
A.B.: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's horrible.
G.P.: *Yeah it is; that's scary.*
A.B.: Also with poetics it's that blank page, but it has some music to it too, and they all suggest visual things to me anyway. They suggest places. I mean like **Forest**; there was a forest, a river, some trees. Which is not to say that it's always easy; because when you get down to the details; the vowels that go to the right notes, and Robert's ability to sing them. So it's not always easy, but it's always fun.
G.P.: *Have you had any shows of your paintings?*
A.B.: Yeah, well when I was actually doing painting. I don't really paint anymore; I mean I do stuff for Robert, I do stuff when there's something to do it for. Yeah, I had a show about 20 years ago. But I've never actually joined the art world in that sense. A bit like Robert never actually having joined the music industry. (laughter)
G.P.: *(laughter)*
A.B.: We just do what we do.
G.P.: *Yeah.*
A.B.: But in fact it's lovely to do it for records because so many more people will see it than would if it were at a gallery.
G.P.: *Yeah it's a great portable gallery.*
A.B.: Yeah, yeah. The same with poetry as well; with **Dondestan** and **Shleep** it actually reached around 60 or 70 thousand people, and you don't get poetry selling like that do you?
G.P.: *No*.
A.B.: So it's nice when it happens, but it's not too connected to the real world.
G.P.: *(laughter) Not directly anyway.*
A.B.: No, not directly. Only as being a kind of leech on Robert.
G.P.: *(laughing) Oh God!*
A.B.: (laughter)
G.P.: *How parallel are your political views?*

A.B.: Oh absolutely; except, I was born an anarchist, so I would tend not to join things. Robert's more of a conformist; he like the idea of belonging to something. But in terms of worldview, and how things happen, and why they happen; I mean we both it read between the lines in exactly the same way.
G.P.: *Right.*
A.B.: We both scream in horror at exactly the same lies, and I think we're pretty similar.
G.P.: *How do you feel about the current US presidency, and their foreign policies?*
A.B.: (silence)
G.P.*: You don't have to answer this.*
A.B.: Yeah, no I'm just thinking what to say really. Shocking, appalling, extraordinary, just horrible.
G.P.*: Yeah, me too.*
A.B.: Yeah, but you know in a way really I'm more shocked by ours.
G.P.*: Oh really? The Tony Blair complicity?*
A.B.: Yeah, well because he's supposed to be on the our side. I'm not surprised when people on the right behave according to their beliefs, I can understand them. But he was supposed to make things better for us. He's been shocking here as far as being sort of power crazy, and proud of the fact of being Bushy's best friend.
G.P.*: Oh yeah.*
A.B.: It's just so horrible.
G.P*.: Yeah, it's nightmarish.*
A.B.: Well do you want me to give you back to Robert?
G.P.*: Yeah I guess. It's been great to get to talk to you.*
A.B.: Okay, bye.
R.W.: That was a good idea.
G.P*.: For a sense of perspective. You said something about her sort of being the dark side of the moon to your work.*
R.W.: Yeah exactly, which is funny in a way because she gets embarrassed as far as anyone drawing attention to themselves, including me. If I get noticed at any kind of social event she just dies on the spot of embarrassment. But this is how I earn a living, somebody's got to get up there and show their face occasionally, that's how it is.
G.P.*: Well some people are not extroverted in that way.*
R.W.: Well I'm not very either. I mean the bit about music I like is the solitary activity of making it. Anyway; it's just that she is very shy. She speaks so well you know, because she didn't start learning English until she was seven. (laughing)
G.P*.: Oh yeah, where's she from?*
R.W.: Poland, her mother's Polish, well she's a mixture of all kinds of things really. She's from the land, and the forest, and about. I think that's why the **Forest** song came up really. She has ancestral; or at least childhood memories all mingled up with the forest, but also the whole world being a sort of a bombsight; as it was when she was a child.
G.P*.: That's a great song!*
R.W.: Yeah, well it's pretty heartfelt I think. The stuff about Alfie that comes out, probably paradoxically enough, the truth is true of what she does.
G.P.*: And it's always nice to hear Brian Eno singing.*
R.W.: Isn't it eh?
G.P*.: I wish he'd do that more!*
R.W.: Oh I know, I know! I tell you he's been working on some stuff, and we've been seeing quite a lot of it during the last year; and his studio is quite near Phil Manzanera's. He's been making such interesting stuff; but he has the same problem I have, of finishing things. But he's the very opposite to me, in the sense that he's very very high tech, and digital. I mean he's got hundreds of things carefully filed and stored, and making more every day. And he buys every new Japanese toy there is.
G.P.*: (laughing)*
R.W.: He's here one day, there the next. It's on and on; he's out there. It's Barcelona on thursday. He gets around and sees things, and he's always so on top of that kind of stuff. But maybe that's part of his thing, but he we're all able to talk about Brian Eno's thinking; his ideas and so on. I mean just as a pop musician; I think he's terrific, you know. Songwriter, singer...
G.P.*: Oh yeah! And he's got such a lovely distinctive voice.*
R.W.: He has, he has, and funnily enough for all his high tech, he's very old fashioned about it. He stands there full sway like an opera singer, and delivers, and it's really strong. (laughs) He's terrific, a terrific singer. The stuff he did was sort of backing vocals and you will have gathered, we sort of managed to take away the top layer, to reveal what he was doing underneath it, you know. And then David Gilmore, he provides the magic fairy dust on **Forest** for me.

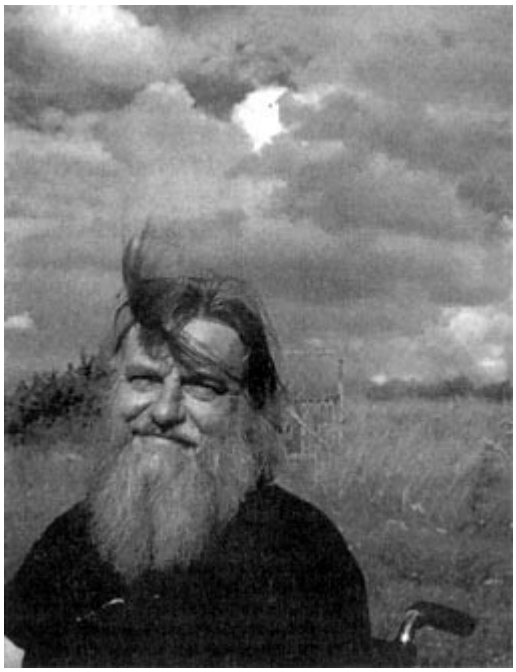


G.P.*: Yeah, it's a beautiful piece of work.*
R.W.: Because he obviously contributes his guitar solo, but also his pedal guitar all the way though it is just terrific you know. He did a lot of work on it, you know. And I hadn't asked him. We met a few times again after 20, 30 years or so, and he and I get along well, and I like his band members. But I get along better with the blokes than the gang. You know groups have a thing that way. Four young men in a box, you know.
G.P.*: Did we cover the making of* ***Cuckooland****; what inspired it?*
R.W.: I knew we had enough stuff; the key to it came when Alfie came up with the words to **Lullaby for Hamza**. And the rest is just getting into gear and getting on with it. And Phil Manzanera who produced the opportunity to work; the way he did it was; he just had a budget for the making of the record, and he just said; "However long it takes." And it won't bring the price up, which is an amazing thing.
G.P.*: That's sensational!*
R.W.: Well it was incredible. I mean he's always had money troubles; but he's just like that. He said "I don't do something by a written company's name, because I don't want to put up with that." In the past so much he'd been part of ended up owned by some alien reptilian...
G.P.*: Corporations.*
R.W.: That's right. Luckily some people from that era, have rescued that era. Lovely folks like Steve Feigenbaum of Hannibal Records, or the folks at Hux Records in England; but on a whole it's as easy to get buggered about by people of that era. There are some nice people to work with; the Ryko lot leading the way in America. They're conscientious, and hard working. These things aren't terribly romantic, but they are absolutely vital. Because apart from everything else this is a job, this is what we do for a living. It's really hard; it does take a bit of time and attention. It just doesn't get the kind of massive sales that like commercial releases get, so they can't really be indulgent in the way that musicians might tend to want them to be. As for myself, I haven't paid anybody like Brian, David, or Paul Weller; because I couldn't afford them. But I pay the regular professional musicians; like Annie Whitehead.
G.P.*: You've chosen some interesting songs to cover over the years: the Neil Diamond/Monkees song* ***I'm a Believer****, Chic's* ***At Last I am Free****, and recently the Bordeleaux/Felice Bryant song* ***Raining in My Heart****; what is the criterion for choosing covers for you?*
R.W.: Well really I always want to remind myself and anybody who's interested, that I do have a great love and respect for pop music and what it can be beyond just being music for teenagers. And I wish to disassociate myself from those elements of the avant garde, and experimental music scene that have openly expressed their distaste for pop music.
G.P.: *Well that snobbery seems kind of foolish to me.*
R.W.: Well it's particularly distasteful coming from a culture that's meant to be a kind of alternative to an antique established establishment. You don't want to see a kind of conservative, elitist, snobbishness reemerging in the avant garde. It just doesn't belong there
G.P.: *You sang with Brian Wilson on a Ryuichi Sakamoto cover of the Rolling Stones '****We***

***Love You**', did you actually meet during that recording?*
R.W.: No, no I didn't know he was on it. Ryuichi just wanted me to sing it; and yes the reason that I did it was because Ryuichi asked me to. The Japanese have such a nice way of asking; I thought, this is such a nice letter, I really ought to do this for him.
G.P.: *It's really a nice version of that song.*
R.W.: Well it is; but the idea that I would ever sing a lyric by that songwriter. I don't know; I wouldn't, myself have chosen that song. But that said; I don't really feel at home in rock culture. But it wasn't because of the song; it was because of Ryuichi has such an amazing, sensitive expressive musical ear. He has a fantastic musical knowledge.
G.P.: *Ah, he's a wonderful musician.*
R.W.: Well he's actually a great musician in the sense of a being a classically trained musician. That kind of refinement of technique; he has it. I didn't know Brian Wilson was on it till I heard it. And you can't fault that.
G.P.: *(I turn over the tape. As I do I tell Robert that I hope it's all recording; part of his reply gets recorded)*
R.W.: Well then you might have to do it back from memory. Like a dream, which seems fitting. (laughter)
G.P.: *Well I can try! (laughter) Do you think it's surprising that you might be doing some of your best work at your age?*
R.W.: Well I'm very relieved to hear you say that because one of the things I felt uncomfortable about was the relentless emphasis... It's a bit like the aesthetic today is that it's only a youth thing. You know it's a wonderful stage to go through; but it's really amazing if you have any luck, how much of your life, isn't youth. It's decades and decades of watching and learning, and finding things out. And you're quite lucky if you survive long enough to really have time to have thought about things, and worked through your ideas. So really it should be the case that, that when you come up in age, you should benefit from that.
G.P.: *Well I think part of the problem is working from the template of a pop artist is erroneous; when looking at artists in other fields their later years are often their most fruitful*.
R.W.: Well that's sort of acknowledged in many arts, but for some reason it's kind of doesn't sit comfortably with the way pop music is promoted; which is fine. I think the kind of central thing of rock, and of pop music is it's a celebration of youth. It's wonderful and I think every generation should happily have it's own sort of coded language, and it's own haircuts, and it's own group sounds, and it's nobody else's business. On the whole pop culture is a wonderful thing and it is about youth. And the fact is that it comes from a much wider and older tradition, which is sort of folk music really. And if you look for the origins of rock & roll and pop, it's sort of Irish and American country music, and then the Black equivalent, and the Italian equivalent, and so on, and so on. And that's the roots of it; and that's a much bigger river. A bigger broader river.
G.P.: *And connected to a lot of other rivers.*
R.W.: Yeah. And there's a lot of music that isn't pop music at all. Still I think the life's blood is singable songs and dancible rhythms. I think Charles Mingus said that.
G.P.: *So are you a jazz artist or a pop artist?*
R.W.: I can't place myself in music at all really. The kind of people that I relate to, if anybody; I'm not comparing myself with the quality of the work of these people, just that I identify with as people who are working their way through their lives; over decades and years. The painters that I like; from the early part of the 20th century. Some of the ones that Alfie mentioned; and Van Gogh or "Van Go" as they probably say in America.
G.P.: *No we can pronounce it right here sometimes.*
R.W.: (laughing) Well it's (correct pronunciation) in Dutch.
G.P.: *Yeah it's got that (throat sound) it's hard to do.*
R.W.: It's like Flemish; it's unsayable.
G.P.: *You know Jonathan Richman wrote that song about Vincent Van Gogh; you may not have heard it.*
R.W.: I like Jonathan Richman.
G.P.: *He said he was really lucky that he didn't know how to pronounce it when he wrote it. Because Van "Go" rhymes with a lot more stuff*
R.W.: (laughing) Yeah, right. Very good. Anyway, you know who I'm talking about. And Marc Chagall, who's original name was Moishe Shagal.
G.P.: *Oh yeah? He's wonderful, very magical.*
R.W.: Great great, and part of the wonderful part of the great Russian Jewish tradition that has given us stuff in every field. I can't imagine what the world of music, or ideas, or science, would be without their contribution. And yeah, I don't know; sorta Joan Miro. Yeah I was very interested in Joan Miro of Catalan, and how those people, grew old interested me. Late Picasso, late Miro; where all of the apparent elements of craft are just gradually discarded, and we just get this sort of like hieroglyphic, childlike scrawl that they would have started out with. And I find that quite a moving process. So those are the sort of people I feel on the same planet as; let's put it like that.

G.P.: *Could you tell me a bit about the BBC documentary, **Free Will And Testament**?*
R.W.: Well that was suggested to me by a man called Jez Nelson, who does a jazz program on radio BBC 3, and had the opportunity through the participation of BBC 4. And I was surprised that he'd ask me, because his main work is in new jazz; but he does other stuff as well. Anyway he asked Mark Kidel, who is a very good filmmaker, a very good director who works in England. And he'd approached us a few years ago anyway about making a film, but hadn't gotten anyone to back it; so then Jez Nelson gave him that. So they went to me; well "What do you do?" Well I got so embarrassed that I don't do anything that I said well; "I could sing some of the songs that Annie Whitehead's band does, and I can sing them with Annie." And it ended up getting done on film.
G.P.: *Well I hope that it gets shown over here.*
R.W.: Well Mark, I think he put it together very well. I think it's difficult work to do, because I just sort of sit here like a cactus in the desert really.
G.P.: *(laughter)*
R.W.: Like some kind of Andy Warhol film really, like the Empire State Building. (laughing) But he made it; he sort of condensed things so that it seemed like lots had happened. I remember they were making a TV film about Quentin Crisp here in England; and John Hurt was playing him. He was talking to Crisp and said "I hope we can get an accurate picture of your life." And Quentin replied "Oh I hope your film is far more exciting than that." (laughter)
G:P.: *(laughing) That's great!*
R.W.: (laughing) Yeah, I hadn't realized till I saw Mark's film how uninteresting I am.
G.P.: *What are some of your thoughts regarding , the current US president and his foreign policies?*
R.W.: I don't know, you see. There are so many great Americans that I get very upset when people say that people like me are being anti-American. I say "No I'm not anti-Michael Moore, I'm not anti-Noam Chomsky." I probably more immersed in great American culture, than most of those people who claim to be representing it. You know what I mean? I could talk to any of those people in his cabinet about Mingus and Charles Ives, and they couldn't catch me out on a detail. So don't talk to me about being anti-American. I can't imagine my life without the American cultural influence; which I attribute to the fact that it's a country of mass immigration from all around the world reconfigured. That's the magic of America to me; and a great gift to the world. I mean looking at American history which is rooted in part in English history, which is why the language that were speaking is called English. And people think that it's something fake, or sort of wishful thinking that the point of America is that it's the land of the free. ln fact the freedom that the British settlers, as I understand it; were looking for. Was the freedom to form these very tight strict religious sects, away from the kind of liberalizing influences that were spreading through Europe. So although it was a freedom; there was embedded in it a freedom to be more conservative than their European ancestors. Rather like the Afrikaners who left Holland precisely it was becoming free and easy. They wanted to stay strict to the Calvinist type rigidity; you know tribal rigidity. So it's always been kind of ambiguous in that sense. My message to America is "Look we love you already, so leave us alone!" (laughing) You know what I mean, you don't have to keep knocking at the door saying "Love me more, love me more." You know I think it's an embarrassment for the Americans I know; what's going on right now. Who just sort of sit back and watch this stuff. Well you know, Noam Chomsky was asked "What would you put in its place?", and he said "It's very simple; to start out. Stop doing bad things." (laughter) "Start there."
G.P.: *(laughing)*



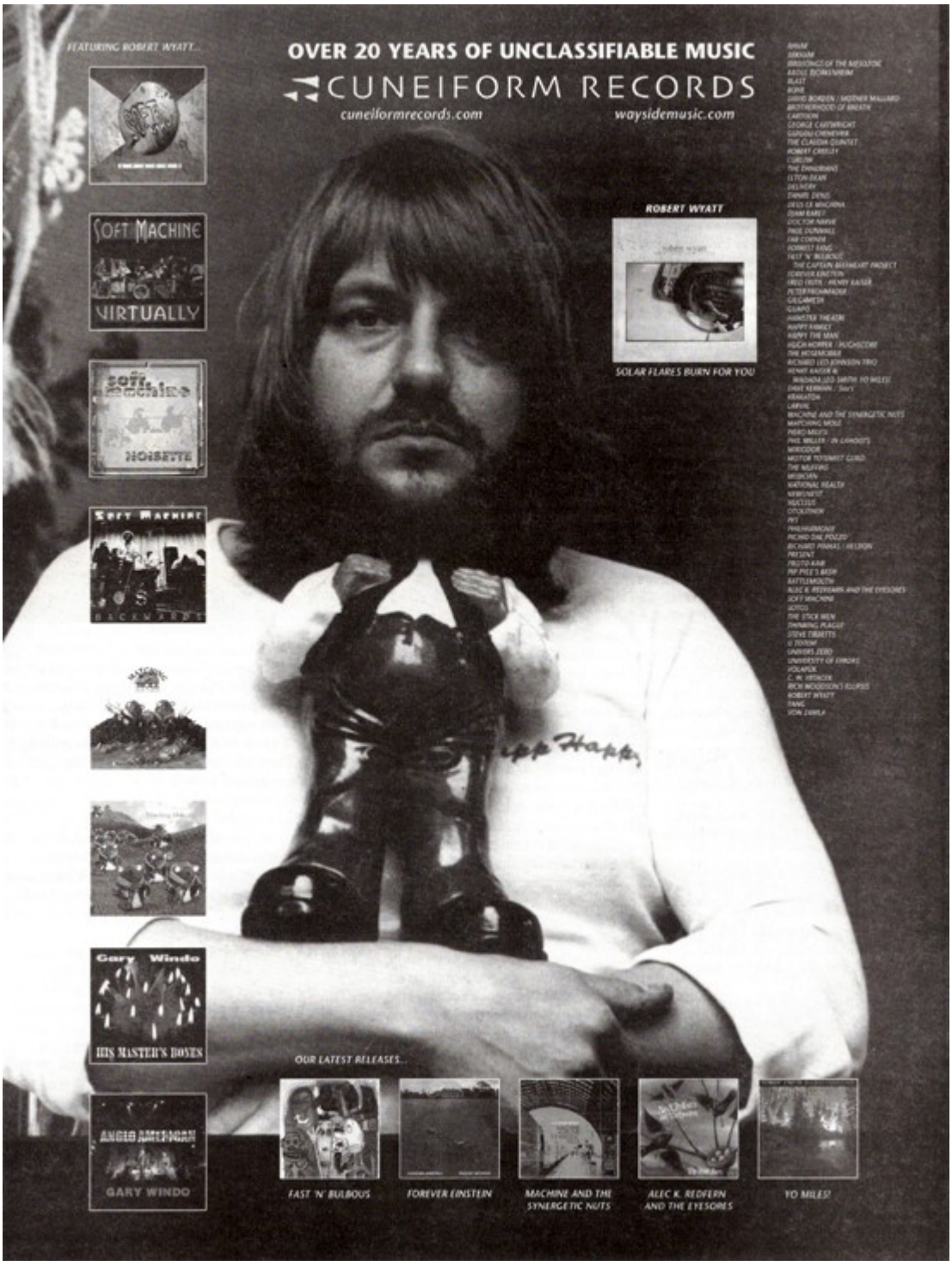


R.W.: That's a pretty good one isn't it?
G.P.: *It pares it down to something pretty simple and understandable.*
R.W.: I think he's great, I love Chomsky.
G.P.: *Oh he's great; and it's nice to hear you mention Michael Moore; he's actually got relatives here and has visited a few times.*
R.W.: Oh really? Well we were lucky enough to see Michael Moore in action on stage in London where he got a full house every night. As great as the films and the books are; the stage performance was uh... I felt "I'd witnessed someone in the great tradition of Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl; you know what I mean?
G.P.: *Yeah, he's brilliant.*
R.W.: That's the dark side of the moon that we hope gets spun 'round to the front one day.
G.P.: *How inspirational was your early meeting with Daevid Allen?*
R.W.: Well the main thing about Daevid was he was older, and hadn't been through the stuff; that me as a schoolboy had been told that I was gonna have to do. You know, passing exams and all that. Well I was rubbish at passing exams, I was rubbish at school. (laughs) Daevid showed me that you are allowed to fail exams really. He was already in his twenties when we were schoolboys.
G.P.: *A sage old fellow.*
R.W.: And he was already out there doing stuff. He already had contacts in Paris and London with some people in the avant garde scene. So that was the influence there really.
G.P.: *How did you and Alfreda meet?*
R.W.: Well we met sort of before we knew we met. She had actually worked at the bar at Ronny Scott's club in London; for starts I must have seen her quite a lot there. I think actually I noticed Alfie at the Roundhouse, which is one of the venues that groups
played in those days. In fact it's the same venue where we saw Michael Moore. In fact when we went to see Michael Moore, we went up to the pillar on which she was leaning when I went and spoke to her that first time. (laughter)
G.P.: *(laughter)*
R.W.: I just saw her; as it were for the first time. And she was so different from the kind of charming sort of stoned wilting flowers around the place. She had a kind of upright dignity; and kind of like a... I don't know, she just looked really good to me
and that was it. And the fact that when I did visit her flat she had the hippest record collection you can imagine! And it was all right there; Sly Stone, Coltrane...
G.P.: *And that tells you a lot right there.*
R.W.: Well you know right there I thought "What's this?"
G.P.: *Yeah, you know it's a good sign. That record collection tells you a lot.*
R.W.: Well it's a start; and then she had these art books of the German expressionists. But mainly she just looked fantastic. She looked sort of like Jean Seberg the great actress.
G.P.: *Oh, I loved Jean Seberg!*
R.W.: Well Alfie was sort of in that mould. I guess I was the lucky one there.
G.P.: *I guess!*
R.W.: It's timing they say.
G.P.: *Well Robert I've gotta tie it up.*
R.W.: Okay. (laughing) Thanks for your interest; and I think your magazine is

extraordinary.
G.P.: I just talked to Terry Riley for the next issue.
R.W.: Oh he's a great man. Please include somewhere in this my great gratitude to Terry Riley. He was very much an important part of Paris; and while we're talking about Daevid Allen. It was though Daevid Allen that I discovered Terry Riley; and he's been a benign and discreet source throughout our lives. Say hello to him through this interview. A lovely man.
G.P.: *Okay Robert, well thank you for your time.*
R.W.: Okay, it's a pleasure, and thanks for your interest in me.

Selected solo Robert Wyatt Discography

The End of an Ear (1970 CBS LP)
Rock Bottom (Virgin 26/7/74 LP)
I'm A Believer/Memories (Virgin 6/9/74 single)
The Peel Sessions (Strange Fruit 1974 EP)
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Virgin 30/5/75 LP)
At Last I Am Free/Strange Fruit (Rough Trade 11/80)
Arauco/Caimenera (Rough Trade 3/1980 single)
Stalin Wasn't Stalin' / Stalingrad (Rough Trade '81 single)
Shipbuilding/Memories Of You (Rough Trade 8/1982)
Nothing Can Stop Us (Rough Trade 3/1982 LP)
With Ben Watt - **Summer Into Winter** (Cherry Red 4/82 EP)
The Animals Film (Rough Trade 5/1982 LP)
Work In Progress (Rough Trade 8/1984 EP)
4 Tracks EP (Virgin 1984)
The Wind Of Change/Naimibia (Rough Trade 10/1985 single)
Old Rottenhat (Rough Trade 11/1985 LP)
Dondestan (Rough Trade 27/8/1991 LP/CD). A completely remixed and revised version of **Dondestan** was released in 1998 by Thirsty Ear /Hannibal
A Short Break (Voiceprint 19/9/1992 CD)
Mid-Eighties (Rough Trade 1993 CD)
With John Greaves and others - **Songs** (Resurgence 1995 CD)
Shleep (Hannibal 9/1997 CD)
Free Will And Testament/The Sight Of The Wind (Island 1997)
Solar Flares Burn For You (Cuneiform, 2003)
Cuckooland (Hannibal 2003)



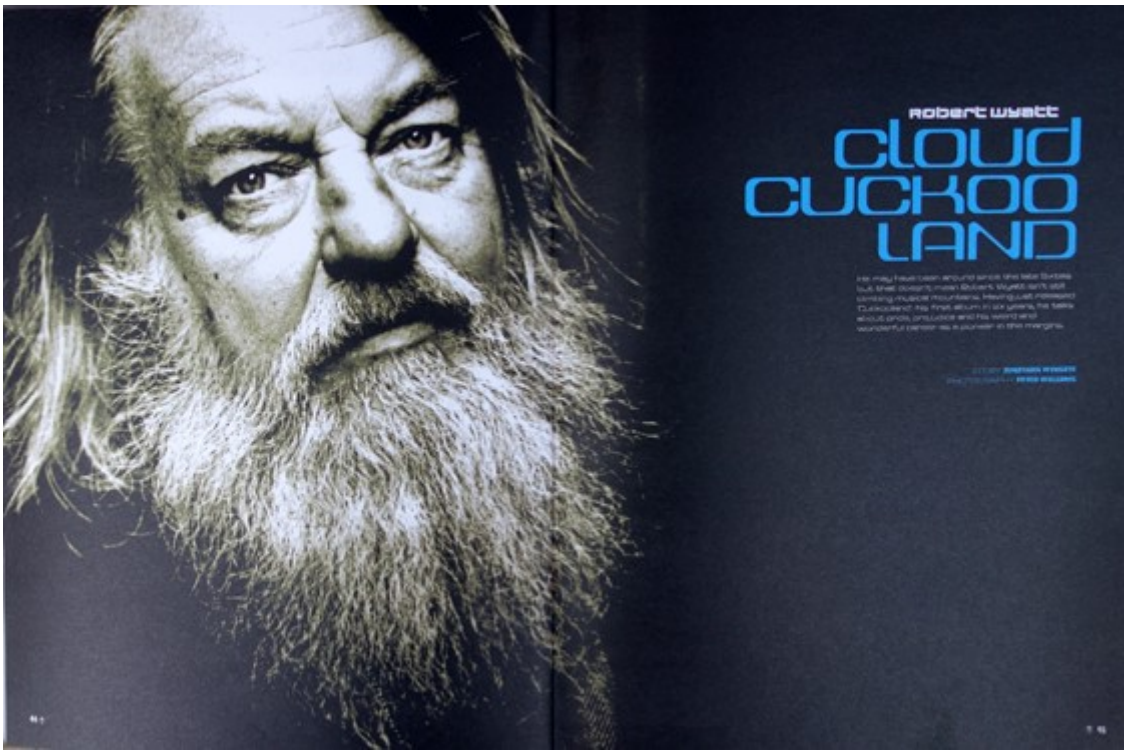
Ad for CUNEIFORM RECORDS in the same issue

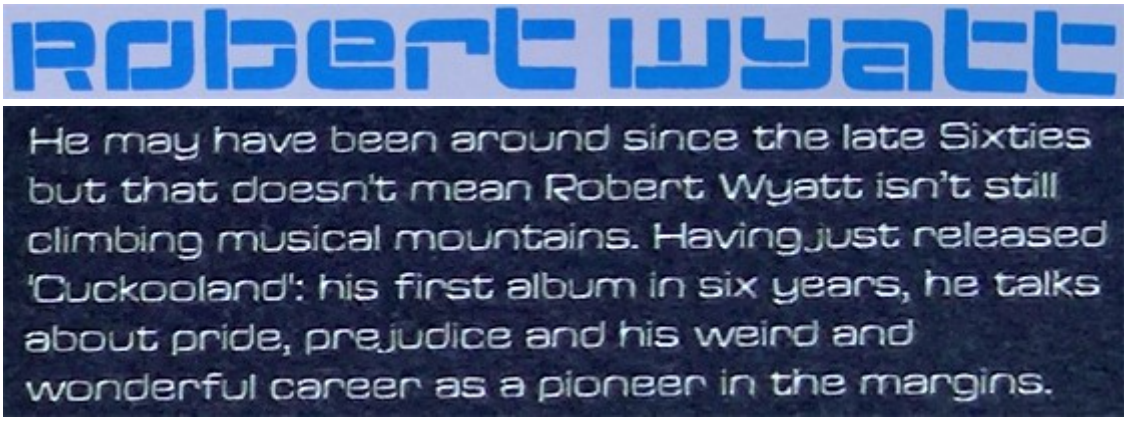
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Robert Wyatt Cloud Cuckooland - Straight No Chaser - Winter 2003





" I like being interviewed, but: I'm quite nervous beforehand,"
he says, maneuvering his wheelchair next to one of the gleaming chrome tables that line the balconies on the South Bank on a boiling hot August afternoon. He removes his black gloves and offers a firm handshake and a warm but ever so slightly wary smile. "Making music isn't an intellectual activity for me. It's an animal activity, like eating or sleeping. The moment you talk about it, it's inevitably pretentious. It's such a physical activity that anything you say about it has a vague whiff of bullshit about it."

We are here to talk about the release of 'Cuckooland', his first LP since 1997, yet by the time we say our goodbyes, our interview has lasted closer to three hours than the scheduled sixty minutes, and we have covered a plethora of subjects ranging from Coltrane to Communism, via Hendrix, humiliation...and archery.

'Cuckooland' is probably his most cohesive and accessible album so far, but it is still just as on the money and edgy as anything he's recorded since 1974's startling Rock Bottom. Ryuichi Sakamoto once said that Robert Wyatt has "the saddest voice in the world," although today Wyatt (incorrectly) describes how "my ever decreasing vocal range is now more or less reduced to a wino's mutter.

"Actually, I am incredibly happy with 'Cuckooland'," he says, when pressed, two hours into the interview. "I wanted to see if I could get the whole length of the CD and try and not be boring for a minute. I've never even attempted it before. It's like somebody who's only ever written short stories trying to write a novel. I feel like I've climbed a mountain, and I feel really at ease and light-headed now that we've got there.

"But nobody could call it a solo album. There are some great people on it like Gilad Atzmon, Annie Whitehead and Jennifer Maidman, who used to be Ian Maidman. She's much happier now as Jennifer than he ever was as Ian."

You could never accuse him of doing the hard sell. What Wyatt doesn't mention is that his guest list of pedigree chums also includes Paul Weller, David Gilmour and Brian Eno, whom Wyatt has worked with on numerous occasions since he sang on Eno's Taking Tiger Mountain. What does Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno - the ultimate mystery man - actually bring to the making of an album?

"Well, it's very hard to say," he smirks. "I couldn't really define the contribution made by Brian Eno, who darts in and out of things in an entirely unpredictable way, leaving a trail of discreet magic in his wake. He played some synthesiser, he sang on Forest, and he put some extraordinary little guitar effects on the last song. He's just around, really. He gave Alfie a fantastic massage when her back was hurting, he brought a fantastic piece of fruit from abroad that we ate...and it made us all sort of better. He's just a magician...like a magic fairy."



Robert Wyatt's mother Honor, worked as a producer for BBC programmes like Woman's Hour, while his father, George Wyatt, was on industrial psychologist until he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. "My dad played piano, but I didn't meet him until I was six. Shortly after he joined us, he contracted MS, so he couldn't play piano or work by the time I remember him. So as a teenager, my parents were living off lodgers. My big brother, Mark had an alto saxophone, and he used to bring home jazz records, so there was always music in the house."

What music were you hearing when you were growing up? "The first things I heard were my dad's records - 20th Century classical music like Stravinsky, Bartok, Debussy and Stockhausen. My brother brought things home like Ellington and Mingus, although it still didn't occur to me that I could play jazz because it seemed so bloody difficult. I started to hear people like Ray Charles and Nina Simone, and I knew I wanted to do this. Then I looked in the mirror, and I thought: You don't look a lot like Ray Charles, son," he laughs. "That was the start of it, really.

"I've got the same record collection now as I had as a late teenager," he continues. "I used to like the records because they were new, and I now I like them because they're old. Mingus, late 50s Miles Davis, Coltrane...right back to Louis Armstrong. I never thought I could play this stuff. It was just music that I used to listen to. Jazz certainly seemed like another world. My dad loved the whole thing of bohemian Europe in the 30s. The avant-garde movements in

the arts, surrealism, Dada and all those things were steaming away in my dad's mind, and therefore, in our house. I'm still working on what my parents gave me in terms of culture. I don't think it would have mattered if everybody had stopped making records in 1962. I'd still have plenty to listen to."

Robert Wyatt was born in Bristol in 1945. As the drummer and sometime singer with the legendary Soft Machine, the group he formed in Canterbury in 1968, he established a unique style that mixed melancholy music with his strange brew of English eccentricity and avant-garde jazz-rock.

"I spent all of '68 on tour with Hendrix," he recalls. "It was all just a bit of a blur. The Paradox is that it was because he'd done such disciplined homework on his music that he was able to be so free with it. If he went off on a solo, he could go anywhere and get back to base because he was so well drilled in the first place. He'd worked with The Isley Brothers and Little Richard - those bands were run like army units.

"It was soldiers coming, lock up your daughters stuff," he says. "Rock musicians tended to be like little princes with their retinue of servants. Hendrix was very courteous...an absolute gent. My eyes still actually water at the memory of him as a person, I can tell you. Compared with the boorish lumpiness that one associates with rock, Hendrix was a very feline person among a lot of very lupine characters."

After three groundbreaking LPs, Wyatt found himself having less and less say in the creative direction Soft Machine were taking, and by the time they came to record their next two albums, he had already made his first solo effort, 1970's patchy End Of An Ear. "I recorded End Of An Ear while I was with Soft Machine in exasperation. I just wanted to open the Windows and shout my head off a bit, which is what I did. But it was useful preparation."

Wyatt was soon fired from the Softs without warning for reasons he still doesn't understand over 30 years later. "I don't know why they kicked me out," he says sadly. "You'd have to ask them. I just got a phone call saying 'we've got another drummer'. I respected them so much that I thought they must be right and I deserved it. I thought Soft Machine was my family. I've thought of a million reasons why they asked me to leave - all perfectly justified - and that didn't leave me feeling any better.

"I think what really hurts is humiliation," he continues, staring out blankly over the Thames. "When people try and analyse the unrest in the world, they always think in terms of the haves and have-nots, but I think humiliation plays a big part in unrest, politically. Oscar Wilde was right - nothing is worse than physical pain, but in terms of debilitating battles of the mind, anyone who's been rejected will know that it's such a bombshell that it's unbelievable how it can wreck you."

Wyatt now looks upon the 60s as "a bit of a waste of a decade, at least as far as me getting anywhere was concerned. I think I'm probably a late developer. It wasn't until the 70s that I started really working on how to write tunes and put things together. I'm nearly 60 now, and from my point of view, I preferred all the other decades I've lived in. A lot of things came to the surface via popular culture in the 60s, but they were mostly things that had already been steaming away in various underground circles, whether it was Rhythm & Blues or the whole psychedelic scene. It was all put through the rock 'n' roll sausage machine and made accessible. But I was quite happy when it was just underground myself," he laughs. "I like this secret Society thing. When these secret society's persisted, like the Mod thing and the Northern Soul thing, I really admired that, because you didn't have to read the fashion magazines to find out about it.

"I thought The Beatles were alright," he says, "but not transcendental. The Beatles was cosy, whereas people like Coltrane take you to Planet Z and then drop you back gently on earth. If I'd got into The Beatles before jazz, maybe it would have moved me more."

He soon got another group together called Matching Mole, who made two albums before disbanding. "It was such a chaotic time. I suppose I started to drink for the same reason as anybody else does - because I've got a low boredom threshold. We were all drunk, and the only thing I salvaged out of it was that somewhere in there I married Alfie and had two kids."

In the summer of 1973, Robert Wyatt got drunk at a party, fell out of a fourth floor window and broke his back, leaving him confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

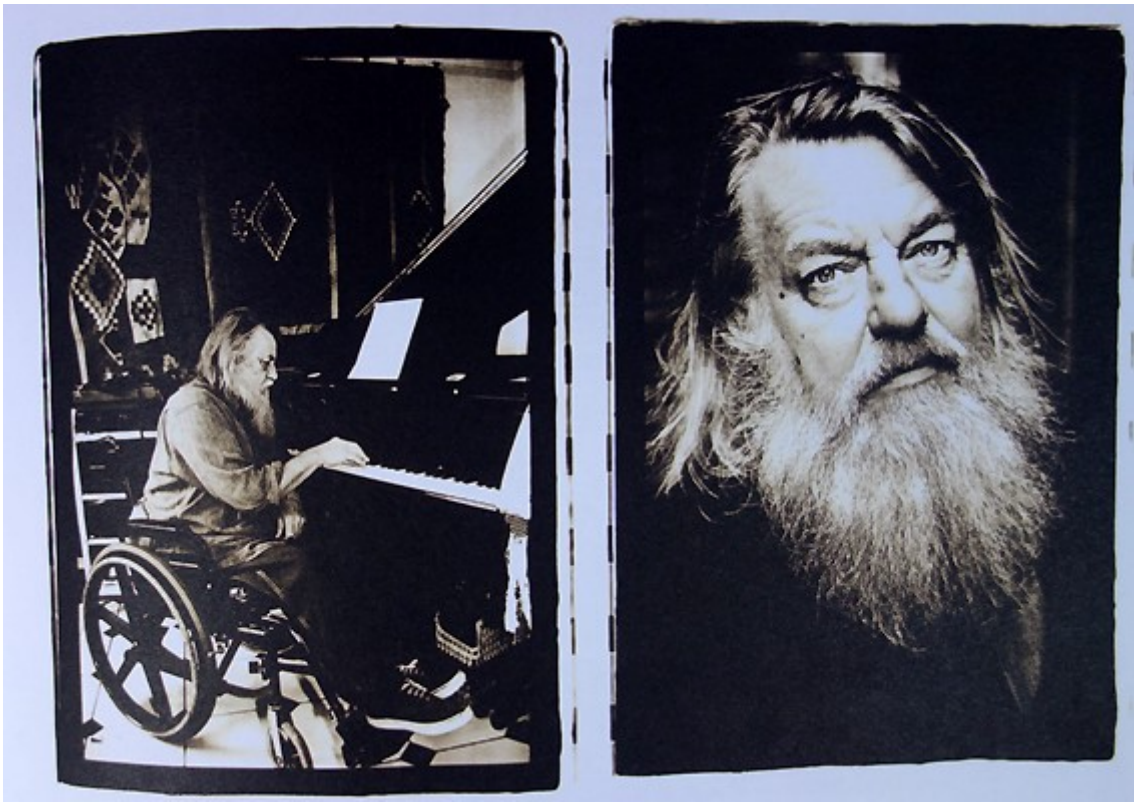
"I was barely conscious when I fell, and I wasn't conscious at all when I landed," he says. "It's like it happened to somebody else. I remember lying there for a second and hearing this

amazing scream echoing across the courtyard that I'd fallen into. Later, somebody told me that that was me."

Did the accident change your attitude to life? "No," he replies, stubbing out a cigarette. "It was like falling off a bicycle. I just fell off and got back on from another angle. It was a bizarre diversion...a bit like a long dream. When you wake up, you're disorientated and you can't quite remember the story. I was unconscious for six weeks, although I was in hospital for nearly a year. When I came out of hospital, I got stuck straight into the music. I'd actually written a lot of 'Rock Bottom' just before the accident.

"I found an unused room in the hospital with an upright piano in it. The alternative to hiding in that room was being taken off to do archery or wholesome exercises. The archery teacher was a funny bloke," he continues with a grin. "He'd come up to you and say: 'I used to work for the LA Police, you know. I don't have to be doing this.' I'd say: 'Right. OK.' So, archery didn't really take off with me."

'Rock Bottom' was followed a year later by 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard', another astonishing box of tricks that included the first of Wyatt's two hits, a cover of The Monkees' I'm A Believer' as well as the song, 'Sonia', composed by South African trumpeter, Mongezi Feza, who died from double pneumonia in an English hospital. Wyatt believes that if Feza had been born white, he would have survived. He also believes it was this incident that acted as the catalyst to kick-start his lifelong fascination with politics. He spent many years as a member of the Communist Party, although he is not a member of any political organisation these days.



> Zoom

"When he died, I was so angry that I think that was a sudden jolt into much more immediate politicization," he recalls. "I suddenly realised that politics wasn't such an abstract thing...it wasn't just conceptual or a theoretical thing. Why is it that he'd come all the way here and bring us such fun with his music and then die like a dog in an institution? I just thought: Fuck this, you know? So I really started to find out what apartheid was all about, because I was such a fan of black music. I just couldn't square the circle of these wonderful people and their music and how life seemed to be so unfair.

'Then I started reading up about it, and the only people who ever really explained things in a way that made sense tended to be anarchists and Marxists. I started to get interested in how the world was run and who ran it on whose behalf. Mongezi's death definitely kick-started politics into the frontline of my consciousness. I got more and more involved in politics, and

in looking for musical connections in politics."

How would you define Communism? "I have a very simple motto - an old trade union motto: Nothing is too good for the workers. If there's one spare penny going out of any enterprise, then it seems to me that the people who should get that spare penny are the people who did the work, not the people who own it."

Wyatt became increasingly involved in politics and enjoying a normal life. "I got involved in Communist Party activities, but I was also enjoying having a life with Alfie. I wanted to have a life and just get by, you know? But you can't. You've got to earn a living. Me on about the workers - there was no point in just watching them."

He was introduced to Rough Trader Geoff Travis, who persuaded him to get back into the studio and start making music again after a five-year hiatus. "I released a few albums with Rough Trade. I try and make records that I don't think anybody else is gonna make. There's no point in thinking: I'd really like to be able to play alto saxophone like Ornette Coleman.

"I shift through all the various noises in my head until I hear something that I can't imagine anybody else making," he explains. "When I actually write, I pick up a certain harmonic idea and it will float about like a virus for years in my brain. It's a very slow process. I wrote a lot of 'Cuckooland' within a year, but I was also using bits and pieces I'd had knocking about for 10 years. Some of the songs are older than the stuff on 'Shleep' - they just hadn't found a home. I find it quite hard to come up with more than about one song a year, so I sometimes find other peoples' tunes to do to complete my CDs."

His other chart entry is his breathtakingly beautiful take on 'Shipbuilding', Elvis Costello's anti-Falklands War lament from 1983. "I didn't really understand the song," he says. "They're amazing lyrics. I was very honoured that someone as on the ball as Elvis Costello had written to me and asked me to do it."

Wyatt's career has brought him precious little commercial success, although today he is undoubtedly one of the most influential avant-garde artists of all time, and albums such as 'Rock Bottom', 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard', 'Old Rottenhat', 'Dondestan' and 'Shleep' are considered to be timeless classics by those lucky few in the know.

"I have no idea what influence I've had, because, like I said, my record collection stopped around 1962," he grins. "I mean, you talk about the effects of paraplegia... I suppose I can't easily get around in a practical way, but it seems to me that I have probably compensated for that by becoming fantastically emotionally and mentally connected with lots of the rest of the world through my music."

How did you feel when you were asked to curate the Meltdown Festival a couple of years back? "I looked at my record collection and thought: There's nobody in it who's still alive," he chuckles. "Then the bloke who organises it sort of nudged me into realising that there was life beyond Miles Davis."

Wyatt hasn't stepped foot on a public stage for over 20 years now, and says that he will never do so again at any price. "I can't cope with a room full of people staring at me," he says. "I get so nervous. I tried doing it a couple of times, and I'd drink, and then I'd forget the words. I last sang on stage in 1983 with The Raincoats. For a lot of people, their main source of income is from touring. It would make me absolutely sick with fear. You know when you turn the water on with those rusty taps, for the first five minutes it's just brown water until it's cleared? Well, my music is a bit like that."

Robert and Alfreda Benge aka Alfie, who has contributed poetry and cover art for many of Wyatt's albums ever since they got married almost 30 years ago, tend to spend most of their time at home in a big old house in Louth, Lincolnshire. Wyatt sits at his piano downstairs and plays his records constantly, while Alfie is often to be found sitting upstairs painting her pictures: "I do karaoke at home...I put on records and join in. I listen to music incessantly...day in, day out. Alfie's art room is upstairs, and I can't go up there because of the wheelchair. She could stand at the top of the stairs and throw buns at me and say: "Fuck off," Robert Wyatt laughs. "But she doesn't. She's too polite."

Robert Wyatt's 'Cuckooland' is out on Rycodisc

Special Brew - Mojo - N° 119 - October 2003

Special brew

Robert Wyatt ★★★★

Cuckooland HANNIBAL



Wyatt's first album for six years features guest appearances by Annie Whitehead, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, David Gilmour and Paul Weller.

Review by
JIM IRVIN
Illustration by
LOUISE WEIR

FEW OF the Class of '68 - the year Robert Wyatt made his recorded debut with The Soft Machine — are doing much more than oldies shows these days. Even fewer are actually making new music which stands comparison with that of their heyday — all of which makes Wyatt's achievements with *Cuckooland* even more remarkable. Winding back 30 years, his tenure as one of Britain's most imaginative and energetic drummers ended abruptly when he broke his back in an accident. This forced him to concentrate his energies into his singing and songwriting — areas in which, fortunately, he was also exceptionally talented.

A slow worker but one who has never released a poor record, he has inched forward over hard-won ground to the point where, at the ripe old age of 58, he has made an album which ranks alongside his strongest work. Wyatt's voice, a uniquely affecting instrument which Ryuichi Sakamoto claimed to be "the saddest in the world", still sounds in good nick. Perhaps, as he claims, he has lost a few notes off the top of his range, but his manchild tones ring out sweet and true.

Maybe we should start putting up the bunting and proclaiming Wyatt a 'National Treasure', but somehow you can't imagine that title fitting him too comfortably. True, his work has always been imbued with a generosity of spirit and a chummy, often surreal, humour, but on *Cuckooland* other equally typical characteristics re-emerge: in particular a profound melancholy and a sympathy with the plight of those at the wrong end of geopolitical powermongering. Imprisoned Israeli scientist Mordechai Vanunu, former Iranian leader Mohammad Mossadegh, the dead of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the persecuted gypsies of the Czech Republic are among those who move through these songs.

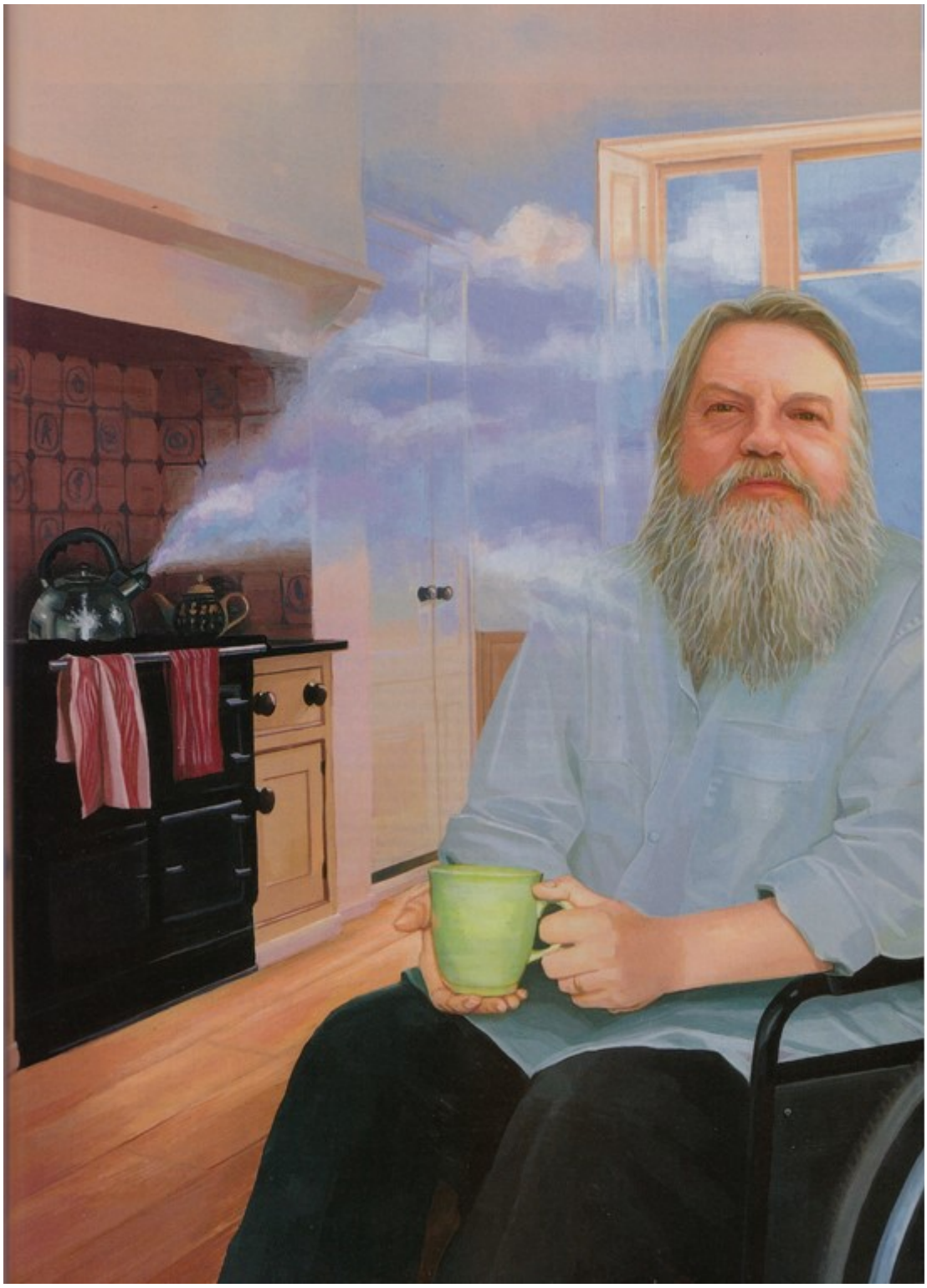


Cuckooland weighs in at 75 minutes, but for those with a limited attention span Wyatt demanded half-a-minute's silence in the middle to allow the listener to "go put the kettle on" or maybe to start with the second half first. Its predecessor, *Shleep*, came after a similarly long wait, but whereas that album was suffused with a light and warmth, *Cuckooland* is grainier and grittier, albeit punctuated by joyous eruptions. One of these is Old Europe, a vivid evocation of the Paris jazz scene of the '40s and '50s, including Miles Davis's romance with Juliette Greco, set to a springheeled bop rhythm. Here Wyatt plays drums, trumpet and keyboards, with saxes and clarinet provided by Israeli reedsman Gilad Atzmon.

Back in die '80s Wyatt chose to stop agonising about his limited songwriting output, pointing out that it had never held back Sinatra or Elvis. Cover versions assumed a greater role in his music and, latterly, collaborations with his partner Alfreda Benge have also become increasingly important. Here he tackles a number of songs by vocalist Karen Mantler, daughter of Mike Manlier and Carla Bley. Thee ominous Beware is one of their many vocal duets on the album, with her New York twang providing a satisfying contrast to his Home Counties enunciation. On Cuckoo Madame, Wyatt makes helium-high samples of Mantler's voice flit around his own as he sings Benge's creepy narrative, and the two trade more orthodox vocal lines on a languid cover of Antonio Carlos Jobim's bossa nova classic, Insensatez.

Wyatt has assembled a cast of exceptional musicians here and directs them with a mercurial touch. Although his heavy friends make some telling contributions, the lesser known Atzmon and his compatriot Yaron Stavi on double bass are particularly impressive, playing with strength and sensitivity. But Annie Whitehead is the crucial presence here. Her clear, singing trombone style is a perfect foil for Wyatt's dolorous tones, particularly on Lullaby For Hamza, a song addressed to a boy born just as the bombing of Iraq commenced. Given Wyatt's leftward political leanings one can hazard a guess what he felt about the attack, but this is a wonderful vocal performance. Over a gently bustling rhythm he sings "The world is wrong again, I need your lullaby/Night is long and sleep's just a dream," transmuting any residual anger into a healing song of tenderness and quiet defiance.

Jim Irving



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt talks to Mike Barnes.

Cuckooland seems quite dark in places.

'There have been some worrying events and we do live under what is the most unpleasant government in living memory, and I find that puts a dark grey cloud over the sunniest day, to be honest. Even if I'm not singing about politics it affects my general sense of alienation. I'm disappointed with the way English governments completely cave in to Washington all the time, it just makes me ill. I'm not against real Americans, they don't vote for these bastards any more than we do. So that's where the gloom comes from. Alfie came up with Lullaloop, about an old git trying to get to sleep and thank God she did, 'cos it does lighten it up a bit. But I feel as happy with the album as anything I've ever done in terms of

getting stuff out of my head onto tape - it's just a great sense of relief."

Your drumming on this album sounds more flamboyant than it has done for a long time.

"Yeah, for years I was traumatised by the thought that I don't want people saying, 'Not bad for a cripple', so I would just do percussion or no drums at all, or get in a drummer. But more recently I've had the room to leave the top of the kit out and actually you can do quite a lot with a couple of cymbals and a snare, and go into the studio and add a bit of bass drum. I thought: Well, what's stopping me?"

Do you agree with commentators who say that contemporary rock music lacks any political bite?

"I wouldn't think it was fair to single out musicians to have a duty to respond or not respond to things. I don't have a theory about it - if I'm writing stuff, whatever I'm thinking about comes out. Music is music and all I'm really trying to do is make nice sounding records. As Charlie Parker once said, I'm trying to get the prettiest notes in the right order."

Given the success of the Soupsongs tour of 2000 - where your music was played without your direct involvement - is there any chance we might actually see you on-stage in the future?

"Tell, the nearest I got was on the telly thing for BBC 4 -I did a few tunes with Annie's band on that but there was no audience. I like to be a back room person, a cook in a kitchen. I lose my nerve if I have to go out and meet the customers (*laughs*). Put it on a plate and let someone else take it out. But hearing someone else do something with my tunes is my favourite thing - it's fantastic."

You've described your voice as having being reduced to a "wino's mutter", which alarmed me until I realised it wasn't true.

(*Laughs*) "Well thank you, that's a relief! I'd rather it was that way round than me saying, Yeah, I'm still singing like a songbird, and then someone says, 'Sounds like a dozy old git to me.' There was a programme on Radio 2 the other day on Nina Simone and I thought, Blimey, this is the real thing. I feel like a molehill looking up at a mountain when I listen to that kind of voice. Luckily, the standards in rock music are so incredibly low that people like me can earn a living."

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Epiphanies - Wire N° 235 - September 2003

EPIPHANIES



Robert Wyatt learns the value of cheap music from a Ray Charles ballad.

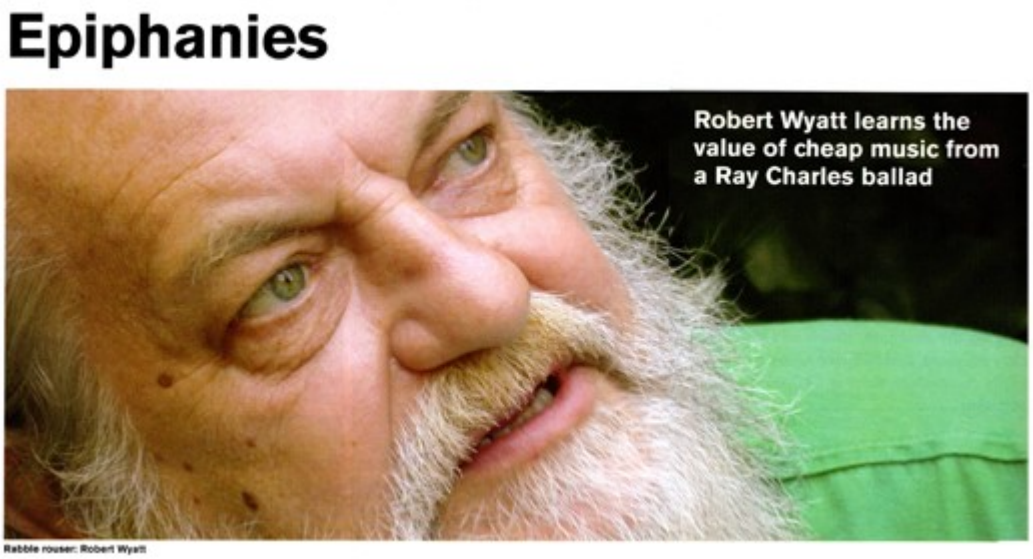
Rabble Rouser : Robert Wyatt
Photo : Keiko Yoshida

Before I can start, there's a caveat... well, two really. One, the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham said that the English don't know much about music but they like the noise it makes. The other is, Gunther Schuller, writing about jazz listeners, talks about the kind of cloth-eared lefties who think that "Strange Fruit" is a good song [Wyatt famously recorded the Billie Holiday song on a Rough Trade single in the 1980s]. I don't feel I'm an authority on music outside of what I know, there's all kinds of stuff about music I don't understand.

I'd been brought up to believe in serious music. For my Dad, most serious was Bartok and Hindemith. He had liked Fats Waller and Duke Ellington before the war, even though he didn't think they were serious music. I did, but my Dad knew they were real music at least, and as I was young, they were allowed. By then I was getting as much out of Gil Evans as I was out of Hindemith, and as far as I was concerned it was just as serious. But at that stage I still accepted the idea that there were intrinsically serious and shallow idioms, and my Dad's thing was that pop music was intrinsically shallow. I'd heard quite a lot of it because my sister had records, and they didn't interest me a lot. So I didn't have a problem with Dad's idea.

Until I came across an LP called *The Genius Of Ray Charles*. I thought, Genius? How could he be a genius if he's only a popular singer? Clearly a misuse of the word. I was like that. I didn't really have any argument with my Dad. I really liked my parents and I liked what they liked, the art of the 20th century, the surrealists, the dadaists and all that stuff. But with Ray Charles, it was a difficult moment because as far as I can hear, bearing in mind my caveats, Ray Charles singing a ballad, even a soppy one like "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying", is as good as Bartok's *Violin Concerto* or Miles Davis. I knew it was a slushy

pop song, just a tune with tinkly cocktail piano, and because it had violins on it, it didn't have any jazz cred. I couldn't even work out what the words were half the time, but I thought, it's an astonishing record, absolutely beautiful. Suddenly any idea of a hierarchy of art crumbled away in my mind, and as far as I was concerned, there was no intrinsically superior idiom.



It was only a small crack in the music listening in the house, but it opened the way for absolutely anything. I could now enjoy Buddy Holly or Beethoven or whatever. After that. I found out I was constantly going against the grain in the sense that every new idiom sets up a hierarchy: good versus naff, quality versus crap, and so on. and on my new trajectory I always seemed to be finding serious, solemn beauty in what was considered naff. Later, when I was making music myself, it was bit embarrassing because we [Soft Machine] weren't playing regular pop music. People said, "This is better than pop music, it is superior." Once again. I could see incipient hierarchies reemerging. like there was this need to have them.

On *The Genius Of*, one side was big band Ray Charles, "Let The Good Times Roll", things like that, and the other side was strings. Well, the jazz hierarchy at that time had it that the respectable side was the big band lot, the other side was the girls' stuff, and I always liked the girls' stuff. I went to absurd lengths, it now seems, to break this hierarchy. I was into The Bee Gees. Lynsey De Paul, The Monkees, anything. Gary Glitter? Let it roll. Fantastic. I wasn't just asserting something against an old guard but the very new guard as well, which was very busily constructing an intellectual hierarchy, of which we [Soft Machine] were petty princes. It was completely mad and I thought, I have got to deal with this. So I did a Monkees song [in 1974, several years after leaving Soft Machine, Wyatt released "I'm A Believer" as a solo single.]

"Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying" interested me as well politically. My parents and a lot of their friends on the Left, not revolutionaries, were egalitarian when it came to economic political issues. But in their minds an intellectual aristocracy had replaced the cultural aristocracy that they had relinquished and abandoned. Similarly, as much as the Socialist countries abandoned economic hierarchies in the Western sense, they vociferously embraced bourgeois cultural values and had an almost hysterical fear of popular culture. They were taken with a thing called improving music, improving culture, which is good for you, and naff culture, which is bad for you, and children must be guided away from all these bad things. The more I read about it, I realised that this tendency had been going on for centuries. The church, for example, used to have a problem with rabble music. Organised church music was elevating, and the music of the rabble, when they got pissed, caught sexual diseases and that sort of thing, was the bad kind. The church monitored the rabble with totalitarian verve, intervening constantly to break down the power of mob culture and mob music. Following on from that, you couldn't shock my parents' communist or egalitarian friends by saying. "I don't believe in God", but you could by saying, "I don't believe in Mozart".

Well, I really disagreed with that. The Left missed a trick there, because the idea that serious music was morally elevating took a bit of a battering after the Second World War.

What they talked about as serious music, basically, was the music of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Opera, symphony and all the great structures of music gave us the Axis powers, and how morally elevating was that? There wasn't anything wrong with the music, but the claims made for it were ersatz religious claims made out of fear of the mob.

All this came out of listening to Ray Charles, who made it perfectly all right to be a genius and I have clung on to that key assertion nervously ever since. Even so, I hadn't yet finished with hierarchies myself. Before buying a record, which wasn't very often in those days, I went on and on subdividing jazz into participants and innovators and geniuses and not-geniuses. All right, we got the geniuses here: Thelonious Monk, yes; Charlie Mingus, yeah; Charlie Parker, yeah; Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, yes... Ornette Coleman, can I buy Ornette Coleman? Well, OK, for the tunes, yeah?

Of course, I was missing the main event, which was hundreds and hundreds of people playing music and having a fantastic time doing it, out of which come some people with a few diamonds. But genius is in the whole culture, fermenting away in hundreds of different ways and every participant is part of it.

Interview by Biba Kopf. Cuckooland is out this month on Hannibal

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'I've no idea what's next' - The Guardian - 22 September 2003

The Guardian

'I've no idea what's next'

His voice may be a wino's mutter, but Robert Wyatt's optimism shines through. Tim Cumming meets the former Soft Machine singer

"Delfina was a Spanish woman we knew who had a farm in Wiltshire and invited us to stay after the accident," says musician Robert Wyatt, looking back on the making of his 1974 cult classic, Rock Bottom. The "accident" happened when he fell, drunk, from a fourth-floor window at a party. He broke his spine and was left confined to a wheelchair. Thirty years after that life-changing fall, Wyatt and his partner, Alfreda Benge, are once again Delfina's tenants at her live-in studios for visiting British and international artists on an untidy stretch of Bermondsey Street in south London. The studio has been Wyatt's London base for the past few years, during which he has recorded a new album, Cuckooland. It is an appropriate setting, with a spirit of internationalism and communalism that mirrors his own art and concerns.

"I was brought up on the music of Europe from the first part of the 20th century," he says, citing Webern, Hindemith and Bartok, "which sets you up for what happens in the second half. I was used to the idea that there were no wrong notes, and I was ready for the postwar stuff like Stockhausen. But what really grabbed me was black music: Duke Ellington, Ornette Coleman."

And then pop music, which came with coffee bars, girls and painful adolescence, and was the medium that held them all together. "I'm really grateful to Buddy Holly and Little Richard for providing the background to all that. To make it all OK."

Pop, jazz and the breakdown of harmonic structure; the three-cornered hat of Wyatt's career was already in place before he had even raised a drumstick. "I left school at 16 completely unable to do anything at all," he remembers. "Then the Beat Group thing started, so I started playing drums and singing, the two instruments you can play without learning a thing about music." He laughs heartily, a three-packs-a-day laugh. "They seemed about the right career choice for me."

Soft Machine, the band that established him as a drummer, vocalist and composer, emerged from what is retrospectively called the Canterbury Scene. Alongside Pink Floyd, they were psychedelic totems of late-1960s London. But their development into cerebral avant-jazz slowly eclipsed Wyatt's more playful, homespun conceptualism. He left the band after their fourth album in 1971, in a familiar tale of musical differences and personal conflict that led him to establish Matching Mole, its name a pun on the French for Soft Machine.

Originally intended as a vehicle for "simple love songs", Matching Mole's music soon expanded on the free style of Soft Machine, with Wyatt's exploration of vocal drones and myriad electronic effects. Remarkable live recordings recently released on the American label Cuneiform reveal a group whose inventiveness flirted with chaos yet came out on top, their avant-garde seriousness tinged with Wyatt's spirit of play.

Wyatt had been on the road almost constantly for a decade until his accident in 1973. Afterwards, Matching Mole was disbanded, and though there were a handful of solo gigs, his performing days were over. "I couldn't really handle it as a singer. It was too naked. I got stage fright."

After the accident he started crafting his own art in the studio. The submarine lyricism of Rock Bottom was the result, composed in Venice before the accident and on a piano in the hospital afterwards, during Wyatt's long convalescence. After a solo recording session on Delfina's farm, the tapes were taken to London, where musicians such as South African trumpeter Mongezi Feza added their parts. It had originally been planned as a band recording, but the accident freed Wyatt from the "terrible difficulties" of being the leader. "I didn't know how I was going to do it, and it was decided for me by circumstances. So what could have been debilitating turned into an excuse to work in a different way without the pressure and responsibilities of performing or being in a group."

Feza's trumpet also featured on Wyatt's next LP, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, but his unexpected death while being treated in hospital for a nervous disorder - a death Wyatt puts down to neglect engendered by racism - galvanised Wyatt towards a decade of political engagement with the Communist party. It was seven years before he released another album, and by then the musical climate had changed completely.

"What I liked about the Communist party," he says, "was that it was internationalist and opposed to the totalitarian global empire in which we're enveloped. It was the only party to see things on that scale." But as he joined, a new generation were about to embark on what Wyatt calls "a practice run for new Labour. So I was in the ludicrous position of joining it as a new member and immediately becoming an anachronism."



Wyatt: 'what could have been debilitating turned into an excuse to work in a different way without the pressure and responsibilities of performing or being in a group.' Photo: Eamonn McCabe

Punk and the rise of independent labels finally brought Wyatt back into the studio, but on his own terms. Geoff Travis at the Rough Trade record label secured his release from the huge debts and tiny royalties saddled on him by Richard Branson at Virgin, and, for the first time, he felt a degree of emancipation from a music industry that he felt had exploited him from the beginning. "My contemporaries felt alienated from music, just as I thought there was somewhere in it where I felt at home. Two Tone came along, Weller and all that lot, and I liked them, I felt more at home in their generation."

The 1980s albums - Nothing Can Stop Us Now and Old Rottenhat - were militant, impassioned and idiosyncratic, the former mixing Chic's Now I Am Free with Stalin Wasn't Stallin', a 1940s black American gospel song in praise of Uncle Joe. There were just two albums in the 1990s. He released Dondestan in 1991: the title is the Spanish phrase for "Where are they?" The highly acclaimed Shleep followed in 1997. By then he had won ownership of his back catalogue from Virgin, and struck a deal with Ryko after Rough Trade was bought out, giving him a measure of freedom and control rare in the industry. "Since Shleep," he says, "it's been the first time in our life when we haven't been poor."

These days he tends to work alone, or in pairs - with fellow musicians, and with Jamie Johnson, the co-producer on Cuckooland. "I concentrate exactly like a painter, with tape instead of canvas and instruments instead of brushes." Percussion, keyboards, cornet, trumpet, and vocals are all part of his palette.

The making of Cuckooland was one of slow accumulation. The jazz-tinged Trickledown dates back almost a decade. "I get ideas and put them on tape, and they're like viruses looking for a body." With the freedom to record at ex-Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera's studio without watching the clock, he could give free rein to his cinematic process of composition. "I like to work with musicians one at a time - get them in for a day or two, and go right through the material and find bits where they can add colour."

Guests on the album include trombonist Annie Whitehead, Israeli sax player Gilad Atzmon, as well as Floyd guitarist Dave Gilmour, Paul Weller and Wyatt's friend and collaborator for many years, Brian Eno, whose role he describes as "making appropriate discrete contributions, a very specific nudge in the right direction on all fronts".

The album is heavily instrumental, with as many textures and tangents as a late Picasso, or his beloved Juan Miro. "I do get my sense of form and rightness, the texture, the number of events and where they're placed, from painters. It makes sense to me what happened to Miro during his life - I can absolutely feel it."

His singing voice is lower than it was - a wino's mutter, he calls it - and he plays trumpet to reach the higher ranges where his melancholy falsetto used to take him. "I can still hear those high notes," he says. "I didn't want to feel pinned down as a singer, and the trumpet frees me from that."

Cuckooland retains that disarming humour that characterises much of Wyatt's work, mixing the celebration of what he calls "hopeless optimism" with the melancholy of that same feeling. Its brass fanfares hark back to the clear, bright playing of Feza on Rock Bottom, as well as his enduring love for Ellington, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane. Often avoiding conventional song structures, it is a music you can almost reach out and touch.

"I think sometimes you can get rather lonely," he says at one point, referring to not only a personal alienation but a political one, too. "I feel a chill of alienation when I'm told what Britishness is by someone for whom I feel contempt, or at least revulsion." For Wyatt, the nationalism of David Blunkett, the home secretary, on the front page of that day's paper is the kind of political and cultural parochialism that his music has long fought against.

As for the future, there are three new tracks on Cuneiform's Solar Flares for You, a fascinating collection of Wyatt's solo rarities, two of them home recordings completed this year with ex-Softie Hugh Hopper. Their looped and layered brass patterns sound as fresh and exciting as ever. "I've no idea what will happen next," Wyatt says. "I've got loads of things I could do, but they're all little viruses and flimsy bits. I never talk about what I'm going to do before I've done it. Not in my line."

Tim Cumming

· Cuckooland is released on Ryko on September 29. Solar Flares Burn for You is out now on Cuneiform.

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The Primer : Soft Machine - The Wire N° 232 - June 2003

THE PRIMER : SOFT MACHINE







A bi-monthly guide to the core recordings of a particular artist or genre. This month: John Cratchley and Samantha Brown trace Soft Machine's passage from London's psychedelic underground to their later jazz rock peaks, while picking up the trails of founding members Kevin Ayers, Daevid Allen and Robert Wyatt, and touching base with their fellow pioneers Keith Tippett and Nucleus. Illustration: Savage Pencil



> Zoom

Pre-Soft Machine incarnation The Wilde Flowers on stage in Canterbury, 1966

Common criticism of jazz-rock argues that it pursued the worst excesses of each genre, and caused irrevocable damage to both. Peter Schulze, who produced many jazz-rock concerts for Radio Bremen in the 1970s, recalls that during this time many jazz groups incorporated rock sensibilities, but far fewer rockers repaid the compliment. The outstanding exception was Soft Machine. At the height of their powers, this polymorphous British outfit achieved a complete synthesis of rock and jazz by drawing not on the excesses, but the strengths of both: raw energy, high volume, intricate time signatures, exemplary musicianship, expressive improvisation, gravitas and whimsy. To arrive at such a successful amalgam required a rare mix of alchemy and serendipity.

The journey starts in the early 1960s, in Canterbury, Kent, where grammar school friends Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper and Mike Ratledge bonded over a shared passion for the bop

and free jazz of Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman. In early 1962 Wyatt befriended Daevid Allen, an itinerant Australian guitarist and Beat poetry aficionado. Allen became a mentor to the three friends, inviting them to join him in London for an event at the ICA performing free jazz and poetry in the company of Brion Gysin and William S Burroughs. Soon after, Allen moved to Paris to conduct tape experiments with Burroughs and the then relatively unknown Terry Riley, among others. Back in Canterbury, meanwhile, Ratledge left for Oxford to study philosophy; and Wyatt and Hopper formed The Wilde Flowers with Hopper's brother Brian, Pye Hastings, Richard and David Sinclair, Richard Coughlan and Kevin Ayers. A few Voiceprint compilations documenting the so-called Canterbury scene quickly scotch the legend about it being the UK's Haight-Ashbury, but they usefully reveal The Wilde Flowers as a not untypical local group - bar the odd jolt of free jazz - playing R&B and soul covers and originals. Allen eventually returned to Canterbury with unknown American guitarist Larry Nolan to rehearse with Ayers. The trio invited Ratledge, back from Oxford, and Wyatt to join them, leaving the rest of The Wilde Flowers to form Canterbury's other great mainstays, Caravan.

When Nolan left as quickly as he came, they went out as a quartet with Allen taking over on guitar, Wyatt on drums and vocals, Ratledge on organ, and Ayers on bass and vocals. After a mercifully brief spell playing out as Mr Head, in mid-1966 they renamed themselves The Soft Machine, after the Burroughs novel, with author's blessing. Although in the beginning Soft Machine worked from a song base, it was fed by two highly idiosyncratic writers in Ayers and Wyatt, while their penchant for improvisation meant they were soon taking their songs beyond the standard three minute pop barrier. About the only place the group felt any sense of belonging was in London's burgeoning psychedelic underground, which in its pre-"Itchycoo Park" period was a loose amalgam of heads open to all shades of weirdness.

Residencies at the UFO and Zebra clubs and extensive touring in the UK followed until July 1966. Outside London's head set, however, the group quickly ran into hostile, uncomprehending audiences with little sympathy for the Soft Machine brand of psychedelic revolution, which was founded on porous medleys of songs and jams at excessive volume. In the summer of 1967, they temporarily quit the UK for dates in France, only to lose guitarist Allen on their way back, when he was refused UK entry as an undesirable alien.



> Zoom

Gong, pictured in 1971 in Hérouville, France, with Kevin Ayers (2nd left) and Daevid Allen (centre)



> Zoom

Soft Machine touch down at the UFO Club, London, 1967

For the remainder of 1967, Soft Machine carried on as a trio. In January 1968, they departed for San Francisco to join Jimi Hendrix's US tour as support group. Before returning home, Soft Machine recorded their first album at the Record Plant Studios, New York. It was eventually released the following year, but only in the USA. Before it came out, Soft Machine had rejoined Hendrix for the winter leg of his US tour. The punishing schedule left the group exhausted, causing them to split up as soon as it was over. But with a two-LP contract to honour, Wyatt and Ratledge were persuaded to reform, recruiting Hugh Hopper on bass in place of Ayers, who had disappeared somewhere in Spain. In 1969, they fulfilled their contractual requirements by recording *Soft Machine Volume 2*.

The chemistry of this Soft Machine trio, experimenting with song segues and ever extending instrumental bridges at deafening volume, triggered the chain reaction that caused the tectonic plates of rock and jazz to shift, grate and collide. In an incredibly fertile three year span between 1969-71, Soft Machine concertina'd between three and

seven members, as the core trio experimented with a horn section involving trumpeter Marc Charig, Elton Dean on alto sax and saxello, Lyn Dobson on soprano and tenor and Nick Evans on trombone. The horn section, minus Dobson, had been lifted piecemeal from another pioneering jazz-rock outfit: Keith Tippett's Sextet. Tippett was a jazz pianist who was already integrating rock sensibilities seamlessly into his music. His sextet had a fixed horn section, but employed the rhythm players best suited to his music's fast-changing demands. Tippett's bass pool included Jeff Clyne, Roy Babbington and Harry Miller, and the drum seat was filled by Phil Howard, John Marshall, Bryan Spring or Alan Jackson. Both Howard and Marshall were destined to replace Wyatt in Soft Machine, when the drumming vocalist was finally squeezed out of the group he founded by an instrumental faction which thought they were above or beyond mere songwriting. Babbington also collaborated with The Softs, eventually replacing Hopper. In the meantime, the impact of Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* period on the rock world was sending ripples to British shores, which was echoed in the electric jazz of lan Carr's Nucleus, the third indispensable group of UK's great jazz-rock experiment, featuring a rhythm section of Jeff Clyne and John Marshall.

The music exploding out of this Soft Machine/Keith Tippett/Nucleus triangle was a powerful, often astonishing rock-driven fusion fired up on free impulses as it enthusiastically negotiated jazz's trickier time signatures. Between them, they opened up a space where the likes of Henry Cow crossfertilised with their oppositional rock Improv; where Soft Machine founder Daevid Allen located an audience for Gong's loopy synths, busking saxes an space rock silliness; where The Softs' Canterbury colleagues Caravan timidly raised the hemline of their post-psychedelic Prog whimsy, if only for a tantalising moment; where Hatfield And The North forged a thrilling, if shortlived, fusion-tempered rock just before the deluge of thrill-seeking second-string jazzers washed the excitement out of the jazz-rock adventure. But these are bit players of varying importance in this particular story. Besides, most of its principal players managed to engineer their own downfalls without any outside help. After six albums Soft Machine had shaken out the last of its experimental elements with the loss of bassist Hopper and reedsman Elton Dean, whose playing kept the free flame burning through The Softs' *Third*, *Fourth* and *Fifth* releases. Ratledge, meanwhile, sulked his way through *Seven* and *Bundles* (1978), Soft Machine's first record for their new label Harvest, and then quit the spotlight for a career in library music, apparently. By the time Karl Jenkins took the helm, Soft Machine had completely frittere away their earlier phenomenal ability to orchestrate monumental blocks of fuzz bass, organ and brass noise with wit and grace.



> Zoom

Soft Machine (Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge and Daevid Allen) in Dulwich Park

With Jenkins doggedly running the franchise until 1981, Soft Machine accelerated the erosion of the group's reputation that had set in for real when Hopper left after *Six*. But in truth, the damage had begun earlier. Indeed, some argue it was seeded in the same impulses that drove them to become one of the heaviest, most powerful and at times pitiless innovative forces in any field at the dawn of the 70s. These peaks were attained at the great cost of Robert Wyatt's vocals and humane lyrics, not to mention his inspired drumming. Fortunately, labels like Cuneiform, Voiceprint and, latterly, Hux have unearthed a rich vein of archive releases that attest to the group's astonishing power and capacity for change between 1967-71.

It is no coincidence that all Soft Machine's early absconders - Daevid Allen, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean and Wyatt, both with Matching Mole and solo - went on creating absorbing music, while Jenkins made his mark on the charts in the 1990s with the execrable chill-out/Gregorian chant project Adiemus (which, incidentally, credited Ratledge).



> Zoom

Recording at Olympic Studios, February 1967

THE SOFT MACHINE

JET PROPELLED PHOTOGRAPHS
CHARLY SNAP133 CD 1967/1989
SOFT MACHINE TURNS ON VOL 1
VOICEPRINT VP231 CD 1967/2001
SOFT MACHINE TURNS ON VOL 2
VOICEPRINT VP234 CD 1967/2001

In April 1967, Soft Machine - here, Daevid Allen on guitar, Kevin Ayers on bass and vocals, Mike Ratledge on keyboards, and Robert Wyatt on drums and vocals - spent three days in De Lane Lea Studios recording with producer, impresario and entrepreneur Giorgio Gomelsky. Rumour has it the group thought they were making music publishers' demos, but Gomelsky insists they were there to record an album and took the tapes away with him. Years after the fact, these have disseminated under various different titles and compilations, and here as *Jet Propelled Photographs*. Its raw playing and sound quality argue that these were indeed intended as demos, but there's no mistaking the potential latent in the material, a good portion of it written when Ayers and Wyatt were still in The Wilde Flowers. Whatever, the group's unique approach to song stirs itself in early versions of Ayers's "Shooting At The Moon" and Hugh Hopper's "Memories" (later covered by Allen on 1971's Banana Moon and Wyatt on the B side of his surprise 1974 hit "I'm A Believer"). Though he's basically comping keyboard accompaniment, Ratledge's ear is finely tuned to the nuances of Wyatt's falsetto, tracking mood shifts as the vocal slithers between melancholy, heartbreak and slapstick punning. But Allen's playing ranges from rudimentary to just about competent. He has not yet evolved the shimmering glissando - an echoing, spacey bottleneck technique he devised after watching Syd Barrett - that distinguishes early Gong. Complementing his own thin, resilient vocals, Wyatt's careering drumming consolidates early Soft Machine's swinging proto-psychedelia.

The bootleg quality live recordings and studio demos constituting the two volumes of *Turns On* confirm the early potential of early Softs with and without Allen, but you have to listen hard to hear it. You have to weigh the significance of their handful of recordings from the Middle Earth club and elsewhere, documenting the group's participation in London's psychedelic underground, against the cruddy sound that renders it nigh impossible to divine the ways they were expanding the psychedelic bubble. Sadly, none of these sets include Soft Machine's only single, "Love Makes Sweet Music" (by Kevin Ayers), backed with "Reelin', Squealin', Dealin'" and released on Polydor in 1967.

THE SOFT MACHINE

THE SOFT MACHINE
ONE WAY RECORDS MCAD22064 CD 1968
VOLUME 2
PROBE SPB1 002 CD 1969

To all intents and purposes, Soft Machine's debut album was recorded live in the studio, with 'non-interfering' producers Chas Chandler and Tom Wilson. But they weren't being jazz-purist about it, and when they did indulge the odd studio intervention, such as a 'phased' drum solo zapping between speakers like a stereo

demonstration record, they did so to glorious effect. Though they're still song-orientated here, their tunes are as much vehicles for the trio's dazzling instrumental interplay as vessels for the lyrics.

Ratledge's organ is bursting with ebullient energy, while Ayers has developed a keener balance of rebounding rhythm and bass-led melodies in the absence of a guitarist. Wyatt, meanwhile, is already incorporating 'found' lyrics and everyday speech patterns in songs like "Why Am I So Short?". But the highlights are "We Did it Again", an awesome exercise in numbskull minimalism hobbled to a riff every bit as compelling as The Kinks' "You Really Got Me" and Velvet Underground's "What Goes On"; and Ayers's mental wake-up call, "Why Are We Sleeping?"

With Ayers retired hurt after their two 1968 American tours, Wyatt and Ratledge recruited bassplaying roadie Hugh Hopper to make *Volume 2*. Now their sole vocalist, Wyatt is in fine form throughout, scatting through " A Concise British Alphabet" and his more complex wordgames. Ironically plummy sleevenotes claim, "in general everybody's heads are more together" and that the music "may impose cerebral responsibilities on the listener".Too true.





> Zoom

Wyatt and Ratledge joined by Hugh Hopper, 1971 ; Recording at Olympic Studios, February 1967

The early Soft Machine sound is a minefield of contradictory elements. Wyatt's drumming is magnificent from the outset: confident, strident, polyrhythmically complex and refreshingly unpredictable. And he's already a wonderfully enigmatic singer, his expressive falsetto negotiating lyrical passages of intellectual realism, elegiac frailty and absurdist improvisation. At this stage, Ratledge is the most technically advanced player and his organ work is as concise as it is magisterial. The departure of both Allen and Ayers had precipitated the group's move into extended improvisation. Upon Hopper's arrival this direction was sealed. With additional saxophone input of Brian Hopper, Soft Machine were steadily moving away from song qua song.

SOFT MACHINE
SPACED
CUNEIFORM RUNE90 CD 1969/1996

A fascinating digression more than their next move, Spaced occupies a unique position within The Softs' output. Resulting from an invitation to produce music for artist Peter Dockley's 'living art installation' at London's Roundhouse in early 1969, the group declined to perform live (although they had famously accompanied a Picasso play in the south of France a year or so earlier). Instead they duly set about amassing prerecorded material to cover for their non-happening at the happening, so to speak. Brian Hopper was again drafted in to add a horn voice. Rehearsed and recorded in an East London warehouse, the finished soundtrack was constructed around loops and effects, and cut together with engineer Bob Woolford using distinctly Heath Robinson methods like looping tapes around milk bottles. The ad hoc methodology produces a distinctive musique concrète feel, with the resulting tonescapes anticipating the textures of Ambient.

SOFT MACHINE
BBC RADIO 1967-1971
HUX HUX037 2XCD 2003
BACKWARDS
CUNEIFORM RUNE170 CD 1969/2002

Both these live compilations illuminate how Soft Machine were far better live than in the recording studio, even if the only audience actually present was a radio engineer. Covering the eight sessions the group recorded for John Peel's BBC *Top Gear* show, the Hux set spans every significant incarnation of the group after Daevid Allen's departure, including their septet experiments with an expanded brass frontline borrowed from Keith Tippett. On Hux's evidence, Peel and his producers had a knack for catching the group on the cusp of change, and happily gave The Softs free rein. Even though Wyatt ironically comments on the necessity of shortening tracks to standard pop length in his amazing stream of consciousness rendition of "Moon In June", their song medleys mostly break the ten minute mark. Even so, the group exercise remarkable economy in their Peel contributions, making the Hux set a wonderful summary of Soft Machine's growth from their 1967 summer of love to the colder mausoleum monumentalism that prefigured Wyatt's departure in 1971. Wyatt has commented how he got interested in the idea of writing songs where the melody line followed the pattern of everyday speech. Thus, in this legendary version of "Moon In June, "*I can still remember/The last time we played on Top Gear/And though each little song/Was less than three minutes long/Mike squeezed a solo in somehow/And although we like our longer tunes/It seems polite to cut them down/To little bits/They might be hits/Who gives a... after all.* "



> Zoom

Matching Mole with Bill McCormick on bass

Backwards collates live material from various UK and European dates, including some septet tracks from Paris in November 1969, and a demo recording of "Moon In June" by Wyatt solo. Its solitary nature evidences Wyatt's increasing sense of alienation, as The Softs' power base shifted.

THE KEITH TIPPETT GROUP

YOU ARE HERE... I AM THERE

DISCONFORME DISC1963 CD 1969

DEDICATED TO YOU, BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING

AKARMA AK227 CD 1971

Pianist Keith Tippett's first album unequivocally laid the ground rules for his particular jazz-rock agenda. With all the material written by him, the album has a satisfying continuity. More importantly, this is composition of the highest order: measured and balanced in his positioning of instruments to give maximum dynamic effect. The pieces unravel slowly, with Tippett gradually introducing rock-flavoured influences, while the playing throughout is forthright and sometimes openly aggressive. E Even at this early stage in Tippett's development, the integrity of his thought process makes any reference to specific forms superfluous, be they jazz or rock. The second track "I Wish There Was A Nowhere" introduces a repeated vamp over which Elton Dean weaves an accomplished alto solo, while trumpeter Charig and trombonist Evans supply swelling chordal overlays. Bassist Clyne and drummer Jackson build a mesmeric pulse over the 14 minute duration of the composition.

If Tippett's debut album is impressive, ranging from fractured avant gardism to pulsating repetition, *Dedicated To You* is, quite simply, indispensable. The compositional credits are more evenly dispersed here, with Evans, Dean, Hopper and Charig aIl contributing. From the outset the album is a rhythmic maelstrom, utilising drummers Wyatt, Phil Howard and Bryan Spring as well as conga player Tony Uta. Spontaneous joy is the result, with Charig and Evans in particularly raucous mood, melding free jazz and rock sensibilities even as they boil to the surface in a fierce bid for independence from each other. Tippett's writing is so integrated, however, that these competing elements are never allowed to rip the piece apart. Instead, they generate a terrific and continuous tension. "Thoughts To Geoff" illustrates this perfectly, with Evans contributing explosive trombone, while Dean's saxello solo on "Green And Orange Night Park" is worthy of Roland Kirk. Tippett, meanwhile, ranges aIl over acoustic and electric pianos to great effect.

SOFT MACHINE

THIRD

COLUMBIA 4714072 CD 1970

The third studio album is The Softs' most complete statement of intent. It was originally released in 1970 as a double LP, with a side each given over to Hopper's "Facelift", Ratledge's "Slightly AIl The Time", Wyatt's "Moon In June" and Ratledge's "Out-BloodyRageous". "Moon In June" is pretty much a solo Wyatt recording, except for Ratledge's fuzzily scrawled organ signature towards the end. Wonderful as it is, it suffers in comparison with the full group's inspired response to the same piece on the Hux *BBC Radio* set. On *Third*, the absurdist element that once defined Soft Machine's group character has been all but ousted by the Ratledge-Hopper axis's heavily pedalled emphasis on fuzzed-up jazz-rock with horn charts, with new recruit Elton Dean's alto and saxello mostly displacing Wyatt's vocalising. The sacrifice of his voice does not preclude Wyatt bringing the relentless swinging energy and invention of his drumming to Ratledge's and Hopper's splendid side-Iong compositions. Recorded live at Birmingham's legendary Mothers club and Croydon's Fairfield Hall, Hopper's "Facelift" rises out of a circling electric piano rondo, until it's abruptly halted by Ratledge's heavily fuzzed organ squalls. Gradually Dean works up the courage to begin a conversation for the whole quartet. The core of Ratledge's loveliest composition, "Slightly AIl The Time", is Hopper's fabulous walking bass part. The organist's other track, "Out-Bloody-Rageous", bursts into being out of endlessly circling keyboards and swooping sax squeals, with an augmented brass section pitching precarious choruses between Dean's and Ratledge's grandstanding.



> Zoom

ROBERT WYATT

THE END OF AN EAR

COLUMBIA 4933422 CD 1970

Matching Mole

Describing himself on the sleeve as an "out of work pop singer", Wyatt was still Soft Machine's drummer when he recorded this first solo statement in 1970. Though it's a predominantly vocal album, with Wyatt playing "drums, mouth, piano, organ", he's got anything but pop on his mind. The album's two takes of Gil Evans's "Las Vegas Tango Part One" are the closest he gets to actual song. Otherwise the music centres on Wyatt's astonishing montages of his multitracked vocal scatting. Mark Charig and Elton Dean provide multitracked horn and sax treatments, Mark Ellidge and Caravan's David Sinclair contribute piano and organ, but the fascination here is the way Wyatt overdubs his many discrete parts into an uneasy and frequently heartbreaking interrogation of his role as a singer in a group that claims to have outgrown the song.

SOFT MACHINE
NOISETTE
CUNEIFORM RUNE130 CD 1970/2000
FACELIFT
VOICEPRINT VP233 2XCD 1970/2001

Noisette is sourced from the same recording of The Softs' January 1970 concert at Croydon Fairfield Hall from which "Facelift" was partially lifted for *Third*. Here they went out as a quintet, featuring Lyn Dobson's soprano, fIute and vocals. At this stage, The Softs were restlessly seeking new elements to keep themselves fresh, and here the trio respond well to the evident empathy already existing between Dobson and Dean.

When they returned to Croydon just three months later on the *Facelift* double, they had already reverted to their standard 1970 quartet. Captured on an audience recording made by Hugh's brother Brian on a failing portable cassette player, *Facelift* nevertheless offers today's listeners an accurate impression of how the group must have sounded from 'out front'. The music's so monstrously good, it's almost terrifying. The quartet throw up stock repertoire props, only with all the supports removed. The way they race around shoring up these towering and teetering compositional blocks with improvised bridges is astonishing. Soft Machine's rehabilitated reputation is largely founded on this pair of releases.



> Zoom

Nucleus with (left) Ian Carr

KEVIN AVERS
JOY OF A TOY
EMI 5827762 CD 1969
DAEVID ALLEN
BANANA MOON
CAROLINE C1512 CD 1971

These early solo albums by two founder members underline how a long and happy life in Soft Machine wasn't really on the cards for either of them. On Ayers's irrepressible debut *Joy Of A Toy*, the first of a great trilogy that included *Shooting At The Moon* and *Whatevershebringswesing*, Wyatt drums on most tracks and both Hugh Hopper and Mike Ratledge contribute; but it's in no way a cloned Soft Machine album. Ayers's songs are beautifully arranged throughout by pianist/composer David Bedford, with Paul Buckminster on cello, Paul Minns on oboe and Jeff Clyne on double bass. The album's hazily surreal pastoralism veils Ayers's deeper interest in articulating his Gurdjieff-inspired attempts to awaken humankind from its slumber. Well, this was 1970 and Ayers wasn't the type to take umbrage if everyone snoozed through the message. For *Shooting At The Moon*, Ayers put together a ramshackle improvising group to rattle the symmetry of the earlier album's arrangements. His group The Whole World turned around Bedford, Lol Coxhill on saxes and 'zoblophone', Mike Oldfield on bass and guitar and Mick Fincher on drums. His earlier jazz influence rears up in crudely effective see-sawing rock improvisations to terrorise fans of his sweeter songs, like the charming opener, "May I?".

Daevid Allen's solo debut *Banana Moon* is simpler but no less inspired. Wyatt is again present on drums, and by now Allen's lead guitar is a little more accomplished. You can tell how far he's come by contrasting this album's version of Hugh Hopper's of "Memories", also featuring a poignant Wyatt vocal, with the same song on *Jet Propelled Photographs*.
Now taking it at a slower pace, Allen brings out an
elegiac quality beyond the young, blushing Soft Machine's reach. All the other songs are Allen's own.

SOFT MACHINE

FOURTH/FIFTH
COLUMBIA 4933412 CD 1971 & 1972
VIRTUALLY
CUNEIFORM RUNE100 CD 1971/1997

Fourth is Wyatt's last outing with the group he founded and squired through their difficult years. It's no coincidence that it is The Softs' most overtly jazz album. You can put this down to Elton Dean's growing influence, and it's his exuberant playing that largely determines the character of the album, even though he, like Ratledge, only contributes one composition, compared with Hopper's pair: the side-Iong "Virtually" suite and "Kings And Queens". Again, Charig, Evans and Hastings fill in brass ensemble interjections, and this time they're joined by the tenor sax of Alan Skidmore. If *Fourth*'s overall balance represents a step forward from *Third*, with Ratledge's electric piano much in evidence, it's not immediately clear exactly what they gained with that advance. For all the brass frontline's free bluster, it's Hopper's compositional Iyricism that shines through this album. Wyatt might have been muted, but his drumming is simply sublime throughout. Even so, the album's momentum is all but severed from the group's psychedelic rock roots. For the first time, The Softs sound less themselves and more like Keith Tippett's group. Jazz now prevails.

Fifth is hinged around the two drummers who were auditioned for Wyatt's vacant chair. Phil Howard and John Marshall got a side each on the original vinyl LP, and the music correspondingly vacillates between their opposing styles. Roy Babbington is once again in evidence on double bass. Howard is an incredibly exciting drummer with free music propensities, who promised much in his shortlived tenure. Sadly, he wastes his energies driving the group into a free Improv corner that no one else particularly wishes to inhabit. John Marshall, on the other hand, is a more precise timekeeper. His side of *Fifth* is altogether more disciplined and less spirited.

Virtually is a pristine recording from the vaults of Radio Bremen that captures the classic Wyatt-Ratledge-Hopper-Dean quartet in its final stages. It offers live renditions of "Teeth", "Kings And Queens" and a truncated "Virtually". More intriguing are the early versions of "All White" and "Pigling Bland" (from *Fifth*), which suggest how that album might have turned out had Wyatt stayed on. But by this point the group's internal power struggles have resolved themselves in Ratledge's favour, and though Wyatt sings, the set is curiously introverted, as if the group are playing it as a private rite of passage sounding an elegy for their own doomed youth. Under the shadow of such composerly sobriety, Dean's freeblowing tendency has also been brought in for questioning.



> Zoom

Fisheye frolics with Ratledge and Ayers at the South London house where Soft Machine resided in early 1967

ELTON DEAN

JUST US
CUNEIFORM RUNE103 CD 1971

He was ousted soon enough. Dean's recently reissued solo debut provides clear evidence of his indomitable free spirit. Here, the emphasis is on fiery improvisation over Phil Howard's flailing polyrhythms of a kind that no longer fitted Soft Machine's masterplan. Dean augments his core trio of trumpeter Charig, bassist Neville Whitehead and Howard with contributions from Mike Ratledge and future Softs bassist Roy Babbington on two tracks. Further, *Just Us* reprises Soft Machine's "Neo-Caliban Grides" in a set otherwise spontaneously 'composed' in the studio. Relishing such spontaneity, his playing throughout is exemplary.

NUCLEUS

ELASTIC ROCK/WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER
BGO BGOCD47 CD 1970
THE PRETTY REDHEAD BBC SESSIONS
HUX HUX036 CD 1971-82/2003
LIVE IN BREMEN
CUNEIFORM RUNE173/174 CD 1971/2003

Trumpeter and Miles Davis biographer lan Carr formed Nucleus with the intention of electrifying jazz-rock, and *Elastic Rock* more than fulfils his sonic vision. Carr's cool, muted trumpet and mellow flugelhorn combine with the meandering soprano of Karl Jenkins, who also plays electric piano to great effect, and Brian Smith's tenor. Their unison playing is dramatically offset by the tension created by guitarist Chris Spedding. Driven by the outstanding rhythm section of Marshall and Clyne, their impact is as immediate as rock.

Spedding's 'slack' style of elongating chords and phrases made him a much sought-after session player, but he still constituted part of the stable lineup that recorded its successor the following year.

We'll Talk About It Later consolidates the group's pole position in jazz-rock. Nucleus's approach to fusion is cooler than Soft Machine's, and their more sophisticated arrangements are directed towards ensemble unity. At this stage, that ambition doesn't inhibit their ability to rock, however, and Spedding even adds a certain funkiness. But it's Carr's clarion brass that directs Nucleus's forward momentum, leaving Jenkins and Spedding to alternate spiky interjections of guitar and electric piano behind his and Smith's precision soloing.

Recorded in 1971 for BBC's *Jazz London*, Hux's radio set reveals Nucleus weren't the kind of guys to let it all hang out live. On the double *Live In Bremen*, Spedding is replaced by guitarist Ray Russell for a set drawn from their first three albums.

MATCHING MOLE

MATCHING MOLE
COLUMBIA 5054782 CD 1972

MATCHING MOLE'S LITTLE RED RECORD
COLUMBIA COLM4714882 CD 1972

SMOKE SIGNALS
CUNEIFORM RUNE150 CD 2001

MARCH
CUNEIFORM RUNE172 CD 1972/2001



> Zoom

Matching Mole was a Robert Wyatt solo project until CBS pressured him to form a group to promote it. Named by distorting the French for 'Soft Machine' ('Machine Molle'), and made up of old Canterbury mates David Sinclair (keyboards) and Phil Miller (guitar), plus Bill MacCormick (bass), Matching Mole weren't about to interfere with Wyatts original intention to record "an album of love songs". Much of it largely features his melancholy musings at the mellotron he found in the studio. He stretches that instrument's lumbering tonalities over skeletal piano to utterly disarming effect on the poignant "O Caroline", where he steps out of the frame to describe his new group in the act of recording the broken love song he's now singing. Hemmed in with his multitracked harmonies, the piano song "Signed Curtain" finds him intoning "*This is the first verse*", etc, as he slowly works his way through the template of a pop song to the devastating last line, when he admits to the futility of attempting to communicate his feelings in words. Thereafter, Matching Mole quickly developed into an erratically effective improvising group headed by guitarist Phil Miller's relatively mood-sensitive "Part Of The Dance".

Unhappy with Mole's change of direction, Sinclair jumped ship, and was replaced by former Nucleus electric pianist Dave MacRae on their second album, *Little Red Record*. What with its daft skits and gooning satire framing tracks as great as "God Song" and their increasingly assured rock Improv, the album is as funny and inspired as early Soft Machine. Somewhat ironically, the two live CDs compiled from the group's 1972 and 73 US and European tours reveal Wyatt's increasing reluctance to sing. Now shaping up around McRae's jamming vehicles, Matching Mole's rock Improv orientation might well corroborate Wyatt's statement. "I was happiest in Soft Machine when it was an all electric trio - after that it wasn't quite my dream band anymore." Though they strike a few sparks, whatever energy they muster is sunk into the group's losing struggle with its growing sense of entropy. Unsurprisingly, Wyatt dissolved the group and was in the act of forming a third line-up when he fell out of a window at a party, a tragedy which left him permanently confined to a wheelchair. The accident prompted Wyatt to embark on his ongoing quest to construct one of contemporary music's most affecting and idiosyncratic songbooks, on a string of releases which has continued up to 1997's *Shleep*.

SOFT MACHINE

SIX
COLUMBIA 4949812 CD 1973

In keeping with their by now established ratio of a major line-up change per album, on *Six* Elton Dean has been replaced by Nucleus's Karl Jenkins. Originally a double LP, *Six* has some very fine moments, but it's a long way from the original group's sensibilities. A virtuoso oboe player, Jenkins also plays baritone and soprano saxes and electric piano. The first half of the album was recorded live in Brighton and Guildford, with Ratledge and Jenkins sharing composing honours with John Marshall's "5 From 13 (For Phil Seaman With Love & Thanks)". Unsurprisingly, given the presence of Jenkins and Marshall, some tracks bear Nucleus's hallmark accentuated rock riffing. On its original release, *Six* drew criticism that the group were now prone to rambling, and that they had lost their essential spark. Such remarks evidence a partial deafness to the careful pattern building of the Marshall/Hopper rhythm section. They consolidate these new compositions' reliance on overlapping

structures, which recall the systems musics of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. Yet this quartet haven't entirely lost their urge to improvise. They may no longer appeal to the rock-biased contingent of Soft Machine's fanbase, but its jazz aficionados go home satisfied. By this time, the numbers were running out for Ratledge, The Softs' last surviving original member. He shuffled and sulked through the desultory *Seven* and *Bundles* and then quit.



> Zoom

KEITH TIPPETT'S CENTIPEDE

SEPTOBER ENERGY

DISCONFORME DISC1965 CD 1971

The inspired insanity of Tippett's *Septober Energy* is arguably the peak of the jazz-rock collisions Soft Machine set in motion back in the mid-60s. To realise the work, Tippett created the 50 piece organism Centipede, whose sections move independently yet attain unstoppable momentum and keen direction. Lord knows what possessed him to assemble such a beast; it took a musician/producer with the marshalling skills of Robert Fripp to help him tame it on record. "When I formed Centipede," wrote Tippett, "I wanted to enfold all the friends that I knew as much as possible, from the classical world, to the jazz world, the jazz-rock world, and the rock-rock world." Naturally, it embraces all and none of these genres simultaneously.

HUGH HOPPER

1984

CUNEIFORM RUNE104 CD 1973

Hopper's first solo album is a musical realisation of the visionary George Orwell novel from which it takes its name. Partly responding to The Softs becoming "a rather ordinary British jazz-rock outfit", Hopper revisited his early 1960s tapeloop experiments with Daevid Allen in Paris to recover his creative curiosity. In the event, he adapted the tapeloop method itself as the shaping metaphor of his musical realisation of the totalitarian condition Orwell describes, interspersing darkly brilliant loop pieces with short funk rock interludes that conjure the exhilarating taste of freedom attained in the act of resistance. These passages are delivered by a group including John Marshall, Lol Coxhill and Nick Evans. Having tasted freedom, Hopper soon made his escape from a group that now frowned on uninhibited creativity.



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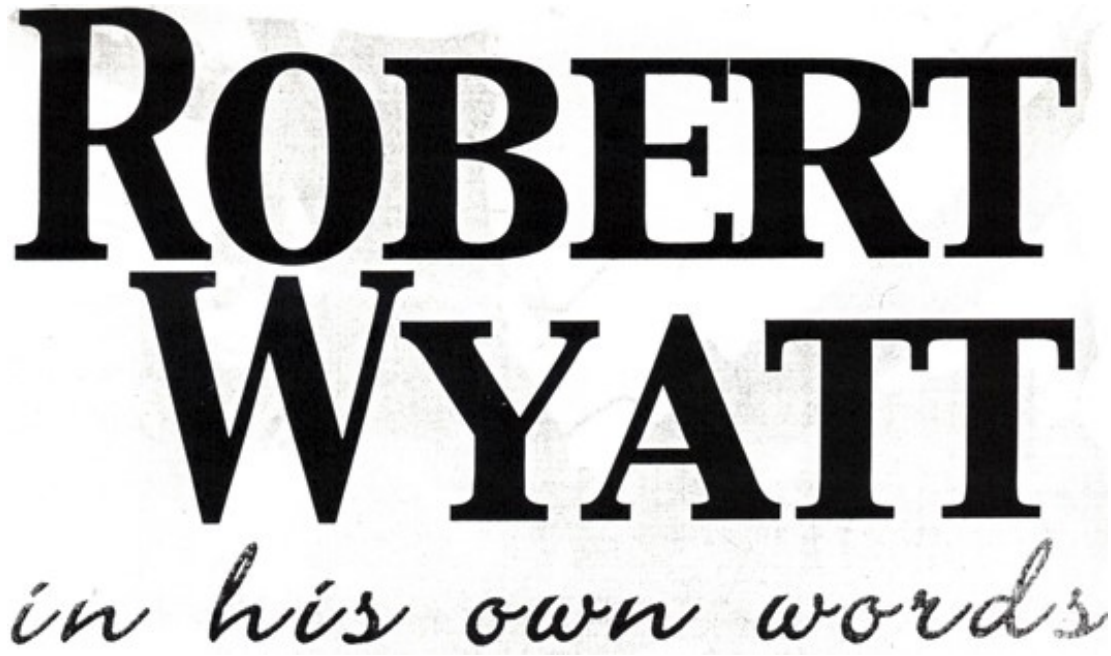
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Robert Wyatt in his own words - Get Rhythm - Issue 6 - August 2001



From Soft Machine and Matching Mole, via Syd Barrett, Elvis Costello and Jerry Dammers, Paul Weller, Ultramarine and Gorky's Zygotic Mycini, Scritti Politti, Ben Watt and Ivor Cutler, Wyatt has instilled such love among his followers and fellow musicians that, through his many attributes - his emotional energy, his integrity and his generosity of spirit over a career spanning four decades - he is unique. Here he comments on five of his own classic albums and his EP box set (released by Hannibal Records) with Andy Farquarson.

THE PAST

Looking back over my career, I feel I got a second chance. In the 1960s, I think I was a bit too cocky, a bit too drunk, never saw things through properly. In one way, being in a wheelchair has been a blessing. It's slowed me right down, stopped me being so manic. And, of course, being married always civilises a chap. The paradox is that in order for your mind to wander freely, you need a fairly stable routine life.



CURRENTLY

I get asked to do a lot bits and pieces with other people, mostly abroad. Recently, I've sung for the double bass player and composer Laurie Scott Baker and also sung on a compilation CD celebrating the centenary of the birth of Lorca the Spanish playwrite.

I've got enough bits and pieces lined up for a recording in my own right but finding the time and space to do things is difficult. It takes me ages to develop things and I don't have a professional composing technique. Rather, I work organically. I suppose that's why I've only made six albums in the time that many of my contemporaries have made forty or so.

I feel rather left behind by the ever-more-rapid developments in recording technology. Machines nowadays seem to designed by electricians determined to dazzle one another at endless trade fairs - an admirable and exciting lifestyle no doubt - rather than to co-incide with what musicians actually need. Today you are saddled with complicated processes involving confusing technologies that don't give you the result you wanted.



ROCK BOTTOM

Like one's children, it's hard to pick a favourite from one's work. Obviously, everything I do

is as good as I can make it. 'Rock Bottom' was me as a grown-up at last, me more in control of what I was doing. There'd been a couple of practice runs, such as the first Matching Mole LP, where I developed the technique of multi-recording myself. 'Rock Bottom" had a long incubation because it was interupted by a year on my back in hospital. That's when I realised you don't have to be in a group: it's not a law. My first influences were painters, not musicians, so I was at home with the idea of doing the drawing, putting on all the colours myself, the whole picture in fact.

RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD

'Ruth...' was more to do with acknowledging the work by the musicians who had enriched 'Rock Bottom', of thanking them. I was extremely lucky with them all Ruth was intended to bring them out more, bring them into sharper focus. There were features for Mike Oldfield, Gary Windo, George Kahn, Mongezi Feza and Fred Frith and the others. It was their record - I was much more just the coordinator really, and I did the singing. I think this was probably the first recording where I covered other, people's material.

OLD ROTTENHAT

'Old Rottenhat' was a real solo effort. I wrote it all and played it all on fairly primitive equipment I recall that one was for Jeff Travis on Rough Trade label. Vivienne Goldman had introduced me to him, explaining that he was an indie producer. I thought 'indie' meant proto-Bhangra - I always get these things wrong. 'Old Rottenhat' came after a break. I'd been with a certain high-profile label with what I thought was a ludicrous, even slightly pervey, name. Suddenly their mask as innovators and nurturers fell and they wanted hits. I thought 'Oh no, not all that again'. They told me my stuff was too lugubrious - I looked it up in the dictionary - and apparently that was a bad thing in a happy happy place full of happy happy people. Besides, you had to use their very expensive studio and be published by their rapacious publishing company. I found all that tedious and humiliating - perhaps I'd got too old or too posh. So I dropped out for a while and devoted a lot of time listening to other people's records, spending time with my wife Alfie, generally having a life. The Rough Trade got me back to work!





DONDESTAN

In the eighties, Alfie and I moved north. I could make more noise at night and have a proper music room with piano, drum kit and tape machine. At that time I had more tunes, more musical ideas, than I had lyrics, so 'Dondestan' is based on poems and word sketches by Alfie. She'd not written them for singing, they were just for herself really, but she writes very singable lines, very sibilant - I'll look that word up later. Setting words to music was a reversal of what I usually do, which is to start by building a musical landscape then populating it with words. I learnt the technique, though not in a formal sense, from working with the composer Michael Mantler. I had to mix Dondestan rather quickly because Rough Trade had a modest budget and studio time is very expensive. It wasn't until I got Ryko's backing recently that I could re-mix and resequence it properly and see it reissued under the title 'Dondestan Revisited'.

SHLEEP

Phil Manzanera made this record possible and I'm very grateful to him. He had a studio and said I could use it without having to watch the clock which was a breakthrough for me. He was near to London which meant I could work with musicians I hadn't seen for ages. I'd met and become friends with Brian Eno years before and he came in to sing on 'Heaps of Sheeps' and helped me mix the track. The mixing is a bit of a jumble but that's not Brian's fault - I buggered it about a bit. Paul Weller came into the studio to record so I said 'If you need any lugubrius backing vocals, I'm happy to do some for you'. He said very politely that he didn't but that if I wanted a bit of strumming on my record he'd drop in. Which he did. The trombonist Annie Whitehead, who I'd worked with in the past, came in too and Evan Parker the saxophonist. Everyone on it has their own character and that shines through so it is very much a group record.

THE EP'S

It was Geoff Travis who first suggested I speak to Hannibal and Ryko Records. I went and met them and they were terrific, lovely people. They not only put out 'Shleep' but reissued the earlier albums. That was wonderful for me. Then Ryko offered to collect and issue all the bits and pieces, the singles, the odd songs. We've put them out as a boxed set of EPs because Alfie suggested the material was too disparate to go on a single CD.

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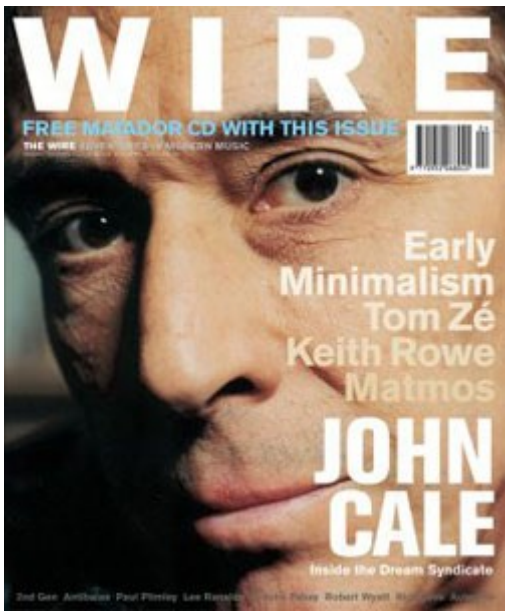
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Epiphanies - Wire N° 206 - April 2001

EPIPHANIES



Having breathlessly chased after Robert Wyatt, Damon Krukowski explains how his hero's example now helps his music to grow older with grace

I think I officially crossed the boundary into obsessive fandom when I chased Robert Wyatt's wife Alfreda Benge down the street. This was in 1991, and my partner Naomi and I had been listening to Wyatt's 1974 record *Rock Bottom* in an endless loop - it was the only album that spoke to the simultaneous grief and joy we felt from music at the time. Robert Wyatt's voice entered my consciousness then in a way that made me feel I was hearing it internally, as if it would sound funny were I to hear it simply tape recorded. I had already been listening obsessively to his drumming for a few years, and similarly, as it were, from the wrong side of the kit: *Soft Machine 1, 2*, and *Third*; plus, a live bootleg I had found while on tour in Holland, *Soft Machine Turns On* (since released officially as *Live At The Paradiso*), had changed the way I saw the drums in front of me each day. What I heard initially in Robert Wyatt's drumming is similar in many ways to what I heard later in his melodies: a phrasing that flexes the boundaries of the bar without abandoning it. He is the 'free-est' drummer in rock because he finds freedom within its simple constraints. Like the great jazz musicians I know he admires, Robert Wyatt stretches and contracts time seemingly at will - and that, to my ears, communicates freedom more powerfully than even the wildest anarchic flailing.

Epiphanies

Having breathlessly chased after Robert Wyatt, Damon Krukowski explains how his hero's example now helps his music to grow older with grace



Above: Robert Wyatt. Right: Damon Krukowski and Naomi Yang

No wonder, then, that Robert Wyatt has such a strong commitment to leftist politics: freedom, in music as in society, is a glorious gift that should be shared by all. His generosity fuels his playing, his politics and, as I have since learned, his dealings with obsessive fans. The incident when I chased Alfie down the street took place in London, outside the offices of the Rough Trade label, to which our former group Galaxie 500 had been signed. Wyatt was also involved with the label at the time, and Naomi and I had arrived for a meeting just after Alfie had left hers. No sooner was her retreating form pointed out, than I raced out of the building after her. I didn't think first what I would say, and when I reached her I discovered I hadn't anything better to offer than, "Are you Alfie? I'm a huge fan of yours and Robert's!" - this delivered out of breath from my chase, no less. Her startled look brought me back to fan reality: the situation I had created for her was undoubtedly not a delightful one. I retreated hastily.

Years later, Naomi and I would meet both Alfie and Robert under better circumstances, though my heart was beating no less fast than during that encounter on the street. We had become labelmates once more, at Rykodisc UK (not a coincidence, exactly, since our music had each found a home there largely through the efforts of Andy Childs, who had previously worked at Rough Trade). But this time the folks at Ryko, knowing my obsession, deliberately arranged for me and Naomi to show up at the office just as Robert was taking a break from a round of press interviews. He and Alfie invited us to sit with them while they ate their Indian takeaway lunch, and they were so gracious, funny and warm - just the way I had imagined - that I once again had the strange sensation of experiencing the encounter as if it were a happy internal memory rather than an event in the external world. Later Naomi and I even tried to write a song about the experience, but it came out an awful maudlin mess. The feeling generated by meeting Robert and Alfie — joy — is one we don't seem to be able to translate successfully into a tune. We seem doomed to write songs only about much darker emotions.

Robert, on the other hand, has the facility to sing about anything and everything and make it beautiful. His and Alfie lyrics can be deceptively mundane, describing a trip to Spain or the life cycle of a salmon, yet they can contain the germ of all feelings at once, like they say white contains all colours. The openness of their lyrics is not the blank generation's emptiness; it's a fullness of feeling expressed through details. Robert Wyatt may be the Chekhov of pop music.

He may also be our Billie Holiday. No one else in English language pop incorporates the expressiveness of jazz like Robert Wyatt. He sings a line as if it were unfolding before him,

a landscape just coming into view. The surprise he generates in his melodies, an his phrasing of existing melodies, is something you can never get used to. I know *Rock Bottom* by heart, but that doesn't eliminate the jump it always has on me, the unexpected rhythmic and melodic turns that keep it surprising every time I hear it.

In my first age in music, Robert Wyatt taught me to look at my drum kit as an instrument rather than just something to hit; in my second age, he showed me what it might be to sing a meaningful tune; and I hope to learn from his example how to have a third age in music. Because Robert Wyatt, of all rock musicians, seems to know how to live with knowledge, and how to use it to improve his music. His latest album, 1997's *Shleep*, made a lot of people wake up and take notice, but they have all been great.
Uncompromised, and uncompromisingly lovely.

Damon & Naomi begin a UK tour in May with Ghost/White Heaven guitarist Kurihara, marking the release of their album Damon & Naon With Ghost*. Their publishing imprint Exact Change has just published* Give My Regards To Eighth Street*:* The Collected Writings Of Morton Feldman.
For info, see www.exactchange.com

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New Model Army - Mojo - March 2001





Soft Machine
Third

Personnel: Mike Ratledge (organ, piano), Hugh Hopper (bass), Robert Wyatt (drums, vocals), Elton Dean (sax), Rab Spall (violin), Lyn Dobson (flute, sax), Nick Evans (trombone), Jimmy Hastings (flute, bass clarinet)
Tracks: Facelift / Slightly All The Time / The Moon In June / Out-Bloody-Rageous
Producers: Soft Machine
Recorded: IBC Studios, London, spring 1970. Facelift recorded live at Fairfield Hall, Croydon (January 4, 1970) and Mothers Club, Birmingham (January 11, 1970)
Released: CBS, June 1970
Chart peak: 18 (UK)

THIRD, SOFT MACHINE'S TANTALISINGLY titled third LP, marked their full transformation from pop-psych Pink Floyd understudies to pofaced purveyors of complex jazz-rock epics. Out went paisley shirts and poetry, replaced by chinstroking, muso extravaganzas. "Mike Ratledge had studied classical music, including theory;" recalls bassist Hugh Hopper, "and Robert [Wyatt] was very into jazz, like we all were."

It was bassist/vocalist Kevin Avers who briefly steered the group towards psych-inspired pop for their debut album. "The songs went after Kevin quit, " Hopper says - and so, very nearly, did the hand. "We spent much of 1968 touring the States with Jimi Hendrix, but the group ceased to exist for the last half of the year," he recalls. "Kevin Ayers had gone, Robert stayed in California and planned a solo career - and besides, he and Mike weren't speaking."

Despite the acrimony. The Soft Machine regrouped, with Hopper replacing Ayers on bass (and sax), to record a contract-fulfilling second album. "It was still mainly songs, though Mike's stuff was already leaning towards instrumental pieces," Hopper explains. After supporting Hendrix and Traffic at the Albert Hall early in 1969, the trio were playing full-time again and in the autumn, at Wyatt's suggestion, experimented with a four-piece brass section. "This hastened the demise of our commitment to songs," says Hopper, "because the brass tended to play Robert's vocal parts."

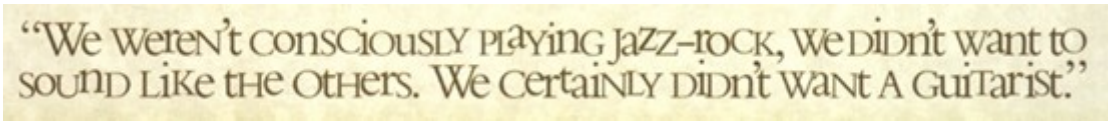
By the time work began on *Third*, only Elton Dean from the enlarged group remained (the octet was trimmed after the live recording). Musically, though, the Softs were progressing nicely. "We weren't consciously playing jazz-rock," Hopper insists. "It was more a case of not wanting to sound like other bands; we certainly didn't want a guitarist." Rock was a dirty word.

The bassist's chief contribution was the extraordinary Facelift, a live/studio cocktail of jerky, Zappa-inspired riffs, squealing tape loops and hazardous keyboard solos. "It was bravado," Hopper claims. "We were making that music for ourselves, really."

Mike Ratledge's two pieces, Slightly All The Time and Out-Bloody-Rageous, were less abrasive but hugely ambitious ventures into full-blown jazz-rock at a time when that genre had barely learnt to walk.

Most memorable was Wyatt's The Moon in June, a virtuoso piece featuring probably the longest coda in rock and - gulp - vocals. "The myth was that we refused to play on it," Hopper says. "Actually, he'd originally recorded it in the States after the Hendrix tour. He simply knew how he wanted it to sound." A little over a year on, Wyatt was fired. "I loved playing their music," he says, "but one day I got a phone call from the organist and I was out."

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Christmas (*Lindsay Cooper on Robert Wyatt*) - Tone Clusters - Mar/Apr 2000



Christmas

I spent the entire holiday period alone. In early December there was a concert of works by Robert Wyatt that a lot of his friends were giving so I arranged to go. Two of my friends offered to take/wheel me and I was really looking forward to it. It was going to be in the Royal Festival Hall, which was built the same year I was born and my father had a job doing admin there.

I spent a lot of my childhood there and remember it very clearly — it still appears in my mind's eye like a '50s black and white film. I was introduced to Sir Thomas Beacham when I was 4 and I imagine a lot of my later interest in music came from those years. I'm very proud that Robert Wyatt's last live appearance was in the Piazza Navona in Rome with Henry Cow. We continued to have a very productive relationship. When we were recording the second News from Babel album and needed another singer we asked Robert. Chris Cutler asked him to contribute to a record that was being made to raise money for the striking miners, and was very pleased that he agreed to do it and wrote the song in only a few hours. These things are very pleasurable but quite dangerous to look back on later: one imagines that a new song is going to come as quickly as the Miners' song did.

When I was stuck for who to ask as a bass player in OH MOSCOW, Sally Potter suggested I pick the first record out of my collection and see if that gave me any ideas. The first record I picked was ROCK BOTTOM by Robert and I couldn't understand why I hadn't thought of Hugh Hopper before. A quick call to Robert established Hugh's correct telephone number and the rest of the story is... the rest of the story. As I was sitting in the Royal Festival Hall to see the show my mind was full not only of images from the '50s but the entire Canterbury School. I've never liked being included as part of that but it certainly brings you a few friends.

Annie Whitehead, whose trombone playing I like a lot, had put an incredible group together to play Robert's music and included in it was Didier Malherbe, who I used to know when he played with GONG (the Canterbury School, you see, lives on), and Harry Beckett, who I've always thought of as a marvelous trumpet player. The vocals were provided by Julie Tippetts and Ian Maidman, who both sounded so spookily like Robert, I found it incredibly enjoyable. The drums were played by Liam Genocky and the piano by Janette Mason, who I hadn't come across before. More saxes were provided by George Khan, who I hadn't encountered since his days in the Westbrook Brass Band.

After a very successful show I went back to the dressing room and had a long chat with (amongst others) Julie Tippetts. I've always liked her work, particularly the stuff she does with Maggie Nicols and although we have played together several times there's never been the chance to talk. I wonder how many other musicians are affected by hardly anything being said.

I think David Jones and John Cumming did a wonderful job of putting the London Jazz Festival together. Just after the concert Robert and Annie had space to sign a lot of CDs and a lot of Robert's fans were made very happy indeed. Annie made very intelligent arrangements of Robert's songs, rangiong from old records like ROCK BOTTOM and RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD through to his most recent CD, the excellent SHLEEP.

L.C.

(Lindsay Cooper, multi-instrumentalist, composer and essayist, is the author of this regular TC column. She welcomes Email comments at cooper@cooper.sonnet.co.uk.)

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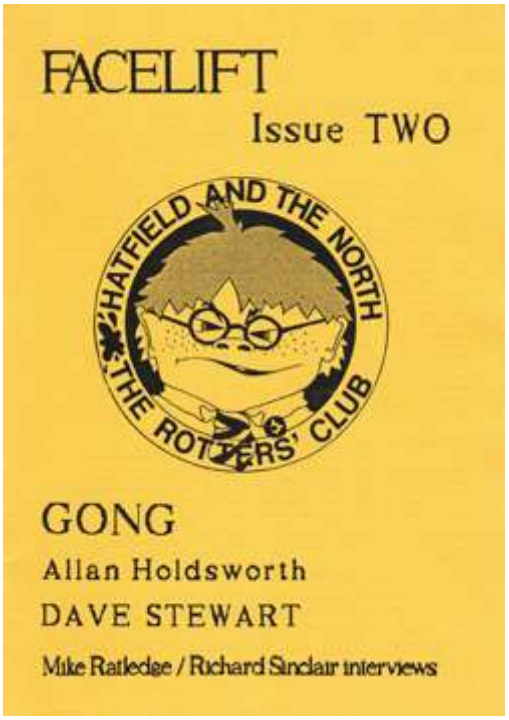
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The Mike Ratledge Interviews - Facelift - N° 2 - September 1999



THE MIKE RATLEDGE INTERVIEWS

Two very different Mike Ratledge interviews are printed for you this issue: the first is taken from a bootleg and was conducted in the heady period between Volume Two and Third, sometime in late 1969 ....

(fade in) **.... extension of the personnel of the Soft Machine. Who are the new members ?**

The new members are Lyn Dobson, who plays soprano and tenor, flute, harmonica and sitar (but not with us) and Elton Dean who plays alto, who is also playing with Keith Tippett.

Why did you take them in the group?

Because the idea of expanding the group was simply that you are more and more into writing; spending more time writing than playing, and every time we write something we have to kind of cut it down to limit it, because there is a definite amount that three people can. So we felt the need to have other instruments to be able to carry other lines, to give sufficient complexity to what we originally have written.

How do you arrange it, how do you rehearse, how do you build up your show ?

Well it starts off, any kind of writing is used, but suppose one person definitely writes a number, then he usually writes out all the parts; and there are various areas that are free : either as a solo for someone, or they're kind of cooperatively free, I mean everyone has a free hand. Then we go and rehearse it (if possible, because we're working too much at the moment). And then we hope in performance it loosens up, ie everybody knows the basic arrangements, and the more familiar you get with it the more you can depart from the basic arrangement and you know exactly what other people are going to be working to .... and

it's like the old medieval principle of composition : you compose the tenor line, then write two lines that fit the tenor but not that necessarily fit each other. I mean you don't know whether they're going to fit each other, but because they've got the same arrangement / reference point, you know it's going to work more or less.

To me it seems that there is some similarity between the development that Frank Zappa has been making in the last few years and your development.

Yeah, well, basically in terms of the fact that we're both getting away from the commercial pop song and going more into kind of the instrumental things .... but I think there are other groups that are doing that too. There is a similarity, but there is also a big difference, I hope.

I agree.

It's not that I don't like the Mothers - I like them very very much, but if we were both doing the same thing it would be a waste of time for one of us.

Finally, about the name of the group : first of all where did it come from and how did you get it ?

Well it came second-hand through a book by William Burroughs called 'The Soft Machine' and he in turn had taken it from a lecture by a physiologist in America (I can't remember what his name was) and Soft Machine is like a generic term for the whole of humanity and we are all Soft Machines and at that time being kind of ... we hope to be a pop group: ie; we hope to appeal ... well our basic assumption is what we like, everybody is going to like as well .... we all have things in common and therefore we are all Soft Machines and we're all going to like Soft Machine music. It might have been a wrong or false assumption.

> The second interview comes from I glossy Italian magazine 'covering everything from Led Zeppelin to free jazz' called GONG. It was translated and subtitled by Saverio Pechini .....

Would you like to put in perspective the early Soft Machine period and your coeval feelings?

The band had been together for a long time when the first album was recorded. It was only a tiny episode in the overall history of the Soft Machine. The recording session followed four months of exhausting tours in the USA, but maybe that was the best period concerning human relationships between us (the festivals in the South of France above all). In a way everyone of us felt that something different was happening : many bands then appearing for the first time were breaking barriers. The main feeling was that everything was possible and people would have accepted everything we played. Many things, unbelievable things, happened between then and now : many changes occurred in the group's line-up.

The problem is: people followed our music by records only, and they saw them as stages of a continuous evolution. So people always noticed a huge difference between records, as between Second and Third. From our point of view, there were never exaggerated gaps between Second and Third, but only a gradual process. When someone decided to quit, that was the outcome of an ongoing evolution and not the start of it.

Criticisms fly concerning the absolute lack of cultural weight in Soft Machine's recent music.

Well in a way it never pretended to have one. To me, a cultural message is a decal job from the outside: if there is one, I reckon it should be the sociologists' task, or something like that, to pigeon-hole it, within a century. Anyway, if ever one of us was interested in any

form of message, that was Kevin (and he still is), but I don't believe you could tag the early Soft Machine with Kevin as a group committed to any kind of message. Music is a medium, which in some ways, requires musical solutions.

Prior to recording the Third album, were you aware of the important evolutive stage to come?

It's really difficult to answer. We played for fun, we had a really naive attitude ... you see, people are very intricate : they always see more than music actually offers. People nurse every kind of illusion about what they are doing: I think it is something innate. Sure, our early tunes were about Dadaism and Pataphysics - things we were, as individuals, really into - but actually there weren't any links with the music, save the ones people want to find in it. Anyway, a link does exist, because it's us who play that music and who are into that kind of stuff, and that's influencing you. You see, nowadays I'm mainly interested in the same things of yore, but it's also true that, since they are outside the group's area of interest, they are more feebly linked to the musical things, or at least compared to Third. In this way, I really hate interviews. To me, to deliver a good interview actually means to lie: and I'm less and less interested in lies. Fact is that you can't take too seriously what you are saying, because there isn't so much to say about the music.

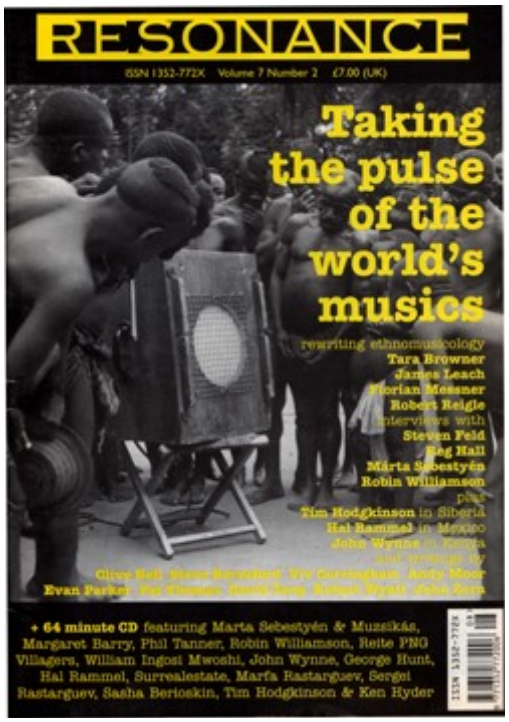
Nevertheless, you are the only original member of Soft Machine still playing in the group. From Sixth to Bundles, compared to Jenkins' ever expanding composing vein, your role seems more and more removed from the music Soft Machine is developing now. What is your actual role and commitment in the 1976 Soft Machine?

Well ... truth ... truth is I'm leaving the group to follow my own direction: in a way I stopped composing music for five elements to concentrate on something more personal. You see, after Sixth I felt like I should develop something that was really mine. After that record, I became more and more involved in things which had nothing to do with the group and I became less and less interested in composing. I think that, compared to the prior period when I was forced to compose since no other did it, now Karl is able to do it, and I've obviously stopped. The present line-up will go on as Soft Machine: I'm unmoved about that; nevertheless many people hate those kind of changes, without understanding how difficult a situation is involving many persons. When Kevin quitted, then maybe we had to change the group's name but we didn't. And then people have their point of view about it, and sometimes you're criticized because you are no more the one you were yesterday. Every band always generated an enthusiasm due to the musicians who played in it for a certain period of time, but a person quitting is just a person quitting. I'm unfavourable to the chaos due to a person quitting the band: it only means that the other members of the band actually flogged a dead horse. Not to diminish the contribution of the musicians who play in the group: Marshall, Holdsworth, Jenkins, but it'll take a little time to re-shape an identity, which now is missing. Music is always more than the persons involved in it: probably that's why it's all right to go on playing how they do. It's up to each one of them to be main or less involved. By this time, to be in the Soft Machine was a drudgery, and playing music should never be like that. You see, there was never a leader (if so, everything would have been different) totally responsible for the music played by the others, and one of the reasons that drove me to stop composing was that I felt trapped in the whole Soft Machine's legendary image; trapped in the overall needless tagging about It. I think it was the same with Robert and Kevin. To be the only original member is horrible: this probably is the main reason for quitting and losing interest in it. When people want to identify you with an entity called Soft Machine and to consider you responsible for what's happening, your first reaction is to get away ..... you feel responsible for, without being obsessed by people, by critics, and the legendary '68. Yes, Sixth, I was rather involved in it, but not 100 per cent; Fifth was an incredibly unsuccessful album, due to changes in the line-up; Fourth is OK; Third, probably the last time I enjoyed what I was doing. It's really difficult to see these things from the outside. It's like peering up at a family in a house. When someone quits, automatically you figure the remaining people are maybe in a better situation compared to the one waiting for the person to leave, but there is the other side of the coin, because that person suddenly make difficulties for the ones who stayed. Trouble is, you can never actually escape from misunderstandings and myths created by the press and by the people. For now, I'm glad to escape from just one thing, that is the thing which journalists call Soft Machine.

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My Favorite Ethnic Recording - Resonance - Volume 7 - Number 2 - 1999

MY FAVORITE ETHNIC RECORDING - ROBERT WYATT



Le Coran - psalmodie par Cheik Abdelbasset Abdessamad Sourat Yassin

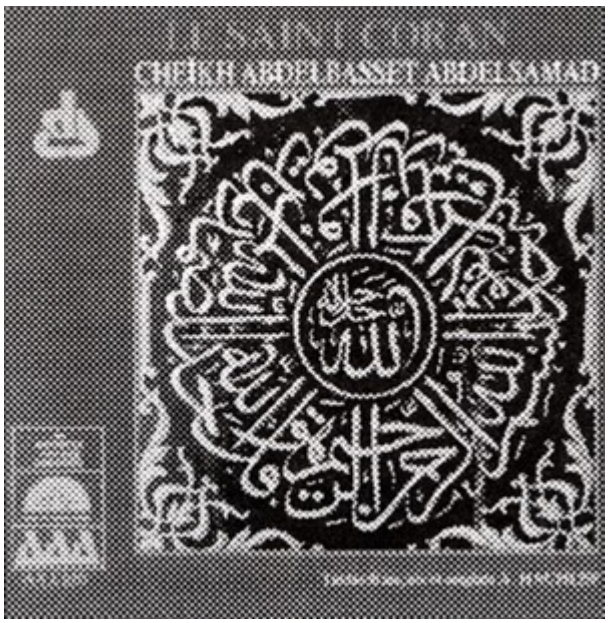
Sono Cairo

(My pressing distributed by Sono Disc, Paris and imported to England by Conifer Records, but this just happens to be a recording of the Muezzin's call to prayer to which I have easy access: any would do really, or none if you've a mosque nearby).

BY WHAT I DARED NOT IMAGINE WAS anything but a lucky coincidence, I found I could tootle along on trumpet using some of what they call I think a gypsy scale mode (I am not a trained musician myself), from an approximate Eb (*i.e.* Eb, E, Fsharp, G, etc) and blow me - literally - the unaccompanied Muezzin on this record seems to tag along with me for the whole first side of this long-playing record.

I followed along more tentatively through side two until about two thirds of the way, by which time he seemed (to my irrelevantly harmonically oriented ears) to be moving around an implied tonal centre from G to D, Eb and F, in which I recognised the phrasing, the phrases and indeed the melodic twists and turns themselves. Then by some luck I was playing this section through the speakers whilst simultaneously listening to a piece which seemed to echo it on a pair of headphones: Miles Davis's rubato solo on the Saeta he recorded with Gil Evans Orchestra for *Sketches of Spain*.

And although the connection is obviously the Deep Song (Cante Jondo) of Andalucia, the odd thing is that despite the widely acknowledged and profound Islamic influence, it's rare to see anything more than references to generalised connect¬ions with Arabic and other Semitic culture derived from the era when Andalucia was the jewel in the crown of the Arabian Empire. Flamenco is after all as quintessentially Romany-Iberian as r'n'b is quintessentially Black American. And I suppose that, since Romany Culture is traced back primarily to the Indian sub-continent, it's only in the names Tzigan, Gitan, Gitano and



Gyspsy - with their misleading but historically understandable origin Egyptian words -that the near-eastern/ north African element apparent.

The Saeta itself I've witnessed in northern Spain in one of the Andalucian 'immigrant' areas around Barcelona, Catalunya. As described in the sleevenotes to *Sketches of Spain*, a kind of dignified but appealingly shambolic slow marching band of drum and bugles halts in a silence - broken only by the simplest of taps on the side-drum - under the balcony of the subsequent Saeta singer, who releases a dramatically fractured chant over the whole proceedings before the band shuffles on mournfully down the street. I remember thinking then, 'There she is up on the balcony sounding for all the world like one of those Muezzin's calls to prayer from a minaret and overlooking a whole neighbourhood.'

I've not seen any flamencologist make this direct and specific link, so I have to assume it's just a hunch, like many others, about a music without much verifiably documented history.

Luckily there are enough mosques around now for virtually anyone to be able to make the comparison, since every comprehensive flamenco anthology contains a Saeta (I've got a great one by Manola Caracol from his La Salvadora session). There's even an appealing but far-fetched theory that the famous flamenco shout "Ole!" could be derived from that other more ubiquitous evocation "Allah!"
But, you know, returning to this record of the Coran (or Q'ran) which is similar to the Coran sung anywhere (Arabic being to Islam what Latin is to Roman Catholicism and English is to transnational corporations), I can't help feeling that this is indeed evidence of the vibrant survival of 'non-European' cultural habits which illustrates a deep-rooted cross-fertilisation between Islamic and Christianised cultures -something that has all but been buried in modern European history books, which airbrush out the Arabic component of Semitic culture with exclusive terms like 'the Judeo-Christian tradition'. And it thrills me to come across a re-affirmation that Europe is not and never has been an Island continent.

R.

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HOME

The Artist Shop IRC Chat with Robert Wyatt on Sunday, March 21, 1999

WotanCCC: Welcome to today's Artist Shop - An afternoon with Robert Wyatt..

Robert Wyatt is a true giant in progressive music. He was a founding member of the legendary Soft Machine (not to mention Matching Mole and other bands) and one of the main pillars of the entire Canterbury movment.

Robert has recently joined the Thirsty Ear label and has released a new CD called Shleep. Robert, thank you for joining us today.

GaryArtistShop: Hello, Robert. So glad to have you here.

Robert Wyatt: Thank you very much for having me. It's an honor.

Theuglyjanitor says: Where did the title "Shleep" come from? And what does it mean?

Robert Wyatt: Shleep, I couldn't think of whether to call it something from sheep or what. It's a kind of Yiddish thing. You do it in America as well - money, shmoney - the 'sh in front of it kind of negates it. It's kind of a joke thing.

I suppose it means 'sleep not'. It means sleep - chance would be a fine thing! It just means I wish I could sleep. That's what it meant. But it's not a complaint, really. Just a joke. I just remembered a saying which might be appropriate which is 'no sleep for the wicked'

Tandomtask says: What contemporary music interests you? Are there any artists out there doing work you really respect?

Robert Wyatt: Yes, there certainly are. I'm thinking of some americans I've heard recently. There's Karen Mantler, daughter of Mike Mantler and Carla Bley.
With parents like that she should be good and she is! Other great daughters include Emily Haines, daughter of Paul Haines, the Canadian poet who does really good songs. And to round up my trio of daughters theres Anja Gabarek, daughter of Jan Gabarek... There's a pianist I've been listening to...improvised music...since working with Evan Parker.

Most recently I've been listening to a pianist named Matthew Shipp, a fellow Thirsty Ear artist. He has a couple of CD's with a violinist named Matt Manieri which are very good. And then there's a keyboard player named John Medeski of Medeski, Martin and Wood. I really like that band and many other bands I hear on CD from the Knitting Factory in New York.

As for rock'n'roll, Paul Weller, his Heavy Soul album.

WotanCCC: Speaking of Paul Weller, were you a Jam fan?

Robert Wyatt: I always liked Jam, yeah!

WotanCCC: Great band, I wish they had been more accepted here in the states.

Robert Wyatt: He reminds me of a very English phenomenon a decade or two ago which was the Mod. The meaning changed when it left England. And I haven't time to go through the sociology of the word, but it's a kind of style, a kind of attitude that I've always found admirable.

In America the word 'mod' I think lost the political edge it had in England. It's not just about style.

WotanCCC: Very artistic connotations.

Regneag says: Robert, Alfie does the brilliant illustrations for your recordings - does she exhibit anywhere?

Robert Wyatt: Well, Alfie has exhibited in the past, but her life is so full, perhaps, that she has too many talents and too many commitments to accumulate enough material for many exhibitions. But her artwork is crucial to my records and in particular these re-releases.

Doktor_j says: just before your accident, there was supposed to be a reformation of Matching Mole - rumour has it that some of the material planned for the MM record was re-worked and became "*Rock Bottom*" (one of my all-time favourite albums, by the way!) - is there any archival material that might someday still be released?

Robert Wyatt: Well, thank you for the kind words about Rock Bottom!
No, most of my practicing and rehearsals were done on a tiny cassette player and I would be embarrassed to let anybody hear them because until I get things right, I really do get them very wrong (LOL)!

Regneag says: Robert, Are you aware of any CD releases of "*Loves Makes Sweet Music*?"

Robert Wyatt: The record company that owns "*Love makes Sweet Music*" won't let anyone release it and won't release it themselves. I think it was Polygram or Polydor. I've heard of copies of the original single still in existance. But I haven't got one. Maybe Kevin Ayres who wrote the song has a copy, I don't know. I myself haven't heard it for thirty years. I think I preferred the b-side (LOL)! Kevin wrote that, too, BTW. It was called *Feeling, Realing and Stealing*. A much better title we would all agree. I don't mind talking about thirty years ago, but it's sometimes hard to remember since I was probably drunk at the time (LOL)

Aboxofrogs says: Being an artist thats been working a long time, do you have any thoughts about the music industry and how it works you can share with us?

Robert Wyatt: Well, it might sound, from what I've just been saying as if I think they're all scoundrels, but I'm happy to be able to say now that I've found some really helpful and friendly record people to work with. It's just a question of mutual trust, mutual confidence, and nobody thinking that they own anybody else.
In the case of Thirsty Ear in the US and Hannibal/Ryko in England and the rest of the world, I couldn't ask for friendlier or more consciencious people. So my advice to anybody starting out in the business would simply be to look before you leap.
It's not all bad. Some of it's very good, even for musicians.

Doktor_j says: i read on Phil Manzanera's web-site that you will be on his new album - can you tell us more about it?

Robert Wyatt: Well, only a few weeks ago Phil and one of his engineers, Jamie Johnson, visited me in my own music room at home where I added a few bits 'girly' choruses to his husky vocals and the occasional note on my new toy which is a cornet. I really like his material, that he's doing now. Up till now the Manzanera that became well know was the Manzanera that's the son of an Englishman. Now the fact that he's also the son of a Columbian woman is taking it's place in his repertoire. And I can hear a romantic side to his nature that I think other people will really warm to.

Strongcomet says: Hi Robert: you probably know that you have gathered a lot of followers and fans throughout the years. Do you feel a need to know who they are, communicate with them (besides this chat), or do you just take it as a side effect of your work ?

Robert Wyatt: Well, first of all, hello and it's nice to here from you (strong comet has put up a Wyatt website for which I'm grateful). I tend to agree with an actor I heard on the radio recently who said, 'Strictly speaking, what other people think of me is none of my business.'

In other words, I try not to be effected to much by either praise or insult. I don't do live gigs so I don't meet many of the people who listen to my music. But I'm very grateful

they're out there somewhere and all I can really say is, 'Thank you.

'The communication on the whole has to be on my side anyway, but through the music. And through Alfie's paintings. Because as you probably immediately understand, I'm slow thinker in real life conversation. Also I don't want to embarrass people by expanding on opinions they may not share.

I don't expect people to think what I think out of politeness as I know that many musicians that I enjoy have inspirations and ideas that simply baffle me. I'll leave it at that.respisces says: Your earlier records were often markedly political - but Shleep seems to downplay this element.

Respisces says: Your earlier records were often markedly political - but Shleep seems to downplay this element. Has your political outlook changed over the years?

Robert Wyatt: I love these names! Ivor Cutler once asked me, 'You still a communist?' And I replied, 'Are you still Jewish?' You are what you are, you know, after a while.
The most important thing to me was dealing with the nightmare of Apartheid. Not just because I have South African friends, but because the very idea that you can have an officially racist government seemed to me a betrayal of what my father fought for in WW II. And if Apartheid still existed, I would be on the barricades.
And I haven't gone to sleep on that yet.

Because there are still governments which see foreigners and even different cultures in their midst as aliens and inferiors.

Darbyccc says: what do you think of the whole mod scene overall musically?

RobertWyatt: In England mod is a contraction of the adjective, Modernist and originally it simply meant that a whole bunch of mainly working class English kids took their inspiration from Black American music, particularly modern jazz and soul music. It's inspired, I suppose, what became known as blue eyed-soul in the end, a universal phenomenon.

But there's something very specific about the way, for example, Paul Weller found a way to expand his music by listening to an awful lot of Marvin Gaye records. In England, Mod also implied a certain 'cool' to use a word that's been much overused in the last 10 years. And discretion, in matters of dress for example, which may surprise people who think that 'mod' meant flamboyant and colorful. In fact, mods were in great contrast to the more ostentatious arm waving rockers, etc. and teddy boys who did not appreciate the world of secret codes that Mod came out of.

But that doesn't answer the question.
If Mod music means The Jam and all the two-tone bands such as the Specials and Madness, then, yes, I love it!

Doktor_j says: there was an article in the March "MOJO" that said you were picking out words from an Esperanto dictionary to use as titles for your next album - how close are we to having more new music from you?

Robert Wyatt: Alas, I've only got as far as the Esperanto dictionary (LOL!). I'll explain the process with analogy.

Think of a cactus in the desert just sitting there being prickly for years and suddenly blooming with pretty little flowers for a very short time before returning back to the apparent inertia of it's prickly state.
That's how I function. Blame it on the desert I live in (LOL)!

But I have recorded a couple things since Shleep, just individual songs including my first ever song in Italian for a CD released only in Italy on Sonica Records.
It was for a compilation of songs I have sung or have written.
The rest of the songs were sung and played by some lovely Italian rock bands who made a CD called Robert Wyatt e Noi. They invited me to contribute a track to their record of my songs. So I did a song by one of these groups called CSI. I have also recorded recently for a Spanish CD dedicated to Lorca who's centenary it was last year.

Regneag says: Is there any plans to re- release the "Obscure" album that you did with Brian Eno and Carla Bley?

Robert Wyatt: Ah, what a good idea! I would love to see that on a CD! That would be up to Brian, I suppose. I have one very happy memory in particular of that recording which is of Carla Bley teaching me the songs that I sang. A couple of John Cage tunes. I had difficulty with it as simple as it is. Carla was very patient with me and I'm grateful for that.

Kentsmith says: What projects (music or otherwise) are you looking forward to next?

Robert Wyatt: Well, at the moment, what I'm doing (and I don't know what it'll lead to), I'm practicing playing cornet, but it's really just cornet karaoke with me favorite records ;-) But owing to my limited technique, it's the slow versions of songs that I can play with. Most recently I've been duetting with John Coltrane on his 'Ballads' LP. Who knows where this will lead?

I do write, of course, songs and words. But slowly. So many things seem to come in the way in real life and I love listening to music and watching videos and sitting around with Alfie so much that I probably don't do as much work as I should on my next project.

Thetrip says: What would it take to get you to come here to the States for some performances -- not, God forbid -- a dreaded tour, of course!

Robert Wyatt: LOL! Thanks for the idea, but I just don't do live gigs. I tried a few in the wheelchair, but I found the logistics of organizing events around the chair too difficult to be worth the effort and the money I would need. But thanks very much for the idea. Recently a few other people have been playing my songs live. I know that Karen Mantler among other people sang a couple of my songs at the Knitting Factory a short while ago. And there is a concert being organized for October in England of a band put together by trombonist Annie Whitehead playing some of my stuff. I like the idea in particular of women singing my songs. Since my voice seems to be suggesting that direction in the first place. I may be a biological male, by I'm a musical hermaphrodite.

Phasedin says: Robert, with Midi nowadays, are you tempted to do an all-solo recording perhaps of keyboards and hand percussion? I'd love to hear it!

Robert Wyatt: Well, even without the use of anything particularly modern, I certainly enjoyed making Dondestan and trying to sound like a whole band all on my own. But I do get lonely in the studio even with a friendly engineer like Jamie. So I think I will most often be inviting friends to help me out. But I don't know. Maybe they won't come. Then I'll have to do a solo record again (LOL!).

WotanCCC: Is there anything else you would like to mention before we conclude today?

Robert Wyatt: I would just like to say thank you very much for setting this up. And I can now answer and earlier question (I told you I think slowly) by saying, I now realize it feels great to hear people who are interested in what I do!

WotanCCC: Its been our pleasure Robert. And I think your fans are very cool. (not to overuse the word..) B-{)}

Robert Wyatt: LOL! Well, it's a good word, let's face it!

WotanCCC: Looks like our time is up. I'd like to thank everyone for joining us tonight. Robert, we appreciate your taking the time to come and chat with us tonight, and hope you'll come back to Talk City again soon!

Robert Wyatt: Thank you everybody. Have a nice spring!

>>**The original chat**

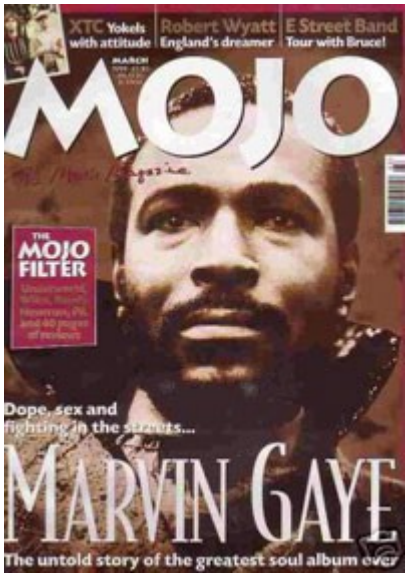
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8 out of 10 cats prefer whiskers - Mojo N°64 - March 1999

8 OUT OF 10 CATS PREFER WHISKERS



Home Counties jazz fan, psychedelic Heath Robinson, protest caroller and musical internationalist, Robert Wyatt is one of Britain's best-loved institutions. "I'd have to be some kind of paedophile to be that interested in youth culture," he tells Barney Hoskyns.
'"I'm a bleedin' grown-up." Portrait by Peter Anderson.

THE DAY BEFORE I DRIVE UP TO Lincolnshire to interview Robert Wyatt, there is a march through the streets of Santiago - a procession of relatives of men and women "disappeared" years ago by the regime of General Augusto Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile. On this march, every wife, mother, and brother clutches a placard bearing a picture of a disappeared beloved and the simple, stark question, "DONDESTAN?"

I bring a newspaper photograph of the march to show Wyatt, who in 1991 released a quietly militant masterpiece called *Dondestan* - and who, as might be expected, is following the current Pinochet affair with keen interest.

"There you are!" he exclaims as he peruses the photograph. "And people think I make these words up! When I told people *Dondestan* meant Spanish for 'Where are they?', they didn't really believe me."

Although the song Dondestan itself concerns Palestine rather than Chile, the new five-CD collection *EPs By Robert Wyatt* does feature Wyatt's version of a heartbreaking song by one of Pinochet's most sainted victims. Victor Jara's Te Recuerdo Amanda, translated in the box set's booklet, is an exquisitely simple sketch of a woman, radiant with love, rushing to meet her lover on his five-minute factory break. Except that her lover turns out to be a man who "left for the hills / Who never did any harm / And in five minutes / Was destroyed...".

"Talk about brave protest singers," Wyatt almost shudders. "I think that's about as brave as it gets, really. And there's great pathos in singing about a disappeared person and then becoming one yourself. So it's pretty timely."

I ask Wyatt and his wife Alfreda Benge - the "Alfie" who has long been his caretaker, collaborator, and muse - if they think Jack Straw will let Pinochet go home. "I was gonna bet with Alfie that he'd want to stay on the right side of Spain," Wyatt says. "But now that the White House has spoken and said send him back to Chile, I think that's what he'll do. There's no question in my mind now".

Straw will prove Robert and Alfie wrong, but one can forgive these former card-carrying Communists for a certain ingrained cynicism about the cosy relationship between Blighty and Uncle Sam.

l never do get to ask them about the blitzing of Iraq that follows two weeks later.



The release of *EPS by ROBERT WYATT* is the final chapter in the reissuing of almost alI the recorded work by this English master, a paraplegic with a Marxian thicket of beard and the sweet, doleful voice of a chorister. Comprising such Wyatt projects as the 1983 EP Work In Progress and an edited version of his 1981 *The Animals' Film* soundtrack, the box ties up alI the loose ends of the man 's mercurial career, including his 1974 Top 30 hit version of The Monkees' I'm A Believer and the 1983 Top 40 hit version of Elvis Costello's Shipbuilding.

EPs also features remixes of tracks from 1997's acclaimed 'comeback' album *Shleep*, a serene, playful collection that chose the personal over the political and returned Wyatt to the murky dream-states of his post-Soft Machine classics *Rock Bottom* (1974) and *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975). As a fan of the spartan, one-man-and-his-Casio loveliness of *Old Rottenhat* (1985) and *Dondestan* - and of the wonderful Rough Trade '80s singles collected on *Nothing Can Stop Us* (1982) - I was initially thrown by the spirit of collaboration that brought people like Paul Weller into the Wyatt frame. But in time I came round to *Shleep* as one comes round to everything this sharp, big-hearted man has done.

When I finally locate the house in the unspoilt Georgian town where Robert and Alfie live, I find them leafing through a dictionary of Esperanto in their dining room. Wyatt is trying to find a title for his next proper album, and Alfie is suggesting musical terms to look up.

"What's 'strum'?" she asks as she disappears into the adjoining kitchen.
"It's *ludate*, which is rather nice. "
"Look up 'sing'," says Alfie, out of view.
"I did. That's *kanti*."
"'Hum'?"
A pause of several seconds.
"Hum itself is *zumi*. That's *very* nice. That's good, isn't it?
I was going to call the record *Humdrum*, so if I now look up drum... *Timburo*? *Tamburo*? That's aIl right, I suppose."

The Wyatts have been in Lincolnshire for 10 years. Prior to that, they'd been wedged into a flat in Twickenham where Robert never had any space to work and into which friends would drop at aIl hours. One day Alfie set forth and drove as far north as it took to find a house for the price that the Twickenham flat was worth. "This house simply worked," she tells me. "It was somewhere we could go out and get everything with the wheelchair. It's quite hard to find a place like that in a place where you're not cut off and imprisoned. Of course you miss culture. This is a total culture-free zone. No films, no art. Once a year there's some jazz in Grimsby. If we hadn 't got a Tardis full of entertainment that we've gathered along the way - books and videos and things like that- it would be a desert island, really. "

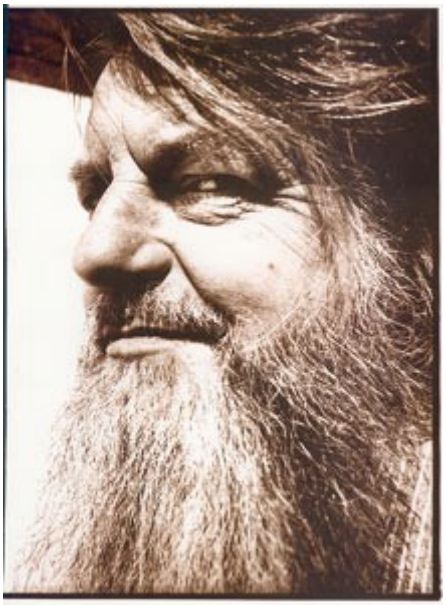
Alfie says the worst was when the Gulf War broke out and she was on her own here. (Wyatt was in the studio working on *Dondestan*.) "I was watching it aIl happen and it was so frustrating not being able to express your disgust and anger in any way, because the town went on as it was before and nobody talked about it. In London you could have gone out and sort of stood somewhere with other people. On the other hand, we're the right age where we know what we need and we've had our stimulation and our adventures. God help any child that's brought up here without any access to the Science Museum or anything else."

"The ones that worry you," chips in Robert, "are the ones who are brought up in Lincolnshire as children and then go on to become Prime Minister. Then you really see what the pay off of that deprivation is."

Given that the Thatcher years coincided with Wyatt's most trenchant musical statements about exploitation, imperialism and the like, this seems a suitable moment to ask him if he is dismayed by pop's wholesale retreat from political commitment.

"Ooh, that's difficult," he says, wincing slightly. "I'm not a sociologist, for a start. And I never felt that anybody *ought* to do anything at aIl in that regard. I was always pleased when people - Jerry Dammers or Paul Weller - got stuck into an issue, because they didn't talk obscurely. But I'd have to be some kind of... *paedophile* to be that interested in youth culture! I'm a bleedin' grown-up. I listen to grown-up music."

MOJO : You've talked about how hard it is to fight against the "ideological soup" that is the centrist politics of Blair and Clinton. Was it easier to shout out against Margaret of Grantham?



> Zoom

Thatcher was exorcism for me. The other night we were watching Harold Pinter on telly being asked about this transition he made to where he was overtly and directly engaged politically, where there were goodies and baddies. He said he was traumatised in the early '80s. He was stifled by the climate. . . *suffocated* was maybe the word he used. You fight your way out of it like you do out of suffocation. When propaganda is disseminated in such vastly effective ways there is a feeling of, well, somebody's got to say the other side of all this. You get baited. The purpose of conservative establishment propaganda is simply to demoralise the opposition, to gas you into submission. You fight because you fight for your own mental survival. That's all it is.

There's a fair amount of political/protest music on the EPs box, from Peter Gabriel's Biko to *The Animals' Film*.

I would like some of my stuff to be more anachronistic than it is, but sadIy it's not an anachronism to be singing a song like Te Recuerdo Amanda, written by someone who was tortured to death by Pinochet's people. And the version of *The Animals' Film* is also timely. There's a central contradiction in the vivisectionists' argument: they say it helps to experiment on animals because they're so like us, but at the same time they're saying animals are so unlike us that they don't suffer like we do. Well, you can't really have it both ways. There is actually an organisation called DAARE, Disabled Against Animal Research - it adds moral clout if disabled people themselves say that the whole purpose of doing good is to reduce the amount of suffering in the world.

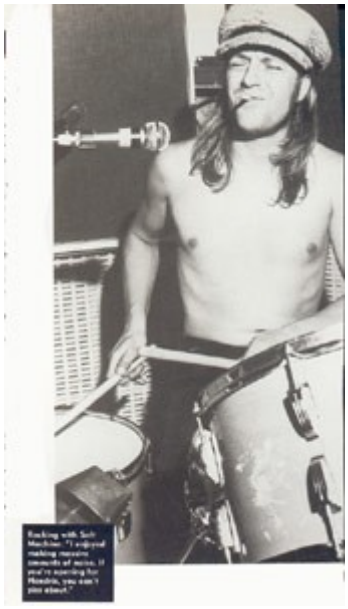
Have the Rykodisc/Hannibal reissues - including Dondestan *(Revisited)*, which afforded you the chance to improve on an album that you thought had been rather hurriedly mixed - brought a cheer to your heart?

Yeah, it's made me feel like I've been *doing* something! I'm really grateful to Ryko. They're a terrific bunch of people - really friendly and helpful and conscientious. The way Joe Boyd has done his repackaging of people like Sandy Denny, who are completely outside the fast traffic of the commercial record world, keeps these safe little pockets accessible to anybody who wants to make that effort. It's also been a chance to refresh things, like Alfie redoing or adding to the artwork, and also getting some of the words printed that weren't there before. And really having another crack at *Dondestan*, putting it in more of a context with Alfie's photographs. It's a great feeling.

But I have been doing other things as well. New recordings that I've really enjoyed. One was the Federico Garcia Lorca centenary this year, and this bunch of Spanish people put together a compilation *[De Granada A La Luna]* setting Lorca to music. They sent me a bit of text and I did it just with a bass player called Chucho Merchan, who's based in England and played on a couple of tracks on *Shleep* - a lovely geezer and a shit-hot musician. They invited us to Granada for the presentation, even though I don't do any live gigs, so I was just there in my capacity as... mascot teddy bear. The other thing was an Italian group called CSI, who got a bunch of groups to do a CD of tunes that I've sung *[The Different You: Robert Wyatt E Noi]*. Half of them were my songs and the rest were things I've sung, like Yolanda. So I sang a track on that, one of their tunes called Del Mundo - the first time I've ever tried to sing in Italian. It was incredible to be asked. And the general principle of other people doing my tunes while I sit at home drinking tea is, I think, to be encouraged.

Going back to the start of your story, would it be fair to say that you were blessed with unusually hip parents?

My parents were great. I've only just been orphaned, in fact: my mother died about a month ago. I've actually very rarely been directly questioned about what went on in Kent. I don't remember it being as breezy and glamorous and easy-going as people describe it. My dad contracted multiple sclerosis when I was about 10, and my parents moved out to near Dover. So the backdrop was my dad retiring early and fading away fairly fast, and my mother struggling as a freelance journalist to make ends meet. They put their last money into a falling down old house, and we were there six or seven years. I went to school a one-hour bus drive away to Canterbury, and I have to say I was very unhappy there. And although it's true that I became interested in music and started playing with other people who were interested in music, this idea of some swinging scene is simply not how I remember it. It was grimmer, and I found Canterbury a rather pofaced sort of town - I remember going into Canterbury Cathedral and signing "Jesus Christ" in the visitors' book, and a school prefect came up behind me and I was caned. I couldn't keep up with school work at all, so I left when I was about 16 and spent six years or so floating about.



> Zoom

Floating about where?

It was a rather lonely time. In late teens people might be going to college or university, whereas I was having to earn a living. My parents went off to live in Italy, and then I worked in a forest, and then as a Iife model at Canterbury Art College.

Then I worked in London, a large kitchen, funnily enough at the LSE, though I'd only ever see the students through the hatch. There was a staff of about 80 people there, and I was about the only bloke and about the only non-Caribbean. They were such a laugh, and they made me so welcome. I didn't really know London very well, and they used to take me back to their places and to their parties. They mothered me around and sat me in dark rooms with cans of beer, blasting me with what was I suppose proto-bluebeat music.

Do you generally retain good memories of making music in the '60s?

I've been quite shocked to see bits of old film where I'm drumming, and I obviously used to get stuck in on the old drum kit. But it all collapsed in such an unhappy way that, to be honest, I don't dwell on it, no. Of course I worked with some great musicians, but in the end I never really found a home as a drummer. So that my period of stimulus and excitement sort of goes from having a really good time until I was about 10 or 11, until school started to get hard. Then it's sort of blank, really, 'til about 1971 or 2. What I do remember enjoying was just that little bit later on: working with people like Henry Cow, that kind of thing.

I know that your ejection from Soft Machine is something that's still painful to you. I wondered if the *Shleep* song Was A Friend, which Hugh Hopper co-wrote, had any bearing on that?

So did I!

Alfie: At the end of that song, when Robert sings "We are forgiven", I wanted to join in and say: "No! Never!"

RW: Alfie's a tough cookie. The thing is, I don't really like reading stuff where musicians talk about this stuff. It all gets so Spinal Tap when you start talking about "musical differences". How can anybody expect any number of lads to be able to do their own thing and stay together that long ? I could have done with some of the money when we came out of it, but we managed. So we must all be like Nelson Mandela about these things.



> Zoom

Could Soft Machine have ever been as big as their great rivals at the time, Pink Floyd?

No, it was too different. Pink Floyd had hit singles from the start, and terrific ones too. And they had a whole grandeur and presence that wasn't anything to do with us. The only thing we had in common was that some of the audiences were the same in the sense that they were prepared to listen to tunes they hadn't heard before. I don't think Soft Machine had enough vision or coherence to get a loyal public. We didn't really know what we were doing. I was too much of a jazz fan. I like to travel light, with a little drum kit. I honestly don't need a lot of the other stuff. I do like eating fried-egg sandwiches.

Do you still feel a connection to the avant-garde spirit of that period?

It's an odd thing, that. In fact, there were a lot more things like what we now call World Music before the beat group hegemony took over the record shelves, actually. People did go and see Ravi Shankar, and they did listen to calypso and bossa nova and all kinds of things. There was a reach to outside the local culture, a very wide one. Really this aIl happened in the '50s, and a lot of the stuff was cannibalised years later in the rock field - by people like us. I wasn't culturally a rebel at all in terms of my parents. In fact, I really liked my dad's records and paintings and stuff that he liked, which was the avant-garde of the first half of the century. Picasso, Prokofiev. So that was a starting point, but it was already a nostalgia for an imagined world that my dad lived in. And even when I got into bebop and modern jazz in the '50s, it was already nostalgia for an imaginary Harlem or something. When some people say art's got to be new, it's got to be cutting-edge, it doesn't mean anything to me at all. I have no ideology of newness.

When you played with Jimi Hendrix, did you think, this guy is light years beyond what most of us are doing?



> Zoom

It was a shock, yeah. It was a lurch. Just how far he'd got, having not seen the roots of it. Always underestimated, I think, was his group, and Mitch Mitchell particularly. There's very few drummers who could have ridden the storm and clocked where the beat was, what the time was, and dealt with that funky beat but at the same time flying like the wind and following Hendrix all over the place. Then again, Hendrix has to be given credit for such a loose group, far looser than anyone else at the time. As someone who'd spent much longer listening to the glorious disintegration of bebop into Sun Ra and Charlie Haden and Don Cherry, this felt more comfortable to me than the strict time and neat and tidy blocks of sound that rock music was locked into. The music breathed, it had air in it. Of course, bits floated off and got lost, but that suited me fine. They were a great encouragement to us, particularly Mitch, who at the end of the tour gave me his kit. Which I've still got [upstairs]. I've never used another. Everything you hear of me on a drum kit is on that maple-wood kit.

Also, Hendrix was not a prima donna. He was actually quite a modest gent, a bit of a grown-up. He' d done those things that conservatives say young men should do. He'd done his stint in the forces. So between the forces and Little Richard's band, he knew all about discipline! He was very, very secure in that way. But he took risks aIl the time. A great inspiration. I can't imagine that period without him. He was pure light. I did see him every night playing something like Red House, and every night it just made the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. I feel quite tearful about it, even now.

Do you think if you hadn't had the accident in 1973 that you would have found the musical voice that you have, and made the music you've made?

No. One thing I'm really grateful for is not being a drummer anymore, as a primary thing. That forces me to take charge of my own music. I should have done it before. It was a good career move... as everyone said when Elvis Presley died. I just carried on with what I do, which is basically slightly out-of-tune nursery rhymes. Up to that point, as a drummer and arranger, I'd been trying to sort of take on everything there was to take on, in terms of music-making - all the harmonic and rhythmic ideas that were available. Which is a great apprenticeship in music, but then you end up saying: What actually is your voice? What is it you yourself have to offer? And the accident made me have to work that out.

I was thinking about how hymnal many of your songs sound. The keyboards sometimes suggest an organ in a little country church, and the voice is like some doleful choirboy. Any idea where that comes from?

The first things I remember my dad playing, before MS stopped him, involved us standing round the piano and singing things like Away In A Manger. I've always liked that rather static feel. In fact, you get it in surprising places. Some South African music has it - you can hear the hymns in the background somewhere or other. Also, some of the most influential music l've listened to was the Charlie Haden stuff, as arranged by Carla Bley. *Liberation Music Orchestra* is stateIy but ramshackle at the same time. I loved the feel of it. The whole thing came up again in one of John Peel's daft projects, getting everybody to sing Christmas carols in the studio. I did Good King Wenceslas with Ronnie Lane - he was Wenceslas and I was the page, singing in this sort of falsetto. It came straight out, I had no problems with it.

Is it accurate to say your voice is a countertenor?

I don't know quite what it is. I've lost some top notes recently, a semitone every year, just about. I can get comfortably up to about a G above middle C. I've got a falsetto in my voice that a lot of people use and comes from black music. I used to listen to a lot of women singers like Dionne Warwick. I could sing along to Dionne Warwick easier than I could to Ray Charles.

**I've always been curious to know how the sound of Rock Bottom - that dreamy, murky minimalism - was born in your head.
Where did the keyboard sound originate?**



> Zoom

The keyboard itself suggested it. Alfie got this thing called a Riviera in Venice, and what I liked about it was that you were able to slow the vibrato right down - normally with things like the Hammond organ the vibrato is quite fast and it's set. So with this Riviera I was able to tune in with the kind of vibrato I wanted, and I was able to play rather like I would sing if I could be a little choir. I could set my voice right into it, and it was like stepping into a warm bath of sound. I felt really at home. But where it comes from, I don't know. I was impressed by the way Rick Wright used to play in the Floyd - it was nothing like the only way I knew how to play at that time, which was somewhere between Booker T. and Jimmy Smith. He left all the drama and dynamics to the other instruments and just created these glacial harmonic backdrops - a very good bit of stage-setting, and rather underestimated. So I was affected by him, although there's a grandeur to what they do, which is not a word that comes to mind with my tunes!

You sit at this intersection of so many different strands. There aren't many people who connect Eno to The Monkees, or Paul Weller to Mike Oldfield. Why is that?

I don't sit down and try and be eclectic. I really like Paul, and I really like Evan Parker. And me in the middle is just the same old thing. No, it's just that I really like all these people and the way they play. Sometimes it's not to do with their genre, but with the character of the particular musician. It's the thing I really like about music and working with other musicians. As a jazz fan, when you had an Art Blakey, there they were - Horace Silver, Benny Golson - and you felt these people in the room, you got a sense of the actual characters. The sense of contrast between Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, and Miles Davis I really felt them as people. There's a particular character trait of someone like Paul that I really find appealing, and it gives you an extra musical thing. It's the actual company, the imagined character that comes through the music.

Did you always intend *Shleep* to be a more collaborative venture than its predecessors?

Shleep was recorded like *Rock Bottom*, which is to say that I was prepared to record the whole thing myself like *Dondestan*. So that any musicians coming was a lovely luxury - a bit of virtuosity, whether it was Annie Whitehead's trombone or Paul's guitar or Evan's saxophone. But I'd mapped it all out myself, and wasn't relying on anybody else to make it work. Their role was to enhance it. Most of the guests on there would come for a weekend or something, and they'd work on a couple of songs. They really brought out stuff that hadn't occurred to me, or at least had in my head, but I couldn't write the sort of early Mingusy thing with trombones and saxophones weaving about, but Annie and Evan concocted much nearer what I had dreamed of. And I wanted Blues In Bob Minor to be a proper sort of blues, even though with my rickety rhythm section thing it's not as beefy as a blues would be done normally. With a bit of encouragement - he didn't wanna disturb the mood of the song - Paul took it much further than I had planned to.

Alfie: Robert's one weakness is that he's not assertive, so he can easily let things go in order not to hurt somebody's feelings, or because he doesn't want to be seen as a prima donna. He knows what it is in his head, but he lets things go because he doesn't want to mess up the atmosphere.

You've talked often of "rock" as opposed to "roll". Do you think "rock" as a phenomenon has burned itself out and become a bit of a joke?

I'd have been quite happy coming out of the '50s into the '60s if there'd never been any rock at all. I'd have been quite happy listening to jazz and bossa nova and rhythm and blues and Cuban music and African stuff. My favourite guitarist's still Wes Montgomery. I can't think of anything that was going on that wasn't quite enough for me already.

On the other hand, you'd never have had Hendrix.

That's right. When I actually think of it, there's lots of lovely rock bands and rock musicians. What happened in rock music was that the guitar took over the role that brass sections in rhythm and blues had had. If you listen to The Contours' original Do You Love Me, it strikes me as being a stronger, more powerful record than any beat group cover version: it's got a drama and a clarity and it swings like fuck. Who could ask for anything more?

Is it an argument, at the end of the day, about power versus sensuality?

I've got ears, and I can hear how dramatic and exciting electric guitars can be, but I can live without it. Maybe I'm not as eclectic as I've been suggesting. A difficulty I had with rock was that I wasn't altogether happy with what happened to drumming. I'd been following the history of drumming in jazz, where rhythm was broken up by drummers like Kenny CIarke and Philly Joe Jones into this wonderful breathing thing, and rock'n'roll seemed to me to take it back to that march-bond thump-on-every-beat, and it just gave me claustrophobia. It's also a musical thing - a lot of rock'n'roll is in eighth-note and 16th-note intervals, whereas what I really love about jazz, and why it's my music of the century, is the triplet feel of the 12/8 signature, the implied three and four simultaneously, which you'll hear in even the most simply equipped West African groups. That seems to me the organic live element that made jazz solos possible and gave a kind of flow to the music, and I'm sticking with that flow... But you could probably stick a bit of John Bonham on and I'd be going, Yeah!!



> Zoom

Do you try to keep abreast of pop music?

I don't feel I'm missing anything, but I can't say that I need much, either. I'm very intrigued by people like Tricky, and what's going on around his vocals. And a lot of what happened with dub, those lo-tech ideas of what you can do in the studio, and then that being picked up by New Yorkers and them doing pan-tonal stuff with hip hop. Perhaps the most recent influence I've had was Björk's last record. I took a bit of courage from her about how to place things. You have to have no fear of technology. There was a nice thing she said in an interview: "I'm not scared of technology, my dad was an electrician!"

Alfie: We really love this record by Wyclef Jean we've been hearing. Something about November.

Gone 'Til November?

RW: Oh, yes, that's great. As a bit of pop song stuff, that's the best I've heard since Björk.

You are - are you not? - a godfather of lo-fi. The very primitive drum machines on East Timor [*Old Rottenhat*], for instance.

Absolutely right. And it goes back to when I used to like Paul Klee's drawings: those spidery pen-and-ink drawings with splodgy bits on and rather feeble colouring-in. I really like precarious, rickety things and always have done. I spent quite a few years in very loud bands, making massive amounts of noise, and I enjoyed all that. If you're opening a concert for Hendrix in front of 15,000 Hendrix fans, you can't piss about. You can't be whimsical, you've got to come up with something. So I do know about all that.

What was the last occasion on which you performed on a stage?

It was in a little club, doing Born Again Cretin with The Raincoats. That would have been about 1983. They did it very nicely, as it happens.

Could you ever see yourself giving a live performance again?

I couldn't, no. I dream about it sometimes, and they're alwoys nightmares: I can't remember the words, the band doesn't know what key the songs are in, and I've forgotten what order we're doing them in.

THE CONVERSATION WINDS down with tea and doughnuts. Outside, a damp, grey sky unfolds across Lincolnshire. When Robert briefly leaves the room, Alfie tells me conspiratorially about a new keyboard a Yamaha "dance keyboard", she calls it- that he acquired after *Shleep*.

"I'm always trying to get him to buy something new," she says. "And he does buy something; but then of course he can't make any of it work. He's just not made for machines. He doesn't even know how to turn them on. He still has the Riviera, but some of the notes started to break up. The next thing he was really fond of was this Wasp, a little small computer thing that made a very good bass sound - he did a lot of *Old Rottenhat* with that. There are alI these sort of dead things upstairs. Like this old trumpet I got him in a car boot sale."

When Wyatt re-enters the room he plays me the nine-minute Cancion De Julieta that he contributed to the Lorca album. It's a huge, mournful thing, with groaning keyboards and horn sounds like baleful whale noises, reminiscent of something off Charlie Haden's *Liberation Music Orchestra*...

Un mer de sueno
Un mer de tierra blanca...
(Oceans of dreaminess
A sea of white earth...)

"This one was obviously meant for me," Wyatt says as we listen. "Sometimes I react against that kind of typecasting, but in this case they were absolutely right. It's serendipity I think... though I never quite know what that means. "

Alfie smiles across the table at him.
"I think it's the future, myself," she says.

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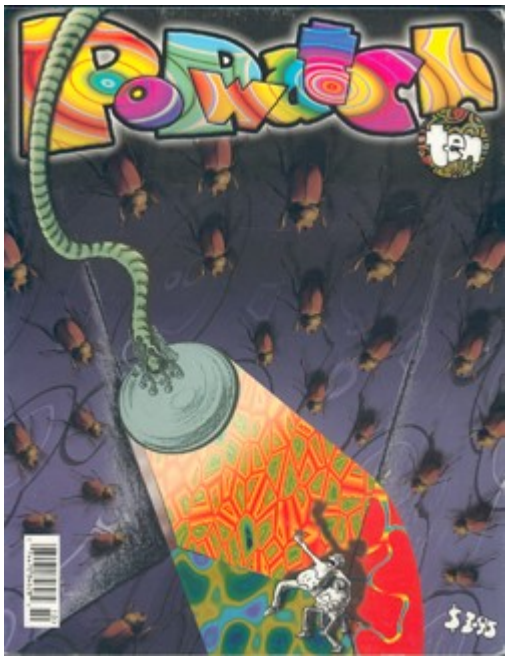
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NOT JUST DIFFERENT DIALECTS... BUT DIFFERENT LANGUAGES



An interview with Robert Wyatt by Dave Cross

The way he sees it, there are two different Robert Wyatt.

The first was Robert Wyatt the bi-ped. As late-60s guideposts of British avant garde freak culture, the Soft Machine had few peers and certainly no rivals. A necessary ingredient to all great rock bands is tension and infighting, without which you wind up with a rather bland end product. There was an overabundance of tension in Soft Machine (whose great name certainly outlived the effectiveness of the band itself) and most of those involved can't look back at their tenure with fondness. Few members of the Softs ever transcended being a "former Soft Machine member". Luckily, Wyatt was first and foremost in distancing himself from his former band - a move that would allow him to go from flower-child freak to far-left political advocate with credibility intact.

After being booted his band (still a source of much bitterness for him), Wyatt formed Matching Mole. At that point, perhaps not distanced far enough from his former unit (indeed, the name Matching Mole was a pun drawn from the French translation of Soft Machine), the Mole was not the greatest financial or critical success. Wyatt folded the first version and was in the process of reforming a more compatible Matching Mole when he fell out a window, breaking his back, and permanently winding up in a wheelchair.

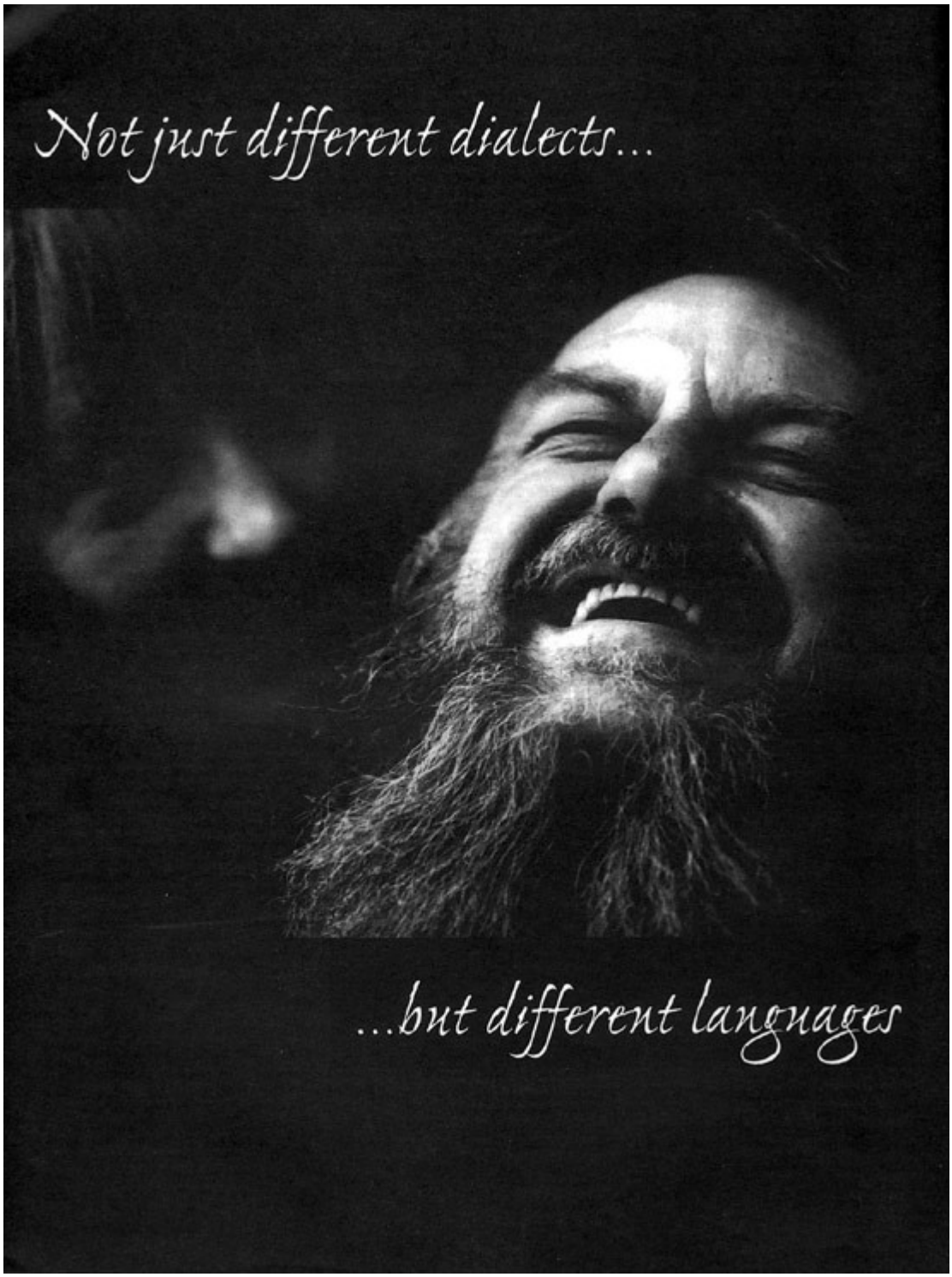
The second Robert Wyatt emerged in 1974 with the release of his fully realized lyrical, political, and musical vision. Although Rock Bottom was actually his second solo record, by all accounts it was the perfect debut of the fully mature Robert Wyatt. Intense, harrowing, and introspective, the record was a critical success, and soon Robert found himself on the English charts with a couple of successfully, designed and executed singles. As Robert would later say, "I'm a girl who likes to say yes".

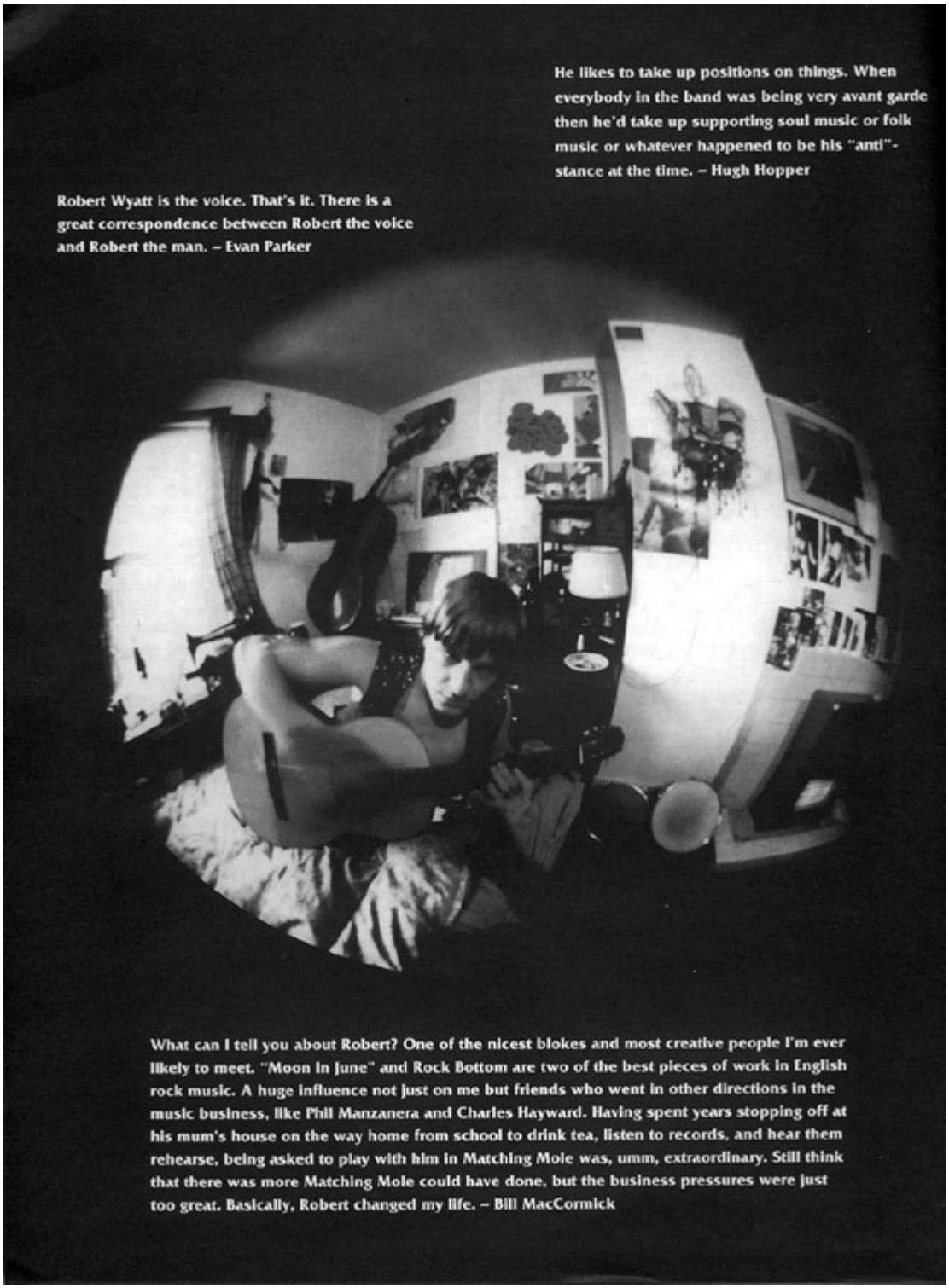
Soon after, punk rock would rear its ugly head. Rather than take the reactionary view of many of his former colleagues, Wyatt embraced the post-punk culture and

worked with some of the leading lights of post-punk U.K. Although it was never meant to last as a permanent document, Wyatt's work of the early 1980s is both politically vitriolic ans musically superb. No thinly veiled political art rock hinting at Communist orientation, Robert's work for Rough Trade is direct and personal. It's as if he's singing those songs just for you; perhaps his most endearing and long-lasting trait.

There are always long gaps in the recorded history of Robert Wyatt. It's as if he realizes no one will ever forget about him, or else he'll reinvent himself to a brand new audience whenever he decided to return. Whatever the reason, the 90s have only seen two new Wyatt releases so far (there were two compilations as well). His latest, Shleep, is a superb romp through many of Robert's old musical playgrounds with cutting-edge jazzbos bumping heads with pop superstar understatement. But don't think for a second that all the high-profile guest stars or superbly glossed production can overshadow. Mr. Wyatt himself. He's the little wizard waving his wand over this whole alchemic brew; at point it comes off like a digital retelling of his classic Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, other times there are elements of most of his other works.

1998 has been a very busy year for Robert Wyatt. The U.K. release of Shleep finally landed in the U.S., thanks to Thirsty Ear. Additionally, Hannibal/Ryko in the U.K. are readying most of the Wyatt back catalog for reissue on CD (likewise to follow shortly thereafter in the U.S.., again on Thirsty Ear).


Not just different dialects...
...but different languages



THIS INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED ON JANUARY 6,1998.

Popwatch - You play trumpet on your new record, Shleep.

Robert - Yeah.

Have you played trumpet on any of your prior records?
I don't think I ever did, although I seem to remember playing a trumpet mouthpiece solo, an imitation Roy Eldridge trumpet mouthpiece solo, on an ancient thing of Daevid Allen's about being an Australian, called "Fred The Fish," in about 1966. I always played mouthpiece at home and I studied it a bit at school, but I didn't like the music I was being taught and I couldn't really read the little dots. So I dropped the lessons and, in fact, left school when I was about 16 altogether. Long before I was even singing, the ultimate sound in my head that a human could make was Miles Davis with a mute. That's always been my favorite sound in the world. And now all my heroes on the trumpet are dead... I just wanted to remind myself of some of the sounds of the trumpet. That was all really.

Does this make you approach composition of melody a little differently?
I think possibly because that was what I was listening to that that's what comes out a bit. I'm not a singer that is obviously influenced by singers. I don't even think about the art of singing, really, when I'm singing. I'm thinking about the notes. And when I think about notes I think about the musicians I like rather than any particular singers. Although I've got to enjoy some singers more recently.

It definitely sounds like your took your time on this new record and really worked it quite a bit, using editing techniques and other studio features that really aren't on a lot of your other records.
That's right. It's just that the circumstances were there, basically. It was just a nice atmosphere being in a studio run by a musician, who's an old friend as well you know... and he helped. We were just able to go back and rework things.

How long did it take you to record this album?
Well, the actual recording time... I work pretty fast, but it was spread out. I would do a couple of days recording and then take the tapes home for sometimes a week or two or more. It was over a year ago... for maybe a couple of months. About a year ago (1/97-ed.) I was right in the middle of it I suppose

How was it working with Brian Eno in 1997?
Just the same! He hasn't changed at all. He's just so fast in the studio. All the particular things that I'm illiterate about... which is like what the little buttons on the machine do and so on... he's quick and fast and very imaginative.
Perhaps he's even quicker and faster now. He gets so quickly to what he wants to do. He doesn't spend hours thinking, "Maybe we can do this." He sort of hears something and calculates an appropriate response, such as the kind of dripping water sound on track two; he got that in minutes really, from hearing the track, and it just goes so well with the cymbal. He just seems to be able to make the machine do it. Whereas other people can do these things but they take hours to find the place on the machine.

It's an interesting combination, putting Brian Eno and Evan Parker together.
Well they're from completely different disciplines. Not just different dialects but different languages almost. But they're both very interested in the idea of not relying on musical clichés or at least making their own language.

Evan Parker being a huge, huge European sax giant.
He is indeed. I think he is one of the few non-American musicians from the jazz tradition who's made a distinct contribution that you could say is not just participating in the American tradition.
There are a few, like Django Reinhart, and I think he is one of those in my opinion.


photo: Mark Ellidge, 1997

> Zoom

You work with Paul Weller on the new record as well.
He was recording anyway, on and off, in Phil's studio, and I left him a little note saying hello really. He said if I needed any strumming on any songs that he'd be happy to give it a try.
There were a couple of tunes, particularly the one by Mark Kramer which I'd altered a bit, "Free Will and Testament," and then the sort of Bob Dylan blues thing at the end, which is really just a blues with slightly altered changes. He just seemed to feel very comfortable with those. He really worked hard. I was very grateful because he was right in the middle of doing his own trio LP, Heavy Soul. It would've been perfectly acceptable had he said, "I can't think about anything else right now," but he loves to play as long as it's serious. He doesn't like fucking about, he likes to get on with it. I was very honored that he spent the time for me.

You play with some other old friends on Shleep. Phil Manzanera makes an appearance.
Yeah, he does. He was sort of hovering about discreetly... because he knows the studio so well.

He also knows my music better than I do. We have a mutual friend in Bill MacCormick, the bass player I used to work with. I think they were school friends, they had a group together before I knew either of them. So he knows what I do and he knows what his studio does. He didn't intrude in any way, but he was discreetly extremely helpful and just made things easier. And he played, of course, on the only track that I really wrote with Alfie... that Alfie was part of the actual writing of the song in the first place, which was " Alien." He played on that. Alfie is very happy with that solo, which is good because that was a very important track for us. It's something of an innovation in the sense that it was a real collaboration. I mean, the word collaboration is used a lot, but that was a real one.

Was Alfie in the studio when you recorded that?
Yeah. She actually sort of wrote what the voices ought to be like. She wanted that effect of accumulating strands, not in terms of just a choir effect but of loose, accumulating strands getting slightly denser towards the end. She mixed the vocals and got the sound on each one... sometimes she would have a bit of treatment on one word and take it off the next word. It was very much her project as well as mine and then Phil just put the icing on the cake.

You work quite a bit with Alfie on this record.
Yeah, that's right. Well this, in common with the last recording, she wrote about half the lyrics as well as ideas on the musical side of how to do things.

You play with another old friend, trombonist Annie Whitehead.
It's funny, because when people think about the musicians I work with they tend to think about the people in the groups I was in when I was a drummer.
But in fact, a lot of the people I know best are musicians that I've known, really, since that period. Since the 7Os in particular... from being around the little jazz clubs in London. Annie, like Evan Parker, spent a lot of time with the African musicians I knew - Dudu Paquan and so on - and that's really how we became friends. We did actually record together once, on Jerry Dammers' recording, but I just really like her. The thing is that she's also a composer and arranger and I really wanted somebody who could think a bit Mingus and not just play a solo.

Is writing lyrics something you've had difficulty with on the past couple records?
Funny... none of the things I am, like being a singer or a songwriter, I never really planned to be any of these things. I'm still surprised that that's what I seem to be and I'm amazed that I still do it. It really surprises me when I write any songs at all - not that I don't write more. I'm really grateful to Alfie though. She doesn't write lyrics as lyrics, apart from "Alien"; she actually writes them as autonomous little pieces and I tend to just steal things from her poetry notebooks and sketchbooks and so on. And that's very useful to me. I have difficulty very often, working from words to music... that way around... but in the case of Alfie's things, I've been through a lot of what she writes about with her. Apart from "Pa in Madrid" which was, of course, a trip she took with her own father to Madrid. So I find I can empathize very closely with what she writes. I mean, I was with her when the swallows disappeared into the sky. I've watched swifts with her. I've seen the same little sparrow underneath the postbox. So it's easy for me to write tunes for that.

There are a couple of thematic strings running through Shleep, one being sleep and another being migratory birds.
Yeah. That's right.

Is it a concept album?
No, absolutely not. A concept album suggests a predetermined plan, and if anything I think less and less about what I'm doing as I get older. I'm working more on a kind of infantile instinct level... just doing what feels right and alive. I used to be much more theoretical than I am now. I've done my, sort of, theoretical homework and I know what I think, and I don't even think about what I think about anymore. And so it's other people's guess, really, as to how these images resonate. Their guess is as good as mine.

Are you thinking in terms of recording another album anytime soon?
Well, I've got bits of more material. It's a question of not recording more than I can deal with at any one moment because I like to tackle each song in its own right. Each song might require quite a different treatment so I don't want to get into sort of a factory process thing. I've noticed that with even some musicians that I really like, especially on the CDs, they just go on and on and on and you feel like after about a half an hour that that whole way of doing things is sort of starting to repeat itself too much and I don't want to do that. So I keep material back. But I've been asked to do a couple of things for other people which I'll get out of the way first... before I get back on to the next thing.

It seems like you're an ideal artist for 7" records. It's too bad they've gone away.



What do you mean, like singles and things?

Exactly. Like the series of singles you made for Rough Trade.
Well it's funny that you should say that. Rough Trade has a singles club, which is a just a subscription-only thing, where they issue one single a month on vinyl with a proper packet. A couple of months ago they... although I'm not on Rough Trade anymore... Geoff Travis at Rough Trade asked me and Hannibal Records if they could use a couple of tracks of mine for one of their singles. They used "Free Will and Testament" and on the other side they put an earlier piece, one of Alfie's things, "Sight of the Wind" from Dondestan. And it was just as a single just for their club, so it was nice to see that. It was very nostalgic. In the 50s, when I was a lad, you got jazz on singles. There were Thelonious Monk singles let alone more obviously commercial things like Art Blakey and Cannonball Adderly and Joe Zawinful and that kind of thing - you know before Weather Report he was working with Cannonball - and that merged into some kind of Nina Simone and Ray Charles stuff and the soul records. And the best jukeboxes in London... I just loved them for that and I do miss that.

> Zoom



> Zoom

Do you have any other thoughts on the album?
Only that there are things that I would now do differently. Brian, for example, sang on the first track, and now listening to it I would have his voice equal up with mine when he comes in. And I regret the fact that I don't think my voice is quite good enough on its own in the verses. That's the thought I have on that! It's a very simple point but there's a couple of little bits like that, and I'm also a bit worried about my drumming as I get older. Having heard some of my drumming 20 years ago I'm not sure how long that I can get away with it.

I think you can get away with it for a little while longer.
(Laughs) Thank you.

Has drumming affected your health at all? I hear Rashid Ali has quite bad tendonitis.
Oh, goodness me. I know Jerry Dammers has that. That's a terrible curse for musicians. I've heard there are some ways of dealing with it, but... that would be a nightmare. No, I don't have any problem with that. I think that what the real problem is - it's an obvious thing about being a paraplegic really, or maybe it's not so obvious - even if you're just keeping time with your right hand there's something about squeezing the hi-hat with your left foot which keeps

your whole body at one. You know, working as a single (piece of) athletic machinery. Whereas when you're just working with your hands, even like playing bass drum by hand on overdubs of the song, it's harder to get that organic unity in the playing. It's as simple as that really.

You seem to regret a lot of the decisions you've made.
Well, some people are very good at the actual craft of living. I seem to spend a lot of time at the wrong place at the wrong time. Or trying to be harmless and actually fucking people up a bit, like Alfie's career for example.

Oh no.
No, really, I feel very uneasy and I think it's because I just can't work it out. There are moments, especially when I sing on other people's records, say, Hapless Child, or more recently for John Greaves (a bass player here in Europe), that if I just did one thing then I could really get around that. But when I'm working on things then I try to think like a drummer or a keyboard player or a composer or a word writer and then I'm just not sure what I'm meant to be. And I've got an awful feeling that just 5 minutes before the end I'll suddenly realize which one I should be (laughs). How I should have approached it all. I wish we could have a test run - it's an old cliché, I know. I just feel like we're all in a play on a stage but nobody's given us a script and there are about eight directors going around shouting out different instructions. And nobody knows who's supposed to be on the stage and who is supposed to be off it, and that's life (laughs).

If we could, I'd like to discuss some of your early band history. Did the Daevid Allen Trio actually participate in a multimedia event with Brion Gysin and William S. Burroughs in 1963?
I can't remember that! The thing is there was a lot of interest around jazz and poetry, that is, poetry, music and effects and other general things in the early 60s when I was in school. We got involved with various multimedia events but I don't ever remember doing anything with Burroughs, certainly. Daevid himself may very well have done so... he got around a lot more. I was just having left school and kind of not knowing what to do then. Daevid himself may have gotten in much more. I mean he was always moving around a lot. Going back and forth from Paris and Australia and all kinds of things. But, no. I consider that period just as an apprenticeship, in terms of what we were doing, more of a learning period really. It was like going to a school. Instead of going to university, because I couldn't afford a proper university with proper things, I went to a kind of culture university with people like Daevid.

The next band, The Wilde Flowers, seems to take a step back. They were more rhythm and blues based.
The Hopper Brothers were very locally based, in a way that I had never ever been in my head. You know, they were born and went to school and lived in one town. And they had a group that played in that town and they used to play, you know, material of the day that was on the charts that was do-able, and quite a lot of soul stuff as well. There again I was surprised, really, because I didn't used to live around there that often. When I had left them Brian had being trying to learn some Cannonball Adderly kind of thing on the saxophone and Hugh had been learning Charlie Haden things on bass... I came back and they were playing Chuck Berry tunes and I was as surprised as anybody! It was good fun drumming, and also socially it was a way of getting out of just playing in people's front rooms and sitting out in the hall. To get to play in public was a most incredible youthful discipline, and to play for dances, even more so.

Your next band was the Soft Machine. Obviously there's bad blood there.
I'm not going to go on about that, don't worry. I'd just like to say for the record that when things wind up badly it's difficult to recapture the hope and excitement that came before that, because it gets tainted.

How many times did Soft Machine tour America?
I don't know. We spent most of 1968 in America, following Hendrix around. In the middle we did a few gigs on our own and Andy Summers came out and joined us for a little bit.

What was his role in the Soft Machine?
He just joined us on guitar about halfway through for a few weeks. I think he was on his way to the west coast, basically, because he had some friends in the Animals. Andy himself had been in a band called Zoot Money Big Roll Band - more or less a kind of a big band soul outfit. And, if fact, he had been the first person to be generous towards us in an interview in the press in England. He was interested in trying different things, away from just being a rhythm guitarist, so he joined us for a bit but he stayed, of course, out on the west coast.

There was another guitarist for the Soft Machine for a while, Larry Nolan.
He was an American lad. He was a very nice bloke... used to write words for songs. Yeah, I think it was sometime in the mid-60s, but he went back to America. In the end, with the guitar

business... we never found a way with guitars. The main thing people seemed to have around that time seemed to be built around the guitar, whereas the music we were making and arranging didn't seem to be comfortable for guitarists. Which is why in the end we didn't have any.

How did the work on Picasso's play come about?
I can't really remember that. It could have been one of Daevid's Paris connections. It's simply where artistic Paris spends its summer and they would all organize various things, though it wasn't all French people down there. There were a lot of Americans there who I didn't know very much about. In fact, Taylor Mead and other people around the New York Andy Warhol circuit seemed to be down there as well. I loved Taylor Mead, he was a great man, very funny... and some other people. It was just that they needed music. We had already done music at the Fringe Edinburgh festival for "Ubu Roi," an Alfred Jarry play, and they wanted musicians that were comfortable outside the regular song format.

Did Soft Machine compose new material for that?
Yes. Yes, we did.

Did that ever get recorded?
I shouldn't think so. Mostly we played on a beach, in a big dome - a temporary structure that was built. A geodesic dome built by Keith Alban, right next to a German beer festival, I remember. That was a bizarre pairing. We had no money, we were just sleeping around on the beach, I think, half the time. Which you can just about do in summer at the south of France.

Could you put the Soft Machine into perspective for someone who's never heard them?
Ah. (Pause)

No?
The thing is... I wouldn't use the word "rock" really. I would say that as a basis we used actual pop song type music. When you think of rock you think of a blues-based guitar, sort of getting heavier and heavier, based in rhythm and blues, and I don't think we were really anything to do with that. I think we were people who like improvising endlessly on fragments of pop songs. That's really what it was, that's the odd combination.

And huge volume.
Oh, it got very loud, yeah. Did you ever hear Lifetime, Tony Williams's band with Larry Young?

I sure have.
It seems like that was the kind of thing that happened around that period. In 1968 our rather steep learning curve - if I can use that very modern cliché - came from having to open for Jimi Hendrix every night. If you're playing in front of an audience of thousands of people who are restlessly waiting for perhaps the greatest rock performer of all time (laughs), they really get impatient unless you come up with something. It knocks the whimsy out of you and you really have to get tough and strong and get on with it. And so, after a year with Hendrix, certainly, that tended to be our approach.



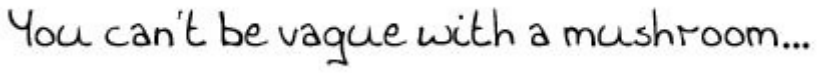
Let's talk about Matching Mole. Certainly there's some similar ideas to the Soft Machine, but movement in a different direction.
That's right. Yeah, certainly from my point of view. I wanted to carry on playing drums and I was always looking for friends to play with. In the end, to be honest, I don't think I ever found somebody to play with. It may be my fault as a drummer, maybe I'm not playable with. Maybe I was never meant to be a drummer. As I'd said, at the end of my life I'll suddenly say "I wasn't meant to be a drummer" and the whole thing will make sense, but anyway... What I was pleased about was that we managed to record a couple LPs on which we got a lot of ideas that I had, and which the others had - Dave McRae, Dave Sinclair, and Bill (MacCormick). It was very democratic in a sense, but with the LPs in particular, the first Matching Mole record, I was able to anticipate what I was going to have to do later on my own on keyboards by doing so much Mellotron on the thing because it was in the studio. It gave me a better grasp on some of the harmonic implications of some of the tunes I was trying to write.

This was aIso the first appearance of your politicaI orientation.
Well I suppose so... in joke form anyway. Although funny enough, I think there's a couple Soft Machine songs where I refer to... I don't know what I was trying to say... "If I were black and I lived here I would want to be (a big man) in the CIA or the FBI." I don't know what that was about. I've always thought about these things.
The politicalization actually coincided with getting to know Alfie. And when I got to know Alfie, there were things around her flat which I had never seen before. Newspapers called the Workers Press and so on (laughs). Alfie's father had been a professor of Libriarianship and had set up Libraries in Trinidad and Nigeria. Between them, they were able to show me the other side. To me black culture had always been another aesthetic phenomena, like Picasso and his sculpture. I was just very grateful for what I consider the main ingredient to make the 20th century culture distinctive, which was the black contribution. In terms of all the music I'd heard - be it Bartok or Buddy Holly - the music that really struck me as having both the emotional and intellectual weight that I wanted was, in the end, Coltrane. So I'd always had this feeling of great gratitude to black culture and more and more, particularly in England... England really invented Apartheid, we distance ourselves from it superficially. Apartheid was a very European phenomenon, funny enough, and there were a lot of Africans who made us aware of that. Somehow you couldn't reconcile the enormous debt to black culture with the general way that black people were being treated politically and economically. You couldn't tally it. You couldn't reconcile it. It was via politics that I opted to try and make sense of that.

Do you continue to do that?
Yes, I do. I would say of all the illuminations of the way I think, the most consistently bright light in the dusty little attic of my brain is based on a few Marxist insights into the nature of power and economics - of who wields it and why. I'm not talking about a failed attempt to do anything about it. I'm simply talking about an analysis of how the world runs. The political analysis helps to sweep away some of the mystification which tends to be used by some of the conservatives to disguise what they are doing in the name of the church and patriotism and the family and all this sort of thing.

Let's jump ahead a couple years to Robert Wyatt the Rough Trade artist and your fierce political agenda of that time.
Right.

To me it is very interesting how the politics of the 80s finally played out.
Well, that would be true of any period. It would also be true of the 60s for me how that played out. Things have their life span. As I say, it's one thing that's really stayed with me. But it's just as you don't have to be a gospel singer if you're a Christian but you might make a few gospel records when you become involved in the first place, then it might just imbue the rest of your life. And I think this has happened with me with my political stuff. People always think reactionary means right wing reactionary; but I think I would call myself a left wing reactionary, that is to say, as harsh as the climate seems to be in terms of right wing ideas being sold around and being considered culturally accept able. I feel the need, not as a missionary or indeed to communicate at all, but just for my own mental well being, to kind of correct the balance in my own work.
So during the harshest period of Reaganomics and Cold War banalities, I felt the need to verify my own separateness from the actions of my own government at the time. As long as there was some form of alternative going on in the world, I would look hopefully at any of these developments. Of course, in the meantime, NATO and the World Bank Organization have won the Cold War. There is no one posing a serious challenge to the western victory in the Cold War. I'm not a revolutionary in the sense of starting something on my own. I can support people who are trying - and in there are people still resisting, I'm always very sympathetic. But the reality at the moment is the Cold War is over and our side lost.



I'm going to give you the names of some people you've worked with. If you could, give me a word or two about them. There's a lot, so if you get bored tell me to stop.
(Laughs)

Jimi Hendrix.
A gentleman.

(Note from the ed. - OK, so the two-word answer wasn't such a great idea. It took Robert one name before he expanded his answers to a length that would give these folks some justice.)

Mongezi Feza.
This is not one word stuff you know. I feel like - and this is presumptuous - he feels like an alter ego to me. Someone I might have been. He was exactly the same age as me and he was 32 when he died. I almost feel like what I've read that twins feel when a twin dies. Not that I was that close to him but that's the feeling I had musically.

Syd Barrett.
Well I thought he was an extremely good songwriter and singer and I was very happy playing on Madcap Laughs, although he left the credits off because we were only practicing in the studio when he recorded it and he didn't want to embarrass us by putting our names on such a shambles, but I thought it was very witty. People think, "Was he mad?" "Was he crazy?" - and I didn't think that at all. A lot of people were crazy, but not Syd.

Dave McCrae.
He's the only session musician I can think of offhand who kept his soul.

Laurie Allen.
Laurie Allen's a great friend. There again - Alfie knew him before I did. And he used to play with the South African musicians with Chris MacGregor quite a lot. And he was the first person I thought of when I couldn't play drums. He would play what I would have wanted to play.

Kevin Ayers.
Kevin Ayers wrote perfectly formed songs right from the beginning. He didn't seem to have to learn how to do it. But I think he puts himself down too much. I've heard him say "The group got too clever/ jazzy/intellectual for me." He was very much one of the main minds behind the innovations and fresh ideas for new things that we were doing in the late 60s. I think one of the reasons he never became a pop star was he just had too many other ideas to obtain in the pop format.

Nick Evans.
Oh, Nick Evans... I think he's a math teacher now. He might even have been then. He's just a totally friendly jovial Welshman - and being slightly Welsh myself I'm quite happy about that - and a lovely trombonist. His big hero was Roswell Rudd, which is fairly appropriate.

Lol Coxhill.
Lol Coxhill is a wonderful musician. I've heard him, I'm sure, playing tenor. I asked him about that and he says "Oh no, no I don't do that." He's a very lyrical player and there again - he's a very good friend. When people are friends it's hard to say an objective thing like a critic might want or you as a writer might want. I mean, it was in his home that Alfie stayed when I was in hospital in 1973 because he lived in the same town as the hospital. He was so poor then. It's incredible - this man bringing up his two children on his own. You know that there's an old saying, "Those who have least give most," and in terms of material possessions Lol definitely qualifies for that remark.

Jerry Dammers.
Well, Jerry Dammers is someone I really miss. He's one of the people who was actually in the rock star industry who really did it consciously and did the right thing but kept it stylish, like Paul Weller. There is a way of doing that. You don't have to become a pranny. I think he put so much... he took his stuff so seriously that every penny he made went into things like Nelson Mandela's birthday party thing that he organized here - a massive concert with Harry Belafonte and so on. He really meant all that stuff and he got kind of lost in it.
I would like him to reemerge and play some more, because I'd hate to think... He's too young to die, you know? In fact Carla Bley said to me... when I was feeling old... she says, "Oh you've got to keep playing. Who do you think you are a fucking rock star?" (Laughs). I'm talking about Jerry, you know. He's too good to stop.

John Cage.
Oh, John Cage... the two interesting things about him that I recall... One was his interest in mushrooms, and I've since acquired a great interest in the biology of mushrooms as a kind of missing link between animals and plants in the sense that they can 't live directly off the earth. That might seem irrelevant to you. The other interest, I believe, was chess. In both cases they're studies which require meticulous indexing. A sort of scientific rigor in studying them - the very same characteristics he led the way in throwing aside in music. I think it's funny that he should still have this love of discipline and indexing but he stripped it away from music.

You have to be very disciplined with mushrooms.

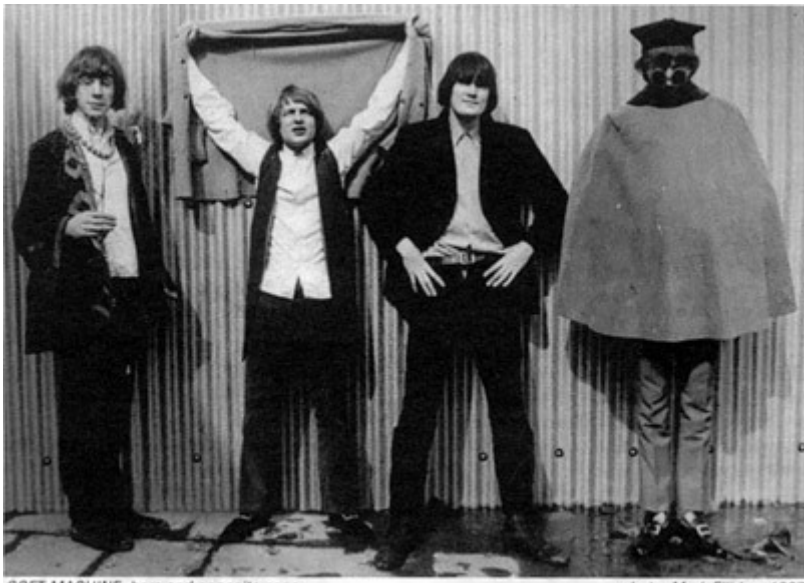
(Laughs) Exactly, you can't be vague with a mushroom. You have to know what you've got there. (Laughs)

Gary Windo.
Well Gary was just a lovely tenor player really. I think he was quite unlike the musicians who were around in England, he was much more like the Americans and, I suppose, the African musicians in England. Although he was English, the fact that he had spent a long time in the States... for example, he played with Wayne Shorter's brother, a trumpet player in various jazz things, and was very much part of the post-Albert Ayler generation. Really, that wasn't happening in England at that time. The jazz musicians in England were more, I don't know, just not that anyway... much more academic. As a consequence of that I've really got on very good with English jazz musicians, and indeed I can't think of many who would work with me anyway because I would be considered too primitive. But not by Gary, and I'm grateful to him for that.

Mitch Mitchell.
You know, I think he's in some kind of hospital thing in America right now. He's been very ill recently, so I have thought about him in the last few years. He's a great drummer, very important. Hendrix benefited a great deal from having Mitch. I remember Mitch and I used to listen to a drummer who was actually a couple of years younger than both of us but we felt of as a kind of a mentor nonetheless - Tony Williams. The stuff he was doing when Miles was making the transition from the earlier forms of jazz to the later ones that he did. The fact that Mitch had that stuff in his mind and knew about it, as well as the more John Bonham heavy rock thing that the English drummers were doing around that time, made him really perfect for Hendrix. That also gave me confidence to move around the kit a bit in a way that I subsequently didn't.

Bill MacCormick.
Well, Bill... yeah. He was a very good bass player. He didn't play like a bass player, really. He didn't seem to play the sort of things bass guitarists are likely to play. He didn't really have a normal bass guitar sound at the time, but I found his playing very bright and imaginative. He was always trying to get the most out of things. He was very good company to have around at the time when we were very, well, destitute really, and things weren't working out. Things never worked out with Matching Mole, but he was always good fun and cheerful and that kept us going.

Richard Sinclair.
He's just an extremely good organ player. It seemed very difficult at the time for players, especially people playing the Hammond, to find a way of playing that wasn't simply based on the Jimmy Smith or Booker T way of playing it. I think that some of them who did play that way were wonderful, and in England there were Georgie Fame and Zoot Money who did so and very well indeed. But he found another way... much more pastoral, a much more European sound and harmonic sensibility which fitted the tunes I was working on at the time perfectly, and I'm very grateful for that.



SOFT MACHINE, here and opposite page photo: Mark Ellidge, 1967

Daevid Allen.
Daevid. Ah, yeah. Now that's a difficult one. That's really a long way back. My father didn't approve of him, really, when he stayed at our house when I was a teenager. I think the main thing was that he provided an escape route for me from school, of which I was a total failure. He was a lot older than us, certainly a lot older than me. And in the early 60s, maybe even the late 50s, he got a houseboat in Paris and I went and stayed with him there and got a taste of what was then the underground focused around Paris and the jazz musicians there. Various pre-psychedelic people like Brion Gysin and so on. He opened some doors. The official doors of schooling had been a total failure in my life, so Daevid did show me there are whole other worlds out there to make. You don't have to worry about being a failure in school.

Daevid is going to be 60 this year.
I think he always was, wasn't he? He always seemed like he had that guru thing.

Phil Miller.
I think the real thing about Phil was that he really liked to work on a harmonic thing and chords and so on on his guitar, and I think that really the most appropriate things done with Phil was when he had actually wrote the pieces for which I was able to write songs. It was one of those periods when I was torn between being a drummer and a singer in that sense... in the Mole... and I could do it both on record. Things like the tune "God Song," which enabled me to write a song that really meant a lot to me to write, and I couldn't have done it without his music suggesting the phrasing. I would have liked to have pursued that side of it more rather than the live things we were trying to do.

Hugh Hopper.
He was a school friend from the age of 10 or 11, I suppose. I've always enjoyed singing his tunes, he himself doesn't sing. He has a harmonic slant on things that I've always found very compatible with the way I sing. And of course I'm still singing some of his songs. On Dondestan I sang a tune of his, I think it's "Left on Man"; and there again on this LP, "Was A Friend" is a Hugh Hopper tune. That must be the longest-running musical association I've ever had, as sparse as it is these days.

Carla Bley.
Oh, Carla's great! This morning I was just listening to a record, actually by her daughter, her and Mike Mantler's daughter, Karen Mantler. I love that record. I've got an LP and a CD by Karen and one of the things is that Karen has learned so much from her mother - the throwaway irony of the lyrics, and the meticulously interesting harmonic developments - she hates a boring harmonic progression and always puts a little angle in there with a kind of dry wit. It's a family trait, I think. Carla was very, very funny to work with. She said, "You have to be tough, if you run a band in New York you've got to be tough." And indeed she was extremely tough, and you could see why. She was very , very witty and had extremely sensible ears. Her father apparently was a piano teacher. She was Swedish - her name was Carla Borg before she married Paul Bley. I had to sing a John Cage song once and it was she who taught me what the notes were.

Mike Ratledge.
Ah, yes. Well, I can't think of very much there. Too much blood has flown under the bridge.

Elvis Costello.
A wonderful bloke. He kept his enthusiasm going all the time when I met him. There again, like Jerry Dammers, he didn't become a blasé supercilious rock star. I've never known anybody with such wide-ranging tastes that he actually did something about. He would work with the Brodsky String Quartet, he would get Chet Baker into the studio, he tried his hand at country music. He was just awestruck by the whole business of music and being allowed to participate in it.
A very, very nice man.

Lindsay Cooper.
I spoke to her about 2 days ago. Of course I've sung a couple of her tunes written with Chris Cutler. I liked all of those musicians very much from the Henry Cow setup, and she was always very inventive in that genre of playing, and a good bassoon player. But you know she's very ill now. I don't know if you knew that.

No.
Yeah. She has multiple sclerosis and, in fact, she's had it for apparently 10 years. She just didn't want to face it herself. And then she decided to sort of say it because she was having such difficulty doing anything. So she's now, as it were, come out with it and has let it be

known, so it's alright for me to tell you. I'm very pissed off about that because she can't really function as she did at all.



SOFT MACHINE

photo "collage": Bill Ellsworth, 197

Fred Frith.
There's a side of Fred that I would have really brought out more. I would have really liked to worked with Fred in a group. I think that if I had found him earlier we could have been in a late 60s group together somehow. Some sort of Henry Machine or Soft Cow or something.

Soft Cow.
(Laughs) Because there's something wistful about meeting someone I felt so compatible with, almost at the end of my career as a drummer or as a group musician. But still, I enjoyed singing with their band, and now particularly I'm having to listen through lots of stuff of mine because it's being reissued by Ryko, and some of it's lasted better than others. At the moment some of the stuff I most enjoy is the duet with him on piano doing his tune "Muddy Mouse/Muddy Mouth" on an LP I did called Ruth is Stranger Than Richard in the mid-70s. It's just wonderful how lyrical it is. He could easily have any kind of career apart from the, kind of, post-Derek Bailey career he has chosen.

Pye Hastings.
Blimey, I haven't heard that name for a long time. There's the brothers of course, him and Jimmy Hastings, the saxophone player. He was a fine musician. He was never amateurish in the way he played guitar. He didn't seem to go through that period like the rest of us went through, I think, perhaps having an older brother who was a superbly schooled musician. Actually, there's a session musician who never lost his soul - another one to add to the short list - his older brother. But I haven't heard from Pye or had any contact with him for decades.

Brian Eno.
Oh! Brian Eno... well, yeah. just a good friend - really helpful. What can I say? He's helped me out of some difficult things. Like a couple of years ago all the microphones I'd had for 20 years, they all started to pack up, and it was Brian who sent me a permanent loan of really good new ones for me to work at home on. Things like that. So he's not just knowledgeable, he's sort of generous like that. He likes to help things happen.

Elton Dean.
Elton. Well, the thing is... I remember hearing him with Keith Tippett's band and asked if I could borrow their front line for the group in 1968 or 1969. But it was, in fact, him that got me kicked out of the Soft Machine because he didn't like the singing, I don't think, and he didn't like the more heavy side of my drumming. He wanted that sort of free jazz thing. Well, I had been listening to free jazz in the late 50s and early 60s and I didn't want to do that again. But he got the others to out-vote me and to get rid of me. So there again, it's a bit similar to the previous question about the organist.

Nick Mason.
Yeah, well, drummers often become friends with drummers of different groups... and there's

no exception there. The Pink Floyd did a benefit concert for us when I had my accident, and sort of to return the favor - I mean, I couldn't return the favor - but I invited Nick to sort of produce Rock Bottom and we became good friends at that time, him and his wife, Lindy. We used to go see them and we developed some mutual friends like Carla Bley and Mike Mantler, who we also did things with later, and in fact when they did a record together, called Fictious Sports, they asked me to sing the tunes, and I really enjoyed doing that. It was very nice to be on their record and to just sing something without having the responsibility for the rest of the band.

Michael Mantler.
Well, Mike got us to sing... I think Carla sent him a copy of Rock Bottom and said "Here's a singer we can use." I don't really know how it happened, but that gave me the opportunity to sing with the most transcendental rhythm section I could have imagined which was Jack Dejohnette on drums, Steve Swallow on bass, and Carla Bley on piano. I doubt if I'll ever work with a better group than that.

Evan Parker.
Evan Parker is one of the few European musicians who've taken an extended line of late Coltrane and turned it into a whole new thing... both on tenor and soprano saxophone. Although with his music he sticks very firmly to a serious line of approach. He himself is a very eclectic listener. Which is why I didn't feel too nervous about asking him to play on my record.

Alfie Benge.
What can I say? She's sitting here. (Laughs) Well, we've been together since the early 70s - I think that, really, we are a group. People think I've been in two groups, but in fact I've been in three. The longest lasting one, the one that's really worked, has been me and Alfie. In every possible way. And when I say every possible way that's exactly what I mean. So, there you are.



"I draw from life and I paint from my head"

A brief interview with Alfreda Benge

by David Cross

While it may be perfectly clear to many people who Robert Wyatt is, far fewer have a clear understanding exactly who Alfreda Benge is. Before you even listen to a Robert Wyatt album you first have an impression created by the accompanying art. From the debut underwater seascape of Rock Bottom to the dry abstract expressionist deserts of Old Rottenhat and Work In Progress right through to the ultimate slumber/dream accompaniment of his excellent current endeavor, Shleep - all have had superbly executed visual echoes of Robert's musical worlds, and all were created by Alfie Benge.

Sadly, in pursuit of the bigger picture, Alfie has let credit slip where credit is due; many of the older CD issues of Robert Wyatt albums feature little or no documentation as to where the source art originated. Hopefully, this will deservedly be rectified by the current spate of reissues by Hannibal/Ryko/Thirsty Ear. If not, perhaps this will help shed some more light on the subject.

I didn't ask Alfie if she has done other interviews, but you can bet that she probably hasn't done very many...

PW - You've done illustrations for a children's book?
Alfie - Yeah. Two children's books, which are out of print now. Ivor Cutler wrote the stories. Do you know of Ivor Cutler who's on the end of Rock Bottom?



> Zoom

Yes. How did that come about? Did he approach you with that?
Yes. He suggested to his publisher that they see my paintings and so I went along and showed them my work. I was going to do four but, in fact, it took 6 months to do each of them and in the end my eyes almost closed with straining because they were so tiny... tiny paintings. I ended up just doing the two: Herbert the Chicken and Herbert the Elephant. (Laughs)

So he lined it up with the publisher.
Yes, he had worked with quite a few illustrators in the past but they were usually ones that were known to the publisher, so he suggested that I may be able to do it. He's a very encouraging person. He gives people confidence; he tells you you're wonderful and makes you believe you can do anything. It was not what I'd been used to because obviously making 24 pages match each other and all of the people look the same and inventing characters is not the same as doing one-off paintings, but I was very pleased with them. I think they're rather good. But like all these things, poor ducks, they go off the shelves. I still get a few pennies every year from libraries. So they exist somewhere, but they're unbuyable. They don't exist anymore.

When did you do those?
Round about '82. The beginning of the 80s... and the next one in '83 or something.

Did you do much illustration other than that?
Other stuff... yeah. I did a bit for a magazine called Time Out... a few things. Obviously Robert's covers, a couple of Fred Frith covers, an Annette Peacock cover... I was trying to be a painter, so it wasn't a career that I was after. I can only really do things if I can connect with them. I mean, I couldn't do a cover for the Rolling Stones. I'd have to know the person and know their inside really.

Have you made some films?
Well, I went to film school. I had a long art school history - I did painting, then I did graphics, then
I went to film school. Obviously at film school I made films. After I left school I had an extraordinary job called Films Officer at IBM, which was a strange thing for me, and if you knew me you'd think it was really strange. And then I did a bit of editing here and there, just before Robert's accident. In England, to work in big stuff at the time you had television or industrial films and quite boring things. I did do one film for the BBC at the end of my student days. I was paid for a half hour thing. And then I got a job as a third assistant editor, which is

just basically writing down numbers on "Don't Look Now," a Nick Roeg film with Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie. But I was just in the cutting room and that was going to get me my union ticket which was quite hard to get in England at that time. So it meant you were much freer to get good jobs. That was in Venice - Robert came with me and wrote Rock Bottom there. Not long afterwards he came back and had his accident and I had to decide what to do... throw him in the river or look after him. At first he wasn't as independent and obviously needed looking after. So I thought the film industry is a bit of a racket, really. I'll give it up... and I hadn't done any painting for about 12 years and Robert said "Why don't you do the Rock Bottom cover?" and that started me back on painting, which I could do at home. So I had meant to keep carrying on in the film industry but gave it up. But last year I did a tiny, sort of, job of rewriting some dialogue in an Aaron Rudolph film. Do you know Aaron Rudolph?

No.
He a sort of protégé of Robert Altman. Occasionally I get dragged back to do little things, basically by Julie Christie, who's my old friend, and she finds things that she occasionally needs me for.

For Robert's covers, what one's have you done?
I've done everything since Rock Bottom except the "Shipbuilding" cover. I remembered Stanley Spencer's wonderful painting and thought nobody could do it better than that. And it turned out we were able to use it for nothing so... apart from that, I've done them all, except for the compilations that have been out of our control

You've worked in a couple different mediums on his covers too. On Nothing Can Stop Us it's some sort of graphic illustration.
It was just a pen drawing. Rock Bottom was pencil, Ruth and Richard was gouache, and then the rest have been oils. They're all oil paintings now. I did graphic design and typography and that kind of stuff, so I really enjoy doing things which are more abstract. Where you're using space and things.
That's one half of what I can do and the other half is strange, narrative pictures with people and stories and goings-on in them. Also, I do very uncharacteristic charcoal drawings which are quite... stronger.
I mean, I draw from life and I paint from my head, basically, and the drawings don't look like mine at all. That's the range, really.

Do you paint specifically for a purpose or do you paint for the sake of painting?
My dream would to be able to paint for the sake of painting all the time, but life gets in the way most of the time... either crisis or something else to do.
When Robert's working I'm also his manager, so I have to do incredibly dull things like the accounts and arguing about contracts, and I'm also his roadie, so I have to get him from A to B. I'm also his nurse, and things in the world happen which need shouting about and you have to go about shouting, protesting about them. So, I get dragged away from the idea of just painting. I mean, if I had a wife I think I'd paint more, but I haven't got a wife.

"I think everybody should have a go at their Cecil Taylor impersonations"

A ROBERT WYATT ANNOTED DISCOGRAPHY

By Robert Wyatt

THE END OF AN EAR

I was very grateful to CBS, I have to say, for the opportunity to go into the studio and make an album. I don't think they realized that I was going to make a totally improvised album like

that, and I didn't get invited back. One of the things that mucks up some of the earlier memories is that we didn't get any more money from those early records at all. None of them. Our managers were total crooks and since they are dead I can name them: Mike Jeffries and Chas Chandler. I mean they just took everything. The record companies were no help, they seemed to close rank with managers rather than see musicians go their dues. In my real life I don't remember much peace and love in the music industry era at all. Having said that, I was very happy to have the chance to record, there again, to play piano and do my little Cecil Taylor impersonations. I think everybody should have a got at their Cecil Taylor impersonations.

ROCK BOTTOM

In my mind, if I ever made a transition from adolescence to adulthood it was by that record. People think it must have been a very tragic period of my life, with breaking my back and all, but 1974 was the happiest moment of my life. The record came out, it came out how I wanted it to come out, it was made with friends. Alfie married me on the day it came out, which was a disgracefully self-sacrificial thing of her to do, but made me feel great.

RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD

On that record I wanted to give the musician I was working with more space to do their own thing. I set up "Team Spirit" as a tenor solo for George Kahn.
And there again - I got Fred Frith to play some of his own tunes - still some of the favorite things I've ever recorded actually, "Muddy Mouse/Muddy Mouth."
In fact, before doing those tunes he played this note, I can't remember what it was, some sort of high D or even an E flat, and I said to Fred, "I can't sing that," and Fred says, "Yes, you can. Your range is from a low F to a high F#." He listened to my records and knew exactly what notes I'd hit on various records and told me I could do it, so I had to do it.

NOTHING CAN STOP US

This wasn't intended as an LP. Virgin was very angry with me when I disengaged myself from them and they threatened us not to make an LP or there would be legal trouble. While Geoff Travis at Rough Trade was trying to sort that out and placate Richard Branson, they allowed us to make a few singles, which is what I did. And it allowed me to sing some songs by people like Violetta Parra and so on... that meant a lot to me. But I did them, more or less, as a musical journalism. I didn't feel these ideas had to last forever. It was Geoff Travis's idea to put them together onto an LP.



> Zoom

THE ANIMALS FILM SOUNDTRACK

Julie Christie had been invited to do the narration on that by Victor Shoenfield, who made the film. They had asked the Talking Heads to do the music. They used one song of the Talking Heads for the opening credit tracks and it cost them 500 pounds. Well, since the budget for the whole film was just a few thousand pounds they couldn't afford them for the whole score. Julie said "I've got a friend who'll do it for really cheap." And it's true; one thing I'm really proud of is I work cheap. Geoff Travis at Rough Trade once said "you may not be the most successful or the best musician we've ever had here at Rough Trade, but you're certainly the cheapest." And indeed, I did the rest of the film score for 100 pounds. They wanted it released to help publicize the film and that's what I did.
I think making music for films is very good because you have to break out of the normal song cycle structure. The structure is given to you by the film. There is a structure but it's quite different and that makes you do things quite differently. I know Miles Davis had the same breakthrough when he did music for a French film, "Lift to the Scaffold." I really appreciate how useful that would have been for him when I was doing the Animals Film.

OLD ROTTENHAT

That was done when I was very isolated from other musicians, although I felt very at home spiritually with the musicians of that era, perhaps even more than with the musicians of my generation. The post punk people in England who were dealing in extraordinary surrealist combinations of punk and reggae and using old ska rhythms. There was a lot of great political music, like Jerry Dammers and, indeed, Paul Weller around that time, but musically it was very different from me because it was very guitar based and I come from quite a different line of thought musically. So I found myself, more or less, on my own and working as a kind of miniaturist there - just trying to get distilled, pure song on it. And as political as the songs are, the main exercise was really an aesthetic one. To try and to get essential song. Just to see how you could pare it down to that point. I'm also interested in artists in other fields in that way. Whether it's Samuel Beckett in writing or Mondrian in painting, it's a very interesting exercise... to try and pair things down like that.

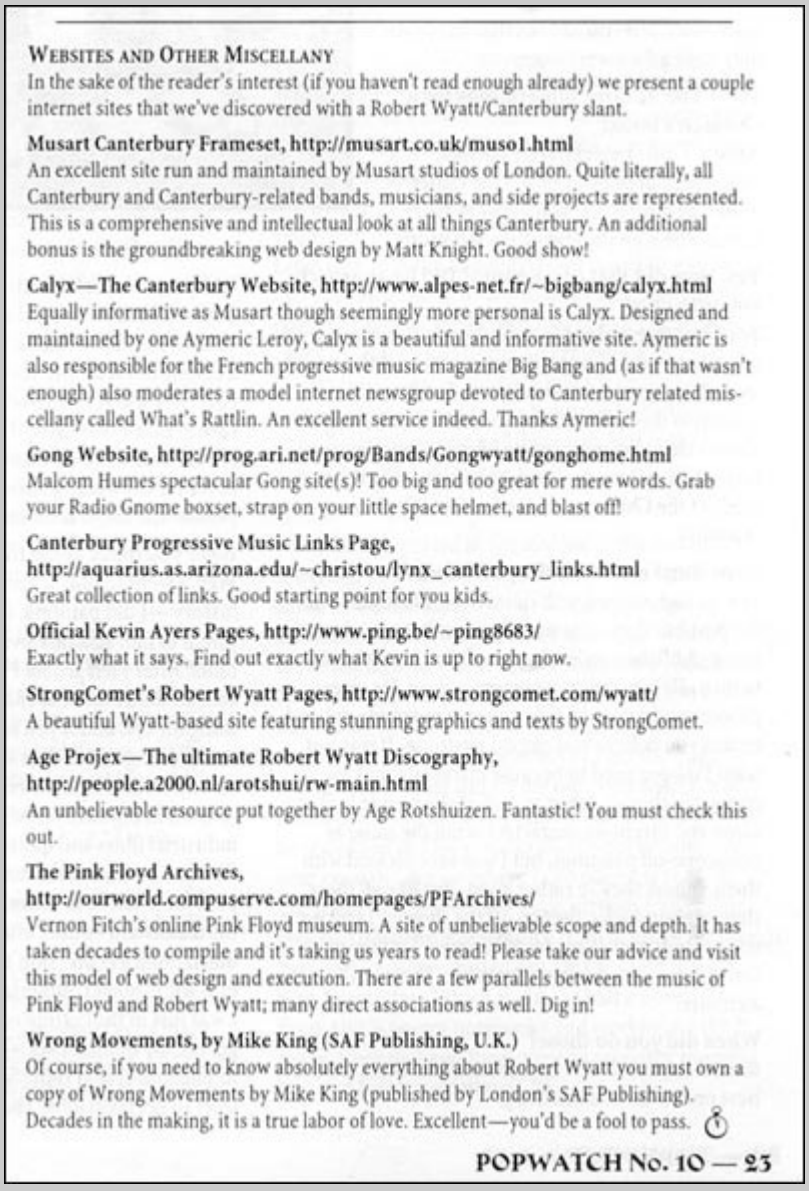
DONDESTAN

Dondestan was after we left London and came to live up north of England, quite near the

coast. We had spent some time in the 8Os in Spain. England was a difficult place to be, so we took any chance we could to go away. Alfie had written quite a lot of poems in Spain. I think there's something about sitting in a Spanish cafe in an out of season holiday resort with a glass of brandy in front of you which brings out a little poetry in Alfie's soul. Especially with the flamenco posters on the wall. So that provided the basis for Dondestan. One of the possible titles for the LP was based on a Cuban film called "Memories of Under Development (Memorias Su Desorio)," that was nearly the title of the first track anyway, and a lot of it has to do with that sense of underdevelopment and dispersal. Not in the third world, but right among us.

SHLEEP

I had a rough period in the mid/early 9Os, musically speaking, and there were some problems here at home as well. I mean, I don't like people to go on about their problems because it's boring... but I broke my legs here in 1993 or 1994, I think, and had to spend some time in the hospital. I fell out of my wheelchair... so those kind of things delayed my activity somewhat. But as much as I get the exact sound I want when I'm on my own I get lonely, and music is a social act in the end. I was very happy to be reminded of Phil's studio and I went because it's near enough London where I can phone up people like Annie Whitehead and Evan without feeling that they had to spend 5 hours on a train to get to the studio. There again, I started exactly the same as I did with Dondestan. Which is, taking half a dozen pieces from Alfie's poetry notebooks and working on the music from that and then carry on with that momentum and finish it up myself.



WEBSITES AND OTHER MISCELLANY

In the sake of the reader's interest (if you haven't read enough already) we present a couple internet sites that we've discovered with a Robert Wyatt/Canterbury slant.

Musart Canterbury Frameset, http://musart.co.uk/muso1.html
An excellent site run and maintained by Musart studios of London. Quite literally, all Canterbury and Canterbury-related bands, musicians, and side projects are represented. This is a comprehensive and intellectual look at all things Canterbury. An additional bonus is the groundbreaking web design by Matt Knight. Good show!

Calyx—The Canterbury Website, http://www.alpes-net.fr/~bigbang/calyx.html
Equally informative as Musart though seemingly more personal is Calyx. Designed and maintained by one Aymeric Leroy, Calyx is a beautiful and informative site. Aymeric is also responsible for the French progressive music magazine Big Bang and (as if that wasn't enough) also moderates a model internet newsgroup devoted to Canterbury related miscellany called What's Rattlin. An excellent service indeed. Thanks Aymeric!

Gong Website, http://prog.ari.net/prog/Bands/Gongwyatt/gonghome.html
Malcom Humes spectacular Gong site(s)! Too big and too great for mere words. Grab your Radio Gnome boxset, strap on your little space helmet, and blast off!

Canterbury Progressive Music Links Page, http://aquarius.as.arizona.edu/~christou/lynx_canterbury_links.html
Great collection of links. Good starting point for you kids.

Official Kevin Ayers Pages, http://www.ping.be/~ping8683/
Exactly what it says. Find out exactly what Kevin is up to right now.

StrongComet's Robert Wyatt Pages, http://www.strongcomet.com/wyatt/
A beautiful Wyatt-based site featuring stunning graphics and texts by StrongComet.

Age Projex—The ultimate Robert Wyatt Discography, http://people.a2000.nl/arotshui/rw-main.html
An unbelievable resource put together by Age Rotshuizen. Fantastic! You must check this out.

The Pink Floyd Archives, http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/PFArchives/
Vernon Fitch's online Pink Floyd museum. A site of unbelievable scope and depth. It has taken decades to compile and it's taking us years to read! Please take our advice and visit this model of web design and execution. There are a few parallels between the music of Pink Floyd and Robert Wyatt; many direct associations as well. Dig in!

Wrong Movements, by Mike King (SAF Publishing, U.K.)
Of course, if you need to know absolutely everything about Robert Wyatt you must own a copy of Wrong Movements by Mike King (published by London's SAF Publishing). Decades in the making, it is a true labor of love. Excellent—you'd be a fool to pass.

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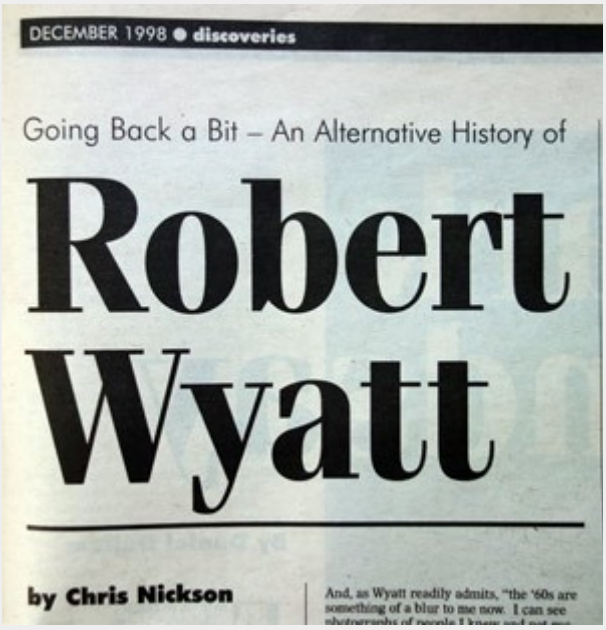
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Going Back a Bit - An Alternative History of Robert Wyatt - Discoveries Issue 127 - December 1998





"I'm not interested in career moves. I have a puritanical thing about music. You should do what the music wants to be. If that happens to be what a lot of people want to hear, you're lucky, but you shouldn't bend it. I can live off what I do, and even if I couldn't, I wouldn't try and change it. I'd get money some other way.

" It's a fine philosophy to live by. But then again, it's exactly what you might expect from Robert Wyatt, who's cut his singular furrow in the musical field for more than three decades now. As a member of the (legendary) Wilde Flowers, Soft Machine and Matching Mole he was a vital part of the Canterbury scene that produced so much wonderful music in the late '60s and early 70s. He developed a reputation as a subtle, inventive drummer, and a singer with a marvelously emotive voice.

In 1973 a fall from a third floor window left him paralyzed from the waist down; drumming was no longer an option. He was forced to look closely at himself and at his

music, and found that plenty of options were open. In many ways, it was the real start for him, and his records since then have been chronicles of the phases of Robert Wyatt, the man. Of course, they haven't been the limits of his work. Both before and after the accident he's worked with people in a number of fields; the idea of boundaries doesn't seem to come readily to him. Michael Mantler, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Henry Cow, Brian Eno, he's recorded with them all, and along the way he's managed to become something of an icon for musical integrity. In 1987 a young Ben Watt, of Everything But The Girl, recorded an EP with him, recently reissued by Cooking Vinyl on "North Marine Drive." A complete discography would fill pages.

Wyatt isn't the most prolific artist - there was a six year gap between Dondestan and the new *Shleep*, and five years between *Old Rottenhat* and *Dondestan*. But this isn't someone who puts out "product"; this is art, accessible and melodic, but still definitely art, individual and creative.

And 1998 might be the year that finds him a wider audience in the U.S. *Shleep* has big name guests, people who admire Wyatt and are pleased to help out, people like Eno, Phil Manzanera (Roxy Music), and Paul Weller, the Mod Boy himself. More than that, Thirsty Ear is reissuing his solo records (all but 1970's *End Of An Ear*) in the U.S., some seeing domestic release for the first time.

This article isn't meant to be a full history of Wyatt: Michael King's book, *Wrong Movements*, covers that quite admirably. And, as Wyatt readily admits, "the '60s are something of a blur to me now. I can see photographs of people I knew and not recognize them." Instead it's more a series of linked thoughts, of what helped make him who he is, and his philosophies of music.

Robert Wyatt Ellidge was born January 28,1945, to Honor Wyatt and George Ellidge. In 1955, George Ellidge was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and the family moved from the London suburb of West Dulwich to the village of Lydden in Kent, some ten miles outside Canterbury. He had a slightly unconventional childhood, with parents whose friends were - for the times - quite bohemian.

"It seemed perfectly normal to me. My father didn't join us until I was six, and he died ten years later, having retired early with multiple sclerosis, so I was brought up a lot by women. My Dad was a psychologist, and my mother a journalist. He was from up North [of England], and she was posh, so I'm a subject of class miscegenation!"

A myth has grown up, making the Wyatt house in Kent something of an offbeat cultural center. Wellington House, as the place was named, was an 18th century building, and the family did take in lodgers, who included Daevid Allen and Kevin Ayers, both of whom would play major parts in Robert's future. But, he says, "I don't really remember musicians coming down to play. I think maybe they did, but when I was no longer there, already on the trot around Europe. We were actually closer to Dover than Canterbury. It was a one hour bus ride into Canterbury. I'd get the bus home at five to my village, so I didn't mix much. It was rather a somber house, really. They supplemented their drop in income by having lodgers, and they were pretty interesting. But most of us, when we could save the money, would go to London for our stimulus. I left school when I was 16 in ignominy, having failed everything in sight, and went off with 20 pounds. I worked in a forest, kitchens, things like that. I remember Canterbury as a rather lonely time, to be honest, and I'm a bit baffled by the subsequent view of it as a kind of country Harlem. I had friends and people did play things, but no more than anywhere else. I was brought up on things that weren't taught in school, like painting, modern classical music, and so on. Nothing at school matched those for interest. I preferred it at home. I lived in my head."

His interest in music would lead him to play in the Wilde Flowers (whose mythical reputation is really undeserved), the band that eventually became Soft Machine, whose other members were originally Mike Ratledge, a Cambridge graduate, on organ and piano, Daevid Allen on guitar, Kevin Ayers, bass and vocals, with Robert behind the drumkit and singing.

This ensemble became a part of the early London hippie scene, along with Pink Floyd Mark 1, and took advantage of Allen's French connections to travel and make a strong mark there. Early sides were produced by Kim Fowley, the man who was everywhere, and in 1968 the Softs toured America as the opening act for the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

"What doesn't come up in these things is the extreme loneliness, even when I was in bands. In retrospect it seems like new, bold things are going on, but my memory is that we didn't know how to do any other things properly and we didn't have a lot in common, so when we formed bands, they were extremely odd. The trouble with bands is that in the

end they're all like Spinal Tap. I didn't make sense of how to function until the early 70s."

Soft Machine went through their ups and downs (their first two albums never saw release in the U.K.), moving slowly towards the more experimental jazz that marked *Soft Machine 3* (with Wyatt's lovely, and virtually solo "Moon In June") and *Fourth*. They became the first "rock" band to play at the prestigious Promenade Concerts.


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Going Back a Bit – An Alternative History of

Robert Wyatt

by Chris Nickson

After *Fourth* Wyatt left the band, envisioning a solo career, but instead formed Matching Mole (a play on words: Machine Moule is French for Soft Machine), who issued two records, then collapsed under the weight of money, or the lack of it.

Then, at the start of June 1973, Wyatt took his fall from the window.

"That's when I found my feet, ironically when I lost the use of them! I could no longer function in a regular group, so I could choose the appropriate musicians for a particular song, or none at all if I felt I could get the mood right myself, and that gave me the freedom to do what I'd done as a teenager with painting, which was take responsibility for what went on. It was so much so, that I felt sheepish about *Rock Bottom*, (1974) that the musicians had done my thing so conscientiously that on *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975) I gave the other musicians more space, and took a back seat slightly. Sometimes it's nice to let someone else drive, someone you trust. Those two really go together."

1974 and 75 were also the years when Wyatt recorded two singles for his label, Virgin, covers of "I'm A Believer" and "Yesterday Man," the first of which actually made the U.K. charts, and gave people the pleasant surprise of seeing Wyatt on "Top Of The Pops."

"I've had several singles. The reason I recorded pop songs is because I like them, and I'm really interested in them, and it's good to get inside them. I've never written one, but I've got inside them. It was a funny thing. Simon Draper, Richard Branson's ears, wanted me to do singles, and I thought 'Why not? I like pop music.' I had a go of it. He got very excited about it, but I was thrown by the restrictions in the singles market, like the fact that people wouldn't like a Fred Frith violin solo. I thought 'Stuff that!' I'm not going to give people less freedom. I had a lot of fun in the studio, trying to improve Neil Diamond's dull little chord sequence and so on. I don't regret it, but I was baffled, because I thought the whole point of what Branson was doing was to enable people not to be restricted by the pop scene. So I felt a bit pushed, and that's probably why the relationship deteriorated."

After that, it would be the 1980s before Wyatt again issued anything under his own name, pulled out of silence by the independent Rough Trade label. And what he did come up with was *Nothing Can Stop Us*, largely a collection of work issued on singles, and *Old Rottenhat*. Both were quite brazenly political albums, and produced Wyatt's other hit single, a luminous cover of Elvis Costello's "Shipbuilding."

"It seemed to come to the surface. I don't think it was deliberate. I work instinctively, whatever feels right at the time, and certain things come to the surface. It surprises me what does and what doesn't. In the '80s I was reacting to what struck me as a fairly barbaric climate. People talk about Reaganomics, but I was talking about the media. When I get down to doing the songs, I'm just doing what comes out. But a lot of thinking and considering goes on before and after. A lot was about how to keep my pecker up in what seemed like an increasingly alien, reptilian world, how to keep your soul warm. There's a certain amount of desperation in that. I'd say, without shame, there's a certain amount of intellectual vigor in that. At times I like thinking deeply and analytically, but they're the times when I'm most uncomfortable, so I have to rethink how I'm functioning. That comes out in the lyrics, and in the music, in a way. There's a kind of tight discipline in the music. When I'm more at ease. It gets looser and sloppier."

The '90s brought a complete about-face with *Dondestan*, an amorphous, shapeshifting sort

of work, impressionistic and often abstract in its moods.

"It's partly a thing I've had about music. Sometimes I wish there was a kind of music that was halfway between silence and music. I think sometimes musicians feel obliged to fill your ears, like a chef who piles up every plate. I'm drawn to the idea of music sometimes not being a great solid substance, but rather gaseous and nebulous, which is translucent, so you can still hear what's going on around you, I've always been drawn to the idea of that. Brian Eno and I had a lot in common in those ideas. He has different references. He's not a political animal in the sense that I am, or a jazzman in the same sense."

And jazz is what's informed all of Wyatt's work, to a greater or lesser degree, whether explicitly - his version of Monk's "Round Midnight" - or in feel, as in the elastic rhythms of "Alifie."

"I don't know; it's the music I listen to. But I don't think the people I listen to would call me one of them. Although I take a lot from jazz, like the shifting harmonic thing, and the rhythmic slipperiness, my tunes are more based on nursery rhymes, folky and primitive. Most jazz musicians would regard me as too unsophisticated to be one of the lads."

Perhaps, perhaps not. He may not be a jazz musician in the conventional sense, but his vision is unique and fully formed as any jazzer's, and people like Keith Tippett, Don "Sugarcane" Harris, Michael Mantler, and Carla Bley don't choose their accomplices lightly.

"I certainly have worked with some great musicians, but I don't read reviews, so I have no idea what anyone thought. And musicians don't say what they think of each other. They say 'D'you want another drink, mate?' 'All right, then.'"

The reviewers, though, have consistently been kind to Robert. He has a sympathetic audience among them, and a cult following around the world, people who've come to his music at different times, for different reasons, and loved it enough to discover the entire canon. As good a place to begin as any is *Going Back A Bit: A Little History of Robert Wyatt* (Virgin U.K. CDVDM 9031) a double album that spans from the Softs to the '90s (even if the '80s are a bit thread-bare here). From the intensely moving version of "Moon In June" to the finale of "The Internationale" (Wyatt was a member of the Communist Party) it's 29 tracks of delights, some rare, all excellent, with the two 1974 Virgin singles included. And for those elusive '80s, Gramavision put out a CD (79459) that compiled tracks from *Nothing Can Stop Us* and *Old Rottenhat*.

The best way, though, is to pick a record - and the new *Shleep* is as accessible as anything he's done - and dive in. It's music that somehow couldn't be anything but English, with lyrical subjects like insomnia and birdwatching, playful but deep. From there all the others are but a step or two away.

It's not for mass consumption - there probably won't be any more hit singles for Robert Wyatt; the climate where that could happen is a thing of the past. But his music - will be very much his own. And that, after all, is what art is all about.

Chris Nickson

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HOME

An interview with the late Hugh Hopper - Panmodern.com - September 6, 1998



An interview with the late Hugh Hopper

by Mark bloch
The Knitting Factory
New York City
September 6, 1998

June 9, 2009--Hugh Hopper, underrated songwriter and the late great bassist for the Soft Machine and a great many other bands, passed away this week after a battle with leukemia. Here is an extended interview I was privledged to do with him in 1998 on a late summer's day between two gigs at New York's Knitting Factory. The first was the U.S.A. debut of Brainville with Daevid Allen, the late Pip Pyle and Kramer and the second, a few days later, was a tribute to Robert Wyatt with a wonderful array of performers from Fred Frith to Karen Mantler. Hugh and I covered much of his wonderful career in this conversation and I was grateful to ask him these questions after decades of enjoying his contributions. We will miss him and his unique musical inventions. His playing and compositions on The Soft Machine Volume II remain unparalleled in music history!

Mark Bloch: The Soft Machine really drew me into the avant garde. You guys were a big influence on me. So it's great to finally meet you.

Hugh Hopper: Here I am!

Ever since you made that *1984* album, I've always felt you were the most "out there" of all the Soft Machine musicians (and that's really saying something!) Yet, I hear the last time you came to New York you played a bunch of James Brown songs. Is there a pop side of you I'm not aware of?

I used to... I still do... love James Brown. But the last time I came to New York, I was playing with Kramer. So in fact, no, in fact we were doing even weirder things. Because Kramer had this set that he wanted to do, of his songs, but also a couple of things like a Roy Orbison song and also we did a Lennon song- the *Jealous Guy*. Stuff like that. That was Kramer's gig. We were going to Japan and he wanted me along. So really, that was a Kramer gig, that wasn't my gig. But yeah, I'd be happy to do James Brown.

But do you like pop music? I remember reading somewhere you brought a pop

sensibility to the Softs.

I'm so mixed, anyway, now. There are so many influences. Like everybody else, I started listening to the radio when I was--whatever--13, 14, and hearing all this stuff. And at that time, when I was that age, it was things like Chuck Berry and Little Richard and stuff like that. Even Presley, things like Presley. I mean, I hated Presley later on but the early stuff... it probably had to do with… It was just the first time I'd heard electric guitar. I mean, Scottie Moore playing electric guitar on those early Presley records... I mean that was the beginning, probably, on my soundscape. As big as other things like John Coltrane, later on, and Ornette Coleman and stuff like that. But when I was 14, I had never heard an electric guitar before. I mean, you can't understand that now because the electric guitar is such a part of life, but then, it wasn't. It was like a dirty word. Especially in England. It was a dirty word and a dirty thing to do. Because it was a whole modern thing-- of rock 'n' roll and electric guitar. "That's the American stuff. Send it back across the Atlantic." Because people, in fact, still had a hangover from the Big Band ages and crooners and stuff like that. Things like Bing Crosby, and the English version-- which was terrible-- that's what the Hit Parade was, before things like Presley and Bill Haley that came across in the Fifties.

So for you that Hit Parade was interrupted-- first by the electric guitar and then, later, by the stranger jazz?

That's right.

T**he jazz after the electric guitar?**

Well after. Yeah, I started playing guitar. Actually, my brother started before me. He's two years older so I always followed him in music for a couple years. And then I took up bass. And the very first, kind of, things we were doing was stuff like Chuck Berry numbers and Little Richard numbers.

So you played the bass and your brother played the guitar?

That's right.

And was your father a musician too? Is that right?

Not really, no. I mean both my parents played. As people that age did, they played the piano. People learned the piano when they were kids. They played the piano much further than I ever learned to do because I never had lessons. But yeah, they were very musical. There was always music in the home. You know, on records or on the radio. Light classical stuff, middle-of-the-road classical stuff. So yeah, my father wasn't ever a musician but both my parents loved music.

And Richard Sinclair told me he came over your house, once, because he heard you had a bass?

Yeah, that's when we first started getting the band together, Wilde Flowers. It was Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers...

But that was before that, right?

It was about the same time.

Wasn't that the first thing that happened? How did it all actually begin?

I think Richard... No, that's right. Because I started playing with Robert and Daevid, actually, first. It was the first musical thing I really did outside of playing at home with my brother. Which then developed into a kind of avant garde, jazz thing. And it was after that. We had decided in 1964 that it was OK, suddenly, to play-- because the Beatles were so big-- that it was OK to play songs again and stuff like that. But it was after a while, actually. OK, so that was '62 and my brother and I were playing rock and roll at home.

Just the two of you?

In fact there's a tape of the two of us doing that. Playing songs like *That's Alright, Mama*, *Kansas City*, all that kind of stuff.

Did you have an electric bass or a stand up bass?

No, an electric bass. OK... that's the first moment, kind of thing. And then after that, I got involved with Robert again. I'd been at school with him but he'd gone off and left school earlier than me. And I got ahold of him again and started listening to jazz and Ornette Coleman. I actually came from the other end of jazz. I didn't know anything about jazz at all I didn't know you were supposed to go through mainstream jazz and then later get to the far out stuff. Unlike many people my age, I listened to the wrong stuff first and then worked backwards. I didn't know anything about the technique of jazz or what was happening at all. I just liked the sound of it. I liked the sound of Charlie Haden on bass and Ornette Coleman, of course, and stuff like that. So I started getting into that, started playing with Daevid and Robert and Mike Ratledge. Yeah, then that was about it. It sort of became respectable to play songs again. After things like the Beatles it was OK.

So then we set up Wilde Flowers and *then* we invited Richard along, I think. In fact, his father knew my father. We lived in the same town and his father was a bass player, in fact —Richard's father-- so that's how that connection came about. But I think we'd already started with Kevin Ayers and Robert just trying to play stuff. Kevin played a bit of guitar but didn't really know many chords or many... Richard knew all the chords of all the songs. He was a great technician on the guitar.

He was?

Yeah, even then, yeah. He was 16 years old he knew all the Beatles songs, all the chords immaculately, you know. I don't think-- he wasn't, actually, playing bass, then, at all. He didn't play bass until much later.

Do you remember when Kevin and Daevid came around to Robert's house? Because they came from elsewhere, right? And you were in school with Robert. So do you remember them coming on the scene?

Yeah, in fact, because Daevid came from Australia so, I mean, he came to England and Robert's parents had a-- it wasn't an enormous house, but it was a quite a big house-- in the country outside Canterbury. But they didn't have any money because Robert's mother was a writer-- and you know the problems with writers-- so they used to let out rooms to passing strangers, hoping to get some money. But, of course, most of the strangers didn't have any money either, so they didn't get paid. But they got some interesting people there. So that's how Daevid came to meet Robert.

And Kevin was actually in school-- a private school-- fairly near where Robert lived. I think that's the connection how Kevin got to meet Robert. Although Kevin was from the region, from the area, just because he was at school nearby.

And so you and Brian were the prime song writers?

Hmmmm...(hesitates), yeah we were, yeah. I used to write alot of songs. I mean, I've never found it hard to actually sit down and write a song on the guitar or piano. At that time people like Robert, in fact, weren't writing much of any songs. Kevin was writing songs because he's quite a natural songwriter. But yeah, I think I never found it hard to write a song. I know there's a craft... I never had any sort of block about sitting down and writing a song. I could do it now. If you asked me to sit down at the piano and write a song I'd do it.

OK, go!

I'm not going to.

A ot of those early songs kept popping up, didn't they? Like on Wilde Flowers and on the early Soft Machine?

That's right. Alot of that stuff. I think I'd never written a song before Wilde Flowers started. I mean, we were doing covers. We were doing all the Beatles stuff, whatever. All the stuff that was... Yardbirds, Kinks. We played all that stuff because that's what there was. Stones, we did some Stones numbers. R&B numbers. And I don't know why, I just started writing stuff. Robert liked trying that... singing them... so, yeah, I never found it hard to write songs.

I asked Robert why he didn't write songs back then and he said that he just didn't have a piano or anything.

Yeah. It's true.

It's interesting that you would write them and he'd just sing them.

It is weird when you think; especially what he developed into. But it's true. Because I'd started on guitar, you've immediately got something you can play a chord on, you know. But because he didn't-- he does play guitar a bit and he plays the piano a bit-- alot-- but that's right, he was living a, kind of, fairly nomad life most of the time. Whereas, I mean, it's like one of those things: most of the time I had at least a part time job. So I had some kind of support. Also, I was living at home, at my parent's house, so there was a piano there. It's crazy, things like that, you know.

And you didn't like to sing?

I don't. I have no confidence in my singing voice at all. Brian used to sing-- my brother. I did a few backing vocals on Chuck Berry things.

But, generally, you'd write songs and they'd have lyrics and you would hand them over to Robert or Kevin or whomever?

Yeah, that's right. I mean, a couple of songs I did with Robert. I started a collaboration with him which, in fact, still goes on today. Where I'd write the music and he'd write the words. A couple of things we did with Wilde Flowers that was true. But, yeah, at that time, most of the time, I'd write the words. They were not profound words. You know, just sort of, "Whoa, baby, why have you left me?" with a few decorations.

I think the Wilde Flowers Voiceprint CD is pretty good!

I'm glad it came out. Because those songs, I was happy with them at the time. They're not bad songs. I mean, and it would have been a shame if they hadn't ever appeared.

So what were some of your earliest songs?

Actually, one of the earliest songs I ever wrote was *Memories*, which was... It's funny it was one the ones that is most covered by other people. And it's probably one of the simplest songs I've ever written, in fact. I think it was about the second thing I ever wrote. You know, it's like B minor, E minor. There's not even a proper bridge to it. It's a very simple song and it works for that reason. People can sing it in different ways. Yeah Robert did a version as the B-side of one of his singles. And it was copied by... did you ever hear the version of Whitney Houston singing it?

Yes, by the band Material! One time only. I couldn't believe it!

If you check it out, Whitney Houston, obviously before she became famous, she was just, like, used as a session singer by (Bill) Laswell. But she actually copies Robert's phrasing on his record-- exactly. Because that's what they gave her. They gave her the record to listen to. She actually copies the same phrasing!

That's not a bad model.

No-- its good!

So you actually get royalties for that song?

Oh yeah! Over the years it's been one of the... obviously I'm never going to make a fortune from it unless they release Whitney Houston's version of it saying "featuring Whitney Houston." But, yeah, its been covered by quite a few people in interesting different versions. A couple singers in Germany called the Rainbirds-- two female singers, a couple female singers, did a very haunting version with simple piano. And Damien and Naomi. I think Galaxy 500 did a version of it.

One of the nicer versions is the one on the Wilde Flowers record that was a demo of your songwriting with Ratledge playing the piano on it...

It's nice isn't it? I kind of half-wrote an idea for Mike to play it with, kind of, an Eric Satie feel to it. A very simple, floating thing and he developed it. Because I'm not a keyboard player in that sense. I just gave him an idea of the notes that I thought would sound nice and he worked it out to a more professional sound. But yeah, it's a good version of it.

Yeah, and it's nice to hear him play the piano in that sedate way. Don't get me wrong-- I love his organ playing-- but it's nice to hear him playing piano calmly and not freaking out. Which leads us to him freaking out on organ and you on the fuzz bass. What's that all about?

Well, yeah, in fact it was Mike Ratledge's idea that I should use fuzz. Because for the second Soft Machine record-- which is the first one that Iplayed on-- alot of the stuff was written by him. And it's kind of... very constructed. And lots of lines of the bass. And the bass had to be as strong... it wasn't just sort of playing... you couldn't... it had to be a strong melody line or a counterpoint line to something that he was doing on the organ. So it had to be really strong and sustained. So he suggested why didn't I get a fuzz box, as well. Because you get a much more powerful sound with it-- a much more linear sound. So yeah, it was Mike Ratledge's idea, really, that I started playing fuzz.

You played it last night. It's part of your thing now, isn't it?

Yeah, it is. I stopped playing fuzz completely about ten years ago because I was a bit embarrassed. You know, "Hugh Hopper-- doesn't he do anything else but fuzz?" …So many people kept asking me to do it and I started working with Lindsay Cooper's *Oh Moscow project.*

So tell me about the transition from the Wilde Flowers to you being in the Soft Machine. How the hell did you become the roadie for the Soft Machine?

In fact because I stopped playing. I left Wilde Flowers. I even stopped playing bass in Wilde Flowers. I started playing sax because the band became, more and more, kind of like a soul band. We were playing Tamla-Motown stuff and James Brown stuff, Otis Redding. Because, in fact, that's what we were enjoying doing and it's a little easier to play that kind of stuff. Yeah, it was easier to get gigs but also I was really into it. All of us were all really into that kind of music.

So, anyway, I started playing sax and gave up bass and then I sort of lost interest in the whole thing and I didn't play for a whole year or so. By which time Soft Machine had started with Kevin and Daevid and Robert. So they asked me if I wanted to be a roadie and like a fool I said yes!

Was it foolish or...?

God, yeah. We did... the first tour I did in the States was supporting Hendrix and we did two and a half months non-stop, coast-to-coast and back again and back again. In February of '68, which was very chilly. You know, it's great looking back on it now. But it was hell at the time, you know, because in those days you didn't have giant crews. It was just one guy for Hendrix-- Hendrix's roadie-- and one guy-- which was me-- for Soft Machine. And that was it. In a U-Haul truck.

Just driving from town to town?

Overnight. Maybe getting a couple of hours sleep before the gig. So it was like... you can do those sorts of things when you're young, you know, but I couldn't do it now.

And you didn't even get to be the rock star! You had to be the roadie!

Yeah, that's right, but I got better pay!

Is that right? But I imagine it was a close-knit group.

Yeah, it was. Although the roadies didn't see much of the band because they were flying to gigs and we were driving overnight.

You would go with the Hendrix roadie?

It was just the one truck and the two roadies. We started off sharing equipment and it was disastrous.

So then Kevin couldn't take it and he dropped out?

I did two and a half months. Then they recorded the first record and then they came back again in the summer and did another 3 months tour or something.

I'm sorry, I don't get it. You did two months...

...as a roadie. I had enough after two and a half months. They went on more tours, basically.

So then, how did you end up being asked to be in the band?

Well, yeah, at the end of that year Kevin had enough. In fact they'd all had enough. Robert stayed in the States and did a demo of his stuff. Mike Ratledge didn't want to do anymore. In fact, what they'd overlooked is the fact that they had a contract to do a second record, which the record company insisted they do. So Kevin didn't want to do it and said, "Not interested," so they asked me to do it.

So when you say Robert did a demo, that wasn't when he did the *Moon In June* stuff was it?

Yes.

So he did that before you'd even done the second Soft Machine Album?

Yeah. In fact he lived out in California at Hendrix's house.

Yeah, he told me about that. And some of those early Wilde Flowers songs ended up in *Moon in June*?

Yeah. That's right. Alot of the stuff on the second record were, in fact, my tunes with his words... which he'd rewritten the words. Alot of the songs we'd done in the Wilde Flowers, he wrote new words for most of them.

On the Wilde Flowers album there's that song *A Certain Kind* sung by Richard Sinclair.

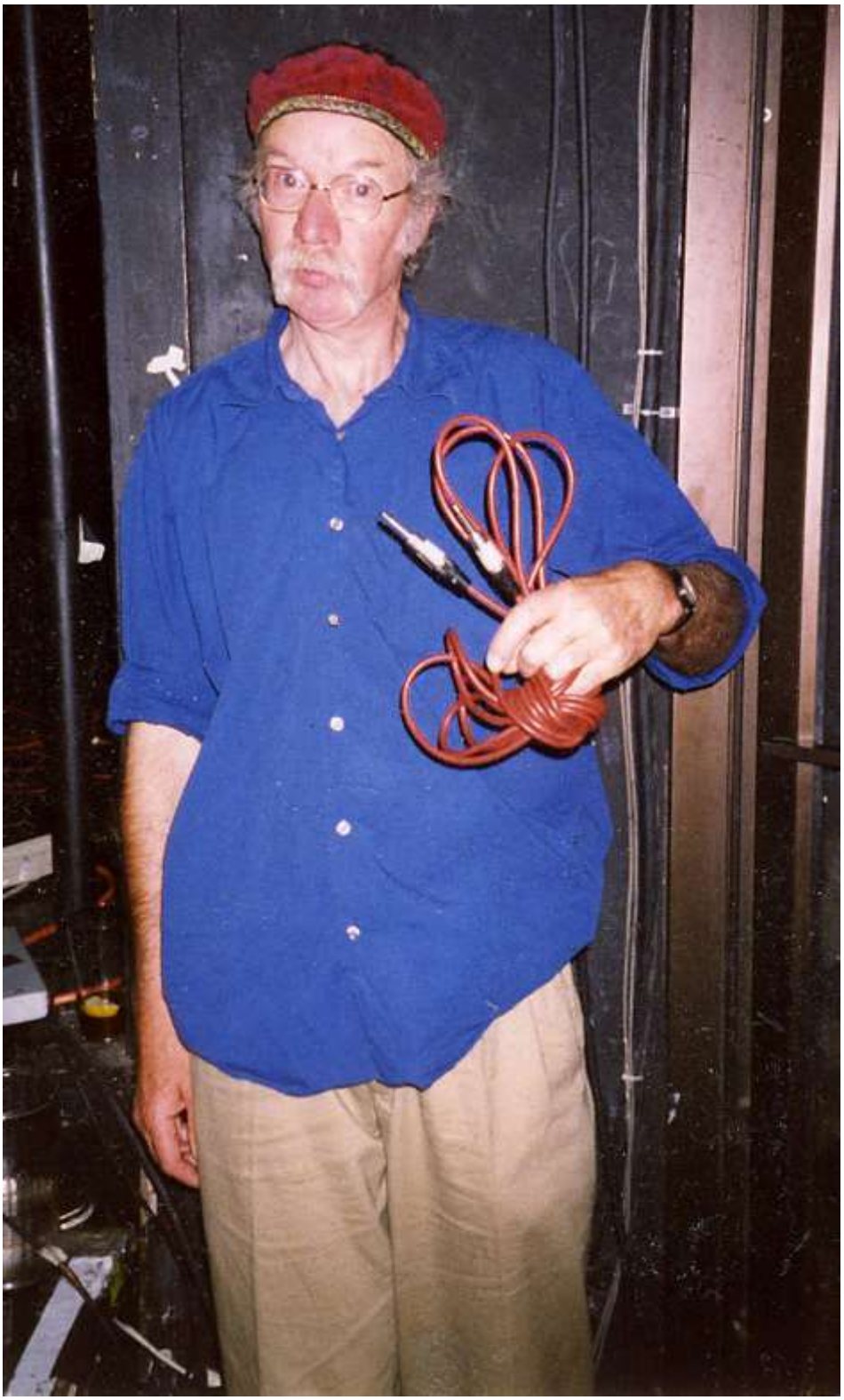
Yeah, wonderful isn't it? It's Like a sergeant major in the Army singing it, yeah. (sings in funny voice) "A Certain Kind..."

Right. And that song's one of yours that ended up being on the first or the second Soft Machine record?

That's from the first one. Yeah. There's a couple of my songs on the first one.

So you were a roadie and honorary songwriter. What about that whole Giorgio Gomelsky thing? I guess you weren't in the band then?

He was here last night, Giorgio. We had a drink with him afterwards.



Hugh Hopper, in 1998.

Hugh Hopper, pausing to mug for the camera while gathering up chords and cords, after a gig at the Knitting Factory in New York in 1998. (Photo by Mark Bloch)

Robert has said so much, just in the last couple years, about the fact that he was kicked out of the Soft Machine. What do you think about that?

Well, it's right, he was kicked out of the Soft Machine. But what's sad about it is that he's becoming more and more bitter about it now. For a long time he just didn't give a shit. I mean, you know, he was annoyed but, OK, that's gone. That's part of something else. But the last couple of years, it's true, in interviews I've read, he's been more and more bitter about it, which is a shame. I mean, it's true, he was kicked out. I mean, well, he was encouraged to leave, you know.

Because you guys were just going in a more intellectual direction?

Well, not intellectual.

How would you characterize it?

Just instrumentally. We were not interested in doing songs and stuff. That's what he wanted to do, yeah.

When you say songs-- you didn't fancy the vocals?

At that time I wasn't at all interested in vocal music... words. Where now I'm more interested. But at that time I was only interested in instrumental sounds.

Do you think you had, in your head, what happened later, more or less? Like, say, on Soft Machine 5?

Well, not that particular record. For me, Third and Fourth Soft Machine records was the kind of stuff I liked doing. Not so much the fifth one. That was kind of... that was more...

Was that the last one you were on?

No, I'm on Six, as well. Because there were so many personnel changes, anyway, after Robert left. Trying different drummers. And Karl Jenkins came in, which was a different influence. For me it became a more of an ordinary kind of band. You know, it was like it didn't have that quirkiness that it had before. Its probably a better musicianship but less, kind of, quirky interest for me.

Yeah, Robert was such a quirky element then. You weren't worried about losing that quality? The Soft Machine definitely lost something then.

Well, I can see that. But, in fact, in the end my feelings against him were much stronger than any logical feeling I might have had about the music, you know. We just weren't getting on. It was like "divorce time," you know? It's a miracle that bands ever stay together. When you think, three or four young males fighting over their territory... their creative territory...

So, as well as the musical differences there was a personality conflict?

In a sense, that was more important than the musical differences because, I think, if you can't get on with someone... It's like in a marriage. You can't logically say what's wrong about it. It just doesn't work. There's no rapport anymore. It's that kind of stuff.

He doesn't seem to be angry so much at you. It's more Ratledge.

Yeah that's right. Because, in a sense, he asked me to join the band and I wasn't one of the first members so it's, kind of, not so deep-standing. Also we've worked together since and we get on OK. We still collaborate on songs. But with Mike it was like, "Boom. Finished." There was no real respect between Mike and Robert, as such. It was, like, Robert felt rejected and Mike wasn't interested.

And now you still collaborate. On *Shleep*, *Was a Friend* is one of yours.

In fact, that's quite an old song. I wrote the music of that about... early eighties... about '83, '84. And it's had several different lyrics. And Robert always liked it and thought maybe he'd do something and it never got done. And then he wrote some different lyrics for it quite recently-- about a couple of years ago.

Actually, we did a version of it-- which still exists, which hasn't yet been released-- which was going to be on a compilation. Do you know a record label called Ponk? It used to be Fot Records. They do very irregular, sporadic compilations of different things, with odd tracks that would never see the light of day. I've done a couple of things for them before. And Robert and I did a version of that song. I layed down the tracks in a studio and sent him the tape and he just sang it on his four track and sent the tape back. And it's a nice record. And it should have been out years ago but their latest compilation just ran out of money or something.

And it's the words from *Shleep*?

Yes. It has a slightly different feel to it. It has more of a sustained organ feel rather than on his record he has drumming and bass guitar, something like that...

Yeah. How about what he did with *Free Will and Testament*? It's a whole different feel...

It's great! Right. That's Kramer's song. Kramer wrote the music. In fact, that was the first collaboration I did with Kramer. That was one of the pieces he came up with in the studio. And I did some bass stuff on it. I just remember saying to Kramer, "This would sound great with Robert's voice, you know." So, in fact, I sent it to Robert when we finished the first, sort of, recording and he just said, "Great," and wrote some words straight away. And it was one of the quickest collaborations I've ever done with him. Within a week he'd sent back a tape with his voice on it, which I sent to Kramer and just like that... it was a really famous way of working.

What was the remark you made that inspired the title, *A Remark Hugh Made*?

I was trying to work out a title which had both our names in it-- in anagram form. Because "remark" is an anagram for "Kramer" and his first name is Mark as well-- Mark Kramer-- though he never uses it. But I can never get mine because I have such an awkward name. There's no anagram for Hugh. Or Hopper. At least I haven't found one yet.

I'll work on that. So your brother Brian just bagged it at some point? The music I mean?

The thing is, he always had a daytime job. He never actually gave it up and started playing like the rest of us did. He always had a career. So in fact, he's just taken early retirement. So he's just getting back into music. He's always had keyboards at home and stuff like that. He's gotten into MIDI music recently. Sequencers at home, stuff like that. He's getting back into it.

Does he ever wish he were you-- career wise? Or vice versa? Do either of you ever think the other one made the right choice? Do you ever talk about that?

No. I mean, yeah, being a musician is weird. I can't say if I'm going to be starving in six months time. Or in three months time! But, yeah, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages for me.

So you like the choice you've made?

Yeah. I have a free life-- as much as anyone does.

As far as art vs. commercial success, do you feel like, "Fuck acceptance"? Have you, at different times in your life, gone out of your way to be more accepted than others?

Yeah, I think, when you're younger, you're more "Fuck you." It's like, "This is it. This is me." It's like, "If you don't like it, fuck you." Where as now, I'm more mellow. I can say, "OK, yeah, I better make some concessions." But on the other hand, I would never make a record just to make money. I hope all my records are going to make money because I need to live like everyone else. But I'm never going to make a record just to be commercial. I couldn't do it, anyway. I don't have that kind of approach to music. And I don't really want to. For me, if I produce something successful it's because I have a certain voice, myself, you know, a creative voice for writing music or playing bass. And I can work for... practice twenty hours a day and become another good session musician but I don't really want to do that. I don't want to work in a factory, either. For me, doing things for commercial reasons is not what I want to do music for.

Why did you leave the Soft Machine?

Basically, because I wasn't interested in the music they were doing and I wasn't friends with them as people. There was not a reason to stay in there, except for money. That was the only reason I was staying. Laziness. Plus I was getting paid reasonably well for staying in there. I wasn't happy musically, or with the people.

Was that a time when you were making a reasonable amount of money? Or is it better now?

Reasonable. It was more regular. In Soft Machine times I could always say, "I want so

much a week," or whatever. Or, "Can I have a couple of thousand to buy a boat?" or something. And I could say that and there was a good chance it'd be no problem. Whereas now, there could be a month where I didn't have any income at all. Or two months, it depends.

Was that because you were on a major label or because Soft Machine had a loyal following?

Yeah, both those things. The two things went together. The Soft Machine, particularly in Europe, was quite a big name. It wasn't as big as the pop groups. But, nonetheless, it was a living. It was reasonable.

In the 70's there wasn't much going on and you guys definitely had a good reputation.

Yeah, that's right. And on CBS Records it sold OK. But with all that I'm actually much happier now-- just scrambling around for things and doing weird things here and there and maybe not anything for six months. With Soft Machine I could've told you what I was doing for 18 months. All the dates were there. I mean, it's nice for the money. On the other hand, I became very... I lost interest in the music because it was like a job, really, a job doing something else. Where as now I get a chance to come to New York. And next week I could be doing a gig in Canterbury. Someone could ask me to do a gig in a pub in Canterbury.

And Brainville... Kramer made that happen because he'd worked with both you and Daevid separately?

Yeah, that's right. Daevid worked with Kramer before I'd worked with Kramer. Yeah, I've done two records with Kramer and a couple of live things and yeah.

Tell me about your album *1984*. When it came out I was young and baffled by it but now I have a greater appreciation for it.

Then you can tell me. I've been wondering myself!

Well, I mean the context. At the time Soft Machine was already pushing the limits of what I could fathom.

Strangely enough, *1984* was really stuff I'd been doing well before Soft Machine. It was really the stuff I'd been doing working with Daevid before all that stuff, when I was still in a, kind of, avant garde period-- before Wilde Flowers, before Soft Machine. Working with loops and stuff like that. Tape loops and cutting up sound collage, that kind of stuff. But I, sort of, messed around with that stuff when I worked with Daevid and also later on, at home, just cutting up pieces of tape, sticking them together and running them-- stuff like that. And then it was the first chance I'd really had enough money and studio time to get to go into a studio. And just record it in a big studio, in good conditions, where I had the time to do it with proper machines.

Did you bring homemade tapes or...

Mostly not....

...or did you make them there?

Yeah, in fact, we even did some big 16-track tapes looping with a big two inch...16(-track) machines, making loops which... you're not supposed to do that. It's against the sound engineer's golden rules. But we did all that stuff. Also, I suppose, it was a kind of reaction against Soft Machine because I was starting to get bored with Soft Machine-- not happy-- and wanted to do some stuff differently from being in the band.

And when was that? Were you still in the band?

Yeah. No, I actually started working on it the year before I left. So it was, yeah, '72.

So were you thinking Stockhausen? Terry RIley or that sort of thing?

Those are two good names, certainly. Certainly Terry Riley. I mean, that was a big influence. And there was a couple of pieces of Stockhausen. There was one called *Kontakte* which is.... now you could do it in, like, 5 minutes on the computer. But then it

was... you'd be sitting in a studio for months getting all this stuff down. Treating, electronically, stuff, which now, you could do with an effects box on stage.

And what about the whole Dada angle?

I've got it now. I didn't, at all, get involved with it, at all. There were people on the outskirts of Soft Machine who were very into that but it...

Who are you thinking of? What types of people?

Actually, people who were really Soft Machine fans, but were not part of the music world. They were, kind of, part of the art world or poets or artists or critics or, kind of, writers.

You mean, like those Pataphysical guys?

Yeah. All that stuff. I forget the guy's name. There was a guy in London who was the official Pataphysical Chairman of Britain. I forget his name. Oh god.

They had a whole organization, right?

That's it, yeah. And we were the official orchestra of the Pataphysical Society of Great Britain. But it was one of those things. It was fun. It's part of Surrealism and Dadaism and stuff of the thirties. I mean, it was very hard to tie down what it means. If you ask someone what Dada. means, it's just the art of the ridiculous or something... or the art of... give it some crazy definition. But it was really, kind of, a rebellion against logic and, kind of, being straight-- the straight world, really.

On the one hand, the tape loop has a dada connection but so does Robert's whimsical singing.

I think Dada is like one of these loose terms everyone has their own definition of...

The art of the absurd. Or making art out of every day life...

I think, mainly, it was a desire not to be part of the mainstream of art or of life. Do something ridiculous because life is ridiculous. Therefore you shouldn't do serious things. Or if you do serious things, you should do it in a weird way that's going to surprise people. Which is great. But, for me, it's not a clear philosophy. It's, sort of, an approach to other things rather than a clear thing in itself. But, then, that's because I was never particularly involved with it. It's something I saw from the outside.

I stayed a fan of the Softs though the seventh album. But it seems to me, when Robert left, that's part of what ended: that whimsical thing. The music became very serious after that.

That's right. Well, Mike Ratledge was always very serious about music. Unfortunately, he never really enjoyed playing live. He hadn't really enjoyed being on stage. It wasn't his life. He really was much happier composing stuff-- which he was very good at doing-- or arranging stuff or working at home. He didn't ever really enjoy being a touring musician.

Did you enjoy it?

I enjoy it now more than I did then because I have more freedom in my life to do what I want to do. At that time I was rather... also you get mellow with age. You see what the good things are and you avoid the bad things. Whereas when you're younger, you go head first into everything and you want everything just to be what you want.

Did you ever tour with the Soft Machine in the US? The three of you guys?

We did a couple of things in the States but mostly in Europe. Well, actually we didn't do it as a trio. Yeah, we did it with a quartet. With Elton Dean in '71, I think, was the first time we went back. We were supposed to do... we were with CBS Records and we had a lot of work with the jazz festival circuit. We were following Miles Davis everywhere. I saw so many Miles Davis gigs in those days... '71, '72.

How did you feel about that?

It was great. I loved that music at the time. I like the electric bands of Miles.

So now you and Daevid are together in Brainville.

I think it was Kramer's idea, really. I think Kramer had an idea for doing a record or a tour. An idea to tour with Daevid and me. First of all, it was going to be David Licht, a drummer who he'd worked with before. But David couldn't do it so we asked Pip. We were supposed to go to Israel and had some gigs in Europe but it's been very hard this year. Things seem to have been cancelled left, right and center for different reasons. But this is the first time we worked together-- in New York-- first time.

And this was the first time you'd been together musically with Daevid since the Daevid Allen Trio in 1963?

That's right. We did five gigs in England in June just as a trio because Kramer didn't come over. But before that I hadn't worked since... what?...1963 with Daevid. How long is that? That's 35 years!

But it's been fun?

It's been great. The five gigs we did in England as a trio were great. It was really nice. I can always work with Pip. It's never a problem. We've done so many gigs together over the years. I know we can get on together, especially improvising. But I really didn't know how we were going to get on with Daevid. Because Pip has worked with Daevid in Gong and they've been together and they've been apart and they've had problems and they've been together. But it really worked out well. We all enjoyed it. I think it was creative. It was improvised with a few songs. Stuff like that. Basically what you heard last night. That kind of approach.

Why did you decide to do *Hope for Happiness*? That was surprising.

I think that was Daevid's idea, actually. In fact, it's my brother's song. Brian wrote that. I can't remember how it came about. I think somebody suggested it. So we tried it and it's a good, open vehicle to do things on, you know.

What songs do you think you'll play for this Wyatt tribute?

We've had a look at *Sea Song* and *The Last Straw* from *Rock Bottom*. And a couple of the ones off the new record *Shleep*. There's one called *Heaps of Sheeps*. We might try that also there's one I co-wrote called *Was A Friend*-- the one we were talking about before. And plus Kramer's *Free Will and Testament*. Oh and *Memories*!! We might do *Memories* again.

It's got that kind of schmaltzy, nostalgic feel.

Everybody take to the dance floor!

You played on *Alifib* didn't you? That was quite an opus, huh?

Yeah, it was great. In fact, Robert had already recorded his piano part and I think it was like a tape loop rhythm part on that and Gary Window had recorded sax on it. Then they sent a demo to me to see if I could come up with some sort of bass line afterwards or whatever-- which I did at home. Then we went into the studio to record it. So, yeah, I really liked it. I was pleased with that, also, because it was a reconciliation with Robert. It was the first thing we did together after he'd left Soft Machine-- a year later.

(*Joking, as Pip Pyle walks by*) Can you shed some light on the whole Pip and Robert Wyatt wife-swapping controversy? Was that a coincidence?

Nothing is a coincidence. By chance, Alfie was Pip's girlfriend at one point. And Pip's ex-wife was also Robert's ex-wife.

Girlfriends seem to play a large role in all of this. Kevin used to go out with Pye Hastings late sister?

That's how we met Pye Hastings, because he was Kevin's girlfriend's much younger brother. He was a 15 year-old schoolboy when we first met him. That's right.

And what about Caravan? You didn't overlap much with them?

Well, I did really. Because that came from Wilde Flowers, as well, and yeah, they were

really the more melodic pop song... or poppier songs from Wilde Flowers and they developed that side of it. Pye is a very good song writer, a very natural song writer. He says, himself, he doesn't consider himself to be a great guitarist. But he plays guitar well for what he wants to do. It fits well with his music. He's not interested in being a jazz musician or in a fancy conservatory. He doesn't do that.

That must have been difficult to reconcile with Robert after his accident. Were you still on the outs with him?

No, we'd made up by then. It was a shock. I remember I heard it from Gary Window, I think. Yeah, Gary phoned me up and told me about Robert. I think at the time I didn't see that he'd be able to handle it. I'd never thought of him as being a particularly strong person to be able to handle a thing like that. I thought it could be easy to try and take his own life because he couldn't stand the idea of being in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Which certainly would have occurred to me, you know. You can't tell until it happens what you would feel like. But he handles it OK.

If I call Robert or Robert calls me, I mean, I just don't think about it, really. He was never a sporty person. He never went sailing or he never went hiking. Although he's lost the ability to play a drum set--he can't play the bottom half of a drum set-- he would laugh at the idea of going jogging, for instance. So for him, most of his life was actually sitting at home and having cups of tea, anyway. In fact sometimes I have to remind myself that he is in a wheelchair. But then that's because I don't see him very much.

Do you think his music has changed since then?

Yeah it has. Well, he certainly hasn't switched off because of it.

What about, drums versus singing, and doing them at the same time. Was that a factor when he left the band?

It was all part of it. In fact, as I was saying before, it's all because we just weren't getting on as people. If he'd been the greatest drummer in the world or the greatest singer in the world, if you're not getting on with someone then it just doesn't help. You can't say, "I must get on with this person because he's the greatest drummer in the world." It just doesn't work. You can't even tie it down to those logical things. You just don't get on with someone so you just hate their face. They walk in the door and you think "I wish you'd go away," or something. It's like any other relationship. Since you've got to play together it makes it twice as bad.

Do you have a family?

Yeah, Several! One daughter of 19 and another one of 2 1/2 from two different mothers.

How's your daughter of 19?

She's actually started playing bass about three years ago but then she's given up now. She's into music but doesn't really have that kind of neurotic desire that you need to have to really get involved in an instrument. But she's always been into music.

How about that neurotic thing? Tell me about your own neurotic relationship to the music. Do you agonize over your recordings or do you have a more laizze fair attitude?

I'm more laizze fair than I used to be. Because I know now what I can do and I know what I can do easily and I know what it's going to be hard for me to do and I accept those problems. I mean, I can now trust myself. If it's someone I'd never met... then I'd say "Yeah, sure," and it wouldn't worry me. I might think, if they presented me with this chart that was really horrendous-- and I'm not a particularly good reader-- so I'd have trouble with that. I know I can do certain things if people ask me to do them and I know I can do them well. I can contribute to a project. So it's not a problem anymore. Whereas when you're younger, you have alot more bullshit about you. You think, "Ah! I can do this." and if can't do it, if you're proven wrong, then things get nasty. Whereas now I can see that it's no problem for me to admit that I can't do something so it makes me more relaxed. So I can probably do things better than I could've done before.

Did reading ever become a problem after Robert left Soft Machine? That horn section you played with was pretty serious wasn't it?

Yeah. It wasn't a problem for reading in that band because the bass lines were mostly riffs anyway.

Did you ever feel a conflict between a more academic approach vs the Chuck Berry School?

Not really. Not at that stage, anyway, because it wasn't that academic. The whole thing about Soft Machine, when I left it, it was becoming kind of a jazz-rock funky thing, which I love-- played by the right people. But I, for one, was not the right bass player for that kind of stuff. And then, in my opinion, they weren't the right writers and other players for it. They all had a lot of qualities but that wasn't one of them. Certain people dearly want to be black, you know. And then they weren't black players and whatever that means. Or they wanted to come from Harlem. I never have come from Harlem, and I know what I can do. I love some of that stuff. I love a lot of it but I don't necessarily want to play it myself.

You did that recent CD *Spaced*, right?

That's right. That was kind of... Alot of that was just the same kind of approach as 1984-- working with tapes and recording stuff live and then cutting it up. Making loops of it, overlaying things. I did a little bit of that on the beginning of one of the tracks on Soft Machine Third-- Facelift-- which has some live stuff mixed with studio stuff. The Spaced project we did it, actually, for a show in London which had dancers and acrobats and they asked us to do the music for it. So we did this tape and it's recently come out on Cuneiform.

Did you have something to do with remixing it?

In fact, there's a guy called Mike King from Canada who tracked down where the tapes were. The engineer who recorded it for us went to live in the States and he's now a bicycle repairman in Connecticut--great! He had it in his loft or something. In these boxes of tapes.

What about the Wilde Flowers tapes? Didn't Mike (King) get those from your brother?

Yeah Brian had alot of them. We had them on acetates; on vinyl demos because that's how you had them in those days. It's like a seven inch EP. ???...tracks on there. That's why its scratchy sounding.

I don't think they're bad, considering...

They've been cleaned up. That was Brian's project-- my brother. He got that going. In fact Voiceprint's going to put out a further, even earlier, archive project of stuff. Like I was telling you about my brother and I singing Chuck Berry songs... more interesting early stuff with Robert and Mike Ratledge. Kind of playing free jazz around the time of the Daevid Allen Trio. We used to get together in each other's homes and pretend to be John Coltrane and things like that.

You guys always have a kind of self-effacing attitude about jazz. It seems to be something you all share that survives from those early days...

We've always got a, sort of, interiority complex about being real jazz musicians, that's right.

Was it because you were young guys in England?

Yeah, young white guys. And also speaking for myself, I never really studied jazz technique and jazz harmony and all that stuff you really want to go into. I just played by ear I'm really kind of a rocker with jazz tinges. As well as other things. I have other interests as well.

What do you think of when I mention Mark Boyle ?

Mark has become quite successful because he's, kind of, been taken up by the art world in London. He did all the light shows for Soft Machine. He does paintings. He's really become quite successful.

Do you see him still?

I haven't seen him for about 20 years.

I saw him in 1980 or so. He did a show in California and played some Softs tapes and talked about the light shows.

Even when I was in the band he came along and did a few special shows for us as well. He gave Mike, Robert and me one of his pictures. He had this project to throw darts at an atlas of the world and wherever the dart landed he would go there and make this epicoat casting.

Yeah, that's what was in the show I saw. It was amazing. So he gave you one of those?

Yeah. Mine is actually a part of the coast of England, the south coast of England-- sand at low tide. You know how sand goes all... kind of... you can see the shape of the wave, the ripples. You can see shells and stuff in it.

And he wasn't involved with *Spaced*?

He wasn't, actually, although it was pretty much composed by the same family... I forgot the guy's name. It was his show really and he put it together.

Who was Ted Bing?

Ted was a school friend. He got into photography. He used to take photographs of everyone. He's now living in Norway-- lives like a Viking! He's about 6 foot 6 anyway. Now, having lived in Norway for the last 20 years, he really looks like a Viking.

You guys always had a multi-media aspect to the Soft Machine.

Yeah, we did. Daevid was very important in that he encouraged... he was the instigator of some of those things. He would get Ted to take a picture of him-- real kind of freaky pictures-- and then project them on him while he was playing and reading poetry and stuff like that.

Well thank you, Hugh. I'm sure there's more I'd like to know but that about does it for now.

Thank you, Mark.

>> Interview with Hugh Hopper on the Panmodern website

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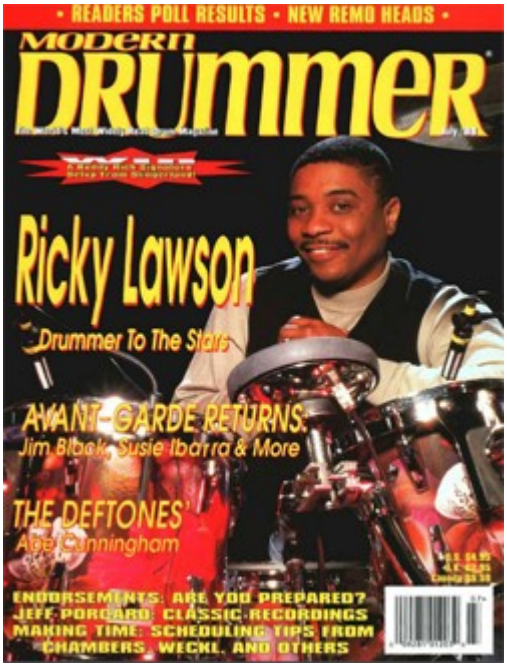
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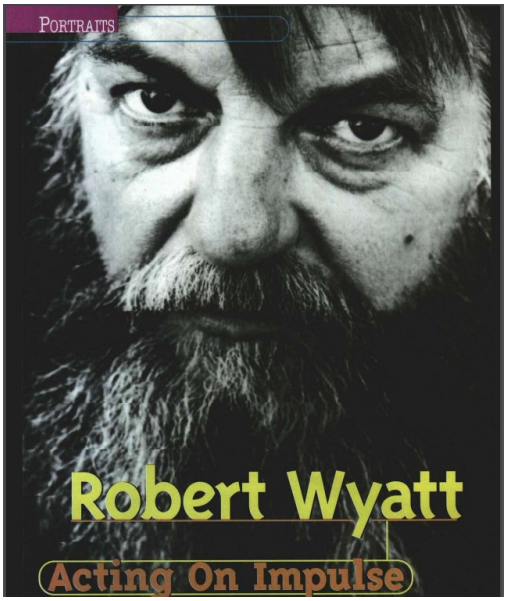
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Robert Wyatt - Acting On Impulse - Modern Drummer - July 1998





> Zoom

Few musical careers parallel Robert Wyatt's. As the drummer and singer with England's Soft Machine, Wyatt literally helped birth the genre of jazz-rock in the mid '60s. After four albums and mounting tensions, Wyatt split, took a stylistic about-face, and released a handful of amazing—if esoteric—solo albums. He never looked back at the potentials of stardom, though, and in fact seems to relish the artistic freedom available outside the mainstream. When the topic of Sheila E's mass exposure via a *7-UP* commercial is brought up, Robert, tongue firmly in cheek, quickly responds, "Well, there's been no *7-UP* commercials *this* way—though it has a busy year."

by Adam Budofsky



child prodigy born to British intellectual "bohemian" parents, and mostly self-taught on drums, Wyatt's taste for modern jazz and twentieth-century classical music helped make Soft Machine one of the most critically acclaimed bands of the '60s. Along with keyboardist Mike Ratledge, guitarist Daevid Allen (who left early on to form the inimitable Gong), and Kevin Ayers (bass, soon to go solo), the group baffled audiences with their music, which clearly had more to do with amping-up Coltrane than weirding-up the Stones.

Despite most people's inability to comprehend the odd band from Canterbury, Jimi Hendrix invited them to open up his 1968 American tour, and forward-thinking musicians in attendance began to dig their unique sound. Of particular note was Wyatt's unbridled kit work, which was oddly accompanied by his fragile yet emotive vocals.

Directly after leaving the band, Robert formed the group Matching Mole, participated in a number of side projects, and released his first solo album, *The End Of An Ear*. A fall from a window in 1973 left him paralyzed from the waist down, after which his albums took a fascinating turn. Without the option of heavy kit excursions, Wyatt's music became rhythmically simpler—but more detailed. The treatment of every element now took on much greater importance: The subtle adjustment of a ride pattern signaled a change in scenery, the turning off of snares beat a new path through the woods. "Despite all this highfalutin education," he says today, "my songs are very simple. They are nursery rhymes half the time."

Wyatt also collaborated with an astounding diversity of artists, including jazz pianist Carla Bley, intellectual dance-poppers Scritti Politti, electronic/soundtrack legend Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Namibian consciousness-raising group the Swapo Singers. This last project in particular highlights his passion for political activism, which continues to be a constant source of inspiration.

Today Robert Wyatt holds demigod status among a small but fanatic group of followers. Among them is Elvis Costello, who co-wrote the magnificent surprise hit "Shipbuilding" specifically for him, as well as Brian Eno and Paul Weller, both of whom made important contributions to his first long-player in seven years, Shleep. Modern Drummer caught up with Wyatt upon the release of the album.

AB: What have you been doing since your last album, *Dondestan*?

RW: I've done some singing for other people. A friend of mine, John Greaves, did a record called *Songs*, and I sang three tunes. More recently I sang a bit for Austrian composer Mike Mantler.

AB: You've worked with Mike in the past.

RW: Yeah, I have. One of the most exciting things I've ever sung against was the rhythm section that he and Carla Bley provided with Jack DeJohnette on drums on *The Hapless Child*.

AB: Your new album seems to be more about collaborations than past records. You recorded at [Roxy Music guitarist] Phil Manzanera's studio, and you played with Brian Eno again, and Paul Weller—for the first time?

RW: Yes, although we've been involved in some of the same sort of political pressure groups, but never as musicians. People have been telling me that I should really work with some other people occasionally, [laughs]

AB: You have done your share of collaborations, though.

RW: I have played with a lot of people, but I do like working on my own. It's a paraplegic thing: We like to do what we can whenever we can, given that in a lot of the world we can't do as much as other people. So even on this album, I've done as much as I could myself. I

try and be my own sort of mini-group. But I wanted the company. I get lonely out here, [laughs]

AB: Are you way out in the country?

RW: Yeah, I'm in a little country town. But I just thought it would be nice to see some of those musicians I used to know in London, and because Phil Manzanera's studio is very near London, I felt free to ask people on a quite casual basis to come 'round for an afternoon or two.

AB: A couple of people actually got pretty involved.

RW: Paul and Brian—neither of whom charged me anything, incidentally—actually mixed some of the tracks that they played on. I thought, well, they've made their contributions, and they worked very hard. I was really grateful, and I also didn't want to misuse their contributions. But they both seemed most concerned with getting my voice right in the mix, which was very kind. And I have to thank Phil Manzanera for providing an atmosphere where I felt I could take time on things.

AB: One thing that is consistent throughout your career is a willingness to let the ride cymbal provide almost the entire driving pulse in a song. From the new album, "Was A Friend" and "Blues In Bob Minor" come to mind.

RW: It's a generation thing I think. I'm just about a year older than people who were brought up on the closed hi-hat concept of timekeeping. I come from the Kenny Clarke ride cymbal era. It's not that I'm a jazz player, but to me that seems to be the natural feel for the kit, and I'm a very top-of-the-kit person. I don't really play "rock 'n' roll"—I don't play "rock" anyway. I like to roll around my tunes rather than rock.

I also particularly like the jazz 4/4, which is of course a 12/8. It just seems to me you can sort of imply the triplets with the ride cymbal in a very organic way, and with a very light touch. One of my favorite rhythm sections was Dannie Richmond with Charles Mingus. I was very impressed with the way they would sort of tug against each other. I don't always use that feel, but on "September The Ninth" on this album the bass and drums are sort of pushing and pulling against each other.

AB: You also seem to enjoy playing with the snares off.

RW: Oh, yeah. I did a whole LP with the snares off, which was the second Matching Mole one, *Little Red Record*. There are ways of getting a cutting edge without the snares on. I really like that slightly hollow sound. There are drummers I used to like, like Ed Blackwell, all of whose drums sounded like toms. And even now, on this record, I have the snare kind of floppy and rattly, like Max Roach. In R&B and other styles, an extremely tight snare is perfect. But not for me. I like an organic, grubby sort of sound.

AB: A long time ago in an interview you made mention of "submerging yourself in the work of learning to play three or four drums." You have always had a relatively small kit, even with Soft Machine...

RW: It's even smaller now! [laughs] All I'm really using now is a snare and two cymbals, with a few little toy ones for the odd "*psh*."

I like the gradations of sounds you can get on one drum rather than always having sudden steps from drum to drum. It just seems to be more organic than the rock thing. I really departed from the rock thing, where you have this: [sings descending notes]. I just like the sounds to merge into each other more. My favorite drummer was Elvin Jones, and the thing about him that really impressed me was that nearly every drum was almost tuned the same.

It's the same with cymbals. I'd rather play a different part of a good cymbal than have like eight cymbals up and only hit the same place on each one. It's not intimate enough for me. To me, each cymbal and drum is a complex instrument in its own right. And of course it's a physical thing now. I can't reach out all over the place; I'm quite liable to fall over, [laughs] So I like my kit close to my body and tight and everything within very easy reach. That also concentrates the mind.

Impulse Buying

a selected Robert Wyatt discography

Most of Wyatt's solo albums are available in the States on CD, but some of the other records he's appeared on are either out of print or available only as imports. Original recording dates appear following label names, except in the case of re-releases or newly available live recordings, in which case the original recording dates appear in brackets, while the latest release dates follow the label names.

WITH SOFT MACHINE

* Vols, I [1968] and 2 [1969] (Big Beat, 1989)
• Third (UK CBS, 1970)
• Fourth (UK CBS, 1971)
* Jet-Propelled Photograph [1967] (Charly, 1994)
* Live At The Paradiso 1969 (Voiceprint, 1996)

WITH MATCHING MOLE

Matching Mole [1972] (Columbia, 1992)
* Little Red Record [1972] (Columbia, 1992)

AS LEADER

* The End Of An Ear (UK CBS, 1970)
* Rock Bottom [1974] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)
• Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard [1975] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)
* Nothing Can Stop Us [1982] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)
• The Animals Soundtrack [1982] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)
- 1982-1984 (Rough Trade, 1984)
• Old Rotten Hat [1985] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)
* Compilation (Gramavision, 1986)
* Dondestan [1991] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)
* Going Back A Bit: A Little History (Virgin, 1994)
• Shleep [1997] (Thirsty Ear, 1998)

AS SIDEMAN

* Daevid Allen: Bananamoon [1971] (Charly, 1990)
* Kevin Ayers: The Joy Of A Toy [1969] (UK Beat Goes On, 1990)
* Kevin Ayers: Shooting At The Moon [1970] (UK Beat Goes On, 1990)
* Ayers, Cale, Nico, Eno: June 1, 1974 (UK Island, 1990)
* Brian Eno: Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy) (EC, 1974)
* Brian Eno: Another Green World (EC, 1975)
* Brian Eno: Before And After Science (EG, 1978)
• Brian Eno: Music For Airports (EG 1979)
* Ryuichi Sakamoto: Beauty (Virgin, 1989)

Also, check out the book *Wrong Movements: A Robert Wyatt History* (ISBN 0 946719 101) from SAF Publishing, UK.

AB: Do you think there is some connection to your lyrics and your drumming style? You've made mention in the past of a conscious decision to make the lyrics simpler and more conversational. Your drumming has taken on a similar kind of evolution.

RW: Actually, I've never really thought of that comparison before. I'll have to think about that; you may be right. I should point out, though, that when I'm talking about music, everything seems more deliberate than it actually is. When you are actually playing, you are acting on instinct. You do a lot of calculating before you play, and maybe after you play, but not while you are doing it. I don't always know what I've done till I sit and think about it. Actually, more and more, I've discarded every theory that I ever had about what things *ought* to be like—even the thought that they've got to be different. I'll use a common device just as happily as an unusual one. All I think now is, "Does it feel alive; does it feel right?"

It's like when drummers are worried about their personality coming through their playing. I don't think you have to think about that. Being deliberately eccentric is as silly as being deliberately conformist. If you just get comfortable, then your natural characteristics will come through. We are all unique without trying, as anyone who has studied fingerprints or voiceprints will tell you.

AB: If you can call it this, one happy result of your not being able to play a traditional trap set is a sort of elimination of the *sound* of a drumset on your albums. When most drummers sit behind a kit, they seem obliged to have to make noise with every limb.

RW: People do like to wiggle all four limbs at least once every four seconds; I've noticed that. Actually, I don't think like a drummer really, or a singer, or any of these things. I'm thinking like a composer. That may sound a bit pompous, but that's the best word for it. I'm just trying to think about what the music needs. It's really exciting to realize that on some tracks I only need to keep time, that I don't need to have a drum on it at all. It's amazing what you can leave out, because immediately the space becomes available for some other instrument. Everybody is in the rhythm section in the end—not just the drummer. You won't fall down a great vacuum cavity if you stop using a limb temporarily.

AB: If you try that in rehearsal, you're liable to have the rest of the band look at you like, "Well, why aren't you playing the whole kit?"

RW: Right. Very often the difference between an amateur and a professional musician is that the amateur is playing and the professional is listening. That's really the job. That's another reason I like the translucence of the cymbal sound, because you can hear right through it. It's important for me to be able to do that. The real problem I had after my accident was not losing the bass drum, because as I get older my tastes get more old-fashioned, and I really don't need that bass drum thing very often. But I did have trouble not having a hi-hat. Listening to Billy Higgins playing and realizing that he was squeezing the hi-hat with such a light touch led me to think, I'll just go one step further *and fantasize* about playing the hi- hat, and my body will kind of move with that.

"Being deliberately eccentric is as silly as being deliberately conformist. If you just get comfortable, then your natural characteristics will come through."

AB: I'd like to go back in time a bit. You were lucky enough to grow up in a home where you were encouraged to listen to music that a lot of your peers probably never even knew existed.

RW: I was very lucky. For one thing, a lodger came to stay at our house once whose name is George Niedorf. I think he had taught at Valley Drum City in California and had run clinics with Joe Morello. But his favorite was Philly Joe Jones, and he used to teach me to listen—not to drummers, but to rhythm sections. That was very, very useful to me. So I used to listen to a lot of things, like Jimmy Cobb with Miles Davis. My older brother had a terrific record collection, so that was perhaps why my tastes were a bit more old-fashioned than some of my contemporaries'. I mean, at school most of my friends were listening to the Everly Brothers. I just liked my brother's records more than theirs—it's as simple as that.

AB: So by the time Daevid Allan *[sic]* came along, also as a lodger at your parents' house, you two were listening to the same sorts of things.

RW: He had a lot of the same records as my brother. Even before then, though, my father had listened to twentieth-century classical music a great deal—not extremely avant-garde,

but certainly Prokofiev and Benjamin Britten and so on. So I got used to kind of dense, twentieth-century harmonic ideas. I never had any problem with what people called "discord." There's no such thing; it's just conditioning as far as I can see.

It was only later that I discovered pop music. I didn't understand it at all at first. When I heard the Beatles I thought Ringo Starr was just so banal. Now I can see what a perfect drummer he was. But it took me years. The people that are called "avant-garde," I hear it straight away. [laughs]

AB: In the mid '60s, audiences were becoming open to more out stuff. The timing seemed pretty good for Soft Machine.

RW: I think we would have been better off a couple of years later. We had some pretty rough rides with audiences, I can tell you. I think I had this need to kind of lose the beat and find it again. People found that very unnerving—including a lot of musicians I played with! But sometimes I just like to stop playing. Dannie Richmond used to do that quite a lot with Charles Mingus. There would be whole sections where he would just, BANG, stop, the band would carry on, and he'd come back in a chorus later. But that was because Mingus told him to. Nobody told *me* to.

AB: You've said that touring with the Jimi Hendrix Experience was positive for the group, musically at least.

RW: First of all, they were encouraging personally. They didn't pull rank, which headliner groups can do. Second, Hendrix very deliberately allowed Mitch Mitchell a lot of space to create drum parts and to improvise. And they were doing it, not in front of tiny jazz club audiences or avant-garde elite, but stadiums full of rock fans—and they were getting away with it! And I realized that if you do something with authority, as if you mean it, people will go with that.

AB: Soft Machine and Pink Floyd have some common history. Nick Mason, the drummer in Floyd, almost seems like your stylistic opposite, yet you've worked together a few times.

RW: The Floyds were always very helpful to us. When I was working on *Rock Bottom* I was taking the responsibility for more than I had taken on before. I just thought it would be great to have the ear of someone else who wasn't in the middle of it, who really had a lot of experience working in studios and making things sound right. Nick drummed in order to make the piece of music sound right, not in order to show off. He would just gently increase or decrease the pressure throughout the song where appropriate. I felt that sense of space and structure could help me in the studio, and I was right. He was extremely helpful.

AB: The drummer on *Rock Bottom* is Laurie Allan, who American audiences might not be familiar with.

RW: When it came time to do my first record where I couldn't really play the kit, Laurie was the first person I thought of. He was part of the London scene and worked quite a lot with some show bands and various free-jazz groups, but he understood rock music as well. I felt in tune with him because of that. I also really liked his sound and felt a real kinship with him, and that makes a difference. Without friendship and companionship it's just a cold exercise. Cleverness is not enough.

AB: You and the other members of Soft Machine worked on [Pink Floyd founder] Syd Barren's first solo album. That must have been quite a task, since his behavior had become quite erratic by that point.

RW: I was actually very touched that he asked us. People say, "Are you upset you weren't given credit on the record?" But I think he left our names off out of kindness, [laughs] We went into the studio and he was virtually mute. He just played us the songs that he had recorded, and they were quite difficult in the sense that there was hardly any sort of steady, regular time going through them. They were structured around the words, which were not in any kind of regular meter.

We rehearsed the songs a little and then were ready to record them, at which time he said, "Right, that's it. Thank you very much." So those initial takes became a few tracks of *The Madcap Laughs*. But I think it was a wonderful record, and today I can see exactly why he wanted to leave it as this clumsy searching sound. He didn't want a smooth thing. I enjoyed the experience very much, and I liked him. All the Floyd were very nice people.

AB: It sounds like his ideas were more intentional than people assume.



RW: If you look at other art forms—like the paintings of Max Ernst or the dadaists or early surrealists—you see that there's nothing unusually eccentric about people like Syd Barrett. I myself was brought up as much with painters as musicians. Syd didn't strike me as particularly eccentric; he struck me as a perfectly normal and sensible songwriter—which maybe says something about me that I don't want to know!

But I do think that we are not here to please the structures in music, or in life. The structures are there where and when we need them to help us out of the chaos if we are lost. But they shouldn't be our masters. I think when any idiom sort of petrifies, it is precisely because the structures have taken over from the impulses that have set them up.

AB: You've mentioned being influenced by visual artists, but are there any particular musicians you've been into lately?

RW: Some of the things I've been listening to include a Japanese group called Ground Zero, who do remixes and sampling and things, but not as dance music. I also listen to a lot of the great American standards—Gershwin, Cole Porter. And I've been listening to an old singer named Jimmy Scott a lot, as well as a record that Linda Ronstadt did with Nelson Riddle, which was done with a lot of respect.

People sometimes listen to my lyrics and think, "Oh, he must be really anti-American," but that's not the case at all. It's just that I find all imperialist governments a pain in the bum. But it's not the people's fault; don't blame the culture. The fact is that something extraordinary happened in American culture in the last hundred years or so: Diverse immigrant groups came together and reinvented their identities alongside each other in ways that have just been fantastic. When you think of Miles Davis and Gil Evans doing *Porgy And Bess*, and you think of the history of the ideas on a record like that—from black Americans to Jewish Americans to goodness knows who else...that's really the area that interests me most at the moment.

I don't feel any obligation to keep up to date. I agree with Byron, who said, "Every time somebody tells me about a wonderful new book, I go out and buy an old one."

AB: There does always seem to be old stuff to discover.

RW: That's right. In fact, I didn't really appreciate Bob Dylan so much at the time, although Hendrix used to say how great he was. But since then I've liked him more and more, which is why I've got that little Bob Dylan tribute on the record, "Blues In Bob Minor."

AB: I guess you haven't heard from him on it yet.

RW: No. I just hope that he will realize that I'm "Bob Minor" and he's "Bob Major"!

Thanks to John Godlewski from Absolute Vinyl in Montclair, New Jersey for invaluable research help on this article.

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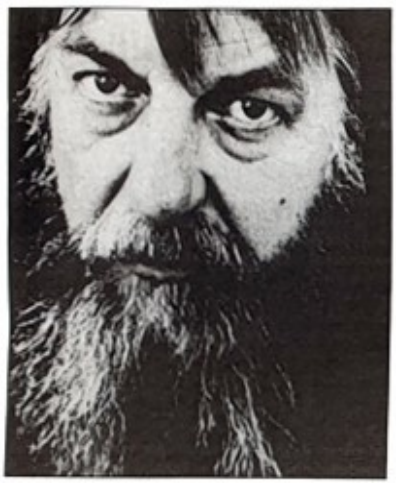
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Singer/instrumentalist (& ex-Soft Machine drummer) Robert Wyatt reveals the secretworld of dreams with Shleep - USR U.S. Rocker Magazine - Number 6 - June'98



Singer/instrumentalist (& ex-Soft Machine drummer) Robert Wyatt reveals the secret world of dreams with *Shleep*

BY SEAN CARNEY



Robert Wyatt? Who the hell is Robert Wyatt!? Well, unless you buy a lot of out-of-print vinyl, you might not have heard of the man before. But now with a new record, *Shleep*, available domestically from Thirsty Ear and a reissue of his entire back catalog planned for summer release, it's time to catch up.

Robert Wyatt was a founding member of the '60s art rock band Soft Machine from Canterbury UK. Although Soft Machine debuted in the middle of the decade-long British rock explosion, the band was quite different from its contemporaries. First off, Soft Machine - in its classic configuration - had no guitarist. Instead, the musical focus was on the hyperactive interplay between Hugh Hopper's fuzz bass, Mike Ratledge's even fuzzier organ, and the drumming and singing of Robert Wyatt. The band careened recklessly from cabaret-sounding jazz to completely frazzed-out rock, bypassing the flaky psychedelic idiosyncratic approach and took Soft Machine along on the Experience's first U.S. tour in 1968.

Wyatt's percussion style was unusual in its fluidity and ratty energy - a mid-point between Keith Moon's manic approach and the precision, "pro" sound of Bill Bruford. Even more remarkable than his drumming was Wyatt's unbroken, high-pitched voice that sounded more like it belonged to a teenage boy than a man. His phrasing on the first three Soft Machine albums is amazing. He breaks the words at unusual points and often indulges in "wordless vocal guitar solos," scatting along in an eerie register, tripping and trilling along

with the melody. His words were exceptional, too, and had nothing in common with the insipid "let's boogie" come-ons of other English bands of the time. He employed whimsical surrealist imagery that was also wise and subtly political. "Virgins are boring," Wyatt sang on "Pig" (from *Soft Machine II*). "They should be grateful for the things they're ignoring."

Wyatt left Soft Machine after three albums to form Matching Mole, an even more spontaneous and jazzy ensemble. Then, in 1973, Wyatt fell from a window at a party and was paralyzed from the waist down. Although this ended his career as a kit drummer, Wyatt was soon back at work, singing, arranging and playing a variety of instruments on classic albums by luminaries like Brian Eno (Wyatt contributed to *Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy* and *Music for Airports* — some pretty cool credentials). Wyatt also began what is now a twenty-five year long solo career that de-emphasized rhythm for vocal and harmonic exploration. On albums such as 1974's *Rock Bottom* and 1975's *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, Wyatt plumbed his emotional depths, extracting some of the most heart-rending personal music of all time. His newest record, Shleep, is a bit more light-hearted than his '80s work (which saw him delve into Marxist politics) and features guest musicians like Eno, Phil Manzanera (from Roxy Music), Paul Weller (from the Jam), and avant garde saxophonist Evan Parker.

USR was lucky enough to have the opportunity to spend some time chatting with Robert Wyatt on the phone early in May. He doesn't do many interviews, but he spoke candidly with us about what it means to live as an artist in the late 20th century, and his joyful lust to create infected us all month long.

It's been a few years since you've released any material. How did you decide it was time for a new record?

Well, I spend months on end working on piano ideas and cymbal ideas and trumpet ideas at my home, I'm always writing bits and pieces of songs but only at certain times do they come together into a coherent piece. I can't force it - I can't turn the tap on and POOF! a song comes out. Things have to come together naturally, organically. And when they do, I get into the studio as quick as I can.

Do you have other collaborators in mind when you're crafting the song ideas?

Ever since the early '70s, I've found that the safest way to record is to take responsibility for everything. It's as if you were the captain of a ship: it's a good idea to be able to do everything you're gonna ask everyone else to do in case they get washed overboard. I really try to be prepared to play every instrument myself and only when I need another voice do I invite someone who I think is appropriate to join me. That way, I'm not dependent on them but they can enhance what I do - sometimes beyond recognition. When I'm mixing, I take that into account and change what I already planned.

So the contributions sometimes surprise you?

Yes, though over the years I've learned a bit better who is most happy in each particular context. I don't always get it right but I really try. I attempt to take into account each musician's harmonic palette and the pace they like to work at beforehand so I don't throw them into an uncomfortable situation. If I'm working on something that is rhythmically or harmonically obscure, there are certain jazz musicians that would be more comfortable with that than rock musicians. Rock musicians possess other important qualities, having mostly to do with dynamics. They can really bear down on a tune if they're harmonically comfortable.

I was very lucky this time because there was a such a helpful and friendly bunch of people that came by the studio. I got more and more happy because I realized I wasn't going to have to rely on myself for everything.

Do you think that's a strength of jazz and rock music - the collaborative spirit?

Yes, that's an advantage those musics have. When I was young, my initial tendencies were towards "purist" artforms like painting and poetry because a person does it entirely themselves, straight from their imagination onto the paper. The trouble is "pure forms" don't reflect what real life is: a constant process of interaction and adjustment to the things going on around you. And I've really understood that listening to jazz. I'm so grateful to jazz because it established the idea of an inter-relationship between the composers and the performers, constantly flowing, constantly shifting. Despite the fact that we're not playing what anyone would think of as jazz, those of us working in the more

improvised and extended areas of rock should be thankful for everyone from Louis Amstrong to John Coltrane for having opened up the whole range of collaborative creativity.

Miles Davis used to arrange music simply by choosing the players and then letting their personalities shape the sound.

That's right, yeah. I was just listening to *Miles Ahead* and on one track Miles Davis makes a humorous reference to "When the Saints Go Marching In." To do that, Miles is depending on the other musicians to know what reference he's making - they don't automatically lock into "When the Saints," but they accommodate him for a few bars. They all faintly echo the '20s record he's referring to and then they zip back into the '50s, which was when *Miles Ahead* was recorded. To accomplish that depends entirely on knowing who you're with and that you can trust them.

I suppose it's like what some socialite might say about how you invite people for a party: a good party depends on who you've got sitting next to whom. But it doesn't mean you can control what they say! If you've chosen well you can't go wrong, however.

It's been suggested that the ultimate anarchist art grouping is a party.

Oh, that's a very good idea! Of course, there's always someone who throws the party and there's always someone who has to say "Fuck off, I want to go to bed!"

And someone who has to do the dishes the next day...

That's absolutely right. As Noam Chomsky said, "Anarchy is not a state that can be achieved but it's a useful tendency that should be applied at all times."

As far as the lyrical imagery of Shleep is concerned were you going for an overall concept or unity?

My initial collaboration for the record was with Alfie, to whom I'm married. I turned to her words, the notes she made, and her poems because, although I had a lot of musical ideas, I had very few lyrics in mind. Her words seemed to be based around the imagery of birds: birds in flight and birds not able to fly, etc. This coincided very well with the almost permanent dream state I've been in the last few years, a narcotic state without narcotics - which is an ideal slate to be in if you can manage it! Hahaha! It's what you'd call state of grace or luck. Real life doesn't let you live that way too often, but I aim for it and Alfie's lyrics aim for that as well.

I also think that as you get older and heavier, the lightness of birds becomes more and more romantic. At least it seems romantic lo me — I always eat too much. So I combined Alfie's vicarious bird fantasies with my yearning to recapture the wonderful world of dreams. I know that sounds like a cliche, but I just *love* dreams. The more I look back on my life I'm just so glad for those dreaming moments. Everything is good about dreams. Even the worst nightmares are great - you wake up thinking. Wow, thank God that wasn't true! But if it's a good dream then all the better, and that's the theme of the album.


Singer/instrumentalist (& ex-Soft Machine drummer) Robert Wyatt reveals the secret world of dreams with *Shleep*

Do you have waking dreams?

Yes, crepuscular dreams - dawn/dusk dreams. They're dreams that emerge right as you wake up and creep in on you as you start to go to sleep. There are other dreams that happen while you're fully asleep, but they're hard to recall and pin down. Crepuscular dreams - those moments between being asleep and being awake - are the maddest. The closest parallel we all know, even if we can't remember our dreams, is when we get drunk or stoned. And maybe that's why we get drunk and stoned -to recapture that magical half-world. It can be a nightmare or it can be magical. And there's no one, even people who are really boring and dull, who doesn't have those moments where the most amazing, fantastical thoughts go through their head. We all have them - it's just a question of harnessing them, which is one of the jobs an artist takes on.

Have you always dreamt so vividly or have you used special techniques to enhance the experience ?

I absolutely have. I've always been involved in listening to music and looking at paintings and I realized fairly early on that what made art so extraordinary was that it took me back into the world of dreams. That's what I liked about art long before I ever made my own.

What kind of paintings do you like to look at?

Well, basically those from the first hall of the 20th century in Europe when people got together around Paris. Not necessarily just French painters - although I love Matisse and Bonnard. But also the ones who arrived in France, like Chagall from Russia or Picasso from Spain. That whole period is superb, right up to the American abstract expressionists in the middle of the century like Jackson Pollock. Those paintings are still my reference points, even more than anything that has happened since in any other artform.

In the '80s, you became deeply involved with the communist cause and your art took on a more political slant. How did that happen?

When things are on my mind, that's what comes out. In the '80s, for example, I was deeply troubled by the nasty end of the cold war. It wasn't that I was trying to be political or that I lived in fear of atomic bombs, it's just that the times were so disturbing they got deep inside. It was an intellectual horror at the banalization of ideas by our Prime Minister at the time, with her moronic cliches and the fact that she was going down so well in the world. It seemed nightmarish to me. I have some pride in English people and I was happier when we were represented in the world's eye by John Lennon, quite frankly!

Have you left that state now?

No, I would say that state has left me. We now have governments that have mastered the art of not representing anything in particular. It's turned into a kind of ideological soup. They don't say anything that could offend anyone. Intellectually, I still feel a certain distance but how can you fight soup? I mean there's nothing there - it's all too cloudy and nebulous. It's impossible to tell what you're up against. So to that extent, my revulsion seems kind of diffused. All I can do is stick to what I know is right and defend it at such moments when it's clear to me. And, God help me, keep quiet when I don't know what I'm talking about.

Don't you think that just making art is a political statement? Don't you think that now more than ever, people are looking for things that are imaginative?

Ugh, I have no idea what people are looking for. I'm certainly looking for the imaginative but I'm not sure what use it is. There's a danger in thinking that great works of art and imagination can really profoundly alter *anything* for the better. For example, my father was a very idealistic man, a Christian socialist of a very English type. He believed what he was fighting for - he was a soldier in WWII - and he really loved classical music. But the people who had created the most majestic classical music in the world at that time were from Germany and Austria and were themselves the seedbed of the most cruel and heartless phenomenon the world has ever known: Nazism and Fascism. It left my father totally confused... and me, too.

I don't know what people want or what they're gonna do with it, and that's the truth. All I know is that an artist should always try to be authentic and be true to himself and hope that that's good enough. If that doesn't work, then there are forces at work too powerful for anyone - let alone me - to know what to do about. It's not a soundbite, I'm sorry. After years of thinking about it, it's gotten harder and harder to work those things out.

One of the things that makes Shleep sound so unusual is the way you extend the melody lines over many bars of the music. Do you sing along with the riffs as you're creating them?

Yeah. I was talking about my dad - he was a big influence on me in terms of music. He got me interested in classical music. I remember when he played me my first LP, a piece called "Antarctica" by an English composer named Vaughn Williams. It went on and on - I had never heard anything quite like it. I was very impressed because up until then I had only heard 78s and just the very existence of LPs meant that ideas could flow like oceans, not just go round and round and disappear down the plug-hole like water in a sink.

As much as I love pop music, which I absolutely do, it seems to me that the length of the early 78s still govern pop. Everything is forced into a two or three minute soundbite song, and I've always felt constricted by those restraints. I love pop, and God bless the people who do it well, but it gives me claustrophobia. I like the idea of things flowing and twisting and turning and going where they will.



It's funny how mechanical considerations have often determined artistic standards in music.

That's right - the three minute single is a result of technical considerations. It's very useful in a way. On those old jazz records they kept those solos short and sweet and didn't ramble on too much. It was a good discipline. But in the end, there's just so much more to be done than that.

Sure - those same players were really cutting it up live.

That's why it's so wonderful to hear live concerts by people like Charlie Parker, extending chorus alter chorus, unravelling the whole song. And we would never have known this if

we'd only heard 78s.

Yep, live is where it's at. What about you, do you still perform out?

No, I figured if Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly can get away with not doing any live gigs, so can I.

That's not the same thing at all, Robert!

I suppose it's not. Playing live is difficult because of the way I make my records. I put all the layers on myself in the studio. It would be hard to re-create that live. Also, I've found that I've got stage fright. I've lost my nerve. Being in a wheelchair has sort of removed me from access to the world of getting on and off airplanes and cars and buses. The everyday world of the touring musician seemed to recede into the distance after a year or two of being in a wheelchair. I get invited to do gigs, but if I said yes to one, they'd be offended if I turned down other ones. Plus, when I'm singing a song my technique is very often shit and it takes me four goes to get it in tune whereas live, the first go is all you get. I'm not Aretha Franklin, I can't hit it on the note every time! I'm much more competent as a drummer than I am as a singer.

But you used to sing and play drums at the same time...

Yeah, but the fewer takes anybody has of that period, the better, as far as I'm concerned.

Would you ever have imagined as a child creating music as you are creating now?

No, I assumed that music was completely outside my reach. I was interested in painting and Dadaist art at the time. I had no idea what I was going to do when I got older. I imagined I would be a comic or a comedy writer because I've always enjoyed word games. It would never have never occurred to me that I would be a musician or a singer, it just sort of happened in the '60s. I was crap at school and I couldn't handle any of the careers I was being trained for. So, like a lot of people of my generation, I went into something where you need no qualifications whatsoever — rock music.

It's interesting that you bring up Dada and comedy. My friend Peter has always said that while Dada destroyed modern art, it was a boon for comics.

Absolutely! Comedy is such an underestimated art-form. The ability to be funny is as great as the ability to play violin. The best comedians are as good as the best artists in any other idiom. Maybe it's because of my early introduction to Dada that I feel so confident in saying that.

A lot of your lyrics -and even your melodic ideas - tend to be whimsical and comedic. But I'm impressed by the deeper sense of feeling that's also there. And I think that's what was so great about the Dadaists, too. A lot of people who came along after them in the artworld missed the humanity of it.

Well, I usually have to have two reasons for doing something. I do things that are amusing to me because I try to avoid boring myself. That's number one. But secondly, "interesting to me" isn't enough because I know from having a record collection that albums that are just novel or interesting only get played while they're new and then, after I get used to them, I don't want to play them anymore because I've gotten the point. I've found what I really like about the music and art that I love the most is that even when I know it by heart, I still want to hear it again. And that seems to me to be a whole other level beyond being surprising or witty. So I try to think about records I like and what keeps me going back to them twenty or thirty years later. It's very hard to me to say what that is, it's beyond words really. When I really think about things like that, I'm in the land of music.

Ah, but that's the great thing about music, which is a totally abstract artform. Like with classical music, the person off the street can appreciate it for the pretty melodies but there are far deeper complexities to ponder, too.

Absolutely right. Words fail me when I try to describe how important music is to me. I have fanciful ideas about that. Perhaps because our animal ancestors were originally underseas animals, we need the viscous connection that music provides - we want to re-create a swimming environment now that we're on dry land. Music connects us ear to mouth, mouth to ear in an invisible physical link through the air. We all know about that. When a baby is born the first thing it does is cry to its mother. Only when it gets a tit in its mouth does it shut up. The noise is for a *reason*. There's something pretty serious going on the

whole business of making a noise at all. Our lives have depended on it since the moment we were born.

Sean Carney

Robert Watt's new album, Shleep, is available from Thirsty Ear (274 Madison Ave. #804, NYC 10016).

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Who is ROBERT and WYATT matters - Pulse! N° 170 - May 1998

WHO IS ROBERT AND WYATT MATTERS



AVANT-POP'S ELDER STATESMAN ON HEGEMONY, HENDRIX AND HEAPS OF SHEEP

BY BILL FORMAN
PHOTOGRAPH BY GUIDO HARARI

Given free will, Robert Wyatt would prefer to live his life as part of a dance rather than as if there were some great weight on his shoulders. "Most people think they ought to stop being trivial and get serious, but I'm trying to get light from heavy," says Wyatt in the wake of *Shleep* (Thirsty Bar), the Soft Machine founder's most congenial and collaborative album in many years, featuring contributions from Brian Eno, Paul Weller and other friends, old and new. "When you let it, life can be so heavy, gravity becomes too great, and you can hardly function. And I think the thing is to somehow become some kind of gas and float above it."

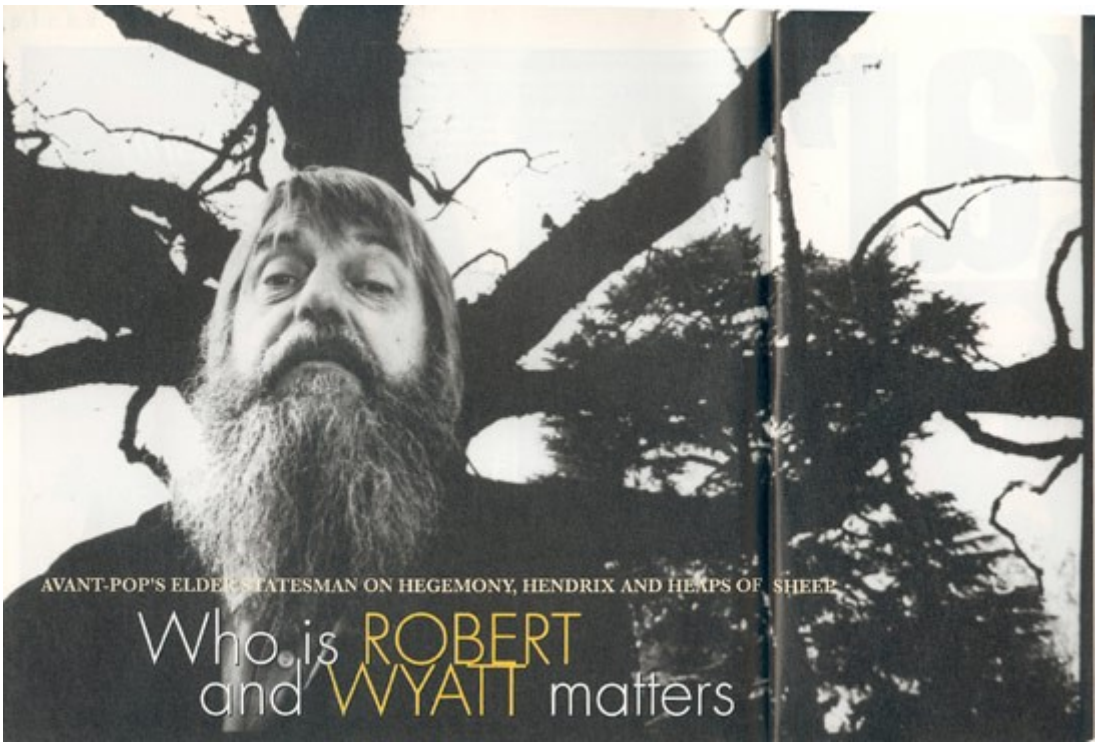
Wyatt has surely had his run-ins with gravity: Both his touring and drumming career came to an abrupt end in 1973, when a fall from a third-story window left Wyatt paralyzed from the waist down. By that point, he had already quit his band Soft Machine and started another called Matching Mole (pidgin French for Soft Machine). Forced to abandon the custom Maplewood kit that Jimi Hendrix Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell had given him after Hendrix and the Softs toured America together, Wyatt switched to keyboards and set about reconstructing himself as a solo artist.
Wyatt's voice, a plaintive countertenor he once likened to "Jimmy Sommerville on valium," has always been unconventional yet oddly accessible. His sad choirboy vocals float serenely through an ambient soundscape of understated keyboard and percussion, colored by the subdued improvisations of his avant-jazz friends. If the most blatant jazz-rock fusion acts combined an excess of technique with a paucity of ideas, Wyatt's approach was more fission, a contemplative yet compelling mix of free jazz, naive pop and English eccentricity.

A year after the accident, Wyatt recorded an altogether unlikely cover of the Neil Diamond-penned Monkees single "I'm a Believer," which became a hit and landed him on the BBC's *Top of the Pops*. Accompanied that evening by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, Henry Cow's Fred Frith and future Police-man Andy Summers, Wyatt lipsynched his way through clenched teeth after a BBC producer insisted that his wheelchair was unsuitable for prime-time televiewing.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, Wyatt's music grew simpler, more direct, and-with the 1975 death of his friend Mongezi Feza - intensely political. "When Mongezi died, I suddenly

realized that apartheid was killing my closest friends, and that's when politics right across the world becomes just as personal as anything can be," says Wyatt of the exiled South African trumpeter featured on Wyatt's *Rock Bottom* and *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (two of the six Wyatt albums Thirsty Ear plans to reissue this year). "You can be theoretically anti-racist or anti-apartheid and say, "I don't think people should be allowed to have a kind of internaI slave population servicing their businesses" - which is what South Africa was, a kind of internaI colonization - and you can know that abstractly. But when you actually have South Africans who come here just so they can play music together and when, in their early thirties, they start dying because you find out they've been living on no food and too much gin from the gin palaces since they were about 9 years old, and even after coming to England, they would be so terrified every time they saw a policeman that they would nearly have a heart attack. Mongezi Feza died a quite unnecessary death of double pneumonia whilst he was in a psychiatric hospital, and he was really only in a psychiatric hospital because he just couldn't handle whether he was allowed to deal with white people or not. He was so confused about what the relationship now was. So then he died. I had actually planned to make a lot of records with him. I had thought I' d found my ideal partner."

Wyatt's songwriting reached its political apex with 1985's *Old Rottenhat*, a starkly beautiful album whose musings on the anti-imperialist theories of Noam Chomsky and the troubles in East Timor earned a mixed critical response. "WeIl, I'm really glad you heard [the album' s minimalist aesthetic] as clarity, because some people heard it as not much going on, which is missing what was going on, I think," says Wyatt. "I mean, there are some people who just don't like my politics, and I understand that, but sometimes they sidestep that by saying they don't like my style. I don't mind. You can't tell people what to listen to. You have to be grateful if they listen to anything you do, really."



It was also during the mid-'80s that Wyatt released a series of 7-inch cover singles on Rough Trade, including the Billie Holiday classic "Strange Fruit," an anthemic remake of Chic' s " At Last I Am Free," and the anti-war ballad "Shipbuilding," which Elvis Costello wrote for Wyatt so that he could hear it sung by the saddest voice in the world. "I think part of the job of a-can I use the word artist? - is not just to make objects, but to find the beauty in objects that already exist and to represent it. It's not that something *has* to be new or indeed perhaps that anything ever *can* be new, but somehow you must *make* it new. And that's really what I wanted to do with those songs."

As a vocal interpreter, Wyatt prefers the understated style of, say, Chet Baker over the melismatic maneuvers that have become de rigueur for contemporary jazz vocalists. "I've listened to singers who are kind of instrumentalists in denial," laughs Wyatt without naming names. "If they really think the voice is just an instrument, they're wrong. The

fact is if somebody is going 'Oooda-da-deeda-dee-da,' you *know* it's a person doing it and there's *no way* it's like listening to a trumpet or a saxophone. We all tend to listen to voices quite differently, which perhaps goes back to childhood when we listened out for our mother's voice. So the human voice carries with it something that no other instrument does, and you just have to remember that when you're singing."

Wyatt says he someday hopes to record an album's worth of Gershwin-era covers: "You know, the Nazis' definition of degenerate music was mournful Jewish tunes sung by Negroes to sexual rhythms, or something like that. Now if I were an American, that's something I'd be really proud of. So I really would like to do some more of those mournful Jewish melodies. But if I'm getting ideas for my own tunes, they take precedence. Not because I think they're more important, but because if I don't do those, nobody else will."

Which brings us back to the long overdue *Shleep*, Wyatt's first full album in seven years. This time out, politics seems to have taken a backseat to semiotics, with Wyatt's crafty wordplay evoking the more enigmatic lyrical terrain of his early work. "I'm not by nature into either confessional personal songs, particularly, or polemics in songs, particularly ," says Wyatt. "Even when I was writing a lot of songs with overt political references, an awful lot of things I was thinking about didn't get into the songs. Songs aren't just sentences set to music. They have to come through [in] that hallucinatory form. They come from somewhere else.

"Actually, a number of *Shleep*'s songs came from Wyatt's wife Alfrede Benge, whose poetry he is forever finding around their old wooden dacha deep in the English countryside. Thus the title cut, recorded over Alfie's mild objections, with its image of an insomniac's sheep-counting gone wrong:

Each sheep, where it landed
refusing to exit, remained.
(Creating a vast writhing
heap growing fast on the left).

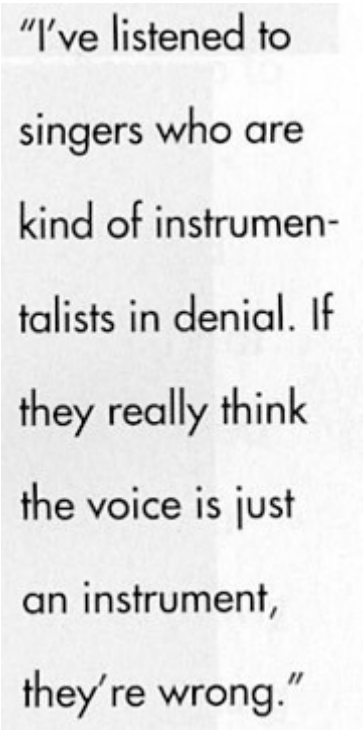
"I couldn 't waste that, could I?" laughs Wyatt. "She thought it was a bit trivial, but it just made me laugh, and it made Brian Eno laugh, too. So we did it anyway. You know, she writes these things and then I find them and then that's what happens. When you're in the same house with somebody, you can't hide everything."

Wyatt has paid tribute to his wife on past recordings, most notably on the surreal " Alifib" and poignant "P.L.A. (Poor Little Alfie)." On *Shleep*, that tradition continues with "The Duchess," a loopy number in which Wyatt vows:

"My wife is old and young,
so sweet with her poison
tongue,
on her evenings off she
blackmails toffs, but her
secret's safe with me."

"We actually wrote 'The Duchess' together, but I got writing credit because she didn't want to be associated with such silliness," he says of his partner, who might have known better after so many years. "That's right," says Wyatt with a laugh, "it' s a bit late now, isn 't it?"

Alfie isn 't the only old friend who turns up on *Shleep*. Roxy Music vets Eno and Phil Manzanera (who lent Wyatt the use of his Gallery Studio) also help shape the sound, as does jazzman Evan Parker and trombonist Annie Whitehead. Citing the "courage of old age," Wyatt even dusted off the trumpet he hasn 't played on record since Soft Machine days. "My excuse is this," says Wyatt, sounding only slightly apologetic. "The particular people who make the exact sound I want to hear on trumpet - Mongezi Feza, Don Cherry, Miles Davis and Chet Baker - have now all died. I really love the great jazz trumpet tradition, you know, people like Clark Terry and Maynard Ferguson and the Marsalis School and now Roy Hargrove, but I'm not trying to do any of that. I'm just trying to extend the range of the song when I'm playing."



With one foot in the folksong tradition, Wyatt has always been more tolerant of simplicity than his jazz friends: "Given that I'd been brought up on the sort of harmonic preoccupations of Bartok and Thelonious Monk, how could I possibly be interested in people who use basic chords and rhythms? And the point is that there is something else going on which transcends the obvious analysis of whether or not this is a complicated or interesting chord. There's something way beyond that with a good singer, someone like Bob Dylan, who just has one of those magic voices."

Wyatt, in fact, pays tribute to Sir Bob on the "Subterranean Homesick Blues" - inspired "Blues in Bob Minor," which culminates, by the way, in a caution not to let the "gringos grind you down." ("So anybody who says there's no politics on this, just point them to that last line," Wyatt says with a laugh.) It's also one of the tracks that features Paul Weller, who was recording down the hall and volunteered his guitar services, just as Jimi Hendrix once stopped by a Wyatt session decades ago and asked if he could try adding a bassline ("You wouldn 't have to use it," whispered Hendrix) . "Funny enough, Paul Weller is the first person I've met who had that same intensity of presence when you're in the room with him, but is equally gentlemanly and modest about what he can do. Hendrix was always worried that his singing wasn't good enough, or his guitar solos were too long or he couldn't write songs as interesting as Bob Dylan. ln that sense, he was almost the opposite of most other guitar legends that l've met, who were very full of themselves indeed. Hendrix was just a considerate person, really; can you imagine that in the '60s!?"

Shleep also boasts a kind of reunion with former Soft Machine mate Hugh Hopper, who provided the melody for "Was a Friend." "He occasionally writes a song that's too simple for the jazz treatments he'll use for his own groups, so he'll send them to me and ask if I would like to use them," says Wyatt. "But we haven't actually met for a long time." Still, Wyatt's lyrics for "Was a Friend" convey a sense of bittersweet reconciliation, a sentiment that resonates throughout much of the new album:

> *"Old wounds are healing.*
> *Faded scars are painless -*
> *just an itch.*
> *We are forgiven. It's been a*
> *long time."*

"There are some songs that you couldn 't even write in your twenties, because you don't know that yet, and I think this is probably one of them," says Wyatt. "That's one of the advantages of surviving, you get time to find these things out."

ROBERT WYATT'S DESERT ISLAND DISCS

1. *Dybbuk*—Moni Ovadia Theatreorchestra (Italian import, Radio Popolare/Sensible Records).
2. *Enrique Morente*—Enrique Morente (Spanish import).
3. *Chet Baker With Strings*—Chet Baker (Legacy).
4. *Lush Life*—Linda Ronstadt (Elektra).
5. "Embraceable You"—Jimmy Scott (song from *All the Way* CD, Sire).
6. *Blonde on Blonde*—Bob Dylan (Columbia).
7. *Ray Charles and Betty Carter*—Ray Charles/Betty Carter (DCC).
8. *Alfie*—Sonny Rollins (Impulse!/GRP).
9. *Man From Two Worlds*—Chico Hamilton (Impulse!/GRP).
10. *Africa/Brass*—John Coltrane (Impulse!/GRP).

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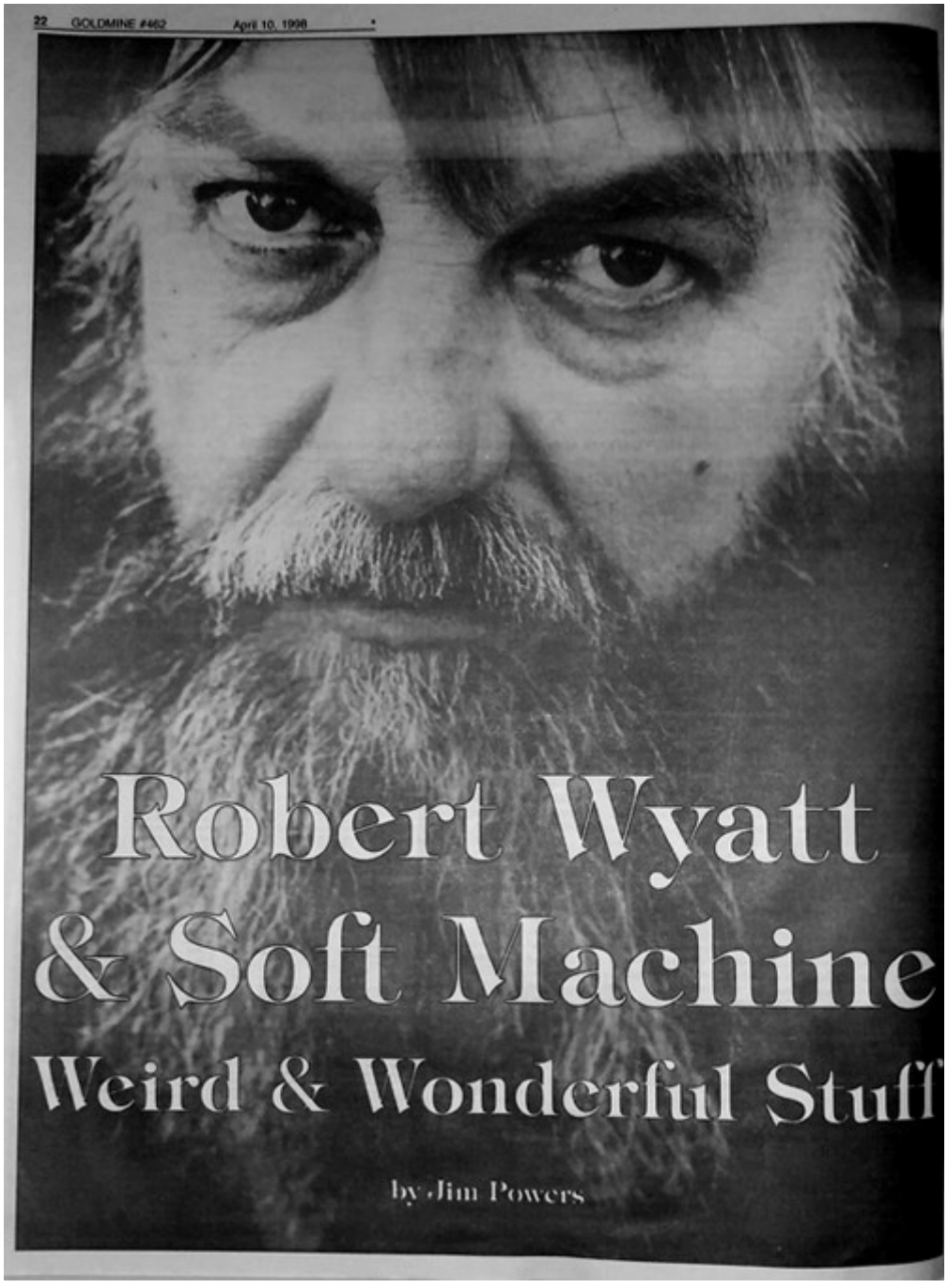
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HOME

Robert Wyatt & Soft Machine- Weird & Wonderfull Stuff - Goldmine - Issue 462 - April 10, 1998



When in April the sweet showers fall and pierce/The drought of March to the root and all/The veins are bathed in liquor on such power/As brings about the engendering of the flower.

The first four lines of the prologue of Geoffrey Chaucer's classic *The Canterbury Tales*, a pilgrimage of many disparate characters, is symbolic of what has become known as the "Canterbury Scene" of English rock, a loose term describing certain underground rock artists who began playing together there as a small local band the Wilde Flowers in the early sixties. During the mid sixties several Flowers splintered off to become the Soft Machine. The remaining Wilde Flowers members re-emerged as Caravan. As the decades progressed, musicians shuffled in and out of both bands, forming new bands or guesting on each others' solo albums, to the point where today, a complex family tree can be (has been) drawn of the whole situation. Gong, Hatfield and the North, Matching Mole, and Curved Air are but a few of these groups.



While none of the Canterbury artists tore up the charts on either side of the Atlantic, a few hit records have been made. More importantly, these artists have attracted an extremely loyal cult following throughout the world, supported by a number of fanzines, Internet web pages, and progressive independent record labels. This article presents the history of the quintessential Canterbury group, the Soft Machine, the band that first brought Canterbury international prominence and continues to be most frequently associated with the "Canterbury Scene."

Vocalist and drummer Robert Wyatt Ellidge was born on January 28, 1945, in Bristol, England. He grew up in West Dulwich, London, until his father George Ellidge contracted multiple sclerosis, at which point the family moved to Lydden, ten miles south of Canterbury. At an early age, he inherited a free-thinking mind from both his parents, something that has shaped his career to the present. In *Wrong Movements: A Robert Wyatt History*, Wyatt explains, "A characteristic which I've inherited from my mother and father is ... iconoclasm. But if you have this consensus, that we are an iconoclastic home, how does a child react to that with their parents? For example, my mother comes from a generation that rejected material wealth and so on, in favour of culture with a capital C. My iconoclasm seems to have manifested itself in even rejecting the aristocracy of high culture. What this means is that I don't believe in Beethoven, and this really shocks people, although it even shocks my mother, but nevertheless I've inherited the desire to say that, I think, from my mother. That's the irony."

Wyatt's childhood home was filled with music. His father played classics by Shostakovich, Hindemith. and Bartok on the piano, his mother played Monteverdi, and his brother Mark introduced him to jazz artists from Duke Ellington to Cecil Taylor. Don Ellis with Jaki Byard to Charles Mingus. Wyatt attended the Simon Langton Grammar School For Boys; among his schoolmates were the Hopper brothers, Hugh and Brian, Mike Ratledge, and the Sinclair cousins, Richard and David, all future members of the Wilde Flowers.

During this early period, Mike Ratledge and the elder Hopper, Brian, performed music, wrote poetry, and experimented with avant-garde photography. Brian described an occasion in Tales of Canterbury: Brian's Tale where they heard a piece of music on the radio in tune with their sensibilities, "I remember one time we both became very excited over a half-heard jazz piece on a foreign radio station, with reception so bad that it kept fading in and out and other stations breaking in. However, what we could hear sounded so much in tune with what was in our own heads and at the same time heart-stirring. It turned out to be Eric Dolphy's "245" - a wonderfully evocative and soaring theme.

Meanwhile, Hugh Hopper and Wyatt, along with other school friends, were spending their time at Wellington House, Wyatt's parents' mansion, reading poetry and listening to Cecil Taylor, Charles Mingus, and Stockhausen. The Wyatts took boarders; the most significant

was Australian Daevid Allen. Despite being six years older, Daevid got along well with Wyatt through a mutual love of jazz and similar iconoclastic spirits.

"He used to get stoned, so he was my introduction to all that," recalled Wyatt in a 1992 *Ptolemaic Terrascope* interview. He also had a dog which he used to take for walks with him - it was actually a tin can on the end of a bit of string which he would trail some yards behind him. To an impressionable lad of my age, that was pretty far out!"

Allen was forced to leave Wellington when, at the end of high school, Wyatt attempted suicide with sleeping pills. Unable to pass his A-levels to go on to the university and feeling that he lost his childlike vision, he argued with Allen about suicide. Allen was unable to counter young Wyatt's arguments; although Wyatt's attempt failed, enough friends witnessed the argument to convince Wyatt not to kill himself to cause Allen to be blamed for the attempt, and therefore become unwelcome at Wellington House. The poignant "Song For Robert" from Daevid Allen & Kramer's 1992 album *Who's Afraid* is about this series of events. Allen headed to London, Wyatt to visit family friend and poet Robert Graves in Majorca before moving to London to work with Allen.

Early in 1963, Mike Ratledge was attending Oxford and Brian Hopper, was discovering rock and roll and rhythm and blues. In London, Allen formed a trio playing detuned guitar with Wyatt drumming and Hugh Hopper playing bass, occasionally augmented by Ratledge on piano. Their three month residency at the Establishment Club lasted a day and a half, so they moved on to the Marquee Club as part of Mike Horowitz's Live New Departures series. *The Daevid Allen Trio Live 1963*, recorded on June 3 and released in 1993 on Voiceprint is the first recording by any of the future Canterbury legends; it is anything but a polished performance, though Allen's between-song banter is very witty. Parts of songs from this performance would resurface later, such as "Ya Sunne Wot" which was adapted to become "Tropical Fish Selene" on Gong's 1971 album *Camembert Electrique*. The Trio soon dissolved for lack of work; Daevid went to Paris, Robert and Hugh back to Canterbury.

Around this time, a longhaired dropout named Kevin Ayers was the newest addition to the circle of friends convening at Wellington. Born in Herne Bay, Kent, Ayers was raised in Malaya where his father was a district officer. Ayers left home as a teenager, and, lacking a family, fell in with Wyatt and company. They were in the process of forming a band, and while it wasn't Ayer's first ambition to become a musician, he enjoyed the company of the Wellington regulars enough to learn some guitar chords and sing a few numbers. The band named itself "The Wild Flowers" after that volume of the Observers Pocket Book series; Ayers added the "e" to make them Wilde in tribute to Oscar Wilde. Guitarist Richard Sinclair also joined the fold, as his father was a friend of Hugh's father. The group began playing around, alternating originals with covers of popular songs to please the punters.

"I don't remember exactly what I was listening to during the Wilde Flowers period, but all the weird and wonderful stuff I heard at Robert's home: blues, bossa nova, classical, and the most modern jazz was obviously relevant to any music I subsequently produced," Ayers said of his musical influences.

"Hugh Hopper's influences were more rock-oriented. As far as I remember, the main influences on me during the Wilde Flowers in 1965 and 1966 were bands like the Kinks, Yardbirds, Zombies, Small Faces, Hollies, Beatles, of course, and particularly, the Birds. Not the U.S. Byrds - this was the English band that had Ron Wood on guitar before he went on to join the Faces and later the Stones. The Birds were tremendous! Loud, lots of chunky chord parts on the guitars and a demon drummer called Pete McDaniels. There is an EP worth searching for called These Birds Are Dangerous."

The Wilde Flowers did not record commercially, however, they did record lots of demos. In 1994, Voiceprint released a self-titled 22-track CD of recordings from 1965 to 1969. Discs of this nature tend to be of strictly archival value; this one is an exception. The Wilde Flowers is essential listening for enthusiasts of 60s garage bands and beat groups; most of these songs would sound perfect on an Archive International Productions compilation.

There are few cover songs on The Wilde Flowers, and the songwriting is very articulate, notably Hugh Hopper's Canterbury standard "Memories".

"In the early days we were like kids with a new toy whenever one of us wrote something," Ayers said of the band members' songwriting process. "It was a family thing, we sought each other's approval and acceptance - well, I did anyway! The arrangements were usually group arrangements. For me writing an acceptable song was initially a quest for approval from my friends. Later it extended to the rest of the world."

Nineteen sixty-six was a year of turnaround of Wilde Flowers members, included the brief

addition of vocalist Graham Flight from another local band. Upon his departure, Richard Coughlin, drummer for a local dance hand joined, enabling Wyatt to concentrate on singing. Ever the drifter, Ayers could have been in or out of the Flowers at any given time. The Wilde Flowers played local clubs like the Beehive, and recorded demos frequently.

On Easter weekend in 1966, Ayers was in Majorca with Daevid Allen. Wes Brunson, a wealthy nightclub owner from Texas was among the partygoers there; not of sound mind by several accounts, voices in his head convinced Wes to give his money to people who would broadcast the New Age.

"Wes Brunson materialized in Deya, Majorca when I was staying there with Daevid Allen," Ayers recalls. "We had discussed the idea of forming a group and it might have remained a possibility had Daevid not successfully convinced Wcs that we were important spokesmen for the things that matter: cosmic vibes, universal mind etc. He offered to finance the group and we were very pleased to accept his helping hand. Daevid immortalized Brunson in song ["Stoned Innocent Frankenstein"] on his 1971 solo album Banana Moon.

Allen and Ayers returned to Canterbury to begin rehearsals for their new group, tentatively named Mister Head. Wyatt's departure from the increasingly commercial-sounding Wilde Flowers and the return of Michael Ratledge on keyboards cemented Allen's new band's lineup: guitarist Allen, vocalist and drummer Robert Wyatt, bassist and vocalist Kevin Ayers, and keyboardist Mike Ratledge. The name "Soft Machine," after the William S. Burroughs novel, was suggested, and the author gave his consent. Ratledge equipped his Vox Continental organ with a fuzzbox to make it sound more aggressive, and Ayers acquired a songwriting contract with the Animals' Anim Publishing, which got the band signed to Animals bassist Chas Chandler's management company. The band moved into Wyatt's mother's house and began rehearsing.

Living in the same neighborhood as the Soft Machine was Bill MacCormick, future Quiet Sun bassist who would collaborate with Robert in the future. MacCormick visited the Softs frequently.

"They transformed the way I listened to music," he recalled. "Quiet Sun says it all really. But hanging out with them, Robert in particular, was also crucial. Every time I went 'round to his mum's house on the way home from school there was something new to hear. It might have been John Coltrane or Miles Davis or Pharoah Sanders. Equally though, Robert told us about Frank Zappa and the Mothers, Spirit, and the first Chicago album (it's odd to think of that now)."

Among the Soft Machine's first gigs was a week's residency at the Star Club in Hamburg. The Soft Machine also played many of the legendary "happenings" like the All-Night Rave at the Roundhouse in London and the Spontaneous Underground at the Marquee. At this time, it wasn't uncommon for the band to have a motorcycle on stage with a microphone on the cylinder head!

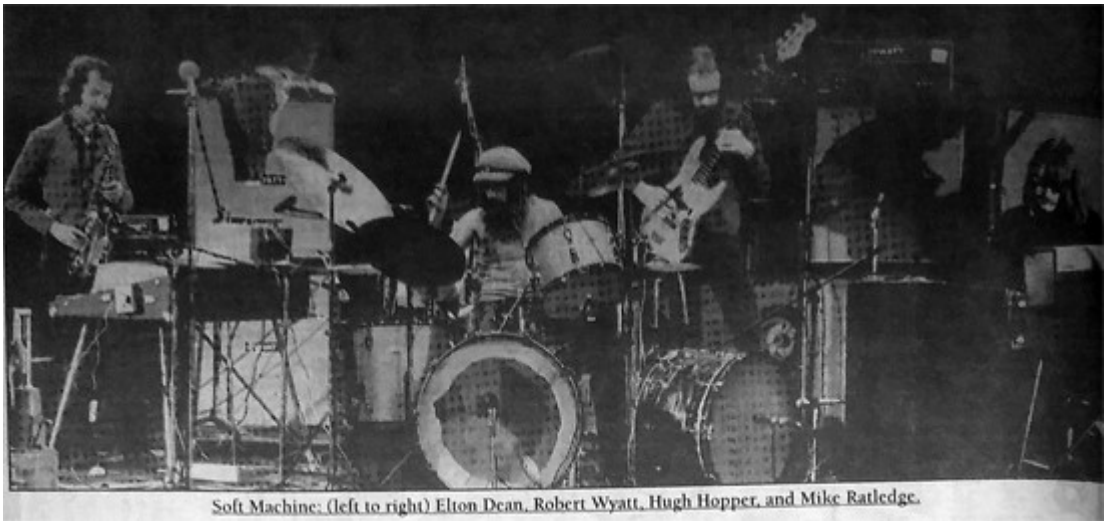
"Those were big events, where every band that was anybody at all performed," MacCormick recalls. "When I saw them a lot, they attracted a hard core of support that grew steadily, so they went from small clubs like the Country Club in Hampstead - a tiny place, you almost sat on the stage, brilliant atmosphere - to the Roundhouse and Lyceum, then concert halls. The audience was full of headbangers, except we gave ourselves headaches thrashing around in 9/8 or 11/4 time!"

Early in 1967, the Soft Machine recorded tracks for its first single, "Fred the Fish"b/w "Feelin' Reelin' Squealin'." Management rejected the A-side in favor of the more commercial "Love Makes Sweet Music." The ubiquitous Kim Fowley produced the B-side. The single is one of the Softs' best releases; it reflects the Wilde Flowers' pop smarts and year's of performing, yet is just different enough to set it apart from other records of the era. Unsurprisingly, on the B-side, Kim Fowley encourages the band to pull out all the "bizarre" stops. Jimi Hendrix is rumored to have participated on this session, but those rumors have since been refuted by both Daevid and Kevin. Rumors that members of the Soft Machine participated in recording sessions by the Fowley associates The Belfast Gypsies are also not true.

Released by Polydor in England, "Love Makes Sweet Music" failed to chart nationally, though it reached #28 on the Radio London Fast Forty. Psychedelia hadn't caught on outside of London, so the band came up with a device to counter the sometimes hostile audience response. Ratledge and Wyatt would improvise links between songs to avoid the silence of confused spectators. Sometimes the audience wasn't the only indifferent party; management would occasionally forget the Soft Machine's paychecks.

Throughout l967, the Softs along with their projectionist Mark Boyle, had a residency at the Speakeasy Club in London, and played regularly at the conical metal Roundhouse. They frequently shared the bill with Pink Floyd. Allen, watching Syd Barrett playing eerie slide guitar, was inspired to create his own "glissando guitar" technique, which he still utilizes. Playing underground venues gave the Soft Machine hip credibility.

"We felt like suburban fakes dressed up on Saturday and visiting the city, I never dared take LSD... Just because we played long solos people assumed we were stoned, which was great for our credibility. I didn't know much about it," Wyatt reflected in *Wrong Movements*.



Soft Machine: (left to right) Elton Dean, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, and Mike Ratledge.

Spring, 1967 the Soft Machine recorded demos at De Lane Lea Studios in London with Yardbirds associate Georgio Gomelsky producing. Manager Mike Jeffries refused to pay the studio costs, so Gomelsky kept the tapes; he released them on his BYG label in 1971 as *Rock Generation Volumes 7 & 8*, and they have been repackaged extensively since. Two of those songs, "She's Gone" and "I Should've Known" were re-recorded in June with Witchseason producer Joe Boyd (soon to launch the Fairport Convention and other folk-rock artists) for a proposed second single. Polydor dropped the band, however, and the tracks were left to languish until the 1977 compilation Triple Echo.

"The Soft Machine reached the same audience as Pink Floyd, in the same way, with songs as a basis for extended improvisation," Boyd recalls of the Soft Machine. "Daevid Allen was the leader as I saw it, but they were quite democratic. I didn't see them as hitmakers. but some songs were very good - "She's Gone' for example."

On July 1, the band went to St. Tropez in the south of France to play a variety of parties and happenings, including the Discotheque Interplay, the Festival of Free Theatre opening of the Picasso play "Desire Caught By the Tail," the Town Square of Si. Tropez Happening, and the Voom Voom Club, where the band members played in the nude above a large swimming pool, These events would bring the Soft Machine as well as later Canterbury bands a loyal following throughout the Continent. Wyatt recalls the time fondly, and reflects upon the difference between French and English audiences.

"There is just a great tradition in France of listening to music and dealing with the arts that is completely conducive to the creation of and the appreciation of, the sort of avant garde set-ups that we dealt in... It's quite different from [Britain], there's no sense of having to deal with the hit parade.,. You could really stretch out in front of a French audience, [but] you almost had to apologize for it in England."

Returning to England in August, Allen was refused re-entry due to visa problems. Relations between he and the rest of the band were becoming strained, so this just made the break official. The Soft Machine continued as a trio; Allen, with wife Gilli Smyth stayed in Paris to form Gong, the first Soft Machine offshoot. Within a few years, Allen would create a whimsical world of radio gnomes riding flying teapots between the Planet Gong and Earth, dispensing peaceful vibrations through music. Gong's music is an amalgamation of John Coltrane influenced hard hop, rock, and borrowings from various ethnic musics. Essential works include *Camembert Electrique* (1971), *Angel's Egg* (1973), *Live At Sheffield 1974*, and *PreModernist Wireless: The Peel Sessions*. Gong is still going strong with its latest disc *Shapeshifter*.

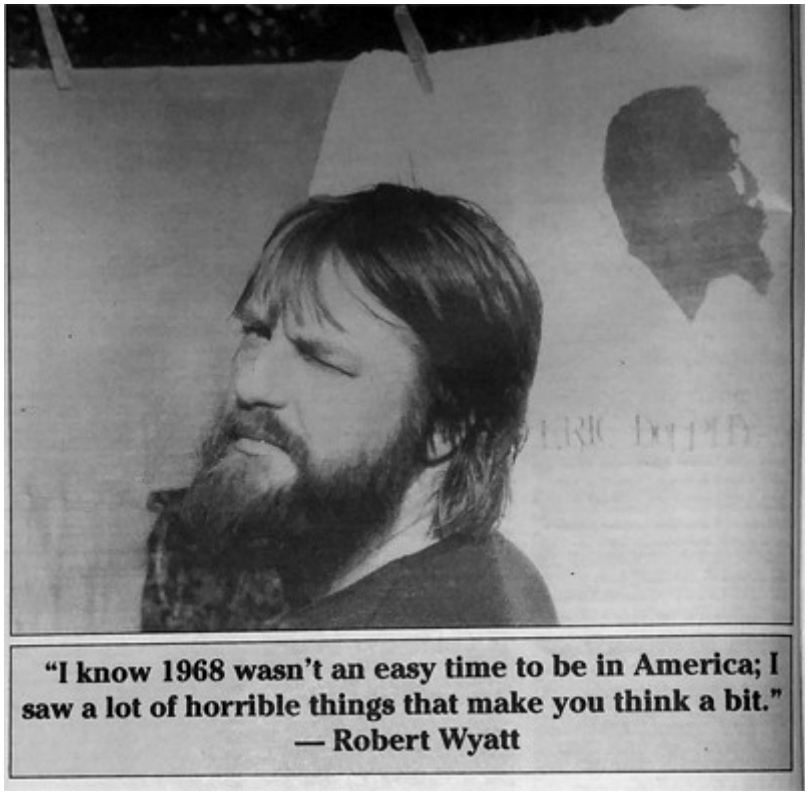
Meanwhile, the French Pataphysical Society named the Softs its official orchestra. Kevin Ayers explained pataphysics to *Trouser Press* in 1977, as "an extension of Dada and surrealism; basically, completely blowing out any kind of given values at any given time...by exploring all the other possibilities. The banana was a symbol for introducing the element of absurdity into conventionally serious situations...[including] - taking yourself too seriously. It's easy to start throwing bananas into society, but with yourself it's really difficult."

From February to April of 1968, the Soft Machine traveled to America for the first time supporting the Jimi Hendrix Experience. In mid-April, the group recorded its self-titled debut album on ABC-Probe Records; Tom Wilson (producer of the Mothers of Invention and Velvet Underground) is credited as producer, but reportedly was not present for much of the recording sessions. For contractual reasons it wasn't released in Britain for several years. *The Soft Machine* became its sole American chart placing, reaching #160.

The album was a replication of the band's live set, and most of the tracks were first takes with few overdubs. "Hope For Happiness" and "A Certain Kind" were written by the Hopper brothers and date back to the Wilde Flowers days, while other songs like "Why Am I So Short" and "Save Yourself" were reworked from the Rock Generation demos. The keyboard-driven sound resembled a more avant-garde Zombies at this point; the overall ambiance of the first album is futuristic. The only detraction is the clumsy stereo panning added in post-production.

Upon returning to England, the Soft Machine briefly expanded to a quartet with future Police guitarist Andy Summers.

Bill MacCormick reminisces fondly about his friendship with the Soft Machine members in those days, "They were a tremendously open and friendly bunch. When Kevin was still in the band and they had all their equipment in Robert's mum's front room, myself and my brother would stop off and listen and sometimes they'd let us mess around with the stuff. We were always 'round there drinking tea, listening to records, and just hanging out. It was a real blow when they went off to the States on the Hendrix tour. But I remember being around the house with Robert's mum when Julian Glover (Robert's actor brother) arrived clutching a copy of the first album. Everyone rushed indoors to hear it, Amazing!"



"I know 1968 wasn't an easy time to be in America; I saw a lot of horrible things that make you think a bit."
— Robert Wyatt

After a second American tour with Jimi Hendrix, the Soft Machine temporarily disbanded from the strain of touring. Each band member's account elucidates:

"The first tour I was completely drunk with the life. Girls lining up outside the door, free drink everywhere, so I was drunk every night, with enormous quantities of girls at my

disposal" said Ayers, from *Why Are We Sleeping?*, July, 1993.

"By the second tour, I had changed completely. I went on a very strict macrobiotic diet and didn't go out to parties. I became alienated from everything that was going on around me because of the violence and extremity of it. At its worst it was literally plane, hotel, gig, plane, hotel, gig. Mike and I used to go around banging on doors shouting, 'I'm cracking up! I'm cracking up!' Mike would read books while I used to lie on the floor and stare at the ceiling."

"Travel in the States with a pop group is like a luxury purgatory," Ratledge said, from *Wrong Movements*. "You stay in Hiltons, then a Cadillac Fleetwood takes you to the airport first thing in the morning. Another Cadillac Fleetwood meets you, takes you to the hotel. You wash, the Cadillac Fleetwood takes you to the gig and back to the Hilton. You sleep. In the end, it completely destroys your sense of geography. You're manipulated like a piece of baggage. You have no control over the direction your life takes. It's like those experiments where they deprive rats of control over their bodies."

"I know 1968 wasn't an easy time to be in America; I saw a lot of horrible things that make you think a bit," recalled Wyatt in *Ptolemaic Terrascope*, January 1992. "You read articles (in England] sometimes about racism and of course we have a right to talk about it, but unless you've spent some time in the States where the streets smell of racism, you have no idea. I saw the kind of things that a sheltered English lad had never seen, the hostility between the police and any kids with hair... the police would ride through crowds on motorcycles without even waiting for them to clear. I saw them pick up a kid, hold him horizontally and run him into a wall like a battering ram. We were pretty much sheltered as a group going from hotel to hotel, but you could see that life on the streets was sticky."

The Soft Machines break-up ended when ABC-Probe demanded fulfillment of the band's two album contract. Ratledge and Wyatt got back together, but Ayers was nowhere to be found. His logical replacement was roadie, and former Wilde Flowers bassist Hugh Hopper. For *Volume Two*, Wyatt added lyrics to a backlog of material Hugh had written before joining the Softs. If Volume Two wasn't as whimsical as its predecessor, it was more cohesive. The humor is still there, its just drier or more subtle.

A high point of the disc is Wyatt singing "A Concise British Alphabet parts I and II," forward on the former, backward for the latter. Hugh's fat, chunky, distorted bass tones became an integral part of the group's sound. Kevin Ayers' spirit was represented by "As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still," a droll account of the effect touring with Jimi Hendrix had on him.

Ratledge, Wyatt, and Hopper decided to produce *Volume Two* themselves considering their experiences from the first album. Lack of technical knowledge plagued them this time, dulling the impact of the final product. Bill MacCormick commented that "nothing has caught the true feel of the Hopper/Ratledge/Wyatt trio in their pomp. The recording studio took the edge off the sound, particularly the Ratledge solo organ. The nearest I've heard it is the live organ solo on *Third* from their Fairfield Hall gig. Live, it made your ears hurt, but it was great!"

As the second Softs album was released, Ayers was recording his first solo album, *Joy of A Toy*, for Harvest Records. His backing group was, for the most part, the Soft Machine, but it wasn't the dream reunion that it looks like on the record sleeve, as Ayers reveals.

"I did the tracks on my little recorder when I lived in Ibiza. They indeed did their parts later in the studio in London. [But] it wasn't strange at all...we were still good friends."

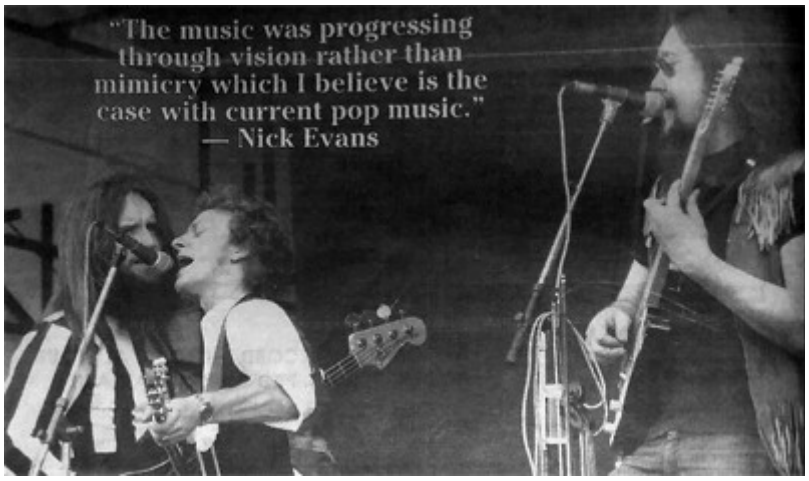
Despite the separation, *Joy of A Toy* is a charming collection of Ayers originals, and one of his best works. Ratledge, Hopper, and Wyatt performed similar post-production recording duties for two tracks on Syd Barretts debut *The Madcap Laughs*.

Meanwhile, back in the Wilde Flowers camp, following Wyatt's departure, a new singer was found in Julian "Pye" Hastings, the brother of one of Kevin Ayers's girlfriends. The Flowers went through a period of playing soul covers until Brian Hopper left for a job in the insurance business (although he would occasionally play with the Soft Machine).

The remaining Wilde Flowers spent a few years woodshedding until re-emerging as Caravan in 1969. While Caravan has a story of its own, it should be noted that its second single "If I Could Do It All Over Again (I'd Do It All Over You)" bears uncanny resemblance to "Lullaby Letter" and "We Did It Again" from The Soft Machine. It also features a brilliant organ solo by David Sinclair, who would later collaborate with Robert Wyatt. Canterbury Tales, released in 1994 by Polygram Chronicles, is an excellent Caravan primer.

The Soft Machine continued touring to promote Volume Two. Once its ABC-Probe contract expired, the band signed with CBS. In light of the band's feelings following the American Hendrix tours, it seemed a strange decision.

"The band built up a momentum after doing some gigs to promote the second album," Hopper explained. "A management machine took over and it was a pleasant enough life most of the time. Robert in particular was very ambitious to make the band successful."



In 1969, between *Volume Two* and *Third*, the Soft Machine's music began to radically change character. Simply listening to those albums would overshadow the gradual nature of the shift. *Spaced*, a forgotten chapter in the Soft Machine's history, was recently unearthed by Cuneiform Records. The reissue documents a piece of music Wyatt, Hopper, and Ratledge created for Peter Dockley's happening "Spaced" at the Roundhouse. The music for "Spaced" was assembled from live performance tapes and tape loops, with help from Brian Hopper and soundman Bob Woolford, between the release of the second and third Soft Machine albums. "Spaced" was a ballet where dancers wore rubber suits with suction cups and were choreographed to the Softs' droning sonic tapestry. While it's not recommended as a first purchase to newcomers, many fans will appreciate this piece of ephemera that hints at the ambient flavor of the upcoming *Third* album.

Also of interest is *Live At the Paradiso 1969* on Voiceprint. This is a recording of the Softs playing *Volume Two* live in Amsterdam on March 29. The band members were approached about releasing it. They declined permission, but it appeared soon after as a bootleg album. The official edition of this fine performance has excellent sound quality and liner notes by Hugh Hopper.

Two factors influenced the changes in the band's material. First, Hugh Hopper's writing was no longer centered around lyrics and second, four new members were added to the band.

"Around the time of *Volume Two*, I lost interest in songs as opposed to instrumental stuff," Hugh says about his writing. "I felt that having a lyric tied the piece of music down to one feeling or subject, whereas an instrumental piece can carry many different connotations for different listeners. I am more interested in writing a good piece of music than a set of words. This may be because I don't sing and therefore don't automatically set out to write the words."

Ratledge invited a horn section from Keith Tippett's band - saxophonists Elton Dean and Lyn Dobson, trombonist Nick Evans, and cornetist Mark Charig - to join the Soft Machine.

"Every time we write something," explained Ratledge in *Facelift*, "we have to kind of cut it down to limit it, because there is a finite amount that three people can do. So we felt the need to have other instruments to be able to carry other lines, to give sufficient complexity to what we have written."

"I didn't know of the Softs when I joined," Elton Dean recalls. "I joined when Ratledge wanted to expand his writing to include horns. He saw the Keith Tippett Sextet at a festival and invited the front line of Charig, Evans, and me to join."

"I took up clarinet at 16 inspired by Dixieland," explains Dean about his musical influences. "Pee Wee Russell, Archie Semple, Acker Bilk, and Tony Coe were favorites. I took up tenor

sax inspired by Bud Freeman and Stanley Turrentine, then soul bands like James Brown, Otis Redding, and Ray Charles, on to Miles Davis, Joe Henderson, and John Coltrane."

"When I joined the Softs, compositions were presented by the individuals - they weren't collaborative. Playing with the Soft Machine spread my name further afield than the jazz scene would have. A "career" did not exist for me, as a concept.

Trombonist Nick Evans also listened to Dixieland as a youngster. A significant event to his musical development occurred "around the age of 20, when I signed up for a Summer School Jazz Course in a Welsh town called Barry," Evans recalled. "That course attracted players from all over Britain, and it was there that I met Graham Collier, Keith Tippett, Elton Dean, and Mark Charig."

"The group that was formed during the summer school with Keith, Elton, Mark, and myself was magic," Evans continued. "Keith's charts were unique and the group hit it off musically and socially. The course was, unfortunately, only two weeks long but it was probably the most important weeks musically to me."

After the course, Nick Evans went to London to join Keith Tippett's sextet.

"That group' held down a residency at the 100 Club in London and became highly regarded by jazz fans," said Evans. "Keith's tunes were so different from the normal that we attracted listeners from other fields. It was at the 100 Club that Mike Ratledge heard us. He offered Elton, Mark, and me the chance to join the Softs, and although we knew little about them, went ahead as we enjoyed each other's playing so much and the Softs simply provided another outlet."

"Mike Ratledge was the main composer of the Soft Machine, although Hugh and Robert also wrote quite a bit of the material. The charts would be rehearsed endless times, and any bits that didn't work were modified rather than rewritten. The set we played was about 58 minutes, so there was little improvisation apart from the solos that each member had. Even so, the soloist had a set number of choruses and therefore the overall time remained the same for each gig performed. I remember that this used to amuse me because Keith's band could play the same tunes at two gigs and the length of each gig would be totally different."

Nick Evans remembers his Soft Machine days fondly.

"The Softs had a fine following. The audience was young and, compared to today, educated. We went down well everywhere and were given star status at most venues. It was a heady time - good players, exciting music, popularity, and lots of work - an effective combination! The music was progressing through vision rather than mimicry which I believe is the case with current pop music."

The only recordings to feature the full septet were for the BBC; they appear on *The Peel Sessions*, released in 1990. Seven members proved too expensive and impractical. Nick Evans, Mark Charig, and Lyn Dobson left the band a few months later.

In August of 1969, Hugh and Brian Hopper recorded four publishing demos; it was a Wilde Flowers reunion, with the Soft Machine and Caravan guitarist Pye Hastings participating. The tracks were released on *The Wilde Flowers*.

"I hoped to get rich by having pop singers to my songs," Hugh confided. "But it didn't happen, although royalties from "Memories" continue to trickle in."

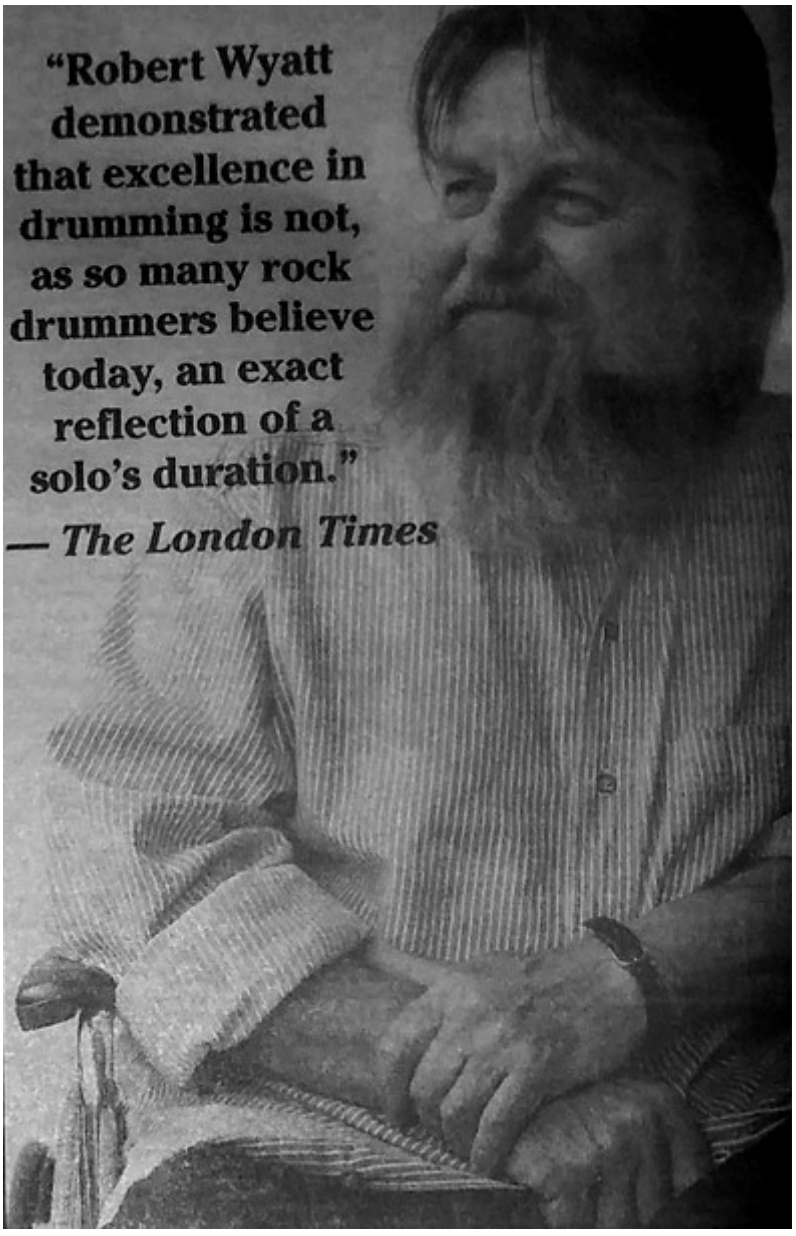
The Soft Machine's *Third* was released in 1970 to great critical acclaim. The double album consists of four side-long tracks, two by Ratledge and one each by Hopper and Wyatt. By taking up an LP side, each piece is allowed space to evolve slowly and build dynamics. This contrasted with versions of the same tracks on *The Peel Sessions*, where the band has less time to explore its musical possibilities; the jazzier side of the Softs is more apparent on the BBC tracks. Robert Wyatt's improvised vocal on the BBC version of Third's "Moon In June," as well as the quotes from "Hope For Happiness" and "We Did It Again" from the first album makes this an essential Soft Machine recording.

The BBC provided an outlet for a Soft Machine dream reunion when the seven-piece Softs lineup was the backing band for Kevin Ayers' February 17, 1970 appearance on *Top Gear* for a rousing unrehearsed ten-minute version of "Why Are We Sleeping," Kevin's tour-de-force from the first Softs album. This performance is available on the recent Ayers release *Singing the Bruise*: *The BBC Sessions 1970-1972* on Band of Joy Records. This disc also features other Ayers material that is more off-the-wall than the original album versions. First Show In The Appearance Business: *The BBC Sessions 1973-1976* makes more Ayers radio archives

available.

Acquaintance with composer Tim Souster got the Soft Machine an appearance on the annual Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concerts on August 16, 1970, released in 1988 as *Live at the Proms 1970*. Although the late arrival of equipment cut into rehearsal time, the performance was critically acclaimed.

The *London Times* raved, "Labels no longer have much meaning in the world of progressive rock or jazz and the four man group moved fluently from savage sheets of sound to delicate phrasing. Robert Wyatt demonstrated that excellence in drumming is not. as so many rock drummers believe today, an exact reflection of a solo's duration." Playing this prestigious event propelled *Third* to #18 on the British album chart.



By this time, The Soft Machine members' camaraderie was waning. Mike Ratledge remarked in 1971 that "although there might be personality conflicts sometimes, it works out for the music. It's because we are different people that it somehow works."

Robert Wyatt was feeling alienated from his bandmates during the recording of the jazzier and vocal-less *Fourth* (the second Soft Machine album to reach the UK album charts, attaining position #32). Where he craved more simplicity in the music, the others preferred more complex arrangements. The other band members also wanted to switch to an all-instrumental format.

Luckily, Robert had plenty of side projects to pursue at this time. He was drummer for former Soft Kevin Ayers' touring band and sang harmony vocals on tracks from the albums *Shooting For the Moon*, *Whatevershebrigswesing*, and *Bananamour*. He drummed for Centipede, Keith Tippett's group featuring fifty members, and Gary Windo's Symbiosis, and sang in the one-off Top Gear Choral Society (also featuring Rod Stewart, Ronnie Lane, Marc Bolan, and Sonja Kristina from Curved Air) for John Peel's Christmas 1970 show.

Another recent Cuneiform archive release. *Virtually*, reissues a March 1971 performance on Radio Bremen in Germany. On this album, the dissension in the Softs' camp does not show, as the band plays some of the loosest, funkiest versions of its repertoire of the day.

After recording a solo album. *End of An Ear,* Wyatt quit the Soft Machine. His replacement was Australian drummer Phil Howard. Mike Ratledge commented to *Melody Maker*, "It's hard to work out exactly what the differences were, but they existed for quite a long time. For instance, Robert has always preferred playing straight 4/4 - he's never really enjoyed or accepted working in complex time signatures. But I never got a specific picture of what he does want to do."

Wyatt's departure created a dividing line between some factions of the Soft Machine's fandom. Many consider the Wyatt years the group's halcyon days, while others prefer the fusion sound of later years. Discussions rage over the Canterbury Internet newsgroup *What's Rattlin'*.

After leaving the Soft Machine, Wyatt formed a new band with former Caravan keyboardist David Sinclair, guitarist Phil Miller, and childhood friend and Quiet Sun bassist Bill MacCormick. He called it Matching Mole, a phonetic pun on the French phrase Machine Molle, or, Soft Machine.

The Soft Machine soon switched drummers again to John Marshall. The band continued the sequential series of album titles with 5 in 1972. Facelift succinctly summed up this album's sound, "plenty of atmospherics, but of a type much cleaner than the psychedelic muddle of *Third*." One Way Records recently released the archival *Live In France* from the days of the 5 line-up.

"The music also grooves like no other Soft Machine line-up," said Howitt, "and if you wanted to introduce someone to Elton Dean's music, this is the era you'd probably turn to. With wonderful off-the-cuff but soulful soloing, never straying from Hugh Hopper's bass lines, Elton Dean is never too far from the heart of the music." After 5, Elton Dean departed the Softs, replaced by Karl Jenkins.

Matching Mole soldiered on as the increasingly more soulful cousin of the Softs. On its self-titled debut, Matching Mole alternated pop songs like "O Caroline" with extended workouts such as "Part of the Dance." While the band was able to play technically complex music, it did in a tuneful and engaging manner.

The Mole had its share of technical problems recording the album. Wyatt relates some war stories in Matching Mole's liner notes.

"We recorded in a studio so cold that Dave Sinclair could hardly bear to take his gloves off to play the Hammond. Astute listeners will detect the merry fizz and tingle of frost melting on rusty electrics throughout, a distinct textural effect I hope you'll all agree: that Rough sound, dead authentic and all that."

Matching Mole's second album, *Little Red Record,* was produced by King Crimson's Robert Fripp and featured Roxy Music member Brian Eno playing synthesizers. It's more of a group effort than the debut, and copious amounts of touring tightened the band considerably. Between albums, David Sinclair, who left Matching Mole to return to Caravan, was replaced by Dave MacRae. Less than a month after completing *Little Red Record*, Wyatt disbanded Matching Mole, tiring of the extramusical responsibilities of leading a band.

Back in the Softs camp, Hugh Hopper left following the live set Six, to be replaced by Roy Babbington. This left Mike Ratledge as the only original member of the band. Hugh embarked on a solo career, releasing albums *1984*, *Hopper Tunity Box*, *Rogue Element*, and *Monster Band*. Those albums, or the recent Mantra compilation, *Best Soft*, drawn from them, demonstrate what a significant contribution Hugh's bass sound and compositional technique was to the Soft Machine.

Critics began to viciously attack the Soft Machine, as during a 1973 *Melody Maker* interview coinciding with the release of Seven. Writer Steve Lake first suggested to Karl Jenkins that the band didn't have the right to the name Soft Machine, then describes the new album in

terms of its "relative dullness" and remarked that "the old crusading spirit has disappeared." Jenkins countered that the rhythm section was "far better now than it has ever been."

New guitarist Alan Holdsworth's brief membership in the Soft Machine in 1975 gave the music a rock-oriented sound for the Bundles album. In 1975, the Soft Machine held a Musician's Union workshop in Newcastle, which participant Sid Smith recalled fondly to *What's Rattlin*'.

"The Softs' Seven was one of my favorite albums of the time, and the opportunity to meet heroes like Roy Babbington was a chance of a lifetime. It was very informal and the band members look players off into separate areas - pianists went off with Mike Ratledge, [and] wind players with Jenkins."

"I went off with Babbington who was courteous, pleasant, and very patient. I had only just started to play the |bass] and was very poor - by far the worst player there. Roy. however, made me feel accepted and valued."

"Looking back, I can honestly say that those two days very formative and important to my understanding of music, improvisation, and my own playing. It also taught me a lot about listening. I am also amazed how open, friendly, and approachable they all were. Does this kind of thing happen today?"

Former Softs timekeeper Robert Wyatt was planning a new line-up of Matching Mole when, during a party on June 1, 1973, he fell five stories from an open window and broke his back, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. When *Rolling Stone* asked which controlled substance caused him to fall, Wyatt dryly remarked, "Good old alcohol, you know, the legal one."

While Robert was at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Pink Floyd and the Soft Machine held a benefit concert at the Rainbow Theatre in London and raised £10,000 for Wyatt's medical bills.

Upon his release from the hospital. Wyatt's peers involved him in their projects. He performed a vocal cameo on Hatfield and the North, the self-titled debut album of a group comprised of former Wilde Flowers and Caravan bassist and vocalist Richard Sinclair, Phil Miller from Matching Mole, former Gong drummer Pip Pyle, and keyboardist Dave Stewart. Kevin Ayers enlisted Robert for percussion duties on an album he was producing for singer Lady June, Linguistic Leprosy.

His drumming days over, Robert Wyatt turned to keyboards and singing, as well as some percussion. His second solo album *Rock Bottom*, one of the essential albums of the seventies, was composed prior to his accident. Wyatt is assisted by a stellar cast of progressive rockers, including Mike Oldfield, Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair, and Pink Floyd's Nick Mason.

In contrast to previous efforts, *Rock Bottom*'s arrangements are given plenty of breathing space, and possess a clarity rarely heard before in his music. The sleeve was illustrated by Robert's new wife, Alfreda Benge. *Rock Bottom* won France's prestigious Grand Prix Charles Cros for album of the year 1974. In addition, the non-album single, a cover of the Monkees' "I'm A Believer" became his first British hit, reaching #29.

A solo piano take of "I'm A Believer" is available on the Robert Wyatt *Peel Sessions* EP. The EP also features a stripped-down version of "Soup Song" from Wyatt's next album *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. "Soup Song" is the melody of the Wilde Flowers' "Slow Walkin' Talk" with, typically clever lyrics. Following a single rejected by Virgin, "Yesterday Man," Robert guested on albums by Phil Manzanera, Carla Bley, Brian Eno, and Michael Mantler (The Hapless Child, an album of the poetry of Edward Gorey).

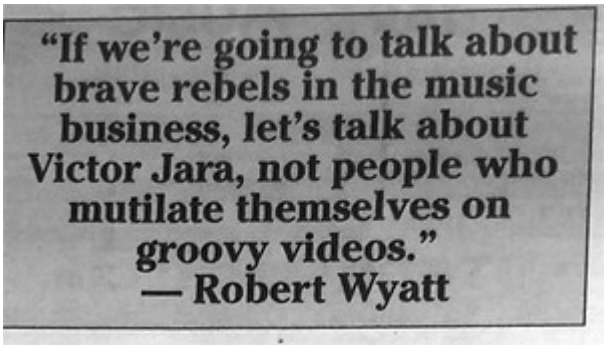
A project Robert contributed to in 1976 was saxophonist Gary Windo's *Steam Radio Tapes* The album was produced by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason to test the Floyd's new Britannia Row Studio. Though unreleased at the time, several tracks are on *His Master's Bones*, a recent collection of unreleased Windo material from 1972-1985. The Cuneiform collection features a who's who of progressive music: Hugh Hopper, Steve Hillage, Carla Bley, Bill MacCormick, and Julie Driscoll-Tippett, among others.

Wyatt became disillusioned by the music industry during the late seventies; he later recollected to *Creem*:

"Well, during the 70s, something happened to my feeling, being in the rock world. There seemed to be this consensus, which was that it was a new and semi-legitimate art form, and

it was a natural vehicle for new and rebellious ideas. And during the 70s, it became quite clear to me that we were, as rock musicians, were in fact members of the establishment. That it was an establishment, and perhaps always had been.

"You were getting to funny stages, where people who deliberately maimed themselves on-stage were selling themselves as brave and courageous, whereas you had someone like Victor Jara in Chile, who, because he sang for democracy in Chile, was tortured to death. If we're going to talk about brave rebels in the music business, let's talk about Victor Jara, not people who mutilate themselves on groovy videos."



Wyatt finished the decade in semi retirement, writing letters to political prisoners, writing guest columns in various publications, and listening to short-wave radio broadcasts from other countries. Wyatt's final concert appearances were made in May and June, 1975 with Henry Cow, the progressive rock group featuring frequent Wyatt contributor Fred Frith. Part of the May 21 performance was released on the Henry Cow album *Concerts*.

Mike Ratledge was also becoming disillusioned by the music industry. Being the last original Soft Machine member became a burden to him, so he left the band in 1976. In an interview reprinted by *Facelift*, Ratledge explained that "music is always more than the persons involved in it: probably that's why it's all right to go on playing the way [The Soft Machine] do... By this time, to be in the Soft Machine was a drudgery, and playing music should never be like that. You see, there never was a leader (if so, everything would be different) totally responsible for the music played by others, and one of the reasons that drove me to stop composing was that I felt trapped in the whole Soft Machine's legendary image...

"To be the only original member is horrible: this is probably the main reason for quitting and losing interest in it."

Ratledge went on to form a production company with Soft Machine member Karl Jenkins, Jenkins-Ratledge. Their company composed commercial music for Pepsi and Delta Airlines among others. The two collaborated on Adiemus' 1995 *Songs of Sanctuary*, performed with the London Symphony Orchestra. The work is very un-Canterburyesque mood piece, at times resembling the score to an epic film with lots of panoramic scenery. *Songs of Sanctuary* has been a big hit throughout Europe, and on the British and American classical charts. Ratledge recently quit the music business; Jenkins is continuing to release Adiemus albums.

In addition to releasing solo albums through the seventies, Hugh Hopper played with the groups Isotope and Gilgamesh before forming Soft Heap. "Soft" identifies the band as a living branch of the Soft Machine, "Heap" is an acronym of the four original members' names: Hugh, Elton Dean, Alan Gowen, former Gilgamesh keyboardist, and Pip Pyle, former Gong and Hatfield and the North drummer. Alan Gowen died on leukemia in 1981, shortly after collaborating with Hugh on the magnificent *Two Rainbows Daily,* recently reissued by Cuneiform. Rainbows is a series of bass and mini-Moog duets that boils down Hopper's unique improvising and playing approach. The reissue features six live bonus tracks with drummer Nigel Morris.

Gowen's replacement in Soft Heap is guitarist Mark Hewins, one of the next generation of Canterbury musicians. His professional career began in 1972 when he began working with Richard Sinclair.

During a *Calyx* interview, he told Aymeric Leroy, "My main goal in my musical life has been to strive not only for personal "expression" but also excellence in technique. The musicians connected with the "Canterbury legend" are, quite simply, the best and most inventive of their generation. I had to work with these guys."

Hewins runs the MusArt label; its website features information, photographs, and amusing anecdotes about many of the Canterbury musicians.

Following Holdsworth's departure from the Soft Machine in 1976, the band, with replacement John Etheridge, recorded tracks for the DeWolfe Production Music Company,

the British equivalent to Muzak. The tracks were collected on the Voiceprint release Rubber Riff. Riff is a surprisingly appealing collection; though not an essential release, and a far cry from the Soft Machine's '60s and early '70s innovative heyday, the music is more engaging than the increasingly technical and virtuosic "real" Soft Machine releases of that period.

In contrast, 1976's *Cruel But Fair,* by Hopper/Dean/[Keith] Tippett/[Joe] Gallivan, reissued by One Way, is a jazzy, at times turbulent collection in the mold of the Softs' Fourth with electronic touches. That year also saw the release of *Yes We Have No Mananas* from Kevin Ayers. Although his most commercial-sounding work to date, the strong songwriting and fluid guitar work of 'Ollie Halsall, as well as Ayers' distinctive baritone voice prevented it from sounding like run-of-the-mill AOR product. Ayers toured Britain with a band that included Halsall, Zoot Money, and former Softs and future Police guitarist Andy Summers. His first American tour in almost a decade prompted stateside release on ABC Records as well.

The original Soft Machine lineup of Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge, and Robert Wyatt, along with Hugh Hopper, reunited in 1977, not to play music, but to program a3-LP retrospective of their work to be released on Harvest Records. *The Triple Echo* includes features selections from the band's entire back catalog with the exception of *Third* and *Fourth* which are represented by live BBC tracks. Both sides of the debut single, "Love Makes Sweet Music" and "Feelin' Reelin' Squealin', as well as "She's Gone," the A-side of a the shelved second single, and "Memories" from the De Lane Lea demo sessions are on the set. Neither *Triple Echo* nor the Polydor single have yet been released on CD.

Robert Wyatt returned to the public eye in 1980 with the release of four singles on Rough Trade. All eight sides are cover versions of songs of a personal or political nature, thematically paired. One of the songs was a version of "Strange Fruit," originally recorded by Billie Holiday in 1938. Regarding his choice to record that song, Wyatt told Melody Maker, "Yes, it's a bit inappropriate... Cross cultural references, it's not my song... I thought it was relevant now, but instead of talking about southern America, we're talking about South Africa. And I thought, we're just going to go on doing this - we were doing it before I was born, and. it's going to go on after I die, and there's nothing I can do about it. But you can't help noticing."

Inspired by those singles, Elvis Costello wrote an anti-war song about the Falkland Islands conflict, "Shipbuilding," which he thought would be the perfect vehicle for Wyatt. Costello produced Wyatt, backed by his band the Attractions, and the result was Wyatt's second UK-charting single, this one reaching #35.

Costello was later quoted in *Wrong Movements*, "It's been the happiest experience I've had as a songwriter/producer. The song has been realized perfectly. It sounds completely like the intent of the lyric and melody. I think people have been so overwhelmed by the melancholy of Robert's singing that the political comment in "Shipbuilding" hasn't been immediately spotted. The lyric seems to filter through afterwards; the BBC probably wouldn't like it otherwise."

The four singles, with two extra tracks were compiled on *Nothing Can Stop Us*; the American release omits Peter Blackman's poem "Stalingrad" and adds "Shipbuilding" and the b-sides from its 12" release, the jazz standards "Round About Midnight" and "Memories of You." The album's title refers to a quote from America Conquers Britain by Ludwell Denny in 1930: "We shall not make Britain's mistake. Too wise to try to govern the world, we shall merely own it. Nothing can stop us."

The last Soft Machine record released was *Land of Cockayne*, in 1981. Karl Jenkins, John Marshall, and Allan Holdsworth are joined by Jack Bruce for a collection that sounds like a Third-era inspired production-music band on its off-time. *Land of Cockayne* has its adherents, and is one of the most hotly-debated topics of "What's Rattlin'," the weekly on-line digest of Canterbury-related music.

In 1985, Robert Wyatt participated in a project with the South-West African People's Organization, the SWAPO Singers, and the Repression and Political Prisoners Campaign. "Winds of Change," produced by ex-Specials member Jerry Dammers and sung by Wyatt with the SWAPO Singers, was released to bring attention to the liberation movement of Namibia, which had been illegally occupied by South Africa.

"I want to show you something which is my finger pointing. That's my finger pointing," Wyatt commented about the political nature of his recent work in *Wrong Movements*.

"Now there are two interesting things about a pointing finger. First of all, you can look at the finger, and secondly, you can look at where the finger is pointing. The problem I have as a

musician is that I'm a pointing finger but it's not enough for me if people only look at my pointing finger. I would only be happy if people looked at what I was pointing at, because otherwise it's just a totally subjective game we're playing with the artist and the person looking at the artist."

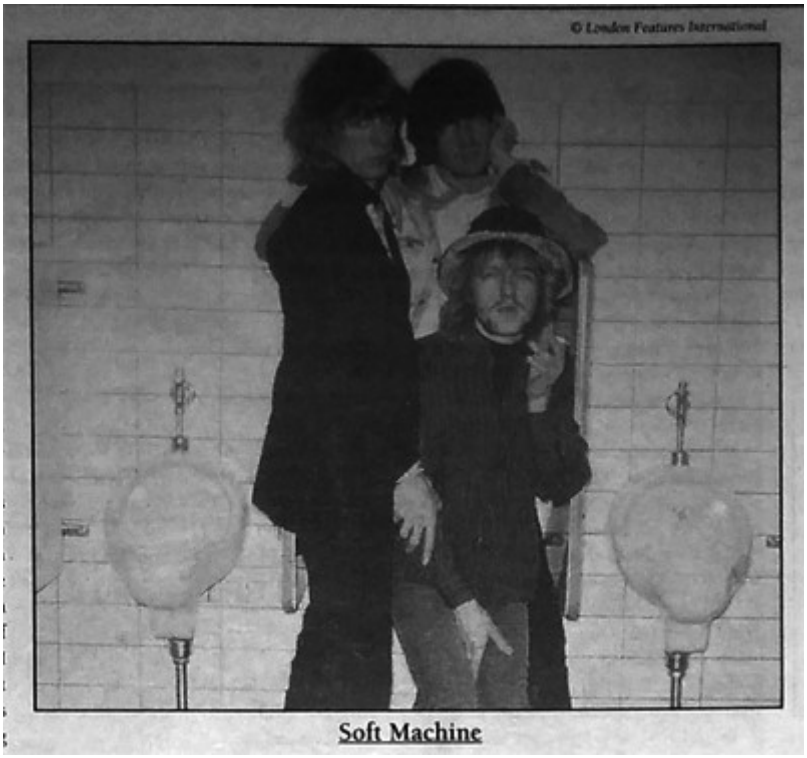
Following his 1991 recording *Dondestan*, Robert Wyatt was largely absent from the music business aside from cameo appearances on numerous releases. Wyatt scatsings on four tracks from Fish Out of Water's debut CD *Lucky Scars* on Stream Records, a label dedicated to the work of disabled artists. Robert takes several vocal turns on former Henry Cow bassist John Greaves's magnificent *Songs*, on Resurgence Records. *Songs* is an exquisitely wrought tapestry of predominantly acoustic pieces that have chamber-music-like qualities. Wyatt also contributed lyrics and vocals to "Free Will and Testament" on Hugh Hopper and Kramer's *A Remark Hugh Made.*

A Remark Hugh Made on Shimmy-Disc is one of numerous recent Hugh Hopper discs released recently. (Remark was, unfortunately, the last album Hugh and Wyatt's friend and collaborator Gary Windo would play on; he died of a heart attack on July 25, 1992.) Shimmy-Disc founder Kramer became familiar with the Soft Machine while studying the work of Jimi Hendrix as a youth. Kramer, a former Gong member who has also recorded two albums with Daevid Allen, *Who's Afraid* and *Hit Men*, discusses his work with both former Softs.

"Daevid and Hugh are artists. Most kids I work with are musicians, and art rarely enters into it," said Kramer. "Hugh and Daevid differ greatly in that Hugh is a musician, or rather an artist who paints with his guitar; although he usually works instrumentally, let us not forget that his lyrics for "Memories" are among the most poignant ever written. Daevid wants people to be moved by his words, Hugh wants people to be moved by his bass guitar and the sounds he emotes from it. Daevid cares about environmental issues and sings about them. Hugh cares about environmental issues and does not sing about them."

"Hugh was familiar only with my collaboration with Daevid before we worked together," said Kramer, describing how he got together with Hugh Hopper. "I wrote [a letter telling him] that I felt *Hopper Tunity Box* was one of the finest works of the era. I told him that if he was at all interested in making a continuation of that idea, I wanted to make a collaborative record. He wrote back saying 'no problem,' and a couple of months later he was at my home recording what turned out to be *A Remark Hugh Made.*"

According to Kramer, the collaboration with Wyatt on "Free Will and Testament" came about when "Hugh suggested that a piano piece I did would sound great with Robert's voice on it. We sent him a tape, and he simply sent back another tape with his voice added to the piano. Somehow, miraculously, I managed to synchronize the two tapes and re-edit back onto 24-track in order to have a decent sounding final product although the flaws are legible if you listen hard."



Soft Machine

Hugh Hopper and Kramer released a second album in early 1997, entitled *Huge*; according to Kramer, "[it] is more strictly from improvisations which I then built upon after Hugh went home to Canterbury." Hugh has also recently collaborated with the Portland, Oregon based group Caveman Shoestore on the *Caveman Hughscore* disc, on Tim/Kerr Records. The collaboration came about when bassist Fred Chalenor called Hugh for the sheet music to his song "Sliding Dogs" for Caveman Shoestore to play. Eventually after enough sheet music and Caveman demo tapes crossed the Atlantic, plans were made to record an album together.

Regarding his influence on and invitations to participate in projects with younger generations of "progressive" musicians, Hugh said he is "happy to have people like Kramer or the Cavemen call me up in awe. Joke is, [Caveman Shoestore bassist] Fred Chalenor tries to leave all the soloing to me, one of his heroes, when in fact he's ten times the bassist I'll ever be!"

Other projects Hugh is involved with include the Hugh Hopper Band, known as the Franglo-Dutch band, a jazz band featuring French and Dutch musicians. This group has released *Hooligan Romantics* on Ponk Records and *Carousel* on Cuneiform. Hugh is also a member of Mashu, a trio of himself, guitarist Mark Hewins, Gong tabla player and percussionist Shyamal Maitra.

Elton Dean frequently makes guest appearances or plays with many of his Soft Machine cohorts. His most recent album is Silent Knowledge, with his current quartet, a jazz band on the free side. He also released an album of duos and trios, *Twos and Threes*, originally released on his tape only ED Tapes label, recently reissued on a Voiceprint CD. Mark Hewins, Keith Tippett, and former Softs guitarist John Etheridge are among the musicians who join him. Dean also played on John Greaves' highly-recommended Songs.

With the help of numerous associates, like Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, and Paul Weller, Wyatt returned with full force to the music business, releasing one of his finest albums, *Shleep* on the Thirsty Ear label in the United States and Hannibal elsewhere. Wyatt continues to pursue lyrical themes present throughout his thirty-year career in popular music - individualism to the point of alienation from society, the concept of freedom, and a surrealistic sense of humor. The rights to six of his classic albums, from 1975's *Rock Bottom* to 1991's *Dondestan* also reverted to him and will be reissued throughout 1998 by his new record companies.

Former Soft Machine and Wilde Flowers members have mixed feelings about the "Canterbury" label that has been placed on their music over the years. Robert Wyatt remarked in *Ptolemaic Terrascope* that "I didn't even know it meant me until interviewers started asking me about it.

"As I say, because I'd bussed in from outside to go to school there I didn't really consider myself a Canterbury person. I think it really means people like Hugh Hopper and Richard Sinclair, who are generally based in that area."

"I met them there and am eternally graceful that I met someone like Hugh who provided something I dont think anyone else could have provided. My mind doesn't dwell on it as a place though, if I recall a former fantasy world upon which I draw, it was Harlem in the Forties and not Canterbury in the Fifties."

Elton Dean does not consider the Canterbury label useful. "Canterbury scene' is a myth that outsiders like to perpetuate. It puts a convenient, is somewhat meaningless label on very diverse musics."

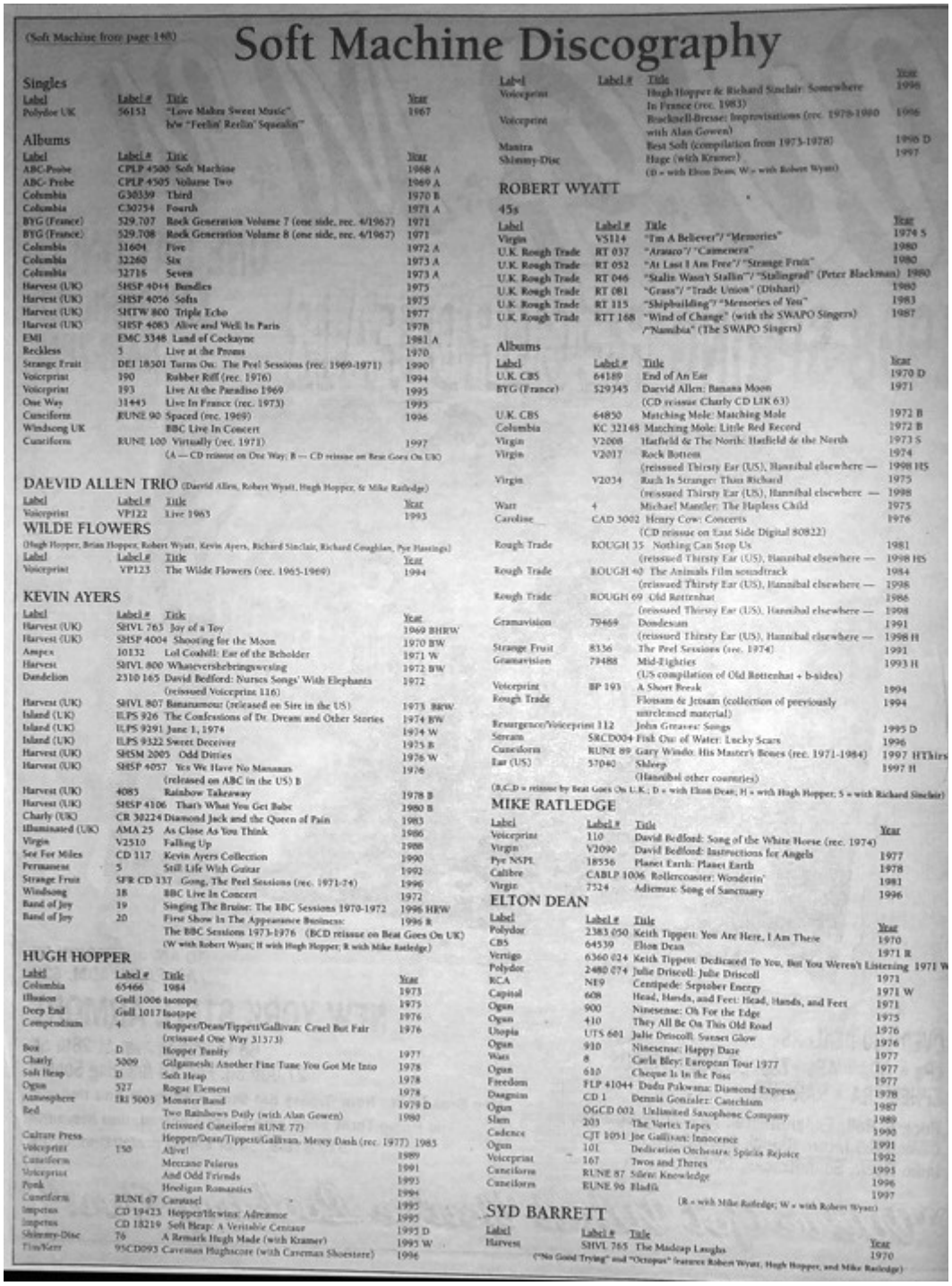
Hugh Hopper and Kevin Ayers, though they don't particularly advocate the Canterbury label, use it to their advantage. Hugh, who once quipped that the only person in Canterbury who recognized him was his mother, "personally [uses] the 'Canterbury Scene' umbrella now that it exists, to foster interest in my current musical projects, but in fact it was a journalistic label given to a very disparate group of musicians (most of whom had never been near Canterbury in their lives), long after the original few Canterbury musicians from the Wilde Flowers had divided into Caravan and the Soft Machine."

Kevin Ayers maintains that "on one side, it has helped me in the sense of being part of a bigger entity. On the other hand, I did some stuff not very related to the Canterbury scene. So?"

Richard Sinclair takes much pride in the town of Canterbury and the music that he had an active role in shaping. He was quoted in *Facelift*: "I think it has got a particular sound, Kent. We've sung it in our schools here, we were all at school in this sort of area. I was part of the C of E choir: up to the age of sixteen I was singing tonalities that are very English. Over the last three hundred years, four hundred years, maybe, and even earlier than that, some of the tonalities go back... A very historical centre of activity is Canterbury for the last hundred years. So it's quite an important sort of stepping stone of whatever this thousand years have covered, I think it's not to be mocked, because it's a centre of communication here and it's a meeting point - many nations come here to visit the cathedral, so you get a very unique situation happening, you know?... People say 'what is the Canterbury scene?' I think you have to come to Canterbury and see and hear it..."

From humble beginnings, a local beat group from the sixties with esoteric tastes in music has blossomed into a grass-roots musical movement whose members have branched out into the realms of psychedelia, jazz, pop, and progressive rock, for a devoted bunch of enthusiasts around the world. Although Hugh Hopper said "so-called progressive music is a dirty word for most promoters - here in the U.K. there were only a few years in the late sixties and early seventies when it wasn't," the Canterbury music fans know better. Like Chaucer's classic novel, a varied group of characters has embarked upon a journey, each bringing his or her own voice."

Jim Powers



(Soft Machine from page 140)

Soft Machine Discography

Singles

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Polydor UK	56151	"Love Makes Sweet Music" b/w "Feelin' Reelin' Squealin'"	1967

Albums

Label	Label #	Title	Year
ABC-Probe	CPLP 4500	Soft Machine	1968 A
ABC- Probe	CPLP 4505	Volume Two	1969 A
Columbia	G30339	Third	1970 B
Columbia	C30734	Fourth	1971 A
BYG (France)	529.707	Rock Generation Volume 7 (one side, rec. 4/1967)	1971
BYG (France)	529.708	Rock Generation Volume 8 (one side, rec. 4/1967)	1971
Columbia	31604	Five	1972 A
Columbia	32260	Six	1973 A
Columbia	32716	Seven	1973 A
Harvest (UK)	SHSP 4014	Bundles	1975
Harvest (UK)	SHSP 4056	Softs	1975
Harvest (UK)	SHTW 800	Triple Echo	1977
Harvest (UK)	SHSP 4083	Alive and Well: In Paris	1978
EMI	EMC 3348	Land of Cockayne	1981 A
Reckless	5	Live at the Proms	1970
Strange Fruit	DEI 18501	Turns On: The Peel Sessions (rec. 1969-1971)	1990
Voiceprint	190	Rubber Riff (rec. 1976)	1994
Voiceprint	193	Live At the Paradiso 1969	1995
One Way	31445	Live In France (rec. 1973)	1995
Cuneiform	RUNE 90	Spaced (rec. 1969)	1996
Windsong UK		BBC Live In Concert	
Cuneiform	RUNE 100	Virtually (rec. 1971)	1997

(A — CD reissue on One Way; B — CD reissue on Beat Goes On UK)

DAEVID ALLEN TRIO (Daevid Allen, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, & Mike Ratledge)

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Voiceprint	VP122	Live 1963	1993

WILDE FLOWERS

(Hugh Hopper, Brian Hopper, Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers, Richard Sinclair, Richard Coughlan, Pye Hastings)

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Voiceprint	VP123	The Wilde Flowers (rec. 1965-1969)	1994

KEVIN AYERS

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Harvest (UK)	SHVL 763	Joy of a Toy	1969 BHRW
Harvest (UK)	SHSP 4004	Shooting for the Moon	1970 BW
Ampex	10132	Lol Coxhill: Ear of the Beholder	1971 W
Harvest	SHVL 800	Whatevershebringswesing	1972 BW
Dandelion	2310 165	David Bedford: Nurses Songs' With Elephants (reissued Voiceprint 116)	1972
Harvest (UK)	SHVL 807	Bananamour: (released on Sire in the US)	1973 BRW
Island (UK)	ILPS 926	The Confessions of Dr. Dream and Other Stories	1974 BW
Island (UK)	ILPS 9291	June 1, 1974	1974 W
Island (UK)	ILPS 9322	Sweet Deceiver	1975 B
Harvest (UK)	SHSM 2005	Odd Ditties	1976 W
Harvest (UK)	SHSP 4057	Yes We Have No Mananas (released on ABC in the US) B	1976
Harvest (UK)	4085	Rainbow Takeaway	1978 B
Harvest (UK)	SHSP 4106	That's What You Get Babe	1980 B
Charly (UK)	CR 30224	Diamond Jack and the Queen of Pain	1983
Illuminated (UK)	AMA 25	As Close As You Think	1986
Virgin	V2510	Falling Up	1988
See For Miles	CD 117	Kevin Ayers Collection	1990
Permanent	5	Still Life With Guitar	1992
Strange Fruit	SFR CD 137	Gong, The Peel Sessions (rec. 1971-74)	1996
Windsong	18	BBC Live In Concert	1972
Band of Joy	19	Singing The Bruise: The BBC Sessions 1970-1972	1996 HRW
Band of Joy	20	First Show In The Appearance Business: The BBC Sessions 1973-1976 (BCD reissue on Beat Goes On UK)	1996 R

(W with Robert Wyatt; H with Hugh Hopper; R with Mike Ratledge)

HUGH HOPPER

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Columbia	65466	1984	1973
Illusion	Gull 1006	Isotope	1975
Deep End	Gull 1017	Isotope	1976
Compendium	4	Hopper/Dean/Tippett/Gallivan: Cruel But Fair (reissued One Way 31373)	1976
Box	D	Hopper Tunity	1977
Charly	5009	Gilgamesh: Another Fine Tune You Got Me Into	1978
Soft Heap	D	Soft Heap	1978
Ogun	527	Rogue Element	1978
Atmosphere	IRI 5003	Monster Band	1978 D
Red		Two Rainbows Daily (with Alan Gowen) (reissued Cuneiform RUNE 77)	1980
Culture Press		Hopper/Dean/Tippett/Gallivan, Mercy Dash (rec. 1977)	1985
Voiceprint	150	Alive!	1989
Cuneiform		Meccano Pelorus	1991
Voiceprint		And Odd Friends	1993
Punk		Hooligan Romantics	1994
Cuneiform	RUNE 67	Carousel	1995
Impetus	CD 19423	Hopper/Hewins: Adrenaline	1995
Impetus	CD 18219	Soft Heap: A Veritable Centaur	1995 D
Shimmy-Disc	76	A Remark Hugh Made (with Kramer)	1995 W
Tim/Kerr	95CD093	Caveman Hughscore (with Caveman Shoestore)	1996
Voiceprint		Hugh Hopper & Richard Sinclair: Somewhere In France (rec. 1983)	1996
Voiceprint		Bracknell-Bresse: Improvisations (rec. 1978-1980 with Alan Gowen)	1996
Mantra		Best Soft (compilation from 1973-1978)	1998 D
Shimmy-Disc		Hage (with Kramer)	1997

(D = with Elton Dean; W = with Robert Wyatt)

ROBERT WYATT

45s

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Virgin	VS114	"I'm A Believer"/ "Memories"	1974 S
U.K. Rough Trade	RT 037	"Arauco"/ "Cumenera"	1980
U.K. Rough Trade	RT 052	"At Last I Am Free"/ "Strange Fruit"	1980
U.K. Rough Trade	RT 046	"Stalin Wasn't Stallin"/ "Stalingrad" (Peter Blackman)	1980
U.K. Rough Trade	RT 081	"Grass"/ "Trade Union" (Dishart)	1983
U.K. Rough Trade	RT 115	"Shipbuilding"/ "Memories of You"	1983
U.K. Rough Trade	RTT 168	"Wind of Change" (with the SWAPO Singers) /"Namibia" (The SWAPO Singers)	1987

Albums

Label	Label #	Title	Year
U.K. CBS	64189	End of An Ear	1970 D
BYG (France)	529345	Daevid Allen: Banana Moon (CD reissue Charly CD LIK 63)	1971
U.K. CBS	64850	Matching Mole: Matching Mole	1972 B
Columbia	KC 32148	Matching Mole: Little Red Record	1972 B
Virgin	V2008	Hatfield & The North: Hatfield & the North	1973 S
Virgin	V2017	Rock Bottom (reissued Thirsty Ear (US), Hannibal elsewhere —	1974 1998 HS
Virgin	V2034	Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (reissued Thirsty Ear (US), Hannibal elsewhere —	1975 1998
Warr	4	Michael Mantler: The Hapless Child	1975
Caroline	CAD 3002	Henry Cow: Concerts (CD reissue on East Side Digital 80822)	1976
Rough Trade	ROUGH 35	Nothing Can Stop Us (reissued Thirsty Ear (US), Hannibal elsewhere —	1981 1998 HS
Rough Trade	ROUGH 40	The Animals Film soundtrack (reissued Thirsty Ear (US), Hannibal elsewhere —	1984 1998
Rough Trade	ROUGH 69	Old Rottenhat (reissued Thirsty Ear (US), Hannibal elsewhere —	1986 1998
Gramavision	79469	Dondestan (reissued Thirsty Ear (US), Hannibal elsewhere —	1991 1998 H
Strange Fruit	8136	The Peel Sessions (rec. 1974)	1991
Gramavision	79488	Mid-Eighties (US compilation of Old Rottenhat + b-sides)	1993 H
Voiceprint	BP 193	A Short Break	1994
Rough Trade		Flotsam & Jetsam (collection of previously unreleased material)	1994
Resurgence/Voiceprint	112	John Greaves: Songs	1995 D
Stream	SRCD004	Fish Out of Water: Lucky Scars	1996
Cuneiform	RUNE 89	Gary Windo: His Master's Bones (rec. 1971-1984)	1997 HThirs
Ear (US)	57040	Shleep (Hannibal other countries)	1997 H

(B,C,D = reissue by Beat Goes On U.K.; D = with Elton Dean; H = with Hugh Hopper; S = with Richard Sinclair)

MIKE RATLEDGE

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Voiceprint	110	David Bedford: Song of the White Horse (rec. 1974)	
Virgin	V2090	David Bedford: Instructions for Angels	1977
Pye NSPL	18556	Planet Earth: Planet Earth	1978
Calibre	CABLP 1006	Rollercoaster: Wonderin'	1981
Virgin	7324	Adiemus: Song of Sanctuary	1996

ELTON DEAN

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Polydor	2383 050	Keith Tippett: You Are Here, I Am There	1970
CBS	64539	Elton Dean	1971 R
Vertigo	6360 024	Keith Tippett: Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening	1971 W
Polydor	2480 074	Julie Driscoll: Julie Driscoll	1971
RCA	NE9	Centipede: Septober Energy	1971 W
Capitol	608	Head, Hands, and Feet: Head, Hands, and Feet	1971
Ogun	900	Ninesense: Oh For the Edge	1975
Ogun	410	They All Be On This Old Road	1976
Utopia	UTS 601	Julie Driscoll: Sunset Glow	1976
Ogun	910	Ninesense: Happy Daze	1977
Watt	8	Carla Bley: European Tour 1977	1977
Ogun	610	Cheque Is In the Post	1977
Freedom	FLP 41044	Dudu Pukwana: Diamond Express	1978
Daagmar	CD 1	Dennis Gonzalez: Catechism	1987
Ogun	OGCD 002	Unlimited Saxophone Company	1989
Slam	203	The Vortex Tapes	1990
Cadence	CJT 1051	Joe Gallivan: Innocence	1991
Ogun	101	Dedication Orchestra: Spirits Rejoice	1992
Voiceprint	167	Twos and Threes	1993
Cuneiform	RUNE 87	Silent Knowledge	1996
Cuneiform	RUNE 96	Bladik	1997

(R = with Mike Ratledge; W = with Robert Wyatt)

SYD BARRETT

Label	Label #	Title	Year
Harvest	SHVL 765	The Madcap Laughs	1970

("No Good Trying" and "Octopus" features Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, and Mike Ratledge)

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Deep Shleep: Robert Wyatt Gets Personal - Boston Phœnix - 20 January 1998

DEEP SHLEEP: ROBERT WYATT GETS PERSONAL

"THE BIG PROBLEM I have with rock and roll is the rock end of it," says Robert Wyatt. "But I love the rolling. I'm into roll music."

Wyatt's been rolling now for more than three decades, along the periphery where pop, jazz, and experimental genres meet, and the music he's made has been both distinctive and enchanting. His latest release, Shleep (Thirsty Ear), is his first in six years, and though it features cameos from various well-known folks, including Brian Eno and Paul Weller, its main virtue is that it marks the return of the unmistakable Wyatt style - droll lyrics, complex melodies, sparse arrangements - and the equally unmistakable Wyatt voice, a fragile, weather-beaten instrument that composer Ryuichi Sakamoto once called "the saddest voice in the world."

A fixture on the London psychedelic underground scene in the '60s, Wyatt hung with legends like Jimi Hendrix and Syd Barrett when he wasn't drumming and singing for his main band, prog-rock pioneers the Soft Machine. But his life changed forever at a fateful party in 1973, when a drunken four-story fall left him paralyzed from the waist down. For the last 25 years, the wheelchair-bound Wyatt has alternated periods of activity - producing classic albums like 1974's Rock Bottom (first on Virgin, reissued by Caroline), 1981's Nothing Can Stop Us, 1985's Old Rottenhat, and 1991's Dondestan (all on Gramavision) - with stretches of complete withdrawal from the music business.

Reached by phone at his home in Louth, a tiny market town in the northeast of England (Lincolnshire), Wyatt matter-of-factly confesses to having had "some severe problems close to home" in the early '90s, including a nervous breakdown. Traces of this experience may lurk in the lyrics to Shleep's 'Was a Friend', which recounts an ominous meeting with a ghost from the past, and 'Heaps of Sheeps', a darkly humorous tale of insomniac desperation. (Although the lyrics to 'Heaps of Sheeps' were written by Wyatt's wife, Alfreda Benge, the CD booklet makes it clear that Wyatt also is familiar with sleepless states.)

The effect of these songs is more inspiring than disturbing: the urgent ride cymbal and close harmonies of 'Was a Friend' burst with energy, and Brian Eno's arrangement and production of 'Heaps of Sheeps', complete with mock-heroic vocal chorus, makes for a bouncy little number.

"Brian loved Alfie's words," Wyatt says. "He just sat laughing as he read them, couldn't get over 'em. I'd thought of the song as a mournful New Orleans shuffle, but he really took it by the whatever-it-is and brightened it up, which was fine by me."

Eno is one of ten guest performers on Shleep, a large number for someone whose last few discs were cut almost completely solo. "The songs seemed to require more people this time," Wyatt explains. "And since we were recording near London, it was easier to have people come out - I can't really invite people up to Lincolnshire for a wasted afternoon."

The most surprising guest is probably Paul Weller, one of only a handful of current pop

artists whom Wyatt professes to admire. Weller contributes guitar and vocals to two selections, a cheeky rewrite of Dylan's 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' titled 'Blues in Bob Minor', and the lovely 'Free Will and Testament', in which Wyatt, backed by Weller's subtle slide work, muses over subjects far from your average pop-song material: "The weight of dust exceeds the weight of settled objects/What can it mean, such gravity without a center?/Is there freedom to un-be?/Is there freedom from will-to-be?"

Philosophical lyrics like these call attention to the biggest stylistic departure on Shleep: the turn away from political discussion. Much of Wyatt's work over the last 20 years has dealt with causes of a left-wing nature. He's sung in his own words about Nelson Mandela and East Timor, the plight of refugees and the Communist Party; he's covered Elvis Costello & Clive Langer's 'Shipbuilding' (which was written especially for him) and the Cuban folksong 'Caimanera'. There's none of that here. Shleep's songs are largely ruminative, in both lyrics and music. In fact, the album reaches its peak with three songs written by Wyatt and Benge – 'September the Ninth', 'Alien', and 'Out of Season' - whose subject matter is drawn from that most nonpolitical of activities, birdwatching.

Wyatt denies that this change of tone was intentional. "I didn't decide to write political songs in the first place. When I'm writing, I function like an animal, just going on instinct. It's hard to know what to say about that - in a way, music starts where words end, doesn't it? I still get very agitated, though, either about unpleasant things in the world or the hypocrisy with which they're reported in the news, and that's liable to come out in future songs.

"I'm easily provoked," he concludes with a laugh. "Somebody better not push their luck."

Mac Randall

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Robert Wyatt - Uncut - December 1997

ROBERT WYATT by David Stubbs

ROBERT WYATT'S career has meandered long and strange, like an underground driver. He's played alongside Hendrix, Mike Oldfield and Phil Manzanera, as well as *avant-garde* extremists such as Fred Frith, with whom he hilariously appeared on *Top Of The Pops* in the mid-Seventies, covering The Monkees' 'I'm A Believer'.



His latest album, *Shleep*, features both *avant-jazz* saxophonist Evan Parker and Paul Weller. He's covered songs by artists as diverse as Chic and Ivor Cutler. Working from jazz, through to the relatively mainstream rock of Soft Machine and Matching Mole, he was left permanently wheelchair-bound in the mid-Seventies after drunkenly falling out of a window several storeys high. Since then, he has forged a musical style all his own, one that combines plaintive drones and disingenuous, childlike repeated musical phrases with a vastly sophisticated exploratory sensibility. Wyatt's music reflects his character – mischievous, desolate, self-mocking, indignant, intimate and enigmatic, sensitive and resigned, open and vulnerable.

He was a communist – but that was somehow a manifestation of his extreme niceness rather than any ideological bloody-mindedness. It's genuinely affecting to hear him talk of the depression and nervous breakdowns that have dogged him in the Nineties, since his last album proper, 1991's bleak *Dondestan*.

"Maybe it's a total coincidence, but after Major got back in again in 1992, I didn't make a record under my own name the entire period he was in office," he reflects, sipping tea in a cafe near Great Ormond Street. "I didn't exactly go on strike, but..."

Now, however, he's had the "wind put back in his sails" with *Shleep*, his finest work in years, a genuinely collaborative effort involving, as well as Parker and Weller (a "hero" of Wyatt's who rockets in my estimation for his in-the-spirit contributions here), Eno, Phil Manzanera – who was generous with his studio facilities – and trombonist Annie Whitehead. It's reminiscent of 1975's *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, recapturing, in Wyatt's own words, the "recklessness" of

the intriguing underside of the prog-rock era. "I've bounced back now," he assures me. "Though always I have this feeling I'm on borrowed time..."

ROBERT WYATT has good and influential friends, but although his own music eclipses most of their efforts, he's never enjoyed similar levels of commercial success. "I've always fallen between tramlines," he laments. He's perceived as quintessentially English, having arisen from the so-called "Canterbury Scene" and having always sung in an open, unaffected Cockney accent years before Johnny Rotten. That, however, was out of a loathing of fake Seventies American accents. He is, in fact, a stern internationalist, who once said of himself in third person, "his political inclination is to be a traitor".

Is that why he joined the Communist Party?

"Yeah," he says, "go straight for the enemy!"

Was he dismayed by the collapse of the Soviet Union?

"No, not really," he sighs. "I've got used to backing losers, you know what I mean? If you've sat in free jazz gigs where the group outnumbers the audience, you're used to political meetings which are exactly the same. What was more important to me was, for instance, that it called the bluff of the apartheid government in South Africa whose excuse had been, 'We can't have democracy because the ANC are a front for the Russians.' My initial interest in the Communist Party was that it struck me as the only truly non-racist, internationalist organisation and I cannot apologise for having been associated with that."

Indeed, Robert Wyatt was among the first white "prog" artists to break way from the patronising attitudes towards black music.

"I was very shocked in 1968 when we went to Detroit and there was MC5 and I was saying to them how great it must be for them being down the road from all those great black groups and these white kids weren't interested in them because they wore suits and did dance routines. I thought, fucking hell, this is like South Africa."

This was a revelatory moment, but he considers himself to have been truly reborn when he began his relationship with his wife, the artist and sometime collaborator Alfreda Benge.

Contrary to popular misconception, his masterpiece, the truly essential *Rock Bottom* (1974), is not a lament for his accident but a euphoric hymn of praise to the beginnings of their relationship when he became, in his own, later, ironic phrase, a "born-again cretin". The album was mostly written by the time of his accident.

"I CONSIDER THAT the start of my real life. The butterfly. Everything before that was the pupa." A surprising image, under the circumstances, but Wyatt has never regarded his disability as a personal disaster or affliction, nor the source of his bouts of depression.

Maybe it's for that reason that he's never bothered overmuch with campaigning for the rights of disabled people. "It was actually strangely liberating, because it meant I had to go it alone. The things that have brought me down have never been so banal as a physical accident. Being in a wheelchair helped me to concentrate and simplify."

In fact, the source of his anxieties has been lack of funds over the years, preventing him from recording as often as he'd like to. He's had various wrangles regarding ownership of his back catalogue, which have only just now been resolved by Rykodisc. "There are good people in this business – Joe Boyd, Geoff Travis. But they're rare. You do get ripped off and there's no rock'n'roll ombudsman to prevent it. I'm not Sting.

"At my level, you notice when money goes missing. Money I need to record. I'm just so hopeless at everyday living. The only way I can get my pride back is if I function musically." Today, pride thoroughly restored, Wyatt and Alfreda live up in

a shack in Spurn Point on the East Coast, a life of cosy, domestic desolation, fending off for the moment the omnipresent threat of depression, a place whose naturalistic ebb and flow is reflected in some of *Shleep*.

What do you do?

"I've started studying insects. The way flies work when they paralyse a caterpillar and lay their eggs on it, then live off the caterpillar but don't kill it until they're just about to hatch, then they move in and eat the brain, then they're done. I know a lot of people like that!"

David Stubbs

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Robert Wyatt Innervisions - Straight No Chaser - Winter 1997

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SWINGING SIXTIES, FREE JAZZ AND ART-LAB EXPERIMENTALISM COMBINED TO PRODUCE THE SOFT MACHINE. WITH IT CAME A VOICE AND A DRUMMER ROBERT WYATT AND LUCKILY HIS GENIUS REMAINS UNDIMMED BY THREE DIFFICULT DECADES. AFTER NUMEROUS ACCLAIMED COLLABORATIONS WITH LIKE-MINDED FOLKS, JERRY DAMMERS, ELVIS COSTELLO AND ULTRAMARINE, A NEW LP, 'SHLEEP' FINDS HIM SHARING THE HONORS WITH BRIAN ENO, PHIL MANZANERA, ANNIE WHITEHEAD, EVAN PARKER AND PAUL WELLER.



STORY : paul bradshaw
PORTRAIT : peter williams

It's midday as I negociate a route past the British Museum and the combined sound of tenor and trombone ebbs and flows in my headphones. Momentarily it lifts me off to another world where a sage-like musician sits with his lover beneath a towering sky and gazes towards a distant horizon. Their shelter is a wooden dacca on the edge of a windswept estuary and that day, September 9th, has provided them, albeit fleetingly, with a host of visitors whose presence signifies the end of a summer. Surrounded by hundreds of swifts preparing themselves for a flight to another hemisphere the woman wishes for wings.

The same couple are still enjoying the vestiges of summer as I join them outside a cafe in Lambs Conduit St in Bloomsbury. Robert Wyatt sports a beard that is way beyond goatee. He and his combat jacket-clad partner Alfreda Benge aka Alfie are in transit between their modest home in Louth, Lincolnshire and a spell in Italy. Both are regulars at this spot. For Robert, who has been confined to a wheelchair since a fall from a fourth floor window in 1973, it's basically a question of access but it's been the site of many an interview to promote the new album 'Shleep' - his first for six years. The album title 'Shleep' is a nod of respect to London's Yiddish tradition, his own Russian Jewish ancestry and the uniqueness of his old friend the late Ronnie Scott. The club was Robert Wyatt's home from home and he misses him a lot. Out of nowhere, comedian Alexei Sayle suddenly appears and greets them both enthusiastically. They had met during the heyday of the resistance against Thatcherite conservatism at a Communist Party benefit in Lincolnshire. A lively banter ensues that reminds me of a quote from Wyatt where he declares, "If I were Blackpool rock I'd have Marxist-Leninist right through the middle."



> Zoom

"In a sense, the politics came out of the music. Mingus and Max Roach, they were involved in making political records... Sonny Rollins' ‘Freedom Suite' is wonderful. My allegiance to the music gave me an allegiance to what they were saying. I knew which side I was on. "The abstract became concrete when confronted by the paradox of apartheid. "I got to know the South African musicians when they came to London. It was so absurd, it was an outrage. For me it wasn't just a problem for South Africa, as long as apartheid existed and the South African government was dealt with as a serious government and not as a gangster/terrorist tyranny, we were all dirtied by it. That's what got me into politics, defence of my culture!"

A commitment to ending all exploitation led him to join the Communist Party. That same card-carrying commie caused a rumpus on Top Of The Pops with a rendition of the Monkees' I’m A Believer'. He berated the jingoism of the Falklands War with a classic interpretation of Elvis Costello's 'Shipbuilding' and anticipated the new dawn in South Africa by joining with a choir from SWAPO to add his own momentum to the 'Winds Of Change".

It has not been easy for Robert Wyatt. Depression and self doubt has taken it's toll but the man sat across from me seems happy. He's clearly enjoying talking about jazz and the positive critical response to 'Shleep' has given him a justifiable lift. A friend described 'Schleep' as "Not a jazz album but an album that could only have been made by a jazz man" and while overall the sound is totally unique, probably owing as much to the big skies and rhythms of nature as to Miles Davis, there are faint echoes which evoke the ghost of Mingus, ensemble parts that uplift like Carla Bley and spacey rhythmic shuffles that tip a nod to Max Roach.

"People ask what I listen to and often wrongly assume I'm listening to music that they associate me with. When I say I listen to a lot of black music they are very surprised... 'I can't really hear it in what you do'. Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, Billy Higgins where do we go from here? The whole way of doing things, the excitement of making music comes out of that... maybe not the whole... but take 'September the Ninth' - the idea of having the tenor together with the trombone comes from late-Fifties Mingus with Jimmy Knepper and Shafi Hadi. Before I was a musician the film score to John Cassavettes" *Shadows* really influenced me. Classic Mingus. I can play reverse karaoke with Mingus at home so I know those textures can intertwine in that way. The other Mingus thing is the music is obviously structured but there's a looseness where everyone is phrasing together. He brought that to group arrangements and that's gone straight into 'September The Ninth'.

Wyatt's fragile falsetto voice weaves its own spell. It's quirky, often drenched in sadness and distinctively English. He doesn't warm to the idea of it being quintessential and of its

"Englishness" says: "That's just what's left because in the end, as a musician, you can't really copy anybody. So you're left with what you are, it's the only thing that's going to work."

Connecting poetry and music has long featured in Robert Wyatt's ventures. Today it's Alfie's poetry and visuals that provide the inspiration. Brian Eno who arranged the opening track of 'Heaps Of Sheeps' and plays on 'Madrid' was reminded of the Fifties jazz and poetry thing. Robert describes that as a kind of third stream, a failed avenue that was explored but remains interesting. Of someone like Mingus who talked all the way through his performances the singer says it can be done because the spoken word is simply a kind of atonal note but it's set off in a harmonic context.



Inspiration is drawn from other literary sources including Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, Belloc and Conan Doyle's pro-Fenian father who, according to Robert, was "quite mad but quite wonderful".

"My favourite book is the Oxford dictionary, but I also like specialist dictionaries... Alfie just picked up a dictionary on Philosophy. I read a lot of books by scientists who write in plain English... Stephen Jones and Richard Dawkins. I still have a thing for children's books. I love books with pictures... my current picture book is on modern astronomy with all the infra-red photography, photos of the cosmos. That feeds back a little into what I do"

"The follow up to 'Shleep' could be a follow up to Charlie Parker's 'Ornithology', could be called 'Etymology' which goes really fast," he says laughing, "we could re-invent be-bop out of my new science books."

Having abandoned the city (which he still loves) and opted for the less socially interactive environment of the countryside I was curious to see how Robert Wyatt, as a drummer who is completely at home with programming, felt about the current tide of junglistic drum ‘n’ bass. Alfie had seen the live TV performance of Reprazent and longed for a few more chords but thought it was fantastic... "so exciting".

"Drum and bass... I'm right in there... Ed Blackwell and Charlie Haden..." says Robert and laughing out loud declares it's futile asking an old man such a thing. "My drums, even when they're jazz influenced, don't have that motorised thing. They move in the opposite direction. It's related to the rhythm section in that I use drums to lift the tune off the ground a bit and get it moving, they're fairly gaseous... smokey... not really solid chunks of rhythm. I've almost taken the bass drum out of my stuff, abandoned that idea of filling up a track with a massive drum sound. I tend more and more to leave it out and fill it up with air."

Referring to drummer Kenny Clark who would float across the cymbals using the kit as accents he declares he enjoys more and more the implied and ambiguous in rhythm. "My tunes still rely on rhythmic tension but it's like Mingus said, 'You get too far from the song and dance and you get lost." When I went to see Coltrane and Eric Dolphy play, they would take their solos but for me the main thing that was going on, that was transcendental was the endless churning of these vamps, these slightly shifting repeated riffs by McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones. It was astonishing. It seemed so primitive yet it was so advanced in the effect it had on your mind. That's what we're talking about now aren't we (with drum ‘n’ bass)? It is an extension of that."

Robert Wyatt surrounds himself with like-minded people. He compensates for musicians who he loved and misses like the late South African trumpet player Mongezi Fezi and Don Cherry by taking up his own trumpet to create a sound that soars alongside his own voice. His politics are implicit in his associations. Paul Weller, a committed leftist happened to be recording in the same studio and was left a note saying, "What about it then?" by Wyatt. The result is on the CD and it's a striking and innovative take on Bob Dylan's 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'.

"Off the record I've been asked, 'Where's the politics ?'. I mean... Cliff Richard doesn't sing hymns all day 'cause he's a Christian. It's so intrinsic to what I am. Look at who I associate with and play with... Annie Whitehead and Evan Parker, look at their histories... Annie working with Aswad, Jerry Dammers, Evan with Louis Moholo. Whether the politics is not apparent in every song is not an issue... treat people who listen to you with respect and

you're already a step ahead of Philip Larkin. Basically, I love playing. I do play... I improvise a lot at home. But I'm just so incredibly relieved when I get enough coherent material to do an album. I'm always amazed I get that far."

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The Impressionist - Mojo - N°47 - October 1997

THE IMPRESSIONIST



A venerable artist returns with his most colourful canvas in some time.

By Ben Thomson

Robert Wyatt
Shleep / Rynodisk

Soft Machine and Matching Mole legend makes triumphant return. Sterling work from all-star supporting cast Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Evan Parker, Annie Whitehead and Phil Manzanera.

FAR FROM the old friends benefit it might have been, Robert Wyatt's first album since 1991 's *Dondestan* is a fresh and fully-rounded work. It combines all the best qualities of his earlier recordings - the happy balance of simplicity and complication, frailty and resilience - with a sense of purpose that feels newly minted. A trio of beautiful bird songs (September The 9th, Alien, and Out Of Season), co-written by Wyatt and his wife Alfreda Benge, form the hub of the album, but there are even greater pleasures in the hinterland. Wyatt's voice resonates as eloquently as ever, but on the bewitching Free Will And Testament it takes flight to a higher realm of unhistrionic poignancy. The exquisite Eno-flavoured opener Heaps Of Sheeps must be the most tranquil song ever written about insomnia, and Blues In Bob Minor - a suitably warped mirror-image of Dylan's Subterranean Homesick Blues - gives Paul Weller the cue for his most free-spirited guitar blow out since the heyday of The Style Council.

Robert Wyatt talks to Ben Thompson.

Your feathered friends seem to have been a great source of inspiration.

"Well, they outnumber us 10 to one, and I really love watching them, which isn't always true of people. I'm not like a twitcher, in the sense that a bird doesn't have to be rare for me to be interested in it - I really like the ones that just hang about. I think sparrows, for example, are extremely witty and amusing to watch, though that's very anthropomorphic of me, because I know they're really busy struggling for survival."

Was it that sympathetic attitude that led you to offer Paul Weller a way out of his pub rock impasse?

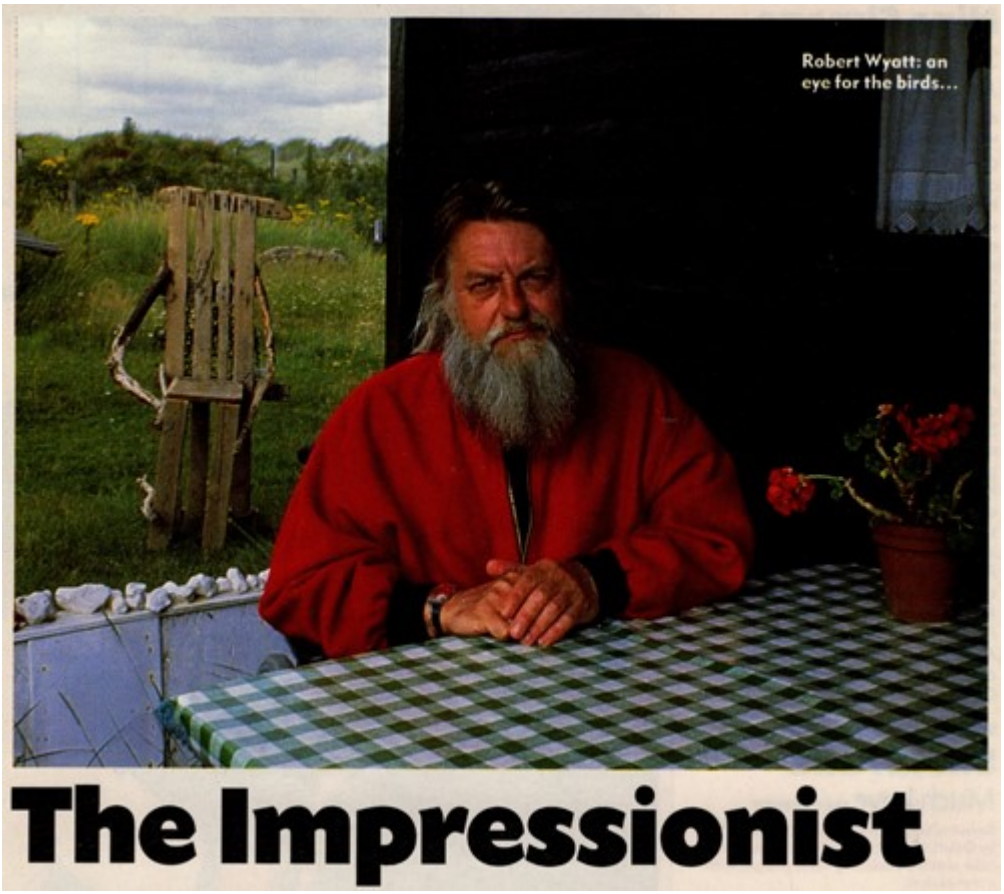
"Haha! With some people I'm just like a normal pop fan - judgement is completely suspended, and Paul is one of those. I've always liked the cut of his jib, and having spent so much time struggling around trying to do different things myself, I really identify with some of the adventures that he's had."

People might be surprised by an avant-garde avatar like yourself teaming up with the arch populist loafer-wearer?

"Someone who knows my track record shouldn't be surprised at me working with anybody, really. In any case, we musicians think differently about these things - inside the brotherhood."

What's Blues In Bob Minor about?

"The original vocal was a bit influenced by those adverts: 'Papa!' 'Nicole!' I was just singing 'Oh Alfie' and I thought it was dead good and minimalist, but when I tried it out on my wife she said I was just being lazy and not bothering to write proper words. So, after I'd slammed the door a few times and smashed a couple of plates, I thought, I'll stuff it with words! I was trying to copy the Dylan original but I couldn't remember the lyrics, which was a good thing because it finished up as Robert Wyatt rather than Bob Dylan. Alfie thinks he might object. If he does we'll just bluff it out and say, 'Borrowing is a vital part of the folk tradition'."



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Interview: Robert Wyatt The only way is up when you've hit rock bottom - Independent - 30 September 1997



Interview: Robert Wyatt The only way is up when you've hit rock bottom

Phil Johnson • Tuesday 30 September 1997 00:02 •

Robert Wyatt has `had a bad Nineties' but has emerged from his depression with an exquisite new album. He talks to Phil Johnson about nostalgia, coping with disability and why he'll die with `Marxist-Leninist' inscribed on his heart.

Even the sleeve-notes are a work of art, a little miracle of grace and humility wherein the author apportions credit and gives thanks to friends and collaborators, like Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera and Paul Weller, for helping to make his first album in six years possible. The album itself, Shleep (the title is meant to invoke the sardonic Jewish humour of Wyatt's friend Ronnie Scott), is a real work of art too, deepening with every hearing and drawing the listener in to a strange, sometimes dark, often painfully fragile but somehow transcendentally hopeful world that has no compare in contemporary music of any genre. Honestly, it's that good (although it's not always easy listening) and, as one would expect, its creator, Robert Wyatt, aged 52, isn't your usual brand of bland pop self- publicist. "That was a long answer, wasn't it?" he adds as a coda to an impossibly convoluted, heartfelt, response to a pat question. "One word would have sufficed, Robert."

Recorded over a period of months in ex-Roxy Music guitarist Manzanera's Chertsey studio, where Wyatt slept in a camp bed on the floor and was relieved of the normal anxiety of clock-watching by getting a cut-price rate from his mate, Shleep is the response, Wyatt says, to a long spell of serious depression from which he thought he might never emerge. "I've had a rough Nineties really, in which I seemed to spin down a dark hole like Alice in Wonderland. For the first time, I reviewed my past and it seemed so inaccessible, and everything I'd done - even making records - so far from what it now was, that it was the first experience I've ever had in my life of nostalgia. Not for anything in particular, but for the physical routine of playing music with people. So when I came out of that I was trying to exorcise it in some way or define it so I could make my emotional problems into intellectual ones, to cool me down a bit, to cool down the fever in the brain. I can be fairly gloomy at the best of times but this was your actual nervous breakdown, I think."

We're talking in the living-room of Wyatt's home in a comfortable Georgian house in the market-town of Louth, in Lincolnshire, where he lives with his wife Alfie (Alfreda Benge), who is really the co-creator of the album. Her poems provide the lyrics for many of the songs, her drawings and paintings adorn the sleeve, and she clearly plays a part in Wyatt's work that is far greater than artist's muse. They came to Louth, she says, because it was

sufficiently far up the map for them to afford a house with a large- enough ground floor for Wyatt's needs. Since an accident in 1973, when he fell drunkenly from a fourth-floor window at a party in London, Wyatt has been paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair. In the year following the accident, he married Alfie on the same day that his brilliant solo album, the mordantly titled Rock Bottom, was released. Shortly afterwards, his cover version of The Monkees' "I'm a Believer" entered the charts and he appeared on Top of the Pops in his wheelchair.

"It took me a long time to get over the accident," he says, "but it's misunderstood. I wasn't traumatised by it - I found it rather novel actually - and my depression wasn't anything to do with it, or not that I'm conscious of. It was a nostalgia for the Seventies, when Rock Bottom was released. I came out of hospital, got married to Alfie and, suddenly, that was my Spring, when I felt that the world was a welcoming place, an exciting place to be.

"I liked Alfie a lot - how do you say these things? - and we had a couple of years together before I was paraplegic, and then we got married when I came out of hospital, which was kind of her, really. It was a lot of work for her because she had spent all that time trying to avoid having a baby and she ends up with this incontinent giant, this alcoholic thing. But nevertheless I got nostalgic for that period, and when I look back it's got stardust all over it. Suddenly I felt like a dead person looking back on their life, and I thought, `I used to do so many things!', and I might as well carry on doing them while I'm still alive. After all, what's stopping me apart from a serious attitude problem?"

The accident had also impeded his progress with his principal instrument, the drums. "My favourite bit of the drum-kit was the hi-hat and I couldn't play it any more. It's taken me years to realise that you don't have to play hi-hat." Shleep is full of ticking cymbals, a signature sound that dates right back to Wyatt's drumming with the early Soft Machine, the great English psychedelic band of the Sixties, whose music pulsed with jazz rhythms and to which Wyatt's seemingly faux-cockney vocals (pleasingly, he speaks with exactly the same accent as he sings) brought a rare distinction. The group's first album from 1968 featured sleeve-notes by the American jazz musician and writer Mike Zwerin which recalled Wyatt in the South of France (the group were providing the soundtrack for a play by Picasso), riding in a car, his long hair billowing in the wind as he sang a note- for-note vocalise version of Charlie Parker's solo on "Donna Lee".

Despite the collapse of communism, Wyatt's political allegiances haven't really altered. "A lot of us have become bird-watchers, apparently, but I haven't changed at all. I shall die with Marxist-Leninist imprinted on my spine, like the letters in Blackpool rock. It's not a question of what I do or say; it's how the world feels to me. I don't expect other people to go along with it, but I will never recant - or whatever it is you do. I still don't see any other serious analysis of the world, and for me to abandon Marxism would be like the creationists deciding to ignore Darwin. I'm very grateful for it, and for me it was invaluable in the struggle against apartheid, which was one of the reasons I got involved, and Joe Slovo, I just think he was a giant among men really, a successful communist who saw it through."

Wyatt's parents were also important in helping to determine his political beliefs. His father, George Wyatt, was an industrial psychologist, and his mother, Honor Wyatt, was a producer for the BBC, on Woman's Hour among other things. "They were liberals, I suppose," he says, "and they always warned me about washing my hands after I picked up a copy of the Daily Express. For my parents, the Welfare State was the whole point of the century, what everything had been fought for since the dismal 1920s." His commitment to communism, however, came about in the Seventies, as both a response to the anti-apartheid struggle and as a reaction to the breakaway of the SDP from the Labour Party. "David Owen, Shirley Williams and that lot... when they peeled off, they seemed to take the intellectual establishment with them, and they left me with the GLC and Arthur Scargill, who I much preferred."

Though in no way a tract, the new album rings with images that unite the personal with the political, although Wyatt looks back on the hippie politics of the Sixties with disdain. "A mass narcissism that allowed people to forget the whole thing. The personal is political therefore if I'm nice... it just shades off into Barbara Cartland really." Nevertheless, he has begun to limit his own intake of reality, for reasons of self-preservation. "For example, I no longer read Amnesty International reports, I just can't bear to, and I've blinkered myself a bit; I just cannot allow this to happen to me, or to Alfie, again. I try to look on the bright side, and it's a desperate move, but I really like watching comedy on television: Father Ted and Frasier. It's like when Princess Diana died and you see all the flowers and you think, well, there's a nice side to the English, it makes a change from wanting to go out and kill the Argies. It makes you want to savour the moment, whereas 10 years ago I might have thrown it away."

`Shleep' is released on Hannibal Records this week

Robert Wyatt born 1945

The Soft Machine: Vol 1 (1968, re-released with Vol 2 on Big Beat CD). Amazing semi-lost dead sea scroll of English psychedelia

Matching Mole: Matching Mole (CBS, 1972) Wyatt's prog-rock outfit. The album features the love song `O Caroline', recently covered by Gorky's Zygotic Mynci

Rock Bottom (1974, Virgin) `An unqualified masterpiece' according to Mark Ellingham in The Rough Guide to Rock

Nothing Can Stop Us (1982, Rough Trade)

Classic `Red Thames' GLC-era recording

Dondestan (1991, Rough Trade) The last full Wyatt album, featuring arrangements of poems by Alfreda Benge

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Or do you wanna get serious? - The Guardian - October 10, 1997

OR DO YOU WANNA GET SERIOUS?

Jonathan Romney



Robert Wyatt makes music like a painter and can't play the piano like Liberace. Jonathan Romney meets him.

Four months ago, Robert Wyatt became a grandfather at the age of 52, and it's fair to say that the role suits him down to the ground. It's not just that he has the right beard for the part, a long shaggy mop that he sometimes tweaks into two forks, ideal for small children to tug. It's also that he makes the kind of music you'd rather hope a grandfather would make - melancholic, quizzical and fired by a mischief that those greybeards-in-denial the Rolling Stones could only dream of.

Wyatt probably has more stories to tell, too, than the average grandfather. 'There have been so many lives,' he muses, 'that sometimes it's hard to remember the correct one.' He started out in the 1960s, drumming and singing with English psychedelia's radical highbrows, the Soft Machine, followed by his own group Matching Mole. Then, in 1973, he fell from a fourth-floor window, breaking his back, and has been paraplegic ever since. He claims that was the making of him. 'As a drummer, I was dysfunctional. I couldn't be told what to do, and in my own group I couldn't tell other people what to do either. I didn't know how to function until I couldn't play drums any more, and that provided the answer.' Since then, Wyatt has forged a unique, diverse solo career. It began with a bizarre moment as a chart artist, reworking the Monkees' I'm A Believer, and took in a spell in the 1980s as purveyor of radical cover versions - from Cuban revolutionary anthems to Elvis Costello's Falklands memorial Shipbuilding, via Chic and Thelonious Monk. Then there were extraordinary LPs such as 1974's dense, harrowing Rock Bottom, setting Wyatt's racked lamentations amid a soundscape that sounded positively subaquatic.

It's been seven years since Dondestan, his last full-length record. But his new CD, Shleep, is his richest and most affecting in years.

Operating, geographically and temperamentally, far off the music-business superhighway, Wyatt works at his own pace, at least when circumstances allow. 'I've got an ideal picture of an artist's life - just a simple routine, pursuing ideas relentlessly week after week… I'm a bit of a hothouse flower. When there's fuss and bother I stop functioning.' The last few

years have brought more than a usual amount of fuss. He recently fell out of his wheelchair, breaking both legs and losing a year's working time. 'They put me in one of those wheelchairs where your legs stick straight out - and I can't play the piano sideways like Liberace.' A further problem was a psyche too finely tuned to the state of the nation. In the 1980s, Wyatt established himself as one of the more politically vociferous figures in British music, his songs inveighing against apartheid, the CIA and the Tories. He was a member of the Communist Party, until he lost faith with its attempts to repackage itself.

Political and mental burn-out eventually came in the form of a nervous collapse. 'The right-wing triumphalism of the eighties got to me. The propaganda war is designed to demoralise rather than kill, and it works.' He tried Prozac, which left him feeling stupefied but, typically, it was the political animal in him that pulled him through. 'I thought, look at all the good things - Mandela, all the corrupt governments like Zaire falling, and millions of vegetarians. It's very rude to all these people to be depressed.'


So you really, really

As Spice Girl mania begins to take over the world, an army of tribute bands is cashing in. **Alex Bellos** picks the best of the bunch

Or do you wanna get serious?

Robert Wyatt makes music like a painter and can't play the piano like Liberace. **Jonathan Romney** meets him

Throughout his career, Wyatt has been an adventurous collaborator, turning up on records by the unlikeliest range of artists -from agit-brass band the Happy End and folk-technoists Ultramarine, to Ryuichi Sakamoto, who overdubbed him onto the Rolling Stones' We Love You, pitched in improbable harmony with Brian Wilson. But on his own recent records, Wyatt has tended to work entirely solo. 'As a paraplegic, you want to prove you can take care of stuff yourself. Because I don't sell many records, I work as a cottage industry mostly. Sometimes I feel like Samuel Beckett, sometimes I feel like… someone much more garrulous.'

It was in that mood that Wyatt decided to socialise again on Shleep, his most extroverted, not to say tumultuous, record in years. Its cast includes trombonist Annie Whitehead, improv saxophonist Evan Parker, and Wyatt's long-standing kindred spirit Brian Eno: 'Seeing him in a studio is like seeing a dolphin in water. He's nice on land - but you should see him in water.' Wyatt's most consistent collaborator has been his wife Alfreda Benge, aka Alfie, who is also his manager, sleeve artist, beard-trimmer and occasional lyric writer. 'She's at least the other half of the story. It's like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo - she turned out to be the major figure of the two and I'm sure that's how it'll be with us.' Shleep features several of her poems, including the inscrutable A Sunday In Madrid. 'They seem to have a natural in-built music that comes out when you sing them,' Wyatt says. 'You know those Japanese bits of screwed-up paper which you put in water and they turn to flowers? Well, Alfie's words are like that - the music is already in them, you just have to wet them.' Although he's not one for the work ethic, Wyatt says that living with Alfie does stir him to a 'husband ethic': 'I occasionally have to go out and crack a bison on the head and drag it home for dinner. If it weren't for that discipline, I'd probably be like Jeffrey Bernard - concentrate on getting pissed and dissolute. My heroes are people like Artaud, who absolutely refuse to participate in any way in anything they're meant to do.' If one thread of continuity runs through Wyatt's career, it's the voice, matured but largely unchanged since the 1960s - a sort of distracted conversational whine, the plaintive sound of a costermonger lost in the woods. 'I don't consciously try to sing like me,' Wyatt says. 'When I started, I tried to sing like Steve Marriott and Van Morrison – even… Leonard Cohen, but none of it seemed to work. So I ended up making notes out of the way I talk. In the end the voice is different from other instruments and you listen to it in a different way.' Wyatt honed that voice on the first three Soft Machine LPs. Tradition has it that he was too much the maverick to stay in a band that was heading up an academic fusion path, but he has only recently, he says, begun to admit the real reason. 'I was a piss artist and they were very sober. I think that's why I was kicked out.' Wyatt's confidence never entirely recovered from the split, but he reacted by developed his own distinctive musical language - a style of keyboard playing, drumming and, most recently, trumpet, that somehow comes across as a direct notation of his psyche. 'If I see the tape as a canvas on

which I'm mapping out shapes and textures, I feel totally comfortable. I… just think about Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy and so on. Painting is DIY, because you don't think, 'Who do I know who does blue?' You just get out your tube of blue.'

Maybe it's this painterly approach that makes Wyatt's detractors see him as a figure of whimsy, a hippie dabbler. But in an industry where rhetoric rules, there's something remarkable about an artist who can produce work so traumatically raw and yet maintain a stance of amused distraction. "I don't have a particular thing about self-expression,' Wyatt says, "it's just that I sometimes hear things in my head that nobody else is going to play if I don't. If it weren't for that, I'd be quite happy listening to everyone else. '

Shleep is released on Hannibal/Rykodisc.

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"If I were Blackpool rock, I'd have Marxist-Leninist right through the middle." Robert Wyatt, radical singer and reclusive star, gives rare interview - New Statesman - September 26, 1997

"If I were Blackpool rock, I'd have Marxist-Leninist right through the middle."

Interview by Jonathan Coe

A thin wash of electric organ, voicing dense, minor chords. A shuffling backbeat on the drumkit, keeping perfect time but somehow sounding hesitant, tentative. An extraordinary lyric, part political lament, part nonsense poem ("hibernate in winter of our discotheque"). And over it all an impossibly frail but utterly compelling voice, somewhere between a high-pitched keen and a guttural rap - a voice that the Japanese composer Ryuichi Sakamoto once called "the saddest voice in the world", but which its owner likes to describe, more prosaically, as "Jimmy Somerville on Valium". This, for the benefit of new listeners, is the unmistakable soundworld of Robert Wyatt.

The song in question is called "Blues in Bob Minor" and comes from a new album - his first in six years - called Shleep. For those of us who have been carrying Wyatt's music in our heads since the 1970s, re-entering that soundworld is one of the sheerest pleasures life has to offer: it provides a bedrock of continuity, among other things, that helps to make sense of two decades of bewildering political and musical change.

By the most superficial standards Wyatt might look like a marginal figure; his sales figures in this country have never been big. But at the same time it's astonishing to realise how often he has quietly risen to the occasion, what a diligent musical witness he has been to the key events in our recent history: berating Falklands jingoism with his version of Elvis Costello's "Shipbuilding"; anticipating the mood of the new South Africa with the Swapo Singers and "The Winds of Change"; and, more recently, radicalising the dance scene by cropping up on Ultramarine's wonderful album United Kingdoms to produce the most unlikely but exhilarating fusion of nineties drum patterns with forgotten Victorian protest songs.

Shleep must rank as Wyatt's most diverse, accessible and accomplished album since the far-off days when he recorded for Virgin Records under the benign stewardship of a budding entrepreneur called Richard Branson. Its predecessor, Dondestan, was a bleak and beautiful record which found Wyatt singing and playing entirely alone, with minimalist backing tracks of keyboards and drums. But while the new songs are still about landscapes, states of mind and political processes, and once again take their lyrical view from the supple, expressive poems of Wyatt's wife, Alfreda Benge, there's now an intriguing roll-call of guest musicians: figures from the more experimental end of the rock spectrum, such as Brian Eno and Phil Manzanera, the jazzers Evan Parker and Annie Whitehead, the singer/percussionist Gary Adzukx and - perhaps the starriest contributor of all - Paul Weller, whose guitar work instills a fierceness and dynamism which is a new ingredient in Wyatt's music. How did that particular marriage come about, I wondered?

"Paul happened to be recording at the same studio," says Wyatt, "and I just left him a little scruffy note saying, 'How about it?'"

He senses that Weller felt a little nervous at first about exposing himself in this fragile musical environment, as have Wyatt's other collaborators in the past. "I suppose one

problem is that I tend to avoid a great wall of sound and so people tread more warily, somehow, when they step into my music. Perhaps that's why they find it scary. But then I've never asked them, so I've no idea. It might be the beard."

Wyatt's beard is indeed a prodigious growth: thick, grey, multidirectional and at least a foot long, it makes his resemblance to an Old Testament prophet so striking that to sit for long in his presence would be a fearsome experience if his manner weren't so relaxed and genial.

The surroundings also help: we are in the cloistered tranquillity of his back garden in Louth, Lincolnshire, where he and Alfie relocated in the late 1980s, propelled from the south of England by property prices and a growing sense of alienation. From the outside it's an unimposing terraced house, but inside it opens up, Tardis-like, to accommodate miles of shelving for tapes, books and records, along with Wyatt's sunlit music room and an upstairs studio for Alfie's painting. There are occasional ramps for the wheelchair to which Wyatt, now paraplegic, has been confined since his fall from a fourth-floor window in 1973.

I'm intrigued by this idea of pop musicians sending each other scruffy little notes. Such shyness seems of a piece with the diffident musical environment in which Wyatt's career began, when he first played drums with his Canterbury schoolfriends in a band called The Wilde Flowers, back in the mid-1960s. With a certain icy, hard-won detachment, he refers to his persona from those days as "the drummer biped".

"It was a great surprise, this whole business of singing: not really what I intended at all. Most of the musicians I knew absolutely refused to sing: they used to just sort of stand there in groups and if there was anybody listening we'd' be blushing with shame and shyness, fumbling at our various stringed instruments and so on. But I had the secret ingredient that my more prudish friends never took on, which was drink - I found that if you drank you lost all fear. So I did that and it seemed to do the trick."

Does it still do the trick? Wyatt chuckles. "Oh yes. As the late Keith Moon used to say: I still like a spot of sherry before dinner."

So there was no desire to be a rock'n'roll hero, then? "No it was just what you did at that time: at the end of National Service they suddenly invented beat groups, as far as I can work out, and we all had to troop along and trundle away in desultory fashion. In fact my main singing influences were Peter Pears, Doris Day singing "Once I Had a Secret Love", and Danny Kaye singing almost anything. I just preceded rock'n'roll, really, by a couple of years. I never had this desire - which I think is a bit onanistic - to see my own generation speak back to me. I never wanted other boys shouting at me: I couldn't stand it! I didn't mind Brenda Lee shouting at me, though."

Over the next few years The Wilde Flowers indirectly spawned a number of bands (Soft Machine, Caravan, Matching Mole, Hatfield and the North) whose polite but adventurous music stands up better than most from that dismal era.

For a while Wyatt was at the centre of his movement but in the mid 1970s there came a sea change. The accident cut short Wyatt's drumming career; the death of a close friend, the South African trumpeter Mongezi Feza, concentrated his mind on the horrors of apartheid; his blossoming relationship with Alfie drew him into anew and more highly politicised circle. After recording an intensely personal solo album, Rock Bottom, his political and musical thinking became notably more wide-ranging.

"My parents were what would now be called new Labour, but with Alfie I began to meet these impressively psychotic young Trots who could out-rampage any rock musician. I hadn't ever really come out of my musical dreamworld before then. Records I'd enjoyed in the late 1950s and early 1960s had included Max Roach's Freedom Now suite and Charlie Mingus's anti-racist songs, and so I knew whose side I was on if it came to it. But I hadn't realised it had come to it. I joined the Communist Party simply because it seemed the only really internationalist one, in the sense that it wasn't just about the English identity crisis, and all that garbage."

"Totalitarian Englishness", in fact, is one of Wyatt's pet hates. On his 1982 album Nothing Can Stop Us he recorded versions of "The Red Flag", the Cuban anthem "Caimanera" and the American a cappella number "Stalin Wasn't Stallin'". Shleep still has strong African and Latin American influences.

"I've never liked being told you must be more interested in England than in Cuba, say, just because you're English. Most of the people I knew who were in opposition were

traumatised by the previous Blair - Eric - who told everybody that the pro-Soviet left were just dysfunctional patriots. I think there is such an emotion as patriotism but to displace it demographically like that is quite refreshing, and sort of . . . surrealist. I was into avant-garde art long before I got into this politics lark and so it always seemed rather a good idea to be a patriotic Cuban sitting in Twickenham. I didn't see the problem at all.

"If I'm to have a cultural identity, then in a free society I'd like it to be one over which I have conscious control. It would be hovering somewhere between prewar Polish writers such as Bruno Schulz, Russian Jews such as George Gershwin, Marc Chagall and Ronnie Scott, and black Americans such as Lester Young and Miles Davis, thank you very much, and nothing to do with Surrey or hunting or public schools or football or any of the things I'm told are in my blood."

Nowadays Wyatt belongs to no political party and is as jubilant as anyone about new Labour's success, but he maintains that "if I were a bit of Blackpool rock I would have Marxist-Leninist right the way through the middle, in pink."

At which point I ask the obvious question: is making music an effective form of political intervention? Can music ever bring about political change?

Wyatt gives the question a more thoughtful answer than perhaps it deserves. "I don't act even on that hope, myself," he says, carefully.

"This is always discussed in the context of left-wing politics, isn't it? But there are certainly members of the conservative establishment who've used music as part of their camouflage, as it were. Songs such as the national anthem come to mind here, not to mention 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. But I sing about these things because it's a way of making contact with like-minded people. What I don't like when the cold rightwing winds are blowing is that loneliness, you know. I like to huddle together with other sympathetic souls."

Then the writer of "O Caroline" and "Sea Song" - two of the most beautiful love songs of the past 30 years - ponders and adds: "I don't know . . . It's the same with love songs. I mean if you write a love song, do you really think it's going to get the girl back? I shouldn't think so. But it's still worth a song, isn't it?"

"Shleep" is released on Rykodisc on 29 September; Wyatt's back catalogue will be reissued by Rykodisc in January 1998.

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The Minimal Robert Wyatt : A Group by Himself - International Herald Tribune - September 11, 1997

THE MINIMAL ROBERT WYATT : A GROUP BY HIMSELF

By Mike Zwerin


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The Minimal Robert Wyatt:A Group by Himself

By Mike Zwerin Published: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1997

PARIS: Robert Wyatt raised the level of playing his instrument to the point that being described as a rock drummer was no longer pejorative.

He was with a no-nonsense British band called The Soft Machine, named after a book by William Burroughs. They fused instrumental jazz and rock at least two years before Miles Davis. A CBS Records executive said that he couldn't figure out if they were the label's best-selling jazz band or its worst-selling rock group.

Wyatt played the drums and sang lead vocals at the same time. Not many drummers could do that then (or now, for that matter), certainly not in 11/4 time. He was also the first drummer in rock history to play bare-breasted. "EEEEE!" the groupies screamed. "Robert took off his shirt."

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However, his crazy caveman Elvis/Elvin persona gave way after he fell out of a window during a party. He has been in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down, for more than 20 years now. His stature is such that you find yourself looking up to him anyway. He is a living legend, a cult hero, a towering figure.

The music he has made since the accident has been described as "wry, plaintive, soulful, humorous, idiosyncratic, melancholic" and "ingenious." There were no other musicians on the albums. He wrote the songs and played all the backing instruments himself. They were, in the best sense of the term, minimal.

His album titles begin to tell the story by themselves — "Rock Bottom," "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard," "Old Rotten Hat," "The End of an Ear." "Shleep," ("Fat Chance to Dream"), Wyatt's latest, is being released this month.<

"Shleep" is on Hannibal, a label with a serious reputation. There are live musicians on it, and not just anybody at that. If you know anything about the European Community alternate jazz and rock scene, you'll be impressed by the names Brian Eno, Philip

Catherine, Annie Whitehead and Evan Parker. If not, be impressed anyway.

Now that he's a real live leader, he looks back on those rough days when he used to patch all the voices and instruments together all alone.

"It's quite funny being in a group all by yourself," he said. "I had all the same arguments with myself that real groups have. I was listening to the bassist and the drummer and I'd think, 'What are those two up to?' And it was all me. It's funny how many different characters you can find in yourself.

"I'm not even sure what culture I'm in: rock or jazz. My head is full of jazz but that's not quite the whole story. I'm not a rock musician; I can't work off power chords. I start the recording process on my little basic four-track machine. It's quite limited, but then I think that Beethoven could have written his late string quartets on a four-track. So there seems to be room for a lot of information."

Living legends and cult heroes generally involve unlikely name and discipline crossovers.

"My parents were part of a little gang of intellectuals," he says. "I guess you could call them bohemians. They were friends of [the poet and novelist] Robert Graves. I left school illiterate and drifted off to Deya on Majorca where Graves owned a house, and he put me up with his own kids. I think he was relieved that I wasn't one more young academic snob asking him about White Goddesses.

"He had Coltrane records, and we listened together. Graves approved of my wanting to be a drummer. He made me feel all right about liking the things I liked."

The Soft Machine was stranded in Saint Tropez in the summer of 1967 when the club in which they were to work went belly-up. Happener, director and poet Jean-Jacques Lebel hired the Soft for his production of the Pablo Picasso play "Desire Caught by the Tail," along with Gary Goodrow and other members of the Living Theatre. (Wyatt says that the high spot of the summer for him, however, was dining with Paul Desmond.)

Time magazine wrote it up, the French press caught on, the Village Voice covered it. Two years later, the Soft was opening for Jimi Hendrix on a tour of the United States (and opened for Davis the following year).

But then hippies began to overdose, move to Los Angeles, start work on projects they never finished and to write highly paid jingles for commercial TV. Wyatt moved to Twickenham, not far from where Peter Townshend lived on the banks of the Thames.

People would pass by and greet him indulgently as he sat in his wheelchair on Twickenham High Street selling Communist literature. He has a seductive smile, and he said that the party offered the only real choice.

He recorded with rock groups called National Health and Henry Cow, and with Carla Bley. He covered songs by Elvis Costello ("Shipbuilding"), Peter Gabriel ("Biko"), The Monkees ("I'm a Believer") and the Golden Gate Quartet ("Stalin Wasn't Stallin"').

Covering other people's material, he can reveal their hidden sides. His own material and the way he presents it is reminiscent of the French chanson — of Brel or Jacques Debronckart, for example. There are unusual degrees of drama, the arrangements are essential and the delivery often adds to the meaning.

In "Heeps of Sheeps" — written with his wife, Alfreda Benge, a painter, and arranged by Eno — counting sheep does not cure his insomnia: "Still not sleeping / I realized my goose was cooked."

The opening lines of "Blues in Bob Minor" go: "Roger's in the archive looking up casement / Martha's in the government digging up the basement."

The Wyatts live in a market town in Lincolnshire that is "meters deep in pesticide. To call it countryside is stretching the language." He bought a Pakistani pocket trumpet in a pawnshop.

He spends his sometimes long days playing along with records by Don Cherry, Dave Brubeck, Charlie Haden, Lucky Thompson and Slim and Slam.

"Wrong Movements," a scrapbook biography, has been published in Britain. Asked whether he's satisfied with his new record album, he replies with a chuckle: "I don't do reviews."

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Local Hero - Wire N° 163 - September 1997

LOCAL HERO



> Zoom

Words: Biba Kopf
Photography: Michele Turriani

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"The last record I made under my own name was while there was no elected prime minister," reminisces Robert Wyatt with a slight shudder as he recalls the grey years. "John Major was there by default, as it were, so I quickly made a record. When he actually got voted in, I was so depressed at the thought that another generation of English people were prepared to vote for a Conservative government that I went on strike for five years, and now he's gone I have made another record..."

Pausing long enough for the listener to weigh up the implications of his one man art strike, Wyatt leans forward, his face creasing into regularly exercised laughter lines, as he readies himself to toss a banana skin under the oncoming train of thought.

"At least that's what I would like to say, but that's a load of old bollocks!" he guffaws. "I just had a hard time collecting my thoughts throughout the 90s. They seemed to just dissipate.

But I have to earn a living," Wyatt continues, "so I just collected together scraps of tunes and words, with a lot of help from other people, other people's tunes, Alfie's words, and I found to my surprise that I had enough material for a record."

Fully animated, nothing can stop Robert Wyatt now. He is sitting in the garden of the ramshackle summer dacha he and his wife Alfie (née Alfreda) bought on the mouth of the Humber river near Cleethorpes, along with a house in Louth, Lincolnshire, with the proceeds from selling their Twickenham flat in the late 1980s. They might be far removed from the heart of things, but their thirst for a righteous fight hasn't diminished. On the way from the train station, Alfie, herself an artist and poet, rejoices in their recent victory over the developers by getting the land around their dacha - one of a colony that used to serve as a holiday retreat for Yorkshire miners - declared a conservation area.

If sunshine and a seaside victory were not enough, Robert Wyatt's excellent new album *Shleep* is just cause for celebration. Recorded at former Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera's studio, it

marks Wyatt's return to working with a range of different musicians, rather than trying to do everything himself on what Alfie calls his 50 quid keyboard. You can imagine what a difference a line-up including Brian Eno, Evan Parker, Annie Whitehead, Belgian guitarist Philip Catherine, and, most surprisingly, Paul Weller made, not only to the texture of the music, but also to Wyatt's spirit.

"The people who came in, they really livened me up," enthuses Wyatt, "because when you are on your own, I mean, not in a group, you can get a bit… abstract. You can lose your grip on that physical, visceral thing of making music, that momentum of working with other people. So it wasn't just their contributions that were valuable, it was the psychological effect, for me, of being back among other people."

What with its balance of musical invention and playfulness, song structure and the freedom for players like Parker to extend song form way beyond its usual parameters, and the sharp observation and Lear-like nonsense of its lyrics, Shleep reverses the spiral of despair which Wyatt's latter records seemed locked into. Indeed, at its most buoyantly optimistic it is as exuberant as "Love Makes Sweet Music", the very first single he made with Soft Machine some 30 years ago, especially when Wyatt's voice locks into - in his words - his "girlie chorus act" with Brian Eno (on "Heaps Of Sheeps") That same spirit carries through into the affectionate comedy of "The Duchess", featuring Parker's soprano and Eno's synthesizer. Thereafter, it takes a wistful tumble through a Wyatt/Catherine ballad and a vaguely troubled dream song co-written with former Soft Machine colleague Hugh Hopper. And then Wyatt slays you with the album's masterpiece, a faintly comic, yet heartbreakingly melancholy philosophical meditation called "Free Will And Testament". Over Paul Weller's guitar and slide revamp of the tune (originally written by Mark Kramer), Wyatt opens brilliantly with the lines, "*Given free will but within certain limitations/I cannot will myself to limitless mutations*", and concludes with the devastating plea, *"Had I been tree, I could have chosen not to be me/Demented forces push me madly round a treadmill/... Let me off please, I am so very tired.*"



The piece heads a canon of great Wyatt songs, among them Soft Machine's "Moon In June", Matching Mole's "Oh Caroline", "Signed Curtain" and "The God Song", the exile's lament of "Dondestan" and the whole of the *Rock Bottom* album. His voice threads such songs through successive tapestries of psychedelic, experimental, Rock In Opposition, post-punk, agitpop, jazz fringe and Electronica musics without ever tugging him away from the path he marked out for himself 30 years ago.

"Any consistency comes from the fact that my brain goes round and round similar preoccupations for years on end," Wyatt remarks in his characteristically self deprecatory manner. "I nag away at one or two thoughts like Winnie The Pooh, who was, in fact, my earliest role model. That's where any consistency comes from."

Robert Wyatt talks as he sings, just as you would expect of the man who, 30 years ago and then

some, introduced the once revolutionary notion of singing it like you talk it, while all around him were mimicking American R&B vocalists. In Soft Machine he drummed and sang the 'pataphysical alphabet in the sour-sweet pop countertenor of a defrocked Canterbury choirboy. Well, who's to know whether he ever really sat in a cathedral pew, but as a prime mover of the Canterbury scene, out of which emerged the pre-Softs group Wilde Flowers, Caravan and Kevin Ayers, Wyatt helped set the tone of a very English kind of psychedelia. And just as his voice - high, keening, sometimes deliberately flattened at the edges to vaguely comic effect or to up the melancholy quotient - refused to disguise its origins, it also expressed a range of emotions and concerns that must be the envy of classically trained countertenors who are invariably confined to freakish roles. After rigor mortis set in at Soft Machine, around the time when the thrilling, fuzzed rutting of their lead players started hardening into a bookish cousin to jazz rock, Wyatt was frozen out of the group he founded. All these years later his 'expulsion' still pains him.

"Well, I think it was Tom Waits who said, I slept through the 60s," ponders Wyatt "All I can say is, I certainly didn't do that but I envy him a great deal. I mean, for me, the things that came out of it were quite other. My son was born in 1966 so it wasn't a waste of time. Something came out of it. But I find it hard to imagine that I wouldn't have been happier somewhere else, with someone else, as far as the music went."

Punning on the French for Soft Machine he teased his ex-colleagues by naming his next group Matching Mole. With them he produced two albums - the first an erratic masterpiece of pioneering mellotron mood experiments wrapped around a pair of heartbreaking songs, "O Caroline" and "Signed Curtain"; and its sequel, *Little Red Record*, an occasionally brilliant melange of skits, bizarre song and racing fusion pieces. He was about to record a third when, in June, 1973, he fell out of a fourth floor window at a party and broke his back. The accident rendered him paraplegic. But straightaway during his stay in hospital he began formulating Rock Bottom, the album that launched his solo career proper.

"I don't think I have ever been a group musician really," Wyatt postulates "Now this sounds sarcastic, but I was liberated by paraplegia from having to be in a group. It was only really since being in a wheelchair that I have had to do what I feel most comfortable doing, which is doing what I do first, then finding the people most appropriate to the particular tracks. I mean, there was no way I could go on the road with a group featuring Paul Weller and Evan Parker and Annie Whitehead. I don't have to think like that anymore. There isn't that awful anxiety of having to fit every person to every tune and every tune to every person, because that is your group."

As evidenced by such a statement, humour and pain are never far apart in Wyatt's work. His music is so profoundly affecting because it's very much a direct expression of his feelings at the moment of recording. That's not to say he's the fringe's equivalent of a 70s singer/songwriter opening their veins to a community of damaged souls. On the contrary, the power of Wyatt's art resides in its understatement. So the post-accident *Rock Bottom* registers the shock, the enormity of the life change, the strange, weightless feeling of hospitalisation in submerged, slithering electronic melodies merging with a fuzz of horns over surging currents of percussion. As a drummer the accident forced him to seek more imaginative ways of keeping the music moving than by simply frog-marching it to a hefty bass-drum kick – thereby bringing it in line with most all late 20th century popular music. Besides, rockbeat has always been anathema to Wyatt's freer musical thinking – a statement borne out by the first-time issue of the British free music unit The Amazing Band's solitary recording, *Roar*, on which Wyatt drummed. "I can safely say with, not pride, but with defiance, that I have never in the end made a rock record in my life," Wyatt proclaims. "If you lean on my rhythm tracks you will always sort of get tripped up somewhere. I just love the ducking and diving of the jazz rhythm section too much. Mind you, I haven't checked back to see..."

If *Rock Bottom* was Wyatt's first landmark solo recording, the personal breakthrough happened earlier, on *End Of An Ear*, his first solo album proper, an intriguing experimental drum 'n' voice record produced in 1970 while he was still in Soft Machine. If he felt Soft Machine's hatchet faced response to their earlier slithering psychedelic orientation was forcing him out of his own group, he wasn't looking to cram *End Of An Ear* with stillborn Soft Machine songs. On the contrary, the record came across like Wyatt was out to prove he could easily outflank their avant garde manoeuvres. Pitched somewhere between Oskar Sala's soundtrack for Hitchcock's *The Birds* and Meredith Monk's vocal compositions, it scats swirls of multitracked vocals over slippery drum and piano-led rhythm figures.

"I learned a lot doing that record," recalls Wyatt. "It was the first time I had ever really gone into the studio and just treated the tape as a canvas upon which to paint. If anything, I have always felt more kinship with painters, like Chagall or Picasso, for example, rather than musicians and composers. That is very dangerous, and a lot of people have made the mistake of thinking that they can translate the visual arts into music. You have to test it musically, because if you only test it visually, you can come a bit of a cropper. Even so, in my head I still see music almost as much as

hear it, so just that feeling of treating the tape like a canvas was incredibly exciting and very euphoric, and it also broke my fear and intimidation of keyboard players. There is a sense of discovery which is often the most enjoyable thing in art for me, rather than just the business of manufacturing perfectly constructed objects."

The experience proved invaluable when the time came to record *Rock Bottom*. Even before the accident he found the notion of recording as a simulation of real-time live performance problematic. "As soon as I started singing the drummer would stop playing," quips Wyatt with mock bafflement. "It used to happen all the time. Never could work out why." On *Rock Bottom*, multitracking resolved that problem.

From early Soft Machine through Slapp Happy and on to Steve Beresford's various projects, humour has always been a strong feature of the British avant garde. Often as not it grates horribly, because it comes on like a typically British apology for getting serious. But in Wyatt's case, humour is integral to his being and therefore to his work. It emerges from somewhere deep inside the music, adds a wholly other dimension to it. Besides, who can resist opening Wyatt lines as divertingly daft, yet spot on, theologically speaking, as "*What on earth are you doing, God?*" from Matching Mole's "God Song"?

"I mean, I am a muddle-up, like lots of people," says Wyatt, getting serious for a moment. "I know I joke that deep down I am shallow, and I think that is right. In fact, one of the funniest things about recording *Shleep* was that though some of the songs had been written in the depths of despair, to coin a cliche, when I was recording them I never felt happier. So I felt a bit of a fraud by the time I had finished doing it, and in fact it is the most nursery rhyme-y things that most accurately reflect my feeling at the time I was recording.

"What I don't like about Anglophone culture is the relentless pressure to be anti-serious," he continues. "The idea that seriousness is suspect, that if anybody is serious, well, they haven't got laid recently, you know, lighten up, man, and all that stuff… My dad used to say there is nothing more ponderously suety than light music. And there is nothing that can make you more miserable than a series of bright major chords and so on, and that, quite apart from anything else, the desperate attempt to be liked has a very leadening effect.

"Well," Wyatt says, "it's not that I believe in seriousness or believe in silliness, I just think you have to not be scared to be true to how you feel, because there is a constant pressure to be cowardly in what you do, which knows no boundaries."



In terms of Wyatt's music, humour is his way of bringing to the bulk of the song the same fluidity and swing of his rhythm tracks. His shifting balance of weight and nonsense recalls the French surrealists' love affair with jazz, embodied in the writings of Jacques Prevert and Boris Vian. Wyatt's courageous commitment to silliness when applicable, in defiance of the more po-faced avant garde ordinances, is shared by one of *Shleep*'s unlikeliest guest musicians, Evan Parker. Other than *Shleep*, Parker's extremely rare song sessions pretty much amount to his appearances with Scott Walker and... Vic Reeves.

"I think Evan was Steve Beresford's idea," Wyatt smiles, Beresford being Reeves's musical arranger "Vic hadn't been told how venerable a character Evan Parker was, and in the middle of one of his long solos, he shouted out, 'Shut it, Parker! and Evan really broke up."

Wyatt knew Parker well enough to feel comfortable asking him to record on *Shleep* "I mean, if you are lucky enough to know Evan Parker, and think you can embarrass him into playing on your record, you do, don't you? Can you think of a better saxophone player? I can't." But he did have misgivings about what Parker's

sterner followers might feel about him playing on the wonderful nonsense track "The Duchess".

"I know that Evan, like a lot of musicians, is a fairly open-minded listener," explains Wyatt. "I mean, it was Evan who stocked me up on the gaps in my Dionne Warwick collection, for example. But people who follow Evan's music follow the philosophy of what he is doing very closely, because it is a very important part of the appreciation of it, and him playing along with me scraping away on Alfie's old Polish fiddle I don't think figures in any of these schemes. So I was a bit worried that they would think I had somehow blackmailed him into doing something, which wasn't quite the point. I wasn't worried about Evan himself; all he asks is that you are trying to do something and you're not following a formula."

Though Wyatt commands respect from so many corners, he himself is modest to a fault about his own pulling power. But in terms of the music he makes and who he chooses to make it with, it is not so much diffidence as a balance of his own tastes and desires with his ability to get along with the people he asks in to help realise them.

"This may be apocryphal, this story," begins Wyatt, by way of illustrating the point, "but I think I heard it from Evan, so I don't think it is too like gossip. It's about Derek Bailey, whom I admire very much. I think it was that bass guitarist, Jaco Pastorius, he said to Derek, 'Oh, that was a nice little bit of playing there', to which Derek said, 'Aw, that chord's been dealt with'.

"Well," he laughs, "I wouldn't really have the confidence to know which chords have and have not been dealt with. I had conversations like that with Mike Mantler [Wyatt has sung on a number of Mantler recordings, among them 1976's *The Hapless Child*]. He'd say, 'How can people go on using the common chord of a major arpeggio?', and I just blushed deeply, because I think that there is at least two and a half hours of my recordings that are just sustained major arpeggios. I love major chords, I could just go on and on, play C-E-G on an organ and just hold it. I do like the basic alphabet of the common musical language, as much as I like what has been done with it, which is why I have never abandoned it to just become an explorer of new music. So there are a lot of people I would never ask to play on my records, because I know that they would feel uncomfortable with chords that have been dealt with."

It's difficult to think of any other musician who has touched so many bases that are so far apart as Robert Wyatt. Normally you'd need special dispensation from the Pope or some other such higher authority to negotiate the difficult passage from The Monkees – Wyatt had a chart hit in the early 70s with a cover of "I'm A Believer" – to Ultramarine, via Michael Mantler. Even allowing for the diplomatic immunity that protects Wyatt from the usual inane accusations fired at anybody who moves so freely between genres, the mention of Paul Weller's presence on *Shleep* produces the biggest shock among Wyatt's more leftfield admirers. For his part, Wyatt is a longtime fan of both Weller's cussedness and his music, explaining that he got to meet one of his "handful of rock heroes" when Weller was demoing at Phil Manzanera's studio.

"I left him a note saying if you need that kind of old man sound on any old hum vocals, a bit of the old gravitas, I am available," Wyatt explains, "and I got a quite a witty note back saying, no, I don't really think I need that, but if you need a bit of strumming on anything, I'll come along and have a go. He was extremely courteous and helpful and he wasn't going to presume to put the Weller stamp on anything.

"The thing is," he goes on, "people think I want to write Robert Wyatt records, you know, here we go, Jimmy Somerville on valium. When he came in, I was a bit nervous, because I normally work with people I know, and I was also a bit nervous on his behalf, because he might feel that some of the things that I do are a bit on the whimsical side."

As it happens, Weller contributes to two of *Shleep*'s most stunning pieces - the aforementioned "Free Will And Testament" and "Blues In Bob Minor". The latter is a lengthy, linguistic tour de force modelled on Bob Dylan's tongue twisting "Subterranean Homesick Blues", except it's almost three times as long. Lyrically, it's an extremely witty, phantasmagorical dusting down of the foulness of British politics though, in keeping with the best post-surrealist traditions, anyone would be hard put to pin down the real point of the song.

Incidentally, it is also Wyatt's first blues. "A bit po-faced, I always thought that as long as apartheid actually existed I didn't really have a right to play the blues, but now Mandela has sorted that one out I thought I would have a go at this old blues business. Never too late to learn. I always thought the blues was an unbeatable chord sequence. I just think it is quite extraordinary how it is endlessly regeneratable. And I had the lyrics, which went a bit like that Capri ad, you

know, 'Papa?' 'Nicole' Well, mine went, "*Ah, Alfie, ah Alfie, ah Alfie...*". But when Alfie heard it, she said, you can't sing that, and I said I can, look, it's dead minimalist, it's really far out, and she said, no, you're being fucking lazy, write some words, people want something to listen to. So I said, OK, you want some fucking words, I'll give you some fucking words. So I just wrote a stream of words. I really like that tumbling, relentless rhythm [on "Subterranean Homesick Blues"] and I also like [Longfellow's poem] "Hiawatha", and the whole thing comes out of that. The reason I referred to myself in the title as Bob Minor is because to be any kind of Bob in that context is an honour, sir."

The six year silence that preceded *Shleep* was not the first to so punctuate Robert Wyatt's recording career. His first period in the wilderness occurred in the mid-70s after his two albums for Virgin, *Rock Bottom* and its sequel, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, which featured his outstanding version of Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra anthem "Song For Chen". Through an invitation from Rough Trade's Geoff Travis, Wyatt began his second great set of recordings - the series of singles now collected together on *Nothing Can Stop Us*. They include a superlative reinterpretation of Chic's "At Last I'm Free", a heartbreaking reading of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit", and a reclamation of the Cuban folk song "Guantanamera" from its Radio 2 void. In their original single form, they were intended as journalism, quickfire bulletins broadcast from Wyatt central to the increasingly ragged broad left alliance.

"Because I don't do gigs, everything I do has to be on record," says Wyatt. "It has this sort of posterity hanging over it, this dreadful weight. By doing them as singles, I wanted them to be almost like journalism, do them fast and then they should disappear. Old records are like old tattoos, you know, 'I love Martha true' and, like, oh no, I've been going out with Carol for two weeks, how can I get this fucking tattoo off? It wasn't my idea to compile them as an album, it was Geoff Travis's, so if it does hang together as a record, he can take credit for that."

The singles began a new phase of Wyatt songs and music. He composed the soundtrack for *The Animals Film*, a harrowing documentary examining the abuses of factory farming. More and more the melancholy and the wistfulness of Wyatt's music was being combined with a tough lyrical stance. The news that Robert Wyatt had joined the Communist Party hardly came as a surprise.

"I do like a kind of integrity of the song, that the words are true to the way that it is done, the tune that is true to the lyrics and all that kind of thing," he explains. "I do like that sort of consistency, although I play perverse games with it, but that is me being deeply shallow for you. In the mid-80s I was writing what sounded like mournful love songs whereas in actual fact they were vehicles to express my deep hatred of David Owen. Some people consider this a deceitful exercise, typical party hack behaviour, undercover work, but I don't think I have done that on this new record [Shleep]. I think there is a consistency between the tunes and the words, they come from the same source.





"But my lyrics, as far as I am concerned, have always been fairly unplanned, they always end up as being what happened when I started writing I have never made a deliberate attempt to either be political or not be political. In any case, politically I am a reactionary - if there is too much of one thing going on I try and tip the balance the other way If there is a lot of acid I need a lot of alkali, and so on. The fact that a lot of the songs ended up with political references is simply a reflection of the preoccupations and pressures which came out or were exorcised when I started to write them. Besides, I never in my own mind distinguish between the use of an utterly private image and a very public one. To me they are all in a way utterly private and then, as with all music, you just have to hope that they resonate somewhere beyond. To those people who say that image or phrase is contentious, I can only say, well, I don't have to fall in love with the same girl as Stevie Wonder when he is singing "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" to actually enjoy the

song."

As the 80s wore on, with the Conservative government systematically dismantling all the social gains of the post-war period, Wyatt became more and more worn down. His music, not unnaturally, reflected his spiritual downward spiral.

"I felt there were assumptions being made on my behalf, which if they included me, I would feel very invaded and interfered with, like after a prime minister described to foreigners the British way of life, I would like to write to every foreigner I knew to say, she doesn't mean me, she is not speaking on my behalf, and so, via songs, I can do that, I can exorcise that viscosity of being stuck to things which made my skin crawl, wash them off via a song...

"I really was depressed to a point of serious disorientation by the Conservative revival, not on principle, but because it was like... Having been born in 1945 I was constructed psychologically simultaneously with what they call the welfare state. My parents thought at last, after the chaos and misery of the past, the basis of a kind of human civilisation was being built in our time; nothing grand, you know, just the basic framework that makes civilised life possible, and the idea that that was being pulled from under our feet just made me very, very queasy.

"Depression," Wyatt asserts, "was a biological response to conditioning... It was just too ghastly, it was nightmarish, there was something hellish going on, and it entered my dreamworld. I mean, I do live in a dreamworld and I never haven't done. I wake up just long enough in the daytime to eat lots of food and then try to go back to sleep. I mean, I am not by nature rebellious or activist or anything like that, I am really self indulgent, but this business was stopping me enjoying myself, it totally invaded and disrupted my world and I had to exorcise it as best I could. And I desperately looked around for sympathisers.

"People say, you only preach to the converted. Well, that's good enough for me. The reassurance of likeminded souls keeps me going."

The funny thing is, the deeper Robert Wyatt trawls the depths of his memory of a painfully difficult decade that left him as depressed as the Left was demoralised, the faster and funnier flows his analysis of the Right's political impact on a very human condition.

"I mean, I hope I am wrong, I don't wanna be right," he concludes. "What pessimist wants to be right? I am not a fucking pervert! Jesus Christ, if anyone wants to persuade me that I am wrong, please do. Take this weight off my mind, set me free. Blondes just wanna have fun."

Shleep is released by Hannibal (through Rykodisc/Vital) on 29 september. The Amazing Band's *Roar* is available nox on FMR (through Harmonia Mundi). Thebulk of Robert Wyatt's back catalogue is due to be reissued by Hannibal early next year.

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The unedited transcript of Biba Kopfs interview with Robert Wyatt. A feature based on this interview appeared in issue #163 of The Wire

BK: You have just released Shleep, your first album for six years. Why has it taken so long?

RW: It might look as if. . . the last record I made under me own name was while there was no elected prime minister, and John Major was there by default as it were, I quickly made a record. When he actually got voted in, I was so depressed at the thought that another generation of English people were going to vote for a Conservative government that I went on strike for five years and now he's gone I have made another record. That's what I would like to say, but probably that's a load of old bollocks. I think, I just had a hard time collecting my thoughts throughout the 90s. They seemed to just dissipate. But I have to earn a living, so I just collected together scraps of tunes and words, with a lot of help from other people, other people's tunes, Alfie's words, and I found to my surprise that I had enough material for a record. And we remembered that Phil Manzanera said years ago to come down and try out his studio any time I liked. I gave him a ring, went down and did them.

WORK PRACTICES

RW: Some of my things are just sort of jokes, like, 'my wife is fat and thin', I mean, that was a kind of mood, that was the kind of feeling I was getting when I was recording, I was getting merrier and merrier instead of downer and downer ,and the merrier I get, the kind of sillier, more infantile, lightweight and childish I get, and the more I like silly games, and it is only when things are really going wrong that I dig deeper to find out what the problem is. And because the tunes are written over quite a few years, it is probably a bit more varied because of that. It wasn't written in one state of mind.

ENO IN THE STUDIO

RW: No, but when Brian came in, we did some stuff together, because he sort of turned it upside down, that particular tune, "Heaps Of Sheeps", and reworked it, and we did a bit of singing together on that, because we haven't done our girlie chorus act since Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy. It was great. The people who came in, they really livened me up, because when you are on your own, and not in a group, not on the road, you can get a bit. . . abstract, you can lose your grip on that visceral thing of music, that physical thing of making music, the momentum of working with other people. So it wasn't just their contributions that were valuable, it was the psychological effect, for me, of being back amongst other people.

PAUL WELLER

RW: Well he had been doing some demos and a bit of recording, in fact, at Phil's studio, he lives fairly near there, I believe. When I first tried to book it, Weller was there, so I left a note saying if you need that kind of old man sound on any old hum vocals, a bit of the old gravitas, I am available, and I got a quite a witty note back saying, no I don't really think I need that, but if you need a bit of strumming on anything, I'll come along and have a go. He was extremely courteous and helpful and he wasn't going to presume to put on anything. The thing is people think I want to write Robert Wyatt records, you know, here we go, Jimmy Somerville on valium.

When he came in, I was a bit nervous, because I normally work with people I know, and I was also a bit nervous on his behalf, because he might feel that some of the things that I do are a bit on the whimsical side. But where I thought he might not necessarily go along with the words, but at least he could acknowledge that there was an attempt at making some kind of serious point along the way, then I would ask him.

THE ENGLISH AND SERIOUSNESS

RW: I mean, I am a muddle up, like lots of people. I know I joke that deep down I am shallow, and I think that is right, in fact one of the funniest things about recording was that though some of the songs had been written in the depths of despair, to coin a cliche, when I was recording them I never felt happier, so I felt a bit of a fraud by the time I had finished doing it, and in fact it is the most nursery rhyme-y things that most accurately reflect my feeling at the time I was recording. . .

What I don't like about anglophone culture is the relentless pressure to be anti-serious, in a way, the idea that seriousness is suspect, that anybody is serious, well they haven't got laid recently, you know, lighten up, man, and all that stuff. My dad used to say there is nothing more ponderously suety than light music. And there is nothing that can make you more miserable than a series of bright major chords and so on, and that, quite apart from any thing else, the desperate attempt to be liked has a very leadening effect. It's not that I believe in seriousness or believe in silliness, I just think you have to not be scared to be true to how you feel, because there is a constant pressure to be cowardly in what you do, which knows no boundaries.

EVAN PARKER

RW: I don't know, I mean, if you are lucky enough to know Evan Parker, and think you can embarrass him into playing on your record, you do, don't you? Can you think of a better saxophone player? I can't. I know that Evan, like a lot of musicians, is a fairly open-minded listener. Evan Parker stocked me up on the gaps in my Dionne Warwick collection, for example. But other musicians are more like the Jesuits or Sufis of their particular train of thought, you know, who will not transgress the unwritten laws that they have written for themselves. People who follow Evan's music follow the philosophy of what Evan is doing very closely, because it is a very important part of the appreciation of it, and him playing along with me scraping away on Alfie's old Polish fiddle I don't think figures in any of these schemes. So I was a bit worried that they would think I had somehow blackmailed him into doing something, which wasn't quite the point. I wasn't worried about Evan himself, all he asks is that you are trying to do something and you're not following a formula.

BK: You are famous for being able to sing Charlie Parker solos note perfect, could you also sing Evan Parker solos?

RW: [Laughs] No fucking way! What I can't do, I don't now any fucking singer who can circular breathe, he'd die of asphyxiation. That's absolutely right, he takes thing beyond what I know the

voice can do. Well, Coltrane also already did that, but particularly the point with Evan is, he really starts beyond somewhere even where you could get to and takes it from there, that's the great thing about him. He is a giant, Evan, there is a consistent trajectory, that he has been carving year in, year out, it is a monumental thing, you know, I think he will be seen as one of these figures.

PARKER'S TRACK RECORD WITH WYATT AND VIC REEVES

RW: Yeah, well, he played on the Vic Reeves thing, I think, because, I think it was Steve Beresford's idea. Vic Reeves hadn't been told how venerable a character Evan Parker was, and in the middle of one of his long solos, he shouted out, shut it, Parker! and Evan really broke up.

DEREK BAILEY AND CHORDS THAT HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH

RW: This may be apocryphal, this story, but I think I heard it from Evan, I don't think it is too like gossip, about Derek Bailey, whom I admire very much. I think it was that bass guitarist, Jaco Pastorius, he said to Derek, oh that was a nice little bit of playing there, to which Derek said, aw, that chord's been dealt with. Well, I wouldn't really have the confidence to know which chords have and have not been dealt with. I had conversations with Mike Mantler like that. He'd say, how can people go on using the common chord of a major arpeggio, and I just blushed deeply, because I think that there is at least two and a half hours of my recordings that are just sustained major arpeggios. I love major chords, I could just go on and on, play CEG on an organ and just hold it. I do like the basic alphabet of the common musical language, as much as I like what has been done with it, which is why I have never abandoned it to just become an explorer of new music. So there are a lot of people I would never ask because I know that they would feel uncomfortable with chords that have been dealt with.

UNCOMFORTABLE HYBRIDS

RW: I can safely say with, not pride, but with defiance, that I have never in the end made a rock record in my life. If you lean on my rhythm tracks you will always sort of get tripped up somewhere. I just love the ducking and diving of the jazz rhythm section too much, I haven't checked back to see. . .

PICASSO, CHAGALL ETC

RW: If anything I have always felt more kinship with painters, like Chagall or Picasso, for example, rather than musicians and composers. That is very dangerous, and a lot of people have made the mistake of thinking that they can translate the visual arts into music. Even so, in my head I still see music almost as much as hear it. But you have to test it musically, because when I have only tested it visually, I have come a bit of a cropper, as on End Of An Ear, for example, where I treated the tape as a canvas to paint patterns on, well, you can't really do that, because music and painting are different senses towards the same thing, so you have to be really respectful of the uniqueness of music.

END OF AN EAR

RW: I learned a lot doing it, it was the first time I had ever really gone into the studio and just treated the tape as a canvas upon which to paint, so just that feeling was incredibly exciting and very euphoric, and it also broke my fear and intimidation of keyboard players. I had to play so much piano for example and that broke the ice in terms of playing me own piano bits. There is a sense of discovery which is often the most enjoyable thing in art for me, rather than just the business of manufacturing perfectly constructed objects. Some things are more important than that. I never had the courage of my convictions, which you need if you are doing things that have never been done before, my nerve would come in fits and starts, so End Of An Ear was a break through in terms of nerve, just the courage to take the tape and not feel constricted by all the rules and regulations of what music should and should not be, and I have been using that experience ever since.

THE SOFT MACHINE EXPERIENCE

RW: Well I think it was Tom Waits who said, I slept through the 60s. All I can say is, I certainly didn't do that but I envy him a great deal. I mean, for me, the things that came out of it were quite other. My son was born in 1966 so it wasn't a waste of time. something came out of it. I think, I find it hard to imagine that I wouldn't have been happier somewhere else, with someone else, as far as the music went.

SOLO

RW: I don't think I have ever been a group musician really. Now this sounds sarcastic, but I was liberated by paraplegia from having to be in a group. It was only really since being in a wheelchair that I have had to do what I feel most comfortable doing, which is doing what I do then finding the people most appropriate to the particular tracks, I mean, there was no way I could go on the road with a group featuring Paul Weller and Evan Parker and Annie Whitehead. I don't have to think like that anymore. there isn't that awful anxiety of having to fit every person to every tune and every tune to every person, because that is your group.

MATCHING MOLE

RW: Well, I have to say that, although the first one is called a Matching Mole record, people like Phil Miller are bit bemused, he wasn't disgruntled about it, but he said, well it was very much Robert Wyatt's group, that's the way he put it, or, he called it a group, he talks democracy. . . But the fact is that is I created a skeleton framework upon which I constructed a sequence of events around the wondrous mellotron and so on. Maybe it was a group recording, but the production was where I took the opportunity to take over, and there was nothing the group could really do about it. So, feeling a bit sheepish about that, on the second Matching Mole record I very consciously gave them their head, you know, but even by the way I said that, you can tell, he gave them their head, you know, we were actually an equal group of equal people in every possible way...

Live it is either/or, you know, I start singing and the drummer stops playing, I mean, fuck, whenever I start singing, the drummer gives up. This was no good, I wanted a drummer who could stick by me in thick and thin, and recording was the only way.

Then again I didn't know what to do with that group, but spending 1973 in hospital resolved that one. I had other things to think about. How I kept myself together I just really kept working on the record in the hospital. But then there was no way I could ask the others to hang on. People had livings to earn. Matching Mole had no money, the other lot got that. So there was no slack, I couldn't keep them hanging around. Remembering how I worked on End Of An Ear, it was like I found the right way to work for when I came out. It was not so much a solo thing, because I depended heavily on other people's ideas and input, it was more that you could take appropriate measures for each tune, rather than think, oh god, it's 20 minutes since we had an alto solo, we better give him another one kind of thing.

As it happened after that, I did start to lose contact with other musicians and became more and more hermetically sealed in my own preoccupations. I had got to the point where I thought, I can't communicate with other musicians, you know. I had actually got to the point where I thought that I had chosen the wrong idiom, I shouldn't have been a musician, that I should have learned to draw, become a painter, like I had got stuck in the wrong world. At least until I got to loosen up in the last year, and start working again with other people. Just, like, ventilate the music a bit with these other people. Recording Shleep actually took me by surprise. I felt quite happy, it felt perfectly natural, a great relief.

WHITE MAN'S SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES

RW: A bit po-faced, I always thought that as long as apartheid actually existed I didn't really have a right to play the blues, but now Mandela has sorted that one out I thought I would have a go at this old blues business. Never too late to learn. I always thought the blues was an unbeatable chord sequence. I just think it is quite extraordinary how it is endlessly regeneratable. And I had the lyrics, which went a bit like that Capri ad, Papa Nicole, Papa Nicole, Papa Nicole, well it went ah Alfie, ah Alfie, ah Alfie. . . But when Alfie heard it, she said you can't sing that, and I said I can, look, it's dead minimalist, it's really far out, and she said, no you're being fucking lazy, write some words, people want something to listen to, so I said, OK, you want some fucking words, I'll give you some fucking words, so I just wrote a stream of words, and I really like that tumbling relentless rhythm and I also like Hiawatha, and the whole thing comes out of that. The reason I referred to myself in the title as Bob Minor because to be any kind of Bob in that context is an

honour, sir.

ALFIE'S WORDS

RW: In those cases, it is always me leafing through either her poetry books or scrap notebooks and just picking out images or phrases that she happens to write - it is a nice coincidence with what she writes is that the images are often very familiar to me, because we've sat side by side and seen these things together. Also her words have a happy knack of sounding very good. They're very out-loudable, very singable, and they really help me to find a thread to tunes that are swimming around in my head. They are actually what got this record off the ground, really.

THE SINGER, NOT THE SONG

RW: I do like a kind of integrity of the song, that the words are true to the way that it is done, the tune that is true to the lyrics and all that kind of thing, I do like that sort of consistency, although I play perverse games with it, but that is me being deeply shallow for you! In the mid 80s I was writing what sounded like mournful love songs whereas in actual fact they were vehicles to express my deep hatred of David Owen. Some people consider this a deceitful exercise, typical party hack behaviour, undercover work, but I don't think I have done that on this new record I think there is a consistency between the tunes and the words, they come from the same source.

PERVERSE IS POLITICAL

RW: My lyrics, as far as I am concerned, have always been fairly unplanned, they always end up as being what happened when I started writing. I have never made a deliberate attempt to either be political or not be political. In any case, politically I am a reactionary — if there is too much of one thing going on I try and tip the balance the other way. If there is a lot of acid I need a lot of alkali, and so on. The fact that that turned into quite a lot of songs with political references is simply a reflection of the preoccupations and pressures which came out or were exercised when I started to write them. Besides, I never in my own mind distinguish between the use of an utterly private image and a very public one. To me they are all in a way utterly private and then, as with all music, you just have to hope that they resonate somewhere beyond. To those people who say that image or phrase is contentious, I can only say, well, I don't have to fall in love with the same girl as Stevie Wonder when he is singing "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" to actually enjoy the song.

Personally, I am quite capable of enjoying things where the intention is quite alien to me, like for example, I love mosques and synagogues, I think they are wonderful. . . One English composer I can easily admire is John Tavener, even though philosophically speaking it is hard to imagine anybody who I would feel more alienated from, but the fact of the matter remains that it seems to stimulate him into a way of making music that I find utterly empathetic. And I hope that people would go along with me in that same way. I am not a recruiting officer, so if people object or take offence, then, in the immortal words of Paul Weller, they can fuck off.

DOWNWARD SPIRAL INTO DEPRESSION CHARTED BY SONGS

RW: Certainly I felt there were assumptions being made on my behalf, which if they included me, I would feel very invaded and interfered with, like after a prime minister described to foreigners the British way of life, I would like to write to every foreigner I knew to say, she doesn't mean me, she is not speaking on my behalf, and so, via songs, I can do that, I can exorcise that viscosity of being stuck to things which made my skin crawl, wash them off via a song...

CHARLIE HADEN

RW: If I were to nominate a prize for the musician of my lifetime, it would be Charlie Haden. Certainly his Liberation Orchestra, the things he did with Carla Bley. Now Carla is nothing like Charlie Haden, he is a very serious, solemn sort of chap, and she is so utterly mischievous and playful, now her arranging with his gravitas is a knockout combination. He is very rigorous musically. He started out playing in the best there was, in the original Ornette Coleman Quartet, so when he started to participate in the Cold War and not go along with his official country line, he did so very rigorously. But there again it is always music first, and I don't think you have to be

interested in what the subject matter originally was to enjoy those records. So if anything was an inspiration or a sort of guide of how to approach things it would be Charlie Haden, more than any singer of songs.

NOTHING CAN STOP US

RW: The singles were done very quickly, one on the heels of another, the consistency only comes from the fact that my brain goes round and round similar preoccupations for years on end. Like Winnie The Pooh — in fact he was my earliest role model really — I nag away at one or two thoughts. That would be where any consistency comes from. Because I don't do gigs, everything I do has to be on record and it has this sort of posterity hanging over it, this dreadful weight. By doing them as singles, I wanted them to be almost like journalism, do them fast and then they should disappear. Old records are like old tattoos, you know, I love Martha, true and, like, oh no, I've been going out with Carol for two weeks, how can I get this fucking tattoo off. It wasn't my idea to compile them as an album, it was Geoff Travis's, so if it does hang together as a record, he can take credit for that.

BESIEGED

RW: I really was depressed to a point of serious disorientation by the conservative revival, not on principle, but because, it was like. . . well, I still feel queasy by the idea of students having to go into debt before they even start working, or the fact that I don't even have the choice of a public dentist in my town anymore. Having been born in 1945 I was constructed psychologically simultaneously with what they call the welfare state. My parents thought at last after the chaos and misery of the past the basis of a kind of human civilisation was being built in our time, nothing grand, you know, just the basic framework that makes civilised life possible, and the idea that that was being pulled from under our feet just made me very very queasy. Depression was a biological response to conditioning. . . It was just too ghastly, it was nightmarish, there was something hellish going on, and it entered my dreamworld. I mean, I do live in a dreamworld and I never haven't done. I wake up just long enough in the daytime to eat lots of food and then try to go back to sleep. I mean, I am not by nature rebellious or activist or anything like that, I am really self-indulgent, but this business was stopping me enjoying myself, it totally invaded and disrupted my world and I had to exorcise it as best I could. And I desperately looked around for sympathisers.

People say, you only preach to the converted. Well, that's good enough for me. The reassurance of likeminded souls keeps me going.

POLITICS OF PESSIMISM

RW: The reason I had to sign up with a political party most identified with the enemy was only because it was a pathetically lost cause, and I wanted to at least give it a better funeral than it was going to get, because I still think it was the noblest experiment in human history, the Soviet thing, and its failure is nothing to be pleased about. Yet there are now people in what were once staunchly right papers saying that the free hand of market forces cannot be reliably benevolent in all cases everywhere. For this blazing insight I am deeply grateful. I don't feel so alienated just for that simple fact being acknowledged. . .

What pessimist wants to be right? I mean, I hope I am wrong, I don't wanna be right. I am not a fucking pervert! Jesus Christ, if anyone wants to persuade me that I am wrong, please do. Take this weight of my mind, set me free. Blondes just wanna have fun.

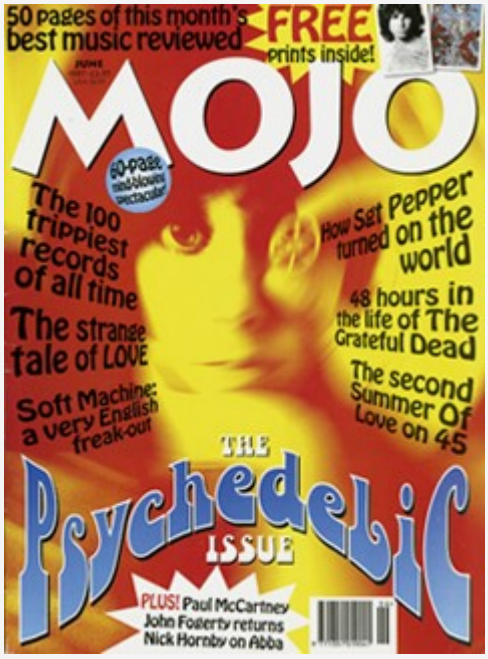
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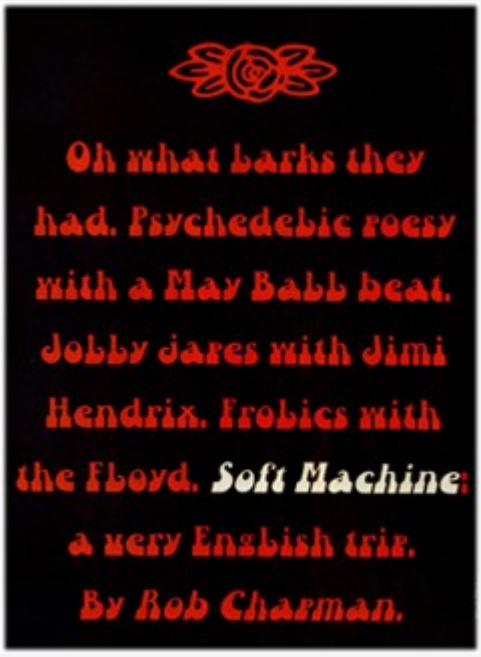
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Pot-Head revisited - Mojo - N°43 - June 1997

SOFT MACHINE : POT-HEAD REVISITED







"ALL I REMEMBER WAS the sound of change hitting the floor as I passed out. These centimes had fallen out of my pocket as I fell flat on my back. I saw a map of a dark island but it was lit from underneath by luminous colours. I'd never seen anything like it."

Some flower child describing his psychedelic rite of passage in '67? A tourist who'd stumbled inadvertently into the UFO Club, perhaps? No, this was the summer of '63. Frank Ifield was Number 1 in the hit parade, but this particular Aussie, Daevid Allen, was in Paris acting as guinea pig for one of Bill Burroughs's fiendish experiments. "They'd tested the dream machine on me, you see. It was a light bulb suspended in the middle of a piece of cardboard. Tiny holes had been punched in the card, because it had been calculated that if you closed your eyes, these perforations turning at the exact circumference of a 78 rpm record would match your brain rhythms. When they coincided you went into incredible colour hallucinations."

Buried beneath Allen's more publicised associations with cosmic tomfoolery and pot-headed pixies is a richer legacy. The softly spoken, eccentrically attired, gangly old hipster who sits telling me

tales in his Glastonbury pad is in fact one of the great lost links between the beats and the hippies. And the band he co-founded, the Soft Machine, named after a Burroughs novel, was the underground before there *was* an underground.



Previous page, Soft Machine in Dulwich Park, South London, 1967. Above: wowing St Aygulf, France. Opposite, the Softs at home, Dulwich, 1966: from top, Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt, Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers.

IN THE EARLY '60S, A TIME WHEN Britpop still meant Bert Weedon, Allen was holed up in the Beat Hotel, a six-storey block on the Left Bank run by the redoubtable Madame Rachou, a former employee of French intelligence, now adept at diplomatically keeping the gendarmes at bay while her clientele of exiled poets, painters, and dope dealers did their stuff. The residents included Kerouac, Gysin, Orlovsky, and Ginsberg. "A scene in every room," as Allen puts it. His first collaboration with Burroughs came in 1962 when he provided the music for a dramatisation of The Ticket That Exploded. "I was the friendly straight with those guys," he grins. "Acid used to arrive direct from the Sandoz factory in those days. You took about 18 of these little tablets. There was another one called Romilar that we took in Ibiza, which had some unknown psychedelic agent in it, and put you in the weirdest states. The locals used to call us the Romilar army."

But it wasn't all kaleidoscopic colours and dream machines. Slow dissolve to teenage stowaway on the first ship out of Melbourne harbour... Allen had left his homeland in 1960 vowing never to return. "They were still killing aborigines like kangaroos," he winces. "Those red-neck dudes from the deep north could hardly tell the difference. It was a horrific atmosphere and it's still not much spoken about. I arrive in Paris and next thing I'm sitting at the end of the piano with Bud Powell playing." Allen namechecks the jazz idols he saw in Paris: Mingus, Monk, Dolphy, Rollins. Then he hitched to England and ended up lodging at Wellington House in Canterbury. This haven of creativity was owned by broadcaster Honor Wyatt and her second husband, psychologist George Ellidge. Bohemians of the old school, they had connections with poet Robert Graves and his artistic colony in Deya, Majorca. Allen immediately bonded with their precociously talented 15-year-old son Robert. "We had the same record collection, so instantaneously we were speaking the same language," says Allen of the future Softs drummer. "He was a prodigy then, with his painting, piano playing and everything. Robert was the same intellectual age as me – which doesn't say much for me, of course – but he was in a very advanced headspace for his years."

While others dreamed of skiffle, Wyatt and his schoolchums Hugh and Brian Hopper and

Mike Ratledge lived in full experimental mode. Hugh Hopper tentatively learning Charlie Haden bass lines off Ornette Coleman records, recalls a Wyatt household full of eclectic noise, ranging from Bartok to bebop, Stravinsky to Varese. "Let's just say that there was no way that Robert was going to be a bank clerk," he adds. Hugh, Brian and Mike spent the early 1960s making rudimentary tape loops and surfing the ether for obscure jazz on American Forces Network and the BBC Third Programme (since renamed Radio 3), "which carried a much more avant garde output than it does today," he remarks pointedly. "But jazz was made much more accessible by the arrival of Daevid Allen, who turned up with about 500 significant records – Monk, Mingus, Miles, Cecil Taylor, etc – which then circulated to everyone's house."



Already no cultural slouches themselves, all of his future co-collaborators cite Allen as the galvanising force. Tape loops? This man had made tape loops with the loop guru himself, Terry Riley. "They were all 16/17," Allen reflects. "I was already the seasoned traveller, their big brother beatnik, so they saw me as a role model. Of course," he adds ruefully, "that worked against me later on. You always have to kill your role models."

Nights of atonal excess round at Wellington House and at the Hoppers' equally tolerant parents eventually blossomed into a distinctive local sound. A whole mythology has subsequently sprung up around the fact that future Soft Machine and Caravan members once shared the same postal district. "An accident of geography," Mike Ratledge pooh-poohs. "I get these German journalists asking me about the 'Canterbury music school'," says Hugh Hopper, "and with hindsight I'm sure it sounds like a great place. In fact it was a small, quite conservative market town where nothing happened. There wasn't even a university until the late '60s."

What their social milieu did allow was for the future Softs to pursue their own unique musical agenda with impunity. Isolated without being isolationist, indulgent without being insular, eclecticism was the natural order of things. It's like that Tom Wolfe remark," Ratledge says. "In seeking a personal style you plagiarise so widely from everybody that you end up with an individual style." I then get a very informative treatise on modality and process, thoroughly befitting a man who spent the Merseybeat years reading music at Oxford.

During this period, Allen, Hugh Hopper, Wyatt



and Ratledge had a go at being a jazz group. They secured a residency at Pete and Dud's Establishment Club in Soho but, being slightly to the left of Oscar Peterson, they got rumbled as imposters by the supper club clientele and were slung out after four nights. They also played an ICA gig with Burroughs and Gysin, and a jazz and poetry night at the Marquee, the largely unflattering results of which, complete with Allen's delightfully self-deprecating sleevenotes, are available on a Voiceprint CD *Live 1963*.

Figuring that, despite his hep credentials, he wasn't going to be the next Charlie Christian or Wes Montgomery, Allen decided to become a full-time poet and headed for Robert Graves's place in Deya. He fondly recalls nights spent busking and reciting under the stars and free accommodation courtesy of Graves. It was on one of these frequent sojourns in the islands that some unlikely pop dreams began to formulate. "Kevin Ayers had some Beatles records and 'Still I'm Sad' by The Yardbirds. We did an acid trip and I thought, Bugger it, maybe I can make a living out of what I was doing before and call it pop. But first I had to adapt my guitar playing to the language of rock'n'roll."

One slight inconvenience – Allen hated rock'n'roll. To this day he wears a T-shirt on-stage with a picture of Elvis captioned "Dead Redneck". "Buddy Holly, *Rock Around The Clock*, all that stuff– I loathed it," he says matter of factly. Ratledge shared this sentiment. "We began to get interested in it as a cultural excitement rather than a musical one," he notes. "Forming a band was a licence to do whatever you wanted to do and call it something saleable – pop music. Kevin was the only one with a real perspective on pop music when we started."



Brought up in the Far East, the 17-year-old Ayers had moved to Canterbury in 1961. "I'd been sent from London on a drugs bust. A policeman put his hand in my pocket and pulled out a lump of hash which I could never have afforded and said, 'Ello 'ello, what's this then?'. I was sent to the Ashford Remand Centre for two weeks. When the case came to court they threw it out for lack of evidence, and the magistrate said I should leave London because it was obviously a bad influence." So how did the teenage pot fiend fall in with the Canterbury avant garde? "I was a musical ignoramus, still am actually. All I'd ever heard was The Sound Of Music and Chinese pop in Malaya.

"I was drawn to Daevid and Robert and Mike Ratledge and the Hoppers because they had wider interests than anyone else around. Daevid was a complete shock to the system. He had what were for that time outrageous alternative views. He was one of the originals. At that time, though, he was more into poetry readings than songs, and I hated poetry readings."

Already adept at drinking wine and having a good time, Ayers's first serious musical

collaboration with the Canterbury set was playing bass and guitar with the semi-legendary Wilde Flowers. "The name had nothing to do with flower power," Robert Wyatt told Jonathon Green for his book Days In The Life: Voices From The English Underground 1961-1971; "We lived in the country and Hugh copper had a book called Wild Flowers, and I think he thought it up." As usual there was no grand design. Future Caravan and Softs members came and went on a whim. Ayers, Wyatt and Hugh Hopper would go off and join Allen in Paris or Majorca or Morocco at the drop of a busker's hat. Ratledge stayed put in Oxford, getting his BA. Brian Hopper's compilation of Wilde Flowers rehearsals and demos, released in 1994, reveal an eclectic blend of soul, jazz, and avant garde pop, the sound of several bands in search of an identity. But early Softs motifs were evident even then: the Hopper brothers' quirky lyrics and angular arrangements, Ayers's own uncluttered songwriting skills, Wyatt's idiosyncratically soulful vocals.



The Wilde Flowers in Canterbury, 1965: an eclectic blend of soul, jazz, and avant garde pop, the sound of several bands in search of an identity.

> Zoom

"When I listen to those Wilde Flowers tracks now I can hear the Zombies influence," Hopper recalls. "And the English Birds too, with Ron Wood: three raucous guitars, lots of shifting chords. One of the great forgotten bands of all time." From Daevid Allen's detached viewpoint, though, it was all a bit too proper. "The Wilde Flowers suffered from the fraternal approval syndrome – it was *de rigueur* for any band at that time, in order to be taken seriously, to be able to play 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag' with the right guitar sound and the right feel. But they could never get it right," he laughs.

By the summer of '66 Allen's own plans for a beat combo, honed in the Romilar haze of the Balearics, were turning into something tangible. Three days of acid-fuelled mayhem with a night club owner from Tulsa called Wes Brunson led to Brunson pledging a considerable portion of his worldy goods to Ayers and Allen in return for them spreading the Aquarian love vibe. "Sure," they said. "We'll need musical instruments, amplifiers and somewhere to rehearse." The result was a four-piece called Mr Head, consisting of Ayers, Allen, Wyatt, and guitarist Larry Nolan. The most appropriately named group since The Small Faces entered beat competitions organised by Melody Maker and the pirate Radio London, and got the music biz agents buzzing. Mr Head toyed with the idea of changing their name to Nova Express, before settling for a slightly better known Burroughs novel. Nolan disappeared, Ratledge came down from Oxford, and Soft Machine was born.

"THE NAME SOFT MACHINE CAME through Mike. He had books like V, that kind of thing. I knew the name was taken from Burroughs but I don't think it intrigued me enough to get a copy," Wyatt recalled. "Wilde Flowers more or less became Soft Machine. We trickled up to London and then regrouped, one by one. When we came up to London there were two connections: Daevid Allen had the connection with people like Hoppy [John Hopkins, underground impresario and co-founder of the magazine IT and UFO Club]. The other connection was Kevin Ayers, who played bass guitar and wrote songs. He was the only other bloke in Kent with long hair. Kevin Ayers knew The Animals' office, where Hilton Valentine and Chas Chandler were already starting to manage, and they signed us up on

the basis of Kevin's songs. They were looking for something commercial. Chas was always looking for Slade, and eventually he found them; meanwhile he had to put up with people like us and Jimi Hendrix. Kevin actually got us a deal and turned us into a group that had a manager and so on. He liked bossa nova and calypso. Ray Davies and The Kinks, who started using stuff like that quite early on, were a big influence on him."

Signed to Chas Chandler's management company, the Softs spent the latter half of 1966 demoing material. Along with Pink Floyd they played seminal London Underground gigs at Notting Hill Free School and the IT launch at the Roundhouse. Like the Floyd, the Softs live favoured free-form innovation, Unlike the Floyd, they lacked a quirky little song about a transvestite to propel them into the pop charts.

"In the first Soft Machine single ['Love Makes Sweet Music'] you could hear all the peer pressures of the time," Allen says of a debut that could have passed itself off as Simon Dupree And The Big Sound if it hadn't been for Wyatt's imploring high register voice. Apart from a brief visit to the payola-ridden charts of the pirates, the single did nothing.


Pink Floyd, 1967: "Our rivals at that time."

"I wrote it in a squalid little hotel in Hamburg," remembers Ayers. It was after we'd been fired from the Star Club – I think we lasted a day. I liked and still do like really good pop songs, and I thought I'd hit on that with 'Love Makes Sweet Music'. Had we had a good producer, and brought in a backing band, and got somebody else to sing it too... (*he dissolves into laughter*) it might have been a hit.

"The Pink Floyd were our rivals at that time," he admits, "and when 'Arnold Layne' came out I thought, Fuck, that's so good, and although I was quite partisan and competitive with our record, I thought there was a lot more fairy dust on theirs. There was a mania with their early stuff, and we were never manic apart from brief bursts when we played live. I think we were all too logical and clever. We could never be spontaneous enough and abandon ourselves."'

"KEVIN TURNED UP WITH A BUNCH OF BEATLES AND YARDBIRDS RECORDS. WE DID ACID AND I THOUGHT, BUGGER IT, I CAN MAKE A LIVING OUT OF THIS."

"Everyone in the media was so surprised at how intelligent we were," says Allen. "There was this interview with a BBC guy who was astonished that Mike would come down from Oxford to play in a 'pop group'."

"It was like a game at first," admits Ratledge. "It was something tangential to my life. It certainly wasn't a consuming passion." So what did he make of the underground cognoscenti? "It all seemed incredibly normal. I certainly didn't feel any disruption or change. I felt I'd been around people like that for most of my teens."

The Softs were soon introduced to another of Chandler's management proteges, Jimi Hendrix. "Kevin came back from Mike Jeffrey's office in Wardour Street," remembers Daevid

Allen, "and said, 'Hey, come and catch this amazing guitar player. He's better than Jeff Beck.' Now Jeff Beck was my favourite guitarist, the most unpredictable, the most exciting, and when it really happened he could fly, but at least half the time he kicked up. When we got there Hendrix was playing with no amp yet the room was full of music. Really strong hands." ("Actually," Allen adds with a twinkle. "Jeff Beck was still more exciting than Hendrix precisely because Hendrix didn't fuck up.")

Wyatt: "Hendrix was tremendously important (or lots of people. For me too, if for nothing else than that what he let Mitch Mitchell do on drums gave me space for what I wanted to do on drums. We were using a lot of jazz ideas on drum kits that there hadn't been room for in the constricted time-keeping stuff I'd been doing before. This was the opposite of what Nick Mason was doing with the Floyd: he was kind of a ticking clock there, which is just what they needed. For electronic rock his approach was more suitable – uncluttered. People like me and Mitch were probably too busy, but at the time it seemed exciting."



Wyatt goes kerplunk. Above, with Ratledge and Jimi Hendrix: "Really strong hands."

By the spring of '67 the Soft Machine had a mid-week residency at the Speakeasy. Allen recounts fond memories of unlimited drinking on Giorgio Gomelsky's expense account and Hendrix dropping by regularly to jam the night away. "I heard Purple Haze for the first time down there," he marvels, "and it sounded like classical music to me but I couldn't see it being in the charts. I mean, how would the charts accommodate something like this?"

While the Top 10 proved itself capable of accommodating the "wild man of rock" (© Daily Mirror 1967), the UK took less of a shine to the Softs. Like Pink Floyd, they found that when they ventured outside London or the university circuit their ambience was not exactly in accord with the provincial *Zeitgeist*. Particularly irksome was the Kevin Ayers-penned 'We Did It Again' with its two-note bass figure nestling somewhere between The Kinks' 'You Really Got Me' and Coltrane's 'A Love Supreme'. "I had got into Sufism," Ayers explains, "and I liked the whirling dervish thing, the repetition. I always wanted to do it as a pure drone but the band always got bored with that, and kept adding things. We tried doing it

like that at Chelmsford and people threw things. In fact people threw thing all the time when we did that number."

"It only happened in England," confirms Ratledge. "If you appeared with, say, the equivalent of Status Quo in England you would get booed off the stage, whereas in America, even in tiny little clubs in Indiana or wherever, they would listen to both of you. In England the expectation was that you would be a pop band and perform chart material."

"We were pelted with stuff by Move fans at the Cambridge Corn Exchange," remembers Allen. "There was certainly an uneasy truce a lot of the time."

Always impeccably well connected whether jamming at Robert Graves's place or getting mad Okies to buy them equipment, Soft Machine now fell in with the Riviera jet set. In the summer of 1967 they played a series of happenings in the South of France culminating in a gig in St Tropez's town square organised by Eddie Barclay of Barclay Records and attended by the cream of Parisian glitterati – Bardot, Delon, Godard, etc. Soft Machine's entire set consisted of an hour-ion performance of 'We Did It Again'. "It was the moment that elevated Soft Machine to the heights in the Parisians' view and put us next to The Beatles and Rolling Stones for the next couple of years," maintains Allen. For Ayers the St Tropez gig was an unrepeatable moment of musical sartori. "That was the only time 'We Did It Again' really worked," he contends. "Your best ideas happen when you're naïve. There was something magical about that early band and I would challenge Robert or Mike to disagree with that. Later on you become more sophisticated and competent but the content is rarely better." The euphoria of the St Tropez gig was short-lived. On returning to England, Allen was refused re-entry at Dover. The official reason was an expired visa, but Customs knew an undesirable Allen when they saw one. The Aussie pothead was exiled back to France. Suspicions still linger in Allen's mind as to whether he fell or was pushed out of the band. Always more assured as a catalyst than as a musician (his playing on the early Softs demos that have surfaced on record is a little unfocused, to put it charitably), he was in those days a tad self-conscious about his technical limitations. Allen recalls in his book Gong Dreaming that after a particularly fraught gig Wyatt once told him that he was ashamed to be on-stage with him.



In the studio, 1967, manager Chas Chandler sports collar and tie: "He was looking for something commercial."

"When somebody tells you something that you already feel, it doubles the effect," reflects Allen now, and although he claims that "being thrown out of the country was exhilarating, liberating, the best thing that could have happened to me," and talks excitedly of being in Paris during May 1968, he leaves you in no doubt that he feels the Customs incident was convenient for the rest of the band.

Ratledge sees things differently. "I was quite shocked to hear that Daevid had indicated that we had kicked him out of the band, which is not my recollection at all. He was deported and was therefore no longer available to us. I don't remember any feeling of 'Daevid must go' at the time." Saying goodbye to their big brother beatnik marked the end of Soft Machine phase one. "I only really started taking it seriously when Daevid left and we were down to a trio," Ratledge admits. "It was then that I started writing for the band."

Still languishing behind Pink Floyd in terms of UK appeal, Soft Machine found audiences more receptive in Europe and America. Live, the three-piece was a *tour de force*. Wyatt's vocals, all Eastern modality and hop approximations, merged with Ayers's Sufi drone over layers of fuzz from Ratledge's trusty organ. "We couldn't afford a Hammond, which was the authentic article," Ratledge explains, "so I was playing this weedy Lowrey and I wanted to approximate the power that Hendrix had. I got sick of guitarists having all the balls."

It was during a break in their first major US tour in April 1968, a full year after *Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, that the three-piece Softs finally got to record their first album. Producer Tom Wilson had worked with Dylan and on the Velvet Underground's debut. "Which is

presumably why he was hired," says Ayers. Despite Wilson's pedigree, and some great material, the resulting mix was clinical and lacking in dynamics. "We started out with some very good ideas," contends Ayers, "but that album was amateurish, sloppy, badly produced – a nightmare, now I look back on it. All he did was phone his girlfriends. I think he thought we were a bunch of little white shits playing this unfunky cerebral caterwauling."

The album, with its distinctive 'pin-wheel' cover pre-dating *Led Zeppelin III* by two years, finally came out in November 1968 on Probe. Shamefully, to this day it has never received a full UK release. Sleevenotes of colossal ineptitude written in period "hey cats, dig their scene"-style were provided by Arnold Shaw, better known for his showbiz hagiographies. Certain tracks on *Soft Machine* – Brian Hopper's 'Hope For Happiness', Wyatt's 'Save Yourself' – were adaptations of material from the Wellington House days. The "head is a nightclub" line on Ayers's seminal 'Why Are We Sleeping' was taken from a Daevid Allen jazz poem. Very little from those early days was ever wasted. Perhaps the most beautiful moment on the Softs' inauspicious debut was Ayers's instrumental 'Joy Of A Toy' (the title taken from a Ornette Coleman track), later reactivated for Ayers's solo debut. "I used a Gibson bass with nylon strings on that," he remembers. "Good for playing lead lines but not so good for a traditional bass sound. It sounds so elastic-bandy and plunky on that first album."



Soft Machine had been recorded in one four-day session while on tour with The Jimi Hendrix Experience. In contrast Hendrix recorded his indulgent masterpiece *Electric Ladyland* over a leisurely six-month period during the same marathon stint. "On the first part of that tour with Hendrix there were moments of sheer magic," says Ayers. "I found Hendrix a very gentle, very sad guy. He was being ripped off emotionally, financially, and he had to strap on an enormous amount of chemical armour before he could become Jimi Hendrix on-stage."

The tour, which took up most of 1968, almost split the Softs for good. "I got heavily into macrobiotics on the second part of the tour," remembers Ayers. "I stopped drinking, stopped smoking, which was totally incompatible with the routine of touring. My energy level went right down and I was falling about all over the place. You can't do a two-hour gig on a green apple, a glass of water and a bowl of rice."

Hugh Hopper was a roadie with the band at this point. "When I look back now I think, Great, I was on tour with Hendrix," he laughs, "but I never not to see much of the music, and even when I did I couldn't appreciate it because I was so knackered. It wasn't 16 articulated lorries like you have now. It was me and Hendrix's roadie with one van praying that we would get to the venue on time. Hendrix was becoming really big during that period, so as soon as there was a gap in the schedule it got filled, and we ended up touring for months without a break. It did Hendrix's roadie's head in completely. He abandoned the van in the streets of New York at the end of it."



It did Ayers's head in too; he fled to Ibiza to regain equilibrium. "Mike and Robert were far more musically literate than I was, and I think my simplicity bored them," he says of his departure. "I met Terry Riley and Gil Evans in New York and I liked all those jazz pieces Daevid and Robert introduced me to, but it was all way beyond my musical comprehension, and I didn't have the interest in playing things in 19/7 just for the sake of it. I never really liked 'fusion music' or whatever it was called, even the slick American stuff. I much preferred the jazz as it was to start with, and rock as it was to start with. Fusion all seemed more fun for the players than the listener. People with virtuoso techniques blasting at each other to see how difficult they could be." He dissolves again into mirthful disdain. "So I took my simplicity elsewhere, and lost this family. Being in a pure spiritual state at that time, clean of body and mind, I wasn't terribly worried. It only hit me later on that I was no longer close to these people."

Ayers gave his bass to Mitch Mitchell ("I still do that, actually: 'Take my house, my car, my wife.' I burn bridges."), and trainspotters might like to note the similarities in plunkiness between Ayers's aforementioned 'Joy Of A Toy' and Noel Redding's playing on '1983 (A Merman I Should Turn To Be) on *Electric Ladyland*'.

SOFT MACHINE EFFECTIVELY DISBANDED. RATLEDGE, LIKE Ayers, was burned out by the American tour. Wyatt hung out with Hendrix in LA and nurtured vague plans to pursue a solo career. Forced to record a second album as an obligation to Probe records, and with Ayers disinclined to budge from his sunny retreat, Ratledge and Wyatt brought in Hugh Hopper as a permanent replacement.

Kicking off with Wyatt's introduction to "the official orchestra of the college of pataphysics" and a scholarly rendition of the British alphabet, the resulting contract-fulfiller turned into a Canterbury classic. Full of self-mythologising little touches like Ratledge and Wyatt's warm referential nod to Kevin's macrobiotics, 'As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still', *Soft Machine Volume 2* takes us back to a time when Pere Ubu was still an Alfred Jarry character and not

a group from Cleveland. Daevid Allen described Jarry's notion of pataphysics to me as "creating a spiritual manifesto in an absurd form, casting a serious topic into an absurdist structure," something he turned into a fine art with Gong. Ayers also applied the principle to his post-Soft Machine work, probably to the detriment of his career. When asked to elaborate on the mechanics of pataphysics, Ratledge talks vaguely of "the science of the impossible" and "perverting the premises of scientific certainties." And how did you apply that to music? "We didn't. Not in the least. Are you kidding?" He rocks with suitably absurdist laughter. "*Soft Machine 2* was people celebrating enthusiasms for things outside the music, be it French literature or whatever. Often song titles were just adverts for things we liked: Read this, listen to that." Indeed. Like many people my age, I first picked up Burroughs's book The Soft Machine thinking it was a biography of the band. "See, it worked," he says with evident satisfaction.

Aside from the toe-tapping tributes to Pierrot Lunaire, and Dada and Jarry it's Hugh Hopper that really comes into his own on *Soft Machine Volume 2*. How could this bookish-looking bloke with curly receding hair, hornrims and 'tache write such exquisitely English songs? He still looks like he would have been more suitably employed in a professorial capacity at the college of advanced pataphysics rather than playing his debut Softs gig with Hendrix at the Albert Hall. One of the most magnificent moments on *Soft Machine Volume 2* is when Wyatt sings Hopper's 'Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening'. "Don't use magnets geophysics/carry you back/autumn health-food homepride satisfied," he enunciates in tones of utter conviction. "I had a terrible migraine when I wrote that," Hopper offers a tad obliquely.

As Wyatt ruefully recalled, "One record company bloke told us, `I don't know whether you're our worst-selling rock group or our best-selling jazz group'."



From the Zebra Club in 1966, to the Albert Hall (inset), August 12, 1970: (from left) Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Wyatt, Elton Dean.

MOST OF THE TRACKS ON *SOFT MACHINE VOLUME 2* SEGUE into each other, a common enough jazz device at the time, although Robert Wyatt later justified the Softs' use of continuity as a defence mechanism against hostile audiences – it's harder to boo when there aren't any pauses. By 1970 such defensiveness was becoming increasingly unnecessary. In the summer of that year, and arguably at the height of their critical acclaim, Soft Machine were invited to perform at the Proms. No longer a bunch of cerebral

hairies playing with their backs to the audience, they now had prestige. Radio 3 respectability beckoned. Again Ratledge was characteristically unfazed. "We'd played the Albert Hall twice before. It was just another gig. One was never surprised by anything during that period. I'm much less blase and more surprised by life now than I was then. The organisation though was a nightmare. The equipment was held up in Spain, there was no proper soundcheck." Even worse, the Softs were restricted to a 45-minutc set. "And because it was televised," adds Hopper, "they needed lots of light so we were all blinded on-stage. By our standards, it was a fairly duff gig."



More ominously, the Proms performance masked severe internal divisions within the band. The release of their double album Third, just prior to the Albert Hall gig, revealed a more overtly jazz-influenced direction. Feeling increasingly limited by writing for a trio, the band was now augmented by stalwarts of the burgeoning English jazz-rock scene like Elton Dean, Lyn Dobson, and Nick Evans. The album, in many ways the culmination of many of the Soft Machine's defining impulses, was largely instrumental, featuring lengthy solo and ensemble work-outs.

The exception was Wyatt's classic montage of life as seen from a New York hotel room, 'Moon In June', with which the others refused to have anything other than minimal involvement. The evident hurt this caused Wyatt was a major factor in his eventual departure from the band. Always the most extrovert member of the Softs – on-stage his long hair flailing and exuberant drumming contrasted sharply with Hopper and Ratledge sitting hunched over their instruments – Wyatt found himself increasingly cut adrift in a sea of cerebral noodling. To break out of the confines, Wyatt's extra-curricular musical activity at this time included stints with Keith Tippett's Centipede, Kevin Ayers And The Whole World and the Spontaneous Music Ensemble.

I remind Hugh Hopper of a story where a purist prog fan went backstage circa 1970 to congratulate the Softs on a great gig and to sneer that they'd had to endure Geno Washington And The Ram Jam Band a week earlier. "We'd play like that if we could," Wyatt had allegedly commented. "Oh absolutely," confirms Hopper. "I remember Robert meeting Phil Chen, the bass player with Jimmy James And The Vagabonds, and being knocked out by all these Temptations bass lines he was playing. But Robert always took stances: if everybody in the band was being freaky and avant garde, he'd have a month of championing Steeleye Span just for the effect it would have."

Shortly after the Proms gig Wyatt recorded his own solo album, End Of An Ear. According to the liner notes Wyatt penned for the album's 1992 CD reissue, this venture hastened his own departure from the Softs. "Perhaps – I was never told why – I was expelled soon afterwards from my original group by the very people I had invited to join it," he observed ungrammatically but, it would appear, accurately. "It was much more tricky than Kevin's departure, which was entirely amicable," Ratledge acknowledges. (Indeed, all of the Softs had subsequently reconvened to play on Ayers's first solo album.) "But after that tour with Hendrix things had polarised between Robert and everybody else. Hugh, myself and Elton were pursuing a vaguely jazz related direction. Robert was violently opposed to this, which is strange, looking back on it, because he was passionate about jazz. But he had defined ideas about what pop music was and what jazz was. I think, like Kevin, he'd made conceptual decisions that pop should remain pop and jazz should remain jazz. And although the so-called conspiracy between Hugh, myself and Elton covered a lot of actual differences between us, we had sufficient similarity to define ourselves against Robert.



"The whole situation in the USA got very complicated. Robert used to walk off the stand because he didn't like what we were playing or writing; you can't sustain a situation where your drummer is walking off the stand maybe one in four nights." "There were nights when we would make fun of him behind his back, admits Hopper. "It really had got that bad. Mike and I couldn't stand Robert and he couldn't stand us. We were very cool and calculated whereas Robert was very open and impulsive. During one evening of drunkenness at Ronnie Scott's he said to someone, 'I wish I could find another band'. The rest of us leapt on it and said, 'Right, go on then'. Robert was definitely pushed out of what he felt was his own group. He'd been one of the instigators, after all. And he seems as bitter about that now as he ever has been."

This much is brought home to me when I contact Wyatt for a contribution to this feature. Back comes a postcard with that familiar childlike scrawl and skewed diction. "I still have nightmares or rather daymares," it reads. "I dream my rejection was a temporary blip and I'm welcomed back into the fold. Then I wake up. How bad was I affected by my being deported from SM? Well breaking my back was easier to deal with. That's how bad." Further qualified enquiries to the man whose music I admire more than that of any other living Englishman get a similarly unyielding response. It would seem that even after all this time there is still too much pain.

"We handled it clumsily," concedes Ratledge with considerable understatement. What is so sad is that the Wyatt-Softs split seems to be indicative of the way the whole musical family gradually fell apart. The Canterbury forefathers have minimal, if any contact with each other these days. Some haven't seen each other for 20 years.

"Nobody in the band was trying to do the same thing at all, which is why it was quite original and why, after a couple of years, it fell part," Wyatt recalled 10 years ago. "It was a constant process of disintegration really, getting in new people to fill the gaps. Which in the '60s was rare, because most bands were quite stable. I talked to Nick Mason of Pink Floyd about that once. I said, 'How come you lot have stayed together so long?' and he said, 'We haven't finished with each other yet.' But it kept changing, we kept on tinkering with it and tinkering with it and throwing each other out of it and leaving it until eventually all the kinks were ironed out, and in the end it became a standard British jazz-rock band. I don't know what happened in the end. I stopped listening after a while – I stopped listening before I even left."

The whole sorry situation elicits a cautious summarising from Ratledge. "The very reason

why the band was so good – with everyone pulling in different directions – became unsustainable. It reached a point where everyone wanted to do what they wanted to do so strongly that you couldn't have any sort of compromise. Nobody in that band was going to do anyone else's thing any more. It's the price you pay for being committed. You can sustain a band on compromise for years if there's no passion there."

EVEN THE ALLEGIANCE TO THE ENGLISH JAZZ ROCK scene was, it would now appear, something of a mismatch. "I never felt part of that English jazz scene," says Ratledge surprisingly, "and the more we included those kind of players in the band the more difference I felt between me and them, mainly because writing was very important to me and jazz at the time was very improvised and anti-writing. Hugh was much more at ease with that kind of departure than I was."


The last line-up with an original member, 1974: (from left) John Marshall, Roy Babbington, Mike Ratledge, Allan Holdsworth, Karl Jenkins.

But Hopper has equal misgivings about the jazz-prog detour taken the band after the early 1970s: "I was very influenced by *Uncle Meat* and *Hot Rats*-period Zappa, but that whole jazz rock territory subsequently became very devalued. For me the best stuff was a mixture of real weirdness and good writing. Zappa was a great writer. But what you ended up with was lots of good technical players who didn't have that weirdness that could lift it." Hopper left after the Softs' sixth album strayed down the creative cul de sac of English jazz-rock. "I've enjoyed playing music much more since leaving Soft Machine," he concludes.

Ratledge was the last of the originals to leave. Conceding that he delayed his departure about a year too long, he left at the end of 1975, after album number eight, by which time Soft Machine had become just another finishing school for English fusionists. "It had stayed static for some time," he admits. "It had become a gig,"

For Ratledge a whole new successful career in TV ad music opened up, far removed from jazz-rock improv in tricky time signatures. "In a curious sort of way, everybody discovered their individuality by being in the band," he concludes. "We all tried to do something cohesive to work out what we had in common but everyone was acting out some idea of what they thought pop music was, and the longer it existed everybody wanted to pull in different directions. That was both the reason for its success and the reason for it falling apart."

Rob Chapman
Photos : Mark Ellidge, Pictorial Press, LFI, Hulton Getti, T. Russell/Redferns

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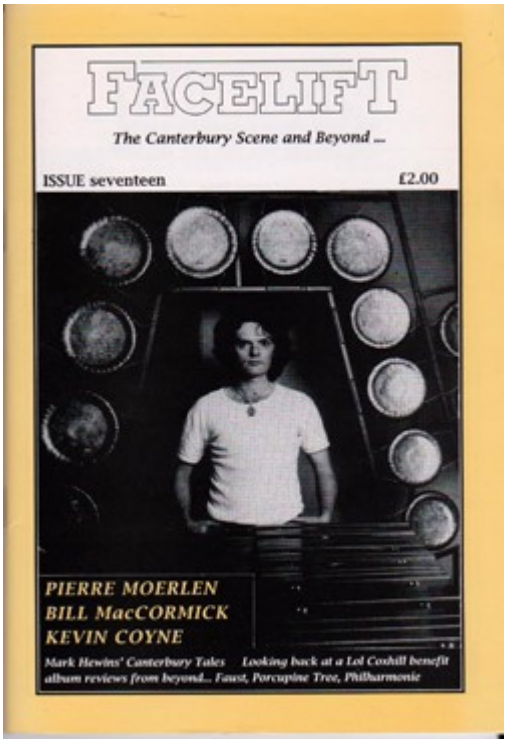
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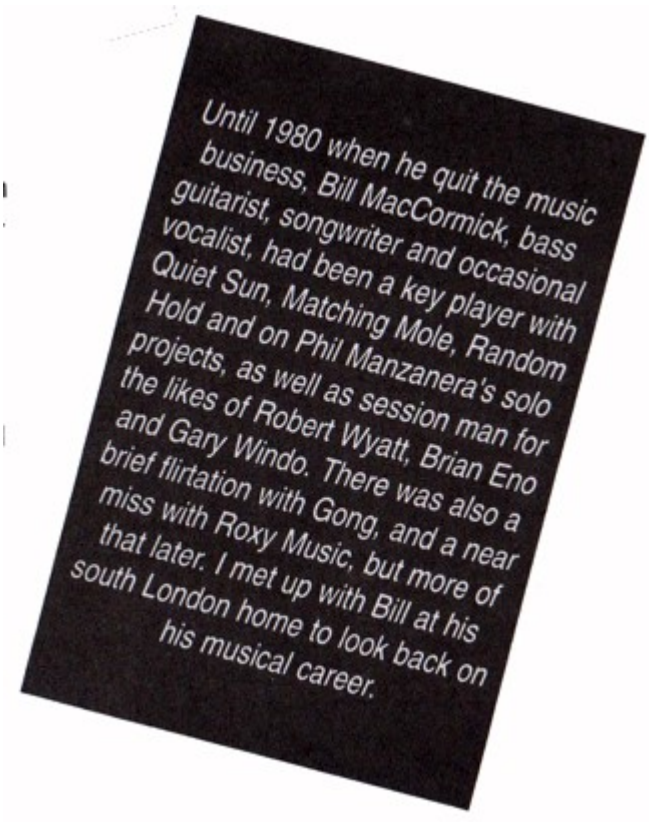


Mole on Hold

an interview with

Bill Maccormick

by Stephen Yarwood



"I was born in London in 1951, my father had been a fighter pilot during the war and worked for a variety of airlines afterwards. My mother, who was also in the RAF, took a more academic path and moved into teaching. While I was at Dulwich College, she worked for a while at the Preparatory School across the road, as did Honor Wyatt, Robert's mother, with whom she got on very well. I soon discovered that Honor had a son who was a musician, which immediately aroused my interest. Eventually my brother Ian and I were invited to a party at some exotic and arty place in Kingston to see Robert's group perform."

This was August 1966 and was the Soft Machine's first live appearance - Daevid Allen, (guitar), Kevin Ayers (bass/vocals), Mike Ratledge (organ) and Robert Wyatt (drums/vocals).

"After that we thought we'd better keep in with these guys as it all seemed very cool. Some time later they all moved into Honor's house in Dalmore Road, West Dulwich, and as this was on the way back from school we started calling in. They had all their equipment, including the ubiquitous 100w Marshall stacks, in the front room. Basically we used to hang out there and drink copious cups of tea whilst listening them rehearse or alternatively to the records that Robert would play. It was a real education, and we started picking up on music well outside of the mainstream like Miles Davis or even Cecil Taylor, whom we actually went to see on one memorable occasion, unbelievably impenetrable stuff! Even so it really opened our ears to what was possible. Ian and myself would supplement this education with frequent visits to West Norwood Library where there was a good music section. By our mid teens the standard stuff on the turntable, apart from the Beatles, would be Pharaoh Sanders, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane plus orchestral pieces by modern classical composers such as Stravinsky."

Elder brother Ian later became a well known and influential music journalist with the NME under the name of Ian MacDonald. As an author he received much acclaim for his Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the 60s, a detailed analysis of the entire Beatles catalogue song by song.

"Around early '68, we decided to get a band together at school, the key figures being myself, Phil Manzanera and Charlie Hayward. Others members were part of a floating complement that came and went. I was the vocalist, I didn't actually take up bass guitar until I left school. Our influences were very much the psychedelic groups of the time, so we started out playing covers of songs by Cream, Jefferson Airplane and those sort of people. We played the school annual arts festival on a couple of occasions, pretty much taking it over in the end. We also played at Dulwich Swimming Baths during the winter when the pool was boarded over. It was a good venue, quite a large hall with a stage. We'd send out invitations to other public schools in the area and end up playing 1½ hour sets to four or five hundred people. By now we'd

written some of our own stuff and had a couple of guys who did the lights, one of whom had been with me in the States in the Winter of 1968 and seen all the top San Francisco light shows at places like the Fillmore. On our return the physics lab was raided for slides and projectors to create some pretty impressive visuals. The school were amazingly tolerant of our activities, we had a great time."

Charles Hayward was something of a musical maverick. In later years he served time with a diverse number of groups such as High Tide, Radar Favourites, Gong and This Heat. The latter had a degree of critical acclaim and produced a number of well received albums in the late 70s and early 80s. Since the demise of This Heat he seems to have ploughed his own furrow with various releases under his own name or in collaboration with a miscellany of artists on the experimental fringes.

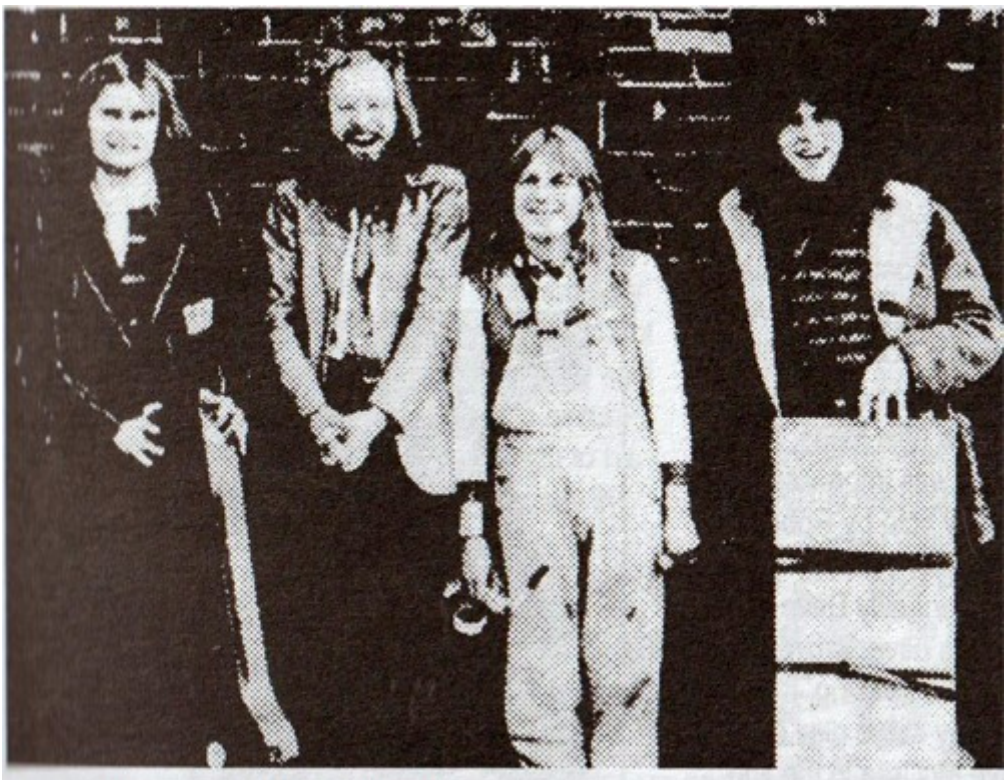


Quiet Sun, 1970: MacCormick, Manzanera, Hayward, Jarrett

"Charlie had originally been asked to join the group because he had a magnificent red Premier Keith Moon style kit, with the two bass drums, extra toms etc. The fact that he could play was a bonus, his parents had paid for lessons over a number of years and he was technically brilliant. After a while he said we could rehearse at his house, a huge Victorian place across the road from Camberwell School of art. This became a regular thing two or three times a week and went on through the final year at school and beyond. Eventually we felt we needed a change of direction, we were writing more instrumental stuff for which we needed keyboards and sax, plus a new bass player. We soon found a sax player, and then Dave Jarrett came in on keyboards. He had also been at Dulwich College and was very much a Mike Ratledge clone. Still we couldn't find a suitable bass player, we had the instrument but nobody to play it. In order to rehearse I said I'd learn the parts and fill in until we found a permanent replacement. We carried on this way until I realised I quite enjoyed it, and the others thought I was doing a good job, so quite by accident I filled Hie vacancy. The sax player had left by this time and we were down to the basic four piece which became Quiet Sun.".

Quiet Sun were very much a musicians band, unusual chord sequences and time signatures, with vocals playing a diminishing role in the increasingly sophisticated music. Bill MacCormick is modest about his own musical abilities, to pick up the bass guitar from scratch and within a few months be playing such complex arrangements is impressive indeed. The name Quiet Sun had come into being sometime in 1970 after Ian MacCormick had come across a magazine article about sunspot activity entitled The Years of the Quiet Sun.

"Warner Brothers had a small studio somewhere in Dorset where we spent a few days recording demos. We organised a few gigs around West Norwood for a fairly loyal following mostly of people who had known us from school, and occasionally played other places. I particularly remember a shambolic appearance on Worthing Pier supporting Steamhammer, but live dates were pretty few and far between. In the end Warner Brothers decided not to sign us. We were probably a bit too obscure to have any real chance of getting a recording deal."



Matching Mole: MacCormick, MacRae, Wyatt, Miller

As the momentum within Quiet Sun began to fade other avenues began to open for individual members. Guitarist Phil Manzanera successfully auditioned for Roxy Music and Bill MacCormick joined up with Robert Wyatt's first post Soft Machine project, Matching Mole. His bass playing abilities had been noted when Quiet Sun and Gary Windo's Symbiosis shared a stage during a gig in Portsmouth.

"Quiet Sun were supporting Symbiosis, with Robert on drums that particular night. Their line up tended to be very fluid and depended on who was available. Towards the end of their set we were asked to go up and jam, it was the first time Robert had actually seen me play. Life for him in Soft Machine had become pretty awful, he was very depressed. They treated him very badly, he gave that band some humanity. Mike Ratledge in particular wrote technically fantastic stuff that I enjoyed listening to, but Robert wrote the good songs."

The inevitable Wyatt / Soft Machine split finally occurred during the Summer of 1971. Ian MacDonald (nee MacCormick) summed it up nicely in a 1975 NME retrospective, "With him he took most of the group's humour and a large slab of their profundity too." In late 1971 Robert began to sound out musicians for what would become Matching Mole. Bill MacCormick was first to be approached, Dave Sinclair (keyboards) had recently split from Caravan, and Phil Miller (guitar) was available after the demise of the short lived DC and the MBs, which had included his brother Steve, Lol Coxhill and Laurie Allan.

"In September 1971 Robert asked me if I would be interested in getting a band together. A couple of months later, with Dave Sinclair and Phil Miller on board, rehearsals began at a house in Notting Hill. We tried out Moon in June, some of Dave's longer Caravan pieces and few new ideas. As it turned out much of the album was improvised and some of it recorded completely solo by Robert. It was rather thrown together really, certainly not what CBS were expecting. Eventually Dave Sinclair was eased out, he was never entirely happy with the way we were progressing. It was a bit too free for him. We did play some gigs with both Dave Sinclair and Dave McCrae in the line up, mainly in Belgium and Holland, but it wasn't really working with two keyboard players. Money was one of our main problems though. I'd had a job for a while the previous year and at one point I actually ended up paying the other members of the band."

Recorded under difficult circumstances due to power cuts (miners' strike) and bargain basement technology, the first Matching Mole album is a bit of an acquired taste, but on repeated listening many of the less immediate parts reveal hidden depths. Unwary listeners can be lulled into a false sense of security by the opening track Oh Caroline, a poignant song with a beautiful melody, apparently about a recently ended relationship with journalist Caroline Coon, and probably Robert Wyatt's best known song. After the wordless multi tracked vocals of Instant Pussy and the tongue in cheek Signed Curtain the rest of the album

is mainly group improvisations over a few basic chord structures, plus a couple of solo Wyatt mellotron pieces. How would this translate to the live situation? Quite successfully in some quarters it would seem. Soft Machine had always been more popular in mainland Europe, and so it was with Matching Mole.

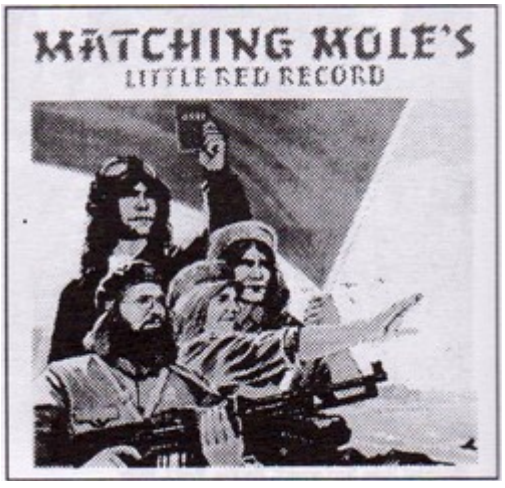


"In the UK we were paid very poorly for our live performances, whereas in Holland, Belgium or France it was far better. In those countries it was a different sort of audience, particularly in France, much more arty. We always went down well in Amsterdam, especially the Paradiso Club where we played on a number of occasions. Our set at that time included bits and pieces from Soft Machine numbers, borrowing Hugh Hopper chord sequences and various other things. It was a very enjoyable period."

Around this time, with the ever improving Phil Manzanera in their ranks, Roxy Music were beginning to attract attention, but their lifelong problems with bass players were about to begin.

"One of the first breaks Roxy got, apart from a rather over the top review of their demos by Richard Williams in the Melody Maker, was at a big festival somewhere in Lincolnshire in May 72. They'd recorded the first album and this was to be their first high profile live appearance after the sessions, but with about a week to go bass player Graham Simpson had a nervous breakdown. Apparently they phoned me but I was in Paris with Matching Mole. That was that, I was in wrong place at the wrong time, but who knows? With their track record with bass players I might have only lasted a couple of weeks." Meanwhile back in the real world, Matching Mole were writing and recording. Studio time for the second Matching Mole album was booked for August 1972.

"At my suggestion we hired Robert Fripp to produce what became the Little Red Record. A very nice man, but as it turned out totally wrong for the job. Unfortunately he terrified Phil Miller, to whom Fripp was the ultimate guitar player. Phil would try to do his parts with Fripp watching from the control room and find it most intimidating. It has to be said that Fripp wasn't terribly helpful under the circumstances. He had a very dictatorial approach to his production duties, he insisted on the final say in everything. I also suggested we get Eno in to do some of the synthesiser parts on Gloria Gloom and other things. Dave McCrae took this as a grave aspersion on his keyboard abilities, which I couldn't understand because he was a brilliant electric piano player but hadn't as far as I knew used synthesisers."



Matching Mole's Little Red Record came out in September 1972 to good reviews, helped along by Ian MacDonald who was by now assistant editor at the NME. Live reviews had also been favourable.

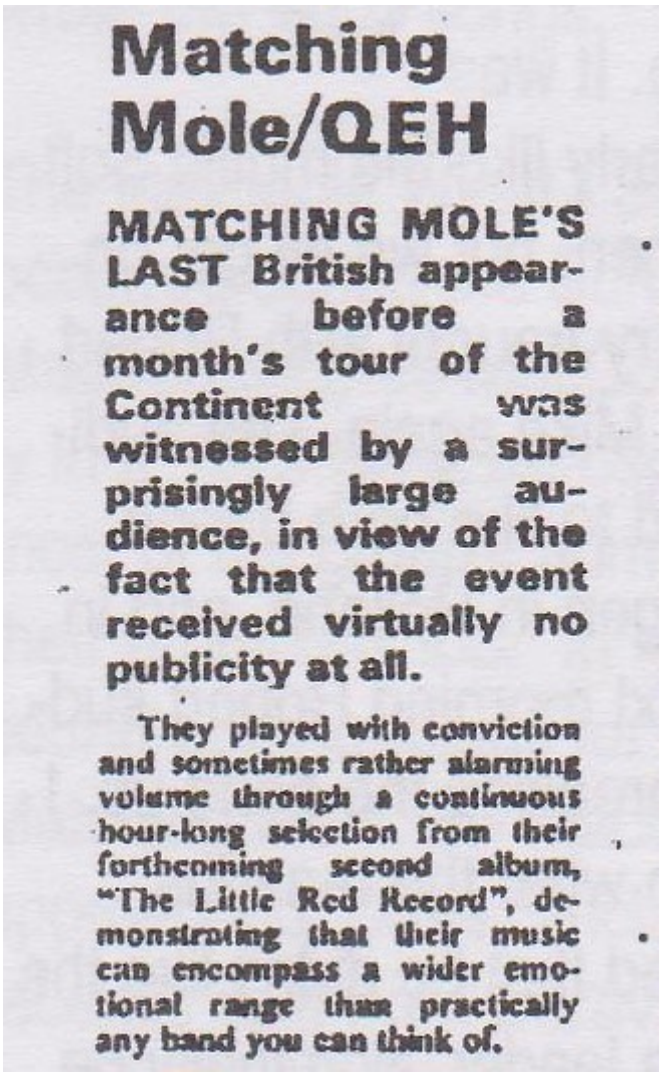
"After the album sessions finished we toured Belgium and Holland with Soft Machine, the Jenkins / Marshall / Hopper / Ratledge line up. It was a nice tour, I didn't particularly like the music Soft Machine were producing then, but we all got on well. It could have been very fraught with Robert meeting up with Hugh and Mike again. The audiences listened and seemed to like both bands. The last gig was in Groningen in Holland, and in the hotel restaurant the next morning Robert suddenly announced he was breaking the band up. I was never really sure as to what the reasons were. It has been suggested that he didn't like the responsibilities of being the leader. Nominally he was the leader, but if you look at the credits for the music it was actually spreading out amongst the rest of us. We were all writing and it seemed to me that we were developing a sound. Whereas the first album had been very

much improvised around some very simple riffs, the second album had a greater structure to it. We were also beginning to make some headway in mainland Europe. We were playing festivals and getting good billing with money up front, we could play any major French/Dutch /Belgian city or town and pull a decent sized audience. I couldn't quite see what Robert's problem was, perhaps he just didn't like the music and was too polite to say. The rest of us were absolutely flabbergasted, it really didn't seem to us to be a reasonable or sensible thing to do."

In the Autumn of 1972 a phone call from Robert Wyatt began a little known chapter in the history of the Planet Gong.

"Robert phoned me to say that Gong were looking for a new bass player and were auditioning at the Manor, Richard Branson's studio. I wasn't too sure about it but went along anyway, and a few days later I got a call asking me if I wanted to join them in France. So I picked up my guitar, flew off to Paris and was taken to this hunting lodge somewhere in the countryside. This would be around November and it was bloody cold. At the time the line up included Daevid .Allen, Didier Malherbe (sax), another Frenchman on guitar (probably Christian Tritsch, recently switched from bass), and a drummer whose identity escapes me (probably Laurie Allan). The band were essentially French, Daevid Allen and Gilli Smyth were both fluent in French, so that was the common language. The only opportunity for me to communicate effectively was through the music. I began to resent the fact that I was there, I had nothing with me apart from the clothes I stood up in, I couldn't sleep because it was too cold, I spoke very little French, and nobody seemed to be going out of their way to communicate with me. Some of the sessions got a bit weird, Daevid seemed to go out of his way to give some sort of competitive edge to the situation. We'd be on opposite sides of the rehearsal room sort of eyeing each other, perhaps this was part of his creative process. It was very strange, I don't know why it happened that way at all. It might have worked if I could have sustained it because there were definitely sparks flying, Didier was enjoying himself tremendously. After four or five days though I told them I just couldn't handle it. So that was that, and they drove me back to Paris."

Since the break up of Matching Mole Mk1 Robert Wyatt's musical activities had been restricted to a few guest appearances, but early 1973 found Bill MacCormick cajoling



Matching Mole/QEH

MATCHING MOLE'S LAST British appearance before a month's tour of the Continent was witnessed by a surprisingly large audience, in view of the fact that the event received virtually no publicity at all.

They played with conviction and sometimes rather alarming volume through a continuous hour-long selection from their forthcoming second album, "The Little Red Record", demonstrating that their music can encompass a wider emotional range than practically any band you can think of.

him to reboot his own musical direction.

"Robert had gone off to Venice with Alfie (Alfreda Benge, whom he later married), she was working in some sort of editorial capacity on the Nick Roeg movie Don't Look Now. While he was there we communicated on a fairly regular basis and I suggested various musical projects. Through his connections I met up with Francis Monkman and Gary Windo, and eventually Robert agreed to Matching Mole Mk2. Whilst he'd been away in Venice he'd been writing some stuff on a portable keyboard, quite a lot of which ended up on Rock Bottom."

Francis Monkman (keyboards) had been a founder member of Curved Air playing on their first three albums, finally quitting in 1972. Since then he has worked mainly as a session man, although he did spend a number of years as a member of Sky with classical guitarist John Williams. Gary Windo was a larger than life character who had his roots in jazz, but who would frequently cross musical boundaries if the spirit and attitude were right. His rasping tenor sax tones added that extra ingredient on countless recordings, particularly Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom and Ruth is Stranger than Richard. His sudden death in 1992 was a great loss.

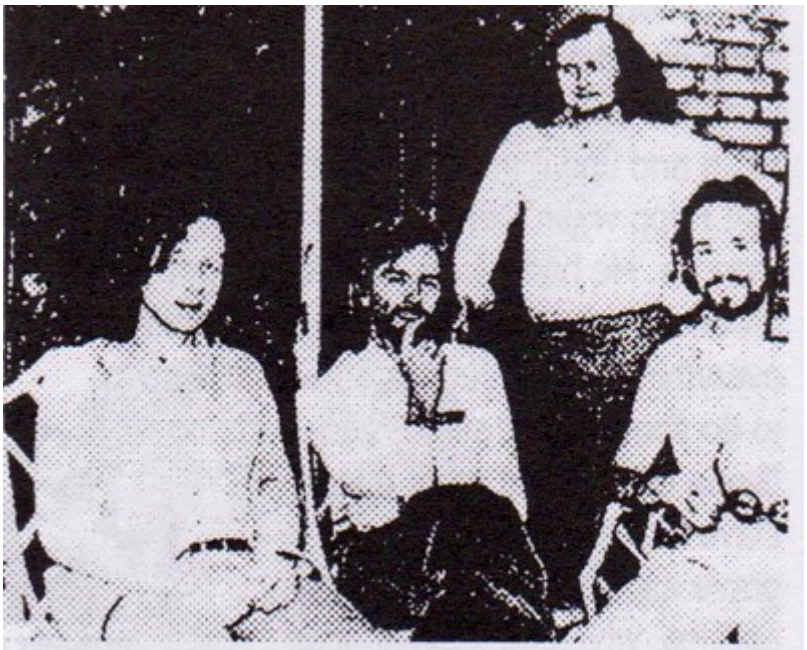
"We started rehearsing, although I use the term very loosely, it was in fact a couple of afternoons up at Alfie's flat. I do remember one day Robert and I went across the road to a pub where they had a band, and we ended up playing rock 'n roll songs. Given my background these were things I'd never played before, so it was quite interesting trying to work out the bass parts that every bass player in the world knew as standards. I'd just never got round to it. My bass playing had all come from playing written parts for Quiet Sun songs. Then Gary and I did a couple of pubs gigs with a pick up band including John Halsey and Ollie Halsall from Patto. We were stopped by the landlord at one of the gigs, it wasn't what he was expecting."



Instrumental high-spots included some delicate impressionism on Dave McRae's "Smoke Signal" and an impassioned "Lithing and Gracing" with a wound-up Phil Miller guitar break liberating itself finally in free atonality. However, the best performances were of a batch of songs full of serpentine melodies and minor changes and all vehicles for Robert Wyatt's firework-display of a voice, reaching into the stratosphere on Bill MacCormick's "Gloria Gloom" and turning on a mock-operatic tenor for McRae's "Drinking My Politics Away". Perversely, the best moment came right at the beginning with a tragically beautiful Miller-Wyatt collaboration, "God Song"; it'll be the stand-out track on "The Little Red Record" as "O Caroline" was on the first album — but only just, because everything Matching Mole are playing these days is of world class.

Silver medal of the evening went to a new singer-songwriter, Paul Wheeler, who proves one of the finds of the year. Melodically, and lyrically, he has already achieved a mature sensitivity which solo artists from both sides of the Atlantic have been struggling to find for a very long time. "Julie Was Saying Goodbye" and "Easy Time" both set South Bank records in their class, and the first record company to reach him must be in with a chance at Montreal.

IAN MacDONALD



Quiet Sun, 1975 : Jarrett, Hayward, MacCormick, Manzanera

The thought of an unsuspecting publican being confronted by the uncompromising blowing of Gary Windo is one to savour. Jumping ahead a year or two, Bill MacCormick was also involved in the sessions for Gary's Steam Radio Tapes.

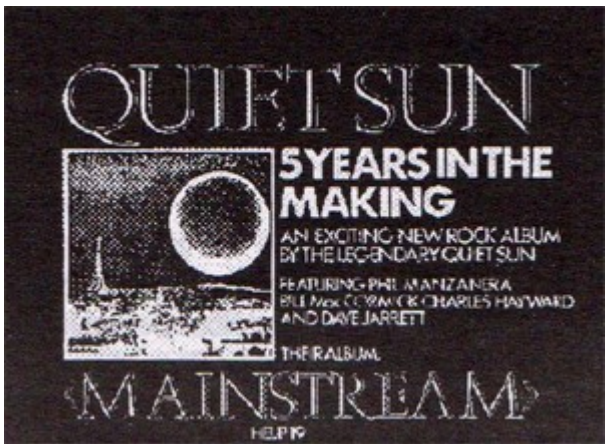
"He certainly was the wild man of the sax, a great player, lots of enthusiasm, when I heard he'd died it was a great shock. In April 1976 I played on the sessions for his Steam Radio Tapes. It started at his flat in Hampstead, quite a lot of it was working on songs that Pam his wife had written. We actually put a band together which played one gig, at Maidstone College of Art. We had Nick Mason on drums, a guitarist whose name escapes me (possibly Richard Brunton), and Pam playing piano and singing. From that it evolved into the Steam Radio Tapes down at Britannia Row studios. Myself and Hugh Hopper played bass, often both of us on the same number, it's virtually impossible to tell who is playing what."

Meanwhile back in 1973 the Matching Mole revival gathered pace, but ended abruptly when an intoxicated Robert Wyatt fell out of a window at a party and sustained severe spinal injuries, resulting in permanent confinement to a wheelchair.

"I think the announcement had gone out in Melody Maker saying that Matching Mole Mk2 were ready to go and were currently rehearsing. Then it all came to an end with the accident. Robert had seemed enthusiastic about the new line up, admittedly I'd badgered him into it. It was a great shame because quite a lot of Rock Bottom had already been written, and when I heard the album I thought if things had been different it could have been us. The accident happened on a Saturday night and I found out on the Sunday, by the evening I was in hospital with appendicitis. The doctor said it could be brought on by stress, or a sudden shock. After the operation I did very little for several months apart from regular visits to Robert at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. He was fortunate in that people rallied round after the accident, Pink Floyd arranged a benefit. When he came out of hospital I was a frequent visitor at his and Alfie's flat, I was amazed how cheerful he was. I did a few sessions for Eno's Here Come the Warm Jets album in September 73, appearing on a couple of tracks, but basically I stopped playing for about 18 months."

This musically inactive period was very active in other areas and set the tone for a future career.

"I joined the Liberal Party in December 73 and became heavily involved in the General Elections of February 74, and in May that year I stood in the Council Elections. I had also wanted to go to university to read politics, but having obtained the necessary qualifications I



Quiet Sun Ad

turned down offers from the London School of Economics and Warwick University in favour of reviving my musical career. Phil Manzanera had come up with the idea for the Quiet Sun album in late 74 and in the end there was no contest."

Phil Manzanera released four excellent song based albums during periods of Roxy Music inactivity in the mid 70s. They were Diamond Head (1975), 801 Live (1976), Listen Now (1977) and K-Scope (1978). Bill MacCormick was bass player on most of the sessions and a major contributor to the writing. The two later albums also contained a significant input from Ian MacCormick. Late 1974 saw the beginning of the sessions for Diamond Head, and running parallel was the recording of Mainstream by the temporarily reformed Quiet Sun. Was Quiet Sun's one and only appearance on vinyl a true representation of their sound?

"Yes, there wasn't time for anything fancy as it was entirely recorded during Phil's sessions. He'd book the studio for say 12 hours, then do 8 hours of his stuff and then 4 hours of Quiet Sun, usually after midnight. There was a certain amount of overlap between the two projects, a number of tracks on Diamond Head were fragments of songs that didn't make it on to the Quiet Sun album. It was all done very quickly. Having got Dave Jarrett away from teaching mathematics or whatever it was, we'd managed to get a few days rehearsal. The production on the album was pretty minimal, apart from a few treatments by Eno. Phil knew him from Roxy of course, and I knew him from the second Matching Mole album and my sessions on his first solo album. The Quiet Sun sessions were really good, I think it probably sounds a bit off the wall because that's the way it had to be recorded, we weren't trying to make it sound pretty or anything. Phil just wanted to put it out because it made sense of the couple of years we'd spent writing the material and getting a sound together. It was a cheap album to make and I'm still getting royalties from it."

Robert Wyatt's post accident career had started well with his highly acclaimed Rock Bottom in 1974, and Ruth is Stranger than Richard the following year. The sessions took place during May 1975 at the Manor in Oxfordshire and featured an interesting mix of musicians.

The Manor was a very nice place to record, the guys in the studio were great, the food was good. It wasn't technically outstanding, but the engineers got an excellent sound and were prepared to try anything. It was nice to work with Robert again. I suspect he felt a bit taken over at times on those sessions, there were some very forceful personalities around, but it was a great two or three weeks. It was quite funny really, there was an underlying tension between the jazzers like George Khan and Gary Windo, and some of the rockers. Basically Brian Eno thought jazz was crap, whereas they couldn't quite understand what this rather bizarre looking character was doing in the studio. But it worked really well and I really enjoyed it. There are a few things on that album where I felt I played particularly well, Team Spirit was one, Five Black Notes and One White Note was another."

The next Manzanera project culminated in the 801 Live album. A varied selection of original material was complemented by carefully chosen covers, in particular an outstanding version of Lennon and McCartney's Tomorrow Never Knows.

"801 came together during 1976, and sprang out of sessions that eventually ended up as the Listen Now album. The sessions had been going on for a long time because of Phil's commitments with Roxy. Eventually he decided he wanted to do something in the summer, and suggested getting a band together and playing some festivals."

In addition to Manzanera and MacCormick the short lived 801 Mk1 also included Brian



Wyatt's Rough cuts

ROBERT Wyatt returns from his self-imposed musical exile with a series of singles to be released by Rough Trade.

The first, Wyatt's interpretation of "Caimenera", the Spanish original of "Guantanamera", is released in a fortnight, with Bill MacCormick on bass and Harry Beckett on flugelhorn. The B-side is Violetta Para's "Arracuoa", sung and played by Wyatt with MacCormick on bass.

The other singles are being lined up, although a final decision on release hasn't yet been made. One of the singles will be Wyatt's versions of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" and Chic's "At Last I'm Free", and another features his acapella cover of the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet's "Stalin Wasn't Stallin'".

All the singles' tracks were recorded over the last few weekends, and an album, again through Rough Trade, is being considered, although there has been no discussion yet about Wyatt playing live.

left: NME album review 1980; above: press announcement, 1981

Eno (synth/vocals), Simon Phillips (drums), Francis Monkman (keyboards) and Lloyd Watson (slide guitar/vocals).

"Lloyd Watson was a singer songwriter who had been support on one of the early Roxy Music tours. It was an interesting combination, a slide guitar player and Brian Eno. As we all had a free summer we were able to get it together in the country. We had the use of a house near Ludlow in Herefordshire so we spent a few days down there examining the possibilities. We looked at songs from Phil's albums, Eno's albums, some Quiet Sun stuff plus a few cover versions. I'm sure the others will claim otherwise but it was my idea to do Tomorrow Never Knows, but I think the idea of doing the Kinks' You Really Got Me just came out of jamming around. We had further rehearsals and were then supposed to go off and do a series of festivals in France, for which we would be pretty well paid. About two weeks before the first event at Orange in the south of France, there was a riot at another festival which resulted in Giscard D'Estaing cancelling all similar events in France that summer. As you can imagine this was a bit of a blow, we could see all this money we'd been expecting to earn going down the tubes. To compensate Phil suggested we make a record, so our final gig at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London was recorded by the Island Mobile and this became the imaginatively titled 801 Live. The album was incredibly cheap to produce, it still sells and the royalty cheques still come in. We had previously played the Reading Festival and on the day it had been raining so hard that the audience area had become a sea of mud, you could see the steam rising off the crowd. As we hit the stage the sun came out. It was a wonderful moment, and more steam rose from the bedraggled masses. It was a great set, we really played well and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves."

About a year later there was a British tour under the 801 banner to promote the new studio album Listen Now.

"It was a lively tour, along with Phil and myself, we had Paul Thompson (drums), Dave Skinner (keyboards) and Simon Ainley (guitar/vocals). The whole 801 project was a good outlet for songs that Phil, Ian (MacCormick) and myself had put together. We would go over to Phil's house and spend days working on various new ideas. Listen Now came out of a lot of half finished things that Phil had, to which Ian and I added lyrics and melodies. It took a long time to record, December 75 through to July 77, and featured a cast of thousands. Simon Ainley did all the lead vocals, amongst the other musicians were Simon Phillips, Dave Mattacks, Mel Collins, Eno, Francis Monkman and Eddie Jobson. Around this time I also had a brief foray into journalism. I did a few things for the NME, the first one about football hooliganism, then an interview with Julie Christie about her anti nuclear stance, and finally a look at the unwelcome rise of the National Front. The latter piece caused a few problems when I received a death threat, which had Special Branch crawling all over the place for a while. These sort of issues were reflected in the lyrics on Listen Now, it was an

unpleasant and threatening time in this country, it seemed like we were moving towards a totalitarian state. I did a couple of things from America for Streetlife magazine, interviewing Warren Beatty about his political activities, and covering the 1976 Presidential Elections."

K-Scope, the last in the quartet of Manzanera albums, was recorded and released in 1978. Writing credits once again, apart from lyrics by John Wetton on one track, were all Manzanera / W.MacCormick / I.MacCormick in various combinations.

" K-Scope had no political concept and was musically a much less coherent piece of work than Listen Now, although recorded in a shorter period of time at Chris Squire's studio. Tim Finn did most the lead vocals, with his brother Neil helping out on keyboards. Their band Split Enz, whom Phil had been instrumental in bringing over from New Zealand, had just split up. Neil and Tim of course later found fame and fortune as Crowded House. It was very co-operative throughout the sessions and overdubs, then Phil rushed off and mixed the whole thing very quickly. I had nothing to do with the final mix at all, and when the album was released it didn't really come up to my expectations. The reason for the haste, it later emerged, was that Roxy were reforming so Phil was keen to get everything else out of the way."



RANDOM HOLD
The View From Here
(Polydor)

RANDOM HOLD, you might say, are red-blooded artisans where Magazines are anaemic artists. Practitioners of a sturdily dramatic music that pulses in fine robust fashion even while the lyrics make an ineffectual nod towards the same bleak todays and oblique tomorrows that trouble Devoto's devotions.

The vocals — wrenching white soulful — impress too, but the strengths of this album are primarily instrumental. Through the ornate crescendos of 'Silver Spoons, Golden Tongues' and moody atmospherics of 'With People (Out Of Love)' to the title track's swiftly shifting rhythmic floor, the music retains its ominous edge.

The final chapter in the Bill MacCormick musical career began in late 1978. Random Hold were formed by David Ferguson (keyboards) and David Rhodes (guitar). The sound they evolved was dark and occasionally austere yet always capable of moments of high drama and excitement, sometimes bringing to mind the aggressive metallic sound of mid 70s King Crimson, but in a more song orientated format.

"I'd watched them play and thought they were quite interesting, so I put some money in and was later invited to join, along with Simon Ainley (guitar / vocals) and Dave Leach (drums). We struggled for some time to get any interest, but eventually I was able to exploit some of my contacts in the music business, in particular Alan Jones at the Melody Maker. After seeing us rehearse for about half an hour he was convinced we were the next big thing, and gave us a spread in Melody Maker which certainly had a dramatic effect on the record companies. Having been in a situation where nobody was interested, we suddenly found ourselves in an auction between three record labels. We successfully played them off against each other and ended up with a substantial advance of 80000 from Polydor, which we immediately blew on expensive guitars and other such luxuries."

So far so good, but there were storm clouds gathering.

"Simon Ainley wanted to be a rock 'n roll star, lots of chicks, lots of guitars on the wall and as big a bank balance as possible. But Rhodes and Ferguson were artists, serious

people with serious objectives in life, they wanted to do something deep and meaningful. Without any reference to me they decided to fire him. This was an error of judgement because they lost a good front man, without him the whole image became one of too much shade and not enough light. Simon was a fairly easy going individual and it reflected in his contribution to the band, it lightened what at times was rather gloomy music. His singing was good, but his guitar playing was too lightweight for Ferguson and Rhodes. Personally I felt it gave counterpoint to the rather dour Rhodes approach, a brilliant technician but rather introverted. Around the same time drummer Dave Leach's medical problems were used as an excuse to oust him in favour of Peter Phipps whose claim to fame was that he used to be in the Glitterband! Polydor were unhappy about Simon's departure and they were never too keen after that."

Despite the personnel upheavals there was interest from an unexpected quarter.

"We discovered Peter Gabriel was something of a fan. I don't know how he found out about us but he came along to the Rock Garden to see us. He persuaded his manager Gail Colson to sign us up for a management deal, and she had us go down to Gabriel's place and work with him on his new material. We spent a couple of weeks down in Bath working on the songs and structures that became his third album. We didn't actually play on the album itself, in the end he decided to use American supersessioners. Gabriel had wanted to produce our records, but his own heavy schedule at the time got in the way of that.

Instead we ended up with Peter Hammil who was part of the same management stable, a very nice guy but not right for us. After three rather undisciplined weeks in the studio the tapes were ready for mixing, it was then that we realised just how dictatorial Mr.Hammil was. We had no say in the mix at all, we used to sit there and get more and more pissed off, eventually I stopped going. When The View From Here album came out I found the sound a bit thin in places, but aside from the production I don't think we performed well in the studio. The demos we did for Polydor with the original line up and produced ourselves were infinitely superior."

I caught them live in a one off gig at Oxford Polytechnic in February 79 with the original five piece line up, and they were brilliant.

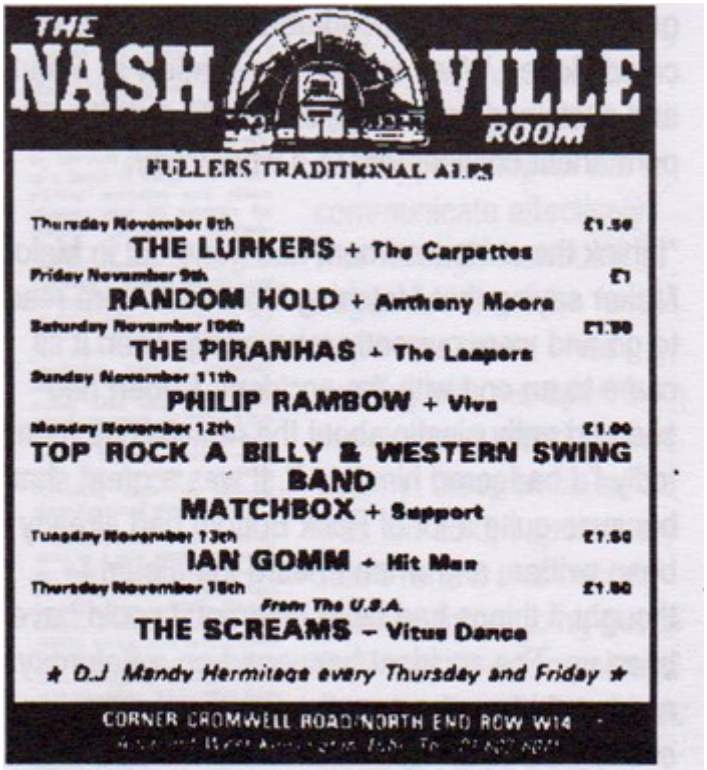


The staunch basis for this authority comes from Peter Phipps (ex-Glitter Band — sussed you Pete!), flaying the drums like a manic carpet-beater, and ex-Matching Mole and 801-er Bill MacCormick, whose bass growls and prowls with customary aplomb. Complementing them are David Rhodes, whose dark chunky guitar occasionally flares with aggression, and David Ferguson, on keyboards that flit and swoop, coax and grumble. And knitting all together with consummate skill is the subtle hand of producer Peter Hammill.

Random Hold do falter at times. 'What Happened' builds well only to sag at the weak chorus, a fault that also afflicts the generally inane 'Etceteraville'.

The odd lapse aside, 'The View From Here' attacks with force and vitality. No new visions, but it runs full-pelt through that grey area where rock traditionally gets bogged down in orchestration or ersatz jazziness, and emerges with most flags flying.

Graham Lock



Random Hold gig ad, 1980

"We toured England with XTC, and then again supporting Peter Gabriel. The Gabriel tour then moved on to the States where our album had been released. We were doing well, sufficiently well for our American label to set up a number of club gigs at the end of the tour. But then everything all fell apart. It had been a bit fraught for some time, with Dave Ferguson and I having major political disagreements. Towards the end of the American tour we had a few more serious clashes, and when we got back the two Daves decided they wanted to carry on without me. They had unfortunately forgotten that the band owed me rather a lot of money, so when I called in the debt it effectively killed the band. By this time I was fed up with the whole business so I just dropped out completely, the end of my music career. Been there, done that!"

What of Rhodes and Ferguson?

"Dave Rhodes was a great songwriter, and despite all the animosity I helped him produce some demos immediately after the band broke up, but eventually he seemed more comfortable as a backing musician on Gabriel's projects. Dave Ferguson went onto a successful career in TV theme and incidental music. I haven't seen either of them for some years. Random Hold hardly sold any records, and I've long stopped receiving royalty statements, which were laughable anyway."

Despite Bill MacCormick's misgivings about the production I can highly recommend all the Random Hold recordings. The essential items are the eponymous debut 12" EP and the album The View from Here. For completists a rerecorded version of Etceteraville from the album was released as a single, with the previously unavailable Precarious Timbers on the flip side. At the end of the day personality clashes and record company indifference ensured that Random Hold never fulfilled their undoubted potential.

The Bill MacCormick playing technique seemed unorthodox in its development, starting with the complicated time signature stuff in the early days, and ending up as a more orthodox rhythm section style.

"In Matching Mole you were effectively soloing a large part of the time, my playing was all about trying things out and taking risks. Working with Robert was always a challenge, you never knew what was going to happen next. Post Matching Mole my playing became simpler and I began to feel more relaxed as part of a rock rhythm section, as long as the material was interesting."

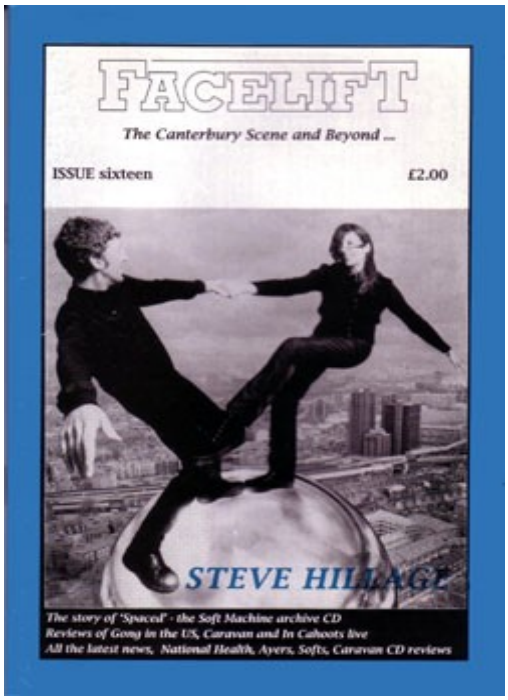
Bill worked for the MP Simon Hughes for a while, and then went on to become London Organiser for the Liberals, working at Party HQ until 1989. By this time he had become involved with the market research company of which he is now a director. He is currently a Liberal Democrat Councillor in South London.

Sincere thanks to Bill for being such an interesting and co-operative interviewee, especially after I arrived 2 hours late after a horrendous journey through the sort of traffic only London can produce.

Stephen Yarwood

>> Digital version of the interview on the Facelift website (slightly different from the original paper version)

A space for - Facelift - Issue sixteen - January 1997



a space for

the story behind Soft Machine's archive release

by Mike King



Without question the most significant historical addition to our understanding, appreciation and enjoyment for the music of Soft Machine has been the recent discovery, and release, of the long lost recording session for the 1969 London multi-media event, Spaced. Here is the most extreme music committed to tape from a band crowned and renowned for breaking idiomatic rock with those twin pillars of the avant garde: minimalism (played/tape looped) and improvisation (tonal/atonal). By now you've heard the CD, and read the notes by Hugh Hopper and engineer Bob Woodford regarding the relevant whys and hows. Forgive my presumption in feeling duty bound to share with fellow Facelift travellers my own part in this discovery, and detail the editing decisions that reduced the original 103 minute recording to the 67 minute CD 'Spaced'. That the music is so utterly strange, as so many have remarked, seems to me fitting in light of the strange sequence of accidents that ultimately led to its CD release.

The story (as briefly as possible) begins backstage after a performance of transcendent soundscapes from AMM here in Toronto June 1992. Drummer Eddie Provost was very approachable and spoke fondly of a 1966/67 period when the work of early AMM and Soft Machine often colluded (ArtsLab, UFO), adding that one Bob Woolford would on occasion

professionally record concerts by both groups. The name sounded familiar - wasn't he credited on 'Third' for concert recordings? By the way, it was here also that guitarist Keith Rowe stood cross-armed in the corner adding quietly: "I know of a session Robert Wyatt did that no-one else knows about', leading in time to the inclusion of 'Nowt Doin' from Laurie Scott-Baker's General Strike on the CD 'Flotsam Jetsam'. That evening I left with Bob Woolford's current address in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, but without a phone number and was frustrated to learn that no phone listing existed for Woolford nor any spelling and vicinity variation. Letters went unanswered and periodic checks with long distance directory were futile - eventuallyI gave up trying.



Two full years after the AMM encounter, during an annual self-induced stupor, I mysteriously was seized by an irrational impulse to plea with a long distance operator again. 'Not in Rocky Hill', she replied, but I've a R Woolford in nearby North Canton'. We finally connected when a soft British voice answered the ringing phone, and I felt worthy of the Royal Canadian Mounties and their motto, 'we always get our man'! Bob was kind, apologetic, and regretted that a recent divorce prevented him responding. But now on his own he had a phone under his name. I soon learned the good news that not only did he record the Softs at Middle Earth (Sept 16, 1967) and in following years, but that he also saw fit to preserve all of his recordings (this in light of Mike Ratledge once urging him to burn all the Softs reels!) Yes, those crappy cassettes marked 'Middle Earth', fall 67 making the tape swap sounds are a travesty of Bob's masters, and forget the impossible notion of a CD release - for one all vocals are horribly distorted thanks to bad vocal mikes and second ... but I digress. The bad news now was that all tape boxes and recorder remained with his ex-wife and had to be tactfully retrieved. It was too late to benefit 'Wrong Movements', which had then just been published, but this was something else altogether, and I was now prepared to wait.

A few months later, October 1994, while in London for the great Gong 25 celebration, and hanging with Hopper I let it slip that I'd contacted Bob Woolford. Without blinking Hugh replied, "Oh, he's got `Spaced"'. I became quickly confused upon being told that `Spaced' was at the Roundhouse, but it wasn't a gig, it was a week long event, but didn't receive public notice... etc until eventually sorting this perfect mystery (one that escaped everyone's memory during antagonistic probes for `Wrong Movements'). In the end learning about `Spaced' would prove one small step, for hearing it would take a giant leap.

Fast forward to May 1995 and and a day off from visiting the Windo family in New York City to take a 3 hour bus trip to the neighbouring state of Connecticut. Bob and I rendezvoued at the bus terminal then wound our way through the mountain to his wilderness hideaway, all the while exchanging stories and laughter. He'd just reacquired his tape collection and reel to reel, and had bought a new cassette deck that day. Tea and tapes were served, in that order, and I'll never forget the sight upon entering a spare bedroom lined with countless waist high stacks of master reels. Of course I obliged an invitation to sort them through, and was gobsmacked (as you say there In England) upon discovering late 60s/early 70s concert recordings of Stockhausen, Amalgam, Portsmouth Sinfonia, Comelius Cardew, Scratch Orchestra, AMM, MEV, Alex Harvey, Pentangle, Love... then a box labelled `Waves', which was just that! All In all a veritable goldmine of British experimental and avant garde music professionally recorded at 15 IPS with stage hung stereo microphones. It took awhile to finally say 'there you go Bob, this corner is jazz, this corner classical, this corner blank tapes (numerous), etc. Then we settled in together and listened to Soft Machine's `Spaced'.

'Spaced' was recorded by Bob at his home in mid 1969, with Hugh and Mike working with him on tape loops and mixing. His reel to reel machines were self designed and homemade - one of which folded neatly in a bicycle saddle

bag for easy transportation to gigs! A more elaborate setup for Bob Woolford Sound was found in his adapted VW mini-bus. Three pancake reels (single sided spools) comprise `Spaced' and what follows in a succinct summary of the editing decisions that distinguish the CD selection from the original tapes. For the record it was unanimously agreed by band members, Steve, Bob and myself that thoughtful edits would benefit the listening sequence.



'One', bass and organ over half speed rhythm track, is complete. `Two' is the opening 7.36 of a 38 minute long tape composition by Ratledge, as so clearly inspired by the pioneering work of Terry Riley. 'Three' is an excerpt from the the middle point of the same piece, which ends with the legendary five fade that's referred to in Bob's notes. `Four' remained in its over-the-top, drugged out, demonic entity at 32.10. The buzzing sounds that open and close `Four' is a tape loop of bees as recorded by Brian Hopper and recalls the tape experiments of Brian and Mike from the very early 60s. Other tapes during this long mixing collage are played at half speed (ie, Robert's vocal) and at various points a concert recording of the Softs by Bob in `69 makes an entrance (ie, check the 13.54 mark). `Five', 'Six' and 'Seven' are taken from a continuous 22 minute piece that comprised the 3rd pancake reel of 'Spaced', with `Five' and `Seven' being the opening and closing sections respectively. What follows 'Five' on the reel is an 8-minute hi-hat solo from Robert, inventive but still ricky-ticky. When a great drum pattern finally breaks out further atonal swellings from Hugh and Mike begin to rise. The recording is soon subjected to randomly abrupt and crude sounding mixing effects. Switching would be a more accurate, description as one channel drops out, reappears, then the other, then both, then sound blips. I remember suggesting to Bob that his speaker wire or interconnect cable was malfunctioning, but, no, that was in the music he insisted. In the end this primitivism was off-putting and easily edited out. Besides which Steve at Cuneiform Records thought that including this section may provoke a flurry of faulty CD returns! Out of this section another concert recording (with Brian) is introduced and this is where the fantastic 'Six' begins. Edited out between `Six' and `Seven' is `Box 25/4 Lid' as lifted from the record album. Blame copyright restrictions.



So there you have it - `Spaced' as it was recorded, and as is now available. Don't worry - you're not missing that much. Here`s some trivia for trainspotters. The photo inside the red circle on the CD cover is a still that Bob took of his projector screen while playing the silent 8mm film footage he shot during a by-chance holidav encounter with the Softs at their St Tropez beach building. There wasn't enough light to film any performance, but just enough to capture the back of Mike's organ. That red square is a stage pass sticker for the 14 Hour Technicolour Dream. To these ears 'Spaced' has become a great CD, just as Bob and myself felt so strongly it would be upon fikrst hearing it ft. The effort was ours, now the pleasure is yours.

original photographs, which appear in the CD booklet, were takenby Mark Ellidge and are reproduced here by kind permission of Cuneiform records

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Interview by Richie Unterberger on November 18, 1996

Al Spicer from Rough Guides charactarized Robert Wyatt as being 'the one performer in England that EVERYONE there respects and loves- the punks, the art rockers, everyone.' The legendary singer/drummer was a founding member of Soft Machine and has continued through his career with an impressive collection of solo albums and collaborations (Syd Barrett, Scritti Politti). Wyatt's solo work is characterized by his beautiful, quavery voice and his earnest commitment to socialism. I mean, how many Marxists have a hit record covering a Monkees song?

Richie Unterberger (contributing editor for All Music Guide and Rough Guide to Music, former editor of Option Magazine and editor of music and travel sections of the Whole Earth Catalog) interviewed Robert Wyatt on November 18, 1996 for his book UNKNOWN LEGENDS OF ROCK'N ROLL, which profiles 60 of the most interesting cult acts of rock history, from the 1950's through the 1980's. The book is published by Miller Freeman.
Special Thanks to Malcolm Humes

Richie Unterberger : *What sort of recording are you doing next week?*

Robert Wyatt : I'm just taking some songs...CDs are too long! I learned my craft on LPs, which is basically two chunks of 20 minutes. CDs somehow, you need more than that. I've reduced the amount I do, rather than increase it. So I'm just trying a 20-minute bunch of songs now. The same old thing, just older (laughs). Then I'll try and do another 20-minute chunk. Then, maybe when I've got two or three, I'll have a presentable CD. I'll just have to see.

I'm recording at Phil Manzanera's studio. A really nice bloke. We have mutual friends like Bill McCormick and Brian Eno. He once said to me, you can use my studio if you ever need to. So I'm going down there, and seeing how it goes. I never know in advance. The last time I went in the studio, I spent a few days in the studio, and there wasn't a single thing I came out with that I could use. This can happen.

The last thing I did that came out that sort of worked--it's not even on record here. But there's a composer called Mike Mantler who now lives in Denmark. He wrote an opera funded by a Danish culture minister for their year of culture or something. I sang a song on that called "Understanding," and made a video for that. Most everyone else was doing a live opera thing. I just had a video insert, 'cause I don't do live things. He sent me a tape of that, and he said he might put the record out next year. I enjoyed that. The actual bit of music I worked on was arranged--the actual organization of the singing--was done by Don Preston. He's apparently a friend of Mike's, and helped him on things, doing programming and so on. So I've never met him, but I've worked with Don Preston, which is nice.

Before then, the last thing that came out was I did three songs on an LP by John Greaves on a label called Resurgence based in Newcastle, I think--somewhere up north, anyway. That was with some French musicians, 'cause John now lives in France. He used to be with Henry Cow. It's nice to keep in touch with those people. I did three songs with him. The words were by Peter Blegvad. He doesn't go out of his way to do stuff that's easy to consume (laughs). None of us do, really. That's not really what we're about. I like those people, so it was nice to be asked. That's the last thing that came out that I was on.

R.U. : *What was it like to hear the Wilde Flowers stuff, when that finally came out on Voiceprint?*

R.W. : I think I prefer the mystic clouds of nostalgia to the real thing, to be honest (laughs heartily). What I would have done, I would have taken about four tracks out maybe, and put 'em on a sort of limited distribution thing for sort of fanzine-type audience only. I feel quite cold-blooded about it. It's impressive to hear how prolific Hugh (Hopper) was already, writing songs, before he was working on more instrumental things. I'd forgotten that. The only excuse I have for the feebleness of the record is that, it was an attempt to do nearly all-original material at a time when our friends were doing covers of one thing or another, whether it was pop or jazz. It's sort of harder to do originals when you can't even play properly. 'Cause there's nobody to sort of get your guitar riffs from (chuckles). That's all I can say about that, really. I wouldn't have put it out in that whole sort of "everything and the dirty socks as well." But it wasn't up to me. Hugh stands to earn from that--they're his songs. And I have no right to stop him earning that, so I didn't veto it. Although there's quite a lot of those things I would veto, if it was up to me. But other people want them out and it's not my business to stop them.

R.U. : *The first ten years or so of your recording career, you were usually playing in groups. Since then, you've usually worked as a soloist, or adding stuff to other people's records. I was wondering if you had any preference for working in group or solo contexts.*

R.W. : In theory, I'd like to work in a group. But the group I'd like to work in, all the musicians in them are long since dead. The classic Charlie Mingus quintets, I wouldn't have minded working with! (laughs) In practice, I would divide it into when I was basically a drummer. Then, when I lost the use of my hi-hat and bass drum legs, I became basically a singer. I was a drummer who did a bit of singing, and then I became a singer who did a bit of percussion. Certainly I would say that I would like to think that the singer is the butterfly, and the drummer was just the little grub in the ground, working to become a caterpillar.

R.U. : *The Soft Machine went through quite a few lineup changes while you were in the group. Was there any phase of that group's development that you felt better about than others?*

R.W. : That's difficult, because it's like talking about a marriage after a bad divorce. If it's a bad divorce, then it kind of spoils the whole thing in your memory. So in fact I have no happy memories of that band at all now, because of the humiliation of being thrown out at the end of it. I never quite got my confidence back from that. I enjoyed the opportunity to record "Moon In June," and to get that onto tape. The first ten minutes of that I played myself. I had a chance to sort of double-track instruments that I didn't actually own at the time--they were in the studio--like Hammond organ and so on. I really enjoyed that. It probably helped me for later on, when I came to do things with my own keyboard playing.

I just had a letter a week ago from somebody in Chile saying, "Please, Robert, send me the words of 'Moon In June,'" and I absolutely have no idea what they are. I wrote them in New York, actually, I know that. But that wasn't about anything.

I'm happy that, if people enjoy it (the Soft Machine), that's good. Because that means it wasn't a waste of time. But for me, the overall experience--I came out of it without much self-respect, without any money, without anything, really. So I haven't dwelt on it too much.

R.U. : *When you starting doing solo albums in the '70s, you did some originals, especially at the beginning. Then there was more of an emphasis on covering other people's songs. For someone who's affiliated with the progressive rock movement, that's kind of an unusual move. Do you feel more comfortable interpreting than writing, or is that even an issue?*

R.W. : That's a very interesting question. I'd say, as you would expect, that when I feel I've done my thing right--most essentially--it's been my own material. Even like, for example, when I did a bunch of singles later on which went onto a compilation (on Rough Trade). There was a track there called "Born Again Cretin," which musically was in my own words. That was really the most me of everything on that.

I was very influenced by painters and artists, more than musicians, when I was a teenager. I don't think it's necessary for a painter to invent the things that he paints, if you see what I mean. If you paint a tree, it's your painting of the tree, it's your choice of color, what you put in and leave it. If you really work it through--interpreting something--it's you. People are quite shocked when you remind them that Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra never wrote a song that they recorded in their lives, as far as I know. Because

people associate those songs by (Otis) Blackwell and Big Mama Thornton with Presley. They don't say, well, he just did cover versions (laughs). They think of them as his songs, and quite rightly so, because they're no better than the originals, but they worked as Elvis Presley songs. So they're his songs, because of his voice.

R.U. : *When you did songs which were pretty unexpected coming from someone from underground rock, like "I'm a Believer" or "At Last I Am Free," was there any consternation or puzzlement?*

R.W. : Well, I was puzzled (laughs). They're quite specific differences. "I'm a Believer," I was sort of pushed into that by Simon Draper, who was A&R for Virgin. It led, in the end, to the breakdown of the relationship with Virgin. It was a bit perverse. I actually only liked Virgin when I thought it was a kind of small-scale, cottage industry-type record company. I didn't realize that they were just using that as a way in. They wanted to be a big posh record company with pop acts just like everybody else. So I was a bit disappointed at this pressure to do singles.

I didn't really mean to do that one. I thought, well, what should I do that's just like the most unhip thing you can possibly think of? But, that's really nice (laughs)? And I thought of the Monkees doing "Last Train to Clarksville" or something like that. But then, I couldn't remember the title, and I did "I'm a Believer." I'm not full of malice, but I do dislike Neil Diamond a lot, and I'm sorry that I've done a Neil Diamond song. If I lived my life over again, I would leave them to the master (laughs).

But I've always liked pop music. There was a bit of a misunderstanding with the avant-garde rock scene, because I think I was sort of swimming the wrong way, really. A lot of the rock thing came out of people who'd started out doing covers of versions of the English scene and the American scene, the Beatles and Dylan and so on, and then got more and more involved in instrumental virtuosity and esoteric ideas. I was really going the other way. I was brought up with esoteric ideas and modern European music and Stockhausen, Webern, avant-garde poets, and all the kind of avant-garde thing in the '50s, before pop music--the beat poets, the avant-garde painters at the time, and so on. To me, the amazing thing was to discover the absolute beauty of Ray Charles singing a country and western song or something like that. So my actual journey of discovery was I discovered the beauty of simple, popular music. And it was much more elusive, really, than people who put it down realize. Anybody who thinks pop music's easy should try to make a pop single and find out that it isn't.

So that always interested me very much. I have a fantastic admiration for really good pop musicians, just straight commercial pop musicians with no hip associations of rock at all. I'm quite happy with that.

R.U. : *Your material encompasses concerns which are pretty personal, and also social/political. Is there a preference there, or do you just cover all of them?*

R.W. : It comes out like that. In fact, they're all the former. Everything I do is totally personal. I don't really have a lot of control over what I write when I'm writing it. I think it's a misunderstanding. I think artists can be overestimated in the amount of control they have over what you do. You sort of do something, and what you do, what you are, comes out. I wouldn't write about anything because I thought, gosh, I ought to write about this, or I ought to write about that. Those times when it comes out as politics for example, or whatever, it's because that's really something buzzing in my gut at that time. And it's just as strong and personal, as emotional, as being in love or anything else. They're not arguable things.

I'm open to the criticism of that, which is, you know, love is blind. My politics has been too. I think you can fall in love with ideas, and you can fall in love with people. It's a very subjective experience. And I'm loyal to that experience.

R.U. : *There have been very few people who started in the underground rock scene in the '60s who have spanned the eras from psychedelia to progressive rock to punk and post-punk, and are still very active in the 1990s. How have you been able to fit in with all the various movements? And, why do you think there have been so few musicians from 20, 30 years ago who've maintained that sort of level of participation?*

R.W. : In my case, what keeps me going is a constant sense of disappointment with what I've already done (laughs). One of the things that might be a problem would be, if you were really happy about something you'd done--you'd really thought you'd done it at a certain time in your life. It may be, for people who really got on top of what they were

trying to do, and articulated it well in a certain era, then they're just trying to cling onto that, and make it harder and harder, and more and more difficult. But if you've never ever felt that you quite got a hold of it, you just feel that before you die, you've got to try and get it right once (laughs). And hope that the experience you have makes up for the some of the diminishing energy.

The corollary of that is, maybe people really feel they had their moment, and it can happen. I don't think they're any the worse for that. Going back to pop music, as far as I know, Sam the Sham & the Pharoahs only ever did "Wooly Bully." But, you know, how wonderful that they just did that! (laughs) And if they went on to become used car salesmen after that, that's fine. They had their one moment, and I think that's fine.

There are some people I know who soldier on. Because I've never really been in the commercial world, it's a funny. Because although I say, I like pop music and I love rock and roll, I've never been in the commercial world, never swam in the business end of it, really. I think that pop, and to some extent rock, are like sport and fashion industry in that they're about the exuberance of youth. That's the sort of subliminal ideology, really. Whereas the things that I draw on, and the world that I feel part of, aren't particularly youth culture.

My heroes are--not people that I hope to emulate--people like Picasso and Miro and people who at last really reach something in their old age, which they absolutely couldn't ever have done in their youth. I feel I'm more like in one of those kind of art forms, than in a youth-orientated art form. I think the people who did well, or are happy, in a youth industry, where their youthfulness was part of the act, obviously, by definition, they define themselves out of the business after a decade or so.

I don't feel that I'm very adaptable, that I particularly go with the flow of new ideas or something. I just don't feel I've mined my own scene properly and fully yet. It doesn't really matter what era I'm in. Because I haven't ever really felt quite =in= an era, I don't feel out of one. There was a certain amount of resentment, for example, in the early '80s of the new kids on the block at that time, the punks and so on. But since I hadn't acquired any particular loyalty to the previous generation, to my own generation even, I had no paranoia about anybody else's. I had no what you might call era patriotism--"that's my era, right or wrong" kind of thing. I've never been any kind of patriot, including not a cultural patriot. So I have no problem with new immigrants bringing new ideas. I'm happy about that.

R.U. : *You've collaborated with a really wide assortment of musicians. Are there certain kinds of collaborations that you seek out?*

R.W. : Absolutely not, actually. To be honest, nearly everything I've been on, I've been asked to be on. And I'm quite surprised at them. I mean, they do surprise me on the whole. I would say that the ones that have perhaps meant most to me have been the most recent ones, Mike Mantler. And things I've done with him before. But no, I wouldn't have dreamt of asking these people. I don't ask people. When I'm recording, I'm very shy of asking people, in case they don't want to do it, or in case they don't get the idea that I had in my head, and I'm too embarrassed to not use it. Also, it's expensive. If you're going to use other people, you have to pay them. People don't (get paid), a lot of the time...

Things I do myself, I often imagine friends on things, and there are people I would like to work with. It's a bit harder, because I live out in the sticks anyway, and plus being in a wheelchair means that I can't really circulate. So I tend to stick to my own thing. I'm not, by nature, a collaborator. I think, there again, going back to the fact that my biggest influences were people like painters and poets. These are solitary workers. It's been very good for me to have been asked on various things, but in the end it surprises me. I just try and do the things that people ask me to do. It's nice, in a way. I don't have the responsibility for the final thing. I'm quite limited in what I can do, so sometimes I just have to say no, not because I don't like it, but because I just don't think I can do justice to the idea of the song.

But on the whole, that's rather misleading, this thing about all the people I work with. Although it's a fact, it's not a career decision on my part at all.

R.U. : *You seem pretty comfortable working in a variety of styles, whether rock, pop, jazz, or avant-garde.*

R.W. : In the end, there are notes and intervals and chords and rhythms. Some I like,

some I don't. But they are actually very often, in all these different kinds of musics, all these musicians from different styles are actually picking and choosing from the same tiny little bunch of notes, and the same little bunches of possible rhythms, and so on. Underneath the kind of superficial differences of style, the kind of music's haircut, if you like, or the current clothes the music is wearing, when you're actually working on a piece of music with at least one good idea in it, that good idea is not really fixed or tied to a style or an idiom. It's a good idea. There's no field of music which doesn't have good ideas. So anybody who has a good idea and I can deal with it suits me fine.

R.U. : *With the music that you're making now, are there any directions that you're eager to stake out?*

R.W. : No, I'm still trying to do the same thing, only get it right! (laughs) The appearance of variety is a complete illusion. It's like somebody who's got a dartboard in his room, a large dartboard, and there's darts all over it. And you think, wow, you've got a lot of different directions you throw your darts. And you say, well yeah, but all I was trying to do was hit the board. That's all I've ever tried to do.

But I don't find the business easy. The moment you start talking about the business, you start sounding like someone in Spinal Tap. But the fact is, I have a great difficulty in communicating with the record business. There are some very honorable and nice record people. In fact, the people who distribute my stuff in the States through Gramavision (Rykodisc), they're very nice people. But on the whole, I've found that there's always that problem that I had with Virgin. I've never seen the need for this great split between success and failure that the pop industry is like. A bit like Hollywood--something's either a smash or it's a complete failure. The world of culture in my head that I come from isn't anything to do with that. It's to do with just people pegging away for a lifetime at their craft.

I mean, if you go to a shop down the road and buy something from the shop, it doesn't have to be the most successful shop in the universe. As long as he makes enough money selling his stuff that he can eat too, he's happy. And I'm like that with my music. I don't want to have to do the things you have to do. I don't want to live the life. It just doesn't mean anything to me, very much, the high-profile, big money side of things. I just want enough to live on, and to be able to get on with what I do, and hang around my friends. This constant pressure from record companies to come up with a hit single or something like that, I find completely tiresome. I just find that there's no understanding, really, of what the industry is.

And I find the same problem in the studio, even with engineers who don't like scruffy noises. They like to clean it up and get everything sounding really pristine clear because this is going to go in their CV, and they don't want another engineer to hear them on a record which doesn't sound all clean and tidy. And my music isn't clean and tidy. That's always been a difficult to me--just not being in tune with the industry.

If I say I'm disappointed in what I've done--and I can think of more wrong with it than right with it--maybe the good side of that is, it sort of keeps me hungry, you might say. It gives me a motive. People say, oh it's a shame, you're not nostalgic about the '60s. Well actually, it's quite good, when you think of it. Wouldn't it be sad if I was sitting here wishing it back? And I don't. So at least you can turn those things around. It's quite healthy, I think.

R.U. : *I wanted to ask a question about someone else in the book who I won't be able to interview. You drummed on some of Syd Barrett's solo records.*

R.W. : I didn't see them (the Pink Floyd) perform very much. I liked him. He was shy, he was thoughtful, and he was definitely onto something.

R.U. : *Did you find him difficult to work with?*

R.W. : Absolutely not, no. Very easy. Almost too easy. He was very, very easygoing. So easygoing that you didn't necessarily know what he wanted, or whether he was pleased with it or not, because he seemed quite pleased with what you did. I think possibly he may have suffered as well from moving into the world of commercial culture, as they did. I think it might have been very confusing for him. Being an artist, working in an attic, to us--this may be a silly illusion, it's just a silly romantic dream, just like being a pop star. But I don't his romantic dreams were anything to do with the responsibilities of commercial pop stardom.

It's not a snobbishness, this thing about commercial stuff. It's just the fact that it seems to have a momentum all its own, and there seems to be demands made on it. You know how it is with, for example, Hollywood films--they're really accountant-led. Being big and famous doesn't get you more freedom, it gets you less, you know what I mean? It happens in the music itself as well. All the machinery that starts to come into gear, from management and touring and the whole way it's done, the musician becomes a fairly small cog in a machine where all these sort of semi-comatose people in the industry certainly come alive, and they certainly know how to act. And suddenly, your whole life is being run by lawyers and accountants. And you're meant to be very pleased, because you've made it and so on. But in fact, you're just getting carried along in a flow where your own personal thing can get completely lost.

As I say, it's not a question of snobbery. Some wonderful stuff comes out of that. But if you did have your own little thing, maybe it can't survive being put through that kind of process. I have no idea, but I imagine that could easily have been what happened to Syd. That the actual success of the band just completely threw him off-balance, I can imagine.

R.U. : *Is there truth to the stories that the musicians on his solo albums weren't told what key the song was in, or that they just had to settle on whatever takes were completed?*

R.W. : That's true, but I mean, that's not very...I was brought up, musically, in the '50s. If you want eccentricity, and that kind of non-verbal world and those kind of weird signals that you have to pick up, you can't beat jazz musicians, you know (laughs). I'm just reading the stories, as I say, about working with Mingus and all those people. Working with Syd Barrett's a piece of cake, I think. I found him courteous and friendly. I can't think of anything wrong with him. I really liked his songs. I liked them musically, I liked them lyrically, and I liked the way he sang them. I can't fault him, really. I don't think he did anything wrong that I know of. I just think that not everybody fits into the business. I know from personal experience, it's not that easy.

The one that I actually got on best with--he was very very kind and generous to me, and good company--was the bass player, Roger. I know they all fell out later. But I liked him and the others so much. I was very sorry that they fell apart. I know how all these things happen. But I really liked them, not just Syd, but all of them. Roger was very important, I thought, his contribution. And so was Rick's organ playing. It was a good band, and then it became another kind of good band. It became something else completely, obviously. Gilmour, as far as I can see--I don't know much about guitarists, really, I haven't worked much with them--but he seems like as good as a rock guitarist can be in that field. But he's very much a man of the world, you know. He's very at home in the world of power and money and so on, and he can deal with it. That had to happen. Syd Barrett fans shouldn't resent him, I don't think. I don't see how anything else could have happened.

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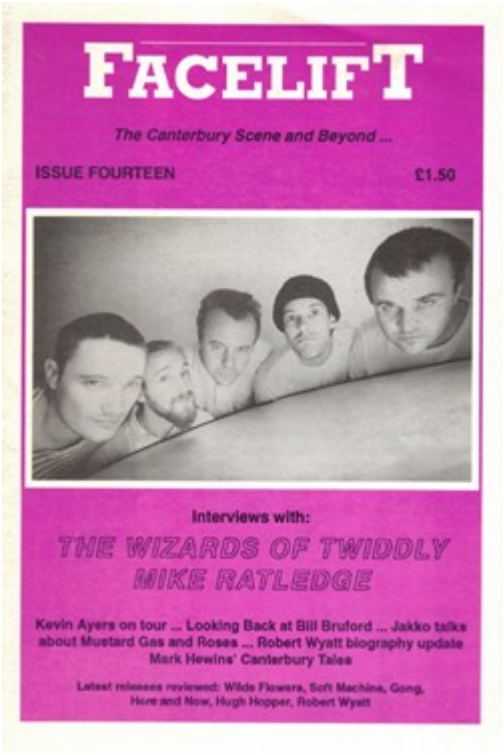
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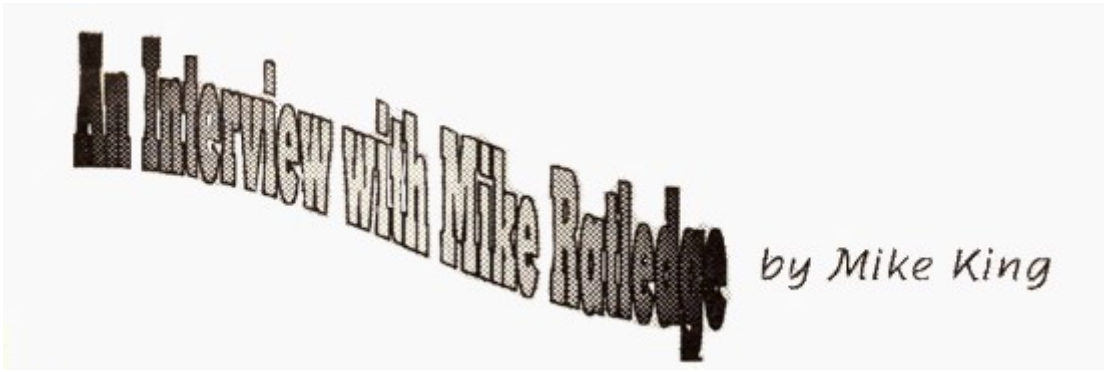
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An interview with Mike Ratledge - Facelift - N° 14 - June 1995



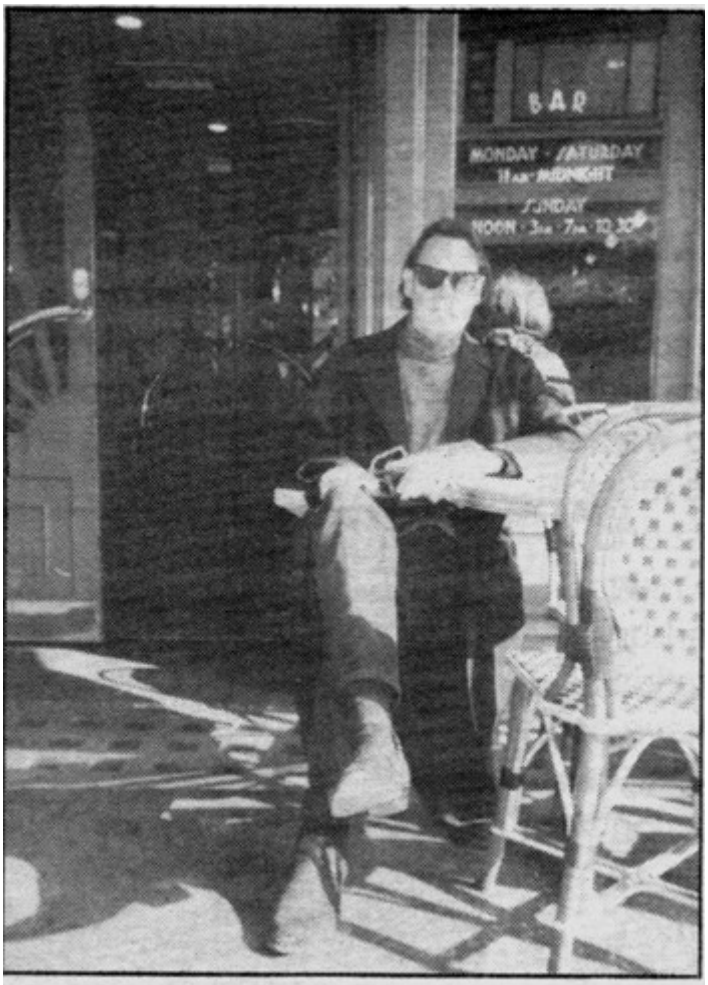
Spending a week in London to attend the Gong 25 orgy and meet long distance friends provided a plethora of memorable encounters, but the one I thought may be of most interest to fellow Facelift readers was my fifty minute meeting, with, of all people, Michael Ratledge.



A quick background. I think it was Hugh Hopper who passed along Mike's phone number back in 1990. It certainly wasn't old Softs manager Sean Murphy, who met my request for Mike's contact bluntly with 'He won't have more than four words for you'. The irony wasn't lost as I later learnt that it would be for Sean that Mike won't have more than four words for. With Hugh's help then I left a message on Mike's answering machine informing him of the 'Wrong Movements' project and requesting specific information for 66/67 era Soft Machine only, as this was proving so very difficult to research. Mike quickly returned the call and cordially conversed about twenty-five years old events. His memory was in solid state and confirmed that the original quintet (with guitarist Larry Nolan) played only four gigs, even identifying venues. Asked if he could share any mementoes, photos, etc, Mike replied 'Nothing... I've

burned my past'.

Fast forward four years to October 11, 1994. Another answering machine message is left saying that I was in London and would like to pass along the book as I didn't have a postal address. We connected and Mike set a time and place (12.30pm at the Pelican in Leicester Square). Look for a lost-looking Canadian, I advised.



Mike Ratledge 1995. Photo: Mike King

With great anticipation I arrived at the upscale coffee shop and found what could only be described as 'Mike Ratledge twenty years later, sunglasses and all'. We shook hands, smiled and immediately felt at ease with one another. Coffee was offered. Now, although I'd brought along the trusty Walkman I dared not ask to record an interview. To betray the intention and personal spirit enveloping our one-on-one would have been not only duplicitous but downright rude.

Instead what follows here are recollections of a conversation easily recalled, for which I'd like to think Mike wouldn't mind my sharing.

Compulsively I began by saying something like 'I'd just like to get one thing out of the

"I've burned my past..."

way. I know it was a long time ago for you and I know your general feelings on the matter, but I've listened to many hours of live recordings of Soft Machine and I've always been absolutely amazed by your playing. It was always so inventive and deeply rewarding". Mike graciously accepted the compliment and we proceeded to openly discuss matters musical and personal, both past and present.

I spoke of the new found interest in Canterbury scene by a new generation as all the old recordings have been given second life as CDs. - and further that his self ejection from recording and gigging in 1976 begets the all too common question 'What ever happened to Mike Ratledge?'. To belabour the point I went on to mention Pip's lyric for Richard Sinclair's recent record 'What's Rattlin', taking the piss out of rear-view navel gazing of bygone days. Mike laughed, and logically explained that he'd simply moved on; a process of growth.

Acknowledged also was the bleak 'behind the scenes' fact that after being monetarily taken from for ten years, ones desire to continue as a cash cow diminishes. It seems everyone lost.

'I understand you're now producing music for television adverts?', prompted Mike to talk about his agency with Karl Jenkins (Jenkins Ratledge), the various adverts they'd scored (Pepsi/ Jaguar/British Airways), and the awards acquired.

Next came a question and answer for which I can retell verbatim. "Yes, but can working with TV commercials actually offer musical challenges and satisfaction?" Came the comeback, "Well, for one you can change your style and not have the band hate you for it", adding that he could find himself arranging for strings in the morning and programming computers in the afternoon. He was pleased that a typical scoring and recording session is completed within three days and

seemed genuinely happy with his work.



classic Son Machine photo from 1966/7:
(from left: Daevid Allen, Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers)

Remembering why we were together I reached into my bag to offer a copy of 'Wrong Movements'. As he flipped through he flipped out over the old photos, 'God, everyone looks so young!' He stopped to read the 1967 BBC audition panel comments and was amused, and in agreement also. Pointing to the adjacent photo of Jimi Hendrix I commented that everyone had said that he was such a nice person, and Mike concurred with kind words of his own. I now recall that during our initial long distance phone conversation Mike relayed how Jimi would sit with him and ask about music theory in efforts to explore new musical territory. We continued to discuss 1967 as I asked about the college dance circuit the Soft Machine were put on. "It was the Star Club experience writ large', referring to the debacle at the famous Hamburg club where their music quickly started fights and cut short the set. Mike suggested that mostly the kids just wanted to dance to pop covers such as 'Knock On Wood', that there was between thirty and forty such

"Everyone looks so young! "

gigs across England, and indeed they were best forgotten.

Naturally talk turned to Robert Wyatt and Mike asked about his well-being and activities. To answer I reached for the book, turned to 1990 and showed Robert's quote defining himself as a true minimalist as he doesn't do anything. Smiles turned sober though when health was discussed. Yes, he knew of John Stevens' death three weeks earlier, and of Gary Windo's passing as well. And he spoke of sax veteran Dick Morrissey's battle with spinal cancer, saying "It always happens to the nicest guys." We lamented together for finding ourselves sharing such terrible news.



flyer from the early days : Soft Machine '67

Mike asked about the Gong Festival which led to reports about the great music, positivity and the long list of participating musicians - "all that was missing was you!", and we laughed. Then like a boxer coming out at the strike of the bell I confronted Mike's disdain: "but problems and all aside you played and recorded with Soft Machine for years, and to have been amidst that incredible energy must have been a fantastic experience for you". "Oh yes, it was", he conceded, "but one moves on". As has everyone else I suggested. "So we can't expect to see you playing keyboards with fuzz in a band soon!" I joked. "God, no! But having said that, I do have some ideas and it's possible that something may appear in a few years. Maybe a record, I don't want to say any more than that."
Certainly we spoke about much more but what more can I say? The fifty minutes flew by quickly. Mike had to leave for an appointment at his Soho offices, so we got our coats and bags and headed for the streets. Handshakes and mutual thanks were exchanged and I'm compelled to convey the appreciation he expressed for 'Wrong Movements' carried a sincere, personal currency - after all Michael Ratledge is an original, albeit divorced family member'. Then just before departing I summoned the nerve for a final request to take a photo. "Sure. There's plenty of pictures of me in your book. What's one more!"

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Invisible jukebox - The Wire N° 142 - December 1995

INVISIBLE JUKEBOX



invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of. . .

Robert Wyatt

Tested by Mike Barnes

In 1973 Robert Wyatt fell out of a window at a party and suffered an injury which left him paralysed from the waist down. Although it effectively ended his spell as one of the UK's most inventive drummers, his musical career continued - he happened to be one of the UK's most inventive singers, songwriters and arrangers, too. Beginning as a drummer and singer in The Wilde Flowers in mid-60s Canterbury, Wyatt went on to a famous five year stint with Soft Machine. In 1972 he formed the more spontaneous, and equally acclaimed, Matching Mole. Post-accident, Wyatt found his true voice and recorded his best work, starting with *Rock Bottom* in 1974. The same year, his version of The Monkees' "I'm A Believer" made the charts - a feat repeated eight years later with the Elvis Costello song "Shipbuilding". In between his own releases, his collaborations have been many and various, from Brian Eno to Mike Mantler, Working Week to Ultramarine. Wyatt joined the Communist party in the mid-70s and his work became increasingly political throughout the 80s. After a five year hiatus, he re-emerged in 1991 with *Dondestan*, his best work for 15 years. An instrumental mini-album *A Short Break* followed. He is currently negotiating a new record deal. The interview took place in Wyatt's home in Louth, Lincolnshire.

CHARLES MINGUS
"Haitian Fight Song" from *The Clown* (Atlantic)

I never saw this band. I do think he's underestimated in importance as a bass player: it's good that you've got one here where he starts on his own. I think he's probably my favourite ever bass player. Apparently he used more fingers than other bass players. He used three fingers of his right hand, which is

why you get rather uneven walking lines, using the middle finger and the first finger. What I like about his solos is that they're the most like speech patterns of any bass player, so that makes him the most remarkable.

This has got a strong melody and even though it's just a quintet, it's like a whole group feeling - not just soloists and a rhythm section, a real group [Looks at CD] It's from The Clown! My God, that is going back.

In your biography you mention a lot of bass players as major musical influences.
It's what drummers work with - we're both in the engine room so they're the ones you get to know and that can be the crucial thing. Also when I'm making a record, it's the one thing that I can't do myself, so I have to get in a bass player.

One of the things that influenced me about Mingus is the compositional thing. There's a tendency in jazz, and it can be allright, for each composition to be a vehicle for the soloists to do their stuff - that's the only reason that tune is chosen. Whereas with Mingus, each piece has got its own character and it's very particular. And even with a small group, an informal set-up like that, they're playing that piece, not some other piece - that's what I like. Because he came from the West Coast and not the East Coast, he got involved in a lot of his early workshops with a mixture of all sorts of strange people that he might not mix with in some other context. But the first groups he had were extremely academic sort of intellectual exercises, the Mingus Workshops. He gradually got bluesier, but his bluesiness had a terrific intellectual authority because he'd done all this technical homework beforehand. So he was in total mastery of time signatures and harmonic complexities and so on.

THE RAINCOATS
"Fairytale In The Supermarket" from *The Raincoats* (Rough Trade)

It's English anyway. Could it be The Slits? Is it Palm Olive? I really think she's good - let me get in a plug for Palm Olive as a fellow drummer. I once said [to The Slits], 'If you ever want me to drum on your records I'd be happy to come', but they never asked me. I was very hurt by that, but never mind, I got to play with The Raincoats instead. It's not The Slits? Blimey, I'm pleased I recognised the drumming. It's Palm Olive and somebody Yeah Go! Go!

It's from The Raincoats' first album, with Palm Olive on drums.
I did the last gig in my life [in 81] with The Raincoats. We did "Born Again Cretin", which they did very well. I really enjoyed it... I didn't know [this] was The Raincoats because I didn't hear their first record. To be fair, that definitely wasn't Ari Up singing. What threw me was distinctive drumming style that I associate with The Slits - that's my excuse. Very nice. I liked that.

How did you come to play with The Raincoats?
I think they were an Rough Trade and we met around Rough Trade. It was a fairly loose set-up where people were listening to each other's stuff and clocking what each other were doing.

You played with other post-punk groups and musicians - Scritti Politti, and Epic Soundtracks from Swell Maps. Few other musicians from your generation got so

directly involved in that area.
Well it surprised me, to be honest. If I was asked and I could do it, on the whole I would. I liked the attitude round then. There were a lot of people I got on with better from that eruption than from that early period in the 70s, that I might have been expected to identify with. I liked the rough and ready approach. It's like somebody said about me: I'm like Jimmy Sommerville an valium, and I haven't got his get-up-and go, I've got a lot of get-down-and-stay. But apart from that I really liked all the people I heard from that period.

I didn't think rock'n'roll was so precious that it had to be played in tune. It never struck me as the essential ingredient in the first place. In fact by having that strange detuning that they all seemed to do - that slightly untuned desafinato that they had - it gave a bit of harmonic interest to a music that normally doesn't have any at all. The music I'd been involved in listening to before, the jazz, had gone into a tailspin of rejection of organisation anyway. So quite a lot of pop groups at that time were a sort of electrified version of a free jazz revival - which to those of us who were accustomed to these things was quite nostalgic really.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Smash The Social Contract" from *Cornelius Cardew Memorial Concert* (Impetus)

Oh it's Communist Party, brackets, Marxist-Leninist, close brackets. Could it be Laurie Baker, the composer? I think I recognise that pianist. Oh, that's very interesting that, because Cornelius Cardew used to write a lot of pieces, but I don't think that is Cornelius Cardew. Although he did take on the attempt to write popular songs, that would have been in the era when I don't think he specifically dealt with things like the Social Contract. The things I remember by him at the time were more Internationalist, but it may be.

It is composed by Cardew, a performance from his memorial concert in 82.
Is it really? Oh, that's interesting. It could have been Laurie Baker on drums [Looks at sleeve] Laurie Baker, there you are.

One thing to say about Cornelius Cardew, before anybody says 'what a load of crap' or anything like that, is he was the most stunningly knowledgeable musician. One of the few in this country that had that really encyclopaedic knowledge of music, that we associate with non-English figures like Pierre Boulez and people like that. And had he lived he would have been recognised as one of the giants of music, just because of the breadth and depth of his knowledge. What people object to, of course, is the way that he channelled that vast knowledge into certain disciplines, but I think that's very heroic myself, and it was very interesting to hear it.

Cardew was obviously keen to get his message across to the greatest number of people by putting it in an accessible 'popular song' form. But do you think the rather knockabout knees-up style of this particular song actually works?
Well the thing is, they set themselves more problems than they tried to solve, because by seeing what you could do without really using Transatlantic popular culture at all, your departure point into the new age comes from somewhere around Gilbert & Sullivan in the end. So you end up becoming Marxist-Leninist-Gilbert & Sullivan-ist! Nobody in England should object to that - we're all very proud of Gilbert & Sullivan. I would

suspect anyone's political motives of disapproving of Cornelius Cardew on those grounds. It's the great thing, innit, Britpop, this year? You can't get more Britpop than Gilbert & Sullivan. So he was right in there, Cornelius, ahead of the pack as usual.

I'm not saying he got everything right, but I like his attitude with all this knowledge, trying to focus it instead of bathing in it in a sort of narcissistic glory of talent. He never tried to do that and I think it's very unusual.

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH
"Fitter Stocke Has A Bath" from *The Rotters Club* (Virgin)

Oh, that's Richard [Sinclair]. What a lovely voice, it's so true. On *Rock Bottom* he and Hugh Hopper really held it together [on bass]. In the mid-60s - he actually came from a musical background, his dad was a musician - although he was younger than us, he always used to sing in tune which I thought was pretty avant garde at the time, and actually I learnt to do the same. It took me a few years. A musician that he liked even when he was a teenager was Nat King Cole, who nobody listened to in the 60s. Nat King Cole people don't realise why singers like him so much. It's because he's so in tune, so accurate. That's half the battle really - and Richard always was.

Hatfield And The North were one of the most fêted groups from that whole Canterbury Scene of the 60s and 70s. Was there any sense of a 'scene' at the time, or has it just become labelled thus with hindsight?
The first time I heard of the Canterbury Scene was in an article. It was invented by that bloke who does family trees [Pete Frame] and in order to do family
trees, you have to have families. If I hadn't been told I was in a thing called the Canterbury Scene it wouldn't have occurred to me. It surprised me that such a thing came to pass and it was interesting how these history books eventually get written. It makes you wonder about them [Laughs]

I had a very, very unhappy and unsuccessful time at school in Canterbury, during which time I actually lived nearer Dover. I think in the long run, despite some very nice and to me now seemingly essential associations like Hugh Hopper, I was unhappy in Canterbury. I know Dave Sinclair [Ex-Caravan and Matching Mole] is very affectionate about it. I never had that kind of ruralist affection. I was taken to the country at about the age of ten, simply because my Dad had a terminal illness and retired early, somewhere where he could take it easy for a few years. As far as I was concerned, my life was shut up in my room doing little paintings and listening to records - so what I really remember is the records I listened to and the paintings I tried to do. Highlights were saving up enough money to go to London to concerts, or buy an Ornette Coleman record.

I wasn't primarily interested in music for a start, and secondly, I certainly couldn't play. People have put out demos and tapes from that period from the 60s which I'm on, and I just find them so ridiculous I can't believe anybody wants to listen to them.

KING CRIMSON
"Cat Food" from *In The Wake Of Poseidon* (Island)

I'm trying to work out where that bassline comes from. Oh, what is that? People do that, use a classic bassline and it throws you. You spend the whole time trying to remember what it is. Oh, John Lennon. It's from a Beatles... that one they did on the roof. It's very interesting indeed. They can all really play [Wyatt later identifies the bassline as coming from The Beatles' "Come Together".]

It's King Crimson from 1970 with Keith Tippett on piano.
I was going to say, the pianist was particularly good. [Laughs] Michael Giles on drums? He's a terrific drummer, I should have guessed it from that. To be honest a lot of bands came up around 68, and in 68 we [Soft Machine] were in America. What I heard of the other bands at that time were Big Brother & The Holding Company, Sly & The Family Stone and The Buddy Miles Express, and Larry Coryell playing in the smaller clubs. American groups, basically, and of course we were with Hendrix. I didn't really know much at all about English bands who would have been considered our contemporaries. I don't remember ever actually going to a rock concert that I didn't have to play at.

One of the reasons that we played this track is that it's an example of the meeting ground of Progressive rock with experimental jazz of the era. Both King Crimson and Soft Machine used Keith Tippett's horn section [Marc Charig and Nick Evans]. King Crimson also collaborated with South African exiles like bass player Harry Miller, while you collaborated with brass players Mongezi Feza and Gary Windo.
The connection is very simple - Keith Tippett's personality. A West Country bloke with a great big heart and completely unlike the Old Boy Network jazz mafia that was the London scene at the time. He had all barriers down, listened to everybody, open-minded, never put anybody down, and one of his things was to get all these different musicians from different genres together - particularly the South African exiles. He would get together these bands and get us into them and then we'd meet each other. So really you could put a lot of that down to one man.

I think Mongs [Feza] and the South Africans we knew anyway, because we used to go down to Ronnie's old place and see The Blue Notes when they came to London. Although I didn't know them personally then, it would certainly have helped getting acquainted with Keith Tippett and Gary Windo and all those people. Alfie [Wyatt's wife] knew Johnny Dyani and Chris McGregor, and when we got together in 70- 71, I also got to know her friends as well, so that would be another connection. It was Alfie, Evan Parker pointed out, who introduced him to John Stevens, for example Chris McGregor was another one with a big heart.

NINA SIMONE
"I Put A Spell On You" from *I Put A Spell On You* (Mercury)



[Immediately] Ah yes, this is nice to hear [Sings along]. There's a fantastic saxophone solo on this but I don't know who it is. It's so great [Sings along to solo] Yeah! Then she picks it up and he keeps on going, he keeps pushing it. *Now* he's finished. Cor, that's the stuff. The saxophone solo is like some of the players who played with James Brown: Maceo Parker.

Now, there's a thing that pissed me off a few months ago. Everybody's favourite parliamentary candidate, Screaming Lord

Sutch, was on [the radio] and boasting, quite rightly, that he's the one who eventually got rid of David Owen by beating him in an election - which is a great contribution to British politics. But then he was on about how he did everything before everybody, long hair and all that, and then he talked about all his coffin stuff and he was way ahead there; but he got all that coffin stuff and that whole act from the bloke who wrote this song, Screaming Jay Hawkins. For him [Hawkins] the "*spell on you*" was the big thing. He was into all that necromancy and I don't know what else.

Didn't you used to sing this with The Wilde Flowers in the mid-60s?
I think I used to sing it but I have a hard time remembering more than about 20 years ago to be honest. But certainly Nina Simone was very important. In fact most of the singers that I was influenced by were women, funnily enough. I seem to have more affinity with women's voices than with men's. That's because my voice never broke really.

I think she's a great singer, not just a good one I'd put her up with Ray Charles. The thing is, she doesn't quite belong anywhere. Really she belongs in the continental tradition of chanson singers, Jacques Brel and all that sort of thing, Edith Piaf - that dramatic presentation of songs. It partly came out of a folk tradition of music hall but not the jokey side of it. Oscar Brown Junior was that as well. It's not pop and it's not jazz, it's not any of the categories that now exist. It's more intimate, more nightclubby. Amazing presence. When she's in Ronnie [Scott]'s she makes the place look really small. It's like having a real queen in a room, the real nature's aristocracy. By the time I saw her, she was no longer hitting the notes. She just sort of intimated them, sketched them in the air. And it was all you needed if you knew the songs.

PUBLIC ENEMY
"Party For Your Right To Fight" from *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* (Def Jam)



Sounds like they're sampling Sly Stone NWA or something like that?

It's someone equally well known.
Not by me, evidently. It's not Public Enemy? I'm trying to work out what they're sampling. Oh well, I know this one. I think that's one of the great lines *"It takes a nation of millions to hold us back"*. It completely inverts the whole notion of dissidence. It's very close on from The Last Poets, the first people who did this kind of thing, without a rhythm section, just a cappella.

What I like about [rap's] kind of talking - in posh music it's called *Sprechgesange* - is that for some reason it liberated words. There's been a problem, I think, in black pop music since Motown. Even in some of the stuff I really love, the lyrics are a bit like rhyming soap operas. What's nice about all this black *Sprechgesange* is that it actually liberated the language that you could use on a pop record. It was a shame because in all this time, the black Americans were reinventing the English language every five years and made a massive contribution throughout the century, probably even before, to revitalising the language, then you get the Motown pop songs that sound great but they all just go *"Ooh Baby"*. It was a waste of all that fantastic vocabulary that's been cooking in the streets - so it was very nice that it broke through [with rap].

Although Public Enemy get their message over without any compromise, there's some witty interplay going on between Chuck D and Flavor Flav.
I used to listen a lot to Peter Tong's rap sessions on Radio 1 and there is some very funny, very witty stuff going on. And as for the stuff that people think is terminally defensive in attitude, I don't think that anyone who hasn't been to America and been around on the streets... I don't feel you can talk about it unless you've been there. It's a long time since I've been, 25 years, but I found white American racism made me feel ill and I wasn't even particularly interested in the subject at the time. But if I lived there, I think I wouldn't really be answerable for what it would do to my brain - and that's just me. So what it must be for someone who's in the firing line, I can't imagine.

SLY & THE FAMILY STONE
"Don't Call Me Nigger, Whitey" from *Stand!* (CBS)

[Immediately] Oh, that is Sly Stone [Drums on table] Yeah, there's one thing about Sly Stone that I really like. First of all it's like Mingus, there are lots of dimensions in it - a foreground, a middle ground and a background, and there's something happening in all of them. It's very beautifully spaced. Also that Mingus thing of each piece is a whole world of its own. [During wah-wah harmonica break] Another thing is, I was very influenced by him in this business of the wordless'vocal guitar solos' [Wyatt's trademark scat style].

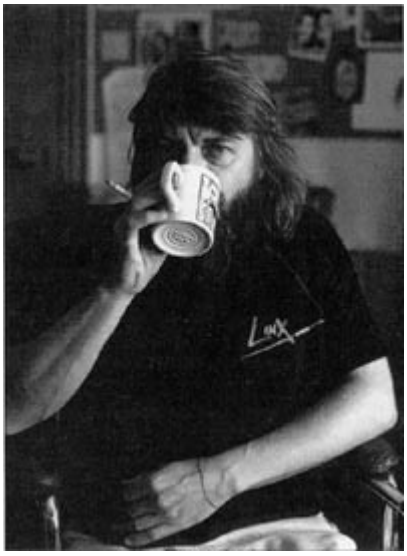
Funnily enough, I was listening to this track this morning and it suddenly became apparent that it's like your own vocal style.
That's it. Almost like harmonica solos with your mouth right up to the mic [cups hand over mouth to give wah-wah effect] and you take a breath. Wonderful. And I thought, 'Yeah, I can play solos now!'

I went to see Sly Stone when I was in the States, but the record that most knocked us out when we [Soft Machine] were in the States was *Stand!*. That was as good as rock music got at the time - absolutely amazing. And the singers he gets in - that woman's a fantastic singer. He got ever such good players.

I read somewhere that you're a big fan of [Sly's bassist] Larry Graham.
Yeah, absolutely. One of the great bass players of all time and a great singer, deep voice, when he had his own band after he left Sly Stone. Very weird, strange person - they all were, but fantastic musicians. There's so much going on, you can't quite tell... Nowadays you can get effects with vocoders and stuff, you can sing through synthesizers and get instrumental effects and so on, but this is before them and better than all that really. It could be a vocoder thing [Sly] had been a disc jockey and knew a lot about studio technology. It's very good, led onto Bootsy and all that sort of stuff.

On some of the singles - specifically "Dance To The Music" - the bass is massively loud.
They had very eccentric mixes. They'd make aesthetic decisions on each track; where to put things, who to have doing what, things coming in and out of each tune. They're great art, Sly Stone's records. And having been a jazz fan, it's nice hearing rhythm sections as good as the first one you played. If you're brought up on rhythm sections like Mingus and Dannie Richmond then rock can seem a bit pedestrian by comparison. A rhythm section like that has got the dimensions of the ins

and outs that make it more interesting, more organic.



> Zoom

PINK FLOYD
"Apples And Oranges" from *Masters Of Rock* (EMI)

Is it Barrett? Is it Jerry Shirley on drums?

It's Pink Floyd, one of the last things Barrett did with them.
I thought it was the second [Barrett] solo LP. That bassline's just a major scale going downwards. It is one of the great tunes, the major scale! [At line *"thought you might like to know"*] See, that's another Beatles influence, it's exactly *Sergeant Pepper* - or it's just as likely to be other way round. Paul McCartney used to listen to them [Pink Floyd].
That's lovely, it's really good. As you can gather, sometimes with English musicians, I know the people without necessarily knowing the music. I didn't collect records or go to the concerts. I was never a consumer. I really like them and there again liked them individually as people. I'm biased because they were very kind to us and to me. In the early days, they got us out of some horrendous tight spots when our equipment blew up, and they would lend us some - and groups don't do things like that. And then to me, they were very generous when I had my accident [Pink Floyd organised and headlined a benefit concert for Wyatt in the same year].

Musically, it's very refreshing to hear that. I'm ashamed to say I didn't know it, but I'm ashamed to say I didn't know
The Raincoats, but there you are. But I don't actually have rock records to listen to particularly. I see rock music as a boy-next-door activity. Rock doesn't have any romantic associations for me. It's what people like us used to do [laughs], the kind of things we got up to. That's all I feel about it, but having said that, I thought it was very inventive. I enjoyed it very much.

The Canterbury Scene we mentioned before has acquired a sort of mythic status over time, but not as much as the 67 UFO Club scene. Was it really as exciting as it's been made out to be?
Well, you have to forgive people involved if they're subjective. The subjective facts are I couldn't play in the 60s. It took me a

long time. So I associate the entire decade - if there is such a thing as a decade - with excruciating embarrassment on my own part. And it's bound to colour what you think about a place or a time.
Objectively, I'd say it was good, yeah. It was good in the sense that the groups weren't the only thing, just part of what was going on.

It was almost like having a big indoor market, really. We [Soft Machine] used to go down there and play, and sometimes they'd have Monteverdi playing, and the atmosphere would already be perfect. All you'd need was Monteverdi playing and people wandering about, or lying on the floor and things like that, and Mark Boyle's and various other people's film projections all over the walls, and already that was it, the atmosphere. And then there would be the groups. It didn't rely on the groups, it was a place to be anyway. As a stage, the audience were all in the play. And except for a few stars in the old style like Arthur Brown, who was wonderful, most people were fairly anonymous. They would just be there as part of making the scene.

I think at that time, I was still too much of a jazz and blues fan to quite be able to tune into what they [Pink Floyd] were doing. The bands I knew in London before them were Zoot Money and Georgie Fame. I was more used to the Ornette Colemans and the Sun Ras, and compared with what was going on [in jazz] by the mid-60s, even the most non-poppy pop groups seemed fairly tame to me, and fairly commercial.
That's not a criticism, it's just a fact.

TONY WILLIAMS WITH MILES DAVIS "Agitation" from *ESP* (Columbia)

[During Williams's long drum solo introduction] Sounds like Elvin Jones. It's not? Good Lord! He was very influenced by Elvin Jones - School of Elvin Jones. [Trumpet comes in] Well. Oh, in that case it's Jack DeJohnette.

It's not actually.
Hang on. OK. It's Tony Williams. Stupid, I am! Oh God, shoot that man. What a funny mistake to make. But that's a really interesting mistake, because I'd never thought of Tony Williams as being anything like Elvin Jones. But that early section and the business of stumbling over where you expect the bar-line to be, is such an Elvin Jones-y thing. And it's a much deeper sound than I associate with Tony Williams: he usually has a much lighter, crisper sound.
It was a very important time for Miles Davis. He never really recovered from the loss of Coltrane and he nearly went under then, I get the impression. But it was finding Tony Williams and doing a whole new thing that put him back on track. I don't know this one, I have to say. This is terrific, I really like this.

It's from ESP from 1965.
I should have this, let alone know it. Miles Davis started recording when I was born and he's been there all my life. And if someone asked me what was my very favourite voice sound ever, I'd have to say Miles Davis. There's a jazz writer, lives in Paris, called Mike Zwerin, who I've been in touch with again recently. He reminded me that one of [Miles's] bon mots - he lives in France so he can say things like that - was 'play half'. And that's exactly right. It's got a Zen appeal to it. The first time you hear it you think, 'Oh, that's easy, I've only got to play half', and then you think, 'Which half?' [Laughs] Miles Davis is one of the great jazz philosophers. It pisses me off

when people list great philosophers and only list great philosophical writers, because to me some of the great philosophers weren't writers, they were people who did other things. Thelonious Monk or Miles Davis.

BRIAN ENO
"My Squelchy Life" from *Nerve Net* (Opal/Warner Bros)

I was going to play you another piece [ie Eno's "My Squelchy Life"] but it seems I've recorded over the tape by mistake.
You'll have to hum it! [After about 20 seconds of me humming] Ah, hang on, that could be Johnny Rotten. Don't tell me, because I know who that is. That's stupid - I just remember him saying something about sex once that that reminds me of. Of course it's Brian. I think Brian would be very amused, first of all that you sang "My Squelchy Life" and I said 'Johnny Rotten'. And secondly, I would think this is only acceptable if you point out that we've broken new ground here, in that you've not actually played the record and I commented on it. I think it's appropriate, Brian would really appreciate that.

I have no objective opinion of Brian at all. I just consider him a great friend and an utterly good bloke. What else can I say? Brian and I used to spend a lot of time together in the 70s just talking and hanging about. Which, despite this thing about various scenes I may have been on, I don't remember doing with musicians on the whole. We used to have such fun. That's why it's so appropriate you didn't play the record, because we used to have fun imagining things that there could be. One of the things was in the 70s there wasn't the word World Music. We thought wouldn't it be great to get all these records that we were listening to from all around the world, totally nothing to do with pop or rock 'n' roll or jazz or American music, anything like that, anything to do with Europe at all, and you could find tracks that would appeal to people and just package it like pop music. It's difficult to explain now that kind of idea has become commonplace, in fact hackneyed, how exciting it was at that time to draw up these sort of thoughts. He was a very enjoyable person to think with. I find that thinking out loud with Brian is incredibly good exercise for the brain.

You performed on Music For Airports in the late 70s, which is now regarded as a landmark in Ambient music. The idea that it was equally valid to listen to or ignore the music seemed very radical at the time.
That's perhaps why we got on well, because I do like that thing that he does and we both do, which is, 'What if you turn the situation upside down, whatever the assumption or premise might be?' You're banging your head on the wall to try and do something to grab people's attention - what if you do the opposite? [Laughs] Ideas circulate and I'm very loath to attribute ideas solely to one person or anything. This question of authorship wouldn't really be a battleground [for Eno]. Although he is a fountain of ideas, he wouldn't promote himself necessarily as such, because he's interested in the circulation of them, and they go through various processes.

I remember a thing that I'd mentioned that I'd came across from Miles Davis. He [Miles] was talking about how to arrange things in a piece of music. And Miles Davis basically wouldn't tell anybody what to do - his arrangement was the choice of musicians you had in the first place. And Brian thought that was terrific and went on to do some things like that, where you wouldn't tell anybody what to do - the arrangement was choosing the musicians. And so that idea you can't attribute

either to him, or to me, I think you'd have to attribute it to Miles Davis, but the point is, the idea was very illuminating.

Eno always used to describe himself as a 'non-musician'.
I don't know what it means in rock 'n' roll, frankly. [Laughs] As opposed to who? Dave Clarke? What are we talking about here? But that's good. It's the great saving thing about pop music. There's a lot of pop music you only have to be able to hear in your head to be able to do it. But that only makes it like conversation. There's nothing wrong with that - doesn't mean it's crap.

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HOME

The Wilde Flowers - Record Collector N° 186 - February 1995

THE WILDE FLOWERS



SHORT TAKES

THE WILDE FLOWERS

MARK PAYTRESS LISTENS TO A SET OF FASCINATING ARCHIVE RECORDINGS FROM THE MOTHER OF ALL CANTERBURY BANDS

For years, the Wilde Flowers have been hailed as the founding fathers of the Canterbury Scene, which gave rise to groups like the Soft Machine, Caravan and Hatfield And The North, but there was never any recorded proof. A few ex-Garden of England groovers held fond memories of their shows in places like Whitstable and Margate, while ex-members like Robert Wyatt smiled vaguely about their pre-history. But one man, bassist, songwriter and future Soft Machine member Brian Hopper, had instant recall: he still had the tapes.

Now, almost exactly thirty years after the band's debut performance, those tapes are appearing on CD for the first time. Originally transferred onto tape by Hopper from a pile of well-preserved acetates, these recordings may sound a little scratchy, and are at least as primitively-recorded as you'd expect. They offer performances forged in the white heat of the beat revolution, if somewhat distanced from its epicentre. While the beat boom was fashioned primarily by a mix of rock'n'roll residue, R&B enthusiasts and opportunist light entertainers, the Wilde Flowers entered into pop sporting beatnik beards, spouting poetry and professing a love for modern jazz. In time, these factors underpinned the whole 'underground' ethic which swept the country during 1967, while three decades on, the arrival of their recordings on Voiceprint's "The Wilde Flowers" CD (VP 123 CD) adds an important piece to the British rock jigsaw.

So the Wilde Flowers have a lot to live up to. Some of them went on to become important figures in the Soft Machine and Caravan. The mere mention of their name — carrying with it a whiff of Edwardian scandal and pre-psychedelic promise — emphasised their reputation as mavericks, quite possibly out of their heads and very probably ahead of their time. 'Tales Of Canterbury', Brian Hopper's accompanying 28-page account of the band's life, reveals that the truth wasn't always a match for hand-me-down legend — the band were no less

opportunist than most, playing soul and Motown covers to meet the demand, and entering (and winning!) Battle Of The Bands-style contests. But as the music on the CD suggests (and Hopper's reminiscences confirm), the Canterbury dreamers were indeed a far cry from Freddie & the Dreamers.



BEATLEMANIA

Founder member Hopper recalls that, as Beatlemania broke, he hated pop. He'd grown up with classical music, before discovering modern jazz and poetry as a teenager. And in the photos, the tell-tale signs are there — dark clothing, even darker shades, a beret worn half-cock, *that* jazz beard — the embryonic Wilde Flowers were card-carrying Beat boys.

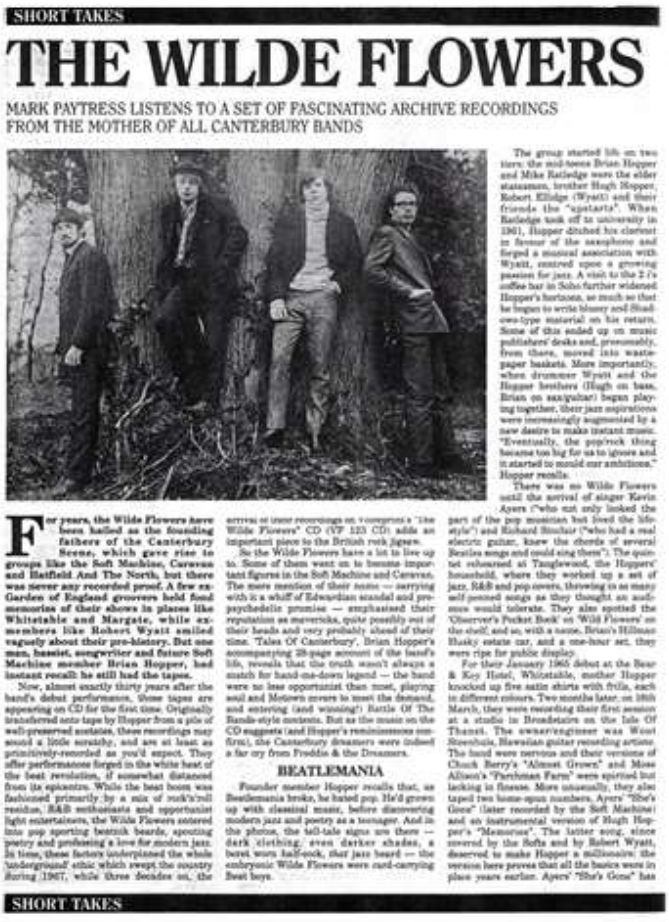
The group started life on two tiers: the mid-teens Brian Hopper and Mike Ratledge were the elder statesmen, brother Hugh Hopper, Robert Ellidge (Wyatt) and their friends the "upstarts". When Ratledge took off to university in 1961, Hopper ditched his clarinet in favour of the saxophone and forged a musical association with Wyatt, centred upon a growing passion for jazz. A visit to the 2 i's coffee bar in Soho further widened Hopper's horizons, so much so that he began to write bluesy and Shadows-type material on his return. Some of this ended up on music publishers' desks and, presumably, from there, moved into waste-paper baskets. More importantly, when drummer Wyatt and the Hopper brothers (Hugh on bass, Brian on sax/guitar) began playing together, their jazz aspirations were increasingly augmented by a new desire to make instant music. "Eventually, the pop/rock thing became too big for us to ignore and it started to mould our ambitions," Hopper recalls.

There was no Wilde Flowers until the arrival of singer Kevin Ayers ("who not only looked the part of the pop musician but lived the lifestyle") and Richard Sinclair ("who had a real electric guitar, knew the chords of several Beatles songs and could sing them"). The quintet rehearsed at Tanglewood, the Hoppers' household, where they worked up a set of jazz, R&B and pop covers, throwing in as many self-penned songs as they thought an audience would tolerate. They also spotted the 'Observer's Pocket Book' on Wild Flowers' on the shelf, and so, with a name, Brian's Hillman Husky estate car, and a one-hour set, they were ripe for public display.

For their January 1965 debut at the Bear & Key Hotel, Whitstable, mother Hopper knocked up five satin shirts with frills, each in different colours. Two months later, on 16th March, they were recording their first session at a studio in Broadstairs on the Isle Of Thanet. The owner/engineer was Wout Steenhuis, Hawaiian guitar recording artiste. The band were nervous and their versions of Chuck Berry's "Almost Grown" and Mose Allison's "Parchman Farm" were spirited but lacking in finesse. More unusually, they also taped two home-spun numbers, Ayers' "She's Gone" (later recorded by the Soft Machine) and an instrumental version of Hugh Hopper's "Memories". The latter song, since covered by the Softs and by Robert Wyatt, deserved to make Hopper a millionaire: the version here proves that all the basics were in place years earlier. Ayers' "She's Gone" has something of the Velvet Underground's "Live 1969" about the sound, though the voice is unmistakeably his. But any promise in that direction was thwarted when he quit some time later, leaving only an added

'E' (as in Oscar) to the Wild Flowers' name.

All four songs have survived on acetate and appear on the new CD. So do a further four, taped at a late summer session in Sellinge, a village just outside Canterbury. This time, the dubious vocal talents of one Graham Flight were on show, his slightly hysterical lines softly tempered by some reverb. He takes lead on the Bo Diddley-like "Don't Try To Change Me" and Brian Hopper's "Slow Walkin' Talk", and shares the spotlight with Wyatt (who's obviously written more words than he can sensibly cram into the song!) on the latter's moody jazz piece, "He's Bad For You". One final number, "It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind)", is familiar from the debut Soft Machine album, where it provides a tender climax to the first side. Again penned by gifted balladeer Hugh, it's not shown in its best light here, where Richard Sinclair takes his vocal bow with an hilarious wooden reading.



SHORT TAKES

THE WILDE FLOWERS

MARK PAYTRESS LISTENS TO A SET OF FASCINATING ARCHIVE RECORDINGS FROM THE MOTHER OF ALL CANTERBURY BANDS

For years, the Wilde Flowers have been hailed as the founding fathers of the Canterbury Scene, which gave rise to groups like the Soft Machine, Caravan and Hatfield And The North, but there was never any recorded proof. A few ex-Garden of England grocers held fond memories of their shows in places like Whitstable and Margate, while ex-members like Robert Wyatt smiled vaguely about their pre-history. But one man, bassist, songwriter and future Soft Machine member Brian Hopper, had instant recall: he still had the tapes.

Now, almost exactly thirty years after the band's debut performances, these tapes are appearing on CD for the first time. Originally transferred onto tape by Hopper from a pile of well-preserved acetates, these recordings may sound a little scratchy, and are at least as primitively-recorded as you'd expect. They offer performances forged in the white heat of the beat revolution, if somewhat distanced from its epicentre. While the beat boom was fashioned primarily by a mix of rock'n'roll revivalists, R&B enthusiasts and opportunist light entertainers, the Wilde Flowers entered into pop sporting beatnik beards, spouting poetry and professing a love for modern jazz. In time, these factors underpinned the whole 'underground' ethic which swept the country during 1967, while three decades on, the arrival of these recordings on Voiceprint's 'The Wilde Flowers' CD (VP 123 CD) adds an important piece to the British rock jigsaw.

So the Wilde Flowers have a lot to live up to. Some of them went on to become important figures in the Soft Machine and Caravan. The mere mention of their name — carrying with it a whiff of Edwardian scandal and pre-psychedelic promise — emphasised their reputation as mavericks, quite possibly out of their heads and very probably ahead of their time. 'Tales Of Canterbury', Brian Hopper's accompanying 28-page account of the band's life, reveals that the truth wasn't always a match for hand-me-down legend — the band were no less opportunist than most, playing soul and Motown covers to meet the demand, and entering (and winning!) Battle Of The Bands-style contests. But as the music on the CD suggests (and Hopper's reminiscences confirm), the Canterbury dreamers were indeed a far cry from Freddie & the Dreamers.

BEATLEMANIA

Founder member Hopper recalls that, as Beatlemania broke, he hated pop. He'd grown up with classical music, before discovering modern jazz and poetry as a teenager. And in the photos, the tell-tale signs are there — dark clothing, even darker shades, a beret, worn half-mock, that jazz beard — the embryonic Wilde Flowers were card-carrying Beat boys.

The group started life on two tiers: the mid-teens Brian Hopper and Mike Ratledge were the elder statesmen, brother Hugh Hopper, Robert Ellidge (Wyatt) and their friends the "upstarts". When Ratledge took off to university in 1961, Hopper ditched his clarinet in favour of the saxophone and forged a musical association with Wyatt, centred upon a growing passion for jazz. A visit to the 2 i's coffee bar in Soho further widened Hopper's horizons, so much so that he began to write bluesy and Shadows-type material on his return. Some of this ended up on music publishers' desks and, presumably, from there, moved into waste-paper baskets. More importantly, when drummer Wyatt and the Hopper brothers (Hugh on bass, Brian on sax/guitar) began playing together, their jazz aspirations were increasingly augmented by a new desire to make instant music. "Eventually, the pop/rock thing became too big for us to ignore and it started to mould our ambitions," Hopper recalls.

There was no Wilde Flowers until the arrival of singer Kevin Ayers ("who not only looked the part of the pop musician but lived the life-style") and Richard Sinclair ("who had a real electric guitar, knew the chords of several Beatles songs and could sing them"). The quintet rehearsed at Tanglewood, the Hoppers' household, where they worked up a set of jazz, R&B and pop covers, throwing in as many self-penned songs as they thought an audience would tolerate. They also spotted the 'Observer's Pocket Book' on 'Wild Flowers' on the shelf, and so, with a name, Brian's Hillman Husky estate car, and a one-hour set, they were ripe for public display.

For their January 1965 debut at the Bear & Key Hotel, Whitstable, mother Hopper knocked up five satin shirts with frills, each in different colours. Two months later, on 18th March, they were recording their first session at a studio in Broadstairs on the Isle Of Thanet. The owner/engineer was Wout Steenhuis, Hawaiian guitar recording artiste. The band were nervous and their versions of Chuck Berry's "Almost Grown" and Mose Allison's "Parchman Farm" were spirited but lacking in finesse. More unusually, they also taped two home-spun numbers, Ayers' "She's Gone" (later recorded by the Soft Machine) and an instrumental version of Hugh Hopper's "Memories". The latter song, since covered by the Softs and by Robert Wyatt, deserved to make Hopper a millionaire: the version here proves that all the basics were in place years earlier. Ayers' "She's Gone" has

SHORT TAKES

STEENHUIS

The Wilde Flowers Mk. II came to an end when Sinclair quit for art college, Graham Flight left because he didn't fit in, and Wyatt vacated the drum-stool to concentrate on his singing. With Richard Coughlan, a full-time dental technician, manning the sticks, the Wilde Flowers returned to Steenhuis's studio in spring 1966 with a more refined idea of what they wanted to do.

Brian Hopper's "Those Words They Say" wasn't a far cry from the ambitious kind of pop being tried out by groups like the Great Society in San Franciscan clubs — all choppy rhythms, interesting chords and 'interesting' (!) guitar solo. It was brother Hugh who was fast emerging as the group's leading songwriter, and while his "Time After Time" is clearly modelled on the Yardbirds, and the bluesy "No Game When You Lose" unsuited to Wyatt's voice, songs like "Never Leave Me", "Just Where I Want" and "Impotence" are not a million miles away from the Soft Machine's early demos. (Most of the songs on side one of Soft Machine's second album were written by Hugh during this period.)

In the meantime, the Wilde Flowers built up their live reputation, travelling to gigs in far-off locations and enjoying modest success. But towards the end of 1966, a certain restlessness was further ruffled by the return of Ayers and co-opted Canterbury scene stalwart Daevid Allen. And Wyatt, who'd been playing furious rock'n'roll covers with pianist Norman Hale, was wildly distracted. Brian Hopper: "He became more and more drawn to their experimentations until one day, during a Wilde Flowers rehearsal, he announced that he was going to quit to become a founder-member of what was to become the Soft Machine."

Despite the writing on the wall, this still came as a shock to the remaining Wilde Flowers. "It was more than the music," says Hopper. "It had become a family affair and one of the key family members was suddenly leaving home."

Into his place stepped Julian 'Pye' Hastings, a young, shy guitarist who'd already sat in with the band on several occasions. Revealing his talent for singing, he joined the group in time for the Radio London Rock Music Contest, held at the Dreamland Ballroom in Margate. The

Wilde Flowers, with Wyatt deputising for the absent Richard Coughlan on drums, won the contest.



SHORT TAKES

something of the Velvet Underground's "Live 1969" about the sound, though the voice is unmistakably his. But any promise in that direction was thwarted when he quit some time later, leaving only an added 'E' (as in Oscar) to the Wild Flowers' name.

All four songs have survived on acetate and appear on the new CD. So do a further four, taped at a late summer session in Sellings, a village just outside Canterbury. This time, the dubious vocal talents of one Graham Flight were on show, his slightly hysterical lines softly tempered by some reverb. He takes lead on the Bo Diddley-like "Don't Try To Change Me" and Brian Hopper's "Slow Walkin' Talk", and shares the spotlight with Wyatt (who's obviously written more words than he can sensibly cram into the song!) on the latter's moody jazz piece, "She's Bad For You". One final number, "It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind)", is familiar from the debut Soft Machine album, where it provides a lesser climax to the first side. Again penned by gifted balladeer Hugh, it's not shown in its best light here, where Richard Sinclair takes his vocal laws with an hilarious wooden reading.

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The Wilde Flowers", Voiceprint's rugged but still intriguing set of Canterbury archive recordings.

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One of the songs performed that day was James Brown's "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag", indicative of the band's new emphasis, which was tailored towards a more commercial sound, including a steady diet of soul and Tamla covers. Brian Hopper switched from bass to saxes, Richard's cousin Dave Sinclair was recruited to fulfil the bass duties, but he turned up with a Vox organ, so Dave Lawrence (from local act Chaos), who was well versed with the soul repertoire, filled that post. This version of the Wilde Flowers was by far the most prolific in terms of playing live, working three or four nights a week during the first half of '67, but that increased workload meant there was little time for recording or experimentation and so there's nothing from this line-up on the CD.

Brian Hopper: "The group was like a diversion in the continuum between the early experimental music of Mike, Robert, Daevid, myself and others, and the later work with the Soft Machine and other bands. It was a diversion that conformed to fashionable trends and to satisfy our egos!" By June 1967, Hugh Hopper upped and quit. The following year, he replaced Kevin Ayers on bass in the Soft Machine. Pye Hastings and the Sinclair cousins began jamming together, and when Richard Coughlan joined them, that project became Caravan. Brian Hopper was left in Canterbury while his young pals helped shape British psychedelia and progressive rock.

That wasn't quite the end of the story. Some time in 1968, Brian took his first post-Wilde Flowers band, known alternatively as Globe or Zobe, into a studio in Whitstable, Kent. As we've already seen, the Wild Flowers weren't, averse to idiosyncrasy in their choice of singers, and Globe/Zobe's Dave Lawrence unhappily joins that line. The three Brian Hopper-penned tracks on the CD betray some familiar WF traits (edgy time changes, nice chords), couched in a looser, jazzier style, like a pre-pubescent Quintessence.

More interestingly, on 6th August 1969, Hugh Hopper booked into Regent Sound Studios, London, to record some of his early songs as publishing demos. With Brian Hopper, Wyatt, Hastings, and the affiliated Mike Ratledge in attendance, the material was basically a Soft Machine set masquerading as a Wilde Flowers reunion, enacted with better sound, technical abilities and a relaxed air of confidence. The songs taped were "Impotence", "She Loves To Hurt" (that's apparently Pye doing the incredibly Wyatt-like lead vocal), "Memories" (with Ratledge's "Soft 3"-style keyboard touches) and "The Big Show", and all reveal just how far the Wilde Flowers — and rock in general — had progressed in such a short space of time.

For further details of the CD and the 'Tales Of Canterbury' booklet, which comes with the first 2,000 copies, write with SAE/IRC to Voiceprint, P.O. Box 5, Derwentside, Co. Durham DH9 7HR.

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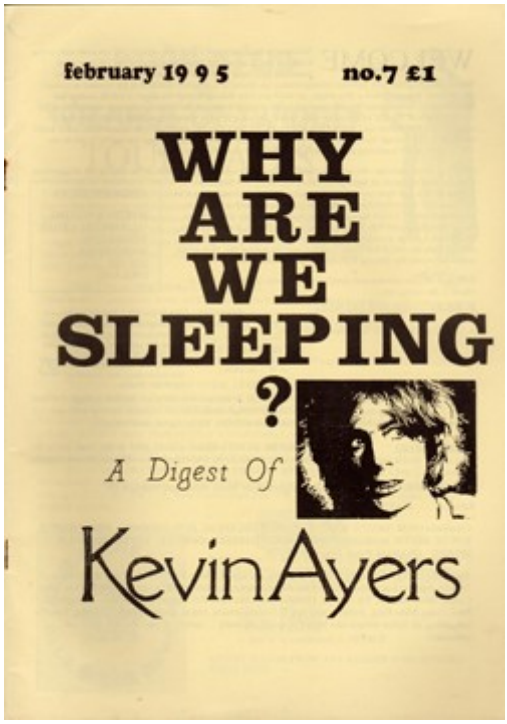
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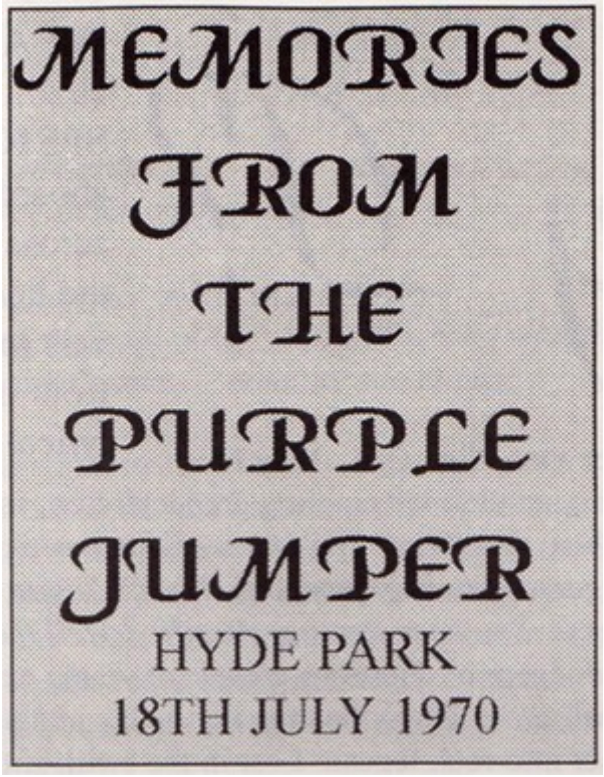
Memories from The Purple Jumper - Hyde Park 18 July 1970 - Why Are We Sleeping ? - N° 7 - February 1995



What an excellent article the David Bedford interview was in WAWS 6. In it David recalled the gig supporting Pink Floyd as one of the most enjoyable ones he played with "the Whole World". As a member of the audience I have fond memories of that concert too. It was the second time I saw Ayers live; though I use the word "saw" loosely.

I was" actually in a fairly pissed off frame of mind when I arrived at Hyde Park. I had had a bad week. I had been due to see Pink Floyd play a BBC "In Concert" the previous Thursday. It was with high expectations I had turned up with my precious ticket, queued patiently, and then had the door slammed in my face by a BBC jobsworth. I had then watched while various middle-aged men and women were allowed into the gig whilst me and a small group of disgruntled punters forlomly waved our tickets outside. It turned out later that the BBC had a policy (and for all I know still does) of issuing more tickets than there were seats in the theatre to ensure a full house. Thus if you were one of the poor sods at the back of the queue the chances were good you wouldn't get in. And of course being the BBC the last thing they were going to do was explain what was going on to a bunch of no good hippies. We later learned that the people being let in after the doors were shut were the brass section for "Atom Heart Mother". If only I had learnt the French Horn or something I could have gatecrashed. One woman did get into the theatre briefly by convincing the commissionaire she was Pink Floyd's wife.

Things had gone wrong the morning of the Hyde Park gig too. By a judicious series of cock-ups I managed to miss meeting all my friends and so I was sitting on my own. I had also arrived late and so the only way I could get anywhere near the stage was by sitting to the side of it, so though I could hear pretty well I couldn't actually see any of the bands.



Early in the proceedings Lol Coxhill performed a solo set. DJ Jeff Dexter introduced him as "Lowell Coxhill" and you can hear Dexter apologising for this on the record. NB. Part of the Whole World's set at Hyde Park can be heard on Lol Coxhill's 1971 'Ear of the Beholder as A Collective Improvisation".To me, the first number he played sounded like he used the riff from "Set the controls for the heart of the sun" as a launch pad for his manaical playing. It was good to hear Lol playing to such a large audience and, considering the extreme nature of his music, going down so well.

He was on good form too when he came back with the band later. Kevin had Robert Wyatt on drums for this gig as well (it was Wyatt's debut with the Whole World - see Melody Maker news item from 18.7.70) as the usual stalwarts of Mike Oldfield, David Bedford and Lol. They played a most entertaining set. Coxhill and Bedford acted out their play Murder In The Air' over the riffing of 'We Did It Again'. The band also played 'Lady Rachel'. It surprises me in retrospect how little of Kevin's set at that time was culled from "Joy of a Toy". Presumably the band was put together to promote the then current Ayers album yet this was the only "Joy of a Toy" song I ever heard them play live. I think we can put this down to an admirable disregard for commercial concerns.

Kevin and Robert did a duet of "Hat Song". It culminated with Kevin singing "So you say you like any hat. you can have my hat" and flinging it into the audience. The only visual impact I received from the whole concert was seeing Kevin's hat sailing out of the stage into the crowd. It looked remarkably like the wide brimmed velvet hat that he wore on the sleeve of "Shooting at the Moon". Who knows it's probably a momento of some Ayers fan to this day.

The rest of the set included much of the material later to surface on "Shooting at the Moon". They played "May I", 'Clarence In Wonderland' and a great 'Rheinhardt / Colores para Dolores". Excellent music for a warm day in the great outdoors; lying on your back you could indeed verify that "Blue is the colour of sky".

Kevin and the Whole World finished with the usual finale of "Why are we Sleeping". Always a great number.

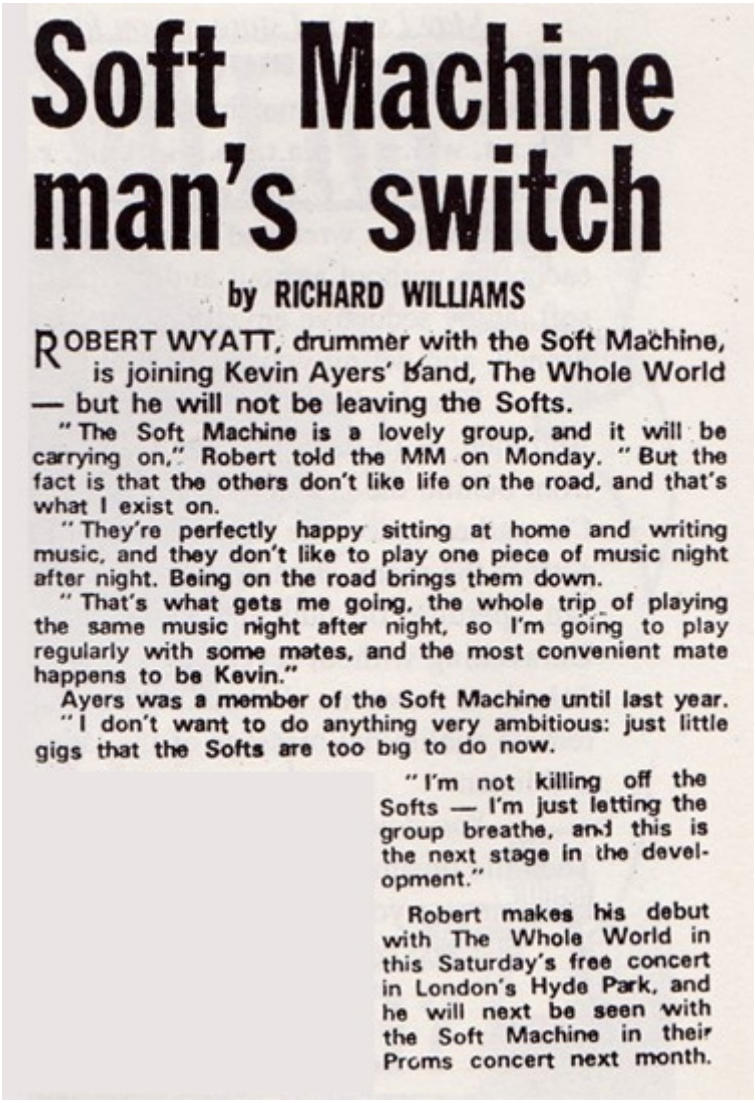
I would have to confess that though their music was suited to the occasion it was not the best time I saw the band; still, bearing in mind the next time I saw them play it was the best gig I ever saw, that is not surprising. The fact it was an outdoor gig meant there was a lack of the intimacy which I think Kevin's music really needs to thrive. Most of the crowd were just out for a day in the sun and couldn't have cared less who was playing. They were too indifferent to even sing along with "Out Demons Out" when the Edgar Broughton

Band came on later.

However largely due to Kevin Ayers (though I had enjoyed Roy Harper's surprise set - despite someone lobbing a beer can at him during "I Hate the White Man" and was much relieved to eventually hear the Floyd do "Atom Heart Mother") I was much cheered up by the end of the day.

I still hate the BBC mind you!

Graham Weston



Soft Machine man's switch

by RICHARD WILLIAMS

ROBERT WYATT, drummer with the Soft Machine, is joining Kevin Ayers' band, The Whole World — but he will not be leaving the Softs.

"The Soft Machine is a lovely group, and it will be carrying on," Robert told the MM on Monday. "But the fact is that the others don't like life on the road, and that's what I exist on.

"They're perfectly happy sitting at home and writing music, and they don't like to play one piece of music night after night. Being on the road brings them down.

"That's what gets me going, the whole trip of playing the same music night after night, so I'm going to play regularly with some mates, and the most convenient mate happens to be Kevin."

Ayers was a member of the Soft Machine until last year.

"I don't want to do anything very ambitious: just little gigs that the Softs are too big to do now.

"I'm not killing off the Softs — I'm just letting the group breathe, and this is the next stage in the development."

Robert makes his debut with The Whole World in this Saturday's free concert in London's Hyde Park, and he will next be seen with the Soft Machine in their Proms concert next month.

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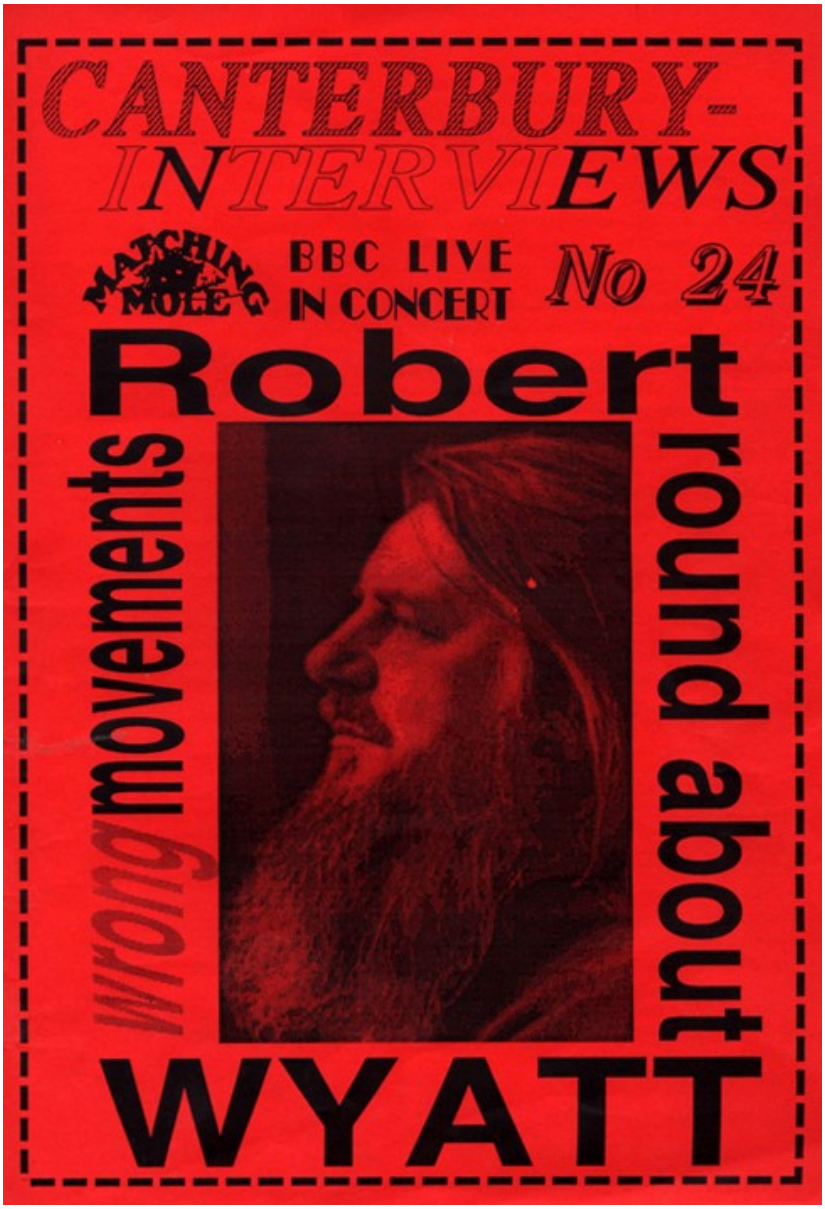
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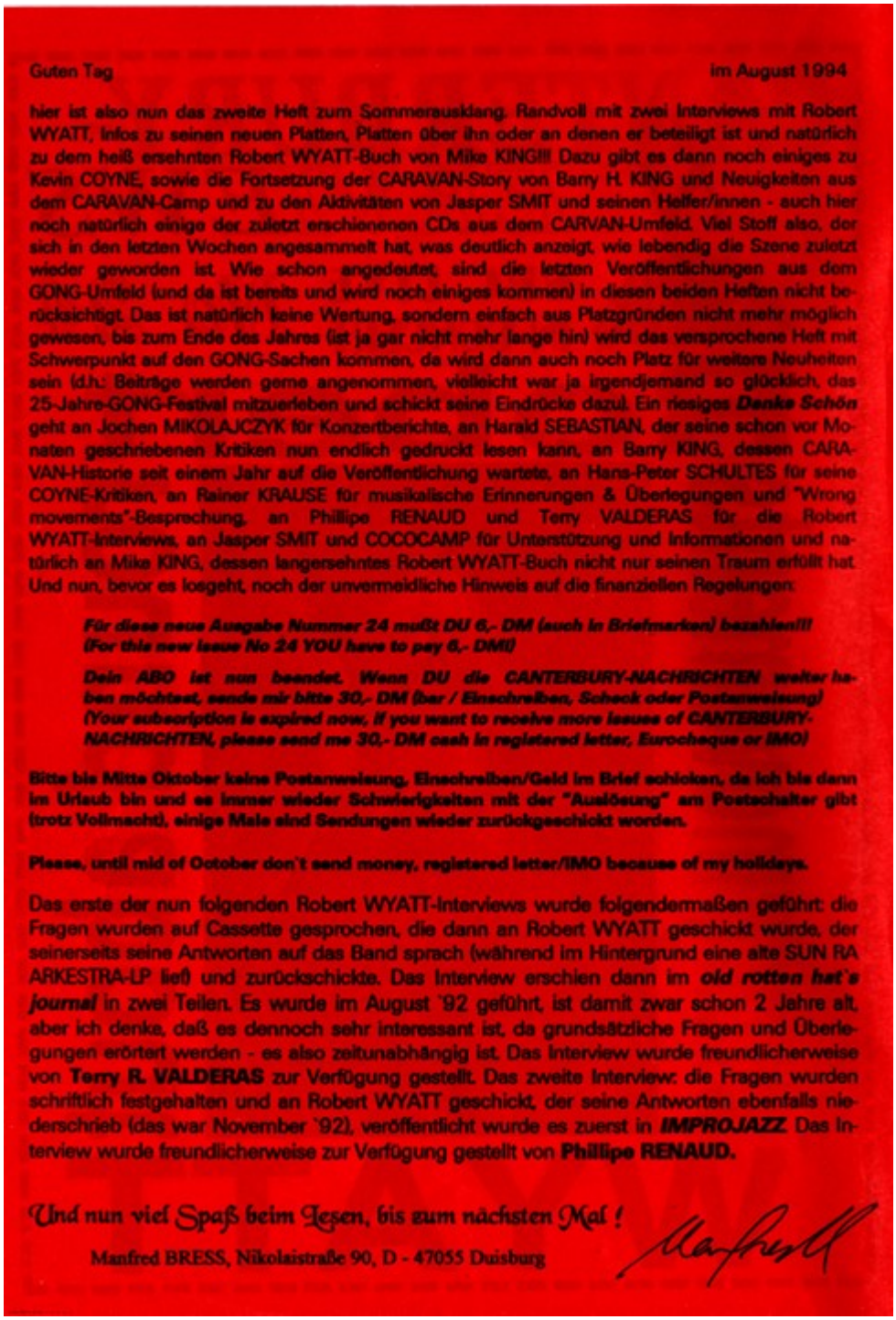
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Robert Wyatt speaks - Canterbury Nachrichten N° 24 - August 1994

ROBERT WYATT SPEAKS



> Zoom



Guten Tag

im August 1994

hier ist also nun das zweite Heft zum Sommerausklang. Randvoll mit zwei Interviews mit Robert WYATT, Infos zu seinen neuen Platten, Platten über ihn oder an denen er beteiligt ist und natürlich zu dem heiß ersehnten Robert WYATT-Buch von Mike KING!!! Dazu gibt es dann noch einiges zu Kevin COYNE, sowie die Fortsetzung der CARAVAN-Story von Barry H. KING und Neuigkeiten aus dem CARAVAN-Camp und zu den Aktivitäten von Jasper SMIT und seinen Helfer/innen - auch hier noch natürlich einige der zuletzt erschienenen CDs aus dem CARVAN-Umfeld. Viel Stoff also, der sich in den letzten Wochen angesammelt hat, was deutlich anzeigt, wie lebendig die Szene zuletzt wieder geworden ist. Wie schon angedeutet, sind die letzten Veröffentlichungen aus dem GONG-Umfeld (und da ist bereits und wird noch einiges kommen) in diesen beiden Heften nicht berücksichtigt. Das ist natürlich keine Wertung, sondern einfach aus Platzgründen nicht mehr möglich gewesen, bis zum Ende des Jahres (ist ja gar nicht mehr lange hin) wird das versprochene Heft mit Schwerpunkt auf den GONG-Sachen kommen, da wird dann auch noch Platz für weitere Neuheiten sein (d.h.: Beiträge werden gerne angenommen, vielleicht war ja irgendjemand so glücklich, das 25-Jahre-GONG-Festival mitzuerleben und schickt seine Eindrücke dazu). Ein riesiges ***Danke Schön*** geht an Jochen MIKOLAJCZYK für Konzertberichte, an Harald SEBASTIAN, der seine schon vor Monaten geschriebenen Kritiken nun endlich gedruckt lesen kann, an Barry KING, dessen CARAVAN-Historie seit einem Jahr auf die Veröffentlichung wartete, an Hans-Peter SCHULTES für seine COYNE-Kritiken, an Rainer KRAUSE für musikalische Erinnerungen & Überlegungen und "Wrong movements"-Besprechung, an Phillipe RENAUD und Terry VALDERAS für die Robert WYATT-Interviews, an Jasper SMIT und COCOCAMP für Unterstützung und Informationen und natürlich an Mike KING, dessen langersehntes Robert WYATT-Buch nicht nur seinen Traum erfüllt hat. Und nun, bevor es losgeht, noch der unvermeidliche Hinweis auf die finanziellen Regelungen:

Für diese neue Ausgabe Nummer 24 mußt DU 6,- DM (auch in Briefmarken) bezahlen!!!
(For this new issue No 24 YOU have to pay 6,- DM!)

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Bitte bis Mitte Oktober keine Postanweisung, Einschreiben/Geld im Brief schicken, da ich bis dann im Urlaub bin und es immer wieder Schwierigkeiten mit der "Auslösung" am Postschalter gibt (trotz Vollmacht), einige Male sind Sendungen wieder zurückgeschickt worden.

Please, until mid of October don't send money, registered letter/IMO because of my holidays.

Das erste der nun folgenden Robert WYATT-Interviews wurde folgendermaßen geführt: die Fragen wurden auf Cassette gesprochen, die dann an Robert WYATT geschickt wurde, der seinerseits seine Antworten auf das Band sprach (während im Hintergrund eine alte SUN RA ARKESTRA-LP lief) und zurückschickte. Das Interview erschien dann im ***old rotten hat's journal*** in zwei Teilen. Es wurde im August '92 geführt, ist damit zwar schon 2 Jahre alt, aber ich denke, daß es dennoch sehr interessant ist, da grundsätzliche Fragen und Überlegungen erörtert werden - es also zeitunabhängig ist. Das Interview wurde freundlicherweise von **Terry R. VALDERAS** zur Verfügung gestellt. Das zweite Interview: die Fragen wurden schriftlich festgehalten und an Robert WYATT geschickt, der seine Antworten ebenfalls niederschrieb (das war November '92), veröffentlicht wurde es zuerst in ***IMPROJAZZ***. Das Interview wurde freundlicherweise zur Verfügung gestellt von **Phillipe RENAUD.**

Und nun viel Spaß beim Lesen, bis zum nächsten Mal !

Manfred BRESS, Nikolaistraße 90, D - 47055 Duisburg

> Zoom

Robert Wyatt speaks:

Terry R. VALDERAS:
If you have any message, or any greetings to our readers, please feel free to make it!

Robert WYATT: I thought I might say something that would lift peoples' spirits in these neo-depression times. And so ... I'm gonna talk about a problem that smokers have ... which is, you always think, "Oh, I can throw a cigarette butt down the toilet I mean it will flush!" And they don't, they bounce back ... bob ... bob ... bouncing back. You think "Oh, God!" (mock surprise). They tell you you're not to put cigarette butts down there, and you think, "it's gotta go down there!" It's gravity. Well, I've got wonderful news; the thingis:

don't panic, don't think, "(mock anger) Oh God, no, now I've gotta fish it out! How can I do that?! What kind of implement ... do they make an implement for fishing cigarettes out?" I don't know of one that you could subsequently use for anything else. Who needs more equipment!! I'm here to tell you, just don't panic! Leave it there!! One day you'll look and it'll be gone. Now, don't ask me where. The people without any soul ... the prosaic, ground-bound people will tell you it's gotten water-logged and flushed. But who's to know? Nobody ever really sees it happen. I think there's a big political implication as well, but I won't get into that yet ... let's get onto the light stuff now, because I don't wanna be heavy the whole time with this stuff!! The spiritualism of butts and so on!! And so I just want to say: Hello!

Tell us about "Nan true's hole" and MATCHING MOLE ?

RW: Well … there's a song called "Nan true's hole", that's got nothing to do with Nan True's Hole. That's how it is with songs … with these sort of subtle song writers. It is the name of a house, that a friend of mine owns, in Sussex. And the origin of the name, I imagine, is that it was the home or ho¬vel of a woman with special powers, perhaps, who lived on her own, called Nan True, who was perhaps a fortune-teller … a witch of sorts who lived in this house. I imagine her regarded with fear, and awe in the supersticious-peasanty british village, in which she lived. My friend had inherited this house, and I just thought, "This name is too good to wasten a house". Phil MILLER agreed, the guitarist (in MOLE) and it turned into a piece of music.

Well … I know I've said that I can't talk about … BA : before the accident. Well, sometimes I can; sometimes I can't! At the moment I feel a kind of wave of affection for ourselves as we were, even for myself so long ago, because it seems like someone else. I listen to those tapes now, and I think "Go! Go! Go!" (laughs very hard). I don't know where, just go somewhere … ya' know!!

We had Phil MILLER on guitar, who would rather play a wrong note than a note that somebody else had ever played. I admired his spirit … and he continues to work and compose in very … rarified forms and atmospheres of … advanced musical knowledge, beyond my technical understanding. I'm glad he was with us when he was in his … you know, younger … early enthusiasm days!

Bill MacCORMICK now works for the Liberal Party, I think. He was the bass player in our band … a very inventive, bouncy bass player. And what a nice man! He was then, and is now.

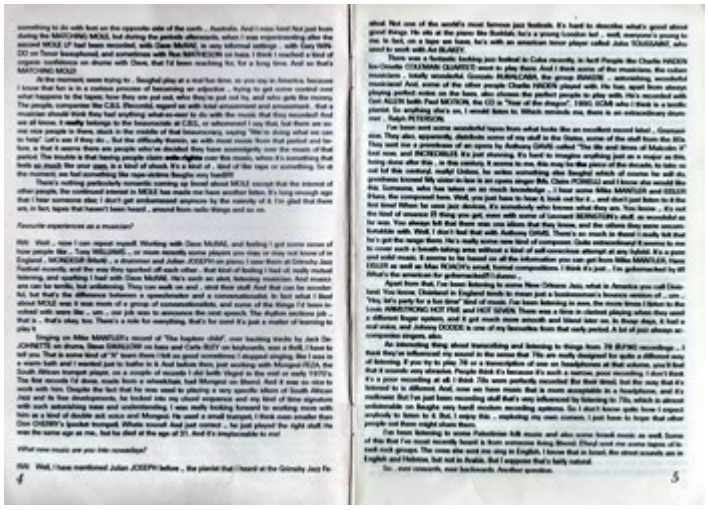
The two Daves … Dave SINCLAIR used to play Hammond (organ), and people still try and persuade him to play it with CARAVAN. He doesn't understand that; he now owns a keyboard shop, and doesn't understand why people want him to go back to the Hammond! But, those of us who were brought up upon Jimmy SMITH and BOOKER T., we just can't get enough of that Hammond sound. I like it when he bothers to carry it around; it's a big heavy thing, as anyone who plays one or bothers to carry around would know.

Dave McRAE is perhaps the best musician I've ever worked with. A keyboard player at that time, playing mostly electric piano, he's now gone back to, what I think is japanese piano, wich is to say the acoustic type that classical music is played on. He's gone back to the antipides, which has something to do with feet on the opposite side of the earth … Australia. And I miss him! Not just from during the MATCHING MOLE, but during the periods afterwards, when I was experimenting after the second MOLE LP had been recorded, with Dave McRAE, in very informal settings … with Gary WINDO on Tenor (saxophone), and sometimes with Ron MATHESON on bass. I think I reached a kind of organic confidence on drums with Dave, that I'd been reaching for, for a long time. And so that's MATCHING MOLE!

At the moment, were trying to … (laughs) play at a real fun time, as you say in America, because I know that fun is in a curious process of becoming an adjective … trying to get some control over what happens to the tapes; how they are put out, who they're put out by, and who gets the money. The people, companies like C.B.S. (Records), regard us with total amazement and amusement … that a musician should think they had anything what-so-ever to do with the music that they recordind! And we all know, it **really** belongs to the beaurocrats at C.B.S., or whomever I say, that, but there are some nice people in there, stuck in the middle of that beaurocracy, saying "We're doing what we can to help". Let's see if they do … But the difficulty therein, as with most music from that period and before, is that it seems there are people who've decided they have sovereignity over the music of that period. The trouble is that having people claim **sole-rights** over this music, when it

something that feels so much like your own, is a kind of shock. It's a kind of … kind of like rape or something. So at the moment, we feel something like rape-victims (laughs very hard)!!!

There's nothing particularly romantic coming up (now) about MOLE except that the interest of other people, the continued interest in MOLE has made me have another listen. It n long enough ago that I hear someone else; I don't get embarrassed anymore by the naievity of it. I'm glad that there are, in fact, tapes that haven't been heard … around from radio things and so on.



Favourite experiences as a musician?

RW: Well … now I can repeat myself. Working with Dave McRAE, and feeling I got some sense of how people like - Tony WILLIAMS … or more recently some players you may or may not know of in England … MONDESIR (Mark) … a drummer and Julian JOSEPH on piano; I saw them at Grimsby Jazz Festival recently, and the way they sparked off each other … that kind of feeling I had of, really mutual listening, and sparking I had with Dave McRAE. He's such an alert, listening musician. And musicians can be terrific, but unlistening. They can walk on and … strut their stuff. And that can be wonderful, but that's the difference between a speechmaker and a conversationalist. In fact what I liked about MOLE was it was more of a group of conversationalists, and some of the things I'd been involved with were like … um … our job was to announce the next speech. The rhythm sections job … that is … that's okay, too. There's a role for everything, that's for sur! It's just a matter of learning to play it.

Singing on Mike MANTLER's record of "The hapless child", over backing tracks by Jack DeJOHNETTE on drums, Steve SWALLOW on bass and Carla BLET on keyboards, was a thrill, I have to tell you. That is some kind of "A" team there I felt so good sometimes I stopped singing, like I was in a warm bath and I wanted just to bathe in it. And before then, just working with Mongezi FEZA, the South African trumpet player, on a couple of records I did (with Virgin) in the mid of early 1970's. The first records I'd done, mado from a wheelchair, had Mongezi on (them). And it was so nice to work with him. Despite the fact that he was used to playing a very specific idiom of South African Jazz and its free developments, he locked into my chord sequence and my kind of time signature with such astonishing ease and understanding. I was really looking forward to working more with him as a kind of double act: voice and Mongezi. He used a small trumpet I think even smaller than Don CHERRY's (pocket trumpet). Whata sound! And just correct … he just played the right stuff. He was the same age as me … but he died at the age of 31. And it's irreplaceable to me!

What new music are you into nowadays? RW: Well, I have mentioned Julian JOSEPH before … the pianist that I heard at the Grimsby Jazz Festival. Not one of the world's most famous jazz festivals. It's hard to describe what's good about good things. He sits at the piano like Buddah; he's a young London lad … well, everyone's young to me. In fact on a tape we have, he's with an american tenor player called John TOUSSAINT, who used to work with Art BLAKEY.

There was a fantastic looking jazz festival in Cuba recently, in fact! People like Charlie HADEN (ex-Omette COLEMAN QUARTET) went to play there. And I think some of the musicians, the cuban musicians … totally wonderful. Gonzalo RUBALCABA, the group IRAKERE … astonishing, wonderful musicians! And, some of the other people Charlie HADEN played with. He has, apart from always playing perfect notes on the bass, also chosen the perfect people to play with. He's recorded with Geri ALLEN (with Paul MOTION, the CD is "Year of the dragon". 1990, ECM) who I think is a terrific pianist. So anything she's on, I would listen to. Which reminds me, there is an extraordinary drummer … Ralph PETERSON.

I've been sent some wonderful tapes from what looks like an excellent record label … Gramavision. They also, apparently, distribute some of my stuff in the States, some of the stuff from the 80s. They sent me a prerelease of an opera by Anthony DAVIS called "The life and times of Malcolm X" (out now. and INCREDIBLE!). It's just stunning. It's hard to imagine anything just as a major as this, being done after this in this … century. It seems to me, this may be **the** piece of the decade, to take us out (of this century), really! Unless, he writes something else (laughs) which of course he will do, goodness knows! My sister-in-law is an opera singer (Ms. Claire POWELL) and I know she would like this. Someone, who has taken on so much knowledge … I hear some Mike MANTLER and EISLER (Hans, the composer) here. Well, you just have to hear it look out for it … and don't just listen to it the first time! When he uses jazz devices, it's somebody who knows what they are. You know … it's not Ihe kind of ersance (?) thing you get, even with some of Leonard BERNSTEIN'S stuff, as wondeful as he was. You always felt that there was one idiom that they knew, and the others they were uncomfortabble with. Well, I don't feel that with Anthony DAVIS. There's so much in there! I really felt that he's got the range there. He's really some new kind of composer. Quite extraordinary! It seems to me to cover such a breath-taking area without a kind of self-conscious attempt at any hybrid. It's a pure and solid music. It seems to be based on all the information you can get from Mike MANTLER, Hans EISLER as well as Max ROACH'S small, formal compositions. I think it's just … I'm gobsmacked by it!! What's the american for gobsmacked?! I dunno…

Apart from that,I've been listening to some New Orleans Jazz, what in America you call Dixieland. You know, Dixieland in England tends to mean just a businessman's bounce version of … um … "Hey, let's party for a fun time" kind of music. I've been listening in awe, the more times I listen to the Louis ARMSTRONG HOT FIVE and HOT SEVEN. There was a time in clarinet playing when they used a different finger system, and it got much more smooth and bland later on. In those days, it had a real voice, and Johnny DODDS is one of my favourites from that early period. A lot of jazz always accompanies singers, also.

An interesting thing about transcribing and listening to things from 78 (R.P.M.) recordings … I think they've influenced my sound in the sense that 78s are really designed for quite a different way of listening. If you try to play 78 or a transcription of one on headphones at that volume, you'll find that it sounds very abrasive. People think it's because it's such a narrow, poor recording. I don't think it's a poor recording at all. I think 78s were perfectly recorded (for their time), but the way that it's listened to is different. And, now we have music that is more acceptable in a headphone, and it's mellower. But I've just been recording stuff that's very influenced by listening to 78s, which is almost unlistenable on (laughs very hard) modern recording systems. So I don't know quite how I expect anybody to listen to it. But I enjoy this … exploring my own comers. I just have to hope that other people out there might share them.

I've been listening to some Palestinian folk music and also some Israeli music as well. Some of this that I've most recently heard is from someone living (there). (They) sent me some tapes of Israeli rock groups. The ones she sent me sing in English. I know that in Israel, the street sounds are in English and Hebrew, but not in Arabic. But I suppose that's fairly natural.

So … ever onwards, ever backwards. Another question.

Life and what do you dig about it…

RW: dig!? That's an american expression. Well … the thing about life is, I don't know anything else, yet. I haven't got anything to compare it to. And so it's a kind of one horse race. I'm not sure that it's … worth it yet … not mine. I have yet to find out (laughs)! I think it's odd, really. You know (if you) saw a man walking down the street … with a large pair of antlers on his head, and a glass bowl in his hand, saying _ "I've got to get to Wisconsin in 10 minutes" - You'd think, "What a strange man! What a strange thing to say. And why is he saying it here? And why is he telling me?!" Well I think life's a bit like that to me. I just think, "What on earth set this thing off?" I can't think of the motivation. I've read various religious texts on the subject and they all seem to be totally all kitsch on the subject. Just the kind of things people would say, just … Self serving romanticism. I find some of the oldest religions more intelligent that the latest ones. I think religions just become stupider as the centuries roll on! The most ancient ones, like worshipping the sun, the water, and the rocks seem to me to have a basis in understandable reality. But the later (recent) ones … just seem like intellectual suicide to me. Any ways … I've lost a few friends there! Hi … bye … (laughs). Oh well … who wants millions of friends. Just a few will do me fine.

Everything about life is biased because the people who talk about it are alive; we don't really get a rounded bunch of opinions on this subject since everybody who talks about it are in the alive camp! Ummm … I haven't got any comparative (laughs); I can't remember being anything else. I suppose I should try and think about what life is. I mean, that interests me, as opposed to something else. I look … at the things that are nearly alive; having some of the characteristics in common with life, but yet not lifelike. For example, crystal formations. The only thing I can really identify … I mean crystal formations has in common with life … it's own charcteristics of wanting to reproduce itself … hummmn… reconstitute it's immediate environment, to rearrange its chemicals. It's difficult to see where that process becomes a desperate desire to celebrate oneself that charcaterizes the living object … I think it's extremely odd. I mean, if there wasn't any life … I wouldn't have predicted it. It seems to me extremely unlikely. I can imagine planets and chemicals and dust and wind and explosions. There are curious sorts of reversed parodies of life, like fire, which soom to travel … and want to take things on, consume things. Wether life is some last echo of what was once … a different kind of fire. I don't know.

There are specific things that I find unsatisfactory about what is called advanced life. It's the terrible trick that is part of our equipment … we're sent in (as) feeling human beings, which means we can surfer. (Laughs) My god, lots of living things just do that (laughs). Of course, I'm not a Puritan or a killjoy in any sense … I'm glad at every amount of happiness there is!! I'm very happy, instantly, for example, for conservatives. Because you know they've made it clear they don't need me! And that's a responsibility off my back! I didn't want it anyway; you know … that's great! So go ahead, you conservatives, and don't bother me, and I won't bother you (laughs hard)! But … don't bother me, and then I won't bother you. Life? Humm … I don't know yet. It all seems, faintly daft to me, to be honest.

Influences of political, musical and literary?



RW: (Laughs quite loudly) You gotta be joking!!! I've been alive for 47 years and an influence enters my brain … probably … several hundred a second, just like everyone else's. (Laughs again) How long have you got? Uhh …

However, we are also filter systems! I mean, you can feed a duck dog-food, but it'll never turn into a dog. We're not kind of empty vehicles for whatever we absorb. I think that we kind select, even when we think we're being open. We can't help it. We're, each of us, a search and selectmachine, and why we find things suit us or don't, I don't think any of us can really say. That's why it's very, you know, difficult territory, if you start putting down other people's tastes, in a way. Because nobody knows what other people really need. I don't find that it works for me to try and guess what other people want to hear from me, and what other people want. Because I just can't imagine anything worth being satisfactory like that, and I don't like it as an audience when I think somebody's trying to gear something to me that doesn't come natural to them, and therefore doesn't sound natural for me, either.

Musical influences … at any given moment you ask me … a day later it will be a different answer. I mean there's this whole thing turning around and you just have to pick out what … surfaces. Rather than dive underneath and risk drowning in … memories … I'm not going to be deliberately obscure; God knows … we'll have difficulty communicating without that (laughs)! And so if some of the names I mention are, say, kind of obvious, well that's fine by me! That means that people are as famous as they should be.

Elvin JONES … the fact that he's alive and playing is some kind of miracle. I don't mean by that it s a terrible surprise. There is no reason he shouldn't be, but he is a miraculous man. He's sort of taken the drums to a level, on a road perhaps started out by, I dunno … Baby DODDS and Chick WEBB … through Kenny CLARKE and so on. He's made this breathing

living wind machine out of a drum kit. You've got to remember that the drum kit is a 20th century invention, and it's as modern as any synthesizer … and even more significant. I think the most foolish that a lovely Tenor (saxophone) player over here, Courtney PINE, did was not accept Elvin's offer to go on the road, with the Elvin JONES BAND. Branford MARSEILLES, said, "Ya shoulda done it", anybody like that Blakey or Elvin asks you to play a gig, you take it! Because, these are the masters, and you've got plenty of time later. It's such a privilege to be asked by these people. So anyways … Elvin JONES, as a drummer.

I'm influenced by a lot of musicians who sing, rather than jazz singers; I've just realized that really. Very often when musicians kind of … (laughs) … grunt out a tune, I've always liked that (now amused). Dizzy GILLESPIE is a lovely singer, in his schooldays. If you hear GILLESPIE … I had a record of GILLESPIE at Newport, Big Band, and he sings that sort of R & B stuff. Like Jimmy SMITH singing "I got my mojo working". Wonderful! And there are, of course, various musicians who sort of play and sing like Mose ALLSION, of course … Nina SIMONE; versatile pianist. (Long pause in thought) And in terms of piano playing, I also like … the playing of … influenced by … practically I have to be, by the people who don't reckon to be pianists or players. But, Gil EVANS once said he played a "rangists" piano, I mean, I know what he meant! If you're gonna be a solo pianist still now, I ought to throw by Bud POWELL, you see … the bebop player, who kind of defected East A lot of musicians did that went to live in Paris and places like that … Bud POWELL is one of these people like Billie HOLIDAY … the people say, "Oh, they went off towards the end of their lives!". But there is something moving about what they did. I don't think they went off towards the end of their lives, it's like saying … alot of people's music goes through various processes and there can come a time in an artist's life when they're no longer displaying their technical virtuosity or their knowledge. They're simply making, kind of iconic marks. And I really identify strongly with people who have the confidence to do that, however. And Bud POWELL used to play piano when he was older. He was … he'd been very badly … damaged. He'd had electro … what's-his-name done there; he'd been brutally treated by psychiatric nurses, or something. It's not dislike you're typical tragic story, I'm not talking about him as a tragic figure: I think he played wonderfully, late in his life, even though he's stumbling. Because there's that sound of searching going on. So, late Bud POWELL … late Billie HOLIDAY … the sounds of people when they're meant to have been past their peak, and cracking up inside. I think it's … ugh … seemed to move me a lot.

Okay … literary … no political … Literary? Literary! Well I suppose I'd have to say the English Comics and comedians. I like our comics. I don't like our serious actors very much, you know, the theater tradition that's very much admired. I mean it just reminds me of the tourist industry and the "World family". Our great theatrical tradition, and our royal family, to me, their entirely … for … um … like those tourist things where everything is decided for you by the touring company, and you file past whatever it is. You go to one country and you file past the Mona Lisa, you go to … what is it … the leaning tower of Lisa, or moaning Pisa or whatever her name is … anyway. To me, our great theatrical tradition is just that, I can't stand that (adapts mock Tudor-styled voice) "Careful ennunciation and r-r-resonant voices." I don't need it. If I want a resonant voice, I'll listen to Billy ECKSTINE. So, our comedians I love.

It's almost immedious to pick out some people; you probably wouldn't know them anyway. I'm not sure they'd translate. They very often came from that musical circuit that used to be in England towards the end of the last century. I suppose, the thing that in America developed into a Vaudeville thing. And related to that there was a kind of … sort of … I suppose … 19th century, turn-of-the-century English funny writers and children's writers. People like Edward LEAR … I really like. I mean, in the same way, America, I really like James THURBER. I mean where do I stop?! That just comes out the Rotten Hat at that particular moment thinking about that question.

Political influences? This is a kind of overwhelming question. It s almost like the same answer, in a way, to the musical ones. You gravitate to what seems to capture your imagination. I'm not even sure you chose to. (Matter-of-factly) England is run by a very conservative establishment, which as Christopher HITCHINGS has pointed out, there's an attempt to sort of copy it in the United States, almost a kind of reaction of aristocracy of leadership. In both cases anyway, you'd have to say they were aligarties (ein Schreibfehler?, ich nehme an, gemeint ist Oligarchie: Herrschaft einer kleinen Gruppe, ursprünglich der Reichen, über das Volk) rather than democracies. Well, obviously if you had to spend any money at all, to become a candidate, that disqualifies most of the people who should do it (laughs). Let's think …

Communism and Socialism as your influence … well, I sort of realized I was one by accusation. I mean, in the sense that … in South Africa, the description of the laws to

prevent the move towards democracy, and away from fascist dictatorship, were called "the Laws Against Communism". I've simply just allowed to be named by my enemies. I mean, when you say all the things I say, or think the things I think, you get called a communist. So I figure, well … if it's useful for people to have a way of identifying me, then I'll live with that because … ummm … "You must be a Commie! Oh, alright if YOU say so!" All these names are labels; they've got nothing to do with what we are as a kind of living, breathing bits of … ecoplasm, or something. Names are just attempts at identifying this one particular lump of ectoplasm from another, by the group at large. And so it just sort of became aparent that I was one, because people like me get called one and I'm not gonna argue with … conservatives. If they say that people like me must be Communists … They're very well educated, they are the standard bearers of civilization … they should know!! I'm certainly neither of those things, so I must accept their word for it. I'm a Communist because I just found that the kind of things I think, I'm told, are communistic. Okay. People say, "Well why in America do you have these other words like Liberal?" Well, that's one of these words that doesn't mean the same in England as it does in America. Because we have political parties, for example, a sort of Liberal (Labour) and Conservative party. In England, the Liberals, if they are here, are sort of like twins with the conservatives in a sense that … like if you're being questioned by a policeman and one's the heavy one who might push you around, the other one says, "Never mind him. Look, I'm your friend. Have a cup of tea. Look let's talk about this." Police work in pairs and so do political parties with their people. And in England, the Liberals and Conservatives are just kind of … "Nice guy / Tough guy". But they're both defending and protecting and talking in behalf of the same interests. So I have to avoid use of the word Liberal. It also suggests a certain kind of moderation, and I have no understanding or conception of what possible use political moderation could have. I can't imagine the kind of moderate, balanced response to any particular situation. Like, for example, the right wing extremist says, "Kill 6 million jews"; the left wing extremist says, "Don't kill any jews". So I suppose the moderate, "Well, maybe we should kill about 3 million … then everybody'd be very happy." (Laughs hard) I don't understand the moderate position, you know what I mean?

*Soweit das Interview, daß **Terry R. VALDERAS vom old rottonhats Journal** per Cassettenzusen-dung mit Robert WYATT hielt Als Ergänzung zu den schon recht ausführlichen Antworten von Robert WYATT folgen jetzt noch einige Fragen, die Phillippe RENAUD von IMPROJAZZ an Robert WYATT stellte und die teilweise Bezug auf das Vorhergegangene nehmen.*

Phillipe RENAUD: It seems to us that your music has always mixed 'beauty' with "messages" (political + social), by using the vehicle of music to communicate a point of view in a more sophisticated way than, for example, the popular agit-prop songs of Cornelius CARDEW. Are you doing, in a certain way folk music ?

Robert WYATT: Do I make folk music ? Of a type? If only by default, yes, in that my methods cannot have the authority of conservatory discipline, nor are they geared to an analysis of markets, in other words, my music is neither classical nor pop. What else is there? If 'Blues' is Folk, and flamenco - me too, please. As for the relationship between 'beauty' and 'message', well the poet Laura JACKSON abandoned poetry when she came to the conclusion that the pursuit of beauty and the pursuit of truth were irreconcilable disciplines (who has the key to an escape route from this dilemma? the humourist).

It occurs to me, translation can never be exact because, for example, if I talk about 'meaning' - well, the dictionary says 'vouloir dire' - 'to mean'. I like that – 'to want to say' - it is a compassionate compound but in English 'what something wants to say' is not inherently 'what it means (take for example words like 'Apartheid' or 'Swastika'.)

Another french term I like is your words for 'that doesn't matter - 'Ca ne fait rien'. It describes better my 'meaning', my 'purpose'. Not 'that doesn't matter' (everything 'matters') but precisely: 'it doesn't do anything'. My lyrics are for the comfort of sympathetic souls. I am not a recruiting sergeant for 'the cause'. I simply define my position, like any other artist.

Do you think that the social and political point of view of your music is changing? (for instance, the propaganda from "Gloria Gloom" / "Stalin wasn't stallin" towards the political songs from "Old rottenhat" or "Dondestan"?) Going further, how this can conciliate with the pure and tough line that you love, facing CASTRO's Cuba?

RW: True to the avant-garde tradition (you like that? 'avant-garde tradition?') I search for beauty where others see only ugliness. So, true to this tradition, I am a reactionary: I react against the assumptions of the liberal / conservative establishment (Irresponsible? No. Ca ne fait rien.)

Why am I doing this? To balance myself. For example, the conservative / liberal elites are determined to humiliate and destroy any one who challenges the master / servant relationship between … oh … the North and the South. This makes my heart feel ill: and I say so, "Ca ne fait rien". It does nothing. So don't let it worry you!

But is your social and political position changing ?

RW: I cannot recall any song I've written, of those revealing a Marxist / Leninist influence, which no longer reflects my inclinations. The camouflaged racism of international capitalism still revolts me. I never try to be subtle about this! On the contrary, I try to eliminate the evasive camouflage of decorative art. Autopsy will reveal the words 'dirty communist' engraved on my spine. Of course, my spine has an interesting break. I am a broken machine, a nice metapher for those who like a little symbolism with their soup.

The most widely accepted form of 'engaged art' is the prayer. (Others? the hymn, the national anthem, and the ritual song / dance for rugby / football teams.) The christian prayer, before eating, thanks god for his bounty. Native american 'Indians', by contrast, would thank the buffalo. Would offer a prayer to the spirit of the buffalo. Of course, I prefer the Native American art.

By extension, while Zionists thank god for Israel, I would be rather more impressed if they thanked the native Palestinians. If colonialism is to continue to be the basis of our civilisations, we could at least say thank you to the appropriate victims, otherwise words like 'repentance' are just verbiage - yes camouflage again. When it comes to agit / prop, some of us can compete with the hardline extremism of the religious establishments. They are tho masters of the genre.

Looking at your actual work, do you think about a normal evolution, non-criticable, or do you have other feelings, looking back ?

RW: Aha ! A question about my actual work Safer ground? No, however, I do not feel it followed a normal evolution, non criticable. I feel crippled not by paraplegia, but by my own terminally frustrating inadequacies and limitations, I sell my songs because I need the money, otherwise I would not have the nerve. It is not a luxurious question of evolution, it is a more basic problem I still have, I don't even know how to begin. I remain, naturally gratefully surprised by people who listen to the results. What can I say ? Thanks.

Gary WINDO is dead in July 1992, Ollie HALSALL in April 1993, Mongezi FEZA, Chris McGREGOR, Dudu PUKWANA … all people, you have known. What are your feelings about all these dead friends?

RW: What are my feelings about all my dead friends? It's true, my most sympathetic musical companions have already achieved perfect peace, I envy them but feel a bit lost without their warmth. Many of our luckiest moments together are not yet publicly available, but exist on a few tapes still. These tapes are my friendly ghosts. Tapes with Gary WINDO and Mongezi FEZA in their group SYMBIOSIS, tapes of Gary WINDO with me and Dave McRAE, the wonderful pianist etc. Incidentally, there are other happy moments on private tapes with musicians, like Dave McRAE, are still, as I speak, very much alive.

For example, I did some 'duets* with the brilliant keyboard player Francis MONKMAN. And perhaps my proudest moment when saxophonist Evan PARKER contributes a solo to complete a song written with Paul HAINES, 'Curtsy. (Some good memories after all).

old rottenhat's journal

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IMPROJAZZ

Dieses neue französische Magazin gibt es seit Januar 1994 (in diesem ersten Heft gab es das Robert WYATT-Interview) und widmet sich in erster Linie dem improvisierten Jazz, darüber hinaus aber allen Sparten des Jazz und der neuen Musik. Neben vielen Plattenbesprechungen gibt es Informatio-

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05 b)	[w BKL & Wind of change / Namibia - 7"/12" vers]	(93) J	Rough Trade TDCN 5025
10)	Going back a bit (A little history of Robert WYATT) [2CDs, cont unrel material & 7" No 01 & 02, rec '69 - '92, w HATFIELD & THE NORTH, HENRY COW, a.o.]	(94) UK	Virgin CDVM 9031
11)	Flotsam and jetsam [cont unrel material, rec '68 - '90, w HENRY, COW, Dave McRAE QUARTET, SLAPP HAPPY, Jimi HENDRIX, a.o.]	(94) UK	Rough Trade R 3112

Sampler-CD:

04)	Mid eighties [incl. 12" No: 3 & LP No: 07, w lyrics]	(93) D	Rough Trade RTD 101.1512.2

Der Soundtrack **"Animals film"** ist auf CD bereits erhältlich, in England erschien sie in unveränderter Form zur LP, das heißt: sie läuft gerade mal 20 Minuten (ist aber deshalb auch für unter 25,- DM zu haben). Die japanische Version wurde durch die 12" und 7"-Versionen der Titel "Wind of change" und "Namibia" verlängert.

Die Doppel-CD **"Going back a bit (A little history of Robert WYATT) "** (zuweilen heißt es auch, es sei nur eine CD?!) sollte ursprünglich schon im April dieses Jahres erscheinen, bisher gab es sie aber noch nicht. Aber es steht natürlich schon fest, was drauf ist (bzw. sein soll): eine "The moon in june" Version der BBC von 1969, natürlich Ausschniitte aus seinen Solo-Platten bei CBS und Virgin: "The end of an ear", "Rock bottom" und "Ruth is stranger than Richard", dann seine Hitsingles "I'm a believer / Memories" und "Yesterday man / Sonia". Weiterhin Ausschnitte aus beiden MATCHING MOLE-Alben, sowie einige ausgewählte Titel von verschiedenen Bands, an denen Robert WYATT beteiligt ist: "Calyx" (bei: HATFIELD AND THE NORTH), "Little red riding hood hits the road" (bei: HENRY COW), "Hapless child" (bei: Michael MANTLER) und "I'm a mineralist" (bei: Nick MASON), dazu ein absolut seltener Titel von einer Virgin-Single: "All she wanted was Marlon Brando (from: Man to woman)" aus dem Musical von Marsha HUNT. Zuletzt sind noch Teile seines letzten Albums "Dondestan" zu hören.

Die nächste CD **"Flotsam and jetsam"** war von Rough Trade eigentlich auch schon für Mai diesen Jahres angkündigt, aber sie wird wohl nicht vor Herbst / Winter kommen. Sie enthält sehr viele unveröffentlichte und den meisten bisher wohl vollkommen unbekannte Titel, was wir insbesondere Mike KING zu verdanken haben, der bei seinen weltweiten Recherchen für das Buch "Wrong movements" diese Titel ausgegraben und diese CD mit ihrer höchst interessanten Zusammenstellung so erst ermöglicht hat. Die CD wird enthalten: "Slow walkin` talk" mit Jimi HENDRIX (diesen Titel gab es bisher nur auf der für Abonennten erhältlichen HENDRIX-CD von Univibes) und "Moon in june", beide aufgenommen in Hollywood, Oktober 1968. "Sandfast" mit SYMBIOSIS (feat Gary WINDO), Januar 1971, "No `alf measures" mit dem Dave McRAE QUARTET, März 1972, "Apricot Jam" mit Lol COXHILL, Herbst 1973, "A little something" mit SLAPP HAPPY, Juni 1974, "We did it again" mit HENRY COW, im Olympia, Paris, Mai 1975, Solo: "God song / Fol de rol", Dezember 1975, "Now is the time" mit Gary WINDO, 1976, "N`out doin`" mit GENERAL STRIKE, zu Hause aufgenommen im Mai 1976, "Speechless / Billie`s bounce" bei der RAI Rom, aus Februar 1981, "Jelly babies" mit EPIC SOUNDTRACKS (Mai 1981), "Oban tancat" solo in den Catalan TV3 Studios, Januar 1987,

"Tutraicon" mit CLAUSTROPHOBIA, Barcelona 1986 und zuletzt "Turn things upside down" mit HAPPY END von April 1990. Was für eine Liste! Hochkarätige Songs aus einem Zeitraum von 22 Jahren, zum größten Teil noch nie gehört. Das macht einem schon jetzt den Mund wässrig. Zu vielen der Gruppen weiß man wenig, einige waren vollkommen unbekannt. Bisher! - muß man nun allerdings sagen, denn mit Hilfe des Buches von Mike KING kann man nun mühelos nachverfolgen, was wann war und wer da mitgemischt hat. Wer also auch Hintergrundinformationen zu den Titeln und Robert WYATT's Musik wissen will, dem ist mit "Wrong movements" bestens gedient. Hier werden die Geheimnisse gelüftet!

Schon länger erhältlich ist **"Mid eighties"**, ein reiner Sampler, was heißt, daß hier nur bisher schon veröffentlichtes zu hören ist: Als Fortsetzung des japanischen Samplers "Late 70's, early 80's" bringt "Mid eighties" folgerichtig die komplette "Old rotten hat" von 1984/1985 und die Maxi-Single "Work in progress" (mit Hugh HOPPER) von 1984 zusammen. Dazwischen gestreut sind "Pigs _ (in there)" vom "Artist for Animals"-Sampler und "Chairman Mao" vom "ReR Quaterly", außerdem noch die Rückseite der 12" "Shipbuilding" = "Memories of you" und "Round midnight" (1982), beide mit Dave McRAE an den Keyboards. Nichts wirklich neues also, aber immerhin ein paar bisher verstreute und schwerer erhältliche Titel.

Am erfreulichsten ist natürlich die Nachricht, daß zum Ende des Jahres mit einer neuen Solo-CD von Robert WYATT gerechnet werden kann. Wahrscheinlich noch davor wird es die CD von Hugh HOPPER und Mark KRAMER geben, bei der Robert WYATT einen Titel singt.

MATCHING MOLE

03) BBC Radio 1 Live in concert, Paris Theatre, 27.07.1972 (94) UK Windsong WINCD 063

Lange, lange mußten wir auf die dritte MATCHING MOLE-CD warten, angekündigt war sie schon Ende '92, aber immer wieder wurde sie verschoben. Nun bin ich denn doch etwas enttäuscht über diese erste offizielle Live-Veröffentlichung der MOLES. Nicht, was die Musik angeht, die ist bar jeden Zweifels erhaben. "Instant pussy", damit fängt es an, mit wunderbarer, vokaler Begleitung (Gesang kann man das ja nicht nennen) von Robert WYATT, parallel entwickelt sich langsam das Thema, die Gitarre und das Keyboard steigen behutsam ein, bis der Song richtiggehend losbricht. Sicher ist die Musik von MATCHING MOLE kein leichter Tobak, sie verlangt einiges ab, gängige Hörstrukturen bieten hier kaum einen Zugang. Die Band hat bei manchen Auftrittten so wild improvisiert, daß es bald die Schmerzgrenze berührte. Dagegen spielen sie hier recht gesittet. Für ungeübte Ohren ist die verschlungene Vielschichtigkeit, das dramatische Tempo und manche Dissonanz sicher nicht leicht zu ertragen (wie mir schon oft versichert wurde). Aber wie gesagt, an der Musik ist gar nichts auszusetzen, die löst bei mir immer noch diesen wohligen Schauer auf dem Rücken aus. Aber, daß diese CD noch nicht mal 26 Minuten läuft, das ist schon ziemlich unverschämt. Und das, wo es, schauen wir mal eben in "Wrong movements" nach: am 17. Januar '72 eine *BBC Top Gear*-Aufnahme im Playhouse Theatre gab (gesendet am 25.01), am 06. März *BBC Sounds of the 70s* im Kensington House gab (gesendet am 24.03), dann nochmal am 21. Juni *BBC Sounds of the 70s* in Maida Vale stattfand (gesendet am 06.07.) usw. Wo sind denn die Aufnahmen alle abgeblieben, die können doch nicht alle verschüttet sein. Da auch bei jeder Aufnahme unterschiedliche Titel gespielt wurden, hätte man hier eine fantastische CD mit verschiedenen Sets zusammenstellen können. Wenn man nur daran denkt!!! Daß noch nicht mal die Besetzung angegeben ist, sind wir ja (nicht nur bei Windsong) gewohnt. Auch wenn es keine Überraschungen gibt (Robert WYATT - dr, v / Phil MILLER - g / Bill McCORMICK - b / Dave McRAE - ep), es soll ja Leute geben, die nicht jede Besetzung im Kopf haben. Auch ein paar Begleitworte - Infos über die Band damals und dergleichen - wären nett gewesen. Bin ich froh, daß es "Wrong movements" mittlerweile gibt, da kann ich einiges über MATCHING MOLE nachlesen. Wer demnächst noch mal irgendwann Platten von und mit Robert WYATT herausgibt, ohne wenigstens ein paar vernünftige Informationen dazu zu liefern, hat keine Entschuldigung mehr dafür.

Robert WYATT on CD with:

HAINES, Paul

01) Darn it! [2CDs, w BKLs & lyrics, rec 1986 - 1993] (93) A American Clave AMCL 1014 2

Das ist die Platte, die Robert WYATT im Interview erwähnt hat: hier ist das fantastische Stück endlich zu hören, daß er bereits im August 1986 mit Evan PARKER aufgenommen hat: "Curtsy". WYATT spielt keyboards, percussion und singt, Evan PARKER spielt sein Sopransax auf eine unglaubliche fesselnde, faszinierende Art. Die Stimmung des Songs erinnert an die MANTLER-Platte "Hapless child", aber so ein Saxophon gibt es sonst nirgends zu hören. Aber auch der Rest der Doppel-CD ist Güteklasse A, über einen Zeitraum von 7 Jahren wurden die Stücke aufgenommen mit ungefähr 60 verschiedenen Musikern, dabei Jack BRUCE, Steve SWALLOW, Paul BLEY, Carla BLEY, Kip HANRAHAN, undsoweiter. Absolut empfehlenswert!

MASON, Nick

01) Nick MASON'S fictitious sports (94) US CBS CSP 37307

Eigentlich ist dieses ja eine Solo-Platte von Carla BLEY, sie hat alle Titel komponiert und die Texte geschrieben. Aber dann hätte man nicht den schönen, verkaufsfördernden Aufkleber "Drummer ber of PINK FLOYD" darauf kleben können. Natürlich haben sich die meisten FLOYD-Fans die Platte gekauft, aber die wenigsten konnten damit etwas anfangen - die deutliche Jazzrichtung, die humorvollen, oft zynischen (Nonsense)Texte, der Gesang von Robert WYATT, das alles war denn doch zu weit vom FLOYD-Stil entfernt. Aufgenommen wurde die LP im Oktober 1979 mit u.a. Mike MANTLER, Chris SPEDDING, Gary WINDO. Ob diese CD über die LP-Version hinaus geht, kann ich nicht sagen, da ich sie nach monatelanger Wartezeit dann doch nicht bekommen habe. Mittlerweile soll sie aber auch als japanische Ausführung erhältlich sein.

MORE EXTENDED VERSIONS

02) Round about WYATT [w BKL & lyrics, first half of CD by "CPT. KIRK &." second half by MORE EXTENDED VERSIONS] 94 D What's so funny WSFA SF 142

Hier spielt Robert WYATT **nicht** mit, aber trotzdem: was für eine Platte! Hat schon die erste CD von MORE EXTENDED VERSIONS "Dedicated to you, but you weren't listening" vollends begeistert, so wird die Begeisterung mit diesem neuen Werk noch verlängert. Die deutsche Band CPT. KIRK &. spielt drei "echte" WYATT-cover (Round midnight / Alliance / Age of self), dazu zwei Titel, die mit WYATT direkt nichts zu tun haben (How he could just kill a man / Racist friend), die aber durchaus von ihm sein könnten und voll in seinem Stil und seiner musikalische Sprache - und auch der inhaltlichen Stellungnahme, z.B. als kompromißlose Haltung Rassisten gegenüber - präsentiert werden. Absolut gelungen, sind sie mit viel Gefühl für die typische WYATTsche Stimmung in seiner Musik umgesetzt! Die österreichischen MEV bringen 6 Titel, dabei ein alter MATCHING MOLE-Song "Gloria gloom", "Venti latir" von WYATT's "A short break" und sein "Born again, cretin". Aber auch aus dem weiteren Umfeld sind hier drei Titel zu hören: das weniger bekannte "Moments of delight" von der 12" der LAST NIGHTINGALES, eine Neu-Interpretation des 7"-Titels von EPIC SOUNDTRACKS von 1981, bei dem WYATT mitsang, "Jelly, babies" (das Original wird auf der Rough Trade-CD "Flotsam and jetsam" zu hören sein, s.o.) und der neuere Titel "Kingdom" von ULTRAMARINEs zweiter CD "United Kingdoms". Auch wenn die Titelauswahl sehr gemischt ist und diesmal sogar zwei Bands beteiligt sind, ist dies doch wieder eine CD wie aus einem Guß, mit eigenständigen, intelligenten Co-

verversionen, die die WYATT-Titel in einem neuen und ungewöhnlichen Licht erscheinen lassen. Für alle, die gerne Robert WYATT hören, werden diese beiden CDs einfach zum unverzichtbaren Repertoire gehören, das ist gar keine Frage!

RAINCOATS

01) Odyshape [w BKL & lyrics] (93) UK Rough Trade R 3042

Mit den RAINCOATS verbunden ist der erste Konzertauftritt von Robert WYATT seit seiner Tour mit HENRY COW 1975, am 19. Dezember 1981 in der Albany Theatre sang er "Born again, cretin", der Schlagzeuger für die RAINCOATS war bei diesem Konzert Charles HAYWARD. (Woher weiß ich das wohl?) Bereits im Juni 1980 spielte Robert WYATT für den Titel "And then it's o.k." den Schlagzeugpart ein, die LP erschien dann 1981. Bei einigen anderen Titel dieser Platte, die jetzt auch auf CD erhältlich ist, ist wiederum Charles HAYWARD (dr, perc) zu hören.

ULTRAMARINE

01) Every man and woman is a star (92) UK Rough Trade R 2892
02) United Kingdoms [w BKL & lyrics] 93 UK Blanco Y Negro 4509-93425-2

Single-CD:

01) Kingdom, Coldcrest, Kingdom (ext mix) [w lyrics, 2 & 3: non-CD] 93 UK Blanco Y Negro NEG 65 CD

Schon an der ersten Platte, die nicht, wie ich mal irrtümlich angegeben hatte, eine Doppel-CD ist, war Robert WYATT beteiligt (auch Kevin AYERS, der den Song "Weird gear" mitkomponierte). Auch bei der neuen CD ist WYATT wieder als Sänger und bei den Titeln "Kingdom" und "Happy Land" als Co-Komponist in Erscheinung getreten. Außerdem gibt es hier eine Version des alten MATCHING MOLE-Titels "Instant kitten". Noch dazu ist Jimmy HASTINGS (cl, fl, pic, ss) an der Musik beteiligt. Wenn das nicht reicht? Die Maxi-CD bietet dann noch einen *extended mix* und den Extra-Titel "Goldcrest", auf dem WYATT auch singt. Die Techno-Rocker Ian COOPER & Paul HAMMOND (das ist der Kern von ULTRAMARINE) sind im Moment, so scheint's, die Lieblinge der englischen Musikpresse, es wird viel über sie geschrieben. Eigentlich mag ich Techno (oder wie immer man diese Richtung nennt) nicht besonders, aber die Musik der ULTRAMARINE ist gar nicht so kompromißloser Techno-Sound, wie es zuerst scheint. Die erste Platte hat mich noch nicht so begeistert, aber bei der zweiten verstehen sie es, wunderbar-träumerische Stimmungen zu zaubern. Verschiedene Gastmusiker sorgen für vielfältigen Klang, der den typischen, etwas gleichförmigen Techno-Rhythmus und eine allzugoße Rolle der Keyboards und des Programmings überdeckt. Und natürlich nicht zuletzt durch Robert WYATT's Gesang (nicht nur auf den erwähnten zwei Stücken) hat die CD dann einige schöne Höhepunkte. Und auch die nächste Platte der ULTRAMARINE wird die Canterbury-Freunde wieder besonders erfreuen: im Sommer haben ULTRAMARINE mit Kevin AYERS vier Titel eingespielt, die im Spätherbst / Winter auf Maxi-CD erscheinen sollen.

WILDE FLOWERS

01) The WILDE FLOWERS [rec at Wout Steehuis Studios, Spring 65] (94) A Voiceprint VP 123 CD

Schon lange sehnsüchtigst erwartet wird diese älteste Aufnahme der Kern- und Urgruppe der Canterbury-scene. Wie es bei Voiecprint heißt, soll die CD in etwa 2 - 3 Monaten nun endlich erscheinen, also: Augen auf! Was denn nun wirklich alles drauf sein wird, darüber gab's in der vergangenen Zeit unterschiedliche Angaben, also spekulieren wir nicht, sondern lassen wir uns überraschen!

wrong movements

a robert wyatt history
by Michael KING

S.A.F. Publishing Ltd. 1994, 160 Seiten, DIN A4-Format, englisch

Wow, welch ein liebevolles, für jeden Fan unumgängliches Werk! Nicht nur, daß es WYATT's Musik - und zum größten Teil seine Lebensgeschichte - mit einer minutiösen Detailtreue behandelt, sondern auch für SOFTMACHINE-Fans eine Menge Leckerbissen bereit hält! Die ultra-raren Fotos sind für Nostalgiker (wie ich es immer noch bin) die reinsten visuellen Highlights. Endlich bekommt der Fan auch mal Einblicke in die internen Probleme von Bands, die man oftmals nur von ihrer Musik her kennt. Nach der Lektüre dieses Buches mußte ich viele bisherigen Ansichten, Meinungen und Falschmeldungen über WYATT, SOFTMACHINE, Kevin AYERS, MATCHING MOLE etc. revidieren. Wenn man die gesamte Informationsfülle in Rechnung stellt, so ist die Entstehungszeit von 4 Jahren absolut gerechtfertigt. Was für grandiose Detektivarbeit hat der Michael KING hier geleistet! Man darf nicht vergessen, daß hier ein Zeitraum von 30 Jahren behandelt wird, der sich mit einer Musiksparte beschäftigt, die nie besonders (massen-)populär war. Selbst die beteiligten Musiker haben offenbar Schwierigkeiten, klare Erinnerungen zu äußern. Umso mehr ein Lob für die am Ende gelungene, chronologisch genaue Auflistung der Konzertdaten, Studio-dates,Sessions etc. Auch mein Bild von Robert WYATT hat sich im nachhinein geändert: Ehrlich gesagt, haben mich seine letzten zwei, drei Alben nicht mehr so sehr vom Hocker gehauen, wie z.B. seinerzeit die Werke "Rock bottom" oder "Ruth is stranger than Richard" und trotzdem, Robert WYATT (dem wohl immer noch die rührendste Stimme in der Rockmusik gegeben ist ...) besticht hier mit seiner weisen Aufrichtigkeit: *"You take things in and you make them your own, and then it's hard to know what is an influence and what is now you. I think my biggest influence in a way is constantly thinking that I still haven't got it right, and listening to what I've done that I didn't like and trying to get it right next time. In practical terms that is the thing that influences what I do, trying not to make the mistakes I made last time"* (1993).

Hart auf die 50 zugehend, resümiert hier einer sein ohne Zweifel außergewöhnliches Leben, wie jemand, der im Kopf auch schon 80 sein könnte.

Nach so viel Lob nun noch die (geringen) Schwachpunkte des Buches:

a) Warum wurden die obligatorischen Seitenzahlen weggelassen ?
b) Die vielen Superfotos sind zwar den Jahren zugeordnet, aber nicht genau datiert (im Gegensatz zum "Triple echo"-Booklet, wo einiges von dem Fotomaterial schon mal auftauchte!)
c) Warum wurde das Buch im Offset-Verfahren gedruckt? Ein Hochglanzdruck hätte die Qualität der Fotos um einiges aufgewertet!

Von diesen Punkten abgesehen, ist der Preis von 45,- DM inkl. Versandkosten angesichts des Arbeits- und Zeitaufwandes absolut gerechtfertigt! Wer hier nicht zuschlägt, hat selber schuld!

Nun denn: ***Congratulations to Michael KING, Hello and thanks to Robert WYATT!***

(Rainer KRAUSE, August 1994)

PS: Wer beginnt nun mit der Kevin AYERS, GONG, CARAVAN ... Biographie???

Sowas kann also dabei herauskommen, wenn man einen Beitrag schreiben will, um ein Freiabo von FACELIFT zu bekommen, damit fing nämlich Mike KINGs Mammutarbeit an. Und wuchs und wuchs und wuchs. Obigem braucht wohl nicht mehr viel hinzugefügt werden. "Wrong movements" ist eine spannende Zeitreise durch 30 Jahre Musik, voller interessanter und überraschender Fakten, ihr werdet das Buch häufig in die Hand nehmen und darin nachlesen und dabei viel bisher unbekanntes entdecken. Biographie und Nachschlagewerk in einem, wird man es immer wieder nutzen und ausgiebig darin schmökern können. Die Arbeit von tausenden von Briefen in die ganze Welt, Kontakte mit einigen hunderten Leuten (Musikern, Journalisten, Veranstaltern usw), Besuche und Gespräche mit vielen Musikern in USA und Europa (natürlich auch mit Robert WYATT, der das ganze Unternehmen während seiner Entstehung nach besten Kräften unterstützte - trotz seines außerordentlich schlechten Gedächtnisses, auf das er immer wieder hinwies) ist hier zusammengetragen.

Doch wie kommt man an das Buch? Ich habe einige Exemplare bestellt (und auch noch ein paar zu Hause): mit Zoll und Porto (als Päckchen verschickt) kostet das Buch 45,- DM (nur in D). Wer sich bis 14.10.94 mit V-Scheck bei mir meldet (aber wirklich spätestens bis dahin), bekommt "Wrong movemnts" gleich zugeschickt (solange noch Exemplare vorhanden sind). Danach dauert es wegen meines Urlaubes etwas länger. Wenn sich genügend Interessenten melden, würde ich auch noch mal eine Großbestellung aufgeben.

In England kostet das Buch £ 14.95 und ist auch per Versand erhältlich bei:
S.A.F. Publishing Ltd. - Mick FISH - 12 Conway Gardens, Wembley, Middx. HA9 8TR, UK (Tel/Fax: 081 - 904 6263), bezahlt werden kann mit Euroscheck (in Pfund Sterling auf englische Bank ausgestellt) oder mit Visa- oder Mastercard (Kartennummer, Gültigkeitsdatum der Karte, Name, Adresse und Unterschrift erforderlich).

Dritte Möglichkeit: im Buchladen bestellen, das Buch wird in UK & Europe durch Airlift Book Company vertrieben, die **ISBN-Nummer: 0 946719 101,** das sollte dann eigentlich reichen.

Und zuletzt: größere Buchläden in Großstädten (nicht nur die mit Musikabteilung) führen auch so das Angebot englischer Verlage. S.A.F. führt da zum Beispiel den Laden "Marissals corner" in Hamburg an.

übrigens hat sich Mike KING nach dieser Riesenaufgabe nicht zur Ruhe gesetzt, um wieder ein normales Arbeits- und Familienleben zu führen, wie er es wohl wahrlich verdient hätte. Während der Arbeit zum Buch war er häufig und in freundschaftlichem Kontakt mit Gary WINDO. Nach Gary WINDOs frühen und überraschenden Tod, hat sich Mike KING daran begeben, an einer CD mit seltenen und auch unveröffentlichten Titel von Gary WINDO zu arbeiten, um dessen musikalisches Werk gehörig zu würdigen: "Gary WINDO `His master's bones` - 1970's archival CD" wird (nicht vor) 1995 bei Cuneiform erscheinen, alle Erlöse aus der CD werden Hazel MILLER's "Blue Notes Trust Fund" für südafrikanische Musiker zufließen.

Soweit zu Robert WYATT und Mike KING, gehen wir nun zum nächsten Thema über:

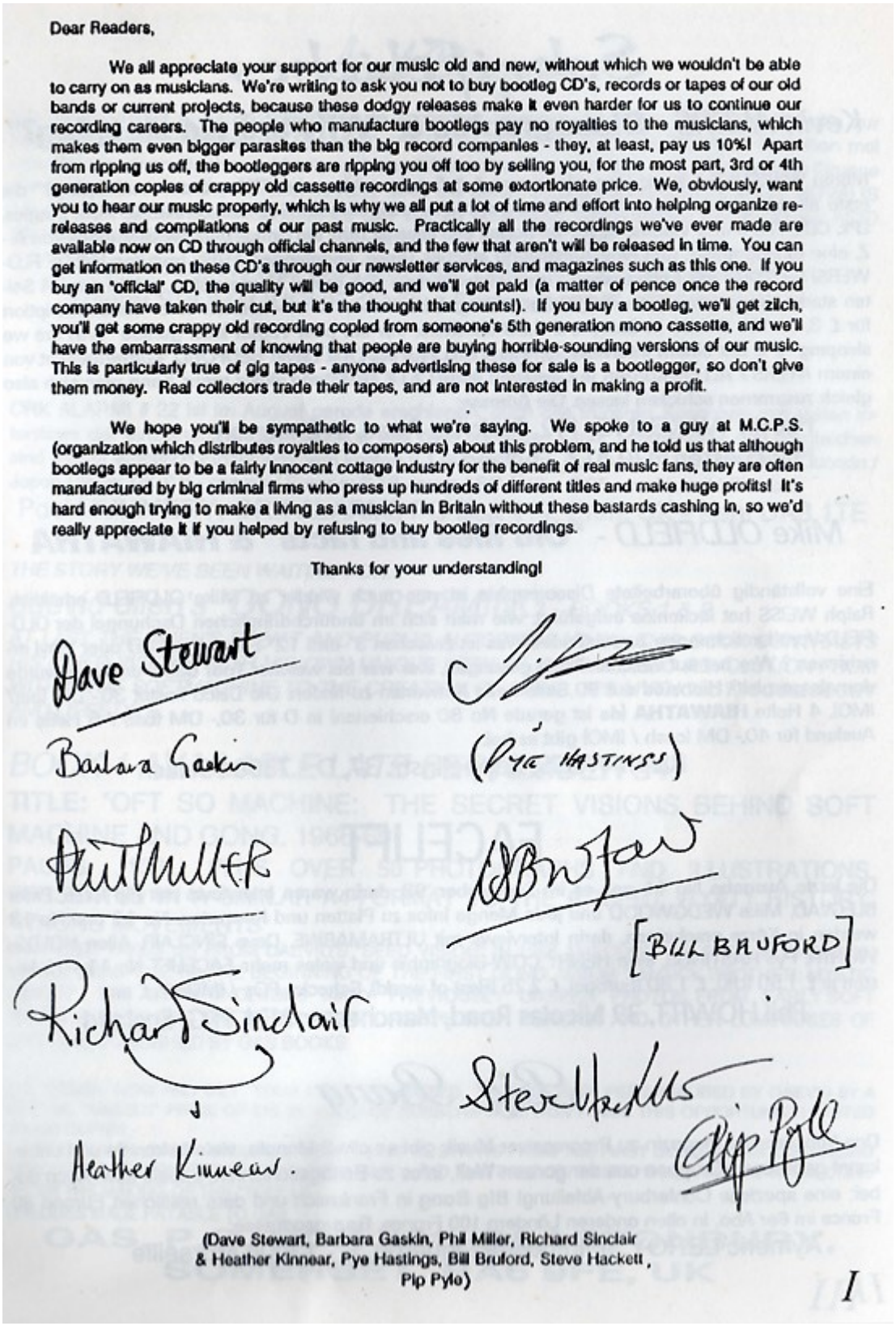
Kevin COYNE

& The PARADISE BAND

am 02.10.1993 in Salzwedel

Ein Konzert mit Kevin COYNE ist immer ein Erlebnis. Egal, ob er allein mit einer Gitarre vor 10 Leuten singt, oder ob er mit einer vierköpfigen Band im Rücken auf der Bühne die Sau rausläßt. Am 02.10.93 konnte ich in Salzwedel gleich beides erleben - Ausstellungseröffnung und Konzert.

Wer COYNE kennt als Musiker und Texter, wird ihn in seinen Bildern wiedererkennen. Die vermeintliche Naivität, der skurrile Humor, resignierende Ernsthaftigkeit oder kraftvolle Trotzigkeit - alles zeichnet Musik, Bild und Wort gleichermaßen aus.



Dear Readers,

We all appreciate your support for our music old and new, without which we wouldn't be able to carry on as musicians. We're writing to ask you not to buy bootleg CD's, records or tapes of our old bands or current projects, because these dodgy releases make it even harder for us to continue our recording careers. The people who manufacture bootlegs pay no royalties to the musicians, which makes them even bigger parasites than the big record companies - they, at least, pay us 10%! Apart from ripping us off, the bootleggers are ripping you off too by selling you, for the most part, 3rd or 4th generation copies of crappy old cassette recordings at some extortionate price. We, obviously, want you to hear our music properly, which is why we all put a lot of time and effort into helping organize re-releases and compilations of our past music. Practically all the recordings we've ever made are available now on CD through official channels, and the few that aren't will be released in time. You can get information on these CD's through our newsletter services, and magazines such as this one. If you buy an 'official' CD, the quality will be good, and we'll get paid (a matter of pence once the record company have taken their cut, but it's the thought that counts!). If you buy a bootleg, we'll get zilch, you'll get some crappy old recording copied from someone's 5th generation mono cassette, and we'll have the embarrassment of knowing that people are buying horrible-sounding versions of our music. This is particularly true of gig tapes - anyone advertising these for sale is a bootlegger, so don't give them money. Real collectors trade their tapes, and are not interested in making a profit.

We hope you'll be sympathetic to what we're saying. We spoke to a guy at M.C.P.S. (organization which distributes royalties to composers) about this problem, and he told us that although bootlegs appear to be a fairly innocent cottage industry for the benefit of real music fans, they are often manufactured by big criminal firms who press up hundreds of different titles and make huge profits! It's hard enough trying to make a living as a musician in Britain without these bastards cashing in, so we'd really appreciate it if you helped by refusing to buy bootleg recordings.

Thanks for your understanding!

Dave Stewart

Barbara Gaskin

(Pye Hastings)

Phil Miller

[Bill Bruford]

Richard Sinclair

Heather Kinnear.

Steve Hackett

Pip Pyle

(Dave Stewart, Barbara Gaskin, Phil Miller, Richard Sinclair & Heather Kinnear, Pye Hastings, Bill Bruford, Steve Hackett, Pip Pyle)

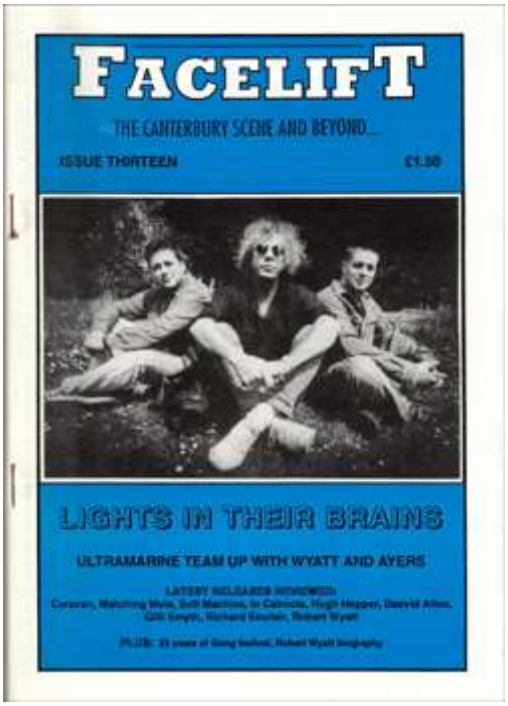
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Wrong Movements, a Robert Wyatt history - Facelift - N° 13 - August 1994



BOOK REVIEW

WRONG MOVEMENTS
A ROBERT WYATT HISTORY

Michael King
SAF Publishing
ISBN 09467 19 10-1

It's taken four years to complete this book and I'm sure I won't be alone in saying that the wait has been worth every moment. 'Wrong Movements' is a revelation.

Mike King, the Canadian writer (whose name will be familiar to Facelift readers as a regular contributor), had promised us a factual book, chronicling every gig, every recording session, every relevant minutae of Robert Wyatt's recording career. And indeed that's what we get. It's meticulously researched, an unsurpassable reference guide to Robert Wyatt. But that's only half of the story.

The real revelation is how 'Wrong Movements' is illustrated. That's not just to say that the book is garnished with previously unseen photos, drawings, archive articles and flyers, which indeed it is. But it also features large slices of spoken text from every key player in Robert Wyatt's career. Some are from contemporary magazines/radio interviews; others taken from more recent conversations Mike King has conducted with the likes of Daevid Allen and Gilli Smyth; Softs, Wilde Flowers and Caravan members; family; sidemen (Andy Summers, Fred Frith, Gary Windo for starters); and many interesting figures associated with Robert right through to the present day. The musicians' comments accompany factual details - there's no attempt by the author to provide a definitive critique or commentary on any element of Robert Wyatt's career. To some extent the interviews do that just as well: there's little over-eulogising or mythologising on any aspect of Robert's career by his fellow musicians - it's an honest account of how each musicians saw events at the time. But a great deal of warmth towards Robert comes over as well.

We also get an insight into Robert's character. Complex, self-deprecating, but overwhelmingly warm and human, it's his own words which give the book much of its character. And because the Robert Wyatt story is not without its tragedies, it's also a very moving tale too. One interesting slant is the mix between contemporary and archive commentary. Notoriously dismissive now of much of his own work before the accident that paralysed him in 1973, here we get both sides of the coin - how Robert Wyatt feels about his music, his work environment and himself, both now and then.

Whilst all areas of his career are well dealt with, the sheer level of activity before his accident mean that much of the book is devoted to the early Robert Wyatt years. There's heavy emphasis on the days before Soft Machine formed, and this is probably the most exciting aspect of the whole book, since it's an era that has never been satisfactorily chronicled up to now. You'll learn much that's new here in a detailed series of reminiscences from key players who were moving between Canterbury, London, Mallorca and Paris with various degrees of interaction. It adds to a certain bohemian mystery which has attached itself to the Canterbury scene, whilst also blowing the cover on other myths: the story is a remarkable one, but does little to disguise the fact that bands such as the Wilde Flowers were as little-known in the early Sixties as they are to many now.



Given its coverage of events in the early Sixties the book could be regarded as the most definitive history of the genesis of the Canterbury scene we're likely to get - a bonus is that the book covers in some detail the early histories of musicians like Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers and Hugh Hopper.

Equally as interesting are early Soft Machine days, the evolving psychedelic scene of London in 1966/7, the Softs/Hendrix tour, and the period around the start of the Seventies when an unsettled Robert was guesting with many musicians and embarking on ad hoc jazz projects. There's also some insight into Robert's political motivations, which have increasingly permeated his attitude and outlook towards his music.

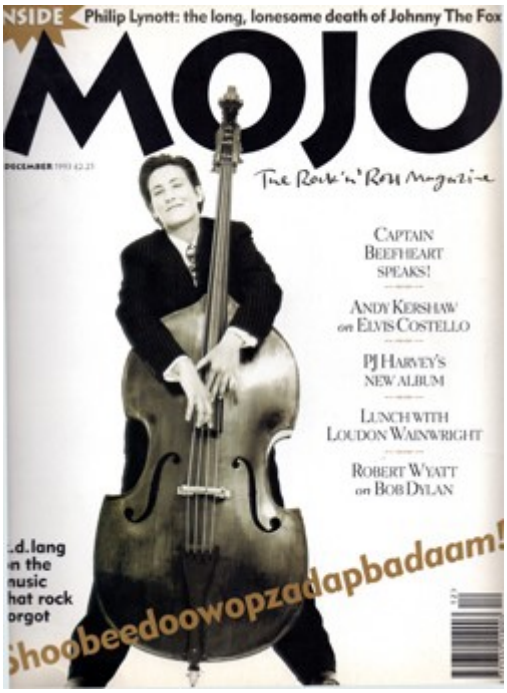
Wrong Movements' comes with a comprehensive discography of official releases, compiled with customary accuracy by Manfred Bress, editor of Canterbury Nachrichten. This includes details of guest appearances and samplers as well as the various editions of solo material, Softs albums et al.

As inspiring a work as I've read, Wrong Movements' is essential reading.

In Issue 14 we hope to publish an article by author Mike King about the compilation of 'Wrong Movements'. This may also Include any updates since the first edition of the book went out, plus unpublished artwork.

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Hear this man do it, and take courage - By Robert Wyatt - Mojo - December 1993



December 1993
BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME
A review of recent releases



"Hear this man do it, and take courage."

By Robert Wyatt

I JUST REALISED, THIS MOJO IS MEANT TO BE about rock'n'roll, so I'm shafted before I start, really. I like to roll with the best of them, but the rock face feels too flinty to me, the backbeat that an idiot couldn't lose. So what are my qualifications, or Dylan's for that matter?

Well, I did shell out for a Chuck Berry cassette at Tesco's a couple of weeks ago, and Broke Down Engine from this World Gone Wrong record could almost be one of the tunes on it. There's no rhythm section on the Dylan album, though; if you want that, you could just thump along on the table-top with Dylan's rhythm guitar, reverse karaoke style. But before I get stuck in... all I really want to say is... order this from your local municipal library's record department now. (CDs etc are far too expensive, and it's not as if the musicians get most of the money.)



> Zoom

World Gone Wrong is a beautiful record by a beautiful man. Readers in a hurry, I have to tell you: that's the review, really. The rest is indulgent speculation. Like a lot of our timeless heritage, folk music as a form was invented in the 19th century — in this case by a German musicologist who was getting his lederhosen in a twist, mourning the destruction of rural culture by the all-engulfing hell of the industrial revolution.

The English-speaking tradition, or at least what I've come across of it, was word-based, and that's been its fundamental limitation, musically.



TRACKS

World Gone Wrong is an all-acoustic album of traditional songs. The following quotes and track information are culled from Dylan's own sleevenote.

(Maybe real authorities like Karl Dallas and Ian A. Andersen would baulk at that. I dunno).

I do know that, as a lad just getting into my teens while Robert Zimmerman was already getting out of his, I could hardly breathe under what felt like the dead weight of the sex-free rhythms, the solemn tremolo, the heavy pauses for emphasis of significant words, the hushed and reverent gatherings. And even worse, the desperate, flushed lurches into Shakespearean mirth. All so uncool!

Don't get me wrong, I don't remember feeling rebellious against it, or wanting to hear fellow adolescents share their teenage angst with me; nor was I easy prey for the new-generation-as-a-tribe marketeers. I was too wary for that. It's just that in the search for musical and cultural stimulus, 'folk music' gave me harmonic claustrophobia.

But of course I didn't know the half of it, and researchers with ears more blessed than mine had already brought precious gold up from rich seams where I'd only seen the dull earth on the surface. In Britain, A.L Llyod begat Annie Briggs and Dick Gaughan; in America Alan Lomax led, in a way, to Leadbelly, to Woody Guthrie, to Bob Dylan. The term 'melting pot', may be a cliché, but it's not a bad metaphor for American culture.

Watching a recent telly film exploring Highway 61, I found out that I could, after all, have identified with the schoolboy Zimmerman if I'd known then about his early 'reference library' and the breadth of his discoveries. Apparently, he never just stuck his nose in the archives, valuable as they might have been. For example, he was a right little rhythm & blues fan way back.

Perhaps that doesn't surprise you, but it was a nice surprise to me. This bloke then descended on New York's already potent folk revival, well tooled-up, self-educated in a living folk culture, ready to cross the bridge already knocked up by Woody Guthrie and his pals, and ready to revitalise old people's fading dreams.

But isn't the point about Bob Dylan that he was what Americans call a 'radical'? An original? Well... 'radical' does mean 'starting again from the root'. And then, isn't the point about him that he is a poet, just as Johnny Cash said he was? Well, no, I don't think it is. I think the point is this: the innovation, if you like, is and always has been in his curiously modest and unpretentious singing. It's the way he tells them, that makes it all his own.

He made it new because he wasn't just another necrophiliac; he didn't embarrass the shit out of everybody by acting out some pious reverie, or by pretending that he really was the son of Victoria Spivey. He had the nerve to draw on history as a living stew-pot. Right from the start.

And that's why, when he sings from the tradition, it's just as good as when he uses his own compositions. He can write as well as anybody, but he doesn't have to. He is a complete musician.

World Gone Wrong finds Dylan strumming again through



World Gone Wrong

"Done by the Mississippi Sheiks . . . all their songs are raw to the bone."

Love Henry

"A 'traditionalist' ballad. Tom Paley used to do it."

Ragged & Dirty

"One of the Willie Browns did this . . . heavy moral vocabulary."

Blood In My Eyes

"By the Mississippi Sheiks . . . rebellion against routine seems to be their strong theme."

Broke Down Engine

"A Blind Willie McTell masterpiece."

Delia

"One sad tale . . . seems to be about counterfeit loyalty."

Stack A Lee

"Frank Hutchinson's version . . . it says no man gains immortality thru public acclaim."

Two Soldiers

"Jerry Garcia showed me Two Soldiers . . . a battle song extraordinaire."

Jack-A-Roe

"Another Tom Paley ballad . . . the young virgin follows her heart."

Lone Pilgrim

"From an old Doc Watson record."

PRODUCED BY BOB DYLAN.

songs from what he sees as his tradition. It is still, totally, a Bob Dylan record. Hear this man do it, and take courage. How great it could be if everybody struggling to find their own voice were able to just sort of stop struggling and.. well, use their own voice. We all got one, unique as a fingerprint.

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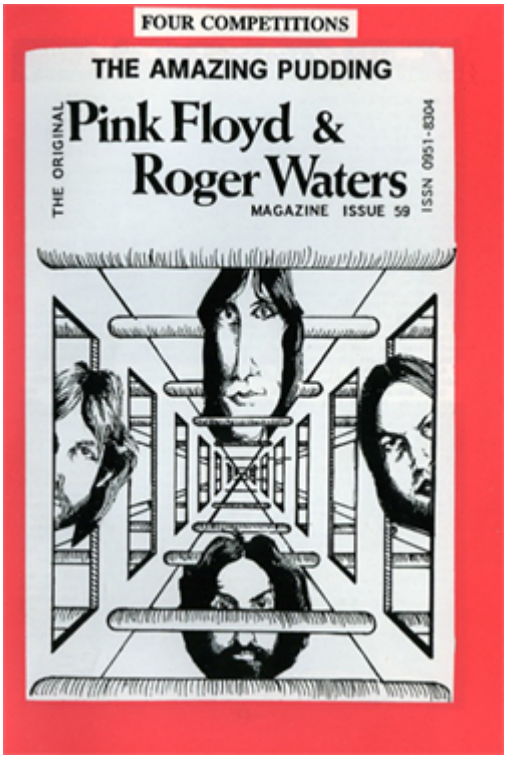
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Who, Wyatt, Where - The Amazing Pudding - #59 - June 1993

WHO, WYATT, WHERE



Robert Wyatt: quirky musician, Soft Machine drummer, gentleman, Marxist, Floyd pal, Madcap sessioneer and now TAP interviewee. This interview was conducted by post; his answers appear below, edited but still weird!

Recollections of the early Floyd?

Eight gangling legs in a dressing room in the Irish centre Hoppy hired. Downcast blushes in the presence of a Paul McCartney dressed in (I think) an oriental robe of discreet but effective turquoise hue...

Pin' Flo' shy, reserved, but friendly eventually and witty. Always very helpful if we had equipment trouble or anything. Unnervingly well organised, in fact, but a refreshing change from your usual Brit Rock loot. It has been written that we had a motorcyclist revving up round the rim of the roundhouse while they played once. This is not the case. During our set, yes, theirs, no.

I see but a tenuous connection with any underground, incidentally. Rock is about as overground and ostentatiously attention seeking as you can get... Underground, like 'Avant Garde', is one of those terms adopted by the chic much as they wear, say, worn jeans or bomber jackets.

The Madcap Laughs...

I liked the tunes on Madcap and the way he did them. We just started to feel our way round them when he said "OK, that's it". So the final recording was like a sketch of a painting never completed. Dead punk when you come to think of it.

I didn't notice we weren't credited, but I'm sure we got paid which is fairly novel. I played it a lot later, at home, 'til Elton Dean came from his room next door and asked me to stop playing "that nonsense" and listen to more sophisticated musicians like Joe Henderson. Ever the sporting neighbour, I lost Madcap.

Peter Jenner and Andrew King?

I've seen Andrew on and off since then, around Twickenham, I remember we got on fine, I liked him anyway and Peter Jenner is at least always nice to your face, which is a lot easier on the nerves than some managers' behaviour, which can be quite grotesque, like that of an American policeman. But the manager I'm most grateful to is Steve O'Rourke, who did so much for me when I was hospitalised in 1973 which leads to:-

Post-Syd Floyd?

My favourite thing was on the second PF LP I think, a beautiful piece by Rick the organist. Was Barrett on that? I forget, so long ago...

They played a benefit for you after your accident. Any comments?

Ronnie Scott and Pink Floyd started helping me when I was still completely out of it on painkillers etc, the first month or two.

I believe the witter Dave Gale alerted P.F. to my horizontalisation. They saved my life as much as the doctors and nurses. What can I say! If any of them see this - thanks!

How did Mason come to produce Rock Bottom, Sonia and I'm A Believer?

In fact I think a reason for asking Nick to help me put Rock Bottom together was to acknowledge that amazing help. Although strictly speaking Moon In June and End Of en Ear were my first solo sides, I consider *my life as a grown-up began with Rock Bottom.

Nick also helped out on a couple of other things : Chris Andrew's Yesterday Man (my favourite) and I'm Believer (on which he played drums - the only one he did play on) and finally my last souvenir of the trumpeter Mongezi Feza on his own Sonia.

[*Since Virgin Lost the names of the musicians in transferring to CD, they are: Richard Sinclair, Hugh Hopper (bass), Laurie Allen (drums), Gary Windo, George Khan (saxophones), Fred Frith (piano]. On the singles, John Greaves, Bill MacCormick (bass), Brian Eno (sin) and Mike Oldfield who also helped on producing. And Ivor Cutler (on mouth and squeeze-box). The best groups I ever worked with.*]

Mason's drumming?

Nick's careful signposts and clear dynamics much impressed Carla Bley who subsequently involved him in her own stuff. She then passed him on to fellow WATT writer Mike Mantler. I knew them because they'd asked me to contribute to a couple of LPs of his tunes she produced.

I don' t know why they asked me. Musicians don't say what we think of each other, it's uncool!

Fictitious Sports - were you 'just' a singer or did you play a bigger part?

Just a session singer and a very honoured one too.

Will you work with Mason again?

Nick and I met recently at a do organised by Mitch Mitchell's wife Dee. But yes, I think we've drifted too far apart to work together again.

Things have a time and a place as Sid Greenwich would say.

Ditto Mike Oldfield?

Ditto Mike Oldfield, as Otto Hardwick would say.

What about other old cronies?

Old cronies in touch with list: Didier Malherbe, Hugh and Brian Hopper, Richard Sinclair, Daevid Allen. Many musicians, mainly 'jazz' e.g. Ronnie Scott, Laurie Allan, Evan Parker, but also Brian Eno.

But a longer list would be of old friends who've died, Chris McGregor and Duda Pukwana, whose ghosts keep us company and whose spirits live on in their friends' hearts.

Top Of The Pops?

I'm never up in time to watch children's TV like Blue Peter or Top of the Pops. I watch the adult, serious late night stuff like Cheers, Roseanne and Prisoner Cel Block whatsit.

Post-Wyatt Soft Machine?

Oh fuck, who cares? Quickly to:-

The Final Cut and Shipbuilding were the only (non punk) records to address the Falklands troubles - how do you feel about this? Were you surprised Roger wrote so strongly?

I mean of course (ta, Rob! - Eds).

Here you consulted by Virgin before they issued your early albums on CD?

Yes... They asked if I fancied including the singles. I said no because I see each record as complete - or at least distinct - entities. I hadn't got CD then anyway and didn't know how much you could get on them. .

Musicians you'd like to work with?

As a subscriber to the Big Bang theory of the origins of the universe, I tend to end up playing, most satisfactorily, with myself.

The filthy rumour, however, that the Spanish named Tosseer de Mar in recognition of my contribution to their tourist industry is entirely without foundation and legal advice will be sought following any such allegations made in the future.



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-20-

Future recording plans?

I hope to churn out some more tunes for the Eurasian market. More specifically for Yuka Terada in Tokyo, a big fan of Stunning Desserts type culture, incidentally. Hello Yuka!

Will you perform live again? PLEASE!

Thanks for asking so nicely, but - I got chronic stage fright, I'm sorry to admit it, I have nightmares about forgetting the words.

The Amazing Pudding?

Frankly, you are not half so amazing as fried beef and sultanas on floppy raw pastry garnished with sand, but I myself prefer your relatively safer traditional recipes anyway, especially that issue with extra dollops of mature Cheddar sauce for the first 8.5 new subscribers.

The best joke you've heard recently?

Jokes too, I like old and matured in the wood. E.G. when anybody trips over on something 1 always say "Hope you enjoyed your trip" and it always makes me laugh.



SELECTED WYATT DISCOGRAPHY

Any Wyatt (and Soft Machine or Michael Mantler) album merits investigation, but these are compulsory listening for Floyd completists (ft for CD unless stated):

I'm A Believer/Memories (7- Virgin VS 114)
Rock Bottom (Virgin CDV 2017)
Yesterday Man/Sonia (7" Virgin VS115)
[all the above produced by Mason]
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard
(Virgin CDV 2034) (includes Sonla)
Nick Mason: Fictitious Sports (LP Harvest SHSF 4116) (Wyatt shares vox)
Michael Mantler: The Hapless Child... (WATT 4) Wyatt sings while Mason speaks ('.), engineers and mixes.

Robert's most recent records are Dondestan (Rough Trade R2742) and A Short Break (Voiceprint VP108CD).

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Jimi & Soft Machine - Univibes N° 8 - Novembre 1992

JIMI & SOFT MACHINE



PART ONE - INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT WYATT

by Caesar Glebbeek

UniVibes: How did Soft Machine get hooked up with Michael Jeffery?

Robert Wyatt: Kevin Ayers who had written quite a bunch of songs did come to London and looked around and gone up to various people's offices... Jeffery said: "Mickey Most will do a single for you, that means you've made it." We said, "Oh, that's nice". He said, "The only thing is that he decides what material you do and how you are doing it. So you put yourself in his hands and he will make you successful" and we thought "what's the point in that?" I think that they lost interest in us after that.. [Management] had another bloke there Tony something...

UV: Garland?

RW: That's right. And he used to worry about our dress-sense and say, 'look, you don't have to go mad, I don't wear a white shirt" He was very nice... and very smart... There was an amount of bad feeling with us from the start because a couple of people were interested in producing us and helping us because they were sympathetic to the more innovatory side of what we were doing. Where as far as I understood it the Anim office were more concerned with the route of turning a group into a proper professional pop group. And trying to get us disciplined to make [and] do proper songs...wear proper clothes and then we could make an LP and freak out a bit... They weren't interested in that...

UV: And what about Kim Fowley as Soft Machine producer?

RW: There was Kim Fowley certainly. He was interested in us. He wasn't a bit interested if we had a hit or not, he just thought, "oh, this is a group that I can make funny noises with."

UV: What were your impressions when you saw the Jimi Hendrix Experience rehearsing?

RW: The sound totally filled the room I couldn't even tell you where it was coming from. It was like a Science Fiction film where you were in an enormous place and you open a door and suddenly you are in a vortex, you know, without a bottom and a top and a ceiling; it was almost choking. I didn't in fact identify immediately particular tunes or instruments, [it was] just a sort of orchestral effect... this was something like total guitar, a total group actually. I think that people underestimated the importance of say Mitch on drums. Mitch

his reputation preceded him, he was already a heavy weight... He was very fluid, he would just kind of 'swoop and dive' along with Hendrix, so that it all helped to make this kind of swirly atmosphere instead of that kind of ploddy atmosphere that most rock bands have...

UV: What about Mitch and Noel?

RW: They both had their role. I always compare it with the John Coltrane Quartet - if is very important that the bass player and the pianist stepped into these very simple anchor points... I don't think Noel's interested in improvising and all that. And I think that three improvisers wouldn't have worked... Noel and Mitch, if anything, suffered in reputation 'cause they were so good at being that one sound, getting the effect that Hendrix was after and allowing him to be the spectacle, the front of it...

UV: What did you think of Mitch as a drummer?

RW: I didn't expect it. You don't expect it in pop groups. You don't have to be a very good musician to be a good rock musician [!]. Mitch was holding the sticks right! In the end I start holding them wrong - you can break rules when you know them - and a lot of people thought, "weIl you can't if you play rock 'cause it's too loud', but he did... Jimi didn't actually display himself as a working musician the way a lot of the musicians do... If you listen to his records they were really the heavier side of the black funk of that period. He was interested in getting those rhythm's right. I do remember that he would work with Mitch on the drum parts. As the composer of the pieces he would have an idea of what everybody would be doing, or at least what the basis would be. Like he wouldn't just compose his own bit. Having said that, once they got the feel then they [Mitch and Noel] were as free as the wind... If we got flack for playing incomprehensible music, or for not playing hits, Hendrix was always [saying], "don't pressure them." He was very keen on people experimenting, I think he liked the fact that we were trying out unusual things more then the results.

"He was a master of organising a dramatic event... he couldn't stand boring bits and he would keep things moving or changing or tighten them up to get the boring bits out. He was ruthless like that with his own material. Don't let himself get away with anything...

UV:
What about Jimi's character?

RW: He was so cool and so shy. Spoke quietly. I mean he had his act but apart from his act you didn't feel like invading his privacy in the same room, at least I didn't. I can see people did and it was very embarrassing. Sort of an illusion that because you admire somebody they want to have you breathing down... When he wasn't working he was usually protected by sort of a praetorian guard of leggy women... obviously rather more interesting than [talking to] some fucking drummer!

UV: How did Soft Machine come onto the 1968 tour?

RW: I don't remember a single conversation about it! It's more like being a private in the army, you're not at the generals discussions of strategy...

UV: Did you see much of Michael Jeffery?

RW: When we did see him every once a year or whatever it was, he seemed to be much more sun tanned every time! The management take on all the kind of hustling qualities off the musicians, so he can appear like a fucking saint, you know what I mean? Whereas lesser mortals have to do their own hassling... Yeah, you'd see more of Chas [Chandler]... I never worked out what they [managers in general] were for!

UV: How did Vanilla Fudge come onto the tour?

RW: Michael Jeffery was a bit sheepish about this - he said, "I know you got your time sorted out for your act, whatever you do, you know, 35, 40 minutes, 'but we got a fourth group on, so you got to cut it down to 20, 25 minutes." He said, "we didn't really want

them but anyway don't make a fuss." And then the Vanilla Fudge arrived, and accompanied, I kid you not, by two geezers straight out of the Godfather. You know, sort of scars down their cheeks, kind of looking around at everybody watching the equipment... and everybody including Michael Jeffery was frightened. That was the only word for it. And apparentIy according to, it may even have been Neville [Chesters], maybe Chas, Mike Jeffery got a phone call saying, "The Fudge haven't made it on the West Coast, they'd like to join your little tour." And they said, "no, we got our package tour." And they said, "you don't understand what I'm saying, the Fudge would like to join your tour, you don't want any trouble, the Fudge join your tour." And big and powerful though they were, everybody made a gap, even Hendrix played shorter. It was frightening... it looked like a straight Godfather phone call...

UV: Mafia?

RW: Oh, absolutely! They decided, they invested in this band and that this band hadn't done well on the West Coast yet... and they decided the way to do it [was to] stick them in just before Hendrix... And me and Mitch used to sit in the back doing little satirical routines behind the stage - every time the organist [Mark Stein] got down really awkwardly, playing with one hand, getting down on his knee, for I think a bit of [sings] 'People get readyyyyyy', we all would get down on our knees and behind backstage with our hands up in the air [sings] "readyyyyyy." And you saw scar-face looking and you would say, "oh, sorry sir" There was this really frightening atmosphere when they were on. We were all very glad when they were taken off. It was a failure...they certainly were spectacular, but their routine was actually so tight and slick that it didn't go down that well, because the rest of it... there was a kind of real wildness about it, the music there was a kind of looseness, a freedom about it, that you can't manufacture. You can't manufacture excitement like that... I think Eire Apparent's roadie [Dave Robinson] complained about their equipment being shuffled off stage in a heap once instead of taken off, and was beaten up and complained to management and they said, "don't make a fuss", you know...

UV: How were the guys in Vanilla Fudge themselves?

RW: They were allright, they tried to be friendly...the only one I actually remember being unpleasant was the drummer [Carmine Appice]...[like] he was the thing and Mitch was shit... he [Carmine] had one af these kits that sort of looked like an antique shop...

UV: Back to Jimi again, would he pop in during Soft Machine studio recordings?

RW: I seem to remember him during studio work mainly on the West coast... but I remember him actually in there more towards the end of the year [1968] and then being in and out...

UV: Tell us about your demo, 'Slow Walkin' Talk', with Jimi.

RW: I recorded the song on the West Coast [at TTG, late October 1968] which I didn't use until years later [note: re-recorded with the new title 'Soup Song' and released in 1975 on Robert's solo LP Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard]. The vocal wasn't very good, which is why I think we didn't make anything of it... Hendrix came in and played bass on it. 'Cause I just did vocals, keyboards and drums. It was a kind of a Mose Allison kind of thing... he came in and listened and whispered something... He would retire to the corner and be a shadow and say, you know, "I could try the bass line an that, you wouldn't have to use it." And he got Noel's bass and you have to remember he's left handed, so he's playing bass the wrong way around, puts down a first take, a fucking Larry Graham bass line. He heard it once including the changes, the breaks and all that, and it was staggering.



> Zoom

UV: What about Jimi's ability to play rhythm and solo at the same time?

RW: Even the good ones, they'd have their rhythm guitar and then they switch a button and then they can play [the solo]... then switch a button and they'd have two things they did. I don't remember that sort of crude division with Hendrix at all... the effect of what I call picking guitar 'cause what he reminded me of in his singing and his playing was actually more like acoustic blues picking people, who of course would do that. Like Spanish guitarists, they're using their fingers, they're not just trashing with the plectrum. Well you can pick a few notes at once whilst doing a sort of bit of a bass-line or you can do something at the bottom whilst moving a top-line.... There's lots of places on the guitar where you can get the same note but of course you can do different things with it. And his work on that, on actually finding different ways to get to the same note, so the effect to move from one to the other could be exciting. I mean of course this is what every musician tries to do but I just remember him being very conscientiously trying, always working the best in [the] most exciting way of doing that...

UV: He used his thumb as a kind of 5th finger on the guitar.

RW: Yes that's right. But also you'd have to have the imagination to hear it...

UV: What about ladies during the 1968 tour?

RW: It was sort of open season!

UV: Would you watch the JHE performances during that tour?

RW: Oh yeah! I mean, that's the funny thing 'cause I've been on the road with other people and you would absolutely not bother. I mean you found out what they were doing and you'd go and get drunk. Of course not every night but on the whole I would, partly because it would never be quite the same and partly because as a drummer... Sitting behind Mitch was ways on education... After all the psychedelic and roar there comes a moment in the evening when he'd [Jimi] take it right down, as they say, and do "Red House"... and your heart would be in your mouth. I mean your hair would stand on end, that was so beautiful. These hushed opening moments and the way that was played. I wouldn't have missed that, I mean every night you would see, you'd think God, this is a great moment of music concerts you've seen here, and even on the 20th night in Wisconsin you would realise that. But that would be the very simple thing, Hendrix playing the blues. It was so intimate. He brought that intimate blues to the masses in a way that the rhythm and blues movement didn't on a whole. They sacrificed that intimacy to be rock bands, so they used the shouting blues as the basis for the English rhythm and blues movement... This is actually an intimate quiet blues, that you wouldn't dream of doing in front of a rock audience. And that's it, they heard the blues sung like it ought to be sung. Because he was a great blues singer... Apart from being a musical gig, the going to a gig is also going to the theatre. And that's the thing with Hendrix - it was a theatre piece. And there again I don't mean this like a circus act. I mean everything you'd expect from a theatre, the drama, and the pace and the variety and the build-ups and the drops. I think he was a master at organising a dramatic event. He wasn't indulgent actually, he hated the boring bits, he couldn't stand boring bits and he would keep things moving or changing or tighten them up to get the boring bits out. He was ruthless like that with his own material. Didn't let himself get away with anything.... He wouldn't want to break the spell. He'd get on stage and there would be a spell and he had to keep that spell. And things can break a spell. We all know those gigs and you see three numbers and you think, "well fuck, I'm going to the bar"... but that's partly because Jimi wrote interesting songs that

were all different from each other. They weren't just different versions from the same song...

PART TWO - SWAP-OVER- RECORDINGS

by Caesar Glebbeek

For many years there's been this rumour that Jimi played on the first Soft Machine single ("Love Makes Sweet Music" produced by Chas Chandler b/w "Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin" produced by Kim Fowley) - released 17 February 1967 on Polydor. Ian MacDonald wrote in his article on the Soft Machine in *New Musical Express*, 25 January 1975: "... The first mix of the A-side featured rhythm guitar by Jimi Hendrix... who happened to be down the corridor in the next studio doing his debut single, Hey Joe. The two groups dropped in on each other's sessions and became friendly - to the point where Hendrix invited Wyatt, Ayers and Allen to do back-up vocals on "Stone Free". Finally, however, both swap-over appearances were rejected in favour of alternative takes." The song which MacDonald is actually referring to is "Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin" which was the *original* A-side of the single until one week after its release Polydor switched the order around by making "Love Makes Sweet Music" the new A-side. In a recent interview with Kevin Ayers in *Record Collector* (June 1992) he answered the question whether Jimi had 'been at the session for the first single' with: "He was, but I don't think he was actually recorded. I remember him scratching around and I remember him liking the lyrics to "Feelin' Reeling' Squeelin". Going back to MacDonald's article, he states that "Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin" was recorded at De Lane Lea Music studio in London. However, according to the Soft Machine release *Triple Echo* the song was recorded at CBS Recording Studios, also in London. But during January 1967. As far as could be determined, the JHE recorded at CBS on 13 and 21 December 1966. If Jimi was 'down the corridor' it could only have been in December 1966 at CBS, but not as MacDonald claims doing "Hey Joe" (recorded 23 October 1966 at De Lane Lea or 'Stone Free' (recorded 2 November 1966, also at De Lane Lea). Unfortunately it's impossible to pin down where the Soft Machine recorded at any given period between late 1966 and early 1967 as they (just like the JHE) were booked into any studio that was available at any given time: Advision, De Lane Lea Music Ltd. and CBS. Also, to make things even more complicated, as late as 4 February 1967 the Soft Machine were doing a final overdub session for their first single at Olympic Sound Studios (just 13 days before its release!) - and who were in the same studio recording until 09.30 of that very same morning? Indeed, Jimi, Mitch and Noel... As "Feeling Reelin' Squeelin" was almost certainly recorded during several sessions spread out over several studios it's anybody's guess when the 'swap-over appearances' actually took place.

Robert Wyatt: I don't remember any of that really except that he did play some guitar... It [has been] suggested that that's how we met Jimi [but] we met him because we were already signed to that management and then they signed Hendrix shortly after we had been signed to them... and using the same rehearsal rooms. So that's how we met... and they would book us into the same studio...

UV: So it is in fact possible that Jimi did play on some stuff?

RW: Certainly if he is, it's an academic point, because if he is on it it's in a very sort of low key way. He might actually [be] backing up Kevin's rhythm [guitar], I don't know, or David's. I just can't remember, I remember that yeah he would come into the studio...

UV: So which studio was it, Advison, CBS, De Lane Lea?

RW: I don't remember...

Another claim about Jimi playing during or on a Soft Machine session comes from Kim Fowley, the producer of "Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin". He has stated that Jimi recorded his song "Fluffy Turkeys"(released on *The Incredible Kim Fowley* LP in the U.S.A. on the Original Sound label - year of release unknown) with a Soft Machine member. Years ago I decided to write to Kim Fowley but not really expecting a reply. Surprise! About nine months later he mailed me a postcard stating that Robert Wyatt was present at the 'Fluffy' session with Jimi.

Robert Wyatt: Thanks Kim! I don't remember that...

PART THREE - HUGH HOPPER INTERVIEW

by Caesar Glebbeek

Univibes:
Were you a roodmanager prior to the 1968 Hendrix/Soft Machine tour in the States?

Hugh Hopper: No, not really. Well, only in England with the Soft Machine... I was in school with Robert Wyatt and I was in a band here in Canterbury with Robert, which then split up into Soft Machine...

UV: Wilde Flowers?

HH: Yeah, the Wilde Flowers was originally the band yes, right. So that continued in Canterbury slightly different. And Robert left with Kevin [Ayers]. But they were actually doing music of mine anyway, songs of mine anyway which I had written, that we played as Wilde Flowers... and then about a year after they've been in London, I think, Robert asked me if I wanted to be a Soft Machine eh, roadie, because their roadie had left or wasn't happy or whatever [but] I was involved with them anyway, musically and as friends.

UV: What did you do during the 1968 tour?

HH: Hendrix had one roadie who was Neville Chesters. And Soft Machine had one roadie, which was me... I had to set Soft Machine's gear and also both of us loaded all the gear. To start, there was only one load of gear, there was only one lot of Fender amps...

UV: Only Fenders, no Marshalls?

HH: No. At the beginning of the tour Fender actually provided, I think, something like three or four amps. Which had to be used for both bands, which was not a good situation. And in fact Neville wasn't told [about] this 'til we were getting on the plane, that another band was using his gear as well.... It could have been disastrous. In fact it was fairly disastrous anyway because it wasn't the right gear for Hendrix. It was too clean and not enough orbit... Neville did most of the driving... he wouldn't let me drive because he was the chief roadie... He was a nice guy in some ways but he was also very kind of obsessed by some things... he was very conscientious. He really sort of cared... we always got to a gig late but I mean he cared whereas I didn't really care. I only [was] just doing it 'cause I was working for friend...

UV: So as soon as one gig was over you tore down the gear and hit the road again?

HH: We started off, first of all, flying the gear. But this was before the flightcase stage. So in fact a lot of the things got broken, amplifiers got smashed, so in the end it wasn't worth flying. So we had to drive. So it meant driving overnight to the next gig... but he [Neville] was very conscientious and it really hurt him if something went wrong. But we were always late, every gig. I think we never were on time at all. Because it was such long distances...

UV: Would you stay in the same hotel as the groups?

HH: Oh yeah. Sometimes. There was no real kind of separation... more times than not we were in the same hotel. But sometimes we had to stay en route somewhere else, like in a Holiday Inn, because it was easier for us to go on...

UV: Kevin Ayers once claimed that the only reason he thinks the Soft Machine was on the tour was because Jimi liked the Soft Machine.

HH: I don't know. The basic reason was because it was part of the same management... There was no way you would be on it. Because that tour consisted of about six bands... Hendrix and us, there was the Animals and Eire Apparent, Alan Price... I mean it was an Anim agency tour... Most of the time it was just Hendrix and Soft Machine going around. And there was the Animals and Eire Apparent going on another circuit. Sure, obvious if

Hendrix hadn't liked the band then there was no way he would have allowed it, or he would have made it heavy... Robert, and Noel and Mitch were quite matey...

UV: So what kind of problems did you have on the tour?

HH: It wasn't technically very difficult. It was just very hard long hours... and also during the tour more and more equipment got added. I mean, we started with very little equipment. Not enough. We ended up with about three times that. And various people would actually give us equipment on the way... By the end of the tour it meant that we had a truck full of stuf whereas before we had sort of a small truck half empty... There were times when I'd been actually loading this gear that I had taken out of the truck only a couple of hours before, loading in at 1 o'clock in the morning in this strange place, in the middle of nowhere in America, you know, to go somewhere else. Some nights we checked into the hotel maybe for on hour just to get a shower... So I was really starting to get disorientated and feeling strange...

UV: What did you get paid? Per week?

HH: Yeah, and it was not very much. I started off on 100 dollars a week. There weren't many expenses.... and Neville was very generous. He liked to pay for my hamburgers! It was part of his thing, you know... We were always complaining 'cause it was so hard, so difficult to get actually to the gig and set it up... the two of us... so eventually the management put it up to 150 dollars a week...

UV: Who would get things together if Chas Chandler wasn't there?

HH: Gerry Stickells. He was really the guy. Gerry was actually the guy that kept that tour together... in fact if it hadn't been for him, well... that could easily have been a real disaster for the tour. As it was, it was kind of limping along the whole thing. Because it was very thrown together. And we started off with a few gigs and most of them were changed. But then more and more [were] added as Hendrix became more and more known... but I always thought, compared with today when you have a roadcrew, thirty at least, three trucks, lighting. I mean it's a joke, two people! One person for Hendrix, one person for Soft Machine...

UV: Wasn't Roger Mayer around?

HH: Yeah, weIl, yes and no. He was supposed to be the electronic wizard, so he showed up at a couple of big gigs and then cleared off and didn't do a thing [apart from] having a good time... he didn't do anything. He just came over on the strength of having built Hendrix's Octavia...

UV: But didn't he do repairs to gear?

HH: No, no...

UV: Who took care of that then?

HH: Well in fact, nothing much really went wrong with the gear. Except that things would be completely smashed in an airplane, so that was gone...so, no, in fact a lot of things kept going and finally Hendrix sent for Sound City and Marshall amps from London, his favourite ones and ended up with all the odd gear anyway...

UV: Did they take off the Sunn gear at that moment?

HH: I think Soft Machine got that eventually if I remember... well everyone was using the Fender, right. And then Jimi got Sunn gear and I think he got a Marshall amp and Soft Machine had the Fender gear and so that should make things a lot better...

UV: Remember anything about the press conference in New York, 30 January 1968?

HH: There was a guy, who was this publicist [Michael Goldstein]... He was great, he was like the typical New York, Jewish PR guy... with this little revolving badge or something lighting up. Completely in the park... It was like the usual stories, like The British Are Coming, or they trot out every year...

UV: Were there other people helping out during the tour?

HH: Occasionally in a big theatre there would be a sound person or a lighting officer... It

was nothing like today...

UV: Columbus, 3 March...

HH: One of Hendrix's guitars got stolen. I think it was in Columbus because we got there really late. I mean really, really late and we needed some help to carry the gear in, so one guy picked up... everybody was sort of taking stuff in... and some guy walked away with it... I think Fender gave him about three or four during that tour...

UV: Any after-gig jam sessions you went to?

HH: I remember the Shrine, in L.A. [10 February]. Before the gig we had the sound check and various people kept turning up, Dave Crosby and Micky Dolenz and all these people. There was a jam with Buddy Miles on drums... Electric Flag. 'Cause I remember they were actually on stage, they actually had a little American flag in a spotlight... I seem to remember he had a blow with Hendrix in the afternoon. L.A. was like that... we would put an amplifier down and someone would plug in immediately...

UV: Texas gigs...

HH: There was a guy who did the Texas gigs called Bob Cope, the promoter. And he was really on the ball... he was like an old-time promoter... he was a real Texas guy and he was really in charge of everything. Like if anything went wrong, that guy was fired... and very nice to the musicians... When we first met Bob Cope's crew, they met us at the airport... we picked up the gear from the airport and we came to unload at the theatre and there was this sack... it had Bank Of Texas on it... [us thinking] like a billion of dollars in the sack. And the American said, "don't dare open it", so we went back to the airport... We suddenly realised that Mike Ratledge's organ wasn't in the van... this had been loaded, the sack, instead of the organ, which was left in the airport. In fact all it was were returned checks!

UV: Smashing Up Time...

HH: It was usually very controlled anyway, it was all part of the last number. And Gerry Stickells was at the back holding the amp. There were times when Hendrix was pissed off in the middle of the tour, he wasn't happy, you know, because the sound wasn't very good...



> Zoom

UV: Chicago, 25 February, afternoon gig...

HH: There was a slope down into the theatre in Chicago, [Neville had] forgotten that he had already opened the back of the truck...

UV: So all the gear went out?

HH: The only thing that was smashed was a suitcase of mine... it was just like one of those sort of comic film moments, rumble, rumble, rumble, imagine all this priceless gear...

UV: Madison, 27 February 1968...

HH: The sound was fantastic. It was a fairly small place and a shitty little club, terrible, no room for gear but in fact it was a great sound...

UV: Mark Boyle...

HH: Mark Boyle was very pro Mike Jeffery. Because Mike Jeffery supported him a lot... you never heard a word against Mike Jeffery. He thought he was a great guy...

UV: Teamsters in Cleveland, 26 March...

HH: Neville and I got to the theatre and they asked us if we were members of the Teamsters, which was the drivers Union... we just sat in the truck while they were sorting it out... first thing they didn't want [to have] anything to do with the band at all...

eventually something was sorted out and we had to tell them exactIy where to put things. We weren't allowed to lift anything which is really annoying, it takes you twice as long to tell someone where to put it...

UV: Chicago, 29 March...

HH: That's the only one which Hendrix didn't play... he was picking up radio on aIl the amps and I think it's because there was actually kind of a steel building...

UV: Soft Machine did play, though.

HH: We did play, yeah, that's right... it was just the radio and buzzing. I think that was the only one that was actually cancelled on the tour...

UV: Yeah, apart from being a bit late.

HH: Not a bit late, a lot late!

UV: Newark, 5 April...

HH: I was loading at the back of the theatre and every thing had gone in except one microphone standard and I just went out to get it and the door was shut and locked, you know, I couldn't get in, so I had to walk around several blocks to get to the front of the theatre holding this mike stand which could have looked like a gun or something. That was the only time I really felt, you know, I could actually be shot at this moment. The second show was cancelled...I just felt, you know, such a strange feeling... feeling very uncomfortable, just wanted to get it out of the way as quickly as possible... In fact there weren't any problems, it was just very, very quiet, almost kind of stunned...

UV: End of tour - 1st leg...

HH: That's when Soft Machine were recording here [New York]... Neville split there in fact. We parked the van with all the stuff in and we parked it outside our hotel and then Neville split...it was just sitting outside and it finally got towed away. I had to go and get it from a very spooky place somewhere out in New York by the cemetery, and most of the stuff was still in it... There was a picture of Hendrix somebody had given us on the road when he painted a picture of him and the radio was gone but all the gear was safe in the back. I remember I had to contact U-haul, the people who owned the van and this very nervous guy came to the hotel in New York 'cause a great deal of money was owed because we took the van over three months before and it was supposed to be for a couple of weeks but in fact because of the tour we kept driving around. So anyway, several thousand pounds or dollars was owed... he thought first of all I was not gonna pay him or secondly that I was gonna attack him, or whatever, I had the cash there... that made him even more nervous...

UV: Would Jimi pop in during the Soft Machine recordings?

HH: [When] he was [also] recording, I think they did. I think they all popped in from time to time... because it was all part of family anyway...

UV: Would you see much of Jimi besides at the concerts?

HH: As much as I saw Hendrix, Hendrix wasn't out to partying... because on the road it usually was hotel, hotel, hotel, so during the day Hendrix wouldn't get up until Gerry Stickells woke him up. Neville used to say that on the first tour [1967] he [Jimi] was known as the bat, 'cause he was always in his dark room and had his clothes on. I wouldn't really see Hendrix until half an hour before he was due to go on, you know. Gerry Stickells was the guy who's had the problem of waking them all up... I don't know how he did it... he was certainly the guy who held that tour together...

UV: How much drugs were there around?

HH: Everybody was smoking obviously, that was normal. I think things like speed, acid. I think that's as much as there was. I certainly don't think there was any heroin... I could not even remember if I ever saw Hendrix smoking but I'm sure he must have done, everybody did... I remember Mitch always seemed to be awake during the night and asleep during the day and he always said he was an downers during the day and uppers during the night, which I don't know if it's true... in fact the best time we saw Noel play was when he had obviously drunk a bit more than usual but was not incapable and he



> Zoom

played like a dream and he was sort of fluid and all that... There wasn't any kind of crazy, sort of 'over the top' things. Certainly not before a concert...

UV: Do you recall seeing Jimi ever writing down Iyrics during the travelling?

HH: The few times I actually travelled with him and flying he'd be kind of distantly, sort of obviously thinking about things like that... Once going up the steps to a plane, there used to be an airline called Braniff from Texas and all their planes were [in] different colours, really bright colours, red, orange, yellow, green. And he was actually standing next to me sort of saying, "Wowl The colours!"... always feeling, sort of digging things... he was really kind of a quiet guy actually in public in most occasions. He was very kind of within himself and digging things from a distance... He was never kind of raving party-goer like Noel and Mitch... Noel always seemed to be like a kid. He liked jokes and he liked sort of practical jokes and playing tricks on you... but Mitch is a sharp guy, he is really kind of intelligent and witty and sharp, sardonic, so I can see that Noel would actually get on his [Jimi's] nerves... I remember one gig [Fort Worth, 17 February] where after the gig Neville and I were packing up the gear and Noel came out to talk to Neville, 'cause he was quite friendly with Neville, in tears, because Hendrix hadn't liked the gig and Noel had gone into the dressingroom to say something and Hendrix said sort of, "I don't wanna speak to any fucker tonight" and it may have been because of Noel or maybe just his general feeling but Noel took it really as a personal thing and he came out and he was actually in tears... I remember a period in the middle of the tour when Hendrix was really pissed off a lot of the time, just with sound problems, I mean it was difficult music. It would be easier now but then it was just like big amps behind and then a microphone and that was it. It wasn't easy to produce. Hendrix was having problems probably getting across and I don't how much of that was because he wasn't happy with the music, he seemed to be happy enough playing most of the time...

UV: How would Gerry Stickells deal with Hendrix babies during the tour?

HH: He would probably just refer it to the lawyers... there must have been a lot of Hendrix babies around but I am sure there are quite a few phantoms as weIl...

UV: There were also bills for damaging theatre equipment?

HH: Yeah, I remember the one period when Hendrix was pissed off and at the end he did "Wild Thing" - the last number. At the end he didn't do the business with the guitar on the amplifier, what he did [instead] was get the head of the guitar and ride along the footlights at the bottom of the stage and popped them all. It was really impressive. It looked good but the theatre did not like it at all...

UV: Do you remember where this was?

HH: It could have been something like Wisconsin, it was a smallish town and I remember the guys, sort of stagehands, all sort of straight stagehands sort of shaking their heads... the audience loved it, but I mean it wasn't planned I think...

UV: Would Jimi ever make comments like 'weIl done' after a show?

HH: Not to me... I only remember Hendrix saying very few things to me. I mean it was things like, "hey, hey, where's my guitar?" because often he wouldn't have a guitar with him, he'd just arrived from the hotel, 'hey, where's my guitar?"...

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Tough Guys Don't Dance - Bill Nelson meets Robert Wyatt - originally appeared in the August, 1992 edition of Musician magazine (US)

TOUGH GUY'S DON'T DANCE
BILL NELSON MEETS ROBERT WYATT

An extraordinary dialogue between two kings of the underground. Nelson and Wyatt have each spent decades producing music of depth and personal vision for a small, devoted audience. Each continues to face enormous hardship in trying to get his music out. You think you know tough guys? Meet the real thing.

Bill Nelson meets Robert Wyatt. For 20 years they've bucked the system and have been making music at the edge of rock. Two vets discuss the never-ending battle.

The first time Bill Nelson met Robert Wyatt, in 1974, Wyatt asked for his autograph. Nelson, the Yorkshire-born singer/songwriter/guitarist, was just starting as a professional. He'd released a limited-edition solo album called Northern Dream and formed a band, Be-Bop Deluxe. The solo album caught the ear of legendary BBC DJ John Peel, who played it on his influential Radio One show. Peel must have been impressed because he invited Nelson to his wedding. Among the celebrities in attendance was Wyatt, who'd established himself as a drummer, vocalist and writer for the Soft Machine and Matching Mole before falling from a third-story window and permanently paralyzing his legs. Nelson admired Wyatt's work, but couldn't get up the nerve to start a conversation. Wyatt had heard Northern Dream and liked it. He wheeled his chair over to Nelson and asked, "Could I have your autograph?" Nelson said, "Only if I can have yours."

The second time Bill Nelson met Robert Wyatt was for this interview, nearly 18 years later. "You haven't changed at all," Wyatt said cheerfully to Nelson. Maybe he hadn't, but much had happened to both of them. Be-Bop Deluxe recorded six albums, getting a British Top 5 hit with "Ships in the Night" and achieving moderate cult status in the U.S. In '78 Nelson formed Red Noise, which made one brilliant album that went nowhere. After that, he began a solo career (literally solo - most of his post '79 music has been recorded at home without collaborators). On the one hand, he produced a series of instrumental records on his own Cocteau label that could almost be called "ambient music" if they weren't so sophisticated. On the other, he made left-of-center pop gems like The Love That Whirls (1982), Vistamix ('84), Getting the Holy Ghost Across ('86) and last year's Luminous, filled with great radio songs that somehow never made it to the airwaves.

Meanwhile, Wyatt recorded two discs for Virgin in the mid-'70s and then dropped out of music for several years. He resurfaced in 1981 with a stunning series of singles that were later compiled on Nothing Can Stop Us. His music, like Nelson's mostly recorded solo, was more stark and somber than before, his lyrics more political. One thing hadn't changed, though: his heartbreakingly tender singing. For the first half of the '80s Wyatt was relatively prolific; then, after '85s Old Rottenhat, he vanished again, emerging after six years with Dondestan, perhaps his best album.

This interview took place over two days in March at Wyatt's cozy 19th-century house in the Lincolnshire town of Louth, a charming village of narrow, winding streets, antique buildings and crooked alleyways isolated by miles of flat green fields and marshland. There's no railway station, and the nearest noteworthy town's about 30 miles away. To most of Louth's inhabitants, Robert Wyatt is simply the guy in the wheelchair, who moves around faster than some cars. Almost nobody here knows about the 30 years he's put into

music, and he likes it that way.

At the time of the interview, neither Nelson nor Wyatt had much reason to be cheerful. Nelson was in the middle of a lawsuit with his former business manager who, Nelson says, is illegally claiming full rights to the Cocteau catalog. He says Virgin has agreed to release three new Nelson albums provided they get the back catalog too. So until the ex-manager lets go of it, Nelson says, there's no deal. What with mounting costs and the lack of cash coming in, he may lose his house, his car, his studio - in short, everything he owns.

Although Wyatt's living in comfort for the first time in years (thanks to friends of his wife Alfie, who gave them the money to buy the house in Louth), his future is also uncertain. Rough Trade, the label he's been signed to since 1981, has gone bankrupt. Though Gramavision is licensed to distribute his records in the U.S., he is essentially, like Nelson, a man without a contract. And like Nelson, he's seen no money for some time.

For decades Wyatt and Nelson have struggled on the perimeter of pop, often with little reward save the devotion of a select group of listeners. They simply love what they do. They are, as Nelson put it, representatives of "two complementary aspects of the human condition - the inward-looking, spiritual side (Nelson) and the outward-looking, political side (Wyatt) that's concerned with how that spirit deals with the rest of the world." And, as Musician quickly learned, they are talkers of a very high order. When the articulate, soft-spoken Nelson and the earthy, wisecracking Wyatt sit across the table from each other drinking wine, laughing, and talking about music in the company of Wyatt's comfortable old mongrel, Flossie - you can't help wishing the conversation won't stop.

MUSICIAN: It seems there's a small group of English musicians who spend most of their time staying home and making records, including both relatively famous people-Peter Gabriella, XTC-and some lesser-known ones-The Bevis Frond, Peter Hammill And then there's you two. Do you see yourselves as part of this - if you can stomach the apparent contradiction-group of individualists?



> Zoom

NELSON: Sometimes I wonder whether all these people had train sets when they were kids. I know Andy [Partridge, of XTC] and I know Peter, and there's something of that in me as well. It's the boy in his loft with his gear. Life passes him by. He's living inside his head all the time. It's an obsessive thing, and you tend not to have time for other people. It's a sad, sick reflection on what we've become. [laughter] I'm terrible sometimes, I don't want to know that there's a world outside that door.

WYATT: Not all of the arts are intrinsically performing arts. Composers, painters, novelists, poets are solitary workers. That's what the job requires. You have to get into a state of mind which too much human traffic can destroy. To use a crummy metaphor, you're working in a pond and it has to be still; otherwise you'll never see to the bottom. In music this may seem odd, because people think of music as something that's performed. But compare it with painting, and you see an analogy that's very obvious.

A lot of English pop music of the '60s came more out of the art college tradition than the conservatory tradition. John Lennon, Pete Townshend, Brian Eno, Ian Dury, were all art students. In the '50s, it was one of the only places where kids could go who didn't have qualifications, who weren't articulate or impressive in academic fields. They could suddenly feel welcome, allowed to do their own thing. They could become kings of their imagination, instead of failures in some system they couldn't understand. I was only in one for three months, but it has to be acknowledged as an English thing.

NELSON: I'm from a working-class family, and I wasn't happy at school but I always liked painting. When I got to art college, it was like going to heaven; everything that made me an outcast before made me acceptable there.

WYATT: I don't think this maverick thing you're talking about comes out of the music colleges. These mad breakthroughs that have taken place from John Lennon onwards,

totally unpredictable things that set off a chain reaction, that has to be attributed to the anarchism of art colleges. By that I mean the lack of hierarchy, the governmentlessness, the feeling that you could be anything you wanted to be.

NELSON: When I was at art college, I used to pick up the International Times to find out what was happening in London. I read about Robert's band, and I'd think, "This sounds wild!' And without being able to go down there and see for ourselves, we made up our own version of what we thought was happening. We did concerts with light shows and the whole thing. Nobody knew what was going on-'Where the hell's this coming from?"-because it was only three of us reading the International Times who knew what was happening anywhere south of Barnsley.

WYATT: That's fantastic.

MUSICIAN: Robert, how did you become apart of that underground London scene in the mid-60s that Bill thought was so wild?

WYATT: I'm afraid I may have to dodge that question, because ... well, people think I must have problems talking about my accident. But I don't; what I have problems talking about is what happened before the accident. Rock Bottom [1974] and beyond, that I see as me. But my adolescent self, the drummer biped, I don't remember him and I don't understand him. I have a hard time dealing with the way I was before; it's almost as if the fall affected my mind. I see the accident now as being a sort of neat division line between my adolescence and the rest of my life.

This was how the accident went: in order, wine, whisky, Southern Comfort, then the window. The doctor was amazed. He said, "You had to have been really drunk to fall in such a relaxed way.' If I'd been any more sober, I probably wouldn't be here today; Id have tightened up with fear shattered. It's been a long time now and it's been hard, but at least the top part of me works, though I'm never quite sure about what's going on in here[points to his head]. I do know exactly what I can and can't do, and that makes it easier.

MUSICIAN: Which players inspired both of you?

NELSON: When I first started out, I played in groups that did everything- country & western, jazz, blues, rock'n'roll, psychedelic. At one time I just wanted to get all the technique together. I had a turntable that went down to 16 so I could slow it down: "Ah, that's how it's done." First it was Duane Eddy, Hank Marvin and the Ventures, the twang. Then Beck and Clapton, and Townshend, more for his attitude than anything else. That little flourish in his chord playing, which is a sort of Wagnerian thing - every guitar player's got that in his book of tricks now, but Townshend was the guy who did it. And if you want to hear the entire catalog of what a guitar can sound like, you have to listen to Electric Ladyland. Nobody yet has gone much further than Hendrix.

WYATT: Music was my way of escaping from school. Mostly jazz; old as I am, I'm more old-fashioned than I need have been. I did have a romantic association with pop records of the time-Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran-but that had to do with where the girls were. Whereas Jazz was my comfort when I was struggling with homework that I couldn't make head or tail of. Miles Davis' voice, getting lost inside a Mingus arrangement, being carried along by the band, chucked from one soloist to another - that saved my soul as a schoolboy.

Then Coltrane and Miles Davis encouraged me to listen to Indian music. At that time more musicians were coming from the Indian subcontinent to England, so Indian music was around. And the fringes of Europe generally, where European harmonies meet something else, that's interesting to me. Not for some ulterior motive, I'm just an aural tourist.

MUSICIAN: Both of you have definite Eastern influences in your music.

NELSON: It's weird. The first time I worked with Yukihiro Takahashi it was for an instrumental piece. He had a half-completed track and no ideas for melody lines. So I put some things down using the E-Bow. And he said, "God, you sound more Japanese than I do.' [laughter]

WYATT: It's just a question of using scales which tend to be identified as Oriental or non-European. But often you'll find they're discarded versions of Greek modes, perhaps from someplace like Macedonia. You hear it in Bulgarian folk music to this day, which is probably closer to ancient Greek music than we realize. I've always liked scales that had

an ambiguity about whether they were major or minor. What I like about flamenco is they use gypsy scales, where the second note is only a half-step up; both our major and minor scales go up a whole tone on the second note. That half-step's a North African thing, because a lot of Egyptian scales are like that.

MUSICIAN: How important was John Peel for your musical generation?

WYATT: I think you'd hardly recognize English rock without him.

NELSON: After I first heard Peel, I started buying American imports, because you could only hear them on his show. And that influenced the way I played. Then he picked up on my things and played them, so it's almost like showing me what was possible and then giving me space to do it myself.

WYATT: By the way, the bloke who put out The Peel Sessions in the States made a fortune. None of us got much of a look-in on that. It's depressing that the memory of the Peel days is spoiled by people who think, 'Oh, these lot are a bit innocent, they're looking the other way, we can clean up."

NELSON: You know Imaginary Records, that put out Luminous? They asked, "Why don't we get the Peel sessions that you did with Be-Bop Deluxe? Would you mind?" I said no, there's some good stuff there; in fact, some songs we did for those sessions never got recorded. There'd been no plan to release the Be-Bop Deluxe Peel sessions. But as soon as these people found out that Imaginary were thinking of doing it, "Ah well, we might wind up putting them out." It's still not resolved.

WYATT: Columbia has a load of stuff I was involved in, both in Soft Machine and Matching Mole. It comes out here and there, on Japanese imports or whatever. But if any of the musicians phone them up to get a handle on anything, they say, 'Sorry, he's out of the office,' 'Oh, you want the legal department," 'He's not here....' They treat musicians like crap, unless, I suppose, you're Wynton Marsalis. And it's a shame, because I know people who want to put that stuff out but CBS won't put it out. So I'm getting publicity for stuff that nobody can buy.

NELSON: All you need is one Top Ten mainstream-play record and that stuff would just roll out. It's waiting for that moment.

WYATT: That's right, and whether you earn a living in the meantime is not a major concern.

NELSON: I've had a lot of pressure from people on the business side. Normally I'd ignore that, but sometimes it looked like by the end of the week we wouldn't have a roof over our head. Then you start thinking, 'Maybe I could compromise...." You always regret it. A few people make a career from music and are utterly uncompromising. They don't give a shit what anybody thinks, they just do what they do. I admire that. It's the only way.

WYATT: Some people can't do that. For kids from tough backgrounds, the only way out is to "make it." The only other choice is the dole or a boring job in the local factory, and they want to make something more of things. So they go for success. The people at Motown said, "We want a classy black record label," and they groomed it to be an imaginary mainstream America. It was a bit utopia but I find no fault with that, because what were the alternatives?

NELSON: And they actually produced decent music.

WYATT: Wonderful stuff. Marvin Gaye knocks me out to this day. You know, politically speaking, black America has been a failure - but often to what's come out of it! All this music that's been my sustenance and made life worth living. Never underestimate the power of failure.

NELSON: I played a long time before I ever thought of making a career from it. One of the spurs in the early days to practice a bit harder was what happened the first time I gave a public concert at school: Suddenly girls would talk to me. I mean, sex had a lot to do with it.

WYATT: Oh yes! He's got a point there...'Sex had a lot to do with it.' That's gotta be my epitaph. [laughter] Especially since I couldn't dance... I mean, how do you meet them? Let's see, a drummer gets to meet them... right. Lester Young started out as a drummer, and he figured that the saxophonists got the nicest girls because they wouldn't wait for the

drummer to dismantle his kit. [laughter] So he changed to saxophone, and became one of the most important players in the history of the instrument.



NELSON: I've worked with young bands in the studio, and you discover people's motives quickly. For a while now there's been a push for music to be a career move, which I think is dangerous. That's forced upon us by the economic climate we live in; there's desperation in this country. Not only do people not have money, but they lose self-esteem. And the myth that pop music creates is so glamorous to younger people. This can show they've achieved. But when they've got into it, they find out it's all a front and they're still stuck with nothing at the end of the day. WYATT: They're calculating career moves, and that's okay, but it can be the wrong place to take your talent ... that week. Talent is a tough taskmaster, first of all, you never know whether you've really got any. But you have to follow it, you can't afford not to. It tells you what it needs. And if you have another master, you're just thinning it out.

MUSICIAN: You would say that the audience is second, and when you're working, you do it primarily for yourself

NELSON: It's a totally selfish experience, creating - it has to be. It's one of the few things where you have to deal entirely with yourself, with your own experience and limitations. But despite that, it still will connect. I think the more true you are to yourself, the more chance it has of connecting with other people, because there are common threads under the surface.

MUSICIAN: What are your views now on the progressive scene of the '70s that you were both, to some extent, apart of?

NELSON: The '70s I spent mostly on tour. I was so wrapped up in what the band was doing that I didn't notice anybody else; I was dismissive of other people. I don't see anything important about what I did then-still [laughs] although EMI re-released the records and people still liked them. But I can only listen to them and hear a young guy struggling with ideas.

I went through a period of buying music that was difficult to play and difficult to listen to. The idea was, if you even pretend you can listen to this, you must be pretty bright. It's like watching people with muscles flex them. They're all oiled up and you can see there's years of work gone into this. But a lot of those people who had all those muscles never actually went out and hit anybody. They didn't do anything except pose around. And the older you get, you see that truth doesn't reside in incredible shows of technique. I used to do 20-minute guitar solos, but I don't anymore; some might call that a retrogression. But I think, why waste your energy?

WYATT: As a drummer, I tried to play things people needed, but at the same time I had my own ideas, and I didn't know anybody except me who was interested in them. [In Soft Machine] they wanted a drummer who could play in any time signature for very long solos. They didn't want a drummer who kept showing alarming tendencies toward turning into something else.

I'd already done what amounted to a solo record, which was 'Moon in June' [on the Soft Machine's Third album]. I'm not credited with it, but I played it nearly all myself; I got the others in just to do a sequence towards the end. They didn't want to play it and I was embarrassed to ask them. I don't think they liked me having ideas, but I don't know-, we didn't talk to each other much. I thought, "If I weren't in a band, I could do more." But obviously, if I wanted to work as a live musician, I had to be in a group. So I wasn't released to concentrate on what was growing in my head, funnily enough, until I found myself in the wheelchair. Then I couldn't live a group life anymore, so I had to take control. And everything got simpler.

MUSICIAN: Didn't you do some live performing after the accident?

WYATT: I did two or three gigs, and the practical side was very difficult; I was nearly fainting with exhaustion onstage. I suppose vanity prevents me from wanting everybody to know that I'm incontinent, but I am, and that's a big problem when you're on a stage somewhere. It's too embarrassing. If I go anywhere or do anything, it has to be carefully worked out.

MUSICIAN: What are your feelings now on the punk revolution of 76-77? It really seemed to change your music, Bill - Red Noise sounded so different from Be-Bop Deluxe.

NELSON: I was listening more to electronic music, and people like the Residents; I'd always liked Terry Riley, Karlheinz Stockhausen. I was using a synthesizer guitar instead of an ordinary guitar, and putting the snare drum through fuzz boxes, making drum loops, manipulating tape. Those were the concerns and not so much the punk thing. The good thing about what happened then-briefly, before the industry grabbed hold of it and strangled it to death-was that it opened up possibilities for people to have a platform to say something. I didn't think the music was all that wonderful, because it sounded incredibly old-fashioned. Apart from John Lydon's voice, I thought the Sex Pistols sounded so dated. Amateur Chuck Berry, full-stop. But John Lydon's voice was very interesting. And I still like Public Image, I'm a big fan. I was listening to a lot of American bands of that period, more than English ones. I liked Television and Talking Heads.

WYATT: What was I listening to then? Calypso and Nat King Cole. [laughter] And shortwave, getting the Latvian version of events. If I heard music that I liked, it was usually Radio Sofia, Bulgaria. But it's the age-old thing, the young bullets coming up. I thought they were sweet little things; Johnny Rotten makes me laugh every time I hear him. And I tend to like things when they're in a state of terminal collapse.

I was taken by [Rough Trade's] Geoff Travis to meet some people, and I thought, 'Do they allow people over 21 in here?" 'Cause I always think of rock 'n' roll as being the land of age apartheid. But people were friendly, they came up and said hello. And I felt at home with them, except I suddenly realized that they were saying hello like I used to say hello to an uncle. They weren't saying hello to a contemporary, and that's a very funny feeling, because I'd never grown up inside.

NELSON: The industry is so youth-oriented. That ageist thing is as bad as any divide between the sexes.

WYATT: And you really feel you're just getting there now. That's accepted in painting, in classical composing. If we were politicians, we'd be considered still in nappies. It's a cruel irony, in a way, that just as we reach adulthood, we no longer belong to anything we can participate in.

MUSICIAN: What prompted you to get back into music, Robert?

WYATT: Alfie saying, 'We're running out of money and you can earn it quicker than I can." And Geoff Travis saying, "If you want to record for us, you can." I fell into it. I might have drifted away altogether, except that I think Alfie worried that whatever I was drifting into didn't constitute earning a living. She also felt I was fraudulent, because on the marriage contract she married a musician. You can't marry someone and then they turn into something else, that's cheating. [laughter] So she and Geoff got me out of it. But if I didn't have to earn a living, I'd be quite happy to disappear completely. I'm not in the music world half the time anyway, I'm somewhere else. There's a dog to be fed - this is serious stuff, you know [laughter]. And when I listen for stimulus, it tends to be music which I have no part in. I'll recreate Harlem 1940 in my front room, because it's untouchable and I can build up a fantasy about that that isn't brought down to earth by any real experience. I tend not to hear what my contemporaries are doing, especially other songwriters. I'm almost nervous of it in a way. Since I stay home a lot, I like music that's comfortable. If you're in the city rushing about, you might very well want to hear music that's like a train driving through your skull. But I don't listen to stuff like that so much. Also, since I haven't been able to see the world, particular emphasis has been on vicarious travel.

I've worked with musicians who are really prolific; I wish I was like that. [Elvis] Costello writes a lot of songs, they pour out all the time, and I was impressed that he was so certain. I think Bill's more like that. I get disheartened, and I spend a lot of time thinking I just can't do it. Nobody's that noble-if you're trying to do something and can't get it how you want it, you go fry an egg. 'Cause I can do that, I know it's going to work. [laughter] Even out of the amount I do, not a lot gets out.

MUSICIAN: That's very different from Bill.

NELSON: But don't forget, I've had the luxury of having my own studio and label. It's like self-publishing; you can foist it on people and they've got no say in it whatsoever: "You will see this exists." If I hadn't had that outlet, it would have been different.

WYATT: Peter Cook, the English comedian, once said his motto was "If at first you don't succeed, give up." Unfortunately, he's had an enormous influence on me. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: Do you miss working with others?

NELSON: There was a time when I struck out just to see what happens when you play everything rather badly and only one thing slightly well. [chuckles] At the moment, I'd crave to have musicians around me to take a skeleton of a song and say, "Okay, you can go down the pub for half an hour, we'll make it sound good." But that's an impossibility at the moment.

WYATT: I don't understand machinery well enough to do the finished object myself, only enough to get the ideas down. My room's just a sketchbook, not a painting; I need people with know-how. The real problem is there just isn't the money. Usually when you're making a record, a record company puts up money upfront. Well, our record company has no money. They can't pay me, how can they pay someone else? That's the inhibiting thing at the moment. It's not an abstract thing of 'what would you like to do,' it's 'what can you do.' And I've ended up just doing what I can. But there's a kind of pride in that. I made the great discovery, influenced by Stevie Wonder, that you can play your own basslines. I thought it wouldn't sound right, but his are so organic. And by covering everything himself, he was compensating for disabilities in real life. There may be an element of that in me as well. I like to hear that rhythm section, that bass player, that drummer.....that's me. Even if somebody else could do it better, it's still a nice feeling. And at least they're playing within your range of technique. They know the tune. [laughter]

NELSON: For me, it's also a way of seeing yourself in a clearer light, because you see everything undiluted.

WYATT: That's very true. Undiluted is a good word.

NELSON: And it might not be brilliant, and it might not be what you'd like to achieve, but it's honest and it's a real mirror. Which is why sometimes it's uncomfortable to listen. I hear everything that's wrong with it and nothing that's right. Then you get on with the next one and say, 'This one'll be okay." But it isn't. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: Yet you make such a point of declaring the imperfections in your work - the broken tape machines and so forth - that you seem to have a certain pride about them too.

NELSON: It's a romantic thing. I've put on the back of my record sleeves that only 14 of the 16 tracks work and the speaker distorts. It's a charming thing to write about, but sometimes it's a bitch to deal with.

MUSICIAN: Robert, have you ever put out anything recorded completely at home, as Bill does?

WYATT: A couple of things. In the early '80s Dave Macrae, who was the keyboardist in Matching Mole, helped me out on a couple of old jazz standards, "Round Midnight" and "Memories of You." I wanted somebody who had enough of a jazz education to play the chords right, but at the same time could drain out everything. I just wanted the skeleton of the tune, but having revealed it, I wanted the bones in the right place.

MUSICIAN: Trying to get to the skeleton of the tune seems to sum up your general approach to music.

WYATT: I've been looking for the essence of what it is I like about a piece. Is it just that one bit where the harmony changes or that one note or the way that beat falls ... it's a process of tracing it and thinking, 'Well, if I'm right, it should stand without any covering." if it collapses under exposure, then it isn't right and I've exposed a fault.

I'm scared of doing what happens a lot in music, which is getting too intoxicated by the beauty of the sound you're creating or the energy you're putting out to actually hear inside

it. The skeleton of the music can be a very rickety and inadequate thing that pulls apart once the excitement's over. That's one of the reasons I'm scared of expensive synthesizers, because you can just sit on 'em and sound great. I've got a feeling that's more or less how some records are made. [laughter]

NELSON: I wouldn't in real company admit to actually being a musician. I'm more of a person who tries, using music as much as I can get my hands on-which often is not very much [laughter]-to express something for myself, about myself, my relationships, whatever. So often my preoccupations when I'm writing aren't musical ones at all.

I'm not a great technician. I've had a reputation in some quarters for being a perfectionist, and I'm not. I'm a lazy sod when it comes to it; I want to get there the quickest route possible. If I had more confidence in myself as a musician, I'd be more thorough, and a lot of what I do isn't. It's not so much that it's slipshod, but I have to let things stand because they came out spontaneously and they're an honest reflection of what I was doing at that moment. Since I often don't know whether it's going to be heard by anybody else, it doesn't matter whether it's perfect or flawed, as long as it's true. So I'm not always pursuing music, it's something else, but I'm not sure how to explain what that something else is.

WYATT: We have a lot of difficulty in this context talking about what we do. When you read about what musicians or artists do, you're not reading about what I sit down and think about when I go to work. If I'm full of too many ideas and theories, it just blocks every route to getting there. It has to be a physical, instinctive thing, just you and the instrument and the sound you're making. All this analysis is retrospective.

Say you sat down and talked with your girlfriend about exactly why you were about to go to bed, it could kind of. - -spoil it. And I think a lot of important activity can be talked out. It's pretentious to use words like 'sacred'; all I mean is that the whole point about music is it isn't accessible to logical analysis. And I don't think those of us who make it know quite what we're doing. Professionalism just consists of knowing which trigger mechanisms are most likely to work. We turn on the tap, and what comes out, that comes from somewhere else. Art Blakey said that music comes from the Creator through the musician to the audience in one split-second. I understand what he meant, though he used the word 'Creator.' But I know Americans are very religious people, I've read about it in the papers. [laughter]

NELSON: I think you'll find that people who are committed to music-and, despite Robert saying he doesn't do it all the time, there's obviously a life commitment there - everyone I've met with that commitment is very cagey about going into too much detail about what the actual creative process is. But if they've had a drink or two, or they know somebody well, you'll always get this reference to it coming through from somewhere else. There's a kind of religious feeling, an awe about it. You know that it's something you can't trivialize or muck about with because it's so fragile. There are so many explanations for where it's coming from, the unconscious or wherever, but whatever it is, it's intangible. So you don't feel comfortable talking about it in front of just anybody.

WYATT: There's actually a hint of apology. We're saying not that we're at the source of creative power, but precisely the opposite, that we're simply tools in the hand of forces that we cannot presume to understand. Even the best gardener couldn't make a single flower. He can only understand how to nurture the process.

MUSICIAN: Do you believe there is a musical mainstream and consciously see yourself as outside it?

WYATT: Stan Kenton was once asked, 'Where is jazz going?" and he said, 'Well, we're going to Cleveland on Tuesday.' [laughter] I've always considered myself absolutely normal. Not only am I in the mainstream, I'm possibly the only mainstream there is. I write absolutely normal tunes, I make absolutely normal records, and it sounds totally sensible to me. People who are deliberately eccentric must be insane; I have enough trouble just trying to be normal. [laughs]

NELSON: It's always a shock when you offer something you've done to someone to listen to and say, 'This is really commercial," and they go, 'This is weird. Where's your head?" And you say, 'No, honestly...'

WYATT: That happened to me when Virgin wanted me to make singles. I'm a girl who likes to say yes, so I did one [a cover of 'I'm a Believer'] and then another, and I really enjoyed it. I did 'Yesterday Man,' a major-key, upbeat, jolly pseudo-reggae thing. I bent all

the chords out of shape and did the whole thing kind of sideways. And I was so happy with that. They said, 'We're not putting this out. It's too lugubrious." I thought, "that must be good," but I got a dictionary, and it's not. [laughter]

MUSICIAN: Robert, how did you go about setting your wife Alfte's lyrics to music for the first five songs on Dondestan?

WYATT: I work from sound, from atmosphere, and the words have to appear out of that, like out of the fog. I had some unpopulated landscapes, and what was surprising was, the words that came were Alfie's and not my own. She wrote those poems in the mid-'80s when we were in Spain. I happen to know that everything she describes is true, like when she describes the wind on the beach sweeping everything away ['The Sight of the Wind']. Everything she describes-"a plastic bag caught by a rail" - that's what we saw. So I wanted the music to give a sense of the event, the time and the location. I worked on it a lot, because I wanted the end result to sound fairly spontaneous. I have to do a lot of work on words to make them sound like there hasn't been a lot of work.

I recorded the whole LP 10 times at home, a kind of dry run before going into the studio. What's in this room is what's on the record. I work at home on the four-track and get it as near completion as I can, and then I beg the studio for a bit of cheap time. And I get in there and work as fast as possible. I have to work cheap because my records don't sell enough for me to work any other way. The last expensive record I made was Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard in 1975. That was with the Virgin lot.

NELSON: That's still selling, isn't it?

WYATT: Yeah, and thank goodness it is, because I only finished paying for it about two years ago. Virgin charged me for making the record. They're a clever lot, you can see how Branson got rich. Everything's collateralized. Any money that came in from a record, instead of you getting it, they'd say, 'Well, you're recording again now, so we'll put it straight back into your next one." You're always behind, and someone's getting your money. I was in debt for years on that one, and I thought, "I can't live like this." So I had to start working dead cheap. But it doesn't make much difference, because Rough Trade's going bust. We're all going bust in England, you've landed on a sinking ship. [chuckles]

MUSICIAN: I guess so. Bill's been telling me all his horror stories.

WYATT: Well, tell me then.

NELSON: Oh, I'm trying to take some people to court at the moment, and they're blocking everything. I set up a label 10 years ago which I funded out of my own income. The guy I'm suing was my business manager, I hired him after the label had been set up, to do the administration, because I didn't have time for that and music. It turns out he's put things through different companies and various manipulations until it's ended up all in his name. He claims that all my work of the last 10 years is his and not mine. And I've just had a deal ... from Virgin, ironically. They want to buy the back catalog, which would bail me out of a lot of problems, because besides appropriating the label my ex-manager didn't deal with taxes, and I ended up getting stuck with them. Virgin wants my catalog, but my ex-manager's claiming that the stuff's his. And I'm saying he has no right to it. It was my label in the first place. I set it up and ran it, and I was virtually the only artist on it! We've got to resolve this, and all he did was apply for extension after extension for time to put his defense together. And when his defense came through, it was a tissue of lies, so that's got to be taken apart. I could go on for months and months.*

*Nelson's ex-manager, Mark Rye, denies ever claiming that Nelson's work belongs to him: "I'm simply trying to get my bill paid. I haven't been paid for the last five years, and until the debts - paid off I'm not prepared to let anything go. He had a debt when I took him on, and he still has one because he spends more DM he earns. The trouble with Bill is he doesn't understand business. He's very talented, but when things go wrong, it's always somebody else's fault."

WYATT: And it costs, doesn't it? Apart from burning up valuable brain cells?

NELSON: Yeah, the Inland Revenue Bankruptcy Department's on my back, and I stand to be homeless within a few weeks, unless a miracle comes out of the sky. Selling the house would clear up a lot of problems, but I don't know what to do after that. It's more of a worry because I have a family; I worry about them being warm and fed more than myself.

WYATT: Oh, it's a bastard. It's such a cesspit, this industry. People think we live on a

higher plane, we're artists. But we're talking about the mechanisms whereby we live. It would be so easy to do a straight deal: 'You make the records, I'll sell them. Percentage so-and-so of retail well crosscheck accounts regularly. You get this amount, I get that amount. Deal? Deal. Right, sign here.' Why work out all these fucking scams?

NELSON: It's not like we're talking about huge amounts of money, especially with people like me. My ex-manager knew how much music I put together on a daily basis. It's been 20 years since my first record, and I've done over 40 albums. The majority of that has been on the Cocteau label which he's got his hands on. And I've no particular faith in the system, or that I'll come out with a fair settlement. I hope so, and the lawyers say so, but they're bound to say that, and there've been so many miscarriages of justice in the past, I don't know.

WYATT: Well, at least you've got a solid body of work, and you know it's yours. There are laws coming to our rescue. I'm thinking of the European stuff about intellectual property and moral rights. There are new laws on the horizon. The last check I got was for what Gramavision picked up in America on my last LP, and that completely disappeared into the Rough Trade debt. So I haven't actually yet made a penny from Gramavision. It discourages you; you think, 'How can I afford to make any more records?' But I must say I like Gramavision's catalog, they've got a great bunch of music.

MUSICIAN: If an artist becomes involved with business, particularly the huge bureaucracy of a major record conglomerate, doesn't that immediately compromise the art?

NELSON: There has to be some kind of compromise, because of the nature of the beast. I always had this dream that you could change things from the inside, and I don't know if I've completely shaken it off yet.

WYATT: I remember when they said the Clash sold out. Well, the lads are only trying to earn a living, you know! Give me a break. [laughter]

NELSON: That's an important point. If you've put your life on the line for music as a career, then you have to survive. A big record company can help make things more successful for you than an independent label. It's not so easy to say, 'All major companies are automatically terrible and corrupt.' I've met some people in majors who don't give a shit about music and all they want is whatever freebies come with the job and as much cocaine as they can get through. But there are some genuine music lovers as well who've got good taste, who really give a lot of their time for what for you're trying to achieve. And I've seen ripoffs in the indie scene just the same as in the majors.

WYATT: It's a romantic illusion that you can extricate yourself from the system. Systems are a bit tougher than that, systems are the way are organized. And you can turn your nose away so the smell doesn't kill you, but really you're in the shit with everybody else. I don't think there's any such thing as an independent record label; there's no such thing as an independent person. Put a self-sufficient individualist in a desert without water and he's dead in a day. A thing that worries me is that, even in the indies, there's tendency for the music to be a hastily cobbled-together afterthought, once the serious business of getting the haircut has been sorted out. [laughter] Obviously, I have personal reasons for feeling threatened by that. At the moment I've nervous about how to function in the future. Because apart from these high aspirations we've been talking about, we are talking about a job and trying to earn a living. I'm not getting any younger, and it's not getting any easier. There are some tough times ahead. And there's nothing I can see on the horizon that'll help much, we're on our own.

NELSON: Everybody could make their own records. It doesn't cost an awful lot to print up a few. I had this dream once that you could release them like you would a newspaper, on a regular basis and quite cheaply. People could try them out and throw them away; they weren't precious so it didn't matter. But the industry has made people expect to pay money. If you start offering people cheap records, they'll think that the music on them is cheap; there's a psychology that goes with it.

WYATT: In my case, I don't think people are saying, "Well, we've got Diana Ross, I know what we need now ... Robert Wyatt!' [laughter] But I don't want to say anything about my decisions which might cast aspersions on somebody else's. For example, I personally have had a very hard time with Columbia, but I also know they've looked after some musicians I admire very much. Maybe there's an inadequacy in me that I'm dumping on the record company. Look at the art industry, the film industry, the way people run supermarkets. There aren't a lot of virtuous organizations out there, really. Just the way things are done

is pretty hair-raising.



> Zoom

You may have thought, 'If he's struggling, how come he's got this nice house?' And I'll tell you. My wife knows a film actress, and after I had the accident, this film actress, in an amazing act of generosity, gave Alfie the money that she'd earned off a film so we could buy a flat. And it was with the money from that that we got this house. This isn't music money. Ronnie Scott and Pink Floyd and a few others also helped set us up. So a lot of what I've got is due to the generosity of particular people, and I'm just glad to have the opportunity to say thanks again. This is indulgent of me, but one man was very nice. I'd only met him once, and at that time I'd had a blazing alcoholic row with him - I can't remember what side either of us was on or what the details were, but there was a lot about Pinochet and Chairman Mao in there. That was the only time I met him, and I was just a friend of a friend. When I broke my back, he was in America. He came to England to see me in the hospital and he said, "I want to put you in the best hospital money can buy. I'll take you anywhere and you won't have to worry about the bill.' Isn't that amazing? It was Warren Beatty. Since he's the kind of man who often gets unsympathetic press, I just wanted to say there are some things about him that he himself would never talk about.

MUSICIAN: If the music world is really so terrible, why carry on?

NELSON: Musicians do complain about business and the rest of it, but ... they're so damn lucky. Despite all the threats of bankruptcy and all the angst, I wouldn't change any of it, because I love what I'm doing and I couldn't do it any other way. I've got a life that would be a dream for some people, so there's very little room to complain. And I'm bloody useless at anything else. [laughs]

WYATT: My maths teacher at school told me once, Look, if you don't pass maths 0-level, you'll be coming back here, 'cause you won't get any work, you know.' And I haven't had to go back to him yet. I've gone a long way without any exam results - I must be well over halfway by now. And I'm proud of that; it's pure vanity.

NELSON: That's like the day I left my day job. The boss said, "Now, about this pop business, Bill... [Laughter] it's rather flaky, you know. I don't want to put you off or anything, I'm wishing you all the best, but your job's always here for you if you have to come back." I got outside that door and I went: ' Yeah!" And I've never gone back. Not even to give them any autographs.

How to make a ROBERT WYATT record: Riviera portable keyboard and make sure the vibrato's set real slow. "It matches my voice," says Wyatt of the instrument that he found in a Venice toyshop back In '73. Also in Wyatt's Louth abode are a Yamaha baby grand piano and PSS-780 keyboard, and two AKG D1200 E microphones. Percussives Include some no-name timbales, Paiste crash, Black Rock Ride and an old Gretsch snare which hasn't been used for a while. "I never liked snares because of their martial overtones, so I've gotten rid of them for my solo records." He also favors brushes and mallets over sticks. Wyatt gets it all down on a Tascam 244 four-track recorder, hidden underneath the Kampuchean Flag.

And here's all you need to duplicate BILL NELSON's Studio Rose-Croix in your very own home: a Fostex B16 tape machine, A.H.B. Systems 8 32-channel mixing console, Sony PCM-Fl mastering deck, Quad amp driving Tannoy Little Red Monitors, and for outboard, a Yamaha SPX90, Fostex compressor/limiter, and MXR 0/1 reverb. Keyboards include an E-max Series 1, Yamaha DX7 and CS70M, while the drum machine's an Akai MPC 60. For guitars, Bill's got three Yamaha SG2000s, Ovation 6 and 12 string acoustics, a Rickenbacker stereo electric 12-string guitars, a Guild D50, and a custom-made Viellette-Citron. A devoted E-Bow user, Nelson has one of the original silver models.

Mac Randall

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Robert Wyatt - Record Collector N° 154 - June 1992

ROBERT WYATT



CANTERBURY SPECIAL

ROBERT WYATT

MARK PAYTRESS MEETS THE INSPIRED AND POLITICALLY-COMMITTED SINGER & WRITER

Of all the active Canterbury-based musicians who came to prominence during the Sixties and early Seventies, Robert Wyatt retains the critical and musical edge. Over the years, he's transformed himself from a drummer with a keenness for inventive solos into a songwriter, and interpreter, of the highest calibre. His delicate voice is instantly recognisable, even if it sometimes seems to go unheard outside the close-knit world of musicians and critics. Elvis Costello wrote the classic "Shipbuilding" for him; countless others cite him as one of the finest singers in contemporary British pop music.

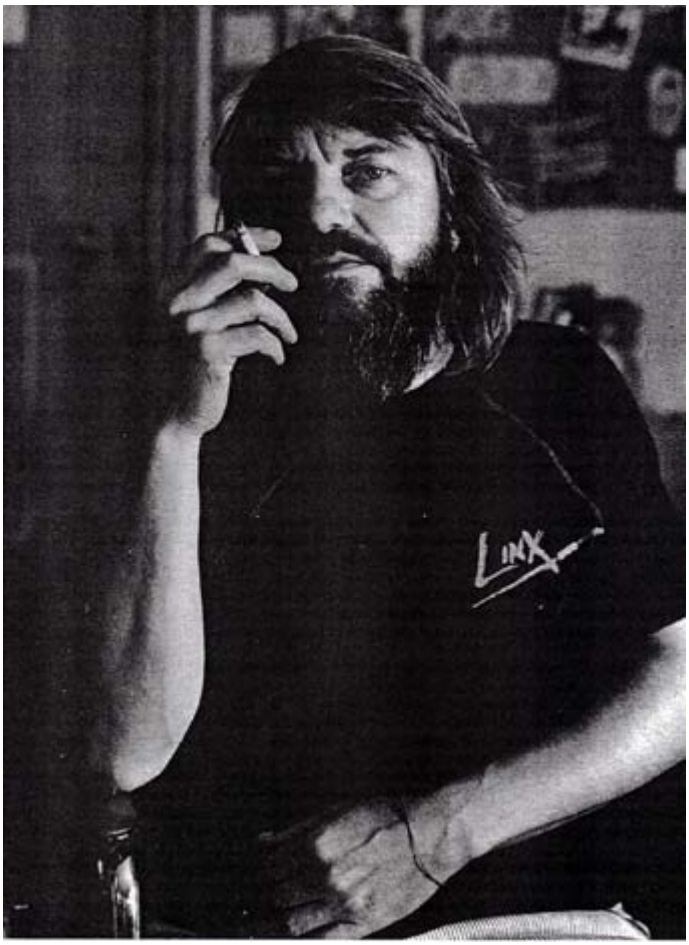
Wyatt is a contradiction. A drummer-turned-singer with a capacity to reduce the hardest of souls to tears with a few bars of verse; the avant-garde jazz fan with an uncanny knack of writing memorable ballads; and the self-confessed musical doodler who likes nothing better than to construct soundscapes in his music room, while retaining a vision that extends far beyond national and cultural boundaries in search of meaningful songs to cover.

When he left the Soft Machine, that group was entering its final, least inspired phase. Wyatt released one patchy solo album, "The End Of An Ear", before forming Matching Mole, a criminally overlooked outfit from the early Seventies who, like Henry Cow, reintroduced political polemic into the broad spectrum of popular music.

In 1973, Wyatt's musical career was jeopardised after an accident left him unable to walk. Since being confined to a wheelchair, he's made the somewhat inevitable switch from drum-kit to keyboards and percussion instruments, and his work has taken - on an intensely personal style, sometimes haunting, at other times warm and profoundly moving. His

acclaimed series of solo recordings have taken him into the Top 30, seen him forge links with the post-punk independent scene, and work with some of the most accomplished songwriters of recent years.

Back in the Sixties, it was Robert Wyatt's intricate, jazz-inspired drumming which won him most praise. His occasional vocal excur-sions — high-pitched and sung with a lisp — were often regarded as a gimmick, a view enhanced by the nonsense lyrics that were a feature of the early Softs material. Then came "Moon In June", his side-long contribution to the band's "Third" album, a piece brimming with inventive melodies and musical inspira-tion, which revealed Wyatt's true capabilities as a songwriter. This talent was honed down for "0 Caroline" from the first Matching Mole album, a rare piece of originality in the often hackneyed world of the romantic balladeer.



Wyatt re-emerged with the self-explanatory "Rock Bottom" album in 1974, a poignant collection of song-based material infused with the inquisitive passion for musical adventure which always informs his work. Last autumn, he returned with a new album, "Dondestan", which received the usual plaudits from the critics, and this year is likely to see the release of some notable archive recording; on Recommended and/or Rough Trade Records.

When I spoke to him, Wyatt — one of the most thoughtful and entertaining interviewees I've ever encountered — was probably keener to discuss the current state of political opposition in this country (and this was before the election!) than trawl back through the memory banks, past the pre-accident barrier, an era which he now claims an amnesia for. You might not find exactly which Soft Machine track it was that Hendrix played on, but you will discover some acute observations on the development of popular music throughout the course of the interview.

Record Collector: There's a melancholy feel on your latest album, "Dondestan", particularly on the tracks where you set music to your wife Alfie's lyrics, which contain a lot of natural imagery. Is this indicative of a kind of retreat from the outside world on your part?

Robert Wyatt: I can't speak for Alfie. She didn't write them as song lyrics, but as a group of poems called "Out Of Season", which were written while I was working in Spain. It was winter, and we were in a holiday area out of season. Being in such an artificial place built for tourists was particularly strange in winter when no-one was there: it had a very strong atmosphere, very specific. The sole person you'd meet would be a West African trinket seller with only abandoned dogs to sell them to. The songs I chose tended to be just about that atmosphere, being on the beach by the sea, literally at the edge of things.

RC: The political content that many expect to find on a Robert Wyatt record eventually surfaces on the second side. Tieing in with what I may have misread as melancholy is "CP Jeebies", which appears to be a veiled attack on the state of the Communist Party. You've been a well-known member of the CP for many years,

but a line like "there will be nothing you can put your finger on" seems to hint at the Party's abandonment of Marxist principles in recent years.

RW: I'm glad that's apparent, yes! But I would say it's more personal. When I joined the Party in the late Seventies, the people I actually liked and got on with were very often the ageing battled-scarred anti-Fascists who'd been in it since the Thirties and had been through a thing or two. There was a plumber who, despite the opportunity to get promoted, chose to stay at the hard end, and really lived the meaning of what he was doing. We used to go to "Morning Star" bazaars and I completely fell in love with the people there.



"At Last I Am Free" was coupled with a fine reading of "Strange Fruit" on this 1980 single.

But then I felt disappointed when a much trendier bunch of post-Beatle people picked up on it, and sat around making sarcastic jokes about these old people because they listened to Paul Robeson and didn't know about what was going on today. I didn't like those people at all! I felt I was being patronised — "Oh, we've got a musician, a real useful badge for our new image." I wasn't interested in helping the right wing do what they do so well anyway, which is laugh at old lefties. Nearly every other Radio 4 play was doing something like that. It's too easy, and it's ageist as well.

RC: Do you see yourself as an artist in opposition?

RW: I don't think the rock idiom itself is inherently revolutionary. I use what comes naturally to me, which is playing music. I can imagine and have seen situations where people who sing songs can be part of a general psyching up for a movement, but I can't see how it could possibly ever be the basis for one. So I see myself as a supporter, a cheer-leader, but rock music is not a substitute for real politics.

The reason I joined the Communist Party during the late Seventies was that I couldn't see rock groups' pose-striking attitudes as changing anything or presenting the slightest challenge to the establishment. There's a lot of that in rock'n'roll, all that "I'm frightening the grown-ups" nonsense. It was conceited.

I left the CP a couple of years ago. It just seemed to be a launching pad for media pundits. I can see no difference between the stance of "Marxism Today" and the David Owen/SDP viewpoint. When I first said that, I was told I was just being provocative, but later on, they took on board a great deal that. I don't need that. I left the Labour Party in the first place because there were too many people like David Owen in it. At least we had a good laugh thinking up some new titles when "Marxism Today" asked readers to send suggestions for its new name!

RC: As part of the Soft Machine in the late Sixties, how much was there a sense that you were chipping away at established styles at the time and forging something new?

RW: I can't really remember what we thought. But if we did think we were changing the

world or loosening the bricks of the establishment, I'd have to say that I think we were probably wrong about that. Any thoughts that I may have entertained in that area were crushed by hearing the group being played on Radio Free Europe to prove how wonderful the West and the establishment is. And so, on the contrary, I think pop and rock has helped the establishment to become more adaptable. No real power shifts have happened.



"Stalin Wasn't Stalling" was a reminder of the Soviet Union's crucial role in the last War.

RC: The sleeve-note for the second Soft Machine album spoke of "music for the mind", as if you were actually rejecting dance music.

RW: It wouldn't have been me who put that on there. That's the kind of remark that would have led to me leaving! It could have been somebody at the record company, but as we couldn't play dance music at that time, it's purely academic anyway! When we started, we did play James Brown medleys, and aspired to what Georgie Fame and Jimmy James and the Vagabonds were doing, but in a provincial, clumsy way.

RC: How did Soft Machine end up playing at the Proms?

RW: That actually happened because a composer, Tim Souster, who had written a piece for his spot, still had half the evening to fill, so he thought he'd be naughty and get in a rock band. There was a certain amount of fluidity at that time amongst certain musicians, it was fairly open-ended. I don't think it was a particularly good gig, though: the Albert Hall isn't a very nice place to play.

RC: Can you recall the Soft Machine playing any gigs before the IT benefit in October 1966 as the Soft Machine and not as the Wilde Flowers?

RW: I remember some of us playing in proto form at the Establishment nightclub: me, Hugh Hopper and Daevid Allen. And I remember another event where we played at the Marquee one night when they also had Donovan and a sitar player, and free music by AMM, but I don't recall what we were called. I seem to remember the first gig where we used the name was at the Roundhouse, but I could be wrong.

RC: There's a studio out-take that purports to be Jimi Hendrix and Soft Machine, but the vocalist is certainly neither you, Kevin Ayers nor Hendrix. Do you recall any studio jams, and can you confirm. Hendrix's presence on either side of the first single?

RW: I seem to remember that he came in and put some rhythm guitar on one of Kevin's songs that came out on single. Because we had the same manager, we'd sometimes be in the same studios at the same time, but I can't recall any specific occasion.

RC: Why did you leave the Softs after the release of "Fourth" early in 1971?

RW: I don't know why I was ever in the Softs! I suppose I wanted to work with musicians that I got on with, could talk to and share ideas with. We'd got together because we were the only ones who could play the appropriate instruments, but when we got to London, we started to meet other musicians. It was exciting getting the band well-known enough to headline gigs, but the last vestige of adventure left it at that point.

RC: Wasn't it getting musically sterile?

RW: Yeah. I'm not particularly interested in English jazz-rock. Different musical textures were forming in my head, which were not just related to drumming on endless rehashes of half-remembered Eric Dolphy solos.

RC: Were you pleased with your first solo venture, "The End Of An Ear"?

RW: It was good fun doing it. There was a great feeling of throwing off the corsets. I couldn't believe my nerve, actually — playing piano on a record!



"Arauco" / "Caimanera" was probably Wyatt's most artistically successful Rough Trade 45.

RC: By 1972, you'd formed Matching Mole, who almost uniquely at the time, introduced politics into rock music.

RW: A lot of people haven't noticed that: they assume that really only started to happen in the late Seventies. At that time, the world seemed to become more solid around me, and I felt more assertive and willing to try and not be part of this 'setting' mould, whereas in the previous decade, there was a sort of feeling that — despite what I said earlier — it was all up in the air, that there could never be another Vietnam War, that racism and colonialism could soon be over. But by the early Seventies, you could see a narcissistic Englishness settling in the ground around you.

RC: Since your accident, you've consistently moved closer towards a song-based format. Do you miss collective music making?

RW: I get the sense of working with people in other ways. It's almost impossible to do a solo thing even if you want to. If I'm playing drums or piano, I'm thinking about previous drummers and pianists that I've listened to, so they're part of a gang in my head that I'm having conversations with. And then choosing other people's material, whether it be Latin-American or old gospel songs, to me that's a kind of a communion too. And you're always working with the engineer. It's always like a kind of blind date when you go into the studio — what's he going to be like?! So never felt in danger of being alone. Music making isn't like that. It is a social activity.

RC: Why did you stop making music after "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard"?

RW: I got overwhelmed by other things that seemed to be more interesting, and embarked upon a process of completing the higher education that I never had, having left school early and gone straight into washing-up and working in a forest. I started to become interested in learning about things that I'd been too busy living before to get round to. Alfie and I used to really enjoy watching the Open University, with these extraordinary professors and their blackboards and charts. I'd watch them all, but particularly those ones that dealt with communication, education and politics, and the relationship between Europe and other countries. That became far more interesting to me than playing musical instruments and being with musicians.

Alongside that, we started going to the London Film Festival, which was akin to a psychedelic experience. We'd see something like 30 films in a fortnight, including many that would probably never get shown again — films from places like Senegal and Java. That was an extraordinary experience, the most exciting barrage of stimuli I'd had since I discovered jazz as a teenager.

RC: Did you see punk rock as a more effective disturbance of the status quo than Rock In Opposition groups like Henry Cow, whom you were loosely affiliated with?

RW: I liked the music of the late Seventies. I thought the Sex Pistols were a wonderful group and I loved Poly Styrene's lyrics for X-Ray Spex. I actually became more interested because it existed side-by-side with reggae. There was a new generation of black youth that seemed to be less English than their bus-driving, nursing parents, who'd been making more of an effort to be more English but who hadn't really been welcomed as much as they might have been. This new generation didn't bother trying and instead began recultivating rural Jamaican patois and all that. It was a grass-roots "fuck-you-too" movement, which actually was a great inspiration for punk alongside it.

It really climaxed in the Two-Tone era when people began digging up the old ska records. I loved Two-Tone. That was really just about the last era of pop/rock music that I felt totally at one with. Jerry Dammers and the Beat and all those people — I thought they were lovely. That whole late Seventies environment really was like a breath of fresh air.



Ivor Cutler's "Grass" was one of the later 45s in the Rough Trade series of cover versions.

RC: And provided the inspiration that led you directly to Rough Trade?

RW: Yes. I felt much more at home among that generation of musicians and the people at Rough Trade. It was like the days when I was a teenage jazz fan. All the labels then were indies, and it was very much that kind of atmosphere, disturbing the grand empire of accountants and lawyers of the major companies.

RC: Was it a definite political statement then, signing to an indie?

RW: No, I have to say it was more personal because I liked them. The songs that I sang around that time, some drawn from Chilean and Cuban culture, perhaps made the point

that while there's some really tough people on the front line of the fight, they actually sing very gentle ballads. South American revolutionary songs, which are sung by guerillas in the mountains, sound to us like "Come Dancing" music. And I thought that was very interesting and a point worth making. There is never a simple equation between making a racket and being dangerous and political activists. It's much more complicated than that.

RC: Don't you think that the growing sense of internationalism in music has, like the sound of the Sixties underground, now been incorporated into the mainstream?

RW: Yes. People are really getting interested in Cuban music, but it's almost invariably played by Cuban exiles in New York or Puerto Ricans doing salsa-fied version of Cuban music. Nobody's allowed to say Cuba's a hot-bed of wonderful music because it's seen as a non-country. So despite this recent upsurge in interest in Latin-American music, it by-passes the people who are actually living in Cuba and enjoy being there. It might have been an international celebration, but it's just become part of the cycle of appropriation of other people's stuff.

RC: You've rarely appeared in concert over the past 15 years, bar a couple of memorable guest appearances with the Raincoats and with Henry Cow. Is that something you miss?

RW: No I don't. I still have nightmares about twice a week about playing live. I used to drink myself under the table in order to pluck up enough courage to go on stage. I was always more interested in having the musical ideas and working them out than in the presentation.

Even going into the studio is a bit like performing. I get nervous. But that's what I have to do to make records. At home I have a four-track cassette, a couple of mikes and the sort of instruments that you hear on my records, and that's enough for me. I'm more interested in getting the bare bones of the music right — the words, the chords, the tunes, the rhythms. I don't like to dwell on the fancification of it all.

RC: But there are a lot of textures on your records.

RW: Actually I did spend quite a lot of time at home preparing this record, working out the layers, so that I can go into the studio and do it quickly. So perhaps it is fancification after all, getting the right textures and sounds to go with the words.

RC: Can you remain optimistic about the political and social concerns which has inspired your music?

RW: No. I heard the news the other day and the whole thing was basically Pentagon newspeak. The qualification for being a news-reader seems to be, "Can you read White House press releases?" It's never been more pathetic, in my opinion. We're really veering towards an American political system of identikit Republican and Democrat parties. And I think that's sad for the rest of the world because it means that the neo-colonialist practices are more safely established now than they were at the beginning of this century, and that means that a lot of people in the world are going to be in for a hard time for a long time. But I'm prepared to cheer-lead almost anybody who's still willing to have a go.

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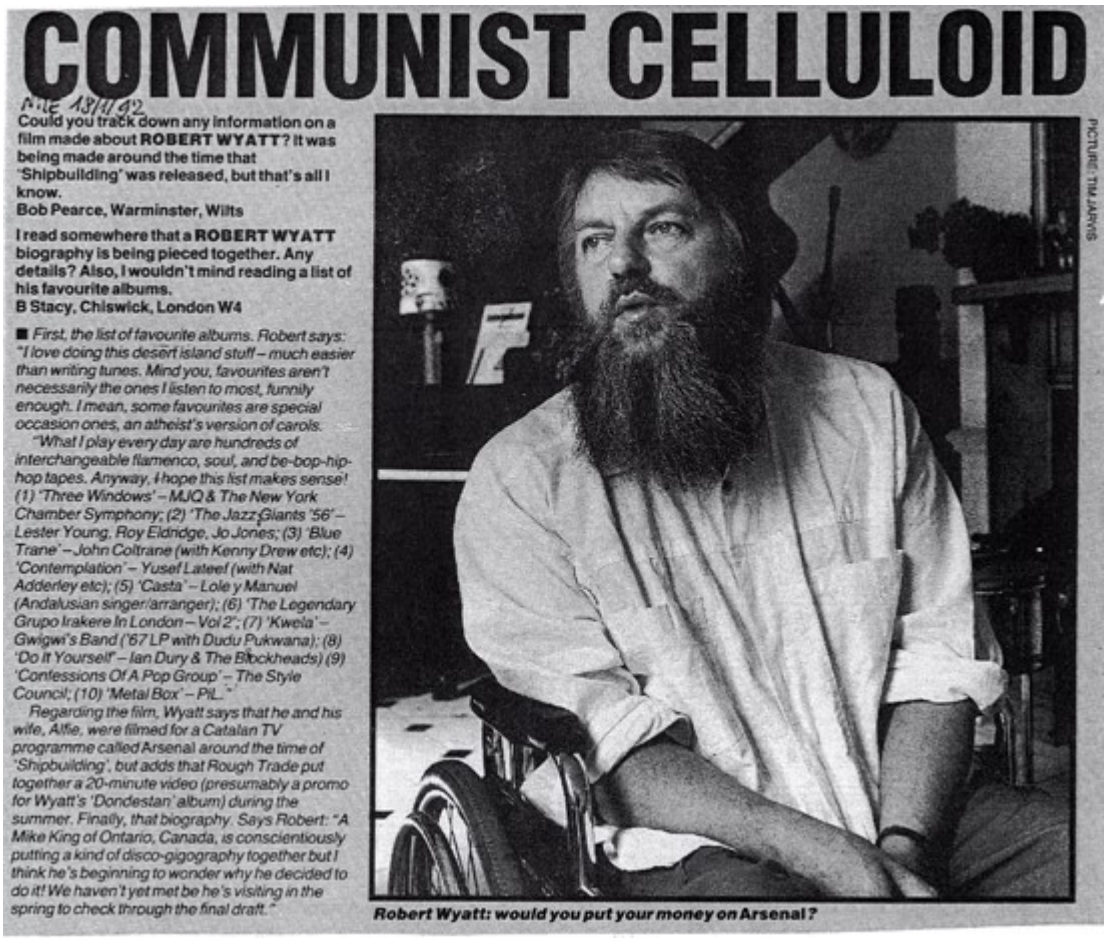
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Communist Celluloid - New Musical Express - 18 January, 1992

COMMUNIST CELLULOID



COMMUNIST CELLULOID

NME 18/1/92

Could you track down any information on a film made about ROBERT WYATT? It was being made around the time that 'Shipbuilding' was released, but that's all I know.
Bob Pearce, Warminster, Wilts

I read somewhere that a ROBERT WYATT biography is being pieced together. Any details? Also, I wouldn't mind reading a list of his favourite albums.
B Stacy, Chiswick, London W4

■ *First, the list of favourite albums. Robert says: "I love doing this desert island stuff – much easier than writing tunes. Mind you, favourites aren't necessarily the ones I listen to most, funnily enough. I mean, some favourites are special occasion ones, an atheist's version of carols.*

"What I play every day are hundreds of interchangeable flamenco, soul, and be-bop-hip-hop tapes. Anyway, I hope this list makes sense! (1) 'Three Windows' – MJQ & The New York Chamber Symphony; (2) 'The Jazz Giants '56' – Lester Young, Roy Eldridge, Jo Jones; (3) 'Blue Trane' – John Coltrane (with Kenny Drew etc); (4) 'Contemplation' – Yusef Lateef (with Nat Adderley etc); (5) 'Casta' – Lole y Manuel (Andalusian singer/arranger); (6) 'The Legendary Grupo Irakere In London – Vol 2'; (7) 'Kwela' – Gwigwi's Band ('67 LP with Dudu Pukwana); (8) 'Do It Yourself' – Ian Dury & The Blockheads) (9) 'Confessions Of A Pop Group' – The Style Council; (10) 'Metal Box' – PiL."

Regarding the film, Wyatt says that he and his wife, Alfie, were filmed for a Catalan TV programme called Arsenal around the time of 'Shipbuilding', but adds that Rough Trade put together a 20-minute video (presumably a promo for Wyatt's 'Dondestan' album) during the summer. Finally, that biography. Says Robert: "A Mike King of Ontario, Canada, is conscientiously putting a kind of disco-gigography together but I think he's beginning to wonder why he decided to do it! We haven't yet met be he's visiting in the spring to check through the final draft."

PICTURE: TIM JARVIS

Robert Wyatt: would you put your money on Arsenal?

Robert Wyatt: would you put your money on Arsenal ? (PICTURE : TIM JARVIS)

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(9) 'Confessions Of A Pop Group'- The Style Council;

(10) 'Metal Box' - PiL.'

"' Regarding the film, Wyatt says that he and his wife, Alfie, were filmed for a Catalan TV programme called Arsenal around the time of 'Shipbuilding', but adds that Rough Trade put together a 20-minute video (presumably a promo for Wyatt's 'Dondestan' album) during the summer.

Finally, that biography. Says Robert: "A Mike King of Ontario, Canada, is conscientiously putting a kind of disco-gigography together but I think he's beginning to wonder why he decided to do it! We haven't yet met be he's visiting in the spring to check through the final draft."

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Robert Wyatt - Ptolemaic Terrascope Vol. 3 - N°1 - January 1992

ROBERT WYATT



The "Canterbury Scene" are three words which have become common coinage in these pages in recent times; not because of some strange fannish addiction to anything emanating to that region of England, but simply due to the sheer quality of the music which has umbrella'd out over the years since those humble 'Wilde Flowers' beginnings of 1964. Whilst musically unimportant in itself, the Wilde Flowers contained in its original line-up three people who, within a decade, were to be considered in many circles, the definitive English rock vocalists: Richard Sinclair, Kevin Ayers, and of course Robert Wyatt.

Whilst always highly rated as a drummer, it is for his wonderful singing and songwriting that Wyatt is today universally admired and respected. The lack of his vocals in the Soft Machine after the glorious 'Moon In June' on their album 'Third' (unbelievably, he only drums on the following album, 'Four', as the rest of the band believed his voice to be dispensible!) marked the departure of any real interest in the band; however in the subsequent Matching Mole, not only is there the treat of hearing Robert's voice combined with the equally unique sound of Dave Sinclair's keyboards, but there's also what many people consider to be one of Wyatt's finest moments - the near perfect love song 'O Caroline', a desert-island-disc if ever there was one.

As is Wyatt's second solo album, 'Rock Bottom' - a masterpiece of languid depths and charged emotion. The previous LP, 'End Of An Ear' is for avant-gardeners only, while the third LP, 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard' is more free blowing but none the less essential. Together, this pair of platters confirm for all time the talents of Robert Wyatt and his place in the hearts and minds of his listeners. Since then he has sporadically put out a handful of excellent singles and the occasional LP on Rough Trade as well as making several guest appearances, most notably on Nick Mason's LP 'The Fictitious Sports' alongside jazz keyboardist Carla Bley.

Now that the Canterbury scene is again up and running with Caravan, Going Going (featuring Hugh Hopper) and Richard Sinclair's Caravan of Dreams, as well as rumours of an upcoming and long overdue return to form for Kevin Ayers and a strong new album from Robert Wyatt entitled 'Dondestan' on Rough Trade, it seems only right and proper that the Terrascope should be in the thick of it. Hence the following interview.

Whilst Robert, as you will see, was until recently unaware that he was considered an integral part of the 'Canterbury Scene', there is no denying that he has always been considered as such and his response is in terms of a mistaken geographical and biographical reference rather than in the general use of the term 'Canterbury' as a broad but distinct musical genre - one which rightly labels the likes of Dave Stewart and Jimmy Hastings as 'Canterbury', even thought neither of them has ever lived there. That small point cleared up, it's on to the results of a delightfully jovial afternoon spent in the relaxed and friendly company of Mr. Wyatt, an afternoon in which, fuelled by impromptu notes, failing memories, quite a lot of tea and the occasional (and vaguely apt) banana, we touched on as many aspects as possible of his long and never less than interesting career...

PT : How did it all begin?

RW : It's a long story. When the Romans left Britain... oh, then a few other things happened, I was born in 1945, went to school in the Fifties and left at the end of them. I think the Fifties were a very good time to be at school. It was in Canterbury - people say 'Oh, Canterbury', but I went to school



> Zoom

there and that's all there is to it.

PT : You didn't live there then?

RW : No I didn't, I lived near Dover actually, although I did have a spell there in late 1960 or early '61. I couldn't make head nor tail of school, I had a coupIe of friends there - one of whom from the age of about 10 was Hugh Hopper. His older brother played clarinet and had some nice records. My big brother had some nice records as well. But because our records were our big brothers' jazz record collections, people think we had older tastes than others our age.

PT : You obviously heard the radio as well, though?

RW : Not obviously at all. I never heard the thing much, quite frankly. We preferred records: jazz, some R&B - we were fans, as teenagers are. Then Hugh got a bass guitar and started playing some Ray Charles type stuff, so there was this twin-tracked thing going on, some dance or song-based music like R&B and some harmonic and melodic deviations of the modern jazz of the time. What we played was neither one or the other in the end, we sort of fell between two stools and stayed there, on the floor.

PT : Great play has been made down the years of the fact that you had various musical contemporaries at school, but in fact they weren't exactly contemporaries at all - there was a year or so between you all?

RW : That's right. I vaguely remember Dave Sinclair playing piano for the school hymns, but I knew his older brother better because we studied violin together for a couple of years. I think the myth really is more glowing than the reality. School life for me consisted mostly of trying to catch the same bus as the girls in the other schools. And I'm very glad I did, because my first wife, Pam, was a girl who lived on the same bus route. She kept me for years afterwards, working as a secretary for some fairly unpleasant cleric when I didn't have two pennies to rub together. I did a few jobs after leaving school, worked in a forest near Folkestone for instance, but that was it. We had a son - he's in his twenties now and a nurse - but that's really the most positive thing I can remember coming out of school. There was some music though, of course. Daevid Allen, who's a nomadic Australian, had come to Europe and floated about London and had some contacts which later became invaluable - people like Hoppy, who set up various gigs. I've come to the conclusion that the whole world is gradually becoming Australian... anyway, there was this bunch of people who were fairly radical in their own fields. And Daevid was older than us, so he showed us around. He used to get stoned, so he was my introduction to all that. He also had a dog which he used to take for walks with him - it was actually a tin can on the end of a bit of string which he would trail some yards behind him. To an impressionable lad of my age, that was pretty far out!

PT : And your first group, The Wilde Flowers, came together then?

RW : Hugh was the one in Canterbury who wanted to get a group together. We (the Wilde Flowers) did basicalIy R&B covers rather than hits, although we did occasionally do Beatles songs and stuff. The point is though, Hugh started writing his own material at this time and I would do odd bits as well - I started singing for instance, because he wouldn't sing himself. It was all a learning process, realIy. [Referring to Richard Sinclair's comments in issue 8 of the Terrascope:] Mine and Richard's memories of Wildflowers material seem slightly out of synch - the soul material I remember doing was like James Brown, Nina Simone, and simple jazz pieces like Watermelon Man (Herbie Hancock). But of course other stuff like by rock & rollers such as Chuck Berry was often thought of as Brit-beat music at the time...

PT : You did some demos as the Wilde Flowers, didn't you?

RW : Somebody knew a popular Radio Two styled musician named Wout Steinhaus who played steel guitar, he had a studio and let us make some things in there. I imagine they

were pretty appalling.

PT : They included a version of 'Memories', I think. (Robert later recorded it as the B-side to 'I'm A Believer')


National Jazz & Blues Fest Plumpton August 1969

Friday

FRIDAY was the dullest day with the Pink Floyd topping. Having heard the Azimuth co-ordinator at work several times this year, the novelty is beginning to wear off, and even the Floyd are getting a bit blase about the recorded seagulls! But they played well especially on "Cymbaline" and "The Journey" sounded effective with stereo speakers booming around the field.

Soft Machine were hit by two successive power failures. They gave up and walked off, their drummer, Robert Wyatt, tearfully kicking over his kit in frustration.

RW : It's possible, yes. Hugh wrote 'Memories' quite early on I can remember singing that. That was the challenge, really trying to play stuff that people hadn't heard before at local dances. Most of the time it was... it didn't have to be hits, but things that were on the band circuit at the time. I think after I left the Wilde Flowers went on to play that stuff very well, but by then I had drifted off with others, making odd noises here and there. The amoeba sort of split one half of the Wilde Flowers eventually became Caravan, and the rest became that other lot.

"One half of the Wilde Flowers eventually became Caravan, and the rest became that other lot."

PT : I've got the original line-up of the Soft Machine down as yourself, Kevin Ayers, Daevid Allen and Mike Ratledge, plus the guitarist Larry Nolan who left after a few gigs. Some demos were done with Georgio Gomelsky. Why did Daevid Allen leave fairly early on?

[as an aside, the demos are now out as 'Jet Propelled Photographs'. In 1972, Daevid Allen said of them, 'They're just a mortal embarrasment to me because it's probably the worst guitar I've ever played... but Robert is just magnificent so their release is justified'. The band also did the 'Feelin', Reelin', Squeelin" single - produced by Kim Fowley!]

RW : We played some music for a play by Alfred Jarry at the Edinburgh Fringe, I think it was. As a result of that we met people on the avant-garde circuit ('avant garde a clue', as Ronnie Scott calls it) who had connections in Paris, where there were student rebellions going on, people trying to set up autonomous universities and stuff. There was this bunch of people doing a play by Picasso called 'Desire Caught By The Tail' in the South of France, for which they wanted a band to play some suitably anarchic music. We went to do that and did some gigs alongside it in the same area. It turned out that a lot of Parisiens were down there, and some New York dropouts like Taylor Meade, so we got known amongst them. Anyway, when we came back, Daevid's Australian visa had run out and they wouldn't let him back into England. He stayed in France and went on to do stuff like Camembert Electrique etc. It was as simple as that.

PT : Then came the American tour with Hendrix and Eire Apparent? [with new member Andy Somers - later of Police - on guitar . He left after a few gigs to join Eric Burdon & The New Animals]


Soft Machine circa 67 l-r: Ayers, Wyatt, Ratledge

> Zoom

RW : Yeah, we got a deal with Anim-management, the Animals people, and because they'd also signed up Jimi Hendrix, we all went on the road to the States. What was useful about that was, a tour like that soon knocks the whimsy out of you. Playing in front of a few thousand beer-soaked Texan teenagers waiting impatiently for Jimi Hendrix does something for your nervous system. It makes you get on with things and state your case. It could have been awful, it could have been very frightening for us - we were going around there with very little money with bands who were using a lot of money (although it turns out they weren't getting to see a lot of it) - but luckily, the Jimi Hendrix Experience were very protective towards us. Like, Hendrix would sometimes get some flak for having this

weird-sounding band at the beginning of his show,
and he always said look, they're trying to do something, they're not trying to copy anybody else, and I want them on the show, OK? He personally stood up for us, even though we were making a lot of musical mistakes and hadn't got it fully together. The others in the Experience were simply terrific as well, and they were always doing things for us without seeming to use their privilege. Like, Noel would say look, we're all going down to this club and we want to go in mob-handed, so you'll have to come too. What he meant was, we know you couldn't afford to go in, we know you couldn't afford to buy any drinks once you're in there, so we're taking you. But they'd never put it like that. Mitch helped us a lot as well- such a brilliant drummer, he'd been with Georgie Fame before, and you have to be good to work with somebody like that. A very proud bloke, quick to take offence but he's actually all heart. Sitting there watching them play every night and seeing how they'd work was great for us. Mitch had had this maplewood drum kit made to his own specifications, and at the end of the tour he gave it to me. Everything I've played since as a drummer has been on that kit which Mitch gave to me.



PT : So you have some good memories of that tour?

RW : Absolutely, yes. I mean, I know 1968 wasn't an easy time to be in America, I saw a lot of horrible things which make you think a bit. You read articles here sometimes about racism and of course we have a right to talk about it, but unless you've spent some time in the States where the streets smell of racism, you really have no idea. I saw the kinds of things that a sheltered English lad had never seen, the hostility between the police and any kids with hair... the police would ride through crowds on motorcycles without even waiting for them to clear. I saw them pick up one kid, hold him horizontally and run him into a wall like a battering ram. We were pretty much sheltered as a group going from hotel to hotel, but you could see that life on the streets was sticky.

PT : Did Hendrix himself suffer from the racism at all?

RW : Well, Hendrix was a rich entertainer, therefore he couldn't really be black. It was a class thing. You'd get cops standing at the side of the shows saying 'hey! That nigger picks good!'. But there's always been a place in America for the black entertainer. Mind you, they've a reason to be grateful. I mean, where would American music be today without the black American's contribution? About as famous as New Zealand's I should think.

PT : The Eire Apparent album (on Buddah) came out of that tour - are you on it?

"Hendrix was trying to turn it from pop into something more dangerous..."

RW : Yeah, that was nice. Me and Noel did girly choruses basically, and Hendrix was trying to turn it from being pop into something more dangerous, as he saw it. Eire Apparent were a very nice bunch of Irish lads. They joined us for the second half of the tour, in a way it was to get something more poppy in on the act - but they'd been signed up and we reorganised the concerts accordingly. It was a good, contrasting sort of thing. I have to say though that even on our best nights, Hendrix would simply erase the memory of everything that had gone before. He was just so fucking good. And consistently good, too. Better than on the records, actually - that's one thing we had in common, I think we played better than we ever recorded and I think he did as well. That's the jazz element for you.

PT : The first Soft Machine album was actually recorded in New York?

RW : That's right. Now, what was the name of the guy that produced that?

PT : Tom Wilson?

RW : That's him. He'd worked with Frank Zappa so they figured he'd be able to deal with us. He was very nonchalent, not kind of fretting - just play, we'll tape it and it'll come out alright. It's easy. He was living his life, and we were welcome to join in if we wanted to. But he made sure all the nuts and bolts were all tight - he did his job. I have to say though that because we in the group never got on very well personally, in a studio situation you'd be dealing with each other much more whereas on stage, you're all facing the same way which is outwards - so somehow we could work together much better live than in the studio.

PT : When was the last time you listened to that album?

"I'd no more listen to that [first Sort Machine album] again than I would put my school trousers back on"

RW : About twenty years ago. I'd no more listen to that again than I would get out my school trousers and put them back on. I accept it completely, but the only way I can concentrate on doing my best is by clearing whatever's gone before ruthlessly away. I couldn't function by sitting in my own bath water!

PT : The Sort Machine disintegrated at that point - you stayed in New York and then later moved to Los Angeles?

RW : Yeah, I liked New York. Mitch took us around and introduced us to some other musicians that I might not have otherwise met - people like Larry Coryell. Then Hendrix booked a house in Los Angeles at the end of the tour, a big L-shaped place it was - basically they're only stage sets for Perry Mason films, but when there's no Perry Mason going on, people live in them. So there we were in this L-shaped stage set with people shouting 'hi!' across the swimming pool...

PT : You recorded some demos while you were in New York and LA?

RW : I did, yeah. Jeff Dexter's just found one of them, I must have left it at his house by accident - but it's only an acetate so it gets really grunged up whenever you try to play it. It costs a lot of money to re-record them and clean them up, but he's trying to organise that at the moment. I also started writing bits and pieces which turned up in later reincarnations of the group.

PT : At that time, did you consider yourself to be a part of Soft Machine?


The same crew as the above photo but with the addition (briefly) of Andy Summers.

RW : I don't know what I felt, really. I remember thinking that I wasn't being a very good father. Anyway, we came back to England and found people were wanting us to do some gigs, so we 'phoned each other up to see if we were all into it. Kevin Ayers wanted to do his own thing, so Hugh, who had already been roadying for us and had actually written some of the best tunes in our repertoire, was the natural choice for a replacement. We reformed really as a response to being offered jobs. I thought God, this noise we're making is boring. I went down to the Marquee and saw Keith Tippett's band and thought they were really good, so we asked if we could borrow their brass section for a while, which made it a bit richer. We went on the road like that for a bit.

PT : You'd already recorded the second Soft Machine album by this time?

RW : I think so - I can't really remember. I haven't got a copy of that one, either.

PT : And by the 3rd album, by which time sax player Elton Dean had joined, the band seemed to have fractured - it's like a side each, really?

RW : I suppose so, although I must say I enjoy Hugh's side, the live side. There was this British jazz-rock thing developing though and I found it a rather tight-arsed thing really, a fairly weak version of what was a pretty dodgy idiom in the first place. I thought, I'm literally not going to get a word in edgeways here. I got all my fun from doing gigs outside of it, playing with Keith Tippett's friends or with the South African exiles that were around. It might not leave any great records, but it was nice to be working with people you enjoy being with. The adventure of trying things out seemed to be more important than getting polished results and showing off tricky time signatures. The corsets seemed to be tightening by the month.

PT : The Soft Machine's appearance at the Proms happened about this time, didn't it? (13/8/70)

RW : Yeah, we were invited there by a very nice English composer named Tim Souster who, being an English composer, had a night to himself at the Proms. He'd written a piece for it which didn't last the whole night, so he thought 'I'll get that band in, that'll stir it up...'. I didn't really like playing there (the Royal Albert Hall) because I couldn't hear what we were doing - it's an appalling place to play. My microphone wasn't on when I was singing and the organ kept breaking down. We did get to be interviewed by Richard Baker though!

P**T : Next we had your first solo album, 'End Of An Ear'?**

RW : Yeah, that was me throwing off the corsets basically. All hell was let loose. I just screamed me head off and had a lovely time, I even played the piano. I can't actually play the piano, but I thought right - I'm going to play the fucking piano. Turned out I could play what I wanted to hear after all. Just goes to show, you never know until you try!

PT : And you recorded 'Bananamoon' with Daevid Allen....

RW : Did I? You're right, I think I did.

PT : .... and went on the road with Kevin Ayers and The Whole World.

RW : That's true. I remember, he'd take two rooms at the hotel - one for him and one for the rest of the band. I mean, I know it was Ayers' band, but I'd never heard of that before! I come from this sort of lefty, co-operative background so I wasn't used to this sort of colonial treatment. Me and Mike Oldfield, Dave Bedford, LoI Coxhill alI scrunged up in this little rat-infested room - well, I suppose we were the rats really. Anyway, I thought that was a bit off so I jumped out of the frying pan and went back into the fire for a bit.

PT : To do the 4th Soft Machine album.

RW : That's it. Back into the fire, as I say.

PT : And then onto Matching Mole with David Sinclair, who was later replaced by Dave MacRae, Phil Miller and Bill MacCormick?



RW : Well, I wanted to play with people I got on with, who would let me sing. Jazz and rock was turning into a horrible hybrid form like railway lines that you couldn't get off. I wanted something that was using that same eclectic approach but which was looser. I liked bands like Tony Williams' Lifetime, a real joyful sort of traffic jam of a sound - like a conversation rather than a series of solos. We did a few tours and a coupIe of albums and just muddled along for a lot less money than I was getting before, but I'm a bit suicidal like that. I left the previous band just as they were starting to break even as well. I think Matching Mole would have carried on, but at the end of it Dave McRae [the man who wrote all the 'Goodies' songs with Bill Oddie!] wanted a trio which concentrated on me on drums and I didn't want to be

corralled into that again. We did do some gigs as a trio, me and Dave and a bass player, and I really enjoyed those but I wanted to start singing properly. I also met people who hadn't been into the jazz thing at all, like Francis Monkman, who was into working out composed structures. I was working on both of those things really when I broke my back, so obviously that put paid to them both because I couldn't drum any more, and I didn't really feel like singing either. I spent most of 1974 - or was it '73? I can't really remember when I did it - in hospital. People think that the LP which came out afterwards, 'Rock Bottom' , was about being paraplegic or about breaking your back - but it's not. I don't write songs about being paraplegic, l'm not that introspective actually. I'd already written quite a lot of it beforehand, it would have been material for the group with Francis Monkman.

PT : That group [Matching Mole Mark 3] never happened though?

RW : The reason I didn't want a group was that it was totally unfair, for a start asking musicians to hang around for months while you're sitting in hospital even though, nice geezers as they are, they might have done so. It's just not fair on them, I mean they've got to earn a living. And then wheelchairs - you just can't get them anywhere. It's taken my wife six months to find this place we're sitting in now, a single flat in London that a disabled person can use and afford. Touring would be quite out of the question. It would be hampering a whole group of people if I formed a band, it's completely out of the question. So the best thing was that I get my material out, such as I had, and try to do as much of it as I could myself. I got together with Nick Mason, a friend from the late Sixties, and he helped co-ordinate stuff that I couldn't possibly arrange myself - and we just got other musicians in to flesh it out. They seemed to understand my stuff- to me, the Rock Bottom group was more like a group than anything I've ever had before. We knew each other well enough to be able to work together, but the situation was unusual enough to put an adventurous thread through it and make everybody stir the creative juices a bit. I felt better after that than I had done for years.

PT : You obviously had some understanding people around you then?

RW : I certainly did. I got remarried - in fact, I think our wedding day was the same day as 'Rock Bottom' came out. It all came together nicely. My first wife and I had split up quite amicably, but as I say I just hadn't been a very good husband or father. I was just too busy speeding about all over the place. So maybe it was a punishment or something...

PT : But then, with respect, you weren't able to speed about so much, were you?

RW : Well, no. That's what my wife says, too!

PT : And then you had your hit single, 'I'm A Believer'.

RW : It was more of a single than a hit, but you can put the two words together if you want to. It was Simon Draper, the A&R man at Virgin,'s idea. Especially in England, record companies get very worried if you don't do singles.

PT : And you did a concert, as well.

RW : Yeah, Dave Stewart came along, Mike Oldfield - he was brilliant, he heard all my keyboard stuff, which I thought was inimitable, and just did it. I thought well, that puts me in my place, doesn't it? It was a good laugh, except Virgin sneakily recorded it and then put the cost of recording onto my bill, which I thought was a bit nasty.

PT : Next, you did the second album - 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard'.

RW : That's right. Although it had my name on it, it was basically a lot of people doing things that they hadn't perhaps got another context for. I did a duet with Fred Frith on piano - Fred's got this wonderful lyrical side to his music which he likes to play down, but it's a shame to waste it. I just stuck some words on, and copped half the royalties for that which I thought was a bit unfair really. Brian Eno came along and mucked about with it all. He didn't like jazz, so it was good having him in on it - like a bit of salt where it might have been all sugar. He was good company, he's a witty man. They (Virgin) charged us an awful lot for recording it at the Manor - I think I only stopped paying it off two years ago. I don't think we're supposed to live this long, really. It's not in the contract!

"I don't think we're supposed

to live this long..."

PT : You were doing live stuff with Hatfield And The North as well?

RW : D'you know, I'd completely forgotten about that. Yes, I did do some stuff. And I'm on one of the tunes on their album ['Calyx']. I later wrote some words for it, but we never recorded that.

PT : Anyway, we had the two albums - what about 'Yesterday's Man' - wasn't that supposed to be a single?

RW : Well, yes - but Virgin Records felt it was a bit...lugubrious. I liked it, myself. It only ever came out on a compilation.

PT : So how much do you feel part of what we loosely term "The Canterbury Scene"?

RW : I didn't even know it meant me until interviewers started asking me about it. As I say, because I'd bussed in from outside to go to school there I didn't really consider myself a Canterbury person. I think it really means people like Hugh Hopper and Richard Sinclair, who are genuinely based in that area. I met them there and I'm eternally grateful that I met someone like Hugh who provided something I don't think anyone else could have provided. My mind doesn't dwell on it as a place though, if I recall a former fantasy world upon which I draw, it's Harlem in the Forties and not Canterbury in the Fifties.

PT : Then there was a bit of a gap in your career?

RW : Well, what looks like a gap was just me living and not putting things down for posterity. I spent a lot of time sitting and thinking, worked on some odd things including a play by Harold Pinter. By that time I'd become more interested in what's now called 'World Music' - basically it's just anything that's not done by young white men from England or America. Or Australia, yes indeed.

PT: Then we had the string of singles on Rough Trade?

RW : I was going to a lot of political gatherings. People would ask me who I thought the best vocalist I'd heard that year was, and I'd say Dennis Skinner. His gigs were a lot better than most rock gigs! Alfie (my wife) took very good care of me, was always devising things for me to do to prevent me from getting bored like going to a festival of foreign films, that was a real eye-opener. Either because of that or in spite of it, I started to get more and more impatient with the idea that rock music is intrinically rebellious. Compared to the marginalised lives that the people I was becoming interested in were leading, the rock thing was a very safe and cosy part of the establishment. The establishment has always had a place for rebellion. Rock and Roll didn't invent that. So then I met a woman named Vivienne Goldman who was writing at the time about reggae from a political point of view. It was a very enlightened look at why black kids in London were being more un-English than their parents. She introduced me to a friend of hers, Geoff Travis, who was a&r man for Rough Trade Records. Geoff said, if ever you feel like recording again, let us know. I hadn't got any albums in my mind, but I thought I could at least try some of these other songs that I'd been listening to. So I deliberately went out to do a Chilean song or a Cuban song or get some Bengalis in the studio to play something. That generated my juices again, and it's that which really got me back into it.

PT : So you did several singles...

RW : Well, I didn't figure I was ready for an album, and besides they weren't supposed to be something that would last. They were done quickly, and there was that feeling about the punk movement which I've always liked, the same as with Matching Mole, that it wasn't a question of a polished, finished product, it was just the adventure of trying things.

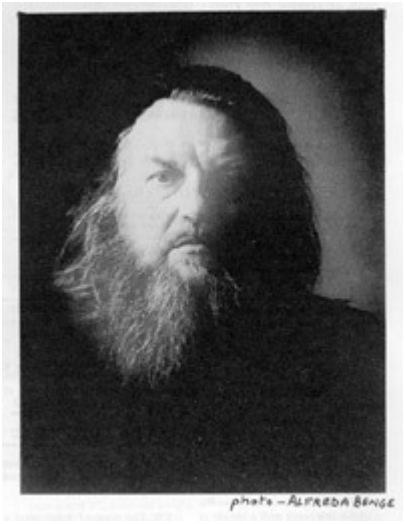
PT : I suppose the most successful one was 'Shipbuilding'?

RW : Yes, eventually. I think what happened was, Clive Langer and Elvis Costello had heard a few of my singles and cottoned onto them, I think Costello liked the way I'd done a choir-boy version of a chic disco thing ['At Last I'm Free']. So they wrote 'Shipbuilding' and offered it to us to do - said they considered it a Robert Wyatt song. I was really

impressed that they could do that, imagine what somebody else would do and find it just fits them like a glove. So Costello took us into the studio and produced it. Basically I just sang over a backing track. The bass player from Madness [Mark Bedford] played on it. Mind you, it all cost £10,000 more than it earned for us. That's what they call the price of success.

PT : An album came out which was basically the singles plus a couple more things besides?

RW : 'Nothing Can Stop Us'. A gratuitous title. Quite ironic really, it's meant to look like a Leftie sort of thing, but in fact it's lifted from some American talking in 1932 - "we should not make the mistake the English made of trying to govern the world, we shall merely own it. Nothing can stop us now!" At the time it was quite contentious, but I think it's turned out to be more or less true.



> Zoom

PT : 'Animals'?

RW : 'That was Victor Schonfield, an American film director who was making this 'Animals' film. He had a friend of ours doing the narrative and he asked her if she could find somebody who could do the film music. They got permission to use a track of Talking Heads music for the opening of the film, but they asked five hundred pounds for something like three minutes. He paid it, but he still had an hour and a half to fill. So I did the rest for a hundred pounds!

PT : Then it's 'Old Rottenhat' after that?

RW : Yes it is. I'd put ideas out without having a coherent reason for an LP. I was originally a drummer and not a composer, it's only occasionally it comes together enough. Thanks to the feedback from the singles though I'd become active again and had generated enough of my own material for an album, so I went and did it. I think the title, 'Old Rottenhat', was influenced by Ian Dury - he's one of the great lyricists in the English language, a very underestimated writer. He's also very funny, and I appreciate that. It was he who inspired me to use that obscure old London expression that I'd heard Alfie use.

"Ian Dury ... is one of the great lyricists in the English language."

PT : So we're coming now towards the present time.

RW : Inexorably, yes. I did an EP called 'Work In Progress' - Jeff wanted me to do *something* but I didn't have enough for an LP so I did that instead. I really enjoyed that - it was a nice studio. I did five things there including a Cuban song, a Chilean song, 'Amber & The Amberlines' (one of Hugh's tunes) and 'Pigs' for some Animal Rights people [Deltic, Captain Sensible's label]

PT : And then your new album, 'Dondestan'?

RW : Well, I'd been moving house further north where I could afford a room without any neighbours above for the same money. Now I can make a lot of noise and put my cymbals up - I've got a proper music room for the first time. The result of that is 'Dondestan'. The trouble was, I'd got the music, but I still hadn't really got around to the words. Alfie, my wife, had written all these poems in a collection called 'Out Of Season' which was ostensibly about being in Spain in the winter, but it also seemed to me to be about a lot of things... it would be pretentious to say what though, I just hope it resonates in different ways for the people listening to it. So I sang her poems to the music I was working on and just juggled it about until it all came together. There's one of Hugh's tunes on there as

well, I like to get one by him on a record - I'm superstitious about that - at least I've got somebody else to blame then!

At this point, we had to leave to make way for a journalist from some far glossier magazine than ourselves. We thank Robert profusely, shake hands and emerge onto the sunlit balcony of his flat. I'll leave the last words to Mr. Wyatt:



It's been a pleasure! A bit like a psychedelic experience going through it an that fast - I must have missed quite a bit out. I don't take any responsibility for lapses in memory or outright lies!

Interview : Mick Dillingham and Phil
Intro : Dill - Article : Phil
With thanks to Chris Stone for tea, sunbathing, bananas and organisation.

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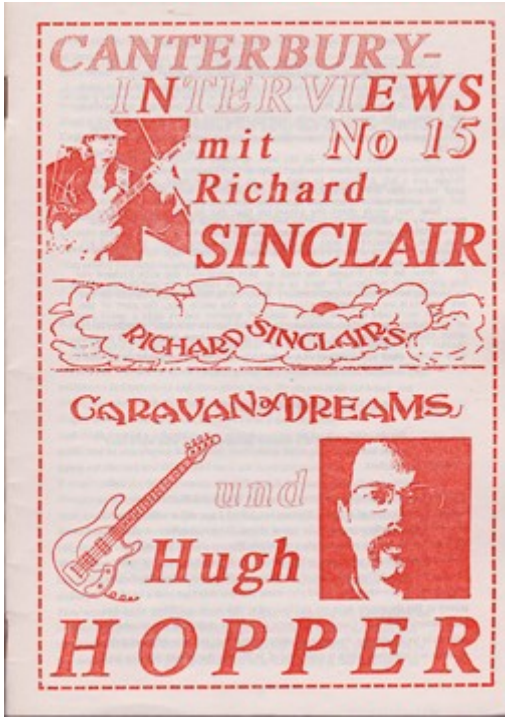
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The Hugh Hopper interview - Canterbury Nachrichten - N° 15 - Winter 1991



THE HUGH HOPPER INTERVIEW

"Keep on Caring", that is what Hugh Hopper did earlier that day for his daughter. But before he left, we made this 25-minutes interview:

F.: Hugh, what was Canterbury like 25 years ago?

H.H.: 25 years ago it was a very quiet place, it was just a small market town, nothing really happening at all. A very strange place to have a center of anything, because apart from the cathedral nothing happened there at all. Then about 25 years ago they started building the university, so things started. More influences came in from outside. And more and more tourism. It's still not a lot of music happening here but it's more an open place than it used to be. It used to be a very small market and country town.

F.: So what differed the Canterbury music scene at that time from the scenes at other towns like London?

H.H.: Well actually I think at the time it wasn't really a much difference. People like Richard, Richard Sinclair and Robert Wyatt and I were interested in different sorts of music, it wasn't just one sort of music we were in, just Rock'n'Roll or so... I mean Robert had listened to a lot of jazz, he introduced me into jazz. But his parents were interested in modern classical music, Stravinski and Varese and all this. I think what it was is that we were open to different influences from outside. Evenings of indian music and ethnic music, so it wasn't just... I think that most other bands that were still playing, were actually playing then in Canterbury were just doing one sort of music. They were playing Rock or Pop or Country and Western or something like that, whereas we were interested in lots of different things.

F.: How did you manage to get this all together?

H. H.: (laughs) That was a great difficulty, yes, it wasn't easy. We didn't play very much to be honest. I mean the Wilde Flowers, which was the first band we started about the end of 1964, and probably in the first year we only played maybe, I don't know, ten, twelve concerts the whole year. I mean, it wasn't a great festival of music. It was quite hard to find enough places to play.

F.: So at that time the Wilde Flowers were just a local band with no international or national meaning, wasn't it?

H.H.: Yeah that's right. We just played around the area, in Kent. I think we played one concert in Essex which is the other side of the river from London, that was it. It was really a local band, some of us had jobs as well and it wasn't professional, wasn't really fulltime professional.

F.: How did the kick come? Now, twentyfive years later, where do you see the point of break now?

H.H: I think probably the break really was in about '66, '67 when the music in England was open to different possibilities. So that when Robert left Wilde Flowers he started up Soft Machine with Daevid Allen. Because at that time there were lots of possibilities of different music, you didn't just have to be a soul band or a jazz band or country and western band. People were actually trying new things, it was the time of Hendrix and all the English bands, different bands, they were trying different things.

It still wasn't easy, it was not suddenly easy to be an avantgarde musican or whatever you want to call that, or experimental. Most people still wanted to listen to the music that had been before.

But in London there were possibilities, the clubs, to play different things. Which was all part of the kind of flower power and whatever hippy-stuff, it was going on at that time, you know.

F.: At that time you were a musician, but for Soft Machine first you worked as a Roadie?

H.H.: It was kind of mixed. It wasn't a clear distinction because for a long time I went to school with Robert Wyatt and we listened to music together and we tried different things, I was playing with Robert and Daevid Allen in London and in Paris just a very few things. We were trying out different things. And then towards the end of '64, '65 I started writing songs. Things like The Beatles were happening and it was suddenly like: O.K. you didn't have to be a jazz musician, you could be a songwriter as well, so I started writing songs.

In fact when Robert broke away from Wilde Flowers they still did some of my songs in Soft Machine, some of the older stuff which is on the first album. So I still connected really. And then there was one point where they needed a road manager and so they asked me if I wanted to do it. So I said yeah, why not. In fact soon after that went on the Hendrix Tour with Soft Machine in the States.

When they were recording the first album it was still Kevin Ayers on bass. But I did some things in the studio, I played a bit of bass here and there. And they were still doing music of mine. And then gradually towards the end of '68 when Kevin had had enough cause it was such a lot of work in America, it was like being at war. You're away from home for years and years and years and he didn't like it, so he left. So the others, Mike Ratledge and Robert, they asked me to join on bass, from then on I was full-time bassplayer.

F.: You just mentioned the connection to Jimi Hendrix. Where there more connections, is it true that Jimi Hendrix played guitar on the first Soft Machine single?

H.H.: I don't know if he played guitar. In fact he and Robert were quite friendly and there are some demos which Robert did after the first Hendrix tour. Robert was actually staying with Hendrix in California and Hendrix actually played some bass on demos of Robert's. Yeah, there was a lot of mixing, things like Robert used to sing, he did some backing vocals on "Stone free", which is on the other side of "Hey Joe", the backing vocal of Robert and there as well as other people. It was a mixture because Hendrix and Soft Machine were in the same Management Company, so they were all friends and if Hendrix was recording

then Robert was to go along to the sessions and Mitch would come along to the sessions we were doing.

F.: It was a very high time of Soft Machine with you, Robert Wyatt and Mike Ratledge. But then it flew away somehow. What did happen?

H.H.: The thing is that when it first started, Soft Machine with Kevin, it was a very different band. It was songs and it was kind of part of the whole sixties, late sixties atmosphere, with Daevid Allen. I mean when Daevid left Mike Ratledge became more dominant and he was more interested in composing and jazz and classical music. So it became more structured and more technical. I think that was the change. Robert gradually became less and less of an influence in the band. So the things like songs went out completely, it became more of a sort of a jazz-rock band. So it changed. But I mean it's like all bands, it changes all the time, it doesn't stay the same.

Kevin was only in the band for about two years. I think I was in the band for about four years. And they carried on after I left for about another five years with completely different musicians. There are two ways you can think about it. Either you should change the name completely as soon as the first person leaves, so it is no longer Soft Machine, it's something else. Or you can say it's like a changing group with people leaving, coming, going. I mean it did change, it became more jazzy, more technique really I think.

F.: What happened to you after you left the Soft Machine?

H.H.: The first thing I did I joined Stomu Yamashita who is a Japanese percussionist, played with him, did some records. Then I joined a hand called Isotope with Gary Boyle. Did some things with Carla Bley. Lots of different things really, I play with people in the jazz and jazz-rock area mostly. Made a couple of solo records and then recently, the last four or five years I've been working mostly with dutch and french musicians.

A very good guitarist called Patrice Meyer with whom I work with, he's one of my favourite musicians. In fact I feel happier playing music now than I was in Soft Machine days because at that time firstly I was younger and when you're younger you are always trying to find a way and it's very hard actually to find what you're really searching for. Also in Soft Machine, when you're in a band which has a certain amount of success then the problem is that you're really there it's like being in a job. It became very much like a job. You know that in six months time you'll he playing in Duisburg or you'll be playing in Paris. And it's really not like when you first start playing music which is: you want to play because you just want to play the instrument or you want to hear the sounds because you love music. But when you become part of a big band then it becomes a business really: You are going to play because you are being booked to play six months before. You may not feel like playing that night.

It's not always had, obviously, but looking back on it now I see that I'm actually happier now than I was then. Because I'm playing when I want to play and with the people I want to play with.

F.: So how did you survive all the time?

H.H.: Good question. I still get some money from things like Soft Machine records. They're all being re-released now on CD which is good. Money from writing music. I mean, I'm not a rich person, I don't have a big car and I don't have a big house so I don't need a lot of money. But I survived.

F.: I heard you worked as a taxi driver?

H.H.: Yeah, for two years I worked in Canterbury as a taxi driver. I havn't done it now for about two or three years. I was so because I was writing a lot. I wanted to be a writer as well as a musician. There are two ways you can do it: You can either look for music work which is not interesting but a lot of money like work in a restaurant, playing music you're not really interested in, which I don't want to do. You just as well might work as a taxi driver because it doesn't interest me to play notes. In fact it's better not to because otherwise you start hating music because you start not even thinking about music, it's just notes. Notes equal money, it's not for me, you know. I'd rather do just a few gigs a year and be interested in the music than do seven nights a week and not being interested in music.

F.: During time your approach towards music seems to have changed. With Soft Machine it was more the jazzy rock-thing, and now you are playing more the

rocky jazz-thing.

H.H.: Well, it comes and goes. It's never one thing or the other. There are times when I'm really interested in writing music, there have been periods when I've written a lot. When I work with Richard Sinclair there was a period about eight years ago when I was writing all the songs, the piano writing things a lot of course. I don't do that now, it comes and goes. I'm glad it does, I hate to be sort of the musician who just does one thing, it doesn't interest me. Although it might make more money.

F.: What do you think of today's music scene?

H.H.: There are good things. I mean lot of it doesn't interest me at all. In every sort of music there are like... Most of the musicians and the music is boring it's just copies what's gone before. There is just a very small percentage of people who are creative. And I don't think that has changed even now. It's easy to say it's all rubbish, it's all machine music. But even within machine music there are good things and bad things in the same percentage. It's the same in jazz. There is a loadful of very very boring jazz. Always has been, because people think: Oh, I like jazz, I play jazz but they don't necessarily have the genius to actually doing it different.

That's the same in all sorts of music. Whenever I listen to the radio, if I listen to a pop station there'll probably be one song in about ten that has got something interesting. So I don't think it has really changed. What has changed is you got a lot of technical advances now which we didn't have. When I first started playing most of the instruments playing with you just had to sit down and play. That was actually a physical thing you had to play with. But now you've got the possibilities of writing computer music and sequencers and things like that. So that has changed. But I think it still depends on being an interesting person doing the computer. It hasn't really basically changed.

F.: What do you think of your place in music business today?

H.H.: My place?

F.: You once wrote a song which was quite popular: "Memories", even sung by Whitney Houston on a Material record. You were a kind of pop star for a certain generation when you played in the Soft Machine. What do you think of your place now in music?

H.H.: I think that was almost an accident. I don't think I was ever a pop star anyway. Soft Machine when they were popular it was a lucky period because there was possibilities then to do something that was called progressive music. But for the great majority of people they weren't really interested in Soft Machine. They were still interested in Rolling Stones, Rod Stewart. And I don't think that changed. So I never really fell that I was a pop star. It was no question that we were. We were just a successful jazz-rock band. So in a sense I don't think my position has really changed, I still feel myself to be a very small part of music. It is not really my desire to be famous. It is more important to me just sort of write a good tune or to play a good concert with people.

Of course everyone likes to get paid money and it's nice to have more money than you've had before. But I never really tried to be famous, it's hard to tell though. When you're young you probably think, yeah, I want to be famous. I never felt myself to be in the mainstream of music anyway. It has never really interested me. I think if we were popular it's an accident more than a grant desire. I think that was the answer.



F.: What happened to the other members of Soft Machine, what are they doing now?

H.H.: I still play sometimes with Elton Dean, he's still active, mostly in Jazz, he's playing sax. He has his own band and he plays with Phil Millers Band. Mike Ratledge, the keyboard player, he is very very rich. He's doing music for television commercials and films. But he doesn't play music, he just runs a studio. He is very very successful. He does all the famous TV commercials in England: Renault cars and things like this.

Robert Wyatt is living up in Lincolnshire in the North of England. And in fact he is just being recording a record now which is good because he hasn't been working much. Robert is very... keeps very to himself and doesn't... he's not interested in just being a singer because he's known as a singer. And he wants to sing when he's got something to sing about or write about. So for a long time, I think it's for five years or something he hasn't brought out a new record. He's just been recording recently. That's good. I suppose Elton and I are the ones that are playing most still. Elton is an actual jazz musician and he will always be playing. When he has got a saxophone he will play it.

There have been times when I haven't played at all for a year cause I've been interested in writing and haven't been interested in music for a year. I don't consider myself just as a musician. I can do certain things in music but I'm not a great musician, not only a musician. I'm interested in writing and other things as well.

F.: You just got a new CD out, a live recording with a dutch band, very good jazz music. What are your plans for the future? Making that kind of music with a dutch band?

H.H.: Yes, I think so because I enjoyed playing with them. When that band started, that was another accident really because there was a friend of mine in Holland. I stopped playing for about a year and when I wanted to start again I contacted people to try and get some ideas for places to play. And so a friend of mine in Holland said, well I know this dutch guys who are very good, come and do a weeks work.

And so I did that and it could have been terrible but in fact it worked out well and the band has gradually changed. When it started it was two saxophone players and keyboards, guitar, bass and drums. And now it's just one sax player and a guitarist so it's more jazz-rock than jazz.

That's the band with Patrice Meyer, the french guitarist has settled into that formation and people I like working with. And a keyboard player Dionys Breukers I like working with cause he's not just a jazz musician, he will play sort of samples of different things, voices and sitars. Sometimes he wouldn't play at all in a number, he would just lend aside and let us going which is great because it doesn't mean you always gonna sound the same, sound different. I'm working with that. Also with Lindsay Cooper. Last three years we've been

doing the whole Moscow project. In fact it's almost finished and we only did two gigs last year. But we might be playing in Moscow itself in September.

I've also been playing with Didier Malherbe from France. Whoever phones. Whenever someone phones and it sounds interesting I'll play. Always doing things with Richard Sinclair, he's doing a recording project at the moment. He and I have done things in the past, writing songs together and playing together. So whatever happens, whatever the phone rings.

F.: Whenever the phone rings, that's the way musicians usually work if they're not only in it for the money. But what has this all got to do with Canterbury? Is there still a Canterbury scene, is there still a Canterbury music?

H.H.: I think it's a journalistic label... it's a useful thing... I mean I don't mind it but people like Robert, he in fact hates the idea if someone says: Oh, you're a Canterbury musician. He says: No, I was born in somewhere else. He just happened to go to school here. It's true that in the time when the Wilde Flowers started we hardly ever worked in Canterbury. It wasn't till Robert and Daevid went to London to start Soft Machine that anything happened at all. They weren't really a Canterbury band. So it's a usefull label that people have put on it to group together people like Caravan and... The only two bands really that were Canterbury musicians were Soft Machine, but they didn't actually start in Canterbury, it's really Wilde Flowers and Caravan. But it's a useful connection. Even when I play with Lindsay, I never played with Lindsay until three years ago, she was with Henry Cow and things like that. So people think of Henry Cow as being a Canterbury band, but they got no Connection with Canterbury at all. No one of them came from here at all, they came from Cambridge or something like that. It doesn't worry me, I use it if it helps people understand or listen to more music then it is fine.

I think it's a rather artificial label. Canterbury has never been a really good place to play. I played one gig last Friday and it was the first gig I played here for about two years. It's not virtually a musical place. There are lots of people who've come from it. There are few pubs here, but it's not really a musical hot bet at all.

F.: Is it true to say that Canterbury is a state of mind?

H. H.: Yes, I think that's right. It's a confused state of mind. Canterbury, what does it mean? I was born in Canterbury and I lived here until I was about nineteen and then I lived in other places in France and London, other places in Kent. Gradually came back this way. It wasn't really a plan, I don't know, it just happened this way. Richard is the same. Richard was born in Canterbury, he went to school here and he's lived in other places too, but he's back here. And Pye Hastings from Caravan, he's lived here, but he wasn't born here, he's from Scotland. It's a nice idea because it's a nice little town, it's got a cathedral and in the summer it looks good, it's a nice idea. It's not really much happening here. If you say to me: Well, where is it happening, I got to think: well, let's see, maybe one gig every two weeks.

F.: When will we see you back in Germany again?

H.H.: I hope to be playing in October when we're working again with Patrice and the dutch guys. I don't know how many days yet, we're starting in Holland in October and suppose we'll be connecting with German gigs as well. Also I have friends in Germany which is good, in Frankfurt and the famous Manfred Bress in Duisburg, he's got this fanzine. He's been responsible for a lot of things really because he knows things about me I don't know about myself. He connects that with lots of other people which is good.

It's always been much easier to play in Germany, Holland and France and Belgium than in England and it always was. Even when Soft Machine were at the peak of success. It's much more interest in those countries. In England it has always been very kind of closed. You're either interested in one sort of music or another sort of music.

There are not many people in this country here who are open to different things. I get the impression in Germany and France and Holland particularly that a lot of people will listen to jazz and listen to other things as well. They'll think: I may not have heard this but at least I'll give it a try. But in England the general impression is: I haven't heard it, therefore I don't want to hear it. If I've heard it already I'll like it maybe. People in England are very conservative musically. This is why I hardly ever play here. I used to play in Holland and Germany.

F.: Have you got any contacts in Germany?

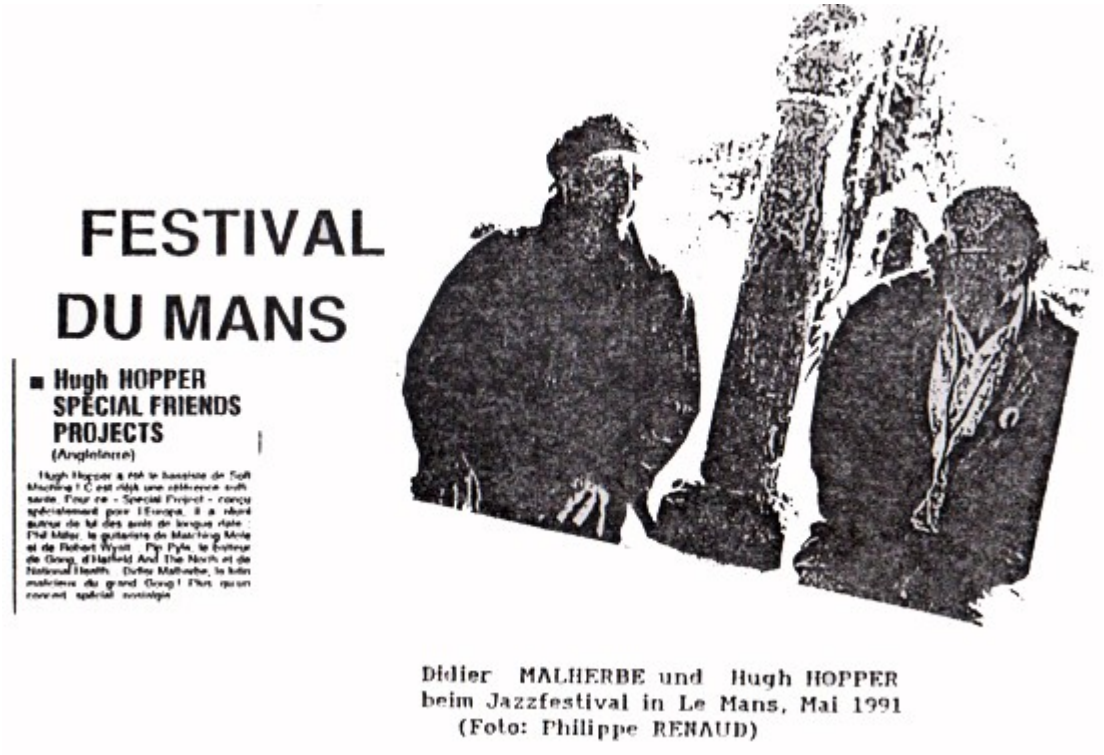
H.H.: There's a guy in Essen called Markus Figgen, he works for a production company called Hinkelstein. They are the people who are trying lo get me somewhere in Germany. I think we will be starting working with him in the Ruhr area cause that's where he is, round Essen and other places as well. We did a couple of gigs in Germany this spring. In Frankfurt we played once and right down in the south in Immenstadt, very small club.

I like Germany. I haven't always because I didn't speak German at all until quite recently. I actually started learning german because I felt so stupid not speaking any german at all. Once you can speak a little bit of a language it makes life a lot easier when you feel you're not completely lost. Because in England you usually learn French in schools and you only learn German when you want to. So I actually started doing lessons myself. Deutschländer.

F.: Would you like to say something to the Germans?

H. H.: It is difficult now. Das ist schwer. Dankeschön für... I can't remember it in german, it's stupid, isn't it? Ich habe alle mein deutsch vergessen. Wiederhören, wiedersehen and also bis nächste…

Frank Müller



Didier MALHERBE und Hugh HOPPER
beim Jazzfestival in Le Mans, Mai 1991
(Foto: Philippe RENAUD)

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Comrade Softy - Q N°61 - October 1991

COMRADE SOFTY



One-time drummer with The Soft Machine, full-time member of the Communist Party, Robert Wyatt's life was changed forever by the accident that crippled him in 1973. But he kept on making music - just about. "If anything," he tells Martin Aston, "it helped me with the music, because the hospital left me free to dream."

"**I'M A MUSICIAN** when I remember to be," Robert Wyatt confesses with an earnest tug at his straggly, greying beard. "In fact, I don't even think about it very often. I'm still mainly a jazz fan. If you could get a job as one, I'd apply for it. 'I want you to listen to the entire works of John Coltrane'. 'OK boss, sure...'"

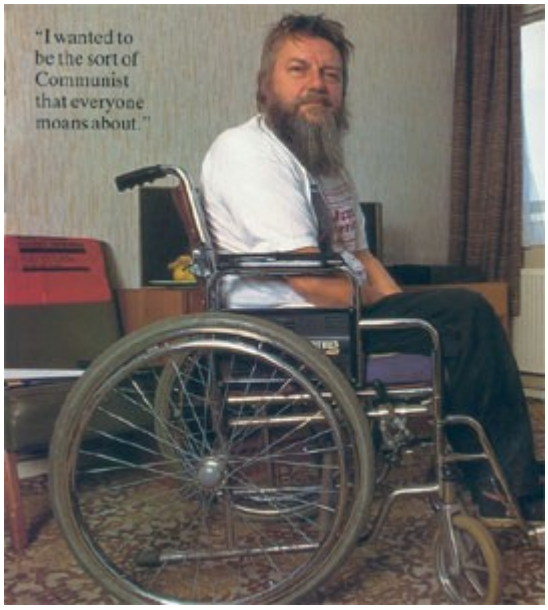
Over the years, Wyatt has become accustomed to defending his periodic absences from the music business. No two or even three-year between albums hibernation here; give or take the odd single or collaboration, since 1975's Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, it's taken him five years to release a brace of singles and a film soundtrack, another four to release a selfpenned album and a further six years before the new LP, Dondestan, was ready to go.

"Basically, since the mid-'70s, you could say my preoccupations have been, uh, political," Wyatt sighs, visibly uncomfortable with the limited connotation of his words. "I've done things like write articles for the Morning Star on topics like Bulgarian folk music or foreign radio stations, or, in the case of my last piece, Courtney Pine. I also write letters to anyone who'll print them, and a lot who won't. It doesn't sound like a lot, does it? I've probably turned into the left equivalent of those anachronistic, retired generals who dash off furious letters to the DaiIy Express - except I write to the BBC..."

Wyatt's career would undoubtedly have taken a different turn had he not, in 1973 , drunkenly fallen out of a fourth-floor window at a party and broken his back. He'd left his Canterbury school in 1960 without any qualifications but with an overwhelming love of jazz - "I used to live precariously in a kind of reconstructed ' 40s Harlem in my head and only come out to eat and sleep" - which led him to the drums and his first group, The Wilde Flowers. They soon split in half, Pye Hastings and David Sinclair forming Caravan while Wyatt teamed up with Mike Ratledge, Daevid Allen and Kevin Ayers in Soft Machine.

The Softies, as Wyatt calls them, joined Pink Floyd at the forefront of Britain's new wave of psychedelic art-rockers, quickly turning to free- form jazz-rock fusion. But

there were constant tribulations - "The history of the group," Wyatt says, "was throwing each other out of it" - and Wyatt himself finally departed after the fourth album, to record the largely instrumental solo album, The End Of An Ear, after which he formed the equally experimental Matching Mole, a group of "people I could talk to" and who gave him the chance to sing in that characteristically affecting, melancholic voice. (When asked now whether he likes his voice, he dodges the question by self-deprecatingly referring to one critic who likened it to " Jimmy Somerville on valium.")



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt in North London, Summer 1991. Disabled by an accident in 1973, the one-time Soft Machine drummer turned his attentions to singing, to solo records like Shipbuilding, and to politics.

Matching Mole were already exploring Wyatt's melancholy fusions when his accident occurred, committing him to hospital for a year and depriving him of the bottom half of his drum kit when he got out. Unable to maintain a group from a wheelchair, Wyatt slowIy transformed the music that was to become the group's third album, ending up at Rock Bottom, a brave, deeply ironic title for a work whose vivid, painful introspection and dreamy, musical landscapes have been compared to those of Van Morrison's Astral Weeks. "I was just relieved that I could do something from a wheelchair," Wyatt confesses. "If anything, being a paraplegic helped me with the music because being in hospital left me free to dream, and to really think through the music."

AT VIRGIN Records' suggestion - "because they had this English idea, that to exist, you had to have a single" - Wyatt recorded The Monkees' I'm A Believer and found himself on Top Of The Pops when it scraped into the Top 30. But the follow-up, a cover of Chris Andrews's Yesterday Man, was never officially released, because Virgin mogul Richard Branson thought it "a bit too gloomy". Wyatt grins at the memory.

1975's Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard was a jazzier, eclectic affair, "more a case of roping in mates in and using their stuff." The mates included exiled South African trumpeter Mongezi Feza, guitarist Fred Frith and oblique strategist Brian Eno, "with his toy machines, desperately hating jazz," Wyatt fondIy recalls. And then silence. "Remember, I started out as a drummer and became a singer, because that was the only thing I could do properly once I found myself in a wheelchair. I've never been a songwriter in the sense of doing it all the time. When I have enough ideas, I start working on them. There has to be a reason for each record I make."

The reason behind his re-emergence in 1980 with four double-sided cover-version singles was two-fold. Being chairbound knocked the idea of the musician's life of travelling on the head, but paradoxically opened up a broader worldview via books, television and, in particular, radio, as Wyatt voraciously tuned in to local, jazz and black music radio and further afield to stations over the globe. Inspired by his wife Alfie, depressed and angry about the continuing existence of apartheid and what he perceived to be the NATO powers' colonial attitude toward the Third World, Wyatt became increasingly politicised, which culminated in his joining the Communist Party.

"I wanted to be the kind of Communist that everyone moans about. I wanted to stick to the party line and see what I got out of it. I wanted to work more as a party member who happened to sing than a musician who was dragging politics into music. At the same time, I came to the conclusion that rock, as an alternative culture and threat to the old order, was becoming increasingly hard to take seriously."

Wyatt's covers were a fascinating selection from diverse cultural contexts but unified by a folk/ethnic base and spirit of resistance. Caimanera (or Guantanamera, as it is better known in the West), virtually Cuba's national anthem, and The Red Flag rubbed shoulders



Wyatt drumming with Soft Machine. "It's taken me this long to get over not being a proper kit drummer. Now I enjoy the top half of the kit."

with an American a cappella tribute to wartime Russia, Stalin Wasn't Stallin', and a chilling version of Billie Holiday's Strange Fruit. Compiled to make 1982's Nothing Can Stop Us, and free of ego, fashion, patronage and sloganeering, the album is arguably the best political record yet made.

By this point, Wyatt had recorded the Animals Film soundtrack and relocated to the Catalan region of Spain, primarily because the light was better for Alfie's painting, but also as a necessary retreat from Blighty. Not that Wyatt could keep his distance. In 1983, he was back on Top Of The Pops with Shipbuilding, with its emotive, Falklands-inspired Elvis Costello Iyrics.

Complete with a smoky, jazz-trio arrangement, Shipbuilding was tailor-made for Wyatt's plaintive croon: "They sent me a cassette through the post because they thought l'd like a go, which I did. It was brilliant of them to think it sounded like a Robert Wyatt song, and not to have met me and got it so right. I was very moved."

WYATT has always enjoyed collaboration. Working Week and Ben Watt and Michael Mantler were among his cohorts through the' 80s, plus Jerry Dammers and the SWAPO singers, with whom he sang 1985's Wind Of Change single, to spotlight the South African occupation of Namibia. The following month, Wyatt returned with Old Rottenhat, 10 of his own songs which exposed a multitude of sins, two being the SDP/Liberal Alliance and the US-aided repression of the Pacific island East Timor. But can political pop stars make a difference?

"Well, yes. For example, I think the Nelson Mandela concert contributed something to his release, though it didn't get rid of apartheid, which is still intact in economic and political terms. One of the reasons why I got involved in politics was that I didn't think art, or culture, was a hammer. I think artists take a much more modest role as witness. I'm just trying to make a much better news programme that the ones that keep buggering up my radio!"

Which brings us to Dondestan, recorded at the start of 1991 near his Lincolnshire home, he and Alfie having come back to England for medical reasons - "the Spanish don't know much about aging paraplegics and I'd rather be near those who are finding out!" Wyatt still manages to chuckle. And the reason for this burst of activity?



> Zoom

"Well, it's taken me this long to get comfortable with being a group by myself, and to get over not being a proper kit drummer. Now I enjoy the top half of the kit, and working out bass lines and a way to play them myself, to make the songs all a piece and in character. My trouble was that the word part of writing songs hadn't been oiled for a while, because writing letters or chatting is quite different to writing Iyrics, which have to be repeatedly heard. But it occurred to me that Alfie had written a bunch of poems when we were in Spain, about the reality of living in a holiday resort out of season, and the flotsam and jetsam of things in a disorientated place. So I've sung half a dozen of her poems and tacked on my usual right-on stuff at the end."

Dondestan is Spanish for "Where are they?". The title track namechecks Palestine and Kurdistan, while Lisp Service and Left-On Man both tackle colonialism. Wyatt starts

grimacing for a change. "It's colonialism a-go-go. All political talk has been about East-West but I've always felt it was a North-South split, which is the exploitation of the underdeveloped countries by the developed. And I got incredibly depressed by the bombing of the Basra Road during the Gulf War, when everyone was retreating, and all the euphoria surrounding it. I would like to be happier, to see news on TV liked, but I can't. I have to swallow it and then exorcise it."

What Wyatt can, and does, enjoy is his beloved jazz. And yet he doesn't make jazz music himself.

"No, I'm a gawping tourist of jazz, not a participant," he wistfully concludes. "Songs aren't really jazz. Jazz was my education, but the only thing that sounded convincing to me was what I do. I'm not a black American in Harlem, I'm an English bloke born in 1945, so if that's what I am and what I sound like, then that's what I should be doing. It's been a long process, finding my own voice."

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The born-again politico - The Guardian - September 26, 1991

THE BORN-AGAIN POLITICO

Jonathan Romney
The Guardian


The Guardian
Kinnock locks out two MPs
RAF welcomes Jackie Mann home
WRITERS!

ROBERT WYATT has just made a new LP, six years after his last one. He would have taken a lot longer over it, if not for the sight of two nuns walking on a Spanish beach. His wife Alfie wrote a poem about it, he set the poem to music, and the song turned into a record, Dondestan.

Rather than being the fruit of extended artistic agonies, the new record Wyatt claims, was made to pay the gas bill. "Every time I've done a recording I'm extremely dubious whether there's anything left in the tank." But over the last 25 years, Wyatt has consistently disgorged more and more intriguing tankfuls. Once the drummer with the Soft Machine, Dadaist doyens of thé British psychedelic era, Wyatt left to found his own group Matching Mole, but in 1973 fell out of a window, breaking his back, and has been in a wheelchair since then.

Dondestan arose out of two off-season winters spent south of Barcelona, Alfie's "verbal photographs" providing five of the songs. Wyatt's own lyrics on the record are more explicitly political, like the title track which posits an imaginary state of the dispossessed. "There probably is such a place. But it's also Spanish for 'Where are they?' We lived in a part of Spain which the locals couldn't afford to use when the tourists weren't there. Dondestan seemed the only title, when you add my songs about colonialism and dispossession."

The latter subjects have preoccupied Wyatt increasingly over the years. He admits to being a born-again politico: "I spent most of the seventies trying to climb out of the mirror world of rock narcissism and have a look outside." What he saw led him to record, among other things, an anti-vivisection film soundtrack, covers of Chilean freedom songs, and a single recorded with the SWAPO Singers and ex-Specials leader Jerry Dammers as a gesture of support for Namibia. For 10 years, he was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party, but that period ended recently, a parting celebrated in the LP's acidic jibe CP Jeebies. "I thought if you were prepared to call yourself communist, it meant you weren't afraid to be called Communist. But the party leadership spent the whole time apologising for the name. They've now become the Jolly-Nice-People-Like-Us-Not-Like-Those-Foreign-Ones Party. Some of the older communists I know, who still have Paul Robeson records, were really hurt."

Wyatt's enduring interest in what he calls "hard politics", and his availability to causes, make him an increasingly anomalous figure in pop. After the failure of Red Wedge and a

decade of post-Clash fatigue, the very notion of political pop is one that most commentators prefer to brush under the carpet. Wyatt is still committed to the idea of music as a soapbox, and feels an affinity with pop's inveterate orators, even if his own style is less vociferous than theirs.

"I totally enjoyed Red Wedge and the Style Council. My approach might be more circumspect but I don't wave the flag of 'subtle artist' at people. I would like to be unmistakeably right-on, but I don't have that confidence. I'm just grateful that there always is some little Speaker's corner somewhere." If that corner remains open in British pop, it's in no small part thanks to Wyatt's defiantly individual, if sporadic efforts.

- *Dondestan is available on Rough Trade.*

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Wheelie saying something - New Musical Express - 21 September 1991

WHEELIE SAYING SOMETHING



Beardy-weirdy radical ROBERT WYATT may have ended up in a wheelchair pursuing rock'n'roll Nirvana with '70s experimental cases Soft Machine, but he refuses to take the continuing distortions and skullduggery of the capitalist propaganda machine sitting down. His new album 'Dondestan', with help from poet wife Alfie, rails against Third World exploitation and the fate of the alternative viewpoint, reckons a hot to Trot STEVEN WELLS, and it's not half bad - for a Stalinist. (Black and) Wyatt riot:
TIM JARVIS.



Sometime between my bollocks dropping and my skin erupting I saw this beardy-weirdy in a wheelchair on *Top Of The Pops*, Cockernee geezering his way through The Monkees' 'I'm A Believer'.

I was very impressed, I remember, by the accent. For a few months "Then Oi Sawuh 'er Fayuss" became a catchphrase amongst Bradford youth.

Alfreda Benge grumbles as she drives us through flat, Lincolnshire farmland to a tea of ham and pickles, wholemeal bread and boiled eggs. She is Robert Wyatt's partner.

"I do the cleaning and the cooking and the shopping and he does the talking..." she says.

"They had an Acid House rave around here and all the locals were complaining about the noise. Then the week after they had this 'Fun Day' with Tornado bombers streaming over at treetop height. Oh, they didn't complain about that, they *loved* it!"

Robert Wyatt is an enemy of the state and he lives but miles from the airfields where US planes left to murder the children of Tripoli.

WHAT EVERYBODY knows about Robert Wyatt: he was the drummer for Soft Machine, he jumped out of a window and broke his back, he wrote 'Shipbuilding' (*really?- Ed*) and all left-wing music journalists have got their tongues stuck right up his arse.

Robert Wyatt is not Nikki Sixx, Ozzy, Izzy, Axl, or Sid the Vish. He's got a beard for a start, always a dead giveaway. And he has... these... long ... pauses in his conversation, like, dude, he is the only person in the entire world *who actually stops and thinks* before he answers a question. Spooky.

And there's his music. Um.



WHEELIE SAYING SOMETHING

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"They had an Acid House rave around here and all the locals were complaining about the noise. Then the week after they had this 'Fun Day' with Tornado bombers screaming over at treetop height. Oh, they didn't complain about that, they loved it!"

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'Dondestan' is Spanish for "Where is it?" It's a pun about countries like Kurdistan and Palestine that exist only in the hearts and minds of their people. And it's his new album which is tinkly and breathy and sad. The first half uses some of the poems that Alfie wrote during a couple of long sojourns in Spain.

With titles like 'The Sight Of The Wind' and 'Catholic Architecture', Alfie's poems are not exactly in the dig-it-up-and-carve- 'New Age Parasite' -on-the-corpse-with-a-rusty-razor-blade Manic Street Preacher style of rock nihilism.

In a different decade, where anything seemed possible and Thatcherism was still a nightmare well under wraps, Alfie was a "drummer's moll" who met up with Robert at the suggestion of his then-wife to help get him over a bout of depression.

Alfie was born in 1941 in Poland. Her father was an Austrian border guard who got her mother drunk and seduced her and, being a good Catholic, married her when she became pregnant. Years later she visited her father's family, visited his grave. One of her relatives, when asked what her father's politics were, replied "he was a good National Socialist (a Nazi) until the end". She resisted the temptation to piss on his grave.

Alfie and her mother spent the war being shunted around the Reich in cattle trucks. Her mother requested and got a move out of Dresden days before it was firebombed into ashes by the Allies. At the end of the war, whilst in a refugee camp, a British officer gave her mother 12 gold guineas. In Vienna, her mother, being a fashion conscious woman, swapped the coins for a handbag before coming to Britain to marry the British officer who

also happened to be an active member of the Communist Party.

The rest of the lyrics on 'Dondestan' are Robert's and they cover much more conventional Wyatt territory, including the exploitation of the Third World, privatisation and the scum-sucking liberal shitehawks of *Marxism Today*.

Oh yeah, another thing everybody knows about Robert Wyatt—he's a Stalinist. Not one of the headbanging personality cult loonies who'll deny that Uncle Joe was a murdering psychotic, racist bastard, but a defender of the (ex) Soviet Union as an imperfect but socialist state.

Me, I think he's full of shit. Usually, says Robert, interviews leave him depressed, but this time "I knew where I stood from the start," meaning that I'm a Trot and he's a Tankie - so we don't waste any time.

"The right-wing establishment eats eight left-wing pressure groups for breakfast - like those monsters in films that the more you use the flamethrowers or whatever the stronger it gets. So I suppose I just wanted to be as inedible as possible."

But he hasn't been glued to the box watching the toppling of the statues of Marx and Lenin. Alfie vets the TV and newspapers for him.

"We're herded week by week from one news story to another, it's thought control really. Soon we're all going to be terribly excited at the thought of another election. I used to quite like listening to Radio Havana, which would talk about literacy rates in the Third World, fresh water supplies in Asia. I think they have a better sense of priorities!

"I find a lot of things offensive that other people don't. I flinch away from looking at right-wing propaganda in the same way that Clare Short flinches away from looking at pornography. And it is propaganda and like all propaganda it serves two purposes. It builds their side up but it also knocks our side down, attempts to undermine our confidence and our ideas."

There are those who shout about the smothering effect of baby boomer culture, of the softness and idiocy and hypocrisy of the '60s generation - the people who gave us sexual liberation and soft drugs, who stormed the barricades in front of the US embassy, kicked seven shades of socialist shit out of the Paris riot pigs and now read Q and buy Tin Machine CDs and think Mike And The Mechanics are exciting and that The Traveling Wilburys have really got something to say and, sporting a hideous ponytail and a Next suit, tell us to *"swim with the dolphins and the sharks*" and then settle down and get af------ing mortgage and rot in suburbia. So how the hell did this particular hippy end up - in disillusioned, battered, sell-out city - as the last rock 'n' roll communist? "

...(*pause*)... I... never enjoyed the cultural triumphalism of rock'n'roll, using words like 'balding' and 'ageing' as insults. The way I saw it was like with Hendrix. The youth of the West were meant to be au fait with black culture and yet, at the same time, their governments were responsible for hideous acts in Mozambique and Angola."

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"We're herded week by week from one news story to another. It's thought control."

MUNCHING SALAD with Robert and Alfie, avoiding the verbal bushfires that start when I'm no longer able to restrain my frustration and confusion as to how two such decent, sorted out and intelligent people were able to ever see the Soviet Union as anything other than the sick, murderous travesty that it was, Alfie, who claims that she always knew that Lech Walesa was an anti-Semitic bastard and who cheered when Solidarity was crushed, asks Robert if he thinks they should adopt a sea-side donkey for the winter and then they tell me how they intend to bury their two million-year-old dog when it eventually dies.

Russian beer and English sunshine. Rock'n'roll drummers and Nazi forced labour. American bombers and pickled onions. When Robert wheels himself to the office to get some fags he dons these massive rock'n'roll gloves that make motorcycle gauntlets look like kiddies' mittens. In the bog Castro's speeches nestle next to *The Book Of Heroic Failures*. There's a novel here somewhere.

What the hell - intelligent pop music made by people who couldn't tell you the difference between Kylie and her grinning sister and who just don't understand why, in a world that for the first time has the resources to feed, clothe and house everybody, we still have the homeless and the starving. You can keep your Morrisseys.

Tim Jarvis

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There's a Wyatt going on - The Wire Issue 91 - September 1991



THERE'S A WYATT GOING ON

Robert Wyatt*, that is. The art-rock artisan of* Soft Machine *and* Rock Bottom *is back with a brand-new record.* **Ben Watson** *meets the unmatched mole of subversive pop. Photo by* **Michael Heffernan***.*

Robert Wyatt 's muse is back on-line. His new release, *Dondestan*, is a telling and sensual as anything he has produced over the last three decades. After a series of politically-oriented-projects - the SWAPO benefit with Jerry Dammers, "Winds Of Change", Elvis Costello's "Shipbuilding" - he has returned to the music he "hears in his head", a strange but effective mix of multitracked vocals and electric keyboards.

Drummer in The Soft Machine (the band, that, along with Pink Floyd, epitomised late-60s underground rock in London), Wyatt's second band Matching Mole was scuppered in 1973 by a fall that broke his back. Paraplegic and wheelchair bound, he had to do a musical rethink: jazz and rock drummers require legs. He found his voice could be an instrument.

In 1974 he released *Rock Bottom*, a masterpiece which many interpreted as a commentary on his condition. Such biographical interpretations are limiting. Being unable to stir up bass drum and hi-hat bombast may explain its calm, but the music was also an excellent critique of the techno-pomp that progressive rock had become. Its domestic quietism showed up commercialized virtuosity (Yes, ELP, Genesis, Chick Corea) as effectively as the garage virtues of punk did three years later. It had the haunting stillness of Claude Debussy or Marvin Gaye: power through poignancy. *Dondestan* does it again. How come?

"I got more into *Dondestan* than anything since *Rock Bottom*. The organ I used on *Rock Bottom* is called a Riviera. Alfie got it for us, it cost about ten bob in an Italian toy shop. It's a three or four-octave toy organ and I broke it in the late-70s and I thought, that's it - it's symbolic. But since coming here to Lincolnshire, Alfie said, Why don't you get it mended, and I've got it mended. It's one of the reasons I was able to pick up from *Rock Bottom*. You will hear the same sounds - it's exactly the same organ and they don't make it anymore.

It was not just the Riviera. Wyatt has a healthy horror of "setting texts", aware of the proper gel between word and note that characterizes authentic song. A Kip Hanrahan project on Paul Haines (lyricist for *Escalator Over The Hill*) led to a track he was pleased with. The project remains unreleased - unfortunate, because the other contributions (by, among others, Roswell Rudd, Evan Parker and Derek Bailey) sound intriguing too - but Wyatt learned that other people's texts could be a stimulus.

Robert Wyatt's partner, Alfreda Benge, had written a book of poems called *Out Of Season* when they were both wintering in Catalonia in the mid-80s.

"When you become very familiar with something, it becomes songlike in the head. I can't make a rule, but that's how it happened. The poems were not written to be sung and therefore they hadn't got the structures I fall into."

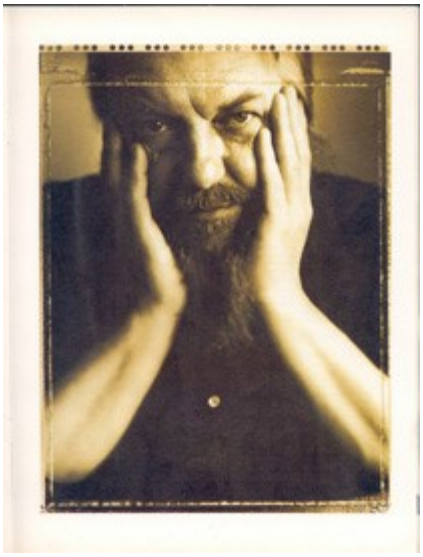
"The Sight Of The Wind" conveys what Wyatt calls "a sense of the unfixableness of things". Robert used a characteristically eccentric device.

"I used heavy breathing as a rhythm track which I haven't done since *Rock Bottom*, because you just get a dip and a rise rather than a punched-out beat. It was in seven, so it wouldn't settle."

Wyatt is quick to dissociate himself from the fusion groups who play in 7/4 in order to be "more complex".

"I'm not one for fancy time signatures - if you get too clever with time signatures it sounds like the *Newsnight* theme - but sometimes you do want an unbalanced shift. You can do anything in 4/4, look at Monk. 4/4 isn't just 4/4 anyway, it's 12/8. All any complex time signature really is, is binary, either twos or ones in various combinations - so no complex time signature is any more complex than a simple one."

There is a wonderful section in "Left On Man" where Wyatt choruses "oversimplify, reduce, oversimplify". This guying of the conventional refutation of Marxism sounds for all the world like Marvin Gaye singing "dance with me baby" on *I Want You*.



> Zoom

"Marvin Gaye is very close to my heart. There's something translucent about his textures, it's like a sea with various layers and undertones. But actually that comes off Groupa Irakere. They have this Cuban thing where a couple of blokes put down their instruments and do a chorus thing [sings and taps a clave rhythm]. I thought, it's so nice when they do that, why aren't I a group, why can't I put down my trumpets and trombones and do that as well?"

"Lisp Service" is a reply to Billy Joel's apology for US foreign policy, whose video appeased (supposedly) longforgotten wars by combining every famous image of American military atrocity - Hiroshima, napalm fire, summary execution - with a chorus that blithely claimed "*We didn't start the fire/It's been burning since the world began*".

"'We Didn't Start The Fire' worried me, I thought, Oh you smug git - yes you fucking did! If you're talking about 'we' I can talk about 'you'. I don't often listen to words, but he was saying, Listen to me, I've got something serious to say, and I thought - you'd better have!"

Hugh Hopper's rousing melody gives "Lisp Service" an eruptive force after the dreamy chant that precedes it. Wyatt's own tunes have startling intervals and pungent harmonies lacking in most pop music. Born in 1945, you might expect him to be a blues boomer. Actually it has always been jazz that fired him, ever since his father led him onto Fats Waller. He hears differently.

"My father used to play Shostakovitch, Hindemith, Bartok, and my mother played Monteverdi. I didn't hear much rock'n'roll and I never liked it. My dad introduced me to jazz, I think he'd seen *Stormy Weather* as a younger man. I thought it was so wonderful that it took over my ears completely. My dad got quite alarmed because I stopped playing the Bartok. That was it really, I was in love and I've remained so."

Just now, as Natalie Cole's revival of "Unforgettable" is bringing a startling shot of harmonic surprise to the charts - King Cole's piano intro suddenly unleashing chords synthipop producers have all forgotten - it is interesting to hear Wyatt point out a different direction to blues, rock and the pop norms of the 90s.

"I think maybe, being brought up on Hindemith and so on, I just wanted that bit extra out of the chords, the harmonies. When I did like singers it would be where there would be

harmonic stuff going on which you don't get on a blues record - Ray Charles is so sophisticated harmonically. That I could really deal with - it was the keyboard end rather the guitar end."

Robert listens hard to music *as music*: his observations have a spark lacking in either academic received wisdom or self-serving biztalk. The disinterest in guitar, for example, did not preclude appreciation of Jimi Hendrix, whom the Soft Machine supported for a year: "so beautiful every bloody time".

Wyatt is remarkably successful in using "world-music" aspects - Kurdish lilts and Ouspecki rhythms litter *Dondestan*, but he feels that any jazz enthusiast is already well prepared.

"It's like clothes - they have to fit. I don't have a sense of the exotic. If you are a jazz fan you're used to having people whose ancestors were African in your room, so the whole concept of 'world music' doesn't mean that much to you anyway."

His new enthusiasm is rap (a musical development that has turned people ten years his junior into nostalgia freaks).

"When you speak words it's atonal music and drumming is mostly atonal. Rap is very liberating, just getting the rhythms and rhymes - that's where the music is, not in the notes. It means that apart from the bass line, which can be quite conventional, the stuff they can do - the little textures and fiddly bits around the edge and the noises they are making - where is that coming from? How did they get that in there? How did they get so *much* in there? How do they get so much in there *clearly* between those two beats? Stunning stuff!"

New enthusiasms aside, he keeps returning to bebop.

"It's like cubism - obstinately unyielding and compressed, not what they call user-friendly. Or like *pemmican*, concentrated food Arctic explorers are. A taste of that and anything else is flaccid. I can see, outside it, the architecture isn't inviting, the space doesn't seem to be there to sit down and make yourself comfortable - but once you learn your way around in there it's utterly addictive."

When he talks about his upbringing, Wyatt's voice grows quiet, and it is important to remember the battles of his generation, a period when *all* black music was dismissed as trivial entertainment, to be patronised by those who knew classical music. His manner is so disarmingly unpretentious, that it was only when transcribing his words that I realized quite how angry they were.

"If you sing in a choir at school... we did Schubert, so I remember a bit about him. We were told how to sing vowels. We were told that the trouble with English was these short vowels - we can't sing them, you can't hold a note on them, so for the following vowels this is how to sing them, you've got to break them down: 'ow' goes 'aa-ooo' and you have to decide when to go from 'aa' to 'ooo'; 'i' goes 'aa-eee'; and if you think how posh singers sing, they sing 'through the naa-eet [night]' because they never sing 'i'. Which means that you get this really churchy mannerism that only has one connotation. If I'd been stuck in legitimate singing... I'm really grateful to all the musics we've been discussing for not being bound by rules like that."

selected discography

The Soft Machine - *The Soft Machine* (Probe) 1968
The Soft Machine - *Volume Two* (Probe SPB1002) 1969
The Soft Machine - *Third* (CBS66246) 1970
The Soft Machine - *4* (CBS 64280) 1970
The Soft Machine - *Triple Echo* (Harvest SHTW800) triple 1967-76
Robert Wyatt - *End Of An Ear* (CBS) 1971
Robert Wyatt - *Matching Mole* (CBS)
Robert Wyatt - *Little Red Record* (CBS 65260) 1972
Robert Wyatt - *I'm a Believer* (Virgin VS114) 7" 1974
Robert Wyatt - *Rock Bottom* (Virgin V2017) 1974
Robert Wyatt - *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (Virgin V2034)
Jan Steele/John Cage - *Voices And Instruments* (Island/Obscure 5) 1976
Robert Wyatt - *Animal Film Soundtrack* (Rough Trade ROUGH40) 1981
Robert Wyatt - *Nothing Can Stop Us* (Rough Trade ROUGH35) 1980-2
Robert Wyatt - *Shipbuilding* (Rough Trade RTT115) 12" 1982
Robert Wyatt - *Work In Progress* (Rough Trade RTT149) EP 1984
Robert Wyatt - *The Age Of Self* (TUC) 7" 1985

Robert Wyatt/SWAPO Singers - *The Wind Of Change* (Rough Trade RTT168) 12" 1985
Robert Wyatt - *Old Rotten Hat* (Rough Trade ROUGH69) 1985
Robert Wyatt - *Dondestan* (Rough Trade) 1991

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No thing can stop him - Option - August 1991

NOTHING CAN STOP HIM

ROBERT WYATT,

NOTHING COULD BE MORE AUDACIOUS OR IRONIC THAN THE LIFE OF ROBERT WYATT. A POST-WAR BRISTOL CHILD TURNED ONTO JAZZ IN THE CANTERBURY OF THE 1950S, WYATT BECAME DRUMMER, LYRICIST, AND SINGER WITH THE SOFT MACHINE IN 1966. QUINTESSENTIALLY PSYCHEDELIC WITH STRONG LEANINGS TOWARDS THE

THE LAST DRUMMER

FREE IMPROVISATION OF JAZZ, SOFT MACHINE PLAYED MINSTRELS TO THE TECHNICOLOR LONDON UNDERGROUND OF THE FLOWER-POWER ERA. SUPPORTING PINK FLOYD AND THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE, THEY BECAME A NOTORIOUS OUTFIT WHOSE SOUND DISMAYED AUDIENCES WITH ITS OUTSIDE, FREE-FORM CHARACTER.

Photos : OLIVER LIM

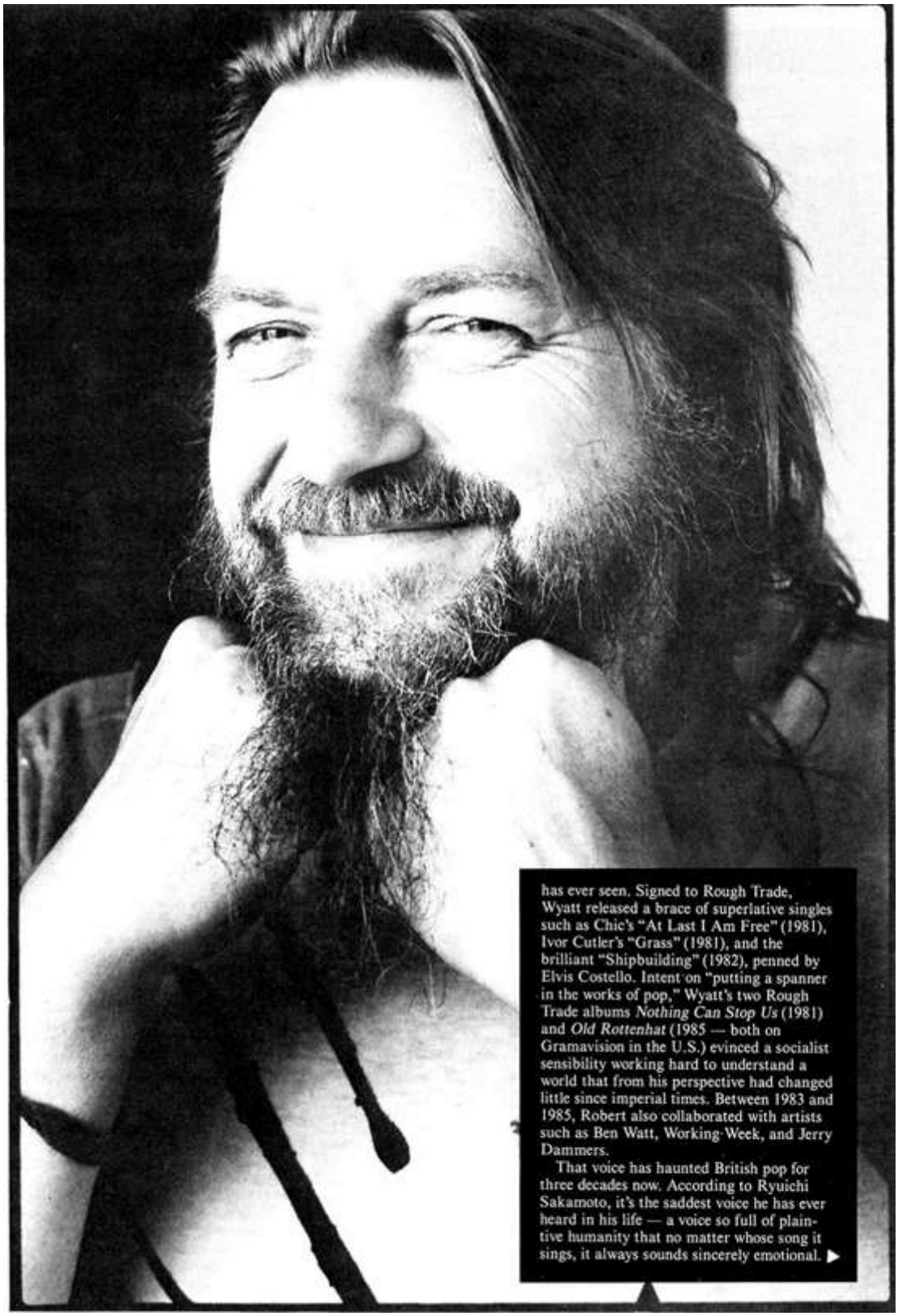
ON THE LEFT

After three albums with the group, Wyatt departed because of their increasing seriousness. The formation of Matching Mole (a pun on the French for "soft machine," a name itself lifted from the book by William Burroughs) in 1971 revealed him to be a truly gifted lyricist and singer, as on "O Caroline," from their debut offering on CBS. Following a second Matching Mole LP, tragedy came in June of 1973. Wyatt found himself in critical condition in Stoke



Mandeville Hospital, suffering from a broken spine after falling from a third floor window at a London party. LSD became the apocryphal culprit, but the truth was more mundane. Wyatt was trying to exit the party via a drainpipe when he fell because "of good old alcohol, the legal one." He would never walk again.

Six months in the hospital led Wyatt to produce his classic second solo LP *Rock Bottom* (1974), and with help from Pink Floyd his career was rejuvenated. His cover of the Monkees' "I'm a Believer" became a hit single that same year, and he later returned to live work with Henry Cow. If the late 70s saw Wyatt become more politically oriented, the early '80s saw him produce some of the finest independent pop Britain



> Zoom

So on Sakamoto's new album *Beauty*, Wyatt injects the Stones' "We Love You" with that trademark twist of melancholy. But it is a sound that also revels in celebration, in the sheer audacity of things.

• B Y M A R K P R E N D E R G A S T

These days Robert lives with his wife Alfie in the Lincoln village of Louth. His spacious 19th century home houses a grand piano, a drum kit, a home recording studio, a definitive jazz record collection, and a lot of books of the politically philosophical kind. In fact, his reading

desk is as much a focal point as his beloved piano. Asked about the use of *Music For Airports*, on which he soloed with Brian Eno, for some of the steamy sex scenes in the film *9 1/2 Weeks*, he chuckles. With no new album since *Old Rottenhat*, the appearance of "We Love You" with Sakamoto points to a low-key Wyatt, industriously working away in the background as others push themselves forward.

"I don't really use the word collaboration," he says. "I call it alternating dictatorships! Really, I work for other people or other people work for me. Specifically, the last thing I did was sing a song for a big band called Happy End. They brought the tape up from London and we recorded it in Sheffield. It was called 'World Upside Down' and I was very pleased to be asked. They are a big big band, around 20 people - bigger than the Count Basie Orchestra. I saw them a few years ago in London, probably at a miners' benefit," he recalls,before moving on to other works.

"Ryuichi Sakamoto is a really interesting composer. I like *Beauty* and I'm really into what he's doing next in New York with some hip-hop people. He's moved there now, you see. I really like the Youssou N'Dour track 'Diabaram,' and it's funny that, because it's more like the kind of track you'd expect to hear me on. 'We Love You' was sent to me with his guide vocal on it, and he just said replace it with my own. It was that simple."

Other recent work has been with Kip Hanrahan in the States and Chris & Cosey in Britain. "I did some music for a poem by Paul Haines which was put together by Kip Hanrahan. He does all kinds of projects and works on things simultaneously, so this hasn't seen the light of day yet. I chose the poem and put the music to it. Also Chris Carter and Cosey Fanni Tutti, who used to be in Throbbing Gristle. They now live in Norfolk and were just putting together some tapes and asked me to collaborate. It was the first time I heard my own voice being used with a sampler. I actually had a tape of me singing 'Autumn Leaves' and some other words, and Cosey shuffled them about into little fragments. Though it's basically her singing and. their music, it comes out feeling like me. They've got their own studio, are self-sufficient and do stuff. It was a true collaboration in that they did the work. I did the 'co,' they did the 'laboration,'" he laughs.

Wyatt self-effacingly admits to being able to do all his bits and pieces at home, where he can sing at his leisure and record at his pleasure. "I can go to a studio if I have to do more." For *Old Rottenhat*, his last proper album, the ten tracks were finalized in Acton and Brixton. He has been working up material for a new album for quite some time now. When ready this will be delivered to Rough Trade, a record company he's still loyal to because "they haven't got reams of paper saying you've got to do this, you've got to do that. They're absolutely straight and honest you know, which is such a nice feeling."

Working with Rough Trade is an intriguing juxtaposition of the old with the new, a post-punk enterprise which has only been around roughly half the length of time that Wyatt has been a professional artist. Wyatt contends that his musical taste had really been formed in the 1950s, but that his own abilities to make good music weren't developed until the 70s. "To me that was a strange, weird period. All sorts of things happened, but what I remember is hangin' around Victoria Station wondering if I missed the 10:50 back to West Dulwich and looking in the fridge and thinking sod, nothing in it again!"

Given the present fascination for all things 1960s, Wyatt's recollections of the era in which he first made his mark make for insightful comment. "For most of the '60s I was very hard-up. I spent the first half of it just struggling desperately, working in a forest, washing up, anything really. Then the music gradually evolved into various groups, and towards the end of it I was able to make a living. Eventually I became a drummer, but it wasn't by all means certain that that's what I'd become."

But there were flashes of rare experience, even if outside London the Soft Machine were booed off the stage on a regular basis. "What pulled us together musically was not audiences as such, but being on the road with the Hendrix trio in 1968. They were so nice to us. At the end of the tour Mitch Mitchell gave me this custom-built Maplewood drum kit. They knew we hadn't much money, but without being condescending they kind of just helped us along. They never tried to pull rank on you, they just wanted to encourage us by not saying anything about the duff bits in our set and helping us with the good bits. All three of them, Jimi, Noel, and Mitch."

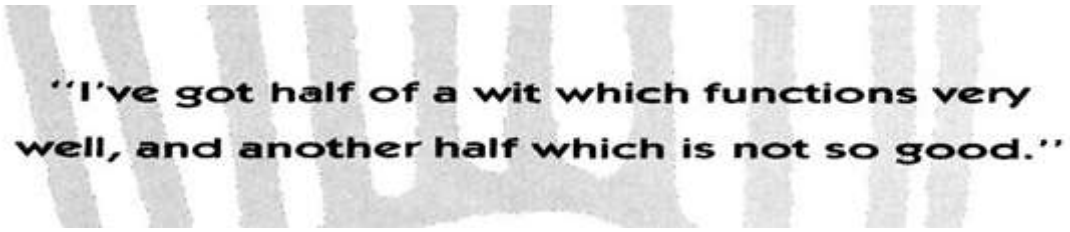
The Soft Machine lineup of Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge, and Wyatt were matched up with the Jimi Hendrix Experience simply because they had the same management team of Chas Chandler and Mike Jeffries. Advised to get Donovan hitmaker Mickie Most to choose some commercial material for a debut single, the Softs responded with "we're only doin' our own

stuff," so that was that. Their debut single "Love Makes Sweet Music," produced by Chandler, really didn't cut the mustard in an era of great pop tunes.

As to the years spent being the driving force behind one of England's classic psychedelic rock bands, Wyatt recalls Soft Machine's artistic development from an interesting perspective. "In terms of how we amplified our music we were a rock group, but what we heard in our heads wasn't pop music. We never looked to other groups for inspiration, in fact we were listening to Coltrane records. We got booed a lot in England at these dances where people were waiting for Jimmy James & the Vagabonds and instead got us - not a tune they recognized, just a row of stony faces; I thought the worst part of it was the break between numbers when there'd be this silence. So I suggested we link all our tunes up together so that the end of one was the beginning of the next. So the only time we stopped was when we left the stage, and that was how we developed the Soft Machine style of sustained continuous sets. Because of this brilliant compositional device, I never really had a clue what the audiences really thought of us.

"But we did get to make our debut album in New York at the end of the six-month tour of the States in '68. Now what was incredible about Jimi Hendrix was that he never got boring. You'd think seeing something each and every night after you played would make you want to go home, but not Hendrix. He was that good - all you wanted was more, even if it was the same. Another thing about him was that he was very professional and audience-conscious, if he was in front of a sophisticated bunch of New Yorkers, he would go every which way and try out all kinds of stuff - pure electronic music, even white noise. If he was in an aircraft hangar with a group of 14-year-old Texans, he would play the hits. Doing anything else would be going over their heads, and he saw there was nothing basically clever in doing that. In a sense he was a very old-fashioned entertainer who knew that people had paid money to see something, and he wanted to make sure they got it."

Working with Hendrix obviously sharpened Wyatt's perspectives on the so-called '60s revolution. What happened in America is viewed by him thusly: "During the '60s the black American civil rights thing had come to a head. And this had its roots in the Harlem renaissance of the 70s and the jazz scene of the late 1950s. That was taken up by radical whites who went forward with their anti-Vietnam War protests, but for me the central alternative thrust had already been there in the black American cultural thing. Charlie Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach were part of the central explosion. The rest was an offshoot of a cultural revolution I'd already experienced.



"With regard to drugs, straight dope/hash had always been part of black American culture. The difference between white hippie culture and black jazz culture was not there, but in the fact that hippie culture was a deliberate, we 're-not-having-anything-to-do thing, a deliberate drop-out. The black American experience was fall-out. They didn't have an establishment to drop out of. They weren't allowed in anyway."

Wyatt is aware that you can't generalize and that a lot of people don't qualify, but what he's saying makes sense. "What we are really talking about here is a cultural celebration amongst people who were already living in two or three of the richest countries in the world anyway. It was really about the young and relatively affluent exploring new cultural ideas. And that was very nice, but what would be silly would be to think that changed the fundamental structures. The notion was that we won't even try anymore, we'll have a good time in our own way and somehow we'll change the fabric of society. But that completely underestimated the plasticity and intelligence of the political, military and banking establishment of our economies and countries and how they're run. It was just children playing on the lawn while the grown-ups make the big decisions in their kitchen."

Conversing with Robert Wyatt, it is not long before the subject turns to politics, a force that seems to drive his very being. "I would say that almost by the mid-1970s I could hardly be called a musician. I felt like I've turned into one of those sandwich board nutters who go around saying the end is nigh. But as I happen to be a musician, it comes out through music. It's really what I think about, music happens, it's what I do. But the core of what I'm thinking is political."

A mere mention of any social or political phenomenon will launch Wyatt into a broadside which has all the incisive quality of distilled truth. "I haven't got a great knowledge of all the world, but there are particular things I think about which are as frightening now as they've ever been. It's funny to hear people talking about, it's post-cold war this and post-history that - post-ideology and post-every-bloody-thing. Most people in the world don't have access to free running water, most people don't have access to proper literacy. So what's that supposed to be. And it doesn't get sorted out.

"I have to admit I'm very narrow-minded, blinkered like a horse. I'm not a broad liberal thinker, but pursue certain things endlessly. And the people who put it articulately are writers like Susan George and Noam Chomsky. She talks about the problem, he talks about how the problem is maintained. She basically says that rich countries have developed purely at the expense of the poorer ones. And I know a lot of people know this, but the facts have been sort of marginalized.

"Chomsky is a hero of mine, he saved my life. He's an American linguistics scholar who writes about the complete moral collapse of the western intellectual world. Now I get emotionally heated and I'm what you call a half-wit (laughs) - I've got half of a wit which functions very well, and another half which is not so good. But he's got a whole wit." Chomsky's thinking and his views about distorted language are written all over *Old Rottenhat*, particularly such songs as "The United States of Amnesia" and "Speechless." To his way of thinking, what Wyatt sees on television and in the newspapers is only a version of the truth, wrapped up in a language that is acceptable to the west.



Wyatt has a good laugh after reading Chomsky

Wyatt tries to keep abreast of musical developments almost as fervently as he follows politics. Though he doesn't see the recent New Age or acid house movements as being significant agents for change, he's interested in the rap situation in America. "This is how a

lot of black Americans have found or come to terms with the fact that their revolution to be in control of their lives is a permanently put off fantasy! And that's because they're outnumbered. So rap is how to develop a kind of sense of 'we're gonna have a life,' 'we're gonna have a culture,' 'we're gonna do what we can,' but in a permanent state of siege."

Once Wyatt gets his teeth into a topic he finds it hard to let go, so a good 40 minutes is passed by his delving into the shortcomings of British politics, the Liberal/Tory power axis, and the ebb and flow that characterizes the unchanging face of the British power elite. He even has his doubts about the Labour Party, which holds views most closely associated with his own. "Still, I think the Labour movement is full of heroism and a tremendous energy. I admire Jerry Dammers, who was in the end responsible for the Mandela concert, Billy Bragg, the Communards, and all those who were involved in *Red Wedge*. If I vote Labour it will be out of loyalty to them and the local people here who may not know anything about access to power but are loyal to their party."

So Wyatt is not all doom and gloom. Though he sees world music and third world film as something functioning at the behest of first world technology, he's still inspired by exotic musical mixtures. "A lot of my musical inspiration comes from people whose ancestors come from other parts of the world. It means that there's a built-in possible future in our culture that hasn't yet reached the political establishment."

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Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening - The Concise SOFT MACHINE Handbook - Strange Things - Volume 1 * Number 6 - Summer 1989



> Zoom

THE CONCISE SOFT MACHINE HANDBOOK
by John Speeding

I was working the hole with the sailor and we did not do bad.

So begins *The Soft Machine*, a William Burroughs novel from 1961. That same year, the posse of Canterbury misfits who'd assume that same name began to interact.

The Simon Langton School has assumed a latent reputation as a place of education for the sons of 'intellectuals'. **Robert Wyatt**, however, only remembers a dull grammar school with little or no cultural direction. Perhaps then it was only coincidence that something of an avant-grade filtered through its upper forms.

Mike Ratelidge was eighteen and about to read Philosophy at Oxford, but was also known to play jazz-based variations with a saxophonist, **Brian Hopper**. The afforementioned Robert, two years younger, had meanwhile befriended Brian's brother, **Hugh Hopper**, in a mutual consuming passion for music. A final piece of the jigsaw, **David Sinclair**, was a further year behind and, in Robert's words, *"played piano at morning assembly."* He also recalls that there was little relationship across the forms, *"I only met Mike twice, once when he was a prefect. He came up to me and said, 'I believe you have some Cecil Taylor records. Can I borrow one?'"*

Since the dawn of the 1980s, Robert Wyatt has picked at the balloon which suggested the Canterbury scene's idyllic genesis. Despite his self-effacing honesty, a powerful image of such comparitive youngsters, embracing the wild jazz of **Mingus**, **Monk** and **Coleman** with the *'Please Please Me*' revelation still a year away remains, nonetheless, romantic.

The chronology here gets somewhat sketchy. At some point the stilled Wyatt quit school to study sculpture at the local Art College. Its regime proved as restrictive and he abandoned study for a penniless trip to Spain. At some point, either here or on a previous visit, he met one **George Neidof**, who returned to Canterbury with him and stayed with his family, in return for which he taught Robert drums. Neidof also knew **Daevid Allen**, who's introduction to the circle was crucial.

Allen's exploits are detailed elsewhere in this issue, but his early involvement was not only inspirational, but innovative. In early 1963 both Hugh Hopper and Robert joined him in his

London flat. Hopper recalls playing with **Michael Horowitz**, backing his poem, 'The Dalai Lama Is Coming To Tea', *"with our very loose version of Bizet's 'Carmen'."*

Hopper and Allen then made plans to travel to Tangier and play at a club called the **Fat Black Pussycat**. Instead Hugh joined Daevid in Paris, making the tape loop experiments which were later essential to **The Soft Machine** canon, before returning home with Wyatt and forming **The Wilde Flowers**.

Here they were joined by the elder Hopper, Brian, Richard Sinclair and Kevin Ayers. Mutual fashion rather than a common education had brought Kevin into the group, who's debut gig was at Whitstable's **Bear and Key** Hotel. *"They try for an Indian influence,"* noted the **'Canterbury Gazette**', *"but their **Rolling Stones** haircuts make the fans go crazy."* The Wilde Flowers set was British R&B, some Beatles and some originals, a flavour of which was caught on a brief 1965 demo. recorded at the unlikely Wout Steenhuis studio. The groups leafs its way through two covers. **Chuck Berry**'s '*Almost Grown* and **Mose Allison**'s reading of *'Parchman Farm*', alongside two originals, Hugh Hopper's reflective '*Memories*' and Kevin's rumbustuous '*She's Gone*'.

In common with their future aggregations, **The Wilde Flowers** were notoriously unstable. Ayers left, a new guitarist, **Graham Flight**, appeared and vanished and Richard Sinclair traded rhythm guitar for college. Robert stopped drumming in favour of permanent vocals. Richard Coughlan replaced him at the kit. and one **Pye Hastings** latterly joined on lead. By 1966 **The Wilde Flowers** were altogether smoother: they entered competitions both for **Melody Maker** and **Radio Caroline**, winning the latter with a heady mix of '*Sunny*', '*Papa's Got A Brand New Bag*' and '*You Put A Spell On Me*'. This line-up, however, crumbled around October 1966 with the departure of Robert Wyatt. (Hugh Hopper quit some five months later, the rest then added **David Sinclair** and became **Caravan**.)

Wyatt, Ayers and Daevid Allen had reestablished contact and a frustrated Mike Ratelidge had left university. The new group flirted with several names, another William Burrough's title, **Nova Express**, was considered, but **Soft Machine** was finally selected with Alien telephoning the author for permission and a blessing.

Following a disastrous opening at London's **Zebra Club**. Daevid's connections with the fledgling London Underground; **John Hopkins** and the **Indica** gang, provided the **Softs** with their spot at the party to launch '**International Times**' and subsequent residency at the hallowed **UFO**. On these early dates the group was supplemented by **Larry Nolan**, an American guitarist who vanished as mysteriously as he appeared, and by **Mark Boyle**'s evocative light show, which formed the perfect counterpoint to a collective increasing it's weirdo quotient. **Pete Frame** recalls their appearance at **The 14 Hour Technicolor Dream** in April 1967.

"Robert Wyatt huffing and puffing and singing from his drum stool, Kevin Ayers with rouge on his cheeks and u black cowboy hat surrounded by a huge pair of glider's wings and Daevid Alien with a miner's helmet (light switched on) and a fixed maniac stare."

In the meantime Kevin had tried to place some of his songs with **The (New) Animals**, an effort which brought the **Softs** into contact with **Mike Jeffries** and **Chas Chandler**. The former became their manager, the latter their early producer, responsible for the topside of the group's first single. '*Love makes Sweet Music*'.
Written by Kevin at his commercial best, it moved with an effortless, magical ease, both confident and irresistible. Its coupling. '*Feelin Reelin' Squeelin*", was produced by the itinerant Kim Fowley and reflected **The Soft Machine**'s wilder conceptions with Ayers' maniacal growl and Allen's liquid guitar.

Despite soaring to the dizzy heights of No.28 on the Radio London chart, '*Love Makes Sweet Music*' made little impression and *Polydor* dropped any option. A series of demos were subsequently cut at **De Lane Lea** studios, with **Giorgio Gomelsky** producing. These tapes have cropped up in various guises, most recently as ***Jet Propelled Photographs***. Although certainly rough and ramshackle, they mix missed notes with a raw ambition and are genuinely engaging.

The songs are split between Robert, Kevin and Hugh Hopper, now on the fringe of the group as their roadie. Both '*She's Gone*' and '*Memories*' are resurrected from **The Wilde Flowers** tape. The latter is as haunting as the group from this era could be, while other highlights appear in the splendid *'I Should've Known*' (freak-out via the '*Shotgun*

riff) and Robert's melancholic *'That's How Much I Needed To Know*', the melody of which would, alongside that of '*You Don't Remember*', reappear, shorn of its adolesent lyric, on **Third's** '*Moon In June*'. Indeed much of the collection would surface elsewhere; Kevin's '*Jet Propelled Photograph*' became '*Shooting At The Moon*', while '*Save Yourself*" and '*I Should Have Know*' were recut for the first official album,the former relatively intact, its counterpart, however, was somewhat remodelled and became '*Why Am I So Short*'.



The boys then recorded a third '*She's Gone*', this time with **Joe Boyd** producing. Scheduled as a single, and featuring **Bill Burroughs** on "*barely audible aphorism*", it was never released as such, although it was subsequently aired on **Triple Echo**, a 1977 retrospective. '*She's Gone*' also marked the end of Daevid Allen's involvement, his *de facto* deportation reduced the line-up to a trio and increased the "*jungle warfare*" (Allen) simmering within the group.



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1967 ended with the **Christmas On Earth** concert, 1968 began with a marathon American tour, supporting **Eire Apparent** and the **Jimi Hendrix Experience**. Each was a part of the Jeffries stable, indeed Hendrix had some rhythm guitar to an early, rejected '*Love Makes Sweet Music*' while Ayers, Wyatt and Alien sang at the back of a similarly canned '*Stone Free*'. At least that's the legend. And while we're weaving webs, don't forget Hendrix makes a splintering, but brief, appearance on Eire Apparent's only album. (UK pressings only!) The U.S. tour lasted six months, and was gruelling. In an effort to diffuse the instrumental strain, guitarist **Andy Summers** was briefly drafted in, but he switched instead to **The New Animals**. "*Nightmare-ish*" was how Wyatt described one particular date at **Madison Square Gardens**, where the touring party was supplemented by **Albert King**, **The Chambers Brothers** and **Big Brother and the Holding Company**. The marathon closed at the **Hollywood Bowl** and an exhausted group was flown back to New York to cut their debut album.

Ostensibly produced by **Tom Wilson**, ("*We'd do a take*," remembers Wyatt, "*go hack into the control room, and he'd he on the 'phone to some girl*."). the set is a triumph of imagination over adversity, and captures many of **The Soft's** most thrilling moments. In '*So Boot If At All*' the group capture the essence of Underground improvisation, and match

the cascading genius of '*Interstellar Overdrive*'. Another Hugh Hopper revival. '*Hope For Happiness*', provides an ideal, stylistic introduction, while the rest of the record matches Kevin's angular eccentricity, the studied seriousness of Ratelidge, and Robert's heartfelt passion.

On completion, **The Soft Machine** disintegrated. Wyatt stayed behind in New York, completing '*Moon In June*' from his diary cum scrapbook, Ayers made for Ibiza and Mike flew back to London to compose. By winter Robert was in L.A., writing and recording enough for two demo albums, one featuring the full '*Moon In June*', the other fragments of older Hugh Hopper material, rearranged and given new lyrics, much of which appeared on their next album.

In the meantime *Probe* had released **The Soft Machine**. It became a cult success, and a demand grew for some kind of group to tour behind it. Wyatt and Ratelidge were, somewhat guardedly, reunited, but Kevin Ayers, who's quirky compositions were at odds with the studious keyboard wizard, was now uninterested and had sold his bass to **Mitch Mitchell**.

Hugh Hopper provided the natural replacement and a reconstituted **Soft Machine** began rehearsing almost immediately. They openned with a blow at **The Roundhouse** with Andy Summers and Zoot Money, before appearing, properly, in public at **The Albert Hall** alongside Hendrix and the **Traffic** substitute, **Mason, Wood, Capaldi and Frog**. A second album, **Volume Two**, was recorded over February and March 1969, and although another wonderful work, the divisions within the group seemed wider than ever. A scan of the titles reflects the gap: "*Thank You Pierrot Lunaire*'. '*Have You Ever Been Green*'' (the surreal Wyatt), against the formal eccentricity of '*Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging*' and '*A Door Opens And Closes*', two of Mike Ratelidge's moments. Although inevitably distanced from **The Soft Machine**'s paisley patterns, the new collection boasted a real maturity, and a sound refined to suit a studio environment.



Brian Hopper had re-emerged on the album to add both soprano and tenor sax, an indication of the group's future development. Between October and the end of 1969, the trio was augmented by a radical horn section; **Lyn Dobson** (flute & soprano sax), **Elton Dean** (alto sax & saxello), **Nick Evans** (trombone) and **Marc Charig** (cornet). Their collective pedigree included **Manfred Mann**, **Keith Tippet** and **Bluesology**, but the experiment proved too expensive and was dropped.

Although the septet would not offically record as such, a session was cut for **Peel**'s '*Top Gear*' that November. *'Esther's Nosejob' and 'the 'Mousetrap' /' Noisette' /' Backwards' / Mousetrap Reprise'* workout thus gave a glimpse into a somewhat unrealised potential, hut also showed the eclipse of the drummer's own ideosyncratic direction. The session was also revived on **Triple Echo**, along with two corresponding pieces. The first featured the basic trio on an inspired reading of Robert's '*Moon In June*', the lyric of which was specially written for the occasion to include references to the programme, **BBC** tea, **Caravan** and **Pink Floyd**. It was, and is, quite simply, a masterpiece.

The remaining session was from May 1970, and contained three Ratelidge compositions, *'Slightly All The Time*', '*Out Bloody Rageous*' and '*Eamonn Andrews*', the first two of which appeared (in different forms) on **Third**, the **Soft Machine**'s next album.
Although it featured several extra musicians, including Dobson and Evans, Elton Dean remained the only permanent addition to the Wyatt/Hopper/Ratelidge triumvurate. A double set spread over four basic pieces, the estrangement between Robert and the rest was near complete. They hated '*Moon In June*' and initially refused to play on it. Wyatt added his own bass and keyboards and although both Hugh and Mike would latterly play a

minor role, it is, obstensibly, a solo effort. The ultimate irony, perhaps, was that Robert admired what the rest were attempting, especially Hopper. "*(Hugh) was the most creative. Excellent though Mike's things were. they could have been written by Herbie Hancock or Wayne Shorter. It was putting us on the fringes of other people's worlds rather than at the centre of our own. To he to, say. Tony Williams, what The Stones were to Muddy Waters, was not really my ambition*."

The last act of defiance by what was recognisably the 'old' **Soft Machine** came in August and their performance at the Albert Hall's Pop Promenade. Sandwiched between the respectability of an archaic music establishment was a somewhat rough-hewn set, evenby the group's own standards, but one now captured on a new-ish release, **Live At The Proms 1970**. Whatever the contemporary controversy, the invitation to appear cemented the ascendant seriousness, as the more formal programme suggested.

Now somewhat alone, Wyatt embarked on a solo album, the punning **End Of An Ear**. Those expecting a further stream-of-consciousness were caught somewhat surprised, this was a sometimes impenetrable mix, but one which allowed an important breathing space. It was, in many ways, the instrumental interludes of the early **Soft Machine**, but without the songs or hooks to 'bookend' them together. Mark Charig and EIton Dean provided the woodwind, David Sinclair the organ, while Robert drummed (naturally), sang a little and began his experimentation with keyboards. If **The End Of An Ear** was autobiographical, it was in the titles; '*To Saintly Bridget*' (Bridget St.John), '*To Caravan And Brother Jim*', '*To 0z Alien Daevid And Gilli*', although the sometimes furious stew
which spilled out in places doubtlessly reflected the confusion of the times.



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Wyatt indeed took a sabbatical and toured with **Kevin Ayers and the Whole World** before returning to **The Soft Machine**'s fold for ***Fourth***, a dour, paired-down version of its predecessors. His percussion aside, Robert's contribution is minimal, and a suggestion, to manager Scan Murphy, that he might like to try something else, was eagerly seized upon by Hopper and Ratelidge. Wyatt was fired in September 1971, and with him went the heart, soul and humour of a group, once excellent, now doomed to a future of cold mathematics.

Heartfelt thanks are due to Ian McDonald*,* Pete Frame *and* John Platt *for providing the original detective work and several of the above quotes.* ***Kevin Ayers****' subsequent erratic, but more often than not, inspired career can he found elsewhere in this issue, while What happened to Robert Wyatt will he divulged in a forthcoming volume of this magazine.*

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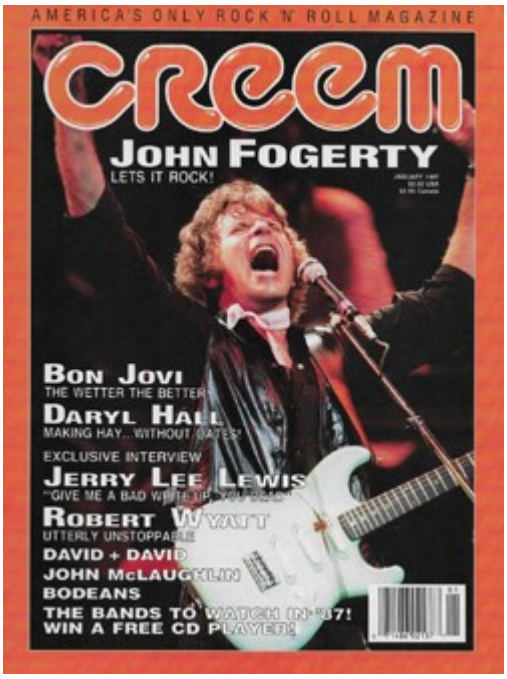
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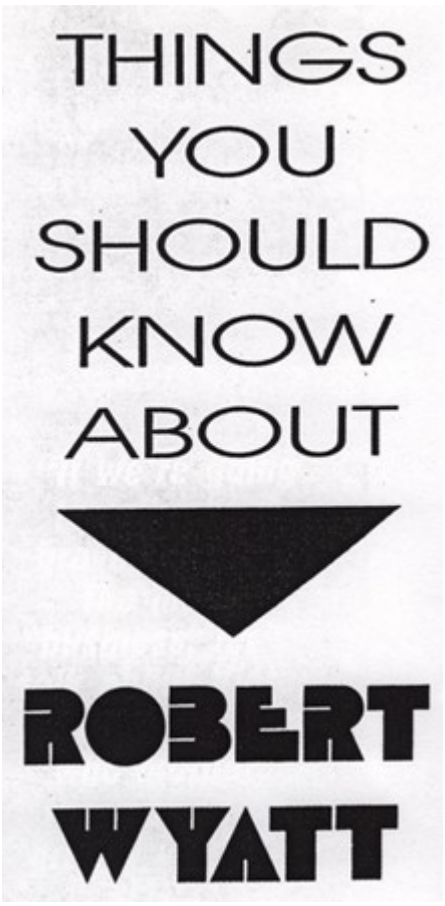
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HOME

Things you should know about Robert Wyatt - Creem - January 1987







It's difficult to call it more than coincidence.

The driver hired to take me south of London, to the home of the person I'm to interview, spends an extraordinary amount of time telling me how apartheid is inherently *good*—how the black people "down there" can't quite take care of *themselves* yet, that they're extremely violent themselves, what are they complaining about? — and much more of that talk, talk I'm not used to hearing in England. I guess there's a lot of it.

The driver has no idea where we're going. In fact, he tells me, he's glad I speak English — "I thought you were an Italian bloke," says he. We get very close to the neighborhood we're seeking, find the proper street, and search the small row of townhouses for the address he's been given.

Robert Wyatt's house stands out among the rest on his block; it's the one with the large END APARTHEID! poster tacked onto the front door.

The driver pulls out a book he'd planned to read in the car while I was doing my interview. It's by Jackie Collins.

Inside the house are many more books. These books are by Marx, Engels, Lenin and others; they're about Latin America and Africa, about political and economic systems; other cultures. Robert Wyatt's wife, Alfie, tells me Robert will be ready for the interview in a few short moments. Would I like some coffee or tea? Oh, and there's no point in the driver waiting outside in his car; invite him to come in as well.

A man in a wheelchair enters the room. The interview takes place.

Later, the driver and I get back in the car. His first words, spoken in amazement: "That woman was a bleedin' *communist*, mate."

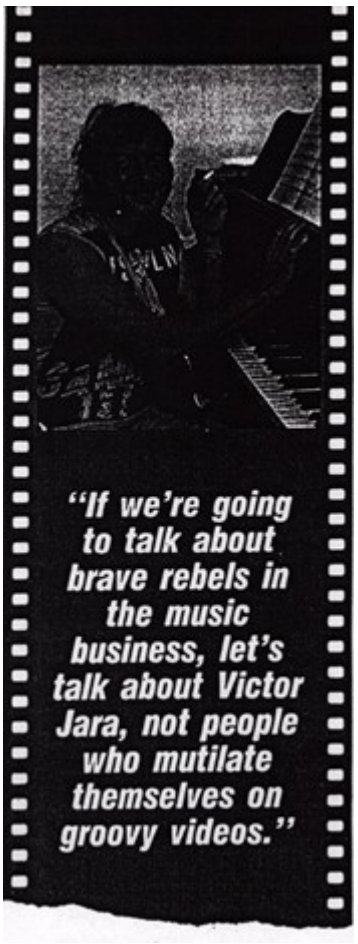
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He's diplomatic when it comes to his reasons for leaving that pioneering band, though the back of his first solo album, 1970's *The End Of An Ear*, bears this intriguing self-description; "Out of work Pop Singer (Currently on drums with Soft Machine)." Wyatt wouldn't be hanging around with the band much longer after releasing it.

"It was sort of a 40-minute burst of frustration, in a way," says he.

Frustration with what?

"Well, I think a lot of drummers are neurotics. That's the sort of thing you used to get in jazz. Because the thing in jazz is, 'This band's got four musicians and a drummer,' that sort of thing." He laughs again. "And there was always that feeling. I was, and have remained, virtually musically illiterate. And you sort of feel — I mean, they used to say to me, 'Why don't you learn to read music?' And I would say, my excuse was, 'So you can't write own what I've got to *play*.'



"But it was sort of feeble. I always felt on the defensive, you know? So from *The End Of An Ear* onwards, I started to go on the attack."

What does he remember most about the band?

"What I remember was, a very experimental era in the early '60s, when we were mucking about with tapes, and where there were no holds barred and stuff like that. And the early group live was an extremely open format, I think.

"And gradually, it stalled to narrow down, and became what you'd call a jazz-rock group. And I felt like the options were closing, that the possibilities were being cut off. Although also during that period, we all got to play much better. So it was odd, we got freer in terms of technique, but it seemed to hamper and predetermine what we actually did with it. We were much braver before we had any technique."

Does he think the band should've changed its name after he left?

"Oh, I don't know—in retrospect, they're welcome to it, you know? But I think we should all give it back to Bill Burroughs and forget the whole thing."

***

Wyatt next turned up in his own band, Matching Mole, in 1972. People that know tell me "Matching Mole" means "Soft Machine" in French, at least phonetically. In the band were friends, like David Sinclair, Phil Miller, Bill MacCormick and Dave McRae. The records were excellent, and much more experimental than the fifth and sixth Soft Machine albums, both wordless and Wyatt-less.

"It was really a necessity," remembers Wyatt. "I had to put something together. Because it's very difficult to find bands to work in. I mean, very often if you're a drummer or a singer, there's *some* opportunity to join this band or that band. But the particular way in which / like to operate—which is, you know, I might want to do songs, but I might want at least as much instrumental, and I might want to have a few very accessible pieces, and a few pieces where we try everything we can think of on them—there wasn't any band to *join* where you could do that in.

"So the only way was just to find some sympathetic friends and carry on. But people who, even if they didn't like you singing, didn't have the power to *stop* you."

Wyatt smiles at his exaggeration.

A second Matching Mole album would soon follow, *Matching Mole's Little Red Record.* It was stranger than the first. Robert Fripp produced it, and former Roxy Music pop star Brian Eno even played synthesizer on it. The band was beginning to develop its own very charming personality.

And then Robert Wyatt's accident happened. A fall from building is what did it; he's been confined to a wheelchair ever since. For a drummer who favored using his bass drum and hi-hat, it couldn't be much worse. Yet after months in the hospital, Wyatt would emerge with what still stands as his masterpiece, 1974's *Rock Bottom*. From its very unusual cover, an illustration by Wyatt's wife Alfreda Benge, to its opening track "Sea Song" (which fans Tears For Fears recorded last year as a B-side), and its finale, "Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road," *Rock Bottom* is one of the finest albums of the '70s.

"In a way," says Wyatt, "that was the easiest record I've ever had to make. It was the first record where you didn't have to spend half the time trying to carry the drum kit around all over the place." Again, he laughs. "Somebody else was the drummer - this was very liberating. So there was less to think about. Because before, I'd been trying to get about drumming and the kit, and writing and arranging and organizing gigs, and singing and writing songs. So cutting it down to those last two, just concentrating on the bits I could handle, and leaving more to other people, was quite liberating.

"It was just because I *wasn't* in a group, and I wasn't having to organize that, and I wasn't having to worry about what four people were gonna eat that week, you know? I could concentrate on the music. Like I hadn't really been able to before. So it was...that was easy.

"And the thing is, there was a piano in the hospital as well, in their visitors' room—and there weren't many visitors. At least there weren't after / got near the piano. They stopped coming. And so when I got out of the hospital, I was really ready. Because I had to spend about seven months in the hospital, and the last two months I was already in the chair, just learning to get around."

Many fans of Wyatt's assume the bulk of *Rock Bottom* was written in the hospital while he recuperated; in fact, prior to the accident he'd been preparing for a third Matching Mole album. "People think it must've been written all afterwards, but in fact no, [the unrecorded Matching Mole LP] would've been something like that anyway."

After that came an actual hit single for Wyatt - a cover of "I'm A Believer," ironically — a non-hit follow-up, "Yesterday Man," and the *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* album. The latter was much more a collaborative effort that anything Wyatt had recorded previously; it's interesting and it's humorous, but it lacks the emotional bite of its predecessor. It was also the last Robert Wyatt album for several years.

The collaborations continued. He'd already done things on albums by Hatfield And The North and Henry Cow; soon his name appeared on works by Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera and

many others. Most notable were the series of albums he recorded with Carla Bley and Mike Mantler; the best of the bunch is *The Hapless Child*, though Mantler's adaptation of the Harold Pinter play, Silence, featured the great Kevin Coyne and also deserves serious attention. Wyatt also popped up on a solo LP by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason (who'd produced *Rock Bottom*) called *Fictitious Sports*, which not incidentally consisted entirely of material written by Carla Bley.

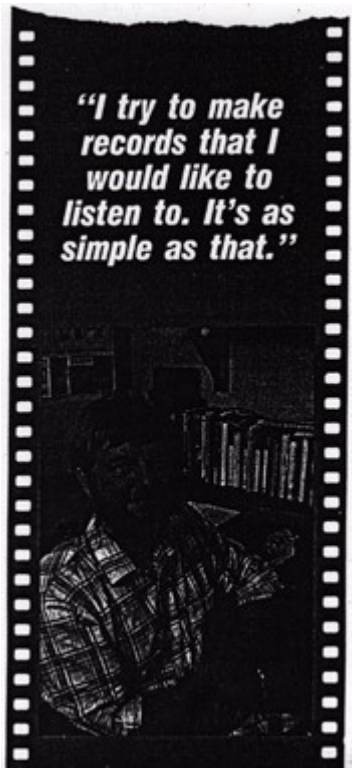
But it took a very long time for Robert Wyatt to release his own records again.

After a long period of silence, you finally started issuing some singles. How did you decide on that material?

***

"Well, during the *'70s,* something happened to my feeling, being in the rock world. There seemed to be this consensus, which was that it was a new and semi-legitimate art form, and it was a sort of natural vehicle for new and rebellious ideas. And during the *'70s,* it became quite clear to me that what we were, as rock musicians, were in fact members of the establishment. That it *was* an establishment, and perhaps it always had been, ever since Elvis joined the GI's. We thought we were kidding.

"But nevertheless, it became part of the big Western propaganda culture, all this stuff. And so really, I became interested in retrieving the idea of a sort of, if you like, *disobedient* music, where rebel poses had become so...sort of *established,* it's part of the whole rock 'n' roll circus.



"You were getting to funny stages, where people who deliberately maimed themselves onstage were selling themselves as brave and courageous, whereas you had someone like Victor Jara in Chile, who because he sang for democracy in Chile, was tortured to death. If we're going to talk about brave rebels in the music business, let's talk about Victor Jara, not people who mutilate themselves on groovy videos.

"And I just wanted to—I started to see more and more of the world that was truly alienated by our establishment, that wasn't *included* in rock 'n' roll, really."

How did you see this? From reading? Films?

"I don't know, in any one particular way. I was very, very hit by the death of Mongezi Feza, the South African trumpet player who was the same age as me, and died at about 31 in the early '70s. And really, he died of old age and a broken heart at 31, as a South African exile who thought he'd escape to England and found that you don't escape racism that easily. He'd come to the country that *invented* apartheid to get *away—and* exported it—but that hadn't occurred to him.

"His death hit me very hard. Quite selfishly, I was very angry to have been deprived of a musician I really enjoyed working with. I started to think. You know, we're told in rock 'n' roll that this is the democratic art form, this is the art form where the inarticulate are allowed to speak. You know? All that stuff—this is where black and white and working class, this is how we...

"But in fact, because it was so proud of being that, all the people who were alienated from this whole cozy consensus, you can see them in stark relief around you. People who *weren't* included in this happy rebel party of rock 'n' roll. So in different ways, I wouldn't say there was one line going through everything I did—but I would say *that* was the kind of thought that was going through my mind when I chose songs."

***

The string of singles Wyatt released in the early '80s was stunning in variety, conception, and performance. If you'd like to hear them, you can; most are collected on *Nothing Can Stop Us*, issued here in September on Gramavision Records.

Listen to these songs. Notice that they all have one thing in common: they are songs of freedom. Thus from Chic's "At Last I Am Free" and Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" to songs by Violetta Para, Victor Jara and Pablo Milanos, Wyatt has put together as aural collage that, however unusual the sources, holds together better thematically than anything he'd recorded in his life.

Listen to Wyatt's version of "At Last I Am Free."

"I think it's a mistake in thinking the only music of rebellious significance, of revolutionary significance, is in music which is consciously so," says Wyatt. "In any piece of music, if you say, 'We exist and we're proud of existing, we wish to do well and flourish, like everyone else'—in certain societies, it has political connotations.

"At that time, people like Chic, were being dismissed. I mean, I know that Chic, when they were young, had been attracted by the Black Power movement like a lot of people, but decided that the best thing to do was just to try and 'make it.' But the way they did it at that time had no legitimacy within rock currency, because they were smart, cleanly dressed, and everybody was, you know, *smart-dressed*, and you did really smart things at the discos. And although that was making money, it had no status.

"And somehow, there's always been this time-lag, it seems to me, with black American music, whereby you do something and it's enjoyed, but has no status, and then white people take it up and the genre gets status. So that 10 years later, it's really groovy to dress up smart and do good disco tunes. But it wasn't *then*, you know? So, I'm not trying to impose my views on Chic—but just simply from my perspective, the existence of them and what they were doing, was politically very interesting."

It was a good song, too.

"That's right—I mean, apart from that. It was a very nice song. I had the feeling about this song, that they had written this chorus and then backed off the implications when they came to the verse. And did what everybody in rock 'n' roll does— which is play safe and pretend that the whole thing was about personal relationships." Wyatt laughs uproariously.

I have to admit, I tell him, just those lines, "At last I am free/I can hardly see in front of me"...

"It's a great couplet. I mean, I think that's *great* poetry, just those two lines."

Wyatt's version of "Shipbuilding," written by Elvis Costello and Clive Langer and also included on *Nothing Can Stop Us*—was he pleased with it?

"Well, I mean, really, all I was doing there was exactly what Costello and Langer asked me to do, as well as possible. Strictly speaking on those things, they're sometimes *called* collaborations, but they're not. I was working for them, definitely, and I just saw my job as trying to sort of live up to what it is they expect me to do."

A hit, in fact, the single was Wyatt's closest brush with "rock stardom" in many years. He's not very fond of the scene.

"The rock establishment in England reminds me totally of the Royal Family and so on, in a way that not even Miles Davis does in jazz. Not even in terms of their attitude to themselves, but in terms of their role in the mass media, the newspapers and so on. And that may all be fine — there's nothing necessarily *wrong* with that kind of acceptance except that...I dunno, one thing and another, I didn't feel that I was part of something that really *meant* anything to me. So I was really looking elsewhere to act. But I couldn't *find* anything else, it was sort of too late. This is all I can do. And so I've come back to making records."

Wyatt's most recently recorded album, *Old Rottenhat*, came out last year in England, this year in the States. It's a remarkable record, filled with brand new Wyatt compositions, his first in many years. Political references abound: there are mentions of linguist Noam Chomsky, Indonesia, East Timor, songs like "The United States Of Amnesia" and "The Age

Of Self." All of this, mind you, miles and miles away from the genuinely hilarious Soft Machine lyrics Wyatt penned almost 20 years ago—but certainly much more incisive.

Wyatt's earlier comment about Chic doing "what everybody in rock 'n' roll does" ("play safe and pretend that the whole thing was about personal relationships") is most telling.

***

Nowadays, Robert Wyatt says he is "more likely to go to a political meeting without any music in it, than a musical meeting without any politics in it." He claims to not be in touch with the London jazz scene as he once was because, "like Duke Ellington said, I don't get around much anymore." He recently went in the studio with British saxophonist Evan Parker for a short bit on Kip Hanrahan's next record, a collection of poems by Paul Haines. He's got no idea what he'll be recording next.

He's one of the most inspiring individuals I've ever encountered.

"I don't think I choose to make a certain kind of record," he told me about Old Rottenhat. "When I remember making records, I make the only kind I can. My ambitions are very simple.

"I try to make records that I would like to listen to. It's as simple as that."

Dave DiMartino

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Robert Wyatt - Record Collector N° 80 - April 1986

ROBERT WYATT



EX-SOFT MACHINE DRUMMER AND VOCALIST WHO HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A CULT SOLO PERFORMER IN RECENT YEARS.

BY BRIAN HOGG.

Two minor chart hits - "I'm A Believer" in 1974, and "Shipbuilding" in 1983 - disguise the fact that Robert Wyatt is generally recognised as one of Britain's most consistently creative and articulate musical talents. Wyatt began his career in the mid-Sixties with the Soft Machine, recording four albums with them that developed from 'psychedelic pop' to a more jazz-based experimentation. Since then, he has emerged as one of the major artists on the British independent scene, with a string of classic singles for Rough Trade. Wyatt is also well-known for his session work, and has played with a variety of artists ranging from Henry Cow to the Raincoats.

The roots of his career can be traced back to the Simon Langton School in Canterbury, an educational facility reserved for the sons of local artists, run on similar radical lines to A.S. Neill's 'Summerhill', and whose other pupils included Mike Ratledge, David Sinclair and Hugh Hopper. Wyatt left the school around 1960, and fled to Spain and Majorca, where he stayed with the poet Robert Graves, a family friend. When he returned home, Robert brought with him George Niedorf who, as well as teaching him the drums, also introduced Wyatt to Daevid Allen, an Australian who lived in a houseboat in Paris. An enthusiast, Allen experimented with the tape-loop music of Terry Riley, knew and worked with William Burroughs, and consumed hallucinogenics - and this was back in 1962! Both Wyatt and Hopper visited him in Paris, and both were profoundly influenced by the trip.

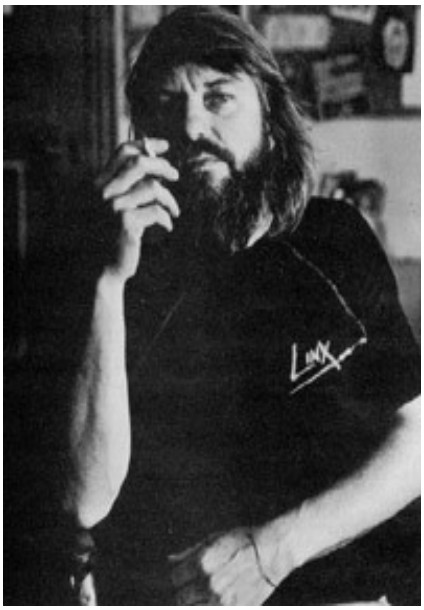
Upon returning to Canterbury, the duo pieced together a group of their own, the Wild Flowers, who made their debut in June 1963 at the Bear and King Hotel in Whitstable, Kent. The rest of the group included Kevin Ayers (vocals), Richard Sinclair (rhythm guitar), and Brian Hopper (sax), with Robert and Hugh on drums and bass respectively. Ayers was soon replaced by one Graham Flight, who in turn was ousted when Richard Coughlin joined as drummer, leaving Robert free to sing. So it remained until August 1966 when Robert left to form the Soft Machine. The Wild Flowers in the meantime added Pye Hastings and David Sinclair, and would, in 1968, evolve into Caravan.

REUNITED

The Soft Machine reunited Wyatt with Kevin Ayers and Mike Ratledge, as well as bringing them together with the mysterious Larry Nolan (who disappeared after a handful of gigs), and Daevid Allen, whose contacts with the embryonic London 'underground' ensured that the Softs became synonymous with the scene. Initially, however, their sets were less

radical, featuring original material mixed with current soul hits. However, by the time they came to record their first single, it was clear that such compromises were now past. The group had signed to Polydor in January 1967 (in the month that their underground contemporaries Pink Floyd released their first single, "Arnold Layne"), and they immediately began recording, using ex-Animal Chas Chandler as producer. While the A-side, "Love Make Sweet Music" was a fabulous piece of pure pop, with Wyatt's voice already distinctive, its flipside, "Reelin' Feelin' Squealin'", was much more like their Dadaist approach to music, helped by having the enigmatic Kim Fowley as producer. In fact, it may be that this track was recorded first, causing Polydor to baulk at its wierdness and demand something less radical. Strange it certainly was, with Kevin's booming depth-of-a-well voice totally upfront. The single itself was a complete flop and copies now are incredibly rare. However, both sides have appeared on subsequent compilations, "Rare Tracks", and "Triple Echo", the latter being a boxed set of Softs' material, of which more later.

DEMOS



> Zoom

Dropped by Polydor after the failure "Love Makes Sweet Music", the group's next move was to put together a set of demos. Although never intended for commercial release, they would ultimately appear on the French BYG label, before eventually being pulled together for a 1977 release on Charly, reissued again in 1983. Despite the sometimes erratic playing (and out-of-tune guitar!), there are some strong performances. Robert's voice is excellent throughout, and two of the songs, "Memories", and the magnificent "That's How Much I Need You Now", are among the best the group recorded. Although most of the material was cut with Giorgio Gomelsky, at least one track, "She's Gone", was produced by Joe Boyd as a projected second single. The album, "At the Beginning" is still in catalogue, and provides a fascinating insight into early British progressive music.

Meanwhile, the group continued to play at London's UFO Club and other burgeoning haunts, but also spent a considerable amount of time in France where they found a very receptive audience. But when they returned from one such visit, Daevid Allen was refused re-entry into Britain and the Soft Machine was thus cut to a trio. As such, they played the 1967 Edinburgh Festival and when Allen did return, he decided he wasn't happy in the group anyway, resettled himself in Paris, joined the barricades during the riots, and began hatching the equally bizarre Gong.

The Softs then began a gruelling U .S. tour supporting the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Between May and July 1968, the trio was augmented by guitarist Andy Somers, en route from Dantalion's Chariot, and before his spell in the New Animals. He joined just after the group completed work on their first album, recorded and mixed in four days in April at the Record Plant in New York, and released by Probe that December. "The Soft Machine" was never granted a U.K. release at the time, partly due to Probe's low profile here, and partly because the band spent most of their time in America anyway. However, it became one of the era's most endearing imports. It was a good album, with "Hope For Happiness" and "Why Are We Sleeping" among the highlights. Gimmicks such as Wyatt's phased drum solo sound rather dated now, but his heartfelt rendition of "A Certain Kind" still remains as powerful as ever. Indifference from the coproducers, Chas Chandler and Tom Wilson, resulted in a somewhat muddy and unfocussed sound which detracts slightly from the overall performance, but the album still remains an essential purchase for those who missed out the first time. It was actually available in two different forms; the earlier pressings had a revolving clock-like front cover (similar to "Led Zeppelin Three") featuring a collage of photos of the group. This was soon dropped in favour of a nondescript non-revolving green circle. Very early copies also lack the bikini crudely drawn on to the girl on the inner sleeve. The final irony was that the Soft Machine, exhausted by the grind of the U.S. tours, celebrated its release by breaking up, Wyatt remaining in America, Ratledge returning to London and Ayers heading for Ibiza.

ERRATIC

When the Softs decided to reform in February 1969, Ayers refused to be tempted back and

began his erratic and idiosyncratic solo career instead. Wyatt and Ratledge then drafted in Hugh Hopper, a promotion of sorts as he'd spent the past year as their roadie. The new trio immediately began work on a second album, "Volume Two", which was an altogether better work, balancing Wyatt's quirkiness with the more serious approach of Ratledge. Hopper's passion for instrumental experiments also pulled the group towards a greater seriousness which would fully manifest itself on later Softs' releases. Meanwhile, here was "The Concise British Alphabet' in all its glory, and other moments of lunacy, all granted a U.K. release this time 'round, although without the elaborate gatefold of the U.S. pressing. Either version is probably rarer than the 'green circle' first album, which was available as a cut-out here for several years, though the American issue is by far the hardest to find. Increasingly rare is the British double-pack of these first two albums, issued during the mid-Seventies as "The Soft Machine Collection", but deleted quickly when the parent company, Anchor, went bankrupt.

"Third", issued by CBS in June 1970, continued the schism between Wyatt and Ratledge, with Robert's masterpiece, "The Moon In June" outshining the more posturing "Out Bloody Rageous". Strangely, it was with this album that the group had their most commercial success, reaching No. 18 in the British album charts, despite the increasingly uncompromising nature of their music. "Third" saw the introduction of saxophonist Elton Dean into the group (as well as Lyn Dobson on a temporary basis); another sign that the group was moving towards serious compositions. In fact, around this time, the Soft Machine became the first 'rock' group to play at the prestigious 'Proms' concerts in London. This line-up can be seen performing "Esther's Nose Job" in the "Stamping Ground" film of the 1970 Rotterdam Pop Festival. When "Fourth" appeared in 1971, charting at No. 32, it became clear that Robert was being squeezed out of the group. He left that September, and although the Soft Machine continued without him until 1978, they bore no resemblance to the group of old. In truth, the spirit of the original group was continued in Daevid Allen's Gong more than anything released on or after "Fourth".

However, the story doesn't quite end there. In 1977, Harvest issued "Triple Echo", the aforementioned boxed set. It took in representative tracks from the whole of the Soft Machine's recordings, but in amongst some straight re-releases were sessions taken from John Peel's BBC Radio programme, 'Top Gear', none of which had appeared on vinyl before. The set thus had versions of "The Moon In June" "Noisette" and, "Slightly AlI The Time" alI of which would appear on "Third" but in different forms, as well as material such as "Mousetrap" and "Eamonn Andrews", which would not be available elsewhere. "The Moon In June" in particular, is a revelation. Broadcast a year (21/6/69) before the official version was issued, it is crammed with references to its specific recording, mentioning the programme, the BBC tea-machine, the Pink Floyd, and much more! "Triple Echo" is worth it for this track alone, but sadly, it was deleted in the early 1980's and is now increasingly scarce. It remains an essential purchase for anyone remotely interested in the group, coming as it does, with an eight page booklet filled with rare photographs, complete session details, memorabilia, and a Pete Frame family tree.



> Zoom

COMPLEX

Robert's immediate work upon leaving the Soft Machine was to make a solo album, punningly titled, "The End Of An Ear". This was a musically complex release, more in keeping with the instrumental fury of the group he was escaping than the intellectual pop one may have expected. Mark Charig and Elton Dean from the Softs played on it, as well as David Sinclair, but in truth, it was not a successful album and was deleted a few years later. However, it was recently repressed on the CBS 'Nice Price' series, and those wishing to hear jazz-rock in a freer atmosphere would find it a rewarding experience.

Robert retained David Sinclair for his next project, which he had pieced together by December 1971. Matching Mole were named after the French for his previous aggregation (machine molle), and also included Phil Miller (guitar), and Bill McCormick (bass). During the recording of their debut album, Sinclair

left to be replaced by Dave MacRae, confirming the line-up which would remain together throughout the group's career. Their eponymous debut was issued in April 1972, and immediately recalled the Soft Machine's ability to mix songs with experiment. The first side in particular, blends well, with the magnificent "O Caroline", "Instant Pussy" and "Signed Curtain". "O Caroline" proved so popular that it was lifted as a single, which is now a highly prized artifact.

COMPULSIVE

A second album, "Matching Mole's Little Red Record" was released in October that year, but was artistically less successful than its predecessor. A complex but compulsive album, once again, the highlights were down to Robert, most notably on "God Song". It was, however, to mark the end of the group, organisational problems and 'personality difficulties' caused them to break up. Both albums have since been deleted , though the first is easier to locate, having been reissued in 1982. Plans to ressurect the band around Wyatt, McCormick, Francis Monkman and Gary Windo were suddenly dashed by Robert's tragic fall, which left him permanently paralysed from the waist down.

A second solo album, "Rock Bottom", written during his long convalescence, was released by Virgin in July 1974. Produced by Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason, it was a rare masterpiece, deeply emotional, personalised, vulnerable, and easily one of that decade's most important and greatest recordings. The same sessions also produced "I'm A Believer", an excellent recreation of Neil Diamond's song for the Monkees, which gave Robert a hit single (No.29), and a 'Top Of The Pops' appearance in September. It was backed by a new version of "Memories", previously only cut as part of those 1967 demos. Plans to continue a singles' career were shelved when it was rumoured that the BBC were not entirely happy at having a man in a wheelchair appear on a pop programme. Chris Andrews' "Yesterday Man", another Sixties hit, had been scheduled for release, but instead, was placed on a Virgin double album sampler, "V". However, in 1977, the track was mysteriously put out as a single, but despite its excellence, disappeared without a trace, and is now highly collectable.

CLASSIC

Meanwhile, a second Virgin album, "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", was issued in May 1975. Another fine album, it moved some way towards combining the vocal and instrumental styles of the two previous albums, and it was not only confined to Wyatt's own material. Charlie Hayden's jazz classic, "Song For Che" was included, alongside contributions from Fred Frith, Phil Manzanera, and Mongezi Feza, to create a fascinating mixture. These two Virgin albums are now available as a budget-priced double-pack, although they are still relatively easy to find individually.

Robert then withdrew from active recording for several years, and it wasn't until 1980 that Rough Trade persuaded him to record a series of singles. Free to choose whatever material he wanted, Wyatt embarked on a fascinating cross-section of releases which indicated much about his politics and his aspirations. The first coupled two South American songs of hope, " Arauco" and "Caimenera", while the follow-up was a beautifully slow recording of Chic's " At Last I Am Free", backed by "Strange Fruit", a worthy rendition of the Billie Holiday song. Ivor Cutler's "Grass" was his third release, although Wyatt was not on the B-side, which was performed by a group of Bengali musicians, Dishari. "Stalin Wasn't Stalling" followed, this time coupled with Peter Blackman's "Stalingrad", while a further track from these sessions, "Born Again Cretin", a homage to Nelson Mandela, turned up on the Rough Trade/NME cassette. In 1983, Rough Trade collected these tracks together, added a version of "The Red Flag", and released them as the "Nothing Can Stop Us" album. Taken together, it allowed Robert the same kind of personal statement that "Rock Bottom" had been.

INDICTMENT

However, it was the fifth Rough Trade single, "Shipbuilding", which brought the most attention to his new music. Written especially for him by Elvis Costello, this subtle indictment of the Falklands War gave Wyatt his second chart hit, reaching No.35 in May 1983. Continued interest in the single was such that eventually it was added to the "Nothing Can Stop Us" album, making the first pressing of the LP increasingly rare. When the "Shipbuilding" single was repromoted, the 7" pressing was issued in a triple fold-out sleeve (the initial copies were not), while a new 12" pressing added another jazz standard, "Round Midnight" to the usual flipside, "Memories Of You". It had previously been only available on another NME cassette, "Mighty Reel".

Wyatt has also turned up on a couple of other collections. He had a one minute version of "Strangers In The Night" on the "Miniatures" album in 1980, then two years later, appeared on the "Recommended Records Sampler" with a rousing version of "The Internationale". Again in 1982, he collaborated with Ben Watt on a 12" EP, "Summer Into Winter". The same year, he made an unpublicised return to the stage, performing "Born Again Cretin" with the Raincoats at the Albany Theatre, London; his first appearance since guesting with Henry Cow back in 1975.

ANIMALS

Wyatt continues to record a variety of material for Rough Trade; his soundtrack album to "The AnimaIs Film" complemented the harrowing scenes captured on celluloid, while in 1984, the appearance of the "Work In Progress" 12" EP was led off by a great reworking of the Peter Gabriel song, "Biko". 1985 saw the release of "The Age Of Self", a single released on the TUC/7.84 label, with proceeds going to the Miners' Hardship Fund, and "The Winds Of Change", a collaboration with the SW APO singers, produced by Jerry Dammers, and proceeds helping the Namibia Support Committee. Robert Wyatt also contributed two songs, unavailable elsewhere, to "The Last Nightingale" EP, again, proceeds going to the Miners. On "Old Rottenhat", his most recent solo LP, Wyatt is backed with only keyboards and sparse percussion, his voice at the forefront. One unreleased track, "Pigs", is due to be included on the "Re Records Quarterly Vol. 1, No.3" disc-zine, and he has been working recently on the future "News From Babel" LP.

In fact, mention must be made of some of the guest appearances Robert has made, for he turns up on literally dozens of albums. Far too many to mention them all here, these include many of Kevin Ayers' earlier albums, Daevid Allen's "Bananamoon", Henry Cow's "Concerts", and Syd Barrett's classic solo, "The Madcap Laughs". More recently, he has worked with the Raincoats on "Odyshape", and Nick Mason "Ficticious Sports".

Taken together, along with his own work and with Soft Machine and Matching Mole , this represents an ambitious and fascinating body of work, the scope of which continues and extends to this day. Undoubtedly, Robert Wyatt has long been one of the most challenging individuals working in music, and as well as maintaining a consistently high standard, he retains a depth and perception that few other artists have achieved.



ROBERT WYATT
COMPLETE UK DISCOGRAPHY

SOFT MACHINE SINGLE

SOFT MACHINE ALBUMS

MATCHING MOLE SINGLE

MATCHING MOLE ALBUMS

ROBERT WYATT SINGLES

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English as a foreign language - New Musical Express 14th December, 1985



ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Does **ROBERT WYATT** have the sweetest voice and sharpest brain in English pop ? Is the English language a tool of cultural narcissism? Which Fleet Street daily has the best tipster? Twickenham's Mr Rottenhat tells **SEAN O'HAGAN** about the problems of being a Red in the stale bed of Western imperialist pop.
Smoothed sheets by **ANTON CORBIJN**.

It seems like that voice has always been there. Raising our eyebrows, bending our lips into smiles and, occasionally, knitting our brows in bemused wonderment.
A reassuring presence, this voice, but also, paradoxically, a strange one. And, the ample evidence suggests, a strangely affecting one.

For such an emphatically English voice to spread out and embrace such an eclectic international spectrum is further proof of an imagination that recognises no borders. Songs as diverse as Chilean poet Victor Jara's 'Te Recuerdo Amanda' and Elvis Costello's 'Shipbuilding', as Ivor Cutler's 'Grass' and Chic's 'At last I Am Free'.

Yet Robert Wyatt's voice, its stately melancholy timbre, unites them all.

FITS AND STARTS

WAY BACK then there was Soft Machine, then an experiment with Matching Mole. Then there was that accident. Silence. Then the former jazz drummer underwent a startling and painfully introspective sea-change - chronicled on'74's 'Rock Bottom' LP - to emerge from the depths, shaken but stronger in resolve. Both 'Rock Bottom' and its offspring, '75's 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard', still stand as resonant, multi-layered, richly-hued landscapes but, for a while, it seemed their maker. Another silence ensued, broken, by of all things, a hit single. Robert Wyatt even made *Top Of The pops*, singing 'I'm A Believer' and, in the process, exorcised the ghost of The Monkees as well. Then another cover: Chris Andrews' 60s opus 'Yesterday Man' underwent the Wyatt treatment. After that, another silence.

A SPANNER IN THE WORKS

ENCOURAGED by his wife Alfie and Rough Trade's Geoff Travis, Robert Wyatt returned in the late '70s with a series of very different singles. Again cover versions were the order of the day, again Wyatt imbued each song with his distinctive breath. These singles - now collectively known as the 'Nothing Can Stop Us' LP - contained only one Wyatt original, the scathing 'Born Again Cretin', but, more importantly, they announced a new intent, a declaration of independence.

"Each song was chosen on quite a consistent basis, all part of a conscious attempt to make *un-misusable* music: music that couldn't be appropriated by the Right. This is also why the new stuff is much more straightforward. I was pushed into this by an alarming

occurrence: I was fiddling around on the short wave radio when I heard one of my old songs being played on one of those Western propaganda programmes - The Voice Of America or Radio Free Europe. Blow me, I thought, I don't want my music used in this way. So, I consciously set out to make records where the ambiguity was removed, records that would have to be rejected by anyone promoting Western culture. Now I make sure I always put a spanner in the works. A desperate move, but ..."

These spanners included heart-wrenching 'Strange Fruit', a bizarre 'Stalin Wasn't Stalling' (originally a patriotic American ditty), a Cuban folk anthem ('Caimanera') and, just so no one could possibly mistake his sympathies, a reading of 'Red Flag'.

Then the phone started ringing...

A VOICE FOR ALL REASONS?

"REALLY, I'D say Costello and Langer were the ones who helped get my name known to the biggest audience. 'Shipbuilding' - that was the one that did it."

'Shipbuilding' is craftsmanship *par excellence*, the perfect, seamless grafting of political *content* and songwriting *style*. The song's deftly executed overview including the irony of working class labour caught up in the imperialist wheels of industry, is imbued with a sad, knowing stoicism and the tenor of Costello's finest lyric fits Wyatt like a glove. Like 'At Last I Am Free' before it, the song became Robert Wyatt's.

Over the past few years, Wyatt's musical involvements have ensured a high profile: one third of the vocal frontline of Working Week's inspired 'Vencermos' debut; a meeting with Ben Watt on the latter's 'Summer Into Winter' EP; the 'Trade Union' outing featuring Bengali musicians Dishari; 'The Age Of Self' miners single, also featuring The Grimethorpe Colliery Brass band; and, finally, the celebrated Jerry Dammers-produced SWAPO song, 'The Wind Of Change'.



Last year Wyatt issued his own 'Work In Progress' EP which, alongside three more excellent cover versions, included 'Amber And The Amberines', only his second self-penned song in ten years.

"It's so bloody difficult to do my own stuff: that's why I'd much rather do covers or quite happily get roped into other people's projects. I go into this state of trance when I'm working on my own and really I have very little control of what I'm going to come up with. The songs tend to suggest themselves so the word 'creative' is a misleading one. For me it's more like fishing, dangling a line over the keyboards and hoping something will jump out at you".

OLD ROTTENHAT; THOUGHTS OF A RELUCTANT SONGWRITER

WHAT HAS "jumped out" is 'Old Rottenhat', an LP of ten new, original compositions. Continuing his catalogue of "un-misusable songs", 'Old Rottenhat' is, on one level at least, Robert Wyatt's most straightforward recording. Yet the targets he has chosen are slippery, ambiguous ones; the treacherous duplicity of political language, the lies that democracy depends on, the so-called plurality of thought that Western culture contains and the infectious spread of cultural amnesia. Behind this array of inter-related topics lurks the spirit of Marxist writer Noam Chomsky, that most mischievous disseminator of Western capitalist mores and guiding light in Wyatt's current way of seeing.

The music remains as haunting and dreamlike as ever, yet here and there an accusatory tone or caustic insight defines a certain shift of emphasis and suggests an angry, spirited individual hides 'neath this most gentle of men'. 'Alliance', the record's opening statement, is a case in point - a song possessed of a political critique and a personal sting: "*You're proud of being middle class (meaning upper class)/You say you're self sufficient (but you don't dig your own coal).*"

"It's a reactionary song. What I'm reacting against is being told that anyone who supported the NUM during the miners' strike was a mindless thug. I've got a couple of friends who, over the years, drifted towards the Alliance and what was nightmarish for me during 1984 was that the official opposition - as well as the usual right-wingers who want to smash the unions good and proper - were all so busy evading the issues. They all put pressure on the miners to accommodate the state instead of vice versa and really the reason the state have such an easy time is 'cause the opposition is so namby pamby. That song is about being painted into a corner called *extremism*; you're pushed into a position because of the sheer

unreasonableness of mainstream alternatives."

"There are degrees of amnesia, ways to forget"
'The United States Of Amnesia'

CULTURAL AMNESIA: the process of selection that allows nations to rewrite their past, highlighting the good, erasing the bad. If Communist countries blatantly rewrite their history to fit a post-revolutionary ethos, the West is, as always, more subtle, more undercover. Chomsky is continually pinpointing this slow, erosive fradulence, as Robert eleborates:

"The liberal and right-wing tradition here, and in the US, the big We, they have a kind of smug consensus which you can see in their self-image in the history books. This consensus gets its moral strenght, as far as I can see, from the fact that everyone else who tries an alternative seems to mess it up. Yet the argument for Western democracy seems to rest on *expedience*. I'm looking at what it means to be expedient all the time: it's expedient to boast about one thing and forget about something else.

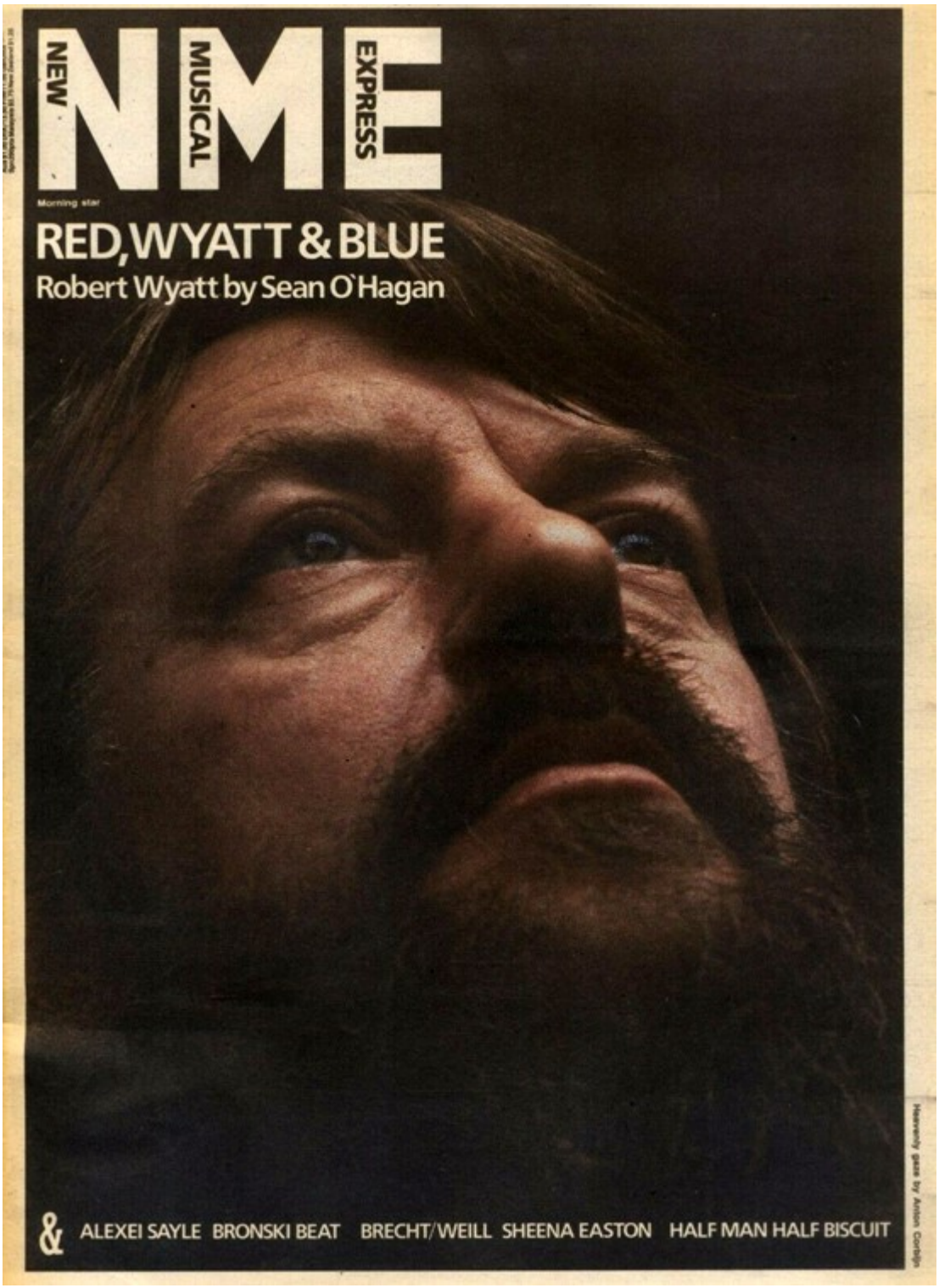
"It still happens all the time: take Western governments' involvement in the Pacific, which never gets publicised. That's why I wrote 'East Timor'. Indonesia, with the West's backing, decided to take East Timor and when the people reisted there was genocide on a massive scale. We need the Pacific for a source of constant cheap labour but we don't hear about the people who are still fighting out there. Now people say they are not interested in all these foreign problems, but our taxes are financing this sort of thing - you can't have it both ways. The song also concerns the very fact that nobody has heard about East Timor. Subtle stuff."

'The Age Of Self' confronts a different, no less pervasive form of amnesia: the constant accusation that the Left is too tied to the past, too fond of its heritage to be a relevant force today: "*they say the working class is dead, we're all consumers now*".

"Yeah, well, I'm all for progress on the Left but you don't do it by disowning your past, by saying you're ashamed of the unions and that. Telling the press we're really with-it now, we're not boring old Lefties - always eager to accommodate *them*. See, one of the things the Right have going is the continuation of their own romantic myth. It's quite a legitimate stance, actually. I think the Left should be like a family where the feeling you have for each other transcends all the pretty differences, and that strengthens all of you. It shouldn't be: let's move forward and discard the industrial workers. I think mutual affection is more in order..."

Is that why you turned out to the *Red Wedge* launch?

"Yeah. People seemed surprised, but the musicians asked for a bit of moral support and I came along. It's good for the Labour front benchers to meet people like that, though I didn't really qualify: I'm not a Labour Party supporter and I'm definitely not a youth!"



"WORDS TAKE THE PLACE OF MEANING"

LANGUAGE, ITS open-endedness and malleability, is something that has always tickled Robert's fancy but, where he once used to play on words, he now draws attention to more sinister types of word-play. 'Vandalusia' simply recites a few well-worn phrases; terms that have slipped into the English language as colonial archetypes and, through constant mindless usage, have become separated from their original, usually quite illuminating, meaning.

One of Robert's choices, "beyond the pale", stems from Norman times when the English "owned" one part of Ireland around Dublin which they christened The Pale, originally meaning 'Boundary'. Now "beyond the pale" has established itself as a phrase meaning "uncivilised" and "outside the limits of decency". Interesting?

"My preoccupation is to try and reclaim meanings from used words and see how they function and it's very interesting indeed. Words resonate and grow and get hi-jacked by

one side or the other, but now there's a distinctly unbalanced analysis of language. Everyone is so careful not to use left-wing swear words like 'fascist' carelessly, but the establishment use all kinds of words so carelessly. 'Extremist' and 'terrorist' are two that spring to mind. In the White House or the State Department a terrorist is anyone who believes in having good schools and hospitals and decides to do something about it. The media have to deneutralise words, steal their meaning as part of a process of self-justification for our method of democracy."



> Zoom

The inter-dependent relationship between the right-wing government and their press, in this country, has now reached ridiculous, yet nonetheless exceedingly powerful realms. The press baron has an unassailable powerbase that, unlike the politician, isn't threatened every five years. The media can have power without responsibility simply because the state is dependent on them to such a degree: hardly the ideal situation for democratic free speech to thrive.

"Well, if you consider the idea of a 'terrorist', they never get a fair hearing which is part of the reason they resort to such extreme tactics. You ignore someone with a legitimate cause until they take up a gun in order to be heard. Then you say that you don't talk to gunmen. All the way along the line, the establishment finds a reason for ignoring them: first they're not powerful enough, then they get power and are ostracised. Either way it's avoided. The media operate on a rough consensus of who the goodies and baddies are and that, of course, works very well for the people who run the set-up."

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ROBERT WYATT is a soul caught in a bind: an unfortunate accident of birth has made him (poor chap) indisputedly English. He worries about this, as well he might, and has my utmost sympathy. Try as he may he can't totally escape the chains that bind him to Albion, althought his Communist Party membership will be enough to get him disowned in most quarters of this "liberal" land. Even the CP, for all its internationalism, calls itself the Communist Party *of Great Britain*: an unfortunate case of colonialist infection.

"I feel like I could be an internationalist but the paradox is my extreme Englishness - I've desperately traced my family tree for some clues but the fartherest we come from is Bolton! But I find Englishness, the English language, forms an amazing power group and for all its apparent broadmindedness, there is a totally suffocating cultural narcissism which is a real problem, not only for the rest of the world, but also for our future. It is, quite simply, an inability to allow other people, who aren't like us, the right to live how they please. That's a problem I address right from the first song.

"It's not just a right-wing thing either but the unconscious racialism of the established Left which also takes this maternal view of movements around the world: telling other groups, in long essays, how to run their revolutions. We should have respect for people even though they makes mistakes."

Coming from a middle-class background, Robert Wyatt is also familiar with the "cunningness" of liberal ideology: the lack of direction disguised as broadmindedness, the inability to make a stand and say what you feel. This all adds up to a kind of political paralysis, a "suffocation" as Robert would have it, which means an "opposition based on consensus rather than challenge, scared of even challenging the fundamental, psychological notions that justify imperialism".

The song 'Gharbzadegi' is interesting in this context: being both a critique of 'Englishness' and a classic example of language becoming so analysed that it slips back into abstractness.

"First up, the very existence of the word makes me laugh - I *think* it's an Iranian word meaning 'westernitis'. I'd like to take this opportunity to say that the record might have been called 'English As A Foreign Language', because I'm, at once, incredibly English and also very uncomfortable with it. So I keep trying to see Englishness from an outsider's point of view. When I come across an Iranian word that means 'westernitis' and sounds like some weird disease, describing how people from other cultures try and become like us... well, what a wonderful word! The song itself is a tricky one, it's not a literal song. It's near the end of the record because I'm on the verge of giving up struggling with words by then."

"**EVERY NIGHT I GO TO SLEEP, I ALWAYS DREAM IN RED**"

'Biko' from 'Work In Progress'

WITHIN THE graduations that constitute the Communist Party, Robert Wyatt describes himself as "a *Morning Star* reader" and humbly suggests that if anyone wants to define that description their best bet would be to place an order for that august daily paper. It has, says Robert, by way of further enticement, "the makings of a good, all-round family newspaper: sympathetic to the international labour movement with a pop column, a gardening correspondent and the best tipster in Fleet Street" (he is reliably informed).

On an artistic level, his politics and his music are inseparable although he eschews the role of demagogic educator so beloved of many agit-pop stars.

"I don't bang my head against the wall trying to make people see my way as the only way. I'm more interested in trying to highlight certain issues, identify groups who need help to be heard. I work out where I stand on something and give my support accordingly, but it's not my place to choose issues and thrust them on people. Similarly I don't think we can tell South Africans how to get rid of apartheid; they ask for your help and support and you do what you can, but they are *there*."

INSPIRATION AND DEDICATION

"*I've got an 'at but it ain't like that - ooooold Rotten'at*".
Alfie's intro to 'Gharbazadegi'
"*For Michael Bettany*"
Wyatt's dedication on the sleeve of 'Old Rottenhat'

ALFIE - OR Alfreda Benge - has been the single most significant force in Robert Wyatt's life: his wife, his inspiration, his record-cover illustrator and the main catalyst for his politicisation. In many ways, the album's semantic preoccupations concern her also.

"The phrase 'old rottenhat' is a West London one which she picked up in her childhood. Now, she spoke German up until she was seven, so she actually remembers hearing English as a foreign language and German wasn't a very fashionable language round here in the late '40s (laughs).

"Alfie really made me look at the borders and dotted lines with which we surround ourselves and which take on some great spiritual meaning. I learnt a lot from her and her family about politics and music."

The name Michael Bettany is one now synonomous with betrayal but, amidst the stoked-up outrage that the media contrived, the individual's true plight, as ever, became buried: a self-made civil servant who worked his way up through the corridors of power only to reach the rarified suffocation of Whitehall.

"I think his real crime wasn't trying to give secrets to the enemy but the fact that he challenged the official ideology of Englishness and realigned his loyalties. Now he's classed as a traitor: this vague notion of Englishness suddenly becomes very specific when it comes to crossing the line. But the actual *pathos* of his situation... he was looking for a way of breaking this dead end - having worked his way up to the top - and when he went to the enemy, they were actually double agents.

"He'd gone as far as he could go to reach a world outside his own and all he reached was another layer of suffocation, a more sophisticated structure of confinement. A perfect subject for a short story.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF BLUES

OLD ROTTENHAT gathers all the strands of thought that Robert Wyatt tries to make sense of and, amidst all the theory and analysis, a music emerges that is the very antithesis of constrictive formalism. A loose, bendy, floating music that playfully raises all the right questions and asks you to look beyond the boundaries. He seems to have absorbed so much music of the early 20th century, taking in the European avant-garde jazz movement along the way, slipping on his international hat and finally allowing whatever takes his fancy to enter his consciousness. We talk about English lovers-rock reggae, soul, Soviet Jazz and the "the sheer courage of Ornette Coleman", who "fought against everything including the place that other musicians had set aside for what they understood as avant-garde. Ornette broke all the rules good and proper *and* he came back to a good danceable beat!"

When asked for current preferences, Wyatt talks enthusaistically about Artery, a group attached to *The Morning Star*, about Harry Gold And His Pieces Of Eight - a veteran of the "pre-war trad-swing style" - about Coleridge Good, one of the last of the "Jamaican Jazz

musicians who came over here just before all the dance music arrived".

His current favourite tune is Canadian folk singer Bruce Cockburn's excellent 'If I Had A Rocket Launcher', which Wyatt played, much to the consternation of the producer ("a little politics goes a long way, don't you think?), on Gary Crowley's Capital radio spot.

Yes, he's heard about Tears For Fears being big fans and rushed out and bought a copy of the single which included a cover of 'Sea Song' from 'Rock Bottom' on the B-side. "Oh, I was so impressed, it's a great feeling hearing one of your songs done well." The mind cannot help but boggle.

And this music of yours, Mr. Wyatt, how would you describe it? I've heard it called folk?

"Oh, I think that would be claiming too much for it. I honestly don't know what you'd call it, but it sure ain't rock'n'roll. I try to make completely normal records but they must come out funny... I haven't got that much control especially over this voice but, let's see... I actually do get very sad about the political climate - not in an abstract way but how it affects people... I am capable of much more energetic music, but I do tend to get brought down and it gets turned into a kind of English blues. Yeah! That's what I'd call it - *English blues*.

That'll do fine.

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ABÉCÉDAIRE

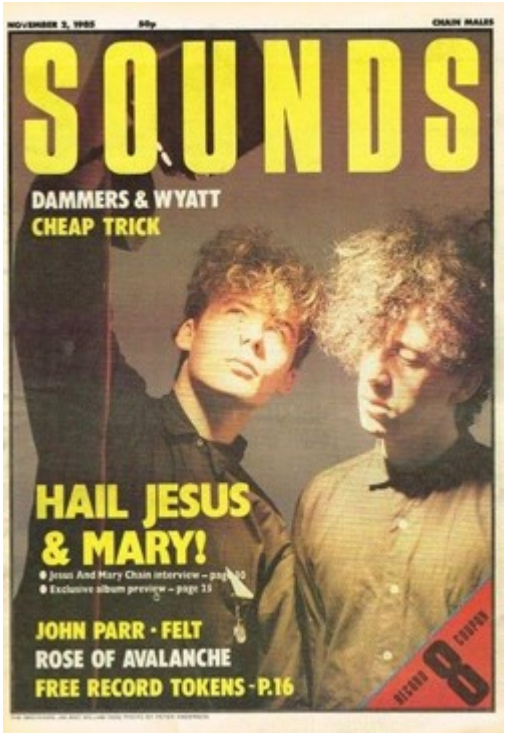
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Wyatt & Dammers - Sounds - November 2, 1985

WYATT & DAMMERS
working to free namibia

Do politics and music mix? Or is it impossible to separate them?
JACK BARRON discovers ROBERT WYATT and JERRY DAMMERS ensconced in deepest England with Zimbabwean RICHARD MUZIRA, working on behalf of a repressed African nation.
EYE AND EYE spies…



IMAGINE...

TAKE TWO women...

One is a Namibian, 40-year-old. She was arrested in her own country by the security forces of the illegally occupying regime of South Africa. That was in 1980.

The reason? She spoke in support of the South West African People's Organisation, SWAPO - the national liberation movement recognised by the United Nations as being the authentic representative of the Namibians.

Tried and sentenced not in her own country but Prime Minister Botha's SA-dist apartheid state, the woman was pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy in jail. The child stayed with her a year and subsequently died. The woman was not allowed to attend her infant's funeral. She is still incarcerated.

The woman's name is Ida Jimmy.

Now remember a supposed world leader swanning around the luxurious environment of the Bahamas. A 60-year-old blue rinse bitch, for every year she has been alive, Namibia has been under the yoke of South Africa. She has, by virtue of her office, an historical responsibility for this abomination.

You see, the kingdom of SA-dists was a British colony when, post-World War One, the South Africans decided to administer what was later to become Namibia. Indeed, this warped state of ours wanted the territory to become a legally recognised part of SA-distonia. Even The League Of Nations weren't fool enough to fall for that.

So there she is clucking evil in the Bahamas. From her perch in the gallery of political despots she mouths empty slogans against Botha's fascist regime - here's the disgusting punchline - all the while plotting to stop other countries from taking practical measures against the SA-dists.

This other woman is, of course, Margaret Thatcher at last week's obscene conference of Commonwealth ministers at the millionaire's resort of Lyford Quay.

She made me ashamed to be British. Thatcher and Ida Jimmy have never met except in this Feature.

What has brought them indirectly togeteher in print is the release of a records, 'The Wind Of Change', by Robert Wyatt, The SWAPO Singers, and an all-star cast, which was produced and arranged by Jerry Dammers.

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'The Wind Of Change' nails a specific concern to its stake, its melodic breeze blowing on beautifully about the plight of people like Ida Jimmy: Namibian political prisoners held illegally by South Africa.

AN ATROCITY EXHIBITION...

TAKE THREE men...

Richard Muzira, black, bearded and baggy-trousered. Apart from being the catalyst behind and singing on. 'The Wind Of Change' project, he is the co-ordinator of the Namibia Support Committee's Repression And Political Prisoners Campaign.

He, Jerry and Robert now Sit drinking tea in Wyatt's house…

"The situation regarding the Namibian prisoners in South Africa has changed just recently," explains Richard, a Zimbabwean formerly involved in the liberation struggle for his country's independence. "There were 21 political prisoners at the last count being detained in South Africa. Now though, 17 of them have been moved back to Windhoek (Namibia's capital).



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WYATT &

working to free namibia

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"The situation regarding the Namibian prisoners in South Africa has changed just recently," explains Richard, a Zimbabwean formerly involved in the liberation struggle for his country's independence. "There were 26 political prisoners at the last count being detained in South Africa. Now though, 17 of them have been moved back to Windhoek (Namibia's capital).

"It shows the South African Government are sensitive about the issue," continues Dammers. Since the days of 'Free Nelson Mandela' the Special-ist has sprouted an abundance of facial hair. "It's an attempt by them to clean-up their image a bit I should imagine."

"Yeah," agrees Richard, "they're trying to give credibility to the puppet-show of the MPC. But that doesn't get around the fact that the Namibians were tried illegally in South Africa, imprisoned there, and may still have life sentences hanging over their heads."

The MPC, I should add, is the Multi-Party Conference, Namibia's so-called 'Transitional Government'. It was unelected and established through proclamation by the head ape of apartheid, Botha, in June this year.

While the inauguration ceremony was taking place in Windhoek, down the road in the neighbouring black township of Katutura the South African terror 'police', Koevoet, were brutally dispersing a demonstration of protesters. Many were seriously injured.

"Another obviously related issue the record is meant to highlight is Koevoet," says Richard. "This is a fascist assassination squad formed by the South Africans in 1979. It has a reputation for atrocities, torture and indiscriminate killing.

"Koevoet is a counter-insurgency unit of the sort the Americans used in Vietnam. The same strategy has been used by the South Africans in Mozambique and Angola. So, as part of the campaign we are demanding that Koevoet be disbanded.

"The reason why this is important, apart from saving innocent lives, is because of Resolution 435 by the Security Council of the United Nations. This resolution sets out a plan to bring independence to Namibia, but the plan itself takes account of the internal forces in the country who will help administer the elections should they ever take place.

"Obviously South Africa's idea is that Koevoet will be part of the internal forces which will monitor the elections. Really though, like I've said, they are an assassination squad under instructions from South Africa. You can see the problem. Koevoet is called a police unit by the MPC, but it has always been a military wing suppressing and torturing the Namibian people.

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OF 70 YEARS OF DEATH...

FOR SEVEN decades Namibia has been a political football, with South Africa doing most of the vicious kicking since they invaded the then German colony of South West Africa in 1915.

Despite repeated protests, and having their occupation declared illegal by the United Nations, the SA-dists have held on to the country ever since. Meanwhile they've introduced the population to all the demons of apartheid: the pass system, bantustans and so on.

Why?

Let's ignore the oft-blessed strategic *red herring* of Namibia being seen as a frontline against Communism, and the fact that South African governments appear to be filled with socio-paths.

"If you want to know how I view South Africa I think of it as Nazism in practice," comments Dammers.

No. Namibia's big problem is its fatal attraction to outsiders because of its wealth of natural resources: diamonds, gold and uranium among them. Those are the sort of glistening prizes countries will fight for: those are the kind of economic gains that make nations like Britain turn a blind eye to obscenities carried out in the name of apartheid.

"Of course the real string-pullers in Namibia are basically the London bankers, and British and American corporations," shrugs Robert Wyatt. "This hasn't come up before, but what happened to another German colony, Tanganyika, is relevant here.

"Tanganyika, as you know, became Tanzania. And when he was asked why Tanzania had got its independence relatively easily, Nyerere (Tanzania's then President) said, 'Luckily we are such a poor country, we didn't have anything anybody else wanted'.

"Namibia isn't so lucky. It's got things the West craves for like uranium; the South Africans are obviously interested in uranium as well. We still, as a nation, make a lot of money out of Namibia. That's worth pointing out since there's a lot of self-congratulation, rightly so, about charity for Africa at the moment. The last figures I saw though showed that Western developed countries take six times as much out of Africa as we give in aid."

As Richard points out, there are still some 70 or so British companies operating in Namibia – including Thorn EMI! The UN has long called for countries to desist from trading with Namibia, and equally Britain has always voted against or abstained in these resolutions. If it'll make us a rand or two we'll economically prop up the crumbling gold-mine of apartheid.

In view of this historical track record, Margaret Thatcher's subversion of the Commonwealth ministers' calls for mandatory sanctions against SA (and hence by implication Namibia) at last week's Bahamas conference is simply par for the course. What was vile was the way she glossed about her shallow 'victory'.

A victory for whom?

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The relative smallness of the population of Namibia came as something of a shock to me. The reason for its numerical size is simple: prior to World War One the Germans committed genocide on the indigenous blacks, and since the introduction of male registration recently by SA – with the idea of conscription in mind – many Namibians have fled to SWAPO enclaves in Angola and Mozambique.

Mind you, being in a bordering country doesn't guarantee safety. In May 1978, for example, South African armed forces slaughtered 600 SWAPO members in an Angolan refugee camp.

The Namibians involved in 'The Wind Of Change' project, The Torch Singers of the cultural wing of SWAPO, have come to England from just such a refugee camp.

They include Bience Gawanas who performs the tone poem on the flip, 'When I Think About My Country', which was written by Vaino Shivute.

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Who put up the money for the record? I ask as Jerry leaves to make a phone call.

"We all gave our services for free," chuckles Robert, "but I think a lot of the money was Jerry's own, and Rough Trade put up some. I believe, I'd better tell you that because Jerry won't."

Having decided on the musical content, there was no shortage of artists willing to donate their skills: Lyndsi Golding, Ben Mandelson from Jazira, Ernest Mapasi Mothle – of whom Wyatt comments "I don't know a better bass player in the world." – Dick Cuthell, Annie Whitehead and others can be heard playing.

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Do politics and music mix? Or is it impossible to separate them? JACK BARRON discovers ROBERT WYATT and JERRY DAMMERS ensconced in deepest England with Zimbabwean RICHARD MUZIRA, working on behalf of a repressed African nation. EYE AND EYE spies. . .

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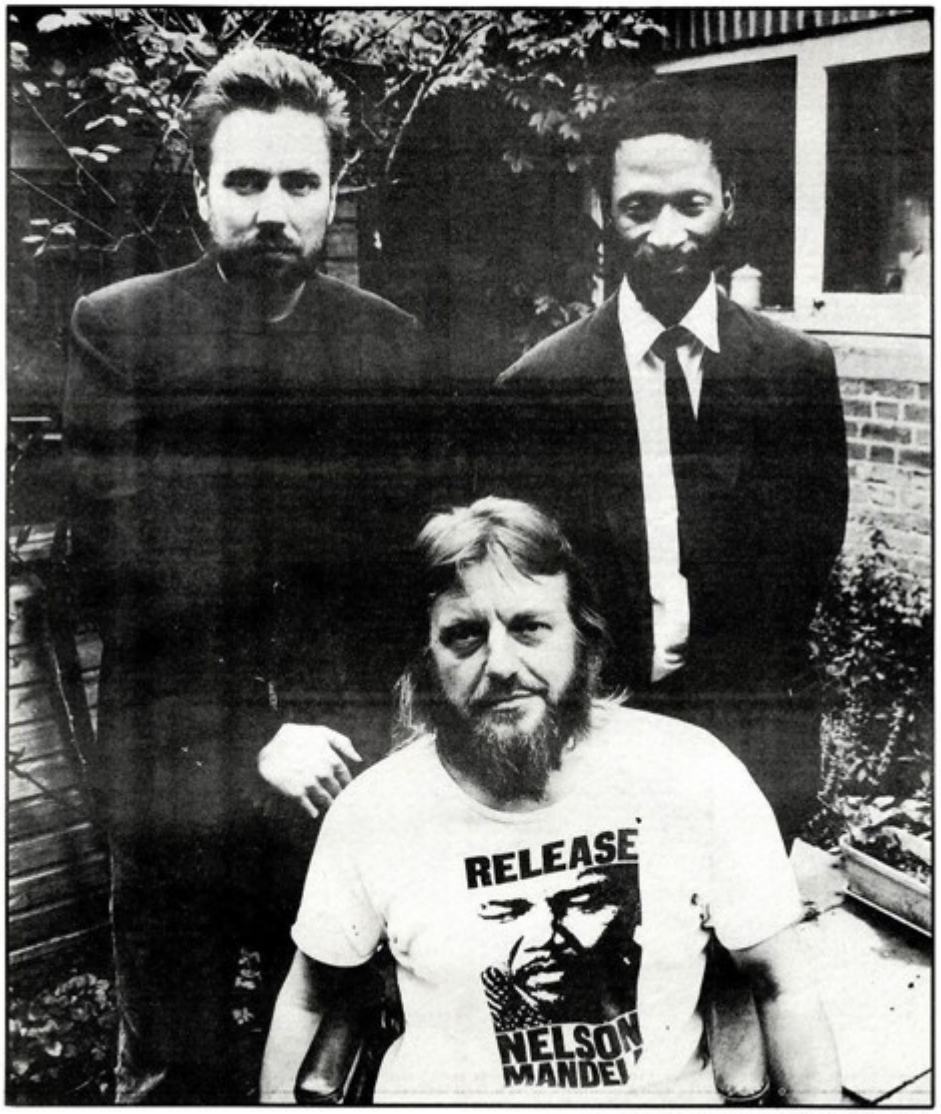
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DAMMERS



JOINING FORCES: Jerry Dammers, Robert Wyatt and Richard Muzira

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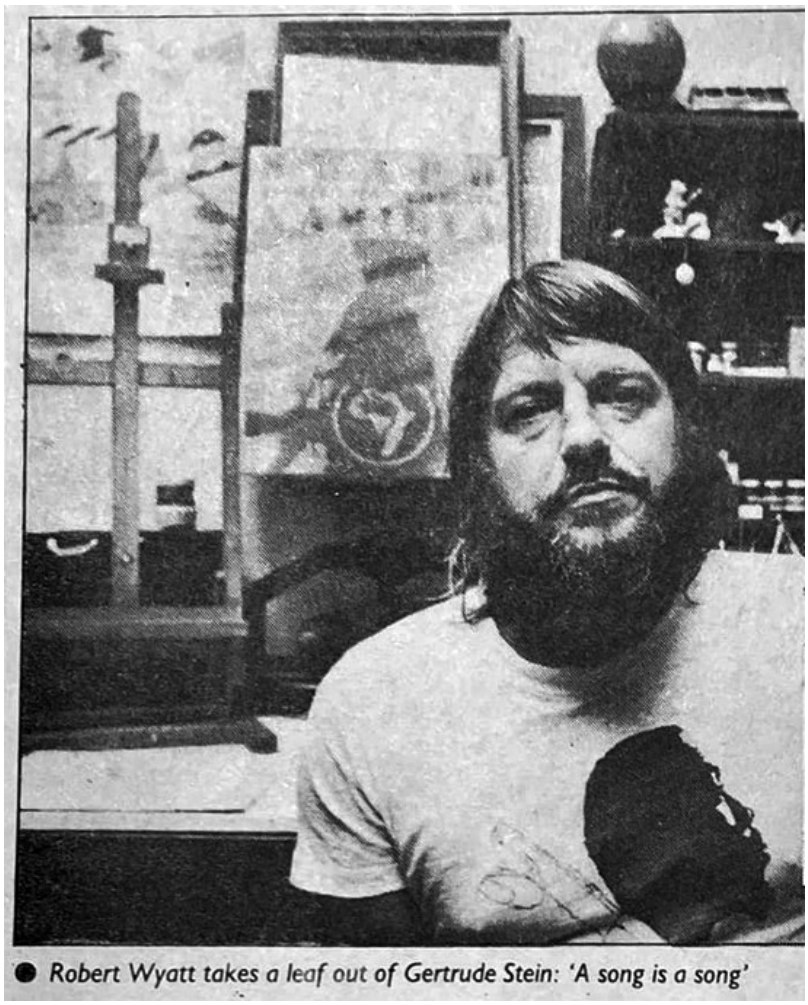
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Chewing on Chomsky - City Limits - 1-7 November 1985

Chewing on Chomsky

A new Robert Wyatt album is rightly considered a cause for delight. And this one he wrote himself. PAUL KERR meets Chomsky's great admirer and wearer of a rotten hat.



● *Robert Wyatt takes a leaf out of Gertrude Stein: 'A song is a song'*

> Zoom

He was guest vocalist on Working Week's debut single, 'Venceremos'; Elvis Costello co-wrote 'Shipbuilding' for him, and last week he could be heard singing alongside a SWAPO student choir on Jerry Dammers' arrangement of 'Wind of Change'. I've got to keep working, because it's my job,' Robert Wyatt explains, 'but I don't do much writing - I find it very hard. I'm not prolific, I'm the opposite of Costello. But when I'm not writing at least I can sing.'

Wyatt's last album ('Nothing Can Stop Us') and 12" ('Work In Progress') contained precisely one self-penned composition apiece. So Wyatt-watchers will be doubly delighted that 'Old Rotten Hat' is a solo album in every sense of the word.

'I just wrote a whole bunch of songs and sung and played them myself - they were all simple enough that I didn't feel the need to get anybody else in on them. And I wanted to do something on my own.' There's no narcissism in that desire, as the terrific 'Age Of Self' makes abundantly clear, nor does Wyatt harbour archaic ideas about the artist working best in a vacuum. 'You don't have the choice of being an isolated individual developing your craft, even if you wanted to, because the official ideology is pumped in at you, it seeps under the doors, through the windows.

'Left to my own devices I might be a lyrical, singalong composer, but I happen to live in a world battered by offensive ideas and just out of pride you have to deal with that - or go along with it.'

The very first track, 'Old School Ties', sets the tone of Wyatt's counter-attack on what he sees as individualist ideology: *'A herd of independent minds - Chomsky got it right/jogging into battle, waving old school ties*.' The song is about betrayals, both of old friends (*'What we had in common makes it even worse*') and old phrases (*'You say you're self-sufficient but you don't dig your own coal*').

Coal - and the miners' strike - is very much the fuel of this album's melodic. melancholic anger. 'Miners in jail are political prisoners,' he says, explaining that the whole album grew out of 'the feelings that came up during the strike and the witchhunt against Scargill.' Hence a song like 'Mass Medium', with its wonderful opening couplet: '*And as history slips out of view/Bated breath for the 9,00 News*'.

To say that the album includes songs about imperialism, the end of ideology, news manipulation and even a couple of acid contributions to the 'Forward March Of Labour Halted' debate - not to mention a beautiful instrumental portrait of Andalucia which builds a haunting topography of chords and contours - is to do no justice to Wyatt's work at all.

His lyrics have taken a page out of Randy Newman's book with some perfectly pitched political ventriloquism and the music muscles into the fray too: the kettle drum alternately hammering out the headlines and underlining the ironies; the keyboards and the bass building an almost physical vehicle for that wonderful voice.

And the voice itself, which Wyatt uses. apparently effortlessly, is both an instrument (he hums, whistles, dee-dee-dees) and his very own vernacular, a conversational singing style par excellence. Wyatt describes his style as 'simply the kind of tune I like to hum. I'm very neanderthal technologically - I'm not a Luddite, I just depend on the engineers. I don't know what the buttons mean. A microphone, a tape recorder and an on-off switch do me fine. I try to do the least possible to get the thing across and that's also my vocal technique.'

He worries about the uncritical attentions given to what rock stars say (as opposed to what they do). In fact he's pretty unimpressed with the whole interview circus. But here we are anyway - after all, it's his job.



'An awful lot of weight is put on musicians, singers and songwriters to come up with stuff. Ideas. First of all what do we know? And secondly, a song is a song and the purest and best way of saying something is to say it.'

Before I can argue, he's back with the smiling reply, 'don't go on listening to me, go and play some Chomsky.' But, Chomsky having been out of the studio some little while, he elaborates on the politics of songwriting:

'You can't just take an article by Chomsky and put notes to it.' I started enumerating songwriters whose lyrics could only be improved by such a tactic—but Mr Wyatt is assuredly not amongst them.

Oh yes, one last thing—the title. 'Old Rotten Hat' is, it appears, the punch line of a playground rhyme from the East End. It goes like this: 'I got a 'at, but it ain't like that, old rotten 'at.'

Don't ask me what it means. Buy the album and work it out for yourself. You'll enjoy it. And so would Chomsky. ●

'Old Rotten Hat' is released by Rough Trade next week.

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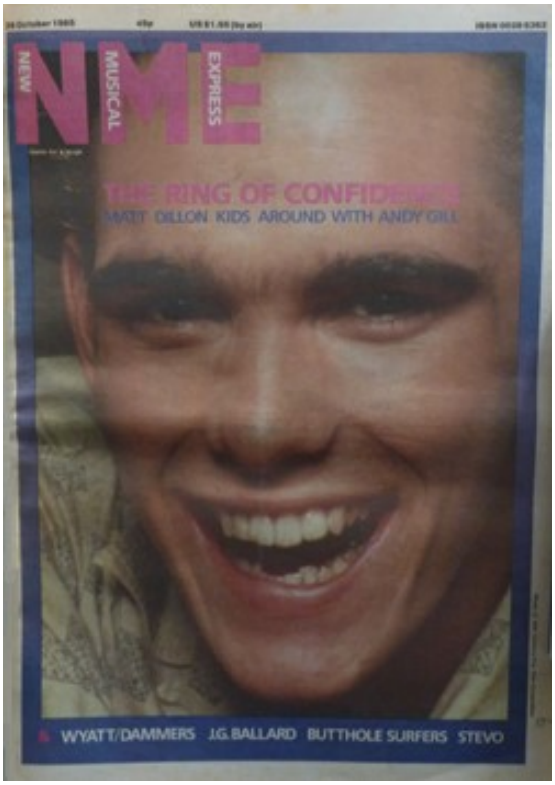
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Rocking The Botha - New Musical Express - 26 October 1985



Pop against apartheid revisited. DANNY KELLY discusses SWAPO single, 'The Wind Of Change' with producer JERRY DAMMERS and vocalist ROBERT WYATT. Photos: A. J. BARRATT

WHEN A POP STAR begins a sentence with "it's just been fantastic to work with..." you await the inevitable "Stevie Wonder", "David Bowie", or "Grandmaster Superflash Megatalent (Thank You, God III," and yawn.

But when that pop star is as undemonstrative a character as Jerry Dammers, and the sentence *actually* ends with "the students who are members of SWAPO", you sit up and take notice.

The special Special continues: "They were just so brilliant to work with compared with the usual prima donna and egos you normally find in studios".

Dammers is talking about his work as producer and arranger of a remarkable new single that's released this week. Called 'The Wind Of Change', and issued by Rough Trade, it features, along with the forementioned student chorus, a lead vocal by the peerless Robert Wyatt, plus work by Lynval Golding, Ben Medelsohn, Dick Cuthell, Annie Whitehead and JD himself.

The record has been made to publicise a campaign aimed at highlighting the continuing terror-random arrests, detentions, torture, disappearances and deaths - perpetrated by South African troops in the newly 'independent' state of Namibia.

Remember Namibia? A few years ago, as the outgunned military wing of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) grimly harassed the South African forces, Namibia - a country bigger than France but composed mainly of rock-strewn desert - was often in the

news. Lately, though, the unfolding agony of the continent's northern famine and the accelerated ticking of the bomb under Botha's fool's paradise have totally overshadowed its fate.

So, some facts: This year Namibia was granted notional independence from South Africa. What this amounted to in practice was the installation of an interim government that even Pretoria sneeringly refers to as 'The Pupppet Show'.



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Namibia is victim of the most intense military occupation on the planet today. Over 125,000 South-African Army and Police personnel oversee 1.5 million Namibians. That's one occupier for very 13 civilians! Imagine over three *million* hostile troops stalking the British mainland and, even allowing for Namibia's relative vastness, you're beginning to appreciate the scale of the operation.

And those forces, given carte blanche by the notorious Proclamation AG 26. have systematically terrorised all those inclined to oppose the Pinochio regime. Britain, though a signatory to the UN agreement that recognises SWAPO as "the sole and authentic representative of the Namibians people", turns a blind eye. No surprise this, as nine multinational companies (foremost among them Standard Chartered Bank, Consolidated Goldfield and, natch, Barclays) are in virtual control of the economy and Britain gets most of its uranium for military and civilian projects from Namibia.

In short, Namibia is under the cosh, up the creek and in the shit.

The Dammers/Wyatt/SWAPO disc aims to spotlight a specific area of Namibia's continuing pain - the detention and maltreatment of political prisoners. Dammers, whose 'Free Nelson Mandela' single predated that slogan's current popularity by over twelve months, is self-effacing about his role.

"I was fairly ignorant about Namibia, but when I was approached and the situation was explained to me, I could hardly refuse, could I? I'm nothing special, it's just that I happen to have access to the media, and if Robert and I can get some attention for the campaign, then

we've achieved something."

Robert Wyatt - whose contribution to the 'Last Nightingale' EP was one of the few vinyl supports offered the miners during their dispute - is well aware that music can only do so much.

"There was a euphoria in the '60s when Dylan picked up on Woodie Guthrie and it was felt that you could protest your way out of Vietnam. However, the result of that movement is Ronald Reagan so the power of song to move continents was, erm, overstated.

"That said, my friends in the anti-apartheid movement said that Jerry's record was a great boost and helped enormously in getting up interest when they were organising the protests against Botha's visit here. So that had a real and tangible effect and the South Africans do seem afraid of pop. They've even banned Stevie Wonder. Maybe to find out how effective political pop is, we should ask our enemies!"

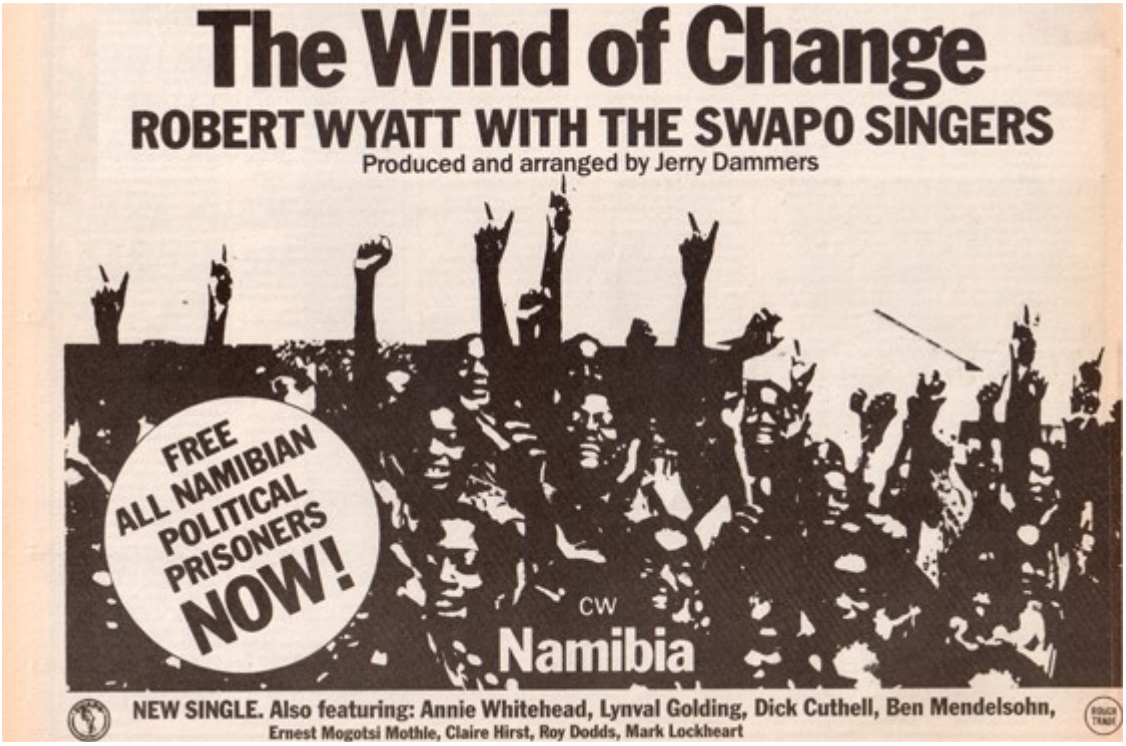
Equally, Wyatt does not fight shy of SWAPO's double edged sword - its military effort which accompanies and complements its political activities. Merely relying on Western goodwill to liberate and feed fits people, he argues, is insufficient for Namibia and the embattled Third World in general.

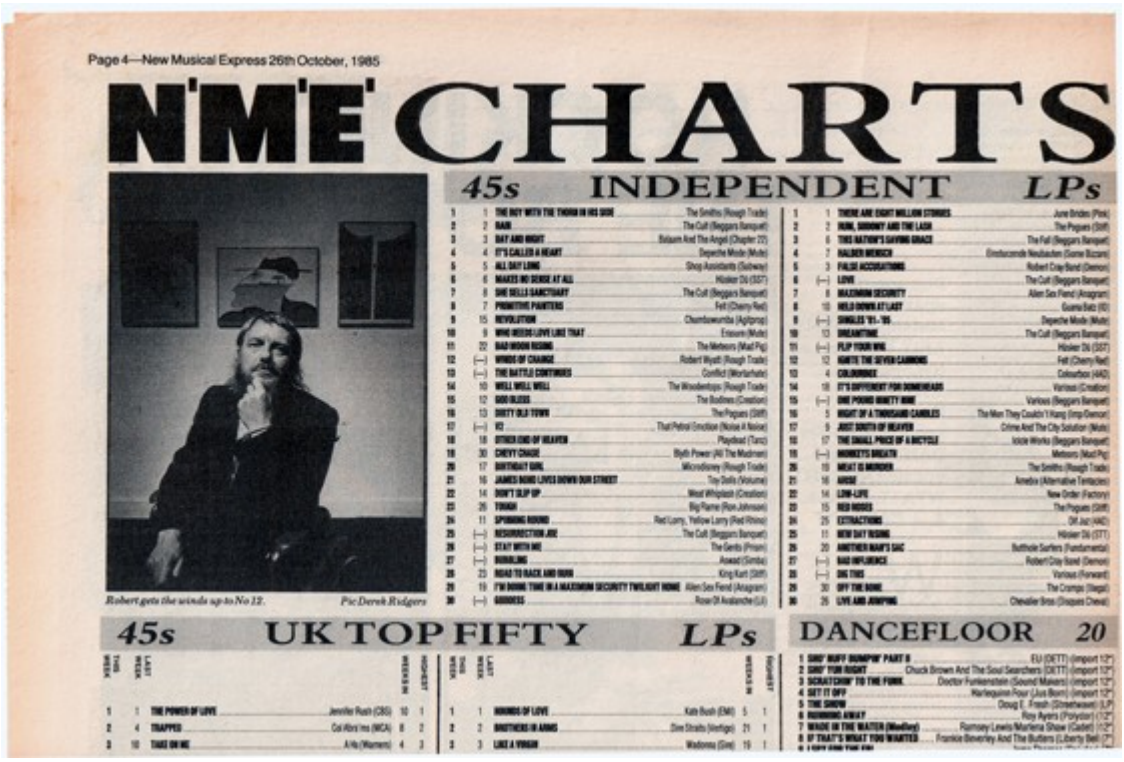
"The trouble with compassion, as anyone who's studied America in the last ten years knows, is what the Americans now refer to as 'compassion fatigue'. The liberals just got *bored* with sharing their resources, and didn't want to bother anymore. If history has taught us anything, it's that you cannot rely on the compassion of the rich and powerful."

SWAPO is habitually referred to in certain quarters - go on, guess - as a 'terrorist' organisation.

"If people want to use that word you have to question their motives. South Africa is a *State* terrorist organisation in the same way that Hitler's Germany was. Our response to Hitler was correct, and I've never heard Churchill called a terrorist!"

So there it is. You can buy 'The Wind Of Change' because it's a fine record, because it's got Robert Wyatt and Jerry Dammers on it, because you wish to support those rotting in Robben Island gaol or just because you want to shout, at this appropriate time and in the words of the fine Microdisney, "*we hate you South African batards!!!*"
But do buy it!





Page 4—New Musical Express 26th October, 1985

NME CHARTS

45s INDEPENDENT LPs

Robert gets the winds up to No 12. Pic Derek Ridgers

45s UK TOP FIFTY LPs

DANCEFLOOR 20

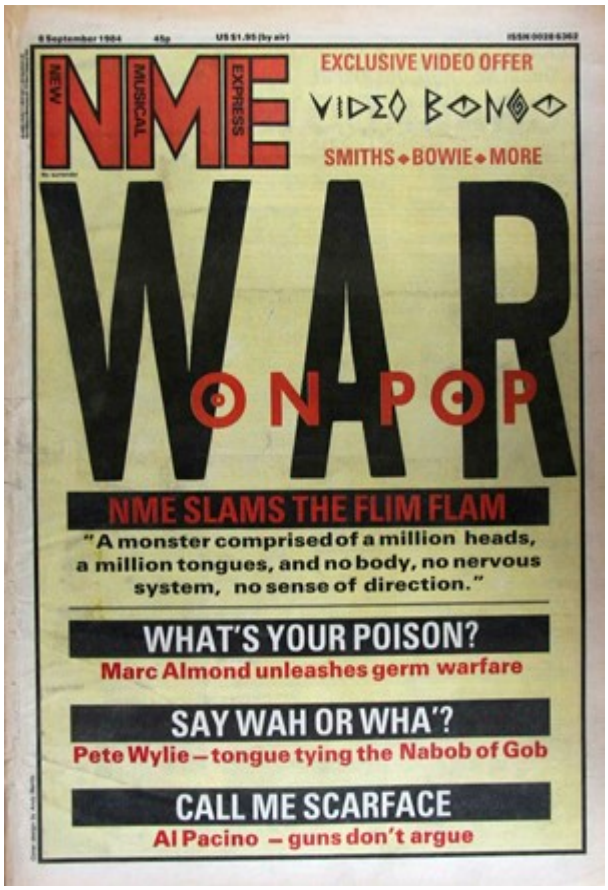
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Robert Wyatt: Mongrel Musics - New Musical Express - 8th September, 1984





Nobody could have told me how Robert Wyatt's cover of Cuban pop star Pablo Milanes 'Yolanda' was going to capture my ear more tenaciously than any double-edged love song since Smokey Robinson's summer masterpiece 'And I Don't Love You'.

But certainly no-one could have warned me that Wyatt's work is done for the same reason as *Eddie Van Halen's.*

Eddie: "It all comes down to one thing: I hear this particular noise in my head. Then I drive myself and everyone else crazy trying to duplicate it."

Robert Wyatt: "It's always been my priority to just duplicate the noise I hear in my head. To be honest I still haven't managed to do it; I've been hearing it a long time and I've always found it a constant struggle, picking out instruments, testing microphones and stuff.

"But I want to SAY that because

sometimes these interviews get so um...far away from the basic effort you're engaged in. Which is to try and make a certain sort of pleasant noise for a certain length of time."

Both Eddie and Robert say, by the way, it's an obsession that can drive their respective spouses "up the wall".

Bristol-born Wyatt gained musical recognition as a school kid – and when *his* garage combo split, the half he went with turned into Soft Machine. He drummed for that bunch of jazz-rock pioneers till '71, when he formed Matching Mole. They had two LPs and a Chinese fire-drill of personnel under their belts when, in 1973, Wyatt's plummet from an upstairs window during a party left him permanently paralysed from the waist down.

Since then we've heard from a different artist; one, as he put it to Brian Case in 1976, "in the position of painters and writers who work on their stuff and then present it for response".

The stuff in question has included two rather diverse chart hits: versions of the Monkees' 'I'm A Believer' and the Costello-Langer meditation 'Shipbuilding'. Wyatt's new release is an EP, *Work In Progress*. Almost titled 'South Of The Border', it strongly reflects its creator's attraction to the Spanish language (he covers Chilean hero Victor Jara's poignant 'Te Recuerdo Amanda' as well as 'Yolanda'). Even Peter Gabriel's 'Biko' has been re-tuned to resonate with the need for North to embrace South.

"I'm told my accent isn't so good in legitimate Spanish," ventures the bright-eyed Mr Wyatt as he taps a Gauloise loose from the pack. "But remember Matt Monro, 'the singing bus driver'? Look, he's a *big* star in Spain where I now live. He does cover versions of every meaningful ballad under the sun – and he's found a whole new career on the Costa Brava. So maybe... " Wyatt grins.

He does that a lot, in fact. So where, I wonder, did I get this idea I was going to meet an eminent worthy, willing to share some air largely with talk of warring political ideologies? Could it have been 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin', off his previous long-player? *Is* Mr Wyatt – however unlikely it's beginning to seem – a sloganeering sort of agit-pop person?

"It varies according to the situation of the listener, actually," is his reply. "Like, I just finished speaking with these two Italian geezers for whom politics is really on the agenda – its vocabulary is inextricably linked with what they DO every day. Now, they think: is this song any use to us or not? What's this guy up to? And I'm willing to be tried and found wanting on their terms.

"Because – musicians make a living selling songs, we're no substitute for serious political action, private or public (*laughs).* Neither, of course, are newspapers. But the consequences of what we do or say are not enormous. People say 'Look at the enormous political influence of Bob Marley' but when Seaga still goes to the IMF, begging bowl in hand, I don't go for it. There's way too much arrogance about the supposed abilities of musical spellbinders to shift the balances of power.

"Against the real forces – people in tall buildings somewhere deciding who to punish by where they put their bucks – there's not much any of us singing our songs can do. It's just *(laughs again)* I see nothing else really interesting in life except trying to go for what I can in that respect."

But that involves musicianship much more than Clash-style sloganeering?

"Well, whatever any record's about you want it to sound good; first off it's always that. *I* don't want to listen to anything which isn't pleasurable to hear simply because someone else thinks I should. There are (*a smile)* bodies in that field but it's a different one altogether from where I am. And if people want to keep in touch with life and ideas I would hardly recommend following pop lyrics!



MONGREL MUSICS

ROBERT WYATT is a rare individual voice in British pop — and that's not just because he sings in Spanish! CYNTHIA ROSE meets the man who's been a Mole, a Believer and a Shipbuilder and now wants to follow in the footsteps of 'The Singing Busdriver'! Art shots by DEREK RIDGERS

"The work of a master story telle
"A great beginning, a fantast
middle, and a very satisfying en
"I couldn't put it down"

The latest chapter from
A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS
THE STORY OF A YOUNG HEA

A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS
THE STORY OF A YOUNG HEART

Produced by Steve Lovell
Includes the hit single
"THE MORE YOU LIVE, THE MORE YOU LOVE"
Album & chrome cassette available from Record Shops!

"The reason I'm happy to say quite simple and I unambiguous *words,"* he continues, "has grown out of sheer exasperation. That what I thought was clear enough in the past just wasn't. So now I'm trying to do something where you couldn't possibly not know whose side I was on in any situation. Life is so full of misunderstanding and ambiguities already... I'm not gonna deliberately set out to build some kind of mysterious chic around what I'm saying."

Um. I understand Spanish. But what about the definite mystery factor anyone who doesn't will encounter when you sing in that language?

"Oh," says Robert. "I love the *sound of* it, just musically, even when I can't understand it. I sang my first song in it a couple of years ago before I knew what the words meant, I basically went with it for musical reasons. *But:* loosely, cultural and political ideas do tend to travel round a network of people who speak the same language or languages. And with the Spanish-speaking world, that language barrier is partly at the root of wrong doings from the North. I think even within the Caribbean, it's language barriers which are the greatest bar to unity."

YOU STARTED out drumming and never ever sang, then you got into drone musics and scatsinging. Now the quality and colour of the voice seem almost your main instrument. Has this evolved from your beginnings in a fan-based approach? Were you drawn to it by an ear for that sort of tone and accent in sound?

"That's right actually. Because I like that fluidity and ambiguity very much. I haven't got a very big record collection – mainly what people have sent me really. And the music I tend to listen to does seem much less cut-and-dried, much less *finalised* than rock seems to have to be."

Listening to all your work as 'in progress', you seem to be trying to bring together things which people separate for their own purposes – which may be political. Things like leisure and politics, thinking and enjoyment...

"All those conflicts are built into everything you do – just listen to me! One minute I'm talking about being as clear as possible and the next minute about enjoying ambiguity. But in fact we're all subject to all those impulses and desires and influences and for me I don't have a clear division between aesthetics and politics or just practical realities.

"Because aesthetics is just a sophisticated word for stimulating the pleasure content of an experience – while cruelty, sadism and suffering eat away at people's capacity to enjoy life.

So, it seems to me that any point made against sadism or cruelty is an aesthetic point. I see them as directly related."

But right now there's this pervasive belief that you can *legislate* people's enjoyment – by and large that is all the music business does or tries to do at the moment. It's one thing very wrong with the Frankie phenomenon and God knows it's damaged any potential for dealing with the arts through television.

"It's very difficult, that. Because you can't set up a Utopian situation, you sort of jaywalk your way through the oncoming traffic and grab onto what bits and pieces you know in your heart matter or that you know you can make work.

"See, I've always tried to keep a distance from things I knew could chew me up and spit me out five minutes later. It's not some higher code... it's just commonsense survival logic. But it means I can say that I see clearly how the long term effects of the novelty industry of 'now' are not even the long term interests of the people being used by it.

"I noticed right from my beginnings with bigger record companies that the people who are slowly and steadily building a position for themselves *weren*'t the musicians. They were the people running the companies.



"So I've never had any reason to go along with any record company's way of doing things – or to believe it would be in my interest to do so. Even though it may *seem* that there is no alternative and even though people tend to go Yes! Yes! when they even see a contract."

Jovially, Wyatt taps another cigarette against the glass table. "I would say it's quite similar to prostitution actually," he grins. "You've got this two or three year period where you're meant to bloom and really by the time you find out what the game is you've lost any power you have because what *they* consider to be your 'bloom' has faded. And anyway, they've got a whole new bunch of innocents.

"The people running things just build and build and build- but the people they use become an ever-increasing scrap heap."

That scrap heap is something Robert Wyatt views from a greater distance than one would think from the regularity with which his name crops up in musical circles ("I don't really know many of the people I might seem to be in touch with" is how he puts it to me). Mostly, he says, it's because his priorities lie elsewhere - so when he goes out "It's often not to a musical event – I tend to go to things where no one knows what I do, whether they're musicians or not."

All around our limited number of figures like Robert Wyatt, individualism is presently going down – degenerating into an anarchy of instincts, a trivial welter of self-absorptions, a pathetic inability to reject those things which spell danger to real values. Yet Robert Wyatt has chosen this same moment to perfect the loneliest art – fighting every loss on behalf of life – and he's re-heard every tune he loves as a rallying cry to the collective spirit. Even, he says, jazz:

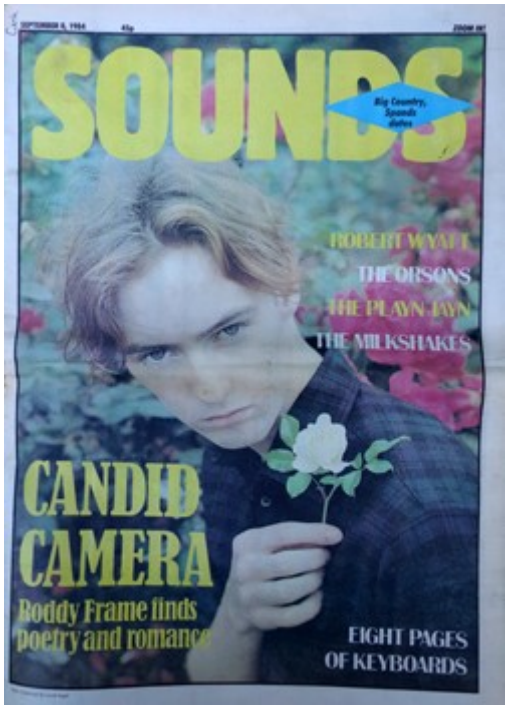
"Yes. Now I see it as much more related to other folk instrumental things. That any community anywhere can develop their own such dialect – and within it of course each individual has their own things to say.

"Jazz has made many things clear to me which have allowed me to learn from the music to which I now listen – the music which comes from all over the world."

Cynthia Rose

Life's A Wyatt ! - Sounds - September 8, 1984

LIFE'S A WYATT !



« YOU KNOW the old saying about rolling stones gathering no moss? Well, paraplegics gather plenty, believe me, » chuckles Robert Wyatt, propelling his wheelchair into the kitchen of his Twickenham house with alacrity. I grin in retort, but the humour is double-edged. It's meant to put me at ease, yet it makes me feel uncomfortable for Robert.

"Eat some of the grapes on the table will you?" he shouts as he prepares a cuppa. I glance around the living room. It's pleasantly cluttered with his wife Alfie's artwork, a large map of the world, records and tapes, postcards and knick-knacks from foreign lands. A plethora of anti-apartheid and agit-prop posters adorn the hall.

"Alfie's away in Paris at the moment interviewing a Turkish film director for *City Limits*," he continues to Tannoy. "So the mother-in-law is worried about my health. If she sees I haven't eaten the grapes she bought for me I'll be in trouble."

Robert reappears, cuppas intact on the plastic tray on his lap together with his evening meal. I was meant to arrive an hour ago and I think he'd given up hope of me coming, hence the pastie he's about to tuck into. Feeling nervous, I decline his offer of food and go out to the car to collect my material.

Out of the boot comes a carrier bag containing a copy of the first, still extremely lucid, Soft Machine album on Probe; a copy of Robert's latest 12"EP 'Work in Progress'; and the sleeve of Working Week's recent poli-jazz single 'Venceremos' to which he contributed; plus my address book. And back in I go through the shiny red door with its polite notice requesting no capitalist propaganda to be posted through the letter box, including the *Richmond Guardian* specially.

I've already explained to Robert the reason for my Lateness. I simply don't think I've done enough research to make the interview worthwhile. For example, until a couple of hours ago I didn't even realise he'd scored the soundtrack for Victor Schonfield's sickening *The Animals Film*. Ah well, we decide to go ahead anyway.

ONE CHATS to Robert Wyatt. Journalistic interrogation is far too harsh a description for what unfolds. Yet when all was said and done I felt the real story of his art had been left

behind unspoken, much like my carrier bag which remained under the table.

So it was a couple of evenings later I found myself back on the man's doorstep searching for my belongings. "Would you like a drink?" inquired Robert. How could I refuse? Inside Alfie, fresh from France, quickly dispensed four fingers of neat whisky. The liquid was turning into fire in my belly when I finally blurted out the question which had been nagging away.

Robert, I hope you don't mind me broaching this subject, but I look around your house with its maps, and I listen to your recent recordings, and they all deal with and point to the outside world. There is no direct comment on your own life in your work. Is this connected to your physical state?

"Mmmm. Well, the maps and things, I guess, are an ethereal method of travelling for me," he says gently. A long explanation follows during which he accounts for his interest in the planet's freedom movements in terms of individual responsibility, something I heartily agree with.

"Yes, but I remember before you were in the chair and we went to Venice your head was full of music only," ventures Alfie. It's a telling clue.

"I don't know, I suppose maybe it's all connected to…" His voice trails off, but I believe he was going to say 'the accident' which paralysed him from the waist down.

"I've never been to a psychologist to be analysed, so your interpretation is as good as mine," he concludes.
I went home — tipsy — thinking my interpretation was presumptious if, perhaps, partly true. Robert is the voice of white conscience in the 80s. Mind you, from the days of early Soft Machine when he, Mike Ratledge and Kevin Ayers were the darling wild boys of the psychedelic avant garde rock scene, touring with Hendrix and playing venues like New York's Museum of Modem Art, Wyatt always had a curiously affecting larynx.

"*I'm nearly five foot seven tall, I like to smoke and drink and ball,* "he sang on 'Why Am I So Short ?' on Soft Machine's debut album. The lyrics were the epitome of the Me Generation’s shallowness, yet he still made them sound somehow MORE.

If memory serves, Robert's lust for life went literally out of the window when, under the influence, he fell from a building and broke his back. The physical wounds healed and left him in a wheelchair, but the emotional scars didn't. I belive we are still listening to them now in his interpretations of songs such as Costello's 'Shipbuilding' and Peter Gabriel's'Biko'.

AS I'VE implied, Robert is self-deprecating in the extreme. He understands the biz's need for photographs but can't fathom why anybody would want to look at him. He speaks of the ghosts of a music scene past who still live in his area. Artists like Peter Green whose guitar set 'Albatross' soaring for nigh on two decades of radio play. But really, he says wistfully, there's nothing doing locally, just a few old retired roadies in the nearby pub.

Whenever Robert tarred himself with the same brush of history, and spoke as a ghost, I wanted to scream "Wake up! Assert yourself. You're not merely some kind of tolerated cripple. You have more to offer than most of the haircuts I interview."

I never did.

However, then I listen to 'Biko' on 'Work In Progress', or to 'Shipbuilding', and I find them inexplicably moving. They are the art of a man who is being positive in the only way he knows how — displacing his own problems by highlighting the plight of others. That's the dialectic from which the empathy in his voice rises. Or so I presume,
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Would you like to keep the record?



Page 30 SOUNDS September 8 1984

ROBERT WYATT: Every dog has its day

LIFE'S A WAITING

ROBERT WYATT reveals his global plan to Jack Barron

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"No! Basically what I would really like is an artificial amnesia pill," he responds with typical diffidence. I laugh, Robert Wyatt is very amusing at times. Why? I was going to ask what kind of memories the album brought back for you?

"No good ones at all, no good old days. Just trying to make a living, that's all," he explains, crossing his powerful arms over the bold slogan on his T-shirt which reads 'Cuba'.

"That sounds inverted unpretentious-cum-pretentious. But really I left school at 16 and couldn't do f**k all. And in those days everybody formed a rock group. They still seem to, actually."

I can remember going to see Soft Machine as a kid...

"We made a record, we made a lot of racket, I remember that," comments the musician, adjusting himself in the chair. Hugh Hopper, he used to be the bass player in Soft Machine didn't he? I ask, noticing the man's name as the co-composer of 'Amber And The Ambiences' on 'Work'.

"Yeah, he always wrote. It must be 20 years now since I've been singing his songs. He doesn't sing, but he writes really nice tunes, and he knows a lot more about chords than I do, which is handy.

"He started writing a bunch a year ago and he sent me cassettes of them. And I found one which just coincided with the request of a friend of mine, Chris (Searl?), who had just been working in Grenada. He was feeling really demoralised and he said 'Write us a song, Robert' and so I used Hugh's tune."

Are you in touch with the others? How about Mike Ratledge (Soft Machine's keyboardist)?

"I don't know what all those people are doing now. I don't get on very well on the whole with the arty end of showbusiness any more than with the blatant end of showbusiness. I don't see any difference except in the pretentiousness."

So what do you fill your time with, apart from declaring war on the Richmond Guardian's 'free' newspaper?

"Other than that, I'm just hanging on really, just getting by as they say. I don't know quite how but I'm still managing to earn enough making records and stuff to pay the bills. And my wife earns a bit painting."

Alfie is in fact responsible for the pastel swathes of colour on the cover of Robert's new EP. Apparently he first heard 'Biko', Peter Gabriel's song for the murdered black South African student organiser, not in its original form but as a version by Martin Simpson on the late Alexis Korner's show.

"Martin is what they call a folk singer, which just means you don't play with electric instruments as I understand it, because in a country which hasn't got any peasants I don't know what folk music means," reckons Robert with biting sarcasm.

"I didn't know it was Peter Gabriel's song. I knew he'd written one though. And I thought it would be great to do his version for the B-side of this one. So I bought the Peter Gabriel record and found out it was the same f**king song!"

WHAT, I wondered, was the reason for picking 'Biko'?

"Well, anybody who is in rock has to be interested in politics, you really haven't got the choice. I get impatient with people who tell you to leave politics out of it. You wake up every morning and you get politics shoved down your face of the right wing kind, the BBC and Fleet Street and everything else. And if you've got any pride at all you've got to resist it and work out your own version of what's going on.

"So I've developed a strong antipathy to the establishment media here. I feel insulted and patronised by it, and I always look for things which talk about what I consider to be their victims as material. For rock musicians, as with jazz musicians before, there has always got to be a lot of black consciousness. Rock and roll is a black American term from the late 20s, it wasn't invented in Hollywood in the 50s.

"But if you do start thinking about politics, and you compare the importance of the black contribution to our music, and the political and social and economic context that black people operate in the West, the contrast is embarrassing and disgusting. So that's why I look for songs that talk about that."

ROBERT'S ENTHUSIASM to put over the crisis facing the planet's financially and politically dispossessed people's acknowledges no national borders. He remains as passionate about what is happening in South America as much as Africa.

'Work In Progress' includes an interpretation, for instance, of Te Recuerdo Amanda', a song written by the Chilean folk-singer Victor Jara, another man who spoke his mind and was murdered by the authorities for it.

And in keeping with the sentiments of that tune, and Working Week's recent 'Venceremos' single, Robert is at present toiling over an album which will deal further with South American themes. It's heartening to think of him worrying about others, a little pocket of militant musical resistance in suburban Twickenham. Perhaps a quote from 'Amber And The Ambiences' is most apt. "Everyone needs to feel at home/Nobody wins who fights alone."

Robert Wyatt might be physically based in Middlesex but he lives for and in a much wider world. 'Work In Progress' is his artistic contribution to cleaning up an environment filthy with dirty tricks. That work continues.

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"He started writing a bunch a year ago and he sent me cassettes of them. And I found one which just coincided with the request of a friend of mine, Chris (Searl?), who had just been working in Grenada. He was feeling really demoralised and he said 'Write us a song Robert' and so I used Hugh's tune."

Are you in touch with the others? How about Mike Ratledge (Soft Machine's keyboardist)?

"I don't know what all those people are doing now. I don't get on very well on the whole with the arty end of showbusiness any more than with the blatant end of showbusiness. I don't see any difference except in the pretentiousness. »

So, what do you fill your time with, apart from declaring war on the *Richmond Guardia*n (a 'free' newspaper) ?

« Other than that, I'm just hanging on really, just getting by as they say. I don't know quite how but I'm still managing to earn enough making records and stuff to pay the bills. And my wife earns a bit painting… »

Alfie is in fact responsible for the pastel swathes of colour on the cover of Robert's new EP. Apparently he first heard 'Biko », Peter Gabriel's song for the murdered black South African student organiser, not in its original form, but as a version by Martin Simpson on the late Alexis Korner's show.

« Martin is what they call a folk singer, which just means you don't play with electric instruments as I understand it, because in a country which hasn't go any peasants I don't know what folk music means, » reckons Robert with biting sarcasm.

« I didn't know it was Peter Gabriel's song. I knew he'd written one thought. And I thought it would be great to do his version for the B-side of this one. Si I bought the Peter Gabriel record and I found out it was the same f**king song ! »

WHAT, I wondered, was the reason for picking 'Biko' ?

« Well, anybody who is in rock has to be interested in politics, you really haven't got the choice. I get impatient with people who tell you to leave politics out of it. You wake up every morning and you get politics shoved down your face of the right wing kind, the BBC and Fleet Street and everything else. And if you've got any pride at all you've got to resist it and work out your own version of what's going on.



ROBERT WYATT: Every dog has its day

"So I've developed a strong antipathy to the establishment media here, I feel insulted and patronised by it, and I always look for things which talk about what I consider to be their victims as material. For rock musicians, as with jazz musicians before, there has always got to be a lot of black consciousness. Rock and roll is a black American term from the late 20s, it wasn't invented in Hollywood in the 50s.

"But if you do start thinking about politics, and you compare the importance of the black contribution to our music, and the political and social and economic context that black people operate in the West, the contrast is embarrassing and disgusting. So that's why I look for songs that talk about that."

ROBERT'S ENTHUSIAM to put over the crisis facing the planet's financially and politically dispossessed people's acknowledges no national borders. He remains as passionate about what is happening in South America as much as Africa.

'Work In Progress' includes an interpretation, for instance, of 'Te Recuerdo Amanda', a song written by the Chilean folk-singer Victor Jara, another man who spoke his mind and was murdered by the authorities for it.

And in keeping with the sentiments of that tune, and Working Week's recent Venceremos' single, Robert is at present toiling over an album which will deal further with South American themes. It's heartening to think of him worrying about others, a little pocket of militant musical resistance in suburban Twickenham. Perhaps a quote from 'Amber And The Amberines' is most apt. " *Every one needs to feel at home/Nobody wins who fights alone*."

Robert Wyatt might be physically based in Middlesex but he lives for and in a much wider world. 'Work In Progress' is his artistic contribution to cleaning up an environment filthy with dirty tricks. That work continues.

ROBERT WYATT reveals his global plan to Jack Barron

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Robert Wyatt - OP Independent Music Magazine - The "W" Issue - May-June '84



ROBERT WYATT

by Rick Karcasheff

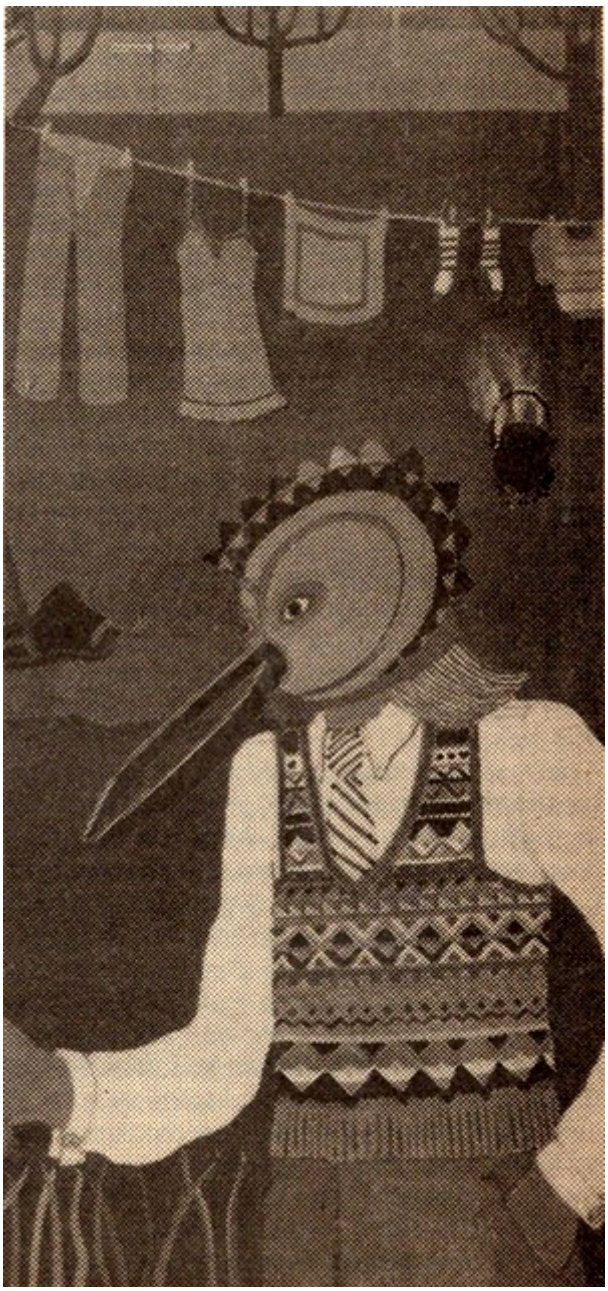
Among the many stellar figures of contemporary British music, there are none less heralded yet more deserving of attention than Robert Wyatt. In a musical career spanning nearly twenty years, he's indeed proved himself a rarity, being able to deliver many classics full of lyrical and emotional wealth and substance. Though his place has been secured by those familiar with the early British progressives, it's certainly time to give Wyatt exposure to any and all newcomers.

Robert Wyatt emerged into the public eye, mid-sixtiesish, with the band the Soft Machine (their name taken from the Wm. Burroughs novel), about the same time as hallucinogens, Syd Barrett and the original Pink Floyd, the Canterbury scene, the summer of love, more hallucinogens, the flower child, and an entirely new conception of pop music. The original Soft Machine—Mike Ratledge, Kevin Ayers, Daevid Allen, and Wyatt—had more raw talent than with which they knew how to deal. First Allen left and founded Gong, a traveling lunatic's asylum of radio gnomes and pothead pixies, and Ayers left soon thereafter, taking up with the likes of David Bedford, Mike Oldfield, and Lol Coxhill. Hugh Hopper joined the Softs during this early transitional phase, and thus many influences and creative forces were combined for the first two Soft Machine albums. These first two releases, appropriately titled *Volume One* and *Volume Two*, are quite eclectic, in varying degrees being pop, jazz, improvisational, electronic, loose and unstructured bits of rock, intellectual and/or pretentious, but above all, these first two efforts were musical milestones, trend-setting and totally transcending the creative limits that had been employed up to that point in rock music. Wyatt contributed heavily in the early years, drumming with youthful and free-spirited abandon, and singing more than he would on later Softs albums, his distinctive upper-register floating effortlessly above the curious and

powerful barrage of electronics and fuzz bass. Voice as instrument, voice as song.

It was about this time Soft Machine began delving more into instrumental aesthetics and Wyatt was asked to concentrate on percussives. An expanded lineup was in order for their third album, a two-record set titled Third. This release featured four extended compositions, each taking up the length of an entire side. Wyatt's one vocal, "The Moon in June," is unfortunately his swan song for the Softs. A near epic piece, with outstanding lead bass from Hugh Hopper and the usual classic organ work of Mike Ratledge, yet it's Wyatt's sadly affected voice that steals the show—a bit huskier than usual, less exuberant, and no doubt aware of the band's internal problems and eventual break-up (only to reform time and again). This version is a complete turnabout from the one specifically recorded earlier for the BBC radio program Top Gear; this "Moon in June" is so playful and alive, nearly intoxicated with life (also containing a reference to the consumption of spirits, a favorite Wyatt topic). The musical arrangement is much the same, but it is Wyatt who brings the warm humor, the ebullience, the wink and the grin. His voice sparkles with immediate identity and distinction, never sounding common or ordinary—only one voice like this.

Following *Third*, Wyatt did a totally instrumental lp with Soft Machine, *Fourth*, and also released a solo entitled *End of an Ear*. Highly unusual and quite different from anything ever attempted by the Softs, Wyatt even has a curious little note on the album jacket, describing himself as "an out-of-work pop singer, currently on drums with Soft Machine." I think it's safe to say that at this point, Robert Wyatt was a very unhappy musician.



Alfreda *B*enge

Which could have led to only one alternative—the formation of his own band, Matching Mole (which is a French derivative of Soft Machine —Wyatt must have left his heart in Canterbury). Matching Mole was certainly a starring vehicle for Wyatt, and their first album accented the softer and less abstract colors of life. The album's first track, "O Caroline," spent the better part of a year occupying the turntable. A more openly honest and forthright song would be difficult to come by. Wyatt convinces and moves with his expression of love professed and profound. He also began experimenting more with his voice, setting it against a minimal musical background, allowing it freedom to drift, a dreamy half-there lilting intonation, generous and open and reaching and arriving at a thoughtful conclusion.

The second Matching Mole album was not as acutely personal. Titled *Little Red Record*, this lp had an abundance of eccentric and offbeat humor, in proper combination with complex time signatures and instrumental virtuosity. Once again the first track sets the tone—"Starting in the Middle of the Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away" is an odd mixture of voice, vibrato, and the usual Wyatt wit. His drumming had

regained its fierceness and drive, and the entire band is sharp, inventive, and quite often offers glimpses of the directions in which Genesis (*Foxtrot*) and King Crimson *(Larks' Tongues in Aspic*) were to later go. Side two contains one of modern man's great religious statements, "God Song." Only Robert Wyatt could have given this song the sort of intense pride it deserves, a search for meaning and purpose, a questioning of fate and faith. Wyatt's delivery is uncertain and a bit tight: "Pardon me, I'm very drunk" (his solution, in most cases), yet refusing to bow down to an invisible god. All he asks for is an answer, and the manner in which he asks for it is unforgettable.

So much promise, things on the upswing, preparations for the third Matching Mole album, and then fade to black. In the fall of 1972, Wyatt fell four stories while drunk and was left paralyzed from the waist down. Thankfully, his creative spirit was left intact and, while in recuperation, he began writing material for what was to be his next solo album, *Rock Bottom*. This was released in June of 1974 to vast critical acclaim and general euphoria for Wyatt fans. It includes yet another Wyatt classic, the drone-ish and melancholy "Sea Song," (and still another reference to alcohol!), perhaps his most striking song. While dealing specifically with relationships, it could easily be seen as metaphor, a majestic reverence for life, of previously untapped human emotion now awakened by physical incapacity, almost a plea to let nothing go by, wistful and dreamlike, the sometime necessity of having to undergo pain and loss in order to gain a firmer grasp of life.

Another solo soon followed, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. Satisfying and simple, highly personal while remaining in the eccentric style of previous releases. In the meantime, Wyatt performed live and in the studio with Slapp Happy, Hatfield and the North, Henry Cow, Michael Mantler, releasing an occasional 45. This brief hiatus was broken by the release of two more albums: *Nothing Can Stop Us* Now (a collection of previously released 45s) and *The Animals Soundtrack*, a lowkey, mostly instrumental soundtrack to a film which depicts our cruelty to the animal world.

Wyatt has most recently worked with the Shiney Men, Ben Watt, the Raincoats, Scritti Politti, and Nick Mason and Carla Bley. He's an artist of the first caliber, a progressive music pioneer who's set artistic standards and then continually strived to surpass them, a curious and introspective musician who offers all who listen a rare glimpse into the heart and soul of humanity.

Recommended Listening List (song & album)
1. Memories—early demo, later turning up on Rock Generation -8
2. Dedicated to You, But You Weren't Listening—Volume Two
3. The Moon in June—Third
4. The Moon in June—Triple Echo (triple album anthology)
5. O Caroline—Matching Mole
6. Instant Pussy—Matching Mole
7. God Song—Matching Mole's Little Red Record
8. Sea Song—Rock Bottom
9. A Last Straw—Rock Bottom
10. At Last I Am Free—Nothing Can Stop Us Now
11. Calyx—Halfield and the North
12. Do Ya?—Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports
13. I'm a Mineralist—Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports

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Nothing to kill or die for - New Musical Express - March 10, 1984

NOTHING TO KILL OR DIE FOR

by Robert Wyatt

East Berlin in winter is no tropical island. Neither the beautiful broad boulevards running from the Brandenburger Gate through the historical part of town nor its vast modern squares such as Alexanderplatz were built to shelter Berliners from the bitter winds blowing across Central European plains.
But as I was in the German Democratic Republik for its third Rock For Peace Festival I spent most of the weekends indoors, inside the gigantic Palast der Republik. The walls of the palast's four floors were lined with stalls and exhibition stands, selling everything from metal jewelry and rock memorabilia, pottery, painting and wooden doves.
An enormous card addressed to the Pentagon and bearing a "Hands Off Nicaragua" message drew large crowds to sign it. There was no doubting as to who was the villain of the piece!

A very state of the art singer who was hot on the connection between capitalism and fascism flashed up big back projections to illustrate his songs. His images would edit together old and new — Guernica and Nicaragua — intercut with images of Hiroshima and so on. And each time shots of old Nazi leaders or new NATO leaders appeared they would be greeted with loud hooting from the terraces.
The disconcertingly named group Silly were anything but — sharp vocals, good subtle undertow in the drummer's loping wallops. A gent called Diestelmann, apparently the G.D.R.'s very own Taj Mahal, did a nice tribute to the late Alexis Korner. And Puhdys, whose brainchild these festivals were, proved to be immensely popular.drawing hundreds of only just teenagers to their feet. Sparklers were whisked out for the moodily lit numbers, that kind of thing.

Paradoxically Puhdys might attract the youngest fans but they are the oldest band. A very untrendy looking quartet of rock survivors, their all embracing show comes on like Pink Floyd doing an Xmas panto: giant inflatables, searchlights, chunks of heavy metal interspersed with programmatic synthesized minidramas, a John Lennon tribute featuring a pause for an appropriate slice of the original 'Imagine' — "*...nothing to kill or die for...and no religion too...*"
With so many groups all alien to me, coming in a very efficiently run relay marathon over the three days and all singing in a language I didn't think I would understand, I unsurprisingly got too wrapped up in the event itself to fix exactly who did what at a given moment. But I can't remember a better organized event or one whose message was conveyed with such impact.

That said, one song in particular stands out. called 'No Bomb' it was performed by Berluc, who have obviously been Pistols fans in their time. Despite this unlikely route into the G.D.R. charts they were rewarded with the biggest hit of '83 — this blistering little ditty sung half in English for the benefit of a "Mr. President of America".
All the groups, mostly German, but also Italian, polish, and Russian, incidentally, agreed to do at least one song each to justify the Peace Festival's name. Any worthy-but-dull clouds you might expect to hover over the event didn't materialize however. For all the performances.



The last night's show, when just about every group encored with its "peace song" was particularly impressive. Such a totally focussed sequence of rock theatrics, normally an organizer's nightmare, went without a hitch, drawing steaming performances and a highly charged audience reaction.
Such cooperation was indicative of the event and illustrative of its central theme. None of the dirty tricks marring Western rock festivals was evident. No long drawn out soundchecks or tuning sessions. Groups didn't need to get louder the more famous they got.

The peace theme, too, suffused the city for the weekend. I am told there's a permanent exhibition of anti-warmongering graphics on the walls of Alexanderplatz Underground station.
After hours, in the university students club where upturned plastic buckets served as seats to a tiny stage, you could hear Ian Dury and The Blockheads records filling the intervals between the live acts. Recalling Berlin cabaret the club's acts this weekend were mainly satirical punk artists with assorted puppets who, to drum machine accompaniment, robot danced and jive talked through tight routines.

Ironically, though, the audience here assumed they were bang up to date London style, not realizing the fashion time warp dated them in comparison to some of the button smart,short back and sides establishment types hanging around the fringes of the Palast.
Personally, I refuse to apologize for saying I had a great weekend in East Berlin. The concentrated atmosphere of careful people trying that bit harder was paradoxically a welcome contrast to the lordly self assurance projected across the Atlantic from the vaticans of our mighty pop industry.
In addition I'm certain all those Lennon tribute peace anthems of the weekend indicate a kid of immortality that would have made the great man himself feel good, "...but I'm not the only one..."
No, John, I don't think you are.

This article was also published in "Wrong Movements - a Robert Wyatt History" by Michael King.

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The Wyatt Life - The Face N° 39 - July 1983

THE WYATT LIFE



After many years of critical neglect and seven months sunny exile on a Spanish beach, Robert Wyatt is back in favour. With the Costellopenned "Shipbuilding" firmly established in the charts and the hearts of the nation, Anthony Denselow drew Wyatt out of his introspective mood for some quiet thoughts on global music, PLU's and the new life of a former "classic Sixties drop-out figure"

Photo by Mike Laye

Robert Wyatt has tried many different approaches to his life and work. He has experimented with drink and melancholic brooding, he has tried periods of relative working normality when he has chatted openly to the press. He has even tried tackling England from abroad. His most recent approach seems to be a healthy combination of early introspection and later career awareness.

He and his wife Alfie have now decided on the curious policy of non recognition of PLU (people like us) which seems to effectively mean that while he continues to seriously consider his musical development he can hide out in Spain having nothing whatsoever to do with the obscene worlds of media and music business.

"It's not an act of hostility, in fact I'm quite grateful to the music scene," says Wyatt. "It's more against the kind of dreadful cultural narcissism that can occur when like-minded people get together in a scene. I'm scared of all the windows misting up and turning into mirrors."

In fact Wyatt's life has changed dramatically since he packed up and headed for the Mediterranean seven months ago. He had a single - "Shipbuilding" - bubbling so close to the top 30 that only the FA cup replay postponed a Wyatt airing on Top Of The Pops. He has suddenly become aware of the growing following he's been attracting in recent months and he has one of the year's finest albums as proof of his importance in a music scene constantly drifting towards the shallow end.

Wyatt sees himself as a "looker, watcher, selector and editor" rather than as a live performer. The singles that have been dribbling out on Rough Trade since the late

Seventies (collected on the new Wyatt album "Nothing Can Stop Us" released recently for the second time) are a truly oddball set of songs from staggeringly diverse cultural contexts. The album is perhaps best described as the first edition of Robert Wyatt's world view displaying a total lack of concern with ego and fashion, rather a fascination with world politics and the sort of universally powerful music that can only lamely be described as folk.

There's a version of the Cuban national anthem updated to talk about the presence American bases in Cuba that few in the West know about. There's a song from Violetta Parra, the Chilean responsible for getting that country's youth song movement off the ground. "Her songs are straightforward, unpolished, fragile and extraordinary," says Wyatt. "This one's a helpless cry for Chileans to rise from the grave and stand up for themselves."

There's Wyatt's heart-trembling version of Chic's "At Last I Am Free", the typically child-like Ivor Cutler song "Grass" ("Cutler says I sing it alright except that I sing it as though it has meaning," reports a surprised Wyatt); "Born Again Cretin" is inspired by Nelson Mandela's imprisonment in South Africa; Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" is about a racial lynching in the American deep South while Wyatt's rendition of the Red Flag speaks eloquently enough for itself.

"I suppose that I'm attracted to certain places but it's more often just the tunes that get me first," says Wyatt about his material. "There are many musical areas that I'm really into that I couldn't handle within my technical range, things like Middle Eastern Arab music and Oriental classical music. So this album doesn't reflect all the styles that I'm interested in, just those that I think I can add to."


THE WYATT LIF

After many years of critical neglect and seven months sunny exile on a Spanish beach, Robert Wyatt is back in favour. With the Costello-penned "Shipbuilding" firmly established in the charts and the hearts of the nation, Anthony Bessallow drew Wyatt out of his introspective mood for some quiet thoughts on global music, PLU's and the new life of a former "classic Sixties drop-out figure"

Wyatt has also included work from other people on the album. Along with Peter Blackman's rather plodding poem about the battle of Stalingrad (revolutionary in content, epic in style) is an excellent piece of music from a British based Bengali troupe called Disharhi. Wyatt heard them singing at an art against racism and fascism concert and liked them so much he just asked them onto the album. They sing (in Bengali) a trade union rallying song. "I was accused of being elitist for not translating the lyrics for the Parra and Disharhi songs," says Wyatt. "It's not elitist if you're a Bengali is it?"

"Nothing Can Stop Us" is a generous album; a collection of fine tunes, stimulating ideas and powerful emotions that says much about the function and inspiration of music (as it leaps between different cultural standpoints). Wyatt himself is weary of giving the album too much significance. "What we think of as global politics, global visions and global cultures are in fact so conditioned by our Eurocentric myopia that we still, despite our power and our increased dealings with other people from around the world, haven't come to terms with other cultures. I even make fun of attempting to make a comprehensive world view with the title of the album - which sounds quite revolutionary. It's a quote from an American government official of the Thirties who reckoned that America shouldn't make the same mistake as Britain by trying to govern the world. He said America should simply own it, nothing can stop us."

For its second outing to the record shops "Nothing Can Stop Us" includes the Langer/Costello/Wyatt collaboration "Shipbuilding", an intriguing partnership that will hopefully bear more fruit in the future. Clive Langer, apparently inspired by the way in which Wyatt sings the Billie Holiday song "Strange Fruit", wrote the music. Elvis Costello supplied the bleak Iyrics and Wyatt received the demo tape through the post one morning.

"It's been the happiest experience I've had as a producer/songwriter," says an unusually enthusiastic Elvis Costello of his encounter with Wyatt. "The song has been realised perfectly. It sounds completely like the intent of the lyric and melody, Wyatt has an amazing voice. I'd always wanted to hear Dusty Springfield record one of my songs and when she did 'Just A Memory' it was a great bland disappointment. I think that people

have been so overwhelmed by the melancholy of Robert's singing that the political comment in 'Shipbuilding' hasn't been immediately spotted. The lyric seems to filter through afterwards; the BBC probably wouldn't like it otherwise."

Wyatt seems to invest everything he sings with this haunting sadness (it will be interesting to hear Costello's version of "Shipbuilding" on his forthcoming album) but he shies away from any boasts on his role as a singer.

"Maybe it's melancholic because I don't consciously emote," he offers. "I'm aware that there are people - musicians - who say that I'm an influence on them but I really don't know enough about the current music scene. In fact there's no one idiom available to me that I feel comfortable with. Rock I find too musically dogmatic. I was brought up on the sort of jazz with fluid, ambiguous, drumming and walking bass lines and I guess it's that kind of breezy fluidity that I'm trying to put into singing songs. I still get infuriated with rigid blocks of verses and instrument breaks, but I'm working on it."

Wyatt is sitting in his Twickenham flat (a quiet backwater by the river that he still maintains despite the move to Spain) surrounded by objects reflecting his preoccupations in life. The walls of his brightly painted breakfast room are covered with Alfie's equally bright paintings and with ethnic art objects; the bookshelves are full of political, mainly Communist, literature. He has a music room where he can play piano (his toy organ has recently broken) and bits of percussion. He has a specially built ramp so he can run his wheelchair into the neat bird-haven garden.

The flat was bought for them partly by their friend Julie Christie and from money raised by a charity concert given by the Pink Floyd after Wyatt's tragic accident ten-years-ago when he broke his spine falling from a house window. "I didn't have to use all the money," recalls Wyatt, "because the album 'Rock Bottom', which I still think is great, was actually making me some money."

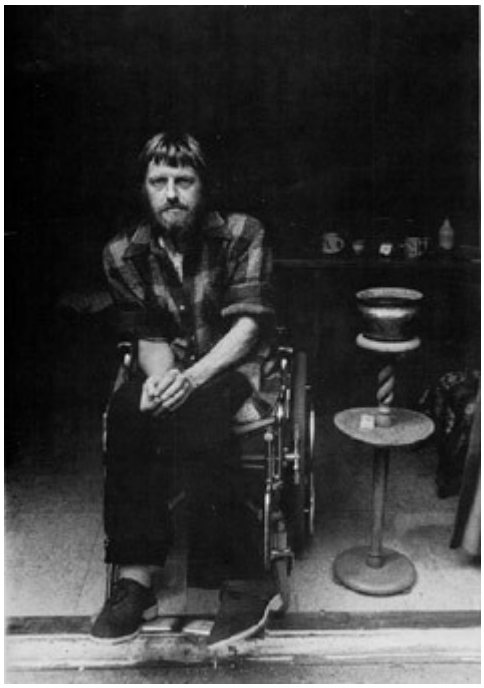
Given Wyatt's current popularity after years in the wilderness it's incredible to consider that his first musical tangles were back in the Sixties. As the drummer with Soft Machine (he was then only a closet singer) he toured the US supporting Jimi Hendrix, and built up quite a following in this country ("among the wrong sort of people") for his bare-backed drumming enthusiasm.

The son of a psychologist father and journalist mother, Wyatt was the perfect Sixties drop-out figure, the untrained and illeducated intellectual member of a jazz-rock fusion band. After Soft Machine disbanded in 1971 Wyatt started to sing, first on the "End Of An Ear" album, then with the band Matching Mole (recording that classic Wyatt song "Caroline") and on the other solo albums "Rock Bottom" and "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard". AIl these records are now difficult to obtain.

While the early albums often reflected Wyatt's frustration with the traditional song format (another Matching Mole song was actually about verses and choruses) he has steadily developed the political quality of his songwriting and music choice. Wyatt is a paid-up member of the Communist Party and he feels that the CP helped him move away from the shock of his accident and from the narcissism of rock in the mid Seventies to a more considered philosophy.

"It helped me focus the jungle of my thoughts, but it's difficult to talk about politics and its relationship with music. I think Julie Burchill is the only person I know of who can articulate that. I don't think of music as intrinsically political (as some do) but I think it's quite pretentious to claim that you're not trying to say anything when you sing. All noise is communication and reminds you of words. Personally I see the political role of music in a totally different light. "Memoies Of You" for example (the B-side of 'Shipbuilding') may sound just like a nostalgia song but it's political for me because Eubie Blake who wrote it and who was 100 in 1983 was writing before jazz and somehow represents a much used but amazingly uncredited strand of American popular music. That he gets some royalties for that song is the only genuinely quantifiable political act I can make: the transfer of resources. Beyond that I have no control over a song and how it affects anybody."

Wyatt's greatest joy in life is to take the phone off the hook and tune his radio into a variety of exotic stations. When he hits Radio Moscow, then he's off in dreamland. He reads and listens to music from all over thc world, especially the early and obscure jazz that he grew up with, and recently he has been expanding his fascination with all things



> Zoom

Spanish.

Robert and Alfie live in "something bigger than a garage" right on the beach south of Barcelona. Alfie paints and Wyatt wheels himself around the beach, writes, reads, attends regular weekend Catalan piss-ups, and has been getting to hear as much pure Flamenco music as possible. He is lucky that Barcelona has a good spinal unit for he cannot stray away too far from medical surveillance. "Being in a wheelchair has been like a short cut to feeling old. You are forcibly removed from things like sexual panic. You worry about getting in and out of places. You start finding yourself sitting on park benches next to retired couples. You feel more fixed, less nomadic. You get tired quicker, and being a paraplegic, my body is actually aging faster than most people's. You cannot be spontaneous, you worry about the future and whether people will buy your records. I never thought that ten years ago."

Wyatt has again retreated back to Spain to consider his next form of musical attack. Apart from the singles and now one album, he has had little commercial output in years and he says he could never consider performing live. "I had to get drunk to do it before; it would mean having things like managers and microphones." He also made that excellent soundtrack for Victor Schonfeld's horrifically distressing *The Animals Film* largely because Julie Christie, the narrator, asked him to. He worked furiously for months for £100. Talking Heads demanded £500 just for the use of their music during the opening sequence.

At the moment Wyatt is carefully observing the policy of avoidance of PLU and he has yet to actually write a song in Spain. Those of us who have been mesmerised by Wyatt's dolorous singing will just have to wait. But hopefully another album will not take another decade in coming. "I can't do anything else in life declares stoically, "I have to keep doing this somehow."

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Diving For Pearls - Melody Maker - June 4, 1983





ROBERT WYATT

Adam Sweeting talks to ROBERT WYATT about shipbuilding, pop music, the Eurovision Song Contest, and revolutionary ideologies. Pics: Jon Blackmore





Strange things happen, and one's just happened to Robert Wyatt . He'd been living in Spain for the last six months, well away from the vertiginous roundabout of British music, British charts and British fashion, when, unknown to him, Rough Trade re-released his haunting single "Shipbuilding".

Next thing you know, the record had begun to scale the singles charts at a healthy enough rate for Wyatt to be whisked back to England to ready himself for a possible appearance on "Top Of The Pops". The single rose to 35 on the BBC's chart last week, but with "TOTP" being shortened in favour of football, Wyatt's services were not required. So now he's staying over here to see what happens this week. "Shipbuilding" would be an unlikely enough candidate for pop payability at any time, featuring as it does Elvis Costello's mordant slant on the Falklands cataclysm, lit by the sort of luminous ironies few other writers are capable of.

Add Clive Langer's sweet-and-sour melody and Wyatt's tragically crucified vocal, and you're probably as close as you'll ever get to the subversiveness "pop" music is supposedly capable of. Then, put the icing on the cake by having the record ascending the charts in the couple of weeks leading up to a watershed British general election, one in which the residue of the "Falklands Factor" will play its part. Perfect!

The maverick Wyatt has looked harder than most at the relationship between music and its social surroundings and origins. He's a practising Communist, is well versed in political history, and takes a keen interest in the culture and development of the Third World. Flick through Wyatt's back catalogue and you'll find a bizarre trail of clues - versions of "Keep The Red Flag Flying" and "Stalin Wasn't Stallin' ", "Guantanamera" and a hit single with the old Monkees' song, "I'm A Believer". There isn't a category with Wyatt's name on it - best to see his work as a collection of hints, provocations and cries for help.

We meet at his flat in Twickenham, around which he has learned to travel deftly in his wheelchair. I ask questions, he talks, I listen - and, frequently, learn. Wyatt is friendly and quite cheerful, but I feel oppressed by the desperation which all his thinking and reading and listening seem to have led him to discover. Most people have too little time. I suspect Wyatt would gladly give them some of his.

Anyway, here are some edited highlights.

SHIPBUILDING

"CLIVE Langer and Elvis Costello had asked me to do the song, and it was sort of tailor-made for me really. My only worry was whether I could do it as they hoped. That was really the beginning and the end of my worry. I'm not going to go out and buy a thousand copies or anything like that.

"I was really pleased and amazed when Elvis offered me the song - I was really surprised, because the last thing I saw of him was the TV programme about him in Nashville, which was very brave of him, chucking himself in at the deep end there. What amazes me is his eclectic range of interests, because although my own is eclectic, it's very bitty. Whereas talking to Elvis, he seems to have an encyclopaedic interest in pop music itself. I was surprised he knew enough about me to ask me to do the song.

"In this particular case, Clive Langer wrote the tune and thought this was the sort of thing Robert Wyatt could do, and Elvis put some words on. They certainly realised I wouldn't shy away from singing political words. I find that things that happen like this out of the blue work better than me trying laboriously to construct projects on my own, very often. So there's no particular incentive for me to construct things of my own. I put most of my energy into the sort of passive pursuit of following the things I'm interested in, culturally and musically, and I'm never sure what's going to come out of them.

"A lot of very interesting things that have happened to me, I've found absolutely no way of expressing them or dealing with them at all, which is very frustrating. A lot of the things that happen to you just don't translate into songs, and I'm not really cut out to be a journalist as far as I can see. I've done a bit of writing occasionally, but nobody ever seems to pay you for it, so I knocked that on the head. The only people who pay you seem to be the ones on the verge of going bust."

ENTERTAINMENT

"I DON'T believe in this idea that music's 'just entertainment' - as if there was any such thing as 'just entertainment'. I think people who are apparently just singing something that's totally self-indulgent or apparently meaningless are making a very serious statement, and that serious statement is 'I exist, I want you all to like me'. That's a very urgent message.

"If somebody tries to dress nicely that's what they're saying, and for all you know their survival, psychologically, depends upon a sympathetic response to that. So it's terribly serious. I think everything that people do is serious, whether it's dancing, to attract somebody they like or just to have a good time, and I get very impatient with people who say you shouldn't try to be serious in escapist culture. It's all pretty desperate if you look at it.

"I think of flowers. People say 'Oh, a lovely relaxed flower garden there' - in fact it's not. If you think about what a flower's doing, he's saying 'If a bee doesn't notice me within about 24 hours I'm not gonna be able to carry on. Everything depends on a bee thinking I'm a really sexy flower and getting hold of my stamens', or whatever it is they do."

PAUL WELLER

"He knows more than I did at his age. For the record, I'm 38. I'm very slow, it's taken me a long time to see things the way I do now. I saw an interview with Paul Weller and he was talking about the people he was conscious of who were around. Not that they've been through more, but you sort of benefit from previous generations' experience. He's watched The Who and he's seen this and that, and he's capable of avoiding the pitfalls that some of us older people may have fallen into. It's quite inspiring really.

"But on the other hand, I'm very conscious that there is an unspoken ideology which is much stronger than conscious politics in rock 'n' roll, and that's age. There is an assumption there that the young standing on the shoulders of the old is in fact a law in rock 'n' roll, and it fits everything, it fits the marketing of it... so I'm very conscious that younger musicians would be uncomfortable that older ones would like them, 'cos each

generation seems to need to feel it's got a sort of autonomous culture.

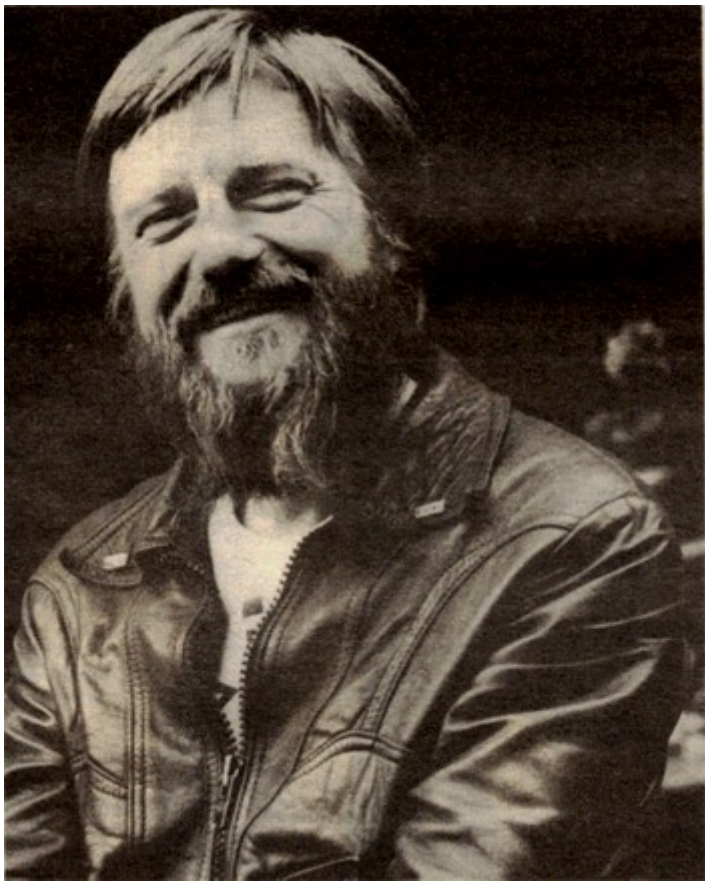
"There's always going to be a gap, because the stuff I was interested in when I was a teenager was stuff that was going on before those people were born, really. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. And the stuff you get into as a teenager stays with you longer than anything, I think. So I respect people like Weller, but it's from quite a distance, because I'm just not in that world.

"But there are times when you think 'Christ, I've got this voice, I've got this constituency if you like, an informal constituency of what I do, I must feel responsible'. I think it's perfectly reasonable that Paul Weller should think 'I've got a responsibility here, therefore I have a choice between whether I say something useful or whether I say something useless', so he gives himself the responsibility of saying something useful. He's not claiming to have any power, he's just saying 'if I have, and it seems as though I may have some, I'd better use it as well as I can'. That's fair enough. Because we don't really know what influence we have, it hasn't been worked out."

MOTIVATION

"I SUPPOSE what set me off is what keeps me going, and what set me off was not politics or pop music, but being brought up as a teenager to deal with people who called themselves avant-garde at that time, in painting and music and so on. Something very strange happens to avant garde, which is that the moment you've said it or done it it's not avant garde any more. And if, for example, you call yourself a performance artist you're giving the game away, and you're no longer a performance artist. The person to watch for is somebody who's not saying who they are - things aren't just what they're called.

"I'd have to qualify that by saying that I'm very rarely happy with the results. That's because I think being brought up not just with the avant garde in general but with the ideas of the Dada era in particular, there was this idea that manifested itself over and over again in rock music, that there was no point in doing anything properly, because when you sketch out an idea it's the idea that's interesting, so you don't hang about and fill it all in and dot all the i's. I'm not saying I should have tidied all my songs up, but the fact is there isn't much I ve done that's quite finished in the sense that some people's work is finished."



POP

"THE reason I did some sort of conventional pop songs was partly to move outside the consensus of people I was working with at that time, which would have said that pop music is a dull and deadend medium. And I thought 'hmmm, could you do a pop song?' So I thought well, let's have a look at a successful pop song, see how it works.

"If you talkto people who deal in long and really developed music, they'll say that one of the reasons that pop is bound to be a minor form is that you can't do much in two or three minutes. I found an interesting thing, that if you're trying to write a good tune it's very hard to make it last longer than one minute, and in fact three minutes is an incredibly long time. Almost without exception it's quite long enough.

"By the time three minutes is up you've heard each idea in the record probably at least three times, and far from being restricted, I found it just as intimidating to try to create three interesting minutes as anything longer.

"I didn't try and write one myself, I was just interested in taking apart a few good or successful pop songs from the inside and then reassembling them in the light of what I could do, just to see what made them work. And I ended up with what I suspected I would have, which is a lot of respect for the craft. People say 'well it's so limited', but so is making pots. Making pottery is not making Rodin's sculpture, you're looking for the wrong thing, but there is a difference between good pottery and crummy pottery."

AFRICA

"ALL this century, Africa has been supplying our culture with its revitalising juices. I don't think musicians should feel guilty about it, I think musicians are relatively innocent and so are their audiences, they're just looking for a different stimulus.

"Within this century, Picasso's revolutionising of the world of painting can be attributed in part to his discovery of African sculpture and wood-carving. He's celebrated as this innovative genius, while sculptors in Mozambique and Tanzania are still struggling away to sell their work to tourists. Picasso might have wanted to transfer the status of the world he'd inherited, of Europe, onto the Africans who'd inspired him, but artists don't have that much power.

"I think what's sad for artists ... if we live in a country which has got rich by crippling the potential of some other country, then even though we ourselves are personally innocent of this economic, political and military fact, we can't help but participate in an unfair situation when we continue to use others. In England, we still inherit a situation where we can get more out of other people than they can get out of us. I don't expect anybody else to take that on if they don't want to, but personally it worries me to the point of not really being sure that anything I do is really any use to anybody whatsoever.

"But then I fall back on my old standby of saying 'Well, I never tried to do any good anyway, I'm just an avant-garde artist'. Because after all, we're all selfish first - we're all saying This is what I do, this is my act, I hope you like it because if you don't I'm done for'. That's what we're all doing and I'm no different from anybody else in that, I'm not any more altruistic."

THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST

"WHEN it comes down to it, I'm more interested in politics under particular situations. I don't actually start off and end up with some sort of overview. Sometimes you get the politics in a very specific situation, like the Eurovision Song Contest. Where you really think about it is where nobody's overtly talking about politics at all. I think Eurovision is just bristling with political implications, on all kinds of layers.

"First of all, why a Eurovision Song Contest? It's slightly broaderthan that ridiculously tiny

and unrepresentative group of countries called the EEC which excludes Austria, Scandinavia, Spain, Portugal and all the countries further east, but not much. Then why is there this tradition that everybody sends rubbish that nobody in their own country of origin knows anything about? Who are the selection committee? Who are the juries? What's going on there?

"The reason I mention the Eurovision Song Contest is that Spain did something this year that as far as I know nobody's ever done before - they sent a great singer with a great song. They sent a girl called Remedios Amaya singing 'Quien Maneja Mi Barca'. Poor old naive Spain, trying desperately to impress the Europeans and trying desperately to get into the EEC, send a good singer and good song - a bit of electronic ska backing and her gypsy vocals and we're away. And of course it got no points at all, none whatsoever. Very unusual thing to happen.

"There's a very touching naivety in Spain and they really were hurt, they started blaming themselves, and you wouldn't believe the debates that went on in the press about 'we shouldn't have sent a gypsy, all Spaniards aren't gypsies', or 'she was barefoot, she should have worn good shoes' - oh, awful stuff. They were blaming themselves instead of saying 'what a cloth-eared bunch of gherkins we've got here'.

"But there were all kinds of other things going on there. Countries gave spectacularly bad marking to the countries where their immigrant workers come from. This may be coincidental, but it's amazing that West Germany, who presumably 30 years ago, had the opportunity arisen, would perhaps have given Israel no points at all, would now give Turkey, Spain and anywhere with gypsies in it no points at all - because the current xenophobia in West Germany is about Spanish and Turkish immigrant workers.



"Then you think well maybe the Israelis will appreciate this song, because it's part of the southern Mediterranean tradition that Remedios Amaya is coming from — you could recognise Middle Eastern folk influences in what she does. But nothing from Israel, because Israel is trying to be more northern European than the northern Europeans. They don't want to know about anything that sounds like gypsies, as far as I can see.

"And then Yugoslavia got nothing from Austria, and Yugoslavia is where Austria's guest workers come from. Not that it's all political, it's just that that's an element in it that's totally ignored, because it's just 'fun, fun, fun'. And as I say, it's not fun, fun, fun, it's Remedios Amaya crying on behalf of Spain for help. There's no such thing as light entertainment, it's all much more desperate."

KILLING PEOPLE FOR AN IDEOLOGY

"I DON'T think killing's the worst thing you can do to people. The usual slogan of liberation movements goes something like 'Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees', and really what I do is ... I will support certain people who have come to that conclusion if I've read their history and I agree with them that they have no alternative.

"The second question is whether that's necessarily effective — it's a moot point. Means become ends in politics and that's always a danger. Bu really what's so unfair about the image given to various liberation movements I sympathise with is that violence wasn't

talked about until they reacted to it - then they're called the violent ones. It's extraordinary the amount of perhaps hopeless, perhaps hopeful violence our Empire has caused as a reaction, and it seems to me that basically we must look for the cause of that in what we were doing there in the first place.

"To take some very obvious examples, if you remember that according to some Namibian liberation fighters that when the English took over the concentration camps from the Germans they got worse, then you begin to see what we're up against. I don't think anybody would seriously say that the French Resistance were wrong to keep up the armed sabotage against the Nazi occupation of France. In fact the people who get despised tend to be the collaborators, people who said 'well let's try and make it work under a Vichy government'. And I think certainly that people living in Namibia and El Salvador find themselves in that position."

THE BIBLE OR MARX ?

"MOST of us, whether we admit it or not, are probably brought up with the New Testament drummed into us at one stage or another. There's a lot of very clear moral advice in that which I find very few defenders of Christianity taking any notice of, and one of those pieces of advice is taking the mote out of your own eye. And I think that our responsibility is towards the casualties and deficiencies caused by how we ourselves operate, how our countries operate.

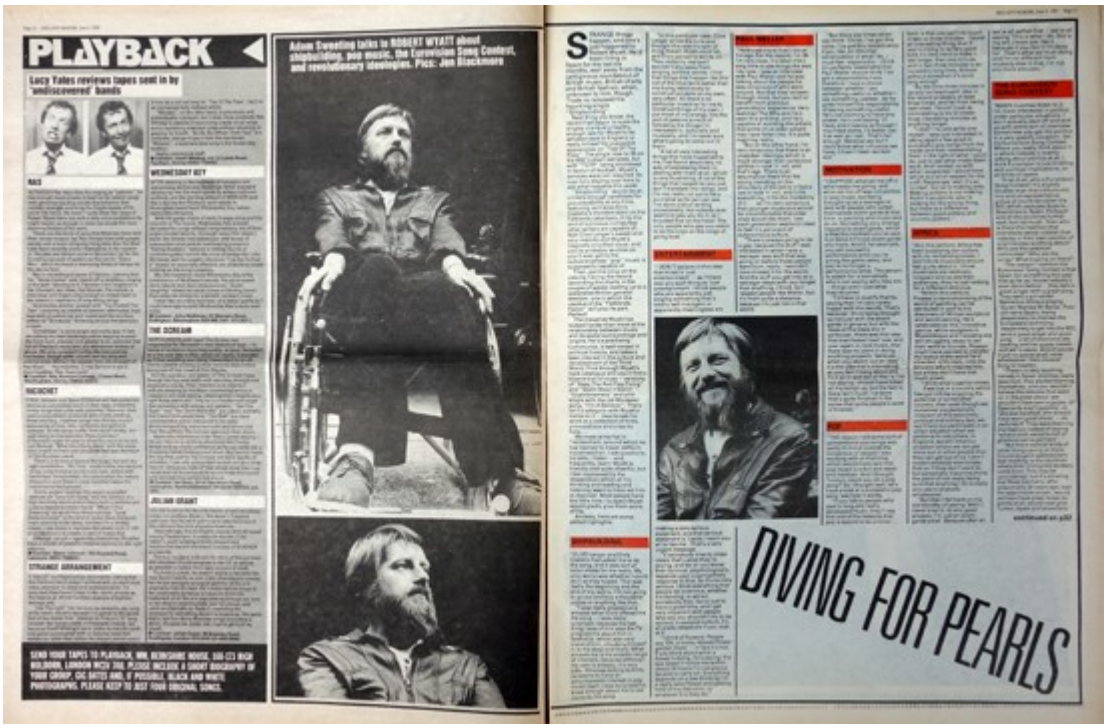
"To me, what seem to be the most unreasonable and totally unpalatable aspects of the so-called Socialist alternative that exist, the worst thing about them is when they try to imitate Western imperialism — technically, when they imitate the British Empire's global sort of spider web, or ideologically when you get people using Marxism as a sort of global idea ... The precedent for that is Christianity - the Pope does exactly the same about what he believes. The Pope is very compassionate about all the Indians being slaughtered in South America at the moment, but the fact is that the ideas that he represents are ideologically totalitarian.

"It's the Mediterranean religions of Islam, Judaeism and Christianity which first suggested this absolutely terrifyingly revolutionary idea of a single mono-God that was totally running the whole show, to whom we must all be servile. That's totalitarianism, that is. I think that having set these precedents, the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other, and becoming so successful at it, it's incredibly hypocritical the way we sort of wag our fingers at people who, in trying to be successful, use elements of these approaches to get their place in the sun.

"If we really think those ideas are bad, then we must debunk them here, because then we won't inspire other people to emulate us."

PARTING SHOT

"SOMEBODY once said to me that I'm very easy to talk to, but very hard to interview."


PLAYBACK

Lucy Tales reviews tapes sent in by 'undiscovered' bands

Adam Sweeting talks to ROBERT WYATT about shipbuilding, pop music, the Eurovision Song Contest, and revolutionary ideologies. Pics: Jon Blackmore

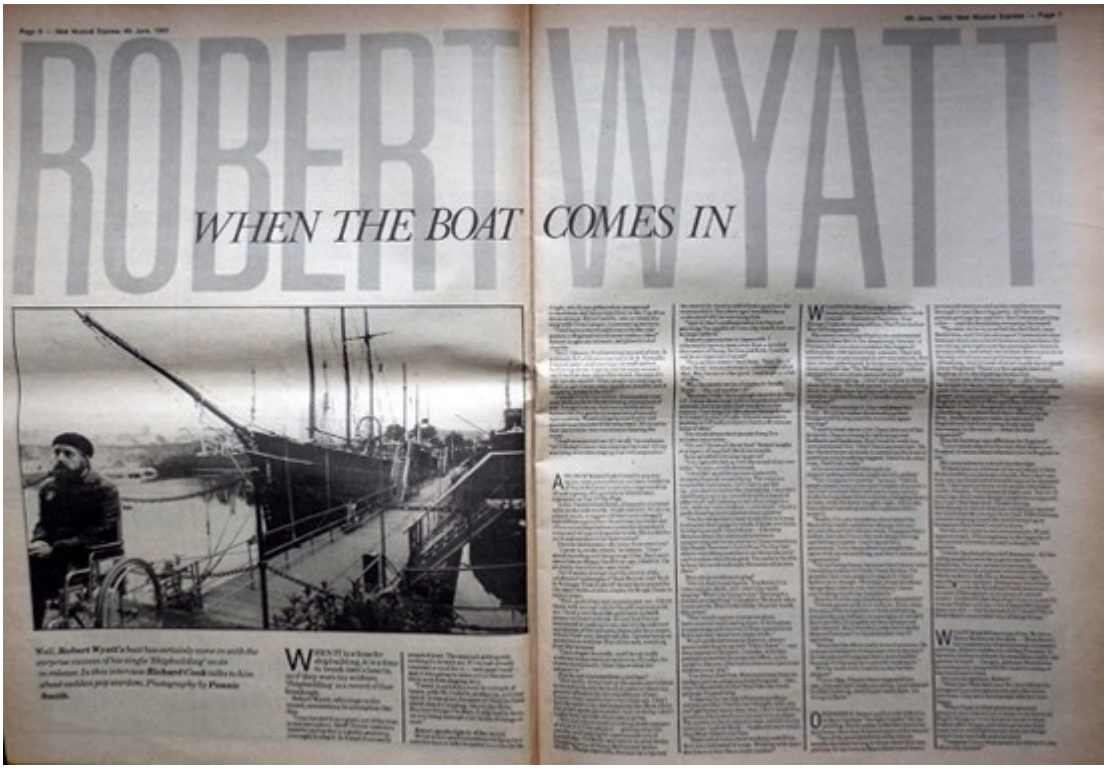
DIVING FOR PEARLS

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Robert Wyatt - When the Boat comes in - New Musical Express - 4th June, 1983



*Well, **Robert Wyatt's** boat has certainly come in with the surprise success of his single 'Shipbuilding' on its re-release. In this interview **Richard Cook** talks to him about sudden pop stardom.*
*Photography by **Pennie Smith**.*

WHEN IT is a time for shipbuilding, it is a time to break men's hearts, as if they were toy soldiers. 'Shipbuilding' is a record of that breakage.

Robert Wyatt, who sings on the record, remembers its conception like this.

"I was handed it on a plate, out of the blue, to mix metaphors. Geoff (Travis) sent me a cassette saying this is a pretty good song, you ought to sing it. So I tried it out and it sounded good. The musical setting was nothing to do with me. Elvis had already recorded a vocal for it – very good vocal – and it was going to come out in the same form with him singing on it.

"I went in and did a vocal in a couple of hours, with Mr Costello producing, and that was it. It was great because all I had to think about was my singing, like on the Mike Mantler

things I've done. I only had to focus on one thing instead of all kinds of things at once."

Robert speaks lightly of the record. He has interrupted his residence in Spain for a mere few days in order to appear in a video for the single, which has gathered an unexpected momentum and taken a position in the Top 30 on its re-release. Elvis Costello, who co-wrote the song with Clive Langer, is overseeing matters.

"I did have a secret ambition to be the only person in England who'd never made a video!" Robert laughs an intimate, delighted kind of chuckle.

"Still, I dunno, it's disarming in a sort of way. It suddenly felt a bit precious not to do it. Normally I've just spent years putting out stuff and not bothering about it again, but for some reason I can't be that way about this record. Because it's not just *my* record. Other people are making an effort to get it to as many people as possible and it would be wrong to be aloof."

Costello's lyric is a wintry, disconsolate view over dockyards in the darkening atmosphere of war. Langer's music fashions a subtle minor lament for the gentle syncopations of acoustic instruments. Wyatt's singing is as lonely and plaintive as the core of the Song itself. No surprise that the lyricist was overcome on hearing the vocal.

"I had no expectations of it at all," he confesses. "All I thought about was singing it in tune! All my worrying went into singing it as well as possible."

AND NOW Robert finds himself a pop star again, nine years after an unlikely rendition of 'I'm A Believer' crept into a depressed top 30 and a group of musicians in wheelchairs appeared on *Top Of The Pops*.

In his Twickenham home, pleasantly cluttered with books and records, bright and airy, he sits on a hard couch, a ragged old beret and a straggly beard framing his face. Sometimes he clasps one of his ruined legs between powerful drummer's arms and swings it from side to side. He is a bit too mild and careless to be 'interviewed'.

Does he deliberately shy away from attention?

"I seem to, on the whole," he admits. "I don't mind recording and doing songs I like. But I can't speculate on things like follow-ups. I doubt it. I'm probably too old to try new tricks."

Yet it seems strange that the creator of the celebrated landscapes of Rock Bottom and Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard should have settled for the small fruits of a few singles for Rough Trade in recent years.

"Well, most of my real interests are, um...I don't think rock is a real vehicle for self-expression for me. I lead a very busy life and I earn as much money as I have to to eat. It's not that I'm not interested in making music, but it's the enforced narcissism of the industry, especially for a singer, which I find very claustrophobic. I prefer being an anonymous watcher. Part of the mob, watching from the terraces.

"I'm a *singer*, basically, and I'm not really working in pop music as such even if I nudge the charts occasionally. I don't know what the category is."

Has he not retreated from a jazz base?

"Not really. If you look at the musicians I choose to record with and the kind of material there is a greater affection for the mainstream of jazz history than I used to have ten years ago. I don't feel the need to try and transcend the idiom which the avant garde presumably feels its doing. I don't really keep up with where jazz is going.

"I'm more interested in looking at the essences of what it is I like about it – peeling away the novelty and looking for a permanent core of knowledge. It's fairly *new* core in musical terms. Nagging away at Sonny Rollins and Archie Shepp...Shepp especially, because he's rejected the search for novelty and is looking at how the masters did it. Ten years ago I wouldn't have understood why he was doing that.

"And all that's craftsmanship way beyond anything I'm capable of. I can only watch that and be inspired by it."

Robert's jazz acumen is impeccable. I reluctantly have to steer away from a detailed

discussion of Shepp, Rollins and Kirk. Could he not be an organiser of sound?

"To a certain extent I have been. 'Team Spirit' from Ruth was an attempt to acknowledge all of that. But I'm not all that good. I tend to get in a bit of a flap."

Why the erratic series of singles for Rough Trade – why not another LP?

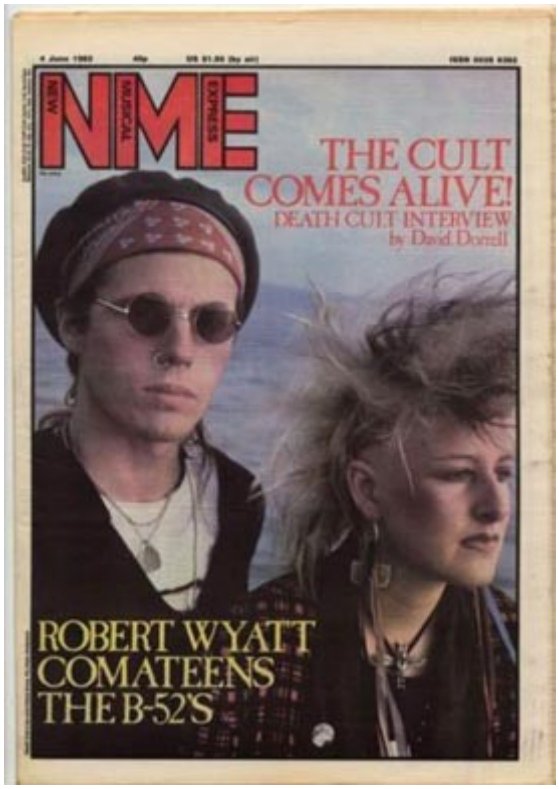
"Because I didn't have enough ideas for another LP. I chose those songs with a consistent political attitude, but even then that was down to the context. One thing I do like about the pop format is it comes in short chunks. It's very expensive making an LP and you have to have a 40-minute lump of ideas."

You could always have people doing five minutes tenor solos...

"Oh yes! I know all about that!" Robert laughs at a legacy of long Soft Machine records.

Is he satisfied with singing per se?

"Um, I get a bit fed up with the sound of my own voice," he says, a trifle downcast.



"I wouldn't mind doing some duets with Annette Peacock or something. The voice is a wonderful instrument, but I tend to get fed up...you start to realise the limitations. I wouldn't mind listening to my records in with a bunch of other stuff; but listening to ten of my songs in a row, with my voice on them – a bit much. I tend to prefer hearing instrumental music anyway.

"On the whole I don't hear words first in a song. I certainly don't judge by words. I think you listen to *singing* as such. I don't know – I develop theories about the relationship between songwriting and music and then I hear something like Randy Newman's 'Let's Drop The Big One' where everything matches everything else and I can't analyse why it's so good. You seem to be able to hear the words and enjoy the music all at once there."

How about wordless singing?

"I think that's even harder. You know it's a voice and you think, well, what's he *really* singing? What's he trying to say? Has he got a disease or something? (Laughter) We know what voices are for. They're for words. Or proto-words, like mmm!

"That would explain your point about instrumental music saying more. It formalises noisemaking and removes it from expectations. But I just don't know how music works."

Wyatt prods and noses at theories, always seems ready to give up with "I don't know" – and then returns to the point. I wonder, with this prodigious interest in cause and effect, in the mystery of music, if he had to overcome a personal snobbery over 'pop'?

"I've always had that. Most musicians from my background see songs as a launching pad – like, what's the chords on this? But I like the whole package of a good song.

"I suppose my two big influences are Mose Allison and Ray Charles cos I thought, well, you can't get better music than that. I don't think it's a question of how much you can put in to an idiom. The quality is due to selectiveness, control of your resources. Look at Monk – he played more simply than Mose Allison ever has.

"That's what's nice about working with Elvis. He's very interested in songs. Working with

him I don't have to feel like a closet vocalist!"

WYATT'S WORLD is large. Some of the books piled near his stereo bracket a wide interest – *Battlefont Namibia, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, The First Indian War Of Independence*.

His recent recordings display an understated discontent best felt in the despairing 'Arauco', a Chilean folk tune that numbers the wages of colonialism with melancholy concern. They are records that sound steeped in private sorrows. But they are so understated. Is he envious of the sheer clout a record like 'The Message' carries, a blunt strength his own music seems afraid of?

"That's interesting...I don't know how to think about that one. The best person I've found writing about the difference between self-alienation and rejection is Julie Burchill. I wonder what she would say?"

Robert worries over it. I try and dispel his frown. Would he rather do something that bludgeoned its way past his normally spare settings?

"I used to bash about a lot. I beat shit out of the drum kit. I learnt to sing by bellowing over feedback and fuzzboxes. But I tend to work in a very piecemeal way. I don't have an overview. On the whole I'm not as much in control as the kind of questions you're asking suggest. I tend to do what I can. That's all, really."

Is he ever concerned that such an inward-looking attitude might be only selfish?

"Yes, I suppose it could be," he says. "I think people expect more of me than I expect of myself. I can't tell you how relieved I am to come out of a studio having done three minutes of singing that's in tune, with the piano roughly right, where the bass player turned up and the engineer didn't erase it.

"Really, I'm very mundane about what I do. Most of my really ambitious ideas go into my private life and not into my work. I suppose that's selfish, but I don't have the rock thing of living and feeling in public. I can't speak for a generation. I only know about six people who agree with me on anything, and that's not much of a generation!

"I'm not being funny, because I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for this. I'm grateful that I can make a living at it. I don't believe in it, though. Obviously songs are about things that interest you, but it doesn't mean you're *doing* anything, necessarily."

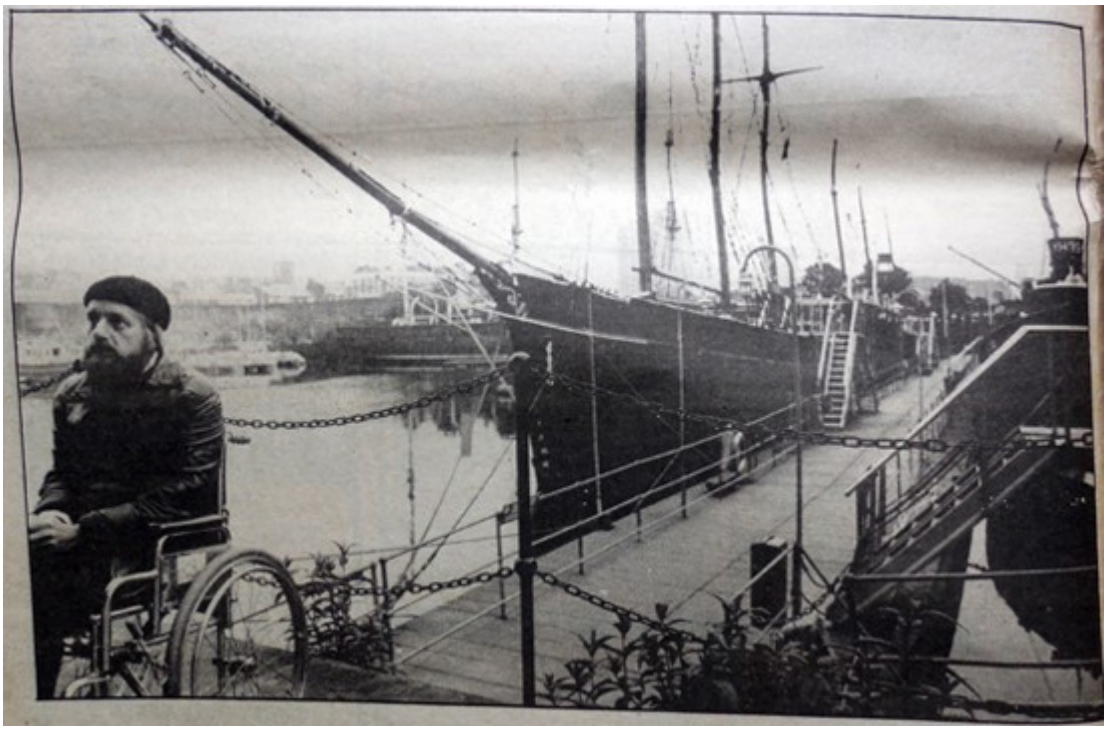
Does he find the pop marketplace distasteful?

"I think people pick on it unfairly. From what I've seen of the art gallery or book publishing circuits the pop industry is a paragon of virtue! I don't see why it's singled out as a cultural red light district. But I wouldn't jump into it at the deep end because I've found another way of operating.

"Someone like Elvis really loves it as music. He puts an investment of attention into it the way I do into jazz and I suppose that's more healthy because it's the area he's actually working in."

Will he work with Costello on any further projects?

"I've no idea. It hasn't been suggested but, um...I myself don't make any plans. I just respond to what comes up. And I'm not really here. I'm living in Spain."



OSTENSIBLY, Robert and his wife Alfie live in Spain because "the light's better" for her painting. But he seems to feel few ties to his first home. How does England seem on his return?

"One of the great pleasures of the last six months has been having to think about that less and less. In our town in Spain there's just been a provincial election and as the results were coming through it was like a big party. All the little parties getting one and two, the Commies getting a few – and the Socialists sweeping the board.

"The area we're in is called the Red Belt, near Barcelona, and it's the strongest Communist area because there are a lot of Andalucian workers, for one thing; and right now the atmosphere there is so enjoyable, and what we've been able to join in in the way of culture and politics has been so refreshing, that it's sort of cruel to ask me to speak about England. There's a few people here still holding on to the bucking bronco but...

"I went into this Commie bar – the Commies have bars in Spain instead of handing out leaflets, more like community centres – and this old geezer came up and said, I fought alongside some English in the Civil War and they were brave fighters. Usually the people struggle to say something nice when they hear where you're from. Another geezer came up and said, the English had the first strong trade union movement in the world – what the fuck happened?"

Does he harbour *any* affection for England?

"I very much object to the way that there's no freedom of choice about whether you're English or not."

His voice takes on a much harder edge. "If there was an element of choice about it then there could be an element of pride. But I don't see how you can be proud of something you're dumped with. I feel more at home with people who behave nicely, frankly. I'm homesick right now. Ten or 15 years ago there were things I might have enjoyed, but I can't feel that now. People saying Britishness is *this* or *that* has completely spoiled any kind of pride you may have had. If Britishness consists of going round the world sneering at foreigners then I don't want to know."

For the only time in our conversation, Wyatt appears angry. If his response to the legacies of colonialism is lowkey, it's still a deeply felt reaction.

"I think the dotted lines kill democracy. All the ruling people have to do is gerrymander situations. You can isolate situations like Northern Ireland, a typical colonialist trick, which makes it look like a democratic right for one side to rule another. Democracy has always

been a lie, even the founding Greek democracy – an oasis of free speech in an ocean of coerced misery. I acknowledge that that's how it is and I'll even go further and say a lot of beautiful things come out of it – but be proud of it? I would like to think there's some other way of doing things."

WYATT MAKES me a cup of tea. We have Sonny Rollins on the deck – 'Blue Seven', his masterpiece of spontaneous symmetry and heat. Robert cuddles his old dog Florence. In his worn clothes and beret he resembles a salty old painter himself – Gauguin, perhaps. Sometimes he scats gently along with the massive sweep of the tenorman's voice.

Are you an optimist, Robert?

"What me? How dare you! No, but I think it's arrogant to project pessimism onto the entire universe. I can see a lot of people who are very happy.

"When I look at what gives me greatest pleasure and inspiration it seems to be the most fragile things or even the most hated or least looked-after things; and what gives me least inspiration and frightens me most are things which look very safe and nurtured.

"I suppose I envy those people for whom it's the other way around."

Richard Cook

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His Master's Voice - Strange Fruit - Freedom - Vol:43 No 22 - 13th November 1982

His Master's Voice
STRANGE FRUIT


anarchist fortnightly
Freedom 30p
POLICE
ON THE LINE

AS early autumn apples ripen in the orchards of Britain consider this strange fruit: a hippy singing songs of praise to Stalin and an ex-Stalinist writing an anti-CND article for *Readers Digest.*

The hippy is Robert Wyatt, ex-Soft Machine, Matching Mole and several solo albums including his latest *Nothing Can Stop Us* (Rough Trade). Issued at the beginning of the year it spent six months in *New Musical Express*'s Alternative LP chart, and Wyatt and tracks from the LP have been cited by various pop celebs as their favourite songs/singer in *NME*'s Portrait of The Artist as Consumer.

Wyatt is an extraordinary singer. His voice has pathos without sentimentality, deliberately singing with a 'nice boy' middle class English accent (like Colin Blumstone did with The Zombies and Paul Jones occasionally with Manfred Mann) at a time when most other singers used American intonation.

Two tracks on the LP - most of which were originally released as 45s - are outstanding: his interpretation of 'At Last I Am Free' and the haunting 'Strange Fruit' chronicling black lynching in the Deep South of the '30s.

But as for the rest ... 'Born Again Cretin' has inventive harmonys and arrangement but the lyrics! Whilst Nelson Mandela rots in prison you pricks are at liberty to read George Orwell (lyrics courtesy of Wyatt}. Or try 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin' for size! Talk about rewriting history! First done by the pinko San Francisco Golden Gate Quartet in the '40s it tells us how Stalin stood up to Hitler and called upon Britain and the US to give him a hand in crushing the fascist vermin. No mention of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. Then to rub your noses really in it, black poet (and not a very good one) Peter Blackman concludes Side 2 by reciting his 'Stalingrad', a turgid litany to the battle of the same name, how the world waited with bated breath for the outcome, etc ... No mention of the fact that the rapid German advance into Russia and initial Soviet setbacks were down to

Stalin's incompetence and paranoia; no mention of those returning Soviet troops in 1945 who disappeared into labour camps because they'd seen too much of the West; no mention of the fate of those White Russians forcibly repatriated, but told in Nikolai Tolstoy's *Victims of Yalta* (Corgi).

The only thing missing from the cover of the LP is an application form to join the British Communist Party and a free offer of an Uncle Joe Stalin poster in glorious Moscolour to hang in your kitchen.

Wyatt is a member of the CP, or was 18 months ago when he was interviewed in *Melody Maker*, who's deputy editor Allan Jones praised the LP to the skies (a bit unexpected that, as most of his articles recount the amount of beer and vodka he's drunk at gigs, or tell of his exploits in trying to look up Carlene Carter's skirt).

What is fascinating about the LP is how Wyatt's commitment hasn't affected his artistry. Commitment usually means earnestness walks in and art walks out (if you've ever heard the truly appalling 'The H Bomb's Thunder' by the London Youth Choir circa 1962 you'll know what I'm talking about). That his commitment includes something as perverse as praises of Stalin is frankly mind-boggling. Nor an LP to buy, but definitely to listen to, if you get the chance. But here's the rub; someone's been buying it, thousands have been sold. Have Malcolm MacLaren's punk anarchists thrown away their bondage trousers and bought boiler suits and joined the Spartacist League?

Frank Chapple used to wear a boiler suit early in his career as an electrician although he was never in the Spartacist League. No. He was a CPer in the days when the CP was a force to be reckoned with. (Recently released Cabinet Papers show Attlee and company seriously concerned about the possibility of massive Party directed industrial disruption in 1950 linked to their 'Peace' campaign over the Korean war.)

But Frank Chapple saw the Light of Day and went from being a left-wing conspirator to being a right-wing one. His chance came when Frank Foulkes and others got caught out fiddling postal returns to secure Communist national officers within the electricians union, the ETU. When Les Cannon - who exposed Foulkes - died, Frank took over as ETU leader and has been firmly in the saddle since 1966. He's now 61 and plans to retire early because, the Sunday Times business section speculates, he saw 'Joe Gormley stay too long as head of the mineworkers, depriving a credible right-wing successor from emerging, and so letting in the marxist Arthur Scargill.' It seems our Frank isn't going to make the same mistake. Besides being the next TUC president early retirement will perhaps also give him the time to write further articles for the *Readers Digest*.



I've mislaid his anti-CND article which *Readers Digest* have reprinted in leaflet form, but basically it boils down to a charge that the men from Moscow are helping to run the anti-bomb movement. He claims that various people in executive authority are Communists and that they are conducting an orchestrated campaign that is pro-USSR and anti-USA. Similar charges were, of course, laid at the door of the anti-bomb campaign in the '50s and '60s.

Up to a point part of what he is saying is true in that there is an anti-USA tendency in the anti-bomb movement, and objectively the USSR can take comfort from and do use the anti-nuclear campaign for their own ends. I wouldn't be at all surprised if the USSR wasn't covertly funding various Western peace groups - without those groups realising it. The USSR would be daft not to. But Crying in The Chapple misses the point: the fact that unawares they might be partly funded by Moscow doesn't invalidate their argument, any more than I would dismiss what Frank fulminates against simply because I read it in the *Readers Digest*, which various brethren over the years have claimed is a CIA front. Two can play spot the bogeyman, Frank! Who cares if the *Readers Digest* is a CIA front! So what?

Of course there are CPers in CND, but I'd suggest to Frank that the anti-bomb movement is of a different character to its '50s counterpart. It's more suspicious and critical of the Labour Party and not half-wedded to it as it was in those days. It's prepared to be more critical of the USSR (though not critical enough) and to give its support to the few genuine peace groups that exist behind the Iron Curtain, such as East Germany. I would also say that the post-1968 politics of personal liberation has to some extent affected its character.

There are many anti-nuclear groups that work sometimes in tandem with CND, sometimes separately, but are not part of it, doing their own thing and not accepting the word of latterday Peggy Duffs and Canon Collinses, which is perhaps one reason why the equivalent of the Committee of 100 has not emerged. It doesn't need to. Whether to break the law or not in pursuit of Direct Action is for many people not the moral dilemma that it was for many in those days. This in itself is perhaps some small advance for the anarchist worldview. Authoritarianism and hierarchy just don't go down too well in 1982, whether it's from the offices of CND or King Street.

When directives from King Street ruled Frank Chapple's life the Party was, as I've indicated, a force to be reckoned with. Today it is in decline, as it is in France and Spain

too. The end of obedience to Stalin heralded in the end of obedience to the Party itself. Kruschev unwittingly pulled the plug out with his famous 20th Party Congress speech in 1956 when he admitted to fellow Communists that Comrade Stalin had somewhat overdone it. Hungary followed closely on this revelation and the European Communist Parties were in a proper turmoil. Party members were no longer prepared to accept the Line and many resigned. Eventually individual Parties rebelled too, not being prepared to always accept the Tablets from Moscow.

Still, we shouldn't be too complacent. Chapple's right when he singles out the major threat to our freedom as coming from the Communist controlled countries, and, it has to be said, many folk who were involved in personal politics still somehow feel, when it's a toss up between the US and the USSR, that the latter is preferable and that Lenin was a good guy.

And fashions and feelings change. Who'd have predicted the Born Again Christian revival? Maybe Robert Wyatt is horribly on the ball. Maybe Stalin is next year's thing! His oriental counterpart, Mao - the world's biggest mass-murderer — happily co-existed in the minds of many of those post '68 dreamers. Strange fruit indeed. Me, I'd rather suck a banana than experience the rough end of a pineapple.

PETE CRAFTON

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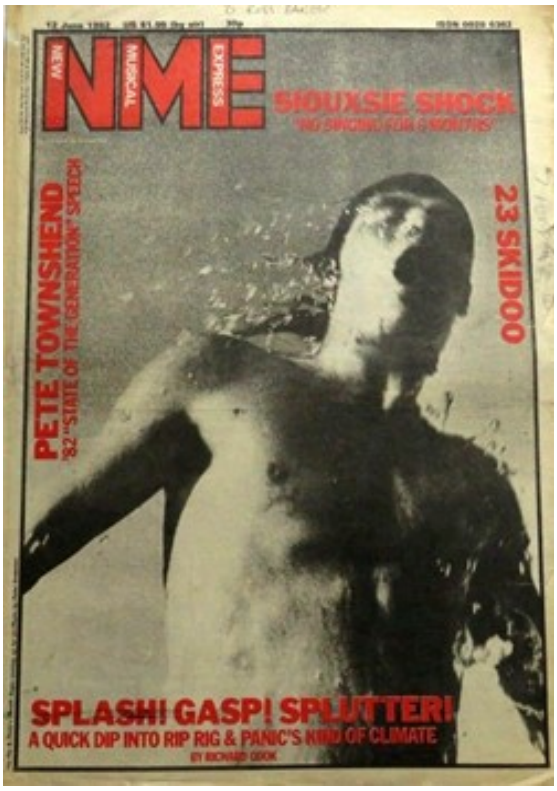
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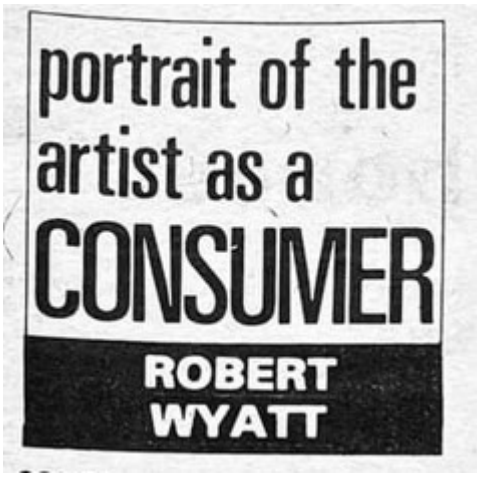
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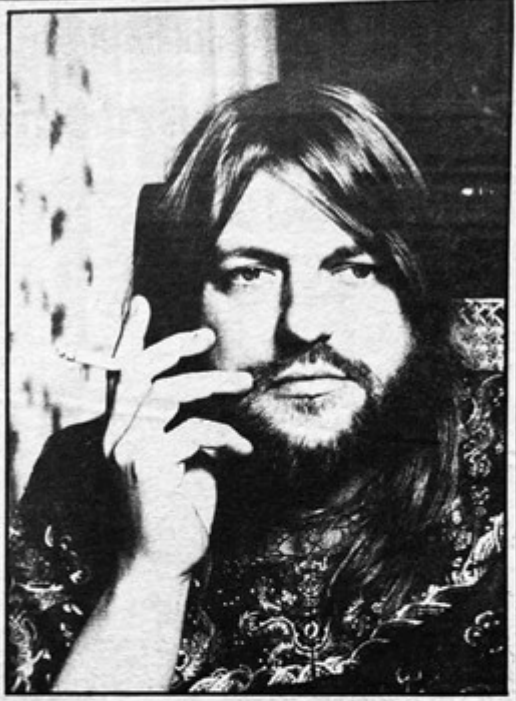
Portrait of the artist as a consumer - New Musical Express - 12 June, 1982





portrait of the artist as a CONSUMER

ROBERT WYATT



SONGS
Hopelessly Without You..... Carroll Thompson
You Bring The Sun Out..... Janet Kay
Love Don't Live Here Any More ..... Rose Royce
Every Little Bit Hurts..... Brenda Holloway
I Put A Spell On You..... Nina Simone
Love Me Tonight..... Trevor Walters

TUNE
Peace ..... Ornette Coleman
(from 'The Shape Of Jazz To Come' LP)

RECENT LP
Wynton Marsalis

DRUMMERS
"Max Roach to Connie Kay to Brian Abrahams — a quick rush through 30 years of jazz."

ARRANGERS
Melba Liston ("A trombonist who's worked with Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Quincy Jones and — a particular favourite — on Randy Weston's 'Tanjah' LP.")
Fela Kuti ("I know he's only got one arrangement, but it's so good it doesn't matter.")
Philip Koutev ("A Bulgarian choir arranger, kind of a Bulgarian folk version of what Gil Evans did for Miles Davis.")

SOVIET MUSICIANS
Alexei Koslov — jazz reeds player and arranger
Igor Brill — jazz keyboards
Folk & jazz from the Southern USSR
("I like Soviet jazz very much. It's unusual in that the musicians are often highly trained formally, but they also play very fiercly, deliberately avoiding formal straitjackets.")

FILMS
Ceddo..... Sembene Ousmane (Senegal, 1976)
Death Of A Cameraman..... Faliero Rosati (Italy, 1978)
The Outsiders..... Mrinal Sen (India, 1977)
India Song ..... Marguerite Duras (France, 1976)

SOME AUTHORS I LIKE
Jean Rhys
Franz Fanon
Jack Santa Maria

RADIO PROGRAMMER
Alex Pascall — BBC Radio London
("He does the *Black London* programme, which is a community programme that actually responds to what people want to talk about — a breakthrough in radio. He also plays records nobody else plays: Soca, Calypso and music for older black people in England — Nat King Cole and suchlike — which I like because I'm old too, I remember Nat King Cole.")

POLITICAL COMMENTATORS
Noam Chomsky
John Pilger
Jonathan (as opposed to David) Dimbleby

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Morning Star

> Zoom

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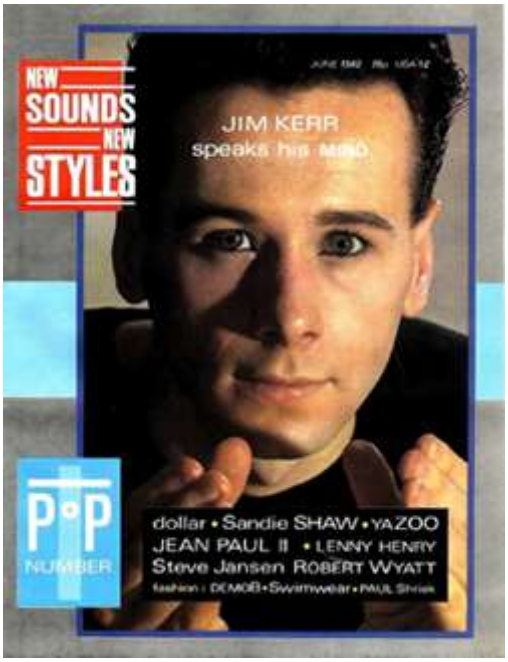
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Robert Wyatt : Whistling in the dark - New Sounds New Styles - June 1982

ROBERT WYATT
WHISTLING IN THE DARK



Robert Wyatt, 36-year-old singer, composer, musician, communist, aficionado of Robbie Vincent's Radio London Soul Show and veteran of seemingly numberiess sessions, groups and albums, smiles sadly.

"I can't handle managers, agents, roadies... If I was a drummer I'd probably have all that. Rock hinges on business, lawyers, art departments, agents arguing with Melody Maker about whether you get the right or left-hand side of the page for the advert which must coincide with the tour which has to end in London as opposed to Scunthorpe because..." He sighs "It's all very distant and far away from me now."

We're talking over the kitchen table of the cluttered Twickenham flat (" a bubble outside time and space") that he's been more or less confined to since the accident in the early '70s robbing him of the use of his legs. Before that unhappy incident - the reckless drunken decision to exit a party via a drainpipe four storeys up - Wyatt was drummer with the original Soft Machine, did a bit of work with jazz musicians, and formed his own group Matching Mole.

But the accident put a stop to his drumming, and since then he's been largely freelance, making only a couple of solo albums (including his best : 'Rock Bottom') apart from occasionally contributing percussion, piano and voice to a variety of different people's musics. He's worked with Eno, Phil Manzanera, Carla Bley and Scritti Politti to name the better-known.

Some two years ago Geoff Travis of Rough Trade approached him suggesting he break a five-year solo silence and record some songs. Songs. That was all Wyatt could think of : specific songs, none of them his, all shortish, all unrelated but interesting in themselves, all suitable, it seemed, for singles.

Over a period of a few months in late '79 and early '80, Wyatt took this eclectic selection

into the studio, and altered them, as he says, "not to revitalize them, but just so I could feel comfortable with them". Eight of the ten or so tracks that were recorded were released as a series of four singles over the following 18 months. Then recently, they were compiled on an album 'Nothing Can Stop Us'.

The recordings were an exercise in reclamation: "more of a priority for me than innovation, these days." Wyatt plucked songs out of context because they were *good* songs, because they were good *political* songs, because he wanted to draw attention to them. 'Nothing Can Stop Us' contains a much more diverse choice than, say, that other current cover version album, BEFs 'Music of Quality and Distinction'.

There's 'Arauco' by Chilean songwriter Violetta Parra, Chic's inexplicably optimistic 'At Last I Am Free', a patriotic American '40s acapella number 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin", Ivor Cutler's nasty little tale of domestic cruelty 'Grass', 'Strange Fruit' about the black lynchings tn the deep American south of the '30s. Each has its own context and history; placed together they form a kind of jig-saw, incomplete but indicating connections, suggesting rather than affirming, asking questions rather than providing answers.

"I suppose," Wyatt muses, "there's an element of double-bluff in it. Subtlety can become obvious. So I'm playing games with obvious statements. Playing with the obvious because in a way it's the least obvious thing to do."

Like doing a version of 'The Red Flag' for instance.

"It's a very sad song. It's not a song about dreams fulfilled, it's a song about whistling in the dark to keep your spirits up. It is now, anyway."



Whistling in the dark to keep your spirits up. That phrase stuck in my head for a few days after the interview. Sitting in front of the typewriter not being able to write the bloody thing. Listening to politicians trying to whip us up into jingoistic fury over a few islands the Argentinians have had a claim on since the British expelled their governor back in 1833. Watching Gil Scott-Heron play a set so compassionate and optimistic that I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Whistling in the dark to keep your spirits up. At the moment that's all an oppositional culture can be. Perhaps it's all it *should* be.

Confined to his wheelchair, Robert Wyatt perhaps has to do a little more whistling than most of us. A typical day is focused around eating and the radio. He used to spend hours listening to distant stations on the short wave band but now listens mainly to programmes like Black London and Robbie Vincent's Soul Show. He has a consuming passion for black American music, all those "endless, uninterviewed studio groups working out great riffs. "

"It sounds like a stupid joke, but I really like dance music. I've never danced, in fact It's like the title of that Ornette Coleman album, 'Dancing in My Head'.'"

And then he cites an anecdote about a journalist being surprised that Coleman - a jazz improviser - should like disco music. "Why?" asked the incredulous hack. Coleman replied: "It's our **revenge**."

Wyatt doesn't drink, doesn't eat meat, can't get out much and doesn't like "the blockbusters at the local cinema" anyway.

"I spend a fantastic amount of time - I don't know how I do it really - just sitting there trying to work it all out."

He reads. Black revolutionary and existentialist Franz Fanon is his favourite writer, the Morning Star his paper. He goes out to see foreign films sometimes. "All these Indian and African film-makers whose names I can't remember."

"The rest of the time, I'm just sort of quietly panicking. Like everyone else I suppose."

At one point I asked which of his own albums was Wvatt's favourite.

"That's difficult. At the moment... I'll have to say 'The Animals Film' because it's still full of fresh challenges. But that probably won't be true in six months time."

Earlier Wyatt had commented: "I suppose I'm the exact opposite of Edith Piaf. I regret **everything**!"

'The Animals Film' is a soundtrack - just released by Rough Trade - for Victor Schonfeld's movie systematically detailing everything from minor cruelty to domestic pets through to the worst excesses of the meat industry. Having been shown an unedited version, Wyatt then spent all last summer composing the music to fit them. Taken out of context, the music is more "ambient" than immediate, but it's an eerily effective ambience, playing with the gentle, haunted mood that's so characteristic of Wyatt's music.

And next?

"I don't know. I only really tend to respond to being nudged into things."

In the mid-70s Wyatt did a lot of work with Brian Eno and Phil Manzanera on great, forgotten albums like Eno's 'Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy', Manzanera's 'Diamond Head' and Wyatt's 'Ruth is Stranger than Richard'. Now, he's lost touch with that nexus of musicians, is isolated from the circles they move in.

He and Eno, apparently, used to do more talking than working. Both having passable falsetto voices, they joked about hiring themselves out as a "girlie chorus". They also used to exchange and formulate theories, some of which, he tells me in a piece of "sheer boastfulness", he's since seen turn up on interviews with David Bowie. (And musically in Eno's work with Talking Heads.)

Just as I'm leaving, clutching an album he's given me and a book he's lent me, Robert Wyatt comes out with this:

"I think I'd really like to be one of those ageing jazz musicians playing out the end of their careers, just doing the occasional gig at somewhere like the Pizza Express."

And then:

"I have to be allowed a certain indulgent escapism, it's necessary to my survival."

Necessary to everybody's, surely?

"Yeah, I suppose I'm in a caricature of the situation everyone's in."

And one more fragment of the percussionist's discourse. It says on the back of 'Nothing Can Stop Us':

"You may notice some technical inadequacies in some of my performance - a hesitant beat here, a dodgy note there - these are of course entirely deliberate and reproduced as examples of my almost painful sincerity."

David Rimmer

East / West - Collusion - #2 - February-April 1982

EAST WEST

by Hannah Charlton



Hannah Charlton looks at the story behind Bengali group Dishari's entry into the singles market - a collaboration with Robert Wyatt on Rough Trade.

Flipping through a stack of singles released over the summer of 1981, you might just pass a greeny-turquoise image of grasses with, high at the top, the small pink titles *Robert Wyatt/Grass* and *Dishari/Trade Union*. But this discreet cover disguises a quietly momentous record, Not only is it an unusual combination, but it also pinpoints a number of issues to do with cross-cultural productions, their presentation and understanding.

The first song is an Ivor Cutler composition, 'Grass', arranged and sung by Robert Wyatt with the beautiful tabla playing of Esmael Shek masking the underlying violence of the words. The second is a unique song called 'Trade Union' by an East End Bengali group, Here the words are paramount — if mainly to the Bengali community in this country. Rough Trade, with great open-mindedness and enthusiastic support for Robert Wyatt, released the record but perhaps underestimated the careful thinking involved in presentation, distribution, marketing to make the Bengali song much more than a novelty

under Robert's wing.

For the single is a two-sided affair, aimed at two audiences who share little contact — the Bengali community and Rough Trade record buyers. They listen to music in different places, they buy their records in different shops... and yet, here is a curious bridge which may lead to a bit more understanding about different musics and the way they function. We live in a pluralist music culture where many musics are out-of-bounds or deliverately not available to the public at large. An example of the latter is the music of feminist bands who play to women-only audiences. Sometimes these musics may be private in the sense that they have strong significance for a small number of people (early music, improvisation) and mostly they operate outside the confines of the music industry and press.

STRANGE FRUIT

The story of how this record came about goes back to 1979 when Robert Wyatt attended an AARF (Artists Against Racism and Fascism) event and was struck by Dishari's music. After meeting them he suggested that they record 'Trade Union' on one side of the last in a series of singles he has put out over the fast year. This series includes Robert's versions of 'At Last I am Free' and 'Strange Fruit'. 'Stalin Wasn't Stalling' (a '40s acapella number originally recorded by the Golden Gate Quartet) is coupled with Peter Blackman reciting his epic oeuvre of Stalingrad. So, by single number four, the inclusion of 'Trade Union' was not incongruous — preceding material having been so wide-ranging. It was also a great recording opportunity for Dishari.

COUNTING THE WAVES

Abdus Salique, the spokesman for Dishari, came to this country from East Pakistan in 1970. He had been involved in pre-independence left-wing politics and found it wise to leave. In London's East End he set up a small factory, added a newsagents and became involved in local Trades Council activities, always conscious of the needs of the Bangladeshi community in the area. Gradually he recognised the lack of a group. playing Bangladeshi music: 'When I came to this country, I was aware that there were lots of Indian and Pakistani groups but none from Bangladesh, which was now independent, I thought I should do something about it especially when there was a lot of trouble in 1978 in Brick Lane (National Front racist attacks). I don't play enough music to do something very creative but when I spoke with people they all asked me to do something. So I made this group, Dishari Shilpee Gosthi, which is a cultural organisation, with Esmael Shek the tabla player and Kadir Duvez the shahnai player and other musicians. A lot of people asked us to play and represent our country; we performed at many multi-cultural events, at a benefit at the Royal Albert Hall, on the TV programmes *Skin* and *Nationwide*, and at the Blair Peach memorial concert. Dan Jones, the secretary of the Trades Council, has been very helpful and I began to develop interest in Trade Union activities. Out of that I wrote the song to encourage my people to join the unions.'



'Trade Union' is certainly to the point — a mixture of folk song images and a blunt Eisler directness. Salique's translation of the song goes as follows:

> We came from a distant land (Counting the waves / of thirteen rivers and seven seas / With hopes of a better life. / We are the workers! / We labour in the factories and the workshops. / If we unite / We can grasp our rights in our hands. / Of course we must unite / If we want to defeat the racists / If we want to draw the teeth / Of those who suck our blood and exploit us. / We must stand together / Under the trade union banner.

With its rhapsodic opening, the keening shahnai, the changes in rhythm and tone, the song is quite formal in its ballad-like structure and musically is rooted in the Bengali folk music tradition. Its message is neither the personal sentimentality of Victor Jara nor the pulpit thumping of the anti junta music of Theodorakis. It's more in the vein of Joe Hill, Phil Ochs or Pete Seeger. It has an immediacy and a potent significance for the first and second generation Bangladeshis who lived through the racist attacks of the late '70s, who struggle to survive in the declining rag trade and who have nurtured the stirrings of a fight-back consciousness.

A LONER IN ASIAN MUSIC

An integral part of the story of Dishari is the experience of Abdus Salique himself. In 1979 he was faced with a deportation order for illegal immigration. The resistance to that order was massive and petitions from the Bangladeshi community and intervention from the M.P. Peter Shore and others meant a strong case for Salique. Here Rough Trade re-enters, because a vital argument for Salique's case was that he was due to make a record here and was therefore required in England. This helped to clinch it and the order was reversed. Salique intends to continue his political songs, hoping that an album can follow.

In many respects, 'Trade Union' stands out as something of a loner in the context of Asian music in general and Bengali music in particular. It is unlikely that Dishari would have been offered a recording contract by one of the big Asian labels involved in the thriving area of Asian film and pop music. Bangladesh is a younger, poorer nation and does not figure strongly and their music concerns itself with the relatively small Bangladeshi community in Britain.

Bengali music (the general cultural region of which Bangladesh is a part) has strong classical and folk traditions, with many songs derived from the poems of Rabindranath Tagore and folk songs in a pop style. But Salique stressed that his song was unique in that it dealt specifically with the problems faced by the Bangladeshi people here in Britain while the protest folk

songs ‘at home’ revolved around harsher Third World circumstances. Musical influences here mean that Salique, an avid *Top of the Pops* watcher, wants to make music relevant for the young Bangladeshis growing up here.

> ‘ I want to write and sing political songs based on the traditional folk songs but also to mix the traditional with new things. We live in Britain now and young people hear very different music around them. The Asian culture is very rich — we can create something new out of that, maybe using western instruments and styles.’

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Strange Fruit Stallin' - New Musical Express - 20th March, 1982



STRANGE FRUIT STALLIN'

ROBERT WYATT

Nothing Can Stop Us (Rough Trade)

ROBERT WYATT's first LP for seven years collects together his quartet of Rough Trade singles and throws in two bonus rarities — 'Born Again Cretin', from the *NME* C81 cassette, plus a singular, unreleased version of the socialist anthem, 'The Red Flag'.

Though there is little new material here, the LP justifies itself with a cohesion and emotional power that far exceeds those of its constituent singles. On his return to recording in 1980, Wyatt doubted that his passionate concern with world politics could find an effective musical voice — one that worked primarily as *music,* without compromising his beliefs. 'Nothing Can Stop Us' has, I hope, laid such fears to rest. While the singles explored ways of reaching this fusion, testing musical and political responses in a series of "sketches", the LP's achievement is to integrate their disparate successes into a whole that stands as attractive music as well as being intensely moving.

Of the less-familiar tracks, 'Born Again Cretin' protests the imprisonment of ANC leader Nelson Mandela to an almost Beach Boys-esque richness of vocal harmonies; while Wyatt's treatment of The Red Flag' is both simple and striking, relying chiefly on keyboards and his plaintive, multi-tracked falsetto. The chorus, incidentally, reminds us that the SDP, for all their talk of breaking moulds, have always been skulking around
in one form or other: "*Then raise the scarlet standard high/Beneath its folds we'll live and die/Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer/We'll keep the red flag flying here*." What was that again - the Socialist Defectors Party?

The remaining songs illustrate Wyatt's global concerns. 'Arauco' is a Chilean folk song that urges the people to stand up for their rights; 'Caimanera' comes from Cuba; Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit' mourns the victims of racist lynchings in the American South. Chic's 'At Last I Am Free', which Wyatt chose for its "lovely tune", becomes a fragile assertion of hope to balance the LP's more sombre moments.



Two tracks are given over to other artists. Dishari, a Bengali band from London's East End, back Wyatt on Ivor Cutler's 'Grass' and also perform their own Trade Union Song', a heady rush of tablas, shenai and impassioned vocals which impart a modern urgency to traditional forms. And Barbados poet Peter Blackman reads his poem 'Stalingrad', complementing Wyatt's a capella version of 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin' ', a garish *American* propaganda piece from the early '40s, originally sung by the gospelling Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet.

Though I agree with its sentiment, which acknowledges the debt we owe to the Russian people for breaking the back of Nazism, I think 'Stalingrad' is overlong, too formal, and distressingly male-centred in its language. The rest of the LP though, is about flawless: the tunes spare but haunting — a flutter of percussion, bass, keyboards and Wyatt's gentle, affecting vocals.

'Nothing Can Stop Us' bears witness to its maker's compassion and amiable humour as well as illustrating his formidable musical talents. More than that, I'm sure he'd agree, it demonstrates a too-rarely seen *communal* aspect to music — what Hannah Charlton's sleevenotes call a "cry of humanity" — affirming a common dignity and its own fleeting beauty against the torture and injustice it denounces.

It's also the kind of LP — 40 minutes of pure pleasure — you immediately want to rush out and buy for all your friends. And if I had as many as Robert Wyatt, who's one of the nicest blokes I've met in the music biz, well, I'd be broke before tomorrow.

This record is absolutely right on. Don't stop now, Robert.

Graham Lock

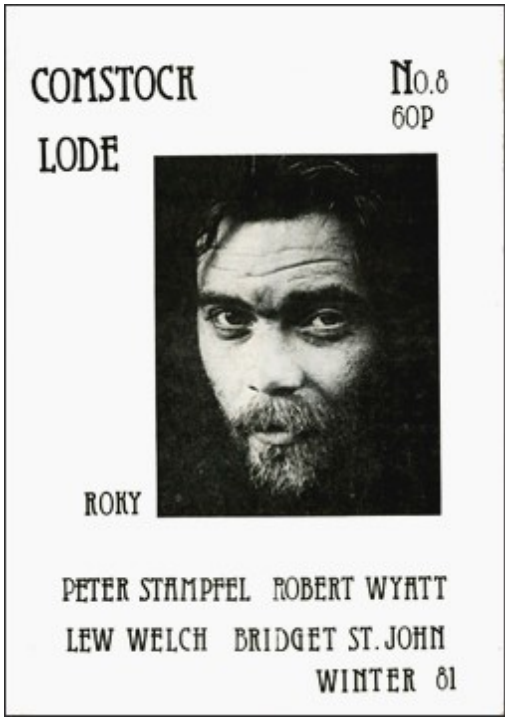
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Robert Wyatt looks back - Comstock Lode - N° 8 - Winter'81

ROBERT WYATT LOOKS BACK



Robert Wyatt's career, especially the Soft Machine era, is well documented so I've left the interview in question and answer form - a narrative seems more appropriate to complete histories. Thus, although more or less chronological it's not designed to be the Robert Wyatt complete biog.

My thanks to Robert for being so forthcoming and friendly, to Alfreda for the meal and to Robert's mum for the photos. (She, incidentally, has some wonderful stories including the fact that she had to wash Mike Ratledge's underwear because he could never be bothered!).

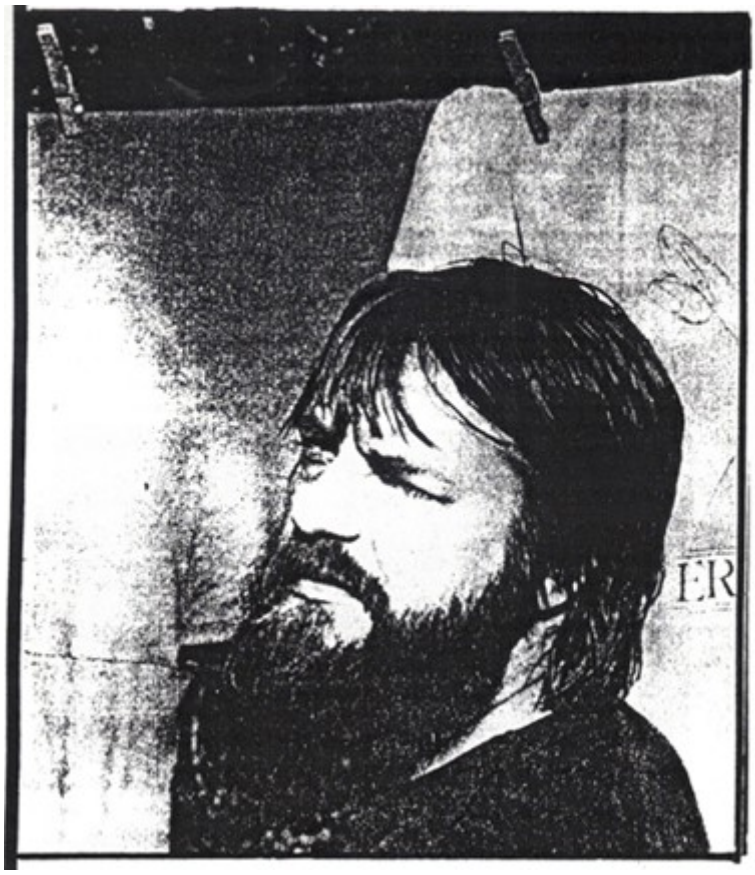
CL. Was there ever really a Canterbury 'scene' or was it just your lot (ie the Wilde Flowers mob plus friends?)

RW. Nothing was happening in Canterbury. This gives me the chance to kill about 18 birds with one stone. Maybe I should show you this book for a moment. I only found it the other day, it's a diary of what we were doing day to day in Canterbury .

I keep reading about the place and keep thinking I don't remember anything like that. (The book is produced and whilst in some ways it backs up what Robert feels about Canterbury it is nonetheless a fascinating document full of the minutiae(?) that make up his songs. It contains drawings, poems, songs, press cuttings etc. right back to when Robert worked as a male model. It also contains things like 'Daevid and Gilli dropped in on their way back from Paris' or 'Kevin off to Majorca again'. Most of it is ordinary diary stuff and in some ways does de-glamourise the whole Canterbury myth - but it does have Robert's original words to 'Moon In June' !).

RW. We went to an extremely dull grammar school, with no cultural activities whatsoever (so much for the image of the Simon Langton school being for artistic/gifted kids from wealthy/cultured families). I only met Mike (Ratledge) twice there. Once when he came up to me when he was a Prefect and said, 'I believe you have some Cecil Taylor records, could I borrow one?' Hugh Hopper I knew in the first year until he went into sciences and I went into arts. Also his parents were Conservative and mine were Labour and we just didn't talk to each other. Dave Sinclair was a year younger so we didn't talk to him - he played piano

at morning assembly.



I can't remember a single stimulating thing about Canterbury. I mean Richard Coughlan (Caravan's drummer) was a dental technician until Hugh rescued him. I think that the Caravan lot had more togetherness in a way - they still live there; Hugh still lives there too - he's the link really. He still feels part of all that. He's just produced a book called, 'Thirty Kent Churches', illustrated by his Dad. (and very nice it is too). I wouldn't have anticipated what happened, at all. Look at this (points to press cutting in the diary) 'Norman and Robert - two very individual young men'. Our first ever review. Now the highlight of that was that in 'Norman and Robert' I did my first ever public drum solo.

We had to play a Police Cadets ball in Folkestone and this drunken Police Cadet came up and demanded, 'Caravan with a drum solo.'' Norman, scouse trooper that he was, knew some quaint, two chorded version of 'Caravan' and I just hammered away. They were all so drunk they thought it was a great solo. That was the start of something or other. Basically all Norman did was play Jerry Lee Lewis songs, about twice as fast as any punk record. (Following the 'Norman & Robert' piece is a reference to Robert Graves the poet, a gentleman frequently cited as Robert's 'spiritual father').

CL. Do you still see Robert Graves?

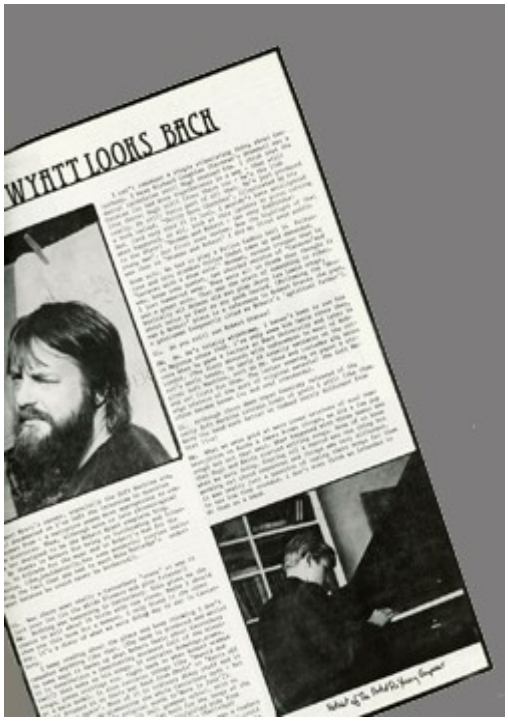
RW. No. He's totally withdrawn. I haven't been to see him in Majorca since 1960. I've only seen him twice since then, once when he gave a lecture at Kent University and later in London. (The diary abounds with references to most of Robert's early bands, by early 66 usually variants on the original Soft Machine, such as Mr. Head and includes gig dates and set lists for them. The latter seeming on paper a strange mixture of the sort of original material the Soft Machine became known for and soul standards).

CL. Although those demo tapes Gomelsky released of the early Soft Machine contain loads of goofs I still like them. Were the band much better or indeed vastly different from that live?

RW. What we were good at were cover versions of soul numbers; Solom on Burke & James Brown things, we did a few pop songs but not that well. What happened with those

demos was that Hugh and Kevin started writing songs. None of us knew what we were doing. Copying off a record was one thing but working out chord sequences and things was very different. It was really just a question of taping their songs for them to see how they sounded. I don't even think we intended to do them as a band.

CL. I really thought that by the time, you'd got to London and were playing UFO etc., that you'd dropped all the covers and were playing largely original material.



RW. The trouble is that the orientation of things like Pete Frame's family tree stuff is that it deals with groups who played gigs and made records. For example for me the most interesting musical events happened before the tree starts ie Daevid Allen, Hugh Hopper and me playing drones together in Paris, where Daevid lived. Daevid was very influenced by Terry Riley and the ESP free jazz records. We were using tape loops as well and it was that stuff that Mike heard and liked. That was how that developed. The thing with pop songs was quite different. That was back in Canterbury, everything was domestic, low keyed, people watched television and went to bed at night. Chronologically it makes no sense. We did experimental things for ages but we got fed up with them for a time and started doing the pop stuff just as an alternative. The actual development doesn't make sense chronologically unless you realize how weird brains are.

CL. To backtrack slightly, going to Paris when you were 16 or 17 to work with Daevid, must have been a big deal for you?

RW. Well, I left school at 16, tried art college for a few months and then just started wandering about. I went off to stay with Daevid in Paris, went down to Majorca. It's such a jumble, I can't make sense of it in retrospect. This is where the Tree is misleading - I don't even remember those groups as being the most interesting things that were going on. That's why the diary is a more real picture, it shows preoccupations. But even a lot of that stuff is dream world stuff. We were never very good, we didn't get work not because we were too far-out, just because we were bad. However, both Hugh and Kevin very early on did start writing what I thought were really good pop songs and it was because of that we did ultimately start doing their stuff. Our friends thought we were mad. They were all jazz fans. Hugh's songs particularly had really lovely harmonic structures but the lyrics were totally perfunctory. Later on when I got into writing words I took the liberty of putting new lyrics to Hugh's old tunes, as he wasn't doing anything with them. That's why the lyrics are different on the real Soft Machine albums from the demo record. Kevin was a great songwriter too but more self sufficient, what Kevin did would have happened anywhere, whoever he'd been with, whereas the music of Hugh and myself was much more interconnected.

CL. Did you like being associated with the Underground and playing UFO?

RW. I would like to have been more included in It rather than less. We felt like suburban fakes dressed up on Saturday and visiting the city. I never dared take LSD. I was in total awe of the audience at UFO, people like the OZ crowd. We used to come in on the train and pretend we were like them. Just because we played long solos people assumed we were stoned, which was great for our credibility. I didn't know much about it, Daevid had connections with a whole generation of people there, all these people with very advanced ideas, Daevid was the internationalist of the group, he got us into all of that. The rest of us were all provincial.



Rare shot of the original Wilde Flowers
L. to r. Robert, Hugh Hopper, Brian Hopper + Mrs Hopper.
(Photo never used at the time as Mrs. H. left the band)

CL. The Soft Machine as well as being associated with the then new Underground seemed as much part of or at least in the tradition of, the pre 66 underground.

RW. In my head it's true. What was disappointing about the late 60's was that all these incredible uncatagorizable cultural phenomena were being channeled into rock, fashion etc. It was really dull compared with the early 60's when, if you went to an event, you didn't know if it was a party, theatre, a group, jazz, an orgy or what it was. But that was me remembering what had excited me as a teenage fan. Sex and jazz and the Paris avant-garde.

What was interesting about dealing with the pop scene was that we came in contact as middle class aesthetes with East End sharks and Denmark Street hustlers with mutual fascination and incomprehension which has been vaguely captured in muchmore glamorous from by Nic Roeg in 'Performance', though nothing like as grand as Roeg. My background was the romantic/avant-garde tradition that I'd inherited from my parents and dealt with ideas and people who had never seriously involved themselves in the real world, a very arrogant group of people.



Portrait of The Artist As Young Composer

CL. One side aspect of all of this was your popularity in France.

RW. I was thinking about this only yesterday and came up with an explanation for the first time. I was thinking about how during the war Hugh Parnassier & the French jazz critics managed to allow jazz to survive under the Nazis by claiming that Jazz was first and formost a Franco-Belgian music and only secondarily a black American music citing Sidney Bechet and important pre-jazz composers, who were vital to jazz, like Debussy and Satie. There is just a great tradition in France of listening to music and dealing with the arts that is completely conducive to the creation of and the appreciation of, the sort of avant-garde set ups that we dealt in. Plus a whole avant-garde theatre tradition, Jarry was French after all. It's quite different from here, there's no sense of having to deal with the hit parade or anything like that, just didn't arise. You could really stretch out in front of a French audience, you almost had to apologise for it in England. There was also the whole American expatriot thing that centred on the Shakespeare bookshop on the Left Bank and bars like the Chat Qui Peche, where they had racks of jazz albums behind the bar that you could request if you bought a drink. Fucking paradise as far as I was concerned.

CL. To jump dramatically tell me about 'End of An Ear'.

RW. I was really depressed after we had done 'Third'. I was really into what Mike & Hugh had done and I'd tried to get it right and they hated 'Moon in June' and refused to play on it and I had to play it all myself except they came in and did a little organ solo with bass accompaniment. I felt really lonely and rejected. So I decided to do a solo album. They let me do one because they thought it was all going to be 'Moon in June' stuff, what I did was to stretch out. It was supposed to include Mongezi Feza but ended up with Elton Dean plus Marc Charig and my brother Mark played a little piano. It gave one a taste of what I could do. What was nice about that was I gave myself a chance to play piano, which I wouldn't have dared to do in public, in front of real people.

CL. Why did you leave the Soft Machine?

RW. I think really we just grew apart from each other. We only got together in the beginning because we were the only other musicians that each of us knew. It wasn't some heartfelt brudersbond (?). There were other things about the musical differences between the old Soft Machine and the then current band, but I've heard that stuff discussed much better by interested

outsiders, I don't really trust myself to do it. It's unfair to give me the opportunity to say what I think.



What I will say is that of the original people the most creative was Hugh. His compositions demanded unique treatment. Excellent though the Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter influenced things that Mike was writing were, they could have been written by Hancock or Shorter which was alright, but it was putting us on the fringes of other people's worlds rather than at the centre of our own. To be to, let's say Tony Williams what the Stones were to Muddy Waters was not really my ambition.

To be honest in the end I was kicked out. I could have stayed but ... In political terms I'd have been better off staying - the equipment, use of the name, guaranteed full houses, road managers etc. In a sense I've never regained the practical resources afforded by the name. Even the way I've told it is coloured by my point of view. The things they had to put up with - my vanity, my gross alcoholism etc. Let's just call' it quits.

I did temporarily leave a bit earlier than that and went on the road with Kevin Ayers and The Whole World. The thing I remember most about that is Lol Coxhill's incredible solos and travelling around Holland. All sorts of disgraceful things - Dutch groupies make LA ones seem like puritans.

It was only really temporary, the group was put together solely to perform Kevin's songs. It's always pleasant to work with him and things always happen around him. It was more like a holiday really. Dutch groupies... Actually, the only reason that whole thing is worth mentioning is that despite my methodist left wing puritanical image I love having a good time, sex and getting drunk and loud music.

CL. What about Gong?

RW. In between his various 'permanent' line-ups Daevid felt he could call on me to help out. He being the original person to get me in all of this anyway. Matching Mole was the next proper thing. I suppose I just hadn't got a group and felt it was time to form one. I kidnapped a few other musicians, like Bill McCormick who was already in Quiet Sun and Dave Sinclair who was about to leave Caravan. He shared my interest in 'simple songs'. I had a few songs I wanted to do and so did everybody else, so we got into a group and played each others tunes. I was really happy with most of that first album. However, we didn't have any money or equipment, that album was made in an abandoned CBS studio that was so cold that Dave Sinclair had to play with gloves on. We'd had no money in Canterbury in the old days but what was different was that we were playing in colleges and concerts and stuff and were expected to come up with a really professional performance as musicians in amateur circumstances. Whereas as teenagers we were playing in small pubs and places as virtual unknowns. It was a very jumbled time. But that's the story of every group you've ever heard of. The name was my idea, the pun was deliberate - they got it in France straight away. Dave didn't stay long. It was difficult to find musicians who want to do all the different things that we were doing. We did a concert in Brussels in which the context was just to improvise - he was very imaginative but he hated it. He just wanted to do songs. You can't do eight 'Oh Carolines'. What do you do? Oh Annette? Oh Jaqueline? Oh Sue? It gets a bit unconvincing. Really he felt very insecure at the very experimentalness of it. So we brought in Dave McCrae he was happy to try anything - a really proficient musician. He really enjoyed the danger of playing in an anarchic situation.

CL. How serious was the whole political side of the band?

RW. I thought that it had all been new but I recently turned up ten year old irate letters to the Home Office. Alcoholic scrawls about the prototypes of the SPG etc. I suppose I

inherited all that from my parents. What's happened recently is an attempt to coordinate all that. So with Matching Mole I was drawing on various things that were on the fringes of my. consciousness. The image of bearded guerillas coming down from the mountains is an exciting, romantic image but you can't really draw any conclusions from that. You have to go beyond that.

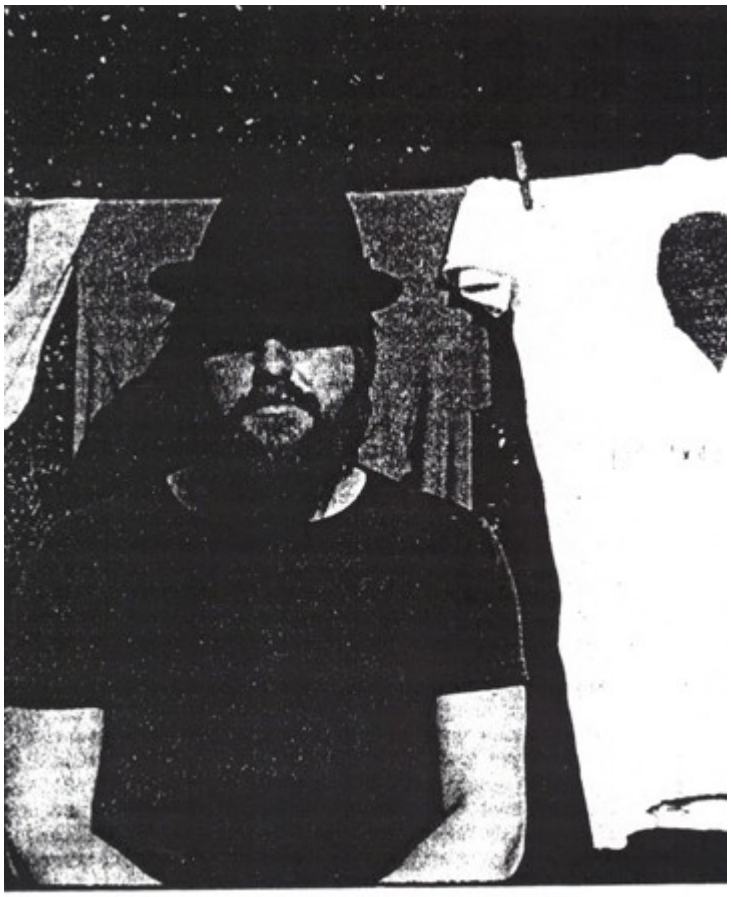
At one time I could have told you who the real music revolutionaries were, people like Charlie Haden, but it's far more difficult today. I don't think of musical and political revolution as the same thing anymore. Haden was wonderful, he ties in with the whole Spanish guitar tradition which really moves me.

To come back to Matching Mole that finished because I don't have the qualities of leadership, I don't want to run things. The onus was on me to run it because I was better known than the others, I became the focus of attention when we played. Not because I'm a nice shy person or anything, I just wanted to be a quarter of a group. Also drink problems, equipment problems, I just couldn't handle it.

I ended up escaping to Venice - thank God for abroad.' There was going to be a new Matching Mole with Gary Windo, Phil, and Francis Monkman. Francis had done a couple of things with us on the radio. We'd been writing lots of things, but the physical state I was in manifested itself, plus the accident and that effectively knocked it on the head.

* * * * * * * *

The accident did indeed effectively end Robert's live performing career. Since then there have been the 2 Virgin albums and the wonderful 'I'm A Believer' single (plus 'Yesterday Man' on the V compilation). He has performed a few times since then largely with the Henry Cow fraternity. Most of the last years of the seventies were spent coordinating non-musical activities. However, last year Rough Trade persuaded Robert to record again. As mentioned last time he has cut at least 3 singles, the first of which, Cainemara has been out for a while and is indeed marvelous. The second one, 'At Last I Am Free' is also out and equally fine. It seems unlikely that Robert will perform live again although he and Eno have seriously considered hiring themselves out as a girlie chorus to any band that needs one. Robert has always been a hero and - myth debunking and self-effacing notwithstanding - remains one.



Old Photos Courtesy Roberts Mum. New ones taken by Alfreda

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HOME

Of dogs and underdogs - Melody Maker - January 24, 1981



Of dogs and under-dogs

ROBERT WYATT had a clearer idea of what he was doing when he wasn't doing anything, but is getting on with it anyway. Brian Case reports ; Adrian Boot clicks the shutter

OUTSIDE in the garden, Robert and Alfie's dog Flossie and my dog Titch challenge a clump of hollyhocks. Once they get together, they become deeply unknowable, and tucket about with their ears treaming, baying at imaginary postmen and piddling on each other's possessions.

According to Robert Wyatt, Flossie is the ringleader, a poodle of infinite inventiveness, effortlessly recruiting my suggestible hound to her vision. I would not dispute this, since a few hours with her owner has much the same effect upon me, brain boiling, nose dry, and ears like pennants and all mailmen's ankles in jeopardy.

A man of ravenous intellect, Robert has theories the way rectories have mice, and many a Wyatt wig-bubble has found its way into the field.

Five years ago in Holland, Cecil Taylor buttonholed me to contest Robert's Theory of social Class & Avant-Garde Staying Power.

"You did the interview with that guy in the 'wheelchair? I liked what he said about breathing, but his social ideas were shit. But at last he has ideas."

Mel Tonne reacted as if I had piddled on his possessions when I laid The Theory Of The Limitations Of Scat-Singing on him, and spent half-an-hour in rebuttal, with oo-bla-dee illustrations.

Most of us have opinions, few have ideas, but Robert's prolificity embarrasses him. One New Year's resolution featured incogitance: at chance.

His latest single, a version of Chic's "At Last I Am Free", was in part a broadside in a debate.



PUNDIT

"One of the reasons I wanted to do it was because of a remark made by a pundit on telly. Someone asked him what effect discos had, and he said, 'Well, of course, the black ballad tradition's gone down the drain. They're all trying to boogie now'. I thought THAT JUST ISN'T TRUE! There is so much black boogie in the front line of the dance thing at the moment - but there's also as much as ever of the song and ballad stuff. This song is an example of that."

Humbug and bad ideas will not pass into the currency unchallenged, and I have an evergreen memory of Robert crouched over the radio, teapot suspended in indignation at the radical chic of a disc jockey. "Rock Against Sexism? He may as well propose *Omelettes Against Eggsism*!"

"The other reason why I wanted to do 'At Last I Am Free' is because I like the tune. There's a nice cycle of chords with a couple of nice melodic things that almost inevitably grow out of it. Just water it with a nice bass line or something.

"I'm very bad at words. I don't very often listen to words. I tend to listen to music from the

bottom upwards, rhythm section upwards. In this case, I listened to it and thought, what on earth is this? The chorus goes 'Now at last I'm free' — yes, well, that's a great feeling, that's good - but the verse is a bitter and miserable let-down. The gist of it is a betrayal, and the chorus is 'Hooray, made it!' I thought, COR - that's right up my street!

"My voice always comes out disappointed, to say the least. I've got that sort of sound. It's too lugubrious to be a hit. Nothing I could do would ever cheer anybody up, and I don't even sound fashionably down. So, if I sing 'At Last I Am Free' it wouldn't sound as if I meant it anyway, and that would suit the sense. I got Frank Roberts to do the piano, and I just did what I liked about it, and left the rest out."

AFTER a long period of musical inactivity, Robert is back recording again with a series of fascinating singles for Rough Trade.

"I've had a difficult year. Maybe I'm a malcontent, but at least when I wasn't working, I knew what I was doing. I could handle that.

"I can't graft all the experiences and thoughts that I've had since I dropped the craft on to what I remember of the craft. I know lots of things I didn't use to know, but they're not specifically about how to make better records. If anyone told me they'd been doing something for five years and felt really disillusioned and wanted to give it a break and go off and do something else, I'd say something like DON'T. Stick to whatever it is you can do, because you have to grow through whatever it is that you do ..."

To say that he has watched the manipulations of popular culture from his wheelchair implies the loftiness of the umpire. Nothing could be further from the truth, for Robert's irreduceable ideas came by way of gnawing concern, doubt and guilt to the cuticle, and are invariably presented without wishing to presume.

"The new English rock bands that took the headlines in "78 struck me as a nostalgia movement for the days when rock was dangerous music, or seen as a dangerous music. It has always had the reputation of so being, and that's always been one of the assumptions about it that you can knock to pieces if you try.

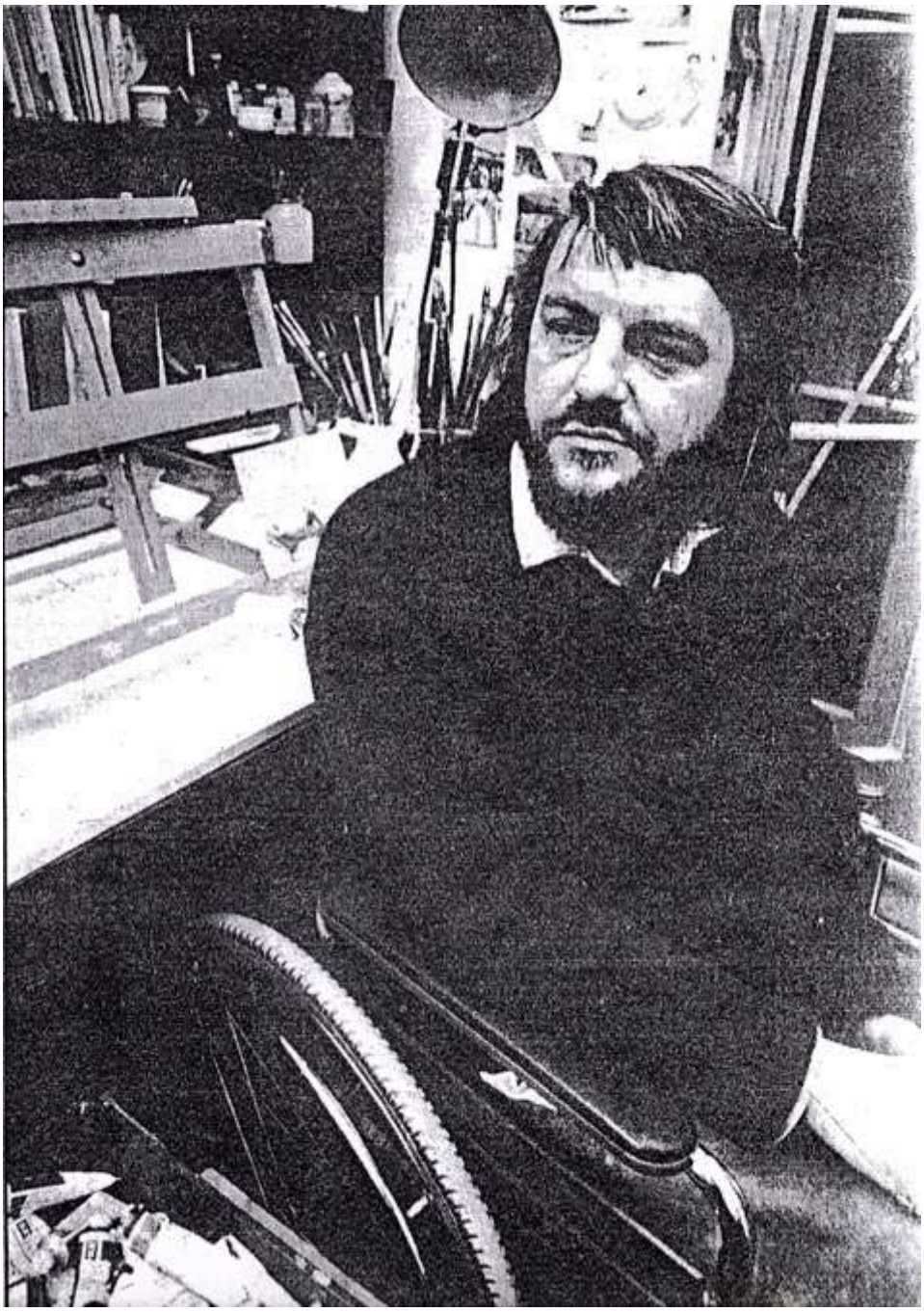
"Nevertheless, it's part of the self-image of people in rock that they're part of the rebel culture, and the industry loses its bearings when it's too obvious that this isn't the case. I used to belong to the consensus myth that if you played iconoclastic music, you were being iconoclastic. I hadn't realised the extent to which that just isn't true.

"The whole cultural set-up absolutely caters for that, and knows how to absorb it completely. It's part of it, it's no threat to anything — in fact, it's part of how the cultural business keeps churning.' There was something charmingly nostalgic about the idea that these punks were REALLY gonna do it, REALLY gonna blow the gaff! The pathos of it!

"A lot of the cultural things that I have become interested in remind me of the title of Mingus' book, 'Beneath The Underdog'. Very often when things reach rock culture and become famous underdog symbols, they've already come up one from the underdog to become acceptable." In the history of rock 'n' roll this is racist.

"In America you had all this raging, raving black music right through the Forties, which was in fact rock 'n' roll — the economy small groups that came out of the big bands with a tenor at the front, and a compere-cum-singer and two rhythm. The history of rock 'n' roll is a history of Saturday night working men's clubs in black America, and the Forties is the rock 'n' roll era.

«IT wasn't about famous people or eccentrics or heart-throbs until it coincided with a staggering, uncertain, ailing Hollywood industry not sure how its new star should look. It is always taken for granted as perfectly acceptable that Sam Phillips could say, 'If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars'. I'm not blaming Elvis and I'm not even saying white musicians are not equally creative - I'm just saying THAT'S the history of it, then look at the rock industry's propaganda for how it sees itself. Dangerous music!



AMERICA

"I sometimes think South Africa is the only really honest Western country because there everybody says, 'Right — the blacks' job here is to provide cheap raw material for our sophisticated industries'. America has some sort of pretence that this isn't so.

"I heard a popular historian on the radio this morning describing the five great stages of American popular music, and it went from Al Jolson, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley to the Beatles. Well - come ON, you know! I mean, those are the stages at which it reached the white, respectable, monied American public — when underdog characteristics became acceptable. But the real underdog is STILL playing janitors in the movies. It's going on unabated."

This is one of our long-standing points of agreement, and we sometimes derive a bilious satisfaction from comparing the time-lag between black and white cultures — "Disco! Ten years; New Wave! Twenty" — before bunging on a jazz record. This time, however, Robert ventures further into the process.

DESPAIR

"A very good example of all this — and it spreads despair because it seems so endless and historical — is the history of the waltz. You had the travelling gypsy musicians in middle Europe getting all the racist abuse, the settler's fear of the nomad coming into that as well — this unacceptable group doing this ' naughty music. In fact, they were living deeply moral and cautious lives. Romany law is fantastically strict in terms of sexual habits and relationships, very, very formal, has to be for the culture to survive.

"Anyway, to the European outsider, they looked loose, outrageous and dangerous to civilisation. Eventually, a respectable light composer took up their waltz, fitted those Oriental lines into the European piano structure, dampened it down and created the newly sterilised, sanitised waltz, and suddenly it was all right for nice people to dance to.



"Does this give the gypsies respectability? Nobody'd heard of the waltz till it was put on the map by respectable people, so that moment of triumph of the culture was about as useful to the gypsies as a lion's head is in the trophy room of the hunter. He's got there, but . . . THAT'S the process that we're dealing with in rock 'n' roll. It's what happens. Winner takes all.

"THE West happens to represent an amazingly powerful force in terms of revolutionising other people's lives. In the end, it's quite a relief to be able to say that my position isn't a moral one, it's aesthetic. That is to say I actually LIKE the idea of this great wealth and variety of ways there are for being people in the world.

"Even though we pretend the colonial period is over, we are steam-rollering the whole world into thinking that the ONLY way to be is something like us. We in the West seem to know when we NEED to assimilate somebody else's culture, and we are able to do that and create our plural society, and leave people nothing.

"I find the creation of this vast mono-culture alarming. Everybody in the world is trying to match up to this great impregnable fortress that Western civilisation has created with its vast technological and military backup, and air of moral and spiritual superiority. "It flattens and belittles everything.

"There's a great Bulgarian poem called 'The Shot That Wounds But Does Not Kill'. It's about a decoy duck, a duck that the hunter clips, takes to the marshes where it cries to its mates who come down and get shot. I'm not talking about the West exterminating people or cultures, but allowing them to survive with clipped wings. Like rock 'n' roll."

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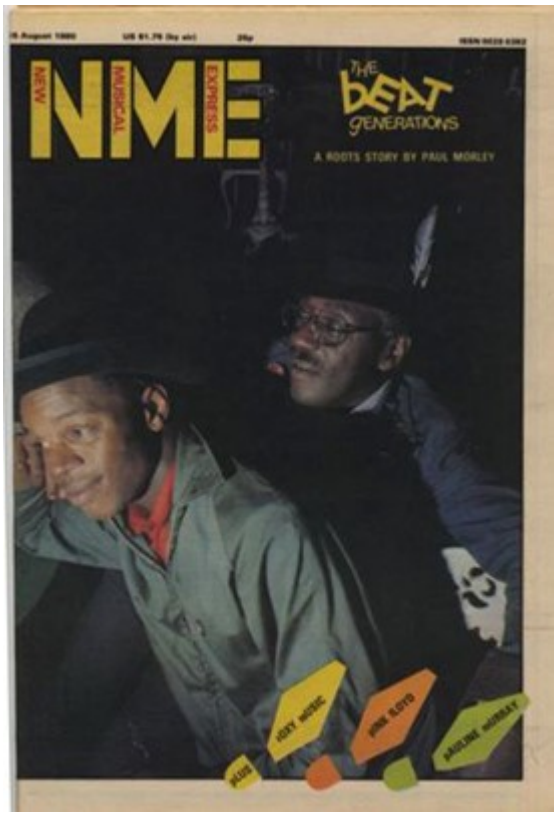
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HOME

Quiet Wyatt - breaks his silence - New Musical Express - 16th August, 1980





This man has just recorded four singles. The first is a Chilean folk song.

**The second's by Chic.
The third is a 1940s pro-Stalinist gospel anthem.
The fourth was written by Ivor Cutler.**

GRAHAM LOCK finds out why they're calling Robert Wyatt "the Red Robbo of Twickenham"

Photographs: ANTON CORBIJN

ROBERT WYATT gazes into the humid air. "I don't know... I think I've become political in spite of myself, my natural inclination is just to have a good time." He laughs. "I'd like to be a hedonist."
He pauses, frowning. "But there's another thing... I didn't feel the need to address myself to it before, but it's strange... it's... I was born in 1945, right, and there were certain assumptions in our generation, certain things that just weren't done any more, like elitism in the form of racism was so discredited after the war, it wasn't on.
"People thought that crap had been chucked out, that 'right' of the Western countries to treat the rest of the world like naughty Borstal boys. But now it's crept back in after what seems, retrospectively, like only a moment's pause.

"It's not only Conservatives, not only politicians, but the whole culture... like the unspoken racism of Radio Three which uses the phrase 'serious music' to describe European academic music and no-one else's.

"These assumptions are flourishing now and it's thrown me completely' cause I thought it was all over. I'd have been quite happy to go on and sing songs and fuck about you know. I'd much rather do that but the whole basis, the whole consensus I thought was there doesn't seem to be around any more and I got really... alarmed."

Wyatt fidgets in his wheel-chair. "And one reason I've joined the Communist Party is because I've realised that ideas which come through in culture, in music, by themselves have no effective power to change things for the better. They can indicate things, or bear

witness, but they can't change them."

He looks up into the sky, as if for help, then sighs. "And I'm still working on the only thing I can do — music — which is based on the assumptions I *used* to have, that art was a real force etc. And, frankly, I don't know how to harness the insights I've had *since* I learned to be a musician. I see everything in the light of politics now but as a performer I feel the first job of the musician is music and however much you might want songs to reflect your own preoccupations, there are in fact rules to music which insist that songs have their own set of values."

He frowns again, then shrugs. "This is part of the problem I'm having. I just don't feel comfortable making a living where that is a priority. I feel really trapped by it and there's no way out I can see. I literally don't know what to do, it's as simple as that."

He looks thoughtful and chews absently at his beard. In the fortnight that his wife Alfie has been holidaying in Spain, Wyatt has munched his beard down from a fine, flowing mane to a tatty, ragged fringe around his chin.

We're sitting in the garden of his Twickenham home to discuss his return to recording. A recent single, 'Arauco'/'Caimanera', the first of a projected series of four on Rough Trade, signalled the end of a silence unbroken since 1975's 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard'album.

The first surprise about these singles is their diversity : two South American folk-songs, Billie Holiday protest jazz. Chic, Ivor Cutler whimsy and, strangest of all, a multi-tracked acapella version of 'Stalin Wasn't Stalling', a World War Two pro-Stalin American propaganda song originally sung by The Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet. Wyatt even plans to include two sides on which he doesn't appear himself — 'Stalingrad' is a poem written and read by author Peter Blackman; 'Trade Union' is the work of Disharhi, a group of Bengali rag-trade workers and folk musicians from London's East End.



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QUIET WYATT BREAKS HIS SILENCE

This man has just recorded four singles. The first is a Chilean folk song. The second's by Chic. The third is a 1940s pro-Stalinist gospel anthem. The fourth was written by Ivor Cutler.

GRAHAM LOCK finds out why they're calling Robert Wyatt "the Red Robbo of Twickenham".

Photographs: ANTON CORBIJN

CONTINUES OVER

The second surprise is the singles' political clout.

Wyatt: " 'Arauco' is by Chilean folk-singer Violetta Parra. It's a despairing exhortation to all the great Indien chiefs and the cultures and communities they represent to rise up and throw off the Christian colonialists. It's despairing because the exploitation's been going on for 400 years and there aren't that many Indians left.

"People say, 'Oh well, these things happen, people die out'. People don't die out, they're *killed* off.

"Pinochet (*Chilean military dictator*) is selling off their land to foreign big business which means that most Indians are almost certain to be wiped out or just turned into slumland factory fodder, used up in the poorest jobs in the mines. If you say, 'What's it got to do with us?', well, we've got a government who're one of the main providers of finance for them to do this.

"'Caimanera' is a version of 'Guantanamero' which is virtually the Cuban national anthem. I sing it... since there's been so much press for the thousands of Cubans who left Cuba I thought I'd sing a song for the millions who stayed."

This is the man who once sang the alphabet on a Soft Machine album.

ROBERT WYATT'S first work of note came as drummer/vocalist with Soft Machine, who rose to prominence in the late '60s, leaders with Pink Floyd of a (then) new wave of largely instrumental, art-rock bands who heralded the arrival of psychedelia and high seriousness in English rock. Now hailed as one of *the* pioneer jazz-rock fusionists, Wyatt tends to deflate such claims with a grin and a ready anecdote.

"At times it was really embarrassing. You'd get these kids coming up after a gig and saying 'Oh, great to have intellectually stimulating music here, last week it was terrible, Geno Washington and the Ram Jam Band and everybody just dancing', and, believe me, if we could've played like Geno Washington and for his audience, we'd have done it, no question.

"We just weren't that good, we *couldn't* do it. Our audience was always, well, snobs really. I suppose it serves us right for playing such silly music. The great thing about the late '60s audiences was that they were all stoned which is why we could all play so many hours of crap and get away with it."

Less modesty or cynicism than myth-debunking humour, Wyatt only stops this joking about his past work when we touch on an aspect that still fascinates him — the relationship between intent and effect.

Discussion centres on songs like 'Oh Caroline' and 'Signed Curtain', which Wyatt performed with Matching Mole, the group he formed after leaving Soft Machine. The latter song is especially infamous, with lyrics that comment on its structure and function: "*... and this is the chorus or perhaps it's the bridge or just another key change. Never mind, it won't hurt you, it just means I've lost faith in this song 'cause it won't help me reach you*".

Here was a deliberate attempt to subvert pop conventions?

"Yes, I think so." Wyatt sounds extremely dubious. "I wouldn't call it iconoclasm, I'm not like Magma, trying to change the world by reinventing the language but... I think I was being sarcastic about how seriously people take songs and I was also very exasperated ...

I was also trying at the time to write a real love song and I thought 'What actually *is* it you're doing? Other people are gonna know how you feel but it doesn't do anything. So what you're doing is something else — just singing a song. And you're trapped in it. You can't actually sing about something else, a song in the end is gonna be about singing — whatever it seems to be about'.

"I felt trapped and so... I think I was just trying to be clever."

Wyatt laughs. But just as he can't help throwing in his self-depracating jokes for fear of seeming heavy, he also can't resist following his ideas through.

"You see, even if you're trying to comrnunicate something, the effect is that what you're left with is an art object which will be admired for its own sake rather than as having pointed something out. An object that entertains people. And if it's not a nice song, if people don't like listening to it, it won't even function like that."

And this, claims Wyatt, holds true despite the artist's intention, despite any formal innovations.

"The artist doesn't have that power... he'll be used by the community any way the community wants to use him because meanings aren't inherent in any object, they're invested in it by observers. Political content can appear and evaporate in the most unlikely places." That mischievous smile reappears. "I mean, I wonder how Blake would feel if he knew that 'Jerusalem' had become the national song of the Women's Institute?"

WYATT REMAINS consistent to his theories of the artist's social impotence, claiming that his new singles were chosen primarily because they were "great *tunes*". Nevertheless, their content — a heady mix of political statement and oblique personal reflection — corresponds uncannily to the possibilities and confusions with which he is currently struggling.

His next release will be 'Strange Fruit'/'At Last I Am Free'. 'Strange Fruit', originally sun by Billie Holiday in the '40s, was a response to a group of lynchings in the South. Noticing the mass of anti-racist stickers, posters and leaflets that adorn the walls of chez Wyatt, I ask to what extent his choice of that song was affected by this preoccupation with anti-racism.

"It does strike me that people talk as if things are past, Americans particularly, lynchings in the South, killing off Indians etc. But if we talk about the forces that are responsible, they're still at work, they're still largely the same people.

"If you take South Africa, I think — were it not for the growing resistance of the Africans — then the USA, England, Western Europe would be quite happy to turn it into another dust-bowl. We know the USA is actively helping the anti-SWAPO forces, as are the English and the French. That kind of racism is at *least* as bad as it was in the days of Southern lynchings."

'Strange Fruit' best exemplifies Wyatt's contention that the singles are "like sketches, very undecorated, just documenting a few songs I like". All are mostly solo work, the sound bare and slightly raggedy — here, bass, keyboards and Wyatt's high, plaintive vocals rise and fall with sombre deliberation.

"At Last I Am Free', the Chic song, Wyatt chose because it was "a lovely ballad"."

Although it has no obvious political or personal references, certain lines in the song seem to strike a poignant note in the context of Wyatt's current problems with music. It's just speculation but you could read it as his farewell song to his illusions about rock'n'roll: "*At last I'am free, I can hardly see in front of me.*"

AFTER Matching Mole had made two albums, Robert Wyatt got drunk at a party one night in 1973, walked out of a fourth-floor window, fell to the pavement and smashed his spine. He's now paralysed from the waist down and is confined to a wheelchair for life.

For a while after the fall, Wyatt maintained his involvement with music. Though unable to use a full drum-kit, he could still handle a wide range of percussion, play keyboards, sing. His comeback album — a second solo (the first, 'The End Of An Ear' from Soft Machine days, has just been reissued by CBS) with the bravely punning title of 'Rock Bottom' — remains the '70s most moving and most neglected masterpiece. A work of real depth, its theme of fall and recovery has an emotional and musical cohesion equalled only by 'Astral Weeks'.

Many people saw the album as being directly about the accident but Wyatt denies it.

"Actually I'd written most of it before the accident. I think the coherence it has is musical, there were a consistent set of ideas I was dealing with through the whole 40 minutes.

After a second album, 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard', and two intriguing covers of 'I'm A Believer' and 'Yesterday Man' Wyatt stopped recording. Why?

"My other interests came to the fore. I think what happened was that I couldn't lead the life of a musician — things like travelling just proved too difficult — and it's very hard to be one if you can't lead that life, 'cause it's not something you *are*, it's part of a set-up — gear, roadies, managers, tours, repertoires. Without all that, I found it harder and harder to keep up a momentum. And the romantic notion of the importance of it all faded quite

rapidly. The things I was starting to think were important weren't related to my job. I mean, the people I talk to now, what I do for my fun... like, I go to see films about what's going on in the world and rock 'n' roll seems so... tiny."

Paradoxically, since being stuck in a wheelchair Wyatt's awareness of the world has expanded dramatically. He's now a voracious reader and regularly tunes in to radio stations from all over the globe. It's no wonder then that he's experienced this gradual disenchantment with rock'n' roll, this shift of values, and entanglement with political matters. But why *return* to recording now?

Wyatt shrugs, a little despondent. "It takes years to build up a craft, so really I had to turn back to this business 'cause I can't do anything else." He pauses, squirming in his chair and frowning again. "Getting back into rock music ... I feel it's like some strange nightmare where I'm going back to school or where I'm trying to get into the clothes I wore when I was 15. It just doesn't fit any more, it's weird."

Is this what you meant when you said recently that returning to the music biz was like a defeat?

"It isn't a defeat 'cause I'm still alive. But I'm surprised I'm doing it again. I thought I was going somewhere else — I don't know where, honestly — it'd be interesting to know, if I weren't in this chair, where I would be...

"I tried at the Labour Exchange for a job. The only job they had was painting chess pieces just down the road and Alfie and her mum said 'You can't do that, you're selling yourself short, you're a musician'. I think really I've been made to feel guilty about *not* doing it. But I've got to earn a living and, like, that's my job."

ONE RESULT of Wyatt's search for a more politically effective mode of action than rock music was his joining the Communist Party some two years ago. While he's willing to talk about it, he requests — for 'fear he'll be accused of preaching — that I make clear I *asked* him to. So why did you join, Robert?

"Well, the reason today I think I joined is... er... fundamentally I think most of our troubles are caused by the institutionalised unaccountability of the major Western capitalist countries and their expansion and their appropriation of the resources of a large part of the world for their own benefit. And, er, to justify capital's growth at the expense of Namibian mineworkers or whoever, the people in power rely on a particular bit of myth, of mystification, which is a notion I call the 'divine right of the few' — the idea that it's right, it's nature's way, for certain people to have and others not to have.

"The notion of this 'divine few' should strike a bell with everybody who's ever had to deal with the fact that they're not a genius, or male, or white, but it's called lots of things — "maintaining standards', 'law and order', anything to hide the fact that this divine deserving elite actually give *themselves* the right to preserve and expand themselves at the expense of others.

"And ... er... the history of Communism seems to me the history of the attempt to expose that hypocrisy."

Typically, after this thumbnail critique of capitalism *and* trashing every other left-wing grouping in the country, Wyatt admits to a little uncertainty.

"I have doubts at times, like Afghanistan, but then I look at all the people who've been *anti*-Communist — Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Pinochet, Nixon, Thatcher, Botha — and I think, well, Communists must be doing *something* right."

Well, maybe. The pity of it is that Wyatt feels his enthusiasms for politics and music to be not a fruitful tension but at an absolute impasse. And his fear that the politics will — to simplify drastically — somehow taint the music in the eyes of his audience can lead him into a defensiveness that is almost comic, as when he explains the choice of Ivor Cutler's 'Go And Sit Upon The Grass' as one of his future singles.

"I like it because it pokes fun at people like me. It says '*do not mind if I thump you when I am talking to you, I have something important to say*'."

You see your songs as thumping people?! ask, incredulous.

Wyatt ponders. "Well, I like to poke fun at myself because there's this awful thing that seems to happen if you talk about anything other than music and 'fun'... the danger is you'll into a sort of left-wing Cliff Richard.

"And that," laughs Robert as he wheels off into some left-wing shadows, "is an appalling thought to have hanging over your head."



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HOME

Up from rock bottom - Melody Maker - March 15, 1980

Writing letters to political prisoners, listening to Radio Havana, thinking about music . . . Robert Wyatt hasn't been inactive during his five-year absence from the studios. VIVIEN GOLDMAN finds out why he's finally decided to record again.



JOKING apart, when you're drunk you're terrific; when you're drunk I like you mostly late at night, you're quite all right. But I can't understand the different you in the morning when it's time to play at being human for a while. We smile... So until your blood runs to meet the next full moon, your madness fits nicely with my own — your lunacy fits neatly with my own. We're not alone." —
"Sea Song" by Robert Wyatt.

« Don't be too hard on your old self », was his advice to me on the phone. I was castigating myself for some idiocy long past. « Try and be friendly to your old self, » he said encouragingly. « After all, even if it seems really stupid to you now, you were doing the best you could at the time. »

This little homily could well have been – sounded as if it was – learnt from life. Robert Wyatt says that it's only recently he's begun to miss the things he used to be able to do before his accident seven years ago. Robert fell from a window during a party at Lady June's flat in a mansion block of flats in Maida Vale.

« I was very drunk, » he remembers. « I didn't fall out, I climbed out… it seems the best way to leave the party at the time. Yes, I did a lot of punch and then a bottle of whisky and so on. Which was quite good, because if you're going to fall out of a window and you're drunk, it doesn't hurt quite so much. Soldiers and bullfighters do it all the time… people who are smashed getting smashed. »

The particular window Robert fell from while trying to evade a typical party tangle is sealed up now. I thought that was symbolic, until I found out that all those windows are sealed up now ; some painter's mistake. Perhaps is still symbolic.

One other thing that’s stuck : Robert’s relationship with his wife, artist Alfreda Benge. She was at the party, and it’s a sticky web of emotions – guilt, loyalty, but above all, a simple bond of friendship – that welds them together as a creative unit.

Oddly enough, during the past five years, in which robert has been passive/receptive – not making records, at any rate, while absorbing information from all over the place like a deep-sea diver gulps oxygen – Alfie’s own visual output has been declining. Perhaps now that Robert’s broken the five-years silence, Alfie’s paintings will increase, too.


Up from rock bottom

Writing letters to political prisoners, listening to Radio Havana, thinking about music ... Robert Wyatt hasn't been inactive during his five-year absence from the studios. VIVIEN GOLDMAN finds out why he's finally decided to record again.

As a music/visuals team, they're matched only by Don and Moki Cherry; like Moki, Alfie's sleeves for Robert's two solo albums provide such a deep-pile context for the music that it's almost impossible to think of one without the other floating into your mind.

Robert's lyrics tend towards surreal dream worlds. Sometimes they seem surreal simply because they're so colloquial and direct you'd think nobody would sing those kinds of words in a song. Calling the first album you make after being stuck in a wheelchair for the rest of your life "Rock Bottom" indicates a surreal/straightforward wit that's awesomely matched by Alfie's eye: a cross-section of a seascape, with a little Robert's top half popping out of the water's surface, waving a big bunch of balloons in one hand — you can almost see the bright lollipop colours speckle the sky, though it's a grey and white pencil drawing — but beneath the water line, there's no matching pair of little Robert legs. Just fronds, or tentacles of passing octopi. Presumably it's Alfie bending over backwards on that tiny island.

Behind her, more balloons float gaily towards a boatpuffing across the horizon. Someone standing on the deck is bound to see the balloons and want to grab one down from the sky, but they might never know that the little man who held them is out there in the water; and even he doesn't seem to know whether he's waving or drowning.

Alfie's illustrations go colour for Robert's next, "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard". Two curious animals — actually people, heads shrouded m masks of gaudy ritual birds and beasts — examine their reflections in mirrors. Each mirror shows the same red sun, each sun sliced across by a razor-blade cloud. But the bird-man in the fairisle jumper sees a solitary gull swooping and diving across the green field in his mirror, while the beast-woman with the beads and hippy print dress gazes impassively into her mirror, at a solitary small woman figure trudging across her green field.

Behind the uncommon pair, a washing-line hangs between trees, stringing miscellaneous items of household ware and underwear across a gypsy encampment: a brown cauldron on a tripod goes hubble-bubble by a comfy armchair, a book lying half read on the flat earth beside it. A green gnome's teapot on a grey tree-stump, a deckchair, a little green TV, even

an ironing-board near the hole in the ground. A blue ladder sticks out of the hole, so that Things can easily climb in and out; there's even a small green wiggling Thing squirming across Alfie's wild world, heading in the direction of the bird's house slung from another tree. Ideal Home in the wilderness, peopled by beasts that can't see each other, only themselves. What's worse, only their inmost souls. No breathers for commercials.

THIS may be a dubious recommendation, but no record makes me cry as much as "Rock Bottom". Robert concedes that "it's one of the only things I've done I would listen to myself. It's one of the only records of mine I've got, I think."

Each track reminds me of Robert's musical self-description: "Long, doleful, when-will-this-end songs." "Rock Bottom's" full frontal pain — at least as intense as any Lennon in his Primal Scream period - sears so deeply that it doesn't seem idle to assume he's referring at least partly to his accident.

"This sounds so silly - I can't really remember," says Robert. "Somebody said, 'Oh, this is a cry of pain from the accident.' It doesn't sound appropriate to me at all to the kind of accident I had. This is taking it too far. You make records instead of saying things. It's up to anybody who listens to put the lid on it. I reserve the old romantic right of ambiguity in art, 19th century though it may sound."

About "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", Robert says: "I'm more fond of that, but in the way a mother might be more fond of her mongol child than the one with all its limbs intact. It's got so much investment of ideas and thought in it that don't hang together, don't make a complete record..."

He specifies the "fan worship thrill" of working with now-dead African trumpeter Mongezi Feza, hearing Mongezi's rhythms hook into Gary Windo's horns, "jazz, not jazz-influenced." Bill McCormick and Laurie Allan were the bass-and-drums-respectively rhythm slice, and Robert was on piano - "I got a vague inkling of how enjoyable it must be to be a pianist in a jazz group."

Both "Rock Bottom" and "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" are deleted by Virgin Records, heaven only knows why. There are, apparently, plans to bring out a compilation of the two; why a compilation and not a double album re-issue I equally cannot imagine. I certainly wouldn't fancy wielding the anthologist's knife over either of these immaculate assemblages.

"THIS is the first verse, this is the first verse... and this is the first verse. And this is the first verse — and this is the chorus. Or perhaps it's the bridge. Or just another part of the song that I'm singing. And this is the second verse, second verse. It could be the last verse. It's probably the last one. And this is the chorus or perhaps it's the bridge. Or just another key change. Never mind; it just means I've lost faith in this song, 'cos it won't help me reach you... — **"Signed Curtain", by Robert Wyatt.**

Robert Wyatt listens with interest to everyone ; he can be almost painfully self-effacing, as if being in a wheel-chair had entirely removed the onus of aggression — as in, "look at me, I'm an assertive rock star" — from his shoulders. Robert says: "I've always been one to shirk responsibilities if there was the opportunity to, and this meant there was a certain number of things I couldn't possibly be expected to do any more, which was quite a relief." He's not being facetious.

There was "Rock Bottom" and "Ruth Is Stranger" - and then the five-year silence. Why?

"I tried to do a couple of singles, and suddenly my preoccupations started to go out of synch with my job. I couldn't relate things I was thinking about to my particular mode of expression. Virgin Records gave me a lot of freedom and opportunity to do what I wanted to do. I've never been prolific, and I couldn't keep the momentum going.

"It probably wouldn't have shown if I'd been in a group. The group momentum keeps the thing going—at any given point, one or two people within the group are the ones with ideas, pushing. The others become interpreters, and then someone else takes a turn. It's much harder to sustain output on your own.

"Having said that, I must have written about 2,000 postcards in the last four years — the most exciting creative project of my life! I wrote them because it's nicer than writing letters. so the postmen have got pretty pictures to look at, and if they really want, they

can read it.

"They're not absolute opposites, being creative and being receptive, but there's an emphasis on one or the other. And I became more interested in music than in making music. That's always been my problem - I've never enjoyed playing instruments, I've always enjoyed listening to records. I'm really a fan of music, so I get involved in listening — and, from that, observing and being interested without being obliged to make it.

"My feeling about music now is... I get in a panic about how much there is to hear and not enough time, so it's going to get wasted, all that unappreciated beauty. Which is the opposite of ten years ago, when I was thinking: "How can I express myself?'
"Going back in the studio — I didn't do it because I thought that singing about things that mattered to me would make the world a better place. I think Linton Kwesi Johnson was quite right when he said singing about things doesn't change them. Changing things changes them. Singing is singing. Just as in art, I'm interested in songs by people who have preoccupations I sympathise with, and acknowledging some songs that I like and the ideas and thoughts they represent."

The result so far is three out of a projected five 45s, possibly to be sold in a set — Robert Wyatt's Paper Bag, perhaps, a humbler collection than PiL's 12-inches in metal, but no less cogent.
They're all cover versions, "because I can't think of anything to say coherently at the moment," says Robert, modestly ignoring the fact that his selections are a pretty good statement in themselves.

Each single is a compact two-step of ideas. The Spanish-spoken one, with a Violetta Parra song on one side about the extermination of the native Chilean Indians, askks questions of American imperialism. It says that there are elections coming up, the implication being: what's the point when most of the indigenous population's already been exterminated? The flip's a version of "Guantanamera", familiar to us all as MOR elevator muzak, here restored to its original, fiery rebel spirit.

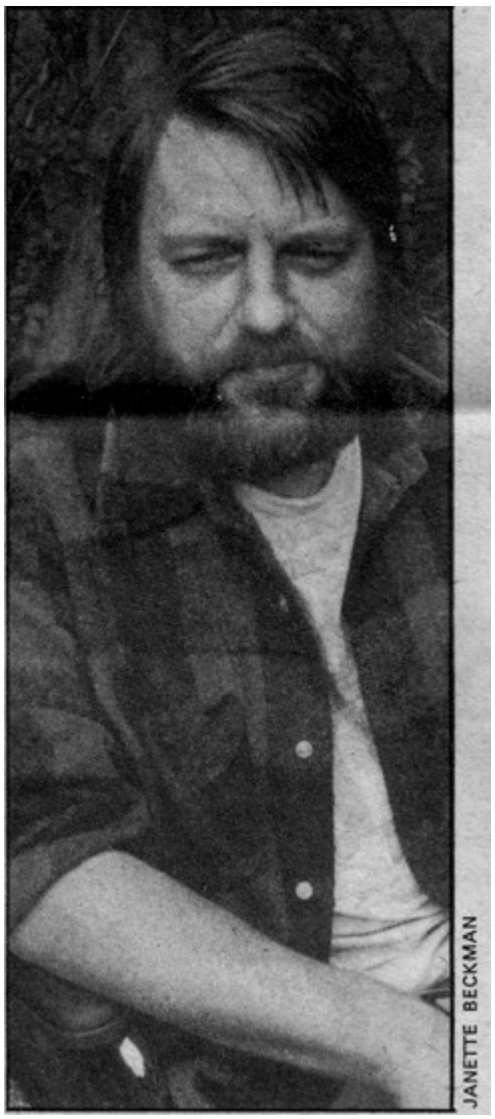
Then there's the Stalin single-one side is a version of "Stalin Isn't Stallin'", originally recorded by an acapella gospel group, the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet. Robert heard it on Alexis Korner's Sunday morning radio show. Alexis said that the record was deleted, like the sentiments expressed in it, and sent a cassette to Robert on request.

"It was made, I think, during the war or after it, and it's a straightforward rally-round, anti-fascist solidarity internationally in a war against Hitler, in which it's pointed out that the war against Hitler and against fascism in Europe, the turning-point and the major victories, were won through amazing sacrifices by the Russians.

"The turning-point was the Battle of Stalingrad, and — this is an embarrasing fact for the West — it wasn't bombing the shit out of Hiroshima, it wasn't the English and the Americans charging round the desert, it was 20 million dead Russians. And, of course, dead Poles and dead Jews. It's a jolly little song to celebrate Joe Stalin, who represented the power that changed the direction of the Second World War, so saving the rest of Europe from domination by Hitler...

"I think the underlying exercise I see running through thoughts of Stalin in the West now is to replace the idea of the all-time 20th century monster of Hitler with the all-time 20th century monster of Stalin. On account of the fact that at the end of the war he didn't stop killing people, for example. He seemed to get a bit carried away... to be honest, I don't want to get heavy. I just thought it was amusing to realise that the song had been done and how impossible it was going to be to find a composer, because he wouldn't dare say he'd written it anyway, when it comes to royalties."
Historical interest aside, the record's swinging finger-snapper, with fourpart Roberts going ooh-ooh in the background, and a touch of percussion to spank along the pace. The flip's a poem by Peter Blackman, father of the Steel & Skin steel band Blackman, about the fall of Stalingrad.

Robert saw Blackman read at an Art Against



Racism and Fascism show. "As that song on the other side points out, England and America were for five extraordinary and unlikely years anti-fascist countries, because they weren't being the fascists. I didn't know anything about Peter Blackman, and when he read this poem I was very moved. He's not young, he belongs to quite another generation, the Thirties Left movement, and he's stuck to it where others haven't. He hasn't made a career out of either being Left wing or a poet."

Blackman is a short, dignified man who carries himself in his casual polo-neck like a general in full honours. When he walked into the recording studio, it was the first time he'd had the opportunity to record his work. But he wasn't in any rush. He was cautious, wanting to know and under-stand more about Robert's preoccupations and intentions.

Robert displayed great deference and respect to the older man, who recites with what Robert describes as "unapologetic pride".

As to where Robert stands, he says: "I'm actually a caring member of the Communist Party, so I'm in a paradoxical position being in the record industry. But I think that things that are serious and things that people enjoy can be the same thing ."

Which leads on to the other recorded single, an initially bizarre coupling of Billie Holiday's classic, "Strange Fruit" — about seeing the corpse of a black man lynched by the Ku Klux Klan swinging from a tree in the American South — and Chic's "At Last I Am Free". As when Robert made a parallel cover hit — the Monkees' "I'm A Believer" — all the ambiguities and tensions disguised by the original straight pop format stand naked.

I chose that song because when I first heard it I was a bit pissed and it made me cry. I was interested in that, because though Rodgers and Edwards are acknowledged songwriters, they're not famous for writing songs that make you cry... I don't think it necessarily moves me the way it moved them when they were writing it. But anyway, there was a bonus in Ihc fact that it was in my range."

Which is... ?

"Well, I don't know — I'm still waiting for puberty and my voice to break and all that sort of thing. Then I'll start covering men's songs, that men sing. Just technically, I find myself singing along more with women singers.

"Yes, a Billie Holiday song. It's a bit inappropriate, like asking a Jew to sing from the Koran or something. Cross-cultural references, it's not my song... I thought it was relevant now, but instead of talking about Southern America, we're talking about South Africa. And I thought, we're just going to go on doing this — we were doing it before I was born, and it's going to go on after I die, and there's nothing I can do about it. But you can't help noticing."

While Robert's fans thrill to the fact that he's working publicly again, and Robert himself seems to be measurably more cheerful lately (although he's racked with nerves about each succeeding move), his pleasure's tinged with other, more ambiguous emotions.

"Going back to work is in some ways a defeat. Because I've now come to the conclusion that I can only do what I used to do in the first place. I'd like to think that after the last four or five years I could now see further, do more, and so on. But this isn't the case — I find I'm reduced to this built-in introspection and narcissism of being A Creative Person,

and it's very hard to harness the amazing things I've seen or heard. Suddenly all the Windows disappear and are replaced by mirrors.

"Everyone believes in something, and I used to believe in Art, in truth with beauty. That if it looked good and sounded good and felt right, then that contained the main truth you need to know and intuition would guide you from then on. If it feels good, do it. I don't seen any evidence of that now. I can see that the cruellest and most repressive peoples and societies can sometimes produce the most beautiful and astounding art — in fact, they need to.

"If another analogy is that art is make-up then the more of it you need the more dubious your real life is. But I do need to at least pretend to believe in something. And religion's out of the question. I've found that talking to people who had political knowledge and experience provided the stimulus that I'd been missing, that I really needed, and I clutched on to that."

Robert always seems to assume Personal guilt and responsibility for the history of Western Colonialism, which can be seen from his selection of songs for the singles. He claims that the aesthetic — is it a nice tune? — comes before the moral in his selection process.

"Art to me is everything that isn't true, if you want to be glib about it. It's quite useful to actually care about something... but I do come, on my mother's side, from a long line of Kentish fascists, and on my father's side I come from a long Une of missionaries going out to various parts of the world to intimidate the locals into submission to make it easier for Western European colonial expansion. Although they'd deny it.

"That doesn't make me kind or like people I wouldn't otherwise like. I just feel angry that I was born a receiver of stolen goods. My immediate parents were breakaways from family tradition... but no amount of masochistic search for my own evil cultural roots would make me actually want to have a relative like Woodrow Wyatt."

PARADOXICALLY, many people think one of Robert's greatest musical contributions is the way he sings; not with a classic Good Voice, just straightforwardly, in a middle-class English accent. This, despite the fact that one of the main reasons he left the Soft Machine is because they didn't like the way he sang.

Hearing Robert talk about drumming — obviously, he can't use a full kit any longer, but he's a sturdy and sensitive percussionist — is one of the few moments that the word "tragedy" pops into your head while you're talking to him.

"I don't feel I can get out of myself when I'm singing. And what I remember about playing music was the way, sitting in front of a drum kit, you somehow got out of your mad skin into the outside world — a wonderful feeling of release which I don't get from singing at all."

Robert's Everyman vocal technique — I'm just an ordinary bloke, why am I so sad? — he puts down to this: "I go blank when I sing, which I think makes it sound sad. That's my sincere-sounding technique. Just go blank and try and get the notes right."

He has evolved some flamboyant but not flashy vocal styles over the years — babbling rushes of overlaid noise, colloquial speech patterns eliding over lines of melody so you sing an up-and-down incantation.

As for the much-celebrated Englishness: "It wasn't patriotic in any way. I got the idea from listening to other people — Pink Floyd, Kevin Coyne, Noel Coward, George Formby, Stanley Holloway, Vera Lynn — but, apart from George Formby, I didn't relate to their material. I'd committed myself to syncopated music, and I don't speak a syncopated language.

"It's just that hearing tapes of me trying to sound like Steve Marriott trying to sound like Wilson Pickett, or Stevie Winwood trying to sound like Ray Charles, or Joe Cocker trying to sound like Ray Charles, made me realise there had to be another way if I was going to get anywhere in this business."

There's a classic John Peel session from years ago where he sings a song and Changes the words to say how nice it is at the BBC, where they let you play almost as long and as loud as a jazz group or an orchestra on Radio 3, and he continues to sing about the coffee machine in the hall...

"Yes, I also got into writing words where some of my preoccupations were purely technical,

and they'd come out as human-being-not-interested-in-technique things, and others to do with expressing myself would come out calculated.

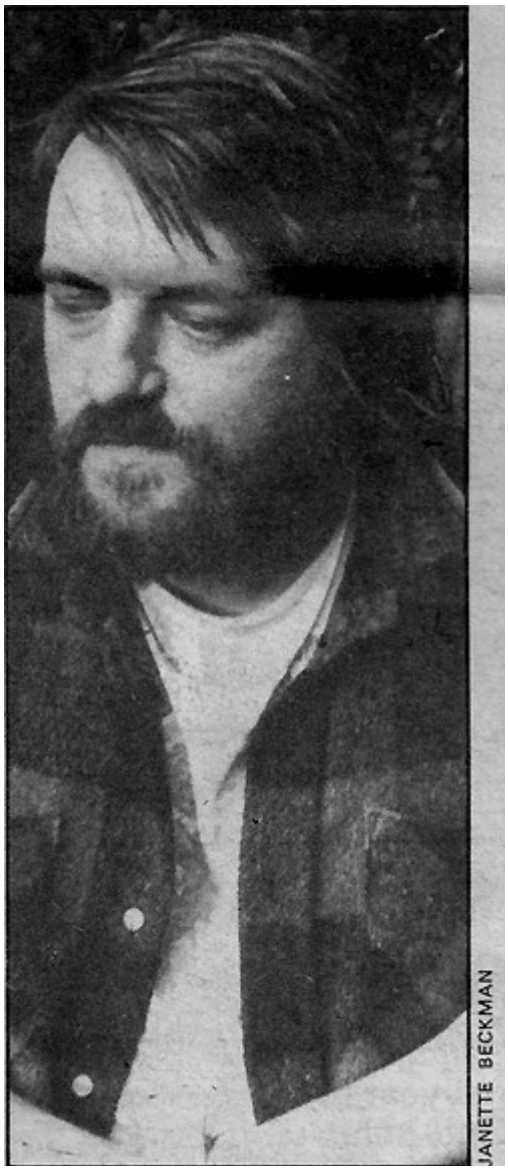
"I got fed up with songs where the main accents would make you emphasise the words in a way you wouldn't if you were just saying them, and I got interested in the technique of writing songs where the melody line fits the way you'd say the words if you were just talking.

"I'd say things you'd say in conversation, not even serious conversation, just things you'd say to make a noise. And that meant singing about things that were true as far as I understood it. And if you're muddled, the only things you're certain are true are that there's a tea-machine in the corridor and it works or it doesn't. This is true, it's not wishy-washy bullshit. It may be low-profile, but it's true. Then I abandoned that, and later I was quite happy to sing things that didn't match the rhythm of the words at all."

*"**I**'M the one face down in the mud on the ground, I'll be stuck here for ever unless you come over and kick me... I'm the best of all you have got. I beat the lot. I take the cake. Believe me, if it's tough you want, then it's tough you've got. I mean, if this is only a question of toughness. Then survive me, or deflate me, pronto..."*
"Team Spirit", by Robert Wyatt, Bill McCormick & Phil Manzanera.

The house, bought for the Wyatts by friends after Robert's fall, is in a finely-preserved street in a residential, riverside area of West London. The Wyatts live on the ground floor. It's a circumscribed world for Robert in his wheelchair, and so it has to be a complete world.

The flat's full of rich, glowing colours, the layout and design catering for the fact that Robert needs effortless access to as much information as possible.


JANETTE BECKMAN

I once suggested that Robert should get himself an invalid car, and up his independence and mobility a hundred fold. Robert laughed and said No — he'd just go off in a daydream, and be bound to crash. Alfie merely commented: "No, not Robert, he's a born passenger..."

So Robert's world has shrunk from that of the globe-trotting rock'n'roller, free-forming it on the French Riviera or in Ibiza, touring across the States supporting Jimi Hendrix ("I thought he was a real gentleman").

Interesting correspondence lies around Robert's desk. Letters from Africans in detention, with whom he's carried on lengthy correspondences which started out as sending a Christmas card and blossomed.

Robert maintains a series of letter exchanges from his desk, and spends a great deal of time listening to the radio; not just the BBC, for his dialtwiddling has led him to uncover long-range frequencies that keep him in touch with far global corners. It's a form of obvious compensation for immobility, but by subscribing to an enormous amount of magazines and literature and listening to people talk from all over the planet, Robert, sitting in his chair at home, is probably more in touch than he ever was in his mobile existence.

When people are around, the only external indication of Robert's frustration is the way the former drummer is constantly drumming

— cigarette packs, lighters, anything that's
lying around is fiddled with and tapped, so that every conversation is punctuated by non-stop syncopation.

"I wanted to get out of this place, especially when I realised after the last election that the country was just full of Tories — I wanted to separate myself, and I couldn't do it physically, so I started tuning into the short wave radio... to anyone who was considered the enemy, with immediate strong bonds of sympathy pouring out to them.

"The result was that I spend my time hovering between the radio of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Radio Moscow. And Radio Havana, on 41 metres short wave, from ten to 11 in English, which means missing the first part of John Peel. That's a sacrifice, seriously — but I'm prepared to make it, so entertaining is Radio Havana. I found out there's more to life on the short wave than the enemy, and it's very Eurocentric to call anyone who isn't us the enemy."

Vivien Goldman
Photos: Janette Belkman

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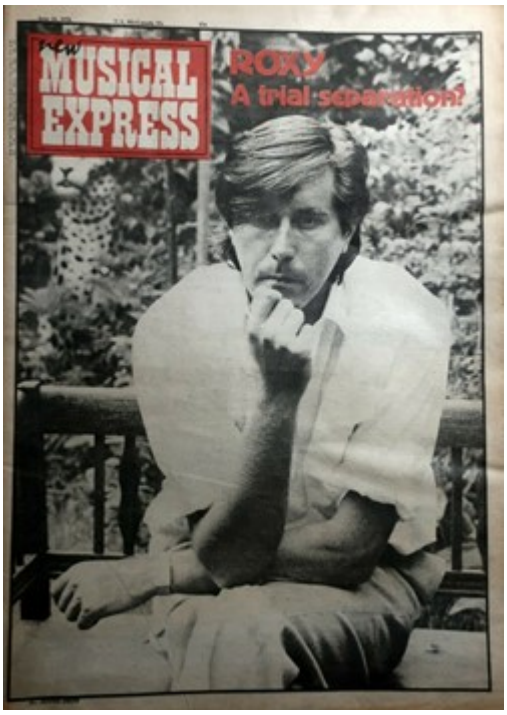
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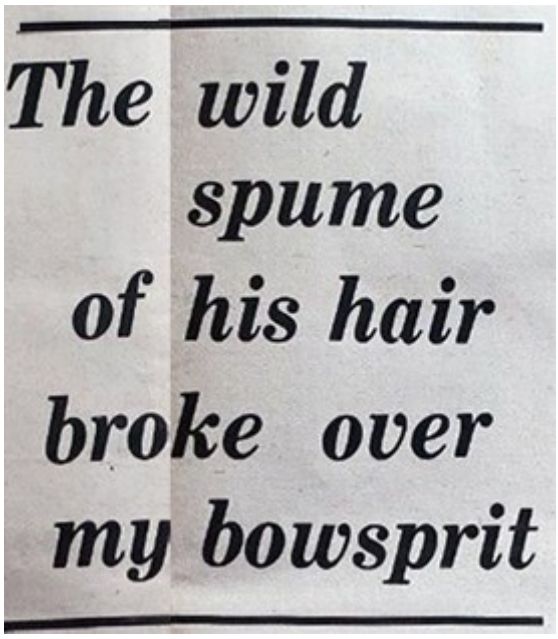
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HOME

The wild spume of his hair broke over my bowspirit - New Musical Express - June 26, 1976





"HANG ABOUT", says Robert Wyatt, and consults his notebook. " Er - oh yes - hmm - ah, there's that ".

Whatever he's got jotted there acts like jump leads on the cortex , because abruptly Robert is off and spouting single-hitched and I'm clinging to my harpoon line and wondering will I ever see Nantucket again.

Unless the critic can put the public's money where his mouth is, he's not much use to the jazz musician." That's for starters. I'm just bracing my 'waders for a bit of a retaliatory tug on the line when the' behemoth flaps his fluke.

"Jazz history so far has been a history of white people creating that idea of a traditional, middle period and avant-garde out of an organic thing that has developed out of its own. You can feel that there's a magnetic pull on jazz to satisfy the white critics need for some parallels to what he knows of the culture he was brought up in. Those classifications are a very European thing. Jazz instruments are basically the instruments of European music, with notable exceptions like the invention of the drum kit. It's based around the same thing, like the keyboard , piano thing. You can see what I mean in Charlie Parker's remarks like "I dig Bartok and all them geezers - very naive in a way".



As Robert speaks, he dashes at his hair, clears the fronds from his face, fails to anchor it behind his ears. It's like a waterspout in a headwind. I catch a glimpse of him through the curds of spume and he's off again.

"What's happened in the last few years is that there's a small black middle class. A black musician can now actually make a living without having to appeal to the white intellectual - up to now it's been a white intellectual preserve because he's been the only person interested in his potential - people like Lomax doing the field recordings...

For the jazz fan who's followed Herbie Hancock there's no musical sense in 'Headhunters' - I mean 'Headhunters' after 'Empyrean Isles'? But you see, jazz fans come from such a totally different cultural set-up. There's a bizarre thing there - fans are often highly educated, anti-dull values, anti-middle-of-the-road, anti-bourgeois but they're dealing with the culture of a people who haven't got a bourgeoisie to react against. It's hypocritical to want them to stay in our camp."

I squinted through the geyser of wig-bubbles and took the strain. "Are you saying we've dumped our cultural armature and our need for rebel heroes on the blacks, and that now they've stopped catering?"

"I think it's simpler than that. It's just a question of economics. Herbie getting into the charts — it doesn't mean anything to a white cultural gent because he's got so many representatives of his own culture who've done that. Not just in the music charts, but top of the political charts, economic charts. It's not an issue for us punters. There's no pride in it.

"But all these players we like and talk of with reverence for going through shit and sticking to what they do — if we really admit how alienated they were, we've got to be happy for them when they make it. If it means they're not going to play things we want to listen to. then tough shit."

"I can't see the crossover bands as up from slavery," I said. "They've just changed owners. If the white jazz fan paid their wages before, now it's an even more exploitative white capitalism calling the shots. A genuine black grass roots movement towards equality being

sidetracked into boutique blackness. Who got shafted by 'Shaft'?"



Robert laughed, sportively splashed a wave at my bowsprit. He knew the gambits of the stern New Englander.

"Take Cecil Taylor," he said. "He's from that very small minority, the posh black. He feels culturally comfortable — apart from his inner flame — secure in the knowledge that a despised avant-garde has a right to live. That's what sustains him."

"What about Albert Ayler then? He wasn't middle class." "Well, he didn't keep it up for very long did he? He was the first to do the funky chicken, for chrissake. He lost the confidence."

'New Grass', Robert was right. My frail craft was matchwood. I secured the line around my beret and trod water. "What about Coltrane then? He kicked aside enough plateaux of achievement and economic security to presuppose Hampstead parents in the background. Yet he was Deep South working class."

"I dunno," said Robert, but he did. "Coltrane seems to me of all of them the most functionally avant-garde, which is to say his notions were actually the most useable for future generations. He was so geared to what was absolutely necessary for the musicians to

know that he couldn't have felt he was on a minority, dilettante mission. You hear him and you know: this definitely has to be done. The community really needed what he had to offer. A lot of people do things that are wonderful but nobody else can make much use of them."

Rollins, he felt was contained wholly within jazz; Coltrane spread beyond. We indulged in a splash fight over that, a mere rockpool rumble before the great dive down into the depths of Coltrane's contribution.

"There were very specific problems that other kinds of music had too — a universal needs thing. Very crudely, if you base the solos on the chord changes per bar thing and then speed the pop song up to twice the speed for Bebop, then you've got changes going past too fast to sustain, the mood thing, the feeling of the richness of the chord. Coltrane simply opened out the bars so you could breathe.

"See, all the chords in Bebop were meant to be played much slower. It used to be film stars crooning those chord changes, that's what they were originally designed for. Coltrane found a way to breath again and not abandon any of the harmonic exploration either.

"I'm talking about it as someone who was involved in the first era of improvising rode things, and we got more practical text book usefulness off Trane than off the Beatles. He anticipated the inevitability of jazz-rock, the ostinato bass things, the dreaded modal business, anticipated largescale needs."

"And knowing he was onto that potent a panacea overrode his class origins," I gasped, dashing Robert's hair out of my eyes.

Even back on terra firma I haven't been able to quite dispel his theories and certainly none of his spell. Glasgow, Bristol and the East End Jewish community have supplied most of our jazzmen — here, the musician and the fan share a common class hostility. Monk's themes savour the taste of each chord, cast an indelible mood. Miles, not Trane, pioneered respiration in the solo through the modal scale.

. . . and I felt the tape line tauten on my cassette recorder as ROBERT WYATT plunged forward into the waves.

By BRIAN CASE



I FEEL a tug on the line Robert is off again. Through the doorway I can see Alfie, Robert's wife, kneeling on the carpet pinning a paper pattern to a length of cloth. Making him a chart of the ocean beds from Tierra del Fuego to Nova Zemblya.

"I was just reading a Blue Mitchell interview in *Downbeat*. He talks about going on the road with John Mayall. Now, he'd done all that with bands like Basie's and the Duke, but here, there's thousands of kids really fuckin' enjoying themselves! He'd never seen an audience like it! In the atmosphere he couldn't put a note wrong — in other words, play a lot of old rubbish, didn't have to play very well — they just MEANT something to that audience. He'd never been in a situation where it meant so much to that many people — the size, the sheer romance and enthusiasm of it!

"So Blue Mitchell goes home and starts making funky records. It's so understandable. I mean, if you spent years in places like Slugs playing to a muted, respectful response for peanuts — and then to be invited into this set-up, lots of kids, lots of bread and they're doing their nuts over you — what are you gonna say? I mean, apart from his music being important to him, his LIFE'S important to him! He's gonna feel his life isn't all it could be. Course he is. He's gonna feel like a nun who's had her first fella. No, I can't believe it's wrong."

"Except the music's boring."

"No, I don't think if he's really that good he'll do it for that long. You've got to give people two or three years to do their homework. Jazz musicians aren't like classical — he has to make his mistakes in public, and perform — no matter how fallow a period it is — to make his living. Not many can afford to woodshed. You can't be too precious in that economic climate — you gotta keep banging the stuff out. Meanwhile, that doesn't mean you're not growing and getting bored with the boring things, you know.

"Compared with classical, jazz has coped pretty well with the rock thing. The post-Cage and Stockhausen gang have made a pathetic showing. They've got so many hang-ups about excitement being a dangerous thing that you lose your taste. I've done a couple gigs Pieces for Chamber Orchestra and Rock Musician.'

"They got such a nervous way of coping with the constant two fingers of popular culture, like 'Oh yes, frankly I'd really like to conduct Shirley Bassey one day.' No idea. This is not the charm of somebody who's secure in one idiom and being broadminded about another — someone like Yehudi Menuhin, bit of Indian, bit of George Harrison — there's a lot of authentic charm there. The geezers I'm talking about really can't make that leap to sexy timekeeping."

"Sounds like a new curate getting in with the Angels." Like no no, Buzz — Palm Sunday is nothing to do with circle jerks.


Again and again he leaps from the waves . . .
Pic: JOE STEVENS

"I'm not in despair about the effect rock culture is having on jazz musicians,'' Robert affirmed, setting the achievements of Zawinul and Jarrett against "the latest funk-bore album by Al Mouzon" and balancing in the black. "I don't think that need to be part of the excitement can be harmful. Not in the long term."

"YOU HAD the roar of the greasepaint, Robert, the smell of the crowd — how do you cope with working in a room after that?"

For new readers, Robert Wyatt drummed for" Soft Machine, lost the use of his legs in an accident and is confined to a wheelchair. Did I say confined? Tarnation — he's off again!

"I think it's overcrude to say you need a live audience. I'm in the position of writers and painters who work on their stuff and then present it for response."

"Nothing shapes the work in progress but you?"

"Right. Plus your anticipation of the response and I do think that matters. Everything you do is in the hope that it matters, and a surefire way of knowing that is if other people pick up on it. One of your motives for doing anything creative is catered for, which is escape from loneliness. You've got all these things in your brain and you're lonely with them so you put them down and the end of the process is when someone picks them up.

"I miss the excitement, the buzz of expectation, the live thing about touring in Europe, but I've still got it in that they still buy records and write letters. If you fuck the next record up it's gonna hurt and embarrass a lot people. Anyway, your first audience has gotta be you, that's gotta be the first person who claps."

Has changing your instrument changed your musical ideas?"

"Hmm. It's a bit worrying in a sense because although drumming makes more noise, it's a pretty humbling thing for a musician to play. You're judged really as a catalyst. While you're drumming, someone else is dealing with the harmonic and melodic set-up. There's no way you could think it's all you. The communal thing is very useful — everything you do has to be met by something somebody else is doing, so that's good for the brain and keeps your ego in check. The nicest thing was that you could stop a lot and think 'I won't do all this stuff just because I'm sitting here and want something to do with my hands.

"Maybe it's a reflection on my drumming, but I used to think how nice things used to sound when I stopped playing. If you stopped filling everything in, leaving enormous spaces, the stage didn't in fact blow up, disintegrate. You can listen almost as an outsider the way no-one else in the group can. It's good for you NOT to make assumptions about how important you are."

Robert picks up his notebook again. "Now I'm dealing with the voice and the piano. I made notes about this: The Problems of Singing. Um — oh yes — I remember. The voice is accidentally something that pop music uses, so the impression is I'm doing more poppy things than I was before, but that's not the case. Singing is a lot to take on, harmonically, because I'm illiterate compared to the amount of available knowledge. I rely on intuition for what's a good note and what isn't — just hearing a chord and seeing what notes go with it I rely on my ears.

"Instrumentalists have this constant tactile reference for the instrument which actually extends them. In other words, a horn player is given ideas by the availability of notes. A singer has to hear everything before he can sing it, he can't do a run in fourths like an instrument, so he's behind generally in innovations. Its a lot more uphill for him, but he avoids the easy inevitability of his fingers falling on that next note — see, you can often almost tell what instrument a tune was composed on. The instrument itself encourages idead."

"So there's no way your technique will outstrip your ideas?" Me, using the voice.

"No" said Robert. "It's a good thing to keep him relevant. But singers have been sort of relegated and composers can't be bothered to write for them. If he's really ambitious in his harmonic ideas, he'll use something else. If he wants to communicate, get across, he'll choose a singer.

Everybody's got a voice, it's the one instrument that everybody plays. The embarrassing thing for me is the connotations — like if I sing 'Love,' they'll judge it by whether I mean it. I plead that's unfair. I dont want to be judged on whether I send shivers through their spine when I sing 'Love.' I'm interested in the notes."

"So why not do wordless singing?"

"The trouble with that is you find yourself going Uh Uh Uh and Oo Oo Oo. What's brilliant' about words is they do make all the noises of the mouth that you'd never think of. You've got all these consonants and vowels and dipthongs and stuff. You try and think of them without words and you're down to a vocabulary of four noises. Words liberate sound. They're a great textural help."

Words, I thought, reeling in the tape. Yards and yards of Robert improvising, arguing, joking, speculating, correlating, endlessly inventive.

I never found the harpoon.

Brian Case

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

Soft Machine 3 (BS 66436)

Soft Machine 4 (CBS 64280)

Matching Mole (CBS 64850)

Matching Mole's Little Red Record (CBS 65260)

Robert Wyatt . . . 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard', (Virgin 2034)

Wyatt . . . 'Rock Bottom' (Virgin V2017)

Michael Mantler . . . The Hapless Child' (Watt 4)

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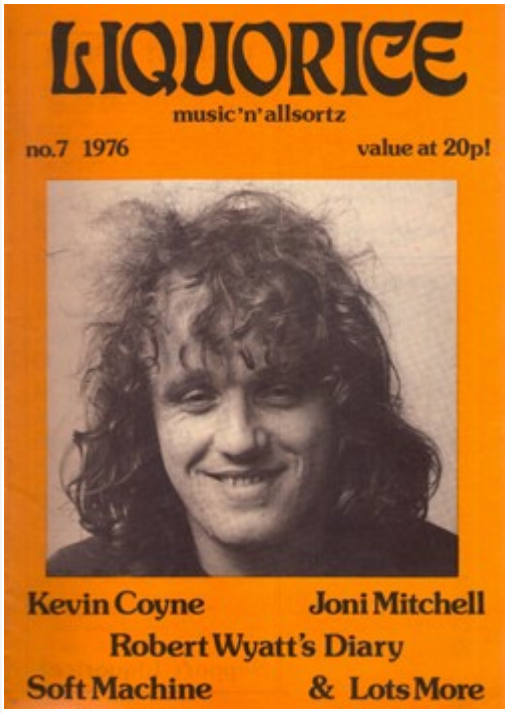
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HOME

The Flowers That Grow On The Compost Heap: a cock-eyed optimist's diary by Robert Wyatt - Liquorice - no.7 - 1976

Robert Wyatt and his Optimist's Diary

The Flowers That Grow



Even sooner than I expected, the 'rock generation' is churning out its John Waynes, Ronald Reagans and Shirley Temples. Steve Harley (who gets the 'purple prose' effect by painting blue meanies red) has revised the classic conundrum: "Nothing I say is true, therefore this statement is false, therefore... etc". He wags his finger at us, saying that Solzhenitsyn tells it like it is. So we turn eagerly to the Venerable S. who tells us, again with the emphatic wag of the trigger-finger, not to listen to arrogant, inexperienced young idealists. As circles go, this is one of the most vicious I've ever come across!

So almost everywhere I turn I seem to hear two generations warning us all against some bogey-man who is draining away our spiritual resources, leaving us morally bankrupt etc. They both regret some supposed lost age of innocence: the Young in a panic because even all Bruce Springsteen's publicity men can't put Bob Dylan's relevance and charisma back together again; the Old in an equally petulant panic because all those dirty coloured people (including miners who are after all only really white men between showers) who used to dig up and cut down our raw materials for us, seem to want a bit more than a pat on the head for their services these days.

The irrational impulse behind the Moan of the Rock Generation could be summarised: "It's no fun getting my Christmas stocking any more now the grown-ups have spoilt it all by revealing that Father Christmas was just daddy with a funny hat on".

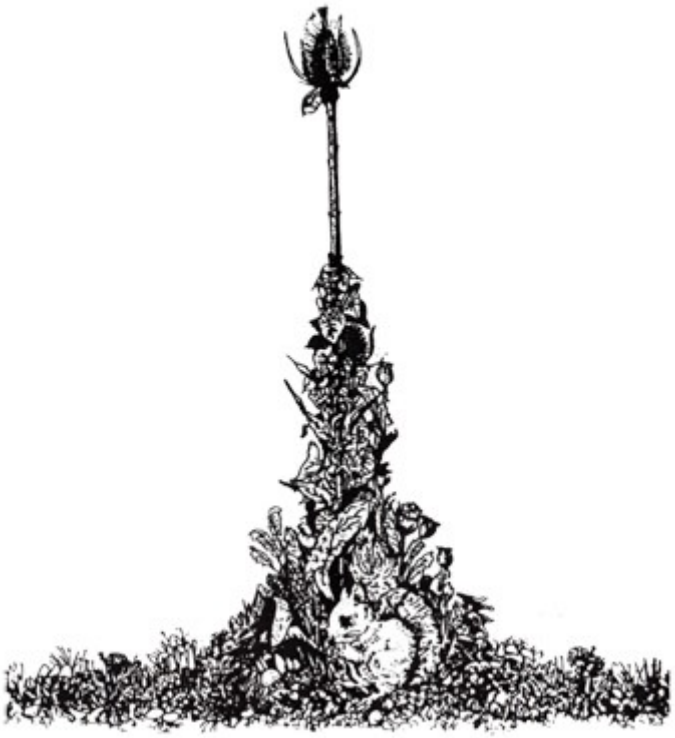
On The Compost Heap:

While the Great Parental Moan could be summarised: "Now my children have grown up, there is nobody to bring in the coal and do the household chores for us. It's not the same with the new maid, you have to pay her - mercenary bitch...". The result of this bizarre confluence of ' Ideaology backlash' victims is that we now find pop-stars and moderates (or right-wing extremists as they used to be called) desperately holding hands to defend the tattered remains of their spoils with only a tiny hand-ful of possessions (like their country retreats, their farmland, their newspapers, their banks, their church and their B.B.C.) to remind them of their former glory. It's a pathetic picture.

And what have all us commies, niggers, hippies, agitators and permissive whores to say for ourselves after all this trouble we've started? I decided to keep a Cock-eyed (no dirty puns intended) Optimist's Diary, in which I would record a random-ish sample of any events, however minor or apparently foolhardy, which gave hope to somebody, somewhere.

A.J.P. Taylor, an active participant in the General Strike That Never Happened, remarked recently, while reflecting on the miners' supporters defeat of the Tories in the '74 elections; "So we won, after all." To A.J.P's outrageously unfashionable cheerfulness, I dedicate the following brief selection from my diary...

a cock-eyed optimist's diary



1 Amnesty International, formed 15 years ago to put pressure on governments who use solitary confinement and torture as standard political tools against 'subversive' reformists etc, have obtained the release of everybody on their original lists, and continue to grow in influence, respected everywhere for their non-partisan approach; one of their most recent success stories being the release of Leonid Plyushch from Dniepropetrousk prison mental hospital.

2a Survival International help fund the Andoke tribe in Colombia, enabling them to pay off 'debts' to the all-powerful rubber-agents, and to become independent enough to purchase their own tools for rubber-collecting, and sell 'direct'.

2b S.I. get some medical protection for the Yaomami tribe of Southern Venezuela and Northern Brazil, suffering from previously unknown illnesses and infections brought in by white civilisation.

2c S.I. help Murvi-Muinane Indians withstand incursions of neo-Colombian society into the native environment.

2d S.I. help towards an integrated project for socio-economic development of the endemic people, with provisions included for animal conservation, on Siberut Island, West Sumatra, Indonesia.

2e S.I. try to assist relations between man and wildlife living at subsistence level in Greenland, Botswana and India, where the interests of man and wildlife sometimes seem to conflict.

2f S.I. help establish new alternatives in food acquisition for the endemic people of Siberut, and help to reduce the impact of white commercial interests related to timber extraction.

2g S.I. influence Paraguayan attitudes to their indigenous Indian population, away from the attitudes of social inferiority inflicted on the Indians because they are not identified as Christians, and help to create an atmosphere of concern for the future of all Amerindian groups.

3 South Africa's Progressive Reform Party demonstrated growing white disillusion with apartheid by winning an important by-election with a barrister who recently defended black students on "terrorism" charges.

4 Meanwhile back in Britain sex discrimination is banned in employment advertising. It's only a start but it's in the right direction...

5 Baroness Wootton and Gerald Gardiner Q.C. give remarkable T.V. interviews demonstrating that maturity and responsibility don't have to make people corrupt and/or cynical.

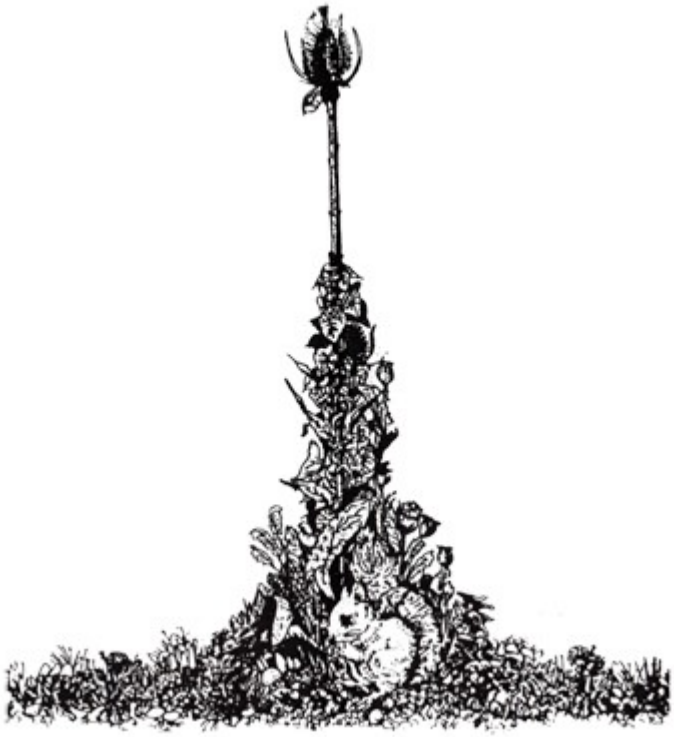
6 Prisoners help the blind: there's a recently established Braille unit at Aylesbury prison.

7 A new government report comes out firmly in support of Free Pop festivals. "Pop festivals are reasonable and acceptable forms of recreation", says the report, "not inherently objectionable or dangerous events".

8 It looks like the fall in the pound could be just what's needed for an export boom! British steel, for example, has flourished recently with such competitive prices.

9 The housing scheme in Blackburn seems to have really worked: they have a policy of renovating the better-built old houses and small shops, keeping neighbourhoods intact wherever possible.

10 Meanwhile - outside Liverpool - Runcorn is being studied by United Nations representatives as a model of new town building. The houses are small-scale, 'human' sized, in fact; buses have their own road; and there's plenty of grass - kids are allowed to play on it, too!



11 And the new Council homes in London's dockland at St.Katherine-By-The-Tower will be traffic-free, landscaped, and will also provide areas for children to play.

12 An export boom is forecast for Britain by Sir Frederick Catherwood, chairman of the British Institute of Management. He gives five reasons: a/the undervaluation of sterling; b/the new pay deal; c/growth of major export markets; d/secure membership of the B.E.C.; e/growing Trade Union realisation of the need for export-led growth.

13 Garfield Todd, former Prime-Minister of Rhodesia, released from prison at last. Now he can campaign more actively on behalf of the others...

14 British population decreased by around 9OOO last year. This should dispel any remaining fears of eventual overcrowding.

15 Get-rich-quick private abortionists lost 4O% business in early '76 compared with the same period last year. And the number of foreign women coming to Britain for abortions - the staple diet of teh private sector - dropped by well over half, as more liberal abortion laws were introduced in France and Germany.

16 Unemployment is down throughout Europe. An indication of the more optimistic mood of West European governments came when the Italian finance minister said he hoped it would be possible to end Italy's comprehensive import controls scheme earlier than its planned duration of three months.

17 Czechoslovakia's G.N.P. increased by 38% during the last five years. They have no unemployment.

18 Recent British Government legislation stops farm labourers being thrown out of cottages when too old or too ill to work.

19 FREGG (campaign for Free Range EGGs) getting organised against
the cruel (not to say tasteless) battery chicken system. Also an indication of the healthy fashion for small-scale home-grown food.

20 HABITAT studying cheap 'alternative technology' for use around the 'poor' world (most of the planet), taking easily available local resources into account. This 'self help' group, started in Stockholm, has been displaying its ideas in a special international gathering in Toronto - itself a model of trouble-free city planning for more affluent conditions. Speaking of which...



by Robert Wyatt

21 The Government of New South Wales is to be the next administration to legalise the private use of marijuana. Laws on soft drugs, homosexuality, prostitution and victimless crimes like vagrancy and drunkenness are all to be liberalised.

22 The notoriously high number of heart attacks in North Karelia being checked: project financed by Finnish government and the World Health Organisation has started to succeed partly by changing diet habits: more vegetables, less fatty meat.

23 A series of articles in a special report in the Grauniad on behalf of a secular, democratic Palestine. Case well and reasonably put.

24 The success of Bob Marley among others has paved the way for relatively large-scale acceptance of modern West Indian music in Britain.

25 3rd year pupils at Stewards Comprehensive School in Harlow, Essex, learning and performing Ghanaian dances taught by director of creative studies, Felix Cobbson. They may go to the Festival of Culture and Arts in Lagos, Nigeria, next year.

26 A government white paper on the working of the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969 contains first steps towards phasing out all remands of young people to adult prisons - and will, says the white paper, come into effect as soon as possible.

27 According to 'Psychiatry in Medicine' (Vol.7), the growing number of women doctors make better G.P.s than men: they tend to be more conscientious and thorough, as well as less irritable. And they are preferred by black and other ethnic groups.

28 Hunter Davies' book on Creighton Comprehensive School points out the unprecedented potential of the comprehensive system.

29 George Davis released to ecstatic welcome home in Bow.

30 Workers representing the 2OOO people of United Biscuits plant at Isleworth took their place alongside shareholders for the first time at the company's annual meeting in Edinburgh. The firm's participation policy was based on effective, cost-conscious, profit-oriented management, who recognised that they were more likely to be successful by embracing participation which leads to greater involvement and breaks down barriers.

31 No "War trials" bloodbath in Vietnam: old Southern soldiers going to polling booths with everyone else.

32 The film 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest' received loads of awards and has been on general release and shown in cinemas that normally only show 'uncontroversial' films.

33 Meanwhile (what a useful word that is) back in the U.S.A., Seminoles and Choctaws, remnants of a once-powerful South-Eastern group of Indians, start on the slow climb back to prosperity...

...music, curtain, lights...

- I'm glad to say this diary has no end -

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Friends of the Earth Limited, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DO.

Free Range Egg Scheme, 39 Maresfield Gardens, London NWS.

Survival International, 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NQ.

The Royal society For The Protection Of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire. SG19 2BR.

Amnesty International/British Section, 55 Theobalds Rd, London WC1,

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HOME

Mantler paints it black + Gorey stories - Melody Maker - April 17, 1976



Mantler paints it black

MICHAEL MANTLER/EDWARD GOREY: "The Hapless Child And



Other Inscrutable Stories " (Watt Records).
Music by **Michael Mantler**, words by **Edward Gorey**, with **Robert Wyatt** (vocals), **Carla Bley** (piano,clavinet, string synthesizer), **Terje Rypdal** (guitar), **Steve Swallow** (bass), **Jack DeJohnette** (drums). Produced by **Carla Bley**.

EDWARD GOREY is a New York cult figure, a 50-year-old eccentric wrapped in fur coats who specialises in desperately grim illustrated novels, mostly set in slightly surreal Victorian scenarios - genteel English landscapes where all ought to be well, but, where terrible things tend to happen to the noblest of families.

Michael Mantler is an ex-**Cecil Taylor** trumpeter turned composer who is married to Carla Bley. Together they run **Watt Records**. Now, all of Mantler's pieces have been distinguished by a harrowing bleakness. Pastel colours, it seems, don't figure in his palette. His favourites are apparently, dark red, grey and black.

One of Mantler's passions is creating a contemporary impressionist music to convey the nature of particular literary artists. Already, he's covered Samuel Beckett on " No Answer" (with some success) and is currently dealing with Harold Pinter. But a Mantler-Gorey collaboration seems singularly apposite. Since each is as miserable as the other, the resultant album plumbs new gloomy depths. I suppose it's a telling comment on my own character that I like " The Hapless Child" very much.

Some story synopses are required. The title tracks tells the tale of a child called Charlotte Sophia, whose mother, believing her husband killed in action in Africa, dies of a broken heart. Charlotte is put into a boarding school where she's punished for things she hasn't 'done. Her favourite doll is torn limb from limb. She runs away, collapses on the street, is robbed and sold into the service of a drunken brute who forces her to make artificial flowers in a dark basement. Her eyesight fails. The brute goes mad. Charlotte runs out into the street where she is struck down by a car driven by her own father, who has returned from

Africa, not dead after all. The child dies in his arms.



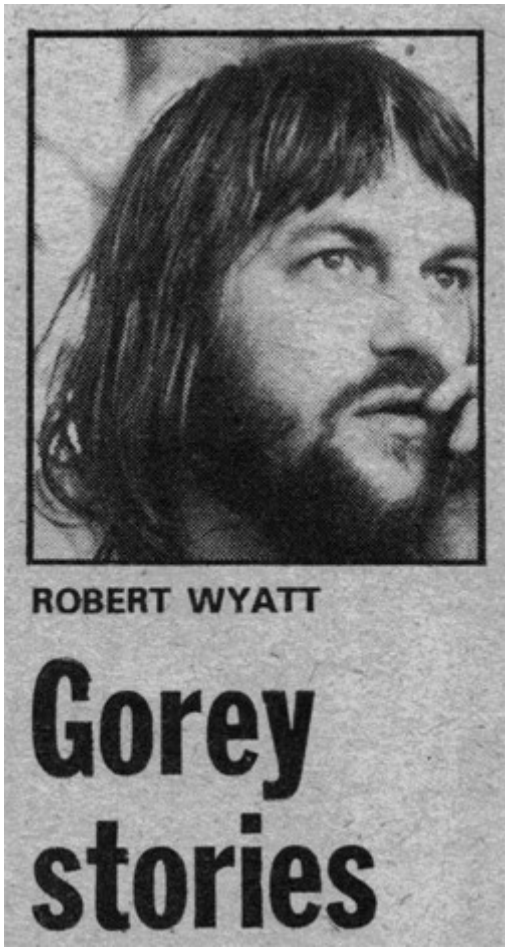
ROBERT WYATT: his most creative vocal work

Heart-rending stuff, you'll agree, though not as terrifying as the story of Millicent Frastley, an unfortunate little girl sacrificed to "The Insect God." Or as mysterious as " The Sinking Spell," an enigmatic visitation that sinks from the heavens. The only light relief, of sorts, is found in " The Doubtful Guest " - the adventures of a rather engaging, plimsolled monster

who attaches himself to a family and wreaks mild havoc. Since all the lyric matter is comprised of complete Gorey stories, some written in verse form, some not, a singer of very special talents is required, and Robert Wyatt, it must be said, does amazingly well with material that, to me, still looks completely impossible to sing. I might even go as far as to claim this as the most creative vocalising Wyatt has yet put on record - and that, as you know, is saying much. But it isn't just the dexterity with which he sings, or the brilliant voice overlaps on, say, " The Object-Lesson," it's also the very *naturalness* of his singing that makes him the perfect choice here. Robert's voice, with lisp and accent intact in their transference to song, doesn't employ the usual mannerisms that are supposed to convey emotion in rock music. And nasty stories delivered completely dispassionately are the most unsettling nasty stories of all, believe me.

Meanwhile, Terge Rypdal's guitar, which is concerned almost exclusively - with conveying choked emotion (at least in the context of his own albums) rambles throughout "The Hapless Child" like a chorus of women wailing on the edge of hysteria. And obviously the rhythm tracks laid down by Bley, Swallow and the ridiculously accomplished DeJohnette, are thoroughly sound. Add up those factors and " The Hapless Child" emerges as an extremely impressive album, probably an important one. At the same time, it's scarcely a record to play at parties. Music by, and for, depressives. There are probably enough of us around to put " The Hapless Child " in the chart.

S.L.



ROBERT WYATT

Gorey stories

AS Steve Lake remarks elsewhere in this issue, in his review of " The Hapless Child And Other Inscrutable Stories," the collaboration between composer Michael Mantler and Edward Gorey, the author and illustrator of the singularly macabre stories upon which the aforementioned album is based, is most apposite.

Who better than Mantler - the man who set to music Samuel Beckett's How It Is - to translate the vivid pictorial landscapes of Gorey, a renowned New York eccentric and cult figure who delights in creating situations infected with surreal menace and paranoia.

According to Carla Bley, who eventually took over the project and produced the album, Manlier had for some time been considering adapting the screenplay of Alain Resnais' Last Year In Marienbad (or possibly his Hiroshima Mon Amour).

She was In Europe touring with the short lived Jack Bruce Band when Mantler decided finally upon the Gorey stories.

Within a month of discovering Gorey's work Mantler apparently, had selected six specific stories and composed all the music and recorded the demos which he then handed over to Bley who set about forming an ad hoc band for the final recordings.

Jack DeJohnette (drums) and Steve Swallow (bass) were she says, automatic choices. The original selection for the vocal part was Jack Bruce, who had worked with Manlier on " No Answer " (the Beckett adaptation).

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Wyatt, whose vocal performance on " The Hapless Child" is not only one of the most compelling features of an extraordinary album but also the most impressive vocalising he has ever committed to record, admits candidly that he was completely alarmed when he was originally asked to contribute to the project.

" It was so bloody complicated," he says of Mantler's score, "and I honestly didn't think I was capable of singing the part." He has, however, captured perfectly the sense of perpetual fright and surprise which is a characteristic of Gorey's victims.
He was drawn immediately to Gorey, he admits, because he finds him to be such a humourous writer.

It comes as no surprise, finally, to discover that Mantler's current project is based on Harold Pinter's play Silence, or that Robert will be singing one of the principal roles. The record is almost complete, adds Bley, who will also be taking a vocal lead. The only problem lies with the availability of Alex Harvey, who will sing the part of the third character in the play.

Alex is currently working on a new S.A.H.B. album and is set to tour Europe in the next few weeks. " If he can't make it before then," says Carla with a hint of desperation, "I don't know what we'll do ... it'll put the entire project back ten years."

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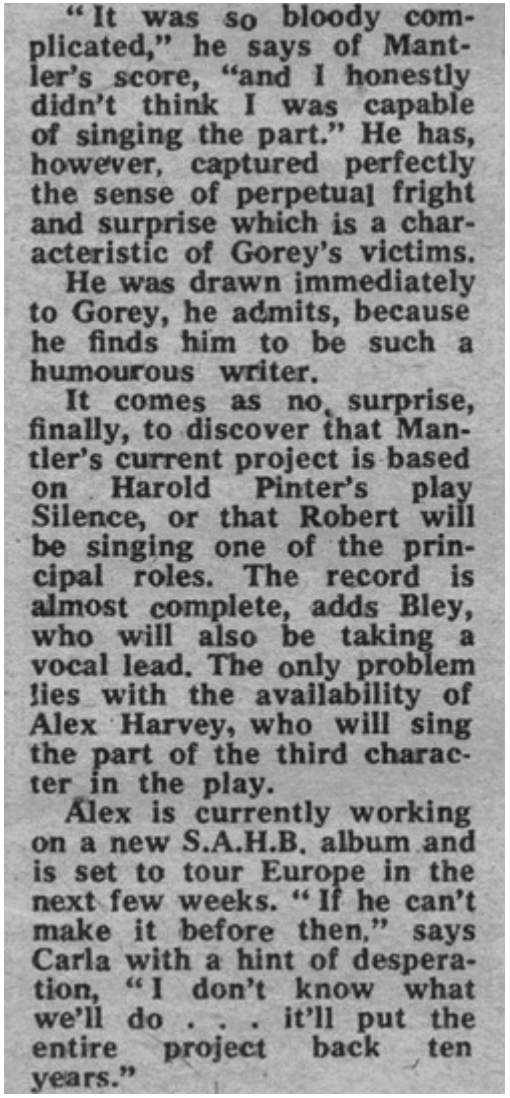
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The real Back to Africa movement stars here - Street Life - March 30-April, 2, 1976

The real Back to Africa movement starts here

by Robert Wyatt



The original idea was for Robert Wyatt to write a tribute to Mongezi Feza, the black South African trumpeter who died at the end of last year; in the event, it seemed that the best tribute to Mongezi would be to talk about his friends and compatriots who are still alive and playing in Britain, and who are also subject to the pressures which killed him. An interview with Louis Moholo, a tribute to Mongezi, a celebration of music that "Britain doesn't know it's got ... "

WHILE preparations were being made to have the body of trumpeter Mongezi Feza flown back home to South Africa for burial (there were some difficulties withe S.A. Customs officials!), some of his friends recorded a memorial performance ("We asked Island records if they could just let us have any spare room with a piano for a few hours") soon to be released on the Ogun record label. Dudu Pukwana on alto of course; pianist Chris McGregor on a brief visit from his place in France; bassist Johnny Dyani, also fresh from working on the continent (he stayed long enough to record another tape with Pete Lemer and Laurie Allan before returning to the relatively appreciative audiences of Scandinavia, etc.) and drummer Louis Moholo. Louis was just about to leave for Venice to play with Keith Tippett and Peter Kowald when he talked to me about the years with Mongezi Feza, and the situation is survivors find themselves in.

These, include Julian Bahula, bassists Victor Ntoni and Ernest Mohle, guitarist Lucky Ranky, and Louis himself, of course. He's been playing with Mike Osborne, with alto player Peter Bennink (Han Bennink's brother) and Evan Parker, Various groups in Holland, Germany,

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"I would say that we're practising in England, but working on the continent . . . Britain doesn't know what it's got."

So, what brought these musicians so far from home in the first place? Knowing that Louis has relatives in South Africa whom he hopes to see later on in the year, I had to avoid asking him any questions of a 'provocatively' political nature, for the obvious reason that I don't want to make his life any more difficult than it is already.

"In order for us (Mongezi, Dudu, etc.) to play together with Chris (McGregor) in South Africa Chris would come to a gig wearing a cap and hide his white skin by pulling his cap right down almost al over his face! But this trick was impossible the other way round — you couldn't hide us in places where whites were playing. We managed to dodge around, playing together, but we knew we wouldn't get away with it for long. Early on the S.A. Government were not that much hip to jazz — they never thought anything of it, you know — but later they caught on. If they had have caught on earlier that would have made it harder — it was getting worse when we split. Just like in the States in the old days — some white cats would be using a black musician, but he would be playing behind a curtain!

"Everybody hears 'kwela' (the folk / dance music of the African townships) on the radio, but it's the 'kwela' the white man likes — you see? It's got nothing to do with us, in a way. Hugh Masakela's music is still really kwela deep down — the one that the people know — I like the way he treats his kwela.

"But if you come in the radio studio with the original kwela then the guy in the studio will say, 'No . . . No, . . . Not That . . .!' .

"The first group we played in professionally was (tenor player) Ronnie Beer's. I remember . . . we played with him and I was arrested — my pass was fucked up, you know — and I went to jail. At the same time there was a festival in Johannesburg; by luck, Chris came to Cape town. He heard Ronnie Beer preparing for the festival and asked: 'Where is Louis?' I was in jail, that was it. But Chris started finding out if there was any fine . . . One afternoon my name was called — and I was out! Into a car, off to rehearsals, and on to the Johannesburg festival.

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"We had Mongezi, Dudu, Johnny Dyani and a tenor player called Nick Moyaki. We were playing mainly Dud's charts — he was composing about six tunes a day! Also we were very influenced by the voicings and sound of Duke (Ellington).

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"But at first when we — Johnny Dyani, Dudu, Mongs — when we wanted to sit in (with American musicians), have a play, the guys would say 'Where do you come from?' 'South Africa.' 'What?' 'I come from South Africa.' Then the guys just wouldn't be interested, they'd figure, South Africa is the jungle, right? There couldn't possibly be any jazz happening there! We'd be pleading: 'Please, can we just have a sit in?' Then, in the end, five days later they'd say: 'O.K. have a blow.' and then you'd blow their arses off, you know?

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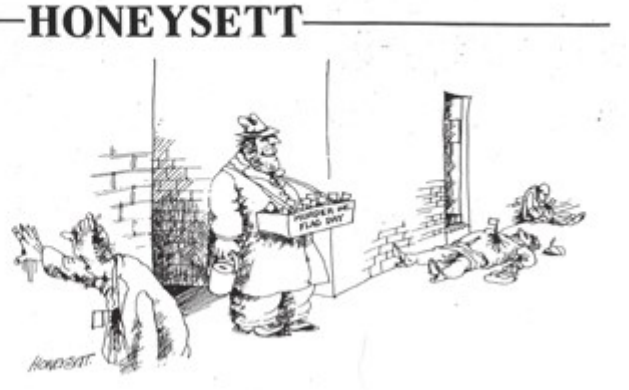
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The Evolving Hymn: Illustrated by Her - Words by Robert Wyatt: Paintings by Alfreda Benge - Street Life - N° 6 Vol. 1 - January 10-23, 1976

The Evolving Hymn: Illustrated by Her

Words by Robert Wyatt: Paintings by Alfreda Benge



Oh Natural Selection, Evolve A While With Me

"Honour thy mistake as a hidden intention" — Brian Eno.

THE EVOLVING HYMN

Oh God, He so comprehensive. He see every sparrow what fall. 'There go another sparrow', He say, 'or war it a thrush? It's hard to tell from up here'. He very well meaning, He on everyone side (but reluctantly plump for the winner-take-all approach).

'Oh Natural Selection
Oh Natural Selection
Oh Natural Selection
Evolve A. While With Me'



We can drink our politics away, starting in the middle of the day we can drink our politics away.

"What we feel we have to solve is why the dregs have not dissolved" — Peter Blegvad.

SIGNED CURTAIN

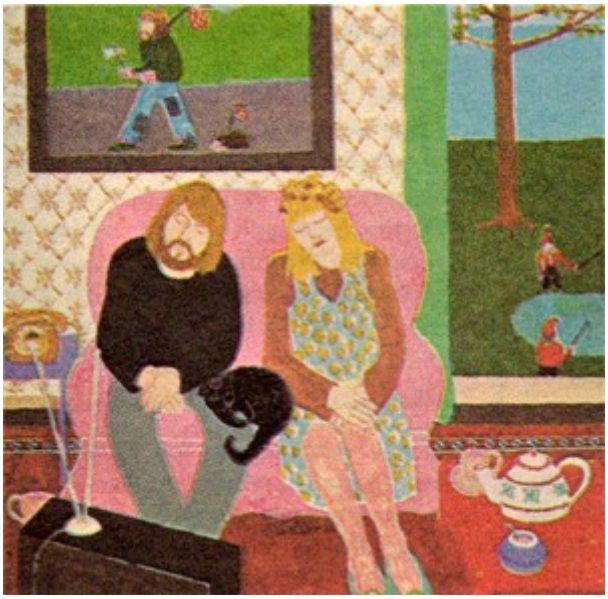
This is the first verse, this is the first verse, this is the first verse, this is the first verse, this is the first verse, this is the first verse and this is the chorus, or perhaps it's a bridge or just another part of the song that I'm singing.
This is the second verse, it could be the last verse, this is the second verse, it could be the last verse, this is the second verse, it's probably the last one; and this is the chorus, or perhaps it's a bridge or just another key change.
Never mind, it doesn't hurt, it only means that I've lost faith in this song, 'cause it won't help me reach you.

"... He passed on to the Statue of Corrupted Endeavour to await the arrival of Autumn" — Edward Gorey.

GLORIA GLOOM

Like so many of you, I've got my doubts about how much to contribute to the already rich among us. How long can I pretend that music's more relevant than fighting for a socialist world?

Someone watching us knows I'm bad. Black plastic along blue black wall, small square (for faces) where dead men can look through. Run along and see the prison bath; throw a stone along an empty road; you and your friend will be found.
Outside the daydream I've woken up to watch you sleep.


In the garden of England, dead moles lie inside their holes

SEA SONG

You look different every time you come from the foam created brine (it's) your skin, shining softly in the moonlight. Partly fish, partly porpoise, partly baby sperm whale, am I yours, are you mine to play with? Joking apart, when you're drunk you're terrific when you're drunk, I like you mostly late at night — you're quite all right. But I can't understand the different you in the morning, when it's time to play at being human for a while. Please smile!
You'll be different in the Spring, I know you're a seasonal beast like the starfish that drift in with the tide, with the tide. So until your blood runs to meet the next full moon, your madness fits in nicely with my own, with my own, your lunacy fits neatly with my own, my very own. We're not alone.

"Don't go madam ... we get better" — Ronnie Scott.

LAST STRAW

Seaweed tangled in our home from home reminds me of your rocky bottom. Please don't wait for the paperweight; err on the good side, touch us when we collapse.
Into the water we'll go head over heel; we'll not grow fat inside the mammary gland. Into the water we'll go head over heel; a head buried behind me deep in the sand.

' I like that Daddy, it doesn't make me boring" — Chloe Mason.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD HITS THE ROAD

Orlandon't tell me oh no! Don't say, oh God don't tell me ... or dear me, heavens above, oh no, no, I can't stand it ... stop, please, oh deary me, what in heaven's name . . . ? Oh blimey, mercy me, woe are we, oh dear . . . oh stop it .". . stop it ...
You've been so kind I know, I know, so why did I hurt you? I didn't mean to hurt you. But I'll keep trying and I'm sure you will too.

"I have to go now because I have to climb a mountain" — Hugh Hopper.

TEAM SPIRIT

Kick me Hardy; without one sweet push from your shine covered boot I don't think, I just know I'll be grounded for ever more; over turn me, you can hardly miss me, I'm the one face down in the mud on the ground. I'll be stuck here forever unless you come over and kick me Hardy. I'm the best football you have got, I beat the lot, I'll take the cake. Be masterful, be my hero and believe me Hardy,
if it's tough you want then it's tough you've got. I mean, if this is only a question of toughness, survive me Hardy or deflate me straight away. Beating the shit out of me takes the hell out of you. If I'm nothing without you then why stick it out? You can pass me over, but I'm the only chance you've got. If you asked me, here's my advice: use me to go hell for leather and back.
Kick me Handy; without one push from your shine covered boot I don't think, I just know I'll be grounded for ever more; over turn me, you should just be thankful (that) when it comes to the crunch I'm the best of the bunch. At the end of the day you could easily say that I come in handy. I'm the best football you have got, I beat the lot, I'll take the cake. Be masterful, be my hero and be grateful Handy.

"Loneliness is a gift from heaven" — James Thurber.



Into the water we'll go, head over heel

LITTLE RED ROBIN HOOD HITS THE ROAD

In the garden of England, dead moles lie inside their holes; the dead end tunnels crumble in the rain underfoot (innit a shame?). Can't you see them? Can't you see them? Roots can't hold them, bugs console them.
I fight with the handle of my little brown broom, I pull out the wires of the telephone, I hurt in the head and I hurt in the aching bone. Now I smash up the telly with remains of the telephone, I fighting for the crust of the little brown loaf — I want it, I want it, I want it ... give it to me. I give it you back when I finish the lunchtea.
I lie in the road, try to trip up the passing cars; yes, me and the hedgehog we bursting the tyres all day. As we roll down the highway

towards the setting sun I reflect on the life of the highwayman yum yum.
Now I smash up the telly and what's left of the broken phone.

"... you and I, we could give up our jobs and go, we could leave all our commitments here, if we wanted to. I think. Well. I think we could. I think we could . . . well, maybe." — Fred Frith.

MUDDY MOUTH

Relatively used to coping with the darkness underground, Cub and Brownie blink as they emerge. Overhead the stars are piercing, glaring on their new home — wasted jungle, crowded with dead trees. What do cubs and brownies do at night after a boring day? Shine their boots and practice tying knots? No of course not! After school they play hide and seek, chase each other, clutching in the dark.
What do Ann and Handy do after a long, exhausting shift? Clean the spades and clear away the dirt? No of course not! Usually they lie down in the mud close together, just to save on heat.
Work is split up, but it gets harder every day, it's never done. Call it peaceful. Call it grinding the time away. Say that ditches aren't homely. Call it boredom. Either way Ann decides to potter off. How's that for brains?
Deep in the undergrows, Handy sighed with relief. He'd come alone in the dark — he'd come again at dawn, if not before the morning cockrise. Meanwhile in the bushes above, behind the toepath which goes along beside the canal leading to the sea, which in turn leads on to all the major oceans — Indian, Atlantic, Pacific, I can't remember the names of the others off-Handy cided to leave. He'd come apart at the seam — endangered life and lawn order before, the more since he lies (even under oaf Handy lies) when he feels caught between righand wrong. I think he might have been wrong this time, which in turn left him with few alternatives to relieving himself by hand, alone in the dark, wanking in the bog.

"What a cunt he turned out to be" — Laurie Allan.

STRUBBLIN' STRIFE



How long can I put it ?

Strubblin' strife, strubblin' strife, Ola Ya Ya Mama, Ola Ya Ya Mama. Me been a senstibule, considulate, fabaloofly greeny, often a parsley. Me Goota Goota, not say 'Freg' — No! No! No! Not sing him 'Freg'. Oh my Goddy Goddy, Deary little God-God.
Hooooooooooooooooooooooo
nabbin my winksey?
Who heeeeeeeeeeeee da breake ma pamererarm?
Crackle Crackle.
De Bay-con. De Sossinks.
Gone astray, gone astray. If you Goddy light I gone astray. De road turn blue, de road turn green, where my cow gone, where she been? De house turn black, de house bend and break, de house squash my Unhappamily. O no! Oh No! My Unhappamily.
Oh God, He so comprehensive, He see every sparrow what fall. 'There go another sparrow', He say, 'or war it a thrush? It's hard to tell from up here'. He very well meaning, He on everyone side (but reluctantly plump for the winner-take-all approach).

'Oh Natural Selection
Oh Natural Selection
Oh Natural Selection
Evolve A While With Me' "I'll smoke to that" — Brian Case.

ALL SONGS by Robert Wyatt. 'Signed Curtain' is from the album 'Matching Mole'; 'We Can Drink Our Politics Away' and 'Gloria Gloom' from 'Matching Mole's Little Red Record'; all published by Soft Machine Publishing Company/MCPS. 'Sea Song,' 'Last Straw,' 'Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road' and 'Little Red Robin Hood Hits The Road' are from 'Rock Bottom'; 'Team Spirit'and 'Muddy Mouth'are from 'Ruth Is Tranger Than Richard'; all published by Virgin Music (Publishers) Ltd. 'Stubblin' Strife' and 'The Evolving Hymn' are new songs, as yet unrecorded. They will be published by Virgin Music (Publishing) Ltd.

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When In Rome... - Sounds - July 12, 1975

WHEN IN ROME...

... you have to adjust to Italian politics, especially when you're putting on a free rock concert. Virgin chief Richard Branson found out the hard way when three of his group appeared at a Rome concert last weekend. STEVE PEACOCK is wise the event.



SOMEWHERE between 40,000 and 60,000 people (methods of head counting at free concerts are pretty rudimentary) were milling in Rome's Piazza Navona last weekend, but the music had stopped. Henry Cow and Robert Wyatt don't normally take a half-time interval.

Somebody had trod on the power cable that stretched halfway across the square from the stage and pulled it out of its connection on the wall of a public building. (Methods of supplying electricity at free concerts can be pretty rudimentary as well.)

The power was reconnected, and the set was finished. Gong followed, and members of Gong and Henry Cow joined together for a finale. Virgin people, says chief Virgin Richard Branson, have long had a large and enthusiastic following in Italy. The crowd was large and the reception enthusiastic.

Graspers

I enjoyed the Cow/Wyatt set, which was much the same as their recent New London Theatre concert but played with a mite less intensity. Robert was less than overjoyed, mainly because he couldn't hear himself sing. He didn't join the finale. I enjoyed Gong less, though more than I usually enjoy them. Since David Allen's retirement they have become more shaped, perhaps more formal. But Steve Hillage looked uncomfortable in the role of front man and they sounded more stylised than stylish. Their ovation was loud and warm. Italy has named one of her main music papers Gong, said Branson proudly. Another is called Muzak. After Mike Oldfield? He sighed - maybe he'd heard it before.

However, the critic in me was off-duty most of the time in Rome. The music played was important, but mostly for the fact that it was played at all. The last time Italy saw non-Italian bands on stage was in March when Lou Reed and String Driven Thing played Milan. Missiles were hurled at the performers, promoters were branded as opportunist graspers, robbing the people to line their own nests, and a fire hose was turned on the riot police.

The notion of music performed for no charge, so prevalent in Germany and France in recent years, resulted in Italian promoters shutting up shop (certainly as far as international tours went). Rome's first major concert in a year was organised and partly financed by a coalition of the political Left and what it used to be acceptable to call the Underground. There was no charge to the consumers, but Richard Branson didn't exactly get in for nothing.

A COUPLE of months ago, a representative of the Left / Underground organisation Stampa Alternativa asked Virgin if they would be interested in supplying groups for a concert in Rome. In some senses it would be a test case (the Communist Party in Italy had approached Stampa's Ellio Donate to organise a series of concerts for them from September) and it would also be a celebration of Rome's continuing movement towards the left. Last month's gains for the Communists in regional elections all over the country emphasised that movement. Stampa raised about £1,000 towards the costs of the concert: Virgin agreed to provide the groups, and although the concert would be a co-promotion between Stampa and Muzak magazine, it would be underwritten by Virgin and its Italian licensee, Dischi Ricordi, to the tune of £1,500 each. The total cost would therefore be £4,000, which would cover the expenses, and pay what Richard Branson describes as "a small fee" to the musicians.

Idealism

At this point it might be an idea to underline some differences between Britain and Italy - particularly to explain the seemingly incongruous relationship between hippy/left idealism and a capitalist-dominated, often extraordinarily selfish rock business. In Britain, the idealism of the late Sixties appears to have faded into apathy inspired as much by idols with feet of clay and eyes on the tax havens as by direct opposition.

If there was ever any foundation for the idea that stamping your feet to rock bands as you waved a funny cigarette was a political act, it certainly ceases to have that implication when rock music and exotic cheroots are de rigueur at smart Hampstead dinner parties, and record company executives wear denims and keep a stash in the cocktail cabinet while they wheel and deal just like the boys in shiny suits.

Also the very idea of declaring yourself communist in a country run by what is, by European standards, a slightly right of-centre coalition in everything but name, where mild Lefties like Tony Benn are attacked as dangerous Commie firebrands, is enough to get you certified as loony, or merely laughed out of polite society.



● HENRY COW: *in Rome's Piazza Navona last weekend during the free concert*

Italy is different. Since the war, no political party has won a big enough share of the nation's vote to have an overall majority and the country has been governed by a coalition of centre parties, led by the Christian Democrats. The Communist party despite a large share of the vote, have been in opposition all the time. Whatever their share of the vote, they have not had a share in the Government.

That is still the position, but all the signs are that things must change soon. The first serious crack in the centre coalition's grasp on power came last year when the country voted against the Government's strongly-held beliefs and decided in favour of divorce - quite a radical step in a country which houses the Roman Catholic church's chief command post. Then, in last month's regional elections, the Communist party increased their share of the vote to become the strongest party in most of Italy's major cities. National elections aren't due until 1977 but the Left is now trying to force them forward.

The swing to the left has been dramatic: it is partly because of disenchantment with the ruling government and a reaction against its failures (high unemployment and inflation, inefficient social services, and so on), but there is another very important factor. The voting age has recently been lowered to 18. And we're back with rock music again.

A good percentage of the people who took up the jubilant chant "Roma E Rossa" outside the Communist Party headquarters in Rome's Piazza San Giovanni after the elections was probably also present among those who applauded Gong, Robert Wyatt and Henry Cow in the Piazza Navona last weekend. The apathy and cynicism which overtook Britain's underground / left / youth movements as the Sixties ended has not yet taken hold on Italy. Or perhaps radical ideas have taken on a new life. Certainly, it seems that a lot of the people who espouse radical politics in Italy are also those who listen to rock bands. And they are not people - who would take kindly to the British habit of accepting a role as Kids who are out to be Entertained with new Product. Hence the revolt against rock capitalism which stopped rock concerts for a year, and hence the banners under which rock music came back to Rome in the shape of a free concert last weekend.



● ROBERT WYATT: with Dagmar of Henry Cow in vocal attendance

Marijuana

NOW WE'RE doing the funky paradox: we left Richard Branson with a reasonable deal - a free concert, organised by the Left in defiance of capitalist promoters and associated business interests, but subsidised to the tune of £3,000 by capitalist record companies.

Virgin may demonstrate enlightened capitalism at work, but it is capitalism nonetheless. Dischi Ricordi is a large, independent Italian record company, also functioning as part of and in support of a capitalist economy. The irony of the situation seems unimportant as long as the compromise works. Rome gets the music free and presumably the record company gets its promotion and goodwill - or whatever. Just like Hyde Park, right?

Five minutes before Branson left to catch his flight to Rome, and some while after the groups had set out, a message arrives at Virgin from Dischi. It claims that Stampa Alternativa and Muzak are using the event to publicise causes with which Dischi does not wish to be associated - principally, a campaign to legalise marijuana in Italy. Dischi says it will not pay its share of the costs. Branson replies that it's too late to hack out now and boards his flight.

In Rome, he does his best to persuade Dischi Ricordi's executives to reconsider; to keep to their side of the bargain. He threatens to pull the bands out and effectively cancel the concert, but he knows quite well what he'll do if they still refuse. Virgin will pay their share as well, and Branson will return to London £3,000 lighter instead of the anticipated £1,500.

Justification

That's exactly what he had to do. The Italian record company remained adamant in its refusal to support the concert while it embraced the legalise marijuana slogan. Branson was angry, but admitted that Dischi had a point. The drugs thing was only part of it. Branson and Virgin happen to be in sympathy with that anyway, and once planned to organise a similar event in Britain.

What gave Dischi greater justification for pulling out was that the organisers appeared to be trying, to make political capital out of the event by disregarding the financial contribution the record companies were making. Speeches were made and leaflets were distributed in which it was claimed that the event proved that rock could flourish for free, without the help of capitalist businessmen. They implied that the cost of the concert had been covered by what

the Left had raised and contributed.

Branson wasn't exactly thrilled with that one either, but he tried to persuade Dischi that, having promised the money in the first place, they should cough up and then hold a press conference to explain their side of it and point out that the concert needed the capitalist money to take place. He failed.

DOING THE funky paradox, part two: "I'll feel a bit silly going up there and singing 'Arise work men and seize the future' - they've already done it," mused Robert Wyatt. Not quite, they haven't.

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Ruth, Richard, and Robert... - Melody Maker - June 14, 1975

Ruth, Richard, and Robert...

ROBERT WYATT is reclining comfortably against a generous supply of pillows and cushions like a bearded Buddha, surrounded by evidence of domestic tranquility and convenience.

His lady, Alfie, makes tea, Florence Mutt dozes peacefully at the foot of the bed, and Mr Wyatt, with considerable skill, evades questions about his most recent artistic endeavour, "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard".

It seems, initially, that Robert is suffering from some kind of post-natal depression after delivering this, his second album, in under a year, and he's using the conversation to excise some personal doubts which have been undermining his confidence in both himself and, by implication, the new work.

" I just don't seem to function as a professional musician," he begins. " I haven't seemed to establish any kind of working procedure or recording procedure or writing procedure.

" It seems to me that I know less and less what it is I'm actually attempting to do as I get

Robert Wyatt's new album 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard' seems certain to get a favourable reception— yet its creator seems unwilling to talk about it. ALLAN JONES tries to pin him down...



older... You know, I watch lots of singers turn out album after album, and I marvel at their continued interest in their own voice.

" They seem to sustain a remarkable interest, which is really quite sensible, I suppose... It's just that the more my interests in music develop, the more they seem to develop away from my own personal potential."

His own voice, he says, horrifies him. He'll try treating it in various ways to extend its possibilities (" it's one of my favourite ways of keeping myself awake"), but it's still a personal relief whenever the focus is directed away from his voice to another instrument.

" It is strange, really, because in theory it is my favourite instrument, because it's the only one that everybody's got. You use it all day in conversation and it's a very interesting instrument. We've all got our own version of it."

Of the way he's manipulated his voice on say, " Solar Flares " (on the new album), he says, yes it was encouraging to discover he could create something satisfactory without relying entirely upon the assistance of other musicians.

It's at about this point in the conversation, when one is being lulled into a false sense of security, that one suddenly realises that all this is something of a diversionary tactic.

One wouldn't, perhaps, have imagined Wyatt to be unduly apprehensive about the impending reaction to " Ruth Is...," even though it does come as successor to the brilliant " Rock Bottom."

THERE may be something of that in Wyatt, but it would be closer to the truth and no exaggeration to suggest that he would rather talk about anything (from Andre Breton to Barry White as he does later) than about his own work.

Phil Manzanera described him as being in a particularly anti-guitar mood at the time of recording " Ruth Is ..." (not that " Rock Bottom " could be described as paradise for a Robin Trower freak). Even as casual a remark as this sets Robert off at another tangent.

" I look at the pop polls, you know, and I see awards for top guitarists and singers . . . and then I see trombones, trumpets, oboes, flutes, ocarinas, and they're all listed under Miscellaneous Instruments... And I think to meself, in me own quiet way, 'Oh, really? That's interesting. So much for the last few hundred years of music.'

Robert scratches his head, lights another cigarette and settles back. " It was," he begins squinting through the smoke," harder to cope with this album psychologically because I was almost convinced that I'd never record another one. There was no immediate motivation.

"Then I thought, well, it really is time to start another album. It seemed my job in a sense. I'm a fake Communist, you see, and I believe that everybody has a job in the community, on whatever level they're working."

He looks as if he'd rather be someplace other than this as he explains.

" And I think my, er, job is to record tunes... sometimes. Unfortunately, I can go a year or more without feeling any compulsion to commit myself to a particular bunch of tunes or any particular set of treatments...

" Before ' Rock Bottom ' I hadn't had a chance for a long time to record, or do anything at all, so a great deal of frustration accumulated and with that album it was like turning on a tap and letting it all run out.

" Since doing that I've resumed my inhibited self-conscious state of mind, whereby I find it difficult to do anything at all." A disarming smil does nothing to alleviate the seriousness of that pronouncement.

STILL, we can't linger. " Rock Bottom," he concedes was — in that it was a most private selection of songs and insights of a particularly autobiographical nature — the least self-conscious of his records.

" The thing is that 'Rock Bottom ' relied more on my voice than anything I'd done before, and anything which relies on the voice is communicated very directly to other people, and they react to it very personally.

" An idea played on the voice, therefore, automatically becomes, or seems, more personal than the same idea played on another instrument...

" The idea, basically, was just to make a nice record, not to explain to the world what a terrible time I was having. For me, the words and the ideas... there's simply no possible excuse for making them public unless there are some nice tunes to go with them. So, the ' meaning ' is actually less important to me than making something pleasant to listen to. "

Long silence. But, Robert,- isn't that REALLY only your old self-consciousness coming back after the act?

" Yes. But even so, I've always thought that the whole bit about self-expression is a little misleading. I don't hold any particular faith in the notion of expressing yourself and thinking that you can actually communicate to other people something which is private and personal.

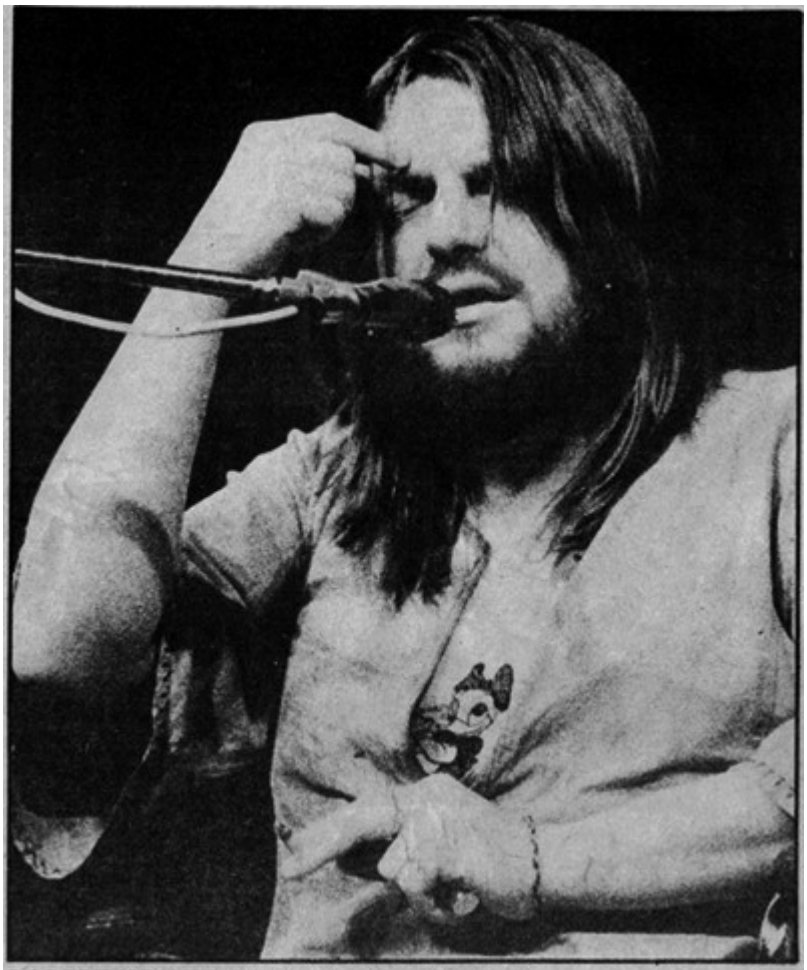
" I think that you can make objects which other people can respond to and appreciate. And that might be quite closely related to what you had in mind when you created the actual object.

" But I still don't really have much faith in the idea, or even the necessity, of really expressing yourself, of saying, ' f------, I'm all bottled up. I must tell the world how I feel '."

Surely, though, the songs on " Rock Bottom " particularly aren't moving merely because the author has a facility for writing an attractive tune and having the taste and perception to choose musicians sympathetic to interpreting those compositions? The act of creation, after all, isn't that facile.

" No, it isn't. You're right. It's a question of vanity, really. Something I don't like to admit. I suppose it's a question of vanity. If you have the opportunity to use words, and make them more than just noises, it's an ability which you have to attempt to use as widely as possible...

" I try to make my songs work on every possible level, quite consciously. Most of the songs on ' Rock Bottom ' were written while we were thinking of ideas for the third Matching Mole album."



ROBERT WYATT: ' I'm a fake Communist '

WE SEEM to reach something of an intermediate conclusion here. And having accepted " Rock Bottom " as the important statement that it is, or was to Wyatt as an artist (as important as was, say, " Plastic Ono Band," or even " In My Life" to Lennon, " Man Who Sold The World " to Bowie, " Blonde On Blonde" as a loose example, to Dylan), the way is open to broaden the conversation.

Let's take, to 'begin with, Wyatt's lyrics, which have always, at their best, revealed a quality out of the mainstream of rock writing. In one sense parts of " Rock Bottom," indeed, owe something to the Surrealist precept of automatic writing, but go one stage further than surrendering personal autonomy to the dream flow and exercise a finely-developed sense of poetry within his writing.

He agrees his writing owes little to the rock mainstream, and that he's quite consciously avoided this.

" Like, I've never thought of myself as being a mouthpiece for the, er, ' Youth Culture,' I've always been on the fringe of what's happened in rock. I'm basically no more worried about identifying with the problems of a street punk than I am with the problems of old-age pensioners. I feel no allegiance to any of those gangs out there."

Robert has previously expressed his disappointment at the lack of widespread creative energy within rock at the moment.

While new directions and possibilities are being explored and investigated by individuals and groups outside the rock mainstream (Henry Cow/ Slapp Happy in one context; Cale, Harper and, say, Eno in another), the majority of people concerned with the music are still waiting in eager anticipation for the arrival of a new rock messiah (the new Dylan/Stones/ Beatles).

This situation leads, via a thought provoked by Eno, to the suggestion that any further developments of significance will evolve from the cooperative efforts of a group of artists sharing a common responsibility.

A situation which would have as its antecedents the Zurich-based Dadaists or the Paris-

based Surrealists, movements which Wyatt regards with affection and admiration.

He considers this thesis with some enthusiasm, but remains a little reluctant to draw a comparison between the group of artists in English rock who share similar ambitions and perspectives and the Dadaists and Surrealists, whose strength and velocity was derived from the interaction of individuals operating within a common identity.

That rock develops at a pedestrian pace is not unrelated to the fact that "music is a more unwieldy business," he thinks.

" Conceptually, it moves that much slower. Music, perhaps, as a form, has a much more functional job.

" In order to work on any large scale, music has to overwhelm or titillate the senses. And, in other words, someone could come along with an incredible way of manipulating your ears, like Sly Stone, and there's no way you can discuss, in the same terms, the conceptual basis of something like ' Stand,' which is a great record.

" You know, this is all very interesting, but there are other things going on at the moment which we haven't taken into account, which are basically political.

" In other words the avant-garde we're talking about still belong to a quite cogent tradition of an elite of academic artists in an affluent society.

" But the general growth of Socialism in various forms around the world has probably made the existence of those elitist power groups more impossible.

" They're unwanted in a way. I've discussed this with Henry Cow, who consider themselves to be very politically motivated.

" The whole idea of small groups of iconoclastic artists were based on the idea of groups of establishment artists reacting against them. We're in a situation now where we're unlikely to have either.

" We're at a point where the dams have burst, and the mutual invasion of popular culture and academic culture are so interswamped, and there's something going on that is really too big for any of us individuals to see or put in any context."

THE ADVENT of recording procedures, the availability of tape recorders of reasonable sophistication is, to a significant extent, precipitating a growing momentum, he feels. The recording idiom is changing to the extent where there are opportunities for artists to involve themselves in music.

" People can see possibilities of developing music which has not been suggested by other forms of music at all, but ideas from completely different persuasions."

It's a process which he finds is undermining the monopoly of " the monster bands " (ie, ELP and their cohorts). From his comparative isolation he can allow himself a freedom of perspective on that situation.

" My ideal state of life would be one of total inactivity, I suppose. I don't approve of these people charging about all the time.

" I mean, I suppose Elton John feels he has to be seen everywhere... It concerns me that people view with impatience anybody when they're not actually coming out with New Product.

" There are periods in everyone's creative life which aren't productive in themselves but which are part of a continual creative process...

" I don't think musicians have been singled out for special treatment on that point...

It can be alarming, though. It gives a strange impression that people disappear when they haven't got a new album out.

" There again, I don't feel it's a problem special to musicians... I mean, I don't feel particularly that no one understands me. The bloke next door to me here, he's not a musician and no one understands him either.

" He doesn't seem too worried about it, so why should I?"

Allan Jones



Ruth, Richard, and Robert...

Robert Wyatt's new album 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard' seems certain to get a favourable reception—yet its creator seems unwilling to talk about it. ALLAN JONES tries to pin him down...

ROBERT WYATT: "I'm a Nice Communist"

Top Union official dies

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Boosey & Hawkes

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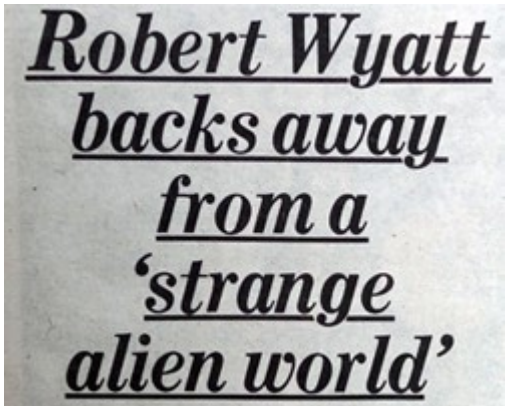
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Wyatt singles are out - Sounds - May 31, 1975



> Zoom





By Steve Peacock

YOUR NAME is Robert Wyatt and your 'comeback' album was hailed as everything

from a triumph to a master-piece by critics the length and breadth of the land. It was an uncompromising sort of album called 'Rock Bottom'.

You had brewed it for months, if not years, and it had turned out right. People assumed that this was the way you had decided to go in the future, but you are far from sure.

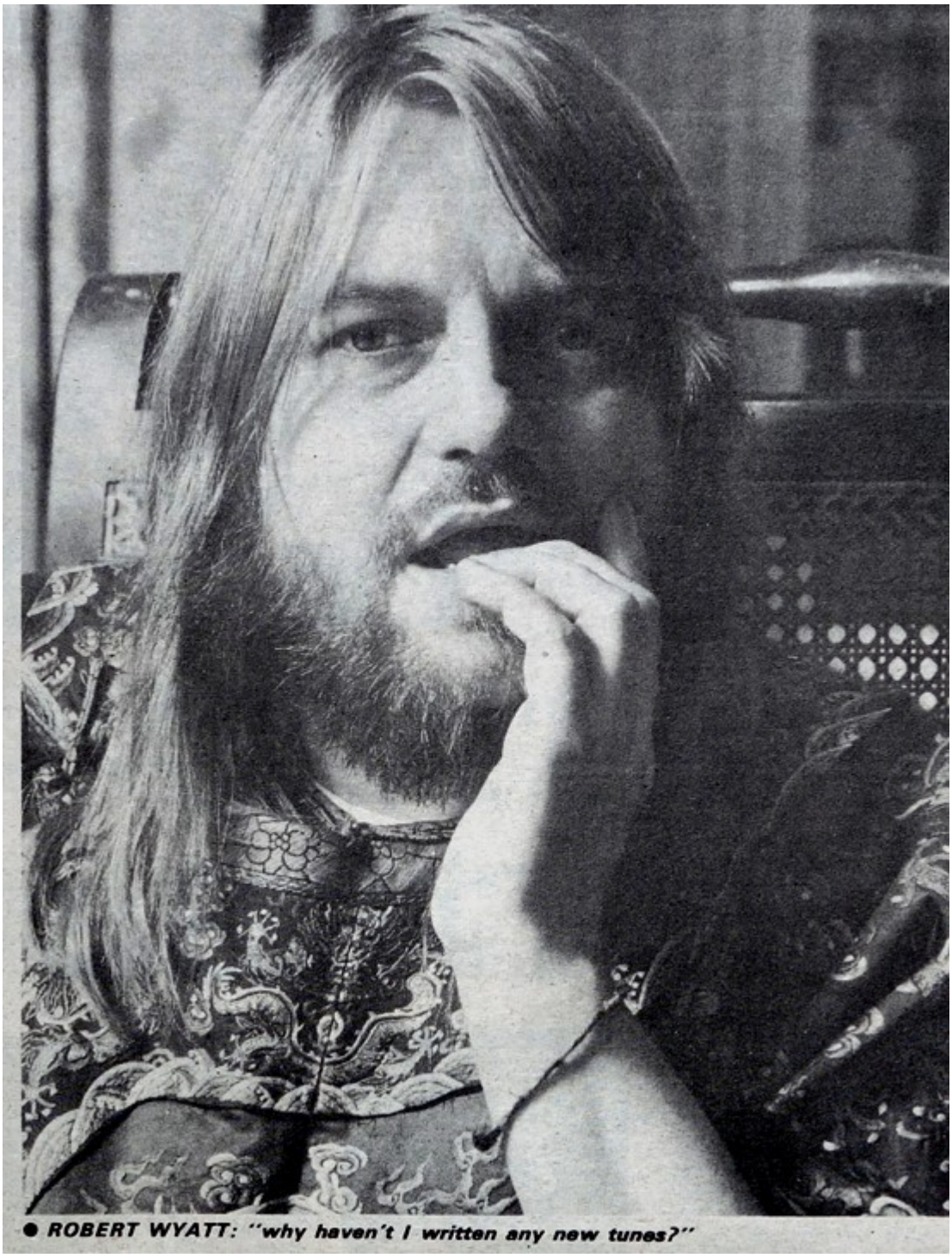
Monkees

Since that album, you also released a single, a version of the Monkees' hit 'I'm A Believer': it was a modest hit for you. You recorded a follow up — a heavily re-worked version of Chris Andrew's 'Yesterday Man' - but decided not to release it. It came out on a sampler album.
'Rock Bottom" came out last Summer: it is now Spring again and persons at your record company are dropping little hints. Like they tell you the Manor studio is free for a couple of weeks. Umm ...

YOU STARTER for ten is this: do you confess to not having a new tune to your name and ask Dave Edmunds to produce the album? Or do you ring up a bunch of friends who you think might sound nice if persuaded to play together, and see what happens? Discuss.

"WE EVOLVED an interesting variation on Eno's Oblique Strategies," says Robert Wyatt. (We've converted this to an oral examination.) "Things like *you go and make the tea*", he indicates Bill MacCormick across the room, "*and we'll turn the bass up two dbs*".
But, says McCormick, they ratted on the deal: they didn't use that take.
The interviewer then switches on his infernal machine and remembers he hasn't got a first question. He confesses this. Wyatt obligingly begins to interview himself: "Why haven't I written any new tunes? It's a long story. Shall I admit that I can't think of any? Yes. Hmmm." Cut.

TAKE TWO: Was he frightened at the thought of having to commit some music to tape again, in the wake of critical and public reaction to 'Rock Bottom'? Long pause. "Yes ... very." Long pause.
"I suppose if I took trouble to do anything with this one," he is talking of 'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard', the new album. "it was to make sure that it wasn't really related to what had gone before. I deliberately did some things and made some noises that I wouldn't have done on 'Rock Bottom' because they would have been inconsistent. In other words, I didn't worry about consistency from track to track on this one. I think more than ever before I just did each track as a separate thing."



● ROBERT WYATT: "why haven't I written any new tunes?"

Accumulate

How did he get together the musicians for the album? "Quite simple — it took about 10 minutes on the telephone."
Yes.
The people were Fred Frith (not Fripp), Bill MacGormick, Nisar Ahmed (George) Khan, Gary Windo (not Window), Laurie Allan, Brian Eno and (for 'Sonia' only) John Greaves and Mongezi Feza. 'Sonia' was recorded as the B-side of 'Yesterday Man' and Robert's secret hope was that it would get flipped over and become the 'Green Onions' or the 'Let There Be Drums' of the Seventies. Mongezi Feza - Superstar!

"It was more or less a question (this is for the album sessions at the Manor) of getting together four or five musicians who I liked the playing of ... I suppose I could have done 'Rock Bottom Parts Two and Three ..."
But that's hardly the point. "That whole thing that surrounded 'Rock Bottom' about 'he's found a new way of working", just isn't the case. I haven't found a new working system. I

haven't got back into anything. 'Rock Bottom' included a lot of old material. Probably having had the pressure off for so long allowed stuff to accumulate."
And even that's not really the point.
What makes Robert Wyatt go, into the studio to make a record? In brief paraphrase, he looks around his record collection, decides what, he'd like to hear and if the record doesn't yet exist then he goes in and tries to make it. That's also oversimplification.
'Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard' started life as Robert's desire for a record by "a-mid Fifties middle-of-the-road modern jazz group with great big booting tenor solos". It developed from that, of course. If that explanation sounds — how you say? — a trifle glib, then let's ask if the pressure of other people's expectations frightens him a little bit.

Caustic

"What's happened is that I've stopped writing because the things I would write naturally aren't necessarily the kind of things I'd want to listen to."
And he makes records because he wants to listen to them.
"I am very caustic about the things other people do, but I'm also pretty caustic about my own things in the sense that a lot of the things I could do I won't do because there doesn't seem any point in doing them just because I *can* - I feel it's not worth it. I find the idea of just going on and on making noises just because that's your job pretty alarming ... and undignified.

"It's not a very healthy attitude in the sense that I never get anything done...
"I think of lots of things, but I only write a tune if it seems absolutely necessary — I won't write it unless it seems quite obvious that no-one else is going to do it. But ideas circulate in a community, and you usually find if you get an idea and don't do anything about it, then someone else will.
"It's just a feeling that if I did just pour out what comes naturally to me, then it would be all right but nothing special — the things that I'd really be proud of myself for doing are beyond my reach. I just wait for the tings I feel I *have* to do, and then rush to a tape recorder..."

Yes, yes but wait a minute: how does "I'm A Believer" fit into all this? Part one, it was fun; part two he was asked to do it my Simon Draper at Virgin; and part three he was interested in tinkering about with the inside works of a standard pop song: "to find out how people are able to write things that last three and a half minutes and are complete miniatures... it's some thing I've never been able to do - I either write things that last a minute or they're long. I've since discovered that all pop songs only last a minute and what they do is play them two and a half times, and the second time round they put in a guitar solo. Only I did it wrong and had a violin solo."



● ROBERT, Florence Mult and Alfreda Benge.

But after getting onto the chart with 'I'm A Believer' and experiencing the world of 45rpm records at close quarters, he decided to withdraw to the red corner. "Frankly, *Top Of The Pop* appalled me, and the different things that are expected of you in situations like that... it's the singles world really, the business thing. People say this has to be changed, or that has to be changed because so and so won't play it. The rules are so strict, and I just haven't got the necessary humility or whatever to fit into that. I could see it becoming what I did — I would make singles — and I didn't want that to happen. I didn't want to get trapped in that strange, alien world.

Horrors

"Deep down I might be competitive, I suppose, but consciously anything competitive gives me the horrors, and always has done. Suddenly, it was all a matter of comparative ratings and would this one do better than the last one or would it do better than that other one ... I'd lived without charts for so long, established myself in a sort of no man's land where as long as I had enough money for cigarettes and tea I was happy...

"And *then*, the other thing was people telling me to put rubbish on the B side in case it detracted from interest in the A side. Apparently, that's quite a common thing, but to me that's the Unacceptable Face Of Capitalism."

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Looking' Back - The Soft Machine Part 2 - New Musical Express - February 1, 1975

LOOKIN' BACK: The Soft Machine. Pt. 2

by IAN MacDONALD



IN LAST week's issue, Part One recounted the history of the Softs from their schooldays to the break-up of the group following the recording of their debut album in 1968. This week we take up the story with the reformation of the band in 1969.

FROM FEBRUARY to early April '69 Wyatt, Hopper and Ratledge rehearsed daily at Wyatt's mother's house in Dulwich, South London. April was the month in which they were scheduled to record their second album and the material they were organising was intended primarily for the studio, not the stage - in fact, none of it was performed "live" before the album was finally cut.

This - and the wholly new complexity of their more recent music - contributed to the slight stiltedness of the final takes on "Volume 2", although this drawback is almost totally occluded by the poor quality of the recording itself.

The Softs, still smarting from their New York experience, had resolved to handle the production themselves, a decision which nearly proved fatal. Almost everything that can go wrong in a studio went wrong - and the band possessed little of the experience required to conquer these problems.

Ratledge, for some reason obsessed with avoiding a repeat performance of his astonishing handling of the Lowrey organ on the first album, insisted on laying all his basic tracks down on a concert grand; acoustic piano being one of the hardest instruments to mike up, the band not unnaturally got it wrong - with the result that the piano tracks, already too reverberant, "leaked" onto the tracks adjoining them, causing all kinds of insoluble puzzles in the final stages. Likewise, the horn tracks (by Brian and Hugh Hopper) possessed little resonance and were duly dominated by the keyboards.

But despite all this - and a truly terrible edit in the opening bars of "10.30 Returns To The Bedroom", necessitated by sheer lack of time for Wyatt to rehearse the devilishly difficult vocal part - "Soft Machine Volume Two" remains almost as much of a rock classic as its predecessor.

Side One features the results of Wyatt's months of work on a heritage of fragments taped by Hopper over a period of three or four years - and it's brilliant. The lyric wit and harmonic sophistication outclass anything in its vicinity, and the group's suave handling of Ratledge's first venture into irregular time ("Hibou Anenome And Bear", erroneously attributed to Hopper), is a delight in itself.

On Side Two a pair of quasi conventional songs (Ratledge's high-stepping farewell gesture to the departed Ayers, "As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still", and Hopper's hauntingly enigmatic "Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening") precede Ratledge's ten-minute session of 7/8 gymnastics, "Esther's Nose-Job" - a composition which would provide an ever expanding flag waver with which to close the group's sets over the next two years.

BUT THERE WAS no time for them to get the results of their labours into any perspective.

Sean Murphy had just taken over in the management department (although Mike Jefferies controlled the royalties situation on the first two LPs, and the group are still involved in prolonged litigation alleging that they never received a penny from either of them). The show was finally on the road and an endless succession of gigs stretched to the end of the year.

The band, using a regular set comprising (in running order) "Moon In June", Hopper's "Facelift", Ratledge's unrecorded "Eamonn Andrews", Hopper"s "Mousetrap" (the latter parts of which - including the beautiful sequence "Backwards" - form the second part of "Slightly All The Time" on "Third"), and "Esther's Nose-Job" (plus "Hibou, Anenome And Bear" as the encore), toured continuously for six months - until Hopper, who had recently taken to playing his bass from an almost supine position in an armchair stage left, declared himself bored and desirous of fresh stimuli.

Wyatt and Ratledge, brooding on possibilities and only too conscious of the imminence of a second break-up, happened to catch The Keith Tippett Group at The Marquee one night in October. Particularly impressed by Tippett's red-hot front-line trio of Elton Dean (alto/saxello). Marc Charig (tpt/flugel-horn), and Nick Evans (tmbn). they enticed the gentlemen into the world of rock with promises of fame, fortune, and centrally-heated groupies.

Dean recommended tenorist Lyn Dobson (who also played sitar, flute, and harmonica) - so that within a couple of days The Soft Machine was a seven piece and off on a singularly gruelling two-month tour of France.

It's one of rock's biggest frustrations that this line-up never recorded together (aside from one rather lacklustre date-on *Top-Gear*"), because the fact is that, playing adventurous charts scored 50-50 by Ratledge and Hopper, the expanded version of The Soft Machine was not only the best-ever line-up in the band's history, but one of the most amazing "live" rock experiences then going.

By the time (February 1970) that the group had got around to recording "Third", Evans and Charig had been dismissed for reasons of financial necessity (and the' original trio's

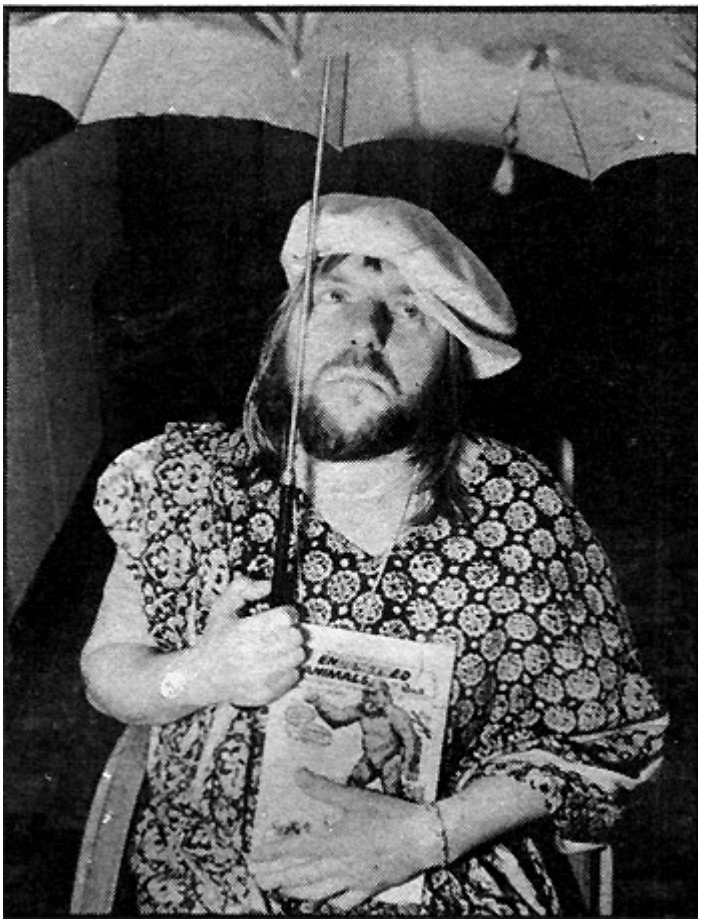
pessimism over the role of brass instruments in performing complex scores at the increasing velocities dictated by audience enthusiasm - which was justifiably running very high).

Dobson was the next to go, his anarchic vitality incurring the distaste of the refined and cerebral Ratledge, but not before he'd contributed to the collage of "live" takes of "Facelift" that forms Side One of "Third".

Moreover, Ratledge's "Slightly All The Time", elegantly influenced by the spacious ease of contemporary Miles (eg., "Miles In The Sky", "Filles De Kilimanjaro"), hardly represented the uproarious thunder of the seven-piece - and his new extended composition, "Out-Bloody-Rageous", carried the fascination with time-signatures and "loop" figures into forbodingly sterile areas.

Only Wyatt's "Moon In June", recorded almost entirely by himself and in the face of frankly-expressed disapproval on the part of Ratledge and Dean, was a real advance - its final five minutes, based on another of the Softs' trademark, the "drone", being worth the price of the double-album alone.

Disturbed by the power-games going on around him, Wyatt subsequently disappeared off to record a solo album and relieve the pressure of his stoppered creativity. This was "The End Of An Ear" and the pun, in retrospect, becomes more serious that it at first appeared.



The End of an Ear at the Proms





SO THE focus of attention has now turned to the Softs-who-got-the-chop, like (top) Robert Wyatt, raiding the charts in a wheelchair; (centre) Hugh Hopper . . . well, maybe one day when "1984" is finally recognised by the discerning public; and (bottom) Daevid Allen, chief pothead pixie in Gong.

THERE WAS considerable Cultural Significance embodied in "Third" - "rock coming of age", etc - and the Establishment and jazz critics zeroed in with polysyllabic fervour.

When the BBC invited the band to be the first representatives of rock at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts, matters (at least as far as Wyatt was concerned) were beginning to get silly.

Increasingly, his popular vocal excursions were being cut back by the demands of more and more fiendishly-technical instrumentals from the pens of Ratledge and Hopper. In addition to this, Dean, was determined to swing things into out-and-out jazz, pushed the music even further from the original conceptions by introducing vehicles for free-form blowing (eg., "Fletcher's Blemish" on "Fourth").

It was only a matter of time before Wyatt would be elbowed out, but an initial trial separation - with him reinforcing the rhythm-section of Ayers' contemporary group The Whole World - didn't work out and he returned to the fold in time to contribute the mysteriously mixed down drum tracks to the totally voiceless "Fourth" (released February 1971).

This was the first of the Softs' albums to appeal to a jazz/rock crossover audience - although many mainstream rockers felt betrayed by sidelong excursions into abstracted vagueness (Hopper's nevertheless extraordinary "Virtually" suite), torrentially melodic solos from the alto of Dean, and Ratledge's most complex (and most successful) composition yet. "Teeth", in which ever-changing time-signatures joust with spikey lines that unravel with a linear steadiness and an ascetic disinclination to repeat themselves.

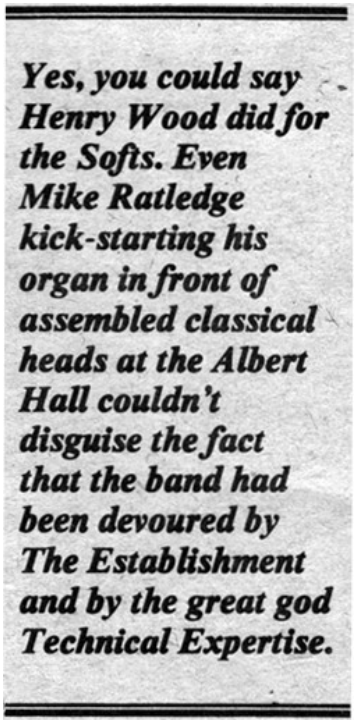
The music was still healthy enough (although contrasts-available from employing the Wyatt drums and tonsils were almost entirely foregone) and the band's name was further exalted. In due course they were invited to play the Newport Jazz Festival where Ratledge found himself on the same bill as his idol McCoy Tyner and Wyatt found himself to be having trouble with reality.

Soon after this he decided things had gone far enough and quit to form Matching Mole in September '71.

STUDIO TIME for the recording of "Fifth" was booked for November - which didn't leave much time for the recruitment of Wyatt's replacement.

However, Dean had been playing the odd gig with Nick Evans in a free-jazz unit called Just Us, the drummer of which was the fiery, multi-directional Phil Howard, whom all admired. Well, *musically*, anyway.

The results of the new combination were explosive, both in musical terms (Side One of "Fifth" is the last really potent statement The Soft Machine ever made) and in personal affairs: Howard and Ratledge clashed egos disastrously and, there and then in the middle of recording, the former was fired.



Nucleus drummer John Marshall was brought in, initially as a session-man, and the group struggled raggedly through Side Two.

In a review in *Let It Rock*, a would-be contemporary cynic saw the departure of Wyatt and the recruitment of two technically dazzling jazz drummers in succession as proof that the music was getting too complex for a mere rocker to cope with Unfortunately this doesn't pan out from actual listening.

Wyatt was far more adept (because far more self-tutored) at getting around Ratledge's 9/8s and 1 l/4s than either Howard or Marshall; Howard transfigured the metrical exactitudes envisioned by Ratledge into a dizzying blitz of crisscrossing polyrhythms - a firestorm at the centre of which was ye olde 4/4, even if only in terms of pulses felt subliminally - whereas Marshall, schooled in the tepid funk of Nucleus, went a step further and actually *played* 4/4, gathering the irregular folds, so carefully disarrayed by the composer, into chunky neatness.

Wyatt's leaving coincided with more than merely the rhythmic simplification of the Softs, however. With him he took most of the group's humour and a large slab of their profundity too.

The four or five months following the release of "Fifth" saw the progressive dissolution of the band's inner ties and trusts.

The honeymoon musical partnership of Dean and Ratledge (symbolized by the presence of the latter on the former's solo album, recorded just prior to "Fifth") was over for good. Dean seething at the rejection of Howard. Hopper, in turn, was beginning to feel somewhat out in the cold and when (in May '72) Dean finally quit to be replaced by another ex-Nucleus man. Karl Jenkins, what had at first only *seemed* like a freeze-out became Antartica a-go-go.

The deal now was technical expertise.

Ratledge had it, Jenkins and Marshall agreed that they had it too; only Hopper, uncomfortably attempting to find a way of playing irregular bass-riffs against Marshall's powerful common-time, had no claim to the diploma the others had awarded each other. Immaculateness was not the sole *raison* of his *etre.*

"SOFT MACHINE Six", recorded in the final months of '72, featured a mass of compositions by Jenkins and Ratledge (including many variants of the Nucleus Hip-Riff-and-Funk ideal) and only one Hopper number - the experimental "1983", based on an electronically-embellished and very lengthy musical loop.

Recorded in the wake of the summer '72 sessions for " 1984" (which eventually came out *after* "Six"), it was intended to be a kind of trailer for Hugh's solo-album. It turned out to be the only vital section of a rather flat and foursquare double-album and, shortly afterwards. Hopper left to pursue his own concerns.

Yet' another jazzer moved in as replacement - bassist Roy Babbington - and the music got smoother and more scintillatingly-played and finally wound up losing its soul somewhere in a glittering galaxy of electric pianos and synthesizers. "Seven", recorded in late '73, documents the downfall.

Recently, the band recruited guitarist Alan Holdsworth, presumably to win some some popular appeal.

"Eight" is imminent for release - but the focus of attention has long since shifted to the Softs-who-got-the-chop: Daevid Allen and his fanatic ally-subscribed Gong, Kevin Ayers and his urbane gestures towards becoming a teen idol. Robert Wyatt and his multi-faceted musical personality that continues to grow richer and purer simultaneously... maybe Hugh Hopper too one day, when "1984" is finally recognised for the minor master piece it is.

BUT THE Soft Machine, the band Mike Ratledge slowly wrested away from its founders in pursuit of his immaculate vision - well, not even its Gallic followers seem too pleased with it these days.

The key lies in a revealing remark Elton Dean made soon after leaving the group.

"Mike and Hugh's idea of getting it on," he said, "is to play aggressively." Ratledge's own half-serious definition of the Softs as "a brute musical experience" adds further clarification.

For, almost since the Softs re-formed in 1969, Ratledge in particular has appeared to be

interested in music as a form of symbolic logic - ie., echoplex pianos playing interlocking phrases = beauty or peace; fast 7/4 and distorted organ = excitement; fuzz-bass roars = drama.

An abstract design for emotive sound.

And, while this objective approach doesn't of consequence preclude expressivity (qv.. Bach, Stravinsky, Bartok for music frequently at its most moving and most impersonal at the same time), Ratledge's viewpoint is ultimately a mechanistic one in which all those frail, wobbly, imperfect, and imprecise human experiences (like intuition, inspiration, doubt, love) finally default to symmetry.

It's doubly significant, thereby, that Wyatt's first move away from the Softs, the "Matching Mole" LP of early '72, is an album primarily about misery. Musically shakey, it devastates anything by the corporate cool smoothie The Soft Machine has become in the last two years sheerly in terms of emotional engagement.

The Softs haven't lost their artistry. Ratledge is as original and unique as ever, if his fellow band-members hardly sparkle in their present combination.

What they *have* lost is their commitment. The Establishment got 'em just as soon as they agreed to play the Proms.

Softs connoiseurs will remember, I'm sure, that that performance came close to disaster when Ratledge's trusty old Lowrey refused to work at the begining of the set. Eventually a kick persuaded it otherwise.

There's a moral or three in there somewhere.

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Looking' Back - The Soft Machine Part 1 - New Musical Express - January 25, 1975

LOOKIN' BACK
The Soft Machine

by IAN MacDONALD



"It's a Now sound, swings like jazz, rocks like rhythm-and-blues, heavy with fuzz-box distortion, off-the-keyboard with electronic atonalities - the sound of music updated by the music of sound".

So wobbled the sleeve garf for "The Soft Machine", a rather extraordinary debut album that was somehow never available in Britain (probably because of the sleeve garf). But don't be put off by the spiel - the Softs were just about the first British group to experiment in any real sense with "progressive" music, and their impact, though low-key, was nonetheless profound and lasting.

In the first of a two-part series, IAN MacDONALD (who really GETS OFF on this stuff, kids) Looks Back on the Rich Kids who Dropped Out and Made Good.

CLASS OF'61 at the Simon Langton School, Canterbury - an exclusive, private establishment for the sons of local artists and intellectuals. Very free, emphatically geared to the uninhibited development of self-expression. A hotbed of teenage avant-garderie.

On my right - in the sixth-form and waiting impatiently to go up to Oxford to study philosophy and psychology: Mike Ratledge. Occasionally he and class-mate Brian Hopper get together to play their own adaptations of Hindemith's organ sonatas, arranged for piano and clarinet. The big boys.

On my left - two years below Mike and Brian - another Hopper. Studious Hugh, bespectacled and prematurely-balding science student. At the moment he plays a bit of sax (in emulation of his older brother) and a bit of guitar; nobody's yet suggested that bass might suit him better.

And, in the same year but in one of the arts classes: Robert Wyatt, aged 16, painter and dabbler in various instruments. He ran into Hugh back in the first year, but they went their different routes through the funfair of academe and have only recently become mates, mainly through a common interest in music.

A year below *them*, one David Sinclair is taking piano lessons - but he's far too young to associate with the likes of Robert and Hugh.

IT'S ALL pretty idyllic in retrospect - visiting each other's houses (but mostly congregating at the 15-room Georgian mansion owned by Robert's mother, writer and broadcaster Honor Wyatt) to play the new jazz releases - Mingus, Coleman, Taylor, Monk - and to enthuse over contemporary mainstreamers (Stockhausen, Luigi Nono), painters (Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock), and writers (Burroughs, the Beats).

However, like most people's formative years, it was hard edged under the general soft-focus.

At the point isolated above, Wyatt, unable to stand the academic strictures of school life any more, fled during his 'A'-levels and enrolled in a sculpture course at the Canterbury College of Art. When this revealed itself to be no escape either, he had a brush with suicide and before taking off to Spain, where he arrived, penniless and unable (then) to speak the language, in early '62.

Luckily, he ran into drummer George Niedorf in a club. Niedorf took him under his wing for a few months and, when Wyatt decided the time had come to re-dig Canterbury, he invited George back. (Niedorf subsequently lived for some time with the Wyatts, teaching Robert drums in lieu of rent.)

But far more significant a result of their meeting was the bringing together of the Canterbury crowd and an eccentric Australian friend of Niedorf's - Daevid Allen.

Allen, who'd left his hometown Melbourne in 1960 at the age of 21, was a walking physical embodiment of your actual day-to-day avant-garde. He knew and had worked on slides with Burroughs; in his adopted second home, Paris, he'd been experimenting with things called "Tape-loops" in the company of the then-unknown Terry Riley; but, heaviest of all, he'd taken ACID - arriving at the norm of a life-style few young people would catch up with until 1967.

He was, in fact, a fully-fledged Freak - and, as yet, The Beatles hadn't even recorded "Love Me Do."

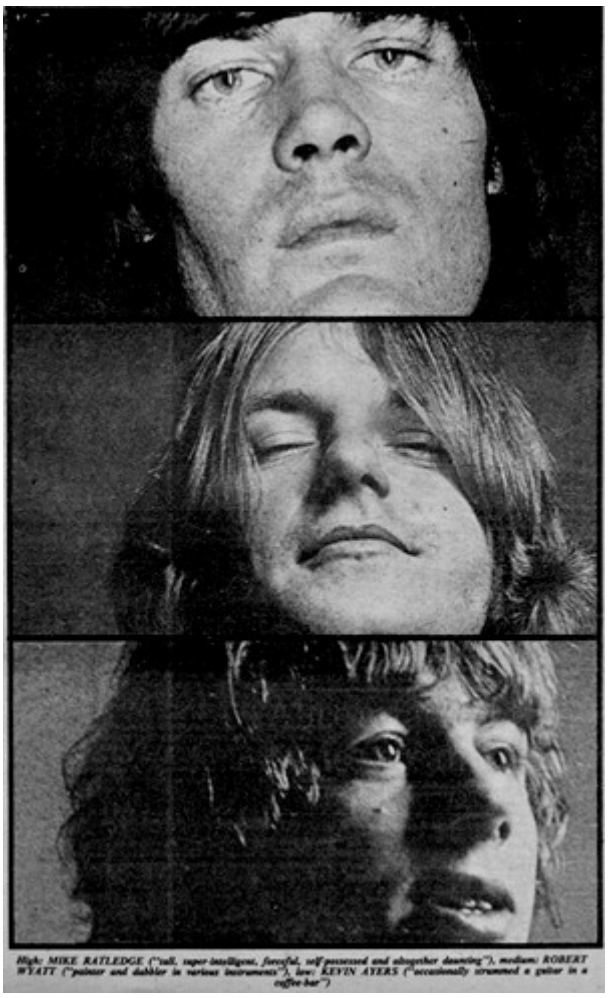
Allen immediately invited Wyatt and Hugh Hopper over to Paris where he lived in a houseboat with his missus, poetess Gilli Smyth, at the Quai D'Orsay. Acid and mescaline were doled out to a soundtrack of Allen's own *musique concrete* and - pow! - two more recruits to ye olde youth-cultural revolution.

Wyatt went home with long hair; Hopper stayed on, completely fascinated by tape-loops of which he made thousands in the next few years.

Back in Canterbury, musical matters were already well under way.

High: MIKE RATLEDGE ("tall, super-intelligent, forceful, self-possessed and altogether daunting"), medium: ROBERT WYATT ("painter and dabbler in various instruments"), low: KEVIN AYERS ("occasionally strummed a guitar in a coffee-bar")

The band, which changed almost daily, was called The Wilde Flowers and featured in its line-up (which extended up to 1967) the Hopper brothers, Wyatt, and all four original members of Caravan. As soon-to-be-Softs left, soon-to-be-Caravans joined - the resulting genealogy being far too complicated to go into here (for the curious, issue 28 of *Zigzag* features an exhaustive family-tree of the Canterbury groups compiled by Pete Frame and Al Clark - though naturally it's now a little out of date).



High: MIKE RATLEDGE ("tall, super-intelligent, forceful, self-possessed and altogether daunting"), medium: ROBERT WYATT ("painter and dabbler in various instruments"), low: KEVIN AYERS ("occasionally strummed a guitar in a coffee-bar")

The Wilde Flowers' first gig took place above a pub in Whit-stable. "They try for an Indian influence," ventured a nonplussed but genially-disposed Canterbury Gazette. "Their Rolling Stones haircuts make the fans go crazy."

(The Stones had just released "Come On" at the time.)

But if it hadn't been for the international recognition-sign of Long Hair, it's doubtful whether the singer on that gig would ever have come into contact with the Canterbury mob at all.

Kevin Ayers lived in Herne Bay - only ten miles away, but hard to get to - and, though he strummed a guitar in a coffee-bar occasionally, he had no intention of pursuing a musical career until Wyatt sought him out one afternoon on the advice of a passing stranger. (Whose words were: "Oh, I thought we had the only long-hair in Kent - ours is over there in the bar if you want to check him out.")

AT FIRST, the Flowers followed well-developed Canterbury biases: a bit of jazz, a touch of rock, mostly blowing on Cannonball Adderley numbers.

Daevid Allen's arrival tipped the balance towards rock and free-form improvisation; Hopper, trained to respect repetition as a valid ingredient through his experience with loops, inveigled everyone into riffing on James Brown numbers; Dave Seeger, a rock 'n' roll singer who dropped in for a few months to have a rave, taught Hugh the bass-lines to the collected works of Chuck Berry and Little Richard.

It took a long time for the elitist hangover from Simon Langton to dissipate sufficiently for the others to condescend to trying out some of Kevin's songs. But - just as Ayers and Allen, collaborating on material, were about to swing the thing round to out-and-out rock 'n' roll - a letter arrived from Oxford.

Mike Ratledge, it said, was bored with university; he wanted to blow some.

This played right into the hands of Hugh, Brian, and Robert, who - studying the contemporary scene in London - had decided that all-guitar front-lines like the Stones and The Yardbirds were definitely passe; the thing, they reckoned, was to get into a kind of Mose Allison/Georgie Fame/Graham Bond bag.

Organs and saxes. Jazz-blues.

Yikes!

Ratledge arrived just as the Hoppers left to do Other Things (Hugh to join Pye Hastings and Richard Coughlan in the next version of The Wilde Flowers; Brian to go into insurance), and his impact was hefty. He was tall, super-intelligent, forceful, self-possessed, and altogether daunting.

And he wasn't impressed with Ayers' songs.

Nevertheless, the new regime settled down to rehearse with an appropriate new seriousness and the music that emerged sounded about as much like Graham Bond or The Yardbirds as Reginald Dixon sounds like Larry Young.

They began to play gigs more professionally, began to hire themselves out for parties — gaining the first elements of A Reputation.

At this time the name of the band was changing almost by the hour. The Bishops of Canterbury was the handle they were using the night I first saw them in '66; Ayers' preference was Mr. Head. Allen preferred Dingo Virgin and the Foreskins (or Four Skins, as when a bloke called Larry Nolan temporarily raised the roll-call to five by joining briefly on guitar towards the end of the year).



An early Wilde Flowers line up. L. to R: Hugh Hopper, Richard Coughlan, Brian Hopper; front: Robert Wyatt.

One day Ratledge decided on the final choice.
(Though legend tells of a close finish with another Burroughs book, "Nova Express". Either

way, Allen phoned Burroughs to ask his permission and got it, along with the novelist's blessings.)

Now all they needed was the wherewithal to move to London and Get With The Scene, Daddy.

The problem was solved by two occurrences.

First, Wyatt's mother sold the mansion and moved to Dulwich where she was able to rent out cheap rooms to most of the band. Second, Allen and Ayers - holidaying in Majorca as usual - ran into a spaced-out American millionaire called Wes Brunson who, convinced they must be the next Beatles, forthwith sold his shades factory in Tulsa and generously financed the group out of the proceeds.

(He later freaked out and joined the Children of God, but not, I'm assured, as a result of finally *hearing* the Softs perform.)

ONCE ENSCONCED in the capital, the quartet set about hunting out gigs.

Allen, who knew Hoppy and the Indica people, hustled a regular spot opposite the nascent Pink Floyd at Tottenham Court Road's UFO - though the Softs' first gig in London was a disastrous appearance at the Zebra Club where they were booed off (some compensation being admitted in the surprise recruitment of four French *au-pairs* as groupies-in-residence).

Ayers, meanwhile had conceived a bizarre plan to sell his songs to The Animals (then well in decline) and, through his subsequent investigations, encountered the management partnership of Chas Chandler and Mike Jeffries. Jeffries promised Ayers that he could get "a fantastic deal" from Mickie Most if the group would let him select chart material for them. The offer was cordially declined - but Jeffries somehow became the Softs' manager, and eventually they later came to regret the fact.

At first, however, it all looked reasonable enough. Jeffries encouraged the band to use Ayers' songs - and even Ratledge could appreciate that what Kevin was doing was more likely to pay the bills at this stage.

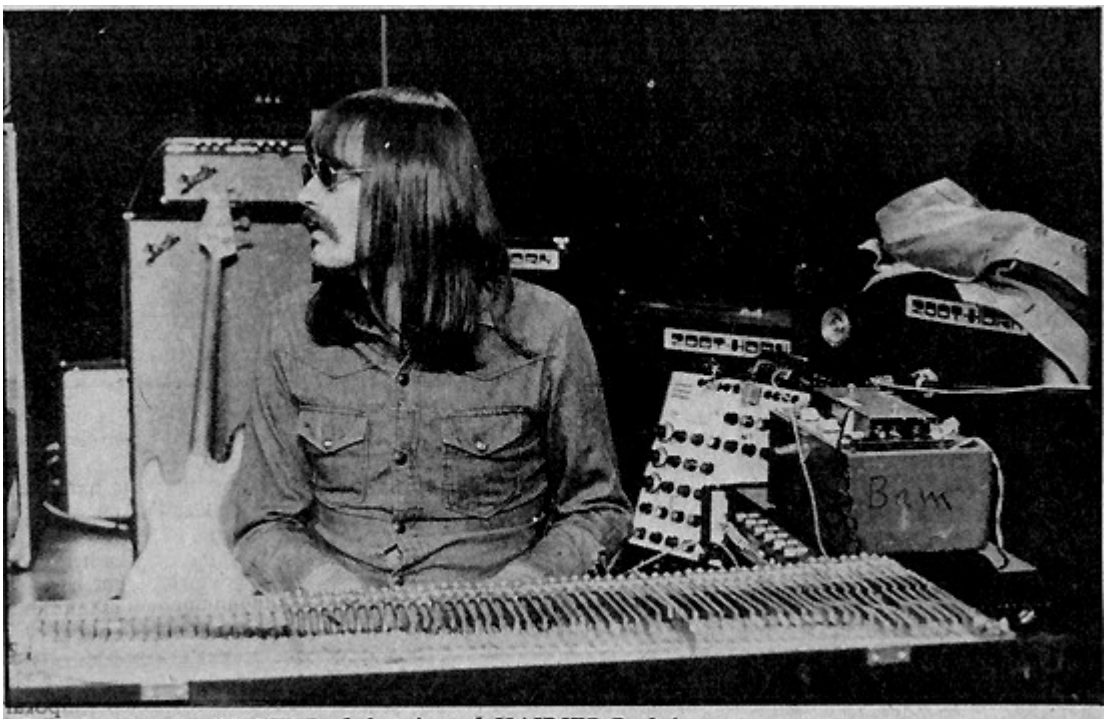
A three-day session at De Lane Lea was arranged. Giorgio Gomelsky was to record the band rehearsing Ayers' material and to offer his creative suggestions.

At the end of the final day Jeffries smilingly declined to pay the studio costs and Gomelsky, gathering the tapes in his arms, stormed out of the studio. Five years later selections from these tapes - which weren't even demos - appeared on the French BYG label as sides of "Rock Generation" Vols. 7 and 8. Only Softs fanatics were pleased.

Meanwhile, nomadic American nut-case Kim Fowley had picked up on the New Wave of 67: a dual gig by the Softs and the Floyd at The Roundhouse. Trying in vain to secure the latter, he moved in on the former - only to discover Jeffries and Chandler already there.

His comradely offer of production help was, however, accepted by the band (even though all they knew of him was a mention of his name on the sleeve of "Freak Out"), all of which led to his special breed of disassociation gracing the B-side of the Softs' first and only single, "Love Makes Sweet Music".

Again recorded at De Lane Lea, the first mix of the A-side featured rhythm guitar by Jimi Hendrix, another Jeffries-Chandler signing, who happened to be down the corridor in the next studio doing his debut single, "Hey Joe". The two groups dropped in on each other's sessions and became friendly - to the point where Hendrix invited Wyatt, Ayers and Allen to do the back-up vocals on "Stone Free". Finally, however, both swap-over appearances were rejected in favour of alternative takes.



Ratledge. A much OLDER Ratledge. A much HAIRIER Ratledge.

The Fowley-Ayers collaboration "Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin' " went out in midsummer as the most uncommercial A-side in the world - until, one week later, Polydor flipped the side and The Soft Machine soared to the lofty eminence of number 28 on Radio London's Fab Forty. (For connoisseurs: the name "Ellidge" on the credit listing is Robert's real name; Wyatt is a stage-name coined from that of poetic Elizabethan ancestor Sir Thomas Wyatt - and, in any case, Ayers wrote both sides.)

NOTHING MUCH came out of the single and Polydor appeared less than manic over the prospect of an album, so the Softs followed the advice of their cherished *eminence grise* Henry Henriod and departed upon the hour for France in the company of The Real Mike Chapman, a large stentorian figure prone to the endless declaiming of his "flow-etry" over the P.A. during rock concerts (as per 14-Hour Technicolour Dream *chez* Alexandra Palace at which the Softs and Floyd performed).

In St. Tropez the band became involved in Alan Zion's production of Picasso's play "Desire Attrape Par La Queue", a "total environment" happening featuring (amongst other attractions) Taylor Meade, Ultra Violet, and the on-stage beheading of live chickens - some years in advance of Alice Cooper, if that's anything to chalk up. It was an incontrovertible *success-de-scandale*, providing the Softs with the core of their subsequently huge French following, and drawing out the local gendarmerie to break up the event and the home-made geodesic dome housing it.

When, however, they attempted to get back into the U.K., Daevid Allen's visa was allegedly discovered to be expired, his passport out of date, and his hair too long. The other three left him at Dover and headed for Edinburgh to play the festival as accompaniment to Simon Watson-Taylor's production of Jarry's "Ubu Enchainee", a gig secured for them by Mark Boyle whose Sensual Laboratory provided the house-lights at UFO.

Watson-Taylor declared the Softs the most "pataphysical" band he'd ever seen (qv. any translation of Jarry) and, the next time they played Paris, the group were ceremoniously created Official Orchestra Of The College Of Pataphysics and given an award by the Minister of Culture.

AFTER THE much-sung Christmas On Earth concert which polished off the year, Hendrix invited the Softs to go with him on his opening U.S. tour. (At this juncture - the group still regarding themselves as a quartet *manque* - guitarist Andy Somers, late of the discontinued Dantalion's Chariot, was invited to join in Allen's place; he spent a couple of months rehearsing with them and then disappeared off to the States with Zoot Money in search of Eric Burdon.)

It was the Softs' first taste of the big time and the itinerary was murder: two sets of two-

month non-stop gigging, divided by a couple of weeks off to sleep in. Hendrix naturally, occupied 99% of the audiences' attention - but, at the Chicago Opera House at least, the Softs managed to stop the show on their own account.

Between the two halves of the tour, Ratledge went back to London. Ayers and Wyatt remained in their chairs, exhausted. The strain was already pulling the group apart.

For the second lap (the bill beefed-up by the addition of Hendrix proteges Eire Apparent) the pressure was somewhat lowered in terms of set-length - but this time all the gigs were killers. In New York at Madison Square Gardens they lost their nerve at the foot of a bill featuring Hendrix, The Chambers Brothers, Albert King, and Big Brother And The Holding Company. "Nightmarish" is how Wyatt recalls the result.

The final gig was at the Hollywood Bowl. The group merely got through it. The next move they discovered was immediately back to New York to do their debut album under the auspices of famous Black producer Tom Wilson.

Wilson, contrary to popular rumour, *was* in the studio most of the time, but didn't appear to fully understand the Softs or their music. "We'd do a take," remembers Wyatt, "go back into the control-room - and he'd be on the phone to some girl."

At the beginning of the single week the recording lasted, the group straggled into the studio and loosened up with a "live" take of "Why Am I So Short?" plus an extended blow later entitled (for no apparent reason) "So Boot If At All".

Wilson listened wryly. "I don't know," he informed them when they'd finished, "how I'm going to record this."

In the event, he simply left the band to their own devices. The first take of "Why Am I So Short?" went onto the album, as did the first takes of most of the other numbers. Post-production work mainly consisted of pan-potting everything ceaselessly from channel to channel - an effect that wears thin after approximately one minute.

Nevertheless, it was a great album - a judgement born out by its enormous import sales over the years.



This was it. Snazzola, hah? A long time before "Led Zeppelin III", too

Wyatt arranged most of the material, coming up with a version of an old Brian Hopper song called "Hope For Happiness" which allowed Ratledge ample space to demonstrate his bizarre sound and tremendous flow of ideas - whilst Ratledge and brother Hugh (now roadying for the band) co-wrote "Box 25/4 Lid" in a hotel opposite the Lincoln Memorial for inclusion as the album's closer.

An extensive musical analysis of the Softs has yet to be written - and this isn't the place - but, when it is it'll have to focus heavily on the very surprising improvisatory ability displayed by the band-members so early in their careers. "So Boot If At All" is certainly one of the all-time classic rock ad-libs.

Naturally, the group there upon broke up.

AYERS returned to Majorca to write songs. Ratledge flew to London and began to compose some of the highly complex scores the Softs would perform in a year's time.

Wyatt stayed on in New York at the Chelsea Hotel, writing "Moon In June" and getting to know the city.

As winter advanced, he left for Los Angeles, there staying with first Hendrix and then Eric Burdon, writing all the time and recording two demo albums by himself. The first featured "Moon In June" in an extended form, the second fragments of old material by Hugh re-arranged and provided with lyrics - the pith of which eventually turned up as Side One of "Soft Machine Volume Two".

Finally Probe resolved to release the first album. It sold fast.

They called Wyatt asking him to get the band on the road again. No band.

He phoned Ratledge, who guardedly promised to give the matter his consideration. He tried to contact Ayers - but the only thing anyone knew about him was that he'd flogged his bass to Mitch Mitchell and thereafter disappeared.

Then - Brainwavesville! Hugh Hopper still wandering the States, was contacted a day before he'd promised himself to sell his bass and buy a motorbike.

The new trio congregated in Wyatt's room in his mother's London house in February 1969, and began to rehearse.

Part Two Next Week (We did it again)

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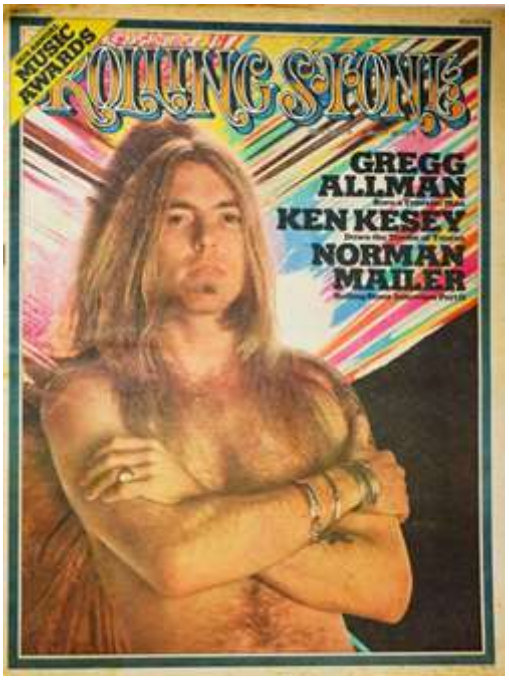
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Soft Machine Man: Up from Rock Bottom - Rolling Stone No 178 - January 16, 1975

Soft Machine Man: Up from Rock Bottom

BY CHARLES NICHOLL



LONDON—There was something surreal about Robert Wyatt's recent appearance on *Top of the Pops*, BBC Television's weekly ritual enactment of the Top 20. "A ramshackle charm" was a phrase he used about something, and it seemed right for him. He stuck out like a sore thumb amid the satin and tat—the veteran from psychedelic London, now a cripple in a wheelchair, smoking incessantly and joking elliptically, the drummer's hands restless in their redundancy.

He was there to sing a single, his first, already a minor hit—"I'm a Believer," the Neil Diamond-penned Monkees hit. A far cry from the jazzy experimentals of the Soft Machine, though the voice is the same: frail and witty and very South London. "There are as many good pop songs as there are good jazz solos," he said. " 'I'm a Believer' just seemed to fit my throat. At 29, it was his first appearance on nationwide TV.

The rise, fall and rebirth of Robert Wyatt is a warming story. Wyatt was a drummer, vocalist and founding force of the original Soft Machine, the late-Sixties cocktail of jazzy influences ("simple riffy Mingus" is Wyatt's label), acid innovations and great British whimsy. Wyatt was celebrated for his bare-chested drum solos, his fondness for liquor and his rendition of the lines "I'm nearly five foot seven tall/I like to smoke and drink and ball."

Chas Chandler looked after the Soft Machine until "one day he came rushing in saying, 'I've just found this fucking genius who plays guitar with his teeth!' " Hendrix took the front seat, but the Softs were supporting on his 1968 U.S. tour, their first album already popular. In 1969, Wyatt made a solo album, *The End of an Ear*, and in 1971, after their fourth album was recorded, he split from the Soft Machine, "We just weren't friends anymore." Then he formed Matching Mole ("*machine moelle*" is French for . . .?). Matching Mole was preparing its third album and a tour when, in June 1973, Wyatt attempted to leave a party by climbing down the drainpipe. He fell three stories and woke up the next day with a broken spine and little chance of walking, or drumming, again. The general assumption was that he'd flown out of the window on acid. "No," he told them, "it's good old alcohol, you know — the legal one."



He mended his life for a year, married an artist called Alfie, and now he's back in circulation, dispensing "ramshackle charm" around the Television Centre, negotiating the python-sized studio cables with his nifty back-wheel balances. He is back with something to sing about, and his new solo album, *Rock Bottom*, produced by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, is a song and a half, a plaintive voice over lush, enigmatic arrangements, the whole thing lyrical with lost movement and a childlike clearness.

Wyatt's music is unmistakable. What is more important is that his music is a focal point for a nucleus of musicians busy trading ideas, intergigging and cross referring. It's not quite a new wave yet, but it is a thoroughly ongoing eddy. Wyatt's lineup at his recent Drury Lane concert is a good example: Mike Oldfield on guitar, Dave Stewart (Hatfield and the North) on keyboards, Laurie Allen (associated with Gong) and Nick Mason (Pink Floyd) on drums, Hugh Hopper (ex-Softs) on bass, Fred Frith (Henry Cow) on guitar and Mongezi Feza on trumpet. These bands and soloists are constantly interweaving, and a distinctive tone is emerging. Interestingly, like a city sound—Mersey and Philly, Boss-town and Motown,

Muscle Shoals and Ville Platte—these artists are linked by a record company, Virgin Records.

So the moment was auspicious as well as nicely surreal when the five million pairs of eyes tuned into *Top of the Pops* were momentarily puzzled by this bearded gentleman in a nightshirt, swaying around in his wheelchair and singing in a funny voice about how disappointment haunted all his dreams. In a career dedicated to small acts of cultural sabotage this was perhaps the coup de grâce. But Robert Wyatt maintains, of course, a healthy skepticism about pop history and its making. "I don't know why everyone worries so much whether it's a good period or a bad period for music," he says. "I'm having a great time. I never have liked these epoch-making records anyway!"

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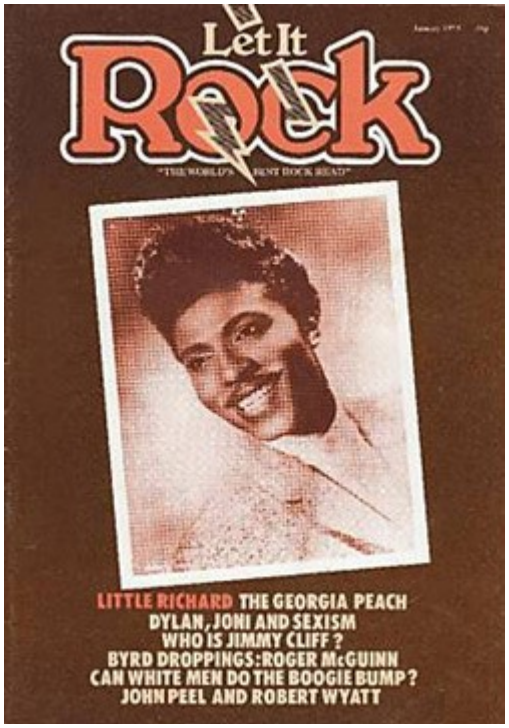
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My Top Ten by Robert Wyatt - Let It Rock - January 1975

MY TOP TEN BY ROBERT WYATT



First of all I have to make the point that I'm 29. I think everybody's stuck in their own age group to a certain extent, where their taste is concerned. People that I know tend to believe that the music of their adolescence is the most inspiring ever, and find music from before their own generation a bit boring, and music after it a bit trivial-childish.

Nearly everybody thinks that, although they rationalise it in other ways. The other point is I'm choosing ten records I like, but actually there are fourteen records that I like, so I've had to leave out four. The third point is that I've lost most of these records so I might have details of the titles wrong.

1

'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' by Charlie Mingus is from an album called *Mingus Ah Um* on CBS (I think). This isn't offically a song - I don't know of any words for it - but it's very singable like a lot of Mingus tunes. However complicated his tunes are, when you know them, you can sing along with them. Also I can almost play it as well as sing it because, like many of Julie Tippet's songs, it's nearly all on the black notes on the piano. The Improvisations on this, which are by Shafi Hadi and Booker Ervin on saxophones, respect the tune - are extensions of the tune. People like Gil Evans and Mingus stand out from other jazz writers and arrangers because they integrate the improvisations of their musicians into their writing.

I should think it's easier for a musician to do that playing with Mingus than with most people, simply because Mingus tunes are so beautiful anyway.



Next bit I've chosen is the **'Piano Quintet' by Shostakovich**. The string quartet part of this quintet, as far as I remember - as it's some years since I've heard it - play bowed muted strings; a very haunting sound. I like the idea of a string quartet anyway; in fact I enjoy the idea of a string quartet more than I enjoy a lot of string quartet music. In this case, perhaps, I liked it because the cello is often used rather in the way the double bass is used in jazz-i.e. not bowed but plucked; relatively simple rhythmically, as far as I remember. It's an incredibly melodic piece, which you must admit is a great achievement for someone who is, after all, only a brainwashed communist.



'Friday The Thirteenth' by Thelonious Monk. The particular version I have in mind is from the Town Hall Concert he did - the first main Town Hall Concert - where the arrangements were done by someone called Hal Overton. I think when Monk dies there'll be a rash of colour supplement potted biographies, little television programmes-arts programmes and so on, about him. 'The zany loony of the bebop world' is what they'll call him, no doubt. They won't do it till he's dead of course, in case he makes lots of money, which they probably think would be bad for him. In my opinion he's one of the greatest writers of tunes that I've ever heard, within my range of appreciation. The thing about this particular concert is that Hal Overton's arrangements are really imaginative. He's taken old recordings of Monk playing these tunes and written them out, including the solos Monk played, and orchestrated them for a large band. So you have the spontaneity of the improvised ideas strengthened by Hal Overton's inspired orchestration. 'Friday The Thirteenth' I particularly like because its got a secondary bass line which is sort of out of synch with the tune itself, and it sort of tilts the whole tune at a strange angle (If that sounds like Pseuds' Comer, I'm sorry , but that's what happens when you try and explain what you like about music).



'Epilogue' by Miroslav Vitous, from the album Infinite Search. Miroslav Vitous is technically in a class with Barre Philips, Stanley Clarke and Barry Guy. But as composer of music for the bass he is my favourite since Charlie Haden. Maybe his slavic origins have something to do with his particular melodic inclinations. On Infinite Search, the double bass - an instrument usually used in a subservient role - is the group's 'lead' instrument. The group - Herbie Hancock, John McLaughlin, Jack de Johnette and Joe Henderson - support Miroslav's lines with the accuracy, speed and imagination you associate with a first-class tennis match. Although the individual musicians are accustomed to working together in a live context, they are also accustomed to drowning out double-bassists, on the expedient premise that the loud instruments lead, the quiet follow. The recording studio can liberate musicians from this 'hierarchy by volume'. In this case, the effect of such energetic players pulling their punches to leave space for Miroslav to set the direction in each piece creates a fine, translucent texture, like a spider's web. Tennis matches, spider's webs - the whole world in a song, what more can you ask?

5

'Blues For Pablo' by Gil Evans and Miles Davis. This is from an LP originally called Miles Davis Plus Nineteen, which was Evans' first attempt to arrange a complete series of inter-related mini-concertos for Miles, who plays mainly flugelhorn in a bigband context. It's harder to play the flugelhorn than the trumpet, which tends to make even flugelhorn virtuosi like Clark Terry, Art Farmer and the great Johnny Coles play more carefully , thoughtfully than many trumpeters. As the title suggests, there is a certain similarity between the music of southern Spain and the early blues of the southern States, which Gil Evans exploits beautifully without using the obvious link instrument, the guitar. In fact Gil Evans was, as far as I know, the first 'jazz' arranger to supplement the traditional 'ethnic' dance band instruments with French horns, flutes and other instruments usually associated with the European orchestral tradition. Incidentally 'Blues For Pablo', like the other tracks on this record, is only a couple of minutes long, which demonstrates Gil Evans' roots as an arranger for 'pop' dance bands, and makes each individual piece nice and tight (if I'd been a radio DJ at the time I'd have pushed them as worthy competition to Sandy Nelson and Duane Eddy on the instrumental singles market).

6

'Sex Machine' by Sly and the Family Stone. Sometimes, when I've got nothing else to do, I sit and speculate about Sly Stone's innovations in the recording studio. He used to be a disc jockey and as anyone who admires the work of Kenny Everett knows, DJs have a unique opportunity to muck around with tape recorders and create a sort of surreal continuity with their between-record link pieces - to make a musical entity out of an otherwise more-or-less random series of records. Also a successful American DJ has to be fast, slick, tasteless and dramatic - a great education for a musician. One major difference between Sly Stone's courageous production stunts and, say Frank Zappa's, was that the basic band recording always had the immediacy and excitement of a good live gig. Larry Graham in particular, is a spectacularly useful bass-player and singer.


His Top Ten

MY TOP TEN

BY ROBERT WYATT

7

'Flying' by the Beatles. A lot of people didn't like the Magical Mystery Tour film because it was amateurish (the cameras didn't dart in and out ot the lead singer's nostril's like they do in professionally made music films) or pretentious (they were actually trying to do something interesting): or something. Belonging as I do to the gullible hippy generation whose critical faculties are irredemably blunted by drugs, sex, and bad PA systems, I

thought it was great. The LP of the same name was even better, because they filled it out with their recent amazing singles. The most magical and mysterious piece on the record though, for me, was Flying' which essentially seems to consist of a twelve-bar blues, except that all the chords are major, and the singing 'white'. So white actually, that it sounds like the 'Volga Boat Song', part two.
The effect is um what can I say oh you know the usual string of misleading, inadequate adjectives, um, how about 'this record is very nice so I like it'. P.S. I though the Beatles much more daring and inventive than most of us 'progressive' groups of the late sixties (apart from the Pink Floyd). Something to do with endless studio time replacing endless live gigs, I should think.



'Leaning On A Lampost' by George Formby. Yet another Daring, Wacky Northerner Apart from being Daring, Wacky, and Northern, George Formby was a shit-hot ukulele player, not half so stodgy as his many imitators - he'd have made a good rhythm guitarist. Apart from which this is a useful record to play to anybody who still thinks that Bob Dylan invented good lyrics. While I'm at it I'd like to mention Frank Crummil. Ahem, "Frank Crummit". Thank you.



''**Hold On I'm Coming' by Sam and Dave**. I vividly remember as if 'twere yesterday the day I saw the amazing Stax circus come to town. And best of all I
remember Sam and Dave striding on stage from either side and meeting in front of Booker T's gang all hammering away like it was the encore already-very exciting. Once again how can mere words convey etc. etc.
Goldie does a version of this song which apparently accentuates the title's erotic possibilities - more power to her, er, elbow and everything, I say; but nevertheless I doubt if her version matches the original in terms of pure musical excitement. On the other hand, there's probably no such thing as pure musical excitement-apart from The Old Grey Whistle Test of course.
The way Stax records were recorded made them perfect for discotheques rather than posh stereo systems etc, on which, like many good dance records e.g.
west-Indian dance records, they sound comparatively stark and dry. Conversely, many so-called "well-produced" records, when pumped out over a busy dance
floor, are about as helpful to dancers as a carpet of wet cement. I mention this because it's puzzling trying to work out why things are or have been popular, if you don't take into account the original context. I'd like to continue in this vein and discuss the amphibious life of the sea lion but I know enough about joumalism to know that you're supposed to stick to the point. So here's my last record.



'Get Out Of My Life Woman' by Lee Dorsey/Allen Toussaint. These two made a series of great singles, and if anybody's got a spare copy of the LP of this title they made together, I'll give anything except perhaps my right arm for it. I gather Lee Dorsey's not working as a singer any more, runs a garage or something. Never mind we've still got John Mayall. Toussaint belongs to the great tradition of musicians
from New Orleans with names thought up by a French Stanley Unwin. Some of my favourite of these voodoo-swamped names include Bechet, 'Slow-drag' Pavageau, Alphonse Picou, Barney Bigard, Joseph 'Zigaboo' on drums on this particular record but

whoever it is ought to be famous. He saved my bacon, anyway, by showing me a way to combine the triplet feel of the earlier swing bands with the more violent military-band-derived eighth note feel favoured in moderb rock circles. Now I hastily leave you to ponder the exact meaning, if any , of the phrase 'modern rock circles'.

La version française de cet article est parue dans le N° 8 de la revue Atem.

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I played Robert Wyatt at 78rpm and I saw God - New Musical Express - October 26, 1974


I played Robert Wyatt at 78rpm and saw God

There's something extra special about green suede boots. A certain devil-may-care attitude, a touch of fearless dandyism combined with a sense of the earthy and an instinct for style that just don't quit.

Robert Wyatt weareth green boots. They go very nicely with the blue plastic stop-watch around his neck.

Nick Mason, Very Famous Drummer and Producer De Luxe, peers eloquently through the plate-glass barrier between the Shop Floor and Ground Control at CBS studios. On the other side, Gary Windo (fetchingly ceilinged by a little white cap) and Mongezi Feza are adding the horn lines to Mr. Wyatt's Next Teenage Smasheroonie.

"Great," opines Wyatt from his mobile command-post at the doorward end of the console. "It does a bit, doesn't it?" replies Mason.

Wyatt groans elaborately. "You and your Pink Floyd in-jokes."

THE SONG is another golden great from the sizzlin' sixties, Chris Andrews' 'Yesterday Man'.

Where Andrews' original was aggressively petulant, Wyatt's is wistfully surreal. He performs on assorted bits of percussion (including a bass-drum whomped by hand) and what sounds like a harmonium, but plays around the beat while the main rhythmic push comes from Windo and Feza.

A modestly clad young man with an air of amiable vagueness that instantly pegs him as a member of Henry Cow wanders in, identifies himself by the highly improbable name of John Greaves, overdubs a positive humdinger of a bass line, inquires how long it takes to get from here to Liverpool Street, and wanders out again.



"Yeah, but could Pan's People dance to it?" inquires Windo.

It looks as if they may have to, because after a minor fracas with Top Of The Pops resident plenipotentiary Robin Nash, Wyatt will probably not be gracing their studios for some little time to come.

It seems that Nash considered Wyatt's appearing in his wheelchair to be somewhat "distasteful," both to the audience and to the production team.

Wyatt retorted, with ample justification, that if being in a wheelchair didn't hang *him* up, he saw no reason why it should offend anybody else.

Exeunt fuming in opposite directions.

Meanwhile, there is a groovy little ditty entitled 'Sonia' to go on the B-side, and for this one Wyatt whips it out on a specially-prepared mellotron programmed with sound effects, tuned percussion, voices, xylophones and a whole circus of other foolishness. As he gets to work on the track (which already features him on piano and percussion) jaws sag and people run serious risks of falling off their chairs.

"He could do a show by himself with two or three of those," murmurs his wife Alfie.

"Can we hear the other one again?" asks Windo.

Mason spins around in his chair, face frozen in well-simulated disgust. "What do you think this is?" he asks icily. "A bleedin' discotheque or something?"

As the studio disintegrated once more into cackles of brain-damaged hilarity, we fade out into a different time phase; two weeks previously in Twickenham, playground of the Elder Deities. We'll give Wyatt one paragraph's start to make it back to his residence in time to admit the writer.

Okay, Robert - go!

WHILE WE'RE WAITING, let's sling in a few thoughts on Mr. Wyatt's album, Rock Bottom, which is being received in the nation's record stores with the proverbial storm of indifference.

First of all, it's an easy album to listen to and a hard one to come to terms with. (Jeez, two clauses ending in prepositions. If my English teacher could see me now.)

As Ian MacDonald pointed out in his original review of the album, rock-star-as-paraplegic is a whole different ball game to the flood of spiritual hypochondriacs currently laying their bummers on paying customers, especially when Wyatt has triumphed over his particular slice of adversity, leaving others (like John Lennon, Lou Reed and pre-Beach Neil Young) staggering under comparatively featherweight burdens.

I don't want to pull any sanctimonious Oxfam there's-a-lesson-to-be-learned-by-all-of-us routines, but nevertheless, the point does have to be made.

Not to dwell overlong, either, on the face that the music and lyrics are a prime vindication of tile theory of lateral thinking as applied to rock music (i.e. many of the conventional criteria of what constitutes a "good rock lyric" or a "good rock melody," are effortlessly short circuited).

There, now. I've gone on for five paragraphs when I only meant to write one, and poor old Robert's waiting for me two weeks ago in Twickenham - so into the conveniently located

time/space reducer (cleverly disguised as an ordinary London taxi) and ...

LO AND BEHOLD, here we are at the Wyatt residence, a large, airy house - reputedly donated by admirer Julie Christie - and here's Mr. Wyatt himself to open the door.

The living-room window is adorned with a Communist sticker (you just knew that he was a dirty Red, didn't you? Now he'll definitely never get back on Top Of The Pops).

Beaming and kaftan draped, he skids around the kitchen organising coffee ("We don't have any sugar, so is condensed milk all right? You don't look like a hippie, otherwise I'd offer you honey"), before transferring the discussion to the Principal Living Area, which, he claims, "has a totally spurious and extremely temporary air of tidiness."

He produces a reminder list for himself of things that he specifically wanted to talk about.

A remark made by the author to the effect that he never listens to the radio because he likes to programme his own listening sparks Wyatt off on one of his ready-made topics.



"But the logical extension of that is why not get a piano so that then you can programme your own notes. It's like singing, everybody thinks that it's a case of some people have a voice and some people haven't.

"*Everybody's* got an equally good voice. Just like everybody's got two arms and two legs. It's just a matter of using it.

"People who get praised for doing it are the people who actually bother. It's incredible cheek, actually. There's nothing easier than putting on layer after layer of any instrument that you find lying around."

Take that, Mike Oldfield. Still, that does presuppose that you can actually *play* the goddamn things in the first place.

"No, not assuming that you can play it. In fact Dave MacRae had a much harder time putting down mellotron than I did, because he knows much more about possibilities.

"I'm so delighted if I can get a note which sounds nice that I don't get too flash with it.

Dave can do so much that it's almost a drawback. The people who make the best rock records are the people who can't really play that well at all."

"It must be very tantalising for someone like Keith Jarrett, because he can do so much. It's like an athlete: there's such a real joy in doing it. His fingers are so fast that his brain can't keep up half the time.

"People with a fantastic amount of facility have a hard time controlling it for a specific musical event. In fact, amazing soloists tend to play different versions of Their Solo in everything they play, jazz guitarists have a much harder time playing solos that are relevant to a particular tune than, say, George Harrison would, who can't move that fast.

"This is my theory, which is my theory and which belongs to me.

"Now what else is on my list ... there's a few things that I'd kick myself for if I didn't mention ...

"ONE OF WHICH is the growing antipathy among NME readers - and writers - towards boring old snobs left over from flower-power, such as myself, being given precedence over ... no, not precedence, but ... taking music away from the people or something ... if I'm wrong I'll apologise ... actually, I think I *am* wrong.

"Anyway, I'd just like to say that I heard Noddy Holder this morning, and I think he's one of the best singers I've ever heard. He's one of the only singers I've ever heard who's constantly done amazing vocals on everything since the first record his group did. I think he's an absolute ... fantastic singer.

"Now, what else does he think?"

What else does he think?

Heavens to albatross, gentle reader, the foregoing represents about four minutes of a four-hour conversation. The ideas-per-minute quotient of a Wyatt conversation rivals that of Groucho Marx in his prime. You'd need a "Wyatt Remembers" type paperback to do justice to it all.

Anyway, lemme just sling in a few random excerpts from our extraavapperama:

"Oh, another thing that I think is ... see, Alfie liked the Sparks single straight off an' I didn't and she suggested that a lot of blokes miss the point that rock's based on. All us blokes claim Mick Jagger, or whoever it might be, as our sort of male hero, but in fact the basic reason that a lot of these geezers get famous is because they're sex symbols for girls.

"The male rock fan takes over in terms of who's supposed to be good and who isn't - and I was wondering about this tendency towards sourness on the part of all blokes when they talk about rock-and-roll and the disillusion that they feel about rock-and-roll.

"It's because they don't like to admit that a large number of the heroes actually became heroes not as earthy rock-music-for-the-people people but simply because *an incredible number of girls fancied them*.

"I reckon you ought to have Elke Brooks and Lyndsey De Paul and people doing singles reviews, because as far as I can remember it's been all blokes doing 'em. A lot of singles are to do with male sex objects, so it's very odd that it's largely men writing about it."

Two more minutes and counting ...

ANOTHER BIT, mainly about that Drury Lane gig of a month or so back. Gonna do any more?

"No. I knew it was gonna be quite good, because Laurie Allan, Hugh Hopper and Dave Stewart are basically my dream rhythm-section. I felt that no matter how bad it was, those people and Fred Frith and so on would be able to pull something out of the hat.

"There's some misleading things put out about me, actually, about my dislike of live performances. All I'm talking about is me and what suits me.

"I get things together in live performances that I wouldn't get together normally and there's certainly a certain magic to it if it's working right, but the sheer cost and the whole organisation of getting a live group working and the solid responsibilities of getting other people paid - there's just so many things that can go wrong that the percentages are all against you.

"But people like me aren't basically quick thinkers and we work best without people ... staring at us.

"I've got a sort of computer mentality - not that I actually do much composing. If I wasn't watching telly I'd be composing most of the time, and this is how my brain operates.

"Performance is something else altogether. Performance is taking on people who've come out for a lift after their day, so that they feel good for a couple of hours, and there's therefore a temptation to get into the exciting bits.

"Whereas most of the music I like is ... pretty boring, actually! Performing live gives you a cheap thrill consciousness."

ONTO THE ALBUM, and its graphic depiction of Wyatt's life before, during and after the accident.

"The accident didn't in fact haunt me or in fact have half the effect on me that people might suppose. It was a useful bunch of symbols of what I think life's like anyway, but even then I'm not really concerned with whining.

"You've got to think of *something* to sing, and something that comes off the tongue quite easily, so obviously you draw on what's around you, just like a person who's going out to sketch. The sketch is just the sketch.

"What they are interested in is their control of their fingers. The subject that they use is really quite incidental.

"It's just one of the tools, part of the stimulating stuff that sets things off. Nothing to do with the quality of what comes out.

"It doesn't matter if at the end you know nothing more about houses or trees. The words are just tools for me to make pleasant sounding songs out of."

Charles Shaar Murray.

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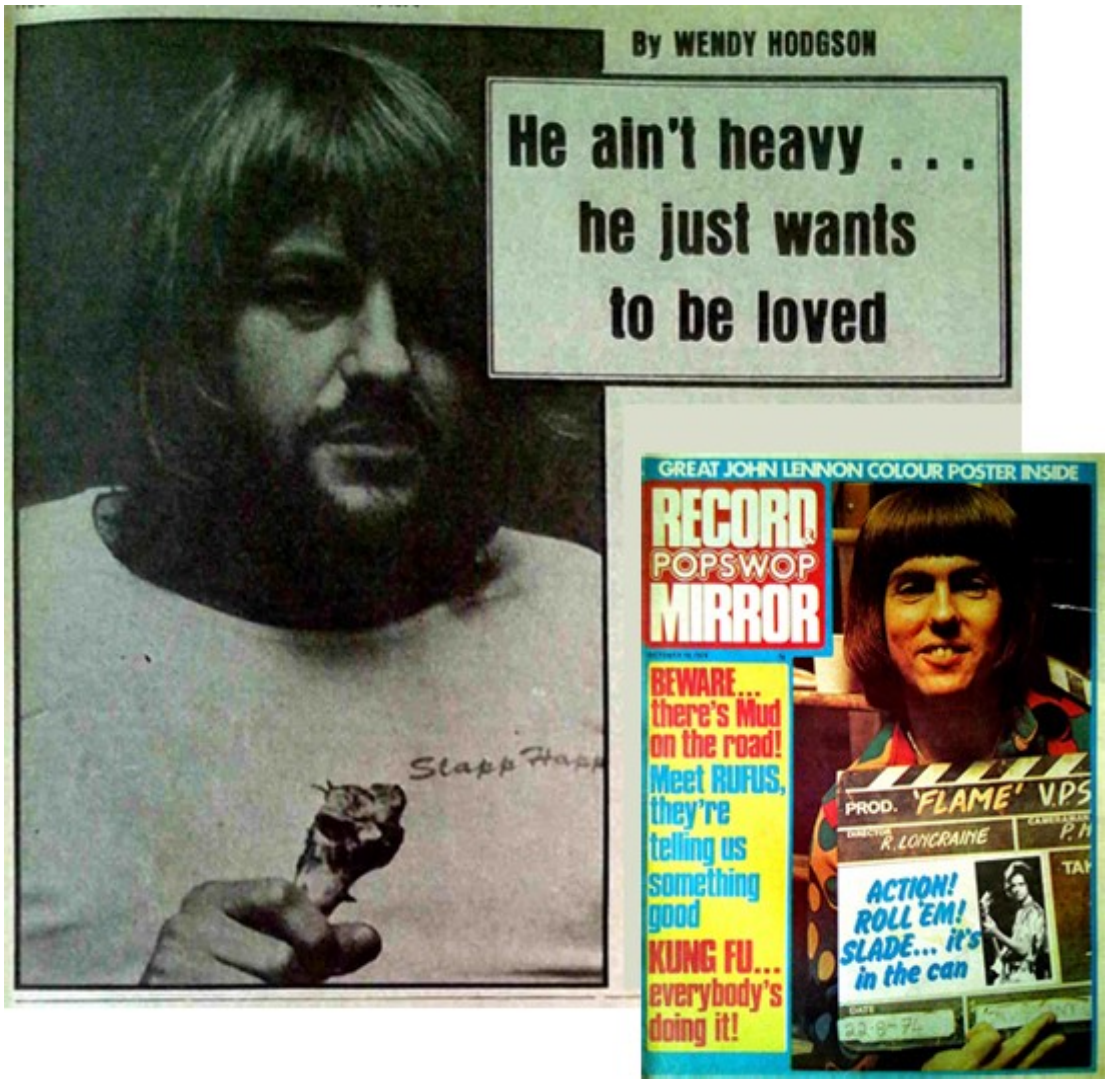
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HOME

He ain't heavy... he just wants to be loved - Record & Popswop Mirror - October 19, 1974



By WENDY HODGSON

A SHATTERING accident or an unfortunate misadventure usually makes peoples more philosophical about life. Robert Wyatt is the exception. Last year he fell from a window breaking his back and paralysing his body from the waist down, but he hasn't changed. He says: "I'm still the same silly git that I ever was!"

Just before this catastrophe, Robert had packed up drumming with Soft Machine and stopped gigging with Matching Mole. He was pondering what steps to take next, when fate

took over with a seven-month bout in hospital. "It's almost as though it had been planned for me now, as I sit back looking over my past," he says.

Within less than a year Wyatt has courageously blasted his way back with a single that has greatly surprised many people - particularly the heavy followers whom he appeals to. In case you haven't heard, it's the old Monkees hit I'm A Believer.

This is Wyatt's first attempt at the commercial market. His dramatic change in style was to get away from his usual five - minute, long material to a shorter, boppler type of record.

"I'd like, to try and make some more commercial records" he begins. "But there are so many people who do it expertly anyway that it's a bit cheeky for me and my recording company to think we can hold our own. For me it's an excuse to try out something different."

Loyalty

And with this comes the assurance that Wyatt will not be burning his boats behind him. "I know what I do best", he exclaims. "It's nice to have the opportunity to reach the other side of the pop scene, but I'm also very concerned with the loyalty of my fans who've been with me for years. I don't want to lose these people or their loyalty. Of course If I had to chose then I'd rather keep entertaining those who I've been appealing to for so many years. If I can reach more people then of course that's fine".

He admits, that in the beginning he was worried about his fans disapproving of the record and particularly worried how more Influential people like DJ's would take it "I thought that if Tony Blackburn was going to play the single then John Peel would stop playing it, but in fact he hasn't stopped playing it. As far as I can gather everyone's been nice and encouraging about the single."

Of course there are some people totally baffled by Wyatt's unusual move, and think he should be doing something more challenging instead of time wasting.

"The first time I saw myself on Top Of The Pops I thought the kids must be wondering "What's that great bear and bunch of hippies doing on our nice clean programme". But In fact these are just friends of mine whom I'm borrowing from my favourite groups. They help me out when they're not too busy."

Everyone puts him into a class of his own, looks up to him, admires him, calls him intelligent and rates him as a superior musician. Robert Wyatt radiates his vivaciousness and easy - going nature to his guests until eventually you feel you've known him for years. He is oblivious of the class in which his fans have put him. He says "I'm grateful for the people who take me serious but I get worried when they start saying I belong to some superior gang.

"I think a lot of people in this business pretend they're communicating some serious message in their lyrics. But really they're saying "Look what a nice intelligent and interesting person I am I want you all to love me very much. I'm probably like that a bit, but at least I know it. I say read the lyrics carefully but don't get taken into them.

"Although I'm not a pop musician. I'm also not a serious heavy musician. Some musicians may try to do something more complicated, serious or involved than straight pop music. I must say that I don't. I'm more interested In Spike Milligan or Monty Python's Flying Circus and people who play silly buggers. In a way I take myself seriously but I try not to be solemn about it".

Lucky

They may refer to him as 'the master-mind' or the 'intelligent musician' - but he's certainly a man full of surprises. The heavies may think they know all about him, but in
actual fact there's far more to this super guy than meets the eye.

He reads about today's charts and confesses: "All I read is complaints all the time, but really I don't think people realise how lucky they are. Eno pointed this out to me by saying listen to Alvin Stardust's records and see how good the guitar breaks are. They're very,

very good. This is where many people would he surprised - although perhaps not so now that I've released an old Monkee record! I tend not necessarily to like bands but particular musicians. For instance I think the Sweet have a first-rate drummer. I like Lindsey De Paul and Christ. If I could sing like Noddy Holder I'd be happy.

"All I've ever done is to try and keep with my audience and play what I thought to be nice stuff to play".

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Wyatt: up from Rock Bottom - Melody Maker - October 12, 1974



by Steve Lake

Robert Wyatt, 29, a gentleman never renowned for his dress sense, leans forward in his chair and

Involuntarily, I gasp. Glitter! Not a profusion, admittedly, but unmistakably there… Robert Wyatt is wearing rhinestoned carpet slippers, folks. Can this be?

hoists the hem of the kaftan/nightshirt affair he's wearing up by two or three inches.

Can yesterday's jazzer really have "gone glam"? He nods his head shrewdly.

"You can tell Gary Glitter – he might as well forget it, because by the time I'm finished, he's going to look hopelessly functional and tame.

Come Christmas time, when me beard's a bit longer, I plan to sport a string of fairy lights, from ear to ear. And I'm also considering the possibilities of a flashing neon street-sign for me wheelchair. How can Glitter compete with that?"

How indeed?

Don't you realise, I suggest to him, that the average reader is very probably a mite confused by the sudden change of direction that your career has taken lately? After all, from the heads-down seriousness of the drum chair with the Soft Machine to Top Of The Pops appearances crooning Neil Diamond tunes is hardly the most predictable of paths.

Wyatt thinks deeply for fully four minutes or so, scratching his head, face screwed up in concentration.

"Good," he says finally, and promptly clams up again, pouring himself a fifth sherry.

"What I would like to say to your readers," he volunteers, "is 'Why are you reading about somebody boring like me when there's a history of the Ronnie Scott Club by Max Jones elsewhere in this very same issue?'"

(See what I mean?)

Actually, "boring" is one thing the Robert Wyatt story is not. For despite his own embarrassment about his entire recorded output prior to the Virgin Records' "Rock Bottom" album, his achievements, personally and musically are pretty extraordinary.

Think about it. While Britain, in late '67, was recovering from an overdose of imported Flower Power and every soul band in the land had suddenly become a "head" outfit (viz the changing of Zoot Money's Big Roll Band into Dantalion's Chariot), the Soft Machine, unquestionably the most articulate of all the post-UFO crowd, were elsewhere.

Building up a heavy "cultural" reputation in France, initially, where they played the legendary St. Tropez gig, warming up the audience before Picasso's play, "Le Désir Attrapé Par La Queue."

The self-deprecating Wyatt finds it inconceivable that anybody should feel nostalgic for the first Softs. "We were just a bunch of posers, who couldn't play as well as Mingus or any of our heroes."

All the same, the said "posers," after, admittedly a line-up change or two, became the first (and to date only) rock band to be invited to play the Proms, were accepted by the British jazz scene (toured with the front line of the Keith Tippett Group in the 1969, played a residency at Ronnie's in '70), and radically changed rock music throughout Europe, being the inspirational source of a zillion Continental jazz-rock outfits. (Wyatt: "I can't say that I feel particularly proud about that.")

And Robert's extra-Soft Machine activities were mostly the kind of gigs that will constitute rock legends in years to come.

Can you imagine what an astonishing buzz it must have been to play a significant role in Keith Tippett's mammoth Centipede venture, for example…

And Wyatt was featured on Syd Barrett's "The Madcap Laughs," arguably the most controversial singer-songwriter album yet.

Robert recalls the sessions: "I thought they were rehearsals! We'd say 'What key is that in Syd?' and he'd say 'Yeah.' Or, 'That's funny, Syd, there's a bar of two and a half beats, and then it seems to slow up, and then there's five beats there,' and he'd go 'Oh, really?' And we sat there with the tape running, trying to work it out, when he stood up and said 'Right,

thank you very much'."

Then came Matching Mole, recording a brace of fine albums… in short, a career a lot of musicians would be proud of. Not Wyatt.


Wyatt: up from Rock Bottom

by Steve Lake

INTERNATIONAL

CHARLIE RICH Fully Realised

"I regret almost every second of my professional life. There's hardly a minute on any of those old albums that I can listen to without wincing. Y'know, there's so many bright ideas there, but there's more confusion."

Early last year, Robert Wyatt managed to fall out of the third floor window of a Maida Vale flat during the course of an exceptionally exuberant party. He broke his back, and put himself out of action for 12 months and is now rather more restricted in his mobility, being confined to a wheelchair.

Curiously, the net result of what must have been a very traumatic period of his life is that Robert seems more in control of his artistic situation than before, despite being unable to play drum kit, which was, previously, pretty much his raison-d'être.

Now forced to concentrate more on singing, at which he was always exceptionally adept, Robert's also got further into keyboards which had hitherto been a hobby, and something he wouldn't have considered doing on stage "unless I got very, very drunk" as he once put it.

Now his keyboard playing is improving, rapidly.

"My keyboard playing, I think, is going to improve just in time to take over from my voice. Limb by limb I'm disintegrating. I can't play drums any more, and, as I smoke 60 cigarettes a day, the singing's obviously going to dry up in a couple of years, and as the alcoholic poisoning takes over I won't be able to write songs any more, and I'll be left a pathetic zombied figure sitting in front of a piano.

Shortly after no doubt, the paralysis will reach my hands, and finally when all my faculties are gone, I'll become a critic and join you on the Melody Maker."

Still, with the top half of Robert Wyatt currently operating at something close to peak performance, the wide spread of activities in which he's immersed himself this year is singularly impressive. First, there was a contribution to Phil Miller's song "Calyx" on the debut Hatfield and the North album, and later, a series of gigs with an augmented version of that delightful ensemble, in which situation Robert sang some vocals and percussed enthusiastically on timbales, cymbals and conga.

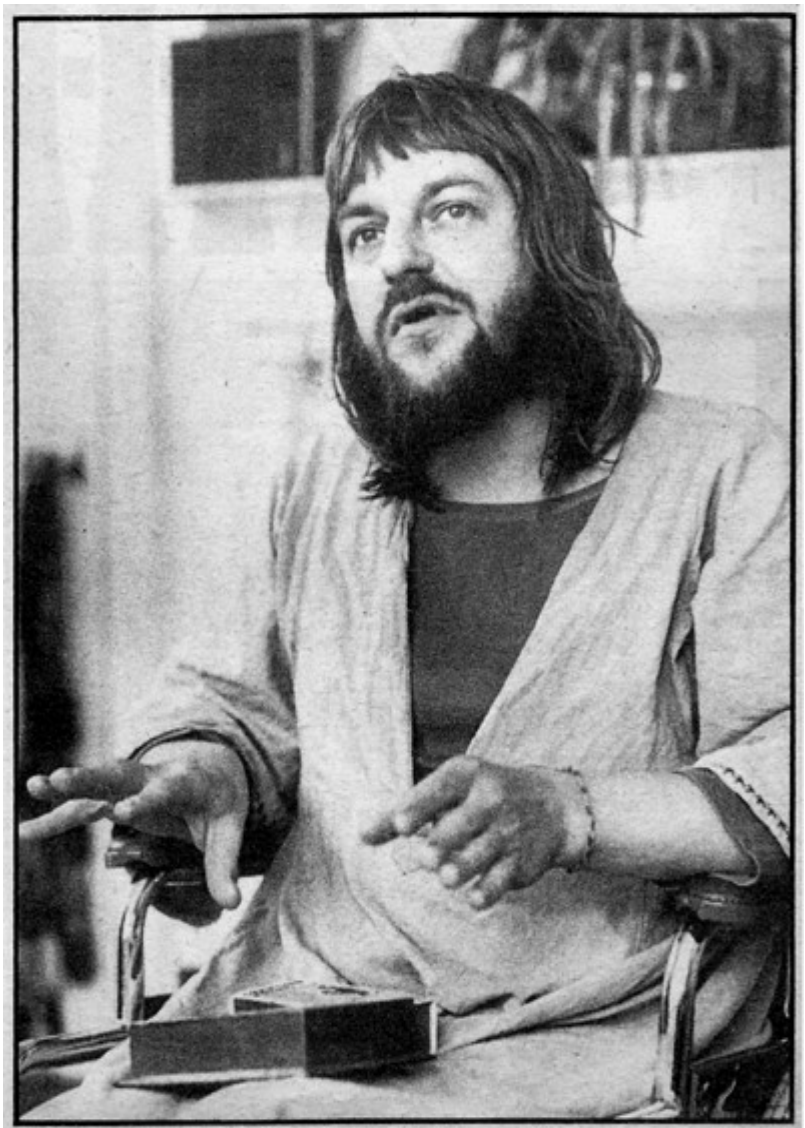
A role, in fact, he was to repeat at the celebrated Kevin Ayers Rainbow gig in June, alongside the likes of Eno, John Cale and Nico.

A nervous solo gig at the Mal Dean benefit at the ICA Cinema followed, since which time Robert's released the "Rock Bottom" album to unanimous critical raves (and some chart success), done some sessions for the new Eno album, got an enthusiastic audience off at a filled-to-capacity Theatre Royal "solo" gig, and, latterly, taken to doing telly shows to promote "I'm A Believer," this year's best single so far.

Top Of The Pops was apparently a rather harrowing experience, despite stalwart mimed support from Nick Mason, Dave MacRae. Andy Summers, Fred Frith and Richard Sinclair, while a second attempt for Granada's new Forty Five show, incorporating the soundless services of the complete Hatfield plus Frith, fared more comfortably.

So, from all this running around, can one deduce that there's a possibility of a Robert Wyatt Band hitting the M1 in the not-too-distant future?

"No." (pause). "No, absolutely not. I'm not being responsible any more for half a dozen other people's food and rent, and the constant compromise of having to present whatever I've got simply because roadies haven't had anything to eat for two weeks.



ROBERT WYATT. Picture by Barrie Wentzell

If I stop working now, I can just sit about for a year if I want and have a think, something that you're never free to do with a band. You have to continually present very substandard stuff for purely economic reasons of keeping the band together."

Live gigs per se, with a band or otherwise, are going to get the chop. There's some he says, that you can't turn down, the Mal Dean benefit being one of them, but outside worthwhile causes, bread alone won't entice Wyatt back on to the boards. Basically, it seems that Robert is keen to eliminate the element of chance almost completely from his music.

He declined the Hyde Park freebie this year, for example, where he was to have performed with Henry Cow and Slapp Happy, because there was insufficient time for rehearsal and he wasn't interested in jamming, and he's reluctant to get into improvised singing duets with Richard Sinclair when he works with Hatfield. "I can work out my bit, you see, if I know what notes and chords the group are playing, but I don't know what Richard's going to sing.

It might be effective, sure, but I think music can be a lot more than just effective. I think they are right notes and wrong ones. I'm not into chance operations at all. In fact, I'm not interested in any kind of procedure for its own sake.

I'm not interested in groups for their own sakes. I think they're all just mechanisms people apply to themselves in the hope that the result will be beautiful music.

"I'm interest in them only if they work."

Is this a changed viewpoint, though? After all, improvisation played a large part in the music of the Softs and Matching Mole, and all that experimentation with Symbiosis seemed very much a raving exploration of free music for its own sake.

"Ummm… Well, I've always had this problem right from the time I started playing music. Right back to schooldays, actually, and the Wilde Flowers. I've always worked with two kinds of musicians —some that were into improvisation as a process, and some that weren't. And I've always kind of played the devil's advocate to all of them. Y'know, talking about Cecil Taylor to Dave Sinclair and taking the exact opposite stance with some jazz musician.

All I'm saying really is that any kind of procedure can become a prison, and when that happens, watch out. It can happen just as easily in free jazz as in any other kind of music.

Y'know… Learning to play your instrument faster than anybody else in the world might liberate you… It liberated Charlie Parker, for example. But on the other hand, you've got someone like Keith Jarrett, who, for all his virtuosity can't quite reach the heights that Monk used to."

Strange, really. For all Robert's enthusiasm for contemporary fashion and an all embracing love for music that can take in Steve Harley, Roxy, Boz Scaggs the Pointer Sisters and whole post-Canterbury mob without any apparent discomfort, there's nothing that really gets him going like his old jazz heroes.

"Yeah, that's the truth. Often when I'd just been to a big deal rock concert somewhere I'd wind up down at Ronnie's listening to five middle-aged guys blowing their hearts out and realise that, yes, I actually liked this a lot more.

For all me name dropping, it's the old record collection, Mingus and Miles that's got it all for me. Why don't you turn to the Ronnie Scott feature, readers?"

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HOME

The bizarre beatitudes of the B side by Robert Wyatt - New Musical Express - October 5, 1974



SINGLES REVIEWED THIS WEEK BY ROBERT WYATT

The bizarre beatitudes of the B side

JOHN LENNON : "Whatever Gets You Thru The Night"(Apple).

Lennon's decided to put out a "no-nonsense rock single". Everything's played and recorded with real class — including Junior Walker imitations and the less predictable rhythm banjo. The words are pretty permissive for Lennon (ie, no finger-wagging) and could well have been written by one of the more affluent folk artists. As many people seem to feel that the world needs more no-nonsense rock singles, I expect this'll be very ... popular.

DANNY WHITE : "Cracked Up Over You"(MCA).

Recorded in 1966. I can't imagine anyone on the Radio apart from David Symonds or John Peel playing this unfortunately. It's the kind of thing the Stones, Kinks, Pretty Things etc, used to cover on their B sides and LPs before the all-our-own-chunes rule took over English Rock (which, funnily enough, was around the time musicians started to realise that about the only way they were going to get a sizeable chunk of the profits made on record sales was to call themselves composers).

THE CHI-LITES : "Too Good To Be Forgotten" (Brunswick).

There will never be any peace (until God is seated at the conference table). How's that for an all-embracing record review? No? Actually it's the title of the B side, and I am momentarily

nonplussed.

THE SOUL CHILDREN : "Love Makes It Right" (Stax).

This really begins as a spoken monologue on the B side, and that's a great idea for a single, though the intended dramatic effect would be more apparent if you didn't have to turn the record over half way through. Nothing much happens I must admit, after that; but the overall effect reminds me of Gladys Knight, and I really like it.

THE RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS : "Give It To The People" (Capitol).

Once it gets under way this could almost be the Walker Bros. Or indeed the Moss Bros, but I don't mind that. Their individual voices sound as impressive as ever, especially on the B side, "Love is Not a Dirty Word".

THE UNDISPUTED TRUTH : "I'm A Fool For You" (Motown).

Yet another frustrating record on which all the bright ideas are displayed in the first 15 seconds, after which sheer tunelessness renders the excellent performance and great musicianship er ... pointless. I wouldn't complain normally except that I really think Norman Whitfield could make more amazing records if he er ... um ... I don't know ... got Fred Frith to write the string parts or something. (Whoops! Still, that's a good excuse to turn to some altogether more British Artists).


PLATTERS

SINGLES REVIEWED THIS WEEK BY ROBERT WYATT

The bizarre beatitudes of the B side

KENNEY JONES : "Ready Or Not" (G.M.).

This really does what I suppose Music's meant to do: make you feel good. This particular combination of voice and instruments sounds really warm and friendly, the B side (performed by "KENNEY JONES AND A POP GROUP" complete with nice drum bits) is good as well. As its effect doesn't depend on novelty alone, I expect "Ready Or Not" to sound even better every time, so here's hoping it becomes one of those records "They" play several times a day on de radio.

SONG OF THE WEEK

GARY SHEARSTON : "I Get A Kick Out Of You" (Charisma).

Here's the exception which proves my "no dead composers" rule. This wistful rendition of the Cole Porter classic, and Hugh Murphy's imaginative production, should make anyone think again about turning away from our Commonwealth cousins in our mad scramble to join the Eurovision Community. I mean if it's a knock¬out contest between special import rates on Gary Shearston versus cut price Charles Aznavour, frankly our

antipodean comrade wins hands down. (Tiny reservation: why change words like 'gal' to 'bird?').

ROXY MUSIC : "All I Want Is You" (Island).

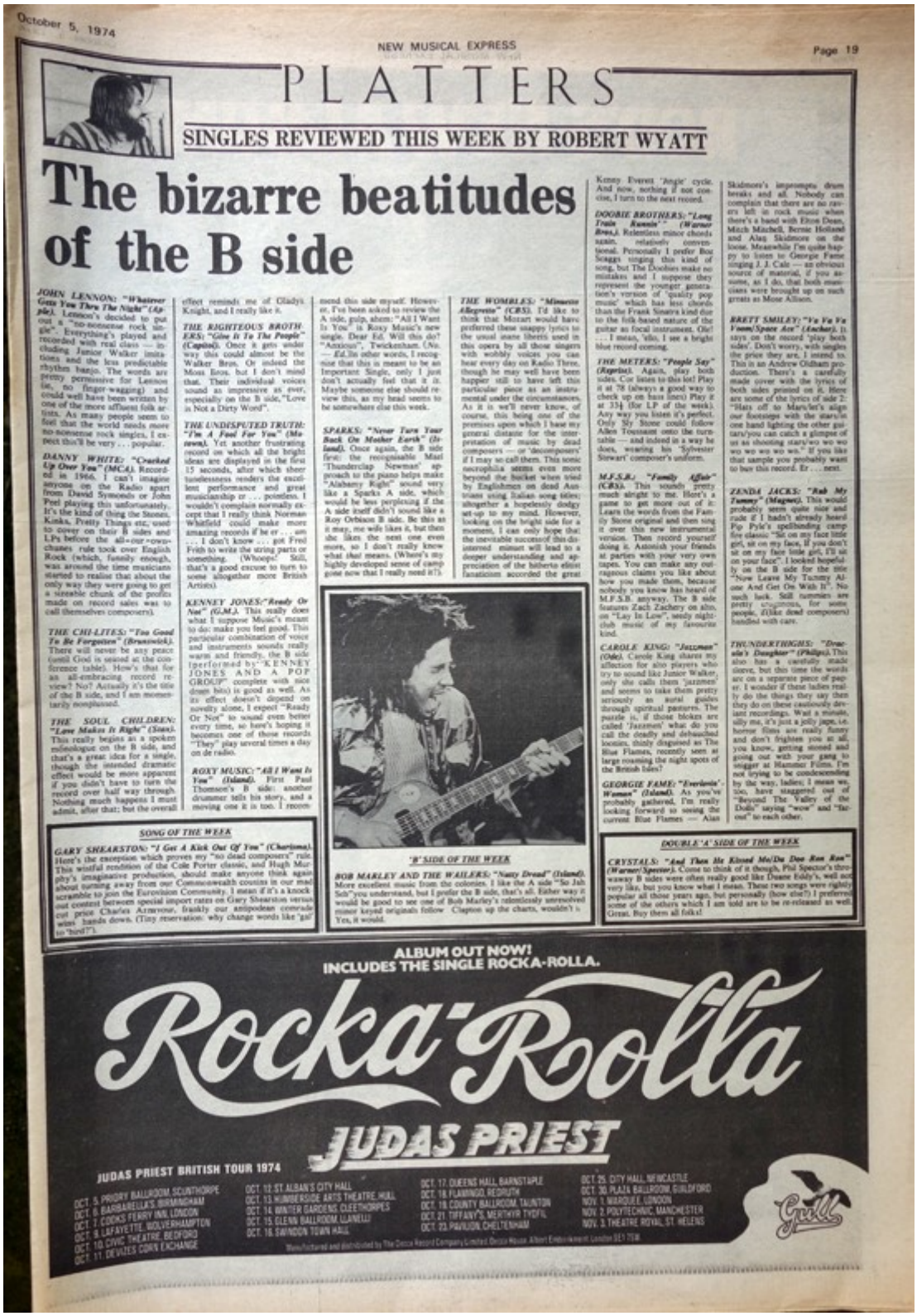
First Paul Thomson's B side: another drummer tells his story, and a moving one it is too. I recommend this side myself. However, I've been asked to review the A side, gulp, ahem: "All I Want Is You" is Roxy Music's new single. Dear Ed. Will this do? "Anxious", Twickenham. (No. — Ed.) In other words, I recognise that this is meant to be an Important Single, only I just don't actually feel that it is. Maybe someone else should review this, as my head seems to be somewhere else this week.

SPARKS : "Never Turn Your Back On Mother Earth" (Island).

Once again, the B side first: the recognisable Mael 'Thunderclap Newman' approach to the piano helps make "Alabamy Right" sound very like a Sparks A side, which would be less perplexing if the A side itself didn't sound like a Roy Orbison B side. Be this as it may, me wife likes it, but then she likes the next one even more, so I don't really know what that means. (Where's my highly developed sense of camp gone now that I really need it?).

THE WOMBLES : "Minuetto Allegretto" (CBS).

I'd like to think that Mozart would have preferred these snappy lyrics to the usual inane libretti used in this opera by all those singers with wobbly voices you can hear every day on Radio Three, though he may well have been happier still to have left this particular piece as an instrumental under the circumstances. As it is we'll never know, of course, this being one of the premises upon which I base my general distaste for the interpretation of music by dead composers — or 'decomposers' if I may so call them. This sonic necrophilia seems even more beyond the bucket when tried by Englishmen on dead Austrians using Italian song titles; altogether a hopelessly dodgy set-up to my mind. However, looking on the bright side for a moment, I can only hope that the inevitable success of this disinterred minuet will lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the hitherto elitist fanaticism accorded the great Kenny Everett 'Jingle' cycle. And now, nothing if not concise, I turn to the next record.



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PLATTERS

SINGLES REVIEWED THIS WEEK BY ROBERT WYATT

The bizarre beatitudes of the B side

JOHN LENNON: "Whatever Gets You Thru The Night" (Apple). Lennon's decided to put out a "no-nonsense rock single". Everything's played and recorded with real class — including Junior Walker imitations and the less predictable rhythm banjo. The words are pretty permissive for Lennon (ie., no finger-wagging) and could well have been written by one of the more affluent folk artists. As many people seem to feel that the world needs more no-nonsense rock singles, I expect this'll be very . . . popular.

DANNY WHITE: "Cracked Up Over You" (MCA). Recorded in 1966. I can't imagine anyone on the Radio apart from David Symonds or John Peel playing this unfortunately. It's the kind of thing the Stones, Kinks, Pretty Things etc. used to cover on their B sides and LPs before the all-our-own-chanes rule took over English Rock (which, funnily enough, was around the time musicians started to realise that about the only way they were going to get a sizeable chunk of the profits made on record sales was to call themselves composers).

THE CHI-LITES: "Too Good To Be Forgotten" (Brunswick). There will never be any peace (until God is seated at the conference table). How's that for an all-embracing record review? No? Actually it's the title of the B side, and I am momentarily nonplussed.

THE SOUL CHILDREN: "Love Makes It Right" (Stax). This really begins as a spoken monologue on the B side, and that's a great idea for a single, though the intended dramatic effect would be more apparent if you didn't have to turn the record over half way through. Nothing much happens I must admit, after that; but the overall effect reminds me of Gladys Knight, and I really like it.

THE RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS: "Give It To The People" (Capitol). Once it gets under way this could almost be the Walker Bros. Or indeed the Moss Bros. but I don't mind that. Their individual voices sound as impressive as ever, especially on the B side, "Love is Not a Dirty Word".

THE UNDISPUTED TRUTH: "I'm A Fool For You" (Motown). Yet another frustrating record on which all the bright ideas are displayed in the first 15 seconds, after which sheer tunelessness renders the excellent performance and great musicianship of . . . pointless. I wouldn't complain normally except that I really think Norman Whitfield could make more amazing records if he or . . . am . . . I don't know . . . got Fred Frith to write the string parts or something. (Whoops! Still, that's a good excuse to turn to some altogether more British Artists).

KENNEY JONES: "Ready Or Not" (G.M.). This really does what I suppose Music's meant to do: make you feel good. This particular combination of voice and instruments sounds really warm and friendly, the B side (performed by "KENNEY JONES AND A POP GROUP" complete with nice drum bits) is good as well. As its effect doesn't depend on novelty alone, I expect "Ready Or Not" to sound even better every time, so here's hoping it becomes one of those records "They" play several times a day on de radio.

ROXY MUSIC: "All I Want Is You" (Island). First Paul Thomson's B side: another drummer tells his story, and a moving one it is too. I recommend this side myself. However, I've been asked to review the A side, gulp, ahem: "All I Want Is You" is Roxy Music's new single. Dear Ed. Will this do? "Anxious", Twickenham. (No. — *Ed.* In other words, I recognise that this is meant to be an Important Single, only I just don't actually feel that it is. Maybe someone else should review this, as my head seems to be somewhere else this week.

SPARKS: "Never Turn Your Back On Mother Earth" (Island). Once again, the B side first: the recognisable Mael "Thunderclap Newman" approach to the piano helps make "Alabamy Right" sound very like a Sparks A side, which would be less perplexing if the A side itself didn't sound like a Roy Orbison B side. Be this as it may, me wife likes it, but then she likes the next one even more, so I don't really know what *that* means. (Where's my highly developed sense of camp gone now that I really need it?).

THE WOMBLES: "Minuette Allegretto" (CBS). I'd like to think that Mozart would have preferred these snappy lyrics to the usual inane libretti used in this opera by all those singers with wobbly voices you can hear every day on Radio Three, though he may well have been happier still to have left this particular piece as an instrumental under the circumstances. As it is we'll never know, of course, this being one of the premises upon which I base my general distaste for the interpretation of music by dead composers — or 'decomposers' if I may so call them. This tonic sol-ruphilia seems even more beyond the bucket when tried by Englishmen on dead Austrians using Italian song titles: altogether a hopelessly dodgy set-up to my mind. However, looking on the bright side for a moment, I can only hope that the inevitable success of this disinterred minuet will lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the hitherto elitist fanaticism accorded the great Kenny Everett 'Jingle' cycle. And now, nothing if not concise, I turn to the next record.

DOOBIE BROTHERS: "Long Train Runnin'" (Warner Bros.). Relentless minor chords again, relatively conventional. Personally I prefer Boz Scaggs singing this kind of song, but The Doobies make no mistakes and I suppose they represent the younger generation's version of "quality pop music" which has less chords than the Frank Sinatra kind due to the folk based nature of the guitar as focal instrument. Ole! . . . I mean, 'ello, I see a bright blue record coming.

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M.F.S.B.: "Family Affair" (CBS). This sounds pretty much alright to me. Here's a game to get more out of it: Learn the words from the Family Stone original and then sing it over this new instrumental version. Then record yourself doing it. Astonish your friends at parties with your very own tapes. You can make any outrageous claims you like about how you made them, because nobody you know has heard of M.F.S.B. anyway. The B side features Zach Zachery on alto, on "Lay In Low", seedy night-club music of my favourite kind.

CAROLE KING: "Jazzman" (Ode). Carole King shares my affection for afro players who try to sound like Junior Walker, only she calls them 'jazzmen' and seems to take them pretty seriously as aural guides through spiritual pastures. The puzzle is, if those blokes are called 'Jazzmen' what do you call the deadly and debauched loonies, thinly disguised as The Blue Flames, recently seen at large roaming the night spots of the British Isles?

GEORGIE FAME: "Everlovin' Woman" (Island). As you've probably gathered, I'm really looking forward to seeing the current Blue Flames — Alan Skidmore's impromptu drum breaks and all. Nobody can complain that there are no ravers left in rock music when there's a band with Elton Dean, Mitch Mitchell, Bernie Holland and Alan Skidmore on the loose. Meanwhile I'm quite happy to listen to Georgie Fame singing J. J. Cale — an obvious source of material, if you assume, as I do, that both musicians were brought up on such greats as Mose Allison.

BRETT SMILEY: "Ya Ya Ya Yoom/Space Ace" (Anchor). It says on the record 'play both sides'. Don't worry, with singles the price they are, I intend to. This is an Andrew Oldham production. There's a carefully made cover with the lyrics of both sides printed on it. Here are some of the lyrics of side 2: "Hats off to Mars/let's align our footsteps with the stars/in one hand lighting the other guitars/you can catch a glimpse of us as shooting stars/wo wo wo wo wo wo wo wo." If you like that sample you probably want to buy this record. Er . . . next.

ZENDA JACKS: "Rub My Tummy" (Magnet). This would probably seem quite nice and rude if I hadn't already heard Pip Pyle's spellbinding camp-fire classic: "Sit on my face little girl, sit on my face, If you don't sit on my face little girl, I'll sit on your face". I looked hopefully on the B side for the title "Now Leave My Tummy Alone And Get On With It". No such luck. Still tummies are pretty ticklish, for some people, (Like dead composers) handled with care.

THUNDERTHIGHS: "Drunkard's Daughter" (Philips). This also has a carefully made sleeve, but this time the words are on a separate piece of paper. I wonder if these ladies really do the things they say then they do on these cautiously deviant recordings. Wait a minute, silly me, it's just a jolly japs, i.e. horror films are really funny and don't frighten you at all, you know, getting stoned and going out with your gang to snigger at Hammer Films. I'm not trying to be condescending by the way, ladies; I mean we, too, have staggered out of "Beyond The Valley of the Dolls" saying "wow" and "far-out" to each other.

SONG OF THE WEEK

GARY SHEARSTON: "I Got A Kick Out Of You" (Charisma). Here's the exception which proves my "no dead composers" rule. This wistful rendition of the Cole Porter classic, and Hugh Murphy's imaginative production, should make anyone think again about turning away from our Commonwealth cousins in our mad scramble to join the Eurovision Community. I mean if it's a knock out contest between special import rates on Gary Shearston versus cut price Charles Aznavour, frankly our antipodean comrade wins hands down. (Tiny reservation: why change words like 'gal' to 'bird'?).

'B' SIDE OF THE WEEK

BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS: "Natty Dread" (Island). More excellent music from the colonies. I like the A side "So Jah Seh" you understand, but I prefer the B side, that's all. Either way it would be good to see one of Bob Marley's relentlessly unresolved minor keyed originals follow Clapton up the charts, wouldn't it. Yes, it would.

DOUBLE 'A' SIDE OF THE WEEK

CRYSTALS: "And Then He Kissed Me/Da Doo Ron Ron" (Warner/Spector). Come to think of it though, Phil Spector's throwaway B sides were often really good like Duane Eddy's, well not very like, but you know what I mean. These two songs were rightly popular all those years ago, but personally (how dare?) I prefer to some of the others which I am told are to be re-released as well. Great. Buy them all folks!

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Grull

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Oldfield joins Wyatt return - New Musical Express - 24th August, 1974



Oldfield joins Wyatt return

ROBERT Wyatt, the one time Soft Machine and Matching Mole drummer, makes his first major stage appearance for a year - since the accident which paralysed the lower half of his body - when he leads a band at a Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, concert on Sunday, September 8.

Among the guest stars booked for the date are Mike Oldfield, whose "Hergest Ridge" album is released this week (see Page 20); trumpeter Mongezi Feza; Julie Tippetts; sax-player Gary Windo; Pink Floyd's Nick Mason; Dave Stewart (ex-Egg keyboard-man), drummer Laurie Allen and Fred Frith, who played viola on Wyatt's recently-issued and highly-acclaimed "Rock Bottom" album.

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Wyatt himself has a new record out on September 1. It's a single -"I'm A Believer" - a re-working of the old Monkees' hit and is produced by Nick Mason.

FRONT COVER:
(foreground) Robert Wyatt with Mike Oldfield (left) and Julie Tippetts (right); middle-distance (l/r) Gary Windo, Laurie Allan, Mongezi Feza; (back l/r) Dave Stewart, and dummy Nick Mason.



Robert Wyatt

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Blunders



> Zoom

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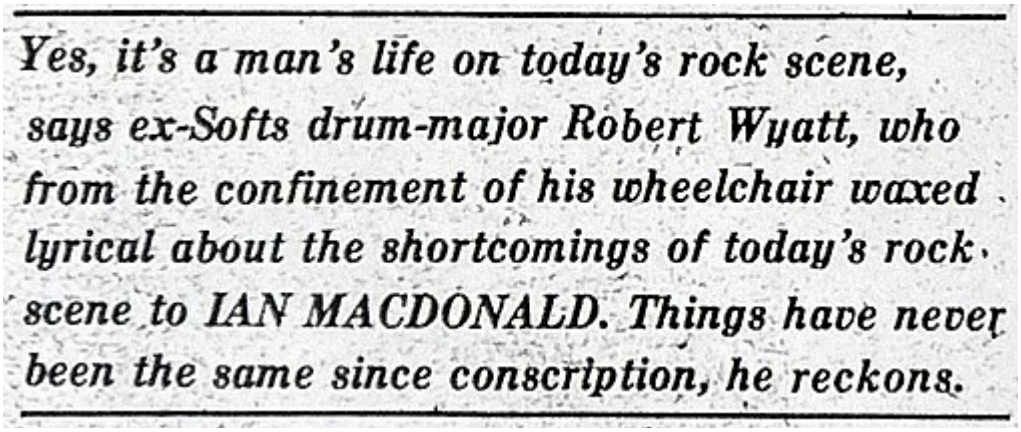
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HOME

Robert Wyatt : Join The Professionals, Form A Rock Band ... - New Musical Express 27 July, 1974

JOIN THE PROFESSIONALS, FORM A ROCK BAND...


Yes, it's a man's life on today's rock scene, says ex-Softs drum-major Robert Wyatt, who from the confinement of his wheelchair waxed lyrical about the shortcomings of today's rock scene to IAN MACDONALD. Things have never been the same since conscription, he reckons.

YEAH, WELL - Robert Wyatt (fact) drummed with Soft Machine, led Matching Mole, and fell from a fourth-storey window in Maida Vale early last year, breaking his back and finishing up in a wheel-chair. His lady's name is Alfie and they now live in a house in leafy Twickenham, and he's just done a solo-album for Virgin, the first enterprise in his post-accident career.

Robert Wyatt (opinion) was probably the most creative and individual drummer in British rock, and his enforced retirement from that activity is a great loss. Fortunately, he is also one of the most creative and individual singers / composers in British rock, as you can hear on Rock Bottom, the title of his new album. The usual deal at this point is for The Journalist to go and ask The Artist questions about The Record - which I did. However, I also knew that Robert was always disposed to think original thoughts about The Rock Scene in general, and reckoned that the isolation of his last year would have allowed



Join the professionals, form a rock band...

NME 27.7.74

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him plenty of time to indulge this bent. This turned out to be true, and looking over the transcript of the interview afterwards, I decided to concentrate on the Wyatt's-Eye-View of what's going down in the music biz by letting him spiel uninterrupted for the rest of this article and handle his album myself elsewhere.

So, without further ado - whatcha think of today's rock scene, Robert?

"I'm vaguely disappointed. I find myself looking with envy at the creative environments of other art movements in the past and - I don't know whether it's just the rosy glow of retrospection - I find the atmosphere around the rock scene today humourless, heavy-handed, and dull. Compared, say, to that surrounding the dadaists and the surrealists in art."

What's up then?

"Well, it's like armies. There's a generation of people who've got to think of something else to do - now they're not being conscripted for a couple of years - and the rock scene seems to be a kind of substitute for army life."

Huh?

"Well, take Charles Shaar Murray's thing about Sergeant Pepper and The Beatles not playing proper rock 'n' roll at the time when they were previously supposed to have been making great records - saying, in effect, that rock has got certain stylistic limitations and is all the better for them.

"I reckon you can say the same of military brass-band music, really - and that's what that kind of obsession with the 'it's-either-rock'n' roll-or-it-isn't' thing reminds me of.

"People say rock bands are influenced by R&B - but that heavy 4/4 thing they're all using now doesn't strike me as having much in common with the fluid, loose, danceable rhythms you get in R&B. It reminds me more of military brass-bands, and in fact, most British drummers these days sound as if they've come straight out of the army to me.

"The excitement that fans today feel seems to me to be like that of a crowd of people cheering their local brass-band as they lead them off to war."

Where's that come from?

"From the 'live' situation. It appears that a band playing to 20,000 people are, if they're going to be successful, going to sound pretty much like Led Zeppelin. That's the main constraint of the idiom today. New bands come in all the time with new ideas but, after a couple of years on the road, these are all squeezed out of them and they end up sounding more or less like Led Zeppelin.

"I've felt this on-stage myself. The audience puts a constraint on what you're doing, by being extremely reluctant to modify their imagined idea of what they're going to enjoy. And, since you have to work out a way of pleasing people to whatever degree is necessary to keep you in a job, it's inevitable that most bands slowly metamorphose into the audience's image of what they ought to be if they're going to get their rocks off to them. And that seems to be Led Zeppelin.

"Personally, I'm far more interested in the hit parade nowadays. The whole crazy logic of Top Of The Pops is very appealing to me since it's largely beyond me why one three-minute chunk makes it while another doesn't. And it isn't just the TOTP promotion-spot that does it. You have to see through all that unfairness and lunacy to a hidden logic - a real human need being catered for.

"I think it's very funny the way the hit parade makes people cross, actually."

What's the solution to all this Led Zeppelin impersonating?

"The acknowledged separation of 'live' and recorded music. Eventually they'll be seen to be as independent of each other as theatre and cinema, and the first suggestion of recorded music having the relationship to 'live' music that cinema has to theatre was probably Phil Spector, wasn't it?

"One big mistake these days is assuming you can do everything. One guy writes it and performs it and records it ... as Bryan Ferry said recently: *'the trouble with rock these days is that everybody writes their own material and they're not very good at it.'* I think it's lovely the way he's getting down to doing tunes that are much better-written than the ones he can write. He's really flourishing now that he's not trying to do it all himself.

"I'm also watching with interest the future development of Andy MacKay. That Eddie Riff record's really fascinating."

In what way?

"Well, it's Pop Art, innit? Much more so than the Who thing in the mid-Sixties when people were wearing striped plastic coats and claiming they were influenced by Bridget Riley. It's only with MacKay and Ferry that the original thought behind Pop Art has reached rock.

"What put me off Roxy Music initially was the idea of playing safe by using an obviously good, obviously professional, polished, modern rock rhythm-section which everybody can stomp along to - and then having the ideas-bits and the jokes sort of spread on top ... so that, if people didn't understand them, they could still come and watch the band and get their rocks off.

"I think that's cheating a bit. I really think that Andy MacKay should have a weak, rickyticky rhythm-section under his rickyticky alto sax. But the idea of that kind of muzak - the idea that you're stuck miles away from anywhere with a really crummy juke-box so you sling on about twenty B-sides - which is what his album's about - ...

"I think that's amazing."

If Ferry's the David Hockney of rock, who's MacKay?"

Richard Hamilton, probably - though, if I was being a bit rude, I'd say Rauschenberg, 'cos he puts in bits of 'legitimate' painting around the edges of his things the same way Roxy use a 'legitimate' rhythm-section.

"Again, it all comes from having to work in the 'live' situation. Of somehow having to make it 'strong.' There's nobody using the kind of wonderfully crummy rhythm-section that Buddy Holly used. Y'know - Elton John'll have his guitarist doing Shadows-type figures, but his drummer'll be bashing away at the modern heavy rock number. Instead of the old Fifties thing, which was someone playing very weakly with a lot of echo.

"In a way though, I like Ferry's attitude to the modern rock rhythm-section. It's like a reintroduction of class-distinction - the Gentlemen and the Players. I think it's a very funny thing to have happened ... so soon after 1967."



Can you elaborate on your theory of Ferry?

"Um, well - I don't think he's very *inventive* musically - he's a thinker, a conceptualizer. But I think he really loves singing 'cos he's so good at it. The idea of taking a lyric and replacing the American thing - the dotted crotchet, which is based on swing - and putting in the British staccato eighth-note ... it's very funny and he knows that and he's exploiting it.

"Take Brenda Holloway's 'Every Little Bit Hurts,' for example. Sing it the way she does it, the American way. You're doing 'every night I cry, every night I sigh' - duckety duck, duckety duckety duck.

"Now, if you sing that with English intonation and stress you're doing it like 'ev-ry litt-ul bit hu-urts' - dum-dum-dum-dum-dum-dum-dum ... And you immediately sound like ... Bryan Ferry!

"There *are* people who suggested it before, mind you. Whispering Paul McDowell of The Temperance Seven using a resolutely English voice on old Louis Armstrong numbers, and so on.

"But there's plenty of things that Ferry's putting in on top of that - like his version of 'Wonderful World': 'Don't know much about the *Free-ench* I took.' That's lovely.

"This whole interpretive thing - last year everybody doing *Foolish Things*-style albums. I think it's very healthy. I agree with Ferry and Bowie when they say they're not really very inventive musically (even if the general public doesn't), because the kind of songs they write, the chord-sequences they use, are - and this sounds terrible, I know - the kind of thing I play every day and reject as not being good enough.

"I think it's good that people are beginning to go back and examine great songs, and not feel obliged to blunder about trying in vain to write them themselves."

Well, well, well. You can hardly call this mainstream thinking, can you, folks?

Only one question left, really. When'll Wyatt get down to doing his own interpretive album and what'll be on it?

"Sooner or later I'd certainly want to do it. I've got lists and lists of stuff in my notebooks - but, right now, the selection I'd probably want to tackle would go something like this:

"Ferry's 'Do The Strand', which is a genuinely good song; Charles Mingus' 'Goodbye Porkpie Hat'; Monk's 'Round About Midnight'; 'Every Little Bit Hurts'; two Beatles' tunes - 'If I Fell In Love With You' and 'She's A Woman', Caravan's 'Place Of My Own'; The Miracles' 'Ooh Baby'; 'Georgia On My Mind'; Brian Wilson's 'She Knows Me Too Well'; Charlie Haden's 'Song For Che'; Duke Ellington's 'Solitude'; Randy Weston's 'Berkshire Blues'; and 'Hey, Hey, We're The Monkeees' - y'know, the theme from the TV show."

I see. Well, I'm sorry Mr. Wyatt, but that's all we've got time for on this page. Your album's reviewed on page 14. Doubtless we'll all see you out on the road again before too long.

"When my guilt about sitting around here doing nothing gets the better of me, yeah."

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Wyatt : back on top - Melody Maker - March 30, 1974

Wyatt: back on top

"Just backing tracks. They're only backing tracks," said Robert Wyatt, almost apologetically. With that endearing lack of self confidence prevalent amongst most of our better musicians, the former Soft Machine drummer seemed vaguely embarrassed to be playing the first things put down for his debut on Virgin Records.

"You can't really get an idea of what these sound like on those crummy playback speakers..." Yeah, O.K., Robert.


Melody Maker

MM Revival Special! New road show soon—now Alvin, Marty, Dave Dee...

RIP IT UP!

Jackson Five coming

Morrison and Mayall cancel

No need for apologies, of course. Incomplete or otherwise, the two songs sounded fit to rate with the best that he's ever recorded.

Proof, I guess, that you can't keep a good man down.

Robert's accident of last year, which effectively prevents him from sitting behind a drum kit (never his favourite instrument, anyhow) seems to have served only to have stimulated a new instrumental creativity.

And, naturally, there's plenty of the man's unique vocalising — high and breathy, with words running in ordinary speech syntax — dropped 'aitches and all.

Future plans for the album include the possibility of adding trumpet mouthpiece to his artillery of instruments, and maybe even a little standard drum kit, judiciously using overdubbing and playing both top and bottom kit with the hands.

The record probably won't turn out as exclusively a "solo" album. Robert has ideas, strange

ideas for other parts yet to come.

I hear from other sources that one plan is to have Hatfield and the North playing a backing track. Suddenly they'll stop, and Henry Cow will continue playing the same thing.

“That will sound peculiar,” admits my musician informant.

Robert Wyatt is recording in the tiny Wiltshire village called Little Bedwyn in a tied cottage belonging to the local manor.

It's an old place, with low ceilings and oak beams that give it an air of lived-in comfort. It looks the sort of place that Constable might have retired to, after a day in the hills sketching out landscapes.

After the noisy roar of Fleet Street, Little Bedwyn is almost uncannily silent. Rolling fields on both sides of the cottages, no traffic sounds at all.

Only trouble is, the fields roll a little too much.

The Virgin Mobile recording truck is parked half way up the nearest slope. Robert can see it out of the window, but can't actually get his wheelchair across the grass to it.

It's a problem that album producer Nick Mason, of Pink Floyd notoriety, intends to sort out.

“Nick's got a second floor studio in London,” says Robert, “And if I can figure a way to get up and down stairs without too much inconvenience, I'll move in there.”

“Actually you've arrived at a particularly un-busy moment; I seem to have reached a creative impasse. There's really not an awful lot I can tell you about the record yet. Can we talk about something else?”

That's Robert Wyatt. Easy to chat to, difficult to actually interview. Never mind. Tell us how come you're writing songs again, Robert.

“I haven't written very many, as a matter of fact. The ones I'm doing now have been in my head for a long while. Apart from one of Charlie Haden's all-time classic pop singles (laughs), this one will be all me own tunes, but I'm not planning to rely on my own inventiveness in that area forever.

Generally speaking I'm not as good at writing tunes as people like Hugh [Hopper], Phil Miller and Dave MacRae are, so I'm quite happy to tackle things that they've thought of as well.

What I'm listening to most at the moment is actually New Orleans rock and roll, that piano boogie stuff...”

Ever obliging, Robert plonks his hands on the adjacent grand piano and plays said boogie, the noise resounding around the small room.

“Yeah… Where was I? Oh, right, other people's stuff. I'd like to do an album of Bobby Charles songs, and there’s some Dr. John things too.

I've got a Lee Dorsey album that I'd like to record exactly as it stands using all me mates and not trying to do anything original at all.

You know, I'd just like to do it properly, get it swinging, and not inject a single idea if I could help it!”



This train of thought temporarily carries Wyatt away as he works through a lengthy list of albums that he'd like to re-record.

He'd like to do all of the songs on Caravan's first album, he says. Especially their first single — "Place Of My Own." What a great song that was.

Of course the songs would ultimately turn out unlike the originals, if just by virtue of the Wyatt tonsils.

"It's the old joke about getting it 'wrong' and calling it 'different'.

"A cliche, of course, but that's what happens. I think it's quite a respectable procedure, nothing to feel guilty about at all."

In the interest of realism, I asked what precise function Nick Mason would be serving on the new album.

"Well, I'd been blundering on until Nick came along, and he's been thinking precisely, like this song requires such and such an instrument, and that song will sound better in a proper studio, with a more practical outlook than I'm capable of, and sorting out the headaches about costs of cetera.

The musician is meant to forget about costs when he's recording, but I never can. I get paranoias about time dribbling away..."

That said, Robert begins to actually look paranoiac about time wasted, and turns again to the piano, there to execute a few fancy trills. Looks like inspiration's about to strike again.

"I really must get down to work," he says, and then, calling to the engineer waiting patiently half way up the hill in the mobile truck:

"Hey, Steve, can we do a tape loop now?"

It's going to be a great album, y'know.

Steve Lake

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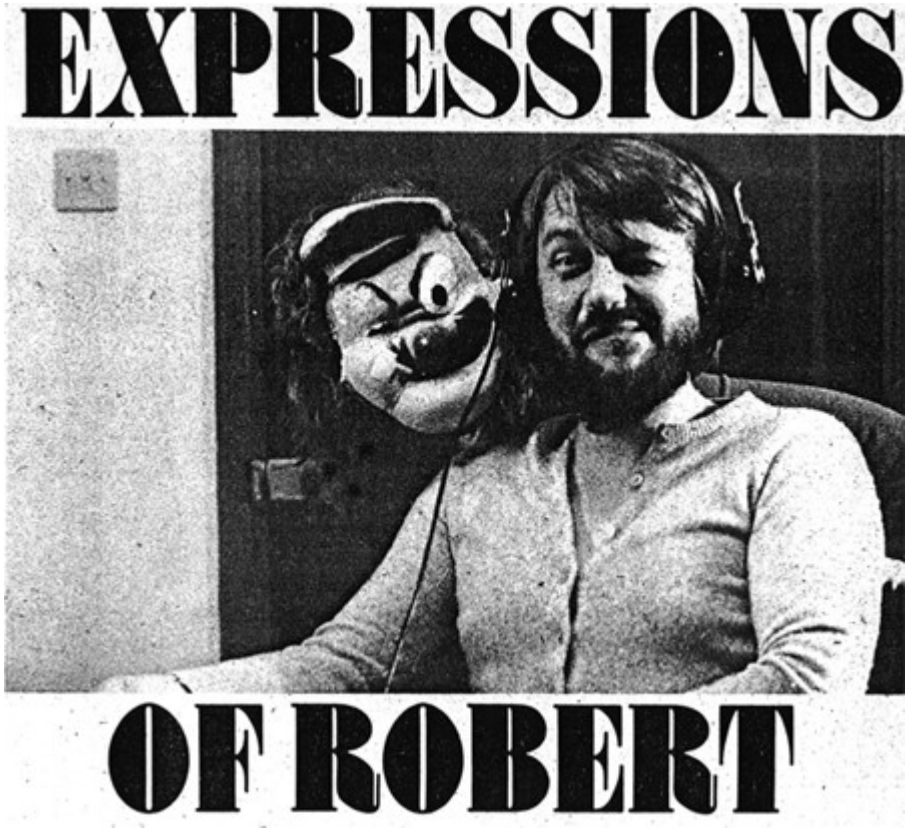
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Expressions of Robert - Sounds - March 23, 1974



Robert Wyatt has set out to make albums of songs before. The first was "End Of An Ear", a solo, album while he was still with Soft Machine, and that didn't turn out anything like an album of songs. The second was "Matching Mole", which got neater — he got through half the first side before he re-realised, as he rationalised it later, that making music is a cooperative process and it became a Matching Mole album.

Now he's started the next Robert Wyatt album, he's not saying "this time I'm going to make an album of love songs" as he's said in the past, and this time it might turn out to be much closer to that idea.

He turns away from the microphone where he's just been making "a tentative stab at a vocal" and stares out of the window in silence at the Wiltshire country-side for what seems like ages. "It's funny doing a song you wrote a year ago — almost like doing someone else's material. You get a different perspective on it, not better necessarily, but you put more into it in a way than you do on something hot from the presses."

But then a year ago the song would have been part of a re-arranged Matching Mole



repertoire. Now it's Robert singing over his own . backing track of organ, piano and conga drum, all recorded in the living room of a cottage in, Wiltshire, onto the Manor Mobile truck.

Matching Mole made two albums and played a number of gigs before all-too-familiar music business maladies forced them into a corner, which for a while seemed certain to put an end to the project. But they rallied, and a new version of Matching Mole was about to emerge last Spring. Then, at a party for Gong on June 1 last year, Robert fell from a window and broke his back, spending the rest of the year in Stoke Mandeville hospital.

Now out of hospital, he uses, wheels instead of legs and picks up his music again — if not where he left off, exactly, as near to it as time, circumstances and the fast-racing flow of his own ideas dictate. He's with Virgin Records now — "where all my mates are" — and is spending a week recording on the Manor Mobile before he and his lady Alfie move to a flat nearer London and he completes the album with production by the Floyd's Nick Mason.

He's always played keyboards, always sung, and always had a broad vision of the way he creates,. music in a studio: after "End Of An Ear" he said he saw himself as much an arranger as anything else, and when he was with Soft Machine he described himself as an "out of work singer, currently on drums with the Soft Machine", I've always rated him. an outstanding drummer, but while that didn't detract from me also thinking of him as an outstanding singer – certainly the most innovative and moving singer in this country that I've heard – and a man who could create staggeringly beautiful musical environments on record, the fact that so much of his work was behind a drum kit on stage prevented more than a part of his potential being realised.

Post-accident, he has absolutely. no plans to form a band, which' as he thinks back to the ratio of gigs he actually enjoyed against those that were a constant source of irritation, is a matter. of some relief to him. It is possible for him to do gigs of course, and he will – there's a Hatfield and the North concert at the Roundhouse coming up at which he'll probably appear, and there are plans for Robert to work out a short set within Hatfield's set which can happen whenever it seems convenient.

But without the structures of a band, Robert's energies seem to have come much more sharply into focus than ever before. Though the music may have been conceived a year ago, he has obviously modified it to suit his new situation, and what he's done so far sounds the strongest, most direct music he's ever done. The things he's done down in Wiltshire, of course, have been totally his own, but they achieve — even in the rough mixes — an intense sense of purpose within an extraordinarily wide range of sounds and ideas.

On one track the beat is sustained by four-to-the-bar done by beating a tin tray with a torch battery — it was originally just a time track but sounded so good that he kept it. On another, there's a churning guitar track which Robert describes as fake Dave Gilmour, though he was trying to do someone else. The song he was working on the day I was there was an affectionate song for Alfie, with sort of Edward Lear nonsense lyrics.

All of them have obvious influences, but equally all of them are quite definitely Robert Wyatt — the music has. a quality quite unlike anything else. Even his singing style has moved on from the one that Richard Sinclair reproduced so successfully on the Hatfield album, to encompass a much broader range of expression. There will, be other people on the album though — as he gets deeper into it he'll find which sections would benefit from different minds and playing styles, and he's drawn up a guest list of people he'd like to invite. to play on particular segments.


March 23, 1974 SOUNDS Page 11

EXPRESSIONS OF ROBERT

ROBERT WYATT has set out to make albums of songs before. The first was "End Of An Ear", a solo album while he was still with Soft Machine, and that didn't turn out anything like an album of songs. The second was "Matching Mole", which got nearer — he got through half the first side before he re-realised, as he rationalised it later, that making music is a co-operative process and it became a Matching Mole album.

STEVE PEACOCK

But the way it looks at the moment, the album will be the most complete expression of Robert as a musician he's ever achieved, and should bring his reputation out of the tight circle of friends and playing acquaintances. he's had since before the Soft Machine to people who might know of it; but who've not had the chance to experience it.

It's about time.

Steve Peacock

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Floyd's finest hour [Pink Floyd-Soft Machine: Rainbow Theatre, London] - Melody Maker - November 10, 1973

PINK FLOYD-SOFT MACHINE: RAINBOW THEATRE, LONDON


Melody Maker

DYLAN, BAND HIT THE ROAD!

Women in pop are in much the same situation as Blacks have been

RECORD CRISIS

Who storm

PINK FLOYD and Soft Machine stunned fans with two sensational shows at London's Rainbow Theatre on Sunday night. It was a splendid evening of rock-co-operation, in which both groups gave their services in aid of disabled drummer Robert Wyatt.

Compere John Peel was pleased to announce that some £10,000 was raised. He said that Robert intended to carry on with a singing and recording career. The ex-Softs drummer was not present but was acknowledged by cheers from the audience.

As two complex shows were performed on the same night, there were lengthy delays between sets which resulted in a certain amount of banter between the road crews and crowd. When the Softs finally came on for the second house, they were still dogged by sound problems. From my position near the right hand bank of speakers, only John Marshall's superb drumming could be heard with any clarity, although the combined keyboard riffs of Karl Jenkins and Mike Ratledge, wove an insidious pattern of great power and menace.

The Softs employed a cataract of sound in which improvised solos seemed of less significance perhaps than the overall blitzkreig, but John's drums employed a fascinating range of tones, and his attack was at times frightening.

There were no problems affecting the Floyd however, and they presented one of the best concerts seen this year; certainly one of the most imaginative and cleverly executed.

Dark Side Of The Moon, their last album was the main basis of operations, and the Floyd faultlessly combined quadrophonic sound, prerecorded tapes, lights, smoke and theatrical effects into a kind of rock Son et Lumiere.

There were many shocks and surprises along the way, and not having seen the Floyd for some time, I was frequently pinned back in my seat or ejected into the aisles, heart beating wildly.

Heartbeats in fact commenced proceedings, pulsating through the auditorium and stilling the more excitable elements in the crowd. Clocks ticked mysteriously and with perfect precision the Floydmen slotted their live instruments into the recorded sound.

The Floyd have a tremendous sense of pace. Occasionally they seem to overstate a theme or extract the last ounce from an idea, but the total effect is like coral growing on the seabed, establishing something deep, eternal and occasionally flashing with colour.

Overhead was suspended a huge white balloon to represent the moon, on which spotlights played, and not long after the performance began, searchlights began to pierce the gloom, and yellow warning lights began revolving in banks on the speaker cabinets.

Meanwhile the music continued apace, Nick Mason excelling with his terse, economical drums, hammering home the heavy stuff where required, and tastefully bringing down the volume when 'ere a new tack or shift in course was signalled.

Dave Gilmour has one of the most difficult guitar jobs in rock, having to contain his own exuberance for the benefit of the greater whole, but making every note felt on his own inventive solos. Dave was particularly effective on the funky 'Money' which should have been a single hit for t'lads.

Rick Wright's keyboards were immensely tasteful and melodic, gently spurred by Roger Waters mighty bass lines. Instrumentally the Floyd are a finely tuned mechanism that surges ahead like an armoured cruiser, oblivious to the smoke of battle.

Indeed the band were enveloped in smoke throughout the performance, glowing red lights adding to the illusion of inferno and hellfire. A choir of ladies cooed like angels of mercy and as a silver ball reflecting myriad beams of light began to revolve and belch more smoke, the audience rose to give them an ovation. They deserved a Nobel prize or at least an Oscar.

Chris Welch



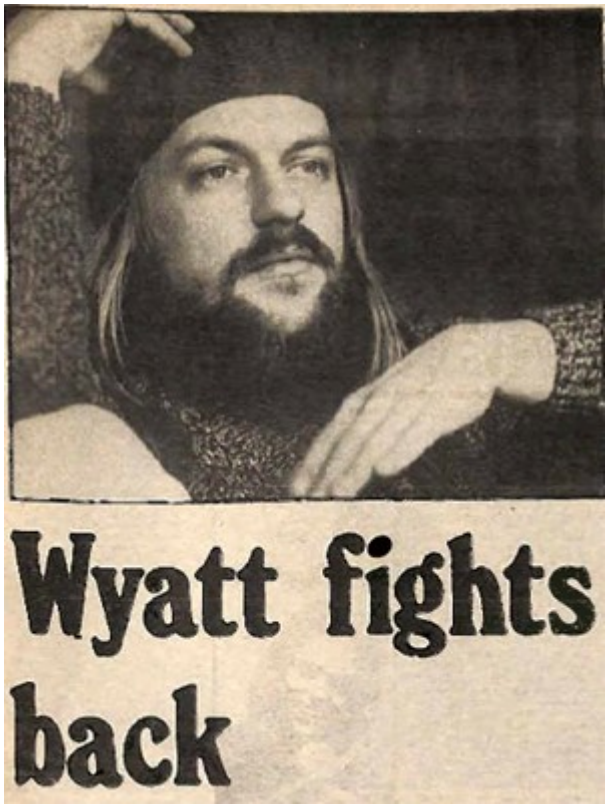
"Wyatt fights back" in the same issue

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Wyatt fights back - Melody Maker - November 10, 1973



He'll never drum again, but Robert Wyatt is getting ready to return to the rock business. From his hospital bed, he talks to Steve Lake.

Last week, Robert Wyatt and his lady Alfie had five pounds in the bank. Not a great reward for almost a decade in the music business, and the sort of situation bound to bring a little panic to any temporarily incapacitated musician.

And for Robert, of course, the prospect was particularly grim. Doubtless everyone knows by now that Robert broke his back in an accident at a party back in June, and now he's paralysed from the waist down.

The cold hard facts are that Robert will not be able to walk or play drums again. For a lesser person that could be the absolute end of the line, nothing left to do but wallow in self-pity.

Not Robert Wyatt, though. He's re-evaluating his position as a musician, and trying to find a way to return, to playing as soon as possible.

I went down to Stoke Mandeville Hospital with Mike Ratledge and Soft Machine manager Sean Murphy last week to see Robert. Frankly, it was a confrontation that I just didn't feel I was emotionally equipped to deal with.

What words could I possibly say to a personal musical hero, now confined to a wheelchair, that wouldn't sound like an obituary?

Some kids grew up with Gene Krupa, some with Jagger. Me, I grew up with the Soft Machine, went to more gigs than I can remember, and it was always an education to watch Robert.

It's not generally acknowledged yet, but Robert was a true innovator as far as drumming's concerned in the mid-sixties, single-handedly responsible, I think, for a lot of the cross-fertilisation that has occurred between rock and jazz.

But my worries were unfounded.

As soon as I saw Robert now out of the wards and as comfortable as possible in a cosy hospital annex called Ashendon House, I realised that he's capable of becoming an influential musician all over again.

One only has to look at his track record to understand the possibilities that are open to him. Generally speaking, if you deprive a drummer of his ability to drum, he doesn't usually have much to offer musically. Wyatt has always been more than just a drummer, however.

For two years he was the lead singer with a Canterbury band called the Wilde Flowers, and later of course he vocalised with the Soft Machine and Matching Mole, so he'll be singing more in future. Then there's his keyboard playing, about which he's always been unnecessarily humble, because he's very original.

As if that weren't enough, he's dabbled with electric guitar ("Memories" on Daevid Allen's "Banana Moon" album), and he once played trumpet in a trio which featured Daevid Allen on guitar and Terry Riley on boogie-woogie piano.

He has actually done some recording since his accident, proof that you can't keep a good man down.

"I went on my first outing since the accident, last week," he says, "to the Manor. I was hanging around the studios while Hatfield (and the North) were recording, hoping to be asked to rattle a tambourine or something, 'cos I'm pretty good at that, and eventually Phil (Miller) getting embarrassed by my presence, gave me a piece of paper and said 'Well, while you're here you might as well make yourself useful. Sing this.'

It was a new song that he'd just written. I thought 'Christ, I'll never be able to learn it. I'll make a fool of myself.' As it happened, though, it worked out all right."


Melody Maker

DYLAN, BAND HIT THE ROAD!

"Women in pop are in much the same situation as Blacks have been"

RECORD CRISIS

Who storm

The Pink Floyd/Soft Machine benefit concert came as a pleasant surprise.

"I couldn't believe it at first, in fact I didn't believe it till I read it.
But I'm knocked out because it means I can stop worrying about money for a bit, and that's a tremendous load off my mind."

And future plans? Rumour has it that Robert has written a whole batch of hit singles from his hospital bed.

"That's not quite true. I'd written a lot of songs for what was going to be the third Matching Mole album with Bill (MacCormick), Francis Monkman, and Gary Windo. I thought I'd got them all sort of safely stored in my head, but what with one thing and another I've forgotten most of them.

I've been working on some tape loops and things though.

By chance I've met a guy who's a friend of Ron Geesin's, and just happens to live across

the road from here.

He's got a piano, and some Revox machines, and Alfie's got me this little Japanese organ. We've made some funny old tapes. This guy doesn't know anything about me or Soft Machine or anything, but does know a lot about recording techniques."

And so, with more problems than most people could handle, he plans to slowly return to the fast-living rack 'n' roll circuit. I'm a hundred per cent certain that he'll be strong enough to cope with the pressures.

"Floyd's finest hour" in the same issue

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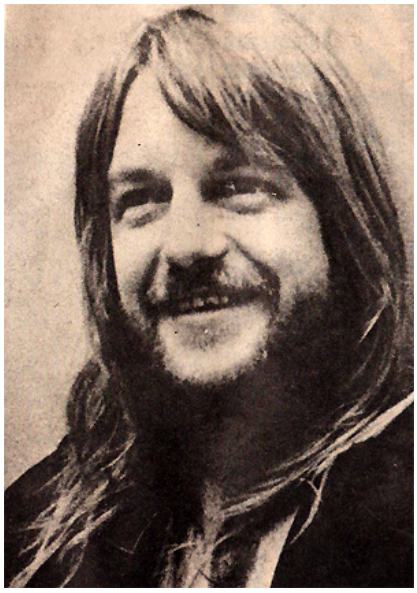
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Wyatt, the innocent abroad - Sounds - November 10, 1973

ELESWHERE in this lavishly presented issue of Everybody's Favorite Music Weekly (SOUNDS, you confounded fool) you may chance to read an account of the past weekend's frolics at the Rainbow featuring the Soft Machine and those roly-poly funsters, the Pink Floyd. I was once invited to dinner with Pink Floyd, the Pig and I were terribly nervous, couldn't understand what our fellow guests were talking about and weren't sure how to eat the excellent fondue and artichokes we were served.



THE JOHN PEEL COLUMNN

Wyatt, the innocent abroad

Since that evening no member of the band has spoken to me — which just goes to show what can happen if you don't care about table manners. Sit up and hold your fork properly while you've still got the chance. The concert review will have been written by one of the host of lynxeyed, erudite and frighteningly attractive young men that the paper employs in order to keep those girlish hearts a-flutter — and boyish too, no doubt, in a few isolated cases.

It's high time that Women's Liberation came to SOUNDS. The reason I mention this is that I had volunteered to report the event from my privileged position on stage as a friend to the stars. I am slightly wounded that my offer has been turned down but I don't intend to go on about it. I'll show 'em though. Any more of this and I'll be off to manage Brighton and Hove Albion.

It the slim youth sent to observe the goings-on fails to remark what a simply wonderful job I did of the compering then he will (and I don't want to seem harsh) be sent to bed without his cocoa and he'll have to take down all the posters in his room.

Last afternoon, as the winds howled about the portals of Broadcasting House and lesser men huddled together fearfully in doorways, high-stepping Radio 1 producer John Walters and I set off in my newest car and motored to Stoke Mandeville. Bucks, to see the subject, as it were, of this weekend's fun and games, young Robert Wyatt.

Before I forget I have not been slow to notice that the hulking Walters, previously a man of no little girth, has been surreptitiously losing weight and is beginning to take on the aspect of one of those warriors seen prancing about in an abandoned way in the woods of classical mythology. Just last week I observed him cooing over his reflection in a pool at the base of the post Office tower.

What, I suspect, the comely little rascal has in mind is to continue shedding the avoirdupois (as the women's magazines so coyly have it) until the times comes when he can ask me, with an affected casualness, how much I weigh. When I reply 10 stone 8 (actually it's more like 12 stone but it wouldn't be good for my image for you to know that — anymore than if you should accidentally discover that I am not, in reality, eighteen years old) he will announce, in a voice of burnished brass, that he weighs less than I do — and I will have lost the one advantage I have over him — unless you count the fact that he supports Crystal Palace, and even then supporting Palace has a certain cult value — like pretending that you think some Peruvian rock band is the best in the world.

As Walters is always quick to point out he is taller than I am, has some trumpery degree to my "O" levels, tells stories better than I do and believes that his silly cat is better than our three majestic animals.

When I first trotted north to peer at Robert in his hospital bed I was rendered almost inarticulate by the circumstances of his accident. What sort of light conversation do you have with someone who is that seriously injured? The fact that Robert has been a friend for a number of years seemed to make it even harder. Curiously he seemed less affected by the whole business than I was.



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There's something about Robert — a sort of questing, wide-eyed-innocent-abroad quality — that has always made the Pig and I feel very protective towards him. Supremely silly, really, as he's invariably shown a capacity for coping with and adjusting to traumatic changes of circumstances much better than I could. As a result I'd decided by yesterday that his adjustment to the fact that he can no longer walk or drum, stemmed from some mystical inner power to rationalize to the point where his incapacity became merely interesting.

When I rather condescendingly trotted out this weighty tripe he quickly disabused me by observing that much worse things had happened to him in his life and that his sole philosophy as far as his accident went was "hum. bloody typical!". That's much better than my silly notions. Even though he's tentatively an Arsenal supporter he's a man for whom the Pig and I — and a great number of SOUNDS readers — have a con-siderable respect and affection. Therefore it's good to know that his scaly little head is sizzling with musical notions and schemes, and that the chances are good that some of these latter will be translated into vinyl.

In fact he's already recorded a modest harmony for the impending Hatfield and the North LP. The benefit performances by the Softs and the Floyd will have helped to bring Robert's plans for world domination closer to fruition so we should thank both groups, both on a personal and a musical level.

If you were at the Rainbow on Sunday and wondered who the rather attractive and distinguished looking chap was who was playing the records — you know, the one the girls just couldn't take their eyes off — well, sillies, it was me — or should it be "it was I"? Answers on a post card please and the first out of our postbag on Monday morning wins a half-nelson and a body-slam.

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Pink Floyd in Wyatt Charity at Rainbow - Record & Radio Mirror - November 3, 1973

Pink Floyd in Wyatt Charity at Rainbow



PINK FLOYD AND SOFT MACHINE are staging two concerts at London's Rainbow theatre on Sunday, November 4 in aid of the Robert Wyatt benefit fund. Wyatt, the former Soft Machine drummer was seriously injured in an accident earlier this year and is paralysed from the waist.

The concerts will be staged in two performances, at 5 pm and 9 pm and are being sponsored by the Floyd who will perform their first live show of their latest album The Dark Side Of The Moon.

A spokesman said: "It's interesting to note that this will be the first time that the bands have played together in six years."

Tickets go on sale at the Rainbow on Thursday. November 1 at 11 am and can be obtained by personal application only. Priced at £5, £2,50, £2 and £1 the tickets are limited to four per person.



Lots of Lights

Fins Here

Pink Floyd in Wyatt Charity at Rainbow

Wailers are back

Alex Harvey

Greenslade — New album and concert

Blondel spectacular

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Floyd, Softs benefit gigs - Melody Maker - November 3, 1973

FLOYD, SOFTS BENEFIT GIGS


Melody Maker

FLOYD, SOFTS TO AID WYATT

OSMONDS: sour grapes or old age?

—Special concert at London's Rainbow this Sunday. Full story: p5

PINK FLOYD and Soft Machine are together on the same bill for the first time in over five years. It happens this Sunday, November 4, at London's Rainbow, in two special benefit concerts for Robert Wyatt, former Softs drummer injured earlier this year.

The concerts, in which the Floyd will perform "Dark Side of the Moon," are promoted by the groups themselves and proceeds will go to a benefit fund.
First performance will be at 5pm and the second at 9pm. Tickets are limited to four per person and are available by personal application only. They go on sale at 11am today (Thursday). Prices: £5, £2.50, £2, £1.50. £1.

Soft's manager Sean Murphy said he and Steve O'Rourke, Floyd's manager, came up with the idea of a concert independently, but simultaneously.

"These two hands started at the same time in the same situation at UFO and Middle Earth,' said Murphy. "They're both marked out by the public as being extraordinary, different groups from the general theme.

"They have similar attitudes and are quite similar people. Robert and Nick Mason are particularly close and the rest of them have always, been friendly. The Floyd felt a great attachment to the Softs and Robert's predicament."

Nick Mason commented: "The scheme is to help Robert get off the ground with another band. That's what it's all about - it's no funeral. It's a special occasion. We're not into doing half-shows like this but there's a good reason for doing this one."



Mike Ratledge of Soft Machine who was at school with Robert, said: "We and the Floyd haven't played on the same bill for years so it's apt that the time we get together it's for Robert. "We're glad to be able to do something. It's fantastic that it's going ahead.
Speaking from Stoke Mandeville Hospital Robert Wyatt, now paralysed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair, told MM he hoped to be out of hospital before Christmas.

About the concert he said: "Isn't it amazing? It's a dream I still can't quite believe it. It's quite an extraordinary thing for them to do."

What were Robert's plans? "Sometimes I get very depressed and think I can't do anything if I can't drum. Other times I get excited because singing, playing keyboards and making tapes — my secondary interests — have been forced to the front by circumstances.

"I've got lots of ideas for recording but it costs money, it doesn't make money. I've had to think about the problems of rent and the cost of living.

"But with any luck this benefit will give me a few months' breathing space. I can do recording and not have to worry about the rent or anything like that until I get out of hospital."

Robert's wife Alfreda has moved into a room at the hospital and is living there to be close to her husband.

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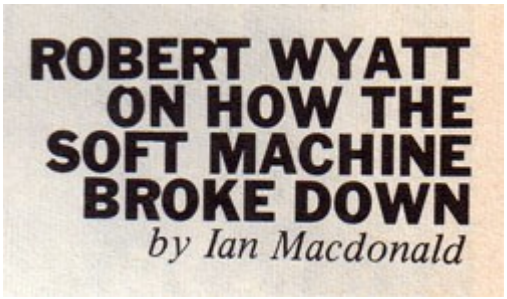
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The Mole In His Hole - Cream - Vol.2 N°2 - June 1972

THE MOLE IN HIS HOLE





Why did you leave the Softs and what are you up to in Matching Mole?

Lots of reasons - and my decisions about doing new things are so varied that they must be rationalisations of some basic thing that I really cannot pin down at all. I needed a complete change of life. At the time, it must have looked like from the outside that I had it made. In fact I was miserable. Absolutely miserable. So everything had to change on every level.

WHAT were the main problems?

Well, I can justify or get pissed off with characteristics of people I'm working with according to whether I'm getting certain musical things I want from them and whether I'm giving the necessary in return. If they are and I am, I see our personal relationship as satisfactory. But if I feel they're not doing what they should be doing or I'm not able to give them what a musician should, then this tends to manifest itself in personality difficulties and I start to dislike the person intensely. And the scapegoat in this case became Elton Dean.

I was jealous and proud of being in it with Mike and Hugh and that their thinking had, as I'd thought it would, finally manifested itself in some amazingly original music - and I felt that Elton didn't appreciate it. The thing is, when we decided to expand the line-up, we thought in terms almost of an artisan to play the ideas already coming from the group as it stood. We needed a wider range of noises more than fresh ideas and also we wanted to try out being a rhythm section behind a soloist for a while. But either we weren't a good enough rhythm section or Elton wasn't interesting enough in that context to carry off those kind of responsibilities — and I don't think he gave a shit anyway. I don't think he was interested in what Soft Machine was. It was a better-paid, more secure gig than his previous ones, and ... I don't want to sound vicious about him, I mean we had good and bad gigs, he rightly liked Mike's writing a lot, and he and I liked very much playing together, blowing freely, and loosening up the prepared things. It balanced out very well sometimes. But it was essentially a false relationship. Not merely strained — relations in the Soft Machine had always been a bit bizarre.



HOW?

Everyone had very different contributions to make to the band and we couldn't really agree; it could only be paths crossing, because we started out in different places and were going in different directions — and what would be satisfactory to one person simply wouldn't be to another. It'd be baffling. Like, someone would write a composition which you'd think beautiful and then arrange it and give the solo to just the wrong person, by which time it'd be too inextricably embarrassing to rearrange it. You know, it's his tune, leave him alone. We got so we didn't really know what each other was on about.

WHEN did that start?

The time the seven-piece went to France. Autumn, 1969. There were amazing difficulties on all levels, not excluding the practical one of not having the equipment or the money for seven people. Eventually it cracked completely. Poor old Nick got really screwed up. You know, there was a lot of happiness, -a lot of new things, a lot of problems, a lot of neuroses, added to which it was incredibly cold in the van and we were all a bit disorientated. The cracks just started to appear. The identity of the group became like a memory after that . . . for me.

HOW did it actually happen then?

Well . . . you get other people in to play Mike and Hugh's stuff, but to get in they have to be musically ambitious which means after a while they want to play some of their own material, and they play it to you, and you don't like it, right? And then it comes out in the open, let's face it, he's meant to be there for you, not you for him, and a hierarchy emerges which freaks out those people who consider they're wrongly placed in that hierarchy. The natural tendency then is to withdraw — cos no-one wants to think of himself as a shit or a schmuck. Then everybody starts getting formal with each other and by then it's turned into another job. From then on it's just a matter of time, really. Just a matter of time.

But, obviously my memories of that time with the Soft Machine are — well, like anyone's memories, like . . .

WHERE do those four records come into your memories? Is it documentary?

I never considered the Soft Machine recorded in any kind of intelligent relationship to our progress, what we actually sounded like. We'd take new compositions into the studio, record them, two months later learn how to play them, six months later discard them, and then a month after that go back into the studio again with more new things we hadn't learned to play properly. The Soft Machine at its best is hardly on record. At best, those records are only an indication of what the group was all about.

ARE you going to keep a sharper eye on the way Matching Mole is recorded?

No, it'll probably be just as ... I mean, all I've done is choose people with potential for excellence in themselves, not their similarity or me-worship or anything like that, so there'll be just as many difficulties — except there was no condescension in the original choice of people. No more Eltoning, in other words. Inasmuch as I ought to have owned up to him what I was asking him to do. Won't make that mistake again. In fact, I've avoided any quick, easy way to get a slick band together and it's yet to emerge what the new group will naturally be - if someone'll be on top of their music enough to turn into a leading-light, for example.

SO WHAT about the album?

Making that record and forming the group were two separate things. I'd have made it whether I'd formed a group or not. It's me. I had total control over it, said I'd choose the material, do the editing, litter the whole thing with fiddling about on the mellotron - with or without anybody's approval. It seemed years since I'd done a record. At the same time, I wanted to form a group because my ideas are more intense than numerous, I'm not a great fountain of ideas and I need to be in a group. I need other people around me to use their ideas and imaginations to pull the best out of me. Besides, I had to *say* I was forming a group etcetera or they wouldn't have let me do the record. Obviously they only like to record people who are out on the road with an act or something to promote it.

IS that pressure on you now?

Don't know really. I refuse to be pressured anyway.

SO WHAT comes next? Are you the leader or what?

Inasmuch as I chose the people in the band. But I see myself more as someone who pulls people together who might otherwise not have thought of it. Giving them opportunities. Like, Dave McRae is in no sense out of work — he's in constant demand as a session-musician — but Matching Mole is giving him an opportunity to play his music in a way that all the rest — Mike Gibbs, Ian Carr and so on — doesn't. I make space, is what I'm saying. I know what I'm good at and let other people get on and do what they're good at.

I feel what I'm doing, however much I enjoy doing it, doesn't cover enough ground to make me think I'm living a complete creative life. There are a few people who write — Hugh, Mike, Dave McRae, Kevin - with whom I like to fit in. I'm not capable of setting up situations by myself alone. I need other people, but only a very few special people and it's fucking hard to find them.

SO what were those two solo albums you made in Los Angeles?

Well, the Soft Machine in its first version had broken up, we'd done the last gig with Hendrix, at the Hollywood Bowl, Mike went back to London, Kevin went on to Majorca. The

record company didn't know we'd broken up — the first album wasn't released yet, though it was six months since we'd recorded it - and there seemed no obligation to carry on; and I'd got various things I'd been wanting to do that I couldn't do with the group as it then was. It was a great relief to get into the studio and play all the instruments myself and do it along without having to be democratic about it. That's all.

WHAT did you record?

There were two sets. See, I went to the record company and said Look, Mike's gone back to London, I dunno ... I mean, it was winter, 1968, and I'd just got back to New York and I'd been approached to do some film music and I was quite happy. But they said 'No, listen, this record's amazing, we want to put it out, the group should go on the road'. So I said 'Is it? Should it?' And phoned up Mike in London and said 'Do you want to start up a new version of the group?' And he said 'No, yes, no, yes, Yes'. And I came back and he did his first writing for the group — bits of 'Esther's Nose-Job', which was pinched off a bass-line of Kevin's, actually — and we did these tunes I'd been doing which turned out to be the first side of *Volume Two* - arrangements of bits and pieces of half-forgotten stuff Hugh had done years ago for the Wilde Flowers that I'd worked into a whole in L.A. - Plus *'Moon in June*'. Which didn't turn up till Third because I was terrified it'd be played wrong. Even then, I did all of it by myself - except the organ solo of course. That was Mike.

MIGHT you ever do another solo album?

Not foreseeably, no. I feel so much closer to the people in Matching Mole in terms of melody, feeling, and the rest. I'm not scared of doing my stuff with them. They've all been in groups that've done songs, for example, and I haven't been in one of them since I was with Kevin.

DOES that mean more songs in your set?

I'm dubious about it, because they'd be more complicated than the kind I've done before, and I might find it hard singing and playing at the same time. Bill might do some, but he'd probably have to write it himself. My stuff's written for my voice or is too specifically about me. And the others would find it hard to write for someone like me who can't read music and has a range of about three notes and you musn't write a semitone on either side of them if you expect it to be remotely in tune.

SO what are you up to live at the moment?

Rehearsing, mostly. Or we have been. Up until the second gig at the Festival Hall we were rehearsing in public; since then, with the exception of a disaster at Canterbury, we've to a great extent sorted ourselves out. I say this chiefly because most people would naturally think a group like this is pretty well-off, 'contract with CBS, album out, etc. In fact we're very poor and can't actually afford to rehearse properly even. We've had a lot of equipment nicked and the promoters in Britain aren't paying us a living wage. I'm not carping — we're paying our dues, like any other band — it's just that I want people to know that we don't use mikes that stop working every five minutes because we like them; we can't afford better. And when the PA blows, it's not... bravura, or something. It's poverty.

HOW do you see the roles of the other three in Matching Mole?

Phil is the only guitarist who doesn't conceptually piss me off a bit. I agree with him about how to play guitar and I really don't with anyone else. I admire lots of names — same ones everyone else does — and I don't want to start putting down other guitarists that aren't working in Matching Mole, but...

Well, the theory's like this: the technical side of I'm-a-guitarist guitarists is based on imitation bebop horn lines. But the sound's weak compared to what's come out of less technical music like- urban blues and rock and roll. So the idea these days is to get the two going together, the facility and the sound. And everybody's saying a lot of guys are doing it, but I don't think they are. . Like, someone for whom I have great overall admiration and who isn't going to give a shit what I say anyway, which is John McLaughlin. He's the answer to my dream of an acoustic guitarist who does what John Williams claims to be doing, which is total control of the guitar, understanding of it harmonically, understanding of bebop, understanding of Hendrix, and using the lot. But, as an electric guitarist, I find he does amateurish parodies of rock guitarists, but in a sort of tasteful, speedy way. If you analyse the solos on *The Inner Mounting Flame*, they're... they piss me off, frankly. As opposed to the Miroslav Vitous album where he's very good, or as an

acoustic player on *My Goal's Beyond*. He's undoubtedly the most on-top-of-his-instrument guitarist around, but, in the end, frustrating — in a way that I don't think Phil will be. Because, though he lacks that facility, he really understands sound and harmony in a way that other guitarists don't. They just don't.

Dave... he's very simply the best musician I've ever worked with in my life. That's about all I can say.

Bill's a bass-guitarist, not a bass-player or a guitarist turned bass-guitarist. I just trust his taste and intelligence, besides which he's amazingly ambitious for his own music. He's actually an idealist and it's not just a job for him — it's important to him that what we're doing has a potential for being very good and satisfying. I knew him before I thought of him as a musician and I never thought he'd turn out to be capable of playing like he does; I'm pre-disposed to believe that anybody who could be that clear and objective in discussion could actually turn out to have that egotistical madness, that... silliness that most good players have. Sloppy thinking on my part, really. I saw him with his group and I was surprised what a natural performer he was — in fact I think of him as quite showbizzy really. So few people, in any case, outside of Jack Bruce and maybe Steve Swallow, have really *used* the bass-guitar. Not functionally; there are some fantastic functional players around, like Sly Stone's and the guy with Edgar Winter. Bill pushes all aspects of the instrument and he's sometimes very demanding to play with.

DO you ever think you and/or the band are taking yourselves a bit too seriously?

Sure. But it's a piece of self-deception that's as necessary as a raincoat in the rain. In performance or in any process like that, you arrive at a strange kind of elated insanity. You feel like God. And it's hard to feel like God and not take yourself a bit seriously. Or something. Know what I mean?

PERHAPS I meant self-involvement when two or three thousand people are watching you.

People used to say this about the other group I was in - which shall be nameless, and which I won't name, but can only be described as the Soft Machine — that we didn't acknowledge or play for people who'd come to see something else, that's true, but eventually the people who got to know and like us were incredibly relieved to have their intelligence and their sensitivity flattered enough to follow us in whatever way our fancy was taking us. In an inverted way, that's just a flash, avant-garde version of showbusiness, really. How many people you lose in the process God only knows but, if I can make a living at it, I'm happy.

ANY gripes about that show business in general?

What an opportunity! God. Yeah, okay. See, in the good old days, back when the Teds used to beat me up and take off me Dizzy Gillespie records and stick on Elvis, there was even so a thing about values in music. One knew where the real worth was. The barriers were very rigid, sure, but it wasn't confused like it is now. Today, the pop press is always telling me, the barriers are down and someone who used to get off on Marmalade celebrates his coming-of-age or whatever by going over to the Other Chart or whatever it's called in *Time Out* and thinks he's digging jazz or classical music when he's listening to his new Keith Emerson album. He's not. It's just pop in another form.

And I think the general smugness of music-listening today — I see it in people's record collections — is regrettable. If half the guys digging Keith Emerson because they thought he was jazz actually put themselves out and listened to, say Keith Jarrett playing the real thing... well! I just dislike the air of easiness about it today, as if good music is now miraculously disseminated to all via ELP or whatever. The really good musicians are, as ever, out of work — and the barriers are not down at all, it's an illusion.

WHEN a fifteen year old chick is digging Marc Bolan is she having the illusion that she's hearing great music or is she hearing great music?

Is it an illusion you're asking me that question? No, look. You've got to be honest with yourself. When I was fifteen, I'd be looking around in a record-shop and I'd come across an album-sleeve saying Charlie Parker is the Guvnor. None of my friends had even heard of him. The Bird? Who? But I bought one of his records to find out. And I didn't like it at all — just seemed a lot of fast noises. But I went on with it, trusting opinion of sources I respected, kept listening, and found out that Parker was, in fact, the Guvnor. And I took it from there.

That sort of experience is available for anyone, but I don't care whether or not they take it. Elvis Presley may also be the Guvnor, I dunno. But he's not pretending to be more than he is, nor are his fans. But fans of 'progressive' or 'underground' music are. It's both a pity and a downright shame. It's a pity that Keith Jarrett has so little recognition he has to play in a group he doesn't really fit into, or even like, but the leader is lazy enough to let other people play in his time. And it's a downright shame that he can't form his own group because virtually no-one has bothered to find out about him. Because it's easy and okay and progressive to dig Keith Emerson. Right? That's all.

Ian Macdonald

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'Matching Mole : the beginning of an other ear' - Time Out - June 16th-22nd 1972

Matching Mole : the beginning of an other ear



Few bands have faced such a discrepancy between the enthusiasm of their welcome and the uncertainty of their economics as Matching Mole. Multiply an average music biz melodrama by the number of holes it'd take to fill the Wembley Empire Pool and you'll come up with some semblance of the equipment, transport and pocket-money problems that have continually confronted this merry and determined little combo of Foster's Lager addicts. This, together with a considerable affection for Robert Wyatt's drumming and voicing, Phil Miller's guitaring, Bill MacCormick's bassing and Dave MacRae's keyboarding (and the now-departed David Sinclair's keyboarding on their record), prompted Al Clark to wander along to a rehearsal in Dave's front room, and afterwards talk with Robert across the kitchen table.

Voices and choices

It's been evident from the first Soft Machine album onwards that Robert Wyatt is the possessor of the most notched, rusty and unfailingly empathetic vocal chords in the entire area of music in which they operate. In one version of the Wilde Flowers, that celebrated, ever-changing Canterbury nucleus-for-the-future, he sang for about nine months while Richard Coughlan (subsequently of Caravan) did the drumming. And it's his voice that overshadows the early Soft Machine demos recently released by Byg. But that was an approach styled around straightforward pop singing, and evolving out of the general excitement surrounding pop music in the early and mid-sixties. Also, Kevin Ayers would occasionally write something outside his own range or might need a harmony part added, and Robert would oblige on that score.

However, by the time it came to recording the first album, his voice had extended itself

into modulations, instrumentalising, harmonising, echoing, a multilaterally true voice in an arid soundscape of good voices. He even became so horrified at the original lyrics of one of his songs ("I Should've Known") that here-wrote them the night before the recording into something so completely honest, revealing and amusing ("Why Am I So Short ?") that it undoubtedly created the precedent for all his word-games to follow. In this respect the previous influence of Daevid Allen, whou sed to lodge with his parents and was an original member of the group, was probably quite substantial.

"Daevid, not by preaching but by example, was living out all the things he was thinking about. To me activity was reading, looking at paintings and listening to records. Meanwhile, he was writing, painting and playing guitar. What you could do consisted of what you wanted to do. He used to sing and make noises and make tapes. He made tapes with people who could play and tapes with people who couldn't play, and there was no difference in quality between them. Things like that shattered the kind of rubbish that I'd been thinking up until then...".

It's surprising - in view of the beauty of Robert's treatment of Hugh Hopper's "A Certain Kind" on the first Soft Machine LP, his amazing vocal jigsaws on Volume Two, the lengthy lyrical passages of 'Moon in June' on Third and the extent to which much of the commercial success of Matching Mole's album can be attributed to the irresistibility of "O Caroline" and "Signed Curtain", both cracked, barely-sung diary-fragments which are indivisible from what they're about - that he isn't really all that keen on songs, or at least song situations.

"*Usually they're just props for making noise. There are certain vowels and consonants that work out and have the right effect, and the people who wrote them will contrive the imitation situation whereby that's what they actually wanted to say. In my case, my pride goes if I find myself lying like that, and I think that if I'm going to use words, I should use them as carefully as possible, bearing in mind that you're talking to somebody, and that if you are trying to say something then be careful what you say. But the thing I really like about music is way outside intelligible conversation, much deeper stronger and more moving than strinding sentences together. So I've generally played in bands which were essentially instrumental. In other words, I've never played with polite, subservient, accompanist-type musicians, and this creates a situation where if you're going to make your voice fit into the context of a set or an album, for the sake of the continuity and mood of the piece, you're just throwing your voice in to the elements, you're dealing with pure music rather than conveying some cute impression of yourself to strangers. So I've always tried to get unsituations where the very fact that I also like singing songs was discouraged. Whether that means I'm totally screwed up I don't know, don't really care either*".

Moon of an ear

"Moon in June" on *Third* is a collage of fragments assembled during the life of the group, mostly during his time in the States after the two tours they did with Jimi Hendrix. Some of it is a lament for being away from home. All of it is his own work. Mike Ratledge came in to play his organ solo and provide a drone with Hugh Hopper. Rab Spall contributed violin, but it wouldn't be unfair to call Robert 'Mr Moon In June', especially in the five-minute one-manaural orgy at the end. In common with most things, it came to represent something not originally intended... Like wanting to hold on to the reins of the Soft Machine he liked while it was beginning to become one he wasn't having so much fun with. With no reflection on Elton Dean, who Robert himself after all had gone out to find, he feels it was at that stage that compromise entered the whole business.

"*Moon in June" for me was the last chance I had to use all the things we'd done without being a jazz band, which was what was developing. I thought that before that we'd done something quite special that had nothing to do with being a jazz band and I wanted to get twenty minutes of it down somewhere. At the same time, I was excited about the new developments and wanted a change too. I don't know if I'll always be in this position, but I really only do those things in studios in the end because, however much I go on about co-operativeness and that, there comes a point when I know exactly what I want something to sound like and the only way to get it is to do nearly everything yourself, I can't write complex enough scores to get other people to do it. When people ask why I don't necessarily do on stage what I do on record, the only answer is that I could not subject other musicians to the rigorous detail and discipline that I have to impose on myself to get those things right. I just don't have that kind of personality*".

How did *The End of an Ear* come about ? Well, partly because CBS probably thought when

they gave their okay that, as he was the singer in a primarily instrumental group, he'd come busting out all over with a long-frustrated headful of commercial pop songs. For Robert though, the motivation was slightly different...

"That was a direct result of wishing that I'd had more than five minutes to meander at the end of "Moon in June". I was just so fucking happy adding layer after layer. Mike had gone, so I made all the little noises on the Lowrey organ that I'd wanted him to make. Christ, for the first time I wasn't just planning and dreaming and hoping, I was actually doing what I wanted to do, and I suddenly thought how silly to stick it on the end of a bunch of songs. So The End Of an Ear came about once I'd decided to continue the ecstasy of charging about in the studio pissed out of me head for forty minutes instead of five".

Were the title, and the 'out-of-work pop singer currently on drums with the Soft Machine' clause on the sleeve a pretty fair indication of how he felt at the time, and a nudge in the direction of his comrades ?

"*I seem to have inspired a certain amount of sympathy and personal enthusiasm amongst people about my own particular loneliness and battle within the Soft Machine. But the fact is that I was drunk and arrogant and didn't take them seriously enough when they didn't want to do the kind of things I wanted to. I put Mike and Hugh through ghastly emotional scenes, and the mind boggles at how they've stuck it all that long... I've had a lot of time to think about that and - sorry, I know public confession boxes is the best trend and all that - but it is worth saying because I'm getting vaguely sheepish and embarrassed about the sympathy for me within that context since they were simply trying to play what they wanted. If the Soft Machine was a prison, then it was a prison I built for myself out of my own indecision and lack of sense of direction. So the record isn't anti-Soft Machine, it's anti-me for not being able to think clearly what I wanted to do. The dedications on the cover are no-pride-left, anybody-out-there-help-help type ones, claiming people by writing down their names. It was absurd. I look back on it as being a feast for some second-rate psychiatrist*".

The longest dedication of all was to Gil Evans whose Wyatt-styled "Las Vegas Tango" came to take up about a third of the record's playing time.

"*He's one of the few people who've come across an endless musical thing to do. This is what the blues is, but it's not any one particular person's invention, it's just thousands of people eventually agreeing on a format that's endlessly satisfying. And Gil Evans, almost single-handedly, got a link going in my head between Spanish cante jondo and blues singing in "Las Vegas Tango", it's just a beautifully shifting seesaw of Spanish-influenced blues chords. That struck me as endlessly satisfying*".

The evolving mole

And then there was Matching Mole, or Machine Molle as some prophetic bilingual punsters would insist. Bill MacCormick was a civil servant at the time of joining but before that was in a group called Quiet Sun who did unusual time signature things. Phil Miller was in Delivery but also worked with people like Roy Babbington, and spent long amounts of time learning his way around his instrument. Or as Robert put it, "*His main background is sitting around playing guitar without any money*". Robert met Dave MacRae through Nucleus who were looking for a new drummer after John Marshall went to join Jack Bruce and, ultimately and ironically, the Soft Machine. Dave still plays piano for them as well as making his considerable contribution to the Mole.

"*Dave MacRae is an antipodean from another planet, and my life started out with them. He's such a total musician, equally happy in Australian jazz groups, knowing his Cecil Taylor, doing a Coca Cola ad or grooving behind Buddy Rich or Sarah Vaughan. The most important contribution he made to the record was being there, tuning up his piano and talking and putting on little odd plinking noises through all the instrumental things, and just creating the atmosphere of being in a room with all he can do but not doing it. It's not so much what he plays, but of how different the record would've been if he hadn't been there*".

The man who did play most of the keyboard parts on the record, David Sinclair, is now late of Caravan, late of Matching Mole and currently working on some songs with a friend, and drummer Pip Pyle. Why late of Matching Mole ?

"*Well, although he joined to play and rave as well as do the songs, the only thing that*

really worked compatibly was the songwriting. He's a great freaker-outer on organ. A keyboardman with a sense of madness is very rare, keyboard people are usually very schooled and can wreck musical madness with their knowledge of what should be happening. Dave can lose himself in wonderful ways,but when you're trying to build a tune that you're going to be playing night after night, it's not enough to have a few things in common. You've really got to have so much in common. Yon can afford casual relationships on a record which you can't afford in a working group".

Was there any track on the record particularly representative of the further-evolved Mole?

"*Hopefully I'm now becoming a quarter of whatever gets said or played. So for me "Part of the Dance" is the most useful pointer to the group because it was written by Phil and I'm just doing my quarter on it, like I'm doing now and like I hope to be doing on the next album*".

Does that necessarily exclude any more "O Caroline" or "Signed Curtain"'?

"*Those things are like cutting off malignant parts of a diseased body. I really don't need them anymore. To be able to write and sing those, without sounding too precious I hope, relieves some of the thing that goes into producing them. However, there's no way of making plans about that. I suppose I shall sit around pianos and sing and think up word games at certain times for the rest of my life. And if I'm in the studio, I'll do it*".

Afterpiece

A few days later, with the group having gone off to France on the Gallic Leg of their John Mayall tour I put my brain cells in a small cardboard box and take them down to an armchair in front of a television screen in South London's ETV studios. Resting in the certain knowledge that the Mole won't be bothering with any of the right-ones and rock'n'roll medleys that might make them rich tax exiles before they get to Avignon, I settle back and watch the playback of a broadcast they taped a few days earlier.

Dave, like an electronic Gandalf with impossibly long fingers, guides the smoky, shifting rhythms over Bill's obsessive Focal Timekeeper bass line and curls elegantly up and down whatever part of the keyboard he fancies. Phil, hunched and Grecian-God-Curled, is the ideal group guitarist, waiting for the moment to contribute effectively and knowing what an effective contribution amounts to. Bill and Phil, like Bill and Ben, have a very special binding language and don't even have to say anything. Robert doing his voice bits isn't a pretty sight but makes a remarkable sound, like a man sobbing his heart out inside an echo chamber. Matching Mole seems to be the sum total of all their lives so far.

It really is a quartet now. And I only talked to Robert. Aw shucks. See them soon. Nice boys every one of them, even if they don't go for smart casuals and fast cars. They're probably the most coherent and adventurous British band that's still accessible these days, equally balancing strong themes and inspired deviations. And they're not doing much, apart from rehearsing. Music-Music never did go down all that well. Still, it's always a new pigeon-hole and there's plenty of money and support in them. In Mole-holes there's only music.

Al Clark

PS : All of which having been said, done and typeset, it turns out that Matching Mole are playing in Saturday's Midnight-to-six gig at Kings Cross Cinema with the Soft Machine (now with Karl Jenkins in place of Elton Dean) and Just Us (Elton Dean's group-on-the-side gone full-time). The wheel goes round and it should be a right old skull fucker of a night...

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Mole : a spirit of togetherness - Sounds - April 29, 1972

Mole: a spirit of togetherness



Interview by Steve Peacock

When you go to a gig, the Matching Mole you see before you is quite unlike the Matching Mole you hear on their first album, just released; it's not unusual for bands to change a lot in the three months it often takes between recording an album and getting it out, but in the case of Matching Mole, there's rather more to it than usual.

"The first time Robert phoned me up he said he wanted to do an album of love songs", says bass guitarist Bill MacCormick. It didn't turn out quite like that, but there are two songs on the first side of the album, songs that represent a kind of release of frustration for Robert Wyatt that needed to happen before he shed his Soft Machine skin and started to get fully involved with the new group.

"Apart from wanting to get into a new band I'd also built up a certain amount of frustration whilst sitting about in various potential homes, writing letters to people that turned into lyrics and writing lyrics that turned into letters and getting all confused. A certain amount of frustration had built up that I hadn't put off my chest before".

STRONGER

Sitting around in keyboard player Dave MacRae's flat, talking to the band, you notice that the hesitancy and confusion of our last interview (Sounds 11/12/71) has given way to a

much stronger feeling of confidence and optimism. I've never actually seen Robert brimming with self-confidence but this time he's a lot closer. The period of change is over, and now it's a question of the group as it is now (David Sinclair, the original organist, has left and Dave MacRae has joined full time after working on most of the sessions) growing together.

"When I'm not playing", says Robert, *"I forget that I'm meant to be a drummer, so I sit in places with pianos singing songs and I think 'oh yes, that's what I do'. Then of course when I'm actually working again I find that I'm actually a drummer, so quite a different set of preoccupations and interests start coming up in your head. I've never quite resolved the difference between the two, so I'll probably spend the rest of my life tossing between them..."*



● ROBERT WYATT: a lot closer

EMOTIONAL

"It's not the technical difficulty, it's the emotional difficulty of it being a totally different role in a group - to be singing songs and playing drums is a totally different relationship to be having with everybody. I find it more natural when I'm actually working to work from the point of view of a drummer".

Though when be was with the Soft Machine he once said he was an out of work singer who just happened to be playing drums.

"I only really started drumming because nobody else could. There were people around with pianos and guitars and things and they needed a drummer. I tried singing with other drummers but they never did it right, and the way to make sure the drummer was doing it right is to play the drums yourself".

So did he feel he'd basically resolved the dilemma? *"No, I've decided that I'm really an organist. I'm at my happiest when very, very pissed and playing the Mellotron, or something like that. But it has nothing to do with proficiency and I'd have to be very pissed to get on stage and touch a keyboard"*.

LIFELINE

So now, with Matching Mole a few months into its life, they were evolving through finding out about each other and what they can do together.

Dave: *"It's more or less like that but with any band it's not an immediate process where you can walk in and do it. There's always the start which makes everyone want to walk in and play together, but once you get past that point it's a matter of finding out just how much you can do together, which we're still doing. Hopefully the lifeline won't run out on us – we're still improving, there's no doubt about that"*.

"It's important to have that spirit in what you're doing, it's important to want to get it on - and not in the way that you know you can to affect an audience so they go 'rah, rah,rah'. Everyone doesn't consciously avoid that, but tries to create an original-sounding music, which I think is about where it's at really. Otherwise you might as well take the route where the money is – and everyone knows where it is".

Phil Miller: *"We're playing for an audience, but primarily to give them something that's ours not what they think we can do. We want to give them something that's our identity, not what they could superimpose on us"*.

Though they're all pretty pleased with the album as it is - although the sound could have been a lot better if they'd been allowed to use a modern studio with the right equipment and it is history. The night before I spoke to them they'd been recording a session at the BBC for John Walters which'll be broadcast on "Top Gear" soon. This, they felt, caught the

present band pretty well.

Robert: *"The thing to remember overall is that this Matching Mole hasn't made a record yet. I'm amazed I fed I can say this but anyone who wants to who's interested in hearing this band and can't hear us live, please listen to the thing we did with John Walters when it comes out. Either I was more drunk than I thought I was or we really got off last night... radio's usually an anaemic medium for musicians, it's so hard for musicians to get off in a studio, but l'd be be happy for anyone who wanted to know what we were doing who couldn't go to a gig, to hear that session."*



● MATCHING MOLE: finding out about each other

ALBUM

"People say 'why make the album before you'd formed the group?', but the reason was that I wanted to. My preoccupation before I left the group I was in before was that there were a few little things I wanted to do, get off my chest. But that was only a quarter of an hour's worth of work, and from then on I wanted to get back into the real business of music-making, which is in fact co-operative".

Steve Peacock

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Mole in a hole - Melody Maker - April 29, 1972



Mole in a hole

Robert Wyatt talks to Richard Williams

On a clear day, you can see the South Downs. Robert Wyatt looks out of the 21st floor window, down at the traffic speeding along Westway, and right over London to the chalky hills beyond.

At the moment, all he an actually see is trouble. Which is ridiculous, I'm sure you'll agree, for a man acclaimed as one of rock's most intelligent drummers and most inventive vocalists, with a solid background in one of our most respected bands.

But his child, Matching Mole, is up to the neck in it. A little earlier, he and his manager were forced to cancel two gigs, in Plymouth, and Penzance, for the craziest of reasons.

"My manager rang me up," he says, "and told me that it would cost us £180 to do the gigs. And we were only going to be paid £160 for them. So we couldn't afford it, and we've had to cancel."

He admits that it goes against his personal motto — "When in doubt, play" – but there it is, and he's sorry for the people who genuinely wanted to hear the Mole.

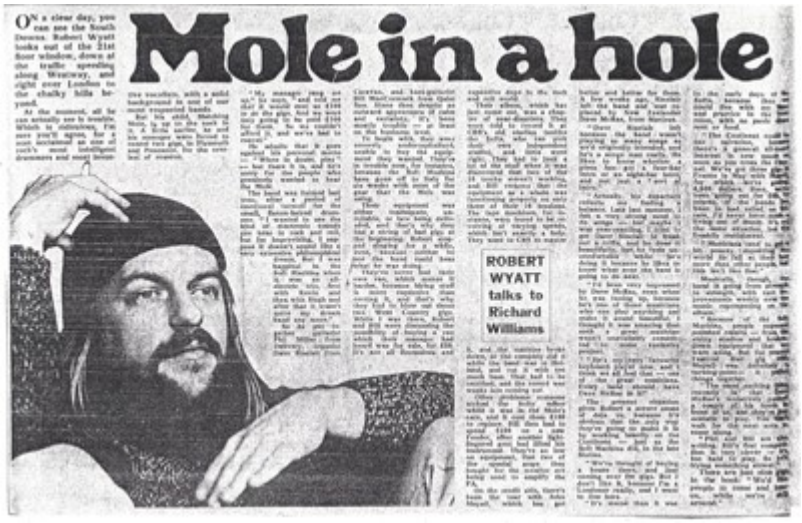
The band was formed last year, after a period of emotional turmoil for the small, flaxen-haired drummer. "I wanted to use the kind of electronic, sounds you hear in rock and roll, but for improvising. I suppose it doesn't sound like a very extensive philosophical dream. But I was happiest in the Soft Machine

when it was an all-electric trio, first with Kevin and then with Hugh and after that it wasn't quite my dream band any more."

So he put together guitarist Phil Miller from Delivery, organist Dave Sinclair from Caravan, and bass guitarist Bill MacCormick from Quiet Sun. Since then despite an outward appearance of calm and certainty, it's been mostly trouble — at least on the business level.

To begin with. they were severely undercapitalised, unable to buy the equipment they wanted. They're in trouble now, for instance, because the Soft Machine have gone off to Italy for six weeks with most of the gear that the Mole was using.

Their equipment was either inadequate, unreliable, or late being delivered, and that's why they had a string of bad gigs at the beginning. Robert stopped singing for a while, even, because neither he nor the band could hear what he was doing.



Mole in a hole

ROBERT WYATT talks to Richard Williams

They've never had their own van, which makes it harder, because hiring stuff is more expensive than owning it, and that's why they had to blow out those two West Country gigs. While I was there, Robert and Bill were discussing the possibility of buying a van which their manager had heard was for sale, for £50. It's not all limousines and expensive dope in the rock and roll world.

Their album, which has just come out, was a chapter of near-disasters. They were told to record it at CBS's old studios (unlike the Softs, who can pick their own independent studio), and little went right. They had to junk a lot of the stuff when it was discovered that two of the 16 tracks weren't working, and Bill reckons that the equipment as a, whole was functioning properly on only three of their 16 sessions. The tape machines, for instance, were found to be revolving at varying speeds, which isn't exactly a help. They went to CBS to master it, and the machine broke down, so the company did it while the band was in Holland, and cut it with too much bass. That had to be rectified, and the record was weeks late coming out.

Other problems: someone nicked the Softs' mixer while it was In the Mole's care, and it cost them £180 to replace. Bill then had to spend £190 on a new Fender, after another light-fingered gent had lifted his instrument. They're so low on equipment, that two of the special amps they bought for the monitor are being used to amplify the PA.

On the credit side, there's been the tour with John Mayall, which has got better and better for them. A few weeks ago, Sinclair left the band and was replaced by 'New Zealander Dave MacRae, from Nucleus.

"Dave Sinclair left: because the band wasn't playing as many songs as we'd originally intended, and he's a songs man really. He likes to know whether a piece has got a four-bar intro or an eight-bar intro, and not just a 'sort of intro.'"

"Actually, his departure reflects me finding a balance. Late last summer, I felt a very strong need to do songs — but maybe I was over-reacting, I tried to get Dave Sinclair to freak out a trifle, and he does it beautifully, but he feels uncomfortable while he's doing it because he likes to know what note the bass is going to do next.

"I'd been very impressed by Dave MacRae, even when he was tuning up, because he's one of those musicians who can play anything and make it sound beautiful. I thought it was amazing that such a great musician wasn't unavailably committed to some exclusive project.

"He's my very favourite keyboard player now, and I think we all feel that — one of the great musicians. Every band should have Dave MacRae in it!"

The present situation gives Robert a severe sense of deja-vu, because it's obvious that the only way they're going to make it is by working heavily on the Continent — just as the Soft Machine did, in the late Sixties.

"We've thought of buying a house there, and just corning over for gigs. But don't like it, because I'm a Londoner really, and I want to live here.

"It's worse than it was in the early days of the Softs, because then we could live with my Mum and practice in the front room, with no panic about rent or food.

"The Continent could be our salvation, because there's a general all-round interest in new music as soon as you cross the Channel. We've got three gigs in France in May with Mayall, for which we're getting 4,500 dollars. Here, we've been going out for £65. Of course, if the bands I've been in had relied on Britain, I'd never have made a living out of music. It's not the same situation, but it's freakily reminiscent.

"Musicians tend to get a bit poncey, expecting the world to fall at their feet more than other people, but this isn't like that."

Musically, though, the band is going from strength to strength, with vast improvements weekly over the music represented on the album.

"Because of the Soft Machine, people expected polished results — from the shifty studios and broken-down equipment that we were using. But the second Festival Hall gig with Mayall was definitely a turning-point— it pulled things together.

The most exciting thing recently is that Dave MacRae's tentatively pushed a couple of his tunes in front of us, and they're just ecstatic to play. You can't wait for the next note to come along.

"Phil and Bill are also writing. Bill's first composition is very clever — it's too hard to play. So he's trying something slower."

There are just nine gigs in the book. "We'd like people to come and hear us, while we're still around."

Richard Williams

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Wyatt quits Softs - Melody Maker - September 4, 1971



Melody Maker

ROCK GIANTS TO AID BANGLA DESH

Steve Miller for Britain

Wyatt quits Softs

Wyatt quits Softs

ROBERT Wyatt, drummer and singer with the Soft Machine, has left the band.

The reason for his departure is believed to be a difference of musical opinion, apparent for some months, which crystalised during the band's recent and highly-successful American tour.

A member of the Softs since their very earliest days in Canterbury, Wyatt left them for a short period last year when, for the same reasons, he went to play with Kevin Ayers and The Whole World. He returned when he found that Ayers' outfit came no closer to realising his musical ambitions.

Wyatt's replacement in the Soft Machine will be Phil Howard, who has for some months been a member of the part-time quartet of Soft's altoist Elton Dean.

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Wyatt quits Softs

4 Sept 71

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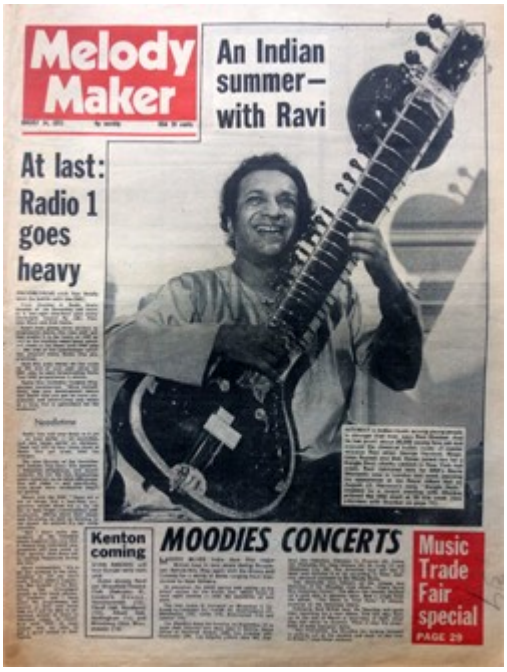
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American experience - Melody Maker - August 14, 1971



American experience

by RICHARD WILLIAMS

Soft Machine's Elton Dean talks about the band's recent U.S. tour

Soft Machine may have missed playing at the Newport Jazz Festival on their recent American tour, but they did play a couple of concerts with Miles Davis, and Ornette Coleman did host a couple of parties in their honour at his famous loft home on Prince Street, New York. So it would not go amiss to say that, even allowing for enthusiastic exaggeration, the band made something of a stir during their visit.

That's a far cry from their previous American experience, three years back, when they toured coast-to-coast with the Jimi Hendrix Experience. That little lot was such a heavy gig that the band folded under the pressure, and didn't come back together for several months. Elton Dean wasn't with the band then. This was his first look at the States. and he says: "I can really understand how the band fell apart last time. Seven weeks of playing every night in America is just unimaginable. It must have been hell. Our tour was fairly leisurely, by comparison, although it didn't really feel that way."

Newport was supposed to be their first port of call, but the riots put paid to that. As it happens it was probably just as well, because they had a lot of trouble with their hired American equipment, which frequently put paid to Robert's vocals. These problems manifested themselves at their eventual first gig, in the Gaslight in Greenwich Village. Had Newport not been cancelled, they'd have been faced with the embarrassment of equipment hassles on a very prestigious gig.

It was at the Gaslight that Ornette first came to hear them. "I think somebody had played

him ‘Third’,” says Elton, “and he dug it so he came down to listen.” Coleman was so impressed that he immediately organised two well-attended parties for them.

Their next stop was also in the Village, at the Beacon Theatre, where they played the concerts with Miles Davis. Elton enjoyed Miles’ band, even though the sound balance was poor and the trumpeter appeared to have lost some interest in serious music. But the band which impressed him most in New York was John McLaughlin's new outfit, which includes violinist Jerry Goodman from Flock, bassist Rick Laird, and drummer Billy Cobham. Apparently Cobham had turned down the chance of joining Miles’ band, and there's talk that the McLaughlin band may tour Europe with the Softs sometime in the near future.

An amusing experience for Elton and the others came in Detroit, where they played bottom of the bill to a local band called Savage Grace and our own Yes. “It was a nice change, being at the bottom. We played pretty well, and the audience dug — there was a lot of shouting going on, lots of enthusiasm.”


American experience
Soft Machine's Elton Dean talks about the band's recent U.S. tour
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Gentle Giant

Then they treked down to Texas, where they played in Houston and San Antonio — which, as somebody next to me said, conjures visions of a super-serious Ratledge playing some fantastically complex improvisation while people in buckskin are shooting off revolvers through the roof, pushing other people in buckskin through the bannisters, and yelling “Yeah!” “Actually not many people came to hear us there, because we were hardly known at all, but those who did come really seemed to like it. Then we went to Cleveland, and the last gig was somewhere in upstate New York. It was a disaster — the show started late and the owner of the cinema came on stage and stopped us playing. I suppose he wanted to get home to bed.”

“Musically, all the gigs were pretty good, and at times we played as well as we've ever played as individuals. Quite a lot of the time we agreed as a group, as well.”

The observant will have noticed that Elton is also running his own band, with Mark Charig (cornet), Neville Whitehead (bass), and Phil Howard (drums). Recently, it's been expanded to a quintet, with the addition of Softs roadie Jeff Green on guitar. “I find that I need the

quintet, as well as the Soft," he says. "I'd like to do much more work with it. It's the spontaneous thing. The Soft Machine has loosened up a lot, but the original conception still exists. There's a lot of freedom inside that, but it's a change to get back to something with no preparation at all."

Elton's own album has been delayed a little, because of a hang-up over printing the sleeve, but it should be out in a few weeks. It is, he says, a blowing album, with very little writing, and features the quartet with the addition of Ratledge and Roy Babbington on bass. The leader is now playing a lot of electric piano, with both his bands. He learned the piano when he was a child, but only returned to it a couple of years ago.

Although Ratledge still uses the Hohner Pianet keyboard atop his organ for written passages, much of the music now consists of duets between Elton and Mike on Fender Rhodes instruments. "Those instruments have such a lovely sound," says Elton. "It's very beautiful, and I enjoy playing that way a great deal now. In fact I play piano in the quintet as much as I play alto."

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Dialogue - Melody Maker - July 3, 1971

Dialogue

Continuing MM's occasional series wich features rock people talking among themselves. This week's participants are Soft Machine drummer Robert Wyatt, Mick Farren, leader of Britain's White Panthers, and promoters; Peter Bowyer and Mike Alfandary. The subject: festivals.



MM: Does anyone feel that festivals are on the way out?

Farren: Like rock and roll! (laugh). It's really a continuous movement. What a festival represents basically for me is that it's half a million people living exactly the way they want to live. It's unfortunate that both the free ones and the promoted don't basically differ very much - it's simply in the returns afterwards. When a thing is promoted it isn't done better because you're paying to go in. Generally it's quite often done worse.

Alfandary: Oh, I disagree with that!

Farren: Well, I've just been to a free one (Glastonbury) which was as good as anything I've been to

MM: From what I heard there was little food and water and hardly any warm place for people to stay.

Farren: Yeah, it was exactly like the Isle of Wight except that nobody got hit with an iron bar, you know.

Alfandary; Well, if something is free there is nobody in a way to be responsible. When it's promoted there's usually somebody there who is. Now if the person there in a responsible

position does not feel conscientious then it can be worse than a free one where everyone mucks in. But a festival that is promoted has a better chance of being well-organised than a free one.

Bowyer: As the organiser of a free festival, you put down a stage and lay on power and that basically is almost the end of your responsibility if you're only putting on a one-day event, a la Hyde Park The moment you charge money then you have to start putting up fences, you have to give the public toilets, facilities for food and doctors, because they have paid money and you therefore have the responsibility to the public to give them facilities!

Farren: Well, don't you think you have a responsibility in any case? The paradox of this thing is that we have this relatively enormous number of people who first of all want to see the music but primarily feel they want to live according to their own ethic. They don't want to live in the city structure. And basically the concept of promoting the event, because the people have a real need to live according to their own cultural ideas, is a contradiction in terms. And the second most practical problem is - and I think Peter and all festival promoters are becoming aware probably - is that the kids, the quarter of a million kids, don't have the money to be able in the kind of situation we have, to make them viable. Therefore, it's coming out of the hands of the promoters and now coming down to some kind of sociology rather than business, which makes it even more difficult. But more interesting.

Money

MM: How viable are free concerts if groups, managers, agents etc have got to make money? It's a business, a music industry.

Farren: Well, it really depends what they're in the business for. A few months ago I was talking to the Grateful Dead and they've making 90 dollars a week each. That's what they're in business for.

Wyatt: Yes, but Mick, look, the musical heroes of your lifetime are perhaps the most capitalistic, money-orientated people - the people whose every move they made was in terms of money - they were your heroes. In the rock and roll era that you're always talking about, they were getting this capitalist type which means you in England had heard of them and worshipped them. And there's all these jazz musicians and classical musicians who you don't really bother to listen to who were into all this art for art's sake and in fact have never got across to you or anyone else because they didn't have this great capitalist type behind them.

Farren:The real point is - and I'm not birching about a promoter making a living promoting rock and roll - it's the incredible situation we had at the Isle of Wight, say, where you have literally a hierarchical situation that was practically as vicious as Tsartist Russia! You had a man on the stage, say Alvin Lee, whose making something, like, I calculated, about three hundred quid a minute, and meanwhile at the other end of the field there's a kid walking into a tent and no one knows exactly what's wrong with him until they suss out that he's actually starving! I think that's just going too far. Plus the problem that at the Isle of Wight they spent, I think it was £30,000 securing Alvin Lee's £500 a minute - and still, presumably they lost money!

It's really nineteenth century capitalism. It's like, take as much as you can, and give back as little as you can. At least twentieth century capitalism realises you've got to give so much in order that the people can consume, so you can just keep turning over the whole wheels of the industry. We're just beginning to see the problem is that the music business is generally disappearing up its own arse! This is the problem with the Isle of Wight with their enormous security arrangements. The arrangements actually outpriced you know, made the festival non-viable,

MM: But who's going to say what a band is worth?

Alfandary: A band is worth what an agent can screw out of a promoter at any given time. That's exactly what it's worth! No more and no less than that. I was perfectly happy for the next Crystal Palace concert not to run If I felt that the public at the end were not gonna get a proper show out of it, and the only reason why it wouldn't have run is because the amount of money available to pay to groups would have been wiped out by one or two

groups and therefore a good show couldn't have been presented. And the business knew that! But it still didn't stop certain groups from asking money that was completely impossible to be paid! I think that the point about festivals is not the free or paying side. It should be split into what they mean socially - and I think festivals are largely a social event - and concerts, which have a financial orientation. A festival is a political statement of telling the establishment where to get off, and the fantastic buzz of standing in a crowd with all the people around you - your own people - and nobody can attack you, you're safe within that crowd, and you're shouting and going mad with the group, and that's incredible.

MM: Who's spoiling it for everybody else?

Alfandary: The people who're spoiling the festivals and the whole music business - and this is my dislike of it - are the managers and agents of groups who're getting big. The moment a group gets big it loses its responsibility to other groups. It gets as much as it can, thinking, my day may not last for ever and I'm gonna get as much money as I can. With venues of 1,000 capacity or just about, you want to have a group that will draw the public in and there's always a spot on that bill for a group coming up, making it, or wants to break itself. And what you find is that the price the middle of the road group charges is such that you find you cannot afford to pay a decent wage to the group you'd like to see second on the bill! So the smaller groups miss out, and that means there's not a lot of groups given a break, which minimises the number of groups .around, which means that the public can only go and see so many groups and then they've seen the lot, which means there's not a lot of turnover. It's a vicious circle, getting broken nowadays. Festivals did break smaller groups but nowadays they've lost their aura.



Peter Bowyer (second from left), Mick Farren, Robert Wyatt (second from right) and Mike Alfandary.

Council

MM : All right, but what about the attitude of the Isle of Wight council and, further than that, the government, which looks as if it intends to ban the Isle of festival?

Alfandary: I attended the debate at the House of Commons during the reading of the Isle Of Wight Bill and the government was embarrassed by that Bill. They really didn't want to know. I'm sure the bill will go through but the Government is embarrassed by it. It's a local bill which has been promoted by the Isle of Wight council, which has been the unfortunate victim of a terrible thing played upon it and its local community... I don't wanna go any further.

Farren: I'm afraid this is rubbish, Mike. We had exactly the same situation with the council when we ran that thing at Worthing last year (Phun City). We were totally f...d up because

the council worked in such a way that right up until the last moment it was virtually impossible to stage the festival. I mean, injunctions kept flying about, there was constant trouble, plus even the health department and the police were actively obstructive to laying on the facilities. I think Harold Pendleton had exactly the same trouble at Plumpton. I don't know a festival that hasn't been totally obstructed, I mean, most festivals are staged in fairly high density rural communities within 100. 150 miles of London, and all these places are so strongly Tory that (a) I can't see this bill not going through and (b), I don't feel the Isle of Wight is the least bit isolated.

Alfandary: Look, on this point of authorities, they don't want to stop young people's events, Many of the supporters of the bill were Conservatives, who didn't like rock music, hated it, couldn't understand it, but said, if young people wanna do it, then we wanna see it happen, but we want to see it happen so they're protected. And quite frankly, any one who's been to the Isle of Wight or Bath knows how unprotected the public is in that situation!

Farren; But the way the bill is laid out the kids going to the festival can in actual fact be potentially even more unprotected. If a festival is only run for 12 hours, you run three festivals consecutively for 12 hours each, you provide no facilities, no camping areas - nothing - you are then totally cool in the terms of the bill. They're not approaching the problem, they're trying to sweep the longhairs under the carpet.

Basically. we're dealing with a bunch of kids who for the first time in a long time in this country's history are attempting to live a life which is far more organic than the linear concept of current cities. I think it's indicative of every festival that there's a pressure group. I mean, the last year or so, there's been a pressure group who wanted to stay on the site and, you know, begin to work out the way they started to live at the festival, and they've always been turned off in the end. Secondly, it's a political thing because I totally disagree with Mike. I feel the phenomenon is (a) being stamped out and (b), totally swept under the carpet, So the kids who're present there end up, if they follow the lifestyle right through, in possibly the worst ghettos we have in this country.

Alfandary: Oh God, this is ridiculous! Ridiculous!

Bowyer: Actually I wonder what would happen If the Isle of Wight was basically where everyone who lived there was young and long haired, and suddenly one week-end 50,000 old, crony people invaded it for a Mantovani concert. This is what it is; up-tight, local residents.

Alfandary: Look, it's easy... hold it a minute... it's easy for Mick to live his own life and do whatever Mick wants to do, and to shout and do things in the way that he does them, which I, by the way, support more than Mike realises.

Farren: There's no danger in these festivals. There's not even much danger to the ecology of the countryside they take place in Therefore, why do you have to go on your knees to the authority to be allowed to have one? The average football match causes 20 times as much trouble in every city every Saturday with no question about them. If you stand outside a football match On a Saturday afternoon you're quite likely to end up killed!

Alfandary: The facts that Mick has brought up I agree with, There is one hundredth of the trouble at an open air pop event than there is at a football match. But I feel you've got to go to the authorities with love in your heart. You can't go to them fighting before you start. And this is why there has been such trouble with local authorities. This is why the Foulk Brothers, I think, had the greatest contempt for the organisation and the people and the inhabitants of the area in which they were putting their festival. And why open air events are so tricky nowadays is because of the fact they've been used to attack the establishment.

Fight

Bowyer: I think it goes back to the thing that you don't fight them. Because this is terrible thing I've found about the whole youth movement - that they are inclined to be more prejudiced to some extent than the older people. I think the young and the long-haired are as prejudiced and build as many barriers as anybody else.







Farren; When we were at Sussex, all we were asking was three days in a field, and basically we kept very much to ourselves.

We met with a great many of the actual people who lived in the country in that area - the farmers, the farm workers, the woodsmen - who were very anxious, firstly, to make a buck out of the thing, and secondly, they were quite anxious to help us. They all came down and sat and looked at the full-frontal that was going about and had a great time...

MM: Look, can we come up with some basic viable concept of how a festival should be ideally run?

Farren: I feel what essentially ought to happen, rather than this ridiculous legislation that's being debated at the moment, is, there is plenty of land in this country still left and the Coal Board, for instance have large amounts of land which are virtually f...d out - are totally wasted, and there is actually a movement to get it together. Essentially, a proportion of unwanted land could be given over. firstly, to a permanent community who could service the land, and secondly, make it available for these kind of events. I feel possibly this is the first solution. And if the youth movement, or whatever, has to dovetail in with the rest of society, then okay.

MM: And some kind of governing body?

Farren: Yeah, possibly, you know.

MM: Who'd be on this?

Farren: What we need is a body who is well aware of the way the people at the festival behave, as well as what needs to be done to pay particular promoted even that deal with these people. The average roadie has a very good understanding of what the audience needs. Personally I'd rather trust some of the doctors we have in the community, than the local Medical Officers of Health as the Isle of Wight Bill proposes.

Alfandary: Look, I know that neither party really understands youth. It doesn't. A youth council, or a council that can be called upon for its expert advice on what young people are really thinking, is a great idea, but if we get it, would become too established, and anyone on that council would have the same stranglehold over festivals. Just as the people on the MU have over exchanges. There is no perfect formula. Young people must just strive really hard in their own communities, to get everybody who's in a position of power, to understand what they're really about and what they're really doing. This means inviting the local straight, heavy MP along to a rock concert: getting your councillors down to the park when your holding an open-air event, and really talking to them.

Farren; Yeah, your local heavy MP comes down, gets himself photographed then leaves again. What we need is a body that can control on the one hand, the promoter who is going to attempt to cut corners on the life-support system within the festival, and the other hand needs to advise and control the community organisation who's possibly going to be untogether and undercapitalised, in providing the same facilities.



So first of all, it needs people who have experience of such events; like road managers are the obvious first in line and journalists second because of the information feeding through.

Health

MM: Do you all agree that festivals as such, are not in a particularly healthy state at present ?

Alfandary: No, no, no. They're great.

Bowyer: They're marvellous, no.

Farren: I believe they'll disappear because the organisation becomes so difficult. I don't think the need of people to congregate in the country-side will disappear, but I feel that festivals will, simply because they're too much of a problem. I mean, they are not viable in terms of profit and they're not possible in the terms of a very skint community coming up.

Bowyer: Well, you were at the Isle of Wight last year, and you were pretty much against it. But you read the bill. You knew the artists who were appearing; you knew the admission - about twenty-five bob a day. Do you think that unfair considering the artists appearing? A promoter puts on all those incredible names, right, and he charges thirty bob a day. In my book, I'd be willing to pay thirty bob a day to see that list of names.

Bogus

Farren: Well, for a start, the list of names was so vast that it was pushing for a totally bogus status situation. They could have stuck on a Doors album, had four guys standing up there, and I wouldn't have known the difference. There is a limit to how far people can sit on a stage and project themselves physically to that number of people.
Physically it was impossible.

Bowyer: But your protest was against the promoters.

Farren: And secondly. the promoters had gone into the situation with the idea that they would make the ultimate gamble and pull it off. Consequently corners were cut drastically. If it had rained at the Isle of Wight, I feel there would probably have been a major disaster.

The Isle of Wight was just the ultimate paradox. You had someone like Jim Morrison saying theoretically, not in actual words. "tear down the walls break down the capitalist barriers," and the whole thing being set up to maintain his elite position in society. It would have been possible for many of the musicians to have come to the Isle of Wight a great deal cheaper. The life-support system was so amazingly expensive that the kids who came, possibly with the bread to get in, couldn't survive.

Bowyer: Then they should have come better equipped than that. I mean. if you've got a huge festival like that and half the people come without the money to get in. then it suddenly becomes the promoters' responsibilities, and it's not his fault, right? Like. if a kid turns up and he can just afford to get in, but he can't buy himself a sandwich or a cup of tea - that suddenly becomes Ron Foulk's fault? I'd like to know why. Because he should put ten thousand quid in a kitty for the kids who've just come for a look and suddenly haven't got any bread? You know, people have got to look after themselves to a certain extent. They just can't rely on promoters, social welfare and the kindness of people to hold hem up all the time! The kid who gone to the Isle of Wight festival with 25 bobs in his pocket and gets in but can't afford anything else - that's his fault?

Farren: In simple terms - very, very simple terms - if there is a guy who is dealing in hundreds of thousands of pounds and there is a kid to whom 25 bob is a difficult deal, then it's surely the responsibility of the one to deal for the other.



Bread

Alfandary: Look, you don't go on a bus without the bread to pay for the bus fare, do you? I don't think you should go to a festival without the means to support yourself.

Farren: But if you have a rock musician saying. " Hey kids, go on the buses without money because that's...uh."

Alfandary: Then that's the irresponsibility of the rock musician for saying that!

MM: To you, Mick. a festival is a battle ground between the alternative society and the establishment?

Farren: I think a festival is a manifestation of alternative society. It's a manifestation of the very committed coming together. It's a dialogue, basically, It's a thing which I don't think any individual should make a vast profit out of. It's a situation that should continue, and I feel that's a situation that Peter as on agent, Mike as a promoter and Robert as a musician, should come out of with no more than their wages, nothing more. Everyone is together in it. Take the Hyde Park concert. The free concert in Hyde Park means that those kids go out and get rock and roll music for free. You get 100.000 kids in Hyde Park and they would have possibly have paid a quid to see the Pink Floyd if it had been a concert in the evening, and they'd have to pay to get in. That has returned £l00,000 spending power to that audience.

MM: The Hyde Park things are completely non-commercial, altruistic events?

Farren: No. they're not!

Bowyer: The Pink Floyd wanted to do the gig. They didn't stop and think: " Wow. money, money," It cost the Floyd nearly a thousand pounds to do that gig.

Farren: It put their album in the charts!

Bowyer: Come on, man, you really think that was their attitude?

Farren: No. I didn't really.

Bowyer: right!

Farren: But it did!

MM: This point about the alternative society using festivals or rock events as a means of confrontation with the establishment, this sometimes results in violence, doesn't it? Robert must know about this, because it happened at that Palais des Sports gig in France. How do the musicians feel about that situation?

Wyatt: The last time we were in Paris we didn't actually play, because there was so much tear gaz around and so many burning seats by the time we got on. We were advised not to go on for our own safety and that of the kids involved.

Buzz

MM: These were the same guys that disrupted the Isle of Wight.

Wyatt: Jean-Jacques wasn't actually at our gig, but he was at another place that was involved in our gig thing, they tied together. But it's all down to pleasure. His pleasure as a non-musician. He can get a great buzz out of some event where music doesn't actually arise but some other kind of buzz does.

MM: Can you defend the actions of these people who go primarily to disrupt festivals?

Wyatt: Well, I think that festivals are a signal for large numbers of people to get together, and perhaps the most interesting thing for them is not music but establishing their life-styles, and it'd be presumptious of me just because I'm a musician to expect them to come there primarily for the music. Initially, of course, I was irritated by the story. A bunch of long-haired geezers - and they do exist - had laid into the police and the police had said "Yeah, yeah, right." In fact the background to this was a long alternate battle which takes place. Each stage of the battle is like boxing - it has rounds, and we were one round. We hadn't seen the previous round and I haven't seen any since, But we provided the stage for that week's confrontation. In fact we were outsiders, a focal point upon which to get together. I've not idea how difficult it is for a kid to leas a new style of life in Paris. If it's really impossibly difficult then I think he's right to use a Soft's concert a focal point for expression. If an audience turns a festival into a violent occasion then maybe there's a reason, a need for it. But you can't tell kids how to behave at a festival. You can't tell the kids who're being hurt how to scream.

Messiah

Farren: Basically, this is the problem of the musician being out of context with the rest of the people at the gathering. The musician is in a much more difficult position because if he comes on stage with a whole environment that is totally focused on him then unfortunately he's put in an almost Messianic context. Unfortunately we have a music business which says that Mick Jagger, Robert and me, when we walk on stage and the whole thing is concentrated on us, we are the actual focal point, and our ideas are the most important thing in the whole event at that time.It's bullshit, real bullshit! But while we have a capitalist situation that turns someone like Jim Morrison, a mediocre singer, into something of a Messiah, then the musician is going to have to make up his mind. If the musician wants to cop out on being the arbiter of what is going on down at the festival then he must admit that he is merely part of the environment. And in those terms I don't really think he can expect to be paid £500 a minute because the cats operating the right shows aren't, the cats cleaning up the toilets aren't, and the lights and the facilities are part of the environment. That's the truth. Would you agree?

Blind

Wyatt: It all depends if you enjoy doing festivals or not. All I can say is, you choose the situation you get into. We don't like playing festivals so we don't unless there's a lot of

money in it, because we're not really communal musicians.

Alfandary: It's always good that the artists should not be involved in all the financial and social hustles that go on around him, but he is responsible, if not more, for those hustles. It's no good enough for an artist to turn a blind eye in whatever his management is doing. Edmund Burke once said that "evil is created when enough good men stand by and do nothing" and there are signs of commission which we're gonna put on managers, agents, etc. and sins of omission which we can lay very much on the door of the artist himself who doesn't want to know what's going up, I mean, there are classic cases of talking to an artist where I say., "Well, I'd like you to play this gig, it'll be a very nice gig" and he says, "it sounds great by me, but go and talk to my agent," but don't listen to a word he says, he's a crook". So how the hell do you fight that? What on earth do you say Right?

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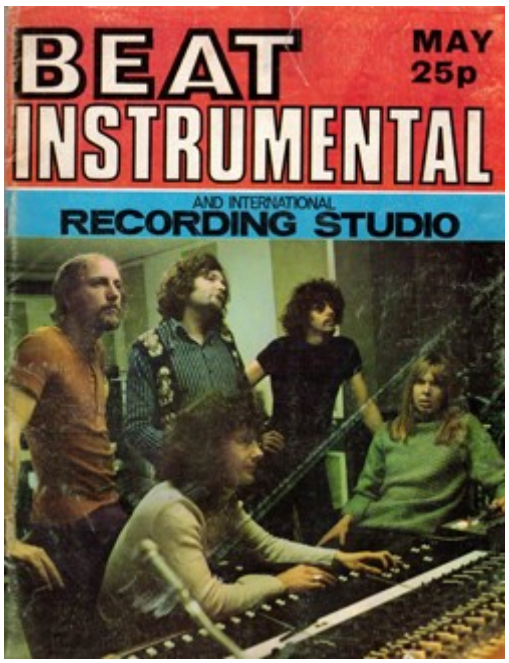
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Player Of The Month - Beat Instrumental - No 97 - May 1971



ROBERT WYATT

'I STARTED with an ammunition box as a snare drum,' says Robert, "an old metal clothes horse for a ride cymbal and a typewriter for hi-hat which went *whuck-woo whuck-woo* and that was my kit.'

When the Wyatt family lived back in Canterbury, a drum teacher from California came to lodge with them for a year. Instead of paying rent for the accommodation he gave drum tutorship to 14-year-old Robert. From this unlikely beginning has grown the musical career which has taken him through straight 'pop' group Wildeflowers and on into the accomplished Soft Machine. It has taken him from the dance halls of Canterbury to the Royal Promenade Concert of 1970. Of the latter gig Wyatt is not too proud, although he is full of admiration for the electronics wizard Tim Souster ("a really beautiful person") who first proposed the group for the appearance.

He describes his function as drummer as being the pulse of the group. 'It's a social act really,' he explains. 'It takes the dynamics of the people you're playing with. It dictates how clearly your beat is to be split up and how much space there is between a beat and a bar. When you're drumming you determine the pace that everyone is at - its affects what the other people do.'

Besides the Soft Machine albums *One*, *Two*, *Three* and now *Four*, Robert has been active in other musical areas. He was involved in the *Centipede* project and has also released his own album *The End Of An Ear*. On the back cover of this release Wyatt credits himself as being 'An out of work Pop Singer (currently on drums with Soft Machine).' This is probably the strongest indication he has given of where his personal artistic ambitions lie. For a drummer he has must surprising ambitions. 'I like a touch of madness,' he says, 'it's one of my favourite human characteristics. The basic thing that I always end up going back to is not really related to rock or jazz at all. It's related to strange tapes and voice things - more influenced by the Goons.'



PLAYER OF THE MONTH

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The drummers that seem to have influenced Wyatt are to be found in the rock world. 'I was listening to a Traffic album last night,' he said, 'and Jim Capaldi is one of my heroes for a start. I prefer the idiom of rock actually because it has a warm chunky feel. I like thick decisive rock drumming which is clear and easy to work with. I'm an admirer of Dave Mattacks (Fairport Convention) and Mitch Mitchell has been a great influence on me.

"Since I last saw myself in print admitting that I couldn't really play properly,' Robert added with a smile, 'I've actually been learning to play quite a lot. It's come almost by accident because we've been doing so much playing and I now feel quite proud of being a drummer. Had you come up two months ago and said that I was to be *Player Of The Month* I would have really been embarrassed.'

> Zoom

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The Sounds Talk-In - Sounds - April 17, 1971



The Sounds

Talk-In

ROBERT WYATT

LAST YEAR, Robert Wyatt was doing a lot of gigs with various bands outside the Soft Machine, and at one point there was even talk of him leaving them altogether. Now he says that he is happier than ever with the Softs, and in this interview he talks about the group now, the way they evolved, and his hopes for the future.

FEATURE BY STEVE PEACOCK

PHOTOGRAPHER : SPUD MURPHY

■ **As far as a lot of people are concerned, the Soft Machine is a comparatively recent thing, but it's grown out of long friendships, hasn't it? You were at school together in Canterbury and things.**

Brian Hopper, Hugh's big brother and Mike (Ratledge) were at primary school together, and by the time I knew them they were doing adaptations of various European pieces - Mike on piano and Brian on clarinet. Then at Simon Lankton school in Canterbury I met Hugh, and at that time I was very interested in Ellington, things like that. Hugh and I used to do violin lessons together, but we didn't all know each other that well at that time. Mike, as far as I know, didn't develop his interest in jazz at that stage. He was very into European music of all ages - Medieval French music up to the latest developments, Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, that sort of thing, which I didn't know very much about except from my Dad. He was very much into his idea of modern European music which wasn't in fact very modern, 1920s things really.

JAZZ

Towards the end of school life Mike and I would lend each other records sometimes, and he got interested in jazz - he started to show an interest in Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy and so on. Then I went away for a while with Daevid Allen who freaked me out completely. He and my big brother Marc really got me into Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman, and they also got me into Terry Riley. He's a friend of David's and we did some little things with him in Paris.

DANCE

David first turned me on, you know all that stuff – sort of – birth period of your adolescence. Then Hugh came out and started to play bass guitar tentatively doing Ray Charles bass lines, and also trying to learn a few Charlie Haden bass lines off Ornette Coleman records. We used to do a lot of freaky instrumental things as a trio, and then we drifted back to Canterbury and formed what was supposed to be a dance group to work in the local area, but already we were doing some of Hugh's original compositions and stuff by Mose Allison, Nina Simone, and Otis Redding who at that time wasn't particularly popular.

■ **This was the Wild Flowers ?**

Right. We didn't get much work — we were about the most unsuccessful group you could imagine. At dances people would just stare at us blankly after about ten minutes.

SNOB

■ **Kevin Ayers joined you soon after that didn't he ?**

Kevin really was very important because, apart from listening to Ray Charles and realising that he was excellent although he wasn't in any sense avant garde, the person who really brought it home to me that songs and simple things were totally all right was Kevin. It never really occurred to me before that anything of majority appeal would ever have any interest for me at all — I'm a snob in every way; I'm a cultural snob, if I had the brains I'd be an intellectual snob, and at that time I was hoping to be a musical snob as well. Kevin would write songs, and at first they'd remind you of something, but after you'd heard it two or three times you couldn't imagine the song not having been written, they were such real songs.

I really had to think again about music then, about simple things that you recognise and know because I'd based my whole thing on music than on the element of surprise, and the idea of something not being surprising and still being totally beautiful was new to me. I realise in retrospect that I went through my own little mini pop revolution, just like everybody else did, but then I always had this great problem of combining this realisation with having always believed in totally freaking out, both with your music and in your lifestyle.


The SOUNDS Talk-In

ROBERT WYATT

Considering that I'm not quite doing what fits my fantasies, I think I'm in the best possible group to be confused in'

FEATURE BY STEVE PEACOCK

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DAVE COUSINS

DAVID PORTER

RICK NELSON

picato

Premier PERCUSSION'S NUMBER ONE

PHOTOGRAPHER: SPUD MURPHY

WRECK

All the kind of rock things and pop things were the last things to occur to me really. When we formed the group with Kevin it was very summery I remember, and we were all growing our hair and walking round looking like girls, and Kevin was wearing make-up, and we'd just all lie around in the grass — just like everybody did in the mid sixties. It was a beautiful thing and we were part of it. Somehow, when we were sitting out in the sunny grass, there didn't seem any point in freaking out, but as we got a group together with Kevin and David my background started catching up with me again, and I felt the need for some really tough musical minds to be working against. It got to the point where we made probably the most important decision of the lot, which was eventually to wreck the first Soft Machine and arrive at the one we've got now, by inviting Mike to join us on keyboards.

For a while, Mike would sort of politely "shift around on the chords behind Kevin, and we never quite knew how he felt about it. He enjoyed some things and not others, but he never really wanted to be a pop musician, I think he was a bit embarrassed by the whole thing. But I've always been in this position, where there's been a constant pull between my background and sort of simple harmony fun. That kind of paradox is the thread that runs through every situation I've been in I suppose.

NARROW

■ When Kevin left, was it purely that Mike's influence was becoming more dominant ?

I don't think you can confine it to that because it's too narrow a thing to say that Kevin was into or what Mike was into. The thing you've got to remember with Mike was that he wasn't narrow-minded at all. For all his reservations, he did give up several years of his life at that stage to work with people who were by his original standards musically illiterate. He wasn't narrow minded at all, far from it, and he loved Kevin's bass playing — quite rightly, because Kevin is such an imaginative, interesting bass player. In the same way, to say that Kevin is just into simple songs is wrong, because he constantly surrounds himself with much more demanding situations than your average folkie singer.

He was very much part of what was unusual about the Soft Machine in those early days, and was really responsible for some of the freakiest situations we got into. In fact he was one of the first in the group to get into out-of-tempo passages with just sound — that was Kevin not me or Mike, who first got into those incredible noises. I mean I tend to give people two-sentence roles in the past, but you've got to bear in mind that they're incredible over simplifications.

VOCALS

■ You were doing a lot of singing with the first group weren't you ?

In the early days of Soft Machine I had to do the drumming, because we didn't know any other drummers really — we wouldn't have dared to ask any jazz drummers, and rock drummers at that time weren't that sensitive, so I had to do it myself, and Kevin and I did the vocals between us. It was basically a song group.

■ And that influence lasted until the second album...

Well fact it is always there in my opinion. It may be kind of more obscure, but I really like the Soft Machine at the moment, and for all the superficial effect it might have on the casual listener, it is very lyrical. I think both Mike's and Hugh's writing is not only lyrical but almost old-fashionedly lyrical. I certainly couldn't work with a group that I didn't think was lyrical. It's tunes that I think matter.



LYRICAL

■ **But not necessarily sung tunes.**

Well, if you've developed the faculty for listening to say Charlie Parker, you've learned to hear quite quickly intervals and rhythms and things - you can ge' into that whole condensed lyricism. Parker and Monk and people are just as lyrical and soulful as anybody before, but they can say in ten seconds what people stretch out to a great loping thing of ten minutes. But if you're not really into picking up the things they're playing, then it's just a blur of notes.

Of course a lot of people who play fast haven't got the melodic inventiveness to keep up with their own speed, and they are the ones who are boring, but people like Charlie Parker retained all of that melodic lyricism at the incredible speed he played at, and it's the same at the moment with people like Gary Burton and Larry Coryell. I find that very ex-citing. So I'd say that the song thing hasn't left us, but it is harder to pick up on if you're used to the comparative ease of listening to rock music.

NEUROTIC

■ **You've said in the past though that you are a singer rather than a drummer. Do you still feel that way ?**

In a way. If I just knew how to do it so that I was in a situation where I was singing more, and was more involved with a traditional concept of lyricism I would do it, but meanwhile I don't consider the time wasted at all, because you learn so much with Soft Machine. It's a very demanding band and a very neurotic band - every other day I want to leave or someone gets p—ed off with someone else - but its because ,we put such incredible demands on each other. But considering that I'm not quite doing what fits my fantasies, I think I'm in the best possible group to be confused in. If I've got to be lost somewhere I'm very glad it's in the Soft Machine because offhand I can't think of any musicians around that I respect more than Hugh and Mike and Elton (Dean).

■ **Last year, there was a time when you were going outside the Soft Machine for various things. There was the time when you were going to go with Kevin, and there was Symbiosis, and various other things. Are you not doing much of that any more?**

It was quite a practical thing. At that time we'd spent a long time on the road, and Mike and Hugh wanted to take some time off to do some writing, and I didn't fancy doing any writing - I was getting a bit, ted up with the pre-planned stuff and I wanted to see, how much could be done just spontaneously again. That's what "End Of And Ear" is all about really - it's really an exercise in total spontaneity, and that whole time was really - Symbiosis, everything - but it wasn't meant to be my whole life. It was really to see what could come out of that, that wasn't coming out with the Soft Machine.

PRIDE

■ **Did anything come out ?**

Yes, but not really what I'd expected. What it mainly brought out was a lot of drumming things - paradoxically it gave me more, confidence as a drummer, than anything, whereas I've always been rather embarrassed about being a drummer in the first place because my main interest has always been beautiful chord sequences. I've learnt a certain pride in drumming now and I enjoy doing it.

■ **You feel that you've learnt as much as you're going to from those thing now then ?**

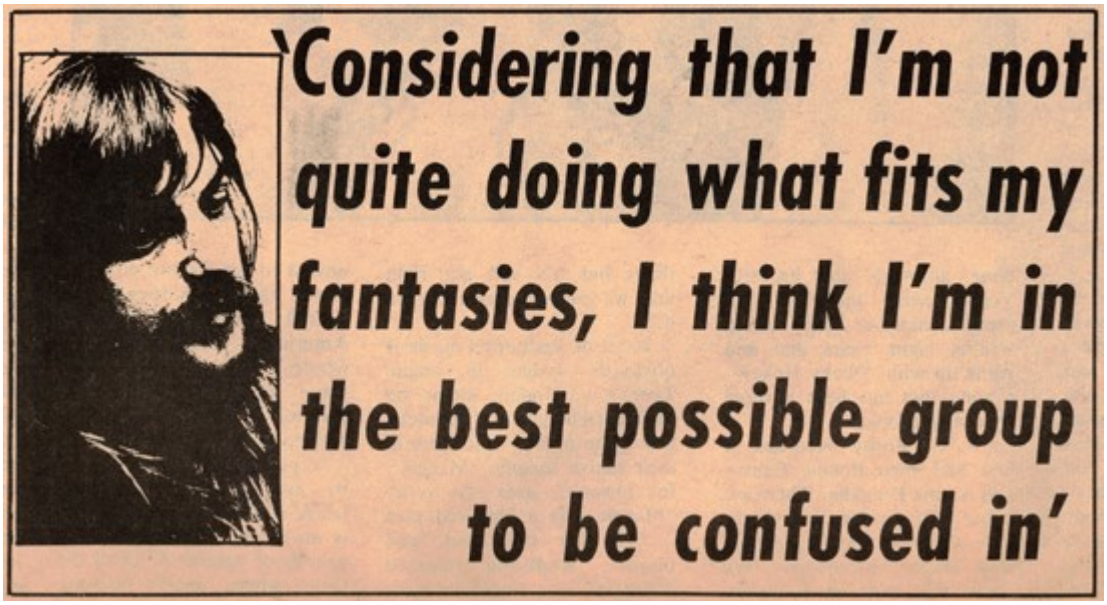
I don't know. It's just that Soft Machine's got lots of gigs now, and I think it's a better band than it was. It's not any more the three or us plus Elton, it really is much more of a quartet now. Mike and Elton in fact have found a way of working together that's stretched Mike out enormously, made him a much freer player. That time last year was just an interlude really. Symbiosis are still going incidentally, with Louis Moholo on drums.

STRETCH

■ You haven't done much writing recently then? Because you had a whole side of "Third", but nothing on the fourth album.

In a sense you could say that "End Of And Ear" and "Fourth" were a double album, one side of which was released before the other. In other words I got the contribution I would have made to this album done separately. It meant that I could stretch out, and Hugh could stretch out on "Virtually", which he definitely wanted to do, but probably wouldn't have felt justified in doing if I'd saved something of mine for the fourth album.

If I'm going to lead into anything else it's going to be more situations of singing, but it doesn't mean that I'm necessarily going to compose. Composing doesn't come naturally to me, though thinking up tunes does, because I haven't really got the skill to pin down what I think of. Melodically, I'm more impressed by other people's tunes anyway, and I'd like to work on some of Kevin's stuff, and on different versions of stuff that Hugh and Mike have written that could be interpreted differently from the way the Soft Machine interpret them. Not better, but just like throw another light on things that I feel are lyrical, but where the lyricism can get clouded over in the Soft Machine.



TUNES

Essentially, potentially I suppose I'm a sort of arranger really — not like writing out arrangements, but going into a studio and working on tunes. Like that Gil Evans on "End Of An Ear" - I'm totally intoxicated by the idea of the original but I just felt that all kinds of things could be done with it that Gil Evans either didn't want to do, or couldn't have, or whatever. But I'm a bit confused as to how to go about it.

■ Would you want to do it like "End Of And Ear", or perhaps work as an arranger with a group of people?

I really don't know, I think I'll try all kinds of different things. First of all I'll see whether

there are any other things that I could do within the context of the Soft Machine that I'm not doing now — like instead of just being the drummer, actually contributing conceptually — but it would have to be something that is acceptable to the others. Anything that doesn't seem to fit in with the Soft Machine… well I'd like to make lots and lots of records, I'd like to make a record a month but that would be financially impossible, so any little opportunities that come along I'll take. I mean, when John Walters gives us a ring and we can have ten minutes on "Top Gear", it gives me a chance to get a little song going - it needn't be for posterity or anything.

CONFIDENT

■ **Can you see any particular way that the Soft Machine is going to develop?**

I'd like to think that at the moment we're going to grow more and more together — accepting each others' differences and each others' similarities more. I'm much more confident about the group now than I have been at any other time. I'm more happy to be getting up on stage with the other three in pleasurable anticipation, though I still freak out sometimes after a bad gig. Obviously all of us have reservations about each other to a certain extent, but I think now the good qualities of the group outweigh the deficiencies. I'll just see what happens really - I don't want to get down to little details too much at the moment.

IGNORED

■ **The Soft Machine are one of the very few groups playing your kind of music who have become successful in terms of commercial success, and "name" and publicity. How do you feel about the way you are handled by record companies and promoters and publicists ?**

Well, God bless them all, but all of us want to be disassociated with some of the recent imagery associated with the group - to wit the poster for our Festival Hall concert and the record cover for "Fourth". I mean we made it quite clear to the__ people concerned that we didn't like either thing but our attitude was ignored. Luckily I think that most people who like the group like us for our music and don't worry about imagery, but to the extent that things like posters and LP covers give some extra information about the group and how they feel, I'd just like to say that that poster and that LP cover are not how we feel, on any level.

INTRIGUE

That cover photograph came out making us look like some solemn, ugly, broody pop group. It doesn't matter really, but that's the thinq that's representing you, for people to look at in their rooms for the next six months, and it's not exactly the kind of thing that is going to intrigue or interest our potential listeners. I don't know if the people who were getting that poster together realise it, but we've got an alto player in the group who has a head and a face - he's not that ugly, you know, we're quite happy to have him on the poster as well.

■ **You suffered a lot over that "pop at the prom" thing too, didn't you. There was some very strange publicity going around at the time.**

Well, I think that was really rather good, because it was a failed effort to make us respectable, and had it succeeded I think it could have done a lot more damage, I don't really have any interest in pleasing the Observer or the Sunday Times - I have no respect for those sort of papers, and I don't really want to be associated with that sort of thing. It kept the barriers up and to that extent, I think it was a very successful concert.

REACH

■ You don't think it would be nice if you music reached out to the people who read the Sunday Times ?

Oh look, I don't want to be nasty - some lovely
people read the Sunday Times, I do myself, there’s nothing wrong with that. Of course we're delighted anybody likes the group and sad if they don't, but that’s not an area of accolades an acceptance that is of any use to us whatsoever.

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Soft Machine - Jazz & Pop - April 1971



Soft Machine

The Soft Machine stirs different associations in different people. Some might think of Claes Oldenberg's soggy typewriters and drums.

For others, it could be William Burroughs' book by that name, a sort of illustrative exercise in man-as nauseated-anal-automaton. The Holy Modal Rounders sang about it. In "Dame Fortune" they told us "... man is just a soft machine..." And then, of course. Mick Jagger mentions the phrase in "Memo from Turner", something about "the man who hides behind the soft machine."

But the soft machine in question here is the band by the name... And they may well be the best of all possible soft machines. Now, somehow, in some way, all of these references fit together; somewhere in the world of nihilism, absurdity, Zen, Dada, fatalism and assorted underground phenomena, they are all in the same family: a soft machine is a Soft Machine is a soft machine.

The Soft Machine (de musica) is a strange mixture of personality clashes and uniformly talented musicians. They first got together about five years ago, while bumming around in the south of France. At that time, the members of the group were Mike Ratledge on keyboards, Robert Wyatt on vocals and assorted percussion, and Kevin Ayers on bass guitar. Their main claim to fame was their musical accompaniment for a play, Desire Caught by the Tail, written by that noted dramatist Pablo Picasso... and their seeming penchant for living out On the Road.

A couple of years later, they did a tour of the U.S. with Jimi Hendrix: the general audience reaction at that time was a sort of mild bewilderment: no one was too certain about exactly what they did, but everyone knew that they sure did it in a strange way. You see, in the first place, they didn't sound like either the Beatles or the Stones — not even Chuck Berry. Secondly, their stage presence was a bit on the outlandish side: it wasn't that they carried-on or anything... but they looked so strange. For example, Robert Wyatt caused quite a ripple in the trendy set during their week-long gig at The Scene due to his unusual jacket and tie. (They were painted onto his skin.) Actually, they all looked like a bunch of

punk kids, which, I suppose, is exactly what they were.

Shortly after their return to England, their first album was released on Probe records, and received a less than ecstatic reaction from the record-buying public: it was, and still is, a very strange record. The Soft Machine were among the first to espouse a desire to combine jazz and rock music, and their approach to the problem is to this day unique - no one sounds like this. The sleeve notes described it as "rock" music. but I'd say that would be stretching things a bit — it really wasn't rock'n'roll at all. It was more a musical montage, a crazy-quilt, loosely strung together by their own weird idiosyncrasies. Now, while this definitely was not one of the best albums in the world, it did from time to time rise to a peculiar sort of greatness. Robert Wyatt's vocals were haunting, actually beautiful; and while the music was generally on the over-indulgent side, the musicianship was superior. Each song contained something really fine, but somehow, nothing was sufficiently developed or explored; the group seemed hung-up in an effort to turn each song into a rock'n' roll thing, when they could have been much better as something else; it lacked continuity.

One year later, in 1969, the Soft Machine released a second album, Volume Two, also on Probe. Somewhere in-between the two albums, there was a change in personnel: Kevin Ayers left the group, and bass player Hugh Hopper, who had collaborated on some of the songs on the first album, joined them. (Kevin Ayers now has his own group called The Whole World.) The degree of improvement on the second album was phenomenal; the group trimmed off much of the excess baggage, and got into some really interesting things.

This second record was one of those "concept" albums: the first side consisted of ten pieces, collectively named "Rivmic Melodies", written mostly by Hugh Hopper. Much of the lyric material was straight theater of the absurd, such things as "A Concise British Alphabet, Parts I and II", amounting to a grand total of 22 seconds of music and 52 letters of the alphabet (A to Z, backwards and forwards). Several of the pieces were simply mental musings. such as "Hulloder", which starts off "If I were black..." (I'd want to be a big man in the FBI or the CIA, but of course I'm not... etc.); and "Thank You Pierrot Lunaire", in which they wonder why the audience is there watching, not doing. Personally, I wonder why they chose that title. (Pierrot Lunaire is the name of a cycle of 21 speech-songs written by Arnold Schoenberg in 1912. The pieces were based on the poetry of A. Giraud, who wrote about this weirdo pervert named Pierrot in the moonlight.) Then you have "Have You Ever Been Green?", in which they offer thanks to "Noel, Mitch and Jim," among others.

Robert Wyatt also has a go at absurdity with his Pataphysical Introduction, parts I and II. Pataphysical? Assuming that the spelling is dialectic phonetics, like Rivmic, I still can't find such a word in the dictionary. There is "paraphysis: one of the slender sterile filaments borne among the sporogenous or gametogenous organs in cryptogamic plants." Let's just leave it at "akin to physics" and forget about it. The music which accompanies the title sounds. like what comes through the door at your local cocktail lounge, with even a bit of "These Foolish Things" thrown in… Very funny, really. There is something about this album which reminds me of what The Who Sell Out might sound like, if the Who were the Soft Machine.

Most of the seven songs on this side were written by Mike Ratledge: the melodic lines are fairly analytical, and very difficult and in view of that, Robert Wyatt's vocals are remarkable. This boy can carry a tune. The melodic and harmonic patterns sound rather similar to the 12-tone school of composition. The rhythms, actually polyrhythms, although still somewhat embryonic, seem to come from Medieval sources and their Twentieth Century adaptations. Once again, the lyrics are pretty absurd; for example, "...time wasted, time that could be spent completely nude, bare naked..." from "Pig". However, Ratledge's compositions seem to be more sound-oriented, while Hopper's lean more towards idea-orientation. I could probably write pages about this album —it's that interesting – but skip that and simply suggest that you buy a copy. Although it's two years old, it is still way ahead of most of this year's music, both in concept and execution.

1970 gave birth to yet another album, Third. Hopper, Wyatt and Ratledge are still with us, despite any number of intra-group hassles, but someone new has been added: sax player Elton Dean, who can not be over-rated. On record, but especially live, this man is brilliant; his presence seems to have added a new dimension to the group, a control of feeling and mood which was often lacking in the past. Everything about the group seems to have been streamlined in the past year. The album cover is a perfect example: the first two covers were complicated, on the gimmicky side, illustrating that, in their minds perhaps "woman

is just a soft machine." (Bah!)

The third cover is different, simply black lettering on a sienna background and actually, the effect is more dramatic. Everything is more effective, totally uncluttered. The first album, precocious child that it was, had 13 songs on two side; the second (adolescent prodigy'?) contained 17 songs on two side; the third, a double album. has only four songs, one each by Wyatt and Hopper and two by Ratledge. This is the first really mature work, and each piece is given ample time for growth. Each man seems to have found his direction here, and although the paths are quite divergent, the musicians seem to function equally well in any environment. Hugh Hopper's composition "Facelift" seems to float somewhere in outer cosmic spaces, with passages of seemingly random, distorted sounds juxtaposed with eery melodic sequences. Everything is cyclical, but everything is strangely distorted and ultimately static, moving one step backward for every step forward. About 2/3 through the piece, a flute joins in, played by one Lyn Dobson; I don't know who he is, but the passage is beautiful, really beautiful. This piece was recorded live, and is one of the best live tracks I've heard in a long time, although something at the end of the piece gives the impression that a bit of extra labor was done in the studio — not that anything is wrong with that.

Robert Wyatt's piece, "Moon in June", is one of those songs that I've always wanted to hear. There is something about it, something so deranged yet reasonable, which makes this listener feel really good. I have several #1 favorite vocalists, and Robert Wyatt is among them. In "Moon", he seems to be singing a letter which no one ever wrote and no one could read… It's a weird song. The music is liberally seasoned with bits of melodrama, occasional spoken directives, with a little Ray Charles-type backing, lots of la-la's and dada's, and this almost aimlessly wandering vocal; the first half of the piece lopes along at a lazy 4/4 pace, and then at half-time shifts to a faster, more complicated variation. The last few minutes of the track are dominated by a sort of warped violin and frequency hum, which, when heard through earphones, have a rather numbing effect on the brain… As I said, it's a weird song. One more thing: for his act of composing 19 minutes and 18 seconds of continuous music without a single drum solo, Robert Wyatt definitely deserves this year's Sublimated Ego and Elevated Taste awards. Recently, he has recorded a solo (sic) album, called The End of An Ear which, so I hear, is absolutely fantastic... and, like "Moon in June", contains no drum ego-tripping, just a lot of fine, spacey music.

A couple of months ago, I saw Robert and Elton Dean participating in an improvisational jam at the London School of Economics. Their rather formidable talents were aided and abetted by several other fine jazz-based British musicians, notably Mark Charig on cornet, Nick Evans on trombone, Gary Boyle on guitar, Roy Babbington on bass and the astounding Keith Tippett on piano. Aside from doing some of the best drumming I've heard anywhere, he also crawled around on the floor with a microphone, rubbed the mike along the edges of a cymbal tied to Tippett's chair, and generally came up with some pretty outlandish but amazingly good sounds. Elton Dean's efforts at the LSE were equally incredible; whether alone, or in harmony with Charig and Evans, he managed to conjure up delights which literally gave me the chills.

"Um, yeah, I think that's a fair observation. I don't really believe in the language theory of music . It is a purely non-verbal form; any analogies to it are bound to be on the fallacious side. What we're really trying to do is produce a good auditory experience for ourselves and everybody else."

Soft Machine music seems three-dimensional, as opposed to one- or two-dimenstional.
"Well yes, in the sense that every single person in the group has a very strong role. There are no real subordinate roles. Each person as a force should be equally strong, equally contributary. And to that extent, it is three-dimensional. It isn't just a plain background with one instrument in the foreground. It should be a constantly evolving texture that each person is modifying."

For a contemporary group, especially a British group, the band seems very introverted on the stage, almost oblivious to the audience.

"Yes. Hugh, the bass player, doesn't really like the on-stage thing in a way. He finds it difficult to relate at all to audiences. I do slightly; I think Elton probably does too. We're all kind of vaguely shy people anyway, and especially in this kind of set-up, which we don't do very often - the club. You know, when you are playing in a concert the audience is completely anonymous. But in a club you are kind of forced right up against them, and this is a very strange feeling for us."

Now although the crowds here at the club have been very attentive, in fact I'd say well-

behaved as far as most club audiences go. I still started to think about watching the Mothers and watching Frank Zappa get so incredibly angry because the audience just didn't understand what was going on with the music. Has the band ever run into any of that?

"Oh yeah, we have. When we first started, it was always like that; it was always bad. But we didn't feel too strongly because we weren't very good, and we completely sympathised with the audience anyway, although they probably weren't reacting to the fact that we were bad, but to the fact that they didn't know what was going on. Nowadays, each of us reacts to the situation like any situation where there are different people. It depends on what mood you're in; sometimes I do get annoyed. But generally speaking, in the concert situation one isn't aware of it, because we create so much power on the stage, and because we never stop during the set. We're never really aware of the audience reaction right till the end, by which time it's too late to react anyway."

Greg Lake told me that when Emerson, Lake and Palmer go over to the States, they are going to try to play only in places that cater more to "serious" music, because they want that sort of audience.

"I really don't care, as long as the place has got good acoustics; that's the most important thing. I think you're going to attract the kind of audience that you deserve to attract, ultimately. So I don't think it matters a great deal what kind of place it is as long as it's got good acoustics."

Do you enjoy recording?

"When it's going well, yes I do."

Do you work out a piece on stage before recording, or do you do it the other way around?

"We'd rather work it out live, because we find that we can't really get a piece to where it should be just simply by rehearsing. Something peculiar seems to happen; one or two people get their parts together very quickly, and then if someone else is struggling to get it together, the others get very bored; whereas, a live situation always makes it very interesting for everybody. The music comes together much more quickly. So when it's possible, we try to work a piece out live before we record it. Although on the second LP, none of that was performed live, it was all done straight and rehearsed in the studio. And I think it suffered because of it. And some of the pieces on the third one too, we didn't play them enough live. We only did about five or six gigs; we should have played them a bit more. If we recorded them now, I'm sure they'd sound much better, but I think that's always true."

Do you have any idea at all of where you want the music to go?

"No, I don't think you ever do. I think you are only aware of it when you start doing something new. What usually happens is that there is a dissatisfaction with the writing, and the material you are performing at the time. Sometimes you have definite ideas that you want to change even though its only in a vague, conceptual level. But other times it just stays a period of dissatisfaction, and then suddenly something happens and the whole direction is changed, and you really haven't planned it at all."

I keep reading things that say you are always perilously close to self-destruction as a band...

"Yeah, true," Mike laughed.

But you still sound really tight just the same: what keeps you together?

"Um… I don't know, I don't know. I think that we're forced back on each other all the time, in the end; although any one of us can go off and work in another situation, ultimately one is forced back into this situation. Although there might be personality conflicts sometimes, it works out for the music. It's because we are different people that it somehow works."

Could you give me an idea of how you put together, of how one of your pieces will take shape, starting off with composition?

"That varies enormously, depending on who wrote it and how structured it is. Some of the pieces are written out pretty well completely; every part is written and there are areas of

freedom in it. And obviously, areas of freedom will change every night. After a while, the actual written parts will begin to change. Sometimes the piece is less heavily structured, and therefore open to modifications during the rehearsal by the rest of the group. There is no real fixed rule or procedure."

How involved are you in technology, in electronics in the music?

"Not completely dependent on it, but a large part of whether we play well is whether the technology is working for us. So you have to, in self-defense, become accustomed to... you have to acquire a certain knowledge about the machinery you are using. We are interested in using new technologies as they become available to us. but so far we haven't really done much work with it."

Have you ever used a Moog?

"Ah, no. We used a VCS 3, which is the English equivalent… It's better. We've only done that once at the Radiophone Workshop. I wouldn't mind using it, but I think it would take me about six months' hard work to use it in a really intelligent way, instead of becoming victimised by having only a limited number of patterns… Not really having enough control over it. I think it would take as long to learn the VCS 3 as it takes to learn to play any other instrument completely from scratch. Ideally, I think it shouldn't be played like an organ. People will set up a certain sound and then play it like an organ; but the whole thing about a VCS 3 is that it's a completely new different system of playing. It offers you that, and if you don't use that, then there's no real point in using a VCS 3."

Mike got up. The rest of the band was ready to start rehearsing. One wishes there had been more time - time enough to speak to all of them. This group is notorious for its differences. Ask them a question and you get four different answers… It could have been very interesting. But they like to tour the States and maybe, now that they've moved over to Columbia and have been getting some backing, they'll actually do it. As good as the records are, they really don't tell the whole story. In spite of the group's dubious feelings about playing live, they remain one of the best live groups around. So if they do show up in the U.S. of A., don't miss them. Soft Machine are a quite unforgettable experience.

Michelle Hush

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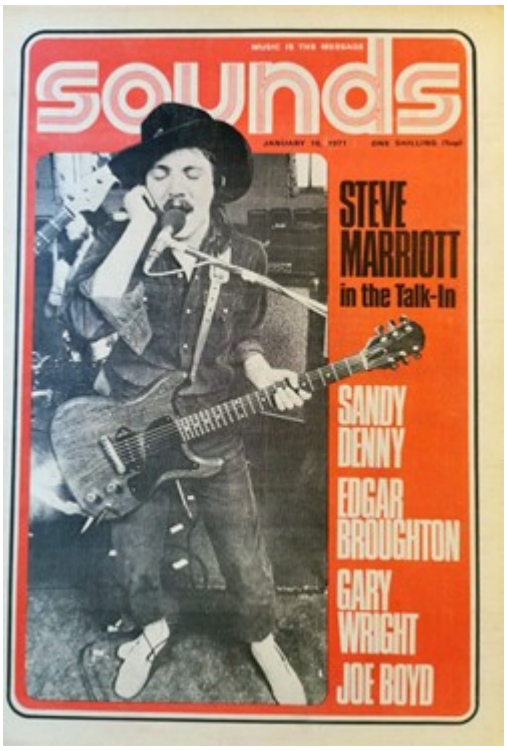
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A freaky spear carrier - Sounds - January 16, 1971



A freaky spear carrier

Steve Peacock visits the BBC TV studios and meets Soft's Robert Wyatt in rather unusual surroundings

I SUPPOSE everyone has a mental image of what a TV or film studio is going to be like - cameras lumbering around like baby elephants, thick cables lying all over the floor, lights, and hundreds of people dashing around importantly giving orders and counter-orders — but I didn't expect my exaggerated images of the principal characters in the charade to be so close to the Real thing.

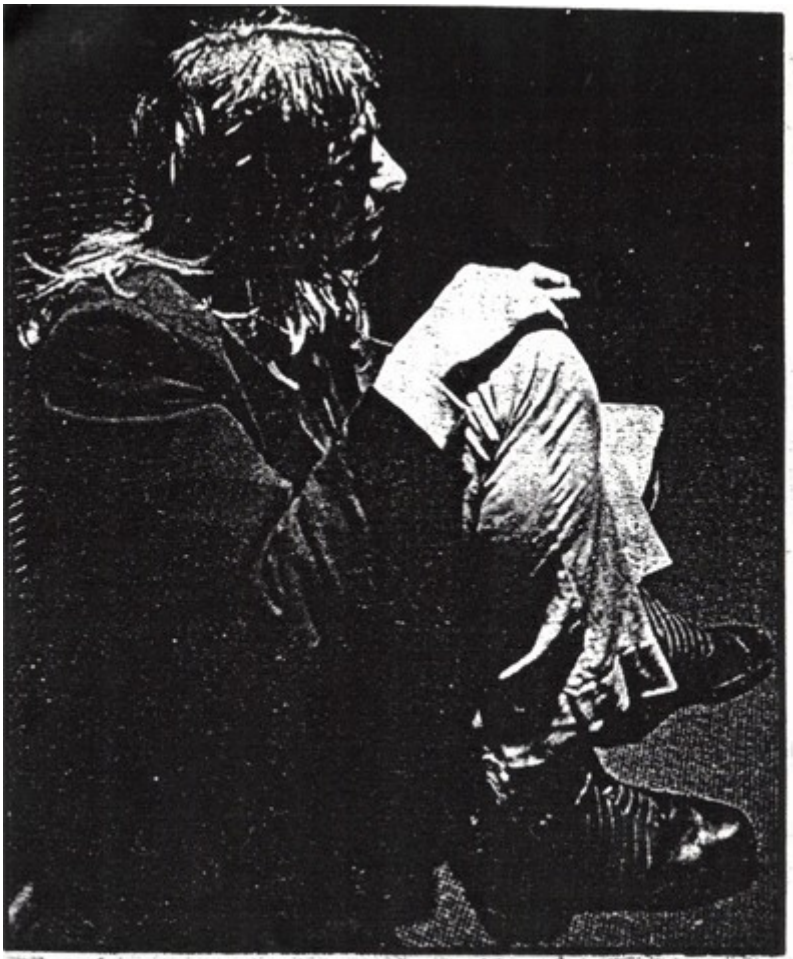
Spending a day at a BBC TV rehearsal can be extremely tiresome, and much of Wednesday last week was, but the tedium was somewhat enlivened by the mould-cast studio characters — not so much the actors, but the people who make up the studio cast.

The director was just as I'd imagined him to be: playing his part to perfection he stormed around the set going into paroxisms of "super, well-done, just right" "when something was good, and screaming at the extras, the floor manager, his assistant, or the lighting man when somebody missed a cue. Even, his costume was perfect — hippie shirt, baggy trousers tucked into suede boots, and a little beard.

The floor manager scurried around with his book and his ear plug, looking more than slightly harassed, calling out "Come on everybody, quiet now, sshhhh, come on, right, applause now, that's it, lovely" and things like that at every available moment, and echoing the director's every whim:

"Where's Julian?"
"Come on everybody, where's Julian?"
(A voice) "He's gone to put his beard on."
"He's gone to... who said Julian could go and put his beard on?"
"Oh yes, it's all right. I said Julian could go and put his beard on."

Other people were leaping about playing their parts to perfection as well, and if they televised the scenes in the studio rather than the play - the first episode of a new "Take Three Girls" series — they were making, I'm sure it would be immensely popular.



● ***ROBERT WYATT: "The whole thing depends on the audience identifying with the girl"***

In the midst of it all, Robert Wyatt who plays a freaky avant garde drummer, was looking bemused and rather lost. Very roughly, the story of the play concerns a new one of the 'Three Girls" who is a journalist, goes to interview an avant garde composer (played by Robert's brother, Julian Glover), pans him in, an article, and he loses his arts council grant.

He gets his revenge and makes a fool of her in public by distorting her image as she distorted his, and in the end we are all supposed to think "poor girl, nasty freaky composer." In fact, it seems rather a silly play, another uncomprehending piece of TV trivia.

Robert, who describes his part as "one of the spear carriers in the avant garde army" as opposed to the trendy straight army, is supposed to sit around playing spontaneous music on cue.

"The whole thing depends on the audience identifying with the girl who starts off ambitious therefore bitchy, and ends up vulnerable, therefore romantic — or that's how they see it,", he said during a break in rehearsals.

"By the end, you realise that the guy who wrote the play just doesn't care about the composer, all he's interested in is the three dumb chicks. I suppose it is stupid to get so serious about it but underneath all the superficial layers I can't help feeling that there is something serious at stake."

There is indeed something serious at stake, and the confrontation portrayed superficially in the play happens all the time between artists and the public, but I suppose it would be asking a bit too much of a series like "Take Three Girls" to go veru deeply into it.

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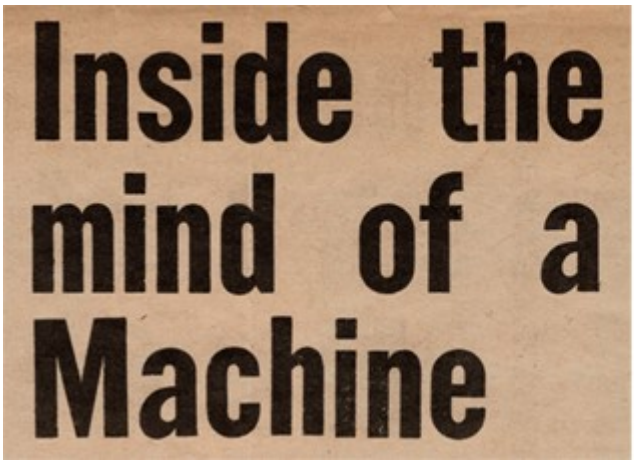
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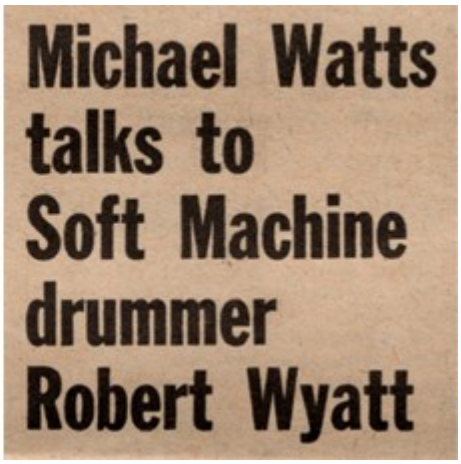
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Inside the mind of a Machine - Melody Maker - January 2, 1971





1970 was a very good year for Robert Wyatt. It was the year in which he established himself as a major drummer in contemporary British music; the year in which he experimented outside the confines, unrestrictive though they are, of The Soft Machine, dallying briefly with Kevin Ayers, then concentrating more strongly on his role inside the Keith Tippett Centipede project, with whom he has played so impressively on their three initial outings.


Melody Maker

RADIO 1 TO DIE?

1971 pop squeeze

GILBERT PLAYS SUCCESS COOL

And then, as the year has drawn to an end, he has further established his own identity by becoming a prime mover in Symbiosis, that excitingly impromptu, free-blowing band, and finally topping off the proceedings by producing his own album — you believe he produced it, too?

He has called it "The End Of An Ear," which is quite a funny pun, I suppose. But then, Robert it quite a funny person with his huge fur French hat crammed down over his untidy lank hair.

Whenever I think of Robert I think of that hat, and there are other mental images, too. Of Robert slouching around in that curious way of his, with his creased trousers that are

always too short flapping around his ankles, dressed in the maroon coat that always look a size too big; of Robert lathered with sweat as he sits stripped to the waist, flailing away like a man possessed under the hot lights of the Albert Hall during The Softs' televised concert; and then there is Robert sitting with bitter tears in his eyes in a dressing room in Rotterdam because he hates the performance he has just given.

Because, you see, he's nothing if not an emotional person. He is also nothing if not a nice person, and niceness is not an excessively common quality among musicians and entertainers. Much of the secret of his success is that people respond so readily to his spontaneity and generosity of spirit. Everybody wants to work with him, and when they have made the gig they come back for more. There was nobody happier and more elated amongst those 50 people in Centipede than Wyatt, and no one more brought down when they band received reviews that were generally cautious and, in one instance, bitterly hostile.

" I'm upset, not for my own sake," he explained later, " but for Keith and Julie."
" And he meant it.
Anyway, like I say, he has reason to feel disappointed about his own career at this point. The past 12 months have proved very fruitful for him. Come to think of it, he could have called that album "The End Of A Year," couldn't he?

HOW do you feel about interviews, Robert?
I regret most I've done when I see what's happened, but then I regret most performances on records, too. I think one of the big difficulties is that written words and spoken words aren't the same thing. You actually think different things in print — I do. Things I say, words I use in speech, if I was writing down the same thought, I actually wouldn't use the same word. There's nothing anybody can do about that, really. It's misleading. I find I say things just to pad some things out, or to be clever for a minute while I'm trying to think what I really think. I can see the value of them, but I still find it makes demands... it upsets me sometimes, put it like that. But that's true of anything.



Inside the mind of a Machine

1970 was a very good year for Robert Wyatt. It was the year which he established himself as a major drummer in contemporary British music; the year in which he experimented outside the confines, unrestrictive though they are, of The Soft Machine dallying briefly with Kevin Ayers, then concentrating more strongly on his role inside the Keith Tippett Centipede project, with which he has played so impressively on their three initial outings.

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Michael Watts talks to Soft Machine drummer Robert Wyatt

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BUT Hugh (Hopper) and Mike (Ratledge) don't like interviews, do they?

Well, Hugh is pathologically shy. Very. The fact that he goes on stage is part of it. You don't get up on your own, you get up with music and amplifiers, and volume. He's very private and being introverted but it does surprise me. What surprises me is that people who are extroverts are shy. What amazes me is why brilliant musicians is so, so shy, because if the extrovert is probably so that they open their tin their mouths rushing to coffee bars meeting pe and I'm surprised that had the time to learn to anything at the same time

Whereas I find that it's more are you social people very often the ones who l to play instruments grop. The one way you can ha be a performer, beca it's really a false identity on stage. You can ri and unshackle and perm

The group has two primarily instrumental, instance, because of characters, in a way. We very emotional group in direction. We just suit both. From whatever seems to excite us at moment to whatever area seeing to excite us, the simple things that gaps, the lack of gaps because we are orchestra I think, to have a stage where the audience expected to see band I just find that so embarrassing — making number, bang, then into the next one, all business. I can't bear it.

YOU don't always sp happy with group. . . What do you t it's gonna wrong for you sonally?

(Long pause). All the th you can talk about is m to agree on. We all g similar ideas on the p bitions of freedom and different types of freed and structure, and discip and what use they are, when they're useful and w they are not, and how to control and still exp yourself. But music isn't concrete ideas, concepts you had them; the real m is the way you play, actual note that you put a the note before.

And quite simply, at times we aren't playing same piece of music — drumming isn't the drums for the bass line that the solo isn't because Hugh and I are somewhere else. The idea, after all, is not to create four pieces of music but one piece of music, and I'm upset on nights when we create four pieces of music.

SO what have you gained musically from the Symbiosis?

Since the summer, since I've started playing with Kevin, I've realised that in other contexts there are things in me which come out and never seem to come out, when I play with Soft Machine, it's not a question of quality at all, it's just a question of different atmospheres demand different skills, and I hadn't realised just how much you do adapt and just play what seems necessary. I would be very loath to put a word to it and think of a concept which fits what I mean.

All I know is that when I get on a kit, and there's Roy Babington on on left and, whatever it might be, Nucleus Whitehead or someone, and Gary (Windo) and Nick (Evans), the whole different thing happens. I just lift up my sticks and immediately something else happens and different atmosphere arise that would never arise with Soft Machine. I just play completely different things.

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ship. European music are of schooled in a way into an almost military hierarchy of composer, conductor and orchestra.

What happens is, there's a kind of assumption that the type of person who conceives the music is a different kind of person from a performer — that's what European music means, although many great European composers have been virtuoso performers of their own work, and many great composers are great conductors. But generally speaking, this is a theory that's accepted, and the fact is that in my opinion the most vital influences on music has been the black music of the past 50 years.

The most interesting thing I seems to me, that has been developed by black music is sense — combine both skills in one person. And this seems to me the most interesting, challenging thing that jazz music has come up with that European music doesn't really like to get to grips with. And what Symbiosis is, is a complete inhalation; in other words, we're all listeners without any of the composers, or when we do have composers — like Keith was with us the other night — he's not in a composing or controlling role at all.

And it's an incredible risk, Symbiosis every night, because we just turn up and play. The responsibility is enormous; you've got to be on from then and there because you're going to be doing all the composing and all the performing at the same time, and so is everybody else.

WOULD you agree that this seems, to be, a very interesting period for young jazz musicians and the thinking rock musicians? They really seem to be coming together.

Well, Centipede is directly responsible for Symbiosis and so on. Yeah, I think so. For me, I find it staggering, and a bit scary, because it seems to me there's so much to do and so little to hide behind.

There's a lot of knowledge and wisdom that's been spread around in the last four or five years. There's a lot of information you are exposed to now with I think there's bound to be a lot of heavy stuff of pornographic interest — interesting but disposable — but I think it's incredibly exciting. Short answer to your question — yes.

WHAT do you think jazz people can learn from those musicians with rock influences?

That's interesting. Before I talk about it I think that if you think of it as a blanket thing you're in trouble; a hard criterion out of general-ised theories sound, like one

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People are often surprised at musicians and performers being introverts but it doesn't surprise me. What surprises me is that people who are extroverts are musicians. What amazes me is when a brilliant musician is an extrovert, because if they're extrovert it probably means that they spent their time in their teens rushing round coffee bars meeting people, and I'm surprised that they had the time to learn to playt anything at the same time.

Whereas I find that introverts are less social people are very often the ones who learn to play instruments properly. The one way you can hide is to be a performer, because it's really a false identity to be on stage. You can really feel untouchable and private.

The group has become primarily instrumental, for instance, because of our characters, in a way. We're a very unplanned group in our direction. We just sort of drift from whatever area seems to excite us at the moment to whatever other area seems to excite us. Even the simple things, like the gaps, the lack of gaps, is because we are embarrassed, I think, to have a silence on stage where the audience is expected to react back to us. I just find that totally embarrassing — ending a number, bang, then straight into the next one, all that business. I can't bear it.

YOU don't always appear happy with the group... What do you think it's doing wrong for you personally?
(Long pause). All the things you can talk about in music we agree on. We all share similar ideas on the possibilities of freedom and the different types of freedom, and structure, and discipline, and what use they are, and when they're useful and when they are not, and how to operate, and still express yourself. But music isn't, like, conscious ideas, concepts if you had them; the real music is the way you play, the actual note that you put after the note before.

And quite simply, sometimes we aren't playing the same piece of music — the drumming isn't the drumming for the bass line that Hugh's using, or there's another bass line that isn't being played, or the rhythm section thing that should be with Mike's organ solo isn't because Hugh and I are somewhere else. The idea, after all, is not to create four pieces of music but one piece of music, and I'm upset on nights when we create four pieces of music.

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Symbiosis is different people. All music is a cooperative thing, you see. Beyond all people's

individual talent, which the music has. How to pin down the best relationship…

European music sort of solidified in a way into an almost military hierarchy of composer, conductor and orchestra.

What happens is, there's a kind of assumption that the type of person who conceives the music is a different kind of person from a performer — that's what European music assumes, although many great European composers have been virtuoso performers of their own work, and many great composers are great conductors. But generally speaking, this is a hieracy that's accepted, and the fact is that in my opinion the most vital influence on music has been the black music of the past 50 years.

The most interesting thing it seems to me, that has been suggested by black music, is that, as in, say, painting, the person who conceives of it and the person who plays it can be one and the same — combine both skills in one person. And this seems to me the most interesting, challenging thing that jazz music has come up with that European music doesn't really like to get to grips with. And what Symbiosis is, is a complete imbalance; in other words, we're all blowers without any of the composers, or when we do have composers — like Keith was with us the other night — he's not in a composing or controlling role at all.

And so it's an incredible risk, Symbiosis every night, because we just turn up and play. The responsibility is enormous; you've got to be on form then and there because you're going to be doing all the composing and all the performing at the same time, and so is everybody else.

WOULD you agree that this seems to be a very interesting period for young jazz musicians and the thinking rock musicians?
They really seem to be coming together. Well, Centipede is directly responsible for Symbiosis and so on. Yeah, I think so. For me, I find it staggering, and a hit scary, because it seems to me there's so much to do and so little to hide behind.

There's a lot of knowledge and wisdom that's been spread around in the last four or five years. There's no excuse for certain types of musicians not knowing about other types. The standards are so high now! And the aera of information you are expected to cope with! I think there's bound to be a lot of messy stuff of journalistic interest — interesting but disposable — but I think it's incredibly exciting. Short answer to your question — yes.

From the technical point of view I'm just nowhere really. I've always felt a bit uncomfortable since we started

WHAT do you think jazz people can learn from those musicians with rock references?
That's interesting. Before I talk about it I think that if you think of it as a blanket thing you're in trouble; a band created out of generalised theories sounds like one to me, always. And a band made out of people who've met and work together well sounds like that as well. There can be as much difference in worlds between two so-called rock musicians working together; they can bring more completely different things to each other than a rock musician and a classical musician.

If there are any general things, I think they’re the obvious ones. Jazz musicians are now realising that there’s nothing mature about consistently droning out your bass player and pianist. There's



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WYATT

FROM P17

ideas. It's an important thing in rock, the amplifiers and that, and instead of being rude about them, I think jazz musicians are realising more and more that they've got a very important function and that they're solving problems that can't be solved in any other way in the immediate future.

And I think rock musicians can learn from jazz musicians. The most important thing they learn is that you can get a lot more out of music and put a lot more into it if you learn to play properly. Quite simply, jazz musicians are showing rock musicians that there's an awful lot of things you can do on a guitar and drum kits that aren't unnecessary or just technical fiddle bits — they just expand your language.

In practice, most jazz musicians tend to me to be very involved in what they play — actually, the relationship between them and their instrument; and they've developed that to a very high extent —a man and his bass, a man and his alto a man and his piano. And what rock has spent a lot more time doing than most of jazz is studying the actual effect and balance of what all these instruments sound like from the outside on a stage.

WHAT aspects of your playing, do you think, have improved since working with the jazz musicians in Centipede?

Funnily enough, this is where categories break down, because it's almost like for the first time I've had to be a rock drummer. It's the first time my primary function has been to lay it down so that, as much as my role permitted, everybody knew where things were, what was going on, what the dynamics and feel were. A functional role to a degree I've never had before. In fact, until this year I've never worked with other people's bands before.

I've been spoilt very much. I've developed everything I've done either in playing in groups without leaders or groups where everybody had an equal say. Keith certainly didn't tell me what to do, but it seemed after the first run-throughs the right approach to take in relation to what Brian (Spring) and Tony (Fennell) were doing. And funnily enough, it's taught me about rock drumming — about that kind of functional drumming as opposed to counter-point drumming. Christ, I haven't played in 4/4 for about two years!

WHAT do you think your strengths are as a drummer?

Well, I suppose it's a bit late to say this, but I don't primarily think of myself as a drummer. I think of myself as a catalyst for the real musicians. How I see myself being most useful is getting people at it slightly more than if I wasn't there, or even getting them together and at it. If I was really into drums as an end I'd be sitting here practising. But I haven't got a practice pad! So long as I can play well enough to pin down what's going on and to emphasise the pace that's necessary.

From the technical point of view I'm just nowhere, really. I've always felt a bit uncomfortable since we started. Basically, I came up to London to sing songs with Kevin (Ayers). Five, six years ago. I'd done a lot of things before then that were instrumental, but by instrumental I don't mean jazz or rock. In fact, the funny way these discussions come to jazz and

want me to loaf about in the sun and just have a nice time and groove, which is virtually the state he's got to now, because he has the traditional attitude that he's done his homework, built up something, and now he's out in the sun finishing it off, so to speak.

I hadn't earned it yet, somehow, and though there was great love abounding it wasn't one which had to be constantly backed up by me being there all the time or him coming here, just that he felt I had to go out and do it, and then when I'd got something that I'd done, maybe go back and see him, again. And I haven't been back yet because I don't feel I've done anything yet that would stand up to his kind of standards.

SO how did the tie-up with Graves originate?

There's a bunch of friends there in the early thirties who'd gone out there—poets and writers — and their children, their grandchildren, got invited out there by the people who stayed on there — you know, the children of the people who went back to England during the war. And I'm one of them. He's no relation, though my father's first wife was his secretary.

There's a kind of family of thinkers that my parents belonged to, and to a certain extent Robert Graves could be called the head of that family. He's a kind of distant tribal chief, though it's several generations removed. He had various fights with me dad, who died some years ago. My father at that time, he was a sort of brilliant young Communist layabout, really, (laughs). He's done various things. He'd got a degree in law at Liverpool, and then he did modern languages at Oxford, and then he got on to do psychology at Cambridge. A very bright bloke.

He lived just long enough to realise that I wasn't going into university, which really disappointed him. He died in a state of anger at me, I'm afraid. But he was also a pianist, and that's definitely where I got my ideas from. The house was full of music.

And Graves, he's incredible. There's a colony, a set around him there. Mind you, I'm talking about when I was there, which was before The Soft Machine. I've got lots of friends who have gone back there. Kevin spent some time there. He got into Majorca as a place to live much more than I did.

SO when you came up to London you were going to sing with Kevin?

Yes, I think that was the idea; I didn't really know. I 'd been through a period in my head very much like the stuff I'm doing now, although not technically, probably. The music I was listening to — had been listening to — was

nothing childish getting your bass player and pianist heard, even if it means they have to play crude instruments such as bass guitar and electric piano. There's nothing essentially immoral or immature about it. The fact that rock musicians assume that you've got to hear the bass line — although very often they overdo it — seems to me an actual element of musical maturity in rock. There's an element of childishness in jazz. There's an assumption that jazz musicians can do all the teaching and rock musicians all the learning.

If the soloist, for instance, is doing a development upon a harmonic sequence and you can't hear the harmonic sequence, so you don't know what the solo lines are referring to, then you lose the point of reference; you lose the lovely cosmic hum, if you'll pardon the expression; you lose the sense of well-being, you lose, actually, the music, and you just leave the ideas. It's an important thing in rock, the amplifiers and that, and instead of being rude about them. I think jazz musicians are realising more and more that they've got a very important function and that they're solving problems that can't be solved in any other way in the immediate future.

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A lot of my richest sources of inspiration come from not one musical idiom or the other but from paintings, and theatre and people's characteristics that you haven't seen come through in music.

BUT everybody is affected to a greater or lesser extent by every experience they encounter. Didn't you once tell me you'd learnt a lot by being told by Robert Graves, the poet, to leave home at 16 and make your own way in the world?
Well, I lived with him in Majorca for a while, and he became my Mediterranean father in a way. He's happy to have me there, and I hadn't left school when I first went there, but he didn't want me to loaf about in the sun and just have a nice time and groove, which is virtually the state he's got to now, because he has the traditional attitude that he's done his homework, built up something, and now he's out in the sun finishing it off, so to speak.

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have gone back there. Kevin spent some time there. He got into Majorca as a place to live much more than I did.

So when you came up to London you were going to sing with Kevin?
Yes, I think that was the idea; I didn't really know. I'd been through a period in my head very much like the stuff I'm doing now, although not technically, probably. The music I was listening to — had been listening to — was Sonny Murray, Milford Graves, and Cecil Taylor, essentially. And Eric Dolphy, and Elvin Jones, of course. And I arrived at the point where I decided the simplicity of Kevin's songs, and the rightness and charm of them, had a fantastic appeal to me after a couple of years of Sonny Murraying and freak-out. And I'm now, I think, at a similar stage. I'm likely now to get into the stage that Chris Spedding has been through on his album. I haven't heard it, but what he's said about it I recognise, and I think a lot of us do.

In fact, it's becoming a long syndrome in music — people going from complexity to simplicity. But I still feel very lost, actually. Sometimes I'm back where I started six years ago. I've to go through the cycle all over again now.

Michael Watts

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HOME

A fantasy come true, by Robert Wyatt - Sounds - November 28, 1970



> Zoom

A FANTASY COME TRUE, BY ROBERT WYATT

BY STEVE PEACOCK

LIKE many other bands that I find musically interesting and emotionally exciting, Soft Machine depend a lot on the contrasts between the members of the group to bring their music to life.
It is not a clash of personalities, but a constant interchange of ideas and approaches that keeps what they do fresh, both in their performances and when working out arrangements. These differences show up a bit on their last album "Third" (CBS 66246), but what shows up even more clearly is the way that four very different people come together to enrich each other's playing, and the music as a whole.
Obviously this works with all groups to some extent, but often there is either one person who dominates, or the musicians come together in the first place because they work with similar ideas.

With bands like The Whole World, Pink Floyd, and the Softs the approach is different and it produces music that is more likely to evolve in new directions.
"Obviously, the changes in the music depend a lot on the people in the group," said Robert Wyatt, drummer and more extrovert quarter of the Softs. "For instance, when Kevin (Ayers) loft and Hugh (Hopper) joined, it made a great difference."
Robert is probably the most basic, least technicallyminded of the four. Does he find it restrictive playing within the comparatively tight framework of Mike Ratledlege's compositions, which are pretty much worked out and arranged?
"I find it difficult" he said "but the discipline is probably very good for me, and it brings out things that nobody could have thought of."

Of course, there is plenty of room for improvisation and individual interpretation within Mike's compositions, and even more in Hugh's, Robert's and Elton Dean's. And the group go further along this path by adding other musicians to the lineup on occasion.
" When I talked to Robert, they were working on the last track of their new album at Olympic Studios, and working with them on the session were Alan Skidmore, Nick Evans, and Roy Babbington.
The effect of that horn section and of the two bass players on the track, one of Mike's called 'Teeth", was incredible - it had so much life about it.

One side of the new album is devoted to Hugh's "Virtually", and other tracks are "Kings



and Queens" by Hugh and one by Elton - "Five minutes of total insanity" according to Robert.
Using two bass players has worked well, and there are plans for Mike Giles, formerly drummer with King Crimson, to do some things with Robert and the Softs - another combination that should produce some very interesting music.

Though the Soft Machine is Robert's main interest, he likes to branch out in other directions. Mike and Hugh do most of the writing for the group and there really isn't enough time to cope with aIl their ideas.
Robert has just completed his own "solo" album, he has been involved with Keith Tippett's Centipede project, and he hopes to start doing some gigs with a sextet soon. Earlier this year he left the Soft Machine to work with Kevin Ayers band, but he soon went back.

"I suddenly realised that I was in my mid-twenties and I had got a job. Everything was very tidy, much too predictable. I just felt like a bit of musical promiscuity."
But it didn't work out quite as he had hoped: "I realised that the things that I could achieve musically with Kevin would probably take far longer than with the Soft Machine. What really happened was that from a distance, I was able to re-appraise the Softs."
His album, out on Friday, is the product of about three weeks recording at Sound Techniques in Chelsea.

"We just went in blank and played and doodled around to see what came out. It's nearly an hour long, and probably the only real tune on it is a Gil Evans thing called 'Las Vegas Tango'."
Robert plays piano and electric piano and sings - "not songs, more as an alternative to playing instruments" - and other people on the album are Elton Dean, Mark Charig (cornet), Neville Whitehead (bass), and Dave Sinclair from Caravan (organ).
"It's not supposed to be some kind of great alternative to the Soft Machine," said Robert. "I just thought it would be nice to have an album like that by somebody."
The sextet he hopes to do some gigs with will be Nick Evans, Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo, Roy Babbington, and Steve someone - Robert couldn't remember his surname.
But the thing that has really excited him recently is the Centipede project, Keith Tippett's monster amalgamation of 48 musicians
"It was like a gathering of the tribes, such a happy occasion," he said. "I really enjoyed it so much - all those people just playing together and enjoying it.

The only thing that brought him down was the critics' reaction to the gig.
"I don't want to complain too much, because if any group has been helped by critics, we have," he said, "but I think with the Centipede thing those guys missed such a lot. It was such a happy occasion, and when someone goes away and says, 'oh yes, quite interesting in parts,' he just misses the point.
"We're musicians, we realise what is wrong with it and that it was ragged and everything. Critics just don't seem to realise that musicians are people as well, and they can be hurt like anyone else.
"I don't hate critics, because that is silly, but l'd like to point out that they've probably depressed and discouraged Keith again. I hope they are proud of their achievement."

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The Softs blow hot and cold in Holland - Melody Maker - October 31, 1970



The Softs blow hot and cold in Holland

Michael Watts on a 3-day Dutch trip with Soft Machine



WHOEVER it was that picked on the title of a Burroughs' novel as the name of The Soft Machine made a curiously appropriate choice. That particular author's conception of the cut-out technique as a means of obtaining interestingly incongruous juxtapositions in literature could well be applied to the Softs in the sense that although they are identified with and receive the same sort of popular acclaim as the rock bands of this period, their lifestyle emphatically does not belong to that context.

They eschew all that bit about casual chick-pulling, booze, drugs, and general looning, for instance -those associations that people invariably make with bands who play to the audiences that they do - and they totally lack the public persona to go with the admiration and adulation that they are accorded everywhere.

One must therefore draw the happy conclusion that their obvious success is based on purely musical values rather than because one or all of them has a spurious superstar tag, or indulges in visual exhibitionism.

They are unlike, say, The Nice, whose musical shortcomings lack of rhythmic invention, for example – were obscured for many people by Emerson's onstage dynamics, or Cream, whose undoubted talent was buttressed by the images of its three members.

With the exception of Robert Wyatt, the drummer, they are very much introverted people, with a self-containment that is difficult to pierce.

Musically, however, there is nothing self-effacing about Soft Machine. Hugh Hopper, on bass, works within a small framework of chords, but using a heavy fuzz tone he slides out scalding sheets of sound, like thick steam, that gives the music its distinctive under-pinning.

Wyatt, who is the only one of the four who cannot read, is probably in the top half-dozen drummers in Britain, with an attack and an energy that derives not so much from being conventionally heavy in the use of the bass drum, but more from his extremely powerful wrist action. Anyone who has picked up his sticks, which are very wide and solid, will appreciate just what strength there is in those wrists. But on top of that he has an instinctive subtlety and understanding of complex time signatures that set him apart from most of his fellow drummers.

On electric piano and organ, Mike Ratledge, who at 26 is the oldest member has a tendency to use Brubeckish piano phrases at times, but he establishes most of the light and shade in the music, ranging from the tumbling, rolling piano sound to the stabbing nasal alto tones of the organ, with which he comes in behind Elton Dean, and saxello.

Dean is for me the most interesting soloist. He combines a cool lyricism, full of sweet and mellow tones, with a strutting jaunty air that soars into high-pitched atonality in key passages - a series of tight squeals and shrieks that punctuate the heavy organ sound in sharp bursts and lift the music to its peaks.

Half-hearted

I make these observations after spending three days with them during their short trip to Holland, where they played in Eindhoven, the Doelein in Rotterdam, and the Gebouw concert hall in Amsterdam, where the tour ended on Sunday evening.

The Eindhoven concert began at about midnight on the Friday. Eindhoven itself somehow fits one's conception of a flat, featureless Dutch town. There are 200,000 people living there and most of them seem to work making bits of electronic equipment for Philips, which has its headquarters there.

Driving through the street I got the impression that most of them were still doing overtime because nary a soul was abroad, apart from those who were going to the concert, and they did not look too many, either.



MM men hit the road with two very different bands...

The Softs blow hot and cold in Holland

Michael Watts on a 3—day Dutch trip with Soft Machine

Half-hearted

Stomping

SOFT MACHINE: success based on musical value

picture by BARR

They did not sound too many as well, from the half-hearted applause that the band got, and this did nothing to help lift their performance, which struggled feebly to get off the ground.

A large part of the trouble was that they playing on a huge stage, grouped together in the centre on an island of amplifiers and drum kit. Wyatt, particularly, had trouble in getting his sound across, and the resonance of the snare and the rest of his equipment was lost in the pool of space. The only one who seemed to get it on at all was Hopper, standing gangling and awkward at the edge of the amps, shifting untidily from one foot to the other.

With his horn-rimmed spectacles, his thinning hair and casual but unfashionable clothes, Hopper has the air of a student who has spent all his life at college passing exams. In fact, he never took his, although he studied bio-chemistry for a time. He dropped out and became a roadie, for The Softs eventually, until he graduated to playing with the band on the departure of Ayers.

Almost all of the time on the tour he stuck with Ratledge. Maybe it's because he was a student as well - at University College, Oxford, where he says he got a "good second" in philosophy.

Philosophical he certainly is. Despite the musical hangups that occurred, he just looked calm and saturnine, peering quietly through oblong shades which he never took off all the time.

He and Hopper behaved with total unconcern about the process of going along to a gig and getting up and playing. After a performance was over they sat back quietly in the dressing room and indulged in some obscure word game they had devised, in which Dean would join in, or maybe they would decide to have a game of Dutch billiards, other times they just went to bed.

Wyatt, a short, stocky figure, with lank fair hair that droops around his shoulders, is the most outgoing of the four and the most instantly likeable. Also the most temperamental, living off his nerves for some of the time, it appeared.

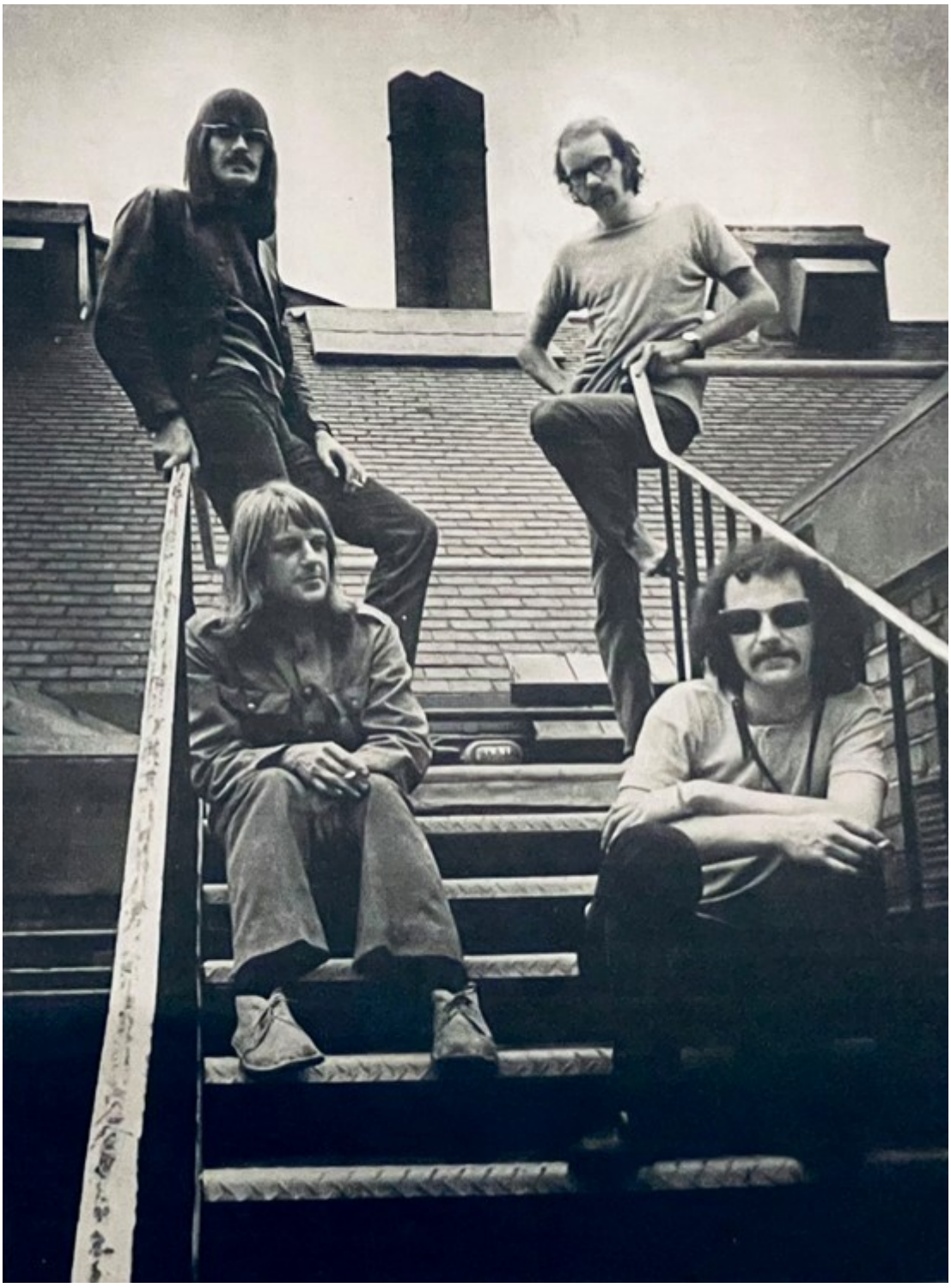
Wyatt did, in fact, blow up on the Saturday, at the Rotterdam gig. The band played two sets and an encore, the music being drawn basically from the Third album and revolving around versions of "Facelift", "Slightly All The Time" and "Out-Bloody-Rageous". Wyatt, it seems, was not happy with the material on that night and he stormed into one dressingroom at the interval while the rest of the band went into another room.

"It's like playing at a bloody Dutch tea party", he remarked bitterly over a bottle of beer. "The audiences here will clap anything you do".

Basically, he was unhappy with the strongly jazz-orientated approach that the band evinced on the tour. Robert prefers to work within the rock context, but none of his compositions were used on the tour because he has kept them aside for his solo album.

The Doelein concert was an improvement on the night before, but their playing lacked any real fire and tension. This was not really Wyatt's fault, it was as if the band was slowly flexing the muscles and waiting for some catalyst to spark off their collective energy.

Amsterdam was the ideal place for this to happen. The city has a youth and vitality about it that you immediately notice when you have just left London.



SOFT MACHINE : success based on musical value. Picture by BARRIE WENTZELL

Stomping

It's also a city where the audiences are more responsive to the Soft Machine than any other in Europe, because they were among the very first to grasp the coat tails of the band on its way up. In a sense, the Dutch, and the natives of Amsterdam particularly, have adopted the Softs as their own, and they all turned out on Sunday to welcome home their protege.

This obviously gave The Softs the emotional lift they needed. Playing the Gebouw concert hall, which is a favourite stomping ground, they ripped into their standard programme of the tour, kicking off with "Facelift" and a new Hopper composition, "Virtually", changing gear into "Out-Bloody-Rageous", with its dipping and swelling piano parts, and rounding things off with a new Elton piece, "Neo-Caliban Grides".

The band came out really lathered up for the second half. Wyatt had forgotten his prejudices, and he was solidly behind the rest with some sharp swishing cymbal work on the first three pieces, "Teeth", "Slightly All The Time" and "Eamon Andrews" - all Mike's compositions, which had a nine to the bar feel about them. Elton's long winding solo, which rose and fell like a gentle landscape, was picked up by Hopper on his own composition, "Kings And Queens", which contained some rasping bass lines, and then they swung into "Esther's Nose Job", very fierce and pounding, which featured a climatic ending with Dean shrieking in the upper register over a huge slabby backdrop of sound.

They did not need too much calling to go back for an encore. Ratledge was the first back on stage, immediately jumping into an extract from his own work, "Slightly All The Time", whose lovely melodic alto phrase, that runs throughout the whole number, got an immediate response from the crowd.

Just one further thing. If, as Tony Palmer says, the Soft Machine are a band distinguished only by a lot of bombast, well, then I'm a Dutchman.

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Jazz in Britain - Soft Machine at the Proms - Jazz Journal - Vol 23 - No 10 - October 1970

SOFT MACHINE AT THE PROMS
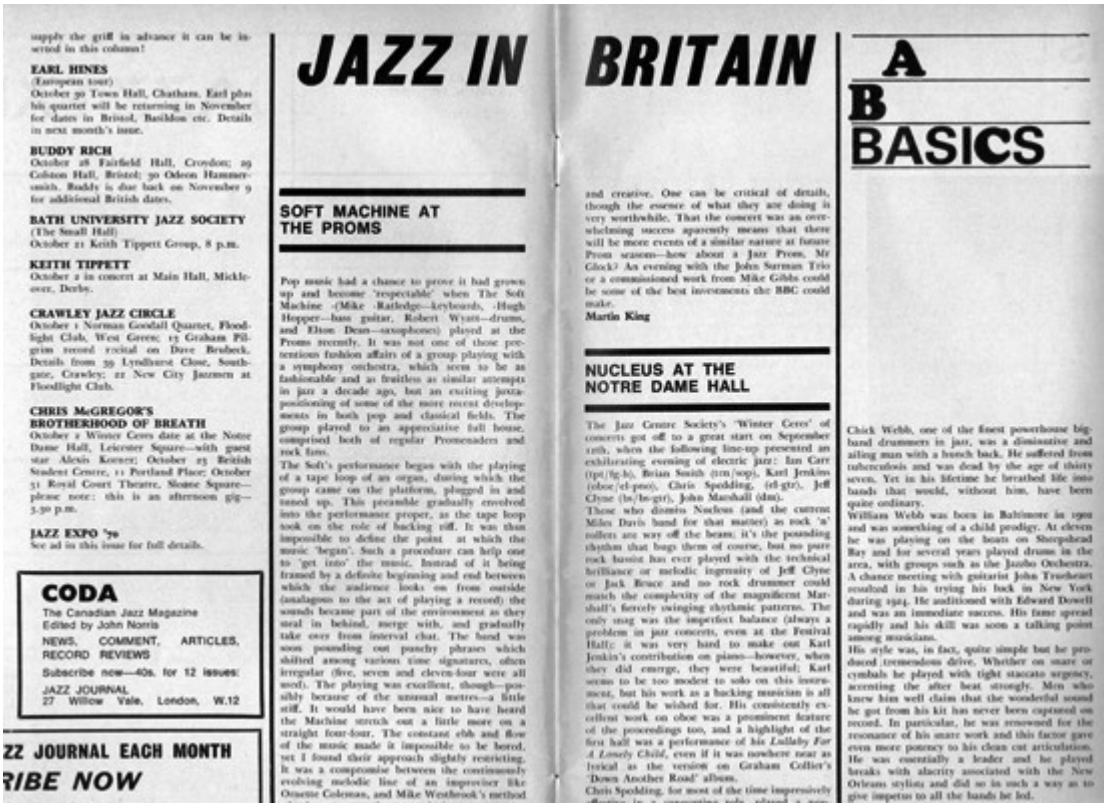


Pop music had a chance to prove it had grown up and become 'respectable' when The Soft Machine (Mike Ratledge - keyboards, Hugh Hopper - bass guitar, Robert Wyatt - drums, and Elton Dean - saxophones) played at the Proms recently. It was not one of those pretentious fushion affairs of a group playing with a symphony orchestra, which seem to be as fashionable and as fruitless as similar attempts in jazz a decade ago, but an exciting juxtapositioning of some of the more recent developments in both pop and classical fields. The group played to an appreciative full house, comprised both of regular Promenaders and rock fans.

The Soft's performance began with the playing of a tape loop of an organ, during which the group came on the platform, plugged in and tuned up. This preamble gradually involved into the performance proper, as the tape loop took on the role of backing riff. It was thus impossible to define the point at which the music 'began'. Such a procedure can help one to 'get into' the music. Instead of it being framed by a definite beginning and end between which the audience looks on from outside (analogous to the act of playing a record) the sounds became part of the environment as they steal in behind, merge with, and gradually take over from interval chat. The band was soon pounding out punchy phrases which shifted among various time signatures, often irregular (five, seven and eleven-four were all used). The playing was excellent, though - possibly because of the unusual metres - a little stiff. It would have been nice to have heard the Machine stretch out a little more on a straight four-four. The constant ebb and flow of the music made it impossible to be bored, yet I found their approach slightly restricting. It was a compromise between the continuously evolving melodic line of an improviser like Ornette Coleman, and Mike Westbrook's method of using a constantly repeated phrase as a framework for a solist. The music moved too slowly to be the flood of improvised melody of

the former, and did not stay on one riff long enough to give a soloist a chance to open up as in the latter technique.

The group is loud (though not too loud) and has a great deal of drive - a pity that Hooper's "bass playing was reduced to a dull thud by the Albert Hall's acoustics. Some of the best music came when Elton Dean was given a chance to extend himself (this was no surprise to those of us who have heard him play with Keith Tippett and Graham Collier), and a wordless vocal by drummer Wyatt provided a looser feeling - a rare moment of inspired abandon. All the Soft Machine members have considerable technique, and their overall concept is bold and creative. One can be critical of details, though the essence of what they are doing is very worthwhile. That the concert was an overwhelming success apparently means that there will be more events of a similar nature at future Prom seasons - how about a Jazz Prom, Mr Glock? An evening with the John Surman Trio or a commissioned work from Mike Gibbs could be some of the best investments the BBC could make.

Martin King



supply the grift in advance it can be inserted in this column!

EARL HINES
(European tour)
October 30 Town Hall, Chatham. Earl plus his quartet will be returning in November for dates in Bristol, Basildon etc. Details in next month's issue.

BUDDY RICH
October 28 Fairfield Hall, Croydon; 29 Colston Hall, Bristol; 30 Odeon Hammersmith. Buddy is due back on November 9 for additional British dates.

BATH UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY
(The Small Hall)
October 21 Keith Tippett Group, 8 p.m.

KEITH TIPPETT
October 2 in concert at Main Hall, Mickleover, Derby.

CRAWLEY JAZZ CIRCLE
October 1 Norman Goodall Quartet, Floodlight Club, West Green; 15 Graham Pilgrim record recital on Dave Brubeck. Details from 59 Lyndhurst Close, Southgate, Crawley; 22 New City Jazzmen at Floodlight Club.

CHRIS McGREGOR'S BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH
October 2 Winter Ceres date at the Notre Dame Hall, Leicester Square—with guest star Alexis Korner; October 23 British Student Centre, 11 Portland Place; October 31 Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square—please note: this is an afternoon gig—5.30 p.m.

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JAZZ IN BRITAIN

SOFT MACHINE AT THE PROMS

Pop music had a chance to prove it had grown up and become 'respectable' when The Soft Machine -(Mike Ratledge—keyboards, Hugh Hopper—bass guitar, Robert Wyatt—drums, and Elton Dean—saxophones) played at the Proms recently. It was not one of those pretentious fashion affairs of a group playing with a symphony orchestra, which seem to be as fashionable and as fruitless as similar attempts in jazz a decade ago, but an exciting juxtapositioning of some of the more recent developments in both pop and classical fields. The group played to an appreciative full house, comprised both of regular Promenaders and rock fans.

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Martin King

NUCLEUS AT THE NOTRE DAME HALL

The Jazz Centre Society's 'Winter Ceres' of concerts got off to a great start on September 13th, when the following line-up presented an exhilarating evening of electric jazz: Ian Carr (tpt/flg-h), Brian Smith (ten/sop), Karl Jenkins (oboe/el-pno), Chris Spedding, (el-gtr), Jeff Clyne (bs/bs-gtr), John Marshall (dns).
Those who dismiss Nucleus (and the current Miles Davis band for that matter) as rock 'n' rollers are way off the beam; it's the pounding rhythm that bugs them of course, but no pure rock bassist has ever played with the technical brilliance or melodic ingenuity of Jeff Clyne or Jack Bruce and no rock drummer could match the complexity of the magnificent Marshall's fiercely swinging rhythmic patterns. The only snag was the imperfect balance (always a problem in jazz concerts, even at the Festival Hall); it was very hard to make out Karl Jenkin's contribution on piano—however, when they did emerge, they were beautiful; Karl seems to be too modest to solo on this instrument, but his work as a backing musician is all that could be wished for. His consistently excellent work on oboe was a prominent feature of the proceedings too, and a highlight of the first half was a performance of his *Lullaby For A Lonely Child*, even if it was nowhere near as lyrical as the version on Graham Collier's 'Down Another Road' album.
Chris Spedding, for most of the time impressively

A B BASICS

Chick Webb, one of the finest powerhouse big-band drummers in jazz, was a diminutive and ailing man with a hunch back. He suffered from tuberculosis and was dead by the age of thirty seven. Yet in his lifetime he breathed life into bands that would, without him, have been quite ordinary.
William Webb was born in Baltimore in 1909 and was something of a child prodigy. At eleven he was playing on the beats on Sheepshead Bay and for several years played drums in the area, with groups such as the Jazzbo Orchestra. A chance meeting with guitarist John Trueheart resulted in his trying his luck in New York during 1924. He auditioned with Edward Dowell and was an immediate success. His fame spread rapidly and his skill was soon a talking point among musicians.
His style was, in fact, quite simple but he produced tremendous drive. Whether on snare or cymbals he played with tight staccato urgency, accenting the after beat strongly. Men who knew him well claim that the wonderful sound he got from his kit has never been captured on record. In particular, he was renowned for the resonance of his snare work and this factor gave even more potency to his clean cut articulation. He was essentially a leader and he played breaks with alacrity associated with the New Orleans stylists and did so in such a way as to give impetus to all the bands he led.

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Why Sir Henry Moore turned in his grave - Disc and Music Echo 1s - September 5, 1970

Why Sir Henry Moore turned in his grave

By CAROLINE BOUCHER


DISC and MUSIC ECHO 1s

I. o. W. 'Never again'

Jethro: big UK tour

ELP GO OUT ON THE ROAD

Hendrix concert —free show? see page 4

Alvin says "no" to movies.

I. O. W. THE DISILLUSIONED ORGANISERS SPEAK

WHILE THE post-mortems are hold and the critics scoff about the first pop group to play at the Proms. Soft Machine continue their rehearsals and regard the incident as just another gig.

Bass guitarist Hugh Hopper only bothered to read a couple of national paper reviews - one scathing, the other complimentary.

"I think we're all pleased we did it now." he says. "At the time lots of little things went wrong onstage, although probably only we noticed - the equipment broke down, things like that. On 'Omnibus' it looked quite good but I wasn't very pleased with the sound - but then it's never good on TV or radio."

The whole Proms appearance came about through Tim Souster, a friend of Mike Ratledge. who heard the Soft Machine back in January and asked them to do a piece on the Proms the same night as him.

"I wasn't very keen," recalls Hugh, "because the Albert Hall is a very strange place for sound.

"We didn't do anything different for that concert," says Hugh, airily. "We just did our usual thing. We fuse things in a sense that we like different bits of music which is all put together. anyway, so there's probably a bit of the classics in there."

Hugh was talking during a break in rehearsals held in the back room of an Islington pub. Soft Machine were rehearsing new numbers for stage performance and the next album, which they start shortly. When I arrived they were in the middle of an Elton Dean composition - his first for the group since joining last November.

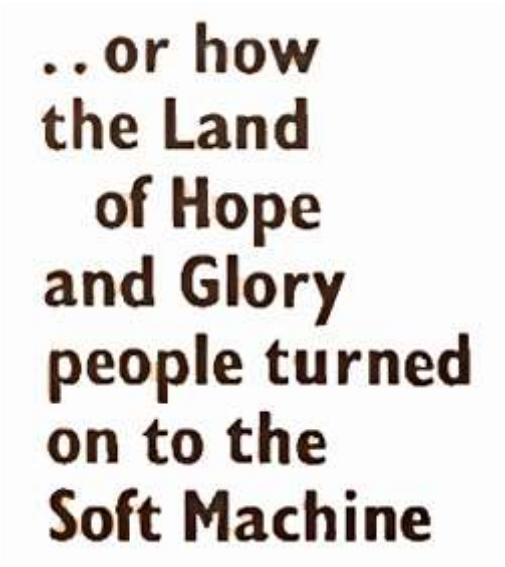
"We started off with me getting a four-piece brass section in - and then it ended up with

just Elton. For anyone who writes it's very nice to have a brass instrument there, it's much fuller. We got the brass because we wanted to expand our writing; it was becoming a bore writing for three people.

"When Lyn Dobson left we thought it would leave a bit of a gap, because when Lyn was in the group Elton stayed in the background, but now it's great and he's worked in really well."

Soft Machine have an usual history. They've been in existence since 1966 and were the first group (with Pink Floyd) to start the London UFO scene in 1966.

Since then they've always had a nucleus of devoted fans but have never hit the limelight as Pink Floyd went on to do. The reason for this is probably that they're reticent people and their music has less universal appeal than other bands.



In this respect their Albert Hall Proms appearance has done them good, and got their name to a larger audience.

I think our fans are not quite blues fans but the hip section of the community - people who actually like listening to the music as well as the effects. What really surprised me were friends of my parents who set up and witched the Omnibus programme at eleven o'clock at night and really enjoyed it" says Hugh.

"I don't think by appearing at the Prom's we could have damaged our reputation, because we were at a level before where any publicity would have helped. If we'd been very well known and played badly it might have hurt us, but as we weren't very well known, it could only really improve rather than hurt us."

It's difficult to pin a "typical" and identifiable sound on the Soft Machine - it's varied over the years depending who was in the group and whose particular number they're doing. It started off as a fairly conventional line-up which varied as people came and went, although pianist Mike Ratledge and drummer Robert Wyatt have been permanent fixtures since their formation in Canterbury. So has Hugh, except for a period in 1967 when he left to ride about on his motor bike, later rejoining them as road manager and finally taking up bass with then again in 1968.

It's all slowly changed. When it first started the group revolved mostly round Kevin Ayers (bass) and Dave Allen (an Australian guitarist/poet) who was later exiled. When they left and Mike became the most influential, and now I think it's Mike and myself. it's good because not many group are organ based - they usually have a lead guitar".



SOFT MACHINE: left to right Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt and Elton Dean

Mike and Hugh tend to do most of the writing - they write separately as a rule but some tracks are collaborations, and Robert writes the occasional thing.

"I think it's good for everyone to write. However good one writer if only one person does the writing all the compositions have the same sort of sound.

Record sales are pretty important to the group, too, as they're not the sort of band that' on the road every night - they do perhaps one gig a week, usually in a big hall, so they've never been earning a terrific amount of money. Now Hugh has just brought out a book of some of his scores for the group, as they were constantly being asked for notes and chords of various numbers at gigs. They also have an American tour lined up for the autumn which they're anticipating with mixed feelings.

"Now," says Hugh, "there'll be people there who actually know us, I really don't know what's going to happen."


From Tom Jones to Toomorrow

By CAROLINE BOUCHER

Why Sir Henry Moore turned in his grave

..or how the Land of Hope and Glory people turned on to the Soft Machine

There I am on top of the Post Office Tower

amateur photographer

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The Softs, the Proms and drummer Wyatt - Melody Maker - September 5, 1970



The Softs, the Proms and drummer Wyatt

By Richard Williams

It's NOT long since Robert Wyatt announced that he was vacating the drum stool with Soft Machine in order to pursue a career with Kevin Ayers'band and various other friends.

"I should know better by now," said Robert last week, shaking his head half in sorrow and half in happiness. "I say things , and I really mean them at the time, but a week later I'm feeling something else entirely.

" In all fairness to the Softs, they're still auditioning drummers, which is something I

suggested because I thought they might find someone they like better than me, someone who can read music for one thing. Not reading is my thing . . . primitive music, y'know.

" But I really intended to leave the band, and I suppose I had to get outside it to find out what I really wanted. We had a few fights inside the band, but it's all back together now, and I don't want anything to break that very fine balance we've regained."

The Softs' recent Henry Wood Promenade Concert at the Albert Hall created controversy among the critics, who seemed to be expecting something the group were never prepared to give. Robert looks back on it with very mixed feelings.

" The whole business of surfacing for a couple of hours in that environment was to be heard by people who normally wouldn't listen to us in our normal context — and it was unnatural.

" I enjoyed parts of it, and the audience was certainly the biggest we've ever had in Britain. It was a very nice evening, socially speaking, and it was good that the audience seemed to enjoy the Terry Riley and Tim Souster pieces just as much as our stuff.

" We played all right, I suppose, and Elton particularly rose above the circumstances to play some excellent solos. In terms of the occasion, I'd say that all music grows up in a certain environment, and ours is loads of people lying around getting stoned, and we spend the first half-hour sorting out the sound balance so that the evening gradually opens out. At the Albert Hall, of course, that just wasn't possible.

" There was also the whole thing of playing to a deadline. It was very frustrating having to finish at exactly four minutes before 12 o'clock because if you run over that the engineers will pull out the plugs."

How did Robert view the motives of the BBC people who put the Softs on the Proms? " I don't honestly think the BBC had too much say in it. It was down to Tim Souster, who managed to get into the sort of position of respect where he was allowed to present his own evening, and as he was interested in our music he asked us to be part of it. I don't suppose the powers-that-be at the BBC knew what they were getting at all.

" Oh dear, I really don't want to sound sour and bitter about it at all. What I'm saying is that we've done a lot of gigs and the Proms doesn't stand out as one of the important ones.

" But I can also see that it seems to have been important in terms of public reaction . . . for a start, the little old ladies round our way used to think that we were a load of nasty, dirty hairies, but now they all say ' Good morning, Robert' very nicely.

"In the end, though, I can't honestly say that I feel it's important. Bridge-building isn't something that you can do consciously, it happens by accident, but it's nice that people can listen to and like something that they wouldn't normally come across. Anyway I don't consider that we're a bridge-building band. We're very narrow really, pursuing one train of thought.

" Elton's writing should make it a little different — but then, oh well, everything seems to go through the sausage mill and come out sounding like the Soft Machine."

Now that Robert is safely back inside the group, does he still harbour desires to get into other areas? " Well, one thing I'm doing right now is playing with my own quartet, which has Elton, Marc Charig on cornet, and Neville Whitehead on string bass.



SOFT MACHINE at the Albert Hall (from left): Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean and Robert Wyatt.

" We've already recorded a long, free version of Gil Evans' 'Las Vegas Tango' for my own album on CBS, and it's really a totally free thing. Maybe we'll get into doing our own versions of Soft Machine numbers — that would be nice, getting another angle on them with a flowing string bass line instead of the fuzz bass-guitar.

" With this band I'm trying to get some space back into my music. Arrangements, freedom, and all those different procedures can make satisfying music, which is very hard to define, but the actual effect is a certain kind of density.

" I admire the sense of space you get from ' Miles Smiles' or the Miroslav Vitous album; the density of rock bands can be very crude and unrewarding. So many things are happening in the quartet; I'm constantly playing things that I've always wanted to play but never been able to, and that's a result of the more fluid situation.

The experiment of working with Ayers and the Whole World was not a success, although Robert still has great admiration for the band. " I did two or three things with them in England, including the Hyde Park 'free,' and a week in Holland.

" I tried it, but I have this tendency to change my mind completely about everything. I still think it's one of the most amazing bands in the world ... oh dear, I'm unhappy about this interview — I'm saying all the things I mean.

" Kevin's band does tend to be a little ramshackle in its approach, and perhaps I've been spoilt by being part of a comparatively slick organisation for quite a long time. I really dig David Bedford though."

Robert's own album, which is nearing the mixing stage, is " hours of completely free things in various combinations, with all the unfashionable sound tricks that Zappa discarded five years ago and which I'm toying with right now.

" Hugh wants to get the Soft Machine into the studios to record very soon, and one of the best aspects of the band at the moment is the way Elton's got so involved in the music.

" He's even getting us to do things that we stopped trying to do to each other years ago, like getting me to read parts. The others completely accept that I'll never do it, but Elton keeps plugging away.

" It's really nice to see Mike and Hugh struggling with someone else's compositions for a change, instead of grinning evilly while I try and struggle through theirs."

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Soft Machine man's switch - Melody Maker - July 18, 1970


Melody Maker

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Soft Machine man's switch

Isle of Wight date with Moody Blues and Joni

COOL AND UNCOOL— WIN AN LP AND HAVE A LAUGH ON PAGE 8

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Soft Machine man's switch

by RICHARD WILLIAMS

ROBERT WYATT, drummer with the Soft Machine, is joining Kevin Ayers' band. The Whole World - but he will not be leaving the Softs.

" The Soft Machine is a lovely group, and it will be carrying on," Robert told the MM on Monday. " But the fact is that the others don't like life on the road, and that's what I exist on.

" They're perfectly happy sitting at home and writing music, and they don't like to play one piece of music night after night. Being on the road brings them down.

" That's what gets me going, the whole trip of playing the same music night after night, so I'm going to play regularly with some mates, and the most convenient mate happens to be Kevin."

Ayers was a member of the Soft Machine until last year.

" I don't want to do anything very ambitious: just little gigs that the Softs are too big to do now.

"I'm not killing off the Softs — I'm just letting the group breathe, and this is the next stage in the development."

Robert makes his debut with The Whole World in this Saturday's free concert in London's Hyde Park, and he will next be seen with the Soft Machine in their Proms concert next month.



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Soft Machine - Time Out - July 11th-25th, 1970

SOFT MACHINE



THE SOFT MACHINE

(Robert Wyatt - drums, Mike Ratledge - organ, Hugh Hopper - bass, Elton Dean - alto sax and saxello.)

Now that the Soft Machine have been chosen to play at the Proms this summer, maybe the pop scene will finally wake up enough to give their music some of the recognition it's lacked for so long. Apart from a small group of devoted fans the group have been ignored in Britain for three years now simply because few people have stopped to listen to them. The pop writers don't go to their concerts, record companies don't release their albums and most of the record-buying public had never heard of them. Thanks to Richard Williams of Melody Maker and John Peel, a little notice is now being taken of what the Soft Machine are doing, but their recent residency downstairs at the Ronnie Scott club still passed largely without comment. And yet they are the only pop group ever invited to play there.

The group's music isn't easy to listen to and probably makes a lot of people feel very uncomfortable. It defies categorisation, using the electronic paraphernalia of modern pop as a medium for hour-long pieces that rival the works of the best twentieth century classical composers in scope and complexity. As much could be said of King Crimson and the Pink Floyd, but when you add the Soft Machine's willingness to experiment with unusual time signatures, their use of brass, Mike Ratledge's incredible organ solos and Robert Wyatt's drumming, they are in a class of their own. It's strange that it takes Ronnie Scott and the organisers of the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts to give a group of such obvious quality the status it deserves.

London first heard the Soft Machine three years ago when they played regularly at the now legendary UFO club in Tottenham Court Road. At that time the group comprised three school friends from Canterbury Grammar - Wyatt, Ratledge and Kevin Ayers on lead - and Daevid Allen, an Australian, who played bass. Despite their over-indulgence in unorthodox sound effects and rather pretentious refusal to break between numbers, the music was raw and exciting, a refreshing change from the banalities of the contemporary pop scene. The group also made the fullest possible use of the lights, strobes and weird stage outfits then coming into vogue to intensify the direct physical assault their music made on slightly

bewildered audiences. Inevitably enough, their only attempt to make the charts, *Love Makes Sweet Music*, released in April 1967, flopped and, by the time promoters were beginning to realise that a large audience existed for 'underground' groups, they were in France. While flower-power boomed in Britain the Soft Machine were playing on the beach at Saint-Tropez, warming up audiences for a new play by Pablo Picasso, *Désir Attrapé Par La Queue*. When the local mayor stepped in and closed it down they moved to a marquee just outside the town, playing for very little money but making a big hit with the media people from Paris who gave the group invaluable exposure on French TV. They've played a lot in France since then and now rate as one of their top three groups.

The British Immigration Authorities forced the first change in personnel by refusing to allow Daevid Allen back into the country. An Australian, he'd been working with the group without a permit. So Kevin Ayers switched to bass and they carried on as a trio, playing art schools for under £50 a night. The group worked better as a trio, getting a tighter sound with more scope for Mike Ratledge's increasingly complex organ solos and Robert Wyatt's voice. Kevin Ayers was a strong influence on the group at this time, writing songs like *We Did It Again* and *Lullabye Letter* and appearing on stage without a shirt, his eyes extravagantly made-up. Robert Wyatt went one better by playing in swimming trunks.

Early in 1968 Mike Jeffery, manager of Jimi Hendrix and the Animals, signed the Soft Machine to support Hendrix on his American tour. At first it looked like the break they'd been waiting for but the tour soon degenerated into one long hassle, playing night after night and travelling incredible distances, with no time to rehearse and very little sleep. Only a historic gig at the Museum Of Modern Art, New York, and the release of the group's first LP saved it from being a total wash-out. A faithful reproduction of their stage act, the LP was recorded in a week and they were unhappy with the results. Tom Wilson was supposed to produce the record but he hardly ever showed up, leaving the Soft Machine who'd rarely seen the inside of a studio to do most of the work themselves. Nevertheless, *The Soft Machine Volume I* is an excellent record, probably the best released that year, with certainly the most original sleeve. It sold well in the States and on the continent, but was never released in this country. Under the influence of Mike Jeffery, the group had signed with the Probe label who distributed their records in Britain through EMI. In 1968, however, Probe were beginning to setup their own outlets here and refused in the meantime to let anyone else handle their records. So, despite frantic telegrams from the group back in England, nothing happened. Their second LP nearly went the same way, finally being released here a year after it had been recorded.



Mike Ratledge - organ (Photo: Dominique Tarle)

The Soft Machine broke up in the States, unable to take the strain of touring any longer.

They reformed almost immediately but without Kevin Ayers who felt unhappy with the musical direction of the group. *'Esther's Nose Job'* had been lying around for over a year but Kevin had never been able to play it, nor was he willing to learn. "It was fine when we were playing the very free things", he recently told Richard Williams, "but it got into a lot of writing and jazz things like odd time signatures and I really wasn'tup to that". To replace him Wyatt and Ratledge brought in another school friend, Hugh Hopper, who had been their road manager in the States. He'd written *'A Certain Kind'* for the first LP, had been rehearsing on bass with the group for some time and, most important of all, he could read music.

Very soon afterwards they recorded the second LP for Probe. Apart from a few superficial similarities - each side of the record being conceived as an entity for example - it was very different from their first. *The Soft Machine Volume 1* captured the intensity of the old stage act but remains a succession of songs, swept along and linked together by Wyatt's ferocious drumming. On *Volume 2* Wyatt had cut down on the vocals and his drumming was less in evidence. Hopper's bass was fuzzier and less pedestrian than Ayers had been and Mike Ratledge was beginning to break away from the restrictions of the 30-second organ solo. The group was tighter yet more relaxed than before and the Hopper-Ratledge writing team obviously had potential. Although it was messy and pretentious in parts and lacked the immediate appeal of their first LP, the record deserved a lot more attention than it was given.

During the last year the Soft Machine have become virtually unrecognisable as the group Kevin Ayers used to play in, despite playing with him on his *Joy Of A Toy* LP for Harvest. They still use some of the numbers from their second LP but most of the material is new and written by Hopper and Ratledge. Although he has written in the past, Robert Wyatt has more or less given up now. Realising that it was impossible to sing and drum well at the same time and worried that his voice sounded out of tune, he has cut down on the vocals as well and limits himself to a few scat solos at each performance. Mike Ratledge now rates as one of the best organists in pop or jazz and Hugh Hopper has improved tremendously since he first played with the group. One of the nicest things about the group is their willingness to experiment musically, and while Wyatt has been phasing out his vocals, their use of brass has increased. For a while last year they appeared with the entire front line up from Keith Tippett's group but after a few months the practical problems of keeping a large band well-rehearsed proved too demanding and they made do with Lyn Dobson (flute and soprano sax) and Elton Dean (alto and saxello) who is still with them.

Despite having concerts at Croydon and the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the residency at Scott's under their belts, a tour of the provinces under way and a Promenade Concert to look forward to on 13 August, the group's new double LP is an important step, the first product of a contract they recently signed with CBS.

Reasonably priced at 59/6d, *Third* is similar in conception to the Floyd's *Ummagumma*. Mike Ratledge is responsible for two sides, *Slightly All The Time* and *Out-Bloody-Rageous*, Hugh Hopper for *Facelift*, alive recording of two performances in January, and Robert Wyatt contributes *Moon In June*. *Facelift* begins with an amazing organ solo by Mike Ratledge who is joined by Elton Dean's alto and Lyn Dobson on soprano who build up for Hugh Hopper to introduce the main theme. The riff is given urgency the first time round by the organ, bass and horns before Ratledge moves into a long solo, followed by some



Robert Wyatt - drums; Hugh Hopper - bass. (Photo: Pete Sanders)

excellent work on flute and soprano sax by Lyn Dobson. *Out-Bloody-Rageous* is the best of the studio tracks, a beautiful and restrained piece which opens with progressions of the theme on piano tapes played backwards. Again, Hopper's bass introduces the rest of the group. Interest is held by some clever changes in tempo and towards the end Dean plays a moving alto solo while the mood is brought to a climax by the organ, bass and drums. The group's strength is their mastery over incredibly complex time changes, sometimes overshadowing the horns which are left repeating the theme of a piece while Mike Ratledge solos into the next tempo. As we see on *Slightly All The Time*, which features a long solo by Elton Dean and some fine work on flute by Jimmy Hastings, the Soft Machine give considerable freedom to their sidemen - a welcome change from the rest of the 'pop meets jazz' brigade. At times Elton Dean does appear a little uncomfortable with his material but the structure of the Soft Machine's music would hardly accommodate the solos he plays with Keith Tippett.

Robert Wyatt's track should really have been called "Volume One Revisited" and it'll please the people who wish that they had stuck to that style. *Moon In June* is the only time that we hear Robert's voice on the record and its lyrics are in the old throwaway style - "before we go on to the next part of our song, let's all make sure we've got the time". He accompanies himself on organ, electric piano and drums until Hugh Hopper switches to fuzz bass and Mike Ratledge comes in with a solo played very much in his *Volume One* style while Robert plays with echo on his voice. I suspect that a lot of people are going to like this track best of all since only here do the group dispense with the brass and go back to the freedom of some of their old pieces.

Third is a staggering musical achievement that transcends anything yet produced by a British rock group and is essential listening for anyone who wants to hear what a fusion of the best of modern jazz and rock can produce. In fact it can't really be discussed in terms of those categories at all since the Soft Machine have virtually created their own. Their music has a long way to go, as Mike Ratledge is the first to recognise, and we'll see a lot of changes as soon as they are in a position to take more time off for recording and writing. But whatever happens to the group in the future, after *Third* no-one can pretend to ignore them.

Jim Talbot

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Two pound notes must copulate - Bath Festival of Blues and Progressive Music '70 Program



Gentle Ghost are intending to film the Bath Festival. They want to make films in a way that the 'system' does not usually allow, and they want to get to a wide audience.

This article suggests that at this point in time they are unlikely to succeed. Our society forces us all to sell out at some level. We can rely on 'the system' to win.



> Zoom

(Richard Leacock was the first exponent of cinema verite documentaries. Tony Garnette produced 'Kathy Come Home' and 'Kes'. Joseph Losey is a highly revered film director who is perpetually involved in difficulties in setting up the films he wants to make).

'TWO POUND NOTES MUST COPULATE'

'My belief is that it will cease to be an industry at all, in the sense that it is now... that it'll be more like the writing of novels. Film-making should be so easy and simple technically, that it'll merely be a matter of creativity and the talent. You will no longer need two hundred thousand dollars to make a movie.'

'There will be no such thing as a cameraman; there'll be film-makers.... There'll be no such thing as editors; there'll be film-makers... It'll become an integrated process.'
(Richard Leacock, in 'Movie' 1963)

'THERE WILL BE NO SUCH THING AS CAMERAMEN'

Ricky Slade just happened to glance at a dirty piece of paper lying in the street. He just happened to pick it up and read it...
'Anyone interested in working in or being in a film...'

'A film is a process over time involving a number of people in - dare I use the word? - a dialectical relationship with each other and the content of reality or view of life which they are trying to synthesise.'
(Tony Garnett in 'After-image 1970')

Hugh Berger had decided to form a group of people to make films. They had to be the right people, and some of the people who replied to his advertisement were rejected. Some were too straight and smug; some were simply starstruck. Others were alright, and 'Gentle Ghost" was formed. There are about 50 members.

Hugh felt that most people in the film industry stuck to pre-conceived ideas, they used only the vocabulary they already knew. It was important that everyone in the group (which does include members of the 'industry') is sufficiently flexible to allow themselves to continue 'discovering'.

This was an item on their agenda -

CONTROL AND DIRECTION WITHIN GENTLE GHOST: DISCUSS...
The process of making the film must be a process of discovery by all involved, only then can it hope to reveal something and gain the audience's participation. The essence of discovery is not unification of purpose but the pursuit of the individual in relation to what is around him.

THE GROUP IS INDIVIDUALS

Ricky Slade, who happened to glance at a piece of paper in the street, was accepted. This was the first time he had ever been accepted by anything. It is said he comes from Atlantis, so this may be the reason.

'Lots of people would reject him, because they wouldn't bother to find out about him... but he's probably one of the most creative people we've got'.

He isn't Ricky Slade every day, sometimes he is Zo Marshall. He thinks people should have lots of names which proves that he has the right qualities. Gentle Ghost want to work together as much as is practical, they don't want their separate contributions autographed and neon lit.

THE INDIVIDUAL IS A GROUP

Hugh doesn't really like films. 'Film is a voyeuristic and corrupt medium, but its a good way of communication with lots of people all over the world with vision and sound'.

Even film directors go to the cinema.

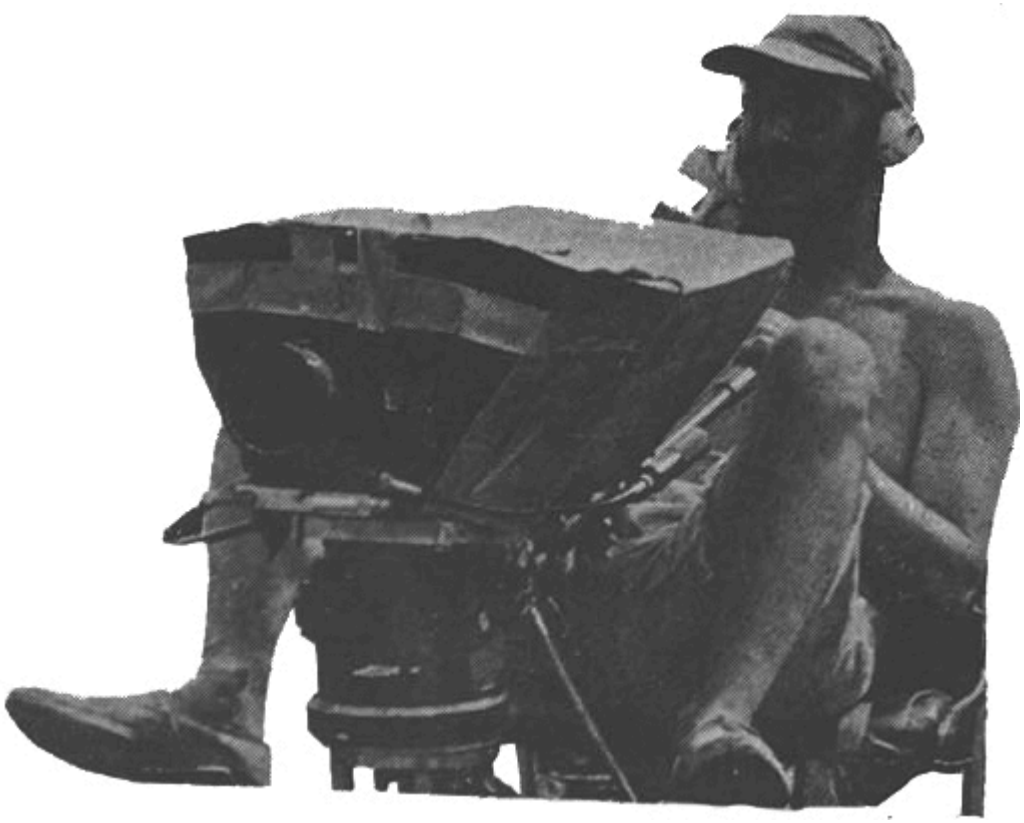
'There is a new enthusiasm for film which I recognise, and I spend a lot of time going round the cinema clubs because I think the new audiences are terribly important to what people can eventually do with films. There are new cinema clubs all over the world and these new audiences are important and their interest must be met. Its the only counter weapon against the monopoly of the big distributors, which has left the film medium largely unexplored... and which forces people like myself into spending three quarters of our lives fighting to get a picture on and protecting it afterwards, instead of making films, which is my job.
(Joe Losey, Unit, June 1967)

Gentle Ghost's first project is under way; they are negotiating to film the Bath Festival.

'Gentle Ghost has been formed with the intention of showing that events like the Festival are representative of an important and sincere attempt at a more humane life-style than modern society offers.'

The planning is complete, but they are waiting for the right signatures on a number of pieces of paper before they can be completely sure that the film will happen. The tension they are feeling is something that Joe Losey would understand.

'I have had innumerable projects that I have tried to set up, but other directors have got hold of and set up, and usually made a mess of, for the simple reason that their reason for wanting to do a subject was quite different from mine. They catered for certain elements that appealed to the money'.



THE COLOUR OF MONEY

'We are trying to make films in circumstances where films are seen as commodities. The reason for films - and its as strong as this - the reason for films in our society is to make profit for shareholders and to get returns on capital investment'.
(Tony Garnett)

If Gentle Ghost don't get to make their film it will probably be the fault of those 'shareholders' in 'events like the Festival' who care less about 'humane lifestyles' than they do about 'profit'.

In one way Gentle Ghost have benefited from the fact that films are commodities. 'Woodstock' has become a very profitable one, and sponsors love to jump on bandwagons. But it is probably Woodstock's success that has put them in the position of having to make either a much bigger scale film than they intended, or nothing Gentle Ghost wanted to make a film for about £2,000 and soon realised it would be impossible. They had competition for the rights to film from other well established companies. There was no question of simply walking into a festival and filming whoever they felt like. Just like everywhere else in wicked modern society.

'The whole thing got blown up and blown up out of all proportion. The amount we needed shot up to £30,000, and only a third of this was directly for the film itself.'

No-one in Gentle Ghost would get more than expenses, only the extra technicians they plan to hire and David Cammell, who they hope will be over-all director, would be paid. Led Zeppelin and The Moody Blues insisted on the kind of deal which would make it impossible to include them.

'We are trying to make films in circumstances where films are seen as commodities'

It is harder to accept that musicians are content to make music in circumstances where both they and their music are commodities, when they seem to be so much part of 'Us'. It is hard to accept that the system has such a devious grip on those we identify with.

THE GROUP IS NOT THE INDIVIDUAL

The following words were written In 'Rolling Stone'.

They knew what kind of movie they were after/before they started. They wanted it groovy. Good vibes. One big happy party. Even on Saturday, after it obviously was not that kind of a trip. David Maysles, one of the Maysles Brothers that's doing the movie, noticed one of his cameramen shooting footage of a naked, porcine young lady who was freaking out backstage. A fairly typical scene... Maysles tapped the cameraman on the shoulder and said: 'Don't shoot that. That's ugly. We only want beautiful things'. This happened at Altamont.

THE GROUP IS THE GROUP

An item on a Gentle Ghost Agenda -
REASON FOR MAKING FILM AND INTENTIONS: DISCUSS.....TO BE THE FESTIVAL AS SEEN FROM THE PEOPLE THERE. To show their motivations and our motivation. Everything must be shown whether we like it or not. We must avoid preconceived ideas of what the concert should be like. It is possible with a documentary to make anything happen we choose; but what we want is honesty and reality, there is no fear in these and we have nothing to hide.'

The following words were written in 'Rolling Stone'.

'The Maysles Brothers, the film company which shot the whole Stones' tour, complete with its violent climax at Altamont, had gotten some remarkable footage of Hunter's killing. No less than three cameras caught the action, and one of them had the entire sequence from the time Hunter was knifed and down and surrounded by Angels..... Which makes it the hottest film property of 1970. Universal Picture has already weighed in with the highest bid.....'

'WE WANT ONLY BEAUTIFUL THINGS'

Somebody certainly spotted the box office potential of the Woodstock Festival film. They also spotted the gullibility of this 'alternative' consumer society. The popularity of 'Woodstock' was due to the inability of this peaceful rebel nation to see the joke, or even to notice the propaganda. They gave their support like so many sheep to the notion that something had actually been achieved. The Mafia did very well out of it, three days of solid pushing with nearly half a million customers. Warner Brothers won't do badly either. Etc, Etc. That's not to say it wasn't enjoyable for those who were there; that's not to say it wasn't a well made film. We are all free to choose the market we go to, we are free to buy the goods we choose. But we mustn't let ourselves be brainwashed into believing that wo were part of a **different** system for those three days of 'peace music and love'.

The film didn't have the guts to reveal that there was as much exploitation and manipulation behind the scenes as there is in any clip joint. The beautiful people were too busy consuming to notice that they were supporting the same old shit.

Presumably we won't so easily identify with Altamont. We'll still go and see it - and it'll be a hit. We will condemn it, disassociate ourselves - and it'll be a hit.

POUND NOTES MUST COPULATE

"We are doing this to show what the alternative society is about, not to show the gloss on the surface of a pop concert'.
(Gentle Ghost)

Repeat of item on Agenda: -:...
'... The process of making the film must be the process of discovery by all involved, only then can it hope to reveal something and gain the audience's participation. The essence of discovery is not unification of purpose but the pursuit of the individual in relation to what is around him.'

Woodstock proved that audience participation can be got by concealing. Perhaps if the day comes when there are no such things as cameramen, the individual will himself bother to 'discover' his relationship to what is around him. If Gentle Ghost are concerned to 'show what the alternative society is about', I hope they will admit it if they discover that they can't find it. It may be only the same old society in disguise, in which case it may be the deciding factor whether or not they make this film at all.

In a capitalist society capital has to be returned — money earns money and two pound notes must copulate.....
(Tony Garnett)

Additional information from Alfie Benge (november 2025) :

The film was never made. The company couldn’t put up with the demands of so many people wanting to be paid. The most excessive being Led Zeppelin who wanted £10,000 to be paid before any filming could begin. So they didn’t make the film.

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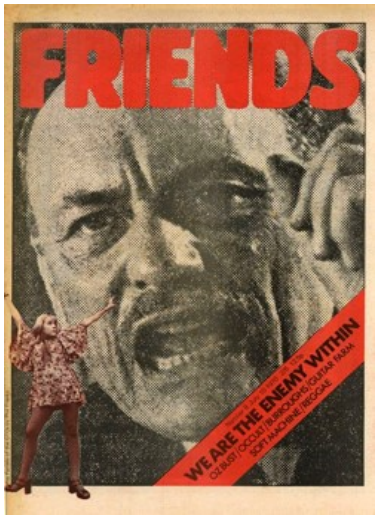
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HOME

The Soft Machine : contemporary classical musicians - Friends N° 9 - 10 July 1970





Andrew Lycette

The first Soft Machine record was a single issued by Polydor in 1966 called 'Love Makes Sweet Music.' It was a conventional pop ditty of the sort which would undoubtedly make the Top Twenty today. But the Soft Machine has moved on from those long distant days when they used to play with Mark Boyle's light show at the Roundhouse or in Joan Littlewood's evening multi-media scenes at Stratford East. They were really only fooling around then, now they are serious professional musicians. Hugh Hopper who himself only joined the group in 1968 after their American tour, told of the paradox, "In those days we were the freaks and serious people came to watch us; now we are the serious ones, and the freaks come to watch us." (Fair enough, he admits that it is best to listen to the Soft Machine stoned, "unless you have an open mind anyway. The best thing about the group are its sound qualities and its dynamics. Well, you can appreciate the dynamics anyway but to get inside the sound "you've got to be either stoned or very receptive." Robert agrees. He says, "You get five times your money's worth if you listen to us smashed").

That's the thing about the group; they are in no way what they seem. English hads try to make them into freaks, but as Mike Ratledge says, it just happened that they were around when the Press latched on to the word 'psychedelic' to describe everything that was going on around the U.F.O. scene. French conoisseurs think they are revolutionaries and pataphysicians.

First a touch of group history though. Mike, Robert Wyatt and Hugh were all together at the Simon Langton Grammar School in Canterbury. They started playing what Mike calls vaguely 'free jazz' when they were 16 to 17 years old. They never actually appeared in public though and limited their venues to each other's houses. Now even after a decade together off and on, they are still none too happy about playing in public. Mike admits like

Hugh to stage fright, and that's why they don't try to act like pop stars.

After this beginning Mike who was a couple of years older than the others went up to Oxford University where he read Psychology arid Philosophy and gained a middle second class degree. He didn't like the place.

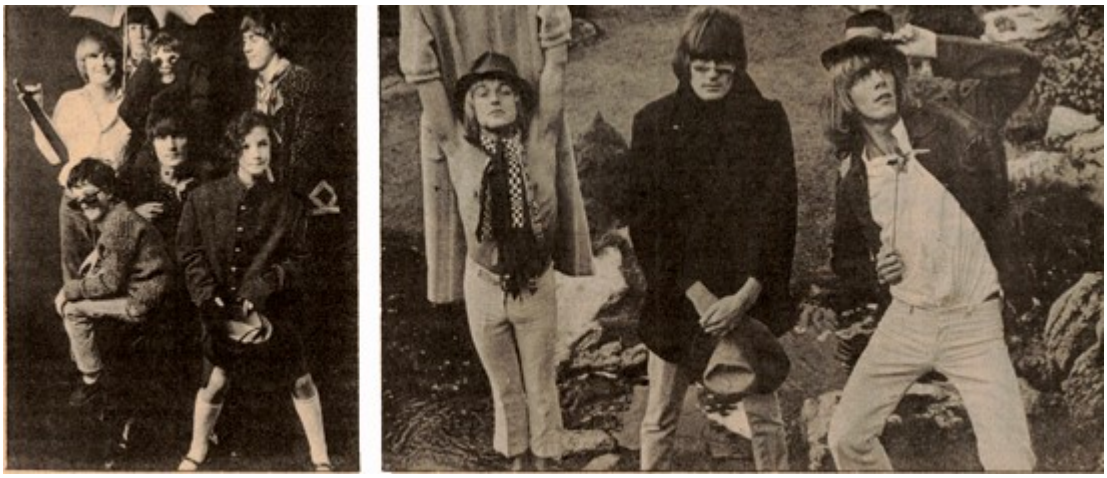
Rather than go to the USA he rejoined Robert in group including Kevin Ayers, and two Australians, Dave Allen and Larry Newlin. Dave was a guitarist whom the group had met in 1963, when, as a modern jazz quartet, they played at the then fashionable Establishment Club. They split up the same year though when Mike was up at Oxford. Hugh and Robert, who had dropped out of school, tried for a while to make it with a pop group (soul et al) called the Wild Flowers, but they got nowhere except very hungry. Kevin and Robert then split to Majorca, still trying to cash in on the post-Beatles pop boom, Hugh to Paris where he got into acid at the early date of 1963.

DINGO VIRGIN & THE FORE SKINS

When they all got back to London and the new group was formed with Mike down from Oxford, they ran through a lot of names — Mr. Head and Dingo Virgin and the Foreskins being two — before arriving at the Soft Machine. It was a title that seemed to fit at the time, and, as Dave knew Burroughs, they got permission to adopt it. But as Mike says, he has explained it away to journalists all over the world in a variety of different manners. Probably the best of these is still the original meaning that Burroughs held when he took the words from physiology where they appear as a generic term for the human race. We're all the human race, therefore we're all Soft Machine.

Ratledge & Co. are still up there, but on a strictly musical sense now, and this helps explain the genesis of the current group. Ratledge especially tended to find the quintet too amateur, too poppy. Larry soon quit, and Kevin and Dave were not quite the musicians the group required.

Still they continued to play in England (the 1966 U.F.O. boom) and on the continent (as in 1967, when they appeared for a week in one of Ian Knight's inflatable balloons on the beach at St. Tropez, but were forced by police pressure to move on and to find refuge as resident musicians at the Picasso play/orgy 'Le désir attrapé par la queue'). David was not allowed to return to England after this as he had been playing without a work permit, so his freaky - there is no other word for it - influence retired from the group.



The original Soft Machine - Wyatt, Ratledge and Ayers

Kevin, who had really got the Soft Machine together in the first place and forced Mike and Robert to find decent equipment and contracts, went after the 1968 American tour, in which they appeared with Hendrix night after night for five months in a succession of gymnasia with foul acoustics. They returned really pissed off and very tired (except for Robert who amused himself greatly at Hendrix's expense in the L.A.); in fact, they disbanded completely for a while. Kevin split again to the continent, and Mike and Robert were soon keen to reconstitute the band, the original trio, with Hugh Hopper, who'd been

their roadie in America and who almost reluctantly agreed to rejoin them as a musician, because they were going to attempt some different sorts of material. "When the Soft Machine first formed," he says, "I didn't really like what they were doing. It was very pretentious, the David Allen thing, the Kevin thing. Not till I actually became their road manager did I get into it."

It seems that he and Mike were now able to assert their influences more. Mike began to compose for the group (for, in spite of what it says on the label, he had little to do with the first L.P.). He is the sort of person who hates sentimentality (of the Incredible String Band type) neither Kevin's romantic lyricism (which Robert loves and which is beautifully manifest on Joy of a Toy where the Soft Machine appear to show there are no hard feelings), nor Dave Allen's anarchistic "Give me a blue mist on a snowy mountain top, Mike" type of approach were quite his scene.

DEBUSSY, RAVEL & HINDEMITH

Mike, who had been learning the piano since the age of 7, who was into Debussy, Ravel, and his favourite, Hindemith when he was at school, and who studied under the world famous classical musician, Treharne, while he was at Oxford was able to bring the music the core of the Soft Machine's act, especially as Hugh was able to read a score which made working much faster. "We had problems over the lyrics, and we found it was difficult to get into word situations. Kevin was more interested in reaching people immediately through verbal participation, but we were not prepared to spend enough time working out a reasonable compromise between this and the music we wanted to play. Robert was singing too much to concentrate properly on his drumming. So now we've made a sort of blind leap of faith. A pop group as we are makes the basic assumption that people are the same, and you succeed by doing what you like."

So now they've moved on from a situation where they were providing jazz backings for Kevin's and David's songs, through a period when they used to sing about the most banal matters possible (as, for example, on a Top Gear last year when they sang a song extolling the virtues of the B.B.C. canteen just along the corridor, using a tune, incidentally, that has cropped up again on the new album with different words and different connotations — good artists never waste their material), to their present practice of playing pure written music with complicated structures and with only very occasional breathless renditions from Wyatt's screaching larynx. Mike puts this down to the fact that "everyone's changed, we're all more experienced," which is undoubtedly true. This has meant that the Soft Machine has left behind the clever poppiness of 'I Did It Again' (supposedly based on a Terry Riley composition, but in fact, Hugh says, rather more influenced by James Brown) and have used their professionalism to venture into unknown areas in their search for what Hugh calls quite simply "nostalgic sounds."

So they've now added an excellent saxophonist in the Coltrane tradition (Elton Dean from the Keith Tippett group) to give themselves extra freedom within which to expand their sound. They did try at one time to use four brass, but that created too much of a big band noise (it was too expensive, anyway); then they went down to two brass which they all liked and which was easy to reproduce on stage, but Lyn Dobson, the flautist and soprano saxophonist did not fit into the group ("there were personal problems," said Mike tactfully). Now they are happy to have just Elton to add to their sound. He enjoys playing with them on a non-permanent basis and is free to play with other groups when he wants.

THE PROMS

The move into the realms of freely structured amplified jazz-pop has of course led to some antipathy from the traditionalists among the Soft Machine's fans (especially, it appears, in France where in true Gallic fashion the cognoscenti remain conservative while imagining that they are radical). The band is undaunted though. It goes on next month to appear at the Proms (the original Henry Wood version) which will be a mind-zapper for the dinner-jacketed audience in the Albert Hall. (Not that the musicians make much about it; Robert, who is careful to say that he enjoys being in a so-called art group, says that it will just be another gig for them and that it will be interesting to gauge the audience's reactions). They would like to do some film music too, but so far they have turned down a number of continental offers in the hope of something bigger and better (though it is true you can see them, along with the Floyd, in a pirated French version of the Amougies festival). Hopper says that he personally would like to do the music for a film by Losey or Polanski. Apart from that they really haven't many plans, though they hope to release another album

pretty soon.

Sean Murphy, their manager, who shows where he is at with his intention to publish an artist's guide to contracts, has signed them up at C.B.S., who are just as happy with the deal as are the group, and has developed the group's policy of concentrating as much on continental audiences as on British ones (with great results, especially in Holland where their second L.P. topped the charts and where in fact they are doing their only festival this year).


THE SOFT MACHINE: CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL MUSICIANS

But then they are not really interested as a group in playing live at all. Ratledge and Hopper insist that they must spend at least as much time relaxing at home, writing their compositions, rehearsing their ideas as appearing on stage. (Again this is the result of the American tour on which they found themselves becoming increasingly stale and unoriginal as they were unable to rehearse or write new material, and it is especially necessary now that when Mike composes a piece he also writes out the parts for the others, especially for Elton who consequently gets through a great deal of work). Hugh in fact admits that he is probably more interested in producing than in playing. His side of the new L.P. is therefore probably the most technically ambitious, adding a number of loops to the group's Fairfield Hall concert in January.

SMALL SCALE INSTITUTION

Robert is quite different. He wants to get back on the road where he feels his real interests lie. "To round off my life I feel the need to get out there, but not in the context of the Soft Machine, that has become too big, it's become a small scale institution. I don't think of myself as a professional musician, I am rather in the tradition the folk musician, the minstrel, if you can make such distinctions, and I think you can." Therefore he proposes to do a lot of work with Kevin Ayers' new group, and with another musician whom he was loth to name because it might compromise him in his position in his present group. Elton feels much the same and will continue to work with Keith Tippett, and with Zoot Money.

In the meantime the whole group are quite happy with their double L.P. The second one they had to rush through on a small budget. Hugh hadn't actually ever even played live with the group, and they were unable to do the things they wanted to do, so they don't particularly like the result. The first album (although incredibly it reached number 38 in the States) is simply old hat to them.

But it is too easy to group the quartet together in a composite 'they' and it doesn't really work. Mike is still very much the university non-conformist, though on a personal level rather than a political one. He is officially married to Marsha Hunt, who is a friend whom he helped stay in the country by going, through the offices. He refuses to admit to any sort of classification either for his music or for himself. When we were talking about Mark Boyle (on whom he had written an enthusiastic article for the French magazine Actuel), he stressed that he offered no self-contained aesthetic criticism. "It really depends who you talk to in this group, man. I mean Robert tends to make everything into a consistent system. I'm really not interested in that at all, i.e., you know, I don't want to systematise all my likes and make it into one great big system. So it tends to be just things I like, and I happened to like Mark Boyle's stuff, his light shows were very good." All this delivered very fast (he has an uncanny source of energy for a cat who can exist for two days on one

omelette and a couple of packs of Benson and Hedges), very intelligently, very precisely. It was typical of him to insert the abbreviation 'i.e.' as an example of his desire to get what he was saying right. Thus when I asked about the literary influences on the early Soft Machine (the Jarry, the French symbolists and surrealists who creep in and appear to have been very important, especially with the evidence of one of their amps which has the words DADA scrawled on its back, but this is only a truly dada touch, because the amp had been stolen in France by a group called DADA LIVES who managed to write half their name before the equipment was refound), he remonstrated, "I mean how do you divide a person up. I mean that's like saying - shit what else do I like doing — you know, if I like motor-cars, you can call it motorcar music. I mean I happen to like reading literature - beautiful tautology that - well, reading anyway, but I don't see why that makes it a literary basis." He admits that he sees the lyrics as rather a fill-in; "Christ, man, words are such a hassle." He prefers to talk of his music as "organic," and spends a lot of time working at the structure of his pieces, developing ideas from Terry Riley, and making sure that the sounds are right. As Hugh said, "Mike is much more interested in melody, he's interested — in written music, in getting a structure. He's been through the intermediate stage (e.g. people like Cage) and now he's listening more to written music which has go to have some form. Myself I'm less worried by form than the others."



The seven piece Soft Machine at Ronnie Scott's

VERY ECHOEY SOUNDS

Hugh, the other main creative influence in the group, very quiet, unforthcoming, patient, apathetic in Mike's words (but not in terms of the music he writes and produces. He doesn't like Americans (their self-confidence he finds obnoxious, though he admits it's probably because he is jealous), he reads Evelyn Waugh and a lot of similar novels, and he answers questions very slowly, very honestly. Acid, for example, had "split me down the middle; sometimes I was really happy, sometimes I was very depressed." This seems to reflect his usual attitude to life. "Several times in the last year I've said to myself that is the last time I am going to play. That's the build-up from a number of depressing situations. But the alternative is even more depressing; I would have to make money in even more depressing situations" — something he has done before and has no desire to return to. Mike may be interested in structure, Hugh is more into sounds qua sounds (thus his desire to produce and his brilliantly inventive bass guitar work on the new L.P.). "When there is a very still passage, not much rhythmic movement, you just get very echoey sounds by playing very loudly and very high notes — I think that is the only thing I really enjoy playing." Actual tunes do not turn him on so much, at least not after he has sussed out what they're all about. "When you make music it's very strange, because once you've written it and worked it out it doesn't have the same interest, it's done. I used to find this particularly when I played semi-pro, when I played other people's music. Take MacCartney's 'Yesterday'; when I heard that I thought it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard. When I actually learnt to play it, it was still a nice tune, but it didn't have any magic. Trouble is, that happens as soon as you write a tune yourself. The best thing is to write it and then lock it away for a year."

Robert is completely different again, bubbly, amusing, sympathetic and, like Mike said, with a tendency to use his intelligence to categorise everything in his mind. He thinks that the way most rock groups are run is amazingly fascist. Not that he sees himself as any kind of revolutionary. "I'm a very conventional socialist. I don't think like others that capitalism is a

system that has got to be totally overthrown before happiness will ensue. Each system is as prone to misuse as any other." He thinks the Labour party legislates nearer to the Christian ideals than any other party in the world (any other left wing party would have made an ideological issue out of the abolition of hanging, he says), and this consideration is very important to his mind. "Christianity has a fantastic ethic-I haven't come across anything better." This rationalist approach to his politics means that, in spite of his wander-lust, he has little time for heads, whom he found "tiring and somewhat humourless. I don't like that kind of naive dabbling with occult, I like the company of really sharp people. In fact, I'd rather watch Morecombe and Wise than read through the Confessions of Alistair Crowley." When he was abroad therefore, he wasn't in Ibiza or Morocco, but rather with his second father, the poet, Robert Graves, who looked after his when his own father died and who educated him with his brilliance, his wit and his liveliness. It also means that he can be pretty scathing about pop gurus and hangers-on. The people who write Rolling Stone, he feels are thirty years old and trying to convince themselves and others that the rubbish they listened to when they were younger was worthwhile. (This remark mirrors his prejudices against modern American music which he hardly listens to — "I don't know what we'd have done without black music, but I have enough respect for it not to try and copy it" — though he loves Hendrix, Sly and the Family Stone and all jazz). He finds it funny too that "the one thing the current revolutionaries are most perturbed by is the fact that their heroes in the pop business are part of the big capitalist set-up." The real revolutionaries in music, as far as he is concerned are not the MC5 — a Mafia hype — but people whom the young revolutionaries have never heard about, people like Charlie Havens and John Surman.

CHURNING AWAY & PHYSICAL

Robert has some original ideas about the music the Soft Machine are putting over too. He is the only member of the group who doesn't seem to believe that the group has progressed in its sound in the last year or so. He agrees that it has gained in popularity; "up to six months ago it was hardly worth our doing a gig in England." "Now it is true we play more notes more often, but actually the base patterns and the rhythm patterns which everything turn on are very traditional. You know, Hugh and I are one of the most straight-forward rhythm sections I've ever heard in jazz or pop. Compare us now to the earlier Soft Machine. There was much more complex dynamics a year or so ago." So he admits, "I think we are a rock group. We're always playing the basis we're working on. In jazz people build up their variations, and gradually drop away what they're variations on, whereas we're rock in the sense that whatever we're improvising on or building things on we keep very strongly in evidence. That's why I always wanted to be a rock player; because whatever we're doing on top, it's always churning away and physical underneath. So we're not only a rock group, but a very traditional one at that. Changing time signatures doesn't mean very much, and in some jazz groups it even masks the inability to play good music."



Photographs by Byron

Robert agrees that the addition of Elton has been very important though, not least because it has allowed him to give over his voice part to the saxophone. Elton is a typical South London head, unpretentious and mildly self-deprecating. He was called to join the group after the Soft Machine had seen him playing at the Plumpton festival last year. His new

arrival means that he has some quite astute things to say about their playing. For instance, he sees his spiritual colleague in the group as Robert, because "he's a spontaneous bloke who blows and fills in little bits, while Mike and Hugh keep to a set pattern." This is in contradistinction to Robert's idea of his function as a member of the rhythm section, and to my own opinion that Mike and Elton can be paired together because they both play mind-blowing phrases over and above the main themes (though that's really Robert in reverse).

It would be a bit sick at this stage to trv to classify the Soft Machine in any particular way. They are not particularly concerned with making it bigger than Jesus Christ; they don't think they've found either an intellectual or a musical answer. Consequently the margin of malaise in their music, from the words on the first L.P. "My head is a night club with tables and chairs,' through the frenzied organ and drum take-off at the end of Kevin's Song for Insane Times on his album of Joy of a Toy, to the new tight and original musical sound dominated by the conflicting leaps and bounds of the organ and saxophone. They are not escapists ("We are not up there to make everyone forget their troubles," says Robert who agrees this is a function for some groups and who therefore really digs Mungo Jerry). They are rather opportunist drifters in the beat style (see Mike's life lines on the first L.P.) interested in creativity for it's own sake (not quite l'art pour l'art). As Robert puts it, their ideal situation would be as painters, because these artists gets the best out of their medium, they are able to concentrate all their talents to producing one particular effect, or series of effects. Yet still "We're part of the European concert group tradition, but using bits of information that others don't know about, such as the rock rhythm techniques of Sly and the Family Stone. Yea, we're contemporary classical musicians."



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HOME

Where pop and classics meet... - Melody Maker - June 27, 1970



by Russell Unwin

Where pop and classics meet . . .

UP until now there has been very little to discuss regarding the relationship between the pop music and the classical music of the day. In the past they have been poles apart.

Today, pop music has grown up and become sophisticated; it is not so obviously naive. Classical music too has grown up in a way: it has learned not to take its illustrious forefathers too seriously. It has learned, in short, to do its own thing. So the two worlds have found themselves with much in common.



Experiment

Both spheres of music are characterised by a desire to experiment - experiment to establish new forms and modes of expression. In this there is much interchange between one camp and the other.

Then we have the breaking down of the distinction between composer and performer, in this case the performer becomes the composer and vice-versa; spontaneous improvisation, sometimes based on a strictly organised concept, sometimes on a completely free basis is the order of the day in both fields. Groups of musicians create and resolve their own musical situations on the spot.

Although it may be taken as true that contemporary pop and contemporary classics have so much in common that they must be the same thing, there are still subtle distinctions which keep them regrettably apart. The basis of this distinction is mostly one of function.

The function of the Who, one of the most middle of the road bands around, is to generate power and excitement. The function of Stockhausen is to stimulate and exercise the thoughtful mind. So the distinction is, crudely, between body and mind.

Overlap

These are two extreme examples to illustrate the point. It is the area where the two fields overlap which is most interesting and only just beginning to be effective.

The only two bands which seem to be wholly committed to this area, looking back over the last few months, are Soft Machine and King Crimson.

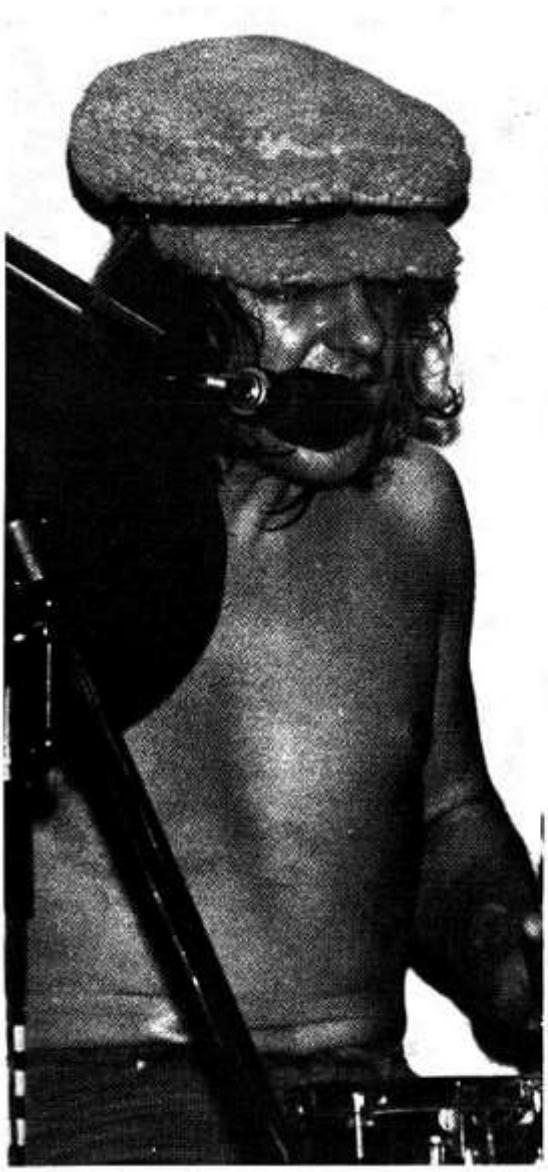
In live performances and on record Soft Machine have a unique sense of form. Their sets are a continuous tight stream of material which develop constantly and logically, making complete use of different types of sound and all kinds of rhythm.

As a whole the music creates an enigmatic, original character of its own which always maintains a high level of interest. On record the music is the same; each side of the disc becomes an entity in itself, without being a random succession of tunes as in most pop albums.

King Crimson have done the same on their albums, each piece has a special relationship with the record as a whole, making full use of the facilities available within the recording studio. Indeed with Crimson the whole package becomes a tight unity including sleeve design and the words to the songs.

Sound

The lyrical songs on the Crimson albums, although superficially they seem almost Simon and Garfunkel, somehow take on a different meaning in relation to the usually heavy sound of the band. They seem to have found a new function for the traditional song, in the same manner as the Beatles did in "Abbey Road."



SOFT MACHINE'S Robert Wyatt



KING CRIMSON'S Bob Fripp

The most important aspect of the music of both Soft Machine and Crimson is their readiness to use sound for its own sake. With Soft Machine the echoed vocalisation of Robert Wyatt and Mike Ratledge's organ, with Crimson the tasteful use of the mellotron especially in the " Devil's Triangle " section at their "Poseidon" album.

This puts the two bands in line with the contemporary avant-garde classicists who also have a tendency to use sound for its own sake.

Another band which I must mention in this context is. of course, the Mothers of Invention, who have influenced both Soft Machine and Crimson as well as many other bands. The Mothers music is again intelligently assembled as a whole but with a strong satirical element.

The Mothers satirise pop music of the past to make their own unique contribution to the present. The only trouble with the Mothers is their tendency to be purposefully obscure - being way out for way out's sake. Anyway they are always good for a laugh.

Phase

A big thing has been made recently of amalgamations between pop groups and symphony orchestras. The Nice, and Deep Purple did it. Barclay James Harvest are about to it. This really is a passing phase probably brought on by a shortage of good original ideas.

There is absolutely no future in Jazzing up Bach and the like. The only interesting excursion was Deep Purple's Concerto for Pop group and orchestra which did at least bring two vastly different types of musician together on equal terms on one

stage.

Zeppelin

It can be seen then that a true lasting relationship between contemporary pop and contemporary classics can only be made by following the example of groups like Soft Machine and King Crimson. Probably the open proof of this relationship will be made at this year's Proms when Soft Machine play alongside Tim Souster. Roger Smalley and the BBC Symphony on August 13.

Other bands play exciting music on the scene today, but unfortunately much of it is very derivative. For instance. Led Zeppelin are a marvellous band but they only make it with their exciting sound and the way they do their numbers, the same goes for the Who and other heavy bands.

Jon Hiseman's Colosseum deserve a special mention for their uncompromising wedding of pop and jazz, but the roots are still in the blues. Pink Floyd are a band whose instrument play the musicians instead of the other way round.

If contemporary pop is to survive intact as an art form on an equal basis with contemporary classics, it must begin to move away from its origins and establish its own ground. Otherwise we shall have nothing to relieve the monotony of the top thirty.

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HOME

Our week at Ronnie's made us improvise - Melody Maker - June 6, 1970



THE SOFT MACHINE are probably the only non-jazz group in Britain who could command a week in the hallowed precincts of Ronnie Scott's Frith Street emporium in London.
In great measure that's a tribute to the way they've synthesised elements from many diverse musical sources, grafting them onto their own well-defined personalities to form an organic and readily identifiable style.
Mike Ratledge is their organist, a rather saturnine man who wears 1965 McGuinn shades and hovers over his twin keyboards, producing sounds which have the suddenness and intensity of lightning.

SOFT MACHINE'S MIKE RATLEDGE TALKS TO RICHARD WILLIAMS

The week at Scott's was obviously an unusual and instructive experience for them. After all, how many of their contemporaries get the chance to sit down and play in one place for six nights, with all the opportunity for detailed exploration that it implies? "

It was useful mainly for that reason," says Mike. "The way it stretched our repertoire was very challenging, and we had to push ourselves into areas of freedom where we wouldn't normally need to go. "

We had to improvise more than we usually do, because we didn't have enough material. In that sense it certainly taught us something.

In terms of audience reaction, the week was not a success. Ronnie's regular patrons were unsympathetic, and few of the Softs' fans could afford the necessarily high prices.

" I think we left the audiences pretty much as we found them, except for those who came specifically to hear us, and they were spread out over the



week. I can't see that it had much value as far as exposure to a different audience goes."

RESTING

The group have now played three London concerts — two at the Fairfield Halls and one at the Queen Elizabeth Hall — within a comparatively short space of time. Mike says that this was purely coincidence, and comments: " My ideal is to play a set repertoire twice, in the same place, and then come back later with new material.

" That's why we're resting at the moment: it's in order to write some new stuff, and I think we'll be playing in London again soon."

Mike and bassist Hugh Hopper write roughly an equal amount of the repertoire. Drummer Robert Wyatt composed early in the band's life, and wrote several of the tracks on their second Probe album (" Volume Two "), but now it's fairly divided between Mike and Hugh. Ratledge doesn't find it easy to talk about the difference in their writing.

LAZY

" Our different backgrounds don't come over. There's as much difference between two of my pieces as there is between one of mine and one of Hugh's. Hugh tends to write a theme, have a blowing section in the middle, and then return to the theme at the end... but then I've written things like that too.

" I tend to write things with a given concept. I'm very lazy and don't have much confidence, so I need something — like a progression or a time signature — to get to compose. These conceptual elements are really something I use to con myself into believing in what I'm writing.

" I'm very interested in unusual time signatures, but at the moment I'm writing a piece in 6/4, which isn't exactly far out. But in terms of a general direction my music is heading for more complex structures.

" Our sets are an amalgamation of different tunes by different people, and when you string them together into a 45-minute entity there's bound to be a somewhat ad hoc quality about the arrangement. You try to make the transitions as organic as possible, but it's not the total piece of music that I'd like it to be at the moment. The sudden switches that people criticise aren't inside each piece, they come when we go from one piece into another."

Unorthodox time signatures are becoming more commonplace, partly because young musicians are growing up around them and thus can "feel" them much more easily than their elders, to whom playing in 7/4 was like going to the Moon.

" I've been aware of them since I started writing," says Mike, " and I guess it was with Messiaen (the 20th Century classical composer) that I first came up against them, although of course they-ve been used throughout musical history in so-called primitive music as well as so-called classical music. But Messiaen was the first person I'd come across who'd obviously spent a lot of time getting into it."



CONTRAST

Mike uses a Lowrey organ, in contrast to the almost ubiquitous use of the Hammond, but it wasn't originally a voluntary decision.

" I bought it when we hadn't got the money for a Hammond, and I got to know what I could do with it. It's worked out well because the majority of organists use Hammonds, so the Lowrey's characteristics stand out a bit.

" I suppose that a large number of my stylistic idiosyncrasies are due to the inherent peculiarities of the Lowrey."

For the future, the Softs plan to remain as a quartet, with altoist Elton Dean, but may add other musicians for selected performances. One innovation will certainly be the use of prerecorded tapes.

" The tapes will mean difficulties like keeping the pitch constant throughout the electronic fluctuations, but they won't be tied down to anything very specific and the musicians will be fairly free on top of it. It won't be like laying down specific drum or piano tracks — it'll be loops and things like that."

MISTAKES

The group's new album, " Third," will be out soon after you read this, and Mike is very pleased with the speed and care with which CBS have handled it. " My feelings about the music on it change constantly. I liked it while we were making it, of course, but listening to it now I'm aware of the mistakes, while assume a disproportionate importance. " None of us can be objective about it now, but I think that each of our albums has been better than the last, although none is as good as it should have been."

Richard Williams

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Soft Machine album - an MM preview - Melody Maker - May 30, 1970



Soft Machine album— an MM preview

IT MUST be hard for a lot of people to understand that, in France, the Soft Machine are one of the top three or four bands. Hard because they mean little in Britain as yet, although they can pack the Fairfield Hall and command a week's residence at the Ronnie Scott Club.

Their first two albums were released first in the States on the Probe label and only the second of these was put out in Britain, after a considerable timelag. These omissions will be rectified early next month, when their new double-album will appear under a new contract with CBS.

The album called simply "Third," resembles Pink Floyd "Ummagumma" in that each member of the band has been given complete freedom. Bassist Hugh Hopper and drummer Robert Wyatt have one side each, while organist / pianist Mike Ratledge has two.

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It opens with Hopper's "Facelift" which is actually a collage of two live performances (from the Fairfield Hall and Mothers in Birmingham, both last January) plus some tapeloops overlayed by Hopper later on. Most of the material is from the Fairfield concert, and the side opens with the extraordinary organ solo with which the second half began.

Ratledge is now probably the most resourceful and inventive organist anywhere, making most other practitioners sound academic with his sliding pitch-warps and visceral gobs of sound. The "bugged" soprano (Lyn Dobson) and alto (Elton Dean) play a Zappalike theme, wich segues quickly into a very percussive 7/4 tune, with Wyatt asserting himself strongly behind the organ solo. Dobson solos well on flute and electric soprano, and it's back to the theme, which is played forwards before the tape is reversed to give a pyramid effect.


SOFT MACHINE'S Mike Ratledge

Ratledge's "Slightly All The Time " starts with harmonics on the bass, and Dean's overdubbed alto and saxello play a theme which has a strong jazz flavour Dean solos on alto over a ponderous bass progression, being interrupted occasionally by brief two-horn riffs which are introduced each time by a staccato organ phrase. A flute solo by Jimmy Hastings develops into a written flute loop, which repeats on top of the saxes' theme, and the saxello and organ solo over a 9/4 pattern. The track fades with a stately theme voiced by the reeds, fuzz organ, and fuzz bass.

Robert Wyatt's "Moon In June" features a great deal of the drummer's highly unorthodox singing, with is most effective in the improved passages, especially when doctored with echo. Robert played most of the organ and electric piano on this track, Ratledge only coming in for a solo near the end.

Finally there's Ratledge's "Out-bloody-rageous," which opens in startling fashion with piano tapes played backwards, all based on progressions of the bass line which underpins the main theme. This theme is again played by Dean on overdubbed alto and saxello, and trombonist Nick Evans makes a couple of brief appearances. Dean has an extraordinarily beautiful alto solo before the track ends with another tape collage, this time of the electric piano overdubbed three or four times, playing phrases of differing lenghts which gradually contract.

The Softs are an exhilarating band, and listening to them can be like jumping off a cliff into a pool of freezing water. The new album is full of music of such fine, invigorating quality, and their crucial importance in the future of popular music cannot be denied.

Richard Williams



new pop albums

A feast of Arthurly music from Love

Soft Machine album— an MM preview

LOVE

GROUNDHOGS

DUANE EDDY

WHEN ME MANAGER SAID THEY WANTED "NO ONE BUT YOU" I THOUGHT 'E MEANT YER ACTUAL 'ZOOT'....BUT NO, 'E MEANT ME NEW SINGLE!

ZOOT MONEY'S FIRST SINGLE ON ENTERPRISE

"NO ONE BUT YOU"

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A child of the pop scene - Melody Maker - February 14, 1970



A child of the pop scene

by RICHARD WILLIAMS

ROBERT WYATT is the member of the Soft Machine you're most likely to be watching while you listen to their music. Tousle-haired and athletic behind his drum kit, he has (he has the kind of natural showmanship which does not compromise the quality of the music he's a part of.

Reviewing their recent Fairfield Hall concert, I commented that it seemed paradoxical that, while the group are progressing rapidly, the audience is still managing to catch up with them.

"Perhaps there's an element of flattery involved," says Robert, "in that we expect them to follow anything we feel we want to do.

"But we can never really gauge for ourselves what he audience is feeling because we don't stop for applause. Now that even the break in the middle has gone, we'll play for a minimum of one and a half hours and come straight off. So we only feel any sort of reaction when we're changing afterwards.

"Our sort of progression is the kind in which the musicians improve as they play, gaining more control over their instruments and pacing themselves better. This is something that everyone has to learn, and that's what's happening to us.

"I never know what people think of us. It's quite mystifying. We can come off stage and Mike'll be quite depressed while I'm turning cartwheels.

"We're not an intellectual group – if we were, we wouldn't get anywhere. We don't even talk about it any more, and it just happens in a subconscious sort of way. Because Mike is musically highly educated doesn't mean we aren't intuitive.

"We don't spend enough time in rehearsals for Mike and we spend too much time there for me, because I can only discover things in the act of playing the piece, in a performing situation.

'It's like painting in a way. Some painters do sketches first, but often the whole thing is the work itself. I use time like a painter, putting layers on; the first set starts out casually, and then I build it up as I get into it. It's really very elastic.

"The basic thing is to find the right people to work with, and after that you commit yourself to working round whatever they're doing. If I thought there was anybody playing something really fantastic, I'd want to work with them – and for me that's Mike, Hugh, Elton, and Lyn.



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"Hugh's bass playing is the most interesting new thing for me. He's doing things to the bass that I've always wanted people to do at this level. When he solos he might play high and fast, but he always keeps the kind of weight and authority that the bass should have. When he races up to the top he doesn't leave a gap at the bottom."

About audiences, Robert comments: "I've always found British audiences to be the least idealistic of all. The French and the Dutch kids really want something else to listen to, and they don't want to feel they're being hyped.

"The whole atmosphere in Britain, when you're dashing up and down the M1, is different. For instance if the PA goes wrong, there's less urgency to get it fixed. Maybe this is because Britain is home, and we don't feel the sense of occasion that we get abroad. That's probably our own fault, because some groups are very conscientious about every gig.

"The university audiences and the militant Left have little to do with what I've got to say. In West Berlin . . . people ask us why our songs aren't more politically committed, and why we charge entrance fees, and "Whose side are you on anyway?". The best audiences are primarily interested in the music."

Robert's singing is an interesting feature of the group, and about this side of his performance he says:

"I'm completely a child of the pop scene. When it comes to drawing inspiration for one of Mike's time signatures, I go and listen to Sly or James Brown. That's more poppy than most pop people listen to.

"The voice came from a need for a particular sound. I can't pitch accurately low because of the nature of the instruments, so I sing high. It's also better to keep tonally blank and let the clear note come through.

"It's also a slightly social thing, in that it's the closest I can get to talking to the audience. I haven't got Lyn's thing about the voice being the source of all sound, and it took a long time to figure out how to use it. Singing songs was obviously out with this band, and Syd (Barrett) has been a big influence. It's an unaffected thing, just straight words really.

"But what I was saying about the pop thing: if there has been any grafting on to our music, pop music was the last thing to be grafted on. Nevertheless in ways we're completely opposed to what happens in jazz, where people extend themselves all the time. We all feel the pressure to the drums. It clears the overall conscious of the editing aspect of performance."

Among the changes which Robert is making in his playing is the use of snare-drum with the snares off, making the drum into a third tom-tom, pitched higher than the others.

"I've been doing that and playing nearer the rim of the drum, to get a ringing sound. This changes the whole nature of the kit, and removes the cymbals from their usual relationship to the drums. It clears the overall sound and makes a lot more space, because the sound with cymbals and snare going with the other instruments can be very muddy."

Robert's technique fascinated me the first time I saw him. He plays not so much like a conventional kit drummer, but more like a tympanist, with that fluid movement around the drums which comes from the arms rather than the wrists.

"I learned from a jazz drummer, who taught me to play with my elbows in, using my wrists like Philly Joe Jones. But I never really mastered it, and anyway you can't get the volume or intensity that way, so I rather let it go and started using my forearms more.

"I'm seriously considering taking the snare drum away from the centre of the kit and putting it more to one side, so that I can get away from the Buddy Rich thing and use it more for accents.

"The kit I use was given to me by Mitch (Mitchell), who had it custom-built in the States out of maple-wood. When I sit down behind it it's like being in a little room, it's very comfortable.

"If jazz drumming has had any influence on me, it's been in teaching me what not to do — although I hope that doesn't sound arrogant. Some drummers have all this jazz training and just do it all wrong. For me, it's really all down to James Brown's rhythm section."

RICHARD WILLIAMS

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Dobson's voice - Melody Maker - January 31, 1970

Dobson's voice



MUSIC IS the only means of enlightenment for this century." Thus spake Lyn Dobson, multi-instrumentalist and thinker, formerly of Group Sounds Five and Manfred Mann and now ensconced in the rapidly rising Soft Machine.

" I'm interested In finding the central core of music," he says. " It can all be traced back through primitive folk music to the central core, which is basically a drone and a polyrhythmic structure.

" Jazz doesn't mean anything much to me now, apart from people who have transcended it, like John Coltrane. The problem of jazz is that it falls into an ego trap.

" People use jazz to prove how clever they are, but you can do more with one note than with any amount of clever phrases. I've been through years of playing fast, using other people's licks, but It never means anything.

"The quality of sound is what really matters, and that's what I'm working on with the Soft Machine. Playing with electric instruments is different — it changes the whole nature of the horns.

" You have to come to terms with the sensual nature of the instrument like the sitar which is my main thing now although I don't play it in the band.

"If the sitar is played badly and is wrongly tuned it means nothing and can hardly be

heard, but if the strings are all in sympathy you can hear it — 20 miles away.

" I never really got into music until I started meditating on my own about four years ago . . . but I don't want to sound pretentious about that.

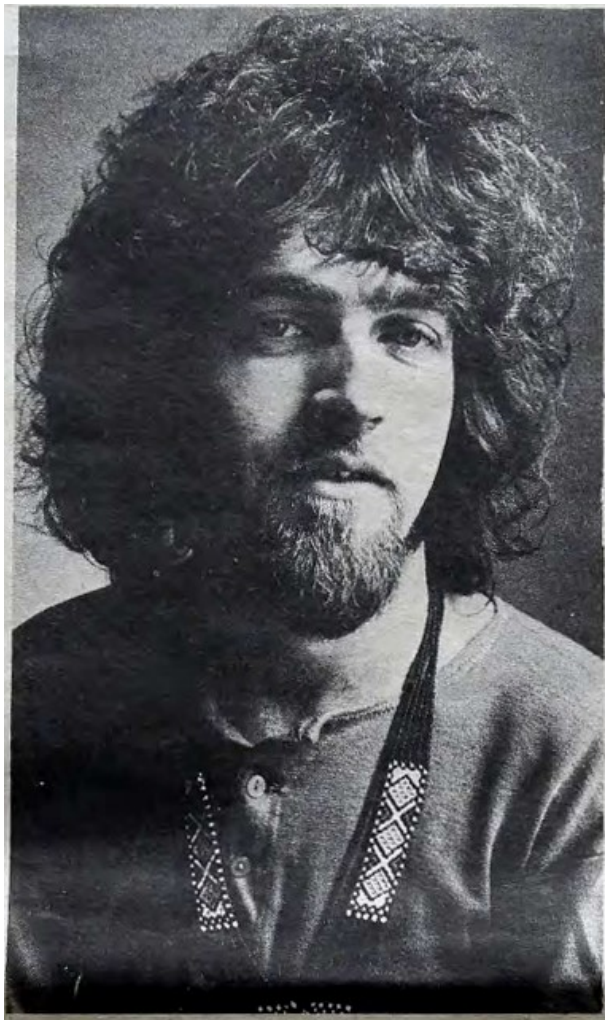
"You know the open air is really the place to play. One of my ambitions is to make an LP out of doors. That's the feeling you have to try and recreate when you're playing an electric horn in a concert hall.

" At the Fairfield Hall the Soft Machine and the audience really came to terms with the environment, and when it's like that I don't feel that I'm a musician on the stage entertaining a lot of spectators. It has to be a total communication thing.

" The whole structure of groups and concerts is artificial Music is a thing in which everybody ought to partake. I've been busking, not for the bread, but to bring music to people in the most unlikely situations.

" I've sat in Tube stations playing and I really turned on people who never dream of going to a pop concert.

" The majority of people playing jazz are happy to make it musically a minority thing. But music isn't valid until it's out in the open. Otherwise it's as ridiculous as a religion which a few people set up for themselves alone, not letting anyone else participate.



LYN DOBSON: Soft Machine man

" Music has got to be destructive rather than creative, and although it's necessary to express hate occasionally, it's the love thing that really matters.

"Steve Marriott taught me a hell of a lot when I played with Humble Pie." (It was on their first album) " He has no technique really, but he's an incredible musician and I really

respect him. he knows instinctively how to tune a guitar and make it resonate, and he can create that feel that makes everyone want to get up and dance round the room.

" The Soft Machine are trying to arrive at that point by complex intellectual approach, but they are aware of the intuitive thing too, so it still comes out pretty basic. And with the group I've also got a chance to get into my own things at the same time. For instance I want to do an album of my own songs, using sitar.

'* Indian music is the most simple music ever, although it seems so complex, and it hasn't changed for hundreds of years. Ragas aren't discovered by intellect — they're really natural law, which is unchangeable.

" About 18 months ago I decided what I'm going to do, and onece I've said what I want to say I'll disappear off to the hills to jam with Indian musicians!"

Richard Williams

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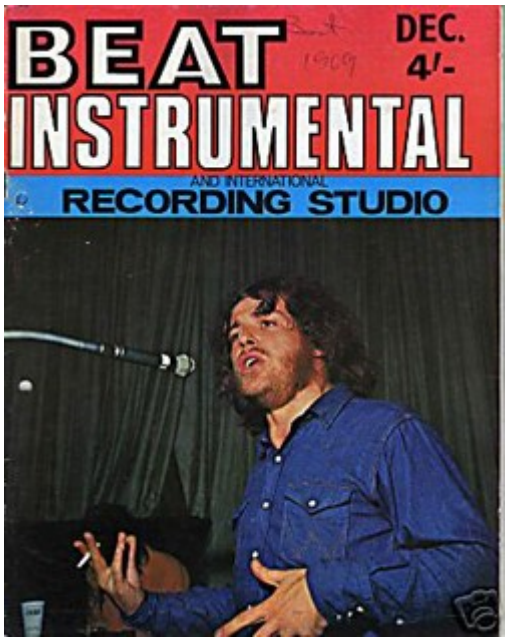
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Soft Machine - Beat Instrumental - December 1969

SOFT MACHINE



"INDEPENDENCE" and "freedom" are words much used today to justify any act from dossing down in Piccadilly to running naked through Trafalgar Square, but Soft Machine use these words with such liberal enthusiasm, that they don't give the impression of just quoting well-worn cliches.

With two LPs under their belts – the first of which was released in America only – the Soft Machine trio strongly believe that the individual and musical freedom they try to practise has formed a great part of the way their career has progressed.

Like so many of our talented groups, they have made a big impact in the States, but have found it very hard to become accepted here. However, having emerged from the psychedelic morass, they have long since dropped the light show as part of their act, and are now intent on earning a reputation on the British scene.

Socially, these three – Mike Ratledge (keyboard), Hugh Hopper (bass) and Robert Wyatt (drums) – don't go around together much, but guard and encourage the right to preserve their own interests.

"We're all horrifyingly independent of each other," said Robert when I met the group recently, "and we're always putting each other down."

An ominous statement when isolated, but the group feel that through this they can progress as a unit. "When we play, we play as individuals. One of us does what he wants to do and drags the others along. If anyone feels bad he is involved with the others and his interest is maintained. This ensures that nobody becomes a passenger. We must be one of the few groups that haven't any passengers, and we're each of us strong enough to have a group built round us and carry it off, but we feel that as individuals we complement one another musically."

This musical independence produces the Soft Machine sound which is impossible to categorise. "We play everything we have ever learnt from rock, pop, jazz – the lot. We're not frustrated jazz musicians, which is what a lot of people think. On the contrary, we like to feel that most jazz musicians are frustrated Soft Machine members."

They never seek to smother one another, merely blend together to produce their own sound. As Robert said: "I'd love to play solid rock, but I would never dream of asking the others to play it all the time."

Another form of independence they're looking for is financial. They wish they had enough money to be able to record more, because they're dissatisfied with both their LPs so far. Their second album is the only one to be released in Britain, and they all feel that it no longer represents the type of music that they are playing.
"The album was recorded months ago, and there's only one track on it that we still play. Admittedly this is because a lot of it is too technical to play on stage, but the record just isn't us at the moment. What we would like is a bit more bread so that we can be free to go into a studio and record how and what we want.

"Time is the big problem. On the last album, because their wasn't much money around, everybody was rushed and the simple and beautiful ideas that we had just didn't come across. They all became fuzzed. It's so frustrating because we know our potential is much greater. The recording studio is a very expensive instrument to play, and not many people can afford to play it well.

"If we don't get more studio experience how can we be expected to learn and progress on record. We're very grateful to the recording company for everything, but actually we truthfully wish that less money had been spent on promotion, and more on getting the record together. At the moment we think we would prefer people to come and see us live, rather than judge us from the album."



Don't get the idea that Soft Machine are content to sit back and dwell on past failures, and dream of future glory. The lads are at present working very hard, and are optimistic about future recording as they have finished some tapes with which they are very happy. They have finished writing the musical score for a French television series, and they have hopes that a film score is in the offing. They also have plans to expand their sound on stage, something that they have always wanted to do.

"Whenever we've got the bread, we're going to play with a line-up of three saxes and a trombone. Two of the saxes are coming from Keith Tippet's band, the other from Mike West's band, and the trombone from Carl Jenkins. We've always felt a bit restricted on stage in the past, but this should really improve our sound."

If they were each given total freedom, what would they all do? The answers came back very quickly. Robert would like "to play rock with soul, do more record production and maybe write more music." Hugh would "produce and write music," while Mike would "do music – period – and extend my interest in the cinema."

There seems to be little chance that the members of Soft Machine will become totally independent and free of each other and go their own ways, for, as I was leaving, Robert said to me: "You know, I couldn't leave Soft Machine, I would feel I was missing something great. I just have to be part of this exciting music we're making." Mike and Hugh just nodded.

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When Soft Machine broke down and cried - Disc and Music Echo 1s - November 29, 1969

WHEN SOFT MACHINE BROKE DOWN AND CRIED



It's impossible to pin an identifiable sound on Soft Machine. Their style has already changed since their last album was out—only a few months ago. And as for their early singles, well, you just Wouldn't recognise them.

Soft Machine themselves forget how long they've been around—five, six, seven years? The two basic originals, Michael Ratledge (keyboards) and Robert Wyatt (drums), say the group was formed when they were at school in Canterbury, got its name some time after that, alternately gathered and lost other members and just choogled along.

At present they have Hugh Hopper on bass. "He was working on a farm in Canterbury," says Robert proudly. "A true country lad. He was about to sell his bass and buy a bicycle and go cycling round France when Michael and I found him. He had a loathing of show-business and it was only by promising not to play any pop we got him." It seems to be this jovial outlook coupled with a genuine dedication to music that- has kept Soft Machine going for so long.

They are well known and popular to a minority in England. ("John Peel has been marvellous, it's been quite embarrassing the way he's helped us along," says Robert.) They also have a large following on the Continent, and were well received when they went around America with the Jimi Hendrix tour last year, after which Mitch Mitchell gave Robert his drum kit.

At the beginning of the emergence of the Underground scene here they were often at UFO, and shared the terrible times with the other groups when they were sent out to mischosen venues.

"We had such terrible times in the early days if we ventured outside UFO," recalls Robert with a shudder. "We'd get microphones and gear bashed up. Six times out of 10 we'd come offstage in tears. I never want that to happen again. "But even in those early days we were on the fringe rather than a part of that scene, like Pink Floyd were. We were spending our summers in Majorca, and other times in Paris with friends on a kind of jazz scene."

Robert says he thinks they have never achieved wide acceptance because they've never bothered with catchy gimmicks.



Soft Machine (left to right) Robert Wyatt, Michael Ratledge, and Hugh Hopper.

"If you want something badly enough you fight for it, and none of us have ever thought of anything clever to say to the audience. We don't fling our arms in the air or freak out onstage—we haven't bothered to make an impact on the keen little ears all over the country. It's just a purely musical thing for us—we're not revolutionaries or anything."

Although Robert will remember instances when they won a competition in Margate by playing "I Put A Spell On You," "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" and other delights many years ago, Soft Machine write their own stuff now. "I can't write so I have to get them to write it down for me, and then they write stuff and I stick words on them for records," says Robert.

"I've always liked to work with brilliant people. I've never liked passengers. And I've never worked with anyone who was coasting and feeding off the rest of the group. We're probably not the happiest group—Hugh and I have completely different ideas, but it's worth it to know we feel strongly and it works onstage. Music comes before sociability for me —it's all very well being friends but it doesn't make for good music.

"If Hugh's listening to music it'll be 'Uncle Meat,' Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. Mike listens to American avant-garde stuff or Debussy quartets, and my record collection is Bee Gees, Sly and the Family Stone and Wilson Pickett doing 'Hey Jude.'"

"The thing we have in common is that we really have got clear, strong ideas on what music should be and what we should be doing. This is why none of our groups will ever last, and that's why you can't give Soft Machine a certain noise."

At the moment they're into the jazz scene, and augmenting their trio with Keith Tippett and three of his jazzmen and Lyn Dobson on soprano and tenor sax and flute.

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Unclassifiable Soft Machine - Hugh Hopper talks to Bob Dawbarn - Melody Maker - November 8, 1969

Unclassifiable Soft Machine

Hugh Hopper talks to Bob Dawbarn

LAST WEEK in Paris, the Soft Machine were presented by the French government with an award.

Even the group seem a little vague about what exactly it was for.

"It was something to do with a section of the government called Leisure for Youth," bass guitarist Hugh Hopper told me. "They give awards for records in every field of music. I can't say what section they found for us, but there was a little note on the award which said we were for anyone over 12.

"Duke Ellington, apparently, was for everyone over eight so we are not sure how to take that."

The French Government certainly had a problem. The Soft Machine are utterly unclassifiable — their music has elements of jazz and straight music as well as the tougher forms of pop.

Looks

And now they have become a seven-piece with the addition of the front line of the Keith Tippett Group — Mark Charig (tpt), Elton Dean (alto) and Nick Evans (tmb) — and Lyn Dobson (tnr, flute).

"Although obviously they all have other gigs



we are hoping it will be a regular front line," explained Hugh. "There are still technical problems over amplifying the saxes and getting everything balanced correctly. We've only been playing together two or three weeks but it certainly looks as though it is going to work out.

"It gives us the chance to bring out certain things in our music that we have been thinking about for some time, apart from having four extra solo voices. We had begun to feel rather restricted by the trio."

Free

I asked if the music was likely to become even more free.

"No, we were really freer in the old days," said Hugh. "We are now much more interested in arranging and use a lot of totally arranged passages.

"Fortunately our audiences seem to change too, they follow what we are doing and adapt. Mind you we have never worried about being commercial and have therefore never been tied down by thoughts of hit records and the rest of it.

"We are all writing in the group, though Mike Ratledge, our organist, does the greatest volume of stuff. We are also getting much more work abroad now — we have three weeks coming up in France and then a tour of Holland, Belgium and Switzerland in January. There is so much more money for us over there."

Though the group does not want labels attached to their music, Hugh agrees that it is a little odd to find them working largely in the pop field.

"We go out as a pop group, but there is little similarity between us and the pop world apart from that," he admitted. "Mind you, we all came up through pop. I spent some time in a soul band, for example. But, basically, the Soft Machine plan to make it commercially without making commercial music."


SOFT MACHINE: their music has elements of jazz and straight music

There is a growing mystique surrounding the group on the Continent. "They are more open to new sounds in places like Amsterdam than they are in Britain," explains Hugh. "They get much more enthusiastic. The English aren't an enthusiastic race — I know I'm not. We all tend to be a bit cool. The odd thing is that on the Continent they aren't interested in their own bands. Instead there is this strange mystique about British groups. Or Americans - there are plenty of black Americans there playing free music and earning a living. They couldn't do it here, nor, possibly, in America. The Swedes, for example, have always been receptive to the avant-garde music".



SOFT MACHINE, their music has elements of jazz and straight music

LAST WEEK in Paris the Soft Machine were presented by the French Government with an award.

Even the group seem a little vague about what exactly it was for.

Unclassifiable Soft Machine

HUGH HOPPER TALKS TO BOB DAWBARN

Looks

Prices

Wide

Free

If you are after that dividend, SPORTING RECORD cannot afford to be without

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ery Tuesday 9d.

Future work for the Soft Machine includes the writing of seven hours of music for a new French TV series which Hugh describes as "a Eurovision thing about some fugitive type guy." The Machine will also be appearing in the series.

Prices

Hugh is already involved in commercials and says: "We would all like to get into incidental music and film writing."

Why change from a trio now?

"The simple answer is we haven't been able to afford it before," said Hugh. "Now we have sorted out our management thing and we have a lot of work on the Continent — and we are getting good prices. We had some nice powerful sounds with the trio but when playing for an hour on stage it gets a bit boring."

The new Soft Machine has already got one unusual booking — it will be playing opposite the Thelonious Monk Quartet at Ronnie Scott's on November 11 and 18.

Wide

"I don't know how the management will take our amplification," commented Hugh. "Or how Monk will, for that matter. But we are really looking forward to this one."

How wide, I wondered, was Hugh's own musical taste.

"Well, my favourite record is the Miles Davis-Gil Evans 'Sketches Of Spain', he told me. "Pop? I'd listen to somebody like the Cream, though I don't say I would buy their records.

"In fact the last record I bought was 'Uncle Meat,' the Frank Zappa thing. Really, Zappa approximates to what I like in the pop world."

Bob Dawbarn

Soft Machine - looking for more complicated musical ideas... - Record Mirror - October 25, 1969



THE Soft Machine don't look on themselves as a pop group, although they are usually booked out as one. They would rather record than perform publically.

"The first album we made was more or less a rehearsal record," drummer Robert Wyatt said. "We're looking forward to the day when somebody will say to us, 'here's a studio — get on with it in your own time'.

"Some people have referred to us as 'underground'. But what is underground? Words like that fall into a trap. At one time Thunderclap Newman's single was more underground than Jethro Tull's because his was in 5/4 and Jethro Tull's was in 4/4."

SOFT MACHINE—one of the most interesting and inventive groups around.

Soft Machine— looking for more complicated musical ideas . . .

ECLECTIC

The trio's music is eclectic—their influences ranging from modern jazz to modern classical music. Ornette Coleman, Don Ellis, Hindemith and Bartock all figure in their musical make - up. Electronic sounds also plays a big part.

From listening to older forms of music, Soft Machine have learnt the use of dynamics — something which many groups haven't even heard of.

"Although we do play loudly, we use dynamics and are as supple and as varied as we know how," explained Robert. "The people who've influenced me in my music are Duke Ellington, Charlie Mingus and Gil Evans.

"Continuity in music is what we're doing. We're involved in the more demanding points of continuity as it goes on and on and the music builds.

"We're aiming for more complicated ideas whereby the structure changes throughout a piece." Mike Ratledge added. "The jazz pianist, Cecil Taylor, has influenced me in terms of his energy and attack in his music. Miles Davis was an influence when he went through his modal thing."

HARPSICHORD

Hugh Hopper plays bass, acoustic guitar and alto with Soft Machine. Robert takes vocals and Mike plays flute in addition to piano, organs and harpsichord.

Although Soft Machine are one of the most progressive groups around, they haven't lost sight of pleasing their audiences. With this in mind, they should be around to entertain us for some time to come. IAN MIDDLETON

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Soft Machine's no ordinary trio - Melody Maker - July 5, 1969

Soft Machine's no ordinary trio


Melody Maker

Exclusive!

STONES AT HYDE PARK

WHAT YOU'LL SEE
WHAT YOU'LL HEAR

'and if you can, bring a drum or a tambourine even a tin to bang on or something,' urges Mick Jagger

TURN TO PAGE 4 AND CENTRE PAGES

Hendrix split: Redding goes, group grows

MITCH MITCHELL'S PLANS UNKNOWN

What the disc price war means to you

see page 3

CECIL TAYLOR, Scott La Faro and Elvin Jones may seem unlikely influences on a trio who regard themselves as part of the pop scene, but they were the original inspiration of Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt who currently make up the Soft Machine with the occasional addition of Brian Hopper on saxes.

But then Soft Machine is hardly one of your predictable pop groups, and generally favour lengthy, complex compositions with unusual time signatures.

The group originally grew from a collection of friends in Canterbury who made up a variety of personnels and groups over the years. The first step, says Mike Ratledge, was an avant garde jazz group in 1962 based on the music of Cecil Taylor. A bit before its time?

"That's what the public thought, too" admits Mike. "We did a couple of weeks at the establishment and then the leader, Daevid Allen quit and went to Majorca while I went to Oxford University.

"The Soft Machine may still be a minority-appeal group, but, for us, it is the music that is important. And we certainly haven't done badly. We do a fair amount of college work here and quite a bit abroad - Holland, France, Switzerland plus seven months in America. That American trip was too much, we were working every day with no time to rehearse and just had to take time out to rethink when we got back.

"A large percentage of our music is improvised, although perhaps not so much of it recently as the structures get more complex. All our material is original."

The group has completed a new album which is released in the States this week and may be followed up with another American tour. The LP won't be out in Britain until September.



SOFT MACHINE: Cecil Taylor influence

"We don't plan ahead," admits Mike. "We suffer from the problem of being three individual people and the group is run on a weak kind of democracy. Actually that side of it is easier since we cut down to three instead of four - one feels more uneasy about ganging up on one person."

As somebody whose first inclinations were towards jazz, does Mike get full satisfaction from the current set-up?

"I don't feel we have copped out in any way, if that's what you mean," he says. "Our present style is forced on us because it is the best way these particular people can work together.

And there is really nothing you can't use when writing for the group.

"The thing is that we have got enough time now to do new material and also get outside the music business. Film music is one thing, we have several projects going. But generally we want to get out of the limitations of a three-piece group. On the new album we have used tenor horn, flute and alto. Writing for a larger group appeals to all of us.

"Everybody in the group writes and, at the moment, each arranges his own material. One problem I find is that you can get caught up on details of structure and the whole piece loses its identity, then you wonder if the original idea was worth it.

"But playing when you have nothing to say is just as important as playing when you have something to say. This is one of the things a group just has to learn".



Bob Dawbarn

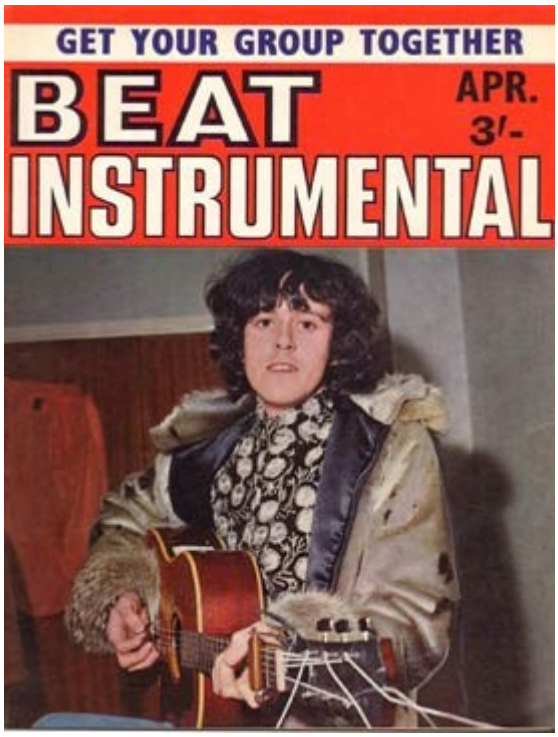
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Soft Machine - Beat Instrumental - April 1969

SOFT MACHINE



WHEN the beads, bells and heady atmosphere of psychedelia first came to our shores about two years ago, two groups in particular emerged and became adopted as musicians by appointment to the hippie movement. One of these was the Pink Floyd. The other was the Soft Machine, with Mike Ratledge on organ, Robert Wyatt on drums, and the now departed Kevin Ayers on bass.

But while the Floyd found themselves hot commercial properties, churning out hit singles and a first album that sold by the ton to a far wider public than just the flower crowd, the Soft Machine never achieved any breakthrough to mass audiences, though they started off with an equally fanatic following. Their performances were perhaps more pioneering than the Floyd's enlisting the considerable talents of Mark Boyle's light show and the dancing of Graziella Martinez.

Much to everyone's surprise, the Soft Machine disappeared from the scene practically without trace. Only recently has anything been heard of the group after an absence of well over a year, their protracted vanishing act being due to an extended visit to the U.S.A., where they reaped much success.

Much more success, that is, than came their way in England. They had one single out on Polydor that did nothing spectacular, got into dire financial straits and nearly became the traditional starving musicians. Often they would not even have enough money to buy petrol for getting to a gig.

The turning point came when their manager, Mike Jeffries, who also looks after the Hendrix Experience, arranged for the group to go on a concert tour of the States with Jimi. At this time, America was far more receptive to new ideas in pop, and the Soft Machine's style, relying to a far greater extent than previous pop on improvisation — as opposed to apeing American blues guitarists — was certainly a marketable commodity. They had already won many converts in France and Holland, and America was the ideal place for the group to concentrate their energies.

soft machine

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This first tour with Hendrix was so successful that the group stayed on after it had finished. Right from the start they had been playing to crowds of five and six thousand and receiving considerably more appreciation than at home. All across the country it was good. They were apprehensive of the dreaded mid-west and the reputation of such cities as Dallas — but in the event, the worst places they had to play were the New York suburbs. Everywhere they played the hippies turned out in force, in the most unlikely places.

Their album, *Soft Machine*, is presently number fifty in the American album charts and still rising after three months; it had an advance order of forty thousand. Though the group have been back in England since last September (now with a new bassist, Hugh Hopper, doubling on alto sax), there is still some doubt whether it will be released here. Track didn't put it out when it was made, their policy at that time being to concentrate on hit singles, and the group were not here to promote it.

They have now finished work on a second album, produced by themselves, which could appear instead. There were a number of things on the first album of which the group disapproved; produced by the man behind Bob Dylan's records, Tom Wilson, they were not given much help. Wilson thought they were such talented musicians that he should impose himself as little as possible. A further problem in recording — on both records — was caused by lack of time, the whole thing having to be completed in a week.

The second record was made in England, at Olympic, early this year. Again, time was a difficulty. Robert didn't have a drum kit to rehearse outside of the studio so he had to try and work out what to do in his head. Once inside the studio, everything had to be played again so he could get into the music when the time should have been used purely for recording.

Since they have been back in England, the group have been relaxing. They made enough

money, working solidly every night for a year, to be able to rehearse, write, and get on with other activities —Mike, for example, is writing a book on Preston Sturges, an American comedy film producer. They have played very few gigs, preferring to stick to the better venues instead of taking all the work that comes along.

Concerts with Kirk

They did play a number of concerts with Roland Kirk and the Ronnie Scott band, Scott's men augmenting the Soft Machine line-up. Mike felt that having a three-piece band can prove limiting, and enjoyed the idea of working with a big band. This brings up the question of how to label the Soft Machine. Are they a jazz group? There are many similarities with jazz trios, but the excitement of the Soft Machine is vintage pop. The members of the group have been involved in the avant-garde jazz scene. But the only real answer is to say that they are playing what they want — call it jazz, pop or whatever.

R.S.

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Mike Ratledge Interview - Oz - n°18 - February, 1969

MIKE RATLEDGE INTERVIEW



> Zoom

The interviewee prefaced the text below with the fact that he had no opinions on any subjects. It was 'ridiculous to attempt an interview.' The tape recorder was switched on. The interviewer gives the impression of being both stupid and innocent — which is quite genuine. For him, pop begins and ends with the Four Seasons & the work of Phil Spector - a fact of no particular relevance.

F W: Are you an Underground group?

M R: That can mean two things. Are we regarded as the subject of cultisms in the Underground? The answer to which may or may not be true, it is not for me to say. The second thing is whether that is desirable. I would say that none of us wish to be a cult in the Underground. The Underground is basically what Taylor Meade described it as — 'Doing something for nothing.' And that's what it's turned out to be. When you're asked to do an Underground benefit, and the promoter starts talking to you in terms of the art you're offering, you know very well that you won't get any money for it, you'll even have to pay your own expenses. It means no organization, the stage will be a shambles, the P A will be hopeless and everything else. But good things have still come out of the Underground. The U F 0 was good when Hoppy was running it. It was well run. But the Underground is usually shambollic.

F W: Would you like to be disociated with the Underground, move out, make a lot of money, a lot - like Hendrix?

M R: I'd hate to have the position of Hendrix in terms of his work schedule and what it's doing to him. I'd hate to be on the road months at a time, working every night and never rehearsing. I mean, still playing numbers like Hey Joe after three years to an audience that shows it doesn't listen to what you're playing because the applause at the beginning of a number when it identifies it is louder than the applause you get at the end. That's all they're interested in.



The group have returned to this country where they are working on the second L P They hope to avoid live performance and tours after the American experience, with the exception of possible Continental tours with Ronnie Scott & Roland Kirk. They are at present rehearsing for the L P. A new bass player has joined the group.

The first L P has not been released in this country. Copies were available in the import sections of shops like Music Land in Berwick Street, Soho.

INTERVIEW

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F W: Off-stage sounds like a nightmare. What's it like?

M R: Exactly as they say it is – working with Hendrix it is anyway.

And travel in the States with a pop group is like a luxury purgatory. You stay in Hiltons, then a Cadillac Fleetwood takes you to the airport first thing in the

technically bad.

F W: What about the Doors?

M R: The Doors I can't really see, except as a sociological phenomenon. The Doors are a chance for all the little teenyboppers in the States to think they're digging something avant garde when they're not at all. They have got all the symptoms of being avant garde. They've got the proselytising lyrics, the sex figure of Morrison who masturbates on stage, so he's really iconoclastic and you're worshipping an iconoclast – who is not actually moving the art forward in any way. They go into old blues riffs, none of them are proficient, they have no authority on stage, their sound is appallingly weak. In all the ways that pop music has broken through in five years, they don't possess any of these features that caused the breakthrough. Hendrix contributed a new searing sound. But they have no sound identity. They're contributing nothing musically.

F W: Groups like the Jefferson Airplane – how do they fit into the scale you just

M R: This jazz/pop thing is very difficult. There are two types – the jazz group that goes into pop, and the pop group that goes vaguely into jazz. Don Ellis and Gary Burton have gone into pop. And in a peculiar way they tend to lose something. Whereas pop groups going into jazz don't. Jazz groups going into pop tend to misconstrue what the actual excitement about pop is. They tend to simplify their structures, but what makes pop is the sound. The excitement of the sound is something which somebody like Don Ellis hasn't got, nor Gary Burton. So they lose both ways. Whereas pop groups in jazz, if they're any good, maintain the excitement of the sound. The best example of this is the Mothers', although they're not really a Jazz/Pop group – there's no such middle stream. But they use devices as in jazz, and they have jazz soloists. But they still have the tough rock sound. The Spirit is another example of this.

F W: Do you have a tough rock sound?

M R: It's tough. I don't know whether it's rock. It's very distorted and individual.

F W: If somebody who manufactures hits (like Spector used to) came to you and asked to record for him – would you?

M R: No, largely because you can't calculate a hit ever. It's chancy. So you'd be left recording something which is neither a success nor a pleasure to perform. The only thing to do is to do what you really like doing. (pause) Supposing Jim Webb came up to me with a song. That's a better example. I wouldn't mind doing it if I liked the song – but not as the Soft Machine. That would be unfair on what little public we have. But I love playing with other people whatever music they play. If Kevin in the group did a pretty-pretty single I wouldn't mind playing on it with him. But not as a Soft Machine. It just confuses the consumer.

F W: How do you react to pop journalism?

M R: The basic trouble is that all journalists are outside us. i.e. they don't

F W: Off-stage sounds like a nightmare. What's it like?

M R: Exactly as they say it is - working with Hendrix it is anyway. And travel in the States with a pop group is like a luxury purgatory. You stay in Hiltons, then a Cadillac Fleetwood takes you to the airport first thing in the morning. Another Cadillac Fleetwood meets you, takes you to the hotel. You wash, the Cadillac Fleetwood takes you to the gig and back to the Hilton. You sleep. In the end it completely destroys your sense of geography. You're manipulated like a piece of baggage. You have no control over the direction your life takes. It's like those experiments where they deprive rats of control over their bodies. In the end you suffer from depersonalisation, loss of identity. It sounds heavy but it does happen like that. There is no longer any 'I' that travels, the travel subsumes you, there is no such thing as place because air destroys that as a form of travel. And America is constructed in such a way that it denies any individual differences from place to place. This is the blueprint for America.

F W: Alright.

M R: What do you mean alright? I haven't finished yet.

F W: O K What about American groups?

M R: There are the Mothers' and the Spirit. They were the only two groups I was interested in, or impressed with at all. (pause) There are four types of groups. Firstly, the group that has technical proficiency on their instruments and have got ideas of their own. The Second has ideas but no technical proficiency. Then those that have no ideas of their own but have the proficiency. And lastly, those who have neither ideas nor technical proficiency.

F W: But they have publicity.

M R: Yes. The Mothers and the Spirit come into the first group. There are thousands of other groups that have either technique or proficiency. Or blues groups doing blues arrangements better than the people did them originally. Then there are weird underground groups in places like Chicago who have ideas but no proficiency - like the M C Five. But most are not worth mentioning because they are so technically bad.

F W: What about the Doors?

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F W: Groups like the Jefferson Airplane — how do they fit into the scale you just suggested?



M R: The J A and the Big Brother Holding Co. are big cult figures on the American underground. I've never seen the J A live, but apparently they're much better than on record. They're too tidy on record for me and the soloists aren't what they're reputed to be. They have strong voices sure. But there's still a blues tyranny in America basically. To be a substantial hit you have to be a blues group. B B & T H C are not an avant garde group. They're just a big super-charged, super-heat blues group. You read in the papers in England about the avant garde in America, their names — when you hear them they're just blues groups.

F W: You started as a straight jazz group and moved into pop. This isn't typical, because the usual group starts with blues and ends up with an avant garde reputation. But you never were a blues group.

M R: This jazz/pop thing is very difficult. There are two types — the jazz group that goes into pop, and the pop group that goes vaguely into jazz. Don Ellis and Gary Burton have gone into pop. And in a peculiar way they tend to lose something. Whereas pop groups going into jazz don't. Jazz groups going into pop tend to misconstrue what the actual excitement about pop is. They tend to simplify their structures, but what makes pop is the sound. The excitement of the sound is something-which somebody like Don Ellis hasn't got, nor Gary Burton. So they lose both ways. Whereas pop groups in jazz, if they're any good, maintain the excitement of the sound. The best example of this is the Mothers', although they're not really a Jazz/Pop group — there's no such middle stream. But they use devices as in jazz, and they have jazz soloists. But they still have the tough rock sound. The Spirit is another example of this.

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F W: How do you react to pop journalism?

M R: The basic trouble is that all journalists are outside us. i.e. they don't play instruments, they've certainly never played in a pop group. They probably, until recently, haven't listened to pop music, not until the Beatles. They're not equipped in terms of musical knowledge to make any kind of judgement. If they confined themselves to saying who they liked and didn't like that would be acceptable. Unfortunately, they try to give musical reasons why they approve. These musical reasons tend to become a series of cliches that people bandy around, which usually have no relevance to the people they're talking about. A specific instance is Tony Palmer who claims qualities for The Cream which they don't possess. He says they expand the structure of common pop song chords, whereas they're still using blues structures basically, and more than any other group around. It's the same for all groups designated avant garde. It reminds me of the beginning of jazz where they tried to make jazz respectable by comparing jazz musicians to Stravinsky & Schoenberg & Bartok. But this is confusing the form because each medium has its own syntax. To make cross-judgements is confusing. It doesn't respect the identity of the medium, like all people writing

film criticism in terms of theatre. Thereby you miss the basic point of what cinema is. So Tony Palmer and the rest of them — when they talk about the Beatles being better or as good as Schubert or Schoenberg or whatever are missing the point about what makes Pop special and different from these people. Cross-judgements simply confuse rather than illuminate. Apart from not being really desirable.

F W: So how would you evaluate the Soft Machine in your musical terms?

M R: It's difficult. I think we're using a lot of things that modern jazz is now using. The most recent numbers use time-signatures like 13/4 and 9/4. We're tending to get more onto a completely compositional basis and not the idea of the cyclical song that's repeated. We're getting a way from the idea of a song as a repeated structure A B A. And more onto song as complete composition. With our definite structure, the structure is a straight fifteen minutes which doesn't actually repeat, which is more of a classical procedure if you like, but then that's not saying that we're jazz/pop or that we're classical. That simply confuses it. We have a straight pop sound inasmuch as it's very abrasive, direct and immediate. Most criticism tends to be based on this pointless comparative system. To say we're like Coltrane or like Cecil Taylor doesn't really help all that much.

F W: Well, you particularly sound like those people to me.

M R: Sometimes it might. But I know that everyone in the group has liked Coltrane at some stage, and the group feeling he got was something one liked. But I prefer to think that we had assimulated it. Because what makes it worth talking about us, or any other group, is what makes them different from the people they've been influenced by.

F W: Is there a pop-musician who even approaches Coltrane as a musician? I'm sorry.

M R: Certainly not in the terms of technique. But they have things which Coltrane doesn't have, and vice versa. I personally don't think that pop has got to the stage where I'd rather listen to any pop group than Coltrane. I'd rather listen to Coltrane any day. You see, you idiot, I don't see that there should be this exclusive choice. Everybody tries to set it up in terms of exclusive preferences.

F W: What of the present claims for pop music, claims which I find pretty screwy, that it is the complete reflection of our time, pop singers being its best interpreters.

M R: As MacIntyre would say - That's either trivial or false. Either you make it tautologically true in terms of retrospective criticism that every artist has always reflected his age — he has no choice. Or it's false because certainly the people one meets in the pop world have no motives in those terms of expressing this thing.

F W: Some of them make these precious claims for themselves.

M R: So do a lot of other people. We all over-estimate our importance, and quite often this is necessary to survive. If you didn't think that you were doing something worthwhile you'd never do it, so again that's inevitable.

F W: I think pop music's importance is over-inflated. Why is there this importance attached to it?

M R: In the last ten years it's been possible to get a lot of money from pop. It was always true of people like Presley. But now the 'star' thing isn't so strong. Today it's friends next door who make a record and become successful or make money. There can't be a person living who doesn't know through somebody or other a pop group that's actually made a lot of bread. So it draws more and more people into it, like supposed intellectuals and everybody else. There's this possibility of so much money to be made. And in the early fifties there was a beginning of a whole concern with the gap between the cultures. Michael Tippet used to have a big thing about the high brow and low brow culture. With this concern the gap began to narrow. At the same time things were becoming more available.

F W: So if poetry made people a fortune, we'd probably now find thousands of poets - is that what your reasoning?

M R: If you could make a huge amount of bread from writing poetry it



would work this way. Money means a/ you'll be a social success b/ you have dozens of chicks c/ it means amazing publicity d/ money must imply a large audience because nobody makes a lot of money without a huge audience e/ it would have to involve a Personal confrontation. If all these conditions were satisfied you would find poetry practised by thousands of people.

FW: What about you?

M R: I'd do whatever I like doing. It sounds strange but I don't do things for economie motives. I fantasize about doing things for money like robbing banks, or huge advertising cons, or writing a con novel. But I never do it.

F W: Why not?

M R: Because I'm too fucking lazy, and I have no real conviction that they would ever work.

Both questions and answers ran out at different points in the interview. To start things off it was necessary to establish what the Soft Machine were NOT doing. As below.

M R: There is nothing to connect us with people like Cage in terms of operational procedures. We don't use chance methods like throwing the I Ching, or I.B.M. random charts, or throwing coins or that stuff. Occasionally we have written a piece which is written by chance in that every note and the rhythmic structure of the piece was written by chance. But that's not our basic working procedure.

FW: You play a long number though called WE DID IT AGAIN? What was that all about? For five or six minutes, or more.

M R: Everybody in the group saw it in a different way. Robert saw it as a chance to do soul drumming for thirty minutes or whatever it was. Kevin saw the whole idea of the repeated figure as being spiritual liberation, the ultimate effect.

F W: Being boring?

M R: It was his idea that if you find something boring, a basic Zen concept, then in the end you find it interesting. And there is something in that if you listen to something repeated in the same way your mind changes the structure of it each time, the ear either habituates or forces a change on it itself, which is similar in a way to the stuff Terry Riley's doing. I saw it mainly as an irritant source.

F W: For yourself or the audience?

M R: I saw it directed at the audience. And the only times I wanted to use it was when I felt like saying fuck you to the audience. But Kevin wanted to use it at any time possible. And Robert saw it as a gesture too. Kevin saw it half way between this spiritual liberation thing, and showing how hip we were. These ostenato techniques. I saw it as an irritant source though mainly.

Fletcher Watkins - Michael Broome - Mary Moore

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Soft Machine - International times N°45 - 29 November 1968

SOFT MACHINE

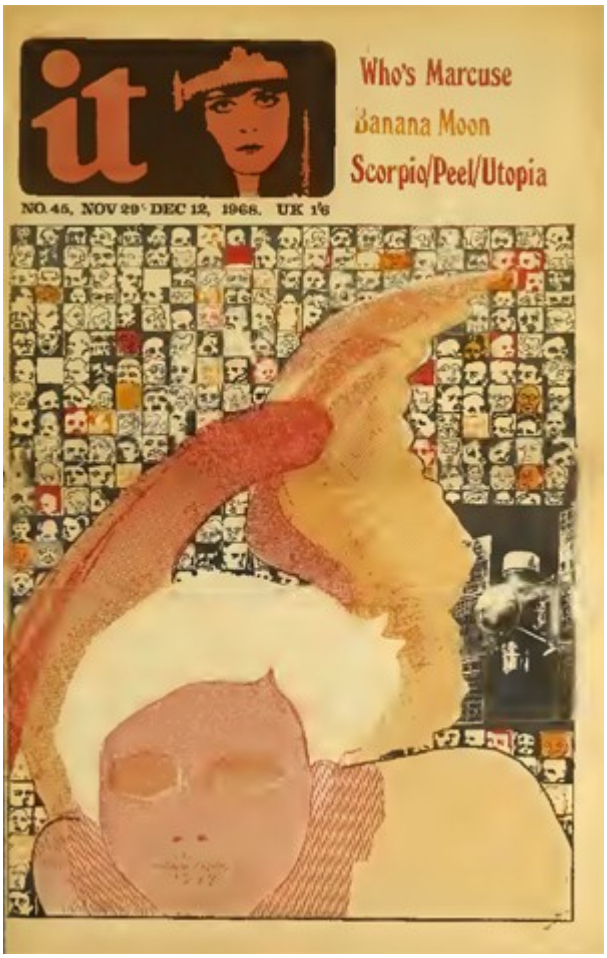


SEVERAL exotic people were sitting on the floor at an Indica Gallery opening in 1966, the tall one with the Dr Strange cape was called Michael, he said: "We've asked William Burroughs if it was OK and he said 'I suppose it'll be alright' so we're going to call ourselves THE SOFT MACHINE." From under the influences of Cornelius Cardew, John Cage, Tilbury and the New York Fluxus Group they assembled, learnt to play instruments in order to play the strange sounds in their heads, and played! They played at IT's celebration party at the Roundhouse for our first issue, where they had Norman with them who played Motor-cycle and took people for rides on it round the edges of the building when it wasn't needed as an instrument They also had Daevid Allen, writing songs, singing and using his poetry and electronic knowledge picked up when his houseboat was moored on the Seine on the Left Bank and he was involved with the French "machine poets".



The Soft Machine, famous for running over Jerry Fitzgerald's giant jelly in the IT Uncommon Market, famous for their experiments with the random element of modern electronic music, and their hour-long songs. Now Daevid sits in the south writing belles

lettres, Norman the philosopher from Oxford and his motor cycle are somewhere in the USA and the Soft Machine are en record;



THE SOFT MACHINE (ABC CPLP 4500), where old UFO favorites like 'Hope for Happiness' are presented in short concise versions which all relate to each other by the use of lines from different songs so that the album becomes essentially one long set. The jazz influences are very heavy particularly in Robert Wyatt's drum solos which could have been recorded live at Minton's, however the atonal serial piano and organ certainly could not have. These vary from a mad Cecil Taylor organ, very fast, describing musical structures by playing all around every note in order to isolate it and consequently making each line a musical event and each tune a sequence of events or a happening rather than some static exercise which could be repeated the next night. Other times the organ is very religious and reminiscent of English university church services and choral societies. They use an old trad jazz technique of describing the time sequence with the bass drum on every beat (sometimes varied with cymbal) in order to free the drums from timekeeping duties. Thus the drummer is able to experiment and improvise at will with no cumbersome restrictions. In 'We Did It Again' a sound fabric is built up by constant slow overlays of sound reminiscent of Coltrane's 'Africa Brass' days, which are then consolidated to one or two continuous sounds. The use of electronics on this album is delicate, sensitive and precise and certainly very advanced. After a long absence they return to us both on plastic and in person. It's nice to see them back.

Miles

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New stars on the horizon - Hit Parader - November 1968





The Soft Machine became the new musical tide pullers in the South of France where they were cross fertilized by the illumination of the Sensual Laboratory of Mark Boyle. Integrating sight and sound, they opened a fantastic discotheque in St. Aygulf bay, St. Tropez. The club designed by Keith Albarn, was especially created around the music and the light show. When the building was completed, it looked like a vision from space, iglooed with four wings rising at the centre in a concentric stack, with four shoulders jutting out at the base. Inside the building, at the centre was a stage, seven feet off the ground where the Soft Machine played and the light show was given. The skin of the building was only an inch thick, so the sound coruscated off the exterior, carrying across the bay to the neighbouring inlets, causing concern to the bourgeois campers. It was a total experience. Of course, the inevitable happened. Crowds came in the daytime to hear rehearsals and in the night time to leap out of their encapsulated selves, dancing to exhaustion, then running to the water some twenty yards away immersing themselves sauna style; then creeping from the water's edge into the darkness of the moon.

The Soft Machine speaks for itself: “Allen Zion, film maker, and Jean-Jacques Lebel, Pope of Happenings, who were opening Théâtre Libre in St. Tropez, heard us and flipped. We were hired to inaugurate the opening. They had planned a film show and happening as the second part of their evening; the first part, a play by Picasso, ‘Desire Caught By The Tail,’ featured Rita Renoir, strip queen of the Crazy Horse saloon in Paris. She dug us and with the ensemble said put the Soft Machine on in the first part to loosen up the audience, then drop the play in and let the depth charges happen. We did.”



new stars on the horizon

THE SOFT MACHINE

"We play hour long sets developing a concert style. The compositions were spaced with improvisations from drum and organ punctuated with songs. The organic rhythms began to flow. The light show diverted the eye from the intellect to the bodily functions and soon, like the pied piper, the audience was dancing on the stage, changing their normal styles to free form and movement. We had arrived at new departures, the Soft Machine, architects of space time." "Kevin Ayers developed new songs, Robert Wyatt became a drum master and counterpoint to Kevin while Michael Ratledge's organ settled compositions on the improvisations flying like a bird liberated from space. We were creating bridges between musical idioms. Mike Zwerin, critic of the Village Voice, wrote a stunning article, Earle Brown, modern American composer said, "This is the type of music I'm trying for also." Yvette Romi wrote an article in the Nouvel Observateur, Paris, hailing us as the Futuristic Beatles. Invitations came rolling in, Café des Arts, St. Tropez and Eddie Barclay's soirée to name but three. We closed the season with invitations from the European capitols. The North awaited.

"At the Edinburgh Festival we added a dance troupe from Paris to give an experimental performance entitled 'Lullaby For Catatonics.' The evening was a critical success. We then accepted Amsterdam TV, where the light show caused an artistic sensation, while the music changed the idea of what's happening on the pop scene in Great Britain. We opened a fantastic club named The Birds where the revolution set in; and are negotiating a film. Paris, with its scorpion string, teased us onto TV, Camera 3 and Dim Dam Dom. From there we went to the Biennale where again we joined the dancers in a fantastic whirlwind. This time the word from the South of France caught up with us. There were calls at the rate of 110 an hour to see the show. Both nights were sold out and the calls were still coming in for a big concert." Keep your eyes and ears on the Soft Machine. Let it happen and watch it soar.

Cramdom Bentley

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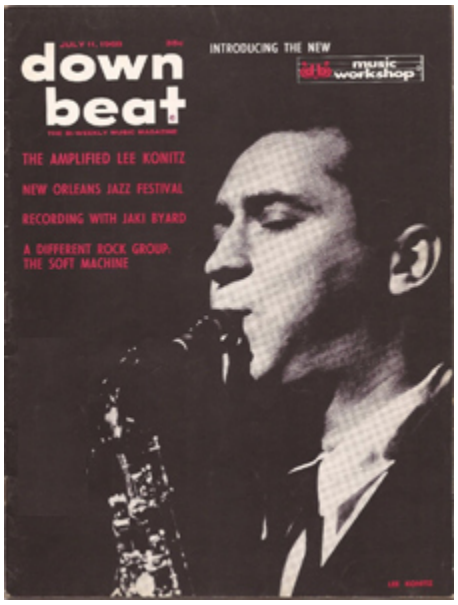
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The Soft Machine - Downbeat - July 11, 1968

THE SOFT MACHINE



By Mike Zwerin

THE SOFT MACHINE IS the world, a woman, a book by William Burroughs -or a psychedelic pop group from London. Whatever it is, it recently toured the United States as part of a package with the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Enveloped in Mark Boyle's moving, abstract projections, floating in many colors on top of them, the Soft Machine presents quite a sight onstage, though not an unusual one in our time. They wear the accouterments expected of the prototype-shoulder-length hair, hats from thrift shops, tiny dark glasses, paisley shirts, beads and bells. Drummer Robert Wyatt sometimes plays dressed only in a bikini bottom. In short, they look like three freaky dropouts.

Things are not always as they appear. Organist Michael Ratledge went to Oxford on a scholarship, winning the college prize in philosophy in 1964 and later taking his honors degree in psychology and philosophy. He describes himself as having a "cool but absent mind... I'm very much the kind of person who does what's there. I'd planned to do graduate work in American poetry, of all things, but I applied too late for the grant. The same day I learned it was lost, a lady friend of Kevin's (Kevin Ayers, the group's third member) gave him her mink coat. We sold it, bought an organ, and started an avant-garde jazz group. But London wasn't ready for us yet. Then we found we could play the way we wanted, call it 'pop', and have a chance to be heard.

" Robert's parents are liberals, old friends of Robert Graves. He spent two summers as Graves' house guest in Deya, Majorca, and the poet and novelist is something of a hero to him. Robert smiles easily and well.



Although the most outlandish dresser of the three he is not unconscious of the bag it puts him in or of his impact on "squares."

"I had a hard time deciding about my hair-had it cut a couple of times. Any kind of uniform bothers me. But when I saw the Rolling Stones for the first time, I decided I just wanted to look that way, regardless. We have been cal!ed a 'psychedelic' group, which implies we all take acid.... and that turns us into some kind of sideshow. I resent that. What I do, I do myself. I don't need any drugs to play the drums."

Kevin Ayers is more like what coud be cal!ed hippy. On the group's press release, he is described as follows "... vocals bassguitar leadguitar songwriter arranger illustrator poet eater. Born Herne Bay U.K. 1944 (Leo) educated Singapore and Chelmsford Essex height 73". Left school early and hung about London Canterbury Canary Islands Casablanca Majorca writing his songs en route. Has the gift for writing most commercially magical songs. (A boy but wild when moody.) ..."

Kevin is also soft-spoken and lucid. "Our music," he said, "is just an extension of what we were fooling around with when we were all living together in Canterbury. It's the way we prefer to spend time, rather than p!aying cricket or golf. The fact that we are working, earning bread, is kind of accidental. When we play concerts, we don't think about things like pleasing teenyboppers. Our music is different."

How is it different? We were all in his small room in New York City's Wel!ington Hotel on Seventh Ave., the 6 o'clock news going unwatched on television. Kevin was stretched out on the unmade bed, his face half covered by silky hair. He propped his head on one band and thought for a few seconds.

"I guess it's because it isn't based on the blues, really. We kind of stay away from those familiar patterns. That's probably why we haven't made it yet. Managers are only interested in 'can they make money.' I think this tour may have started ours thinking maybe we can. The audience response has been fantastic."

BY MIKE ZWERIN

ONE OFTEN HEARS about young pop groups making fortunes but rarely about the others. When I first met Michael, Kevin and Robert last summer, they were pretty much stranded on the French Riviera. Along with two road managers, they had crossed from London and driven to the Riviera jammed in a panel truck full of electronic hardware. They were scheduled to work all summer as part of the "beer festival" on the beach of St. Aygulf. After a week, they were fired. It seems the wrong element (penniless) was hanging around the discotheque but not drinking beer.

Then the trio floated around St. Tropez for some time, sleeping on floors or the beach. Finally, Jean Jacques Lebel hired them to be the second half of his Festival Libre, and they performed each night after Pablo Picasso's play, *Desire Caught by the Tail*. It was a good time, but as is so often the case, they were paid in inverse proportion to their enjoyment of their own music.

So far they have invested more than their salary in amplifiers, speakers, guitars and other such things. A new level of affluence was reached on the tour of the United States: $100 a week. Out of that, however, they paid Boyle because they feel his projections are essential, an opinion their management doesn't share.

Michael has written a scholarly paper on Boyle. "Mark Boyle's 'events' are content with a direct presentation of the reality that already exists, with no self-interposition from the artist... Whereas 'happening' implies agency, 'event' is the effect of something happening; to perform a 'happening' it is necessary to act, but one cannot act an 'event.' It is sufficient to realize the fact that a 'happening' has occurred. An 'event' is a discovery of what is happening, a 'happening' an active invention-fact as against act."

Boyle, a Scot with a melodious brogue and establishment-length hair, has eyes that blaze with warmth and involvement. He explains himself:

"The most complete change an individual can effect in his environment, short of destroying it, is to change attitudes to it. This is my objective...
I am certain that, as a result, we will go about so

alert that we will discover the excitement of continually digging our environment as an object/experience/drama from which we can extract an esthetic experience so brilliant and strong that the environment itself is transformed."


The Soft Machine

BY MIKE ZWERIN

In 1966, Boyle obtained sophisticated projectors that made possible his most ambitious "pieces" entitled "Earth, Air, Fire and Water," and "Bodily Fluids and Functions." In the latter, human body fluids, such as blood, saliva, bile,vomit and sperm were projected onto a large screen together with electroencephalogram and electrocardiogram responses of a couple making love, while the sounds of the bodies were amplified throughout the auditorium.

Although his projections over the Soft Machine are somewhat more modest, they add an exciting visual dimension to the music. Unlike most other light shows, he uses no stills and no objective images of any kind. The light and movement, formed by liquid chemicals, are determined by chance factors. Michael writes, "... These presentations make it possible for the spectator to rediscover the 'esthetic' aspect of our environment that has become hidden by accretions of use and habit and to become aware of... environments that were previously inaccessible to us."

The Soft Machine is not part of anybody's musical establishment. The jazz establishment will not accept it because of the rock format, instrumentation and appearance. At the same time it is not commercial enough for the pop world. And although composer Earle Brown loves the group - he may write a piece for it - "serious" musicians right now don't consider this sort of thing legitimate.

Despite occasional lack of control and a tendency to extend length beyond content, the Soft Machine is unique and satisfying, an impressive synthesis of various elements from Karl-Heinz Stockhausen, John Cage, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and rock itself.

Its cloudy sound moves to unexpected places in weird ways. Everything is filtered through a fuzz box, an electronic gadget that intentionally distorts sound. (For an example, listen to the introduction of the Rolling Stones' I Can't Get No Satisfaction.) There is a good deal of collective improvisation. Sets are more like suites, each 'tune" running into the next. Unlike most rock groups, the Soft Machine makes crescendos and decrescendos and incorporates silence.

I have never heard (or seen) any thing quite like it.

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Soft Talk - International Times - n° 33 - June 14, 1968



SOFT TALK

KEVIN AYERS/ Soft Machine

First of all I am on the stage playing the guitar in front of a massive unidentifiable being. Secondly I am part of this beast and watching myself perform... goading myself from the front row to break out and explode.

Inevitably the result is that we are both disappointed, there has been no explosion and (inconsequently) no fusion. The moth of myself has seen the ecstatic flame that tantalises with its ridiculous nearness, unable to embrace her completely and suck her essence, there is no orgasm to share and the only positive result is a negative identification and sympathy on the part of the audience for the failure (once again) to escape the seemingly inescapable shell that imprisons our composite molluse.

The real FREAK OUT is still confined to violence... imagine an emotional experience of the same energy intensity as that created in a fight or any such physical battle... imagine

imagine that, o rational male! However... when violence is presented as a spectacle for entertainment, it functions as an effective tittilating device, as it posesses a contagious vibration, easily received, especially by a collection of people. The effects of these vibrations are the staple diet of most communications media... when will there be a headline proclaiming the devastating effects of an outbreak of happiness?

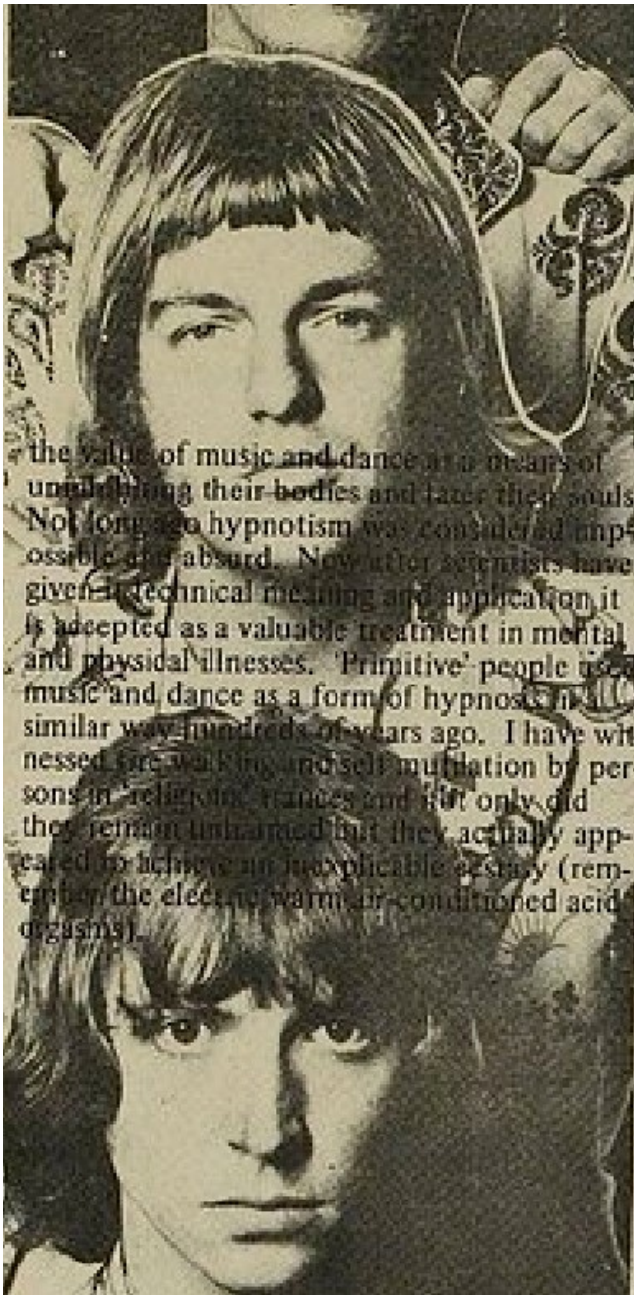
Most performances fail to be anything more than entertainment because the spectator is seldom asked or moved to contribute more than signs of approval or disapproval... both of which are positive communications but they only provide a short lived union between performer and spectator rarely carried outside the theatre and offering no more than a level of pleasure or disatisfaction.

AH total participation... oh communal ecstasy. Whether the participation is in madness, gladness or sorrow the orgiastic wish is still the strongest box office draw. A performance which assists the overcoming of all inhibitions that prevent the confined life spring in all of us from bursting out is the performance that all aware performers must be working on at this very moment.

Primitive peoples, with the remnants of ancient knowledge still with them, appreciate...

[I can't decipher the following sentences and reproduce them as printed in the article...]

...



...

The reason for the above references is that I believe (with my head) a new breed of performer will evolve, or emerge, and the type of performance will be radically different. Instead of being amused with a spectacle, people will amuse themselves under the direction of the New Performer.

The amusement will no longer be a presented fantasy but will take the form of self discovery and experience, hopefully bringing about the destruction of inhibitions that prevent total experience... perhaps mass hypnosis through repetitive music presented under strict discipline on the part of the performers. Or perhaps the New Performer will be a composition of audio-visual energy created by an enlightened group blessed with the true spirit of benevolence.

What do I think I mean by total participation?

Confronted with possible injury and/or death, a man will turn bestial to save his skin. When confronted with an unfamiliar situation he will still be defensive, but this time in a more rational way, using logic (he thinks) as his armour, and he loses the experience in the mud of reason, comparison etc.

The difference between the madness of violence and the madness of the extraordinary is that violent lunacy is of such a low message to every human being. The madness of the extraordinary, being of a higher order, fails to attract the participation of the most enlightened men. (By madness I do not specifically mean insanity and debauchery. I mean here the madness that seems most elusive that of leaving our accustomed repertoire and exposing ourselves to utterly unfamiliar experiences).

This lowering of defences to the unfamiliar is difficult: even as you read this you are asleep.

Well, how conscious are you of your surroundings... do you remember what you felt half an hour ago (if anything)? Do you still feel that you are a trapped soul peering through the two available windows of your body... occasionally, by accident, making contact with something but never contact enough to really feel you have totally participated in the experience...

Well... you ignorant self pitying crab... away with your doubts the wind is your sponsor.



SOFT TALK

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REX SET

Festival Hall, June 3 — What a letdown from the Tyrannosaurus Rex. It was an unwise move for them to do such a long set, and the reason is, their arrangements do not vary enough. If they had done two sets of say half an hour, with someone like Stefan Grossman, or Roy Harper in between, I think it would have been much more enjoyable.

Stefan Grossman, who opened the show, gave an excellent performance and achieved the most important thing - which was that of creating an atmosphere: which he did very successfully.

John Peel made appearances between performers, and by the sounds of it he had been turning on with lagers, he also spoke too near to the mike, which muffled a good many of his words (I doubt if they were of great importance).

Next came Roy Harper, a very professional performer, who also had a good idea of the meaning of communication. I hope we see a great deal more of him.

David Bowie, although one or two drugs were heckling him, received the longest and loudest applause of all the performers, and he deserved it. It was a pity that he didn't have a longer set.

Then came the Tyrannosaurus Rex. They have a beautiful sound, but too much of it all at once is like using a typewriter all day - it gets boring. If they had stopped after Deborah, the interest in their sound would still have been at its peak, but they went on and spoiled it by Marc singing without music. He asked the audience to clap, which was a wise move on his part, because it covered up some of his off-key notes but not all of them.

Their performance was not up to standard. The reason might have been that they were nervous at playing to such a large audience. Every time I have seen them at the Middle Earth they have always been of a fairly high standard.

Don't forget they have got a new L.P. coming out in about 3 or 4 weeks time entitled: **My people were fair and had sky in their hair, but now they're content to wear stars on their brows.**

I heard one side of this L.P. about 2 months ago, I liked it.

Kip

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WITH THE EMPHASIS ON ENJOYMENT

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A different drummer - Downbeat - Vol.34, N° 20 - October 5, 1967

A DIFFERENT DRUMMER



State Of Mind

By Mike Zwerin

ROBERT AND I are lost in Frejus, driving around in circles. We are looking for the Autoroute to Juan-Les-Pins and the Antibes Jazz Festival. Finally, we ask a cop standing in front of a gendarmerie. He points the way politely.

"That's the building they took us to— looks like it at least," Robert says.

"Who took you?"

"The cops. They picked us up, man."

"What for?"

"For being in the south of France. We were sitting in a cafe in Cogolin having coffee. Two cops pulled up and said to come with them. We told them we had an important date in a half-hour to see' about a gig. They didn't care, though. We had our passports, and they let us go after two hours.

"Long hair can be a hangup. I cut mine a couple of times—couldn't decide which way I wanted to go. Finally, I let it grow long after I saw the Stones for the first time. I like that look. But you get put in a bag. We are known as a psychedelic group so everybody looks at us like we are some kind of side show. People say, 'Boy, it must be wild to play on acid.' Man, I do my thing myself. I don't need acid to play the drums."

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Robert is hugging his crumpled shirt and shaking his blond hair rhythmically as he talks.

"I spent a lot of time listening to jazz," he says. "That's all I did when I wasn't in school. I even wrote some criticism once."

"Really? About what?"

"Sonny Rollins and Cecil Taylor. But it was mostly teenage fan stuff. I was pretty star-struck. Still am, I guess. It's a drag, too, because—well, I know that most of the guys I like don't dig

what I'm doing. Categories are a drag. But I guess I'm just a rock-and-roll drummer. Funny. . . ."

He talks about Robert Graves, the poet and novelist, and the two summers he spent in his house on Majorca. I think about the Soft Machine, the pop group from London with which Robert Wyatt is drummer and lead singer. They are pretty freaky-looking on stage, wearing their weird hats, long hair, shades, and their funky, bizarre garb. It is odd that young people who look that way are familiar with *Donna Lee*, Robert Graves, or Cecil Taylor. But things are not always as they appear.

The Soft Machine has been playing around St. Tropez a lot since I've been here, and I've heard them a lot. There is no doubt that the music they play is jazz. Of course, there are vocals, but when Ray Charles or Jack Teagarden sing, it is still jazz, isn't it?

In between the vocals, the Soft Machine improvises, and they swing. It's not simple-minded either. They do it all on electronic instruments, though, and this throws many people off. The sound is as new, as strange—and as fresh—to jazz as bebop seemed at first. And as the older cats laughed at the hoppers in the '40s, the establishment of jazz laughs at the music of the flower children in the '60s.

The Soft Machine's members have a cloudy sound. They use vocal sound effects close in on microphones. Robert sings with plenty of soul, in tune, swinging, reminiscent of Wilson Pickett or Otis Redding. Mike Ratledge on organ is a very exciting cat. He is obviously influenced by Cecil Taylor as he flies around the keyboard, often atonally, over the hard rock beat.

STRICTLY AD LIB

New York: **Eddie Blackwell** was **Ornette Coleman's** choice to replace **Charles Moffett** as drummer in his quartet (**Charlie Haden** and **David Izenzon,** basses) during a recent engagement at New York's Village Gate, but Blackwell didn't stay long. He left for Africa with **Randy Weston** to fulfill a two-week engagement. Coleman then called on **Billy Higgins,** who had been the drummer in his original group at the Five Spot in 1959. For Coleman, Higgins, and Haden (another member of that first quartet) it was a grand reunion . . . Versatile multi-instrumentalist **Roland Kirk** was a veritable whirlwind after his return from the Molde Festival in Norway and the Danish Radio Festival in Copenhagen. To begin, he and his quartet (**Ron Burton,** piano; **Steve Novosel,** bass; **Jimmy Hoppes,** drums) played at the Village Vanguard opposite the **Bill Evans** Trio (**Eddie Gomez,** bass; **Philly Joe Jones,** drums). During this stint, Kirk & Co. helped Jazz Interactions open their new series of Sunday afternoon concerts at the Red Garter. (Fluegelhornist **Art Farmer,** with tenor saxophonist **Jimmy Heath,** pianist **Cedar Walton,** bassist **Roland Wilson,** and drummer **Billy Higgins,** shared the bill.) The following week, the Kirks played opposite **Milt Jackson's** unit (Heath was in this group, too) at the Club Ruby in Queens. And while visiting the Rainbow Grill to hear **Duke Ellington** Kirk sat in with the maestro on soprano saxophone and clarinet. In the middle o all this he found time to sign an exclusive long-term contract with Atlantic record . . . **Jaki Byard,** recently re-signed by Prestige records, has been working a Sergio's in Westchester, with **Jack Gregg** bass and **Roger Blank,** drums . . . Alt saxophonist **Sonny Criss** spent a couple of August weeks in New York concertizing and recording. He led a quartet including Cedar Walton, bassist **Bob Cranshaw,** and drummer **Lennie McBrowne** in concert at the Museum of Modern Art, with vocalist **Earl Coleman** as guest. The next day

/Continued on page 42

State Of Mind



A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

By MICHAEL ZWERIN

ROBERT AND I are lost in Frejus, driving around in circles. We are looking for the Autoroute to Juan-Les-Pins and the Antibes Jazz Festival. Finally, we ask a cop standing in front of a gendarmerie. He points the way politely.

"That's the building they took us to—looks like it at least," Robert says.

"Who took you?"

"The cops. They picked us up, man."

"What for?"

"For being in the south of France. We were sitting in a cafe in Cogolin having coffee. Two cops pulled up and said to come with them. We told them we had an important date in a half-hour to see about a gig. They didn't care, though. We had our passports, and they let us go after two hours.

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And rock is stretching out. The time moves from slow to fast and back again. They have a number in 7/4, subdivided 1,2,3,—1—1,2,3. Robert swings hard in a style I've never heard before, a combination of Ringo Starr and Elvin Jones. The tunes are very long, perhaps too long. They sometimes lose the dancers and even the listeners. But the Soft Machine is exploring in lonely territory, not accepted by its heroes and yet not commercial enough to make heavy bread. If it should eventually have a hit, it may be because it has sold out, whatever that means. The temptations of the market place can be overwhelming. Right now, though, you really have to listen to the Soft Machine to understand it. And it is music really worth listening to, truly avant-garde. All you have to do is throw away all your prejudices.

In Juan-Les-Pins, Robert and I take a walk before the concert. Robert talks about drummers. Elvin is his favorite but "Jimmy Cobb is very underrated. When everybody was driving that two-and-four high-hat thing into the ground, Jimmy was doing something entirely different. Tching, tching, tching, tching, on the ride cymbal, way on top of the beat. Man, that's a groovy way to keep the time. And when he plays in another meter, like six, he just keeps doing it instead of subdividing into two threes, like so many other drummers."

Later, we have dinner with Paul Desmond. I wonder, at the beginning, how these two generations of jazz musicians will relate to each other. It is immediately clear that Robert has great respect for Paul and is rather flattered to be with him.

Like so many of his peers, he is extremely mature and knowledgeable for his age. He talks and listens in the proper places. He talks about the musicians he likes—Mingus, Monk, Trane, Ornette. He knows details about the life and music of Steve Lacy and even about more obscure players such as Clarence Shaw.

As the evening progresses I can see that Paul is becoming more interested in Robert, less concerned with his long hair or image.

The next night, the Soft Machine is working. They are covered with moving, multicolored polka dots. Lights are flashing. Dancers, bodies are jumping, twirling, shaking. The place is alive and swinging with the Soft Machine in gear, and there is no category.

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2500 Ball at IT-Launch - The International Times - October 31 - November 13, 1966

2500 Ball at IT-Launch


The International Times Oct. 31 - Nov. 13/1s.

it

LOOK 4 PAGE UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL SUPPLEMENT

EUROPE CALLING— POUND SPEAKING

Ezra Pound Speaking

It isn't cool to rave about your own party, but the IT Rave-Up at the Roundhouse two Saturdays ago was such an event we decided it merited an IT report.

It was mainly atmospherics: two and half thousand people dancing about in that strange, giant round barn. Darkness, only flashing lights. People in masks, girls half-naked. Other people standing about wondering what the hell was going on. Pot smoke. Now and then the sound of a bottle breaking. Somebody looks as if he might get violent. There was a lot of tension about.

Plus the specifics:
- The Pink Floyd psychedelic pop group, did weird things to the feel of the event with their scary feedback sounds, slide projections playing on their skin (drops of paint run riot on the slides to produce outer space/prehistoric textures on the skin), spotlights flashing on them in time with a drum beat... more about them next issue.

- The Soft Machine, another group with new ideas, drove a motor bike into the place, in and around the pillars that held up that gallery we had been warned wasn't all that safe... more about them too.
- a large car (some said it was an Oldsmobile, others a Cadillac) in the middle of it all, painted bright pop art stripes and explosions, by Binder, Edwards and Vaughan, New-York Interior decorators who, someone said, put stripes over everything. Car was previously seen parked inside the Robert Fraser Gallery. Apparently the group has a juke box on show and in action in the Golden Egg on the Strand.



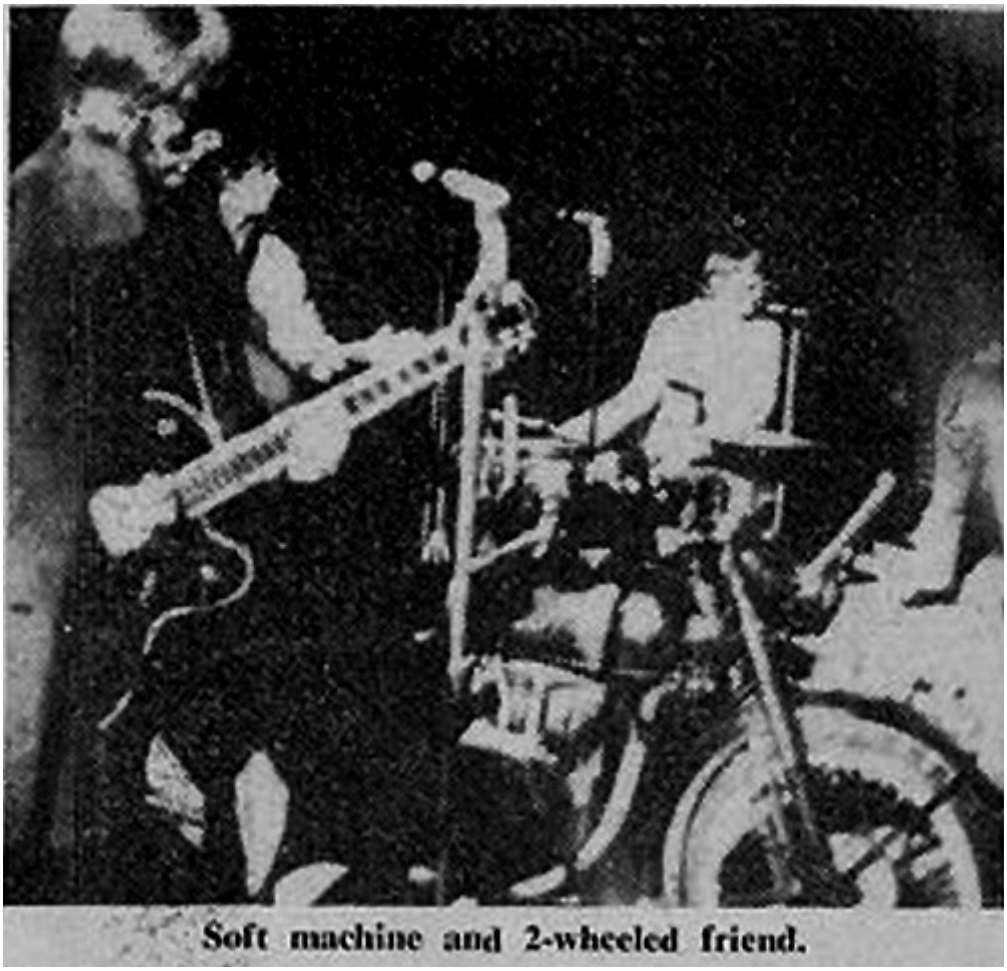
- Simon Postuma and Marujke Koger, the Amsterdam couple who are opening Karma (see Miles column last issue), designed an interesting cubicle with coloured screens and nets, and within the box one of them, in suitable dress, read palms and told fortunes.

- In another part of the Roundhouse, Bob Cobbing and the London Film Coop gave an all-night film show, featuring film like Scorpio Rising. Towers Open Fire, under the most difficult of conditions. The audience stood in front of the projectors, on top of Bob Cobbing. Yet the films went on. It may, though, have been just the right setting for those particular films. Burroughs inner space disappearance in Towers Open Fire somehow had more impact because of the vibrations from the "party".

- "famous people turned up : Antonioni and Monica Vitti, Paul McCartney disguised as an arab, Kenneth Rexroth, Peter Brook, Mickey Most and Tony Secunda. We also saw a well-known junkie, a notorious homosexual, and many happy people who were only know to their friends but who the hell cares in a scene like that anyay ?

Of course several things went strong. There was that narrow entrance for an unpleasant start. That communal toilet that ended up in flood. A giant jelly made in a bath for the party was unfortunately run over by a bicycle. How this happened, or what became of the remains of the jelly or the bicycle, no-one seems to know. After the party, the crowds caused a traffic jam in the streets outside. It should be said here that throughout the event the police were co-operative.

[Perhaps it was just relief that something has at last happened in the Round House. It was a good party, and just to prove that something really IS going on in London, another bigger, better one is currently being planned. details next issue.]


Soft machine and 2-wheeled friend.

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Une discographie de

Robert Wyatt



ARCHIVE 6
au 1er juin 2026

Interviews & articles - vol.2 (en français)

Interviews & articles

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- Auf deutsch
- Em Português
- Norsk
- στα Ελληνικά
- Cesky
- Türkçe
- Po polsku

My Wantlist

***

EN FRANCAIS

Mike Ratledge 1943-2025 - Rock & Folk - N° 692 - avril 2025

Mike Ratledge, l'homme-moustache de Soft Machine - Gonzaï - 9 février 2025

Rock Bottom - Utopia - N° 246 - du 9 octobre au 12 novembre 2024

La vie de Robert Wyatt en version hallucinée - Le Monde - 16 et 17 juin 2024

Byg Records - Le magnifique catalogue - Rock & Folk - juillet 2023

Robert Wyatt - L'interview inédite - Jazzmania.be - 10 août 2022

Robert Wyatt: tout ce que vous ne deviniez pas ! - Jazzmania.be - 8 août 2022

La voix, la chute & la cicatrice, Robert Wyatt - Poezibao - 20 janvier 2022

Robert Wyatt - Les actes réussis - Rolling Stone - février 2021

Elle cultive son image - Télérama - Du 18 au 24 juillet 2020

Soft Machine, une mécanique de précision - CitizenJazz - 24 février 2019



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- Robert Wyatt, 2003 - Rock & Folk - décembre 2016
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- Robert Wyatt - "J'essaie d'écrire normalement " + dossiers "L'école



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- Robert Wyatt - "Mille fois plus heureux." - Les Inrockuptibles Hors-Série Interviews - novembre 2007
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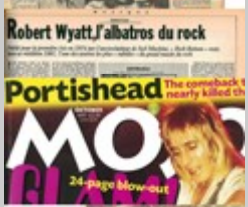




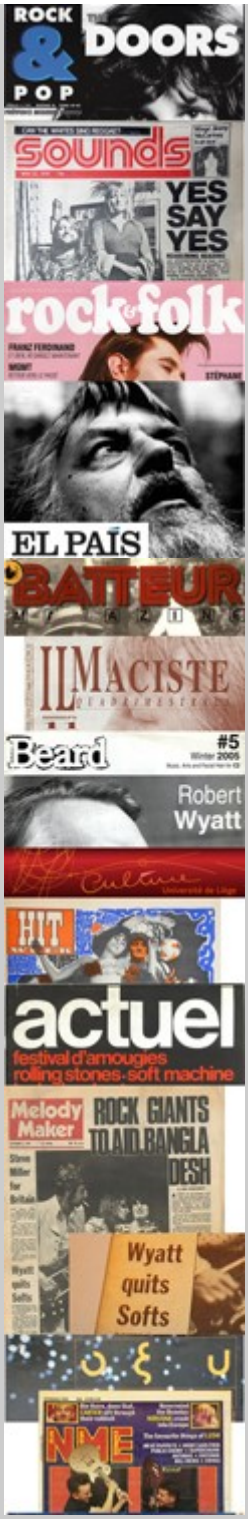








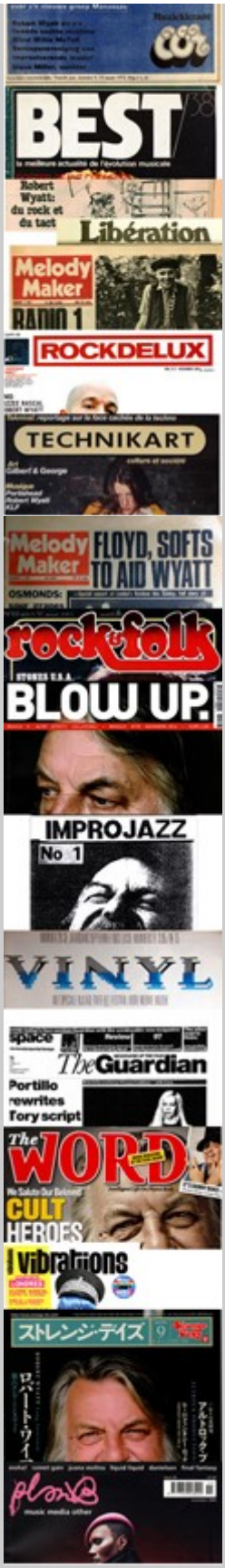
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- Les flamants mous - Actuel - novembre 1970
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- Soft Machine - machine molle qui tourne rond - Pop Music - 18 juin 1970
- Les Soft Machine au Petit-Quevilly - Paris Normandie - 2, 4 et 7 mars 1970
- Aventure pop - Rock & Folk - février 1970
- Concert Soft Machine - Best - janvier 1970
- La machine en France - Rock & Folk - janvier 1970
- Les "Soft Machine" - Le Soir - 29 novembre 1969
- Auto Soft Machine - Actuel - novembre 1969
- Concert Soft Machine - Chorus - 1969
- Soft Machine - Best - août et septembre 1969
- Soft Machine à Paris - Rock & Folk - août 1969
- Douce machine - Rock & Folk - juin 1969
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- Soft Machine - Actuel - 1968
- 18 novembre : l'an 2000 ? - Rock & Folk - janvier 1968
- Soft Machine: délire ou futur ? - Rock & Folk - décembre 1967
- Les "hippies" à la recherche d'adeptes - Le Monde - 21 novembre 1967
- Les futurs Beatles - Le Nouvel Observateur - septembre 1967
- "Le Désir attrapé par la queue" unique pièce écrite par Picasso redonne ses couleurs au surréalisme - Le Monde - 26 juillet 1967

Mike Ratledge 1943-2025 - Rock & Folk - N° 692 - avril 2025



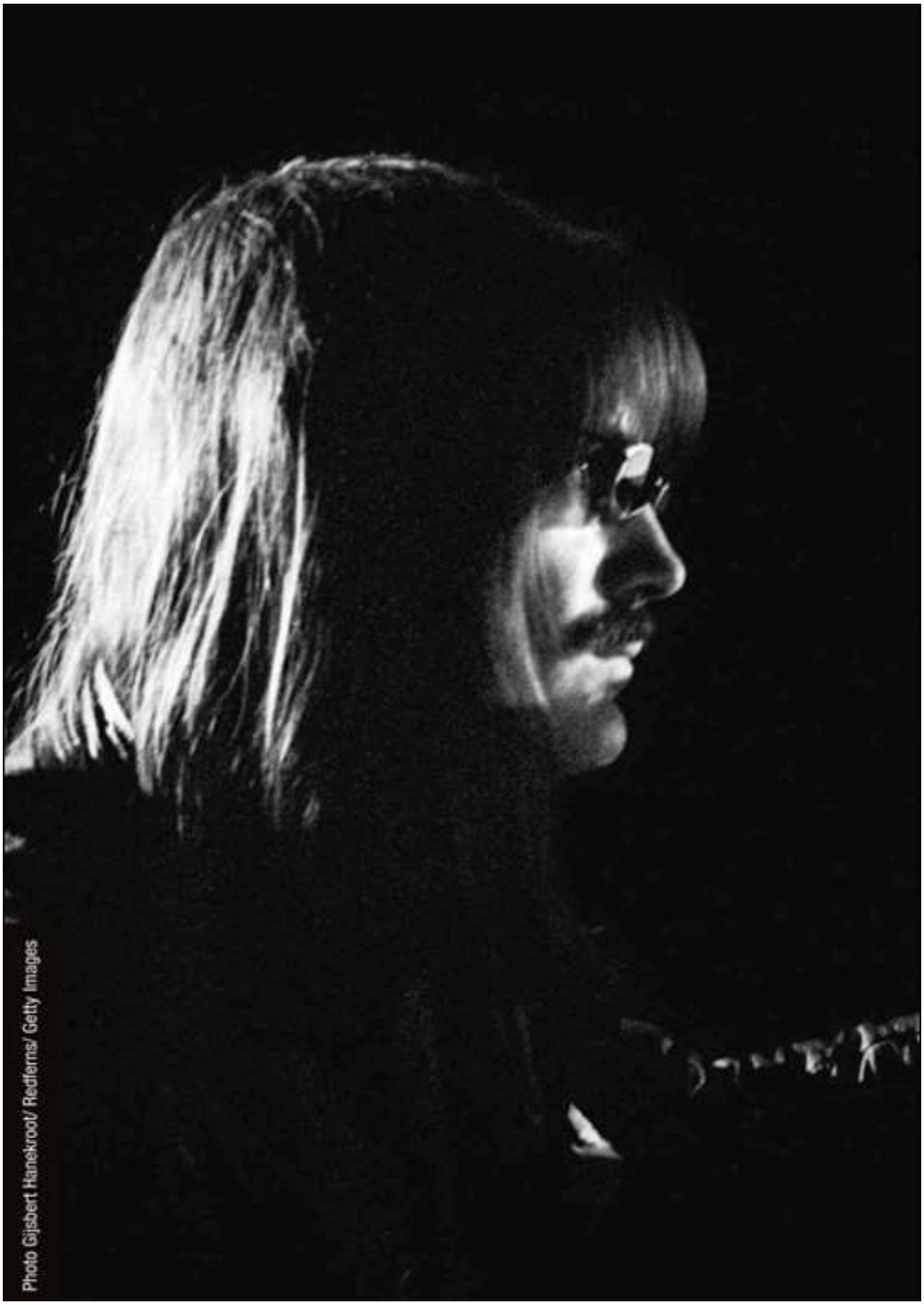


MIKE RATLEDGE, C'ÉTAIT AVANT TOUT UN LOOK. De longs cheveux raides, une frange qui laisse pointer de fines lunettes noires, un col roulé sous une veste cintrée, une fine moustache au-dessus d'une bouche qu'on a rarement vu sourire. Mike Ratledge était ce grand type mince qui faisait la tête sur les photos quand ses comparses de Soft Machine faisaient des grimaces, celui qui restait impassible au cœur d'un maelstrom sonore. L'incarnation même du cool, mais surtout un musicien prodigieux qui faisait sortir de son clavier des sons jamais entendus avant.

Déluge de notes

Né en 1943 d'une famille bourgeoise, Mike Ratledge a reçu une solide éducation musicale classique avant de voir son univers, et celui de beaucoup de ses amis, être bouleversé par l'irruption dans sa vie du beatnik australien Daevid Allen. Allen et son bagage empli de disques de Thelonious Monk, Charlie Mingus et Cecil Taylor allait traumatiser une bande de jeunes gens de Canterbury qui allaient vite l'accompagner sur scène sous le nom de Daevid Allen Trio (soit Allen, avec Hugh Hopper à la basse, Robert Wyatt à la batterie et Mike Ratledge au piano). Le groupe, tentant des expérimentations jazz au-delà de ses capacités, a été immortalisé dans un album "Daevid Allen Trio - Live 1963" assez médiocre mais où on entend ce qui est possiblement la première composition de Ratledge, "Dear Olde Benny Green Is A-Turning In His Grave", pas inoubliable. Le groupe ne fit pas long feu et, alors qu'Allen multipliait les allers-retours à Majorque chez le poète Robert Graves en compagnie de Kevin Ayers (une autre âme aventureuse), Ratledge allait à Oxford pour obtenir son diplôme en psychologie. Quand Allen et Ayers reviennent de voyage en 1966 avec l'envie de monter un groupe pop, Ratledge, avide lecteur, trouve le nom du groupe : Soft Machine,

d'après le roman de William Burroughs. Très vite, le groupe devient, avec Pink Floyd, l'un des emblèmes du Londres psychédélique. Les journalistes avaient alors du mal à croire que cet intellectuel d'Oxford prenne part à une carrière pop. Ratledge, qui avait baigné depuis son adolescence dans un monde de poètes et de rêveurs, n'en avait cure. Au-delà de la voix d'ange de Robert Wyatt, le son de son clavier allait devenir la signature du groupe. Un son lourd, vrombissant, sorti d'un orgue Lowrey Holiday Deluxe acheté parce que Ratledge n'avait pas les moyens de s'offrir un Hammond. "*Un grand nombre de mes idiosyncrasies stylistiques sont dues aux étrangetés inhérentes du Lowrey*" dira-t-il. Branché dans une pédale fuzz, son orgue générait tellement de feedback que Ratledge dut, pour le dompter, adapter son style en jouant sans interruption en legato, d'où ce déluge de notes absolument unique.



Rupture

Le départ d'Allen allait libérer Ratledge. Soft Machine, sous son impulsion, prit un tour plus sérieux et son clavier allait devenir l'instrument lead. Un premier album, encore un pied dans la pop psychédélique avec les chansons de Kevin Ayers témoigne de la versatilité de

son jeu. Quand le premier solo explose sur "Hope For Happiness", c'est un nouveau vocabulaire que l'on découvre. Lorsque le deuxième album sort en 1969, Kevin Ayers a quitté l'affaire, remplacé par Hugh Hopper, ce qui permet au groupe d'aller plus loin dans sa quête de sophistication. Ratledge y écrit l'essentiel de la face B (la suite "Esther's Nose Job") et le groupe est en phase comme jamais il n'a été ou ne sera. Les concerts enregistrés de cette période sont fous, mais en coulisses la tension monte. Sur l'album "Third" (1970), chaque membre écrit un morceau occupant une face entière, tandis que le quatrième est cosigné Ratledge/ Hopper. "Out-Bloody-Rageous", la composition de Ratledge, le voit expérimenter avec la musique électronique, faire des collages et tenter une fusion jazz propulsée par l'arrivée de cuivres, qui deviendra une des signatures du Soft Machine tardif. Cet album marque la rupture avec Robert Wyatt qui fera ses adieux au groupe après "Fourth" (1971), où Ratledge figure au premier plan sur la pochette. Désormais seul maître à bord, il guide Soft Machine dans une fusion jazz-rock radicale où le saxophone prend de plus en plus d'importance. De cette période, "Six" (1973) est peut-être le moment où la formule fonctionne le mieux. Alors qu'Hopper part après "Seven" (1974), Ratledge restera jusqu'à "Bundles" (1975), sur lequel le guitariste fraîchement arrivé Allan Holdsworth mène la danse. Ratledge n'y prend quasiment plus de solo. Le cœur n'y est plus. Dès lors, sa carrière prendra un tour plus confidentiel et jamais il ne reviendra sur son travail avec Soft Machine. Il ne tentera également aucune carrière solo et ses rares collaborations publiques (Syd Barnett, Kevin Ayers, Mike Oldfield...) l'ont été alors qu'il était encore un musicien actif. Ratledge, jouissant de sa liberté retrouvée, fera beaucoup de choses dans l'ombre de son home-studio. Des publicités, quelques bandes originales, de beaux disques de *library music* sous le nom de Rubba, à chaque fois avec son ami Karl Jenkins avec qui il montera en outre quelques projets éphémères : la disco électronique de "Planet Earth" (1978) et "Plaza" (1979), un album de reprises jazz de Stevie Wonder avec Rollercoaster en 1980, la pop jazzy de JAR en 1988. Rien de marquant. Cette quasi-disparition sur scène et en dehors finira même par devenir un nouveau sujet d'énigme. Richard Sinclair de Caravan (accompagné de Hugh Hopper et de membres de Gong) chantera même un morceau à ce sujet en 1994, "What's Rattlin", avec le couplet "*One question we all dread, What's doing Mike Ratledge?*". Jusqu'à ce funeste 5 février, on s'interrogeait également.

Eric Delsart

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Mike Ratledge, l'homme-moustache de Soft Machine - Gonzaï - 9 février 2025

Gonzaï
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MIKE RATLEDGE, L'HOMME-MOUSTACHE DE SOFT MACHINE



Le claviériste Mike Ratledge s'est éteint le 5 février 2025 sans bruit, à l'âge de 81 ans. Il fut principalement connu pour être l'un des membres fondateurs et pilier musical du groupe Soft Machine, formation britannique avant-gardiste qui fut à l'origine de la révolution psychédélique avec Pink Floyd, avant de développer un jazz fusion fascinant aux horizons rêveurs. Discret depuis plus de 40 ans, sa disparition vient ranimer le fantôme de Soft Machine et d'une époque où la musique pouvait être originale et se vendre.

Il y a deux situations où la musique de Soft Machine s'apprécie pleinement. La première, c'est tout seul la nuit, avec une lumière discrète, et de préférence au casque afin de se concentrer sur toutes les nuances sonores. La seconde, c'est en voiture, en fin d'été ou à l'automne, lorsque les paysages défilent à travers la fenêtre sur une route départementale le long d'une rivière, ou dans une campagne boisée. C'est là que l'effet magique de la musique de Soft Machine se développe pleinement. Le groupe de Canterbury sera mon grand plongeon dans le jazz fusion ou jazz-rock. J'ai alors découvert que l'on pouvait se laisser emporter sur de longs morceaux instrumentaux totalement dénués de guitare électrique.

Un début d'existence austère

Michael Roland Ratledge est né le 6 mai 1943 à Maidstone dans le Kent. Maidstone est une ville moyenne au sud-ouest de Londres, traversée par la rivière Medway, et doté d'une magnifique architecture de l'époque Tudor. Il grandit dans une famille d'enseignants, qui lui fait prendre des cours de piano classique, comme dans toutes les familles de la classe moyenne éduquée. Il n'y a que de la musique classique à la maison, et Mike Ratledge et donc très loin de la pauvreté et de la souffrance des musiciens issus du Nord industriel de l'Angleterre, ce qui ne le conduira donc pas à jouer du blues ou du hard-rock.

Au lycée, il fait la connaissance de Hugh Hopper et Robert Wyatt. Le trio commence à traîner ensemble, et ils font la connaissance de Daevid Allen, un jeune homme plus âgé qu'eux originaire d'Australie, et qui joue de la guitare. Robert Wyatt est le fils du propriétaire de l'appartement où vit Allen. Il les initie au jazz de Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, Miles Davis et Thelonious Monk. En 1963, Allen, Ratledge et Wyatt forment le Daevid Allen Trio, qui se lance dans une sorte de jazz électrique inspiré de Sun Ra. Puis, le trio se disloque en 1964. Wyatt retrouve Hugh Hopper, et rencontre Kevin Ayers. Ils fondent les Wilde Flowers, formation de rhythm'n'blues bien dans le mouvement musical de l'époque, de facture plus classique.

Les musiciens évoluent tous sur la même scène autour de l'université de Canterbury, et se croisent donc sans cesse. Allen, Ratledge, Wyatt et Ayers décident de fonder leur propre groupe, au nom inspiré d'une nouvelle de William Burroughs : The Soft Machine. Nous sommes à l'été 1966, et la culture étudiante se met en effervescence. Des écrivains Beat américains commencent à venir faire des lectures à Londres dans les librairies et dans les universités, le mouvement de contestation contre la Guerre du Vietnam atteint les rivages européens, et de manière générale, une envie de changement de société est en train de naître. La Grande-Bretagne vit toujours dans le climat de l'austérité et de la reconstruction post-Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Les vies des Britanniques sont tristes de manière générale, entièrement dédiées au travail et au bien-être matériel de leurs familles, proches de la survie, dans un confort très relatif.

Alors que désormais, les restrictions s'éloignent et que les Anglais de la classe moyenne commencent à goûter à une certaine aisance, leurs enfants s'investissent en politique. Le capitalisme se voit être remis en cause, les idées communistes s'installent dans de petits groupuscules étudiants. On veut profiter de la vie, on veut plus de partage des richesses, et ne plus souffrir comme leurs parents. Une effervescence culturelle se met à exploser autour de 1965, qualifiée de Swingin' London. Les Who, les Rolling Stones, les Kinks, les Pretty Things, les Beatles, les Small Faces sont autant de groupes qui viennent apporter de la joie, de l'espoir et un vaste champ créatif à la jeunesse britannique, et même européenne.

Des précurseurs

The Soft Machine débarque avec une fusion de rhythm'n'blues et de jazz, mettant en avant des improvisations de plus en plus folles. Allen, Wyatt et Ayers sont issus de familles libertaires, presque bohémiennes. L'apprentissage de la musique se fait à l'oreille et au feeling. Mike Ratledge est le seul de l'équipe à avoir un vrai bagage de musicien. Et cela s'entend rapidement dans sa manière d'approcher l'orgue électrique Hammond dont il fait l'acquisition, explorant les possibilités sonores infinies de ce nouveau clavier. The Soft Machine est désormais régulièrement à l'affiche des clubs branchés UFO ou Middle Earth à Londres, là où est en train de naître le mouvement psychédélique anglais en parallèle de la scène de San Francisco. Soft Machine devient l'une des attractions scéniques favorites de l'UFO avec le quatuor Pink Floyd mené par le guitariste-chanteur Syd Barrett, au son plus rock. Parmi les spectateurs de ces prestations faites de musiques improvisées, de shows lumineux expérimentaux, de consommation de marijuana et des premiers acides, on y trouve les Beatles, les Rolling Stones ou les Who. Toute la scène pop vient s'abreuver de ces nouvelles idées et les injecter dans sa musique, donnant des albums comme « Revolver » des Beatles ou « A Quick One » des Who.

La hype londonienne traverse la Manche, et Soft Machine est invité à venir faire quelques dates sur la Riviera française pour animer les soirées branchées de la jeunesse bourgeoise de Saint-Tropez, de Nice ou de Cannes. The Soft Machine fait également quelques concerts en Belgique et en Allemagne de l'Ouest où sa musique originale se télescope avec la volonté de la jeunesse allemande de faire sécession avec le passé nazi de leurs parents, donnant le krautrock de Can, de Neu, Popol Vuh ou Klaus Schulze.

A leur retour en Grande-Bretagne fin août 1967, Daevid Allen est arrêté à la frontière. Son visa a expiré et il est expulsé du territoire. Il s'installe alors à Paris, et débutera par la suite une nouvelle carrière avec le groupe Gong qu'il fonde avec sa compagne Gilli Smith. Wyatt, Ratledge, et Ayers rentrent donc à trois en Grande-Bretagne, et dès septembre 1967, ils sont de retour au Middle Earth. Cette configuration en trio libère les énergies, exactement comme dans le Jimi Hendrix Experience ou Cream. Si ce n'est que le virtuose instrumental n'est pas un guitariste mais un organiste : Mike Ratledge. Le trio laboure un nouveau répertoire exclusivement écrit par Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper, qui fait alors office de roadie.



Les morceaux s'allongent encore et toujours, et commencent à s'enchaîner sans interruption, comme une sorte de gigantesque improvisation continue. Le trio croise habilement pop music, jazz, et rhythm'n'blues. Ayers a pris le relais au chant, mais Wyatt l'accompagne de plus en plus souvent de sa voix haute perchée. Il se permet des improvisations vocales, sortes de scats hallucinés. Quant à Mike Ratledge, il utilise désormais une amplification digne d'un guitariste rock sur son orgue Hammond. Dès la fin de l'année 1967, le son définitif de The Soft Machine est en place. En avril 1967, The Soft Machine avait enregistré une première démo grâce à Giorgio Gomelsky aux De Lane Lea Studios de Londres, sans succès. Désormais managé par Chas Chandler, l'ancien bassiste des Animals et actuel manager de Jimi Hendrix Experience, The Soft Machine part aux USA en première partie du trio le plus électrique de 1968, et ce pour deux tournées américaines d'affilée.

Dès les premiers concerts new-yorkais, The Soft Machine est repéré par le label ABC Records, spécialisé dans le jazz, et qui a à son catalogue John Coltrane, Ray Charles, Art Blakey ou Sonny Rollins. ABC a créé son propre label pop, Probe. Il veut signer The Soft Machine, et le trio sera leur premier album. En avril 1968, The Soft Machine est aux Record Plant Studios de New York sous la houlette de Chas Chandler et de l'ingénieur du son Tom Wilson. Le trio expédie d'une traite son répertoire live, quasiment sans aucune retouche.



L’étrange machine dans la tempête

Après l’enregistrement du premier album, The Soft Machine doit envisager une nouvelle tournée US. Le groupe se sent mal à l’aise avec The Jimi Hendrix Experience, bien plus explosif. Le guitariste Andy Summers, futur The Police, est recruté. La tournée débute en août 1968, et l’ancien trio ne fonctionne plus. Summers prend toute la place, et l’ampleur des improvisations ainsi que la créativité de la fin 1967-début 1968 s’est envolée. Ayers fait virer Summers pour retrouver le trio initial. Mais le bassiste-chanteur est aussi épuisé par presque deux cent dates de concerts. Il finit par partir à la fin de la tournée en septembre 1968 et The Soft Machine se sépare. Robert Wyatt reste en Californie pour préparer un album solo. Il joue l’ensemble des instruments sur ces sessions qui s’étalent d’octobre à novembre 1968 entre Hollywood et New York. Jimi Hendrix lui-même vient jouer de la basse sur *Slow Walkin’ Talk*. Quant à Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge, ils contribuent à l’élaboration d’un morceau vertigineux et audacieux d’une vingtaine de minutes nommé *Moon In June*. L’autre titre majeur se nomme *Rivmic Melodie*s, un autre monument de plus de dix-huit minutes entièrement assemblé par Robert Wyatt, jouant absolument tout.

Ayant l’équivalent d’un album, Robert Wyatt est sur le point de se lancer, lorsque Probe se rappelle au bon souvenir de The Soft Machine. Nous sommes en décembre 1968, et le label réclame le second album dû selon le contrat signé. Le trio doit donc se reformer, mais Kevin Ayers a déjà entamé une carrière avec l’album « Joy Of A Toy » qui voit justement la participation de ses anciens camarades de Soft Machine. Ratledge et Wyatt refont équipe, et font appel à Hugh Hopper à la basse et à la composition. De nombreuses idées anciennes sont recyclées, à commencer par la face A du disque nommée *Rivmic Melodies*, et s’inspirant du morceau initial de Robert Wyatt. La face B se nomme *Esthers’s Nose Job*, avec un autre assemblage d’improvisations et d’idées anciennes. « Volume Two » réunit un panorama créatif aussi large qu’étrange. Wyatt y jette ses vieilles idées, Ratledge les remodèle, Hopper contribue à la fantaisie jazz-fusion. L’enregistrement est tellement haï par Wyatt et Ratledge,

qui y voit une contrainte commerciale, qu'ils nomment certaines improvisations du nom de disques de bruitage qu'ils trouvent au hasard des étagères du studio : *Pig*, *Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging*…



Sauf que le résultat, ce disque complètement improvisé et bâclé, est absolument génial, supérieur au premier album. Et des cuivres apparaissent par moments comme sur *Hibou, Anemone And Bear*. Hugh Hopper fait rapidement la différence avec sa maîtrise des effets de guitare électrique appliqués à la basse. Il deviendra notamment un maître de la fuzz. Et pour couronner le tout, l'album grimpe haut dans les classements dans certains pays européens, atteignant notamment la seconde place des ventes aux Pays-Bas. The Soft Machine devient un groupe demandé en concert en France, en Allemagne et en Grande-Bretagne. Il n'est alors plus question de se séparer de nouveau, et un contrat avec la major Columbia fait tomber les derniers doutes.

A partir d'octobre 1969, The Soft Machine devient Soft Machine. Il se dote d'une section de cuivres : Lyn Dobson à la flûte et au saxophone, Jimmy Hastings à la clarinette, Nick Evans au trombone et Elton Dean au saxello. Sauf que les revenus des concerts, certes de plus en plus importants, ne permettent pas de couvrir les frais d'un groupe de sept musiciens.

Rapidement, l'équipage se limite à Wyatt, Ratledge, Hopper, Dobson et Dean. C'est cette formation qui enregistre un live majeur le 2 mars 1970 au Théâtre de la Musique à Paris. Le quintette est totalement effervescent de créativité.

Le troisième

La configuration de Soft Machine se stabilise autour du quatuor constitué de Ratledge, Wyatt, Hopper et Dean. Le 13 août 1970, la BBC prend la peine d'enregistrer le concert au

Royal Albert Hall de Londres. Soft Machine vient d'atteindre un sommet commercial inattendu. L'album « Third » est sorti en juin 1970, mêlant musique live et studio, sur deux disques, avec quatre titres, un par face. « Third » sera 18ème des ventes en Grande-Bretagne, et 5ème en Hollande.

> Sur les photos, seul Robert Wyatt possède un sourire malicieux. Hopper et Dean, avec leurs moustaches et leurs crânes se dégarnissant, ressemblent plus à des profs de math.

C'est un immense succès pour un double album sans aucune concession sonore, tournant sur trois morceaux instrumentaux et une étrange improvisation vocale qui remonte en fait à 1968. Avec « Third », Soft Machine vient d'atteindre l'étrange statut de groupe pop le plus apprécié de 1970 avec une musique totalement originale et sans concession. Toutes les éditions de « Third » révèlent des merveilles où Mike Ratledge devient le mage sonore au coeur de la musique. Il continue d'explorer les nuances de l'orgue Hammond et du piano électrique Fender. Les sons synthétiques arriveront plus tard, lorsque Mike Ratledge se sentira en capacité de produire un son plus personnel.



L'année 1970 est l'apogée de la carrière de Soft Machine, avec un double album d'une créativité folle, et des concerts devenus de véritables séances d'improvisations et d'expérimentations, les morceaux originaux servant juste de base de travail. Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper sont les deux musiciens les plus expérimentaux. Le premier invente des boucles obsédantes et des solos tantôt d'une poésie mélodieuse exceptionnelle, tantôt d'une

violence électrique folle. Le second se transforme en Jimi Hendrix de la basse dès qu'il enclenche sa pédale fuzz. Robert Wyatt cimente le tout avec ses roulements de caisses devant autant au jazz qu'au rhythm'n'blues. Elton Dean devient le troisième soliste avec ses interventions à la ferveur coltranienne, dérapages free compris. D'ailleurs, le morceau Facelift qui ouvre « Third » est un mélange de prise live et de studio, montrant le cercle vertueux de création qui joue au sein de Soft Machine. On ne sait par ailleurs pas comment les classer : rock progressif, rock psychédélique, jazz-rock. Avec ses longues rêveries, le groupe est sûrement progressif, définitivement jazz fusion, avec des touches de musique concrète comme les boucles entêtantes inspirées de Terry Riley, mais plus du tout psychédélique. Le côté dadaïste a disparu pour la recherche musicale. L'image du groupe est par ailleurs assez austère, Mike Ratledge se cachant de plus en plus souvent derrière son rideau de cheveux noirs et raides et de petites lunettes fumées.

Sur les photos, seul Robert Wyatt possède un sourire malicieux. Hopper et Dean, avec leurs moustaches et leurs crânes se dégarnissant, ressemblent plus à des profs de math.

Le virage jazz

Si l'influence du jazz a toujours été là dès les débuts de Soft Machine, la fantaisie mélodique de Robert Wyatt, et les audaces musicales de Ratledge et Hopper rendaient le groupe passionnant et totalement unique. « Third » a été vécu par le désormais quartette comme une sorte de concrétisation d'une première phase créative. Après tout, *Moon In June* datait de fin 1968, et les ébauches de *Facelift* et *Out-Bloody Rageous* aux concerts de la seconde moitié de 1969.

Ratledge, Hopper et Dean décident d'opérer une bascule dans une musique plus jazz, au détriment de la fantaisie pop de Wyatt. Le batteur a de moins en moins le droit de s'exprimer, et sur l'album « Fourth » qui paraît en février 1971, il ne signe ni ne chante aucun titre. L'album a pourtant été enregistré dans la foulée de la brillante tournée de « Third », en octobre et novembre 1970. Mais le batteur est sur la touche. Incapable d'écrire correctement de la musique, expliquant ses idées en les chantonnant, il ne peut rivaliser avec un Ratledge ou un Hopper capables d'écrire des partitions. Sur « Fourth », Wyatt ne fait que jouer de la batterie, de manière toujours aussi originale, mais il est désormais relégué au rang de musicien-interprète. *Kings And Queens* et la suite *Virtually* qui occupe la seconde face sont l'oeuvre de Hopper, *Teeth* est signée Ratledge, *Fletcher's Blemish*, un court morceau free, est de la plume d'Elton Dean. L'album est au demeurant excellent, avec l'ajout de plusieurs musiciens brillants : Roy Babbington à la contrebasse, Mark Charig, Nick Evans, Jimmy Hastings et Alan Skidmore aux différents instruments à vent. C'est un album entièrement instrumental, à la fois austère dans son approche plus traditionnellement jazz, mais aussi chaleureux et mélancolique dans son interprétation et son écriture à la sonorité très particulière. Le disque déroute le public, qui s'attendait à un nouveau « Third ». Il se classe à la 32ème place, marquant un clair recul. Cependant, pour une musique aussi élitiste, totalement dénuée du moindre tube commercial, c'est encore un beau score.



La tournée européenne de 1971 fait encore illusion. Robert Wyatt a droit à sa petite improvisation vocale, et les morceaux de « Third » occupent encore une bonne part des

concerts. Par ailleurs, les interprétations à quatre des morceaux des albums de « Fourth » se fondent bien dans l'ensemble, et on entend encore un groupe soudé par la musique. Des dates américaines suivent, mais Robert Wyatt devient frustré et ingérable à cause de sa consommation grandissante d'alcool. Il a déjà publié un premier album solo en décembre 1970 nommé « The End Of An Ear » où il y met toutes ses idées recalées. Il tente d'emmener Hugh Hopper avec lui dans un nouveau projet nommé Matching Mole, mais le bassiste préfère rester au sein de Soft Machine, groupe dans lequel il a une grande latitude d'écriture, du moins pour le moment. Wyatt décide de partir en août 1971 après avoir assuré l'ensemble de ses engagements. Soft Machine doit se trouver un nouveau batteur.



Une froide détermination

Des auditions sont passées, et le batteur Phil Howard, au pedigree résolument jazz, rejoint Soft Machine. Il participe à la première partie des sessions de « Fifth » qui se tiennent en novembre et décembre 1971. Son jeu volubile mais technique doit rappeler un peu celui de Wyatt en plus sérieux. Et il fait un travail admirable comme sur le titre d'ouverture *All White*, déjà expérimenté durant les concerts de début d'années avec Wyatt. Cependant, Howard n'a pas l'état d'esprit Soft Machine, et il finit par s'en aller au bout de quelques semaines. Finalement, c'est un vieil ami du groupe, le batteur John Marshall, ancien membre de Nucleus, l'autre grande institution jazz fusion anglaise, qui prend les baguettes. L'homme a tout ce qu'il faut : la technique et l'instinct. Sur « Fifth », Mike Ratledge se montre plus productif, composant quatre des sept morceaux. Hugh Hopper n'apporte quant à lui qu'une seule pièce : *M C.*

Mésestimé, « Fifth » est un album magistral, mais glaçant. Soft Machine joue sur les nuances de gris, les percolations sonores, les claviers liquides, les échos froids. C'est un album à écouter face à un paysage de lac enneigé sous un ciel bas. La beauté réside dans les mélodies sublimes d'une mélancolie infinie. Le piano électrique a désormais pris le dessus chez Mike Ratledge, l'orgue Hammond saturé devenant désormais l'accessoire.

Les concerts s'accumulent, car « Fifth » a été boudé par le public européen, ne se classant nulle part. La majeure partie de l'année 1972 est consacrée à la promotion du nouveau disque, mais aussi à faire survivre Soft Machine qui n'a plus que cela comme principale source de revenu. Le quatuor essaie également d'y puiser de nouvelles idées. Mais Soft Machine semble rigide, arrivant difficilement à retrouver la poésie de sa musique. Elton Dean est mis à contribution au second clavier. Son saxophone sonne de manière plus mécanique. Finalement, il s'en va au cours de l'année 1972, peu de temps après les concerts européens.

John Marshall suggère alors le nom de Karl Jenkins. Ce dernier fut aussi membre de Nucleus, et Mike Ratledge l'estime beaucoup. Il est un multi-instrumentiste, saxophoniste, clarinettiste et claviériste, mais aussi compositeur prolixe. Jenkins intègre Soft Machine à la fin de l'été, et le nouveau quatuor part sur la route. Les concerts redeviennent spectaculaires de par l'improvisation permanente qui y réside. Soft Machine capte deux concerts au Dome de Brighton le 24 octobre 1972 et au Civic Hall de Guildford le 1er novembre 1972. La matière live servira au premier disque d'un double album nommé « Six ». Le second disque sera capté en studio en novembre et décembre 1972 aux Advision Studios de Londres.

« Six » qui sort en février 1973 se vend mieux que « Fifth », et reçoit de belles critiques par la presse spécialisée. Sur le disque live, Soft Machine a retrouvé sa magie poétique, et sur le disque studio, il a réactivé son audace créative avec des morceaux fascinants comme *The Soft Weed Factor*, *Stanley Stamps Gibbon Album* ou *Chloe And The Pirates*. Karl Jenkins a parfaitement su se fondre dans l'identité sonore de Soft Machine fermement tenue par les claviers de Mike Ratledge. Ce dernier a encore été particulièrement prolifique, signant la moitié des nouveaux titres originaux, dont *The Soft Weed Factor* qui est l'aboutissement de ses recherches sur Terry Riley.

Le 1er juin 1973, Robert Wyatt passe à travers une fenêtre lors d'une soirée trop alcoolisée et perd l'usage de ses deux jambes. La solidarité de la scène se met en route. Pink Floyd assure deux shows en une journée au Rainbow Theatre, avec Soft Machine en première partie, les bénéfices allant en soutien à Wyatt.

Au même moment, Soft Machine enregistre son septième album au CBS Studios de Londres. Hugh Hopper a décidé de quitter le groupe au printemps 1973, désormais limité à un rôle de compositeur complémentaire derrière Jenkins et Ratledge, le duo ayant pris le contrôle artistique de Soft Machine. Il va enregistrer un excellent premier album solo nommé « 1984 » et publié en 1973, avant de rejoindre le quatuor de jazz fusion anglais Isotope.

Hopper est remplacé par Roy Babbington, qui intervient à la contrebasse sur des albums de Soft Machine depuis 1971. La photo intérieure de « Seven » montre quatre musiciens au physique de laborantins scientifiques et de mathématiciens. La pochette est elle aussi presque soviétique, géométrique et médicale. Karl Jenkins et Mike Ratledge explorent les nouveaux claviers électroniques nommés synthétiseurs. C'est une vraie transition par rapport à « Six », qui conservait une touche progressive et jazz psychédélique. Ici, la musique se fait plus épurée et froide. On retrouve l'approche de « Fifth » avec cette touche électronique qui déshumanise encore l'ensemble. « Seven » est en fait un disque de pérégrination de banlieue parisienne. La musique ricoche sur le froid du béton des barres d'immeubles et des usines, et la chaleur d'un piano électrique jazz vient rappeler qu'il y a encore un peu d'âme humaine au pied d'une chapelle ou dans un bar de cette périphérie urbaine.

« Seven » est résolument un album électronique, où se mêlent les premiers synthétiseurs joués par Mike Ratledge et le saxophone baryton de Karl Jenkins. Roy Babbington dessine des lignes de basse six-cordes d'esthète, et John Marshall fourmille d'idées rythmiques. Mais c'est encore un disque froid et mélancolique qui saisit à la gorge celui qui s'y plonge. C'est un disque terrifiant, subtilement électronique, comme le prouve les géniaux *Nettle Bed* ou *Penny Hitch*. La poésie délicate reste ancrée dans la musique de Soft Machine, malgré les innombrables changements de line-up, qui fait que Mike Ratledge reste désormais le dernier membre fondateur.



Le tournant jazz-rock

Alors que l'année 1973 se termine, une évidence insidieuse s'affirme : « Seven » est certes un disque moderne qui connaît un succès correct, mais Soft Machine commence à manquer de souffle sur scène. Le set télévisé Jazz Workshop à Hambourg le 17 mai 1973 avec le doué Gary Boyle à la guitare donne des idées à John Marshall. Boyle est un ancien membre du Brian Auger And The Trinity et de Stomu Yamashta's East Wind. Il est dans l'esprit de Soft Machine, et la télévision allemande a l'idée de les réunir pour un concert unique. L'intervention de Boyle révolutionne le jazz-rock un peu constipé de Soft Machine. *Gesolreut* est par exemple littéralement transfiguré par les lignes de guitare de Gary Boyle. Il ne reste cependant pas, formant au même moment son propre groupe nommé Isotope.

Après « Seven », Soft Machine bascule de Columbia chez EMI Harvest, le label progressif qui accueille notamment Pink Floyd. Le groupe décide de recruter définitivement un guitariste. Des auditions ont lieu, jusqu'à ce que Allan Holdsworth se présente. Le musicien a déjà fait partie de Nucleus et Tempest. C'est un virtuose discret, qui ne peut être que parfait pour Soft Machine. Il est immédiatement recruté à la fin de l'année 1973, et il se fera rapidement remarquer grâce notamment à sa prestation au Montreux Jazz Festival le 4 juillet 1974. Le 22 mars 1975, Soft Machine publie l'album « Bundles ». Le disque marque une rupture à tous les niveaux. D'abord il brise la numérotation des albums. Ensuite, il place Soft Machine dans le spectre du jazz fusion de l'époque : Mahavishnu Orchestra, Return To Forever, Colosseum II, Brand X… le quintette en offre sa version revue et corrigée, toujours sans perdre sa poésie sonore. Allan Holdsworth est le soliste leader avec ses interventions de guitare brillantes. « Bundles » est un chef d'oeuvre de jazz-rock poétique dominé par la suite *Hazard Profile* qui occupe l'essentiel de la première face. Mike Ratledge s'efface derrière l'écriture de Karl Jenkins, signant toutefois l'excellent *The Man Who Waved At Trains*.

Lorsque Soft Machine décide de se lancer dans une grande tournée européenne, Allan Holdsworth est hélas parti pour une offre qu'il ne pouvait pas refuser : intégrer le nouveau Lifetime du batteur légendaire Tony Williams. John Etheridge se glisse dans le rôle de nouveau guitariste, et la tournée est un grand succès. L'Europe redécouvre Soft Machine dans sa nouvelle configuration à guitare électrique. Le répertoire est focalisé sur le nouvel album complété de nouveaux morceaux inédits, faisant table rase de ses albums précédents. Et cela marche. Mike Ratledge y joue cependant un rôle de plus en plus mineur, accompagnant magnifiquement ses camarades au piano électrique, et intervenant en de rares occasions à l'orgue électrique, sa sonorité rappelant avec brio le passé de Soft Machine et l'album « Third ». Si John Etheridge n'est pas l'incroyable prodige de la six-cordes qu'est Allan Holdsworth, son jeu inventif et sa personnalité tranquille lui permettent de bien se fondre dans le groupe, et de laisser davantage de place aux autres musiciens, faisant de Soft Machine une entité sonore plutôt que le groupe d'accompagnement du guitariste. Soft Machine est même à l'affiche du prestigieux Festival de Reading du 22 au 24 août 1975 au milieu d'une affiche comprenant Yes, Wishbone Ash, Thin Lizzy, Hawkwind, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Robin Trower, UFO, Lou Reed et Supertramp. La carrière de Soft Machine est clairement relancée, et EMI Harvest ne ménage pas sa peine pour mettre en avant le groupe, fier de la nouvelle musique proposée, et d'avril à décembre 1975, Soft Machine est constamment sur la route.

En janvier 1976, Soft Machine se voit offrir les studios Abbey Road pour assembler un nouvel album. Le groupe se met au travail, disposant déjà de plusieurs thèmes travaillés sur scène les mois précédents : *The Tale Of Taliesin*, *Ban-Ban Caliban*, *Song Of Aeolus*, *Out Of Season*. Mike Ratledge semble absent, assurant ses quelques parties de synthétiseurs avec professionnalisme, mais sans implication particulière. A la fin de l'enregistrement en mars, il annonce qu'il s'en va. Le nouveau son de Soft Machine ne lui correspond plus, et les longues tournées l'épuisent. Ratledge est un homme discret, il n'a jamais fait part de ses états d'âme aux autres. Il sent juste que son temps est venu, et que le nom de Soft Machine est entre de bonnes mains avec Jenkins, Etheridge, Babbington et Marshall. Afin d'étoffer le son, le saxophoniste Alan Wakeman est ajouté. Il apparaît sur la pochette de « Softs » publié en juin 1976, mais pas Mike Ratledge.



« Softs » est une nouvelle merveille de jazz-rock moderne, toujours dotée de cette poésie sonore très particulière que la présence de Mike Ratledge a réussi à maintenir malgré le fait que la musique soit désormais le fruit exclusif du travail de Karl Jenkins, John Etheridge et John Marshall. La face A est dotée de trois thèmes majeurs développés sur plusieurs minutes, la seconde est constituée de thèmes courts créant une suite sonore. Le disque est bien reçu par la presse, et la tournée continue d'intéresser un public important, Soft Machine étant depuis quasiment ses débuts dans le circuit des universités anglaises. Roy Babbington n'en fera pas partie, décidant lui aussi de quitter le navire, remplacé par Steve Cook.

La plongée dans l'oubli

Mike Ratledge se consacre alors exclusivement à de la musique de studio, ce qui lui permet de rester davantage auprès de sa femme, la chanteuse soul-rock Marsha Hunt, avec qui il est marié depuis 1967. Il signe avec le label De Wolfe, spécialisé dans les musiques de films et de théâtre, et les publicités.

Soft Machine poursuit quelque temps, avant de s'éteindre en 1978 après un ultime album live enregistré au théâtre du Palace à Paris en 1977. La scène rock européenne a basculé dans le punk-rock et Soft Machine n'intéresse plus personne, surtout sans aucun musicien historique dedans. Karl Jenkins tentera de réanimer le nom avec Marshall et Holdsworth en 1981 pour un ultime album : « The Land Of Cockayne ». Jenkins rejoindra en parallèle Ratledge, dès 1976, pour signer des musiques de films, de pièces de théâtre et de publicités.

La mort de Mike Ratledge a subitement ranimé tous ces souvenirs, toute cette musique exceptionnelle, toute cette époque folle où la musique instrumentale improvisée était maîtresse, et où le public n'hésitait pas à se laisser submerger par l'écoute. Mike Ratledge était un homme de cet autre temps, un artisan discret, brillant et passionné. Même si elle était inévitable, quelque chose de plus s'éteint avec sa disparition.

Julien Deleglise

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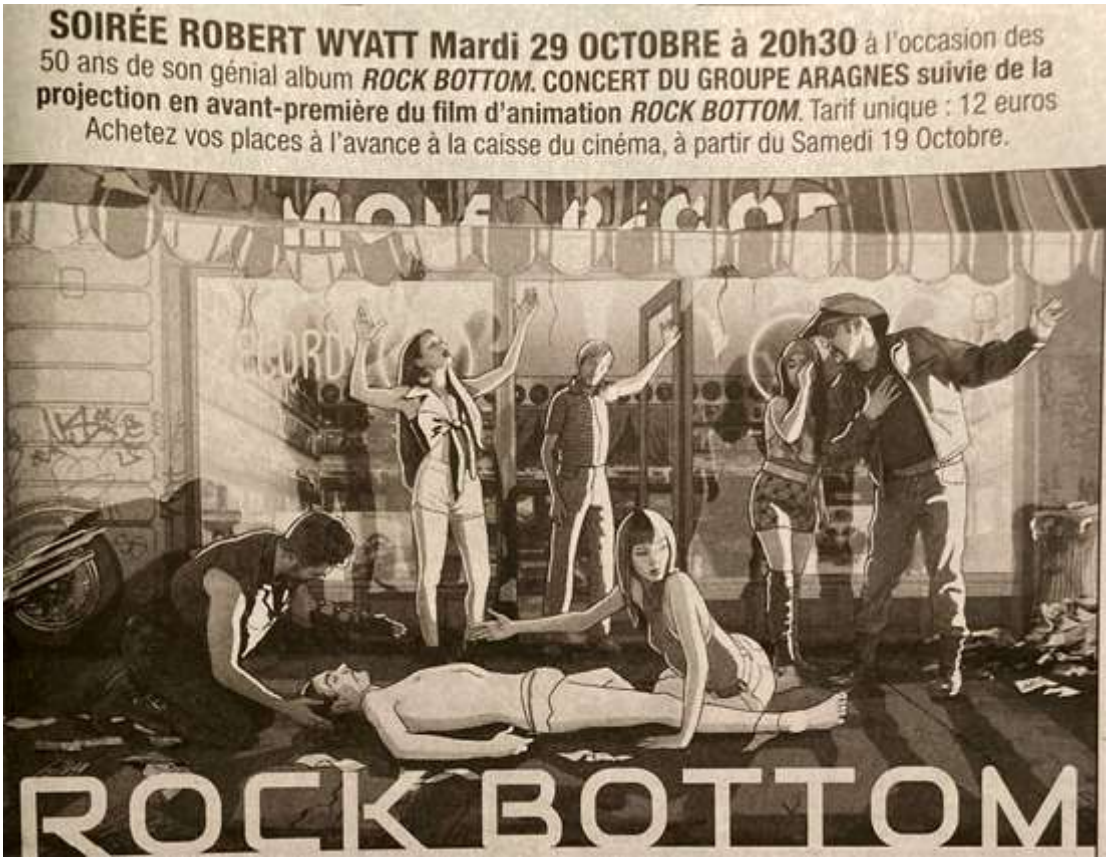
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Rock Bottom - Utopia - N° 246 - du 9 octobre au 12 novembre 2024



Bienvenue dans le film le plus psychédélique que nous ayons pu voir cette année. Un hommage vibrant à une légende des années 1970, le musicien britannique Robert Wyatt (ex-leader du groupe Soft Machine) et plus particulièrement à son chef-d'œuvre, l'album *Rock Bottom*, composé et enregistré il y a tout juste cinquante ans, en 1974, un an après le drame qui a changé sa vie. Le 1er juin 1973 en effet, pendant une fête débridée dans l'appartement new-yorkais (en vrai les faits se sont déroulés à Londres) de June Campbell Cramer alias Lady June, artiste peintre, poète du groupe franco-britannique Gong et égérie d'un monde bigarré, le musicien, sous l'emprise d'un mélange d'alcools et de psychotropes, tombe du quatrième étage de l'immeuble. Par miracle, il survit à l'accident mais il reste paralysé des membres inférieurs.

A partir de cet épisode charnière dans l'œuvre et l'existence de ce musicien surdoué, la réalisatrice espagnole Maria Trénor, également scénariste et animatrice compose un poème visuel tout entier dédié à la folle créativité d'une époque révolue. Où l'image, éclaboussée d'ocre, d'orange et de violet, semble trempée dans l'acide des rêves artificiels. Où l'amour même est une drogue, à consommer sans limite, sur une plage de Majorque, dans l'une des plus belles scènes du film.

C'est à Majorque, au bord de la Méditerranée, que le Robert Wyatt d'avant la chute a composé l'un de ses plus beaux titres, le mélancolique Sea song, inspiré par sa femme et muse, Alfreda Benge, une artiste plasticienne qui dessinera la pochette de *Rock Bottom*.



Film d'animation écrit et réalisé par Maria TRÉNOR
Espagne / Pologne 1h26 2024
VOSTF (anglais)

Leur passion en huis clos, contemplative, charnelle, souvent tempétueuse, brille au coeur du film... Tout, de l'animation en rotoscopie aux vêtements excentriques et aux visions hallucinées des personnages, des rues folles du New York des années 1970 aux pentes ensoleillées de l'île espagnole, contribue à un hypnotique voyage dans le temps, aux antipodes de tout biopic classique. L'occasion enfin de (re)découvrir l'album *Rock Bottom*, un des chefs-d'œuvre de l'histoire du rock (même si Robert Wyatt refuse toute étiquette) produit par Nick Mason (batteur du groupe Pink Floyd), avec les contributions de Mike Oldfield, du poète Ivor Cutler, ou encore du trompettiste Sud-Africain Mongezi Feza. Une musique aventureuse et envoûtante d'un musicien qui jouait chaque note de ce disque comme un acte de renaissance. (D'après Cécile Mury - *Télérama*).

PS : Robert Wyatt a vu, approuvé et aimé le film.

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Festival d'Annecy « Rock Bottom », un fol hommage à Robert Wyatt

Image extraite du long-métrage d'animation de Maria Trénor, « Rock Bottom ». LOCO FILMS

« ROCK BOTTOM », de la réalisatrice espagnole Maria Trénor, fut, sans contestation aucune, le film le plus fou de la compétition officielle du Festival du film d'animation d'Annecy. Un hommage halluciné à Robert Wyatt, le chanteur, batteur et figure importante du rock progressif, créateur en 1966 du groupe légendaire Soft Machine. Il a fallu à la cinéaste dix ans pour écrire le scénario et deux pour réaliser ce long-métrage qui plonge le spectateur, en pleine période hippie, dans une communauté où se croisent des artistes.

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La vie de Robert Wyatt en version hallucinée

Au Festival d'Annecy, Maria Trénor présente "Rock Bottom", un film-hommage psychédélique au musicien

RENCONTRE
ANNECY - *envoyée spéciale*

Le film le plus fou de la compétition officielle du Festival du film d'animation d'Annecy est sans conteste celui de la réalisatrice espagnole Maria Trénor. Son titre ? *Rock Bottom*, du nom de l'album chef-d'œuvre écrit il y a tout juste cinquante ans par Robert Wyatt, chanteur, batteur et pierre angulaire du rock progressif, qui forma, en 1966, le groupe Soft Machine et, plus tard, Matching Mole.

L'album contient six chansons intenses et délicates, inquiétantes et poétiques, que le long-métrage reprend, dans l'ordre, déroulant à partir de là une partie de la vie tumultueuse du musicien britannique, dans les années 1970. A New York (Robert Wyatt a vécu, en réalité, à Londres) et à Majorque, l'île des Baléares où il aimait se retrancher avec sa compagne, Alfie (Alfreda Benge, avec qui il vit toujours), artiste plasticienne qu'il a épousée en 1974. Soit un an après sa chute de quatre étages d'un immeuble, lors d'une soirée au domicile londonien de June Campbell Cramer (1931-1999). Chute qui le laissa paralysé des deux jambes, lui fit abandonner son groupe et entreprendre une carrière solo. C'est durant sa convalescence qu'il finalise *Rock Bottom*.

Le film nous envoie en pleine période hippie, au sein d'une communauté où se croisent les artistes, notamment les Pink Floyd, amis de Wyatt. La drogue et l'alcool accompagnent les jours et les soirées planantes, créant aussi des états d'angoisse et de descentes vertigineuses. Si le film de Maria Trénor est fou, c'est qu'il illustre tous ces états, mais aussi les sensations que procure la musique. Et ce, par le champ immense qu'offre l'animation: saturation des couleurs, juxtaposition des images et courants artistiques, glissement de la réalité au rêve par l'usage de diverses techniques, dont la peinture. Dans *Rock Bottom*, la tête mise à l'envers, on perd pied, on plonge dans des espaces hallucinatoires, puis dans les eaux marines de Majorque, avec le couple d'artistes. Retour à la réalité.

Pour cette immersion psychédélique, la réalisatrice, née en 1970 à Valence, en Espagne, s'est inspirée de l'esthétique underground et surréaliste du début des années 1970, du cinéma expérimental, d'artistes tels que Mati Klarwein, Maya Deren, Barbara Rubin et Shirley Clarke. «*J'ai souhaité que Rock Bottom tente de capturer l'essence même de l'expérience artistique et personnelle de Wyatt, explique-t-elle. Les différences de style et d'esthétique du film traduisent en image les hauts et les bas, les humeurs et les émotions qui le traversent au fil de sa vie. Je n'ai pas réalisé un biopic, mais un film sur la musique et la création. La plus grande difficulté, d'ailleurs, a été d'écrire un script, de créer une narration cohérente à partir des morceaux de l'album, dont je voulais respecter l'ordre. Chaque scène, chaque note de ce film cherchent à immerger les spectateurs dans un monde où la musique n'est pas seulement entendue, mais ressentie et vécue.* »

Elle-même aurait aimé devenir musicienne, mais, lorsqu'elle s'est décidée, il était trop tard. Elle a donc choisi les beaux-arts, mais la musique n'a cessé de l'accompagner, occupant une grande place dans ses films - jusqu'à ce jour, des courts-métrages seulement, mais pas des moindres, puisque *Con que la lavaré ?* (2003), le premier, retenu à la Berlinale, à Sundance et à Annecy, a reçu quatorze prix et propulsé la réalisatrice sur la scène de l'animation. Ont suivi *Exlibris* (2009) et *Donde estabas tu ?* (2020), qui, eux aussi, ont parcouru les festivals et engrangé des récompenses.



Image extraite du long-métrage d'animation de Maria Trénor, « Rock Bottom ». LOCO FILMS

> Zoom

Long travail de documentation

Rock Bottom est son premier long, né de sa rencontre avec l'artiste rock. «*Quand j'ai découvert cet album de Wyatt, je n'avais jamais rien entendu de pareil J'ai eu ensuite la chance de le rencontrer, en Angleterre. }e m'attendais à voir quelqu'un de distant, de très british. Il était une sorte de mythe et je pensais trouver une star. Or il a été d'une gentillesse inouïe, très avenant. Si bien que j'ai eu le courage de lui demander si je pouvais réaliser quelque chose sur lui. Contre toute attente, il m'a répondu: "Bien sûr! Et faites ce que vous voulez."*»

A commencé alors pour Maria Trénor un long travail de documentation, sur l'artiste mais aussi sur l'époque hippie. «*L'épicentre de ce courant et de ces artistes se nichait en Californie, mais aussi à Majorque, où se retrouvaient les artistes européens. L'île était isolée, bon marché, et leur offrait cet espace idéal pour la liberté à laquelle ils aspiraient. Ce qui apparaît aussi comme un paradoxe, puisque l'Espagne, à ce moment-là, est celle de Franco.* » Wyatt et Benge, eux, y trouvent leur paradis pour un amour aussi heureux que fébrile, soumis aux affres de la création et des effets des drogues.

« J'ai voulu laisser la place à la créativité jusqu'au montage »

MARIA TRÉNOR
réalisatrice

Sur l'île, ils sont logés par l'écrivain Robert Graves (1895-1985), grand ami de la mère de Wyatt, au point qu'elle donna à son fils le même prénom. « *Graves a été très important dans la vie de Wyatt. Notamment, l'écrivain l'a accueilli après une tentative de suicide dont avait réchappé le musicien. Mais il le fit à une condition: qu'au moment du dîner il fasse quelque chose d'artistique, lire un poème, jouer un morceau... Histoire de lui remettre le pied à l'étrier*. »

Rassembler toute cette matière, écrire le scénario a pris dix ans. La réalisation, deux ans. «J'ai travaillé à partir d'une base, mais, avec les nombreuses équipes qui m'ont ensuite accompagnée, j'ai tenu à garder une certaine flexibilité. J'ai voulu laisser la place à la créativité tout au long du processus et jusqu'au montage», souligne la réalisatrice. Pour passer du court à ce long-métrage, avec son originalité et sa destination à un public exclusivement adulte, il a fallu l'intervention d'une société de production courageuse.

Maria Trénor l'a trouvée auprès de la productrice Alba Sotorra, qui, salue la réalisatrice, «aime mettre en avant les femmes». Quant aux coûts des droits sur la musique de Robert Wyatt, la somme a été raisonnable, semble-t-il. « Grâce à lui, qui est intervenu pour qu'ils ne soient pas trop élevés. Il a été très généreux. » En revanche, le musicien n'a toujours pas vu le film, terminé dans la hâte pour Annecy. Il tarde désormais à la réalisatrice de voir

sa réaction.

Véronique Cauhapé

Le Monde
DIMANCHE 16 - LUNDI 17/JUIN 2024

La vie de Robert Wyatt en version hallucinée

Au Festival d'Annecy, Maria Trénor présente « Rock Bottom », un film-hommage psychédélique au musicien

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Image extraite du long-métrage d'animation de Maria Trénor, « Rock Bottom ». LOUD FILMS

Le film nous emmène en pleine période hippie, au sein d'une communauté où se croisent les artistes, notamment les Pink Floyd, amis de Wyatt. La drogue et l'alcool accompagnent les jours et les soirées planantes, criant aussi des états d'angoisse et de descentes vertigineuses. Si le film de Maria Trénor est fou, c'est qu'il illustre tous ces états, mais aussi les sensations que procure la musique. Et ce, par le champ immense qu'offre l'animation : saturation des couleurs, juxtaposition des images et courants artistiques, glissement de la réalité au rêve par l'usage de diverses techniques, dont la peinture. Dans *Rock Bottom*, la tête mise à l'envers, on perd pied, on plonge dans des espaces hallucinatoires, puis dans les eaux marines de Majorque, avec le couple d'artistes. Retour à la réalité.

Pour cette immersion psychédélique, la réalisatrice, née en 1970 à Valence, en Espagne, s'est inspirée de l'esthétique underground et surréaliste du début des années 1970, du cinéma expérimental, d'artistes tels que Mati Klarwein, Maya Deren, Barbara Rubin et Shirley Clarke. « *J'ai souhaité que Rock Bottom* trotte de capturer l'essence même de l'expérience artistique et personnelle de Wyatt, explique-t-elle. *Les différences de style et d'esthétique du film traduisent en image les hauts et les bas, les humeurs et les émotions qui le traversent au fil de sa vie. Je n'ai pas réalisé un biopic, mais un film sur la musique et la création. La plus grande difficulté, d'ailleurs, a été d'écrire un script, de créer une narration cohérente à partir des morceaux de l'album, dont je voulais respecter l'ordre. Chaque scène, chaque note de ce film cherchent à immerger les spectateurs dans un monde où la musique n'est pas seulement entendue, mais ressentie et vécue.* »

Elle-même aurait aimé devenir musicienne, mais, lorsqu'elle s'est décidée, il était trop tard. Elle a donc choisi les beaux-arts, mais la musique n'a cessé de l'accompagner, occupant une grande place dans ses films – jusqu'à ce jour, des courts-métrages seulement, mais pas des moindres, puisque *Con qué la lavaré ?* (2005), le premier, retenu à la Berlinale, à Sundance et à Annecy, a reçu quatorze prix et propulsé la réalisatrice sur la scène de l'animation. Ont suivi *Exlibris* (2009) et *Donde estabas tu ?* (2020), qui, eux aussi, ont parcouru les festivals et engrangé des récompenses.

Long travail de documentation

Rock Bottom est son premier long, né de sa rencontre avec l'artiste rock. « *Quand j'ai découvert cet album de Wyatt, je n'avais jamais rien entendu de pareil. J'ai eu envie la chance de le rencontrer, en Angleterre. Je m'attendais à voir quelqu'un de distant, de très british. Il était une sorte de mythe et je pensais trouver une star. Or il a été d'une gentillesse inouïe, très enthousiaste. Si bien que j'ai eu le courage de lui demander si je pouvais réaliser quelque chose sur lui. Contre toute attente, il m'a répondu : "Bien sûr ! Et faites ce que vous voulez."* »

A commencé alors pour Maria Trénor un long travail de documentation, sur l'artiste mais aussi sur l'époque hippie. « *L'épicentre de ce courant et de ces artistes se nichait en Californie, mais aussi à Majorque, où se retrouvaient les artistes européens. L'île était isolée, bon marché, et leur offrait cet espace idéal pour la liberté à laquelle ils aspiraient. Ce qui apparaît aussi comme un paradoxe, puisque l'Espagne, à ce moment-là, est celle de Franco.* » Wyatt et Benge, eux, y trouvent leur paradis pour un amour aussi heureux que fébrile, soumis aux affres de la création et des effets des drogues.

Sur l'île, ils sont logés par l'écrivain Robert Graves (1895-1985), grand ami de la mère de Wyatt, au point qu'elle donna à son fils le même prénom. « *Graves a été très important dans la vie de Wyatt. Notamment, l'écrivain l'a accueilli après une tentative de suicide dont il avait réchappé le musicien. Mais il le fit à une condition : qu'au moment du dîner il fasse quelque chose d'artistique, lire un poème, jouer un morceau… Histoire de lui remettre le pied à l'étrier.* »

> « J'ai voulu laisser la place à la créativité jusqu'au montage »
>
> MARIA TRÉNOR
> réalisatrice

Rassembler toute cette matière, écrire le scénario a pris dix ans. La réalisation, deux ans. « *J'ai travaillé à partir d'une base, mais, avec les nombreuses équipes qui m'ont ensuite accompagnée, j'ai tenu à garder une certaine flexibilité. J'ai voulu laisser la place à la créativité tout au long du processus et jusqu'au montage* », souligne la réalisatrice. Pour passer du court à ce long-métrage, avec son originalité et sa destination à un public exclusivement adulte, il a fallu l'intervention d'une société de production coutageoise.

Maelia Trénor l'a trouvée auprès de la productrice Alba Sotorra, qui, salue la réalisatrice, « *a mis sa mettre en avant les femmes* ». Quant aux coûts des droits sur la musique de Robert Wyatt, la somme a été raisonnable, semble-t-il. « *Grâce à lui, qui est intervenu pour qu'ils ne soient pas trop élevés. Il a été très généreux.* » En revanche, le musicien n'a toujours pas vu le film, terminé dans la hâte pour Annecy. Il tarde désormais à la réalisatrice de voir sa réaction. ■

VÉRONIQUE CAUHAPÉ

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// AU SERVICE DU ROCK'N'ROLL DEPUIS 1966 //

rock&folk



DIVA TURNER

BEN HARPER
PROTOMARTYR
THE MILK CARTON KIDS
THE DATSUNS
MAX ROMEO

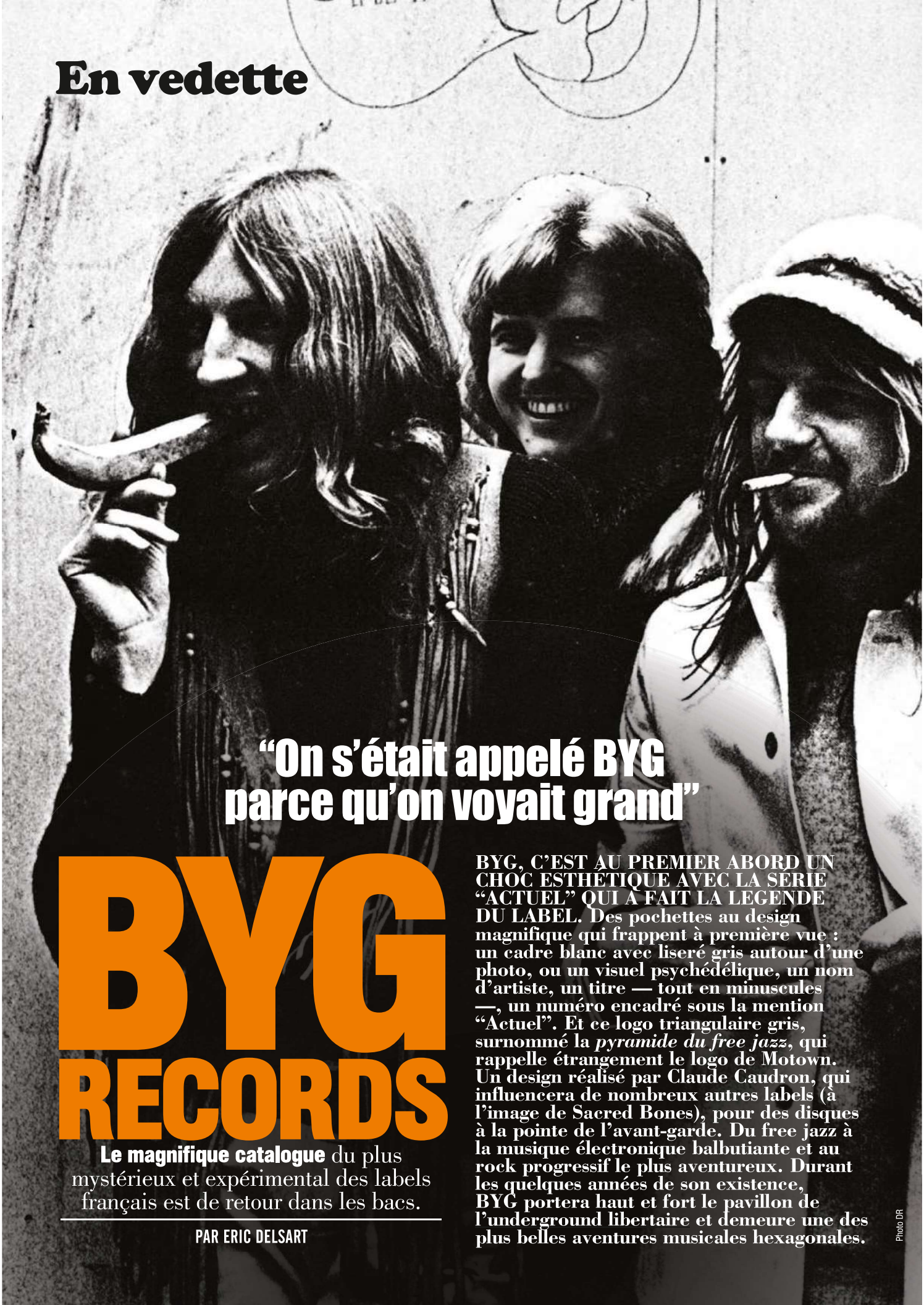
MES DISQUES A MOI
JACKY

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
ALICE COOPER
PORTUGAL. THE MAN
ROSS HALFIN & METALLICA
LE LABEL BYG
MURAT

JUILLET 2023
N°671 / 6,90 €
MENSUEL
BEL 7,80 €
ALLEMAGNE 9.90 €
LUX 7,80 €
SUISSE 11,70 CHF
PORTUGAL CONT 7,90 €
ITALIE 7,90 €
ESPAGNE 7,90 €
CAN 11,90 $ CAN
DOM 7,80 €
NCAL(S) 1030 XPF
ILE MAURICE 7,80 €

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Editions Larivière



“On s’était appelé BYG parce qu’on voyait grand”

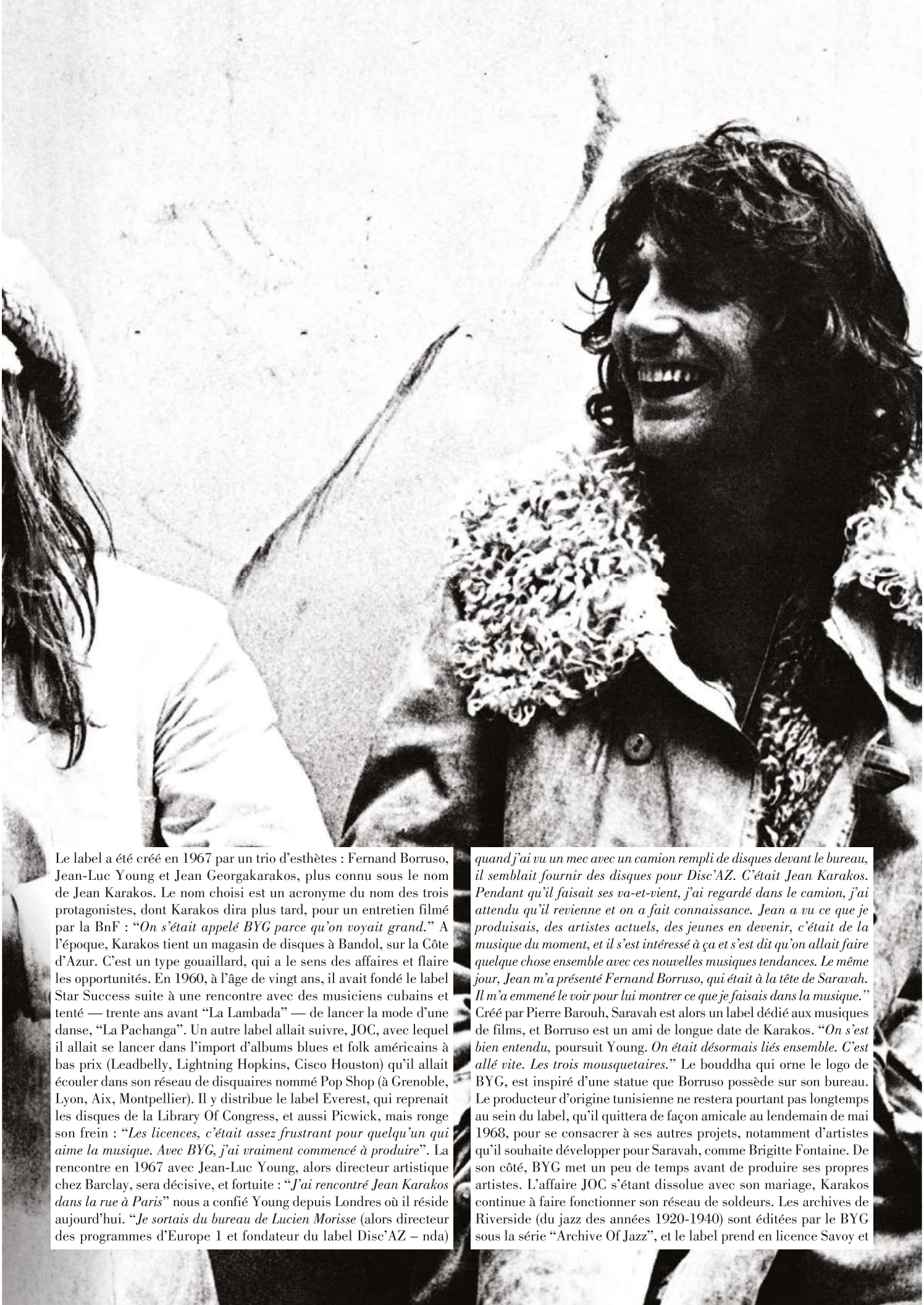
BYG RECORDS

Le magnifique catalogue du plus mystérieux et expérimental des labels français est de retour dans les bacs.

PAR ERIC DELSART

BYG, C’EST AU PREMIER ABORD UN CHOC ESTHÉTIQUE AVEC LA SÉRIE “ACTUEL” QUI A FAIT LA LÉGENDE DU LABEL. Des pochettes au design magnifique qui frappent à première vue : un cadre blanc avec liseré gris autour d’une photo, ou un visuel psychédélique, un nom d’artiste, un titre — tout en minuscules —, un numéro encadré sous la mention “Actuel”. Et ce logo triangulaire gris, surnommé la *pyramide du free jazz*, qui rappelle étrangement le logo de Motown. Un design réalisé par Claude Caudron, qui influencera de nombreux autres labels (à l’image de Sacred Bones), pour des disques à la pointe de l’avant-garde. Du free jazz à la musique électronique balbutiante et au rock progressif le plus aventureux. Durant les quelques années de son existence, BYG portera haut et fort le pavillon de l’underground libertaire et demeure une des plus belles aventures musicales hexagonales.

Photo DR

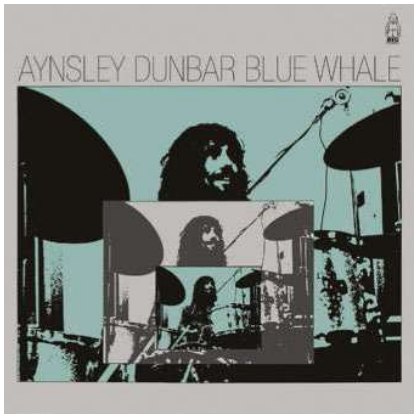


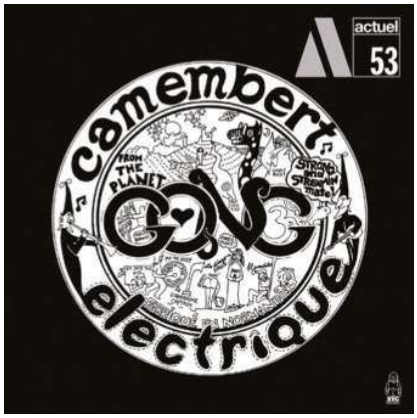
Le label a été créé en 1967 par un trio d'esthètes : Fernand Borruso, Jean-Luc Young et Jean Georgakarakos, plus connu sous le nom de Jean Karakos. Le nom choisi est un acronyme du nom des trois protagonistes, dont Karakos dira plus tard, pour un entretien filmé par la BnF : "*On s'était appelé BYG parce qu'on voyait grand.*" A l'époque, Karakos tient un magasin de disques à Bandol, sur la Côte d'Azur. C'est un type gouaillard, qui a le sens des affaires et flaire les opportunités. En 1960, à l'âge de vingt ans, il avait fondé le label Star Success suite à une rencontre avec des musiciens cubains et tenté — trente ans avant "La Lambada" — de lancer la mode d'une danse, "La Pachanga". Un autre label allait suivre, JOC, avec lequel il allait se lancer dans l'import d'albums blues et folk américains à bas prix (Leadbelly, Lightning Hopkins, Cisco Houston) qu'il allait écouler dans son réseau de disquaires nommé Pop Shop (à Grenoble, Lyon, Aix, Montpellier). Il y distribue le label Everest, qui reprenait les disques de la Library Of Congress, et aussi Picwick, mais ronge son frein : "*Les licences, c'était assez frustrant pour quelqu'un qui aime la musique. Avec BYG, j'ai vraiment commencé à produire*". La rencontre en 1967 avec Jean-Luc Young, alors directeur artistique chez Barclay, sera décisive, et fortuite : "*J'ai rencontré Jean Karakos dans la rue à Paris*" nous a confié Young depuis Londres où il réside aujourd'hui. "*Je sortais du bureau de Lucien Morisse* (alors directeur des programmes d'Europe 1 et fondateur du label Disc'AZ – nda) *quand j'ai vu un mec avec un camion rempli de disques devant le bureau, il semblait fournir des disques pour Disc'AZ. C'était Jean Karakos. Pendant qu'il faisait ses va-et-vient, j'ai regardé dans le camion, j'ai attendu qu'il revienne et on a fait connaissance. Jean a vu ce que je produisais, des artistes actuels, des jeunes en devenir, c'était de la musique du moment, et il s'est intéressé à ça et s'est dit qu'on allait faire quelque chose ensemble avec ces nouvelles musiques tendances. Le même jour, Jean m'a présenté Fernand Borruso, qui était à la tête de Saravah. Il m'a emmené le voir pour lui montrer ce que je faisais dans la musique.*" Créé par Pierre Barouh, Saravah est alors un label dédié aux musiques de films, et Borruso est un ami de longue date de Karakos. "*On s'est bien entendu,* poursuit Young. *On était désormais liés ensemble. C'est allé vite. Les trois mousquetaires.*" Le bouddha qui orne le logo de BYG, est inspiré d'une statue que Borruso possède sur son bureau. Le producteur d'origine tunisienne ne restera pourtant pas longtemps au sein du label, qu'il quittera de façon amicale au lendemain de mai 1968, pour se consacrer à ses autres projets, notamment d'artistes qu'il souhaite développer pour Saravah, comme Brigitte Fontaine. De son côté, BYG met un peu de temps avant de produire ses propres artistes. L'affaire JOC s'étant dissolue avec son mariage, Karakos continue à faire fonctionner son réseau de soldeurs. Les archives de Riverside (du jazz des années 1920-1940) sont éditées par le BYG sous la série "Archive Of Jazz", et le label prend en licence Savoy et


Archie Shepp et Jean-Luc Young

Photos DR


Art Ensemble Of Chicago







publie ainsi des albums de Charlie Parker, John Coltrane et Charles Mingus sous le nom de "Jazz Masters Serie". La première véritable production de BYG sera le groupe blues rock français Alan Jack Civilisation, produit par Giorgio Gomelsky, producteur emblématique du Swinging London et manager des Yardbirds, qu'il connaissait par l'entremise de Brigitte Guichard (future coordinatrice d'Amougies). Un 45 tours ("Shame On You"), puis un album ("Bluesy Mind") qui ne marchent pas vraiment. Karakos l'imputera plus tard aux abus de LSD du pianiste pour son échec.

Coup de génie

Ce n'est que lorsque le label lancera sa série "Actuel" — du nom du magazine underground de l'époque — qu'il prendra son essor et trouvera son identité, son âme free jazz et avant-gardiste. À l'époque, "Actuel" se veut le pendant français de l' "International Times" de Londres ou "Oz" de New York, des magazines de contre-culture aux idées avant-gardistes marquées à l'extrême gauche. Un fanzine qui se déplie en accordéon, imprimé et diffusé en indépendant, dont le rédacteur en chef est Claude Delcloo, lui-même batteur de jazz versé dans le free. La rencontre avec le musicien sera décisive. C'est ainsi qu'en juillet 1969, ce dernier et le photographe Jacques Bisceglia, grands fans de jazz, évoquent devant Karakos le fait qu'ils se rendent au Festival Pan African d'Alger, où jouent les leaders de la scène jazz avant-gardiste. Karakos sait que Philippe Constantin, qui désire monter un label free-jazz pour EMI, s'y rend pour rencontrer les artistes. Il échafaude alors un plan pour accueillir les artistes à la sortie de l'aéroport, les héberger à l'hôtel George V grâce à une des combines dont il avait le secret, et les faire signer sur son label. A l'époque, les artistes de la communauté afro-américaine subissent aux Etats-Unis le contrecoup des émeutes de Watts de 1965 qui ont essaimé partout dans le pays en 1968, et ils se voient fermer beaucoup de portes. La France ayant toujours été un havre de paix pour les jazzmen noirs, notamment entre les deux guerres, ceux-ci saisissent l'opportunité de quitter l'Amérique de Nixon. Le coup de génie du label fut alors d'inviter tous ces artistes — le saxophoniste Archie Shepp, l'Art Ensemble Of Chicago — à enregistrer des morceaux dans le studio parisien Davout durant des sessions marathon (où même Delcloo participera, tout comme Didier Malherbe, saxophoniste de Gong) avant de repartir aux Etats-Unis. Il résulte de ces deux mois de furia free jazz des dizaines de disques saisis sur le vif qui forment le cœur du catalogue jazz de la série "Actuel" de BYG, qui reste aujourd'hui la contribution la plus prestigieuse de label à l'histoire de la musique. La série "Actuel" — qui comptera en tout 52 références — est alors lancée, avec des pochettes imaginées par Claude Caudron avec des photos magnifiques de Jacques Bisceglia. Entre 1969 et 1971 y seront publiés des albums d'artistes avant-gardistes venus de divers horizons : free-jazz (Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Sun Ra



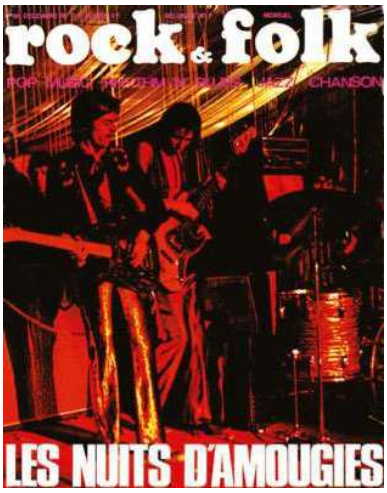


Photo courtesy of Christian Rose–DR

Daniel Lalou, Daevid Allen et Didier Malherbe

Ce festival est un des plus mythiques regroupements de freaks de la fin des années soixante

& His Solar-Myth Arkestra, Archie Shepp), électronique (Pierre Mariétan et Terry Riley, Musica Elettronica Viva), progressif (Daevid Allen & Gong, Ame Son, Freedom), avec Claude Delcloo comme entremetteur entre le label et les artistes de la scène underground. "*On pressait en général entre 2 000 et 4 000 vinyles par titre et on vendait la quasi-totalité*" se remémore aujourd'hui Jean-Luc Young.



Festival mythique de l'underground européen

Le projet prend de l'ampleur. Le magazine "Actuel" est racheté par BYG, qui décide de lancer en octobre un festival au nom du magazine qui serait l'équivalent de Monterey et Woodstock, mais en Europe continentale. Le début d'une histoire légendaire, mais aussi de galères pour le label. Le festival doit à l'origine avoir lieu à Paris, aux Halles, mais la crainte d'un déferlement hippie un an à peine après Mai 68 donne des sueurs froides aux autorités. Des Halles, le festival est délocalisé à Vincennes, puis Saint-Cloud, puis Courtrai, en Belgique, avant une nouvelle relocalisation à Amougies, petit village à proximité de la frontière franco-belge, décidée à peine plus d'une semaine avant la date de l'événement, du 24 au 28 octobre 1969. Pour la programmation, le label veut frapper fort et invite Frank Zappa qui vient juste de dissoudre la première mouture des Mothers Of Invention. Il accepte toutefois de venir en qualité de maître de cérémonie, façon Monsieur Loyal qui interviendrait sur scène avec certains artistes et emmène Don Van Vliet, alias Captain Beefheart, dans ses bagages. Trois cents musiciens jouent durant cinq nuits, sous un chapiteau planté dans un champ au milieu de la boue. Parmi eux, le catalogue Saravah de la série "Actuel" de BYG, évidemment, tels Gong, Ame Son, Don Cherry, Archie Shepp, Alan Silva, Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Aynsley Dunbar, mais aussi des pointures tels que les Pretty Things, Zoo, Soft Machine, Caravan, The Nice, Ten Years After, Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band et bien sûr Pink Floyd, dont la performance est restée légendaire, notamment parce que Frank Zappa participe au morceau "Interstellar Overdrive". Succès critique, célébré dans Rock&Folk n°35 par Paul Alessandrini dans un papier demeuré célèbre nommé "Les Folles Nuits d'Amougies", ce festival est un des plus mythiques regroupements de freaks de la fin des années soixante. Pourtant, on sera loin de l'affluence de Woodstock ou du festival de l'île de Wight qui ont eu lieu l'été précédent et attiré des centaines de milliers de personnes. En raison de sa délocalisation tardive et de son choix de site, le festival n'attire que… 80 000 personnes. Moment de liberté fantastique, formidable métissage de pop et de jazz, instant clef de l'underground européen, l'événement est un moment de symbiose magnifique et une "*expérience humaine incroyable*" selon Young, mais aussi fiasco financier qui met les comptes de BYG dans le rouge. Le label espère qu'un documentaire réalisé par Jérôme Laperrousaz et Jean-Noël Roy, en deux parties nommées "Amougies Music Power" et "Amougies European Music Revolution" — "*Deux films libres sur un festival interdit !*" dit la publicité — (qui seront ensuite rassemblés en un seul film), aidera l'événement à atteindre la reconnaissance de Woodstock et sauver les



Amougies

Photo courtesy of Jean Paul Margniac-DR

Le public hippie refuse de payer les trente francs de droits d'entrée et prend d'assaut le site







finances, mais ce dernier est retiré de l'affiche pour des raisons de droits de certains groupes concernés, notamment Pink Floyd. Seules quelques salles parisiennes l'auront diffusé, et aujourd'hui il n'est possible de voir ces films que dans un cadre de recherche auprès du CNC.

Fiasco

Le label poursuit toutefois son aventure, publiant des albums d'artistes aussi influents que Sun Ra ou Fontaine & Areski (le sublime "L'Incendie"), et de nouveaux enregistrements sont réalisés au Studio 104 de l'ORTF (notamment d'Alan Silva). En 1970, Jean-François Bizot est nommé rédacteur en chef d'"Actuel" qui devient un périodique et sort de l'amateurisme éclairé. La même année, BYG tente, pour le lancement du magazine, un deuxième festival nommé Popanalia prévu à Biot (près d'Antibes) avec Joan Baez, Pink Floyd, Eric Clapton, Traffic, Kevin Ayers et Plastic Ono



Band (entre autres) à l'affiche. Un beau programme, pour un festival qui ne se déroule pas comme prévu. Le public hippie, venu en nombre, refuse de payer les trente francs de droits d'entrée et prend d'assaut le site qui devient impraticable. Quelques artistes jouent, dont Joan Baez, mais le festival tourne court. On ne sait si ce fiasco est à l'origine de la disparition de BYG, mais le label continuera à publier des disques dans la collection "Actuel" jusqu'en octobre 1971, avec "Camembert Electrique" de Gong comme dernière référence, avant de déposer le bilan et de cesser toute activité en 1975. Jean-Luc Young part pour Londres, où il fonde Charly, spécialisé dans les rééditions. Jean Karakos lance Tapioca, puis part à New York fonder le label punk Celluloid (entre autres aventures). Ils ne travailleront plus jamais ensemble. Si Karakos est décédé en 2017, Young vient de relancer BYG et en réédite aujourd'hui le magnifique catalogue qui demeure, cinquante ans après, plus pertinent que jamais. ★

Robert Wyatt, l'interview inédite - Jazzmania.be - 10 août 2022

JazzMania
ANTHOLO-JAZZ

ROBERT WYATT
L'INTERVIEW INÉDITE

Publié par Jean-Pierre Goffin

C'est à l'occasion de la remise du titre de docteur honoris causa décerné en 2009 par l'Université de Liège que Jean-Pierre Goffin a rencontré Robert Wyatt.

Cette interview n'avait encore jamais été publiée !

Quel a été votre premier émoi musical ?
Robert Wyatt : Honnêtement, c'est difficile à dire… Mais je me souviens bien appeler ma mère alors qu'elle était à l'étage. J'étais dans un petit lit et elle chantait (il chante) « Mummy, Mummy, Mummy, Mummy » et cet intervalle m'est resté dans la tête. Je pense l'avoir utilisé dans des compositions et plus particulièrement quand j'ai écouté Miles Davis plus tard… Les notes qu'il choisissait m'ont rappelé les appels de ma mère… Je pense que les premières chansons qui m'aient attirées sont les chants de Noël que je chantais avec mon père (il chante…). Mais je ne sais plus les chanter aujourd'hui ! Il y avait « Christmas Carol », si je me souviens bien.

Entre la musique de Soft Machine et vos œuvres récentes, qu'est ce qui a changé dans votre façon d'appréhender la musique ?
R.W. : Je pense que les sons que j'ai dans ma tête n'ont pas beaucoup changé depuis cette époque, les harmonies non plus. J'ai toujours essayé de trouver de la fraîcheur dans mes harmonies, des choses simples comme dans la folk music. Mais en y réfléchissant bien, je pense que la grande différence réside dans le fait que quand j'ai débuté, j'ai essayé d'être aussi intéressant que possible. Alors que maintenant, j'essaie simplement de chercher de belles notes… C'est cela oui, dans un sens la musique que je joue maintenant est plus primitive que celle que je jouais il y a trente ans… Quand on est jeune, on veut démontrer quelque chose, même si il n'était pas question de sentiments, d'idées élevées, je n'étais pas comme ça. Je n'ai pas eu une formation scolaire, ni de qualification. J'étais fait pour un métier manuel et quand j'ai eu la chance de jouer comme batteur, j'ai effectué un job pour lequel j'étais payé, et beaucoup mieux que tous ceux que j'avais exercés auparavant ! Jouer pour des gens qui dansent est excitant et vous donne un grand sens de la communication. Ça reste un job pour moi car je joue, et si ce n'était plus un métier sans doute que je resterais au stade d'imaginer simplement de la musique. J'ai besoin de la pression pour imaginer des choses.

Beaucoup de gens ont dit que Soft Machine était la réponse européenne au groupe de Miles Davis. Êtes-vous d'accord avec cela ?
R.W. : J'y ajouterais l'influence de John Coltrane, l'utilisation des modes et des gammes, mais dans un sens je voudrais dire que quand John Coltrane est décédé, dans mon esprit, c'était comme un arbre géant dans la forêt qui tombait, qui laissait de l'espace à d'autres



Robert Wyatt © Luc Pilmeyer

pour leur donner une chance de grandir et de recevoir directement la lumière du soleil. La plupart d'entre nous ont grandi dans les espaces laissés par des géants qui tombaient et qui laissaient de l'espace et des possibilités. Dans mon cas, l'écho d'Elvin Jones a été très important, il n'y avait aucune raison d'être gêné d'utiliser cet espace parce que c'était ce que nous écoutions et ce que nous aimions. Ces géants m'ont donné une idée vers où aller avec la musique et que faire avec. Dans la musique de Coltrane, il y avait des éléments de transe qui m'ont inspiré… En fin de compte je ne peux pas dire que je suis européen dans ma musique car le jazz existe grâce aux noirs américains et nous leur sommes reconnaissants. Je suis heureux d'être entouré d'Archie Shepp et d'Anthony Braxton aujourd'hui (ils recevaient le même titre que Wyatt le même jour – NDLR). Braxton est un mélange de toutes sortes d'influences et je dois beaucoup à cette musique qui représente une sorte d'élastique intellectuel qui tend vers le rock et le rhythm and blues. Et ce qui est grand, c'est que cette musique est toujours vivante quand on la joue aujourd'hui. Je ne vis pas dans une communauté géographique, j'en ai une mais elle n'est pas géographique. J'apprécie que l'Université de Liège prenne des risques en nous honorant, c'est inhabituel et je pense qu'ils sont courageux de faire ceci.



Robert Wyatt, Dick Annegarn, Archie Shepp & Anthony Braxton © Luc Pilmeyer



Robert Wyatt & Alfreda Benge © Luc Pilmeyer

Merci à Luc Pilmeyer pour les photos.

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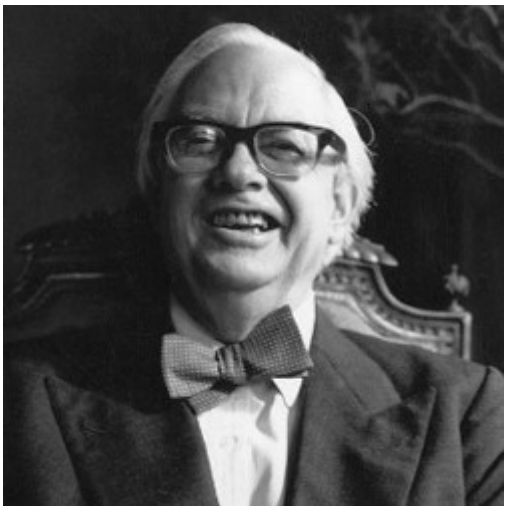
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Robert Wyatt: tout ce que vous ne deviniez pas ! - Jazzmania.be - 8 août 2022

OUT OF THE BLUE / JAZZ

ROBERT WYATT: TOUT CE QUE VOUS NE DEVINIEZ PAS !

JazzMania



Baron Wyatt de Weeford (source Wikipedia)

Beaucoup de musiciens font l'objet d'un culte. Comme les Saints d'une religion improbable. Les cas les plus marquants sont bien entendu ceux du « Club des 27 », à savoir Robert Johnson, Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain ou Amy Winehouse pour les plus célèbres ou du moins les plus cités… en tout cas auxquels il faut ajouter Alan « Blind Owl » Wilson (Canned Heat), Ron « Pigpen » McKernan (Grateful Dead), Dave Alexander (The Stooges), D. Boon (Minutemen), Jean-Michel Basquiat (peintre mais aussi musicien de Gray, groupe de noise/no wave, ce qu'on a tendance à ignorer) et quelques autres encore… dont un belge (oui oui !), à savoir Dennis Wielemans, batteur de Girls in Hawaii. Overdoses, accidents de voiture, suicides, meurtres, noyade (au singulier, pour Brian Jones), etc. Celui qui n'avait jamais entendu parler du « Club des 27 » vient de comprendre de quoi il s'agissait. Enfin, j'espère…

Par contre, les musiciens qui jouissent d'un culte de leur vivant sont nettement plus rares. Même si certains sont décédés aujourd'hui. Mais pas tous, heureusement. Je pense ici par exemple à Frank Zappa, Genesis P-Orridge, Captain Beefheart, Peter Hammill et, vu que c'est le sujet de cet article, à Robert Wyatt. Sans oublier Hendrix et Morrison, de nouveau. Bien entendu, le jazz a aussi ses icônes, comme Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Charlie Mingus pour ne citer qu'eux. Et, comme les religions, les cultes se partagent, se pratiquent ou font schisme… Mais ça, on s'en fout.

Histoires de famille

Le 8 Pluviôse de l'an CLIII du calendrier républicain, à savoir le 28 janvier 1945, naquit l'actrice Marthe Keller à Bâle, en Suisse. C'était un dimanche, durant la période zodiacale des verseaux, mais cela ne nous intéresse pas. Car ce qui nous intéresse, là, tout de suite, s'est passé exactement le même jour en Angleterre, à savoir à Bristol, approximativement

à 850 kilomètres au nord-ouest de la capitale culturelle de la Suisse : la journaliste de la BBC Honor Wyatt donne naissance à un garçon qu'elle et George Ellidge, le père, décident d'appeler Robert. Pourquoi pas, après tout…

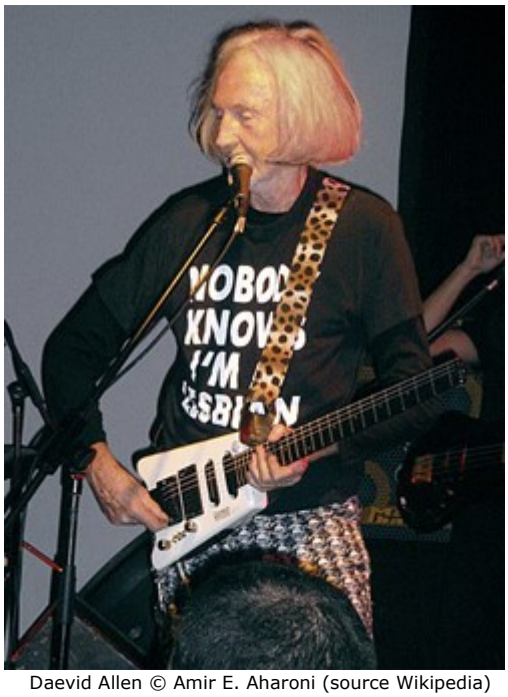
Résumer rien que l'enfance du petit Robert serait une entreprise aussi vaste que de réécrire un dictionnaire. On pourrait parler pendant des pages et des pages de ses frères et sœurs, demi-frères et demi-sœurs et de ses rapports avec eux ainsi qu'avec ses parents directs ou même un peu plus lointains qui ont, entre autre, influencé sa vie et ses prises de position politiques qui, je vous rassure tout de suite, virent plutôt tendance gauche, voire communiste (rappelez-vous la pochette du « Little Red Book » de Matching Mole – dont je vais certainement reparler un peu plus tard et n'hésitez pas à m'envoyer des lettres d'injures des fois que j'oublierais !), en sachant que le cousin de sa mère n'était autre que le politicien Woodrow Lyle Wyatt, Baron Wyatt de Weeford, proche de la Queen Mom, ayant commencé sa carrière avec les travaillistes pour la terminer, oh horreur, aux côtés de l'Iron Lady, la sinistre et maléfique sorcière du nord conservatrice, Margaret Thatcher.

Julian Glover, l'acteur que l'on a pu voir dans « Rien que pour vos yeux » (le 12ème James Bond) ou dans « Indiana Jones et la dernière Croisade » (le rôle du cruel Donovan) est, par leur mère commune, son demi-frère ainé de 10 ans. Mark Ellidge, son autre demi-frère (par son père) était un photographe de presse cinq ans plus âgé que lui. Il jouera du piano sur plusieurs morceaux du premier album solo de Robert, « The End of an Ear » en 1970.

Très jeune, alors qu'il est encore à la Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys de Canterbury, Robert sera initié à la musique par son père George lorsque celui-ci rejoindra (enfin) Honor Wyatt après 6 ans d'absence. George, en plus d'être psychologue industriel dans l'Angleterre d'après-guerre, était aussi pianiste classique. Il a d'ailleurs enregistré quelques 78 tours. Il emmènera Robert à l'opéra et à des concerts au Royal Festival Hall de Londres avant même qu'il n'ait 10 ans. Très tôt donc, il se familiarisera avec les compositeurs classiques du XXème siècle comme Bartók, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Britten et d'autres.

Mais c'est surtout au jazz que son père s'intéresse. En particulier à Fats Waller et Duke Ellington. Son frère Mark aussi s'intéressait au jazz, plus contemporain que celui de son père, il faut dire… À eux deux, ils feront figure de « Profs de Jazz » pour Robert.

L'éducation de Robert ne fut pas des plus conventionnelles : ses parents étant ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui des bobos ! Après quelques déménagements, la clique Wyatt-Ellidge débarque à Lydden dans le Kent, à une vingtaine de kilomètres de Canterbury et à moins d'une heure trente de marche pour arriver au pub The Eight Bells, Cannon Street à Douvres, pour y vivre dans une grande maison qui accueille entre autres un co-locataire qui n'est autre que l'australien Christopher David Allen, plus connu sous le nom de Daevid Allen, allias Bert Camembert, Dingo Virgin ou encore Divided Alien. Franchement, ça devait être vachement cool d'avoir Daevid comme coloc !


Daevid Allen © Amir E. Aharoni (source Wikipedia)

Puis Robert apprend également la batterie avec le jazzman américain George Niedorf que Daevid a rencontré à Paris et emmené avec lui à Lydden. Franchement, ça devait être vachement cool de vivre à Lydden dans ces années-là ! En 1962, Robert et son prof de batterie partent pour Majorque et y rencontrent le poète Robert Graves.

De Wilde Flowers à Soft Machine

Un an plus tard, Robert rentre en Angleterre et se joint à Daevid pour former le Daevid Allen Trio avec le bassiste Hugh Hopper. Mais le fantasque Allen se barre à nouveau pour Paris, laissant Robert et Hugh qui en profitent pour former les Wilde Flowers avec leurs potes Kevin et Richard, respectivement Ayers et Sinclair. Et Hugh demande à son petit frère

Brian de les rejoindre pour tenir la guitare et le saxo. Le groupe n'existera officiellement qu'en 1964 et sera considéré comme le premier des groupes à faire partie de ce qu'on appelle l'école de Canterbury ou la Canterbury scene. On peut qualifier leur musique de pop-psychédélique et expérimentale à la limite du rock progressif.



Pas d'album durant leur existence – jusqu'en 1967 – mais deux sessions d'enregistrement en 1965 qui ne seront éditées en CD qu'en 1994 (Voiceprint – VP123CD – UK) sous le titre prévisible de « The Wilde Flowers » incluant 3 morceaux de Zobe, un autre groupe dans lequel jouait Brian Hopper.

En 1965, après le départ de Kevin Ayers, c'est Robert lui-même qui assure les vocaux principaux. Puis il quitte lui-même le groupe moins de 2 ans plus tard, invité par Kevin et Daevid à rejoindre leur nouveau groupe, Soft Machine.

À noter que, de la séparation des Wilde Flowers, naîtra également Caravan, un autre groupe emblématique de la Canterbury scene, fondé par Richard Sinclair (claviers) et son cousin David (Sinclair aussi – à la basse) avec, au départ, deux autres anciens membres des WF, à savoir Pye Hastings (guitare) et Richard Coughlan (batterie). Avec Soft Machine, Caravan est un groupe majeur de l'école de Canterbury. Robert est donc maintenant le batteur attitré du Soft Machine.

À la fin de la première partie de leur tournée avec le Jimi Hendrix Experience aux États-Unis – il faut dire qu'Hendrix et le Soft Machine ont le même producteur, à savoir l'illustre Bryan James Chandler, plus connu sous le nom « Chas » Chandler, l'ancien bassiste mythique des mythiques Animals et qui deviendra aussi étrangement le producteur de Slade quelques années plus tard – ils se retrouvent à glander à New York en avril 1968 (j'avais 11 ans) et, plutôt que de s'emmerder à faire des mots croisés dans leurs chambres d'hôtel, ils décident d'en profiter pour aller faire un tour au 321 West 44th Street, adresse qui abrite les Record Plant Studios. Ils pourront donc honorer une partie de leur contrat avec Probe Records en enregistrant un album. Il y a là bien entendu Robert Wyatt à la batterie et aux vocaux, Kevin Ayers, basse et vocaux et Mike Ratledge, orgue et piano, avec quelques invités comme Hugh Hopper et le trio The Cake pour les chœurs sur un morceau (Jeanette Jacobs, Barbara Morillo et Eleanor Barooshian). Étrangement, on ne retrouve pas Daevid Allen.



Mais est-ce vraiment si étrange pour un tel personnage ? En fait, si Allen n'est pas à NYC avec le reste de la bande, c'est qu'il s'est fait retirer son visa pour traverser la Manche… « Interdit de séjour en Grande Bretagne… Quelle merde ! » peste Daevid. Il doit donc, à son corps défendant j'imagine, quitter Soft Machine pour des raisons sérieusement indépendantes de sa volonté. Il en profite alors pour former Protogong qui deviendra plus tard le Banana Moon Band, puis Gong tout court après pas mal de péripéties… On connaît l'apôtre, maintenant. Faut dire qu'il a eu une révélation lors d'une nuit de pleine lune en 66' où il a vu les Octave Doctors, des intelligences supérieures qui le regardaient jouer en live devant un public rock tout en testant une connexion mentale avec ces êtres qui reflétaient l'amour. Mais ça, c'est une autre histoire…

Petite parenthèse pour revenir au Soft Machine de la fin des années 60 : on peut voir une interview et des extraits du set de Soft Machine au Jazz and Pop Festival de Bilzen le 22 août 1969 sur youtube. Et cela vaut franchement la peine… Really !

Bientôt seul… Mais d'abord la machine molle

Mais revenons à notre petit Robert qui, faut le dire, n'est pas très content. En 1970, Soft Machine revient d'une tournée on va dire poliment chaotique, pour ne pas dire carrément merdique. De plus, il en a marre que ses idées musicales passent chaque fois à la trappe. Bon, il tient quand même le coup jusqu'à l'enregistrement du quatrième album qui, faut bien le dire, n'est plus que de la vulgaire jazz-fusion insipide. Soft Machine devient donc

aussi inintéressant que le Pink Floyd sans Syd Barrett. On est loin maintenant – c'est mon avis et je le partage – de la Canterbury scene et on se demande, quand on entend cet album, si l'ordre de la Grande Gidouille correspond toujours bien à la musique que fait le groupe depuis le troisième album. Faut dire que le Soft Machine a reçu l'insigne honneur d'être reconnu au Collège de Pataphysique quelques années plus tôt.

Fâché, Robert quitte le groupe. Il participe d'abord à Centipede, un big band de jazz-fusion, puis se produit avec Jean-Luc Ponty, Sugarcane Harris, Michal Urbaniak ou Terje Rypdal entre autres puis fonde enfin et en 1972 son groupe à lui, Matching Mole.



Matching Mole, Matching Mole ? Drôle de nom pour un groupe ! Pourquoi pas Libellule ou Papillon ? Ben oui. Si Soft Machine faisait sans le moindre doute référence au roman de William S. Burroughs que Daevid Allen avait eu l'occasion de voir à Paris, Matching Mole en est juste la transcription phonétique pure et simple : machine molle.

Mais il existe une autre interprétation du nom, ou plutôt un double sens : l'idée de mole (taupe) faisant référence aux Trotskystes qui infiltraient les partis politiques de gauche traditionnels. On savait déjà que Wyatt était loin d'être centriste et encore moins de droite, mais c'est avec le design de la pochette du second album, « Little Red Record », qu'on se rend compte sans la moindre ambiguïté des idées politiques de Wyatt. La face avant de la pochette se présente comme une affiche de propagande maoïste dans laquelle les membres du groupe posent comme tout modèle chinois qui se respecte pour les publicitaires politiques de l'époque du Grand Timonier. Mitrailleuse et drapeau rouge. La face arrière de la pochette arbore, elle, une étoile rouge qui ne prête à aucune confusion.

À noter que le « Matching Mole's Little Red Record » (1972) est produit par Robert Fripp (King Crimson) et que Brian Eno (Roxy Music à l'époque) y fait une apparition. L'intelligentsia musicale londonienne se serre les coudes, on va dire… Musicalement, Matching Mole renoue aussi avec la Canterbury scene que Soft Machine avait négligée depuis son troisième album.

Entre-temps, Robert avait déjà sorti son premier album solo en 1970 : « The End of an Ear » qu'il a enregistré alors qu'il était « en vacances », rapport à Soft Machine. On y retrouve son pote Elton Dean qui avait rejoint SM pour leur troisième album, ainsi que David Sinclair, un vieux de la vielle de l'époque Wilde Flowers et qui avait rejoint son cousin Richard pour fonder Caravan – si vous aviez bien suivi, je n'aurais pas été obligé de le rappeler, n'est-ce pas ?



Là, Matching Mole commence à battre de l'aile et se dissout petit à petit. Robert se met à écrire des trucs qui pourraient lui servir pour un nouvel album solo mais, le 1er juin 1973, à l'anniversaire de Gilli Smyth (de Gong) chez June Campbell Cramer (peintre et poétesse), la merde totale : mort bourré, il tombe du quatrième étage de l'appart de Lady June sur Hall Road à Maida Vale (quartier vachement huppé à l'ouest de Regent's Park et au nord de Hyde Park à Londres). Il se casse la colonne vertébrale. Malheureusement, ça arrive. Y en a d'autres qui se noient dans les piscines, n'est-ce pas, Mister Brian Jones ?

Wyatt aurait raconté en 2012 sur Radio 4 de la BBC qu'il avait viré vachement alcoolo lors de la tournée Soft Machine + Hendrix dont je parlais plus haut. Apparemment, Mitch Mitchell et Noel Redding étaient plutôt genre boit-sans-soif. Il a aussi fréquenté Keith Moon, son collègue batteur des Who qui, grand connaisseur, lui a fait découvrir les effets particuliers de l'alternance shot tequila / Southern Comfort – le bourbon sucré que Janis Joplin s'enfilait sur scène… Wyatt dit aussi, et je veux bien le croire, que son « accident » lui a, d'une certaine manière, sauvé la vie. Qu'il serait certainement mort plus tôt, rapport à ses excès ou à ses comportements complètement imprudents.

Toujours est-il que le petit Robert, lui, s'en est vachement mal sorti : paraplégique, paralysé des orteils à la taille, il est depuis PMR comme il est d'usage de le dire aujourd'hui. Accident qui l'a empêché, j'imagine, de participer à l'album « Lady June's Linguistic Leprosy

» paru en novembre 1974 avec comme musiciens rien moins que Kevin Ayers, Brian Eno, Pyp Pile, et j'en passe…

On n'a pas parlé de Wyatt Aid à l'époque (les « Aids » n'étaient pas encore à la mode dans ces temps-là, le Live et le Band ne sont, eux, arrivés que dans les années 80'), mais plusieurs initiatives ont vu le jour. Le Pink Floyd a donné deux benefit concerts le même jour, le 4 novembre 1974, avec le soutien de John Peel et du Soft Machine. Ce qui a quand même rapporté à Mister Wyatt la modique somme de £ 10,000. Et, vu le taux de la livre sterling en novembre 1974, cela faisait quand même à peu près € 20,490. À replacer aussi dans l'époque ! De plus, pas mal d'amis de sa femme, la compositrice et peintre Alfreda Benge, y ont été de leur portefeuille, comme Jean Shrimpton qui leur a offert une voiture (Mrs Shrimpton a été une figure emblématique du Swinging London et fût la mannequin la mieux payée au monde dans les années 60) ou encore l'actrice Julie Christie qui leur a prêté son appart londonien que le couple lui a ensuite acheté. Pas mal les amis, quand même, non ?

Bon, retour aux choses sérieuses : je parlais du Pink Floyd un peu avant. Il faut rappeler que sur l'album de Syd Barrett « The Madcap laughs » (enregistré entre mai 68 et août 69), on retrouve tout le Soft Machine de l'époque en guest, à savoir Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge et le petit Robert, bien entendu.

Pour ce dernier, la batterie, c'est donc fini. Il entame alors sa carrière solo. En 1974, il sort son deuxième album solo, « Rock Bottom », produit par Nick Mason, le batteur du Floyd. On y retrouve Mike Oldfield, Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair, Gary Windo, Laurie Allan, Mongezi Feza, Ivor Cutler et, j'ai gardé le meilleur pour la fin, Fred Frith. Robert y joue des claviers, de la slide guitar, des percussions et fait la plus grande partie des vocaux. Sa femme Alfreda s'y trouve aussi pour les vocaux sur un morceau.

Une bonne partie des morceaux avaient déjà été écrite au début 73 à Venise avant l'accident. Il y séjournait avec Alfreda qui travaillait comme assistante monteuse sur le film « Don't Look Now » de Nicolas Roeg, bien qu'elle ne soit pas créditée au générique. « Rock Bottom » qui a reçu en 1974 le grand Prix du Disque de l'Académie Charles-Cros est considéré par beaucoup comme un incontournable. Alain Dister, le journaliste cofondateur de Rock & Folk le considère comme, je cite, « l'un des chefs-d'œuvre les plus originaux de l'histoire du rock ».

La même année, Wyatt sort une reprise de « I'm a Believer », second single des Monkees, morceau écrit et composé par Neil Diamond. Ce sera pour Robert un petit succès commercial : il restera cinq semaines dans les charts UK et atteindra la 29ème place.



L'année suivante voit sortir « Ruth Is Stranger than Richard », (sorte de jeu de mots avec « truth is stranger than fiction ») un nouvel album toujours produit par Mason. Aucune composition personnelle, juste des arrangements de morceaux composés par ses amis (Phil Manzanera, Hugh Hopper, Fred Frith, …). Les influences deviennent plus jazz avec quelques colorations africanisantes.

Durant les années 70, on le voit travailler avec un paquet de musiciens et groupe de tous bords : Henry Cow, Hatfield and the North, Carla Bley, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera (Wyatt participe d'ailleurs à son premier album solo), Michael Mantler (pour qui il récite des poèmes d'Edward Gorey sur l'album The Hapless Child, avec, entre autres, Steve Swallow, Jack DeJohnette, Carla Bley, Terje Rypdal, dont les cinq premiers morceaux sont mixés par Nick. Nick qui ? Mais Nick Mason, bien entendu !

En 1982, il enregistre une version de « Shipbuilding » d'Elvis Costello (qui sera présent pour les chœurs dans le morceau). Cette chanson traite de manière ironique le fait que la guerre, celle des Malouines, en l'occurrence, apporte pas mal d'argent aux entreprises de constructions navales militaires. Le single n'a pas eu de succès directement, mais à sa réédition, huit mois plus tard, il entre dans les charts UK et atteint la 35ème place en y restant six semaines et le NME (New Musical Express) l'a élu 3ème meilleur morceau de l'année 1982. L'interprétation de ce morceau est en soi une prise de position de Wyatt qui, depuis quelques années, politise ses projets. Il est d'ailleurs devenu porte-parole du CPB, Communist Party of Britain.

C'est aussi en 1982 qu'il sort sa compilation « Nothing Can Stop Us », ouvertement

politisée, avec des compositions personnelles comme « Born Again Cretin » (encore un jeu de mot sur « borna gain christians »), des traditionnels comme « Red Flag » ou des reprises comme « Stalin Wasn't Stallin' » du Golden Gate Quartet et « Strange Fruit » immortalisé par Billie Holiday. Et même « At Last I'm Free » de Chic ! Why not, après tout ?



Après une BO de film (« The Animals Film ») en 1982, Robert sort quelques nouveaux albums : « Old Rottenhat » en 1985, « Dondestan » en 1991, son meilleur album depuis « Rock Bottom » pour lequel sa femme Alfreda a écrit cinq poèmes (c'est d'ailleurs elle qui s'occupe de la plupart de ses pochettes), puis « Shleep » en 1997. En 1998, Wyatt sort « Dondestan (Revisited) », nouvelles interprétations des morceaux dans un ordre différent. « Cuckooland » en 2003, « Comicopera » quatre ans plus tard clôturent sa discographie solo.

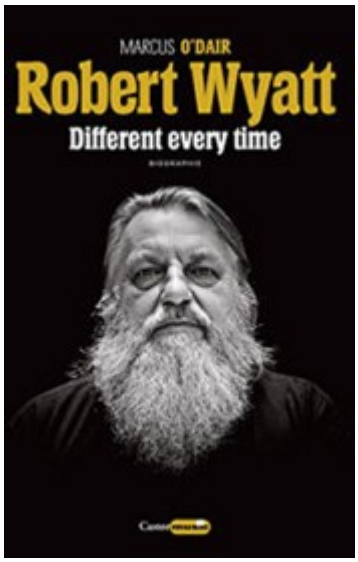
On le retrouvera aussi un peu partout à toutes les époques, avec David Gilmour, Gilad Atzmon, Björk, Pascal Comelade, Ben Watt, Bertrand Burgalat (il chante « This Summer Night » écrit par sa femme Alfie sur l'album « Chéri B.B. » en 2007), Charlie Haden, Hot Chip, Epic Soundtracks, ou tous ceux dont j'ai déjà parlé plus haut… Et j'en passe, et des dizaines.

On ne compte plus le nombre de ses participations à des albums-projets divers. Ni même les compilations de ses morceaux, comme celle sortie en 2014 « Different Every Time » en deux volumes, le premier « Ex Machina » qui reprend un morceau de Soft Machine, deux de Matching Mole et dix autres de ses projets personnels et le deuxième volume « Benign Dictatorships » qui reprend 17 morceaux auxquels il a participé en tant qu'invité.

Cela fait aujourd'hui huit ans que Robert Wyatt a pris sa retraite. Comme il le dit lui-même, il y a une fierté à s'arrêter… Il est toujours marié depuis 1974 à Alfreda « Alfie » Benge qui a fait, comme je le disais plus haut, les pochettes de ses albums solos, a illustré deux livres pour enfants écrits par Ivor Cutler. Née en Autriche cinq ans avant son mari, elle a étudié la peinture à la Camberwell Art School, le graphisme à la London School of Printing, le cinéma à la RCA.

Et pour terminer (enfin !) il faut savoir que Mister Robert Wyatt est, depuis 2009, Docteur Honoris Causa de l'Université de… Liège ! Eh oui !

Jean-Pierre Devresse



À lire absolument si l'on veut en savoir plus :

Marcus O'Dair
Robert Wyatt : Different Every Time

Traduit de l'anglais par Pauline Firla et Louis Moisan,
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Marcus O'Dair est journaliste musical pour The Guardian, The Independent et The Irish Times, et à la radio pour BBC 3 et BBC 6. Il a notamment interviewé Brian Eno, Bjork, John Cale, David Gilmour, Cecil Taylor, Nick Cave… Il est également musicien au sein du groupe Grasscut – que l'on retrouve sur la compilation Different Every Time, tiens donc !

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La voix, la chute & la cicatrice, Robert Wyatt - Poezibao - 20 janvier 2022

Poezibao

LA VOIX, LA CHUTE & LA CICATRICE

ROBERT WYATT

I

Au-delà de ce que je vais pouvoir dire, je sais déjà que j'ignore en vérité toujours tout des raisons, les vraies, les réelles qui me font, oui, en quelque sorte me contraignent à le faire, parler de Robert Wyatt, ce musicien, ce batteur, ce chanteur du groupe Soft Machine, puis de Matching Mole et qui, débutée à la fin des années soixante, poursuit sa carrière désormais seul. Robert Wyatt est à lui seul une de ces fulgurances musicales qui vous a traversé, transpercé même, mais que vous ne comprenez pas plus que cela. Car la musique que j'écoute depuis maintenant des décennies, à partir de mes dix-sept ans – l'adolescence , elle, ne connut, mais passionnément et avec érudition je crois, que la musique Pop, ainsi qu'on la nommait à l'époque – a construit un espace intérieur, celui de la représentation et de son cadre, celui des différentes tonalités de l'existence qui constituent jusqu'à aujourd'hui les repères qui me permettent du moins de croire pouvoir m'appuyer sur quelques certitudes, celle des œuvres, en suivant les indications des grands musiciens qui sont aussi, on l'oublie presque toujours et partout, de très grands penseurs. Sans ces œuvres, Nietzsche y insistait, la vie et l'existence ne vaudraient guère la peine et nous n'aurions en vérité d'autre activité que celle de plaquer notre nez sur la surface des choses, comme sur une vitre.

* * *



Robert Wyatt en 2006 - Photo Wikipédia

Certes, mais plus exactement, qu'est-ce que la musique *nous fait*, au sens propre, physique et non seulement spirituel du terme ? La question est en effet décisive et elle exige quelques précisions. Et je me suis rendu compte avec le temps que Robert Wyatt s'impose comme apportant l'une d'elle, envers et contre tout, contre les habitudes prises, mais aussi parallèlement en tout cas à toutes les voies de pensée et d'existence empruntées avec Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Bruckner, Mahler, Berg, Scriabine, Webern pour en rester aux classiques. Robert Wyatt a donc touché quelque chose en moi, Robert Wyatt m'a fait quelque chose. (Tout comme, à peine plus tard, avec fracas, ce fut un choc comparable à la découverte d'un nouveau continent, ce fut une autre blessure, une coupure, décisive celle-là, mais ça n'est pas ici le sujet, même si les choses ne sont pas, on le comprend, sans rapport : l'écoute de la Grande Fugue de Beethoven, la plupart du temps rattachée, comme son final, au quatuor à cordes op. 130, le XIII°).

C'est alors bien davantage qu'une simple trace, c'est comme une cicatrice, quelque chose qui a eu lieu et qui est toujours présent, pas seulement un souvenir par conséquent. Toujours est-il que la cicatrice serait en effet la plus belle image qui soit, parfois aussi la plus douloureuse de ce qu'est un *événement*. On emporte avec soi ce qui a marqué, et ce qui a marqué dans ce qui était marquant, ce qui suppose une appropriation subjective, une façon d'être modelé et formé par cette entaille en nous, alors que nous n'étions rien, parce que jusque-là notre conformation ne tenait qu'à l'hérédité, à une sorte de champ impersonnel qui forme notre fond. Or, il n'y a de subjectivité réelle que heurtée, modifiée, détournée, blessée. C'est, outre la difficulté de survivre qui est le propre des petits d'homme, ces êtres qui doivent composer avec leur immaturité, qui dépendent et ne reposent que sur les autres et donc sur ce qu'ils ne sont pas eux-mêmes, encore un autre défi que de s'enrouler ou non dans ce qui arrive jusqu'à y lire l'existence qui sera la sienne, non plus par nécessité, mais par reconnaissance. Très certainement, le nom de Robert Wyatt comme sa musique, qui aura accompagné jusque dans de nombreuses et longues périodes de ce qui ressemble à de l'oubli l'existence, recouvre, comme une sorte de fétichisme psychique, bien d'autres personnages, et, j'en suis tout autant persuadé, un peu toutes les musiques qui furent les miennes et celles aussi, je l'espère, qui me restent encore à connaître et peut-être à traverser. Parmi ces personnages, il y a Coltrane, Robert Wyatt était d'ailleurs lui- même un inconditionnel de sa musique au point que ses propres mélodies recouvrent (je n'ai pas trouvé trace d'une écoute admirative d'Eric Dolphy, mais je ne puis m'empêcher de songer à lui en cet instant) et même doublent ses solos, Schumann à l'évidence pour cette folie, pour la constante tonalité de chute que dégage sa musique, Schubert aussi pour l'errance et la solitude, Beethoven surtout pour son handicap, tout ce qui de lui apparaissait comme inaudible, et tant et tant d'autres ...

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Dans ce nom qui a la forme d'une question, l'interrogation est portée par une voix, qui s'adresse d'abord à elle-même, qui se cherche comme on dit. La voix de Robert Wyatt est en effet une question. Et c'est cette question que j'ai à mon tour entendue et qui m'a arrêtée. On peut donner une image de cela, certes seulement une image, mais vraiment une image : celle d'une voix devenue intemporelle, que je ne puis dater ni référer à un moment de l'existence, une voix qui se superpose à la mienne, ou bien l'inverse, en tout cas l'impression, le marquage, la cicatrice par conséquent, d'un petit garçon qui explore, et pas seulement dans ses rêves et ses cauchemars, les parois d'une grotte, ou bien d'un caveau, ou encore de quelque boyau, l'image donc se révélant, revenant d'on ne sait d'où et se précisant peu à peu, de ce petit garçon qui gratte leurs surfaces comme pour y chercher quelque chose, à vrai dire d'abord dans l'espoir qu'elles s'ouvrent et laissent passer un peu de lumière.

À y revenir et y réfléchir davantage, ce qui dans cette disposition se présente au premier plan de cette pensée, et pas seulement de la mémoire, c'est cette insistance : pourquoi Robert Wyatt ? À cause de sa voix si particulière, de quelques passages musicaux de l'album *Third* de Soft Machine, *Moon in june* surtout, à cause de l'originalité incroyable de l'album *Rock Bottom*, que j'avais pourtant presque oublié pendant des décennies, en somme de toutes ces présences, ces oublis, ces présences-oublis, ces cicatrices ? Il s'avère que c'est bien la voix qui recouvre, en tous les sens du terme, ces dimensions, qui les reprend, les dispose à nouveau, et cela au-delà et par-delà la certitude que ces albums de Robert Wyatt ont pourtant bien vieilli et qu'ils ne sont pas loin de n'être plus que des documents d'époque, plus rien ne reflétant la nôtre. Mais il reste la voix, cette voix…

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On dit qu'elle chante faux, que c'est faux, insupportablement faux… On comprend, mais c'est précisément tellement faux. Robert Wyatt tombe en enfance, ce qui n'est pas la même chose que retomber en enfance. Retomber est précisément le propre des hommes, des névrosés, de nous tous, par infantilisme, si moche, si désastreux. On le voit dans la colère, plus que jamais aujourd'hui, la dernière fois ce fut dans le nazisme, la rage, l'immaturité. Tout à l'inverse, tomber en enfance appartient à l'avenir, c'est rouvrir le langage, l'existence, c'est comme dit Deleuze, « *se refaire une naissance* ». Au fond, c'est ce que font tous les grands musiciens et écrivains. Cette enfance-là, devant, en avant, est elle-même un « monde » vers lequel toutefois peu se dirigent. Il y faut du courage. Baudelaire : « *l'artiste est une enfant* ». Cela sonne comme un impératif ou une condition plutôt que comme un constat.

Si donc Robert Wyatt chante « faux », cette fausseté est en vérité la justesse de l'enfance, sa façon à elle de gambader, de sautiller à cloche-pied dans la nature. « Faux » est un mot d'adulte. « Faux » n'est pas un terme qui appartient à la musique, sauf à la « musique », celle qui se fait, non celle qui est expression et émotion. A-t-on jamais entendu une émotion « fausse » ? (Et si elle l'est, si c'est manifeste, ça n'est plus de l'émotion). L'art de Robert Wyatt, toute proportion gardée mais comme toute grande œuvre, est à peine de « l'art ». Ce chant de l'enfance, cette voix *trouvée*, ne peut guère être référée à la trouvaille du chanteur en herbe qui d'abord l'avait cherchée et qui va se réjouir d'avoir mis au jour une voix d'artiste, celle qu'on attend de lui. Car cette voix ne relève aucunement de l'art et du reste ne tient pas à y correspondre. C'est en revanche une voix de poète si un poète est celui qui parle du monde sans être conditionné dans son langage par la reconnaissance du monde (cette voix n'attend pas d'être jugée, elle est indifférente à cet égard). Enfin, on comprend qu'elle se moque de la virtuosité et de la démonstrativité. En revanche, Robert Wyatt a percé en amont, pour *l'aval* qui en est la parution et l'expression, un chemin vers l'autre monde, non pas l'au-delà, mais celui qui ressemble à la pièce d'à côté qu'on ne connaissait pas. Or le monde est, cela le définit, ce qui ignore les pièces d'à côté dans lesquelles vivent les enfants.

Robert Wyatt cultiva l'abstraction à l'égard du monde, il fut, dans tous les sens et pas seulement en raison de son handicap réel résultant de sa défenestration, *paralysé* au monde. Le poème chanté s'est dégagé lors de la chute dans le vide. Ce vide fut l'ouverture même du chemin vers ce poème qu'on entend très bien décrit dans *Rock Bottom*, ce « fond touché » qui fut en vérité l'espace nouveau d'une percée. Un vide qui ouvre ! Cela contrevient à toutes les philosophies…

Toutefois, il ne s'agissait pas pour Robert Wyatt, c'est décidément certain, de faire poème d'un accident. L'accident appartient au passé, à la vie d'avant et à son agitation. À

présent, et dans ce temps qui s'est ouvert, Robert Wyatt est immobile, une sorte de Zénon de l'éternité, l'éternel chanteur en position rythmique de batteur qui bat la mesure de sa pensée. C'est elle que nous entendons, en poème, dans *Rock Bottom.*

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Reprenons : Robert Wyatt, c'est donc d'abord un nom qui surprend et qui pose, à même sa résonance à l'oreille, une interrogation : *why ? Wyatt ? Why Wyatt ?* C'est ainsi que je l'ai entendu la première fois, je me souviens étonnamment bien, mais on sait à quel point les jeunes gens rêvent sur les mots et les noms, comment les noms propres leur apparaissent à cet égard comme les communs, et, dans l'ignorance de leur signification, la pensée se laisse aller vers eux et en eux comme si elle était attirée par les Sirènes. Ce qui avait soutenu cette rêverie qui prenait le pas sur tout le reste, en particulier le vide scolaire et le désastre familial, c'est que j'avais eu connaissance, de façon très improbable, au fond d'une province, à l'âge d'à peine quinze ans, du premier album de Soft Machine. Et je crois bien qu'au-delà de quelques images alors fournies par cette encyclopédie qu'était alors le périodique *Rock and Folk*, j'ignorais tout des visages et des allures des musiciens. Mais gloire à *Rock and Folk* ! C'est avec lui que j'ai appris à lire, que je me suis instruit pour devenir, je crois bien, à présent que j'ai presque tout oublié, une encyclopédie vivante de la musique pop de ces années-là, j'étais en effet incollable et je ne comprenais pas pourquoi les autres n'avaient pas les mêmes connaissances que je désirais, pour sortir de la solitude, à tout prix partager. Enfin, c'est dans ce journal que j'ai pris contact avec la musique, oui. Il n'y a ni bonne ni mauvaise entrée. On entre ou on n'entre pas, et toute entrée sincère, totale, est, c'est vrai, abandonnée, érotique au sens que donne Bataille à « *l'approbation de la vie jusque dans la mort* ». C'était vital, qu'on y songe sérieusement.

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Souligner « *why* » dans Wyatt, c'est aussi se rappeler, je ne l'ai pourtant deviné et ensuite appris que par la suite, le rapport très étroit que Robert Wyatt entretenait avec la pataphysique. Il fréquentait les livres d'Alfred Jarry. *Soft Machine II* est un album de pataphysique (par ailleurs, on s'arrêtera sur la pochette créée par Byron Goto qui fut l'associé de Willem de Kooning, image dont l'expressionnisme le dispute au délire psychédélique). Le groupe y est même présenté comme « l'orchestre officiel du Collège de "pataphysique". Écoutons seulement le chant des lettres de l'alphabet, dans l'ordre, puis à l'envers, en souvenir des repas retournés souhaités par Jarry, en remontant du Brandy à la soupe !

On manquerait l'essentiel si on estimait que ces attitudes, pensées et manifestations pataphysiques ne seraient qu'une pose. D'une part, la pataphysique est bien une pensée, celle des contradictions qui, toutefois, se soustrait aux principes énoncés une fois pour toutes par Aristote dans sa *Métaphysique*, à savoir, pour l'essentiel, le principe d'identité, de tiers-exclu et de (non)-contradiction. L'essentiel tient en effet à l'exclusion de ce qui touche à l'identité, une chose ne pouvant être en même temps et sous le même rapport, écrit Aristote, différente d'elle-même… Plus exactement : « *Il est impossible qu'un même attribut appartienne et n'appartienne pas en même temps et sous le même rapport à une même chose* ». Or, c'est là manquer une pensée de l'événement, ce que la pataphysique appelle une théorie des exceptions. Ainsi, l'accident que subit Robert Wyatt et qui le paralysera sera aussi, aussitôt, en même temps, parce que l'accident contenait un événement, la porte d'ouverture d'une autre existence. En ce sens, la cicatrice est et n'est plus, mais encore et toujours, aussi également, etc. Si la pataphysique est, selon la formule célèbre, la science « *qui étudie les lois qui régissent les exceptions* », elle est également celle qui traite des « *solutions imaginaires* ». Cette « science » trouve son champ d'expérience dans ce qu'on appelle « *le monde des « enfants* » … Cette « science » est ce qui nous reste, parce qu'elle en est si l'on veut la reconstruction, de ce monde. L'attitude existentielle de Robert Wyatt, instruite par la pataphysique, se laisse résumer ainsi : « *Sur le long terme, c'est la seule façon que j'ai de considérer la vie. Je la considère comme une blague. C'est au-delà de la tragédie* ». Robert Wyatt renvoie la pataphysique à son sérieux, lisons bien ce qu'il entend par « blague », car le sérieux habituel ne l'est guère, recouvert qu'il est par le voile de la blague de la non-contradiction qui ne correspond pas au réel, c'est-à-dire non pas, en l'occurrence, à ce qu'on se représente dans et par une chute, mais à ce qui agit, à savoir l'événement qui *ouvre* l'existence et dont la cicatrice sera la marque sinon intemporelle du moins transtemporelle.

La pataphysique, on l'a dit, est au centre de *Soft Machine II*. De fait, il n'y a qu'à consulter les titres : *Pataphysical Introduction I & II*, *Dada was here*… Mais on n'oubliera pas qu'elle

se tient d'abord au cœur du langage, de ce qui est chanté, du poème, et même dans le jeu de batterie, dans les rythmes impairs de battements par mesure, dans leur asymétrie ou leur irrésolution, leur contradiction pourrait-on ajouter, comme l'existence elle-même, comme le réel … En se tenant loin de la réalité (entendons les apparences forment la représentation commune, celle par exemple qui nous montre le soleil tourner autour de la terre), la pataphysique montre qu'elle est la science du réel. Culturellement cette fois, Robert Wyatt, avec Soft Machine, n'oublie pas Schoenberg dans *Thank you Pierrot lunaire* et Frank Zappa et ses *Mothers of Inventions*.

II

Batteur du groupe de pop, de jazz, on ne sait pas trop, Soft Machine, puis d'un autre, Matching Mole, par la suite d'une carrière en solo qui s'étend jusqu'à aujourd'hui, joueur occasionnel et pour le moins original de claviers aussi, on le sait moins, chanteur surtout, surtout chanteur, mais à peine chanteur au sens que recouvre habituellement ce mot. On ne parlera donc presque que de cela, ne pouvant le faire d'autre chose, puisque c'est cette voix de fausset, d'enfant, qui nous aimante. Une voix qui chante faux et puis non, qui ne chante ni faux ni juste parce que ce n'est pas ce qu'on attend d'une voix. On attend plus certainement qu'elle exprime quelque chose d'exact, de pénétrant et d'enthousiasmant comme celle qui porte les mots d'une maman, ou de la personne qui témoigne heureusement de son amour.

La voix de Robert Wyatt est presque de tête, très haut perchée, immature dirait-on, pas même une voix d'enfant, mais une voix enfantine, parfois très féminine même. Elle est à la fois régressive et utopique, celle qu'on imagine à propos d'un monde constitué uniquement, *enfin*, ou bien seulement d'enfants ou bien d'hommes-enfants. (Dans *Soft Machine I*, le début de *Hope for Happiness* est presque un blues heureux !). Ce fut cette voix qui devint inoubliable puisqu'elle se fait toujours et encore entendre, malgré toutes ses imperfections, et elle n'est sans doute même que cela, à travers les « grandes musiques » que j'écoute désormais. Incontestablement, soit elle résonne en écho à une conformation psychique personnelle, ce qui n'est pas très intéressant puisqu'on pourrait faire dans ce cas état de toutes les histoires individuelles, au même niveau et de la même manière, soit elle énonce une vérité dans l'événement même, au moyen de son insistance et de la mémoire fidèle qu'il a suscitée.

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De la période d'adolescence, autant que je puisse m'y projeter, il me reste ce lien, ce fil qui aura donc traversé toute l'existence. Et je m'interroge : pourquoi lui ? Certes, il n'est pas tout à fait le seul, ou bien il s'est emmêlé avec d'autres qui ont suivi au moyen d'une logique qui m'échappe, mais j'ai cessé d'écouter la musique Pop lorsque sa diffusion, sa pénétration médiatique lui ont assurément fait subir des infléchissements, et plus certainement encore un véritable appauvrissement *musical* – on est tout de même passé, pour faire référence à mon panthéon personnel, de Jimi Hendrix, Keith Emerson, King Krimson, Frank Zappa, le premier Pink Floyd et le premier Chicago, Cream, Blindfaith, Grateful Dead et bien sûr quelques autres dont les qualités artistiques furent tout bonnement extraordinaires et auxquelles l'histoire n'a pas jusqu'à aujourd'hui rendu justice, aux « cultures contemporaines », industrielles, décadentes à tous égards et douteuses, symbolisées par Michael Jackson et désormais mondialisées dans les psalmodies meta-religieuses du rap qui outre qu'elles nourrissent une clientèle aliénée et régressive font la promotion de la seule et unique valeur, celle de l'argent dans un capitalisme envoûté et s'écroulant dans son propre vide, et dont la seule pensée se laisse résumer dans un doigt d'honneur.

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Dans le partage des voix, il en existe certaines, très rares, qui sont si singulières qu'elles le perturbent, et en réalité le redistribuent. Pourtant, au regard de ce qu'on vient de dire d'elle, qui est esthétiquement peu valorisant, on peut effectivement s'interroger sur les raisons qui motivent chez Robert Wyatt le chant et même comment il a pu se faire que ses compagnons de Soft Machine aient pu le laisser aller au chant au lieu de se concentrer sur le jeu de batterie dans lequel, autant qu'on puisse en juger par les albums du groupe, il excellait.

L'association fut faite assez vite et forme un des fils de la transition dont j'ai fait état un peu plus haut : Robert Wyatt chantonne comme au même moment Glenn Gould le fait encore ! C'est que le chantonnement est bien une sorte d'invocation, c'est la modalité musicale du regard vers le haut, c'est ce vers quoi la musique tend avec toutes ses forces. Et même, il figure, disons esquisse ce que la musique devrait rejoindre. C'est pourquoi, sous cet angle, rien n'est jamais aussi exact qu'un chantonnement, car il touche au *dictamen*, à ce qui cherche à se dire dans la modalité impérative qui est la sienne. D'où provient-il si ce n'est d'*avant* le sujet constitué. Il est la voix avant qu'elle n'exprime son désir, elle forme sa raison si l'on veut, sa tension et la pulsion qui lui a donné à la fois sa consistance et son grain.

Il n'empêche, pour qui écoute et surtout pour ceux à qui on la fait écouter et qui en retour vous regardent d'un air étonné et interloqué, se posant sans doute une question sur vos capacités de jugement esthétique, alors qu'il ne s'agit absolument pas de cela, cette voix déraille ! Elle provient en même temps de si loin comme gravée il y a longtemps et portée par un vieux disque. Le climat qu'elle installe, et c'est étonnant dès lors qu'on accepte, ne serait-ce qu'un instant, de se laisser guider par elle, est celui du rêve, voire d'une sortie des limbes. Tout en elle est inabouti et immature. Elle est, si l'on peut dire, l'enfance d'avant l'enfance, elle contient une expression d'avant même l'absence de langage qui fait l'*infans*. Comment ? Parce que l'accès au langage est lui-même déjoué par le ton, les tonalités improbables. Si l'on préfère, elle est la voix restée dans la voix, qui y est restée bloquée et qui parvient à s'en échapper malgré tout d'une certaine manière, très fluette. C'est pourquoi on a risqué l'idée d'une voix d'homme-enfant. Quelque chose de cette prime enfance persiste comme issue à l'origine et appelant à s'y retrouver adulte d'un jardin d'enfant, celui de *Ma Mère l'Oye*, *Le Jardin féérique*, de Maurice Ravel. Parfois, on entend en effet une fête d'enfants. Ou bien on songe à une histoire entre l'enfant et l'homme barbu, à Robert Wyatt dans les deux rôles comme dans *Alifib* sur *Rock Bottom*, cet album incomparable et inclassable de 1974. « Rock Bottom », c'est le plancher, le niveau le plus bas qu'on puisse atteindre, c'est aussi l'infra fondamental, l'origine d'avant l'origine, en effet. Ou bien, on songe à une maison, une de celle qu'on offre aux enfants à Noël, une maison avec des poupées et des jouets. On entend des enfants jouer et faire de la musique avec des instruments-jouets…

Peut-être et même sûrement, rien ne compte davantage, et ne *conte* que les livres pour enfants avec leurs histoires sans fond. La vie n'est certainement pas un songe quand on sait ce que Dieu a permis que les hommes fassent et subissent – il y a dès lors, définitivement, quelque chose de très peu sérieux dans le sérieux de la vie… –, mais il y a des existences, toutes précieuses, comme il est raconté pour l'une d'elle dans *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, toujours de Ravel, décidément, lorsque le superficiel est rejoint par le profond. On peut penser aussi à l'existence de Pierre avec les animaux dans *Pierre et le loup* de Prokofiev, mais dans cette œuvre le drame est si caché, si confisqué d'une certaine manière là où chez Ravel il n'est jamais bien loin, les choses et les événements menaçant toujours de dérailler ou d'être exposés au mal et plus couramment à la méchanceté. L'angoisse, elle, est omniprésente et donc incontestable chez Ravel (la scène, qui rappelle tous les traumatismes, de l'école ! Celle des chats, celle de la nuit). Du reste, dans l'œuvre de Ravel, stimulée par l'art de Colette, la scène est quasiment celle de l'opéra. On est très proche de celui de Janacek, c'est du moins ce que l'écoute retient, non sans angoisse concernant une œuvre qui met en scène, oui, l'enfant, et qui retrace des étapes décisives, pour beaucoup de survie, quand on regarde en arrière, de l'enfance. C'est ironique, c'est parfois, même souvent drôle, parodique et justement c'est terrible. Et on revient de ce songe musical comme sonné avec l'idée qui s'impose à l'esprit selon laquelle on vient de toucher, malgré toutes les apparences, à quelque chose d'essentiel et sans doute aussi, sous une apparence très trompeuse encore, justement, le fond. *Rock Bottom*. On ne sait quoi penser de ce bruit du canard qui conclut l'album *Rock Bottom*…

III

On connaît, jusqu'au rabâchage, l'injonction : *Deviens ce que tu es* ! Mais comment devient-on ce que l'on est, et que veut dire exactement la formule ? On en a fait mention, Robert Wyatt est tombé du 4° étage un jour de fête très arrosée en 1974. Il deviendra paraplégique. On croira, comme on l'a cru, que cet événement marqua une fin. Or, ce fut un commencement, un engendrement et comme dit Deleuze avec ironie comme avec génie, l'effet de « *l'immaculée conception* ».

Tant de personnes ne deviendront jamais ce qu'elles sont, non par négligence, ni d'ailleurs par immoralité ou mensonge à leur propre égard, mais parce qu'il n'y eut aucun événement qui leur en donna l'occasion. Car ce devenir ne relève pas d'une décision formelle et donc abstraite, mais de ce qui arrive. Lorsque Robert Wyatt prit connaissance, après le coma, de son état de paralytique, il dit à sa mère, je crois : « *Hum, vachement typique !* » (1), il se reconnut, il sut enfin qui il était parce qu'il venait d'en avoir la confirmation. Il reconnut à la fois une logique et une vérité. On peut conserver des considérations d'Alain Badiou ceci, qui est incontestable, à savoir qu'il n'existe de vérité que dans la fidélité subjective à un événement. L'idée peut tout autant être dérivée de Deleuze, de cette page de *Logique du sens* consacrée à Joe Bousquet (2), qui a précisément pour titre *De l'événement*, à laquelle on ne peut que renvoyer et qu'on croit lire en filigrane de ce qui est arrivé à Robert Wyatt et dans les propos qui furent les siens. On se souvient de la phrase de Joe Bousquet à partir de laquelle Deleuze construit sa très belle démonstration : « *Ma blessure existait avant moi, je suis né pour l'incarner* », phrase tirée, cela n'est pas noté, de ce livre prodigieux de profondeur intitulé *Traduit du silence* (3).

Malheur à ceux qui n'ont jamais connu ce que c'est qu'un événement, celui, qui n'est qu'à cette condition, qui les regarde, en tous les sens de ce verbe ! Malheur, alors que communément, un malheur est précisément tout autre chose, le contraire même de celui qui ouvre, dans le désastre, une existence dans laquelle on devient ce qu'on est. C'est lui qui dans la souffrance, la privation, le deuil, l'accident, la catastrophe, le handicap autorise l'accès à soi, faisant de soi un Soi, qui ne se préexistait pas et qui, en même temps et pourtant, attendait comme s'il s'attendait, comme s'il n'attendait que sa propre attente comme sa venue même. Et cela, cette épreuve, ou bien cette bifurcation, est si radicale, si douloureuse, en rien souhaitable et désirable en tant que telle évidemment, qu'elle réclame le stoïcisme comme sa doctrine, à la condition qu'elle soit correctement comprise, non pas comme résistance et acceptation de ce qui arrive, mais comme volonté de ce qui arrive *dans* ce qui arrive. Car l'événement n'est pas ce qui arrive, remarque Deleuze, mais ce qui se tient et arrive dans ce qui arrive. Et c'est bien là que l'événement se joue comme tel, puisque d'un côté il est si facile de se laisser aller, jusqu'au ressentiment, et que de l'autre s'ouvre une voie dans laquelle se promet le « Soi » qu'il s'agit de devenir, en se hissant par la volonté jusqu'à lui, jusqu'à son promontoire.

Qu'on lise seulement les déclarations de Robert Wyatt, lorsqu'il se retourna sur ce qui lui était arrivé. D'abord, celle qui raconte l'accident avec une précision et une profondeur extraordinaire auxquelles peu de philosophes parviennent :

« C'est difficile d'expliquer ce qu'on ressent en tombant. Vous n'avez pas idée. C'était affreux, pas pour moi, mais pour les autres. Moi, je suis tombé. C'est comme perdre toute sensation d'un coup. Je n'ai pas perdu connaissance. Je ne suis pas tombé sur la tête, mais sur mon talon gauche, même si le reste a rapidement suivi. Je me souviens d'avoir entendu un cri semblable à un hurlement de loup. Plus tard, j'ai mentionné ce détail et quelqu'un m'a dit : « C'était toi ». Mais je me rappelle un cri lointain. J'ai donc entendu mon propre cri faisant écho au loin. J'étais en quelque sorte détaché de ce cri. Je me rappelle avoir été attaché dans l'ambulance. Bref, six semaines plus tard – parce qu'apparemment on est tellement drogué à l'hôpital qu'on ne se rend compte de rien –, je me suis réveillé dans un lit d'hôpital, et un nouveau monde s'offrait à moi.»

Texte et paroles, en effet, d'une richesse incroyable qui ne peut pas ne pas faire songer à l'événement de la chute de Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Ménilmontant évoquée dans la Seconde Promenade des *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. L'existence est mise à distance, ou apparaît dans cette dimension. Pour Robert Wyatt la voix permet d'en prendre la mesure, à moins que l'existence se regarde depuis la mort comme si elle surgissait dans l'évidence de son apparaître en tant que telle, vraiment, à cette occasion.

Une pure, la pure existence, voilà ce que Robert Wyatt découvre. Il la voit, il l'entend. Il renaît. Oui, il renaît de ce coma. Et puis non, il naît à lui-même. La preuve en est cette autre déclaration :

« Vous devez penser que c'était difficile, mais c'était fantastiquement libérateur. C'est peut-être l'une des raisons pour lesquelles je n'ai pas de problème à me retrouver en fauteuil roulant. Paradoxalement, c'était libérateur. Tout à coup, je ne pouvais plus être tous les hommes que j'avais essayé de devenir, batteur ou chanteur. Je devais m'asseoir et me dire : "Arrête de dépendre des autres. Fais-le toi-même, c'est tout". »

On le reconnaîtra, on dirait que Robert Wyatt a passé beaucoup de temps à lire la page de Deleuze à laquelle on a fait référence, qu'il connaissait la phrase de Joe Bousquet, qu'il a expérimentée pour la penser et qu'il a pensée comme l'expérience même, unique et

singulière de soi.

Là aussi la preuve en est cette dernière déclaration :

« Les gens pensent que je dois avoir du mal à parler de mon accident. Mais c'est faux ; ce dont j'ai du mal à parler, c'est de ce qui est arrivé avant l'accident. Rock Bottom et ce qui a suivi, je considère que c'est moi. Mais le moi adolescent, le batteur bipède, je ne me souviens pas de lui et ne le comprends pas… Maintenant, je vois mon accident comme une ligne de séparation claire entre mon adolescence et le reste de ma vie. »

On commence ainsi à comprendre mieux ce que c'est qu'un événement. Non pas l'accident, donc, pris en lui-même, encore moins les réactions de douleur, de nostalgie et de ressentiment qui peuvent apparaître comme la suite logique de ce qui est arrivé, mais ce qui s'est produit dans le sujet et l'a pour ainsi dire élevé à ce statut. Certainement, l'usage du terme de « sujet » n'est guère approprié dans un texte de Deleuze en raison de son passé et de son historique, mais il s'impose ici, malgré tout, en raison de sa puissance de marquage d'un commencement. Ainsi lorsque Deleuze enchaîne sa référence à Joe Bousquet par cette remarque concernant la morale, en posant que « *ou bien la morale n'a aucun sens, ou bien c'est cela qu'elle veut dire, elle n'a rien d'autre à dire : ne pas être indigne de ce qui nous arrive* », il est proche d'une pensée nouvelle de ce que la notion de « sujet » peut vouloir dire, à savoir l'appropriation dans l'accident, littéralement ce qui arrive et nous arrive, non pas de ses effets, qui en eux-mêmes ne sont que handicap et souffrance, mais de sa puissance d'éclairement, de dégagement du temps et d'un avenir, et par conséquent de soi. Deleuze va parler de « *vérité* » lorsqu'il va s'agir de préciser ce que « vouloir l'événement » veut dire en précisant que « *c'est d'abord en dégager l'éternelle vérité* ». Et pour conclure, ceci, qui fait écho avec tellement de proximité, et même boucle parfaite, avec ce qu'on vient de lire et d'entendre de Robert Wyatt :

« Bousquet dit encore : "Deviens l'homme de tes malheurs, apprends à en incarner la perfection et l'éclat". On ne peut rien dire de plus, jamais on n'a rien dit de plus : devenir digne de ce qui nous arrive, donc en vouloir et en dégager l'événement, devenir le fils de ses propres événements, et par là renaître, se refaire une naissance, rompre avec sa naissance de chair. »

IV

C'est seulement à présent que l'on peut essayer de dire quelques mots sur l'œuvre. Le mieux, peut-être, mais ça n'est sans doute pas si arbitraire que cela, serait d'évoquer d'une part *Moon in june* dans *Soft Machine Third*, soit une des quatre pièces que comportait alors le double album en vinyle, chacune durant à peu près vingt minutes, et d'autre part l'album, qu'on a cité à plusieurs reprises, parce qu'il est emblématique, *Rock Bottom*. Le premier choix est induit par la performance musicale elle-même, à la fois la voix à plein régime déployée de Robert Wyatt dans ce morceau et son jeu de batterie dans un album extrêmement sophistiqué et écrit ; le second est, comme dit, l'inventivité même, l'originalité, un objet poétique et musical vraiment étonnant.



Moon in june. Soft Machine se distingue des autres groupes Pop, se caractérise même par l'absence de guitariste dans son effectif, ce qui constitue, on le reconnaîtra, une incongruité dans la musique Pop d'alors et peut-être même dans les musiques d'aujourd'hui. En revanche, on notera, mais ce fut un trait d'époque, qu'on se souvienne de *Chicago Transit Authority* et de *Blood, Sweat and Tears*, mais dans les deux cas, la guitare était maintenue – et comment dans le premier cas avec Terry Kath ! –, la présence et l'importance des cuivres. Cette formation fut saluée par Keith Tippett lui-même. L'originalité de cette musique était déjà très singulière, elle n'avait rien à voir avec le succès de Weather Report ou même du Maravishnu Orchestra de John McLaughlin auxquels elle fut très et trop vite assimilée. La preuve en est en quelque sorte cette déclaration de Robert Wyatt : « *Je voulais quelque chose, je l'avais en tête, mais je n'arrivais pas à l'identifier. Un style musical qui n'existait pas encore et pour lequel je n'avais pas de nom* ». Cette innommable mérite d'être souligné, car d'une part il enveloppe le chant et la voix de Robert Wyatt, cette dimension de l'enfance, qui en vérité n'est que le déplacement de toute réalité dans le réel de la musique, celui que l'enfance symbolise, et d'autre part le projet proprement stylistique, l'exigence d'une exactitude musicale. La déclaration se poursuit ainsi, au sujet de Soft Machine : « *Au mieux de sa forme, je pense qu'il n'existait rien de tel. C'était un groupe incroyable* ».

Assurément, on ne comprend pas vraiment l'album *Third* si on n'a pas connaissance des performances de Cecil Taylor, ce pianiste de jazz qui venait des heures avant le concert pour commencer à jouer et qui finissait, si l'on peut dire, au-delà de sa fin… Rien ne commence, rien ne finit, les choses suivent leur cours aurait dit Samuel Beckett. Et à propos de la partie chantée, qui n'est pas réellement composée de phrases, Robert Wyatt précise en bon pataphysicien que « *le titre* "Moon in june" *semble très structuré. Mais en réalité, il s'agissait d'une série de chansons inachevées et, au lieu de les terminer, je les ai mélangées. Quel bazar !* » Mais il fallait ces dimensions pataphysiques du « *bazar* » pour que cette voix et le chant qu'elle porte aient quelque sens. D'une part, la dimension purement vocale, c'est-à-dire acoustique – mieux : *musicale*, ce qui est tout autre chose que « la musique » –, ou encore le chantonnement se tiennent au premier plan et non pas le régime et le registre des significations et de la communication ; d'autre part, cette pure expression n'est possible que par la singularité à la fois sonore et linguistique qui caractérisent une voix, et cela malgré l'influence reconnue de Mimi Perrin, la chanteuse des Double Six, elle qui aura appris à Robert Wyatt comment accompagner vocalement le morceau Naima de Coltrane… Robert Wyatt résume ainsi la situation : « *Je ne pense pas que tout le monde doive chanter de cette façon, mais moi, je dois chanter comme ça* ». On ne peut que souligner cette dernière expression, qui porte un *dictamen*, à savoir de façon combinée un impératif expressif, une « vocation » au sens fort du terme ainsi que, encore un trait de pataphysique, le régime d'exception qui sera de plus en plus le sien. Et on ne peut pas ne pas voir dans ce commandement l'annonce, presque le signe de l'événement à venir dont Robert Wyatt fera la condition de sa subjectivation.

L’exception subjective s’exceptera de plus en plus du groupe Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt note que ses collègues ne l’écoutent même plus chanter en concert, tellement il serait en train de dériver et de ne rien apporter musicalement. Alors que, en toute logique, Robert Wyatt a conscience, dans la ligne de l’*Asphyxiante culture* de Jean Dubuffet (4), de se soustraire à la « haute culture », qui, si elle n’est d’aucune manière condamnable dans ce qu’elle a produit, aurait néanmoins perdu de vue la musicalité, c’est-à-dire l’éthique de la musique, qui est autre chose, en tout cas bien davantage, que « la musique », mais qui concerne le cœur même de l’existence, la manière dont on la considère et ce que l’on en fait. Marcus O’Dair, dans son très beau livre, précise que Robert Wyatt « *a plus tard insinué qu’il refusait d’apprendre à lire la musique, pour que le reste du groupe ne puisse pas lui indiquer quoi jouer* » ! Enfin, rien ne va davantage en ce sens que la condamnation que fait Robert Wyatt de toute virtuosité (ce qui ne l’empêcha pas d’être un batteur virtuose) : « *J’ai commencé avec des idées ésotériques et la musique moderne européenne, avec Stockhausen, Webern, les poètes tout ce qui était avant-gardiste pendant les années 1950, avant la musique pop, les poètes de la Beat Generation, les peintres de l’époque, etc. À mes yeux, le plus fascinant avait été de découvrir la beauté absolue de Ray Charles chantant, par exemple, une chanson country ou western. Donc, mon vrai voyage de découverte eut lieu quand j’ai découvert la beauté de la musique simple et populaire* ». L’enfance n’est donc pas seulement subjective, le Jardin féérique est aussi celui, perdu, des traditions, la musique n’est possible, comme la beauté même, que par l’événement, la blessure : ne plus pouvoir voir, ne plus voir ce que les autres voient, voir autre chose ; ne plus pouvoir se mouvoir, se mouvoir autrement, comme un oiseau. Tomber, avec Joe Bousquet, avec Deleuze, mais tomber vers le haut, s’envoler.





Rock Bottom, donc, pour finir.

« *Je me suis dit : "Je dois inventer une manière de créer sans aucune référence"* ». La déclaration parle d'elle-même. L'album a paru en 1974 et fut immédiatement reconnu pour son originalité. Il est présenté comme un album en solo mais le personnel musical comporte bon nombre d'invités prestigieux, le guitariste Mike Oldfield par exemple. Les invités sont également présents dans la conception, ainsi le magnifique album, toujours un peu inégalé, de van Morrison, *Astral Weeks* (1968), dont, précise Robert Wyatt, les « *visions enfantines* […] *sautent aux yeux* ». Déjà la pochette, réalisée par Alfie, la compagne puis l'épouse de Robert Wyatt, qui composera toutes les autres pochettes des albums en solo, montre un paysage marin, un autre fond que celui de la chute, celui des limbes, en l'occurrence un microcosme aquatique. Et toute la musique va sortir de ce paysage. La musique ? C'est-à-dire comme le fond de la musique même, des rythmes que Robert Wyatt exécute avec un plateau à thé et un petit tambour d'enfant puisqu'il ne peut plus vraiment jouer de la batterie, des imitations comme celle d'un cor sur le morceau *A Last Straw*. Nous écoutons cette musique, nous sommes replongés dans un « monde » d'avant le langage, là où se forment les mots et les phrases qui se répéteront à leur manière, reformés et déformés, puis reconstitués par la musique et la poésie tout au long de la vie des très grands artistes à l'écoute de ce qui leur vient de ce « monde ». Dans ses déclarations, Robert Wyatt fait également, en plus, référence à l'animal, non, certainement, pour cultiver on ne sait quelle dimension primale, qu'on ne perçoit au demeurant pas dans l'album, mais pour détruire un art faux, alambiqué, un art de pur produit sans engagement existentiel ou expressif profond. Voilà, la musique de Robert Wyatt est profonde, elle apparaît superficielle, pataphysique oblige, mais elle est profonde. Elle ne cesse en effet de forer en vous à la recherche de compositions de mots premiers et d'agencements de phrases. Ce que dit de l'album Robert Wyatt est sans ambiguïté : « *J'ai plus l'impression qu'il s'agit de retrouver l'animal à l'intérieur de l'homme sophistiqué* ».

Par ailleurs, il se réjouit de « *la beauté de la chose mal faite* », parce qu'il comprend que le chef-d'œuvre, disons « conceptuel », ne correspond à rien dans l'ordre de l'expression qui est censé constituer le contenu de tout art. Il faut habiliter la notion de « *chef-d'œuvre raté* » (5). Car un chef-d'œuvre quelque peu réel comporte une dimension de ratage, dit plus simplement d'imperfection. Plus exactement encore, mais on l'a compris, c'est de la dimension enfantine qu'il s'agit. Décidément, une fois de plus, « *l'artiste est un enfant* », ou alors un être qui a su s'accrocher à l'enfance comme on le ferait pour capter une tonalité, une modulation, celle-là même qu'on entend, et qui touche, dans la voix de Robert Wyatt. Et il y a ce personnage excentrique qu'on entend déclamer à la fin de l'album, Ivor Cutler, qui conclut ce *paysage* musical de sa propre voix, étrange, vraiment venue d'ailleurs.

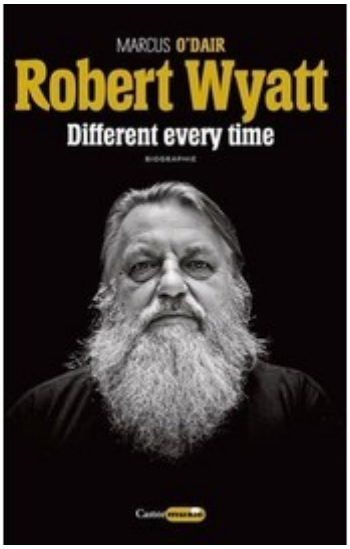
Voici le résumé de l'album fait par Robert Wyatt lui-même :

« *De la même façon que Paul Klee et Picasso ont commencé à faire des gribouillages d'enfant quand ils ont vieilli, je trouvais que c'était émouvant et intéressant, cet abandon de la technique. L'histoire du jazz était un peu dans cette veine, dans le sens où Ornette Coleman jouait du violon – ce qu'il ne savait pas faire. Je trouve ça très courageux. Ou encore, Ivor Cutler dessinant de sa main gauche parce qu'il considérait trop simpliste de le faire de la main droite.* »

Il existe donc un « *style tardif* », selon l'expression d'Adorno à propos de Beethoven surtout, expression reprise et travaillée également auprès de quelques écrivains par Edward Saïd, mais un style tardif très spécial qui retourne non pas à l'élémentaire comme le fait le compositeur allemand, mais qui perce le voile qui avait recouvert l'enfance. Peut-être en littérature Adalbert Stifter y est-il parvenu, lui qui aimait les enfants, mais avec des ressources artistiques trop importantes à cet égard. Ravel sans doute, on en a d'emblée fait la remarque. Ce qu'on entend chez Robert Wyatt, ce qui s'avère bouleversant, c'est que cette musique est si douloureuse dans la joie qu'elle manifeste qu'elle se montre joyeuse de pouvoir renverser tous les régimes du manque, de la perte et de l'abandon.

André Hirt

L'ouvrage cité en note de Marcus O'Dair, Robert Wyatt, Different every time, trad. Pauline Firla et Louis Moisan, Préface de Jonathan Coe, Le Castor Astral, 2016.



(1) On renverra, pour toutes les informations factuelles, événements et citations, dont il est fait état ici par la suite, au livre détaillé, remarquable et de part en part passionnant de Marcus O'Dair, Robert Wyatt, Different every time, trad. Pauline Firla et Louis Moisan, Préface de Jonathan Coe, Le Castor Astral, 2016.

(2) Gilles Deleuze, Logique du sens, Paris, Minuit, 1969, p.174 sq.

(3) Le livre de Joe Bousquet, Traduit du silence, est réédité chez Gallimard, dans la collection « L'Imaginaire ».

(4) Jean Dubuffet, Asphyxiante culture, Paris, Minuit.

(5) Habilitation tentée dans André Hirt, Staccato, Paris, Kimé, 2016, pp. 177-184.

>> Le texte original

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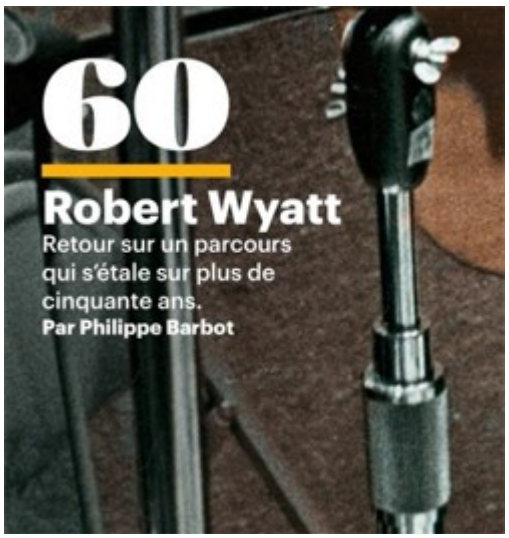
Robert Wyatt - Les actes réussis - Rolling Stone - n° 129 - février 2021



Si Dieu était

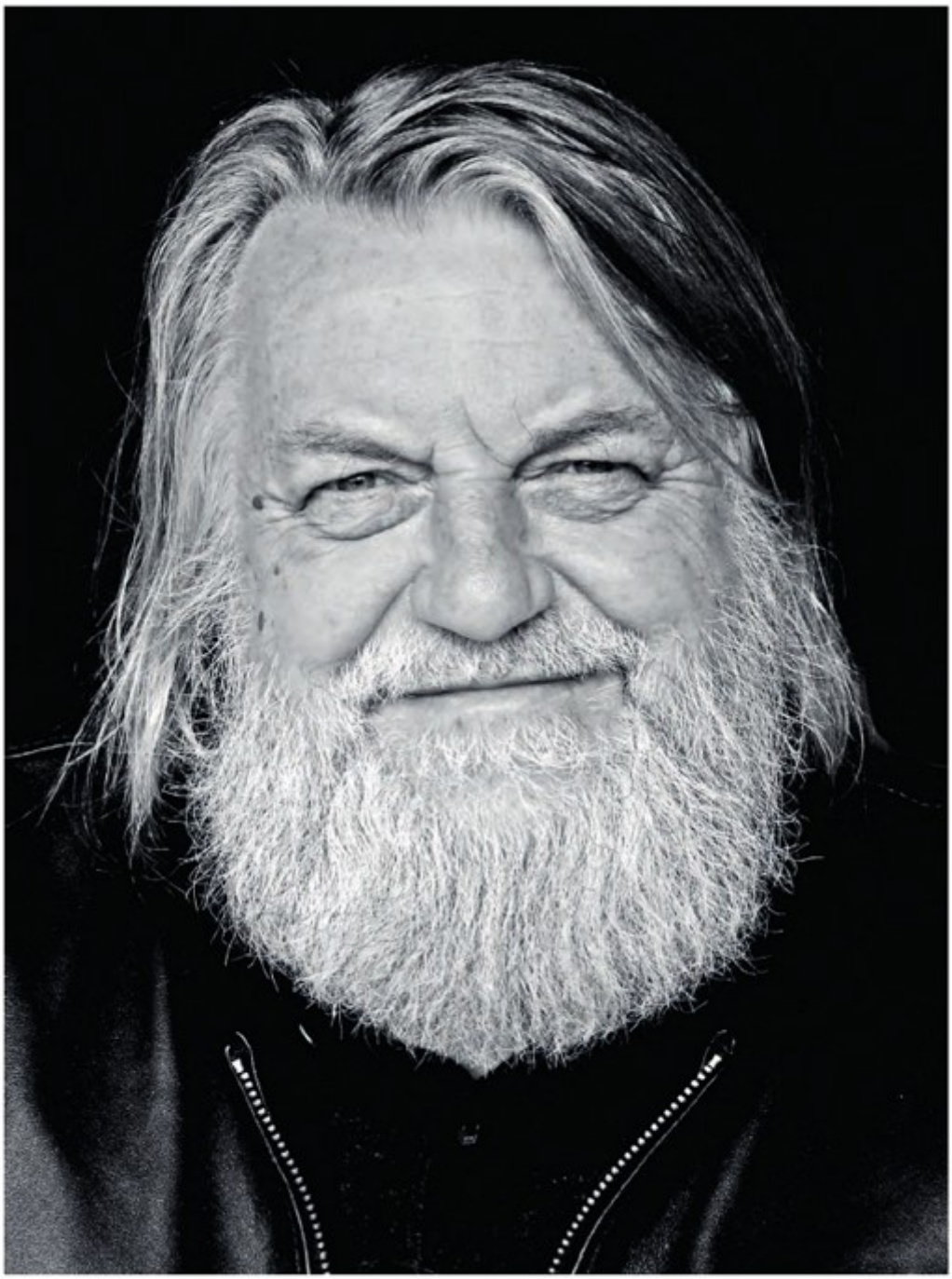
britannique et communiste, il ressemblerait à Robert Wyatt : un personnage bienveillant à barbe blanche, trônant à jamais sur un nuage. À l'image de la pochette de l'album Shleep, où notre héros plane dans des cieux azurés, lové sur le dos d'une colombe. Tout au long d'une dizaine d'albums studio en un demi-siècle, le grand Robert a créé une œuvre singulière, empruntant aussi bien au jazz qu'à l'opéra, au rock progressif qu'aux rythmes sud-américains. Une œuvre en apesanteur, concoctée par un ange cloué au sol, à la voix





surgie du fond des âges, à la fois primitive et sophistiquée, nasillarde et caressante, cosmique et terriblement humaine. Dont certains des fleurons sont aujourd'hui réédités en vinyle dans une compilation baptisée His Greatest Misses, dix-neuf titres, du classique "Sea Song" au plus récent "Foreign Accents", en passant par des reprises fameuses comme "At Last I Am Free" de Chic, "Shipbuilding" de Costello ou "I'm a Believer" des Monkees. De quoi survoler plusieurs décennies de la carrière d'un artiste hors norme, qui publie aussi Side by Side, un ouvrage écrit et dessiné avec sa compagne et muse Alfreda Benge, dite "Alfie".

Le 1er juin 1973, la vie de Robert Wyatt-Ellidge a basculé. Une chute accidentelle du troisième étage, au cours d'une soirée arrosée pour l'anniversaire de Gilli Smyth, l'égérie du groupe Gong, le laisse colonne vertébrale brisée, paralysé des deux jambes. Le batteur-chanteur virtuose de Soft Machine et Matching Mole se voit contraint de vivre désormais dans un fauteuil roulant. Lui, l'elfe blond bondissant, sculpteur de tempos complexes, doit abandonner son instrument de prédilection. S'il a perdu l'usage de ses membres inférieurs, il lui reste deux bras et un gosier. C'est ainsi qu'il élaborera ce qui demeure son album le plus légendaire, Rock Bottom, en 1974. Un de ces disques dont la découverte a bouleversé le paysage musical de l'époque et l'inconscient de plus d'un auditeur.



Flash-back. Né en 1945 à Bristol, Angleterre, fils d'un psychologue d'entreprise et d'une enseignante animatrice de radio, le jeune Robert s'initie à la batterie auprès du musicien de jazz américain, George Niedorf. Au collège, il se lie d'amitié avec un certain Hugh Hopper, puis avec le dénommé Mike Ratledge. Mais c'est l'arrivée d'un excentrique beatnik australien, les valises chargées de disques de jazz, qui va décider de la suite: Daevid Allen, future figure de proue de Gong, a loué une chambre chez les parents de Robert, désormais exilés à Lydden, dans le Kent. C'est avec lui que le tambourinaire fait sa première expérience de groupe, avant de rejoindre les Wilde Flowers, en compagnie des frères Hopper, de Richard Sinclair, futur Caravan, et de Kevin Ayers, futur lui-même. Les débuts de ce qu'on désignera bientôt sous l'intitulé "école de Canterbury", concept musico-géographique rassemblant des musiciens de tous horizons expérimentant une sorte de jazz-rock progressif, psychédélique et dadaïste. Style un brin nébuleux, que Wyatt pratique de 1966 à 1971, tout au long de quatre albums de Soft Machine, avant de claquer la porte d'un groupe qu'il juge désormais trop engoncé dans le jazz instrumental. Sans doute aussi parce qu'il se sent de plus en plus mis à l'écart, lui qui, devant le refus de ses collègues, a été obligé de jouer seul tous les instruments sur une partie de sa pièce "Moon in june", qui occupe toute une face du double album *Third*. Avant de se voir privé de

chant sur le disque suivant.

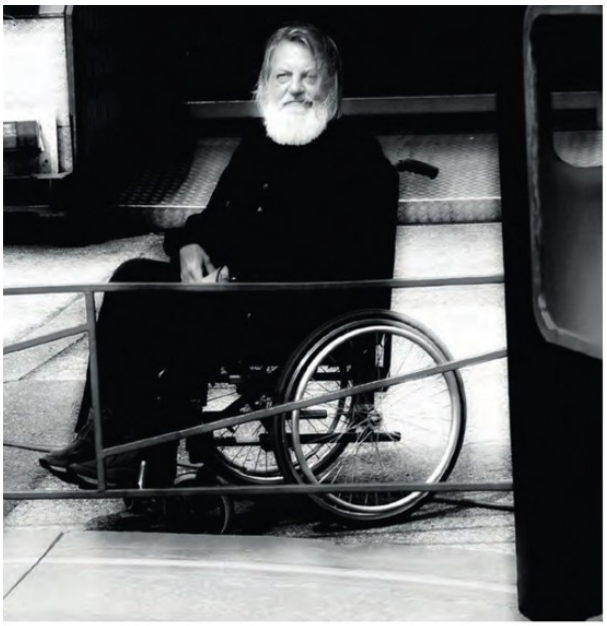
C'est dans cet état d'esprit qu'il fonde alors le groupe Matching Mole, jeu de mots franglais entre "machine molle" et "taupe combattante". Un orchestre à géométrie variable, qui enregistre deux albums, dont l'un produit par Robert Fripp, avant de se dissoudre pour cause d'accident de son leader. Dès le lendemain de cette tragique soirée de juin 1973, le groupe avait en effet prévu de se réunir pour travailler les compositions du disque suivant... Depuis déjà plusieurs années, notamment à la faveur d'une pause de Soft Machine suite à une épuisante tournée avec Jimi Hendrix, Wyatt travaillait à des projets solos, concrétisés par un premier album bricolo, *The End of an Ear*, en 1970. Quelques mois avant son accident, à l'occasion d'un court séjour à Venise, il avait ébauché quelques mélodies: "*Pour m'occuper, Alfie m'avait acheté un petit clavier très simple, doté d'un singulier vibrato qui chatoyait comme cette eau qui nous entourait.*" Un instrument de fortune dont le son vacillant, souvent à l'unisson avec le chant, hantera ensuite toute l'œuvre de l'artiste. Comme dans "Sea Song", l'une des pièces maîtresses de l'album *Rock Bottom.*

Littéralement, on pourrait traduire le titre par "36e dessous". Ou "Toucher le fond", à l'image de la pochette de la réédition du disque, en 1998, sur laquelle virevoltent des plongeurs au milieu d'un banc de poissons.

Robert et Alfie vivent dans un petit village du Lincolnshire, au milieu d'un bric-à-brac de claviers, d'instruments à vent et de percussions...

Un dessin signé Alfie (comme celui de la version originale, au pastel onirique), qui illustre bien la teneur de cette œuvre peu commune : une musique aux volutes aquatiques, aux harmonies en spirales, comme une longue plainte en apesanteur, un rêve ouaté aux dissonances douillettes. Six morceaux, guidés par la voix d'ange rouillé de Wyatt, où s'entremêlent claviers, trompettes, guitares et percussions, à la façon d'un orchestre aérien en train de s'accorder, d'une chorale sans partition interprétant une symphonie cosmique, un poème tellurique. Le tout produit par le Pink Floyd Nick Mason, avec la participation de quasiment tout ce que la scène de Canterbury compte de virtuoses touche-à-tout, de Hugh Hopper à Mike Oldfield, de Richard Sinclair à Fred Frith.

Si le disque suivant, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, malgré ses qualités, n'égale pas la renommée de son prédécesseur, la carrière du céleste paraplégique se poursuit avec une sporadique parcimonie. Il s'en explique ainsi : "*Je chemine très lentement. Je n'ai pas beaucoup d'idées, mais j'ai une très longue vie... alors je ne suis pas pressé. Avant d'écrire, j'ai besoin de vivre de nouvelles expériences, de nouvelles sensations. Sinon, ce que je crée ressemble invariablement à quelque chose qui existe déjà. Par exemple, j'ai dû faire involontairement une centaine de versions de 'Embraceable You', le standard de jazz... Je travaille directement avec mes doigts et ma bouche, le bois, le métal et le souffle. Pour moi, le summum de la technologie, ce sont les micros !*"



Le 1er juin 1973, la vie de Robert Wyatt-Ellidge bascule. Une chute accidentelle du troisième étage le laisse colonne vertébrale brisée, paralysé des deux jambes.

Il faut attendre dix ans pour voir la publication de l'album suivant, *Old Rottenhat*, et cinq années de plus pour *Dondestan*, inspiré par des poèmes écrits par Alfie. Qui participe aussi à l'album *Shleep*, en 1997, enregistré avec Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno et Philip Catherine. Un duo à l'osmose créatrice: "*Mon disque Rock Bottom est sorti exactement le jour où nous nous sommes mariés. Nous vivons ensemble vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre. Quand l'un commence une phrase, l'autre peut l'achever aisément. Parfois même, nous ne savons plus lequel de nous deux a commencé à la formuler. J'ai du mal à imaginer que j'aurais pu entreprendre quoi que ce soit, ou même rester vivant, sans Alfie. Elle est ma raison d'être. Donc d'écrire.*"

Depuis, Robert et Alfie vivent dans un petit village du Lincolnshire anglais, au milieu d'un bric-à-brac de claviers, d'instruments à vent et de percussions diverses. Tout en faisant des apparitions sur les disques des autres (entre autres Français, Pascal Comelade, Bertrand Burgalat ou Bruno Coulais), et même sur scène en compagnie de David Gilmour, Wyatt a publié d'autres albums originaux, dont *Cuckooland* en 2003, et le dernier, *Comicopera*, en 2007. Comme il dit : *"La perte de mes jambes m'a apporté finalement une nouvelle sorte de liberté..."* À côté de diverses compilations, (comme *Nothing Can Stop Us*, qui regroupe certains singles, dont le traditionnel "Caimanera" et le "Strange Fruit" popularisé par Billie Holiday), cette réédition du "best of" *His Great Misses* rappellera à ceux qui l'ignoreraient encore le talent unique d'un des plus exceptionnels compositeurs et vocalistes de la musique contemporaine.

Après tout, ce n'est pas tous les jours qu'on a l'occasion d'écouter Dieu.

Philippe Barbot

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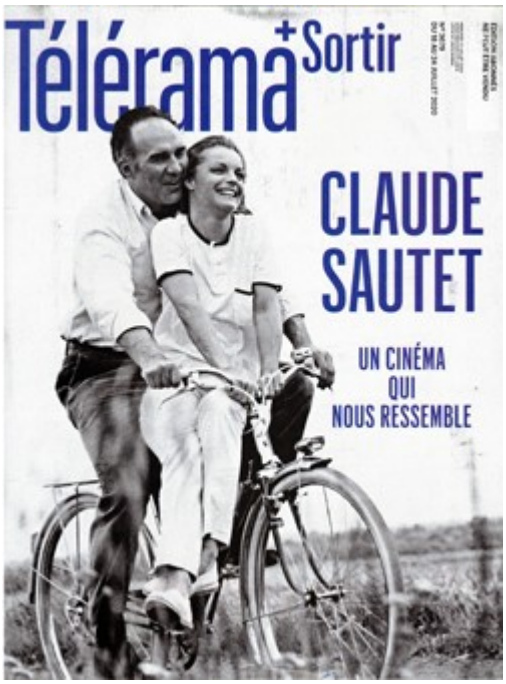
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Dans l'ombre de... Robert Wyatt - Elle cultive son image - Télérama - N° 3679 - du 18 au 24 juillet 2020





ELLE CULTIVE SON IMAGE

Double fusionnel de Robert Wyatt, Alfreda Benge est sa manageuse et sa parolière occasionnelle. Elle est surtout la dessinatrice des pochettes de ses albums, aussi identifiables que la musique de son compagnon.

Par François Gorin

« Un peu poisson, un peu marsouin, un peu bébé cachalot...»
C'était une façon singulière de décrire l'être aimé dans une chanson. Mais Robert Wyatt, qui en 1974 dédiait *Sea Song* à sa nouvelle compagne, Alfreda Benge, était tout sauf un chanteur pop ordinaire. Et cette ode marine, juste un hommage parmi d'autres sur l'album *Rock Bottom*, est considérée encore aujourd'hui comme le chef-d'œuvre du musicien anglais. Car pour Wyatt, il y a eu un avant et un après «Alfie» - ainsi nommait-on cette jeune femme fougueuse et créative, qui attirait les regards dans des vêtements conçus de sa main. Près de cinquante ans plus tard, leur couple aussi évident qu'atypique est toujours soudé, rare exception chez les artistes. Et si Alfreda Benge s'est toujours contentée de l'aura discrète de «la femme qui dessine ou peint les pochettes », quiconque s'est intéressé à la vie et à la musique de Robert Wyatt sait qu'il lui doit plus encore.

De leur première rencontre, elle se souvient mieux que lui. Il y a eu les soirées où ils se croisaient. Un complot amical de leurs deux ex. Un concert de Matching Mole, le groupe que menait Robert en 1972. Un billet qu'elle lui fait passer: «*Cher Robert, qu'en dis-tu?*» L'affaire se conclut un soir où Alfie avait deux places pour les Kinks.

« *On est rentrés chez moi et il n'est plus jamais parti.* » Amoureux, Wyatt découvre un vrai personnage, et ses talents. Née en 1940 d'un père autrichien, Alfreda a suivi sept ans plus tard en Angleterre sa mère polonaise, remariée à un bibliothécaire aux idées larges. À Londres, elle a étudié les arts graphiques et la typographie, s'est essayée à la peinture mais sans priser la tendance conceptuelle du moment. Elle aime Chagall et Léger, les collages du dadaïste Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948). Déplorant qu'on tienne le dessin pour

mineur, elle se tourne vers le cinéma, le montage, tout en fréquentant les clubs jazz de Soho, jouant les barmaids chez le saxophoniste Ronnie Scott, qui avait ouvert son propre club. Elle n'est donc pas dépaysée quand Robert Wyatt l'invite à se joindre à la tournée de Matching Mole. «*Je leur préparais des sandwichs au pain de seigle et leur tricotais des bonnets de laine*», se souvient-elle. Pour lui, c'est une phase transitoire. Il a été pendant quatre ans le batteur et chanteur de Soft Machine, le groupe qui faisait courir le Londres branché en fusionnant rock et jazz sur les brisées du psychédélisme. Un lutin blond, jouant souvent torse nu, explosif et inventif au point d'impressionner Miles Davis. Et ne lésinant pas sur les fêtes arrosées.



Alfreda Benge et Robert Wyatt dans leur maison de Louth dans le Lincolshire, dans le Nord-Est de l'Angleterre.

Musicalement, Wyatt cherche une nouvelle voie. Quand, à l'hiver 1972, Alfie part à Venise travailler sur un film de Nicolas Roeg, *Don't Look Now* (Ne vous retournez pas), il la suit.
Et pour tromper l'ennui, sa compagne lui offre un petit orgue-jouet.
Là, il compose les premiers rudiments de *Rock Bottom*. Le 1er juin 1973, Wyatt et Benge sont conviés à une soirée londonienne hippie-bohème. Le batteur fantasque abuse des mélanges, passe par la fenêtre et chute de trois étages. Le dos brisé, il sera désormais paraplégique. La vie de Robert Wyatt prend alors un triple tournant. Le 26 juillet 1974, il épouse Alfie. En fauteuil roulant. Le même jour sort l'album *Rock Bottom*. Sa pochette au doux trait grisé montre une plage et la mer où des enfants jouent, et les fonds marins si bien évoqués par cette musique fascinante. Elle est signée Alfreda Benge. «*Sur le moment, j'ai eu le trac. Je n'avais pas dessiné depuis longtemps. Mais ça m'a rassurée de pouvoir utiliser mes talents tout en restant à la maison pour m'occuper de lui.* » Dès lors, Alfie devient le double graphique d'un musicien qui, obligé de renoncer à la batterie, se concentre sur le chant et les claviers, et ne se produit quasiment plus en concert. Les pochettes de Wyatt deviennent aussi identifiables que sa musique, même si le nom de l'artiste est moins connu que le sien. Rester dans l'ombre ne cause nulle frustration à Alfreda Benge. Elle n'a jamais pensé carrière, se dit satisfaite d'être vue comme une simple illustratrice et bénéficiant de la gratitude exprimée par son compagnon - camarade serait un terme aussi juste, il fut un temps membre actif du Parti communiste britannique. «*Elle n'a qu'une vie et elle me l'a consacrée. Si je gâchais mon existence, je gâcherais la sienne aussi*», confiait Robert Wyatt à *Télérama* en 2007.



Unfinished Painting, un tableau d'Alfreda la représentant avec Robert.

Dix ans auparavant sortait *Shleep* un album à la genèse douloureuse dont la pochette, où le chanteur est lové contre un grand oiseau blanc en vol, sublime avec douceur la terrible réalité : des mois de dépression et d'insomnie. Wyatt avait replongé dans l'alcool, et son look de vieux sage adopté dès avant la quarantaine, longue barbe et cheveux blancs, cachait encore des démons. Cette fois-là, le couple a frisé la rupture. *Shleep* n'en est pas moins une des pochettes préférées d'Alfreda Benge. Son style tantôt coloré et naïf, proche des papiers découpés de Matisse, parfois joliment surréaliste ou tirant vers l'abstrait à la Miró, a pu s'épanouir et, à l'occasion, s'échapper vers les disques d'autres musiciens ou l'illustration de livres pour enfants. Il lui est arrivé d'exposer, mais elle rechigne à vendre ses œuvres, en donne plutôt à ses amis, et trouve un intérêt à sa peinture dans le plaisir qu'elle y prend. «*Comme Robert a toujours gagné correctement sa vie avec la musique, j'ai pu éviter de me frotter au monde réel et m'offrir le luxe d'être une peintre du dimanche*», résume-t-elle avec humour.

On ne saurait cependant oublier qu'elle a joué d'autres rôles auprès du musicien avec qui elle partage depuis trente ans une maison à Louth, bourgade du Lincolnshire dans le nord-est de l'Angleterre. En plus d'être sa manageuse dès les années 1970, elle lui a écrit des paroles, et quand la chanson était d'elle ne se privait pas d'intervenir en studio, en particulier pour faire refaire des prises vocales à ce chanteur génialement fêlé, qui a toujours misé sur la spontanéité. « *Ça ne m'est pas difficile d'écrire pour Robert, car je connais son cerveau, ses préoccupations, ses valeurs...*» Ce que Wyatt lui-même, sans peut-être anticiper la longévité de leur association, traduisait avec ces mots dans *Sea Song*: « *Your lunacy fits neatly with my own.* » Deux folies qui s'accordent impec : un secret pour durer ?

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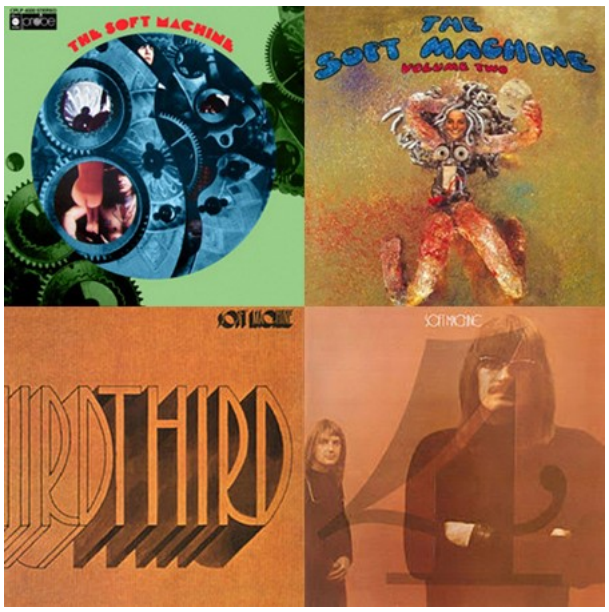
Soft Machine, une mécanique de précision - CitizenJazz - 24 février 2019

SUR LA PLATINE

Soft Machine, une mécanique de précision

Remonter un demi-siècle en arrière peut être un vrai plaisir.

La preuve, ce sera l'occasion de replonger dans l'univers de Soft Machine qui, en avril 1968, enregistrait son premier album. Sans Daevid Allen, co-fondateur fantasque du groupe et futur extraterrestre de Gong. Mike Ratledge aux claviers, Robert Wyatt à la batterie et au chant, Kevin Ayers à la basse et au chant composent ce trio d'avant-garde à l'origine du courant musical de Canterbury, du nom du campus anglais d'où est notamment sorti le groupe Caravan à la même époque.



D'emblée, **Soft Machine** imposa son originalité forgée dans l'exubérante matière grise de ses membres. Car les acolytes sont des intellectuels qui distillent leurs influences artistiques pour opérer une fusion musicale inédite. Ces influences sont littéraires, puisées aux sources lyriques et hallucinatoires, de Dada aux surréalistes en passant par le docteur Faustroll, et à celles, exaltées et révoltées, de William S. Burroughs. La radicalité de Cecil Taylor et le génie de John Coltrane, dont la disparition en juillet 1967 les laissait inconsolés, ont poussé Soft Machine aux confins du jazz. Et ce faisant, ils ont affiné le rock. Les sections improvisées ouvraient large le champ expérimental à leur musique, favorisaient la recherche et libéraient la sensibilité et l'énergie.

La musique se devait d'être novatrice, progressive, expérimentale et Soft Machine, servi par ses trois excellents musiciens, avait les moyens de ses ambitions. **Mike Ratledge** conduisait les harmonies à l'orgue et distordait les sons, **Robert Wyatt** assurait la partie rythmique tout en imposant son timbre si particulier et **Kevin Ayers**, de sa voix chaude, tournait ses phrases à la manière soufie. Ainsi, sur « We Did It Again » (*Vol. 1*) Kevin Ayers nous gratifie t-il d'une impro répétitive à partir du célèbre riff des Kinks sur « You Really Got Me ». Certes moins désopilante que la version « Chauffez les gamelles » de Patrick Bouchitey dans *Lune froide*... à voir et à revoir !

Chas Chandler, le producteur de Jimi Hendrix, s'engagea en faveur de ce premier volume et bien lui en prit. Le très accompli *Volume 2* sortira en 1969 (en même temps que *Hot Rats* de Frank Zappa : certains ont dû casser leur tirelire !) avec Hugh Hopper à la basse pour remplacer un Kevin Ayers en voyage. La musique de Soft Machine se structure, s'intensifie, se complexifie aussi des contre-temps d'un Robert Wyatt transporté mais très présent. *Third*, double album enregistré en 1970, a suivi. Plutôt qu'une suite de chansons, il fait la part belle aux longs morceaux où s'affirme la fusion entre le jazz et le rock et la rupture avec la pop music. Puis arrive le *Volume 4* où le groupe intègre une section de cuivres. À l'emprise de Mike Ratledge s'ajoute la lassitude d'un Robert Wyatt démotivé. D'autres LP paraîtront, sans lui. Dès lors, la Machine a un coup de mou…

Martine Hermann

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Plus c'est communiste, plus c'est pop - Rock & Folk - N° 607 - mars 2018



Réhab'

PAR BENOIT SABATIER

Ignorés ou injuriés à leur sortie, certains albums méritent une bonne réhabilitation. Méconnus au bataillon ? Place à la défense.

Plus c'est communiste, plus c'est pop

Robert Wyatt

"OLD ROTTENHAT"

Rough Trade

Robert Christgau, du Village Voice, qualifie "Old Rottenhat" de "*musique ingrate*". S'il déteste cet album, c'est surtout pour les prises de position de Wyatt, reprochant à l'anglais de traiter les Etats-Unis "*d'empire aryen*", accusant le barbu de complaisance et démagogie. "*Ne prêchez pas les convertis avant d'en avoir converti plus encore.*" L'artiste se défend comme il peut. "Old Rottenhat" ? "*Une tentative consciente de faire de la musique inutilisable.*" C'est à dire : non récupérable par les ennemis du peuple. Toujours acclamé, Wyatt se retrouve avec "Old Rottenhat" sur le banc des accusés : mais qu'est-il venu faire dans cette galère artistico-politicienne ?

En 1974, suite à une défenestration qui le condamne à vivre sur une chaise roulante, l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine sort "Rock Bottom", immédiatement catalogué comme un chef-d'œuvre du 20ème siècle. "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard"' (1975), pourtant pénible, entérine son statut de génie romantique. Et puis Robert Wyatt disparaît. Enfermé avec sa femme Alfie dans la jolie maison que leur a offert leur amie Julie Christie, il se désole de la fin des utopies, fulmine contre la marche du monde, décide finalement de prendre sa carte au Parti Communiste. Au sein de Soft Machine et Matching Mole, le batteur n'était pas un élément politisé, mais un fêtard bourré, un excentrique chaud-lapin. Bambocheur, puis poète, place à la troisième mue : artiste engagé. Il quitte Virgin et son capitaliste de patron. Richard Branson, pour signer sur Rough Trade, coopérative où tout le monde touche le même salaire.

Geoff Travis, le connecte à la scène postpunk. The Raincoats, Vivien Goldman, Epie Soundtracks, Scritti Politti, Ben Watt et, en 1980, Wyatt se sent de nouveau prêt à enregistrer ses propres disques. Problème : il



Réhab'

Ignorés ou injuriés à leur sortie, certains albums méritent une bonne réhabilitation. Méconnus au bataillon ? Place à la défense.

Plus c'est communiste, plus c'est pop

Robert Wyatt

"OLD ROTTENHAT"

n'a aucune compo sous le coude. Il va donc chanter des reprises : d'un révolutionnaire chilien, du ménestrel de Castro, de Chic (écrite quand Nile Rodgers était Black Panther). de l'obscur "Stalin Wasn't Stalling" (pour corriger l'image négative du bourreau)... Quatre singles compilés sur "Nothing Can Stop Us", disque qui contient en plus une version de l'hymne socialiste "Red Flag". Costello et Clive Langer lui offrent un autre morceau, "Shipbuilding" (contre la guerre des Malouines), Wyatt en profitant pour aussi reprendre le "Biko" de Peter Gabriel (en mémoire du militant sud-africain Steve Biko). Et puis quand même, pour défendre la cause des mineurs en grève, il écrit enfin un inédit, "The Age Of Self', dont les bénéfices sont reversés au Miners Hardship Fund. Le NME en fait son Single of the Week, et il y a de quoi : musicalement, le morceau montre un Wyatt au top, avec une mélodie sautillante, accrocheuse, magnétisante, sur un texte toujours politique ("*Ils disent que la classe ouvrière est morte/Maintenant nous sommes tous des consommateurs*"). Son engagement communiste lui procurant une fantastique inspiration musicale, il ne s'arrête pas en si bon chemin : neuf autres chansons sont créées pour "Old Rottenhat".

Encore plus démiurge que pour "Rock Bottom", Wyatt compose, chante, joue de chaque instrument. Geoff Travis : "*Robert disait que ça faisait partie du Front de libération des paraplégiques : tout faire soi-même, prouver qu'on ne dépend de personne.*" Dédié à Bettaney, agent du MI5 accusé de bosser pour les soviets, l'album enchaîne les minibombes : "The Age Of Self, "East Timor". "The British Road". "Alliance", chacune dénonçant les injustices mondiales — "PLA" (Poor Little Alfie, dédié à sa femme), le seul titre non-politique, est tout aussi déchirant. Militantisme triste et minimalisme engagé : l'album le plus pop du barbu, celui où ses aspirations jazz se font le plus discrètes. Principalement composées sur un synthé bon marché, la moitié des chansons font moins de trois minutes. Bienfait du communisme : rendre sa musique plus directe. Face aux retours mitigés, l'artiste entre dans une nouvelle retraite, alors que le mur tombe, que s'effondre le bloc soviétique. Wyatt cesse d'adhérer au PC et déclare : "*A la question* : 'Pensez-vous avoir commis des erreurs en ayant inclus des anachronismes dans vos chansons politiques ?', *ma réponse est* : J'espère.' "

II sombre dans une grosse dépression. Alfie : "*Robert a essayé de suivre une thérapie, mais c'était un désastre. Il s'est mis à pleurer souvent.*" II faudra attendre la fin des années 90 et ses trois derniers albums pour que Wyatt soit de nouveau traité de génie. Un mot a alors fait son apparition : *wyatter*. Signification : choisir des musiques compliquées dans le jukebox du pub pour faire fuir les consommateurs. Alfie : "*Ce n'est pas sa faute si une partie de sa musique peut être difficile à comprendre. Robert ne l'impose à personne. Il apprécie tellement les qualités de la musique pop.* "

On l'entend dans "Old Rottenhat". Avec cet album, le pub se remplit (de staliniens).

Première parution : novembre 1985



> Zoom

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Le style Canterbury "une époque où les choses tordues pouvaient payer" - Libération - 20 décembre 2016

LE STYLE CANTERBURY



Plus jamais rock progressif, psyché et jazz-rock n'ont fusionné depuis l'école de Canterbury. Aymeric Leroy, auteur du livre-référence sur le sujet, nous précise les contours de cette contre-culture intello et débridée britannique des seventies

Par Grégory Schneider

Difficile d'expliquer ce qui s'est joué entre 1968 et 1978 sur le front de la scène dite de Canterbury (dans le Kent, sud-est de l'Angleterre), étrange syncrétisme ayant fait exister un art des contraires aux mains d'une élite musicale n'utilisant jamais les chemins consacrés avant elle, usant comme assise rythmique des métriques impaires (11/8, 9/8, 15/8…) pour éprouver l'auditeur et mélangeant la frénésie mithriaque - les sons saturés à l'aide de pédales de distorsion, griffe sonore du mouvement - à une douceur liée à une Angleterre édénique et pastorale, comme retranchée dans sa propre mythologie.

Pour donner une idée du genre, le mieux est de s'en remettre à l'un des témoignages recueillis dans l'ouvrage qui nous occupe, celui de Steve Lake, critique à l'époque au *Melody Maker*, qui parle du *Shooting at the Moon* d'un Kevin Ayers ayant quitté Soft Machine parce qu'il voulait retrouver une musique plus pop, plus élémentaire : «*Le groupe de Kevin Ayers était un groupe radical et son noyau dur d'esprits farouchement indépendants, tirant chacun dans une direction différente, était foncièrement canterburien dans l'esprit. J'aime beaucoup les moments où les chansons implosent ou explosent pour laisser la place à des improvisations collectives totalement spontanées […] Le disque vient à peine de commencer qu'ils en sont déjà à démantibuler les chansons ! […] Kevin [Ayers] avait peut-être eu du mal avec les subtilités rythmiques de Soft Machine, mais dans des improvisations plus texturelles de forme ouverte, son apport était plus que conséquent - la basse glissando évocatrice de* Underwater [sur Shooting at the Moon, 1970, ndlr], *parfaite !*»

«Radical», «texturelle», «forme ouverte», «implosion», «glissando», «improvisations collectives», «démantibuler» : une exploration du style Canterbury, même à travers un

disque comparativement sage comme *Shooting at the Moon*, est un voyage iridescent.

La couleur dépend du point de vue. Un musicologue y verra un défi sans équivalent lancé au grand public - 500 000 albums vendus pour le troisième Soft Machine quand même, selon la maison de disques - avec des dégagements sur la musique atonale ou répétitive, une guerre totale poussant toutes les composantes (notes, rythmes, couleurs…) au-delà des limites dans l'espoir d'arracher une vérité inédite.

Les fans de musique, eux, ont toujours considéré ce mouvement d'une dizaine de groupes ou individualités (Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt, Hatfield and the North, Steve Hillage, National Health, Egg, Khan, Gong, Caravan…) comme un tour de force ayant réconcilié les trois grands courants des années 70, courants qui ne se rencontreront plus jamais ensuite : un rock progressif pourtant jugé pompier et ridicule par ses détracteurs ; une musique psychédélique censément issue du chaos et destinée à un public défoncé au LSD ; et ce jazz-rock perpétuellement accusé de vacuité sous couvert de virtuosité technique.



CULTURE

Le style Canterbury

«Une époque où les choses tordues pouvaient payer»

Plus jamais rock progressif, psyché et jazz-rock n'ont fusionné depuis l'école de Canterbury. Aymeric Leroy, auteur du livre-référence sur le sujet, nous précise les contours de cette contre-culture intello et débridée britannique des seventies.

Pour notre part, on conservait plutôt l'image d'une arrogance qui saute aux yeux sur les photos d'époque et un extrémisme totalement contenu dans le propos musical, les bouclettes séraphiques de types posant comme des rois - la compétence musicale moyenne des canterburiens excède de beaucoup celle de n'importe quel autre genre lié à la pop - dans des chambres d'hôtel mordorées et une prise de risque ne laissant que l'échec comme issue. En effet, hier comme aujourd'hui, l'oreille doit s'y faire : il faut des semaines pour ajuster sa propre écoute et commencer à entrevoir les trésors de raffinement et de nuances plus ou moins cachés dans les chansons.

Par un effet expressionniste, il aura fallu pas moins de dix-sept années pour qu'Aymeric Leroy, armé d'une solide maîtrise du solfège et auteur d'ouvrages consacrés au genre progressif en général, et à King Crimson ou Pink Floyd en particulier, pour boucler le présent livre : une recension monumentale se voulant à la fois l'ouvrage source (quinze années d'interviews), la référence (il n'existe rien de comparable sur l'école de Canterbury) et la synthèse, l'objectif étant aussi de décrire la résonance du genre avec son temps.

Un détail disant l'ampleur du projet : pas moins de neuf musiciens interviewés dans le livre sont morts avant sa publication - Aymeric Leroy aura d'ailleurs mis certains de ces entretiens à la disposition d'auteurs ayant sorti leur propre livre avant lui. Un après-midi de décembre, on lui a soumis des mots-clés figurant les clichés les plus utilisés pour qualifier le style canterburien, l'objectif étant de faire ressortir les couleurs d'un genre devenu presque intimidant au fil des décennies.



Une école de Canterbury qui passe par l'intellect et non par le cœur ?

«Un préjugé véhiculé par toutes les musiques complexes et qui repose sur un postulat populiste : la musique doit être simple et le public à peu près capable de la jouer - c'est l'esprit punk du "fais-le toi-même", l'artiste ressemble à son public. Auquel s'ajoute un second postulat : la musique doit être sincère, c'est-à-dire qu'elle doit cheminer vers celui qui l'écoute par une voie émotionnelle. Déjà, il y a des exceptions. Le *Rock Bottom* de Robert Wyatt (1974), conçu alors qu'il regardait le plafond d'un hôpital pendant six mois après une chute lui ayant fait perdre l'usage de ses jambes, relève en partie de l'émotion directe. Par ailleurs, pourquoi est-ce que la musique relèverait de l'auto-apitoiement ou de la compassion ? Pourquoi n'écouterait-on un disque que pour pleurer ? La gamme des sensations humaines est plus large. «J'en reviens à Wyatt. Il constatait déclencher une émotion chez l'auditeur alors qu'il utilisait l'humour ou le second degré, par exemple quand il chante les lettres de l'alphabet sur *The Soft Machine Volume 2*. Pour lui, il était victime de sa voix androgyne, à laquelle il prêtait une musicalité propre, hors de son contrôle. Quand Wyatt voulait chanter quelque chose de gai, les gens entendaient des sons tristes, bouleversants. Voilà l'une des choses que le style Canterbury a mise en évidence : une musicalité pure, dégagée de l'intention.»

Une musique virtuose et sans âme ?

«Par rapport au jazz-rock américain et des figures comme Chick Corea ou encore Herbie Hancock, qui jouait un concerto avec orchestre à 10 ans, le niveau instrumental des Canterburiens relève plutôt de l'amateurisme éclairé. Ce sont des autodidactes. Certes, ils ont atteint une forme d'excellence dans la maîtrise de leur instrument mais celle-ci ne s'applique qu'à leur propre style, ils ne pourraient pas jouer la musique d'un autre ou obéir aux demandes d'un producteur. Ce paradoxe apparent s'explique par la vie communautaire des années 70, qui leur permettait - Hatfield and the North s'est par exemple forgé ainsi durant cinq années - de répéter quotidiennement ensemble. Ce qui créait une forme collective de virtuosité.



La «seventies touch» de Soft Machine, fondé en 1966 : le bassiste Hugh Hooper, le batteur Robert Wyatt, qui tenait alors encore sur ses deux jambes, et le claviériste Michael Ratledge. Photo Govert de Roos. Dalle APRF

«En dehors du groupe, en revanche, les musiciens perdaient ces repères qui leur avaient permis de se construire. Parfois, ces musiciens ont un côté démonstratif, ils cherchent à jouer vite ou très complexe, on sent une aspiration à l'excellence technique… puis, la seconde d'après, à l'intérieur du même morceau de musique, ils basculent sur quelque chose de simple. C'est ce mélange qui est canterburien, pas la virtuosité ou la simplicité en soi. Pour moi, diversifier sa musique dans ces proportions était impossible à n'importe quelle autre époque que celle-là.»

Une musique jouée par des musiciens snobs pour un public de riches ?

«Certains groupes ont appartenu à une contre-culture intello où le second degré (le *Little Red Record* de Matching Mole, en référence au *Petit Livre rouge* maoïste) et les références au dadaïsme, sans même parler des finesses ou gags liés à l'Angleterre, pèsent lourd. A défaut de comprendre les références, on peut faire semblant de les comprendre *(sourire)*. Dans les faits, la plupart des musiciens ont vécu une partie des années 70 aux crochets de leur compagne. Hugh Hopper *[bassiste et compositeur de Soft Machine,]* a été chauffeur de taxi avant de gagner sa vie à l'office de tourisme de Canterbury. Daevid Allen a conduit un taxi, en Australie. Robert Wyatt a même envisagé de prendre un boulot dans une usine, à la chaîne, compatible avec sa vie en fauteuil roulant. Sa compagne a refusé. Elle aurait dû le conduire là-bas et venir le chercher, ce qui n'était pas compatible avec son travail à elle.



Le panneau qui a inspiré le nom du groupe fondé en 1972, composé de Pip Pyle, Dave Stewart, Phil Miller et Richard Sinclair (de g. à dr.). Authentique et sans trucage.

«Ces difficultés s'expliquent en grande partie par leur intransigeance artistique. Ils baignaient dans un environnement où la prise de risque et les choses tordues pouvaient payer, le *Passion Play* du groupe progressif Jethro Tull [*1973, qui raconte les pérégrinations d'un mort refusant à la fois l'enfer et le paradis, jugés par lui caricaturaux et simplistes, ndlr*] avait été numéro 1 aux Etats-Unis, par exemple. Certains ont été mis en difficulté par leurs managers et maisons de disques.

«Virgin avait l'habitude de "croiser" les budgets, réinvestissant l'argent dû aux artistes dans l'album suivant, ce qui est désormais interdit. Disons que les artistes ont le droit de lire les contrats qu'ils signent. Sinon, la crise pétrolière de 1974 a été un tournant. La hausse du prix de l'essence a limité les possibilités de concert et augmenté le prix du vinyle. Et les maisons de disques ont rationalisé leur approche du marché.»

Une musique éthérée ?

«Mike Ratledge *[claviériste et âme de Soft Machine]* n'écoutait pas des musiciens rock mais Karlheinz Stockhausen *[compositeur allemand visionnaire, précurseur en matière d'électroacoustique]*, ou encore Cecil Taylor ou Tony Williams, parmi les premiers jazzmen à jouer aussi fort et saturé que Jimi Hendrix. Ratledge vient sans doute au rock pour les filles, mais aussi pour l'excitation qui y règne et l'énergie qui s'en dégage. Factuellement, Ratledge utilise un orgue Lowrey saturé avec une pédale de distorsion Shaftesbury Duo Fuzz : il en tire un son très violent avec des accords plaqués, à la limite de la dissonance.

«Concernant la voix de Richard Sinclair *[membre de Caravan et Hatfield and the North]*, la voix canterburienne par excellence, c'est vrai qu'elle est purement musicale, dégagée des mots qu'elle porte puisqu'elle ne duplique pas émotionnellement le texte qu'elle chante.»

Une musique qui ne parle de rien ?

«C'est vrai. Mais alors, elle a le défaut de ses qualités. Il y a une distance très anglaise, une réticence à être explicite. Dave Stewart *[de Egg, Hatfield and the North et National*

Health] jugeait durement Peter Hammill *[de Van Der Graaf Generator]* ou Peter Gabriel, de Genesis : pour Stewart, le fait qu'un chanteur soit ainsi mis en avant et occupe une position démiurgique ou prescriptrice (je pense ci, faites cela…) était impensable.

«Prenons l'une des grandes œuvres de Caravan, *Nine Feet Underground*, sur *In the Land of Grey and Pink* (1971). Elle se déploie sur vingt minutes. Une chanson de cinq minutes au début, une autre de cinq minutes à la fin et une longue partie instrumentale au milieu. La première chanson dit : "*Regarde, le jour se lève*", c'est une capture de l'instant. La seconde, à la fin : "*Il y a un endroit où je peux aller*", un cocon où le narrateur se ressource. Aucun rapport entre les deux, donc, sauf à imaginer un arc conceptuel - qui serait la partie instrumentale - les reliant. Pourquoi pas, mais alors, c'est sans eux : aucun musicien de cette école n'a jamais médité sa musique de manière aussi consciente, la logique étant d'élargir la palette et d'introduire des éléments de séduction (les chansons) dans une dominante instrumentale.»

Une musique… pataphysique ?

«En introduction de leur deuxième album en 1969, Soft Machine explique être "*l'orchestre officiel du collège de pataphysique*", mouvement artistique lié à l'absurde et à la contrainte. Mon contact au collège de pataphysique était troublé : aucune trace du diplôme de Soft Machine dans leurs archives. J'ai enquêté. Le groupe s'est vu remettre ce diplôme en novembre 1967 par un certain Simon Watson Taylor. Qui s'est fait virer dans la foulée, officiellement pour ne pas avoir déposé un copyright sur une traduction de Boris Vian. En extrapolant au plus près, il a pu utiliser un diplôme vierge dans le dos du collège et être exclu une fois ce forfait découvert. Robert Wyatt *[le batteur de Soft Machine]*, lui, s'est souvenu dans les Inrockuptibles avoir vu un vieux pataphysicien rendre visite au groupe après un concert : «*"Vous êtes le groupe le plus nul que j'aie jamais entendu. Vous êtes parfaits."*»

L'école de Canterbury par Aymeric Leroy
Editions Le Mot et le reste
732 pp., 33€

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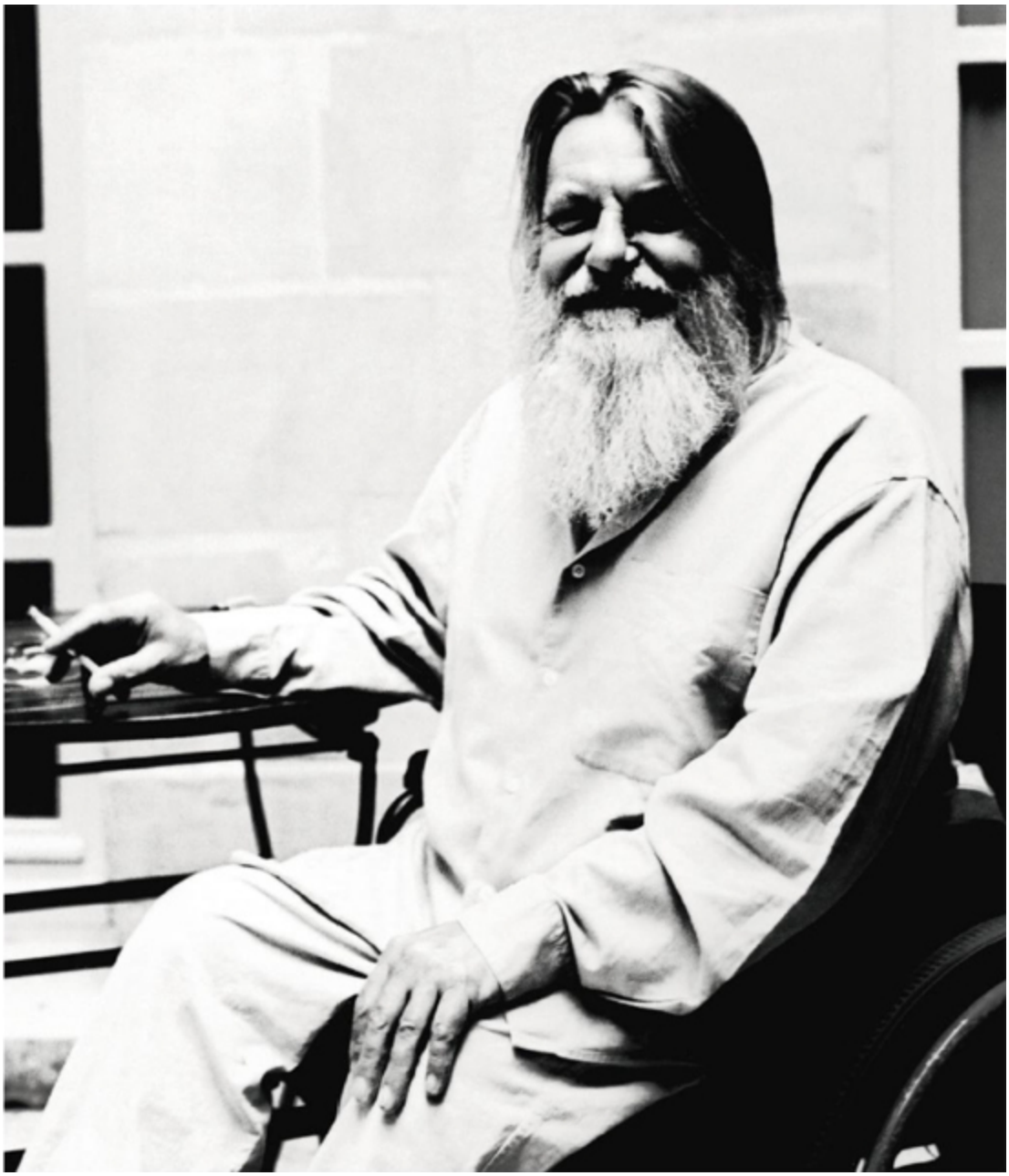
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Robert Wyatt, 2003 - Rock & Folk - N° 592 - décembre 2016





Muriel Delepont
Robert Wyatt, 2003
"C'est l'aménité, la délicatesse, la grâce, la sympathie, la bienveillance, le talent. Une belle personne, un grand artiste...
Rock Bottom... *Thank you, sir Wyatt.*
Merci Rock&Folk."



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Chute et ascension de Robert Wyatt - Aide-mémoire - N° 77 - juillet - août - septembre 2016



Le 1er juin 1973 est définitivement la date de naissance d'un nouveau Robert Wyatt. Ce soir-là, Lady June donne une réception dans sa demeure. Lady June, c'est June Campbell Cramer, artiste peintre et égérie d'un monde bigarré composé d'artistes, vrais ou aspirants, une de ces figures qu'on rencontrait beaucoup à la fin des années 60 et au début des années 70. Lady June est aussi poète, elle intègre à ce titre le groupe franco-britannique Gong, et la fine fleur de l'école musicale dite de Canterbury la met en musique : Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, anciens du groupe Soft Machine, ou encore Brian Eno, électron libre du Rock des seventies.

Robert Wyatt est là ce soir. Lui aussi a quitté Soft Machine, lorsque la douce folie pataphysicienne qu'il avait initiée avait cédé la place à un jazz rock de plus en plus obscur, sous la houlette du claviériste Mike Ratledge. Wyatt boit. Il boit même trop. Batteur, chanteur, musicien complet avide de jazz (mais pas de jazz rock), il a formé un nouveau groupe, dont le nom est un jeu de mots qui s'adresse plus aux francophones qu'à ses compatriotes. Soft Machine (d'après un roman de William Burroughs) signifie « machine molle », il appelle son groupe Matching Mole, à la prononciation proche de la traduction en français, et qui signifie grosso modo « la taupe qui est à la hauteur ».

Wyatt boit trop ce soir-là. Et il tombe du quatrième étage. Il perdra définitivement l'usage de ses jambes. Dur, pour un batteur. Quelques mois plus tard, il apparaît comme invité sur le premier album du groupe Hatfield & The North où il chante un morceau. La pochette intérieure le montre en chaise roulante pour la première fois. Il assume, ce qui n'est pas le cas de la BBC, à travers son émission à succès *Top Of The Pops*, qui estime non-productif de montrer un chanteur « handicapé » dans une émission « pour jeunes ». En soi, Robert Wyatt à *Top Of The Pops* relève du surréalisme, puisque ce programme ne concernait que les artistes figurant au hit parade des meilleures ventes. Or, pour la seule fois de sa vie, c'était le cas pour Wyatt qui, en gag, avait repris à sa façon un tube un peu guimauve des années 60, *I'm A Believer*. Contre toute attente, le 45 tours entre dans les « charts »


AIDE-mémoire

Editorial

Extrême droite en Europe : radicalisme feutré et langage codé

Attentats de Bruxelles, que dit et propose l'extrême droite ?

(seulement n°29, mais tout de même présent).

Beaucoup de groupes mimaient pour *Top Of The Pops*, mais Wyatt avait amené des amis musiciens qui jouèrent « en vrai », notamment son producteur et batteur occasionnel, Nick Mason, de rien moins que Pink Floyd. Comme Wyatt avait refusé de chanter dans un fauteuil « normal » en envoyant au présentateur indélicat le mot de quatre lettres (qui n'est pas « L.O.V.E. »), les représailles furent immédiates : la BBC ne diffusa pas la chanson. Représailles aux représailles, la semaine suivante, l'alors très influent *New Musical Express* montra en couverture tous les musiciens impliqués dans la chanson en chaise roulante, ridiculisant la station de télévision.

Ce fut le début d'un combat protéiforme pour Robert Wyatt. Combat personnel d'abord : il abandonne l'alcool et désavouera, de façon excessive selon moi, la plupart de ses disques d'avant sa chute. Combat politique ensuite : il se disait déjà ancré à gauche, mais sans vraiment de substance. C'est le jazz noir contemporain, très revendicatif avec des artistes comme Miles Davis ou Archie Shepp, qui le formera. Combat musical enfin : il refuse désormais toutes les étiquettes et propose la musique la plus libre et la plus personnelle possible, laquelle reste étrangement et heureusement très accessible à toute personne honnête et ouverte d'esprit. Son premier opus majeur, c'est l'excellent album *Rock Bottom* (sorti juste avant le fameux 45 tours cité plus haut) qui ne ressemble à rien de connu, et est pourtant fascinant et captivant. Alfreda Benge, qui a épousé Robert après l'accident, en a dessiné la pochette - ce qu'elle fera encore régulièrement par la suite. Parmi les musiciens, l'artiste a fédéré aussi bien des stars comme Mike Oldfield dont le tout récent *Tubular Bells* vient de marquer durablement les esprits, que des jazzmen comme Gary Windo ou Mongezi Feza, l'ancien Soft Machine Hugh Hopper, l'ancien Matching Mole Richard Sinclair ou des joyeux iconoclastes avant-gardistes comme Fred Frith ou le délirant Ivor Cutler. *Rock Bottom* sera la première pierre du Wyatt nouveau.



Un album suivra en 1975 : *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, sorte de jeu de mots sur « *truth is stranger than fiction* » (la vérité est plus étrange que la fiction). Wyatt le divise en deux faces bien distinctes, l'une prolongeant peu ou prou l'ambiance de Rock Bottom, la seconde proposant des reprises, entre autres du Jazz le plus engagé socialement du moment à

travers *Song For Che* du contrebassiste activiste Charlie Haden.

Mais Wyatt sort son album le plus ouvertement politique en 1982, en plein thatchérisme, *Nothing Can Stop Us* (« Rien ne peut nous arrêter »). Il s'agit d'un assemblage curieux mais cohérent de chansons venant de tous les horizons possibles. La cohésion vient de cette voix étrange, presque non-humaine, imposant à la fois une présence forte et un détachement quasi abstrait. Il interprète quelques classiques du chant de lutte, comme *Guantanamera* ou le *Strange Fruit* créé par Billie Holiday dans l'Amérique de la dépression et des exactions du Ku Klux Klan. Plus étrange, cette reprise distanciée du morceau de Chic, groupe disco alors fort à la mode : *At Last I Am Free* (« Enfin, je suis libre »). C'est que Wyatt ne dénigre en rien les chansons en vogue si elles sont de qualité, mais surtout il a mis l'accent sur le texte de Chic, presque existentiel (« Enfin je suis libre, mais je vois à peine devant moi ») plutôt que sur la musique. Mentionnons encore la reprise du titre contemporain d'Elvis Costello, *Shipbuilding* (construction navale), réquisitoire contre la guerre des Malouines promue par Margaret Thatcher. Et aussi cette provocation : *Stalin Wasn't Stallin'* (« Staline n'hésitait pas »), chanson de propagande de la Seconde Guerre mondiale interprétée à l'époque par le Golden Gate Quartet et « archivée » dès le début de la Guerre froide. La version de Wyatt verse dans le situationnisme : il garde le texte intact mais lui offre un fond musical à la Spike Jones, avec bruitages et effets de studio.

Wyatt lui-même ne propose qu'une seule de ses compositions, mais particulièrement parlante : *Born Again Cretin*, encore un jeu de mots, cette fois sur le phénomène des « re-nés » chrétiens, les *Born Again* Christians, soit des convertis récents souvent plus zélés et obscurantistes que les croyants de longue date.

Les finances de notre artiste n'ont jamais été florissantes et il enregistrera peu pendant quinze ans, et quand ce sera le cas, il le fera « à domicile ». Reconnu néanmoins par ses pairs, il reviendra pleinement en 1997 avec l'album *Shleep*, mot inventé à partir de « *sleep* » (« sommeil ») et « *sheep* » (« mouton »). Il bénéficiera du concours de certains amis : Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, mais aussi notre compatriote guitariste de jazz, Philip Catherine, avec qui il reprend son Nairam sous le titre *Maryan* (quasi anagramme) en y ajoutant des paroles. Un invité plus surprenant : Paul Weller, ex-Jam et ex-Style Concil.

Suivent dans les premières années de notre siècle *Cuckooland* et *Comicopera*, deux disques remarquables. L'instrumentation, généralement « *sparse* » (la traduction française, « clairsemé », ne rend pas justice à la finesse réalisée par Wyatt), change à chaque morceau.

Il engage beaucoup de femmes : Annie Whitehead au trombone, sa propre épouse, Alfreda Benge, participe aux compositions, Seaming To chante et joue de la clarinette, Monica Vasconcelos participe aussi aux voix, et il reprend du Anja Garbarek. Il connaît le français et chante volontiers en espagnol, notamment sur du Garcia Lorca. Comme on le voit, s'il ne fait plus de disques ouvertement politiques, ses choix musicaux correspondent à ses convictions.

Quelques disques marquants :

- Rock Bottom (1974)
- Nothing Can Stop Us (1982)
- Shleep (1997)
- Cuckooland (2003)
- Comicopera (2007)

Les curieux pourront l'entendre comme invité sur de nombreux disques d'autres artistes. La liste est longue. Épinglons juste Carla Bley (*Escalator Over The Hill*), Kevin Ayers (*Whatevershebringswesing*), Anja Garbarek (*Smiling & Waving*), Björk (*Medulla*) ou David Gilmour (*On An Island*)

Il vient de connaître une revanche sur la goujaterie de *Top Of The Pops* : son interprétation censurée de *I'm A Believer* est maintenant sur Youtube, comme l'est celle, en anglais, de L'Internationale qui n'avait pas pu paraître en disque. *No pasaran* !

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Soft Machine, machine molle sous tension - Télérama.fr - 28 mai 2016

Télérama

Soft Machine, machine molle sous tension

Laurent Rigoulet

En 1970, Soft Machine, grand rival du Pink Floyd de l'ère Syd Barrett sur la scène londonienne déjantée, aborde un tournant décisif. Le pianiste Mike Ratledge veut s'ouvrir les nouvelles terres du jazz-rock. Robert Wyatt déteste la fusion. Ça donne de grands disques de rupture. Joliment réédités.

Quand on pense à Soft Machine, les images défilent vite. Probablement les mêmes chez tous ceux qui se sont penchés sur leur cas. Londres période psychédélique. Londres sous acide. Londres complètements déjanté. Les soirées UFO (Unlimited Freak Out à la Roundhouse). Robert Wyatt torse nu à la batterie devant un parterre de hippies et de mannequins. Des idées dingues ou farfelues. Une moto qui fend le public, de l'acide sur la peau de la batterie et Wyatt cognant ses fûts avec la conviction qu'ils vont exploser. Kevin Ayers en Pierrot Lunaire. Daevid Allen toujours en quête d'une nouvelle expérience comme la « Dream Machine » que Bill Burroughs lui a fait découvrir à Paris. « *Une ampoule derrière un carton, lequel tourne à la vitesse d'un 78 tours avec des perforations qui diffusent des lumières branchées sur le rythme de votre cerveau.*»

Soft Machine est un groupe dada qui s'éclate, tendu vers l'improvisation et l'hallucination collective. Un groupe pop surréaliste, des musiciens intellos aux neurones fondus, plus dingues encore que ceux du Pink Floyd, leurs rivaux de l'époque, une bandes de rêveurs, débarquant de Canterbury, la ville chimérique dans l'imaginaire du rock anglais.

L'histoire se complique vite. La composition de Soft Machine a toujours été aussi changeante que le ciel de Wimbledon (au point que l'on trouve sur Wikipédia leur arbre généalogique à peu près incompréhensible), et le pilier du groupe, la star de l'ombre, c'est Mike Ratledge dont on parle moins souvent. Sur les photos de l'époque, il est à tomber. Manteau de cuir, lunettes noires, cheveux longs, frange bien droite, mine fermée. On dirait qu'il sort d'un polar avec Michel Caine. L'école de Canterbury, c'est lui.

Quand Robert Wyatt l'a rencontré dans son lycée, Ratledge était « prefect », un de ces élèves élus pour veiller à la discipline et qui ne perdent pas une occasion d'abuser de leur autorité (cf If de Lindsay Anderson). La première conversation entre les deux lycéens a été brève, règlement oblige : « *J'ai entendu dire que tu avais un disque de Cecil Taylor. Tu peux me le prêter ?* », a demandé Ratledge. Plus un ordre qu'une question. Robert Wyatt s'est senti flatté et en a profité pour écouter en boucle *Cecil Taylor at Newport*, concentré de radicalisme jazz. Les rapports entre les deux hommes se sont plus ou moins renversés par la suite mais la discussion a toujours été riche (et tendue.)

Elle n'est jamais aussi intense que sur le troisième et quatrième album de Soft Machine, disques de rupture dans tous les sens du terme. A l'approche des années 70, le groupe se remet à peine d'un longue tournée américaine en compagnie de Jimi Hendrix. La consommation de drogues et les expériences musicales ont été particulièrement intenses. Kevin Ayers s'est mis la tête à l'envers et s'en va à Ibiza. Il se sent trop frivole, trop léger musicalement pour continuer le chemin avec Wyatt et Ratledge qu'il pense « ennuyer ».

Les deux super-egos se retrouvent quasi seuls aux commandes (avec le bassiste Hugh Hopper qui a quand même plus que son mot à dire et signe sur l'album l'impressionnant *Facelift*). La bataille est telle, à l'intérieur du groupe, que Robert Wyatt se retrouve à peu près seul pour enregistrer *Moon in june*, qui restera un sommet de sa carrière, vingt minutes d'envolées et de bifurcations mélodiques (les quatre morceaux de l'album occupent chacun une face du double album).



En studio, le groupe cherche à dialoguer mais les positions sont tranchées. Elles donnent une lecture passionnante d'un courant qui va marquer les années suivantes : le jazz-rock. Mike Ratledge a des idées bien arrêtées sur la question. Il affiche son mépris pour le rock et la pop et veut ouvrir les horizons de Soft Machine (un nom de groupe qu'il a trouvé lui-même en référence au roman de Burroughs). Il est très critique pour ses pairs même ceux qui peuvent sembler les plus audacieux. « *Les Doors*, dit-il en 1969, *multiplient les signes de l'avant-gardisme, mais c'est tout. Jim Morrison est un iconoclaste qui ne fait rien avancer !* » Janis Joplin et son Big Brother ? « *Leurs disques sont trop sages !* » Il dénonce la « tyrannie du blues » qui domine le rock américain.

Lui parle plus facilement de Stravinsky que de John Lee Hooker et entend tout révolutionner en insufflant au rock les audaces du free jazz, ce qu'il fait sur *Out-Bloody-Rageous* vingt minutes sans concession. « *Faire cohabiter jazz et pop est difficile*, dit-il. *Il y*

a deux genres d'approche, les groupes de jazz qui font de la pop et pensent qu'il suffit de simplifier leur structure musicale pour accrocher l'énergie de cette musique ; et les groupes pop qui font vaguement du jazz. Tous y perdent leur âme. Mais les musiciens rock qui s'ouvrent au jazz en gardant l'excitation et le noyau dur de leur son peuvent faire des choses fantastiques. Le meilleur exemple, c'est Frank Zappa. »

Robert Wyatt n'y croit pas. Il offre à Soft Machine toute la puissance de sa technique, mais pendant l'enregistrement du troisième album, au printemps 1970, s'oppose fermement à la direction défendue par les autres : « *J'étais pourtant un fan de jazz au lycée et j'adorais la façon dont cette musique évoluait*, raconte-t-il dans sa biographie. *Mais je ne croyais pas à la fusion. Pour moi, le jazz-rock prend le pire de chaque musique. Les rythmes rock sont joués de manière affectée et précieuse avec des solos beaucoup trop compliqués. Je rêvais plutôt de la fluidité des rythmiques jazz associée à la simplicité des musiques populaires.* » Il ne tardera pas à claquer la porte, mais les échanges donnent deux albums – *Third* and *Fourth* – sous tension. Et quelques sommets de friction qui montrent que la conciliation n'est pas toujours la meilleure solution.

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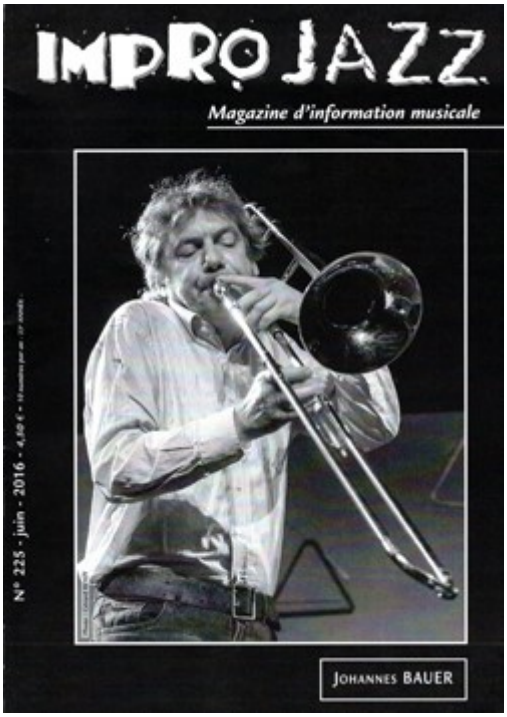
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Aymeric Leroy - L'école de Canterbury - Improjazz - N° 225 - juin 2016

Aymeric Leroy - L'ECOLE DE CANTERBURY



Un livre, ou plutôt une bible, comme certains aiment déjà l'appeler. Si vous voulez tout savoir sur ce mouvement musical britannique né dans cette petite cité du Kent, dans l'extrémité sud-est de l'Angleterre, sur la rivière Stour, à 86,4 km de Londres, deux adresses possibles : celle des éditions Le Mot et le Reste, ou celle de son auteur, un passionné du nom d'Aymeric Leroy...

IMPROJAZZ : *Quand et pourquoi as-tu eu l'idée de ce livre ?"*

Aymeric LEROY (AL) : L'idée de faire un livre sur ce sujet est née début 1999, et je pense qu'elle s'est imposée davantage par l'accumulation de matière, tant dans le cadre de mon site Calyx, né en 1996, que dans celui de la revue Big Bang depuis 1993. Envisager de passer de l'exercice de la chronique à un livre me paraît avec le recul présomptueux, mais par naïveté plus que par prétention, j'imaginais qu'une fois réunie la matière, le livre naîtrait de lui-même, un peu comme par magie. Evidemment, il n'en a rien été. Pendant deux ou trois ans, j'ai mené des recherches en bibliothèques, épluchant la presse musicale française et étrangère, et interviewé pas mal de gens. J'ai ainsi pu compenser le manque d'informations sur certains groupes ou certaines périodes et me trouver en position de les aborder avec le niveau de détail qui me semblerait justifié pour chaque, sans tenir compte d'une hiérarchie basée sur la notoriété ou le succès. En 2003, afin d'obtenir une subvention du Centre national du livre, j'ai finalisé un chapitre et une proposition de sommaire, mais en réalité la structure a considérablement évolué par la suite. L'idée d'une division par dates à la manière d'un agenda ne s'est imposée qu'assez tardivement. Au départ, je pensais proposer des chapitres traitant chacun d'un groupe, ou d'une période d'un groupe, mais ça ne fonctionnait pas, et je suis heureux d'avoir trouvé cette solution qui me semble bien meilleure.

IMPROJAZZ : *Tu tentes de justifier au début de ce livre l'appellation "Ecole de Canterbury". Il est vrai que ce terme s'est vite invité lorsqu'on parle de Soft Machine ou Caravan, mais pourquoi, à ton avis, fallait-il faire admettre cette notion une fois pour toute*

?

AL : Je ne veux pas donner une importance excessive à ce qui reste un exercice de style obligé pour justifier l'existence d'un tel ouvrage et son intitulé. Définir le style Canterbury n'est pas en soi un enjeu de qualité artistique, mais simplement la localisation d'un centre de gravité stylistique, qui explique par exemple que je parle davantage de Hatfield and the North que de Gong, alors que ce dernier mériterait assurément à lui seul un ouvrage.

Pour autant, cet exercice de style ne me semble pas totalement futile, dans la mesure où il permet tout de même d'expliquer ce que cette musique a pu avoir d'original, de novateur et d'unique dans le paysage musical de son temps. Avec évidemment une préférence personnelle mais sans exclusive. Je suis conscient que les musiques qui me plaisent ne sont pas forcément celles qui présentent la plus forte résonance avec leur époque, et inversement. Il ne s'agit donc pas pour moi de dire qu'il est injuste que ce style-là n'ait pas connu un plus grand succès public, critique ou commercial.

La définition que je propose - mélange d'éléments de fond (une couleur jazzy, un goût pour les métriques impaires et changeantes, des textes absurdes ou auto-référentiels) et de forme (l'orgue saturé, la discrétion ou l'absence des guitares, une façon de chanter anti-théâtrale) - ne revendique pas d'être une vérité révélée. Pour autant elle n'est pas complètement subjective. Elle est, je crois, nourrie de tout ce que j'ai pu lire ou entendre à son sujet, tant des musiciens que des journalistes ou de simples auditeurs. Je doute que les premiers s'y reconnaîtront forcément, mais j'espère l'assentiment des derniers. C'est après tout la conscience populaire qui a le dernier mot pour légitimer telle ou telle appellation comme désignant un courant artistique. Dans une certaine mesure, je ne fais qu'entériner, en le théorisant de façon plus approfondie, ce que la postérité a d'ores et déjà retenu de cette musique.



L'auteur et Robert Wyatt

IMPROJAZZ : *Il a fallu nécessairement la collaboration des musiciens pour retrouver tous ces détails, notamment pour Soft Machine, avec ces diverses versions des mêmes morceaux. De quelle manière cela s'est-il passé avec des gens comme Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair ou Robert Wyatt ?*

AL : Tous se sont montrés très coopératifs, mais avec évidemment dans le cas de Robert Wyatt sa réticence bien connue à aborder la période Soft Machine. Lors de mon principal entretien avec lui, en 2001, j'ai dû user de stratégies détournées pour lui soutirer quelques phrases, sans grand succès. Il s'est montré beaucoup plus expansif sur *Rock Bottom*. Plus récemment, en l'interviewant pour le livret de 68, je l'ai trouvé plus serein et disert. Hugh Hopper, je l'ai interviewé en face à face mais j'ai aussi beaucoup correspondu avec lui par mail quand c'est devenu possible, et il a fait preuve d'une grande disponibilité, tout comme Pip Pyle ou Dave Stewart notamment. Richard Sinclair, je l'ai souvent croisé et échangé de manière informelle. En dehors d'une interview commune avec Phil Miller (et Pip Pyle nous a rejoints sur la fin) au festival Baja Prog au Mexique en 2006, j'ai beaucoup puisé dans d'autres entretiens, ce que j'ai été aussi obligé de faire avec Mike Ratledge, qui était le

porte-parole de Soft Machine dans les années 70, mais ne s'est guère montré désireux de s'épancher lorsqu'il nous est arrivé de nous croiser.

Pour ce qui concerne les détails factuels, les musiciens ne sont pas toujours les meilleures sources. Pas d'autre solution que de jouer les rats de bibliothèques et recouper les témoignages. Avec parfois la divine surprise de tomber sur telle ou telle personne ayant tenu et conservé des carnets. On n'est parfois pas très loin d'un travail d'investigation policière !

IMPROJAZZ : *Le livre est préfacé par Jonathan Coe, un auteur très proche de ces musiciens (on pense bien sur à son livre The Rotters' Club paru en 2001). Comment es-tu rentré en contact avec lui ?*


Wilde Flowers leaping, 1966.

AL : J'avais déjà lu *Testament à l'Anglaise* quand est paru *Bienvenue au club* [le titre français] en 2001. J'ai découvert sa passion pour la scène de Canterbury dans ce livre. En 2002, il est venu à Paris pour un petit concert promotionnel autour du CD (*9th & 13th*) qu'il avait sorti chez Tricatel. On m'a présenté à lui après le concert et il s'est avéré qu'il connaissait mon site *Calyx*, et pensait même le mentionner dans la suite (*The Full Circle*), ce qu'il n'a finalement pas fait. Par la suite, nous nous sommes souvent croisés, notamment lors de concerts de reformation d'Hatfield, à Londres ou Canterbury, tout en correspondant de temps en temps. Lorsqu'il est venu à Paris pour présenter *Expo 58*, il m'a de lui-même proposé de signer un avant-propos, ce que j'ai accepté avec plaisir, avant tout parce qu'il était totalement légitime, ayant vu ces groupes à une époque où j'étais bien trop jeune pour m'y intéresser, et connaissant très bien les disques et, dans certains cas, les musiciens eux-mêmes, mais aussi parce que sa notoriété d'écrivain pouvait attirer sur mon livre l'attention d'un public ignorant tout de cette musique.

IMPROJAZZ : *Pourquoi avoir parlé de Soft Machine jusqu'au bout du bout ? Idem pour Gong (sans Daevid Allen)...*

AL : : II y a deux projets parallèles dans ce livre: le premier, qui me tient le plus à cœur, était d'explorer le cœur de ce que je ressens comme l'essence du style Canterbury, que je situe quelque part entre le *Volume Two* de Soft Machine et Hatfield and the North; le second était de prendre en compte les attentes légitimes des lecteurs d'un livre ainsi intitulé, et donc aborder aussi les groupes ou les périodes pas forcément les plus "canterburiennes" des formations les plus emblématiques. Dans le cas de Gong, il y a du reste un paradoxe, car la période la plus "canterburienne" du groupe est sans doute celle qui a immédiatement suivi le départ de Daevid Allen, dominée par Steve Hillage qui venait de publier *Fish Rising*... Pour ce qui concerne Soft Machine, je l'avoue, je suis allé bien au-delà de la phase "canterburienne" de leur évolution musicale, alors que j'ai abandonné en cours de route certains musiciens dans leurs parcours solo. Ça se discute. Disons que c'est le privilège du nom.


Soft Machine 1967


Caravan, 1969

IMPROJAZZ : *Tu décris très bien pour chaque groupe l'intérêt qu'il a représenté (ou non) dans une certaine esthétique musicale qui a marqué bon nombre d'entre nous dans ces années fertiles que furent la fin des années 60 et les années 70. Que penses-tu de l'influence que ces musiciens d'une banlieue normale d'une Angleterre en totale révolution ont pu avoir sur la culture musicale européenne ?*

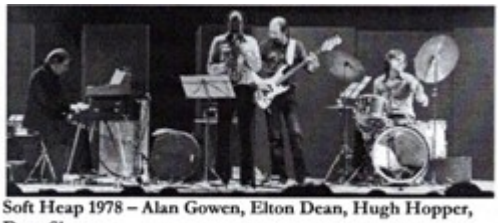
AL : Des gens comme Pierre Lattes ou Jean-Pierre Lentin, tous deux disparus aujourd'hui hélas, avaient là-dessus des pistes de réflexion intéressantes à proposer, en tout cas pour ce qui concerne l'affection particulière de la France pour cette musique. Au-delà d'une attirance générale pour la pop anglo-saxonne, et britannique en particulier, il y avait dans la scène de Canterbury des spécificités qui plaisaient aux Français : un côté intello, pointu, contrebalancé par un goût pour l'absurde et l'humour. Dans le sens inverse, ces musiciens étaient eux-mêmes moins tournés vers l'Amérique que leurs contemporains, et donc réceptifs à des inventions françaises comme la Pataphysique. Il y a évidemment une part d'involontaire, aussi, dans tout ça. Robert Wyatt raconte souvent que ses reprises parfois "décalées" sont au départ des tentatives d'imitation fidèle des originaux, mais que sa personnalité musicale s'impose malgré lui. L'imitation est donc ratée, mais c'est précisément ça qui en fait une réussite. Je vois quelque chose d'assez similaire dans la scène de Canterbury en général : une réappropriation de musiques venues de l'étranger, des Etats-Unis en premier lieu, mais transfigurée par un ADN britannique dont ces musiciens ne pouvaient pas se débarrasser. Wyatt souligne à ce propos le rôle de Kevin Ayers qui assumait son accent anglais sans essayer de singer les Américains, mais Ayers lui-même m'a expliqué qu'il n'avait pas le choix, qu'il était incapable de prendre un autre accent que le sien, ce qui d'ailleurs le faisait enrager !


National Health 1981

IMPROJAZZ : *Quelle est ta position personnelle par rapport à ce mouvement ? Ce qui est le plus étonnant est que ce soit un Français qui ait décrit avec minutie cette aventure typiquement british...*

AL : Je suis conscient du paradoxe, y compris générationnel. Ma rencontre avec cette musique était improbable, et le fait que je m'y sois investi à ce point encore plus. Peut-être suis-je la preuve qu'il y a décidément une affinité très profonde entre cette musique et la France. Difficile à dire. Dans mon cas personnel, c'est l'exploration des musiques de cette période, qui m'ont tout de suite attiré à une époque (le milieu des années 80) où ce qu'on entendait sur les ondes était assez épouvantable, qui m'a mené plutôt vers l'Angleterre que les Etats-Unis, et au sein de la scène britannique, disons "progressive" en général, vers ses nuances plus "jazzy", en l'occurrence l'école de Canterbury. Mais c'était moins en raison de la connotation jazz en elle-même que par le fait que l'éventail de styles me paraissait plus complet : dans le Canterbury, on a à la fois tout ce qui m'intéresse dans le progressif, sans le côté conceptuel un tantinet pesant et le kitsch des resucées classiques, et cette sophistication jazz, dans le fond (richesse harmonique, improvisation) comme la forme (utilisation des vents et cuivres). C'est une excellente synthèse de tout ce qui m'intéresse en musique.


Hatfield & the North Big Band

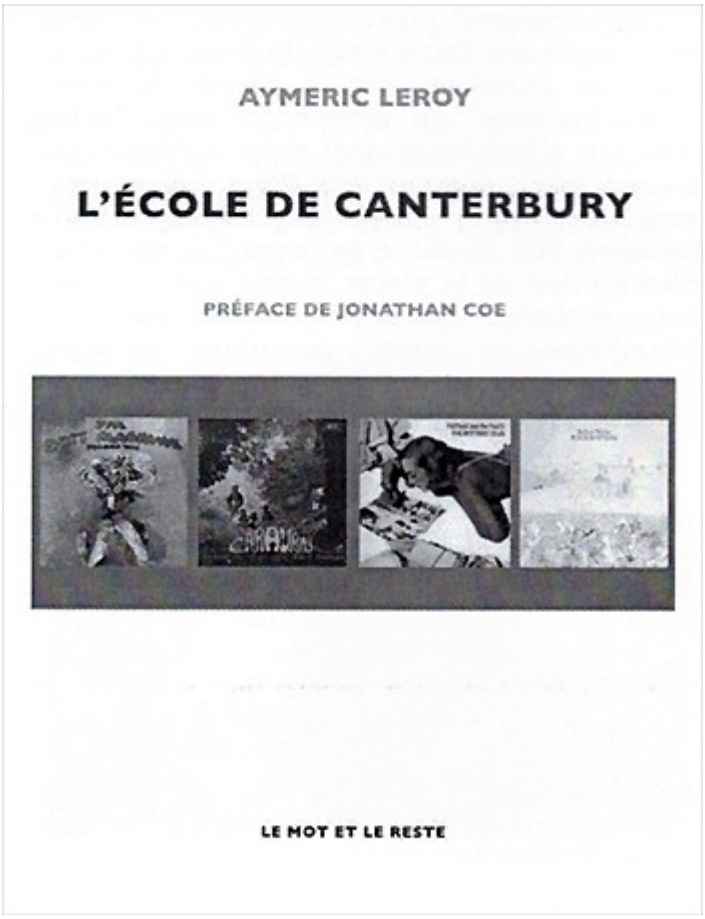

Soft Heap 1978 – Alan Gowen, Elton Dean, Hugh Hopper, Dave Sheen

IMPROJAZZ : *Que penses-tu des réactions (plutôt enthousiastes) sur internet, réactions majoritairement britanniques ?*

AL : Pour l'instant, un mois seulement après la parution, les réactions sont encore

partielles - il faut le temps d'en venir à bout, de ce pavé ! - et informelles, recueillies notamment lors des quelques signatures que j'ai faites. Pour les vraies chroniques, il faudra attendre un peu ! Mais, à moins que les déçus ne tiennent à ménager ma susceptibilité, les retours sont très enthousiastes. Je crois que le livre a des qualités objectives, qui tiennent à la quantité d'informations délivrées et à l'intérêt de l'histoire racontée et des musiques évoquées. Mon apport personnel, critique et littéraire, est moins omniprésent que dans les livres précédents, et j'espère donc que même ceux qui ne partagent pas mes préférences ou n'aiment pas mes analyses trouveront matière à se contenter - je laisse beaucoup la parole aux protagonistes eux-mêmes, et aussi à mes confrères critiques de l'époque. Mon objectif est simple, c'est le même que pour mes autres livres, et j'espère l'avoir rempli : enrichir l'écoute des disques, qui reste l'essentiel, en révélant les coulisses et le contexte dans lequel ils ont été créés. Le meilleur compliment qu'on puisse me faire, et je l'entends souvent du reste, c'est que mon livre donne envie de réécouter les disques et d'en découvrir d'autres qu'on avait ratés.

Propos recueillis par Philippe RENAUD



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Beautiful Caniveau - Article 11 - Samedi 7 novembre 2015



BEAUTIFUL CANIVEAU

Où il est question de Robert Wyatt, de lapins morts, de techniques d'envol, des mystères de la pop et de quelques autres considérations existentielles suscitées par l'écoute amoureuse du grand et barge barde anglais.

Première banderille, ce monologue fou, récité d'une voix badine de promeneur étonné :

« Oh, regardez, un lapin mort... Tout écrasé... Complètement écrasé... Oh, il y en a un autre... Et il y a quelque chose dans le caniveau... Oh c'est... Une de ces boîtes en... Hum, polystyrène... Ça ressemble aux... Emballages de nourriture à emporter... Et il y a des frites dedans... Je n'ai pas vraiment envie de finir ces frites... Ce n'est pas banal. 1 »

Comme prologue à un morceau cristallin, parangon d'alchimie pop, on a connu plus vendeur. Moins taré. T'as pas forcément envie d'entendre parler de lapins aplatis quand tu te prélasses musicalement en quête de sonorités apaisantes. Tu viserais plutôt des trucs parlant de couchers de soleil, d'amour à la plage – *ahou, cha cha cha* – ou d'arcs-en-ciel virevoltants. Combien de fois les Beatles ont-ils mobilisé le thème des lapins écrasés dans leurs ballades ? Je te le donne en mille : zéro fois. N'est pas Baudelaire qui veut.

Mais Robert Wyatt peut tout se permettre. C'est le roi. Un croisement entre Robert Desnos et Georges Harrison, orfèvre azimuté décollant vers le ciel aux commandes de ce fauteuil roulant auquel il est condamné depuis une sombre soirée de juin 1973, laquelle le vit basculer d'une fenêtre au quatrième étage vers le plancher des vaches.

LSD, alcool, dépression, tout a été dit sur ce saut de l'ange sans filet, et au vrai on s'en

tamponne. C'était peu après l'époque Soft Machine, celle où il malmenait sa batterie comme on polit un galet et où déjà il avait la voix la plus triste du monde. Privé de jambes suite à l'accident, Monsieur Wyatt apprit alors à voler sur son lit d'hôpital en composant *Rock Bottom*, album tutoyant la stratosphère qu'on ne résume pas d'un simple adjectif – merveilleux, fantastique, génial – parce que ce serait blasphème. Empruntons plutôt ces paroles de « Sea song », qu'un jour j'aimerais lui gribouiller sur une carte postale envoyée depuis une île déserte aux eaux tourmentées, en guise de reconnaissance de dette : « *Ta folie s'accorde joliment à la mienne. […] Nous ne sommes pas seuls* .2 »

Bref. Revenons à nos lapins. Le préambule en question est tiré de « A beautiful place », morceau beaucoup plus tardif, présent sur l'album *Comicopera* (2007). Un titre sobre, à l'instrumentation dépouillée – deux guitares folk, une contrebasse, une voix, quelques claquements de doigts –, qui tutoie les cimes de la perfection mélodique 3. Comme une évidence. Il chante et l'univers s'ouvre en deux.

Il est toujours difficile de comprendre ce qui déclenche dans un cerveau l'emballement neuronal poussant à remettre encore et toujours une chanson sur le sillon, à l'écouter tant de fois qu'inéluctablement on finira par s'en lasser. Une consolation : dans ce cas précis, ce jour est lointain. En attendant, je m'interroge : pourquoi ce morceau ? Qu'est-ce qui s'accorde si parfaitement à ma propre folie ? L'intonation de sa voix ? La structure mélodique ? Les paroles ? Le sublime dépouillement ? *No lo se*.

Après tout, c'est une chanson d'apparence très simple. Jusqu'aux paroles qui une fois le préambule surréaliste évacué, se font d'abord presque banales, conformes aux canons pop. « *Cela fait des heures que je marche / Une pause serait bienvenue / J'observe les environs / Aucun endroit où se poser* 4. » *On the road*, un thème tout ce qu'il y a de plus classique.

Puis sans prévenir débarque l'étrange. Ou plutôt le non-formaté pop. « *Il y a un magasin / Qui vend des costumes pour hommes chics / Et un peu plus loin / Un ou deux agents immobiliers / Et un panneau 'vente à emporter' / Posé sur une porte poussiéreuse / Des clichés éclatants de nourriture / Légèrement passée au micro-ondes* 5 ».

Allons bon. C'est gris. Méchamment gris. Wyatt décrit un environnement urbain d'une notable morosité. Des snacks et des magasins fatigués. Le genre que tu croises au Kremlin-Bicêtre un après-midi de semaine. Ou à Melun, te dirait Pete. Même « *l'église méthodiste* » évoquée un peu plus loin, avec son « *côté sinistre* », ne convoque pas vraiment de décor rieur.

Comme de juste, le morceau se conclut sur un constat désabusé, que je ne te fais pas l'affront de traduire : « *It's a beautiful day / But not here* ». Oui, ça n'incite pas exactement à la transcendance.

Alors quoi ? Quelle particularité brandir pour démêler le mystère du magnétisme ?

Eh bien aucune en particulier, en fait. Et c'est peut-être là toute la beauté du constat. Contrairement à des morceaux cultes et virtuoses de Wyatt comme « Sea Song » précédemment cité, ou bien ce « Shipbuilding » qui tirait à boulets rouges 6 et éclatants sur la toute fraîche guerre des Malouines, il est quasiment impossible de situer précisément le point d'attraction de « Beautiful Peace ».

« *J'aime la pop à mort* », a un jour déclaré Monsieur Wyatt. Ce n'était pas des paroles en l'air. Mais ce n'était pas non plus à lire de manière littérale. Selon moi, le message peut se lire ainsi : *j'ai beau avoir trempé dans le rock expérimental et le jazz d'avant-garde, je sais bien qu'au fond il n'y a qu'une vérité, qu'une grille de lecture, celle que te renvoie ton âme quand tu touches du doigt le mystère sacré de la Sainte Mélodie et que l'espace d'un morceau tu es immortel*. J'extrapole à fond les ballons, évidemment, mais j'y crois aussi un peu. Car c'est bien là l'essence de la pop si tu l'envisages non pas comme une récréation ensoleillée sauce MTV merdique, mais comme art ultime de condensation des sentiments les plus élevés.

Il y a dans la légèreté maîtrisée une dimension qui touche à l'immortel, transcende la triste vanité de ce monde abonné au gris. Les Beach Boys, les Beatles, les Kinks, Lennon solo, tous les monstres sacrés de la pop l'ont été parce qu'ils insufflaient une magie presque paranormale dans des paroles aussi sucrées et niaises que « *I want to hold your hand* ». Je t'apprends rien, je sais, j'enfile même les perles à vitesse grand V. Reste que ce lieu-commun – le mystère du frisson qui te saute au cou en babillant comme un bébé panda sous kétamine et que la seule raison ne saurait expliquer – ne sera jamais intégralement percé. Et c'est tant mieux.

C'est sans doute après ça que courent tous les fondus de musique. Cette sensation d'avoir trouvé une maison idéale alors même qu'elle est tout à fait brinquebalante et plus sobre qu'un terrier de renard. De se sentir chez soi sans raison, assis comme un con sur ta chaise de bureau grinçante, simplement parce que tes oreilles battent la mesure.

Lémi

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1 *Oh look, there's a dead rabbit,… all flat,… completely flat... Oh there's another one… What's in the gutter... oh it's a… one of those polystyrene… um boxes… that's all… take away... there's chips in there… didn't really want to finish the chips… that's unusual…*

2 *You're madness fits in nicely with my own ... / We're not alone.*

3 A noter : Brian Eno a participé à la composition de ce titre.

4 *I've been walking for hours, / Needed a rest. / Take a good look around, / Nowhere to rest.*

5 *There's a shop / Selling gentlemen's suits. / Further along / An estate agent or two. / And a take-away sign / Over a dusty door. / Shiny photos of food, /Slightly microwaved.*

6 Robert Wyatt fut un temps porte-parole du Parti Communiste anglais.

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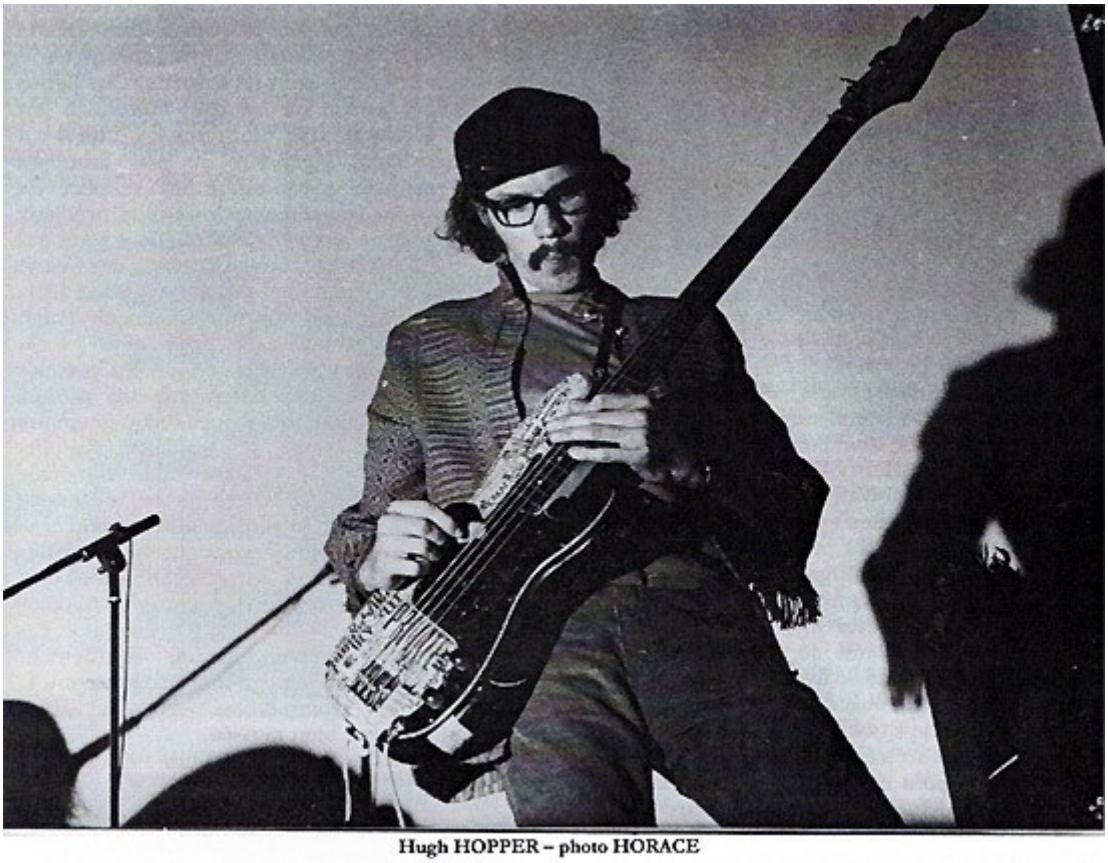
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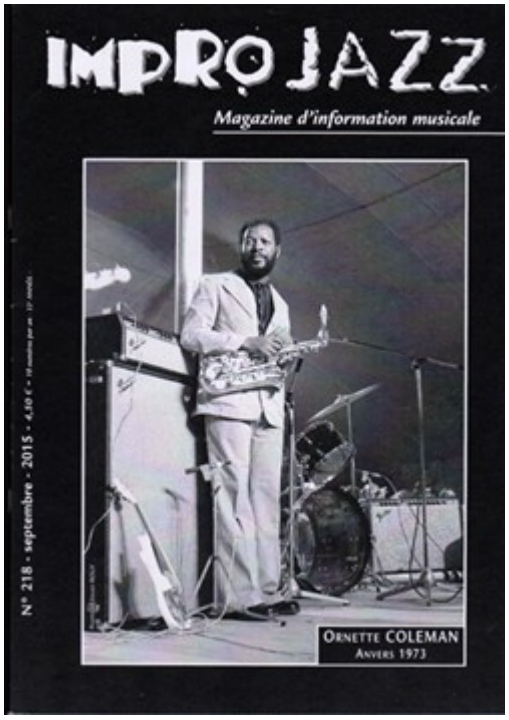
Les dix albums indispensables de Hugh Hopper - Improjazz - N° 218 - septembre 2015

Les dix albums indispensables de Hugh HOPPER



Hugh HOPPER – photo HORACE

Le prog ou rock progressif est une sorte de grande armoire à rangement dans laquelle on a stocké des groupes ou des musiciens très différents et qui dans certains cas n'avaient à peu près rien en commun; de Yes à Univers Zéro l'écart est immense si l'on peut dire! En fait prog désignait au départ des groupes ou artistes dont la démarche consistait à faire évoluer une base musicale sur laquelle à peu près tout le monde s'entendait et que l'on désignait comme pop-rock. Mais si certains musiciens faisaient simplement évoluer le



genre rock, d'autres créaient carrément une nouvelle identité musicale reprenant l'énergie du rock mais aussi l'improvisation du jazz ou la sophistication de la musique contemporaine. Si aujourd'hui la musique de Henry Cow nous est devenue familière, il est toujours intéressant de tenter d'imaginer la désorientation qu'elle a exercée sur les oreilles de l'époque. Pour brouiller encore davantage les choses il existe des groupes dont la musique a considérablement évolué et parfois en peu de temps; ce fut le cas de Soft Machine qui en à peine une année va faire un grand saut, cette année allant de mi 1969 aux premiers mois de 1970. Deux musiciens vont influencer le cours des choses durant cette période : **Elton Dean** et **Hugh Hopper**. Pendant que **Robert Wyatt** et **Mike Ratledge** restent perméables à de nombreuses influences, Hopper et Dean semblent clairement attirés par la musique instrumentale, improvisée et assez nettement influencée par le jazz. C'est très clair pour Elton Dean, plus ambivalent pour Hopper, en effet la technique d'amplification de sa basse (fuzz) va lui permettre d'accrocher des sons qui se rapprochent tantôt de la guitare électrique, tantôt du synthétiseur. Lui et Ratledge restent séduits par les sons massifs présents dans le rock grâce à la guitare, à cet égard je vous suggère d'écouter « *Grides* » un live de Soft Machine enregistré au début de l'année 1971 au cours duquel le son de la basse de Hopper et du clavier de Ratledge n'ont jamais été aussi proches.

Nous sommes donc à cette époque ou ces musiciens produisent une musique très difficile à classer et que l'on appelle encore prog: « Leg end » de Henry Cow ou « Third » de Soft Machine. L'ambivalence sera de mise encore pendant quelques années chez Hatfield and the North ou sur les premiers albums de National Health ou de Gilgamesh. Où ranger ces disques, dans le jazz rock, dans le rock ? Non, dans le prog! Cette ambivalence a fait que tous ces musiciens se sont créés un public bien plus que d'avoir massivement réussi à séduire le public rock ou jazz. Le capital notoriété de **Fred Frith** dans le champ du rock n'est pas très élevé pas plus que celui de **Pip Pyle** auprès des amateurs de jazz, le seul qui a finalement acquis ses lettres de noblesses dans le jazz est sans doute Elton Dean, à tel point que certains de ceux qui le suivent méconnaissent non seulement qu'il a fait partie de Soft Machine mais aussi qu'il n'a jamais totalement quitté cet environnement en entretenant des groupes comme Soft Heap ou Soft Works durant toute sa carrière.

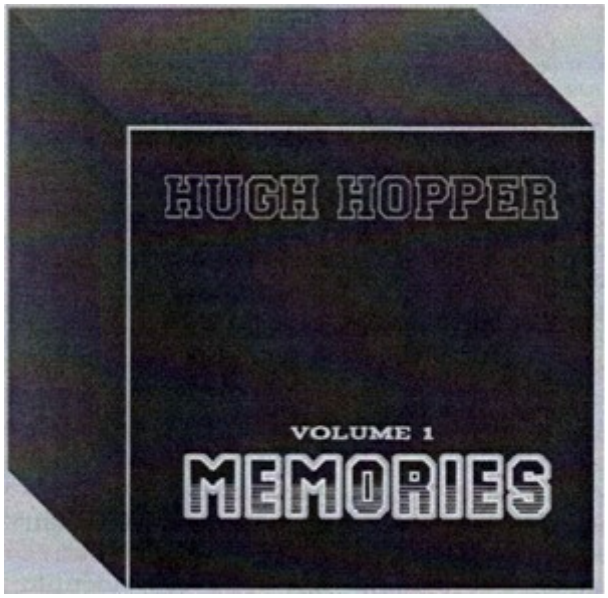

Pip PYLE & Hugh HOPPER, Angers 1984
photo Philippe RENAUD

Puisque ces colonnes sont celles d'un magazine de jazz et d'impro, il me semblait intéressant d'évoquer un musicien qui ne bénéficie pas vraiment de la considération des publics de l'un et l'autre de ces styles mais qui comme je l'écrivais plus haut, s'est forgé son propre public. Pourtant Hugh Hopper mériterait largement de figurer dans les discothèques des amateurs de jazz en tous cas de celles et ceux qui savent écouter la musique pour ce qu'elle est sans trop tenir compte des classifications assignées par les biographes et autres critiques musicaux.

Malgré tout et à la décharge du public, on peut dire que

Hopper n'y a pas vraiment mis du sien! Au moment où on aurait enfin pu le capturer dans la catégorie jazz ou jazz-rock voilà qu'il allait fricoter avec des guitaristes pour produire des albums clairement orientés rock comme avec le groupe Glass Cage ou encore Brainville. Il est vrai que l'éclectisme n'est pas toujours perçu comme une qualité, du coup pour un certain nombre d'amateurs de jazz, Hopper est toujours resté au purgatoire voire en enfer. Je vais donc essayer de l'en faire sortir.

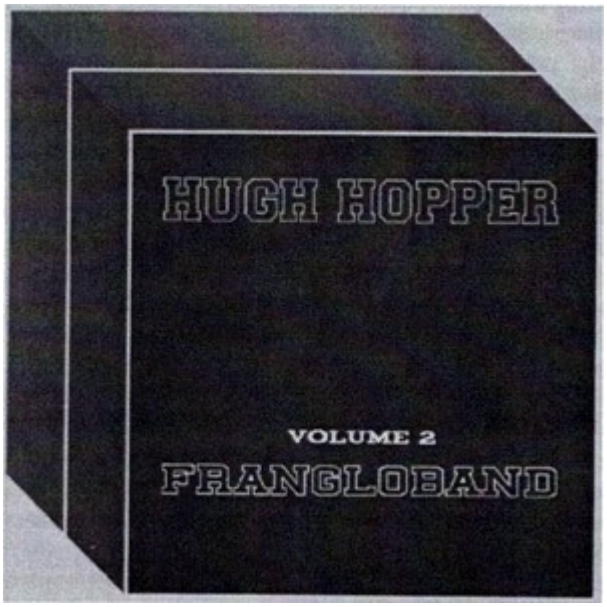
L'occasion m'en est donnée avec cette série qui lui est consacrée sous la forme de dix cd's publiés par le label Gonzo et dont les 9 premiers numéros sont déjà sortis. Ces lignes permettent aussi de rendre hommage au regretté **Michael King**, qui nous a quitté il y a quelques mois, ingénieur du son fabuleux ayant restauré avec un infini respect de nombreux enregistrements tous plus précieux les uns que les autres. C'est Michael King qui a œuvré à la constitution de cette rétrospective magnifiquement réalisée. King étant en plus un admirateur sincère de Hugh Hopper il s'est surpassé pour cette série. Chacun des dix cd's à l'exception du premier et du dernier se focalisent sur un groupe particulier et l'ensemble de ces disques couvre majoritairement les années 90/2000. En effet si durant les années 70 la trajectoire musicale de Hugh Hopper est restée assez cantonnée au prog, du milieu des années 80 jusqu'à sa mort il a multiplié les expériences musicales et les rencontres ; ces deux décennies n'étant à peu près pas documentées avant l'arrivée de cette collection. Mais avant d'évoquer ces différents groupes commençons logiquement par le premier volume qui se présente sous la forme d'une compilation, celle-ci étant particulièrement bien pensée.



Si au sein de Soft Machine Elton Dean et Hugh Hopper étaient ceux qui manifestaient l'attirance la plus claire pour le jazz, les centres d'intérêt de Hopper étaient à cette époque plus éparpillés, en témoigne l'album 1984 enregistré à l'été 1972. Ce disque est très éloigné du free jazz de l'époque mais c'est pourtant cet éloignement qui aurait dû capter l'attention des amateurs du genre. En effet le collage quasi schizophrène qui constitue ce disque est un défi à la bienséance musicale au moins aussi important que les plus grands classiques du free. Télescopage entre Lovecraft, Terry Riley et le Rhythm & blues, ainsi pourrait être résumé ce disque dans lequel on trouve la première version de « *Miniluv* » une composition qui va jalonner ces dix volumes en se retrouvant sur bon nombre d'entre eux. Par la diversité des enregistrements qui le constitue « *Memories vol 1* » illustre donc assez bien l'ouverture d'esprit de Hugh Hopper et s'avère donc une excellente introduction.

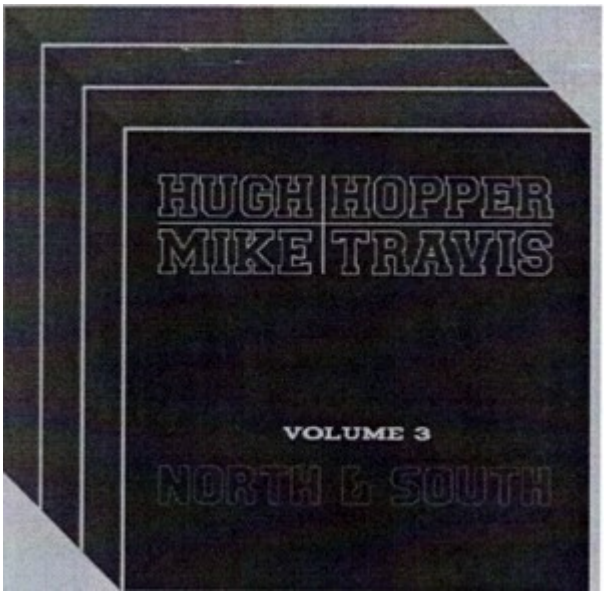


Il était difficile de ne pas commencer par Soft Machine puisque sans dire que tout débuta ici pour Hopper, la machine molle a quand même été la rampe de lancement. Remplaçant **Kevin Ayers** en 1969, Hopper est le premier des deux musiciens qui va influencer le groupe Soft Machine dans une direction plus instrumentale et expérimentale. Mais le titre « *Memories* » qui ouvre ou presque cette compilation est davantage dans l'esprit de «Two» que de « Third ». Qui ouvre ou presque parce qu'en fait le premier son de ce cd est la voix de Hugh Hopper, une voix qui va introduire chaque morceau ; « *Memories vol 1* » se présente donc comme une sorte d'émission de radio dans laquelle on aurait donné carte blanche à Hopper et l'idée s'avère une trouvaille qui fonctionne très bien. Plus de trente ans séparent le premier du second morceau, c'est avec le Frangloband que le disque se poursuit, puis c'est ensuite North & South. Je ne vais pas m'attarder maintenant sur ces deux formations car elles sont l'objet des deux volumes suivants. Attardons-nous plutôt sur trois autres titres de cet album. Le premier est « *Playtime* » une composition d'**Alan Gowen** avec lequel Hopper a régulièrement joué dans la seconde moitié des années 70. Fondateur de Gilgamesh et co-fondateur de National Health on peut dire que Gowen aidait Hopper à sublimer son attirance pour le jazz rock. Mais la complicité entre ces deux musiciens allait plus loin, en effet « *Two rainbows daily* » qu'ils enregistrèrent en 1980 n'a pas grand chose à voir avec les sonorités du jazz rock de l'époque, cet album va plus loin que le simple duo intimiste dont il a l'air. La réinterprétation de « *Playtime* » que l'on peut entendre sur ce premier volume sonne plus « électro » mais constitue un bel hommage à cette complicité. Dans le registre des curiosités qui font de cette introduction un cd indispensable on trouve aussi un duo avec **Nigel Morris**. Là aussi les deux musiciens ont un background commun qui remonte aux années 70, à l'époque ou Hopper à un temps joué pour Isotope. Mais dès les années 80 Nigel Morris se frottait au free jazz en étant l'un des trois membres du **Paul Rutherford** trio avec **Paul Rogers**. Ce duo Morris Hopper est à ranger dans la catégorie des inclassables, Morris joue en re-recording tout un assortiment de percussions sur lequel Hopper vient greffer sa basse, non seulement le titre est très réussi mais en plus il vient compléter la discographie de Morris qui est plus que maigre. Ce premier volume se termine par un collage de diverses sources sonores, musiques, voix, bruitages effectué par Hugh et qui nous renvoie à l'époque de "*1984*" où il avait pour la première fois utilisé ce procédé de boucles sonores se présentant à l'époque comme l'un des précurseurs d'un effet aujourd'hui plus que démocratisé. Sauf qu'à l'époque de "*1984*" il n'y avait pas d'ordinateurs permettant l'échantillonnage du son, il fallait travailler avec la bande magnétique et les ciseaux de montage! Au moment de la sortie de « *Memories vol 1* » en 2013, tout avait donc été fait pour nous mettre l'eau à la bouche et la suite n'a pas déçu comme on va le voir.



Hugh Hopper le musicien mais aussi le compositeur, et ce sont justement ces compositions qui ont été préférentiellement choisies sur cette série, abordons donc le deuxième volume sous cet angle car il offre un point de vue passionnant. Frangloband comme son nom l'indique présente le bassiste de Canterbury accompagné d'un groupe français. Le guitariste **Patrice Meyer** joue avec Hopper depuis le milieu des années 80, les deux autres musiciens **Pierre-Olivier Govin** et **François Verly** l'ont rejoint plus tard. Ce disque qui reprend un concert donné au Triton en 2003 s'ouvre sur « *Facelift* » le morceau qui débutait précisément « *Third* » de Soft Machine et qui marquait véritablement l'impact d'Hopper sur le groupe. Pour celles et ceux qui ont en mémoire « *Facelift* » une question surgit forcément: comment peut-on jouer ce morceau plus de trente ans après les versions détonantes que l'on a pu entendre sur les différents live du groupe, d'autant que durant les années 80 Hopper avait un peu mis de côté ce titre. L'ouverture du thème est assez rugueuse, presque géométrique dans les arrangements et pour lui redonner cette rugosité, Hopper et Meyer ont recours à quelques artifices sonores ; sans aller jusqu'à exhumer le son de sa fuzz bass de l'époque, Hopper lui redonne néanmoins un son assez tranchant quant à Meyer il donne à sa guitare le style d'une syntax à la **Holdsworth**. On ne retourne quand même pas dans les ambiances de bataille électroniques ou de déchaînement pyrotechnique à la Ratledge mais le clin d'œil y est quand même. Lorsque le morceau s'installe dans sa phase plus rythmique, Verly l'aborde de façon moins directe que ne le faisait Wyatt, cymbales et caisse claire entrent plus en jeu. La leçon à en tirer est que « *Facelift* » reste aujourd'hui encore un formidable terrain d'improvisation dont certains musiciens actuels en manque d'idées devraient s'inspirer. Ils pourraient aussi s'inspirer de « *Shuffle Démons* » une autre composition de Hopper, pas si ancienne que cela mais pourtant très proche de ce qui se faisait dans le prog à la grande époque et notamment sur le premier National Health (voir "*Tenemos Roads*"). Sur un rythme qui reste à peu près identique durant tout le morceau, celui-ci se développe en quatre tableaux constituant chacun une mini composition dans un ensemble avec à chaque fois une ambiance singulière ; il suffit d'écouter cette version là pour se rendre compte que le thème est une source d'improvisation à peu près inépuisable. « *Howny Brownie* » marque l'intérêt de Hopper pour le rhythm and blues car ce thème aurait pu sortir tout droit d'un groupe de blues rock. Par ce titre, Hopper montre que la simplicité d'une composition peut en fait permettre aux musiciens de libérer toute une énergie d'interprétation, c'est le cas ici et le final répétitif aurait pu durer trois ou quatre minutes de plus que l'on ne s'en serait pas lassé. Enfin l'incontournable « *Miniluv* », visiblement Michael King considérait ce thème comme important puisqu'il l'a retenu sur cinq des dix volumes ; et en effet cette composition relève à mon avis d'un coup de génie comme l'a été « *Acknowledgement* » pour Coltrane. Ces deux morceaux qui n'ont apparemment rien à voir ont en fait un point commun et ceci permet d'aborder une transition idéale vers « *North & South volume 3* » puisque «*Miniluv*» y figure aussi.

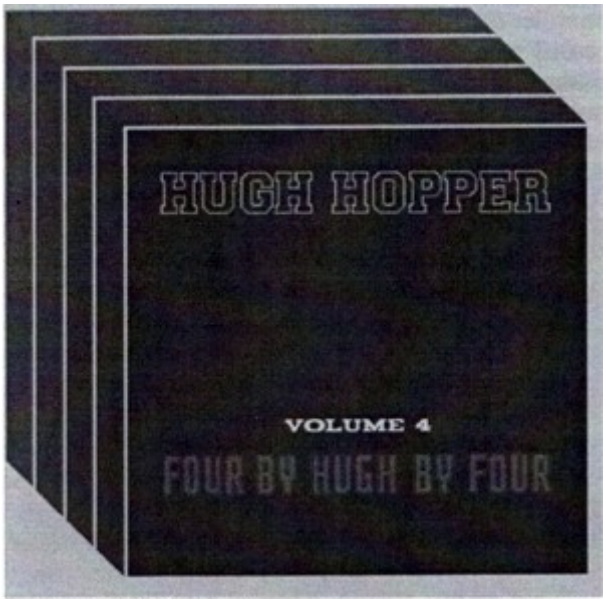
Ce troisième cd est aussi l'un des plus longs de toute la série, durant plus d'une heure il reprend un concert donné le 24 août 1995 dans un petit club d'Aberdeen. Il est crédité à Hugh Hopper et **Mike Travis**. Si Hopper et Travis se sont



régulièrement croisés, tout cela ayant commencé avec Gilgamesh vingt ans plus tôt, le groupe que l'on peut entendre sur ce disque a eu une durée de vie assez courte et c'est bien dommage au vu des impressions qu'en procure l'écoute. L'audience semblait assez restreinte à un petit nombre, il se dégage en tous cas une impression d'intimité et le sentiment que le groupe n'était là ni pour prouver ni pour impressionner mais simplement pour le plaisir de jouer. Il en ressort une ambiance détendue mais loin d'être superficielle. Il suffit d'entendre l'engagement de **Steve Kettley** au saxophone sur des compositions comme « *Miniluv* » ou « *Shuffle Démons* » pour se convaincre que l'on a à faire à des musiciens qui ne font pas de figuration. J'avais évoqué la relation que l'on pouvait percevoir entre « *Acknoledgement* » de **John Coltrane** et « *Miniluv* ». En fait cette relation réside dans le fait que dans les deux cas la basse suggère le rythme mais aussi la mélodie. A chaque fois le thème mélodique proposé est assez simple mais son intrication dans le rythme en fait une base extrêmement solide pour le ou les improvisateurs ainsi que pour le groupe qui le soutient. Kettley le prouve tant on le sent s'envoler littéralement avec une aisance déconcertante. Nous verrons sur le volume 4 comment cette composition est abordée par un duo sax/trombone. Deux titres plus loin Hopper surprend avec « *Lullaby letterbomb* » une composition qu'il a peu jouée et encore moins enregistrée. Semblant être sortie de l'imagination d'un compositeur de Trinidad, elle apporte une touche exotique inattendue et au moment où l'on se dit que l'on aimerait entendre quelques percussionnistes locaux pour rehausser le tout, on s'aperçoit que **Paul Flush** a modifié le son de son clavier pour en sortir des sonorités proches d'un steel drum. Une mention particulière peut être décernée à Flush pour ses choix sonores. En effet les sons en vogue sur les claviers des années 90 font parfois mal aux oreilles tant ils sont « marqués » par leur époque mais Flush a su tempérer tout cela en variant les ambiances. Les deux derniers titres sont un hommage très clair à la musique noire. « *Frankly speaking* » dont le groove ne dépareillerait pas sur un album jazz funk et surtout « *Lux Beta* » qui est la composition la plus bluesy que Hopper a pu imaginer. Là encore Paul Flush s'adapte en produisant le son d'un orgue. Ce morceau termine de façon très appropriée par un feeling calme un concert joué au plus près de ses auditeurs. Ce disque est probablement l'un des plus intimistes de toute la discographie de Hugh Hopper, singularité qu'il partage avec le volume suivant.

Autre groupe, autre ambiance avec « *Four by Hugh by four* », autrement dit 4 par Hugh joués par 4, il s'agit donc d'un quartet et là aussi le groupe est unique dans la discographie du bassiste. Cet album occupe une place spécifique non seulement dans cette série mais plus généralement dans la discographie de Hugh Hopper, en effet il est l'un des rares ne comportant ni clavier ni guitare, cela laisse supposer que la basse sera nettement plus en avant que d'ordinaire. Le groupe est donc constitué de **Robert Jarvis** au trombone, **Oscar Schutze** à la batterie et de **Frank Van Der Kooy** au ténor et à la clarinette basse (1er titre). Ce dernier étant le plus connu puisqu'il a joué dans le Hugh Hopper band dès le début de la formation et Hopper a joué dans son propre groupe N.d.i.o. « *Was a friend* » qui fera l'objet d'un traitement particulier dans le dernier volume est une composition toute en tension ou Hopper après une introduction plutôt virtuose passe à un registre plus «minimaliste» en se concentrant sur une seule note ou presque, qu'il obtient en frappant la corde de façon rythmique, ce motif d'allure lancinante créée un véritable climat et cette tension monte progressivement au milieu du morceau. On a jusqu'à présent eu peu d'occasion d'entendre cette composition comme les trois suivantes du reste. « *Virus day* » est une sorte de groove au tempo médium mais les musiciens ne s'y endorment pas loin de là. Sur « *Wrong gong* » Hopper propose une sorte de thème répétitif basé sur huit notes un peu à la manière d'un tempura dans la musique indienne.

On retrouve ici l'intérêt que Hugh Hopper a toujours porté à la musique dite minimaliste qui constituait l'un des points d'encrage de « *1984* ». Ce disque relativement court qui a été enregistré en 2000 en Hollande se termine sur « *Miniluv*

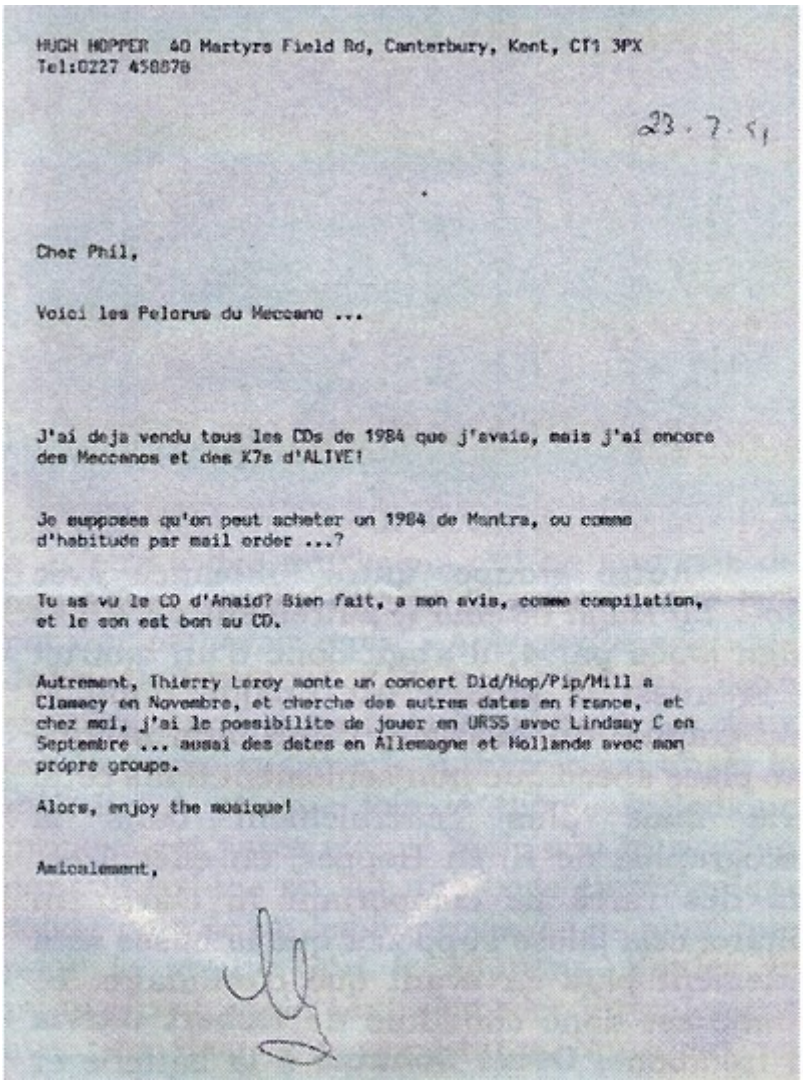


» et la version qui est jouée offre encore un point de vue nouveau sur la substance de cette composition. D'abord durant les premières secondes où le batteur s'installe, son jeu pourrait laisser penser qu'il va aborder le thème avec un rythme reggae, mais la sensation disparaît car il abandonne presque aussitôt le contrepoint rythmique pour jouer dans une égalité plutôt binaire qui renvoie davantage au rock. Malgré tout cette porte brièvement entrouverte laisse penser qu'une guitare rythmique à côté de la basse pourrait donner une belle interprétation à la sauce reggae de ce titre. Il ne se passe que quelques secondes avant de noter les « boucles » répétitives jouées par le saxophoniste et le tromboniste en guise d'introduction, boucles qu'en particulier Van Der Kooy réutilise au milieu du morceau. Hopper lui aussi se concentre sur cette manière d'aborder le titre en faisant varier très progressivement la signature mélodique de ce thème de telle sorte qu'on la reconnaît toujours en arrière-fond. « *Miniluv* » par sa capacité à accueillir la répétition de courts enchaînements de notes se positionnant sur la base, montre toute la fascination que cette manière d'aborder la musique a opéré sur Hopper mais aussi sur des générations d'amateurs qui se sont abandonnés à la contemplation auditive en écoutant La Monte Young, Terry Riley ou Steve Reich. Je me souviens d'avoir déjà évoqué le sujet dans les colonnes de ce même journal lors d'une interview consacrée à **Trevor Watts**, nous avions rencontré ce sujet en abordant les premiers enregistrements du Spontaneous Music Ensemble ainsi que ceux de Moire Music. Pour en revenir à ce « *Four by Hugh by four** il est peut-être (avec le volume 8) celui des dix volumes qui séduira le plus les auditeurs les moins attirés par le prog. C'est sans doute le plus « jazz » de toute cette collection mais ses compositions gardent toutefois la saveur que seul un musicien venant d'autre part que du jazz est capable de donner. Il est aussi par la constitution du groupe qui joue ces titres, l'un des plus intimistes, certes moins que le cinquième volume qui est un duo.



Ce nouveau volume ainsi que les deux suivants vont nous permettre de croiser quelques-unes des figures légendaires de l'école de Canterbury sans pour autant que l'on replonge dans le prog des années 70. Ça commence donc avec ce duo Hugh Hopper / **Phil Miller** intitulé « *Heart to heart* » et enregistré à Amsterdam en 2007. Miller et Hopper ont suivi des routes parallèles durant les années prog, Delivery, Hatfield and the North et National Health pour le premier ; Soft Machine, Isotope et Gilgamesh pour le second. Ils avaient déjà joué ensemble durant cette période mais se retrouvent officiellement à la formation de In

Cahoots avec lequel Hopper va jouer au début. Ils se retrouveront à nouveau dans Short Wave mais on en reparlera dans peu de temps. Dans la discographie de Hugh Hopper les duos sont peu nombreux, celui qui vient à l'esprit est évidemment « *Two rainbows daily* » avec Alan Gowen au début des années 80. « *Heart to heart* » partage avec « *Two raimbows daily* » cette ambiance de conversations amicales entre deux musiciens qui n'ont rien à prouver ni à eux ni aux auditeurs. Pour cette session chacun apporte une composition : « *Miniluv* » pour Hopper et « *Calyx* » pour Miller, cette dernière ayant fait son apparition à l'époque de Hatfield and the North, on en trouve d'autres versions et notamment avec Elton Dean. Moins marquante que « *Seven for Lee* » de Dean diront certains, sans doute moins percutante également que « *Miniluv* », « *Calyx* » n'en reste pas moins un magnifique thème qui pousse au lyrisme mais qui ne basculera jamais dans l'excès entre les mains de ces musiciens. Il s'agit vraiment d'un juste équilibre entre sens mélodique et improvisation. Les trois autres morceaux sont davantage basés sur l'impro que sur l'écrit mais avec quelques repères tout de même. « *Sky light* » est un titre au climat qui révèle une certaine tension et à qui il ne manquerait plus qu'une batterie pour que l'on soit du côté du rock. Derrière la basse on trouve une discrète boucle qui donne l'impression que Hopper s'est pré-enregistré avec une fuzz bass comme à la grande époque. « *Shifting sands* » qui termine l'album est une longue pièce de plus de 18 minutes qui connaît plusieurs phases. Une boucle répétitive soutient les premiers échanges qui ne semblent pas prendre une direction bien définie mais finalement Hopper insinue un rythme qu'il va abandonner assez vite et l'ambiance va se calmer au point de devenir presque planante. Apparaissent alors de nouveaux « samples » de basse discrets et répétitifs puis les deux musiciens se réinstallent pleinement pour clore le morceau dans une ambiance à nouveau plus rythmée. Difficile de dire si cette session est du côté du jazz ou du rock, il est clair que le son de la guitare de Miller et sa manière d'utiliser le contrôle du volume penchent plutôt pour le second terme mais la qualité des improvisations renvoient tout de même au jazz. A la fin de ce cinquième volume on ne peut que se féliciter encore une fois de l'idée et de la qualité de réalisation de cette série.



HUGH HOPPER 40 Martyrs Field Rd, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3PX
Tel:0227 458878

23.7.91

Cher Phil,

Voici les Pelorus du Meccano ...

J'ai deja vendu tous les CDs de 1984 que j'avais, mais j'ai encore des Meccanos et des K7s d'ALIVE!

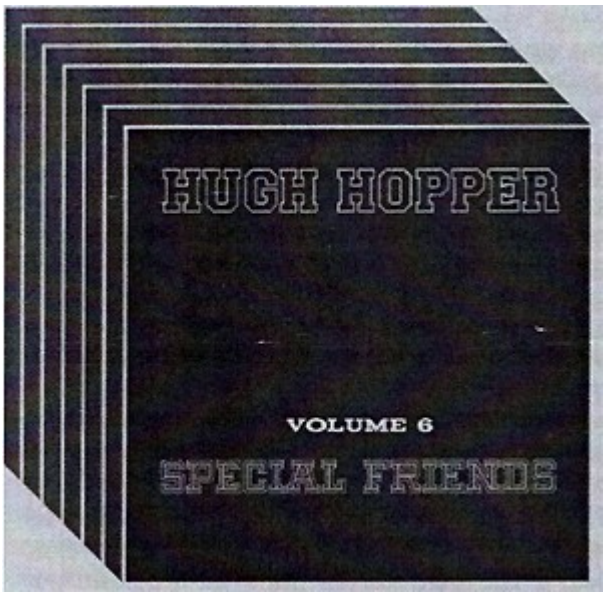
Je suppose qu'on peut acheter un 1984 de Mantra, ou comme d'habitude par mail order ...?

Tu as vu le CD d'Anaid? Bien fait, a mon avis, comme compilation, et le son est bon au CD.

Autrement, Thierry Leroy monte un concert Did/Hop/Pip/Mill a Clamecy en Novembre, et cherche des autres dates en France, et chez moi, j'ai la possibilite de jouer en URSS avec Lindsay C en Septembre ... aussi des dates en Allemagne et Hollande avec mon propre groupe.

Alors, enjoy the musique!

Amicalement,



Phil Miller nous accompagne encore sur le volume suivant, rejoint par Pip Pyle une autre figure du prog, pour un groupe dont le personnel varie sur les deux derniers morceaux. Connu sous le nom de Pip Pyle' Short Wave cette formation a aussi tourné en tant que Hugh Hopper spécial friends. Un album de Short Wave avait été publié dans les années 90, plutôt décevant mais ce sixième volume vient pleinement combler la frustration et lève définitivement les doutes sur le potentiel de ce groupe. Pour les amateurs éclairés du prog le premier titre « *For Alan* » indique clairement à qui s'adresse la dédicace, il s'agit d'Alan Gowen bien entendu, avec lequel Hopper a souvent joué à la fin des années 70. C'est une ballade ou **Didier Malherbe** offre un très beau solo à la flûte avec juste ce qu'il faut de lyrisme, Miller l'accompagnant en restant assez discret. Une très courte version de « *Sliding dogs* » est ensuite jouée mais elle est totalement différente de celle que l'on trouve sur le volume 3, beaucoup plus rock d'une certaine manière; cela rétablit en quelque sorte le background de cette composition qui figurait pour la première fois en deux versions sur l'album « *Monster Band* » (1973). « *Midnight Judo* » m'a rappelé la quatrième partie de la suite « *Slightly all the time* » (Soft Machine *Third*) « (*backwards*). « *Midnight Judo* » n'en est nullement une reprise mais on a le sentiment que Hopper s'est inspiré de ce plus ancien thème pour cette composition plus récente. « *Miniluv* » qui nous a accompagné pratiquement depuis le début de cet itinéraire permet à Phil Miller de briller par un solo qui sans être incisif est tout de même joué avec beaucoup de conviction. Puis c'est « Wanglo saxon » une composition que l'on a pu apprécier sur « *North and South* » et qui est jouée ici à peu près dans le même style. "*Wanglo saxon*" revient aussitôt pour introduire le groupe qui va jouer sur les deux derniers morceaux, Malherbe est remplacé par Elton Dean à l'alto et le groupe est augmenté d'un pianiste. La succession de ces deux versions est intéressante car la seconde lecture aborde le thème de façon plus affleurante, plus restreinte. Mais sans transition le groupe enchaîne avec une improvisation de plus de 17 minutes qui constitue l'une des attractions de ce sixième volume. Sans que l'on puisse identifier un thème, il y a une rythmique qui donne une certaine direction et chaque musicien improvise à tour de rôle. Etonnamment Elton Dean n'est pas particulièrement incisif sur cette dernière partie, son jeu apparaît finalement comme assez proche de celui de Didier Malherbe qui l'a précédé sur les cinq autres titres.

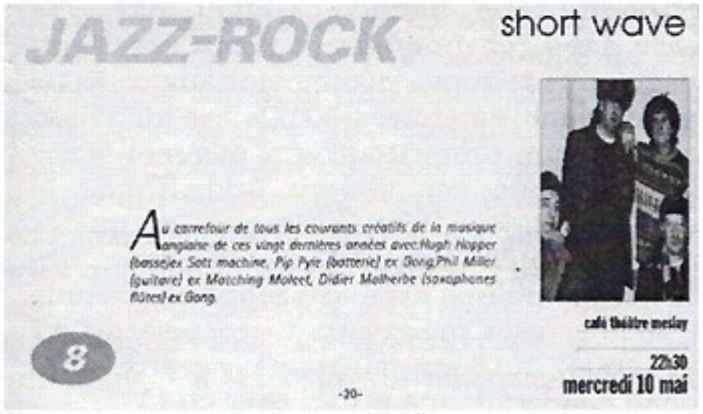
Cette longue improvisation est magnifique, elle ne donne pas l'occasion d'une démonstration de force de l'un ou l'autre des musiciens mais illustre plutôt une grande cohérence du groupe et des improvisateurs sûrs d'eux-mêmes et convaincants.

Si Phil Miller avait assuré la continuité entre les volumes 5 et 6, c'est Elton Dean qui est le trait d'union entre ce volume et le suivant.

Intitulé « *Soft Boundaries* » ce septième volume vient en fait compléter la discographie plus que maigre d'un groupe qui n'aura hélas pas duré assez longtemps. Formé en 2004, la trajectoire de « Soft Bound » s'est arrêtée à la mort prématurée d'Elton Dean en 2006. Un seul disque était disponible : « *Live at le Triton 2004* » enregistré le 17 juin. Constitué de Hopper à la basse, Dean au saxophone, **Simon Goubert** à la batterie et **Sophia Domancich** aux pianos acoustique et électrique, cette dernière n'étant pas une novice dans l'environnement post-Canterbury puisqu'on la retrouva notamment aux côtés de Pip Pyle dans les années 90. Ce live au Triton était plus que prometteur et a pas mal laissé de



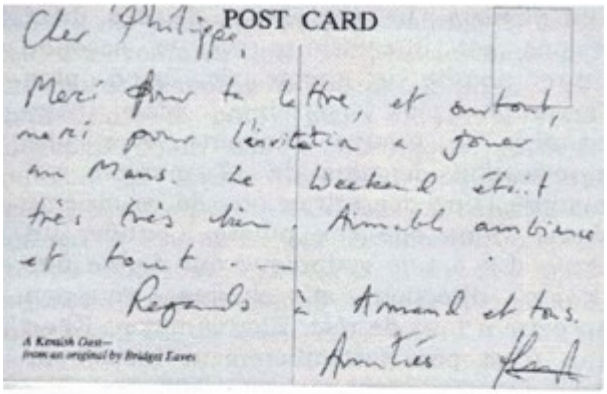
Short Wave à la Grange de Meslay (et non à l'Ouest de la Grosne comme indiqué sur la photo) le 10 mai 1995. Photo Martial PETIT

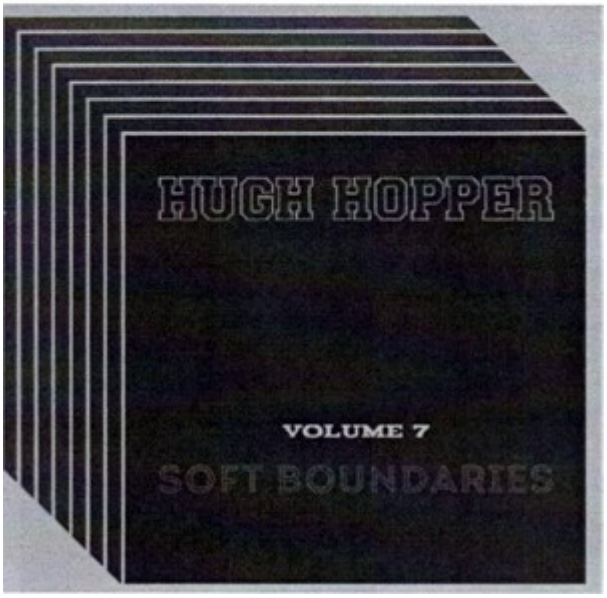


Extrait du programme avec son lot d'erreurs…

frustrations car il était évident que le groupe avait joué bien plus que les quatre morceaux qu'il contient. Voici donc les attentes comblées avec ce septième volume qui ajoute deux morceaux du concert du 17 juin 2004 et deux autres morceaux d'un second concert donné un an plus tard.

Avant d'aborder la musique elle-même il me faut faire un petit retour sur la dynastie des « Soft ». Même si « Soft Head » ou « Soft Heap » n'étaient pas tout à fait dans la lignée de l'héroïque « Soft Machine » de la période « *Third* », « *Fourth* » ou « *Fifth* », ces groupes en reprenaient l'idée directrice, le bon côté jazz rock pourrait-on dire, à savoir l'énergie du rock avec les préoccupations virtuoses en moins. Ce qui était également intéressant dans ces deux formations, c'était l'absence de guitariste comme dans la période charnière de « Soft Machine ». Je pense en effet que s'il y avait eu un guitariste sur « *Third* » et les deux suivants, jamais Ratledge et les autres n'auraient pu occuper l'espace musical comme ils l'ont fait ; chacun sait à quel point dans le prog un guitariste prend naturellement une place importante. L'une des raisons pour lesquelles je n'ai personnellement jamais été très enthousiaste à l'égard de « Soft Machine Legacy » tient au fait que j'aurai largement préféré un clavier aux différents guitaristes qui se sont succédés dans ce groupe. Ainsi « Soft Bound » a immédiatement incarné en ce qui me concerne une sorte d'héritage des « Soft Head » ou « Soft Heap ». Héritage certes mais la musique est totalement actuelle. Bien sûr si l'on se basait sur « *Live at le Triton* » on pouvait argumenter que l'apparente modernité était due au fait que trois des quatre compositions étaient actuelles, seule « *Kings & Queens* » venait du répertoire de Soft Machine. Toutefois l'interprétation de ce "standard!" ne se faisait pas à la lettre.



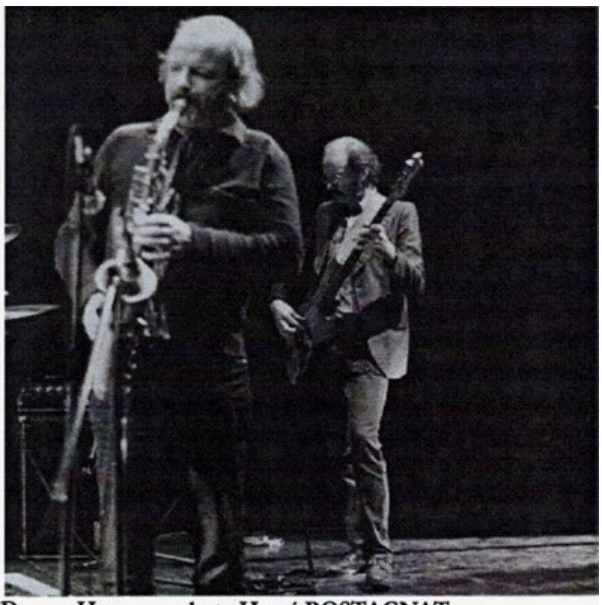


Cela tenant aussi au fait que Simon Goubert et Sophia Domancich révisaient encore leur bac philo quand les deux anglais étaient déjà sur les routes depuis un moment! Pour les amateurs de Soft Machine il est toujours intéressant d'entendre la relecture actuelle de certaines compositions, en effet les différents « Soft » Head ou Heap ont majoritairement joué un répertoire inédit et ont peu repris. Ainsi en découvrant la liste des titres de ce septième volume la fébrilité ne va pas manquer d'envahir les aficionados de la machine molle période « *Third* ».

C'est « *Slightly all the time* » qui ouvre le bal et la suite composée majoritairement par Ratledge est jouée dans son intégralité à peu près sans aucun réarrangement. Le génie de cette composition qui se déploie dans ses différentes phases produit toujours son effet. Elton Dean apparaît plutôt discret et c'est Sophia Domancich qui tire son épingle du jeu. Elle est au piano électrique ce qui semble assez logique étant donné l'histoire de ce titre mais elle ne cherche aucunement à imiter Ratledge. En utilisant son background jazz elle réactualise complètement la composition. Son jeu est bien sûr plus sobre que celui de son aîné et elle n'a recours à aucun effet sonore particulier, se reposant uniquement sur ses solos ou ses ponctuations rythmiques.

L'esprit du morceau est là mais sans la moindre trace d'un revival ennuyeux. A ce stade de l'écoute on attend avec impatience la seconde version qui termine le cd en se demandant quelle est la raison qui a bien pu pousser Michael King à choisir une deuxième fois ce titre plutôt qu'un autre. Le second titre qui est aussi le dernier extrait du concert du 17 juin 2004 est « *The lonely sea and the sky* ». Déjà croisé sur le deuxième volume, ce titre provient en fait de «

Hopper tunity box » enregistré en 1976. Ici se trouve l'un des aspects les plus intéressants de cette formation à savoir que même si une partie des racines provient du prog, le groupe ne cherche pas à ressusciter cette période. Comme par ironie d'ailleurs, Domancich s'installe au piano pour ce titre, c'est seulement dans un second temps qu'elle revient au piano électrique. Ce choix est vraiment intéressant car comme de son côté Elton Dean joue du saxello dans un style tout en retenue, et avec un son magnifique dont il avait le secret, l'ensemble donne au titre un aspect franchement classieux! Ce morceau au tempo médium qui apparaissait comme une sorte de respiration planante dans « *Hopper tunity box* » à l'ambiance plutôt rock/expé, se voit en 2004 devenir une ballade plus que respectable dont la solide composition se révèle pleinement.



Dean – Hopper – photo Hervé ROSTAGNAT



Nous faisons ensuite un bond d'une année pour se retrouver le 11 juin 2005 dans le même lieu et avec le même groupe ou presque pour les deux derniers morceaux de ce volume. « *Spanish Knee* » contient l'un des aspects les plus singuliers de cette formation à savoir sa capacité à délivrer l'énergie du rock sans pour autant être dans le jazz rock. C'est déjà ce que l'on pouvait ressentir dans « Soft Head » ou « Soft Heap » mais pas franchement dans « In Cahoots » par exemple. Ce climat tient notamment à Simon Goubert qui marque le rythme de façon bien moins binaire que ne le ferait un batteur dans un contexte jazz rock. Il est plus subtil mais son déploiement d'énergie à la **Elvin Jones** donne à ce titre un relief singulier que l'on ne retrouve pas forcément dans le jazz. Elton Dean toujours au saxello est plus incisif et Sophia Domancich sans s'imposer fait preuve de pertinence. Enfin arrive la seconde version tant attendue de « *Slightly all the time* ». Le quartet est rejoint par un second saxophoniste, le français **Jean Michel Couchet** que l'on retrouve sur certains

disques de Goubert. Ne connaissant pas par ailleurs la discographie de ce musicien, je ne peux me fier qu'à sa prestation sur ce titre. Visiblement inspiré par le morceau et sans doute aussi par le groupe il délivre un solo très captivant, énergique sans être expressif à outrance. La paire qu'il forme avec Dean est très efficace et l'on aimerait en avoir davantage que ce seul titre. C'est aussi Simon Goubert qui est mis en avant avec un solo de batterie qui peut encore une fois rappeler Elvin Jones. Le thème est à nouveau traité dans ces différentes phases mais avec un focus plus appuyé sur les solistes. Sur l'ensemble de ces quatre titres Hugh Hopper reste plutôt discret, ne prenant presque pas la parole en solo mais la pertinence de ses contributions en particulier dans les figures rythmiques qu'il apporte sur la première version de « *Slightly all the time* » fait qu'on le remarque sans problème. Ce septième volume est donc d'importance pour la qualité de son contenu et en tant qu'il vient compléter la plus que maigre discographie de « Soft Bound ». Mais surtout une réflexion m'est venue au terme de cette écoute et en considérant que ce groupe n'a pratiquement joué que dans un seul endroit: « le Triton »; je me demande bien ce que font les programmateurs des festivals et je pense notamment à ceux qui travaillent en hiver ou dans les banlieues peintes en bleu!



Comment les différentes formations de Hugh Hopper ont pu demeurer étrangères à ces événements. Il est vrai qu'Hopper n'y mettait pas beaucoup du sien en s'obstinant à être resté anglais durant toute sa vie. Eh oui malheureusement, pour une partie de l'intelligentsia du jazz en France le passeport américain reste encore une qualité en soi. Ceux-là ne savent pas ce qu'ils loupent. Le huitième volume en apporte une démonstration flagrante.

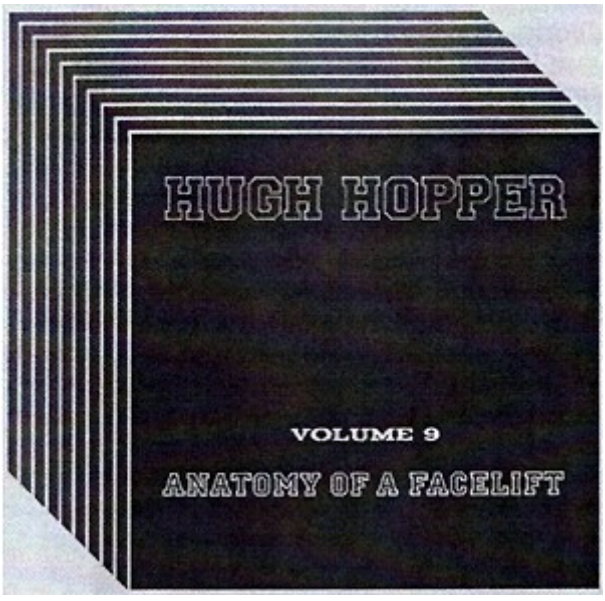
Ce huitième titre intrigue d'abord par son personnel. Aux côtés de Hugh Hopper on trouve en effet le batteur **Aharon Kaminski** qui vient plutôt du rock alternatif, le producteur et instrumentiste **Meidad Zaharia** fondateur en d'autres temps du label Mio Records, le saxophoniste **Pierre Olivier Govin** (Frangloband) et enfin le célèbre pianiste **Slava Ganelin** qui fut en d'autres temps l'âme du Ganelin trio. Un piano, une batterie et des percussions, un saxophone, des loops et des samples... Avec un personnel pareil et en regard des acrobaties auxquelles Hugh Hopper nous a habitué on se demande bien quel genre de musique nous attend d'autant qu'il s'agit d'une seule improvisation divisée en cinq parties.

Mais ce qui intrigue encore davantage c'est ce qui nous est révélé dans les notes de pochettes à savoir que la session était normalement prévue pour deux. Initialement le producteur voulait enregistrer Kaminski et Ganelin, mais à l'écoute de la session, Zaharias a eu l'idée d'y ajouter une basse, celle de Hugh Hopper en re-recording puis Pierre Olivier Govin s'est greffé aussi avec le même procédé. Au début on pourrait croire à un re-make de « *1984* » et donc aussi à une bande son en cohérence avec le classique de George Orwell. Tout y est comme en 1972, une basse électrique en tension, au son démultiplié et au drone instable, le tout surplombant des sons à peine identifiables mais pouvant faire penser à une lointaine foule en agitation. Mais peu à peu Kaminski et Ganelin s'installent et la fuzz bass disparaît au profit d'une basse simplement électrique. On entre dans la seconde phase et une impression étrange peut traverser l'auditeur à ce moment là, le sentiment d'une modernité déjà entendue. Ce qui caractérise les deuxième et troisième parties de cette pièce, ce son en apparence des références au prog mais d'une telle subtilité que l'on en doute tout en les remarquant. Au début de la seconde partie la musique peut renvoyer à « *Leg end* » ou à « *Unrest* » de Henry Cow en cela que l'on est dans l'improvisation mais sans pour autant dire que l'on est dans le jazz. Les rythmes, le positionnement des solistes n'évoque pas directement le jazz. C'est en particulier l'approche de Pierre Olivier Govin qui installe ce climat, ne s'imposant pas comme le ferait presque naturellement un saxophoniste de jazz, il s'installe un peu à la manière d'un **Geoff Leigh**, disparaissant avant que l'on y prête trop attention. Slava Ganelin est quant à lui assez reconnaissable, auteur de ses assauts orageux immédiatement tempérés par un calme assuré tel qu'il les délivrait dans le Ganelin trio. Peu à peu toutefois les références rythmiques au jazz s'installent mais sans

jamais s'identifier totalement à ce style.

Dans le quatrième mouvement Govin endosse cette fois plus clairement le costume du saxophoniste jazz dans un morceau qui pourrait faire penser à une version actuelle de « Soft Heap ». Quelques discrètes manipulations sur le son du saxophone renvoient encore une fois au travail sonore effectué sur les deux premiers Henry Cow. Kaminski de son côté fait preuve d'une belle inventivité tant à la batterie qu'aux percussions dont le jeu avec le son contribue autant à la mise en valeur du rythme que le simple respect du tempo. La basse de Hugh Hopper est très bien mise en valeur dans le mixage avec un son un peu différent de ce que l'on a l'habitude d'entendre venant de lui. Des basses ont été rajoutées rendant le son de l'instrument à la fois plus présent mais aussi un peu plus sourd, le faisant planer comme une ombre persistante sur le groupe entier. L'improvisation se calme totalement dans sa dernière phase, la basse a disparu pour laisser place à de discrets loops à la source assez unidentifiable, le saxophone s'est aussi éclipsé et les mystérieux loops forment un tapis derrière la batterie de Kaminski qui s'est adoucie et le piano de Ganelin qui prend des airs de **Satie** ou de **Mal Waldron** introspectif. Ce huitième volume occupe une place particulière au sein de toute la série. En effet « *North & south* », « *Frangloband* » ou « *Soft Boundaries* » s'inscrivaient dans une sorte de traitement du passé au présent. Mais ce « *Bass on Top* » propose une musique entièrement neuve. En effet il n'y a plus ici de thèmes familiers comme on peut en trouver dans les autres formations, l'organisation de la musique est inédite et même si l'on y trouve des traces du passé, celui-ci se voit réapproprié par le musicien d'une façon totalement nouvelle. De même les membres de ce groupe ainsi que les circonstances de l'enregistrement relèvent d'un choix inédit. Si dans les différentes formations des premiers volumes on trouve des musiciens qui partagent un socle commun, le prog ou le post prog, ici tout est différent. Aucune trace de prog ni chez Kaminski ni chez Ganelin. Pierre Olivier Govin s'avère être un musicien qui aurait pu faire un chemin encore plus long avec Hugh Hopper, il apparaît dans ce volume comme totalement en phase avec l'évolution musicale que poursuivait le bassiste. Ce disque est aussi comme un message posthume à tous ceux qui actuellement jouent inlassablement une musique datant d'il y a 40 ans en étant persuadés d'être à l'avant garde et en se demandant en même temps pourquoi ils vendent si peu de disques. Par cette longue improvisation Hopper montre comment des influences si glorieuses soient-elles ne doivent pas faire office de carcan mais doivent permettre au contraire une réactualisation de la musique.

Le volume 9 se présente sous des apparences trompeuses; en effet en tant qu'il propose cinq fois le même titre *'Facelift'* on pourrait croire qu'il se destine avant tout aux auditeurs versés dans la musicologie. Cinq fois le même titre, il n'y a que les amateurs d'études musicales approfondies qui peuvent être séduits! Mais le fait est que ces cinq versions sont toutes différentes et présentent chacune un véritable intérêt. Ainsi on ne se lasse aucunement de ce disque malgré sa constitution. Sans prétendre disserter sur « *Facelift* » à la manière d'un musicologue il faut tout de même s'attarder sur la singularité de chaque version tant l'album porte bien son nom, c'est vraiment une anatomie de cette composition à laquelle nous sommes conviés.



« *Facelift* » est le titre qui ouvrait « *Third* » et par lequel était donc introduite la mutation que Soft Machine avait opéré en moins d'un an. Si « Slightly all the time » ou « *Out bloody rageous* » larguaient vraiment les amarres avec la première période de la machine molle, « *Moon in june* » et « *Facelift* » étaient le trait d'union. « *Facelift* » tout en étant instrumental conservait l'aspect direct propre au rock. Moins sophistiquée que les deux compositions de Ratledge elle permettait au groupe de ne désorienter que modérément son auditoire si l'on peut dire. C'est justement en partie ce sujet que Hugh Hopper aborde dans l'introduction de ce cd où il explique que n'ayant pas fait d'études musicales particulières ses compositions étaient plutôt simples,

citant comme contre-exemple Mike Ratledge qui ayant des notions théoriques sur la musique lui permet de composer de façon plus complexe. Le propos de Hopper soulignant qu'une composition d'apparence simple peut se complexifier selon la manière dont on l'aborde va être illustré par le choix et la succession telle que voulue par Michael King, on va en effet assister à une complexification graduelle du titre.

Cela commence par ce qui est probablement la version la plus rock de « *Facelift* » enregistrée le 25 juin 1969 à Paris, cette version est l'une des rares en trio et elle donne à entendre ce que l'on pourrait appeler le squelette de la composition. Dépourvue de l'introduction à laquelle le titre sera adossé par la suite, on entre immédiatement dans le chorus initial et désormais célèbre. Le jeu de basse de Hopper est assez concentré sur un spectre restreint à la manière d'un bassiste de rock, Wyatt a un jeu puissant ; les deux musiciens étant avantagés par le mixage c'est pour cela que l'on peut parler du squelette du titre. Ce qui accentue la dimension rock de cette première interprétation c'est aussi le son très brut de l'orgue de Ratledge qui prend parfois des accents de guitare électrique. Son solo est impressionnant et l'ensemble du trio déploie toute l'énergie d'un groupe rock. Quatre mois après l'ambiance évolue sensiblement. Là encore on prend directement pied dans le titre mais le trio de base est augmenté par Elton Dean (sax alto), **Lyn Dobson** (flûte et saxophone), **Marc Charig** (trompette) et **Nick Evans** (trombone). Certes le son est un peu confus et l'on a du mal à distinguer chacun de ces musiciens mais ce qui apparaît très clairement en revanche c'est l'arrivée d'arrangements qui viennent se greffer sur le thème de base. Ces arrangements ainsi que les solos donnent à ce titre une dimension moins brute, plus sophistiquée. Les solos sont privilégiés dans la troisième version, datant du 4 janvier 1970, on se rapproche de l'enregistrement de « *Third* ». Moins de solistes potentiels puisque les souffleurs se réduisent à Dean et Dobson mais du coup la dimension jazz apparaît davantage car il y a plus de place pour l'improvisation. C'est aussi la première fois que le titre n'est pas joué directement mais introduit par ces quelques minutes calmes avant l'arrivée du morceau proprement dit.

Les deux dernières versions sont intéressantes car elles apportent encore une évolution un peu inattendue. On revient à la formule en trio même si à l'écoute on pourrait croire qu'il y a deux claviers. La première de ces deux versions est enregistrée le 27 mars 71 en Norvège ; l'introduction un peu lente du morceau se prolonge et durant un instant on croît même que le titre va prendre une direction un peu free mais cela se calme bien vite. La dextérité de Ratledge quant à jongler entre orgue et piano électrique rappelle l'ambiance des premiers National Health.

Les habitués auront compris que je veux décrire par là des sonorités assez raffinées mais soudain la basse de Hopper prend un son nettement plus tranchant et le thème arrive. Toutefois Ratledge entretient ce climat un peu jazz rock durant tout le morceau, Wyatt restant assez discret dans sa manière de marquer le rythme. La version suivante séparée d'un mois de celle que nous venons d'entendre s'installe un peu de la même manière à la différence que l'introduction lente est plus brève, le thème arrive plus soudainement et Wyatt reprend un jeu plus massif. Les improvisations de Ratledge sont elles aussi plus directes et engagées.

On s'aperçoit au terme de ce parcours qu'entendre cinq fois le même titre n'a pas été ennuyeux tant les versions sélectionnées sont différentes et toutes intéressantes. Le choix très judicieux de Michael King est donc venu illustrer à la perfection le propos de Hugh Hopper faisant la différence entre le titre et la manière de l'aborder. Cela semble une évidence dans le jazz mais l'est moins dans une musique qui prend une partie de ses racines dans le rock. Mais cela ouvre aussi sur une interrogation en relation avec la cohorte d'hommages aux géants du jazz à laquelle on a droit depuis si longtemps. Le meilleur hommage consiste-t-il à rejouer le thème ou à se l'approprier pour en faire quelque chose de neuf ? Moins de deux ans contiennent ces cinq versions de « *Facelift* » et en ce court laps de temps le titre a beaucoup évolué. Mais il faut alors faire un retour sur « Frangloband » volume 2 et se remémorer la version de « *Facelift* » qui y figure pour convenir que celle-ci manque sûrement un peu d'audace et apparaît comme un peu sage à la lumière de ce que l'on vient d'entendre.



Reste donc un dixième volume qui paraît début septembre, il contiendra notamment une rencontre entre Hopper et **Chris Cutler** ainsi qu'une version de « *Was a friend* »* par le trio de **Denis Colin**. Etant donné le niveau des neuf premiers titres, il y a peu de chances pour que ce dernier volume déçoive.

L'idée de sortir ces cd's séparément et non sous forme d'un coffret est judicieuse en cela qu'elle laisse la possibilité à chacun de privilégier ce qu'il souhaite écouter même si à mon avis les dix volumes sont indispensables en tant que tels et en tant que chaque chapitre met en valeur l'ensemble de cette collection. Il faut aussi encore une fois souligner l'excellent travail d'organisation et de compilation effectué par Michael King qui montre encore une fois l'exigence de qualité qui a marqué absolument tous les titres sur lesquels il a travaillé tant pour son label que pour ceux qui lui faisaient appel ; on ne pouvait pas imaginer un meilleur hommage à la musique de Hugh Hopper. Pour être tout à fait complet, sans que cela ne soit revendiqué par le label Gonzo, cette série semble sortir en quantité assez limitée car quelques exemplaires sont déjà un peu difficiles à trouver. Enfin sur le même label vous pourrez trouver quelques autres rééditions d'importance en relation avec Hugh Hopper. Il y a notamment les deux albums du quartet Hopper, Dean, Tippett, Gallivan à savoir « Cruel but Fair » et « Mercy Dash ». Présent également sur ce catalogue la réédition de l'album « Monster Band » de Hopper ainsi qu'un live de 1971 de Soft Machine rejoint par **Daevid Allen** et **Gilly Smith**.

Olivier Delaporte

Hugh HOPPER : né le 29 avril 1945 à Canterbury et décédé le 7 juin 2009

** "Was a friend' était le titre générique que Michael King avait en tête au départ pour cette collection...*



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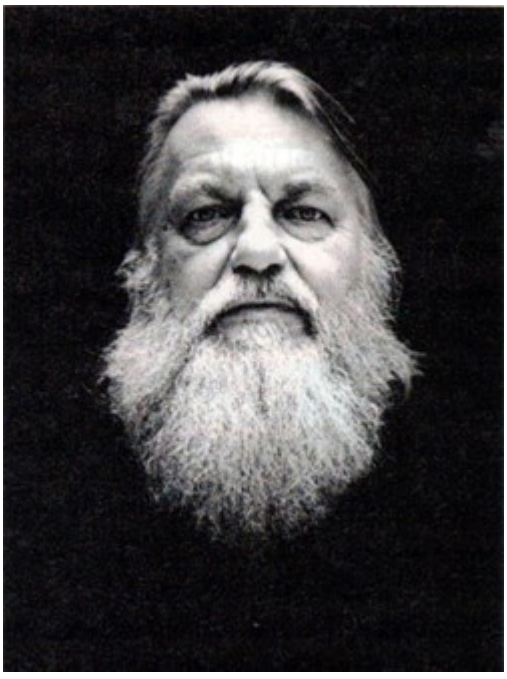
Wyatt, voix royale - L'Obs - n° 2620 du Nouvel Observateur du 22 au 28 janvier 2015

ROCK MARXISTE

Wyatt, voix royale

DIFFERENT EVERY TIME, ROBERT WYATT (DOMINO).





Robert Wyatt est un handicapé marxiste et un compositeur à la voix étrange - ou l'inverse. A 69 ans, l'ex-Soft Machine rassemble les moments clés de sa carrière pour un double CD épatant, en même temps que sort sa biographie. Il est « celui qui ne nous a jamais laissés tomber, jamais trahis », écrit le « Times Literary Supplément ». On y apprend que lorsqu'il est devenu paraplégique en 1973 après une chute du quatrième étage, la BBC a refusé de le programmer pour ne pas heurter « les familles ». Ou que c'est en réaction aux positions ultra-droitières de son cousin Woodrow Wyatt, politicien et

journaliste aux « News of the World », qu'il a adhéré au Communist Party...

Quant au double album, il s'ouvre sur le monstrueux « Moon in June » (tiré de l'album « Third. Soft Machine ») et s'achève, sur le deuxième CD, par des duos avec Nick Mason, Björk ou Terje Rypdal (« Sinking Spell », notre préféré).

Il y a quinze ans, le philosophe Mathieu Potte-Bonneville écrivait : « Wyatt chante comme un homme assis dont la poitrine est comprimée par un diaphragme perpétuellement bloqué enposition haute [...] Son falsetto, que ne soutient aucune réverbération, est un homme sans ombre. D'un point de vue strictement musical, c'est en tous points bouleversant. » En tous points, oui.

Éric Aeschimann
Photo : Naïve - Renaud Monfourny/Dalle

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Trois vies puissantes - Libération - 1er et 2 novembre 2014

Libération

TROIS VIES PUISSANTES

Marcus O'Dair passe en revue l'enfance et les carrières du musicien britannique.

par Sophian Fanen



Robert Wyatt, 69 ans - Photo : Renaud Monfourny

> Zoom

Les ouvrages consacrés à Robert Wyatt sont bien trop rares. A peine un petit livre de rencontres signé Jean-François Drean et Philippe Thieyre (2009) et une bio succincte, *Faux Mouvements* (1998). La somme - pas encore traduite de l'anglais - que vient de publier le Britannique Marcus O'Dair, professeur de musique populaire à l'université du Middlesex à Londres, est donc doublement la bienvenue pour éclairer la carrière faussement paisible d'un musicien qui a vécu trois vies.

Voyage.

Une compilation en deux disques, également préparée par O'Dair, viendra mettre ce voyage en sons le 17 novembre chez Domino, non pas sous la forme d'un best-of, mais plutôt d'un fil chronologique, depuis ses premiers morceaux avec Soft Machine et Matching Mole, puis ses compositions en solo et ses collaborations à 360 degrés avec le monde du jazz (Anja Garbarek), du rock (Phil Manzanera), et de la pop (Björk, Hot Chip). Marcus O'Dair relate donc in extenso les vies de Robert Wyatt, 69 ans aujourd'hui, dans une forme qu'on aurait souvent aimé plus distanciée et critique.

On découvre surtout la jeunesse de Robert Ellidge, qui prendra le nom de sa mère pour monter sur scène. Il s'en est peu ouvert, mais son enfance passée dans une maison progressiste et ouverte aux musiciens de passage, dont l'Australien Daevid Allen, personnage central du rock expérimental des années 70, explique beaucoup de sa liberté de pensée. Gamin doué touché par tous les arts, le jeune Wyatt finira même par rendre visite à Georges Braque dans son atelier parisien. Simplement parce que c'était le genre de choses que l'on faisait dans la famille.

La deuxième vie de Robert Wyatt est celle du musicien excessif, qui connaît tôt le succès comme batteur et chanteur de Soft Machine, un groupe qui fut un temps l'égal de Pink Floyd dans le monde psychédélique, avant de s'en faire virer parce qu'il n'avait «pas le niveau». Mais Marcus O'Dair fait bien comprendre que ce sont les abus alcoolisés de Wyatt qui l'ont isolé. Deux ans plus tard, c'est cette même façon de se bourrer «*jusqu'à délirer*» qui le jettera du quatrième étage d'un immeuble de Londres, le 1er juin 1973.

Aquatique.

La colonne vertébrale brisée, il se découvre alors une nouvelle philosophie : inventer sa nouvelle musique à partir de moyens désormais réduits. C'est sa troisième vie, riche de 11 albums d'une pop aquatique et délicate nourrie de jazz. Un monde unique, d'une sérénité remarquable, que l'on comprend un peu mieux en ayant refermé cette biographie nécessaire.

«Different Everytime» de Marcus O'Dair, éd. Serpent's Tail (anglais), 27 €.

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Les Soft Machine au 33 rue Notre-Dame de Lorette - Jeansegura.fr - 8 novembre 2014



Les Soft Machine au 33 rue Notre-Dame de Lorette

Jean Ségura

[Sur son site personnel, Jean Ségura évoque une rencontre inattendue à Paris avec les "Soft Machine". Il est probable que l'auteur ait confondu Daevid Allen et Kevin Ayers dans ses souvenirs.]

Rencontre fortuite le Dimanche 8 octobre 1967 avec trois musiciens de Soft Machine, quand le Swinging London s'invite chez mes parents le temps d'une soirée télévisée

Juillet 1967, Summer of Love sur toute la planète, les Soft Machine se produisent au Festival de la Libre expression à Saint-Tropez. Le groupe, alors inconnu, passe en première partie du spectacle donné par Jean-Jacques Lebel : Le Désir attrapé par la queue ; de Pablo Picasso avec la « tragédienne du strip-tease » Rita Renoir et son mari chauve Jacques Seiler. Ma cousine, journaliste au Nouvel Observateur et de dix ans mon aînée - familière du « portrait à vif » qui a déjà John Lennon et Salvador Dali dans son tableau de chasse - aborde les Soft sans complexe.

Les Futurs Beatles

L'article sort sous le titre Les Futurs Beatles le 11 septembre 1967 dans la rubrique « Les bruits de la ville ». Et les Soft reviennent bientôt en France dans un Paris qui répercute avec quelques mois de retard la vague créative du Swinging London des sixties. La Télévision Française (qui a déjà raté les Beatles et les Rolling Stones lorsqu'ils étaient venus, alors quasi-inconnus en 1964) ne peut plus ignorer que la musique d'outre-Manche ne se limite pas aux bluettes de Petula Clark. Les Soft, invités de l'émission de Daisy de Galard Dim Dam Dom Variétés, enregistrent – en couleur - une session qui doit être diffusée dans la soirée du dimanche 8 octobre 1967 sur la 2ème Chaîne.



Dim Dam Dom ouvre ses studios

En fin de cette journée du 8 octobre, ma cousine (qui n'a pas la télé) appelle à la maison et me demande si elle peut passer avec ses *copains*, les Soft Machine ?

Les musiciens voudraient vraiment voir leur passage sur le petit écran des « frenchies ». Coup de chance, mes parents sont de sortie ce soir-là et j'accepte de recevoir discrètement ces « nouveaux Beatles ». Nous n'avons qu'une télévision en noir et blanc, mais cela fera l'affaire (la couleur n'a commencé à émettre sur la 2ème que depuis le 1er octobre 1967) . Les Soft Machine débarquent rue Notre-Dame de Lorette vers 21 h. Et moi, ado de 18 ans, j'ouvre la porte à Daevid Allen, qui semble vivre une romance avec ma cousine, Robert Wyatt (pas encore en fauteuil roulant) et un troisième (sans doute Mike Ratledge).

La gentillesse de Robert Wyatt

Ces musiciens hyper-chevelus - qui auraient fait peur à papa et maman - resteront assis tranquillement le temps de leur passage à l'antenne. Puis ils repartiront bien gentiment après des remerciements très « british ». Je me souviens encore de la gentillesse de Robert Wyatt et du sourire de Daevid. Les Soft Machine ne sont jamais devenus les nouveaux Beatles. Je ne suis pas sûr de bien connaître leur musique. Mais il m'en restera ce souvenir bien vivant.

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Wyatt Hotel - crisscross-jazz.com - décembre 2010

Wyatt Hotel

A l'heure où deux nouveaux disques (Gilad Atzmon et Sophia Domancich) se servent de sa voix comme d'un étendard des temps d'art maintenant levés, il était temps pour nous d'essayer de toucher du doigt l'essence qui alimente ce véhicule bio et diesel qu'est Robert Wyatt. Au point de publier un texte inédit faisant de troublantes révélations sur l'existence du chanteur-compositeur-batteur au grand choeur. Robert Wyatt serait-il un fantôme?

AVANT-PROPOS

« For the Ghosts Within ». Tel est le titre du dernier disque de Robert Wyatt. Ce titre dégage quelque chose de troublant. Car l'ombre de Robert Wyatt plane sur le jazz et plus généralement sur la musique moderne comme un fantôme sur un hôtel, tel les ectoplasmes classes qui surgissent de l'inconscient malade du Jack Nicholson de Shining. Mais pour l'homme de fer de la pop souterraine, ce serait l'inverse. Comme si Jack Nicholson-Robert Wyatt débarquait dans un hôtel qu'il a longtemps habité, faisant le service sans que personne ne s'en rende compte. Certains si. Tel Daniel Yvinec sur le premier album de l'ONJ, Sophia Domancich sur son dernier disque ou le saxophoniste israélien Gilad Atzmon qui vient de convier ce fantôme à chanter des standards du jazz, de Lush Life à Round Midnight en passant par In A Sentimental Mood. Tout le monde le sait: les spectres acteurs tels que Wyatt sortent toujours Round Midnight, mènent une Lush Life outre-tombe et laissent inévitablement échapper derrière eux comme une Sentimental Mood.

I.

Robert Wyatt est un fantôme. J'en suis sûr. Enfin, presque sûr. J'ai des preuves. Des preuves quasiment flagrantes. Et puis non, pas besoin de preuves, une preuve, ça peut toujours être récusée, une preuve, ça ne résiste que très rarement à l'épreuve de sa contre-preuve. Et puis les preuves, c'est comme les promesses, elles n'engagent que ceux qui y croient durs comme frères. Donc pas de preuves, une chose de réglée.

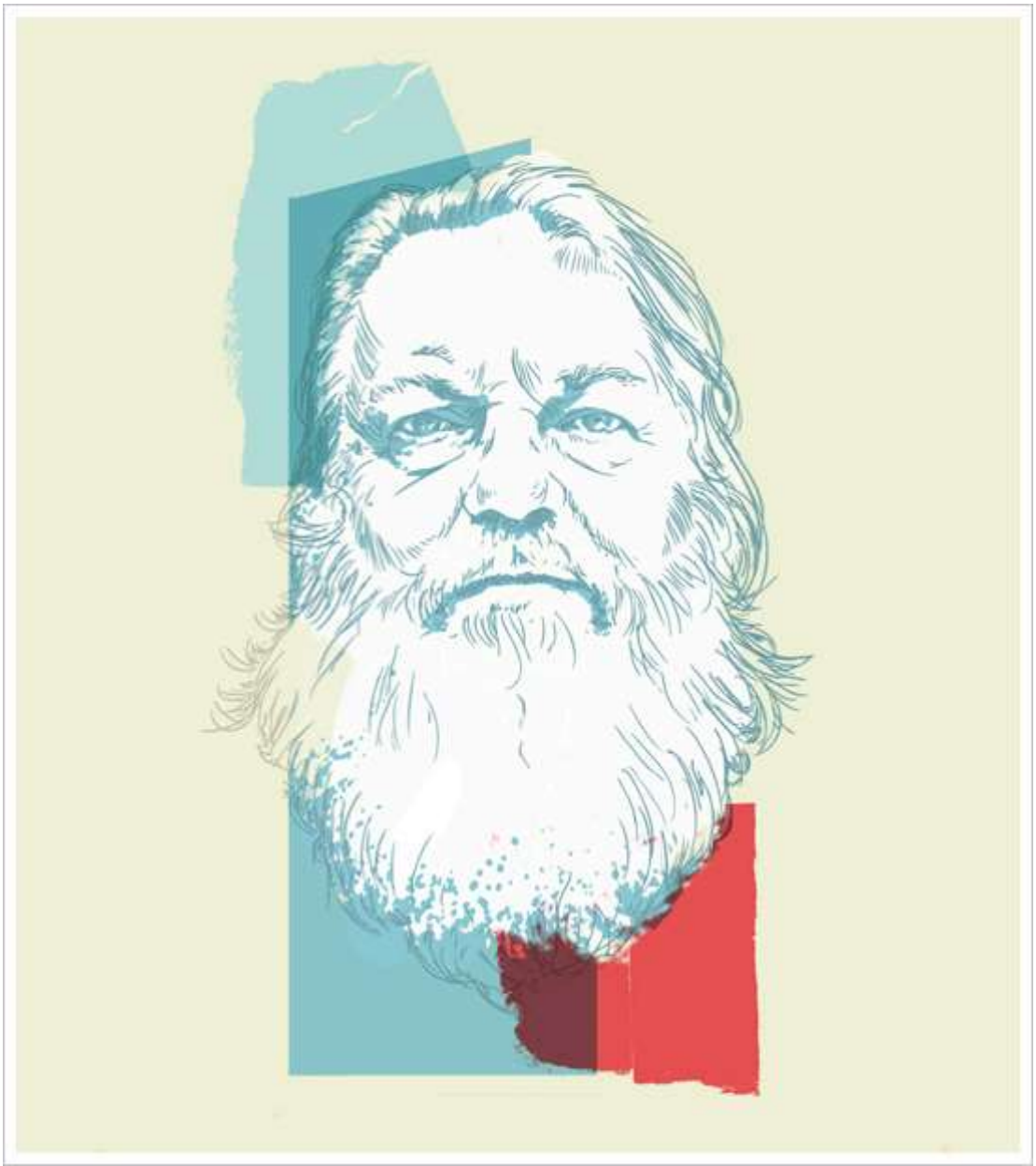
II.

Il suffit de se rendre compte qu'après 1975 et son accident qui ne lui a pas coûté la vie mais deux jambes, sa musique a changé de face, à jamais. Voici ma thèse. Ce jour-là, Robert Wyatt a chevauché la barrière, vous savez celle qui sépare les vivants (presque)

morts des morts (à l'allure de) vivants. Depuis ce jour, son fantôme continue cependant à nous hanter, nous mortels aux grandes oreilles que nous sommes. Nos feuilles de chou, il s'en sert comme d'antennes pour faire passer ses messages. Bref, le trentenaire éternel nous mijote une sorte de radio d'outre-tombe. Mais enfin, c'était pourtant évident. A partir de « Rock Bottom », sa voix devient aussi fragile qu'un fil sur le point de casser sa pipe en mille morceaux. Et puis, ce vulgaire stratagème de la barbe blanche, quand même c'est gros comme une monumentale maison perdue dans une petite prairie. Cette allure de figure divine ou christique ou messianique sur le retour, ça ne vous a pas mis la puce à l'oreille? Doit-on en déduire qu'au Ciel, nous devenons tous des clones du Dieu à la toison blanche? L'idée fiche son lot de banderilles à l'épine dorsale, surtout pour les plus séduisants d'entre nous – car la beauté cachée des laids, des laids, se voit sans délai, délai, c'est bien connu.

III.

A tout ça, je ne vais pas vous mentir, j'y pensais plus ou moins, avec des hauts et débats avec moi-même. Et puis, j'ai appris qu'il sortait un nouveau disque, avec le saxophoniste Gilad Atzmon. Et que dans le même moment, il participait au nouvel opus de la pianiste Sophia Domancich. Le don d'ubiquité, je ne sais pas vous, mais pour moi, il n'y a qu'une seule genre de substance à la posséder: la fantomatique, l'ectoplasme, celle qui traverse les murs sans se cogner la tête, celle qui peut dire « va voir là-bas si j'y suis » et s'y trouver. Et puis, l'an dernier, on nous avait déjà fait le coup. L'ONJ de Daniel Yvinec s'était baptisé « Around Robert Wyatt « comme on inaugure d'un jet de Nabuchodonosor un bateau devenu ivre, du genre « oui, on a enregistré un disque avec sa voix, mais il n'était pas là en studio, il nous a envoyé les bandes, et blah blah bli et blah blah blah ». Comme disait Henri Michaux qui s'y connaissait en esprits divers et variés. « C'est surtout grâce à ton imbécillité que l'imbécillité de l'autre est pour toi si pleine. / Pourtant superficielle. Elle n'a guère que ta substance. » Hormis le retour de la substance (comme par hasard), ça veut surtout dire qu'il ne faut pas nous prendre pour des buses sans arrêts. Ma thèse puisqu'il faut tout vous dire: depuis 35 piges, le vieux Bob éponge une poignée d'élus auxquels il fait croire qu'il sort des disques à un rythme soutenu. En réalité, ces objets sonores – on les dit souvent « non identifiés » comme si c'étaient des extra-terrestres ou des soucoupes volantes, non, ce sont simplement comme des images mentales et auditives venues de l'au-delà – bref, je reprends: ces objets sonores donc nous sont transmis par le fantôme de Robert Wyatt. Comment choisit-il ces heureux auditeurs VIP de l'outre-tombe? Je ne saurais vous dire. Si j'en juge par ce que j'ai pu observer de mes yeux vus, il a sans conteste un don pour ne pas raser les mûrs (traduction: la chair fraîche, très peu pour lui, merci). Parfois il se tourne vers les moins de vingt ans, mais le jeunisme ne semble pas faire partie de sa philosophie de transmission sonore. Certes il est apparu à Björk à l'aube de ses quarante printemps, mais il ne tape que très rarement plus bas – enfin, il faut que j'arrête avec ma mauvaise foi, mais sans mauvaise foi aucune thèse à peu près crédible n'est possible, car j'avais oublié une audio-apparition pour les electro-popeux de Hot Chip et pour le rejeton féminin de Jan Garbarek, Anja. Enfin ça pèse pas lourd. Les quadra, les quinqua, les sexa, les septa, les octaves, c'est bien plus son fond d'apparition. Maintenant à la question: le fait-il exprès? Difficile à répondre, même s'il faut reconnaître que les fantômes ne fréquentent que très rarement la jeunesse. C'est comme ça, on ne peut rien y faire. Faut sans doute une certaine expérience de vie pour pouvoir les capter.



IV.

Il y a un autre point à ne pas négliger. Robert Wyatt est considéré comme l'un des fondateurs de l'école de Canterbury. Et qu'est-ce qu'on y trouve à Canterbury? Je vous le donne en mille: le fantôme décrit par Oscar Wilde. Tututu vous allez me répondre et vous ne seriez pas dans votre tort: le fantôme du Dandy Oscar était domicilié à Canterville et non à Canterbury. Certes, mais je vais me permettre, sauf votre respect, (« c'est pas que je m'ennuie, mais je vais me barrer » signifie « je m'ennuie, encore deux secondes de plus et je rejoins François Villon au paradis des pendus »; pareil pour « sauf votre respect », c'est un attentat larvé d'irrévérence.) Bref, sauf votre respect, je vais me permettre d'en placer pas une, mais deux. D'une part, comme Proust avec Balbec pour ne pas nommer Cabourg ou Kerouac avec Dean Moriarty pour ne pas se retrouver avec un procès au cul de Neal Cassady, il est évident que Canterville sous la plume d'Oscar Wilde résonne comme un Canterbury à peine maquillé. Et l'évidence ne tolère aucune contestation possible. Elle s'impose 6/0 6/0 6/0 un point c'est tout. Si l'évidence était un joueur de tennis, ce serait Nadal à Roland-Garros, faudrait vraiment qu'elle ait 40 de fièvre, une jambe cassée et un coup dans le nez pour ne pas s'imposer. Si l'évidence était une équipe de foot, ce serait Barcelone. Pour le pilote automobile, elle hésiterait entre Schumacher et Loeb et pour le cyclisme, elle prendrait Lance Armstrong, même si Jeannie Longo ferait très bien l'affaire. Bon, je n'étoffe pas la métaphore plus loin, je pense que vous avez saisi le truc. Et puis, à Canterbury, il y a eu un autre événement célèbre, le meurtre dans la cathédrale de l'archibishop Thomas Becket. C'est T.S. Eliot qui l'a raconté et lui s'y connaît sévère en fantômes. Oui, je pense aux Hollow Men que récite Marlon Brando dans Apocalypse Now, autre revenant, épouvantail, spectre fameux de l'imaginaire collectif.

V.

Et puis je n'ai jamais entendu parler de Robert Wyatt au journal de Jean-Pierre Pernaut, le miroir par excellence de la réalité. Si j'étais logicien (ce dont je m'abstiens volontiers), je m'aventurerais même à dire: Jean-Pierre Pernaut montre la réalité / Robert Wyatt ne passe pas au journal de Jean-Pierre Pernaut / Donc Robert Wyatt n'est pas réel. Alors que si le journal de Jean-Pierre Pernaut avait existé avant 1975 (ça demande un léger effort d'imagination, mais pas tant que ça, essayez donc), il aurait sûrement parlé de Soft Machine. De là à savoir si le reportage aurait été laudateur ou accusateur, je ne saurais m'avancer, mais au moins ça prouve… non j'avais dit pas de preuves, disons ça démontre que Robert Wyatt n'existe plus puisque Jean-Pierre Pernaut n'en parle pas. En tout cas, une chose est indubitable. Si Jean-Pierre Pernaut avait eu son journal en 1975, il aurait annoncé la disparition de Robert Wyatt, il ne se serait pas trompé lui.

VI.

Maintenant, je pose une autre question: à quoi bon savoir la vérité? A rien je vous l'accorde, nada, dalleque, quequette. La vérité ne sert jamais à rien de toute manière. La franchise pourquoi pas, la diplomatie why not, l'hypocrisie ça peut être bien utile, la cautèle vous en reprendrez bien une part allez faut pas gâcher, mais la vérité, non, c'est vraiment une perte de temps (et si Robert a du « why » dans son patronyme, c'est pour nous éviter le tracas des bi-causes, celles qui peuvent expliquer le tout et son contraire).

VII.

Je pourrais continuer longtemps comme ça et vous faire ingurgiter de force toute une liste d'arguments comme on nous force à manger deux ou trois agrumes par jour. Non, les listes, c'est pour les mariages et les commissions, deux sujets qui n'ont pas leur place ici, ni au royaume (ou dictature ou république ou empire, faudrait qu'on se penche sur ce problème avant qu'il ne soit trop tard) des spectres. Je me contenterai donc d'une ultime remarque – d'autant que je finirai par un septième chapitre (malmener et jouer du chiffre sept quand on manie l'au-delà, ça fait toujours son petit effet). Sur la pochette intérieure de « Comicopera », l'un des derniers opus de l'homme de fer qui aiguise le faire, il est inscrit texto « You can't see me but I'm here, I'm particles in the air. » Et comme si ça ne suffisait pas, Robert s'adresse, dans la chanson inaugurale du recueil, à ceux qui ont les antennes pour le capter: « So, if you can hear me, / if you're still there, / stay tuned, / I'll get back to you ». Alors, là, de deux choses l'une: soit, Wyatt rend sa condition spectrale tellement évidente que personne ne la voit – une condition qui deviendrait solaire à force d'être fantomatique, comme un astre qui nous illumine sans cesse, mais qu'on ne peut jamais regarder dans les yeux; soit (et ce n'est pas antinomique), il nous annonce très clairement sa réincarnation prochaine. Alors, ce serait couillu de sa part, car ça aurait un petit parfum de resucée, cet acte de ressusciter, d'autres s'y sont déjà frottés et se sont brûlés les ailes – mais cela expliquerait le parfum de cantique qui s'échappe de nombre de ses morceaux, jusqu'au chant de Noël de « Nothing Can Stop Us » (Red Flag). A l'inverse de prestigieux et précédents confrères, Robert Wyatt aurait donc déjà composé et rédigé son évangile avant même de revenir de parmi les morts. Ça aurait de la gueule.

Texte: Clopin Trouillefou / Illustration: Dudley A. Zmuda (d'après une photo de Renaud Monfourny).

Réédition des « classic albums » de Robert Wyatt chez Domino Records: « Rock Bottom », « Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard », « Nothing Can Stop Us », « Old Rottenhat », « Dondestan Revisited », « Robert Wyatt & friends, Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8th September 1974"…

Sortie le 13 décembre du single What a Wonderful World (Domino Records)
« For The Ghosts Within' » de Robert Wyatt-Gilad Atzmon-Ros Stephen (Domino Records)

« Snakes and Ladders » de Sophia Domancich (Cristal Records) avec notamment John Greaves, Napoleon Maddox, Simon Goubert… Concert de sortie du disque jeudi 9 décembre à 20h30 au Triton des Lilas.

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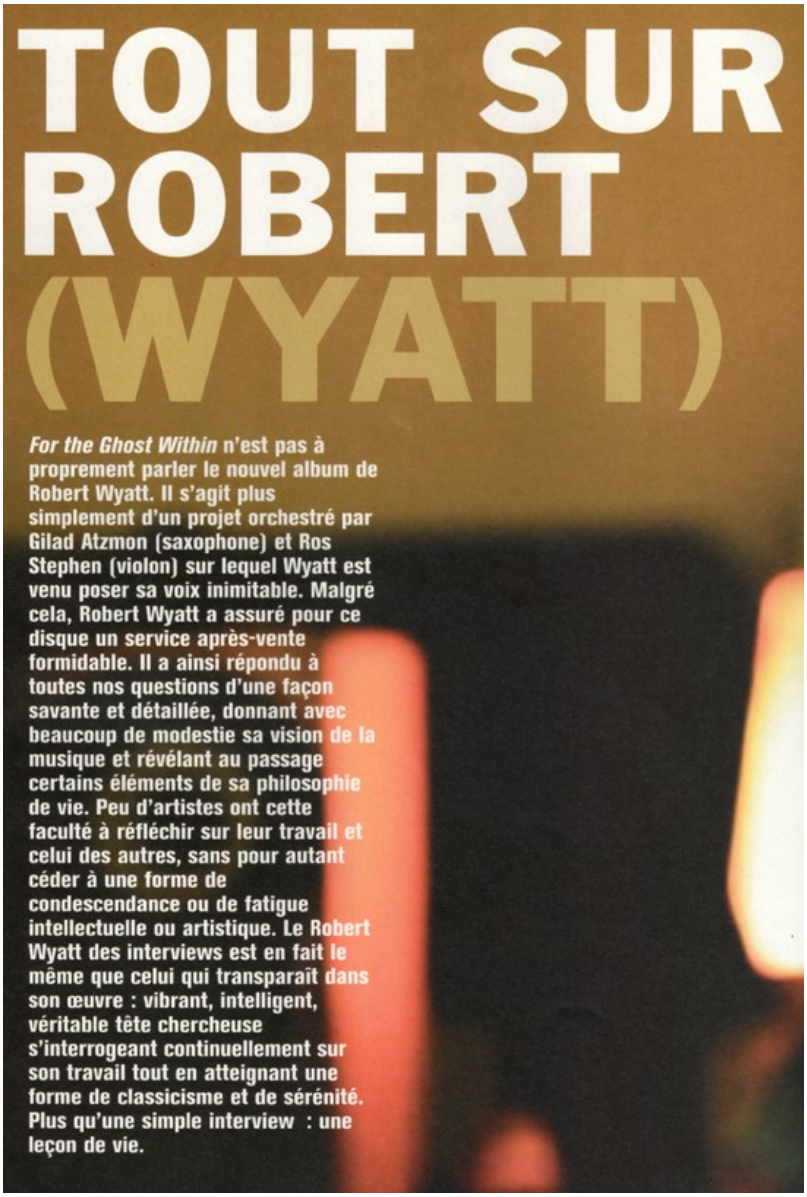
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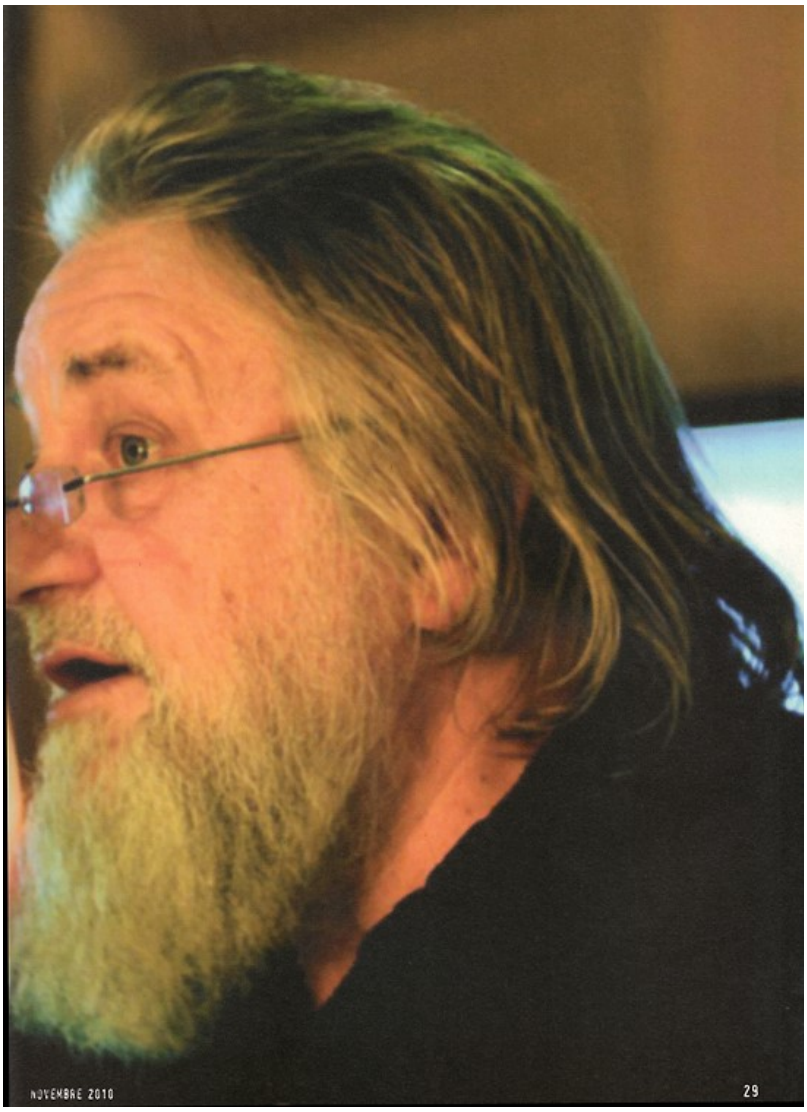
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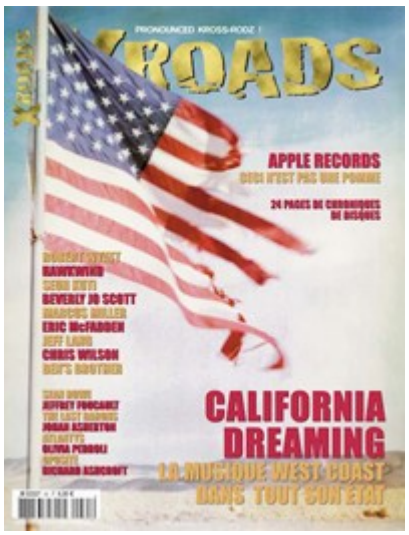
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Tout sur Robert (Wyatt) - Xroads - novembre 2010







Votre musique a toujours incorporé des éléments de jazz, mais c'est la première fois qu'un disque de vous y fait référence d'une façon si consciente. Pourquoi avoir fait cela à ce stade de votre carrière ?

Déjà, vous avez parfaitement raison, c'est ce qui se rapproche le plus d'un disque de jazz dans ma carrière, mais je ne suis pas l'instigateur de ce projet. Ce projet est en réalité une collaboration entre la violoniste Ros Stephen et le saxophoniste Gilad Altzmon. C'est leur troisième album ensemble. Le premier était un disque de tango, car c'est la spécialité de Stephen et le second était un hommage à Charlie Parker. Tous deux souhaitaient qu'il y ait un troisième album et que celui-ci soit chanté. Pour cette raison, ils m'ont demandé de les rejoindre. À l'origine, je ne suis donc qu'un chanteur invité sur ce disque, mais je me suis impliqué un peu plus en choisissant les morceaux que nous interpréterions ensemble. L'idée était de faire une musique qui date d'avant l'invention du rock'n'roll. Il y a bien sûr une référence aux jazz, mais ces musiciens ne sont pas des jazzmen. Ils viennent de la musique classique contemporaine. Il y a par ailleurs d'autres invités sur le disque : la femme de Gilad est venue interpréter un morceau et il y a aussi une chorale de chanteurs palestiniens.

Comment avez-vous rencontré Gilad Atzmon et Ros Stephen ?

J'ai rencontré Ros, il y a quelques années, dans un centre écossais, à Ayth. J'ai immédiatement trouvé sa musique, un point de vue moderne sur le tango argentin, très intéressante. Gilad, lui, je le connais depuis plus de dix ans. Je crois qu'on peut dire que je suis un fan de sa musique et aussi de ses idées. Il a joué sur mes deux derniers albums, *Cuckooland* et *Comicopera*.

Comment avez-vous choisi les originaux et les reprises figurant sur ce disque ?

Je crois que le dossier de presse fourni par Domino sur ce disque est un peu inexact. Il y a des compositions personnelles sur ce disque, mais aucune n'a été écrite spécifiquement pour ce projet. L'idée que l'on retrouve dans le titre était d'interpréter une musique fantomatique, dans le sens où l'on a déjà l'impression de l'avoir entendue quelque part. C'est pour cela que les standards choisis sont de grands classiques dont il existe déjà beaucoup d'interprétations célèbres. Les compositions elles-mêmes sont réminiscentes de musiques qui existent déjà. Gilad, par exemple, a composé un blues très classique. L'idée, à part cela, était de confronter une quatuor à cordes avec le son de la contrebasse. C'est ce qui constitue la base du disque. À partir de là, la plupart des expérimentations viennent de Ros. C'est elle qui a composé le second morceau du disque, «Lullaby for Irène», sur des textes de ma femme, Alfy.

Pour les standards, vous êtes-vous inspiré de versions précédentes ?

Jusqu'à présent, ma connaissance du jazz était surtout instrumentale. J'aime l'improvisation. Je ne m'étais pas trop intéressé aux chanteurs, ce que j'ai fait pour ce projet. Plus spécifiquement, je me suis inspiré de Nat King Cole et Peggy Lee. Cela ressemble à une musique simple, on se dit que c'est de l'« easy listening », mais ce n'est pas pour autant du « easy playing ».

À ce moment, je dois faire une pause dans ce papier pour vous dire ce qui s'est passé lors de la conversation téléphonique. Un grand blanc. Vingt secondes, peut-être, et puis Wyatt me dit : « Excusez-moi, je bois une tasse de thé ». Là, je me dis que je vais attendre une autre vingtaine de secondes, et non, ça dure plus de cinq minutes. J'entends chaque respiration de l'artiste, chaque gorgée, le bruit de la tasse, la déglutition, le bruit de quelqu'un qui roule une cigarette, quelques soupirs - ayant déjà rencontré Wyatt, je sais qu'il doit constamment se repositionner sur sa chaise roulante et que cela lui est assez pénible. Le truc, c'est que ces mêmes soupirs, on les entend sur For the Ghosts Within. Ce serait donc n'importe qui, ça n'aurait pas la même valeur, mais voilà, Robert Wyatt chante comme il parle, et il parle comme il soupire. On le dit de Miles Davis, mais ça vaut pour lui aussi : après la musique de Wyatt, le silence aussi, c'est du Wyatt. En gros, j'ai l'impression d'écouter une prestation improvisée dont je serais le seul auditeur. Croyez-moi, je n'en perds par une miette. Puis, la voix revient : « II y a toujours quelqu'un à l'autre bout du fil ? ». C'est reparti.

... Généralement, quand on pense au jazz, on pense à l'improvisation, au momentum, à la performance elle-même. Le fait est qu'il s'agit avant toute chose de pièces musicales assez terribles, utilisant des fréquences, des harmonies que l'on n'entend pas dans d'autres styles de musique. En utilisant un quatuor à cordes pour jouer du jazz, on peut aboutir à des choses saisissantes. Normalement, l'artiste devrait jouer un accord. Là, on peut décomposer cet accord et n'en faire jouer qu'une partie à certains des musiciens et le reste à d'autres. C'est comme si, littéralement, la note prenait vie. L'autre chose géniale avec ce disque, c'est qu'il implique la participation de jeunes musiciens classiques qui sont plus ouverts à des harmonies nouvelles que les musiciens de pop.



Ce qui ressort du disque également et avant toute chose, c'est votre voix. Est-ce que pour vous ça n'impliquait pas un certain challenge ?

Oui, ça l'a été. Sur mes disques, je ne mets pas ma voix en avant. J'ai tendance à la noyer sous les arrangements, à la placer dans la musique. Pour ce disque, Gilad voulait au contraire qu'il y ait une forme de clarté et je me suis senti beaucoup plus exposé qu'à l'habitude.

Vous avez parlé de Peggy Lee et de Nat King Cole, mais pour ma part, j'entends beaucoup de Chet Baker...

Oui; bien sûr, Chet Baker est la principale influence sur ma voix. Quand je vous parlais de Peggy Lee et de Nat King Cole, je ne pensais pas à l'influence qu'ils ont eu sur ma technique vocale, mais je faisais juste référence au fait que je voulais revenir à l'origine de la chanson dans ce qu'elle a de plus pop. Après, si on parle de ma façon de chanter elle-même, c'est clair qu'il y a du Chet Baker. Je ne suis pas un bon chanteur, la seule chose que j'ai à offrir, c'est ma voix naturelle, celle avec laquelle je parle. Je ne peux pas vraiment l'adapter au style de la chanson car je n'ai pas beaucoup de registre. Chet Baker a fait un travail formidable avec Charlie Parker, lors des « West Coast Sessions ». Il n'était pas éduqué musicalement, pas plus que je ne le suis. C'est pour cela que je m'identifie à lui, j'imagine. Par contre, il avait une oreille extrêmement précise. Il n'était pas comme les chanteurs de son temps. Là où les autres chanteurs de jazz devaient amuser et chanter avec une certaine autorité, sa voix laissait avant tout passer énormément de solitude et de faiblesse. C'était tout sauf du showbiz. Aussi, il y a quelques années, je me suis mis à la trompette, je ne peux pas vraiment improviser, mais j'arrive à jouer des mélodies, je suis contraint de jouer d'une façon minimaliste et pour cela aussi, Baker est une grande influence. Cela a aussi beaucoup contribué à façonner mon souffle.



À un certain moment dans l'album, il devient impossible de dire si on écoute de la pop, du jazz ou de la musique contemporaine. Croyez-vous que les frontières aient bougé entre ces genres, qu'elles sont aujourd'hui abolies ?

C'est vrai ce que vous dîtes. Des amis qui ont entendu ce disque me disent qu'il n'est pas facilement classable. L'idée du disque était de jeter un regard nouveau sur de vieilles choses. Nous sommes trois personnes très différentes, venant de disciplines différentes. Le produit de cela est assez inhabituel avec un côté innovant. Je dois dire que l'innovation pour elle-même n'est pas quelque chose qui m'intéresse, ça m'ennuie même beaucoup. J'ai un peu dépassé cette période du free où il fallait forcément inventer quelque chose de nouveau. Plus

modestement, sur ce disque, la nouveauté vient du fait que ma voix, les cordes et le saxophone sont mis sur un plan d'égalité, que rien ne vient donner plus d'importance à l'un ou à l'autre. Je pense aussi que les musiciens d'aujourd'hui sont plus ouverts qu'avant, du moins ceux avec lesquels je travaille parce que je ne voudrais pas généraliser. Ils sont moins condescendants qu'il y a quelques décennies, quand les musiciens de classiques méprisaient ceux du jazz qui méprisaient eux-mêmes ceux de la pop. Ce n'est plus le cas désormais, car les musiciens de classique se sont ouverts aux musiques du monde. Ils écoutent des choses comme de la musique africaine et du reggae et ça change beaucoup leur attitude par rapport au jazz et à la pop.

D'un autre côté, la musique mainstream est de plus en plus standardisée. Quand on écoute le jazz contemporain, c'est comme si le free n'avait jamais existé. Ne croyez-vous pas que nous vivons dans un monde de plus en plus conservateur sur le plan artistique ?

Ça, c'est une très bonne question, mais voyez-vous, je ne suis pas sûr de pouvoir fournir une très bonne réponse ! Cela me rappelle une phrase qu'avait dite le chef d'orchestre de jazz Stan Kenton quand on lui avait demandé où allait le jazz. Il répondit: « Moi, je vais à Cleveland ce mardi ». Je me sens un peu comme lui, je ne me pose la question que pour moi-même. J'ai quand même l'impression qu'il y a toujours pas mal d'innovation en musique, beaucoup de collaborations aussi. Ce qui est plus difficile à observer dans la musique actuelle, en fait, c'est un arrière-plan révolutionnaire. Je crois que nous nous sommes habitués à l'idée que l'avant-garde soit la voix d'un changement massif. Beethoven, par exemple, voulait écrire une symphonie pour Napoléon, puis il changea ensuite d'avis, car il réalisa que Bonaparte n'était qu'un tyran comme les autres. L'idée, c'était qu'un changement politique dans le monde réel devait nécessairement s'accompagner de nouvelles formes artistiques. Cela était lié à l'émergence de l'idéologie révolutionnaire en Europe. Les révolutions artistiques, pour moi, suivent les révolutions réelles. La même chose nous est arrivée pour ma génération avec l'avènement du communisme. Nous croyions vraiment en Mao Tsé Toung et nous jouions du free jazz pour accompagner la révolution communiste. Nous nous sommes aperçus plus tard qu'il n'était qu'un dirigeant totalitaire et ego-maniaque. Ce fut une impasse. Aujourd'hui, nous vivons dans un monde où il n'y a plus d'idéologie, donc il n'y a plus non plus de formes artistiques fortes pour les accompagner. Quand aujourd'hui, on vous présente ce nouvel artiste contemporain, ce nouveau film choquant, ça ne choque plus vraiment les gens. C'est complètement creux la plupart du temps. Est-ce vraiment une mauvaise chose ? Peut-être est-ce seulement la fin d'une parenthèse qui aura duré deux siècles. Après tout, l'art n'est peut-être là que pour amuser les gens, c'est à mettre au même niveau que l'artisanat ou la boulangerie. Certains font de la musique comme on fait du pain. Peut-être finalement que cette idée de l'art comme quelque chose de forcément innovant est appelée à disparaître.

Ah oui... finalement, vous avez quand même fourni une très bonne réponse à ma question ! Pour la peine, je vais être beaucoup plus terre-à-terre. Le fait d'être sur un label indie pop vous fait-il écouter beaucoup de cette musique ?

La chose qui fait que je suis chez Domino, c'est que c'est une compagnie très décente. Je ne sais pas si c'est le cas de la branche française, mais je peux le dire sans problème au sujet de la maison-mère en Angleterre. Si j'ai été présenté à ces gens, c'est parce que déjà, j'étais chez Rough Trade avant. Je sens chez Domino la volonté d'investir dans des musiques assez difficiles. Il y a un vrai soutien pour les artistes d'avant-garde. Maintenant, ce n'est qu'un label. Ce qui nous lie tous les deux, c'est que nous voulons manger. D'accord, je ne suis pas si vorace que cela, mais il ne faut pas croire que notre relation est romantique. Il s'agit au moins de gagner de quoi vivre. Mais nous nous sommes toujours très bien entendus et c'est comme cela que j'ai fait mon pas dans le mouvement indie anglais.

Qu'écoutez-vous en ce moment ?

Le disque reflète assez bien le genre de musiques que j'ai écoutées ces derniers temps. Ma discothèque me semble commencer dans les années 1940 puis aller jusqu'en 1950 et revenir en arrière dans les années 1940 à nouveau, et ainsi de suite, comme un cycle.
J'écoute beaucoup de musique datant environ de 1945. Pour la reprise de « Laura », j'ai re-regardé le film d'Otto Preminger. Je trouve cela intéressant de regarder le passé. Le futur, ce n'est rien du tout. Par contre, le passé, lui est en constant changement. Je vais faire une analogie. Si vous grimpez sur

« GÉNÉRALEMENT, QUAND ON PENSE AU JAZZ, ON PENSE À L'IMPROVISATION, AU MOMENTUM, À LA PERFORMANCE ELLE-MÊME. LE FAIT EST QU'IL S'AGIT AVANT TOUTE CHOSE DE PIÈCES MUSICALES ASSEZ TERRIBLES, UTILISANT DES FRÉQUENCES, DES HARMONIES QUE L'ON N'ENTEND PAS DANS D'AUTRES STYLES DE MUSIQUE. EN UTILISANT UN QUATUOR À CORDES POUR JOUER DU JAZZ, ON PEUT ABOUTIR À DES CHOSES SAISISSANTES »

une montagne, il n'y a absolument rien au sommet, ce que vous voyez, c'est une ligne d'horizon qui ne change pas, ce n'est pas très intéressant. Ce qui change, en revanche, c'est la façon dont vous voyez le passé. Vous commencez à grimper et au bout de quelques centaines de mètres, vous voyez l'endroit d'où vous venez et il vous semble complètement différent. Si vous grimpez encore, vous aurez de nouveau une vue différente, plus large. Du coup, je ne suis pas d'accord avec l'idée que le changement n'est que le privilège de la jeunesse. Je crois au contraire que l'expérience est ce sur quoi nous pouvons nous appuyer pour changer. C'est pour cela que ce nouvel album traite de la nostalgie, en tant qu'élément positif. Devenir vieux, c'est quelque chose que j'apprécie, en fait. Bon, cela étant dit, j'écoute quand même pas mal de choses récentes, mais toujours en lien avec les gens avec lesquels je travaille. Ces derniers temps, par exemple, j'écoute Monica Vasconcelos, une chanteuse brésilienne avec laquelle j'ai travaillé et Sarah Gillespie, que Gilad vient de produire. Sinon, je ne suis pas obligé de suivre la musique qui se joue en ce moment. Je ne suis pas chroniqueur comme vous et personne ne m'oblige à écrire dessus.

Que va-t-il se passer ensuite pour vous ?

Sur le plan discographique, rien n'est prévu. Je ne me sens pas obligé de faire de nouveaux disques. Je considère mes disques comme des enfants. Si j'en ai quatre ou cinq, je peux encore les élever correctement, faire que l'on soit fier d'eux, mais si j'en ai une centaine, cela va être plus difficile. Je veux donner le maximum sur chaque album pour ne rien regretter ensuite. Maintenant, je sais que je vais continuer à faire des disques. Je suis vivant et cela va plutôt bien. Cela prendra juste le temps qu'il faut. Ma devise, c'est « Bop'till you drop » [swinguer jusqu'à en crever]. Un point commun entre moi et le free jazz, c'est que ma vie est complètement improvisée. En fait, je ne sais pas ce que je vais faire cette après-midi.

Bon, je vais vous laisser y réfléchir, alors...

Oh, non, je vais le faire d'abord, et j'y réfléchirai ensuite.

Yann Giraud

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Spectres lumineux - Les inrockuptibles - N° 779 - du 3 au 9 novembre 2010



SPECTRES LUMINEUX

Accompagné d'hommes libres, Robert Wyatt enchante en reprenant des classiques de tous temps et de toutes origines. Où il a le courage, malgré tout, de chanter What a Wonderful World.

On est loin de la version foutage de gueule vomie par Nick Cave et Shane MacGowan. Ou de l'esprit grinçant de Michael Moore qui l'étale sur des images de guerre dans *Bowling for Columbine*. *Quand Robert Wyatt reprend le tube de Louis Armstrong* What a Wonderful World, *c'est bête, mais on a envie d'y croire. On a l'espoir insensé de retrouver l'enchantement originel du monde rien qu'en scrutant le bleu du ciel et la verdoyante parure des arbres. Oublions le vagissement des bébés... Et quel interprète mieux désigné pour rénover ce standard passé par toutes les intonations, de la plus sarcastique à la plus niaise, qu'un homme de 65 ans qui vient d'en passer trente-sept cloué dans un fauteuil roulant? Quel messager plus crédible pour porter un optimisme si peu conforme à l'air du temps, si peu raccord avec l'actualité que cet éternel enfant au regard tendre et malicieux, à la voix aérienne, à l'idéalisme politique demandant encore l'impossible?*

"C'est sans doute la chose la plus barrée que j'aie jamais eu à faire. Je ne pratique pas l'ironie ou le cynisme dans mes chansons. Je ne sais pas faire ça. Je suis conscient à quel point les choses vont mal aujourd'hui, combien il est difficile d être optimiste au pian politique, combien l'espoir tend à se dissoudre en beaucoup d'entre nous. A quoi ai-je pensé en enregistrant What a Wonderful World *pour que ça sonne vrai ? Ça va vous paraître idiot mais à des choses aussi simples qu'au sourire d'un enfant, à des amoureux qui se promènent dans le parc..."*



Il y a quinze ans, Robert Wyatt a fait une grave dépression qui a failli le faire chavirer définitivement. II a dû arrêter l'alcool, non sans mal, non sans regrets, et il entend

depuis, tout en s'excusant du cliché, "*regarder le bon côté des choses*". Son idée du bonheur se résume à ça ; être chez lui, avec sa femme Alfie et quelques amis, à écouter de vieux disques. A "*savourer les fantômes*", comme il dit... Son *What a Wonderful World* clôt un album savoureux et inclassable : *For the Ghosts within'*.

Allez, ces fantômes de l'intérieur n'ont pas l'air bien méchants. Ils défilent devant nous comme une chenille de vieilles chansons qui ont traversé le mur des époques. Outre *Wonderful World*, Wyatt y reprend des standards de l'ère du 78t comme *Lush Life*, *What's New?*, *Laura*, des rengaines ouvre-boîtes pour concentré de nostalgie. Il siffle sur le *Round Midnight* de Thelonious Monk. Relance la carrière de *Maryan*, parmi ses plus belles créations. Rafraîchit ce *At Last I'm Free* de Chic, enregistré une première fois en 1982, avec cette sincérité fragile s'éternisant en lui.



C'est là presque un exercice de style tardif, l'album d'un crooner assis se révélant dans la douceur de l'automne. Une idée pas si folle pour l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine, figure décalée de la scène rock qui a créé sa propre niche où accoucher d'une portée d'albums sans concession, populaires et progressifs. Et même assez conforme à son goût pour la romance pur sucre - entrevue avec cette reprise d'*Insensatez* d'Antonio Carlos Jobim sur son avant-dernier album *Cuckooland* - ou pour la voix soyeuse de Nat King Cole, son chanteur préféré.

Il est accompagné ici par les cordes du Sigamos String Quartet, qu'emmène la violoniste Ros Stephen, et par les anches du jazzman Gilad Atzmon, les deux initiateurs de ce projet dont Robert n'est que l'invité de marque. Un étrange trio pour un projet bien à part, ni vraiment jazz, ni tout à fait pop, un peu classique et même hip-hop. Stephen a cousu des arrangements d'une rare élégance qui habillent de neuf le romantisme un peu suranné des thèmes. Tandis qu'avec sa clarinette et son saxophone Atzmon en orientalise certains, en "parkerise" d'autres. Amis, Atzmon et Wyatt collaborent régulièrement. Militant antisioniste

exilé à Londres et blacklisté par le gouvernement israélien, Atzmon déloge de ce nouveau projet des intentions par trop passéistes en y introduisant des sonorités electro et en invitant sur un morceau deux rappeurs palestiniens de Ramallah. Juste assez pour doter l'ensemble d'un contre-champ, de rendre son anachronisme assumé pertinent dans un contexte de désastre régional aux résonnances planétaires.

Une manière de dire que la musique ne se divise plus aujourd'hui. Que les peuples feraient peut-être bien d'en faire autant. Qu'"*il y a dans de vieilles chansons assez de beauté pour conjurer un peu du malheur ambiant*", dit Robert Wyatt. Assez pour témoigner que le monde peut être vraiment *wonderful*.

Francis Dordor
Photo Renaud Monfourny.



Album Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen *For the Ghosts within'* (Domino/Pias)
www.dominorecords.com

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Robert Wyatt - Démons et vermeil - Libération - 6 et 7 novembre 2010

Robert Wyatt
Démons et vermeil



A l'occasion de la sortie de «For the Ghosts Within», son 13e album, l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine, paraplégique depuis 1973, fait le point pour «Libé» sur un moment contrasté de sa carrière

Par SOPHIAN FANEN Envoyé spécial à Louth, Angleterre

Comme d'habitude lorsqu'il ne fait pas trop froid, la porte de la maison en brique sombre est ouverte sur la rue. Pas besoin de frapper, Robert Wyatt nous a vu arriver et nous attend, clope au bec et tasse de thé à la main, pour discuter de son très beau mais déconcertant nouvel album, *For the Ghosts Within*. Un vieux jazz file dans la pièce où le soleil pénètre dès que les nuages lui laissent un peu d'espace. Une trompette et un cornet dorment au pied d'un piano demi-queue. Une casserole, des fûts bizarres, des tuyaux en plastique colorés et un keffieh pendent devant la cheminée. Les autres murs sont occupés par des tables de mixage fatiguées et une collection de disques.

C'est dans cette maison de Louth, une bourgade isolée du Lincolnshire, à l'est de Sheffield, en Angleterre, que le barbu paraplégique travaille depuis plus de vingt ans, après que sa femme, Alfreda, et lui se sont convaincus que «*Londres n'était plus fait pour [eux]*». Et surtout pas pour le fauteuil roulant dans lequel Robert Wyatt est coincé depuis 1973, le dos broyé après une chute du quatrième étage, un soir de beuverie en compagnie des principaux acteurs de la scène rock psychédélique britannique de l'époque.

La première vie de Robert Wyatt, qui s'était lancé en solo en 1970 avant d'être viré de Soft Machine l'année suivante, s'achève là. La remise en cause musicale qu'il avait alors déjà entreprise a dû changer de forme : abandonner la batterie pour la trompette, le piano et une poésie pop aux ambiances aquatiques nourries de free jazz. Depuis, avec l'aide de la précieuse Alfie, qui écrit certaines paroles et dessine les pochettes des disques, Robert Wyatt construit à l'écart de l'agitation une discographie qui n'appartient qu'à lui. Un monde sonore endémique.

Jazz et chahut électronique

Agé de 65 ans, le chanteur revient en cette fin d'année avec ce treizième album en trompe-l'œil où lui-même se considère comme «*un invité*». «*L'idée de départ n'est pas de moi*, embraye-t-il en nous apportant une tasse de café, *mais de Gilad Atzmon [saxophoniste] et de Ros Stephen [violoniste]. Ils ont sorti, il y a quelque temps, un disque inspiré des morceaux que Charlie Parker a enregistrés avec un petit orchestre de cordes. Ils voulaient continuer dans cette tonalité et m'ont demandé d'en être la voix et d'en choisir les chansons.*» Ce nouveau disque est donc un «*Robert Wyatt with strings*», qui juxtapose un ancien morceau réorchestré (*Maryan*), trois compositions originales et des reprises de standards jazz (*Laura*, thème du film de Preminger du même nom ; *Lush Life*, popularisé par Nat King Cole ; les éternels *'Round Midnight* et *In A Sentimental Mood*, puis le non moins célèbre *What A Wonderful World* en guise de fermeture). Les nouveaux titres sont signés Atzmon, Stephen, Benge (le nom d'Alfreda)… mais pas Wyatt. Même chose pour la musique faite de cordes et de bois au classicisme jazz chahuté par des astuces électroniques et des boîtes à rythmes, où il n'apparaît que furtivement à la trompette.

Une panne d'inspiration ? Robert Wyatt allume une énième cigarette et s'agite dans la pièce. De temps en temps, il ouvre le piano pour illustrer ses propos de quelques accords, ou caresse sa barbe d'un gris-blanc qui semble ne plus devoir bouger. «*J'ai arrêté de boire depuis deux ans grâce aux Alcooliques anonymes*, lâche-t-il enfin. *J'apprécie de me réveiller avec l'esprit clair le matin. Mais la folie me manque… Oui, la folie me manque*.» Une façon pieuse de dire qu'il n'a pas achevé une chanson depuis qu'il est «clean», comme nous l'apprendra plus tard Alfie en nous raccompagnant à la gare, le regard préoccupé. «*J'espère que Robert sortira un nouvel album avant notre mort, dira-t-elle. Il a encore beaucoup de musique dans la tête, mais ça ne sort plus comme avant.*»

For the Ghosts Within nous apparaît tout d'un coup comme la dernière phase d'une thérapie, et pas la plus facile : rééduquer une vie de musicien en se reposant sur des chansons familières. Chacune avec sa petite histoire qui a touché Robert Wyatt à une époque de sa vie. «Lush Life *est l'une des plus belles chansons d'amour jamais écrites. Surtout, c'est une chanson d'amour homosexuel à une époque où il était très difficile pour les gays de vivre tranquillement. Je trouve qu'elle y gagne une profondeur supplémentaire.*» Et ce *What A Wonderful World* un peu caricatural ? «*J'ai mis cette chanson dans le disque parce qu'elle compte beaucoup. Je n'aurais pas pu chanter un texte comme ça il y a vingt ans. J'ai plongé dans la dépression dans les années 90, et je ne m'en suis sorti qu'en acceptant l'idée qu'il y a toujours quelque chose à aimer même si tout va mal aux infos.*» De la fenêtre de sa salle de musique, qui donne sur la rue, à deux pas des commerces et du marché, Robert Wyatt raconte avoir «*vu passer des enfants, devenus des adolescents qui rentrent saouls, puis de jeunes hommes qui vont au travail et aujourd'hui des pères qui emmènent leurs enfants à l'école. C'est quelque chose de merveilleux à regarder*».

Rêver reste le quotidien de Robert Wyatt, qui dit «*jouer de la trompette tous les jours*», et arpente le reste du temps cette maison dont les pièces s'enfilent jusqu'à un petit jardin où les plantes poussent comme bon leur semble. Il ne quitte Louth que de temps en temps, pour enregistrer ou se faire soigner à Londres, parfois pour aller voir des amis à Edimbourg. Il ne fréquente «*presque plus*» les concerts et refuse toujours de remonter sur scène. Mais il continue à chanter comme un ange. Sur ce nouveau disque, sa voix naguère cristalline et proche du registre de haute-contre, se fait encore un peu plus basse et instable. Des imperfections qui l'enrichissent en sensations contradictoires et évoquent les derniers enregistrements de Billie Holiday, dans lesquels elle se montrait d'une fragilité effrayante. «*C'est la période que je préfère chez elle. C'est du blues pur. Ces disques ont été rejetés pendant longtemps, mais je pense qu'on les comprend enfin aujourd'hui parce qu'on vit dans un monde post-rock'n'roll où la technique n'est plus un critère. C'est vrai, Billie Holiday ne chantait plus aussi parfaitement, mais elle chantait de façon plus touchante.*»



Photo Michael Grieve

«Antiraciste et xénophile»

Dans ce registre, le titre le plus poignant de *For the Ghosts Within* est *Lullaby For Irena*, dont les paroles, écrites par Alfie, sont dédiées à sa mère récemment disparue. Après les chansons d'amour, la politique arrive sur la table. Comme dans tous les disques de Robert Wyatt depuis *Cuckooland* en 2003, deux des compositions originales de ce nouvel album (le morceau titre et *Where Are They Now?*, qui invite la rappeuse britannique Shadia Mansour) évoquent directement le conflit israélo-palestinien.

Le trompettiste, qui fut membre du Parti communiste et se présente comme «*antiraciste et xénophile*», se passionne pour ce combat, encore alimenté par le militantisme de Gilad Atzmon, né israélien et soldat lors de l'invasion du Liban, avant de devenir britannique et critique du «*colonialisme sioniste*». A son contact, Robert Wyatt a sensiblement durci son discours propalestinien. *«La politique que mène Israël en ce moment est un nettoyage ethnique*, dit-il. *J'appelle les colons des "sionazis", parce qu'en liant toute critique envers eux à une remise en cause de l'Holocauste, ils amènent l'Occident à nier ce qui se passe réellement en Palestine.*»

Dans son cheminement très personnel, *For the Ghosts Within* finit par devenir bien plus qu'un bel album. C'est un disque d'étape majeur pour Robert Wyatt, celui où sa femme et ses amis le poussent à trouver une nouvelle façon d'être, de créer et d'enregistrer après des années accrochées à l'alcool. Ses envies de musique sont intactes, et il n'est pas permis de douter que ce disque l'aidera à profiter de sa nouvelle liberté.

«Quartet for the Ghosts» de Robert Wyatt, Gilad Atzmon, Ros Stephen and the Sigamos String Within (Domino/Pias).

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Rock Bottom, l'espace du dedans par Robert Wyatt - Gonzaï N° 333 - 13 août 2010 / Rock Bottom - Parlhot.com



Le 1er juin 1973, le farfadet de Soft Machine et Matching Mole fait une chute de quatre étages qui le laisse paraplégique ad vitam. Désormais il sera Robert Wyatt ou personne. Quelques semaines auparavant, il a fait la connaissance d'Alfie, sa compagne et muse aquatique, puis égrener les compositions de l'album à venir, « Rock Bottom », sur les bords de Venise. Trente cinq ans plus tard, Wyatt explique à Gonzaï la genèse de cette rupture historique.

Tout ça remonte à loin, près de 30 ans, et la mémoire n'est pas infaillible, c'est en partie quelque chose que nous construisons. Je ne peux donc être sûr que ce que je dis là est conforme aux choses telles qu'elles se sont passées.

A ma sortie d'hôpital j'essayais juste de mettre en forme les idées que j'avais accumulées durant ce séjour. J'avais passé presqu'un an sans autre chose à faire que rester au lit et écouter ce qui se passait dans ma tête. Au bout d'un moment j'avais fini par visualiser un ensemble. Ça devait représenter quarante minutes de musique. Je ne pouvais pas retenir plus. Je m'étais dit que ça pourrait faire un album. J'étais donc content de pouvoir me remettre au travail. Mon ambition était des plus modestes : trouver le moyen de continuer à faire de la musique alors que je ne pouvais plus être batteur.

A l'hôpital, dès que j'avais repris conscience, je l'avais dit aux musiciens « Je crois que vais rester là un moment. Je ne vais pas pouvoir continuer Matching Mole. » La vie de groupe, les tournées, tout ça pour moi c'était fini. En un sens c'était libérateur, mais c'était une liberté effrayante. Sans les musiciens de talent qui m'avaient accompagné, je n'étais pas sûr de pouvoir refaire un disque.

J'avais toujours fait partie d'un groupe. A mes débuts, dans les années 60, avec un groupe local, nous reprenions des standards de pop, de country et de rythm'n'blues pour faire danser les gens dans les bars. J'essayais de chanter ça en y mettant ma patte. Des mecs



comme Joe Cocker et Rod Stewart excellaient à ce jeu-là. S'approprier l'accent américain et les voix viriles de Sam Cook et de Ray Charles, c'était vraiment leur truc. Moi pas. J'avais un timbre trop androgyne et j'aimais trop les voix de femmes comme celles de Dionne Warwick et du label Motown. Il fallait que je trouve ma propre façon de chanter et de faire de la musique.

Les aléas de ma vie m'ont poussé dans ce sens. Aujourd'hui ma musique n'est ni rock ni vraiment jazz et j'utilise ma voix comme un instrument. Ça ne veut pas dire que la voix est un instrument comme les autres. La voix n'est pas un instrument comme les autres. C'est un instrument plus limité que les autres, mais c'est le seul que tout le monde entende et que tout le monde sache jouer. A notre naissance, via notre mère, c'est même notre contact privilégié avec le monde. Tout ça en fait un instrument spécifique, qui implique certaines attentes et certaines responsabilités.

Je ne me suis jamais considéré comme un chanteur mais peu de temps avant mon accident, j'avais commencé à développer ma propre idée de ce que je devais chanter. Ça impliquait que je me mette au clavier et que je me considère comme un compositeur-arrangeur malgré mes maigres compétences techniques. Avant de faire éventuellement appel à d'autres musiciens, je devais pouvoir retranscrire seul les atmosphères que j'avais en tête.

A l'époque je m'étais remis à composer, je travaillais sur le matériel censé nourrir le troisième album de Matching Mole, j'avais des bouts, des liens entre les morceaux. Je fréquentais Alfie depuis peu. Elle me disait qu'elle aimait ce que je jouais depuis dix ans, mais qu'elle trouvait ça trop dense, trop crispé. Pour elle, j'avais tout à gagner à ralentir le tempo, simplifier les structures. Aller vers l'espace, vers la lumière. Elle m'avait offert un petit clavier. C'est la base du son de Rock Bottom. De mon côté, je m'étais lancé dans des improvisations vocales avec des amis comme Gary Windo. Ce genre de chant se retrouve sur le disque.

Peu importe ce qui a été fait avant ou après l'accident. Peu importe que je sois en train de jouer du clavier à Venise auprès d'Alfie ou cloué sur mon lit d'hôpital à réfléchir et rêver.

L'album se situe sur un autre plan. Je ne dis pas que l'accident n'y est pour rien. En un sens, j'ai eu de la chance d'être allé à l'hôpital. Pendant près d'un an je n'avais eu aucune responsabilité. Je n'avais pas eu à chercher de travail, à me faire à manger, à payer de loyer. Ne pouvant plus marcher, je n'avais rien d'autre à faire qu'à rester au lit et écouter ce qui se passait dans ma tête. Curieusement, il y avait un piano dans la salle des visites. Elle était constamment vide parce qu'en toute logique les visiteurs restaient dans la chambre de leurs proches. Mais c'est là que j'ai composé tous les passages de piano de Rock Bottom. Les paroles, elles, ont autant été écrites avant qu'après l'accident. Elles n'en découlent pas. Souvent les mots n'y ont d'ailleurs aucun sens précis. Je me suis juste projeté dans l'espace que j'avais en tête, j'ai chanté et c'est ce qui est sorti.



T.S. Eliot a dit une belle chose. Il a dit que ses lecteurs comprennent sans doute mieux ses poèmes que lui-même. Je vois très bien ce qu'il veut dire : quand j'écoute de la musique, par exemple celle de Duke Ellington ou de Charles Mingus, je sais parfaitement ce qu'elle signifie pour moi, mais je n'ai aucun moyen de dire si c'est ce que le type avait en tête. Ce que l'artiste vise et ce que les gens voient dans son œuvre sont deux choses différentes. De toute façon je ne crois pas que la musique parle de tristesse ou de bonheur, de soleil ou de ciel gris. C'est comme se dire « De quoi parle une fleur ? » Penser la musique en ces termes peut donc détourner de sa vraie nature, de ce qu'elle a à offrir. Je pense que ma musique échappe à ces critères météorologiques simplistes. Nos états d'âmes aussi. Ils sont plus complexes. Alors bien sûr, parfois ils se radicalisent, c'est notamment le cas lorsque nous sommes déprimés. Mais moi, quand je le suis je n'arrive à rien. Si je finis un morceau et qu'il se retrouve sur disque, ça veut donc dire que je me sentais plutôt bien quand je l'ai écrit et confiant quand je suis sorti de studio.

Une fois que j'ai eu toute la matière – six morceaux et pas un de plus si mes souvenirs sont bons – j'ai voulu accueillir d'autres couleurs.

Sur certains morceaux je ne me sentais par exemple pas capable de jouer telles parties de basse, et encore moins de la trompette. Et, autant sur certains morceaux je pouvais me contenter de mes propres percussions, autant sur d'autres je voyais bien que j'avais besoin d'un autre batteur. Pendant l'enregistrement, j'ai donc fait appel à des musiciens en fonction des besoins spécifiques de chaque chanson. C'était la bonne méthode de travail. J'ai tour à tour sollicité les services de Gary Windo à la clarinette et au sax ténor, de Montgezi Feza aux trompettes, d'Hugh Hopper et de Richard Sinclair à la basse et de Laurie Allan à la batterie. D'autres contributions sont plus accidentelles, notamment celle Mike Oldfield et d'Ivor Cutler.

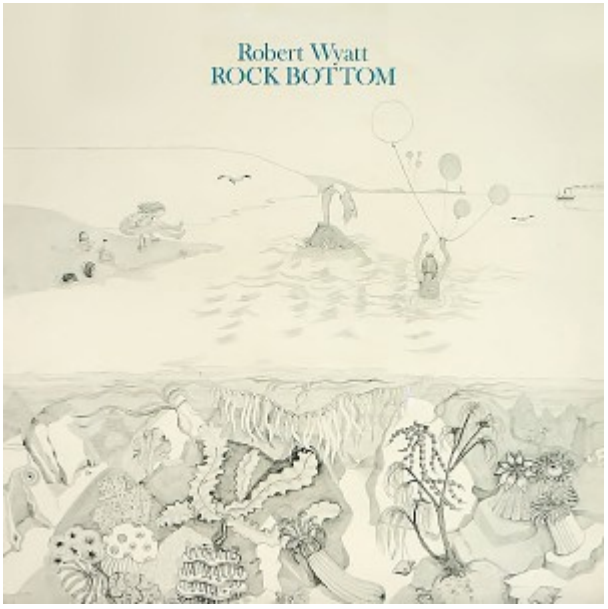
Pendant la fin de l'enregistrement – qui a surtout eu lieu au studio The Manor de Richard Branson – Mike Oldfield était souvent là. Le gros son à base de guitares et de claviers de la dernière partie du disque, c'est son idée. Je n'y avais pas pensé car je ne suis pas porté sur instruments électriques, je préfère les acoustiques. C'est en partie pour ça que j'écoute peu de rock. Aujourd'hui je n'écoute quasiment pas de musique chantée.

Le chant qu'on entend sur le dernier morceau du disque est d'Ivor Cutler, un poète écossais qui venait nous voir jouer presque tous les week-ends du temps de Matching Mole, et qui montait souvent sur scène pour réciter ses poèmes sur fond d'harmonium. Sa participation à Rock Bottom est un hasard. Il avait une voix très particulière. Je ne m'étais pas préoccupé de savoir si la mienne convenait au texte que j'avais écris, je lui ai demandé de le lire et comme ça rendait bien j'ai laissé sa voix. Du coup je n'y chante rien, mais ce n'est pas grave. Je me fichais que ce soit ma voix ou pas, je voulais juste retrouver le son que j'avais en tête. Le transport. Je ne pense pas m'en être éloigné. Enfin je dis ça, je n'ai vraiment su ce qui m'habitait que le jour où j'ai commencé l'enregistrement avec les musiciens.

Il y a environ deux ans sur son album intitulé The Bairns, le groupe folk de Rachel Unthank, The Winterset, a repris Sea Song. Leur version est plus sobre que la mienne, mais très belle. Quand je l'ai entendue je me suis souvenu que c'était plus ça que j'avais initialement en tête. Le solo de la pianiste est vraiment très proche de ce que je souhaitais atteindre. Le mien est complètement parti ailleurs une fois que je l'ai enregistré. L'improvisation vocale de la fin, les sons bizarres, la production de Nick Mason, tout ça s'est rajouté en studio, mais si Rock Bottom avait dû être un vrai album solo, Sea Song aurait plutôt sonné comme ce qu'en a fait Rachel Unthank.

Sea Song est la première plage de Rock Bottom.

A l'époque de sa sortie Alfie l'ignorait ; elle ne savait même pas que Sea Song parlait d'elle. Elle pensait que ça parlait de choses plus abstraites. En un sens c'était vrai, mais c'était surtout une description d'elle et de ce que ça signifie de vivre avec une femme. C'est un immense privilège. Leur sang est lié avec la lune et la mer. Comme elles, elles ont des cycles qui les affectent. Ce n'est pas un scoop de le dire. D'ailleurs beaucoup de clichés ont déjà été écrits à ce sujet. Mais Sea Song en remettait une couche ! Tout ça pour dire que ce n'est pas parce qu'on aime quelqu'un au point de former cet animal qu'on appelle « un couple » qu'on sait tout de lui. Notre partenaire peut traverser des choses dont on n'a pas idée, ne serait-ce parce qu'elle a son propre espace, ses pensées. C'est quelque chose qu'il ne faut pas l'oublier.



Pour la pochette de Rock Bottom, Alfie – qui réalise seule l'artwork de mes disques – voulait quelque chose de sobre pour prendre le contre-pied de tous ces disques psychédéliques et colorés qui envahissaient les bacs à l'époque. Elle s'était mise en tête de faire une image nostalgique, évoquer ces souvenirs issus de l'enfance qui incarnent une certaine conception du bonheur, de l'innocence, ce genre de choses archaïques qui restent dans l'inconscient collectif. Le dessin du Steam Ship en est une par exemple. C'est un gros bateau à vapeur, ça ne se fait plus aujourd'hui.

Alfie a eu l'idée de deux enfants qui jouent sur la plage, d'une fille et d'un garçon qui passent un moment comme ça, isolés.

Elle a aussi dessiné des reproductions de dessins de flore sous-marine. Elle avait trouvé ça dans de vieux livres de sciences naturelles. C'était des ouvrages datant des débuts de la révolution industrielle. Ils parlaient d'un monde où la nature avait plus de place dans la vie des gens, où la photographie n'existait pas encore. Ils montraient donc de beaux dessins d'oiseaux, d'arbres, de plantes. On en achetait plein. Surtout ceux qui parlaient de découverte de la vie sous-marine. Les gens rêvent souvent de voyage dans l'espace, de rencontres extraterrestres, mais en un sens pour nous cette vie sous-marine a toujours été plus fascinante. Cette autre forme de vie, on est sûr qu'elle existe. Au fond des mers de notre planète vivent vraiment des êtres qui n'ont plus rien de commun avec les poissons et tous les autres animaux que nous connaissons. On ne peut juste pas la voir ! Enfin maintenant on peut car nos instruments ont atteint ces zones de pressions mortelles et

ramener des photos, mais ça reste du domaine de l'incroyable.

Cette vie sous-marine m'a toujours évoqué ces autres mondes qu'on a en tête et qui resurgissent parfois lorsqu'on crée. Ce n'est qu'une métaphore mais la vie vient des océans. Nous sommes que des créatures aquatiques qui tentent de vivre sur terre. Je crois que c'est ce genre de livres qui m'a donné l'idée d'appeler ce disque Rock Bottom.

Je ne pensais pas que cet album aurait un public. Quand je l'ai fini, comme à chaque fois que je fini un disque, je me suis dit « ça y est, la source s'est tarie, je suis cuit ». J'étais donc heureux que les gens l'aiment. En France, on m'a même décerné un prix spécial, le Prix Charles Cros que je suis allé recevoir à Paris. Ça m'a réconforté de voir qu'on acceptait ma nouvelle façon de travailler.

Un jour, des années après sa sortie, Rock Bottom a été réédité. Alfie a alors pensé que l'artwork n'était plus en phase avec l'époque. Elle a eu une nouvelle idée. Elle a fait une peinture très colorée qui met l'accent sur les enfants qu'on voyait dans l'arrière plan de la première pochette. Je crois que l'idée lui a inconsciemment été soufflée par la révélation du sens de Sea Song. Quelque part, cette femme et cet homme qui rejoignent la flore sous-marine, c'est nous.

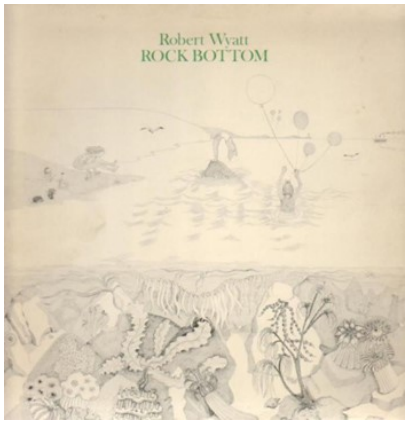
Propos recueillis par Sylvain Fesson, avec l'aide de Bertrand Burgalat
Illustration: Colocho

>> **L'interview sur le site de Gonzaï**

Lire ci-après la version intégrale de cet interview mise en ligne quelques mois plus tôt (le 17 novembre 2009) sur le site parlhot.com.

PARLHOT
L'INTERVIEW ROCK !

ROCK BOTTOM



17 novembre 2009. 17h. Paris 19e. « *Hello Mr. Wyatt !* » m'entends-je dire pour la troisième fois de ma vie. Non pas que je m'apprête à interviewer Robert Ellidge, vrai nom de Robert Wyatt, pour la troisième fois de ma vie, c'est la première et ce sera sans nul doute la seule, mais on s'est déjà eu deux fois au tel, le 12 novembre pour l'informer de ma demande, et le lendemain, vendredi 13, pour faire l'interview sauf que j'ai merdé. Au dernier moment, mon plan ligne fixe non surtaxée à l'étranger a sauté, et j'ai dû lui poser un lapin, à Wyatt, la honte. Et demander qu'on reporte. Parce que voilà, moi j'aurais préféré être là à me prélasser dans un train filant, comme immobile, vers l'âtre de « *Mr. Wyatt* ». Je voyais déjà les plaines de son Lincolnshire osciller dans la fenêtre de mon compartiment comme du vin dans un verre et ma joue ventousée tout contre, des feuilles griffonnées sur mes genoux, le sommeil pas loin, comme un rêve. Oui, j'aurais traversé cette campagne de la côte est anglaise, vu ces plaines que j'imagine comme celles qu'on voit dans le « Faust Arp » version Scotch Mist de Radiohead. J'aurais pu frapper à sa porte et dire : « *Hello Mr. Wyatt !* »

Ç'aurait été quelque chose. Ç'aurait été une quête. Wyatt chez lui me parlant de sa vie, de son oeuvre. On aurait eu le temps, tout le temps, comme hors du temps. Ambiance Père Castor, Chem-cheminée, Winnie l'Ourson présenté par Jean Rochefort. J'avais bien noté son adresse (je l'ai encore dans l'agenda de l'époque, j'attends vos propositions), j'avais regardé l'itinéraire, les trains. Je me voyais déjà raconter tout ça comme assis dans l'histoire. Je m'en faisais une joie. Mais non, le voyage n'avait pas pu se faire. Résultat : j'étais stress, stress, speed : il me fallait ce truc en plus : ce foutu fixe.

J'en avais finalement trouvé un. Thomas Ducres de Gonzai avait bien voulu me prêter le sien. La moindre des choses : c'est pour le premier et unique numéro de sa revue digitale Luxe Intérieur, autrement dit peanuts, que j'allais longuement interviewer « *Mr. Wyatt* ». J'allais donc chez Thomas. Et comme d'hab', j'étais en retard. C'avait été le parcours du combattant dans les couloirs du métro. Du coup, le corps tout entier tendu par la pulsion fasciste de rejoindre mon destin, flèche aveuglée par sa cible, j'avais voulu flinguer tous les gens de boue sur mon chemin. « Je suis vivant et vous êtes mort ! ».

Ça ne se serait pas passé comme ça si j'avais été jusqu'à lui. Extrait de la fourmilière sururbaine, je n'aurais pas été le même. Le temps se serait écoulé différemment, compote de pommes, matching mole. Et de visu, par sa présence et son humour (et peut-être un verre et une clope), Wyatt aurait su me mettre à l'aise comme il l'avait fait lors de notre premier échange. On ne se souvenait plus du décalage horaire entre le Royaume-Uni et la France et comme dans mon agitation j'avais galéré à trouver ça sur le net, il avait blagué : « *Les anglais sont stupides d'avoir changé d'heure, désolé, moi je n'y suis pour rien !* ».

D'ailleurs là au tel il ne fait pas autre chose : il calme le paranoïd jeune homme lancé dans ses folles espérances. J'arrive en lui demandant d'emblée de combien de temps on dipose pour l'entretien, il me dit qu'il voudra pouvoir sortir avant qu'il fasse complétement nuit, et comme dans ma peur de manquer je ne saisis pas l'idée (« *Hakuna Matata, on a le temps* »), je m'exclame d'un stupide stress d'esprit : « *Très bien, vous me direz donc quand il se mettra à faire nuit chez vous !* ». H(on)ey man, slow down. Il clarifie donc la donne : « *Pose-moi simplement tes questions et je vais essayer d'y répondre.* »

« Rock Bottom est sur un plan qui a peu à voir avec mon accident »



Bonjour Monsieur Wyatt. Une remarque pour commencer. Connaissez-vous l'écrivain et critique rock américain Greil Marcus ?

Non.

En 1989, il a sorti Lipstick Traces, un livre-somme très érudit qui se présente comme une « histoire secrète du vingtième siècle » où il fait le lien – c'est en quelque sorte sa thèse – entre le mouvement dada et le mouvement punk. Et au début de ce livre il parle d'une vieille chanson intitulée « I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground ». Avez-vous entendu parler de cette chanson ?

Non.

Elle aurait été écrite en 1924 par Bascom Lamar Lunsford, un avocat de 42 ans originaire de Caroline du Nord. Le refrain fait : « Oh, I wish I was a mole in the ground / Yes, I wish I was a mole in the ground / Like a mole in the ground I would root that moutain down / And I wish I was a mole in the ground. » Cette histoire de taupe m'a fait penser à vous, en raison du nom de votre groupe *Matching Mole* – formé en 72 après votre départ de *Soft Machine* – mais surtout parce que je trouve qu'elle illustre bien votre rapport au rock : vous l'avez infiltré et modifié ce monument comme cette taupe rêve de réduire la montagne en poudre. Pour moi, vous êtes un peu une taupe du rock. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

Oh, c'est une belle image. J'aime bien cette idée. Mais il est difficile de qualifier ma musique de rock, n'est-ce pas ?

Oui.

Mais faisons comme ci c'en était, ça me va. Hé bien disons que ma vie m'a poussé à inventer ma propre façon de faire de la musique. C'est ce qui est arrivé. Je veux dire, j'entends des choses dans ma tête, je n'essaie pas d'être différent, mais je n'essaie pas non plus de copier qui que ce soit, j'essaie juste de sortir les sons que j'entends dans ma tête. Certains sont très communs et certains ne le sont pas. Je suis très influencé par les

musiques que j'aime. Et je suis même plus influencé par les musiques que je n'aime pas.

Ah oui ? Par exemple ?

Oh, non, je ne te donnerai pas d'exemples (*rires*) ! Je n'aime pas dire du mal des autres en public. Par contre, je peux te dire que je ne suis pas satisfait de certaines musiques que j'ai faites, et j'en tire des leçons pour les suivantes. Mon processus de création s'en trouve d'autant plus efficace, libéré.

Quand vous dites que certaines de vos musiques ne vous satisfont pas, vous pensez à certaines choses de *The End of an Ear*, votre premier vrai disque solo paru en 70 ?

Non, pas particulièrement, je pense à tous mes disques quand j'y entends quelque chose que j'aimerais refaire. Mais souvent c'est juste des questions d'intonation, de cadence de phrases, de certains mots que j'aurais bien changés. Disons que je vois mes 10 premières années de création comme ma période d'entraînement, ma période adolescente.

Il vous arrive donc de réécouter votre propre musique ?

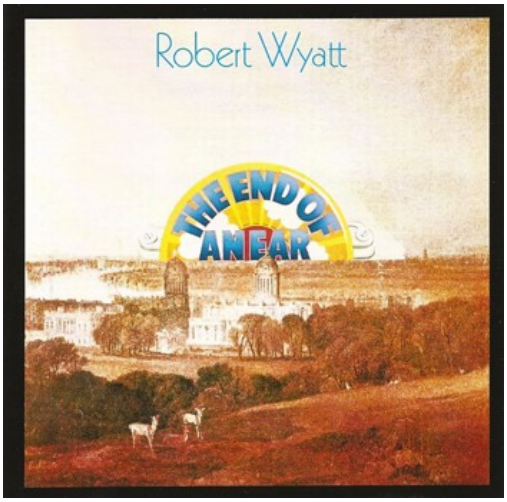
Oui, ça m'arrive, je réécoute certaines choses et parfois des choses me surprennent, que ce soit positif ou non. Mais souvent, je n'ai pas besoin de réécouter ce que j'ai déjà fait, parce que c'est dans ma tête, j'ai intégré ce que j'ai besoin de savoir de ma musique et je me sers instinctivement de ce que j'ai fait au cours d'une séance d'enregistrement pour nourrir les séances suivantes. Par exemple, j'ai souvent l'habitude de cacher la voix dans le mix, je la traite comme si c'était un instrument comme un autre. Et Alfie (Alfreda Benge, sa compagne – nda) et David Gilmour (guitariste de Pink Floyd – nda) m'ont déjà dit : « *Robert, ne cache pas ta voix, tu as une belle voix, il faut que les gens l'entendent.* » Sur mon dernier album, qui est ***Comicopera*** (sorti en 2007 – nda), j'ai donc pris soin d'isoler un peu la voix des autres instruments. Ce sont donc des choses comme ça qui me dérangent parfois à la réécoute, rien de très sorcier. Je continue d'apprendre pour être plus efficace. Toute ta vie tu ne fais qu'apprendre.

Pourquoi avoir pris l'habitude de noyer votre voix dans le mix. Vous ne l'aimez pas ?

Non, c'est juste que je ne me suis jamais vraiment considéré comme un chanteur. Je n'écoute pas trop de musique chantée. En fait, je n'écoute quasiment pas de musique chantée. J'utilise juste la voix car j'y vois un instrument. Mais à mes débuts, dans les années 60, je chantais de la pop, des morceaux de rythm'n'blues, des morceaux sudistes, et quand je les chantais j'essayais de me les approprier, d'y mettre mon style, Mais bon, j'ai toujours trouvé que les plus belles reprises étaient faites par des femmes, pas par des hommes. Par exemple, j'ai toujours préféré Dionne Warwick ou d'autres chanteuses du label Tamla Motown ou des chanteuses folk. Et comme j'ai toujours eu du mal à chanter comme chantent les hommes, j'ai arrêté d'écouter de la musique d'hommes.

C'est pourquoi votre voix a toujours plutôt sonné comme celle d'une femme ou d'un elfe ?

Oui, je suis hermaphrodite ! D'ailleurs, encore aujourd'hui, quand des gens reprennent mes chansons, ce sont les femmes qui s'en sortent le mieux. C'est le cas, comme j'ai pu l'écouter, dans l'album de reprises qui a été réalisé avec l'orchestre de Daniel Yvinec (***Around Robert Wyatt***, sorti en 2009 avec, outre la sienne, les voix de Camille, Rokia Traoré, Yaël Naïm, Daniel Darc, Arno… – nda). Mais mon sentiment, quand je compose, c'est que je suis un producteur qui produit ses propres disques et pour moi la voix est un son parmi d'autres. Et je suis assez content de certains disques où j'ai mis la voix au même rang que les autres instruments, comme c'est notamment le cas sur ***Cuckooland*** (sorti en 2003 – nda). Mais en vérité, la voix n'est pas un instrument comme les autres parce que c'est le seul instrument dont tout le monde joue et que tout le monde entend. Quand tu es bébé la voix est même ton interface privilégiée avec le monde, notamment dans le ventre de la mère. C'est donc un son qu'il nous est nécessaire d'identifier pour survivre et grandir.



Qu'est-ce qui vous a amené à cette réflexion sur la voix ?

Je ne sais plus, mais tu sais, la voix c'est comme un visage. Et de la même manière que dans une musique complexe et touffue on se raccrochera toujours au chant, hé bien dans la peinture abstraite d'un visage on sera toujours capable de reconnaître un visage parce que reconnaître un visage est aussi une des premières choses qu'on doit apprendre étant bébé : qui est maman ? qui est papa ? est-ce un étranger ? est-ce un chien ? est-ce un chien mort ? Tout ça c'est une part importe de l'apprentissage du bébé. Devant une toile abstraite, on ne voit donc pas un fatras de lignes et de différentes couleurs, on voit les correspondances avec ce qu'on a appris dans la vie. Et donc, de même que le portrait est une part cruciale de l'histoire de l'art, la voix est une part cruciale de l'histoire de la musique. Ceci dit, en un sens, la voix est un instrument très limité. Avec elle, tu ne peux pas faire ce que te permet un piano ou un violon ou une batterie, etc. Ce qui montre bien que ce n'est pas un instrument comme un autre. Il faut comprendre que c'en est un qui est très spécifique, qui implique certaines attentes et certaines responsabilités.

Vous votre voix vous a toujours singularisé car vous évoluez dans un genre musical assez complexe – le jazz – ou elle y est souvent minoritaire. On peut dire que votre voix vous a en un sens popularisé, démocratisé…

Après avoir chanté de la pop et du rythm'n'blues pour faire danser les gens au milieu des années 60, j'ai joué dans un petit groupe qui tournait dans des clubs locaux et on chantait des chansons connues, toujours pour faire danser les gens. Ce n'est qu'ensuite que j'ai commencé à faire ma propre musique en essayant d'y incorporer toutes les influences issues du jazz et des musiques modernes que j'écoutais. J'étais très influencé par la plasticité du jazz et le fait qu'il ait un pied dans la structure et l'autre dans le chaos. Certaines musiques sont tout l'un ou tout l'autre, mais j'aime cette tension entre contrôle et perte de contrôle. D'autres choses m'ont influencé dans le jazz, mais je me serai senti en porte à faux et dans la mauvaise voie si je m'étais contenté d'imiter les chanteurs de jazz. Et je n'étais pas vraiment intéressé par les chanteurs de jazz. Par exemple, encore aujourd'hui, si je veux savoir comment chanter une bonne balade, j'en apprends plus en écoutant comment John Coltrane joue ses superbes balades plutôt qu'en écoutant comment le chanteur les chante. Parfois les gens pensent que tout ça doit se chanter avec, comment dire, un accent américain, des tournures de phrases américaines, que c'est comme ça que ça sonne bien, mais rien ne t'y oblige et ça ne marchait pas vraiment pour moi. Certaines personnes font ça très bien, comme Joe Cocker qui chantait comme Ray Charles, ou Rod Stewart qui chantait comme Sam Cooke, etc. Et il n'y pas de problème, c'est très bien, mais moi j'en étais incapable, j'ai donc dû trouver ma propre voix.

Mais comment l'avez-vous donc trouvé cette voix si particulière ?

Hum, c'est une bonne question ! Je n'en ai aucune idée.

Ok. Revenons si vous le voulez bien au thème central de cet entretien : la rupture.

Oui.

Tout à l'heure je l'ai introduit en vous comparant à la taupe de la chanson « *I*

Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground **» et en disant que, comme elle, vous aviez déconstruit une montagne : le rock. Vous avez fait ça par le biais d'un album. Cet album c'est *Rock Bottom*, votre deuxième album solo. On ne compte plus les musiciens rock ou pop qu'il a influencé depuis sa sortie en 74. Ce désir de donner de nouvelles pistes au rock vous habitait-il d'une quelconque façon au moment de faire ce disque ?**

Oh, tu ne penses pas à ça quand tu fais un disque !

J**'imagine mais la question mérite quand même d'être posée !**

Mon ambition était on ne peut plus modeste, je voulais juste trouver comment continuer à faire de la musique maintenant que je n'étais plus batteur. J'essayais de donner forme à toutes les idées que j'avais accumulées sur des cassettes. Et dans un deuxième temps j'étais juste heureux d'être sorti de l'hôpital et de pouvoir à nouveau travailler.

D'un autre côté, vous aviez de l'ambition, vous vous lanciez en solo…

A ce moment-là je ne le savais pas encore, tout ça n'apparaît que rétrospectivement…

C'est vrai.

Quand j'ai fini le disque je me suis dit ça y est, nous y sommes, je n'ai plus rien, je suis fini. Car voilà, c'est tout ce que j'avais. J'avais mis tout ce que j'avais. Et c'est ce que je ressens à chaque fois que je fini un disque : « Ça y est, la source est tarit, je suis fini. » Mais quelque part, pour moi, tout ça fut libérateur. Effrayant mais libérateur. Parce que jusqu'à présent j'avais été dans des groupes, des aventures collectives, mais là je savais que je n'allais plus pouvoir faire partie d'un groupe, que je ne pourrais plus jouer de la batterie ni partir en tournée, ce n'était plus possible, et quand j'ai repris connaissance à l'hôpital, j'ai dû dire aux musiciens : « *Ecoutez, je pense que je suis là pour un certain temps, je ne vais pas pouvoir continuer* ***Matching Mole.*** »

Je vois, musicalement vous n'aviez plus que vos mains, votre voix…

Oui, et en ce temps-là, j'avais commencé à de plus en plus développer ma propre idée de ce que je devais chanter et ça impliquait que je sois aux claviers, que j'arrange tout, que je me considère comme un compositeur. Je devais faire le son moi-même, avec mes maigres compétences techniques plutôt que d'essayer de les obtenir par le biais d'autres musiciens. Je devais réussir à faire un disque par moi-même et créer avec mes propres atmosphères. Et une fois que j'aurais fait ça, j'inviterais des musiciens en studio pour donner vie aux sons que j'avais fait. C'est comme ça que j'ai travaillé et c'était vraiment la meilleure manière de travailler. Je n'aurais pas pu faire ça avant, mais j'ai trouvé que c'était le meilleur moyen de rendre compte de la musique que j'avais en tête.

Ce qui est curieux par rapport à *Rock Bottom* c'est que la force du mythe lié à votre accident, le thème de la chute : la plupart des gens pensent que vous l'avez composé après votre accident, comme s'il en était la méditation, le fruit, que c'était l'album de l'après, d'après la chute, ce que je dois dire je pensais aussi, mais en préparant cet entretien j'ai appris que vous l'aviez commencé avant votre accident…

Je ne l'avais pas avancé tant que ça mais oui, j'avais déjà commencer à travailler dessus. J'avais déjà rencontré Alfie depuis environ deux ans et elle m'avait offert un clavier et le son de base de ***Rock Bottom*** vient de ce petit clavier…

Une bonne idée cadeau donc !

Oui, ça s'est avéré être une bonne idée, exactement. Et j'ai aussi remarqué que dans les improvisations que je faisais avec des amis comme Gary Windo je chantais des sons qui se sont retrouvés sur ***Rock Bottom***. Au départ, j'étais en train de travailler sur du matériel qui devait former le troisième album de ***Matching Mole***. Et ensuite, à l'hôpital, j'ai trouvé un piano dans la salle de visite et personne n'y venait car les visiteurs vont plutôt dans les chambres des patients, donc tous les passages de piano de ***Rock Bottom*** ont été faits sur ce piano et les paroles ont autant été écrites avant qu'après l'accident, elles ne découlent pas de l'accident. Je veux dire, en un sens ce qui est bien dans le fait d'être à l'hôpital pendant presque un an c'est que je n'avais aucune responsabilité. Je n'avais pas à chercher un travail, ni me faire à manger ou payer de loyer…

En un sens, vous étiez dans la position d'un enfant…

Oui, parce que je ne pouvais pas bouger, on m'apportait à manger et j'étais vraiment libre de rester au lit et de rêver. Et ce qui est bien là-dedans, c'est que je pouvais être tout à fait à l'écoute de ce qui se passait dans ma tête et travailler là-dessus, encore et encore. Donc quand j'ai enfin pu enregistrer tout ça, j'avais balisé l'espace, visionné le tout, trouvé la forme. Etre à l'hôpital à aider à faire émerger tout ça. Mais les idées sur lesquelles je travaillais dataient d'avant.

A l'écoute de *Rock Bottom* on est happé par des moments de musiques véritablement extatiques. Vous sont-ils apparus tout aussi extatiques quand vous travailliez dessus ou que vous y pensiez sur votre lit d'hôpital ?

Oui, je pense que oui. Si les gens envisagent la musique en termes de joie ou de tristesse, ça peut les déconnecter de ce qui a vraiment lieu et de ce que communique réellement la musique. Je ne pense pas que la musique ait quelque chose à voir avec ces deux adjectifs. Je n'aime pas quand je vois des critiques de musique dire que Beethoven était colérique ou que Shostakovich était triste là où il était joyeux. Je pense que ma musique échappe à ces clivages émotionnels. Ces émotions sont comme des métaphores météorologiques, il pleut, il fait soleil… Or les choses qu'on a en tête, nos humeurs, ça change tout le temps, c'est une autre planète où tout se mélange. Évidemment, on est inconsciemment influencé par nos états d'âmes, mais tout ça est plutôt une question d'énergie. Quand tu es déprimé c'est très dur de faire quoique ce soit. Et moi, en effet, quand je me sens vraiment déprimé je n'écris pas, je ne compose rien du tout. Si je fais un morceau et si je le grave sur disque alors tu peux être sûr que que je devais me sentir bien et confiant dans ce que j'avais fait une fois sorti du studio. Et je ne pense pas qu'on puisse délibérément orienter sa musique en se disant : « Je veux que le public ressente ça plutôt que ça. » C'est plus instinctif.

Quelles chansons qui se sont finalement retrouvées sur *Rock Bottom* aviez-vous déjà composé en vue du troisième album de *Matching Mole* ?

Peu, c'était plus des petits liens entre les chansons. Des bouts. Mais pour être honnête tout ça date tellement que je ne me souviens pas bien. Et pour moi, ça importe peu car comme je te l'ai dit je n'arrêtais pas de penser aux sons que j'entendais dans ma tête. Que je sois avant l'accident dans l'appartement d'Alfie ou ailleurs avec le clavier ou que je sois dans mon lit d'hôpital en train de réfléchir ou même assis au piano dans la salle de visite, pour moi cet album se situe sur un autre plan, qui a peu à voir avec mon accident et ses circonstances physiques.

Mais vous ne pouvez pas nier que ce disque est aussi devenu ce qu'il est – mythique – parce qu'il y a eu cet accident. Avant comme après vos disques ne proposeront plus un tel envoutement et ne susciteront plus un tel accueil. Les gens le relient à votre accident, comme si cet événement vous avait ouvert les portes de la perception et connecté à un autre plan ou la musique, si je puis dire, n'est plus seulement de la musique. C'est un point de vue un peu cliché mais je ne pense pas qu'ils aient totalement tort, si ?

Non, je pense qu'inconsciemment ça a joué. Cet événement a joué. Parce que j'imagine que les gens se sont dits que c'était quelque chose de terriblement tragique et que si ça leur arrivait, ils se diraient : « Mon Dieu ! Que vais-je devenir ? » Mais ce n'est pas ce que j'ai vécu.



Finalement, *Rock Bottom* n'est-il pas plutôt un album sur l'amour qu'un album sur votre soi-disant tragique accident ?

Un album sur mon amour pour Alfie ? Oui, peut-être. Mais là encore je ne suis pas sûr qu'on puisse circonscrire la musique à ce genre de thèmes bien précis. Ce serait comme se demander : « De quoi parle une fleur ? Que signifie une fleur ? »

Je vois. Mais vous avez tout de même composé ce disque au début de votre relation avec Alfie, vous l'avez commencé quand vous l'avez rencontrée…

C'est sûr que sans elle il aurait été différent. Elle m'a influencé sur certaines choses, notamment par ce qu'elle me disait. Par exemple, elle me disait que pour elle la musique que je joue depuis 10 ans a beau être impressionnante et énergique, elle restait trop riche, crispée, hyperactive. Elle trouvait que j'avais tout à gagner à changer de rythme et à laisser plus d'espaces. Ce genre de choses. Et je pensais qu'elle avait raison. J'ai donc laissé plus d'espaces et simplifié les structures pour mettre plus de lumière dans ma musique.

Et qu'est-ce que ça vous fait de savoir qu'avec ce disque beaucoup de gens ont cru tenir une sorte d'ermite mystique ?

Hum, T.S. Eliot a dit une belle chose à propos de ses poésies. Il a dit que les gens qui lisaient ses poèmes les comprenaient sans doute mieux que lui-même. Et moi-même, je sais ça en tant qu'auditeur de musique. Par exemple si j'écoute du Duke Ellington ou du Charles Mingus, je sais très bien ce que ça signifie pour moi, je peux l'expliquer mais je n'ai aucun moyen de dire si c'est ce que ces musiciens avaient précisémenten tête. Ce sont deux choses. Je veux dire, ce que j'aime dans la musique et dans l'art, c'est que l'artiste produit quelque chose instinctivement et si ça marche, si ça plait, c'est parce que ça entre en résonance avec des émotions et des sentiments que les gens éprouvent. Ce qui fait qu'ils peuvent s'identifier. Mais ce n'est pas quelque chose que tu fais délibérément. Malgré nos différences et nos particularités, nous ne sommes que les déclinaisons du même animal, du même atome. C'est ce que je pense. Il n'y a pas seulement une humanité commune, mais une communauté d'esprit entre toutes les choses vivantes. Je ne suis pas religieux mais là-dessus je suis d'accord avec les bouddhistes.

Vous êtes bouddhiste mais vous n'êtes pas religieux ?

Oui, je suis bouddhiste et Bouddha n'était pas un Dieu, c'était un homme. Je ne déteste pas

Dieu mais j'aime juste cette idée que nous sommes tous une petite partie d'une seule grande et même chose. Les gens et les autres créatures vont et viennent mais le matériau dont nous venons, le matériau qui nous fait aller et venir, lui il est toujours là, il ne bouge pas, il change juste de forme, et quand on meurt d'autres personnes arrivent. Les gens sont tous la même manifestation du désir d'avoir une belle vie. Et parfois les artistes arrivent à trouver en eux un langage qui fait dire aux gens : « Oh, je vois pourquoi il a fait ça ! ». ça dépasse les mots, et c'est donc difficile d'en parler comme ça dans une interview.

Oui. Il y a d'ailleurs peu de mots dans *Rock Bottom* !

Oui, et je connais un jeune chanteur israëlien qui m'a dit un jour : « Quand j'étais jeune je ne pouvais pas parler anglais donc j'écoutais vos disques. » Après, il a appris a parler anglais et il a réécouté ***Rock Bottom*** et il m'a dit : « Je ne comprends toujours pas ce que tu y chantes ! » (rires) Les mots n'y traduisent pas un sens précis, rationnel.

Je crois bien que c'est votre seul disque où les mots n'ont pas de sens direct et se « réduisent » souvent à des sons, des onomatopées, comme « not », « ni »…

Oui, mais encore une fois, comme je te l'ai dit, c'est sorti comme ça, je n'ai pas décidé d'écrire comme ça, je me suis juste projeté dans l'espace que j'avais en tête, j'ai chanté et c'est ça qui est sorti, voilà. Après tu te sers juste instinctivement de ta faculté de jugement pour sélectionner ce qui te semble marcher, sans même savoir pourquoi ça marche. Je ne sais pas pourquoi ça marche.

Sur *Rock Bottom* vous pulvérisez aussi toute signification rationnelle en ayant enregistré certaines bandes à l'envers…

Oui, c'est le cas sur la dernière plage de la première face du disque.

Sur le morceau « Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road », c'est ça ?

Oui, la seconde moitié du morceau est l'exact miroir de la première. J'ai renversé les cordes ainsi qu'une partie des voix, mais j'ai aussi ajouté une nouvelle chanson par-dessus et demandé à Richard Sinclair, le bassiste, de jouer dans le bon sens tout au long de cette partie. Donc c'est à la fois à l'envers et à l'endroit.

Les fondamentalistes chrétiens ne vous ont jamais cherché des poux en allant dire, comme c'est arrivé aux Beatles et à Led Zeppelin, que ces bandes renversées cachaient quelques messages satanistes destinés à corrompre la jeunesse ?

Oh, non, j'ai de la chance de ne pas être assez célèbre et ça m'a évité d'avoir des ennuis. Personne n'a élevé la voix mais peut-être que certains y ont vu ce genre de messages subliminaux. Pour ma défense, je dirais que Satan n'est qu'un ange déchu.

Pour revenir plus concrètement au thème qui nous incombe – la rupture – il y a une chose qui m'a frappé à l'écoute de *Rock Bottom*, c'est sa proximité, ne serait-ce que dans les ambiances musicales développées, avec l'album Kid A de Radiohead. Connaissez-vous ce groupe et cet album ?

Je n'ai jamais écouté Radiohead.

Du tout ?

Non.

Hé bien je vous conseille d'écouter ce Kid A. Sans rentrer dans les détails, un soir de l'été 2007, j'ai vu *Rock Bottom* dans cet album. Une étrange et puissante expérience.

Ok. Mais nous ne sommes pas de la même génération, leur album est sorti bien après le mien, n'est-ce pas ?

Oui, en 2000, 26 ans après, mais justement : ne pensez-vous pas que deux œuvres puissent dialoguer ensemble par-delà les âges, comme deux sœurs, puisant à la même source ?

Oui, je vois.

Mais dites-moi, vous qui êtes anglais, et un anglais amateur de jazz et de musiques progressives, comment est-il possible que vous n'ayez jamais entendu parler d'un groupe de rock anglais si célèbre et amateur de jazz et de musiques progressives comme Radiohead ?

Disons que j'écoute peu de rock. A vrai dire, je n'écoute aucun groupes de rock, ce n'est pas un champ qui m'intéresse. Je veux dire, je suis sûr qu'ils sont très bons, on m'a dit qu'ils l'étaient, mais j'écoute plutôt de vieux disques de jazz, du flamenco et d'autres choses comme ça… Les groupes de rock blanc ne m'ont pas vraiment intéressé depuis les années 60. ça ne veut pas dire que je n'aime pas ce qui se fait en rock aujourd'hui, mais voilà c'est juste que je n'écoute pas ça.

C'est une question de fossé générationnel ?

Je ne sais pas. Oui, peut-être. Mais bon, il y a des milliers de styles de musique différents dans le monde… En terme de musique guitare, basse, batterie, clavier, chanteur, ce n'est juste pas celle que je préfère écouter.

Vous n'êtes même pas curieux d'écouter un peu les groupes de pop actuels qui vous citent parmi leurs références ?

Hé bien, je suis toujours content de savoir que les gens écoutent ma musique mais je ne cherche pas à savoir qui j'influence. Je préfère me concentrer sur ce que j'ai à faire.



17 novembre 2009. 17h30. Paris 19e. « Je n'ai jamais écouté Radiohead ». Et là, c'est le drame ! A mi-course, après une demie heure d'entretien, j'ose enfin en venir au sujet qui me tient à coeur, j'ose enfin lui révéler, sans qu'il s'en rende compte, ce qui constitue l'étincelle, la scène primitive de mon projet d'interview avec lui, je crache enfin le morceau, lui parler de Radiohead, des correspondances magiques qui unissent, à 26 ans d'intervalle, son Rock Bottom et leur Kid A, deux disques OVNI, ni jazz, ni rock, portés par les mêmes synthés mediumniques, le même délitement du logos et surtout, surtout, mystérieusement hantés, en leur centre, par la même figure mythologique : l'histoire d'un homme qui tombe d'un immeuble et se réinvente à travers ce handicap (cf. la théorie d'un Kid A bande-son prophétique des événements du 11 septembre dans Je, La Mort et Le Rock'n'Roll de Chuck Klosterman). Mais plouf ! bide de ouf : Robert Wyatt ne connait pas Radiohead.

En même temps quel naïf je fais. Pensais-je sérieusement que j'allais pouvoir lui exposer ma théorie toute personnelle et faire mouche comme dans un rêve, pensais-je sérieusement qu'il allait la valider point par point tel un maître de thèse, et même l'écrire avec moi là toute de suite dans l'ora(c)l(e) de l'échange ? Tout cela est de l'incommunicable, de l'ordre du strict ressenti de l'auditeur tout retourné et ce texte, je devrais le tirer moi-même de ma sainte trinité (Me, Myself and Eye). Et ce texte, ce sera même le premier chapitre de mon livre sur Radiohead : Where I End and You Begin. En attendant, je ne me formalise pas, ce bide était somme toute prévisible et j'ai encore tellement à lui dire et il parle tellement volontiers, abordant finalement de lui-même, je m'en rendrai compte après coup, tous les thèmes secrètement « Radioheadesques » que

j'avais en tête (J.C. et Bouddha, E.T. et monstres marins, le visage et la voix, l'abstraction et le figuratif…) que je lâche prise.

« vivre avec quelqu'un c'est inventer une sorte de nouvel animal qui s'appelle le couple ».



Revenons à *Rock Bottom*. Vous dites ne pas chercher à savoir l'influence que votre musique exerce, mais n'étiez-vous tout de même pas un peu inquiet de la manière dont ce disque allait être reçu quand vous l'avez sorti ?

Je ne pensais pas qu'il aurait un public. J'ai donc été vraiment ravi de découvrir que les gens aimaient ces chansons. D'ailleurs, en France j'ai même gagné un prix spécial, le Prix Charles Cros. Je suis allé le recevoir à Paris. J'étais stupéfait, très content et un peu nerveux. J'avais sérieusement douté de pouvoir refaire tout un disque sans les très bons musiciens avec qui j'avais eu l'habitude de jouer, ça m'a donc réconforté de voir que les gens aimaient ma nouvelle façon de travailler.

Parlons de ces musiciens sans qui *Rock Bottom* ne serait pas non plus *Rock Bottom.* Comment les avez-vous choisi ?

J'ai fait ça chanson après chanson. Je me disais par exemple : « Qui serait le meilleur bassiste pour ce morceau ? » Pour certains morceaux je pensais à Hugh Hopper et pour d'autres à Richard Sinclair. Pour la batterie, j'ai parfois demandé à Laurie Allan de venir jouer et parfois je me suis même dit que j'allais faire moi-même mes propres percussions.

Vous avez fonctionné un peu à la manière d'un peintre, teintes par teintes et touches par touches ?

Oui, et d'autres choses se sont faites de manière assez accidentelle. Par exemple, à la fin de l'enregistrement Mike Oldfield était souvent dans le studio – The Manor, le studio de Richard Branson – il nous a donc fait quelques suggestions et il en est venu à ajouter des guitares. Il a aussi eu l'idée de démultiplier le son de mon clavier en plusieurs couches. Le gros son à base de guitare et de clavier qu'on peut entendre avant le dernier morceau de l'album est donc vraiment dû à Mike Oldfield. Moi je n'avais pas vraiment pensé à ça parce que je ne pense pas vraiment aux guitares et c'est d'ailleurs la raison pour laquelle je n'écoute pas beaucoup de groupes de rock : je n'écoute pas vraiment de guitares et de basses, je préfère les instruments acoustiques. Enfin bref, en studio j'ai envisagé chaque chanson individuellement, sans aucune préméditation. Je me disais : « Tiens, sur celle-là – « Alifib » – *ce serait bien d'avoir tel motif, de le laisser tourner et de demander à Gary Windo de jouer des solos par-dessus.* » Je ne savais pas de qui j'aurais besoin avant d'entrer en studio.



***Rock Bottom* compte seulement 6 morceaux. Y en a-t-il que vous n'avez pas gardé ?**

Non, j'ai utilisé toutes les idées que j'avais. Donc tout est là, dans ces 6 morceaux. Des choses ont bien sûr été jetées lors de l'editing des morceaux, mais à part ça je ne me rappelle plus trop. A l'époque où je suis sorti de l'hôpital, je n'arrivais pas à mémoriser plus de 40 minutes de musique jouée… 40 minutes de musique jouée par un seul homme. J'aurais d'ailleurs pu faire un album solo avec ces morceaux. Mais quand j'ai commencé l'enregistrement, j'ai voulu accueillir les idées et les sons que les musiciens pouvaient m'apporter. Dans le dernier morceau de l'album, je ne m'étais même pas préoccupé de savoir si ma voix convenait bien au texte que j'avais écrit, j'ai donc demandé à Ivor Cutler (auteur de chansons, écrivain, poète et humoriste écossais qui s'est notamment fait connaître pour son rôle de chauffeur de car dans le film des Beatles Magical Mystery Tour – nda) de le lire. Du coup, je lui ai laissé faire toute la dernière voix. Et ce n'était pas préalablement décidé, ça s'est fait sur le tas. Peu m'importait que ce soit moi ou un autre qui s'y colle, l'important était juste de parvenir à recréer le voyage que j'entendais dans ma tête. Je ne me souviens plus trop si j'ai beaucoup dévié en route. J'aurais tendance à dire que j'ai bien traduit ce que j'avais en tête. Enfin, à vrai dire, je ne sais pas trop ce que j'avais en tête, je ne l'ai réalisé que lorsqu'on est entré en studio.

L'enchaînement des chansons sur le disque traduit-il la manière dont vous les faisiez passer dans votre tête quand vous étiez à l'hôpital ?

Je t'avoue que j'essaie de m'en souvenir mais ça remonte à si loin… Quel âge as-tu ?

30 ans.

Hé bien ça fait plus de 30 ans que ***Rock Bottom*** est sorti. Imagine si on te posait des

questions précises sur ce que tu as fait il y a 30 ans, tu vois le problème ?

Oui, j'ai bien conscience de vous poser des questions difficiles !

Donc le fait est là : tout ça remonte à loin et la mémoire n'est pas tout le temps fiable. C'est en partie quelque chose que nous construisons consciemment. Je ne peux donc pas être sûr à 200 % que ce que je te dis est conforme à ce qui s'est vraiment passé. Je reste surpris quand je vois tout à coup des évidences surgir de mon passé. Ça me sidère. Tiens, je vais te raconter une de ces dernières choses issue de mon passé qui m'a récemment pris par surprise. Il y a un groupe de folk du nord de l'Angleterre qui s'appelle The Unthanks. Il est essentiellement formé de deux filles, Rachel et Becky Unthanks. Elles ont intitulé un de leur album The Bairns, un mot du nord de l'Angleterre qui signifie « enfant », « bébé ». Il est sorti il y a environ deux ans. Et elles y ont repris « Sea Song ».

Oui, je me rappelle avoir écouté le disque et la reprise : une belle reprise !

Oui, elle est plus sobre que la mienne, elle est vraiment folk, mais c'est une belle reprise. Et surtout, quand je l'ai entendue, je me suis souvenu que la façon dont elles l'avaient reprise était en fait plus proche de la manière dont j'avais moi-même envisagé « Sea Song » dans ma tête à l'époque.

Vraiment ?

Oui, et la plupart des choses que j'y avais rajoutées – l'impro vocale tout au long de la fin, les sons bizarres, l'aide de Nick Mason à la production, tout ce travail d'expansion – toutes ces choses sont essentiellement venues quand on est entré en studio. Mais si ***Rock Bottom*** avait vraiment dû être un album solo, « Sea Song » aurait été très proche de la version qu'en a faite The Unthanks.

Vous le leur avez dit ?

Oui. Aujourd'hui elles ont un pianiste, il est très bon, mais la femme qui jouait du piano sur « Sea Song », son solo était très proche de ce que je souhaitais initialement atteindre. Moi, mon solo de piano est parti complètement ailleurs une fois que je l'ai enregistré. Donc voilà, à la base ce que j'avais en tête ressemblait plus à ce qu'elles ont fait et c'est étonnant, comme si elles avaient clairement capté l'essence de ce que j'avais en tête et qu'elle l'avaient porté à une autre génération. C'est vraiment étrange, je trouve fascinant qu'elles aient su capter l'essence de « Sea Song ». C'est comme si quelqu'un te regardait et voyait clair en toi, voyait ton âme, tu vois ?

Oui et c'est plutôt rare que des reprises de *Rock Bottom* vaillent vraiment le coup…

Peut-être, mais ces derniers temps il y en a eu de bonnes. Il y a quelques années est sorti un CD que je trouve bon, des groupes français y reprennent mon répertoire de différentes manières et plus récemment un groupe suisse ou australien a fait d'extraordinaires versions de certains de mes morceaux. Des gens arrivent donc à s'approprier mes morceaux. Je pense aussi à John Greaves ou Annie Whitehead qui a fait quelque chose avec la chanteuse Julie Tippetts, une musicienne et une grande chanteuse. Elle chante même mes morceaux plus justement que je ne les chante moi-même. C'est un sentiment extraordinaire d'entendre ça. J'aime quand les gens reprennent mes chansons.

Parlons maintenant un peu des pochettes de *Rock Bottom*. Ce disque en a effet bénéficié d'une nouvelle pochette lors de sa réédition en 88. Pourquoi ce changement d'artwork ?

Tous les visuels sont d'Alfie. Elle a vraiment carte blanche. Je ne lui conseille rien. L'artwork, la typo, tout ça, c'est elle qui décide. Son idée de base c'était de faire un dessin au crayon de papier sur un morceau de carte, quelque chose de clair, voire terne, pour prendre le contrepied de toutes ces pochettes de disques de musique psychédélique très colorées qu'on voyait dans les magasins. Elle a fait ça pour le disque d'origine. Et quand sa réédition a été décidée, elle a pensé que ce travail ne convenait plus. Le contexte n'était plus le même. Et elle a eu une nouvelle idée, elle a donc fait une peinture.

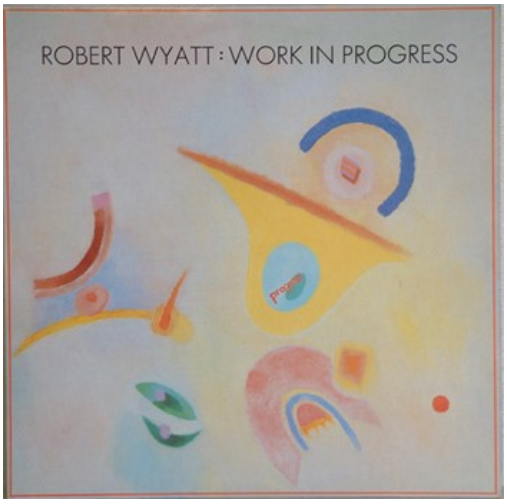
D'accord…

Et puis lors de la première édition du disque, elle ne savait pas que son premier morceau serait « Sea Song » et que ça parlait d'elle. Et ça parlait d'elle. (Il chantonne :) « When

you’re drunk, I like you mostly / Late at night, you’re quite alright / But I can’t understand / The different you in the morning ». Je ne la nommais pas mais pour moi c’était évident que ça parlait d’elle. Elle s’en est rendue compte plus tard, après que je le lui ai dit. Et je crois que c’est en partie pour ça qu’elle s’est permise de peindre un homme et une femme pour la nouvelle pochette de ***Rock Bottom***.

C’est une interprétation plus claire du sens de cette chanson…

Oui. En un sens, ça nous représente elle et moi. Elle a fini par se rendre compte de ça. Avant elle pensait que j’y parlais de choses plus abstraites. D’un côté, ce n’est pas faux. Mais maintenant je réalise que j’y faisais juste une description d’Alfie. Et que j’y parlais aussi, par projection, du privilège extraordinaire qu’est de vivre avec une femme.



Quand on est un homme ?

Oui, c’est un grand privilège. Il ne faut pas l’oublier. L’autre n’est jamais acquis, il ne faut pas croire qu’entre deux personnes qui s’aiment il y a forcément entente et compréhension mutuelles. Ça ne va pas de soi. Ce n’est jamais acquis. Quand tu vis avec quelqu’un – et tu peux être homosexuel, vivre avec une personne du même sexe – ton partenaire a beau être ton partenaire, il a son propre espace, sa propre pensée, quelque chose qui t’échappe…

Oui, il y a quelque chose de fondamentalement expérimental à tenter de faire un pot commun de deux cerveaux, deux sexes, deux peaux, deux solitudes, deux êtres !

Tout à fait, c’est comme si tu inventais une sorte de nouvel animal qui s’appelle « un couple ». Néanmoins, tu dois garder à l’esprit qu’il a d’évidentes différences biologiques entre l’homme et la femme (*rires*) ! Par exemple, j’ai remarqué la relation que leur sang entretien avec le rythme des marées. Dans « Sea Song », je faisais donc allusion au fait que les femmes ont des cycles menstruels, que leur organisme se nettoie de son sang et qu’elles peuvent donc être affectées par ces changements. De ce fait, elles sont donc connectées à la lune. Je sais que beaucoup de choses et que même beaucoup de bêtises ont déjà été écrites au sujet de cette différence entre les hommes et les femmes mais voilà, ma chanson parlait aussi de ça ! Du fait qu’on doit respecter que la personne qui partage notre vie puisse traverser des choses dont on n’a pas idée et qu’on ne peut pas comprendre.

« Sea Song » est donc une chanson assez féministe !

Oui, on peut le voir comme ça. Dans ma vision des choses elle l’est, mais pas au sens du féminisme qui voudrait que l’homme et la femme soient pareils. Pour moi, il est assez évident que nous ne sommes pas pareils. Que nous sommes complémentaires. C’est comme ça que je vois les choses.

Pour en finir au sujet des pochettes de *Rock Bottom*, je dois dire que j’ai toujours été frappé par leur opposition de style : la première est lunaire, presque livide, comme funéraire, alors que la seconde est chaude, méditérranéenne, sensuelle.

C'est possible. Il faudrait que tu en parles à Alfie. Mais elle vient juste de sortir faire des courses… Je ne peux pas répondre à sa place, mais je pense qu'elle n'envisageait pas la première pochette sous un angle funèbre, mais plutôt sous celui d'une certaine nostalgie, cette nostalgie des choses issues de notre petite enfance qui désertent petit à petit notre mémoire, comme le Steam Ship (bateau à vapeur – nda). Ça, ça ne se fait plus aujourd'hui. Ce bateau nimbé de fumée est donc devenu une image archaïque, quelque chose qui fait partie d'un certain inconscient collectif. Et c'est pareil pour l'idée de la seconde pochette du disque : ces enfants qui jouent sur la plage et qui passent un moment comme ça, isolé des tracas du monde extérieur, ça évoque aussi quelque chose de l'ordre de l'inconscient collectif. Quelque chose qu'on ne voit plus trop. Il est une nouvelle fois question de la réminiscence de quelque chose d'agréable et de très lointain, définitivement derrière nous… Mais bon, je ne sais pas trop là, je m'aventure en terrain inconnu, il faudrait plutôt poser la question à Alfie !

J'aimerais pour conclure que nous parlions plus clairement de poésie. Tout à l'heure vous avez évoqué Ivor Cutler, un ami poète, qui parle sur le dernier morceau de *Rock Bottom*. Comment l'avez-vous rencontré ?

C'était un poète écossais. Il n'est plus de ce monde. Il était plus vieux que nous. Je l'ai rencontré parce qu'il lisait des poèmes en s'accompagnant à l'harmonium, des poèmes souvent très drôles, étranges, et qu'on était régulièrement programmé aux mêmes soirées. Il venait nous voir jouer presque tous les week-ends. C'est comme ça qu'on est devenu amis. Il a laissé une centaine de livres merveilleux, dont la plupart parlent de drôles et d'étranges histoires sur ce qu'est une enfance en Ecosse. Il avait une voix très particulière. Il venait vraiment de la campagne écossaise, sauvage, d'une famille de juifs immigrés issue d'Europe Centrale. Il avait donc la double identité de juif-écossais, et je ne sais pas ce que ça signifiait pour lui, mais je crois que ça faisait tout son caractère. C'était un type super. Très drôle. Il était assez connu en Angleterre. Il faisait des émissions de radio, des livres audio. Il a fait beaucoup de choses, mais c'était un vrai minimaliste au sens où ses histoires étaient courtes, ses mots simples. Il y avait quelque chose de très enfantin dans son travail. Tu devrais faire une petite recherche sur lui sur internet. Je ne sais pas ce qui s'y trouve, je n'ai pas regardé, mais si tu tapes Ivor Cutler sur Google ça te donnera une meilleure idée de lui et de ce qu'il faisait.

Vous semblez proche des poètes et d'une certaine forme de poésie. En 1969, pour célébrer la bizarrerie à l'oeuvre dans la musique de Soft Machine, le Collège de Pataphysique vous a d'ailleurs fait Chevalier de l'ordre de la Grande Gidouille. Etiez-vous passionné par la poésie quand vous étiez jeune ?

Ah ! c'est marrant, j'en parlais justement l'autre soir avec Alfie. Mais pour être honnête la réponse à cette question est : « Non ». Mes parents avaient un ami poète qui s'appelait James Reeves, et ma mère a plus tard rencontré Robert Graves, qui était un grand poète. Mais non, moi mon truc c'était la peinture et la musique. Je suis plus venu aux mots par les auteurs de comédies, les humoristes et les écrivains pour enfants, comme Lewis Caroll, qui a écrit Alice au pays des merveilles. J'aime les jeux de mots.

Oui, vous en faites souvent dans vos titres de groupes, d'albums et de chansons ! Je pense notamment à *Soft Machine/Matching Mole*, *The End of an Ear*, *Shleep*, *Cuckooland*, *Comicopera*…

Absolument, j'y prends un malin plaisir. La poésie, je ne m'y suis mis que récemment. Alfie a beaucoup de livres de poésie. En lire m'a ouvert à un tout un éventail de mots dont j'ai pu nourrir mes chansons. Récemment, on regardait des émissions sur des poètes avec Aflie, et hier soir celle qu'on regardait était consacrée à Stevie Smith et elle m'a fait réaliser que l'avantage que la poésie a sur les autres arts c'est qu'elle offre un degré maximal d'intimité avec l'auteur, et cela sans aucune interaction, sans contrepartie néfaste. Le lecteur reçoit directement ce que la personne a écrit. Là quelque se passe avec la poésie…

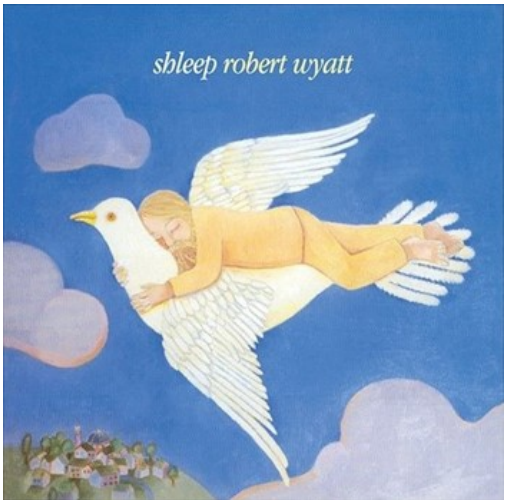
Qui n'a pas lieu avec la musique ?

Si, c'est assez proche de la musique finalement. En fait la musique et la poésie ont grandi ensemble. Elles sont absolument parties du même point et sans doute qu'à la base la plupart des poèmes étaient chantés. Elles ont donc grandi ensemble. Mais le truc avec la musique c'est que c'est un acte inévitablement plus social. Si tu joues un son dans une pièce, tout le monde va l'entendre mais si tu écris un mot sur un bout de papier il restera silencieux. Avec la poésie il y a donc la possibilité d'une solitude et il me semble qu'à ce niveau-là la poésie propose quelque chose d'inégalable, quelque chose qui va chercher loin,

qui va vraiment chercher quelque chose en toi. Il y a des formes d'art qui combinent la présence physique, la musique et les mots, l'opéra par exemple, et ça fonctionne. Mais chaque forme d'art est différente, avec ses propres atouts, et je pense que la poésie est par exemple quelque chose de totalement différent de la prose. Et de la même manière, même si ces formes d'art sont liées, écrire des chansons n'est pas la même chose qu'écrire des poèmes.

J'ai appris qu'en 1962, à 17 ans, vous êtes parti à Majorque pour rencontrer le poète Robert Graves dont vous parliez tout à l'heure. Pourquoi ?

Je pense que je l'ai rencontré pour la première fois à la fin des années 50. Il avait tout simplement été un ami de ma mère dans les années 30, avant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Ma mère était journaliste, elle avait gagné assez d'argent et elle étais alors partie vivre à Majorque. Elle écrivait des articles sur la vie là-bas, qui était très différente de celle qu'elle est devenue car c'était avant que Majorque devienne une destination touristique. Elle envoyait les articles en Angleterre et il la payait un peu pour pouvoir les publier. Ça la faisait vivre. Mon père, qui n'était pas encore mon père, vivait aussi à Majorque, avec une autre femme, sa première femme. Ma mère et mon père n'étaient donc pas encore ensemble, ce n'est que plus tard qu'ils se marieront à Majorque. Mary, la première femme de mon père, est devenu la secrétaire de Robert et mon père et lui sont devenus amis à la fin des années 30, jusqu'à ce que la Deuxième Guerre mondiale les sépare. Mon père est alors revenu en Angleterre et s'est engagé comme soldat. Mais ils sont restés amis et je pense qu'on m'a appelé Robert en souvenir de Robert Graves. Je n'en suis pas sûr mais je crois que c'est comme ça que ma mère a eu l'idée de ce nom. Et quand je suis devenu ado et que j'ai voulu quitter la maison et partir vadrouiller ma mère a écrit à Robert pour lui demander s'il pouvait m'accueillir là où il vivait. Il a dit oui et il m'a trouvé une petite cabane de pêcheur, près de la mer, juste une chambre. Le pêcheur habitait toujours dedans. J'allais parfois prendre mes repas chez Robert. A l'époque, je savais peu de choses sur lui et je savais peu de choses en littérature, mais ça ne le dérangeait pas, il m'en était plutôt reconnaissant, il n'aimait pas vraiment que les gens lui parle de ses écrits. Et, heureusement pour moi, c'était un gros fan de jazz. Il en savait plus que quiconque sur plein de sujets, mais il préférait parler d'autre chose. On était à la fin des années 50, au début des années 60, il avait un grand savoir sur l'art, la religion et les mythes des autres cultures, il a même écrit un bon livre sur les mythes du monde. Il a aussi écrit un livre extraordinaire intitulé King Jesus, un récit très savant en écho à la vie de Jésus et qui est totalement différent de celui qui a été écrit et diffusé. Il parlait grec, il savait lire les vieux textes, mais sa version de la vie de Jésus était si différente de la version officielle que ça a beaucoup marqué les gens et qu'ils le pensaient devenu fou. Quoiqu'il en soit, c'était un grand homme. Par exemple, il pouvait retracer l'histoire de l'Europe en se focalisant sur la manière dont, à l'Est, les trois religions – judaïsme, christianisme et islamisme – ont crée un grand Dieu masculin, la Chose, précisant qu'avant ça les religions méditerranéennes étaient plus féminines. Il a écrit un livre intitulé The White Godess où il dit qu'une des premières choses que ces trois religions masculines ont fait, ça a été en quelque sorte de rabaisser les femmes, de les diaboliser et de les criminaliser, de les traiter de sorcières. Et il disait qu'avec la façon dont nous regardons les femmes c'était très étonnant qu'un tel Dieu survive, et que s'il avait pu survivre c'était dans la manière dont les catholiques regardent la vierge Marie. Il a dit que ce regard porté sur Marie était une sorte d'astuce pour vouer un culte secret à une Déesse, donc de louer un Dieu redevenu féminin. Il m'a marqué. Je devais avoir 15-16 ans. Parler de tout ça et entendre ce genre de choses m'a ouvert l'esprit. En ce sens il a donc été très important pour moi. Même si j'ignorais tout de ses poèmes (*rires*) !



Une dernière question : nous évoquions vos titres d'albums. Pourquoi avoir appelé *Rock Bottom Rock Bottom* ?

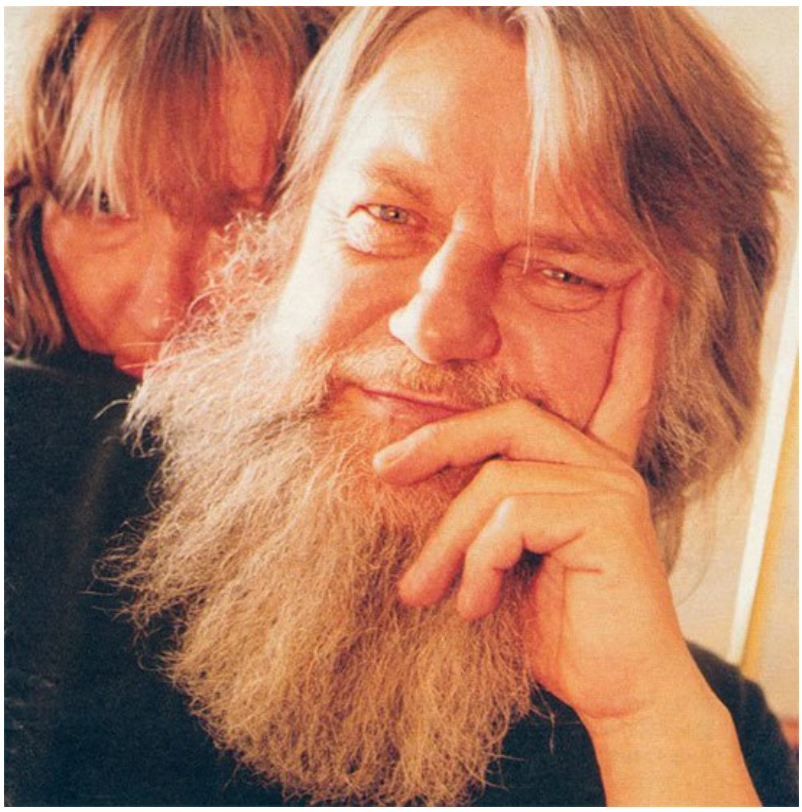
Je n'en ai aucune idée ! Je crois que les gens y voient une portée bien plus symbolique que celle que j'ai pu vouloir y mettre. Par exemple Alfie a écrit une chanson intitulée « Cuckoo Madame » (parue en 2003 sur l'album Cuckooland – nda) et des auditeurs pensent que ça symbolise quelque chose de mystérieux alors que « Cuckoo Madame » parle juste d'une femelle coucou. De la même manière, si je me souviens bien, Rock Bottom vient juste du fait qu'à l'époque on regardait de très vieux livres de sciences naturelles et contrairement aux autres livres de sciences de l'époque, ceux de sciences naturelles sont souvent mieux que ceux d'aujourd'hui, ce qui s'explique principalement par le fait qu'à l'époque, au début de la révolution industrielle, la nature avait plus de place dans le monde. Il y avait plus d'oiseaux, d'arbres et de plantes dans la vie des gens. Bref on avait donc acheté ce genre de vieux livres dont la plupart dataient même d'avant l'invention de la photographie. Ils comportaient donc de beaux dessins. Il y en avait par exemple de très très beaux pour décrire la vie sous-marine. Alfie et moi nous sommes pris de passion pour ces dessins et on s'est mis en quête de vieux parlant de la vie sous-marine et de gens découvrant ces animaux qui vivent vraiment tout au fond. Parce qu'il y a toute une vie qui se meut au fond des océans. En un sens, pour nous c'est plus étrange que la vie extraterrestre car là on est sûr qu'il y a toute une zone où d'étranges êtres témoignent d'une autre façon de vivre qui a lieu ici, sur la même planète. Et en plus, ils peuplent la majeure partie de notre planète ! Je suis très intéressé par les animaux qu'on connaît, ceux qui vivent en surface, les poissons, etc. Mais dans les profondeurs ce ne sont même plus des poissons, c'est autre chose. Aujourd'hui on en sait plus sur ces êtres, on en a de fantastiques photographies. Mais ce n'est pas possible pour les humains de descendre à ses profondeurs, la pression est trop forte.

On doit donc se contenter de ces photos et imaginer…

Exactement. On était donc captivé par ça et quand tu regardes la pochette d'origine de Rock Bottom tu vois qu'elle a été inspirée par ces fantastiques dessins qu'on avait trouvés dans ces vieux livres de sciences naturelles. D'ailleurs, si je me souviens bien, Alfie n'a pas imaginé les animaux qu'elle a dessinés, elle les a vraiment dessinés tels qu'ils étaient représentés dans ces livres. Voilà d'où vient le titre de l'album, Rock Bottom. Les gens parlent souvent de voyage dans l'espace, de voyage dans le temps, de tous ces trucs de science fiction mais là, au fond des océans, nous avons ces créatures sur notre propre planète, nous partageons le même espace mais c'est un monde totalement différent de créatures totalement différentes, à la fois de nous et des animaux que nous connaissons. J'ai trouvé que c'était assez magique, ça m'a rappelé ces autres mondes qu'on a parfois en tête quand on fait de la musique, qu'on créé… D'ailleurs, si les premiers hommes viennent d'Afrique, il faut bien avoir à l'esprit que toute vie vient des océans. Nous sommes des créatures d'eau qui essaient de survivre sur terre. C'est une évidence mais dans mon imaginaire nous avons donc quelque part hérité de la mémoire ancestrale d'avoir été des animaux marins. Mais ça peut tout aussi bien être lié au fait qu'on a passé les neuf premiers mois de notre vie dans une poche d'eau dans le ventre de notre mère. Ça expliquerait notre lien privilégié avec l'eau. Notre environnement premier d'être vivant est de l'eau chaude et ce n'est qu'au bout de neuf mois qu'on débarque sur terre. Par là,

chacun vit donc une sorte de version accélérée de l'histoire de l'évolution du vivant. Enfin, je dis ça, ce ne sont que mes petites théories hein !

Sylvain Fesson



>> L'interview sur le site de Parlhot.com

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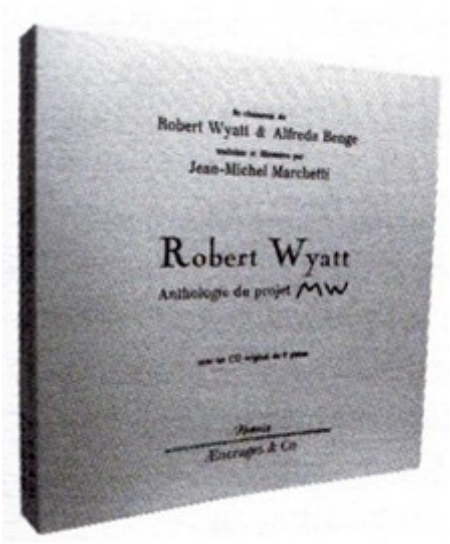
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Force et fragilité de Robert Wyatt - Revue & corrigée - #82 - Décembre 2009

WYATT PAR JEAN-PAUL GAVARD PERRET

Force et fragilité de Robert Wyatt





WYATT est un artiste transversal et un dessinateur d'espaces sonores. Sa volonté demeure de faire vibrer le et les sens. On peut le définir comme un voyageur utopique. Il se voulut d'abord peintre et écrivain. Il entra d'ailleurs dans la musique sous le patronage de Dada et de la Pataphysique. En pénétrant dans l'art qui allait lui permettre ses explorations les plus probantes, le barde, après l'aventure de Soft Machine, dégringola de plusieurs niveaux avant de composer un des albums les plus importants de l'histoire de la musique populaire (en la faisant rejoindre une musique plus savante) Rock Bottom.



Roland Chopard, Alfreda Benge,
Jean-Michel Marchetti, Philippe Fretun
& Robert Wyatt.

Aencrages And Co fait ici coup double. D'abord en compilant 80 textes de WYATT et de sa compagne Alfreda Benge en collaboration avec le plasticien et pianiste Jean-Michel Marchetti. Ensuite en joignant à ces textes un CD de reprises minimalistes de Pascal Comelade. Ce dernier offre une lecture sonore nouvelle de WYATT. Les textes du compositeur et auteur sont magnifiques et ouvrent à bien des dérives : "dans la ville aux portes closes, des hommes vivants miment des saints gisants, sur des surfaces gondolées". Se retrouve dans les mots la voix feulée (à la Chet Baker) de l'artiste. On sait combien elle porte en leurs quasi-murmures les textes d'une sensibilité rare. Ils peuvent traiter d'un tableau de Magritte, de la dénonciation de la guerre des Malouines ou encore du bombardement de Tripoli. Jamais le désamour du monde ne précipite WYATT dans les plis de la rêverie vide. Alors qu'il a parfois de quoi s'assombrir, l'île noire de ses imaginations reprend le dessus et la machine de travail se réenclenche dans une approche subversive pour dépasser la fin des mondes.

WYATT est par excellence un artiste contemporain. Il porte le poids de l'Histoire mais lui donne une dimension humaine jusque dans les lignes mélodiques qu'a reprises et comprises Comelade. Force, douceur, fragilité sont liées dans les textes comme dans les musiques. WYATT demeure exceptionnel dans les rendez-vous qu'il propose en faisant irruption dans nos vies par ses formes, ses structures musicales et les comptines à facettes de ses textes. Baroque et classique, il nourrit notre écoute d'une grande part d'inconnu. Reste à prendre une attitude suffisamment ouverte pour entrer dans l'œuvre non comme on visite un monument mais comme on explore un environnement neuf fait d'ondulations et de variations.



Les volumes d'Aencrages And Co

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Robert Wyatt : l'interview - lesinrocks.com - 26 octobre 2009



Fêté par l'Orchestre National de Jazz dans un album hommage qui va donner lieu à un concert parisien ce soir lundi 26 octobre au Théâtre Marigny, Robert Wyatt goûte avec plaisir à la reconnaissance dont il est aujourd'hui l'objet.

Entretien.

Comment avez-vous réagi quand Daniel Yvinec, le directeur de l'Orchestre National de Jazz, vous a fait part de son projet Around Robert Wyatt ?

Pour être franc, je ne lui ai pas été d'une grande aide ! Sa proposition est arrivée à un moment un peu difficile pour ma femme et moi, car nous étions tous deux confrontés à des problèmes de santé. Daniel m'a simplement demandé de chanter sur quelques morceaux, et je me suis exécuté, mais pas de manière très professionnelle - je suis un peu embarrassé par ma contribution vocale, qui selon moi ne sonne pas aussi bien que le reste du disque. Ensuite, les arrangements ont été construits à partir de mes pistes de chant, et le résultat m'a tout simplement bluffé. Certains morceaux m'ont vraiment surpris, certains m'ont laissé un peu interdit ! Je veux rendre ici un vibrant hommage à l'arrangeur *(Vincent Artaud)*, aux musiciens de l'ONJ et à tous les chanteurs et chanteuses qui ont participé à ce projet.

Le disque propose effectivement des reprises de vos chansons par des femmes (Rokia Traoré, Yael Naïm, Camille et Irène Jacob) et des hommes (Daniel Darc et Arno). Quel regard portez-vous sur leurs interprétations ?

J'ai été frappé par une chose assez amusante. Les deux intervenants masculins ont une approche vocale radicalement différente de la mienne, ce qui est une riche idée : je trouve ces contrastes très intéressants. En revanche, les femmes semblent davantage chanter depuis l'endroit où, moi, j'ai aussi l'habitude de chanter, il y a une vraie connivence… Il faut croire que ma part féminine s'exprime pleinement lorsque je fais de la musique.

A travers ce projet, vous avez donc appris des choses sur votre musique.

Elle est en fait aussi simple que la musique que peuvent produire des enfants : ce ne sont que des notes, des mots, des mélodies, quelques accords que j'aime bien… Mais ma façon de la jouer ne représente qu'une facette de ce qu'elle est vraiment. J'ai toujours su qu'elle était ouverte, qu'elle pouvait se prêter à d'autres inteprétations. Il y a eu déjà eu dans le passé des relectures très belles de mes chansons, que ce soit par John Greaves ou par Soupsongs, le groupe de mon amie tromboniste Annie Whitehead. Avec le projet de l'ONJ, je les découvre encore sous un nouveau jour. Je pense par exemple sincèrement que la version de *Shipbuilding (interprétée par Yael Naïm)* est supérieure à celle que j'ai moi-même enregistrée.

Les chanteurs qui participent à ce disque viennent d'horizons très différents. Est-ce particulièrement gratifiant ?

C'est extraordinaire, en effet. A mes yeux, leurs versions de mes chansons sont comme mes petits-enfants : elles existent de manière autonome, et en même temps je peux me reconnaître un peu en elles. C'est un sentiment magnifique.

Êtes-vous surpris de voir que vos chansons font aujourd'hui partie d'un patrimoine, d'une histoire ?

Toute personne qui travaille depuis quarante ans fait partie, qu'il le veuille ou non, de l'histoire… Mais en réalité, je ne conçois pas les choses sous cet angle. J'écris des chansons, je suis un musicien qui fait son boulot dans son coin. Je ne sais pas comment ma musique vit en dehors de chez moi, si elle résonne ou pas dans l'histoire. Vous savez, je vis dans un petit monde, un monde très intime. En tant que journaliste, j'imagine que vous gardez un œil sur tout ce qui se passe, que vous vous intéressez à la façon dont les choses évoluent. En tant que musicien, je n'ai pas une vision aussi large, je ne m'intéresse qu'à ce que je fais sur le moment, sans me projeter au-delà.

La notion de transmission n'est-elle pas importante à vos yeux ?

Si, mais j'ai tellement l'impression qu'elle est le fruit du hasard… Un jour, j'ai entendu un acteur anglais déclarer ceci : "Tout ce que les gens peuvent penser de moi ne me concerne pas". Je me sens proche de cette idée-là. Je ne veux pas donner l'impression d'être indifférent par rapport à ce qui m'entoure ou à l'écho que reçoit ma musique. Mais ma vie, mon métier, c'est de réaliser des choses qui, à ma petite échelle, me semblent justes. Je suppose que ça me rassure de considérer les choses ainsi, ça donne une raison d'être à ce que je produis.

Vous avez traversé des moments très difficiles dans les années 80. Pouviez-vous imaginer alors que votre travail, vingt ans plus tard, serait ainsi reconnu ?

Certainement pas. Dans les années 80, je me suis retrouvé de plus en plus isolé, je vivais comme un moine. J'étais plus dans l'activisme politique, j'étais totalement déconnecté de la scène musicale, même si j'aimais beaucoup par exemple ce que produisait un label comme 2 Tone, l'esprit honnête et simple qui l'animait. Mais je n'avais plus rien à voir avec ce qui se passait dans le rock ou la pop. Ma femme Alfie et moi étions comme sur une coque de noix perdue au milieu de l'océan. Depuis, nous avons heureusement eu la possibilité de retrouver la terre ferme…

Viendrez-vous assister au concert du théâtre Marigny ?

Je ne voyage plus maintenant, à moins que mon travail l'exige vraiment. Il faut bien comprendre qu'Alfie et moi avons atteint la soixantaine et que tout est plus dur pour nous maintenant. Je ne veux pas interrompre ma solitude. Je travaille loin du grand monde, j'aspire à vivre ainsi maintenant. Mais je suis très reconnaissant envers Daniel Yvinec et l'ONJ. J'ai été épaté d'entendre comment ces jeunes musiciens se sont appropriés mes chansons, comment ils ont su insuffler leur propre inspiration dans ma musique - notamment dans les passages improvisés, qui sont splendides. Je crois à cette idée que les jeunes ont tout intérêt à monter sur les épaules de leurs aînés, non seulement pour être aidés mais aussi pour aller plus haut et faire mieux qu'eux. C'est exactement ce qui se passe avec ce projet. Ce disque et ce concert prolongent en les améliorant les gestes que j'ai moi-même pu accomplir : c'est une expérience incomparable.

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Le Jazzfan - Jazz Magazine - N° 607 - octobre 2009



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LE JAZZFAN

Si une créature congelée dans les sixties pouvait être ramenée à la vie à Louth aujourd'hui, elle ne serait sans doute guère surprise par ce qu'elle verrait, à quelques détails près. Off The Beaten Tracks, sur Aswell Street, un magasin de disques à l'ancienne, tenu par Mark Merrifield, est là pour le prouver. Chevelu, mais pas bien vieux, Mark a failli avoir un accident de voiture quand il a vu là, sur le trottoir, vu de ses yeux dans la ville où il a ouvert son magasin, détournant soudainement toute son attention de conducteur, Robert Wyatt, LE Robert Wyatt. Dorénavant, il sait qu'il habite à côté de lui.
En ces journées ensoleillées, Robert paraît en très bonne forme et pratique l'art de mettre à l'aise son interlocuteur, lui faisant sentir que c'est lui, Robert Wyatt, qui est flatté par l'intérêt que nous lui portons. Cette attitude n'est pas feinte ou faussement modeste, mais, d'après Alfie - Alfreda Benge, sa femme -, correspond à une facette primordiale de sa personnalité: le plaisir de la rencontre, de la conversation et du partage hors de toute agressivité.

Depuis les années 50, le Jazz a toujours occupé une place importante dans la vie de Robert Wyatt. C'est bien sûr une influence musicale majeure dans ses propres disques, mais c'est surtout un idiome qui l'a accompagné toute sa vie, à la fois refuge intime et déclencheur d'idées. « Dans ma famille, la musique était constamment présente. Mon père, très bon pianiste, est venu vivre avec ma mère quand j'avais six ans. Il aimait particulièrement les compositeurs du début du XXème siècle comme Stravinsky, Bartok, Chostakovitch, Ravel, Debussy, Satie, Hindemith... *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* a bercé mon enfance et m'a imprégné de la tradition musicale française. Mais mon père était aussi très éclectique, me faisant découvrir une spécialité anglaise, les *christmas songs* (chants de noël) et le jazz. Mon frère Mark apporta aussi sa contribution avec sa collection de disques et ses interprétations au piano de morceaux de Duke Ellington et de Charles Mingus. Enfin, ma mère n'était pas en reste, m'introduisant au monde de l'opéra comme aux enregistrements de Doris Day. »

ROBERT WYATT est l'un des créateurs les plus singuliers de l'histoire de la musique anglaise. Il ne se considère pas comme un jazzman mais il aime le jazz plus que toute autre musique. Philippe Thieyre et Jean-François Dréan sont allés rencontrer celui qui, malheureusement, n'a jamais pu parler à Miles Davis...

« Je fais certainement partie de la dernière génération pour laquelle le jazz représentait la

première découverte et la principale éducation musicale à la radio. Il était alors un courant majeur en termes d'audience, statut qu'il a perdu quand il s'est éloigné de la danse et s'est peu à peu confiné dans des références plus intellectuelles. Toute l'histoire du jazz me plaît. Ma musique classique, c'est Blue Note et le bebop, Hank Mobley, Lee Morgan, Chet Baker, Miles Davis et les autres. À l'époque, entendre jouer un trompettiste, c'était l'extase. La découverte d'Art Tatum et de Duke Ellington, elle, vient de mon père. Un cinéaste, il me semble, a un jour déclaré que les sixties représentaient pour nous une période de renversement des valeurs, de libération et de révolte contre les parents. Qu'il parle pour lui ! Il n'y a jamais eu de dispute avec mes parents dans le domaine de la culture. Au contraire, j'ai compris et aimé ce qu'ils m'ont apporté, telle que la découverte du jazz et de la peinture, ce qui ne m'a pas empêché d'appréhender beaucoup de choses par moi-même, ou à travers une vision personnelle. Ainsi, je me rappelle encore avoir pleuré à la projection du film *Glenn Miller Story*, pas pour l'histoire de Glenn Miller, mais en voyant Louis Armstrong interpréter Basin Street Blues, que j'ai immédiatement acheté en 78-tours.»

BITCHES BOUH !

Quand j'étais teenager, rien ne marchait socialement. J'étais complètement paumé. J'aimais peindre, écouter du jazz et regarder les filles, au lieu de travailler. Comme je n'avais aucune idée de la bonne manière de communiquer avec les filles, je passais l'essentiel de mon temps à jouer des disques. Le rock'n'roll était pour moi une forme de musique à apprécier dans un certain contexte social, dans les clubs ou avec des amis, ce dont le jazz n'avait pas besoin. Pour écouter Miles Davis, il n'est pas besoin d'être copain avec lui. D'ailleurs, quand j'ai rencontré Miles, ça ne s'est pas très bien passé. C'était à New York en juillet 1971, avec Soft Machine, nous partagions l'affiche avec le groupe de Miles (qui comprenait notamment Jack DeJohnette et Keith Jarrett) au Beacon Théâtre. Caroline, celle de *Oh!Caroline,* mon amie de l'époque, m'accompagnait et j'essayais de l'initier au jazz. Dans les loges, nous avons vu Miles. Caroline s'est alors approchée pour prendre une photo, mais Miles s'est tourné vers elle en criant : *« Que cette salope vire ce putain de truc loin de mon visage !».* Immédiatement, j'ai su que je n'aurais pas l'occasion de parler à mon trompettiste favori et que je n'initierais jamais Caroline à l'univers merveilleux du jazz. »



LES BALAIS D'ASCENSEUR

« Jouer de la batterie m'a toujours procuré un plaisir intense : frapper les peaux et les cymbales me convient tout à fait. Plusieurs batteurs m'ont vraiment impressionné, parfois bien après les avoir découverts, prenant seulement conscience de leurs qualités exceptionnelles au fil du temps. C'est le cas pour des musiciens comme Art Taylor et Charlie Persip, qui était toujours en parfaite osmose avec le contrebassiste. Quant à Tony Williams, c'était une véritable encyclopédie de l'instrument : il en explorait comme nul autre toutes les possibilités, créant de nouveaux langages. À ces noms, je rajouterai celui de Dannie Richmond, qui a longtemps accompagné Charles Mingus, ainsi qu'une pensée envers les batteurs de La Nouvelle-Orléans, ceux de la soûl et du deep south des États-Unis. Sur *Old Europe* (un titre de "Cuckooland"), j'ai utilisé des balais en référence au jeu de Kenny Clarke dans *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*. Ce film, que j'ai vu pour la première fois à Paris, m'a laissé une impression extraordinaire et durable, en grande partie grâce à la musique de Miles Davis. D'ailleurs, alors que les sessions de jazz proposent souvent un enchaînement thème/solo/thème, les bandes originales laissent finalement plus de liberté d'expression aux musiciens, grâce à une structure plus ouverte. Je pense que cet exercice a profondément influencé les orientations futures de Miles Davis. Shadows, un film de John Cassavetes, avec sa BO et la participation de Charles Mingus, est une autre belle expérience. »

SOFT MACHINE : ROCK ET JAZZ

« Quand Soft Machine a commencé à jouer ses propres compositions, nous y avons peu à peu introduit une bonne part de jazz et d'improvisations, surtout pour ne pas répéter soir après soir les mêmes solos, les mêmes passages, bref pour éviter la monotonie et l'ennui. Nous essayions de reproduire ce que nous avions dans la tête, mais nous n'y arrivions pas toujours, faute de capacités techniques suffisantes. De même pour la trompette, lorsque j'essaye d'apprendre à bien en jouer, je m'aperçois à quel point les jazzmen que j'admire sont brillants... Toutefois, nous avions réussi à faire preuve d'imagination et à incorporer des concepts dans notre musique, pour la rendre plus attractive, sans idées préconçues, ni théorie. Nous avons simplement emprunté au jazz des idées musicales et au rock une attitude, une arrogance théâtrale, une dynamique, une manière de jouer fort avec un son amplifié au maximum. Après nos concerts londoniens, j'allais régulièrement au Ronnie Scott découvrir ou réécouter des musiciens de jazz. »

ROBERT LE JAZZFAN

« Quand j'enregistre, je choisis des musiciens avec qui j'ai des affinités. Je leur fais écouter les morceaux que j'ai préalablement enregistrés chez moi. Avec les musiciens venus du jazz, je n'ai pas besoin de longues explications, en général ils comprennent très vite ce qu'ils entendent et ce que je leur demande. » Comme on le voit à travers ces extraits d'interviews, le jazz est constamment présent d'une manière ou d'une autre dans l'univers singulier de Robert Wyatt, bien qu'il ne se considère pas du tout comme un jazzman, mais avant tout comme un amateur...»

A LIRE - Le texte complet de cette série d'entretiens devrait paraître fin octobre sous le titre de "Robert Wyatt par Philippe Thieyre (texte) et Jean-François Dréan (photos)" aux Editions des Accords.

1969
Hugh Hopper remplace Kevin Ayers au sein de Soft Machine, qui s'élargit sur scène à la taille d'un septette, avec 4 souffleurs.

1970
"Third" de Soft Machine, avec le célèbre *Moon In June* signé Wyatt.

1971
Robert Wyatt quitte Soft Machine.

1973
Après une chute, Robert Wyatt perd l'usage de ses jambes.

1982
"Nothing Can't Stop Us" comprend une adpatation de Strange Fruit.

2009
Sortie de "Radio Experiment Rome" (concert inédit de février 1981), avec une reprise du *Billie's Bounce* de Charlie Parker.



Photo: Jean-François Dréant

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« MON APPORT A ÉTÉ TRÈS MODESTE »

Robert aime "Around Wyatt" et ne s'en cache pas...



« Ma musique s'apparente à une forme de folk techniquement modeste. Si ma formation musicale avait été meilleure, j'aurais aimé orchestrer des morceaux comme l'ont fait Daniel Yvinec et Vincent Artaud. Le travail de ce dernier est fantastique. Les solos des saxophonistes sont magnifiques et techniquement brillants. J'ai particulièrement apprécié la démarche de l'ONJ consistant à enregistrer la voix d'abord, puis à construire les sonorités et la trame musicale autour. D'habitude, c'est l'inverse, comme avec le compositeur Bruno Coulais, je reçois la musique, les mélodies et je place mon chant par-dessus. Pour "Around Robert Wyatt", Daniel Yvinec m'a

simplement demandé de chanter directement et d'enregistrer ma voix, seul chez moi, sur mon matériel, puis je lui ai envoyé le CD. Pour le choix des morceaux, il a suggéré certains titres, j'en ai sélectionné d'autres comme *Te Recuerdo Amanda*.
Il m'a proposé d'en chanter un plus grand nombre, mais c'était impossible. Cela aurait nécessité trop d'implication de ma part.
De toute façon, j'ai également trouvé le choix des interprètes excellent, comme celui d'Irène Jacob pour *Del Mondo*, un morceau important en Italie, mais peu connu à l'étranger. Je suis très satisfait du résultat et je prends du plaisir à écouter ce disque.
Ce qu'il a construit autour de ma voix, en particulier les arrangements, est vraiment réussi, et mon apport a été très modeste.
Au micro : Philippe Thieyre



Photo: Jean-François Dréant



SÉLECTION CD

QUAND ROBERT JAZZE

Cinq CD de Robert Wyatt pour ceux qui aiment le jazz. Sélection : Pierre de Chocqueuse.

Volume Two [avec Soft Machine]

(Polydor / Import Angleterre, 1969)

Soft Machine invente ici une fusion de genres tout à fait inédite. Robert Wyatt s'est beaucoup impliqué dans l'agencement de *Privmic Melodies*, une des deux suites du disque, arrangeant la plupart des morceaux d'Hugh Hopper, et co-signant le superbe *Hibou, Anemone and Bear*. *(Le premier Soft Machine vient également d'être réédité et remasterisé par Polydor, NDLR.)*

The End Of An Ear

(Columbia Rewind / Sony Music, 1970)

Un disque expérimental et inclassable proche du free jazz et de la musique contemporaine. *Las Vegas Tango* de Gil Evans ouvre et referme l'album. Robert y assure toutes les voix. Certaines scandent des rythmes ; d'autres improvisent des mélodies, marmonnent, murmurent, tonnent ou clament d'étranges onomatopées, parfois accélérées par la bande magnétique.

Matching Mole

(Columbia / Sony Music, 1972)

Dave McRae improvise au piano électrique et accentue l'aspect jazz d'un album qui enchaîne chansons (*Oh ! Caroline*, subtilement drappé par des nappes d'orgue et de mellotron) et séquences instrumentales (*Part of the Dance*, *Beer as in Braindeer*, plages largement improvisées, voire trempées dans le free), sans oublier *Instant Pussy* porté par les voix, toutes de Robert, sur une trame mélodique.

Rock Bottom

(Dominio Recordings / Pias, 1974)

Magnifiques chansons nées lors d'un séjour de Robert à Venise, en hiver 1972. La trompette de Mongezi Feza fait merveille dans le répétitif et fascinant *Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road*. Les mélodies splendides se parent d'étonnantes orchestrations dans lesquelles le free jazz se teinte de lyrisme, de couleurs onirique. Robert assurant les claviers et les rythmes sur une petite batterie.

Shleep

(Dominio Recordings / Pias, 1997)

Des mélodies inoubliables - *Alien*, *A Sunday in Madrid*, *Maryan*, féerie écrite avec Philip Catherine qui assure les guitares - et une orchestration plus riche que dans les albums qui précèdent. On retrouve un peu la sonorité de l'orchestre de Mingus dans *September the Ninth* (trombone et saxophone ténor confiés à Annie Whitehead et Evan Parker). Et pour la première fois, Robert souffle dans une trompette.

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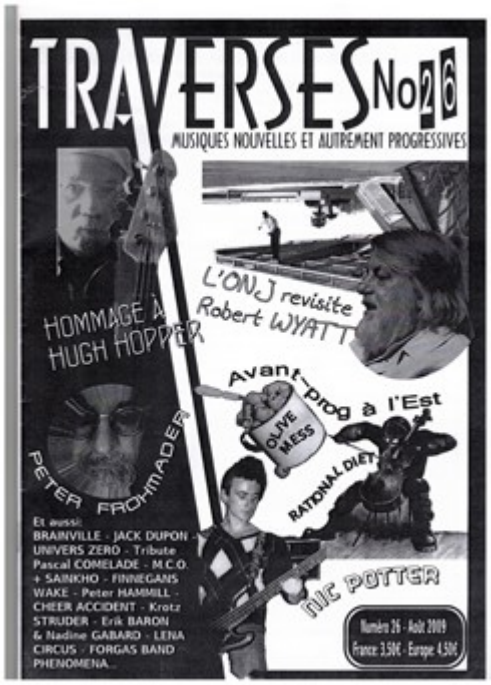
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Les Wyatteries de l'ONJ - Traverses - N° 26 - août 2009



DU DISQUE A LA SCENE

LES WYATTERIES DE L'ONJ

Contrairement à d'autres pointures de la famille « Softmachinienne » et de la scène musicale dite de Canterbury comme Elton DEAN, Pip PYLE. et plus récemment Hugh HOPPER, tous trois prématurément disparus, Robert WYATT est toujours bien de ce monde, mais les hommages musicaux qui lui sont rendus ne font que s'accroître, preuve d'une célébrité qui dépasse les sphères sus-citées et d'une aura qui rayonne sur plusieurs générations de fans et de passionnés pour son œuvre irréductible aux étiquettes de genres. La « panthéonisation » du chanteur et multi-instrumentiste anglais s'est poursuivie en 2009 avec la nouvelle création de L'ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE JAZZ : Around Robert WYATT. La volonté de son directeur artistique, Daniel YVINEC, est moins de verser dans une (vaine) restitution servile de la musique de WYATT que d'en proposer une relecture qui ouvre sur des perspectives obliques... et même cavalières!

Depuis une dizaine d'années, la musique de Robert WYATT a été amplement « tributée », dans toutes les orientations possibles et imaginables. En Italie, on a vu apparaître un obscur projet musical baptisé *The Different You - Robert WYATT E Noi*. En Grande-Bretagne, il y a eu le « tribute band » SOUPSONGS, avec Annie WHITEHEAD, Julie TIPPETTS et Phil MANZANERA. Côté français, on s'est aussi pas mal activé à rendre hommage au « Père Noël de la pataphysique », avec notamment Jean-Michel MARCHETTI et ses livres-disques *MW*, faisant intervenir moult personnalités des musiques bricolées ou improvisées (cinq volumes aux éditions Aencrages + un CD compilation sur Gazul) et la formation DONDESTAN! THE WYATT PROJECT, impliquant John GREAVES, Karen MANTLER, Hélène LABARRIÈRE, Sylvain KASSAP, etc. À son tour, l'ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE JAZZ (créé en 1986 sur une initiative du Ministère de la Culture) a décidé d'ajouter sa pierre à l'édifice décidément très prisé de l'hommage wyattien.

Team Spirit



Le projet *Around Robert WYATT* n'est que l'une des trois créations - les deux autres étant une revisitation de l'œuvre de Billie HOLIDAY (*Broadway in Satin*) et une B.O. de *Carmen*, film muet de Cecil B. DEMILLE - sur lesquelles travaille actuellement le nouvel ONJ, et qui lui vaut sa première réalisation discographique. Pour cet orchestre institutionnel et subventionné, l'enjeu est multiple. L'idée répond d'abord à une ambition de faire évoluer le potentiel créatif de l'orchestre, d'autant que la nomination à la tête de l'ONJ de Daniel YVINEC en tant que « directeur artistique » constitue déjà une grande première (les précédents directeurs n'étaient que « musicaux »).

Bassiste à la base mais en fait touche-à-tout instrumental, doublé d'un producteur et d'un compositeur, Daniel YVINEC s'est distingué par son parcours musical bigarré et cosmopolite (il a travaillé avec David SYLVIAN, Hector ZAZOU, John CALE, Ryuichi SAKAMOTO, DEAD CAN DANCE, Salif KEITA, Maceo PARKER, parmi d'autres...) et ses projets électro-jazz sous le nom YVINEK. Son rôle dans l'ONJ s'inscrit dans une perspective de mise en valeur de celui-ci en tant qu'espace de création ouvert à d'autres formes artistiques et aux croisements musicaux les plus variés, et ce en repensant totalement les modes d'approche de l'orchestre. Enfin, à titre plus individuel pour YVINEC, la musique de Robert WYATT est un catalyseur de longue date et, comme il le dit lui-même, un « point de convergence de beaucoup de musiques qui m'animent aujourd'hui »..

Comme à chaque changement de directeur, L'ONJ a également modifié son équipe et accueille aujourd'hui de jeunes multi-instrumentistes aux CV pour le moins éclectiques. La nouvelle mouture de l'ONJ déploie un kaléidoscope de teintes foisonnantes : saxophones, clarinettes, flûtes, synthétiseurs, ou encore piano (parfois préparé), trompette, banjo, guitare, basse, batterie et traitements électroniques.

The Wind of Change



Pour stimulante qu'elle soit, l'idée de rendre hommage à l'univers de WYATT risquait de s'échouer contre l'écueil de la redite en termes d'approche et de répertoire. Le catalogue wyattien est néanmoins plus large qu'il n'y paraît, et *Around Robert WYATT* recèle son lot de surprises.
Aux côtés de quelques classiques que tout bon tribute band se doit de reprendre (*Alifib, Shipbuilding, P.L.A., Alliance, 0 Caroline, Vandalusia*) figurent donc des « reprises de reprises », comme *Te Recuerdo Amanda* et *Del Mondo*, qui rappellent toute l'importance de la culture populaire sud-américaine chez WYATT, ou encore *Rangers in the Night*, une rareté

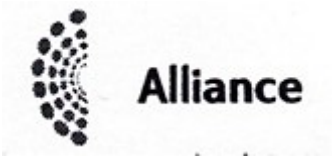
apparue sur la compilation thématique *Miniatures* de Morgan FISCHER et qui avait été repêchée naguère pour l'anthologie *Going Back a Bit*. Enfin, l'ONJ nous offre ce plaisir incomparable de reprendre des fleurons de la paire Peter BLEGVAD / John GREAVES : *Kew.Rhone*, *Gegenstand* et *The Song*, que Robert WYATT a déjà chantés sur l'album *Songs* de GREAVES.

Ce qui distingue surtout l'hommage de l'ONJ à WYATT des précédents tributes est que Daniel YVINEC a abordé l'exercice en s'appuyant sur deux postulats : partir de la voix et respecter le format chanson. Contre toute attente donc, *Around Robert WYATT* n'est pas un disque de jazz ni de versions jazzifiées des compositions de WYATT, mais bel et bien un disque de chansons.



Au commencement d'*Around Robert WYATT* était donc la voix. Ou plutôt les voix, puisqu'il a été fait appel à plusieurs chanteuses et chanteurs pas nécessairement issus de la sphère jazz. C'est ainsi la chanteuse malienne Rokia TRAORÉ qui s'est appropriée cette forteresse blindée qu'est *Alifib*. Plutôt que de chercher à « copier » périlleusement l'intimité émotionnelle de ce grand classique, elle en a projeté l'appel au loin. CAMILLE, YAEL NAÏM et l'actrice Irène JACOB sont les autres voix féminines choisies et chacune a cette qualité de pouvoir refléter les inflexions fragiles, graciles et cotonneuses du chant wyattien. Côté hommes, Daniel DARC (ex-TAXI GIRL) joue une nonchalance feutrée qui laisse perplexe sur O Caroline et ARNO verse dans le blues éméché un poil outré avec *Just as You are*, face au timbre plus espiègle de Yael NAIM. C'est du reste la seule reprise faite par un duo de voix (il est vrai que la version originale de ce morceau est l'une des rares où WYATT partage le chant avec une autre voix). Si le destin avait été moins funeste, on aurait apparemment eu droit à une reprise de *Sea Song* par Alain BASHUNG. S'il y a bien deux grands absents dans ce projet, ce sont ceux-là...

Le recours à des personnalités de la chanson française, du cinéma, du rock et de la world music paraîtra évidemment sacrilège à qui ne veut voir en Robert WYATT que le pionnier de ce croisement entre jazz, rock et psychédélisme de la fin des années 1960 avec SOFT MACHINE et MATCHING MOLE. Mais sa carrière soliste a cependant prouvé qu'il n'en est pas resté là, qu'il s'en est même royalement éloigné et qu'il a travaillé avec une infinité d'artistes provenant d'horizons très divers. Aux collaborations d'hier avec des tenants de l'avant-garde pop, rock et jazz de l'époque (Kevin AYERS, Keith TIPPETT, Michael MANTLER, HENRY COW, Nick MASON, Brian ENO...) se sont ajoutées des participations à des albums d'artistes aux univers plus « actuels » (Bruno COULAIS. Cristina DONÀ, BJÖRK, LA TORDUE et - tiens donc ! - Daniel DARC). Qu'on le veuille ou non, Robert WYATT est aussi devenu une icône d'un certain milieu pop moderne, et le choix des voix invitées sur *Around Robert WYATT* reflète cet état de choses.

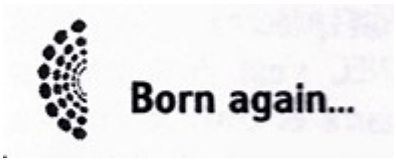


Mais sans doute le coup de maître de l'ONJ est d'avoir pu faire participer le « maître » en personne à ce disque. En plus d'avoir cautionné le projet, Robert WYATT y a laissé une trace significative en offrant son chant sur plusieurs morceaux. Singulièrement - et non sans perversité - ce ne sont pas sur des thèmes composés par lui que WYATT se fait entendre, mais sur des morceaux écrits par d'autres qu'il a déjà couverts. Ceux-ci constituent du reste une bonne moitié du répertoire sélectionné par YVINEC et expliquent pourquoi ce projet a été baptisé « autour de Robert WYATT ». A l'inverse du processus courant, les arrangements instrumentaux n'ont été conçus qu'une fois les voix enregistrées a cappella. Cette démarche a obligé l'ONJ à repenser ses pratiques, au risque de transformer ses instrumentistes en simples pupitres et musiciens de session pour des disques de chanson ou de variétés. C'était compter sans les prouesses d'arrangeur de Vincent ARTAUD,

réquisitionné pour l'occasion, qui a été chargé de confectionner les écrins les plus idoines pour enrober chaque chanson tout en permettant à l'orchestre de faire entendre le son qui lui est propre et à chacun de ses musiciens de faire un chorus, tradition jazz oblige. Chaque morceau retenu bénéficie donc de broderies et parures ouvragées et autorise un ou deux instrumentistes (différents à chaque fois) à effectuer une échappée soliste qui doit cependant rester concise.



Cela dit, YVINEC et ARTAUD ne se sont pas privés parfois de faire évoluer leurs adaptations au (grand) large des versions originelles. Écoutez l'album en aveugle, vous risquez de ne pas reconnaître instantanément *O Caroline*...



S'il ne fallait pas trahir l'univers tout en délicatesse de Robert WYATT il n'était pas question non plus de s'en tenir à une interprétation soumise et entravée à force d'être obséquieuse. Ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard si bon nombre de chansons retenues pour ce projet sont à la base très dépouillées, comme celles de l'album *Old Rottenhat* (*Alliance, P.LA, Vandalusia*) : elles autorisent de fait Daniel YVINEC et son équipe à tracer de nouveaux contours, à ornementer à loisir les interstices originels, à batifoler avec tact quand l'envie s'en fait sentir et à métamorphoser ces thèmes minimalistes en une luxuriante forêt de timbres et de lignes harmoniques sinueuses et ciselées. La polyinstrumentalité des musiciens de l'ONJ a favorisé un habillage façon orchestre de chambre qui préfère la finesse millimétrée à l'esbroufe sensationnaliste, et qui charrie ça et là des parfums d'ambiances à la Gil EVANS, Philip GLASS ou Pascal COMELADE.



Sur la durée, on peut reprocher cette tendance presque systématique à verser dans la joliesse en couches, dans l'« aquarellisation » des couleurs, la « pastellisation » des espaces et la « printanisation » des intentions wyattiennes. Certaines reprises échappent toutefois à ce tableau un rien trop chatoyant, comme Kew.Rhone, Vandalusia, Gegenstand, Rangers in the Night, et creusent des climats plus interlopes. Entre adoration et dévoiement du sujet, et entre raffinement et audace de son traitement, l'ONJ n'a pas fait de choix radical, et c'est ce qui rend au fond son album si attachant.

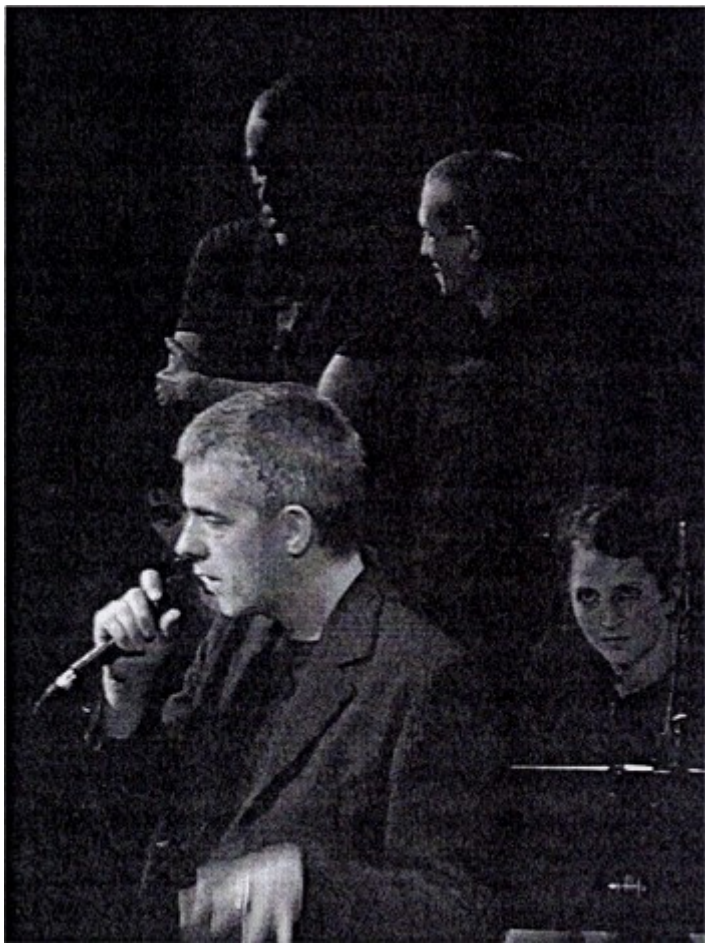
Around Robert WYATT en live : Sea without a Song

La méticulosité et la complexité des arrangements d'Around Robert WYATT, alliée à une remise à plat des fonctionnements usuels d'un orchestre de jazz, ne laissaient à priori pas supposer que telle création puisse trouver son chemin jusque sur scène. C'est pourtant ce qui s'est produit ce 23 mai 2009. Dans le cadre du Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés, à la Maison des Cultures du Monde de Paris, l'ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE JAZZ, appuyé par des projections vidéo expérimentales et improvisées réalisées par Éric VERNHES, a joué Around Robert WYATT en quasi-intégralité (manquait juste Kew.Rhone, dommage) et a remisé sur le tapis la démarche inhérente au disque. Il a néanmoins fallu tout le long du concert s'habituer à entendre les voix de l'album en « off ». Les musiciens devaient donc caler leurs interventions en fonction de ces voix virtuelles. Pour un public majoritairement jazz qui attendait sans doute que les musiciens de l'ONJ se mettent en valeur à travers des chorus élargis, la performance de ceux-ci, fidèle à l'orfèvrerie harmonique cousue main par Vincent ARTAUD sur le disque, est peut-être restée en travers de la gorge. Il n'y a guère que dans l'interlude improvisé par Eve RISSER au piano préparé et par l'invité spécial Erik TRUFFAZ avec sa trompette et ses pédales d'effets que les amateurs d'aventures instrumentales ont pu se régaler.

Force est d'admettre que le démarrage ne fut pas exempt de froideur à force d'application. Mais c'est le même Erik TRUFFAZ - qui s'est commis aussi avec bonheur sur *The Song* - qui a, dès sa première apparition au beau milieu du set, provoqué le frisson avec cette reprise instrumentale de *Sea Song* ! Sa prestation, émouvante et habitée, a sans conteste été le «highlight» de la soirée, la surprise du chef. En s'appropriant de la sorte le monument liminaire de *Rock Bottom*, TRUFFAZ a offert ce qu'un public jazzeux est plus habitué à venir écouter, à savoir une improvisation (bien sentie) sur un thème. De fait, on en vient à penser que, dans le cadre du concert, l'ONJ aurait dû se résoudre à jouer des versions instrumentales des morceaux choisis pour l'album, de manière à se donner plus de liberté.

Au lieu de cela, il a préféré défendre bec et ongles, au risque d'engendrer une certaine frustration, le parti-pris esthétique de son disque et restituer la dentelle complexe et précise de ses arrangements. Les voies de l'univers wyattien se remarquent pourtant aussi à cette absence de balisage trop strict et à cette réinvention perpétuelle des thèmes et des approches.

Mais quoi qu'il en soit, ce projet, dont les qualités posent autant de questions que ses défauts, mérite qu'on s'y attarde. De même que Robert WYATT a utilisé la chanson pour traduire son regard sur le jazz, Daniel YVINEC, avec une formation jazz qui s'approprie le format chanson, diffuse une vision oblique de l'œuvre wyattienne et en pointe des aboutissants qu'on ne lui avait peut-être pas soupçonnés.





CD ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE JAZZ

Around Robert WYATT
(Bee Jazz Records / Abeille Musique)

Article : Stéphane Fougère
Photos: Sylvie Hamon & Stéphane Fougère

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Robert Wyatt : Les voies d'une voix - Culture - Université de Liège - août 2009



Dans le parcours de Robert Wyatt se succèdent et se mêlent la liberté et l'engagement, l'exploration et la création, la souffrance et la sérénité.

Vocation, formation, exploration

Wyatt n'est le « produit » d'aucun « système ». Ses parents sont des intellectuels bohèmes et anticonformistes typiquement britanniques. Sa mère est journaliste, son père est psychologue. C'est certainement à eux que Robert doit son désir créateur et sa singularité, à la façon dont ils l'ont non pas éduqué, mais aidé à s'épanouir, sur des principes éducatifs empreints d'un grand « libéralisme ». À la fin des années 50, cet adolescent de Canterbury (il est né en 1945) écoute le jazz d'avant-garde (Charlie Mingus, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor) et la musique contemporaine, bien plus que le rock-'n'-roll. On raconte qu'il impressionnait son entourage en étant capable de chanter, note pour note, un solo de Charlie Parker.

Durant ces années de formation, il s'ouvre et touche à tout : peinture, écriture, mais surtout la musique. Fin 1960, un jeune Australien loue une chambre chez les parents de Robert : Daevid Allen amène la poésie improvisée, l'esprit de la Beat Generation, d'autres formes de jazz. Celui qui fut à l'époque le héros de Robert aura une grande influence sur lui.

La maison des Ellidge (Wyatt est le nom de sa mère) est ouverte à tous, et les condisciples du collège de Canterbury y viennent faire de la musique : on improvise, on expérimente... Robert découvre sa vocation, les percussions, en tapant d'abord sur divers objets ; mais il prendra finalement des leçons de batterie auprès d'un professionnel (dont les leçons paient la chambre...) - et non dans une école. Il se met aussi au chant. Deux groupes se forment successivement : Le Daevid Allen Trio, qui en 1963 se produira quelques soirs à Londres dans un show assez improbable de jazz et de poésie improvisée ; puis en 1964 les Wilde Flowers, qui rassemblent des amis tels que Mike Ratledge, Kevin Ayers ou les frères Brian et Hugh Hopper. Le groupe joue des reprises pop et des compositions propres, sans grande influence de leurs goûts les plus originaux. Mais les uns et les autres composent...

L'invention collective

En 1966, la pop anglaise approche de son apogée, avec pour courant montant le psychédélisme : quatre protagonistes forment le groupe **Soft Machine**, en apportant chacun sa touche : l'esprit beat de Daevid Allen, les mélodies et la voix de basse de Kevin Ayers, la rigueur du claviériste Mike Ratledge, le jeu de batterie et la voix de Robert Wyatt.



Soft Machine est un groupe à l'histoire chaotique : les changements de personnel sont multiples (les départs d'Allen puis d'Ayers, remplacé par Hopper, puis l'arrivée des instruments à vent) ; le rythme des concerts et des tournées, mais aussi les divergences croissantes, usent et tendent les relations internes ; les réorientations musicales amènent le groupe d'une pop psychédélique déjà mâtinée de jazz (le premier album : *The Soft Machine*, 1968) à une musique totalement neuve, qui fusionne rock et jazz, au même moment que Miles Davis, mais à partir du versant rock. Elle est notamment marquée par l'apport de plusieurs souffleurs, dont le saxophone Elton Dean, qui restera plus longtemps dans le groupe et contribuera beaucoup à son orientation. En très peu de temps (1969-1971), la musique de ce groupe expérimental passe de l'humour pataphysique du deuxième album (*Volume Two*, 1969) à un esprit beaucoup plus sérieux, un jazz plus austère dans lequel Robert Wyatt ne se sentira plus à l'aise *(Fourth*, 1971) : sa dernière composition pour le groupe est le long et superbe « Moon in June » sur le troisième album *(Third*, 1970), le chef-d'œuvre du groupe ; pendant l'année qui suit, l'évolution de Soft Machine ne laisse plus de place à la voix (et au style musical) de Wyatt, qui ressent l'orientation jazz que suivent Ratledge, Hopper et Dean comme un carcan trop étroit.

En 1971 il quitte le groupe puis en forme un autre, nommé par jeu de mots **Matching Mole**. C'est tout sauf le groupe d'un leader-chanteur. Chaque musicien est l'égal des autres. La musique est libre, collective, hors genres, tantôt improvisée et tantôt mélodique. (Deux albums : *Matching Mole* et *Little Red Record*, tous les deux en 1972.)

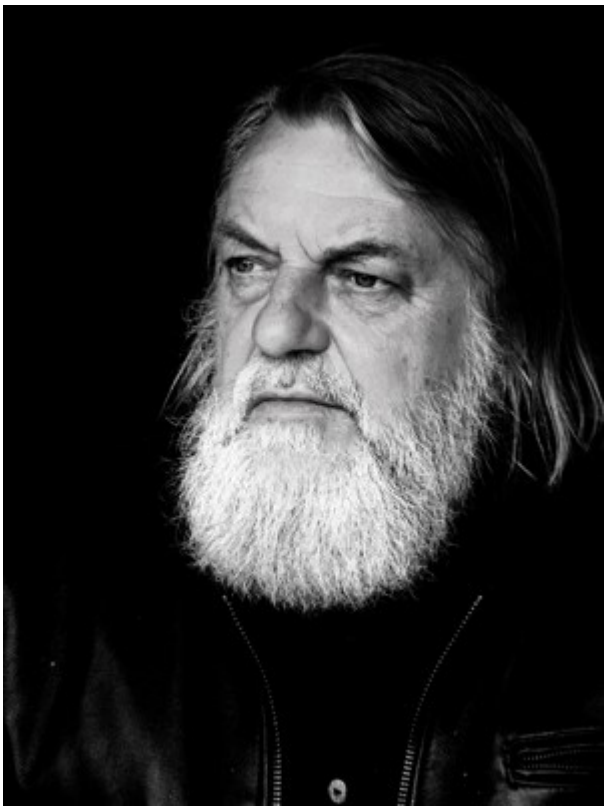
Puis vient l'accident : en juin 1973, une chute laisse Robert Wyatt paraplégique. Soutenu par la solidarité de ses amis musiciens, il sort du drame en entamant, à partir de 1974, une carrière solo exemplaire de 35 ans, où il s'affirme à la fois comme chanteur et comme compositeur.

Un artiste sincère

Depuis l'époque Soft Machine, et pour avoir participé à la période mythique de ce groupe novateur, Robert Wyatt jouit d'une aura considérable dans le milieu musical et parmi les amateurs de rock progressif.

Le **batteur** qu'il fut jusqu'en 1973 est souvent décrit comme « imaginatif » : son jeu est libre, lyrique, inventif, polyrythmique ; sous ses baguettes, la batterie devient un instrument à part entière (c'est particulièrement sensible sur les deux premiers albums du groupe), qui marque le rythme avec une légèreté scintillante, et dont souvent les lignes quasi mélodiques visent davantage à dialoguer avec les autres instruments - une batterie qui chante. (À partir de 1974,

contraint à ne plus disposer que de ses bras, il pratiquera encore les percussions, au son forcément plus clair et d'un style simplifié, mais il se tournera de plus en plus souvent vers le piano et les claviers.)



C'est à sa **voix** que de Robert Wyatt doit une grande part de son renom, tant auprès des musiciens qui feront appel à lui durant quarante ans (depuis 1969) qu'auprès d'un public de fans littéralement conquis à ses séductions. On peut multiplier à l'infini les adjectifs pour la qualifier : cristalline, lumineuse, douce, fragile, intense, souple, plaintive, mais aussi sombre, poignante - humaine. Elle paraît ténue, mais se révèle extrêmement riche : elle peut alterner l'aigu et le grave, la plus grande justesse avec une imprécision expressive et totalement volontaire. Wyatt peut aussi bien chanter les mélodies les plus simples ou se servir de sa voix comme d'un pur instrument, en scat ou par d'autres techniques.

Cette voix est particulièrement suggestive et belle lorsque par de multiples enregistrements superposés il en vient à s'accompagner lui-même, à faire dialoguer sa propre voix avec elle-même - technique qu'il emploiera avec bonheur dès le premier morceau du premier album de Soft Machine, et dans tous ses travaux solos jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

Ses **compositions** sont l'autre grande facette de son talent à laquelle s'attachent ses admirateurs. De ses expériences en groupes, il a tiré une écriture et un style qui, puisant leurs racines dans le jazz, ne peuvent se réduire à celui-ci, et certainement pas davantage à la simple musique rock. On le voit avec son album-phare, ***Rock Bottom***, qu'il publie en 1974, un an après son accident, et qui lui a valu une reconnaissance unanime (prix de l'académie Charles-Cros). Il contient certaines de ses plus belles compositions, qui mêlent les ingrédients les plus marquants de sa manière : mélodies simples ou longs enchaînements, improvisations collectives, atmosphères construites, minimalisme ou foisonnement des arrangements, voix sûre ou volontairement fausse - toutes marques que l'on retrouve dans son œuvre ultérieure, même si elle s'enregistre de plus en plus en solitaire, avec l'accompagnement occasionnel de partenaires fidèles (Hugh Hopper, Annie Whitehead).

Ses origines le laissent prévoir : Wyatt est empreint d'un **humour** assez britannique, qui émaille sa musique, ses paroles ou les titres de ses compositions. Deux exemples : sur le très pataphysique deuxième album de Soft Machine, il chante l'alphabet en anglais, à l'endroit puis à l'envers. Son premier album solo (1970), collection d'expérimentations vocales et instrumentales, s'intitule *The End of an Ear*... mais, même plus ou moins renié par son auteur, il reste audible !

Autre exemple : sur la pochette de l'album de son retour après les années 70 (*Nothing Can Stop Us*, 1982), on trouve cette précision en forme de revendication artistique : « Vous pouvez relever quelques faiblesses techniques dans certaines de mes prestations - un rythme hésitant ici, une note peu sûre là - elles sont évidemment entièrement délibérées et reproduites comme témoignage de ma sincérité presque maladive. »

Enfin il importe de signaler **l'engagement** politique de Robert Wyatt, radicalement situé à gauche, qui l'a un temps affilié au Parti communiste et qui l'amène à se mobiliser, via les paroles de ses chansons, pour les causes les plus notoires ou les plus oubliées, comme, par exemple, la Palestine (« Dondestan » sur *Dondestan*) ou le Timor oriental (« East Timor » sur *Old Rottenhat*). Lorsqu'il reprend une chanson, c'est généralement en raison de sa

portée politique ou humanitaire ; parmi ses plus belles reprises, on citera « Biko » de Peter Gabriel ; « Strange Fruit » (Billie Holiday), « Caimanera/Guantenamera », « Te Recuerdo Amanda », « Hasta Siempre Comandante ». Marquante fut son interprétation du « Shipbuilding » d'Elvis Costello, contre la guerre des Malouines. Il a aussi collaboré au dernier album de David Gilmour (On an Island (2006), qui avait participé à Cuckooland en 2003.

Robert Wyatt est une figure pour de nombreux musiciens. Il a tissé dès les années 60 un large réseau de connaissances et de connexions, dans les milieux musicaux les plus divers. Les qualités de sa voix font de lui un chanteur recherché, dont les **collaborations** sont innombrables. Relevons notamment ses participations à plusieurs productions de Michael Mantler (*The Hapless Child*, 1976, où il chante les textes cruels ou inquiétants d'Edward Gorey ; *Silence*, 1977, d'après Harold Pinter) et de Carla Bley (*Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports*, 1981) ; son interprétation de deux compositions pour voix de John Cage, sous l'égide de Brian Eno (1976) ; sa participation vocale à la musique du *Peuple migrateur* (2001) par Bruno Coulais (ainsi qu'à son *Stabat mater*, 2005). Il a aussi collaboré au dernier album de David Gilmour, le leader de Pink Floyd (*On an Island*, 2006), qui avait joué sur un morceau de *Cuckooland* en 2003.

C'est un seul et même parcours à travers les genres musicaux, du rock au jazz et ailleurs, qui aura mené ce musicien atypique et génial du jeune chien fou des années 60 au sage tranquille des année 90 et 2000.

Discographie sélective



The Soft Machine, *The Soft Machine* [1er album] , 1968 :
Une musique psychédélique, avec des influences du jazz et de la musique répétitive ; un dialogue entre quatre instruments solistes : un clavier, une basse, une batterie et une voix, à l'unisson ou en contrepoint. Percutant dès les premières notes (« Hope For Happiness »), posées par la voix et les drums de Wyatt.

The Soft Machine, *Volume Two*, 1969 :
L'humour pataphysique sur une face, une longue composition jazz-rock, obstinée et exploratoire, sur l'autre. Le jazz-rock s'invente sur le versant anglais ; la voix de Wyatt explore ses multiples modes non académiques.

The Soft Machine, *Third*, 1970 :
Quatre longs morceaux, un par face de ce double album ; sur une bonne partie du seul morceau chanté, son « Moon in June », Wyatt joue de tous les instruments. Sa voix y mène une longue mélopée sur fond d'exploration sonore.

Robert Wyatt, *Rock Bottom*, 1974 :
le chef-d'œuvre et le tournant (voir plus haut) ; chaque morceau est un monument, des deux longues parties de « Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road » aux deux pièces jumelles « Alifib/Alife », dédiés à sa compagne Alfreda Benge, qui illustre toutes ses pochettes et deviendra sa parolière.



Robert Wyatt, *Old Rottenhat*, 1985 :
Un album « maison ». À nouveau Wyatt joue de tous les instruments : les percussions claires, les claviers aux sonorités électroniques, quasi « cheap », la voix dont brille et vibre la fragilité, sur des mélodies d'une

grande beauté (« The Age of Self », « The British Road », « Gharbzadegi », « P.L.A »...). [Cet album est repris tout ou partie sur *Compilation*, 1990, et *Mid-Eighties*, 1993.]

Robert Wyatt, *Shleep*, 1997 :
Dans les années 90 Wyatt prend son temps pour produire de nouveaux albums. Après *Dondestan* en 1991, *Shleep* voit à nouveau Wyatt faire appel à des musiciens-accompagnateurs (dont Brian Eno, Philip Catherine, Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera). La musique y trouve une variété d'orchestration qui sert bien la richesse vocale de Wyatt et son inventivité mélodique et stylistique.



Robert Wyatt, *Comicopera*, 2007 :
Le dernier opus en date, après *Cuckooland* en 2003. Un album construit en trois « actes », avec une dominante de rythmes jazzy, mais très variés (« Cancion de Julieta », sur un texte de Lorca, renoue avec les ambiances orchestrales de *Rock Bottom*). Les discrètes marques du temps exacerbent les multiples qualités de la voix : polyphonique sur « Be Serious » ; tendue et tragique sur « Out of the Blue » ; nonchalante, comme chantée au fond d'un pub, dans « A Beautiful Place » ; empreinte d'une touchante fêlure sur fond de cuivres souples et discrets dans les superbes « A.W.O.L. » et « You You ». Chaque chanson est un monde musical, vocal et émotionnel en soi.

Gérald Purnelle

Août 2009

Gérald Purnelle enseigne les formes poétiques modernes à l'ULg. Ses recherches actuelles ont pour principal objet la métrique, l'histoire des formes poétiques et la poésie française des XIXe et XXe siècles.

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Robert Wyatt - Interview - BatteurOnline - 5 juillet 2009

ROBERT WYATT - INTERVIEW



Robert Wyatt est un musicien rare, atypique, un personnage discret devenu un des artistes les plus respectés des plus grands. Batteur légendaire du non moins légendaire Soft Machine, groupe à la suite duquel il fonda Matching Mole (appréciez le jeu de mots), il est devenu chanteur multi instrumentiste en chaise roulante, suite à un soirée bien arrosée où il passa par la fenêtre du troisième étage. Il poursuit depuis une oeuvre unique, en marge de toutes les modes, marquée par la créativité et la sensibilité. C'est un homme extrêmement doux et délicat, à l'oeil vif et l'esprit en alerte, naturellement drôle et sympathique.

Cet entretien a eu lieu en 1997, à l'occasion de la sortie de son album Shleep.

Sur la pochette du premier album de Soft Machine, vous vous définissez comme " un simple batteur de rock'n'roll ", mais l'auteur affirme que vous êtes bien plus que ça.

Ces notes sont extraites d'un article de Mike Zwerin pour Down Beat (revue institutionnelle du jazz, NDR), intitulé " Les batteurs différents ", ce qui m'impressionnait terriblement. Il m'avait interviewé dans le Sud de la France lors d'un festival où je partageais l'affiche avec Tony Williams qui, plus jeune que moi, jouait déjà très sérieusement. Le simple fait d'apparaître dans Down Beat me semblait présomptueux.

Mais vous étiez effectivement un batteur différent, votre musique n'était ni rock, ni jazz, mais totalement nouvelle.

La plupart des batteurs que j'aime en savent beaucoup plus qu'ils n'en font, comme mon batteur de rock favori du moment, Steve White, qui joue avec Paul Weller. On entend nettement son évolution avec le Style Council , il avait 18 ans et essayait des plans à la Kenny Clarke, même si le groupe ne jouait pas dans ce style.

C'est ce que vous écoutiez quand vous vous êtes mis à la batterie ?

Le premier avec lequel j'ai " joué " était Max Roach, le disque de ce fameux concert de 1953 à Massey Hall avec Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie et Charles Mingus. Je jouais des balais, enfin, avec des rouleaux de papier, sur la table. Mon loisir favori consiste toujours à jouer sur mes disques préférés à la maison.



Donc vous travaillez toujours la batterie ?

À cette époque je le faisais, mais quand j'ai dû me confronter au volume des groupes électriques, le jazz ne convenait plus. Mes modèles de transition furent Ginger Baker et surtout Mitch Mitchell, qui m'a donné beaucoup de liberté. Mais jouer à ce volume posait d'autres problèmes, à commencer par le fait qu'un électrophone n'est pas assez puissant pour pouvoir jouer de la batterie avec des baguettes.

Avec Soft Machine, vous jouiez fort ?

Oh oui, très fort. L'organiste (Mike Ratledge, NDR) portait d'ailleurs des protections auditives.

Et votre batterie était totalement reprise ?

Je ne me souviens pas, il me semble qu'il n'y avait que des micros d'ambiance. Ce qui me causait du souci, car pour moi l'élément principal de la batterie est la charleston, sans doute une trace de mon goût pour le jazz. Dans la soul music, on garde le tempo sur la charleston fermée, mais de manière moins " legato "que dans le jazz. J'aime vraiment cet accessoire. Avec juste une charleston, un pied et deux mains, il y a tellement à faire. À cette époque, je commençais sérieusement à songer à me mettre aux claviers. Je comptais jouer de la batterie en multipiste en studio, puis faire appel à des amis batteurs comme Laurie Allen pour la scène.

Sur " Rock Bottom ", les sons de percussions sont assez étonnants. Malgré votre handicap vous jouiez sur une batterie classique ?

C'était la vieille batterie d'un copain, mais il y a très peu de batterie en fait, j'ai surtout joué sur un plateau en étain et des boîtes de conserve. Ce qui me manquait était le jeu de charleston, c'est pourquoi j'ai fait appel à Laurie Allen, qui était le musicien le plus sensible que je connaissais. Il jouait aussi bien du rock que du jazz ou de la musique sud-africaine.

En revanche, avant votre accident, sur " The End Of An Ear ", vous jouiez bien d'une vraie batterie...

Oui, sur celle de Mitch Mitchell. C'était une Ludwig en érable, fabriquée spécialement pour Mitch, avec une caisse claire Greetsch, j'en ai joué de 1968 à la fin de ma carrière de batteur. Il me l'avait donnée, et j'ai tout fait avec, aussi bien Soft Machine que Matching Mole. Il avait remarqué que j'avais un mal de chien avec ma Premier, qui n'était pas assez puissante pour ce que jouais, ou alors, le problème venait de moi … Quoi qu'il en soit, Mitch ne supportait plus de me voir me battre avec mon matos. Un soir, il avait emprunté ma batterie pour jouer avec Hendrix et me l'avait rendue en me disant que c'était de la daube.

Vous étiez très proche de Mitch Mitchell car vous avez tourné ensemble lors de votre première tournée américaine avec, à la même affiche, The Jimi Hendrix Experience et Soft Machine. Comment s'est faite cette connexion ?

Nous avions le même manager et répétions au même endroit. Et je connaissais le bassiste, Noël Redding, qui était au départ guitariste dans un groupe de Folkestone. Ils ont été fantastiques avec nous, tant en termes d'entraide que d'inspiration.

Vous avez eu l'occasion de boeuffer avec Jimi ?

Les autres membres du groupe affirment que nous avons joué avec Hendrix mais je n'en ai aucun souvenir. En 68, je vivais à Los Angeles, je n'avais plus de groupe et je partageais une maison avec les gens de l'Experience. Ils avaient loué un studio à temps plein et m'avaient proposé de l'utiliser. J'y ai donc enregistré quelques chansons, sur lesquelles Hendrix a fait quelques parties de basse. La bande n'existe plus mais il reste la matrice métallique, de très mauvaise qualité bien que nettoyée par un ingénieur du son canadien. Ça figure sur une compilation, " Flotsam and Jetsam ", mais ça n'a vraiment valeur que de souvenir.

Et qu'est donc devenue cette Ludwig que Mitch Mitchell vous a donnée ?

Je l'ai toujours, elle est chez moi. Je l'ai ressortie récemment pour la prêter à Mitch qui en avait besoin pour une émission sur Jimi Hendrix pour la télévision anglaise. Elle sonne toujours aussi bien.



Pourquoi avez-vous quitté Soft Machine ?

Je ne suis pas parti, j'ai été viré ! Je ne sais pas pourquoi, ça s'est fait sur un simple coup de fil. Demandez aux autres …

Peut-être preniez-vous trop d'importance dans le groupe ?

De toute façon, ils n'appréciaient pas le fait que je chante.

Votre façon de chanter est pourtant unique, comment l'avez-vous développée ?

Le premier groupe pop que j'ai vu sur scène, c'était Them, avec Van Morrisson. J'avais été très impressionné par le fait qu'il porte un T-shirt dégueulasse, je n'avais jamais vu quelqu'un s'en foutre à ce point sur scène (rires). Ceci dit, c'était aussi un sacré chanteur, comme Steve Marriott. Mais je n'ai jamais été attiré par les voix d'hommes, à la maison je chantais plutôt sur Dionne Warwick. Ou si, en voix d'hommes, j'aimais bien les falsetto Tamla Motown, comme Smokey Robinson.

Vous avez toujours chanté en jouant de la batterie ?

Au départ, non, je ne faisais que jouer de la batterie. Quand j'ai voulu chanter, il a fallu que je trouve quelqu'un pour jouer de ce foutu instrument, j'ai alors dégoté Richard Coughlan, le cousin de Richard Sinclair (membre fondateur de Hartfield And The North). Quand il jouait de la batterie, je pouvais chanter.

Mais avec Soft Machine, vous faisiez bien les deux en même temps ?

Oui (rires), et c'était pour le moins problématique. Mais une fois, auparavant, je m'étais retrouvé avec les Wilde Flowers à faire un tremplin sans Richard Coughlan et nous ne voulions pas faire d'instrumental. Nous avons choisi I Put A Spell A you qui est un 6/8 assez facile, et des reprises de James Brown. Et en fait, dans les morceaux de James, la voix et la batterie sont rarement jouées ensemble : (il chante) I Feel Good, ta la la la …

Comment arriviez-vous à improviser à la batterie et au chant simultanément ?

Très mal (rires). Je n'avais jamais fait ça avant les années 70, et ce n'est qu'en studio que je suis parvenu à faire quelque chose de correct.

Que ce soit avec Soft Machine ou Matching Mole, vous avez toujours été très friand d'improvisation, non ? Hum, c'est vrai, mais j'ai aussi toujours été très attaché aux structures, à la forme. Certaines de mes contributions à la musique sont indécelables. Par exemple, j'aimerais bien que la fin des solos soit écrite, pour qu'à la fin d'une pièce apparemment totalement libre on se retrouve à nouveau dans une partie très arrangée.

C’est le genre de procédé que l’on trouvait beaucoup chez Don Cherry. Mais à côté de ça, je n’aime pas que la musique sonne trop travaillée.

Les concerts de Soft Machine étaient-ils différents chaque soir ?

Je n’en ai plus aucune idée, car je n’ai pas dessoûlé pendant 10 ans ! J’ai du mal à me souvenir de quoi que ce soit.

Comment arriviez-vous à jouer dans ces conditions ?

Très mal (rires). Et mon tempo est toujours merdique, j’accélère et je ralentis tout le temps. Mais maintenant je m’en fous, ce n’est plus un problème pour moi.

A propos de tempo, vous n’avez jamais eu recours à des programmations ou à des boîtes à rythmes sur vos disques ?

Oh que non ! Je suis un musicien de Néanderthal, j’utilise le bois, le métal et les peaux.

Vos sons de clavier ne sont pas non plus ultramodernes …

Je me suis servi d’un Mellotron en studio parce qu’il était là, mais je n’en ai jamais eu à la maison. Je n’avais de toute façon pas de local avant 1974. J’étais donc incapable de pratiquer quoi que ce soit, la scène était le seul endroit où je jouais. Deux personnes m’ont filé des tuyaux pour la batterie, un américain nommé George Nydel, et un batteur catalan Ramon Barran. Ils m’ont montré comment tenir correctement les baguettes et tout ça. La chose la plus importante que m’ait fait comprendre George est que les sections rythmiques européennes étaient bonnes individuellement mais incapables de battre ensemble comme un seul cœur. Il m’a fait écouter les disques de Count Basie, ou ma rythmique préférée, celle de Miles Davis avec Jimmy Cobb et Wynton Kelly. Chaque musicien est distinct mais ils jouent comme un seul homme. Il m’a appris ainsi à écouter autant qu’à jouer.



Vous avez toujours écouté beaucoup de musique ?

Oui, surtout dans ma période scolaire, c’est sans doute pour cette raison que j’étais un cancre, pour autant que je me souvienne de ma scolarité. Je travaillais bien en classe, mais à la maison j’écoutais des disques au lieu de faire mes devoirs.

A propos de rythmique, comment cela se passait-il avec Hugh Hopper lorsqu’il est devenu bassiste de Soft Machine ?

Très franchement, ce que j’ai toujours aimé chez Hugh, et qui a fait que je l’invite ensuite sur mes albums, ce sont surtout ses qualités mélodiques et qu’il sait parfaitement s’adapter aux mots d’une chanson. Mais je ne me suis vraiment soucié de bassiste que ces dernières années, notamment quand j’ai enregistré avec Chucho Merchan. Je joue moi-même de la basse depuis longtemps, et je le fais généralement sur mes disques. Mais, par exemple, sur " Shleep ", sur le morceau avec Philip Catherine, c’est Chucho qui joue de la contrebasse. Il a fait par ailleurs la partie de grosse caisse en complément de mes percussions. Et il y a aussi un joueur de djembés et de tablas, Gary Adzukx, car je suis incapable de maîtriser la technique de ces instruments. A l’avenir, j’essaierai d’avoir toujours des bassistes de la trempe de Chucho. Je dis ça sans dénigrer personne, chacun a ses qualités, comme Bill Mc Cormick qui joue de très belles parties en complément de la batterie de Laurie Allen sur " Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard ", et j’ai beaucoup apprécié de jouer avec le bassiste du Brotherhood Of Breath. Ces deux-là sont les meilleurs souvenirs de bassiste que j’ai.

Les rapports avec le bassiste sont capitaux pour tout batteur, non ?

Oui, c'est ce que George m'avait enseigné à l'écoute de la rythmique Paul Chambers/Jimmy Cobb. Une autre relation forte est celle de Charles Mingus avec Dannie Richmond. Ils parvenaient chacun à jouer par devant ou derrière l'autre tout en se retrouvant exactement soudés, voilà aussi une rythmique extraordinaire.

Mais la mélodie semble rester primordiale pour vous. Comment composez-vous ?

Au piano, toujours. Il m'arrive aussi d'écrire des chansons à partir de mélodies de gens qui ne sont pas chanteurs, comme Hugh Hopper ou Philip Catherine. C'est un peu comme ce qu'avait fait Joni Mitchell pour ses chansons d'après Mingus (l'album " Mingus ", NDR). Certaines mélodies sont si belles qu'elles doivent être chantées, comme les thèmes de Monk. Il y a des morceaux de " Dondestan "ou de " Schleep "qui proviennent de fragments ou de pages entières de mon carnet de notes. J'ai toujours des idées plein mes calepins. Je ne trouve pas que composer soit une chose aisée. C'est facile d'avoir des petites phrases ou des idées rythmiques, mais élaborer complètement une chanson est quelque chose de très difficile à mes yeux. J'ai découvert que les mots ont une musique en eux, ils me suggèrent leur propre musique, très chantante. Il y a aussi des séquences que j'avais dans la tête depuis des années sans savoir qu'en faire, Alfie les a mises en forme (Alfreda Benge, compagne et muse de Robert, qui créé le visuel de ses albums, NDR). Quant à la méthode, je ne sais pas, je me mets au piano et les idées viennent. Enfin, je prie pour ça.

Sur le premier album de Soft Machine, dans So Boot If At All, il y a un extraordinaire solo de batterie qui semble improvisé, mais après une écoute attentive, il s'agit de deux parties superposées qui se téléscopent d'un canal à l'autre.

C'est une combinaison d'organisation et d'improvisation. Le travail en studio se rapproche du travail d'un peintre ou d'un cinéaste : il y a un premier jet spontané, puis on construit quelque chose autour. Mais je faisais un peu ça sur scène aussi. J'aime improviser car il y a des choses qui ne se créent que dans l'urgence, mais il y en a d'autres qui nécessitent de la réflexion. Je prenais mes bandes et j'essayais d'en tirer profit de la même façon que j'écoutais les disques de jazz, je bâtissais alors une superposition complémentaire.

Vous procédez de la même manière pour vos chansons ?

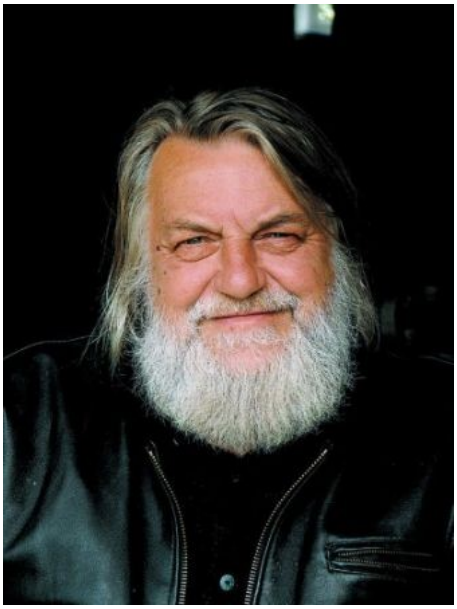
Je veille à maintenir l'intérêt, c'est un problème propre à tout chanteur. On peut faire beaucoup avec la texture d'une voix, mais je me suis aperçu que, finalement, j'écoutais surtout de la musique instrumentale, pour la variété des dynamiques et les possibilités physiques de chaque instrument. Quand je chante tout un album, je me dis que pour que quelqu'un puisse écouter cinq chansons d'affilée, il doit se passer quelques chose. C'est pourquoi j'aime reposer mes oreilles de ma propre voix.

Les paroles sont-elles très importantes pour vous ?

Elles le sont, mais je ne sais pas ce que j'écris quand je l'écris.

Comme par exemple celle de Signed Curtain, sur le premier album de Matching Mole, où le texte dit simplement : " Ceci est le premier couplet, et ça c'est le refrain … "?

Il y a tellement de conneries qui ont été écrites en guise de paroles que je me suis demandé quel était le rôle des mots. Ils doivent dire la vérité, mais qu'est-ce que la vérité, sur un plan philosophique, si ce n'est de dire que " C'est le premier couplet ", etc. Si je suis honnête, c'est la seule chose dont je sois sûr, donc la seule que je puisse dire. Quand on chante pour un public, cela semble être une façon de communiquer, mais c'est au fond si abstrait … on ne peut pas réellement attendre de quelqu'un qu'il tienne compte de ce que l'on raconte. L'écoute est subjective, chaque auditeur se crée sa propre interprétation de ce qu'il entend, il faut être lucide sur ce point.



Comment s'est passée la collaboration avec Nick Mason, le batteur de Pink Floyd, qui a produit " Rock Bottom " ?

Il m'a été d'une aide précieuse, il a une grande expérience du studio, il y a passé beaucoup de temps. Pas moi. Chaque fois que je rentrais en studio, il fallait faire vite, car ça coûte tellement cher. Je me demande comment les gens parviennent à apprendre le studio. Les Pink Floyd n'ont jamais été pauvres, ils ont toujours eu les moyens de faire les choses, et ils ont su les utiliser à bon escient. Par ailleurs, du fait que Nick Mason est batteur, il y avait une certaine camaraderie entre nous. Je crois même que les batteurs sont plus copains avec d'autres batteurs qu'avec les membres de leur propre groupe, mais ça vous le savez déjà. Nick sait installer un climat décontracté, il essaie de comprendre où tu veux en venir, mais il ne t'impose jamais rien.

Pour beaucoup, " Rock Bottom " reste un chef-d'œuvre absolu. Comment considérez-vous ce disque aujourd'hui ?

Je ne fais pas chroniques de disques, moi (rires). Je vais le réécouter bientôt car le label Ryko compte rééditer mon catalogue, et je vais pouvoir veiller à ce que tout soit fait correctement. Autrement, il y a des années que je n'ai pas réécouté ma production, je n'ai plus du tout ça en tête.

Votre premier album sous votre nom " The End Of An Ear " était quant à lui très marqué par le jazz.

La relation que l'on a avec une musique est toujours particulière. Pour moi, le jazz est du progressive rock, le jazz et le rock se sont développés ensemble, c'est manifeste dans les vieux disques de blues. Oui, le jazz a toujours été du rock progressif, c'est ce qu'il a toujours été. Je voulais briser les barrières de la pop, ce n'est pas du tout une autre musique. En un sens, la musique de danse américaine n'a toujours été que du jazz.

A la veille des années 70, y avait-il une fraternité entre les musiciens de jazz et ceux de rock ?

Je n'ai aucun souvenir d'une communauté rock, mais d'une communauté de batteurs oui. Mais il est vrai que les gens que je fréquentais à l'époque étaient pour la plupart des musiciens de jazz. J'ai toujours été attiré plutôt par les instruments acoustiques que ceux électriques, je suis un percussionniste de Néanderthal, je le répète, j'aime sentir les musiciens souffler ou frapper, je suis bien plus sensible à ce contact physique que l'on trouve dans le jazz. J'ai besoin de sentir une compagnie, c'est sans doute une question de génération. Même quand j'étais à fond dans le milieu rock, j'écoutais toujours des albums de Gil Evans. Je souhaitais agrandir le champ du rock, mais je faisais une erreur, on ne peut importer le dialecte et les accents du langage américain dans la musique anglaise sans sonner idiot. Certains y parviennent tout naturellement mais pas moi. Quelqu'un comme Paul Weller est plus proche de Marvin Gaye que n'importe quel chanteur anglais, mais cela semble faire partie de lui. Dans mon cas, il aurait fallu tout réinventer avec une

espèce d'accent anglais.

La scène ne vous manque jamais ?

Je ne pourrai plus remonter sur scène, j'ai trop le trac. Lorsque j'étais batteur, ma batterie me servait de cuirasse. Ce qui pourrait me manquer aujourd'hui est la complicité entre musiciens, mais pour " Shleep "nous avons créé une atmosphère très conviviale. D'habitude, quand on rentre en studio, on arrive à onze heures du matin, tout est noir, on se retrouve seul avec un ingénieur du son qui vous propose une tasse de thé. Comment peut-on créer quelque chose de magique dans ces conditions ? Je préfère qu'il y ait une fenêtre, même si on entend un peu les bruits de la circulation. C'est de cette façon que j'ai enregistré " Rock Bottom ", une écoute attentive révèle des bruits de vaches, de tracteurs, etc., car nous avions les fenêtres grandes ouvertes. Et " Hapless Child "de Mike Mantler, tout comme ce que j'ai fait avec Carla Bley, a été enregistré dans de telles conditions. Nous n'étions pas ensemble en studio le même jour, mais quelle sensation de jouer sur la rythmique Jack Dejohnette/Steve Swallow/Carla Bley ! Un véritable voyage au paradis.

Avec qui rêveriez-vous de chanter ?

Je crois qu'on peu difficilement demander mieux que ces trois-là, Dejohnette/Swallow/Bley. Mais bon, il y a certains musiciens londoniens auxquels je ferais volontiers appels i j'avais beaucoup d'argent, ces musiciens de jazz apparus dans les années 80 dans le sillage de Courtney Pine, comme Steve Williamson qui est vraiment excellent. Et j'aime bien ce que le label Nato a produit avec Tony Coe, qui est en fait le meilleur musicien de toute l'Angleterre, je pense. Il peut absolument tout faire, il a d'ailleurs suggéré que nous réalisions quelque chose ensemble. J'ai aussi le souvenir d'avoir enregistré avec Didier Malherbe, qui a le plus beau son de flûte du monde. Et Lol Coxhill est un musicien fabuleux.

Il existe énormément de traces audiovisuelles de vos passages en France. Est-il envisageable qu'un jour sortent des disques ou des vidéos de ces concerts ?

Ça me fait peur. J'ai entendu récemment la bande d'un concert de Matching Mole à l'Olympia, j'étais tellement ivre que c'en est choquant. A franchement parler, je souhaiterais plutôt que toutes ces bandes disparaissent dans un grand bûcher !

Pourtant certaines prestations de Soft Machine étaient pour le moins remarquables !

C'est possible, mais je ne peux plus écouter ce putain de groupe maintenant, c'est terminé pour moi.

Avez-vous lu " Faux Mouvements ", le livre qui vous est consacré ?

Je l'ai vu mais pas lu, c'est beaucoup trop années 60 à mon goût, ah ah ah.

On vous y voit cependant avec des configurations de batterie pour le moins bizarre ?

Je me suis toujours bien amusé avec les batteries. Il y a quelque chose que je n'ai jamais dit, mais comme vous êtes spécialisé ça peut vous intéresser. J'ai toujours voulu trouver un moyen d'éviter l'utilisation habituelle de la caisse claire, surtout dans le rock, c'est tellement abrupt, dictatorial en un sens. Tou kou pab tou kou pab, c'est adapté au rythm'n'blues, mais dans le rock ça ne vit pas assez à mon goût. Sur mon dernier album enregistré en tant que batteur, en l'occurrence " Little Red Record ", le deuxième de Matching Mole, j'ai joué sur un kit normal mais avec la caisse claire jouée tout le temps sans le timbre. De fait, il n'y a pas de caisse claire sur ce disque. C'est le genre d'expérience que j'aimais bien tenter. Il m'arrivait aussi parfois de jouer tout un concert avec les mains.

Parfois, vous placiez le tom bass à la place de la caisse claire, celle-ci étant à la place du tom médium !

J'aimais bien faire ça, c'était l'occasion de varier les figures. Parfois, j'inversais la grosse caisse et la charleston mais je jouais comme si le kit était normal, ce qui créait instantanément une sorte de rythme de reggae à la charleston (rires).

C'est peut-être à cause de ça que



vous avez été viré de Soft Machine ?

Sans doute (rires). Mais vous savez, j'ai un seuil d'ennui très bas, je me lasse très vite. J'ai besoin de tout chambouler souvent pour voir ce qui se passe. En studio, il m'est arrivé de jouer la grosse caisse aux baguettes, voire aux balais.

Les percussions électroniques ne vous ont jamais tenté ?

Une fois j'ai acheté un synthétiseur, le moins cher possible. Il suffisait d'ajouter de la reverb pour le faire sonner dix fois plus cher, après tout ce n'est qu'un signal. J'avais ce clavier qui faisait : di dadoum pab tsch prr, je m'en suis servi pour Shrink Wrap sur " Dondestan ", mais simplement parce que je l'avais acheté, alors merde, il fallait bien l'utiliser.

Et la batterie ne vous manque jamais ?

Hum, la charleston me manque toujours, car je n'entends jamais personne jouer ce que j'aimerais, quoique Steve White s'en approche parfois. Je n'ai jamais pensé en termes de batterie ou chant ou autre, mais seulement en termes de besoins musicaux.

Après votre accident, ça a dû être terrible de ne plus jamais pouvoir jouer de la batterie ?

Mmm, non, pas tellement. Pour être honnête, la nouvelle situation qui était la mienne était plutôt excitante. Sans cet accident, les choses auraient sûrement été tout autres (rires). C'est en parfaite adéquation avec ma personnalité que de me retrouver contraint de faire de tout nouveaux choix.

Mais à ce moment, vous étiez déjà sur une autre voie, non ?

J'essayais de composer pour le troisième album de Matching Mole et j'avais un problème. Si je jouais de la batterie, il me fallait recruter un clavieriste, mais si j'en avais un, je ne savais pas exactement quoi lui demander, pas du jazz, pas du rock, même si c'était clair dans ma tête. Le fait de ne plus pouvoir jouer de la batterie m'a permis de réaliser mon rêve : prendre le total contrôle des claviers.

Si vous pouviez rejouer de la batterie, que joueriez-vous ?

Hum, c'est une bonne question. Je pense que je me débrouillerais pour avoir le contact de Sonny Rollins, et je lui demanderais de faire une reprise de l'album en trio au Village Vanguard avec Elvin Jones et Wilbur Ware. Peut-être prendrions-nous Chucho à la basse, et j'essaierais de jouer dans l'esprit d'Elvin à cette époque. Sur ce disque, il a un son purement bois, presque primitif, c'est ce dont j'ai toujours rêvé. Mais il faut pour cela un soliste exceptionnel. La plupart de mes idoles sont mortes, à part Sonny Rollins qui est toujours là. Oui, je crois que ça sonnerait bien (sourire).

Propos recueillis par Férid Bannour

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Wyatt entre les lignes - Les inrockuptibles - N° 703 - du 19 mai 2009





Une belle relecture oblique du répertoire de ROBERT WYATT PAR L'ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE JAZZ, sous la direction de Daniel Yvinec et avec quelques guests inattendus.

L'art de la reprise n'est pas un simple exercice de réinterprétation, qui mènerait selon les cas de la reproduction la plus littérale (la méthode du copiste) au contre-pied le plus spectaculaire (la méthode de l'iconoclaste). S'approprier une pièce musicale, c'est aussi essayer de la relire entre les lignes, partir du principe qu'elle n'a pas tout dit, débusquer tout ce qu'elle peut contenir comme sous-entendus. L'an passé, les frères Belmondo, entourés de musiciens de jazz et du classique, avaient jeté un éclairage nouveau sur l'œuvre du Brésilien Milton Nascimento : leurs mains amoureuses avaient fait surgir de ses chansons un capiteux bouquet de pensées savantes, qui n'attendaient que ça pour s'épanouir en pleine lumière.

Aujourd'hui, c'est au tour de l'Orchestre National de Jazz d'accomplir ce travail de décryptage sur le répertoire protéiforme de Robert Wyatt, tout aussi propice aux

expériences de langage. Un projet initié par le contrebassiste, multi-instrumentiste et producteur Daniel Yvinec, qui assume la direction de l'ensemble depuis 2008. *"Ce qui m'intéressait chez Wyatt, indique ce dernier, c'est que ses chansons ne sont pas figées dans un style, dans des certitudes esthétiques, ni même dans une forme de perfection : ça nous laissait une marge de manœuvre considérable."*

Fin connaisseur de la musique de l'Anglais, qu'il fréquente depuis l'enfance et la découverte hallucinée de l'album RockBottom, Yvinec n'a pour autant pas souhaité réaliser un disque de fan. "Ce projet n'est pas un hommage à Wyatt, mais une vision de son univers à travers des prismes différents des siens. Parmi les musiciens de l'ONJ, certains ne savaient pas qui il était. Je n'ai pas cherché à les évangéliser, à leur passer ses disques en boucle: je ne voulais pas qu'ils aient forcément en tête les versions d'origine." Le coup de maître d'Yvinec est d'avoir réussi à impliquer Wyatt lui-même dans cette aventure. Le chanteur apparaît sur quatre titres, enregistrés en version piano-voix avant d'être confiés à la patte d'arrangeur de Vincent Artaud, qui leur a tricoté des parures orchestrales ouvragées, parfois très éloignées des trames harmoniques d'origine.



Cette méthode a aussi été adoptée pour les autres chansons, ouvertes à un cortège inattendu d'interprètes - Rokia Traoré, Camille, Yael Naim, Irène Jacob, Arno et Daniel Darc.

Le résultat, pas exempt de reproches (les deux voix mâles frisent le hors-sujet), comporte aussi son lot d'excellentes surprises - Traoré et Naim flottent en état de grâce, tandis que Camille se montre d'une émouvante sobriété. "*Je tenais à des gens aux identités fortes, aux univers marqués, explique Yvinec. Avec des admirateurs avérés de Wyatt, on se serait retrouvé avec un disque de musicologue beaucoup moins ludique*."

On peut aussi écouter Around Robert Wyatt comme une étude fouillée sur l'art de l'Anglais. Tirant vers les univers de Gil Evans, de Claude Debussy ou de Weather Report, l'album replace le songwriter dans une histoire élargie, au-delà du contexte pop-rock dans lequel il est souvent enfermé. Le principal intéressé ne s'y est pas trompé. "Je ne suis pas un musicien qualifié, a-t-il écrit à Yvinec, mais si je l'étais j'aime à penser que je ferais des disques comme celui-ci." Révéler à un musicien des qualités qu'il ne se soupçonnait pas: c'est aussi la marque d'un album de reprises réussi.

Richard Robert

Photo : *Annabelle Tiaffay*



Album Around Robert Wyatt (Bée Jazz/Abeille Musique)
Concerts Le 23 mai à Paris (Festival Saint-Germain-des-Prés), le 2 juillet à Dijon, le 26 à Sédières
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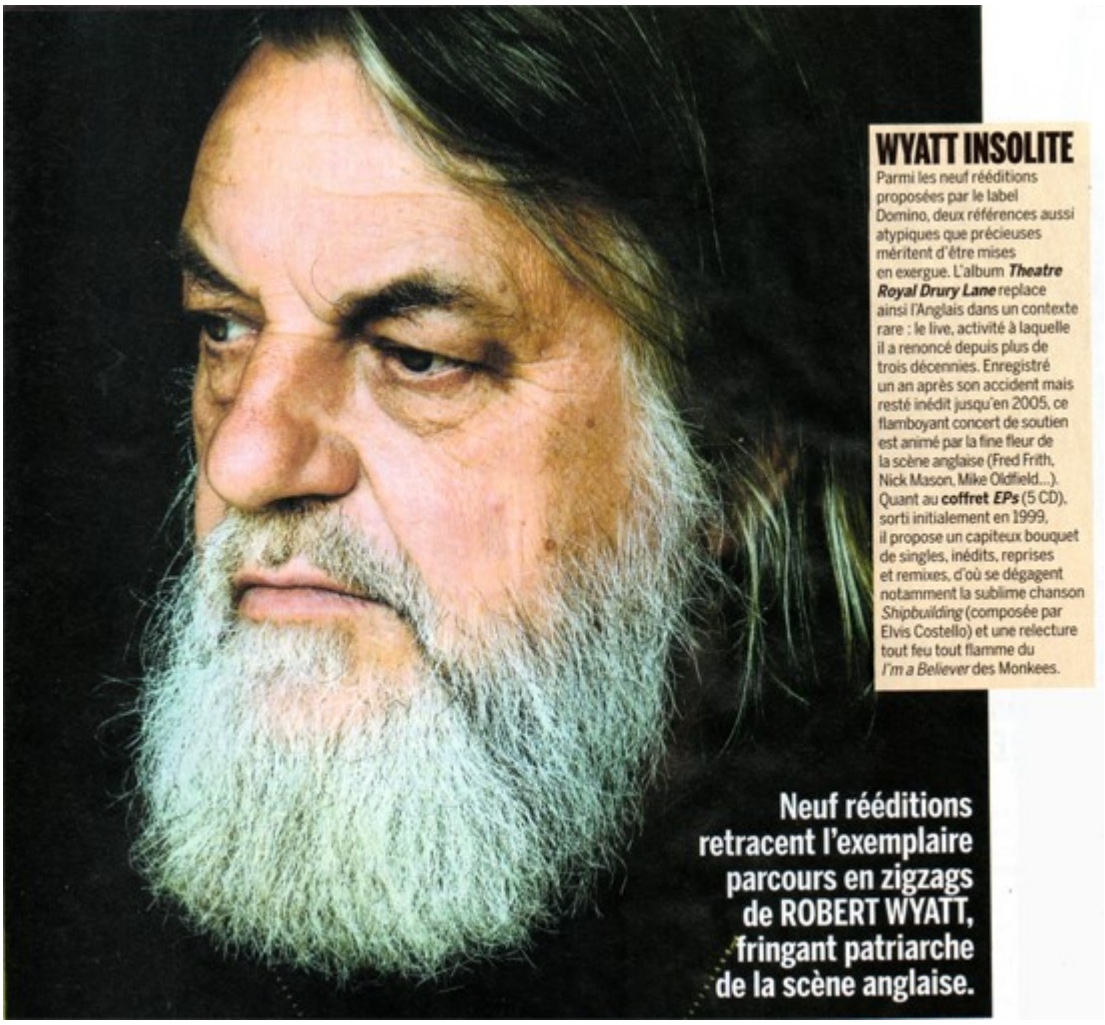
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Tout sur Robert - Les inrockuptibles - N° 678 - du 25 novembre au 1er décembre 2008



TOUT SUR ROBERT

Il y a un an, alors qu'on l'invitait à tirer un bilan de sa carrière solo, entamée en 1970, Robert Wyatt eut cette réponse : ***"A vrai dire, je n'imaginais pas que j'éprouverais aussi longtemps le besoin déjouer de la musique. Ce n'est que dans les années 90 que j'ai compris à quel point c'était une drogue dont je ne pouvais pas me passer... Je me suis toujours senti étranger au monde des musiciens : j'étais convaincu que je n'étais qu'un visiteur, un touriste. Par le passé, certains ne se sont d'ailleurs pas privés de me le faire comprendre !***" En prononçant ces derniers mots, l'Anglais n'avait montré aucun signe d'amertume. Et pour cause : à 62 ans, cet authentique franc-tireur, zigzaguant depuis toujours entre les lignes de la pop, du jazz, de l'electro ou de l'expérimentation, venait une fois de plus de se percher au faîte de son inspiration avec son dernier album, l'ambitieux *Comicopera.*



WYATT INSOLITE

Parmi les neuf rééditions proposées par le label Domino, deux références aussi atypiques que précieuses méritent d'être mises en exergue. L'album ***Theatre Royal Drury Lane*** replace ainsi l'Anglais dans un contexte rare : le live, activité à laquelle il a renoncé depuis plus de trois décennies. Enregistré un an après son accident mais resté inédit jusqu'en 2005, ce flamboyant concert de soutien est animé par la fine fleur de la scène anglaise (Fred Frith, Nick Mason, Mike Oldfield...). Quant au **coffret *EPs*** (5 CD), sorti initialement en 1999, il propose un capiteux bouquet de singles, inédits, reprises et remixes, d'où se dégagent notamment la sublime chanson *Shipbuilding* (composée par Elvis Costello) et une relecture tout feu tout flamme du *I'm a Believer* des Monkees.

Neuf rééditions retracent l'exemplaire parcours en zigzags de ROBERT WYATT, fringant patriarche de la scène anglaise.

Mais ses propos rappelaient que son parcours - dont ces neuf rééditions reprennent le tracé erratique - n'avait pas été une allée de roses.

Avant de devenir le fringant patriarche d'une vaste parentèle de musiciens sans œillères ni barrières, Wyatt a dû déjouer toutes les embûches que le sort s'est plu à semer sur son chemin. A l'aube des années 70, il lui faut ainsi digérer son départ douloureux de Soft Machine, groupe phare de l'agit-pop anglaise dont sa batterie, sa plume et sa voix acrobates ont largement façonné l'esthétique. Il panse alors ses plaies en bricolant un premier disque solo (*The End of an Ear*, non réédité), puis en s'ouvrant un nouveau terrain de jeu avec sa formation Matching Mole. Wyatt plane enfin, mais il va être fauché en plein vol : le 1er juin 1973, lors d'une fête copieusement arrosée, il chute du quatrième étage d'un immeuble londonien. Désormais cloué sur un fauteuil roulant, il réussit à brosser *Rock Bottom* (1974) : une peinture sonore de la plus belle eau, dont la singulière grâce plastique (coulures de claviers, voix translucide) marquera nombre d'esprits, de Pascal Comelade à Mark Hollis (Talk Talk), de David Sylvian aux éclaireurs du post-rock.

Réaliser un chef-d'œuvre est une chose ; lui survivre en est une autre. Wyatt y parvient dès *Ruth Is Stranger than Richard* (1975). Dans cet album aussi bariolé et débridé que *Rock Bottom* était épuré et intimiste, il laisse libre cours à ses deux grandes passions : la mélodie et l'impro. Sans disparaître des radars (il collabore avec Brian Eno, Michael Mantler ou Henry Cow), Wyatt entre ensuite dans une longue période d'hibernation créatrice. Repoussé dans la marge, il ne refait surface qu'avec *Nothing Can Stop Us* (1982), compilation de singles composée de reprises magnifiquement dépouillées (Chic, Violeta Parra, Billie Holiday...) et tendue par la colère que lui inspire un thatchérisme alors triomphant.

> Wyatt, plus fort et libre que jamais, incarne un possible maître à penser pour tous les amateurs d'école buissonnière.

Dans la dèche, Robert Wyatt trouvera pourtant les ressources pour composer en solitaire de brillants albums de quat' sous : à base de claviers cheap, *Old Rottenhat* (1985) et *Dondestan* (1991) posent les bases d'un arte povera unique en son genre, qui met en valeur l'aveuglante blancheur de son chant.



Par la suite, l'Anglais passera encore par les affres de la dépression. Mais la vie lui sourira à nouveau avec *Shleep* (1997) puis *Cuckooland* (2003) : deux disques irisés de mille reflets sonores (de la pop chercheuse au be-bop, de l'ambient aux musiques latines), qui marquent à la fois un retour au collectif (Eno, Paul Weller ou Karen Mantler l'épaulent dans ces projets) et à des conditions d'enregistrement décentes. Aujourd'hui, Wyatt plus fort et libre que jamais, incarne un possible maître à penser pour tous les amateurs d'école buissonnière : pas si mal pour un homme qui pensait traverser comme une ombre l'univers de la musique.

Richard Robert

Albums Rock Bottom ; Comicopera ; Ruth Is Stranger... Nothing Can Stop Us ; Old Rottenhat ; Dondestan ; Shleep ;Cuckooland', Théâtre Royal Drury Lane (Domino/Pias)
Coffret EPs (5 CD, Domino/Pias) www.dominorecordco.com

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Robert Wyatt "J'essaie d'écrire normalement" + dossiers "L'école de Canterbury" et "Soft Machine" - Muziq - N°14 - mai-juin 2008

ROBERT WYATT "J'ESSAIE D'ECRIRE NORMALEMENT"



C'est toujours un plaisir de s'entretenir avec Robert Wyatt parce qu'il n'a pas l'habitude de ressasser les mêmes histoires. Bien qu'il puisse prétendre au statut d'étoile au firmament de la musique, il a conservé sa générosité et s'excuse du moindre retard quand d'autres prendraient des poses snobinardes et distantes. La musique s'en ressent. Heureusement. La sienne est simple. Son minimalisme est complexe, ses complexes ont forgé son art. L'accident qui l'a cloué sur une chaise roulante il y a une trentaine d'années lui a permis de trouver sa voix. Le timbre est inimitable, voix blanche haut perchée avec un léger cheveu sur la langue. Le batteur légendaire de Soft Machine et de Matching Mole est devenu un chanteur de charme, plus rouge que rose, l'inventeur d'un style où beaucoup se reconnaissent indirectement. Son romantisme possède un souffle épique qu'il met au service des grandes causes comme des petites. Son quotidien réfléchit son engagement. Il peut chanter en français, en espagnol, en italien comme en anglais. Considéré comme un musicien pop, il a toujours revendiqué le jazz sans négliger les élucubrations électroacoustiques de laboratoires.

Depuis l'album "Rock Bottom" où il la chantait déjà, il forme un couple avec Alfreda Benge, sa compagne, parolière et peintre de ses albums. Ensemble, ils continuent à apprendre à vivre. Un bel exemple.

Quoiqu'authentiquement culte dans un monde musical infesté d'icônes jetables, Robert Wyatt se définit, non sans ironie, comme « compositeur de musique impopulaire ». À l'un de ses confrères et amis musiciens, *Muziq* a demandé d'aller amicalement questionner ce très, très grand Robert. PAR JEAN-JACQUES BIRGÉ

Comment vas-tu?
Je pense que je vais bien. Je ne m'intéresse pas assez à moi pour en être certain, mais je me sens bien.

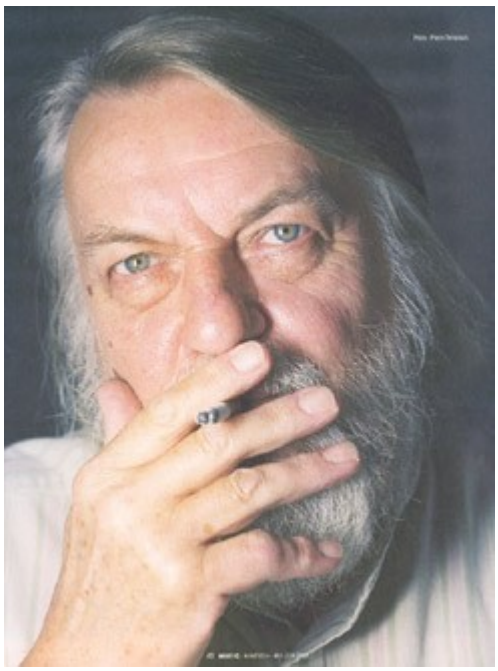
Et Alfie?
Elle n'arrête pas, elle fait cinq choses à la fois.

Quel est son rôle exactement?
Je la compare à la face cachée de la lune. Sans elle, il ne resterait de moi qu'une fine page de papier jauni. Elle me tient en vie, ce qui n'a jamais été dans le domaine de mes préoccupations. Elle fait donc attention que je respecte notre contrat de mariage, me nourrissant de vitamines et m'empêchant boire quand elle peut. Mais elle m'écrit aussi des paroles de chansons, elle peint en visualisant littéralement les disques et elle se bat comme un tigre pour s'assurer que je sois payé...

Tu as changé de maison de production...
J'ai quitté Ryko qui a été rachetée par une grande major américaine anonyme!

Tu as pris ton indépendance?
Alfie a été très maligne en stipulant sur les contrats que l'on ne pouvait être cédés à aucun autre producteur en cas de rachat. Domino va pouvoir sortir les anciens albums au fur et à mesure. C'est une petite compagnie qui fait le maximum pour m'aider. Comme je ne peux ni jouer sur scène ni poser pour de superbes photos pornographiques, j'ai accepté de faire quelques interviews en public. C'est aussi une façon pour moi de rencontrer du monde.

Tu t'es longuement expliqué sur le titre de ton dernier album "Comicopera", en précisant la différence entre la comédie qui se joue entre les hommes et la tragédie qui concerne les dieux. Mais y a-t-il des opéras dans l'histoire de la musique qui t'ont marqué?
L'année dernière, je suis allé écouter "Mithridate", un opéra que Mozart écrivit lorsqu'il avait 14 ans, l'âge des boys bands! C'est l'histoire d'un roi des Balkans qui combat Rome. La forme est très archaïque, bien avant l'opéra moderne.



> Zoom

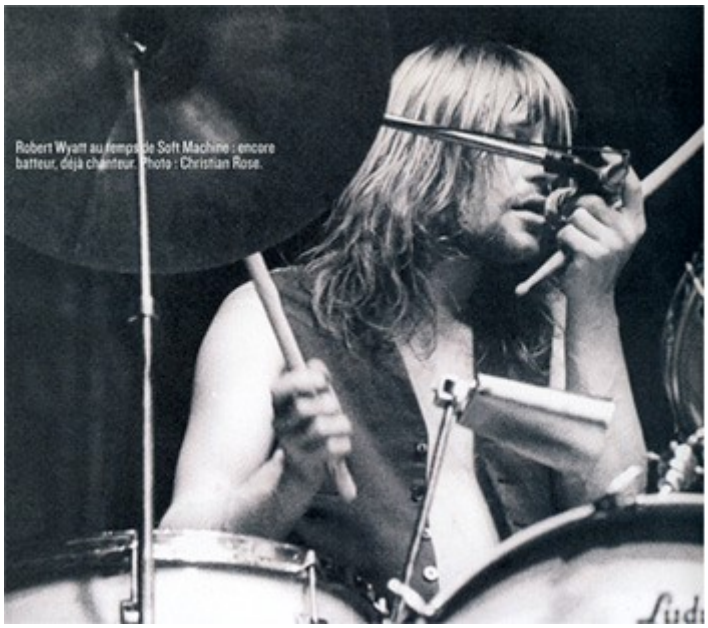
La mise en scène à Covent Garden était très dramatique, un des trucs les plus avant-gardistes que j'aie vus et entendus, les hommes chantant comme des femmes, les femmes comme des hommes, extrêmement étrange. C'était un petit orchestre mozartien, avec très peu de cuivres, ils sont apparus seulement au XIXe siècle, juste un clavier, pas encore de piano, des cordes, des clarinettes, c'était si délicat, même si l'orchestre était amplifié, si beau que cela m'a frappé. En titrant "Opera" je n'ai jamais tenté de m'en approcher, c'eût été ridicule, mais j'aime beaucoup l'idée de présenter des chansons sans que ce soit un cycle, avec des voix et des personnages qui vont et viennent, des échanges entre une femme et un homme... J'ai toujours aimé les duos genre Ray Charles et Betty Carter...

C'est ainsi que tu t'es adressé à Monica Vasconcelos?
Sur le second morceau, il y a la voix superbe et délicieuse de Monica et sur le premier celle de Seaming To (ses parents sont de Hong-Kong) qui sonne comme un Theremin. Elle joue très bien de la clarinette, alors je lui ai dit que c'était juste quelques notes d'un putain de concerto pour clarinette de Mozart, et elle a bien voulu en jouer et chanter. Il y a une autre fille qui joue du sax baryton sur *Out Of The Blue*, Beverley Chadwick.

A propos de voix, il y a tant de gens qui adorent la tienne. Gamin, est-ce que tu te rendais compte que tu possédais un timbre particulier?
Bien sûr que non. Je chantais avec mon père, au piano, des trucs simples, des cantiques de Noël. Je ne comprends toujours pas pourquoi les gens aiment ma voix. J'essaie seulement d'éviter ce qui ne me semble pas nécessaire.

Pourtant, on la reconnait bien dès la première seconde...
C'est marrant, parce que je ne peux pas vraiment la transformer. Il faudra que je sorte un

disque anonyme où je chanterai autrement! Fred Frith regrette que je ne fasse plus de trucs bizarres avec ma voix. J'ai perdu pas mal dans les aigus. Chaque année, ma tessiture se réduit. Je voudrais seulement chanter d'une manière aussi naturelle que je parle, sans aucun artifice, mais tout de même avec des notes!



> Zoom

Tu es souvent sollicité pour participer à tel ou tel projet discographique, autant par des célébrités que par des musiciens peu connus. Comment fais-tu pour choisir?
Les gens qui m'écrivent ont le plus souvent une bonne idée de ce que je peux aimer, et j'apprécie la plupart des choses que l'on m'envoie, mais je pressens ce qui fonctionnera ou pas. Je dois aimer le texte et être capable de jouer les notes.

Comment fais-tu pour enregistrer chez toi, à Louth?
J'ai un petit magnéto huit pistes et quelques micros. J'ai enregistré les parties italiennes ici, mais la majeure partie du disque et les voix ont été enregistrées au studio de Phil Manzanera. Alfie me conduit à Londres où l'on peut rester dans l'appartement de Phil... Je fais tout ce que je peux à la maison, parce que le temps de studio est onéreux, même si Phil fait le maximum pour moi. Particulièrement pour "Comicopera", je voulais que d'autres musiciens jouent les accords, surtout dans le premier tiers du disque. J'ai tout préparé le plus correctement possible en amont, une sorte de maquette ou de squelette avec le bon feeling et les vraies notes pour qu'ils saisissent l'atmosphère de chaque chanson.

J'ai lu que tu voulais qu'ils jouent tous ensemble...
J'aurais bien aimé, mais j'ai travaillé avec seulement un à la fois. C'est un orchestre imaginaire. C'est dans mon imagination, comme ma révolution et pas mal d'autres choses... C'est ce que font les artistes, ils ne font qu'imaginer...

Tu joues de plus en plus de trompette...
Cela m'amuse beaucoup. Elle est par terre à côté de moi. Je joue par-dessus des disques tout le temps. J'en joue lorsque je ne chante pas, comme récemment avec David Gilmour ou dans Clear Frame, le quartet de Charles Hayward avec Lol Coxhill, Orphy Robinson et Hugh Hopper. J'aurais dû enregistrer avec eux, mais j'en ai été empêché par la neige, alors ils m'ont envoyé la bande et j'ai ajouté quelques secondes de cornet.

Tu improvises...
J'improvise beaucoup plus que les gens ne l'imaginent. Les musiciens de jazz préparent sur ce quoi ils improviseront. Lorsque je travaille, j'essaie de faire le contraire. Mes compositions sont le fruit de mes improvisations. Chaque fois que je chante un air, que je joue une suite d'accords ou un rythme, cela change du tout au tout d'un jour à l'autre. J'enregistre une foule d'attaques différentes sur la même idée et je conserve la meilleure pour n'organiser tout cela qu'à la fin. Par exemple, Alfie a écrit les paroles de *You You* sur une partie de clavier que j'avais totalement improvisée. J'improvise des heures sur la même suite d'accords pour ne garder que ce qui va sonner comme un morceau composé.

La musique existe-t-elle toujours avant les paroles?
Oui, absolument. Si j'écris d'abord les paroles, cela s'entend parce que l'air est fonctionnel, comme sur *Be Serious*, ou à la fin de "Rock Bottom", des morceaux très rythmiques, sans presque aucune mélodie. Cela m'arrive aussi pour des textes d'Alfie comme *Cuckoo Madame* ou *Sight Of The Wind* sur le précédent. Des gens pour qui j'ai enregistré comme Steve Nieve ou Michael Mantler ont cette approche du texte et savent les mettre en musique.

Dans ton dernier disque, "Comicopera", le mot comic me fait penser au Collège de Pataphysique. Est-ce que tu y appartiens toujours ?
Je ne pense pas que l'on puisse jamais le quitter. On en prend pour perpète! mon rôle officiel aurait été de diriger l'orchestre dans sa marche triomphante, mais cela ne s'est jamais produit. C'était du temps où j'étais batteur. Je ne pourrais plus m'exécuter. J'espère néanmoins rester un "petit-fils Ubu" toute ma vie.



Est-ce que cela a quelque chose à voir avec ta manière de fabriquer les lettres que tu envoies, lorsque tu écris sur des petits bouts de papier déchirés, tes collages?
Je le faisais déjà. C'est peut-être pour cela qu'ils m'ont demandé de me joindre à eux...

Tu es très fidèle à tes musiciens...
Les trois derniers disques constituent une petite trilogie de mon orchestre imaginaire. Cela a commencé avec le studio de Phil et Jamie, et puis Annie Whitehead; Paul Weller est venu jouer sur quelques morceaux; trouver Gilad et Yaron, deux formidables musiciens israéliens, a été magique, ils s'investissent et jouent avec tant de passion..."Comicopera" est construit en trois parties. La première est tendre. La seconde a des implications sociales...

Elle est assez ironique, même si l'ironie est un concept que je n'aime pas beaucoup. c'est une sorte de revue de l'Englandry. *[NDLR: "anglouillard", comme on dit franchouillard].*

Dans la dernière partie, *Away With The Fairies*, ce sont des chansons que tu avais déjà enregistrées sur des compilations d'autres musiciens...
Oui, ce sont presque tous des remixes d'anciens morceaux. Parmi tout ce que j'ai fait, j'avais la sensation qu'ils faisaient partie de moi-même et je désirais les sortir de leur clandestinité. La distribution de disques est si injuste, lorsque les albums ne sont pas produits en Angleterre ou aux Etats-Unis. Alfie était particulièrement fière du *Lorca*, c'est elle qui a eu l'idée de faire jouer l'archet par le contrebassiste colombien Chucho Merchan, c'est un peu son bébé. Elle voulait que ce soit entendu par plus de monde.

Un jour que je t'interviewais pour le *Journal des allumés*, je t'ai demandé quelle profession je devais écrire et tu m'as répond "*compositeur de musique impopulaire*"...
Oui... Alfie souhaiterait que j'écrive de la musique populaire, ça aiderait pour l'intendance, mais je ne peux pas l'imaginer. J'essaie d'écrire normalement. Je suis très impressionné par le luxe de ceux qui écrivent excentrique; ils ont de la chance d'avoir le choix. Je ne désire que faire des albums normaux. De temps en temps, je réécoute le mien en espérant qu'il est normal, mais je me rends compte qu'il est étrange.

Est-ce que tu es toujours en colère, contre le monde? Il t'arrive encore d'aller manifester?
Je ne lève plus beaucoup le poing. Parfois je me joins aux autres, par exemple pour les manifs contre la guerre

en Irak, juste pour dire que l'on n'a pas le droit de faire cela en notre nom, c'est tout. Je suis trop fatigué pour être en colère. Après des siècles de sagesse, nous sommes toujours gouvernés par des adolescents perturbés. J'essaie de rester à l'écart de ce qui sent mauvais. J'ignore l'impact de ce que je fais, mais j'en ai besoin pour mon confort psychique. Dans la troisième partie de "Comicopera", ce n'est pas seulement négatif de parler de toute cette merde impérialiste des peuples qui parlent anglais, c'est aussi montrer qu'être anglais n'est pas forcément un facteur dominant. C'est pour cela que j'aime chanter dans d'autres langues et laisser la place à d'autres instrumentistes... D'ailleurs, avant que l'on se sépare, je voudrais encore te remercier de m'avoir présenté Hélène Labarrière qui a fait un si beau CD... *[NDLR: "Les Temps changent", Emouvance.]*



CD "Comicopera (Domino/Pias)

Jean-Jacques Birgé



Illustration de Laurie Lewis extraite de "The Rotter's Club" de Hatfield And The North.

L'école de Canterbury

Dans le rôle de berceau de l'un des courants les plus novateurs de la scène musicale anglaise, la très conservatrice capitale du Kent n'avait rien de prédestiné. C'est pourtant sur les bancs du collège local que se trouve réunie une bande de musiciens en herbe, futurs piliers d'une école d'un tout autre genre... Passées les premières jams, plutôt *free*, naissent en 1964 les **Wilde Flowers,** première branche d'un arbre généalogique particulièrement luxuriant. Les aînés fonderont **Soft Machine,** qui après avoir breveté le son Canterbury, subtil équilibre entre raffinement jazzy et évidence pop, rehaussé d'une bonne dose d'humour, le délaissera vite au profit du jazz.

HÉRITIERS DE LA MACHINE MOLLE

On le retrouvera un temps chez les cadets, rebaptisés **Caravan,** avec les albums "If I Could Do It All Over Again..." et "In The Land Of Grey And Pink", et leur pop parfumée de jazz (double inversé du Soft de "Third"), où alternent parties vocales mélodieuses et excursions instrumentales menées par l'orgue saturé de David Sinclair. Mais son ambition plafonne : il n'osera jamais s'aventurer franchement hors des frontières rassurantes de la pop.

Après la jazzification tentée sur "Waterloo Lily", Pye Hastings fait définitivement le choix du rock – encore ambitieux sur les excellents "For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night" (1973), où entre en scène le violoniste Geoff Richardson, et "Live At Fairfield Halls" (1974), mais il se perdra dans les turbulences de la fin des années 70, délaissant sa poésie instrumentale pour ne conserver que les mélodies accrocheuses.

Formé en 1971 par Robert Wyatt après son divorce de **Soft Machine, Matching Mole** en revendique l'héritage par jeu de mots interposé, mais remplace le saxophone par la guitare, celle genres, Hatfield s'imposera le temps de deux albums miraculeux comme le représentant le plus accompli du style Canterbury. Hélas son idéal démocratique ne résistera pas à l'affirmation d'ambitions individuelles. C'est ainsi que Stewart crée **National Health.** D'abord sextette codirigé avec l'ex-**Gilgamesh** Alan Gowen, il enregistrera en 1977 un premier opus aux orchestrations chatoyantes, plus proche du rock progressif que du pur Canterbury, avant de se resserrer sur "Of Queues And Cures" autour d'un quatuor pluraliste à la Hatfield (Miller et le batteur Pip Pyle sont de la partie), le bassiste John Greaves (ex-Henry Cow) ajoutant une touche plus RIO.

APRÈS L'ÂGE D'OR

Ce sera l'ultime chef-d'œuvre canterburien. Les années 80 seront plus difficiles : le mélange des genres n'est plus dans l'air du temps. Les ténors s'éclipsent, les autres sont sommés de choisir leur camp : certains tenteront leur chance dans la pop ; la majorité poursuivra son chemin sur un mode plus jazz – les **Soft Heap, In Cahoots** et autres **Short Wave,** permutations infinies d'un même noyau de musiciens –, n'intéressant hélas qu'un public de plus en plus restreint. Le son Canterbury aura entre-temps fait des émules un peu partout : le **Quiet Sun** du futur guitariste de Roxy Music, Phil Manzanera (un très bel album posthume, "Mainstream") en Angleterre, **Moving Gelatine Plates** ou **Forgas** en France, **Supersister** aux Pays-Bas, tous héritiers directs du Soft Machine de "Volume Two" ; les **Muffins** (États-Unis), sorte de croisement entre Hatfield et Sun Ra ; **Kultivator** (Suède), mâtiné de zeuhl ; ou flirtant avec le RIO, **Picchio Dal Pozzo** (Italie) et **Cos** (Belgique).

AYMERIC LEROY

de Phil Miller. Deux albums ponctueront sa brève existence : le premier commence par une sublime ballade nappée de piano et de Mellotron, *O Caroline*, et se poursuit sur un mode free-rock expérimental ; le second, "Little Red Record", tempère cette austérité par des gags et des thèmes plus consistants. Hélas, le succès ne sera pas au rendez-vous, et Wyatt sabordera prématurément sa « taupe assortie ».

DEUXIÈME GÉNÉRATION

C'est **Hatfield And The North** qui héritera du flambeau. On retrouve chez ce "supergroupe", nettement sous influence du Soft de 1969, le même mélange de pop-songs nourries d'humour absurde et autoréférentiel, et d'échappées instrumentales complexes et jazzy, dominées par les claviers typiquement canterburiens de Dave Stewart - jeune prodige issu de **Egg**, trio revisitant (l'excellent "The Polite Force") les balbutiements classico-rock des Nice à l'aune de la sophistication moderniste de Stravinsky, et acolyte de Steve Hillage dans **Arzachel** et **Khan**. En poussant encore plus loin le télescopage des

POUR COMMENCER

Caravan : If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You (Decca, 1970)
Hatfield And The North : The Rotters' Club (Caroline, 1975)
Hugh Hopper : Hopper Tunity Box (Cuneiform, 1977)
Matching Mole : Matching Mole (Columbia, 1972)
National Health : Of Queues And Cures (Spalax, 1978)

POUR CONTINUER

Kevin Ayers : The BBC Sessions 1970-1976 (Hux)
Soft Head : Rogue Element (Ogun, 1978)
Gilgamesh : Another Fine Tune You've Got Me Into (Charly, 1978)
Richard Sinclair : R.S.V.P. (Sinclair, 1994)
Phil Miller/In Cahoots : Parallel (Crescent, 1996)





Illustration de Nigel Soper extraite de "Mainstream" de Quiet Sun.

LE ROCK PROGRESSIF/PORTRAIT

Soft Machine

Si l'on s'en tient au sens littéral de l'adjectif, Soft Machine fut sans doute le groupe le plus "progressif" de tous les temps! De sa naissance en 1966 à ses ultimes concerts en 1984, l'évolution aura été telle qu'on peine à en dégager une ligne directrice. Seul rescapé des purges à répétition qui verront les départs, plus ou moins volontaires, des autres figures emblématiques de la Machine (dans l'ordre: Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt, Elton Dean et Hugh Hopper), Mike Ratledge, dont l'orgue saturé avait jusque là été un fil rouge Sonore, partira à son tour au terme d'une décennie de bons et loyaux services, abandonnant sans état d'âme les commandes du navire à ses lieutenants.



> Zoom

MACHINE À PLEIN RÉGIME

Né sous le signe du psychédélisme, pionnier de l'underground londonien de 1966-1967 aux côtés de Pink Floyd, Soft Machine affinera son hybride de rock heavy - mais avec l'orgue dans le rôle de la guitare - et d'impros déjantées sur son premier album, enregistré en 1968 à New York au milieu d'une longue tournée américaine avec Jimi Hendrix. On remarque déjà la voix singulière de Robert Wyatt. "Volume Two" fera éclater les carcans: Wyatt puise dans la pataphysique, et Ratledge, dans ses débuts remarqués de compositeur, s'essaie déjà aux rythmes impairs. À ce stade, leurs approches se conjuguent encore avec une lumineuse évidence: cette synthèse constituera la matrice du Canterbury sound. Conséquence prévisible de l'adjonction, fin 1969, d'une section de cuivres, l'espace vocal de Wyatt se restreint tandis que l'ascendant du saxophoniste Elton Dean, seul des souffleurs à intégrer durablement le groupe, va croissant: l'avènement du tout-instrumental et le glissement vers le jazz seront aussi rapides qu'irrévocables. La face solo de Wyatt sur le merveilleux *Moon In June*, dans "Third", a des allures de baroud d'honneur avant les adieux définitifs à la pop. Le reste du double album consacre la fusion rock/jazz privilégiée par Ratledge et le bassiste Hugh Hopper: rythmes tarabiscotés, harmonies ambiguës, impros épiques... Avec encore, mais plus pour longtemps, un sens mélodique garant d'une large accessibilité...



PROBLÈMES MÉCANIQUES

"Fourth" débute par l'éblouissant et ultracomplexe *Teeth* ; la suite est plus minimaliste, mais les atmosphères restent envoûtantes. "Fifth" consacre par contre une austérité dont toute référence au rock est désormais bannie - et pour cause: Wyatt n'est plus là, deux candidats se disputent son poste. C'est John Marshall qui sera retenu, brillant mais académique, représentatif du type de musiciens par lesquels Ratledge remplacera l'un après l'autre ses ex-acolytes. Le successeur de Dean, le multi-instrumentiste et (prolixe) compositeur Karl Jenkins, s'impose ainsi comme coleader, mais pousse la Machine vers un jazz-rock plus conventionnel; évolution parachevée avec l'arrivée du prodigieux guitariste Allan Holdsworth pour "Bundles" (1975), excellent dans le genre, mais à mille lieues du Soft Machine que l'on avait tant aimé. D'autres albums suivront, tout aussi irréprochables mais dénués du frisson de l'inédit.

ÂGE D'OR

La période 1969-1971 restera, aux yeux de la postérité, l'âge d'or de Soft Machine: il est alors, en France tout particulièrement, l'égal de Pink Floyd: beaucoup voient en lui l'inventeur de la musique du futur. De fait, il opère une synthèse

novatrice entre des courants jusque-là isolés les uns des autres: rock, jazz, mais aussi musique contemporaine (dissonances), concrète (travail sur les bandes), répétitive (boucles à la Riley)... En limitant son horizon au jazz-fusion et en se privant de ses figures charismatiques fédératrices, la Machine s'aliénera une partie de son public, qui jugera ses incarnations suivantes froidement cérébrales et reportera son attention sur d'autres branches, plus fidèles à l'esprit de "Volume Two" et "Third", de l'arbre généalogique canterburien.







REDÉMARRAGES

L'ère des rééditions CD a mis en évidence la popularité intacte, voire grandissante, de Soft Machine. À la numérisation de son back catalogue (renouvelée l'an dernier pour la période Columbia) s'est ajoutée une véritable pluie de documents d'archives, dont certains (ceux publiés chez les labels Cuneiform et Hux) de qualité exceptionnelle. Conséquence logique, les anciens ont remis le couvert, au premier rang desquels Hugh Hopper et Elton Dean (hélas décédé en 2006), avec les projets SoftWorks, PolySoft, Soft Bounds ou Soft Machine Legacy. Mais en l'absence de Mike Ratledge, définitivement retiré des affaires, leur musique reflète surtout le versant jazz de l'héritage softien.

AYMERIC LEROY

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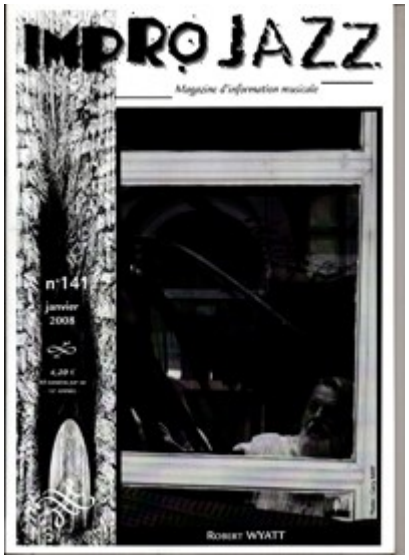
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Robert Wyatt La Musique Aigre-Douce - Improjazz - N° 141 - janvier 2008

ROBERT WYATT LA MUSIQUE AIGRE-DOUCE



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt, présent à Paris pour promouvoir son dernier disque, **Comicopera,** nous a gentiment reçus, avec sa femme Alfie, après une longue journée d'entretiens, pour parler de sa musique et de beaucoup d'autres choses encore. Homme généreux, drôle et chaleureux, à l'image de sa musique, ce qui caractérise Robert Wyatt, c'est un étonnant mélange de sagesse et une fraîcheur presque enfantine qui fait tout son originalité. Discuter avec lui fut un vrai plaisir, merci Robert et Alfie, pour le temps, les paroles, et la musique.

IMPROJAZZ : *Est-ce qu'on peut parler tout d'abord de Matching Mole ? Plusieurs disques sont sortis récemment, doublant quasiment le volume de la discographie, que penses-tu de cette musique aujourd'hui ?*

Robert WYATT (RW) : Elle me redonne le moral, même s'il y a des choses qui se répètent. La façon dont on abordait cette musique était très ouverte, on pouvait la jouer de plusieurs façons, c'est bien d'en avoir des versions différentes. J'aime "*On The Radio*", car dans une partie de cet enregistrement, Dave Sinclair joue encore de l'orgue Hammond, et en plus il y a Dave MacRae. J'aimais beaucoup ça, et j'aurais volontiers continué, mais je crois que Dave était perturbé par le fait qu'il y avait si peu de morceaux qu'on pouvait 'fredonner', il croyait qu'on n'allait faire que ça. Je pense aussi qu'il était perturbé par le fait que les notes choisies par Phil à la guitare étaient souvent très imprévisibles, mais moi je trouvais ça génial, ça me plaisait beaucoup. Ce que j'aime faire c'est mettre ensemble des gens qui normalement n'auraient pas eu l'idée de jouer ensemble, et faire en sorte que ça marche. Parfois, c'est le cas mais bien sûr il peut aussi avoir des carambolages monstrueux, (rires)

IMPROJAZZ : *C'était l'une des meilleures choses de cette époque, tous ces musiciens de styles très différents qui se sont mis à jouer ensemble...*

RW : C'est vraiment ce que j'aime faire, c'est ce que j'ai toujours aimé, ce n'est ni de l'éclectisme gratuit, ni une sorte de jeu malicieux, c'est simplement que j'ai écouté beaucoup de sortes de musique très différentes qui m'avaient été présentées comme incompatibles, et moi je ne vois pas les choses de cette manière. On dit, par exemple, qu'en cuisine, il ne faut pas mélanger le sucré et le salé mais les Chinois font du porc aigre-doux et c'est génial, on pourrait donc dire que je suis à la recherche du nouveau porc aigre-doux.

IMPROJAZZ : *De la musique aigre-douce ?*

RW : De la musique aigre-douce, exactement.



photo Philippe Renaud

IMPROJAZZ : *On te retrouve aussi sur les rééditions des disques de Gary Windo...*

RW : Oui, en fait nous avons fait plein de choses ensemble. Nous formions une sorte de petit groupe qui, je crois, s'était mis en place suite au projet magnifique de Keith Tippett, un type génial, avec un cœur gros comme ça, comme le sont les gens de l'Ouest de l'Angleterre. Quel homme merveilleux, Keith, un musicien formidable, un pianiste solo formidable également, mais aussi un meneur d'hommes. Je viens d'écouter un disque Cuneiform, que j'ai depuis un certain temps, Isipingo, le groupe de Harry Miller, et bien sûr on y trouve beaucoup de Mongs, Mongezi Feza, c'est l'un des meilleurs disques pour comprendre Mongezi Feza. Ecoute Isipingo, et là tu entends cette batterie géniale, qui scintille et qui pétille, et la rythmique avec Harry... Et même si c'est un peu sous-enregistré, le jeu de Keith ne ressemble à personne d'autre, pas à Paul Bley, pas à qui que se soit d'autre, mais ça marche parfaitement. Pour résumer, ce groupe-là c'était des types supers qui venaient de l'orchestre de Keith et il me semble que c'est comme ça que j'ai dû rencontrer Mongs et Gary. Mais à l'époque, j'allais aussi voir l'orchestre de Chris McGregor à *Ronnie Scott's Old Place*, et ça c'était vraiment quelque chose. Quel joyeux délire, ces soirées-là, de L'Ellington atonal! Que demande le peuple! Bon sang, ça bougeait. Mais ça ne m'aurait pas effleuré l'esprit, de demander de jouer avec eux. C'était comme si un énorme oiseau exotique avait atterri en plein cœur de Londres.

IMPROJAZZ : *Cela a vraiment fait bouger les choses à Londres ?*

RW : Absolument! Même si certains des musiciens locaux regardaient ça de travers. C'est vrai, il y en avait à qui ça ne plaisait pas.

IMPRO JAZZ : *Ils étaient jaloux ?*

RW : Je pense que c'était une réaction du style: 'On était là avant'. Je ne dis pas que c'était comme le BNP (= le FN en Angleterre, ndlr), mais ils se disaient, 'nous avons fait le boulot avant eux, alors c'est qui ces types qui débarquent ?'.
Le jazz britannique, c'est superbe, mais c'est un petit monde, il n'y a pas beaucoup de travail, c'est surtout des mecs de la classe ouvrière, et ils ne supportaient pas de se sentir menacés, après tout, c'est normal. Mais ils n'étaient pas toujours très accueillants, alors dieu merci Keith Tippett était là, sans oublier Evan Parker et John Stevens, bien sûr.
Il se trouve que Gary Windo avait un petit groupe qui improvisait avec Louis Moholo, et si Louis n'était pas disponible, je jouais avec eux, c'est ce qu'on entend sur les disques de Gary Windo. Mais c'est comme ça que je me suis rendu compte à quel point j'aimais Mongezi. La première fois qu'on entend quelqu'un on se dit, "il est comme un tel ou un tel..." et lui c'était une sorte de style côte-ouest noir, du be-bop avec une dose de Don Cherry, mais en fait, il n'était aucune de ces choses, il y avait en lui ce que Chris McGregor appelait un vrai feu, quelque chose qui tout de suite explosait, qui s'emballait et démarrait au quart de tour. Les notes qu'il choisissait n'étaient pas seulement des notes 'américaines', elles avaient gardé le côté folk africain.

IMPRO JAZZ : *On peut presque parler de musique 'folk'..*

RW : Oui, c'est vrai, car il était Xhosa, n'est-ce pas ? (Alfie confirme) je pense que c'est ça, comme Dudu (*Pukwana*), je ne me souviens plus.



Robert et Alfie - photo Philippe Renaud

IMPRO JAZZ : *Quand tu entends quelqu'un comme lui, à quel moment finis-tu par te dire qu'il peut avoir un rôle à jouer dans ta musique?*

RW : Et bien, j'ai eu deux rôles différents ; en tant que batteur on est souvent au second plan, dans le sens où on est dans le moteur de la voiture, mais pas vraiment derrière le volant. Alors on a l'occasion de connaître des gens, et de voir si on s'entend. J'ai tout simplement pris mon courage à deux mains, pour lui demander de jouer sur mes trucs à moi. J'ai dû certainement demander à Gary de lui poser la question, car j'étais loin d'être sûr qu'il en aurait envie, mais il a tout de suite était partant. Il est venu pour "*Rock Bottom*" et il a fait, je ne sais pas, peut-être huit prises et je crois qu'avec Nick (*Mason*) on s'est dit, "on va toutes les utiliser!" Ce qui explique le résultat final. Dudu m'a dit, "Hey, Man, (je n'arrive pas à faire son accent) tu me piques mon trompettiste ?"
"Seulement pour une après-midi!" ! (rires)

IMPROJAZZ : *Même si ta musique est clairement informée par le rock et le jazz, il me semble qu'il y a aussi un élément plus folk, quelque chose qui rassemble les gens, qui donne le sentiment d'appartenir à une communauté. Est-ce que tu es d'accord avec ça ?*

RW : Tu as certainement raison pour le côté folk. La musique folk, au sens le plus large du terme, c'est la principale forme de musique dans le monde, celle qui est le centre de tout, c'est le tronc d'où poussent toutes les branches. Et quel que soit le degré d'éloignement, et parfois on semble en être très loin (je pense à Schoenberg, Brian Eno, à la techno...), je trouve que si quelque chose marche, c'est parce qu'il y a une résonance quelque part, biologiquement, avec des éléments qui sont au premier plan dans la musique folk. Comme le disait Mingus, la danse et la chanson, c'est l'origine de tout, elles sont toujours présentes quelque part. Et dans certaines de mes musiques préférées, par exemple chez Ornette Coleman que j'ai toujours aimé, il y a toujours eu quelque chose qui swinguait, mais pas le swing be-bop, "*dans le coup*", mais une sorte de danse primaire, une cadence hors du temps qu' Ornette fait ressortir, avec des gens comme Charles Moffett. On en était où ?

IMPROJAZZ : *La musique folk. Est-ce qu'il y a un lien avec la dimension politique de ton travail?*

RW : Non, c'est plus le hasard. Tu as parlé d'éléments sociaux et c'est sûrement le cas avec Gary, ou Keith, ou Chris McGregor, mais en ce qui me concerne, je ne suis pas conscient de cela. Quand je parle de folk, c'est dans le sens le plus traditionnel du terme. Par exemple l'une des premières choses que j'ai écoutées dans mon enfance, c'était des 78 tours qui appartenaient à mon père, des adaptations de veilles chansons folk anglaises. Parmi celles qui m'ont vraiment longtemps hanté, il y avait un trio avec Benjamin Britten au piano, Peter Pears qui chantait (ténor, bien entendu) et Dennis Brain au cor d'harmonie.

Il s'agissait donc de chansons folk, mais interprétées par un compositeur du vingtième siècle. L'une des choses le plus sympathiques chez des gens comme Benjamin Britten, et chez ce dernier en particulier, c'était leur utilisation innovatrice des accords, pas innovatrice au sens iconoclaste comme Stravinsky ou Schoenberg, mais au sens où cela apportait quelque chose d'innovateur dans des formations de musique classique. En fait, j'aime beaucoup les formes archaïques de musique folk en Angleterre, celles qui ont revu le jour grâce à des gens comme lui, ou Cecil Sharp. Mais Cecil Sharp, et d'autres personnes qui nous servent de guides dans cette tradition folk, se concentrent souvent sur les paroles, et souvent c'est là que se trouvent les éléments politiques. Et cela s'applique à beaucoup de groupes folk, à la tradition poursuivie par Ewan MacColl, et aussi à beaucoup de musiques noires.

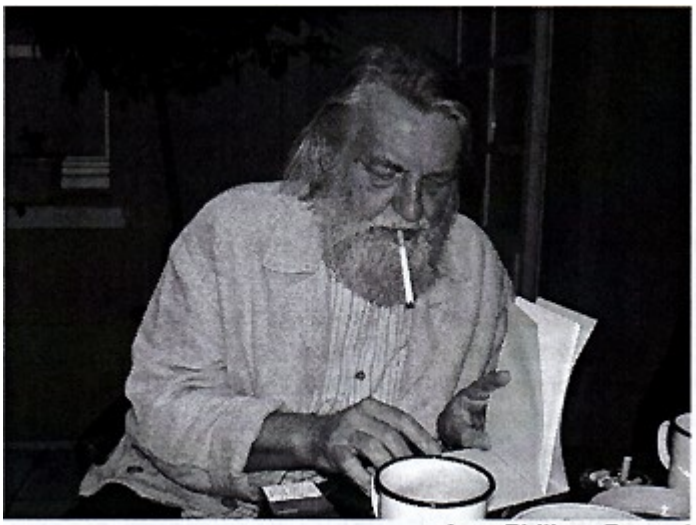


photo Philippe Renaud

IMPROJAZZ : *Et même à quelqu'un comme Paul Weller..*

RW : Oui, absolument. Paul est un vrai chanteur de folk moderne, la voix d'une communauté vivante. Mais en ce qui me concerne c'est un peu différent, c'est un peu comme un lapin et un lièvre, ils se ressemblent, mais ce n'est pas tout à fait la même espèce. Ce que je fais est purement le résultat d'un certain héritage musical, ce qui veut dire qu'en écoutant de la musique, je peux entendre certaines gammes archaïques, comme celles utilisées dans le flamenco ou les modes musicaux des grecs anciens. Certaines d'entre elles survivent dans la musique arabe (ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'elles étaient grecques à la base mais que les Grecs avaient plus de gammes que celles exploitées par la musique classique des 17ème et 18ème siècles, qui se contente des gammes majeure et mineure.)
La musique de Britten et certains morceaux de Vaughan-Williams renvoient à des traditions antérieures.

IMPROJAZZ : *et presque à certaines formes de musique religieuse ?*

RW : Bien entendu. Il y a aussi une tradition liturgique très intéressante, car totalement étrangère à l'idée de danse, mais qui est à l'origine de l'harmonie occidentale. Ce n'est pas une harmonie délibérément recherchée car beaucoup de musiques religieuses n'aiment pas que la musique soit synonyme de plaisir ou de volupté. Il faut que la musique soit propre et pure et n'éveille surtout pas la sensualité! Mais néanmoins il avait déjà la polyphonie et le fait que des gens chantent et qu'une autre personne commence sur une autre note, ça c'est vraiment le début de l'harmonie. Et la façon dont c'était fait, les notes qui étaient choisies, ça fait partie de ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui la tradition folk. Et en ce qui me concerne, c'est par ce biais que ces notes et ces sons se retrouvent dans ma musique. Chez moi, le côté politique, c'est autre chose. Cela vient du fait que quand on aime le jazz, je crois que, "*ipso dicto facto dicta*", on adule automatiquement ceux qui font cette musique. Je ne pouvais ni comprendre ni accepter le contraste entre la joie que me procurait la musique noire, et le statut des noirs à la fois ici et dans leurs pays d'origine. C'est donc de là que vient l'aspect politique, c'est par une voie bien distincte en fait.

IMPROJAZZ : *Est-ce que c'est quelque chose que tu mets délibérément dans la musique ou est-ce que ça ressort de manière inconsciente ?*

RW : Non, je ne mets jamais rien délibérément dans ma musique. Le problème, quand on parle de ces choses-là, c'est qu'on réfléchit toujours de manière rétrospective. C'est simplement ce qui sonne bien à un moment donné. En fait, je suis assez hédoniste, je veux simplement faire du bruit vraiment agréable pour les oreilles, du mieux que je peux.

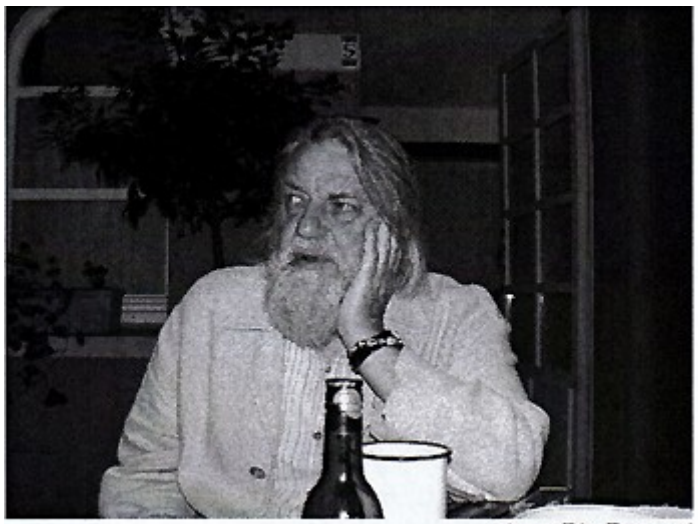


photo Ph. Renaud

IMPROJAZZ : Le fait que tu ne fasses jamais de concerts et que le disque soit donc le produit fini, est-ce que cela change ta façon de travailler en tant que compositeur ? Tu sais que la musique ne sera jamais contractée ou étirée comme celle de Matching Mole dont on parlait auparavant.

RW : C'est très intéressant. Je n'y avais jamais pensé. Mais je crois que ça doit jouer. D'une certaine façon, je dois sûrement mettre plus de temps à me décider avant de choisir la version définitive. Autrefois, je faisais des enregistrements un peu comme un musicien de jazz. Le disque était un reflet de ce que je ressentais ce jour-là, en quelque sorte. Mais maintenant je me dis que qu'il faut que le morceau soit gravé dans le marbre définitivement.

IMPROJAZZ : *Quand tu dis: 'ça y est'...*

RW : ...effectivement 'ça y est'. Et à ce moment-là je peux passer à autre chose, la chanson est terminée. Car elle va rester telle quelle pendant un moment, et le but (jamais complètement atteint, je l'admets) c'est qu'une fois gravée, elle soit inaltérablement ce qu'elle devait être.

IMPROJAZZ : *Et est-ce qu'il t'arrive de réécouter quelque chose et de te dire, 'peut-être que j'aurais pu... '*

RW (gémissant) OOOOOOh oui ! C'est tellement triste! (rires). C'est le drame de ma vie, my friend! (rires).

Alfreda BENGE : II passerait bien le reste de sa vie à 'remixer' (rires)

RW : Mon dieu, comme j'aimerais que cela ne m'arrive jamais, (rires)

IMPROJAZZ : *Parlons un peu d'Annie Whitehead, elle apparaît souvent sur tes disques, et elle est aussi présente sur le nouvel album.*

RW : Nos vies étaient en quelque sorte liées sans que l'on ne se connaisse vraiment. D'abord c'est une des disciples de John Stevens, ce qui est une bonne référence pour moi, une bonne case à cocher sur un CV si tu vois ce que je veux dire. Et puis elle aime travailler avec des africains, ce qui est une autre bonne référence, et son tromboniste préféré, même si elle aime Curtis Fuller etc.., c'est un tromboniste jamaïcain de l'époque Ska, c'est quoi son nom...? (Et tout ceci n'enlève rien au fait qu'elle sait lire de la musique instantanément et à un niveau technique très élevé..).

AB : Don Drummond?

RW : Don Drummond, très bien! Merci Alfie. C'est son modèle, ce qu'il fait c'est très simple mais c'est un certain ton, un rugissement, et on se dit 'oouuuii, c'est ça'. Elle s'est vraiment imprégnée de reggae, à tel point qu'elle est parfois surprise par ce qu'elle voit dans le miroir. Elle a beaucoup travaillé et elle aimait particulièrement Dudu, son décès a été quelque chose de très dur pour elle, elle lui a dédié des morceaux par la suite. Elle aime une certaine cadence rythmique chaloupée, tu vois (il chante *'Sonia'* de Mongezi Feza) comme ça. Et moi j'avais quelque chose de similaire avec Mongezi, le partenaire de Dudu et donc on avait tout ça en commun...
Je crois que j'ai travaillé avec elle pour la première fois quand Jerry Dammers a fait '*Winds Of Change*' pour Swapo. Il avait créé un groupe, avec des amis à lui et des musiciens de son groupe, il y avait Ernest Mothle à la basse, et Annie au trombone. Elle était vraiment excellente ; elle a remis le 'bone' (os en anglais ndlt) dans le trombone ! J'ai beaucoup aimé ce qu'elle faisait : c'était subtil, elle suivait ce que faisait Ernest à la basse, et jouait de manière très complémentaire et cela donnait quelque chose de plus fort que la basse ou le trombone seul.
Je me sers encore de cette technique aujourd'hui et, en fait, à un moment donné sur le nouveau disque je lui ai demandé de refaire la même chose. C'est quelque chose que Gil Evans utilisait aussi, ça n'est pas vraiment une nouveauté, mais j'ai entendu Annie jouer comme ça et j'ai beaucoup apprécié la générosité avec laquelle elle fait exactement ce qui est nécessaire sans chercher à se mettre en avant.



photo Ph. Renaud

IMPROJAZZ : *Pas d'ego*...

RW : Pas du tout! Elle se demande simplement, "qu'est-ce qui est nécessaire ici ?" A tel point qu'il a vraiment fallu que je la pousse, "vas-y solo, fais quelque chose"!
Après, j'ai été contacté par quelqu'un qui organise un festival à Newark, une ville du Nord de l'Angleterre où chaque année on présente l'œuvre d'un compositeur. Il voulait que ce soit moi, et que je donne quelques concerts. Je lui ai répondu que je n'en faisais plus, mais il a insisté et m'a demandé si quelqu'un d'autre était capable de jouer ma musique. Ça n'est pas évident, mais nous avons pris le temps d'y réfléchir, et je me suis dit qu'Annie en était capable. Pour l'avoir vue en concert, j'en étais convaincu. Quand je l'ai contactée, elle a dit, oui, je veux bien essayer. Ce qui est génial c'est qu'elle a été obligée de transcrire mes chansons correctement, ce qui n'avait jamais était fait par le passé, certainement pas par moi en tout cas. Quand j'ai vu Annie au festival de jazz de Grimsby il y a dix ans, il y avait Janette Mason au piano, et un merveilleux batteur, Liam Genockey. Il avait joué avec certains des meilleurs groupes de folk-rock, mais aussi avec des gens comme Trevor Watts, ce qui lui permettait de faire des choses très diverses. C'était un groupe fantastique et je me suis dit qu'ils étaient capables de jouer ma musique. Il fallait simplement rajouter un chanteur, et c'est ce qu'on a fait. Après le festival, on a demandé à Annie de faire quelques concerts supplémentaires, puis plusieurs autres sur le continent, avec diverses chanteuses. La première, à ma plus grande joie, a été Julie Tippetts. Je n'avais pas travaillé avec elle depuis le concert de Drury Lane en 1974. Quelle chanteuse superbe! Elle connaissait pas mal de mes chansons, ce que j'ignorais, et elle en a fait

quelques versions formidables avec Annie. Puis pour d'autres concerts il y a eu d'autres chanteuses comme Sarah Jane Morris, une autre chanteuse pleine de talent et de passion.

IMPROJAZZ : *Et ils continuent de tourner?*

RW : En fait, ils ont le matériel, et si on leur proposait...

AB : ...Ils ont fait un concert cette année.

RW : Oui, dans une petite ville du Nord-est de l'Italie, c'était presque des vacances pour eux, un petit festival sympa, avec le traditionnel château éclairé, pleins de gnocchi et du bon vin, il y a pire comme concert!

AB : ...toujours avec Harry

RW : Avec Harry Beckett, oui. Avant, elle me demandait si j'étais d'accord quand elle choisissait tel ou tel musicien, mais maintenant elle me dit simplement: "Robert, fait moi confiance, il ou elle est bien", et c'est ce que je fais. Et voilà c'est l'histoire de ma longue et heureuse collaboration avec Annie.

IMPROJAZZ : *La manière de distribuer la musique évolue rapidement, avec les ordinateurs, les MP3, etc., certaines personnes affirment que 'l'objet musical' le support tel qu'on le connaît, comme les vinyls, les cassettes, les CD, pourrait disparaître. Qu'est-ce que tu en penses ?*

RW : Les miens ne vont pas disparaître! Du moins pas de mon vivant. Quand on m'a dit que les cassettes allaient disparaître, je me suis dit: "OK!", et j'ai commencé à ressortir toutes mes cassettes et à les écouter, un acte de résistance, comme Canut*(**roi d'Angleterre qui ordonna à la marée de s'arrêter ndlt*) (rires). Puis j'ai fait pareil pour les 33 tours, et pour les EP. Chez moi le vent sauvage du changement ne se fait pas trop ressentir. En même temps, je suis sûr que tout ça c'est un progrès, que les gens sont plus heureux qu'ils ne l'ont jamais été, c'est merveilleux... Non, je ne critique pas, mais nous avons tous nos habitudes, nous nous habituons aux choses. Je suis quelqu'un qui aime bien les objets et je suis donc très content que la maison de disques qui va sortir mon album le fasse aussi en DOUBLE vinyl!

IMPROJAZZ : *Nous aussi nous en sommes très contents !*

RW : On ne sait jamais ce qui peut revenir, alors je garde mes cassettes. Les cassettes sont peut-être enterrées dans le passé, mais ça ne veut pas dire que cela ne va pas revenir un jour en attendant un retour! (rires) Personne n'imaginait, dans l'Amérique des années 50, avec la musique de Stan Kenton, et toutes ces machines à laver très design, que la musique folk allait revenir à la mode et les gens ne se laveraient plus ! Ce n'était pas prévisible. Alors, on ne sait jamais.

IMPROJAZZ : *On a dit que les claviers électroniques allaient faire disparaître les pianos.*

RW : Tout à fait, et ça ne se passe pas comme ça, les ordinateurs devaient aussi tuer le papier, mon cul!

IMPROJAZZ : *Les choses se rajoutent les unes aux autres.*

RW : Exactement. Je prends les choses à la légère. Je sais qu'il y a dans ma maison des choses qui dureront plus longtemps que moi...

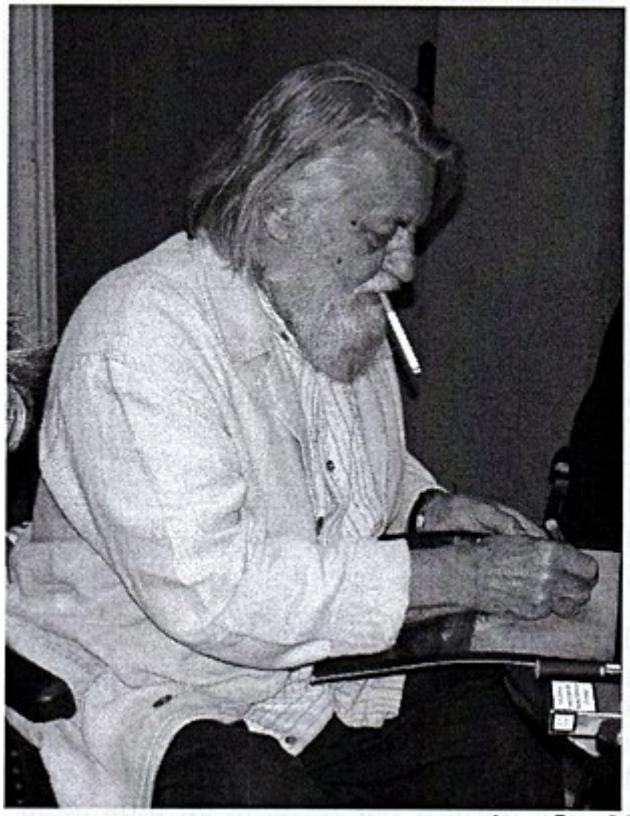


photo Gary May

IMPROJAZZ : *Est-ce que tu es un grand collectionneur ?*

RW : Pas vraiment, mais je ne jette rien.

AB : Mais tu acquiers toujours de nouvelles choses, mon chéri, (rires) Nous avons un magasin de disques d'occasion qui vend des vinyls de jazz, et il est toujours en train de me demander: "Est-que tu peux me donner dix livres, s'il te plaît?"

IMPROJAZZ : *Il faut bien que quelqu'un fasse vivre les petits disquaires!*

RW : Oui, c'est quelque chose de très important! Cette boutique c'est un vrai magasin de disques, tenu par des enthousiastes, avec des cartons partout par terre, et en plus dans une toute petite ville du Lincolnshire! Je pense que c'est dans mon intérêt de les aider, n'est-ce pas? (rires)

AB : Chut, chut, chut!

IMPROJAZZ : *Il devrait y avoir davantage de ces magasins, mais même à Londres il y en a de moins en moins...*

RW : Tout à fait, ça n'est pas facile pour mon disquaire, mais il s'en sort en proposant des disques de rock, ce qui est normal, pour les jeunes de la ville. Mais il est étonnant de voir combien de disques de Sarah Vaughan il vend aussi. Il y a toutes sortes de personnes étranges, pas encore mortes, qui ont toujours envie d'écouter ce qu'ils veulent écouter, et je peux lui commander plein de choses, l'autre jour j'ai acheté un super disque de Joachim Kuhn en trio, c'est génial.

IMPROJAZZ : *Est-ce que tu suis l'actualité rock ou pop?*

RW : Pas vraiment, j'ai tendance à travailler comme un archéologue et à me demander ce qu'il y a derrière telle ou telle chose. Donc après avoir passé plusieurs décennies à explorer les années cinquante, je fais face au 21ème siècle en écoutant de plus en plus de musique des années trente et quarante! Je viens de trouver un disque de Coleman Hawkins, presque swing, avec un très jeune Shelly Manne à la batterie. C'est le genre de chose qui me fascine, ou bien encore un disque où on entend Scott La Faro jouer avec Harold Land. Je suis fasciné par des petites choses comme ça. Bien entendu je suis les gens avec qui je travaille et on m'envoie plein de choses que j'écoute, et puis il y a plein

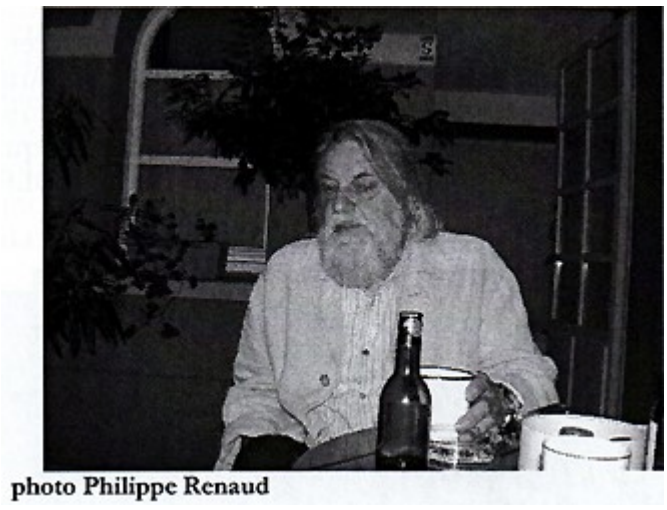
de choses que je fais moi-même dans mon salon.
J'ai même eu l'idée (mais je ne pourrai plus le faire parce que je n'étais pas censé en parler) de sortir un disque intitulé *'Les bandes perdues de Isban Solihum*', et qui serait fait entièrement de mes tentatives et bruitages improvisés au piano et à la batterie. Je les aurais fait passer pour le travail d'un dissident tchèque oublié depuis longtemps (rires) qui aurait caché son travail dans un tiroir avant de s'échapper à Los Angeles, où il aurait été tué d'un coup de couteau dans une bagarre! (rires). Les disques sont pour moi comme de vieilles photos de famille, ils ont de plus en plus de valeur avec le passage du temps, non pas le contraire. La nouveauté en elle-même n'a pas de sens pour moi, pas plus que la tradition. Pour moi, ce ne sont pas des qualités, mais de simples faits. L'art ne devient ni meilleur ni pire, il ne fait que changer et change sans cesse, c'est tout.
Récemment, en France, la contrebassiste Hélène Labarrière a enregistré un CD et elle m'a fait l'honneur de me demander d'écrire les notes de pochette, ce que j'ai fait! Je vais vous les montrer, pas mal, non, *mon pote*? Et le disque n'est même pas sorti! (Il va chercher le disque). Elle était dans un groupe avec John Greaves qui faisait des variations sur certains de mes trucs en France. Je pense que son jeu est d'une beauté rare, et je l'ai fait venir quand j'étais programmateur du 'Meltdown Festival'.

IMPROJAZZ : *Est-ce que tu portes toujours un intérêt particulier aux batteurs?*

RW : Oui, bien sûr. C'est drôle, en ce moment, je suis en train de redécouvrir des batteurs que je connais depuis fort longtemps, comme Charles Hayward, qui a joué avec des musiciens avec qui j'ai travaillé, par exemple Bill McCormick. Il y a quelques années il avait un groupe superbe avec Harry Beckett, et maintenant il en a un autre avec Hugh Hopper et Loi Coxhill, plus Orphy Robinson au vibraphone. Je devais aller jouer avec eux pour une émission de radio, mais je n'ai pas pu y aller à cause de la neige. Alors Charles m'a envoyé un CD en me disant de rajouter un peu de cornet là où je voulais. Le disque n'est pas encore sorti, mais je crois qu'il essaie de le sortir sur son propre label, sinon sur un label comme Thirsty Ear.

AB : *Et tu écoutes beaucoup un autre batteur qui s'appelle Dylan Howe, je crois?*

RW : Dylan Howe est un batteur bebop, le fils de Steve Howe, ce qui est assez drôle, car Steve Howe était dans un groupe de prog-rock (*Yes*), et son fils est batteur dans un groupe de be-bop! C'est le monde à l'envers! (rires) J'adore ce genre de truc. Il a un groupe de be-bop qui travaille actuellement sur un projet, et c'est là que l'on se rend vraiment compte que c'est une autre génération. Il est en train de faire des versions des "classiques" de sa jeunesse, ce qui veut dire, pour lui, des arrangements jazzy de musique ambiante de Brian Eno et David Bowie! (rires) C'est la roue qui tourne!


photo Philippe Renaud

IMPROJAZZ : *Est-ce que tu as parfois envie de refaire des concerts?*

RW : Non. Certes, faire partie d'un groupe c'est quelque chose de génial et je suis content d'avoir à mes côtés une équipe qui me donne cette impression. Mais être dans un groupe, ça a été tellement dur pour moi sur le plan personnel. D'une manière ou d'une autre, même quand on s'entendait bien entre nous, il y avait la logistique, les problèmes d'argent, le matériel volé, le fait de ne pas être payé... Je n'en pouvais plus, ça a fini par mal tourner. Toutefois je garde des souvenirs de moments d'intense bonheur. Parfois je regarde des vidéos de cette époque et je me dis, "Robert, tu as réécrit l'histoire, tu t'es

bien éclaté quand-même. Regarde, t'étais peut-être saoul, mais ça bougeait comme si c'était la dernière fois", et finalement, il se trouve que c'était en effet la dernière fois !

IMPROJAZZ : *Il y a donc le fait de jouer, et puis tout le reste...*

RW : C'est exactement ça, si seulement on pouvait ne faire que jouer et oublier tous les tracas qui vont avec. Voiceprint est en train de sortir une vieille vidéo de la télé française, et le fait de voir et ressentir à nouveau le plaisir purement physique et viscéral qu'il y a à jouer de la batterie m'a bouleversé. J'ai éprouvé un tel sentiment de nostalgie que j'en ai eu les larmes aux yeux .Je ne pourrais plus jouer comme ça aujourd'hui, même si j'en étais capable, si tu vois ce que je veux dire. Il existe beaucoup d'enregistrements radio, et on ferait mieux de sortir certains de ces enregistrements plutôt que de ressortir des disques. Nous étions tellement plus à l'aise, plus libres, plus vrais, plus vivants, et donc plus 'nous'. Même des trucs que j'ai faits au tout début avec Kevin sont mieux rendus sur les bandes de la BBC que ce qui est sorti en disque. Ça m'aide à me dire que je n'ai pas complètement gaspillé ma jeunesse ! (rires)

IMPROJAZZ : *Parle-nous de ton nouveau disque.*

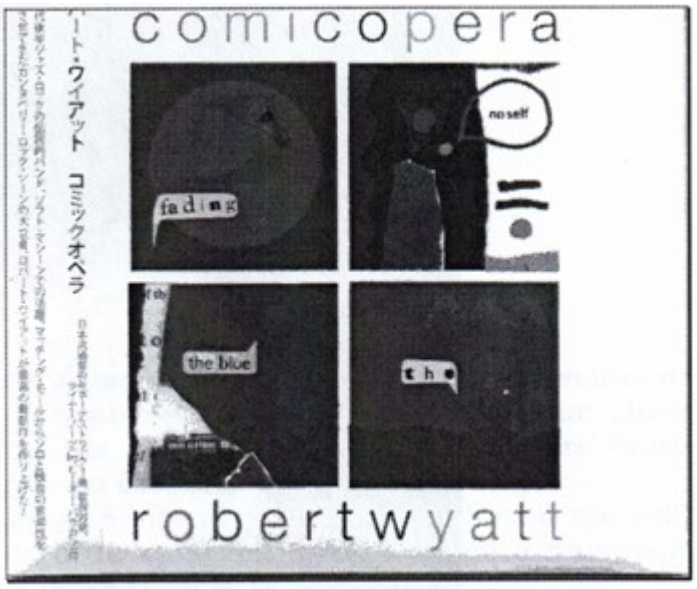
RW : II s'appelle *Comicopera*, en un mot, un mot nouveau. Il se compose de trois parties de vingt minutes chacune, parce que les CD sont très longs, et je considère que les meilleures choses que j'ai faites tiennent sur une face d'un 33 tours. C'est une durée qui me convient. Il y a donc trois segments de vingt minutes, qui s'appellent respectivement *Lost in Noise*, *The Here and The Now* et *Away With The Pairies*. Les chansons sont regroupées selon le sujet des paroles, plutôt que par rapport à la musique. La musique n'est donc pas une séquence se déroulant dans un seul paysage, comme j'ai plutôt eu tendance à faire par le passé, quoique pas toujours. Donc chaque morceau de musique se distingue des autres. C'est la même configuration que pour *Cuckooland*, même groupe, même ingénieur du son, même studio, car j'en ai gardé un très bon souvenir. La différence ici c'est que j'ai mis le groupe plus en avant, c'est vraiment le disque d'un groupe et donc quand je composais au clavier, tout de suite, je me disais "Ça, ça irait très bien avec la contrebasse de Yaron, et une clarinette". C'est pour cette raison que je parle d'un groupe, même si les musiciens n'étaient pas tous réunis en même temps.

IMPROJAZZ : *Quand tu étais en train de composer, tu as toujours pensé à une œuvre en trois parties ?*

RW : Non, c'est venu après, il a fallu rassembler les morceaux qui semblaient marcher ensemble, et on a procédé de différentes façons. Parfois j'écrivais la musique pour les paroles d'Alfie, parfois elle mettait des paroles sur ma musique. Sauf pour le premier morceau qui est d'Anja Garbarek, et le dernier, qui est *Hasta Siempre Commandante* de Carlos Puebla. J'ai déjà enregistré une chanson de lui, j'aime bien chanter en espagnol. Ce morceau là a été fait avec un orchestre italien de Palomar, avec un joueur de baryton qui s'appelle Carmadi et qui est un excellent musicien. Ensuite, il y a un air d'un groupe italien nommé CSI. J'essaie de chanter en italien, même si je ne parle pas la langue.



photo Philippe Renaud



AB : Sur la troisième partie il ne chante plus du tout en anglais.

RW : Non, dans cette troisième partie je laisse tomber l'anglais. La deuxième partie s'intitule *The Here And The Now*' car elle parle de l'Angleterre, au début d'une manière plutôt amusée et un peu grincheuse. Mais vers la fin c'est vraiment de la colère, car on bombarde un autre pays, on est entrés en guerre et cela m'énerve beaucoup. Donc je décide de partir et devenir étranger. La première partie parle plutôt des rapports entre les gens...

AB : et de la perte

RW : La perte, le sentiment de perte qu'éprouvent les gens, la perte de confiance, le deuil, c'est très gai ! (rires)

IMPROJAZZ : *Tu fais toujours partie du mouvement pataphysique ?*

RW : Et bien oui, ce n'est pas un mouvement que l'on peut quitter comme cela. C'est un honneur qu'on ne rejette pas. Je n'ai jamais reçu de lettre m'expliquant que je ne faisais plus partie du mouvement. On ne m'a pas foutu dehors (rires). Si jamais il y avait une marche triomphale des Pataphysiciens à travers Paris, ce serait à nous de jouer la musique, nous serions l'orchestre officiel. C'est marqué sur le contrat ! (rires) Et comme le groupe n'existe plus, c'est un défi extrêmement intéressant à relever... (rires)

IMPROJAZZ : *un problème pataphysique...*

RW : Oui (rires). En fait les choses se sont passées ainsi : il y avait un vieux qui se faisait balader en fauteuil roulant, et qui était le grand chef et il devait donner son accord sur tout, mais je ne sais pas qui c'était. Quelqu'un lui avait dit qu'on était le groupe le plus pataphysique au monde et il est donc venu nous voir et après il a dit "c'est tout simplement horrible, rien que du bruit, bien sûr c'est le groupe le plus pataphysique du monde, il nous les faut ! (rires). Et au bout de dix minutes il a demandé qu'on le fasse sortir (rires).

Propos recueillis par GARY MAY et Philippe RENAUD, le 3 septembre 2007.
Traduits par Gary MAY et Catherine TINLAND.

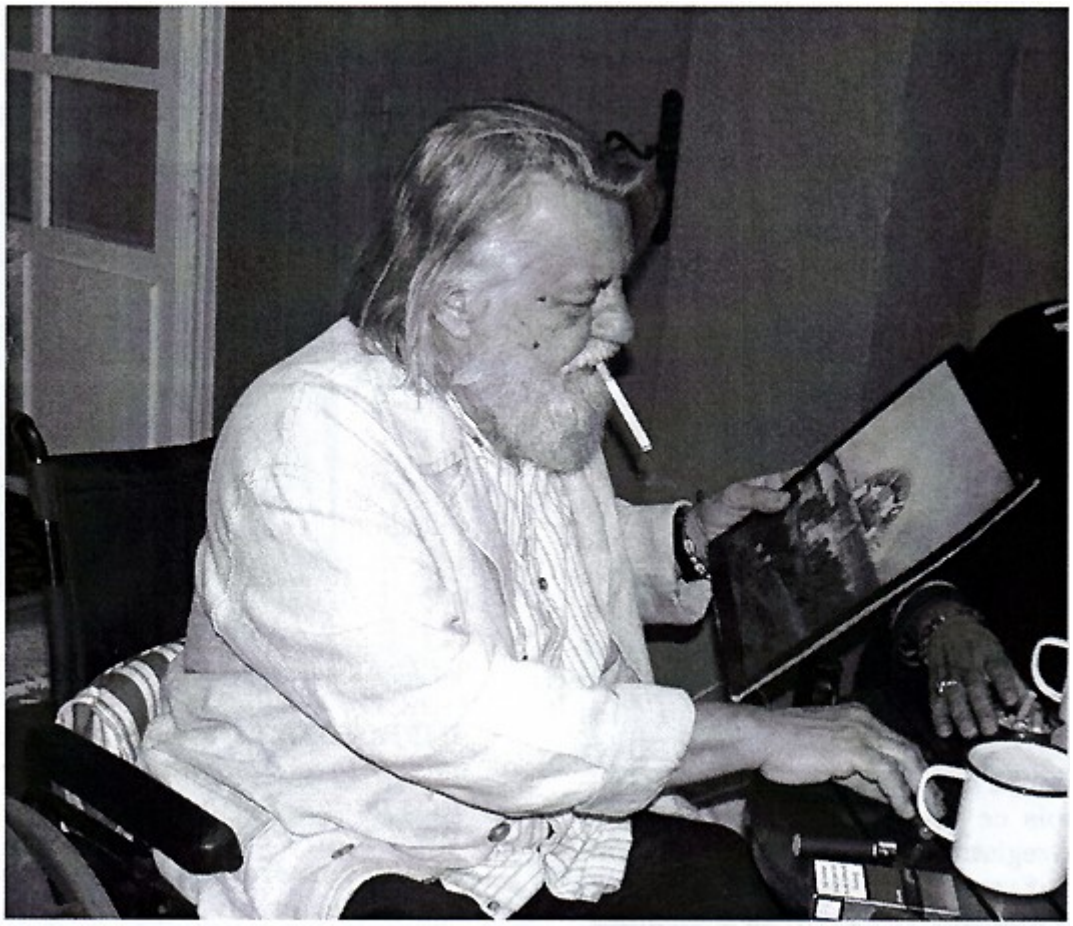


photo Gary MAY

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MILLE FOIS PLUS HEUREUX



Figure légendaire du paysage pop avant-gardiste britannique des années 70, l'ex-leader de Soft Machine poursuivait deux décennies plus tard une carrière solo qui entrait de plain-pied dans l'ère de la sagesse. Sans autre pression que la soif de recherche, de liberté et d'engagement politique de cet éternel survivant.

ENTRETIEN RICHARD ROBERT -1997

ROBERT WYATT : Depuis dix ans maintenant, il y a chez moi une pièce consacrée à la musique, où je peux jouer quand je le souhaite, il y a là un piano, un magnétophone, des carnets de notes, quelques cymbales. Et, depuis peu, un cornet *(il l'imite)*... Alfie, ma femme, me l'a offert quand j'ai terminé l'enregistrement de *Shleep*. J'ai aussi une trompette de poche, comme celle de Don Cherry, que je caresse comme si c'était un petit lapin en peluche... La plupart du temps, dans cette pièce, je reste simplement assis là, à regarder par la fenêtre. Mais parfois je mets des disques et je les accompagne. Dernièrement, j'ai joué des cymbales avec Lennie Tristano, de la trompette avec Jimmy Scott, des percussions avec des groupes cubains... C'est de la joie pure. Parfois, quand les disques sont terminés, je continue de jouer. Et c'est comme ça, entre autres, que j'accumule des idées que j'essaie d'enregistrer ou de noter. Mais enfin. ..je ne suis pas naturellement un compositeur. Ma vocation, ça serait plutôt de dormir profondément.

Quand et comment décidez-vous alors de vous atteler à un album comme *Shleep* ?

Je trouve des fragments d'idées... Et à un moment, je sens qu'il faut coordonner tout ça, en tirer quelque chose. C'est mon boulot, vous comprenez, il faut bien manger. Histoire de mieux dormir ensuite... A un moment, j'ai été assez surpris de constater que j'avais assez pour faire un album. J'avais essayé auparavant. Mais depuis le début des années 90, rien n'avait jamais abouti. Une période difficile, pleine d'obstacles. En 93, j'ai eu un accident : je suis tombé de ma chaise roulante et me suis brisé les jambes. Deux ans après, j'ai traversé une grave dépression nerveuse. Ce sont des choses qui arrivent à tout le monde. Il y a eu aussi beaucoup d'embrouilles politiques dans la ville où nous habitons. Des choses très dures, qui m'ont beaucoup distrait... Et la panique m'a gagné. Cette impression que je ne pourrais plus jamais fonctionner en tant que musicien, que ça ne pèserait plus rien dans ma vie. Sûrement que je me mentais. Je me sens tellement mieux aujourd'hui, après avoir enregistré *Shleep*. Mille fois plus détendu, heureux qu'il y a deux

ans. Ne serait-ce que physiquement : je me sens plus solide et en bonne santé qu'auparavant. C'est aussi, j'en suis persuadé, grâce à la présence stimulante d'Alfie, à son implication grandissante dans mon travail. Ça, ça a complètement régénéré mon âme.

La musique n'avait jamais eu ce genre de pouvoir ?

Peut-être que si. Mais j'étais sans doute un peu plus inhibé. Surtout depuis les années 60, qui se sont achevées de manière si désastreuse... J'ai été tourné en ridicule, maltraité par les musiciens avec lesquels je travaillais jusqu'alors (*Soft Machine - ndlr*). Ils avaient dû estimer qu'en fin de compte, je n'étais pas un partenaire musical légitime. Ils étaient plus âgés que moi, j'ai pensé qu'ils avaient raison. J'ai mis du temps avant de retrouver la confiance. De toute façon, même lorsque je suis très satisfait de ce que j'ai fait, il m'a toujours suffi d'écouter un disque de Miles Davis et Gil Evans pour que ça me calme un peu... Des musiciens ont vaincu des sommets. Moi, où que j'aille, et même si ça a souvent été bien, ça n'a jamais été que des collines.

Comment êtes-vous sorti de cette période difficile ?

Phil Manzanera m'a généreusement proposé de m'ouvrir son studio, comme ça, pour expérimenter. Je me suis dit que si j'allais chez lui et que ça ne donnait rien de bon, ça ne serait pas dramatique. C'était l'invite d'un ami, pas une proposition commerciale. Il devenait urgent d'essayer, quitte à ce que ce soit loin d'être parfait. Finalement, avec l'aide d'autres personnes, ça a pu se concrétiser très vite. Le simple fait de travailler avec elles m'a arraché de ma dépression.

Est-ce l'album solo où vous avez le plus collaboré avec d'autres musiciens ?

C'est vrai que je ne l'ai pas fait tant que ça par le passé. Et pourtant, Dieu sait si on m'a plusieurs fois accusé d'être un collaborateur... Mais je ne suis pas Maurice Chevalier ! Plus sérieusement, j'ai toujours été surpris que les gens utilisent ce terme. Ça suppose une idée de compagnonnage facile, dont je n'ai absolument pas souvenir dans toutes les expériences de groupe que j'ai pu connaître. Parfois, j'ai envie d'atteindre une sorte de cristallisation miniature de ma musique et là, il me faut être seul ; parfois j'ai besoin d'ouvrir la fenêtre, d'amener de la compagnie. *Shleep* appartient à ce deuxième cas de figure. Pour moi, les choses vont toujours ainsi, par paire.

C'est pour ça, à ce propos, que les CD m'ont toujours posé beaucoup de problèmes. Qu'on ne puisse pas les retourner, ça m'est insupportable. Ces blocs d'une pièce, s'étirant à l'infini... Sur *Shleep*, j'ai abandonné au bout de 55 minutes. Il y avait encore de la marge. Mais je ne pouvais pas continuer indéfiniment, je ne suis pas Richard Wagner...


NÉ EN 1945

A qui veut sonder les profondeurs de l'imagination humaine, l'œuvre de Robert Ellidge offre un voyage de première classe. De ses premières frasques au sein du groupe Soft Machine jusqu'à sa carrière solo, jalonnée de chefs-d'œuvre inqualifiables (*Rock Bottom*, *Cuckooland*, *Shleep* ou le *Comicopera* de 2007), ce promeneur solitaire s'est refusé à choisir entre pop et jazz, raison pure et folie douce, regard critique et fantaisie surréaliste. Cloué dans un fauteuil roulant depuis un accident en 1973 mais en cavale depuis toujours, Wyatt est ce vieux sage à la voix d'enfant, égaré dans un monde dont il redessine sans cesse la beauté.

> Zoom

"JE SUIS UN COMPOSITEUR TRÈS LENT.
MAIS J'Ai UNE IDÉE TRÈS CLAIRE DE CE QUE JE VEUX FAIRE. LES MOTS, LES ACCORDS, LE SON : TOUT EST CONÇU DANS LE DÉTAIL"

Dans votre travail, il y a toujours eu un habile mélange de spontanéité et de maturation?

J'ai toujours été un compositeur très lent. Intérieurement, j'avais une idée très claire de ce que je voulais pour *Shleep*, une sorte de schéma directeur. Les mots, les accords, les rythmes, le son : tous les éléments de base étaient mis au point dans le détail. Je réfléchis aussi beaucoup à l'équilibre global entre les chansons, entre ce qui est improvisé et ce qui ne l'est pas. J'entends parfois des disques où chaque moment est vraiment bon. Mais le

voyage complet, lui, est difficile à digérer. J'essaie d'éviter l'indigestion à mes auditeurs. Maintenant, il est souvent très déprimant pour moi de réécouter ma propre musique. Je dois vraiment me battre pour ne pas être trop en colère contre moi-même.

Etes-vous un insatisfait chronique ?

J'entends parfois des artistes déclarer que c'est très sain de n'être jamais satisfait de ce qu'on fait. C'est ridicule. Comme si l'on disait "*Quand je mange, j'aime que ça ne me semble pas bon*"... Il est certain que je veux tout le temps le truc parfait. Mais rétrospectivement, je me rends compte que je fais des erreurs. A chaque fois que je m'engage dans un nouvel album, j'essaie de m'en souvenir et de les éviter. Et forcément, j'en fais de nouvelles, c'est pathétique ! Bon, il est toujours utile de se tromper. C'est une loi islamique, ça : chaque dessein doit compter une erreur, car seul Dieu a le droit d'être parfait. Bon... Je suis assez d'accord avec ça, si ce n'est que personne, en fait, ne foire autant que Dieu.

Y a-t-il des erreurs qui sont plus douloureuses que d'autres ?

Dans le passé, je n'ai pas toujours été capable de choisir les partenaires idéaux, je n'ai pas toujours su trouver le morceau qui leur correspondait. Le dialecte, l'accent ne leur convenaient pas. Maintenant que je ne suis plus dans un groupe, c'est plus facile et je fais davantage attention. Les chansons de *Shleep* ont été écrites sur une assez longue période et dans des humeurs très différentes : il y a deux ou trois morceaux composés dans un état extrêmement dépressif, et d'autres écrits quand j'étais ivre, joyeux. J'ai donc fait un choix de musiciens qui respectent cette variété. Dans un sens, je me suis senti plus courageux : j'ai pris le risque d'abandonner les morceaux aux musiciens, pour voir ce qui se passerait. J'ai eu beaucoup de chance avec Annie Whitehead, Evan Parker, Philip Catherine et Paul Weller... Ils ont tout de suite sauté dans les chansons sur lesquelles ils ont joué et du même coup, ils m'ont amené de nouvelles couleurs.

Et les vieux compagnons comme Brian Eno ou Phil Manzanera ?

Outre son jeu de guitare très spécifique, la plus grande contribution de Phil est sans doute d'avoir amené un ingénieur du son très intelligent, dont l'aide a été énorme. En termes de qualité sonore, je n'ai pas les mêmes valeurs que beaucoup de musiciens. Dans le passé, certains ingénieurs ont eu du mal à concevoir le son que je voulais : ils essayaient automatiquement de le corriger. Ils ont toujours cette tendance à vouloir tout lisser - en particulier dans le rock. Moi, j'aime que la musique soit un peu négligée, débraillée, sale, abîmée... Quant à Brian, c'est autre chose. Il a cette énergie étonnante, une façon de péter le feu. En studio, il est un peu comme un adolescent, il est fou-fou. Quand vous pensez à l'autorité qu'il a acquise au fil des années... Rien de tout ça ne transparaît dans sa personnalité, il ne joue pas les grosses pointures. Il aime travailler dur, s'y mettre à fond. Un morceau comme *Heaps of Sheeps* est au moins autant le sien que le mien.

Selon Eno, la principale matière d'une musique n'est plus le développement harmonique, les accords, les rythmes, mais la texture. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

J'ai bien du mal à définir ce qui est essentiel en toute chose - en musique comme ailleurs. Disons que dans la musique d'avant-garde conceptuelle - post-Stockhausen - comme dans l'univers des remixes, de la dance-music et du dub, la texture est effectivement fondamentale. Mais dans mon cas, j'ai gardé une vision rigoureusement traditionnelle de la musique. Sous l'animal étrange que peut devenir un morceau, j'ai besoin de sentir un squelette, des os, des muscles, des tissus - tout ce qui le rendra organique. Ça déroute ceux qui considèrent qu'en musique, deux écoles s'opposent: l'une qui adopte une démarche radicalement neuve, et une autre qui emprunte les chemins déjà balisés. Parmi mes amis musiciens, il y aura Evan Parker, qui va développer des improvisations totales, sans structures. Et à côté de lui, il y aura Paul Weller, qui travaille quotidiennement dans un langage musical que je qualifierais d'"anglais à guitares". Pourquoi faire un choix entre les deux ? Ce qu'il y a de plus excitant, c'est précisément la rencontre entre ces extrêmes, entre l'inconnu et le familier - et toute l'électricité que cela provoque.

Dans votre musique, le familier et l'inconnu se côtoient-ils en permanence ?

Franchement, au fond de moi, je pense être très traditionnel. Les musiciens craignent souvent d'être trop conventionnels. Mais je pense que la stérilité existe aussi dans la recherche obsessionnelle de la nouveauté. J'ai souvent l'impression d'entendre la quintessence de musique lorsque j'écoute du folk, des musiques populaires, voire des musiques "fonctionnelles" - comme les appels à la prière des muezzins, par exemple. Je suppose que la dance-music, à sa façon, est un exemple de musique fonctionnelle. Mais

ma sensibilité me mène vers des formes de musiques plus artisanales. Comprenez-moi,: je serai toujours très reconnaissant à l'égard des grands aventuriers, des grands explorateurs de la musique, de Cecil Taylor à Pierre Boulez. Mais si j'avais à choisir les musiciens selon moi essentiels, ce serait davantage Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, les chanteurs de blues, le flamenco... C'est d'abord à eux que je suis fidèle, loyal avant tout. Ensuite, partant de là, j'ai essayé de rendre ma vie intéressante en accomplissant de petits voyages avec d'autres musiciens.

Avez-vous le sentiment d'être le maillon d'une histoire musicale ?

Je ne suis pas un chanteur de blues ni de flamenco, c'est évident. En revanche, je viens de cette grande scène pop anglaise. La pop-song est toujours mon principal outil. Cela dit, pour que la musique devienne vivante, il faut que je sente ce côté folk-song. Même si c'est souterrain. J'aime à penser qu'il existe un langage populaire passant à travers les âges, qui existerait au-delà des formes musicales plus sophistiquées qu'a développées chaque culture dans chaque pays. Si j'étais capable de visiter l'ancienne Egypte, je suis sûr que je prendrais du plaisir à écouter les flûtes et les harpes de ces filles que l'on voit sur certaines images.

Avez-vous toujours été intéressé, attiré par les musiques traditionnelles ?

A l'origine, j'étais davantage séduit par ce qu'on pourrait appeler la musique d'avant-garde. Et puis j'ai rencontré Alfie, qui a toujours aimé la chanson, notamment traditionnelle. Quand nous avons habité en Espagne, elle s'est beaucoup intéressée au flamenco, nous avons cherché et fréquenté beaucoup de lieux où ce genre de musique se produisait. Pour ma part, je pense que mon principal stimulus reste la musique noire américaine des années 50 - et tout ce qui en découle. Le jazz est toujours pour moi le plus magique des mondes musicaux. Parce qu'il a été une rampe de lancement pour l'improvisation, mais aussi - on a tendance à l'oublier - parce que les musiciens de jazz ont toujours su écrire de magnifiques chansons. J'ai essayé de prendre dans le jazz toutes ces protéines de bonnes harmonies, de bonnes lignes mélodiques, de bons rythmes : des éléments plus universels que toutes ces choses stylistiques sur lesquelles la plupart des gens préfèrent s'arrêter.

"LA POLITIQUE VOUS SUIT PARTOUT
ELLE VOUS RATTRAPE DANS VOTRE VIE PRIVÉE. IL N'Y A QU'A VOIR COMMENT LES COMPAGNIES PRIVÉES ESSAIENT DE PRENDRE LE CONTRÔLE DE CHAQUE PARCELLE DE NOS EXISTENCES".

Sur plus de trente ans de pratique musicale, pensez-vous avoir tiré une ou plusieurs théories ?

Jamais, en tout cas, au moment même où je travaille. Là, je suis complètement instinctif. Peut-être étais-je plus dans la théorie quand j'étais jeune : j'essayais de comprendre comment les différents types de musique fonctionnaient, pour parfaire mes connaissances et ma propre technique. Mais au fond, c'était comme à l'école : l'objectif, c'était d'atteindre un stade où je saurais faire les choses automatiquement. S'il m'arrive de développer des théories, c'est rétrospectivement, et c'est à mon sens un travail intellectuel un peu complaisant... Les théories ne sont que des gaz. La pratique instinctive de la musique, voilà la figure de proue de mon travail, c'est elle qui me fait aller de l'avant. J'ai besoin des lumières qu'elle m'apporte, de ses jaillissements, de ses feux d'artifice. Ma conscience, elle, observe ça de loin, sur sa vieille bicyclette : elle essaie de voir où ça part, où ça retombe, mais elle a du mal à suivre.

En tant que musicien, prenez-vous beaucoup de risques ?

Il y a bien des moments où j'éprouve l'équivalent musical de ces virées en voiture que font les gamins qui n'ont pas le permis : ils ne savent pas conduire, mais ils piquent une bagnole, roulent à fond la caisse jusqu'à ce qu'ils se plantent. J'ai passé les vingt premières années de ma vie professionnelle à faire ce genre de *joyriding*. Je vois ça comme un apprentissage. Mais je ne suis pas masochiste. Je me sens contusionné par tous ces accidents... Je sais ce qui se passe lorsqu'on traverse la rue sans regarder ou lorsqu'on tombe très haut d'une fenêtre. C'était intéressant, ça, mais... Inutile de le refaire.

LA CORRUPTION DES MAISONS DE DISQUES
A ÉTÉ POUR MOI L'HORREUR ABSOLUE PENDANT VINGT ANS. C'ÉTAIT BIEN PLUS PARALYSANT QUE LA PARAPLÉGIE ELLE-MÊME. C'EST LA CHOSE LA PLUS... INVALIDANTE QUE J'AIE CONNUE."

Cela signifierait-il que vous ayez atteint une sorte de sagesse ?

C'est un mot de luxe, comme "communisme" ou "chrétienté", non ? Cela dit, lorsque vous êtes plus âgé, vous savez quoi faire de vos idées. Quand vous êtes jeune, vous n'avez pas forcément une idée très claire de ce que vous voulez. Alors vous bouillonnez, vous pleurez, criez, tendez le poing, courez, sautez... Sans aucune motivation rationnelle. Aujourd'hui, je sais ce que je veux. Je n'ai pas pour ambition d'approcher une sagesse que personne n'aurait jamais atteinte - ce genre de croisade. Plus modestement, j'essaie de trouver ce qui est bon, pour moi, de faire. Je ne cherche pas à tout prix à rester le même ni à être différent. Vous ne pouvez pas décider d'être original. D'autant que pour ma part, je me sentirais plutôt conventionnel. Quand il m'arrive d'entendre un de mes morceaux à la radio, ça me gêne à en mourir. Ça ne sonne jamais comme un "vrai" disque. C'est le chaos : on dirait que la batterie et la basse roulent dans toute la pièce, ma voix sonne comme quelqu'un qu'on étrangle ou qui se noie. Je suis démasqué : je ne peux pas faire de vrais disques, comme les vraies gens. Je ne refuse pas de faire joli. Simplement, je ne sais pas comment faire... Quand je suis seul à la maison, que je suis un peu ivre et livré à moi-même, j'écoute des musiques que certains trouveraient insupportablement mielleuses. Mais moi, avec ces jolies petites chansons, je vais au plus profond de mon âme. Astrud Gilberto, Dionne Warwick, les arrangements de Burt Bacharach... Pas les plus tranchantes des musiques, c'est sûr.

Quelle importance accordez-vous aux mots et à leur sens ?

Sur les deux chansons qu'il a mixées, Paul Weller était très inquiet que la signification des mots se perde. C'est lui qui m'a incité à mieux protéger ma voix, à ne pas la laisser se perdre dans l'environnement. Alfie, qui a notamment écrit les textes et arrangé les parties vocales *d'Alien* et *Heaps of Sheeps*, trouvait aussi que j'étais un peu paresseux sur l'articulation, que je devais me concentrer davantage sur mon travail de chanteur. J'ai sans doute besoin de ces injonctions : mon chant est meilleur là où on m'a poussé. Mais je ne pense pas tant que ça aux paroles en termes de sens. J'estime qu'elles doivent en quelque sorte être au service de la musique. Mes textes préférés sont ceux qu'on peut déjà chanter rien qu'en les disant. Quand j'écris, je ne sais pas vraiment ce qui se passe, l'important est que ce soit approprié à la musique. Je ne planifie rien, je vais peut-être parler du Nicaragua ou de mon voisin. Ça devrait être la partie la plus consciente, la plus rationnelle de mon travail : c'est au contraire la plus abstraite... Je me suis posé la question une fois : "Ce que tu dis dans tes chansons, le dirais-tu dans ta vie, au quotidien ?"

Quelle est aujourd'hui votre relation avec l'industrie musicale ?

Ça a été l'horreur pendant vingt ans. Un vrai désastre. Heureusement, j'ai reçu l'aide de quelques personnes honorables comme Geoff Travis, de Rough Trade, ou de mon nouveau label, Rykodisc. Mais la corruption profonde, systématique, dont a pu faire preuve dans le passé le milieu du disque a été pour moi plus paralysante que la paraplégie elle-même. C'est la chose la plus... invalidante que j'aie connue. Combien d'entre nous n'ont pas fait le dixième de ce qu'ils auraient pu accomplir à cause du manque d'intégrité de l'industrie ? Il y a des exceptions, bien sûr, dans cet univers-là. Mais je trouve justement scandaleux qu'ils soient réduits au rang d'exceptions.

Aujourd'hui, vous sentez-vous isolé, loin de tout ça ?

Vous savez, la plupart du temps, je ne suis tout simplement pas un musicien. Nous vivons, Alfie et moi, avec nos proches autour de nous... Nous avons des amis très gentils, là où nous habitons. Et puis il y a les oiseaux au-dehors, le passage des migrateurs. Mes jumelles sont là, toujours à portée de main. Je me sentais beaucoup plus seul il y a trente ans. Un étranger dans un pays étrange - le pays des musiciens -, voilà ce que j'étais. J'ai été très agréablement surpris lorsque j'ai commencé à rencontrer des musiciens comme Fred Frith, John Greaves ou Peter Blegvad, avec lesquels j'avais beaucoup de points communs. Peut-être que si j'avais été plus chanceux, si je les avais rencontrés plus tôt, nous aurions formé ensemble un groupe très harmonieux... Ce qui est sûr, aujourd'hui, c'est qu'il y a beaucoup de musiciens qui participent plus régulièrement que moi au monde dans lequel ils travaillent. Moi, je ne fais que le visiter, lorsque je sors de ma cachette - si

tant est que je me cache. Dans *Shleep*, la dimension politique est bien moindre que par le passé. Je me sens plus fragile depuis ma dépression nerveuse. Là où des militants s'enflammeront, moi j'aurai tendance à être plutôt déprimé. Je suis de plus en plus profondément... meurtri par l'esprit, l'attitude des conservateurs. J'aimerais rendre le monde un peu plus paisible, être insouciant, regarder des comédies à la télévision. Mais la politique vous suit partout où vous allez, elle vous rattrape dans votre vie privée. Il n'y a qu'à voir comment les compagnies privées essaient de prendre le contrôle de chaque parcelle de nos existences. Vous voyez ce fauteuil roulant ? La Sécurité sociale me l'a fourni il y a deux mois et il est déjà tout déglingué. Tout est fait pour nous pousser dans les bras du privé. Alors je pourrais me contenter d'être assis chez moi, à penser aux petites choses de nos vies. Mais il suffira que je regarde la télé et que je tombe sur CNN pour que ça anéantisse tout. Cette vision cauchemardesque des informations... Ça me rend malade exactement comme il y a vingt ans. Mais comme je me sens un peu plus fragile, je suis aussi un peu plus poltron. J'en ai assez de perdre des amis uniquement parce que j'aurai défendu devant eux la cause palestinienne.

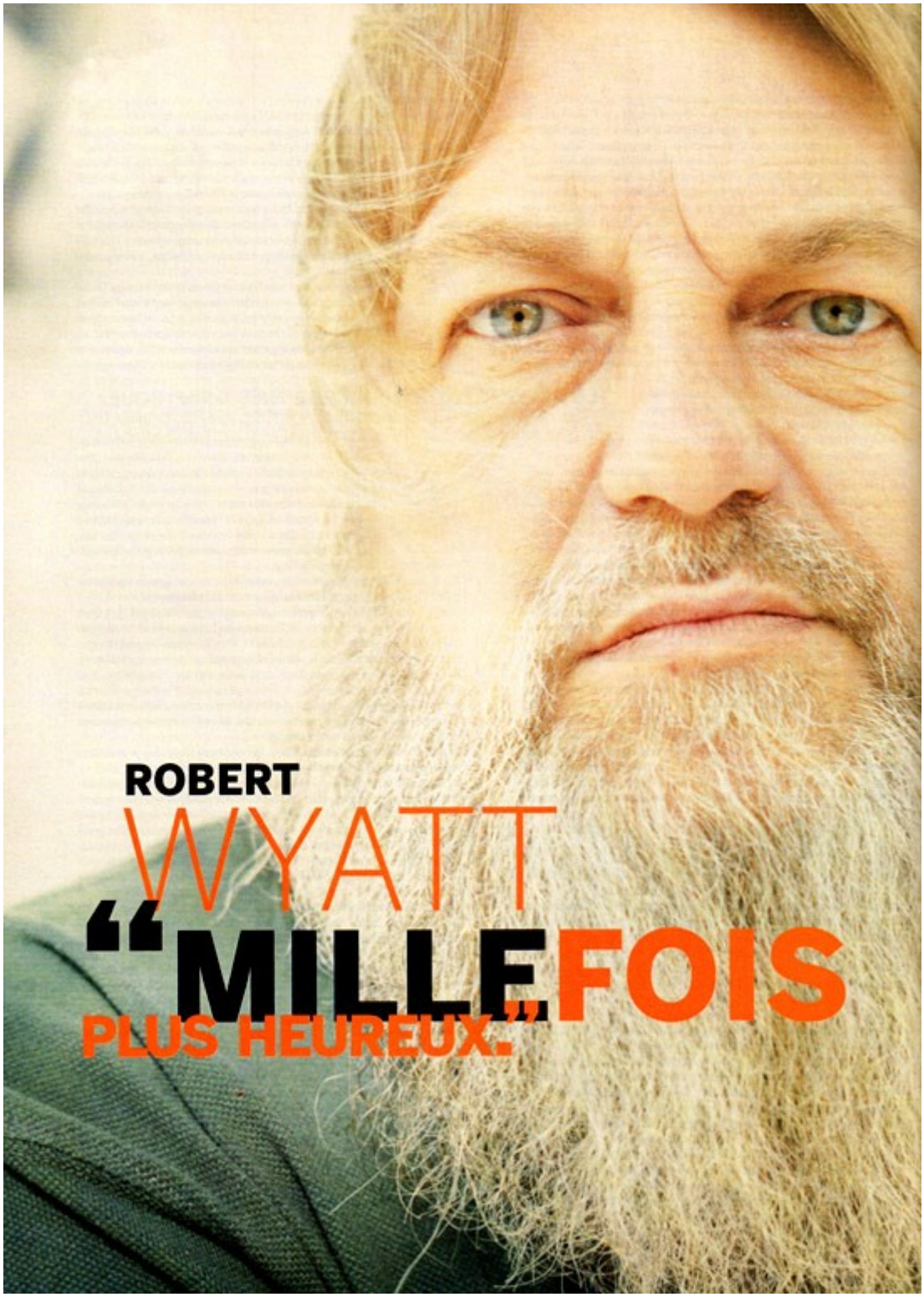


Photo : Renaud Monfourny

Vous renvoie-t-on souvent à Rock Bottom, en sous-entendant que vous n'avez jamais fait mieux depuis ?

J'ai entendu dire que je n'avais jamais été aussi bon musicien que lorsque j'étais batteur dans Soft Machine. Et que depuis, bon, c'était pas mal pour un paraplégique, sans plus... Pour d'autres, c'est dans les années 70, les années Virgin, que j'aurais trouvé la bonne formule. Dans mon esprit, mon parcours est celui d'un
train s'arrêtant dans différentes gares. Certains estiment que telle ou telle gare aurait dû être le terminus de ma destination. Mais le train, c'est moi ! Et les trains ne restent pas comme ça dans les gares. Par contre, ils laissent des gens en route et ils en prennent d'autres vers une autre destination... Si certains aiment tout particulièrement un seul de mes disques, ça me rendra heureux.

Entre votre musique et votre personnalité, existe-t-il des liens évidents ?

Je ne suis déjà pas sûr de savoir ce qu'est une personnalité, alors je n'essaie pas de projeter la mienne dans mes chansons. Je me sens un peu caméléon. Il y a bien chez moi quelque chose de constant. Mais ça se mélange en permanence avec ce qui se passe dans l'environnement, ça se laisse influencer, imprimer, c'est chimique. Je n'ai pas l'impression d'avoir fixé une identité. Certaines de mes actions passées semblent tellement loin de celui que je suis aujourd'hui. Bon, je suppose que j'ai tendance à m'écouter un peu, mais pas de cette manière.

Et musicalement, vous ne pensez pas avoir fixé une identité ?

Si j'en ai une, c'est de manière un peu ridicule, imaginaire, voire fantasmée. Par exemple, quand j'essaie de jouer de ma petite trompette sur *Was a Friend*, je pense que je suis Don Cherry. Quand je regarde dans le miroir, je vois bien qu'il n'est pas là. Mais pendant que je joue, aucun doute... Je suis toujours heureux quand je peux ainsi lever l'ancre. Me perdre, dans un sens. Le monde des sons est comme un océan, on peut y nager, au milieu des textures, des sentiments, des chansons... Pendant un moment, je vais peut-être pouvoir nager dans les mêmes eaux que Don, là où lui-même allait - même si ce n'est pas aussi bien que lui, même si moi je n'ai pas pied.

Avez-vous déjà songé à ne plus jouer de la musique que chez vous, pour le plaisir ?

Si je n'avais pas le besoin matériel de travailler, je serais probablement une espèce d'amateur de musique un peu aristo, un gentleman qui jouerait ses chansons à la maison. Certains des enregistrements qui me ravissent le plus ne pourraient pas faire l'objet d'une diffusion. Si vous me demandez quel est le travail qui m'a le plus comblé ces dernières années, je vous répondrai sans hésiter : une petite cassette où je chante Happy Birthday pour ma belle-fille. Une chanson écrite rien que pour elle, comme une lettre. C'est parfois quand vous travaillez ainsi, pour une seule personne, un ami, que vous vous découvrez une écriture entièrement libre, relâchée. Peut-être que nos meilleures réalisations naissent ainsi, dans des situations de la plus totale intimité. Il y a une infinité de choses que l'on peut partager avec d'autres personnes, et qui suffisent largement à faire une vie. Je suppose qu'au fond, c'est ça, la grande idée.

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HOME

Robert Wyatt - Rencontre avec un génie humble et secret - Bon pour les oreilles- 28 octobre 2007



Il y a des rencontres qui vous transportent. Robert Wyatt est de celles-ci. Les yeux emplis d'une douceur inouïe, il disserte avec le charme du conteur, passant comme naturellement de la musique à la politique.

A l'occasion de la sortie de *Comicopera* (Domino/ Musikvertrieb) découvrez une interview avec un artiste unique, dont le génie musical et la voix fragile et aérienne ne connaissent pas d'égal.



Comicopera évoque la perte et la guerre. Peut-on vraiment parler d'opéra comique?

On peut bien sûr y voir un opéra tragique. Mais comme je ne suis pas quelqu'un de tragique ou de pessimiste, j'ai préféré l'intituler *Comicopera*.

Pourquoi avoir choisi de diviser l'album en trois parties?

A la fin de l'enregistrement, *Comicopera* durait une heure, ce qui me semblait plutôt long. La solution idéale était donc de diviser cet album en différentes parties, d'une vingtaine de minutes chacune, à la manière d'une face de vinyle.

Chaque partie a pourtant un titre spécifique, ce qui suggère une certaine cohérence...

Contrairement à mes précédents albums, différentes atmosphères se dégagent des chansons, tant dans leurs thématiques qu'au niveau des musiciens et des compositeurs qui y ont participé. On peut voir cela comme une pièce de théâtre musicale, avec un fil conducteur narratif, même s'il ne s'agit pas vraiment d'une histoire suivie. De plus, certaines chansons semblaient aller ensemble, du fait de leurs préoccupations. La première partie évoque ainsi la perte et l'intimité, la deuxième la vie en Angleterre à observer le monde autour de soi, tandis que la dernière a quelque chose d'un voyage féerique, que l'on peut aussi bien rattacher à une certaine forme de folie qu'à un ailleurs, déconnecté de la réalité.

> Plus je vieillis et plus les albums que j'écoute vieillissent. Ce qui explique le son de *Comicopera*.

Chaque partie peut donc s'écouter indépendamment des deux autres, comme s'il s'agissait de trois albums distincts?

Oui, d'ailleurs les changements d'une séquence à une autre sont plutôt abrupts. La seconde partie se termine par un bombardement (la chanson *Out of the Blue*) et la troisième débute avec la réaction de celui qui reçoit cette bombe (*Del Mondo*). Cela implique deux points de vue, mais également deux ambiances musicales très différentes.

Malgré ces différentes parties, l'album trouve sa cohérence et sonne comme un croisement réussi entre pop et jazz. Etait-ce un idéal que vous vouliez atteindre?

Dans un sens oui, mais ce son est également lié aux musiciens qui m'accompagnent. Sur mes deux derniers albums, j'ai trouvé un groupe avec lequel je pouvais travailler. Surtout, j'ai pris conscience de ce qu'il pouvait apporter à ma musique. D'habitude, je travaille en solo, puis ajoute des musiciens au moment d'enregistrer. Cette fois-ci, j'ai opté pour un fonctionnement en groupe. Bien sûr, j'aurais pu continuer à créer les différentes parties musicales avec des synthés, mais j'avais envie d'intégrer le caractère des personnes présentes dans ma musique.

Par moments, les atmosphères de _Comicopera_ évoquent le jazz des années 50. Est-ce que cette période vous a influencé?

En fait, plus je vieillis et plus les albums que j'écoute vieillissent *(rires)*. Ces dernières années, j'ai écouté beaucoup de disques des années 50, ce qui explique le son de *Comicopera*. Aujourd'hui, je me plonge dans les vinyles des années 30.

Est-ce que ça veut dire que votre prochain album sonnera comme du jazz des années 30?

C'est une très bonne idée! Peut-être que ma trompette aura plus de vibrato… En ce moment, j'écoute de très vieux enregistrements de jazz, notamment Mutt Carey, un trompettiste des années 20. Il faisait partie du mouvement New Orleans et a enregistré ses disques avant Louis Armstrong et l'apparition des premiers solistes. Son style est très beau, peu syncopé, presque archaïque *(ndlr: il fredonne quelques mesures)*. J'adore ça. Donc si vous m'entendez jouer de cette manière, vous pourrez dire: "J'avais raison. Le voilà de retour dans les années 20." *(rires)*

> “J'ai trouvé dans la musique de Johnny Cash une possibilité de changer ma voix, de chanter de manière plus grave. Ce qui correspond mieux à mon âge, puisque je ne suis plus un enfant, ni même un jeune homme.

A côté de ses sonorités jazz, une chanson comme *Beautiful Peace* ressemble à une ballade country, proche de celles de Johnny Cash. Qu'est-ce qui vous a amené à explorer ce registre, plutôt inhabituel pour vous?

Durant l'enregistrement de *Comicopera*, j'ai beaucoup écouté les sessions réunissant Johnny Cash et Bob Dylan. Ça m'a permis de comprendre ce genre de musique et m'a donné l'envie de m'y essayer. De plus, j'y ai trouvé la possibilité de changer ma voix, de chanter de manière plus grave. Ce qui correspond mieux à mon âge, puisque je ne suis plus un enfant, ni même un jeune homme.

Cette chanson fait écho au titre *Beautiful War*, présent dans la même partie. Quel est le sens de ce couple?

A l'origine, les deux chansons sont nées d'une même idée musicale de Brian Eno. Ensuite, leurs thématiques se répondent. *Beautiful Peace* est une manière de se rappeler que même si nous ne sommes pas toujours heureux, nous avons la chance de vivre dans des pays en paix. Quant à *Beautiful War*, elle fait référence à une réalité qu'admettent rarement les militaires ou les politiciens liés à l'armée: ils aiment l'esthétique de la guerre, qu'il s'agisse des uniformes ou des machines utilisées. De la même manière, on se laisse prendre par l'euphorie de piloter un avion, même si celui-ci sert à lâcher des bombes.

Comme dans la dernière scène de *Dr Folamour* de Stanley Kubrick, où un officier chevauche la bombe lâchée par un avion, à la manière d'un cow-boy en plein rodéo?

Exactement. Cependant, je peux comprendre d'une certaine manière la fierté qui envahit les soldats. Là où je vis, dans le Lincolnshire, certains des habitants se sont battus durant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale et en retirent une fierté innocente. Néanmoins, je me demande si les soldats anglais qui se battent en Irak pourront connaître un sentiment similaire, puisqu'ils ne luttent pas contre une armée qui les a attaqués.



Pourquoi avoir choisi de reprendre *Hasta Siempre, Comandante*, chanson consacrée à Che Guevara, en fin d'album?

La troisième partie de l'album est majoritairement consacrée aux alternatives possibles face à une réalité inacceptable. Che Guevara en est une, au même titre que Garcia Lorca, dont je reprends un texte dans *Cancion de Julieta*. Mais ces alternatives se traduisent également dans l'art, comme dans le mouvement surréaliste, par exemple. Ou encore dans l'improvisation, qui est une autre forme de libération, comme le free-jazz. Derrière la musique, il y a une confiance dans la spontanéité du moment. Pour ma part, j'ai le luxe de pouvoir être un pacifiste, mais je conserve toujours une admiration pour ceux qui se battent pour améliorer les choses. Et si j'ai choisi de terminer l'album avec cette chanson, c'est pour montrer que je ne suis pas pessimiste.

C'est pour cette raison que vous avez opté pour une instrumentation jazz très cubaine, qui dégage un certain espoir?

En fait, je suis accompagné par des musiciens italiens sur ce titre. J'ai beaucoup apprécié leur façon d'interpréter cette chanson. Ils viennent du jazz, mais jouent avec un respect de la version originale écrite par Calos Puebla. Ils ont su trouver l'équilibre entre les éléments folk et jazz, ajoutant une sorte de twist harmonique qui correspond parfaitement à la manière dont je voulais chanter. De plus, ces sonorités reflètent la partie du monde où je trouve de l'espoir aujourd'hui: l'Amérique Latine.

> A l'origine, le rock portait en lui une idée de liberté. Mais aujourd'hui, on l'utilise pour torturer des prisonniers à Guantanamo. C'est assez flexible comme idée de liberté...



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Quel genre d'espoir y trouvez-vous?

On assiste à une forme de renaissance politique de l'Amérique Latine, liée à un espoir d'autonomie et de démocratie. Au Chili, la présidente Michelle Bachelet a connu la torture sous la dictature de Pinochet. En Bolivie, Evo Morales est le premier président d'origine amérindienne. Et même si Cuba vit dans une forme d'état de siège depuis la révolution, il est l'exemple d'un pays qui parvient à survivre en totale autonomie ou presque, ce qui donne une inspiration à d'autres pays d'Amérique Latine.

Vous n'avez jamais caché votre attirance pour le communisme, tant dans votre musique que dans votre engagement. Est-ce que vous y croyez toujours aujourd'hui?

C'est la dernière chose qui me reste. Par exemple, je ne crois plus dans le rock'n'roll. A l'origine, il portait en lui une idée de liberté. Mais aujourd'hui, on l'utilise pour torturer des prisonniers à Guantanamo. C'est assez flexible comme définition de la liberté *(rires)*. Plus sérieusement, le communisme connaît un paradoxe similaire à celui qu'a rencontré le Vatican. Au moment où il a perdu son pouvoir politique, il est devenu une très grande force morale. Ou plutôt immorale, selon moi. Je pense que les idées socialistes peuvent survivre au monde communiste. L'idée que chacun puisse participer de manière égale à la richesse de la planète, reste définitivement la meilleure idée du monde.

Dans une interview accordée à *L'Hebdo* en 1991, vous racontiez écrire de nombreuses lettres aux journaux, sans jamais être publié. Le faites-vous encore?

Parfois. Mais ce n'est plus une habitude. Cependant, j'ai eu la surprise de voir une de mes lettres publiées dans *The New Scientist*. Incroyable! Au final, cela m'importe peu d'être publié ou non, il s'agit juste d'indiquer mon désaccord. Surtout quand on sait que les lecteurs plus conservateurs ne se gênent pas pour écrire aux médias au moindre signe de relâchement moral.

> **Les grandes compagnies discographiques sont comme d'énormes icebergs flottant dans les eaux bouillantes du monde moderne.**

Comicopera est votre premier album pour le label anglais Domino. Qu'est-ce qui a motivé votre choix?

Durant toute ma carrière, j'ai été fidèle au label Rykodisc. Mais en 2006, il a été racheté par Warner. Et comme vous le savez, ce genre de grandes compagnies sont aujourd'hui désespérées. Comme d'énormes icebergs flottant dans les eaux bouillantes du monde moderne *(rires)*. Je n'ai aucune confiance dans ces compagnies, où personne n'est réellement intéressé par la musique. J'y étais par le passé et je ne veux pas retourner dans ce marais infesté de crocodiles. Par chance, un ancien de Rykodisc a rejoint le Domino et m'a proposé de travailler avec eux. Au début, cela m'a paru étrange. Pourquoi s'intéressaient-ils à moi, alors qu'ils sortent de jeunes groupes à succès comme Franz Ferdinand ou Arctic Monkeys? Puis j'ai compris que leur catalogue était bien plus vaste et que ces succès étaient arrivés par accident. Surtout, Domino allie efficacité et passion musicale.

Vous avez chanté avec Björk et de nombreux musiciens actuels vous citent comme influence. Quel effet cela vous fait-il d'être une sorte de grand-père musical?

Techniquement, je suis un grand-père. J'ai quatre petits-enfants. Donc je l'accepte *(rires)*. Plus sérieusement, je ne vois pas les choses ainsi. Le passé m'a été très utile, comme source d'inspiration. Quant à moi, je ne suis qu'un musicien qui essaye de faire de bons albums et qui rencontre les mêmes difficultés que tous les autres. Je ne me sens ni plus haut ni plus en sécurité. Quant Björk m'a contacté pour *Medúlla*, j'ai été très étonné. Qu'est-ce que cette belle et talentueuse jeune femme faisait chez moi? Aujourd'hui encore, je ne comprends pas cet intérêt, mais j'en suis très reconnaissant.



Robert Wyatt
Comicopera
Domino/Musikvertrieb

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Planète Wyatt - Libération - N ° 8217 - 8 octobre 2007


culture
Planète Wyatt
Le musicien paraplégique, batteur du mythique Soft Machine, sort «Comicopera», un album au-delà des genres qui stigmatise le fracas du troisième millénaire.
A

PLANETE WYATT

Le musicien paraplégique, batteur du mythique Soft Machine, sort «Comicopera», un album au-delà des genres qui stigmatise le fracas du troisième millénaire.

Robert Wyatt
CD : «Comicopera» (Domino/Pias).

Aujourd'hui sort *Comicopera*, le disque d'un communiste tardif en fauteuil roulant, façonné avec des musiciens de jazz et de pop (Jan Garbarek, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Paul Weller), signé avec fierté sur un label rock (Domino) et sonnant comme si un extra-terrestre avait décidé d'entreprendre un voyage sonore dans le tiers-monde.

Règles du marché. Robert Wyatt compose une musique livrée à elle-même, n'appartenant plus à aucun genre défini. «*Je considère que je fais de la pop musique. J'y suis très attaché*», dit-il. Il caresse sa lèvre inférieure, sourit malicieusement, tricote un peu sa barbe. Il la tient depuis longtemps, cette réponse toute fière en forme de défense d'un art pop'. Pop' pour abréger populaire, comme on le disait de la Chine de Mao. Fondateur en 1966 du groupe anglais Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt, 62 ans, échappe aux règles du marché. Les choses seraient pire encore si on les rangeait, lui et sa musique, dans la catégorie des élites, des avant-gardes, ou des artistes maudits. Lui ne voit le maudit nulle part, surtout pas dans sa chute d'une fenêtre lors d'une soirée arrosée (et/ou acidulée, comme le voudrait une insistante rumeur) de 1973, qui le cloua pour la vie dans un fauteuil roulant, dans une chambre d'hôpital dont il ressortira en 1974 avec *Rock Bottom*, son chef-d'œuvre. «*Rock Bottom n'était pas un chant douloureux composé par quelqu'un apprenant qu'il ne pourrait plus marcher, mais l'album d'un homme amoureux*», commente-t-il rétrospectivement. Les jambes s'en sont allées - il était batteur, il apprendra à composer au piano -, l'amoureuse est restée : Alfie. La blonde Alfie, Alfreda Benge, qui signe aussi certains textes et toutes les pochettes, est là encore ce matin, autour de la table, dans la cour jardinée d'un hôtel parisien de la rue du Bac, «*ce quartier où j'avais été hébergé petit, l'été, en correspondant d'un écolier français. J'arpentais les rues sans savoir que, des années plus tard, j'allais me mettre à rêver des cafés existentialistes, des caves jazz*».

Pour apprécier Robert Wyatt, il faut prendre la musique comme l'art modeste par excellence. Ainsi ce titre, *Comicopera*, sonnant comme un oxymore : l'ambition d'un opéra, «*d'un travail immense*» et le dérisoire de la chose, car «*le musicien est comique par essence*». Wyatt a été adoubé par les pataphysiciens, ce sont des choses qui marquent. «*Un titre, ça vous vient tard. Une fois le travail fini. Quelle étiquette donner à tout ce bruit ? Des mots de quelle couleur ? Comment ranger ces chansons écrites seul ou alors dans la joie d'une collaboration ?*»



> Zoom

Ballade languide. Cet opéra blague a été divisé en trois parties. La première s'intitule *Lost in Noise*. Elle présente Wyatt sous son jour le plus sentimental : une ballade languide comme *Just as You Are*, en duo avec Monica Vasconcelos, sonne comme un Dylan enfin dépourvu de sarcasmes. Les voix tanguent : laissez aller, c'est une valse. On sait bien que pour un homme pareil, inquiet, doux (qui, dans l'encoignure de la porte, fait des petits signes de la main et a gardé les traits d'expression d'un enfant de 8 ans), chaque chanson finie doit être vécue comme une bonne nouvelle. Ou un signe d'espoir.
Les disques de Wyatt s'écoutent davantage seul, parce qu'ils ne s'adressent qu'à une personne à la fois et que le message qu'ils délivrent finit toujours par révéler une inquiétude. Les disques de Wyatt ont la pureté et l'obstination de l'innocence.

Ainsi va la seconde partie, *The Here and the Now*, qui ressemble de loin à un journal. Les morceaux, cassés, murmurés, métissés (*On the Town Square* sonne littéralement caribéen, «*car là se situe le Londres [qu'il] aime*»), tiennent le bulletin poétique d'un été de feu, celui de 2006 : «*Alfie et moi ne quittions plus l'écran de télévision, regardant impuissants l'exode des réfugiés chiites du Liban, sur des routes exposées aux bombes, les gens sous les décombres à Caana. Yaron Stavi, mon contrebassiste originaire d'Israël, rentrait dans une colère noire contre son pays. Les morceaux naissaient tout seuls de nos conversations lorsque nous travaillions, le matin*.» Deux titres, parmi eux, sont d'un paradoxe inouï, écrits chaque fois avec Brian Eno : *A Beautiful Peace* et *A Beautiful War*. «*Dans le premier, je décris un monde inamical, sans repos : notre paix ! Dans le second, j'imagine la journée réussie d'un bombardier !*» En six titres, Robert Wyatt transforme la guerre en une chose abstraite. Ce qui est beaucoup plus inquiétant qu'une simple dénonciation.

Utopies. Mais le sursaut définitif de cet album, c'est son acte III : *Away With the Fairies*, fugue chantée en tout sauf en anglais, composée de morceaux parfois disponibles depuis des années, «*tous réenregistrés, pour tenir désormais dans une unité*» : le funèbre, abyssal et sublime *Del Mondo*, écrit par les italiens de CSI, tombeau glacial murmuré dans un souffle. Et puis, enchaînée, sa reprise sur sept minutes du poème de Federico García Lorca, *Cancion de Julieta*. Et le coup de grâce : le terminal *Hasta Siempre Commandante*, trente ans après *Song for Che*, emportant cet album loin dans l'anachronisme, comme si ces trois actes refermaient une époque, un monde désormais achevé, celui des utopies.
Wyatt ralentit le souffle. Assis quand tous les autres musiciens s'agitent, il entend passer le jazz, les fanfares tropicales, la pop, le psychédélisme, tout remonte par souvenirs. Il n'a plus qu'à rechanter les bribes de ce qu'il a vécu ou vu. Sa voix ressort cela en faisant sonner les mélodies comme une langue étrangère : «*Je ne sais pas d'où elle me vient, cette voix aérienne, parfois j'ai peur qu'elle ne s'éteigne, je perds une demi-octave par album.*»
Quand il veut lui donner une prolongation, il souffle du bout des lèvres dans une trompette, ou passe ses mains sur une touche d'orgue, quoi que ce soit d'assez étrange et doux pour s'accorder à son timbre. Ou il fait rentrer des invités. Qu'importe, du moment que, l'espace de trois ou quatre minutes, il dialogue avec l'ange : *cosmic opera*.

Philippe Azouri

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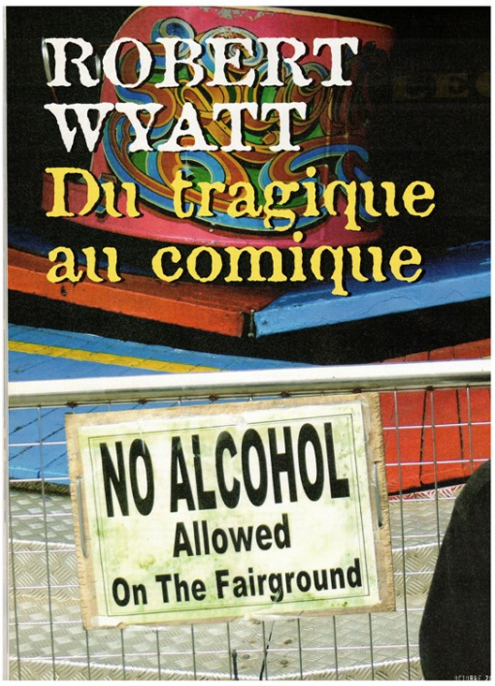
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Robert Wyatt - Du tragique au comique - Xroads - octobre 2007



Parfois, rien ne sert de tourner autour du pot : le nouvel album de Robert Wyatt, *Comic Opera*, est un chef d'œuvre. Franchement, il faudrait presque inventer une sixième étoile pour chroniquer un disque pareil. Mélange subtil de pop, d'electro, de jazz et de musiques du monde, porté par la voix fragile de cet immense musicien et interprète, *Comic Opera* synthétise, en un peu plus d'une heure de musique, trente années de carrière sans concession ni compromis et fait la nique à tous les Damon Albarn de la terre. Non seulement, interviewer Wyatt est certainement l'un des fantasmes absolus du rock-critic, mais pouvoir le faire à l'occasion d'un disque aussi bon représente vraiment la cerise sur le gâteau.



Comic Opera **est un disque généreux, découpé en trois parties distinctes, la première, *Lost in Noise*, est un sommet de pop éthérée et mélancolique, portée**

par une magistrale reprise d'Anja Garbarek qui permet à l'album de débuter sur une note plus que convaincante.

La seconde, plus jazz et plus foutraque s'intitule *The Here and The Now*, et nous transporte dans un monde festif avant que la bombe ne vienne tout gâcher.

Alors, en représailles, dans la troisième partie, *Away with the Fairies*, Wyatt délaisse la langue de l'assaillant pour ne plus chanter qu'en espagnol et en italien, empilant les compositions tragiques avant le final prestigieux, une reprise d'*Hasta Siempre Commandante* qui rappelle le *Liberation Music Orchestra* de Charlie Haden et Carla Bley. Un chef d'œuvre, je vous dis.

Et comme si un tel chef-d'œuvre ne suffisait pas, il s'avère que ce type est en plus l'un des plus adorables et des plus affables qu'il m'ait été donné de rencontrer. Dans un petit hôtel du sixième où il occupe une très agréable chambre au rez-de-chaussée – forcément -, je suis reçu par sa femme, Alfie Benge, qui l'accompagne depuis les jours sombres de *Rock Bottom* et la tragédie qui l'a précédé. Nous nous installons dans la cour intérieure et commençons l'interview.



D'abord je dois vous dire que je suis très surpris par les conditions de l'interview, sans protocole aucun, c'est comme cela que vous aimez faire les choses ?

J'aime bien les choses informelles. Je n'aime pas les réglementations, la discipline excessive. Certes, les choses doivent être quelque peu organisées, mais je n'aime pas trop les opérations militaires. Je dois dire qu'être sur un label comme Domino est pour moi une situation idéale, car les gens y sont très sympathiques et ne me forcent pas à faire de la promotion, si je n'en ai pas envie.

***Comic Opera* est-il une collection de chansons que vous avez décidé d'arranger à la manière d'un disque conceptuel ou le concept existait-il dès le départ ?**

Ce n'était pas un album concept dès le départ, ce n'est pas ma façon de travailler. Je travaille à ma manière, à vue, dans le brouillard. Je note toutes les choses qui me viennent à l'esprit et que j'aime, à l'instinct. Il n'y a que quand j'ai fini que je m'arrête et commence à me demander ce que cela signifie. Mais avant cela, j'essaie de ne pas penser au rendu global, je ne fais que ce qui me semble juste sur l'instant.

Cela commence d'une façon mélancolique, devient festif et puis, après l'explosion de la bombe, l'atmosphère s'assombrit. N'aurions-nous pas plutôt affaire à un opéra tragique ?

Oui, c'est bien tragique, en un sens, mais le terme "opéra" est un grand mot Bien sûr, je n'ai pas l'ambition d'écrire un opéra. Quand vous pensez à ce que c'est qu'un bombardement, vous vous apercevez que les personnes qui font cela, qui bombardent des civils, pensent que c'est génial. Ils passent vraiment une bonne journée. Au-delà de la tragédie, il y a une sorte de plaisanterie sur cette façon dont les gens peuvent organiser un acte comme celui-là. Nous sommes vraiment des animaux ridicules qui essayons de trouver un sens à la vie, et cela, quelque part est tragiquement drôle.

Vous avez choisi de commencer par une reprise d'Anja Garbarek,"Stay Tuned". Pourquoi avoir choisi cette chanson en particulier ?

Parfois, quelqu'un écrit une chanson et celle-ci me va comme un gant. Il y a beaucoup de chanteurs qui n'écrivent pas du tout de chansons, qui sont des interprètes, et j'aime beaucoup faire cela de temps en temps. Mais dans ce cas précis, cette chanson me plaisait tellement, elle m'allait tellement bien, tant sur le plan harmonique que sur le plan des paroles que j'ai voulu fixer la tonalité de l'album tout entier à partir de celle-ci. J'ai rencontré Anja, il y a quelque temps, j'avais écouté son disque et avait aimé toutes les chansons. Puis un peu plus tard, j'ai croisé son père *[ndr : Jan Garbarek, un saxophoniste de jazz ambient qui a sorti pléthore de disques sur le label ECM]*, je lui ai dit que je voulais reprendre cette chanson. Il m'a dit : "Fais-le, fais-le". Et bien, je l'ai fait.

Votre version de la chanson est beaucoup plus claire que l'originale, on distingue beaucoup mieux la progression harmonique. L'avez-vous fait exprès ?

Absolument. Ma version a l'air de sonner plus "pop", car dans la version d'Anja, on a l'impression que certaines parties de la chanson sont totalement libres de toutes contraintes de tempo, ce qui en réalité n'est pas le cas. Sa voix est au centre de sa version. Pour ma part, je voulais mettre en avant ce qui dans la version originale était à l'arrière, d'où l'impression que ma version est plus claire. En un sens, sa version était extrêmement subtile, la mienne est beaucoup plus brute, car elle est un ange, alors que moi, je ne suis qu'un rustre (rires)...

L'album se termine par une série de chansons en italien et en espagnol, Y a-t-il un message politique derrière ce changement de langue ?

Bien sûr, il y a un message politique, j'essaie de ne jamais perdre de vue le caractère politique de ma musique, et de tout ce que je fais, de manière générale. À la fin, j'ai choisi avant tout de faire de la bonne musique, mais je voulais aussi montrer un état d'exaspération, et je voulais voir comment transférer mon identité anglaise vers d'autres façons de penser, d'autres façons d'envisager la triste réalité. Par exemple, à un moment donné, j'utilise un vibraphone jouant une note unique, presque atonale, puis les musiciens brodent autour des motifs libres, c'est comme si les musiciens nettoyaient le paysage sonore. Je conçois cette forme de liberté comme un élément politique. C'est comme Garcia Lorca, dont j'utilise un texte sur mon disque. Lorca a été fusillé par les fascistes, il a connu les pires atrocités, mais il construisait des mondes imaginaires comme moyen de s'échapper de la réalité. Par exemple, il pouvait concevoir un monde sous-marin comme une sorte d'échappatoire. C'est un peu de cette façon que des artistes au début du siècle utilisaient l'image comme un véhicule pour l'imagination et non pas comme une simple représentation de la réalité. Ce n'est pas un hasard si tout cela s'est passé en Europe au moment même où il y avait la guerre. Il y a quelque chose de fondamentalement romantique dans cette attitude et la romance est au cœur de la dernière partie de mon disque. C'est le sens que je donne à l'allusion à Che Guevara, dans la reprise finale de l'album. Il y a quelque chose de romantique à propos du Che, car c'est la personne en qui toute ma génération a cru. S'il devait rester une romance dans ma tête, ce serait l'image iconique de Che Guevara.

Est-ce qu'un changement dans la langue peut avoir pour conséquence un changement dans la musique, dans la façon de placer le chant, par exemple ?

Oui, il y a une différence. Quand je chante en anglais, j'utilise ma voix naturelle. En chantant dans une autre langue, il y a quelque chose de théâtral qui se met en place et qui est particulièrement amusant. Même lorsque je parle, on peut dire que d'une certaine manière, l'intonation de ma voix forme une sorte de musique primitive, pas si primitive que cela d'ailleurs, car le langage est complexe. Il y a différentes façons amusantes d'utiliser la langue, l'espagnol est vraiment intéressant, par exemple. J'aimerais pouvoir chanter dans beaucoup d'autres langues. Notamment en arabe et en japonais, si possible.

La reprise de « Hasta Sempre Commandante » à la fin de l'album m'a fait penser au *Liberation Music Orchestra* de Charlie Haden. Avez-vous entendu l'album qu'ils ont enregistré contre la guerre en Irak, *Not in our name* et si oui, qu'en avez-vous pensé ?

Je ne l'ai pas entendu, je sais bien qu'il existe, et il faudrait que je me le procure. Tout ce que je peux dire, c'est que je sais que Charlie est quelqu'un qui ne fait aucun compromis dans sa musique, pas plus que Carla Bley avec laquelle il collabore sur ce projet. En même temps, il ressent une grande empathie envers les peuples du monde. Il utilise ces gens comme une inspiration pour sa musique. Il fait toujours de la grande musique, en toute indépendance, avec des arrangements somptueux. C'est un très grand jazzman. Ça fait beaucoup pour un seul homme, et donc, oui, il faudrait absolument que j'écoute ce disque !

Comment expliquez-vous que la guerre en Irak n'ait pas donné lieu à une musique aussi radicale que la guerre du Vietnam avait pu le faire en son temps ?

Je ne pense pas que quiconque, dans cette *zeitgeist* actuelle, ait une solution alternative claire à proposer au système construit par l'économie occidentale, dont la conséquence la plus directe est la brutalité avec laquelle nous traitons certains peuples dans le monde. Des pays entiers sont humiliés par l'occident, tandis que nous ne voyons parmi les habitants de certains pays du Moyen-Orient des personnes qui sont susceptibles de vouloir nous tuer. Il ne s'agit plus d'un affrontement bloc contre bloc, et il est donc plus difficile de s'y retrouver et de proposer des solutions qui soient simples. Par conséquent, l'occident peut continuer à vouloir contrôler toutes les ressources et nous pouvons continuer à vouloir exterminer des peuples et la plupart des gens, bien que parfois animés d'une once de sentiment pacifique, n'ont globalement rien de cohérent à proposer en retour.

Vous avez beaucoup d'amis faisant partie de la scène jazz expérimentale, comme Fred Frith. Est-ce que vous pensez que cela a un sens de faire une musique provocante et expérimentale aujourd'hui ?

Cette question n'a pas vraiment de sens pour moi. Je ne cherche pas à être particulièrement expérimental. Je cherche juste à créer la meilleure musique possible à partir d'idées qui existent déjà. Je ne crois pas du tout qu'il y ait une corrélation entre le caractère provocant d'une musique et sa capacité à faire changer les mentalités des gens pour agir. Je sais qu'il y a certains de mes amis pour lesquels cette corrélation existe, que la musique peut libérer les esprits et qui continuent à faire une musique bruitiste et expérimentale pour faire passer un discours politique, mais je n'y crois pas. Je ne suis pas aussi ambitieux. Vous pouvez réaliser un documentaire fantastique sur le rôle de la CIA dans les pays du tiers monde, et les gens vont trouver cela fascinant, mais dans le fond, ça ne va rien changer. Les gens préfèrent entendre parler des exploits d'Arnold Schwarzenegger. Il y a des personnes qui contrôlent les médias, de toute façon. Le musicien ne peut pas être autre chose qu'un simple témoin de son temps.



C'est pessimiste...

Non, ça ne l'est pas. Je crois que les gens peuvent réellement se mobiliser, je crois en l'action collective, mais je pense aussi que l'artiste n'a qu'un rôle mineur dans le réveil des consciences. L'artiste est important aussi en tant que citoyen, dans la façon dont il se comporte. La plupart des gens sont conscients de l'inégalité du commerce, de l'aspect ridicule de la façon dont le monde fonctionne. L'industrialisation de la nourriture, par exemple, est un processus absurde. L'artiste est également conscient de cela, mais il ne compte pas plus qu'un autre citoyen. Je crois en la démocratie, et dans la démocratie,

chaque voix a le même pouvoir. Nous, les artistes, n'avons pas le droit de nous accaparer plus d'une seule voix chacun, comme le reste de la population.

I1 y a beaucoup de références au jazz de la période post-bop dans *Comic Opera*. Est-ce que Charles Mingus est une influence importante pour vous ?

Mingus, bien sûr que oui (silence, puis rires). Je ne peux pas vous donner une réponse plus claire que celle-ci.

Arrêtons-nous là sur Mingus, alors. Au début des années 70, les frontières entre musique blanche et musique noire semblaient être en train de disparaître alors même qu'elles continuaient à marquer la société. Aujourd'hui, on sent que ces frontières sont revenues. Comment expliqueriez-vous cela ?

Cela, c'est votre avis de critique. Vous voyez la scène musicale d'un point de vue général et vous êtes mieux placé que moi pour avoir un avis sur la question. En fait, je ne m'intéresse pas particulièrement à ce qui se passe dans l'industrie du disque. Je ne me pose pas la question de savoir si les musiciens devraient faire des choses différentes. Je m'occupe uniquement de ma propre musique, et j'essaie juste de faire ce qui me semble juste pour moi. Moi-même j'ai très peu évolué, en fait, j'ai toujours eu des influences de la musique noire, comme toute ma génération de rockers anglais. Il est indéniable que les plus grands changements qui ont affecté la musique occidentale au cours des cinquante dernières années sont liés à l'introduction de la musique des afro-américains dans la culture musicale populaire des blancs. Parfois, nous n'en prenons pas conscience. Mais à chaque fois qu'un guitariste effectue un bend, par exemple, il rend hommage au blues primitif.

Vous ne faites pas réellement partie d'un groupe, mais vous avez des personnes autour de vous telles qu'Eno, Manzarena ou Ayers qui continuent à participer à vos projets. Constituent-ils une famille autour de vous ?

Oui. Bon, je ne devrais pas dire oui comme cela, car je ne voudrais pas présumer de leur avis. Ils ont bien aussi une famille de leur côté. Mais effectivement, notamment sur les trois derniers disques, ces gens sont venus me prêter main forte. Sur le dernier disque, il y a presque un groupe de formé et on peut même parler d'une sorte de conscience collective.

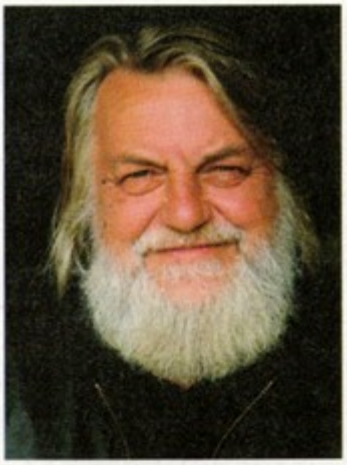
Vous avez sorti des disques sur le label Rough Trade dans les années 80. Aujourd'hui, vous êtes chez Domino Records. C'est important d'être sur un label indépendant qui produit de la pop contemporaine ?

Je vais juste là où les gens sont chaleureux et sympathiques. Dans ce cas particulier, je préfère être dans une petite structure composée de personnes qui sont mues par l'intelligence et le goût artistique, et non pas, comme sur les gros labels, par des considérations purement financières et comptables. Il y a une telle froideur chez ces gens, et l'on ne peut pas compter sur eux. Pour ma propre sécurité, j'ai eu besoin d'aller voir des labels indépendants, et des personnes comme Geoff Travis de Rough Trade. Pendant longtemps, j'étais chez Ryko et cela se passait très bien, mais le label a été racheté par une major et ce n'était plus possible. J'ai eu la chance de pouvoir rencontrer des personnes de Domino, un groupe de personnes si enthousiastes.

Vous avez fait un morceau avec Bertrand Burgalat, "This Summer Night", vous pouvez m'expliquer comment s'est passée cette rencontre ?

Nous nous sommes rencontrés dans cet hôtel même, la dernière fois que je suis venu à Paris. Bien que Bertrand soit essentiellement un producteur, il fait parfois des disques pour lui-même et il voulait qu'Alfie lui écrive des textes. Il nous a envoyé des bandes du dernier album, qui est très bon. Puis, parmi ces bandes, il y avait certaines chansons en particulier sur lesquelles Alfie n'arrivait pas à voir ce que son texte pourrait donner, car elle ne voyait pas du point de vue de la mélodie comment le texte allait coller sur la trame envoyée par Bertrand. (Alfie, assise sur le côté depuis le début de l'entretien, intervient : "II n'y avait pas de mélodie"). Donc, en fait, j'ai pris l'habitude de chanter les paroles d'Alfie par-dessus les démos de Bertrand, et je les lui chantais au téléphone quand il m'appelait, pour qu'il puisse vérifier par lui-même que ça fonctionnait. C'est tout naturellement qu'il m'a proposé de venir chanter sur un morceau.

Cela sonne plutôt léger et funky. Vous aimez Jouer avec votre image ?



« Ce n'était pas un album concept dès le départ, ce n'est pas ma façon de travailler. Je travaille à ma manière, à vue, dans le brouillard. Je note toutes les choses qui me viennent à l'esprit et que j'aime, à l'instinct. Il n'y a que quand j'ai fini que je m'arrête et commence à me demander ce que cela signifie. Mais avant cela, j'essaie de ne pas penser au rendu global, je ne fais que ce qui me semble juste sur l'instant »

C'est bien simple : je n'ai pas d'image, alors je ne peux jouer avec rien du tout (rires)...

J'ai entendu dire que vous aimiez beaucoup Bobby Lapointe et Jean-Louis Murat. Vous suivez un peu ce qui se passe au niveau de la scène française ?

Je ne la suis pas particulièrement mais généralement, je trouve honteux que mes concitoyens n'écoutent pas plus de musique faite dans d'autres langages. Il y a des choses fabuleuses qui se font ailleurs que dans le monde anglo-saxon, et c'est très injuste que ça n'arrive pas jusqu'aux oreilles du public anglais et américain pour de simples questions de langage. Je connais très bien le pianiste Steve Nieve, qui réside à Paris. Il a composé un opéra avec sa femme, Muriel Teodori, qui a écrit un magnifique libretto. C'est un projet de musique continentale pour Deutsche Grammophone [ndr : *Welcome to the Voice*], dans lequel je suis impliqué. Par ailleurs, pour répondre plus précisément à la question, j'ai écouté le dernier disque de la chanteuse française de jazz Hélène Labarrière, que j'ai trouvé excellent. Je n'écoute pas une musique en particulier du fait de sa provenance, mais j'essaie de garder constamment les ouïes ouvertes à tous les genres musicaux, de toutes les origines...

Yann Giraud

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Le rêveur de réalité - Les inrockuptibles - N° 618 - du 2 au 8 octobre 2007



LE REVEUR DE REALITÉ

Depuis quarante ans, les chansons de Robert Wyatt défient les lois de la pesanteur musicale. Avec son nouvel album, l'Anglais prend encore de la hauteur et fait le pont entre petites bagarres intimes et grand chaos planétaire.

Par Richard Robert

Dans la musique populaire, la coutume veut que les chansons d'amour et les chansons engagées ne soient pas rangées dans le même panier: elle réserve la poésie aux coeurs tendres et la politique aux esprits bien trempés. Comme souvent, la coutume a tort, et Robert Wyatt, qui s'emploie depuis quarante ans à faire vaciller nombre de certitudes, est encore une fois là pour le rappeler. Au milieu des années 60, alors qu'il jouait au sein de Soft Machine, l'Anglais refusait déjà d'être un homme coupé en deux: il ne voulait pas choisir entre sensation pure et réflexion aiguisée, pas plus qu'il ne voulait trancher entre son amour pour la mélodie et son goût pour la recherche sonore.

Des dérives solitaires de Rock Bottom (1974) jusqu'au grand chantier collectif de Cuckooland (2004), sa carrière solo n'a cessé de défier les lois de la pesanteur musicale, tout en brouillant les frontières entre songe et réalité. Cloué sur un fauteuil roulant depuis un accident survenu en 1973 (il se jette d'une fenêtre au milieu d'une fête copieusement arrosée), Wyatt est devenu à la fois un observateur pénétrant de son temps, dont le coeur ancré bien à gauche se soulève régulièrement devant les infamies de toutes sortes, et un contemplatif en quête de hauteur, toujours prêt à s'envoler dans les vastes sphères de l'imaginaire.

Aujourd'hui, dans Comicopera, son propos gagne encore en ampleur. Entouré une nouvelle fois de fidèles (Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera et Paul Weller, mais aussi la chanteuse Karen Mantler, la tromboniste Annie Whitehead ou le saxophoniste Gilad Atzmon), Wyatt explore dans les grandes largeurs un langage musical qui synthétise son intérêt pour l'harmonie classique, son penchant pour l'improvisation et le swing, et cette sensibilité mélodique à fleur de peau qui en fait l'un des songwriters les plus touchants de sa génération. De sa voix flutée, il réussit à unifier et à éclairer un disque qui est aussi touffu dans le fond que dans la forme.

Découpé en trois actes, Comicopera commence en effet par un bouquet de chansons sentimentales, qui se penchent avec délicatesse sur la mécanique complexe et fragile des relations amoureuses. Il se poursuit avec un tableau saisissant du chaos mondial (avec le désastre irakien pour toile de fond) et s'achève sur une longue bouffée d'onirisme pur,

forcément libérateur. Telle est la morale de Robert Wyatt: on ne peut vraiment habiter ce monde qu'en se confrontant à la réalité et en se réservant à tout moment le droit de s'en détacher.

ENTRETIEN

Comicopera est un album très ambitieux. Aviez-vous une idée précise de ce que vous vouliez accomplir ?

Robert Wyatt – Ce n'est qu'à la fin de l'enregistrement que j'ai commencé à en avoir une vision d'ensemble… Il en a toujours été ainsi, pour chacun de mes disques. Je laisse les choses se produire, en essayant d'ouvrir au maximum le champ des possibilités. Mais je ne contrôle rien, je ne fais que suivre mon instinct. J'espère simplement que tous ces morceaux qui s'accumulent vont finir par s'agglomérer les uns aux autres, former un tout cohérent. Le vrai processus créatif commence quand j'ai toute la matière sur bande et que je dois l'organiser. Là, je deviens impitoyable : j'élague énormément avant d'arriver à un résultat satisfaisant.

Est-ce plus confortable de procéder ainsi ?

Pas du tout, c'est effrayant ! Je ne sais jamais où je mets les pieds. Jusqu'au dernier moment, je me sens perdu, comme dans une pièce plongée dans l'obscurité. J'avance à l'aveuglette, je me cogne à des objets que j'essaie de reconnaître, je cherche la lumière, des bougies, un rideau à ouvrir… Je sais que quelque chose d'intéressant se cache là-dedans, mais je n'en saisis pas la nature tant que je n'ai pas réussi à l'éclairer. Je suis comme ce comédien qui affirmait : "Je ne sais pas ce que je pense tant que je n'ai pas entendu ce que je dis !"

Comment êtes-vous parvenu à cette construction en trois actes ?



> Zoom

Je me suis aperçu que près d'un tiers des titres avaient un contenu très personnel : ils traitaient des difficultés relationnelles, de ce sentiment d'étrangeté qui s'incruste parfois dans une vie de couple. Un deuxième groupe de chansons évoquait plutôt le rapport au monde, le plaisir et la colère qu'on peut ressentir devant le spectacle de l'humanité. Il y avait enfin une troisième partie, qui était une sorte d'échappée dans une dimension alternative, purement imaginaire. J'ai alors réalisé que tout était relié, que les petites batailles intimes et les grands événements mondiaux se répondaient, et que l'imaginaire était une façon de se soustraire aux aspects les plus intolérables de la réalité. Que faire quand on voit que nous continuons à envoyer des soldats dans des pays qui ne nous ont jamais envahis, et où nous créons des problèmes que nous prétendons ensuite résoudre ? Vient un moment où, face à une réalité aussi brutale, le besoin de s'échapper devient urgent. Je ne peux pas le faire physiquement, alors je le fais par l'esprit, en musique.

Relier des choses apparemment éloignées, n'est-ce pas ce que vous vous efforcez de faire depuis toujours ?

Jadis, les savants s'intéressaient autant au microcosme qu'aux grands mécanismes de l'univers : pour eux, ça allait de pair. De la même façon, je suis convaincu que le monde dans lequel nous vivons est le résultat d'interactions permanentes entre l'intime et l'universel. Dans mon cas, il y a des moments où, de manière très consciente, j'essaie de me tenir au courant de ce qui se passe dans le monde. Et il y en a d'autres où ma seule préoccupation est d'essayer de ne plus faire sortir ma femme de ses gonds… Ce que racontent les journaux n'a alors aucune espèce d'importance. Le reste du temps, j'essaie simplement d'avoir une belle vie, d'être un hédoniste insouciant. Je passe donc par des états très divers, mais qui cohabitent pourtant dans le même bonhomme : il n'y a pas de

raison de les dissocier.

Pourquoi, dans la dernière partie de Comicopera, ne chantez-vous plus qu'en espagnol et en italien ?

C'est encore une façon de me sortir d'une situation où je me sens coincé. Quand, à propos de tel ou tel conflit, j'entends aux infos que "les Anglais ont déclaré que…", je ne peux réprimer une grimace. Je déteste qu'on parle ainsi en mon nom, j'ai envie de crier : "Comment ? Mais je n'ai pas dit ça ! Donnez-moi un micro que je vous livre le fond de ma pensée !" Sauf qu'en réalité tout le monde se fout de ce que vous pensez… J'ai donc imaginé cette porte de sortie. Mais j'insiste sur le fait que cette troisième partie est d'abord un appel au rêve. Si j'ai choisi par exemple de mettre un texte de García Lorca en musique, ce n'est pas seulement parce que c'était un grand poète espagnol : c'est aussi parce que l'imagerie qu'il emploie ici est totalement irrationnelle, onirique. Si je reprends *Hasta siempre comandante*, cette chanson révolutionnaire et romantique d'un autre temps, c'est parce que je continue de penser qu'à l'origine elle portait un beau rêve. Depuis des décennies, je plonge ainsi régulièrement dans l'océan des songes, je me réfugie dans cette sorte de vie sous-marine… C'est un endroit à part, préservé, où il fait bon vivre.



Dans votre cas, l'imaginaire ne semble pas être qu'une fuite : c'est aussi une façon très active d'être au monde.

Honnêtement, je préférerais que le monde soit un endroit paisible et amical : je pourrais alors vivre pleinement dans la réalité et la chanter. Mais ça n'est pas le cas. Bien sûr, cultiver son imagination est aussi une façon d'embrasser le réel. Mais c'est ce que tous les prisonniers font, non ? On nous répète à longueur de temps que nous avons de la chance d'avoir une certaine liberté de parole. Oui, en effet : derrière ses barreaux, un prisonnier peut crier "Laissez-moi sortir !" autant de fois qu'il le veut. Personne ne l'en empêchera : c'est ça, la liberté de parole…

Ne vous sentez-vous pas plus libre lorsque vous chantez en espagnol ?

Chez moi, les disques que je préfère viennent d'Espagne, de Cuba, du Chili… Lorsque je les écoute, je ne me sens pas enfermé dans un petit espace. Je suis toujours étonné de voir à quel point les intellectuels de mon pays ont une vision du monde très provinciale, limitée à l'horizon anglophone. Lorsqu'ils traitent de politique ou de philosophie, ils passent leur temps à comparer auteurs américains et britanniques – en accordant de temps à autre un

peu de crédit à un Australien… Pour eux, tout ce qui sort de cette sphère relève de l'exotisme. Dans ma musique, j'ai la chance de ne pas être figé de la sorte. Je n'ai pas de limites : je veux chercher la beauté partout où elle se trouve. Je ne peux pas me passer d'elle. Je ne suis pas de cette école de pensée qui tente d'exorciser la laideur en faisant des choses laides. Dans l'art contemporain, par exemple, il y a beaucoup de provocateurs qui ont pour but de choquer, de susciter le dégoût. Je comprends et je respecte ça, mais ça n'est tout simplement pas mon propos.



Reconnaissez-vous la beauté de votre propre musique ?

Je ne me regarde pas ainsi dans le miroir… Je sais la beauté de ce que j'ai trouvé, mais je sais aussi que je n'en suis pas le créateur. Je ne fais que rassembler des choses qui étaient déjà là. C'est comme lorsque vous venez de manger un excellent repas : vous complimentez le chef pour son tour de main, mais vous ne le félicitez pas d'avoir inventé la laitue, la viande ou les pommes de terre ! Son talent, c'est d'avoir su accommoder ces ingrédients à sa façon. C'est aussi ce que j'essaie de faire.

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Charming Man - Chronic'Art - N° 39 - octobre 2007

Charming man

A 62 ans, Robert Wyatt reste un modèle d'intégrité et de créativité pour de nombreux musiciens. Des 60's psychédéliques et libertaires aux 60's des grands conflits internationaux, Wyatt est un témoin amusé et profond de son époque, doublé d'un formidable mélodiste et chanteur. Interview d'un vrai petit père du peuple.

PAR: DAVID FENECH & WILFRIED PARIS | **PHOTOS:** © SAMUEL KIRZENBAUM & MATHIEU ZAZZO

(versionn complète augmentée)



Le parcours de Robert Wyatt, qui s'étend sur quatre décennies, est d'une grande cohérence musicale, Des années 60 au début des années 70, Wyatt est surtout connu en tant que batteur des progressifs et pataphysiciens Soft Machine [avec Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Daevid Allen et Kevin Ayers], puis de Matching Mole (et leur tube *O Caroline*). Suite à un accident qui le rend paraplégique en 1973, il est contraint de travailler en solo et privilégie alors son travail vocal, déjà présent dans ses oeuvres de jeunesse. Il sort en 1974 son chef-d'oeuvre, *Rock Bottom*, un disque d'une grande originalité, au-delà des genres établis, à la fois jazz, poésie, pop et musique expérimentale. C'est le vrai début d'une passionnante discographie de plus de trente ans, marquée par des albums comme *Dondestan*, *Old Rottenhat* ou *Shleep*, qui développent ses obsessions pour le jazz et les mélodies vocales surnaturelles autant que ses idéaux révolutionnaires [Wyatt a été adhérent du parti communiste anglais dès la fin des années 70]. Ses chansons sont un regard sur le monde profondément humaniste et pacifiste. Traversant de longues périodes sans sortir d'albums, Wyatt revient régulièrement nous rappeler sa vision du contemporain, toujours accompagné par sa chère et tendre Alfie [sa femme, Alfreda Benge], qui écrit pour lui de nombreux textes et s'occupe des illustrations de ses albums. Paradoxalement, sa musique est à la fois d'une grande simplicité et d'une étrange complexité, d'une confondante beauté et d'une infinie tristesse. C'est là toute l'ambiguïté de son art, dont la signature la plus évidente est sa voix caméléon aux multiples inflexions. C'est l'un des rares personnages de l'histoire du rock qui a été épargné par tous les grands mouvements musicaux, du rock progressif au punk, de la pop au trip-hop : tout le monde aime Robert Wyatt.., Avec *Comicopera* [qui sort sur un vrai label rock, Domino], Wyatt clôt de la plus belle des manières la trilogie débutée par le cotonneux *Shleep* et le longuet *Cuckooland*, en home-recording et avec les mêmes musiciens [notamment Brian Eno, Varon Stavi, Annie Whitehead, Paul Weller glissant quelques arrangements impressionnistes de guitares]. L'album, très mélodique, presque pop, est lui-

même composé comme un opéra, en trois actes, qui irait du singulier à l'universel, de la relation de couple (le duo avec Monica Vasconcelos en forme de déclaration, *Just As You Are*) aux grands espaces lointains et solaires de Garcia Lorca (*Cancion De Julieta*) ou Carlos Puebla (*Hasta Siempre Comandante*). Le troisième acte est quasi intégralement chanté en langues non-anglaises, Wyatt réitérant ainsi sa résistance et sa protestation devant l'hégémonie de la langue et de la culture anglo-saxonne, en même temps qu'il conclut ce beau disque par un message d'espoir (ambigu, à travers la figure romanticisée de Che Guevara) et d'ouverture aux autres cultures. L'utilisation de la religion par les va-t-en-guerres de tous poils traverse l'album comme un faucon inquiétant, sa critique pouvant avoir des atours ironiques (*A Beautiful War* évoque la belle journée ensoleillée d'un bombardier) ou dramatique (*Out Of The Blue* ou l'autre versant de la guerre, non chirurgicale, lorsque les victimes se réveillent dans les décombres). Ce qui n'empêche pas un certain mysticisme de la part de Wyatt, panthéiste et compassionnel, comme si le communisme s'était transformé en une belle religion, Wyatt est ainsi un actuel-inactuel, touchant à la fois au pur contemporain et à l'universel sans âge, un peu comme sa voix, très ancienne et toujours moderne, masculine-féminine, enfantine et angélique, pure merveille d'instrument et signature unique. Pourtant, lorsqu'on le rencontre dans le patio-ryad d'un hôtel du quartier latin, il fume clope sur clope et avoue avoir perdu un peu de sa tessiture. Mais sa gentillesse et sa générosité ne sont absolument pas légendes: Robert Wyatt rit et sourit tout le temps (" *Je suis un hédoniste* ") et il a plein de petits plis au coin des yeux, qui le font un peu ressembler au père Noël. Un père Noël en avance de deux mois, qui nous apporte le plus beau cadeau d'octobre, ce *Comicopera*, une douce compagnie, avant l'arrivée du froid...

Chronic'art : Ce nouvel album parle spécialement de religion et de foi, sous leurs diverses manifestations (dogmatisme, mysticisme, fanatisme). Et le premier titre de l'album, Stay tuned, cette reprise d'Anja Garbareck, me fait penser au panthéisme de Spinoza ("Dieu, c'est la nature"). Quelle est votre position par rapport à la croyance religieuse ?

Robert Wyatt : Je n'ai pas lu Spinoza, mais pour moi, le mot "métaphysique" n'a aucun sens, c'est un oxymoron. Si la physique parle de tout "ce qui est ici", la "méta-physique" n'a aucun sens : c'est ici ou ça ne l'est pas, mais ça ne peut pas être les deux en même temps (*rires*). Dans notre imagination, nous créons et anticipons les mots, par exemple même si je trouve qu'un Dieu ne nous est pas nécessaire, il est nécessaire pour les hommes d'inventer une figure paternelle ou maternelle de ce genre. Ils le font de toute façon. Mais si je me souviens bien de l'origine étymologique du mot "spirituel", cela vient du mot latin pour "souffle", quelque chose qui souffle, qui respire. Tout ce que je sais alors, c'est que nous sommes des animaux et que nous respirons. Mais ni les scientifiques, ni les religieux ne savent pourquoi nous sommes ici. Nous venons tous de la même poussière cosmique. Alors, je ne suis pas un individualiste, je nous vois comme des petites parties de matière qui interagissent. Mais le problème est que nous nous sentons séparés, nous sommes des personnes isolées, et la religion essaie de faire le lien, la connexion entre ces parties séparées. En tant qu'humains, nous sommes des animaux sociaux, et nous vivons en communauté, mais nous nous sentons quand même toujours uniques et solitaires. Si je dis "*le ciel est bleu*", je n'ai aucun moyen de savoir que le bleu que je vois est le même bleu que toi tu vois, je n'ai aucune idée de ce que ça signifie pour toi. Cette incertitude dans la relation à autrui est le thème de la deuxième partie de *Comicopera*. Même avec quelqu'un de très proche, que vous aimez, vous pouvez parfois vous sentir perdu, ou trahi. Et la première partie de l'album exprime que, par exemple, quand quelqu'un que vous aimez meurt, l'immortalité consiste en la mémoire de cette personne chez les autres gens, pas en un au-delà, une autre planète, ou le ciel. Le sens originel de "heaven" était juste "ciel" et n'avait pas de signification spirituelle, avant que le christianisme ne s'empare de ce mot. En un sens, je pense que nous sommes des animaux intelligents et aussi des animaux ridicules, parce que nous nous inventons des dieux, nous nous prenons pour des dieux. Je comprends la religion mais je ressens aussi de la peur, de l'anxiété devant les gens qui veulent parler au nom d'un Dieu. Aux rabbins, aux papes, aux mollahs, j'ai envie de dire "*Ecoute, tu es juste un type avec un chapeau marrant, tu me fais marcher* (*rires*). *Tu pisses, tu manges, tu dors, tu vas mourir…*". Robert Graves a dit à propos des mythes et des religions que la question n'est pas de savoir s'ils sont vrais ou pas mais ce qu'ils racontent sur la psychologie de ceux qui les ont créés. Le mythe d'une déesse maternelle dit autre chose sur la société qui l'a créé que les trois religions monothéistes, le judaïsme, le christianisme ou l'islam, avec leur unique dieu masculin, qui suggèrent une vision complètement différente de qui nous sommes. Cependant, mes disques ne sont pas polémiques, ne sont pas des discours, mais reflètent ce à quoi je pense à un moment donné.

Ils ont quand même vocation à produire des "messages" ?

Oui, mais c'est toujours ce qu'on fait quand on parle. Je veux dire que je ne suis pas un activiste. Je suis vraiment un pacifiste, mais je n'aime pas l'idée de l'artiste comme prêtre. J'ai une vision idéale de la démocratie, où chacun a le droit de dire ce qu'il pense, et où l'artiste ou le prêtre n'ont pas à avoir plus de voix que les autres. Mais c'est juste mon boulot de faire la musique, de faire des chansons, comme le chef cuisinier fait des plats et le charpentier fait des chaises. Je ne pense pas pouvoir changer quoi que ce soit au monde. Si quelqu'un chante "*Baby come back* or *I'm gonna die*", je ne crois pas qu'il pense vraiment qu'il va mourir si la personne qu'il aime ne lui revient pas. Je ne crois pas non plus qu'il pense que la personne qu'il aime va lui revenir grâce à la chanson. C'est un message mais c'est juste l'expression d'un sentiment, un témoignage. Je n'ai jamais eu aucune preuve qu'une chanson d'amour marchait vraiment (*rires*). Je pense que l'artiste peut participer à la société. Tout le monde change son environnement. Un charpentier ou un maçon impriment leurs marques dans leur environnement. Mais je ne fais pas confiance aux artistes pour nous guider, pas plus qu'aux prêtres, ni à personne d'autre.

Est-ce qu'on peut comprendre l'album comme une tentative de répondre à la question "comment vivre avec les autres ?" d'un point de vue personnel, individuel, jusqu'à un point de vue plus général, politique ou mystique ?

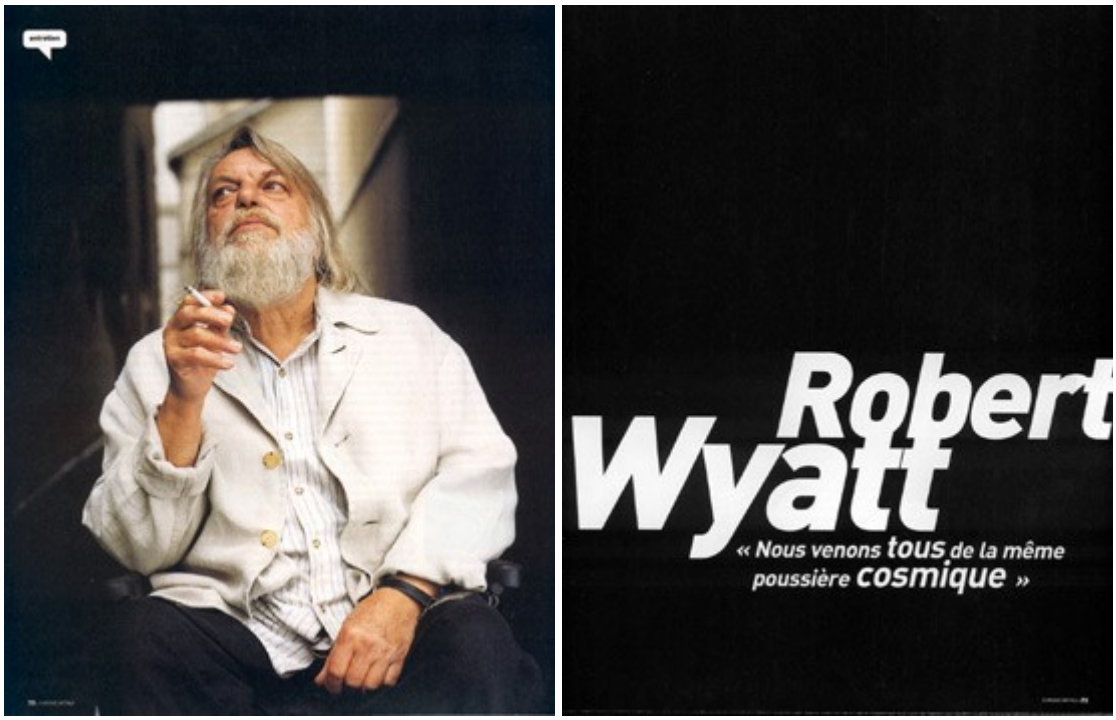
L'album ne parle pas directement des relations, ou de quelque chose de " cosmique ", mais ce sont des observations simples de mon quotidien, parfois juste des blagues. Dans la chanson *A Beautiful peace*, je marche dans la rue et je me sens fatigué, mais il n'y aucun endroit amical où m'arrêter, pas de petit café, juste cette église, mais je ne peux pas y fumer, je ne peux pas m'y reposer, ce n'est pas très accueillant et il y a ce grand panneau sur le mur qui dit "*Il accueille tout le monde*" (*rires*) et je me dis "Je ne vais pas m'arrêter ici". Et puis je pense aux implications de ça, aux gens qui construisent des églises en se disant "Cet endroit est pour tout le monde", et je me dis "Vraiment ? Quelle arrogance de dire ça". Je n'aime pas être intimidé par ces symboles des croyances religieuses, je ne ressens pas de colère, mais une certaine irritation, comme un vieil homme grognon. (*rires*) J'écris de manière très instinctive, pas du tout intellectuelle. Je pense en termes musicaux d'abord, parce que mon premier instrument est ma voix. Mais ensuite, je passe constamment des menus détails à de grandes images, qui prennent une ampleur… cosmique. Mais ce n'est pas inhabituel selon moi : on peut simplement marcher dans la rue, remarquer sur une plaque que le nom de la rue est celui d'un général et se demander : qui était ce général ? A quelle guerre a-t-il participé ? Pourquoi a-t-on donné son nom à cette rue ? Et cette rue devient alors quelque chose de plus grand, suggéré par un simple détail. Les connexions peuvent être vraiment folles, parfois…

Pour *Comicopera*, vous avez choisi la forme d'un opéra. Quelle est la part de spontanéité et de construction dans le choix de cette forme ?

C'est seulement à la fin que j'ai trouvé la forme générale et je pense que ça vient du jazz. La différence entre un compositeur de musique classique et un soliste de jazz, c'est que le premier part de l'architecture générale de son oeuvre et va ensuite vers les détails, tandis que le jazzman accumule les détails puis cherche les connexions entre ces détails pour en faire un tout, ce que j'ai fait. Avec un peu de chance, si je trouve une cohérence naturelle entre ces parties diverses, j'ai mon disque. Sinon, je suis obligé de recommencer. Parce que je ne fais pas de disques tous les jours (*rires*).

L'album se finit sur un hymne à Che Guevara. Vous avez déjà fait des morceaux sur lui. Quelles sont les différences entre Song for Che écrite en 1975 et cette chanson aujourd'hui ?

La dernière partie de l'album pointe les aspirations de ma génération. Je ne fais pas un jugement sur ces aspirations, ce n'est pas évangélique non plus, mais je ne veux pas renier mon passé. Ces choses ont été très importantes pour moi et je finis sur ce qui a été le plus important : la pure romance qu'ont représenté les révolutions latino-américaines. Je ne voulais pas terminer sur une note pessimiste, vu que l'album peut être ressenti comme très triste, avec toutes ces histoires de bombardements, alors j'ai pensé aux pays d'Amérique latine, le Chili, le Brésil, la Bolivie, le Venezuela, qui essaient tous difficilement de trouver une nouvelle forme d'autonomie, à partir de quelques idées socialistes.



> Zoom

Quelqu'un comme Guevara est toujours utile, comme un petit Saint, dans cette sorte de religion idéale (*rires*). Pour certains, c'est juste une image sur un sac à dos, mais pour moi, il signifie quelque chose d'important. Je ne dis pas avec cette chanson que la révolution va arriver, je n'y crois pas, mais je veux dire que ces gens et ces moments ont allumé un feu dans mon coeur, qui brûle toujours. La chanson *Del Mondo*, également à la fin de l'album, évoque un mélange intéressant entre une sorte de féminisme radical et une très désuète sensibilité catholique autour de la Vierge Marie. Il s'agit de la déification de figures féminines, qu'une féministe pourrait apprécier, ou qu'elle pourrait gêner. Je ne crois pas que les féministes soient très à l'aise avec l'image de la Vierge Marie : elle n'a jamais rien dit ! (*rires*) De la même manière, en Angleterre, les féministes sont gênées par la figure de la Reine. C'est juste la Reine, elle ne représente personne, il se trouve juste que c'est une femme. Ce que je veux dire avec cette chanson, c'est que, même au sein d'une société dominée par des religions masculines fortes, l'idée d'une déification de la femme n'a pas disparue et pourrait être ravivée par les féministes même, à une époque où les hommes se conduisent très, très mal.

On a l'impression que l'album, sous sa forme d'opéra en trois parties, évoque la relation à l'autre sous la forme d'un trajet entre l'individuel et le collectif, mais aussi entre le sol natal et les pays étrangers, et entre le passé, le présent et le futur.

C'est très juste. En tant qu'individu, c'est la seule vie que nous ayons, alors on peut fantasmer sur des mondes possibles qui puissent nous inspirer, mais on doit toujours faire du mieux que l'on peut avec la réalité qui est à notre disposition, avec notre vie et les gens qui nous entourent. Quelqu'un me disait hier "*Si vous en avez à ce point marre de l'Angleterre, comment pouvez-vous continuer à vivre dans une petite ville anglaise ?*", et je lui ai répondu "*Mais c'est bien ! Je fais en sorte que ce soit bien*". Je ne vais pas rester là assis à me morfondre, toujours en colère contre le gouvernement anglais, mais je vais faire de mon mieux, à ma petite échelle, pour vivre la meilleure vie possible, avoir le plus de joie possible, et essayer de ne blesser personne. J'ai de la joie. Je ne veux pas vivre comme un moine, je suis un hédoniste.

Cependant, à la fin de l'album, vous choisissez de ne plus du tout chanter en anglais, et de chanter les chansons d'autres personnes. Ce qui est assez curieux pour un opéra, finalement ?

"Opéra" veut dire "travail", et j'ai voulu l'intituler "Comic" parce que le mot opéra à tellement de connotations tragiques et de grandeur historique : je ne suis pas tragique et je ne suis pas grand, alors je l'ai appelé "Comic". Et également, je voulais faire un opéra avec de l'humour, comme les français parlent de "la comédie humaine", parce que nous sommes des animaux amusants, qui essaient tellement, et ont tellement de mal à vivre ensemble. Je

crois que le problème général est une sorte de racisme, au sens où les gens n'arrivent pas à comprendre que les autres sont juste comme vous, qu'ils ont les mêmes besoins que vous : ils ont besoin d'amour, de nourriture, d'écoles, d'hôpitaux, partout dans le monde. Ce qui se passe, c'est qu'en temps de guerre, les "Autres", avec un A capital, sont diabolisés, et nous sommes divinisés. Bush et Blair se présentent comme des hommes de Dieu, qui combattent les démons et les mauvais dieux, les faux dieux. C'est très primitif et ce n'est même pas juste immoral, c'est complètement faux. J'ai lu un très bon livre, *Bagdad burning*, qui compile des textes issus de blogs, et un des auteurs très brillant, dont le pseudo est Riverbend, raconte comment elle est exaspérée par les caricatures des musulmans et des irakiens qu'elle reçoit des Etats-Unis et d'autres pays, la banalisation de ce qu'ils sont, de leur histoire, de leur vie. Elle n'arrive pas à y croire. C'est une femme libre et moderne, qui a fait des études, qui sait des choses, et elle est traitée comme une sauvage primitive, qui a besoin d'être détruite ou civilisée. De bien des manières, elle est beaucoup plus civilisée que des soldats américains qui détruisent les habitations de sa ville, qui frappent aux portes des gens pour les réveiller en pleine nuit. Elle est très gentille, elle dit qu'elle se sent désolée pour ces soldats, à qui on a présenté la guerre comme une sorte de grand jeu vidéo et qui se retrouvent très embarrassés quand ils font face à de vrais gens. Ils rentrent de force chez les gens, ils les obligent à sortir de chez eux, et quand ils se retrouvent sur le trottoir face à des enfants qui pleurent, des vieilles femmes, ils se sentent stupides. On ne leur a pas dit que ces gens étaient juste comme eux. C'est le seul message à mon avis qui doit être répété encore et encore. S'il y a une solution à nos problèmes, c'est celle-là.

Est-ce là le propos de ces deux chansons qui se répondent sur l'album, *A Beautiful War*, qui raconte la journée d'un soldat qui va bombarder une ville, sans se rendre compte vraiment de ce qu'il fait, et *Out of the blue*, qui montre la réalité de gens bombardés, l'émotion qu'ils ressentent après l'explosion ?

Oui, exactement. J'ai écrit les paroles de ce joyeux bombardier, qui part joyeusement bombarder une ville en un beau jour ensoleillé. "*Une belle journée est une bonne journée pour bombarder, on voit mieux les cibles*", etc. Et Alfie, qui regardait à la télévision des images de Beyrouth bombardée - mais ça aurait pu être n'importe quelle autre ville dans la même situation -, a vu une image d'une femme courant dans la rue, dans la plus totale confusion cherchant on ne savait quoi, son sac, son bébé, son mari, son chien ? On ne savait pas. Mais le bombardement avait pris cinq minutes pour le pilote dans l'avion, et pour elle, ce seront des mois, des années, pour repartir. Et cela est arrivé des milliers de fois, à des milliers d'individus, juste comme vous et moi… Et Alfie a donc écrit les paroles de *Out Of The Blue*. Voilà ce qu'on essaie de faire avec un disque : encapsuler de choses comme ça, en quelques mots. Si je faisais des discours, ce ne serait plus de la musique. Il faut que ce soit des moments musicaux.

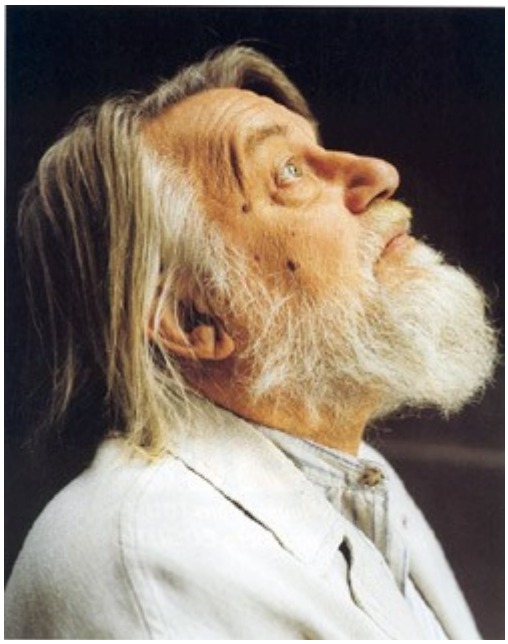
Il y a d'autres dialogues entre les morceaux dans *Comicopera* : le *Fragment* à la fin fait écho à *Just as you are*, du début de l'album, il y a des effets de symétrie. C'est en rapport avec la forme d'opéra que vous souhaitiez donner au disque ?

Oui, car si vous avez le disque d'un chanteur, Nick Cave par exemple, vous allez vous attendre à la permanence d'une voix, d'une personnalité, d'un unique point de vue, même si il peut y avoir des humeurs différentes. J'ai réalisé en faisant l'album qu'il y avait plusieurs genres de caractères dans *Comicopera*, qui passent par moi ou Alfie, Anja Garbareck, Carlos Puebla ou Garcia Lorca. Comme c'est moi qui chante à chaque fois, et que ma voix est toujours la même, ça sonne encore comme un putain d'album de Robert Wyatt (*rires*). Mais, j'ai fait de mon mieux pour qu'on ait l'impression d'entendre différents personnages, comme dans un roman. Mais ce n'est pas un roman, c'est de la musique. Donc c'est un opéra. J'ai emprunté le mot, j'espère qu'ils ne m'en voudront pas (*rires*).

Récemment, vous avez chanté dans deux Opéras : *Welcome to the voice* de Steve Nieve et le *Stabat mater* de Bruno Coulais. Cela vous a-t-il influencé pour l'écriture de votre Comic Opera ?

Je n'y avais pas pensé, c'est une heureuse coïncidence… Mais d'une certaine façon cela a dû m'influencer, même si je n'en avais pas conscience. Manifestement, l'idée de l'opéra était dans l'air... J'ai aussi été marqué par *Mithridate*, un opéra de Mozart que je suis allé voir à Covent Garden au début de l'année. C'est un opéra d'une forme encore archaïque, que Mozart a écrit alors qu'il était adolescent, bien avant que l'opéra moderne n'apparaisse. A cette époque, les Autrichiens s'intéressaient beaucoup à ce qui se passait en Italie. Et l'on trouve dans cette œuvre de jeunesse cette qualité essentielle : ce n'est pas juste une accumulation de chansons mises bout à bout ! En tant que mélomane, j'ai pris l'habitude d'écouter de la musique ayant différents niveaux d'écoute. En ce sens, l'opéra est extraordinaire : vous avez le travail d'orchestre et aussi la possibilité de passer d'un personnage à l'autre, de créer une variété sur la durée, d'avoir des événements nouveaux

qui arrivent... Ça m'a toujours préoccupé, dans le domaine de l'opéra bien sûr mais aussi chez Billie Holiday et Lester Young par exemple. Et en ce qui concerne le travail avec Bruno Coulais, tout a commencé avec la bande originale du film *Le Peuple migrateur*, pour laquelle il a utilisé ma voix. Puis il y a eu d'autres projets, comme son oratorio. C'était très intéressant parce qu'il intégrait les voix à l'écriture instrumentale. Pour mes disques, j'essaie de travailler avec de bons solistes, de bons musiciens et de considérer ma voix comme un simple élément dans cet ensemble. Non pas par humilité, mais parce que je pense que cela donne de meilleurs résultats. Quant à l'opéra de Steve Nieve, je sais qu'il a travaillé longtemps à son écriture avec Muriel Teodori, sa femme. Le travail de Muriel sur les textes est absolument génial, totalement au profit de la musique. Et bien sûr ce disque était comme une rencontre fortuite de choses que l'on n'imaginerait pas ensemble... Travailler avec le quatuor Brodsky sur l'opéra de Steve Nieve était comme un rêve ! C'est un quatuor à cordes exceptionnel.



> Zoom

Pouvez vous me parler de votre voix ? C'est une voix de " Robert Wyatt "...

En effet ! (*rires*)

Elle est à la fois identifiable et ambiguë (entre celle d'un enfant, d'un homme et d'une femme) et en ce sens peut convenir à différents personnages.

Je suis ravi de vous l'entendre dire car c'est vraiment ça l'idée ! Mais parfois je trouve ma voix tellement limitée techniquement que ça me frustre. Et comme je n'arrive plus à atteindre certaines notes aiguës, j'aime bien faire appel à des invitées pour les chanter. Les femmes ont bien de la chance de pouvoir chanter aigu toute leur vie...

Justement, est-ce que vous travaillez votre voix ?

Je chante beaucoup chez moi, mais pas de manière disciplinée… J'essaie constamment d'apprendre à jouer des instrumentaux pour chanter dessus. Ces dix dernières années, je me suis davantage focalisé sur la pratique de la trompette. C'est très utile pour le chant car vous devez visualiser mentalement la note que vous allez jouer… sinon le son ne sort pas correctement. Vous devez connaître la différence entre un si et un si bémol.

J'entends votre utilisation de la trompette comme une extension de votre voix.

C'est exactement ça !

Elle est apparue sur les trois derniers disques et devient de plus en plus présente...

C'est justement lié au fait que je perds de la tessiture dans les aigus. En gros, mon organe vocal ne me permet d'atteindre que la moitié grave des notes d'un piano. Je ne peux plus chanter que jusqu'à six notes au-dessus du do central. Et comme je veux toujours entendre ces notes aiguës dans ma musique, j'utilise d'autres moyens et la trompette m'est d'une grande utilité pour cela.

Et il me semble que vous enregistrez de plus en plus chez vous...

Je travaille à la maison parce que parfois lorsque vous écrivez une chanson, le moment précis où l'idée est encore fraîche est le moment idéal absolu ! C'est comme pour un solo de jazz, on ne peut pas dire "*tu peux me rejouer ce solo ?*". Parfois je garde l'idée telle qu'elle est apparue. J'aime attraper ces instants privilégiés et les utiliser dans l'enregistrement final, même s'il y a des imperfections, même si on entend une voiture passer au loin, même si je laisse tomber ma tasse par terre pendant la prise de son, ou même si je suis un peu ivre… En revanche, si je prépare des démos à la maison pour les réenregistrer en studio, il est probable que cela sonne plus professionnel, mais je risque de perdre cette notion de découverte... voilà pourquoi j'enregistre à la maison. Mais techniquement, je ne suis pas

très doué avec les machines. Régulièrement quand je me recule du piano, un câble de micro s'accroche à ma chaise roulante et se défait… je passe ensuite un temps fou à retrouver l'endroit où le reconnecter. Je n'y arrive pas ! Bref, quand je pense avoir assez de morceaux pour aller en studio, je les transfère sur bande avec l'aide de Jamie Johnson, mon ingénieur du son. Et j'ai remarqué que sur les trois derniers disques, j'ai trouvé des musiciens qui ont vraiment compris ce que je fais. Ils amènent leur sonorité, leur personnalité très affirmée, mais en même temps ils éclairent ma propre musique. Et ce dernier disque sonne vraiment comme celui d'un groupe parce que depuis dix ans je travaille avec les mêmes musiciens en qui j'ai confiance. Annie Whitehead et Gilad Atzmon peuvent tenter toutes sortes de choses maintenant. Et Yaron Stavi peut jouer de la basse avec beaucoup d'aisance sur mes chansons. Je pense que ça s'entend ! Je suis particulièrement content à l'idée que l'on puisse identifier facilement chaque musicien : personne d'autre ne pourrait jouer à leur place. Paul Weller est également venu jouer sur les derniers disques. C'est génial d'écouter ses parties de guitare, car ça ne ressemble pas vraiment à ce qu'il aurait pu jouer sur ses propres disques… et je n'aurais jamais pu le jouer moi-même. Il a inventé une nouvelle façon d'être Paul Weller juste pour mes chansons. C'est magique ! Ca me rend vraiment euphorique. Et croyez moi, il m'a fallu du temps pour trouver ça.

Certaines chansons de cet album, comme A.W.O.L, sont assez pop, et me rappellent les Beatles, She's leaving home...

Vous avez raison. En tant qu'auditeur, j'ai toujours écouté toutes sortes de musiques, mais en tant que musicien, c'est vraiment de là que je viens, de cette tradition anglaise allant de John Lennon aux Kinks… Voilà comment j'ai commencé à jouer de la musique. Je suis très reconnaissant aux premiers groupes Beat d'avoir ouvert une brèche pour tous les Anglais. Vous savez, c'est la première fois dans l'histoire de la musique qu'un mouvement venant d'Angleterre a suscité l'intérêt du monde entier. On ne trouve pas beaucoup de musique anglaise par ailleurs dans l'histoire de la musique… Peut-être Purcell, ou Benjamin Britten, mais pas grand monde... Et en plus, ce mouvement était pop. C'était comme de la musique folk de l'ère industrielle, folk dans le sens où n'importe qui pouvait en jouer, techniquement parlant. Ce n'est pas compliqué de jouer de la pop : c'est juste une question de personnalité de l'interprète. Il n'y a rien de très difficile techniquement dans une chanson de Bob Dylan, mais c'est génial parce que c'est une personnalité. Quand j'ai débuté, j'avais une technique très rudimentaire. Ma tête était pleine de Paul Hindemith et de John Coltrane… C'est quelque chose d'avoir ça dans sa tête, mais c'en est une autre d'arriver à en jouer ! En revanche, je savais immédiatement jouer la musique pop. Ce sont mes racines. J'aime les chansons pop.



> Zoom

Vous citez souvent des musiciens de jazz, mais vous êtes considéré comme un artiste pop-rock...

Oui. Il existe de la musique vocale et de la musique instrumentale. Pourquoi devrait-on les opposer ? Depuis mes débuts, j'ai toujours aimé l'idée que l'on puisse jouer des deux. On ne voyait aucune raison d'exclure telle ou telle musique. Peut-être était-ce dans l'esprit de l'époque, de la fin des années soixante… nous écoutions Karlheinz Stockhausen et Luigi Nono et James Brown et Otis Redding. Non pas pour reproduire ce qu'ils faisaient, mais pour s'inspirer de leur travail. Et pourquoi pas ? La seule raison pour laquelle certains musiciens ne le font pas c'est quand ils veulent s'adapter à un marché spécifique… dans les années soixante, je me foutais complètement du marketing. J'étais probablement trop ivre pour m'en préoccuper! Il y a cette phrase que Miles Davis aimait dire à ses musiciens : "*J'aimerais que vous jouiez au-delà de ce que l'on connaît*". Pour lui, ce n'était pas suffisant que ses musiciens jouent juste bien… C'est intéressant de voir ce qu'il a fait avec Cannonball Adderley, ce saxophoniste extraordinaire qui pouvait jouer comme Benny Carter ou Charlie Parker. Tout le monde aimait Cannonball, mais Miles Davis a été assez grossier avec lui en lui disant "*Que fais-tu de vraiment nouveau harmoniquement parlant ? Tu te reposes sur mes harmonies, et tu sais exactement ce que tu vas jouer ! Et ça, c'est vraiment ennuyeux... trouve-moi*

d'autres notes !". Miles Davis l'a poussé en avant, de manière un peu brutale. Et c'est vraiment génial, mais aussi terriblement effrayant pour un musicien professionnel de s'entendre dire "*Maintenant, voilà quelque chose que tu ne peux pas faire*". Et c'est aussi la manière que j'ai de travailler. J'aime utiliser tout ce que je sais, mais en continuant d'expérimenter…

Comme jouer avec la voix de Brian Eno dans votre échantillonneur ?

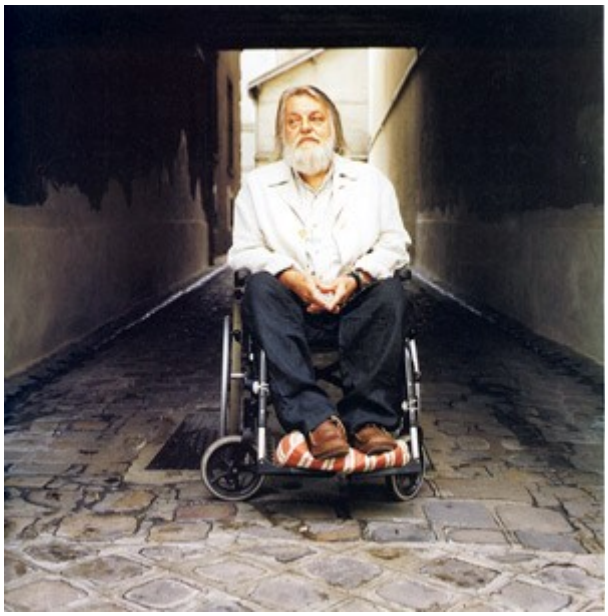
Tout à fait ! Que se passerait-il si je tentais ceci, ou si je tentais cela ? Échantillonner de la voix n'est pas une idée nouvelle : c'était déjà le principe du Mellotron (*le Mellotron était l'ancêtre de l'échantillonneur, les sons y étaient stockés sur des cartouches de bande magnétique, ndlr*). Je crois que Jack Bruce avait un Mellotron rempli uniquement avec des échantillons de sa propre voix. Que ce soit vrai ou non, l'idée est restée dans ma tête. J'ai toujours cherché à humaniser mon clavier. J'ai d'abord pensé que je devais tenter l'expérience avec ma propre voix. J'ai essayé et c'est une catastrophe. Tout sonnait désaccordé. Aucun intérêt. Donc je n'ai pas utilisé le Robertron pour ma propre musique. D'autres musiciens l'ont utilisé, comme Bjork sur le morceau *Oceania* de l'album *Medulla*. Et finalement, j'ai adoré ça ! Ensuite, j'ai essayé avec la voix de Karen Mantler. C'était très réussi. Puis j'ai repris le principe avec la chanteuse brésilienne Monica Vasconcelos, qui a une voix très pure. Et enfin j'ai échantillonné la voix de Brian Eno. J'ai vraiment insisté pour qu'il le fasse parce que je considère que c'est un chanteur remarquable et qu'il chante trop peu sur ses disques. Je l'encourage à chanter plus, car il a un peu tendance à se retirer derrière ses jouets. Je suis particulièrement content de l'Enotron. J'espère faire d'autres musiques avec cet instrument.

Vous devriez le commercialiser...

C'est vrai que c'est amusant… Mais les harmonies que je lui ai demandé de chanter ne sont pas forcément évidentes pour tout le monde. Comme dirait la chanson, "*It's my party and i won't cry if want to*" (Robert Wyatt chante le tube de Lesley Gore, ndlr). Et sur mes disques, c'est aussi simple que cela. J'ai envie de m'éclater pendant une heure en gardant cet esprit aventurier... J'évite de faire des fautes et j'essaie de jouer quelque chose de divertissant. C'est un combat permanent pour y arriver. Et quand je pense avoir obtenu quelque chose de réussi, je me passe un disque de Charlie Mingus ou de John Lennon, et ça me remet à ma place… Bon, ça veut dire qu'il y a toujours mieux à faire et c'est bon à savoir.

Vous vous référez souvent à des musiciens du passé. Ecoutez-vous aussi des musiques récentes ?

Ces derniers temps, je n'ai écouté quasiment que la musique que j'étais en train d'enregistrer, et celle de mes musiciens. Je pense que les critiques musicaux ont un meilleur panorama de la musique actuelle. Je ne reçois pas beaucoup de disques, je n'écoute pas la radio et je regarde peu la télévision… Et occasionnellement, quelques sons nouveaux parviennent à mes oreilles. En fait, je ne suis pas particulièrement à la recherche de nouvelles musiques. L'une des grandes qualités de l'art est qu'il peut se détacher de son époque et devenir intemporel. Ces derniers temps, j'ai essentiellement exploré la musique des années 30 et 40, et la musique archaïque venant d'Europe et du reste du monde. J'écoute aussi de la musique folk du monde entier… Parmi les disques récents que j'ai particulièrement aimé, il y a celui d'Hélène Labarrière, une contrebassiste française. Elle sait que j'apprécie son travail parce que je l'avais invitée à jouer au festival Meltdown dont j'assurais la programmation (*en 2001, ndlr*). Et je viens d'écrire les notes de pochette pour son dernier album, que j'écoute souvent et que j'adore. J'ai aussi acheté le disque de Joachim Kuhn. C'est un trio avec ce chanteur et joueur d'oud nord-africain (*Majid Bekkas, ndlr*) et ce batteur espagnol (*Ramon Lopez, ndlr*).



> Zoom

C'est un merveilleux groupe d'influence méditerranéenne, dans la tradition de Paul Bley… Et bien sûr, comme je suis chez Domino, j'écoute les sorties du label comme les Arctic Monkeys ou Bonnie Prince Billy. C'est vraiment bien. J'écoute aussi d'autres trucs, comme Amy Winehouse par exemple. Elle a un groupe dément, et un batteur vraiment incroyable. J'aime bien ces nouveaux groupes black qui apparaissent en ce moment à Londres… Tout cela me stimule beaucoup. Et comme vous le savez, Orphy Robinson joue du vibraphone sur mon album. Il vient de cette génération de musiciens qui a surgi en même temps que Courtney Pine. C'est un musicien complètement imprévisible, dont on ne peut deviner la prochaine note dans un solo. Je suis aussi impatient d'écouter le nouvel album de Cristina Dona. Et parfois, j'entends une musique que j'aime mais dont je déteste les paroles. Je dois avouer que je compatis maintenant pour mon public polonais, qui aime ma musique mais déteste l'idée que j'étais membre du parti communiste ! (*rires*). Je comprends très bien cela, car j'ai eu une réaction un peu semblable il y a quelques années au sujet d'un disque de Sinead O'Connor, ce très bel album qu'elle avait enregistré avec des musiciens jamaïcains (*Throw Down your arms*, *produit par Sly and Robbie, ndlr*). Au niveau des paroles, c'est du pur revival religieux rastafari, avec des passages comme "*Les gens disent que dieu n'existe pas. Mais je sais qu'ils ont tort*". En écoutant ça, je me dis "*Sinead, mais que racontes-tu là ?*". Mais ce reggae blanc est si réussi musicalement que j'aime le disque de toutes façons.

Et votre réponse à cela était le morceau Pastafari ?

Ah oui ! Cette idée me vient de Orphy Robinson. Ses parents sont jamaïcains et il est marié à une architecte italienne. Ils ont deux enfants, deux petits garçons qu'ils aiment bien appeler leurs "petits pastafariens" ! Je trouvais ça vraiment amusant et je lui ai demandé d'utiliser ce jeu de mots pour le morceau que nous avons enregistré ensemble. Ca convient tout à fait à l'idée du morceau car c'est un duo d'Orphy avec lui-même. Ce sont deux vibraphones qui se répondent, et dont l'un des deux a été traité par Jamie Johnson afin qu'il sonne comme un gamelan balinais… Ces deux vibraphones sonnaient vraiment comme ses deux petits enfants, ses petits Pastafariens !

Nous aimerions aussi parler de la pochette du disque.

C'est le travail d'Alfie. Je lui laisse une liberté totale quant au choix de ce qu'elle veut exprimer sur la pochette. Demandons-lui son avis. Alfie ?

(*Alfie nous rejoint alors*)

Alfreda Benge : C'était difficile de résumer l'album en une seule image. Et il y avait cette idée que l'opéra-comique pouvait aussi s'entendre comme un opéra "comic" (*comic, au sens de comic book, bande dessinée, ndlr*). Et donc, je suis partie sur l'idée de ces quatre petites cases, comme dans une bande dessinée, un strip. La première case "*Fading*" est liée au premier acte de l'opéra, "*No self*" correspond au deuxième acte et *"Out of the blue*" est un petit bonus parce qu'il faut quatre cases pour faire un carré, et cela correspond à cette chanson de transition avec le dernier acte. Et la dernière case est "*Un mar de suenos*"

(correspondant au titre Cancion de Julieta). Mais ces dessins ont été conçus de manière assez automatique. Je ne me suis pas dit : "*Je vais illustrer telle ou telle partie*". Le sens s'est finalement révélé après quelques semaines d'essais en agençant des découpages. Je pense que cette technique de collage est vraiment adaptée à l'esprit de ce disque, qui sonne lui-même comme un collage de différents points de vue.

On aimerait savoir si vous réalisez d'autres oeuvres par ailleurs, et si vous avez l'intention de les exposer un jour.

Je ne travaille plus vraiment les arts graphiques, à l'exception des pochettes de disques pour Robert. Mon passe-temps favori est d'écrire des paroles pour ses chansons. Mais j'ai un emploi du temps très occupé en ce moment, à cause de problèmes personnels liés au fait que ma mère ne va pas très bien. Donc j'ai finalement assez peu de temps à consacrer à tout cela. Et il n'y a pas suffisamment d'œuvres à montrer pour constituer une exposition.

Parlons aussi de vos nouveaux projets. Vous avez enregistré avec Charles Hayward *(le légendaire batteur de This Heat, ndlr*) ?

Robert Wyatt : Oui, on a fait des choses ensemble. Il a monté un groupe très intéressant d'improvisation libre. Il a travaillé avec le trompettiste Harry Beckett, Lol Coxhill, Hugh Hopper et Orphy Robinson. En fait, Charles Hayward n'a pas eu beaucoup de chance avec moi. Il m'avait invité à jouer du cornet avec eux à la radio, mais j'ai dû annuler à cause de la neige qui bloquait tous les trains. Impossible de me rendre à Londres dans ces conditions. Ils m'ont donc envoyé l'enregistrement de leur émission pour que je joue par-dessus. Mais ce n'était pas évident… Ca me donnait un peu l'impression d'être le type qui débarque en retard à une fête. J'ai tout de même trouvé des passages dans l'enregistrement qui me permettaient de jouer dessus. Charles a mixé le morceau et compte le sortir bientôt sur son propre label. C'est donc un petit quintette, avec Hugh Hopper, encore une fois. Quarante ans après nos débuts musicaux (*au sein de Soft Machine, ndlr*).

Vous apparaissez aussi avec Hugh Hopper sur le prochain album de Kevin Ayers...

Kevin m'a demandé de chanter l'une de ses chansons. Mais vocalement, je n'arrivais pas à suivre. Dans le temps, nos voix s'accordaient très bien parce qu'il pouvait chanter dans les graves et moi dans les aigus. C'était un joli contraste : je pouvais être sa voix féminine en quelque sorte. Mais maintenant nos voix sont dans le même registre. Et donc je lui ai proposé d'utiliser mon Robertron. C'est un chouette principe, ce Robertron : vous êtes à la fois là et ailleurs, c'est vous et c'est quelqu'un d'autre, c'est comme une personne qui n'en est pas une... c'est fantastique !

Et comme votre voix est très signée, on vous reconnaît immédiatement.

C'est justement ce qu'il voulait, et je suis content du résultat. Je suis heureux de voir que Kevin est de retour. Il a traversé une période difficile ces vingt dernières années, un véritable combat. Et il a finalement trouvé son Modus Operandi, sa façon de faire marcher les choses. Il était temps ! Je lui dois tellement parce qu'à nos débuts, Kevin était le seul du groupe à savoir écrire de vraies chansons. Ses chansons étaient à l'origine de toutes nos musiques, au moment où nous avons commencé à ne plus jouer de reprises pour nous focaliser sur l'écriture de nos propres morceaux. Je remercierai toujours Kevin pour cela. Il m'a tout appris.

Je me demandais si vous aviez écouté le disque de Scott Walker, The Drift...

Je l'ai écouté. J'ai même vu une émission de télé à son sujet. C'était passionnant. J'aime l'idée qu'il se soit complètement retiré des circuits classiques de l'industrie musicale pour explorer ses propres territoires musicaux. J'admire vraiment cette démarche.

Vous avez beaucoup de choses en commun, comme cette idée de l'opéra, ou les thématiques liées à la situation politique internationale.

Et nous sommes tous deux fans de Gil Evans! Je le sais parce que Alfie se souvient très bien de lui. Il fréquentait le club de Jazz de Ronnie Scott, où Alfie travaillait à l'époque, et elle se rappelle bien de Scott Walker. Il venait régulièrement pour écouter des jazzmen, pendant des nuits entières… Il n'y a pas tant de musiciens de rock qui font cela. On cherchait dans ces musiques d'autres façons de jouer. Nous ne jouons pas du jazz, ni Scott ni moi, mais nous avons tous deux appris énormément au contact de cette musique.

C'était une autre époque, bien avant Internet. Etes-vous au courant que votre album est déjà disponible illégalement, plus d'un mois avant sa sortie ?

C'est un peu effrayant, parce qu'en ce qui me concerne, je n'ai que ça pour vivre. Nous n'avons pas d'autres sources de revenus. C'est flippant parce que nous avons déjà dépensé beaucoup d'argent pour faire ce disque, et nous y avons consacré beaucoup de temps. Alors si les gens écoutent la musique sans l'acheter, nous sommes foutus ! C'est un réel problème, vous savez…

D'autant plus que vous ne faites pas de concerts.

Voilà bien le problème. C'est tout ce que nous avons pour vivre. Cette situation est assez cruelle. C'est comme si vous alliez au restaurant et que vous décidiez de vous enfuir sans payer l'addition ! Ce n'est pas très correct… (*rires*).

ROBERT WYATT
Comicopera
(*Domino / Pias)*

Robert Wyatt par Bertrand Burgalat

Sur son nouvel album, l'épatant *Chéri B.B.* (Tricatel), Bertrand Burgalat fait chanter Robert Wyatt, dans un registre qui ne lui est pas habituel. *This Summer Night*, disco 70's et cordes Curtis Mayfield, est une chanson à la nostalgie touchante (Robert Wyatt dansant dans une boîte de nuit disco, le sourire aux lèvres). B.B. nous donne son sentiment sur Wyatt.



" Robert et sa femme m'avaient déjà aidé sur quatre titres de mon album précédent. Alfie avait écrit des textes et Robert les chantait ensuite sur un magnétocassette pour me montrer comment les paroles devaient être placées sur ma mélodie. Cette fois-ci, je n'avais pas envoyé de voix témoin, juste un instrumental avec toujours le même genre d'indications, du genre faire quelque chose de solaire, méditerranéen, gai d'apparence et assez triste en même temps. Alfie a écrit les paroles avec en tête des souvenirs de jeunesse de vacances en Espagne, de rencontres d'une nuit qui se passent bien. Avant que j'aie envoyé un essai de mélodie, Robert en avait fait une. C'était très beau et j'avais honte de chanter ça après lui, je lui ai demandé s'il pourrait le faire; je les ai rejoints à Londres quand il finissait Comicopera. Une fois sa voix enregistrée, il m'a poussé à chanter dessus, ça m'a fait extrêmement plaisir car je n'ose pas trop chanter, j'ai l'impression que je n'ai pas le droit de faire ça. Mes sentiments sur Wyatt: lui et Alfie sont d'une générosité rare. Je n'aime pas le terme, en général dans le showbiz il désigne de vrais connards ; mais leur sensibilité ne s'arrête pas à la musique, ils sont extrêmement attentifs à ce que ressentent les gens autour d'eux, pas du tout génies créateurs dans leur tour d'ivoire. Il y a chez eux un mélange de détermination et de souplesse. Ils ne sont pas gentils parce qu'ils sont communistes, mais ils sont sûrement communistes parce qu'ils sont gentils ".
Propos recueillis par W.P.

La discographie de Robert Wyatt regorge de disques magnifiques, depuis ses débuts avec Soft Machine : il a joué sur des albums aussi indispensables que *The Madcap Laughs* de Syd Barrett, *Before And After Science* de Brian Eno, ou plus récemment *Smiling And Waving* de Anja Garbarek et *Songs From Before* de Max Richter, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns. Une discographie très complète est disponible sur le très beau site www.disco-robertwyatt.com. Petite sélection parmi ses albums solo.

ROCK BOTTOM

(1974)



Beaucoup de choses ont été dites sur cet album, grand classique des musiques de traverses... Pour ceux qui ne connaissent pas, difficile d'en parler sans tomber dans le superlatif. Que dire, alors ? Que son étrange hypnotisme peut vous faire pleurer et rire à la fois, qu'il peut s'écouter plus de mille fois sans dévoiler tous ses mystères, qu'il risque de changer votre vie à tout jamais ? Vous l'aurez compris, cet objet est bien plus qu'un simple disque : c'est un chef-d'œuvre absolu.

OLD ROTTENHAT

(1985)



Cet album est comme une épure de la musique de Wyatt. L'instrumentation est simplissime et se résume souvent à un clavier, une percussion et une voix (on touche là la quintessence de son travail vocal). Ce disque prouve une fois de plus que l'on peut dire beaucoup avec peu de moyens. C'est aussi son disque le plus ouvertement politique, aux textes abordant des sujets très durs, en contrepoint saisissant d'une musique plutôt douce.

DONDESTAN

(1991, revisité en 1998)



Sur des textes de Alfie, son épouse, Robert Wyatt signe là son disque le plus accessible. Tout en posant un regard sur le monde comme son prédécesseur (en militant pour la création d'un Etat palestinien, par exemple), ce disque est néanmoins plus décalé et surréaliste. On conseillera *Dondestan* comme une introduction en douceur à l'univers du maître. Une version remaniée est sortie en 1998 avec un mixage et un ordre des morceaux différent.

A SHORT BREAK

(1992)



Peu de temps après *Dondestan*, Robert Wyatt enregistre ce mini-album, mystérieux et sombre. C'est son dernier disque complètement solo, avant la trilogie *Shleep / Cuckooland / Comic-opera* (avec la même équipe de musiciens). Peu connu et souvent introuvable, cet album n'en demeure pas moins passionnant. Ce sont de longues litanies quasi improvisées avec un chant plaintif et entêtant. Une phrase bouleversante se dégage de cet album : « *Is every moment forever ?* ».

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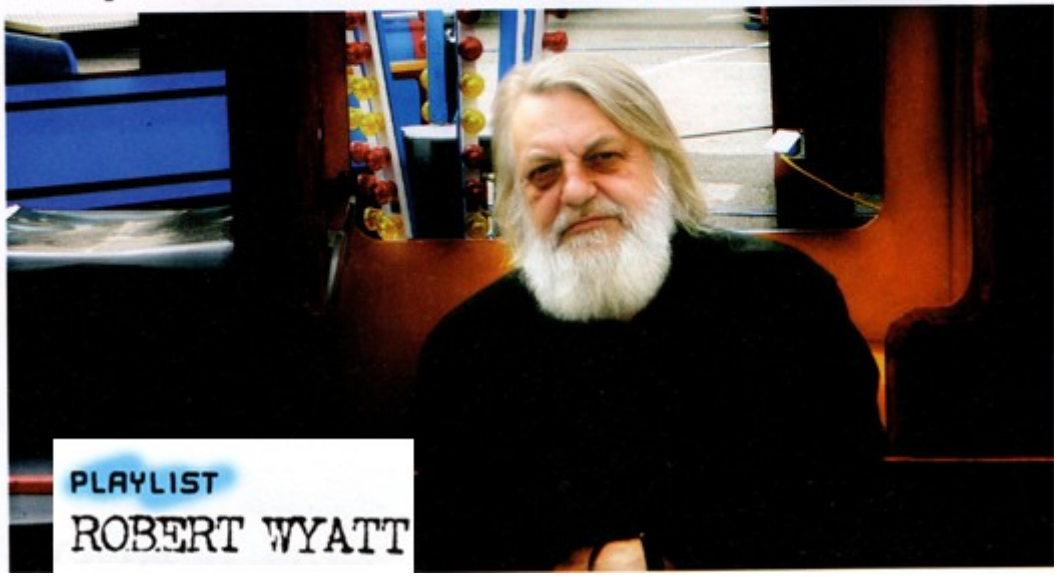
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Petite fable humaine - Vibrations - N° 97 - octobre 2007

ROCK

PETITE FABLE HUMAINE

Post concept-album ou opéra, peu importe, voici l'un des sommets artistiques de l'ex-Soft Machine Robert Wyatt





Les disques qui comptent pour Robert Wyatt, œil espiègle et sourire vif, comme le prouve son drôle de Comicopera où il invite quelques vieux complices dont Brian Eno

CHARLES MINGUS
Shadows
Ce film de John Cassavetes, je l'ai compris. Une longue improvisation, qui a exercé une grosse influence sur moi. Adolescent, j'étais amoureux de l'actrice Leila Goldoni… C'est peut-être elle qui m'a fait aimer cette musique.

DIONNE WARWICK
Make Way For Dionne Warwick
C'est l'une des chanteuses que j'admire le plus, elle m'a donné envie de chanter. Elle reprend ici les écrins de Burt Bacharach. La combinaison des deux aboutit au meilleur album pop de tous les temps.

RAY CHARLES AND BETTY CARTER
Dedicated To You
Un grand moment d'élévation sexuelle de la musique, ou d'élévation musicale du sexe. Après tout, nous ne sommes pas que des auditeurs abstraits, mais aussi de vrais animaux !

Propos recueillis par Jacques Denis

Robert Wyatt, Comic Opera *(Domino/PIAS)*

EN CONCERT
12/10 : Bordeaux
13/10 : Le Thor
16/10 : Annemasse
17/10 : Paris (Olympia)
18/10 : Massy
20/10 : Béziers
23/10 : Vendheim

>>> **Retrouvez la playlist complète de Robert Wyatt sur www.vibrationsmusic.com**

Robert Wyatt, Comicopera (Domino)





En guise d'ouverture, une citation tirée de ce nouveau Robert : « Les Grecs séparent les choses en comédie ou tragédie. La comédie ne signifie pas la drôlerie, mais implique simplement les fables humaines, à l'opposé de la tragédie qui concerne les Dieux et le Destin. Ainsi, ceci comprend des fables humaines (...) et si pour terminer je chante un hymne à Che Guevara, je ne cherche cependant pas de nouveaux dieux, mais parle encore et toujours de fables humaines. »

Acte 1 : Robert Wyatt victime de la gravité, condamné à la perpétuité d'une chaise roulante pour être tombé d'une fenêtre du quatrième étage. Autrefois.

Acte 2 : Aujourd'hui. Robert Wyatt maître de la gravité, jouant malicieusement des sens de ce mot si lourd de conséquences. Sa musique atteint des sommets de légèreté (ici, rien de commun avec superficiel, mais synonyme de douceur, finesse, grâce) tout en considérant le Monde tel qu'il le mérite, c'est à dire avec sérieux, dignité, voire sévérité. Avec l'âge, sa barbe lui donne un air de Tolstoï et l'on perçoit chez cet infatigable engagé politique un mélange de tendresse et de colère.

Acte 3 : Robert Wyatt affranchi du rythme comme de la mélodie, connaisseur averti de leurs moindres sentiers et chausse-trappes, se riant du tempo comme les enfants jouent à saute-mouton. Il n'y avait guère que Monk pour aborder les principes de bases de la musique contemporaine avec une telle désinvolture magnifique. Robert Wyatt compose et enregistre son « Comicopera » en mode « automatique » ne découvrant qu'au final les tenants et aboutissants de l'œuvre. « Les plans comme les concepts sont limitatifs » déclare le maître de cérémonie. Oubliez l'idée d'un concept-album, ce fourre-tout des années 70, voici né le post-concept-album, dont lui seul a le secret.

En guise de final, une autre citation du Grand Robert : « La musique n'est pas un plaisir

abstrait ; lorsque vous jouez un disque, elle est une compagnie. La raison pour laquelle j'aime Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus et les big bands, c'est parce que chaque caractère du groupe est identifiable comme personne - Voici un groupe d'humains dans une même pièce. » II en va de même en cet opéra avec dans la distribution Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Phil Manzarek, Alfie Benge, Monica Vasconcelos, Anja Garbarek, Garcia-Lorca... : des amis, des présences, au long de ces seize pièces, belles, fascinantes et fragiles comme l'humanité du conteur Wyatt.

Thierry Sartorett

comicopera



robertwyatt

Voix unique dans le monde rock anglais,
ROBERT WYATT, entouré d'invités
aussi prestigieux que Brian Eno,
Paul Weller et Phil Manzanera,
est au sommet de son art et insuffle
une touche de poésie dans
une rentrée rock plutôt sombre...

Album "Comicopera"
Sortie le 8 octobre
(disponible en CD et double vinyle gatefold)

Soirée exceptionnelle au Divan du Monde (Paris)

L'unique apparition en public de Robert Wyatt
(interview + dédicace
+ diffusion de documentaire inédit)

Le 16 Octobre à 19h30



Publicité pour Comicopera parue dans le N° d'octobre 2007 de Vibrations

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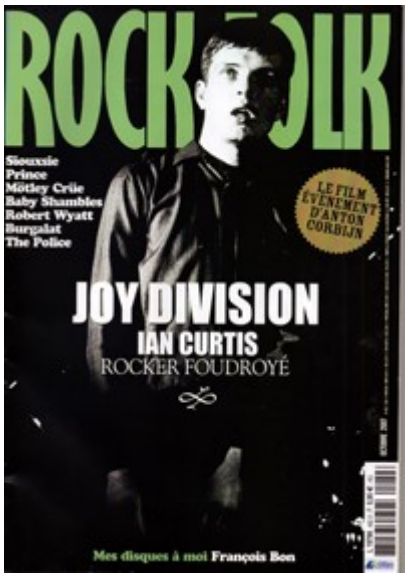
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Bertrand Burgalat - Robert & Bertrand - Rock & Folk - N° 482 - octobre 2007

BERTRAND BURGALAT - ROBERT & BERTRAND



BERTRAND BURGALAT

Sur son nouvel album, le patron de Tricatel convie le maître Robert Wyatt pour un duo aux harmonies cosmiques. Interview et tournage de clip.



TRAND GALAT

e patron de Tricatel convie le maître
duo aux harmonies cosmiques.
et tournage de clip.

Un des derniers dimanches d'été, à Paris. Soleil timide, vent volontaire, un été moderne. 8e arrondissement. Les rues sont vides, ou presque. Deux touristes américaines, le pantalon quasiment sous les aisselles, polo rose de marque, sourire de cire, scrutent la vieille pierre mais semblent surtout regretter les devantures closes. *No shopping today*. Plus loin, l'Elysée. Avec deux plantons qui montent la garde. A l'intérieur, pas âme qui vive. Tous au travail. Ou tous sur un yacht. Peu importe. La République dort depuis longtemps. Place Beauvau, maintenant. Trottoir de gauche. Numéro impair. Code. 1er étage. Là, dans les bureaux d'Azzaro se tourne le clip de "This Summer Night", extrait du nouvel album de Bertrand Burgalat, "Chéri BB", où le fondateur de Tricatel croise la route de Robert Wyatt. Le fils qui a convié le père. Importance. L'homme en fauteuil est là, accompagné d'Alfie, sa compagne, manageuse, aussi peintre, auteur, bien sûr parolière. Les cigarettes s'enchaînent, les poignées de main et les sourires francs également.

Daniel Klein, le réalisateur, ne semble pas stressé plus que ça. Le tournage se déroule dans une pièce unique, tapissée de miroirs et de vitres qui semblent se renvoyer indéfiniment leurs pensées secrètes. Entre scène finale d'un James Bond ou d'un Bruce Lee, boîte à partouze époque Brigitte Lahaie avant qu'elle abandonne les queues pour les micros de radio grandes ondes et vaisseau d'un futur déjà oublié. On devine à peu près le rendu final. L'équipe est réduite, pas d'attachée de presse, agent, producteur dans les parages. Ambiance véritablement décontractée. Il n'y a pas de secret : pour vivre mieux, il faut savoir se débarrasser des petits soldats qui gesticulent dans le vide.

Photo Nathalie

"On ne peut pas être aimé par tout le monde"

Bertrand Burgalat honore aujourd'hui le bleu. La chemise, le pantalon, bleu. Il donne moins l'impression de participer à un clip que de recevoir des amis. Robert Wyatt, lui, est souffrant, migraines et virus vachard. Pas la forme olympique. Mais la petite étoile de mer brillante qu'il affiche sur sa chemise noire (une création de Vanessa Seward, l'amie de Burgalat et également créatrice de mode pour Azzaro), seul déguisement qu'il a accepté de revêtir, lui donne un côté prophète cosmique.

Il est gentil, Robert Wyatt. Malgré quarante années au service de la musique, quelques disques cultes et une tragédie personnelle au compteur, qui n'a toujours pas fini de faire fantasmer ceux qui le regardent comme une sorte de créature mythologique, il fume silencieusement, accepte toutes les conversations, ne se plaint pas. Quand il apprend que Rock&Folk est dans la place, il est agréablement surpris. Alfie, elle, s'interroge. Pourquoi pas d'interview de Robert pour son nouvel album qui sort en octobre chez Domino ? Presque embarrassé, on répond à côté. Les prises défilent. Robert semble mal à l'aise, il s'explique : "*]e suis vraiment un piètre acteur. Alfie me reproche souvent de ne pas interpréter les personnages que je chante. Elle a raison. Aujourd'hui, je me sens comme un vieil homme très moche qu'une jolie jeune femme viendrait prendre en photo pour un magazine sur le tournage d'un clip. C'est ridicule. Ça devrait être le contraire, moi derrière l'appareil et elle qui pose.*



Quand j'étais jeune, beau et ivre (en français—NdA)*, je n'avais peur de rien, je pouvais traverser le monde à poil. Maintenant, je ressemble à un vieux prêtre russe ou quelque chose du genre. Et d'être ainsi filmé, je me sens pris au piège, coincé. Je suis un peu nerveux, je ne me produis plus sur scène, j'ai du mal. Mais ce n'est pas trop difficile.]e n'ai pas de choses trop compliquées à faire devant la caméra. Je ne suis qu'un mauvais acteur.*"

Mais de voir, dans cette pièce miroir, Wyatt dans son fauteuil et Burgalat assis à ses pieds, tous les deux s'adonnant au play-back, on hallucinerait presque. Le titre 'This Summer Night' tourne en boucle. Dans un monde parallèle, il serait certifié platine. Pop qui tournoie, où Wyatt chante les mots d'Alfie, une romance d'une nuit, il y a longtemps, où deux amants dansent avant de s'étreindre, avant de se séparer pour toujours. Wyatt qui danse. Evidemment, la magie opère. Deux voix qui finissent par n'être qu'une, cette basse entêtante, ces cordes d'évasion, ça coule, c'est beau. C'est l'impossible qui devient accessible. Plus tard, les AS Dragon viendront jouer la comédie, tout de blanc vêtus. Avec aussi Louis Bona, joueur d'alto de 17 ans, gueule d'ange, déjà adopté par la Famille, la Tribu. Loin des associations de malfaiteurs trop souvent croisées.

La journée se passe, doucement. Entre deux séquences, Burgalat dévore une salade de fruits multicolore. Robert Wyatt, lui, dort, la tête posée sur un coussin improvisé. On propose à Burgalat de parler de ce "Chéri BB", album invisible qui n'existera pas dans les bacs des disquaires. Uniquement disponible sur le site de Tricatel, en chargement et bientôt en CD, en VPC. Un disque que personne ne pourra taxer de difficile ou de private joke. Le talent, la générosité aussi, l'amour de la mélodie qui emmène, le sens de l'atmosphère propice à mille évasions, la poésie qui fait mouche, sans jamais flirter avec le slogan, tout est là. Et puis, ce son ! Conçu quasiment à la maison, ce disque explose dans le casque. Surtout et c'est là que la chose devient carrément sublime, c'est que, dans ce disque, n'importe qui pourra retrouver ses propres influences, même si ce ne sont pas celles de Burgalat. Voilà la force d'un artiste crédible. Quand les chansons s'adaptent à la vie de ceux qui les écoutent. Sans forcer. Burgalat, c'est Louis de Funès jouant au golf avec Spector, c'est "La Boum" avec de l'acide dans le verre de Sophie Marceau, c'est Alan Vega au volant d'une voiture italienne, avant que le béton ne dévore le littoral. Blondie qui fait du trampoline. Lio qui implose. C'est tout ce que l'on veut parce que c'est un disque personnel, au sens le plus vital du terme et donc un disque forcément universel. Un disque où Burgalat chante et chante mieux que bien ! Un disque, enfin, que l'on sentirait presque comme la dernière chance pour Burgalat. Même s'il s'en défend, la fatigue est palpable. Mais le regard, lui, reste rigolard. Même pas mort.

Robert & Bertrand

Je me rappelle, à la fin du siècle dernier, avoir lu un entretien avec Robert Wyatt. Le journaliste lui demandait quelle musique il écoutait. Le vieux barbu était embarrassé : il n'écoutait rien ou presque, si ce n'est du jazz et de la musique latine. Pas de rock — qui n'existait plus à l'époque — ni de musiques électroniques - qu'il fallait impérativement aimer, même si l'on ne comptait que quelques perles rares pour des milliers de coquilles vides. De tout cela, Wyatt se fichait royalement (comme dit le Petit Larousse : *"de manière royale, somptueuse ; avec magnificence").* Ni vieux con (comme tous ces morts vivants qui ont fait de la chapelle Sixties un lupanar), ni faux jeune (comme David Bowie), ni intello soporifique (comme Brian Eno), ni perché irrécupérable (comme certains de ses camarades de Canterbury). Détaché et sans descendance ou presque. Quelques petits malins ont bien tenté de copier la recette, pour un résultat un peu tiède (Imitation Electric Piano), souvent dégoulinant (Syd Matters), parfois brillant (Testbild !). C'est qu'une chose leur avait échappé : les recettes de Wyatt changent constamment, au point qu'on ne saurait parler de recettes. Est-ce à dire que Wyatt est *intemporel* ? On laissera l'adjectif aux esprits simples ; une œuvre d'art intemporelle, c'est comme une maison non-spatiale, ça n'existe pas. Une imperméabilité aux modes et une intelligence à faire des mondes suffiront - Oscar Wilde : l'art *"fait et défait des mondes et tire la lune du ciel avec un fil de pourpre",* la lune fût-elle en juin. Ce monde autonome, régi par ses lois propres, Wyatt a su l'habiter sans faute de goût., au point que certains esprits chagrins le rangent volontiers dans le tiroir du bon goût néo-bourgeois, aux côtés de ces petites billes de naphtaline (la nouvelle scène rock) et ces nounours en peluche (la nouvelle chanson française et toute la joliesse lo-fi) dont la presse cultivée ne cesse de faire la promotion. Mais ranger Wyatt dans ce beau tiroir de bois verni, c'est comparer une taupinière à une montagne. Oui, la musique de Wyatt est de bon goût mais dans un sens autre que le bon goût lo-fi de Coco Rosie ou les mignardises d'Emilie Simon — car le sentimentalisme, on le sait depuis Platon, est une perversion du goût qui jamais n'a atteint Wyatt.

Je me rappelle, au début de ce siècle, avoir assisté à un concert de Bertrand Burgalat. L'assistance, c'était l'époque, était composée de jeune cadres dynamiques et branchés, en pleine vague des start-ups. On pouvait entendre : *"Tu verras, c'est le pape de l'easy listening."* Avec humour, Burgalat avait dit un jour : *"Je fais du* difficult listening, *mes ventes de disques en témoignent."* Comme Wyatt, Burgalat mélange des accords complexes et des rythmes sophistiqués issus du jazz à des structures pop, avec un riche travail sur le timbre et un amour inconditionnel des vieux synthétiseurs aux flancs de bois, des arrangements d'orchestre et des dernières technologies numériques. Si la musique de Bertrand est easy listening, c'est à la manière non de la *muzak* que distillent les haut-parleurs des entreprises américaines mais des musiques d'ameublement d'Erik Satie qui habillent notre mélancolie plutôt que les intérieurs bourgeois. Entendre de l'easy listening chez Burgalat, c'est comme s'amuser du kitsch de Kraftwerk. C'est passer à côté. Comme celle de Wyatt, la musique de Burgalat peut être dite de bon goût, au sens noble, bien loin de la mignardise et de la facilité. On aura compris le caractère non fortuit de cette collaboration et l'on se passera des poncifs (rencontre au sommet, etc).

JOHAN GIRARD (Dorian Pimpernel)

Un mec super

ROCK&FOLK : Cette journée est forcément particulière pour vous : un tournage de clip avec Robert Wyatt ?

Bertrand Burgalat : Je n'ai pas toujours conscience des choses géniales quand elles se produisent. Je ne sais pas assez jouir des choses pour me dire qu'aujourd'hui, c'est un moment super. J'ai du mal avec l'instant présent. Pour moi, Robert Wyatt a eu une influence énorme. C'est une joie de faire de la musique avec lui, de tourner ce clip avec lui. Aujourd'hui c'est irréel. Et puis, il y a les AS Dragon qui sont là, aussi. Un vrai moment de joie.

R&F : Comment définiriez-vous votre nouvel album, "ChériBB"?

Bertrand Burgalat : Comparativement à ce que j'ai pu faire avant, je pense que ce disque est plus compact J'ai une tendance à vouloir faire des disques où il y a toujours des arrière-plans et c'est peut-être ce qui les rend déconcertants à la première écoute. J'aime bien qu'on puisse réécouter et trouver derrière des couleurs, des choses qu'on n'entendait pas la première fois. Celui-là est peut-être plus direct.

C'est l'avantage quand on fait des trucs qui ne cartonnent pas, on n'a pas de recette. On ne peut pas se dire : *que va penser mon public ?* Quoique (rires). Je me suis retrouvé en studio avec des mecs qui vendaient 3000 disques et qui pensaient comme ça... Après "Portrait Robot", j'étais quand même vraiment super déprimé. C'est bizarre parce qu'à chaque fois, je mets quand même la barre très bas (*rires*). Et à chaque fois, je n'y arrive pas. "Portrait Robot" n'a pas dû dépasser les 10 000 exemplaires...

R&F : **Vos derniers entretiens vous montraient quelque peu amer...**

Bertrand Burgalat : Actuellement, j'ai plutôt la patate. Mais parce que je n'attends pas grand-chose. Ce qui est difficile, c'est vraiment, quand on fait de la musique, une fois qu'on l'a finie, de se dire : *Putain, ça va encore être la croix et la bannière pour trouver un distributeur, pour en placer trente en magasins...* Mais dès lors qu'on s'en fout, on n'a plus ce truc de compétition. On essaye donc de vendre ses disques de la manière la plus simple et directe possible. Par contre, je ne ferai jamais les choses comme ça pour un groupe comme les Shades. Parce qu'ils ont vraiment la possibilité de toucher un public plus large...

R&F : Mais ce nouvel album possède certains atouts capables de toucher un public plus large. Auriez-vous abandonné le combat concernant vos propres albums ?

Bertrand Burgalat : C'est très délicat de s'occuper de son propre disque. C'est pour ça que les deux précédents, je les avais mis en licence. Au moins, ce n'était pas moi qui appelais les radios pour leur dire à quel point Bertrand Burgalat était un mec super et qu'il fallait le cartonner en FM (*rires*). Mais le label, je ne l'ai pas fait par choix... La plupart des disques que nous avons sortis n'auraient jamais vu le jour sans Tricatel. Il fallait que ces disques existent. C'est de cet ordre-là... Rencontrer le manager malhonnête, qui croit en ce que tu fais et qui t'arnaque, ça a toujours été mon rêve. Mon Colonel Parker. Et je n'aurais pas eu à faire tout ça.

R&F : Pardonnez l'insistance mais ce nouvel album est tout de même très accessible, avec des chansons... Plusieurs amis au départ réfractaires ont applaudi à l'écoute...

Bertrand Burgalat : Souvent, des gens me disent : "*C'est incroyable que tel truc n'ait pas marché.*" J'ai réfléchi là-dessus. Si certains de nos trucs n'ont pas explosé, c'est parce que c'étaient des tubes idéalisés. Parce que je me disais : *Voilà ce qui devrait passer à la radio*. Alors qu'en fait, c'étaient des ovnis, des choses qui ne correspondaient pas à ce qui passait sur les ondes à ce moment-là. Aujourd'hui, on est dans une période où il y a très peu de tubes naturels. Franchement, le mec qui dit qu'il était sûr que ça marcherait, c'est de la connerie. Un truc comme Christophe Willem, pour moi, c'était intéressant. Ça me rend modeste. Je me rends compte qu'avec lui, je fais le même genre de chansons que d'habitude et ça marche. Pourquoi ? Ce n'est pas parce que nos chansons sont bien mais parce que, tout d'un coup, il y a un interprète qui a quand même du charisme, qui joue le jeu à fond, qui est vraiment un performer, qui a su charmer le public et, en même temps, je suis conscient que, dans ce disque, ce ne sont pas les morceaux que j'ai faits qui cartonnent le plus.

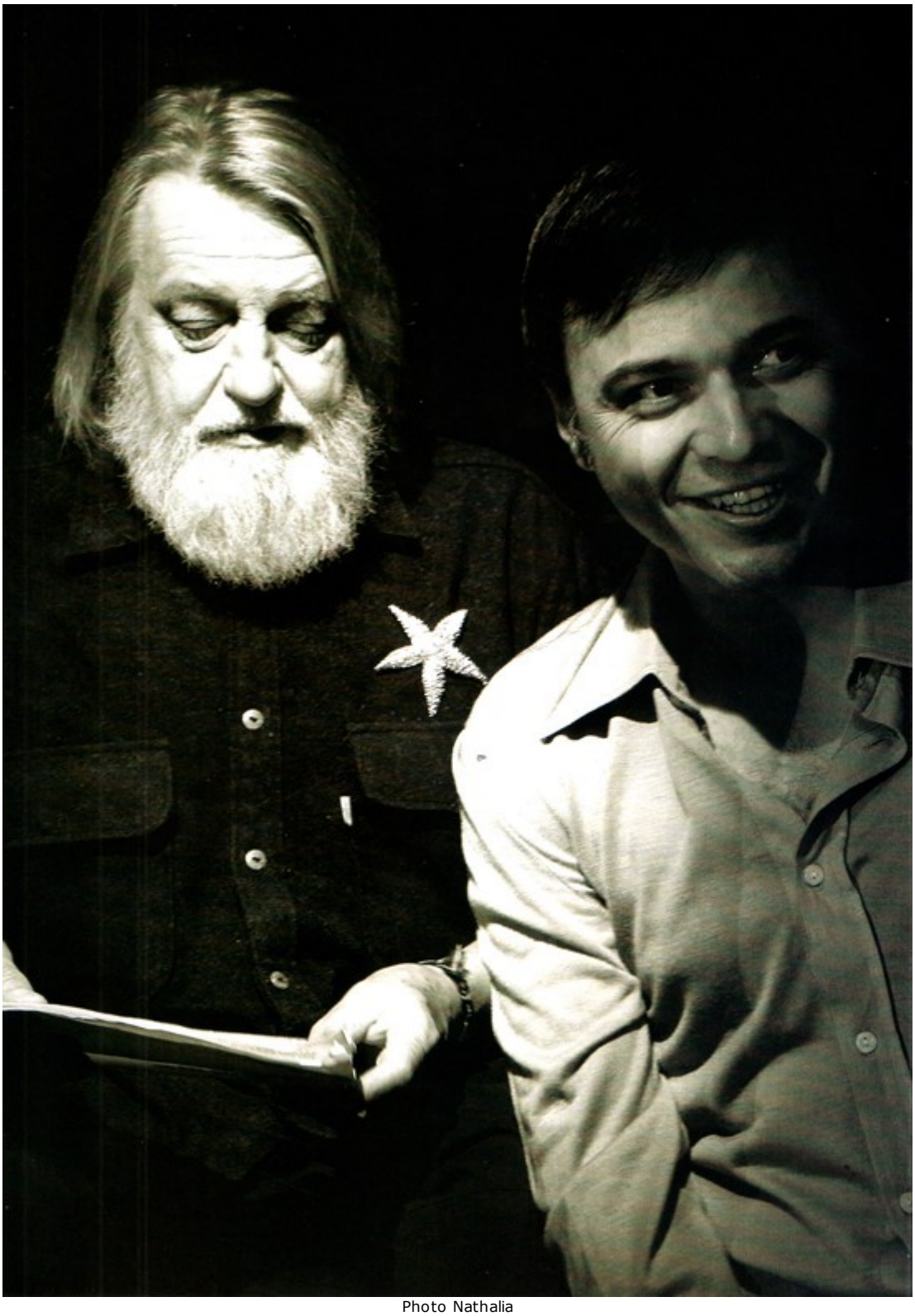


Photo Nathalia

Si ça plaît à Robert

Coupure. Le tournage reprend. Bertrand et Robert assis sur un canapé, des fruits dans des coupoles sur une table basse. Les AS Dragon et Louis qui jouent dans le vide, en arrière-plan. Un songe. Le temps s'est arrêté. Alfie attend dans une pièce adjacente. Elle se confie : " *Quand j'ai rencontré Bertrand, je lui ai dit que ma seule règle était de ne jamais écrire de chansons d'amour. Il est tout de même parvenu à me pousser à trahir ma seule règle* (rires)... *Les chansons de Bertrand sont comme des personnages dans les films d'Eric Rohmer. Bertrand est unique, spécial. Il a du style, il sait où il va, sans jamais manier l'ironie. II ne donne pas dans le pastiche. Et ses productions sont intenses.* " Pas de doute, l'enfant terrible de la pop française a été adopté.

Nouvelle pause. Robert rejoint Morphée. Bertrand attend la prochaine question. Le soleil est de retour, la terrasse inondée de lumière, des rires qui résonnent au loin, Nathalia qui mitraille tout ce qui bouge, un dimanche en apesanteur.

R&F : Votre paranoïa vis à vis de certains médias qui vous boycottent se porte bien ?

Bertrand Burgalat : J'essaye de faire la part des choses. On ne peut pas être aimé par tout le monde. Que quelqu'un ne m'aime pas en tant que personne, je trouve ça tout à fait normal. Je trouve ça dommage quand ça rejaillit sur tous les groupes du label. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire ? Pour l'instant, je n'ai pas l'impression que tous ces préjugés aient écarté des gens très intéressants. Ça écarte des gens plutôt conformistes. Et, en même temps, ce que l'on fait, ça demande un effort, c'est vrai. Non pas que la musique soit difficile, mais ça demande un effort pour dépasser les préjugés. C'est le cas à toutes les époques. Et même si on a la réputation d'être branché, on n'est jamais le truc qu'il est bon de citer.

"Conjurer le côté artiste maudit"

C'est marrant, ce n'est pas grave. Mais je ne suis pas vraiment paranoïaque. Ce qui est certain, c'est que je ne suis pas complètement détaché. Il y a des gens qui se foutent d'être aimé ou pas. Moi, quand je vois une critique qui est dure, ça me blesse. Mais bizarrement, je me sens moins découragé actuellement qu'il y a un an ou deux... Il y a quelques temps, dans les Inrocks, un mec a écrit que Burgalat ferait mieux d'arrêter de chanter. Mais quand Robert m'a dit que je devais chanter sur le morceau, ça m'a fait super plaisir ! Si ça plaît à Robert, c'est déjà pas mal (rires). J'ai aussi régulièrement ce fantasme de tout laisser tomber et de faire autre chose...

R&F : II y a justement une rumeur qui dit que Burgalat va partir s'installer dans les Pyrénées...?

Bertrand Burgalat : Ouais, la délocalisation est en voie. Je ferai de la musique, j'essayerai de faire de la musique...

R&F : En guise de conclusion, pourquoi ce titre, "Chéri BB" ?

Bertrand Burgalat : C'était une façon de dire que, finalement, même si je suis du style à tout le temps me plaindre, je suis conscient qu'il y a plein de gens qui m'aiment. Plein de gens qui soutiennent le label. Une façon de conjurer le côté artiste maudit et tout ça (*sourire*).

Plein de surprises

C'est dans la boîte. Le clip de "This Summer Night" verra bientôt le jour. Sur internet et nulle part ailleurs. A moins que la télévision se réveille. Pas gagné. Robert Wyatt s'apprête à quitter les lieux. Il demande une cigarette. Et joue au critique rock le temps d'un au revoir :"*Le nouvel album de Bertrand, parfois, m'évoque la musique d'un film indien, cette collision folle d'effets à la fois familiers et inconnus. Ou alors un western. On ne sait jamais ce qui va venir après. C'est plein de surprises. Il parvient à être consistant sans jamais être ennuyeux. Et je peux vous assurer que c'est un véritable défi pour un artiste, de parvenir à ce résultat... Rock&Folk se porte bien ? Je comprends que vous ne parliez pas de moi, place aux jeunes, hein ?*" La jeunesse... On évoque Pete Doherty. Sans attendre, il répond : "*Pete Doherty ? Oh, je le trouve charmant, il l'air si gentil. Pour moi, la musique n'est pas une histoire de niveau technique mais de compagnie. Il suffit de se sentir bien avec les gens avec qui on se retrouve en studio. Je l'aime bien, ce petit gars et je lui souhaite le meilleur et toute la chance possible. Les journalistes sont durs avec lui. Ils feraient mieux de l'encourager parce que c'est un bon songwriter. Eh, Rock&Folk, continuez comme ça et ne vous laissez pas emmerder par les connards !* "

Message reçu. Dernière poignée de main à Bertrand Burgalat. Une journée loin du monde s'achève. Il va désormais s'agir de privilégier la musique. Avant de condamner Burgalat pour les pires raisons (bobo, easy listening, branché, élitiste, passéiste, la liste des inepties est encore longue), il serait bon de lui laisser une chance. Par exemple en se rendant sur www.tricatel.com où "Chéri BB" est disponible à l'écoute. Il serait regrettable de jouer la carte de l'ignorance et d'oublier un disque, un bon disque (ce qui ne gâche rien), avant même qu'il ait pu véritablement exister.

JEROME REIJASSE

CD "Chéri BB" (Tricatel)

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Robert Wyatt - Une carrière accidentelle - Muziq - N° 5 - janvier-février-mars 2006

ROBERT WYATT - UNE CARRIÈRE ACCIDENTELLE



"L'idée même d'un groupe de rock est un vrai désastre. Un groupe finit obligatoirement dans la douleur".

L'East End londonien, un lundi d'octobre. Robert Wyatt, fondateur de Soft Machine et Matching Mole, le lien qui unit Syd Barrett à Bjork, le chevalier de la grande gidouille nommé par le Collège de Pataphysique, l'ancien membre du parti communiste anglais et le seul musicien prog' vénéré par les punks accueille l'envoyé spécial de Muziq avec le dernier Albert Marcoeur en fond sonore.

L'œil azur pétille, le *teapot* fulmine et le jazzman contrarié s'apprête à remonter le temps.

Premier arrêt en 1962 avec les Wild Flowers de Brian Hopper, Richard Sinclair et Kevin Ayers. « Avant les Wild Flowers, je n'avais jamais songé à devenir musicien. J'ai quitté l'école à 16 ans. J'ai fait la plonge, distribué des flyers pour des concerts de jazz, coupé du bois dans les forêts pour préparer les arbres de Noël... Au début des sixties, les beat groups sont arrivés. Et comme c'était le cas pour la musique folk, tout le monde pouvait en jouer. J'ai été batteur dans un de ces groupes et on a commencé à jouer dans des soirées dansantes. C'est un sentiment merveilleux : vous jouez un beat et les gens se mettent à danser. C'est comme quelqu'un qui se met à la cuisine. Vous avez la chance de préparer votre premier repas. Et ils mangent ! C'est une connexion qui s'établit avec des gens que vous ne connaissez pas, un rapport intime avec des étrangers. Je suis très fier d'avoir joué lors de ces soirées. Après six ans, c'était le job qui ressemblait le moins à un vrai boulot. C'était comme des vacances ».

Les vacances prendront fin en 1966, date du split des Wild Flowers. Wyatt, Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge et Daevid Allen fondent Soft Machine, dont la principale particularité, outre un patronyme emprunté au Festin nu de Burroughs, propulse le batteur aux lead vocals, une anomalie dans la scène rock de l'époque. Wyatt vivra mal sa première incursion dans le *star system*. Les tournées incessantes (malgré une scène régulièrement partagée avec Jimi Hendrix en 1968), la pression commerciale et les conflits d'ego auront raison de Soft Machine au bout de trois albums.

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UNE CARRIÈRE ACCIDENTELLE PAR CHRISTOPHE GEUDIN

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DEUX ALBUMS SUIVRONT, jusqu'au dramatique 1er juin 1973. Lors d'une party copieusement arrosée, Robert Wyatt tombe d'une fenêtre du troisième étage et devient paraplégique. « J'étais le buveur et j'allais toujours trop loin » se souvient le multi-instrumentiste. « Quelque part, cet accident m'a peut-être sauvé la vie ». Evoluant désormais en chaise roulante, Wyatt réactive sa carrière solo et convoque un panel de proches (dont Nick Mason, batteur de Pink Floyd, Fred Frith, guitariste d'Henry Cow, Mike Oldfield et Ivor Cutler) pour enregistrer son chef d'œuvre, "Rock Bottom", pierre de touche du rock méditatif, sort en 1974. « Nick Mason et ma femme Alfie ont exercé une sorte de double influence sur "Rock Bottom". Ils pensaient que la musique que j'avais jouée auparavant ne respirait pas assez, qu'elle manquait d'espace. Alfie a toujours été une fan de Van Morrison. Elle aimait sa façon de dériver. Elle pensait que Soft Machine et Matching Mole essayaient trop de remplir chaque mesure avec des nouvelles idées et de nouveaux procédés. D'un point de vue technique, Nick Mason était un batteur au style diamétralement opposé au mien. Il marque le temps comme une grande horloge sur les disques des Pink Floyd. Je voulais qu'il amène son sens du pas et de l'espace. »

LE DIMANCHE 8 SEPTEMBRE 1974, quelques mois à peine après son accident, Robert Wyatt donne un concert historique au Drury Lane Theater de Londres, à quelques pas de Covent Garden. Nick Mason, Phil Manzanera, Laurie Allan, Fred Frith et le claviériste Dave Stewart délivrent l'intégralité de "Rock Bottom", assortis de titres de Soft Machine et Matching Mole autour de Robert Wyatt, au piano et au chant. John Peel, un proche de Wyatt, joue le rôle du MC lors d'une formidable introduction en forme de numéro de *stand-up comedy*. « C'était si léger. John ne se sert pas d'hyperboles. On a l'impression que tout se passe dans votre salle à manger. C'est tellement agréable de jouer un concert dans ces conditions... J'aimerais penser que j'étais proche de lui, mais on s'est tous rendus compte après sa disparition que nous étions des milliers à nous sentir proches de lui. John était une sorte de travailleur social. Il pouvait transformer une guerre féroce en partie de football amicale. Il recevait des groupes qui chantaient « je veux tuer mes parents et démolir à la mitraillette la première personne que je croiserai dans la rue ». Il les trouvait très drôles et les invitait ensuite au pub et toute l'animosité retombait. Tout était humanisé avec John. Il jouait du reggae à l'époque où le National Front et les jeunes se battaient dans la rue. Il était au-dessus de tout ça, il guérissait les blessures ». A la grande satisfaction de l'auteur de "Dondestan" (1991) et du très réussi "Cuckooland", paru en 2003, le concert de Dury Lane est enfin disponible sur le marché, trente et un ans après son enregistrement. « On nous l'a longtemps demandé. C'est une bonne surprise d'entendre ça à nouveau. Ce show était disponible en pirate depuis de nombreuses années, et ces putains de bootlegs blessaient ma vanité *[rires]*. C'était la première fois que j'avais le privilège d'avoir des musiciens qui travaillaient sur mes propres compositions, la première fois que je passais d'acteur à metteur en scène. C'était aussi la première fois que je me retrouvais à la tête d'un groupe. En tant que batteur, j'essayais juste de m'intégrer et essayer de comprendre ce que les autres voulaient de moi. Mais par-dessus tout, j'étais choqué de plaisir de découvrir que ce concert sonnait mieux que dans ma mémoire ».

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ECOUTER "Live At Druny Lane 1974" (Hannibal/naïve)

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Robert Wyatt - "Ma propre folie" - Keyboards Recordings - N° 203 - décembre 2005



Robert Wyatt

" Ma propre folie "

En 1974, Robert Wyatt remontait sur scène après un accident grave. Un concert unique, resté dans les mémoires sous la forme de bootlegs. Trente ans après, l'événement prend un tour officiel avec la sortie du live. L'occasion pour le batteur-chanteur de revenir sur une carrière riche en folies...

KR : *Théâtre Royal Drury Lane 8th September 1974*, le concert unique qui marqua votre retour sur scène après l'accident qui a provoqué votre paralysie, bénéficie aujourd'hui d'une sortie officielle. Pourquoi?

Robert Wyatt: On m'a longtemps demandé de le sortir. De très mauvaises versions pirates ont fait surface ces dernières années et ces putains de bootlegs blessaient ma vanité (rires). Du coup, on a décidé de sortir notre propre pirate. Les bandes étaient dans les coffres de Virgin Records depuis des années. On a récupéré un peu plus de la moitié des masters. La durée de la première partie du concert est égale à celle d'un LP, soit quarante minutes. Les vingt minutes restantes ne sont pas complètes. Je m'en excuse dans le livret de l'album, même si les représentants américains de Rykodisc m'ont expliqué que je ne devais pas m'excuser. Typique des Américains...

Quelle a été votre réaction à l'écoute de ces bandes trente ans plus tard ?

J'ai été choqué de plaisir en constatant que le concert sonnait beaucoup mieux que dans mes souvenirs. Je ne me souvenais pas non plus d'avoir chanté des notes aussi hautes...

J'étais tellement nerveux à cause de mon implication personnelle dans le projet que je ne faisais presque pas attention aux autres membres du groupe. C'était la première fois que je me retrouvais à la tête d'un groupe. J'avais l'impression de passer du rôle d'acteur à celui de metteur en scène. En tant que batteur, j'essayais juste de m'intégrer tout en écoutant les musiciens interagir sur scène. Ils ne s'échangeaient pas les choses les plus évidentes. Je suis sûr que les concerts auraient été différents chaque soir mais, de toute manière, je n'aurais jamais pu financer une tournée pareille.

En fin de concert, vous reprenez « I'm A Believer », un titre pop des Monkees qui ne cadre pas du tout avec votre répertoire habituel. Pourquoi ce choix inattendu?

Au cours d'une interview avec le *New Musical Express*, on m'a demandé si j'avais envie de reprendre une chanson pop. L'idée m'a amusé. Je n'ai rien contre la musique pop, contrairement à la majorité des rockers et des jazzmen. J'ai essayé d'imaginer comment interpréter un titre des Monkees en y ajoutant ma propre folie. C'est intéressant de se retrouver à l'intérieur d'une chanson pop et d'étudier son organisation interne. Les chansons pop ne se prennent pas pour des symphonies. De plus, j'ai toujours pensé que les compositeurs étaient moins snobs que le public. Beethoven et Stravinski ont toujours tenu compte des airs folkloriques et des chansons populaires de leur enfance. Bartok et Gershwin aussi.

Nick Mason, le batteur des Pink Floyd, jouait à Drury Lane. Il a aussi produit *Rock Bottom*, votre deuxième album solo sorti en 1974. Quelle a été son influence sur le son de ce disque?

Nick et ma femme Alfie ont exercé une sorte de double influence. Ils pensaient que la musique que j'avais jouée auparavant ne respirait pas assez, qu'elle manquait d'espace. Alfie a toujours été une fan de Van Morrison. Elle aimait sa manière de «dériver ». Elle pensait que Soft Machine et Matching Mole essayaient trop de remplir chaque instant avec de nouvelles idées et de nouveaux procédés. D'un point de vue technique, Nick Mason était un batteur au style totalement opposé au mien. Il marque le temps comme une grande horloge sur les disques des Pink Floyd. Je voulais qu'il amène à l'album son sens du pas et de l'espace. Nick incarne mon contraire absolu. Mon cerveau pétille en permanence, comme si des petits solos de Coltrane traversaient mon esprit à toute vitesse.



> Zoom

Vous avez aussi joué de la batterie sur *The Madcap Laughs*, le premier album solo de Syd Barrett. Quels souvenirs gardez-vous de ces sessions?

On jouait dans les mêmes clubs avec le Floyd. Il nous a entendus et il avait envie de faire autre chose que ce qu'il faisait avec son groupe. Il voulait voir ce qui allait se passer avec d'autres musiciens, comme je l'ai fait par la suite avec Nick Mason et David Gilmour. Il y a de très belles chansons sur *The Madcap Laughs*. De très drôles aussi... Il ne nous donnait aucune indication sur les tonalités, le rythme ou quoi que ce soit d'autre. Il était très calme mais, avec un peu de recul, je crois qu'il était très nerveux à l'idée de travailler avec des gens qu'il ne connaissait pas. Nous étions un groupe ordinaire, rien à voir avec la formation glaciale et majestueuse que le Floyd allait devenir. On était l'inverse, une sorte de train express... Syd se tenait dans un coin du studio, en train de chanter ses chansons à la guitare. Il nous demandait juste de l'accompagner. Je pensais qu'il n'utiliserait pas ces morceaux dont la plupart étaient basées sur l'invention instantanée. Syd était un singer/songwriter de l'improvisation libre.

Vous êtes paralysé suite à une chute survenue en 1973. De quelle manière appréhendez-vous l'enregistrement aujourd'hui?

J'ai un 8 pistes, un piano, une trompette et quelques cymbales dans ma chambre. Quand

je veux m'enregistrer de manière plus professionnelle, je me rends au studio de Phil Manzanera, à Londres. D'un point de vue technologique, je suis toujours coincé au 20e siècle. Je me suis construit culturellement au siècle dernier. À mon âge, il serait stupide d'essayer de m'adapter aux dernières évolutions techniques. Je suis comme un immigrant qui ne comprendrait pas le langage de la technologie moderne.

Avez-vous déjà songé à enregistrer un album uniquement constitué de voix?

Oui et non, car j'ai participé un disque de ce genre récemment: *Medulla*, avec Björk. C'était un grand honneur de la rencontrer. C'est une grande chanteuse soul, comme l'était Nina Simone. Une grande parolière aussi. Je l'admire. Ses disques ont le souffle de la vie. J'étais très nerveux quand elle est venue chez moi. J'ai fait quelque chose de spécial pour elle : elle est arrivée avec son ingénieur du son et j'ai rempli une bande avec toutes sortes de parties vocales. Elle devait rentrer ce soir-là en Islande avant de repartir pour New York. Elle est partie avec la bande, ce qui m'a un peu contrarié. En général, quand j'enregistre, j'aime bien me réécouter deux jours après, puis revenir ensuite de nombreuses fois sur mon travail. Je pensais qu'elle n'utiliserait que quelques bribes de ma voix sur son album. Dans *Medulla*, il y a un morceau superbe intitulé « Constellation ». Mais sur « Oceania », elle s'est servie d'accords basés sur les samples de ma voix comme si elle jouait d'un clavier.

Quels sont vos prochains projets?

Impossible à dire. Je ne fais jamais de projets. Je viens de terminer l'enregistrement de *50 Minutes Later*, le nouvel album de Phil Manzanera. Brian Eno, Andy Mackay et Paul Thompson jouent dessus. Je leur ai suggéré de monter un tribute band à Roxy Music avec moi au chant à la place de Brian Ferry (il se lance dans une imitation parfaite de Ferry) « Do The Strand... ». Pas mal, non? (Rires)

C.G.

Robert Wyatt & Friends Théâtre Royal Drury Lane 8th September 1974 (Hannibal/Rykodisc/Naïve)

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PRIERE
Jean Songe

Il y a une dizaine d'années, un soir, il y eut un miracle à la TV, c'est rarissime mais ça existe, la preuve : j'ai vu Robert Wyatt. Eclairé à la bougie, son visage de vieux farfadet barbu en retrait, cloué sur un fauteuil roulant - il est passé par une fenêtre au début des folles et lysergiques 70's - l'ex-batteur virtuose de Soft Machine racontait qu'un jour, de peur qu'il ne s'ennuyât, Alfie, son épouse, lui acheta un orgue-jouet et sa vie en fut bouleversé à jamais.



Loin du jazz-rock et de ses pitreries techniques, cet homme s'inventa, lui et la musique et la voix qu'il entendait dans sa tête. Et il y eut *Rock Bottom*, du jamais entendu. Un principe angélique, venu d'ailleurs, ni mâle ni femelle, d'une simplicité si confondante que le cœur de l'amateur bat un peu plus fort à chaque fois qu'il écoute cette musique fantôme, comme les villes, mais délivrée de l'angoisse et de la peur, juste les molécules des corps dissous
qui flottent dans l'air.

L'homme a de qui tenir. Son papa évitait les compartiments non-fumeurs dans les trains parce qu'ils sentaient l'urine et il craignait que l'encre des journaux anglais de droite ne l'empoisonnât. Robert Wyatt a prouvé qu'en une minute de musique comme en presque vingt, avec trois fois rien ou en grande pompe, un homme peut offrir son coeur sans arrière pensée. "On me dit de haïr les Cubains, a-t-il dit, ça me donne envie de chanter une belle chanson cubaine."

Et quelle joie de le voir mettre un 33t d'un big band cubain sur la platine, puis d'accompagner ces ronflements de cuivres d'une frappe légère à la batterie. "Je suis un danseur" confiait-il dans un sourire radieux.

Et le danseur Robert Wyatt me rappelait les courses de fauteuils roulants dans les couloirs de l'hôpital Trousseau que des restrictions budgétaires avaient désertifiés, les rires des gamins, poisson pilotes que je propulsais en avant aussi vite que mes jambes le permettaient, et puis ma lâcheté d'abandonner devant les ascenseurs une ado dont la poche abdominale de déjection venait de céder et tomber par terre en répandant sa merde liquide, elle m'appelait à l'aide, je tournai la tête, fis semblant de ne pas l'entendre et me précipitai dans la cabine, le doigt pressant le bouton
pour m'enfuir de ce cauchemar.

A cette époque encore plus lointaine que lors de la diffusion du reportage sur Robert Wyatt, je cohabitais avec des enfants dont le cancer avait dévoré le trou du cul de certains d'entre eux. Ceux qui avaient échappé au cancer avaient été dévorés, d'une façon ou d'une autre aussi atroce, par le feu. Et je revois très clairement, sur le tapis de jeu de l'atelier que j'animais, cette enfant, six, sept, huit ans (quel âge lui donner ?), que l'infirmière vient de déposer comme un paquet de linge, défigurée, des lèvres et un nez qui n'en avaient plus que le nom et l'emplacement sur le visage, sans cheveux, sans oreilles, muette, le moignon lisse de son avant-bras rongé, dépourvu de main. Elle ne bougeait pas. Une statuette. Ses yeux éteints ne me voyaient pas, je crois. Jamais je ne

me suis senti aussi impuissant. Elle avait subi des tas d'opérations. A répétition, les chirurgiens l'avaient rafistolée, et on m'avait confié que ça ne pourrait aller que de mal en pis, les tissus dégénéraient. Il y a de celà dix-sept ou dix-huit ans aujourd'hui. Des histoires, j'aurais dû lui en raconter, des histoires qui l'auraient sortie de son désastre. Un peu. Peut-être. Ou lui faire écouter les chansons en espagnol de Robert, les jaillissements d'amour d'une limpidité absolue de "Yolanda" et de "Te Recuerdo Amanda", des fontaines de mélodies pures, dont on peut boire l'eau jusqu'à plus soif, et peut-être que sa voix aurait rafraîchi cette petite fille.

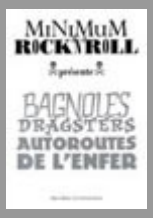
Aujourd'hui, si elle est encore en vie, et je ne sais pas si je le lui souhaite, c'est une jeune femme désormais, une jeune femme d'à peu près vingt-cinq ans. Il m'arrive encore de rêver d'elle et de son petit masque facial livide et je me réveille en sursaut, en larmes, je pleure. Priez pour la petite fille sans visage. Ayez une pensée pour elle. Soyez gentils.

En écrivant ces lignes, "Let's go out tonight" que chante Paul Buchanan résonne dans mon dos, et il chante "pray for me, prayin' for the light, i'll be kind ", prie pour moi, priant pour la lumière, je serai doux, et je frissonne comme la première fois que je l'ai entendu à la fin du sixième épisode de *Six Feet Under*.

Ça me fait une belle roue, aurait pu dire avec le sourire Robert Wyatt.

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http://minimumrocknroll.free.fr



L'ange immuable - Batterie Magazine - N° 18 - novembre 2005

L'ANGE IMMUABLE

La pop musique ne peut pas se vanter d'avoir engendré deux Robert Wyatt. Ce batteur-vocaliste exceptionnel qui avait failli nous quitter lors d'un accident fatal en juin 1973, est plus qu'un simple musicien de pop-rock psychédélique, c'est un mythe. A l'occasion la sortie de l'unique album live de « Rock Bottom », album cultissime depuis 1974, il semblait inévitable de revenir sur le parcours de Robert Wyatt.





Lorsqu'il naît le 28 janvier 1945, Robert Wyatt traverse déjà l'infini grâce au son de sa voix, première arme musicale. Très tôt, la question ne se pose plus et ne se posera plus jamais, il sera "musique". « *Je me souviens que dès mon plus jeune âge, j'ai commencé à chanter, ma voix est mon premier instrument à vrai dire. Lorsque mon père est venu habiter avec nous j'avais à peine 6 ans. A la maison, il jouait du piano, des adaptations de chansons folk, des chansons de Noël aussi, c'était ça mon premier band (rires). Vers l'âge de 16 ans je me suis fabriqué des baguettes avec des papiers journaux roulés et je jouais sur des disques de Max Roach. Je tapais sur des boîtes et je me suis constitué un petit set de batterie composite. Par la suite, j'ai aussi essayé la trompette en essayant de repiquer des plans de Don Cherry ! Mais je n'étais pas très bon (...)* »

Les années lycée seront décisives pour Wyatt, toutes ses rencontres musicales vont se manifester les unes après les autres et constituer l'embryon de la fameuse Ecole de Canterbury.



LES CONTES DE CANTERBURY

Déjà en 1957, le jeune Robert ne tient plus en place. Il a alors 12 ans et monte une formation de skiffle (mélange de rythm'n'blues et de rock'n'roll). Ses parents, totalement ouverts à tous types de musique facilitent l'évolution musicale de Wyatt, leur maison de Canterbury possède 14 chambres et pour rentabiliser cette bâtisse, ils louent des chambres à de jeunes musiciens et autres vagabonds de l'imaginaire. C'est ainsi qu'apparait en 1960 Daevid Allen, jeune hippie voyageur et fondateur de Gong, apportant avec lui une énorme collection de disques de jazz et une philosophie de la vie dont Robert Wyatt s'inspirera profondément. A partir de cette date, Wyatt va s'entourer des musiciens qui créeront le mouvement musical rock-psychédélique appelé « l'Ecole de Canterbury ». Les groupes qui vont composer cette école s'appellent Soft Machine, Matching Mole, Gong, Caravan et Hatfield And the North. Agissant dans ces formations à géométrie variable. Robert Wyatt s'exprimera aussi bien à la voix qu'à la batterie. En 1962, il intègre au chant The Wilde Flowers, prémices de l'école de Canterbury. Tous les musiciens de son premier groupe Soft Machine proviennent de ce band initial: Hugh Hopper (bassiste), Kevin Ayers (guitare, voix) et Mike Ratledge (orgue). Soft Machine vivra 5 ans, de 1966 à 1971. ouvrant même pour Jimi Hendrix lors d'une de leur tournée en 1968 dans le Massachusetts!

C'est aussi au sein de Soft Machine que Robert Wyatt développera toute sa conception de la batterie.

« Lorsque j'ai commencé à jouer avec Soft Machine, j'avais deux idées en tête concernant mon approche de la batterie : d'une part la simplicité, dans un style axé soul-music avec de bons grooves à faire tourner ou encore des plans façon "New Orleans" plus jazzy mais très sobres ; d'autre part - et d'un point de vue extrême - j'aimais aussi le style des batteurs de la fin des années 50 qui jouaient avec le pianiste Cecil Taylor (avant-garde jazz), le batteur Billy Higgins et bien sûr le grand Elvin Jones.



C'étaient tous des batteurs possédant un style très personnel, je ne cherchais pas à imiter leur style mais plutôt à rejoindre leur idée de liberté avec l'instrument. A la batterie, j'ai toujours cherché à servir la musique avant tout, je ne me suis jamais préoccupé de mon style car pour moi la batterie en tant qu'instrument isolé ne m'intéresse pas. On peut faire et composer de la musique sans batterie, donc, à mon sens, sa place doit toujours être justifiée. Il ne suffit pas simplement de s'asseoir derrière pour créer l'effet désiré. Je pense qu'à l'époque, on retrouvait dans ma façon de jouer de la batterie certains ingrédients jazz. C'est une évidence : la batterie et l'évolution du set de batterie appartiennent à l'histoire du jazz avant tout. J'adore l'ambiguïté rythmique qui se crée dans le jazz, car je trouve la batterie rock parfois trop rigide., trop arithmétique. Je préfère la batterie lorsqu'elle est jouée dangereusement.»

Matching Mole, francisation angliciste de Soft Machine (prononcez machine molle avec un accent anglais, vous verrez), existant de 1971 à 1973, ouvre la carrière solo de Wyatt. Même si ce dernier laisse le groupe s'exprimer démocratiquement, il excelle déjà dans la composition isolée et visionnaire (cf. "The End Of An Ear" 1970).

La tragédie

La fin de l'aventure Matching Mole est marquée par un triste accident: le 1er juin 1973, durant une soirée trop arrosée à Londres, Robert Wyatt se défenestre du troisième étage. Il ne retrouvera plus jamais l'usage de ses jambes et devient paraplégique. De cette tristesse intense émergera "Rock Bottom" en 1974, second album solo, objet musical non identifié à ce jour et d'une beauté impitoyable. L'unique testament live de "Rock Bottom" vient à peine de sortir, il révèle dans son intégralité la solitude lunaire de Wyatt sublimée par les mêmes musiciens ayant participé à l'enregistrement du chef-d'œuvre. Après cette date du 8 septembre 1974, Wyatt ne donnera plus jamais de concerts.

« *Je ne peux plus faire de concerts, il m'est impossible de me concentrer face à un public tout le long du concert, je n'ai pas les idées claires et je n'arrive pas à écouter attentivement ce qui se passe dans ma tête. J'ai peur du jugement des autres. Pour la batterie, c'était différent, je considérais ça comme un acte social, le fruit d'un apport avec d'autres personnes. En plus, quand j'étais jeune, je m'en fichais complètement d'être sur scène ou pas.* »

Il se retire dans la campagne anglaise avec sa femme Alfie et compose pour lui et d'autres artistes. Il compte environ 7 albums solo depuis, et une quantité incroyable de participations avec des musiciens de plusieurs pays. Dernièrement, on a pu l'entendre sur l'album de Bjork "Medula".

« *Chanter sur l'album "Medula" de Bjork fut une belle surprise. Nous nous sommes vus un week-end, elle est venue jusqu'à chez moi - elle a pris un hôtel à côté, je vous rassure! - et elle m'a présenté son album fini. Elle voulait une autre touche vocale et m'a laissé entièrement libre de faire ce que je voulais. En studio j'ai dû demander à l'ingénieur du son d'aller faire un tour pour faire ma prise car j'étais trop nerveux de le voir en face de moi à travers la vitre de la cabine. Pour la seconde prise, je lui ai demandé la même*

DISCOGRAPHIE







- Soft Machine, "Volumes One And Two", 1969
- Robert Wyatt, "The End Of An Ear", 1970
- Matching Mole, "Matching Mole", 1972
- Robert Wyatt, "Rock Bottom", 1974
- Robert Wyatt, "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", 1975
- Robert Wyatt, "Nothing Can Stop Us", 1982
- Robert Wyatt, "Dondestan », 1991
- Robert Wyatt, "Shleep", 1997
- Robert Wyatt, "Cuckooland », 2003
Robert Wyatt, "Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 8 sept. 1974, Robert Wyatt And Friends in Concert", 2005

faveur. Bref, Bjork est une chanteuse remarquable avec un esprit frais et novateur. »

De nombreux livres et documents sont consacrés à Robert Wyatt, son génie inspire toujours la scène pop et rock actuelle, sa façon de chanter mais aussi ce sentiment de liberté musicale et d'affranchissement des règles imposées. Son avis sur les groupes d'aujourd'hui ? « *J'écoute la pop actuelle mais pas trop de rock, d'ailleurs je ne connais pas beaucoup les groupes d'aujourd'hui. Ce qui me dérange le plus avec les groupes de maintenant c'est que je n'arrive pas bien à savoir s'ils sont vraiment responsables de leur musique. Cela me semble très occulte.* »

Michel Villar

7 QUESTIONS FLASH À ROBERT WYATT

1/ **Bœuf ou poulet ?** *Poulet, mais du bon poulet de basse-cour !*

2/ **Jérôme Bosch ou Picasso ?** *Difficile de faire un choix...mmh, en ce moment même je dirais Jerôme Bosch.*

3/ **Sun Râ ou Mc Coy Tyner ?** *Bonne question ! Très difficile à dire... chacun est si fantastique. Il y a deux ans j'ai vu un concert de Mc Coy Tyner à la télévision anglaise, on ne peut rien faire de mieux que Mc Coy, c'était incroyablement beau.*

4/ **The Beatles ou Pink Floyd ?** *Pink Floyd.*

5/ **Vivons-nous dans un monde binaire ou aléatoire ?** *La vie est binaire mais pas le monde dans lequel nous vivons qui lui est aléatoire.*

6/ **Votre ennemi publique n° 1 ?** *Notre dégoûtant premier ministre anglais !*

7/ **Côtes du Rhône ou Sauvignon ?** *Pas assez connaisseur en vin français, attendez, je demande à ma femme... (il lui demande)... ce n'est pas une offre chérie, dis moi juste ce que tu préfères... elle lui répond Sauvignon.* •



Eloge de la fuite - Lesoleil.cyberpresse.ca - 31/08/2004

leSoleil

Eloge de la fuite

A l'occasion de ses 30 années de carrière solo, Robert Wyatt accorde une rare entrevue.

Artiste d'exception qui a animé les belles années de Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt mène depuis 1974 une fascinante carrière solo, où les œuvres d'une grande densité, tant émotionnelle qu'intellectuelle, figurent parmi les sommets du rock expérimental. Près d'un an après la parution de Cuckooland, la maison Ryko entreprend la réédition du catalogue de Wyatt, l'occasion rêvée de joindre le musicien dans sa cambuse du Lincolnshire pour l'une de ses rares entrevues.

« Pour moi, l'art est ce qui rend la vie plus tolérable, réfléchit Robert Wyatt. Par l'entremise de la musique, je crée dans ma tête, dans mon esprit, un monde nouveau dans lequel je peux respirer.»

La vision du chanteur et multi-instrumentiste prend toute sa signification lorsqu'on prête l'oreille à La Ahada Yalam, dernière piste de l'album Cuckooland. Proposant sa lecture d'une composition du Palestinien Nizar Zreik, qu'interprétait sa femme, Amal Murkus, Wyatt a décidé de faire appel au clarinettiste Gilad Atzmon pour livrer la mélodie. Son choix n'avait rien d'innocent : Atzmon est un ancien membre de l'armée israélienne, qui s'est établi en Angleterre, car il ne voulait plus faire partie d'une organisation « raciste ou colonialiste ».

« Ça devenait formidable de réunir Gilad et son étonnante histoire juive avec Zreik, Murkus et leur passé palestinien pour faire quelque chose de très beau, commente Wyatt. C'est fantastique d'obtenir quelque chose du genre en comparaison de la brutalité de la vie sur le terrain, au Moyen-Orient. »

Conscience sociale

Robert Wyatt décide très jeune de consacrer sa vie à la musique. Il fait ses premières armes au sein d'épisodiques formations, telles les Wilde Flowers, après quoi il joint les rangs de la troupe mi-jazz, mi-psychédélique Soft Machine, en 1966. Le public découvre alors non seulement un groupe inspiré, mais un batteur talentueux, qui sait aussi être un chanteur polyvalent. Il quitte le navire après quatre albums et une aventure solo pour fonder le pertinent Matching Mole (clin d'œil à la machine molle), où sa voix se fond de nouveau à son jeu de batterie. Or le 1er juin 1973, un détour du destin vient trancher de façon tragique entre ses deux habiletés : au cours d'une sauterie fumante, il chute d'un troisième étage et se retrouve paralysé de la taille aux pieds.

Plutôt que de mettre un terme à ses activités, son malheur fait grandir le créateur en lui : il pond, en partie sur son lit d'hôpital, le superbe Rock Bottom (1974), qui sera couronné du grand prix de l'Académie Charles-Gros. Dans ce nouvel univers, où les vocables jazz, rock et world se côtoient, sa voix singulière et mélancolique, décrite par le compositeur japonais Ryuichi Sakamoto comme « l'une des plus tristes au monde », devient centrale, donnant corps à des textes réfléchis, politisés, gorgés d'émotion et comptant aussi, de temps à autre, des segments humoristiques.

« J'aime bien jouer avec les mots à la façon d'un peintre et je suis fasciné par l'étymologie, mais le revers de tout ça, c'est qu'effectivement, je suis triste, confie Wyatt Ce n'est rien de physiologique qui pourrait remonter à l'enfance. Je suis déçu des occasions gâchées qui se présentaient au terme de la Seconde Guerre mondiale afin de faire de la planète un monde plus égal et plus juste. Nous sommes retournés aux vieux jours de l'Empire, avec les divisions entre riches et pauvres et ça me déprime. »

Les chansons de l'ancien Soft Machine ont souvent eu une teinte politique. Bien qu'il ait mis des bémols à ses idéaux communistes, Wyatt est demeuré critique et fin observateur de ce qui se trame autour du globe. Encore récemment, il a composé, avec la complicité de sa femme, la poétesse Alfreda Benge, une berceuse pour Hamza, un Irakien né en 2003 au moment où une bombe tombait sur l'hôpital où sa mère accouchait. Curieusement, l'homme à la longue barbe ne croit pas vraiment au pouvoir des artistes, y voyant la conséquence d'un climat politique et non une cause.

« La pensée politique est au centre de ma philosophie et de mon existence, alors ça remonte à la surface quand je fais de la musique. Idéalement, j'aimerais n'avoir jamais à y penser, mais c'est tellement choquant... Les gouvernements britannique et américain me mettent en furie par ce qu'ils font et par leur hypocrisie. Cette sorte de croisade morale pour civiliser la planète est incroyable, c'est une insulte à l'intelligence. »

Le grand intérêt de Wyatt pour ce qui se passe sur la planète ne se limite pas à la politique. Les musiques que pratiquent ses pairs à l'étranger l'intéressent grandement. À la fin des années 70 et au tournant des années 80, Wyatt a fait plus que puiser une partie de son inspiration dans la world avant qu'elle ne soit au goût du jour. Il s'est fait interprète de compositions d'autrui, provenant de son Angleterre natale (Shipbuilding), de Cuba (Caimanera), du Chili (Arauco) ou de pays arabes (Trade Union), ce qui a pris la forme de Nothing Can Stop Us, en 1982.

« C'est un exercice passionnant, indique Wyatt. Quand vous ne composez pas, vous pouvez tenter de rendre la pièce comme si elle était une partie de vous. C'est tout

de même impressionnant qu'Elvis Presley n'ait jamais écrit une chanson, mais que les gens parlent encore de sa musique... Mais je crois que ce que j'aime le plus, c'est quand les gens reprennent mes chansons comme c'est arrivé en France, en Australie, en Italie et dans les pays basques. C'est fascinant d'entendre le résultat ! »



Créateur solitaire

Après 30 ans de carrière solo, Robert Wyatt demeure associé, malgré lui, à la scène de Canterbury, qui a vu naître les Soft Machine, Caravan, Hatfield & the North et autres Camel. Le musicien refuse toujours cette appellation, issue de la presse britannique, et ne se réclame d'aucun courant. Il préfère mettre de l'avant ses propres sensibilités en procédant par instinct et en composant en solitaire. Il se moque tout autant des façons de faire de l'industrie. Il n'est donc pas rare que quatre, cinq ou même six ans ne s'écoulent entre deux de ses enregistrements.

« II y a plein de choses qui manquent dans ce monde, mais pas des disques, alors je ne veux pas faire paraître quelque chose si ce n'est pas nécessaire, explique-t-il. [...] Je pense que tenter d'être plus commercial, ce n'est pas quelque chose à faire, ni de tenter d'être moins commercial, il faut plutôt être franc et sincère avec soi-même et voir où ça nous mène. Et si vous ne pouvez pas tirer assez d'argent de ce que vous faites, alors vaut mieux chercher un autre travail ! Pour ma part, j'ai trouvé une façon de vivre qui n'appartient à aucune routine et qui cadre avec ma... biologie ! »

En faisant fi des modes et des courants, Robert Wyatt a assuré une sorte d'intemporalité, voire d'immortalité, à ses réalisations. Mieux, il a su éviter les redites et proposer un répertoire en constante évolution. Malgré tout, celui que le guitariste Phil Manzanera a surnommé « Rob-Art » s'avoue insatisfait de plusieurs de ses enregistrements. Il songe quelquefois à répéter ce qu'il a fait avec Dondestan - retourner en studio pour faire des ajustements - tout en avouant qu'il ne ferait peut-être pas mieux. II continue donc de vivre dans la réalité parallèle de son art en donnant vie à de nouvelles chansons qui, avec un peu de chance, sortiront de sa petite maison où les oiseaux piaffent, pour investir les chaumières des mélomanes.

« Inévitablement, je suis toujours un peu frustré quand

je réécoute les disques que j'ai faits par le passé, mais je ne vis pas mal avec ça. C'est un peu comme quand vous avez des enfants : vous les aimez, même s'ils sont un peu étranges ! »

Nicolas Houle

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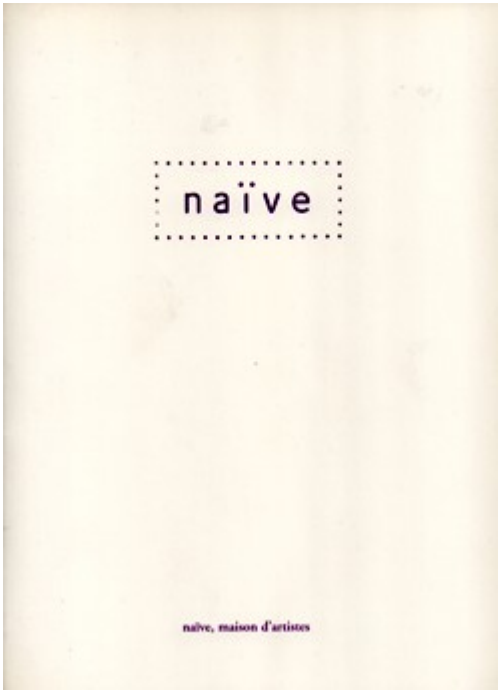
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Robert et Alfie- naïve, maison d'artistes - mars 2004

robert et alfie



Patrick Schuster, responsable du jazz, qui affirme que s'il n'est pas devenu fou en travaillant chez naïve c'est parce qu'il l'était déjà avant, insiste pour que j'aille rencontrer Robert Wyatt l'artiste "culte" de passage à Paris à l'occasion de la sortie de son disque *Cuckooland*. Robert Wyatt, co-fondateur de Soft Machine, quitte ensuite le groupe pour mener sa propre aventure; il enregistre plusieurs disques dont *Rock Bottom* en 1974. "C'est, disons-le tout net, son chef d'oeuvre : une émotion intense malgré l'abstraction de l'expression ; des textes d'une naïveté étrange et des interventions parlées encore plus étranges d'Ivor Cutler." (Mark Ellingham)

Un rendez-vous est pris à l'hôtel, rue Jacob, Paris 6e. Patrick Zelnik est là aussi. Il est venu dîner avec le couple : l'artiste et sa compagne de longue date, Alfrenda Benge - "Alfie". À eux deux, c'est une sacrée rengaine, une chanson dont elle compose souvent les mots. Dans le petit patio de l'hôtel, autour d'une bouteille de vin bio offerte à Robert Wyatt par un journaliste, nous discutons.

Robert Wyatt, très aimable, cherche à détendre l'atmosphère. Alfie, réservée, parle avec passion et clarté lorsqu'on l'interroge. Ils vont nous expliquer. Par moments fredonner, chanter, parce que la mélodie est leur chemin de vie. Je regrette de ne pas avoir apporté ma caméra pour capter leurs paroles, leurs gestes et cette lumière qui par instants les nimbe d'un halo émouvant lorsqu'ils se racontent. De temps en temps, je jette un coup d'oeil à Patrick Zelnik, attentif, bouleversé face à l'artiste qui lui a procuré, il y a trente ans, une de ses plus grandes émotions.



Les magiciens

Robert Wyatt : Mon père absent lors de mes premières années est revenu vivre avec nous lorsque j'avais six ans. Il jouait du piano mais comme il était atteint d'artériosclérose, il ne pouvait plus interpréter que des chansons de Noël et des folksongs. Il passait beaucoup de temps à la maison à écouter le troisième programme de la BBC : de la musique classique et baroque. Il écoutait aussi de la musique contemporaine, Debussy, Ravel (*L'Enfant et les sortilèges*), Bartok, Stravinsky. Je pensais alors que les musiciens étaient des magiciens. Je ne concevais pas de phase intermédiaire, d'apprentissage. Ça me rappelle cette vieille blague : Quelqu'un pose à un homme, cette question : *Sais-tu jouer du violon ?*
Il répond : *Je ne sais pas, je n'ai jamais essayé.*

Plus tard, mon grand frère - le fils de mon père, né d'un autre mariage - a rompu la barrière et s'est mis à nous rendre visite. Il amenait avec lui des disques - Wes Montgomery, George Russel... A cette époque, j'allais souvent au café avec des copains pour regarder les filles parce que c'est tout ce que l'on pouvait faire : les regarder. Qu'est-ce que l'on dit aux filles? Je n'en ai toujours aucune idée. Au moins, dans les cafés, il y avait le juke-box qui enrobait les choses. C'était dans la région nord-est du Kent... Ces étranges petits cafés de la côte... Le juke-box diffusait dans cette atmosphère parfumée d'un nouveau mystère Eddy Cochran, Little Richard, Ray Charles...

A seize ans, j'ai quitté l'école. Pendant six ans, j'ai fait la plonge, j'ai travaillé en forêt. De quoi se nourrit-on à seize ans lorsqu'on n'a pas d'argent? Je ne me souviens plus.

Alfie : De pain et de beurre.

Robert : De pain et de beurre, peut-être. Je ne savais toujours pas vers quoi je me dirigeais, mais j'avais toujours sur moi un carnet où écrire et dessiner.

Le jazz-world

Patrick Zelnik intervient demandant à Robert Wyatt de parler de cette utopie du jazz-world qu'il a déjà évoquée devant lui, l'autre jour.

Robert Wyatt : Dans une Amérique où il y avait tant de racisme, à l'époque de Lester Young, Miles Davis, George Gershwin, le jazz promettait un monde d'échanges entre les différentes cultures. Des musiciens juifs d'origine russe et des noirs américains jouaient ensemble. L'art est un point de rencontre, un monde idéal.

Lullaby

The world is dark again,
I need your lullaby.
Sleep bas gone
Night is long again.

Robert : Les Anglais étaient sur le point de recommencer les croisades, vous savez, et Alfie se sentait très concernée.

Alfie : Nous étions sur la route, nous rentrions chez nous quand la guerre a débuté.

Robert : L'atmosphère était lourde.

Alfie : On ne pouvait pas s'empêcher d'y penser.

Robert : Quand les bombardements ont commencé, on était là à se dire sans arrêt : ce soir quelqu'un aux commandes d'un avion, un jeune héros va décoller d'ici, d'Angleterre et aller jeter des bombes sur...

Alfie : ...des enfants.

Robert : Sur la Mésopotamie. Au milieu de la nuit. Et vous êtes là à penser : et il fait ça avec nos fichus impôts... Jésus-Christ!

Alfie : Je suis née en Europe au début de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Les bombardements ont dû être très violents, je ne me souviens pas des détails mais pendant huit années consécutives après la fin de la guerre, les bombardements ont hanté mes cauchemars.

Robert : Je pense que tout bombardement est en soi un crime de guerre. C'est si dur d'aller jeter des bombes sur un autre pays. Notre culture si policée au fond ne l'est pas tellement. Il doit y avoir un autre moyen de résoudre les problèmes.

Alfie : La mélodie de *Lullaby* est très vieille. Robert me l'avait fait écouter (elle fredonne l'air) puis nous sommes descendus pour enregistrer d'autres chansons et j'ai écrit les paroles, là, dans le studio.

When bombers bomb again,
I need your lullaby
Fires are burning
The nightmares begun
When bombers bomb again,
We'll need your lullaby.

Alfie : J'ai toujours eu secrètement envie d'écrire des mots pour la musique de Robert. Un jour, il m'a donné un projet de chanson avec des citations. On a un endroit à nous sur la côte, je m'y suis isolée quelques jours avec une bouteille de gin et des bougies. Je regardais la mer, je cherchais. Je me disais *Quels sont les mots de cette chanson?* Après, je ne voulais plus faire que ça. C'est bien de se trouver une nouvelle passion quand on est une si vieille dame. (Elle n'a pas l'air vieille du tout). J'ai l'impression, d'être une sorte de Grandma' Moises parolière.

Nous avons d'abord respecté la règle suivante : la musique venait toujours d'abord. Puis nous sommes arrivés à un point où les mots ne suivaient plus. Mais j'écris des poèmes, comme ça, juste pour moi-même. Un jour Robert a ouvert mon tiroir et y a piqué quelques feuillets. Et là, la musique est venue des poèmes.



Le chat qui pêche

Robert : Pour *Le Chat qui pêche* - chanson qui évoque l'idylle entre Juliette Gréco et Miles Davis qui eut pour cadre Paris en 1949 - je savais que la mélodie à laquelle je pensais me ramenait à ces vieux films français en noir et blanc que mon père aimait... Il est mort "dans un accident. Il me manque. Sa culture me manque. Alfie a donc apporté un magnétoscope pour qu'on puisse voir ces vidéos qui appartenaient à mon père. *Quai des brumes*, *Les Enfants du paradis*, etc. C'était beau. En composant cette mélodie, j'avais à l'esprit la France, Paris.

Le chat qui pêche
Paris at night
And the strains of a ghost saxophone

... Alfie : Je me suis juste assise et j'ai essayé de trouver les mots de la chanson... Peut-être qu'avec un gin... Mais nous avions déjà bu beaucoup de vin. La difficulté c'est de trouver les bonnes voyelles surtout pour la fin. Vous savez, avec une voyelle qui ne serait pas la bonne, on peut tuer la chanson.

Nous nous sommes dit au revoir dans la rue, les deux Patrick les accompagnaient. Il était déjà plus de neuf heures du soir et ils allaient manger, boire, parler et rêver. Alfie à nouveau silencieuse, réservée, poussait le fauteuil roulant de Robert dans cette nuit d'été.

Yasmine Khlat

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Le roi des Aulnes - Abus Dangereux - N° 85 - décembre/janvier 2004

LE ROI DES AULNES



> Zoom

Six ans après Shleep, le génial pataphysicien anglais revient avec son septième véritable album en trente-deux années d'une carrière unique dans le monde de la musique populaire. Epaulé par Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Karen Mantler ou Phil Manzanera, **Robert Wyatt** reste fidèle à une vision musicale iconoclaste rare, rencontre de jazz, de pop et de musiques du monde avec un style vocal toujours aussi inimitable depuis son chef d'œuvre *Rock Bottom* paru en 1974. Nous l'avons rencontré, en grande forme, la barbe fleurie, la langue ondoyante, le regard bleu et malicieux, dans le patio d'un hôtel de Saint-Germain-des-Prés, autour d'une assiette de fromages, de fraises et d'un paquet de Gitanes.

Vous semblez avoir une relation privilégiée avec ce quartier ?

C'est effectivement un plaisir que de me retrouver ici, à Saint-Germain-des-Prés. J'adore cette atmosphère littéraire. Il y a quelque temps, j'avais adapté des poèmes de Philippe Soupault pour une pièce musicale de Michael Mantler. Nous sommes juste à côté de la rue Saint-Benoît, une atmosphère que l'on retrouve sur "Old Europe", le deuxième morceau de mon nouvel album.

Où avez-vous trouvé l'idée de "Old Europe" ?

J'avais la musique, sans les paroles. Tout ce que je pouvais dire à Alfie, c'était qu'avec cette musique, j'avais le sentiment de voir des vieux films français que regardait mon père, comme *Touchez-Pas au Grisby*, ce genre de film en noir et blanc avec Jean Gabin *[en*

français]. Ensuite, elle a écrit les paroles, selon ma propre nostalgie et non celle de mon père. Lorsque j'étais enfant, je suis venu ici pour la première fois à l'âge de dix ans et c'est là que j'ai commencé à découvrir toute la magie du monde que l'on n'enseigne pas à l'école *[rires]*... Les filles, le jazz, tout cela... St-Germain-des-Près a été un baptême culturel, pour toujours. Toute cette atmosphère est restée avec moi à jamais. Les gens disent « les années cinquante sont les années cinquante, à quoi bon revenir en arrière ». Mais dans ma tête, les années 1950 sont toujours là. C'est là que "Old Europe" trouve son origine. Lorsque Alfie écrit des paroles, elle utilise des images et des moments très spécifiques. Le plus souvent, il s'agit de choses qu'elle a vues en photos. Dans ce cas présent, elle a utilisé la photo de Miles Davis et de Juliette Gréco à Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Cette photo symbolise toute une époque, celle d'avant le rock'n'roll et de la magie qui était encore là. Encore aujourd'hui, il est utile de rappeler aux amnésiques de la politique américaine et britannique l'importance qu'a joué l'Europe pour développer non seulement sa propre culture, mais aussi le meilleur de la culture américaine qui n'était pas vraiment apprécié outre-Atlantique. Comme tous ces musiciens de jazz qui ont trouvé exil en Europe. Il me semble que parfois les politiciens américains ont la mémoire courte. Ils ont une dette envers nous. Car ici en Europe, nous avons toujours laissé se développer les artistes, d'Ernest Hemingway à Joséphine Baker en passant par Kenny Clark, Bud Powell ou Miles Davis.

Est-ce lors de cette première visite en France que vous êtes vraiment devenu intéressé par la musique ?

J'ai toujours été attiré par la musique. Mon père possédait des disques. Il avait été musicien classique. Il aimait Mozart, Debussy, Ravel et Benjamin Britten. Il y avait donc toujours de la musique à la maison. Il m'a aussi fait écouter le jazz de son enfance, Duke Ellington et Fats Waller, mais rien ne m'avait préparé à la réalité de vivre et de travailler dans une ville avec de vrais musiciens, car je ne connaissais seulement les livres et les disques. Tout ce que l'on apprend dans les livres existe dans la réalité, avec ce pouvoir incroyable de pouvoir faire exploser votre imagination.

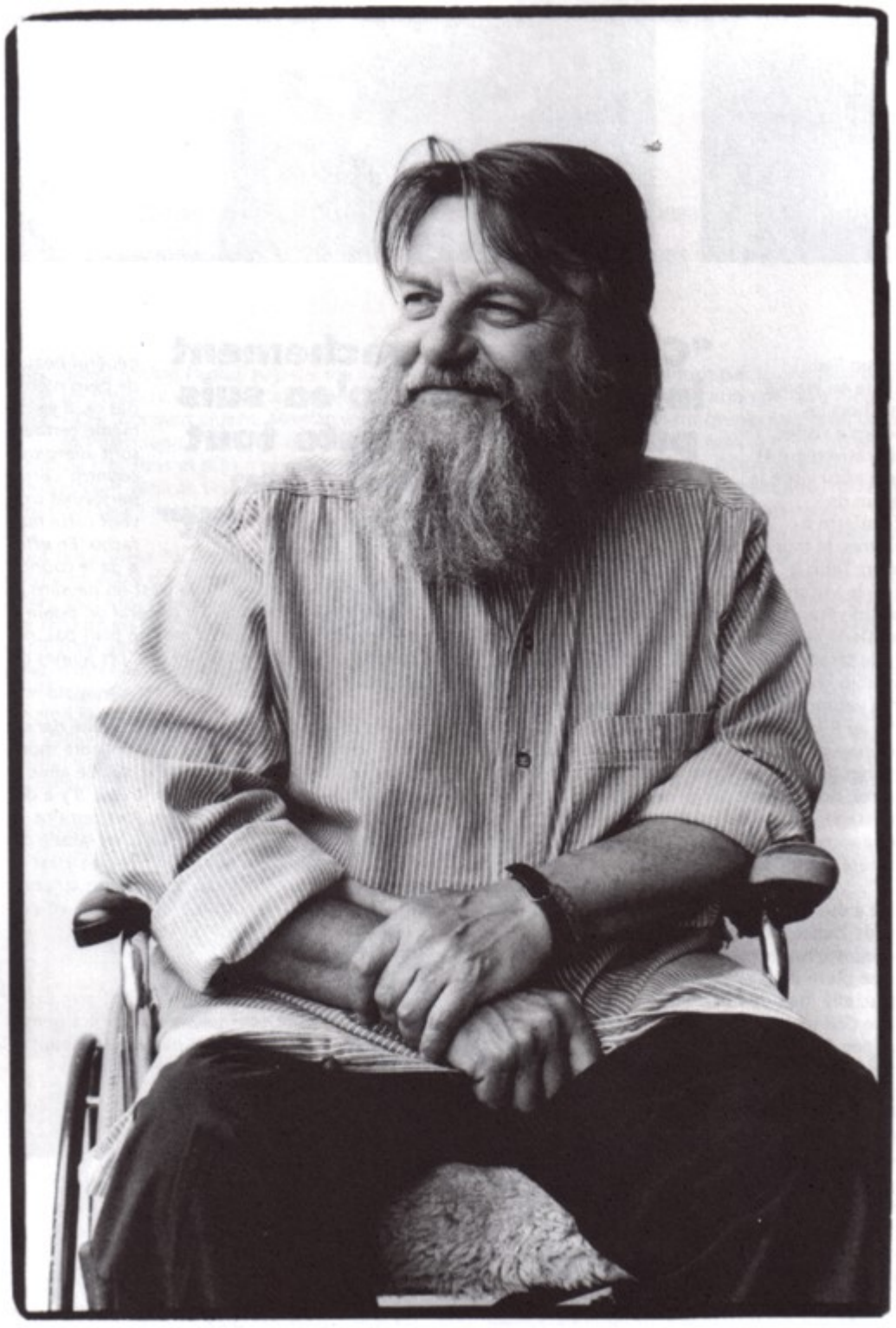


photo © Alfreda Benge

Est-ce enfant que vous avez décidé de devenir musicien professionnel ?

Non, je pensais que les musiciens étaient des magiciens, qu'il était impossible pour un simple mortel d'être musicien ! Le seul moyen d'approcher cela était pour moi par le biais de la peinture. Là encore, mon père m'a fait découvrir les grands peintres de la première moitié du vingtième siècle grâce à des reproductions. Beaucoup de mon esthétique vient de là. Non, vraiment, je n'avais aucune intention de devenir musicien enfant.

Grandir dans l'Angleterre de l'après-guerre au sein d'un tel environnement artistique était pour le moins rare... ?

Il me semble que oui. *[rires]* Mais je ne le savais pas à l'époque ! Cela me paraissait

parfaitement normal. Mais d'une autre manière, aucune des autres familles que je visitais à cette époque ne mangeait d'ail et de spaghetti et encore moins ne buvait du vin français ! Il s'est avéré que je suis devenu une sorte de privilégié auquel on donnait beaucoup de choses à penser, en particulier car j'étais misérable à l'école. Je ne comprenais pas la logique des cours. Si le but de l'école était de vous donner des idées et de vous préparer à la vie, je n'avais aucune perspective en ce qui me concernait. Rien pour moi ne semblait me préparer à une vie après l'école ou à quelque chose que je puisse faire. J'ai donc quitté l'école à l'âge de seize ans. Durant six ans, j'ai fait divers petits boulots, que ce soit faire la plonge dans un restaurant ou travailler comme garde forestier.

D'après les illustrations d'Alfie sur "Old Rottenhat", vous semblez avoir recréé cet environnement artistique chez vous, entouré de livres, de disques, de peintures et de photographies...

En réalité, nous vivons de manière très discrète, Alfie et moi. Nous formons une petite famille. Nous habitons une maison dans une petite ville pas très loin de la côte. Sa mère et son chien n'habitent pas très loin de chez nous. Je pense que la plupart des gens ne savent pas ce que nous faisons. Nous sortons très peu. Il n'y a pas de restaurants, ni de cafés où nous vivons. Nous avons quelques amis. Nous sommes à un âge où il est vrai que nous avons accumulé beaucoup de livres, de disques et de souvenirs. Notre vie est plutôt domestique, nous ne faisons pas de festins culturels. Nous sommes juste un petit couple d'âge moyen qui habite une petite ville anglaise.

Comment gardez vous contact alors avec les suspects habituels, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera... ?

Nous ne gardons pas contact. Nous nous rencontrons juste occasionnellement. Nous sommes de nouveau en mesure de visiter Londres. Une amie a mis à notre disposition un petit appartement, avec une salle de bains adaptée. Londres est si cher ! Le studio de Phil Manzanera est très accueillant. J'avais enregistré *Shleep* chez lui, mais dans son studio précédent. Ce nouveau studio, plus petit, est intégré à son appartement. Il est beaucoup plus facile pour moi de faire des disques ainsi. Je n'ai pas à regarder la pendule tout le temps ! Les studios sont devenus si chers aujourd'hui. Phil me facilite la vie. Il habite à Kitburn et cela est très facile pour des musiciens que je connais de passer nous voir. Brian Eno habite non loin de là, il vient à vélo. Il n'a pas de voiture. Parfois il participe, parfois, il donne juste son avis, « essaie ceci, essaie cela »...

Est-ce ainsi que l'album a été enregistré ?

Non, pas vraiment. J'ai préparé ce disque comme si je devais le faire entièrement seul. J'ai enregistré des disques tout seul par le passé, comme *End Of An Ear*, *Old Rottenhat*, *Dondestan*... Je suis donc toujours prêt a enregistrer ainsi. Mais s'il est possible que des musiciens viennent m'aider, pour rajouter des couleurs, de la batterie ou de l'excitation, alors s'ils sont là et qu'ils sont disponibles, ils viennent. Parfois, ils passent juste dire bonjour. Brian Eno passait avec des fruits du marché et faisait un massage à ma femme. C'était tout, mais c'était important. Je n'avais jamais travaillé avec certains de ces musiciens auparavant. Notamment avec le saxophoniste israélien Gilad Atzmon. Cela fait quelques années qu'il vit à Londres, il est devenu citoyen britannique. Je lui ai demandé s'il voulait participer à ce disque. Il a travaillé sur "Insensatez", la reprise de Jobim. Je lui ai demandé de rajouter un solo de clarinette à la fin de ce morceau. Il aime la voix de Karen Mantler, alors il était heureux d'y participer. Sur ce morceau, on retrouve le "Karenatron", une sorte de machine que j'ai inventée à partir d'un clavier qui retranscrit sa voix. C'est une sorte de mellotron. Je fais chanter toutes les notes à Karen et cela est retranscrit électroniquement par le clavier. Nous avons donc une sorte de chœur chanté par Karen et Gilad joue ce solo. Il m'a demandé si je voulais un bassiste. Il m'a présenté à Yaron Stavi, un autre israélien qui habite non loin de chez Phil. Il est venu. C'est un musicien accompli, beaucoup plus que moi, en classique et en jazz. Il a joué sur "Forest", ainsi que sur ce morceau arabe qui clôture le disque, "La Ahada Yalam".

C'est peut-être le plus beau morceau de l'album...

J'avais le CD d'Amal Murkus, qui a interprété la version originale. Je trouvais ce disque magique. Mais je ne pensais pas pouvoir faire quelque chose avec la musique arabe, car elle si différente de ce que je connais. Je voulais juste avoir cette composition sur le disque en demandant à quelqu'un d'autre de la jouer. Une des raisons de l'exil de Gilad est qu'il a beaucoup de respect pour la culture arabe. En Israël, il ne voulait pas vivre dans cette ambiance coloniale. Ce n'est pas un couard, il a fait l'armée. Mais il s'est dit, « je suis un musicien de jazz, je n'ai rien à voir avec ce nationalisme, je suis antiraciste ».



Il est né en Israël, il a essayé d'y vivre et il est parti. Peut-être qu'un jour, il fera la paix avec son pays. Il dit : « nous sommes en exil depuis des siècles et nous avons tout de même réussi à accomplir de grandes choses, Chagall, Einstein... ». Il veut continuer dans cette tradition d'exil, il n'aime pas le confinement nationaliste. Je ne peux pas parler pour lui, mais nous avons beaucoup de points communs. Il était très intéressé pour essayer de jouer ce morceau. Il collabore avec des musiciens et des chanteurs palestiniens à Londres. La plupart sont originaires d'Haïfa, qui est la ville la plus progressiste et tolérante d'Israël. Comme la Nouvelle-Orléans à l'époque de la ségrégation raciale. Il a joué de manière très belle sur le morceau jazz, mais il ne savait pas comment aborder "La Ahada Yalam". Au final, il a suivi la version d'Amal, de manière très douce, à la clarinette. On pouvait à peine l'entendre dans le studio. Comme s'il respirait dans le micro. Et Yaron a ensuite rajouté sa double basse. On peut entendre que c'est un musicien de jazz, il dégage une vraie majesté dans son jeu. Puis Jennifer Maidman et moi-même avons joué le reste des accords. Je pensais que personne ne pouvait suivre ce morceau. Je l'ai donc mis à la fin, pour terminer le disque.

Quand Cuckooland a commencé à prendre forme dans votre esprit ?

Après la sortie de Shleep ? Même avant ce disque ! J'avais "Forest" et "Old Europe" sur des cassettes depuis des années. Et Alfie avait écrit ce poème "Cuckoo Madame", qui n'avait pas de musique. J'avais donc ces éléments depuis quelque temps. Mais parfois, il ne faut pas se forcer, il faut savoir attendre l'idée adéquate qui vient parachever ce qu'on avait déjà en place. Mais à cette occasion, j'ai dû un peu me forcer, du style «nous sommes dans un nouveau millénaire, je ferai mieux de continuer ce que j'ai en cours». Et bien sûr, il faut travailler pour gagner de l'argent. Je n'en gagne pas suffisamment pour m'arrêter de jouer. C'est pourquoi je suis un musicien de rock. Mais même les musiciens de rock que je connais aiment vivre ainsi et jouer alors c'est OK. C'est Alfie qui m'a vraiment aidé. Elle a écrit de nombreuses paroles, à sa manière, mais toujours avec une empathie pour mes propres sentiments.

Comment en êtes-vous venu à reprendre "Raining In My Heart", écrit par le couple Bryant et interprété par Buddy Holly ?

L'histoire des Bryant est unique. Felice était fille d'ascenseur dans un hôtel de Milwaukee. Elle a rencontré le violoniste Boudleaux Bryant dans son ascenseur. Ils se sont mariés trois semaines plus tard et ont passé quarante ans à écrire des chansons ensemble, pour Buddy Holly, les Everly Brothers, Roy Orbison et beaucoup d'autres. Je n'ai appris leur histoire qu'après avoir enregistré ce morceau. J'adore la pop des années 1950. Après "Cuckoo Madame" qui est une chanson très ambitieuse pour moi, je dois dire ici que j'essaie de pousser ce que je fais le plus loin possible, je ne suis qu'un musicien pop. C'est mon territoire. Je ne suis pas un compositeur d'avant-garde dans un sens classique. Je voulais juste un peu de modestie sur le disque, moi qui suis parfois si ambitieux musicalement parlant. C'est pourquoi j'ai choisi de reprendre "Raining In My Heart".

Ecoutez-vous toujours des disques pop ou rock ?

Des disques pop, oui. Je ne suis plus trop fan des groupes de rock. J'en ai gardé de mauvais souvenirs. *[rires]* Je ne pense pas que cela fonctionne. Les gens se plaignent que le marketing contrôle la pop, le style... Et la pop peut effectivement devenir très

ennuyeuse, uniformisée, avec des danses stupides et des coupes de cheveux ridicules. Mais il me semble que la musique pop est très importante, car elle reste la musique de jeunes garçons découvrant de jeunes filles. La pop fait partie de la manière dont les garçons et les filles s'imaginent et deviennent romantiques les uns envers les autres. C'est très sérieux. Cela parait socialement correct, mais c'est la musique du peuple, des gens qui sont trop occupés pour se soucier vraiment de la musique ou qui ne sont pas vraiment intéressés par autre chose. Mais, ils possèdent un langage commun, celui des chansons pop, faciles à chanter. C'est exactement le rôle de la musique folk par le passé. Je respecte totalement la musique pop et les musiciens pop. C'est ainsi que j'ai commencé moi-même.

Quelles ont été vos expériences avec l'Amérique ?

Je n'en ai pratiquement pas ! J'ai joué là-bas la plus grande partie de l'année 1968. C'était une grande expérience car nous tournions avec Jimi Hendrix. Mais après cela, je n'ai jamais voulu y retourner. Je trouvais l'Amérique totalement étrange. Peut-être était-ce parce qu'ils parlent anglais ? Je pensais que c'était une culture aux antipodes de la mienne. Je me sentais plus chez moi en allant à Chinatown à Londres que parler de culture avec un blanc américain. Cela étant, certains de mes meilleurs amis sont américains, comme Karen Mantler et sa mère, Carla. Comme mon ami Michael Weddings *[Aymeric Leroy me signale qu'il s'agit plus probablement de Michael Zwerin, journaliste auteur du premier article sur Robert Wyatt paru en 1967 dans la revue Down Beat en 1967!* note de JPM*]*, un musicien new-yorkais des années 1940 et 1950, qui est venu habiter à Paris au milieu des années 1960. Il écrit beaucoup sur les musiciens américains à Paris mais aussi sur les happenings. Je me suis senti très étranger en Amérique. C'était culturel. Je suppose donc que je suis profondément européen.

Quels sont les disques les plus importants de votre carrière ?

Mes disques sont comme mes enfants, donc il n'y a pas vraiment de favoris ! Ce serait immoral d'avoir à choisir. Certains sont grands, d'autres plus petits, d'autres beaux, mais ce sont tous mes enfants. Ceux qui me plaisent sont généralement les plus récents. Alors maintenant, j'ai encore la tête plein de *Cuckooland*. C'est notre nouvel enfant, encore tout mouillé... *[rires]*

II tiendra la route encore mieux que les autres ?

J'essaye de mettre en œuvre tout ce que j'ai appris au fil de ma carrière, afin d'améliorer ma musique. Je suis chanceux d'avoir eu d'aussi bons musiciens qui sont venus me voir sur ce disque. J'avais laissé du temps pour que les chansons se développent, qu'elles aient un caractère propre et qu'elles ne soient pas une répétition d'autres chansons plus anciennes. Bien que l'on retrouve inévitablement mon style. Actuellement, j'aime donc *Cuckooland*.

Comme beaucoup de personnes, j'ai découvert votre musique par le biais de Rock Bottom et j'ai été fasciné par le caractère totalement intemporel de cet album, le fait que ce soit le genre de disque qui vous accompagne tout au long de votre vie. Un monde nouveau s'ouvre en effet à vous à l'écoute de "Sea Song"...

Merci. Que dire d'autre ? Lorsque je faisais cet album, je savais que j'avais trouvé comment créer notre propre univers, à Alfie et à moi. Un univers que je pouvais habiter au lieu de vivre dans le coin d'une planète étrangère. J'avais donc trouvé ma propre planète. Et aussi, j'étais incapable de me vendre dans un registre particulier, alors je ne me donne pas les moyens de savoir ce qui est à la mode telle ou telle année. Je n'ai jamais ressenti cela. Je ressens juste le fait de faire quelque chose qui me semble bien. Je ne peux pas être distrait par les nouveautés du moment.

Bien que cela m'influence aussi lorsque j'y pense. Avoir sur *Rock Bottom*, le trompettiste nigérian Mongezi Feza et Mike Oldfield à la guitare reste très lié à cette époque. Mais même lorsque je travaille ainsi avec des musiciens, je ne leur fais pas jouer ce qu'ils feraient normalement. Le contexte est différent. Il s'agit d'eux mais dans un autre monde, dans une sorte de petit pays dans lequel nous vivons. Cela parait prétentieux, n'est-ce pas ? *[riresl*

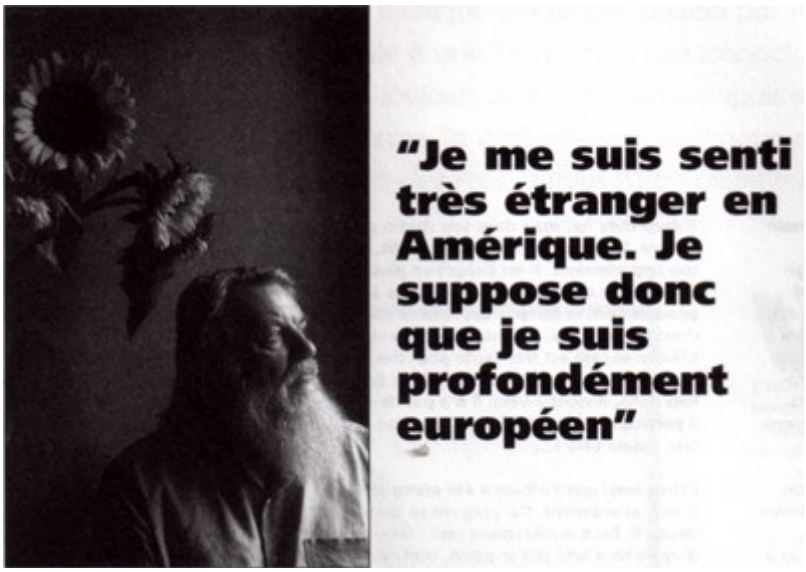
Vous avez dit lors de la mort de Mongezi, décédé d'une pneumonie dans un hôpital britannique, que s'il avait été blanc, il aurait été sauvé. Est-ce à cette période que vous avez pris conscience des réalités politiques sociales pour lesquelles vous vous battez toujours aujourd'hui ?

C'est effectivement à cette époque que je suis devenu confus et anxieux quant aux politiques du monde extérieur, surtout après avoir été aux Etats-Unis en 1968. Mais je

n'avais pas pour autant d'engagement personnel. Jusqu'au décès de Mongezi, je me disais que ce qui se passait autour de moi n'affectait pas ma propre vie. Mais tout à coup, les politiques sont devenues personnelles. C'est là que j'ai compris que la politique agissait sur le monde dans lequel on vivait et la manière dont il était régi. Bien sûr que même si on ne s'intéresse pas à la politique, elle finit tôt ou tard par nous rattraper. Tout ce que je veux, c'est m'amuser, boire et jouer de la musique. Mais la plupart des gens dans le monde se battent juste pour avoir le droit de faire ces choses-là. Cela ne m'affectait pas auparavant, mais lorsque Mongezi est décédé, j'ai compris beaucoup de choses. Il avait le même âge que moi, trente-trois ans. Je suis encore en colère aujourd'hui contre ce qu'il lui est arrivé. Il pensait pouvoir s'échapper lorsqu'il a quitté l'Afrique du Sud. Mais la réalité du racisme l'a rattrapé. Il n'y avait malheureusement pas d'autres issues pour lui.

Vous êtes un des seuls artistes dont l'engagement politique ne sombre pas pour autant dans une quelconque forme de prosélytisme...

Je n'essaie absolument pas de rassembler les gens. Lorsque je chante, lorsque Alfie écrit, lorsque j'écris, ce qui est à l'intérieur vient à la surface. Politiquement, c'est très défensif. En ce qui me concerne, cela revêt plus de sens, dans l'art du moins, de défendre les gens qui sont injustement attaqués ou politiquement vilipendés que d'attaquer les gens qui les attaquent. Les paroles originales de « Forest », une sorte de gospel, étaient si énervées et si agressives qu'elles auraient convenues aujourd'hui. Je les avais écrites au début des années 1990, à l'époque de la première Guerre du Golfe. Je disais aux Américains « vous êtes les seuls types à balancer ce genre de bombes, arrêtez de dire au reste du monde ce qu'il doit faire, c'est vous qui avez commencé... ». La chanson était très virulente. Puis je me suis dit, on peut chanter cela dans un contexte donné, mais cela reste de l'exploitation de le faire sur un disque parce que lorsqu'on achète un disque, c'est pour s'affranchir d'une certaine réalité. C'est comme si j'abusais de cette chanson en chantant ces paroles. Alors Alfie a écrit les nouvelles paroles, à propos des gitans qui sont mis au ban de la société britannique aujourd'hui.



Mais ce n'est pas vraiment une attaque contre qui que ce soit, c'est plutôt une célébration de cette survie extraordinaire des Roumains face à cette société qui les rejette. Ils vivent différemment mais ce n'est pas le problème. Si nous avons cette grande rhétorique qui fait de nous les champions de la liberté, de l'individualisme, alors pourquoi ces gens devraient se conformer à nos manières de vivre ? C'est donc une chanson de défense. Notre planète est trop petite. Mais je me fiche de savoir si les gens écoutent les paroles ou non. J'ai un ami israélien de votre âge qui me dit qu'il écoutait *Rock Bottom* sur son walkman en allant à l'école, sans savoir de quoi il s'agissait. Il avait une représentation mentale de ce disque à partir des sons et non des paroles. Plus tard, il a appris à parler anglais, pas pour nous, mais parce que les Américains parlent anglais. Même lorsqu'il parlait anglais, il m'a dit qu'il ne pouvait toujours pas comprendre. Car ce ne sont pas vraiment des paroles mais des mots avec des sonorités particulières.

Comment avez-vous trouvé ces sons de Rock Bottom, qui sont uniques et inégalés à ce jour ?

La base du disque n'était pas un mellotron mais un petit clavier qu'Alfie m'avait trouvé à Venise. Elle travaillait sur un film à l'époque. Je l'aimais parce qu'on pouvait contrôler le vibrato et faire que la vitesse du vibrato s'accommode à ma voix. Et si on le doublait, je pouvais modifier légèrement la vitesse, ce qui donnait une sorte de mouvement à l'intérieur du clavier. Je me suis toujours dit que si j'utilise un clavier, il ne faut pas qu'il sonne comme une machine. Mais plutôt comme un clavier qui possède un élément brut ou une qualité humaine ou animale, car le problème avec la technologie moderne et ces sons fantastiquement modernes, est qu'elle a perdu toute humanité. Une des choses que je veux en musique, c'est avoir de la compagnie. Alors, j'essaie de modifier certains éléments lorsque j'utilise des machines, pour les rendre plus sales ou plus boueuses.

Vous a-t-on demandé récemment de collaborer avec certains artistes ?

Lorsque j'enregistrais *Cuckooland*, Phil Manzanera enregistrait également un album solo. Il n'en fait pas souvent, mais ces disques font ressortir ses origines latino-américaines. J'ai joué des percussions, de la trompette et j'ai chanté sur certains morceaux. J'espère que cet album va sortir. J'ai dû refuser quelques collaborations car je devenais trop distrait. Il fallait que je me concentre sur *Cuckooland*. Je voulais l'appréhender comme un tout dans ma tête, car cet album est tellement riche.

Avez-vous pensé à faire un album avec Brian Eno ?

Nous enregistrons de la musique tous les trois avec Alfie depuis des années dans son studio. C'est un ami très cher, un homme admirable. Nous avons donc quelques morceaux qu'il n'utiliserait jamais sur ses propres disques et que je n'utiliserais pas non plus. Alors un jour, nous pourrions sortir un album ensemble, qui serait une sorte d'hybride. Mais il est très occupé. Un de ces morceaux est conçu avec un rythme électronique très dansant et disco. J'ai ramené ce morceau à la maison et j'ai surimposé un solo de trompette frénétique très free jazz. Et jamais il ne choisirait cela pour son disque. Et jamais je ne prendrai un morceau électronique comme celui-ci sur le mien. Si cela pouvait aussi faire rigoler quelqu'un d'autre, nous pourrions sortir cet album...

Les rééditions de votre catalogue sur Ryko de 1997 sont parfaites...

Oui. Cela a fait une grande différence pour mon état mental. Le fait de savoir que tout ce que j'avais enregistré était dispersé aux quatre vents. Enfin, après des années de lutte, j'ai regagné les droits de mes enregistrements des années 1970. Cela a permis de rénover quelques idées, notamment artistiques avec les pochettes d'Alfie. L'abstraction totale de *Old Rottenhat* se réduit très bien au format cd. Les nouvelles illustrations de *Rock Bottom* sont superbes. J'ai aussi, par ce biais, redécouvert mes chansons latino-américaines.



> Zoom

Quels seraient selon vous les moments marquants de votre carrière ?

Pour être honnête, il me semble que plus les années passent et plus j'aime ma carrière. Chaque année, Alfie et moi essayons d'apprendre les leçons du passé. Vieillir n'est pas si mal, on peut recommencer certaines choses et devenir sages. C'est un cliché, mais on gagne en sagesse ce que l'on perd en énergie de la jeunesse. Et mentalement, je ne me sens pas vieux. Je me sens même ridiculement comme un enfant *[rires].* Comme l'a chanté Bob Dylan « J'étais tellement plus âgé à cette époque que maintenant ». Et enfin, j'ai trouvé une maison de disques honnête. Rough Trade et Geoff Travis étaient aussi biens, mais ils luttaient durs. Et je luttais également pour savoir comment fonctionner. Je lutte toujours en ce qui concerne les côtés pratiques de la vie, mais maintenant avec le studio de Phil Manzanera, et ce jeune ingénieur du son, et Alfie à mes côtés, je me sens mieux.

Est-ce à dire qu'un nouvel album suivra prochainement ?

Je ne pense pas. Tout ce que j'avais accumulé depuis des années, je l'ai mis sur *Cuckooland* car il fallait que j'avance. Le futur est maintenant. Je me sens vidé de ma tête après ce disque. Cela est un soulagement mais une forme d'exhaustion également.

Exception faite de *Rock Bottom* et de *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, la plupart de vos disques ont toujours été espacés de plusieurs années. Est-ce votre rythme de travail ?

[Il allume une Gitane bleue] La vie peut être difficile. Par exemple, lorsque nous avons déménagé de Londres au nord de l'Angleterre au cours des années 1980, en aménageant dans notre nouvelle maison, le plancher était tellement pourri que le piano est passé à travers. Beaucoup de choses pratiques difficiles se sont produites. On ne peut pas opérer comme une machine, la vie peut devenir délicate. Mais bon nombre de personnes ont des vies plus difficiles que les nôtres.

Au cours de votre vie, vous avez notamment vécu à Venise et à Barcelone. Pensez-vous notamment que vous pourriez vivre et travailler ailleurs que chez vous ?

Si je n'étais pas si physiquement piégé, Alfie et moi aurions quitté l'Angleterre, il y a bien longtemps. Mais je suis dépendant des hôpitaux britanniques. J'ai maintenant développé une sorte de routine avec les spécialistes de la colonne vertébrale, que je vois tous les ans. Ils me connaissent et je sais qu'en vieillissant, tous les problèmes que je pourrai rencontrer seront plus facilement traités avec eux. Ce fauteuil roulant et son entretien sont gratuits. Je connais tous mes commerçants. Il y a trente ans, cela ne m'aurait pas dérangé... Mais aujourd'hui, à l'approche de la soixantaine, je ne peux plus faire comme si j'avais vingt ans et partir avec mon sac à dos.

Mais vous voyagez pourtant partout avec vos chansons, à Cuba, en Israël, au Japon, en Irak, au Chili, en Afrique du Sud...

Oui, comme une forme de compensation. Je suis heureux d'être musicien. Certains de mes contemporains sont écrivains en Grande-Bretagne et ils me paraissent être piégés, d'une certaine manière, dans une sorte de britannicité, qui traduit une forme de narcissisme culturel anxieux. Je ne voudrais pas vivre là-dedans. En tant que musiciens, nous sommes plus libres. Il n'y a pas de réelle histoire musicale importante en Grande-Bretagne. Alors si l'on s'intéresse à la musique, il faut regarder en dehors de chez soi. Ou regarder ce qu'ont amené des étrangers et des exilés. C'est pourquoi j'aime les grandes villes comme Londres ou Paris, qui ont l'air de microcosmes d'empires désintégrés. Et même à la maison, je voyage. J'écoute des disques du Cap-Vert, c'est chouette de découvrir tout cela. J'assiste à des concerts à Londres et je voyage aussi, je parle à des musiciens étrangers. Des musiciens comme Gilad m'apportent une fraîcheur nouvelle. Il souffle l'histoire jazz, turque, levantine et ottomane dans sa clarinette. Je suis sûr qu'un jour, ce conflit israélo-palestinien ne sera qu'un mauvais rêve, mais maintenant, pour des gens comme lui, il s'agit de vivre. Le monde est frénétique. Alors superficiellement, on regarde son esthétique.

Florent Mazzoleni

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Soft Machine - Les Inrocks 2 - Hors-série vol.4 'Les années soixante' - 2004

Soft Machine



Epicurien et absurde, le groupe de Robert Wyatt et Kevin Ayers organisa les rencontres saugrenues de la pop débridée et du jazz libre, de la pataphysique et du psychédélisme.

Inspiré par le titre d'un livre de William Burroughs (en français : La Machine molle), Soft Machine se forme en 1966, émergeant des racines d'un groupe peu documenté, The Wilde Flowers, originaire de Canterbury et dans lequel officiaient déjà Robert Wyatt et Kevin Ayers. Rejoints par le guitariste australien Daevid Allen et le pianiste Hugh Hopper, ils fondent Soft Machine qui, aux côtés de Pink Floyd et d'une poignée d'autres groupes, formera le cœur de l'underground psychédélique anglais. Pourtant, contrairement au groupe de Syd Barrett, Soft Machine ne s'est jamais imposé auprès du grand public, demeurant en réserve de la reconnaissance publique, sans doute à cause de ses tendances les plus avant-gardistes qui ont vite bridé les envies d'écriture pop. Tout le parcours du groupe peut en effet s'écouter comme un éloignement progressif de la pop et des formats de chansons courtes pour aller au plus près du jazz et de l'improvisation purement instrumentale. Pourtant, le groupe avait à son actif quelques titres très enivrants, comme l'étincelant Memories, morceau crépusculaire et nostalgique, capable de tirer des larmes à n'importe quel éléphant féroce, mais qui n'est jamais sorti ailleurs que sur des compilations de raretés du groupe.

S'éloignant progressivement du format pop, les quatre premiers disques de la formation, Volume 1, 2, 3 et 4, font se mêler des vignettes pop et psychédéliques, presque dadaïstes, et des digressions inspirées par le jazz américain. En bref, Soft Machine était une étrange symbiose entre Jimi Hendrix (avec lequel le groupe a joué) et certaines expériences illuminées de Miles Davis. Au bout de quatre disques, la formation se tourne définitivement vers un jazz européen, abandonnant en cours de route son batteur et chanteur Robert Wyatt. Les albums des années 70 sont dispensables, souvent trop bavards, alors que ceux avec Wyatt demeurent des joyaux importants de la fin des années 60. ||

Joseph Ghosn

Album conseillé :
Soft Machine volume 1 (Probe, 1968)



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Robert Wyatt plus visible que jamais après trente ans d'éclipse - Le Monde - 7 novembre 2003

Le Monde

Robert Wyatt plus visible que jamais après trente ans d'éclipse

Le chanteur, pianiste, percussionniste et ancien batteur britannique, paralysé depuis 1973, fait l'objet de trois disques, et un hommage lui est rendu au Théâtre de Charleville-Mézières.

Viendra, viendra pas ? A chaque fois que des musiciens célèbrent sur scène le chanteur, pianiste, percussionniste et ancien batteur Robert Wyatt, ses admirateurs se posent la question. Le 1er juin 1973, lors d'une fête, Wyatt était tombé accidentellement de la fenêtre d'un appartement londonien et s'était brisé la colonne vertébrale. Il vit depuis dans une chaise roulante. Aux problèmes logistiques de ses déplacements hors de sa maison de Louth, lieu de vie et de travail à trois bonnes heures de route de Londres, s'ajoute, comme il nous le confiait en février 1999, la pudeur, voire l'appréhension, à l'idée de se retrouver sur scène. Même en sachant que le regard de son public sera tendre et respectueux.

S'il avait été absent en octobre 1999 de la présentation au Nancy Jazz Pulsations de Soup Songs par une nonnette britannique qui perpétue son œuvre, Wyatt avait, un mois plus tard, assisté en coulisse au concert du même groupe dirigé par la tromboniste Annie Whitehead lors du London Jazz Festival. "*Ma présence aura été ce qui se rapprochera au maximum de l'idée de mon "retour" scénique*", avait-il alors plaisanté. Reste que toute initiative est suivie de près par Wyatt, qui pose volontiers sa voix sur un arrangement d'une de ses chansons dans des disques (par exemple, ces dernières années, dans l'hommage des musiciens italiens réunis pour *The Different You*, avec Pascal Comelade, John Greaves...), envoie parfois un inédit, écrit des petits mots pour manifester ses encouragements, son émotion.

Dernier projet en date, la création au Théâtre de Charleville-Mézières de "Dedicated to You, variations sur la musique de Robert Wyatt", par une troupe familière de son univers. Le bassiste et chanteur John Greaves, cofondateur de Henry Cow, groupe de la même famille que Soft Machine et Matching Mole, où Wyatt chantait et pouvait encore jouer de la batterie. Karen Mantler, organiste, fille de Carla Bley et Michael Mantler, a récemment composé pour Wyatt, et son père sollicite régulièrement le chanteur dans ses

enregistrements.

Le batteur Jacques Mahieux revendique une filiation avec le jeu de Wyatt comme avec son chant. Le clarinettiste Sylvain Kassap et la contrebassiste Hélène Labarrière ont, eux, été invités par Wyatt au Meltdown Festival, en 2001, lorsqu'il en a eu la direction artistique. Enfin, le violoniste Dominique Pifarély complète l'ensemble. Le programme devrait être constitué de thèmes allant de ses débuts avec Soft Machine jusqu'à des compositions de l'album *Shleep*, paru en 1997.



CULTURE

MUSIQUE • Le chanteur, pianiste, percussionniste et ancien batteur britannique, paralysé depuis 1973, fait l'objet de trois disques, et un hommage lui est rendu au Théâtre de Charleville-Mézières

Robert Wyatt plus visible que jamais après trente ans d'éclipse

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UNE VOIX TOUJOURS PRENANTE

La fin de l'automne 2003 est favorable à Robert Wyatt avec, en plus de cette création, trois parutions concomitantes. D'abord *M4W*, quatrième volume de la collaboration avec le peintre Jean-Michel Marchetti, qui traduit en français les textes de Wyatt accompagnés de gravures originales. Comme dans le précédent volume édité par Aencrages & Co, Wyatt a proposé des inédits (quatre instrumentaux et deux chansons), dont certains interprétés avec Marchetti.

Chez Cuneiform, ce sont des archives qui viennent au jour. Deux séries de concerts pour la BBC en septembre 1972 (avec sa future épouse, Alfreda Benge, et le pianiste Francis Monkman) et en 1974 (en solo), la musique collage d'un court métrage de 1973, des retrouvailles avec le bassiste Hugh Hopper (ancien de Soft Machine) et *The Verb,* enregistré en 2003 par Wyatt chez lui.

Enfin, le récent album du chanteur et pianiste, *Cuckooland*, vient de paraître chez Hannibal-Ryko. Un disque d'où s'échappe toujours la voix singulière de Wyatt, l'une des plus prenantes issues du courant rock progressif britannique de la fin des années 1960 et du début 1970 avec celles de Kevin Ayers (Soft Machine, The Whole World), Peter Gabriel

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(Genesis), Greaves, Peter Hammill (Van Der Graaf Generator) et Pye Hasting (Caravan). Un disque tout en climats étranges, mélodies enfantines, au minimalisme touchant, marque de Wyatt depuis plus de trente ans.

Sylvain Siclier

Photo : *Renaud Monfourny*

"Dedicated to You", création au Théâtre de Charleville-Mézières, place du Théâtre, Charleville-Mézières (Ardennes). Tél. : 03-24-32-44-50. Samedi 8 novembre, à 20 h 30. De 7,90 € à 18 €.

M4W, 1 livre-CD, Aencrages & Co, 35 € , à commander au 5, place du Vieux-Gérardmer, 88400 Gérardmer, ou sur le site Internet www.aencrages.com ;

Solar Flares Burn For You, 1 CD Cuneiform Records/Orkhêstra International ; Cuckooland, 1 CD Hannibal-Ryko/Naïve.

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"Après la mort de Coltrane, je n'ai pas entendu grand-chose de bien impressionnant" - Rock & Folk - N° 435 - novembre 2003

"APRÈS LA MORT DE COLTRANE, JE N'AI PAS ENTENDU GRAND-CHOSE DE BIEN IMPRESSIONNANT"



L'EX-BATTEUR DE SOFT MACHINE, CONSACRÉ EN 1974 PAR LE CHEF-D'OEUVRE "ROCK BOTTOM", LIVRE AVEC "CUCKOOLAND" UNE NOUVELLE COLLECTION DE PERLES POP VENUES D'AILLEURS.

Fin d'été dans le patio d'un hôtel coquet du quartier des Beaux-Arts. Robert Wyatt est à Paris pour évoquer "Cuckooland", nouvel album après six ans d'absence dont seuls quelques fans ont dû souffrir, tant la personnalité musicale exigeante et la poésie débordante de la musique de Robert Wyatt semblent inactuelles dans l'Angleterre de Muse, Coldplay et autres sensations médiatiques. S'il est beaucoup question dans ce disque des atrocités du siècle passé et de celui qui vient de commencer, les harmonies de synthétiseur sur lesquelles planent une trompette tour à tour plaintive ou jazzy et la voix d'oiseau triste de Wyatt, font paradoxalement de ce disque un véritable enchantement. Enregistré en grande partie seul, "Cuckooland" bénéficie néanmoins du concours d'instrumentistes magnifiques (sax soprano, trombone, clarinette, guitare, contrebasse) dont certains comme Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno et David Gilmour incarnent le meilleur du rock anglais. Plus que l'engagement politique de l'artiste - il a pris sa carte au Parti Communiste à la fin des années 70 - c'est le musicien de cette fameuse école de Canterbury, toujours insolemment inspiré - comme David Bowie et John Cale cette saison - qui nous a intéressé pendant cette heure agréable en sa compagnie.



Rien ne m'empêche de jouer de la trompette

Rock&Folk : Votre dernier disque sonne comme un aboutissement musical. De surcroît, on vous découvre trompettiste. Quand avez-vous appris cet instrument ?

Robert Wyatt : J'ai mis tout ce que j'ai appris musicalement dans ces chansons. Il y a un vrai soulagement à réaliser qu'on n'est jamais trop vieux pour composer de la musique, qu'on peut toujours trouver de nouvelles façons de composer ou en redécouvrir d'autres. Je n'avais pas touché à une trompette depuis l'âge de 16 ans. Je n'aurais alors jamais imaginé devenir musicien de profession. Pour moi, les musiciens étaient des sortes de magiciens. Je travaillais alors en forêt, à couper du bois, brûler et tout ce qui va avec. Je n'avais aucune qualification en quittant l'école.

Quand les premiers groupes beat anglais ont émergé, on s'est tous dit que ce que Charlie Watts ou Ringo Starr faisaient, tout le monde pouvait le faire, ça semblait tellement simple. Ce sont des batteurs que j'admire beaucoup aujourd'hui mais, à l'époque, leur simplicité était comme un encouragement à faire la même chose. Je n'ai jamais retouché à un violon ou une trompette après l'adolescence, mais j'ai toujours trimballé avec moi une embouchure de trompette sur laquelle j'essayais de trouver des idées de chansons. Depuis quelque temps, je n'ai enfin plus de voisin, donc rien ne m'empêche de jouer de la trompette à quatre heures du matin. Je me suis remis à la trompette en improvisant sur des disques de Ray Charles et Jimmy Scott. Je me suis rendu compte que pouvoir rejouer de la trompette aujourd'hui tombait bien pour pallier la perte des notes les plus aiguës de mon registre vocal. Ces dernières années, j'ai bien dû perdre une demi-octave, alors jouer de la trompette est une vraie consolation.

R&F : Composez-vous vos chansons sur un instrument, le piano par exemple, mentalement ou à la table ?

Robert Wyatt: En général, en studio avec mon programmeur qui utilise Pro Tools. La première chose que je fais, c'est de chercher un beau son sur un synthé, des Yamaha pour la plupart. Mais je suis beaucoup moins calé que Brian Eno sur les questions techniques. Voilà, je cherche un son, et je vois comment ma voix interagit avec et c'est cela qui m'inspire.

R&F : Votre style, du coup, est très personnel...

Robert Wyatt : Et à la fois assez traditionnel, la plupart des disques que j'écoute datent d'avant 1967. Après la mort de Coltrane, je n'ai pas entendu grand-chose de bien impressionnant. Je n'ai aucun problème à vivre en n'écoutant que des disques de cette époque. Au contraire, ça m'aide à ne pas oublier qu'il y a eu une époque où la musique était importante pour les gens, avait une grande signification. Et je ne parle pas que de la musique américaine, mais également de la musique juive, noire, italienne, française. Je suis allé avec mon ami Mike Zwerin (musicien de jazz et journaliste au Herald Tribune) écouter René Utréger jouer en club, et on se disait toute la soirée "et celle-là, c'est 'Love For Sale' ?" et des tas de trucs comme ça. Le jazz n'est pas la seule musique mais, pour ma génération, ça a beaucoup compté. Bien sûr, j'adore Hindemith, Ravel, Debussy, Stravinski, Bartok, Webern, Britten. Mais quand j'ai entendu ce live de 1953 à Toronto avec Max Roach, Mingus et Parker, j'ai compris que quelque chose était en train de changer.

J'ai appris à déchiffrer le be-bop et à jouer de la batterie comme ça. En essayant de tenir le

beat pardessus le disque, façon karaoké. L'apparition du micro-sillon reste une révolution dans ce sens. Aujourd'hui, en m'enregistrant à la trompette, je découvre de nouvelles possibilités. Je reste fasciné par ceux qui poussent le système tonal à ses limites, que ce soit Coltrane ou Dolphy, des gens disparus mais qui m'inspirent encore.



> Zoom

R&F : Vous-même, au sein de Soft Machine, avez essayé aussi d'inventer quelque chose de différent...

Robert Wyatt : C'est beaucoup moins glorieux que ça. A ce que je me souvienne, nous étions juste des musiciens habitant pas trop loin les uns des autres, se réunissant pour jouer comme on pouvait. On mettait tout ce qu'on savait dans la marmite. Je me souviens d'être venu rendre visite à Daevid Allen à Paris où il se passait tant de choses alors, à commencer par le jazz, mais aussi grâce à la présence de personnages comme Brion Gysin. David avait rencontré Terry Riley, et on passait des heures à écouter ses boucles sonores répétitives. Mais à l'époque de Soft Machine, on ne parlait pas beaucoup entre nous, on ne pensait qu'à travailler nos instruments et gagner de quoi vivre avec les concerts, donc il n'y avait aucun projet artistique particulier.

J'ai commencé par imiter des chanteuses noires

R&F : Vous n'êtes pas resté longtemps dans ce milieu rock, prenant d'abord vos distances avec Soft Machine, puis embrassant une carrière solo, singulière et à contre-courant des modes. Avez-vous grandi dans l'amour de la culture, de la poésie, des lettres ?

Robert Wyatt : Je me suis toujours senti plus proche de mes parents qui m'ont fait découvrir "Ulysse" et "Finnegan's Wake" de Joyce, Ezra Pound, Paul Klee, Picasso, le mouvement dada et le jazz, que du monde du rock, particulièrement déprimant, même si tout y semble joli. Mes parents étaient de condition très modeste, mais ils avaient l'amour de la culture. J'aime ce mot de Shelley ou Byron, je ne sais plus: *Chaque fois qu'on me recommande un nouveau livre génial, je sors et file en acheter un vieux.*

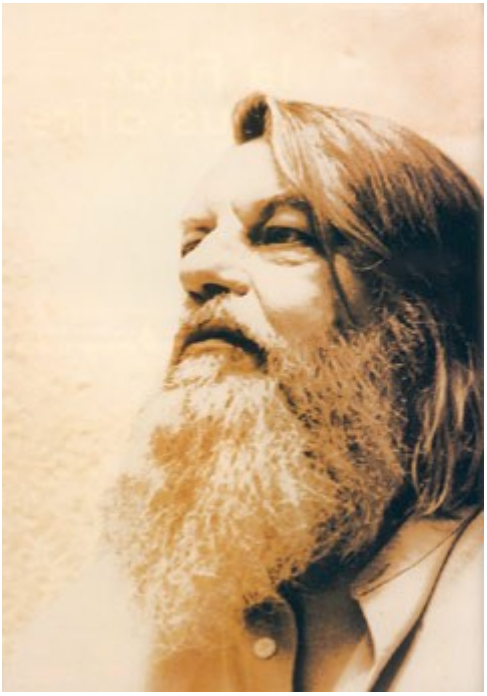
R&F : Et votre style vocal, d'où vient-il ?

Robert Wyatt: J'ai commencé par imiter des chanteuses noires américaines comme Dionne Warwick, surtout à cause du répertoire, signé Bacharach-David en l'occurrence. Impossible de dire comment j'en suis arrivé à trouver mon propre son, par tâtonnements sans doute car, au risque de me répéter, il n'y avait pas d'ambition artistique particulière à l'époque des groupes de beat, on essayait juste de faire ce qu'on pouvait.

R&F : Vous retrouvez un collaborateur de longue date sur ce nouveau disque en la personne de Brian Eno...

Robert Wyatt: Eno et moi avions, à l'époque où nous nous sommes rencontrés, été un peu rejetés par nos formations respectives, même si nous avions choisi de les quitter. Brian Eno est venu jouer du synthé sur un disque de Matching Mole et moi, j'ai joué sur son disque "Another Green World" en 1975, sous le pseudonyme de Shirley Williams [*]. Brian s'est imposé comme un ami, avec qui je pouvais parler, en plus c'est un auteur compositeur et un vocaliste merveilleux. Brian est venu me rendre visite quelques fois sur les séances de ce dernier album. Comme il habite à côté, il passe en vélo et dépose un mini-kit de batterie électronique en me disant: "*Essaye ça*" J'ai gardé deux notes qu'il a jouées à la fin d'un morceau de l'album.

Je découvrais Paris



> Zoom

R&F : A propos de jazz, votre chanson "Miles & Juliette" évoque une période de grande création artistique. Vous ennuyez-vous aujourd'hui ?

Robert Wyatt : Je ne suis pas un jazzman, le jazz n'a pas besoin de moi, mais ce que je fais musicalement n'aurait pas été possible sans les jazzmen, ou certains peintres. Je sais que les standards de jazz durent plus longtemps, et j'aimerais voir si mes chansons dureront aussi longtemps que "Insensatez" de Jobim que je reprends sur le disque. Beaucoup de chansons de "Cuckooland" ont été écrites il y a dix ans. Pendant toutes ces années j'écoutais comment des batteurs comme Billy Higgins gardent le tempo, ce genre de choses. Pour en revenir à "Miles et Juliette", c'est la romance ultime. Je découvrais Paris, en pleine puberté. Chez moi, les gens étaient soit cérébraux, soit primitifs. A Paris, j'ai découvert qu'on pouvait être intello et bon vivant, traîner dans des clubs enfumés avec des Noirs Américains.

R&F : C'est comme ça que vous voyez ?

Robert Wyatt : Je fais les choses simplement, je ne suis pas un théoricien. Le mot de créateur me gêne, je me vois plutôt comme quelqu'un qui trouve les choses.

RECUEILLI PAR ERIC DAHAN

CD "Cuckooland" (Ryko/Naïve)

[*] Note de l'éditeur : il semble que R.W. confonde les albums *Another Green World* et *Before and After Science* car c'est ce dernier qui est effectivement crédité d'un Shirley Williams aux "brush timbales, time".

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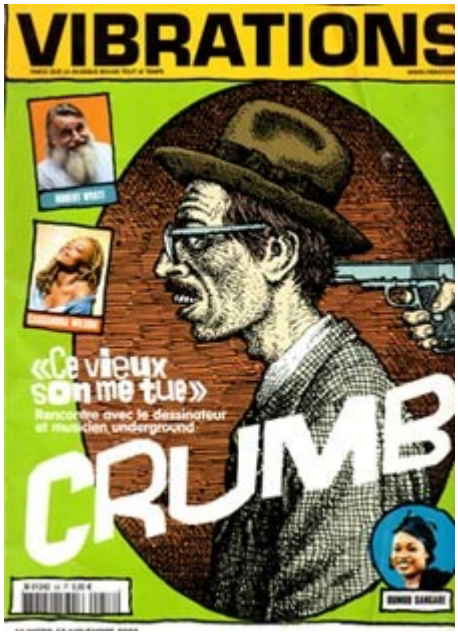
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Un pays enchanté - Vibrations - N°58 - novembre 2003

UN PAYS ENCHANTÉ

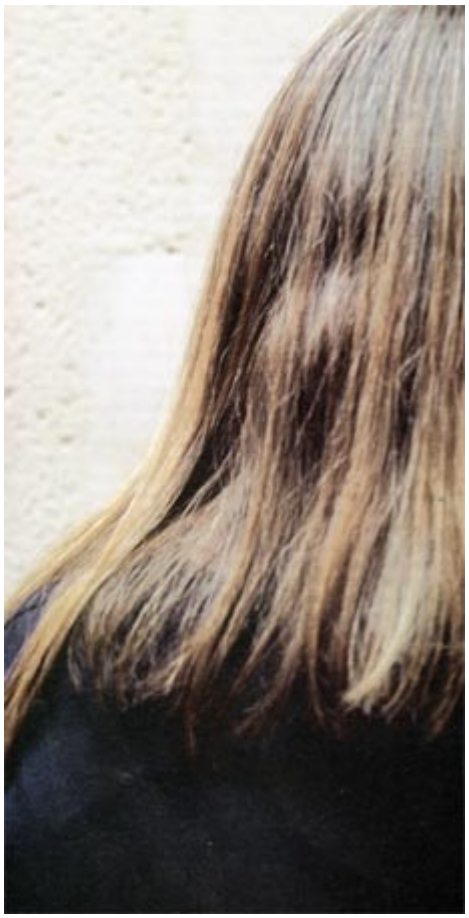


Un pays enchanté

Mijoter un blind-test à l'attention de Robert Wyatt n'est pas tâche aisée. Que choisir? Existe-il seulement en ce bas monde une musique qui laisse cet homme indifférent?

Rencontre Richard Robert
Photos Benoît Peverelli

Ni consommateur boulimique ni puits de science sans fond, Robert Wyatt est de ces âmes généreuses qui, devant le simple exposé d'une phrase musicale, ne peuvent se retenir de laisser parler leur cœur et leur raison. Quand bien même nous lui aurions diffusé quelque spécimen de death-metal lapon ou de



drum'n'bass malaise, l'Anglais aurait probablement trouvé quelque doux sentiment ou quelque fine remarque à nous livrer, avec cette faconde chaleureuse et cette intelligence pétillante qui le caractérisent et le distinguent des experts professionnels et des spécialistes en tout. Finalement, on s'en sera tenu à une sélection musicale aussi hétéroclite que possible, couvrant vaille que vaille ce large éventail de saveurs et d'inclinations dont son œuvre est le plus juste reflet. A l'image de son nouvel album, «Cuckooland»: un disque où il se paie l'audace de convoquer le jazz de Saint-Germain-des-Prés, l'Amérique de Buddy Holly, les douceurs du tandem Jobim-De Moraes et la grâce inaltérable des musiques sans nom, sans jamais sacrifier à cette mode du pêle-mêle et de la citation qui gangrène tant de petits disques modernes. Avec sa femme Alfreda Benge, dite Alfie, Wyatt écoutera chaque titre avec l'attention émerveillée d'un enfant qui découvrirait la musique pour la première fois.

Thelonious Monk Monk's Dream

Robert Wyatt: (Il chante pendant tout le morceau) Magnifique, de la joie pure... J'ai vu Monk sur scène à la fin des années 60, il était comme un vieux comédien. Il avait de très beaux chapeaux...

Dans quelle mesure vous a-t-il influencé?
Robert Wyatt: II m'a aidé à trouver des façons de jouer qui me rendent heureux. Monk aime étendre les accords au-delà des notes qui sont censées les former. Mais en plus de cela, il a pour coutume d'enlever pas mal de notes intermédiaires entre la racine et la cime de l'accord, de telle sorte qu'en l'écoutant, on ne sait plus trop de quoi il retourne. J'aime aussi la façon dont ses deux mains jouent ensemble: il y a là une autorité incroyable, très physique.

Les musiciens de jazz que vous aimez - Monk, Don Cherry, Charlie Haden - ne sont pas très orthodoxes.
Robert Wyatt: Tous les peintres que j'aimais, comme Klee ou Mondrian, avaient quelque chose de bizarre et de personnel, je voulais retrouver ça chez les musiciens. Du coup, quand le jazz s'est installé dans une sorte d'orthodoxie, je ne m'y suis pas vraiment intéressé. Depuis j'ai appris à admirer aussi les artisans. Le vibraphoniste Cal Tjader a dit un jour: «*je n'aspirais pas à innover, mais à participer.*» C'est une façon très belle et très modeste de résumer cet état d'esprit.

Le jazz a-t-il été le premier bain musical dans lequel vous avez trempé?
Robert Wyatt: Avant le jazz, il y a eu la musique classique, surtout des compositeurs du XXe siècle comme Williams, Britten, Debussy, Ravel... Mon père, qui avait été pianiste dans sa jeunesse, appréciait aussi Duke Ellington ou Fats Waller. Enfant, j'ai été ébloui par la musique. Tendrement ébloui. Je le suis toujours. «Rien ne saurait ternir mon amour pour la musique»: voilà une devise qui pourrait résumer ma vie.

Ray Charles Just For A Thrill

Robert Wyatt: Oh! merci beaucoup... *(Il chante à tue-tête)* Je l'ai beaucoup écouté seul, de préférence avec un verre. Je peux pleurer en écoutant ça, c'est très compromettant...

Vous avez dit que Ray Charles avait changé votre regard sur la musique.
Robert Wyatt: Auparavant, je croyais en cette idée selon laquelle il y a une musique légère et une musique sérieuse. La première menant au sexe, à la drogue et à de mauvais

résultats scolaires, quand la seconde stimule vos neurones et peut vous transformer en dix minutes en un savant philanthrope. C'est la preuve que même l'éducation la plus libérale peut vous inculquer les pires préjugés... La façon dont Ray Charles peut habiter une chanson populaire est plus profonde que tout ce que j'ai pu entendre chez un violoniste classique ou un soliste de jazz. En l'écoutant, j'ai compris qu'il n'existait pas de bons ou de mauvais idiomes musicaux. Intellectuellement, il m'a fallu un certain courage pour en arriver là. Dans les années 60, ce n'était pas toujours facile à assumer. Quand, dans une soirée, je passais un disque de Little Richard après un album de John Cage ou de Cecil Taylor, j'entendais aussitôt «*Oh, Robert, comment peux-tu...?*» C'était comme si j'avais pissé sur la salade! La vérité, c'est qu'aujourd'hui encore je préfère simplement un steak frites parfaitement cuisiné à un grand mets complètement raté.



> Zoom

Est-ce que de tels préjugés avaient cours à l'intérieur d'un groupe comme Soft Machine?
Robert Wyatt: Le plus pénible, c'était cette notion stupide de «rock progressif», assortie de commentaires du genre: «*Ecoute ce solo de guitare, il y a quand même vachement plus d'accords et de notes que chez B.B. King!*» Quand, plus jeunes, nous défendions bec et ongles le jazz, c'était parce qu'au début du siècle, les gens le considéraient comme une musique superficielle, divertissante - avec ce présupposé raciste que les Noirs ne pouvaient pas jouer une musique sérieuse. Ça a donc été très décevant de voir que, par la suite, cette vision des choses pouvait refaire surface dans le rock. Aujourd'hui, elle perdure dans cette espèce d'élite avant-gardiste qui a tendance à croire que la musique improvisée est intrinsèquement supérieure à la chanson populaire. L'inverse existe aussi, bien sûr, parce que cette façon de considérer la musique d'un endroit prétendument supérieur est hélas universelle.

Kevin Ayers Religious Experience (Singing A Song in the

Morning)

Robert Wyatt: J'ai rencontré Kevin dans les années 60, à l'époque où j'habitais avec mes parents dans le Kent. Quelqu'un m'a dit: «*Je connais un type dans le Kent qui est comme toi.*» Je dois dire que je n'ai pas été très impressionné par cette information! J'ai finalement rencontré ce jeune gars très drôle, brillant, qui écrivait de magnifiques pop songs et qui avait des disques de bossa et de calypso dans sa collection. C'est grâce à sa petite cargaison de chansons que nous (Soft Machine) avons décroché notre premier contrat de management. Tout ça est parti en morceaux ensuite, comme vous le savez. Kevin, qui n'était pas plus amateur qu'un autre, a perdu son temps avec des gens comme nous. Je l'ai toujours pris très au sérieux.

Comment expliquer que, pendant les années 60, l'Angleterre ait généré tant d'individualités originales comme vous, Kevin Ayers, John Greaves, Fred Frith, Derek Bailey et tant d'autres?
Robert Wyatt: Nous avons tous grandi dans les années 50, une époque où beaucoup de jeunes musiciens noirs sont venus jouer en Europe, ce qui a apporté un souffle nouveau, très libérateur. Au même moment, les mouvements d'avant-garde du début du siècle comme le surréalisme ou Dada sont revenus à la surface, après avoir été étouffés voire rayés de la carte pendant la guerre. Il n'y avait pas plus d'idées ici que n'importe où ailleurs, mais elles ont été canalisées et filtrées à travers un médium - la musique - qui avait un énorme impact populaire.

Alfie: II faut aussi parler de l'influence des art schools. Dans les années 60, tous les gens qui ne voulaient pas entrer dans la vie active et désiraient stimuler leur imagination se sont retrouvés dans ces écoles. Et tous voulaient jouer de la musique, c'était une sorte de désir universel. Certains passaient plus de temps à jouer du sax dans les couloirs qu'à suivre des cours de dessin... Des groupes se sont spontanément formés.

Robert Wyatt: A l'époque, les gens issus des classes sociales les moins favorisés pouvaient accéder à ce genre d'écoles. Aujourd'hui, je suppose qu'ils joueraient tous au football...



Brian Eno Here He Comes

Robert Wyatt: Oh! c'est Brian. On devrait plus souvent rappeler combien il est un chanteur délicieux. J'adore le côté très peu démonstratif de son jeu et de sa voix. Il laisse la musique parler, apparaître dans sa propre clarté.

Vous vous êtes tous deux régulièrement invités sur vos disques respectifs. Quelle influence exercez-vous l'un sur l'autre?
Robert Wyatt: Je n'en ai aucune idée... Nous avons progressé ensemble, même s'il y a

d'énormes différences entre nous, un fossé presque intergénérationnel. Pour Brian, le jazz, par exemple, est une musique sans aucune nécessité. En ma compagnie, il reste heureusement très poli sur ce sujet! Nous avons sans doute plus de choses en commun aujourd'hui, même s'il n'apprécie guère les petits bruits que je mets dans mes disques... Brian a plutôt trempé dans cette avant-garde anglaise incarnée par des gens comme Cornélius Cardew. Mais il a fait fructifier cet héritage dans la musique populaire. Ce que j'aime chez lui, c'est son envie de toujours renverser les choses, de voir quelle tournure peut prendre une musique si on change radicalement d'approche. C'est aussi quelqu'un qui s'ennuie très vite, ce qui explique sans doute pourquoi il est si inventif.

Eno est aussi un musicien qui, tout en maniant des concepts, ne perd jamais de vue le côté purement pratique de la musique.
Robert Wyatt: C'est exact, et les critiques selon lesquelles il serait trop cérébral sont injustes. Il a les pieds sur terre. Quand nous étions en studio pour l'enregistrement de «Cuckooland», il passait de temps en temps nous voir en bicyclette. Rien de cérébral là-dedans, n'est-ce-pas?

Benny Moré Que Bueno Baila Usted

Robert Wyatt: C'est cubain. Qui est-ce? Ah! Benny More... Même si on peut le relier à ce qui se fait à La Nouvelle-Orléans, Trinidad ou le Brésil, le rythme cubain est absolument unique. Il est à la fois plus africain, plus sophistiqué et plus jazzy que partout ailleurs. Seul le Brésil présente un tel degré de raffinement. Le mélange africain et espagnol des musiques cubaines est une tradition d'autant plus merveilleuse qu'elle se perpétue. C'est un constat assez troublant, quand on sait que la propagande occidentale a toujours affirmé que le socialisme tuait la culture. Je crois être assez objectif si je dis qu'aucun groupe créé à l'extérieur de Cuba n'a joué aussi bien qu'Irakere.

Quand avez-vous éprouvé le besoin d'écouter d'autres musiques, comme les musiques cubaines ou le flamenco?
Robert Wyatt: II y a une bonne vingtaine d'années, à une époque où le rock'n'roll prétendait qu'il était le langage universel de la jeunesse et de la rébellion, alors qu'il ne me paraissait être que l'emblème du colonialisme occidental. Le contrôle de l'industrie du disque anglo-américaine sur le marché mondial était tel que beaucoup de musiques locales étaient écrabouillées, et que certains peuples commençaient à avoir honte de leurs propres traditions. J'ai éprouvé un tel sentiment de claustrophobie que je suis allé voir ailleurs. Si vous voulez vraiment entendre une musique faite par des gens qui refusent de se conformer aux règles, écoutez donc du flamenco! S'il y a en Europe des gens méprisés et bafoués, ce sont bien les gitans... Cela étant, j'insiste sur le fait que c'est avant tout parce que j'ai été ému par ces musiques que je me suis intéressé à elles.

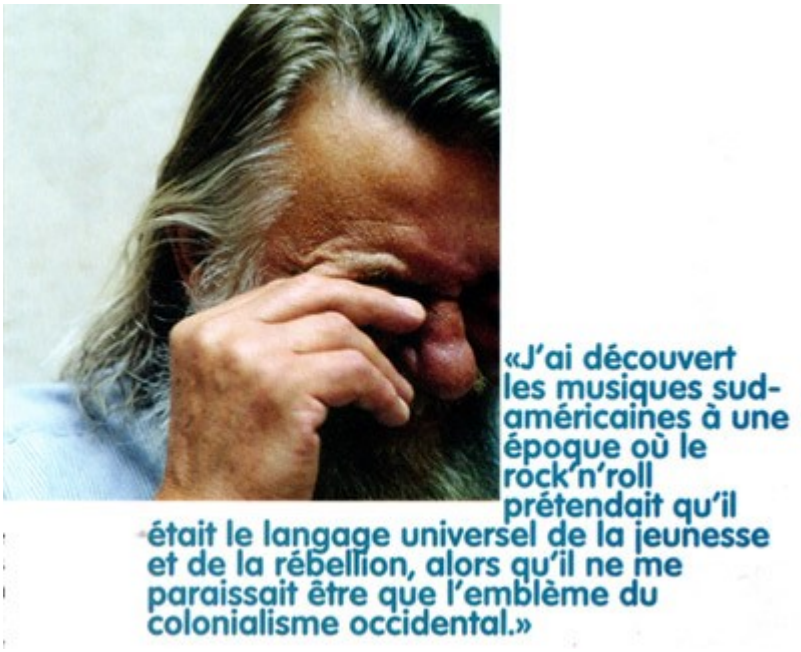
Tom Zé A felicidade

Robert Wyatt: Ce côté à la fois dépouillé et plein de détails, c'est exceptionnel. Les harmonies, les arrangements, l'utilisation très légère des percussions: tout n'est que musique ici.

C'est Tom Zé. Un musicien brésilien qui dit avoir trouvé son propre langage le jour où il a compris qu'il ne saurait jamais composer de «vraies» bossa novas.
Robert Wyatt: C'est exactement le chemin que j'ai suivi. Quand vous avez entendu de la pop ou du jazz mais que vous êtes incapable d'en jouer correctement, vous essayez de trouver des équivalents.

Dans «Cuckooland», vous signez une reprise épurée de «Insensatez», un autre standard de Jobim/De Moraes.
Robert Wyatt: J'ai d'abord voulu célébrer le fait que le Brésil, depuis l'élection de Lula, a une sérieuse opportunité de devenir une démocratie. J'ai vécu assez longtemps pour savoir que ce genre d'idéal peut être balayé en un rien de temps par le cynisme qui régit ce monde. A ce moment précis de l'histoire brésilienne, j'ai eu envie de fêter cet événement. Il y a aussi une raison strictement musicale. Depuis quelques années, le Brésil connaît un renouveau musical qui passe beaucoup par les clubs, les DJs. Il se traduit par des musiques de danse où le rythme est valorisé au détriment de l'harmonie. J'ai donc voulu célébrer une qualité de la musique brésilienne qui a été un peu marginalisée: son extraordinaire invention mélodique et harmonique. Ce n'est pas une critique en règle de ces nouvelles musiques. Juste une façon de dire: «*je suis assez vieux pour me souvenir*

aussi de ce pan-là de la musique brésilienne.»



Randy Newman Political Science

Robert Wyatt (II rit de bon cœur): C'est la meilleure chanson politique du XXe siècle. Si on l'avait mise en ouverture des journaux télévisés au moment de la guerre en Irak, il n'y aurait rien eu d'autre à ajouter.

Conciliez-vous facilement votre dégoût pour l'impérialisme américain et votre amour pour la musique américaine?
Robert Wyatt: Bien sûr, car ce ne sont généralement pas les mêmes personnes qui font l'une et l'autre! Potentiellement, les USA pourraient être ce pays merveilleux que décrivent leurs porte-parole officiels. Le problème des Américains, c'est qu'ils sont patriotes pour de mauvaises raisons. Si l'on y réfléchit bien, ce qui est arrivé de meilleur en provenance des USA est le fruit de vagues successives d'immigrants venus de tous les coins du monde, et projetés dans une configuration nouvelle qui les a amenés à réinventer tous ensemble leurs identités. Dans quel autre pays aurait-on pu voir un «Africain» comme Charlie Parker jouer la musique d'un Juif comme Gershwin? A l'heure où tout le monde ferme ses frontières, voilà une formidable publicité pour l'émigration de masse! En fait, je n'ai jamais autant célébré les Américains que dans «Cuckooland»; il y a trois chansons de Karen Mantler, une reprise de Buddy Holly et des époux Bryant, un célèbre couple de songwriters de Nashville...

Il y a aussi «Old Europe», qui est à la fois un hommage à Saint-Germain-des-Prés et une réponse cinglante aux déclarations de Donald Rumsfeld sur la «vieille Europe».
Robert Wyatt: Ce qui est bien avec cette chanson qu'a écrite Alfie, c'est qu'on peut dire «Fuck You!» à Donald Rumsfeld avec le titre, tout en célébrant par le texte et la musique ce grand moment de tendresse et de beauté que fut l'histoire d'amour entre un Américain exilé, Miles Davis, et une jeune Française, Juliette Gréco. Pour moi, c'est le plus beau moment dans l'histoire de la culture au XXe siècle. Il était bon de rappeler que, sans le soutien de la France, certains jazzmen américains n'auraient sans doute pas eu un tel destin.

Alfie: J'étais adolescente dans les années 50 et j'ai vécu quelque temps à Paris. J'allais écouter du jazz au «Chat qui pêche», rue de la Huchette. C'était très émouvant de voir des musiciens noirs aussi respectés. Le contraste avec la situation des Noirs en Angleterre à la même époque était saisissant. Il y avait un climat de confiance et d'ébullition incroyable. Robert et moi avions envie d'évoquer cela, car nous nous sommes sentis insultés.

Alain Bashung L'irréel

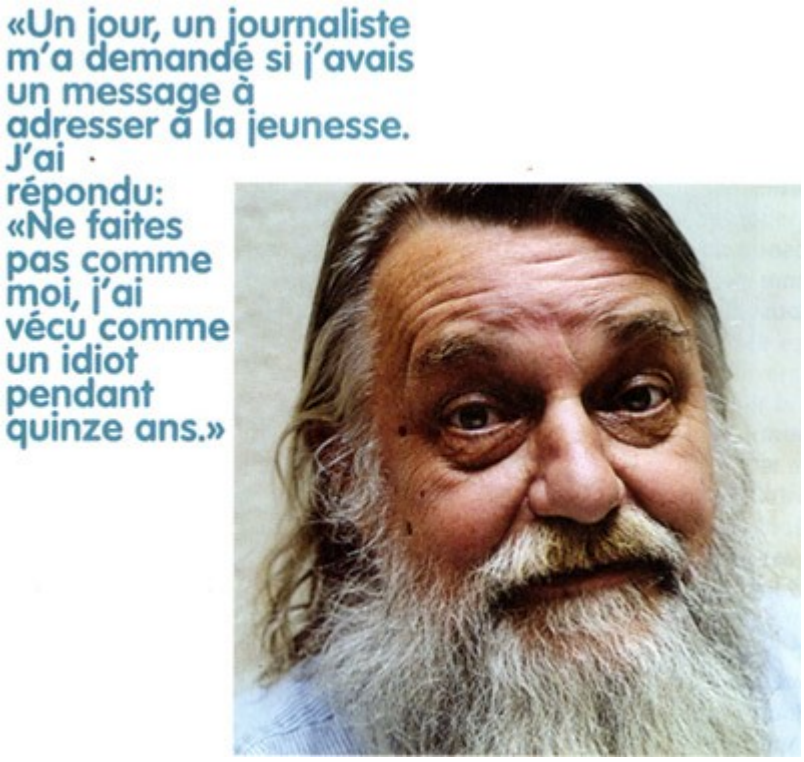
Robert Wyatt: Je ne saisis pas toutes les paroles, mais je sens que cet homme résout de façon très personnelle le problème de la relation entre, musique et poésie - une question qu'Alfie et moi nous nous posons depuis des années.

Il s'appelle Alain Bashung et, comme beaucoup d'autres musiciens français (Comelade, Truffaz, Bed, Man), il vous considère comme un modèle.
Robert Wyatt: Mon Dieu, mais c'est ridicule! Un jour, un journaliste m'a demandé si j'avais un message à adresser à la jeunesse. J'ai répondu: «*Ne faites pas comme moi, J'ai vécu comme un Idiot pendant quinze ans.*» Dans ces conditions, vous comprendrez que je suis un peu inquiet pour tous ces gens que vous me citez !

Avec un parcours comme le vôtre, il est normal que vous laissiez une empreinte.
Robert Wyatt: Regardez Lester Young: pendant longtemps, il n'a pas eu de véritable place dans l'histoire du jazz parce qu'il est apparu dans cette période de transition entre l'ère du swing et le be-bop. Mais beaucoup de musiciens se sont ensuite inspirés de son travail, les plus intéressants étant bien sûr ceux qui ont créé des musiques dont Young lui-même n'aurait jamais eu idée. Dans mon cas, il est très gratifiant de voir que quelqu'un comme Pascal Comelade a sa propre expression. Il a été l'un des premiers à me soutenir - en particulier dans les années 80, qui n'ont pas été tendres. C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles j'ai enregistré cette reprise de «September Song» avec lui: pour le remercier d'être là depuis des années.

Dionne Warwick Alfie

Robert Wyatt: Warwick chantant du Bacharach... C'est tellement bon. Avec Billie Holiday, elle représente à mes yeux la chanteuse populaire idéale. Cette mélodie est aussi liée à un souvenir qui m'est cher. C'était à un concert de Roland Kirk, peu de temps avant sa mort. Alfie, que je ne connaissais pas encore, était dans la salle. Comme c'était son anniversaire, l'une de ses amies est allée en coulisses et a demandé à Kirk s'il pouvait jouer «Alfie». Il s'est exécuté, en bataillant ferme parce qu'il n'avait pas l'habitude de jouer ce morceau seul, et il a terminé le morceau par une brève citation de l'«Alfie» de Sonny Rollins. C'est l'un des plus beaux moments que j'ai jamais vécus, et il a pris une valeur sentimentale supplémentaire par la suite.



Votre femme Alfie signe encore cinq textes de «Cuckooland». Comment votre association artistique a-t-elle évolué au fil du temps?
Robert Wyatt: je ne comprends pas pourquoi, dans beaucoup de cultures, les femmes d'artistes sont toujours considérées comme le côté obscur de la lune... Alfie est présente dans ma musique depuis le deuxième album de Matching Mole, en 1972. Elle n'a pas seulement apporté des textes. Elle m'a notamment convaincu qu'il était bon de faire une musique qui ne soit pas surchargée et compliquée, qui ait de l'espace et du cœur.

Alfie: J'ai toujours été une personne créative, je sortais d'une école d'art lorsque Robert et moi nous sommes rencontrés. Ma vie a changé quand il a eu son accident en 1973. J'étais frustrée d'abandonner mon propre cheminement créatif, alors j'ai essayé de m'immiscer un peu dans sa musique...

Robert Wyatt: J'ai longtemps été traumatisé par ce que j'avais vécu dans les années 60. Alfie m'a énormément aidé. Elle est le groupe dont j'ai toujours rêvé et que je n'ai jamais eu.

Robert Wyatt, «Cuckooland» (Rykodisc/Naïve/Musikvertrieb)

Rencontre Richard Robert
Photos Benoît Peverelli

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Robert Wyatt : le rock progressif, c'est classe - contre classe - CQFD - N° 6 - novembre 2003

Le Cri du Possum #6

ROBERT WYATT : LE ROCK PROGRESSIF, C'EST CLASSE – CONTRE CLASSE

Cri du possum #6. Au début des années 1980, dans *Old Rottenhat*, Robert Wyatt, devenu crypto-stalinien, plaque la lutte des classes sur un rock progressif presque aussi beau que celui de Rock Bottom.



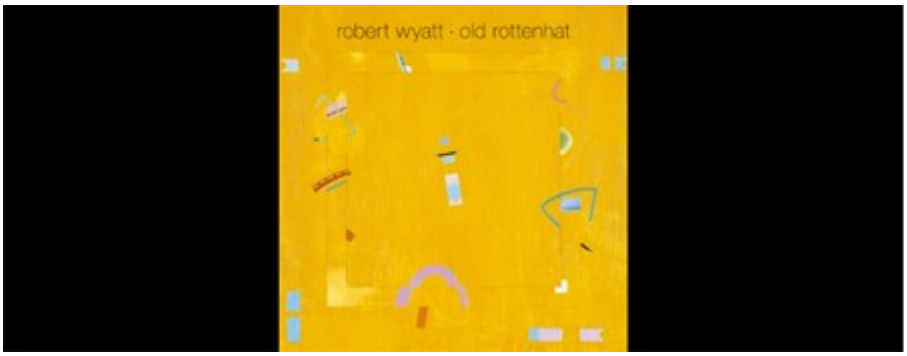
C'est quoi, la musique politique ? Pour aller vite, on peut distinguer deux catégories. La première, c'est la musique qui colle à ce qu'elle dit : qui chante le triomphe sur un air de triomphe (« *Prenez gaaardeu à la Jeune Gaa-aaa-rdeu...* »), la colère sur un air de colère (« *LA RAGE tagadagada… LA RAGE tagadagada…* »), la misère sur un air de misère (« *Et elle mouruuut dans le caniveauuu...* »). Voilà de la musique qui réunit aussi vrai que « Les Lacs du Connemara », qui tient chaud, qui rassure – de la musique qui chausse des pantoufles au cerveau, de la musique de gauche mais musicalement de droite, quoi, dont les auteurs finissent souvent par trahir leur camp, et ce n'est pas l'auteur de « Société, tu m'auras pas » et d'« Où c'est que j'ai mis mon flingue » qui dira le contraire.

De l'autre côté, il y a la musique politique qui fait chier, qui inquiète, qui prend le réel à rebours et ne craint pas de retourner le purin à la fourche. Dans ce camp-là, on a les Bérurier Noir qui, au lieu d'argumenter sur la démocratie, le dialogue et la tolérance, répètent 25 fois « *La jeunesse emmerde le Front national* », ce qui est bien suffisant. Ou Hanns Eisler, compositeur de la bande-son guillerette de *Kuhle Wampe*, le film de Slatan Dudow et Bertolt Brecht sur la condition ouvrière sordide du Berlin des années 1930. Il y a Ornette Coleman et Archie Shepp, qui attaquent la *white supremacy* à coups de marteaux dans les oreilles. Et il y a Robert Wyatt dans *Old Rottenhat*.

*
**

Sorti en 1985, *Old Rottenhat* est le premier album de Wyatt en dix ans. À l'époque, il y a longtemps que plus personne ne le calcule. Ses prises de position l'ont isolé. Au début des années 1980, Wyatt, depuis toujours marxiste plus ou moins avisé, a adhéré au parti communiste de Grande-Bretagne, de stricte observance moscoutaire, et enregistré une série de douteux singles politiques, réunis sur *Nothing Can Stop Us* (1982). Pour *Old Rottenhat*, pas question d'engager des musiciens, non tovaritch, d'ailleurs il est fauché. Alors il fait tout tout seul : textes, musiques, chant, instruments, arrangements – et retrouve ainsi la solitude, la concentration, la mélodie intérieure de *Rock Bottom* (sorti en 1974 – l'album le plus déchirant du rock ? sûrement), composé sur un lit d'hôpital après l'accident furieusement con qui, à 27 ans, l'a laissé paraplégique. À 40 piges, il assume sa chaise roulante et son look hasardeux. « Old Rottenhat » (« *Vieux chapeaupourri* ») est une insulte à destination des dandys, des frimeurs trop sapés, qu'il s'adresse ironiquement à lui-même (« *Cesse de crâner !* »).

L'album est en effet une manifestation d'orgueil personnel et politique, un *statement* subjectif et révolutionnaire. On y reconnaît, mûries, moins tripales, les fêlures du premier chef-d'œuvre, la fausse simplicité de mélodies qui se mettent soudain à crisser, les montées en puissance soudaines, qui dérapent dans un lyrisme à pleurer. Là-dessus, qui, au moment de la sortie du disque, doit paraître bien vintage, pour ne pas dire ringard, il balance, frontal, acerbe, plus ringard et plus pénible encore : la lutte des classes.



Le « message » d'*Old Rottenhat*, c'est : choisis ton camp, et pas de quartier. La première chanson, « Alliance », construit un mur de Berlin entre Wyatt et un vieux pote qui s'est embourgeoisé :

C'est dur de parler à des ennemis, et nous sommes ennemis
Avec tout ce que nous avions en commun, c'est encore pire
Tu es fier de faire partie des classes moyennes (sous-entendu : classes supérieures)
Tu dis que tu es indépendant (mais c'est pas toi qui pompes ton pétrole)
Je crois que ce qui t'effraie plus que tout
Est de savoir que tu as besoin des ouvriers plus qu'eux de toi

Campiste résolu, il défend implicitement l'Union soviétique en dénonçant les crimes des Américains, et d'abord celui, originel, du génocide des Amérindiens dans « The United States of Amnesia ». Le début est sinueux, moraliste, à la Brecht parolier de Kurt Weill. On se dit : où il va ?

Il y a des degrés dans l'amnésie, des manières d'oublier
Des manières de se souvenir de tout le bien que vous avez fait
Et si vous n'arrivez pas à trouver de témoins, gardez-en vous-mêmes la mémoire Personne n'est parfaitement bon tout le temps

Puis ça commence à piquer, sournoisement :

Et si vous avez tué tous ces Peaux-Rouges il y a très, très longtemps
Eh bien, aujourd'hui ils seraient morts de toute façon, de toute façon

Pour finir par tout défoncer :

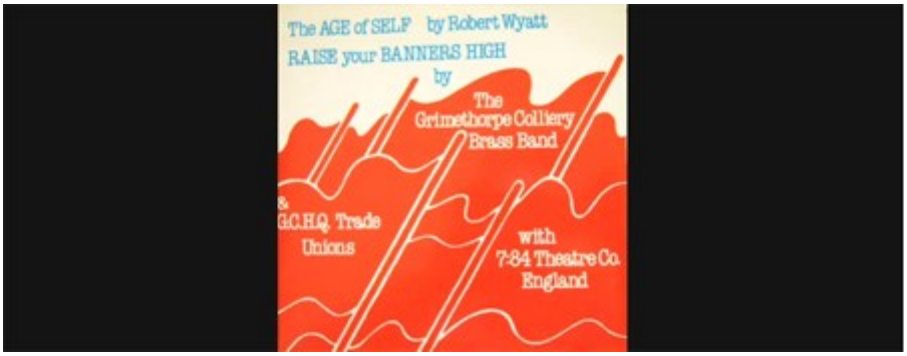
Donc, aucune réserve ! Du passé, faisons table rase
Dégageons le chemin pour le pays des hommes libres
Louons la civilisation une fois encore
Construisez votre empire aryen en paix.

Comme dans un roman de W. G. Sebald, souvenir et amnésie se déplacent et nous promènent au milieu d'un champ de ruines, sans qu'on sache exactement où on va : l'amnésie des Américains au sujet de leurs crimes recouvre l'oubli de la civilisation qu'ils ont exterminée.

Puis il évoque Timor oriental, où l'Indonésie de Suharto mène une guerre de conquête et d'extermination sous l'œil indifférent de ses alliés occidentaux, Australie et États-Unis en tête. Et ça swingue : « *What did Gillespie do to help you ?* » [« *Qu'est-ce que [le général australien] Gillespie a fait pour vous aider ?* »] résonne comme un « Poupidoupidou ».

⁂

Car ce qui rend *Old Rottenhat* d'une efficacité terrible et glaçante, c'est qu'entre les mots et la musique, ça ne colle pas, jamais. Les sonorités du texte s'encastrent dans les notes avec la rigueur d'un slam surdoué. Mais ce que le texte dit, on n'a vraiment pas envie de l'entendre sur cette musique, et on l'en entend d'autant mieux.



Sur « The Age of Self », il emprunte au new wave alors hégémonique pour chanter, tellement cool, avec basse répétitive et réverb, la défaite du mouvement ouvrier à l'ère de l'individualisme :

Il paraît que la classe ouvrière est morte, qu'on est tous devenus des consommateurs
Il paraît qu'on est allé de l'avant – que nous ne sommes plus que « des gens »
Il y a des gens qui vont « terriblement bien » et d'autres sur le carreau
Mais de ceux-là on s'en fout, voici venir l'Ère de l'Ego

À la fin, ça tourne à l'hymne élégiaque qui remplit le cœur de passion révolutionnaire et de mélancolie :

Et il me semble que si on oublie
Nos racines et où nous sommes
Le mouvement se désintégrera
Comme des châteaux de sable.

⁂

L'avant-dernier morceau de l'album, « Gharbzadegi », est le plus ambitieux musicalement et on y trouve en résumé, par touches, toutes les émotions de *Rock Bottom*. Le titre signifie quelque chose comme « la fièvre de l'Ouest » en persan. Les paroles sont un peu cryptiques :

C'est si facile de juger d'après un nom
C'est un jeu, donner un nom
C'est si facile de regarder les choses de haut
Vision d'hélicoptère
De se faire une image quand on est hors du cadre

En invoquant le pays et la langue de l'ayatollah Khomeini, ennemi absolu de l'Occident d'alors, Wyatt propose de renverser le point de vue, d'essayer de regarder le monde depuis ailleurs, de prendre conscience de notre ignorance de ce qui n'est pas notre monde. Et ce disant, il décrit ce que fait sa musique, et qui est la condition de toute révolution : un pas de côté, une interrogation permanente, la certitude bien accrochée que tout ce qui est, pourrait aussi être autrement.

Laurent Perez



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Coucou, c'est Robert Wyatt - Jazz Magazine - N° 541 - octobre 2003

COUCOU, C'EST ROBERT WYATT



Quatre ans après "Shleep", l'un des plus singuliers auteurs-compositeurs anglais - l'un des rares à faire tomber les barrières entre jazz et rock sans qu'on s'en aperçoive - revient avec "CuckooLand" (« Le pays du coucou »).

Chouette !

INTERVIEW :
BAPTISTE PIÉGAY.
PHOTO :
THOMAS DORN

L'été s'en va, mais Robert Wyatt revient, et de la plus belle des manières : "Cuckooland" s'impose d'emblée comme un de ses plus beaux disques. Libre, donc infiniment jazz, inventif, nostalgique, sans amertume, concerné sans pesanteur, rien ne lui fait défaut pour prétendre au statut de chef-d'œuvre. Entouré de partenaires exemplaires - Annie Whitehead au trombone, Gilad Atzmon aux saxophones ou encore Karen Mantler au piano et à l'harmonica - il s'échappe loin des conventions pour embrasser toute la beauté dont un musicien est capable. Ravi de constater que *Jazz Magazine* ne le perd pas de vue, il nous éclaire sur son cheminement depuis "Shleep", sa dernière livraison. Si les nouveaux morceaux semblent faits d'éclats, comme des kaléidoscopes brisés, cela tient d'abord à ses

méthodes :

« J'aime faire le plus de choses moi-même, c'est très difficile pour moi d'expliquer aux musiciens ce que je souhaite. Une fois que les bases sont jetées, c'est plus simple pour eux de trouver un espace. Dans le studio, il n'y a que moi, Alfie, Jamie Johnson, l'ingénieur du son, et le musicien. Cette impression d'éclatement dans les morceaux vient du fait que j'enregistre une série de duos, et que je mixe le tout ensuite ».

Wyatt organise leurs interventions très précisément *: « Ce sont des musiciens très différents, dans leur approche de la musique et leur sensibilité. Annie ou Gilad saisissent ce que je veux tout de suite. Les musiciens de rock ont peut-être un sens dramatique singulier, mais ils n'ont pas l'habitude de faire attention aux détails des accords que j'utilise, ils me demandent beaucoup de prises et un travail important au mixage ».*
Cette approche étonnante pour un musicien imprégné de jazz, passionné des souffles collectifs (une chanson est dédiée à Mike Zwerin du légendaire "Orchestra USA"), Wyatt la justifie par sa hantise du groupe - l'expérience Soft Machine, et son renvoi, restent un traumatisme profond :

« *Cette angoisse de n'être plus rien ne m'a jamais quitté, je n'ai jamais retrouvé cette joie de vivre...* ». Il poursuit, proposant une théorie idéale de l'écoute de la musique et de sa pratique : « *Je ne me suis jamais fait à cette idée qu'un disque doit être une machine parfaite, je veux qu'il y ait une relation intime avec le musicien. C'est comme notre conversation : nous sommes plus à l'aise tous les deux. S'il y avait d'autres journalistes, vous ne réagiriez pas de la même façon* ».

La grande beauté de "Cuckooland" doit beaucoup à son sens de l'organisation du champ de la chanson, presque impressionniste, par touches délicates :
« *Sur* Insensatez [Ndlr - du duo Jobim/De Moraes]*, je chante en duo avec Karen Mantler, et il y avait un espace où je ne voulais pas chanter et je souhaitais que Gilad fasse un solo de clarinette - il a un son où l'on retrouve l'âme des premiers clarinettistes avec une influence arabe. II a aussi utilisé une flûte, et a trouvé un arrangement dans l'esprit de Gil Evans. Sur* Old Europe*, une chanson nostalgique sur le jazz en Europe dans les années 40-50, un monde que je n'ai pas connu, que je me contente d'imaginer. C'est aussi une célébration d'une chose qui reste vivante tant qu'on le garde en tête. Gilad a tout de suite compris que j'attendais des petites réponses dans les intervalles que je laisse dans le chant. Il a travaillé ses soli pour qu'ils aient d'abord une couleur évoquant les années 40, puis 50. Il allait et venait entre quelque chose de très primitif à la clarinette et des riffs "*late swing ».

Il faut chercher ailleurs pour comprendre la composition au sens où il l'entend : « *II y a une obsession de la précision clinique dans la musique, qu'il s'agisse de classique ou de pop, qui ne m'a jamais intéressé. Chez les peintres que j'aime, Mirô ou Picasso, quand ils vieillissaient, il y avait de moins en moins de signes de leur virtuosité technique. J'en reviens toujours à Miles : il voulait que tout le monde joue au-delà de son savoir et de sa science. Techniquement, il n'était pas aussi rapide que Clark Terry mais on a l'impression qu'il essaie de surpasser ce qu'il sait faire pour obtenir ce qu'il souhaite ».*


En bref

1945
Naissance, le 28 janvier à Bristol (Angleterre).

1960
Rencontre avec Daevid Allen, l'un des futurs fondateurs de Soft Machine.

1973
Un grave accident lui fait perdre l'usage de ses jambes.

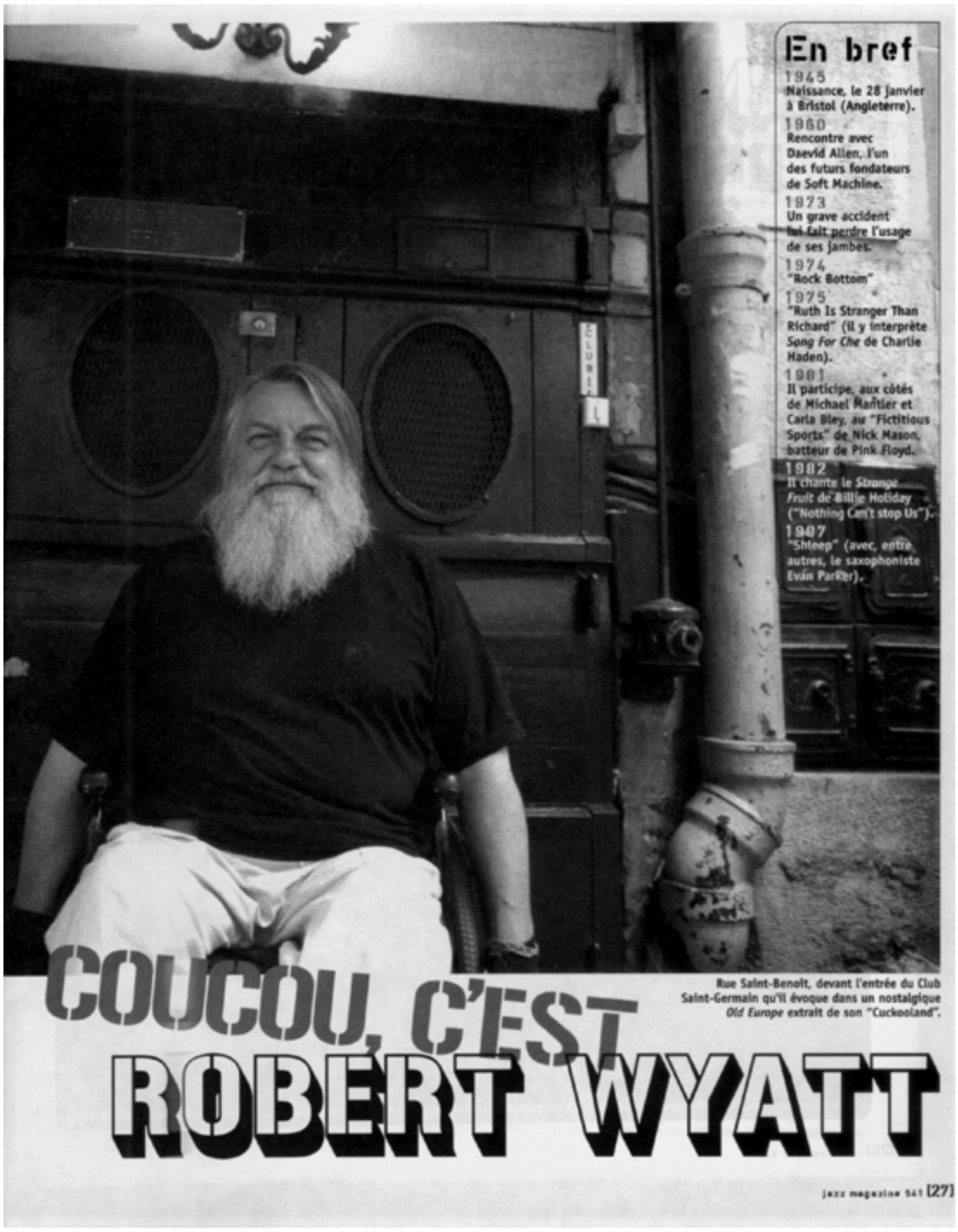
1974
"Rock Bottom"

1975
"Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" (il y interprète *Song For Che* de Charlie Haden).

1981
Il participe, aux côtés de Michael Mantler et Carla Bley, au "Fictitious Sports" de Nick Mason, batteur de Pink Floyd.

1982
Il chante le *Strange Fruit* de Billie Holiday ("Nothing Can't stop Us").

1997
"Shleep" (avec, entre autres, le saxophoniste Evan Parker).



Ouvert sur le monde de la musique, Wyatt s'émerveille de l'attitude de ses musiciens : « *Nombre d'entre eux ont reçu une formation académique, mais ils étaient compréhensifs. Dans mon souvenir, les musiciens de jazz n'étaient pas comme cela il y a trente ans : ils méprisaient ma technique assez primitive. Aujourd'hui ils sont plus ouverts, ils écoutent de tout : Annie travaillent avec des gens qui ne lisent ni n'écrivent la musique, par exemple des groupes de reggae, alors qu'elle peut tout déchiffrer* ».

Lorsqu'on l'interroge sur ses musiciens de référence lors de l'enregistrement, deux noms sont évoqués instantanément : Billy Higgins et William Parker. Si la matière de l'album propose des plages de grande douceurs (*Insensatez* et son merveilleux harmonica, en droite ligne Toots Thielemans), elle reste viscéralement abrasive et combative : de Bagdad au sort des réfugiés, en passant par la quête démocratique de l'Amérique Latine, rien de l'état du monde ne le laisse indifférent :

« *Alfie* [Ndlr – sa femme et parolière] *s'informe en permanence de tout ce qui se passe d'horrible dans le monde. Elle est un peu masochiste !* ».

Tordons le cou à ces clichés qui feraient de Wyatt le barde de l'avant-garde, alors qu'il qualifie avec insistance sa musique de « primitive » et souligne son goût de la musique populaire :
« *Quand j'étais plus jeune, avant même que je commence à jouer, il y avait déjà une tension entre la musique sérieuse et le reste, y compris le jazz. Je n'aimais pas voir ces préjugés de l'élite reproduits. J'ai toujours eu un immense respect pour la pop, même si elle vient de gens qui ne s'intéressent pas particulièrement à des choses plus complexes. D'après Mingus, si l'on s'éloignait du « song and dance », on perdait tout. Je comprends qu'on puisse avoir de l'aversion pour la pop, elle fait partie d'une culture commerciale dégradante, même si ce n'est pas la faute des musiciens, mais de l'industrie* ».

A ÉCOUTER
"Cuckooland" (Rykodisc/Naïve).

A VOIRà Charleville-Mézières (Théâtre, 8 novembre) : "Dedicated to you - Variations sur la musique de Robert Wyatt" par John Greaves, Sylvain Kassap, Hélène Labarrière, Jacques Mahieux, Karen Mantler, Dominique Pifarély. Renseignements : 03 24 32 44 50.

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Robert Wyatt enregistré à Paris par Philippe Thieyre le 28 août 2003 - diffusé sur France-Inter (Radio France) le 25 octobre 2003

Philippe Thieyre : *Pourquoi ne pas chanter «Old Europe» en français ?*

Robert Wyatt : J'ai chanté en français pour Mike Mantler, un compositeur autrichien qui a fait des adaptations de poèmes de Philippe Soupault. Alfie, bien qu'elle ne soit pas née en Angleterre, écrit en anglais. Plusieurs des chansons de «Cuckooland», notamment «Old Europe», lui sont dues. Elle est londonienne, donc elle parle le londonien. Elle aime les grandes cités cosmopolites comme Londres et Paris. A propos de nos impressions sur ces villes, je ne parlerais pas vraiment de nostalgie d'une époque. Au contraire, j'aime la manière pleine de vie dont elle transcrit nos sentiments, car, dans nos têtes, notre imagination élabore une vision en partie fictive, romantique et idéalisée des gens et des endroits qui font qu'on se sent bien et, en général, moins seuls sur la planète. Elle réussit bien à retranscrire cette idée que l'Europe, Paris en particulier, au siècle dernier, a été un refuge pour les artistes du monde entier, et pas seulement pour les artistes. Dans les années 50, quand nous étions jeunes, les musiciens américains, entre autres, ont été bien reçus à Paris J'étais très jeune, 9/10 ans quand je suis venu à Paris, et cela a créé une association romantique avec ma découverte du monde, ma première sortie en dehors de mon petit univers originel…

Politiquement, actuellement, il y a une amnésie à propos du rôle de l'Europe et des insultes sont venues de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique. Je veux signifier aux pays qui parlent anglais qu'ils devraient être reconnaissants à la France et à l'Europe de s'être occupées d'artistes qui avaient été délaissés dans leur propre pays. Un peu plus de respect, s'il vous plaît. Je recherche la beauté et un peu d'empathie comme tout le monde, partout. Les situations conflictuelles me rendent plus humain. «Old Europe» a été influencé par les vieux films français en noir & blanc. Et puis, en quelque sorte, je rends hommage au jazz, ce n'est pas réellement du Miles Davis, mais c'est une manière de rendre hommage à cette musique.

Ma musique peut être définie principalement comme une sorte de pop music, mais j'aime utiliser des idées et des trucs venus du jazz. Par exemple, je fluidifie le rythme et je fais glisser les notes d'un chorus à un autre. Je suis reconnaissant à Yaron Stavi, le contrebassiste. Il m'a été recommandé par Gilad Atzmon, qui joue du saxo sur 3 ou 4 morceaux de «Cuckooland». Gilad est devenu maintenant un citoyen britannique. Auparavant, il était dans l'armée israélienne. Là, il a ressenti que quelque chose n'allait pas. Il est venu s'installer en Europe. Quant à Yaron, originaire du même endroit, Tel-Aviv, il joue en Europe depuis 10 ans, notamment avec des orchestres classiques. Il est arrivé en Angleterre à cause de Gilad avec qui il se produit régulièrement. Pendant l'enregistrement du «Insensatez» de Carlos Jobim, j'ai demandé à Gilad de jouer un solo de clarinette. Il m'a alors proposé d'inviter Yaron qui a pris le bus et a débarqué avec sa contrebasse. C'était vraiment beau ce qu'il a joué et tous les deux sont de fantastiques musiciens, si rapides à assimiler les morceaux. Yaron est resté pour un autre titre, puis je l'ai rappelé pour «Forest», pour «Trickle Down» et pour la dernière plage, «La Ahada Yalam», une composition d'un israélien arabe que j'ai entendu sur un CD de folk.

Comme j'ai été ému par les sonorités, je voulais absolument cette chanson sur mon disque. Qu'importe qui chante ou joue, je veux simplement faire le meilleur album possible. C'est ennuyeux d'enregistrer toujours le même chanteur. J'ai donc demandé à Gilad de se lancer. Il apporte aussi sa contribution à «Old Europe» où il a suggéré cette manière de mini big band, clarinette et saxophone. A un moment, sur une de mes

compositions qui paraissait pourtant simple, je l'ai vu hésiter devant une succession de phrases musicales différentes et il m'a dit alors que la musique de Charlie Parker était plus facile à interpréter. A Londres, il travaille avec les réfugiés palestiniens et a enregistré un album, «Exile». Pour revenir à «La Ahada Yalam», il a joué le morceau comme la chanteuse le chantait, mais le paradoxe est qu'ensemble Gilad et Yaron trouvent des sonorités plus orientales que l'interprétation originale. C'est l'éducation musicale ottomane qui ressort. Il y eut également un moment amusant quand il a décidé de monter d'un octave lors d'un passage et qu'il m'a demandé si ça ne sonnait pas trop juif. (Rires...)

J'écoute toute sorte de musique, mais, au final, j'en reviens toujours aux vieux disques de jazz. Même si je ne me livre pas à des improvisations de jazz, c'est ma vision du bon feeling et je fais des disques pour me sentir bien. En fait, je ne pense pas avoir jamais réalisé un disque de rock dans ma vie. Mes racines de compositeur se trouvent dans la pop music traditionnelle dérivée du rock'n'roll, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Little Richard. J'ai un grand respect pour eux et j'aime l'affirmer de temps en temps. C'est le cas avec ce joli petit morceau «Raining In My Heart», qui n'a pas été écrit par Buddy Holly mais par le couple Bryant qui a aussi composé pour les Everly Brothers. Toujours les années 50. Ma période romantique, c'est les années 50, peut-être parce que j'étais à l'école. J'étais très malheureux à l'école et l'évasion vers d'autres mondes, le jazz, la pop, la peinture, était devenue vitale pour ma santé mentale, une question de vie ou de mort. J'ai essayé de sauver ma peau. Merci Buddy Holly.

"Lullaby For Hamza" est une composition que j'avais en réserve depuis des années, sans les mots. Alfie a écrit les textes au moment où les anglophones se sont trouvés des raisons pour bombarder des gens, ce qui semble une habitude historique et récurrente. Nous pensons que c'est notre devoir d'aller sauver le monde de lui-même. Cette forme de libération par les bombes est tout à fait un concept britannique. Alfie n'est pas anglaise, elle vivait en Europe pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, en conséquence elle perçoit les bombardements et la guerre dans leur brutalité. La guerre psychologique est peut-être encore pire, les ennemis doivent être diabolisés, ils doivent être des monstres, et bien sûr il y a des monstres partout, alors c'est facile de le faire. Alfie nous rappelle que ce ne sont jamais les méchants mais les gens comme vous et moi, les mères et les enfants qui subissent la guerre. Quand vous êtes bombardés, c'est trop tard pour la colère , pas de cris, pas d'hystérie, vous essayez juste de protéger les innocents, de les réconforter. Bien entendu il y a un rapport évident avec les Palestiniens : tous les arabes ont été diabolisés. Les racistes doivent se réjouir. Leurs victimes leur avaient été enlevées une par une : dans le passé, ils pouvaient s'attaquer aux Juifs, aux Noirs, dorénavant ce n'est plus permis, mais maintenant il y a de nouveau les Arabes. Un autre paradoxe réside dans le fait qu'ils n'ont jamais admis que les Arabes sont des sémites, avec une culture sémite. Pour moi, tout cela marque en fait un retour au vieil antisémitisme chrétien. C'est également très triste la façon dont les ambitions arabes ont été balayées au cours des quinze dernières années. La faim et le meurtre sont des choses terribles, mais je sais, d'après ma propre expérience, que le pire pour eux, le plus déstabilisant, c'est l'humiliation.

La leçon réside dans le fait de dire : faites ce qu'on vous dit, pas ce qu'on fait. J'ai honte des gouvernements des pays anglophones, je regrette de ne pas me développer dans une civilisation plus mature, comme celle de l'Europe moderne. C'est humiliant pour moi, alors : «Pas en mon nom, Tony».

Je comprends que les USA sont dans une position où ils ont tout le pouvoir. Tous les gouvernements veulent rendre leur pays plus fort, mais je leur reproche ce côté moralisateur, cette supériorité morale qu'ils affichent. Conneries. La morale de ces dernières années, c'est qu'on vous respecte, qu'on vous traite sur un pied d'égalité si vous avez des armes nucléaires. C'est une forme de racisme éhonté et total que de décider qui peut posséder la bombe et qui ne peut pas, de dire que certains peuples sont dignes de confiance, en fait ceux qui ont déjà utilisé ces armes de destruction massive, et d'autre pas. Les bombardements d'Hiroshima et de Nagasaki n'étaient absolument pas nécessaires, ils ont juste été décidés pour impressionner l'Union Soviétique et lui faire comprendre qu'on avait déjà la bombe. Juste une histoire de propagande et d'essai du matériel. Alors n'insultez pas notre intelligence avec vos histoires de morale.

P.T. : *Pourquoi cet écart de 5 ans entre «Schleep» et «Cuckooland» ?*

R.W. : Ces dernières années, j'ai enregistré pour d'autres gens en Espagne, avec le compositeur Bernard Coulais pour un film ou avec Pascal Comelade, et j'ai longtemps pensé que je n'avais pas assez de chansons pour un disque de Robert Wyatt. En réalité, je ne veux pas faire des disques solo. Le nom de Robert Wyatt signifie que j'ai initié le projet

et que j'en assume les conséquences. C'est l'album d'un groupe composé de moi, d'Alfie, de l'ingénieur du son, Jamie Johnson et de tous les musiciens plus les compositeurs comme Alfie, Karen Mantler (la fille de Mike et de Carla Bley). J'ai repris de vieilles compositions et j'ai demandé à Alfie de mettre des mots dessus. Elle a accepté avec empressement, se jetant dessus comme un poisson dans l'eau. Elle connaissait les musiques et puis nous ressentons tellement de choses en commun. A la fin, nous avions vraiment beaucoup de matériel. Plutôt une bonne chose car j'ai pu le retravailler, le couper un peu. Ainsi «Trickle Down», que j'ai eu beaucoup de plaisir et de joie à graver avec Yaron Stavi, durait initialement entre dix et quinze minutes.

P.T. : *Ce CD est particulièrement long.*

R.W. : Brian Eno est parfois choqué par la sorte de bruit sale et bordélique que j'aime produire. Même s'il y a son nom, il n'est pas responsable de ça. C'est ma responsabilité à moi. Le disque était beaucoup plus long. Un joli paradoxe : parce que j'ai tellement de morceaux, je peux les réduire, les couper, ôter tout ce qui n'est pas nécessaire à la structure de la chanson. En conséquence, rien n'est figé, y compris à l'intérieur d'une même chanson. J'ai eu la chance de pouvoir changer n'importe quelle phrase, n'importe quel vers. Quand nous avons fini, nous nous sommes aperçus que nous avions 75 minutes de musique. Nous avons bien ri. C'est un CD que personne ne veut faire. Personne ne veut écouter un CD aussi long. Nous nous sommes retrouvés bien embarrasser, mais je vais avoir 60 ans dans deux ans et le futur, c'est maintenant. Aussi j'y ai mis tout ce que j'ai. C'était trop long pour un style musical bien défini, on en a finalement tiré un avantage dans le découpage et le placement des chansons. J'y ai aussi abandonné l'idée d'une continuité évidente, donnant la primauté au mouvement et au changement.

P.T. : *Est-ce que, comme beaucoup de musiciens, vous avez perdu un peu d'aigus dans la voix ?*

R.W. : J'essaye de chanter, je n'ai pas un pitch parfait…Je ne sais pas ce que c'est exactement, quelque chose entre un *c* moyen au piano et le *c* au-dessus, c'est probablement un *f*, peut-être un *e*. Quand je suis saoul, il m'est possible d'atteindre un *a*. Mais maintenant, je ne peux plus accéder à un octave de *c*. Dans le temps, je pouvais aller plus haut. C'est fini. Le registre de la voix n'est finalement pas si grand que ça et quand vous perdez une note, c'est définitivement une grande perte. Heureusement, j'en ai gagné quelques-unes dans les graves. Bien entraînés, les chanteurs d'opéra, par exemple, peuvent conserver plus longtemps leur registre, mais c'est mon côté rocker, j'ai mal vécu. Je n'ai pas assez surveillé mon instrument.

P.T. : *Est-ce qu'il sera possible de vous entendre de nouveau sur une scène ?*

R.W. : Je ne peux pas faire ça. J'ai perdu mes nerfs. Je fais maintenant de la musique tout seul, ou avec une personne à la fois. Avec Gilad et Yaron, nous avons travaillé ensemble parce qu'ils sont si proches. Sinon, normalement quand je travaille avec Annie (Whitehead), je travaille seulement avec Annie. Avec Paul (Weller), c'est seulement Paul. C'est d'ailleurs très différent. Paul aime tout ce qui est fort. Vous ne pouvez pas être dans un studio avec Paul et Karen parce que Karen va être trop intimidée par l'atmosphère qu'aime Paul. Moi-même, je ne peux pas jouer avec un groupe. J'ai essayé. Quand des gens regardent ce que je fais, je perds tous mes moyens. Ce qui arrivait quand c'était le cas, c'est que je me saoulais tellement pour me donner du courage que j'en oubliais les mots et que le fauteuil roulant arrachait les fils électriques.

J'ai donné deux ou trois concerts (après «Rock Bottom»), certains avec Henry Cow, mais j'ai réalisé que je ne pouvais vraiment plus le faire. J'en ai donné un à Paris après «Rock Bottom». Le dernier s'est déroulé Plaza Navona en Italie : j'étais assis sur la scène et j'étais presque inconscient. C'est une terreur effroyable pour moi. Par contre, ce qui est bien maintenant, c'est que j'ai acquis suffisamment de confiance pour jouer avec d'autres musiciens. A une époque, dans les années 80, je ne pouvais même plus enregistrer parce que l'ingénieur du son m'écoutait. Je m'enfermais tellement en moi-même que j'ai dû arrêter complètement la musique. J'ai au moins gagné ça. Je pense que tout est parti de mon exclusion de Soft Machine. J'avais créé le groupe, rassemblé les gens et, démocratiquement, ils ont tous voté mon exclusion. Je me suis senti comme de la merde ! Si je n'avais pas eu de respect pour eux, j'aurais juste été en colère, mais parce que je les respectais, je me suis dit qu'ils devaient avoir raison. Quoique je fasse, tout le temps, je les ai sentis derrière mon épaule en train de rire de moi. En y repensant, je me serais probablement jeté par la fenêtre parce que je ne pouvais supporter cette humiliation. La part de l'humiliation est énorme. Je ne les en blâme pas, ils avaient sans doute raison,

mais cette idée ne m'a pas permis de me sentir mieux pour autant. Pourtant, finalement, c'était plutôt positif, ils m'ont permis de suivre mon propre chemin, de trouver mon autonomie musicale et de réaliser «Rock Bottom».

…Maintenant j'ai le courage de demander à des musiciens de venir m'aider. Au moins dans le studio, le disque semble résulter d'un travail de groupe, même si je ne vois qu'un musicien à la fois. C'est plus ouvert et j'aime cette sensation, mais je ne peux construire la trame du disque que chez moi.

La manière de travailler change avec les musiciens. Je demande à certains des choses précises. J'ai une idée exacte de ce que je veux. D'autres fois, ils apportent leur contribution personnelle. Par exemple, Paul Weller, s'il ressent l'envie de jouer de telle façon, il le joue et rajoute sa petite touche. A David Gilmour, je lui ai posé la question : veux-tu rajouter quelque chose ? Il a alors joué ce beau passage à la steel guitare. Il aurait pu dire non, c'était à lui de décider. C'est avec Annie que je me sens le plus proche dans le travail. Elle sait très bien trouver les notes importantes dans un chorus ou renforcer discrètement l'impact d'une chanson. Ainsi, sur le premier titre, vous ne remarquez pas sa présence, mais si vous l'enlevez, vous vous en apercevez tout de suite. Avec Gilad, par exemple sur «Old Europe», je lui donne une ou deux indications, puis il rajoute qu'il sentirait bien quelque chose rappelant les années 40 au ténor, enchaîné sur une approche plus marquée par les années 50. C'est exactement ce qu'il fait, puis il me demande de rajouter ce petit riff…puis des harmonies. Il commence à construire une jolie petite superstructure au saxophone, puis à la clarinette , une clarinette à l'ancienne avec un saxo très 50's. Au final, cette chanson est l'oeuvre d'un trio, les mots d'Alfie, la générosité de Gilad et moi. Le tout à parts égales. C'est ce que j'aime le plus quand la musique prend le pas sur les individualités, la mienne comme celle des autres.

Interview et traduction : Philippe Thieyre.

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Vol au-dessus d'un nid de coucou - Les inrockuptibles - N° 411 - octobre 2003



vol au-dessus d'un nid de coucou

Robert Wyatt, le vieux sage pas sage de la musique anglaise, revient avec un album somptueux, Cuckooland. Un disque où pop, jazz et musiques nouvelles continuent leur malicieux frotti-frotta. C'est dans son village de Louth que Wyatt nous a ouvert sa maison, son cœur et sa musique.

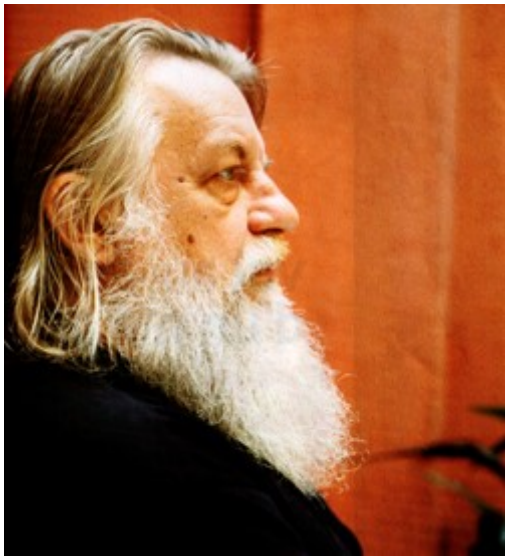
Par Richard Robert Photo Renaud Monfourny

Pour se rendre chez Robert Wyatt, il faut d'abord laisser Londres et filer droit vers le nord. Prendre l'un de ces trains pour Newcastle ou Leeds qui, au petit matin, sonnent forcément le creux - pourquoi diable des gens de la capitale iraient-ils se perdre là-haut ? Puis, après deux heures de voyage, sauter dans un tortillard de campagne, qui se traîne comme une chenille au milieu de paysages où rien n'arrête l'espace ni le regard, sinon quelques vaches et moutons accrochés comme des poux à la laine jaunie des pâturages. Enfin, descendre dans une petite gare déserte, pour suivre, quelques miles durant, une route qui sinue par pur caprice, puisque aucun obstacle visible ne justifie qu'elle ondoie. La ville de Louth apparaît au terme de ce long chemin, toute fardée de briques et habillée de calme. Un Londonien se dirait sans doute qu'il est arrivé là au bout du monde, et que le bout du monde est un coin bien perdu. Assez vite, il pourrait pourtant s'apercevoir que cette grosse bourgade n'est pas plus paumée ni moribonde qu'une autre. Elle mène sa vie, ramassée et grouillante, sans se soucier de sa place dans l'univers ni du rôle qu'elle tient dans la marche de la planète. Elle possède ses centres de gravité - son marché, ses pubs, son église, sa rue commerçante - et se fiche de ne pas être soumise à l'influence de ce que l'on appelle aujourd'hui les "pôles de décision". Si bien qu'après une douce journée à Louth, tout vous paraît facilement renversé : c'est Londres qui, comme sous l'effet d'un subtil mouvement de balancier, est repoussé à la périphérie, très loin au fond du décor, perdu dans quelque province embrumée.

La musique de Robert Wyatt détient exactement ce genre de pouvoir. Elle change les perspectives d'écoute, brouille les critères censés distinguer la "norme" de la "marge". Elle culbute aussi cette logique selon laquelle la pop, le jazz ou les musiques nouvelles seraient des entités figées et distinctes. Ceux qui ne la connaissent que de loin la croient étrange, difficile à cerner, voire indéchiffrable. Ceux qui ont pris la peine de l'explorer savent qu'elle constitue un monde à part entière, où il fait bon se réfugier quand l'époque vire à la grisaille. Ce monde est l'antre chaleureux et profond d'un homme qui n'est pas

plus un anachorète qu'un doux illuminé. Trop occupé à suivre la pente de ses goûts et de son inspiration, Wyatt s'est détaché comme par distraction des us et coutumes du milieu musical. Comme Mark Hollis ou Pascal Comelade, deux de ses nombreux héritiers, il n'est pas ailleurs : il campe simplement au cœur de sa propre musique et rien ne saurait le déloger d'une place aussi privilégiée.

L'Anglais jouit d'un prestige nouveau depuis *Shleep* (1997), un album gorgé de sève et d'idées qui aura mis fin à une longue période d'hibernation. Son nom est réapparu dans la liste des créateurs les plus influents de ces trente dernières années. Toute une volée de jeunes musiciens le cite volontiers en exemple - notamment en France, où Bed, Syd Matters ou Man n'existeraient peut-être pas sans lui. Mais certains des éloges qui lui sont adressés contiennent aujourd'hui encore une part d'incompréhension. Très récemment, on lisait ainsi dans une gazette ce commentaire à double tranchant sur son nouvel album, *Cuckooland : "Wyatt sort des disques en général magnifiques, mais difficilement accessibles au commun des mortels."* Pas franchement ce qu'il y a de plus encourageant.



> Zoom

"C'est un avertissement plutôt sympathique, juge l'intéressé. Je comprends que les gens prennent ce genre de précautions avec moi. Je n'ai jamais cherché à être délibérément obscur, mais je ne me suis jamais retenu de faire quelque chose sous prétexte que ça risquait d'apparaître comme tel. Bien sûr, je me dis très souvent que je sors des disques on ne peut plus normaux, puisque j'y mets la musique que j'ai toujours rêvée d'entendre. Mais dès que la radio diffuse l'une de mes chansons, je mesure à quel point elle ne ressemble à rien de ce qui se fait aujourd'hui... Mon isolement relatif est peut-être à l'origine de ce décalage. Ça fait des années que je ne fréquente pas l'univers des musiciens, quelle que soit leur obédience - avant-garde ou mainstream, mainstream de l'avant-garde ou avant-garde du mainstream... Du coup, je crois que j'ai développé une sorte d'anatomie mutante, un peu comme ces espèces des îles Galapagos qui n'ont pas suivi la même évolution que les autres parce qu'elles étaient séparées du reste du monde. Etre "différent" ou "comme les autres" n'a jamais représenté le moindre enjeu à mes yeux. D'une manière générale, tout ce qui, dans ma musique, renvoie à ma personnalité ne m'intéresse pas. Ce qui m'importe, c'est de composer de belles pièces organiques, qui puissent vivre par elles-mêmes."

Le parcours de Robert Wyatt est celui d'un musicien qui, lentement mais sûrement, s'est mis hors compétition. Pour lui, tout a pourtant commencé comme une de ces bonnes vieilles légendes dont l'histoire du rock aime à nourrir sa chronique.

Né en 1945, il tiendra, au milieu des années 60, la batterie dans un groupe qui, aujourd'hui encore, fait figure de référence pour tous les amateurs de musiques aventureuses. Alors que les Beatles et les Stones se tirent la bourre devant le monde entier, Soft Machine ouvre un front pionnier en rassemblant des forces apparemment disparates. L'esprit libre du jazz, la puissance énergétique du rock et du rhythm'n'blues, les inventions de langage chères au surréalisme ou à dada se mêlent dans un bric-à-brac pataphysique qui illustre à merveille cet amour du désordre dont les années 60 se firent l'écho.

A cette époque, Wyatt fait déjà plus que cogner sur ses fûts. Avec sa voix haut perchée et ses compositions en escalier, il apporte à Soft Machine cette sensibilité joueuse et cette poésie lunaire dont il ne se départira jamais, même aux heures les plus sombres de sa carrière. Après le départ de Daevid Allen (futur Gong) et surtout celui du troubadour pop Kevin Ayers, il se heurte pourtant très vite à la rigidité des deux membres restants, partisans d'une ligne plus sérieuse et purement instrumentale.



Lorsque Wyatt quitte le groupe en 1971, laissant ses partenaires s'enliser dans l'ornière prog-rock, le mal est déjà fait. Ses deux albums à la tête du collectif Matching Mole (traduction phonétique et ironique de "machine molle", Soft Machine en français) ne dissiperont que momentanément les doutes qui l'assaillent. *"A titre personnel, les années 60 ont été un véritable désastre, une humiliation. J'ai côtoyé des musiciens de grande qualité, tant dans la pop que dans le jazz, mais ces expériences collectives se sont toujours terminées par un fiasco. Pendant une bonne quinzaine d'années, je me suis senti coupable, j'avais tout simplement honte d'exister."*

L'accident qui, en juin 1973, lui coûte l'usage de ses jambes (à la suite d'une soirée passablement arrosée, il chute du quatrième étage d'un immeuble londonien) marque violemment la fin d'une ère. Avec *Rock Bottom* (1974), chef-d'œuvre flottant dont il a tracé les plans sur son lit d'hôpital, Wyatt passe de l'autre côté du miroir rock. Enrobée dans un nuage de cymbales, de claviers et de trompettes qui tremblent comme des gouttes sur une branche au soleil, sa musique s'émancipe de toute tradition et présente des propriétés plastiques qui le rapprochent de ses premières amours, la peinture.

Devenu paraplégique, Wyatt semble avoir redécouvert les vertus originelles du chant et du geste musical. Sa voix de tête, d'une blancheur presque aveuglante, et ses instrumentations liquides dessinent des figures mélodiques faussement transparentes, où tout est affaire de lignes, de points, d'irisations, de grain et de texture.

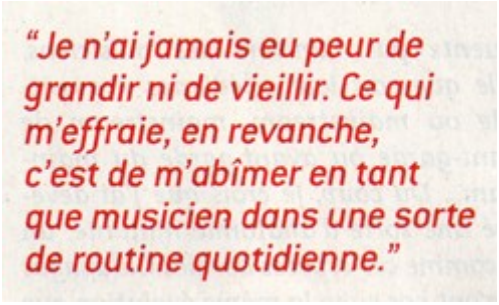
Tétanisé en studio, méprisé par des ingénieurs du son qui n'entendent rien à ses partis pris esthétiques, Wyatt distille au compte-gouttes des albums âpres à l'oreille et longs en bouche - *Old Rottenhat* en 1985, *Dondestan* en 1991 - où l'absence de toute ornementation inutile valorise un peu plus les incroyables inventions de son écriture. Avec ses claviers pourris et sa voix flûtée, Wyatt signe alors une véritable musique d'île déserte.

Ses engagements politiques (il adhère au PC anglais de 1979 à 1987, au moment où le libéralisme thatchérien triomphe et où le bloc communiste se désagrège) et son refus viscéral de se produire sur scène ("*Je m'évanouis de peur à la simple idée que des gens comptent sur moi pour animer leur soirée*") achèvent de le mettre en retrait du grand cirque pop.

Pourtant, cet homme au visage broussailleux de Robinson Crusoé n'est pas totalement naufragé ni solitaire. Certains amis fidèles, comme Brian Eno, Michael Mantler ou Geoff Travis, le boss du label Rough Trade, sont de ceux qui l'incitent à enregistrer, fût-ce par intermittences. Surtout, Wyatt a trouvé son Vendredi en la personne d'Alfreda Benge, dite Alfie, son épouse depuis 1974. Elle est à la fois sa muse (il lui a dédié *Rock Bottom*) et son point d'ancrage avec le monde, son bras armé (c'est elle qui, au bout d'un long combat avec Virgin, récupère les droits de ses premiers albums solo) et son guide, sa conseillère et sa parolière - elle a signé cinq textes de *Cuckooland*. "*Je l'enjoins à intervenir de plus en plus dans ce que je fais. Elle ne m'apporte pas seulement des textes ; elle m'a notamment poussé à composer une musique moins surchargée et complexe, qui ait de l'espace et du cœur.* Shleep *et* Cuckooland *n'auraient pas eu le même visage si elle n'avait pas été là. Lorsque je compose, j'ai besoin d'être dans une sorte de transe solitaire. Mais ensuite, il faut que je puisse partager, échanger. Avec Jamie Johnson, mon ingénieur du son depuis* Shleep*, Alfie forme le groupe que je n'ai jamais eu.*"

En bon émule de Darwin, Wyatt affirme que *Cuckooland* est le résultat de toute cette histoire, des quelques rencontres qu'il a pu faire sur ce tortueux chemin et des leçons que ses expériences lui ont enseignées. Une manière de dire que, six ans après *Shleep*, il a

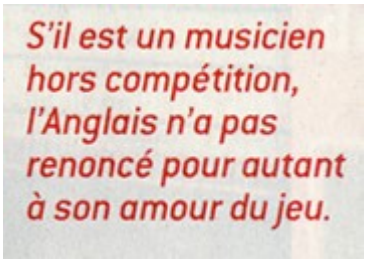
choisi comme toujours de changer dans la continuité. De fait, les premières mesures de *Cuckooland*, où quelques coulures de cornet glissent sur une nappe de synthé bon marché, ramènent l'auditeur en terrain familier. Mais le terrain est si fertile, si prodigue de beautés et d'inventions, qu'on se laisse une fois de plus surprendre.



Il y a d'abord la classe phénoménale d'un musicien qui réussit à enchaîner les figures harmoniques, mélodiques et rythmiques les plus acrobatiques sans jamais donner l'impression de s'adonner à de pénibles tours de force. Il y a cette voix à la fois neuve et ancestrale qui unifie cette improbable mosaïque, cette voix d'enfant centenaire qui n'est pas - n'en déplaise à Ryuichi Sakamoto - "*la plus triste du monde*" : simplement la plus littérale et la plus musicale du monde, comme en témoigne la relecture limpide *d'Insensatez*, le standard de Tom Jobim.

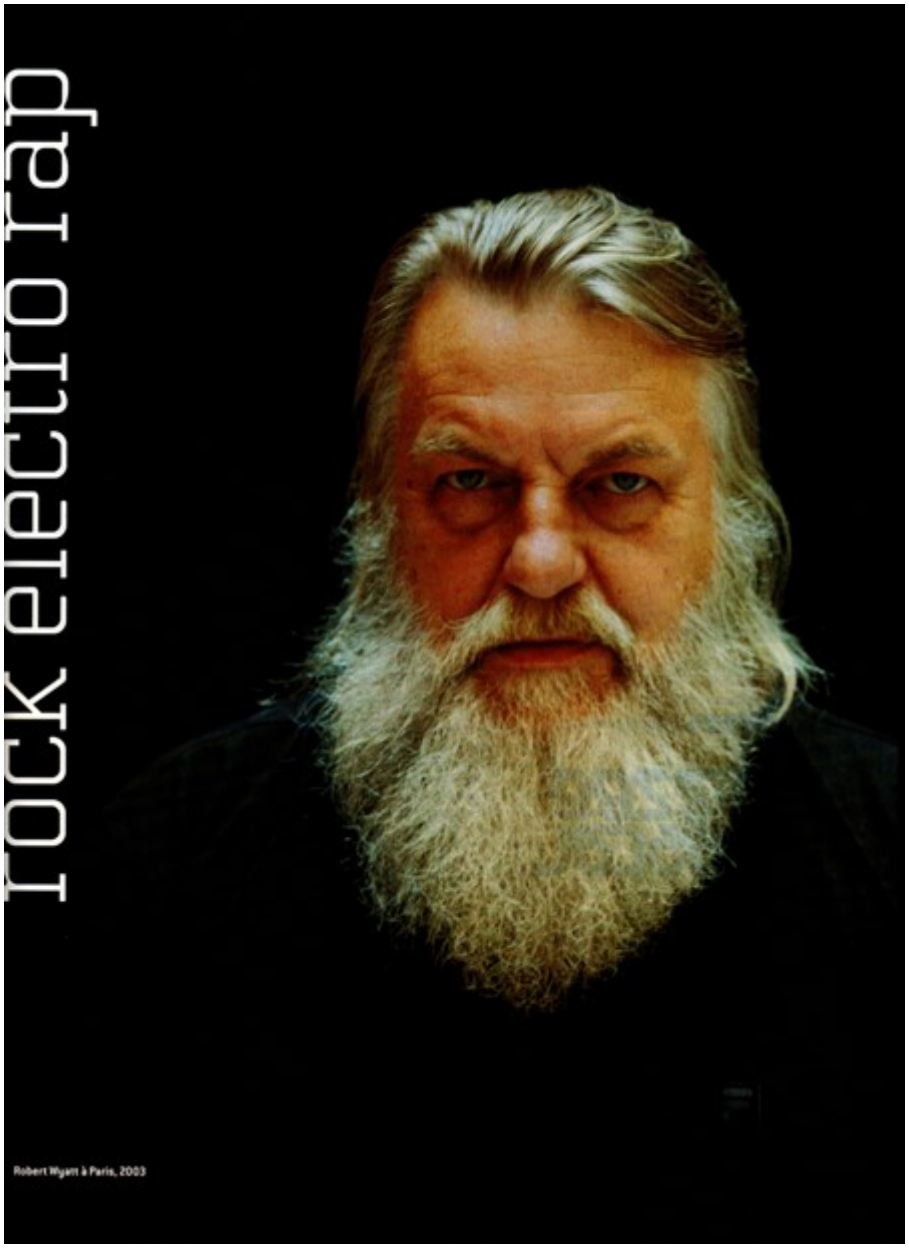
Il y a aussi l'extraordinaire fond de jeu d'une équipe d'instrumentistes qui, de Karen Mantler à David Gilmour, du clarinettiste israélien Gilad Atzmon à la tromboniste Annie Whitehead, donne à chaque trait mélodique la couleur et la vibration requises. Il y a enfin cette place nouvelle accordée au jazz, qui n'apparaît plus seulement en filigrane, mais de manière très explicite, comme sur ces véritables airs à swinguer que sont *Old Europe* ou *Trickle Down*. "*Lorsque vous commencez à atteindre un certain âge, vous êtes peut-être tenté de retourner dans les parages de l'enfance et de l'adolescence. Mes racines, ce sont les années 50 - et non les années 60, comme beaucoup de gens peuvent le croire. J'ai tellement détesté l'école quand j'étais gamin que je me suis évadé dans l'univers chimérique du jazz et de la peinture. Je ne me considère pas aujourd'hui comme un jazzman, mais le jazz est le chemin par lequel je suis vraiment entré dans le monde. Note par note, rythme par rythme,* Cuckooland *est aussi une façon de retrouver ce lien avec ma culture d'origine.*"

Cet hommage à la musique qui l'a éveillé n'est pas le seul moment fort d'un disque extrêmement dense : toutes les chansons, ici, peuvent facilement faire l'objet de plusieurs niveaux de lecture (musical, poétique, politique, sentimental...), sans que la limpidité ni la légèreté de l'ensemble en soient pour autant altérées. Comment Wyatt réussit-il à créer une musique aussi chargée et aussi aérienne ? Face à une telle question, l'Anglais répond qu'il n'est pas psychologue pour un sou et qu'il n'est pas doué pour l'introspection.



Un court détour par sa salle de musique, au rez-de-chaussée de sa maison de Louth, apporte un élément de réponse. Dans cette petite pièce dorment un magnéto 8-pistes, une table de mixage, un piano, une guitare qui appartient à Kevin Ayers, des percussions et des cymbales. Et aussi un cornet, avec lequel Wyatt se plaît à accompagner les disques de Jimmy Scott, Astrud Gilberto ou Ray Charles. "*Voilà à quoi ma vie de musicien ressemble le plus souvent : à un karaoké*", lâche-t-il, amusé. La joie presque enfantine avec laquelle Wyatt évoque cette modeste activité dit à elle seule ce qui fait sa singularité : s'il est un musicien hors compétition, l'Anglais n'a pas renoncé pour autant à son amour du jeu. Et c'est bien ça qu'on entend de bout en bout dans *Cuckooland*, comme dans une épatante compilation d'inédits qui vient de sortir, *Solar Flores Burn for You* (1972-2003).

"Je n'ai jamais eu peur de grandir ni de vieillir. Ce qui m'effraie, en revanche, c'est de m'abîmer en tant que musicien dans une sorte de routine quotidienne. Pour moi, il y a là une forme de sacrilège. Ecrire une chanson, c'est comme peindre la voûte d'une chapelle : dans les deux cas, on essaie autant que possible de créer de la magie. Si j'aime Van Gogh, par exemple, c'est parce qu'il est capable de voir la beauté impérieuse d'une vieille chaise ou d'un bol de pommes de terre, de les peindre comme s'il venait d'une autre planète et voyait ces objets pour la première fois... Pour moi, ce genre de sensations renvoie forcément à l'enfance, qui est l'âge de la magie par excellence, une période de la vie où tout est choquant, extraordinaire, étonnant. S'il y a encore un enfant en moi, il resurgit ainsi, presque par hasard, dans l'acte de jouer et de chanter. Ça n'a rien à voir avec une forme d'immaturité ou d'innocence. Il se trouve simplement que, par moments, la musique m'aide à considérer le monde comme un endroit magique. En cela, elle est une alliée précieuse dans ma bataille contre le cynisme et le désenchantement. Avec elle, je trouve cette planète beaucoup plus intéressante.



> Zoom

C'est peut-être là l'enseignement délivré par l'œuvre de Robert Wyatt : l'amour de la musique, quand il est porté par une telle fraîcheur d'intention et d'expression, rend beau, intelligent, heureux et sensible. Une vérité qu'on est en droit d'estimer naïve, voire mièvre, mais qui trouve pourtant dans *Cuckooland* sa plus indiscutable transcription. Neuve comme au premier jour et belle comme l'antique, la musique de Wyatt renferme à

la fois tout le possible du monde et les bruissements de la vie simple. Cette prouesse, accomplie avec l'humilité et la droiture d'un homme qui ne s'est jamais vu plus grand qu'il n'était, mérite bien qu'on la célèbre avec un peu de grandiloquence. Car elle rend, elle aussi, cette planète plus intéressante et, tout simplement, plus vivable".

Cuckooland (Rykodisc/Naïve) ; Solar Flares Burn for You (Cuneiform/Orkhëstra).

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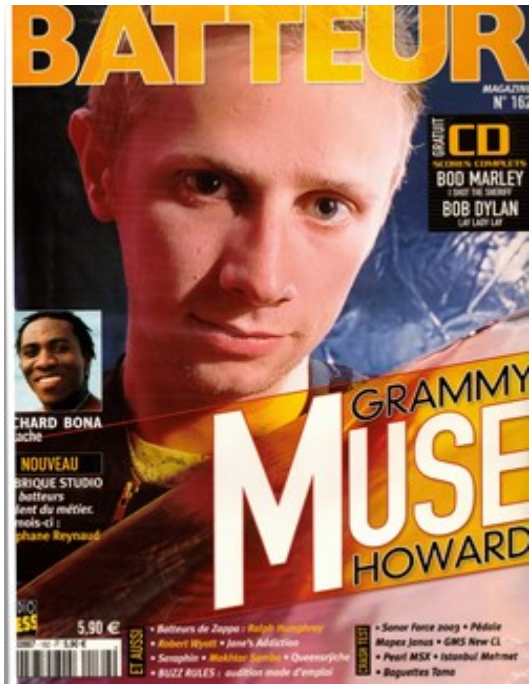
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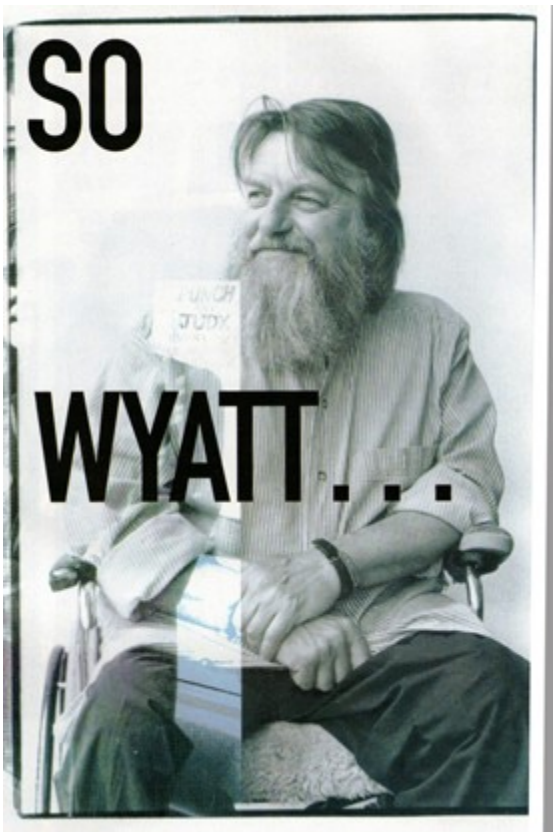
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So Wyatt... - Batteur Magazine - N° 162 - octobre 2003



Tout le monde dit de ce héros de la batterie des années 70 que sa discographie est inclassable.



C'est sûr qu'il fait partie de ces rares artistes à n'avoir fait que comme bon lui semblait. A l'occasion de la sortie de son dernier album, "Cuckooland", nous ne pouvons manquer le rendez-vous avec cet extraordinaire personnage.

Robert Wyatt est simplement un héros de la batterie, un de ceux qui ont su graver leurs lettres au firmament d'un style de musique déprécié de nos jours mais qui reste une étape musicale fondamentale : le rock progressif. Robert Wyatt a su compter parmi les piliers indispensables de l'élaboration de ce style, au même titre d'ailleurs que Pink Floyd. Dans les années 70, alors que les chansons de pop et de soûl étaient conditionnées par le carcan d'une structure quasi immuable (couplet-pont-refrain-couplet) et d'un format radio (3*30), une série de musiciens - pour la plupart britanniques - se sont évertués à détruire les structures pour imprimer aux chansons de nouvelles formes, plus libres, plus folles. Les délires sonores et instrumentaux n'avaient ici pour limite que le bon goût — limite largement franchie dans certains cas. Dans ce contexte où la pop se mêlait au jazz, le rock à la musique classique, Soft Machine a joué un rôle primordial. Mais on se répète. Après le départ de Robert Wyatt, Soft Machine sombrera dans les méandres un peu froids d'un jazz-rock sans âme, pendant que Wyatt fondera Matching Mole - jeu de mots sur la traduction

française de Soft Machine, "Machine Molle". Il faut dire que le groupe de l'école dite de Canterbury n'a pas vraiment apprécié l'ascendant que prenait le batteur sur le groupe. Et pour cause, l'humour et la créativité semblaient de plus en plus lui appartenir. Cet élan créatif va trouver nourriture dans un traumatisme qui aurait pourtant dû détruire Robert Wyatt. Alors qu'il préparait le troisième album de Matching Mole, Robert Wyatt, totalement torché, participe à mettre une ambiance de feu à une soirée en se jetant par la fenêtre. Résultat, six mois d'hôpital et surtout une hémiplégie définitive. Impossible donc de jouer de la batterie. Pour l'excellent batteur, c'était sûrement un traumatisme insurmontable, mais pour le compositeur c'est l'opportunité de ne se focaliser que sur la création. Une création qui le pousse à réaliser des albums inclassables.

Quelle ambition pour le compositeur sur ce dernier album ?
« Oh là, ambition ? J'essaie juste de jouer et trouver les meilleurs sons que je peux. En ce sens, j'ai l'impression de toujours réaliser le même disque, je tente juste de mieux le faire sonner (rires). Quand j'écoute mes anciens albums, je me dis : "tiens j'aurais dû faire ça comme ça" et maintenant je sais comment le faire sonner. Pour l'instant, je me dis que « Cuckooland » est le meilleur disque que j'ai fait, jusqu'à ce que je réalise que j'aurais pu faire mieux. »

Un travail de studio avant tout pour l'homme blessé qui ne monte plus sur scène depuis son accident. Peu lui importe de "défendre" son disque en tournée, pour lui la musique se défend d'elle-même, pour autant qu'elle ait besoin d'une défense.

« Je n'ai pas envie de monter sur scène. Premièrement parce que je suis trop timide à présent. Quand je jouais de la batterie et que j'étais sur scène, déjà j'étais complètement ivre la plupart du temps et, ensuite, la batterie était une sorte de protection. Deuxièmement parce que... je pense que l'image la plus appropriée pour te décrire ce que je ressens par rapport à la scène serait celle d'un mariage fabuleux qui se conclurait par un divorce humiliant. Même si le mariage était magnifique, le souvenir ne l'est pas. C'est comme quand tu as un accident de voiture. Tu pouvais avoir une splendide bagnole, mais quand elle est ratatinée, elle va à la casse. Les années 70 sont pour moi comme cette voiture, et l'idée de monter sur scène relève du cauchemar. »



II n'en reste que Robert Wyatt, inoxydable passionné de la musique et du rythme, continue d'assurer les ambiances rythmiques de ses productions, tout en ayant des vues précises sur l'instrument. Il est de ceux qui considèrent que la batterie est trop utilisée comme un instrument global alors qu'elle est un amalgame de plusieurs instruments avec leur histoire propre et leur diversité de son :

« Depuis que je ne peux plus jouer de la batterie, je réalise à quel point un set de cymbales peut sonner, quelle variété de sons tu peux obtenir, et je trouve dommage qu'on ne considère pas assez le potentiel de chaque instrument du grand tout qu'est la batterie. Je reste totalement subjugué par ce que peut faire Billy Higgins. Higgins réussit à créer des

ouvertures à la charley hallucinantes. Ce n'est pas un "tchip" comme tu les entends. Ce n'est pas une ouverture où la cymbale du haut retombe sur celle du bas. C'est une vague. Rien que ce son est un swing. Le son qui est produit est d'une beauté épatante. Je me suis dit qu'il fallait utiliser chaque instrument de la batterie avec un tel soin, un tel souci du son. Sur mon dernier album, j'ai tenu à utiliser les cymbales comme une "fracture permanente", en jouant les mêmes figures des deux mains, mais en créant un petit décalage entre chacune d'elles. J'ai noté également que quand on jouait un shabada, ce qui suscitait le swing c'était la charley sur le 2 et le 4. Si tu retires la charley, tu te rends compte que souvent ça ne swingue pas. Billy Higgins quand il joue, il met tellement d'intention sur la ride que ça swingue tout seul. Du coup la charley n'est plus un accessoire mais un vrai instrument. On n'utilise jamais la charley comme un réel instrument. Et cette règle s'applique à toutes les cymbales. On les utilise mal, on ne fait que les frapper. On privilégie la grosse caisse et la caisse claire, mais ce que tu peux tirer d'une cymbale est surprenant pour peu que tu prennes le temps de t'y attarder. »

Puisqu'il y a trente ans, Robert Wyatt déterminait une nouvelle façon de jouer de la batterie avec Soft Machine, il semblait inévitable de lui demander quelle était sa vision de l'avenir de notre instrument.

« *Mon point de vue est assez limité, et puis je ne travaille pas pour un magazine de batterie* (rires). *Cela dit, au lieu d'avoir une vision globale, je préfère me concentrer sur le ressenti et le feeling de certains batteurs. J'adore le feeling de Mark Mondesire. J'aime aussi Helge Norbakken, qui est un batteur qui joue avec une chanteuse portugaise, Maria Joao (qui s'est également entourée de Miroslav Vitous, de Trilok Gurtu ou encore de Manu Katché ndj). Il est étonnant à jouer avec des batteries détendues au maximum, à les cogner comme le ferait un poids lourd. Il a un feeling unique, hors de commun. Plutôt que de voir dans la globalité, je préfère me concentrer sur le feeling de quelques-uns. Je ne sais pas quoi dire, si ce n'est qu'il reste de très bons jours à la batterie.* ».

Jean-Baptiste Mechernane

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Une extension de la pop - Politis - N° 768 - du 25 septembre au 1er octobre 2003

Au fil de la semaine

CULTURE

« Une extension de la pop »

ROCK. Avec « Cuckooland », Robert Wyatt marque un retour au jazz et aux sujets politiques. Cet artiste chaleureux et modeste évoque sa musique, sa façon de travailler et son engagement.



Plusieurs chansons de « Cuckooland » abordent des sujets politiques, ce qui était déjà le cas de vos disques des années 1980. Pourquoi cette constante ?

Robert Wyatt : C'est ma femme,Alfie, qui m'a amené à la politique. Elle était beaucoup plus impliquée que moi, elle avait lu des livres que je n'avais pas lus. Aujourd'hui, ces sujets font partie de mon monde. Pour être honnête, je ne crois pas que les artistes puissent changer quoi que ce soit mais, quand on est conscient de certains problèmes et que l'on écrit des textes, le sujet vient naturellement. Les chansons de cet album ont été écrites au moment où le gouvernement anglais cherchait des prétextes pour bombarder l'Irak. Alfie avait ce fait à l'esprit quand elle a écrit le texte de « Lullaby for Hamsa ». On vit dans le monde, pas dans un jardin de roses.

Ne trouvez-vous pas qu'il y a eu peu de réactions contre la guerre en Irak de la part de la scène musicale ?

Le problème n'est pas que les musiciens ne prennent pas suffisamment les sujets politiques au sérieux, mais que les politiciens ne prennent pas assez ces sujets au sérieux ! En Angleterre, la politique est devenue une sorte de *soap-opera* comparable au *show-business*, une bataille de personnalités, un jeu permanent avec les médias. Il faut beaucoup chercher pour comprendre ce qui se passe réellement en Irak. Il n'y a pas que les musiciens qui devraient débattre de cela, tout le monde devrait le faire.

Mais tout le monde n'a pas accès facilement aux informations qui permettent de se faire une opinion...

Il faut chercher cette information. Nous n'avons pas Berlusconi mais nous avons Murdoch, qui contrôle une grande partie des médias. Ses prises de position ont une grande influence sur le gouvernement et sur les électeurs. C'est un contrôle des esprits déprimant. Mais je n'attends pas des musiciens qu'ils mènent les armées de la révolution. Tout ce qu'ils veulent, c'est parvenir à faire des disques. Moi-même, je préférerais que les professionnels se chargent de politique, je pourrais alors ne pas y penser et simplement m'amuser. Et puis, être rebelle n'est pas dans ma nature, je préfère plus de confort. Cependant, je me sens de moins en moins à l'aise quand je considère les événements qui se déroulent en Irak. Je ne peux supporter l'hypocrisie des grandes puissances. Autant dire simplement : nous avons aujourd'hui la possibilité de contrôler les ressources d'énergie pour les cinq cents années à venir et personne ne peut nous en empêcher. Même Kissinger était plus honnête, quand il disait qu'il ne fallait pas confondre la politique étrangère américaine avec un travail de missionnaire.

Est-il difficile de conjuguer ces deux engagements : musical et politique ?

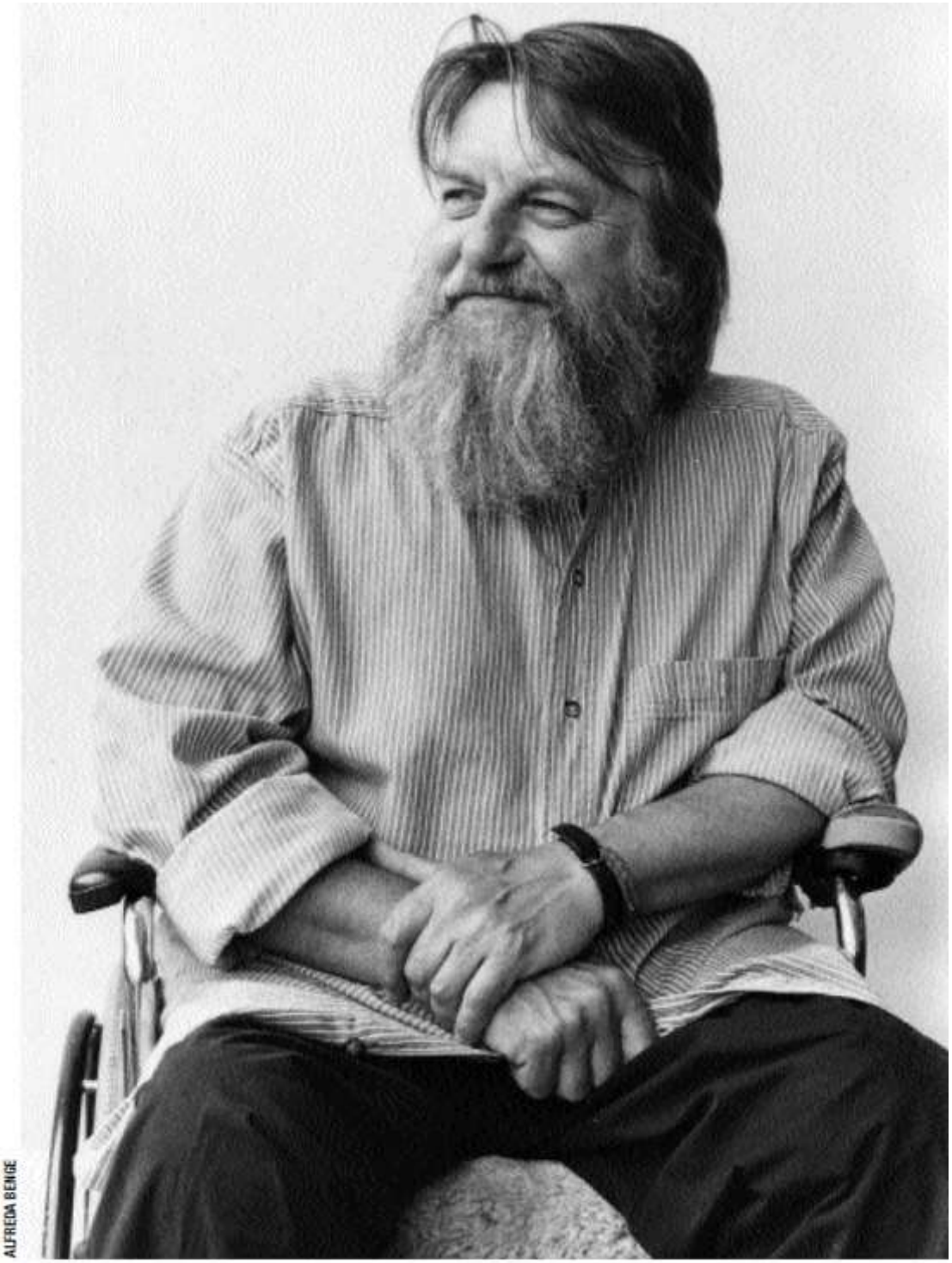
Oui, et je pense que ma responsabilité c'est d'essayer de composer la musique qui sonne le mieux possible. C'est très difficile de faire une musique qui se justifie, au milieu de l'océan de musique existant. Mais si je voulais vraiment être utile, je quitterais le monde de la musique. Pour m'engager dans le développement d'un contrôle démocratique de l'eau, par exemple.

Vous considérez-vous comme un « protest-singer » ?

Non, j'essaie seulement de trouver un élément humain, quelque chose à quoi je puisse m'identifier chez les personnes qu'on me désigne comme des ennemis. Mon travail est de défendre le droit des peuples à leur dignité. Ce n'est pas seulement une question de morale. Cette idée d'un Tony Blair présenté comme un gentil petit garçon face à des mauvais garçons insulte mon sentiment d'être citoyen du monde. Je veux clamer que je ne m'associe pas à ce discours.

C'est la position d'une association américaine comme Not in my Name.

Exactement : je ne peux pas vous empêcher de faire ce que vous faites,mais ne venez pas prétendre que vous le faites pour moi ni en mon nom. Si je proteste, c'est essentiellement pour dire cela.



Robert Wyatt : « Pour moi, la musique pop n'a rien de léger ou de trivial. »

Quelle était l'idée derrière « Blues in Bob Minor » sur le disque précédent (dans lequel Robert Wyatt chante à la manière de Dylan, NDLR) ?

C'était un hommage de Bob le Mineur à Bob le Majeur ! J'aime beaucoup les jeux de mots, les différentes significations, les *mots-valises*, comme vous dites en français. Dans un monde parfait, je passerais mon temps à jouer avec les mots. On peut dire beaucoup de choses avec des jeux de mots très simples.

Comment quelqu'un comme vous, venant de l'avant-garde, a-t-il commencé à chanter des mélodies pop ?

J'ai toujours considéré la musique pop comme une sorte de musique folk industrielle avec d'autres moyens de contrôle et de distribution. Quand j'avais 11-12 ans, je voulais être là où étaient les filles mais je ne savais pas comment leur parler ! Alors, j'allais dans les cafés où il y avait un juke-box, je mettais un disque, je m'asseyais à une table et j'observais ces « choses » magiques appelées filles... Pour moi, la musique pop n'a rien de léger ou de

trivial, je pense que c'est la chose la plus sérieuse du monde. Ou presque. Je l'ai toujours défendue. D'ailleurs, c'est la base de mes chansons. Je ne suis pas un compositeur classique ni un musicien de jazz. Je n'en ai ni le savoir académique ni la technique. Ce que je fais n'est qu'une extension de la pop.

Où placez-vous la voix parmi les autres instruments ?

La question de la voix est frustrante car, pour moi, c'est juste un autre instrument. Mais, au milieu des instruments, une voix s'entend toujours différemment parce que tout le monde utilise sa voix dans la vie courante, pas seulement comme une décoration, mais de manière fonctionnelle. Le son de la voix est donc une responsabilité particulière que j'assume. Même chose pour les mots. Souvent, Alfie trouve que je suis paresseux avec les vocaux, que je me contente de les poser là. Elle m'oblige à retravailler pour chanter mieux ! Si je faisais un disque tout seul, les vocaux feraient simplement partie du désordre.

Vous avez dit un jour que si vous étiez musicien c'était pour faire une musique que vous vouliez écouter et que personne ne faisait. Est-ce toujours le cas ?

Absolument. Il y a énormément de musique que j'aime que je suis incapable de jouer. Mais il y a de la musique que personne d'autre que moi ne fera. Je ne me sens pas meilleur ou pire que les autres, c'est juste la musique que je dois faire.

Comment aviez-vous conçu ce disque au départ ?

Il n'y a jamais de conception particulière. Je me contente de rassembler ce que j'ai composé et enregistré chez moi, tout ce que j'aime bien, en dehors de tout contexte. C'est seulement en studio, quand j'ai presque terminé, que je peux y voir une cohérence et enlever les parties qui ne s'y intègrent pas. À ce moment-là, j'agis un peu comme un peintre, je rajoute ceci, je déplace cela...

Vous avez d'ailleurs été très influencé par la peinture.

J'ai besoin d'approcher les choses de manière visuelle avant de les entendre. Tout est une question de couleurs et de formes. Je suis influencé par des personnes comme Paul Klee. Quand je m'éloigne des structures pop, je ne cherche pas particulièrement des formules issues du jazz, je pense plus à Miro ou Picasso. Les artistes de la première moitié du XXe siècle ont développé un travail sur les textures, les formes, le mouvement. C'est ce qui m'aide à construire une chanson ou un disque.

Jacques Vincent

Un album ensorcelant

Cuckooland a été enregistré avec quelques-uns des complices habituels de Robert Wyatt : Eno, Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera, David Gilmour, etc. Beaucoup d'autres aussi. Pas tellement dans une démarche collective puisque les différents musiciens ne sont jamais présents en même temps dans le studio, mais, comme l'explique Robert Wyatt, dans le *« partage d'un moment de musique »* avec chacun d'entre eux.

Une grande partie des chansons, notamment les plus politiques (sur l'Irak, les réfugiés de l'Est, les armes nucléaires), sont cosignées avec sa femme, Alfie, qui en a écrit les textes. Car *Cuckooland* marque un retour au politique. Au jazz aussi.

Surtout, c'est une immensité. Un océan de musique, masse dense et foisonnante, une matière organique aux mouvements lents qui porte la voix lunaire de Wyatt et d'autres qui la côtoient parfois. Un monde dans lequel on entre moins facilement que dans *Shleep,* album précédent sorti il y a déjà six ans, mais qui se révèle petit à petit et finit par se montrer ensorcelant. Nouvelle pièce d'une œuvre, *Cuckooland* n'est pas fait pour les auditeurs pressés.

J. V.

Cuckooland, Robert Wyatt, Naïve.

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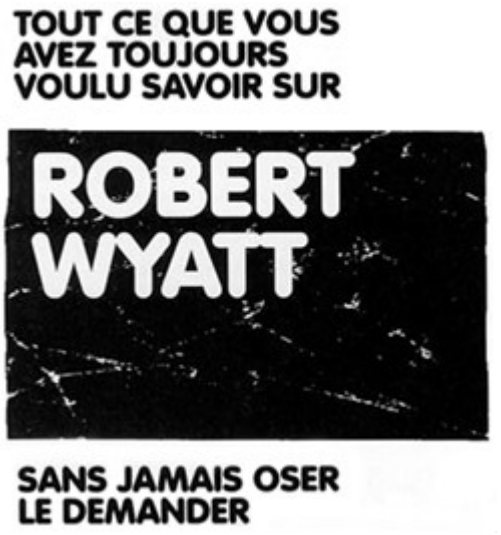
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Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur Robert Wyatt sans jamais oser le demander - Vibrations - N° 51 - mars 2003





"Parfois, je sors de ma tanière pour enregistrer un disque. je me sens alors comme un étranger qui visiterait un étrange pays: le pays des musiciens. Pour être franc, je ne me suis jamais vraiment senti à mon aise dans ce milieu-là."

Ainsi Robert Wyatt s'exprimait-il à la fin de l'été 1997, alors qu'il venait tout juste d'achever "Shleep", son dernier album à ce jour. Ces quelques mots résument parfaitement la mentalité de cet électron libre, qui n'a jamais brigué un poste fixe ou une position influente dans le grand organigramme de la musique moderne.
Des aventures mouvementées en compagnie de Soft Machine jusqu'aux fugues solitaires de "Rock Bottom" ou de "Old Rottenhat", cet éternel flâneur a su pousser son chemin vers des zones préservées, où l'esprit de compétition et la dictature des modes n'exerçaient pas leur emprise. Quatre décennies d'activités plus ou moins soutenues, de pures songeries et d'âpres combats, d'acrobaties pataphysiques et de chansons toutes nues, d'illuminations soudaines et de longues éclipses, n'ont pas réussi à le transformer en vieux briscard. Aujourd'hui âgé de 58 ans, Wyatt reste à nos yeux cet amateur de génie invité par erreur chez les professionnels de la profession, ce non-spécialiste entré clandestinement au royaume des experts et des forts en thème. Avec lui, l'adjectif *dilettante*, que le langage courant leste souvent d'une inexplicable charge péjorative, renvoie à une forme d'exigence poétique et de sagesse rêveuse que les musiciens installés ne pourront jamais tout à fait connaître.

Wyatt est le symbole le plus éclatant d'une certaine excellence britannique qui, à l'écart de l'orthodoxie pop-rock incarnée par les Beatles, les Stones et consorts, a donné ses meilleurs fruits sous le climat bouillonnant des années 60. Comme Derek Bailey, Kevin Ayers, Fred Frith, Gavin Bryars, John Greaves ou Brian Eno, il est l'enfant d'une époque où le paysage culturel se transformait à vive allure et où la partition du monde musical en obédiences et en chapelles n'était pas franchement à l'ordre du jour. Elevé au lait du be-



bop, admirateur transi de Thelonious Monk, Charlie Haden ou Don Cherry, Wyatt s'est découvert peu à peu de solides inclinations pour les harmonies pop, les rythmes caraïbes ou encore les mélodies sucrées-salées d'un Burt Bacharach. Sa grandeur est d'avoir su créer une musique qui, sans l'illustrer littéralement, reflète l'étendue de ses goûts.

Ceux qui appréhendent pour la première fois son oeuvre ont souvent le sentiment de se heurter à un étrange rébus. Comment décrypter un langage qui, tout en partageant quelques points de tangence avec le rock, le jazz, la pop ou les musiques expérimentales, ne peut être réduit à une simple combinaison d'influences? Que penser d'un musicien qui, pour tout arrangement, sait volontiers se contenter d'un ruisselet d'orgue, d'un piano aqueux et d'un nuage de cymbales? Que dire de cette voix curieusement délavée, qui ne recourt pas à la lourde signalétique émotionnelle si chère aux chanteurs populaires? Où ranger une oeuvre qui, à maints égards, se joue des clôtures censées séparer les avant-gardes (ou ce qu'il en reste) des musiques pour tous ? Par sa relation au métier de musicien comme par ses propositions esthétiques, Wyatt n'a au fond jamais été en phase avec les canons de la musique occidentale. L'accident qui, en 1973, l'a cloué à vie sur une chaise roulante a naturellement renforcé ce décalage. Peu après "Rock Bottom" (1974), l'Anglais a fait une croix sur les performances live et a adopté un rythme de travail nettement plus irrégulier qu'à ses débuts. Ces choix-Ià, qui auraient pu le confiner dans une marginalité de plus en plus asphyxiante, l'ont imposé au fil des ans comme l'un des créateurs les plus affranchis de ce temps. Wyatt n'est pas un cas à part ni une anomalie. Il est l'un de ces bienheureux inconscients qui, en toute simplicité, ont choisi de vivre au centre de leur propre monde.



1969
Soft Machine
Volume Two
(PROBE)

Lorsqu'il enregistre ce disque, Soft Machine sort d'une préhistoire plutôt chargée, agitée et remarquée. Le groupe a déjà connu une première mouture (comprenant notamment Daevid Allen, futur Gong, et Kevin Ayers) et assuré deux tournées américaines bien arrosées en soutien de Jimi Hendrix. Il a aussi troussé un premier album ("Volume One" en 1968) qui, avec un sens plutôt réjouissant du désordre, aura inventé une nouvelle façon de filer à l'anglaise. Réduit à un trio (Hugh Hopper à la basse, Mike Ratledge aux claviers et Wyatt au chant et à la batterie), Soft Machine parvient sur ce deuxième opus à unifier et densifier une musique pourtant vouée à l'éparpillement des idées et à l'éclatement des formes. Trait d'union oblique entre délires de jamsession, fulgurances pop et coq-à-l'âne pataphysiques (le groupe a été décoré de l'Ordre de la Grande Gidouille en 1967), ce patchwork gonflé mais pas gonflant doit beaucoup à la verve contagieuse de Wyatt qui co-signe la quasi-totalité des titres. Ce dernier ne retrouvera une telle liberté de création qu'après avoir quitté le groupe, en septembre 1971.

1970
Soft Machine
Third
(cbs)

S'il a laissé un souvenir impérissable dans l'esprit de ses fans, Soft Machine est resté pour Wyatt une expérience éprouvante, voire humiliante. "*J'ai été tourné en ridicule et maltraité par les musiciens avec lesquels je travaillais* ", dira-t-il encore trente ans après les faits. Jusqu'à cet album, les membres du groupe avaient su bâtir une identité commune autour d'une chimie humaine et musicale pour le moins instable. "Third" sera leur pomme de

discorde: le fossé se creuse entre Hopper et Ratledge, partisans d'une voie plus sérieuse et instrumentale, et Wyatt, désireux d'aller de l'avant sans se plier à une ligne esthétique prédéfinie. En position de force, les deux premiers s'adjugent trois des quatre longues suites que compte cet ambitieux double album. Leurs montages sonores ne manquent pas de panache, mais ils sont surclassés par l'unique contribution de Wyatt, le terrassant "Moon in June": une incroyable pièce gigogne longue de dix neuf minutes, dont chaque mesure semble receler la promesse de dix autres morceaux. Multi-instrumentiste jongleur doublé d'un chanteur contorsionniste, Wyatt invente là un langage virtuose qui ne cède jamais à la tentation du tour de force. En musique, la générosité, - tout comme la sincérité ou l'intégrité, n'est pas un talent. Mais c'est une vertu qui, chez Wyatt, souligne la nature de son génie: cet homme sait commuer la plus invraisemblable bizarrerie en évidence, en beauté modestement offerte. "Moon In June" est un classique instantané qui, si le monde était un peu moins sourd et frileux, serait aussi populaire que "Let it Be" ou "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction".

1972
Matching Mole
Matching Mole
(cas)



En nommant son nouveau groupe Matching Mole (transcription phonétique du français "Machine Molle"), Wyatt adresse un malicieux pied de nez aux deux petits caporaux qui le brimèrent au sein de Soft Machine. Après avoir papillonné de projets extérieurs en collaborations (avec Centipede, Amazing Band ou Kevin Ayers), l'Anglais se reconcentre sur son ouvrage en contrôlant quasiment de A à Z ce disque à la fraîcheur presque printanière concocté avec David Sinclair (claviers), Phil Miller (guitare) et Billy MacCormick (basse). Nettement plus facile d'accès que son premier essai solo (le très expérimental "The End of an Ear" sorti en 1970), "Matching Mole" réconcilie les deux facettes d'un musicien qui ose à la fois s'adonner aux plaisirs féroces de l'improvisation "Part of the Dance") et s'affirmer comme un mélodiste supérieur - voir la ritournelle sentimentale "O Caroline" et ce sommet de non-sens pop qu'est "Signed Curtain". Un deuxième disque plus collectif et inégal suivra "Little Red Record", produit par Robert Fripp) avant que Wyatt n'envisage de refondre totalement le groupe. Un tragique coup du sort l'en empêchera: le 1er juin 1973, au cours d'une fête particulièrement alcoolisée, il chute du quatrième étage d'un appartement londonien. Wyatt en réchappe miraculeusement, mais il restera à jamais paraplégique.



1974
Robert Wyatt
Rock Bottom
(RYKODISC)

Les coulures d'orgue, les notes de piano qui tombent en pluie, le flic-floc discret des percussions et la voix qui glisse en sinuant "*You look different every time*"... A chaque nouvelle écoute, les premières mesures de "Sea Song" renforcent le mystère d'une musique qui colonise la conscience de l'auditeur comme les eaux montantes d'un fleuve prendraient possession d'une terre - lentement et sûrement, par le bas. Après en avoir dressé l'ébauche lors d'un séjour à Venise en 1972, Wyatt a ruminé "Rock Bottom" des mois durant sur son lit d'hôpital. Pour autant, ce disque sans égal dans la production musicale contemporaine n'est pas un obscur labyrinthe mental, le chant intérieur d'un homme prisonnier de lui-même. Il s'agit d'abord, selon les propres termes de son auteur, d'*un chant d'amour et de curiosité*" adressé à sa compagne Alfie qu'il vient tout juste d'épouser. Surtout, "Rock Bottom" marque l'éclosion définitive d'un nouveau Wyatt, comme allégé par le drame qui lui a coûté l'usage de ses jambes. Le musicien devient ici un plasticien qui, avec trois tubes percés, deux pinceaux pelés et une toile bon marché, brosse une épure qui a la richesse d'une fresque. Tout ici est faussement monochrome, des à-plats de claviers étalés par couches successives jusqu'à ce chant blanc et cassé qui, par de troublantes irisations, semble réfléchir toutes les couleurs du spectre vocal. Souvent décrit comme un abîme de mélancolie, ce disque est avant tout un sommet de

musicalité que les années n'ont pas érodé. Si "Rock Bottom" touche le fond, c'est d'abord le fond des choses, l'essence même du chant, l'origine du geste musical. L'histoire du rock considère généralement comme cruciaux les disques qui savent synthétiser le passé et ceux qui savent prédire le futur. "Rock Bottom" n'appartient à aucune de ces deux catégories. C'est une brèche dans l'espace-temps, un vertigineux pas de côté, un univers parallèle dont la face cachée se dérobe aujourd'hui encore à l'analyse.

1982
Robert Wyatt
Nothing Can Stop Us
(RYKODISC)

Pourquoi sélectionner ici ce disque bizarrement foutu et tout rapiécé? Pourquoi ne pas lui préférer par exemple les sonorités fauves de "Ruth is Stranger Than Richard" (1975), contrepoint bariolé aux subtils dégradés de "Rock Bottom"? Pourquoi ne pas privilégier les collaborations fructueuses de Wyatt avec Michael Mantler ou Brian Eno? Parce que "Nothing Can Stop Us" marque le retour faussement anecdotique d'un homme qui, sans la grande bienveillance du patron de Rough Trade Geoff Travis, aurait vraisemblablement disparu de la circulation. Certes, le disque est quelque peu plombé par un arrière-fond idéologique pas toujours léger - Wyatt, qui a adhéré au Communist Party trois ans plus tôt, n'y va pas avec le dos de la faucille lorsqu'il chante " Staline Wasn't Stallin' ". Mais il y a heureusement plus que cela: composée pour l'essentiel de reprises, cette compilation de singles dispersés au début des années 80 est le juste reflet d'une sensibilité musicale en forme de puzzle, tout à la fois morcelée et cohérente. Par le passé, Wyatt avait apporté la preuve de son éclectisme éclairé en reprenant "I'm a Believer" de Neil Diamond et "Song for Che" de Charlie Haden... Ici, il passe avec une élégance désarmante d'une vieille scie cubaine à une chanson de Chic, d'une protest-song chilienne à une cover dépouillée de "Strange Fruit", éblouissante d'intelligence musicale. Vingt ans ont passé depuis la sortie de ce disque et son esthétique un peu glacée a brillamment survécu au discours politique qu'elle était censée soutenir. A la même époque, Wyatt illumine de sa présence deux disques de toute beauté: le single "Shipbuilding" écrit par Elvis Costello et le très attachant EP de Ben Watt, "Summer Into Winter" (1983).

1985
Robert Wyatt
Old Rottenhat
(RYKODISC)



"*Je suis un vrai minimaliste, parce que je n'en fais pas des masses. je connais des minimalistes qui se prétendent minimalistes mais qui font des tonnes de minimalisme! C'est de la triche. Moi, vraiment, je ne fais pas grand-chose...*" Cette profession de foi pourrait être placée en exergue d'un disque à priori ingrat, aux arrangements faméliques, bien moins accueillant que ne le sera l'album "Dondestan" (1991). Et pourtant: c'est vers ces plages arides que nous aimons revenir. Remonté comme une pendule contre l'Angleterre de Thatcher et les Etats-Unis de Reagan, Wyatt s'est juré de réaliser un album que les conservateurs de tous pays et de tous poils ne pourraient pas écouter ni détourner à leur profit. Sur ce plan, le pari est réussi, mais une fois de plus c'est la valeur musicale du projet qui, plus que sa connotation politique, emporte le morceau. Wyatt, qui se décrira quelques années plus tard comme un "*Jimmy Sommerville sous Valium*", psalmodie ici comme un chanteur de flamenco qui aurait sifflé une bouteille d'eau de Javel ou comme un muezzin qui aurait trop fait la nouba: sa voix atteint son plus haut niveau de rudesse et de blancheur. Autour, des claviers à deux sous dessinent un décor désertique et presque invariable où il fait bon se perdre. C'est l'un des disques les plus radicaux de Wyatt. Hors du silence lui-même, il n'existe sans doute pas de musique plus gracieusement littérale que celle-ci. (A noter que "Old Rottenhat", agrémenté du maxi "Work In Progress" et des faces B de "Shipbuilding", a également été réédité en CD sous le titre "Mid-Eighties").

1997
Robert Wyatt
Shleep
(RYKODISC)

Contraction de "sheep" (mouton) et "sleep" (sommeil), "Shleep" saisit Wyatt au sortir d'une longue période de doute et de détresse morale. Le moins que l'on puisse dire est que le réveil est tonitruant: perché à un niveau d'inspiration peu commun, Wyatt cloue le bec à tous ceux qui le jugeaient moribond depuis "Rock Bottom". Au générique de ce disque rêvé figurent de vieux camarades (Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno, Evan Parker ou la tromboniste Annie Whitehead) et quelques nouveaux venus (dont l'inattendu Paul Weller): une sorte de All-Star Band où les talents individuels ont pour une fois le bon goût de s'additionner au lieu de s'annuler. Souvent présenté comme un animal plutôt solitaire, Wyatt démontre ici qu'il peut être un hôte d'un grand raffinement, qui sait combiner les instruments et les sensibilités de chacun comme d'autres savent marier les différentes couleurs de leur palette. A la fois mieux produit et plus audacieux que ses prédécesseurs, "Shleep" voit Wyatt chasser sur les terres de Brian Wilson ("Heaps of Sheeps"), empiéter sur les plates-bandes de Bob Dylan ("Blues in Bob Minor"), dérouler une *nursery rhyme* surréaliste ("The Duchess") ou livrer une confession d'une pénétrante simplicité ("Free Will and Testament"). Une brebis n'y retrouverait pas ses petits? Peut-être, à ceci près que ce disque possède la logique particulière de ceux qui savent témoigner d'un sens aigu de l'absurdité. "Shleep" est un chef-d'oeuvre foisonnant et limpide, un disque d'une cruelle beauté à côté duquel les trois quarts de la production musicale du moment auront pris un méchant coup de vieux. Depuis, Wyatt s'est de nouveau assoupi. Mais des murmures de plus en plus insistants soutiennent qu'il pourrait sortir très prochainement de sa retraite. Le "*pays des musiciens*" serait bien inspiré de lui réserver le meilleur des accueils.

Soup Songs: A Tribute To Robert Wyatt, groupe emmené par la tromboniste Annie Whitehead, se produira au Festival Banlieues Bleues près de Paris le 15 mars. www.banlieuesbleues.org

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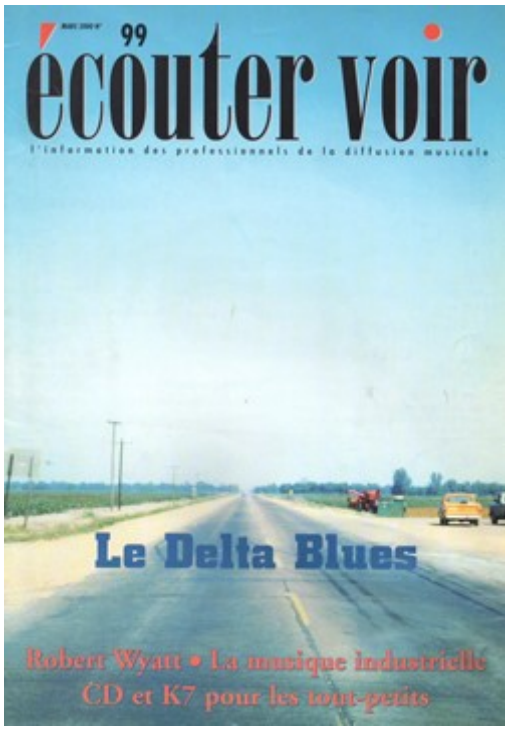
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Robert Wyatt, l'homme à l'oreille cassée - Ecouter Voir - N° 99 - mars 2000

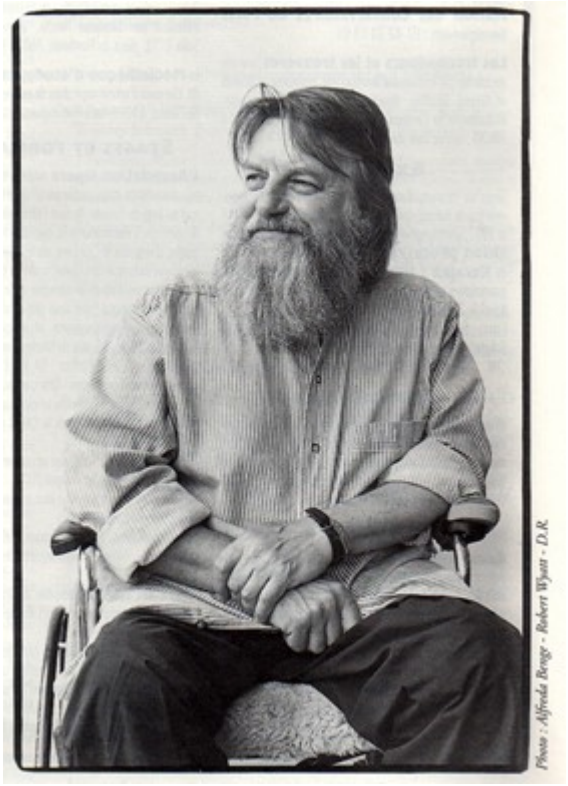


ROBERT WYATT, L'HOMME A L'OREILLE CASSÉE

Une voix inoubliable, fragile,
une voix filée de l'intérieur,
étrange et bleue,
*comme celles de **Billie Holiday**,*
***Chet Baker** ou **Janis Joplin**.*
Une musique inattendue
et surprenante,
toujours neuve
à force de poésie
et de simplicité.
Une musique minimale
et évidente, belle,
étrange et intime,
qui semble familière
dès la première écoute,
et paraît n'avoir été inventée
que pour tendre
entre les auditeurs
les fils invisibles du rêve

Depuis plus de trente-cinq ans, de ses débuts au sein du **Daevid Allen Trio** et des **Wilde Flowers**, puis de **Soft Machine** et **Matching Mole**, jusqu'à sa carrière en solo, Robert Wyatt a su trouver grâce à sa musique, une place et une résonance très particulière au sein de la mouvance rock. Puisant ses racines aussi bien dans le jazz que le rock ou la musique contemporaine, ses mélodies ont aussi hérité l'esprit innocent des comptines sans queue ni tête de l'enfance ou encore des *limericks* chers au *nonsense* anglais. Loin du tapage médiatique, en dehors des modes illusoires et éphémères du show-business, la carrière de Robert Wyatt apparaît presque miraculeuse au sein d'un *establishment* rock de plus en plus imbu de son image et de ses dollars.

L'Ecole de Canterbury



En Angleterre, dans le nord-est du Kent, sommeille Canterbury, ville médiévale tranquille, célèbre pour sa cathédrale et lieu de naissance au XVIème siècle de Christopher Marlowe, célèbre auteur dramatique contemporain de Shakespeare. C'est également à Canterbury qu'au XIVème siècle Chaucer écrivit ses non moins célèbres Contes de Canterbury. Dans ce cadre historique va naître à l'aube des années soixante un courant musical majeur du rock des années soixante et soixante-dix, que certains critiques en mal d'inspiration dénommeront L'Ecole de Canterbury. Comme toutes les étiquettes, celle-ci est trop réductrice pour rendre compte avec fidélité d'une scène locale qui se caractérise plus par la diversité des courants qui la traversent que par une quelconque discipline collective et scolaire. La notion d'école est à prendre ici comme un *sticker* avant la lettre, bien pratique pour rassembler des groupes aussi particuliers que **Soft Machine**, **Caravan**, **Hatfield and the North** ou des musiciens aux styles aussi différents et singuliers que Kevin Ayers, Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair, ou Daevid Allen.
La plupart de ces musiciens seront d'abord des camarades de lycée avant même de démarrer une quelconque carrière musicale. Ensuite, par le biais de rencontres diverses, de participations et d'échanges, l'arbre généalogique du *Canterbury Sound* étendra ses ramifications dans de multiples directions musicales, jusqu'à des groupes comme **Gong**, **National Health** ou **The Work**. Les idées forces communes de toutes ces formations et musiciens sont, à partir du refus d'un intégrisme rock, le goût des aventures musicales, aux frontières du jazz et des musiques nouvelles (rock psychédélique, free rock, free jazz, musique minimaliste), ainsi qu'un réel désir d'entraîner la *rock music* vers des territoires inexplorés à ce jour, et donc de contribuer à créer une musique réellement *progressive*.

Une introduction au Canterbury Sound

Depuis l'avènement du CD au début des années 80, les éditeurs phonographiques, qui avaient pendant longtemps envisagé la *pop music* comme un produit commercial intéressant mais éphémère, ont progressivement modifié leur attitude. Rééditions d'albums vinyls dans leur habillage d'origine, augmentés des différentes prises de studio *(alternate tracks),* ou même redécouvertes de bandes totalement inédites. C'est le cas du label anglais *Voiceprint* qui a édité ou réédité de nombreux enregistrements de groupes phares de la scène anglaise, comme Soft Machine ou Gong. Avec la série *Canterburied Sounds, Voiceprint* offre en quatre CD un panorama original et méconnu de l'Ecole de Canterbury. La plupart des bandes gravées sont en effet inédites, issues le plus souvent des archives personnelles des musiciens. Le volume trois de cette anthologie est dédié à deux *mums* de l'ombre, Billie Hopper, mère de Brian et Hugh Hopper, et Honor Wyatt, mère de Robert Wyatt, sans l'amour, la compréhension et la complicité desquelles, rien n'aurait été possible : ni les rencontres, les hébergements improvisés ou même les répétitions. Il permet notamment de retrouver Robert Wyatt dans plusieurs improvisations ou bandes de répétitions en compagnie de **Mike Ratledge**, Brian et Hugh Hopper. Bien que la qualité sonore ne soit pas toujours excellente, ces enregistrements, pour la plupart très imprécisément datés des années 1963 et 1964, permettent d'entendre un Wyatt batteur à l'aube des aventures à venir, celles des Wilde Flowers et de Soft Machine. Son jeu est encore très nerveux, chargé d'énergie brute. Il remplit l'espace en suivant pas à pas les déclinaisons pianistiques torturées du cérébral Mike Ratledge, à des années-lumières du minimalisme et de l'économie de moyens des albums solo à venir.

Sous le vent de la beat génération

A Londres au printemps 63, **Hugh Hopper** et **Robert Ellidge**, rassemblés derrière le bouillant **Daevid Allen**, futur leader de **Gong**, forment un trio mêlant jazz et poésie. Daevid Allen, qui a déjà pas mal bourlingué en Europe et ailleurs, connaît bien **William Burroughs** et **Brion Gysin**, deux poètes fameux du mouvement *beat* américain. Il joue de la guitare électrique, souvent désaccordée, chante et lit des poèmes, Hugh Hopper est à la guitare basse, et Robert Ellidge, - qui n'a pas encore adopté comme nom de scène le nom de jeune fille de sa mère, Honor Wyatt -, est à la batterie. Même si l'existence du trio fût de courte durée, il permit néanmoins aux membres de la formation d'être confrontés à l'expérience de la scène, de rencontrer d'autres musiciens au cours d'innombrables *bœufs*, et surtout de goûter à la liberté de l'improvisation totale. Un enregistrement public garde la trace de ces premières aventures expérimentales. Les compositions sont de Daevid Allen, sauf *Little Rootie Tootie* de **Thelonious Monk**, sur lequel on rencontre au piano pour la première fois **Mike Ratledge**, futur clavier de Soft Machine. L'ambiance générale des morceaux navigue entre jazz façon Cecil Taylor ou Bill Evans, et poésie issue de la *beat génération*. Accueil mitigé, public dérouté, à la fin de l'été 63, Allen dissout le groupe et part à Paris, tandis que Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge retournent à Canterbury.



Le début du Canterbury Sound

« Les années 60 ne signifient rien pour moi, vu que je les ai passées saoul la plupart du temps ». Robert Wyatt 1964 : après un été passé à Majorque en compagnie de Daevid Allen et Kevin Ayers, riche de rencontres diverses et de nouvelles aventures musicales, Robert Wyatt regagne Canterbury. Il y retrouve les frères Hopper qui viennent de fonder, en compagnie du jeune guitariste **Richard Sinclair**, un nouveau groupe au sein duquel Kevin Ayers va assurer la partie vocale et l'accompagnement au tambourin. Surnommé les **Wild Flowers** par Hugh Hopper, le nom de cette nouvelle formation se transformera rapidement en **Wilde Flowers**, sous l'influence de Kevin Ayers dont Oscar Wilde est le poète préféré. A force de répétitions, le groupe se constitue rapidement un répertoire, alternant reprises et compositions originales. La musique et les textes sont le plus souvent écrits par Hugh ou Brian Hopper, excepté *She's Gone* de Kevin Ayers et deux reprises, *Almost 'Grown* de **Chuck Berry** et *Parchman Farm* de **Booker White**. Brian Hopper signe notamment l'efficace *Slow Talkin' Talk*, sur lequel Robert Wyatt joue de la batterie et des percussions, mais qu'il réenregistrera brillamment en octobre 1968 cette fois-ci comme chanteur, accompagné par Jimi Hendrix à la basse. Robert Wyatt, quant à lui, signe les paroles et la musique d'*He's Bad For You*, influencé par John Coltrane et Elvin Jones, qu'il chante également en compagnie du nouveau chanteur du groupe, **Graham Flight**, arrivé en mars en remplacement de Kevin Ayers. Il écrit également les paroles de plusieurs titres dont *Impotence* et *Dont Try To Change Me*, dont il co-signe les paroles avec Hugh Hopper et Graham Flight. Après le départ de Graham Flight en septembre 1965, il devient l'unique chanteur du groupe. Sa voix est déjà étonnante, même si sur certains titres, dont le très "stonien" *Those Words They Say*, elle est encore peu originale et quelquefois nasillarde. Deux titres donnent déjà un aperçu prometteur des merveilles vocales à venir, le simple et magnifique *Impotence*, dont la compilation parue chez *Voiceprint* nous offre deux versions différentes, et le mélancolique *Memories* (Hopper), qui évoque tout à la fois **Erik Satie** et **Chet Baker**. Sur scène, le groupe alterne les reprises les plus diverses, rock'n'roll inspiré (Chuck Berry, Rolling Stones, Beatles), folk (Dylan), bien que la dominante soit incontestablement soul (Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, James Brown, Wilson Pickett). C'est de cette tentative de croisement entre des genres avant eux cloisonnés que les Wilde Flowers tirent leur statut incontesté de premier

groupe mythique d'un courant progressif que certains critiques dénommeront plus tard l'Ecole de Canterbury. Plus simplement, ils doivent également ce titre au fait que de nombreux musiciens qui en firent partie essaimèrent ensuite dans d'autres groupes, comme **Richard Sinclair** (Caravan), ou Kevin Ayers et Robert Wyatt (Soft Machine).

One, two, third, fourth

« Nourririez-vous votre fille à la Machine Molle ? » (premier slogan publicitaire de Soft Machine)

Mais Robert Wyatt n'est pas satisfait de l'orientation musicale du groupe. Il est à la recherche de nouveaux sons, de nouvelles directions, moins exclusivement liés aux guitares omniprésentes dans la *pop music à* cette époque. En août 1966, il retrouve Mike Ratledge à l'orgue, formé entre-temps à la musique classique et contemporaine, et avec Kevin Ayers à la basse et au chant, Daevid Allen et **Larry Nolan** aux guitares, fonde Soft Machine, nom donné en hommage au livre clé de **William Burroughs** *La Machine molle.* Le guitariste Larry Nolan quitte rapidement le groupe après quelques concerts. Le nouveau quatuor gagne très vite une place à part dans la scène psychédélique anglaise, à côté de groupes comme **Arthur Brown**, **Pink Floyd** ou le **Jimi Hendrix Experience**. Ils enregistrent quelques *démos* avec le producteur **Georgio Gomelsky**, puis sous la houlette de Kim Fowley un premier single (jamais réédité à ce jour), avec deux chansons écrites par Kevin Ayers *Love Makes Sweet Music* et *Feelin Realin Squeelin,* qui passe complètement inaperçu. Mais c'est par les concerts (Roundhouse, UEO,...) que Soft Machine va réussir à créer la surprise et à enflammer un public de plus en plus important. En France, ils deviennent la nouvelle coqueluche à la mode en intervenant dans deux spectacles, *Ubu cocu* et surtout *Le Désir attrapé par la queue* de **Picasso**. Daevid Allen bloqué à la frontière pour des problèmes de visa, ne peut retourner en Angleterre, et le groupe se transforme en trio, remplaçant provisoirement Allen par le jeune guitariste **Andy Summers**, futur membre de Police. Ils partent ensuite aux Etats-Unis pour une tournée en première partie de **Jimi Hendrix**, avec qui Wyatt enregistrera un *single* dans un petit studio californien. Il retravaillera cette chanson quelques années plus tard pour le morceau *Soup Song* sur *Rock Bottom.* En avril 1968, à la fin de la tournée, le groupe enregistre son premier album à New York.
Juste après l'enregistrement, Kevin Ayers quitte le groupe, ne se retrouvant plus dans ce nouveau son au fort parfum de jazz et d'improvisation. Le roadie Hugh Hopper est engagé à la basse et le groupe enregistre en février et mars 1969 son deuxième album, suivi en mai 1970 de *Third* et en novembre 1970 de *Fourth,* dernier album de Soft machine sur lequel jouera Robert Wyatt.



Héritiers du jazz dont les différents avatars ont fortement imprégné leur univers sonore, les aventuriers de la Machine Molle refusent néanmoins de se limiter à une seule perspective musicale. Ils brassent dans leurs rythmes et leurs mélodies les influences les plus diverses. Du psychédélisme, ils ont laissé de côté les fioritures inutiles et plaquées comme les gimmicks orientaux ou autres chinoiseries, et n'en ont retenu que l'essentiel, soit le goût de l'exploration et la quête d'un monde réellement inouï ; du rock, ils ont conservé la rythmique nerveuse, l'impatience, la rage et le sens de la démesure ; l'esprit du jazz quant à lui, est présent en filigrane derrière toutes leurs compositions, d'où l'idée d'improvisation n'est jamais absente. Ils poussent enfin leurs incursions jusqu'aux musiques nouvelles, aux

confins des figures répétitives d'un **Terry Riley**. Il suffît pour s'en convaincre d'écouter les boucles hypnotiques du début et de la fin d'*Out-Bloody-Rageous* sur le somptueux *Third*, qui reste sans aucun doute un de leurs meilleurs albums. Au sein du groupe, Robert Wyatt apportera peu de compositions, celles-ci restant l'apanage quasi exclusif du tandem Ratledge-Hopper. Néanmoins, son influence sur l'esprit général des deux premiers albums, plus délirants que les suivants, est évidente. Sur les deux premiers albums, il signe seul le parfait *Save Yourself* et les deux parties de *Pataphysical Introduction*, collabore avec Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge à l'écriture de quelques autres titres, tandis qu'il conçoit les arrangements de plusieurs morceaux écrits et composés par Hugh Hopper. Sa voix est de plus en plus remarquable et originale, à la fois fragile et puissante, en particulier sur un des titres phares du groupe *Hope For Happiness*, à redécouvrir d'urgence !

Sur *Third*, il compose et chante *Moon In June*, admirable voyage musical dans lequel on peut déjà repérer tous les éléments à venir sur ses propres albums : une mélodie simple, calibrée au format chanson, qui se décale par instants de son cadre formel, le transcende insidieusement et réussit à créer petit à petit une magie singulière.
Avec *Fourth*, il retourne à ses baguettes de batteur et Soft Machine s'éloigne définitivement de l'esprit de ses deux premiers enregistrements, qui célébraient à leur façon délirante le mariage de dada et de la pataphysique. A la suite de cet album, il part fonder **Matching Mole**, et le groupe, malgré quelques disques intéressants, ne retrouvera pas la folie magnifique de ses débuts. Le trio Ratledge-Hopper-Dean, débarrassé d'une de ses composantes majeures, élaborera désormais une musique plus "sérieuse" et se rapprochera de l'univers incertain et mouvant du jazz-rock.



De l'avis même de Robert Wyatt, le groupe donnait vraiment le meilleur de lui-même lors de ses nombreuses apparitions publiques. Les musiciens retravaillaient souvent les morceaux après les enregistrements, continuant à progresser et à expérimenter de nouvelles voies. Sur scène, les chansons s'enchaînent sans arrêt dans un flot musical ininterrompu, ne laissant aucune chance aux spectateurs d'exprimer leur enthousiasme ou leur colère. La presse rock de l'époque décrit souvent un Wyatt déchaîné derrière sa batterie, torse nu, s'enflammant dans un grand déluge de cheveux et de baguettes, offrant un contraste saisissant avec la retenue et le sérieux de ses trois autres comparses. Heureusement pour nous, plusieurs live gardent la trace de quelques-uns des sets les plus intéressants du groupe. Trois d'entre eux, *Spaced* (1969), *Virtually* (1971) et *Noisette* (1970) ont été édités par le label américain *Cuneiform*, spécialisé dans le free rock et le rock progressif. Noisette, édité en février 2000, est issu de la même performance que le fantastique *Facelift*, titre d'ouverture de *Third*, enregistré au Fairfield Hall de Croydon le 4 janvier 1970 et au Mother's Club de Birmingham le 11 janvier de la même année. Trois autres live, *At the Paradiso* (1969), *Live at the Proms* (1970), *BBC Radio 1 live in concert* (1971), publiés respectivement chez *Voiceprint*, *Reckless* et *Windsong*, permettent d'achever le portrait scénique d'un des groupes les plus authentiquement novateurs qu'ait jamais produit la scène rock.





Le petit disque rouge

Clin d'oeil ironique à la Machine Molle, Matching Mole, le nom du nouveau groupe du batteur-chanteur est à lui seul une véritable déclaration d'humour dadaïste, une manière ironique de prendre du recul avec la formation précédente. Wyatt s'entoure de deux jeunes musiciens, **Bill McCormick** à la basse et **Phil Miller** à la guitare. A l'orgue et au piano, il retrouve brièvement **David Sinclair,** autre figure de la scène canterburienne, qui jouait auparavant dans **Caravan**. Il sera ensuite remplacé par **Dave McRae** au piano électrique. Les deux albums de Matching Mole (La Taupe assortie) intègrent une partie de la liberté et de l'ouverture musicale qui étaient la marque de fabrique du premier Soft Machine. Dans le premier, très attendu à l'époque par tous ceux pour qui le Soft, c'était Wyatt plus que Ratledge ou Hopper, la musique est traversée d'influences diverses au gré des plages qui s'enchaînent dans un flot ininterrompu. On repère ici ou là quelques passages répétitifs façon Riley ou même des instrumentaux proches de l'esprit des premiers disques de Weather Report, comme *Part Of The Dance*. L'album, bien qu'inégal, recèle néanmoins quelques perles incontournables comme *O Caroline* qui introduit l'enregistrement et les deux **Instant Pussy** et *Instant Kitten* où l'on retrouve toute la fougue et la magie de *Save Yourself*. Sur quelques titres, Wyatt abandonne provisoirement la batterie pour le piano (*Signed Curtain*), ou même le mellotron (*Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening*). Avec le second album, *Little Red Record*, produit par **Robert Fripp** de **Roxy Music**, la recherche et l'expérimentation s'affirment au profit d'une musique beaucoup plus cohérente. Bien que des influences soient toujours perceptibles, - boucles à la Riley de l'intro de *Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away*, ambiances jazz-rock de certaines compositions, passages free à la **Ornette Coleman** -, elles sont parfaitement intégrées. A noter la présence de **Brian Eno** au synthétiseur V.C.S.3 sur l'étrange et superbe *Gloria Gloom*. Bien que Robert Wyatt n'ait signé aucune des compositions, le climat général de l'album, conçu comme un véritable disque-concept, reflète parfaitement ses préoccupations, son sens de l'humour, du titre à la pochette, clin d'oeil au *Petit livre rouge* du Président Mao et aux images de propagande communiste.

L'oreille cassée

« *Robert Wyatt, chanteur pop au chômage (actuellement à la batterie avec Soft Machine)* ! » (Note de pochette)

Bref retour en arrière. Wyatt fait toujours partie de Soft Machine mais déçu par l'accueil très critique réservé par Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper à *Moon In June* sur le troisième album du groupe, il décide d'enregistrer un album solo. En août 1970, quelques mois seulement après l'enregistrement du mythique *Third*, il entre en studio pour y graver les neuf morceaux de l'extraordinaire *The End Of An Ear*. Tout le monde, ses comparses du Soft compris, s'attend à ce qu'il compose des chansons de la même veine que *Moon In June*. Et Wyatt surgit exactement là où personne ne l'attend. Ses compositions, d'une forme très éclatée, ne ressemblent à rien de connu. Elles échappent complètement à l'univers conventionnel de la pop music et du rock, cherchant de nouvelles directions parallèles au free jazz (Coltrane et Ayler ne sont pas loin), à la musique contemporaine et aux musiques expérimentales. L'un des morceaux les plus réussis est la reprise en deux parties du *Las Vegas Tango* de Gil Evans. On y sent vibrer dans une totale liberté un absolu bonheur d'improviser. La musique est perméable à toutes les influences. Elle fait son lit d'un torrent d'idées musicales assimilées avec une aisance confondante, à la recherche d'un idiome inconnu. Wyatt s'y essaie au piano pour la première fois et prouve avec succès qu'il est déjà bien plus que le simple batteur d'un groupe déjà légendaire.



Dans la mer des sons

Décembre 1972. Après avoir dissout Matching Mole dont il n'arrivait plus à assumer pleinement la fonction de leader, Wyatt participe comme choriste à l'enregistrement de *Bananamour* de Kevin Ayers. Puis, en février 73, il commence à envisager sérieusement la constitution d'un nouveau groupe, sous la forme d'un quartet composé de Gary Windo au sax ténor, Dave MacRae au piano, Ron Mathewson à la basse et lui-même à la batterie et au chant. En avril la formation évolue et le guitariste Francis Monkman, du groupe Curved Air ainsi que le bassiste Bill MacCormick, préfigurent la résurrection de Matching Mole. Mais le 1er juin de la même année, au cours d'une fête organisée à l'occasion de l'anniversaire croisé de Gilli Smyth et de Lady June, Robert Wyatt tombe par la fenêtre de l'appartement et se brise la colonne vertébrale. Le diagnostic est sans appel. Il a perdu l'usage de ses jambes et sa carrière de batteur est donc définitivement close. Après un séjour de plusieurs mois à l'hôpital, juste interrompu par sa participation comme chanteur sur un titre de l'album de *Hatfield and the North*, il retrouve ses amis et sa famille.

En février et mars 1974, il rentre de nouveau en studio et enregistre *Rock Bottom*, son deuxième album solo, le plus célébré à ce jour par la critique internationale. Il recevra notamment en France le Prix de l'Académie Charles Gros et est toujours considéré aujourd'hui comme un des "classiques" du rock, au même titre que par exemple *Pet Sounds* des **Beach Boys**, *Blonde On Blonde* de **Bob Dylan** ou *The Pipers At The Gate Of Dawn* du **Pink Floyd**. Produit par **Nick Mason**, batteur de Pink Floyd et ami de longue date, ce disque fait partie de la catégorie très rare des galettes que l'on peut écouter et réécouter sans jamais en épuiser toutes les subtilités. Une telle originalité et une telle perfection se rencontrent rarement. Pas un seul morceau de cette musique merveilleuse ne vient affaiblir cette impression. Dès les premières mesures étranges de *Sea Song* jusqu'à la déclamation pleine d'humour d'Ivor Cutler et au rire final de *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*, la musique est superbe, magique, toujours simple et envoûtante. Pas de prétention affichée, de savoir faire racoleur, mais un dépouillement lumineux qui va à l'essentiel. Une économie de moyens mise au service de l'émotion la plus pure. Plus question ici de parler de rock, de jazz ou de musique contemporaine. On est au-delà des genres et des étiquettes, dans le territoire du rêve et de la folie. Sa voix, cassée, brisée, n'a jamais été aussi unique, entre murmure, plainte et chuchotement. Elle sert à merveille la mélodie lente et circulaire de *Sea Song* où ses vocalises s'envolent en écho avant de retomber doucement dans le silence. Plus grave et recueillie sur *Alifib*, elle devient grinçante et ironique, parlée et hachée sur *Alifie*, chanson en miroir de la précédente où les mêmes mots semblent prendre tout à coup un sens différent et inquiétant. Les arrangements et l'orchestration des morceaux, confiés à des musiciens s'intégrant admirablement à l'univers de Wyatt, achèvent de faire de cet album l'un des plus beaux du musicien.

Le 26 juillet, jour de la sortie du vinyl, Robert Wyatt et Alfreda Benge, qui vivaient ensemble depuis plusieurs années déjà, se marient. C'est elle qui est évoquée dans *Alifib/Alifie*. C'est elle aussi qui va illustrer de délicieuses peintures naïves et tendres la plupart des pochettes des albums, de *Rock Bottom* à *Ep's*.

Ruth, Richard et Robert

Les 15 et 22 mars 1975, il enregistre son troisième 30cm pour *Virgin*. La face A se nomme Ruth, la face B s'appelle Richard, et le tout s'intitule *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. Une fois de plus, Wyatt surprend et seuls sont déçus ceux qui s'attendaient à ce qu'il enregistre à nouveau une copie conforme de *Rock Bottom*. Dès le premier titre, *Soup Song*, et son swing jazzy appuyé par le sax ténor de **Gary Windo** et le baryton de **Nisar Ahmas Khan**, on comprend que sa musique a évolué. Il est vrai qu'entre-temps, il a beaucoup écouté le jazz sud-africain du **Brotherhood of Breath** de **Chris McGregor** dont fait justement partie le trompettiste Mongezi Feza, qui a écrit et interprète le cadencé et chaloupé *Sonia* (titre à nouveau produit par Nick Mason). On retrouve également ces références au jazz sur *Song For Che*, un morceau écrit au départ par le bassiste **Charlie Haden** pour son **Liberation Orchestra**, dont cette version très sobre souligne l'aspect processionnel et funèbre. Sur la face Richard, les étonnants duos entre les accords subtils du piano de **Fred Frith** et la voix haut perchée du chanteur font merveille dans les variations successives de *Muddy Mouse*, devenu dans sa troisième et dernière apparition (la plus longue) *Muddy Mouth*. Mais les deux compositions les plus ambitieuses, par leurs complexités harmoniques et leurs subtilités rythmiques sont *Team Spirit* et *Black Notes And I White Note*. Sur la première, à partir d'une montée rythmique assurée par la basse de Bill MacCormick et la batterie de Laurie Allan, bientôt rejoints par les deux saxos ténors, sa voix installe une mélodie ondulante. Elle monte et retombe avant que la basse ne reprenne régulièrement son rythme squelettique de quatre notes. Puis les cuivres arrivent de nouveau au premier plan, dans une série de stridences jubilatoires. La structure du morceau se stabilise pendant plusieurs minutes avant de s'effilocher petit à petit et de disparaître dans le silence. Sur la seconde pièce, inspirée par un passage d'une composition de **Jacques Offenbach**, un mouvement lent et répétitif se construit peu à peu, portés par tous les instruments, avant d'éclater dans une myriade de sons épars d'où surnage seulement les sons aigus et électriques d'un piano-jouet.

Robert le Rouge

Au cours des années suivantes, il collabore à plusieurs albums, notamment ceux de **Michael Mantler**, Brian Eno, **Henry Cow** ou Nick Mason. Sa vie se passe de plus en plus en dehors de la musique et sa carrière personnelle entre dans une phase de sommeil. Il lit, traque les radios du monde en ondes courtes, va au cinéma, écoute beaucoup de musique (surtout du reggae), s'intéresse à ce qui se passe autour de lui. En conformité avec ses nouvelles convictions politiques, il adhère en 1979 au Parti communiste anglais. Alors qu'il semble avoir abandonné l'idée d'enregistrer de nouveau, Geoff Travis, le patron du label *Rough Trade*, lui propose de graver une série de *singles*. En 1980, quatre 45 tours verront le jour, rassemblés ensuite sur la compilation *Nothing Can't Stop Us* (1982) avec deux autres titres enregistrés l'année suivante, *Born Again Cretin* et le traditionnel *Red flag*.

La plupart des morceaux sont des reprises et cet exercice difficile entre tous lui permet de prouver une fois de plus l'immensité de son talent. L'original *At Last I Am Free* de **Chic** est totalement métamorphosé en une mélodie belle et mélancolique dont Wyatt a le secret. Il chante pour la première fois en espagnol sur *Caimanera*, version originale du standard latino *Guatanamera* et reprend en multitrack *Stalin Wasn't Stalling*, une chanson de propagande de la dernière guerre. Mais c'est surtout avec le poignant *Strange Fruit*, créé par Billie Holiday, qu'il démontre sa capacité à s'approprier un autre univers musical que le sien. Cette chanson poignante qui évoque le lynchage des Noirs par les activistes racistes du Ku Klux Klan devient un instant d'intense recueillement. Un moment où tout se tait et où seuls des mots parlent dans la nuit de souffrance et de mort, portés par une voix fragile et brisée. Sur les deux derniers titres, *Trade Union*, du groupe bengali **Dishari** et *Stalingrad* du poète communiste **Peter Blackman**, Wyatt est absent. Poursuivant sa logique d'engagement politique, il a souhaité s'effacer devant deux artistes militants de la cause anti-raciste et anti-fasciste.

Le vieux chapeau rouge

En août 1981, il enregistre seul la musique originale de *The Animals Film*, un documentaire produit et réalisé par Victor Schonfeld pour lutter contre l'exploitation des animaux.



En novembre 84 et jusqu'à l'été 85, il entame l'enregistrement des morceaux à paraître dans son nouvel album *Old Rottenhat*, qui sortira en novembre de la même année. Auparavant, au printemps 84, il avait gravé les quatre autres titres de *Work In Progress*. L'intégralité d'*Old Rottenhat* et de *Work In Progress*, augmentée des deux faces B de *Shipbuilding*, ressortira en CD chez *Rough Trade* en 1993 sous le titre *Mid-eighties*. Tous les titres figurant sur cette compilation perpétuent avec brio l'alchimie wyattienne : arriver à exprimer l'essentiel avec les moyens dont on dispose, même et surtout si ceux-ci sont limités. En d'autres termes, un minimalisme revendiqué parce ce qu'authentiquement vécu, assumé, pratiqué dans l'exercice même de la composition. Dans ce sens, *Old Rottenhat* est une totale réussite. Les mélodies n'ont jamais été aussi épurées, la rythmique si claire et précise, et sa voix si présente. Il suffit pour s'en convaincre d'écouter n'importe quel titre de l'album, de la limpidité fluide *d'Alliance* à la mélodie aérienne de *Vandalusia*. Les morceaux tirés de *Work In Progress* sont tous très réussis également. La reprise de *Biko* dépasse de très loin l'original écrit et chanté par Peter Gabriel, tandis que *Yolanda* demeure une de ses chansons les plus séduisantes.

Dondestan

Six ans après la sortie de son album précédent, il enregistre *Dondestan*. Pour la première fois, une partie des textes n'émanent pas de Wyatt lui-même, et ne sont pas non plus des reprises. Cinq de ces nouvelles compositions ont été écrites à partir de poèmes d'Alfreda Benge. Ceux-ci sont l'exact reflet des peintures illustrant les pochettes. Ils traduisent une passion du détail et un sens aigu de l'observation des choses de la vie quotidienne. A partir de ces écrits, Wyatt a reconstruit son univers musical familier avec encore plus de rigueur et de simplicité qu'à l'habitude. L'extraordinaire climat spectral de *Sight Of The Wind* est tout entier construit sur le juste mixage de quelques éléments sonores minimaux, bandes passées à l'envers, chuchotements, deux notes étirées répétées inlassablement. Ils créent un paysage lunaire que la voix de Robert vient effleurer comme une aile d'oiseau. D'autres titres retrouvent l'esprit et le rythme des comptines, légères et gaies, bien que les textes soient infiniment plus sombres. Ainsi *Dondestan* aborde la question des réfugiés palestiniens et kurdes comparés à des déportés qui n'ont rien à construire, ni place ni pays où vivre. Et *Catholic Architecture*, sans doute l'une des chansons les plus calmes et apaisées du disque, peut aussi être entendue comme un hymne à l'humanisme et à la tolérance. La deuxième édition du CD, *Dondestan Revisited* comporte une partie multimédia qui permet, outre l'écoute des chansons, de voir et d'entendre une interview du musicien parlant des conditions de création de sa musique.

Vocalises pour une courte pause

Durant l'été 92, Wyatt enregistre chez lui sur un quatre pistes cinq nouveaux morceaux édités la même année par *Voiceprint* sous le titre *A Short Break*. Elles sont présentées par Robert lui-même comme « cinq sketches abstraits », sortes de cartes postales offertes ici et maintenant sans recours aux artifices du studio. Généralement mal accueilli par la critique, ce court moment de détente entre deux tâches quotidiennes mérite pourtant toute notre attention. Il nous donne à entendre une musique encore plus intimiste qu'à l'ordinaire, reflet musical de quelques instants de flânerie passés au Portugal. En toute liberté, il nous livre une musique brute, où sont pourtant présents tous les éléments du langage wyattien : piano

squelettique, martèlement de la percussion et voix mourante.

Shleep

Au moment où sort *Shleep*, Wyatt n'a plus enregistré de véritable album depuis six ans. En compagnie de vieux compagnons de route comme **Evan Parker** ou Brian Eno, il reprend la route du studio, celui de **Phil Manzanera**, et enregistre durant l'hiver 96 et le printemps 97 onze nouvelles chansons. Si ce nouvel album s'inscrit dans une continuité évidente avec les précédents, sa structure générale est moins dépouillée qu'à l'habitude. La présence sur chaque titre de nombreux musiciens **(Annie Whitehead**, **Paul Weller**, **Philip Catherine**) ajoute plus de nervosité et de rythme à ses mélodies. Toujours déstructurées, oscillant entre pop et jazz, celles-ci naviguent en permanence entre sagesse et folie, déliquescence et apaisement, sagesse et humour. Une fois de plus, il y démontre toute l'étendue de son génie à transcender les chansons les plus simples. Il suffit pour le comprendre d'écouter la comptine affolée de *The Duchess* où sa voix passe soudain de l'aigu au nasillard, à la manière de celle de **Ringo Starr** dans *Yellow Submarine*. L'album recèle aussi de purs joyaux comme la superbe ballade *Maryan*, accompagnée par le violon de **Chikako Sato**. Outre des morceaux qui perpétuent des ambiances proches de celle de *Rock Bottom*, aériennes et crépusculaires, la musique se fait quelquefois plus rock : écoutez *Blues In Bob Minor*, son tempo nerveux et son scat-rap endiablé. Sur la pochette, Robert dort allongé sur le dos d'un oiseau qui ressemble à une colombe, celle de la paix retrouvée peut-être. En tout cas, *Shleep* est un bien bel album, et Wyatt, qui avoue avoir une passion pour le sommeil, a bien fait de se réveiller pendant quelques mois pour nous offrir toutes ces merveilles.

Ep's

Cerise sur le gâteau, ce généreux coffret de cinq CD, illustré des peintures colorées d'Alfie, offre sa cargaison de raretés et d'inédits à tous les aficionados du musicien. Certains titres avaient déjà fait l'objet d'une réédition dans la compilation *Goin Back A Bit : A Little History Of Robert Wyatt*, aujourd'hui épuisée. Le premier disque *Bits* contient quatre chansons enregistrées en 74 pour *Virgin*, dont une version inédite de la reprise du *I'm A Believer* des **Monkees**. *Pièces* nous transporte dans la décennie suivante et rassemble des titres sortis en 45 tours chez *Rough Trade* plus deux titres intégrés dans des enregistrements collectifs. On y entend le merveilleux slow *Shipbuilding*, écrit par **Elvis Costello** en pleine guerre des Malouines, du jazz avec une version lumineuse du *Round' Midnight* de **Thelonious Monk**, le slow lunaire *Memories Of You* signé **Eubie Blake**. A écouter aussi le très étonnant *Pigs...(In There)*, où le texte parlé dénonçant les conditions d'élevage et d'abattage des cochons, se transforme peu à peu en chanson. Le troisième disque contient l'intégralité de *Work In Progress*. Claviers, percussion, voix et la magie peut commencer sur *Yolanda*, de **Pablo Milanes**, *Te recuerdo Amanda*, de **Victor Jara** et *Biko* de **Peter Gabriel**. *Animals* reprend *The Animals Film*, une curiosité militante où l'on n'entend pas la voix du chanteur. Enfin, sur le dernier, quatre remixes extraits de *Shleep*, dernier album de Robert Wyatt paru à ce jour. Une anthologie remarquable à compléter par l'écoute de *Flotsam Jetsam* (peut-être épuisée), compilation qui offre un parcours du musicien au travers de ses différents groupes.

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G.N.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE SÉLECTIVE

(Pour des problèmes de place, les références d'articles de périodiques n'ont pu être intégrées à cette bibliographie. Pour les personnes intéressées, s'adresser à la rédaction du journal qui transmettra).

Généralités

- **Dister, Alain** : *Le Rock anglais*. - Albin Michel/Rock & Folk, 1973. Bibliogr. Discogr. 190 p.
- **Renaud, Philippe** : *Simply not cricket* : catalogue du jazz britannique : 1964-1994 ; trad. en anglais par Chris Atton. - ImproJazz (14, Allée des Myosotis. 41000 Blois), 1995. Index. Liste des abrév. - 300 p. 250F.

Monographies (français)

- **King, Michael** : *Faux mouvements* ; Balandret, Yves, trad. - Camion Blanc, 1998. - Discogr. 239 p. 120 F. Outre son format réduit par rapport à l'édition originale anglaise, cette traduction française d'un livre essentiel à tous les amoureux de Wyatt souffre malheureusement d'approximations hasardeuses qui en rendent quelquefois la lecture malaisée. Indispensable cependant à tous les non anglicistes.

Monographies (anglais)

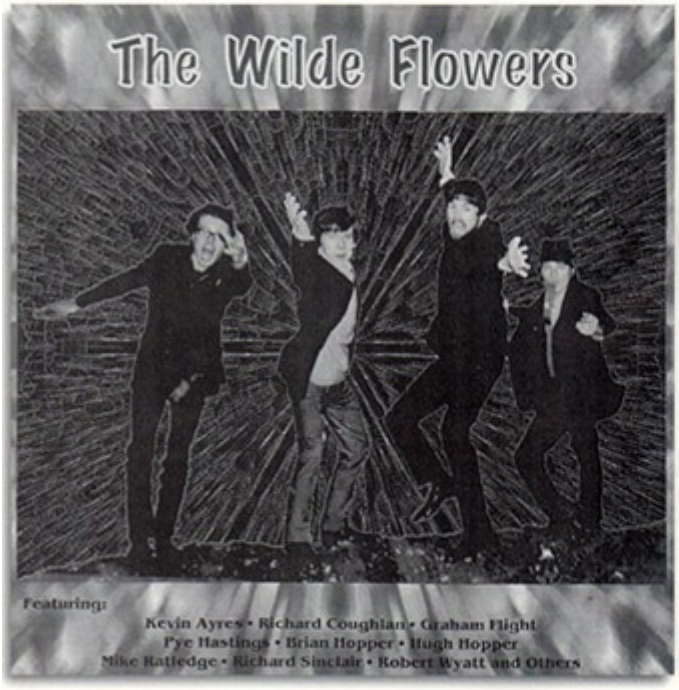
- **King, Michael** : *Wrong Movements : A Robert Wyatt History*. - SAF, 1994. - Discogr. Le livre d'un fan pour les fans. La carrière de Robert Wyatt est retracée à la manière d'un puzzle géant, année après année, session après session, concert après concert, illustrée par une très riche documentation (affiches d'époque, tickets de concerts, photos inédites, fac-similés d'articles). Indispensable.
- **Marchetti, Jean-Noël** : *Robert Wyatt : MW* ; Jean-Noël Marchetti, ill. - Aencrages, 1997.
- **Marchetti, Jean-Noël** : *Robert Wyatt : M2W* ; Jean-Noël Marchetti, ill. - Aencrages, 1998. - 72 p. : ill. + 1CD. 140 F. 15 chansons pour le premier livre, 16 chansons pour le second, illustrées et mises en page par l'artiste Jean-Noël Marchetti. Une réussite totale, tant par la qualité de la présentation des textes, offerts ici en version bilingue, que par la sobriété de l'édition elle-même. Sur le CD accompagnant *M2W*, enregistré en juillet 1997, Robert Wyatt lit deux textes : *The British Road* et *Blues In Bob Minor*.

Fanzine (anglais)

- *Facelift* (Phil Howitt, 23 Nutclough Hebdenbridge HX78HA (Email : facelift@gpo.sonnet.co.uk.). Un magazine entièrement consacré à la scène de Canterbury. Existe depuis plusieurs années, a connu une interruption mais semble aujourd'hui repartir du bon pied. Nombreux articles consacrés à Hugh Hopper, Caravan, Daevid Allen, ... et bien sûr *R.W.*
- *Old Rottenhat Journal : A News-Info Source Of The International Robert Wyatt Contingent* (c/o Terry Valderas, 2021 S.E. Taylor Street, Portland, Oregon 97214, USA). Le fanzine indispensable à tous les fans. Donne de nombreuses informations sur l'actualité du musicien : nouveautés, rééditions, inédits, interviews de *R.W.*, critiques, discographie ...

DISCOGRAPHIE SÉLECTIVE

Cette discographie chronologique sélective recense tous les albums disponibles en CD, à l'exclusion des compilations regroupant des titres déjà édités en albums. Les collaborations de Robert Wyatt sur les enregistrements d'autres musiciens sont trop nombreuses pour être citées ici. Pour les personnes intéressées, s'adresser à la rédaction du journal qui transmettra. Lorsque le nom du distributeur n'est pas mentionné, il s'agit d'enregistrements parus sur des labels anglais ou américains non distribués en France à la date de parution de cette discographie. Celle-ci reprend, d'une manière abrégée mais actualisée, la discographie de Manfred Bress intégrée dans Wrong Movements *de Michael King. Dans toutes les notices, le nom de Robert Wyatt est mentionné par ses initiales écrites en italiques : R.W.*



Anthologie

- *Canterburied Sounds : volume 3* ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Jimi Hendrix, guit. ; Mike Ratledge, p ; Biran Hopper, guit. ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; Pete Lawson, voc. ; Caravan ; Zobe. - Enr. 1962-1963, 1968. Voiceprint CD VP203CD
- **Daevid Allen Trio :** *Live New Departures* ; Daevid Allen, guit., voc. , poésie ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; Robert Ellidge (*R.W.*), batt. ; Mike Ratledge, p ; Mike Horowitz, voc. - Enr. 1963. Voiceprint CD VP122CD
- **The Wilde Flowers :** *The Wilde Flowers* ; Kevin Ayers, voc. ; Brian Hopper, guit., sax. ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; Richard Sinclair, guit., voc. ; Richard Coughlan, batt. ; Graham Flight, voc. ; Pye Hastings, guit., voc. - Enr. 1965-1969. Voiceprint (Clémusic) CD VP123CD
- **The Soft Machine**
  - *Jet propelled* ; Kevin Ayers, guit. ; Mike Ratledge, org. ; Daevid Allen, guit. ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. - Enr. 1967. Spalax CD CD14816 (Regroupe des enregistrements publiés auparavant sur deux compilations de divers artistes chez BYG, réédités ensuite de nombreuses fois, le plus souvent sous le titre *Jet-Propelled Photograph* ou *In The Beginning*).
  - *Volumes One and Two* ; Michael Ratledge, org. ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Kevin Ayers, guit. ; Hugh Hopper, guit. - Enr. 1968. Big Beat CD CDWIKD 920.

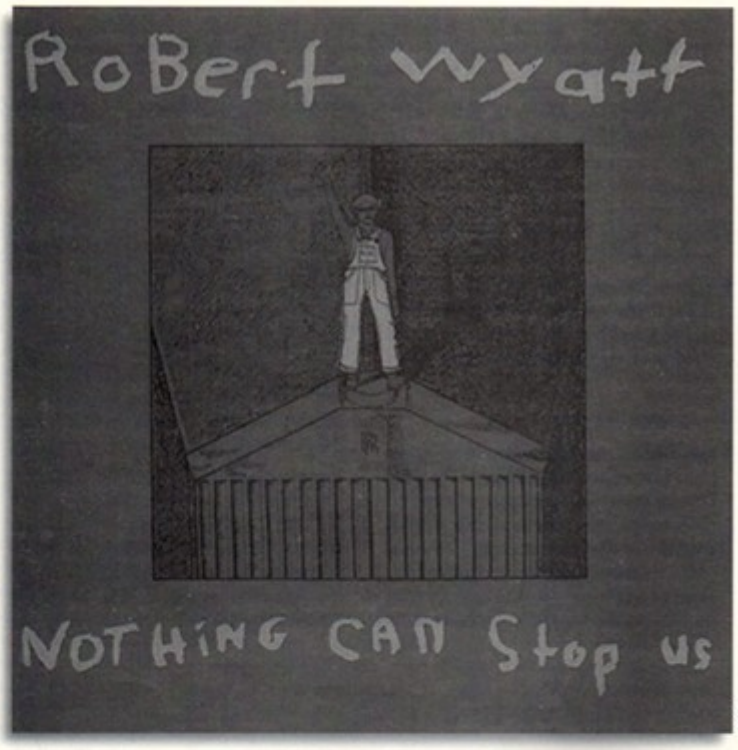
- *Live At The Paradiso 1969* ; Hugh Hopper, guit. ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; *R.W.*, batt. ; Elton Dean, as. - Enr. live 1969. Voiceprint (dis. Clémusic) CD VP193CD
- *Spaced* ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; Brian Hopper, sax.. ; *R.W.*, batt. Enr. live au Roundhouse 1969. Cuneiform (dis. Orkhêstra) CD Rune 90
- *Third* ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; Hugh Hopper, guit. ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Elton Dean, as, saxello ; Rab Spall, vl. ; Lyn Dobson, fl., ss ; Nick Evans, tb. ; Jimmy Hastings, fl., clar. - Enr. live 4 janvier 1970. Columbia (dis. Sony) CD 4714072
- *Noisette* ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; Hugh Hopper, guit. ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Elton Dean, as, saxello ; Lyn Dobson, fl., ss. - Enr. live 4 janvier 1970. Cunéiform (dis. Orkhêstra) CD
- *Live at the Proms* ; Hugh Hopper, guit. ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; Elton Dean, as ; *R.W.*, batt. - Enr. live par la BBC au Royal Albert Hall le 13 août 1970. Reckless Records (import) CD RECK 5
- *Fourth* ; Hugh Hopper, guit. ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; *R.W.*, batt. ; Elton Dean, as, saxello ; Mark Charig, cornet ; Nick Evans, tb. ; Jimmy Hastings, fl., clar. ; Alan Skidmore, st. - Enr. 1971. Columbia (dis. Sony) CD COL 473003-2
- *Virtually* ; Elton Dean, as, saxello, élect. P ; Mike Ratledge, électr. P ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. - Enr. live Gondel Filmkunsttheater, Bremen le 23 mars 1971. Cuneiform (dis. Orkhêstra) CD Rune 100
- *The Peel Sessions* ; Hugh Hopper, guit. ; Mike Ratledge, org., p ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Elton Dean, as. - Enr. 1969, 1970, 1971. Strange Fruit Records 2CD SFRCD 201
- *BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert* ; Elton Dean, s ; Mike Ratledge, org. ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; R.W., batt. ; Ronnie Scott, ts ; Marc Charig, cornet ; Paul Nieman, trb. ; Ray Babbington, dble b. ; Neville Whitehead, guit. b. ; Phil Howard, batt. - Enr. live au Paris Theatre London le 11 mars 1971. Windsong CD WINCD 031

Matching Mole

- *Matching Mole* ; Phil Miller, guit. ; Dave Sinclair, p, org. ; Bill MacCormick, b ; *R.W.*, p, mellotron, voc., batt. ; Dave MacRae, p électr. - Enr. décembre 1971, janvier 1972. Columbia (dis. Sony) CD COL 471 489-2
- *Matching Mole's Little Red Record* ; Phil Miller, guit. ; Bill MacCormick, b ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Dave MacRae, p électr., org., p, synth. ; Brian Eno, VCS3 ; Der Mütter Chorus (David Gale, Julie Christie, Alfreda Benge). - Enr. juillet 1972. Columbia (dis. Sony) CD COL 471 488-2
- *BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert* ; *R.W.*, batt., voc. ; Dave McRae, clav. ; Phil Miller, guit. ; Bill McCormick, bg. - Enr. 27 juillet 1972. Windsong CD WINCD063

Robert Wyatt

- *The End Of An Ear.* - Enr. août 1970. Columbia (dis. Sony) CD COL 473005-2
- *Rock Bottom* ; *R.W.*, voc. Gary Windo, sax. ; Mike Oldfield, guit. ; Fred Frith, vla ; Mongezi Feza, tp. ; Richard Sinclair, guit. b. ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b. ; Laurie Allan, batt. ; Ivor Cutler, voc. ; Nick Mason, prod. ; Alfreda Benge, voc., ill. - Enr. février-mars 1974. Hannibal (dis. Harmonia Mundi) CD HNCD 1426



- *The Peel Sessions* ; *R.W.*, voc., p, perc. - Enr. septembre 1974. Strange Fruit CD SFPS CD 037
- *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* ; *R.W.*, voc., clav., perc. ; Nisar Ahmad, ss, ts, bs ; Gary Windo, ts, as, bcl ; Brian Eno ; Fred Frith, p ; Bill MacCormick, guit. b ; John Greaves, guit. b ; Laurie Allan, batt. ; Alfreda Benge, ill. ; Nick Mason, prod. - Enr. mars 1975. Hannibal (dis. Harmonia Mundi) CD HNCD 1427
- *The Animals Film* : b.o.f. de Victor Schoenfeld ; *R.W.*, voc., org., p, perc. ; Julie Christie, British Humane Society, prod. - Enr. août 1981. Rough Trade (dis. Arcade) CD R3172
- *Nothing Can't Stop Us* ; *R.W.*, p, voc., guit., clav. ; Bill MacCormick, guit. ; Harry Beckett, tp. ; Mogotsi Mothle, cb. ; Frank Roberts, clav. ; Esmail Shek, tabla ; Kadir Durvesh, shehnaï ; Peter Blackmann, réc. ; Alfreda Benge, ill. - Enr. janvier 1980-juillet 1982. (Réédition en CD d'une compilation parue en 1982, qui regroupait quelques inédits plus des titres édités à l'origine en 45 tours : *Arauco, Caimanera* (Rough Trade 100112) ; *Stalin Wasn't Stalling, Stalingrad* (Rough Trade 100113) ; *At Last I'm Free, Strange Fruit* (Rough Trade 100114). Hannibal (dis. Harmonia Mundi) CD 72438 394032 5
- *Old Rottenhat* ; *R.W.*, voc., clav., perc. - Enr. été 1985. Hannibal (dis. Harmonia Mundi) CD HNCD 1434)
- *Dondestan (Revisited)* ; *R.W.*, voc., org., p, batt, perc. ; Alfreda Benge, ill. - Enr. février 1991. Hannibal (dis. Harmonia Mundi) CD Plus HNCD 1436
- *A Short Break* ; *R.W.*, voc., org. - Enr. été 1992. Voiceprint CD VP108CD
- *Mid-Eighties* ; *R.W.*, voc., clav., perc. ; Hugh Hopper, guit. b ; Dave MacRae, clav. - Enr. 1982-1986. Rough Trade (dis. Arcade) CD 31093
- *Going Back A Bit : A Little History Of Robert Wyatt.* - Enr. 1969-1991. Virgin 2CD CDVDM 9031
- *Flotsam Jetsam* ; *R.W.*, voc., p, batt., org. ; Jimi Hendrix, guit. ; Gary Windo, ts, fl. ; Nick Evans, tb. ; Steve Florence, guit. ; Ray Babbington, cb., ... - Enr. 1968-1989. Rough Trade (dis. Arcade) CD 8399142
- *Shleep* ; *R.W.*, voc., clav., bguit., perc., tp. ; Brian Eno, synth., voc. ; Jamie Johnson, guit. ; Evan Parker, ss ; Paul Weller, guit., voc. ; Gary Azukx, djembe ; Phil Manzanera, guit. ; Chucho Merzan, bguit. ; Alfreda Benge, voc., ill. - Enr. 1996-1997. Hannibal /Rykodisc (dis. Harmonia Mundi) CD HNCD 1418
- *Eps* : Bits. Pieces. Work In Progress. Animals. Remixes ; *R.W.*, voc., clav., batt. ; Enr. 1974-1998. Hannibal/Rykodisc (dis. Harmonia Mundi) SCD HNCD 1440

Hommage

The Different you : Robert Wyatt e noi ; *R.W*, Ulan Bator, Marlene Kuntz, Here, CSI, Franco Battiato,... ; Consorzio Produttori Indipendenti. - Enr. 1999. Mercury CD 300 496-2

FILMOGRAPHIE

◗ **Di Loreto, Francesco - Bevilacqua, Carlo :** *Robert Wyatt : Little Red Robin Hood* ; avec la participation de Steve Beresford, Elvis Costello, Carla Bley, Lol Coxhill, Brian Eno, Hugh Hopper, Phil Manzanera, Paul Weller, Hugh Hopper, Nick Mason, Andy Summers, Chris Cutler. - 1999. RéR Recommended (dis. Orkhêstra) VHS 65 mn. vonst RWVI

Internet : http ://www.strongcomet.com/wyatt/ Un site entièrement consacré à R.W. On y trouve sa discographie, les paroles de nombreuses chansons, ainsi que des liens vers d'autres sites en partie dédiés au musicien : Calyx : the Canterbury web site, Age Projex, Musart, ... plus certains labels comme Voiceprint ou Rykodisc.

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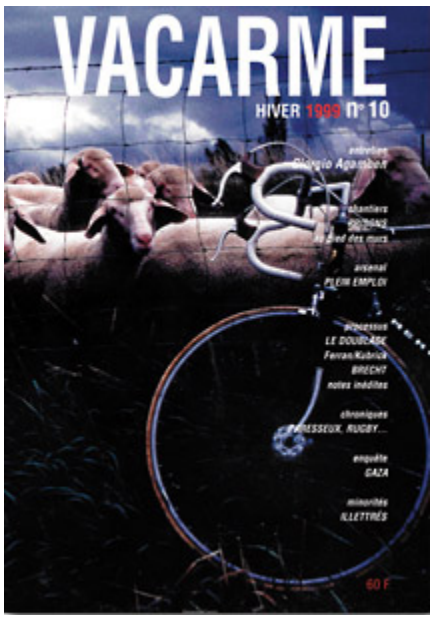
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Le plus grand chanteur à roulettes du monde - Vacarme - Hiver 2000



LE PLUS GRAND CHANTEUR A ROULETTES DU MONDE

Mathieu Potte-Bonneville

Le plus grand chanteur à roulettes du monde se nomme Robert Wyatt. Il est anglais, a cinquante-cinq ans, une barbe un peu plus longue que celle de feu Kubrick, mais un *cottage* moins spacieux. Sa musique est profonde et subtile, inattendue, mélodies folk très simples brusquement emportées vers la dissonance, escalades d'accords déplaçant de proche en proche la tonalité initiale. Éléments de base désuets (piano, guitare, saxophone). Sans doute la seule rencontre du rock et du jazz qui ne s'abîme pas dans la neutralisation réciproque, dans l'impasse tiède du jazz-rock.

La femme de Robert Wyatt se prénomme Alfie. Les notes de pochette rappellent, avec beaucoup de douceur, qu'elle co-écrit les textes de presque toutes les chansons. Je me demande comment ils font, et qui trouve les noms étranges de ces albums, *Ruth is stranger than Richard*, *Dondestan*, *Animal film soundtracks*. Le titre de *Rock bottom*, toutefois, m'est avis que c'est lui qui l'a trouvé : en 1973, sa chute depuis une fenêtre l'a laissé sur le cul, paraplégique. De là, les roulettes.

(Un peu plus tard, à une époque où sa musique avait brièvement émergé à la surface des radios et des *charts*, l'émission télévisée *Top of the pops* refusa de le laisser chanter pour cause de fauteuil roulant. Il lui fallut des semaines pour obtenir gain de cause — ensuite de quoi sa musique replongea, avec un jet de vapeur, tout au fond de l'océan).

Robert Wyatt est communiste. Du Parti Communiste britannique, il dit : « C'est lui qui m'a quitté, pas moi. Il s'est juste dissous dans l'air, comme ça, tranquillement, depuis dix ans. Moi, je n'ai toujours pas trouvé de meilleure analyse de la façon dont le monde contemporain est organisé que l'analyse marxiste. »

À ce stade du récit, il faudrait dire que la voix de Wyatt s'envole, extirpant de ce corps mutilé et de cet engagement fantôme des notes aériennes, d'une pureté inouïe. La vérité

est qu'elle ne s'envole pas du tout. S'y appliquerait plutôt le constat souriant qui ouvre l'une des chansons : « *Giving free wills, but whithin certain limitations*. » Robert Wyatt chante comme un homme assis, dont la poitrine est comprimée par un diaphragme perpétuellement bloqué en position haute, et dont le souffle est très limité. Sa voix est dos au mur — littéralement, une voix de tête. Comme si, disons, Joseph Deller ou quelque autre haute-contre avait inhalé du ciment. Son *falsetto*, que ne soutient aucune réverbération, est un homme sans ombre. D'un point de vue strictement musical, c'est en tous points bouleversant.

Robert Wyatt a sorti, voici deux ans (chez Rykodisc), un album intitulé *Shleep*, et qui a bien marché. *Shleep* est un mot-valise, compression intraduisible de « sommeil » et « moutons ». La première chanson de l'album, *Heaps of sheeps* (disons, « des tas de moutons ») raconte ceci : je ne peux pas dormir, et je décide de compter les moutons. Ils sautent la barrière, de droite à gauche, un par un. Se retrouvent de l'autre côté. Mais pour aller où ? Nulle part. Ils n'ont nulle part où aller, ne veulent ni ne peuvent quitter la scène, rien n'est prévu à cet effet — et il en vient toujours, un par un s'entassant dans l'étroite clôture qui sépare la barrière du bord de mon sommeil. Plein de moutons, qui sautent et s'entassent sur la gauche, en foule moutonnante. Je ne peux plus dormir.

Ceci pour dire : la prochaine fois que l'on arguera, devant vous, de la fin des clivages et de l'inanité qu'il y aurait aujourd'hui à distinguer la droite de la gauche, rappelez-vous. Est à gauche, celui qui ne peut pas dormir parce qu'il se demande, la barrière passée, ce que deviennent les moutons.

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Soup Songs : la musique de Robert Wyatt sans croûtons - Traverses - N° 5 - décembre 1999

Soup Songs : la musique de Robert WYATT sans croûtons



De tous les pays d'Europe, c'est paraît-il en France que Shleep, le dernier album de Robert WYATT s'est le mieux vendu. Le label Hannibal/Rykodisc ayant de surcroît procédé à la réédition de ses principales œuvres antérieures (cf. TRAVERSES n° 2 et 3), l'homme à la barbe blanche qui a Fait les beaux jours de la Machine Molle s'est offert les honneurs d'une actualité qui risque fort de se prolonger. En effet, sa musique a été honorée sur scène il y a peu par une formation nommée SOUP SONGS, dirigée parla tromboniste Annie WHITEHEAD personnalité immanquable d'un certain jazz contemporain anglais.

Outre deux concerts donnés à Newark (près de la résidence de WYATT) et à Londres, SOUP SONGS s'est produit en exclusivité française à Nancy au mois d'octobre dernier, dans le cadre du Festival Nancy Jazz Pulsations, qui, mine de rien, assurait déjà sa 23e édition. C'est avec Robert WYATT "himself" que Annie WHITEHEAD a conçu son projet d'hommage, et elle a fait appel à plusieurs musiciens qui ont eu l'occasion de travailler avec lui ; par exemple Phil MANZANERA, l'ancien guitariste de QUIET SUN, 801 et ROXY MUSIC. TRAVERSES a voulu en savoir plus et a demandé à Annie WHITEHEAD et à Phil MANZANERA d'exposer les tenants et les aboutissants de ce tribut à l'inimitable Robert.

Entretien avec Annie WHITEHEAD et Phil MANZANERA

N'est-ce pas un peu singulier que de monter un groupe pour jouer la musique de Robert WYATT alors qu'il n'y est pas présent ?

Annie WHITEHEAD : Robert nous manque c'est certain ! Sa voix est tellement spéciale... Mais sa musique n'a jamais été jouée sur scène. Robert est quelqu'un qui travaille en studio, il ne joue pas sur scène, il n'en a pas la volonté et cela l'effraie. Aussi, dès le début, il nous a fallu songer à monter notre projet sans penser une seule seconde à y faire chanter Robert. Nous avons donc monté une formation avec des gens que Robert apprécie, et qui ont, pour certains, déjà joué avec lui avant. Toutefois, la musique de Robert étant d'abord une musique de studio, pour la jouer " live ", nous avons dû la transformer. Des décisions ont été prises concernant ce qu'il fallait garder des enregistrements studio et ce qu'il fallait changer.

Avez-vous élaboré ce projet avec lui ?

AW : Oui, j'ai eu de nombreuses discussions avec lui ; pendant une semaine, nous n'avons cessé de parler de ses morceaux. Tout le temps. Robert est sûr de ce qu'il veut. En tout cas, avec moi, il sait ce qu'il veut me faire jouer. Quand je suis venue jouer sur deux morceaux de *Shleep*, je suis restée tout un week-end et on a discuté, écouté de la musique... Bref, pour le projet, il a été convenu que nous ne jouerions que des morceaux de ses albums solo et, de préférence, ses propres compositions, non des reprises. Pas question donc de jouer *I'm a Believer* ou *At Last I'm Free*, qui sont des chansons écrites par d'autres. Cependant, nous avons décidé de jouer Song for Che et Sonia, de Mongezi FEZA, parce qu'il n'est plus de ce monde et que Robert l'aimait beaucoup. Nous avons donc voulu que son esprit soit représenté, de même que celui de Gary VVINDO, qui a également disparu. Aussi, dans SOUP SONGS, je joue également certains de ses solos.

Voilà, nous avons donc passé une semaine à discuter de ce qu'il fallait faire et ne pas faire, des choses qu'il fallait modifier et des choses qu'il ne voulait pas modifier, et nous avons répété pendant huit jours. Les deux derniers jours, Robert est venu nous voir et nous avons rediscuté de certaines choses à mettre au point.



Annie WHITEHEAD

Phil MANZANERA : Je me dois de dire que Ian MAIDMAN est l'une des rares personnes en Angleterre à pouvoir chanter les chansons de Robert WYATT, ce qui n'est pas une tâche facile. Il a la bonne formation, la sensibilité musicale adéquate et ça sonne vraiment naturel avec lui. Vous savez, ça fait des années que je connais la musique et les chansons de Robert, et je ne trouve rien d'étrange à ce que lan chante ses chansons. C'est si important d'avoir les bonnes personnes pour faire ce qui doit être fait.

J'ai cru comprendre qu'à l'origine deux personnes devaient assurer le chant : Ian et Julie TIPPETTS, qui a jadis publié un disque (Sunset GIow) qu'elle a dédié à Robert WYATT...

AW : Oui. nous voulions avoir Julie pour chanter vraiment certaines ballades, et d'autres petites choses. La façon que Julie a de reprendre les chansons de Robert est très différente de celle dont ce dernier les aurait jouées C'est une improvisatrice et, par conséquent, elle les interprète comme elle aurait souhaité les jouer, à sa manière. Elle a fait ses propres versions des chansons de Robert. Avec Ian, on reste dans le même esprit que celui de Robert, tant sa voix est naturelle. Dès que nous avons commencé à parler du projet, tout le monde s'est demandé : " Mais qui va chanter ? " Et j'ai dit : " Je connais un type... " Ian avait fait un album, je l'ai apporté à Robert et lui ai demandé : " Qu'en penses-tu ? " Et nous avons donc décidé qu'il y aurait deux approches. Ian chanterait dans cet esprit, et Julie nous porterait dans une autre direction.

Pour le concert de Nancy, seul Ian est présent. Cela signifie-t-il qu'il chantera les chansons qui lui ont été allouées, plus celles de Julie TIPPETTS ?

AW : De toutes les chansons que Julie chante normalement, nous n'en avons gardé que deux. Il faut savoir que, pour le premier concert que nous avons donné, nous avions trois heures de musique ! A Nancy, nous ne pouvons jouer qu'une heure et demie ; aussi, nous ne pouvons faire que les chansons avec Ian. Mais nous jouerons par exemple *Sea Song*. Au départ, Julie et Ian voulaient tous les deux la chanter, et nous avons dû trancher. On a dit : " OK ; celle-là, c'est pour Julie ! ", tout en sachant qu'à Nancy Ian pourrait se permettre de la chanter.

Avez-vous songé à une formule en duo ?

AW : Julie chante sur un ton très différent de celui de Ian...

Nancy, c'est votre deuxième date ?

AW : Exactement. Notre première fut à Newark, le 10 octobre, et nous donnerons un autre concert au Festival du Royal Albert Hall le 16 novembre. Et c'est vraiment tout ! Pour la suite, nous devons parler à Robert. Je crois qu'il veut faire des enregistrements avec Ian au chant, mais qu'il veut aussi trouver le moyen de faire chanter Julie, Ian et lui-même ensemble ! Nous devons savoir où nous allons. Robert ne sera pas au concert de Nancy, mais on pourrait très bien envisager sa présence plus tard. Notre projet a besoin de s'étoffer avec lui ; sinon, ça deviendra un " Robert WYATT Tribute Band " et, comme il le dit lui-même, il n'est pas encore mort ! (rires)



Ian MAIDMAN

Sur scène, vous êtes nombreux à lui rendre un hommage...

AW : Nous sommes neuf musiciens. C'est vraiment une célébration ! Mais il n'y a pas toujours neuf musiciens pour chaque morceau ; parfois, il n'y en a que cinq. Tous les gens que j'ai invités à participer à l'événement ont immédiatement dit " Oui ! ", sans aucune hésitation. Cela montre le sentiment que ces gens portent à Robert ; ils l'aiment. Même Phil (MANZANERA), qui est quelqu'un d'extrêmement occupé, ne m'a pas répondu " J'y réfléchirai... ", il m'a dit " Oui " spontanément. C'est vraiment un travail fait par plaisir par tout le monde !

Concernant les chansons que vous avez reprises, avez-vous réécrit certains passages ?

AW : J'ai fait quelques arrangements, mais il y a aussi certaines choses qui restent semblables aux versions originales. De plus, tout le monde avait ses propres idées. Durant les trois premiers jours de la répétition, nous avons travaillé avec la section rythmique afin de déterminer quels plans rythmiques étaient possibles, un peu comme si on faisait un CD. Parce que, vous voyez, notre batteur apprécie énormément le jeu rythmique de Robert, mais il n'était pas question pour lui de refaire la même chose. En répétition, Robert lui a dit après l'avoir écouté : " C'est exactement comme ça que j'aurais joué si j'avais eu une bass drum ! " Donc, chacun a usé de sa propre sensibilité.

Cela veut-il dire que tout a été écrit au millimètre près ?

AW : Non, nous avons des parties très écrites, et d'autres très ouvertes, propices à l'improvisation.

Phil MANZANERA. vous êtes connu pour avoir fait partie de ROXY MUSIC, groupe plutôt orienté " glam rock " ; c'est une surprise de vous retrouver impliqué dans un projet-hommage à une grande figure de la scène dite canterburyenne.

PM : En fait, je connais Robert depuis l'âge de 15 ans. J'étais son ami et j'ai suivi sa carrière. Il m'a beaucoup influencé. Avant ROXY MUSIC, j'avais un groupe qui s'appelait

QUIET SUN, dans lequel jouait le bassiste Bill McCORMICK, qui plus tard a rejoint le groupe de Robert, MATCHING MOLE. En 1975, quand j'ai fait mon premier album solo (Diamond Head), Robert est venu chanter sur le premier morceau. De plus, je l'ai présenté à Brian ENO, avec qui il a travaillé.



Phil MANZANERA

Ainsi, notre relation a perduré pendant toutes ces années et, quand il a voulu enregistrer son album *Shleep*, nous avons pu passer beaucoup plus de temps ensemble. Ça faisait quelques années qu'il n'était pas retourné dans un studio ; aussi, je lui ai proposé de venir travailler dans le mien. En fait, ça faisait des années que je lui avais fait la proposition, mais il n'avait pas saisi l'occasion jusqu'à ce qu'il se rende compte que, finalement, il s'y sentait à l'aise. Il a même dormi dans le studio ! Nous avons passé beaucoup de temps à parler, avec lui comme avec sa femme, Alfie. Nous avons bu du thé, du vin, et parlé de choses et d'autres et puis nous avons aussi fait de la musique (NDLR : Tant qu'à faire…) C'est ça, notre mode de vie ! Évidemment, son parcours musical est différent du mien, qui a oscillé entre ROXY MUSIC et la musique latino-américaine.

En somme, vous avez deux visages ?

PM : Trois ! J'ai un côté anglais, je suis né à Londres mais j'ai passé mon enfance à Cuba, au Venezuela, et mes racines sont dans la musique sudaméricaine. J'ai joué avec des groupes sudaméricains et j'ai produit des groupes argentins, colombiens, mexicains, espagnols… L'an dernier, j'ai produit un célèbre chanteur espagnol, Enrique BUNBURY, no 1 dans les hits là-bas.

Cet attrait pour la musique sudaméricaine vous fait un point commun de plus avec Robert WYATT.

PM : Robert a toujours eu des affinités avec l'Espagne et avec Cuba. Il a fait des reprises de chansons comme Yolanda de Pablo MILANEZ, ou Hasta Siempre, qui parle de Che GUEVARA. Ces chansons, je les ai jouées avec un groupe cubain… Donc, c'est vrai que je fais des choses très différentes. J'ai joué sur le dernier album de Brian FERRY, par exemple. Mais maintenant, je ne veux plus avoir affaire à un producteur d'une maison de disques qui te dicte ce que tu dois faire, qui te contrôle et qui ne te laisse aucune liberté artistique. J'ai donc monté mon propre label, Expression Records, et je vends mes disques sur mon site Web. J'essaie d'encourager Robert à en faire autant !

SOUP SONGS fera-t-il un CD ?

AW : C'est à l'étude. Robert veut en enregistrer un. Nous avons enregistré notre premier

concert et la plupart des morceaux seront mixés dans le studio de Phil. A écouter les bandes, je pense qu'il y a de très bonnes choses à garder.

Je ne sais pas si vous êtes au courant, mais il y a déjà un album " tribute " à WYATT qui est sorti en Italie…

PM : Ah oui, c'est vrai ! Mais celui-là, il n'est pas officiel, ni cautionné par Robert. Seul celui d'Annie l'est !

AW : Robert aurait vraiment aimé venir en France pour le concert, mais il lui est très difficile de voyager.

PM : La France est un endroit très spécial pour Robert. Déjà, à ses débuts, SOFT MACHINE était plus accepté en France qu'en Angleterre. En France, Robert a toujours été bien apprécié. Il aurait franchement adoré venir…



Didier MALHERBE

Le concert du Festival Nancy Jazz Pulsations (20.10.99)

Présenté en exclusivité française, le groupe SOUP SONGS donnait à Nancy le deuxième concert de son existence (sur trois prévus !). Le Festival Nancy Jazz Pulsations n'avait pas lésiné sur la promotion médiatique de son " événement ", et quelques brochures et journaux locaux avaient même été jusqu'à murmurer bien haut et bien fort qu" il " honorerait la soirée de sa présence ou qu" il " apparaîtrait sur scène au bon moment… Intox tellement prévisible qu'il en devenait de bon aloi. De toute façon, le festival NJP s'était assuré de pouvoir faire le plein dans son chapiteau du Parc de la pépinière puisqu'il avait également programmé ce soir-là à la même affiche deux autres titans des 70's dont le culte est resté très vivace : MAGMA et GONG. Le Kommandoh vandérien a ouvert les hostilités en jouant rien moins que sa trilogie Theusz Hamtaahk, dont le deuxième mouvement, Wurdah Itah, n'avait je crois jamais été interprété en version live intégrale jusqu'à cette année. Mais à part ça, rien de neuf dans le répertoire magmaïen, au contraire de GONG qui, en dernière partie de soirée, a offert au public un avant-goût de son prochain album (à paraître au printemps 2000) avec quelques pièces très prometteuses, à défaut d'être maîtrisées.

Entre les deux, SOUP SONGS, formation composée de neuf musiciens et dirigée par Annie WHITEHEAD. Très active dans le milieu jazz contemporain, la tromboniste s'était en priorité entourée de musiciens qui lui sont familiers, notamment ceux avec lesquels elle a formé le groupe RUDE : son partenaire le chanteur et guitariste Ian MAIDMAN (plus connu comme bassiste et qui a joué avec PENGUIN CAFE ORCHESTRA, David SYLVIAN, George CLINTON, Boy GEORGE – cherchez l'erreur…) ; mais aussi le batteur Liam GENOCKEY et le trompettiste Harry BECKETT. Étaient également présents le guitariste Phil MANZANERA, évidemment, et le saxophoniste George KHAN – alias Nisar Ahmed KHAN –, tous deux ayant participé à Ruth is Stranger than Richard, l'album de WYATT sur lequel figure le

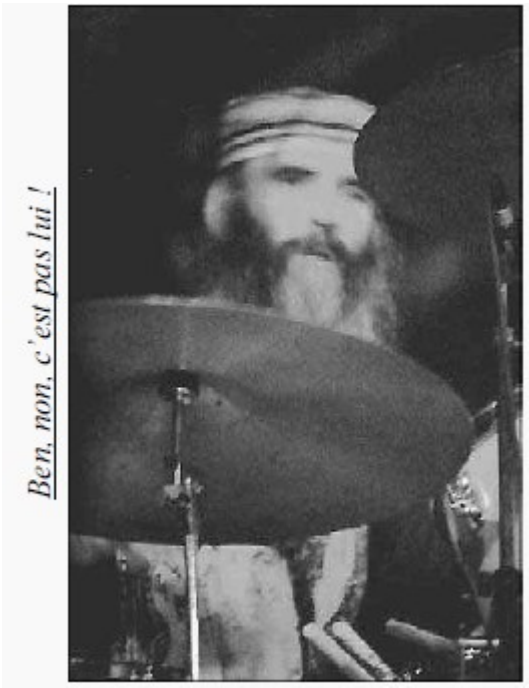
morceau Soup Song (bon sang, mais c'est bien sûr !), ce qui donne une idée de la nature de l'hommage qui devait être rendu au Grand Robert… Enfin, il n'est pas inutile de préciser que parmi les cuivres s'était glissé notre Didier MALHERBE national, toujours aussi brillant ! Hélas, si la formule du " mini-big-band " adoptée se prêtait parfaitement à des morceaux comme Sonia, Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road, Team Spirit et bien entendu Soup Song, elle s'avérait un peu trop chargée pour des pièces plus diaphanes ou flottantes, telles Sea Song ou Alife. Cette dernière avait du reste subi une adaptation plutôt tapageuse, voire destroy, qui en a cloué plus d'un sur place !

Pour beaucoup, l'univers de Robert WYATT, ce sont des lignes mélodiques dessinées au fusain, raturées ou gommées par endroits pour en laisser respirer les troubles éthyliques ou les dérives cotonneuses, des claviers chavirant sur des houles rythmiques langoureuses, des percussions chloroformées toujours en passe de trébucher sur la moindre abîme émotionnelle, une voix grisée par la tentation du vide aux bords effrités d'une falaise existentielle… Difficile d'exprimer une telle fragilité au sein d'un orchestre doué d'une certaine épaisseur sonore. Et quand bien même les neuf musiciens n'étaient pas constamment présents sur chaque morceau joué, la tendance était tout de même au formatage " gros son ", avec une batterie proéminente. Free Will & Testament a ainsi pâti d'un rythme binaire alourdissant et Left on Man a été recarburé au " latino super " un rien appuyé ! Loin de moi l'idée de critiquer le jeu de Liam GENOCKEY, qui a versé dans suffisamment de genres - le rock, le jazz, le folk (STEELEYE SPAN) - pour pouvoir assurer une frappe intelligente adaptée au contexte qui nous occupe, mais l'usage de balais à la place de baguettes eut parfois été plus approprié, de même que l'abandon temporaire de la batterie au profit de percussions plus lestes et tamisées.



George KHAN

" Et le chant ? Et le chant ? " me clamez-vous ? Evidemment pas à la hauteur de son modèle, et assurément trop tendance " variété ", en dépit de quelques intonations réminiscentes de Robert par endroits. Il était tout à l'honneur de Ian MAIDMAN de ne pas avoir cherché à imiter celui à qui il était censé rendre hommage, mais plus d'implication émotionnelle n'aurait certainement pas nui à l'ouvrage. De fait, l'absence de la chanteuse Julie TIPPETTS nous a été d'autant plus pénible, bien que, peut-être, ses prouesses vocales auraient dangereusement creusé le fossé entre les deux interprètes ! Mais sans doute le trouble qui a envahi certains spectateurs a-t-il été d'abord de nature visuelle. Quand on sait que le batteur faisait, physiquement, penser à un hybride entre WYATT et MOONDOG et que Ian MAIDMAN a cru bon d'arborer un déguisement de " Petit Robin des bois rouge " en complet décalage avec le look plus strict des souffleurs et celui, complet-veston coincé, de Phil MANZANERA (au demeurant excellent dans ses recherches sonores de guitare), on se demande s'il ne fallait pas prendre toute l'entreprise au second degré ! Simple mauvais goût ou clin d'oeil pataphysique à l'époque de la Machine Molle ? Chacun en sera quitte pour rejoindre ses retranchements, mais ce type de fantaisie eut davantage convenu à un hommage à Kevin AYERS !



Cela dit, SOUP SONG a aussi réalisé, en matière de réarrangements, quelques coups de maître : September the Ninth était propice aux échappées libres, et l'impronon̲çable Gharbzadegi (album Old Rottenhat) avait subi une mutation du plus bel effet, tout en montées climatiques et rythmiques progressives. Chaque musicien a eu l'occasion, sur un morceau ou sur un autre, de se mettre en avant, démontrant ainsi une part de son talent : la claviériste Janette MASON et le bassiste Steve LAMB étaient convenables quoique sans grands éclats, Ian MAIDMAN savait se débrouiller mieux à la guitare qu'au chant, Phil MANZANERA affichait une sensibilité monstrueusement discrète, les cuivres jouaient la carte du " lâcher-prise " contrôlé mais jubilatoire, et Annie WHITEHEAD rayonnait en maîtresse de cérémonie. Certes, il y avait de quoi remplir la scène, de quoi gaver les enceintes du chapiteau et donc de quoi offrir un vrai " spectacle " mouvementé et dynamique à l'auditoire présent (majoritairement jeune, il faut le préciser). Il n'empêche que la formation affichait d'emblée les limites de son ambition. Bref, à défaut d'avoir exprimé les diverses et fugitives facettes de l'artiste Robert WYATT, SOUP SONGS a célébré, au moins en partie, un peu de l'esprit de sa musique. Après tout, écouter du Robert WYATT en live, ça n'arrive pas tous les jours…

Réalisé par : S.F. - Photos : S.H. - Remerciements à : C.P.

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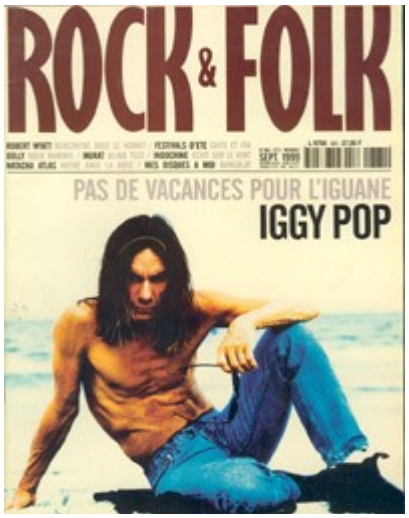
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Robert Wyatt - Le ventre de l'architecte - Rock & Folk - N° 385 - septembre 1999

ROBERT WYATT - LE VENTRE DE L'ARCHITECTE



Sage à la voix d'or, reclus volontaire, Robert Wyatt a tout fait pour qu'on l'oublie. C'est raté. Ses apparitions nous manquent, ses chansons nous hantent. Pour Rock&Folk, il accepte de rompre le silence: on tourne.

Robert Wyatt a été le batteur, beaucoup, et le chanteur, un peu, de Soft Machine, une formation psychédélique anglaise souvent à l' affiche avec le Pink Floyd de Syd Barrett ou tournant à travers les USA en première partie du Jimi Hendrix Experience. Peu à peu, cette formation muta jusqu'à devenir, à la fin des sixties, une des sources créatrices du jazz-rock. Son succès fut considérable, notamment en France et en Allemagne. Le 1er juin 1973, Wyatt chutait d'un quatrième étage et perdait l'usage de ses jambes. Un an plus tard paraissait "Rock Bottom", disque solo qui a profondément marqué une génération, le genre de galette qui aide à mieux rêver et se doit de figurer dans la trousse de premier secours à emporter sur la fameuse île déserte. "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", paru l'année suivante, est l'indispensable complément du précédent. Depuis, se sont succédés quelques parcimonieux mais remarquables albums entrecoupés de longs moments de silence et de flamboyants singles, reprises de chansons connues magnifiées à la sauce Wyatt ("Strange Fruit" , "I' m A Believer" , "At Last I Am Free", "Shipbuilding"...), ou textes militants, hommages aux opprimés et aux victimes du racisme ou/et du fascisme ("Biko" , "Te Recuerdo Amanda" , "Namibia" , "Caimanera"...), toujours chantés de façon unique et aussitôt reconnaissable, comme son interprétation de l'Internationale. En effet, cas assez rare chez les musiciens anglo-saxons, les Wyatt ont été longtemps membres du parti communiste anglais et commentent cet engagement d'une seule voix:



"A la fin des années 70 en Angleterre, la menace de l'extrême droite se faisait plus pesante et pour la combattre nous pensions qu'il était indispensable de s'engager. Le parti communiste anglais offrait le double avantage de n'avoir accédé à aucun échelon du pouvoir et d'être le seul parti réellement antiraciste au sens large du terme, ouvrant notamment un réseau de communication privilégié avec les Africains ou les Sud-Américains. Nous l'avons quitté après son hara-kiri, lorsque les jeunes loups du parti ont voulu s'approprier quelques bribes de pouvoir. Ici, nous sommes passés en quelque sorte de la macro à la micropolitique, nous battant sur des problèmes focaux dans cette région dominée par des grands propriétaires terriens conservateurs."

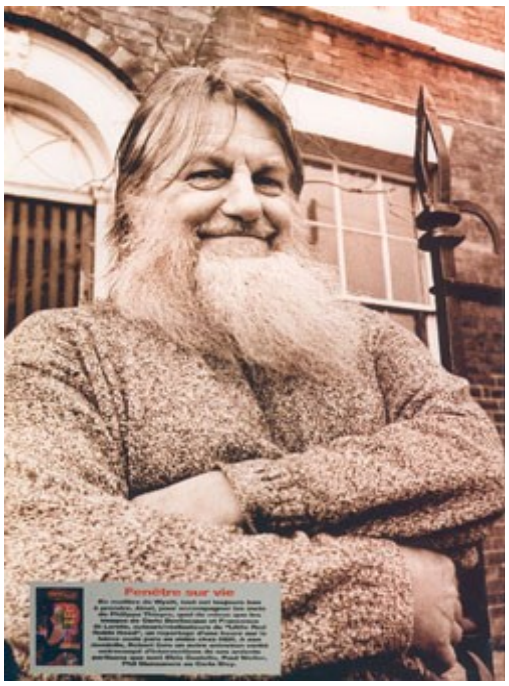
Fin 1997, après plusieurs années de silence, "Shleep" , un disque très proche de "Rock Bottom" dans sa conception, paraissait chez Hannibal/Ryko. Puis, bénéficiant d'une nouvelle présentation, presque toute l'oeuvre de Wyatt fut rééditée, la série se terminant par le coffret "EPS", cinq mini-CD qui compilent singles, remixes de "Shleep", la BO "Animals" et "Calyx", un live de 1974.

Une centaine de filles minimum

Robert Wyatt n'aime ni Margaret Thatcher ni Richard Branson et il a bien raison car, grâce aux privatisations à tous crins de l'une et à la boulimie de pouvoir de l'autre - en plus de ses avions et de son ballon, Branson a également racheté des lignes de train - se rendre à Louth, Lincolnshire, est devenu un jeu de piste à dérouter Sherlock Holmes lui-même. C'est dans cette petite ville typiquement anglaise, du brin de gazon aux grosses cheminées géorgiennes, à 150 miles au nord-est de Londres, que l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine a élu domicile, il y a une dizaine d'années. Alfie (Alfreda Benge), sa femme depuis 1972, explique très rationnellement ce choix:

"Il nous fallait une ville avec un vrai centre, des commerces à proximité et suffisamment loin de Londres pour pouvoir acquérir une maison assez grande, adaptée pour Robert, à un prix raisonnable, c'est-à-dire moins cher que notre appartement de la banlieue londonienne dans lequel nous nous sentions de plus en plus à l'étroit. De plus, la musique était diversement appréciée par le voisinage."

Si leur situation financière s'est améliorée avec "Shleep" et les rééditions récentes sur Ryko, les Wyatt ne sont pas bien riches, leur ancien manager s'étant, semble-t-il, approprié les royalties des disques de Soft Machine et chez Virgin, à l'évidence, c'est



> Zoom

surtout le patron qui s'est enrichi. Il est difficile de faire plus british que la maison des Wyatt, avec ses larges fenêtres à carreaux et ses jardins fleuris séparés par une remise en bois. Elle est certes pourvue d'un étage mais présente surtout l'avantage de posséder un rez-de-chaussée spacieux, s'étalant en longueur de part et d'autre de la cuisine. Dans la première pièce, lumineuse, se côtoient 33 tours et CD, un piano orné d'une photo de Billie Holiday, une petite batterie et des cymbales, une trompette, une table de mixage et un magnétophone...

"Quand je compose, j'utilise les instruments comme un enfant: je tapote, je pianote, je souffle en attendant l'inspiration qui viendra quand elle le voudra bien, comme les rêves au dormeur."

Alfie et Robert réservent un accueil chaleureux aux visiteurs. Plein de gentillesse mais aussi de malice et d'humour, foncièrement politiquement incorrects, ils boivent et fument énormément. Très en forme, Robert semble apprécier l'art de la discussion tout en triturant élégamment sa barbe et si, commencée autour d'un thé, la conversation s'est déroulée en anglais, le français aurait tout à fait convenu car il le maîtrise fort bien.

"Mes parents étaient francophiles, ainsi mon père, qui par ailleurs était un bon pianiste classique, aimait beaucoup Catherine Sauvage, Juliette Gréco, Jean Gabin, Ravel, les écrivains, le cinéma et le vin français. A 10 ans, j'ai passé un trimestre à Paris chez des amis de la famille. De cette culture familiale j'ai conservé un goût certain pour le cinéma, en particulier Rohmer, et le vin français."

Si Robert Wyatt, né à Bristol le 28 janvier 1945, garde un bon souvenir de ses premières années passées dans la banlieue de Londres, il a détesté son adolescence campagnarde entre Canterbury et Douvres :

"Aujourd'hui je suis heureux d'habiter à la campagne mais, à l'époque, rien ne pouvait m'arriver de pire. En outre, je haïssais le lycée et le travail scolaire au grand désespoir de mon père qui avait réussi de brillantes études universitaires. Je trouvais alors des refuges solitaires dans la peinture, la poésie et la musique, le jazz que j'avais découvert grâce à mon père qui avait des goûts éclectiques et aux disques de mon grand frère, Mark. Chaque fois que je le pouvais, je me rendais à Londres pour assister à des concerts.

Mon initiation à la batterie a démarré en tapant avec les pieds sur une vieille machine à écrire de ma mère qui était prof de journalisme, puis en m'entraînant sur des papiers. Le rock ne m'intéressait pas spécialement. Mais lorsque je débarquais dans les fêtes avec des disques comme 'Dizzy Gillespie And His Band At Newport', on ne peut pas dire que je rencontrais un franc succès auprès des danseurs qui préféraient de loin les Everly Brothers. Aussi, étant piètre danseur moi-même, il ne me restait plus qu'à devenir batteur dans un groupe de rock pour draguer les filles de mon âge. De ces formations adolescentes, je me souviens d'un duo intitulé Norman & Robert. C'était moi, Robert le batteur, et Norman, un pianiste originaire de Liverpool - ce qui l'assurait déjà de la présence minimum d'une centaine de filles dans la salle qui chantait à la façon de Little Richard."

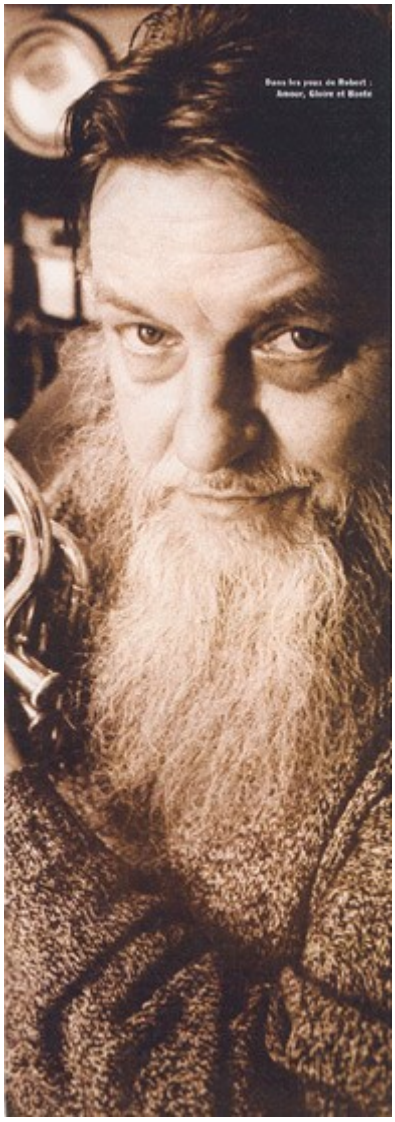
Attrapé par la queue

Par la suite, on parlera d'une scène de Canterbury réunissant divers groupes plus ou moins qualifiés au début des années 70 de progressifs tels Soft Machine, Caravan, Kevin Ayers Whole World, Khan, etc. Certains d'entre eux viendront des Wilde Flowers:

"De mon point de vue, cette prétendue scène de Canterbury est l'invention d'un

journaliste, tout comme celle de Liverpool. Si on veut vraiment appliquer la notion de scène à un lieu, Londres semble plus indiqué ou, de nos jours, Bristol.

De toute façon les gens sont déçus lorsqu'ils m'interrogent sur les sixties. Je n'en garde pas de très bons souvenirs. J'étais très souvent soûl pour vaincre ma peur de monter sur scène."



> Zoom

Soft Machine, au nom tiré d'un roman de William Burroughs et au sein duquel sévissaient à l' origine Daevid Allen (futur Gong) et Kevin Ayers associés à Robert Wyatt et à l' organiste Mike Ratledge, proposait à ses débuts une sorte de free rock pimenté de psychédélisme, de jazz et de dadaïsme. Ce mélange était particulièrement prisé par la scène underground de Londres où le groupe participa à tous les grands événements musicaux et dont on peut redécouvrir la saveur dans les disques 'The Soft Machine" et "Soft Machine Vol 2". Par la suite, réduit à un trio (Wyatt, Ratledge et le bassiste Hugh Hopper) bientôt renforcé par une section de cuivres, le groupe publiera en janvier 1970 "Third", un des albums fondateurs du jazz-rock dans son aspect le plus attractif et qui occupera une place de choix dans la discothèque idéale des Français au début des années 70. D'ailleurs, Soft Machine a beaucoup arpenté les voies gauloises : Paris, Lyon, Grenoble, Nantes... mais aussi deux mois dans le Sud-Est en 1967.

"Nous avons souvent joué en France, entre autres à Saint-Tropez. Un soir, Jean-Jacques Lebel avait organisé un happening autour d'une piscine dans une grande villa. Tout le monde devait être nu, y compris les musiciens. Moi, derrière ma batterie ça allait encore, mais imaginez la tête de mes camarades nus au bord de l' eau avec des fils électriques tout autour d'eux. Pour clore la soirée, J-J Lebel a égorgé un poulet dont il a répandu le sang sur le corps des femmes. Une autre fois, nous nous sommes produits sous un dôme géodésique conçu par Keith Albarn, le père de Damon, le chanteur de Blur. Nous avons également parlicipé à une adaptation du 'Désir Attrapé Par La Queue', une pièce de théâtre écrite par Picasso. Durant la tournée américaine (avec Andy Summers, futur guitariste de Police à la place d'Allen) *on s'est extrêmement bien entendu avec Jimi Hendrix. Un type très cool et gentil qui avait des facultés extraordinaires pour mémoriser la musique: on lui faisait entendre un morceau, dix minutes plus tard il pouvait le reproduire à la guitare. Nous avons jammé ensemble à plusieurs reprises aux USA et en Angleterre. Nous étions aussi très amis avec Pink Floyd qui, plus fortuné que nous dès le départ, nous a souvent dépannés et prêté du matériel. Cela dit, au sein de Soft Machine, j'ai toujours ressenti une certaine condescendance pour le jeune batteur que j'étais. Ainsi 'Moon In June' (sur l'album 'Third") est en fait mon premier enregistrement solo, Ratledge et Hopper n'intervenant que sur la fin parce qu'ils n'appréciaient que modérément cette composition. On a longtemps pensé que j'avais volontairement quitté le groupe. En réalité j'ai été viré et l'ai très mal vécu, tout comme mon échec scolaire. Cette éviction a renforcé un manque de confiance en mes capacités."*

Finalement, c'est Soft Machine qui pâtira le plus du départ de Wyatt, le groupe perdant de son originalité pour s'étioler dans un jazz-rock morose. Robert, qui avait déjà publié '"The End Of An Ear", son premier album solo chez CBS, se relance vite dans une autre aventure collective, Matching Mole, dont deux disques, "Matching Mole" et "Little Red Book" *[sic]*, paraissent en 1972. Initialement, les chansons qui prendront leur forme définitive sur "Rock Bottom" (produit par Nick Mason, le batteur de Pink Floyd) furent écrites pour une nouvelle mouture de Matching Mole mais sa chute accidentelle du 1er juin bouleversa tous les projets de Robert Wyatt.

"je suis resté sur un lit pendant un an, entièrement pris en charge. Ce qui laisse du temps

pour réfléchir et composer. De fait, ma vision de la musique n'était plus la même. La batterie était tout mon univers, tout ce que j'avais toujours voulu faire, au point qu'on peut dire que je n'ai pas été un bon père parce que je ne pensais qu'à jouer de la batterie - mon
fils, né en 1966, vit maintenant à Lincoln, à 25 kilomètres d'ici, et ne s'intéresse pas particulièrement à la musique. Mes compositions ont donc été à la fois recentrées sur le chant et sur le fait que je n'avais plus besoin d'un groupe mais ponctuellement de musiciens pour mettre en forme mes idées.



Surmonter la peur

Break pour que le photographe profite des derniers rayons du soleil.
Un bon moyen de se faire remarquer par son voisinage: être photographié en fin de journée, devant un caviste, par un trompe-la-mort bondissant au milieu de la circulation, bardé d'appareils de toutes sortes.

"Mes voisins, en général, ne savent pas que je suis musicien et comme je veux entretenir de bons rapports avec eux, je ne leur propose pas d'écouter mes chansons. En revanche, rapporter un autographe de Paul Weller, que je respecte énormément en tant qu'homme et musicien, voilà qui force l'admiration dans une ville de province au Royaume-Uni." Il est temps de transmuter le thé en vin rouge dont les Wyatt sont grands amateurs *("On dit que je suis un chanteur typiquement anglais, pourtant je n'aime pas la bière")* et de prendre des clichés d'intérieur avec Robert soufflant dans sa trompette une émouvante variation de "Sketches Of Spain".

Le 8 septembre 1974, Robert Wyatt donne un concert au Drury Lane Theater de Londres dont une chanson, "Calyx", resurgira 25 ans plus tard sur le coffret "EPS" :

" Le concert a été enregistré dans son intégralité, mais la bande n'est pas de bonne qualité. Seuls, à mon avis, deux ou trois morceaux sont récupérables." Une courte tournée européenne avec Henry Cow est mise sur pied dont une prestation mémorable au théâtre des Champs-Elysées en mai 1975. Depuis, Bob n'aura fait qu'une brève apparition en décembre 1981 avec les Raincoats. *"A l'époque, Henry Cow m'avait totalement pris en charge. Aujourd'hui je n'ai pas envie d'assumer la responsabilité matérielle d'engager un groupe.*

Déjà, par moments, je me demande comment je trouve l'énergie suffisante pour composer alors que je serais si bien à boire un coup et à paresser, lire ou regarder des films. Et puis je me sens à l'écart du mouvement général, mon savoir-faire reste artisanal : je crée une ambiance musicale et, seul dans mon coin, je fabrique, j'assemble le puzzle pour construire une chanson et cela autant de fois qu'il m'est nécessaire, comme au cinéma par opposition au théâtre où la présence du public impose en même temps une précision programmée et un affrontement physique qui aident à surmonter sa peur, dimension que je ne maîtrise plus sans ma batterie. Par ailleurs, l'idée de rejouer les mêmes morceaux jour après jour me rebute. Enfin, quand je vois les files d'attente devant les salles de spectacle, le fait d'envisager que ces gens pourraient venir exprès me voir et m'entendre, moi, m'angoisse par crainte de les décevoir." Alfie: "Récemment des Italiens ont organisé un concert en l'honneur de Robert. Ils l'ont appelé au téléphone au milieu du spectacle: quand Robert a décroché, la salle lui a fait une ovation. Ça l'a beaucoup touché, au point de le paniquer."

Atmosphère, coloration, sonorité

Après l' épisode Virgin, Wyatt était découragé et, sans le soutien d'Alfie et la rencontre en 1980 avec Geoff Travis, patron de Rough Trade, il aurait sans doute définitivement

abandonné la production de disques. Parmi les albums enregistrés pour ce label, Robert affiche une préférence pour "Dondestan" paru en 1991 et remixé en 1998 lors de sa réédition chez Ryko : *"C'est la réussite d'un pari personnel, c'est se dire: Est-ce que je peux le faire ? Et je l' ai fait, concevoir et réaliser un album complet entièrement par moi-même. D'autre part, pour 5 titres sur 10, j'ai suivi un processus inhabituel: j'ai retrouvé des textes d'Alfie remontant à une dizaine d'années que j'ai mis en musique alors que d'habitude le procédé est inverse : les paroles sont écrites en même temps ou après la trame musicale.*"



"Shleep", qui marque un retour à une structure plus classique, regroupe un certain nombre d'intervenants dont, fait assez rare chez Wyatt, plusieurs guitaristes tels Philip Catherine, Paul Weller et Phil Manzanera : "*J'ai redécouvert la guitare rock et le blues ("Blues In Bob Minor") avec trente ans de retard.*" Après une tentative infructueuse trois ans plus tôt, il se remet au travail composant et enregistrant peu à peu le contenu de l'album dans son salon de musique, agençant avec précision chaque chanson. Phil Manzanera l'invite alors à utiliser son propre studio en lui accordant des facilités financières.

Alfie:
"Nous y sommes restés 42 jours. C'était la première fois que Robert n'avait pas besoin d'avoir le regard rivé sur la pendule et qu'il pouvait accorder un temps suffisant au mixage. Nous avions une sorte de forfait payable à tempérament." Robert : "Pendant l'enregistrement à cause de mauvais souvenirs de séances en groupe ou d'un manque de confiance en moi pour diriger plusieurs personnes à la fois, j'ai entrepris les musiciens un par un, un jour Paul Weller, un autre Brian Eno... Ils ont su apporter leur touche personnelle dans un cadre strictement défini. Quand j'entre en studio, je sais quelle atmosphère, quelle coloration, quelle sonorité je recherche puis, dans un second temps, une petite variante, un apport inattendu peut s'imposer de manière imprévue." Alfie: "Une fois 'Shleep' terminé et ayant enfin récupéré les droits des disques précédents, nous avons pu négocier avec un label, en l'occurrence Ryko, un contrat sur une base égalitaire, prenant en compte aussi bien le nouveau disque que nos désirs concernant la présentation des nouvelles rééditions. Ainsi la compilation sous la forme d'un double CD, publiée par Virgin, ne me plaisait pas du tout. Pour 'EPS', je suis parti du principe que celui qui aimait 'Shipbuilding', par exemple, ne voudrait pas forcément écouter 'The Animals' à la suite, d'où cette idée de cinq EP qui nous plaisait beaucoup."

Note après note

Pendant le laps de temps, quelquefois important, qui s'écoule entre chacun de ses disques, Robert Wyatt offre généreusement sa contribution soit à des projets collectifs le plus souvent militants, soit aux réalisations d'autres artistes. *"Toutefois j'ai tellement de mal à écrire que j'essaye de garder mes propres compositions pour mon usage personnel."*

Les enregistrements s'effectuent de toutes les manières possibles mais en tout cas pas sur Internet : *"Ma compétence en terme de manipulation des machines s'arrête au grille-pain."*

Un article complet suffirait à peine pour rendre compte de ses innombrables collaborations. Ce jour-là, Wyatt nous fait écouter à plein volume un des deux titres, datant de 1998, qu'il interprète sur un double CD, hommage à Federico Garcia Lorca, "De Granada A La Luna" (Phonomusic) et en explique la genèse :

"j'ai posé le texte sur le piano et commencé à chercher la musique adéquate. Lorsque tout a été en place, j'ai démarré l'enregistrement avec, à la contrebasse, Chucho Merchan, un bassiste colombien déjà présent sur 'Shleep', en lui indiquant le tempo et les notes exactes qu'il devait jouer, non pas dans un glissando à la Ry Cooder, par exemple, mais en décomposant son mouvement note après note. Parallèlement suivant une idée d'Alfie,

je lui ai demandé d'exécuter une autre partie de contrebasse, cette fois-ci à l'archet mais de façon totalement libre, un peu à la manière du free jazz, et j'ai superposé les deux."

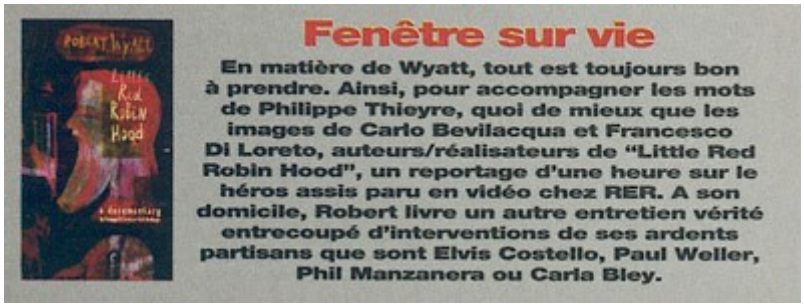
Le résultat est formidable, d'autant qu'il va chanter la partie de basse d'une voix aux capacités et au feeling extraordinaires. Cette voix que certains exégètes en période de ramollissement du cerveau ont qualifiée de *non-voix*.

La soirée se terminera au pub après un bon repas préparé par Alfie. Dans le hall Robert Wyatt remarque une affiche pour le prochain concert en ces lieux d'un chanteur dans le style Jo Ringard et ses Castors Magiques, annonçant avec emphase le grand retour du rock'n'roll. Un coup de fauteuil à droite, un coup de roue à gauche et Robert s'en ira en chantant "Tutti Frutti". Le prochain Wyatt sera-t-il rock' n' roll ?

Philippe Thieyre

Photos : Fabrice Demessence

Discographie Robert Wyatt disponible chez Sony et Ryko



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LE PETIT CHAPERON ROUGE : RENCONTRE AVEC ROBERT WYATT

PAR JEAN-JACQUES BIRGÉ

De *Machine Molle* (Soft Machine) en *Matching Mole*, au bord du jazz comme d'un précipice, improvisant un autre rock et des chansons d'ailleurs, il suscite une admiration "culte". Jean-Jacques Birgé, agitateur sonore d'*Un Drame Musical Instantané*, est allé dans le Lincolnshire retrouver l'ex-batteur, débatteur et (en)chanteur-compositeur.

Depuis 1969 je voue à Robert Wyatt une admiration béate qui m'étonne. Tous ceux qui connaissent ses disques partagent ce sentiment qui tient de l'énigme. Est-ce pour son inimitable timbre de voix. à la fois fragile et déterminé, ou bien la rencontre de mélodies simples avec des improvisateurs souvent venus du jazz, ou encore les textes qui alternent entre tendresse, humour absurde et engagement politique ? Il faut certainement de tout cela pour faire de ce "compositeur de musique impopulaire" dixit Wyatt, figure légendaire et homme adorable. Batteur du groupe Soft Machine, il se signale dans leur troisième disque par le morceau Moon in June, puis en 1974, après un accident qui le colle à vie dans une chaise roulante, il impose son nom avec l'album "Rock Bottom". Avec la complicité de sa compagne, Alfreda Benge, il va continuer d'enregistrer. Dernier paru, "EPS", un coffret de cinq disques qui rassemble des pièces rares ou inédites. Un film vidéo, Little Red Robin Hood, et un livre, Faux mouvements, racontent son histoire.

Le numéro spécial de Jazz Magazine consacré aux Allumés du Jazz lui avait plu parce que s'y côtoyaient Carla Bley, Grant Green et György Ligeti.

Nous sommes chez lui à Louth, dans le Lincolnshire, c'est le matin. Dans le bureau dont les fenêtres donnent sur la rue, un quart de queue, une petite batterie, des synthés rudimentaires, une trompette de poche, des livres d'art, des photos de Monk et Picasso à l'oeuvre, une repro de Paul Klee, des disques presque exclusivement de jazz. Robert sifflote, une tasse à la main, une cigarette dans l'autre.

Varèse et Mingus

ROBERT WYATT : Hier à table tu parlais des producteurs qui sont également musiciens.

Justement je viens de recevoir une cassette de Teo Macero, qui a enregistré Monk et Miles Davis, et j'ai aussi retrouvé de vieux disques de Charles Mingus où il joue du ténor, magnifique, il aurait pu se retrouver avec Lee Konitz et Warne Marsh. On entend des trucs pendant des années et puis soudain ça devient évident. Macero a travaillé avec Miles Davis pour certains de ses meilleurs disques, mais le plus extraordinaire c'est cette cassette dans laquelle il joue. Ce sont vingt minutes d'une séance de répétition dirigée par Edgar Varèse avec, entre autres. Eddie Bert, Charles Mingus et Art Farmer, à New York vers 1954. Et c'est du free jazz. Varèse adorait les musiciens de jazz, leur son. On l'entend leur donner des instructions. Teo Macero me dit que ça n'intéressera personne parce que la bande est mal enregistrée... Varèse et Mingus dans la même pièce ! En l'entendant il m'est apparu que Mingus, qui était paradoxalement un compositeur si académique au début, puis qui avait inventé son propre free jazz avant le free jazz, aurait pu être directement influencé par cette séance avec Edgar Varèse. Ce serait vraiment amusant.

Rompant avec le classicisme, contrairement à Schönberg, Varèse est le fondateur de la musique contemporaine, qu'elle soit académique, libertaire ou technoïde. Il a substitué le concept de "sons organisés" à celui de musique. Il composa la première pièce pour percussion seule de l'histoire de la musique occidentale, et fut le premier à mélanger une bande magnétique et un orchestre. Justement à cette époque, il préparait les Interpolations qu'il allait intégrer à Déserts, et comparait l'orchestre symphonique à un éléphant hydropique et le big band de jazz à un tigre. L'année suivante, Mingus créait les Modernists avec Teo Macero, inaugurant une nouvelle avant-garde.

Comme une vieille bicyclette

JEAN-JACQUES BIRGÉ : Que tes chansons soient sentimentales, pataphysiciennes ou politiques, elles sont souvent portées par un souffle romantique.

R. W. : J'ai été très influencé par mes parents. Je suis né en 1945 et je n'avais rien d'un adolescent rebelle. Je n'ai jamais essayé de rompre avec le passé. Le vibraphoniste Cal Tjader a dit: "Je veux juste participer". J'adorais ce que j'imaginais avoir été leur vie dans les années trente. Mon père aimait la musique du XXe siècle, surtout lyrique. Il était pianiste amateur et jouait Debussy, Ravel, Britten. Rien ne me semble jamais atonal. J'ai toujours été habitué aux nouveaux rythmes, aux nouveaux sons, je suis né après le dodécaphonisme. Ma musique ne m'a jamais paru iconoclaste. Je retrouve ce lyrisme autant chez Alban Berg que chez Duke Ellington. Mon père avait aussi des disques de Catherine Sauvage et Juliette Greco, j'entendais beaucoup de chansons populaires à la maison. Je crois qu'en fait j'ai une idée de la musique plutôt vieillotte qui remonte au XIXe siècle. J'aime être transporté par un chaleureux flot de sons.

J. J. B. : La qualité de ta voix y est aussi pour quelque chose, en équilibre sur un fil, à la fois pleine de doutes et volontaire. En plus, tu l'enregistres, souvent plusieurs fois, en *rerecording*, donnant l'impression d'un choeur.

R. W. : J'imagine que je suis sur une vieille bicyclette et que je dois affronter des camions sur une autoroute. Entouré par ces géants métalliques et technologiques, si je me crashe je suis le perdant. Face à une symphonie ou à Coltrane, je suis très vulnérable, aussi je dois agir avec une détermination claire.

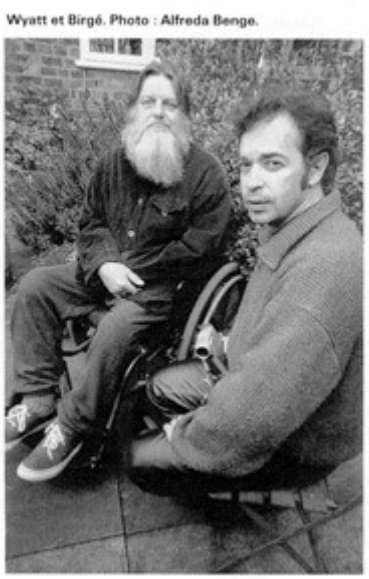
J. J. B. : Ta manière de chanter rappelle les hymnes révolutionnaires, épiques et romantiques.

R. W. : J'envie les religions qui ont mis quelques siècles à trouver leur voix. On reproche à l'art communiste d'avoir été si ennuyeux et conservateur, surtout si on le compare à la cathédrale de Chartres ou aux messes de Bach. Mais, au début, la musique religieuse ne devait ressembler qu'à quelques petites chansons mal foutues. Il a fallu à cet art des centaines d'années pour prendre sa forme. J'aime ses manifestations parce qu'elles sont l'expression d'une aspiration collective. Je m'identifie complètement à ces aspects de la religion. Ça n'a rien à voir avec la mystification religieuse qui sème la confusion et vous empêche de réfléchir à votre condition. J'ai le sens du sacré même si je n'ai pas de religion. J'aime faire partie du tumulte de la collectivité humaine, le célébrer et y chercher l'inspiration. Du côté de mon père il y a beaucoup de pasteurs et de missionnaires. Au début du XIXe, l'un d'entre eux, George Ellidge - c'est le nom de mon père, Wyatt vient de ma mère - fut le premier à aller en Nouvelle Finlande, sur la côte Est du Canada, et dans les archives il est écrit que ce qui lui manquait en acuité intellectuelle était compensé par la beauté de son âme, en d'autres termes: c'était un complet idiot mais il avait bon coeur !

Mon père était heureux de savoir qu'un artiste était aussi une personnalité de grandeur morale, même si ça n'avait pas de rapport. Quand j'écoute Coltrane c'est encore mieux de savoir que c'était aussi un type bien.

" Elvin Jones a apporté l'urgence... C'était plus spectaculaire que tous les concerts de rock. "

J. J. B. : Le fait d'écrire des paroles te permet aussi d'être plus juste...


Wyatt et Birgé. Photo : Alfreda Benge.

> Zoom

R. W. : Une formule simple et banale peut convenir à une chanson. Les paroles ne sont ni des poèmes ni des discours. Quand j'ai écrit *Amber and the Amberines* ce n'était pas seulement sur l'invasion de l'île de Grenade par les Etats-Unis : "Nous avons tous besoin de nous sentir chez nous, personne ne gagne à se battre seul" *("Everyone needs to feel at home, nobody wins who fights alone ")*.

J. J. B. : C'est une phrase emblématique de ton travail. Tu as aussi l'habitude d'envoyer des messages à faire passer à d'autres.

R. W. : C'est peut-être à cause de mon isolement depuis vingt ans. Je ne suis pas un animal social, je n'aime pas aller dans les pubs, mais j'aime passer le relais, disséminer. J'adore recopier des cassettes pour les amis. J'enregistre peu moi-même parce que d'autres font déjà ce que j'aimerais écouter. Quand j'entends dans ma tête quelque chose que personne d'autre n'a fait, je pense devoir l'ajouter à la contribution générale. Lorsque j'ai fait des disques tout seul, comme "Old Rottenhat" et "Dondestan", je n'ai pas eu l'impression de faire des albums solo. Je les ai faits avec les luthiers, les techniciens, ceux qui m'ont suggéré tel ou tel air, ça fait partie d'une histoire collective.

J. J. B. : Il semble que la magie de tes morceaux vienne entre autres de la manière de faire entrer ta voix au milieu de l' orchestre de manière extrêmement déterminée. Il y a une forte charge émotionnelle.

R. W. : C'est une idée qui me plaît mais c'est inconscient. Quand un morceau commence, je veux qu'il soit comme la vie. Le sang doit circuler partout. Le reste peut être flou, mais je fais le point sur la voix, c'est un centre auquel tout le reste peut se référer. Les idées de composition ne viennent pas de nulle part. Je me souviens d'un concert de Coltrane, et d'Elvin Jones puisque j'étais d'abord batteur. Ce n'est pas l'innovation polyrythmique qui m'intéressait chez lui, Tony Williams ou Han Bennink ont été beaucoup plus loin: il a apporté l'urgence, le 12/8 sous le 4/4 jazz, retardant ensuite un peu, et puis un coup de cymbale... C'était simple et la section rythmique jouait seule pendant cinq minutes. C'était plus spectaculaire que tous les concerts de rock. Coltrane et Eric Dolphy entraient chacun d'un côté de la scène, aussi dignes que des employés de pompes funèbres, ils jouaient India ou quelque chose comme ça ensemble. Puis Coltrane prenait le solo, on n'entendait plus que lui. Le solo fini il sortait de scène, de nouveau la section rythmique, enfin trois minutes plus tard c'était au tour de Dolphy... J'entends la même chose chez James Brown"At the Apollo" ou chez Terry Riley, mais c'est Coltrane qui m'a amené à la transe...

Claustrophobie

J. J. B. : Un compositeur cherche souvent à retrouver les émotions fondatrices qu'il a rencontrées enfant ou adolescent..., Alors que ta voix entre de manière spectaculaire dans le son, les musiciens qui jouent avec toi tissent une toile plus souvent qu'ils n'exécutent des solos, comme par exemple Evan Parker dans "Shleep" : on n'entend pas un saxophoniste mais plein de petites notes...

R. W. : Oui, je cherche à ce que la texture de chaque morceau ou de chaque disque soit spécifique. Je n'en peux plus de m'entendre, j'ai besoin des autres. Même Miles Davis s'entourait de bons solistes. J'aime les instruments. Tant mieux si la voix peut aider la musique. Dans le morceau de danse sud-africaine de Mongezi Feza j'étais heureux de simplement doubler la basse avec la main gauche du piano, de jouer du tom basse et de ne pas chanter. J'aimerais bien faire autre chose, mais je me dis "merde, j'ai encore fait un autre disque de Robert Wyatt", je deviens claustrophobique dans mon corps. Je me fous de tel ou tel instrument. je suis curieux des personnes, je cherche de la compagnie.

J. J. B. : Tu chantes souvent pour d'autres musiciens ?

R. W. : Mike Mantler m'appelle de temps en temps. Carla Bley m'a présenté à lui à l'époque où nous étions tous chez Virgin. Il compose une musique très intègre, très difficile à chanter même si ça a l'air simple. La voix doit jouer des notes qui ne sont pas portées par l'harmonie de l'orchestre. C'est souvent un demi-ton plus loin que là où on s'y attend. Mon préféré est "The Hapless Child", et les poèmes de Philippe Soupault dans "Many Have no Speech". La voix de Jack Bruce, qui est plus enracinée dans le sol, correspond mieux à son style opératique. Sinon je suis obligé de refuser la plupart des propositions que je reçois, ça m'embête, mais ça m'éloigne trop de mon propre travail. Alfie, ma compagne, m'a appris à dire "non" ! Je dois bientôt enregistrer pour la chanteuse Anja Garbarek, la fille de Jan Garbarek. Elle vient me chercher, je chante ma petite chanson, elle me ramène, c'est confortable. J'aimerais chanter plus souvent avec une femme. C'est le yin et le yang. Comme avec Alfie. J'adore les duos comme Betty Carter et Ray Charles. J'aurais aimé faire quelque chose avec Annette Peacock avant qu'elle ne retourne à Woodstock. En vérité je ne recherche aucune collaboration.

J. J. B. : Même sur tes propres disques ?

R. W. : Parfois j'ai besoin de renforcer une couleur particulière, comme lorsque j'ai demandé à Paul Weller de venir jouer de la guitare électrique sur *Blues in Bob Minor*.

J. J. B. : Comment écris-tu la musique ?

R. W. : J'accumule du matériel en jouant pour le plaisir, au piano ou à la trompette. Je me dis parfois que ça pourrait faire une chanson. C'est seulement au bout de six morceaux que je me demande s'il n'y a pas l'embryon d'un nouveau disque. Je n'écris pas de manière conventionnelle, j'écris le nom des notes, A B C D E F G... Je lis mal, j'apprends par coeur, je dois entendre avant de chanter. L'interprète que je suis est intimidé par le compositeur qui est en moi. Le compositeur dit: "Allez Robert, tu peux le faire", l'interprète répond: "Pourquoi tu ne demandes pas à quelqu'un d'autre ? ". Il faut bien que je m'y colle d'abord si je veux que d'autres jouent dessus ensuite. Comme je n'écris pas, le morceau doit exister avant qu'ils interviennent.

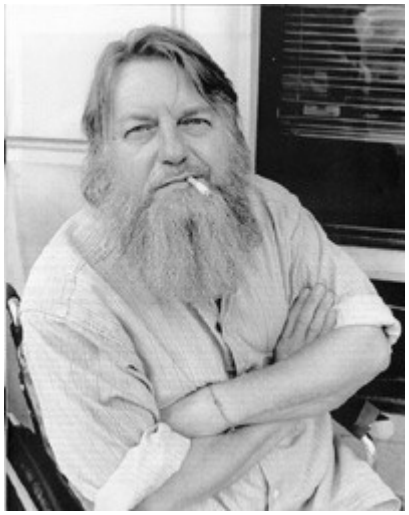
J. J. B. : Est-ce que tu as enregistré depuis la sortie de " Shleep " ?

R. W. : J'ai enregistré *Hasta Siempre Commandante*, pour Maurizio Camardi, un sax baryton qui est prof à la Gershwin School de Padoue, dix minutes de Federico Garcia Lorca sur un double cd espagnol, "De Granada a la Luna", et avec un collectif italien, C.S.I., qui a enregistré tout un album avec des chansons de moi ou que j'avais chantées. C'est mon album préféré, parce que, pour une fois, même si c'est un" fucking Robert Wyatt record ", il y a plein de moi que j'aurais pu être et que je ne suis pas. Le titre est malin: "A Different You".

Ma raison d'être

En 1975, j'assistais à la mémorable représentation que Robert donna avec le groupe Henry Cow au Théâtre des Champs Élysées. Il y avait là Fred Frith, Lindsay Cooper, John Greaves, Chris Cutler... Robert mettait en scène ses entrées vocales avançant son fauteuil roulant d'un coup de poignet. Il reculait aussitôt d'un demi-tour de roue, toujours avec la même franchise.

J. J. B. : Tu ne joues plus sur scène depuis 1983. Improviser ne te manque pas ?



> Zoom

R. W. : J'improvise puisque je ne joue jamais deux fois la même chose. Quand j'enregistre, ça marche ou je passe à autre chose. Dans "Shleep" j'ai composé avec les éléments que Brian Eno, Evan Parker et moi avions improvisés préalablement. Je joue d'abord les variations pour trouver le thème qui y est caché et au mixage j'essaie de rendre tout ça clair.

J. J. B. : Mais tu ne pratiques plus l'improvisation libre.

R. W. : Depuis un ou deux ans j'écoute à nouveau les premiers Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman et Don Cherry, Paul Bley... Au début c'était par nostalgie, et puis peut-être parce que j'ai retrouvé Evan Parker que j'avais perdu de vue depuis dix ans. J'ai réécouté l'Art Ensemble of Chicago, Steve Lacy, Sunny Murray. Je suis à nouveau fasciné par l'improvisation collective, mais je ne sais pas si j'en ferai quelque chose dans mon travail.

A un questionnaire sur le jazz paru dans le numéro de septembre 1998, Robert Wyatt m'avait répondu: "Je me sens le rejeton illégitime né d'une brève rencontre entre Betty Carter et Hans Eisler dans un motel le long de l'Autoroute 61, et qui a été abandonné devant l'Orphelinat du Rock'n Roll"

J. J. B. : Tu te réfères sans cesse à des jazzmen alors que tu es connu comme musicien de rock.

R. W. : Oui je sais, c'est triste, non ?.. Le rock anglais s'exporte bien, mais ça ne me transcende pas. Les chansons de Lennon et McCartney sont géniales, j'aime bien les groupes dont je connais personnellement les musiciens, The Jam de Paul Weller qui a un très bon batteur... En Angleterre tout le monde formait des groupes. Le rock c'est la musique du gars d'à côté, mais je veux faire un plus long voyage... Ma raison d'être vient du jazz. Avant je trouvais la musique merveilleuse mais je m'intéressais à la peinture, et aux filles encore plus qu'à n'importe quoi. Je restais au café à faire ce que je fais ici, boire et fumer, déconner et me saouler. Entendre Coltrane, Miles Davis et Ellington a donné un sens à ma vie.

J. J. B. : Toi-même tu as formé un groupe.

R. W. : Non je les ai rejoints, Soft Machine existait déjà. Le seul que j'ai formé c'est Matching Mole et c'était une lourde responsabilité. Je ne fréquente pas non plus tellement la scène jazz anglaise. J'y avais des amis mais Mongezi Feza et Gary Windo sont morts, et Ronnie Scott récemment. "Shleep" lui est dédié. A Londres on avait toujours un endroit où aller, et pas seulement pour y jouer. Je vois souvent la tromboniste Annie Whitehead qui joue aussi du ska, du reggae, et qui improvise... Les Sud-africains passaient d'une musique à une autre tout à fait naturellement, du hard-bop, du free, comme avec Chris McGregor, mais ils jouaient aussi bien des trucs de danse.

"Pourquoi jouer un truc américain alors qu'on avait notre propre son ? "

J. J. B. : Avec Soft Machine parliez-vous de votre musique ?

R. W. : C'est difficile de me souvenir. Ça n'a duré que quatre ans. Non. On ne se parlait pas.

J. J. B. : Cela nous apparaissait comme un vrai groupe.

R. W. : Pas socialement. Plutôt un mariage de raison. Si nous nous étions parlé nous aurions probablement été en désaccord. Quand ils m'ont foutu dehors, la musique qu'ils utilisaient pour la promo à la radio était *Moon in June* dans lequel je joue seul tous les instruments, l'orgue Hammond, le piano, la batterie, le chant. J'étais très énervé.

J. J. B. : Sais-tu pourquoi ils t'ont viré ?

R. W. : Ils ne me l'ont jamais dit. Je crois que l'alto Elton Dean n'aimait pas mon jeu. Ironie du sort, je l'avais fait entrer dans le groupe. Nous jouions très fort, ça nous assimilait au rock. Elton a commencé à écrire et il voulait que je joue comme Jack DeJohnette. Ça devenait un truc de jazz-fusion, ça ne m'intéressait pas. Je n'écoute pas cette période de Miles, je préfère le Tony Williams Lifetime avec Larry Young. J'étais un batteur arrogant, "je joue comme je joue, tu sais. Il faut demander à Elton s'il s'en souvient, nous ne sommes pas fâchés, il était là au mariage de mon fils. Moi j'avais envie de jouer aussi comme le batteur d'Otis Redding, même si c'était à des tempi et dans des mesures différentes. Il n'avait pas envie de faire ses solos là-dessus. Il pensait que ça ferait un vrai groupe de jazz avec un autre batteur. Et puis ils détestaient tous ma façon de chanter. Moi j'étais heureux d'être juste un des quatre coins de la table, c'était un honneur de jouer des compositions aussi intéressantes avec d'aussi bons musiciens. Cela m'a humilié d'être viré, mais pourquoi jouer un truc américain alors qu'on avait notre propre son ? Grâce à eux j'ai eu la chance d'apprendre beaucoup. Ça m'a pris du temps de trouver ma voix. Je n'aurais pas écrit "Rock Bottom" à vingt ans. Je n'étais pas assez bouddhiste comme batteur, les solistes attendaient de moi que je ne sois pas dans le chemin !

Robert Wyatt utilisait sa batterie comme un instrument complet rythmique, mélodique et structurel. Il aimait s'y promener.

Petit Poucet...

J. J. B. : Tu joues des claviers, de la guitare, de la basse, de la trompette, du violon…

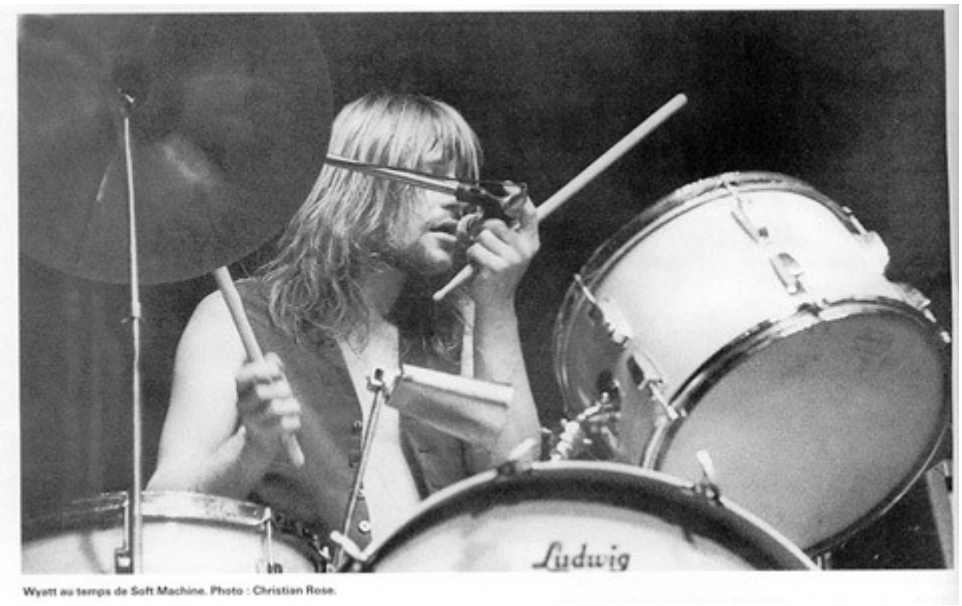
R. W. : Je voulais être peintre, et je voulais utiliser toutes les couleurs...

J. J. B. : Choisir sa palette de timbres est plutôt l'apanage du compositeur.

R. W. : Plus que de jouer ou de chanter, mon véritable plaisir était d'organiser la forme de la soirée, prévoir le moment où les gens pourront bouger leurs fesses sur leur chaise ou concentrer leur attention. Si on n'a rien imaginé avant, on se retrouve avec un solo de guitare au milieu de chaque morceau.

J. J. B. : As-tu joué sur scène d'autres instruments que de la batterie ?

R. W. : Une fois du piano, complètement improvisé, avec le groupe Henry Cow. Quand j'étais très jeune, je jouais de la trompette mais pas dans des conditions professionnelles, des trucs dans le style de Jelly Roll Morton ou Bunk Johnson. J'avais toujours une embouchure dans ma poche.



Wyatt au temps de Soft Machine. Photo : Christian Rose.

> Zoom

J. J. B. : À propos d'instrumentation inhabituelle, Jimi Hendrix a joué de la basse avec toi...

R. W. : J'enregistrais en studio *Slow Walkin''Talk*, un morceau qui est devenu plus tard *Soup Song*. C'est un boogie-woogie avec des changements de tonalité vers le haut et le bas. J'avais fait la batterie, l'orgue Hammond, le piano... Je ne payais pas, Hendrix avait loué l'ensemble des studios et m'avait offert de m'en servir, il était très gentil, son trio était très attentif aux musiciens qui essayaient de faire quelque chose, c'était une manière de nous subventionner. C'est la raison pour laquelle Hendrix m'a proposé de faire la ligne de basse, qu'il a enregistrée immédiatement, très inventive et totalement intégrée à ma petite chanson. J'étais fier, surtout lorsque j'ai réalisé que, bien que gaucher, il avait utilisé la basse de Noel Reedding. Hendrix était ambidextre et il se débrouillait également très bien à la batterie. Il n'écrivait pas la musique, il expliquait à Mitch Mitchell ce qu'il voulait en prenant les baguettes, comme Stevie Wonder la batterie, il jouait l'essentiel... Je n'avais pas les moyens d'acheter la bande. Le morceau a été repiqué d'après l'acétate, c'est un disque en métal, il n'y avait que deux copies...

... Ou Petit Chaperon Rouge?

J. J. B. : Penses-tu qu'une chanson puisse influencer une opinion politique ? R. W. : Pour moi c'est plutôt l'inverse, la situation politique exerce une influence décisive sur la musique à tous les niveaux. Si le musicien est riche ou pauvre et pourquoi, comment il perçoit la société, comment il est reçu...

J. J. B. : Un artiste a-t-il un rôle à jouer dans la société ?

R. W. : À la radio j'ai entendu une émission sur les mouvements chiliens dans les années 70 avec Violetta Parra et Victor Jara. Allende les encourageait à jouer partout, pour les syndicats, pour tous ceux qui luttaient contre l'exploitation. Hélas, tout ce que ça a donné c'est que Kissinger a empêché la General Motors d'envoyer des pièces détachées pour les automobiles et qu'il a suggéré aux banquiers de retirer leur argent du Chili. Je ne crois pas qu'une chanson puisse battre un tank. Pour les Sud-africains, chanter et danser fait partie de la lutte, l'hymne de l'A.N.C. a été crucial.

J. J. B. : Les Américains utilisent l'industrie culturelle à des fins hégémoniques.

R**. W. :** C'est vrai, c'est comme du temps du christianisme. Ils prêchent partout dans le monde: " Il n'ya qu'un seul dieu et son nom est Elvis, chantez en anglais, prenez des guitares électriques et marchons ensemble!". C'est ce qui se passe aujourd'hui à Cuba.

J. J. B. : Nous avons une responsabilité en tant qu'artistes...

R. W. : Oui, derrière les lignes ennemies. Que la langue anglaise soit dominante est pour moi très embarrassant. Mais qu'est-ce que je peux faire ? Je chante en italien, en espagnol! J'essaie seulement de me préserver des mauvaises odeurs que dégage la société occidentale à laquelle j'appartiens.

Do the right thing

J. J. B. : Aurais-tu un conseil à donner à un jeune musicien ?

R. W. : Je ne suis pas un sage. J'ai souvent cru avoir compris, et tous les dix ans je m'aperçois que je me suis trompé. J'ai passé ma vie à faire l'idiot. Une chose dont je suis sûr c'est qu'il ne faut pas penser en termes de carrière. Il faut rester soi-même, qu'on soit Bob Dylan ou Lol Coxhill. Je dirais comme le titre d'un film de Spike Lee: "Do The Right Thing" ("Fais ce que tu as à faire").

J. J. B. : Et à ton fils ?

R. W. : "Les filles détestent les garçons qui se rongent les ongles". "Nettoie la cuvette des toilettes après toi"... Il a hérité de moi une sorte de déconnexion d'avec le monde réel, il est heureusement avec une fille qui sait comment faire avec les choses pratiques.

J. J. B. : Comme Alfie avec toi ?

R. W. : Elle m'a sauvé la vie. Elle a une certaine ténacité qui m'empêche de sombrer dans un rêve dont je me réveillerais cinq ans plus tard. Elle s'est occupée qu'on perçoive des droits sur les cd (on n'a rien touché sur les 33-tours), elle a tourné une vidéo, elle écrit des paroles, des poèmes, elle est pleine de ressources, on passe du bon temps ensemble. Nous aimons les mêmes comédies à la télévision, et aussi Eric Rohmer. Je ne me suis jamais senti seul depuis que j'ai rencontré Alfie. Au début j'ai composé d'après son journal intime, sans qu'elle le sache. D'habitude j'écris d'abord la musique et j'ai du mal à faire le contraire. Mike Mantler m'a appris à trouver la musique dans les mots. Pour "Dondestan" et "Shleep" Alfie avait des idées sur comment adapter ses textes. La manière dont elle peint les pochettes influence aussi ma façon de composer.

Alfie connaît bien la fragilité de son compagnon. Elle a choisi d'habiter à Louth parce que Robert peut se déplacer en toute indépendance : la maison possède une rampe et tous les commerces sont accessibles en fauteuil roulant. La collaboration avec le label Ryko est agréable, comme les conditions d'enregistrement que Phil Manzarena a offertes pour "Shleep". Aujourd'hui Robert Wyatt est en pleine forme.

J. J. B. : Comment vois-tu l'avenir ?

R. W. : J'en suis incapable. Si j'improvise quelque chose c'est bien ma vie. Souvent je me réveille et je ne suis pas un musicien. Pendant des semaines je me plonge dans des livres d'astronomie, ou bien je milite politiquement, ou je m'insurge contre la malhonnêteté des médias. Cela devient parfois un morceau mais le plus souvent je suis trop énervé pour en faire une chanson. Ce qui change sans cesse pour moi c'est le passé. Il y a une infinité de façons de le vivre. Ça bouge tout le temps. C'est pourquoi il n'existe aucun endroit stable d'où je puisse regarder l'avenir. L'Histoire est suspecte parce qu'il n'en subsiste que la version écrite par les vainqueurs. Je ne voudrais pas qu'on oublie les perdants. Par exemple je voudrais qu'on se souvienne de l'extermination des Amérindiens ou des luttes syndicales américaines dans les années vingt. Le dernier champ de bataille se fait dans les livres d'histoire.

En relisant ces lignes, Robert Wyatt ajoute : "J'ai parlé de Roy Haynes alors que je joue du Joan Miro !... Nous vivons et puis nous apprenons, dans cet ordre, hélas!".

Traduction Jean-Jacques Birgé
Retranscription avec l'aide d'Agnès Desnos

A ÉCOUTER " Rock Bottom " (Ryko HNCD 1426/Harmonia Mundi). " Dondestan (Revisited) " (Ryko HNCD 1436). " Flotsam Jetsam " (Rough Trade 8399142). " Shleep ", Ryko HNCD 1418). " EPS ", coffret de 5 CD, Ryko HNCD 1440. " The different You - Robert Wyatt e noi " Consorzio Produttori Independenti (Mercury 300496-2).

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Robert Wyatt : "Le jazz est un miracle absolu" - Jazzman - N° 47 - mai 1999

ROBERT WYATT : "LE JAZZ EST UN MIRACLE ABSOLU"





Pour sa participation, comme batteur, au groupe britannique Soft Machine, vers la fin des années 60, au moment ou le Swingin'London était en train de se frotter au psychédélisme, pour « Rock Bottom », un album-référence, Robert Wyatt a souvent été considéré comme l'une des icônes du rock. Pourtant le chanteur, pianiste et percussionniste, privé à jamais de l'usage de ses jambes après un accident en 1973, est d'abord un jazz fan. Il a surtout enregistré avec des musiciens de jazz, a égrené ses albums de reprises de standards. Il y a quelques semaines, lors d'un long entretien à son domicile situé à quelques heures de train de Londres, il évoquait cette passion au son de la musique d'« Ascenseur pour l'échafaud» ou du chant d'André Minvielle, dans le premier volume de «Paris Musette».

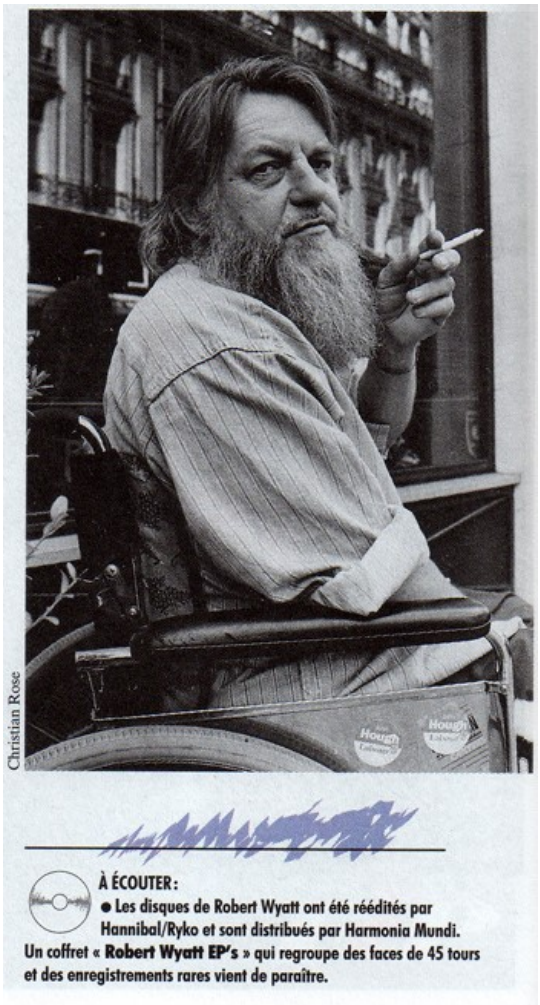
« Le jazz est un miracle absolu pour moi. Je crois que c'est Clint Eastwood qui a déclaré que les États-Unis n'avaient été capables de donner au monde que deux choses au XXe siècle : le jazz et le western. C'est la musique qui a le plus de sens pour moi. Dans les années 60, mon langage musical, mon jeu de batterie venaient du rock et du rhythm and blues noir américain. Mais dans le même temps, le summum de la classe en batterie c'était Kenny Clarke. Pour l'élégance, la distinction. Parmi les autres batteurs qui m'ont marqué je citerais Jimmy Cobb, Chico Hamilton, Dannie Richmond, Elvin Jones ou Billy Higgins. Je pourrais finir ma vie simplement assis à écouter Miles Davis, Eric Dolphy, Charles Mingus, Don Cherry ou Thelonious Monk. Monk a été un formidable créateur de mélodies. À l'époque de Soft Machine, nous étions surtout en contact avec le free jazz.

Il y avait aussi à Londres tous ces musiciens sud-africains : Mongezi Feza, Dudu Pukwana, Louis Moholo, Chris McGregor... Une période durant laquelle le rock et le jazz se rencontraient naturellement. Nous jouions dans les mêmes festivals, les mêmes concerts. J'ai souvent lu que les années 60 ont été celles d'une invention constante, mais je ne me souviens pas que nous nous disions que nous étions en train de créer l'avant-garde. Le

vibraphoniste Cari Tjader disait : "je ne suis pas un innovateur, je suis juste un participant", c'est une phrase que j'aime reprendre à mon compte. C'est la nostalgie historique qui a fait de nous des innovateurs. C'est plus tard que je me suis aperçu de l'importance de la période qui a précédé le bebop, lorsque les musiciens Noirs Américains ont fait le lien avec les immigrés juifs d'Allemagne ou d'Europe de l'Est comme George Gershwin, Irving Berlin... Hollywood ou les comédies musicales ont surtout montré le spectacle kitsch chez Gershwin et je ne suis pas persuadé que sa musique était vraiment adaptée au langage de la musique classique.

Mais pour le jazz, pas de doute, ce sont vraiment les jazzmen qui ont su rendre avec intelligence et force la dignité et la magie de ces mélodies. Le jazz moderne est vraiment venu de là, de Lester Young ou Coleman Hawkins. Ma musique n'a rien à voir avec l'industrie du rock. Elle est naïve, primitive et c'est dans la fragilité, l'acceptation de l'erreur et du doute du jazz que je me retrouve totalement. »

Propos recueillis à Louth, Angleterre, par Sylvain Siclier



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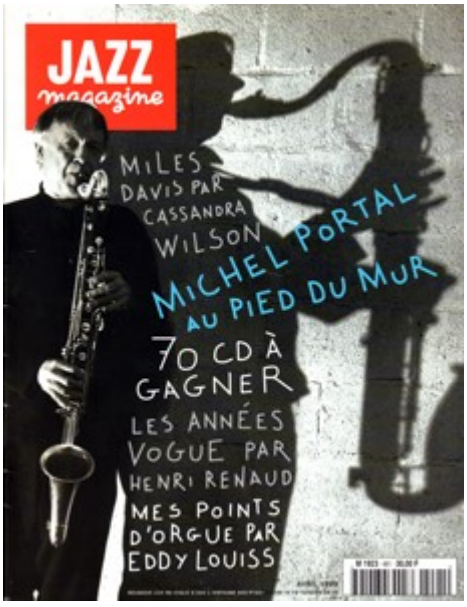
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Canterbury & Co - Jazz Magazine - N° 491 - avril 1999



Canterbury & Co

Dans la famille des (ré)éditions, on (re)trouve des cartes laissées par les musiciens et amis d'adolescence de « la famille de Canterbury » — ainsi que de son invérifiable descendance. Après avoir tâté de la vie effarante d'un groupe pop en tournée et envisagé de couper court à cet enfer (**Hugh Hopper** ayant tout de même remplacé Kevin Ayers, retenu en Méditerranée), les membres de **Soft Machine** furent requis pour l'illustration sonore d'un spectacle de Peter Dockley où des danseurs en costume de pieuvre affrontaient dans les airs d'anciens gymnastes de l'armée : « Spaced » (Cuneiform Records Rune 90/Orkhêstra). Ensemble, dans un hangar des docks londoniens, ils extrapolèrent une bande-son où chacun satyrisa son instrument : distorsions, altérations, liquéfactions même. Si on se repère au tangage des claviers de **Mike Ratledge**, à la basse déformante de Hopper, à la batterie sèche et rutilante de **Robert Wyatt** qui n'est pas sans évoquer Billy Higgins, on reconnaît le groupe dans cette matière sonore élastique qu'incidemment il abordait et qui allait servir de soubassement à son troisième album.

L'autre composant dans la préparation de « Third », c'était le jazz, de préférence modal ou libertaire, avec lequel Soft Machine flirtait déjà au cours de ses improvisations. Peter Schulze rappelle dans le livret de « Virtually » (Cuneiform Rune 100) que, si l'on ne compte plus les jazzmen qui se sont tournés vers le rock au début des années 70, rares furent ceux qui accomplirent le chemin en sens inverse. Ce concert du 23 mai 1971 pour Radio Brème, après « Third », et juste avant « Fourth » dont tous les thèmes sont utilisés, revient sur un moment trop bref de l'existence du groupe : entre l'arrivée du saxophoniste Elton Dean, venu du quartette de Keith Tippett, et le congé de Wyatt (dont les parties chantées sont réduites à d'anormales vocalises). Celui au cours duquel se cabre la provisoire modernité de Soft Machine : des morceaux gigognes dont les noyaux mélodiques sont interchangeables, abrégés, prolongés ou raccrochés en cours de défilé, qui écarquillent, introduisent le doute et la spontanéité, et font un saisissement.

Il y a dans cet amas sonique livide ou criard bien plus que les ombres profilées de Terry Riley et James Brown

En 1972, Wyatt est donc allé voir du côté de Matching Mole si l'esprit joueur y était encore, Dean est lui-même sur le départ, et Hopper compense la « fusion » dont s'entiche Ratledge en reprenant à son compte les expériences de « Spaced ». Les bandes et boucles dépouillées et entortillées de « 1984 » (Cuneiform Rune 104), augmentées sur *Minipax /*et sur une reprise inédite de *Mini-luv* de cuivres et de saxes, d'un funk dégénéré où excellent Lol Coxhill et Pye Hastings (de Canterbury), s'inspirent des quatre sinistres ministères imaginés par Orwell. Il y a dans cet amas sonique livide ou criard qui effraya Cbs bien plus que les ombres profilées de Terry Riley et James Brown. Le bassiste y étrenne certaines solutions musicalement liquides travaillées aujourd'hui par Tortoise ou Gastr del Sol. Hopper et Dean, sous différents noms (Soft Heap, Soft Head, etc.), n'ont pas cessé d'étendre l'influence et le polymorphisme de cette camaraderie excédant les formations auxquelles elle donne un lieu et une formule. La plus convaincante de ces moutures vit le jour sur ces entrefaites, en 1971-72, avec Just Us dont l'unique enregistrement vient de reparaître enrichi (Cuneiform Rune 103).



De gauche à droite : Elton Dean, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge. Photo : Cuneiform Records.

Elton Dean, aidé de **Marc Charig** au cornet, y maintint la pression et les excès salutaires d'un jazz alors hasardé dans la chaleur orageuse du piano et de la basse électriques. L'autre postérité de Soft Machine viendra des élaborations d'**Henry Cow** dont le batteur **Chris Cutler** nous (re) présente les trois premiers disques, parus chez Virgin au milieu des années 70 avec la complicité de Wyatt, dans leur mixage initial (ReR Megacorp/Orkhêstra) — quelques années après l'édition américaine supervisée par le saxophoniste, clarinettiste et claviériste Tim Hodgkinson. Et c'est déjà une autre histoire.

Chansons étourdies prises de bouffées de chaleur, reprises aux allures d'oraison

Vint ensuite la seconde vie de Wyatt. Hannibal réédite tous les enregistrements (et un coffret de raretés) que le batteur, et le chanteur, et le musicien démasqué s'est figurés après son accident, à commencer par « Rock Bottom » (HNCD 1426/Harmonia Mundi) en 1974. Il faudrait insister sur tout ce que le drame a amplifié chez cet ancien ménestrel : sa voix plus légère que l'air qui prend sa source dans un fredonnement de démiurge ou un soupir, l'invention verbale et la vraie fantaisie de ses textes (reproduits pour la première fois dans les livrets, et traduits aux éditions Aencrages), la neige persistante des claviers et des percussions sur laquelle se détachent les grands amis (**Mongezi Feza** et **Gary Windo** du *Brotherhood of Breath*, **Fred Frith** et **John Greaves** d'Henry Cow, Hopper et **Richard Sinclair**... de Canterbury, dernièrement **Evan Parker** et **Annie Whitehead**), les chansons étourdies prises de bouffées de chaleur, les reprises aux allures d'oraison *(Song for Che* de **Charlie Haden**) ou de friponneries (*Strange Fruit*), le studio devenu chez soi pays des merveilles. Un an après « Rock Bottom », où il effectue une plongée métaphorique qui l'emmène au-delà de sa chute, Wyatt met en scène « Ruth is Stranger Than Richard »

(HNCD 1427), œuvre bouffonne et chamboulante dont il ne retrouvera l'inspiration et l'envie qu'avec « Schleep », paru en 1997 (HNCD 1418). Au préalable, « Old Rottenhat » (HNCD 1434), « Nothing Can Stop Us » (HNCD 1433) et « Dondestan » (version remixée et cd-rom, HNCD 1436) marqueront le temps d'une plus grande solitude et celui d'une politisation plus express. Une collecte d'informations appelée « biographie » vient d'être mal traduite en français aux éditions Camion Blanc, sous le titre *Robert Wyatt, faux mouvements*. Elle laisse à penser que, chez cet homme *volant* qui, enfant, passait ses vacances chez l'écrivain Robert Graves, rien ne saurait être désuni, le songe et la probité, un malheur et un délice, conscience incurable et émerveillement.

Alexandre Pierrepont

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La résurrection de la douce machine de Robert Wyatt - Mad -17 mars 1999

MAD

LES MAX DU MAD



La résurrection de la douce machine de Robert Wyatt

Cela fait plus de trente ans que, discrètement mais avec un talent fou, l'Anglais Robert Wyatt marque de son empreinte la pop expérimentale. Au sein de Soft Machine (1966-1971) d'abord, de Matching Mole ensuite avant une carrière solo (inaugurée par le sublissime « Rock Bottom » consécutif à un grave accident qui le clouera dans une chaise roulante pour le restant de ses jours).

Après avoir réédité chacun de ses six albums parus au cours des trois décennies, le label Hannibal a eu l'excellente idée de regrouper en un coffret de cinq CD intitulés «Eps» (distr. Munich Records) la musique de Wyatt qui n'avait pas paru sur ses long-playing : faces b, remixes, mini-album «Work in progress», musique du film «Animals»... Une face interactive propose même la vidéo de «Shipbuilding». On retrouve ainsi tout l'univers passionnant du musicien en chambre, sa voix plaintive et ses travaux sur. les sonorités feutrées servant aujourd'hui une classe de musiciens contemporains de plus en plus bondée.

Photo Retna.

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La belle tristesse de Wyatt - Le Vif / L'Express - Mars 1969



Une splendide compilation portant sur un quart de siècle d'œuvres solo prouve que Robert Wyatt est, tout simplement, l'un des plus grands artistes de la culture rock britannique

« J'approche le bonheur lorsque je me sens libre de me perdre dans mon propre environnement. C'est comme prendre un bain chaud où la température du corps se confond avec celle de l'eau autour de soi. Je me sens à l'opposé de ces artistes prônant l'individualisme et qui, d'une certaine façon, s'opposent au monde : pour moi, c'est le cauchemar ultime ». Dans ces bribes de biographie en libre-service sur le Net (1), Robert Wyatt cerne ainsi son comportement : une démarche où l'introspection sert de lien avec le monde. Le vecteur des pensées de cet Anglais né à Bristol en 1945 est donc sa musique, héritière unique du jazz moderne, de l'expérimentation psychédélique des sixties et d'un goût prononcé pour la mélodie.

En 1968, lors de la parution du premier album de Soft Machine, on remarque d'emblée le batteur-vocaliste du trio : un multi-instrumentiste de 23 ans. Capable de chanter note pour note le solo de Charlie Parker sur *Donna Lee* ou d'enchaîner avec un maximum de soul une collection de tubes de James Brown. C'est Wyatt, bien sûr, fou de musique noire et de fusion sonore. Après cinq ans de Soft Machine, Wyatt fonde Matching Mole, autre formation anglaise « progressiste ». C'est déjà sa voix qui exprime au mieux son talent : un organe crayeux, friable, extraordinairement mélancolique et suggestif. Qui brasse les histoires fantomatiques aussi bien que les récits épiques, proches de la chronique engagée. Cette voix est toujours la force motrice du tout nouveau *EP's* (2), collection de cinq (mini) CD rassemblant dix-neuf pièces musicales signées Wyatt, de 1974 à nos jours. Emballé façon art brut dans les peintures de la compagne de Wyatt, Alfreda Benge, ce coffret aux illustrations enfantines resitue l'importance musicale du musicien ermite.

De Costello à Gabriel

Lors d'une soirée trop arrosée en juin 1973, Robert Wyatt fait une chute de quatre étages et se brise la colonne vertébrale. Il est condamné à la chaise roulante. Sa vie bascule, en même temps que sa musique. *EP's* témoigne d'une longue période loin des folles scènes récréatives des années 60.



Le premier des EP's s'ouvre pourtant comme un clin d'œil à celles-ci avec une reprise de *I'm a Believer*, tube de Neil Diamond. Ce sera pour Wyatt son seul véritable succès en single, avec une apparition en chaise roulante au célébrissime Top of the Pops britannique. Les autres morceaux de cet EP 1, tous datés de 1974, culminent dans la mélancolie de *Memories* et d'une chanson live au Drury Lane de Londres : quelque part entre Peter Hammill et le chant des sirènes, Wyatt monte sa voix dans les aigus avec une considérable charge émotive.

L'EP 2 contient le fabuleux *Shipbuilding* (écrit par Costello et Clive Langer) et d'autres titres aussi intenses tels qu'une refonte admirable de Thelonious Monk.



Robert Wyatt : une voix bouleversante issue de l'expérimentation anglaise. ISOPRESS

Sur l'EP 3, Wyatt combine son goût de la musique latine avec des arrangements électroniques « primitifs ». Sa version d'un classique du Chilien Victor Jara et son protest-song contre l'invasion américaine de la Grenade (*Amber and the Amberines*) témoignent de son engagement politique et de l'originalité viscérale de son univers. Ainsi, la reprise dépouillée du *Biko* de Peter Gabriel transforme le crime raconté (celui d'un militant noir en Afrique du Sud) en récit épuré simplement bouleversant. Seul l'EP 4 freine notre enthousiasme puisque cette longue pièce de 20 minutes, écrite en 1982 pour un film, manque clairement de support visuel. Ce qu'on oublie bien vite avec le volume 5 : quatre remixes de l'album *Shleep*, sorti en 1997. Quatre songes drum'n'bass où Brian Eno, Philip Catherine et Paul Weller, entre autres, plongent avec délice dans la musique terriblement humaine de Robert Wyatt.

Philippe Cornet

(1) www.rykodisc.com/Ryko-Internal/Limited/wyatt/ title.htm

(2) EP pour Extended-Play, nom donné aux 45-tours comportant plus de deux chansons, très en vogue dans les années 50/60 EPs, distribué par Munich Records.

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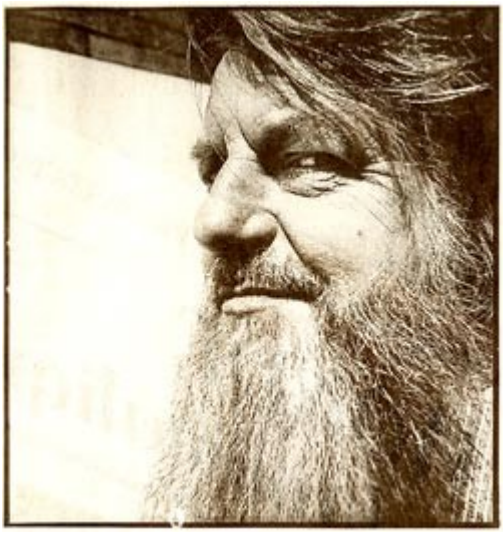
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Robert Wyatt, le miel de la mélodie - Le Monde - 12 mars 1999

ROBERT WYATT, LE MIEL DE LA MELODIE

Compositeur de chansons tendres et hantées, l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine nous a ouvert la porte de sa retraite créative dans la campagne anglaise.



> Zoom

Sur la route qui relie Market Rasen à Louth, un bourg de bonne taille dans le Lincolnshire, à plus de trois heures de train au nord-est de Londres, Alfreda Benge montre des étendues plantées de céréales. « Ils détruisent les terres avec leurs engrais, pour gagner plus d'argent. Et pour élever leurs cochons, chaque jour ils polluent un peu plus. » « Ils », ce sont les grands propriétaires qui se partagent le pays. « Alfie », la compagne de Robert Wyatt depuis le début des années 70, fulmine contre l'héritage du libéralisme thatchérien : les chemins de fer ayant été privatisés, pour atteindre Louth, dont la station n'était plus rentable, il faut une trentaine de minutes de voiture.

Alfreda Benge et Robert Wyatt se sont installés ici à la fin des années 80. Les habitants les connaissent, mais de loin. Le couple a quitté Londres , en raison de l'augmentation des loyers , et de voisins qui avaient peu de tendresse pour les accents mélancoliques de la voix de Wyatt, les motifs rythmiques joués à la cymbale et ses mélodies étranges et hantées, gaies et ironiques qui s'échappent de petits claviers. Robert Wyatt montre son nouvel enregistrement, un regroupement de titres rares, de 45-tours oubliés, qui fait suite à la réédition, sous son contrôle, des cinq albums qu'il a enregistrés en vingt- cinq ans (Le Monde du 21 novembre 1998). Le coffret de carton, les pochettes intérieures ont été conçus par Alfie. Tous deux sont fiers et heureux du résultat. « Nous avons réalisé du neuf à partir de quelque chose d'ancien, explique Robert Wyatt, mais sans la sentimentalité ou la nostalgie qui sont souvent attachées à ce type de compilations. Rien de spectaculaire, mais ça rafraîchit l'esprit. »

DU JAZZ NAÏF - Le spectaculaire, Robert Wyatt et Alfreda Benge s'en méfient. Les années 60 des débuts de Wyatt - batteur de Soft Machine, évincé par ses « camarades », fondateur du groupe Matching Mole en 1970 - sont loin. « Je n'ai aucun souvenir enjolivé de cette période. Je buvais beaucoup, pour vaincre la terreur panique de me retrouver sur scène. On tournait en permanence, les disques se vendaient et on ne gagnait pas un sou. Des managers sont partis avec la caisse... Je préfère ma vie d'artiste aujourd'hui. » Le 1er juin 1973, lors d'une fête, Wyatt, fin saoul, tombe de la fenêtre d'un appartement londonien. Il survit, mais restera à jamais dans une chaise roulante.

Wyatt devient alors chanteur, il joue du piano, de quelques percussions ; il se mettra aussi à la trompette, une de poche comme celle de Don Cherry, l'un de ses héros du jazz. Dans

la maison de Louth, Wyatt a pu installer un piano à queue, des éléments de batterie, des claviers, du matériel d'enregistrement... C'est là qu'il prépare, note à note, dans le doute, durant des semaines, ses compositions. Parfois, il quitte la petite maison de briques rouges pour un studio d'enregistrement. « D'une certaine manière, ma musique peut être présentée comme du jazz dénuée de virtuosité instrumentale, ajoute Robert Wyatt. Du jazz naïf et primitif en quelque sorte. C'est la musique qui a le plus de sens pour moi, une découverte qui est l'une des disciplines artistiques les plus importantes pour moi avec la peinture de Paul Klee ou Picasso. Et puis il y a le cinéma, en particulier le cinéma français ; je pense à un auteur comme Eric Rohmer par exemple. Je pense que le jazz est l'art le plus surprenant, le plus éblouissant de l'Amérique. »

Le monde de l'enfance a parfois été évoqué à propos des créations fragiles de Robert Wyatt. Il se souvient, avec amusement, que lorsque ses premiers disques ont été édités aux Etats-Unis , ils avaient été parfois mis dans la section « Pour enfants ». « Je me rapproche du monde de l'enfance après avoir été adulte », dit-il songeur. Ses séquences courtes avec une ligne mélodique claire et un rythme qui les met en valeur - « Ce qui est finalement une bonne définition d'une chanson pop » - ont une simplicité d'apparence que Wyatt met des semaines, des mois à atteindre.

L'ART, MOTIVATION PREMIÈRE - Robert Wyatt et Alfreda Benge ont appris à mettre en commun leurs talents. A Wyatt la musique, la voix, à Benge les pochettes, les dessins : des pastels, des dessins au crayon, récemment du papier découpé qui rappelle Kokoschka.

Les textes de Wyatt n'ont pas toujours de signification évidente, d'autres pointent les injustices, les cruautés du système capitaliste. A une époque, Robert Wyatt a rejoint le Parti communiste de Grande-Bretagne. « Je me considère comme quelqu'un de gauche, de manière instinctive, ce n'est pas une position qui me vient de lectures ou de théories. J'ai eu ma carte du parti, mon quotidien était le même que celui des opprimés. Mes chansons ont parfois été le reflet de cette position mais il n'y a pas de message. Ce ne sont pas mes chansons qui vont apprendre quoi que ce soit aux gens, et l'art reste ma motivation première. Pour moi, c'est une manière d'atteindre la vérité. » Un jour, Alfie s'est enhardie à proposer des poèmes, elle a même chanté.

Dans la maison, il y a des tableaux, des objets africains, une collection de cruches sur des étagères, des livres d'art, des ouvrages de Chomsky, des essais sur la politique, la sociologie... Wyatt écoute la musique d' Ascenseur pour l'échafaud, de Miles Davis, l'un de ses disques favoris. Quand le soleil reviendra sur ce pays humide, proche de la mer du Nord, « Alfie » retournera dans le jardin et « Robert » s'installera près d'elle. Lentement, avec des silences, le couple commencera alors à faire venir au jour une nouvelle chanson.

Sylvain Siclier

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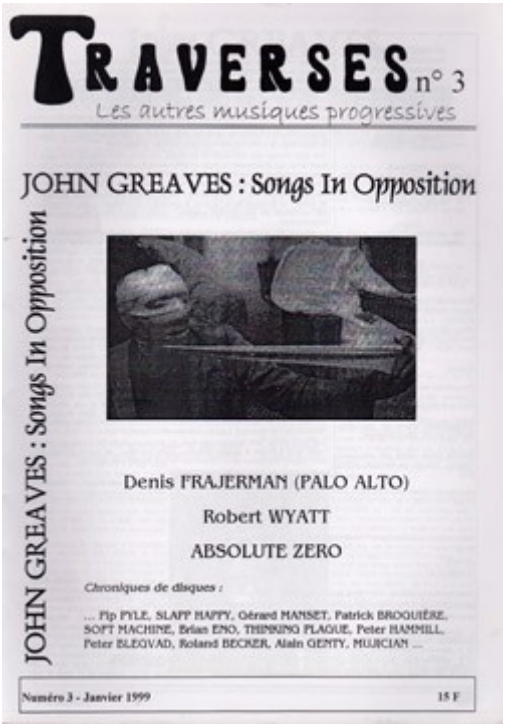
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Robert Wyatt - Traverses - N° 3 - Janvier 1999



ROBERT WYATT

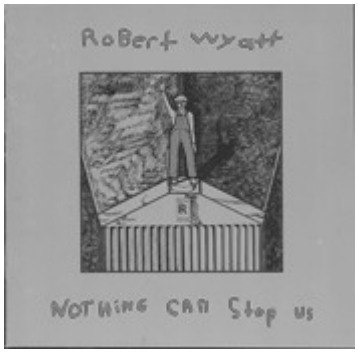
Suite des rééditions remasterisées des œuvres solistes de Robert WYATT.

Après Rock Bottom et Ruth is Stranger than Richard (v. TRAVERSES n° 2), c'est au tour des principaux opus des années 80 et début 90, en attendant la parution en février d'un coffret regroupant singles, mini-albums, vidéos promo et remixes. Le prétexte était idéal pour revenir sur ces productions sans doute moins connues ou mésestimées, d'autant que la première biographie rédigée sur WYATT vient récemment d'être traduite en français.

Nothing Can Stop Us (1982, Rough Trade - rééd. 1998, Hannibal - Rykodisc / Harmonia Mundi)

A la fin des années 70, le marché de la musique tourne le dos à tous ceux dont la pratique musicale s'inscrit dans une réflexion et une démarche individuelle ou collective à perspective créatrice et ne devient qu'une usine à fabriquer des hits pour abrutir les masses.

Le dialogue entre artistes et maisons de disques s'en va à vau-l'eau... de boudin. Robert WYATT, sceptique quant à la possibilité de se faire encore entendre, se réfugie dans les bouquins pour parfaire sa culture et s'inscrit au Parti communiste anglais pour maintenir sa conscience politique en éveil. Son rendement créatif souffre alors de léthargie. Geoff TRAVIS, le patron du label Rough Trade, vient cependant secouer le brave Robert, qui se risque donc à enregistrer quatre singles comprenant des reprises. Paru en 1982, Nothing



Can Stop Us regroupe ces singles et leurs faces B et comprend en outre deux nouvelles compositions, Born Again Cretin et Red Flag. Présenté sous l'angle peu ragoûtant de ce qu'il faut bien appeler une compilation, ce recueil est pourtant le garant de la possibilité (de la nécessité) pour un créateur tel Robert de continuer à faire valoir ses options dans un contexte a priori hostile à celles-ci, et ce, sans jamais déroger à la règle du format single.

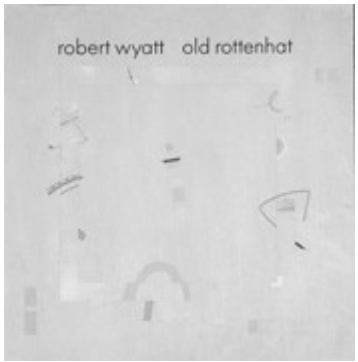
Ayant fait sien le principe selon lequel le verbe doit figurer un engagement, un acte politique, Robert WYATT reprend ainsi des chants ou des hymnes à caractère révolutionnaire, tel Caimanera, adapté de l'hymne cubain non officiel Guantanamera ; Strange Fruit, qui dénonce les lynchages des Noirs dans l'Amérique des années 30 ; ou encore Arauco, chanson chilienne évoquant la colonisation des tribus indiennes, tandis que Red Flag (" Mon beau sapin... ") en appelle à l'unité des ouvriers du monde. La reprise de Stalin wasn't Stallin du GOLDEN GATE QUARTET et celle du tube disco du groupe CHIC At Last I'm Free, avec son ambiance fin de soirée dans un club aux bouteilles vides de liquides mais pleines de fumées, ne déparent évidemment pas dans cet ensemble, si l'on veut bien considérer leur connotation politique.

Nothing Can Stop Us rend d'autant plus compte du caractère unique des singles de WYATT que celui-ci a même convié d'autres artistes à se produire sur ses faces B.

Ainsi Peter BLACKMAN vient-il réciter son poème Stalingrad, alors qu'un groupe de musiciens bengali, DISHARI, représentant d'une organisation culturelle en faveur du Bengladesh, accompagne Robert sur Grass avec ses shenaï et tablas et nous gratifie d'un Trade Union de circonstance.

On aura compris que cet album rend un hommage respectueux et revendicatif en faveur des minorités " indigènes " et, à ce titre, mérite d'être considéré comme l'une des œuvres de référence de la " World Music ", au sens noble du terme. De la part de quelqu'un qui prétendait avoir atteint le degré quasi zéro de la créativité, Nothing Can Stop Us se révèle être un album de haute cohérence. Celle-ci n'était certes pas préméditée, mais vu les thèmes abordés dans ces " simples ", leur réunion sur un LP ne pouvait qu'établir une remarquable logique politique et intellectuelle, à défaut d'une grande homogénéité musicale. (Mais cette dernière considération est insignifiante, je suis bien d'accord avec vous !)

Old Rottenhat (1985, Rough Trade - rééd. 1998, Hannibal - Rykodisc / Harmonia Mundi)



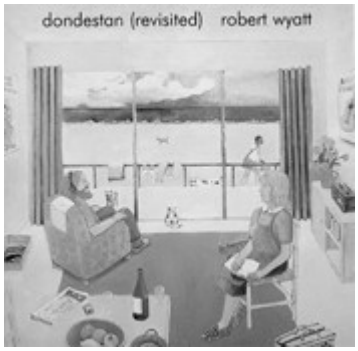
Passent les années et brûle encore la flamme de l'engagement révolutionnaire chez WYATT, de sessions en collaborations diverses. C'est l'époque où il enregistre sa version de Biko et The Wind of Change / Namibia, avec un groupe d'Afrique du Sud, THE SWAPO SINGERS. En 1985, Robert a retrouvé un potentiel d'écriture suffisant pour faire un nouveau disque. Ce sera Old Rottenhat, dédié à Michael BETTANY, un ouvrier anglais manipulé et accusé d'avoir livré certaines indiscrétions au bloc de l'Est ; son histoire posant, selon WYATT, le problème de la liberté individuelle dans une société donnée. Robert traite dans cet album du sort inique de la classe ouvrière (Alliance), fustige le capitalisme (The Age of Self), l'impérialisme anglais (The British Road) et la société de consommation (Mass Medium). Enfin, il n'oublie pas non plus de réveiller la conscience coupable des Etats-Unis par rapport à la cause indienne dans le bien nommé United States of Amnesia. (" And if you killed all those red skins long, long ago, well they'd all be dead now anyway (...) Build your aryan empire in Peace. ")

La bonne conscience moralisatrice de la culture orientale et américanisée est ainsi prise à partie avec une détermination lucide et meurtrie. Cela s'en ressent sur le plan musical puisque la voix de Robert se fait encore plus spectrale et que seuls quelques claviers, percussions et boîtes à rythmes lui servent de support fragile.

A cette aridité instrumentale s'ajoute une rectitude, voire une austérité textuelle qui bannit tout ce qui pourrait passer pour une allusion trop floue, une formulation trop vague ou une métaphore trop évasive. Robert WYATT s'est appliqué à écrire des textes où ses idées sont formulées sans aucune ambiguïté possible, de manière à empêcher toute récupération malsaine. Si l'on n'est plus dans Rock Bottom, on est à coup sûr dans le " Politic Bottom ".

Dondestan (revisited) (1991, Rough trade - rééd. 1998, Hannibal - Rykodisc / Harmonia Mundi)

L'histoire n'aura pas attendu le changement de siècle pour procéder à ces coups de théâtre qui ont le don de bouleverser les repères idéologiques des hommes. Les manichéismes ne sont plus ce qu'ils étaient, mais il y a néanmoins encore pas mal de causes à défendre et de questions à poser.



Dondestan, en espagnol, signifie " Où sont-ils ? " et fait référence aux apatrides. Mais Dondestan, c'est aussi une communauté mythique, peut-être pas le village mondialiste dont on rêve aujourd'hui, mais en tout cas la communauté de ceux qui n'ont plus ou pas de racines.

C'est de nouveau pour WYATT un album solo, mais solo ne signifie pas forcément en solitaire. Les textes sont en fait des poèmes de sa femme, Alfie (qui conçoit également les pochettes), sur lesquels Robert a composé des musiques ; et le camarade Hugh HOPPER est également venu caser une compo (LISP Service). Le minimalisme de l'instrumentation (claviers, percussions) permet à WYATT d'épanouir son chant plaintif en de funambulesques mélopées et certains climats sont réminiscents de Rock Bottom, le vieil orgue qui avait servi jadis ayant été déterré pour l'occasion. Sight of the Wind et Catholic Architecture resteront à jamais de rares et émouvantes émanations de ce que l'âme humaine a d'indicible. Au contraire de Nothing Can Stop Us et de Old Rottenhat, réédités sans aucun changement hormis la remastérisation, Dondestan a pour sa part subi quelques transformations sur le plan sonore

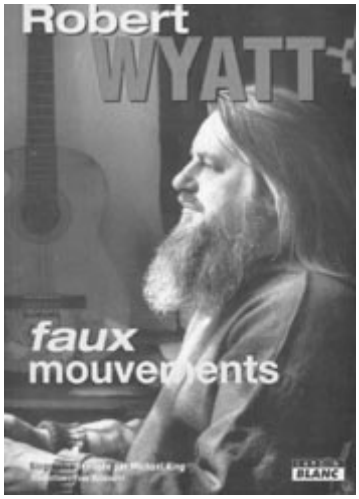
Du fait de contraintes de temps, la première édition avait été, d'après Robert, mixée un peu trop sur le pouce ; l'album a donc été entièrement remixé. Il s'agit toujours des mêmes morceaux, des mêmes prises, mais dont la géographie sonore (masses instrumentales, lignes vocales, tracés rythmiques) bénéficie d'une mise en relief plus contrastée. Et quand bien même les versions sont celles de l'édition originale, il a été procédé de-ci, de-là à de légères modifications : la partie instrumentale de CP Jeebies a été écourtée, l'entrée des percussions différée sur Dondestan, le phrasé de batterie repensé sur Shrinkrap, alors que Workship gagne une minute instrumentale supplémentaire. De plus, toutes ces perles se suivent dans un ordre différent du premier Dondestan. L'essentiel, c'est-à-dire l'envoûtement émotionnel, a été heureusement préservé, il se bonifie même grâce à cette restauration de printemps.

Comptant parmi les plus beaux opus de WYATT, Dondestan se remet à briller. Les diamants ont beau être éternels, il faut veiller à en améliorer l'éclat. Voilà qui est fait. Ajoutons qu'une partie CD-ROM complète la piste audio et contient un entretien de près de vingt minutes avec notre " little red Robin Hood " préféré.

Robert WYATT - Faux Mouvements (éditions du Camion Blanc)

C'est assurément une initiative inspirée de la part des éditions du Camion Blanc que de rendre enfin disponible sur notre territoire la biographie sur Robert WYATT réalisée par Michael KING, et qui plus est, traduite ! Il y a là-dedans tout ce que le moindre admirateur du personnage pouvait rêver d'apprendre. L'originalité de l'ouvrage était en effet de retracer le parcours si peu commun de Robert ELLIDGE WYATT, non sous forme d'un exposé fastidieux mais à partir de témoignages divers, les siens comme ceux des gens qui ont partagé son histoire à un moment donné, des débuts de sa carrière de musicien jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Les trois quarts du livre s'attardent surtout sur la période des années 60-70, celle qui recouvre donc les aventures ô combien épiques et hallucinées du DAEVID ALLEN TRIO, de SOFT MACHINE, de CENTIPEDE, de MATCHING MOLE, etc. C'est toute une époque et un état d'esprit qui ressurgissent avec la sensation du direct. Quantité d'anecdotes et d'informations concernant les tournées, les concerts, l'enregistrement des

albums et les rencontres des artistes sont ainsi livrées au grand jour, c'est dire si nous avons affaire à une source de renseignements particulièrement profuse !



On s'explique donc mal pourquoi l'objet, étant donné son importance, pâtit d'un certain nombre de négligences qui, accumulées, lui portent un cinglant préjudice.

D'abord, une bonne partie des documents visuels de la version originale ont été supprimés. Il était pourtant facile de leur faire de la place en réduisant la taille des caractères, pour le moins voyants dans cette édition française...

Mais il y a plus grave : l'ouvrage est en effet truffé de toutes les coquilles et fautes de frappes, d'orthographe, de syntaxe et d'accord grammatical possibles et imaginables ! On se croirait au BHV du bêtisier de l'édition. C'en est à un point tel que les propos traduits en deviennent parfois flous ou ambigus et flirtent sans vergogne avec l'incompréhensible. Déjà que les différents entretiens recueillis ne sont pas datés (on ne sait s'ils sont d'époque ou postérieurs à celle-ci), il n'était pas utile de bouleverser davantage la chronologie en jonglant avec les temps des verbes (il y a parfois trois temps différents dans une même phrase)...

Je sais qu'il est facile de critiquer, mais je vous prie de croire que, à TRAVERSES, on connaît bien le problème ! Et je ne dénonce pas seulement ici le fait qu'on ait écrit " sceau " au lieu de " seau ", mais surtout des approximations dans la traduction qui engendrent des âneries de première classe. Je suis désolé, mais une " jews harp " n'est pas une " harpe juive ", c'est une guimbarde ! En outre, je ne savais pas qu'Ornette COLEMAN était une femme ! Ou alors il s'est fait faire une opération... (Mais on ne me dit jamais rien, à moi ! Je le savais, c'est un complot...)

Pour finir, il faut croire que tous les efforts ont été fournis pour rendre la discographie de fin de volume suprêmement illisible, avec ses abréviations et ses chiffres qu'on ne sait pas quoi-t'est-ce qu'ils veulent dire... Ah, au fait, vous saviez, vous, que le premier 45 T de SOFT MACHINE, sorti en 1967, était un sampler CD ?

On en apprend de belles, des vertes et des pas mûres... Ce n'est pas parce que cet ouvrage était censé s'adresser à un public spécialisé qu'il fallait passer outre à toute exigence de rigueur typographique. Malheureusement, c'est au lecteur de payer l'addition !

T.B. et S.F.

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Robert Wyatt, d'air et d'eau - Le Monde - 21 novembre 1998

ROBERT WYATT, D'AIR ET D'EAU

Le chanteur et compositeur britannique réédite cinq de ses albums, dont son chef-d'oeuvre, publié en 1974, « Rock Bottom ».

LE 1er JUIN 1973, Robert Wyatt Ellidge, né le 28 janvier 1945 à Bristol, tombe du quatrième étage d'un appartement londonien. Il se brise la colonne vertébrale. Il vit désormais dans une chaise roulante. Robert Wyatt, ancien batteur de Soft Machine puis de Matching Mole, l'une des plus belles voix du rock anglais, pianiste, compositeur, membre de cette confrérie de musiciens qui, à partir du milieu des années 60, ont permis aux improvisateurs du rock et du jazz britanniques de se fréquenter de manière créative, a alors le choix entre le désespoir et la renaissance. Avec le soutien de sa compagne, Alfreda Benge, de quelques amis, dont de nombreux musiciens, Wyatt va réapprendre - apprendre dans certains cas - le goût de la musique, de la nature, de la politique, le goût des mots, du chant, de l'amour pour Alfreda qu'il appelle Alfie. Une certaine forme de solitude lui convient, de dérision à son égard également.

C'est de tout cela, en grande partie, dont il sera question à partir de 1974 pour Robert Wyatt, au travers d'albums et de singles, de collaborations diverses et de groupes plus ou moins durables. Dans Wrong Movements, la biographie que lui consacre Michael King - traduite sans la plupart des documents de la version originale, mais avec coquilles et fautes diverses aux éditions Camion blanc -, Wyatt dit aussi : « J'ai le sentiment qu'après cet accident je suis devenu un meilleur musicien, plus concentré ».

Cinq albums de Robert Wyatt sont réédités sous son contrôle. Il n'a procédé qu'à quelques modifications : ici une courte présentation ; là la reproduction de textes des chansons ; ailleurs de nouveaux dessins d'Alfie, qui a réalisé toutes les pochettes de ses disques ; là encore un remixage et un nouvel ordre des titres. Ce sont les albums tels quels, sans « inédits ». Des albums d'une quarantaine de minutes, denses, concis, regroupements de chansons fragiles qui hésitent souvent entre le tragique, le mystère et la tendresse, parfois séparés par plusieurs années.

CHANTS RÉVOLUTIONNAIRES

Rock Bottom, c'est vingt-quatre ans en six chansons. Le musicien crée le disque auquel tout son futur travail sera régulièrement mesuré. Il dira en avoir souffert. C'est une pièce maîtresse, fondatrice que l'on écoute là. Quelques notes de piano, une trompette qui déchire l'air, des percussions, et cette voix masculine et féminine, un peu cassée, qui ne se laisse pas apprivoiser, une voix plus proche des failles d'un Chet Baker que de la perfection formelle.

En mai 1975, Ruth is Stranger than Richard, succède à Rock Bottom. Album hybride, inévitablement en deçà des fantasmes d'un Rock Bottom bis, il est partagé entre la

collaboration de Wyatt avec le guitariste Fred Frith - illustration des relations régulières avec la nébuleuse du groupe Henry Cow - et la tentative de rendre viable une envie de trio avec le saxophoniste Gary Windo et le trompettiste Mongezi Feza - tous deux morts depuis. Ruth... s'approche de près du jazz, celui d'Albert Ayler, venu des fanfares, comme celui du Liberation Music Orchestra de Charlie Haden, dont il serait un versant mobile et léger. De là l'intérêt de Wyatt pour des chants révolutionnaires, pour une parole qui reflète des actes et des engagements - il rejoint le Parti communiste britannique pour quelques années. De là, plusieurs reprises regroupées, en 1982, dans Nothing Can Stop Us. Chants de Cuba (Caimanera), du Chili (Arauco), des Etats-Unis (Strange Fruits), du monde (Red Flag, le drapeau rouge).

Old Rottenhat (1986) accentue cette notion d'engagement. L'album est dédié à Michael Bettany, Britannique emprisonné pour avoir vendu des secrets aux Soviétiques. Prenant pour cible les conservateurs, Old Rottenhat est aussi le disque d'un Wyatt plus sombre, seul avec ses claviers, boîtes à rythmes et petites percussions. Aride par endroits, porté par une voix plus désincarnée qu'à l'accoutumée, le disque contient quelques perles dont s'échappe le cristallin Mass Medium.

Enfin Dondestan (1993) prolonge cette volonté d'être seul. Aux textes ouvertement politiques, Wyatt substitue les poèmes d'Alfie ; sa musique se fait plus acoustique. Il est généralement seul. Le bassiste Hugh Hopper (Soft Machine), fidèle parmi les fidèles, passe à un moment. Dondestan - ici dans une version remixée et réorganisée - ramène la lumière dans l'univers de Wyatt. Une lumière encore pâle, fugitive mais perceptible qui prendra de l'ampleur les années suivantes. Même si l'ampleur chez Wyatt reste toujours de l'ordre du minimalisme.

Sylvain Siclier

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Robert Wyatt à la maison, l'After Shleep - Improjazz - N° 45 - mai 1998

ROBERT WYATT A LA MAISON - L'AFTER SHLEEP



> Zoom

Robert est de retour, 44 numéros plus tard...

Robert Wyatt est désormais plus qu'un "homme à fans".
Le succès commercial sans précédent de "Shleep" couronne l'oeuvre d'un artiste dont le moindre talent n'est pas celui de jongler malicieusement avec les paradoxes. Ce disque ouvert fait exploser les chapelles musicales et consacre des collaborations artistiques inattendues. Ces chansons d'humeur et d'humour coulent de source en dépit de leur architecture complexe. Depuis "Rock Bottom", Robert n'avait pas conçu de disque aussi émouvant. Il était nécessaire que retombe un peu l'enthousiasme suscité par cet album hors normes pour envisager de rencontrer enfin son auteur...

Avril-Décembre : 9 mois nous séparaient de la sortie du chef-d'oeuvre et il était possible de bavarder avec Robert sans être irrésistiblement aspiré par le souvenir obsédant des mélodies de "Shleep"... Lors d'une conversation à bâtons rompus qui a duré plus de trois heures, Robert a beaucoup parlé. De sa jeunesse, de musique plus encore, de politique un peu... Pour lui, cette interview mettait un terme à toute une série d'entretiens accordés à la presse internationale. Un parfum de vacances a souvent filtré de cette après-midi d'hiver plus volontiers ponctuée par les verres de Coteaux du Loire que par le tic-tac des aiguilles de la pendule.

Robert Wyatt et Alfie Benge sont des gens chaleureux et leur maison est à leur image. Le salon est au centre de la vie commune. C'est là que trônent la chaîne stéréo et le lecteur C.D. La pochette du "Best of' des Coasters côtoie une photo où John Peel pose en compagnie de Robert. Ici, on préfère le bois, la faïence et le vinyl au fer et au plastique... Très vite l'ordre des questions cède la place à une conversation vaguement chaotique. Alfie, absente le temps de l'entretien, fait de furtives réapparitions, commente ou ravive tel ou tel souvenir...

Robert et Alfie aiment l'Europe continentale. Alfie est d'origine austro-polonaise et Robert ne manque pas une seule occasion de placer un mot ou une phrase en français ou en espagnol. Il a une affection particulière pour les calembours : "Shleep" associait le sommeil et les moutons que l'on compte pour s'aider à s'assoupir. Dans le passé, il en a concocté des bilingues: ainsi Matching Mole était un clin d'oeil phonétique et franglais à Soft Machine. On se souvient d'une lointaine prestation à la télévision française où Robert, le visage dissimulé par un passe-montagne, présentait les morceaux de "*Little Red Record*" en français...

La France et l'Amérique.

"J'ai été élevé dans une atmosphère continentale. Mes parents ont vécu longtemps en Espagne et en ont ramené des habitudes culinaires. Chez nous on mangeait de l'ail et de l'oignon: autant de parfums qui révoltent l'odorat des britanniques! Mais c'est à Paris, où j'ai vécu quelques mois à la fin des années 50 que m'ont été révélés en même temps le jazz et le cinéma. C'est là que j'ai vu "Ascenseur pour l'échafaud". Je ne comprenais pas un mot de ce que racontait Jeanne Moreau mais j'ai découvert Miles Davis et Barney Wilen : un moment de pur bonheur ! J'allais à l'école du quartier avec le fils des amis de mes parents, des gens qui avaient rejoint de la résistance pendant la guerre. A la fin de mon séjour je parlais français. Il s'est rouillé depuis ! Parfois, je me teste: quand un journaliste de Libération est venu me voir à l'occasion de la sortie de "Shleep", j'ai insisté pour que l'interview se déroule en français. Mes lacunes ont été décisives: nous sommes vite repassés à l'anglais... Pour un projet de Mike Mantler, j'ai dit une poésie de Soupault. Ma façon de prononcer les diphtongues françaises, "l'oeil" par exemple, a le don d'agacer Alfie !".

Robert suit l'actualité culturelle française de très près: son cinéma, sa chanson (Jean-Louis Murat), sa musique (Pascal Comelade) ont peu de secrets pour lui. Il a une affection particulière pour le jazz français des années 50 et 60, un sujet qu'il maîtrise particulièrement bien...

"Le jazz français a su mettre en valeur les solistes américains. Je pense à René Urtreger, Pierre Michelot, Jean-François Jenny-Clark, Mimi Perrin, Jacques Loussier... On les sous-estime sans doute au regard de leur carrière "populaire" mais leur sensibilité est bien là. Dans les années 50, la scène française a révélé des gens comme Chet Baker ou Miles Davis... En Amérique, le jazz était perçu comme une musique légère, en France, on l'a prise au sérieux et les artistes de couleur ont trouvé un refuge. Les jazzmen américains étaient enfin traités avec respect. Ils se sentaient à l'aise pour jouer. Le groupe de Miles Davis était mixte: deux noirs - trois français. Cette combinaison inter-ethnique n'a rien à voir avec l'impérialisme mais tout avec les bonnes manières! Cette combinaison a été décisive : grâce à elle, Miles a pu se libérer des structures mélodiques et il a pu laisser ses talents d'improvisateur littéralement exploser. Ca, c'est unique... Je crois aussi qu'il y a une connexion historique entre la France et l'Amérique, entre le vieux continent et le berceau du jazz: Sidney Bechet était un créole de la Nouvelle-Orléans... Dans un contexte personnel et forcément subjectif, vu le recul que me donnent mon âge et ma culture musicale, je considère que ma façon de chanter a plus été influencée par le jeu de trompette de Miles Davis dans "Ascenseur pour l'échafaud" que par la voix de n'importe quel chanteur".

Robert est frappé par "l'impérialisme de l'intérieur" qui pénalise les américains, les condamnant à l'ignorance de leurs racines et de leur histoire...

"*Avec Soft Machine, nous avions tourné aux Etats-Unis en première partie de Jimi Hendrix. C'était en 67 ou 68... J'ai le souvenir d'endroits*
neufs et curieusement interchangeables... Le fan de jazz que j'étais a été déconcerté par le manque de culture des Afro-américains. Ils ignoraient jusqu'au nom de Langston Hughes! Non seulement leur histoire leur était inconnue, mais aussi leur propre culture musicale! Cette culture de l'oubli encourage le manque de recul, elle empêche le processus évolutif normal des choses... Alors même si, pour des raisons toutes aussi valables les unes que les autres, on peut ne pas être sensible à la musique de Wynton Marsalis, on doit garder en mémoire qu'il est un de ceux qui est le mieux placé pour la défendre et la promouvoir. Il en est un des gardiens les plus précieux. Par sa simplicité et son attitude ouverte, il parvient à faire partager son amour mais aussi sa connaissance du patrimoine musical afroaméricain. Il ne faut pas oublier que les années 30, 40 et 50, pour les jeunes du ghetto, c'est le Moyen-Age ! Infatigablement, il initie les gens de sa communauté avec leur culture...".

Le Folklore et le rock.

Au début des années 80, Robert a produit une série de 45 tours pour le label Rough Trade. Par le passé, il avait déjà imprimé sa griffe distinctive à des standards pop ("*I'm a Believer*" des Monkees, "*Yesterday man*" de Chris Andrews") un hymne, ("*L'internationale*"), et les projetait dans une autre dimension. Là il accordait une attention particulière à des chansons populaires sud-américaines ("*Arauco*", "*Caiminera*") et aux

standards de jazz ("*Strange Fruit*"). Robert se réincarnait littéralement dans des chansons sélectionnées pour leur symbolisme rebelle et leur bouleversante intensité. Coïncidence, en France Jean Rochard proposait différents projets articulés autour du jazz et de la musique d'inspiration folklorique.

"Je considère que Nato est un des meilleurs labels européens avec ECM... C'est mon copain d'école Tony Coe qui m'a fait écouter mes premiers disques Nato. Sur "Les Voix d'Ixtassou", C'est Jose Menese qui chante "Hasta la victoria". Il faut savoir que Jose Menese est non seulement un des interprètes les plus authentiques, les plus enracinés que compte le chant gitan, mais qu'il est aussi un sincère militant communiste... Il a trouvé la personne qu'il fallait pour la bonne chanson. Pour l'anecdote, le nom de Jose Menese apparaît sur "Dondestan" : sur la reproduction d'une affiche de spectacle flamenco... J'ai été impressionné parce que le projet de Jean offrait quelques similitudes avec certains aspects de ma propre production des années 80. Mais son travail est tellement plus sophistiqué, tellement plus abouti! Jean Rochard m'a invité à participer à certains de ses projets, mais il faut qu'il m'excuse de ne pas avoir su le satisfaire: je suis obligé de donner la priorité à mon travail et je travaille lentement. Le travail, même personnel, m'angoisse terriblement, alors quand il s'agit du travail des autres...".

En Grande Bretagne, la révolution industrielle a éradiqué les folklores. Robert n'est pas particulièrement intéressé par les mouvements "revivalistes" même s'il apprécie la voix de June Tabor... Les fils spirituels des Joe Hill, Ewan McCall et Woodie Guthrie ne sont pas forcément là où on croit qu'ils se cachent...

"Il y a deux ans, je suis allé à un concert de Billy Bragg pour la levée de l'embargo américain de Cuba -quelle belle ironie quand on sait que les américains sont les apôtres du libre échange !- Après le concert, il y a eu cette petite fête où Billy et moi avons sympathisé et bavardé. Il m'a énormément parlé de son grand copain Paul Weller. Paul et Billy sont à leur façon d'authentiques musiciens "folk". Ils perpétuent dans un langage approprié parce qu'adapté aux réalités du moment, une tradition de chant rebelle; ils fabriquent des chansons qui sont destinées à être mémorisées puis reprises par un large public. A mon avis, ils sont les successeurs de ces compositeurs anonymes des siècles passés. De ces gens qui avaient une fonction, non seulement d'artistes mais aussi de critiques du système social en place, parfois même d'agitateurs. Dans un autre contexte, le disque de Denez Prigent m'a surpris : il faut avoir des racines sacrément bien fichées dans son terroir pour survivre à l'ère Disney! "

Alors qu'en 1976, les Sex Pistols entreprirent un "Jubilee Tour", qui allait bouleverser le paysage de la musique populaire anglaise, les artistes de la génération Stones-Beatles s'étaient intégrés dans un douillet "establishrnent" Stars rock et musiciens de jazz dénigrèrent ce mouvement qui leur apparaissait comme une apologie ultime de l'amateurisme. C'est chez "Rough Trade", le label britannique qui incarna le mieux l'émergence d'une scène post-punk que Robert enregistre "*Born again Cretin*", une chanson qui fustige la droite fondamentaliste chrétienne. Là, il côtoie Stiff Little Fingers mais aussi Scritti Polititi et son chanteur Green, un jeune Gallois qui s'est particulièrement inspiré du timbre vocal d'un certain... Robert Wyatt.

"L'importance du punk-rock a échappé à beaucoup de musiciens et d'artistes qu'on peut qualifier "d'innovateurs". Sans doute parce qu'ils s'étaient embourgeoisés et que les bourgeois méprisent la culture populaire. Il n'y a pas plus réactionnaire qu'Andy Warhol à la fin de sa carrière ! Le punk rock a été une expression musicale particulièrement offensive et authentique. Johnny Rotten m'a fait énormément rire. Il y avait quelque chose de cruel et d'impitoyable dans ses textes et sa façon de les chanter. Son arrogance le rendait imperméable au regard des autres et aux conventions. Cette cruauté était son atout majeur ! Mais la chose principale, à propos du punk, n'était pas son côté novateur. Loin de là! C'était son côté primitif, offensif et instinctif... A l'époque de Matching Mole, les musiciens étaient avalés par leur propre aptitude à jouer de plus en plus vite des figures de plus en plus compliquées. J'étais très impressionné par leurs facultés athlétiques. Mais ce nombrilisme esthétique ne faisait pas battre mon coeur. Non, ce qui fait battre mon coeur est bien plus simple que ça: les Specials et le mouvement 2-Tone, leur mariage des idiomes rock et jamaïcain et d'idées politiques intéressantes. Mais la musique punk n'a d'aucune façon affecté ma musique: elle a été un charmant intermède..."

Expérimentation, chanson et politique.

"*Moon in June*" sur le "*Third*" du Soft Machine, puis "*Caroline*" avec Matching Mole

annonçaient le travail novateur de Robert en matière d'association du chant et de l'écriture musicale. Pourtant, en mariant sa voix et des mélodies complexes, il provoqua quelques turbulences...

"Je travaille avec des musiciens de jazz et j'adore le jazz mais la "fraternité" du jazz anglais garde ses distances, des distances plutôt aimables il est vrai. Les gens qui travaillent avec moi sont des exceptions : Annie Whitehead, Evan Parker... La musique d'Evan Parker est comme une impulsion électrique. Pour moi, ce n'est pas de la musique "compliquée", certainement pas plus "compliquée" que la façon de chanter de Johnny Rotten ! Il laisse parler son coeur et c'est tout simplement fantastique ! A l'époque de Matching Mole, il y avait déjà cette dualité : les musiciens de jazz ne prenaient pas le groupe au sérieux. Le groupe n'a pas fonctionné comme il aurait dû. On peut prendre l'exemple de Dave Mc Rae qui était un musicien de session très sollicité. Il a eu du mal à choisir entre les tournées avec Matching Mole et ses missions sédentaires : Il est finalement reparti en Australie avec son épouse... Quant à mon chant, il est naturel et sa couleur aussi ! C'est une voix humaine comme celle de Murat chez vous... Les expérimentations vocales auxquelles j'ai procédé sur "The End of an Ear" où j'inspire les paroles au lieu de les expirer ont été une parenthèse... La voix est un instrument de communication qui transcende la linguistique. Les sons d'une langue chantée offre plusieurs niveaux de lecture et celui du texte n'est pas forcément le plus important... Je peux vibrer au son d'une voix venue de Mongolie car l'émotion qu'elle véhicule me touche...".

Robert a toujours revendiqué l'indissociable relation entre art et politique. Celle-ci ne se manifeste pas par l'émission gratuite de points de vue, mais par la mise en pratique d'une philosophie. Militant, Robert peut l'être même lorsqu'il écrit une chanson...drôle.

"L'idée d'avant-garde est intéressante parce qu'elle remet en question les fondements d'une culture qui verrouille tout de l'intérieur et maintient une élite dans ses privilèges. En fait les choses deviennent stimulantes lorsque les gens cessent de se référer à la culture en place, qu'ils la dénaturent pour favoriser la naissance d'une culture populaire. Cela marche au niveau du langage et du vocabulaire : il ne me viendrait pas à l'esprit de me servir du mot "beau" pour qualifier quoi que ce soit. La beauté est une notion typiquement bourgeoise : elle est source d'exclusion. Max Ernst dit "Pas de règles". Je sais que ça a l'air d'un cliché mais dans le fond c'est la seule façon de rester fidèle à soi-même, de demeurer authentique... L'humour peut être offensif. Dada et les Surréalistes l'ont démontré en leur temps. Jusqu'aux musiciens populaires, les jongleurs du Moyen-Age qui allaient de village en village, utilisaient l'humour comme une forme naturelle de sédition : la farce et l'ironie sont une arme...".

Création et mélange des genres.

Robert est un auditeur attentif, voire boulimique. Pourtant il reste circonspect et vigilant sur les phénomènes de modes. Lui dont l'oeuvre, des contributions à Soft Machine jusqu'à "Shleep" a pratiquement une dimension conceptuelle, cède plus volontiers à son instinct qu'aux nouvelles sirènes techno ou "drum'n'bass". Un souci du long terme qui le distingue de nombre de ses contemporains...

"Les phénomènes de modes ont une influence déterminante sur l'évolution musicale. Je pense que dans les années 20, c'est le choc de la chanson populaire américaine, essentiellement juive, et de la musique populaire noire qui a permis au jazz de faire son nid... A certaines époques, et la nôtre en est une, les barrières entre les gens et les genres se dissipent. Les artistes rock et les artistes jazz travaillent ensemble. Mais il y a un fil ténu entre la démarche systématique et opportuniste du mélange à tous crins et la symbiose naturelle des styles. C'est vrai qu'un nouveau son est excitant mais il faut que son appropriation soit motivée par un sentiment profond...".

Le processus de création chez Robert est un phénomène lent. Six années séparent "*Dondestan*" de "*Shleep*"... C'est que chaque album est une architecture sophistiquée de projets et de chansons qui exigent une attention et un soin particuliers, des arrangements et des collaborateurs différents...

"Pour "Shleep", Phil (Manzanera, guitariste de Roxy Music) m'a fait un pont d'or. Il m'a dit de prendre tout le temps qu'il me faudrait et tarifé la location de son studio au prix du forfait. Ca a contribué à faire de cet album ce qu'il est. J'ai été libéré des contraintes habituelles qui sont le lot des gens qui ont beaucoup à faire dans une période de temps

limitée, libéré de toutes les tensions que génèrent chez moi les périodes d'enregistrement. Sans son amitié, je n'aurais pas pu inviter Paul Weller (pop star, ex Jam et Style Council) et Evan Parker... Deux artistes qui naviguent dans des eaux différentes et qui ne se sont d'ailleurs jamais rencontrés... "Shleep" m'a permis de retrouver de vieux amis et de tirer profit de leur collaboration de façon fructueuse...".

Là-haut sur la côte de la Mer du Nord, c'est déjà un peu l'Ecosse et l'Europe Septentrionale. Les journées y sont bien plus courtes que les nuits. Très vite les lumières oranges des réverbères rejoignent celles des illuminations et des guirlandes de Noël...

Et même si Alfie et Robert rêvent d'Espagne et de soleil, ils sont confortablement installés dans un endroit paisible qui offre les avantages de la ville sans présenter les désagréments de la vie à la campagne. Cette proximité du monde rural a été un élément déterminant dans la réalisation de "Shleep". Le succès de ce dernier a permis au couple de faire l'acquisition des droits des albums précédents de Robert (exception faite de la compilation Rough Trade) et voit l'avenir de façon amène et sereine. Il a déjà composé plusieurs titres pour un album à venir. Quand on connaît la lenteur revendiquée du processus créatif chez Robert, il n'est nul besoin d'être devin pour se faire l'interprète du bon augure de la réalisation en chantier...

Nothing can stop him...

René GUYOMARC'H Le site d'ImproJazz

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L'homme qui voulait se perdre dans la musique - Vibrations - N° 3 - avril 1998



Alors que le rock actuel se cherche dans les expérimentations, il est temps de redécouvrir **Robert Wyatt**, un pionnier de la pop progressive.
Il réédite aujourd'hui ses anciens albums.
Priorité à "Rock Bottom" (1974) sur lequel on retrouve Fred Frith et Brian Eno.

L'homme qui voulait se perdre dans la musique

Texte Pierre-Jean Crittin
Dessin Anna Sommer

En ce mois d'avril 1998, «Rock Bottom» et «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard» deux albums mythiques de Robert Wyatt ressortent en CD avec de nouvelles pochettes dessinées, comme les originales, par sa compagne Alfreda «Alfie» Benge. Ils seront suivis en juin par «Nothing Can Stop Us» et «Old Rottenhat», et plus tard dans l'année par «The Animals Soundtrack» et «Dondestan». Ces enregistrements ont gardé une fraîcheur et une modernité qu'on serait bien en mal de retrouver chez le reste du rock progressif anglais de

l'époque. Se jouant des genres avec beaucoup de liberté et d'individualisme, mettant la technique musicale au service non pas de la virtuosité mais de la poésie, «Rock Bottom» et «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard» préfigurent à leur façon les vignettes pop décalées d'un Gastr Del Sol.

Ce programme de réédition est supervisé par le producteur Joe Boyd qui a travaillé avec des artistes aussi divers que Fairport Convention, REM ou Defunkt et qui a créé son propre label Hannibal. Boyd est depuis toujours un grand admirateur de Wyatt. Il avait produit en 1967 un single de Soft Machine qui n'est jamais sorti. 30 ans plus tard, il ne cache pas sa fierté d'accueillir le musicien sur son label. «*En six mois, depuis la sortie de «Schleep», il a totalement renouvelé son public*» estime le producteur. «*Je reçois des lettres d'encouragement de gens très jeunes*» s'étonne de son côté Wyatt pour qui les années 90 avaient été jusqu'alors synonyme de traversée du désert.

Une autre personne

Wyatt et sa femme s'activent avec beaucoup de soin autour de ces rééditions auxquelles ils souhaitent donner une seconde vie. Pour «Rock Bottom» Alfreda a dessiné une pochette «*beaucoup plus proche de l'esprit du disque que l'originale, car elle me connaît mieux aujourd'hui*» souligne Wyatt. Quant à ce dernier, soucieux de ne pas ennuyer l'auditeur, il soigne les détails techniques, revoit l'ordre des morceaux de certains albums et prépare en collaboration avec Rykodisc une compilation de "*morceaux courts*", des singles et raretés éparpillés jusqu'alors sur différents albums. Chose étonnante, replonger dans ces enregistrements dont la genèse fut pour certains douloureuse ne s'est pas avéré un exercice pénible.

«*J'ai passé ma vie à essayer de faire le même disque d'une façon différente*» dit-il en riant. *Je n'ai donc aucune peine à les réécouter. Mais je ne remonte pas plus en arrière qu'il y a 25 ans. Avant pour moi, c'est de la préhistoire. C'est du Cro-Magnon, du Neandertal!*» En d'autres termes, sa carrière d'avant l'accident qui lui a coûté l'usage de ses jambes, lorsqu'il était batteur de Soft Machine puis de Matching Mole, fait partie de son passé. «J'étais une autre personne» résume-t-il laconiquement.

L'âge d'or

L'année 1974, Wyatt l'avait passée presque entièrement à l'hôpital. "*Le monde physique m'avait abandonné: je flottais*» dit-il aujourd'hui pour résumer cette épreuve. Il se remet pourtant au travail sitôt sorti. La plupart des compositions de «Rock Bottom» auraient dû figurer sur le troisième album de Matching Mole, mais il réalise alors qu'il n'est plus possible pour lui d'avoir un groupe. «*Les musiciens étaient très loyaux envers moi et prêts à attendre mon retour, mais je trouvais que ce n'était pas juste de leur demander d'attendre et d'attendre. Alors je décidais de travailler ces chansons d'une façon différente.* »

De cet album considéré par toute la critique comme un chef-d'œuvre, on ne sait au fond pas grand-chose. Wyatt lui-même ne se souvient que de quelques détails. «*Je me souviens de moments particuliers. Je me souviens que Mike Oldfield m'avait beaucoup aidé pour que les claviers sonnent de façon vivante. Je me souviens du morceau «Little Red Robin Hood» avec Mongezi Feza à la trompette. La chose qui m'avait le plus impressionné était que je pensais qu'il me faudrait beaucoup de temps pour expliquer les changements d'accords harmoniques, mais Mongezi les comprit instantanément. Parfois, quand vous travaillez avec des musiciens de free jazz, vous avez tendance à oublier qu'ils ont une solide culture académique.* »

Quand on demande à Wyatt si «Rock Bottom» a été immédiatement bien accueilli par le public et la critique, il marque un certain étonnement. « *Je n'ai donné que deux ou trois concerts à l'époque du disque et depuis les années 70 mon contact avec le public a été pratiquement inexistant.* » De manière générale, Wyatt reconnaît n'avoir aucune connaissance directe de l'effet de sa musique sur le public.

«Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard» paraît l'année suivante et ne possède guère de points communs avec son prédécesseur. En fait, Wyatt s'était senti tellement embarrassé d'avoir pris un rôle aussi dominant dans «Rock Bottom» qu'il a voulu donner plus de place à ses amis musiciens. «*J'ai voulu les sortir de l'ombre et les mettre à la lumière. Cela ne suffit*

pas de demander à quelqu'un comme Fred Frith de jouer un peu de violon sur une partie d'un morceau. C'est pourquoi sur la nouvelle édition de «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard», j'ai placé les trois compositions de Fred («Muddy Mouth a, b et c») au début du CD et non pas à la fin, J'ai fait la même chose avec la contribution de Brian Eno, discrète mais très importante, que j'ai déplacée au début du CD.»

La guerre à Thatcher

Au début des années 80, Robert Wyatt devient une sorte de parrain pour la scène new wave. Il initie certains groupes aux musiques latines, montre l'exemple pendant la grève des mineurs de 84 en payant de sa personne. Il participe aux disques de Scritti Polliti, des Raincoats et de Ben Watt, le futur guitariste d'Everything But The Girl. Le culte trouve son apogée lorsqu'en 1982 Elvis Costello compose pour Wyatt «Shipbuilding», une chanson écrite en protestation contre l'intervention des armées anglaises dans les Malouines, une colonie britannique située en Amérique du Sud. Costello se souvient encore aujourd'hui avec émotion de la genèse de cette chanson: «*J'avais écrit le texte très rapidement et ce fut très difficile de nous réunir tous les trois avec le producteur Clive Langer car nous étions tous très occupés. Je crois qu'en plus Robert vivait toujours à Barcelone à cette époque. Bref, le jour où nous nous sommes finalement retrouvés en studio, tout alla très vite. Je ne me souviens pas exactement combien de prises il y eut, mais très peu je crois. La chose importante était que j'avais écrit «Shipbuilding» en pensant à ce chanteur si particulier et la performance vocale de Robert fut si extraordinaire que tout le reste passa à l'arrière-plan.*»

La chanson sort en 45 tours chez Rough Trade où Wyatt trouve tout naturellement refuge. C'est l'époque où le label indépendant, fort du succès phénoménal d'un groupe comme The Smiths, se permet quelques petits plaisirs solitaires. D'autres individualités in-classables comme Ivor Cutler, David Thomas ou Arthur Russell y publient leur album. Geoff Travis était à la tête du label aujourd'hui défunt. Communiste, sa sensibilité était proche de celle de Wyatt et d'ailleurs Rough Trade fonctionnait en coopérative. Même si pour Wyatt, ces accointances politiques ne sont qu'une coïncidence: *« Les gens de Rough Trade faisaient partie de la "nouvelle gauche" - féministe, végétarienne, etc. - alors que moi j'appartenais à l'ancienne gauche discréditée. Mais je m'entendais très bien avec Travis qui n'avait pas le profil type du directeur de maison de disques. Il venait du théâtre étudiant d'avant-garde.* »



De 1985 à 1991, Wyatt ne publie que deux albums, «Old Rottenhat» et «Dondestan», deux

disques plutôt introspectifs réalisés sans l'appui de quelconques musiciens extérieurs. Puis plus rien jusqu'à «Shleep» sorti en fin d'année 1997. Wyatt, de son propre aveu, travaille très lentement. «*Il faut réfléchir à deux fois avant de sortir un CD. Dans mon cas, j'ai réfléchi à deux fois pendant pas mal d'années.*» Sa plus grande crainte est de s'ennuyer et d'en-nuyer les autres. «*J'ai l'impression que les gens font des albums trop facilement. Cela peut être un travail très dur. Même Mozart avait des difficultés avec les symphonies qui excédaient 35 minutes.*

Un homme sollicité

Le regain d'activité que suscite la supervision de ses anciens enregistrements suffit amplement à remplir les journées de ce couple exilé depuis des années à la campagne. Robert Wyatt vit à son rythme. II n'écoute guère la musique qui se fait actuellement, ne ressent «*aucune obligation de rentrer dans le débat pour ou contre les nouvelles musiques*». Ses goûts le portent désormais presque exclusivement vers le jazz et l'opéra. On lui propose pourtant souvent de participer à des projets extérieurs, et ce n'est pas l'énergie qui lui manque. «*Je n'en vois pas beaucoup de sa génération qui ont cette vitalité*» confiait récemment Paul Weller aux cinéastes italiens Francesco Di Loretto et Carlo Bevilacqua, auteurs d'un remarquable documentaire sur Wyatt intitulé «Little Red Robin Hood». Weller qui joue de la guitare sur «Free Will and Testament», un morceau étonnamment rock de «Shleep», ne cache pas son admiration: «*C'est l'une des plus belles chansons que j'ai jamais entendues et je ne dis pas ça parce que je joue dessus!*»

Parmi toutes ces sollicitations, il en est parfois qui le touchent plus que d'autres. Ainsi Wyatt aurait volontiers répondu présent à l'appel lancé par Steve Naive, le pianiste d'Elvis Costello installé en France. Il aurait également volontiers participé au nouveau disque de son ami Pascal Comelade dont il admire la musique depuis longtemps. Mais il a préféré y renoncer, sachant que pour qu'elles soient fructueuses les rencontres demandent qu'on y consacre toute son énergie créatrice. *"Réfléchir à ces collaborations m'extrait de mon petit monde rassurant...*» dit-il presque en s'excusant de ne pas toujours y donner suite. Pour le lui dire, Wyatt a simplement envoyé à Comelade une carte postale. »

A voir: le documentaire vidéo «Little Red Robin Hood« duquel sont tirées les citations de Paul Weller et Elvis Costello. Ce film en anglais peut être commandé directement auprès des cinéastes Carlo Bevilacqua et Francesco di Lorefto à Milan. Tel: 39-2-583) 3900. Fax; 39-2-5831 2841.

Les cartes postales de Robert Wyatt

Rock Bottom

Que dire qui n'a pas déjà été dit à propos de cet album paru en 1974 juste après l'accident de l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine? Un concentré d'émotions contradictoires mis en musique et produit par le Pink Floyd Nick Mason et dans lequel passent les amis de toujours Mike Oldfield, Richard Sinclair, Hugh Hopper et le fantastique trompettiste sud-africain Mongezi Feza. Plus de 20 ans après, «Rock Bottom» et ses riches tessitures harmoniques n'ont pas pris une ride.»

Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

L'album qui révèle les profondes racines jazz de Wyatt, en particulier sur la composition «Song For Che» de Charlie Haden, «*l'un de mes cinq musiciens préférés de tous les temps*» (Wyatt). A l'instar du dernier «Shleep», «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard» révèle la face lumineuse du musicien et met l'accent sur les performances des invités - en particulier Fred Frith et Brian Eno. A noter que pour cette nouvelle version en CD, Wyatt a inversé les faces A et B du vinyl «*afin de mette en avant les fantastiques performances de Frith et Eno*».

Nothing Can Stop Us
The Animals Soundtrack

Deux albums en marge de la discographie «officielle» mais qui intéresseront les aficionados. En particulier «Nothing Can Stop Us» qui regroupe des singles du début des années 80 comme «Strange Fruit» de Billie Holiday ou «At Last I Am Free» de Chic, repris à la fois pour leur contenu politique et mélodique. «The Animals Soundtrack» est plus anecdotique, mais révèle un aspect peu connu de Wyatt, la composition de musique de film. En l'occurrence une commande de l'actrice Julie Christie pour illustrer un documentaire sur les animaux torturés.

Old Rottenhat
Dondestan

Mon premier est politique, mon second est davantage poétique. «Old Rottenhat» (1985) peut être vu comme un résumé des désillusions de Wyatt à propos de l'Angleterre thatchérienne, celle de l'après-guerre des Malouines et de l'échec de la grève des mineurs. Les mots sont durs et les musiques d'une rare mélancolie. Arrangées autour des poèmes de sa compagne Alfreda Benge, les chansons de «Dondestan» (1991) sont plus variées et enjouées et Wyatt y fait un usage très réussi de la technique du «multitracked vocal» qui permet à sa voix de se démultiplier et d'atteindre une certaine abstraction harmonique.

Tous ces albums sont réédités en CD par Rykodisc, distribués en France par Harmonie Mundi et en Suisse par COD-Tuxedo

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Robert Wyatt - un paroissien sans chapelle - Le Maine Libre - 18 décembre 1997

ROBERT WYATT
UN PAROISSIEN SANS CHAPELLE

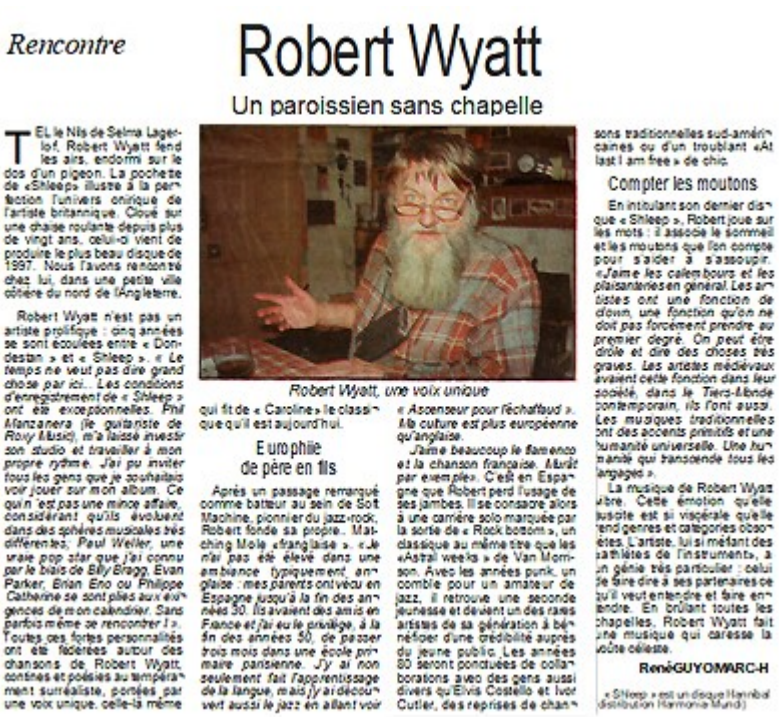


Tel le Nils de Selma Lagerlof, Robert Wyatt fend les airs, endormi sur le dos d'un pigeon. La pochette de «Shleep» illustre à la perfection l'univers onirique de l'artiste britannique. Cloué sur une chaise roulante depuis plus de vingt ans, celui-ci vient de produire le plus beau disque de 1997. Nous l'avons rencontré chez lui, dans une petite ville côtière du nord de l'Angleterre.

Robert Wyatt n'est pas un artiste prolifique : cinq années se sont écoulées entre « Dondestan » et « Shleep ».

« Le temps ne veut pas dire grand chose par ici... Les conditions d'enregistrement de « Shleep » ont été exceptionnelles. Phil Manzanera (le guitariste de Roxy Music), m'a laissé investir son studio et travailler à mon propre rythme. J'ai pu inviter tous les gens que je souhaitais voir jouer sur mon album. Ce qui n'est pas une mince affaire, considérant qu'ils évoluent dans des sphères musicales très différentes; Paul Weller, une vraie pop star que j'ai connu par le biais de Billy Bragg, Evan Parker, Brian Eno ou Philippe Catherine se sont plies aux exigences de mon calendrier. Sans parfois même se rencontrer ! ».

Toutes ces fortes personnalités ont été fédérées autour des chansons de Robert Wyatt, comptines et poésies au tempérament surréaliste, portées par une voix unique, celle-là même qui fit de « Caroline» le classique qu'il est aujourd'hui.



Rencontre

Robert Wyatt

Un paroissien sans chapelle

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Europhile de père en fils

Après un passage remarqué comme batteur au sein de Soft Machine, pionnier du jazz-rock, Robert fonde sa propre.. Matching Mole «franglaise ». « Je n'ai pas été élevé dans une ambiance typiquement anglaise : mes parents ont vécu en Espagne jusqu'à la fin des années 30. Ils avaient des amis en France et j'ai eu le privilège, à la fin des années 50, de passer trois mois dans une école primaire parisienne. J'y ai non seulement fait l'apprentissage de la langue, mais j'y ai découvert aussi le jazz en allant voir « Ascenseur pour l'échaffaud ». Ma culture est plus européenne qu'anglaise.

J'aime beaucoup le flamenco et la chanson française. Murat par exemple». C'est en Espagne que Robert perd l'usage de ses jambes. Il se consacre alors à une carrière solo marquée par la sorte de « Rock bottom », un classique au même titre que les «Astral weeks » de Van Morrison. Avec les années punk, un comble pour un amateur de jazz, il retrouve une seconde jeunesse et devient un des rares artistes de sa génération à bénéficier d'une crédibilité auprès du jeune public. Les années 80 seront ponctuées de collaborations avec des gens aussi divers qu'Elvis Costello et Ivor Cutler, des reprises de chansons traditionnelles sud-américaines ou d'un troublant «At last I am free » de chic.

Compter les moutons

En intitulant son dernier disque « Shleep », Robert joue sur les mots : il associe le sommeil et les moutons que l'on compte pour s'aider à s'assoupir.

« Shleep » est un disque Hannibal distribution Harmonia Mundi)

RenéGUYOMARC-H

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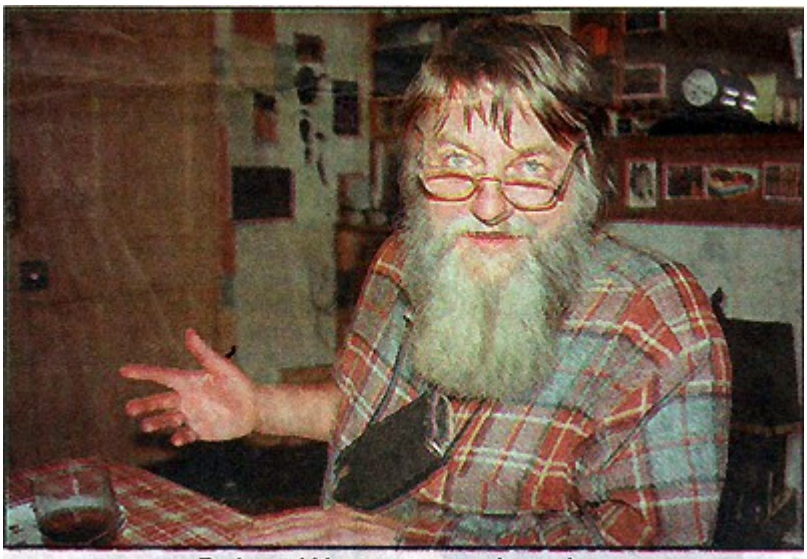
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«J'aime les calembours et les plaisanteries en général. Les artistes ont une fonction de clown, une fonction qu'on ne doit pas forcément prendre au premier degré. On peut être drôle et dire des choses



Robert Wyatt, une voix unique

très graves. Les artistes médiévaux avaient cette fonction dans leur société, dans le Tiers-Monde contemporain, ils l'ont aussi. Les musiques traditionnelles ont des accents primitifs et une humanité universelle. Une humanité qui transcende tous les langages ».

La musique de Robert Wyatt vibre. Cette émotion qu'elle suscite est si viscérale qu'elle rend genres et catégories obsolètes. L'artiste, lui si méfiant des «athlètes de l'instrument», a un génie très particulier : celui de faire dire à ses partenaires ce qu'il veut entendre et faire entendre. En brûlant toutes les chapelles, Robert Wyatt fait une musique qui caresse la voûte céleste.

René GUYOMARC-H

« Shleep » est un disque Hannibal (distribution Harmonia-Mundi)

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Robert Wyatt - Passé & Présent - Batteur Magazine - N° 106 - novembre 1997



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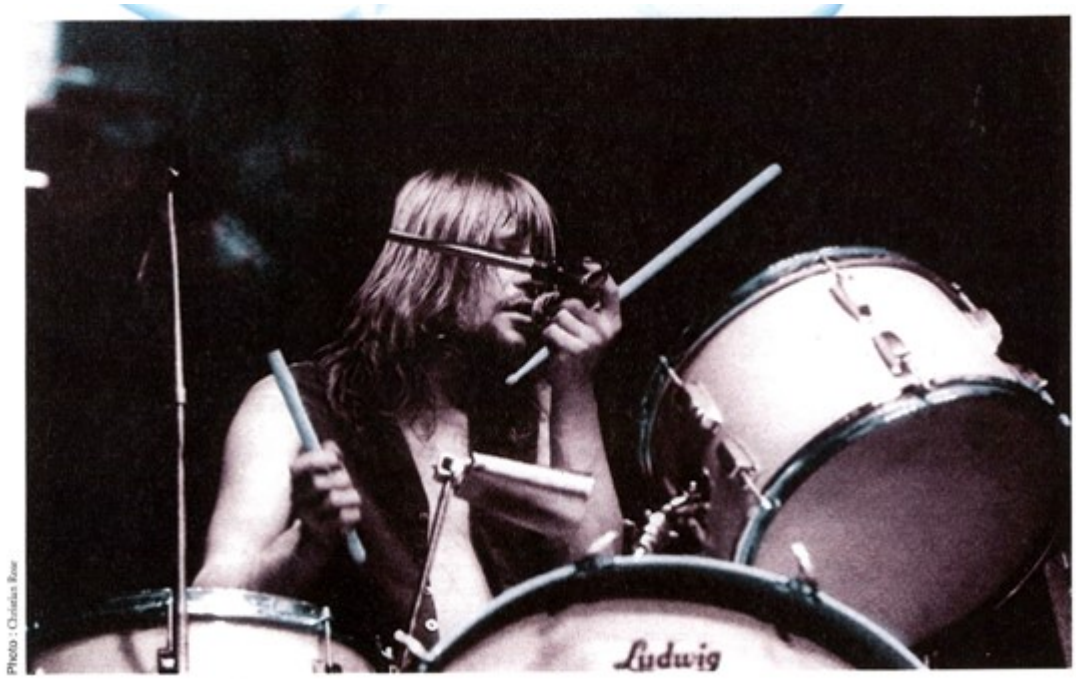
PASSÉ & PRÉSENT

Extraordinaire batteur cloué sur une chaise roulante à la suite d'un accident, Robert Wyatt a bâti au fil des années une œuvre unique, inclassable, d'une absolue liberté.
En dehors de tous les courants, en marge de tous les styles définis, sa musique ne semble toujours animée que par rémotion la plus pure, la plus nue. À tous points de vue, il n'existe aucune voix comparable à la sienne. À la rédaction, nous sommes depuis longtemps de ses fans. Le rencontrer était un de nos plus vieux rêves. L'homme est chaleureux, gai, drôle, cultivé, nullement nostalgique ni amer. Ses réponses sont comme sa musique, souvent surprenantes mais jamais inintéressantes. Nous sommes heureux de mettre à la une cet "artistissime" qui se définit avec humour comme un "homme de Néanderthal".

ROBERT WYATT

Néanderthal Man





C' est au sein de Soft Machine, formation expérimentale, à la croisée du jazz et du rock, empreinte de poésie dadaïste, que Robert Wyatt se fera remarquer à la fin des années 60, autant par son jeu de batterie que par sa façon de chanter. Né à Bristol le 28 janvier 1945, élevé au sein d'une famille d'intellectuels (une mère journaliste, un père psychologue), il débute à la batterie dans les Wilde Flowers, groupe de reprises de rhythm'n'blues formé avec des copains du lycée à Canterbury, dont Kevin Ayers avec qui il formera quelque temps plus tard Soft Machine. Viré après le quatrième disque de Soft Machine, il réalise son premier album solo, "The End Of An Ear", puis monte, en 1972, Matching Mole (jeu de mots franglais surréaliste évoquant son ancien groupe - Robert Wyatt parle le français). Le second album de ce groupe, "The Little Red Record", affiche clairement les positions pro-communistes de son auteur. Mais en 1973, au cours d'une soirée trop arrosée, Robert passe par une fenêtre du quatrième étage et se fracture la colonne vertébrale. Il est désormais paralysé des membres inférieurs.

Son album suivant, le premier où il n'est plus batteur à part entière, "Rock Bottom", est sans conteste un des plus grands disques pop de tous les temps. Suivra "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" en 1975. Robert Wyatt se consacre désormais au chant et aux claviers mais joue aussi, avec ses membres supérieurs, d'une mini-batterie. Tout au long des années 80, il multiplie les collaborations les plus diverses, essentiellement animé par des motifs politiques, tout en sortant ponctuellement des singles pour le label Rough Trade. La plupart de ces chansons figurent sur "Nothing Can Stop Us". En 1985, c'est "Old Rottenhat", puis en 1991 "Dondestan", suivi d'un EP "A Short Break" l'année suivante. Il faudra attendre cet automne pour que paraisse un nouvel album, "Shleep", grâce à l'appui de Phil Manzanera, l'ancien guitariste de Roxy Music. En guise d'initiation, nous recommandons l'écoute du troisième Soft Machine, "3", du premier Matching Mole, "Matching Mole", et bien sûr "Rock Bottom", et surtout "Shleep" car Robert ne regarde jamais vers le passé, sauf pour nous être agréable dans cette interview.

Sur la pochette du premier album de Soft Machine, vous vous définissez comme « un simple batteur de rock'n'roll », mais l'auteur des notes de pochette affirme que vous êtes bien plus que ça.
Ces notes sont extraites d'un article de Mike Zwerin pour Down Beat (revue américaine institutionnelle du jazz, NDR), intitulé "Les batteurs différents", ce qui m'impressionnait terriblement. Il m'avait interviewé dans le Sud de la France lors d'un festival où je partageais l'affiche avec Tony Williams qui. plus jeune que moi, jouait déjà très sérieusement. Le simple fait d'apparaître dans Down Beat me semblait présomptueux.

Mais vous étiez effectivement un batteur différent, votre musique n'était ni rock,

ni jazz, mais totalement nouvelle.
La plupart des batteurs que j'aime en savent beaucoup plus qu'ils n'en font, comme mon batteur de rock favori du moment, Steve White, qui joue avec Paul Weller. On entend nettement son évolution avec le groupe Style Council : il avait dans les 18 ans et essayait des plans à la Kenny Clarke ; maintenant il est mûr et sûr de lui, il n'a plus besoin de montrer qu'il sait jouer en faisant des super moulins. S'il en fait, c'est seulement quand la musique le requiert. Il est évident que tous les batteurs que j'aime ont écouté Philly Joe Jones ou Kenny Clarke, même s'ils ne jouent jamais dans ce style.

C'est ce que vous écoutiez quand vous vous êtes mis à la batterie ?
Le premier avec lequel j'ai "joué" était Max Roach, le disque de ce fameux concert de 1953 à Massey Hall avec Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie et Charles Mingus. Je jouais des balais, enfin, avec des rouleaux de papier, sur la table. Mon loisir favori consiste toujours à jouer sur mes disques préférés à la maison.

Donc vous travaillez toujours la batterie ?
À cette époque je le faisais, mais quand j'ai dû me confronter au volume des groupes électriques, le jazz ne convenait plus. Mes modèles de transition furent Ginger Baker et surtout Mitch Mitchell, qui m'a donné beaucoup de liberté. Mais jouer à ce volume posait d'autres problèmes, à commencer par le fait qu'un électrophone n'est pas assez puissant pour pouvoir jouer de la batterie avec des baguettes.

Avec Soft Machine, vous jouiez fort ?
Oh oui, très fort. L'organiste (Mike Ratledge NDR) portait d'ailleurs des protections auditives.

Et votre batterie était totalement reprise ?
Je ne me souviens pas, il me semble qu'il n'y avait que des micros d'ambiance. Ce qui me causait du souci, car pour moi l'élément principal de la batterie est la charleston, sans doute une trace de mon goût pour le jazz. Dans la soûl music, on garde le tempo sur la charleston fermée, mais de manière moins "legato" que dans le jazz. J'aime vraiment cet accessoire. Avec juste une charleston, un pied et deux mains, il y a tellement à faire. À cette époque, je commençais à sérieusement songer à me mettre aux claviers. Je comptais jouer la batterie en multipiste en studio, puis faire appel à des amis batteurs comme Laurie Allen pour la scène.

Sur "Rock Bottom", les sons de percussions sont étonnants. Malgré votre handicap vous jouiez sur une batterie classique ?
C'était la vieille batterie d'un copain, mais il y a très peu de batterie en fait, j'ai surtout joué sur un plateau en étain et des boîtes de conserve. Ce qui me manquait était le jeu de charleston, c'est pourquoi j'ai fait appel à Laurie Allen, qui était le musicien le plus sensible que je connaissais. Il jouait aussi bien du rock que du jazz ou de la musique sud-africaine.

En revanche, avant votre accident, sur "The End Of An Ear", vous jouiez bien d'une vraie batterie...
Oui, sur celle de Mitch Mitchell. C'était une Ludwig en érable, fabriquée spécialement pour Mitch, avec une caisse claire Gretsch, j'en ai joué de 68 à la fin de ma carrière de batteur. Il me l'avait donnée, et j'ai tout fait avec, aussi bien Soft Machine que Matching Mole. Il avait remarqué que j'avais un mal de chien avec ma Premier, qui n'était pas assez puissante pour ce que je jouais ; ou alors le problème venait de moi... Quoi qu'il en soit, Mitch ne supportait plus de me voir me battre avec mon matos. Un soir, il avait emprunté ma batterie pour jouer avec Hendrix et me l'avait rendue en me disant que c'était de la daube.

Vous étiez très proche de Mitch Mitchell car vous avez tourné ensemble lors de votre première tournée américaine avec, à la même affiche, The Jimi Hendrix Expérience et Soft Machine. Comment s'est faite cette connexion ?
Nous avions le même manager et répétions au même endroit. Et je connaissais le bassiste, Noël Redding, qui était au départ guitariste dans un groupe vedette de Folkstone. Ils ont été fantastiques avec nous, tant en termes d'entraide que d'inspiration.

Vous avez eu l'occasion de bœuffer avec Jimi ?
Les autres membres du groupe affirment que nous avons joué avec Hendrix mais je n'en ai aucun souvenir. En 68, je vivais à Los Angeles, je n'avais plus de groupe et je partageais une maison avec les gens de l'Expérience. Ils avaient loué un studio à temps plein et m'avaient proposé de l'utiliser. J'y ai donc enregistré quelques chansons, sur lesquelles Hendrix a fait quelques parties de basse. La bande n'existe plus, mais il reste la matrice métallique, de très mauvais qualité bien que nettoyée par un ingénieur du son canadien. Ça figure sur une compilation, "Flotsam And Jetsam", mais ça n'a vraiment valeur que de souvenir.

Et qu'est donc devenue cette Ludwig que Mitch Mitchell vous a donnée ?
Je l'ai toujours, elle est chez moi. Je l'ai ressortie récemment pour la prêter à Mitch qui en avait besoin pour une émission sur Jimi Hendrix pour la télévision anglaise. Elle sonne toujours aussi bien.

Pourquoi avez-vous quitté Soft Machine ?
Je ne suis pas parti, j'ai été viré ! Je ne sais pas pourquoi, ça s'est fait sur un simple coup de fil. Demandez aux autres...



La deuxième incarnation de Soft Machine (1969) : Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper et Robert Wyatt

Peut-être preniez-vous trop d'importance dans le groupe ?

De toute façon, ils n'appréciaient pas le fait que je chante.

Votre façon de chanter est pourtant unique, comment l'avez-vous développée ?
Le premier groupe pop que j'ai vu sur scène, c'était Them, avec Van Morrisson. J'avais été très impressionné par le fait qu'il portait un T-shirt dégueulasse, je n'avais jamais vu quelqu'un s'en foutre à ce point sur scène, ah ah ah. Ceci dit, c'était aussi un sacré chanteur, comme Steve Marriott. Mais je n'ai jamais été attiré par les voix d'hommes, à la maison je chantais plutôt sur du Dionne Warwick. Ou si, en voix d'hommes, j'aimais bien les falsetto Tamla Motown comme Smokey Robinson.

Vous avez toujours chanté en jouant de la batterie ?
Au départ, non, je ne faisais que jouer de la batterie. Quand j'ai voulu chanter, il a fallu

que je trouve quelqu'un pour jouer de ce foutu instrument, j'ai alors dégoté Richard Coughlan, le cousin de Richard Sinclair (membre fondateur de Hatfield And The North). Quand il jouait de la batterie, je pouvais chanter.

Mais avec Soft Machine, vous faisiez bien les deux en même temps ?
Oui, ah ah ah, et c'était pour le moins problématique. Mais une fois, auparavant, je m'étais retrouvé avec les Wilde Flowers à faire un tremplin sans Richard Coughlan et nous ne voulions pas faire d'instrumental. Nous avons choisi *I Put A Spell A You* qui est un 6/8 assez facile, et des reprises de James Brown. Et en fait, dans les morceaux de James, la voix et la batterie sont rarement jouées ensemble : *(il chante)* I Feel Good, ta la la la la...

Vous aviez aussi la réputation de chanter des chorus de Charlie Parker paraît-il ?
C'est encore une rumeur colportée par Mike Zwerin, ou quelqu'un de ce genre qui s'est trouvé dans le coin un jour où j'ai fait ça. Ce qu'il voulait faire passer au public est qu'une nouvelle génération arrivait, d'une autre planète, avec une toute nouvelle culture musicale.

Comment arriviez-vous à improviser à la batterie et au chant simultanément ?
Très mal, ah ah ah. Je n'ai en fait jamais fait ça avant les années 70, et ce n'est qu'en studio que je suis parvenu à faire quelque chose de correct.

Que ce soit avec Soft Machine ou Matching Mole, vous avez toujours été très friand d'improvisation, non ?
Hum, c'est vrai, mais j'ai aussi toujours été très attaché aux structures, à la forme. Certaines de mes contributions à la musique sont indécelables. Par exemple, j'aimais bien que la fin des solos soit écrite, pour qu'à la fin d'une pièce apparemment totalement libre on se retrouve à nouveau dans une partie très arrangée. C'est le genre de procédé que l'on trouvait beaucoup chez Don Cherry. Mais à côté de ça, je n'aime pas que la musique sonne comme étant travaillée.



Les concerts de Soft Machine étaient-ils différents chaque soir ?
Je n'en ai plus aucune idée car je n'ai pas dessoûlé pendant dix ans ! J'ai du mal à me souvenir de quoi que ce soit.

Comment arriviez-vous à jouer dans ces conditions ?
Très mal, ah ah ah. Et mon tempo est toujours merdique : j'accélère et je ralentis tout le temps. Mais maintenant je m'en fous, ce n'est plus un problème pour moi.

À propos de tempo, vous n'avez jamais eu recours à des programmations ou à des boîtes à rythmes sur vos disques ?
Oh que non ! Je suis un musicien de Néanderthal, j'utilise le bois, le métal et les peaux.

Vos sons de clavier ne sont pas non plus ultra-modernes...
Je me suis servi d'un Mellotron en studio parce qu'il était là, mais je n'en ai jamais eu à la maison. Je n'avais de toutes façons pas de local de musique avant 1974. J'étais donc incapable de pratiquer quoi que ce soit, la scène était le seul endroit où je jouais. Deux personnes m'ont filé des tuyaux pour la batterie : un Américain nommé George Nydel, et un batteur catalan Ramon Barran. Ils m'ont montré comment tenir correctement les baguettes et tout ça. La chose la plus importante que m'ait fait comprendre George est que les sections rythmiques européennes étaient bonnes individuellement mais incapables de battre ensemble comme un seul cœur. Il m'a fait écouter les disques de Count Basie, ou ma rythmique préférée, celle de Miles

Davis avec Jimmy Cobb et Wynton Kelly. Chaque musicien est distinct mais ils jouent comme un seul homme. Il m'a appris ainsi à écouter autant qu'à jouer.

Vous avez toujours écouté beaucoup de musique ?
Oui, surtout dans ma période scolaire, c'est sans doute pour cette raison que j'étais un cancre, pour autant que je me souvienne de ma scolarité. Je travaillais bien en classe, mais à la maison j'écoutais des disques au lieu de faire mes devoirs.

À propos de rythmique, comment cela se passait-il avec Hugh Hopper lorsqu'il est devenu bassiste de Soft Machine ?
Très franchement, ce que j'ai toujours aimé chez Hugh, et qui a fait que je l'invite ensuite sur mes albums, ce sont surtout ses qualités mélodiques et qu'il sait parfaitement s'adapter aux mots d'une chanson. Mais je ne me suis vraiment soucié de bassiste que ces dernières années, notamment quand j'ai enregistré avec Chucho Merchan. Je joue moi-même de la basse depuis longtemps, et je le fais généralement sur mes disques. Mais, par exemple, sur "Shleep", sur le morceau avec Philip Catherine, c'est Chucho qui joue de la contrebasse. Il a fait par ailleurs la partie de grosse caisse en complément de mes percussions. Et il y a aussi un joueur de djembés et de tablas, Gary Adzukx, car je suis incapable de maîtriser la technique de ces instruments. À l'avenir, j'essaierai d'avoir toujours des bassistes de la trempe de Chucho. Je dis ça sans dénigrer personne, chacun a ses qualités, comme Bill Me Cormick qui joue de très belles parties en complément de la batterie de Laurie Allen sur "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", et j'ai beaucoup apprécié de jouer avec le bassiste du Brotherhood Of Breath. Ces deux-là sont les meilleurs souvenirs de bassiste que j'ai, mais vous n'êtes pas un magazine de basse n'est-ce pas ?

Certes, mais les rapports avec le bassiste sont capitaux pour tout batteur, non ?
Oui, c'est ce que George m'avait enseigné à l'écoute de la rythmique Paul Chambers - Jimmy Cobb. Une autre relation forte est celle de Charles Mingus avec Dannie Rkhmond. Ils parvenaient chacun à jouer en avant ou derrière l'autre tout en se retrouvant exactement soudés, voilà aussi une rythmique extraordinaire.

Mais la mélodie semble rester primordiale pour vous. Comment composez-vous ?
Au piano, toujours. Il m'arrive aussi d'écrire des chansons à partir de mélodies de gens qui ne sont pas chanteurs, comme Hugh Hopper ou Philip Catherine. C'est un peu comme ce qu'avait fait Joni Mitchell pour ses chansons d'après Mingus (l'album "Mingus"NDR). Certaines mélodies sont si belles qu'elles doivent être chantées, comme les thèmes de Monk. Il y a des morceaux de "Dondestan" ou de "Shleep" qui proviennent de fragments ou de pages entières de mon carnet de notes. J'ai toujours des idées plein mes calepins, c'est de là que provient "Shleep" en grande partie. Mais c'est un tel soulagement d'avoir pu mettre en forme toutes ces idées que j'avais depuis le début des années 90. Je ne trouve pas que composer soit une chose aisée. C'est facile d'avoir des petites phrases ou des idées rythmiques, mais élaborer complètement une chanson est quelque chose de difficile à mes yeux. J'ai découvert que les mots ont une musique en eux, ils me suggèrent leur propre musique, très chantante. Il y a aussi des séquences que j'avais dans la tête depuis des années sans savoir qu'en faire, Alfie les a mises en forme (Alfreda Benge, compagne et muse de Robert, qui crée le visuel de ses albums. NDR). Quant à la méthode, je ne sais pas, je me mets au piano et les idées viennent. Enfin, je prie pour ça.

Sur le premier album de Soft Machine, dans *So Boot If At All*, il y a un extraordinaire solo de batterie qui semble improvisé, mais après une écoute attentive, il s'agit de deux parties superposées qui se télescopent d'un canal à l'autre.
C'est une combinaison d'organisation et improvisation. Le travail en studio se rapproche du travail d'un peintre ou d'un cinéaste : il y a un premier jet spontané, puis on construit quelque chose autour. Mais je faisais un peu ça sur scène aussi. J'aime improviser car il y a des choses qui ne se créent que dans l'urgence, mais il y en a d'autres qui nécessitent une réflexion. Je prenais mes bandes et j'essayais d'en tirer profit de la même façon que j'écoutais les disques de jazz, je bâtissais alors une superposition complémentaire.

Vous procédez de la même manière pour vos chansons ?
Je veille à maintenir l'intérêt, c'est un problème propre à tout chanteur. On peut faire beaucoup avec la texture d'une voix, mais je me suis aperçu que, finalement, j'écoutais surtout de la musique instrumentale, pour la variété des dynamiques et les possibilités

physiques de chaque instrument. Quand je chante tout un album, je me dis que pour que quelqu'un puisse écouter cinq chansons d'affilée, il doit se passer quelque chose. C'est pourquoi j'aime reposer mes oreilles de ma propre voix.

Les paroles sont-elles très importantes pour vous ?
Elles le sont, mais je ne sais pas ce que j'écris quand je l'écris.

Comme par exemple celles de Signed Curtain, sur le premier album de Matching Mole, où le texte dit simplement : "Ceci est le premier couplet, et ça c'est le refrain..." ?
Il y a tellement de conneries qui ont été écrites en guise de paroles que je me suis demandé quel était le rôle des mots. Ils doivent dire la vérité, mais qu'est- ce que la vérité, sur un plan philosophique, si ce n'est de dire que "*C'est le premier couplet...* " etc. Si je suis honnête, c'est la seule chose dont je sois sûr, donc la seule que je puisse dire. Quand on chante pour un public, cela semble être une façon de communiquer, mais c'est au fond si abstrait... On ne peut pas réellement attendre de quelqu'un qu'il tienne compte de ce que l'on raconte. L'écoute est subjective, chaque auditeur se crée sa propre interprétation de ce qu'il entend, il faut être lucide sur ce point.

Signed Curtain est par ailleurs une chanson mélodiquement naïve.
En un sens, c'est une mélodie inspirée par la musique country, et par Dave Sinclair qui écrivait des morceaux qui ressemblent à des hymnes d'écoles.

Comment s'est passée la collaboration avec Nick Mason, le batteur de Pink Floyd, qui a produit "Rock Bottom" ?
Il m'a été d'une aide précieuse, il a une grande expérience du studio, il y a passé beaucoup de temps. Pas moi. Chaque fois que je rentrais en studio, il fallait faire vite, car ça coûte tellement cher. Je me demande comment les gens parviennent à apprendre le studio. Les Pink Floyd n'ont jamais été pauvres, ils ont toujours eu les moyens de faire les choses, et ils ont su les utiliser à bon escient. Par ailleurs, du fait que Nick Mason est batteur, il y avait une certaine camaraderie entre nous. Je crois même que les batteurs sont plus copains avec d'autres batteurs qu'avec les membres de leur propre groupe, mais ça vous le savez déjà. Nick sait installer un climat décontracté, il essaie de comprendre où tu veux en venir, mais il ne t'impose jamais rien.

Pour beaucoup, "Rock Bottom" reste un chef-d'œuvre absolu. Comment considérez-vous ce disque aujourd'hui ?
Je ne fais pas de chroniques de disques moi, ah ah ah. Je vais le réécouter bientôt, car le label Ryko compte rééditer mon catalogue, et je vais pouvoir veiller à ce que tout soit fait correctement. Autrement, il y a des années que je n'ai pas réécouté ma production, je n'ai plus tout ça en tête.

Votre premier album sous votre nom, "The End Of An Ear" était quant à lui très marqué par le jazz.
La relation que l'on a avec une musique est toujours particulière. Pour moi, le jazz est du progressive rock, le jazz et le rock se sont développés ensemble, c'est manifeste dans les vieux disques de blues. Oui, le jazz a toujours été du rock progressif, c'est ce qu'il a toujours été. Je voulais briser les barrières de la pop, ce n'est pas du tout une autre musique. En un sens, la musique de danse américaine n'a toujours été que du jazz.

À la veille des années 70, y avait-il une fraternité entre les musiciens de jazz et ceux de rock ?
Je n'ai aucun souvenir d'une communauté rock, mais d'une communauté de batteurs oui. Mais il est vrai que les gens que je fréquentais à l'époque étaient pour la plupart des musiciens de jazz. J'ai toujours été attiré plutôt par les instruments acoustiques que ceux électriques, je suis un percussionniste de Néanderthal, je le répète, j'aime sentir les musiciens souffler ou frapper, je suis bien plus sensible à ce contact physique que l'on trouve dans le jazz. J'ai besoin de sentir une compagnie, c'est sans doute une question de génération. Même quand j'étais à fond dans le milieu rock, j'écoutais toujours des albums de Gil Evans. Je souhaitais agrandir le champ du rock, mais je faisais une erreur ; on ne peut pas importer le dialecte et les accents du langage américain dans la musique anglaise sans sonner idiot. Certains y parviennent tout naturellement mais pas moi. Quelqu'un



comme Paul Weller. qui a joué sur deux titres de "Shleep", est plus proche de Marvin Gaye que de n'importe quel chanteur anglais, mais cela semble faire partie de lui. Dans mon cas, il aurait fallu tout réinventer avec une espèce d'accent anglais.

La scène ne vous manque jamais ?
Je ne pourrai plus remonter sur scène, j'ai trop le trac. Lorsque j'étais batteur, ma batterie me servait de cuirasse. Ce qui pourrait me manquer aujourd'hui est la complicité entre musiciens, mais pour "Shleep" nous avons créé une atmosphère très conviviale. D'habitude, quand on rentre en studio, on arrive a onze heures du matin, tout est noir, on se retrouve seul avec un ingénieur qui vous propose une tasse de thé. Comment peut-on créer quelque chose de magique dans ces conditions ? Je préfère qu'il y ait des fenêtres, même si on entend un peu les bruits de la circulation. C'est de cette façon que j'ai enregistré "Rock Bottom", une écoute attentive révèle des bruits de vaches, de tracteurs, etc., car nous avions les fenêtres grandes ouvertes. Et "Hapless Child" de Mike Mantler - tout comme ce que j'ai fait avec Caria Bley - a été enregistré dans de telles conditions. Nous n'étions pas ensemble en studio le même jour, mais quelle sensation que de chanter sur la rythmique Jack DeJohnette-Steve Swallow-Carla Bley ! Un véritable voyage au paradis.

Avec qui rêveriez-vous de chanter ?
Je crois qu'on peut difficilement demander mieux que ces trois-là : DeJohnette-Swallow-Bley. Mais bon, il y a certains musiciens londoniens auxquels je ferais volontiers appel si j'avais beaucoup d'argent, ces musiciens de jazz apparus dans les années 80 dans le sillage de Courtney Fine, comme Steve Williamson qui est vraiment excellent. Et j'aime bien ce que le label Nato a produit avec Tony Coe, qui est en fait le meilleur musicien de toute l'Angleterre je pense. Il peut absolument tout faire, il a d'ailleurs suggéré que nous réalisions quelque chose ensemble. J'ai aussi le souvenir d'avoir enregistré avec Didier Malherbe, qui a le plus beau son de flûte du monde. Et Lol Coxhill est un musicien fabuleux.

Il existe énormément de traces audiovisuelles de vos prestations en France. Est-il envisageable qu'un jour sortent des disques ou des vidéos de ces concerts ?
Ça me fait peur. J'ai entendu récemment la bande d'un concert de Matching Mole à l'Olympia, j'étais tellement ivre que c'en est choquant. À franchement parler, je souhaiterais plutôt que toutes ces bandes disparaissent sur un grand bûcher !

Pourtant certaines prestations de Soft Machine étaient pour le moins remarquables!
C'est possible, mais je ne peux plus écouter ce putain de groupe maintenant, c'est terminé pour moi.

Avez-vous lu "Wrong Movements", le livre qui vous est consacré ?
Je l'ai vu mais pas lu, c'est beaucoup trop années 60 à mon goût, ah ah ah.

On vous y voit cependant avec des configurations de batteries pour le moins bizarre?
Je me suis toujours bien amusé avec les batteries. Il y a quelque chose que je n'ai jamais dit, mais comme vous êtes une revue spécialisée ça peut vous intéresser : j'ai toujours voulu trouver un moyen d'éviter l'utilisation habituelle de la caisse claire, surtout dans le rock, c'est tellement abrupt, dictatorial en un sens. Ton kou pah tou kou pah, c'est adapté au rhythm'n'blues, mais dans le rock ça ne vit pas assez à mon goût. Sur mon dernier album enregistré en tant que batteur, en l'occurrence "Little Red Record", le deuxième de Matching Mole, j'ai joué sur un kit normal mais avec la caisse claire jouée tout le temps sans le timbre. De fait, il n'y a pas de caisse claire sur ce disque. C'est le genre d'expérience que j'aimais bien tenter. Il m'arrivait aussi parfois de jouer tout un concert avec les mains. Parfois, vous placiez le tom bass à la place de la caisse claire, celle-ci étant à la place du tom médium ! J'aimais bien faire ça, c'était l'occasion de varier les figures. Parfois j'inversais la grosse caisse et la charleston mais je jouais comme si le kit était normal, ce qui créait instantanément une sorte de rythme de reggae à la charleston, ah ah ah.

1969, avec la ludwig offerte par Mitch Mitchell.



Photo : Christian Rose

C'est peut-être à cause de ça que vous avez été viré de Soft Machine ? !
Sans doute, ah ah ah. Mais vous savez, j'ai un seuil d'ennui très bas, je me lasse très vite. J'ai besoin de tout chambouler souvent pour voir ce qui se passe. En studio, il m'est arrivé de jouer la grosse caisse aux baguettes, voire aux balais.

Les percussions électroniques ne vous ont jamais tenté ?
Une fois j'ai acheté un synthétiseur, le moins cher possible. Il suffisait de rajouter de la reverb pour le faire sonner dix fois plus cher, après tout ce n'est jamais qu'un signal. J'avais ce clavier qui faisait : di da doumpah tschprr, je m'en suis servi pour Shrink Wrap sur "Dondestan", mais simplement parce que je l'avais acheté, alors merde, il fallait bien l'utiliser.

Et la batterie ne vous manque jamais ?
Hum, la charleston me manque toujours, car je n'entends jamais personne jouer ce que j'aimerais, quoique Steve White s'en approche parfois. Je n'ai jamais pensé en termes de batterie ou chant ou autre, mais seulement en termes de besoins musicaux.

Après votre accident, ça a dû être terrible de ne plus jamais pouvoir jouer de la batterie?
Mmm, non, pas tellement. Pour être honnête, la nouvelle situation qui était la mienne était plutôt excitante. Sans cet accident, les choses auraient sûrement été tout autres, ah ah ah. C'est en parfaite adéquation avec ma personnalité que de me retrouver contraint de faire de tout nouveaux choix.

Mais à ce moment vous étiez déjà sur une autre voie, non ?
J'essayais de composer pour le troisième album de Matching Mole et j'avais un problème. Si je jouais de la batterie, il me fallait recruter un claviériste ; mais si j'en avais un, je ne savais pas exactement quoi lui demander, pas du jazz, pas du rock, même si c'était clair dans ma tête. Le fait de ne plus pouvoir jouer de batterie m'a permis de réaliser mon rêve : prendre le total contrôle des claviers. i

Si vous pouviez rejouer de la batterie, que joueriez-vous ?
Hum, c'est une bonne question. Je pense que je me débrouillerais pour avoir le contact de Sonny Rollins, et je lui demanderais de faire une reprise de
l'album en trio au Village Vanguard avec Elvin Jones et Wilbur Ware. Peut-être prendrions-nous Chucho à la basse, et j'essaierais de jouer dans l'esprit d'Elvin à cette époque. Sur ce disque, il a un son purement bois, presque primitif, c'est ce
dont j'ai toujours rêvé. Mais il faut pour cela un soliste exceptionnel. La plupart de mes idoles sont mortes, à part Sonny Rollins qui est toujours là. Oui, je crois que ça sonnerait bien *(sourire)*.



Propos recueillis par Férid Bannour et Christophe Rossi

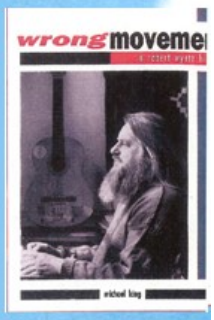


L'École de Canterbury





Robert Wyatt appartient à ce que les rock critics ont nommé "l'École de Canterbury" et qui rassemble tous les groupes issus de cette ville britannique (et bien au-delà) : Soft Machine bien sûr, mais aussi Gong, Caravan, National Health, Hatfield And The North (avec l'étonnant batteur Pip Pyle), Centipede ou Henry Cow (avec Chris Cutler, le batteur aux pieds nus). Au fil du temps, Robert Wyatt a joué, chanté ou composé avec de nombreux musiciens issus de cette mouvance : Hatfield And The North ("Hatfield And The North" Virgin) et Henry Cow ("Letters Home") donc, Kevin Ayers ("Whatevershebringswesing/Banamour" Pathe), Nick Mason ("Fictitious Sports" Harvest), Michael Mantler ("The Hapless Child And Other Inscrutable Stories" et "Many Have No Speech" sur le label Watt), mais aussi, plus récemment, Scritti Politti ("Songs To Remember" Rough Trade), Elvis Costello ("Shipbuilding") et Working Week ("Venceremos" Virgin).



Enfin, la compilation "Flotsam And Jetsam" (Rough Trade/Labels), album, "anecdotique" selon Robert Wyatt, où on le retrouve avec Jimi Hendrix sur un titre, *Slow Walkin' Talk*. Autres curiosités, "Live At The Paradiso 1969" de Soft Machine et le mini-album "A Short Break", en solo (tous deux sur le label Blueprint/MSI). Enfin, l'acquisition de "Rock Bottom" (Virgin), "Matching Mole" (Columbia), du premier album de Soft Machine, (pour l'incroyable énergie), "Soft Machine 3" avec le fabuleux *Moon In June* (Columbia) nous semble indispensable, mais sachez qu'après de nombreux démêlés juridiques avec ses anciennes maisons de disques, Robert Wyatt, aidé par le label Rough Trade, a pu récupérer la majeure partie de son œuvre en solo qui devrait être remasterisée et rééditée par Rykodisc, qui, selon l'artiste *"semblent être des gens de bon goût"*.

À lire : la biographie *Wrong Movement* (en anglais) par Michael King (SAF Publishing Ltd).

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LA SAGESSE DU VIEIL HOMME



DOMINIQUE MESMIN
PHOTOS CANIGHER

Robert Wyatt, figure incontournable de la musique anglaise, reste encore aujourd'hui un artiste influent. Après un silence de plusieurs années, il revient avec " Shleep " (Ryko), un album qui pourrait bien prouver qu'il existe bel et bien une vie après " Rock Bottom ", le disque majeur de sa carrière, jalon d'une musique dite progressive à tendance déstructurée. C'est dans un hôtel parisien, installé dans sa chaise roulante, qu'il nous a reçus..

Le jus d' orange

" Je ne peux jamais parler de ma musique ou l'analyser pendant que je la compose. Une fois ce processus terminé, elle est à l'abri des interférences et de la banalité du langage. Parfois mon commentaire n'apporte rien de plus qu'un avis extérieur. Ce n'est pas à moi de m'exprimer. Mon devoir est d'utiliser ce qui est figé sur la bande pour en faire de la musique. Je ne suis pas un théoricien, je fonctionne à l'instinct. Les idées fusent mais leur concrétisation prend plus de temps. C'est pourquoi, malgré ce que pensent les gens, il n'y a rien d'extraordinaire chez moi. Et puis, tu sais, c'est difficile d'expliquer à quelqu'un qui n'en aurait jamais bu à quoi ressemble le goût du jus d'orange. "

Perpétuelle métamorphose

Guide spirituel de Soft Machine entre 1966 et 71, ce batteur, chanteur et claviériste fonde ensuite Matching Mole. En 1973, lors d'une fête où il est passablement éméché, il passe par la fenêtre. C'est à l'hôpital qu'il compose " Rock Bottom " (produit par Nick Mason, batteur de Pink Floyd). Depuis, immobilisé dans un fauteuil roulant, il a toujours cherché à ne pas s'apitoyer sur son sort malgré une détresse incurable.
" Si un air me rentre dans la tête, alors, petit à petit, il devient un personnage vivant qui me réclame ce qu'il a besoin pour grandir ou exister. Je n'ai aucune intention de restreindre ses besoins. Mes préoccupations de compositeur sont cycliques mais comme la vie est en perpétuel changement, un problème apparemment familier peut prendre une tangente inédite. J'essaie néanmoins d'apprendre de mes erreurs et déceptions passées. Au fil des années, je n'arrive pourtant pas à être plus rapide, plus habile dans le choix du bon mot ou de la bonne séquence musicale. Avant tout, les chansons demandent de la clarté et de la simplicité. "

Travail d'équipe

Robert Wyatt, génie intarissable, a toujours été en perpétuel combat contre une musique elle aussi inféodée à la pensée unique. Plus les standards se sont uniformisés, plus il les a contournés.

" Certains titres de "Shleep" sont des ébauches qui proviennent de l'album précédent mais qui n'étaient pas à maturité. Je conçois les choses très clairement mais parfois je ne sais pas comment les concrétiser. C'est grâce à la collaboration d'autres personnes, des musiciens, des producteurs, ma femme (qui écrit d'ailleurs beaucoup de ses paroles. NDLR) qu'elle prennent forme. Quand j'enregistrais cet album, Phil Manzanera avait des idées précises sur la façon dont cela pouvait sonner. Il m'a donné des conseils. En quelques jours, une simple progression d'accords peut devenir quelque chose de très concret et organique. Chaque chanson possède ce genre de destin. Elles sont toutes de petites histoires. Mes disques ressemblent à une sorte de journal personnel, un instantané de périodes de ma vie. Surtout celle de musicien. C'est un reflet assez limité car beaucoup de mes passions et de mes centres d'intérêt n'ont rien à voir avec la musique. Je ne me souviens pas vraiment des sixties mis à part la naissance de mon fils avec ma première femme. Désolé (rires). "

Les invités

Et pourtant, c'est à cette époque que Robert travaille avec Syd Barret. Des collaborations, il y en aura d'autres comme avec Henry Cow, Mike Oldfield, Kevin Ayers, Elvis Costello, Scritti Politti, Raincoat, Ben Lee, Ryuichi Sakamoto... " Shleep ", son premier album depuis " Dondestan " (Rough Trade 91), a été enregistré dans le studio de Phil Manzanera (ex-Roxy Music). Outre l'apparition de ce dernier sur un titre, on retrouve aussi Brian Eno, Paul Weller (Ex-Jam, Style Council...), Evan Parker, Annie Whitehead...

" Je ne connaissais- pas personnellement Paul Weller, par exemple. En revanche, je pensais le solliciter depuis de nombreuses années. Le hasard a voulu qu'il soit en studio chez Phil Manzanera en même temps que moi. J'ai été surpris quand il a accepté. Je ne pensais pas qu'il puisse être intéressé par une musique différente de celle de son époque. La plupart du temps, dans ce genre de travail en commun, les gens ne veulent pas que leur intégrité soit manipulée. Il faut qu'ils se sentent à l'aise.

Moi, je ne suis pas trop friand de ce genre de chose. Je suis un vieux solitaire qui a toujours vécu reclus dans le sous-sol d'une maison à la campagne. "

L'imaginaire



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt bosse seul. Avec une dévotion et une foi inébranlable. Malgré la complexité de ses compositions, il n'a jamais sombré dans la surenchère. " Généralement, j'essaie de m'arrêter avant de tout baiser. Avant que l'essence originelle ne se soit diluée. J'aime jouer avec les stéréotypes, prendre le contre-pied des clichés chanson rapide = colère, titre lent = romantique. En revanche, pour être le plus authentique possible avec les mots, il faut simuler la façon étrange et perverse dont fonctionne notre cerveau. Dans mon propre intérêt, j'enlève toutes les métaphores. Je n'utilise pas vraiment mon imagination pour les textes. Elle est très sollicitée par mes lectures sur les plantes, les insectes, la cosmologie, la vie des galaxies. Je n'arrive pas à me concentrer sur la vie quotidienne, sur les petits aléas. C'est sûrement pour ça que je passe par les fenêtres (rires). "

Dépasser ses limites

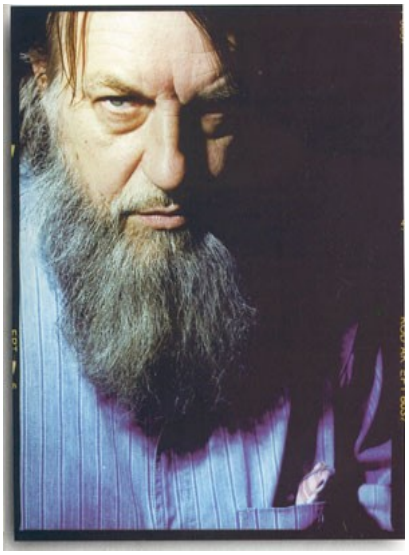
Bien qu'il ne se soit jamais senti prisonnier dans sa musique, Robert Wyatt a été contraint, cas de force majeure, de délaisser la batterie et de se concentrer sur la composition et le chant. Aujourd'hui, il possède l'une des voix les plus envoûtantes et travaillées de la musique populaire.

" Je n'ai pas les connaissances encyclopédiques d'un Frank Zappa. Mon langage musical est assez similaire à celui de la pop music. Ma voix est limitée. Ce sont sûrement mes

principales frustrations. Sinon, je suis toujours bombardé d'informations. Je préférerais en avoir moins et bénéficier de plus de clarté, d'indications sur la direction à prendre. Pour s'améliorer, on peut toujours développer le côté athlétique de la chose. Jouer plus vite du piano. Utiliser une brosse sur la batterie pour rechercher des sons plus organiques. En fait, c'est un moyen de tromper ses limites. Tu sais, un compositeur écrit sa musique avant de la jouer. Cela baise tout. Moi, je n'essaie jamais de tendre vers une identité de globalité dans mes disques. J'ai des bouts de phrases et de musique dans la tête. Quand je pense qu'ils peuvent aller ensemble, alors je me lance. "

Matos

Derrière leur apparente simplicité, les chansons de Robert Wyatt sont riches en rebondissements. Elles préfèrent les innovations structurelles au vernissage de la technologie.
" Avec la technologie, on peut feinter. Remonter les volumes sonores. Agencer les choses différemment. Elle est fondamentale pour ce que je fais. Je n'opère pas dans un secteur très commercial, je n'ai donc pas besoin de m'engouffrer dans cette surenchère de recherche sonore et d'arrangements compliqués. Je ne vends pas assez de disques pour que cela soit rentable. Mon instrument de prédilection reste la voix. Il est forcément inféodé à la technologie de l'enregistrement. Brian Eno est réputé pour sa capacité à toujours être à l'avant-garde. Pour amorcer les futures tendances et de nouvelles voies d'expérimentation. Durant nos diverses collaborations, il n'a jamais essayé de m'influencer, de me donner trop de conseils. Cependant, il m'aide. J'utilise cette machinerie seulement pour servir la créativité humaine. "



> Zoom

L'artisan

Jamais démodé, Wyatt courtise l'intemporel. Ses chansons ne s'embarrassent pas de l'érosion du temps. Drapées de leur plus belle nudité, elles se bricolent, ici ou là, sans matériel superflu.
" Rough Trade, mon ancien label m'avait offert un enregistreur Teac 4 pistes. C'est avec ça que je compose à la maison. Il commence à fatiguer. Comme moi d'ailleurs. C'est peut-être pour ça que l'on s'entend bien (rires). Je possède aussi deux micros très performants que Brian Eno m'a laissés en gage de sa sympathie. Avant ça, je n'avais aucune idée de ce que pouvait être du bon matériel. Je travaille principalement sur le piano. J'ai bien des claviers bon marché, ce genre de trucs qu'on trouve dans n'importe quel magasin, mais leurs possibilités sont limitées. Je suis arrivé à la conclusion que si une idée fonctionne au piano, elle marchera partout. C'est le test ultime. Il y a un écrivain qui disait, quand on l'interrogeait sur son écriture, qu'il écrivait toujours en latin avant de traduire en anglais. Si cela signifiait quelque chose en latin, alors, il ne risquait rien. J'ai une démarche similaire.
Avec la technologie, on peut faire plein de choses. En revanche, si le coeur n'est pas là, alors, cela sera bancal.
Je crois comme le disait Charlie Parker qu'il n'y a pas de règles. Pourtant, dans ma carrière, je ne suis jamais arrivé à travailler à partir des sons pour ensuite créer des structures."

Des mots, des maux...

Complicité entre la voix et les sons. Ceux de sa musique mais aussi ceux de ses paroles.
" Je ne gamberge jamais sur mes paroles. Je suis toujours le premier surpris par ce qui se passe. Les mots découlent de la musique. Ils sont ses serviteurs. Je n'ai aucune intention de transmettre des idées personnelles. Parfois les mots servent à exorciser des douleurs. Je n'aime pas l'idée d'artistes faisant leur thérapie, qui prennent les auditeurs ou spectateurs en otages. Il y a donc une distance entre mes textes et ce que je suis réellement. On a tous nos problèmes. Fuck off. Inconsciemment, je ne garde que ce qui est acceptable et susceptible d'intéresser le public. Rien de plus."

L'engagement

" The Little Red Record", " Song For Che (Guevara) ", " Nothing Can Stop Us ", manifeste

contre la guerre des Malouines (avec Elvis Costello), la politique de Thatcher et l'Afrique du Sud... Robert Wyatt a, durant sa carrière, toujours défendu des idées chères. Le communisme, l'écologie...
" Je voudrais bien que les gens acceptent l'idée que j'ai des convictions mais qu'elles n'ont rien à voir avec ma musique. Cela serait complètement déplacé et stupide de croire que quand on connaît le parcours politique ou intellectuel d'un artiste, on comprend mieux son oeuvre. C'est d'un prétentieux. En tous les cas, avec moi, je ne pense pas que cela fonctionne puisque je ne laisse rien transparaître de mes idées dans mes paroles."

Dépoussiérage

Les disques de Robert Wyatt, résolument innovateurs, stimulants et décalés, ont profondément marqué leur époque et rénové un genre en pleine décrépitude. Alors que plusieurs générations de musiciens y ont avidement puisé un nouveau souffle, ils seront enfin réédités l'année prochaine (" Rock Bottom ", " Ruth Is Stranger... ", " Old Rotten Hat "...)
" Ils ne vont pas être remasterisés à cause de problèmes d'argent. De plus, je ne suis pas sûr qu'ils nécessitent vraiment de l'être. Les gens n'écoutent pas mes disques pour les performances technologiques. Il doit y avoir d'autres motifs (rires). Je pense que Brian Eno serait la personne la plus à même d'en tirer le maximum. Mais, de toute façon, il vit maintenant à Leningrad et il y a toujours ce problème de thunes. Je ne suis pas Keith Richards (rires). "

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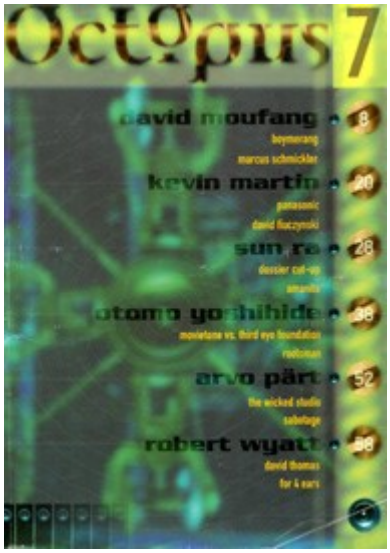
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Robert Wyatt - Octopus - N° 7 - novembre 1997



ROBERT WYATT

«Jimmy Sommerville sous valium»

par Gilles Tordjman

C'est comme ça que Robert Wyatt définit lui-même sa voix, dans l'un de ses accès de cruauté intime qui l'ont jusqu'ici préservé de l'apitoiement. C'est qu'à force de ne pas pouvoir se voir en peinture, il a bien fini par s'aimer. Accepter cette voix sinusoïdale, tutoyant le bruit blanc, pour en faire l'une des paroles les plus justes - comme on dit d'un diapason - de ces 30 dernières années. Accepter la paraplégie qui condamne le batteur à dire adieu aux grosses caisses pour devenir un maître du jeu aérien, donnant des ailes au cuivre des cymbales à défaut de savoir la gravité de la terre. Accepter d'être enfin l'incarnation la plus extrême de la différence, pour que d'autres, d'un coup, y reconnaissent la leur. Robert Wyatt ne marche plus mais sa musique fait toujours le grand écart, avec cette grâce spéciale qui est l'usufruit de ceux qui ont su donner au monde son congé. Des trompettes diffractées de «Rock Bottom» à la sublimation des Casio pouraves de «Dondestan», des improvisations lunaires de Soft machine aux mécaniques désirantes du récent «Shleep», toujours la même histoire de départ arrêté, d'éloignement virtuel : Robert Wyatt écrit la musique de demain à écouter tout de suite. D'où les malentendus: l'étiquettage «avant-garde», qui ne veut plus rien dire depuis que les avant-gardes sont devenues tolérables, lui va à peu près aussi bien que le mot «vérité» dans la bouche d'un politicien. Rien de «fusion» non plus dans cette musique qui ne se résout pas à mêler les saveurs mais en accuse les caractères propres : comme un livre de Pérec qui continuerait à s'écrire en boucle, la fin effaçant le début, ou comme un palindrome élégamment fermé sur lui-même mais faisant cercle autour de tous les riens qui font une mémoire d'homme. Musique fortiche en Histoire mais pas ramenarde en récitation, toute pleine de souvenirs détournés, de réminiscences diffuses, de savoirs hétéroclites : «le plaisir toujours renouvelé d'une occupation inutile» (Ravel ? Henri de Régnier ? Ecrire au journal qui transmettra) mais aussi «C'est un plaisir de parler des ennuis passés» (vieux proverbe Yiddish, en exergue du Système périodique de Primo Levi). Robert Wyatt se souvient, donc. Et l'on n'aura pas beaucoup de chance d'entrer dans sa musique si l'on n'y sent pas ce passage du temps, cette liberté si chèrement conquise de dialoguer avec ses fantômes. Ce qui fait, par exemple, qu'un Kurt Weil nous sera toujours plus proche que tous les Oasis interchangeables, ou que Scriabine sera toujours plus moderne qu'un John Adams (Ils vous disent: «ne comparez pas ce qui n'est pas comparable». Faites le contraire, pour découvrir de beaux paysages). Depuis toujours, le «futurisme» est la carotte amère des recalés de l'histoire. Comme tous ceux qui ouvrent des portes pour demain, Robert Wyatt cultive son jardin de récits, son lopin de mémoire. Voilà pourquoi, à l'heure où sort «Shleep» (avec Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Evan Parker, Paul Weller), l'un de ces disques qui fait vieillir toutes les «nouveautés» du petit commerce Kulturel, il était tentant de faire parler l'intéressé sur son musée égoïste, de Cuba à Barcelone, de Dada à Monk, pour retrouver ce bon vieux paradoxe du goût musical: la seule chose qui s'affine en s'élargissant.

Vous considérez vous comme un collectionneur ?

Pas au sens strict du terme. Je ne cherche pas l'exhaustivité, je ne me sens pas obligé de posséder tout ce qu'a fait un artiste que j'aime. La seule personne dont je voudrais avoir tous les disques, c'est Charlie Haden, parce que je ne l'ai jamais entendu jouer une note inutile durant toute sa carrière. Ça fait de lui un être à part, Mais il est vrai que ces derniers temps je n'ai pas écouté beaucoup de musique à cause de l'enregistrement de mon disque qui m'a pas mal absorbé. J'ai juste trouvé du temps pour Charlie Haden... Je collectionne tout ce qu'il a fait depuis 1958.

Avez-toujours été éclectique dans vos goûts musicaux ?

Non, je ne me considère pas du tout comme quelqu'un large d'esprit. C'est juste une question de temps qui passe: depuis 40 ans que j'écoute de la musique, mon intérêt s'est porté dans plusieurs directions, mais je ne me suis jamais contraint à une curiosité tous azimuts. Ma discothèque ne contient pas le monde entier, même si c'est l'impression que vous pourriez avoir en la voyant. Disons que j'ai le sentiment d'avoir élargi mon étroitesse naturelle. En outre, je cherche toujours des choses très spécifiques. Il fut un temps où j'étais particulièrement intéressé par les gammes et les modes de la musique espagnole ou tsigane. Bien que ça semble être un domaine très vaste, je ne cherchais que deux ou trois petites choses, quelques notes à saisir, juste pour voir comment elles sonnaient.

«Une musique n'est pas supérieure à une autre parce qu'elle est plus sophistiquée»

Y-a-t-il des musiques que vous avez apprivoisées plus difficilement que d'autres ?

Là encore, il y a le travail des années, l'ouverture progressive. Si je repense à ma jeunesse, je crois que j'étais un petit garçon très élitiste, un gamin insupportable. Avec des mots d'ordre du genre: "La vie est courte, je n'ai de temps que pour les génies." Donc, hors de Mingus, Ellington et quelques autres, Il n'y avait pas de salut. Mais maintenant, je vais plus volontiers vers des choses que je n'aurais jamais écoutées à l'époque, comme Sarah Vaughan, par exemple. A 5 ans, je n'aurais certainement pas compris tout ce qu'il y a à apprendre de personnalités comme celle-Ià. J'avais une forme de snobisme de l'avant-garde qui ne me poussait pas à apprécier ce genre de choses. J'avais aussi une certaine aversion pour toute la musique noire trop éloignée du blues. J'écoutais plutôt des chanteurs comme Ray Charles ou du gospel, et je m'intéressais également à toutes les résonances que je pensais trouver entre certaines musiques et certaines avant-gardes picturales: Don Cherry était quelqu'un d'important, vu sous cet angle. Pour les pianistes, j'étais naturellement plus porté vers Monk et Paul Bley que vers quelqu'un comme Red Garland ou Eroll Garner. Mais maintenant, je peux comprendre ce qu'il y a de beau dans ces choses qui me paraissaient presque trop simples, trop évidentes. En musique, apprécier la simplicité peut parfois prendre du temps. Je ne crois pas en l'idée du progrès en musique, c'est une chose ridicule. Chaque époque est une sorte de grand présent qui ne peut pas être jugé à l'aune de ce qui vient après. Une musique n'est pas supérieure à une autre parce qu'elle est plus sophistiquée.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a donné envie de devenir musicien en premier lieu ?

Je ne voulais pas être musicien, je voulais peindre. Mais en pratiquant un peu, je me suis rendu compte que je ne pouvais peindre qu'en écoutant de la musique. Petit à petit, je me suis avoué que j'étais plus attiré par la musique. Le plaisir physique, sensuel, de jouer de la batterie a été mon premier sésame. Je ne pense pas avoir eu de prédisposition pour la musique. Même aujourd'hui, je suis encore étonné de pouvoir faire des disques qui sonnent comme de vrais disques, avec de vrais musiciens. La deuxième raison majeure pour laquelle je fais de la musique, c'est que j'entends dans ma tête des choses que je n'ai jamais entendues jouées par d'autres. La seule manière de les faire exister, c'est de les jouer moi-même. La technique, pour moi, ça n'est rien d'autre que donner une forme à l'imagination.

Aujourd'hui, les genres musicaux et leurs publics sont très segmentés. Etait-il plus facile d'être éclectique dans ses goûts, pour

un jeune des années 60 ?



> Zoom

C'est une bonne question. Je ne pense pas. Je crois que ce qui distingue cette époque-là, du moins dans le souvenir que j'en garde, c'est l'émergence de l'underground à la surface des médias. Mais il faut remonter bien loin en arrière pour que l'éclectisme prenne tout son sens. Les années 60 ne sont quand même pas grand chose comparées à l'émergence des avant-gardes européennes dans les années 20 et 30. Tout ce que les années 60 ont eu d'innovant, d'imaginatif sur le plan musical vient de là; il faut rappeler que la majorité des musiciens créatifs des sixties sortaient des écoles d'art et qu'ils ont plus été marqués par les avant-gardes musicales que picturales. Même si beaucoup d'entre nous connaissaient et admiraient les œuvres de Schoenberg et Berg, nous pensions que l'esthétique d'un Duchamp était plus immédiatement adaptable à ce que nous faisions. On n'a fait qu'hériter d'une tradition de bouleversement du langage qui remonte à la fin du XIXème siècle. Les sixties furent le temps de la réappropriation de ces avant-gardes sous une forme commerciale. J'ajoute que ce phénomène s'est doublé d'une hégémonie de l'industrie culturelle anglo-américaine qui a marginalisé durablement des pans entiers de culture mondiale, comme les musiques sud-américaine, arabe, africaine. Il était impossible à l'époque d'avoir une bonne appréciation de l'importance d'Oum Kalsoum: voilà quelqu'un qui était adulé par des millions de gens sans que l'Occident n'en sache rien. Ainsi, je ne sais pas si l'on peut dire que les gens étaient plus éclectiques dans leurs goûts à cette époque, dans la mesure où cet éclectisme ne concernait qu'une forme de culture anglo-saxonne.

A quand remonte votre découverte de la musique afrocubaine ?

Je crois que c'était vers la fin des années 70. J'avais été invité à un festival de musique à Helsinki. L'intérêt de la Finlande, à cette époque, c'est qu'elle était à peu près le seul pays à maintenir des échanges culturels avec les pays communistes. Il y avait donc fréquemment des artistes cubains qui y tournaient et y enregistraient. Là-bas, j'ai trouvé des disques d'Irakere, que je connaissais déjà, et ça a été le déclic. Bien sûr, avant ça il y avait eu toute la période «cubaine» de Dizzy Gillespie. Sur le plan politique, j'ai toujours été intéressé par l'idée de ces rencontres entre les cultures noires; c'était la conséquence normale de ma passion pour le jazz. Irakere et Chucho Valdes restent mes préférés dans cette scène-Ià, ainsi que le saxophoniste Herman Velasquez. Mais par-dessus tout, ce que j'aime, c'est ce jeu d'ensemble, cette homogénéité d'instrumentation si particulière à la musique afro-cubaine. Beaucoup de gens qui s'y essaient n'y parviennent pas. Je conseille également le beau disque de Gonzalo Rubalcaba avec Charlie Haden et Jack Dejonhette, ainsi que les albums que Joe Boyd a produits pour son label Ryko. J'écoute aussi beaucoup de son, mais, comme pour le jazz, il m'a fallu un peu de temps pour remonter aux formes anciennes, pour aller de la complexité rythmique de la salsa au dépouillement du son. Même chose avec le flamenco, que j'ai découvert assez tardivement. Il y a une chose étonnante dans ces musiques, c'est l'engagement physique, l'influx nerveux presque palpable des musiciens. Les concerts de l'Orchestra Reve étaient, sur ce plan, assez saisissants.

Vous avez vécu en Espagne. Quels souvenirs en gardez-vous ?

On a dû y passer un an en cumulant les séjours. Alfie y faisait des illustrations pour des livres d'enfants, et la lumière du sud nous paraissait plus propice à la peinture. Ça nous a beaucoup appris sur la richesse de l'immigration en Europe. A Londres, par exemple, le dynamisme de la ville vient, en grande partie, des communautés caribéennes qui s'y sont implantées. A Barcelone, ce sont les gens venus d'Andalousie pour trouver du travail qui font bouger les choses. On a le souvenir d'une fantastique hospitalité, et je serais bien en peine de vous résumer en deux phrases tout ce que cette expérience m'a apporté.

«Je dois prévenir les gens que Paul Weller ou Brian Eno ont surtout apporté leur touche à une musique qui reste la mienne»

En tant que compositeur, qu'est-ce qu'une "bonne chanson» pour vous ?

Je n'ai pas d'idées arrêtées là-dessus. Je crois que j'ai des goûts assez conventionnels en la matière. J'aime ce que beaucoup de gens aiment, les chansons de Burt Bacharach par Dionne Warwick, celles de Stevie Wonder. Des compositeurs comme Kurt Weil ou George Gershwin ont su mettre leur énorme savoir au service d'une petite forme très concentrée. Prenez une ballade comme «Embraceable You» : elle n'a rien en soi de fantastique mais quand vous voyez qu'elle se prête à tant d'interprétations différentes, ça lui donne une valeur fantastique. C'est presque impossible de faire une mauvaise version d'«Embraceable You». Quand je chante une reprise, je ne cherche jamais à changer mon accent ou mon phrasé; je dois me sentir à l'aise. Après ça, Je cherche à m'en tenir exactement à la raison pour laquelle chaque note et chaque mot ont été écrits. Je n'essaie pas d'interpréter ou de changer quoi que ce soit. Par exemple, l'introduction de davier dans ma version de Strange fruit est la transcription note pour note du solo de trompette dans la version originale de Billie Holiday. Mon ambition est de respecter sans imiter.



> Zoom

Après "Dondestan», enregistré seul, beaucoup de musiciens différents sont présents sur "Shleep». Quelles sont les difficultés spécifiques des deux formules ?

Enregistrer seul, c'est d'abord une question d'argent: les musiciens comme les studios coûtent cher, alors si on peut le faire seul, on peut arriver à un résultat satisfaisant avec très peu de moyens. C'est aussi pour ces raisons que je ne me considère pas comme un artiste «pop» ; ce n'est pas le monde où je vis, et je trouve que cette présence massive de l'argent dans le métier est absolument ridicule. Ce qui s'est passé, pour le nouvel album, c'est que Phil Manzanera m'a offert la possibilité de travailler dans son studio sans me soucier des heures qui tournaient, et qu'il y a eu une entente extraordinaire avec des musiciens de passage. Des gens que je n'aurais pas pu payer m'ont offert leur collaboration en me disant qu'ils me devaient bien ça parce que j'avais eu une place dans leur vie à un moment ou un autre. J'ai ainsi pu retrouver des sensations de groupe que je croyais perdues. Mais je dois prévenir les gens qui s'attendraient à trouver des morceaux de Paul Welter ou Brian Eno dans mon disque; ils ont surtout apporté leur touche à une musique qui reste la mienne.

Dans le travail, êtes-vous sévère avec vous-même ?

Non, pas vraiment, mais Alfie est vigilante pour deux. Il lui arrive de me dire que telle ou telle prise de voix est paresseuse, que je peux faire mieux. Mais quand elle n'est pas là, je me satisfais assez bien de ce que je viens de faire et je vais me servir un verre... L'un des avantages de jouer en groupe, en tournée, c'est qu'on a une appréciation très immédiate des points forts et des points faibles de ce qu'on est en train de jouer. Comme ce n'est pas la vie que je mène, je dois trouver d'autres moyens d'évaluer la qualité de mon travail. Quand je travaille sur une chanson, maintenant, je répète obstinément chaque partie, le piano, la voix, la ligne de basse, la batterie, pendant plusieurs mois s'il le faut. Si ça continue à fonctionner après ce traitement, ça mérite d'être couché sur la bande magnétique. Je ne pense jamais à ce que j'aurais pu ou dû faire en musique dans le passé. Je crois que c'est très déprimant pour un paraplégique de commencer à penser de cette manière (rires). Mes ambitions musicales sont assez limitées, en vérité: si je tiens une idée de chanson, que les paroles et la mélodie semblent bonnes, je suis content avec ça. Pour ne pas avoir eu de vocation musicale, je suis toujours étonné et heureux de parvenir à faire de la musique. Quant à tout ce que je ne sais pas faire, je suis heureux d'écouter d'autres musiciens le faire. Je n'ai pas de regrets, ou alors peu. Pendant un moment, lorsque j'écoutais les disques de Mingus où il n'utilisait pas de trompettiste, j'avais envie de retrouver pour moi ce son particulier, à base de saxophones, mais c'est un désir qui s'est réalisé sur le nouvel album, avec Annie Whitehead au trombone et Evan Parker au ténor.

Diriez-vous qu'il vaut mieux travailler à l'intérieur de ses propres limites ?

Je ne sais pas, mais une chose est sûre: comme je n'ai pas une ambition symphonique démesurée, je me contente de faire ce que j'ai envie d'entendre. L'important pour moi, c'est de faire une chose que personne d'autre ne fait. Le fait d'être considéré comme un

artiste d'avant-garde me laisse un peu perplexe: le jour où les gens qui croient ça écouteront Sarah Vaughan, l'étiquette tombera d'elle-même (rires). Je ne sais pas très bien tout ce que cela veut dire. J'observe simplement que les avant-gardes du XXème siècle, qui étaient pour certaines vraiment révolutionnaires, ont été digérées, récupérées par la pensée dominante. Idem pour les cultures non-européennes, laminées par l'impérialisme. Je n'ai pas le désir de précéder quoi que ce soit; je suis dans mon temps, simplement. La technologie ne m'intéresse pas en tant que telle, mais seulement pour la place qu'elle tient dans ma vie. Je me sens beaucoup plus concerné par l'invention du microphone et du magnétophone que par le flux des nouvelles technologies.

Qui sont les musiciens qui vous ont le plus marqué ?

Miles Davis, pour la manière d'infléchir les phrases, Charlie Haden et Charlie Mingus pour la faculté de créer des ambiances. Et Dionne Warwick, bien sûr.

CD "Shleep", Rykodisc / Harmonia Mundi

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Interview inédite de Robert Wyatt pour Rock'n'Folk (jamais publiée) - 1997

ROBERT WYATT par Stan Cuesta

Cette interview de Robert Wyatt réalisée pour Rock&Folk à l'occasion de la sortie de Shleep n'est jamais parue dans son intégralité. Je n'en ai utilisé qu'une infime partie pour un article format timbre poste...



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INTERVIEW INEDITE DE 1997

Une photo de Robert et Alfie datant des années 70, prise sur le site de Cuneiform Records, un excellent label qui édite en CD de nombreux concerts et inédits de Soft Machine.

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Jeudi 28 août 1997, Hôtel Scribe. Robert Wyatt et Alfreda Benge (allongée sur le lit). Robert me reçoit avec ces mots :
Je ne vends pas assez de disques en Angleterre pour vivre, alors je dépends des gens d'autres pays pour avoir de quoi manger. Merci à vous.

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On peut passer votre carrière en revue, pour finir avec ce nouvel album ?

Vous pouvez essayer, mais j'ai quelques amnésies, il vous faudra inventer, être très créatif en ce qui concerne la première partie.

Vous avez pourtant écrit des notes de pochettes parlant de votre enfance...
Oh oui, ma mémoire va de l'enfance à 1962, puis s'arrête et repart en 1972.

Votre éducation musicale ?
Mon père était pianiste et je chantais avec lui. Il a essayé de m'apprendre le piano, mais c'était sans espoir. Comme quand une femme essaye d'apprendre à conduire à son mari... Ça a été un échec, mais peut-être m'en est-il resté quelque chose, tout de même. Quoiqu'il en soit, il y avait un piano à la maison. J'étais à la chorale de l'école, je chantais la Truite de Schubert. Puis j'ai pris des cours de violon pendant deux ans. Puis j'ai vendu le violon, au grand chagrin *(en français)*, quel mot magnifique, de mon père, pour acheter une trompette, car je voulais être Miles Davis. Je ne voulais pas jouer comme Miles Davis, je voulais être Miles Davis. Mon père était horrifié, car il n'y avait pas un répertoire important pour la trompette, en musique classique bien entendu. Il pensait que j'étais fou. Malheureusement, il est mort peu de temps après, il était très malade, il avait une sclérose en plaques. Mon éducation s'est faite en écoutant ses disques, j'essayais de jouer par dessus les parties de batterie de ses disques de jazz, mais je ne pensais vraiment pas devenir musicien quand j'étais jeune. J'étais plus intéressé par la peinture.

Vous peignez toujours ?
Non. Je laisse ça à Alfie. Ce serait légèrement redondant... Donc, j'ai commencé à jouer un peu de batterie, de percussions avec des copains, ou des voisins : vous apprenez ce dont vous avez besoin et vous progressez à partir de ça, en écoutant des disques...

Vous étiez juste batteur, au début...
J'essayais toujours de chanter un peu, parce que souvent les musiciens écrivaient des chansons, mais ne pouvaient pas les chanter. Depuis mes 18 ans, je n'avais pas d'endroit où vivre et où avoir des instruments. Pendant six ans, j'ai vécu dans des petites pièces, ou chez des gens, je ne pouvais jouer nulle part. C'était toujours une surprise de trouver un musicien avec de la place pour jouer chez lui, et des parents tolérants.

Vous avez un style distinctif au piano. Monk ?
J'ai bien sûr des pianistes favoris, mais en fait, quand je fais une chanson ou un morceau, j'entends simplement dans ma tête ce que je voudrais derrière, et peut-être que j'entends l'orchestre de Gil Evans, mais ils n'habitent pas à côté de chez moi, alors... Ce n'est pas particulièrement dérivés de pianistes, c'est une tentative de clarification du contexte rythmique et harmonique de la chanson. Mais bien sûr, je suppose que Monk a toujours été mon pianiste favori. Et l'est toujours.

J'aime votre 'Round Midnight'
Oh, merci. J'aimerais chanter plus de chansons de Monk, s'il y avait plus de paroles, mais c'est difficile d'en trouver. Un ami à moi, Pete Brown, a essayé d'en écrire, j'en ai fait une miniature, 'Locomotive', mais nous avons finalement abandonné le projet, je n'étais pas très à l'aise...

Avec ce background jazz, vous avez commencé par le rock...
Les deux frères Hopper voulaient être une sorte de beat group, on répétait chez eux, on faisait les chansons qu'ils voulaient et on essayait aussi de faire des démos pour un producteur, pour éventuellement faire un vrai disque, mais ce n'est jamais arrivé... Je n'étais pas vraiment l'instigateur de tout ça, ce que je jouais pour moi était totalement improvisé, mais n'a jamais été enregistré.

Le CD *Jet Propelled* avec Daevid Allen, qui contient des titres d'avril 1967, vous le connaissez ?
Je ne l'ai jamais vu. Ils ne nous les envoient jamais car on pourrait leur demander de l'argent... On ne touche rien là-dessus, non, l'industrie est corrompue, dégoûtante. Ça pue. J'ai utilisé certaines de ces chansons ensuite, oui...

Vous le voulez ?
Non, ça me rend triste...

Oh, pardon...
Non, ne vous inquiétez pas, je suis très honoré que vous soyez suffisamment intéressé pour rechercher des choses comme ça. Du dehors, ça peut être intéressant. Mais vu de l'intérieur, c'est inconfortable pour moi.

Mais vous avez recherché des trucs pour *Floatsam & Jetsam* ?
Oui, mais c'était Mike King, il était très intéressé, il voulait accompagner son livre avec des illustrations sonores. Je ne sais pas où il a trouvé ces bandes, je ne les avais jamais entendues. J'étais très surpris.

Vous vous souvenez d'avoir joué avec Hendrix ?
Oh oui, je n'avais pas de groupe, j'étais à Los Angeles en 1968, le groupe dans lequel j'étais s'était dispersé et j'enregistrais dans le même studio que lui. La seule chose que je n'arrivais pas à faire, c'était la partie de basse. Il est arrivé et m'a demandé 'Tu veux que je la joue ?', j'ai dit 'Oh oui, merci beaucoup !' Et il l'a jouée magnifiquement. J'essayais de tout faire moi-même, mais bien avant que je trouve comment jouer mes propres lignes de basse, Hendrix a été un bon professeur... Le meilleur, en fait. Il aurait pu être bassiste. C'était tout simplement un musicien fantastique.

Mais alors, votre mémoire fonctionne pour 1968 ?
Oui, là ça va, il n'y avait pas de groupe.

Vous ne mentionnez jamais son nom, vous dites : le groupe.
Oui, tout comme je ne peux pas dire le nom des précédents premier ministres en Angleterre. Ca ne peut tout simplement pas sortir de ma bouche.

Vous ne voyez plus les membres du groupe, mais vous avez travaillé avec Hugh Hopper.
Oui, il m'envoie des bandes de temps en temps. Des morceaux qu'il a écrit dont je peux faire des chansons.

Vous ne le voyez pas ?
Non, nous n'habitons pas dans la même région. J'habite dans le nord, il vit dans le sud.

Dans les années 70, vous jouiez encore avec lui, il joue sur *Rock Bottom*.
Oui, c'est vrai, nous n'étions pas fâchés. C'est moi qui l'avait introduit dans le groupe, parce que j'aimais son don pour la mélodie. Ca m'aidait beaucoup. Même avant que je compose moi-même, je me sentais très à l'aise avec ses mélodies. J'ai eu de la chance qu'il ne chante pas, il avait besoin de quelqu'un pour le faire. Aujourd'hui encore, je suis toujours intéressé quand il me propose des chansons.

Qu'est il advenu de Brian, son frère ?
Il travaille pour une compagnie chimiste, c'était un hobby pour lui, pas une carrière.

Et Kevin Ayers, vous ne le voyez plus ?
Non.

Mais vous avez joué avec lui dans les années 70 ?
Euh, je suppose, c'est possible... Je ne m'en souviens pas.

Il avait un groupe qui s'appelait Whole World...
Ah oui, avec Lol Coxhill, David Bedford et Mike Oldfield. Oui, j'ai joué un peu avec eux, mais je ne l'ai pas revu depuis.

Je l'ai vu sur scène il y a quelques années, et il jouait '*Why Are We Sleeping*'.
Ah oui, j'ai vu une vidéo de lui jouant ça, et j'ai trouvé ça vraiment bon. Il y avait des cuivres, c'était intéressant de voir ce qu'il faisait de la chanson, maintenant qu'il en avait le contrôle.

C'est un chanteur pop.
C'est vrai, mais beaucoup d'idées novatrices étaient aussi de lui. En un sens, ce n'était pas de chance pour lui. S'il avait été seulement un chanteur pop, il aurait pu avoir beaucoup plus de succès dans sa carrière, comme Donovan ou Ray Davies, ce genre de chanteur. Mais il était toujours beaucoup plus aventureux que ça. Il a raté des opportunités à cause de ça.

Après la fin de ce groupe, vous en avez formé un autre, peut-être peut-on mentionner son nom, Matching Mole ?
Oui, vous pouvez mentionner ce nom.

Ce groupe n'a pas eu le succès qu'il méritait.
Je ne pense pas qu'il méritait beaucoup de succès. J'ai bien aimé faire les disques, mais ils étaient faits en studio. Je pense que nous n'avons bien fonctionné qu'en tant que groupe

de scène. J'ai entendu des bandes, c'est OK, mais ce n'est pas vraiment confortable.

Oui, mais 25 ans après, c'est toujours une influence importante, de nouveaux groupes reprennent 'Oh Caroline', c'est une très bonne chanson, qui aurait pu être un hit.
C'est possible, je peux le dire parce que c'est David Sinclair qui a écrit la mélodie, j'ai simplement écrit les paroles. C'est à lui que revient tout le mérite. C'est un compositeur très mélodique.

Beaucoup de gens vous mentionnent comme une influence.
Je ne reçoit pas beaucoup de feedback. Parfois, j'entends quelque chose, et je me dis : Eh, je faisais ça. Je me souviens d' un truc qu'utilisait beaucoup David Bowie, doubler sa voix exactement à l'octave. Et puis un jour, j'ai lu une interview où il disait qu'il avait énormément écouté mes disques. Quand j'entends la chanson de Sting, à propos des disparus, il me semble retrouver quelque chose de "Te Recuerdo Amanda". Surtout sachant que c'était un ami d'Andy Summers, qui était un vieil ami à nous. Mais pour être honnête, je suis beaucoup plus conscient des gens qui m'ont influencé moi.

Comment avez vous rencontré Brian Eno ?
Vous savez quoi... Je n'arrive pas à m'en souvenir. Nous avions des amis communs, comme par exemple Phil Manzanera, qui avait été à l'école avec Bill McCormick, un bassiste avec lequel j'ai joué.

Ils ont formé un groupe ensemble, qui s'appelait 801.
Oui, je pense qu'ils avaient même déjà ce groupe à l'école. C'est peut-être comme ça que nous nous sommes connus, mais aussi peut-être par une espèce de camaraderie entre exilés et réfugiés de grands groupes. Tout ce dont je me souviens, c'est que nous avons été immédiatement de très bons amis. Nous sommes toujours restés en contact par lettre et par téléphone. En ce qui concerne le nouvel album, j'avais entendu une musique pour un film à la télé, et à la fin j'ai vu les crédits, c'était Brian Eno. Je l'ai immédiatement appelé pour lui dire que j'avais vu l'émission et que je pensais que sa musique était très bonne. Nous nous sommes mis à parler de différents sujets, comme l'utilisation de la voix, le fait de savoir quoi faire avec les mots. Nous avons des sentiments totalement opposés en ce qui concerne les sections rythmiques. Il pense que le jazz est trop surchargé et bordélique.

Oui, je me souviens, sur un de vos disques, il était crédité aux "anti jazz rayguns".
C'est vrai, dès qu'il entendait du jazz, il désintégrait le mec *(il mime un pistolet laser)*. Mais même quand il est franchement contre quelque chose, il ne devient jamais condescendant. Il est toujours ouvert aux discussions, aux contradictions. C'est très agréable d'être avec lui pour cette raison.

Vous avez utilisé les Stratégies Obliques ?
Oui je trouvais ça très bon. Par exemple, je ne sais plus si c'en est tiré ou si c'est quelque chose qu'il a dit, mais parfois, il enregistre une piste de sons, de bruits au hasard, qu'il met de côté et puis il enregistre son disque, et ensuite, par endroits, il injecte cette première piste. J'ai utilisé ça plusieurs fois. Beaucoup d'idées comme ça. Et une autre, merveilleuse : parfois, quand vous êtes en train d'enregistrer, vous pensez que tout est complètement merdique. Ne le détruisez pas. Parce que c'est meilleur que vous ne le pensez. Vous êtes simplement de mauvaise humeur.

Alfie : Honorez vos erreurs comme une intention cachée.

Oui, c'est ça, c'est fantastique. Merci. Brian est plus influencé par des idées du monde de l'art que par la musique, et moi aussi, d'une certaine façon. Mon idée de l'art, c'est de créer un monde dans ma tête, comme un peintre.

Vos mélodies sont toujours très originales.
Pendant des années, j'ai essayé d'être comme les gens que j'aimais.

Même sur les reprises, vous changez les harmonies, etc.
Oui, c'est vrai. Je me lasse très rapidement de certaines harmonies couramment employées dans le rock normal. J'utilise des harmonies très simples, mais ce ne sont pas exactement celles qui sont utilisées, par un guitariste, par exemple. Ça vient du jazz, bien sûr, mais aussi, même si ça fait un peu prétentieux de dire ça, de l'écoute de Ravel et de Prokofiev.

Qui étaient influencés par la peinture...
Oui, à la recherche d'une fluidité, rythmique et harmonique, la sensation que tout se fond et n'est pas encore complètement solidifié.

Vous avez arrêté d'écrire, à un moment.
J'ai travaillé avec d'autres personnes. J'ai enregistré 'Hapless Child' pour Mike Mantler, une musique pour un écrivain, Edwin Gore (?), arrangée par Carla Bley. Ils avaient entendu *Rock Bottom*, qui était distribué à l'époque par Virgin, et ils m'ont demandé de chanter. Et ça a été une expérience fantastique, simplement chanter pour quelqu'un, sans aucune autre responsabilité, juste interpréter, comme un instrumentiste. Quand les autres instruments sont joués par Jack DeJohnette, Steve Swallow et Carla Bley, personne ne peut faire mieux ! C'est très stimulant. Ce n'est peut-être pas considéré comme créatif dans un sens compétitif, mais comme je ne donnais plus de concerts, c'était une façon de continuer à travailler. Et puis, j'en ai fait d'autres. Oui, j'avais des difficultés à écrire... Je ne veux pas écrire la même chanson deux fois de suite. Il faut attendre que des idées nouvelles vous viennent, parfois on ne peut pas forcer les choses.

Costello ?
C'est le nom qui me venait à l'esprit, justement. En partie parce qu'il est tellement prolifique... Il peut écrire des centaines de chansons. Le contraire absolu de moi, en un sens. Un gars super, très amical. La chanson avait été écrite par Clive Langer, un ami d'Elvis. Ils ont simplement envoyé une K7 à Rough Trade, avec un mot demandant si je voulais la chanter. C'était la première démo de la chanson, j'ai simplement remplacé sa voix par la mienne. Et puis nous avons sorti le disque.

Avez vous entendu sa version, avec Chet Baker à la trompette ?
Oui. La première chose dont nous ayons parlé quand nous nous sommes rencontrés, c'est de Chet Baker, car il avait découvert qu'Alfie était une fan des débuts. Il me disait que je devais enregistrer un album de reprises de Chet Baker, ce que je ferai peut-être un jour. C'était un très grand musicien, même à la fin, quand il était en très mauvaise santé, il a continué à jouer une bien meilleure musique que bon nombre d'autres musiciens. C'est aussi pour ça que j'étais ravi de travailler avec Philippe Catherine, qui a longtemps joué avec Chet.

Ensuite, en 1984, vous avez enregistré *Old Rottenhat* qui est décrit dans votre biographie même comme un album plutôt lugubre. Partagez-vous ce point de vue ?
Je n'ai pas de commentaire à faire sur mes propres disques. Je répète souvent ça : je ne fais pas de chroniques de disques, même pas avec un seul mot.

Mais c'est vrai que votre nouvel album est beaucoup plus varié que *Old Rottenhat* et *Dondestan*...
Oui, ces deux albums, ainsi que d'autres choses que j'ai faites à la même époque, comme le EP *Work In Progress*, étaient en quelque sorte l'essence concentrée de ce que je fais. L'essence nue absolue.

Il y a beaucoup plus de musiciens invités sur *Shleep*. Aviez-vous besoin de rejouer avec des gens ?
Oui, je commençais à me sentir un peu seul. Pas socialement. Je suis plutôt heureux avec Alfie et mes amis, mais musicalement.

Comment avez vous rencontré Paul Weller ?
Quand Phil Manzanera m'a proposé d'enregistrer dans son studio, Paul Weller était en train d'y travailler. Phil m'a dit : je ne peux pas te donner cette semaine, car il y a Weller. J'ai laissé une note, un petit bonjour, lui demandant s'il avait besoin d'un chanteur pour des harmonies vocales ou quoi que ce soit, je lui demandais aussi la grille d'accords d'une vieille chanson de Style Council que je pensais enregistrer, ce que j'ai d'ailleurs fait, "The Whole Point Of No Return", parce que j'avais le disque, mais je voulais être sûr que les accords étaient les bons. En fait, j'ai abandonné ses accords, mais je voulais les connaître avant. Il m'a répondu en me demandant si je n'avait pas besoin d'un peu de guitare sur certains titres. Je me suis dit que je pouvais essayer, ça c'est fait de façon très informelle.

C'est inhabituel d'entendre de la guitare sur vos disques.
Oui, je ne comprends pas les guitares, normalement. C'est vraiment la grande différence de dialecte culturel qui existe entre moi et le rock'n'roll. Je ne vis pas dans le monde des guitares. Et là, il y en a plein… Quatre ! Il y a quatre guitaristes, tous différents.

Des vraies guitares rock...

Oui, je suppose que c'est comme ça qu'on dit, bien que j'ai toujours préféré le roll au rock. J'étais nerveux avec Paul, parce que je ne le connaissais pas. C'était une sorte d'acte de foi aveugle. Je pouvais vraiment me ridiculiser. Et puis j'ai réalisé qu'il était un peu nerveux lui aussi.

Etait-il fan de votre travail ?
Je n'en ai aucune idée... Comment aurais-je pu lui demander ? Non, nous n'avons pas parlé de ça, mais de soul music. Il passait son temps à demander à Alfie comment c'était dans les boîtes, à Londres, dans les sixties. C'est un mod, il veut savoir ! Alfie était là quand les mods ont été inventés, elle en faisait partie... C'était l'essentiel de notre conversation. Il a juste travaillé sur la musique, il était content de simplement faire un peu d'acoustique, mais je lui ai demandé d'en faire plus... Je ne payais pas ces gars-là, alors, je ne pouvais pas vraiment leur demander quoi que ce soit. Mais il s'est réellement investi. Je crois qu'il bossait très dur sur Heavy Soul, et pour lui c'était une façon de se reposer un peu, se changer l'esprit. Des sortes de vacances ! J'ai eu de la chance. C'est un homme très gentil, très drôle. Et ce qui est le plus important, il a une très bonne oreille. Il a vraiment compris ce que je voulais. Mieux que moi-même, je pense... J'aurais peut-être maintenant une attitude un peu plus bienveillante envers la guitare ! Parce que comme je n'arrive pas à en jouer, je ne pense pas à elle.

Vous jouez de la basse.
Oui, j'ai une guitare à la maison. Sur les quatre cordes graves, j'essaie toujours de jouer des lignes de basse. Par exemple, un riff de Charlie Haden de... 1958, que j'essaie de jouer sur deux cordes depuis... 30 ans ? *(Il le chante)* J'ai enfin trouvé un endroit où le placer !

Vous le connaissez ?
Oui, j'avais repris une de ses chansons ("Song For Che"), et ensuite, il nous a rendu visite. Evidemment, nous avions des amis communs, comme Carla Bley.

Avez-vous eu des réactions d'autres personnes dont vous avez repris des chansons : Chic, Peter Gabriel...
Non... Oh, je crois que je l'ai vu une fois à l'autre bout d'une pièce, parce qu'il m'a regardé bizarrement. Je ne savais pas qui il était, puis j'ai réalisé par la suite que c'était lui. J'aurais du le remercier pour la chanson, "Biko". *(Il demande à Alfie s'il en a rencontré d'autres)* : Bien sûr, pas Victor Jara, qui a été assassiné au Chili, Para était mort...

Alfie: The Monkees ?

Non... Je ne les ai jamais rencontré. J'espère que ça n'arrivera jamais...

Hendrix avait tourné avec eux, et avec les Walker Brothers...
Oui, il n'en parlait pas beaucoup ! Et avec Cat Stevens, aussi. Et Engelbert Humperding!

Shleep ?
Ce sont les mots d'Alfie.

Vous êtes moins politique sur cet album que sur les deux derniers.
Comme je l'ai déjà dit, je ne chante pas deux fois les mêmes chansons. Je devais chanter ce que j'ai fait auparavant. Et la plupart de ces chansons viennent du monde de mes rêves, comme *Rock Bottom*, et c'est un monde très perturbé. Parfois le sommeil est plus perturbé, et il l'a été très sérieusement pendant l'ère des Reaganomics. Je ne pouvais pas y croire. C'était partout pareil. Je me sentais totalement étranger à mon environnement. C'est sorti dans les chansons. Je devais me différencier de cette atmosphère inconfortable.

Vous pensez que ça va mieux aujourd'hui ?
Non, je ne crois pas. Mais, depuis que les alternatives sérieuses ont toutes disparues... J'ai toujours les mêmes idées sur le fonctionnement du monde. La vraie guerre est pour moi entre la démocratie et les investisseurs, les banquiers. Mais ce n'est pas clair, parce qu'on apprend qu'ils coopèrent. Ils sont tous amoureux.

Marcos ?
Si ça marche. C'est difficile de parler de ça dans les pays riches. Dans un pays capitaliste, vous êtes probablement bénéficiaire... Pas tout le monde, non... Mais si vous êtes d'un pays 'client', vous êtes baisé. Je crois toujours à ça. Mais la plus grande tentative de construire une alternative s'est totalement effondrée. J'ai du mal à imaginer quelqu'un refaisant tout ce boulot. Pourtant, des choses fantastiques ont eu lieu. La plus importante, à mon avis, est la mort de l'apartheid. Particulièrement pour ses architectes, les anglais et

les hollandais. La plupart des communistes avec qui j'étais impliqué se battaient pour ça. Après la fin de l'URSS, l'excuse utilisée par l'ouest et l'apartheid (si vous luttiez contre eux, vous étiez une marionnette communiste) a disparue. C'est ce qui s'est passé au Mexique, au Zaïre..

.

Qu'est devenu le Parti Communiste anglais ?
Il s'est fait Hara Kiri ! Son cœur était basé sur une génération de gens vieux ou morts. Principalement des anti-fascistes des années 30. Il y avait un très fort élément juif et écossais. Beaucoup d'idées ont été adoptées. Mais il ne faut pas le dire.

'Blues in Bob Minor' est un hommage à Dylan ?
Oui, il est Bob Major, je suis Bob Mineur. J'avais écrit cette progression blues altérée en Fa mineur, je jouais ça au piano depuis des années. Puis des mots me sont venus, une parodie d'une pub pour une voiture française "Papa, Nicole ?". Et je faisais "Alfie , Oh, Alfie" Je trouvais ça très cool. Je lui ai joué et elle a dit que ce n'était pas cool du tout ! Que j'étais peut-être simplement un peu fainéant. Elle m'a gentiment suggéré de travailler un peu plus dur là-dessus. Et dans une sorte d'accès de mauvaise humeur, je me suis dit que j'allais la remplir de mots. Et quand vous balancez une litanie de mots sur une forme de blues altérée, Bob Dylan vient immédiatement à l'esprit. C'est pourquoi il n'est pas chiant alors que tant de chanteurs folks le sont... Le rythme de ses mots est très vivant. C'est presque une version folk du bebop, avec les syllabes. J'ai donc essayé de chanter 'Subterraneans Homesick Blues' par-dessus ce que j'avais fait. Mais la vérité, c'est que je ne pouvais pas me souvenir des paroles. J'ai juste écrit deux ou trois phrases dont je pouvais me souvenir : "you only got ten" et quelques autres... et pour le reste, j'ai juste mis des trucs à moi.

Avez vous été influencé par les poètes beat, comme lui ?
Pas directement. Je m'en souviens, c'était très important dans les années 50, ce mélange de poésie et de jazz.

Ecoutez vous du rap ?
J'en ai beaucoup écouté au début des années 80. J'en ai fait un sur un texte d'Alfie : "Shrink Rap". Ce que j'aimais dans le rap, c'était qu'on y retrouvait peut-être pour la première fois ce qu'on avait connu avec Fats Waller et beaucoup d'autres chanteurs bop des années 40 qui jouaient avec des mots très rapides… depuis, les mots de la musique noire étaient restés très préfabriqués et pourtant les noirs américains parlent un superbe dialecte. Il semblait que ça apparaissait enfin sur disque dans le rap. C'était magnifique pour cette raison.

Qu'écoutez vous comme musique en ce moment ?
Honnêtement, depuis un an, je n'écoute quasiment que ce que j'essaye d'écrire. J'ai vraiment travaillé très dur sur *Shleep*. Je voulais vraiment savoir ce que je faisais. Le dernier disque que j'ai acheté est un Charlie Haden, mon musicien favori, en partie parce qu'il a toujours des choix de collaborateurs intéressants, de Don Cherry à Stéphane Grapelli.

La conversation dévie sur un bootleg enregistré en 1971 à Berlin avec deux violonistes : Jean Luc Ponty et Sugarcane Harris:

Oh, je ne savais pas ce que je faisais à l'époque, j'étais totalement à côté de mes pompes, mais Jean Luc est un violoniste formidable.

Ecoutez vous de la musique nouvelle ? Dance, Acid Jazz...
Non. Je crois que c'est Byron qui disait : "Chaque fois que j'entends parler d'un nouveau livre formidable, j'ai envie de foncer en courant m'acheter un vieux livre formidable."

>> L'interview sur le site de Stan Cuesta

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Bob au taupe niveau - Guitares & claviers - N° 189 - octobre 1997



Dire que Robert Wyatt n'est pas un acteur de la scène musicale comme les autres relève du gentil euphémisme...
En lutte avec leurs démons jazzo-post psyché-progressifo-dadaïstes au sein de Soft Machine et de Matching Mole, le batteur de Bristol et ses amis arty ne vivaient guère la musique comme leurs confrères, laissant ainsi à Genesis, Jethro Tull et autres King Crimson, le soin de jouer avec leurs déguisements de trolls et autre quincaillerie tolkienienne à trois balles (tendance costumier du Gros Bazard de Michel Fugain).
Car le "rock" filtré par la grammaire de Canterbury apporta certes des instants magiques mais aussi, au fil des mois, un bon wagon de déchets 100% rock progressif.

ROBERT WYATT
BOB AU TAUPE NIVEAU

Manque de chance ou véritable résurrection, au bout du chemin des excès "livrés" dans le kit de cette aube des 70's, le petit Robert, imbibé, passa par¬dessus un balcon pour atterrir quelques étages plus bas en pièces détachées. On connaît la suite. Définitivement exclu de toute chorégraphie breakdance, Wyatt compose le magistral et noir "Rock Bottom" sur son lit d'hôpital (juin 74). dévoilant enfin un visage fait de greffes de Pharoah Sanders. Coltrane, Billie Holiday. Stravinsky, musique orientale... Inclassable parmi les inclassables, Wyatt croisera, avant ou après ce fameux accident, Syd Barrett. Nick Mason, Hendrix (tournée U.S. commune pour Soft Machine et le Gaucher en 68), Robert Fripp, Fred Frith, Brian Eno, Elvis Costello ou Ryuichi Sakamoto, sortant occasionnellement un album solo. N'ayant jamais

réussi à choisir son camp musical, il utilisera toujours son incroyable falsetto, des nappes de claviers atmosphériques et une conception de la batterie tout en nuance. Pour son nouvel album ("Shleep"), Robert Wyatt, un demi-siècle sous le bras, s'est entouré d'un casting guitaristique déconcertant : Phil Manzanera. Philip Catherine et Paul Weller.

Robert Wyatt : J'ai réalisé qu'en assemblant ces chansons, cela aboutirait à un album. Il me manquait juste l'essentiel : les gens avec qui le faire.

Jouer dans un groupe vous manque-t-il ?
Non. D'ailleurs, ça n'a jamais vraiment marché pour moi. Chaque œuvre demande un traitement à part entière. C'est pour ça que jouer en groupe m'a toujours posé problème. Tout le temps le même bassiste, le même guitariste, ça ne me convient pas.

Parce que vous avez toujours été à cheval entre les genres ?
Surtout, je me suis aperçu que je pouvais être plusieurs musiciens à moi tout seul (*rire*). J'étais batteur, je suis devenu chanteur, puis je me suis mis aux claviers et à la basse. Sur "Shleep". je suis presque un quartette à moi tout seul. Quatre qui sont loin d'être des virtuoses, mais qui s'entendent très bien (*rire*). Lorsque je compose, ça commence par une sensation harmonique. Ensuite, je place mes changements harmoniques, savoir si c'est majeur ou mineur, ou bien encore si il y a un changement d'accords.

Lorsque vous jouez de plusieurs instruments, cette méthode a un équivalent ?
Non. ça change d'un titre à l'autre. Je place d'abord les percus, les cymbales. Ensuite la base du clavier. Puis la voix provisoire. Enfin, je commence à travailler les textures, les solos... En général, le rôle de la basse est essentiel pour moi. Parfois, il m'arrive de l'avoir à l'esprit en même temps que la batterie. Dans ce cas, je vais chercher une sorte de fusion entre les deux. Mais il m'arrivera également de jouer la dualité basse/batterie.

"Shleep" est un album de rencontres...
Complètement. Lorsque j'invite quelqu'un pour jouer sur mon disque, je lui demande d'abord si il pense pouvoir intervenir sur la compo proposée. Vu que je ne le paye quasiment pas. je ne peux pas lui imposer mon diktat (*rire*). Je choisis l'invité pour sa personnalité, pas simplement pour prolonger la mienne. C'est ce que faisaient mes arrangeurs préférés. Ellington et Mingus. Ils cherchaient à intégrer le caractère des musiciens dans les arrangements qu'ils écrivaient.

On peut transposer ça sur "Shleep" ?
Par exemple, lorsque Phil Manzanera a commencé à travailler sur *Alien*. je lui ai demandé quels renseignements il voulait. Il m'a répondu : "ne me dis rien et fais-moi simplement écouter ce que tu as déjà enregistré"... Avec Paul Weller, c'était différent. Il voulait juste connaître les accords que j'avais joués au clavier. Il a pris son acoustique en jouant juste rythmique avec moi. Je lui ai fait comprendre qu'il pouvait en faire davantage sur les passages où je ne chantais pas. Sur *Blues In Bob Minor*. il m'a demandé des précisions, j'ai parlé de B.B. King et il s'est lancé. Il a fait deux prises et. en trafiquant ça. on les a intégrées ensemble. C'est pour ça qu'il y a deux solos de guitares. Sur *Free Will And Testament*, il a écouté dix fois ce que j'avais fait, il voulait connaître toutes les paroles. Il a embarqué la cassette et m'a appelé le soir en parlant d'ajouter une guitare slide... Paul est quelqu'un d'étonnant. Son entente avec Steve White, son batteur, a atteint une maturité vraiment jouissive.

Vous jouez toujours autant de claviers...
J'aime bien ça. Je prends ce qui me tombe sous la main. Un vieux truc de préférence. Si c'est écrit en japonais avec plein de boutons, ça me fait peur (*rire*). Pour la batterie, j'ai toujours mon kit de la période Matching Mole. Mitch Mitchell me l'avait donné. En studio, je ne me suis pas servi de la grosse caisse. Je joue avant tout avec les cymbales. J'ai conservé ça de l'époque où j'écoutais beaucoup de jazz. Tout le système jazz, la gestion du temps, le jeu en legato, etc. Il y a un côté venteux et brumeux qui convient davantage à mes chansons que l'idée classique qu'on se fait de la batterie dans le rock. Ma caisse claire Gretsch, mes cymbales et quelques tambourins me suffisent.

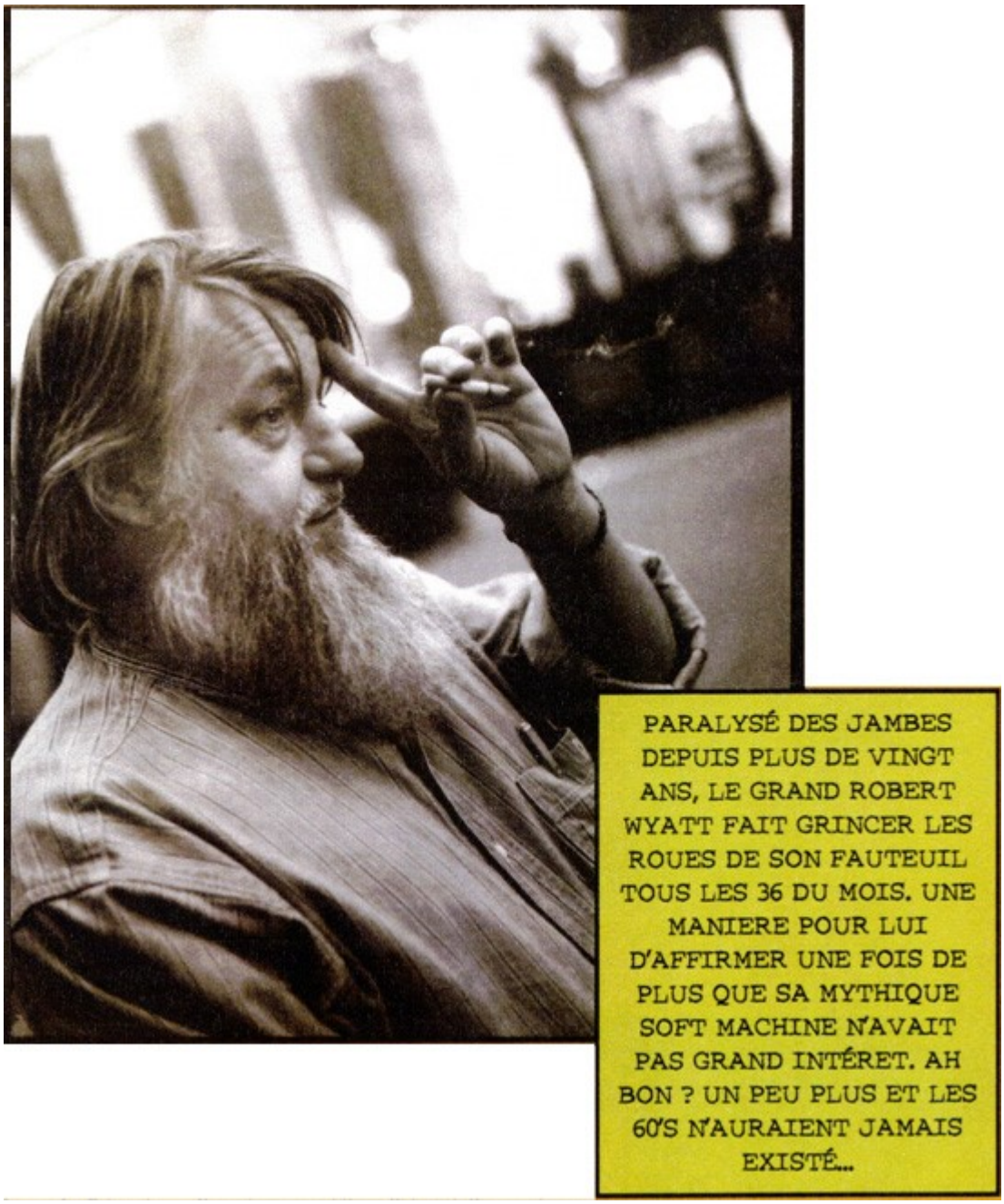
Vous jouez de la guitare de temps en temps ?
Je n'ai jamais vraiment compris cet instrument, même si j'en ai une chez moi pour travailler principalement les lignes de basse. Déjà, j'ai du mal à la tenir. Ça n'est pas un geste qui me vient naturellement. Je devrais essayer la guitare hawaïenne (*rire*).

C'est pour ça que vous avez embauché plusieurs guitaristes ?
C'est un disque inhabituel pour moi à cause de cela. L'ingénieur du son Jamie Johnson, a été

fantastique avec moi. Il joue également de la guitare et compose un peu. Brian Eno qui a produit le premier titre, lui a demandé s'il pouvait en jouer. Le titre avec Philip Catherine avait été enregistré en Belgique il y a plusieurs années. J'y ai repensé et lui ai demandé si je pouvais m'en servir. En fait, j'ai utilisé sa piste rythmique. Il a collé quelques fioritures, j'ai ramerné la cassette chez moi et ajouté ma voix... Ensuite, il y a Phil Manzanera qui travaillait déjà dans le studio, c'est le sien (*The Gallery dans le Chertsey).* J'avais à l'esprit le son qui lui était propre sur *Alien*. Un son magistral, assez atmosphérique. Enfin, il y a le jeu de Paul Weller ne ressemblant à aucun des trois autres. A l'arrivée, les quatre ont conservé leur personnalité musicale.

Et le disque s'écoute d'une traite...
Parce qu'en restant eux-mêmes, ils sont obligés de jouer ma musique et de jouer avec moi (*rire*). Mais je voulais que chacun reste lui-même. Surtout que ne suis pas un familier de la culture guitaristique dans le rock. Le jazz a pris le dessus pour moi... J'adorais Emily Remler. L'école Charlie Christian est celle qui me touche le plus.

Et les impressionnistes comme Jim Hall ?
J'aime sa modestie. Il a joué sur des disques qui me sont chers. Comme ce qu'il a fait avec Jimmy Giuffre. Et puis il a joué des choses inhabituelles avec Sonny Rollins... J'adore aussi les guitaristes de flamenco.



Jeune, qu'est-ce qui vous retenait de ne pas aller à fond dans le jazz?
Je ne me suis jamais senti à l'aise avec les acteurs de la scène jazz. Surtout les Britanniques. Ils avaient un problème d'identité. Pire que les Français (*rire*). La contribution européenne à la musique noire américaine va de Bach aux compositeurs russes immigrés comme Irving Berlin ou Gershwin. Le développement harmonique né de la musique de Billy Strayhorn jusqu'aux pianistes modernes comme McCoy Tyner est proche de Ravel ou Debussy. Pas seulement rythmiquement mais en termes de palette harmonique. Et un certain nombre de jazzmen américains ont séjourné en France... Bref. l'Angleterre dans tout ça n'a jamais vraiment trouvé sa place dans le rapport Europe/États-Unis. Et puis il y a une trop grande partie de moi qui n'est pas entièrement jazz. J'ai grandi avec la chanson. Des choses musicalement simples éloignées de la musique instrumentale. Cette tradition folk de conserver une simplicité est un élément clef dans la musique. Lorsque je travaille mes chansons, je veux garder ça à l'esprit. La musique doit être au service de la chanson. C'est pour ça que Dylan est quelqu'un de très important pour moi. Et c'est justement tout sauf un vrtuose... La musique qui me traverse l'esprit n'est pas UNIQUEMENT du jazz. Et ne l'a jamais été. C'est autre chose. Il y a des composantes de traditions diverses. En même temps ça n'a pas de tradition à part entière...

Comme Glenn Gould qui n'avait pas seulement Bach à l'esprit lorsqu'il jouait Bach. C'était presque autant Bach que lui...
Complètement. C'est étonnant la façon dont il jouait Bach. Comme si cette musique était encore toute chaude, sortie du cerveau du compositeur... Dans "Shleep", j'emprunte des instants à Don Cherry. B Higgins. Charlie Haden.

Quel regard portez-vous sur les 60's ? Les gens avec qui vous avez joué comme Barrett. ceux que vous avez croisés comme Hendrix...
Je ne veux même pas y repenser. Je n'ai jamais été à ma place, ni été avec les bonnes personnes... Je me sens comme un soldat de la Guerre de 14 qui n'a pas envie d'en parler (*sourire*). Ma vie musicale dans ma tête se déroule de ma jeunesse à 62 et de 72 à aujourd'hui. Entre, il n'y a rien d'intéressant, sauf la naissance de mon fils en 66.

Votre participation à "Madcap Laughs" de Barrett fut assez étrange...
On est allé chez lui. il nous a passé les bandes qu'il avait déjà réalisées. On a commencé à répéter pour se familiariser avec ses compos. On lui demandait quels étaient les accords et il répondait "oui. oui" ou bien "ah. très drôle" (*sourire*). Quand on est passé à la répète suivante, il nous a remerciés en nous précisant qu'il nous avait enregistrés dès la première répétition.

Quelles sont les images musicales que vous avez conservées d'avant 62 ?
Les chansons populaires à la radio. Des trucs de Doris Day. L'opéra où m'amenaient mes parents. Les disques de jazz de mon frère comme ceux du MJQ, Cochran et de Buddy Holly qui passaient dans le juke-box d'un bar que je fréquentais. Il y avait aussi la musique de *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi* (*sourire*). Mais j'ai plein de phases non-musicales ayant eu des répercussions sur mon rapport à la musique. J'adore peindre, par exemple. D'ailleurs, mes héros sont des peintres. Mais dormir reste mon hobby favori (*rire*).

Marc Zisman

Robert Wyatt sur Internet :
Apparemment presque rien : juste une simple évocation de la carrière de Wyatt. En y regardant de plus près, on s'aperçoit que cette courte biographie recense tous les sites Web consacrés de près ou de loin à l'ancien Soft Machine. Une belle plate-forme.
http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Studios/6940/ Wyatt.htm

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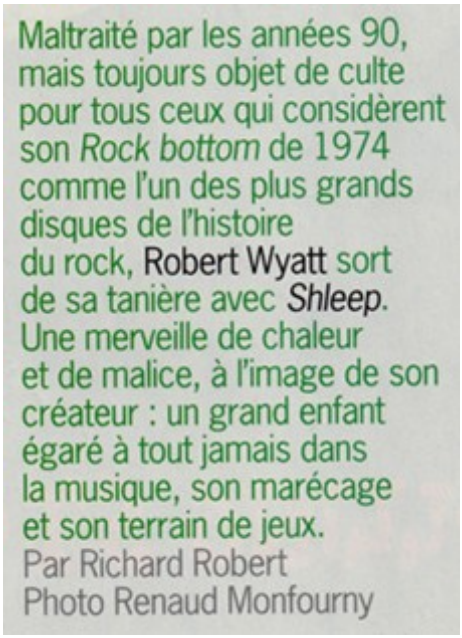
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Le Grand Robert - Les Inrockuptibles - N° 120 - du 1er au 7 octobre 1997

LE GRAND ROBERT




Maltraité par les années 90, mais toujours objet de culte pour tous ceux qui considèrent son *Rock bottom* de 1974 comme l'un des plus grands disques de l'histoire du rock, Robert Wyatt sort de sa tanière avec *Shleep*. Une merveille de chaleur et de malice, à l'image de son créateur : un grand enfant égaré à tout jamais dans la musique, son marécage et son terrain de jeux.
Par Richard Robert
Photo Renaud Monfourny

le Grand Robert

On en connaît, des héros fatigués, dont l'aura persistante ne peut dissimuler l'inspiration en compote. De ces anciens qu'on panthéonise encore ici et là, par pur réflexe du coeur, pour services rendus à la nostalgie. Et puis voilà que revient Robert Wyatt. Et avec lui, décidément, une tout autre musique : la bonne vieille claque amicale, la vie et l'art toujours discrets, sans vieillesse, impeccables. Wyatt, oui, avec son parcours et ses dérives d'escargot : l'affranchi des cadences infernales, le génie hors des gros coups, à la porte d'une époque qui entretiendra sans lui sa religion maladive de l'actualité. Wyatt, avec son bricolage parfaitement décousu, sans sécurité, cette capacité de muer en or singulier ce qui, pour lui, n'aura au fond jamais cessé de ressembler à une impuissance première. Avec cette carrière (?) aisément sacrifiée à des satisfactions plus quotidiennes : regarder passer le temps et les migrateurs, recevoir les amis, jouer de la musique en douce, dormir surtout... Wyatt, lui-même drôle d'oiseau voyageur et sans patrie, reprend donc son envol

public, après des années d'un silence pas toujours serein.

Et *Shleep*, son nouvel album, est logiquement, magiquement, cette suite de chansons déclouées du sol. Un vagabondage onirique et éveillé, entre songes aériens, idées noires et *nonsense* fendard, qui s'élève sans difficulté au-dessus du plancher des musiques ruminantes, parquées dans leurs prés carrés. A l'écoute de ces chansons denses et lumineuses, il nous vient à l'esprit des mots comme texture, canevas, tracé, lavis, nuances, ombres, motifs... Bref, nous voilà beaux. Sauf que pour une fois, la métaphore picturale ne semble pas usurpée. Wyatt, de plus en plus musicien de chevalet - mélodies au pinceau, voix à l'eau —, joue avec la matière, étire ou resserre formes et perspectives, sort à plaisir des cadres.

Dans chaque chanson de *Shleep*, au moins autant de minutie que de déraison. Moins seul, poursuivant sa fertile association avec sa compagne Alfie, l'homme s'est aussi entouré d'une poignée d'amis sûrs : la patte très personnelle d'Eno, le souffle long d'Evan Parker, les guitares exemplaires de Phil Manzanera, de Philip Catherine et celle, revenue en grâce, de Paul Weller. *Shleep*, sans la ramener, invite à une fréquentation paisible de l'inconnu, qui rend cette musique à la fois reconnaissable entre mille et durablement mystérieuse. Une chaleur spéciale — celle, sans doute, qui préside à la rencontre au sommet de quelques solitudes. Wyatt dit souvent que ce qu'il apprécie le plus dans la vie, c'est le sommeil. Sa musique confirme : c'est par les rêves les plus doux et les plus fous qu'elle accède aux libertés les plus intimes.



> Zoom

Depuis dix ans maintenant, il y a chez moi une pièce spécialement consacrée à la musique, où je peux jouer quand je le souhaite. Il y a là un piano, un magnétophone, des carnets de notes, quelques cymbales. Et, depuis peu, un cornet *(il l'imite)*... Alfie, ma femme, me l'a offert quand j'ai terminé l'enregistrement de Shleep. J'ai aussi une trompette de poche, comme celle de Don Cherry, que je caresse comme si c'était un petit lapin en peluche...

La plupart du temps, dans cette pièce, je reste simplement assis là, à regarder par la fenêtre. Mais parfois je mets des disques et je les accompagne. Dernièrement, j'ai joué des cymbales avec Lennie Tristano, de la trompette avec Jimmy Scott, des percussions avec des groupes cubains...

C'est de la joie pure. Parfois, quand les disques sont terminés, je continue de jouer. Et c'est comme ça, entre autres, que j'accumule des idées que j'essaie d'enregistrer ou de noter. Mais enfin... je ne suis pas naturellement un compositeur. Ma vocation, ça serait plutôt de dormir profondément.

Quand et comment décidez-vous alors de vous atteler à un album comme *Shleep* ?

Je trouve des fragments d'idées... Et à un moment, je sens qu'il faut coordonner tout ça, en tirer quelque chose. C'est mon boulot, vous comprenez, il faut bien manger. Histoire de mieux dormir ensuite... A un moment, j'ai été assez surpris de constater que j'avais assez pour faire un album. J'avais essayé auparavant. Mais depuis le début des années 90, rien n'avait jamais abouti. Une période difficile, pleine d'obstacles. En 93, j'ai eu un accident : je suis tombé de ma chaise roulante et me suis brisé les jambes. Deux ans après, j'ai traversé une grave dépression nerveuse. Ce sont des choses qui arrivent à tout le monde. Il y a eu aussi beaucoup d'embrouilles politiques dans la ville où nous habitons. Des choses très dures, qui m'ont beaucoup distrait... Et la panique m'a gagné. Cette impression que je ne pourrais plus jamais fonctionner en tant que musicien, que ça ne pèserait plus rien dans ma vie. Sûrement que je me mentais. Je me sens tellement mieux aujourd'hui, après avoir enregistré *Shleep*. Mille fois plus détendu, heureux qu'il y a deux ans. Ne serait-ce que physiquement : je me sens plus solide et en bonne santé qu'auparavant. C'est aussi, j'en suis persuadé, grâce à la présence stimulante d'Alfie, à son implication grandissante dans mon travail. Ça, ça a complètement régénéré mon âme.

La musique n'avait jamais eu ce genre de pouvoir ?

Peut-être que si. Mais j'étais sans doute un peu plus inhibé. Surtout depuis les années 60, qui se sont achevées de manière si désastreuse... J'ai été tourné en ridicule, maltraité par les musiciens avec lesquels je travaillais jusqu'alors *(Soft Machine)*. Ils avaient dû estimer qu'en fin de compte, je n'étais pas un partenaire musical légitime. Ils étaient plus âgés que moi, j'ai pensé qu'ils avaient raison. J'ai mis du temps avant de retrouver la confiance. De toute façon, même lorsque je suis très satisfait de ce que j'ai fait, il m'a toujours suffi d'écouter un disque de Miles Davis et Gil Evans pour que ça me calme un peu... Des musiciens ont vaincu des sommets. Moi, où que j'aille, et même si ça a souvent été bien, ça n'a jamais été que des collines.

Comment êtes-vous sorti de cette période difficile ?

Phil Manzanera m'a généreusement proposé de m'ouvrir son studio, comme ça, pour expérimenter. Je me suis dit que si j'allais chez lui et que ça ne donnait rien de bon, ça ne serait pas dramatique. C'était l'invite d'un ami, pas une proposition commerciale. Il devenait urgent d'essayer, quitte à ce que ce soit loin d'être parfait. Finalement, avec l'aide d'autres personnes, ça a pu se concrétiser très vite. Le simple fait de travailler avec elles m'a arraché de ma dépression.

Est-ce l'album solo où vous avez le plus collaboré avec d'autres musiciens ?

C'est vrai que je ne l'ai pas fait tant que ça par le passé. Et pourtant, Dieu sait si on m'a plusieurs fois accusé d'être un collaborateur... Mais je ne suis pas Maurice Chevalier ! Plus sérieusement, j'ai toujours été surpris que les gens utilisent ce terme. Ça suppose une idée de compagnonnage facile, dont je n'ai absolument pas souvenir dans toutes les expériences de groupe que j'ai pu connaître. Parfois, j'ai envie d'atteindre une sorte de cristallisation miniature de ma musique et là, il me faut être seul ; et parfois j'ai besoin d'ouvrir la fenêtre, d'amener de la compagnie. *Shleep* appartient à ce deuxième cas de figure. Pour moi, les choses vont toujours ainsi, par paire. C'est pour ça, à ce propos, que les CD m'ont toujours posé beaucoup de problèmes. Qu'on ne puisse pas les retourner, ça m'est insupportable. Ces blocs d'une pièce, s'étirant à l'infini... Sur *Shleep*, j'ai abandonné au bout de 55 minutes. Il y avait encore de la marge. Mais je ne pouvais pas continuer indéfiniment, je ne suis pas Richard Wagner...

Dans votre travail, il y a toujours eu un mélange de spontanéité et de maturation ?

La maturation prend du temps, j'ai toujours été un compositeur très lent. Intérieurement, j'avais une idée très claire de ce que je voulais pour *Shleep*, une sorte de schéma directeur. Les mots, les accords, les rythmes, le son : tous les éléments de base étaient mis au point dans le détail. Je réfléchis aussi beaucoup à l'équilibre global entre les chansons, entre ce qui est improvisé et ce qui ne l'est pas. J'entends parfois des disques où chaque moment est vraiment bon. Mais le voyage complet, lui, est difficile à digérer. J'essaie d'éviter l'indigestion à mes auditeurs. Maintenant, il est souvent très déprimant pour moi de réécouter ma propre musique. Je dois me battre pour ne pas être trop en colère contre moi-même.

Etes-vous un insatisfait chronique ?

Pas par principe. J'entends parfois des artistes déclarer que c'est très sain de n'être jamais satisfait de ce qu'on fait. C'est ridicule. Comme si l'on disait "Quand je mange, j'aime que ça ne me semble pas bon"... Il est certain que je veux tout le temps le truc parfait. Mais rétrospectivement, je me rends compte que je fais des erreurs. A chaque fois que je m'engage dans un nouvel album, j'essaie de m'en souvenir et de les éviter. Et forcément, j'en fais de nouvelles, c'est pathétique ! Bon, il est toujours utile de se tromper. C'est une loi islamique, ça : chaque dessein doit compter une erreur, car seul Dieu a le droit d'être parfait. Bon. . . Je suis assez d'accord avec ça, si ce n'est que personne, en fait, ne foire autant que Dieu.

Y a-t-il des erreurs plus douloureuses que d'autres ?

Dans le passé, je n'ai pas toujours été capable de choisir les partenaires idéaux, je n'ai pas toujours su trouver le morceau qui leur correspondait. Le dialecte, l'accent ne leur convenaient pas. Maintenant que je ne suis plus dans un groupe, c'est plus facile et je fais davantage attention. Les chansons de *Shleep* ont été écrites sur une assez longue période et dans des humeurs très différentes : il y a deux ou trois morceaux composés dans un état extrêmement dépressif, et d'autres écrits quand j'étais ivre, joyeux. J'ai donc fait un choix de musiciens qui respectent cette variété. Dans un sens, je me suis senti plus courageux :

j'ai pris le risque d'abandonner les morceaux aux musiciens, pour voir ce qui se passerait. J'ai eu beaucoup de chance avec Annie Whitehead, Evan Parker, Philip Catherine et Paul Weller. . . Ils ont tout de suite sauté dans les chansons sur lesquelles ils ont joué et du même coup, ils m'ont amené de nouvelles couleurs.

Et les vieux compagnons comme Brian Eno ou Phil Manzanera ?

Outre son jeu de guitare très spécifique, la plus grande contribution de Phil est sans doute d'avoir amené un ingénieur du son très intelligent, dont l'aide a été énorme. En termes de qualité sonore, je n'ai pas les mêmes valeurs que beaucoup de musiciens. Dans le passé, certains ingénieurs ont eu du mal à concevoir le son que je voulais : ils essayaient automatiquement de le corriger. Ils ont toujours cette tendance à vouloir enlever les plis, tout lisser - en particulier dans le rock. Moi, j'aime que la musique soit un peu négligée, débraillée, sale, abîmée. . . Quant à Brian, c'est autre chose. Il a cette énergie étonnante, une façon de péter le feu. En studio, il est un peu comme un adolescent, il est fou-fou. Quand vous pensez à l'autorité qu'il a acquise au fil des années. . . Rien de tout ça ne transparaît dans sa personnalité, il ne joue pas les grosses pointures. Il se comporte toujours avec la même innocence, la même ouverture. Il aime travailler dur, s'y mettre à fond. Un morceau comme *Heaps of sheeps* est au moins autant le sien que le mien.

Selon Eno, la principale matière d'une musique n'est plus le développement harmonique, les accords, les rythmes, mais la texture. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

J'ai bien du mal à définir ce qui est essentiel en toute chose - en musique comme ailleurs. Disons que dans la musique d'avant-garde conceptuelle - post-Stockhausen - comme dans l'univers des remixes, de la dance-music et du dub, la texture est effectivement fondamentale. Mais dans mon cas, j'ai gardé une vision rigoureusement traditionnelle de la musique. Sous l'animal étrange que peut devenir un morceau, j'ai besoin de sentir un squelette, des os, des muscles, des tissus - tout ce qui le rendra organique. Ça déroute ceux qui considèrent qu'en musique, deux écoles s'opposent : l'une qui adopte une démarche radicalement neuve, et une autre qui emprunte les chemins déjà balisés. Parmi mes amis musiciens, il y aura Evan Parker, qui va développer des improvisations totales, sans structures. Et à côté de lui, il y aura Paul Weller, qui travaille quotidiennement dans un langage musical que je qualifierais d' "*anglais à guitares*". Pourquoi faire un choix entre les deux ? Ce qu'il y a de plus excitant, c'est précisément la rencontre entre ces extrêmes, entre l'inconnu et le familier — et toute l'électricité que ça provoque.



> Zoom

Dans votre propre musique, le familier et l'inconnu se côtoient-ils en permanence ?

Franchement, au fond de moi, je pense être très traditionnel. Les musiciens craignent souvent d'être trop conventionnels. Mais je pense que la stérilité existe aussi dans la recherche obsessionnelle de la nouveauté. J'ai souvent l'impression d'entendre la quintessence de la musique lorsque j'écoute du folk, des musiques populaires, voire des musiques "fonctionnelles" - comme les appels à la prière des muezzins, par exemple. Je suppose que la dance-music, à sa façon, est un exemple de musique fonctionnelle. Mais ma sensibilité me mène vers des formes de musiques plus artisanales. Comprenez-moi : je serai toujours très reconnaissant à l'égard des grands aventuriers, des grands explorateurs de la musique, de Cecil Taylor à Pierre Boulez. Mais si j'avais à choisir les musiciens selon moi *essentiels*, ce serait davantage Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, les chanteurs de blues, le flamenco... C'est d'abord à eux que je suis fidèle, loyal avant tout. Ensuite, partant de là, j'ai essayé de rendre ma vie intéressante en accomplissant de petits voyages avec d'autres musiciens.

Avez-vous le sentiment d'être le maillon d'une histoire musicale ?

Je ne suis pas un chanteur de blues ni de flamenco, c'est évident. En revanche, je viens de cette grande scène pop anglaise - quoi que j'aie pu apprendre du jazz ou de n'importe quel autre type de musique. La pop-song est toujours mon principal outil, la pièce basique de ma mécanique. Cela dit, pour que la musique devienne vivante, il faut que je sente ce côté folk-song. Même si c'est souterrain. J'aime à penser qu'il existe un langage populaire passant à travers les âges et les pays, qui existerait au-delà des formes musicales plus sophistiquées qu'a développées chaque culture. Si j'étais capable de visiter l'ancienne Egypte, je suis sûr que je prendrais beaucoup de plaisir à écouter les flûtes et les harpes de ces filles que l'on voit sur certaines images...

Avez-vous toujours été intéressé par les musiques traditionnelles ?

A l'origine, j'étais davantage attiré par ce qu'on pourrait appeler la musique d'avant-garde. Et puis j'ai rencontré Alfie, qui a toujours aimé la chanson, notamment traditionnelle. Quand nous avons habité en Espagne, elle s'est beaucoup intéressée au flamenco, nous avons cherché et fréquenté beaucoup de lieux où ce genre de musique se produisait. Pour ma part, je pense que mon principal stimulus reste la musique noire américaine des années 50 — et tout ce qui en découle. Le jazz est toujours pour moi le plus magique des mondes musicaux. Parce qu'il a été une rampe de lancement pour l'improvisation, mais aussi — on a tendance à l'oublier - parce que les musiciens de jazz ont toujours su écrire de magnifiques chansons. J'ai essayé de prendre dans le jazz toutes ces protéines de bonnes harmonies, de bonnes lignes mélodiques, de bons rythmes : des éléments plus universels que toutes ces choses stylistiques sur lesquelles la plupart des gens préfèrent s'arrêter.

Sur plus de trente ans de pratique musicale, pensez-vous avoir tiré une ou des théories ?

Jamais, en tout cas, au moment même où je travaille. Là, je suis complètement instinctif. Peut-être étais-je plus dans la théorie quand j'étais jeune : j'essayais de comprendre comment les différents types de musique fonctionnaient, pour parfaire mes connaissances et ma propre technique. Mais au fond, c'était comme à l'école : l'objectif, c'était d'atteindre un stade où je saurais faire les choses automatiquement. S'il m'arrive de développer des théories, c'est rétrospectivement, à froid, et c'est à mon sens un travail intellectuel un peu complaisant... Les théories ne sont que des gaz. La pratique instinctive de la musique, voilà la figure de proue de mon travail, c'est elle qui me fait aller de l'avant. J'ai besoin des lumières qu'elle m'apporte, de ses jaillissements, de ses feux d'artifice. Ma conscience, elle, observe ça de loin, sur sa vieille bicyclette : elle essaie de voir où ça part, où ça retombe, mais elle a du mal à suivre.

En tant que musicien, prenez-vous beaucoup de risques ?

Il y a bien des moments où j'éprouve l'équivalent musical de ces virées en voiture que font les gamins qui n'ont pas le permis : ils ne savent pas conduire, mais ils piquent une bagnole, roulent à fond la caisse jusqu'à ce qu'ils se plantent. J'ai passé les vingt premières années de ma vie professionnelle à faire ce genre de *joyriding*. Je vois ça comme un apprentissage. Mais je ne suis pas masochiste. Je me sens contusionné par tous ces accidents... Je sais ce qui se passe lorsqu'on traverse la rue sans regarder ou lorsqu'on tombe très haut d'une fenêtre. C'était intéressant, ça, mais... Inutile de le refaire.

"Parfois, la musique n'est
que burgers et ice-creams,
alors elle meurt, elle n'a pas
eu assez de vitamines."

Cela signifierait-il que vous ayez atteint une sorte de sagesse ?

C'est un mot de luxe, comme "communisme" ou "chrétienté", non ? Cela dit, lorsque vous êtes plus âgé, vous savez enfin quoi faire de vos idées. Quand vous êtes jeune, vous n'avez pas forcément une idée très claire de ce que vous voulez. Alors vous bouillonnez, vous pleurez, criez, tendez le poing, courez, sautez... Sans aucune motivation rationnelle. Aujourd'hui, je sais ce que je veux. Je n'ai pas pour ambition d'approcher une sagesse que personne n'aurait jamais atteinte — ce genre de croisade. Plus modestement, j'essaie de trouver ce qui est bon, pour moi, de faire. Je ne cherche pas à tout prix à rester le même ni à être différent. Vous ne pouvez pas décider d'être original. D'autant que pour ma part, je

me sentirais plutôt conventionnel. Quand il m'arrive d'entendre un de mes morceaux à la radio, ça me gêne à en mourir. Ça ne sonne jamais comme un *vrai* disque. C'est le chaos : on dirait que la batterie et la basse roulent dans toute la pièce, ma voix sonne comme quelqu'un qu'on étrangle ou qui se noie. Je suis démasqué : je ne peux pas faire de vrais disques, comme les vraies gens. Je ne refuse pas de faire joli. Simplement, je ne sais pas comment faire... Quand je suis seul à la maison, que je suis un peu ivre et livré à moi-même, j'écoute des musiques que certains trouveraient insupportablement mielleuses. Mais moi, avec ces jolies petites chansons, je vais au plus profond de mon âme. Astrud Gilberto, Dionne Warwick, les arrangements de Burt Bacharach... Pas les plus tranchantes des musiques, c'est sûr.

Quelle importance accordez-vous aux mots et à leur sens ?

Sur les deux chansons qu'il a mixées, Paul Weller était très inquiet que la signification des mots se perde. C'est lui qui m'a incité à mieux protéger ma voix, à ne pas la laisser se perdre dans l'environnement. Alfie, qui a notamment écrit les textes et arrangé les parties vocales *d'Alien* et *Heaps of sheeps*, trouvait aussi que j'étais un peu paresseux sur l'articulation, que je devais me concentrer davantage sur mon travail de chanteur. J'ai sans doute besoin de ces injonctions : mon chant est meilleur là où on m'a poussé. Mais je ne pense pas tant que ça aux paroles en termes de sens. J'estime qu'elles doivent en quelque sorte être au service de la musique. Mes textes préférés sont ceux qu'on peut déjà chanter rien qu'en les disant. Quand j'écris, je ne sais pas vraiment ce qui se passe, l'important est que ce soit approprié à la musique. Je ne planifie rien, je vais peut-être parler du Nicaragua ou de mon voisin. Ça devrait être la partie la plus consciente, la plus rationnelle de mon travail : c'est au contraire la plus abstraite... Je me suis posé la question une fois : "Ce que tu dis dans tes chansons, le dirais-tu dans ta vie, au quotidien ?"

Quelle est aujourd'hui votre relation avec l'industrie musicale ?

Ça a été l'horreur pendant vingt ans. Un vrai désastre. Heureusement, j'ai reçu l'aide de quelques personnes honorables comme Geoff Travis, de Rough Trade, ou de mon nouveau label, Rykodisc. Mais la corruption profonde, systématique, dont a pu faire preuve dans le passé le milieu du disque a été pour moi plus paralysante que la paraplégie elle-même. C'est la chose la plus... *invalidante* que j'ai connue. Combien d'entre nous n'ont pas fait le dixième de ce qu'ils auraient pu accomplir à cause du manque d'intégrité de l'industrie ? Il y a des exceptions, bien sûr, dans cet univers-là. Mais je trouve justement scandaleux qu'ils soient réduits au rang d'exceptions.

Aujourd'hui, vous sentez-vous isolé, loin de tout ça ?

Vous savez, la plupart du temps, je ne suis tout simplement *pas* un musicien. Nous vivons, Alfie et moi, avec nos proches autour de nous... Nous avons des amis très gentils, là où nous habitons. Et puis il y a les oiseaux au-dehors, le passage des migrateurs. Mes jumelles sont là, toujours à portée de main. Je me sentais beaucoup plus seul il y a trente ans. Un étranger dans un pays étrange - le pays des musiciens -, voilà ce que j'étais. J'ai été très agréablement surpris lorsque j'ai commencé à rencontrer des musiciens comme Fred Frith, John Greaves ou Peter Blegvad, avec lesquels j'avais beaucoup de points communs. Peut-être que si j'avais été plus chanceux, si je les avais rencontrés plus tôt, nous aurions formé ensemble un groupe très harmonieux... Ce qui est sûr, aujourd'hui, c'est qu'il y a beaucoup de musiciens qui participent plus régulièrement que moi au monde dans lequel ils travaillent. Moi, je ne fais que le visiter, lorsque je sors de ma cachette - si tant est que je me cache.

Dans Shleep, la dimension politique est bien moindre que par le passé.

Je me sens plus fragile depuis ma dépression nerveuse. Là où des militants s'enflammeront, moi j'aurai tendance à être plutôt déprimé. Je suis de plus en plus profondément... meurtri par l'esprit, l'attitude des conservateurs. J'aimerais rendre le monde un peu plus paisible, être insouciant, regarder des comédies à la télévision. Mais la politique vous suit partout où vous allez, elle vous rattrape dans votre vie privée. Il n'y a qu'à voir comment les compagnies privées essaient de prendre le contrôle de chaque parcelle de nos existences. Vous voyez ce fauteuil roulant ? La Sécurité sociale me l'a fourni il y a deux mois et il est déjà déglingué. Tout est fait pour nous pousser dans les bras du privé. Alors je pourrais me contenter d'être assis chez moi, à penser à de petites choses de nos vies. Mais il suffira que je regarde la télé et que je tombe sur CNN pour que ça anéantisse tout. Cette vision cauchemardesque des informations, cette image du monde... Ça me rend malade exactement comme il y a vingt ans. Mais comme je me sens un peu plus fragile, je suis aussi un peu plus poltron. J'en ai assez de perdre des amis uniquement parce que j'aurai défendu devant eux la cause palestinienne. Alors parfois, je laisse couler...

Je ne veux plus perdre d'amis. J'en ai de suffisamment bons pour vouloir les épargner.

Vous renvoie-t-on souvent à *Rock Bottom*, en sous-entendant que vous n'avez jamais fait mieux depuis ?

J'ai entendu des gens dire que je n'avais jamais été aussi bon musicien que lorsque j'étais batteur dans Soft Machine. Et que depuis, bon, c'était pas mal pour un paraplégique, sans plus. . . Pour d'autres, c'est dans les années 70, les années Virgin, que j'aurais trouvé la bonne formule. Dans mon esprit, mon parcours est celui d'un train s'arrêtant dans différentes gares. Certains estiment que telle ou telle gare aurait dû être le terminus de ma destination, que j'aurais dû sauter du train et m'installer là à jamais. Mais le train, c'est moi ! Et les trains ne restent pas comme ça dans les gares. Par contre, ils laissent des gens en route et ils en prennent d'autres qu'ils emmènent vers une autre destination. . . Si certains aiment tout particulièrement un seul de mes disques, ça me rendra heureux.

Entre votre musique et votre personnalité, existe-t-il des liens évidents ?

Je ne suis déjà pas sûr de savoir ce qu'est une personnalité, alors je n'essaie pas de projeter la mienne dans mes chansons. Elle me semble tellement différente selon les moments. Je me sens un peu caméléon. Il y a bien chez moi quelque chose de constant. Mais ça se mélange en permanence avec ce qui se passe dans l'environnement, ça se laisse influencer, imprimer, c'est chimique. Je n'ai pas l'impression d'avoir fixé une identité. Je suppose que si je me sentais vraiment bien avec tout ce que je fais ça imposerait une sorte de cohérence.

> "Si je n'avais pas le besoin matériel de travailler, je serais un gentleman qui jouerait ses petites chansons à la maison."

Mais certaines de mes actions passées semblent tellement loin de celui que je suis aujourd'hui. Bon, au final, je ne pense pas vraiment à tout ça. Je ne suis pas un grand introspectif. Je suppose que j'ai tendance à m'écouter un peu, mais pas de cette manière.

Et musicalement, vous ne pensez pas avoir fixé une identité ?

Si j'en ai une, c'est de manière un peu ridicule, imaginaire, voire fantasmée. Par exemple, quand j'essaie de jouer de ma petite trompette sur *Was a friend*, je pense que je suis Don Cherry. Ensuite, quand je regarde dans le miroir, je vois bien que c'est une grosse erreur, qu'il n'est pas là. Mais pendant que je joue, aucun doute. . . Je suis toujours heureux quand je peux ainsi lever l'ancre. Me perdre, dans un sens. Le monde des sons est comme un océan, on peut y nager, au milieu des textures, des sentiments, des chansons. . . Pendant un moment, je vais peut-être pouvoir nager dans les mêmes eaux que Don, là où lui-même allait - même si ce n'est pas aussi bien que lui, même si moi je n'ai pas pied.

Avez-vous déjà songé à ne plus jouer de la musique que chez vous pour le plaisir ?

Si je n'avais pas le besoin matériel de travailler, je serais probablement une espèce d'amateur de musique un peu aristo, un gentleman qui jouerait ses petites chansons à la maison. Certains des enregistrements qui me ravissent le plus ne pourraient pas faire l'objet d'une diffusion. Si vous me demandez quel est le travail qui m'a le plus comblé ces dernières années je vous répondrai sans hésiter : "*C'est une petite cassette où je chante Happy birthday pour ma belle-fille.* "Une chanson écrite rien que pour elle, comme une lettre. C'est parfois quand vous travaillez ainsi, pour une seule personne, un ami, que vous vous découvrez une écriture entièrement libre, relâchée. Peut-être que nos meilleures réalisations naissent ainsi, dans des situations de la plus totale intimité. Il y a plein de choses que l'on peut partager avec d'autres personnes, et qui suffisent largement à faire une vie. Je suppose qu'au fond, c'est ça, la grande idée.

Shleep (Rykodisc/Harmonia Mundi).

Robert Wyatt - Virgin Megaweb - août 1997

ROBERT WYATT

Les rêves, l'inspiration et les engagements d'un très grand bonhomme au rock bizarre, authentique et sophistiqué.

On a tendance à l'oublier : Robert Wyatt a presque autant marqué la musique d'aujourd'hui que Brian Eno, avec lequel il a d'ailleurs souvent joué et qu'on retrouve sur son extraordinaire nouvel album : "Shleep". A la grande époque psychédélique de la fin des années soixante, alors qu'il était le batteur et le chanteur de Soft Machine, Wyatt a créé une pop teintée de jazz et d'expérimentation, marquée par des mouvements artistiques poétiques et rebelles tels le surréalisme et son petit frère le dadaïsme, auquel notre Musée imaginaire est consacré sur le Megaweb. Un peu plus tard, en 1974, il est l'auteur de l'un des chefs-d'oeuvre absolus de l'histoire du rock : "Rock Bottom". Un disque à pleurer d'émotion. Mais peut-on parler de rock ? Et pourquoi pas trip hop avant l'heure ? Ou pop jazz romantique ? "Shleep", le nouvel album de Wyatt, renoue avec les ballades inclassables de "Rock Bottom". Outre Eno, on y retrouve Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera et les jazzmen Philip Catherine et Evan Parker. Depuis son accident il y a maintenant 22 ans, Robert Wyatt se déplace en fauteuil roulant. C'est un sage. Une sorte d'ermite à la barbe d'immortel. Lors de l'entretien - exercice qu'il ne prise guère -, l'homme hésite, cherche ses mots. Il parle de musique, de politique aussi. D'un côté, il avoue être totalement débranché de toutes les modes musicales d'aujourd'hui. De l'autre, lorsqu'on se berce aux mélodies et aux subtils arrangements de "Shleep", on se dit que sa musique ne vieillira jamais...

VIRGIN MEGAWEB : Ta musique oscille sans cesse entre la terre et le ciel, la politique et la poésie, le communisme et le surréalisme. Or en écoutant "Shleep", j'ai plutôt eu un sentiment d'insurrection esthétique que de révolution politique.. .

ROBERT WYATT : Je n'ai pas vraiment changé. Je ne change pas. Mais les circonstances, elles, changent beaucoup. Quand j'écris des chansons, je ne sais pas où je vais, je ne sais ce que je fais. J'utilise mes instincts. Pas ma raison. Je sens si cela marche. C'est impossible de se défiler. Rétrospectivement, on peut catégoriser...

Je ne cherchais pas à catégoriser, plutôt à comprendre, à qualifier...

Oh, tu sais, j'accepte tout à fait ton point de vue... Moi, je suis aussi surpris par ce qui se

passe sur le papier que toi en écoutant l'album. La seule constance entre "Dondestan" et cet album, c'est que la moitié des textes est écrite par Alfie, ma femme. Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mais les textes d'Alfie sont pour moi un merveilleux point de départ. Cela fonctionne. Et pourtant elle a une sensibilité très différente de la mienne. Question politique, elle est bien mieux éduquée que moi, mais ça ne se voit pas du tout dans ses paroles. Ce n'est pas qu'elle regarde le monde ou ses proches différemment. L'écriture, pour moi, est quelque chose d'incompréhensible. J'ai l'impression de n'avoir jamais fait de musique rebelle. Je ne suis pas, eh bien...

Un artiste engagé ?...

L'engagement n'est pas la rébellion. Je suis engagé, mais je ne suis pas un soldat. Je n'ai pas de mission. Je n'ai pas de conquête à faire, pas de bataille à gagner contre mes ennemis. Je n'ai qu'une règle, très simple : être honnête avec mes sentiments sur le monde, sur la vie... C'est tout. Et si, au final, cela ne semble pas la même vision que celle du gouvernement, certains voient ça comme rebelle, mais dans mon esprit, cela ne l'est pas du tout. C'est le gouvernement qui est rebelle : il n'est pas d'accord avec moi. Ce n'est pas ma faute ! (rires) Moi, je suis vraiment un lâche. J'aime la paix, l'unanimité, l'anonymat. Je n'ai pas le désir de marquer ma différence. Juste être en accord avec mes textes, être authentique en somme. L'art, pour moi, est juste un jeu. L'artiste continue à jouer comme quand il était gamin. On a une vie très enviable, parce qu'on joue encore. Nous sommes des enfants joueurs à un âge où la majorité des gens pensent qu'ils doivent arrêter et devenir des adultes. L'artiste ne devient jamais adulte.

Tu as des enfants ?

Oui, je suis même grand-père depuis quelques mois. Mon fils est presque aussi fou que moi. Jouer c'est une préparation à l'âge adulte. Mais, pour moi, c'est aussi une raison de vivre. Tu as parlé de surréalisme. C'est important, pour tout homme, de préserver cette soif de découverte, cette naïveté enfantine, et d'écouter, de réagir avec la fraîcheur d'un enfant. C'est ça, pour moi, le travail d'un artiste, d'un musicien... Ce n'est pas la même chose qu'être enfant. C'en est la continuation.

"Shleep", l'album, est à la fois enfantin et complexe, notamment la musique, qui rappelle même parfois "Rock Bottom"... et qui est très variée, avec du sax, de la percus, des tas de sons...

Pendant des années, j'ai travaillé quasiment tout seul, juste avec Alfie. Je suis devenu trop solitaire. Je n'ai jamais été très heureux dans les groupes. Mais, là, je crois que partager ma musique avec d'autres musiciens me manquait. Le problème, c'est que c'est frustrant de jouer avec des musiciens qui se contentent de bien jouer ta musique, un point c'est tout. Inversement, s'ils jouent leur truc à eux, sans se préoccuper de ta musique, c'est encore pire ! (rires) J'aime les musiciens qui gardent leur personnalité même lorsqu'ils se mettent au service d'un autre. C'est pourquoi je les ai soigneusement choisis pour "Shleep", capables de m'aider, mais avec assez de confiance en eux pour ne pas gommer leur caractère. Histoire d'éviter l'ennui (rires)...

Comment s'est passé l'enregistrement ?

Magnifiquement. Nous étions dans les studios de Phil Manzarena, sans avoir la moindre pression. Ces dernières années, j'étais plutôt mal. Je me sentais coincé. Le seul moment agréable, je l'avais passé lors d'un enregistrement avec John Greaves. Et là, de nouveau, j'ai pris un grand plaisir à enregistrer, à jouer avec tous les musiciens de "Shleep", ceux qui je connaissais comme ceux que je ne connaissais pas...

C'est drôle de retrouver Brian Eno avec toi. Peu de gens le savent, mais tu étais l'un des seuls musiciens en dehors de Brian Eno à être crédité en 1978 sur "Ambient 1", le premier album "officiel" de sa série ambient...

Cela me fait plaisir que tu l'es remarqué. C'est vrai, à l'époque, nous avions des idées très proches. Il a d'ailleurs collaboré à mon album "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", peu avant "Ambient 1". On a travaillé ensemble sur un air d'Offenbach (rires). Sur "Ambient 1, Music for Airport", il m'a invité dans son studio, j'ai joué au piano, et il m'a crédité sur un titre que je co-signe. Il aurait pu ne pas me créditer. Il a été très généreux. C'est un homme très gentil.

Et un visionnaire formidable, un grand bonhomme...

Oui, mais parfois, ces deux hommes, l'homme généreux et le grand homme, ne sont pas

ensemble. Ils ne font pas une seule et même personne.

Tu veux dire qu'il est le plus souvent l'un ou l'autre, mais rarement les deux en même temps ?

C'est un peu ça, il est rarement les deux à la fois... (rires) Mais je l'adore !

Evan Parker, dont j'ai adoré le jeu, est un saxophoniste de jazz ?

Oui. Mais je crois qu'il préfère parler d'impro-jazz que de jazz...

Tu joues plus que jamais avec les mots, à l'image du titre "Shleep", entre "Sleep" et "Sheep", le sommeil et le mouton...

Mes textes sont un cauchemar pour les traducteurs. J'utilise l'anglais de façon très irrespectueuse. Je le change à ma guise. J'invente mes mots...

Il y a beaucoup de rêve et d'utopie dans "Shleep" aussi, mais d'utopie concrète, à vivre dans sa vie quotidienne...

C'est une idée intéressante. Faire de la musique, pour moi, c'est comme une grenouille qui plonge à nouveau dans l'eau, un retour aux origines, à la vie du têtard. L'eau est plus visqueuse que l'air. Faire de la musique, c'est un peu vivre dans une eau imaginaire. On est déjà dans le pays des rêves. Ce que je préfère, c'est l'oubli. On dort. Ailleurs. L'oubli. Mais, vivant, on ne peut pas trouver l'oubli, même si on essaye. Si l'album a un sujet, c'est celui-là. On veut des rêves, mais ils sont toujours troublés, interrompus, et ils peuvent devenir des cauchemars. Mais je ne savais pas tout ça lorsque je faisais le disque, je le découvre maintenant...

C'est pour ça qu'on se voit après et pas avant !...

Avant, je n'aurais rien eu à dire. Mais vraiment rien ! (rires)

Le seul titre qui sonne politique, mais toujours de façon poétique et soft, c'est "Blues in Bob Minor", comment est né ce texte ?

Oh, je l'ai écrit trop vite... Très très vite. J'avais écrit un texte très simple. Je l'ai fait lire à Alfie qui m'a dit qu'il était totalement ridicule. C'était un texte dérivé d'une pub en Angleterre, pour une voiture française, la Renault Clio. Il y avait deux personnages, Nicole et papa, et ça répétait sans cesse Nicole, Papa, Nicole, Papa. Je me suis dit que j'écrirais une chanson comme ça : Oh Alfie, Oh Alfie, Oh Alfie... Il n'y avait que ça. Alfie m'a dit que ce n'était pas possible de chanter ça, qu'il fallait des paroles, que ces deux mots sans cesse répétés c'était ennuyeux. Alors, en colère, je me suis dit que j'écrirais plus de mots que jamais. Plein de mots ! Ecrivant ça, je me suis souvenu de Bob Dylan. Dylan était beaucoup plus intéressant que tous les chanteurs de folk parce qu'il chantait des textes compliqués, et avec un débit très très rapide... Alors, plutôt que d'essayer de chanter "Subterrean Homesick Blues", dont je n'arrivais plus à me souvenir, j'ai écrit "Blues in Bob Minor"... C'est tout. C'est un exercice sonore. Cela ne veut rien dire...

Mais tous ces personnages, le long de la chanson, "Martha au gouvernement", "Roger", "Eartha Kitty"...

Ils existent. Car je pense à des gens, à des situations lorsque j'invente des noms et des textes... Mais il n'y a rien de rationnel là-dedans...

J'utilise le terme "transrationnel" pour ne pas dire "irrationnel"... Hors de la raison...

Va pour transrationnel ! Quand j'écris à l'instinct, donc, je suis encore moi-même ! Je ne suis pas une machine. Mes préoccupations et les noms que j'aime ressortent naturellement...

Et ce Sala Hak-Din Yusuf Ibn Ayyub ?

C'est à peu près le nom de Saladdin. Saladdin était au Moyen-âge, pendant les croisades, le défenseur des Palestiniens contre les chrétiens. Et si l'histoire se répétait, je serais assurément du côté de Saladdin contre les croisés. Je considère les croisades comme le premier mouvement fasciste européen. C'était la première expression violente et collective de l'antisémitisme et plus largement d'un racisme viscéral envers tout ce qui est différent

de soi... Comment ce nom inspiré de Saladdin m'est-il venu en tête ? Je ne sais pas. C'est proche de son nom d'origine...

Et Martha ? tous ces noms et petites anecdotes trouvent leurs sources dans des gens que tu as connus ou vus passer ?

Martha, il y a une Martha dans la bible, il y a une Martha en Californie, une Martha Sebastien, il y en a plein dans ma tête, ce nom, Martha, c'est un peu comme "mère".

En t'écoutant parler, on a vraiment l'impression que tu pratiques une sorte d'écriture automatique...

Ce titre, tout particulièrement, a été créé d'une façon très proche de l'écriture automatique pratiquée par les surréalistes...

Et "Free Will and Testament" ?

Ca, c'était une tentative délibérée de ne pas écrire une chanson. Il y a deux ou trois ans, j'ai eu une dépression nerveuse, un effondrement total. Je me suis demandé : c'est quoi, le problème que j'ai eu ? Et j'ai essayé de l'écrire. Je ne fais jamais d'auto-thérapie. Mais j'ai trouvé qu'en essayant d'exprimer mes problèmes, j'allais en réalité au-delà, je divaguais comme toujours, et que donc je pouvais en faire une chanson.

Tu es encore membre du Parti Communiste anglais ?

Le Parti Communiste anglais s'est fait hara-kiri. C'est lui qui m'a quitté. Pas moi.

Et ça date de quand, cet hara-kiri ?

Il s'est juste dissous dans l'air, comme ça, tranquillement depuis dix ans. Pas partout. En Afrique du Sud, le Parti Communiste reste puissant et très utile. Beaucoup de ses idées sont maintenant acceptées. Mais je n'ai pas vraiment changé. Je n'ai toujours pas trouvé de meilleure analyse de la façon dont le monde contemporain est organisé que l'analyse marxiste. En revanche, comment construire une meilleure organisation ? A observer l'histoire moderne, c'est clair que nous n'en avons aucune idée. La description des limitations imposées par le système moderne, par un monde entièrement dirigé par les banquiers et les financiers... Je ne peux imaginer comment un tel monde peut rendre l'humanité heureuse sur le long terme. Cela me semble impossible. Je n'ai rien de personnel contre les banquiers et les financiers, mais je ne comprends pas comment on peut leur confier la responsabilité d'organiser la santé de la Nation. Ce n'est pas leur job, et personne ne devrait leur confier.

Tu penses quoi de l'alternance politique en Angleterre avec Tony Blair ?

C'était agréable, lors des élections récentes, de voir les gens rejeter une bande de pourris corrompus et racistes. Mais il n'y a que peu de chance d'une alternative majeure en Angleterre. Les dernières élections en France et au Mexique étaient à ce titre plus porteuses d'espoir. Car les leaders, les vainqueurs de ces élections ont eu le courage de dire qu'on ne pouvait faire confiance aux grands trusts internationaux pour organiser leur vie. Un gouvernement ayant le courage de dire ça, c'est déjà pas mal...

Que reste-t-il des combats du passé en Angleterre, du combat des mineurs par exemple pour lequel tu t'es mobilisé ?

Les syndicats anglais ont été décimés par Thatcher et les Conservateurs. Le travail, en Angleterre, est en pièce, il y a encore beaucoup de chômage, et une large part du travail est accompli par des femmes, et en temps partiel, mal payé et sans sécurité. Même s'il y a du travail, la qualité des écoles ou des hôpitaux a baissé. Même les gens qui travaillent sont anxieux aujourd'hui. C'est pourquoi les Conservateurs ont perdu les dernières élections. Tout le monde se sent en insécurité.

As-tu l'impression que les jeunes générations se retrouvent dans ce type d'analyse ?

Il n'y a pas une unique jeune génération. Le jeune palestinien n'est pas dans la même situation qu'un jeune homme du Koweït. Même au sein d'un pays comme les Etats-Unis, la vision d'un jeune black ne peut être la même que celle d'un jeune blanc. De plus, je ne passe pas mon temps à poser des questions à des jeunes gens (rires)...

Mais qu'en est-il des jeunes musiciens que tu rencontres ?

Je ne rencontre jamais de jeunes musiciens... (rires)

Disons des musiciens plus jeunes que toi, comme les gars du groupe Ultramarine il y a quelques années, qui a repris l'un de tes morceaux...

Il y a des tas d'idées, comme les idées écologistes, qui sont de l'ordre de l'évidence chez les jeunes. Une majorité des jeunes, par exemple, semble d'accord pour éviter la cruauté envers les animaux. Pour la première fois dans l'histoire. Au fond, leur désintérêt pour les partis institutionnels me semble parfaitement compréhensible. Maintenant que je viens de fêter mes 50 ans et que je suis grand-père, ce n'est pas mon boulot de dire aux nouvelles générations ce qu'il faut penser. C'est à eux, s'ils le veulent, de réinventer ou de dépasser le passé. Ma génération a eu ses batailles. Ce n'est pas à moi de leur expliquer quelles doivent être leurs batailles. Regarde ce qui s'est passé en Yougoslavie. J'ai rencontré de jeunes Yougoslaves d'une vingtaine d'années. Avant la guerre, ils n'avaient aucune idée de la religion de leurs parents, s'ils étaient serbes, croates ou musulmans; ils s'en foutaient. Leur vie était ailleurs, un point c'est tout. Et soudainement, des anciens, des fantômes du passé leur ont imposé leurs archaïques divisions tribales par la force des armes. Soudainement, on leur impose de réinventer de vieilles catégorisations d'êtres humains les uns par rapport aux autres, et de se tuer pour cela. Voilà le danger : que de vieilles générations forcent les plus jeunes à combattre au nom des guerres d'il y a vingt, trente ou quarante ans. Les jeunes ont assez de leurs propres batailles pour que je n'essaye pas de leur imposer les miennes...

Tu as entendu parler, j'imagine, de cette histoire de deux jeunes anglais qui ont gagné un long procès contre McDonald's ? B

Bien sûr, c'est une histoire fantastique. Un journaliste du Guardian, John Vidal, vient de sortir un livre sur cette affaire. C'est toute l'histoire du procès, écrit avant même son issue. C'est l'aventure la plus extraordinaire d'un couple depuis Bonny & Clyde. Vraiment ! Absolument ! C'est fantastique ! Ils ont complètement écrasé l'aréopage d'avocats et de conseilleurs de McDonald's. C'est une histoire héroïque...

Comment a-t-elle commencé, cette histoire ?

Ce couple appartenait à un petit groupe anarchiste qui avait distribué des tracts décrivant la bouffe de McDonald's comme de la merde, parlant de sa façon de traiter ses employés comme de la merde, sans parler de l'origine de la viande... Une activité tout à fait normale pour de jeunes anarchistes. A part d'autres anarchistes, en réalité pas grand monde n'avait vu ces tracts... Mais soudainement, l'un des managers de McDonald's, en colère, a décidé de stopper la distribution de ces tracts. McDonald's a pensé qu'il suffirait de menacer d'une attaque en justice pour tout régler, comme ils le font tout le temps. C'est une nouvelle méthode de censure. Les gens de McDonald's disent : vous avez sali notre réputation, vous devez nous payer en réparation 200.000 livres sterlings, et les gens, terrifiés de devoir payer une telle somme, effrayés devant la puissance de McDonald's, s'excusent. Mais ces deux gamins ont répondu : non, fuck off. Les gens de McDonald's étaient totalement désorientés. Cela n'arrive jamais. Mais ils étaient obligés de continuer, parce qu'ils l'avaient dit. Leur crédibilité était en jeu. Alors ils ont envoyé au procès leurs avocats, très chers bien sûr, ils ont envoyé les avocats les plus expérimentés contre deux gamins qui n'avaient aucun avocat. A McDonald's, ils se sont dits qu'en deux jours se serait terminé. Les gens de McDonald's ne voulaient surtout pas de pub à propos de leurs méthodes de travail, de la façon dont ils traitent les animaux, notamment au Brésil, etc. Ils ne voulaient surtout pas que les gens se posent la question : Ce que fait McDonald's, est-ce bien ou pas bien ? Les deux gamins, qui avaient étudié leurs dossiers comme personne, ont bien évidemment parlé de tout ça. Ils se sont défendus, ont appelé des témoins à la barre. Le procès a duré, pour le plus grand plaisir des gamins. Pour McDonald's, c'était un cauchemar. Plus ils attaquaient les gamins, plus ils subissaient une mauvaise publicité. C'était merveilleux. Je dois dire que nous avons envoyé de l'argent pour la campagne. Au dos du livre il y a un... oh, non... Pardon. Légalement, les gamins n'ont pas le droit de prendre de l'argent pour le procès. Au dos du livre, il y a une adresse pour les gens qui veulent contacter le "Label Campaign" group, et leur envoyer leurs meilleurs voeux. Je n'ai rien dit. Oublis ce que j'ai dit tout à l'heure. Nous n'avons pas envoyé d'argent ! Juste des voeux ! (rires)

Que penses-tu des "eco-warriors" ?

Les eco-warriors ? Ces kids ? je pense qu'ils sont merveilleux ! Ce sont des anges ! Ils sont magnifiques ? Ils sont le ciel ! Ce n'est pas que leur morale ! Ils sont beaux, avec ces

chapeaux si drôles, et ces splendides anneaux au nez et aux oreilles des filles ! Ils sont totalement sales, ils ne se lavent pas pendant des mois. Ils sont fantastiques, je les adore ! Ils signifient la renaissance d'une moralité intégrale, d'une innocence radicale ! Incorruptibles. C'est possible, quelle que soit la merde dans laquelle vous vivez. C'est une communauté magnifique. Ils m'inspirent. Je les aime à la folie ! Ai-je été clair ? (rires)

Parfaitement clair !

Ce sont des génies ! Vraiment des hommes politiques hors du commun !

Et les travellers, tout le mouvement des raves ?

Ils sont drôles eux aussi, les travellers, car ils défient l'hypocrisie de l'individualisme tel que le brandissent les gouvernements en occident depuis la guerre froide. "Protéger les droits de l'individu", tel était leur slogan contre les rouges. Mais, en réalité, ce qu'a démontré l'establishement conservateur en Angleterre avec l'interdiction des raves et la poursuite des travellers, c'est qu'ils détestent les individus, et qu'ils sont les premiers ennemis du droit des individus à vivre comme bon leur semble. Ils détestent les gens. Ils ne supportent pas l'idée que certains se disent : ok, je choisis de vivre dans la rue, ok je veux entrer dans cette communauté, ok je ne veux pas travailler... Ils deviennent fous. Ils brandissent "l'english way of life" et disent non ! Et la liberté ? Et l'individualisme ? Les hommes politiques s'en sont toujours complètement foutus !

Ce mouvement des raves avec son "Freedom to Party" était incroyablement puissant il y a quelques années...

Yeah ! Avec Alfie, nous voulions créer le Saturday Night Party, et peut-être qu'il existe maintenant... La raison pour laquelle j'avais rejoint le Parti Communiste est que je ne voyais pas comment tous ces groupes de gens pourraient avoir une chance de vaincre la grande armée du pouvoir, surtout quand le conflit devient sérieux. C'est pourquoi j'ai rejoint le groupe d'opposition qui avait lui-même la plus grande armée internationale, le Parti Communiste. (rires) Mais maintenant, c'est fini, seuls les Conservateurs ont une grande armée. Et à la fin, ils ont le contrôle. Mais le système est si hypocrite... Pour le moment, l'essentiel, c'est que les gens gardent vivante la flamme d'une véritable dissidence. Mais je ne crois pas que beaucoup de travellers se voient comme des rebelles, ou des symboles d'une résistance politique. Ils veulent juste vivre comme ils l'entendent. Ce sont les gens qui tentent de les empêcher de vivre comme ils le veulent qui en font des rebelles.

En ce sens, ne sont-ils pas proches des artistes dont tu parlais tout à l'heure ?

Oui, tout à fait, ce sont des artistes de leur vie. Et ces jeunes eco-warriors qui s'attachent les uns les autres, dans les marécages, sur les chemins prévus pour la construction d'autoroutes, ils font du free jazz avec leur vie. Ce sont des artistes...

Ce sont les Ornette Coleman du quotidien...

C'est exactement ça. Des Ornette Coleman dans un monde de musique militaire !

Tu écoutes encore du jazz ?

Oui, évidemment... Ou en tout cas, le jazz comme musique improvisée... Le dernier disque que j'ai acheté, c'était un album du bassiste Charlie Haden. C'est un musicien fantastique. J'ai l'enregistrement de Charlie Haden avec Don Cherry qui est incroyable, et un autre avec Stéphane Grappeli qui est vraiment bizarre. Quelle belle idée que ce mariage entre le jazz de Grappeli et le jazz improvisé de Haden ! Haden a un concept tellement fort de la musique qu'il peut même jouer avec des chanteurs de folk portugais...

Tu vois encore Hugh Hopper, ton alter ego des premiers Soft Machine ?

Non...

Mais alors, ce titre qu'il co-signe, c'est un vieux morceau ?

Il avait l'habitude de m'envoyer des cassettes de titres qu'il trouvait trop simple pour son groupe instrumental - le Soft Machine de l'époque. Il devait se dire : oh Robert a toujours su faire quelque chose de mes airs les plus simples, alors il me les envoyait... Quelquefois, je réécoute l'une ou l'autre de ces cassettes, et je trouve ça intéressant à utiliser. Mais on ne s'est pas vu depuis longtemps, au moins dix ans...

Que penses-tu du travail de Peter Gabriel, de Real World, de son implication dans Amnesty International ?

C'est lui qui a écrit "Biko", non ? Je lui serais éternellement reconnaissant pour avoir écrit cette chanson, que j'ai reprise. Mais je ne suis pas vraiment au courant de son travail. Je suis en revanche un grand supporter d'Amnesty International, leur rôle est d'autant plus important aujourd'hui que la guerre froide n'est plus qu'un souvenir. Il y a encore tant de torture dans le monde...

Tu ne trouves pas dommage qu'il y ait aussi peu de "protest songs" aujourd'hui ?

Rien n'est permanent. Je me suis pas mal impliqué dans la musique il y a une quinzaine d'années. J'adorais Jerry Dammers, toute cette génération. J'adorais Madness aussi, même s'ils n'ont jamais vraiment montré dans leurs chansons quelque engagement politique. Ils partaient d'un même mouvement, avec les Selecters. Je me suis fait récemment un nouvel ami de cette époque : Paul Weller, qui jouait à l'époque avec les Jam. Cela a été formidable d'enregistrer avec lui après tant d'années de proximité, mais à distance, sans se voir ou jouer ensemble...

Tu ne le connaissais pas avant ?

Je l'avais vu à une marche contre l'apartheid. Et j'ai vu Billy Bragg en concert, tout récemment, lors d'un concert de protestation contre l'embargo économique contre Cuba, qui est contraire au principe de la liberté du commerce comme nous le savons tous, et que nous devons supporter. C'était vraiment sympa de rencontrer et de jouer avec Paul Weller. Je me demande ce que devient Jerry Dammers, c'était quelqu'un de fantastique. Il n'était pas à l'aise avec l'industrie du disque. Si je pouvais me mouvoir plus facilement, j'essaierais de le retrouver pour le saluer. Maintenant, je me sens trop vieux pour suivre tout ce qui se passe à Londres en musique...

La jungle, le trip hop...

Ma tête est déjà pleine de tant de choses, je n'ai pas besoin d'en rajouter. Mon plus gros travail consiste à chercher la musique de ma propre tête. Pour moi, c'est cela la nouvelle musique...

Et c'est un travail à plein temps...

Oui, un travail à plein temps. Chaque fois que je fais un disque, c'est une musique nouvelle.

Mais où trouves-tu l'inspiration, ne crois-tu pas qu'on a besoin d'un peu d'utopie ?

L'inspiration, je la trouve en moi et partout dans mon monde... Quant à l'utopie, elle ne peut marcher que dans l'imaginaire. Si Pol Pot s'était contenté de rêver et n'avait pas agi, tout n'aurait peut-être pas aussi mal tourné... L'utopie est bonne pour fertiliser l'imagination. Dans la vie de tous les jours, nous devons avoir des ambitions plus modestes. Il faut fuir l'arrogance d'imposer sa raison.

Mais les "eco-warriors" vivent leur utopie au quotidien...

Il y a des moments où nos vie sont magnifiques, et d'autres où tout tourne mal. C'est dur de généraliser pour un large groupe de gens...

On doit juste préserver les bons moments...

Oui, on doit les retenir, s'en souvenir pour apprécier les bons moments, car sinon vous rentrez dans cette habitude de tout trouver merdeux, et vous devenez alors vous-même merdeux. C'est paresseux, ce n'est pas vrai.

Tu vis à la campagne ?

Je vis dans une petite ville de campagne, juste au Nord de Londres, près de la côte. ma maison n'est pas aussi pittoresque que les fermes françaises. Les Anglais ont détruit le genre de paysages qu'on trouve en France. Et puis nous, on a des fruits chimiques...

Tu aimes le fromage français ?

J'adore le fromage français. Ce n'est qu'en France qu'on peut manger du fromage qui ait vraiment du goût. Pas du fromage fantôme, qui vous donne l'impression d'ingurgiter un bout de papier comme ici en Angleterre. De la même façon, après avoir goûté aux vins du monde entier, c'est le vin français qui reste le meilleur...

Tu aimes cuisiner ?

J'aime manger. Je suis ridicule à la cuisine. C'est Alfie qui fait la cuisine. C'est la seule façon, et pour elle et pour moi, de manger ce que nous aimons...

Manger, dormir, jouer... Une vie simple, non ? (rires)

Lorsqu'ils dorment et lorsqu'ils mangent, là, vous pouvez vraiment éprouver de l'empathie pour les animaux. C'est ça qui unifie les tous les êtres de la planète ! (rires)

Des projets ?

Pas de plans. Je ne sais pas ce qui peut arriver. Cela dépend des idées qui me viendront. C'est une improvisation totale...

Alors, finalement, après une heure de discussion, tu ne trouves pas qu'il y a pas mal de réminiscences de "Rock Bottom" dans "Shleep" ?

Je dois te l'avouer : je n'écoute jamais mes anciens albums. Mais je vais les réécouter bientôt car ils vont tous être réédités par Ryko. Je te répondrai à ce moment-là.

Propos recueillis par Ariel Kyrou, le 29 août 1997, Paris.

Quelques albums essentiels :

- Robert Wyatt, "Shleep" (97), Hannibal / Ryko / Harmonia Mundi;
- Robert Wyatt, "Dondestan" (91), "Old Rottenham" (89), "Nothing Can't Stop Us" (82) Rough Trade;
- Robert Wyatt, "Rock Bottom", Virgin (74);
- Matching Mole (72), Virgin;
- Soft Machine, "Volumes One and Two" (67-68), Big Beat / MCA.

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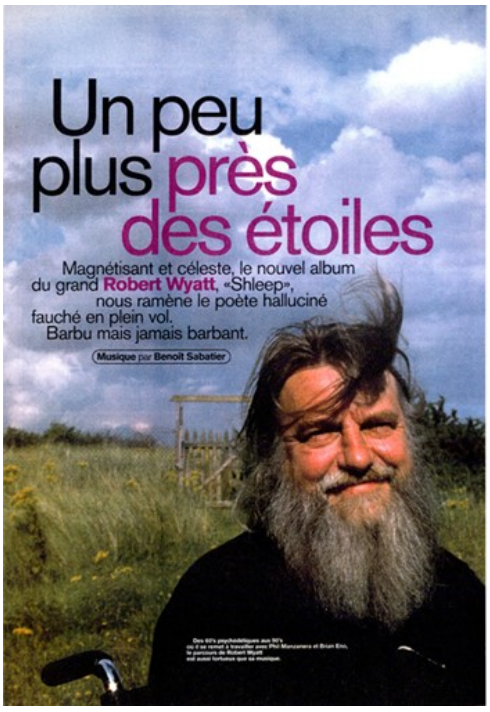
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Un peu plus près des étoiles - Technikart - N° 16 - octobre 1997



Un peu plus près des étoiles

Magnétisant et céleste, le nouvel album du grand Robert Wyatt, "Shleep", nous ramène le poète halluciné fauché en plein vol.
Barbu mais jamais barbant.



La mode n'est pas aux barbus. Daft Punk n'est pas barbu. Les Spice Girls non plus. Robert Wyatt, si. Comme l'était Karl Marx. Comme l'est Mike Kandel, de Tranquility Bass. C'est un signe, tous ces poils : comme pourrait l'expliquer Gérard Miller, ça doit receler un tempérament broussailleux, un hirsute parcours. Tiré par les cheveux ? Pas pour l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine : expert en pataphysique, décoré de l'Ordre de la Grande Gibouille, Wyatt et sa musique s'imposent comme les champions de l'alambique-alambiqué-bique ta mère.

Né à Bristol en 1945, le gars Robert se retrouve mi-sixties à étudier la peinture dans une art school de Canterbury. Ça tombe bien : c'est le lieu et le moment où, côté musical, ça bouillonne sauvagement. Des zigues de Caravan, Gong, Hatfield and the North (avec Dave Stewart) sont les camarades de rue de Soft Machine (« Pas moi qui ai trouvé le nom du groupe, je n'ai jamais lu le livre. Mais on admirait tous beaucoup Burroughs. ») Composé de Wyatt, Kevin Ayers (juste un petit conseil : achetez immédiatement *tous* ses disques solos) et quelques férus de jazz, le groupe débute sous le signe du cut-up psychédélique, du dadaïsme et de la pataphysique. Avant de glisser vers un jazz-rock sérieusement chiant.

Wyatt plie bagage après *Fourth*, non sans avoir auparavant improvisé la grandiose pièce *Moon in June*. « J'étais en apprentissage, juste un batteur, je ne chantais que très occasionnellement. Je me rappelle vaguement nos prestations en 67, au club psychédélique le UFO. On y jouait souvent avec Pink Floyd — j'ai d'ailleurs ensuite bossé sur le *Madcap Laughs* de Syd Barrett. Mais déjà, à l'époque, je n'écoutais pas beaucoup de "rock". Il y avait juste le premier Spirit, Hendrix (avec qui j'ai joué fin 68), Sly & The Family Stone... Mon idéal musical a toujours penché du côté de Gil Evans ou Charlie Haden. J'ai bossé avec Caria Bley, qui est une artiste très proche de Haden. J'admire tellement l'engagement et la musique de Haden que j'ai enregistré deux de ses morceaux : *Song for Che* et *Chairman Mao*. »

Engagement, chansons, marges, jazz, surnaturel : voilà définis les contours d'une destinée qui s'est passée de frontières. En 1971, après un premier album solo enregistré dans « une atmosphère de petit club jazz », Wyatt forme Matching Mole. Rythmique leste et aérienne, mélodies lunaires, voix déchirante : le premier album éponyme du groupe, avec des morceaux comme *O Caroline* et *Signed Curtain*, atteint des cimes que la musique moderne n'avait jamais décelées. Après un second album placé sous l'égide de Mao (*Little Red Record*, à la pochette révolutionnaire), et un nouveau sommet (*God Song*), c'est le drame : en juin 73, suite à une homérique party, Wyatt se défenestre d'un quatrième étage. Il passera le restant de sa vie sur un fauteuil roulant.

De cette tragédie, l'ex-Matching Mole tirera un album solo qui fait toujours date : l'historique *Rock Bottom*. Entouré de Canterburyens fidèles, de Mike Oldfield et du Pink Floyd Nick Mason, Wyatt déroule à la suite de l'olympien *Sea Song* des chansons poignantes, célestes, saturniennes, surnaturelles.



Tous les albums de Wyatt enregistrés depuis sont (presque) aussi essentiels. On peut se repasser en boucle *The Age of Self* (sur *Old Rottenhat*, 1985), *Shipbuilding* (sur *Nothing Can Stop Us*, 1982), ou *Shrinkrap* (sur *Dondestan*, 1991), et ne maudire qu'une chose : le peu d'albums enregistré par le génie barbu — seulement quatre entre *Rock Bottom* et son nouveau, *Shleep*.

Réponses de Wyatt : 1) II n'est pas stakhanoviste par nature. 2) Le business musical lui colle de l'urticaire. 3) II travaille beaucoup pour les autres. La liste de ses collaborations s'avère aussi longue qu'impressionnante, aussi fameuse qu'éclectique : Ben Watt (Everything But The Girl), John Greaves, Ryuichi Sakamoto, jerry Dammers (des Specials), Scritti Politti, Henry Cow, Phil Manzanera (guitariste de Roxy Music), Brian Eno... Ces deux derniers, compagnons de longue date, font d'ailleurs partie du casting de son lumineux nouvel album, Shleep. « L'enregistrement a eu lieu dans le studio de Phil. On gravitait tous dans les mêmes sphères dans les 70's. C'est toujours passionnant de travailler avec Brian. Quand il est là, il y a une atmosphère très spéciale, enthousiaste et fructueuse. On a souvent bossé ensemble : lui pour moi (*Little Red Record*, le *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* de 75...), ou moi pour lui (*Taking Tiger Mountain*...). Notre amitié est basée sur

des idées assez générales, notre culture musicale étant finalement assez différente : lui, son approche est technologique, il travaille pour des pop-singers. Moi, je me sens de plus en plus éloigné de la musique anglaise, mes disques de chevet sont au rayon jazz ou musique cubaine. »

Shleep bénéficie également de la présence de jazzmen fameux (Philip Catherine, Evan Parker), et de la guitare de Paul Weller — Wyatt reprenant le *Whole Point of No Return* de ce dernier (« Un morceau datant de son expérience Style Council, la plus risquée, la meilleure. »)

Autant de collaborations qui interdisent à *Shleep* de virer vers les écueils des dernières productions de Wyatt : le repli sur soi, l'apitoiement filandreux. *Heaps of Sheeps* pourrait même, comme sa reprise de *I'm a Believer* en 1974, propulser leur interprète dans les charts, à moins que ce ne soit le tonique *Blues in Bob Minor*... ou les remixes dance qui vont être tirés du disque par Nigel Butler. Car Wyatt n'est pas indifférent aux expériences liées aux « nouveaux sons » — voire sa collaboration avec Ultramarine, et son admiration pour Bjork («Fantastique ! »).

On n'a jamais pu classifier la musique de Wyatt. Même le rayon martien serait trop réducteur. Sa voix non recensée, sa cosmique approche rythmique, son sens alambiqué de la mélodie, son louvoiement entre chansons élégiaques et jazz diffus en feront toujours un marginal céleste. Atemporel, oui. Perpétuellement visionnaire, également. Mais aussi sacrement vital.

«Shleep» (Hannibal/Harmonia Mundi).

Benoît Sabatier

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Robert Wyatt - L'ange et le bougnat - interview d'une légende par Jean-Louis Murat - Télérama - N° 2488 - du 20 au 26 septembre 1997



L'ANGE ET LE BOUGNAT

Entretien : Ils partagent un même goût de la simplicité, de la solitude. Le patriarche anglais, silencieux depuis six ans, sort un nouvel album. Fan de toujours, le chanteur auvergnat l'a rencontré. Dialogue chaleureux.

"
Il me fait penser à un ange cloué au sol. Un ange avec les deux pieds pris dans le béton et qui n'a que sa voix pour s'élever... "

Prélude à une interview pas comme les autres, plutôt une rencontre aux sonnets. Chambre 459 d'un hôtel parisien, à deux pas de l'Opéra. Jean-Louis Murat - pâtre et poète bougnat, auteur d'un des plus beaux albums français de l'année, Dolores - a rendez-vous avec Robert Wyatt, ermite-patriarche britannique, véritable légende du rock et du jazz, qui publie un nouveau disque après six années de silence.

Le premier est fan, le second affable. Tous deux sont émus. Jean-Louis a consenti à quitter sa chère Auvergne pour rencontrer l'artiste qui hante depuis longtemps ses jours et ses nuits. Robert, pour quelques jours à son antre de Louth, dans le nord-est de l'Angleterre, semble tout éberlué qu'un chanteur français connaisse aussi intimement son œuvre. Murat, consciencieux avisé, a soigneusement préparé l'entrevue, réécouté les disques, griffonné fébrilement des notes. Wyatt colosse barbu et chaleureux, a découvert avec émotion les albums de Jean-Louis. Il avouera y avoir déniché des similitudes avec les siens : la simplicité sans facilité, l'émotion sans emphase et, surtout, la mélancolie. Une éthique commune, pourrait-on ajouter : le même goût de la solitude, de l'artisanat rigoureux.

L'affaire remonte à plusieurs mois déjà. Au cours d'une interview à Télérama, Jean-Louis Murat avait évoqué sa passion pour cet artiste qui, disait-il, trônait dans son panthéon personnel aux côtés de Neil Young et de Leonard Cohen. Difficile paroissien pourtant que ce monsieur Wyatt. Amateur de pataphysique, jadis inscrit au parti communiste britannique, il fuit les feux des médias et du show business depuis 1973, période à laquelle une chute accidentelle l'a laissé paraplégique. Depuis, il enregistre avec parcimonie, comme malgré lui, d'étranges disques à la nudité crue, transcendés par des claviers plaintifs et une étrange et envoûtante voix de tête, serpentant entre jazz atmosphérique, ballades cubaines et improvisations schizophréniques.

Lorsqu'il adapte les chansons des autres, Strange Fruit, de Billie Holiday, Biko, de Peter Gabriel, ou le traditionnel sud-américain Caimanera, c'est pour les remodeler à sa façon, s'en emparer humblement, mais farouchement. Avec la ferveur d'un homme pour qui la musique est désormais la seule planche de salut.
Depuis Rock Bottom. son chef-d'œuvre de 1974, invariablement classé dans les disques

les plus marquants de l'histoire du rock avant-gardiste, Robert Wyatt n'a cessé de susciter respect et passion. Au sein de Soft Machine, l'un des premiers groupes à avoir tenté et réussi une fusion entre rock et jazz, puis avec Matching Mole, sa formation suivante, il était l'un des batteurs les plus inventifs de sa génération. Privé de ses jambes, il est devenu une voix, une des plus intrigantes de la musique contemporaine depuis Billie Holiday et Yma Sumac. Hors norme. Résolument à part.

Face à face, donc, l'auteur de Dolores et celui de Ruth is stranger than Richard. En arrière-plan, discrète et attentionnée, Alfie, poète et peintre, épouse et partenaire de Wyatt, complice de presque tous ses enregistrements. Robert offre du vin rouge, Jean-Louis compulse ses notes. L'entrevue, pardon, la rencontre, peut commencer.


Musique

Robert Wyatt et Jean-Louis Murat

Entretien Ils partagent un même goût de la simplicité, de la solitude. Le patriarche anglais, silencieux depuis six ans, sort un nouvel album. Fan de toujours, le chanteur auvergnat l'a rencontré. Dialogue chaleureux.

L'ange et le bougnat

JEAN-LOUIS MURAT : *Vous savez, je n'ai pas l'habitude de faire des interviews. Mais pour moi, vous êtes quelqu'un de très important. C'est vous qui m'avez donné l'envie de devenir chanteur, d'écrire des chansons...*

ROBERT WYATT : Je suis très touché. J'ai lu des interviews de vous et j'y ai retrouvé des émotions que je partage. Par exemple, quand vous parlez des animaux, vous dites qu'il faut les observer longtemps, essayer de se mettre à leur place pour les connaître et les respecter. Justement, il y a une chanson, Alien, dans mon disque, qui tente d'exprimer cela...

J.-L.M. : *J'aimerais savoir comment vous travaillez. Est-ce que vous passez beaucoup de temps sur un disque ?*

R.W. : Je chemine très lentement. Je n'ai pas beaucoup d'idées, mais j'ai une très longue vie... alors je ne suis pas pressé. Avant d'écrire, j'ai besoin de vivre de nouvelles expériences, de nouvelles sensations. Sinon, ce que je crée ressemble invariablement à quelque chose qui existe déjà. Par exemple, j'ai dû faire involontairement une centaine de versions de Embraceable you, le standard de jazz... Après tout, et vous êtes bien placé pour le savoir, il n'y a que douze notes dans la gamme...

J.-L.M. : *Dans vos disques, vous n'utilisez ni ordinateurs ni samplers. Vous êtes rebelle à la technologie ?*

R.W. : Je travaille sur un piano, chez moi. Je n'ai pas de studio à la maison, pas de salle de musique. Je vis à la campagne depuis dix ans pour une raison très romantique : les loyers sont beaucoup moins chers qu'à Londres ! Je possède juste un petit magnétophone à quatre pistes. C'est vrai, je ne connais rien aux machines électroniques, je n'ai pas d'assistant pour m'aider. Alors je travaille directement avec mes doigts et ma bouche, le bois, le métal et le souffle. Pour moi, le summum de la technologie, ce sont les micros! Aujourd'hui, nous pouvons murmurer pendant qu'un batteur cogne sur ses caisses juste derrière. Ça, c'est la plus grande avancée technologique qu'ait connue la musique !

J.-L.M. : *La plupart du temps, ce sont les maisons de disques qui nous obligent à utiliser des gadgets électroniques, comme si elles avaient peur que nous ne soyons pas à la mode... Mais il y a un son de clavier bien particulier qu'on retrouve souvent dans vos anciens enregistrements. Il fait partie de votre griffe sonore, avec son espèce de vibrato qui semble résonner à l'unisson de votre voix...*

R.W. : C'est un vieux clavier électrique de marque italienne, Riviera, je crois. Mais aujourd'hui il est cassé et je n'ai trouvé personne pour le réparer. C'est vrai, je l'ai utilisé énormément, il me servait de guide-chant.

J.-L.M. : *J'aimerais parler de votre voix, elle m'intrigue. Pour moi, c'est la voix d'un ange. Tout son mystère et son charme infini, c'est que vous chantez comme on le faisait sans doute avant même que le chant existe. Vous avez un chant extrêmement naturel, qui semble remonter à la nuit des temps. Peut-être même qu'il vous échappe... Etes-vous un autre quand vous chantez ?*

R.W. : Dans ces moments-là, j'oublie parfois qui je suis, ce que je suis en train de faire. Je chante à l'instinct. Ma voix a quelque chose d'organique, c'est vrai, mais je n'en suis pas responsable. A mes débuts, j'essayais de reproduire le style des artistes que j'admirais ; sans doute voulais-je désespérément faire partie du monde impressionnant des vrais chanteurs. Ça n'était pas convaincant. Comme si j'avais tenté de me dénicher les habits les plus seyants et que je m'étais aperçu, entre deux essayages de costumes, que je n'étais authentique que nu. Ma technique, c'est de l'anti-technique. Cela dit, j'ai des problèmes de tonalités. J'ai besoin de m'entendre distinctement pour être juste. Je ne pourrais pas chanter comme Frank Sinatra, avec un énorme orchestre derrière moi. C'est pour cette raison aussi que je ne donne pas de concerts.



> Zoom

J.-L.M. : *J'ai l'impression que vous utilisez surtout votre voix comme un instrument de musique. Je joue un peu du saxophone, et je rêverais de pouvoir chanter comme un solo de Coleman Hawkins ou de Stan Getz.*

R.W. : Pour moi, la voix doit suivre la musique, comme les feuilles tombent de l'arbre. Trop de chanteurs utilisent fort bien leur voix, mais en oublient de dire quelque chose. Il y a des tas de belles chansons qui semblent n'être, pour leurs interprètes, qu'un prétexte à ouvrir la bouche...

J.-L.M. : *Vous avez fait partie d'un des plus célèbres groupes de rock dit " progressif ", Soft Machine. Quelle a été votre éducation musicale ?*

R.W. : J'étais batteur, donc très intéressé par le jazz, qui me semblait plus riche, rythmiquement, que le rock. J'adore Charlie Mingus, mais aussi des compositeurs classiques comme Ravel ou Prokofiev. Et de grands chanteurs aussi, comme Roy Orbison ou Brian Wilson - bien que je déteste la rythmique des Beach Boys. En fait, je n'ai écouté le rock ou la pop qu'à travers des juke-boxes, ou dans des festivals où nous jouions. Avec Soft Machine, je suis entré dans une phase de ma vie qui m'échappait. J'étais ivre mort du matin au soir. J'avais l'impression de nager à contre-courant. D'ailleurs, j'ai tout oublié de cette période. C'est comme un grand trou noir ...

J.-L.M. : *Vous n'aviez pas enregistré depuis six ans. Qu'est-ce qui vous a poussé à vous remettre au travail ?*

R.W. : En 1993, j'ai eu un autre grave accident, une sorte d'attaque nerveuse, et j'ai dû être hospitalisé. J'avais perdu la coordination de mes mouvements, l'évaluation des distances, la mémoire des noms. J'ai pensé que j'étais un vieil homme fini, prisonnier d'un corps ridicule et dérisoire. La seule chose que je sais faire, c'est la musique. Alors je me suis forcé à m'y remettre. J'avais quelques mélodies dans la tête, mais des difficultés avec les mots. J'ai choisi des poèmes d'Alfie, ma femme, et essayé de les interpréter en m'accompagnant au piano. Peu à peu sont nées quelques chansons : ainsi Alien, née de l'observation des oiseaux migrateurs devant notre maison. Certains d'entre eux volent parfois pendant trois ans sans jamais se poser. Ce sont des étrangers permanents. Alfie elle-même est une réfugiée d'Europe de l'Est, une "alien" aussi…

J.-L.M. : *Tous les deux, vous formez une vraie équipe. J'ai même l'impression que vous écrivez de la même façon, comme si vous poursuiviez un dialogue permanent. Et que vous avez pour source d'inspiration commune le sommeil, les rêves. Robert évoque les problèmes que rencontre Alfie pour s'endormir; Alfie parle des difficultés qu'éprouve Robert à affronter le réveil. Cette osmose extraordinaire est une des clés du mystère de votre talent.*

R.W. : Mon disque Rock Bottom est sorti exactement le jour où nous nous sommes mariés. Nous vivons ensemble vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre depuis vingt-cinq ans. Quand l'un commence une phrase, l'autre peut l'achever aisément. Parfois même, nous ne savons plus lequel de nous deux a commencé à la formuler. J'ai du mal à imaginer que j'aurais pu entreprendre quoi que ce soit, ou même rester vivant, sans Alfie. Elle est ma raison d'être. Donc d'écrire.

J.-L.M. : *Lorsque j'éprouve des difficultés à écrire une chanson, il me suffit d'y penser comme un cadeau à la personne que j'aime. Et ça marche...*

R.W. : Vous avez raison. Ce disque, par exemple est le fruit d'une totale collaboration entre ma femme et moi : elle a écrit des poèmes, dessiné la pochette, choisi la typographie, l'ordre des morceaux. Pour moi, rien n'est plus important que ce duo, ce groupe que nous formons. Je suis peut-être vieux jeu, mais je ressens chaque jour le besoin de justifier la raison pour laquelle je l'ai épousée. Elle n'a qu'une vie et elle me l'a consacrée. Si je gâchais mon existence, je gâcherais la sienne aussi. Et ça, c'est une idée que même la musique ne pourrait me faire supporter ...

Propos recueillis par Philippe Barbot
Photos - Pascal Dolemieux / Metis

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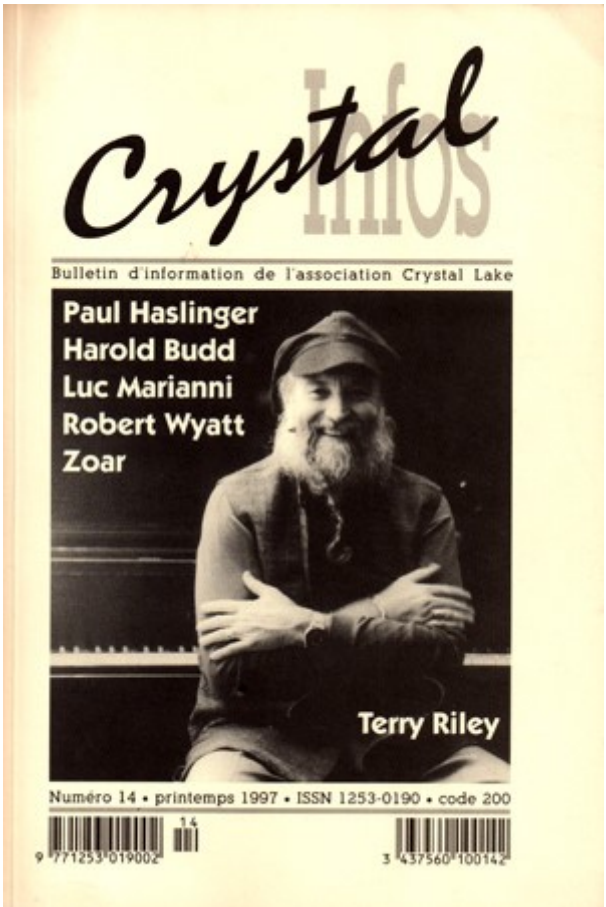
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L'essentiel Robert Wyatt - Crystal Infos - N° 14 - Printemps 1997

Robert Wyatt



L'essentiel Robert Wyatt

Robert Wyatt est une légende vivante ou pour le moins un personnage incontournable dans l'évolution des musiques progressives et nouvelles depuis la fin des années soixante. En marge de sa carrière personnelle, il a ainsi collaboré avec des gens aussi différents que Jimi Hendrix et François Bayle, Eric Burdon et Brian Eno, Syd Barett et Ryuichi Sakamoto et est adulé par les nouveaux groupes anglais... Sans prétendre dresser une biographie et une discographie exhaustives, il est bon de rappeler les étapes essentielles de sa carrière qui coïncident bien souvent avec les grandes dates de la musique populaire contemporaine.

Né en 1945, Robert Wyatt apprend le violon et la trompette à l'école, puis le piano et opte pour la batterie. Sa mère s'intéresse à Monteverdi et son père à Prokofiev, Britten, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Cage ou Satie... À dix ans, il flashe sur *Ascenseur pour l'Échafaud* et surtout pour la musique de Miles Davis.

En 1962, il rentre à l'école des Beaux Arts de Canterbury, se met à la peinture et écoute beaucoup de disques de jazz et de rock& roll. Il rencontre Daevid Allen et Hugh Hopper avec lesquels il bricole des bandes magnétiques. Ils fondent Wilde Flowers où passeront également plusieurs musiciens de Caravan. Kevin Ayers les rejoint un peu plus tard ainsi que Mike Ratledge.

En 1967, le groupe nommé Soft Machine tourne dans les mêmes circuits que Pink Floyd, notamment dans le club légendaire de l'UFO. Ils enregistrent un single *Love Makes Sweet Music* avec Kim Fowley et Jimi Hendrix aux sessions. Andy Summers les rejoint pendant une période...

À l'inverse de Pink Floyd qui opte pour le planant, Soft Machine veut mélanger toutes les influences de l'époque pour faire sa musique. Du contemporain via Schoenberg au surréalisme et au dadaïsme, du jazz à la musique répétitive, de la pop aux expérimentations sur les nouvelles technologies en passant par le psychédélisme anglais. Cette musique qualifiée d'intellectuelle dans l'univers blues rock de l'époque est en fait celle d'où va naître le rock progressif. Mais elle n'entre pas encore dans un format existant car la pop n'offre pas la musicalité du jazz que souhaitent les musiciens et le jazz est trop aride pour les mélodies de Wyatt et Ayers. Elle est aussi plus aventureuse que celle qui sera son héritière.

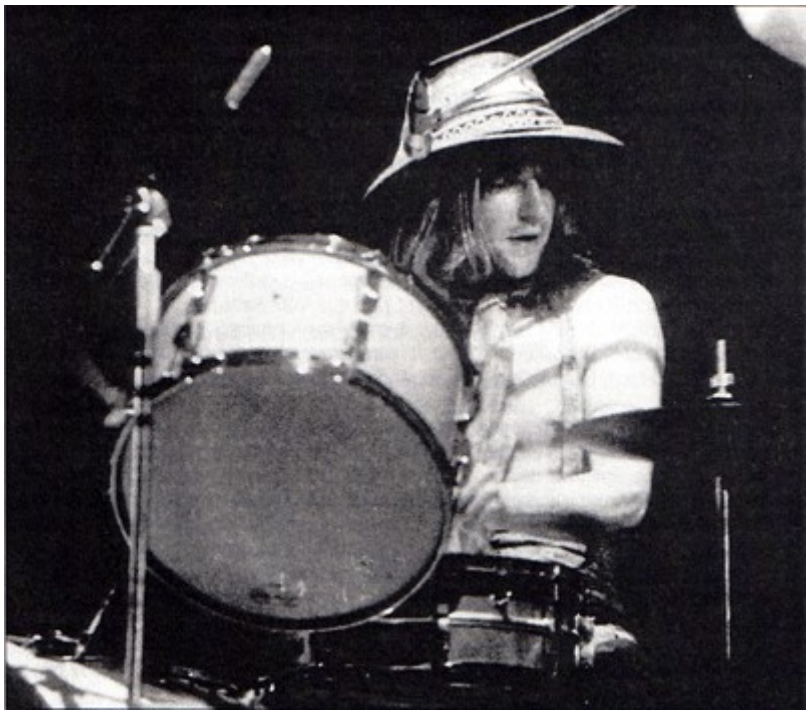
En 1968, Soft Machine est composé de Robert Wyatt (percussions, chant), Mike Ratledge (claviers), Kevin Ayers (guitare et chant). Leur premier slogan publicitaire est "Nourririez-vous votre fille à la machine molle ? ".

Soft Machine

Soft Machine 1 (1968)
Soft Machine 2 (1969)

Dès le premier disque, le groupe joue du rock dans un esprit free jazz, mélangeant les pop songs de Ayers avec les délires de percussions de Wyatt et d'orgue trafiqué de Mike Ratledge, la référence sonore de nombreux groupes qui viendront ensuite dans le courant progressif dit de "l'école de Canterbury". L'aventure du jazz et de la poésie se coule dans les couleurs et les timbres du rock. Robert Wyatt utilise sa voix comme un instrument à vent, une voix lunaire et fragile, profondément blanche qui peut être très énergique ["Save Yourself") ou habiller des slows langoureux ("A Certain Kind").

Le second disque, plus homogène, développe cette nouveauté sur deux longues suites, sans s'embourber à aucun moment, enchaînant sans répit les instrumentaux d'orgue et de piano, l'ensemble étant soutenu avec efficacité par des percussions inventives et une basse ronflante (Hugh Hopper, qui remplace Kevin Ayers). Changements de rythmes, récitations "pataphysiques" ou dada, arrangements non conventionnels et folie contrôlée... Forte influence de Robert Wyatt qui chante l'alphabet pour... un grand voyage bourré d'idées et d'énergie qui est l'œuvre de Wyatt, un musicien bouillonnant, à l'inverse de Ratledge et Hopper qui sont plus cérébraux. Sa folie inventive lui vaudra à l'époque, de la part du collège de pataphysique, d'être admis à l'ordre de la Grande Gidouille.



Third (1970)
The Peel Sessions(1990)

Pour *Third*, la musique se discipline en quatre longues plages qui s'ouvrent sur l'improvisation live la plus contemporaine qu'ait connu l'orgue Hammond. Le public rock découvre Terry Riley grâce aux boucles d'orgue de Ratledge qui débouchent sur un rock jazz chaleureux et non démonstratif. Le saxophone de Elton Dean n'est pas encore free et la basse de Hugh Hopper réchauffe les séquences de piano. Mais le chef d'œuvre incontestable, un sommet de poésie planante, c'est "Moon in June", la plage de Robert Wyatt. La première partie de ce titre a été enregistrée en novembre 1968, avant la sortie du deuxième album, par Robert Wyatt seul qui y joue des claviers, des percussions et qui chante. La seconde a été enregistrée avec le trio au printemps 1969 mais c'est Robert Wyatt qui y manipule seul les bandes passées à l'envers qui sont sur le final.

Épopée vocale sur soli d'orgue et caresses de guitare basse ronflante qui revient d'un autre monde... L'orgue crée un message de dentelle morse, d'ondes courtes pour jouer avec la voix de Wyatt sans l'accompagner mais en la poussant toujours plus loin. Piano "à la Satie", mélodie fragile et lunaire... Les atmosphères éthérées puis un riff rock et un solo jazzy d'orgue traité avec une distorsion. L'ensemble s'éteint, sur des bandes à l'envers, des sons accélérés et des effets de voix.

Vingt-cinq ans plus tard, ce titre est encore plus fort et rend assez inutile une bonne partie de la discothèque accumulée depuis.

On retrouve une version différente de "Moon in June" sur le live *Peel Sessions* (enregistré en 1970). Les paroles y sont improvisées pour la circonstance autour de l'épopée des musiciens de la famille Soft et de Pink Floyd et les musiciens sont là pour apporter leurs variations dans la version originale. Les parties d'orgue et de piano de Ratledge sont ainsi différentes de celles de l'original jouées par Wyatt lui-même.

Les deux premiers Soft et "Moon in June" sont la conception de Wyatt.

Matching Mole

Robert Wyatt quitte Soft Machine après le quatrième album où il ne chante déjà plus. On le repère avec Syd Barett, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Keith Tippett et son super groupe Centipede, Carla Bley, Nick Mason... Il fonde Matching Mole (nom choisi pour sa phonétique française proche de la "machine molle") avec David Sinclair (Caravan) au piano et à l'orgue et Dave Mac Rae au piano électrique, Phil Miller à la guitare et Bill Mc Cormick à la basse.

Matching Mole (1972)
Matching Mole's Little Red Record (1972)

Les deux albums du groupe sont le prolongement de "Moon in June".

De nouveau, sur *Matching Mole*, les atmosphères lunaires où basse et voix se perdent dans l'écho, où les love songs au mellotron ("O Caroline") et les ballades côtoient des instrumentaux aux soli d'orgue ciselés par Sinclair dans des fuites de piano électrique de Dave Mac Rae ("Part of the Dance", "Instant Kitten") et la guitare frippienne de Phil Miller... Wyatt chante merveilleusement avec ses textes bizarres notamment sur "Signed Curtain" dont les paroles commentent la structure du morceau : "C'est le premier couplet, c'est le refrain, voici le changement de clé ou peut-être le pont... ". Il achève lui-même l'album par de longues plages au mellotron contemporain qui préfigurent déjà Jasun Martz.

Little Red Record, produit par Robert Fripp et avec Brian Eno invité au synthétiseur VCS 3 est plus instrumental. Dave Mac Rae tient tous les claviers et il est très inventif au piano électrique, le plus souvent traité, trituré, pour s'identifier à la guitare de Phil Miller qui joue merveilleusement. Expérimental et rock, alliant Terry Riley au jazz rock naissant, cet album est très homogène et mélodieux. Le groupe, manipulateur de sons et d'effets, de rythmes et d'influences ouvertes, est en pleine force créatrice mais Robert Wyatt sera contraint de l'arrêter pour des raisons financières.

Robert Wyatt

The End of An Ear (1970)

Avant de quitter Soft Machine qui devenait trop sérieux alors que Robert voulait continuer à explorer l'absurde à sa manière ("J'ai toujours pensé que l'absurde c'est très très sérieux"), Robert Wyatt qui avait été initié à la musique de John Cage dès son enfance, a voulu développer ses concepts personnels, sa musique dada et son sens de la poésie contemporaine en utilisant de multiples instruments de percussions et en poussant la construction vocale par le re-recording. David Sinclair est à l'orgue et Mark Elridge au piano pour seconder Robert Wyatt qui joue déjà de ces deux instruments. Ces claviers se fondent dans des rythmes hypnotiques empruntés aux indiens d'Amérique ("To Caravan and Brother Jim"), au jazz, joués sur des percussions diverses et des boites en plastique, mêlés à des voix accélérées, des bandes à l'envers, au piano préparé, aux effets électroniques et traitements divers. Folie mesurée et belles mélodies, sans agression sonore mais en perpétuelle inventivité, imagination débordante, compositions sophistiquées et surtout humour. "Las Vegas Tango" de Gil Evans est repris en deux versions différentes et la distribution des sons, des détails, de l'espace sonore mouvant est surprenante.

Probablement le premier disque issu du rock et de la pop music qui flirte d'aussi près avec les collages free des contemporains mais qui peut aussi être qualifié de jazz. Une atmosphère que l'on retrouvera en partie mais dans une approche plus intimiste sur *The Animals Film* (1982), le soundtrack d'un film sur les atrocités subies par les animaux.

En 1973, Robert Wyatt est victime d'un très grave accident qui le laisse paralysé à vie sur un fauteuil roulant. Il passe un an à l'hôpital où il réfléchit aux titres en gestation de l'album qui devait être le troisième Matching Mole et qui devenait maintenant un album solo. Il lit et redécouvre des musiques plus simples que celles qu'il considérait comme intéressantes auparavant.

"Souvent, les gens qui ont quelque chose à dire ne se donnent pas la peine supplémentaire d'inventer un nouveau langage pour les exprimer. Les langages établis leur conviennent. Souvent, les créateurs vraiment Imaginatifs n'éprouvent pas le besoin de restructurer le langage musical".

Il développe son approche des claviers et des percussions les plus abordables dont il tirera la meilleure expressivité, et à sa sortie, encouragé par le fait que de nombreux amis musiciens l'attendaient et avaient organisé un concert à son profit, il enregistre *Rock Bottom*.

Rock Bottom (1974)

Chef-d'œuvre à inclure dans une anthologie de la musique moderne.

Ce disque qui obtiendra le prix de l'Académie Charles Gros est envoûtant du début à la fin. Construit à partir de chansons dans lesquelles la voix n'est qu'un instrument pour Wyatt qui joue également des claviers, du mellotron, l'album est étrangement beau. Le son épuré (Nick Mason de Pink Floyd est le producteur), permet d'appréhender toute la tristesse embrumée qui reflète l'univers de ce batteur paralysé des jambes, pour lequel le rythme était et reste premier. Mais il chante merveilleusement, épousant la basse de Richard Sinclair ou de Hugh Hopper, la guitare de Mike Oldfield ou son propre piano ou les mélopées de l'orgue et du mellotron...
Lyrisme et sensibilité sur "Sea Song" au piano si créatif derrière l'orgue sinueux et qui débouche sur d'étranges chœurs au-dessus desquels Robert vocalise comme un instrument à vent...
Tout comme sur "Last Straw" et son solo vocalisé sur claviers et basse, alors que "Alifib" plonge dans l'intimité des timbres de basse solo sur fond d'orgue parcourus par une voix morne d'aspect mais terriblement sensuelle, amoureuse et expressive qui se dévoile en soupirs trop humains et se faufile ensuite avec "Alife", dans un hymne kaléidoscope parcouru de sons inventifs, de manipulations de bandes, d'invocations surréalistes, de cuivres expansifs et de piano free...

Fred Frith, Laurie Allan, Ivor Cutler participent également au disque ainsi que le trompettiste Mongezi Feza. Des images subtiles, une poésie veloutée, une musique mélodique, sensible, émotive, sensitive et subtile qui se déroule à partir de claviers marécageux aux mélodies bizarres mais jamais dissonantes et à laquelle on adhère dès la première écoute. Un disque qui ne vieillit pas et pour lequel tous les commentaires ne peuvent qu'être limitatifs. *Rock Bottom* est au-delà des descriptions et des références.

"Peut-être avais-je besoin de la discipline que j'ai acquise en devenant paraplégique... Rétrospectivement, c'était le bon moment pour que ça arrive... Il était temps de changer ma méthode, ça a été le cas avec cet accident".



Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (1975)

La mélancolie s'atténue et ce nouveau disque, poussé par un souffle d'énergie nouvelle, est plus free. De nombreux musiciens sont invités (Brian Eno, Laurie Allan, Bill Mc Cormick, Gary Windo, Mongezi Feza, Fred Frith...) et Robert leur laisse plus d'initiatives, du boogie revisité de "Soup Song" à "Team Spirit" qui part dans tous les sens ou "Song for Che" de Charlie Haden. Sur "Solar Flares" et "Muddy Mouth", Robert fait d'étonnantes parties vocales en utilisant sa voix comme un instrument et pour son seul timbre, sans paroles.

Robert remonte sur scène notamment avec Mike Oldfield mais il découvre le trac en tant que chanteur car il n'est plus protégé par sa batterie et renonce assez rapidement.

Pendant les années quatre-vingt, Robert Wyatt ressent un grand besoin de culture. Il se retire et vit notamment en Espagne. Il lit beaucoup et, sensibilisé par les relations Nord-Sud et les formes modernes de néocolonialisme économique, il milite au parti communiste anglais. Il en partira cependant après avoir constaté que militants et dirigeants ne poursuivent pas les mêmes buts.

Cela ne l'empêche pas de sortir de nombreux singles en reprenant des classiques ou des chansons qu'il aime particulièrement et qu'il relit de manière très personnelle.
Les versions Wyatt de chansons connues sont toujours de véritables recréations. Il se débarrasse des arrangements d'origine et se plonge, à partir de sa"manière personnelle de percevoir la chanson qu'il aime dans une approche qui ne lui est dictée que par sa sensibilité. La mélodie est alors dépouillée de tous les artifices, simplifiée et réarrangée selon le "son Wyatt". Sa voix si particulière contribue énormément à la facture colorée de ces reprises comme le son incroyable de l'orgue qu'il parvient à sortir de ses traitements et effets personnels. C'est ainsi que "At Last I'm Free", un tube disco de Chic, devient une ballade sensuelle et romantique et que le "Biko" de Peter Gabriel devient une pièce détestée ou adulée selon la sensibilité des auditeurs. Et beaucoup découvriront Billie Holiday grâce à sa version de "Strange Fruit".

Nothing Can Stop Us (1982)
Old Rotten Hat (1985)
Mid Eighties (compilation, 1993)

Cette série de singles sera regroupée dans un album *Nothing Can Stop Us* où se côtoient des ballades comme "Shipbuilding" écrit par Elvis Costello, "At Last I'm Free" de Chic, des chansons reprises du jazz comme "Memories of You", "Round Midnight", "Strange Fruit" qui sont toutes extrêmement denses et fluides en même temps et des inspirations gospel ("Stalin Wasn't Stallin"), latino-américaines ("Caimanera", version de "Guantanamera"), indiennes ("Grass"). L'ensemble s'éloigne un peu du son Robert Wyatt qui ne se retrouve réellement que sur les ballades.

Ce son est au contraire intact et très homogène sur *Old Rotten Hat* où les nappes de claviers sont très belles sur "Alliance", sur les très lyriques "United States of Amnesia" et "The Age Of Self ou dans le calme de "Vandalusia" ou "Mass Médium". Un très beau disque tout à fait dans le son Wyatt et avec de très belles mélodies.

Mid Eighties est une compilation des œuvres des années quatre-vingt où l'on retrouve les versions de "Biko", "Round Midnight", des extraits de musiques de films et l'intégralité de *Old Rotten Hat*. Une merveille dans la lignée de *Rock Bottom* et préfigurant *Dondestan* où l'orgue, le piano et les synthés analogiques sont au service de la voix pour des mélodies extraordinaires.



Dondestan (1991)

Chef d'œuvre.

Ce disque dédié aux apatrides et entièrement construit autour des poèmes écrits par son épouse Alfreda Benge ("Alifie" de *Rock Bottom*) évolue dans la solitude des claviers cotonneux (sonorités identiques à celles de *Rock Bottom* du fait que Robert a fait réparer le petit orgue Riviera qui était tombé en panne), du piano et de petites percussions inventives. Une musique intime et poétique à l'image de *Rock Bottom* mais sans la tristesse qui était sous-jacente dans ce dernier. Rythmes incantatoires ou boucles à

l'envers, ballades, humour, nuages sonores en compagnie de son ami Hugh Hopper, mélodies fondantes aux arrangements qui déstabilisent par des harmonies inédites ou un jeu de piano sans code, tantôt romantique, tantôt free ou répétitif, toujours au service de l'émotion ou de la sensibilité.

Références à *The End of An Ear*, au jazz, à *Little Red Record* ou *Rock Bottom*, à Satie ou Terry Riley, voix étranges et psalmodies suaves, mixages subtils de simplicité, dadaïsme assagi au service de la beauté et de l'authenticité. Car c'est une des caractéristiques de Wyatt de se réapproprier son passé pour en faire du neuf. Et toujours la voix merveilleuse de Robert, comme à l'époque de "Moon in June" et sa joie de chanter comme dans un rêve, de greffer des vocalises dans l'espace ouaté de la musique, dans des paysages impressionnistes qui se révèlent des mirages à redécouvrir sans cesse.

Bilan de toute sa carrière, sans débauche technologique, sans démonstrations et où chaque note est à sa place sans pourtant respecter les codes préétablis. Un disque de sagesse, de plénitude et de douceur, d'une unité remarquable, comme une longue suite, débarrassé du désespoir des années antérieures.

Robert Wyatt est peintre, percussionniste, chanteur, compositeur, mais il dit ne composer que peu... "À la base, j'écoute les disques des autres et à l'occasion, je concocte les miens... Il y a beaucoup de métiers que j'aurais aimé exercer... Par exemple, j'aurais aimé m'asseoir et écouter des disques toute la journée, mais on ne m'a jamais offert un tel boulot... ". "Pour moi, un disque c'est aussi de la compagnie. Quand tu fais un disque, ou que tu en écoutes un, tu invites des gens dans ta propre chambre". "J'ai toujours été un visiteur de la musique, je n'ai jamais vécu dedans".

Bien avant son accident, il a créé la musique qui ne nécessitait pas le batteur qu'il était ("Moon in June", Matching Mole) et c'est dans les claviers et le chant qu'il s'est vraiment révélé. Une musique éclatée par toutes les influences d'une époque qui est devenue ensuite une extraordinaire musique de repli sur l'enfance, d'intimité et de non conventionnalité. Il utilise sa voix sinueuse et virtuose, torturée et sereine, au timbre à la fois céleste et écorché comme un instrument à vent, un harmonica, une flûte ou un saxophone, brassant les schémas du jazz et les influences des musiques indiennes pour décrire des arabesques au-dessus du vide. Au-dessus du vide d'une musique qui est pourtant extrêmement riche par ses sonorités et ses harmonies innovatrices... Cette voix est sans références et on ne peut échapper à son recueillement et à sa charge émotionnelle hors du commun. Des filiations peuvent être évoquées avec Billie Holiday ou Sarah Vaughan mais aussi des rapprochements avec Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan et avec les phrasés de Jon Hassell mais toutes ces approches sont loin de la réalité et il faut découvrir ou redécouvrir "Solar Flares", "Muddy Mouth" (Ruth is Stranger...), "Born Again Crétin" (*Nothing Can Stop Us*), "Last Straw" *(Rock Bottom*) pour entrer dans cette authenticité rare d'instrumentiste vocaliste et de claviériste des brumes de la pensée humaine.

Claude CHEMIN
février 1997

Pour en savoir plus sur Robert Wyatt, voir le livre Wrong Movements — A Robert Wyatt History de Michael King (SAF Publishing Ltd).

Discographie complémentaire

(mais non exhaustive)

Daevid Allen. *Bananamoon*
Kevin Ayers. *The Joy of a Toy* — *Shooting at the Moon* — *Bananamour*
Centipede. *Septober Energy*
Lol Coxhill. *Ear of the Beholder* — *The Story So Far*
Kevin Coyne. *Sanity Stomp*
Brian Eno. *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* — *Another Green World* — *Before and After Science* (Robert Wyatt utilise le pseudonyme de Shirley Williams) — *Music for Airports* (le célèbre piano qui a défini le concept de l'ambient, c'est lui)
Hatfield and the North. *Hatfield and the North* (le très beau "Calyx")
Jimi Hendrix. *Jimi Hendrix 50th Birthday*
Henry Cow. *Concerts*
Michael Mantler. *The Hapless Child and Other Inscrutable Stories* (avec Terje Rypdal notamment) — *Silence* — *Many Have No Speech*
Phil Manzanera. *Diamond Head*
Nick Mason. *Nick Mason's Fictious Sports*
Ryuichi Sakamoto. *Beauty*
Scritti Politti. *Songs to Remember*
Jan Steele/John Cage. *Voices and Instruments*
Ultramarine. *Every Man and Woman Is a Star*
Ben Watt. *North Marine Drive*
Wilde Flowers. *The Wilde Flowers*



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Robert Wyatt a plus d'un disque dans sa barbe - Mofo - N° 60 - février-mars 1997

ROBERT WYATT A PLUS D'UN DISQUE DANS SA BARBE



Dès 1966 avec Soft Machine, puis en solo depuis près de trente ans, sa voix haute et douce, sa frappe de batterie jazzy et ses multiples collaborations ont fait de Robert Wyatt un musicien unique sur la scène rock. A l'heure où l'album Shleep balaye les inquiétudes liées à six ans de quasi silence, un large rappel factuel s'imposait.



«Love makes sweet music», 45t, Soft Machine, 1967. «The Soft Machine», 33t, Soft Machine, 1969. «Little red record», 33t, Matching Mole, 1972.

1966-1970, ANNEES SOFT

Au milieu des années 60, Robert Wyatt joue d'abord avec les Wild Flowers. Dès 1966, la plupart des membres de ce groupe de Canterbury se retrouve au sein de Soft Machine. Outre Wyatt, on trouve là Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge et Daevid Allen. Ce line-up enregistre quelques démos qui ne voient le jour qu'en 1972. Rapidement, Allen s'en va former Gong et est remplacé, après le premier véritable album, par Hugh Hopper, ancien lui aussi des Wild Flowers.

Entre ***The Soft Machine*** et ***Volume 2*** qui sortent tous deux en 1969, le groupe joue aux Etats-Unis en première partie de Jimi Hendrix. De retour en Grande-Bretagne, Ayers jette le gant à son tour. Avec une poignée d'invités, Soft Machine enregistre alors ***Third*** qui sort en 1970. Wyatt, qui assure depuis le début l'essentiel du chant, y propose notamment *Moon in june*, un titre de 20 minutes partiellement improvisé qui le fait entrer dans la légende. En 1971, Wyatt s'en va lui aussi après l'album *4*, strictement instrumental.

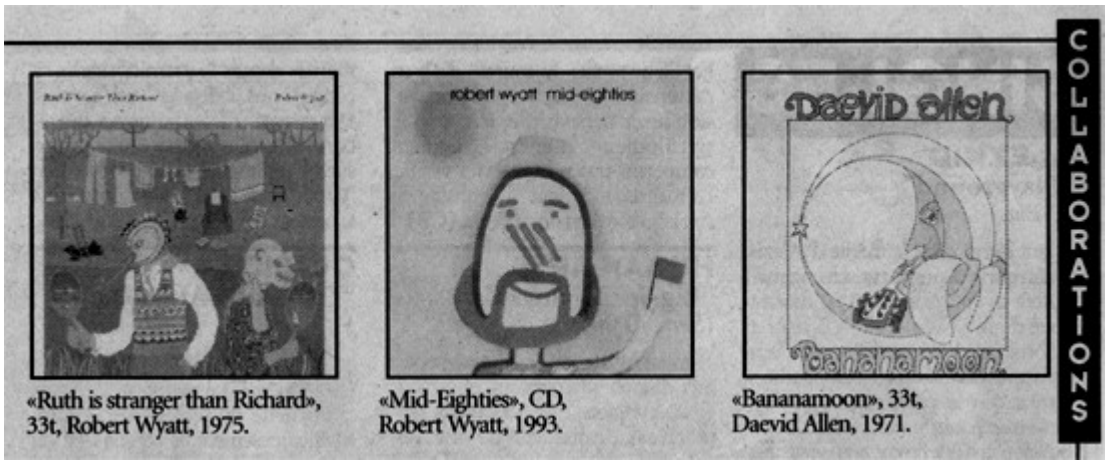
En quelques années, Soft Machine, qui tire son nom d'une nouvelle de William Burroughs a réussi à ébranler au moins deux camps: les jazzmen, longtemps rebutés par son «*apparence frivole et chevelue*» (dixit Rock & Folk dans les années 70) et les amateurs de pop, incapables de retrouver leurs schémas dans ces chansons déclinées avec une sensibilité d'avant-garde plus ou moins revendiquée et dont les titres résument bien le côté dadaïste. Vraies chansons en tout cas.

1971-1975, ANNEES MOLLES

Après 1970, Soft Machine survit encore une dizaine d'années sous la houlette de Mike Ratledge, en s'enfonçant dans un jazz-rock ennuyeux, aujourd'hui oublié. Mais avant même d'avoir quitté le groupe, Robert Wyatt, «out of work pop singer» comme il le précise sur la pochette, enregistre ***The end of an ear***, un premier album solo plutôt jazzy et expérimental. On le voit aussi jouer avec The Whole World, le nouveau groupe de Kevin Ayers, ainsi qu'avec l'ex-Pink Floyd Syd Barrett pour l'album *The madcap laughs*.

Wyatt forme ensuite Matching Mole, anglicisation phonétique du français «Machine Molle»... En 1972, ce groupe sort les albums ***Matching Mole*** et surtout ***Little red record*** que produit Robert Fripp de King Crimson et auquel participe aussi Brian Eno, membre à l'époque de Roxy Music.

Juin 1973: rond comme une pie, Wyatt se défenestre d'un quatrième étage et se retrouve cloué en chaise roulante pour le restant de ses jours. A l'automne, Pink Floyd et Soft Machine donnent un concert londonien à son profit, tandis que Wyatt chante un titre sur le premier album de Hatfield And The North, groupe progressif qui rassemble notamment d'anciens Egg, Gong, Caravan et Matching Mole.



«Ruth is stranger than Richard», 33t, Robert Wyatt, 1975. «Mid-Eighties», CD, Robert Wyatt, 1993. «Bananamoon», 33t, Daevid Allen, 1971.

C'est l'année d'après qu'est enregistré ***Rock bottom***, qui reste considéré à ce jour comme la meilleure carte de visite de Wyatt. Produit par Nick Mason (batteur de Pink Floyd), cet album à la fois planant et bizarrement remuant a l'effet d'une secousse sismique sur le rock progressif britannique dont la presse stigmatise le manque de folie et d'imagination.

En 1974 aussi, Wyatt joue des percussions sur l'album live *June 1, 1974* qui, autour de Kevin Ayers, rassemble John Cale, Nico, Eno et Mike Oldfield pour les plus connus. En solo, il reprend *Yesterday man* et *I'm a believer* des Monkees, sorte d'ancêtres sixties des boys bands. Le succès de ces 45t lui valent de jouer à l'émission *Top Of The Pops*, en chaise roulante.

En 1975, Wyatt enregistre ***Ruth is stranger than Richard***, assez proche des climats de *Rock bottom*. On y trouve une reprise du jazzman Charlie Haden (*Song for Che*) et une composition du trompettiste sud-africain Mongezi Feza, décédé en 1996. La même année, Wyatt tourne aussi avec le collectif underground Henry Cow et apparait sur l'album *Diamond head* de Phil Manzanera, guitariste de Roxy Music.

1976-1982, ANNEES PUNK

Pendant les dix années qui suivent, incapable qu'il se dit de composer suffisamment pour s'assurer une carrière par le disque, Wyatt n'enregistre presque aucun album sous son nom. En revanche, il multiplie les collaborations les plus diverses.

Avec le jazzman Michael Mantler d'abord pour les albums *Silence* et *The hapless child*, puis avec une série de nouveaux venus qui suivent de près la déferlante punk Scritti Politti, Vivien Goldman, les Raincoats (sur l'album *Odyshape*), Epic Soundtracks (des Swell Maps) ou Ben Watt (futur Everything But The Girl).

En 1980, on le voit aussi avec Kevin Coyne pour l'album *Sanity stomp* auquel les punks des Ruts participent également On le trouve aussi sur la compile *Miniatures*, aux côtés de Half Japanese, des Residents, Gavin Bryars, Joseph Racaille, etc. En 1981, Wyatt chante sur l'album solo de Nick Mason, *Fictitious sports*, auquel participent aussi Carla Bley, Gary Windo ou Chris Spedding.



«Taking tiger mountain», 33t, Brian Eno, 1974. «Sanity Stomp», 33t, Kevin Coyne, 1980. «Odyshape», 33t, The Raincoats, 1981. «United Kingdoms», CD, Ultramarine, 1993.

En 1980 et 1981, sur le label Rough Trade, Wyatt sort sous son nom différents singles

consacrés essentiellement à des reprises de standards les plus divers: *Arauco* de la chanteuse sud-américaine Violetta Parra, *Caimanera* (en fait Cuantanamera, sorte d'hymne national cubain officieux), *Strange fruit* popularisé par Billie Holiday, mais aussi *At last I'am free* de Chic ou *Stalin wasn't stallin*, chant patriotique américain de la seconde guerre mondiale. Avec d'autres, ces titres sont compilés sur **Nothing can stop us** qui sort en 1982. La même année, toujours en 45t, sa reprise du *Shipbuilding* d'Elvis Costello, chanson sur la guerre des Malouines, le fait à nouveau entrer dans les charts.

1982-1990, ANNEES MILITANTES (1)

A diverses occasions, sa fibre de doux militant communiste l'amène encore à chanter en espagnol, avec Working Week pour *Venceremos* (1983) ou sur le maxi ***Work in progress*** qui sort en 1984. Wyatt y reprend des chansons du Cubain Pablo Milanes et du Chilien Victor Jara. Il y chante aussi, en anglais cette fois, le *Biko* de Peter Gabriel. A la même époque, il participe aussi à *The last nightingale*, maxi enregistré avec des membres de Henry Cow et vendu au profit des mineurs grévistes en Angleterre. En 1985, avec les Swapo Singers, il enregistre le *The wind of change*, 45t réalisé à l'initiative de Jerry Dammers (des Specials). C'est aussi cette année-là que sort ***Old rottenhat***, album fortement teinté d'anti-américanisme comme en témoigne par exemple *The United States of Amnesia.*

L'année d'avant, Wyatt signe aussi la b.o. de ***The animals film***, documentaire dénonciateur de Victor Schonfeld consacré aux expérimentations animales.

A la fin des années 80, Wyatt collabore avec plusieurs groupes catalans alors qu'il séjourne en Espagne. On le voit jouer avec le big band anglais The Happy End et on le remarque sur *Beauty*, album solo de Ryuichi Sakamoto, II y reprend le *We love you* des Rolling Stones. «*Je cherchais la voix la plus triste qui soit*», explique le leader des électroniciens japonais de Yellow Magic Orchestra.

1991-1997, ANNEES MILITANTES (2)

Wyatt réapparaît en 1991, avec l'album Dondestan marqué par des paroles particulièrement virulentes. «Pentagon über alles...» sur Left on man par exemple, tandis que Lisp service réplique au We didn't start the fire, l'hymne à l'interventionnisme militaire américain de Billy Joël. En 1992, sort aussi le maxi A short break bricolé à la maison et passé inaperçu. En 1994 et 1995, à nouveau courtisé par des intellos de l'électronique, Wyatt enregistre avec le duo britannique Ultramarine pour l'album *United Kingdoms*, puis avec le belge Jo Bogaert pour l'album du projet Millenium, *A civilized word*, sur lequel sa voix apparaît sur trois titres. Au même moment, le premier album des jeunes Gallois doux-dingues des Gorky's Zygotic Mynci affiche une reprise de Matching Mole (*O Caroline*). Sur un de ses maxis, le même groupe reprend peu après un vieux titre de Kevin Ayers (*Why are we sleeping?*). Pour la suite, reportez-vous à la chronique du nouvel album.

M.F.



ROBERT WYATT
"Shleep"
(Hannibal / Munich)



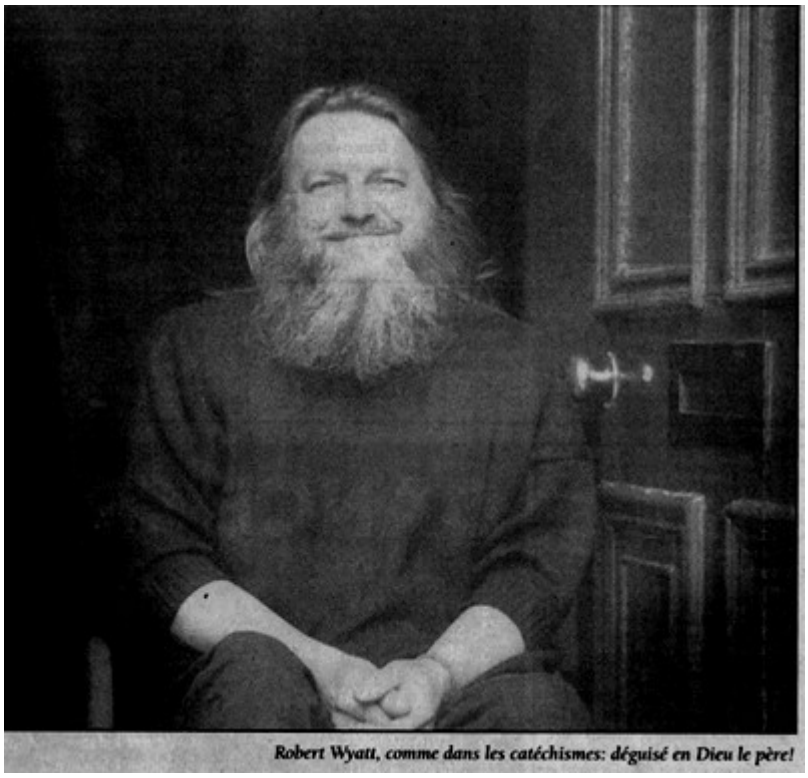
Ça roule à nouveau pour Robert Wyatt, qui chante sur sa chaise roulant depuis bien plus longtemps que Vic Chesnutt. Après cette introduction de très mauvais goût, inclinons notre chapeau bas comme le firent Led Zep (sur leur 3e album) devant un grand artiste dont il serait anecdotique de parler s'il n'était que physiquement diminué. Depuis le début de sa carrière solo, l'ancien chanteur de Soft Machine a suscité l'admiration de ses congénères souvent prêts à venir lui prêter main forte. C'est encore le cas sur "Shleep", puisqu'on retrouve Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera (ex-Roxy Music) et les jazzeux Annie Whitehead et Evan Parker. Mais là n'est pas l'essentiel. Enfin sorti d'une zone de dépression suspendue au-dessus de sa tête cinq années durant, Robert Wyatt de sa voix délicate réactive son univers unique. C'est léger, atmosphérique, jazzy par moments. Pour ceux qui ne connaissent pas (j'en étais), ça rappelle le "Caterpillar" de Cure.. en moins pute. La pochette évoque sans détour l'univers de Marc Chagall. La musique n'en est pas loin non plus: naïve, colorée, joyeuse et pourtant d'une insondable mélancolie perceptible dans les sanglots retenus au fond de la gorge du violon. (BR)

Nothing can stop us (1992, Rough Trade) : dix ans après sa sortie initiale, cette compile rassemble la plupart des titres parus sur le label Rough Trade.

Mid-eighties (1993, Rough Trade): rassemble l'album *Old rottenhat*, le maxi Work in progress, ainsi que quelques raretés.

Going back a bit : a little history of Robert Wyatt (1994, Virgin): l'unique best of jamais consacré à Wyatt, puisqu'on y trouve la plupart des titres les plus souvent mentionnés, y compris *I'm a believer*, introuvable ailleurs en album.

Flotsam jetsam (1994, Rough Trade): rassemble près d'une vingtaine de titres rares voire inédits, enregistrés entre 1968 et 1987. Un bon aperçu des collaborations qu'a eu Wyatt avec les saxophonistes Lol Coxhill ou Gary Windo, Peter Blegvad (et Slapp Happy), les Catalans de Claustrophobia, etc. Jimi Hendrix joue même de la basse sur un titre.



Robert Wyatt, comme dans les catéchismes: déguisé en Dieu le père!

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Diabolis in Musica - Revue et Corrigée - N° 24 - juin 1995

DIABOLIS IN MUSICA



Dans son "Histoire abrégée de la musique occidentale", Arthur Jacobs mentionne un décret papal du XIVe siècle, qui établit quelles formes musicales sont ou ne sont pas admises dans le cadre d'une église.

L'harmonie était jugée suspecte, car susceptible de distraire l'auditeur du contenu verbal, c'est-à-dire les prières. Les valeurs rythmiques brèves, la mesure complète en 4/4 et la minime étaient déconseillées parce qu'elles "*envoûtaient l'oreille, plutôt que l'apaiser*". L'emploi de plus en plus fréquent des tierces au XVe siècle fut considéré comme sacrilège. La septième comme suprême blasphème, quant à la quinte bémolisée, connue au Moyen Age sous le nom de "Diabolus in Musica" elle fut explicitement proscrite au XVe siècle par le concile de Trente. L'improvisation bien évidemment était totalement hors de question: "... *ils corrompent les mélodies avec des improvisations dissonantes*..." En 1552, Ignace de Loyola et sa Société de Jésus allèrent plus loin en proscrivant toute musique "*à laquelle aurait pris part quoi que ce soit d'impie ou de lascif.* "

Deux siècles plus tard, de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique, la conversion des esclaves à la religion des colons allait entraîner des situations parfois très cocasses. Le révérend Gates, le plus populaire des prédicateurs qui enregistrèrent avant la seconde guerre mondiale, utilisait des

thèmes d'actualité et l'argot de l'époque pour séduire son auditoire. Dans "Thèse Hard Times", il employait l'expression "tight like that" (être serré à l'étroit) en parlant de la pénurie nationale de travail, d'argent, de nourriture liée à la crise de 1929. Son public y voyait une allusion au morceau paillard de Tampa Red "It's tight like that" et de relever la connotation sexuelle du terme.

Le grand Blind Willie Johnson, pour l'enregistrement de "Jésus make up my dying bed" en 1927, innove en utilisant une métaphore moderne pour l'époque, la communication par téléphone avec le ciel:

"D'puis qu'Jésus et moi'n est mariés,
Pas une minute, on s'est quitté,
l'ai à la main le récepteur,
Et ma religion dans le cœur.
... J''peux l'appeler quand j'veux ... "

Il fut suivi par beaucoup d'autres, comme Blind Roosevelt Graves and Brother: "The Royal Telephone".

"A la gloire téléphoner,
O c'est une joie divine!
je sens en moi le courant
Vibrer le long de la ligne... "

ou Blind Joe Taggart:

"Appelle Jésus au ciel,
Sûr, il te répondra;
Au téléphone viendra... "

Blind Willie Johnson illustra le jugement de Dieu sur la vanité des mortels, dans "God moves on the water", récit du naufrage du Titanic; il avait été dit que Dieu lui-même ne serait pas capable de couler le paquebot.

La prestation la plus connue de Blind Willie Johnson est "Dark was the night, cold was the ground", reprise et popularisée par Ryland Cooder pour la musique du film "Paris-Texas". *"Une monodie de gémissements, quasiment sans parole, accompagnée par un jeu de slide nerveux et mélodieux. D'une austère beauté, ce chant utilise les silences entre les notes pour créer une tension tout à la fois angoissante et mystique... La veine révérentielle de ce chant semble récréer cette partie du service Baptiste: les sœurs du coin des Amen, quand les hommes priaient pour leur donner un peu de cœur à l'ouvrage, elles se mettaient à gémir et eux ça les faisait prier. "*

De son paradis, Blind Willie Johnson, mort en 1947 des suites d'une pneumonie -après que l'hôpital ait refusé de le prendre en charge- fut certainement ravi de voir son enregistrement de 1927 faire partie des spécimens de la culture terrestre transportés par la navette Voyager vers... l'Au-delà, à l'intention des récepteurs auditifs extra-terrestres.

Pour échapper à la servitude agricole sous contrat, l'Artiste Noir n'avait pas d'autre choix que le rôle de prédicateur ou de musicien. D'ailleurs, l'un ou l'autre des domaines demandait les mêmes qualités personnelles: souffle, talent rhétorique... Rien d'étonnant donc à ce que les Artistes Noirs d'avant-guerre connaissaient aussi bien la musique du Seigneur que celle du Diable et soient alternativement passés du prêche au blues.

Des 54 titres laissés par Charlie Patton, 10 sont des chants religieux. Patton était connu à la fois comme chanteur de blues (Founder of the Delta Blues) et comme prédicateur.

De même les textes de Son House (The man who taught Robert Johnson) révèlent une fascinante ambivalence à l'égard de sa foi baptiste. Parfois, il se proclame athée, à d'autres moments, il implore Dieu, pour ensuite ridiculiser la piété et confesser ses faiblesses.

"J'vais m'trouver une r'ligion,
J'vais rejoindre les baptistes,
J'vais m'faire prêcheur baptiste,
J'serai pas forcé d'travailler..."

Robert Wilkins devenu révérend Wilkins, redécouvert en 1964, reprend ses textes profanes en les revêtant de dehors liturgiques, *"Oh si j'étais chez les Baptistes je pourrais chanter ces*

chansons là sans qu'on me rejette, mais dans l'église où je suis, on ne voudrait pas de moi." "That's no way to get along" devint "The prodigal son" repris par les Rolling Stones sur Beggars Banquet, faisant ainsi se côtoyer la musique des anges avec "The sympathy for the devil". Ils avaient déjà puisé dans le répertoire religieux avec "The last time" des Staple Singers et "Everybody needs somebody to love". Ils firent mieux encore lorsqu'ils copièrent la version de "You got to move" de Fred Me Dowell. C'était bien la première fois qu'un traditionnel religieux était publié illustré par une photo d'une braguette en gros plan.

Révérend Gary Davis était baptiste, ce qui lui permettait d'interpréter indifféremment "Twelve gates to the city" et "Cocaïne blues". Tous les baptistes n'étaient pas aussi tolérants: Leadbelly fut chassé de l'église. Blind Lemon Jefferson, plus malin, enregistra "All I want is that pure religion" sous le pseudonyme de Deacon (diacre) L.J. Bates et la légende veut qu'il refusa pieusement de jouer du blues le dimanche.





Amusant également de savoir que "Stalin wasn't stalling" chanté par Robert Wyatt - adhérent du Parti communiste anglais- est un arrangement, en hommage aux Soviétiques, du chants religieux "The preacher and the bear", par le Golden Gate Quartet. Lorsqu'en 1981, Pascal Bussy demande à Wyatt "*Irais-tu jusqu'à convaincre tes amis pour qu'ils soient aussi au Parti communiste?*" Ce dernier répond: *"j'espère que non! A ce stade, je serais une sorte de religieux fanatique... Mais c'est curieux, car justement ma propre adhésion au communisme a été un peu comme une conversion religieuse.*"

Dominique GRIMAUD

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Remember ? Robert Wyatt - Rockstyle N° 7 - novembre/décembre 1994

REMEMBER ? ROBERT WYATT

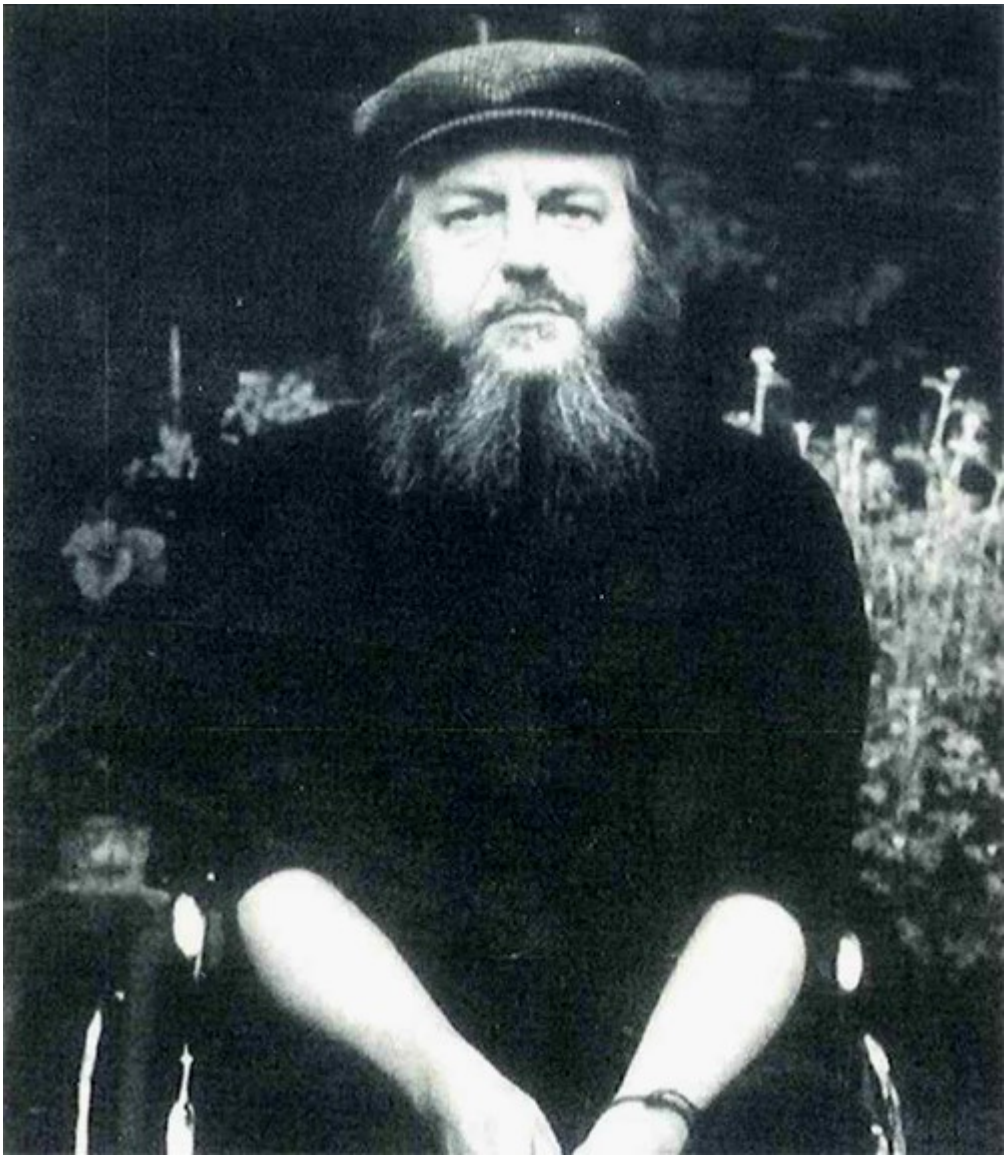


C'est un survol de la carrière d'un extra-terrestre du rock que nous vous proposons cette fois-ci dans «Remember ?». Ancien chanteur-batteur du mythique SOFT MACHINE, qui perdit avec son départ la plus grosse partie de son humour et de son originalité, Robert WYATT est un artiste définitivement décalé, livrant paresseusement tous les cinq-six ans un nouvel opus majeur et intemporel, à cent lieux des modes et des mauvais courants...

(par Frédéric Delage)

Robert WYATT, c'est d'abord une voix. Une voix qui s'infiltre dans les neurones comme un filet de lumière, pâle et aérien. Entre les trois premiers albums de SOFT MACHINE et les dernières productions solo du bonhomme, peu de points communs musicaux si ce n'est ce timbre vocal unique et volumineux. Militant d'un idéal communiste qui n'a, selon ses propres dires, jamais été appliqué («Je chante presque une espèce de nostalgie pour des rêves qui ne se sont jamais réalisés : ce n'est pas tout à fait du militantisme»), cloué à un fauteuil roulant depuis une nuit d'ivresse de 1973,

Robert WYATT n'est même pas convaincu d'être vraiment un musicien. Juste un "visiteur de la musique". D'ailleurs, s'il ne tenait qu'à lui, il suffirait à son bonheur de lire des livres, d'écouter des disques de jazz ou de musique sud-américaine en les accompagnant lui-même de sa batterie. Heureusement, cela fait quand même près de trente ans qu'il illumine de décibels tout personnels le ciel musical de ce siècle. Discrètement. Mais magistralement. Car WYATT est un artiste aussi essentiel, aussi à part qu'un Syd BARRETT, un Jacques BREL ou un Peter HAMMILL. Peut-être parce que comme eux, sa musique, presque extérieures aux influences et aux mimétismes, vient d'abord de la sensibilité et de l'esprit d'un homme.



THE SOFT MACHINE
"Volume One" *(1968-B/g Beat/MCA)* 4/5
"Volume Two" *(1969-Big Beat/MCA)* 4/5
"Third" *(1970-Columbln)* 3/5

C'est donc en 1966 que Robert WYATT (voix, batterie), Kevin AYERS {voix, basse), Mike RATLEDGE (claviers) et Daevid ALLEN (guitare, futur GONG) forment un groupe nommé SOFT MACHINE, en hommage au livre de William BURROUGHS. Issus des WILD FLOWERS, comme CARAVAN (l'autre groupe majeur de l'école dite de Canterbury), les machines molles vont vite devenir un des groupes à la mode de cette fin de décennie psychédélique, au même titre que le PINK FLOYD de Syd BARRETT. Pourtant, si une partie du public de SOFT MACHINE se la joue snob, le groupe, lui, ne se prend pas au sérieux. Les titres, absurdes, de certains morceaux en disent d'ailleurs plus long qu'un sketch des MONTY PYTHON : "Why am I so short?" (1 minute 39'), "We did it again" (morceau répétitif), "Have you ever bean green ?" (avec un "a" à "bean", siouplaît claviste !), "Plus belle qu'une poubelle" (en français in ze text)... La Machine Molle a même l'honneur de composer avec "Pataphysical introduction" l'hymne officiel d'une des institutions de l'absurde héritée de l'esprit dadaïste : le collège de pataphysique. Lequel décerne au groupe «L'Ordre de la Grande Gidouille »...

Musicalement, les deux premiers albums de SOFT MACHINE oscillent entre délires rock-jazz et pop songs psyché dont la démesure ne sera pas sans influence sur l'émergence des dinosaures progressifs. Qui la rendront quant à eux plus ambitieuse (ou plus prétentieuse, les avis divergent...). Toujours est-il que les deux premiers albums de SOFT MACHINE, déjà dominés par la voix dorée et la batterie haletante de WYATT, sont toujours indispensables.

Le troisième album amorce déjà l'orientation du groupe, sous la direction de RATLEDGE, vers un jazz-rock certes intéressant mais plus froid et moins flamboyant. Wyatt préfère imiter son copain AYERS : il quitte le groupe. Mais avant, il laisse sur 'Third" son premier chef-d'œuvre solo: "Moon in June", morceau culte et dernier titre chanté de SOFT MACHINE, merveille bizarroïde de 19 minutes à la mélodie sinueuse et à l'atmosphère venue d'ailleurs. Ailleurs, c'est justement là que WYATT se dirigeait...

Robert WYATT
"The End Of An Ear" (1971-Columbia) 1/5



MATCHING MOLE
"Matching Mole"(1972-Columbia) 3/5
"Matching Mole's Little Red Record" (1973-Columbla) 3/5

Affublé d'une pochette qui semble sortie tout droit d'une animation des MONTY PITHON's Flying Circus (tiens, encore eux...), le premier album solo de Robert WYATT mérite malheureusement son titre : la fin d'une oreille. A l'époque, cet effroyable timide (enclin à boire avant un concert pour y enfouir son trac) préférait s'aventurer (se cacher ?) dans une sorte de jazz-rock expérimental et parfois complètement anarchique. Une curieuse mixture souvent hermétique qui devait s'avérer bien plus convaincante sur les deux uniques albums du groupe que WYATT formait en 72 : MATCHING MOLE, cette "taupe assortie" adressant bien sûr un joli clin d'œil de myope à la Machine molle. Pourtant, s'il ne fallait retenir que deux chansons de MATCHING MOLE, le choix devrait alors se porter sur des morceaux du premier album, mélodiques et dépouillés, donc atypiques du groupe : "O Caroline", une des plus belles chansons d'amour jamais composée, et le merveilleux "Signed curtain", paroles absurde-romantiques et mélodie confinant au sublime.

Robert WYATT
"Rock Bottom" *(1974-Virgin)* 5/5

C'est entendu, les œuvres dépassent toujours leurs créateurs. Ainsi, Robert WYATT n'est pas un génie. Et pourtant, "Rock Bottom" est une œuvre de génie. Beaucoup ont cru que l'inspiration de cet album était venue du drame vécu par WYATT quelques mois plus tôt : lors d'une soirée trop arrosée, une chute lui faisait perdre définitivement l'usage de ses jambes. En fait, Robert lui-même devait avouer beaucoup plus tard qu'il avait déjà en tête, avant l'accident, le concept de "Rock Bottom". Produit par Nick MASON, comptant la participation de gens aussi doués que Fred FRITH, Richard SINCLAIR (CARAVAN), Hugh HOOPER ou le jeune prodige Mike OLDFIELD, cet album est un miracle, salué unanimement (pour une fois) par critiques de tous poils et public initié comme l'un des plus grands disques de l'histoire de la rock music. Malgré son titre (littéralement "Au plus bas", "touchant le fond"), "Rock Bottom" va très très haut et n'est pas même un disque de rock. Ni de jazz. Ni de progressif. Au carrefour de ces trois styles et, en même temps, loin au-dessus, voilà où doit, quelque part, se situer "Rock Bottom". Car très rarement, peut-être jamais, un album n'aura touché de si près la beauté pure, la mélancolie la plus noire... Au point que si la grille de notations de Rockstyle devait compter treize milliards de petits cercles, alors, ils seraient tous noirs pour "Rock Bottom" ! Autant pour les trompettes de la mort de "Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road", profondes et majestueuses, que pour le souffle lent, hypnotique et macabre d'"Alifib". Ou bien encore pour la chanson de la mer, le grandiose morceau d'ouverture "Sea song", conclu par un "We're not alone" contredit en fait par tout l'album. Avec "Rock Bottom", ce n'est pas le fond mais bien la cime ultime que Robert WYATT touchait du doigt et de la voix.



Robert WYATT
"Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" *(1975-Virgin*) 4/5
"Nothing Can Stop Us" *(1932-Rough Trade/Virgin)* 3/5

Passé l'état de grâce de "Rock Bottom", WYATT retrouve vite son humour et quelques amis (Bill MacCORMICK, Brian ENO, Fred FRITH...) pour un album plus "terrien" que le précédent chef d'œuvre. "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" n'est pourtant pas loin d'en être un aussi, étrange mélange de mélancolie et d'allégresse musicale, entre jazzy et progressive, respirant aussi le plaisir ressenti par tous les musiciens à jouer ensemble. Après cette nouvelle réussite, WYATT va déserter presque complètement !a scène musicale el adhère au C.P.G.B., le parti communiste briton qui commence alors... à s'effondrer.

Il faudra attendre 1982 pour le voir réapparaître avec un nouvel album, poussé par Geoff DAVIS, le patron du label indépendant (à l'époque) Rough Trade, "Nothing Can Stop Us" est un disque essentiellement constitué de reprises, dont celles très réussies de "Shipbuilding" d'Elvis COSTELLO et "At last I am Free" de CHIC. Musicalement plus conventionnel («Pour la première fois, des gens me disaient de changer un début, d'enlever un solo à la fin...»), le disque comporte aussi des chansons militantes dont "Caimanera", une chanson cubaine et "Stallin wasn't stallin", créé pendant la seconde guerre mondiale par le GOLDEN GATE QUARTET.

Robert WYATT
"Old Rottenhat" (1985) / "Mid Eighties" *(rééd-compilation 1993-Rough Trade / Virgin)* 4/5
"Dondestan" *(1991-Rough Trade/Virgin)* 4/5

Trois ans plus tard, revoilà Robert avec, enfin, un nouvel album entièrement personnel : "Old Rottenhat", minimaliste et essentiel, où il rebaptise fort à propos les U.S. A "United States of Amnesia" et délivre avec "P.L.A" un joyau intemporel dédié à Alfie, alias Alfreda BENGE, sa femme polonaise-Slovène, dessinatrice des pochettes magnifiques et naïves des albums solo de son compagnon. En 1993, Old Rottenhat" sera réédité en CD sous le titre "Mid-eighties", couplé à plusieurs singles inédits des années 80, dont une reprise Wyattienne du "Biko" de Peter GABRIEL et le magnifique "Amber and the Amberines", co-écrit avec l'ex-complice de SOFT MACHINE Hugh HOPPER, et dont les paroles dévoilent sans ambiguïté l'esprit avant tout humaniste de WYATT, démarqué de toute suspicion de dogmatisme : «Ceci est pour les enfants de l'histoire / qui changent de l'intérieur / Pas seulement parce que Che GUEVARA a montré la voie / Pas seulement pour faire honte à la CIA / Tout le monde a besoin de se sentir chez soi / Personne ne gagne à combattre seul». Mais ce citoyen du monde est aussi un gros fainéant : se mettre à composer n'est pas pour lui un geste naturel («Je préfère écouter des disques que d'en faire : c'est une plaisanterie de penser que le monde a besoin que j'écrive une nouvelle chanson»). Cette fois, c'est Alfie qui le pousse à s'y remettre : toute la première moitié de "Dondestan" est ainsi basée sur des poèmes de sa femme. Suite musicale logique d'"Old Rottenhat" (batterie et clavier minimalistes, voix pure, pas d'autres musiciens, pas de producteur), ce nouvel album somptueux se conclue majestueusement par le titre "Dondestan" qui évoque pudiquement la Palestine («Patestine's a country/Or at least used to be») sur une mélodie de gaieté enfantine... d'où s'échappe finalement une nappe de claviers très inquiétants.

Robert WYATT
"The Peel Sessions"*(1901-Strange Fruit)* 4/5
"A Short Break" *(1992-Voiceprint)* 2/5
"The Animals Film" *(1994-Rough Trade)* 2/5
"Flotsam Jetsam" (*1994-Rough Trade)* 3/5

Il faudra sûrement attendre encore un ou deux ans le prochain album de notre homme (secoue-le, Alfie !...). Mais, depuis 91, les compils inédites et autres rééditions font prendre aux fans leur mal en patience. Outre "Mid-Eighties", on en dénombre pour l'heure quatre. D'abord, les "Peel Sessions", aussi indispensables que celles de Syd BARETT, pour la reprise de "I'm a believer" de Neil DIAMOND et surtout pour les trois minutes célestes de la version d' "Alifib". Ensuite, "A Short Break", vingt minutes étranges de Robert WYATT improvisant chez lui sur un quatre pistes en 1992, le tout oscillant entre l'excellent et le passable. Puis, 'The Animals Film", musique écrite en 1982 pour un film réalisé par le Animais Liberation

Movement, une organisation anglaise luttant contre la cruauté et "Flotsam Jetsam" qui compile toutes les raretés inédites entre 1968 et 1989, en solo ou avec d'autres artistes. Le premier morceau, "Slax' walkin' talk", vaut à lui seul l'achat de l'album : écrit à l'époque des WILD FLOWERS par Brian HOPPER, enregistré en octobre 1968, on y retrouve WYATT à la voix, au piano et à la batterie, accompagné par un bassiste de génie. Un certain Jimi HENDRIX. Je croix que celui-là était aussi guitariste...



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La voix du maître - Big Bang - N° 8 - novembre 1994

La Voix du Maître...

Petit entretien avec Robert WYATT



Interroger Robert WYATT sur sa musique, c'est toujours assez délicat : il est en effet avare de considérations globales sur son oeuvre, et élude les questions sur son appartenance éventuelle au courant progressif, et même à la légendaire Ecole de Canterbury. Voici néanmoins les quelques réponses que BIG BANG a pu obtenir de lui...

BIG BANG - N°8

Ces deux compilations comprennent de nombreuses collaborations avec d'autres artistes. En général, lorsqu'on te contacte pour chanter sur un disque, dis-tu toujours oui ?

Eh bien, parfois, je suis simplement trop embarrassé pour refuser, je n'ai pas envie de faire du mal aux gens... D'autres fois, quelque chose de vraiment intéressant se passe. Enfin, tant que les paroles ne sont pas complètement stupides... Euh, eh bien non, même pas ça... ! Ça m'est arrivé plus d'une fois de chanter des trucs débiles !

Tu sembles collaborer de moins en moins avec d'autres artistes. C'est dommage, car tes participations aux albums de MikeMANTLER ou NEWS FROM BABEL étaient très réussies. Trouves-tu plus de plaisir à travailler seul ?

J'aime beaucoup être invité par Mike ou Chris CUTLER. Je suis d'accord avec toi, ces

collaborations étaient réussies, et en fait, une compilation des morceaux que j'ai faits avec HENRY COW et les autres groupes de Chris, ça ferait sans doute un meilleur album que ce que je fais tout seul ! Ceci dit, je trouve que ma collaboration avec Alfie sur *Dondestan* a été la plus fructueuse de toutes.

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Oh bien sûr ! Mais c'est toujours le même problème que pour mon propre travail, ce que je t'ai dit tout à l'heure... Mon fauteuil roulant me cause de plus en plus d'anxiété, je me sens moins sûr de moi, physiquement... Je ne sais pas... En fait, je me sens incroyablement paralysé ! Ça paraît étonnant, je sais, mais c'est une sensation nouvelle et terrible pour moi. Même aller poster une lettre est devenu quelque chose de difficile !

Sur Going Back A Bit, on trouve une version live de "Calyx" qui, de toute évidence, provient du fameux concert de Drury Lane, en 1974. Ceci veut-il dire que, contrairement à ce que l'on croyait, ce concert a bel et bien été enregistré professionnellement ?

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Tu es un grand amateur de jazz. Cette influence, très présente dans SOFT MACHINE, l'est bizarrement moins dans ton travail solo, surtout celui des années 80. On y trouve en général des chansons assez courtes, plus 'pop' que jazz en fait...

C'est vrai, j'utilise beaucoup le format 'pop'. Je ne le déteste pas, bien au contraire, lorsqu'il est possible de l'utiliser sans qu'il y ait les pressions qui lui sont généralement associées, comme être obligé de viser un marché spécifique. Ceci dit, les invités qui ont participé à mes disques venaient souvent du monde du jazz : Mongezi FEZA, Gary WINDO, Ernest MOTHLE, Evan PARKER, Harry BECKETT, George KHAN... Et j'ai aussi utilisé des idée typiquement jazz dans certains morceaux : par exemple, l'introduction vocale de "Born Again Crétin" est en fait "Peace" d'Omette COLEMAN, celle de "Dedicated To Caravan And Brother Jim" est "Con Aima" de Dizzy GILLESPIE... Et puis j'ai repris des standards de jazz comme "Round Midnight" ou "Strange



BIG BANG - N°8 COMPILATIONS... ROBERT WYATT

La Voix du Maître...

Petit entretien avec Robert WYATT

Interroger Robert WYATT sur sa musique, c'est toujours assez délicat : il est en effet averse de considérations globales sur son œuvre, et étudie les questions sur son appartenance éventuelle au courant progressif, et même à la légendaire École de Canterbury. Voici néanmoins les quelques réponses que BIG BANG a pu obtenir de lui...

Ces deux compilations comprennent de nombreuses collaborations avec d'autres artistes. En général, lorsqu'on te contacte pour chanter sur un disque, dis-tu toujours oui ?

Eh bien, pacifiste, je suis simplement trop embarrassé pour refuser, je n'ai pas envie de faire du mal aux gens... D'autres fois, quelque chose de vraiment intéressant se passe. Enfin, tant que les paroles ne sont pas complètement stupides... Euh, eh bien non, même pas ça... ! Ça m'est arrivé plus d'une fois de chanter des trucs débiles !

Tu sembles collaborer de moins en moins avec d'autres artistes. C'est dommage, car tes participations aux albums de Mike MANTLER ou NEWS FROM BABEL étaient très réussies. Trouves-tu plus de plaisir à travailler seul ?

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Es-tu toujours impliqué dans la politique ?

Oh !... Maintenant, mon action politique se résume à une autodéfense désespérée... Nous sommes noyés dans une corruption politique généralisée où les spéculateurs prédateurs immobiliers règnent en maîtres...

Qu'aimes-tu faire lorsque tu ne joues pas ou n'écoutes pas de musique ?

Euh... J'imagine de la musique ! Et puis j'aime aussi, euh... comment dites-vous en français ? Ah oui, "bavarder" ! Bavarder avec ma femme Alfie, je suis un de ses grands fans ! Je pense par exemple que ses poèmes sur *Dondestan* m'ont inspiré la meilleure musique que j'aie jamais écrite. Ils sont vraiment magnifiques ! Et puis ses peintures sont si humaines et valorisantes. Ses remarques sur la vie sont toujours drôles et surprenantes. Je suis toujours étonné de sa constante créativité, même lorsqu'elle ne fait que changer un meuble de place ou faire la cuisine... Et puis des fois elle m'emmène faire un tour en voiture, dans des endroits où nous pouvons regarder les oiseaux avec des jumelles, et nous cherchons à deviner de quels oiseaux il s'agit...

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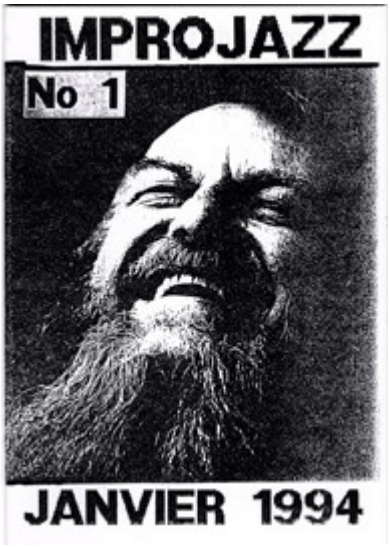
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Robert Wyatt - Improjazz - N° 1 - janvier 1994

ROBERT WYATT



> Zoom

Personnage central d'un certain courant musical révolutionnaire à la fin des années 60, et figure marquante d'un militantisme engagé, enragé et mal vu d'une société britannique par ailleurs en lambeaux, Robert WYATT est un de ces musiciens qui force le respect mais qui sait aussi être très (trop) discret sur une scène quelque peu agitée. L'interview qui suit a été réalisée pour partie grâce à "L'International Robert Wyatt Contingent", dirigé par le charmant Terry VALDERAS, pour les questions sur Mole et sur la vie en général d'une part, par Chris ATTON et votre serviteur pour le reste d'autre part. Caroline, Go...

IMPROJAZZ: II nous semble que votre musique a toujours mélangé la "beauté" avec les "messages" (politiques et sociaux) en utilisant le véhicule de la musique pour communiquer un point de vue d'une manière beaucoup plus sophistiquée que par exemple, les chansons agit-prop "populaires" de Cornélius CARDEW. Est-ce que, d'une certaine manière, vous faites de la musique folklorique?

Robert WYATT: Oui, seulement par défaut, dans le fait que mes méthodes ne peuvent pas avoir l'autorité de la discipline du conservatoire, ni une adaptation à l'analyse des marchés. En d'autres termes, ma musique n'est ni classique, ni pop. Qu'y a-t-il d'autre? Si le blues est folk et flamenco, moi aussi, s'il vous plait. En ce qui concerne la relation entre la "beauté" et le "message", et bien le poète Laura JACKSON abandonna la poésie lorsqu'elle a atteint la conclusion que la poursuite de la beauté et de la vérité sont des disciplines inconciliables. Qui a la clé de l'échappatoire à ce dilemme? L'humoriste. Il me semble que la traduction ne peut jamais être exacte, parce que, par exemple, si je parle de "meaning", le dictionnaire dit: "vouloir dire", = to mean. J'aime ce "vouloir dire". C'est un « composé compatissant; mais en anglais, "ce que quelque chose veut dire" n'est pas nécessairement "ce qu'elle signifie". Prenez par exemple des mots comme "Apartheid" ou "Swastika". Un autre terme français que j'aime bien est votre traduction de "It doesn't matter" (tout a de l'importance), mais précisément: "Cela ne fait rien". Mon lyrisme est pour le confort des âmes compatissantes, je ne suis pas un sergent recruteur pour la "Cause". Je définis simplement ma position comme n'importe quel autre artiste.

IMPROJAZZ; Pensez-vous que le point social ou politique de votre musique change? (Par exemple, la propagande de Gloria Gloom/Stalin wasn't stallin' vers les chansons politiques de Old Rotten Hat ou de Dondestan? En allant plus loin, comment cela peut se concilier avec la ligne pure et dure que vous adorez, vis à vis du Cuba de Castro?

RW: Fidèle à la tradition Avant-Garde (vous aimez ça? La tradition Avant-Garde?), je

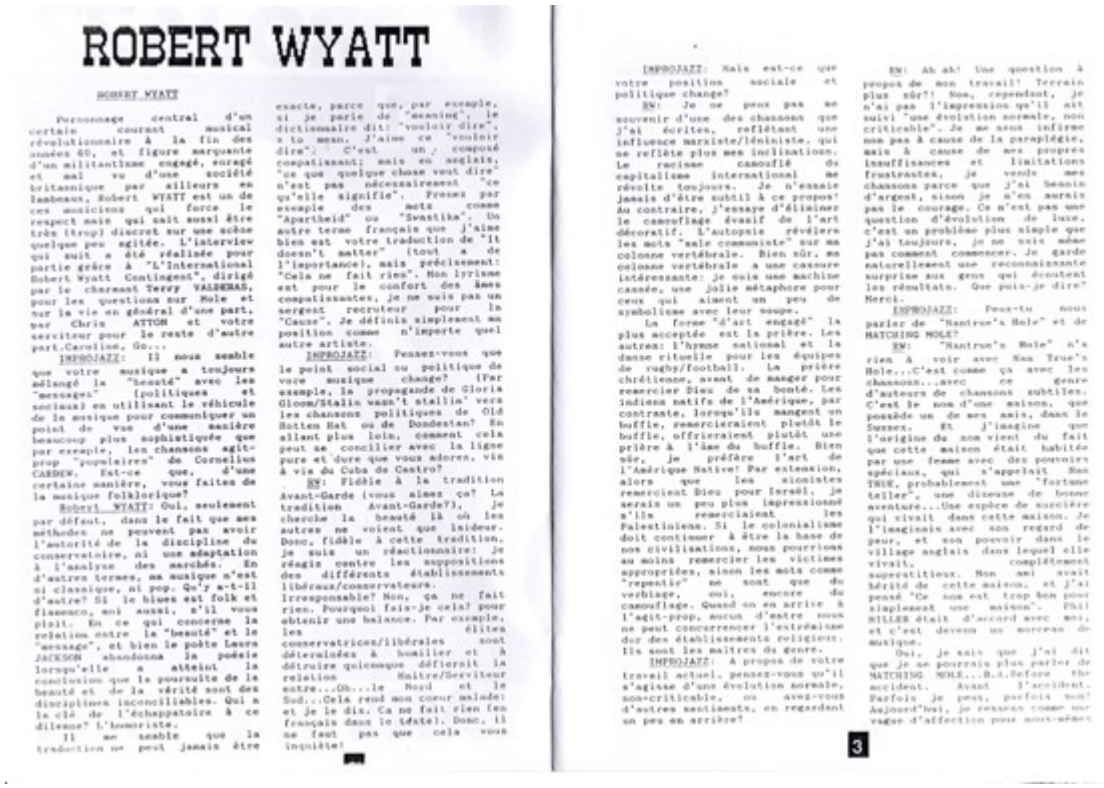
cherche la beauté là où les autres ne voient que laideur. Donc, fidèle à cette tradition, je suis un réactionnaire: je réagis contre les suppositions des différents établissements libéraux/conservateurs. Irresponsable? Non, ça ne fait rien. Pourquoi fais-je cela? Pour obtenir une balance. Par exemple, les élites conservatrices/libérales sont déterminées à humilier- et à détruire quiconque défierait la relation Maitre/Serviteur entre...Oh...le Nord et le Sud... Cela rend mon cœur malade: et je le dis. Ça ne fait rien (en français dans le texte). Donc, il ne faut pas que cela vous inquiète !

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La forme "d'art engagé" la plus acceptée est la prière. Les autres: l'hymne national et la danse rituelle pour les équipes de rugby/football. La prière chrétienne, avant de manger pour remercier Dieu de sa bonté. Les Indiens natifs de l'Amérique, par contraste, lorsqu'ils mangent un buffle, remercieraient plutôt le buffle, offriraient plutôt une prière à l'âme du buffle. Bien sûr, je préfère l'art de l'Amérique Native! Par extension, alors que les sionistes remercient Dieu pour Israël, je serais un peu plus impressionné s'ils remerciaient les Palestiniens. Si le colonialisme doit continuer à être la base de nos civilisations, nous pourrions au moins remercier les victimes appropriées, sinon les mots comme "repentir" ne sont que du verbiage, oui, encore du camouflage. Quand on en arrive à l'agit-prop, aucun d'entre nous ne peut concurrencer l'extrémisme dur des établissements religieux. Ils sont les maîtres du genre.

IMPROJAZZ : A propos de votre travail actuel, pensez-vous qu'il s'agisse d'une évolution normale, non-critiquable, ou avez-vous d'autres sentiments, en regardant un peu en arrière?



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IMPROJAZZ: Peux-tu nous parler de "Nantrue's Hole" et de MATCHING MOLE?

RW: "Nantrue's Hole" n'a rien à voir avec Nan True's Hole...C'est comme ça avec les chansons...avec ce genre d'auteurs de chansons subtiles. C'est le nom d'une maison, que possède un de mes amis, dans le Sussex. Et j'imagine que l'origine du nom vient du fait que cette maison était habitée par une femme avec des pouvoirs spéciaux, qui s'appelait Nan TRUE, probablement une "fortune teller", une diseuse de bonne aventure...Une espèce de sorcière qui vivait dans cette maison. Je l'imaginais avec son regard de peur, et son pouvoir dans le village anglais dans lequel elle vivait, complètement superstitieux. Mon ami avait hérité de cette maison, et j'ai pensé "Ce nom est trop bon pour simplement une maison". Phil MILLER était d'accord avec moi, et c'est devenu un morceau de musique.

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MATCHING MOLE avait Phil MILLER à la guitare, qui aurait préféré jouer une note fausse plutôt, qu'une note déjà jouée par quelqu'un d'autre. J'admirais cet esprit. Et il continue à travailler et composer dans des formes très rares et des atmosphères de connaissance musicale avancée... au-delà de ma connaissance technique. Je suis heureux qu'il ait été avec nous lorsqu'il était... Vous savez... plus jeune, les premiers jours, enthousiaste!

Bill McCORMICK travaille maintenant pour le parti travailliste, je pense. Il était le bassiste, quelqu'un de très inventif, et quel homme formidable! Il était comme ça, et l'est encore.

Les deux Dave... Dave SINCLAIR jouait de l'orgue Hammond, et les gens essayent encore de le persuader d'en jouer avec CARAVAN (maintenant reformé et qui tourne pas mal en Angleterre). Il ne comprenait pas ça. Maintenant il possède un magasin de claviers, et ne comprend toujours pas pourquoi les gens veulent qu'il retourne à l'orgue Hammond! Mais nous qui avons été élevés avec Jimmy SMITH et BOOKER T., on n'en a jamais assez de ce son Hammond! J'aime ce son, et tous ceux qui le pratiquent savent ce que c'est.

Dave McRAE est peut-être le meilleur musicien avec qui j'ai travaillé. Il jouait des claviers à cette époque, principalement du piano électrique. Il est retourné maintenant à ce que je pense être un piano japonais, sur lequel on joue de la musique classique. Il est reparti aux antipodes... quelque chose à voir avec les pieds sur la partie opposée de la terre! L'Australie. Et il me manque! Non seulement à l'époque de MATCHING MOLE, mais aussi pendant la période qui a suivi, lorsque j'expérimentais après le deuxième LP de MM. Vous savez, j'ai travaillé dans diverses formations qui n'ont pas été enregistrées, avec Dave McRAE, dans des situations informelles... avec Gary WINDO au ténor, et parfois Ron MATHEWSON à la basse. Je pense que j'ai atteint une sorte de confiance organique à la batterie avec Dave, que j'avais atteint il y a très longtemps avant. Et ainsi était MATCHING MOLE! Il n'y a rien de spécialement romantique à venir à propos de Mole, sauf l'intérêt des autres gens, qui m'a fait avoir une autre écoute. Je ne suis plus embarrassé par la naïveté de ce groupe. Je suis heureux qu'il existe des bandes qui n'ont jamais été entendues, des radios, etc.

IMPROJAZZ: Gary WINDO est mort en juillet 92, Ollie HALSHALL en avril 93, Mongesi FEZA, Chris McGREGOR, Dudu PUKWANA... des gens que tu as côtoyés... Quels sont tes sentiments envers ces amis décédés?

RW : II est vrai que mes compagnons musicaux les plus compréhensifs ont déjà obtenu la paix parfaite. Je les envie, mais je me sens un peu perdu sans leur chaleur. Beaucoup de nos moments ensemble, les plus chanceux, ne sont pas encore disponibles publiquement, mais ils existent toujours sur quelques cassettes. Ces cassettes sont mes copains les fantômes: les cassettes avec Mongesi et Gary dans leur groupe SYMBIOSIS, cassettes de Gary WINDO, Dave McRAE et moi... Incidemment il y a d'autres moments heureux sur des cassettes privées avec des musiciens qui comme Dave McRAE, sont toujours, au moment où je parle, bien vivants. Par exemple, j'ai fait quelques "duos" avec le brillant joueur de claviers Francis MONKMAN. Et peut-être mon moment le plus fier fut lorsque le saxophoniste Evan PARKER contribua par un solo pour finir une chanson écrite avec le

poète Paul HAINES "Curtsy". (De bons souvenirs après tout).

IMPROJAZZ: Que penses-tu de la vie?

RW: Je ne connais pas autre chose encore... Je n'ai rien pour comparer. C'est comme une course de chevaux. Je ne suis pas sûr que... Pas pour moi. Je dois encore trouver! *(rires)* Je pense que c'est étrange, réellement. Soit ce qui concerne la vie est biaisé, parce que les gens qui en parlent sont vivants. C'est très étrange car s'il n'y avait aucune vie, je ne l'aurais pas prédit. Je peux imaginer des planètes, des industries, de la poussière, du vent et des explosions. Il existe des parodies diverses de la vie, comme le feu, qui semblent voyager... Et qui veulent prendre les choses, les consommer. La vie est comme le dernier écho de ce qui a existé autrefois. Une sorte différente du feu. Je ne sais pas.

Robert parlerait des heures, et nous l'écouterions toujours passionnément. Mais l'œuvre la plus achevée concernant sa vie sort cette année, chez Chris CUTLER. "Wrong Movements" a été écrit par le canadien Mike KING, et c'est une vrai bible! Mike a travaillé en étroite collaboration avec Robert lui-même, et contrairement à certains écrits, WYATT est tout-à-fait d'accord sur l'entreprise. Un MUST! Sinon, il est urgent de s'abonner à "Old Rottenhat's Journal", qui nous a aidé pour cet article: c/o Terry VALDERAS, 2021 S.E.TAYLOR Street, PORTLAND.OREGON 97214 USA. La souscription est de $5 pour trois lettres, mais peut-être plus pour l'Europe. N'hésitez pas à contacter Terry, déjà un fidèle d'IMPROJAZZ!

Philippe Renaud

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Le psychédélisme anglais 1966/68 - Soft Machine - Juke Box Magazine - N° 73 - septembre 1993

SOFT MACHINE





Dominique Martin de la Cruz termine ici son tour d'horizon du psychédélisme anglais, de cette époque charnière, 1966-68, qui a vu tant de groupes exploser au firmament. Seule la partie psychédélique de chaque formation, ayant au moins enregistré un album, est retracée ici. Pour le reste de leur carrière il suffit de se reporter aux numéros de Juke Box Magazine cités en référence. Ce cinquième et dernier chapitre nous emmène de Soft Machine aux Zombies, en passant par les Yardbirds.

L'univers de Soft Machine est tout autre à celui des différentes formations psychédéliques anglaises, tels les délires intérieurs d'une machine emballée.
L'influence musicale du groupe (musique indienne, jazz brésilien, rythmes afro-cubains et Archie Shepp) donne une coloration patchwork laissant souvent libre cours à l'improvisation. Il suffit alors de fermer les yeux et, à l'écoute de leurs premiers disques,

de se repasser dans la tête leurs folles prestations scéniques, silhouettes éclatées sur fond de light-shows diffusant à plein régime le *trans-british-express* et somnanbulatoire « **We Did It Again** » ou l'envoûtant «**Why Are We Sleeping** » avec les sons d'orgue rappelant les sirènes de police. Pourquoi en effet sommes-nous en train de dormir alors que ce que nous cherchons est devant nos yeux : « *People are watching/ People do stare/ Waiting for something/ But already there/ Tomorrow l'Il find it.* » (Les gens observent/ Et vous fixent/ Attendant quelque chose/ Qui est déjà là/ Demain je te trouverai). Le groupe se forme à Canterbury en 1966. Les membres en sont alors Robert Wyatt (batterie, chant, qui vient de quitter les Wilde Flowers), Kevin Ayers (basse, chant), Mike Ratledge (claviers) et Daevid Allen (guitare). Influencés par le rock et le jazz, ils se produisent sous différents noms de groupe (Bishops, Four Skins, Mr. Head) avant d'adopter celui de Soft Machine que leur propose Mike Ratledge, tiré d'un roman de William Burroughs : «La Machine Molle». Durant leur séjour à Majorques (aux Baléares), ils rencontrent un excentrique millionnaire, Wes Brunson, qui décide de financer le combo. Dès 1967, à Londres, Soft Machine multiplie les prestations et il n'est pas rare de les voir souvent à l'UFO, au même programme que Pink Floyd. Ils sont même en avance sur ceux-ci quant à la qualité de leur spectacle question light-show.



Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt et Kevin Ayers le 18 novembre 1967 au Palais des Sports.

Bien avant eux, ils ont développé aux Baléares la technique du light-show avec le technicien Marc Boyle. Leurs concerts sont un déluge de sons et d'images pour des happenings où les spectateurs font partie intégrante du show. En connexion avec Giorgio Gomelsky, le quatuor répète des chansons de Kevin Ayers. Ces bandes sortiront quelques années plus tard, sur le label Byg, tout d'abord dans la série « Rock Génération, Vol. 7 & 8», avant d'être reprises sur Charly Records. L'inénarrable Américain Kim Fowley, qui est toujours à l'affût de mauvais coups, produit en 1967 leur seul single sur Polydor, « Feelin' Reelin' Squelin' », auquel il collabore. Une semaine après, leur compagnie ressort le disque avec, en face A, l'envers, «**Love Makes Sweet Music**» (Polydor 56151). Puis, le 29 avril 1967 devant quelques milliers de hippies, Soft Machine participe à la fête psychédélique intitulée Fourteen Hour Technicolor Dream (14e heure de rêve en technicolor). Les membres rivalisent par leur tenue délirante. Daevid Allen porte un casque de mineur, avec la lampe qui illumine son visage lui donnant des reflets mordorés, et Kevin Ayers arbore un chapeau de cow-boy et d'immenses ailes. La musique est baroque à souhait et terriblement excitante. Dès l'été, on les voit sillonner la Côte d'Azur, vivant le plus souvent en faisant la manche à la terrasse des cafés. Ce qui ne les empêche pas de se balader avec un camion rempli de matériel électronique. C'est ainsi que Soft Machine participe au festival de Saint-Tropez dans la pièce de Picasso « Le Diable Attrapé Par La Queue », montée par Jean-Jacques Lebel et Victor Herbert. Puis ils partent pour Paris où ils sont programmés dans le cadre de l'émission TV Dim Dam Dom, avant d'orchestrer comme maîtres de cérémonie au spectacle psychédélique du studio des Champs-Elysées. Dans une mise en scène très

avant-gardiste, évoluant au milieu d'objets hétéroclites et d'explosions de couleurs, l'âme de Soft Machine donne un concert débridé musicalement, imposant un rythme très soutenu grâce à l'infatigable et super batteur Robert Wyatt qui, intraitable, contrôle tout du haut de son installation. Le groupe fait de toute façon la part belle aux improvisations (orgue et batterie). Peu après, ils sont de retour au Palais des Sports de Paris, en novembre 1967, pour participer au festival La Fenêtre Rosé où ils étonnent encore.

Groupe expérimental et scénique avant tout, Soft Machine grave son premier album courant 1968. Ce disque, simplement intitulé «Soft Machine», se rattache définitivement au courant psychédélique par sa conception. De plus, la pochette américaine est un modèle du genre avec sa roue dentelée permettant de faire apparaître au gré des trous aménagés différents motifs. Les moments de rare accalmie sont suivis de constructions intenses ponctuées par les déchaînements intempestifs de Robert Wyatt et des solos d'orgue mélodieux ou pseudo-atonals de Mike Ratledge. Néanmoins les titres qui se détachent le plus sont pour la plupart composés par le talentueux guitariste Kevin Ayers qui depuis le départ de Daevid Allen a abandonné la basse. Outre «**We Did It Again**» et «**Why Are We Sleeping**» déjà cités, le morceau «**Lullabye Letter**» retient joliment l'attention par sa structure marquée d'effets de fuzz, distortion et breaks appuyés soutenant bien les montées vocales. Le bassiste Hugh Hopper (ex-Wilde Flowers), qui les seconde pour l'instant, avant d'être intégré par la suite à Soft Machine, surprend avec l'harmonieux « **A Certain Kind** ». Puis, avec leur second LP. «**Soft Machine 2**», le groupe s'éloigne du courant pop psychédélique pour épouser les contours du jazz. Néanmoins la musique de Soft Machine nécessite un effort d'écoute et il n'est pas toujours évident d'accepter d'emblée les chansons que le groupe se plaît à déstructurer pour les reconstruire selon des improvisations très free (libre). Le bombardement sensoriel peut parfois surprendre et gêner. Mais Soft Machine n'en demeure pas moins un rouage du courant psychédélique, particulier, qui a animé avec ferveur les années 1967-68 et dont les compositions étirées ont meublé avec charme l'espace environnant d'alors, créant de multiples sons et rythmes nouveaux. A ce jeu, Soft Machine a libéré un courant d'interférences contribuant à un équilibre du monde du rock et du jazz dans un jet électronique continu d'une machine molle se proposant de rééduquer l'oreille et les esprits.



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Robert Wyatt L'être-ange - Jazz Magazine - N° 426 - mai 1993

ROBERT WYATT L'ETRE-ANGE



par Thierry Jousse

Ni vraiment rock ni vraiment jazz, et vraiment pas jazz-rock, le batteur-inventeur hier de Soft Machine, aujourd'hui chanteur et compositeur, se rappelle à nos meilleurs souvenirs avec deux rééditions et une nouveauté.

L'identité musicale de Robert Wyatt est essentiellement incertaine. Traditionnellement identifié au monde du rock, son univers n'a pourtant que de très lointains rapports avec une musique issue du *rhythm and blues*. Sans doute fut-il, à certains moments, proche du *jazz-rock* ou autre *progressive rock*, mais ces concepts-étiquettes sont si flous qu'ils confinent le plus souvent à l'attrape-tout. Loin de moi, pourtant, l'idée de coloniser cette musique à partir du jazz. Ce que nous apprend la publication récente et simultanée de trois cd, deux rééditions ("The End of an Ear", premier disque de Wyatt devenu introuvable, enregistré sous son nom en 1970, alors qu'il était en rupture de ban avec son groupe d'origine Soft Machine, et "Mideighties", qui comprend l'intégralité de "Old Rottenhat", accompagné de quelques morceaux de ces mêmes années 80, dont certains demeuraient jusque-là inédits) plus une nouveauté ("A Short Break", suite de cinq morceaux enregistrés à la maison et en solitaire sur un magnétophone quatre pistes) c'est plutôt que le monde de Wyatt ne renvoie qu'à lui-même tout en étant sans cesse redéfini et diffracté par un ensemble de connexions, interpolations, mises en relation, lectures et relectures, kaléidoscope coloré qui ne cesse d'éclater pour mieux se recomposer autour d'un noyau infracassable.

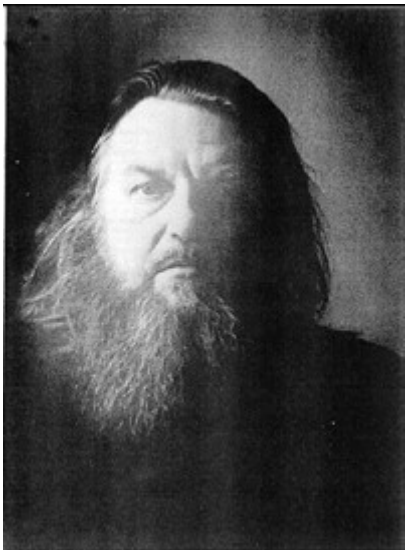
L'éducation musicale de Wyatt fut pétrie de jazz: Fats Waller, Duke Ellington aussi bien que Lennie Tristano ou le Modern Jazz Ouartet lui sont familiers. Son jeu de batterie ne serait pas ce qu'il fut sans Elvin Jones ou Tony Williams. Son chant, si particulier, revendique la tradition fertile de Billie Holiday, Betty Carter ou Sarah Vaughan. Voilà pour quelques racines avouées d'une musique qui ne travaillera pas exactement à les faire fructifier, mais plutôt à s'envoler et proliférer à partir d'elles dans des directions imprévisibles. L'oeuvre elle-même est nourrie de citations, emprunts, affinités, reprises. On entend ici et là des échos d'Ornette Coleman (Peace), de Charles Mingus (*Boogie Stop Shuffle*, dans Shrinkrap), Dizzy Gillespie (*Con Alma*, au début de *To Caravan and Brother Jim*, dans l'album "The End of an Ear"), même de Nina Simone (dans "Rock Bottom"). Plus curieux encore, Robert Wyatt aime à reprendre des standards qu'il relit de manière toute personnelle.



Au temps de Soft Machine

Dans "Nothing Can Stop Us", paru à l'orée des années 80, on trouve trois perles rares. *Round' Midnight*, *Memories of you* (ces deux-là figurent dans la compilation qui vient de paraître) et *Strange Fruit*. Fidèle en un sens aux univers respectifs qu'il investit de sa voix blanche et fantomatique, Wyatt s'emploie à redonner une nouvelle innocence à ces emblèmes du jazz le plus noir, le plus "bluesy". Aérienne, quasi translucide, légère et dramatique à la fois, sa version de *Round' Midnight* est comme l'ombre de toutes les versions précédentes, célèbres ou inconnues. Elle en est comme la formé décantée, celle qui vient nécessairement après toutes les autres, comme si la composition de Thelonious Sphere Monk était désormais accompagnée à tout jamais et en permanence d'un double incroyablement persistant quoique invisible. On pressent chez Wyatt un désir de retourner à l'origine, c'est-à-dire ici à la ritournelle, que l'on fredonne mentalement plutôt que vocalement, mélodie obsédante, enfantine, entendue au loin et qui reste incroyablement présente alors qu'on croyait l'avoir oubliée depuis si longtemps, comptine simple qui installe un monde en quelques notes d'évidence. Les standards de Wyatt viennent et reviennent de loin, chus dans l'obscurité de l'oubli et remontant à peine à la surface, encore nimbés de leur auréole de nuit. Ce *Round Midnight* ou ce *Strange Fruit* sont un peu comparables à l'étrange motif faulknerien du *Bruit et la fureur*, *Elle sentait comme les arbres*. La mélodie y est enfin dépouillée de tous ses oripeaux, simplifiée, aussi évidente que mystérieuse, elle marche toute seule, devenue autonome, phrase personnelle et non-personnelle à la fois qui s'échappe, n'ayant plus de compte à rendre qu'à elle-même, au-delà ou en-deçà du jazz. L'incroyable voix de Wyatt n'y est évidemment pas pour rien. Trop haut perchée pour être vraiment humaine, elle vient d'ailleurs, des anges, des nuées, presque céleste, à la fois hypersexuée et asexuée. Elle élève le débat, le met sur un autre plan, elle ralentit, décompose et donne du liant. Elle enchante et fait mal, ou peur. Elle renvoie encore et toujours à l'enfance, la sienne, la nôtre et surtout celle de la musique. Ou même, pourquoi pas, à un temps antérieur, d'avant la naissance.

Autre manière de relecture les deux versions de *Las Vegas Tango* qui encadrent "The End of an Ear". Ce chef-d'oeuvre incontestable signé Gil Evans, dont on trouve la forme la plus parfaite sur "The Individualism of Gil Evans", Robert Wyatt ne l'imite pas: il le recrée littéralement avec ses moyens propres. A ce moment précis de sa carrière, Wyatt est en devenir. il vient d'être exclu de Soft Machine, pour non-orthodoxie musicale, et n'a pas encore fondé Matching Mole. Ce qu'il trouve chez Evans, lui-même en devenir à cette époque, autour de l'électricité et de Jimi Hendrix, c'est une possibilité d'accroissement du temps qui est aussi une façon de créer de nouveaux espaces.



Comme chez Evans, le temps se spatialise littéralement et la référence au jazz ne passe plus par la traditionnelle succession des solos, mais plutôt par une distribution libre des sons, détails, singularités dispersés dans un espace mouvant. ouvert. Plus tard, à l'époque de "Rock Bottom", Wyatt confessera avoir été influencé, sous l'impulsion de sa femme Alfie Benge, par les derniers disques de Coltrane, eux-mêmes fondamentalement placés sous le signe de l'air. Plus généralement, le disque entier "The End of an Ear" est sans doute le plus jazz de toute une carrière traversée d'envolées et de trous d'air. Wyatt souhaitait y travailler avec Gary Windo et Mongezi Feza, deux "souffles" du Brotherhood of Breath de Chris McGregor, qui n'étaient pas libres pour l'enregistrement et qu'il retrouvera un peu plus tard pour "Rock Bottom" et "Ruth is Stranger

than Richard" (où on trouve d'ailleurs un thème de McGregor ainsi qu'une très belle version du *Song for Che* de Charlie Haden). Finalement, c'est avec Mark Charig et Elton Dean, transfuges de l'orchestre de Keith Tippett et de Soft Machine, qu'il élaborera le son de son album. Le jazz de "The End of an Ear" est fondamentalement impur, traversé d'effets de brouillage, de pianos solitaires et déchirants, de bandes magnétiques à l'envers, de charleston vocaux, de cuivres ayleriens, de thèmes lointains et à peine formulés, de percées atonales à la Don Ellis ou à la Lennie Tristano, un peu daté aussi mais moins qu'on pourrait le croire. C'est une conception globale et proliférante du son qui préside à l'installation d'une musique insituable, ni jazz, ni rock, ni "contemporaine", mais nouvel idiome incertain. Vingt-deux ans après, le dernier disque de Robert Wyatt en forme de pause, "A Short Break", offre un visage radicalement différent. Pourtant. à travers les différences, quelque chose insiste. "A Short Break" est placé sous le signe de l'intime et de la pauvreté. Wyatt n'éprouve même plus le besoin d'enregistrer en studio, il préfère rester chez lui. En solitaire, comme dans ses deux précédents disques, "Old Rottenhat" et "Dondestan", il chantonne quelques ballades liées encore à l'enfance. La technologie y est rudimentaire, le son feutré, étouffé. L'album ne dure que vingt minutes, il est soustrait à toute actualité, un peu neurasthénique ou peut-être serein. Le bruit du monde n'y parvient qu'atténué. Les paroles disparaissent et s'effacent dans un fredonnement insistant. N'agit plus qu'un mouvement de réitération, de surplace porté par la voix de muezzin de l'être-ange Wyatt. Musique de blues très blanc, lointain intérieur. Quelque chose insiste décidément. Pas du jazz ? A quoi bon cette question ? Un ange passe et repasse, toujours semblable et toujours différent...

> Zoom

T.J.

P. S. La plupart des informations concernant Robert Wyatt proviennent de l'émission radiophonique de Cyril Bécu et Gilles Pézerat, *Le Chant d'un funambule*, diffusé sur France Culture en mars dernier dans le cadre du *Rythme et la raison*.

À ÉCOUTER

"The End of an Ear", Cbs, 1970;
"Mideighties", Rough Trade, 1993;
"A Short Break", Voiceprint, 1993.

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Robert Wyatt - Rocksound - n° 3 - janvier/février 1993

COLLECTOR

Robert Wyatt



Des premiers balbutiements de Soft Machine au Grand Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros décerné à "Rock bottom" en 1974, la musique de Robert Wyatt a toujours emballé les Français. Alors que Rough Trade publie la collection rétrospective "Mid eighties" et que le label Voiceprint compile des ébauches jazzy intitulées "A short break", Pierre Perrone est allé rencontrer le chanteur qui demeure l'une des figures légendaires du rock britannique des vingt dernières années.

A la base, je suis un fan. J'écoute les disques des autres et, à l'occasion, je

concocte les miens" déclare volontiers Robert Wyatt. La carrière du musicien reflète tout à fait cette ambivalence de l'amateur et du créateur.

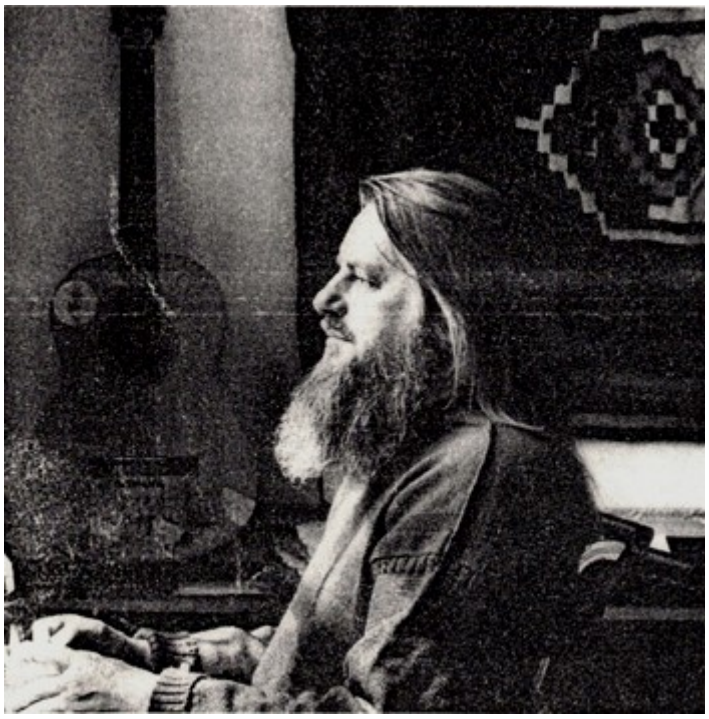
Robert vit le jour à Bristol le 28 janvier 1945. Sa mère "travaillait pour la BBC. Elle aimait des compositeurs comme Monteverdi tandis que mon pater préférait Prokofiev et Benjamin Britten. Pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, mon père a découvert le jazz. il a vu Fats Waller dans un film intitulé "Stormy Weather" et il m'en a parlé. C'est grâce à lui que j'ai découvert Duke Ellington et que le jazz a joué un rôle si important dans ma vie" ajoute Wyatt qui se souvient également d'un film qui l'a beaucoup marqué. "Ascenseur pour l'échafaud" de Louis Malle avec une bande originale de Miles Davis.

"J'avais dix ou onze ans lorsque j'ai vu ce film à Paris : incapable de suivre le dialogue, je me suis laissé bercer par la musique tout en regardant Jeanne Moreau qui chialait dans des cabines téléphoniques. Le jazz m'a tout de suite fasciné même si, à l'époque, j'avais l'intention de me consacrer à la peinture. J'avais étudié le violon et la trompette à l'école mais le solfège ne m'avait jamais intéressé" soupire Robert.

MACHINE MOLLE

En 1962, notre bonhomme se retrouva au collège des beaux-arts de Canterbury. Il passait le plus clair de son temps "à écouter des disques de jazz fabuleux tout en peignant des croûtes minables. Un peu plus tard, j'ai rencontré Hugh Hopper et Daevid Allen. Nous nous sommes mis à concocter une musique improvisée qui ne ressemblait guère à du jazz même si nous nous inspirions dés disques d'Ornette Coleman, de Ray Charles et de Nina Simone. Nous avons commencé à pondre des compositions bien à nous qui étaient plutôt avant-gardistes ; nous bricolions avec des bandes magnétiques et nous inventions des trucs pas croyables, encore plus bizarres que ceux que nous avons mis en boîte par la suite", précise Wyatt.

A l'époque, le groupe s'appelait Wilde Flowers et changeait constamment de personnel. Robert sourit en disant que **"les fans sont fascinés par ce qu'ils ont baptisé la scène de Canterbury. En fait, c'était une ville provinciale vachement chiante. Il n'y avait pas des tas de musiciens : les jeunes qui s'emmerdaient et voulaient faire du boucan et de la musique faisaient cause commune. Les futurs membres de Caravan sont passés dans nos rangs. Un beau jour, Kevin Ayers est arrivé avec ses chansons influencées par le calypso et la bossa-nova. Il aimait aussi beaucoup les Kinks et il s'est mis à composer comme Ray Davies".**



Inspirés par le bouquin de William Burroughs, Wyatt (batterie), Allen (guitare), Ayers

(basse) et Mike Ratledge (claviers) se rebaptisèrent Soft Machine. En 1967, ils se produisirent avec Pink Floyd dans les clubs underground de la capitale britannique avant de publier un simple intitulé "Love makes sweet music". Kim Fowley et Jimi Hendrix participèrent aux sessions. Le 45 tours passa inaperçu dans le Royaume-Uni mais pas en France. Les quatre musiciens participèrent à un happening qui se déroulait à St-Tropez : il s'agissait d'une version du "Désir attrapé par la queue" de Picasso mis en scène par Alan Zion. Les gendarmes n'appréciaient guère les frasques de ces pseudo-hippies et débarquèrent pour disperser cette ménagerie. Le groupe remit le cap sur la Grande-Bretagne mais Daevid Allen, dont le passeport australien n'était pas en règle, se vit obligé de rester à Paris où il fonda un autre groupe légendaire, les fameux Gong (dont les pérégrinations justifieraient à elles seules un article dans une future édition de Collector, les habitants de la curieuse planète Gong ayant établi avec Magma les fondations de la scène musicale française du début des années 70). En 1968, Soft Machine embauchèrent Andy Summers (futur guitariste de Police) et tournèrent aux USA en première partie de Jimi Hendrix. Ce line-up ne fit pas long feu et se sépara après avoir mis en boîte un album qui ne sortit qu'à la fin de l'année. Hopper remplaça Ayers et l'arrivée d'Elton Dean au saxophone transforma peu à peu Soft Machine en groupe de jazz-rock ésotérique qui publiait des albums intitulés "Third" ou "Fourth".

Avec le recul d'une vingtaine d'années, Robert admet que les musiciens n'avaient "pas beaucoup d'atomes crochus. Hugh Hopper est le seul à avoir continué dans le même sens que moi. Il a d'ailleurs composé la musique de "Lisp service" que l'on retrouve sur "Dondestan", mon dernier véritable album paru en 1991. En concert, ça décollait quelquefois mais les disques de Soft Machine ne cassent pas trois pattes à un canard", avoue Wyatt qui avait déjà à l'époque enregistré un album solo intitulé "The end of an ear". Il plaqua le groupe en 1971 et monta Matching Mole (un jeu de mots laid sur la traduction française du nom de l'orchestre précédent : Soft Machine = Machine Molle. Vous suivez?) au sein duquel il se sentait "beaucoup plus à l'aise. Les trois autres musiciens étaient des potes à moi. c'était sympa. Nous étions vachement influencés par Lifetime, le groupe de jazz-rock de Tony Williams et nous nous sommes remis à improviser".

Fin 1973. alors qu'il s'apprêtait à partir en tournée avec son groupe, Robert fut la victime d'un tragique accident. Il s'était rendu à une sauterie où le vin coulait à flots et, dans le feu de l'action, le pauvre Wyatt tomba d'un balcon et se fractura plusieurs vertèbres. Il est depuis paraplégique, paralysé des deux jambes.

LE FEU SACRÉ

Les musiciens britanniques ne perdirent pas de temps pour venir en aide à leur collègue : Pink Floyd mirent sur pied un concert au bénéfice de Robert. Du coup, au lieu de sombrer dans la déprime, notre bonhomme passa le plus clair de sa convalescence à concocter les compositions que l'on retrouva sur "Rock bottom", l'album solo qui paru chez Virgin en 1974. Ceci dit, lorsqu'on mentionne Richard Branson, le grand manitou du label, Wyatt ne mâche pas ses mots : **"les gens l'ont pris pour un idéaliste parce qu'il avait les cheveux longs mais ça ne voulait rien dire. Il ne comprenait rien à la musique et faisait confiance à Simon Draper qui était un fan de Soft Machine. Comme le label démarrait, il voulait embaucher des gens qui étaient relativement connus comme Gong, Hatfield and the North et moi. Branson avait réalisé qu'il était possible de vendre des albums d'un artiste sans avoir au préalable besoin d'un hit. Pas besoin d'aller chercher plus loin"**, soupire Robert qui curieusement se retrouva dans les charts cette année-là avec une reprise inattendue du "I'm a believer" des Monkees.

Le chanteur fait la grimace : **"ce n'était pas vraiment un hit. Dans une interview, j'avais eu le malheur de mentionner mes chansons préférées (c'était l'époque de "Pin ups" et autres albums de cover versions de David Bowie et de Bryan Ferry). J'avais choisi des trucs de Roxy Music, des Beatles et, pour rigoler, j'ai dit les Monkees. Draper m'a presque forcé à mettre en boîte "I'm a believer", le pire c'est que j'ai réalisé qu'en fait c'était "Last train to Clarksville" que je voulais enregistrer, pas une foutue composition de Neil Diamond. Trop tard, la machine était déjà en route : Nick Mason, de Pink Floyd, qui était un de mes potes, a tenu la batterie, Fred Frith d'Henry Cow a assuré le violon et la guitare, Dave McRae d'Hatfield and the North était aux claviers. C'est une plaisanterie qui a foiré"** lance Wyatt qui concède toutefois que **"ça a valu la peine rien que pour voir la tronche des gens lorsque nous avons participé à Top of the Pops".** Le passage d'un artiste dans un fauteuil roulant au hit-parade télévisé de la BBC créa un précédent qui fit beaucoup pour les handicapés.

Fin 1974 les critiques musicaux français donnèrent un autre coup de main à la carrière de Robert en lui décernant le Grand Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros pour "Rock Bottom". En

repensant à la cérémonie, le chanteur sourit : **"Ça m'a vraiment motivé parce que je ne savais pas vraiment ce dont j'étais capable dans un fauteuil roulant. Je n'ai jamais retrouvé l'arrogance que j'avais derrière ma batterie mais, lorsque j'ai reçu cette récompense, j'ai compris qu'il fallait que je tire le meilleur parti des ressources que j'avais à ma disposition. Je pouvais assurer les percussions avec mes mains et ça ne m'a pas trop gêné de ne pas pouvoir tenir la batterie : Laurie Allen (ex-Gong) avait un style qui ressemblait au mien et j'étais vachement préoccupé par mes claviers, mes vocaux et le fait que c'est moi qui devais mettre en scène le disque en donnant des instructions à mes accompagnateurs. C'est seulement ces dernières années que je me suis remis à jouer de la batterie : j'ai eu le temps de réapprendre et d'adapter mon jeu à mes limites. Mais à l'époque, ce qui comptait, c'était de peaufiner les chansons"** explique Wyatt "Ruth is stranger than Richard" parut l'année suivante. des compositions comme "Soup song" et "Team spirit" continuent à emballer le chanteur qui remonta à l'époque sur les planches. **"Encore une fois, tous mes potes m'ont filé un coup de main. Mike Oldfield était de la partie mais j'ai réalisé que j'avais plus le trac en tant que chanteur que lorsque je pouvais me cacher derrière ma batterie. Ça m'étonnerait que je remonte sur scène de si tôt"** concède Robert.

SIMPLE COMME BONJOUR

La muse semble avoir quelque peu déserté notre bonhomme qui attend maintenant **"d'avoir accumulé assez de trucs pour un album. Je n'ai pas l'intention d'encombrer les ondes radios comme je le faisais autrefois. Je laisse ça aux jeunes"**, déclare-t-il sans aucune trace d'amertume dans sa voix fluette. Pourtant, au début des années 80, Wyatt publia une ribambelle de singles sur le label indépendant Rough Trade.



"A la base, je suis un fan. J'écoute les disques des autres et, à l'occasion, je concocte les miens."

ROBERT WYATT

Pour le chanteur, il s'agissait avant tout **"d'adopter une attitude de journaliste. Même si j'étais d'une génération différente, j'appréciais beaucoup l'enthousiasme du mouvement punk, le fait que personne ne se prenait trop au sérieux, qu'en deux temps trois mouvements, on pouvait mettre en boîte un 45 tours, le sortir et passer à un autre quelques semaines plus tard. J'aime beaucoup "Caimanera" et ma version de "At last I am free" qui était une adaptation mélancolique d'un titre disco"** explique-t-il. Comme l'explique Robert, **"cette série de simples ne tomba pas dans l'oreille d'un sourd. Clive Langer et Elvis Costello avaient apprécié mon interprétation de "Strange fruit" et l'accompagnement avec contrebasse, piano et balais, très fin de soirée dans un night-club enfumé, de "At last I am free". Ils m'ont envoyé une maquette de "Shipbuilding", une composition que Costello trouvait sans doute trop mélodramatique pour son répertoire. A ma grande surprise, j'ai réalisé que la composition allait comme un gant à mon style et que je ne pouvais pas refuser de l'enregistrer. J'admire énormément ce que fait Elvis Costello, il est tellement prolifique, tout le contraire de moi. Il a des tas d'idées, il déborde d'énergie et d'enthousiasme. Tout est bon : Chet Baker, la musique country, le vieux rock, la vague punk, tout l'intéresse. Et il n'a pas la grosse tête. Ce qui le motive c'est de mettre en boîte des disques qui valent le coup. Cette collaboration était parfaite et a marqué cette année là"**, ajoute Wyatt en repensant sans doute aux paroles de cette chanson qui examinait le conflit des Malouines. Le chanteur a longtemps pris un malin plaisir à donner un coup de pouce à de bonnes causes (voir le "Pigs in there" de l'album "Végétarien" "Artists for animals", "The liberator" qui figure sur l'album rétrospective "Mid-eighties", réédition qui combine l'intégrale de "Old rottenhat" et une ribambelle de simples

et de faces B) mais il avoue "**avoir de moins en moins le temps de filer un coup de main à d'autres artistes. Collaborer avec d'autres, ça me permet de lubrifier les pièces du moteur mais on retrouve ce que je définis vraiment comme étant ma musique bien à moi dans des disques comme "Rock bottom". "Old rottenhat" et "Dondestan".**

ENGAGE

Au fil des années, Robert est devenu de plus en plus engagé, enregistrant des titres comme "Biko", "Chairman Mao", "The United States of Amnesia", "Trade Union", "The wind of change", "When I think about my country" et militant pour le Parti Communiste britannique. Ceci ne l'empêche pas d'avoir un sens de l'humour irrévérencieux . Il intitula l'un des albums de Matching Mole "Little red record" (allusion ironique au livre rouge de Mao et, sur "Dondestan", il n'avait pas hésité à se présenter comme un "Left on man" qui refuse de changer. "**Je me moque de moi-même mais je considère toujours que le néo-colonialisme des pays occidentaux est lamentable, que l'impérialisme économique est dégueulasse et que ça n'a guère avancé les Soviétiques d'avoir Mc Donald's ou Pizza Hut à Moscou. On a présenté ça comme un exemple d'une certaine diversité mais, à mon avis, c'est plutôt un symptôme de l'uniformité qu'on retrouve aux quatre coins de la planète**", soupire notre bonhomme qui évite généralement de lire les journaux et préfère éplucher des bouquins "Deterring democracy" de Noam Chomsky. "The sight of the wind" est d'après Wyatt la composition qui résumait le mieux la démarche de "Dondestan". "**J'ai utilisé certains effets sonores qui datent de "Rock bottom" et j'ai ressorti ce vieil orgue au son caractéristique qui a bien collé au poème d'Alfie**" élabore le chanteur qui avoue "**avoir eu du mal à pondre des lyrics. J'avais des tas d'idées musicales mais au niveau des paroles, ça coinçait. Et puis, après avoir longtemps tourné en rond, j'ai réalisé que mon épouse avait écrit des tas de poèmes que je pouvais mettre en musique. Je n'ai donc pas hésité à les lui piquer**", lance Robert en faisant un clin d'œil à Alfreda Benge qui était présente pendant notre interview. Le couple a abandonné la capitale britannique et réside maintenant dans une petite ville du Lincolnshire où Wyatt peut se promener "**en fauteuil roulant sans trop de difficultés. Les activités culturelles sont limitées ce qui n'est pas plus mal puisque ça m'oblige à travailler dans ma salle de musique. Plus j'y suis, plus je risque d'arriver à créer quelque chose. Je ne suis pas musicalement incontinent !**" lance-t-il en se moquant de sa situation.

Le chanteur admet que "Dondestan" n'existe pas. "**C'est une sorte de pays mythique que j'ai inventé, peut-être parce que je n'ai guère l'impression d'avoir des racines. Tous ces conflits nationalistes qui remontent à la surface me fascinent même si je dois avouer que j'ai tiqué lorsque je suis rentré du studio où je venais de mentionner les kurdes dans mes paroles et que j'ai réalisé qu'on ne parlait que d'eux à la télé. En mentionnant des événements précis dans mes compositions, je cours toujours le risque de ne plus être d'actualité. J'essaie en général de faire passer un autre message plus général en me servant d'exemples particuliers qui seront peut-être un jour datés. Lorsque j'ai chanté "Born again Christian", je ne m'attendais pas à ce qu'on libère Nelson Mandela de si tôt. Mes textes seront redondants lorsque tout ira bien dans le monde**" ajoute Robert sans jamais tomber dans l'humanisme grandiloquent d'un Jim Kerr ou d'un Bono. Wyatt est toujours surpris par le succès de ses disques à l'étranger. "**C'est vrai qu'à la grande époque de Soft Machine, je me produisais plus en France qu'en Angleterre. Et n'oublions pas que les Français sont des fanas de jazz que ce soit le be-bop, Oscar Peterson, Thelonious Monk, Errol Garner**" élabore notre bonhomme tandis que je songe un instant à le comparer à ces géants de la musique du vingtième siècle.

L'humilité du chanteur m'empêche de le couvrir de lauriers, d'autant qu'il se moque une fois de plus des difficultés qu'il éprouve à s'exprimer en français. "**Un journaliste de Libération avait autrefois eu le malheur de me dire que je parlais sa langue comme un pied et j'ai laissé tomber. Quand j'essaie de parler français, j'ai l'impression que mon cerveau est un œuf brouillé**", soupire-t-il alors que je prends congé. Robert Wyatt ne devrait pas se faire de souci: sa musique intimiste transcende toutes les barrières.

Pierre Perrone

Mid eighties : la compilation Wyatt

ROBERT WYATT : MID EIGHTIES (Rough Trade/VIRGIN)

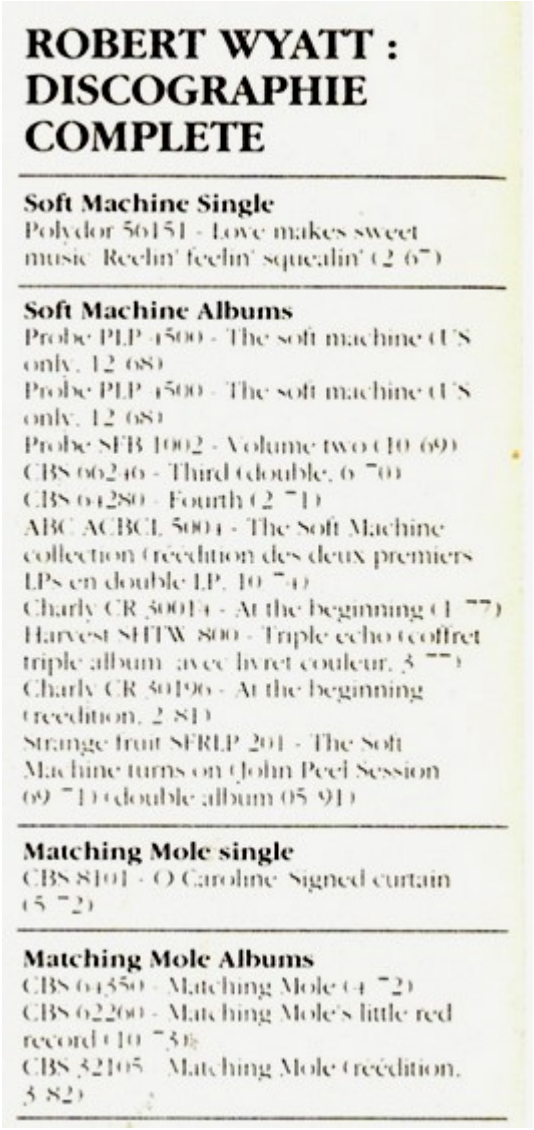
Saluons, avec toute la déférence qu'il convient, l'opportunité (autant que "l'opportunisme" en ces temps alléchants d'étrennes) de Rough Trade qui offre avec "Mid eighties" un survol circonstancié de l'activité musicale de Robert Wyatt au sein du label et du Cartel à la période charnière 1984-1985.

Centrée autour de l'album Old rottenhat", sorti en décembre 1985 et 1er album solo de Wyatt depuis "Ruth is stranger than Richard" publié une décennie plus tôt chez Virgin et dont elle reprend l'intégralité des 10 titres, cette compilation offre l'intérêt majeur pour tous ceux qui ne collectionnaient pas de façon maniaque les 45 t séminaux publiés au compte-goutte par "le reclus" du Lincolnshire d'accéder aux 8 titres (Maxi 45, B sides et collaborations aux LP collectifs du Cartel) qui ont préparé et annoncé en 1984 la Genèse de "Old rottenhat".

Le maxi 45 (4 titres) "Work in progress" qui ouvre magnifiquement cette compil est à lui seul le résumé parfait des années Wyatt/Rough Trade (80/84) qualifiées par facilité "d'engagées et de militantes". Retiré du monde, physiquement cloué sur sa chaise roulante, condamné à l'artisanat du 4 pistes, Robert Wyatt applique à la lettre le mot d'ordre conceptuel d'un Kandinsky qui veut que tout artiste opératif et conscient de son art soit déjà, à lui seul une minorité opprimée.

D'où le processus de validation et de sublimation de son travail (qui passe nécessairement par un engagement mondialiste auprès de tous ceux qui, dans un monde dominé par la "barbarie triomphante" du néocolonialisme et le travail d'uniformisation culturelle engendrée par la logique du capitalisme, combattent pour assurer la reconnaissance légitime de leurs droits et de leur dignité.

Mondialisme. conscience et humanisme : Robert Wyatt. en Artiste Absolu, a raison 10 ans avant tout le monde. Devant l'effondrement des messianismes d'état et les idéologies "libératrices" marxisantes, l'engagement (concept



ROBERT WYATT : DISCOGRAPHIE COMPLETE

Soft Machine Single
Polydor 56151 - Love makes sweet music Feelin' feelin' squealin' (2 67)

Soft Machine Albums
Probe PLP 4500 - The soft machine (US only, 12 68)
Probe PLP 4500 - The soft machine (US only, 12 68)
Probe SFB 1002 - Volume two (10 69)
CBS 66246 - Third (double, 6 70)
CBS 64280 - Fourth (2 71)
ABC ACBCL 5004 - The Soft Machine collection (réédition des deux premiers LPs en double LP, 10 74)
Charly CR 30014 - At the beginning (1 77)
Harvest SHTW 800 - Triple echo (coffret triple album avec livret couleur, 3 77)
Charly CR 30196 - At the beginning (reedition, 2 81)
Strange fruit SFRLP 201 - The Soft Machine turns on (John Peel Session 69 71) (double album 05 91)

Matching Mole single
CBS 8101 - O Caroline Signed curtain (5 72)

Matching Mole Albums
CBS 64350 - Matching Mole (4 72)
CBS 62260 - Matching Mole's little red record (10 73)
CBS 32105 - Matching Mole (reédition, 5 82)

sartrien si obsolète qu'on peut lui prédire un retour en force) redevient un humanisme, un combat personnel et intime, au plus près de l'être. D'où l'absolue évidence et modernité des reprises telles que "Biko" (reléguant le tiers-mondiste Peter Gabriel au rang d'un vulgaire et pompeux bateleur de tréteaux médiatiques) ou "Te recuerdo Amanda" (du révolutionnaire et martyrisé chilien Victor Jara). Minimalisme, recueillement, scansion haletante d'une voix de tête, torturée et sereine, qui tutoie les anges mais célèbre la finitude des corps qui souffrent, la litanie envoûtante d'un orgue qui pervertit le concept même de religieux en le débarrassant de ses oripeaux grandiloquents ou prétentieux (cf. Eno, Emerson) pour mieux en exprimer l'essence : re-lier les consciences. Tout l'art de Wyatt est là - et qui va illuminer l'album "Old rottenhat" - : dénoncer l'intolérable mais échapper par une stylisation épurée (à la limite de la pauvreté - comme de l'arte povere ou des primitivistes italiens du Quattrocento) à la contingence historique pour viser l'universel. Emotion intacte, une musique qui ne prend pas une ride puisque hors du temps et des modes, une fidélité absolue a la "ligne claire" et au dépouillement qui place Robert Wyatt à la hauteur séminale d'un Lou Reed et peut-être même plus haut puisque celui-ci a l'intelligence que n'a plus celui-là : affirmer sa personnalité en évitant les pièges dorés de l'ego.

Dépouillement poussé à l'extrême avec "Pigs... (in there)" contribution à l'album collectif "Artists for animals" où Wyatt aux côtés de Durutti Column, Madness, Style Council et Anne Clark, dénonce l'indignité humaine infligeant des traitements dégradants aux animaux. Aucune indignation ni dénonciation, seulement une voix, exilée du plus profond d'elle-même, qui se déshumanise progressivement, cancérisation technologique de l'inhumanité en acte : terrifiant d'efficacité. Une grande leçon de Savoir-Vivre.

Enfin deux grandes perles n'appartenant pas à la ligne "engagée": "Memories of you" et "Round midnight", superbes covers en B side du maxi "Shipbuilding" produit par Elvis Costello et sorti en novembre 1982. Hommage appuyé de Wyatt aux influences jazzistiques qui ont fortement influencé ses débuts musicaux (cf. article ci-dessus). Avec "Memories of you" composé par le pianiste américain Eubie Blake en 1930, spécialiste du ragtime, hommage paternel et écho assourdi du "Memories" composé par Hugh Hopper et B side de son premier single solo "I'm a believer" sorti en

Robert Wyatt Singles

Virgin VS 111 - I'm a believer Memories (9/74)
Virgin VS 115 - Yesterday man Sonia (4/75)
Rough Trade RT 037 - Arauco Caimenera (p/s, 5/80)
Rough Trade RT 052 - At last I am free Strange fruit (p/s, 11/80)
Rough Trade RT 046 - Stalin wasn't stallin' (b/w "Stalingrad", par Peter Blackman, p/s, 2/81)
Rough Trade RT 081 - Grass (b/w "Trade Union", par Dishari, p/s, 8/81)
Rough Trade RT 115 - Shipbuilding Memories of you (p/s, 8/82)
Rough Trade RT 115 - Shipbuilding Memories of you (pochette ouvrante, p/s, 11/82)
Rough Trade RT 115T - Shipbuilding Memories of you Round Midnight (12", p/s, 11/82)
TUC 784 TUC 784 - The age of self ("Raise Your Banners High", par the Grimsthorpe Colliery Band p/s, 9/85)
Rough Trade RT 168 - The wind of change Namibia (chanté avec The Swapo singers, p/s, 10/85)
Rough Trade RT 168 T - The wind of change Namibia (12", p/s, 10/85)

Robert Wyatt EPs

Virgin VS 499 - From man to woman (plus members of cast, 4/82)
Rough Trade RT 149 - Work in progress (Biko Amber and the Amberines Yolanda Te Recuerdo Amanda, 12", 8/84)

Robert Wyatt Albums

CBS 64189 - The end of an ear (10/70)
Virgin V 2017 - Rock Bottom (7/74)
Virgin V 2034 - Ruth is stranger than Richard (4/75)
CBS 31846 - The end of an ear (réédition, 8/80)
Virgin VGD 3505 - Rock Bottom Ruth is stranger than Richard (réédition double album, 3/81)
Rough Trade ROUGH 35 - Nothing can stop us (premier pressage sans "Shipbuilding", 4/82)
Rough Trade ROUGH 35 - Nothing can stop us (contient "Shipbuilding", 4/83)

septembre 1974. Mélodie poignante, tempo ralenti, une nostalgie du fond des âges "Héroiques" de l'âme noire. Une très grande démonstration des possibilités vocales et harmoniques de Wyatt et une charge émotionnelle qui l'apparente idéalement aux dernières œuvres de la grande Billy Holiday. Avec l'impérissable "Round midnight" d'un autre grand reclus et génie musical Theolonus Monk, Wyatt salue son maître : le prince de l'économie, le grand architecte du silence, le Gary Fisher de la syncope. Un hommage sublime : Monk venait de s'éteindre 6 mois avant la sortie de "Shipbuilding". Il va sans dire que ces "minimalia" wyattiennes sont indispensables non seulement aux amateurs du grand Bob (s'ils ne les ont déjà) mais à tous ceux qui recherchent l'exigence musicale et la perfection formelle alliées aux plus hautes qualités humaines. Wyatt est incontournable et il le prouve une fois de plus à travers ces fragments et œuvres "de circonstances" où son art est au plus haut, entre minimalisme formel et charge émotionnelle maximale avec ce chant qui est, pour citer Marc Edouard Nabe. "l'oubli et la mémoire simultanée de tout ce qu'elle a souffert'". (SOFT MAD)

P.S. Une ou deux "réserves" méthodologiques sur la pertinence de la compilation Mid eighties :

1- pourquoi avoir oublié "Shipbuilding", la sublime collaboration Costello-Wyatt ?

2- pourquoi avoir omis les 2 litres : "Moments of delight" et "in the dark year" enregistrés par R. Wyatt avec le personnel d'Henry Cow en novembre 1984 sur 'The Last Nightingale" (45 t maxi, 5 titres, Recommended Records), superbes compositions free-jazz et s'insérant parfaitement dans la période traitée ?

3- pourquoi avoir écarté l'intégralité des 45 t Rough Trade ("Aranco", "Caimanera", et "At last I am free", "Strange
fruit", "Stalin was'n't slallin" et "Grass") quitte à faire un double CD, ou à écarter "Old Rottenhat" et en faire une compilation Rough Trade singles à part entière ?

Quien sabe, Amigo !

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France-Culture - Le rythme et la raison, la douleur et la paix - Le Monde - 1er mars 1992

LE RYTHME ET LA RAISON, LA DOULEUR ET LA PAIX

Contrairement à ce qu'il croit, Robert Wyatt gagne à être connu. Voilà plus d'un quart de siècle, depuis les débuts de Soft Machine en 1966, que le musicien de Canterbury joue à cache-cache, avec les médias et la célébrité, bien sûr, mais aussi avec son public, avec ses collègues musiciens.

Il vit aujourd'hui dans une semi-retraite, à Louth, au nord-est de l'Angleterre. Lorsqu'on vient l'y trouver, il manifeste étonnement et gratitude (à ne pas confondre avec surprise feinte et mondanité) que l'on en ait trouvé le temps et l'énergie. Ensuite, il se livre, avec lucidité et acuité. Robert Wyatt appartient à cette catégorie de musiciens qui comprennent leur propre musique mieux que personne. Et la netteté du regard qu'il porte sur son univers rejaillit sur le reste du monde.Qu'il explique ce qui l'a conduit à chanter de cette voix haute, toujours au bord de la rupture, alors que son registre naturel en ferait plutôt un baryton, ou les raisons de son engagement politique, Robert Wyatt, voix calme et léger zozotement (malheureusement couverts par la traduction simultanée), exerce la même attraction apaisante que lorsqu'il fait de la musique.

Pour les journalistes de France-Culture, il est revenu aux sources, à cette école de Canterbury dont sont issus les groupes qu'il fallait appeler " progressistes ", Soft Machine, bien sûr (nom emprunté à Burroughs), Caravan, Gong et autres bizarreries. On suivra ensuite Robert Wyatt avec Matching Mole (Taupe coordonnée, Soft Machine se traduisant en français par Machine molle), puis en solo. Hémiplégique depuis 1973, à la suite d'une chute, Wyatt a réalisé deux disques parfaitement à part, Rock Bottom et Ruth Is Stranger than Richard, deux moments sans équivalent : savants et simples, déchirants et sereins.

Depuis, Wyatt n'a enregistré que par à-coups. Dondestan (Rough Trade, distribution Virgin), son dernier album, est sorti l'été passé après un silence de cinq ans. Pendant les années 80, Wyatt avait trouvé une espèce de moteur auxiliaire dans le militantisme politique. Adhérent au Parti communiste britannique au moment où celui-ci éclatait, il a enregistré tout un album " révolutionnaire " (Old Rotten Hat, Rough Trade), mélangeant chansons cubaines et spirituals internationalistes (Stalin Wasn't Stallin, créé par le Golden Gate Quartet pendant la seconde guerre mondiale). Aujourd'hui, il n'a en rien renié son rejet des mécanismes du show-business, de la culture-marchandise, mais son adhésion militante n'a pas survécu aux bouleversements en Europe.

Wyatt s'est souvent expliqué du manque de confiance en lui-même qui lui rend difficile le passage de la porte d'un studio (le Monde du 19 septembre 1991), il y revient ici, et, une fois encore, on se demande comment cette somme d'incertitudes peut aboutir à une musique aussi simplement parfaite.

Sotinel Thomas

Ecouter l'émission "Le Rythme et la Raison"

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Le parti d'en vivre - Best - N° 282 - janvier 1992

LE PARTI D'EN VIVRE



L'homme n'est pas très doué pour la paix

Avant "l'accident", Robert avait une bonne bouille blonde à la Brian Jones et des articulations miraculeuses : c'était le batteur le plus fin, le plus fou, le plus solide de la planète des blancs. Depuis, **Robert Wyatt** ressemble à Raspoutine un lendemain d'avoine carabinée et son œuvre aux grimaces d'Einstein : barbu-rubicond-soufflé-à-roulettes (pas russes : de fauteuil ! Et pas à bascule!), il a toujours l'air de protester qu'il ne l'a pas fait exprès... Avant "l'accident", Robert était celui des Soft Machine qui éternuait sur la nappe, un virtuose, certes, mais fort mal embouché, pitre qui ne sait plus s'arrêter : "Moon In June" ("Third") est son chant du (vilain petit) canard, son rôle sur "Fourth" étant ignominieusement réduit aux effleurages de cymbales et toms. Accablé d'ennui, le lutin bâcle un solo ("The End Of An Ear", sortes de tableaux d'une déposition chaotique mais déjà magnifique), puis fonde Matching Mole (dada-hue !) dont il inonde les deux albums de ses amples foucades mao-déstructurées. C'est là que survient la moche cabriole... *« On festoyait au troisième étage... J'ai cru que je pourrais descendre en rappel par la gouttière, mais la gouttière n'a pas voulu !... »*

Fractures irrémédiables, bassin brisé, jambes mortes. Huit mois d'hôpital, la main volontariste de son amie Alfie, artiste prussienne tendance Rosa Luxembourg et ces mots sardoniques qui tournent dans sa tête sauve : Rock Bottom... Lequel devient musique en 74, sans doute le seul au monde où l'odeur de l'éther vous a un goût de revenez-y aussi envoûtant qu'une plainte velvetienne. Moins connu, son successeur, "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", s'ouvre plus nettement vers le commentaire social aigre-doux, mais encore sous le couvert d'un rock-jazz futé de facture infiniment britannique. L'émergence des punks, qui devrait combler d'aise le Wyatt anti-tout qu'on connaît, le contraint au contraire au mutisme (rares collaborations proto-art contemporain avec Mike Mantler et Carla Bley), puis à l'exil (en Espagne, où Franco pourtant râle encore) : rebelle dialectique, le bonhomme voue un culte à la beauté en tant que vecteur de contrastes, de contradictions si possible.



ROBERT WYATT : « matou »

Ce qui est simple n'est pas nécessairement pauvre, par exemple!... Et le voilà, lui, le ludion qu'on croyait anar, qui s'inscrit au Parti Communiste dont le moignon goddon est ridiculement stalinien! Sa production des années suivantes, à partir de 80, s'articule autour du concept des singles ponctuels, où l'homme au basisme supposé ingénu de la pop (reprise du "I'm A Believer" des Monkees) s'oppose à la critique atrabilaire de l'évidence, et où l'humour volontiers abscon alterne avec l'essence de colère au premier degré (le confondant "Shipbuilding" antiguerre des Malouines écrit par Costello : ça durant cette période, Wyatt, s'il chante plus sublime et barjot que jamais, ne compose presque rien...). Une compilation Rough Trade et l'album de bric et de broc "Old Rottenhat" rendent dignement compte des errements didactiques de Robert en cette décade à courte vue. Enfin elle se clôt, et survint "Dondestan", où flottent à nouveau les méandres fuligineux de l'orgue Riviera qui firent les délices de linceul de "Rock Bottom". Plus des paroles à cru, ces mélopées comme des mantras passées au laminoir d'une voix ultime, unique et qui s'en marre derrière une masse de longs fils gris, au fin-fond d'une province anglaise qui sent la mer, dans une chaude maison banale où règnent une femme trapue et un parfum de savon tiède... *« Ce petit orgue de rien du tout, je l'avais dégotté par hasard quelque part en Italie : il avait ce son mélancolique et naïf que je devais chercher depuis l'enfance, probablement... Sans lui, je n'aurais pas pu composer "Rock Bottom", encore moins l'enregistrer! Et puis il a servi un putain de groupe rock qui me l'a cassé, je l'ai oublié dans un coin. Jusqu'à ce qu'« on » me pousse à le faire réparer, et comme je suis bonne pâte !... Ce n'est qu'un jouet, au fond, et voilà qu'on me dit « ô miracle ! » !... »*

Le son est tellement spécial qu'on ne songe même pas à lui donner un âge... *« Moi si! J'apprécie le temps qui passe, mais pas qu'on le découpe en tranches : dans ce cas là, je ne me souviens pas des sixties — trop défoncé! J'abomine les seventies — elles m'ont fait mal partout ! Et je conchie les eighties — tellement pauvres musicalement et socialement que les aigrefins ont inventé le concept néo-colonial de "world music " ! Je n'écoute que du jazz, ou la musique que les Indes, l'Egypte et le Burundi font depuis trois mille ans, pas les ersatz qu'on leur dérobe... Je suis un vieux matou immobile et revêche! (rires).* L'accueil fait à "Dondestan" me fait plaisir, pourtant, mais je ne crois vraiment pas pouvoir le jouer live : la scène est encore un enfer pour les gens comme moi, techniquement et financièrement, et c'est dommage parce que même dans cette maison, même un homme tassé sur une chaise ne font pas forcément de la confiture d'harmonie et de sérénité. L'homme n'est pas très doué pour la paix !... » C'est pour ça que Robert Wyatt demeure

communiste contre vents et marées ?... *« Mais c'est maintenant qu'il faut se proclamer communiste! Quand les rats ont quitté le navire! Retour aux catacombes! Revers de la farce! Jouvence! Le pessimisme, c'est espérer toujours!... »*

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Robert Wyatt, le rescapé du rock - L'Evènement du jeudi - N° 365 - du 31 octobre au 6 novembre 1991

Robert Wyatt, le rescapé du rock



Après cinq ans de silence, l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine, rockeur en fauteuil roulant, un temps converti au communisme, sort un nouvel album.

Robert Wyatt a une barbe un peu folle et les cheveux longs. Il a 47 ans et vit à Louth, une bourgade anglaise sans importance au nord-est de Londres. Robert Wyatt sort des disques au compte-gouttes. A chaque fois, on se laisse prendre à cette voix liquide et mélancolique qui, depuis trente ans, psalmodie d'étranges mélodies, entre rock dadaïste et jazz désenchanté. Après s'être tu pendant cinq ans, Robert Wyatt revient avec *Dondestan* (« Où sont-ils ? ») dédié aux apatrides.

Dans les années 60, Robert Wyatt était le batteur fantasque de Soft Machine, groupe

phare avec Pink Floyd de ce rock londonien avant-gardiste, qui servit de bande-son aux événements de Mai 68 : « *Nous n'avons jamais pensé jouer du rock. Probablement du fait que notre musique n'entrait pas dans un format déjà existant, nous nous sentions plus près de gens comme le jazzman Ornette Coleman qui avait en quelque sorte inventé une musique. On ne savait pas comment jouer de la pop... La pop n'offrait pas assez d'espace ouvert à l'improvisation.* » Soft Machine tourne aux Etats-Unis avec Jimi Hendrix. Les pataphysiciens les élèvent au rang de chevaliers de la Grande Gidouille. Robert Wyatt met au point un jeu fantasque de batterie, où cymbales et fûts chantent plus qu'ils ne marquent le rythme. Il chante aussi : « *La batterie est un instrument atonal qui produit des rythmes et une texture, une énergie, que j'appréciais dans le jazz. Mais en tant que consommateur de musique, ce qui me hantait, c'était de petits fragments de mélodie qui se stockaient dans mon esprit et n 'avaient pas l'opportunité de se développer dans ce contexte. J'avais donc besoin de trouver un contexte. Ensuite, ça a été un processus lent...* » Dès le quatrième album, sous l'impulsion du froid Mike Ratledge, la « Machine molle » s'oriente vers une musique de plus en plus structurée, oubliant son principe fondateur: « *L'absurdité comme élément libérateur.* » Robert Wyatt ne le supporte pas. Et s'en va. «Je ne voulais plus consacrer ma vie à être dans une machine de plus en plus efficace... Ils recherchaient quelqu'un de plus professionnel, j'étais considéré comme un amateur fini. » II fonde son propre groupe, Matching Molle, d'inspiration gauchiste : « Ce qui est bien dans le rock, c'est son côté démocratique, tout le monde peut en faire, tout le monde peut en écouter. »



Une nuit de l'été 1973, c'est le drame. Au cours d'une fête, Robert Wyatt, qui a toujours aimé boire, se prend pour un oiseau. Il sera paraplégique à vie. Adieu la batterie... Après un an d'hospitalisation, il enregistre grâce à Nick Mason, le batteur de Pink Floyd, *Rock Bottom*, un album magique, à mille lieues de ce que l'on entendait à l'époque. Il y chante un monde brumeux : « *Je chante presque une espèce de nostalgie pour des rêves qui ne se sont jamais réalisés : ce n'est pas tout à fait du militantisme.* »

Au début des années 80, Robert Wyatt le pataphysicien adhère au matérialisme dialectique et milite au Parti communiste britannique. « *Dans les seventies, j'ai voulu rejoindre des gens d'une classe qui s'éduque en permanence. Ma femme et moi étions sans cesse à recherche de livres et il était plus stimulant d'être dans un milieu où les livres circulent tout le temps. Le PC semblait un bon vecteur, car en Angleterre il n 'a jamais eu ni la crédibilité ni la taille de ceux de France ou d'Italie, pour d'évidentes raisons historiques : chez vous, la résistance passait par le communisme ; ici, elle s'appelait Winston Churchill... Je sentais que j'étais prêt pour rejoindre une organisation politique qui était aussi impopulaire et incomprise que pouvait l'être l'avant-garde dans le milieu artistique.* »

Dans la foulée, il enregistre des titres comme *Stalin Wasn't Stallin* (« Staline rigolait pas ») qui avait été lancé par le Golden Gate Quartet pendant la guerre... « *J'ai toujours été un léniniste romantique* », dit-il.

Aujourd'hui, revenu de tout (en dehors d'une certaine nostalgie pour Cuba), Robert Wyatt, sage en chaise roulante, qui se cache tantôt derrière des habits de clown surdoué, tantôt de savant fou, compose des morceaux d'extraterrestre en quête de paysage. C'est pour ça qu'on l'admire.

Yann PLOUGASTEL

CD Dondestan, Rough Trade, distr. Virgin, 30870. Pour des raisons incompréhensibles, les premiers albums de Soft Machine et de Robert Wyatt ne sont plus disponibles...

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Wyatt le survolté - Libération - 26 et 27 octobre 1991

WYATT LE SURVOLTÉ

Libération

Une demi-douzaine d'années après sa dernière canette à la mer, le crypto-stalinien du pataphysico-jazz-pop anglais remet ça. La même scie, mais pas tout à fait mais si: loin de "Guantanamera", "Dondestan".


TUBE

WYATT LE SURVOLTÉ

Granma

In spite of the blockade

Il faut le voir comme le nain des jardins potagers: un peu minable mais en même temps là, tutélairement ; la brouette, l'assiette de lait, une rumeur secrète des petites choses de rien, tout ça. Au bout d'un moment, les pieds dans l'herbe, au bord de la petite mare, le bonnet se fond dans le tableau au milieu des bégonias, et voilà comme on finit par oublier les Wyatt. Pas de quoi en faire une paraplégie. Chacun son tour, la roue tourne. Et Moon Martin, alors ? D'ailleurs il a eu sa carte, ce qui est, comme la conversion à l'islam terroriste (Cat Stevens), une raison suffisante de disqualification. Sans compter la barbe. Ou la lassitude...

Rock Bottom : pas tout à fait vingt ans, petite révolution dans le système nerveux central du rock "décadent" ; entre Syd Barrett disons, pour la descente on vous demande, et cri primal (hi) ou quelque chose comme ça, un ex-Soft(ies) Machine, complètement mao-spontex expérimental côté Chandelle Verte (et éthylisme artiste revisité beat-generation) au Pink Floyd, relevant de suicide et/ou de LSD dans une petite voiture, couine et geint tel un gros foetus jazz pré new-wave rouillé, au fil d'un 33 T UFO longuement réfléchi (un an d'hôpital) qui fera date. C'est à dire doute.

Drain de piano lunatique, prothèses ternaires bidouillées, bruitisme clinique et gloussements d'eunuque crypto-bolchévique, sous le signe du déviationnisme infantile électro-acoustique et du grabouillas, cette matrice triste dépose un son typique définissable ainsi, entre corps, panique et orgue (de Staline) : l'organique.

Les pièces-maîtresses minimalistes de ce puzzle mental déphasant de Robert Wyatt, apprenti jazzman bonasse né d'un défenestrage planant, ne changeront plus; tout est là, en place. La musique de chambre de contention est inventée. Blanche, à commencer par la pochette mesquine. Il faut remonter à Erik Satie et à ses séries grises, titres potagers alignés, *Danse maigre*, *Embryons dessséchés* et petit humour amidonné, tics à la gomme, pour trouver plus plâtreusement lymphatique et vieux garçon pitre.

Oublions *Rock Bottom*. Le suivant, qui n'est pas mal (on a oublié le titre - *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* ou l'inverse ?), le répète convenablement, en moins bien donc, et ainsi de suite, la piste se brouillant dès lors. (1)

Dondestan, celui d'aujourd'hui, sous sa pochette coloriée cucu à souhait (bobonne écrivaine, les chiens, le miaou, le balcon, la table, la mer avec le soleil, les chaussons, le gentil monsieur il est dans son fauteuil, le nain dans le jardin - ah non, tiens...), ne déroge pas à la règle. Dans la ligne. Mais en dix ans, quinze de négligence et d'oubli du coco, on a eu le loisir de se distraire les tympans, qu'il commençait peut-être à légèrement nous briser des Soft machin et consorts Molle (Khomsomol ?), et, par ces temps de néo-babacooleries, le come-back du dégringolé tombe à pile. Petite remise à l'heure, jolie leçon. Rien à voir en effet entre le bonhomme Robert, saisi ici dans sa bizarre pérennité autistique récurrente, et tant de ses collègues indécrochables sur le retour type Jethro, Winwood, Mor(t)isson (Van ou Jim, quelle importance ?), Clapton, Floyd, Genesis, activistes surexposés mais tellement HS.

Le brave vieux barbe pas si ronchon que ça de Wyatt, lui, ce serait plutôt l'ombre, face cachée de l'hallu : dans la famille des "beaux perdants" plus ou moins explosés (le copain d'Amérique : Brian Wilson ; l'oncle tueur : John Martyn ; le frère-légume : Syd Barrett ; le père complètement barré, Scott Walker ; le cadet roadie, Wreckless Eric ; la bonne-soeur : Marianne Faithfull, etc.), je demande... le révérend frère supérieur.

Pour ne rien gâter, le monsieur ayant pris la peine tout à fait *progressivement*, de ne pas progresser d'un iota durant l'éclipse à répétition, on se réveille avec lui comme on s'assoupissait : Hein quoi, il est l'heure ?
- 1991, mon vieux. Ca boume ?

Tu parles. Si, dès la première seconde de la première (deuxième, troisième, quatrièmmmmme...) plage placentaire de ce manifeste pour une démobilisation hydrophile, l'air spongieux qui nous est joué est assez celui de la rengaine (blblbgnagnabubbubbbbbhhhhh...), l'ouverture de la cinquième reprise, elle (que rien, techniquement n'interdit de passer d'entrée), peut saisir. Enfin, n'exagérons rien, n'est-ce pas. Hi. *Shrinkrap*. Nous tenons là une manière de break-dance, rien moins, mettant en branle clavier et voix au timbre similaire, fausset, un grelot jerk : on s'énerve, on s'énerve.

Filet mélodique insaisissablement free à la clef, fun lugubre de rigueur, avec la suite les choses vont rentrer dans l'ordre, développant les qualités lancinantes familières d'improvisation funambulesque du revenant paralytique. Méditation contemplative, répétitions, séries, minuties. Au fait tout cela pourrait être signé sur les intros du moins, par Murat de chez nous - amateur, entre deux retours de Ferrat ou Ferry.

La cathédrale jazzy pop, imbriqué de McCartney et Talk Talk mettons sur le mode thème et variations, qui monte bientôt, *Left On Man* sans doute, comme un effritement à l'envers, est difficilement nommable. C'est une pâtée : grouillement de petites erreurs lâches emmêlées, attendrissements utérins vaguement répugnants malaxés au farfisa de barbarie et au re-re. Soudain, cela glisse et biaise. De 7 à 8. Nico la droguée en vélo (à cheval, etc.) n'est pas loin, *Einstein On The Beach* non plus ; c'est juste Bob le jarryen en roue libre, pédalant dans *Lisp Service*. Jusqu'à ce que, harmonies barbituriques s'en mêlant, la chose, mignardement liturgique si l'on veut et désaxée, touche à son comble bref : du grégorien mesquin, entonné par des basses liliputiennes à la ferveur tatillonne, comme un troupeau d'ogres bergers rabougris chassant une bêlante brebis perdue à la laine synthétique - ce qui ne veut rien dire.

Assez longtemps, après ces évènements (dix pièces en tout, deux fois vif et huit fois lent, aux textes "engagés" vaguement idiots mais parfois jolis (2) et aux intitulés plus ou moins tarabiscotés tels que *Catholic Architecture*, *Worship*, *The Sight Of The Wind*, *CP Jeebies*...), le disque cesse. Quand il aurait pu continuer à divaguer (*Dondestan* - Où suis-je ?), dans le mêlme décousu inspiré et gaga à la fois (*N.I.O.*) sans dommage majeur. Comme cette note ou son point final.

BAYON

(1) En vrac, un coup proto-jazz avec Michael Mantler ; un coup militant métaguévariste avec Working Work : Venceremos ; un coup littéraire avec Marianne Faithfull et Jack Bruce (incantations), Soupault et Beckett (poésie), etc.

2) "Everybody loves me/Everyone but me" ou "Parasol".

Dondestan, CD/LP/K7 Virgin.

" Pas du rock "

Dans l'entretien qui suit Robert Wyatt l'ermite parle sans façon de lui, c'est à dire de sa musique, hantée par l'idée du jazz.

Batteur-chanteur de Soft Machine, leader de Matching Mole, académisé Charles Cros en 1974 pour l'album solo *Rock Bottom*, "cultivé" par Ruychi Sakamoto, Everything But The Girl, Happy End, Tears For Fears ou Costello, tombé d'une gouttière en juin 1973, silencieux depuis six ans *(Old Rotten Hat*), Robert Wyatt.

Dondestan, enregistré dans le Lincolnshire avec Alfie (épouse auteur de la moitié des textes ; *Lisp service* étant signé Hugh Hopper, ex-Softies), est un volume précieux. Humble drolatiquement, comme l'individu. Fuyant mais nerveux tel sa musique, sur laquelle flotte une voix dolente reconnaissable entre toutes.

LIBERATION. Pourquoi six ans de silence ?
R.W. Je n'ai pas encore résolu si je veux ou non être musicien quand je serai grand. Je me dis que j'ai déjà tenté ci ou ça... Et finalement, je ne sais rien faire d'autre.

LIBERATION. En tant que consommateur, qu'écoutez-vous ?
R.W. Du jazz. Des trucs rap. C'est agréable d'entendre ce parler de la rue, au

lieu des conneries romantiques d'Anita Baker. Les réactions à ces textes me font marrer. Moi-même, combien de fois m'a-t-on dit : "*Comment peut-on écrire des trucs pareils?*". Pourquoi avoir peur ? Je ne suis pas armé.

LIBERATION. Mais les rappeurs américains ?
R.W. L'Amérique est le pays des armes à feu, celui où on décore des meurtiers comme Schwartzkopf.

LIBERATION. La guerre du Golf justement.
R.W. J'enregistrais, je n'ai donc pas très bien suivi. Emotionnellement, je suis devenu ce que je ne pensais pas être : un pacifiste. L'excitation presque sexuelle des tueries m'a choqué. Je ne peux concevoir une guerre juste, et quand bien même, je ne pourrais pas la trouver enthousiasmante.

LIBERATION. Le titre en espagnol...
R.W. Le nom d'un lieu qu'on aurait l'impression d'avoir déjà entendu sans pouvoir le situer...

LIBERATION. Mais ça veut bien dire "Où sont-ils" ?
R.W. Le disque traite en quelque sorte de la dérive, du déracinement.

LIBERATION. Vous y jouez absolument tous les instruments...
R.W. Ce doit être le seul terrain où je me venge de ma paraplégie. La seule chose que je puisse faire sans aide.

LIBERATION. Avant, et après l'accident ?
R.W. Je suis plus traumatisé par certaines mésaventures antérieures à ma chute. Quand je me suis fracassé le dos, j'ai juste pensé : "Typique".

LIBERATION. Aussi simple que ça ?
R.W. Oui, comme la vérification physique de quelque chose qui m'était de toute façon déjà arrivé. J'étais mal barré, totalement paumé. Je n'ai jamais su quoi faire, jamais eu de projet.

LIBERATION. Votre carte.
R.W. Je me suis inscrit à la fin des seventies et j'y suis resté dix ans. j'ai adhéré par sympathie avec les artistes sympathisants qui disaient " *notre fonction est l'ambiguïté*". J'ai été communiste pour ne pas être un non-communiste, et rendu ma carte après m'être fait des amis qui ne croyaient pas tout ce qu'ils lisaient dans la presse du Parti.

LIBERATION. Aujourd'hui, vous considérez-vous toujours communiste ?
R.W. Plus que jamais depuis qu'on parle de l'effondrement du socialisme. Ce que je n'aimais pas avant, l'impérialisme, le colonialisme, etc. en devient d'autant plus puissant. Si j'avais de bonnes raisons il y a dix ans de me méfier, j'en ai dix fois plus maintenant ; j'éprouve une obligation d'autant plus pressante à parler.

LIBERATION. *Dondestan* vous satisfait ?
R.W. Oui, avec les réserves habituelles: je regrette de ne pas être Charlie Mingus.

LIBERATION. Vous vous sentez limité ?
R.W. Je suis un potier s'appliquant à tourner de bons pots.

LIBERATION. Pourquoi le jazz ?
R.W. Je ne comprends toujours pas comment ça fonctionne. Des types comme Duke Ellington ont jeté l'architecture par la fenêtre. Avec une symphonie, on sait où on va ; avec le jazz... Comme une conversation. Improvisation et planification, fluide tout en étant très rythmique. Quelle intelligence !

LIBERATION. Et le rock ?
R.W. Je n'aime pas ses évidences rythmiques militaires. A part ça, j'ignore ce qu'est le rock, mais je suis sûr que je n'en écoute pas.

LIBERATION. Sans votre femme, où en seriez-vous ?
R.W. Inconcevable. Elle m'a reconstruit, recollé mes morceaux ramassés un

peu partout, en oubliant de se construire elle-même. Elle peignait, réalisait des films, écrivait des poèmes mais elle a choisi mon "Je ne sais quoi". Elle a pris en charge mes incapacités psychologiques et physiques, donc je compte qu'elle composera et chantera mon prochain album - comme ça je n'aurai plus rien à faire.

LIBERATION. C'est votre but ?
R.W. Oui. Devenir éthéré, éminence grise sans substance ni fonction.

LIBERATION. On dit que vous n'aimez pas parler du passé.
R.W. Faute de réponses honnêtes. J'ai été humilié, donc j'essaie de réécrire l'histoire afin de m'en sortir un peu dignement. Typiquement staliniste. Je n'étais pas doué à l'école, faire de la musique m'a donné confiance en moi ; mais quand j'ai voulu m'en mêler, on m'a dédaigné... J'ai toujours dit que j'avais quitté les Softies : faux : j'ai été renvoyé. J'ai toujours peur qu'on dise que les autres avaient raison, qu'après tout je n'étais pas bon.

BARBARIAN

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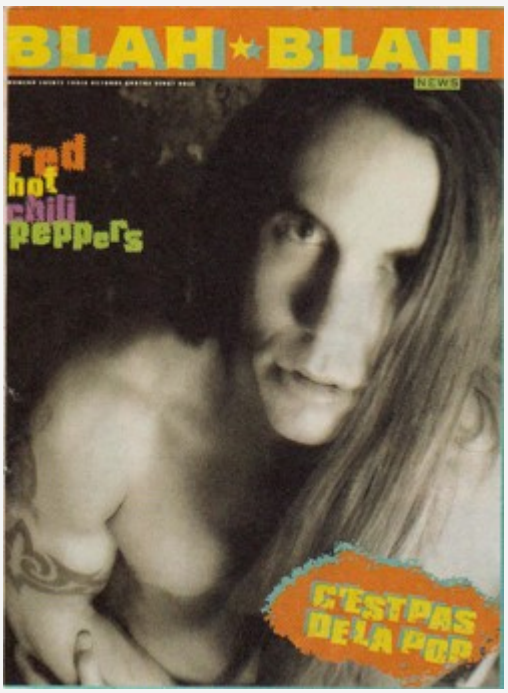
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L'orgue à Robert - Blah-Blah - N° 33 - octobre 1991

L'ORGUE A ROBERT

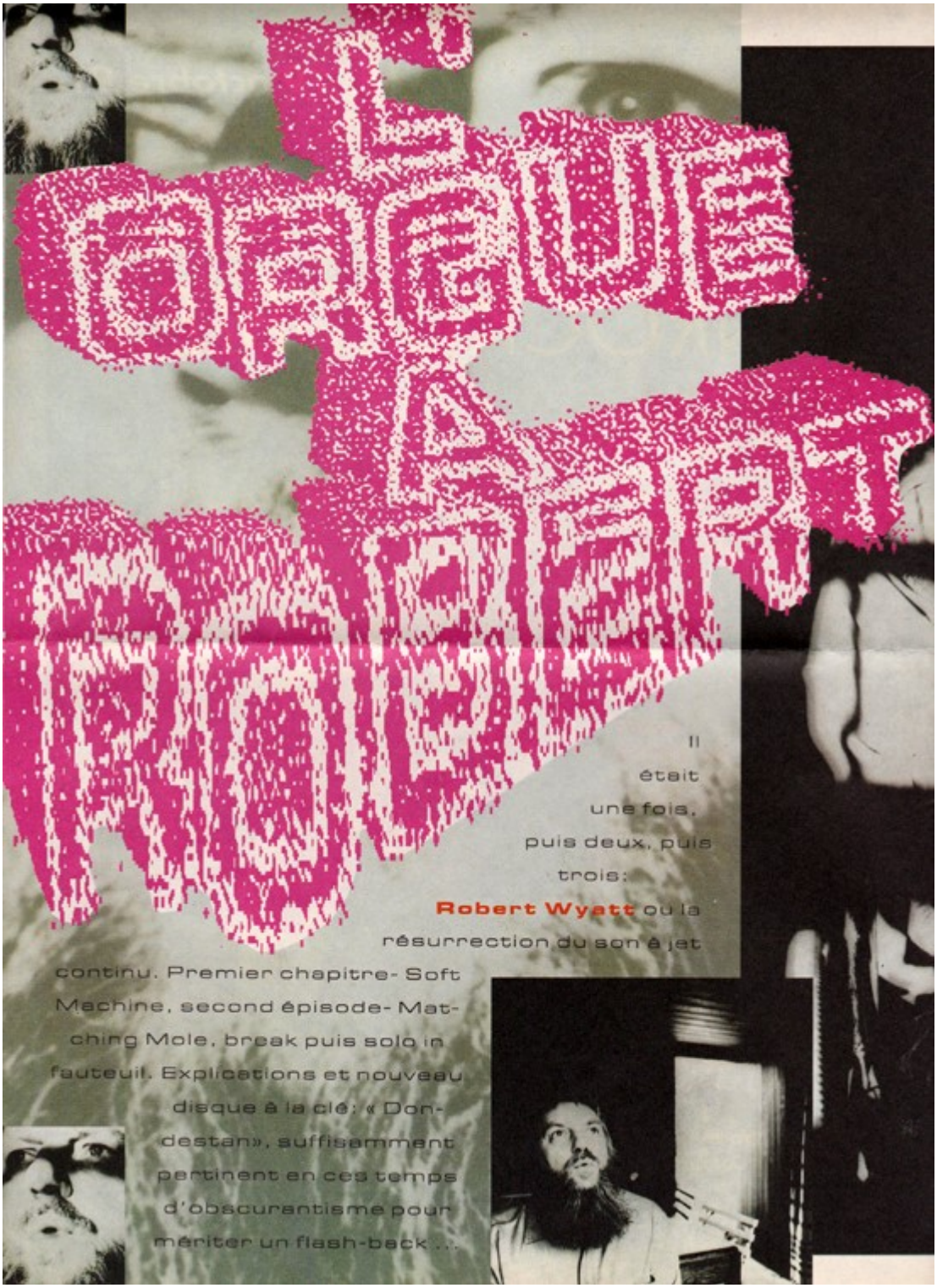


Il était une fois, puis deux, puis trois : **Robert Wyatt** ou la résurrection du son à jet continu.

Premier chapitre : Soft Machine, second épisode - Matching Mole, break puis solo in fauteuil.

Explications et nouveau disque à la clé: "Dondestan", suffisamment pertinent en ces temps d'obscurantisme pour mériter un flash-back...

Je vous parle d'un temps que les moins de trente ans risquent de ne pas connaître, trouvant le terrain trop miné, les chemises trop Paisley et le son - un chouilla décoloré. Que nenni mes bons, que nenni, il s'en faut de beaucoup que la première apparition de Soft Machine et de son batteur-chanteur-trompettiste - guitariste-pianiste - le Wyatt en question qui nous occupe précisément là, se soit faîte dans le silence le plus terrible.



Avec les rééditions qui sortent aujourd'hui on cerne mieux l'importance de la « Machine Molle» titre emprunté par l'organiste Michael Ratledge à un livre de William Burroughs. On comprend mieux les raisons pour lesquelles les «Volume Un et Deux» (Ace-distribution Média 7), le «Third Album» (Sony-import USA) et les Peel Sessions de Soft en 70/71 (Strange Fruit - Wotre Music) sont des disques qui DOIVENT figurer dans toute discothèque qui se respecte. Ces raisons tiennent en peu de mots, mais de taille : des individus inspirés et créatifs autour d'un clavier qui fait le son. Et la liste des musiciens est longue - qui va de Daevid Allen qui formera Gong, enregistrant juste «Feelin, Reelin, Squeelin» produit par Kim Fowley, en passant par Kevin Ayers, le chanteur à redécouvrir absolument pour une poignée de titres magiques, Hugh Hopper le bassiste et l'âme de Soft à partir du second album, Michael Ratledge le premier à expérimenter les trifouillages sonores au synthétiseur, le saxo Elton Dean et puis les batteurs: Wyatt, Phil Howard et John Marshall; une somme plus forte que ces simples éléments.

Là où le Floyd s'est spécialisé dans le planant et le pathos (the Wall), le chemin du Soft a été de mélanger toutes les influences existantes de l'époque pour faire sa musique; et là l'histoire du rock ne bégaye pas- le mélange va du contemporain via Schoenberg, au dadaïsme et au surréalisme en passant par le jazz, la musique répétitive et les expérimentations avec les nouveaux instruments, sans oublier celles sur la voix par Wyatt, encore à partir d'une trame qui se nomme justement le psychédélisme anglais. Mais l'originalité du groupe ne s'arrête pas là, car ils sont aussi les premiers à jouer des lights-shows et à faire de longs concerts qui passent par de longues improvisations entrecoupées de leurs morceaux construits (qui servent d'intermèdes) et pas le contraire - toute l'astuce est là.

Mais un tel équilibrisme musical ne pouvait durer qui, en faisant sans cesse exploser des schémas repoussait sans arrêt les limites musicales. L'alchimie disparue, avec ses fondateurs partant les uns après les autres pour de nouvelles expériences, il reste comme traces ces disques qui ne sont pas prêts de prendre des rides, à moins que vous n'ayez déjà les portugaises ensablées... « Avec Soft Machine, j'étais le chien de la famille, tapant sur mes tambours, ouvrant ma gueule pour chanter et la refermant pour taper sur autre chose... Il se peut que j'ai inventé quelque chose pour le chant - la façon de servir de la voix comme d'un harmonica, en alternant aspiration et expiration - ce qui permet d'avoir un son continu - mais ma contribution s'arrête là.» Wyatt est le fils d'une écrivain Honor Wyatt et même si depuis son accident en 73, il n'est plus batteur, car resté paraplégique après une chute de trois étages, il est encore peintre, percussioniste, chanteur, compositeur et doué d'un humour peu commun que «Dondestan» ne révèle que peu.

Dernier flashback, l'épisode 71-73. Musicien adulé, rock star demandée partout pour jouer ou chanter, on peux le repérer avec Eno, Manzanera, Carla Bley, Nick Mason, Keith Tippett quand il n'officie pas avec son groupe Matching Mole (jeu de mot sur un jeu de mot sur un jeu de mot - merci Gertrude Stein). Un batteur paraplégique - un gag, oui mais pas un percussionniste-chanteur. Là où d'autres se seraient laissé mourir à petit feu, le batteur - rock le plus jazz de la planète (avec celui de Can) sort un chef d'oeuvre intitulé «Rock Bottom» (Virgin), en forme de bombe glacée - mais de bombe quand même. Seule sa créativité et l'amour retrouvé pour un peintre - la fameuse Alfie de ses pochettes, son actuelle compagne, lui permettent de ne pas sombrer. "Rock Bottom", c'est un tableau de Tanguy, un tableau avec de bizarres formes colorées mais à dominante grise, et qui dans ce cas précis perdrait ses couleurs au moment même ou l'on porte son regard dessus. "Je n'ai jamais eu autant confiance en moi en tant que chanteur-compositeur que quand j'étais batteur. Je me sens intimidé en studio, les nouvelles technologies m'intimident et cela me rend Cro-Magnon" . J'ai du mal à écrire des chansons, cela ne m'est pas naturel; mon premier intérêt est pour la batterie (le drum-kit) pas pour la guitare ou le synthétiseur. Chez moi, c'est le rythme qui est premier et je ne peux pas composer sans avoir défini des éléments de base , et de texture rythmique.

C'est le nouveau Wyatt qui émerge là, un batteur reconverti dans le minimalisme de moyens, mais qui en tire une beauté désolée et pétrifiante par l'emploi judicieux de claviers qui viennent rehausser l'emploi des toms et son jeu de cymbale - sa marque de fabrique qui donne le contrepoint exact de sa voix. 75 voit émerger un Wyatt ayant retrouvé toute sa confiance et qui s'adjoint Mongezi Feza et Dudu Pukwana trompettiste et saxophoniste pour un disque qui reprend et la route du jazz et celle des comptines déboussolées du temps de «Moon in June» ou de «Caroline», en moins pop. Comme s'il tentait de reprendre les expérimentations là où il s'était arrêté avec son accident. Un disque majestueux, déconnant et dépouillé qui n'a d'équivalent que le «Dinner Music» du Carla Bley Band. « C'est à ce moment vers 73 que j'ai commencé à chanter en espagnol pour montrer que l'Amérique ne s'arrêtait aux frontières anglo-américaines et qu'il existait d'autres pays qui s'appelaient le Chili ou Cuba...» Et puis ,c'est le silence radio, imposé par le punk. Wyatt (comme Tom Petty) trouve que vers 75, la pauvreté des textes et des démarches devient consternante; et comme l'autre, il est trop vieux pour devenir un punk. De l'avant-garde au punk, il n'y a que Bizot en France pour sauter le pas... Donc Wyatt se tourne vers d'autres horizons, il se rapproche des communistes anglais, après avoir mis à mal les structures musicales du rock, il fait la révolution dans sa tête et sort au début des années 80 deux albums « Old Rottenhat» et «Nothing Can Stop Us» qui font encore plus signe aujourd'hui qu'à leur sortie. Sa démarche de mettre en avant des chansons telles que Strange Fruit, The Age of Self, Red Flag, Stalin wasn't Stallm, British Road - ou de faire jouer de la world-music avant qu'on n'ose même en parler, font de lui un musicien touche à tout qui balance des vignettes et des libelles sur l'ère Thatcher qui tenant compte du peu de singularité du rock anglais (néo-machin truc) va piocher dans les classiques et les relifte par son interprétation. C'est toujours du grand Wyatt, même avec un son différent et un traitement particulier. La voie de la voix... Costello ne s'y trompe pas qui accepte de produire sa version de «Shipbuilding» - gros tube évident. Puis, les déclarations à la presse

arrivent, où un Wyatt toujours conséquent décide de se retirer à l'étranger, passablement dégoutté qu'il est du show-biz qui lui fait des entourloupes. Exil en Espagne et silence musical pendant cinq autres années où on se demande dans quelle morosité il a sombré et pourquoi l'enchanteur à roulettes se tient en retrait: plus rien à dire, à faire ou à créer?



Aujourd'hui, "Dondestan" est dans les bacs des disquaires, encore une fois à part. Solo pour ce qu'est devenu le propos et les amis disparus; mais aussi en 11 titres, la preuve qu'il n'a pas fini de se métamorphoser. Aujourd'hui il se prend pour un Cro-magnon de studio qui ne comprends plus le maniement de la technologie des années 90 et se retrouve avec ses vieux instruments à la quête d'un son qui se démarque d'autant plus, par sa construction, des produits sophistiqués qu'on trouve sur le marché de la culture. Seulement, malgré cela, la magie est au rendez-vous, le travail parfait et on en redemande. Dondestan repart des recherches sonores de «Rock Bottom», avec des climats moins tendus, moins désespérés et flippés qu'auparavant, pour atterrir sur une nouvelle planète qui doit plus au jazz pour le feeling et le son qu'au rock d'hier. C'est un moyen commode de remettre la main à la pâte. Un retour en arrière - ou mieux, désolé pour l'image, un coup de pied au fond de la piscine, vers la lumière et l'air libre. Piano, percus, synthés et jeu modal sont là, avec des textes poétiques et sa voix, la grande voix d'un revenant qu'on n'osait plus attendre. «L'excitation de la création, chez moi, ne vient pas de la musique, en premier lieu, mais de la peinture. Quand j'étais jeune, je ne pensais pas devenir musicien ou encore artiste. Je me suis aperçu de l'effet qu'avait la musique sur moi ,au collège, quand je n'ai plus pu pratiquer en écoutant mes disques - cela m'a fait un choc et j'ai reconsidéré et mon approche de la peinture et celle de la musique...

Dondestan: l'album vient d'un voyage en Espagne au milieu des années 80 où Wyatt et sa femme devaient passer quelques temps et ils y ont trouvé du travail - elle comme

illustratrice de livres pour enfants, lui à la radio. Là, ils ont pris des notes, et à partir de ces notes l'album est né (quelques années plus tard...) «Dondestan», le morceau-titre parle des gens qui, d'une manière assez ironique, possèdent une culture, des racines un mode de vie spécifique et qui sont sans arrêt sous la coupe d'autres gouvernements qui les empêche de vivre selon leur désirs (Kurdes, Arméniens, Palestiniens). La lutte continue.

J P Simart

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Le chant du cygne - Guitares & claviers - N° 123 - octobre 1991



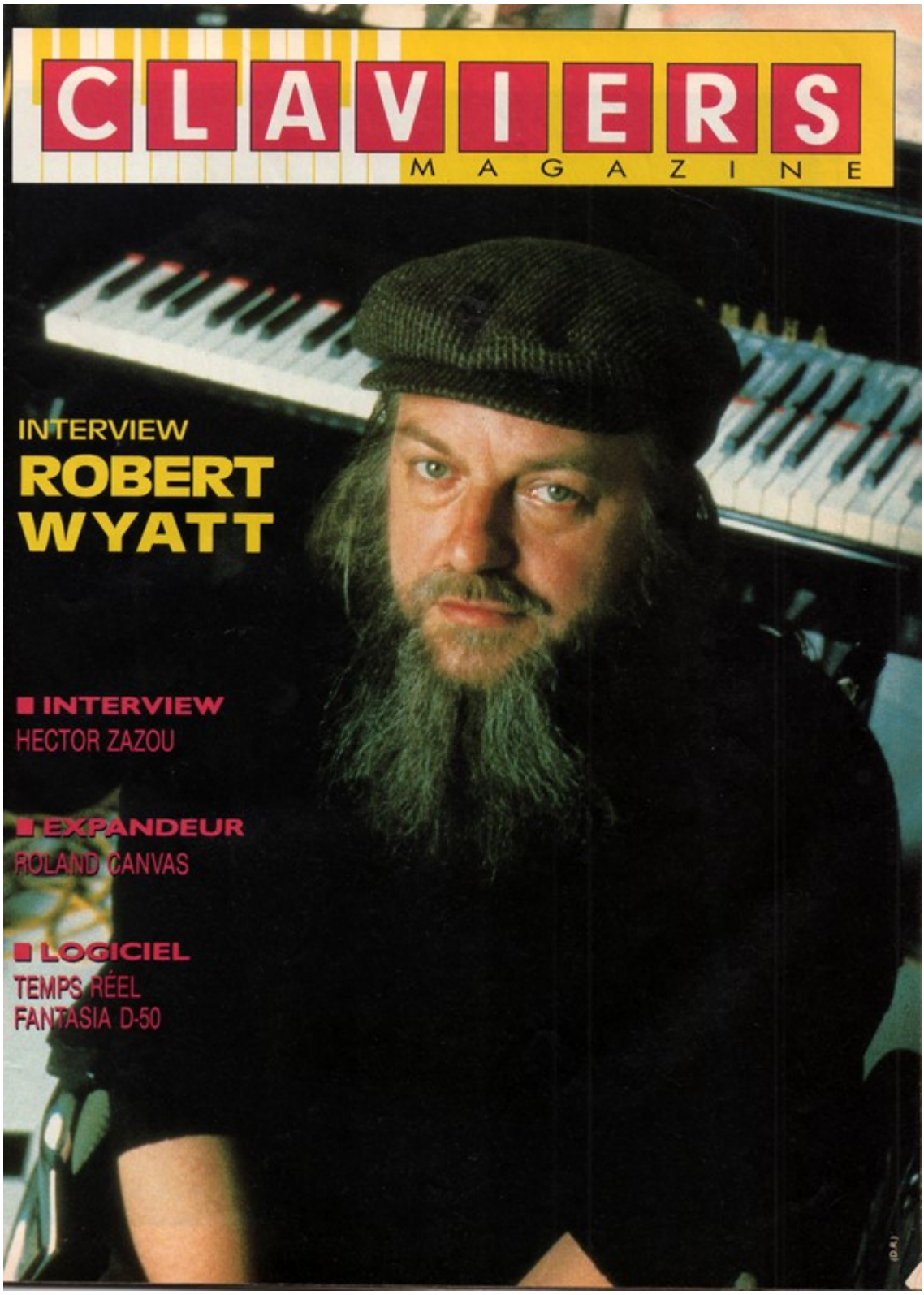
LE CHANT DU CYGNE

Un nouveau disque de Robert Wyatt est toujours un évènement. Surtout que le bougre n'est pas très généreux : quatre disques en dix-sept ans!

"Dondestan", chef-d'œuvre dans la lignée de "Rock Bottom" est donc à déguster avec modération.

Mais ceux qui ne peuvent attendre pour se saouler peuvent déjà boire les paroles du maître.

Après les expérimentations jazzo-progressives pataphysiques et pseudo-dadaïstes de Soft Machine, puis de Matching Mole (la traduction française du « Soft Machine » de Burroughs : « La Machine Molle »), Robert Wyatt, ancien batteur, s'est retrouvé incapable de jouer suite à un accident qui le laissa paraplégique et découvrit qu'il pouvait faire de la musique avec sa voix d'une façon plus intense qu'à l'époque de l'U.F.O., de Canterbury et du Londres psychédélique. D'où l'album « Rock Bottom », composé durant son séjour à l'hôpital, véritable cri qui fait allègrement passer la face B de « Berlin » (Lou Reed) et l'œuvre complète de Nico pour des chansons de salle de garde.



On découvrit alors un talent unique : une voix utilisée comme un instrument lead, chantant parfois comme une flûte, un piano ou un saxophone brassant toutes sortes de cultures, depuis la tradition Coltranienne de « Love Supreme » jusqu'aux différentes musiques du continent indien, le tout baignant dans des marécages de claviers mouvants curieusement entremêlés, qui malgré la singularité de leurs mélodies ne sonnaient jamais dissonants. Le tout dégageait une beauté certaine que d'aucuns n'hésiteraient pas à appeler « convulsive », à couper le souffle.

« Rock Bottom » était incontestablement un chef-d'œuvre. Produit par Nick Mason le flamand rosé, le disque bénéficiait en outre d'un son exceptionnel et fut finalement couronné par le prix de l'Académie Charles Gros en 74, à une époque où cela voulait encore dire quelque chose. Puis ce fut « Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard » en jazz déglingué légèrement décevant, dont Wyatt dit lui-même qu'il s'impliqua moins, laissant plus de liberté aux musiciens, tout

comme sur le second Matching Mole avant différentes collaborations (Jerry Dammers, Sakamoto, Costello) et quelques reprises (Strange Fruit de Billie Holiday) avant un autre « vrai » album, « Old Rotten Hats ». « Dondestan », qui sort actuellement, est donc son quatrième album solo depuis 1974, si l'on oublie l'instrumental « The End Of An Ear » !

Et curieusement, c'est celui qui ressemble le plus à « Rock Bottom ». Par sa qualité, mais aussi pour ses sonorités, même si l'ambiance de ce nouveau chef-d'œuvre est beaucoup moins tourmentée qu'il y a dix-sept ans. On y retrouve avec joie ces longues plages où la voix semble improviser sans cesse sur des claviers en extension.

Robert Wyatt, homme profondément intelligent à l'humilité rare, reçoit chez lui dans un petit village au nord de Norwich. Un sourire malicieux ne le quittera pas de toute l'interview avant de conclure « ici, j'ai réduit mon monde. Je vis dans cette maison, ce petit village et je connais tout le monde. En deux semaines, j'ai vu une vingtaine de journalistes de tous les pays qui viennent me voir pour me poser des questions... (sourire). C'était intéressant... »



Votre nouvel album, « Dondestan », sonne étrangement comme « Rock Bottom »...

(*Silence*). Ça vient de cet orgue, le Riviera. Je l'avais utilisé sur tout « Rock Bottom ». C'est un petit truc cheap italien que j'avais acheté au début des années soixante-dix. Ça devait être la copie de je ne sais quoi. Enfin, un jour, il est définitivement tombé en panne. Je ne m'en servais plus mais sa sonorité me manquait. Récemment, comme je n'avais jamais réussi à en trouver un autre, ma femme m'a suggéré de l'apporter chez l'électronicien du coin et de le faire réparer. En voyant le Riviera, le type était vraiment effrayé : « qu'est-ce que c'est que ce truc ? ». Enfin, il l'a réparé et j'ai pu l'utiliser sur « Dondestan ». Ce disque a donc exactement la même sonorité que « Rock Bottom ».

Depuis la fin de Matching Mole, vous avez pris votre temps pour la réalisation de chacun de vos albums : Entre « Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard » et « Old Rottenhat », dix ans se sont écoulés. Et aujourd'hui, vous sortez « Dondestan » six ans après « Old Rottenhat ».
La musique compte énormément pour moi, mais elle ne représente pas toute ma vie. Je lis, j'écris ou j'écoute la musique des autres, essentiellement du jazz. Après « Old Rotten Hats », je n'avais plus d'inspiration. Même pas l'envie de faire un disque. Puis un jour, je suis tombé sur des poèmes que ma femme, Alfie, avait écrits durant l'un de nos séjours hivernaux en Espagne. Elle ne m'en avait jamais parlé ! Je me suis aperçu qu'en les lisant à voix haute, la sonorité des mots assemblés était déjà très musicale. J'ai alors trouvé quelques idées au piano. Je jouais et je lisais les textes, en même temps. L'inspiration revenait. Puis j'ai trouvé la mélodie de la voix, petit à petit.

A ce propos, votre façon de chanter est tout à fait inhabituelle. A l'origine, d'où vous est venue l'idée d'utiliser votre voix de la sorte, comme un instrument à part entière ?
Je pense que c'est du au fait qu'à l'époque, je n'écoutais que de la musique instrumentale, essentiellement du jazz. J'ai donc logiquement eu la même approche avec ma voix. (*La rumeur veut que, pendant un concert de Soft Machine, Wyatt ait sidéré tout le monde en chantant note pour note le solo de Charlie Parker sur Donna Lee NDR*).

Que pensez-vous de chanteurs comme Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan?
Je suis content que vous pensiez à lui. A l'époque de « Rock Bottom », j'écoutais énormément de musique du continent indien. Toute la fin de Sea Song sur « Rock Bottom» est influencée par ça. C'était la première fois que je chantais ainsi, avec ces notes *(il mime le trajet d'une feuille qui tombe en virevoltant NDR*). Mais j'ai vu ce Nusre Fatak Aie, enfin, je n'arrive jamais à me souvenir de ce bordel de nom, je l'ai vu en concert et c'était l'une des plus belles choses que j'ai jamais entendue de ma vie. J'écoute également de la musique Kurde et toutes sortes de musiques folkloriques et traditionnelles.



Soft Machine ou le « rock pataphysique ».

Lorsque vous vous êtes décidé à chanter ainsi, cela s'est opéré sans effort ?
C'était assez compliqué. Si vous jouez du piano, de la guitare ou n'importe quel instrument, vous avez toujours des repères, vous pouvez visualiser ce que vous allez jouer : où se trouve telle note, tel accord, etc.
Mais en chantant ce genre de mélodies influencées par la musique indienne, vous devez passer d'une notre à l'autre, suivant une mélodie qui n'est pas évidente, et il faut rester juste. C'était assez difficile au début.

Lorsque vous enregistrez, improvisez-vous au chant ?
Ah non ! Le studio est beaucoup trop cher ! Je fais des démos chez moi sur mon Fostex quatre-pistes pour mémoriser le chant. Quand j'arrive au studio, tout est écrit dans ma tête. Les heures de studio coûtent beaucoup trop cher pour que je puisse me permettre d'improviser.

A l'époque de « Rock Bottom », aviez-vous conscience que ce disque allait être unanimement considéré comme un chef-d'œuvre ?
Non, mais l'accueil qu'il a reçu m'a encouragé. Avoir ce succès d'estime à cette période de ma vie a été capital pour ma carrière solo. J'étais resté à l'hôpital pendant un an. Un an pendant lequel j'ai composé la plus grande partie de « Rock Bottom », mais aussi un an pendant lequel j'ai dû penser au reste de ma vie dans un fauteuil roulant. Je ne savais pas si je pourrai encore faire de la musique, et je ne pouvais plus faire de batterie, un instrument qui était vraiment important pour moi. Avec « Rock Bottom », j'ai compris que je pouvais continuer ma vie en tant que musicien.

Vous avez très peu tourné depuis cette époque. Pourrons- nous vous voir au cours d'une éventuelle tournée « Dondestan » ?
J'ai un gros problème avec la scène. Je suppose que c'est un genre de phobie. A l'époque de Soft Machine, quand j'étais caché derrière la batterie et que j'avais bu beaucoup d'alcool, ça allait. Mais aujourd'hui, être seul devant la scène, avec ma voix... Et il ne m'est plus permis de boire autant qu'avant. Je ne m'en sens pas capable. Et puis c'est très compliqué d'envisager une tournée quand on est en chaise roulante. Je me suis renseigné, à Londres, il n'existe que deux hôtels accessibles à des handicapés ! Et ils sont hors de prix. Alors vous voyez, je fais des interviews au lieu de faire des concerts, c'est le maximum que je puisse faire (*sourire*)...

Quel souvenir gardez-vous de votre travail sur « The Madcap Laughs » de Syd Barrett?
Il était très gentil, très poli : « voudriez-vous me faire le plaisir de vous asseoir et prendre une tasse de thé ? » On est arrivé chez lui et il nous a fait écouter ses bandes pour qu'on commence à travailler sur ces morceaux que nous ne connaissions pas. A la première écoute, on a donc essayé d'accompagner les bandes tout en les découvrant. Puis, lorsqu'on a voulu attaquer la deuxième répétition, Barrett nous a dit « c'est bon messieurs. Tout est enregistré, merci » ! C'est pourquoi la batterie sur des morceaux comme Octopus semble si chaotique.

Aujourd'hui, y a-t-il des musiciens avec qui vous aimeriez collaborer ?
Bien sûr, énormément. Mais je n'oserai jamais demander à ces personnes de travailler avec moi. A chaque fois, ce sont les autres qui sont venus me trouver, et ça m'a toujours étonné. Donc, si je répondais à votre question et si je citais des noms, ça serait une façon de leur demander de travailler avec moi. Je serai très gêné (*rires*)...

Quelle est votre réaction lorsque vous entendez des gens qui sont manifestement très influencés par vous. Notamment David Sylvian ?
(*Ne connaissant visiblement pas*) Je n'écoute pas assez de pop music (sic) pour m'en rendre compte. J'ai appris récemment que Tears For Fears avait repris l'une de mes chansons. Je me demande d'ailleurs toujours comment quelqu'un peut reprendre un truc de Robert Wyatt (*rire*). Mais évidemment, ça me flatte énormément.

Nicolas Ungemuth

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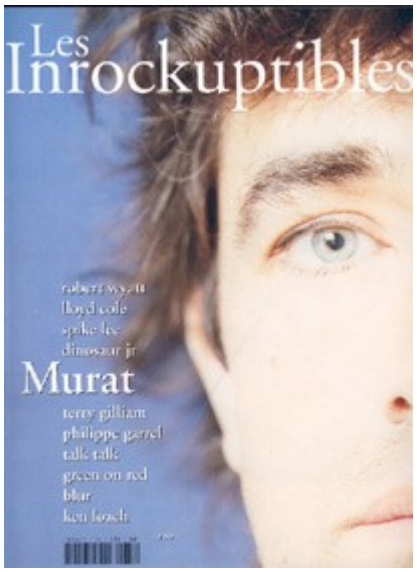
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Chevalier de la Grande Gidouille - Les inrockuptibles N° 31 - octobre 1991

CHEVALIER DE LA GRANDE GIDOUILLE

C'est dans les sixties que **Robert Wyatt** et sa Soft Machine jettent une pleine brassée d'humour dans une époque dévolue à la révolte. La décennie suivante voit le batteur devenir chanteur. Il mènera dès lors une carrière solo paresseuse - lorgnant à la dérobée sur le mythe et coupée de tout enracinement temporel. Avec les années 80 et derrière un engagement politique exemplaire se dessine un esprit plus subtil que dogmatique. A l'heure où paraît son nouvel album, celui qu'on prenait pour un vieux baba prosélyte se révèle être un véritable citoyen du monde chez qui morale rime avec dignité et respect avec humanisme.

Interview Bates & JD Beauvallet
Photo Renaud Monfourny



Ma mémoire commence déjà à me jouer des tours et j'ai tendance à inventer des excuses valables pour tout ce que j'ai fait dans ma vie. Mais il me semble que si j'ai délaissé la musique à certaines périodes, c'est simplement parce que je trouvais d'autres centres d'intérêt. En particulier, j'ai ressenti ce besoin de culture qu'ont habituellement les jeunes lorsqu'ils vont à l'université. Mais, ayant quitté l'école à 16 ans et sans qualifications, j'ai été obligé de gagner ma vie en entrant directement dans le monde du travail: je n'avais tout simplement pas lu assez de livres par rapport à mes envies. J'ai voulu m'éduquer un peu plus. Il faut ajouter que je me suis également éloigné du rock-business parce qu'il était devenu presque impossible de communiquer avec les maisons de disques vers la fin des seventies. . .

UN VISITEUR DE LA MUSIQUE

C'est Geoff Travis, de Rough Trade, qui m'a fait changer d'avis. Il m'a dit "Pourquoi ne pas refaire un disque au lieu de bouquiner, vieux tromblon ?" J'ai accepté, d'autant qu'à l'époque j'avais besoin d'un job, je ne pouvais pas vivre de l'air du temps ou manger mes bouquins *(rires)*. . . Il y aurait eu beaucoup de métiers que j'aurais aimé exercer, mais j'arrivais trop tard, ou je n'étais pas assez qualifié, ou encore ce travail n'existait tout bonnement pas. Par exemple, j'aurais aimé m'asseoir et écouter des disques toute la journée, mais on ne m'a jamais offert un tel boulot *(rires)*. . . Et puis, il faut reconnaitre qu'il n'est pas inscrit dans mes gènes que je sois musicien, je n'ai jamais été persuadé de l'être; c'est juste l'opportunité qui s'est présentée à moi lorsque j'ai quitté l'école. A cette

époque, il n'était pas envisageable pour un jeune Anglais de vivre les sixties sans être dans un grand groupe *(rires)*. . . C'est vrai, j'ai toujours été un visiteur de la musique, je n'ai jamais vécu dedans.

D'où venait votre difficulté à communiquer avec les maisons de disques dans les seventies ?

En Angleterre, il existe un problème spécifique: tu es considéré comme illégitime, tu n'existes pas, tant que tu n'as pas fait un hit. Et j'avais du mal à fonctionner selon ce schéma. J'ai essayé de faire un disque pop, c'est très difficile. D'ailleurs, j'admire sincèrement ceux qui font des disques très pop et très commerciaux. Moi, je ne pouvais pas.

Vous étiez sur un jeune label Virgin, dirigé par des gens de votre âge. . .

Mais, croyez-moi, le contrat de Virgin était exactement le même que celui des autres compagnies. La seule différence, c'est qu'à l'époque Richard Branson avait les cheveux longs. Et c'était probablement une perruque *(rires)*. . .

Plus tard, vous avez fait Top of The Pops, vous avez eu des hit-singles avec l'm a believer ou Shipbuilding. . .

Humm... C'était des singles, c'est sûr *(rires)*... Après ça, j'ai surtout eu plus de respect pour les chanteurs pop professionnels qui réussissent à mener une carrière, il faut se montrer intelligent. Le mot français pour "single", c'est "simple", n'est-ce pas ? Eh bien, ce n'est pas le mot approprié *(rires)*. . . C'est très compliqué de faire un single. Je ne pouvais d'ailleurs pas en écrire. C'est pourquoi on avait choisi cette chanson des Monkees, et *Shipbuilding* n'était pas non plus mon idée, elle venait de Clive Langer et d'Evis Costello qui m'ont fait parvenir une cassette et demandé d'essayer . . .

Comment vous sentiez-vous, soudainement accepté par l'industrie musicale ?

Je n'y ai jamais prêté attention, jamais. Je suis un peu comme ces bombardiers qui larguent leurs bombes dans l'indifférence, sans se préoccuper des points de chute et des victimes. . . Je fais des disques sans penser aux conséquences. Et puis, j'étais trop âgé et ce succès a été trop bref pour qu'il affecte ma vie. Ce n'était pas comme si ça m'était arrivé quand j'étais adolescent. Moi, je travaillais depuis des années, j'ai ressenti ce succès comme des vacances d'été dans un pays exotique *(sourire)*. . . Et je n'aurais pas voulu qu'elles durent plus longtemps. Ce qui m'a alarmé, c'est que plus tu deviens populaire, plus tu as de contraintes. Pour la première fois, des gens me disaient de ne pas mettre tel solo de guitare de Fred Frith ou de changer un début, une fin. D'un coup, on me désignait ce qui était requis pour répondre à un langage spécifique. On pense qu'être reconnu donne plus de liberté, alors qu'on en a de moins en moins, comme à l'école.

Ça vous a posé des problèmes de conscience de gagner votre vie comme musicien ?

Non, au contraire *(rires)*. . . J'ai été fier de vivre de la musique dès que j'ai quitté l'école. Mon prof de maths me disait toujours que si je n'avais pas de bons résultats scolaires, je n'aurais jamais de boulot et que je reviendrais le voir pour lui demander de l'aide. Je suis très fier de ne l'avoir jamais fait *(sourire)*. . .

Faire des disques, est-ce un travail, un plaisir ou les deux ?

Eh bien *(silence)*. . . C'est difficile à dire. L'idée n'est pas un plaisir, non. La phase des idées me plonge dans une inertie complète. Je n'arrive à rien de bien tant que je n'accepte pas complètement ce que je suis en train de faire. Il y a des gens qui peuvent accomplir leur travail même s'il ne les intéresse pas, car ils ont une technique, un tour de main professionnel. Je ne peux pas. Lorsque je ne travaille pas, je suis heureux de ne rien faire. C'est un sentiment comparable à celui d'une femme sur la maternité. L'idée d'avoir un bébé est terrible: "Non, je ne peux pas repasser par ces épreuves encore une fois !" Mais, bien sûr, dès le début de la grossesse, le système hormonal reprend le dessus et cette femme fait en sorte que tout aille bien. Pour moi, l'effort, c'est de commencer ; ensuite, ça doit être agréable sinon je ne peux rien faire. Ça signifie peut-être que je ne suis pas naturellement musicien. Je ne me réveille pas avec des mélodies plein la tête et l'envie d'écrire, comme certains.

Les choses ne viennent-elles jamais seules ?

Ça devrait, mais la vie est trop courte pour attendre gentiment que les choses arrivent d'elles-mêmes *(rires)*. . . Mais j'ai installé un piano et une batterie dans mon bureau pour m'encourager. Je ne peux pas bouger sans qu'ils viennent se rappeler à moi. Pourtant, je n'y touche pas tous les jours, car j'ai d'autres centres d'intérêt. La musique m'intéresse aussi en tant que consommateur, j'adore écouter les disques des autres. C'est comme vivre au bord d'une jolie rivière que tu vois sans arrêt: parfois, tu plonges pour prendre un bain; d'autres fois, tu préfères la regarder depuis la rive avec ta vision périphérique. . . Quand je me mets au boulot, je travaille plutôt durement et vite, en fait. Mon problème, c'est que mon esprit change et s'ajuste tous les jours. C'est épuisant, car un disque existera pour toujours sur la foi de la décision d'un moment précis, c'est une sacrée responsabilité. . .

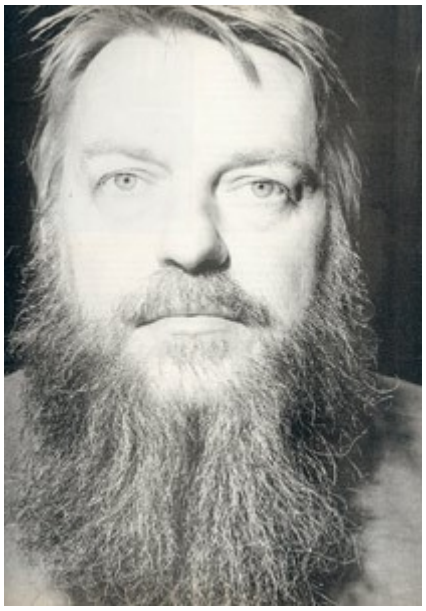
Est-ce à dire que vous craignez la pérennité d'un disque ?

Lorsque j'ai commencé à enregistrer pour Rough Trade, je travaillais sur les chansons des autres, je considérais ça comme un travail à court terme, je n'attendais rien du futur, pas même que ces singles soient compilés, comme ça a été fait. Je faisais des chansons courtes et pour l'instant présent. Mais d'habitude, je pense à la postérité, uniquement parce que ce qu'on a fait par le passé nous hante, "Pourquoi ai-je donc fait cela ?" *(Sourire)*. . . Pour la paix de mon esprit, je veux donc m'assurer que ce que je fais ne me rendra pas nerveux dans le futur.

C'est peut-être pour ça que vos disques semblent intemporels.

Je comprends ce que vous voulez dire. . . Je n'essaie pas délibérément de ne pas faire de disques datés, mais c'est vrai que mon processus de travail s'étale dans le temps. J'ai parfois une idée qui met des années et des années à se concrétiser, elle ne peut donc pas être marquée par le vent du moment, non. . .

De même, vous avez toujours recherché la simplicité, l'épure, contrairement à la plupart des musiciens des années 70.



> Zoom

Il est suffisamment difficile de clarifier son esprit, de ne garder que l'important dans un morceau pour qu'il faille en plus y ajouter des enluminures, des décorations futiles qui éloignent du point originel. Donc, j'aime ne garder que les bases, l'air, les paroles. . . Je n'ai pas de théorie préméditée qui me limiterait, c'est juste mon mode de fonctionnement. C'est comme dans le jazz, j'aime l'idée qu'il y ait cinq instruments dans un quintet, point. Même si mes disques, ne s'y rattachent pas dans ce sens parce qu'ils ont plus de texture, j'aime cet aspect direct du jazz. C'est pour cela que je suis frustré lorsque je juge mes disques, j'y trouve toujours quelque chose à changer. Mais je n'en discute qu'avec moi-même, il y a assez de points sur lesquels polémiquer sans y mêler d'autres personnes *(sourire).* . .

Que reprocheriez-vous à un disque comme Rock bottom ?

(Silence). . . Je crois que j'ai été chanceux avec celui-là. Il est venu à une période où j'ai eu beaucoup de temps pour y réfléchir, j'ai eu la chance de pouvoir choisir les musiciens comme je le voulais et d'y travailler de façon idéale: il faut se sentir bien avec les gens, ne pas avoir besoin de parler de la musique. Le travail du compositeur est d'expliquer clairement ce qu'il veut, ensuite c'est facile à partir du moment où on a établi une bonne relation avec les musiciens. Je n'aime pas l'idée d'employer des musiciens de sessions. Pour moi, un disque, c'est aussi de la compagnie. Quand tu fais un disque, ou que tu en écoutes un, tu invites des gens dans ta propre chambre.

J'ÉTAIS LE BUVEUR

Revenons au passé. On a fait tout un plat de l'école musicale de Canterbury,

qu'en est-il exactement ?

Je ne pourrais pas vous renseigner personnellement *(rires)*. . . Je ne me souviens pas d'un mouvement particulier. J'étais à l'école là-bas, je m'y suis marié et y ai vécu. L'école où je suis allé n'avait rien de spécial, il n'y avait pas d'intérêt particulier pour l'art, et je m'y ennuyais car je n'étais pas très bon élève. Je ressentais donc une pression et, d'année en année, je perdais prise.

Etes-vous d'une famille où le succès scolaire était important ?

Mes parents n'étaient pas particulièrement vieux jeu mais estimaient que je devais être bon dans une matière, or il n'y en avait aucune où j'excellais. . . Pas même la musique. Quand on a 14 ans, chanter *La Truite* de Schubert n'est pas particulièrement excitant, la cour de récréation est plus intéressante *(sourire)*. . . J'écoutais beaucoup de musique car mon père était pianiste, c'est lui qui m'a initié au jazz, et c'est devenu ma raison d'être. Non, pour être honnête, en relisant mes carnets, je m'aperçois que mon principal intérêt à cette époque, c'était les filles. J'en parlais beaucoup dans mon journal. Ce journal devait être un moyen de réussir quelque chose par moi-même car je me sentais un peu perdu. L'école, c'était comme un entraînement pour quelque chose qui n'était jamais défini, je ne comprenais pas ce qu'on attendait de moi ; ce journal, lui, était concret. Je n'avais aucune idée de ce que je voulais faire plus tard. Si la scène beat n'était pas apparue au milieu des sixties et que je ne me sois pas mis à la batterie, je me demande vraiment ce que j'aurais fait.

Votre jeunesse a-t-elle été marquée par le sentiment spécial de l'après-guerre ?

C'est possible, je me souviens du rationnement alimentaire qu'on subissait, et c'est peut-être pour cela que je suis devenu végétarien car la viande était rare et étrange *(rires)*. . . Mes parents ont certainement plus souffert de l'après-guerre ; pour eux, c'était une fausse aube. Ils ne voulaient plus de guerre, et ça a recommencé immédiatement *(rires)*. . . D'un autre côté, ils sentaient que le peuple était respecté pour la première fois de l'histoire, parce qu'il s'était battu pour la patrie et qu'on lui reconnaissait donc un droit à la santé et à l'éducation. Mes parents étaient assez cultivés mais ils n'avaient pas beaucoup d'argent, ils vivaient donc, économiquement parlant, comme la classe ouvrière.

Aviez-vous un sentiment de frustration à vivre dans une petite ville ?

Il ne faut pas exagérer. J'avais de très bons amis, comme Hugh Hopper, qui étaient musiciens. Mais pour se stimuler, on essayait d'économiser de l'argent pour passer le week-end à Londres, à dormir par terre chez l'un ou chez l'autre. On avait trouvé un café dont le juke-box était plein de disques de Thelonius Monk, ça nous paraissait incroyable, on trouvait cela vraiment cool. J'avais une paire de lunettes très noires, comme Ray Charles, j'avais donc du mal à voir quoi que ce soit de Londres, mais je me disais qu'en les retirant, je ne pourrais plus trouver de petites copines cool *(rires)*...

D'où est née l'idée de faire un groupe ?

Je crois que l'idée concrète vient de Hugh Hopper plus que de tout autre. Sans lui, nous serions restés des lycéens qui s'amusent. C'est lui qui a pris tous les contacts pour jouer, on répétait chez lui. Ses pauvres parents. . . Ils étaient si gentils. Ils avaient une toute petite maison et on s'installait juste derrière la porte d'entrée. Personne ne pouvait entrer sans se prendre les pieds dans la batterie. Et nous, on improvisait, on essayait de jouer des morceaux de Cecil Taylor ou de Ray Charles. Les parents de Hugh ne disaient jamais rien sur notre musique, c'est dire combien ils étaient gentils *(rires)*. . . Grâce à Hugh, nous avons eu une réputation de groupe local, mais nous, nous voulions partir à Londres. S'il y a eu une scène à Canterbury, c'est vraiment quand les Wild Flowers *(premier groupe de Wyatt, avant Soft Machine)* sont devenus Caravan, eux étaient des gens de Canterbury.

Fin 68, on voit la première photo de quatre jeunes garçons, Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge, Daevid Allen et vous. C'est le groupe Soft Machine.

Il s'est donc monté autour de ceux qui avaient quitté Canterbury pour Londres. Lorsqu'on quitte une petite ville pour une grande, on ne connaît personne et on reste donc en contact avec ceux qu'on connaissait avant. Je ne me souviens vraiment plus comment cela a commencé. Je sais que Daevid Allen, qui était australien, plus vieux et plus expérimenté, a été très stimulant. Il préférait Paris, où il s'était marié et vivait sur une péniche amarrée au quai d'Orsay. Il avait des amis musiciens de jazz ou poètes, comme Brion Gysin. Moi, mes influences venaient du jazz, mais lui, avec ses amis plus dans le vent, nous a donné beaucoup d'idées, pour les light-shows par exemple, ou pour les drogues et compagnie.

Les drogues ne m'ont pas du tout influencé, mais Daevid certainement.

Qui a choisi le nom de groupe, évidemment tiré du livre de Burroughs ?

Je ne m'en souviens vraiment plus. . . L'un d'entre nous, mais probablement pas moi *(rires)*. . . Daevid avait en tout cas assisté à des lectures de Burroughs à Paris. Et il prenait pas mal de drogues.



> Zoom

On pourrait se demander, à ce point de l'entretien, si ce qui vous a motivé pour monter le groupe était le jazz, la drogue ou les filles. . .

Je me le demande aussi (rires). . . Certainement pas la drogue en ce qui me concerne, elle me rendait nerveux. Moi, j'étais le buveur. On peut boire comme un idiot sans être poursuivi par la police. Déjà à l'époque, je me tenais à l'écart de la drogue à cause de cela. En tout cas, je ne me souviens plus de ce qui nous a poussés à monter le groupe. Nous étions un peu les gars de la campagne qui montent à la ville et qui doivent apprendre plus vite, c'est vrai. Il faut ajouter que ce qui m'intéressait le plus, c'était de devenir batteur, apprendre à mieux jouer, réussir à en vivre.

Sur les vieilles photos, vous avez pourtant l'air assez intéressé par le look et le glamour de l'époque.

En fait, la maison de disques qui nous a signés nous a dit "Règle numéro un: si vous n'êtes pas capables d'écrire un hit, ayez au moins des habits de scène, vous devez vous changer pour jouer, avoir un costume." Ils nous ont donc emmenés acheter des fringues. La seconde règle, c'était d'avoir des coupes de cheveux. Ils payaient, on s'exécutait. Cela faisait partie de la routine lorsqu'on signe un contrat. Ils essaient de vous rendre présentables. Ça, comme le fait de venir à Londres, c'était pour échapper à l'ennui, chercher l'aventure.

Pour des gens qui cherchent à fuir l'ennui, était-ce un accomplissement d'être dans ce monde du show-biz, on vous a vus par exemple sur des photos avec Hendrix. . .

C'est parce qu'il était signé par le même management que nous. C'était agréable d'être si près d'un musicien de cette qualité, ça vous fait réfléchir, Quand même, côtoyer un batteur aussi fantastique que Mitch Michell... J'avais du mal à imaginer que le public aille les voir eux, et viennent aussi nous voir. . . Ça nous motivait pour bosser la musique, afin de ne pas passer pour des idiots.

Vous avez accompagné Hendrix en tournée aux USA, vous sentiez-vous proche du rock'n'roll circus ?

Lui-même ne se sentait pas dedans. Quand je disais que la maison de disques nous imposait de beaux vêtements, que les managements organisaient des fêtes, ça c'est le rock'nroll circus et sa routine: ils vous présentent sous un certain angle. Mais on peut très bien prendre tout ça avec détachement. On est heureux que le public nous demande, et flattés, on apprécie les intentions, donc on marche avec Ia maison de disques; mais sans pour autant être enfermés dans son système. Habituellement, les gens de la qualité d'Hendrix sont des jazzmen, et donc, être dans la même pièce que lui, sur la même tournée, était très stimulant.

Que trouviez-vous de plus chez les jazzmen, comme Ornette Coleman, que chez les Beatles ou les Stones par exemple ?

Je ne sais pas. Nous n'avons jamais pensé jouer du rock. Probablement du fait que notre musique n'entrait pas dans un format déjà existant, nous nous sentions plus près de gens comme Coleman qui avait en quelque sorte inventé une musique, même s'il était très modeste et sympathique. On ne savait pas comment jouer de la pop. . . Du jazz, nous

avions pris le plaisir physique de jouer de notre instrument et de le travailler. La pop n'offrait pas assez d'espace ouvert à l'improvisation. D'autant que, quand tu fais un hit, tu dois toujours le jouer de la même façon et il n'était pas question que nous jouions un morceau deux fois pareil.

Etiez-vous attirés par l'idée d'avant-garde dont on gratifiait Soft Machine ?

Je ne peux pas parler au nom des autres, mais pour ce qui me concerne, le mot avant-garde me paraît un qualificatif rétrospectif. Comment dire que quelque chose est avant-garde au moment où il a lieu ?

Contrairement à tous les groupes de l'époque, plus ou moins psychédéliques, Soft Machine improvisait sur de vraies pop-songs. . .

Ça me paraît être une définition juste. Probablement parce qu'à cette époque, on était des buveurs et pas des fumeurs *(rires)*. . . La bière au lieu du haschich, ça nous a éloignés du psychédélisme. Par contre, notre public devenait de plus en plus snob, et ça a influencé ce que j'ai fait par la suite. S'il y avait quelque chose que je n'appréciais pas dans la musique classique moderne qu'écoutait mon père, c'était bien cette atmosphère snobinarde. Et je ne voulais pas la voir réapparaître dans le rock. Ce qui est bien dans le rock, c'est son côté démocratique, tout le monde peut en faire, tout le monde peut en écouter. Un constat presque politique s'impose: le rock est une musique à laquelle n'importe qui peut prendre part. Je n'aimais pas l'idée d'une musique rock élitiste, ce n'est pas avant-garde du tout; au contraire, c'est un concept très démodé. En même temps, je crois avoir été un peu dur envers le public, j'ai rencontré depuis des gens qui aimaient notre musique très simplement et qui étaient très gentils. J'avais été trop dur envers ces pauvres diables que je n'avais jamais rencontrés *(sourire)*. . . Il faut dire qu'il fait noir lorsqu'on joue, on ne peut pas voir les gens *(rires)*. . .

Ils étaient peut-être charmés par quelque chose dont vous jouiez depuis vos débuts : la pataphysique. Votre tout premier slogan publicitaire était "Nourririez-vous votre fille à la Machine Molle ?"

Cet intérêt est venu du premier signe de sympathie que nous ayons reçu : un boulot dans le sud de la France. Et le Sud, en été, c'est Paris *(rires)*. . . Qu'est-ce que je raconte, c'est venu bien avant, lorsqu'on nous a demandé de faire la musique pour une pièce d' Alfred Jarry au festival d'Edimbourg. Nous nous sommes donc intéressés au propos de la pièce et on a trouvé ça magnifique, même dans la traduction anglaise. C'était la première fois qu'on nous laissait être nous-mêmes, au lieu d'être calibrés et dirigés par le management. Nous nous sommes reconnus dans cette attitude, on avait trouvé le moyen d'être en confiance pour jouer sans nous soucier d'une étiquette à coller sur notre musique.

Comment vous êtes-vous reconnus dans la pataphysique ?

Dans mon esprit, c'érait une extension de ce que mon père m'avait dit, plein d'admiration, des dadaïstes. II était incroyablement enthousiaste sur la musique de Satie et son attitude. Et puis, la pataphysique me faisait rire. Dieu, laissez-moi réfléchir *(silence)*. . . Je suppose que j'étais déjà un pataphysicien stalinien puisque j'adhérais à la définition de la pataphysique que quiconque me donnait et que ça devenait la définition du jour. J'acceptais totalement l'autorité de quiconque se disant pataphysicien pour ce qu'elle signifiait. Il me semblait que personne ne savait ce qu'était la pataphysique et qu'on pouvait l'inventer à l'intérieur de ce non-dit.

Voulez-vous dire que ce n'était qu'une marque ?

Non. Simplement, on se sentait à l'aise avec l'attitude, les idées et l'imagerie que nous avons découvertes. Et puisque notre préoccupation principale était l'écriture musicale, je ne crois pas que nous puissions donc détenir quelque autorité que ce soit sur ce sujet. Il faudrait demander à des gens plus qualifiés. A ceux qui nous ont donné un certificat, par exemple. Il est possible qu'ils aient eu des raisons complètement ironiques pour décréter que nous étions un groupe pataphysicien. Et je les en remercie. Mais personne n'a jamais pu expliquer le pourquoi, et on ne va certainement pas le faire maintenant *(rires)*. . .

Comment avez-vous reçu l'ordre de la Grande Gidouille, le diplôme du Collège de pataphysique ?

Tout ce que je sais, on nous l'a dit après, c'est

qu'un très vieux et très important pataphysicien qui ne pouvait plus marcher, a été amené à un de nos concerts. On lui avait décrit notre musique comme la plus ridicule imaginable et affirmé que s'il avait besoin d'un orchestre officiel, nous étions celui qu'il fallait *(rires)*. . . II nous a écoutés vingt minutes, "Oui, c'est bon", avant qu'on ne Ie ramène chez lui aussi vite que possible. C'est ainsi qu'il a décrété que nous étions adéquats, nous et personne d'autre *(rires)*. . . Nous avions donc le droit officiel d'ouvrir la parade officielle de pataphysique chaque fois qu'elle était appelée à défiler. Ça n'arrivait jamais *(rires)*. . . Mais ça nous a valu l'ordre de la Grande Gidouille.



> Zoom

Qui étaient ces gens du Collège de pataphysique, des enseignants loufoques ?

Je ne sais vraiment pas. C'était des gens qui présentaient bien, ils ne venaient pas à nous en disant "Hello, je suis pataphysicien" mais en prononçant quelque chose de très bizarre. C'est seulement après coup qu'on réalisait que la phrase n'avait pas de sens. "Ah oui, il doit être du Collège de pataphysique" *(rires)*. . .

On trouvait une part d'absurdité et d'ironie dans Soft Machine, alors que le groupe était pris au sérieux. N'était-ce pas frustrant ?

Sur la fin, c'est certain, nous n'avions plus d'identité collective. Les autres ne voyaient pas la même chose que moi dans le groupe. J'étais plus touché par l'absurdité comme élément libérateur que les autres. . . C'est pour cela qu'après quelques années, ils ont cherché quelqu'un de plus sérieux. Moi, je pense que l'absurdité, c'est très très sérieux.

Au vu de vos carrières solo, on se rend compte qu'il n'y avait que vous et Kevin Ayers pour jouer sur l'humour et la simplicité.

J'étais deux personnes. Le batteur, mais aussi un chanteur. Et la direction dans laquelle j'allais en tant que batteur était différente de celle où le chanteur voulait aller. Tant que ma priorité était la batterie, le contexte convenait. Mais je développais de plus en plus de petits moments de simplicité et de clarté contre le barrage des effets compliqués: c'était le chanteur qui grandissait en moi. Et il est venu à la surface plus tard. . .

Le chanteur était-il frustré par le batteur ?

Pas vraiment. Il était comme un petit frère attendant son tour. Je ne voulais pas vraiment devenir chanteur. . . La batterie est un instrument atonal qui produit des rythmes et une texture, une énergie que j'appréciais dans le jazz. Mais en tant que consommateur de musique, ce qui me hantait, c'était de petits fragments de mélodie qui se stockaient dans mon esprit et n'avaient pas l'opportunité de se développer dans ce contexte. J'avais donc besoin de trouver un contexte, c'est tout. Ensuite, ça a été un processus lent. Mais, cette analyse est faite a posteriori. De plus, je ne veux pas porter de jugement sur les différences qui existaient au sein du groupe: qui avait fait le bon choix, qui avait fait le mauvais ? C'est trop embarrassant. Je peux juste dire que j'étais de moins en moins à l'aise.

Vous êtes gêné parce que c'est vous qui avez fait le bon choix, au regard de l'histoire de la pop.

Je ne voyais pas de voie qui conduirait directement à la joie et l'illumination. Et je ne voulais plus consacrer ma vie à être dans une machine de plus en plus efficace. Les autres me faisaient me sentir mal à l'aise, pour une simple raison: la plupart du temps, j'étais un imbécile bourré. C'était loin d'être amusant, et même pénible, lorsqu'on essayait de travailler avec moi, pas parce que j'étais lourdingue, mais à cause de mon indiscipline *(silence)*. . . Sans fierté, je dirais que je les ai quittés, mais il me semble que la vérité est que je ne les aurais pas quittés s'ils m'avaient demandé de rester. Ils recherchaient quelqu'un de plus professionnel, j'étais considéré comme un amateur fini: j'étais devenu de plus en plus embarrassant pour eux. . .

Peut-être viviez-vous plus dans l'esprit post-soixante-huitard, flower-power ?

J'étais dans un état d'esprit qui datait d'avant cela. Flower-power, ça me fait penser à des étudiants californiens, et je ne me trouvais aucune affinité culturelle avec cette ambiance. Si j'arrive à clarifier mes idées de l'intérieur, je dirais que je me sentais plus redevable à l'esprit dada et à la pataphysique. Je n'arrive pas à replacer ma trajectoire personnelle dans un contexte social. Je ne me sentais pas partie prenante du mouvement hippie ou d'autre chose. J'étais avec des gens. . . Encore une fois, il me fallait trouver un contexte différent du groupe et c'était difficile car j'avais mis beaucoup de mon identité dans Soft Machine et ça ne collait plus. Je devais partir et recommencer autre chose. C'était comme un divorce et j'avais peur des problèmes matériels, il fallait que je me débrouille seul pour trouver des contacts, des billets d'avion, de l'argent pour des micros ou une batterie. . .

Viviez-vous plus comme une pop-star ou comme un père de famille ?

Laissez-moi réfléchir... Dans les sixties, j'étais marié à Pamela et nous avons eu un fils, mais à cause de la vie de groupe, des voyages, j'étais un père et un mari inefficace, comme un marin. . .

Voulez-vous dire que vous aviez une fille dans chaque ville ?

Pas nécessairement. Simplement, je n'avais pas le sens des responsabilités que requiert un enfant. Tout le travail incombait à la maman. Ce n'est pas exactement la réponse à la question, mais j'essaie de me souvenir *(silence)*. . . Je me rappelle que j'ai cessé de voyager en taxi pour reprendre le bus, si c'est ça la différence entre une pop-star et un père de famille, alors *(rires)*. . .

REJOINDRE UN PARTI MOCHE ET HORRIBLE

Aviez-vous déjà des préoccupations politiques ?

Je crois que j'en ai toujours eu, mais jusqu'à la fin des sixties, je pensais que le monde entier les partageait et qu'il n'était donc pas nécessaire de les exprimer ou de se battre pour elles. C'est seulement lorsqu'une espèce de néo-conservatisme démodé a pointé son nez, plus tard, que j'ai décidé de ne pas le cautionner par le silence. Je suis donc devenu actif pour rester moi-même. Avant, il y avait un consensus car la droite avait été discréditée par la Seconde Guerre mondiale, qui était la crise ultime de la droite en quelque sorte. Et là, d'un coup, la droite avait survécu, et elle se portait même très bien, merci pour elle *(rires)*. . . Mais, je n'attends pas des autres, des groupes de rock, qu'ils aient des prises de position politiques. Je sais que c'est suffisamment dur de faire les concerts, de vivre sa vie. Je connais des gens très charmants mais qui ne peuvent pas avoir de préoccupations politiques, ils vivent, travaillent et essaient de faire le bon choix lorsqu'une alternative se présente. Je l'accepte tout à fait. Moi, j'ai été de plus en plus stimulé par l'analyse politique.

N'aviez-vous pas d'ennemis dans les sixties, contrairement aux étudiants de 68 ?

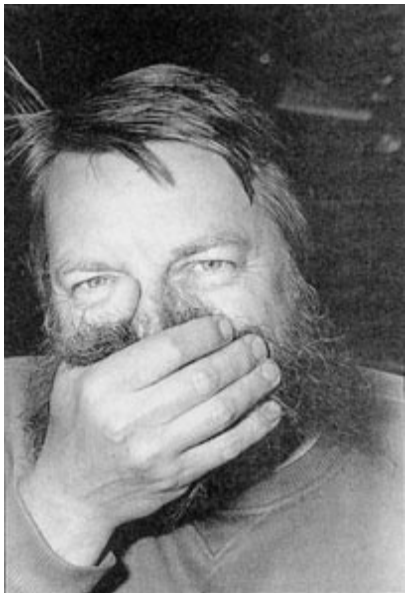
Je pensais que les ennemis avaient perdu *(rires)*... Quant à 68...
En allant à Paris, ou en Allemagne, nous étions plongés dans un drame que nous ne pouvions pas comprendre. Et cependant, nos sympathies étaient très claires: quand tu vois un gosse frappé par un policier français, tu es du côté de l'étudiant, d'un point de vue purement émotionnel. Il me semblait indéniable que lorsqu'elle deviendrait adulte, cette génération ne permettrait plus que la police ait un tel comportement. Et puis, je pensais qu'elle avait été traumatisée par la Seconde Guerre mondiale que nous avions en quelque sorte ratée. Notre incompréhension venait donc d'une différence d'expériences. Je n'ai découvert les ramifications internationales du mouvement de 68 que plus tard. Je n'étais pas au même point de réflexion politique que les activistes de l'époque.

Votre conscience politique est-elle apparue grâce à la lecture ?

Au départ, c'est venu de voir des policiers frapper des étudiants *(rires)*. . .
Et, plus tard. . . Quand tu es fan de jazz, les aristocrates de ta famille culturelle sont noirs, donc d'origine africaine. Je me sentais plus proche d'un jazzman noir que d'un Anglais me disant d'être fidèle à ma race. "Pour qui te prends-tu pour m'interdire d'écouter Coltrane, merde, quand tu feras des disques aussi bons que les siens, reviens me voir" *(rires)*. . .

Etiez-vous féru d'anglicité ou cela vous énervait-il ?

Oui. Ce qui m'énerve avec l'anglicité, c'est son double langage. Qui se résume dans cette phrase: nous sommes si modestes, c'est ce qui nous rend meilleurs que le reste du monde. Et que pensent les autres des Anglais ? Que ce sont des gens charmants, polis; d'accord, ils ont bien essayé de conquérir le monde, mais ce n'est rien. C'est cette image de gentils gars qui jouent au cricket qui serait celle du peuple le plus impérialiste et le plus mégalomane de toute l'histoire ? Impossible de songer à cela et de rester sain d'esprit. Peut-être que grâce à mon père - les compositeurs qu'il écoutait étaient russes, français, américains - ou la peinture que j'aimais - qui était influencée par la sculpture africaine ou par les estampes japonaises -, grâce à tout cela, donc, j'ai pris conscience qu'il y avait de l'inventivité et de la stimulation dans le monde entier.



> Zoom

Est-ce ce qui vous a poussé à écouter des radios du monde en ondes courtes ?

Ça, c'était plutôt dans les seventies, pour avoir plusieurs éclairages sur ies événements et la vie. Car l'un des aspects de cet étrange narcissisme anglais, c'est qu'il était soi-disant suffisant d'écouter la BBC, puisque contrairement à la radio russe, elle donnait tous les points de vue, passait toutes sortes de musiques, etc. Mais lorsqu'on prétend qu'il n'y a pas lavage de cerveau, c'est en fait là qu'il y en a. C'est pour ça que je recherchais des points de vue extérieurs, en particulier de personnes dont on me disait qu'elles étaient le diable. Vous, Anglais, me dites qui est l'ennemi et que notre Premier ministre et son grand-père Shakespeare sont Dieu; comme je ne suis pas d'accord, je ne suis donc pas convaincu que ceux que vous me désignez comme l'ennemi le soient. C'est une attitude dont les Américains semblent avoir hérité, tout comme ils ont hérité de notre langue. Certains les décrivent comme ayant des besoins globaux mais une insularité spirituelle. Ils ont donc comme image d'eux-mêmes celle d'un petit village tranquille qui veut être en paix avec les autres, alors qu'en fait, ils ennuient tout le monde. Ils ne veulent pas prendre la responsabilité de ce qu'ils ont fait par le passé.

C'est ce que vous avez un jour décrit comme l'United State of Amnesia. . .

Oui. Il est difficile de croire quelqu'un qui va partout dans le monde pour défendre les droits de l'homme alors qu'il vient d'un pays dont l'existence même est basée sur l'extermination des populations indigènes. La bataille des Américains contre Ies Indiens était plus vaste et plus réussie que ce que les Nazis ont fait subir au peuple juif, par exemple. A l'évidence, tous les habitants d'un continent ont été exterminés ou sont lessivés, ce ne sont plus que de tristes alcooliques parqués dans des réserves. Pardon, je sais qu'il y a aussi un pourcentage d'Indiens forts et actifs qui travaillent, mais quand même, ils se sont fait entuber sur une échelle difficile à imaginer. Je trouve donc qu'il faut aux Américains une sacrée dose d'amnésie pour prêcher au monde entier la bonne manière de faire ou de prospérer après de telles actions. Ils ont pris cette habitude de se voiler la face et la conscience avec les Indiens, et puis le procédé s'est répété. Quant à nous, les Anglais. . . La principale chose que nous ayons appris à nous cacher sur l'Empire, c'est bien que la fonction primaire d'un empire est de sucer la richesse des victimes pour enrichir celui qui ponctionne, alors qu'on présentait ça comme une expansion de la civilisation chrétienne, du commerce libre, de l'éducation. . . Ça ne me dérangerait pas si on avait admis la réalité. Il y avait eu des empires avant, ils disaient "Nous sommes les plus forts et les plus grossiers et on veut vaincre les autres pour se sentir mieux." Au moins, c'est honnête, et c'est ce qui nous a manqué.

Est-ce pour être plus actif que vous avez rejoint le Parti communiste anglais ?

J'ai mis du temps. Durant les seventies, j'ai voulu rejoindre des gens d'une classe qui s'éduque en permanence. Ma femme et moi étions sans cesse à la recherche de livres, et il était plus stimulant d'être dans un milieu où les livres circulent tout le temps. Le Parti communiste semblait un bon vecteur, car en Angleterre il n'a jamais eu ni la crédibilité ni la taille de ceux de France ou d'Italie, pour d'évidentes raisons historiques: chez vous, la résistance passait par le communisme, ici, elle s'appelait Winston Churchill *(rires)*. . . Je sentais que j'étais prêt pour rejoindre une organisation politique qui était aussi

impopulaire et incomprise que pouvait l'être l'avant-garde dans le milieu artistique. Vous me demandiez ce que je pensais de l'avant-garde, comment la définir. Si elle a une valeur, c'est bien de voir de la beauté là où les gens voient de l'horreur. Dada nous a appris qu'il n'y a pas de choses horribles. Donc, ça ne me posait pas de problème de rejoindre un parti qu'on disait moche et horrible. j'avais assez de confiance en moi pour rejoindre un groupe très impopulaire parce que j'avais besoin d'une atmosphère d'analyse, d'être au contact de gens qui lisaient plus que moi.

Les communistes anglais sont-ils plutôt des intellectuels que des ouvriers ?

Le président de ma section était plombier, et il m'a fait énormément réfléchir. Je l'aimais beaucoup, c'était un plombier très éduqué et posé. L'idée que les intellectuels puissent être coupés du monde des travailleurs ne m'a donc jamais effleuré. Etre communiste en Angleterre m'a apporté un énorme courage. Dans le monde du rock ou des arts, les gens considérés comme dangereux sont finalement assez bien traités.
On t'adore même quand tu es un rocker dangereux, donc c'est que tu ne l'es pas vraiment. Par contre, si tu es communiste ici, on te descend en flèche et on te marginalise, on te traite comme une merde. En un sens, le vrai courage est là et pas chez les rockers rebelles qui jouent juste un rôle. Dans ma section, j'ai rencontré des gens vraiment courageux qui ne seront jamais connus ni millionnaires. . .

Et pourquoi avez-vous quitté le parti ?

C'est comme la question sur mon départ du groupe. . . Est-il tombé ou l'a-t-on poussé ? *(rires)*. . . je suis parti parce qu'il me semblait ne pas retrouver ce courage des gens de la base parmi les dirigeants. Ils paraissaient uniquement préoccupés par les attaques incessantes de la presse et déterminés à ne garder du communisme que le nom. Pour cela, ils devenaient plus amicaux envers nos ennemis à une époque où ça ne m'impressionnait plus du tout.

Ils devenaient professionnels ?

Oui. Ma femme a toujours été plutôt anarchiste, et elle me disait "Bien sûr, Robert, la merde finit toujours par remonter à la surface" *(rires)*. . . j'ai toujours été un léniniste romantique. . .

Y avait-il des polémiques sur le fait d'être plutôt léniniste ou trotskiste ?

On ne peut pas discuter avec un trotskiste *(rires)*. . . je n'ai jamais été hostile aux trotskistes, simplement ils m'énervaient d'avoir parcouru la moitié du chemin pour faire ensuite le mauvais choix politique *(rires)*. . .

Et vous, n'avez-vous jamais pensé avoir fait le mauvais choix ?

La raison pour laquelle je n'ai jamais été attiré par le trotskisme, c'est qu'il ne défend que des théories. Il n'existe pas un seul pays trotskiste, pas même une petite province italienne, ce n'est pas une réalité. Les journaux trotskistes m'ont parfois fait réfléchir, je possède une histoire trotskiste de la Révolution russe qui est merveilleuse, mais cette doctrine a une caractéristique commune avec le christianisme qui me gêne beaucoup. Celle qui consiste à dire que ses héros ont été crucifiés. Donc, forcément, le monde moderne ne peut rien reprocher aux trotskistes, ils ont une espèce de virginité, de pureté qui leur donne le droit de critiquer n'importe quoi dans le monde.

Justement, ce caractère utopique ne vous a-t-il jamais attiré ?

Vous soulevez un point important. . . Pourquoi ai-je choisi le Parti communiste ? Cette décision me paraît toujours évasive et inconsciente. Les conservateurs attaquent tout le monde en bloc sans différencier les trotskistes des autres, ils attaquent en bloc ceux qui se réclament des idées de gauche. Leurs campagnes de haine sont basées sur une critique des pays communistes. Les trotskistes sont assez heureux de s'associer à ces attaques contre l'URSS ou d'autres. Donc si la droite ne fait pas de différence entre les courants du socialisme, moi j'en vois. Et je n'ai pas ce côté artiste utopique. Je répète que je ne suis pas certain d'être d'abord artiste, d'être motivé par l'aboutissement de satisfactions artistiques. Je dirais modestement que je voulais me dissocier de la machine à penser conservatrice, uniquement pour préserver ma santé mentale. C'est presque psychologique, je me sentais insulté et désorienté par ce consensus créé par les conservateurs alors qu'ils prétendent avoir fondé une communauté vibrante et pluraliste. J'ai plutôt l'impression qu'ils ont une réponse uniformisée pour tout ce qui peut arriver dans le monde. C'était urgent de m'extirper de ce consensus.

Quand vous avez quitté le parti, il y a quelques années, avez-vous trouvé autre chose pour remplir votre vie ?

D'abord, je n'ai pas le sentiment d'avoir perdu ce que j'ai retiré de cette expérience. D'une certaine manière, j'ai quand même perdu mon éducation de classe, et donc, je me retrouve au point où j'en étais dans les années 70 : ma femme et moi sommes sans arrêt à la recherche de livres *(rires)*...

Avez-vous parfois regretté de n'avoir pas un média plus important que le disque pour exposer votre point de vue politique ?

Ça va vous paraître étrange, mais je ne considère pas que toucher un public soit primordial. Je dois le faire avec mes disques parce que c'est mon boulot, mais je ne me sens pas une âme de missionnaire. Donc, je me partage entre le disque, qui doit nécessairement être public, et discuter, par exemple, de livres avec ma femme, ce qui est tout à fait privé. Le travail que je fais, c'est pour rester intègre et sain. Je serais désespéré d'être enrôlé dans une direction contraire, je ne suis pas un rebelle et je veux rester au contact des gens.

Vous avez d'ailleurs souvent eu des affinités avec des chanteurs engagés.

Oui, en particulier, j'ai été très heureux de rencontrer Jerry Dammers *(ex-chanteur des Specials)* et de l'aider à faire ce disque au profit de la Namibie. Je ne sais pas pourquoi on a mis mon nom sur la pochette du disque parce qu'il y avait six autres chanteurs et la chanson était de Dammers *(sourire)*. . . C'était vraiment une rencontre enrichissante car il est plus homme de terrain que moi. Etant bloqué sur une chaise roulante, je ne peux pas aller dans la rue. . . Lui menait une action quotidienne dans les rues de Coventry. J'ai été particulièrement impressionné par les groupes sur le label de ska Two Tones. Je ne suis pas l'actualité du rock, ce n'est pas la musique qui m'intéresse, encore une fois parce que je la trouve trop cloisonnée, mais j'aime beaucoup certains musiciens de rock. Je connais l'acid-test, qu'est-ce que je raconte ? *(Rires)*. . . Donc, le test qui détermine mes choix, c'est quand je sens qu'une personne est attaquée. Si je lis par exemple une critique de cette Irlandaise rasée, oui, Sinéad O'Connor, alors je serai à ses côtés. Voilà le test. C'est ainsi que j'estime certains musiciens, ou quand je lis des interviews de groupes irlandais punks comme Stiff Little Fingers ou That Petrol Emotion. J'apprécie leur attitude, même si je n'aime pas forcément la musique, elle me paraît plus sérieuse que celle de Johnny Rotten. J'aime les gens qui ont une attitude vraiment courageuse et la mettent au service d'une cause qui le mérite.

Vous n'avez pas mentionné Billy Bragg, qui est pourtant le plus engagé.

Bien sûr, je l'aime beaucoup. Pour ses chansons, mais pas uniquement. Récemment, il a fait une émission de télé avec un DJ de la BBC. C'était un reportage, avec juste un magnétophone et un caméraman, sur les mines d'or en Amérique du Sud. Ils observaient le fonctionnement de ces vieilles exploitations coloniales et rencontraient les gens sur place. Ils enregistraient de la musique locale et Billy chantait ses chansons. C'était merveilleux, c'était un reportage qu'un professionnel n'aurait jamais fait. L'Angleterre manque de Billy Bragg, elle n'a pas cette tradition de chanteurs engagés qui s'accompagnent à la guitare et qu'on trouve ailleurs, ne serait-ce qu'en Amérique.

Comme Billy Bragg, êtes-vous motivé par la rage ?

Non, je dirais que ma motivation première est presque l'exact contraire : quand, par exemple, on me dit de haïr les Cubains, ça me donne envie de chanter une belle chanson cubaine. Je n'accepte pas qu'on me dise de détester des gens. Je ne suis jamais allé à Cuba, mais, par pitié, ne me dites pas de haïr ses habitants; quels qu'ils soient, vos motivations pour les détester puent, je le sais. Je fonctionne donc plutôt sur le refus de la haine. Et si ça passe dans mes chansons, comme vous le sous-entendiez, j'en suis ravi. Je me souviens bien de l'exemple des Namibiens. On disait "Ce sont des noirs - manipulés par des terroristes cubains de surcroît -, ils ne peuvent donc pas se prendre en charge, ce ne sont que les poupées des Russes." Et je les ai rencontrés, ce sont des gens si bons, si modestes, excellents travailleurs et accueillants. Et on ne voudrait pas les laisser gouverner leur propre pays ? Quelle insulte que d'entendre des prétendus experts dire qu'ils étaient manipulés.

JE CASSE DES OBJETS

En vieillissant, n'avez-vous pas envie de vous occuper un peu moins des autres et plus de vous ?

(Rires). . . La plupart du temps, c'est ce que je fais. Comparé à la majorité des gens que je connais, je suis assez paresseux, assez autocomplaisant, et mon penchant naturel tendrait à l'hédonisme. Je me suis retrouvé dans une guerre des nerfs, mais je ne suis pas un combattant né. J'aime mon petit confort douillet *(silence)*. . . Ma seule contrainte en vieillissant, c'est de me montrer de plus en plus prudent dans mes actions. Je dois réfléchir trois fois au lieu d'une seule, ou de pas du tout *(rires)*. . . L'âge en lui-même ne m'effraie pas: plus tu es vieux, plus tu as vécu, donc plus tu as de souvenirs, c'est une évidence. Par contre, physiquement, l'âge est un problème. Cette déchirure musculaire à la poitrine que j'ai eue avant-hier, ça peut toucher n'importe qui, mais c'est le genre d'accident qui m'arrive de plus en plus fréquemment. . . C'est un rappel constant que je ne suis plus aussi résistant qu'avant. . . Ce doit être un peu effrayant pour ma femme *(silence)*. . . En vieillissant, mon corps ne répond plus comme je le voudrais. . .

Voulez-vous sous-entendre que vous avez mal vécu votre accident physique ?

Mon accident originel ? Au début, oui, car je suis resté un an à l'hôpital et j'étais assailli par toutes sortes de pensées, sauf les questions pragmatiques du genre "Comment payer mon loyer ?". Et puis, à cause de mes limitations physiques, je devais me concentrer profondément sur la moindre petite chose. Ça a été un problème pour travailler, je devais faire de nombreux efforts, puis abandonner *(silence)*. . . Peut-être avais-je besoin de la discipline que j'ai acquise en devenant paraplégique. . .

Etiez-vous enragé contre vous-même à cause des excès qui ont conduit à cet accident ?

(Silence). . . J'aurais pu atterrir sur *(silence)*. . . Vu comment je m'en suis sorti, je crois que j'ai eu de la chance. C'était plus un changement dramatique qu'un désastre. L'hôpital où j'étais soigné était très bon. Et lorsque j'en suis sorti pour enregistrer, les amis avec qui je travaillais avant étaient toujours là. Quand vos amis disparaissent, là c'est très dur. . .

Auriez-vous un fond chrétien pour accepter ainsi la fatalité ?

Je pense vraiment que ça aurait pu être pire. Dans le lit voisin du mien, il y avait un ouvrier du bâtiment qui était tombé d'un échafaudage. Son syndicat lui avait obtenu une bonne pension car l'échafaudage était mal fixé, il n'avait pas à s'inquiéter pour l'argent et on lui avait même trouvé un boulot dans un bureau. Mais ça l'a déprimé, car c'était un travailleur physique et d'extérieur; il ne pouvait pas supporter l'idée d'être enfermé dans un bureau. Alors que pour moi, l'idée que je ne puisse plus être batteur et faire de tournées, c'était presque. . . Rétrospectivement, c'était le bon moment pour que ça arrive. Plus tôt, ou plus tard dans ma vie, cet accident m'aurait abattu mais pas à ce moment-là. C'était comme s'il n'y avait plus de suite possible à ma manière de travailler. Il était temps de changer ma méthode, ça a été le cas avec cet accident.

Le prix à payer n'était-il pas trop lourd ?

Bien sûr, de par mes limitations physiques, j'ai un sentiment permanent de frustration. Oui, je casse des objets par colère, j'écrase des choses quand je n'arrive pas à atteindre ce que je veux attraper. Et après, je me sens mieux: c'est un indicateur de ma frustration physique.

Votre accident est-il arrivé parce que vous faisiez trop d'excès ?

Oui. Ma vie était un peu disloquée *(sourire)*. . . Je cherchais continuellement toutes sortes de stimulants. Il faut être un peu désespéré pour chercher à s'amuser sans cesse. Aujourd'hui, j'ai toujours des tendances à l'excès. Cette blessure à la poitrine que je me suis faite, eh bien, c'est parce que j'ai picolé comme un Polonais, que j'ai voulu m'extraire de mon fauteuil et que je n'ai pas pu me contrôler. Si on ne me surveille pas, je vais boire sans m'arrêter ou écouter de la musique à plein volume pendant six ou sept heures d'affilée jusqu'à ce que les voisins deviennent fous.

Avez-vous toujours du plaisir à boire ?

Oui *(rires)*. . . C'est bien là qu'est le problème.

Vous sentez-vous plus sage avec l'âge ?

Je ne sais pas *(sourire)*... A 5 ans, on se sent plus sage qu'à 12; à 20, plus qu'à 15 et à 25, on se rend compte qu'on ne l'était pas à 20. On se sent toujours plus sage. Il faudrait apprendre de chacune des expériences précédentes et assimiler. Comme vous pouvez le constater, j'ai du mal à tirer la leçon du passé, et même parfois de m'en souvenir. Pour devenir sage, il faudrait tout retenir et construire sa sagesse sur cette somme de savoir. On pourrait ainsi contempler les choses depuis une montagne élevée *(sourire)*. . .

Votre réputation de gentillesse, de timidité, vous énerve-t-elle parfois ?

Gentil ? Si ma femme était là, elle éclaterait de rire *(rires)*. . . Je ne suis pas assez introspectif pour me connaître vraiment. C'est drôle parce que j'ai l'habitude d'être considéré comme la personne raisonnable associée à des gens très agressifs. Politiquement, mais aussi parfois musicalement.
Je n'ai jamais vraiment essayé de me défaire d'une quelconque réputation qu'on me ferait, simplement parce que je ne crois pas qu'on puisse tracer une ligne autour de quelqu'un pour l'enfermer dans une définition. Et je ne suis pas assez détaché de moi-même pour pouvoir me juger de l'extérieur.

Avez-vous jamais dû faire un choix entre votre vie privée et votre carrière ?

Je tiens absolument à préserver ma vie privée. . . Il y a eu, par le passé, des moments où mon travail a détruit les chances de succès de ma vie privée. Je ne veux en aucun cas que ça se reproduise. En termes plus explicites, disons que j'ai complètement foiré mon premier mariage par négligence, je ne veux pas que ça recommence, Aujourd'hui, je comprends mieux comment je fonctionne, je vois plus clairement ce que je dois faire, comment le faire et ce que je dois éviter. Tout va mieux. J'en suis au stade des réglages de précision. Dans chaque choix qui se présente - ne serait-ce que l'achat d'un disque de jazz de tel ou tel artiste -, je deviens plus réfléchi et plus précis.

Deviendriez-vous plus rationnel sous l'influence de votre femme ?

Tiens, je l'entends rire à nouveau *(rires)*. . . Elle a certainement essayé de me rendre plus pragmatique. Elle croit avoir réussi, et hop, elle s'aperçoit qu'elle s'est fait avoir. . . Mais j'aimerais vraiment devenir plus rationnel si ça pouvait la rendre plus heureuse.

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Rencontre avec Robert Wyatt, un extraterrestre en sa demeure - Le Monde - 19 septembre 1991

RENCONTRE AVEC ROBERT WYATT, UN EXTRATERRESTRE EN SA DEMEURE

Depuis trente ans, Robert Wyatt dessine des arabesques dans les marges de la musique de ce siècle. Fan de jazz, il écrit des chansons ; pataphysicien, il a adhéré au Parti communiste britannique. Depuis l'époque de Soft Machine, son premier groupe, il a toujours laissé l'imagination au poste de commande. Il publie Dondestan, son premier disque en six ans.


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« La bataille de la côte »
Le gouvernement freine les dépenses publiques
Pari sur la reprise
L'Eglise russe à l'âge de la restauration
Gérer la santé
FRED

LOUTH est un gros bourg entre Lincoln et Hull, dans le nord-est de l'Angleterre, posé sur un paysage morne qui n'évoque que de très loin la verdeur des étés anglais. Dans une maison du centre-ville habite Robert Wyatt. Il y a trois ans que le musicien a quitté Londres, parti vers le nord pour ne s'arrêter qu'après avoir trouvé un endroit assez bon marché pour qu'il puisse y habiter une maison.

Apparemment, Wyatt y a également trouvé une forme ou une autre d'inspiration : Rough Trade Records vient de publier Dondestan, le premier album du musicien depuis 1985, un intervalle presque ordinaire pour Wyatt, qui était resté sans enregistrer de 1974 à 1980. En quatre ans, il avait alors enregistré quatre albums, dont la bande originale d'un film et une compilation de 45-tours, avant de retrouver le silence.

On décèlera à l'écoute de Dondestan l'essence même de l'art de Robert Wyatt : simplicité, mélancolie, humour et très haute sensibilité aux vocabulaires de la musique. C'est-à-dire, à la marque des années près, ce qui, il y a vingt-cinq ans, caractérisait l'apport de Wyatt à Soft Machine, son premier groupe. Depuis 1973, depuis que, par une nuit d'ivresse, Robert Wyatt est tombé par une fenêtre, il est paraplégique. Il ne peut plus jouer d'une batterie complète - sa vocation initiale, - et à chaque pas de sa vie de musicien il doit tenir compte de son handicap.

Au cours d'une longue conversation, ce handicap resurgit au détour d'une phrase, dans le développement d'un raisonnement, comme une borne qu'il faut toujours reculer, contourner. Sur Dondestan, Robert Wyatt tient toutes les parties instrumentales, claviers et percussions, il explique son goût de la solitude et finit par dire : " On peut y voir aussi des éléments de politique du handicap : je connais quelques musiciens handicapés et je sais qu'ils suivent attentivement la manière dont d'autres se débrouillent tout seuls. Et pour eux, c'est un motif de fierté de voir quelqu'un mener à bien un projet important. "

Plus tard, il explique qu'il a abandonné la scène à cause des contraintes matérielles et financières que lui impose son handicap, puis il poursuit en parlant du trac qui le poussait au bord de l'évanouissement à chaque fois qu'il lui fallait monter sur scène : " Je crois d'ailleurs que c'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles je buvais autant en tournée. Je ne suis pas un interprète naturel. "

A écouter Robert Wyatt, chaleureux, drôle, honnête, on finirait presque par croire au peu d'importance de l'homme et de son œuvre, tellement son humilité est déconcertante : " Je travaille seul parce que, en général, je n'oserais jamais inviter les musiciens que je verrais bien jouer sur mes disques. " Ou sur son travail passé : " L'autre jour, j'écoutais une bande de Matching Mole (le groupe qu'il avait formé au début des années 70 après son départ de Soft Machine) enregistrée en public ; il m'est apparu clairement qu'à l'époque je cherchais désespérément à assimiler la manière que Tony Williams avait de battre pendant les cinq années précédentes. Du coup, on ne distingue pas qui je suis dans ce que je faisais. Pour moitié, je jouais de la musique, pour moitié, tâchais de parfaire mon éducation : c'est une affaire très embrouillée. En chantant, je distingue beaucoup plus clairement qui je suis et ce que je fais. "

La voix de Robert Wyatt est un genre vocal à elle seule, douce, plaintive, extraordinairement souple. Robert Wyatt est un jazzman non pratiquant. Il n'écoute que du jazz, ses amis musiciens sont des jazzmen, mais il s'est tourné vers la chanson. On trouvera dans cette schizophrénie douce la source de son originalité. Il raconte ainsi la genèse de son style : " Je n'ai jamais eu de grandes ambitions quant à ma voix. Je me suis aperçu que la différence entre ma voix et les autres instruments dont je jouais est qu'elle était mienne. En essayant de définir des chansons, des airs, des idées mélodiques qui me plaisaient. Au début j'ai tenté de copier d'autres chanteurs. Sans doute parce que j'étais très mauvais dans cet exercice, j'ai abandonné. Ensuite, pendant un moment, j'ai expérimenté des improvisations vocales. Je réécoutais les bandes et je retenais les moments où je n'avais pas envie de me suicider à force d'embarras. "

Cette façon, presque hésitante, aux antipodes de l'assurance macho définie par les grandes voix du rock, de Presley à Johnny Rotten en passant par Robert Plant, Robert Wyatt l'a toujours fait coller à son matériau, des expérimentations pataphysiques de Soft Machine et Matching Mole à l'introspection des deux magnifiques albums enregistrés juste après son accident (Rock Bottom et Ruth Is Stranger than Richard, tous deux indispensables) et enfin à sa période militante.



ROCK

RENCONTRE AVEC ROBERT WYATT

Un extraterrestre en sa demeure

bientôt... octobre

Les orchestres: Orchestre Symphonique de Göteborg, Philharmonie de Munich, Berliner Sinfonie Orchester, Orchestre National de France

Les chefs: Neeme Jarvi, Sergiu Celibidache, Alexander Dmitriev, Eliahu Inbal, Jeffrey Tate

Les quatuors: Vaghi, Quadro, Keller, Artis, Arditti

Les chorégraphes: Edouard Lock, Karine Saporta, Laura de Nessy et Bruno Dizien, Hervé Robbe, Kenneth Kvarnstrom, Stephen Petronio et Michael Clark

Location: (16) 35 70 04 07
Hangar 23 Port Autonome 76000 Rouen

A la fin des années 70, Robert Wyatt adhère au CPGB, le Parti communiste de Grande-Bretagne et, après un long silence, reprend le chemin des studios à l'invitation de Geoff Davis, le patron du label indépendant Rough Trade. Wyatt y enregistre des chansons militantes, le Stalin Wasn't Stallin' (Staline ne rigolait pas), créé par le Golden Gate Quartet pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, Strange Fruit, de Billie Holyday, Caimanera, une chanson cubaine (à ce jour, Robert Wyatt est toujours abonné à l'édition en anglais de Gramma, organe centrale du Parti communiste cubain). " Je ne crois pas être vraiment un chanteur militant. Si j'avais chanté pendant la première moitié de ce siècle, au moment où les gens pour lesquels je chante étaient encore pleins d'espoir, on aurait pu admettre un sentiment de triomphe. Mais en cette moitié de siècle, ce serait de plus en plus irréaliste. Je chante presque une espèce de nostalgie pour des rêves qui ne se sont jamais réalisés : ce n'est pas tout à fait du militantisme. "

Aujourd'hui, Robert Wyatt a quitté le parti et s'en moque sans agressivité dans CP Jeebies, l'une des chansons de Dondestan : " J'avais adhéré au parti au moment où il a commencé à s'effondrer. Parce que presque tous les gens de ma génération voulaient se débarrasser des péchés passés du parti, ils se sont repliés sur une espèce de nouveau libéralisme. Ça peut sembler séduisant, mais, en pratique, je crois que c'était une reddition pure et simple face aux puissants qui dirigent l'Angleterre. Tout bêtement parce qu'ils en avaient assez qu'on les déteste. Il y a eu tout un tas de grands discours donnant des motifs très nobles, mais, en fait, moralement, c'était de l'opportunisme. Et c'est de ça que parle la chanson. Mais ça m'est égal que les gens comprennent de quoi il s'agit. Parce qu'elle est d'abord censée être un joli morceau de musique. En fait, les pays où je suis le plus populaire ne sont pas anglophones. "

Finalement, Dondestan est né à un moment où tout allait mal : le socialisme, Rough Trade, qui a frôlé la faillite et n'y a échappé qu'en tournant le dos aux idéaux coopératifs qui avaient présidé à sa fondation. Tout sauf Robert Wyatt, qui s'est mis à écrire : " Le disque est basé sur une série de poèmes qu'Alfie, ma femme polonaise- slovène, avait écrits. Il s'appelaient Out of Season (Hors saison) et parlaient de la vie dans un endroit où personne n'est censé habiter. " Les Wyatt ont vécu quelque temps dans un appartement

de la Costa del Sol, en hiver, à un moment où les loyers étaient si bas " qu'on faisait des économies en partant là-bas au lieu de chauffer notre appartement à Londres ". La musique s'est lentement agrégée autour de ces poèmes au fil des années. " Ils m'étaient devenus si familiers que j'avais l'impression de pouvoir les chanter. J'ai choisi quatre de ces poèmes, plus un petit texte sarcastique sur les nouvelles psychothérapies californiennes, Shrink Rap. La musique d'une autre chanson a été écrite par Hugh Hopper [qui fut le bassiste de Soft Machine]. D'habitude, je ne travaille pas autour des textes. Je pars d'une atmosphère, en l'occurrence une situation harmonique. Je me suis aperçu que ma voix était le meilleur outil pour effectuer la mise au point d'un morceau de musique. Un peu comme une corde à linge à laquelle je peux accrocher ce que je veux et décider si cet élément a sa place ou non. "

Robert Wyatt a trouvé un studio dans le Lincolnshire et s'y est enfermé avec un ingénieur du son, sans musiciens à qui il aurait fallu expliquer sa musique, sans producteur, avec des instruments simples, piano, batterie, percussions. Wyatt est tout sauf un fanatique de technologie. Contrairement aux apparences, le motif rythmique de Shrink Rap, par exemple, n'a pas été réalisé avec un séquenceur (comme on le fait pour le " vrai rap "), mais en enregistrant une partie de batterie à l'envers. " Ma méthode varie selon les chansons, bien sûr, et je ne peux jamais déterminer à l'avance ce que je vais faire. Mais aujourd'hui je sais mieux définir le moment où j'ai trouvé ce qu'une chanson veut être et comment y arriver. De toute façon je veux faire une musique plutôt simple. Pour moi, les chansons ne peuvent être le support d'idées symphoniques. Et puis, au bout de trente ans, je connais mieux mes mécanismes, je sais quand je suis perdu, comment retrouver mon chemin, éviter les impasses. Je ne sais pas comment utiliser un échantillonneur, je n'ai pas les connaissances technologiques pour même m'efforcer d'en maîtriser un. Finalement, la musique que j'écoute est technologiquement très conservatrice. "

Pour les mêmes raisons, Robert Wyatt n'envisage pas d'installer un studio chez lui. Son salon de musique est d'une simplicité désarmante : un piano, une petite batterie sans grosse caisse. Il explique que l'une de ses occupations favorites est d'accompagner les disques qu'il passe en faisant semblant de faire partie du groupe. Il reçoit de temps en temps des disques de jazz, et l'on commence à comprendre un peu les raisons de ses longs silences. " Je n'ai jamais réussi à me convaincre que j'étais fait pour être un artiste ou un musicien. J'essaie de trouver la façon de le faire du mieux possible, mais j'ai l'impression d'être un visiteur d'une autre planète. Je n'arrive pas à me dire que je ne suis qu'un musicien. J'ai l'impression de devenir fou quand il faut écrire, avoir recours au mot. Je trouve plus intéressant d'écouter des disques que d'en faire. Par moments, je me dis qu'il manque beaucoup de chose au bonheur du monde, mais qu'il y a bien assez de disques. C'est une plaisanterie de croire que le monde a besoin que j'écrive une nouvelle chanson. " Après cet accès autocritique, il reconnaît deux raisons à sa persévérance, aussi épisodique soit-elle : l'intérêt que lui portent de par le monde quelques milliers de fidèles, et sa survie matérielle. La situation juridique des disques de Soft Machine est si compliquée qu'il n'en tire aucun revenu. Robert Wyatt ne peut compter que sur sa production pour Rough Trade depuis 1980. Mais une fois admises ces contraintes, Wyatt avoue qu'il envie Elvis Presley. Pas parce qu'il était riche ou qu'il vendait beaucoup de disques : simplement parce que Presley est mort et qu'il ne courra jamais plus le risque de décevoir son public. Il le dit sans que même l'effleure l'idée que lui, Robert Wyatt, contrairement à Elvis Presley, en trente ans, n'a jamais déçu son public.

Thomas Sotinel

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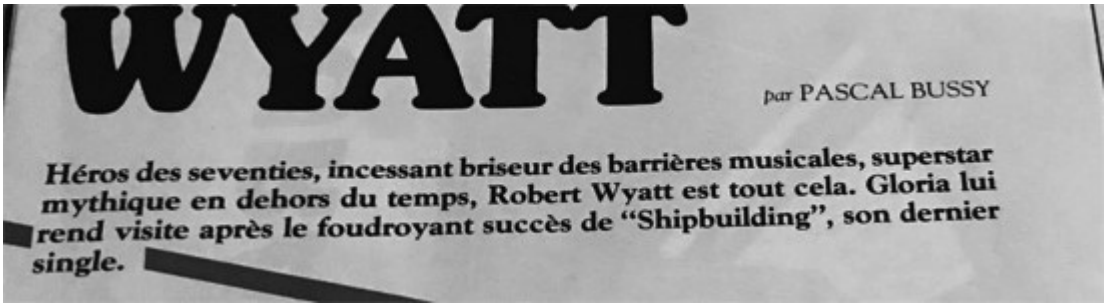
Robert Wyatt - Le vaisseau fantôme - Gloria - décembre-janvier 1983-84



Robert Wyatt

LE VAISSEAU FANTÔME

par PASCAL BUSSY


WYATT

par PASCAL BUSSY

Héros des seventies, incessant briseur des barrières musicales, superstar mythique en dehors du temps, Robert Wyatt est tout cela. Gloria lui rend visite après le foudroyant succès de "Shipbuilding", son dernier single.

Londres humide et grisonnant, la gare blafarde de Charing Cross, le train de banlieue cafardeux, pour se rendre dans le Middlesex, la route est parfumée par cette oppressante atmosphère de monotonie anglaise. Au bout du chemin, Twickenham, satellite urbain aux faux airs de province tranquille. Sortie centre ville, la rue commerçante, encore quelques détours et puis voilà une courte avenue bordée d'arbres qui tourne sur elle-même. Robert Wyatt habite au 58.

Quand il vient ouvrir la porte, cloué dans sa chaise roulante, il ressemble à un étrange farfadet, un lutin que le destin machiavélique aurait planté là, dans un pavillon anonyme

d'un faubourg britannique. Malgré moi, des images du temps passé défilent... L'atmosphère chaleureuse des lieux les arrêtent immédiatement.

Wyatt me fait les honneurs du rez-de-chaussée, plusieurs pièces aménagées spécialement pour lui avec tout à la portée de ses mains. Le salon est son domaine, il y lit et travaille, écrit, et écoute ses disques et sa radio. Dans la pièce voisine, sa femme Alfreda Benge dessine et peint, les toiles grandeur nature des pochettes de *Rock Bottom* et de *Ruth is Stranger than Richard* ornent les murs. Mais déjà Wyatt revient de la cuisine avec deux tasses de thé, l'œil malicieux : "Tu sais, nous habitons ici de moins en moins, la plupart du temps nous sommes en Espagne, dans une maison près de Barcelone, la lumière est supérieure qu'ici pour la peinture d'Alfie..."

— Tu arrives à vivre de ta musique ?

— Disons que nous vivons tous les deux de nos activités, de ses peintures et de ma musique. Les deux mis ensemble, on s'en sort.

— Le succès de *Shipbuilding* t'a étonné ? Tu étais n" 1 dans les charts indépendants et tu es même arrivé dans le Top 30 officiel...

— Bien sûr, cela m'a surpris, mais cela a surtout été un succès d'estime. On a tourné une vidéo en Espagne et elle n'est toujours pas amortie, il faudrait vendre encore beaucoup de disques ! De toute façon, cela a été une excellente expérience. Quand Rough Trade m'a proposé la chanson, elle m'a tout de suite plu, la musique de Clive Langer et les paroles d'Elvis Costello avec leur côté satire sociale, très orientées sur la guerre des Falklands. Au départ, Costello a pensé à moi comme chanteur car il trouvait que le morceau ressemblait à certaines choses que j'avais faites, comme Strange fruit par exemple. Et j'ai trouvé Costello quelqu'un de, euh..., very nice! Un musicien pas du tout corrompu par le milieu rock en tout cas.

— Et toi, tes relations avec ce milieu ?

— Elles sont heureusement très limitées, j'ai beaucoup de chance avec l'équipe de Rough Trade, c'est d'ailleurs grâce à eux si j'ai recommencé à enregistrer il y a trois ans. C'est une petite compagnie, indépendante et aventureuse à la fois, et qui traite bien ses artistes. C'est très rare. Il y a une autre compagnie à New York: Europa Records, qui est dirigée par le Français Jean-Pierre Weiller. Europa va d'ailleurs sortir en 84 un album de Hugh Hopper et de Richard Sinclair sur lequel je chanterai quelques morceaux.



Depuis son retour à une vie musicale active, Robert Wyatt se contente d'être interprète, de chanter des morceaux composés par d'autres musiciens. Comme il l'explique, il aime se concentrer sur le chant sans s'occuper du reste, arrangements, composition ou instrumentation.

— J'ai découvert ce plaisir en travaillant autrefois avec Mike Mantler et Carla Bley, cela m'a changé de *Rock Bottom* où j'avais dû tout superviser.

— Tu ne composes plus du tout ?

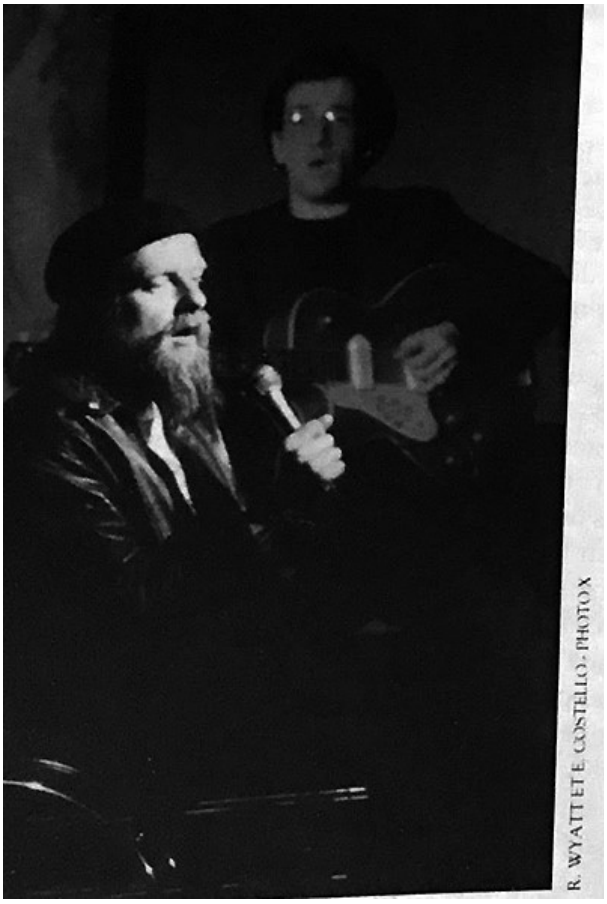
— Si, mais pas forcément en pensant à des disques. Plusieurs critiques ont écrit que ma musique était meilleure autrefois et je ne suis pas loin de penser qu'ils ont un peu raison...

— Tu feras bien sûr d'autres disques...

— Quand on me demande ça, j'ai un peu envie de dire la même chose que Johnny Rotten il y a 6 ou 7 ans : No future! Tu sais, je n'ai jamais pensé à la musique en termes de carrière, quand un single a marché comme *I'm a believer* ou bien là comme *Shipbuilding*, je n'ai jamais voulu faire de follow-up. C'est cela qui me plait beaucoup avec Rough Trade aussi: ils me laissent complètement libre, je fais un 45 tours de temps en temps, quand l'occasion se présente et que j'en ai envie. D'ailleurs, c'est Rough Trade quia remis le 45 tours à la mode en Angleterre.

— Parle-moi de ta fascination pour les vieilles chansons noires américaines...

— J'ai toujours aimé cette musique, les vieux disques de Cole Porter et Nat King Cole par exemple. J'en écoute beaucoup et je m'aperçois qu'on n'en parle pas assez aujourd'hui, bien que tout un tas de nouveaux groupes s'en inspirent, peut-être sans le savoir évidemment. J'ai repris sur l'autre face de *Shipbuilding* un très beau morceau, *Memories of you* d'Eubie Blake, et le *Round Midnight* de Thelonious Monk. Blake faisait tous les lyrics de Fats Waller, et il vient de mourir il y a quelques mois. Comme Monk. Sans le savoir (ces deux titres ont été enregistrés début 83) j'ai rendu un double hommage à ces deux musiciens. Mon disque a un parfum un peu triste, non ?



— Tu écoutes beaucoup de musique ?

— J'écoute surtout ma radio ondes courtes, cela me fait voyager. Beaucoup de musiques des pays arabes, des pays de l'Est. En ce moment, je prends souvent la Palestine, comme ça j'ai une autre vision de l'actualité, plus globale et plus culturelle. Quant aux programmes anglais, ils sont impossibles à éviter, on les entend malgré soi mais il n'y a rien de neuf. Tiens, j'écoute beaucoup la musique d'Andalousie, c'est passionnant de regarder les liens entre la musique espagnole, maghrébine, grecque, le flamenco. Tout ça, ce sont les mêmes racines au départ.

— Et le cinéma ?

— Oui, ma femme m'y emmène beaucoup, surtout des films allemands, français ou japonais, qui ne sont pas distribués dans les grands circuits. Heureusement, nous avons maintenant une chaîne en Angleterre, le Channel 4 où l'on peut voir pas mal de films latino-américains, et beaucoup plus de choses culturelles qu'ailleurs.

Cruelle ironie du sort. Aujourd'hui qu'il est paralysé dans sa chaise roulante, Robert Wyatt est reconnu internationalement comme un pape de la nouvelle musique. Une réputation qui dépasse bien sûr les frontières du rock, et qui s'étend au jazz, à la new-wave, à la musique expérimentale. Tous ses compagnons de la première heure, les anciens de Soft Machine, sont en pleine faillite musicale. Kevin Ayers s'abandonne à la variété, Mike Ratledge vit en faisant des musiques de spots publicitaires, Daevid Allen se raccroche désespérément à une pauvre new-wave mort-née. Wyatt, lui, est toujours dans la course. Il poursuit son itinéraire solitaire de nomade musical, travaillant, comme il dit, en "absorbant des influences". Après deux autres tasses de thé, il me raccompagne à sa porte en m'affirmant qu'il ne croit plus à l'avant-garde.

"Et d'ailleurs ajoute-t-il, je viens de découvrir tout récemment que l'origine de l'expression est un terme militaire français du dix-neuvième siècle, tu te rends compte... ! ?"

A quoi pense-t-il, Robert Wyatt, à cet instant où le crépuscule descend doucement sur la morne banlieue de Twickenham ? A l'Espagne tiède du côté de Barcelone où il ira bientôt ? A une mystérieuse station de radio du bout du monde qu'il va capter cette nuit ? Ou bien tout simplement à la relativité des choses et à la logique parfois absurde du quotidien ? Et moi je pars vers Londres dans le soir, la mélodie voluptueuse de *Shipbuilding* flotte doucement dans ma tête, j'ai rencontré Robert Wyatt et je me sens tout d'un coup tout petit, très fort et plein d'espoir.

Discographie :
- L.P. "The end of an ear" (1971, C.B.S.)
- L.P. "Rock Bottom" (1974, Virgin)
- L.P. "Ruth is stranger than Richard" (1975, Vir [illegible])
- L.P. "The Animals/Film soundtrack" (198[illegible] Rough Trade)
- L.P. "Nothing can stop us" (1982, Rough Trade)
- Maxi 45 tours "Shipbuilding" (1983, Rough Trade)
- Discographies de Soft Machine et Matching Mole (C.B.S.)
- Collaborations : Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Centipede, Lol Coxhill, Kevin Coyne, Brian Eno, Vivien Goldman, Hatfield And The North, Henry Cow, Mike Mantler & Carla Bley, Phil Manzanera, Nick Mason, Raincoats, Scritti Politti, Epic Soundtracks, Keith Tippett Group, Morgan Fisher, Hugh Hopper, etc.

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Scritti Politti, le rock anglais rencontre Derrida - Libération - 28 septembre 1982


FRAUDE: LA CONTRE-ATTAQUE DE LA RATP

Libération

Statut de Paris: la bataille va rebondir

François Mitterrand dans le Sud-Ouest

ALLONS ENFANTS DE LA RIGUEUR!

Rencontre avec Roy Lichtenstein

Scritti Politti, le rock anglais rencontre Derrida

Imaginez Otis Redding lançant ses plaintes métaphysiques sur un back-ground synthético-futuriste à la Kraftwerk en invoquant Jacques Derrida.., Ainsi est Scritti Politti.

C'est à n'en pas douter un des disques les plus délicieusement tortueux (peut-être devrais-je dire « retors » ?), parus en cette morne année 82. De quoi mettre en rage tous les vieux gommeux nostalgiques que l'on nomme « rockers ». Qu'on en juge ! Le nom du groupe qui l'a commis est déjà hautement improbable : Scritti Politti (« Ecrits Politiques », en toute simplicité), un rescapé particulièrement obscur de la non moins obscure et introuvable « vague froide » de 79-80 qui, après un long passage au Purgatoire (ou aux Limbes) de l'expérimentation underground, vient de prendre, comme hier les disco-raides Human League, le tournant commercial.

Côté musique, toutes les influences sont au rendez-vous de cette pièce montée kitsch: soul à la Tamla-Motown, reggae lourd mâtiné de dub, revival « swing », funk à la néoromantique, restes décadents à la Roxy ou Bowie grande époque, et même free-rock à la Robert Wyatt (qui tient d'ailleurs les claviers sur plusieurs morceaux de ce disque-OVNI). Imaginez Otis élevant sa plainte métaphysique sur un back-ground synthético-futuriste à la Kraftwerk, ou bien encore Robert Wyatt expirant ses mélopées doucereuses sur un rythme funky très chic, et vous aurez une (petite) idée des rencontres incroyables que met en scène « Songs To Remember ».



CHARABIA

Scritti Politti, le rock anglais rencontre Derrida

Imaginez Otis Redding lançant ses plaintes métaphysiques sur un back-ground synthético-futuriste à la Kraftwerk en invoquant Jacques Derrida... Ainsi est Scritti Politti.

Patrick BOLLON

« Songs To Remember » — Rough Trade (distribution Celluloïd).

Les paroles, de leur côté, donnent dans l'insupportable : outrageusement intellectuelles, avec un net penchant pour le Tarabiscoté-Obscur, tournant un grand dos à toute « réalité », en dehors des modes, des clichés et des mythes tarifés du rock, sans souci aucun de l'«air du temps ». On y trouve même — le comble ! — une chanson-hommage à Jacques Derrida (« I'm in love with Jacques Derrida »), le rocker français bien connu des lecteurs de «critique». Scritti Politti s'était autrefois attaqué à notre Jacques Lacan national. Espérons qu'il nous donnera dans ses prochaines livraisons un « Do the Bernard-Henry Lévy » et un « Barthes for Ever » : ce serait parfait.

BIZAR

L'ensemble, comme pour aggraver à plaisir le malaise, garde un côté volontairement inachevé, bancal, un peu (malgré l'excellente production) « brouillon » ou « fragments ». « Songs To Remember » ressemble au « Best Of » d'un groupe qui aurait dix ans d'existence derrière lui, et deux fois plus de travestissements à sa disposition. Chaque morceau explore, en quelques minutes, une direction, un style, une option possibles, mais sans jamais les développer. On songe à ces bibliographies imaginaires que s'inventent les écrivains pleins de talent mais paresseux qui, en un mot et quelques idées paradoxales fragmentaires, présentent comme finis des ouvrages qu'ils ne commenceront jamais : des vertus du dilettantisme beaudelairien appliqué au binaire.

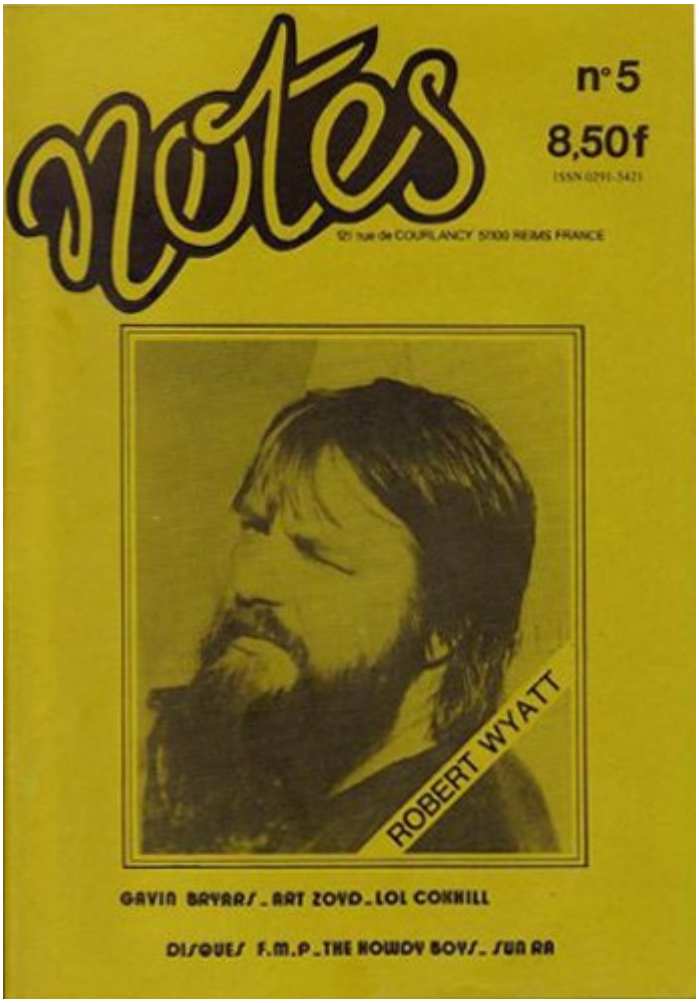
Le plus étrange, dans tout cela, c'est que ce jeu pur, ce patchwork à la limite de l'arrogance de parvenu artiste, tienne et accroche notre sensibilité. En Angleterre, pays où tout intellectualisme est par définition suspect (ou français, ce qui revient au même), le disque est même arrivé à se tailler une solide seconde place dans les charts « indépendants », le classement des disques « bizarres » publiés par de petits labels privés. Le miracle ? Il est relativement simple à expliquer : « Songs To Remember » révèle une personnalité hors du commun, comme il n'en émerge dans le rock que deux ou trois tous les cinq ans : celle de Green Gartside, le chanteur-fondateur-compositeur du groupe, un transfuge (un de plus) des écoles d'art anglaises passé au rock, sorte de Bowie de l'après néoromantique qui, comme son Grand Caméléon de modèle, sait piller tout ce qui se passe autour de lui pour le fondre dans une sensibilité originale, dans un discours individualiste. Et, bizarrement, ce qui, sur le papier, apparaît comme biscornu, à la limite de l'intolérable, devient, manipulé par lui, autant de piécettes habiles et pleines de charme, dotées d'une sensibilité sophistiquée, presque secrète. Les deux moments forts du disque se trouvent en fin de chaque face : « Faithless », un titre qu'aurait pu signer le Bowie de « Young Americans », et « The Sweetest Girl », très influencé par « Rock Bottom » de Wyatt. Nul doute que l'on reparlera de Green Gartside, avec ou sans ses « Ecrits politiques » : au côté d'Orange Juice, il est ce que le rock anglais a produit de plus prometteur depuis bien longtemps.

Patrick BOLLON

« Songs To Remember » — Rough Trade (distribution Celluloïd).

La voix du silence - Notes - N° 5 - mars 1982

LA VOIX DU SILENCE



WYATT LE SILENCIEUX PARLE ENFIN.

II a enregistré quatre 45t,

Le premier est une chanson folklorique chilienne.

Le deuxième un morceau de CHIC.

Le troisième est un hymne stalinien de 1940.

Le quatrième est de IVOR CUTLER.

ROBERT s'explique sur son activité récente.

« Je ne sais pas... je crois que je me suis politisé malgré moi, mon penchant naturel est plutôt de prendre du bon temps" (Rires)" J'aimerais être hédoniste " Il s'arrête en fronçant les sourcils. " Mais il y a autre chose... Auparavant je ne ressentais pas le besoin de me référer à, mais c'est bizarre... Je suis né en 1945 et dans ma génération il y avait des hypothèses, certaines choses qui ne se faisaient plus, comme l'élitisme sous une certaine forme de racisme, qui était complètement discrédité après la guerre, ce n'était plus à la mode.

On pensait avoir éliminé toute la merde, ce droit des pays occidentaux à traiter le reste du monde comme de sales petits voyous. Mais maintenant on fait marche arrière après ce qui

apparait rétrospectivement comme une pause momentanée. Ce n'est pas seulement l'affaire des conservateurs, pas seulement des politiciens, c'est toute la culture… Comme le racisme inavoué des radios qui utilisent le terme de "musique sérieuse" en parlant de la musique académique européenne et d'aucune autre. Ces hypothèses sont maintenant florissantes et je n'en reviens pas car je croyais que c'était définitivement mort.

J'ai été très heureux de continuer, de chanter des chansons et de déconner, tu sais.

Une des raisons pour lesquelles j'ai adhéré au Parti Communiste, c'est que j'ai réalisé que les idées qui apparaissaient dans la culture, dans la musique n'avaient pas de pouvoir efficace pour améliorer les choses. Elles pouvaient donner des indications ou témoigner, mais elles ne pouvaient rien changer.

Pourtant je continue à travailler sur la seule chose que je puisse faire: la musique, qui est basée sur l'hypothèse à laquelle je croyais, selon laquelle l'art est une force réelle. Et franchement, je ne sais pas comment exploiter La compréhension que j'ai acquise en pratiquant la musique. Je perçois tout de manière politique à présent, mais en temps qu'artiste, je pense que le boulot d'un musicien est de faire de la musique, et malgré tout le désir qu'il ait que ses chanson reflètent ses propres préoccupations, il y a en fait des règles musicales qui font que les chansons ont leur propre échelle de valeur. C'est en partie le problème que j'ai. Je ne me sens pas très à l'aise en vivant là où il y a d'autres priorités. Je me sens vraiment prisonnier de cette idée et je ne vois pas de moyen de m'en sortir. Je ne sais littéralement pas quoi faire, c'est aussi simple que ça."

WYATT parait pensif et il mâchonne sa barbe, l'esprit ailleurs. Nous sommes dans le jardin de sa maison de TWICKENHAM pour parler de ses récentes réalisations. D'abord le single "Arauco/Caimanera", le premier des quatre sur ROUGH TRADE, qui brisait un silence entretenu depuis "Ruth is Stranger", en 1975.

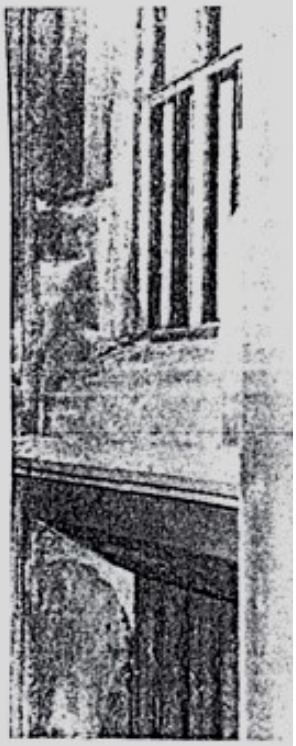
La première surprise de ces 45t, c'est leur diversité: deux chansons folkloriques Sud-américaines, un protest-jazz de Billie Holiday, un morceau de CHIC et un d'IVOR CUTLER, fantaisiste, le plus étrange de tous, une version en re-recording acapella de "STALIN Wasn't Stalling", une chanson américaine de propagande pro-staliniste de la deuxième guerre mondiale, chantée à l'origine par le Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet. WYATT a aussi fait figurer deux face où il n'apparaît pas : "STALINGRAD", un poème lut par son auteur, PETER BLACKMAN, et "TRADE UNION" qui est l'œuvre de D1SHARHI, un groupe d'ouvriers bengali et de musiciens folk du East End de LONDRES.

La deuxième surprise est la portée politique de ces singles. WYATT : "Arauco est de la chanteuse folk Chilienne VIOLETTA PARA. C'est une exhortation désespérée envers les grands chefs indiens, la culture et les communautés qu'ils représentent à se relever et à chasser les colonialistes chrétiens. C'est désespéré car cette exploitation dure depuis 400 ans et qu'il ne reste plus beaucoup d'indiens. Les gens disent: "Bien sûr, cela arrive, les gens meurent..." Mais ils ne meurent pas, on les assassine. PINOCHET vend leurs terres à de grandes sociétés étrangères, ce qui signifie que la plupart des indiens sont presque certains d'être expulsés ou simplement de finir dans un bidonville, exploités dans les travaux les plus pénibles dans les mines. Si vous dites: "Qu'est-ce que ça à voir avec moi ?" C'est justement que notre gouvernement est une de leur principale source de crédit pour leur permettre de faire ça.

"Caimanera" est une version de "Guantanamera" qui est pratiquement l'hymne national cubain. Je chante ça... depuis qu'on a tant parlé dans la presse des quelques milliers de cubains qui ont quitté Cuba, j'ai pensé que je devais chanter cette chanson pour les millions qui sont restés."

C'est le même homme qui a chanté l'alphabet sur un album de Soft Machine.

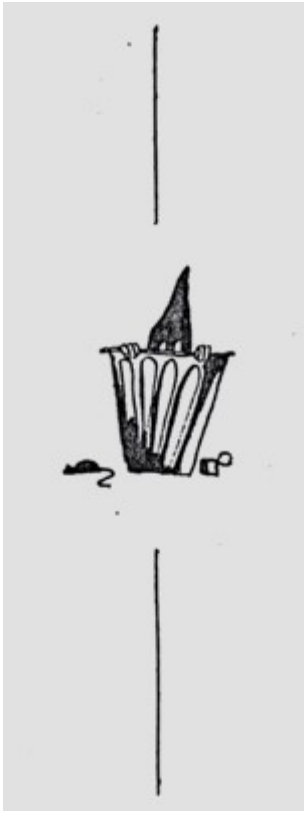
Quand on le salue comme un pionnier de la fusion entre le jazz et le rock, WYATT tente de rabaisser cette réputation par un sourire et une anecdote toute prête: "A l'époque, c'était très embarrassant, il y avait ces gosses qui venaient après le





concert en disant: "0h' C'est super d'entendre ici une musique intellectuellement stimulante. La semaine dernière c'était horrible, c'était Geno Washington et le Ram Jam Band, et tout le monde dansait." Mais croyez-moi, si nous avions pu jouer comme Geno Washington et pour son public, nous l'aurions fait sans hésitation. Mais nous n'étions pas assez bons pour pouvoir le faire. Notre public était snob. Je suppose que le fait de jouer une si mauvaise musique nous a rendu service.
Le grand truc des publics de la fin des années 60 c'est qu'ils étaient tous défoncés, ce qui explique que nous ayons pu jouer cette merde pendant des heures et démarrer avec ça."

Moins par modestie et par cynisme que par un humour ravageur de mythes, WYATT cessa de plaisanter sur le passé quand nous avons abordé un sujet qui le fascine toujours: la relation entre l'intention et les effets. La discussion tournait autour de morceaux comme "0h Caroline" et "Signed Curtain".



Ce dernier morceau est spécial par le fait que ses paroles commentent sa propre structure "C'est le premier couplet… C'est le refrain… C'est un changement de clé…"

Etait-ce une atteinte délibérée aux conventions du Rock ?

"0ui je crois". WYATT semble dubitatif. "Je n'appellerai pas cela de l'iconoclasme, je ne cherche pas comme MAGMA à changer le monde en réinventant le langage mais… je crois que j'étais sarcastique en voyant à quel point les gens prennent les chansons au sérieux et cela m'exaspérait. A cette époque j'essayais aussi d'écrire une vraie chanson d'amour et je me demandais: "Qu'est-ce que tu fais exactement ? Les autres vont savoir ce que tu ressens. Et après ? C'est donc autre chose que tu fais ; tu chantes une chanson. Et elle te retient prisonnier. Tu pourras bien sûr chanter n'importe quoi, mais en fin de compte l'intérêt de la chanson sera le chant lui-même, quelqu'en soit le sujet."

"Je ne suis senti coincé… et j'ai simplement tenté de faire preuve d'intelligence."

Wyatt rit.

Et de même qu'il ne peut s'empêcher de lancer des plaisanteries d'auto-dénigrement de crainte de paraître trop sérieux, il lui faut aussi suivre ses idées jusqu'au bout. "Parce que vois-tu, si tu cherches à communiquer quelque chose, il n'en reste pas moins vrai que tu traites un objet d'art qui sera admiré pour ses propres caractéristiques plutôt que comme devant indiquer quelque chose. C'est un objet destiné à distraire. Si la chanson n'est pas belle, si les gens ne prennent pas plaisir à l'écouter, elle ne remplit pas sa fonction." Et ceci, affirme WYATT, reste vrai, en dépit de l'intention de l'artiste, en dépit de toute innovation de forme.

"L'artiste n'a pas ce pouvoir… il sera utilisé par la communauté de la façon dont elle veut l'utiliser car aucun objet n'a de signification inhérente, mais seulement des significations prêtées par l'observateur. Des contenus politiques peuvent apparaître et disparaître aux endroits les plus inattendus."

Il sourit à nouveau.

Je veux dire par là que je voudrais bien savoir ce qu'aurait dit BLAKE s'il avait su que "Jérusalem" deviendrait l'hymne du Women Institute ?"

WYATT reste cohérent avec sa théorie de l'impotence sociale de l'artiste en affirmant que les thèmes de ses 45t ont été choisis à l'origine car c'étaient de "bons airs". Néanmoins, leur contenu, un mélange de déclarations politiques et de réflexions personnelles obliques correspond tout à fait aux possibilités et aux confusions qu'il affronte actuellement.

Le deuxième 45t était " Strange Fruits/At Last I'm Free". "Strange Fruits", chanté à l'origine par Billie Holiday en 1940, était la réponse à une série de lynchages dans le Sud des USA.

En voyant la masse d'auto-collants, d'affiches, de tracts qui ornent les murs chez WVATT, je lui ai demandé si le choix de ce morceau avait été guidé par des préoccupations anti-racistes.

"Ce qui me frappe, c'est que les gens parlent de ça comme si c'était passé, en particulier les américains, quand il s'agit des lynchages du Sud, de l'extermination des Indiens etc.

Mais si l'on parle des forces qui en sont responsables, elles sont encore à l'œuvre, entre les mains des mêmes gens. Dans le cas de l'Afrique du Sud par exemple, on sait bien que les USA, l'Angleterre et la France aident activement les forces racistes anti-SWAPO. Cette forme de racisme est au moins aussi nocive que celle de l'époque des lynchages du Sud.

"Strange Fruits" illustre le mieux l'affirmation de WYATT selon laquelle "Les 45t sont comme des sketches, très dépouillés, mettant en scène quelques chansons que j'aime.

Tous sont principalement du travail solo avec basse et clavier et la voix haute et plaintive de WYATT. Il a choisi "At last I'm Free" de Chic parce que "c'est une jolie ballade". Bien qu'il n'y ait pas de références politiques ou personnelles évidentes, certaines phrases de cette chanson prennent une signification poignante dans le contexte des problèmes actuels de WYATT.

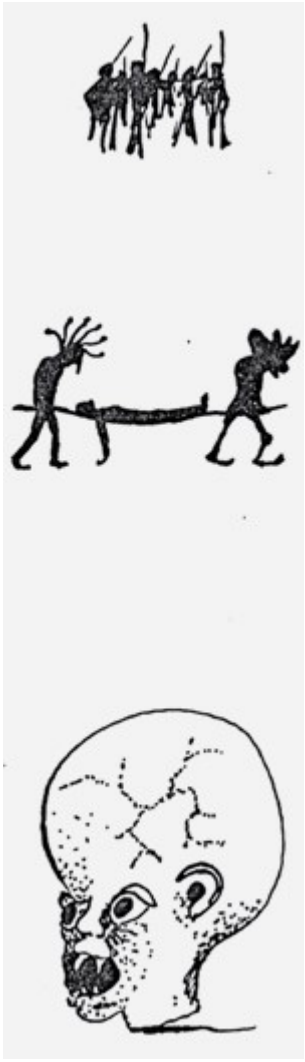
Ce n'est qu'une hypothèse, mais on peut l'interpréter comme sa chanson d'adieu aux illusions du rock : "At last I'm Free, I can hardly see in front of me".

Après l'accident qui le paralysa en 1975 et le confina dans une chaise roulante, WYATT continua la musique. Bien qu'incapable d'utiliser une batterie, il pouvait encore jouer de nombreuses percussions, des claviers et chanter. Le chef-d'œuvre qu'est Rock Bottom en est la preuve.

Beaucoup ont vu dans cet album l'incidence directe de sa paralysie, mais WYATT s'en défend : "J'avais déjà presque tout écrit avant l'accident. Je crois que la cohérence de ce disque est surtout musicale en regard du nombre important d'idées qui sont brassées pendant ces 40 minutes."

Après "Ruth is stranger" et deux reprises, "I'm a believer" et "Yesterday man", c'est le silence.

> "D'autres centres d'intérêt m'ont accaparé. Ce qui s'est passé, c'est que je ne pouvais plus mener une vie de musicien, au niveau des tournées par exemple, sans lesquelles il est difficile d'être musicien, car ce n'est pas quelque chose qu'on est soi-même, mais une partie d'un tout : l'équipe, les roadies, les managers, la tournée, les morceaux. Sans tout cela, j'avais de plus en plus de mal à garder une continuité et la notion romantique qui s'y rattache disparut rapidement.
>
> Les choses qui me semblaient importantes étaient sans lien avec la musique c'est à dire les gens que je côtoyais, mes distractions etc. Par exemple quand j'allais voir des films pour savoir ce qui se passait dans le monde, le rock me semblait si… léger."
>
> Paradoxalement, depuis qu'il est cloué dans une chaise roulante, WYATT a accru de ma-nière dramatique sa perception du monde extérieur. C'est maintenant un lecteur



vorace, et il se branche régulièrement sur des stations de radio du monde entier. I1 est donc normal qu'il ait fait l'expérience d'un certain désenchantement vis-à-vis du rock, le système de valeurs qu'il représente et ses contradictions politiques.

Mais alors, pourquoi ce retour maintenant ?

"J'ai dû revenir à la musique parce que je ne sais rien faire d'autre. Le retour au rock, je le ressens comme dans ces drôles de rêves ou l'on retourne à l'école ou bien où l'on essaye de remettre les habits qu'on avait à quinze ans et qui ne vont plus… c'est bizarre."

C'est ce que tu voulais dire en déclarant récemment que ton retour au rock était une défaite ?

"Ce n'est pas une défaite en ce sens que je suis encore vivant. Mais je suis surpris de refaire ça. Je croyais me diriger ailleurs, je ne sais même pas où, et franchement ce serait peut-être intéressant à savoir où je serais si je n'étais pas dans cette chaise roulante.

J'ai cherché du boulot à l'agence pour l'emploi. Le seul truc qu'ils m'ont proposé, c'était de peindre des pièces de jeu d'échec et Alfie et sa mère m'ont dit : "Tu ne vas pas faire ça, tu mérites beaucoup mieux, tu es un musicien !" Je crois qu'on m'a culpabilisé de ne pas jouer de la musique. Et puis il fallait gagner sa vie et comme c'était mon boulot…"

Un des résultats de la recherche de WYATT d'un mode d'action plus politisé que le rock fut son entrée il y a trois ans au Parti Communiste. Pour qu'on ne l'accuse pas de prêcher, WYATT me demande de bien préciser que c'est moi qui lui ai demandé d'en parler.

Pourquoi cette adhésion Robert ?



Photo Barclay

Aujourd'hui, je pense que la raison pour laquelle j'ai adhéré au Parti, c'est que fondamentalement, je pense que la plupart de nos ennuis sont causés par l'incapacité institutionnalisée des grands pays capitalistes occidentaux, leur expansionisme, et l'appropriation à leur seul bénéfice d'une grande partie des ressources du monde. Et pour justifier l'accroissement du capital aux dépens des mineurs Namibiens ou autres, les puissants imposent par un mythe, une mystification, cette notion que j'appelle "le droit divin de quelques-uns", l'idée qu'il est juste, naturel, que certains possèdent et d'autres pas.

Cette notion de "droit divin" devrait faire retentir une sonnette d'alarme chez toute personne qui a un jour pris conscience qu'il n'était pas un génie, ou un mâle, ou un blanc. Elle se manifeste sous des tas de formes différentes : "maintenir la tradition" ou "loi et ordre", n'importe quoi pour masquer le fait que cette élite de droit divin se donne actuellement le droit de subsister et de prospérer aux dépens des autres.

Et pour moi, l'histoire du communisme est l'histoire d'une tentative pour dénoncer cette

hypocrisie. J'ai parfois des doutes, comme pour l'Afghanistan, mais quand je vois tous ceux qui ont été anti-communistes comme Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Pinochet, Nixon, Thatcher, Botha, je me dis que les communistes doivent faire quelque chose de bien."

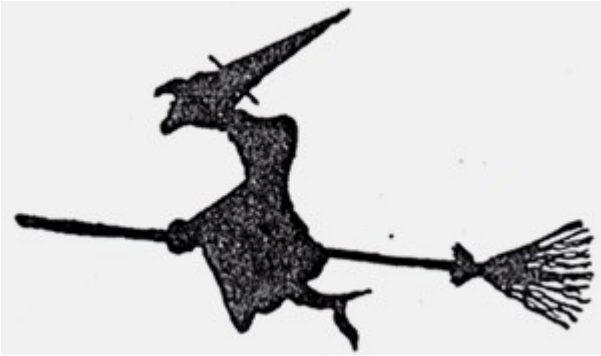
Le malheur dans tout cela, c'est que WYATT - ne ressent pas son enthousiasme pour la politique et son intérêt pour la musique comme un affrontement fructueux, mais comme une impasse totale. Et sa crainte que la politique ne colore sa musique aux yeux du public le conduit à une attitude défensive presque comique, comme lorsqu'il explique le choix du morceau "Go and sit upon the grass" d'Ivor Cutler sur le troisième 45t.

"J'aime ce morceau car il se moque des gens comme moi. II dit: "Ne t'inquiète pas si je t'agresse quand je te parle, mais j'ai quelque chose d'important à te dire."

Tu considères tes chansons comme agressives ?

WYATT précise: "Eh ! bien, j'aime me moquer de moi-même car j'ai l'impression qu'il arrive une chose horrible si l'on ne parle que de musique et de distractions… il y a le danger de devenir une sorte de Cliff Richard de gauche !

Et cela" conclut Robert en riant, "c'est une idée vraiment épouvantable à accepter."



Propos décryptés librement par Bernard GUEFFIER

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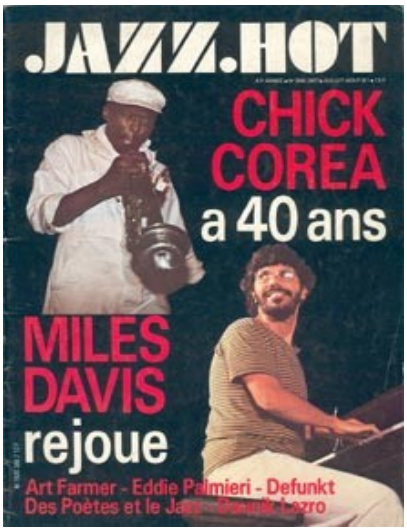
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Le retour d'un ermite - Jazz Hot N° 386/387 - juillet-août 1981

LE RETOUR D'UN ERMITE





Qui ne se souvient de Soft Machine ? L'orchestre le plus bizarre produit par l'Angleterre des années 60; tellement bizarre qu'il obtient en 1969 l'ordre de la Grande Gidouille décerné par le collège de pataphysique... Son premier batteur, Robert Wyatt, est toujours resté imprégné de ce style baroque, délirant et profondément Jazzy qui faisait l'originalité du groupe aujourd'hui disparu. Au moment où reparaissent ses deux chefs-d'oeuvre que sont "Rock Bottom" et "Rut", Pascal Bussy est allé surprendre chez lui "Monsieur le Pataphysicien"...

FLASH-BACK. Fin 67, à Paris au Palais des Sports, une de ces folles soirées interminables, la légendaire " nuit de la fenêtre rose "... Pierre Lattès, qui assure un direct pour France-Inter, hurle dans le poste: "*Voici les trois Soft Machine, la pointe de la musique électronique telle qu'on l'imagine dans la pop music! Et surtout, n'ayez pas peur: augmentez la puissance de vos récepteurs!*" Sur scène, trois hurluberlus venus de l'underground anglais, excentriques et habitués de la dolce vita de Saint- Tropez et de Majorque. Mike Ratledge fait dérailler son orgue dans le crissement des décibels, Kevin Ayers, qui est le principal compositeur du groupe à l'époque, répète ses refrains extravagants en martelant sa basse, et au milieu, Robert Wyatt, complètement en transe, frappe ses caisses comme un fou en chantant d'incompréhensibles onomatopées. Les titres s'enchaînent, "*Clarence in wonderland*", "*Soon soon soon*", "*We did it again* "...

Aujourd'hui, quatorze ans plus tard, l'épopée est bien finie. Ratledge l'intello trafique tout seul ses synthés dans son appartement aux murs tapissés de vieux bouquins, le dandy Kevin vomit tous les deux ans un lamentable 30 cm de soupe-variété, et l'exubérant Robert est cloué depuis huit ans sur une chaise roulante, à la suite d'un accident idiot qui lui a paralysé les jambes pour le restant de sa vie. Et pourtant, c'est le seul qui soit resté dans la course, et malgré un long silence de plusieurs années, il vient de publier de

nouvelles petites perles musicales fort attrayantes. Robert Wyatt livre son combat en solitaire, avec une énergie et une simplicité qui devraient faire réfléchir pas mal de nos jeunes loups de la soi-disant new-wave... Au moment où Barclay a décidé de presser en France les trois 45 tours de Wyatt, ça valait vraiment le coup d'aller faire un petit tour à Londres pour y rencontrer notre héros.

Lorsque j'entre chez Wyatt, dans son pavillon d'une rue bien sage de Twickenham, il écoute des bandes-démos en compagnie de Chris Lavalle, un musicien de Birmingham qui lui a demandé sa collaboration le temps d'un disque. Je parle à Wyatt de la nouvelle coqueluche du rock anglais, Adam and the Ants. Il rigole: " *Adam and the Ants ! Ah, tu vas voir!* "



Et, d'un petit coup de chaise roulante, le voilà qui fouille dans sa collection de disques. Tel un lutin malicieux, il en extirpe un 33 tours de musique du Burundi. Il le pose sur sa platine, mais le passe en... 45 tours. Tout en battant la mesure, il jubile et sourit dans sa barbe : Tu vois, c'est ça, Adam and the Ants, de la musique africaine accélérée, c'est tout! "

Jazz Hot. - *Dis-moi, comment en es-tu venu à signer avec Rough Trade ?*
Robert Wyatt. - C'est une longue histoire. Brian Eno m'avait présenté à Vivian Goldmann, une journaliste spécialiste du reggae qui connaît très bien les gens de Rough Trade. En fait, ce sont eux qui m'ont offert d'enregistrer, et leurs conditions étaient très bonnes. Alfie, ma femme, s'est occupée du contrat, moi je ne comprends rien à ces choses-là ! Le contexte de cette série de 45 tours me plait beaucoup, car ce n'est pas nécessaire de chercher tout un plan d'ensemble comme pour un album. Mes projets de chansons étaient très simples. D'abord, " Cainemara ", qui est la version originale du fameux " Guantanamera ". Et puis, " At last I'm free " de Chic et " Strange Fruit ", une chanson de Billie Holiday. Enfin, " Stalin wasn't stalling ", où je chante en multi-track une adaptation d'un truc de propagande de la dernière guerre !

J.H. - *Tu es content du résultat global ?*
R.W. - Non, cela aurait dû être mieux, mais j'ai été limité par le temps. C'est ma faute, remarque, car je n'ai toujours pas trouvé une manière efficace et " relax " de travailler en studio. Si j'avais eu le temps, j'aurais pu peaufiner les arrangements. Tu sais, j'ai joué moi-même de presque tous les instruments, et cela aussi a été un problème, je n'ai pas pu répéter assez.

J.H. - *Sur deux titres, tu chantes en espagnol. Tu aimes cette langue ?*
R.W. - J'adore l'espagnol, ses accents surtout, bien que je ne le parle pas très très bien. Mais ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de pouvoir transmettre l'esprit d'un texte. Pour " Cainemara ", l'espagnol, qui en est la langue originale, s'imposait, évidemment.

J.H. - *Tu réécoutes tes anciens disques... ?*
R.W. - Pas trop, mais j'aime l'unité d'ambiance de " Rock Bottom ", et aussi " The end of an ear ", toutes ces choses répétitives, ces imitations de free-jazz, cette espèce de " proto-dub " si tu veux! Quant à " Ruth and Richard ", je n'en ai jamais été très satisfait. Le projet de départ était avec Mongezi Feza et Gary Windo, mais ça n'a pas pu aboutir pour des problèmes d'argent. Tu sais, vraiment, j'envie le peintre ou l'écrivain qui peuvent expérimenter et retoucher pendant des heures avec pour seul matériel un crayon, une feuille de papier, et trois ou quatre sous pour une tasse de thé et un sandwich. . . Un studio, c'est tellement cher, et en plus je ne m'y sens pas trop à l'aise.

J .H. - *Tu écoutes beaucoup de musiques différentes ?*

R. W. - Surtout du reggae. C'est pour moi le phénomène musical le plus important de la fin des années soixante-dix: Même le punk a été une réponse au reggae. Et les Jamaïcains, sans l'aide d'aucun journal et d'aucune radio, ont réussi à imposer une nouvelle musique, une nouvelle manière d'enregistrer, une nouvelle façon de parler, de s'habiller, etc. J'aime bien Basement Five, leur musique est très très forte. Sinon, j'écoute beaucoup de musiques européennes comme Hindemith, des musiques ethniques, et du jazz, beaucoup de jazz.

J.H. - *Quels sont tes centres d'intérêt en dehors de la musique ?*
R. W. - Je vais souvent au cinéma avec ma femme. Je lis, j'ai redécouvert récemment Roland Barthes et Aimé Césaire, par exemple. Et puis, j'ai depuis peu la passion des radios lointaines: j'ai un poste à ondes courtes et je cherche des stations le soir... En ce moment, je suis attentivement les émissions de Radio-Vietnam, qui émet en anglais et en Français d'ailleurs, et de Radio-Lithuanie, en Russie. Tout ça m'aide à retrouver certaines filiations musicales, les influences respectives des musiques arabes, turques, iraniennes, indiennes, espagnoles, etc. Je me passionne pour tout cela, comme un généalogiste pour ses arbres.

J.H. - *Que penses-tu de ton public en France, qui traîne cette image vieillotte de " rock progressif ", tout ce côté un peu snob... ?*
R.W. - C'est vraiment un conflit intérieur chez moi... J'ai été classé malgré moi comme créateur, et je suis devenu un symbole pour des gens qui investissent trop de choses dans la musique. Il faut dire aussi que le rock a tout récupéré, à commencer par la pataphysique du début des Soft Machine. Mais, d'un autre côté, je suis très reconnaissant à tous ces gens, en France, en Italie, en Hollande: sans eux, je n'aurais jamais pu vivre de ma musique avec le seul public anglais.

J.H. - *Même en ce moment, tu vis de ta musique ?*
R.W. - Actuellement, nous vivons surtout grâce aux peintures de ma femme (NDLR : c'est Alfreda Benge qui a fait les magnifiques dessins des pochettes de "Rock Bottom " et " Ruth is stranger from Richard "). Mais à tous les deux, bon..., on s'en sort.

J.H. - *Tu as des projets de concerts ou d'autres disques ?*
R.W. - Non, aucun. D'abord, des concerts, ce serait dur à organiser. J'ai perdu tout ce que j'avais autrefois, un groupe régulier, un répertoire, des roadies, l'habitude des tournées, je n'ai même plus d'instruments! Et puis, je serais tellement paniqué sur une scène! Récemment, j'ai travaillé pour une radio en Italie, j'étais invité pour un programme d'une semaine-carte blanche, mais les conditions de ce voyage étaient très différentes que pour une tournée. Et en ce qui concerne les disques, j'attends, je réagirai aux circonstances... Ah si, j'oubliais, il y a un quatrième 45 tours qui va sortir! "

Oui, Robert Wyatt n'a pas de projets trop établis, mais il nous réserve d'autres surprises, c'est sûr. En tous cas, pour le moment, c'est un musicien heureux. Rough Trade (distribué par Barclay en France) vient donc de publier ses trois 45 tours, et, coïncidence, Virgin ressort en double-album " Rock Bottom " et " Ruth ". Pour compléter le tableau, Wyatt tient tous les lead vocals de " Fictitious Sports ", le disque-solo de Nick Mason, du Pink Floyd, enregistré avec Carla Bley et Mike Mantler. Et puis, C.B.S. a ressorti de ses tiroirs l'introuvable " The end of an ear ", son tout premier disque-solo. Pas de doute, 1981, c'est l'année Wyatt.

Pascal Bussy

Références des disques cités: " The end of an ear " (import C.B.S. anglais), " Rock Bottom/Ruth Is Stranger From Richard " (double album Virgin), " Cainemara ", " At last I'm free " et " Stalin wasn't stalling " (trois 45 tours Rough Trade-Barclay). Enfin, " Fictitious Sports " de Nick Mason (Pathé-Marconi).

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Tago Mago

ABÉCÉDAIRE

En 1981, Pascal Bussy, éditeur du label Tago Mago, publie une revue-cassette comportant un double titre : MECANO - ROBERT WYATT. La revue imprimée en N/B est présentée dans un emballage plastique transparent, une cassette audio glissée à l'intérieur.

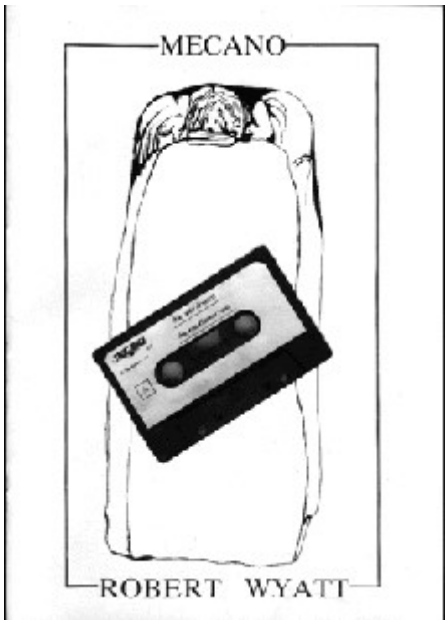


Illustration : Robert Wyatt

> Zoom


Illustration : Théo Bolten

Tiré à 1 500 exemplaires au format 21 x 29,7, l'objet se compose d'une présentation du groupe néerlandais Mecano, d'un entretien avec son bassiste (Théo Bolten), de paroles de chansons et photo du groupe.
La musique sur la cassette est uniquement signée Mecano.

Robert Wyatt y répond également à un long interview et propose un "Self-Pawtrait" accompagné d'une de ses illustrations et du dessin de couverture. D'autres dessins de Théo Bolten et d'Hugh Hopper complètent la revue.

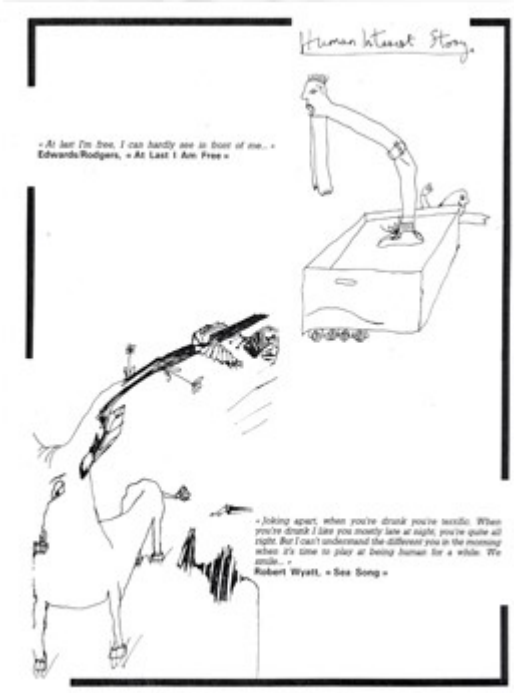




Illustration : Hugh Hopper

Soft Machine, Matching Mole, «Rock Bottom», inutile de présenter Robert Wyatt, ce héros de la musique anglaise qui fut l'un des tout premiers à faire reculer les barrières traditionnelles du rock. Depuis quelques années, Wyatt s'était tenu un peu à l'écart de la production musicale. Et puis, au début de 1981, c'est la surprise : il signe un contrat avec Rough Trade, le label de nouveau rock le plus en vue d'Angleterre. Au programme, une série de singles, et sans doute d'autres projets par la suite. Déjà, le nom de Wyatt réaparaît sur les pochettes de disques : il joue des percussions pour les Raincoats, de l'orgue avec les Scritti Politti, et participe à la « superstar session » de Vivien Goldman avec John Lydon de P.I.L. Dans cette longue interview réalisée chez lui dans sa maison de Twickenham, Robert Wyatt parle de sa vie, de la musique bien sûr, et de quelques-uns de ses centres d'intérêt.





Robert Wyatt a enregistré avec Soft Machine (Probe, C.B.S.), Matching Mole (C.B.S.), et en solo (C.B.S., Virgin). Depuis sa signature chez Rough Trade, il y a publié quatre singles: « Arauco »/« Caimanera », « Stalin Wasn't Stalling »/« Stalingrad », « At Last I'm Free »/«Strange Fruit », et « Grass »/ « Trade Union », ainsi qu'un inédit, « Born Again Cretin », sur la cassette New Musical Express/Rough Trade.

Wyatt a collaboré en outre à certains disques de Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Centipede, Lol Coxhill, Kevin Coyne, Brian Eno, Vivien Goldman, Hatfield And The North, Henry Cow, Mike Mantler et Carla Bley, Phil Manzanera, Nick Mason, des Raincoats, de Scritti Politti, Epic Soundtracks, et du Keith Tippett Group. Il apparaît aussi sur le 33 tours « Voices And Instruments » consacré à Jan Steele et John Cage (Obscure 5) et sur le 33 tours « Miniatures » dirigé par Morgan-Fisher (Pipe).

Pourquoi ce silence musical de plusieurs années ?
Après la sortie de « Ruth & Richard » j'ai eu de gros problèmes matériels, beaucoup de dettes..... A cette époque, j'aimais encore tout faire à la fois : composer, jouer, chanter, diriger ma musique, et faire des concerts de temps en temps. Et puis, petit à petit je me suis dit que si je ne composais pas je pouvais très bien chanter des morceaux de quelqu'un d'autre, j'ai découvert ça avec Carla Bley et Mike Mantler. Je dois beaucoup à Caria Bley. c'est elle qui m'a obligé à retravailler, pour « The Hapless Child » et «Silence», à un moment où j'étais très découragé. C'était juste après « Ruth », et le fait que quelqu 'un d'autre ait la responsabilité de la musique m'a beaucoup plu. j'étais très content d'être là juste en tant que simple exécutant. Evidemment, depuis que je suis dans une chaise roulante tout a changé, je ne peux plus avoir de groupe régulier et je ne pense plus du tout en termes de carrière, de disques, de concerts, etc. Et puis j'ai commencé à avoir d'autres priorités. Mes intérêts et mon travail, en fait, sont devenus de plus en plus séparés. Mais quand j'y repense, je n'ai pas été en dehors du « business » pendant si longtemps. J'ai répondu à diverses propositions d'autres gens. Ce qui est vrai, c'est que je n'ai rien suscité moi-même jusqu'à que je signe avec Rough Trade.



A un moment tu avais parlé d'un retour avec Scritti Politti...
Finalement ça ne s'est pas fait de cette façon-là. J'ai tout de même joué avec eux et j'ai participé à l'enregistrement de leur disque avec « Sweetest Girl ». Cela a été très agréable à faire, d'ailleurs.



Tu acceptes toujours de participer à des sessions pour d'autres musiciens ?
Oh.oui. J'ai joué récemment avec les Raincoats (sur un titre d '« Odyshape »), et puis il y a eu cette session organisée par Vivien Goldman (« Launderette »). plus des choses avec Kevin Coyne.

Et en dehors de la musique, qu'est-ce que tu fait ?
J'ai énormément écrit, des centaines de pages... Et Alfie, ma femme, m'a beaucoup emmené au cinéma.

Par le cinéma (et aussi la radio) je me familiarise avec beaucoup de choses.

Qu'est-ce que tu as aimé comme films, récemment ?
Les films du Japonais Ozu. ils sont merveilleux. Et dans le cinéma européen. Wim Wenders. Fassbinder. Tous ces cinéastes ne sont pas très connus en Angleterre, d'abord parce que les Anglais regardent trop la télévision et ne vont pas au cinéma, et ensuite parce que dès qu'un film est étranger ils pensent qu'il s'agit d'un film prétentieux !

Tu vois beaucoup d'amis, musiciens ou non ?
Euh... j'ai des amis de l'époque où j'étais plus actif, mais ce sont des gens qui voyagent tous beaucoup et je ne les vois jamais. Prend par exemple tous ceux qui jouent sur; "Ruth & Richard", John Greaves est aux Etats-Unis. Brian Eno aussi. Fred Frith vit à New York. Gary Windo est aussi en Amérique. Mongezi Feza est mort.... Hugh Hopper vient me voir de temps en temps. Mike Ratledge aussi quelquefois.

Je reviens un peu en arrière. Tu n'as pas été content de « Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard » ?
Non pas vraiment. Mon idée de départ était en fait un disque en trio avec Mongezi Feza et Gary Windo Et puis, il y a eu des problèmes d'argent, je n 'ai même pas eu de quoi terminer le disque comme j'aurais voulu. L'argent est un problème constant pour moi. Comme j'envie le peintre et l'écrivain, ils peuvent expérimenter et retoucher pendant des heures avec pour seule dépense du papier et un crayon, et quelques sous pour une tasse de thé. Mais un studio, ça coûte tellement cher ! Et en plus dès que j'y suis je deviens tout de suite très nerveux, comme lorsque je vais chez le dentiste.... !

La solution serait d'avoir ton propre studio...
Oui mais il y aurait un autre problème car je ne comprends rien aux choses électroniques. Je sais organiser la musique dans ma tête, la mettre en sons avec mon corps.... Finalement je suis un musicien très primitif, j'utilise à la base les deux instruments les plus simples, la bouche et les mains, et je fais le plus possible avec ça.

Que penses-tu de ton public en France ? Tu n'as pas l'impression de représenter un mythe malgré toi ?
Oui, il y a tout ce côté, euh.....un peu snob.... Mais..... à dire vrai, c'est un peu un conflit pour moi tout ça. D'avoir été classé comme un créateur de la musique moderne, tout ce processus, ce langage, cette terminologie exclusive. Et bien sûr. je me rends compte que pas mal de gens qui ont acheté mes disques ont souvent investi là-dedans toutes sortes de significations, trop sans doute. Mais j'ai du mal à te répondre objectivement, car sans tous ces gens en France, en Italie, en Hollande, je n'aurais jamais pu gagner assez d'argent pour vivre et continuer ma musique. Je leur suis donc très reconnaissant.

Pourquoi as-tu cité la Hollande ?
C'est le premier pays où il y a eu un article dans un journal sur Soft Machine, même avant la France. C'était fantastique de jouer en France et en Hollande, on pouvait se donner à fond, tandis, qu'en Angleterre le public était plus réservé. J'ai de très bons souvenirs en Hollande, j'y avais fait une tournée dans le Whole World de Kevin Ayers, c 'était fantastique ! Je me rappelle ces solos de sax incroyables de Lol Coxhill, et les groupies hollandaises. Mon Dieu, les groupies hollandaises.... !



Comment revois-tu aujourd'hui la période d'avant Soft Machine ? Y avait-il vraiment une « scène de Canterbury »…. ?

Euh.... Il ne se passait pas grand chose à Canterbury. J'avais rencontré Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, David

Sinclair. Les gens de Caravan, eux, possédaient plus que nous ce sentiment d'appartenance à un clan. D'ailleurs, aujourd'hui encore ils habitent tous là-bas, comme Hugh. Hugh est le véritable lien de toute cette famille, si elle existe.

A quoi ressemblait votre musique de l'époque ?
A de la pop, avec deux ou trois reprises de James Browxn par-ci par-là. C'était tout, rien d'extraordinaire.

Les bandes publiées plus tard par Gomelsky sont-elles représentatives, d'après toi?
Ce ne sont que des «démos» qu'on avait enregistrées sans penser qu 'elles sortiraient un jour en disque. Hugh Hopper et Kevin Ayers avaient commencé à écrire des chansons, on a voulu voir comment elles sonnaient, c'est tout. J'aime beaucoup les musiques que Hugh écrivait, avec de très belles structures harmoniques. Mais musicalement, ce qu'il y a eu de plus intéressant je pense, c'était lorsqu'on était en trio, Hugh, Daevid Allen, et moi. Plus tard, quand Soft Machine a vraiment commencé, nous avions déjà abandonné une bonne partie de notre côté expérimental.

Allen était au centre du premier Soft Machine, non ?
Il était l'élément international, il avait des contacts partout. Nous, à côté, on était des provinciaux! Mais musicalement c'était Hugh le plus créatif. Kevin Ayers, c était différent, son talent se serait développé dans n 'importe quel autre contexte. Soft Machine ou pas.

Vous voyagiez beaucoup à cette époque..... ?
Oui, et c 'est une des choses qui me rend très triste depuis mon accident. Je suis cloué en Angleterre, alors, qu'autrefois je trouvais tellement excitant de voyager, de quitter ce pays. Je suis content d'être anglais mais je n'aime pas vivre en Angleterre. Les Anglais disent souvent : « Nous n 'avons pas d'idéologie, nous sommes anglais, c'est tout ! » Cela me gêne et je me sens frustré, dans un sens. Bien sûr. ce n'est pas complètement négatif car musicalement ça crée une pression, mais tout de même, j'éprouve une sorte de malaise. Peut-être as-tu une image de moi très placide, ici, chez moi, mais ce n 'est pas comme ça, tu sais....

Tu ne te déplaces jamais, même pour quelques jours ?
C'est difficile. Récemment j'ai été travailler une semaine en Italie, pour un programme de radio, et ça s'est bien passé. Mais partir en tournée, même pour un ou deux concerts, ça je n'y pense même pas. Tout ce que j'avais autrefois, un groupe, des instruments, un répertoire, un manager, des road-managers, c'est fini. Tout ce qui me reste c'est un micro et un magnéto à cassettes pour noter quelques idées. Et partir en tournée me coûterait trop cher, je devrais emprunter de l'argent, c'est impossible.

Tu vis de ta musique en ce moment ?
Entre les peintures de ma femme et ma musique on s'en sort généralement. C'est parfois difficile, mais vraiment je ne vois pas d'autre solution.

Comment en es-tu arrivé à signer avec Rough Trade ?
Tout s'est passé grâce à Vivien Goldman. Brian Eno nous avait présentés au vernissage d'une exposition de Peter Schmidt il y a quelques années, et nous avons sympathisé. Elle vient souvent chez moi, et m'apporte quelques disques de reggae qui viennent de sortir. C'est elle qui m'a présenté à Geoff Travis, l'un des dirigeants de Rough Trade, qui m'a proposé d'enregistrer. Je ne comprends rien aux contrats, mais ma femme qui s'en occupe pour moi m'a dit que les conditions étaient bonnes. Ce qui m'a beaucoup séduit chez Rough Trade, c'est qu'ils ont contribué à remettre les « singles » à la mode. J'aime cette méthode de travail : deux chansons, ça suffit, on peut sortir un disque, cela me convient parfaitement. Je n'ai pas besoin de penser à toute une suite de morceaux, à ce « design » du 33 tours. L'idée de liberté à laquelle on pense généralement en faisant un 33 tours est fausse, car on rejette des morceaux qui soi-disant ne collent pas avec le reste, et ensuite on les oublie ou ils se perdent. Je me rappelle de « Ruth & Richard », il y avait des gens qui me disaient que « Muddy Mouth » n 'allait pas avec le « Sonia » de Mongezi Feza, par exemple. Qu 'est ce que tu veux répondre à ça ! ! !

Avec tes deux premiers disques en solo, tu as eu ce genre de problèmes ?
Pour « The End Of An Ear », d'abord ? Non. mais l'atmosphère dans laquelle j'ai fait « The End Of An Ear » était très particulière. Après l'album « Third» de Soft Machine, j'étais déprimé. Ni Mike Ratledge ni Hugh n'avaient aimé « Moon In June », et j'avais presque été obligé de les forcer pour qu 'ils acceptent de jouer dessus ! Ce qui n 'était pas très honnête, car moi j'avais fait de mon mieux pour « rentrer » dans leurs morceaux à eux. E tpuis, quand j'ai eu l'idée de « The End Of An Ear », C.B.S, m'a laissé faire en croyant que ce serait le même style de musique que «Moon In lune», justement.... Déjà avant de rentrer en studio,

les deux faces étaient dans ma tête : ces choses répétitives, les imitations de free-jazz, cette espèce de « proto-dub ».... Mais pour l'enregistrement, j'ai été très seul, car aucun des musiciens n 'a vraiment aimé la musique, et il n'y avait personne pour m'encourager. Là aussi, j'aurais voulu travailler avec Mongezi Feza, mais ça n 'a pas été possible et j'ai finalement enregistré avec Elton Dean et Mark Charig principalement, plus mon frère Mark avec qui j'ai partagé les parties de piano. Je me souviens, ça m'avait fait beaucoup de bien de jouer du piano sur ce disque, parce qu'en public je n'aurais jamais osé..... /

Et « Rock Bottom » ?
Là. c'était tout à fait autre chose, six thèmes autour des mêmes idées avec donc une certaine unité. Beaucoup ne le savent pas, mais le gros de « Rock Bottom » a été écrit avant mon accident, à l'époque où je voulais recommencer Matching Mole avec Phil Miller, Gary Windo et Francis Monkman.

Donc, tu ne penses pas du tout à un 33 tours ?
En fait, il y en a un que j'aurais aimé faire, mais quelqu'un vient de le faire à ma place.... Je l'aurais appelé «Continental Drift », et il aurait été rempli de références à des musiques de danses d'Europe continentale, ce genre de choses. Oui. j'y pensais depuis plusieurs années, et voilà que Fred Frith a fait « Gravity ». sur Ralph Records. « Gravity » est basé sur cette même idée, c 'est un très bon disque, et j'ai donc abandonné ce projet. Tu sais, faire un album, pour moi, cela n'a plus tellement de sens. Dans la musique rock, je suis un vieux, comme tous ceux qui ont plus de trente ans ! J'ai déjà derrière moi une vie entière de musicien, et faire des disques a un peu perdu le côté excitant d'autrefois.... Mais, album ou pas, disons que, euh.....je réagirai aux circonstances, voilà tout ! En ce moment, j'ai des projets spécifiques : une chanson, une autre, c'est tout. J'ai toujours aimé les chansons simples, comme à l'époque où j'avais repris « I'm A Believer « et « Yesterday Man ». Cette idée de chansons simples était aussi un goût que David Sinclair et moi partagions quand nous avons commencé Matching Mole.

Pourtant, il n'est pas resté longtemps dans le groupe....
C'est à dire... Il aimait les chansons simples, oui. le style des jolies mélodies comme « Caroline », mais Il ne se sentait pas du tout à l'aise dans le contexte de l'improvisation. Quand Dave Mc Rae l'a remplacé, les choses se sont arrangées de ce côté-là. Dave Mc Rae a toujours été un musicien très habile, et qui aime tout essayer.

Parlons de cette série de « singles ». Comment as-tu choisi les morceaux ?
Je ne veux pas trop en parler, cela paraîtrait prétentieux. Je suis avant tout un musicien, ce qui me plaît c'est l'élégance d'une ligne mélodique, une partie de basse pour la soutenir, c'est déjà beaucoup...

Tu es content du résultat ?
Non, cela aurait dû être mieux, mais j'ai été limité par le temps. Je n 'ai toujours pas trouvé une manière efficace de travailler en studio, je veux dire une façon « relax », qui me permette d'obtenir exactement ce que je veux. Dans un sens, bien sûr, je suis content, car j'ai atteint mon but de départ, qui était d'enregistrer une série de chansons. Mais si j'avais eu davantage de temps j'aurais pu dépasser ce stade. J'ai tout fait sans répétitions, car j'ai joué moi-même presque tous les instruments. Il y a juste Bill Mc Cormick qui joue de la base sur « Arauco » et « Caimanera ». Harry Beckett qui est au Flugelhorn sur « Caimanera », et un contrebassiste, Peter Ind, dans « Born Again Cretin ». En fait, je vois ces chansons comme des esquisses, un peu.

Sur « Arauco » et « Caimanera » tu chantes en espagnol...
Oh, mon espagnol n 'est pas très bon, pas assez en tout cas pour traduire un texte directement en anglais. Donc, je préfère le chanter en espagnol. Et puis, j'aime les intonations de cette langue....

En écoutant tes nouvelles chansons, on voit tout de suite que tes obsessions sont essentiellement politiques....
Sûr. Mais on peut aussi les écouter sans faire attention aux textes, juste pour elles-mêmes. On peut aussi, évidemment, ne pas les écouter du tout !

Tu ne cherches donc pas à faire passer un message ?
Non. Je ne peux pas et je ne veux pas dicter aux gens ce qu'ils doivent sentir. Mais c'est faux de dire que la conscience politique déforme l'art. Un artiste doit utiliser tout ce qu'il possède, sa conscience politique, son conscient, son inconscient, tout. Si j'étais compositeur de musique uniquement, ou peintre abstrait, ce serait autre chose. Mais puisque l'univers des mots est un élément de mon travail, je me sers des mots et de leurs significations. Les mots, de toute façon, veulent toujours dire quelque chose. Et d'ailleurs, cela m'a beaucoup intéressé de jouer sur la signification des chansons: par exemple, quand je reprends «Arauco» de

Violetta Parra. la fonction d'origine de la chanson change complètement. Cet aspect des choses est passionnant.

De quand date ton engagement politique ?
C'est un sentiment que j'ai toujours éprouvé, je crois, mais qui a refait surface il y a quelque temps comme une priorité. Mes parents étaient travaillistes, ça a peut-être joué aussi.... Mais en d'autres termes, euh.... Tiens, je vais te raconter une anecdote. Mark Boyle, qui s'occupait autrefois du light-show de Soft Machine, est devenu peintre et sculpteur. Il y a quelques mois, il a acheté deux peintures qu'il ne trouvait pas bonnes, uniquement parce qu'elles étaient l'œuvre d'un peintre actuellement emprisonné en Russie. Il les a accrochées chez lui, pour se rappeler que lui est heureux, qu'il n 'est pas en prison, et qu 'il est libre. Voilà un très bon exemple de l'aspect transcendant de l'art : que ces peintures soient bonnes ou mauvaises, elles ont une signification au-delà du jugement esthétique. Et leur impact politique est évident. Le plus curieux, c'est que si le peintre en question, lui, connaissait cette histoire, il se sentirait sans doute encore plus rejeté....

Tu es donc devenu membre du Parti Communiste....
Oui, il y a deux ans et demi. En Angleterre, le Parti Communiste est un tout petit parti, plus proche idéologiquement du Parti Communiste Italien, par exemple, que du Parti Communiste Français.

Qu'est-ce que cela t'a apporté ?
Avant tout une ouverture. C'est curieux, en général le fait d'adhérer à un parti a une connotation de peur, de blocage. Là. j'ai eu exactement le sentiment inverse. Je suis devenu ultra-conscient de certaines contradictions, et cela m'a beaucoup stimulé. Et puis, j'ai énormément appris de choses en rencontrant des gens en dehors du milieu de la rock-music, qui est un monde très narcissique, qui tourne sans arrêt sur lui-même, et où les gens réfèrent tout à leur imagination, à leurs fantasmes. Je ne porte pas de jugement, mais en ce qui me concerne ce changement a été très bénéfique.

Penses-tu rester toute ta vie inscrit à ce parti ?
Je ne crois pas que je pourrais raisonnablement quitter le Parti Communiste, pour la seule raison qu'être ex-communiste me semble bien plus présomptueux qu 'être communiste !



Irais-tu jusqu'à convaincre tes amis pour qu'ils soient aussi au Parti Communiste ?
J'espère que non ! A ce stade je serais une sorte de religieux fanatique.... Mais c'est curieux, car justement ma propre adhésion au communisme a été un peu comme une conversion religieuse. L'évèque Romero aurait compris ça, et les « Rastafarians », eux, comprendraient certainement. Récemment j'ai eu une longue conversation avec un ami italien de Naples qui a une position très proche de la mienne : il me disait qu'il ne voit pas le communisme comme un but. mais plutôt comme une base de départ, un point de ralliement. Mais c'est vrai qu'il se passe des choses incompréhensibles, comme par exemple la position des communistes français sur l'Afghanistan. C'est pour me moquer de ce genre de gens que j'ai enregistré « Staling Wasn 't Stalling ». Certaines choses sont évidentes pour moi : je suis à la lois contre ce qui se passe en Afghanistan et en Afrique du Sud. Et tout le monde parle de l'Afghanistan, mais qui connaît par exemple Nelson Mandala. un leader noir qui est en prison en Afrique du Sud depuis plusieurs années.... ?

Et le lien entre ton engagement et ta musique ?
Mon inspiration de base a toujours été la musique noire. Comme toutes les musiques, la musique noire a besoin d'une certaine ambiance pour s'épanouir. Et quand on est Noir, ici en Angleterre, crois-moi ce n 'est pas facile. Je peux t'en parler très précisément car j'ai été très touché par la mort de Mongezi Feza. Mongezi, dans sa naïveté, croyait qu'il échapperait aux horreurs de l'Afrique du Sud en venant vivre dans ce qu 'on appelle « le monde libre ». Et il est mort, à 31 ans, dans un hôpital psychiatrique, considéré comme schizophrène... Nos pays occidentaux sont remplis de ces sortes de choses, et beaucoup de gens viennent ici en pensant être libres, comme Mongezi... Et c'était un trompettiste fabuleux ! Tu ne peux pas savoir comme je suis triste et en colère de ce qui lui est arrivé. Et quelquefois je me dis que toute ma vie, d'une certaine manière, je continuerai à expier pour lui. Tu sais, je ne vois rien d'autre à dire sur ce sujet sans que cela paraisse

sentimental ou stupide.

Quels genres de musiques écoutes-tu ?
Un peu de tout. D'abord, quand je travaille avec des musiciens, j'écoute ce qu 'ils ont fait. Aujourd'hui Chris Lavalle, de Birmingham, hier Scritti Politti, demain je ne sais pas. Mais en général, je ne suis pas très au courant de ce qui se passe, en dehors des disques de reggae que Vivien m'apporte.

Tu aimes le reggae ?
Oh oui. beaucoup, et je suis convaincu que c'est une des choses les plus importantes de ces derniers temps au niveau musical, la plus stimulante en tout cas de la fin des années soixante-dix. En Angleterre, toute l'énergie du nouveau rock vient du reggae et de la culture qui l'accompagne. Même le punk, tout à fait opposé au niveau du style, est en partie une réponse au reggae. Ce qui me frappe aussi, c'est que les Jamaïcains ont imposé leur musique sans l'aide des média, comme tout ce qui va autour : leur façon d'enregistrer, de parler, de s'habiller, etc. Le phénomène était tellement fort que le rock avait besoin d'une alternative : ça a été le punk. Et si tu prends un groupe comme Basement Five, eux ils répondent au punk en faisant une sorte de reggae punk. C'est un échange musical continu. Sinon, en dehors du reggae, j'écoute de la musique européenne contemporaine, du jazz, très peu de rock, et de la musique ethnique, grâce à ma radio à ondes courtes.

Tu découvres des stations mystérieuses ?
Oui. j'adore me mettre devant ma radio et chercher des postes - de pays lointains. Récemment j'ai trouvé une radio de Lituanie, et Radio-Vietnam, que j'écoute tous les soirs en ce moment, le programme en anglais de 18 heures à 19 heures, et celui en français de 19 heures à 20 heures. J'écoute aussi la radio iranienne où il y a des musiques fabuleuses. J'aime essayer de retracer les filiations musicales, par exemple les influences de la musique iranienne sur les musiques arabes et turques, les ressemblances entre les musiques d'Afrique du Nord et d'Espagne. L'autre jour, j'ai étudié un peu comme ça l'évolution des gammes entre la Chine, le Japon, et le Vietnam. C'est passionnant.

Et les livres ? Tu lis beaucoup ?
Oui. pas mal. J'ai relu récemment des choses de Roland Barthes. Je sais qu 'un livre comme « Mythologies » est un peu démodé aujourd'hui en France, mais je suis convaincu qu'il s'agit d'un ouvrage très très important. Je lis aussi les livres d'Aimé Césaire en ce moment, ils m aident à comprendre certains problèmes politiques, toute la question de la négritude.

J'ai l'impression que ta n'aimes pas beaucoup les interviews...
Non, pas tellement..... Mais, euh..... lorsque les gens me demandent j'ai du mal à refuser, j'essaye de faire de mon mieux mais j'ai de plus en plus de mal à trouver les mots pour dire ce que je sens réellement. Et j'ai l'impression que les choses que je dis n 'ont aucun sens...

Parce que tu es un perfectionniste ?
Oh, c'est davantage une question de moment. Le plus bizarre, c'est lorsque je lis les interviews une fois qu'elles sont publiées, après. Je trouve les bonnes réponses en relisant les questions, comme si tout l'interview n'avait été qu'une suite d'occasions ratées..:. C'est fou. non ?

Les nouveaux morceaux de Robert Wyatt

- « Arauco ». Chanson populaire chilienne de Violetta Parra, une exhortation aux chefs indiens à se soulever contre les colonisateurs.
- « Caimanera ». Chanson traditionnelle d'Amérique du Sud arrangée par Wyatt, l'original en fait du standart « Guantanamera ».
- « Stalin Wasn't Stalling ». Hymne de propagande pro-staliniste chanté par le Golden Jubilee Quartet pendant la seconde guerre mondiale.
- « At Last I Am Free ». Une chanson de Chic, « a lovely ballad » comme dit Wyatt.
- « Strange Fruit ». Chanson créée par Billie Holiday dans les années quarante.
- « Grass ». Version d'une chanson d'Ivor Cutler.
- « Born Again Cretin ». Seul morceau composé effectivement par Wyatt. Dédié à Nelson Mandala, un leader noir actuellement emprisonné en Afrique du Sud.

Deux faces des 45 tours sont en outre consacrées à un poème et un morceau sur lesquels Wyatt n'apparaît pas :

- « Stralingrad ». Poème écrit et lu par Peter Blackman.
- « Trade Union ». Un morceau du groupe Dishari, des musiciens originaires du Bangladesh qui vivent dans l'East End de Londres.

Robert Wyatt, l'albatros du rock - Libération - 22 juin 1981

ROBERT WYATT, L'ALBATROS DU ROCK

Publié pour la première fois en 1974 par l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine, « Rock Bottom » reste, dans sa réédition 1981, l'une des œuvres les plus « subtiles » au grand musée du rock.

Toute réussite cache un drame. Le plus souvent, celui-ci reste en coulisses, dans les replis de la « vie privée » ou dans les profondeurs, plus opaques de la « vie intérieure ». Il arrive aussi qu'il éclate en plein jour. *C'est* le cas pour **Robert Wyatt**. Pendant l'été 73, cet ancien fondateur, chanteur et batteur de Soft Machine, une des figures majeures de la musique pop « progressive » des années soixante, se fracassait les deux jambes en tombant d'un troisième étage. Tentative de suicide ? Montée irrépressible d'angoisse due à l'absorption de LSD ? Ou encore, comme le répète avec insistance sa biographie, simple et « malencontreux » accident? Les raisons de ce geste, à la limite, importent peu. **Robert Wyatt** en sortit paralysé à vie. Six mois plus tard, il enregistrait un des disques de rock les plus « sensibles », une manière de chef-d'œuvre : « *Rock Bottom* ».

De son drame, « *Rock Bottom* » ne porte apparemment aucune trace directe. Aucune plainte, aucune protestation, pas le moindre cri d'angoisse ou de révolte contre le sort ne viennent en effet troubler ce long flux de mots et de notes entrelacés, au premier abord langoureux et presque doucereux. Pas de ruptures de rythmes, aucun de ces riffs violents, dont use et abuse habituellement le rock. La musique coule encadrant le chant, dans une sorte de long épanchement. La voix, sinueuse et virtuose - on dirait presque : « aérienne » -, dessine d'étranges arabesques et figures libres, tournant, valsant, virevoltant, planant, sans jamais donner l'impression de buter sur un quelconque obstacle.



MUSIQUE

RÉÉDITION

Robert Wyatt, l'albatros du rock

Publié pour la première fois en 1974 par l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine, « Rock Bottom » revit, dans sa réédition 1981, l'une des œuvres les plus « subtiles » du grand vaisseau du rock.

Soft Machine

At The Beginning

« Aucune prétention, aucune gloire, pas la recherche vers d'inquiétantes »

> Zoom

L'HOMME QUI REVAIT D'ETRE UN OISEAU

Les paroles, quant à elles, se veulent anodines, neutres. De longs chants d'amour, presque des berceuses, des comptines d'enfant, d'interminables vocalises purement formelles. De l'ensemble, se dégage l'impression d'une vaste liberté, d'un univers harmonieux et paisible, comme une sorte de grand rêve enfantin de bonheur total. Pour un peu, on imaginerait son auteur comme un être un peu superficiel, sans blessure ni fêlure. Conformiste et heureux de l'être: un grand naïf.

La pochette du disque renforce cette impression : un dessin gris au crayon, dont le motif ne se détache qu'avec peine du fond-blanc uniforme et qui représente trois jeunes filles jouant sur une plage, dans l'ignorance insouciante de cette flore vaguement monstrueuse qui prolifère dans les profondeurs de la mer. Un beau symbole : de même que sur la pochette le niveau de la mer sépare deux mondes - d'un côté, celui de l'harmonie et de la beauté ; de l'autre, celui des formes « aberrantes » et de la lutte pour la vie -, la musique de « *Rock Bottom* » semble vouloir oublier le chaos intérieur, le monde désordonné et fangeux des pulsions, sur lequel il repose, au profit d'un monde cristallin, sans conflit ni limite d'aucune sorte, pur comme l'air.

Et puis, on écoute dix fois, vingt fois « *Rock Bottom* » et chaque audition apporte un éclairage différent. Cette musique lisse, propre, « blanche » et sans aspérités, d'où tout conflit brutal semble banni, cette apparente simplicité des thèmes, presque de la neutralité, cette fuite de la réalité, ce repli consolateur sur un monde qui ne connaît pas la frustration, les limites du réel, que peuvent-ils symboliser, sinon, justement, l'univers de la maladie? D'où tirent-ils leur force, sinon de cet événement brutal et largement incompréhensible - l'accident, la faillite du corps - qui exclut du monde réel et dessine les contours d'un monde clos, auto-suffisant, où toutes les catégories du monde réel perdent leur sens, leur pertinence ?

C'est précisément cette exclusion qu'exprime « *Rock Bottom* » : son insouciance n'est pas « naturelle », immédiate ; elle n'est jamais que le produit, la conséquence, de cet événement qui arrache brutalement le malade du monde des responsabilités et des décisions - celui des bien-portants et, plus généralement, des « adultes » -, pour le projeter dans un monde abstrait, idéal et imaginaire, puisqu'il se retrouve - et c'est ce qui le rapproche de l'enfance - brusquement « materné » sur un lit d'hôpital.

Qu'il y ait dans ce grand repli une visée consolatrice - donc, beaucoup de nostalgie et de mélancolie - ne saurait surprendre. C'est dans l'ordre des choses. L'absence de conflits

traduit le regret d'un état à jamais perdu : la santé, la normalité ; la liberté de la voix est strictement inverse, comprendre l'immobilité définitive de ce corps désarticulé, à la limite du monstrueux, condamné à se déplacer avec gaucherie sur une chaise roulante ; le désir insensé de bonheur est le pendant de ce malheur quotidien, avec lequel on sait que l'on devra composer une vie entière. L'angoisse ne cesse d'ailleurs de tourmenter cet univers.

LA CICATRICE INTERIEURE ET LE DESIR DE CHUTE

Dans « *Rock Bottom* », on la trouvera dans ces dérapages infinitésimaux de la voix, portée à tant de virtuosité que parfois elle se brise et verse dans le décor ; dans ces piaillements des saxophones, comme autant de douleurs étranglées qui n'arrivent pas à s'exprimer ; dans les grondements de la basse, présence-rappels évidents du drame ; ou encore, dans ces longues fuites mélodiques, qui pourraient symboliser la hantise - mais, on pourrait dire tout aussi bien : le désir - de la chute et sur lesquels la voix murmure : « *stop it !* », comme si elle voulait en arrêter le cours.

C'est dire que « *Rock Bottom* » est un disque particulièrement riche, aux multiples niveaux d'interprétation et de sensibilité. Sa force provient justement de ce que cette richesse n'est jamais exposée, donnée, mais toujours suggérée, avec tant de pudeur et de secret que l'on ne peut jamais vraiment la saisir.

C'est particulièrement rare dans le rock, plus habitué à un expressionnisme direct et impulsif, presque exhibitionniste. Cela s'appelle de la subtilité.

Robert Wyatt n'a malheureusement jamais retrouvé cet état de grâce quasi miraculeux. « *Ruth is stranger than Richard* », enregistré un an plus tard en 75, s'il s'inscrit dans la lignée de « *Rock Bottom* », ne l'égale que dans de rares morceaux : sur « *Five black Notes and on white Note* », un rêve de bonheur si insoutenable qu'il confine à de la mélancolie généralisée, et, dans une moindre mesure, sur la belle version qu'il donne du « *Song for Che* » de **Charlie Haden**, étrange marche funèbre dédiée à Che Guevara. Le reste du disque donne le sentiment d'une redite, la sensibilité et, donc, la nécessité en moins. La voix est toujours aussi aérienne, mais d'une virtuosité qui tourne à la démonstration formelle. L'accompagnement sent le « gimmick » et l'attachement à une « image de marque ». L'absence de sens immédiat devient vide, car elle n'est pas relayée par une vraie et authentique sensibilité.

Les trois derniers simples publiés par la maison de disques indépendante « Rough Trade » accusent, hélas !, cette sombre impression : **Robert Wyatt** n'a plus rien à dire. Comme s'il fallait que cela se sache, il vient même d'enregistrer un numéro grotesque de propagande communiste - il serait tout aussi grotesque, s'il défendait le libéralisme, le socialisme ou quoi que ce soit d'autre - et que seul son nom explique qu'il ait été publié : « *Stalin wasn't Stalling* », couplé à un discours débile sur les défenseurs soviétiques de Stalingrad. En redescendant sur terre, **Robert Wyatt** est redevenu sinistrement banal, indifférent, presque bête. Le drame de tous les albatros.

Patrice Bollon

« Rock Bottom. » + « Ruth is stranger than Richard » (réédition double LP-Virgin) « Arauco/Caimanera », « At last I am free/Strange Fruit », « Stalin wasn 't Stalling/Stalingrad » (Rough Trade, distrib. Barclay).

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Le pionnier solitaire Robert Wyatt - Stereoplay - mai 1981



LE PIONNIER SOLITAIRE : ROBERT WYATT

Wyatt est l'ancien batteur et chanteur de Soft Machine, le groupe qui a été avec Pink Floyd à l'origine de tout le rock anglais des Seventies. Après avoir quitté les Softs qui devenaient trop hermétiques à son goût, il a fondé son propre orchestre, en lui donnant un nom qui était un clin d'œil au public français : Matching Mole. A la fin de 72, Wyatt a eu un accident, et depuis huit ans il vit dans une chaise roulante, paralysé des jambes. Après deux albums-solo, qui viennent tout juste d'être réédités par Virgin, il avait arrêté la musique. Cinq ans plus tard, il revient en force avec d'étranges pop songs inclassables. Je rends visite à Robert Wyatt dans sa petite maison de Twickenham, le Sud-Ouest de Londres. Il vit avec Alfreda Benge, sa femme, un peintre de talent.

Pourquoi cette rupture il y a cinq ans ?

Je n'ai pas arrêté brusquement. Après la sortie de « Ruth and Richard », j'avais d'énormes problèmes financiers et l'album n'avait même pas pu être terminé comme je l'aurais souhaité. J'en avais assez.

Ensuite, tu as joué avec d'autres musiciens ?

A vrai dire, c'est Carla Bley qui m'a forcé à recommencer, et j'ai aussi joué avec Fred Frith et Henry Cow. Ça m'a mis en confiance que ce soit quelqu'un d'autre qui prenne la responsabilité de la musique. Maintenant, je ne suis plus comme autrefois, je ne veux plus tout faire moi-même, composer, jouer, chanter, donner des concerts et m'occuper seul de tous les arrangements. Tout ça, c'est fini. Et puis j'ai toujours aime reprendre des chansons des autres...

Justement, cette série de 45 tours ?

Oh, j'avais des petites idées depuis quelques mois, et puis Rough Trade m'a contacté, m'offrant des conditions de travail très acceptables. Jusqu'à présent, trois simples sont sortis, mais il y en aura sans doute d'autres.



Comment as-tu choisi les morceaux ?

Tu sais, il n'y a pas vraiment de ligne directrice. « Cainemara », le premier, est la version originale de « Guantanamera » que je chante en espagnole.

Pourquoi pas en anglais ?



Je ne parle pas assez bien espagnol pour pouvoir traduire les paroles en anglais. Alors, je chante en espagnol ! Sur le second 45 tours, il y a « At last I'm free » et « Strange fruit », un titre des Chic et une chanson qu'avait eu à son répertoire Billie Holiday. Et le troisième, qui vient juste de sortir, « Stalin wasn't stalling », est une bande où je chante en multi-track une adaptation d'une chanson de propagande de la dernière guerre !

Que fais-tu en dehors de la musique ?

J'écris beaucoup, j'écoute pas mal de choses, surtout du reggae car je connais une journaliste qui m'apporte toutes les nouveautés et je vais pas mal au cinéma . J'aime beaucoup capter des radios lointaines avec appareil à ondes courtes. Tous les soirs, j'écoute Radio-Vietnam !

Tu penses remonter sur une scène ?

Pas pour le moment. J'ai abandonné complètement l'idée d'un groupe permanent.

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Robert Wyatt: du rock et du tact - Libération - 30 décembre 1980



ROBERT WYATT : DU ROCK ET DU TACT

Ses disques, surtout ceux qu'il enregistre après son départ de Soft Machine, me passionnaient. Comme des puzzles complexes. Mélodies gentilles, rythmes bizarres, rock pas rock, jazz déformé ; une musique toujours curieuse, jamais ennuyeuse en ce qu'elle innovait dans l'évidence et non dans l'abstraction. «Rock Bottom » obtient le grand prix de l'académie Charles Gros. «Ruth is stranger than Richard » n'obtient rien du tout. Mais c'était un bon disque aussi. Ensuite, il s'est tu pendant sept ans. Il avait 25 ans, une barbe et des cheveux blonds, plus toute sa tête et deux jambes. Hors d'usage à la suite d'une chute dont on ne sut jamais la cause... Robert Wyatt, le circonspect.

Je savais qu'il vivait à Londres, quelque part dans sa banlieue tranquille. « Chez lui », m'avait-on prévenu, on parle haut et fort la nuit et les réveils sont nauséeux. Je suis allé jusque devant sa porte le soir, mais je n'ai rien entendu. La maison est restée close, en silence. « Il a de nouveau quelques amis » m'avait dit quelqu'un qui le connaissait un peu. « Mais il lui est resté de son accident, un goût certain pour la solitude ». J'avais vu son visage s'empâter, de photographies en photographies, des ombres grasses sur son cou, ses pommettes livides, et son regard noyé. Je n'étais pourtant pas assez curieux de lui pour aller fouiller dans ses poubelles. Ni pour l'épier quand il sort sur une chaise roulante. J'attendais une occasion. Je l'ai eue, presque neuve.

Je suis seul, assis à une table. Et l'attends. L'homme m'a donné rendez-vous chez lui à midi ; il se réveille à peine. Sa femme dort encore et son fils (15 ou 16 ans) traverse la cuisine. J'entends arriver le charriot métallique. Il parle français et réfléchit toujours longuement avant de répondre. Robert Wyatt vient d'enregistrer deux 45 tours chez Rough-Trade, et une chanson « Stranger in the night » pour une compilation intitulée « Miniatures », produite par ***Morgan Fisher****.* ***Robert Wyatt*** *serait-il de retour ?*

JE SUIS ENCORE PERDU

P.J. : Pourquoi ces deux nouveaux disques ? Et pourquoi ce silence, avant ?

R.W. : J'ai rencontré des musiciens qui m'ont persuadé de *recommencer*. Ils m'ont dit qu'il fallait continuer à travailler, même quand on n'est pas inspiré parce que c'est un métier comme un autre. Le problème, c'est que je ne sais pas aujourd'hui ce que ça veut dire « faire de la musique ». Il y a 10 ans, c'était simple. Ça correspondait pour moi à une esthétique. A une *vérité*. Maintenant, j'ai l'impression que c'est beaucoup plus compliqué. Alors, j'essaie de trouver quelques raisons de me stimuler. Je n'écris plus de musique. Je chante et je joue la musique des autres pour essayer de recevoir leur énergie. En même temps, je voudrais comprendre ce qu'est la musique populaire. Qui la fait ? Pour qui ? Quelle est la relation entre des styles comme la disco et la musique écrite pour le *prolétariat* et qu'il n'écoute pas. Ces contradictions m'intéressent. J'essaie aussi de comprendre comment le rock, qui était un genre iconoclaste, a recréé un système de valeurs semblables aux autres. Je me dis qu'il faut trouver une autre direction. C'est difficile. Une autre question. Je suis perdu.

P.J. : Vous entrevoyez une solution ?

R.W. : Je ne sais pas si… Je voudrais arriver à une situation qui ne soit pas prévisible ! C'est-à-dire que tout fonctionne toujours suivant le même schéma : « l'avant-garde », etc. Finalement, la musique que j'écoute. Non, je suis encore perdu. Une autre question ?

J'en épuise une série. Il se perd toujours autant. Plus tard je dirai à quelqu'un « Il a la tête comme un gruyère, avec plein de trous dedans. » D'ailleurs ses deux nouveaux 45 tours ne sont pas terribles. Ils auraient été excellents il y a 10 ans quand il savait ce que voulait dire la musique. Même voix, mêmes arrangements. Qui aimera ça ? Je l'aurais voulu plus sûr de lui, plus dynamique. Et puis, en écoutant radio 7 et les interviews de l'après-midi, je me suis aperçu que le dynamisme de tous ces faux jeunes me soulevait le cœur. Jamais d'hésitation. Ne pas savoir quelle question poser. Ne pas avoir répondre. Mais peut-être que ***Wyatt*** *avait trop bu la veille ? Ou bien, était-ce qu'il s'obstinait à parler français ?.*

P.J. : Tout ce cycle dont vous vous méfiez, l'avant-gardisme puis la récupération etc ça ne dépend pas du créateur lui-même. Quand vous avez enregistré « Rock Bottom » je suppose que vous ne vous adressiez pas spécifiquement à un public, disons intellectuel ? »

R.W. : Non

P.J. : Vous auriez même aimé être « populaire » ?

R.W. : Oui

P.J. : Donc, où est votre responsabilité ?

R.W. : *(long silence)*

P.J. : C'est parce que vous vous êtes aperçu de ce décalage que vous vous êtes arrêté ?

R.W. : *(silence encore)*

LES KATANGAIS

Je commençais à me sentir déprimé. Il essayait de me répondre honnêtement et cela remettait en cause notre « entretien ». En réécoutant la bande, je pensais qu'il fallait avoir le courage de ses silences. Des silences finalement plus dangereux que les mots (voilà pourquoi tout artiste désireux de bien se vendre a un discours fourni) parce qu'ils prêtent à mésinterprétation. Et puis il s'est mis à parler.



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MUSIQUES

Robert Wyatt: du rock et du tact

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P.J. : Pourquoi ces deux nouveaux disques ? Et pourquoi ce silence, avant ?

R.W.: J'ai rencontré des musiciens qui m'ont persuadé de recommencer. Ils m'ont dit qu'il fallait continuer à travailler, même quand on n'est pas inspiré parce que faire de la musique c'est un métier comme un autre. Le problème, c'est que je ne sais pas aujourd'hui ce que ça veut dire « faire de la musique ». Il y a 10 ans, c'était simple. Ça correspondait pour moi à une esthétique. A une vérité. Maintenant, j'ai l'impression que c'est beaucoup plus compliqué. Alors, j'essaie de trouver quelques raisons de me stimuler. Je n'écris plus de musique. Je chante et je joue la musique des autres pour essayer de recevoir leur énergie. En même temps, je voudrais comprendre ce qu'est la musique populaire. Qui la fait ? Pour qui ? Quelle est la relation entre des styles comme la disco et la musique écrite pour le prolétariat et, qu'il n'écoute pas. Ces contradictions m'intéressent. J'essaie aussi de comprendre comment le rock, qui était un genre iconoclaste, a recréé un système de valeurs semblable aux autres. Je ne dis qu'il faut trouver une autre direction. C'est difficile. Une autre question. Je suis perdu.

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J'en épuise une série. Il ne peut toujours autant. Plus tard je dirai à quelqu' un « Il a la tête comme un morceau de gruyère, avec plein de trous dedans. » D'ailleurs ses deux nouveaux 45 tours ne sont pas terribles. Ils auraient été excellents il y a 10 ans quand il savait ce que voulait dire la musique. Même voix, mêmes arrangements. Qui aimera ça ? Je l'aurais voulu plus sûr de lui, plus dynamique. Et puis, en écoutant Radio 7 et les interviews de l'après midi je me suis aperçu que le dynamisme de tous ces faux jeunes me soulevait le cœur. Jamais d'hésitation. Ne pas savoir quelle question poser. Ne pas savoir répondre. Mais peut-être que Wyatt avait trop bu la veille ? Ou bien, était-ce parce qu'il s'obstinait à parler français !

P.J : Tout ce cycle dont vous vous méfiez. L'avant-gardisme puis la récupération etc ça ne dépend pas du créateur lui-même. Quand vous avez enregistré «Rock Bottom» je suppose que vous ne vous adressiez pas spécifiquement à un public, disons «intellectuel ?»

R.W : Non

P.J : Vous auriez même aimé être «populaire» ?

R.W : Oui

P.J. : Donc, où est votre responsabilité ?

R.W : (long silence)

P.J : C'est parce que vous vous êtes aperçu de ce décalage que vous vous êtes arrêté ?

R.W : (silence encore)

LES KATANGAIS

Je commençais à me sentir déprimé. Il essayait de me répondre honnêtement et cela remettait en cause notre «univers». En réécoutant la bande, je pensais qu'il fallait aussi avoir le courage de ses silences. Des silences finalement plus dangereux que les mots (voilà pourquoi tout artiste désireux de bien se vendre a un discours fourni) parce qu'ils prêtent à méconstruction. Et puis il s'est mis à parler.

R.W : Arrêter, ça a été une décision négative. J'avais perdu toutes mes illusions. Je me sentais comme un voilier qui s'arrête parce qu'il n'y a plus de vent. Ce n'était donc pas vraiment une décision. Maintenant, je cherche d'autres vents. Mes parents m'ont pourtant appris à croire en l'Art, mais ça ne fonctionne pas. J'ai découvert des choses que d'autres ont compris depuis longtemps. L'autre jour, je parlais avec des journalistes italiens et ils me disaient : *«Vous êtes fou de vous être inscrit au Parti Communiste. Ça ne se fait plus ! Ça n'est plus à la mode».* Aujourd'hui, la mode c'est d'écouter les disques d'Eno et de ne plus croire en rien. *J'étais à* Paris, en 68, avec Soft Machine. Au mois de Mai. Et je n'ai rien compris ! J'étais là pour jouer de la batterie, pour draguer, pour boire. Bien sûr, les étudiants me semblaient sympathiques mais c'est tout. Aujourd'hui, quand je parle politique, je sens mes interlocuteurs ennuyés. Ça ne les intéresse plus. Pourtant il reste tant à faire !

P.J : Vous êtes content de faire partie du PC ?

R.W : Oui. Ça ne m'a fourni aucune réponse, mais au moins ça m'a aidé à formuler clairement les questions.

P.J : Est-ce que refaire de la musique est pour vous un acte militant ?

R.W : *(il répond en anglais)* Ça aurait pu l'être. Si je savais ce que militer veut dire...

P.J : Aimeriez-vous que ce soit vraiment un geste militant ?

R.W : Oui. Mais je n'en suis pas certain *(il reprend en français)* Quand Jagger chante «*Street fighting man*» son «message» est complètement déplacé. Quand je chante une chanson de Violette Parra, je ne suis pas sûr non plus de toucher quelqu'un. La musique que j'aime écouter n'a rien de militant. C'est de la musique de danse.

P.J : Vous avez enregistré «Guantanamera». C'est encore une chanson commuuiste ?

R.W : Oui mais je l'ai choisi uniquement parce que tout le monde le connait. C'est devenu quasiment de la «muzak». Et je n'ai pas gardé les paroles originales. Parce que le texte dit «*Yo soy un hombre sincero*» Je ne suis pas encore prêt à chanter ça. J'ai trouvé les nouvelles paroles sur un disque cubain qui a 5 ou 6 ans.

P.J : Elles sont en espagnol ?

R.W : J'aime chanter en espagnol. Mais je ne comprends pas tout ce que je dis. En tant que musicien, j'aime bien ne pas comprendre les mots. Ça m'intéresse de les interpréter à travers leurs sonorités. Si Dylan a eu un tel succès, ce n'est pas grâce à ses mots, mais grâce à la manière dont il les disait. Le message ne suffit pas. Regardez les chanteurs «engagés» - surtout les sud-américains - ils ne nous touchent pas !

P.J : C'est peut-être ça, le solitactisme : l'impuissance artistique...

R.W

Le rock est devenu impuissant, lui aussi. La musique électrique, qui était faite par des gens complètement en marge, est devenue la musique des jeunes gens-comme-il-faut. On disait pourtant : «C'est révolutionnaire». En quoi ?

P.J : Vous voudriez trouver une musique véritablement révolutionnaire ?

LA MUSIQUE EPHEMERE

R.W : Oui. C'est ce qui m'intéresse. J'ai enregistré un morceau de Carla Bley pour un disque solo de Nick Mason (du Pink Floyd). Et je ne suis posé un tas de questions sur les paroles. Je voulais savoir exactement pourquoi elles avaient été écrites et c'était une préoccupation nouvelle pour moi. Je ne pourrais plus chanter une chanson sans faire attention aux paroles. *(What a paradox ? Qu'est ce que tu disais il y a à peine cinq minutes à propos des chansons en espagnol. Ah oui c'est vrai, le dilemme du musicien-militant subit).* Ce qui m'intéresse aussi, ce sont les gens qui n'acceptent pas les choses telles qu'elles sont. Les gens de Rough Trade sont comme ça, et c'est pour ça que j'ai enregistré pour eux

P.J : Pour le deuxième 45 tours vous avez choisi une chanson de Billie Holliday et une suite de Chic. Curieux, non ?

R.W : C'est logique. Chic représente le côté extrêmement populaire, le côté «cliché» de «*Guantanamera*». Quant à Billie Holliday, elle ressemble beaucoup à Violette Parra. Ce sont deux femmes de couleur - une noire, une indienne - et qui ont vécu, difficilement. Et puis, ni l'une ni l'autre ne sont à la mode. Et il y a le fait que j'aime ces chanson. Comme ma voix est basse, je me sens plus à l'aise dans les chansons de femmes. C'est Dionne Warwick qui m'a donné ma vocation de chanteur.

P.J : Vous avez envie de vendre beaucoup de disques ?

R.W : La musique «éphémère» m'intéresse beaucoup. Pas forcément les hits. La musique qui dure m'ennuie un peu - sur disque j'entends. Le fait même qu'une musique dure et une autre pas me semble intéressant à analyser. Pourquoi ? Quels sont les critères ? Je me méfie de la postérité et de l'histoire.

JOB

SWING

ROCKING-CHAIR MODELE J.J. CALE

Le «J.J. Cale nouveau» est en retard sur le Beaujolais. On a l'habitude, ce cru-là apparaît tous les deux ou trois ans. Le prochain, qui sera le sixième, doit sortir le 12 février. Pour les fidèles, pas de quoi se ronger : ils peuvent graisser le rocking-chair et reprendre le balancement type Mississipi. Le plus économe en gesticulations et haussements de ton de tout le sud n'énonce toutefois un (tout petit) peu, plus que dans les cinq précédents. Dans un des morceaux, Carry on, il va même jusqu'à rire. L'audacieux.

VINYL MODELE BOULEZ

Boulez, le Pierrot de Beaubourg n'est pas, à ce qu'il semble, sous contrat exclusif, question lancement du disque. Il aura recours, en 81, à rien moins que trois maisons de disques pour épancher sa frénésie de création, direction, et aide à la jeunesse musicale contemporaine. Stravinsky, Schönberg, et Berio pour Erato, Stravinsky again pour E.G.G., Varese et re-Schönberg pour C.R.S. Sans parler des cassettes commentées (mais oui !) qu'éditera l'I.R.C.A.M. Rassurez-vous pour sa santé, il n'a prévu pour 81 qu'une douzaine de concerts... dont certains seront enregistrés. C'est Léo Ferré, son pourfendeur, qui va encore être content !

MAGMA MODELE VANDER

Magma, c'est le genre de micro-société dont on a perdu le temps de constater la disparition que, hop, ça revient. Cette fois, le lapin-Magma que Christian Vander nous ressort imperturbablement de ses tambours se fera sans Klaus Blasquiz, comoagnon jusqu'à présent désespérément fidèle. On vous révélera plus tard les noms des membres de la famille. Seule certitude : R.C.A. a signé Magma pour trois albums, dont le premier sera un enregistrement du concert de juin dernier. Et une tournée de 40 dates a été programmée pour le premier semestre. Vander a toujours des fournis dans ses baguettes...

LIBERATION MARDI 30 DECEMBRE 1980

> Zoom

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LA MUSIQUE ÉPHÉMÈRE

R.W. : oui. C'est ça qui m'intéresse. J'ai enregistré un morceau de **Carla Bley** pour un disque solo de **Nick Mason** (du **Pink Floyd**). Et je me suis posé un tas de questions sur les paroles. Je voulais savoir exactement pourquoi elles avaient été écrites et c'était une préoccupation nouvelle pour moi. Je ne pourrai plus chanter une chanson sans faire attention aux paroles *(What a paradox ? Qu'est ce que tu disais il y a à peine cinq minutes à propos des chansons en espagnol. Ah oui c'est vrai, le dilemme du musicien-militant ndlc)*. Ce qui m'intéresse aussi, ce sont les gens qui n'acceptent pas les choses telles qu'elles sont. Les gens de Rough Trade sont comme ça, et c'est pour ça que j'ai enregistré pour eux.

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Il y connait rien - Charlie Hebdo N° 528 - 24 décembre 1980

IL Y CONNAIT RIEN



L'AUTRE jour, j'ouvre l'album « Third » du groupe Soft Machine. Je m'aperçois que j'y avais inscrit la date et le lieu de l'achat. Gare St-Lazare, le 2/8/70. Ça fait donc dix ans ! Je l'ai ouvert parce qu'en enregistrant des 45t, je venais d'écouter le dernier Robert Wyatt chez Rough Trade. Il vient d'enregistrer « Strange Fruits », une chanson qu'on avait surtout entendue, jusqu'à maintenant, par Billie Hollyday. Les « Strange Fruits » dont parle la chanson sont les Noirs pendus aux arbres dans le Sud des Etats-Unis. C'était un spectacle fréquent au début du siècle. Vous connaissez les problèmes raciaux des Etats-Unis. « Strange Fruits » était une chanson nègre engagée de l'époque. Robert Wyatt se sent l'âme militante, depuis quelque temps. Dans son premier 45t chez Rough Trade, il interprétait en espagnol une chanson de Violetta Para et le fameux « Guantanamera ». Tout ce que fait Wyatt est réussi. Même le « Strangers in the night » qu'il a donné pour le « Miniatures » de Morgan Fischer.

Rappelons que Robert Wyatt est tout d'abord apparu comme batteur des « Soft Machine ». C'était un batteur fin et inventif, au style foisonnant. Soft Machine fut le premier groupe rock à résonance intellectuelle. Autrefois, le rock était le football du mélomane. C'était prolo. Le jazz avait la place du tennis. C'était avant que le tennis se démocratise. L'étudiant écoutait du jazz et l'autre gland du rock. Soft Machine a amené l'étudiant dans le monde du rock. Et s'agissait de rock « progressiste ». Avec un mot comme ça, il adhérait. Et la maison de disques d'étaler les diplômes universitaires de Ratledge (claviers) et des autres sur la pochette du premier disque. Le côté déconneur de Wyatt lui a valu d'être cité comme flirtant avec la pataphysique. Enfin, toute une légende. En tout cas, aujourd'hui, qu'on ressorte ça ou « Rock Bottom », ça tient le coup.



MUSIQUE

L'AUTRE jour, j'ouvre l'album « Third » du groupe Soft Machine. Je m'aperçois que j'y avais inscrit la date et le lieu de l'achat. Gare St-Lazare, le 2/8/70. Ça fait donc dix ans ! Je l'ai ouvert parce qu'en enregistrant des 45 t, je venais d'écouter le dernier Robert Wyatt chez Rough Trade. Il vient d'enregistrer « Strange Fruits », une chanson qu'on avait surtout entendue, jusqu'à maintenant, par Billie Hollyday. Les « Strange Fruits » dont parle la chanson sont les Noirs pendus aux arbres dans le Sud des Etats-Unis. C'était un spectacle fréquent au début du siècle. Vous connaissez les problèmes raciaux des Etats-Unis. « Strange Fruits » était une chanson nègre engagée de l'époque. Robert Wyatt se sent l'âme militante, depuis quelque temps. Dans son premier 45 t chez Rough Trade, il interprétait en espagnol une chanson de Violetta Para et le fameux « Guantanamera ». Tout ce que fait Wyatt est réussi. Même le « Strangers in the night » qu'il a donné pour le « Miniatures » de Morgan Fischer.

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Oui, parce que, vous le savez, un jour, en faisant le con au bord d'une fenêtre, il est tombé et il s'est esquinté. Je crois qu'il a eu un accident encore après, dans une bagnole. Vous vous rendez compte, un batteur privé de ses jambes ! Foutues à vie. C'était à se pendre. Eh bien, il a remonté la pente. « Rock Bottom », il l'a fait dans cet état. Et, avec Henri Cow, il est même venu au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Au lieu de se pendre, il est devenu militant. Il a réussi à se mettre dans la tête qu'il y en avait qui étaient encore plus dans la merde que lui. Je l'admire. Moi, si un jour je me fous sous le train, je laisserai un papier : « Je perdais mes cheveux ». Lennon ne perdait pas ses cheveux. J'ai fait un truc sur les Beatles dans un numéro « Spécial Beatles » édité par « le Matin de Paris ». Il m'ont emballé ça, il faut voir... C'est comme quand je m'égare dans « Actuel » et tout le reste. Je ne sais plus quoi dire, à force. Je sais tellement que ça ne sert à rien. Les gens sont comme ils sont, voilà tout.

En ce moment, j'écoute « Pop Art Poem », un souple des Jam pris dans une revue de teenagers anglaise. J'aime beaucoup les Jam. Surtout grâce à la personnalité de Paul Weller. Il y a peu de temps, à cause de la fermeture du Bataclan, ils n'ont pas pu jouer à Paris. Dommage. Le dernier album est bien. C'est toujours bien, les Jam. Jamais étonnant à la première écoute, mais ça tient le coup. Achetez les albums des Jam.

Berroyer

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Berroyer

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Robert Wyatt reprend du service - Le Monde de la Musique - n° 23 - mai 1980





Robert Wyatt reprend du service

Il est vivant, il va bien et vit dans la campagne anglaise. Qui ? Robert Wyatt. Le génial compositeur de *Rock bottom*, l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine, reprend du service. Sous l'égide de Rough Trade, une jeune compagnie anglaise issue de la new wave, il prépare une série de cinq 45 tours sous le titre global de *Robert Wyatt Paper Bag*. Voilà qui va rompre un silence inquiétant de plus de cinq ans, la disparition musicale d'une des plus grandes figures de la rock music. Après avoir prêté son style unique de batterie et sa curieuse voix éthérée aux expériences de Soft Machine et Matching Mole, Robert Wyatt avait été victime en 1974 d'un grave accident : une chute par une fenêtre et la paralysie à vie. Cloué sur son fauteuil roulant, il nous avait pourtant livré une œuvre étrange et noire. belle et torturée, *Rock Bottom*. Suivit *Ruth is stranger than Richard*, son deuxième disque solo. puis plus rien, ou presque : quelques apparitions vocales dans des enregistrements de Carla Bley ou du groupe Hatfield and The North. « *Pendant tout ce temps*, affirme l'intéressé, *j'ai écouté mes disques et écrit environ deux mille cartes postales...* »

Ses projets musicaux ? Une version du célèbre « Guantanamera », le tube sud-américain, à

qui Robert compte rendre ses paroles originales en espagnol, qu'on a parait-il, toujours édulcorées. Suivront une chanson sur l'extermination des Indiens du Chili écrite par la chanteuse Violetta Parra, un morceau à la gloire de la bataille de Stalingrad (!), un classique de Billie Holiday. et un tube du groupe Chic. Robert Wyatt n'a pas fini de nous surprendre. En plus, il a l'air d'aimer ça. « *Je suis un membre actif du Parti communiste,* révèle-t-il, *ce qui me place dans une position paradoxale par rapport à l'industrie du disque. Mais je suis sûr que les choses sérieuses et les choses qui font plaisir aux gens ne sont pas incompatibles.* »

Ph. B.

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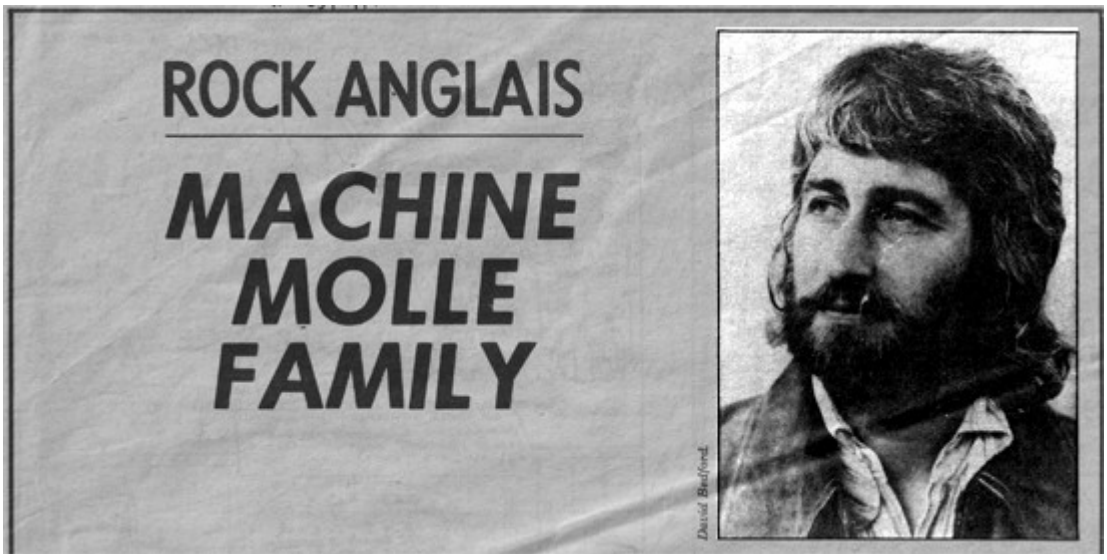
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Machine Molle Family - Libération - 25 novembre 1977


Libération

1,80 F. Belgique : 15 FB Suisse : 1,20 FS Portugal : 17 esc. Pays-Bas : 1. 25 fl. Italie : 400 L. Commission paritaire n° 54072



LES Sex Pistols triomphent *: à peine sorti dans les magasins, leur 30cm se vend comme un « Barre ». Chez Virgin, c'est la fête, «* ***On n'avait pas ça en GB depuis les débuts des Stones et des Beatles*** *».*

Un magnifique sourire préfabriqué peint sur ses adorables lèvres rouges, Lisa (miss relations internationales) nous regarde venir. Un tee-shirt marqué d'un « Smile » de circonstance, enrobe avec délicatesse des rondeurs Mansfieldiennes. « ***J'espère que vous ne venez pas pour les Pistols*** *», dit-elle en guise de préambule. «* ***Non madame****, répondons-nous poliment,* ***c'est pour un autre article*** *».*

***Ah**, dit-elle vaguement déçue, **parce que si c'était pour les Pistols, nous sommes submergés de demandes et pas n'importe quelle demande** etc, etc... » « **Rassurez-vous ma brave dame**, reprenons-nous, **Johnny Rotten, c'est pas pour nous** ». « **Et bien**, s'étonne-t-elle, **vous connaissez pourtant Pacadis ?** » « **Sûr que ça l'aurait intéressé**, approuvons-nous obséquieusement, **mais nous non**. »*

NOUS, on est à Londres pour continuer une petite enquête qui nous a conduits de la Sainte-Baume à l'Italie et de l'Italie au Royaume-Uni. Une démarche de flic maniaque guettant les moindres indices, fouillant dans les poubelles du show-biz, louvoyant dans le monde obscur des compositeurs déments, des musiciens hallucinés et irresponsables. Sur nos fiches, 3 suspects : David Bedford, largement compromis dans une histoire d'adaptation symbolique de « Tubular Bells », ce super tube composé par Mike Olfield et choisi comme soundtrack de l'Excorciste (N° 1) ; Ivor Cutler, vieil Ecossais sexagénérisant dont la voix a été gravée à jamais dans la cire fraîche du fameux Rock Bottom de Robert Wyatt ; Gavin Bryars enfin, musicien, très contemporain aux amours très françaises, au nostalgique attachement au début de notre siècle, un compositeur tout-à-fait doué qui réalisa pour un petit label dénommé Obscure, un des plus beaux disques qu'il m'ait été donné d'écouter, « Sinking of the Titanic ».

DAVID« TUBULARBELLS » BEDFORD

Un peu étriqué aux épaules, David Bedford vit dans un de ces cottages typiquement anglais pareil à ceux qu'on trouve par milliers dans la banlieue londonienne. Il nous reçoit dans une salle de musique encombrée d'instruments électroniques divers, de claviers plus ou moins acoustiques, de modèles réduits d'avions, de partitions dans des états d'achèvement différemment avancés. Il est un peu bourru, boit du café, roule lui-même ses cigarettes et répond prudemment aux questions qu'on lui pose comme s'il avait peur de perdre sa place. Un personnage à l'image de sa musique : sympathiquement peu original ; un tâcheron influencé à en crever par la musique classique et qui essaie d'introduire dans ses compositions doucement pompiers des ex-croissances électriques dont il laisse la charge — dans son dernier album — à des gens comme Mike Ratledge (synthétiseur) ou Mike Oldfield (guitare).

Libé : C'est en faisant partie du groupe de Kevin Ayers en 70 que vous avez fait une entrée — remarquée — dans le monde de la pop musique. A quoi correspond cette évolution chez quelqu'un comme vous, nourri exclusivement de musique classique ?

D.B. : *J'aime toutes les musiques. Le mélange des genres ne me dérange pas... Ça dérange seulement les critiques et les vendeurs de disques parce qu'ils ne savent plus très bien dans quelle catégorie ils doivent ranger ce qu'ils entendent. J'ai rencontré Kevin Ayers parce qu'on m'avait demandé de faire les arrangements de son 1er album solo : il m'a dit qu'il avait besoin de quelqu'un aux claviers, j'ai accepté, ça a été mon premier contact avec les instruments électriques.*

Libé : Pas de motivation commerciale dans ce choix ?

D.B. : *Aucune*.

Libé : *Est-ce que vous avez toujours réussi à faire ce que vous aviez envie de faire sans qu'il soit question de fric ou autre problème assimilable ?*

D.B. : *II faut essayer des choses nouvelles. Dans mon dernier disque, les morceaux sont courts mais c'est simplement parce que composer ce genre de choses, c'était une expérience nouvelle pour moi.*

Libé : Est-ce que votre maison de disques vous accorde tout ce dont vous avez besoin ?

D.B. : *Dans la mesure où je suis raisonnable, oui. Virgin me laisse travailler sans problème.*

Libé : Et vous enregistrez au Manor (c'est le studio Virgin).

D.B. (un peu gêné) : *Non parce que c'est trop cher. Ils ont des compatibilités séparées.*

Libé : Vous pensez que les contacts entre les compositeurs ne sont pas nécessaires ?

D.B. : *Non seulement ils ne sont pas nécessaires mais en plus ils peuvent devenir dangereux parce qu'il est très facile d'être influencé par quelqu'un et de perdre sa propre personnalité. Je n'écoute que les musiques qui sont à l'opposé de ce que je fais, c'est le meilleur moyen de sauvegarder ma créativité.*

Libé : Et en dehors de la musique ?...

D.B. : *Je lis beaucoup, je suis passionné par des tas de choses. Ça dépend de ma curiosité du moment... J'adore la science-fiction.*

IVOR CUTLER : A L'AISE DANS SES POMPES

C'est un petit bonhomme revêtu d'une robe de chambre s'ouvrant sur un costume d'intérieur tout-à-fait décontracté. Nous avions rendez-vous à 14 H. Il est 13 H 50. « *J'ai déjà vu des journalistes en retard, d'autres à l'heure, c'est la première fois que j'en rencontre qui soient en avance !* », nous dit-il en guise de bienvenue. Nous grimpons jusqu'à son appartement. Un deux pièces cuisine fleurant bon l'originalité désuète et le non-conformisme ironique. Ivor Cutler prépare le thé, offre des gâteries au chocolat, papillonne dans son décor quotidien, très amusé par sa propre mondanité. Au mur, une affiche de Robert Wyatt, assis dans son fauteuil roulant. « *Robert est mon meilleur ami, nous déclare-t-il pendant ce long entretien. Je ne sais pas si je suis son meilleur ami mais lui est réellement mon meilleur ami, oh... après moi-même bien sûr...* ».

Ce qui lui permettra de nous faire part de sa philosophie existentielle : « *Il faut s'accepter et vivre en bonne intelligence avec soi. Pendant des années et des années, on agit comme un âne bâté et ça n'est que quand on arrive à mon âge qu'on comprend qu'on a passé son temps à essayer de se soigner de soi-même. Et quand on est guéri, c'est le moment de mourir* ».

Ivor Cutler est un compositeur très spécial : ses chansons, qu'il interprète avec cette voix incroyable au magnifique accent écossais, sont très courtes, très simples musicalement et pourtant intensément expressives, un peu comme les compositions d'Erik Satie dont Cutler avoue avoir subi l'influence (indirecte) : « *J'aime beaucoup Satie, malheureusement depuis qu'il est passé dans le domaine public, la TV utilise ses gymnopédies pour de la pub pour des produits de beauté ou d'autres saletés comme ça* ».

En dehors de ses activités musicales, Ivor Cutler a à son actif 7 bouquins pour gosses « *très appréciés des mouvements féministes*, dit-il fièrement, *parce que les personnages féminins y jouent des rôles particulièrement importants* ». Ses dessins ont été publiés dans *l'Observer*, le *Sunday Times*, l'*International Times*, il a participé à de nombreuses émissions radiophoniques et télévisées et il enseigne encore deux jours par semaine, ce qu'il appelle la « free music ». « *J'apprends aux tous petits — ils ont de 6 à 11 ans — à faire de la musique sans instruments. Ils utilisent leurs voix, leurs mains, les murs, n'importe quoi et leurs compositions sont très sophistiquées, croyez-moi ! John Cage serait très heureux d'entendre ça !* ».

Libé : Vous aimez les expériences électro-acoustiques des nouveaux compositeurs ?

I.C. : *Philosophiquement, j'approuve complètement leur démarche. Il est exact que le bruit est déjà de la musique. Quand je pars me ballader à bicyclette dans la campagne, j'écoute le chant des oiseaux, les cris des animaux et — mais vous allez me trouver bêtement romantique — ça me suffit comme musique... La dernière fois que j'ai été au zoo, j'ai chanté une vieille chanson ecossaisse à un troupeau de gros moutons. Ils sont tous venus autour de moi, pour m'écouter et je suppose que l'effet était inversé, c'étaient eux les romantiques.*

Libé : Comment passez-vous le temps ?

I.C. : *Quand je ne crée pas, c'est mon inconscient qui travaille et qui prépare une prochaine création. Ce matin, par exemple, je me suis réveillé à 4 heures et j'ai écrit une histoire que*

j'avais dans la tête. Elle était toute prête. Ensuite, je suis retourné me coucher... Ce sont les mots qui m'intéressent le plus, leur bruit, leur mystère. J'adore les alphabets différents : le chinois, l'arabe. J'aime ces petites marques noires incompréhensibles, imprimées sur des feuilles blanches.

Libé : Vous êtes un homme assez solitaire !

I.C. *: Pas vraiment. J'aime les contacts sociaux. Je commence seulement à apprécier les hommes — pas sexuellement —. Je veux dire qu'il est plus facile de communiquer avec une femme, parce que les désirs sexuels peuvent vous pousser à communiquer, alors que la seule relation que vous pouvez avoir avec les hommes, est une relation intellectuelle. J'aime bien faire des concerts. J'y tiens le rôle d'un petit bonhomme un peu bête pour que les spectateurs s'imaginent plus grands et plus intelligents que ce qu'ils ne sont. Ça a l'air d'un truc très intellectuel. En fait pas du tout, c'est simplement parce que j'aime ça. Je suis une espèce de Buster Keaton, voilà tout.*

Libé : Cette mise en scène apparaît déjà dans la manière que vous avez de chanter. On peut comprendre le sens de vos chansons sans savoir l'anglais.

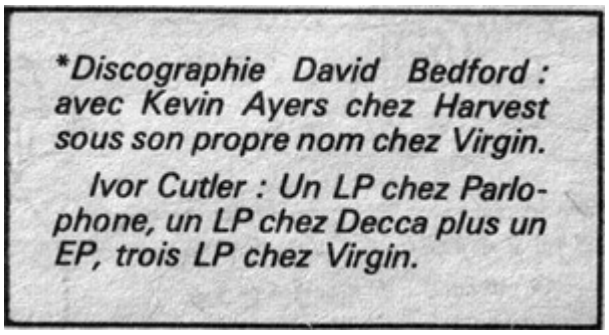
I.C. *: Mes chansons sont écrites de telle manière que, si on arrive à se débarrasser de son intellect, elles sont compréhensibles. C'est en vieillissant que les gens désapprennent à comprendre. S'ils n'avaient pas oublié qu'ils ont été des enfants, ils n'auraient plus ce genre de problèmes... Ceci dit, le côté intellectuel des choses m'intéresse aussi énormément.*

Libé : C'est à cause de votre éducation. Vos oreilles ont grandi en Grande-Bretagne...

L'expression plait beaucoup à Cutler qui corrige en rigolant sans vergogne. *« Mes oreilles ont grandi en Ecosse maij elles ont été transplanté — avec succès — en Grande-Bretagne ».*

La prochaine fois : Gavin Bryars.

Pierre JOB, Laurence BERNARDI



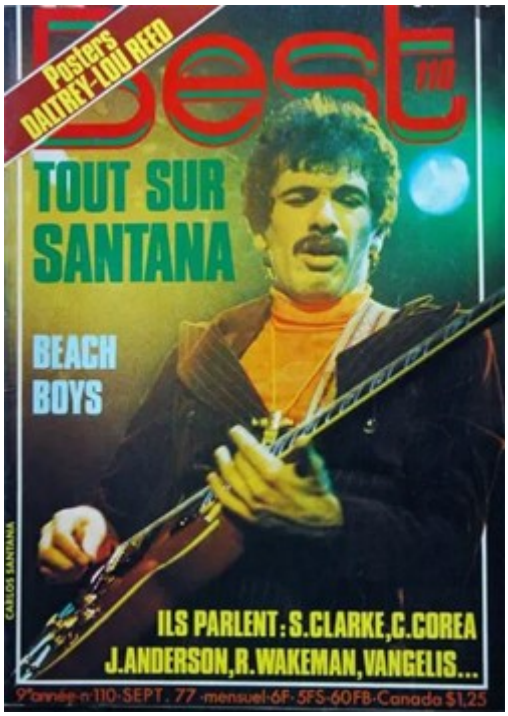
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Soft Machine, dix ans après - Best - N° 110 - septembre 1977





C'est à Paris que Soft Machine a décidé de fêter ses dix années d'existence en donnant quatre concerts au théâtre « le palace ». Lesquels concerts sont soigneusement enregistrés en vue d'un album commémoratif à paraître en septembre. Dix ans, pour un groupe cela commence à faire long. Et ce qui est surprenant quand on voit les musiciens de Soft Machine, c'est qu'ils ont tous l'allure d'universitaires boutonneux et qu'on se demande si leur carrière au sein du groupe n'a pas commencé à l'époque de leur première communion. Puis en jetant un coup d'oeil à la fiche de renseignements concernant la carrière du groupe on s'aperçoit qu'aucun des musiciens actuels n'en faisait partie à sa création.



Dans ce cas vous demandez vous, puisque tous les musiciens ont changé, pourquoi avoir gardé le nom de Soft Machine ? Bonne question assurément mais qui, à son énoncé, jette un froid certain. Les sourires s'évanouissent, les conversations s'arrêtent, (dans les westerns le pianiste de salon s'arrête de jouer et plonge derrière son piano), la situation se dégrade à une allure vertigineuse. L'un d'eux répond froidement « *On nous a déjà posé cette question* ». Bon, fichu pour fichu (les bons rapports) ; autant insister et reposer la même question en arborant un air niais. Le sang va couler mais le manager (business oblige) s'interpose en souriant.

« *Voyez-vous, ce changement s'est opéré imperceptiblement. L'un des membres originaux est parti et a été remplacé. Le nouveau venu s'est intégré entièrement au groupe, à son esprit, puis quelques mois plus tard un autre fondateur du groupe est parti et a été remplacé et ainsi de suite*. »

« *De toutes façons*, renchérit un musicien, *en gardant le nom de Soft Machine, cela nous permet de continuer à travailler et de gagner notre vie et si quelqu'un n'est pas content...* ».

A part cela les, euh, Soft Machine vont bientôt partir faire une tournée en U.R.S.S. Ils aiment la France et les jolies filles et détestent les coups de pied au derrière. Et tout le monde était bien content quand l'addition est arrivée.

(S.R.)

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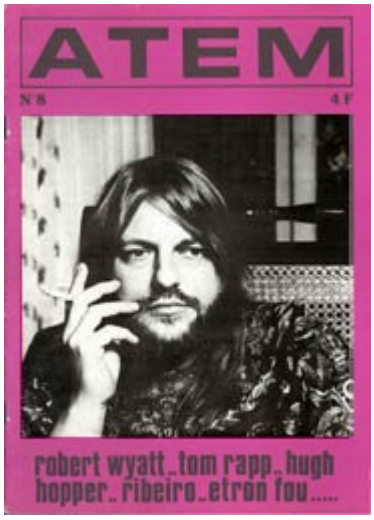
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Mon Top Dix par Robert Wyatt - Atem - N° 8 - février 1977

MON TOP DIX PAR ROBERT WYATT



Une rubrique qu'on inaugure avec ce numéro mais qui ne sera pas régulière.

Il nous a semblé qu'il pourrait être intéressant de connaître les disques favoris des musiciens qu'on aimait bien. Alors, on a écrit à Robert WYATT qui nous a envoyé son TOP TEN, qui était déjà paru dans un vieux numéro de "LET IT ROCK".

Accompagnant ce TOP TEN une petite note de Robert disait : "Il y a quelques années, quand j'étais plus sûr de mes opinions, j'ai écrit ceci. Je vous le montre pour votre amusement mais vous pouvez l'utiliser si vous voulez ; mais je le suspecte d'être trop anglais, ou tout simplement trop vieux."

Tout d'abord, je dois préciser que j'ai 31 ans. Je pense que chacun dépend plus ou moins d'un groupe d'âge, en ce qui concerne ses goûts. Les gens que je connais ont tendance à croire que la musique de leur adolescence est la plus inspirée qui ait jamais été et trouvent la musique qui précède celle de leur génération un peu ennuyeuse, et la musique qui suit un peu triviale, bêbête. Presque tout le monde pense cela, bien que chacun le rationalise par d'autres côtés. L'autre point est : je choisis 10 disques que j'aime, mais en réalité, il y en a 14, aussi, j'ai dû en retirer 4. Le troisième point est que j'ai perdu la plupart de ces disques et il y a donc peut-être des erreurs sur les détails des titres.

1 "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" par Charlie Mingus, tiré de l' album "Mingus Ah Um" chez CBS je crois. Ce n'est pas officiellement une chanson - je ne connais pas de mots pour le qualifier - mais c'est très chantable, comme beaucoup de chansons de Mingus. Tout compliqués que peuvent être ses morceaux, quand on les connait, on peut les chanter. Je peux presque les jouer aussi bien que les chanter, parce que, comme beaucoup de chansons de Julie Tippetts, tout est presque joué sur les touches noires du piano. Les improvisations, par Shafi Hadi et Booker Ervin aux saxes, respectent la mélodie, sont une extension de celle-ci. Des gens comme Gil Evans et Mingus se détachent des autres arrangeurs de jazz parce qu'ils intègrent les improvisations de leurs musiciens dans leur écriture. Je pense qu'il est plus facile pour un musicien de jouer avec Mingus qu'avec la plupart des gens, simplement parce que ses mélodies sont toujours belles...

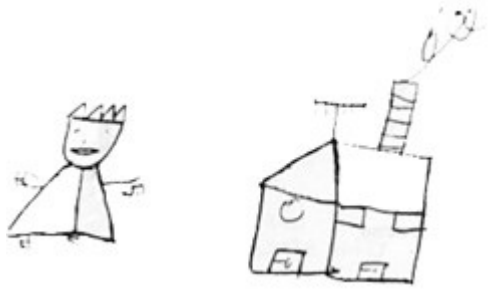
2 Ensuite, j'ai choisi le "Piano Quintet" de Shostakovich. Dans ce quintet, si je me souviens bien - cela fait des années que je ne l'ai pas entendu - il y a une partie dans laquelle le quatuor à cordes joue sur les cordes en sourdine, un son très obsédant. De toutes façons, j'aime l'idée d'un quatuor à cordes; en fait, j'aime plus l'idée d'un quatuor à cordes que
je n'aime une grande partie de Ia musique des quatuors. Dans ce cas-là, peut-être que je l'aime parce que le violoncelle est souvent utilisé un peu à la manière de la contrebasse en jazz - c'est à dire que les cordes ne sont pas frottées (archet) mais frappées (doigts) ; relativement simple rythmiquement, si je m'en souviens bien. C'est une pièce incroyablement mélodieuse, ce qui, vous devez l'admettre, est un grand exploit pour quelqu'un qui n'est, après tout, qu'un communiste endoctriné (brainwashed communist)....!



3 "Friday the thirteenth" par Thelonious Monk. la version que j'ai en tête est celle qu'il fit lors du concert au Town Hall, où les arrangements étaient faits par quelqu'un appelé Hal Overton. Je pense que quand Monk mourra, il y aura profusion de biographies avec supplément, de petits programmes de télévision - des programmes d'art etc. à son sujet. "The Zany loony of the bee-bop world", c'est sans doute ainsi qu'ils l'appelleront. Ils ne le feront pas avant qu'il meure, bien sûr, car il risquerait de gagner beaucoup d'argent, et ils pensent surement que ce serait mauvais pour lui. A mon avis, il est l'un des plus grands compositeurs que j'aie entendu, d'après mes critères d'appréciation. Le truc, à propos de ce concert au Town Hall bien précis, est que les arrangements de Hal Overton sont vraiment imaginatifs. Il a pris tous les anciens enregistrements de Monk jouant ces morceaux, les a transcris en y incluant les soli joués par Monk, et les a arrangés pour grand orchestre. Ainsi vous avez la spontanéité des idées improvisées consolidée par l'orchestration inspirée de Hal Overton. J'aime particulièrement "Fridey the thirteenth" parce qu'il possède une deuxième ligne de basse qui n'est pas vraiment synchronisée avec le morceau lui-même, et cela incline le morceau entier sous un angle étrange. (Si cela parait prétentieux, j'en suis désolé, mais c'est ce qui arrive quand on tente d'expliquer ce que l'on aime dans la musique).

4 "Epilogue" par Miroslav Vitous, de l'album "Infinite search". Miroslav Vitous se situe techniquement dans la catégorie des Barre Philips, Stanley Clarke et Barry Guy. Mais comme compositeur de musique pour basse, il est mon préféré, avec Charlie Haden. Peut-être que ses origines slaves ont quelque chose à voir avec ses inclinations mélodiques particulières. Sur "Infinite search", la contrebasse - instrument utilisé d'habitude de manière servile - est l'instrument principal du groupe. Le groupe - Herbie Hancock, John Mc Laughlin, Jack De Johnnette et Joe Henderson - soutient les lignes de Miroslav avec la précision, la vitesse et l'imagination qui sont le propre des matches de tennis de première classe.
Bien qu'individuellement les musiciens soient habitués à travailler ensemble dans un contexte "live", ils sont aussi habitués à couvrir les contrebassistes, sur le principe que lorsque les instruments forts mènent, les instruments doux suivent. Le studio d'enregistrement peut dégager les musiciens de cette hiérarchie par le volume. Dans le cas présent, l'effet de ces musiciens retenant leur énergie pour laisser à Miroslav l'espace qui sert dans chaque morceau à donner la direction, crée une texture raffinée, transparente, comme une toile d'araignée. Des matches de tennis, des toiles d'araignées - le monde entier dans un morceau - que demander de plus ?

5 "Blues for Pablo" par Gil Evans et Miles Davis. Cela vient d'un album appelé à l'origine "Miles Davis plus Nineteen", qui était la première tentative de Evans pour arranger une série complète de mini concerti pour Miles qui joue principalement du flugelhorn dans le contexte d'un big band. C'est plus difficile de jouer du flugelhorn que de la trompette, ce qui fait que même des virtuoses comme Clark Terry , Art Farmer et le grand Johnny Coles jouent plus précautionneusement, de manière plus réfléchie que la plupart des trompettistes. Comme le titre le suggère, il y a une certaine similitude entre la musique de l'Espagne du Sud et les premiers blues des Etats du sud, ce que Gil Evans exploite superbement sans utiliser l'instrument qui parait pourtant évident: la guitare. En fait, aussi loin que je me souvienne, Gil Evans a été le premier arrangeur de jazz à compléter les instruments traditionnels des groupes de danse ethniques par des cors, des flutes, et d'autres instruments associés d'habitude à la tradition orchestrale européenne. Accessoirement, "Blues for Pablo", comme les autres titres de ce disque, n'est long que d'une paire de minutes, ce qui démontre les sources de Gil Evans comme arrangeur des groupes de danse "pop" et qui rend chaque pièce individuelle agréable et dense. (Si j'avais été un DJ à l'époque, je les aurai mis en compétition avec Sandy Nelson et Duane Eddy sur le marché des singles instrumentaux.)



6 "Sex machine" par Sly and the Family Stone. Quelquefois, quand je n'ai rien d'autre à faire, je spécule sur les innovations possibles de Sly Stone dans un studio d'enregistrement. Il a été disc jokey, et comme le savent tous ceux qui admirent le travail de Kenny Everett, les DJ ont l'opportunité unique de manipuler des magnétos et de créer une sorte de continuité surréelle avec leurs enchainements, de créer une entité musicale à partir de séries de disques choisis au hasard. Une différence importante entre la tentative de production courageuse de Sly Stone et celle de, disons Frank Zappa, réside dans le fait que le groupe de base qui enregistre a toujours l'urgence et l'excitation d'un bon concert en public. Larry Graham, en particulier, est un bassiste et un chanteur spectaculairement utile.

7 "Flying" par les Beatles. Beaucoup de gens n'aimaient pas le film parce qu'il était amateur (les caméras ne tournaient pas autour du nombril du chanteur comme c'est le cas dans la plupart des films musicaux professionnels) ou prétentieux (ils essayaient vraiment de faire quelque chose d'intéressant) ou quelque chose de ce genre. Comme j'appartiens à la génération hippie facile à berner et dont les facultés critiques sont irrémédiablement émoussées par les drogues, le sexe et les mauvaises sonos, je pensais que c'était super. Le LP du même nom était encore mieux, parce qu'ils l'avaient complété avec leurs récents et fantastiques 45 tours. Le morceau le plus magique et le plus mystérieux du disque, pour moi, était "Flying", qui semblait consister essentiellement en un blues de douze mesures, sauf que les accords sont majeurs et le chant "blanc". Si blanc en réalité qu'il sonne comme les "Bateliers de la Volga" deuxième partie. L'effet est euh que puis-je dire, oh vous savez, le chapelet habituel d'adjectifs fallacieux et inadéquats, euh, que diriez-vous de "ce disque est très chouette, donc je l'aime".
PS: Je pense que les Beatles étaient beaucoup plus audacieux et inventifs que la plupart de nos groupes "progressifs" de la fin des sixties (à l'exception de Pink Floyd). Je penserais que cela a quelque chose à voir avec des heures de studio illimitées plutôt que des concerts illimités.

"Leaning on a lampost" par George Formby. George Formby était un putain

8 de joueur d'ukulele, au moins deux fois moins lourd que ses nombreux imitateurs - il aurait fait un bon guitariste rythmique. A part ça, c'est un bon disque à passer à quiconque pense encore que Bob Dylan a inventé de bons lyrics. Tant que j'y suis, j'aimerais aussi mentionner Frank Crummit, un chanteur de Liverpool des années 30. Ahem, "Frank Crummit". Merci.





9 "Hold on I'm coming" par Sam & Dave. Je me rappelle encore très vivement, comme si c'était hier, du jour où le fantastique "cirque" de chez Stax est venu en ville. Et avant tout je me souviens de Sam & Dave, chacun partant à grandes enjambées d'un des côtés de la scène et se croisant devant le gang de Booker T. se défonçant comme si c'était déjà le rappel - très excitant. Encore une fois, comment de simples mots peuvent-ils convenir etc. etc. Goldie a fait une version de cette chanson qui apparemment accentue les possibilités érotiques du titre - plus de force à son.. euh...coude...et tout ça... Mais néanmoins je doute que sa version vaille l'original en terme d'excitation purement musicale. D'un autre côté, il n'y a probablement rien qui puisse être uniquement excitant d'un point de vue purement musical - à part le "Old Grey Whistle Test ("une émission télévisée, très BBC, sur le rock), naturellement.
La manière dont les disques stax étaient enregistrés les rendait parfaits pour les discothèques plutôt que pour les chics systèmes stéréo sur lesquels, comme beaucoup de disques de danse - par exemple les disques de danse des indiens de l'ouest- ils sonnent comparativement raides et secs. Réciproquement, beaucoup de disques soi-disant "bien produits", quand ils résonnent sur une piste de danse sont aussi utiles aux danseurs qu'une couche de ciment humide. Je mentionne ça parce que c'est embarrassant d'essayer de trouver pourquoi des trucs sont ou ont été populaires si on ne tient pas compte du contexte original. J'aimerais continuer dans cette veine et discuter de la vie amphibie du lion de mer, mais j'en sais assez sur le journalisme pour savoir qu'on est supposé s'en tenir aux faits.
Donc, voici mon dernier disque...

10 "Get out of my life woman" par Lee Dorsey/Allen Toussaint. Ces deux là ont fait toute une série de simples fantastiques et si quelqu'un possède une copie de l'album du même nom, album qu'ils ont fait ensemble, je donnerai n'importe quoi pour l'avoir, sauf peut-être mon bras droit. Je crois que Lee Dorsey ne chante plus mais s'occupe d'un garage ou d'un truc dans ce goût là. Ne vous en faites pas, on a encore John Mayall. Toussaint appartient à la grande tradition des musiciens de la Nouvelle Orléans avec des noms français. Parmi ces noms des bayous à parfum voodoo, mes favoris sont Bechet, "Slow drag" Pavageau, Alphonse Picou, Barney Bigard, Joseph "Zigaboo" à la batterie sur ce disque ci, et qui, qui qu'il soit, devrait être célèbre. En tous cas, il m'a sauvé la peau en me montrant le moyen de combiner le toucher en trio des premiers groupes de swing avec le toucher plus violent de la huitième note dérivée des orchestres militaires, privilégié dans les cercles du rock moderne. Maintenant, je vous laisse précipitamment réfléchir sur la signification exacte, s'il y en a une, de l'expression "cercles du rock moderne"...

Robert Wyatt.

Les dessins sont de Virginie Nguyen (She is six years old, you know ?)

Pourquoi des paroles de Robert Wyatt ?

Pourquoi non traduites ?

la fin d'une oreille.

Plutôt que de faire un article historique en disant toujours les mêmes choses (batteur, chanteur de Soft - "chanteur au chômage", Matching Mole...) il est beaucoup plus intéressant, plus émotionnel (parce qu'émouvant est déplacé pour Wyatt) de montrer à travers quelques-uns de ses morceaux le thème de l'incommunicabilité qui fait de lui le non-poète qui refuse les mots, qui préfère murmurer plutôt qu'expliquer.

Traduire serait trahir, et nous avons essayé de rester à la limite de la décence - Voilà, c'est un peu solennel, pas de pleurs, pas d'éternels regrets... Pas de commentaires, ou très peu. Et puis Mr Robert ne veut pas qu'on parle trop de lui...

Jacques Gisclard - Xavier Béal



O CAROLINE

Dave is on piano and I may play on the drums
And we'll try to make the music work
We'll try to have some fun
But I just can't help thinking
That if you were here with me
I get all my thoughts in focus
And play more exciting beat
I love you still Caroline
I want you still Caroline
I need you still Caroline

If you call this sentimental crap
You make me mad
Cause you know that I would not sing
About some passing....
And if my attemps are groaning unconvincing
to your ear
That memory betray you through the passing
of the years
I love you still Caroline
I want you still Caroline
I need you still Caroline

You must think it doubtfull
But I mean no word I sing
Or that all attempt to reach you
This way could not mean a thing
But you must admit
We both thought we'd be man and wife
And that I could make you happy
For the best part of your life
I love you still Caroline
I want you still Caroline
I need you still Caroline

SIGNED CURTAIN

This is the first verse
This is the first verse, verse
This is the first, first...
And this is the chorus
Or perhaps it's the bridge
Or just another part
Of the song
That I'm singing



And this is the second verse
It could be the last verse
And this is the second verse
Second verse, second verse
It could be the last verse
Last verse
And it's probably
The last one
And this is the chorus
Or perhaps it's the bridge
Or just another key change
Never mind
It doesn't hurt
It only means
That I've lost faith in this song
Cause it won't help me
Reach you....



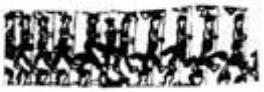
Little Red Robert et Alfredo Bongo (garçe manger).
"Dead moles in the garden of England.
Rocky Bottom, je t'aime davantage à la fin de la nuit et ne peux comprendre ton autre personnage le matin, quand il est temps de jouer aux êtres humains - Please smile -"



LITTLE AND WOMEN HOOD HITS THE ROAD

In the garden of England
Dead moles lie inside their holes
The dead end tunnels
Crumble in the rain
Underfoot
Insits whats

I fight with the handle of my little
brown broom
I pull out the wires of the telephone
I hurt in the head and I hurt in the
aching bone
Now I smash up the telly with remains of
the broken phone
I want it I want it I want it give it to me
I give it you back when I finish the lunch tea
I lie in the road try to trip up the
passing cars
Tea me and the hedge hog we bursting the
tyres all day
As we roll down the highway towards the
setting sun
I reflect on the life of the highwayman
run run
Now I smash up the telly and what's left
of the broken phone



TEA SONG

You look different every time
You come from the foam created brine
It's your skin shining softly in the
moonshine
Partly fish partly porpoise
Partly baby sperm whale
Am I yours are you mine to play with
Joking a part
When you're drunk you're terrific
When you're drunk I like you mostly
late at night
You're quite alright
But I can't understand the different
you
In the morning
When it's time to play at being
Human for a while
Please smile



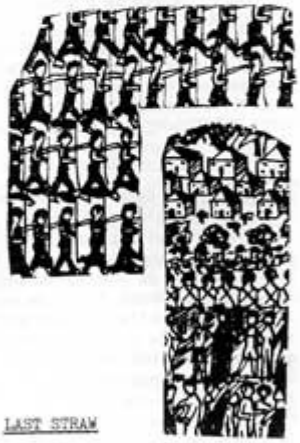
You'll be different in the Spring
I know you're a seasonal beast
Like the star fish that drift in
With the tide, with the tide
So until your blood runs to meet
The next full moon
Your madness fits in nicely
With my own, with my own
Your lunacy fits neatly
With my own, my very own
Ah we're not alone



LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD HITS THE ROAD

Orlan
Don't tell me oh no
Don't say oh God
Don't tell me
Oh dear me
Heavens abone
oh no
I can't stand it
Stop please
Oh deary me
What in Heavens name
Oh blimey mercy me
Woe are we
Oh dear
Oh stop it stop it

You've been so kind
Did I hurt you
I didn't mean to hurt
But I'll keep trying
And I know
That you will too

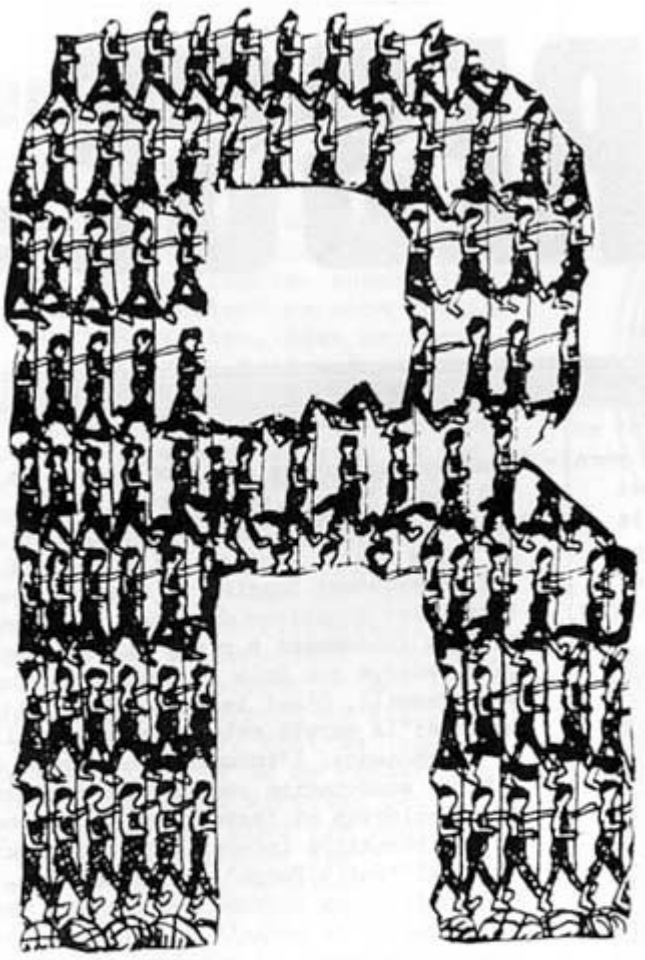


LAST STRAW

Sea weed tangled in our home
From home
Reminds me of your
Rocky Bottom
Please don't wait
For the paper weight
Err on the good side
Touch us when we collapse

On the
Into the water
We'll go head over heel
We'll not grow fat inside
The marmary gland





ALIFIE



No nit not
Nit no not
Nit nit folly bololy
Alifie my larder
Alifie my larder
I can't forsake you
Or forsqueak you
Alifie my larder
Alifie my larder
Or make you late you you
Alifie my larder
Alifie my larder

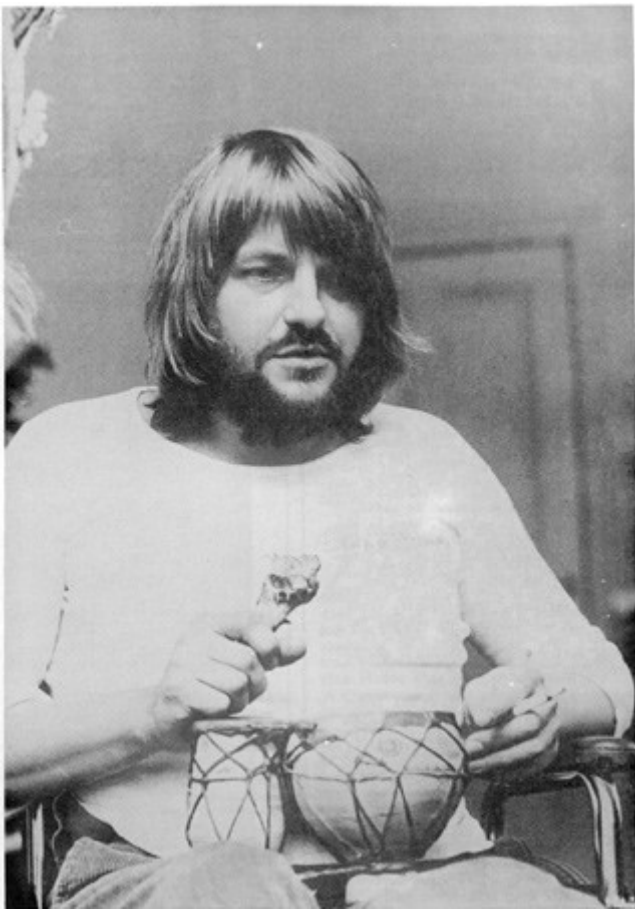
Not nit not
Nit no not
Nit nit folly bololy
Burly bunch the water mole
Heli plop and finger hole
Not a wasit bundy see
For jangle and bo jangle trip trip
Pip pipipipi landerim
Alifie my larder
Alifie my larder



I'm not your larder
Jammy jars and mustard

I'm not your dinner
You soppy old custard





La version originale de cet article est parue dans le N° de janvier 1975 de la revue Let It Rock.

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Robert Wyatt - Atem N° 5 - juin 1976

ROBERT WYATT

L'interview qui suit n'a pas été réalisée par ATEM. . . Au moment où nous étions à Londres, Robert Wyatt était souffrant et nous n'avons pu le rencontrer. Néanmoins, nous avons récupéré une cassette sur laquelle Robert est interviewé, courtesy of Milanka Comfort de Virgin. Et puis, "Little Red Robert" nous a écrit une lettre qui nous a fait spécialement plaisir... Oui, ça a été un bon mois...



Tu viens juste de terminer un album dont la musique est de Michael Mantler et les textes d'Edward Gorey, "The Hapless child and other inscrutable stories". Comment as-tu été amené à participer à ce projet?

Robert: Je me suis intéressé récemment aux choses faites par ces gens et j'ai pensé que je devais élargir mon horizon. Ce que je chante avait été au départ prévu pour Jack Bruce. Avant cela Michael Mantler n'avait pas écrit beaucoup de morceaux sur lesquels il était possible de chanter. Il a mis plusieurs trucs en musique, dont certains ont été chantés par Jack Bruce et de son côté, Carla Bley avait déjà utilisé des chanteurs comme Linda Ronstadt ou Paul Jones sur ses compositions instrumentales. Il s'est avéré que j'ai été une des dernières personnes qu'ils ont rencontrée et avec laquelle ils ont eu envie de travailler. C'est arrivé au bon moment, parce que je n'avais rien à faire, je voulais même faire de nouvelles versions de chansons que j'avais déjà faites, et ils me proposaient de faire quelque chose de totalement différent.

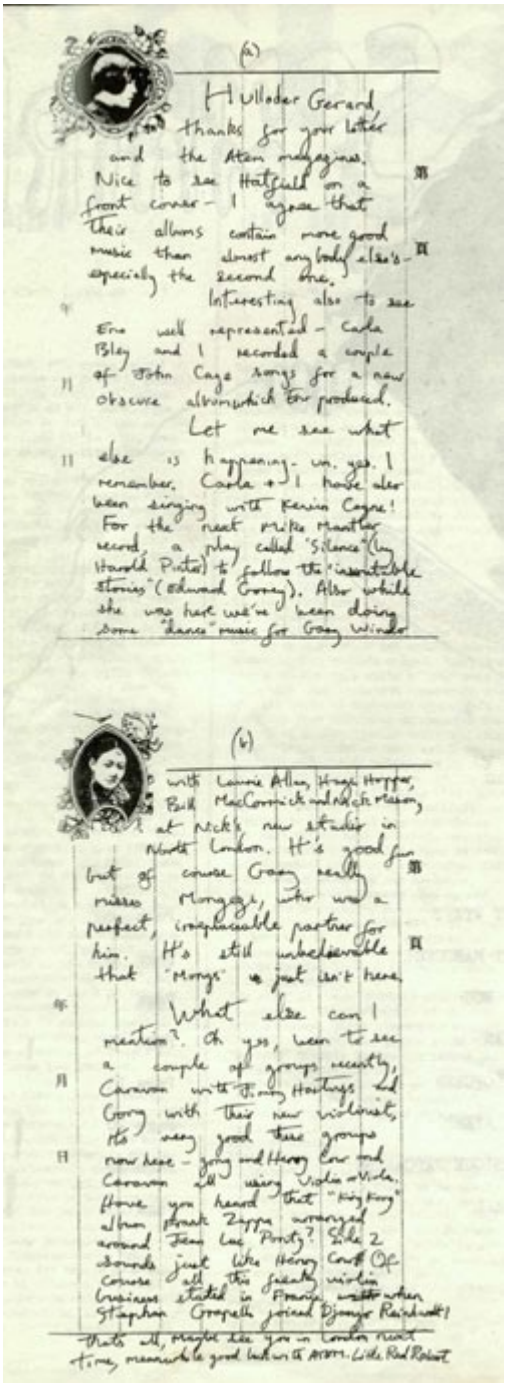
Que s'est-il passé entre le moment où tu as accepté et le moment où tu as reçu les idées globales pour chanter les morceaux?

Robert: Ca a commencé par une certaine panique. La première panique a été au moment où Michael m'a apporté une cassette où il chantait sur son propre accompagnement aux claviers. Ce n'était qu'une ébauche mais je pensais "Je ne peux pas le faire, je peux, je ne peux pas, je peux", jusqu'au moment où je me suis dit: "En fait, tu peux le faire". Je ne pouvais pas rejeter quelque chose qui venait de Mike et de Carla, je devais donc le faire. Ils m'ont alors envoyé des bandes, le livre des histoires de Gorey dont les chansons ont été extraites. Et je les ai aimées à la perfection. Je les ai apprises par coeur.

Quand as-tu commencé à faire les

parties vocales sur l'accompagnement basse, batterie et claviers, tenus respectivement par Steve Swallow, Jack de Johnette et Carla Bley?

Robert: Le tournant a eu lieu lorsque l'accompagnement a été fait et m'a été envoyé. J'ai alors vraiment compris comment cela allait être réalisé. Les gens de la section rythmique figurent parmi mes musiciens favoris, Jack de Johnette, Steve Swallow. Il y a dix ans, je suivais Steve Swallow juste pour savoir quelle sorte de chaussettes il portait. . . Ce sont tous des gens comme ça, dans ce groupe et c'était étrange de travailler avec eux. Ils ont donc fait l'accompagnement et Terje Rypdal est venu jouer de la guitare après que j'ai moi-même enregistré les vocaux.
Le disque a donc été fait un peu partout, mais à la fin, le résultat sonne comme un groupe.



> Zoom

Es-tu satisfait du résultat ?

Robert: Oui, nous avons fait le maximum.

Tu commences à préparer quelque chose d'autre avec Carla Bley. Peux-tu en parler?

Robert: Oui. Mike a dit: "Ok, c'est très bon. Maintenant j'ai quelque chose d'autre !". Il a écrit la musique d'une petite pièce de Harold Pinter appelée le "Silence", qui date de la fin des années soixante, et qui est prévue pour trois voix. L'une d'entre elles est la mienne. Cela me semble encore plus difficile que tout ce que j'ai fait auparavant. Mais je suis en train de l'apprendre et nous allons bientôt l'enregistrer. Ca me rend assez nerveux. Mais ce ne sont pas les mêmes gens que pour "Hapless child". Il y a Ron McClue à la basse, que j'ai entendu pour la première fois dans le quartet de Charles Lloyd, avec De Johnette et Keith Jarret et Carla aux claviers, Mick Taylor joue de la guitare...

Est-ce que cela suivra le même processus que pour "Hapless Child" ?

Robert: Non, cette fois-ci les parties vocales seront enregistrées les premières. Je vais faire un peu de percussions aussi. . .

Pourquoi d'abord les vocaux ?

Robert: Je pense que la manière dont les disques de Carla et de Mike se développent est toujours tortueuse. En fait, il s'agit avant tout du problème d'avoir les gens qu'il faut au moment où il faut. . . Mais c'est une bonne idée que d'avoir d'abord les vocaux et de construire la musique tout autour, particulièrement pour les pièces de Pinter dans lesquelles les mots sont importants. C'est un nouveau départ pour moi, car je commence à plus apprécier les mots pour leur signification...

As-tu l'intention de faire prochainement un album avec tes propres compositions?

Robert: Pour la première fois depuis des mois, je me sens plus sûr de moi-même pour

composer. Ces derniers temps, je m'intéressais de plus en plus à ce que faisaient les autres et de moins en moins intéressé en mon propre potentiel. Il faut faire un disque parce qu'on a envie d'en faire un et non parce que c'est un boulot. Je préfère travailler comme cela, en faire moins mais être sûr que c'est quelque chose de différent. Je pense que j'ai beaucoup appris en travaillant avec Carla, des notes différentes, des choses différentes que je peux maintenant faire. J'ai brisé quelques-unes de mes règles en travaillant avec elle, par l'exemple l'idée que l'on peut mettre des mots en musique, je ne l'avais jamais trouvée acceptable auparavant. J'hésitais à faire "The Hapless child" mais cela semble marcher, on peut écrire de la musique sur des bonnes paroles. Mon éventail de possibilités s'est considérablement élargi...



> Zoom

Aimerais-tu refaire des concerts ?

Robert: Certaines musiques que j'aime, comme le jazz, se développent dans un certain contexte: l'atmosphère des clubs de jazz. La pop musique elle, se développe dans un contexte qui est celui du disque, et les grands groupes de rock cherchent à faire un maximum de bruit dans le stade le plus grand possible; le stade devient alors lui-même partie du processus créatif. Si je devais jouer, j'aimerais jouer avec une double-basse qui n'a pas besoin d'être amplifiée.
Mais c'est si loin de l'idée actuelle qui veut qu'il faut avoir des tonnes d'équipement... Je pense que l'électrification totale des instruments a arrêté le développement des instruments, et des caractéristiques que j'aime dans ces instruments. Je suis de plus en plus attiré par la musique acoustique. Il y a un cadre dans lequel j'aimerais jouer en public, et qui n'existe pas encore.

Il faut donc que j'essaye de l'aider à se créer. Quand je dis musique acoustique, je parle des musiques qui n'ont pas 200 ans, qui ne soient pas la musique folk, et qui peuvent être jouées pour être écoutées...

Est-ce que les petits clubs ne peuvent pas éventuellement faire partie de ce contexte ?

Robert: Pour le moment, la plupart des gens que j'aime jouent au premier étage des pubs...Il n'y a pas vraiment de circuit en Angleterre... en Hollande peut-être...

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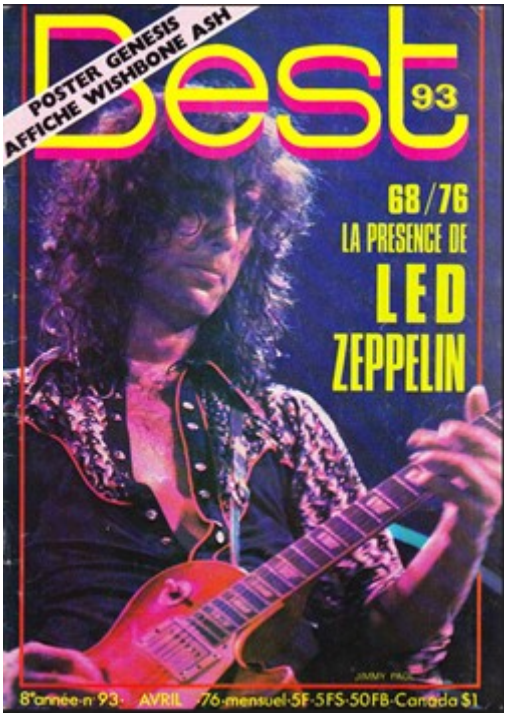
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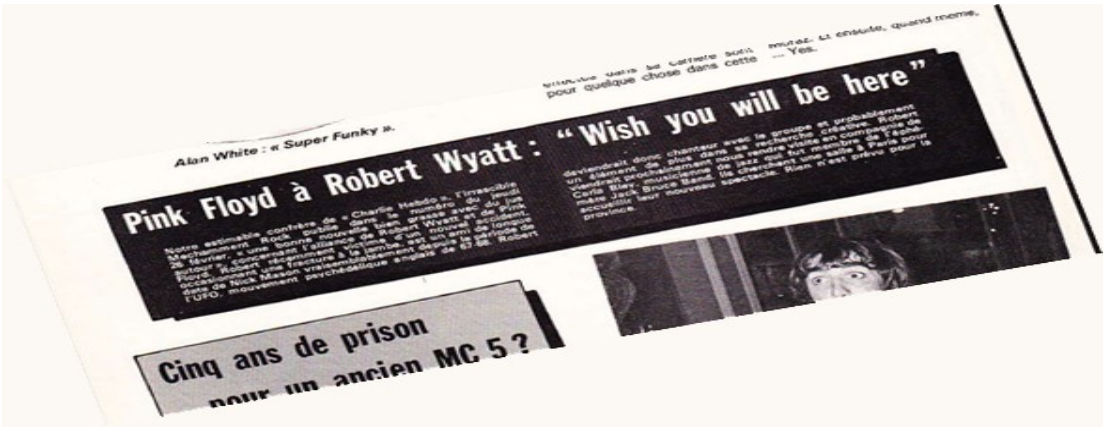
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Pink Floyd à Robert Wyatt : Wish you will be here - Best - N° 93 - avril 1976





> Zoom

Pink Floyd à Robert Wyatt : "Wish you will be here"

Notre estimable confrère de "Charlie Hebdo", l'irrascible Méchamment Rock publie dans le numéro du jeudi 26 février, "une bonne nouvelle bien grasse avec du jus autour", concernant l'alliance de Robert Wyatt et de Pink floyd. Robert récemment victime d'un nouvel accident, occasionnant une fracture à la jambe, est un ami de longue date de Nick Mason vraisemblalement depuis la période de l'UFO, mouvement psychédélique anglais de 67-68.

Robert deviendrait donc chanteur avec le groupe et probablement un élément de plus dans sa recherche créative. Robert viendrait prochainement nous rendre visite en compagnie de Carla Bley, musicienne de jazz qui fut membre de l'éphèmère Jack Bruce Band. Ils cherchent une salle à Paris pour accueillir leur nouveau spectacle. Rien n'est prévu pour la province.

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Tambours majeurs - Dossier spécial Batteurs - Robert Wyatt - Rock'n'Folk - N° 103 - août 1975



*De Carmine Appice à **Robert Wyatt**, tout ce qui cogne des peaux et fouette des cymbales sur le tempo de rock. Par Jean-Pierre qui roule Leloir et l'habile Manœuvre.*

INTRO

L'un des disques les plus vendus de toute l'histoire du rock est « In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida », de l'Iron Butterfly. Vous vous souvenez... Une face de vingt-six minutes, traversée par



un solo de batterie... La France n'a pas peu contribué au succès de ce disque, puisque par ici on trouve les chiffres de « In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida » très loin devant « Sergent Pepper » et « Beggars Banquet » réunis. Et c'est justice pour la batterie !
Les mieux placés sur scène ne sont jamais les batteurs. Guitaristes et organistes offrant leur plus glorieux profil se querellent, déversent l'un sur l'autre des cascades de notes, se noient dans les rappels de leurs éducations respectives. Les guitaristes, la chose est connue, sont des bêtes sensuelles, brandissant des engins d'où peut à tout moment surgir une foudre que les premiers rangs recueilleront précieusement. Les organistes leur opposent une toute autre tradition, religieusement apprise sur l'harmonium de la paroisse, faisant appel aux fondements de notre civilisation et de plus en plus à ses aboutissements technologiques, synthétiseurs et moogs venant tout naturellement à leur secours. Les chanteurs sont comme des prétextes. Les bassistes sont des gens réservés et ombrageux. Alors, il ne reste plus que le batteur, cet homme caché du public par un mur de peaux, de cheveux et de muscles pour établir la balance, et ramener par ses interventions toute cette électricité à ses dimensions premières. La batterie rock est essentiellement binaire, et va chercher sa pulsation par delà le blues, dans la simplicité des rythmes tribaux. Ron Bushy, batteur de l'Iron Butterfly, ne figure pas dans cette anthologie. Beaucoup d'autres non plus... Place et temps nous sont comptés, qui nous ont empêché de louer à leur juste valeur quelques drummers qui nous sont, pourtant, aussi chers qu'à vous. Ceux du heavy métal, particulièrement, manquent ici. Bientôt, justice sera rendue dans R'n'F aux fans des Stooges, Cult, Purple, Sabbath, Led Zep, Seeds et autres Blue Cheer.
Dès lors, nous avons tenu à faire figurer, dans un souci d'efficacité, les têtes de pont de la batterie, ceux dont beaucoup, plus jeunes et sans doute plus valeureux, descendent.
Au chapitre des Anglais, on ne trouvera pas ces gens que l'on n'a pas fini de célébrer, Simon Kirke, l'angelot de Bad Co ou son frère Jerry Shirley, d'Humble Pie. Manquent en vrac: la très planante rythmique d'Hawkwind (Simon King et Alan Powell). Le complètement fou Viv Prince, des Pretty Things. Le délicat Paul Thompson, de Roxy Music. Les joviaux Twink et Pip Pyle. Mike Giles, perdu dans les studios avec Gerry Conway, roi des sessions folk. Phil Collins, cœur de Genesis. Kenny Jones, cogneur des Faces. Et BJ Wilson, de Procol Harum. Et chez les Américains, Corky Laing, et Don Brewer qui fit avec le Funk danser plus de gens que vous n'en verrez jamais. Et John Densmore, clef des Doors. Et la rythmique des Allman Brothers (Jai Johansen et Butch Truck), deux monstres de cool. Et mon grand espoir, Bill Lordan (de Robin Trower) qui concilie si magnifiquement soul et rock. Et Moe Tucker, du Velvet. Et Stu Cook, le pouls de Creedence. Et Jerry Edmonton, dynamo de Steppenwolf. Et Bill Kreutzmann et Greg Elmore et Ed Cassidy de la West Coast. Et Ed Marimba et Art Tripp, les bizarres. Et l'admirable Levon Helm, du Band. Et Kenny Buttrey, le stakhanoviste de Nashville. Et Lenny White, nouveau prince du jazz-rock. Mais assez pour chanter les absents ! Leur tour viendra si vous le voulez ; maintenant, place aux drummers qui ont défriché, inventé, et surtout et encore battu une musique qui sans eux aurait été bien froide.

ROBERT WYATT

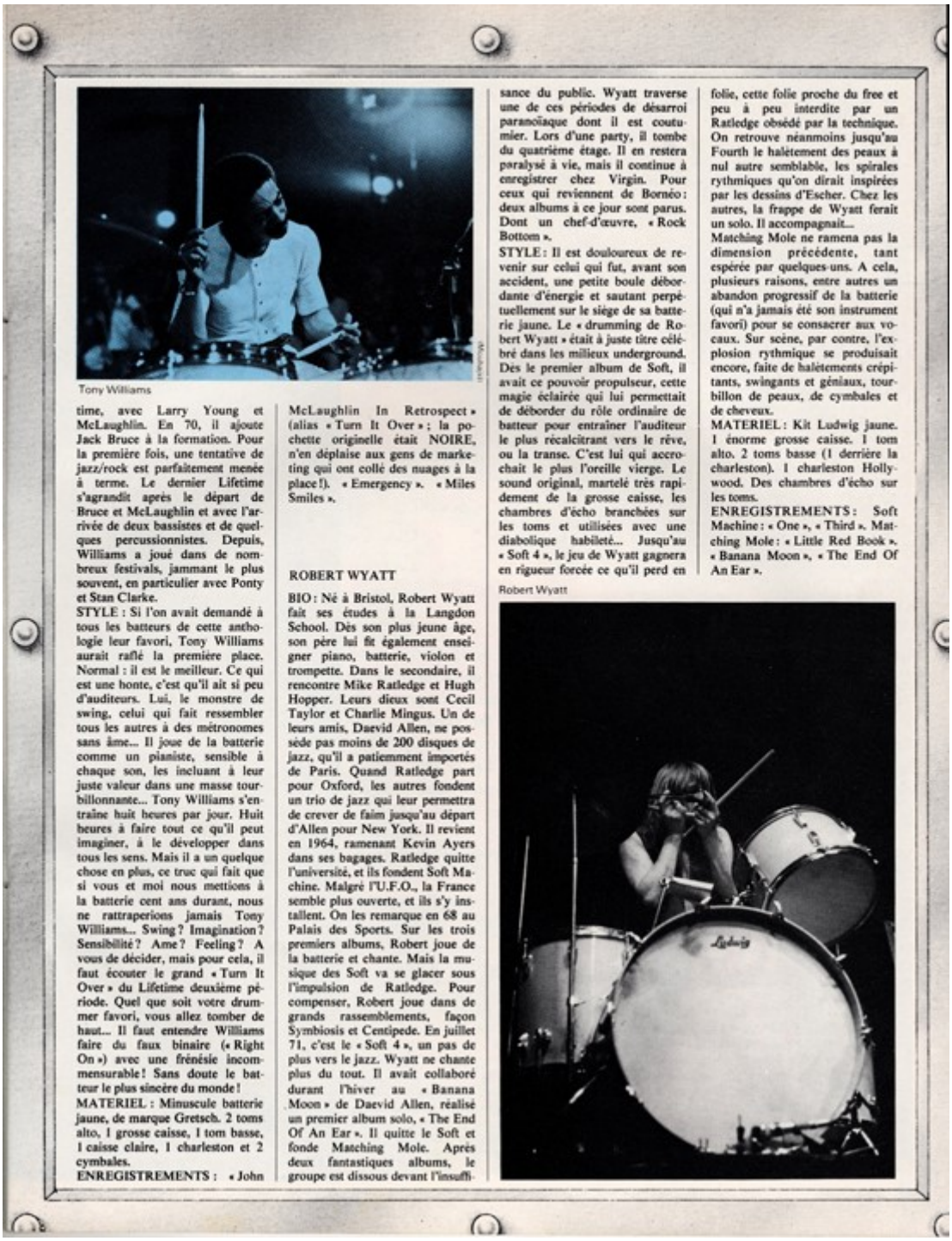
BIO : Né à Bristol, Robert Wyatt fait ses études à la Langdon School. Dès son plus jeune âge, son père lui fit également enseigner piano, batterie, violon et trompette. Dans le secondaire, il rencontre Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper. Leurs dieux sont Cecil Taylor et Charlie Mingus. Un de leurs amis, Daevid Allen, ne possède pas moins de 200 disques de jazz, qu'il a patiemment importés de Paris. Quand Ratledge part pour Oxford, les autres fondent un trio de jazz qui leur permettra de crever de faim jusqu'au départ d'Allen pour New York. Il revient en 1964, ramenant Kevin Ayers dans ses bagages. Ratledge quitte l'université, et ils fondent Soft Machine. Malgré l'U.F.O., la France semble plus ouverte, et ils s'y installent. On les remarque en 68 au Palais des Sports. Sur les trois premiers albums, Robert joue de la batterie et chante. Mais la musique des Soft va se glacer sous l'impulsion de Ratledge. Pour compenser, Robert joue dans de grands rassemblements,

façon Symbiosis et Centipede. En juillet 71, c'est le « Soft 4 », un pas de plus vers le jazz. Wyatt ne chante plus du tout. Il avait collaboré durant l'hiver au « Banana Moon » de Daevid Allen, réalisé un premier album solo, « The End Of An Ear ». Il quitte le Soft et fonde Matching Mole. Après deux fantastiques albums, le groupe est dissous devant l'insuffisance du public. Wyatt traverse une de ces périodes de désarroi paranoïaque dont il est coutumier. Lors d'une party, il tombe du quatrième étage. Il en restera paralysé à vie, mais il continue à enregistrer chez Virgin. Pour ceux qui reviennent de Bornéo: deux albums à ce jour sont parus. Dont un chef-d'œuvre, « Rock Bottom ».

STYLE: II est douloureux de revenir sur celui qui fut, avant son accident, une petite boule débordante d'énergie et sautant perpétuellement sur le siège de sa batterie jaune. Le « drumming de Robert Wyatt » était à juste titre célébré dans les milieux underground. Dès le premier album de Soft, il avait ce pouvoir propulseur, cette magie éclairée qui lui permettait de déborder du rôle ordinaire de batteur pour entraîner l'auditeur le plus récalcitrant vers le rêve ou la transe. C'est lui qui accrochait le plus l'oreille vierge. Le sound original, martelé très rapidement de la grosse caisse, les chambres d'écho branchées sur les toms et utilisées avec une diabolique habileté... Jusqu'au « Soft 4 », le jeu de Wyatt gagnera en rigueur forcée ce qu'il perd en folie, cette folie proche du free et peu à peu interdite par un Ratledge obsédé par la technique. On retrouve néanmoins jusqu'au Fourth le halètement des peaux à nul autre semblable, les spirales rythmiques qu'on dirait inspirées par les dessins d'Escher. Chez les autres, la frappe de Wyatt ferait un solo. Il accompagnait... Matching Mole ne ramena pas la dimension précédente, tant espérée par quelques-uns. A cela, plusieurs raisons, entre autres un abandon progressif de la batterie (qui n'a jamais été son instrument favori) pour se consacrer aux vocaux. Sur scène, par contre, l'explosion rythmique se produisait encore, faite de halètements crépitants, swinguants et géniaux, tourbillon de peaux, de cymbales et de cheveux.

MATERIEL : Kit Ludwig jaune. 1 énorme grosse caisse. 1 tom alto. 2 toms basse (1 derrière la charleston). 1 charleston Hollywood. Des chambres d'écho sur les toms.

ENREGISTREMENTS : Soft Machine : « One », « Third ». Matching Mole : « Little Red Book ». « Banana Moon », « The End Of An Ear ».



Tony Williams

time, avec Larry Young et McLaughlin. En 70, il ajoute Jack Bruce à la formation. Pour la première fois, une tentative de jazz/rock est parfaitement menée à terme. Le dernier Lifetime s'agrandit après le départ de Bruce et McLaughlin et avec l'arrivée de deux bassistes et de quelques percussionnistes. Depuis, Williams a joué dans de nombreux festivals, jammant le plus souvent, en particulier avec Ponty et Stan Clarke.

STYLE : Si l'on avait demandé à tous les batteurs de cette anthologie leur favori, Tony Williams aurait raflé la première place. Normal : il est le meilleur. Ce qui est une honte, c'est qu'il ait si peu d'auditeurs. Lui, le monstre de swing, celui qui fait ressembler tous les autres à des métronomes sans âme... Il joue de la batterie comme un pianiste, sensible à chaque son, les incluant à leur juste valeur dans une masse tourbillonnante... Tony Williams s'entraîne huit heures par jour. Huit heures à faire tout ce qu'il peut imaginer, à le développer dans tous les sens. Mais il a un quelque chose en plus, ce truc qui fait que si vous et moi nous mettions à la batterie cent ans durant, nous ne rattraperions jamais Tony Williams... Swing ? Imagination ? Sensibilité ? Ame ? Feeling ? A vous de décider, mais pour cela, il faut écouter le grand « Turn It Over » du Lifetime deuxième période. Quel que soit votre drummer favori, vous allez tomber de haut... Il faut entendre Williams faire du faux binaire (« Right On ») avec une frénésie incommensurable ! Sans doute le batteur le plus sincère du monde !

MATERIEL : Minuscule batterie jaune, de marque Gretsch. 2 toms alto, 1 grosse caisse, 1 tom basse, 1 caisse claire, 1 charleston et 2 cymbales.

ENREGISTREMENTS : « John McLaughlin In Retrospect » (alias « Turn It Over » ; la pochette originelle était NOIRE, n'en déplaise aux gens de marketing qui ont collé des nuages à la place !). « Emergency ». « Miles Smiles ».

ROBERT WYATT

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Robert Wyatt

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Wyatt and Cow - Best - N° 83 - juin 1975

WYATT AND COW



Les ouvreuses du théâtre des Champs-Elysées avaient tort de s'inquiéter. Il ne s'agissait pas de musique de nègre mais de musique européenne. Pas de fauteuils cassés, tout juste quelques trous dans la moquette fait par les joints écrasés.

Robert Wyatt était donc le héros de cette soirée et le public nombreux était venu plus pour lui que pour Henry Cow qui faisait l'affiche. Sympathie mêlée d'une certaine pitié pour l'ancien Soft Machine et intérêt pour les expériences de l'auteur de « Rock Bottom », on peut d'ailleurs se demander jusqu'à quel point l'utilisation de son nom et de sa présence sur scène est un argument publicitaire, aussi bien pour les organisateurs que pour Henry Cow.

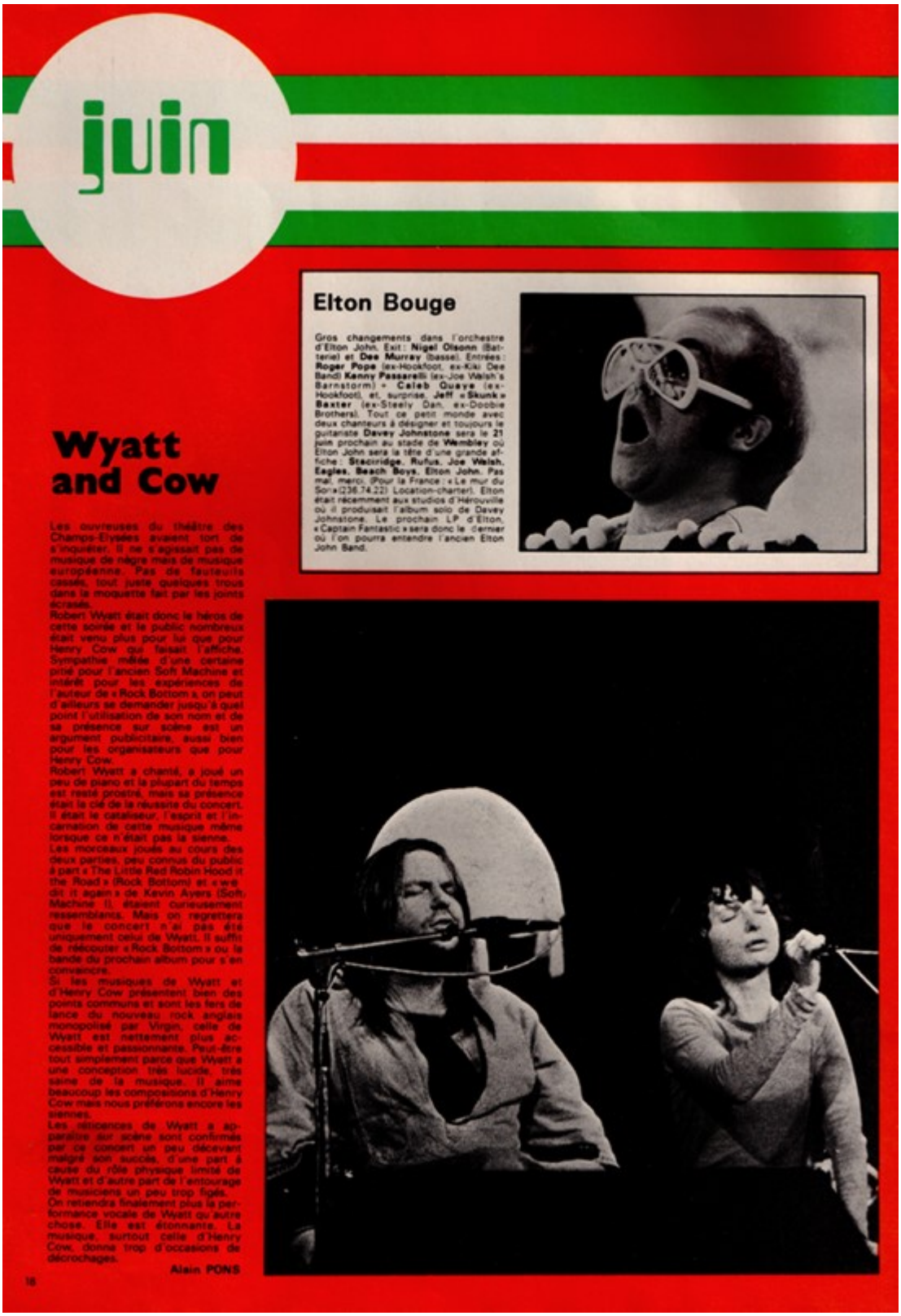
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Les morceaux joués au cours des deux parties, peu connus du public à part « The Little Red Robin Hood hIt the Road » (Rock Bottom) et «We Dit It Again » de Kevin Ayers (Soft/ Machine I), étaient curieusement ressemblants. Mais on regrettera que le concert n'ait pas été uniquement celui de Wyatt. Il suffit de réécouter « Rock Bottom » ou la bande du prochain album pour s'en convaincre.

Si les musiques de Wyatt et d'Henry Cow présentent bien des points communs et sont les fers de lance du nouveau rock anglais monopolisé par Virgin, celle de Wyatt est nettement plus accessible et passionnante. Peut-être tout simplement parce que Wyatt a une conception très lucide, très saine de la musique. Il aime beaucoup les compositions d'Henry Cow mais nous préférons encore les siennes.

Les réticences de Wyatt à apparaître sur scène sont confirmés par ce concert un peu décevant malgré son succès, d'une part à cause du rôle physique limité de Wyatt et d'autre part de l'entourage de musiciens un peu trop figés. On retiendra finalement plus la performance vocale de Wyatt qu'autre chose. Elle est étonnante. La musique, surtout celle d'Henry Cow, donna trop d'occasions de décrochages.

Alain PONS



juin

Elton Bouge

Gros changements dans l'orchestre d'Elton John. Exit : **Nigel Olsonn** (Batteriel) et **Dee Murray** (basse). Entrées : **Roger Pope** (ex-Hookfoot, ex-Kiki Dee Band) **Kenny Passarelli** (ex-Joe Walsh's Barnstorm) + **Caleb Quaye** (ex-Hookfoot), et, surprise, **Jeff «Skunk» Baxter** (ex-Steely Dan, ex-Doobie Brothers). Tout ce petit monde avec deux chanteurs à désigner et toujours le guitariste **Davey Johnstone** sera le 21 juin prochain au stade de **Wembley** où Elton John sera la tête d'une grande affiche : **Steeleridge, Rufus, Joe Walsh, Eagles, Beach Boys**, Elton John. Pas mal, merci. (Pour la France : « Le mur du Son » (236.74.22) Location-chartier). Elton était récemment aux studios d'Hérouville où il produisait l'album solo de Davey Johnstone. Le prochain LP d'Elton, « Captain Fantastic » sera donc le dernier où l'on pourra entendre l'ancien Elton John Band.

Wyatt and Cow

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Alain PONS

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Robert et Henry - Rock & Folk - N° 101 - juin 1975



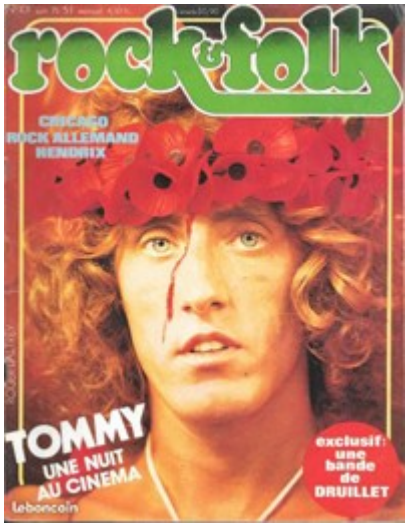
ROBERT ET HENRY
de Jean-Marc Bailleux

D'abord il y avait Robert. Jusqu'au troisième balcon le vieux théâtre était bourré de fanatiques venus lui rendre un culte auquel personne n'a jamais rien compris. Pas de la faune trendy ou groupisante, l'amour qui se partageait là n'a rien à voir avec les modes ou un vulgaire sentiment d'appartenance, le seul symbole était sur scène, chargé de tous nos souvenirs, de nos espoirs, de nos désillusions: un survivant. Et l'on est remonté cinq ans en arrière, dans ce même théâtre pour un autre concert, celui du Pink Floyd devenu aujourd'hui le fantôme de lui-même et l'ombre de son image. Et puis l'on n'a pas pu ne pas remonter quelques années plus tôt et se rappeler cet étonnant personnage torse nu, ruisselant comme une source, frappant ses peaux comme un damné et ânonnant des comptines ineptes avec une voix d'ailleurs. Hier ce n'était plus un personnage, c'était un mythe. Nous l'avions vénéré dans la solitude de nos chambres;"We Did It Again", ensemble, cette fois.

Ensuite, il y avait Henry Cow, qui **n'est pas un musicien**, mais le groupe inconnu qui, après quatre albums tous plus beaux les uns que les autres, est le plus grand laissé pour compte de la critique de rock et du business français. Et l'un des trois plus originaux de la scène anglaise.

L'idée faisait peur, d'un concert d'Henry Cow avec Robert Wyatt comme "guest star"; j'entendais déjà les planqués de l'orchestre gueulant "Caroline !" ou "Alife !"; frustration et "mauvaises vibrations". Or, à la fin de la première partie, il n'y eut qu'un flippé pour crier sans écho. C'était gagné, il n'y avait plus rien à dire tant la symbiose était parfaite. Symbiose, c'est bien de cela qu'il s'agissait (l'association de deux ou plusieurs organismes vivants qui leur permet de vivre au mieux des avantages pour chacun), il y avait une totale identité d'esprit, une parfaite complémentarité de Robert Wyatt à Henry Cow. Et puis l'amour du travail bien fait, cela se sent, il y avait derrière la mise en place, chaque break, chaque enchaînement impeccable, plus de deux semaines de répétitions quotidiennes pour cet unique concert: voilà le respect du public. Ils ne s'y sont pas trompés, tous ceux qui, venus pour Robert, ont fait une ovation de dix minutes pleines à sept musiciens, sans exclusive. Je l'ai dit, la première partie fut le test où, à l'exception de "Gloria Gloom" du "Little Red Record" de Matching Mole, tous les autres titres enchaînés dans une longue suite sinueuse étaient des composition d'Henry Cow: "Beautiful As The Moon" et " Terrible As An Army With Banners" du prochain album, "In Praise Of Learning", pour lequel j'espère bien que Barclay va enfin se décider à faire quelque chose, puis "Nirvana For Mice" de "Legend" (le premier lp), "The Ottawa Song", un vieux morceau qu'ils n'ont jamais enregistré, " Gloria Gloom" et enfin "Ruins" de "Unrest" (le deuxième lp). Pendant tout ce temps, Robert partagea avec Dagmar, la seule rescapée de la fusion Henry Cow/Slapp Happy, le strict rôle de vocaliste, merveilleusement. Dagmar, c'est l'anti-

Wyatt, un physique en fil de fer et une voix aussi forte et sèche aussi décidée que celle de Robert peut être hésitante, douce et nuancée. Il y avait une grande intensité dramatique, tant dans le duo lui-même que dans la disposition des musiciens autour de lui, tous assis par respect pour Wyatt, sérieux comme des papes, d'une impassibilité que venait seul troubler un regard, l'ébauche d'un signe, mais qui malgré tout laissait transparaître le plaisir qu'ils avaient de jouer une musique proprement extraordinaire, de vivre comme nous un **événement**.



La seconde partie du concert fut un sommet, de ces moments qu'on garde des années enfouis dans la mémoire; le "j'y étais" que l'on n'échange pas, un cinéma qui tournera pour soi seul, pour oublier dans les temps de cafard, et qui nous fera dire "le plus beau concert de l'année", un peu comme l'on dit "le plus beau jour de ma vie". Robert chanta "Richard", la plus belle chanson de son nouvel album "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard": à pleurer. John Greaves caressait sa basse avec un sourire qui en disait long sur le pied qu'il prenait; puis il y eut une longue improvisation passionnante où Robert pour la seule fois de la soirée, se mit au piano et joua dans son style "inculte" qui tient du Monk et du Cecil Taylor, la charmante Lindsay Cooper transfuge d'orchestre symphonique, triturant son basson dans la plus pure tradition free; cela tenait parfois de la démence zappesque avec d'autres personnages et une autre culture. Et l'on entra dans une suite de chefs-d'oeuvre: d'abord "Bad Alchemy" du troisième lp, "Desperate Straights" (Slapp Happy/Henry Cow) à cent coudées au dessus de l'album, le plus beau duo de Robert et Dagmar, puis et surtout un époustouflant "Little Red Riding Hood" enchainé sur un train d'enfer où Robert fit une longue improvisation en scat et qui fut dominé par l'incroyable virtuosité de Fred Frith à la guitare; avec "Richard", le plus grand moment. Henry Cow termina par sa meilleure composition à ce jour, "Living In The Heart Of The Beast", la plus violente et qui prouvait, si c'était encore utile, qu'il est encore bien des terres vierges à explorer, que la musique d'Henry Cow est parfaitement originale... Dix minutes d'applaudissements, et Robert revint pour nous mettre les points sur les i: "We Did It Again", ce classique de la culture anglaise du XXIe siècle, comme pour nous dire, et qui s'y tromperait, qu'Henry Cow est la Machine Molle des années 75... Quant à Robert Wyatt, c'est le plus grand et le plus humble guru du rock. Merci pour ce concert.



ROBERT WYATT RECEVANT SON PRIX
J'y étais

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Wyatt par No Mad - Libération - 20 mai 1975

LIBE-POP

WYATT PAR NO MAD


ANGELA DAVIS A PARIS • P. 12

Libération

MITTERRAND : UN AN DEJA

Le COPCON pour le pouvoir populaire à la base

Paris, un 8 mai. Le théâtre des Champs-Elysées : Henry Cow, Wyatt, Slapp Happy jouent ensemble. Organisé par le Club de Karaté de la Guimbarde : Bernard Torrent, Assad Debs, des gens qu'on a branchés. Un concert où trois heures avant qu'une seule personne ne soit arrivée devant la porte, Assad Debs nous confiait qu'il avait demandé la présence des cars de flics et qu'il n'hésiterait pas à les faire intervenir au moindre problème. Si on fait un petit speech sur l'organisation de ce concert et sur ces nouveaux petits requins de rock-biz, c'est parce qu'on en a gros sur la patate de s'être fait utiliser par eux pour qu'ils se lancent dans les affaires ; la récupération d'années de trip dans les fermes, baraques, appartements, bureaux, pour en arriver à ce que notre musique-pensée se fasse dans les conditions les plus dégueulasses socialement. Le lendemain, nous sommes allés voir Robert Wyatt pour lui demander s'il était conscient de la situation... Nous sommes partis dans un trip réflexion-discussion de deux heures.

WYATT : *Le rock and roll, c'est le capitalisme pur... La musique que l'on fait est le dernier cri de l'aristocratie capitaliste. Quand le socialisme arrive, je dis au revoir, le rock bizz, c'est fini... Je trouve qu'il y a beaucoup d'hypocrisie à être musicien gauchiste. Ils veulent réussir la musique et garder l'alibi gauchiste... Ce sont les musiciens qui sont le cœur de cette corruption, l'innocence de ces pauvres artistes dans le monde cruel, je n 'y crois pas. Il n'y a pas besoin d'artistes produits, ils doivent disparaître avec la révolution. Les artistes donnent du plaisir dans des situations dégoûtantes. Les artistes, c'est le prestige de l'église, des rois, la plus-value de CBS, Virgin ou Coca-Cola...*

Le pouvoir de la gloire et celui de l'argent sont la même chose, beaucoup se croient musiciens avec ce que cela implique d'élitisme. Faire un free festival, c'est aussi bien pour l'ego. Etre musicien privilégié au milieu des applaudissements, ça vaut bien 3000 francs. Faire des rock-festivals, c'est faire un produit d'importation de l'Ouest. Prends l'Angleterre, l'un des principaux produits d'exportation, c'est la musique. On n'a pas de voiture ou d'industrie qui rapporte autant... Le rock-bizz doit survivre.

Trois jours dans une chambre d'hôtel déplanante, le concert et ce que cela implique... C'est pas vraiment drôle pour moi... Je suis un produit du capitalisme... Pour être honnête, je suis inutile parce que je n'ai pas l'enthousiasme. Je fais cela parce que je ne sais faire que cela et que toute ma façon de travailler est le résultat d'une éducation capitaliste. Je fais de la musique, j'accepte le jeu, les capitalistes font le reste et m'apportent ce dont j'ai besoin pour survivre.

Plutôt que de crier pour le prix des places, il ne faut pas aller aux concerts et jouer de la guitare ou autre chose, entre vous, chez vous. Pourquoi avoir besoin des Rolling-Stones ou d'autres, pour vous réunir ? Pourquoi rentrer dans le jeu d'une tête d'affiche pour que beaucoup de gens soient ensemble... Tout le monde peut et sait jouer... Le rock-bizz des "Led Zeppelin" dans les grandes salles, sans aucune acoustique, c'est pour que les gens arrêtent de penser. Mais en fait, ce qu'il faut, c'est acquérir le pouvoir de faire des choses ensemble.



Toute une discussion s'installait dans la tête... une discussion autour des visions possibles du monde... lucides, froides, chaudes, généreuses. Je crois qu'il faut se mettre ensemble pour générer une nouvelle façon de vivre. Construire une vie libre en amenant dans le quotidien une nouvelle énergie, une nouvelle perception du monde. Abandonnons le vieux monde... qu'il crève... car déjà nous vivons le nouveau dans nos rapports et nos délires...

Robert, si tu veux être utile à la nouvelle communauté libre, il faut jouer ta musique qui fait penser - planer - et trouver avec nous l'alternative qui empêchera que la musique se fasse dans des conditions dégueulasses. Nous pouvons tous jouer, et jouer c'est aussi organiser nos fêtes.

NO MAD

ILS VIVENT POUR CA

Voici la liste des groupes qui font partie de No Mad, ne vous gênez pas pour les appeler, les faire venir, utilisez-les, ils vivent pour ça !

Mahjun, Crium Delirium, No Mad Music, Global Village et Trucking Co, Frenchies, Crystal Machine et Rayon Rouge, Art Zoyd, Hamsa Music, 440 HZ (musique électro-accoustique), Truffy (musique indienne), Gérard Coperet, Hanuman, Albert et sa fanfare, Animation vidéo-film, Animation enfant, No Mad Animation Graphik (pour enfants), Manège-Lilas, Robert Wood.

No Mad dispose de matériel sono, de chapiteaux, d'un écran pour projections et du Moonderleight (studio 24 pistes). Il cherche à contacter des tripers pour organiser des fêtes, festivals, et s'éclater ; il met ses fichiers et ses renseignements à la disposition des rêveurs qui délirent sur le pied !...

No Mad est une structure que nous avons créée pour autogérer notre production, notre vie quotidienne... Nous nous inscrivons dans un mouvement général qui doit aboutir à un changement des rapports d'échanges... C'est pourquoi nous tenons à maintenir un contact permanent avec un grand nombre de gens pour être informés et pouvoir informer.

Si No Mad existe, a créé un lieu, c'est pour assurer des liaisons, communications entre des gens qui, comme vous et nous, projettent d'avoir des activités communes... que nous traitions ensemble des problèmes, y compris économiques qui se posent aux créateurs pour survivre.

No Mad prépare actuellement un 45 Tours, puis un 33 Tours, avec tous les musiciens que nous aimons...

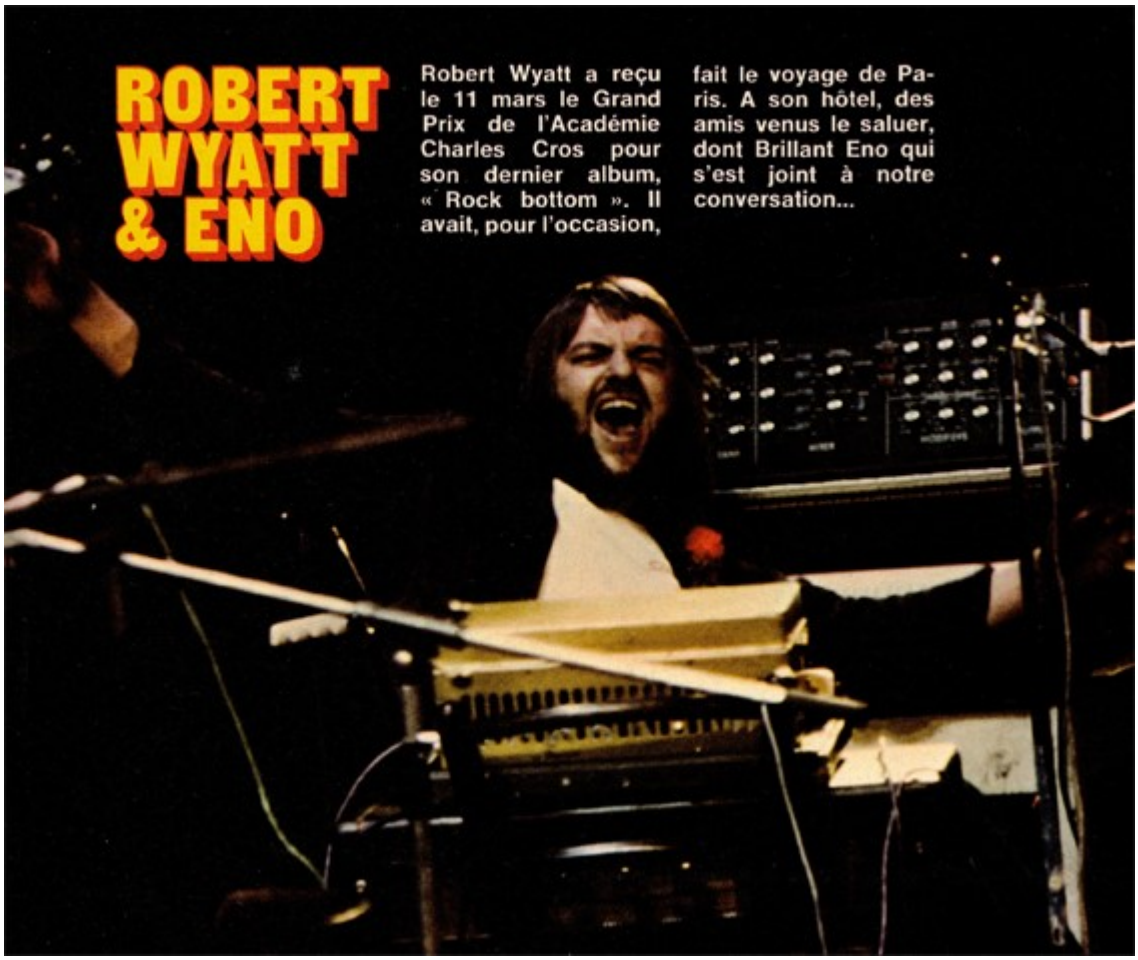
Si vous avez des possibilités de distribution, écrivez-nous : **No Mad, 29 rue Veron, 75018 Paris ; téléphonez-nous : 606 18 18.**

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Robert Wyatt & Eno - Extra Encyclorock - N° 54 - mai 1975



Dans sa chambre d'hôtel, Robert Wyatt est très entouré. C'est un va-et- vient incessant d'amis, anglais ou français, d'organisateurs de tournées, de représentants des maisons de disques, de journalistes. L'un d'eux vient justement l'interroger... sur ses rapports avec Jimi Hendrix, qu'il a connu du temps de « Electric Ladyland ». Rapports distants, aux dires de Robert. Jimi se confiait peu. Il avait sans doute peu d'amis, bien que des tas de gens aient prétendu avoir été ses amis d'enfance. On a dit qu'il était parfois



brusque, c'est explicable quand on est en face de gens qui vous aiment et que vous n'aimez pas forcément, situation déjà inconfortable au singulier, mais sans doute insoutenable multipliée par des milliers.

Robert dit tout cela d'une voix assez calme, parfois hésitante. Il se prête au jeu des questions avec sympathie et une évidente bonne volonté. On retrouve au détour d'une phrase, d'une intonation, le musicien romantique et généreux, le parolier plein d'humour : il ne se cache pas, il est là. Entier.

RAS LE POP

Quel genre de musique aimes-tu actuellement ?

Archie Shepp, Thelonius Monk, le jazz des années 40 en général...

Pas le rock ?

Non j'en ai un peu assez du rock et du pop en ce moment. Il y a une musique qui semble naître au-delà du rock, et qui est beaucoup plus passionnante...

Le jazz-rock, la musique des Allemands ?

J'aime bien le jazz-rock. Mahavishnu. J'aime beaucoup le dernier disque de Return to Forever et la basse de Stanley Clarke, mais je préfère quand même Miroslav Vitous. A la batterie, surtout Tony Williams pour ce qu'il a fait avec le Lifetime. Cobham est un grand sportif, mais Williams est un batteur remarquable. Qui donc encore ? Ah oui, Weather Report, très fort ce groupe... La guitare m'ennuie un peu. On en a trop entendu ces dernières années. C'est ce qui me gêne chez Mahavishnu, par exemple... Quant aux Allemands, j'aime bien Can, mais je connais encore assez mal les autres. On ne peut pas juger sur un seul concert ou un seul disque.

Qu'est-ce qui t'attire particulièrement dans le jazz des années 40?

C'est l'équilibre entre la composition et l'improvisation, chez Charlie Mingus, par exemple. C'est très important... Il y a des gens qui pensent que cette musique est vieille, mais par rapport à tous les gens qui écoutent Mozart, je trouve mon goût assez modérément vieux... Et puis cette musique est aussi un point de rencontre entre une structure complètement atonale et une structure tonale...

Tu travailles en solitaire ou en tout cas, hors d'un groupe stable...

C'est la meilleure façon d'être efficace et de ne pas se poser continuellement des questions de personnes, de compatibilité des humeurs... On est ensemble quand on en a le temps et l'envie...

VOILA LES CHAUDES LANCES (HERE COME THE WARM JETS)

C'est à ce moment qu'arrive Eno. Epuré des maquillages de la première époque, son dandysme n'est plus seulement une attitude vestimentaire, il

cultive désormais la distance sur d'autres hauteurs. Bien sûr, la finesse de son visage, la fragilité de son allure font beaucoup et séduisent au premier abord. But the best is always yet to come. Le charme de Eno est dans son intelligence vive, dans ce brio qui lui donne réponse à tout (réponse cohérente, faudrait-il ajouter). Bryan s'amuse avec la vie, sûr de lui comme de l'univers (mouais...), démontant avec la même facilité les rouages du show-business et les radiateurs de l'hôtel. Que la paranoïa est belle le soir dans les Hilton !

Sur le fond de ce qu'il dit, on peut ne pas être toujours d'accord, mais on aurait bien mauvais goût à le contrer sur la manière. Sur le fond, il rejoint l'attitude majoritaire chez les musiciens anglais, qui consiste à refuser d'établir le pont, fragile ô combien, qui relierait des recherches en art et des transformations par la politique. Cette voie individuelle (Gainsbourg à la télé : « Et si plus il fallait être altruiste... ») est différente, il faut le noter, de celle qu'ont empruntée la plupart des musiciens de recherche allemands : si tous n'envisagent pas un engagement précis, à peu près tous intègrent leur production musicale dans un contexte politique. Les Anglais sont beaucoup plus réservés à ce sujet, même si, comme on le voit plus bas, Robert et Brian comprennent que la musique n'est pas un îlot de pureté protégé du reste du monde. A suivre. Back to the flaring Narcissus.



Eno. - Cette façon de travailler [avec des musiciens de rencontre] a tous les avantages du groupe sans en impliquer ni les inconvénients, ni les responsabilités. Nous sommes quelques amis, Robert Wyatt, Fripp, Phil Manzanera, John Cale et d'autres. On se retrouve sur les disques de l'un ou de l'autre. Celui qui est responsable nous dit : fais-ci, fais-ça. C'est très confortable. Dans un groupe on a l'impression qu'on est mariés, il faut faire des projets... On ne peut pas maintenir longtemps une relation aussi intense avec quelqu'un...

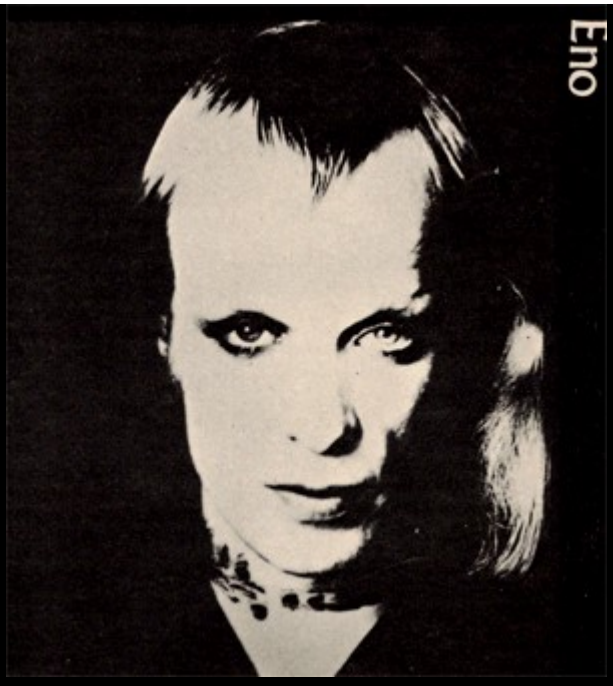
Combien de temps as-tu été marié avec Fripp ?

Eno. - Neuf heures. Oui, on a été neuf heures en studio. On recommencera, bien sûr, mais il faut laisser passer du temps. Je n'ai pas encore digéré ces neuf heures... Avec Nico, ça a duré trois jours... Avec Robert (Wyatt), on a dû travailler une trentaine d'heures en studio... Et puis dans un groupe, chacun a un rôle qui semble figé. Très vite, un consensus général désigne le clown du groupe, l'intellectuel...

Quel rôle avais-tu dans Roxy ?

Eno. - Je ne le dirai pas... J'ai eu le rôle de... l'évadé...

A propos, te considères-tu toujours comme un non-musicien ?



Eno. - Oui, dans la mesure où je ne pense pas la musique...

Robert. - Mais il risque d'y avoir malentendu car non-musicien, pour les gens, ça peut signifier : sous-musicien. Ce n'est pas le cas de Eno.

Que penses-tu de l'évolution de la scène musicale en Angleterre ?

Robert. - La scène musicale, c'est essentiellement pour moi la musique que font mes amis. Le problème est qu'on est partis du rock et qu'on voudrait nous y enfermer. Mais les catégories ne définissent pas la musique... On a voulu faire du rock un phénomène à part, une explosion soudaine. En fait j'ai vécu 1967 et c'est une année qui ne m'a pas paru plus intense, au contraire, que 63 ou 64 sur le plan musical. Mais je me suis aperçu que c'est ce que la critique et par ricochet les gens en avaient pensé. Pour moi, il n'y a qu'une histoire de la musique qui est d'ailleurs une histoire à suivre. Presley a été le Sinatra de notre génération. Mais le temps passe et il sera bientôt aussi étranger aux jeunes que Sinatra l'a été pour nous.

Eno. - En fait, le problème avec les gens et notamment avec les critiques, c'est qu'ils ne voient pas que la musique n'est pas une cause mais un symptôme. Ce n'est pas Presley ou Dylan qui ont fait changer les gens si les gens ont changé à un moment ; la musique n'a fait qu'accompagner un mouvement qui la dépasse largement. La société dans laquelle nous vivons a tendu jusqu'ici à diviser et à différencier chaque fois un peu plus. Les gens ont commencé à réagir contre ceci, notamment les jeunes, et le rock a traduit cette réaction en prenant ici et là, en réalisant une synthèse. Le rock est une musique hybride... Pourtant il semble que l'industrie du disque s'emploie à varier les produits en fonction de différents publics : The Osmonds, Bowie, Little Feat, Tangerine Dream ou McLaughlin n'ont pas le même public.

Robert. - Sans doute ne peut-on pas encore tendre vers une synthèse unique, mais toutes ces musiques sont hybrides...

LE RETOUR DE L'ILE D'ELBE

Que pensez-vous du Reggae ?

Robert and Eno. - On adore ça.

Robert. - On a pris dans le reggae des éléments rythmiques et on l'a transformé. Mais ça ne veut pas dire qu'on l'a trahi. J'ai été très content, bien que j'aime les Wailers, d'entendre des Jamaïcains me dire qu'ils préfèrent « I shot the sherif » par Clapton parce qu'ils trouvent sa version plus funky... L'Amérique a la chance de posséder ces minorités, noires ou autres. C'est de là que vient toute la musique populaire depuis 50 ans. Les blancs ont adapté, Elvis est devenu un mythe, mais c'est des minorités que tout est toujours parti. Sinatra a tiré sa musique du ghetto italien...

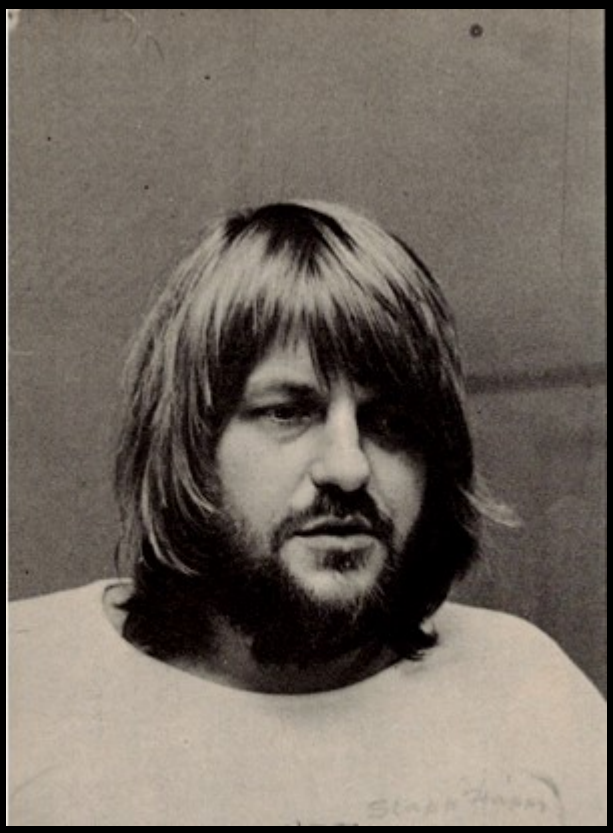
Que pensez-vous de l'évolution de Bowie ?

Robert. - Dans ce travail, il y a deux dangers : se renouveler et ne pas se renouveler. Les deux sont aussi hasardeux. Bowie a choisi de changer, de déconcerter, pas toujours à bon escient...

Eno. - Mais ce qui se passe avec lui est symptomatique d'une chose. S'il fait un, deux

ou trois mauvais disques, on dit qu'il est fini. Or ça signifie seulement qu'il traverse une impasse d'un ou deux ans. Qu'est-ce que c'est dans une vie ? Dylan vient de prouver qu'on peut revenir en force après huit ans d'absence. On s'était fait à l'idée que Dylan était fini. Son disque prouve qu'il a encore des tas d'idées, et qu'il n'est pas fini...

Robert. - Comme Cassius Clay !



Eno. - C'est un des écueils de la critique qui veut jouer un rôle en étant plutôt prescriptive que descriptive. Les critiques veulent trancher, pour plaire au lecteur ou pour se plaire, le présent, mais aussi l'avenir. Ce n'est pas forcément bon.

Virgin ?

Robert. - Qu'est-ce qui se passe avec Virgin ?

Eno. - Tous les Français ont l'air de croire que Virgin Records est un poste avancé de la culture... (rires).

Robert. - Mais le rock n'est pas différent d'un autre secteur économique. Virgin pour survivre doit faire des bénéfices. Les gens de Virgin ont seulement trouvé avant les autres que « Tubular Bells » pouvait se vendre, que Hatfield and the North est un groupe excellent...

L'AIGUILLE CREUSE

Robert, que penses-tu du Prix ?

Robert. - J'ai été très honoré. Mais c'est plutôt bizarre. On m'a présenté des tas de gens dont je n'avais jamais entendu parler et qui n'avaient jamais entendu parler de moi, on s'est serré la main, on s'est fait des sourires et voilà.

Et toi Eno, que fais-tu à Paris ?

Je suis venu me reposer après mon accident d'auto. J'ai encore un petit trou dans lu tête.

As-tu des projets musicaux ? des concerts en vue ?

Eno. - Je n'aime pas les projets. Je n'aime pas me sentir lié. J'ai assez à faire avec le présent...

Tu es plutôt de ceux qui cultivent l'Art pour l'Art...

Eno. - Je crois que la musique n'est «pas un langage. Un accord de musique n'est pas aussi précis sur ce plan qu'un mot. Un accord en soi veut dire n'importe quoi. C'est pourquoi je m'étonne toujours que les Français veuillent lier à tout prix musique et politique. La première question qu'on m'a posée la première fois que je suis venu avec Roxy à Paris c'est : « quels sont les rapports entre votre musique et le communisme ? ». Ils sont fous ces Français (traduction libre)...

Et les paroles que tu mets dans tes chansons...

Eno. - Ce n'est pas très important. Je crois que la musique est un art gratuit et qu'il est impossible de communiquer par la musique. Ce que je mets dans ma musique n'est pas ce que toi tu vas y chercher, ou quelqu'un d'autre. Chacun a un niveau de lecture différent.

Que penses-tu de la tentative de Magma ?

Eno. - Au départ c'est une très bonne idée. Mais elle est gâchée parce qu'ils veulent absolument fabriquer un langage. S'ils disaient simplement : nous produisons ces sons parce qu'ils nous plaisent, ce serait tout aussi efficace et moins prétentieux... Mais tu m'as aussi parlé de Bério ; je trouve que « Visage » est la meilleure chose qu'il a fait. C'est vraiment très bien.

Tu as vu le Louvre ?

Eno. - Oui, j'ai été voir quelques tableaux, deux ou trois, de Tiepolo et de Veneziano. J'ai une méthode particulière pour visiter les galeries ou les musées. Je rentre et je fonce jusqu'à ce que mon œil soit attiré par quelque chose. Ça peut être une croûte, mais même dans ce cas il y a quelque chose à apprendre. J'aimerais bien prendre un groupe de touristes et les guider dans un musée en leur racontant n'importe quoi sur les tableaux...

Crois-tu qu'il existe des correspondances entre les arts ?

Eno. - Oui, mais c'est difficile à exprimer...

As-tu pensé à faire du cinéma ?

Eno. - Oui, on m'a proposé quelques scénarios. Mais j'aimerais faire quelque chose comme Paul Newman. Les gens ne doivent pas croire ça possible. J'aimerais travailler dans des films d'action avec Sam Peckinpah.

La musique dans l'avenir ?

Eno. - Je produis deux disques pour un nouveau label. On va faire une musique qui intégrera les expériences modernes et la musique Victorienne, injustement oubliée. Tu verras...

Paul Inconnu, son cicérone, lui fait signe, il est tard. Et Narcisse flamboyant se retire les doigts dans la tête, emportant un coin de peinture vénitienne du XVIIIe siècle, un peu de Cézanne, un peu de Bacon, la musique à venir.

Etienne Blondet.

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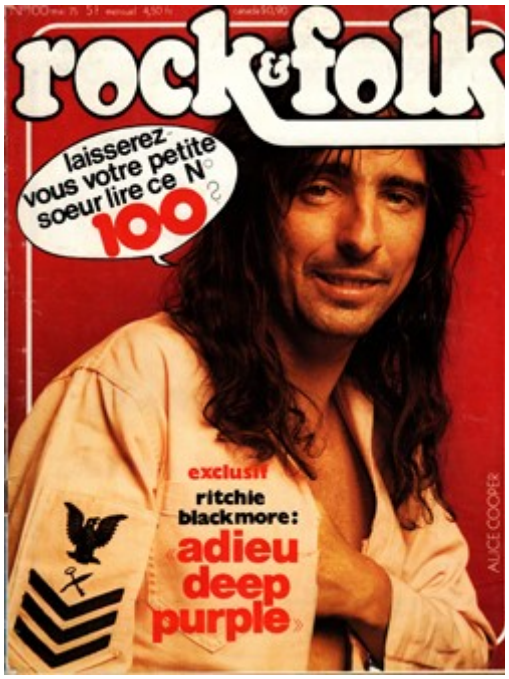
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Robert et Eno - Rock & Folk - N° 100 - mai 1975



robert et eno

Robert Wyatt n'était pas peu fier: son disque « Rock Bottom » venait d'être lauréat de l'Académie Charles Cros le matin même. Au-delà d'un album somptueux, la « reconnaissance officielle», enfin, d'un travail qui porte sur près de cinq années. De Soft à Hatfield and the North, chemin faisant par Matching Mole et une dizaine d'albums...

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Pour Wyatt, la surprise fut totale. Il parle, intarissable, du matériel sur lequel déjà il se prépare à travailler, cherche a comprendre, aussi «la fascination de tous ces Francais pour Virgin ». On lui explique donc que le show business français est bien loin d'œuvrer au nom d'une quasi philanthropie musicale, et qu'il serait bien inspiré de loucher un peu vers le Manoir...

« Je crois en Virgin. Je n'ai aucune idée de la manière dont se profile le futur, mais je sais que le rock expérimental anglais n'est qu'à ses premiers balbutiements. Un musicien comme Henry Cow, par exemple, porte dans sa tête non pas une, mais des musiques, qui une fois réalisées engendreront à leur tour de nouveaux courants, Et il n'est pas seul. »

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Méchamment rock - Charlie Hebdo N° 235 - 15 mai 1975

MÉCHAMMENT ROCK



Pour être un beau bordel, ça a été un beau bordel. Il n'y a pas de sens unique, je suis rentré par la sortie, j'ai pu arriver au milieu d'un spectacle et partir avant la fin d'un autre, sans que personne ne m'engueule, les groupes que je suis venu écouter n'ont pas joué, et réciproquement. Je suis parti content. La désorganisation est la mère de la liberté. C'était la critique musicale de la fête de la libre expression, organisée par Politique Hebdo.

Pour Robert Wyatt, c'était un autre style. C'était très bien aussi. C'est fou comme l'humain et l'élastique se ressemblent. Le théâtre des Champs-Elysées est une chouette salle. C'est une vieille salle, un peu attendrissante. Ça m'embête un peu de voir que le public de Robert Wyatt est tellement épris de liberté qu'il ne peut s'empêcher de fumer dans un endroit pas conçu pour ça. J'ai remarqué que, pour pisser, on attend quand même l'entracte, ce qui prouve qu'on n'est pas si libres que ça. Est-ce tellement meilleur de se retenir de pisser que de se retenir de fumer, en voilà une bonne question pour le bac philo.

En tout cas, c'était plein, plus de doute que Robert Wyatt est une vedette chez nous, plus que dans n'importe quelle autre partie du monde. Le concert, c'était Henry Cow, ce qui reste de Slapp Happy, c'est-à-dire Dagmar, la petite chanteuse, berlinoise je crois, et Robert dans sa chaise roulante. Il y a eu des moments poignants, des moments excitants, et des moments chiants. Les moments chiants, c'est la faute de Henry Cow, qui pratique la distanciation comme d'autres le billard électrique : avec une application amusée. Je n'ai pas tellement besoin qu'Henry Cow distancie, parce que Hanns Eisler l'a déjà fait pour moi. Je n'ai pas tellement besoin qu'Henry Cow encule les mouches en 19/4, parce que les Viennois l'ont déjà fait pour moi. Il y a des musiques qui sont plus amusantes à jouer qu'à entendre. L'astuce consisterait à faire passer là-dessus un grand souffle dionysiaque, ce qui est plus facile à dire qu'à faire. Ceci dit, Fred Frith est un musicien passionnant et Linsay Cooper un jeune hautboïste de choc. Les moments poignants, c'est quand Robert chante comme il jouait de la batterie, avec cet équilibre entre la force et la fragilité, le sérieux et la rigolade qui fait de son art un objet réel, et non une vue de l'esprit mal exprimée par des moyens insuffisants. Excitant quand Robert avec les moyens simples du rock, tire le tempo avec lui dans une course tendue dans Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road, une course qui va très loin, vers des régions que peu de personnes peuvent nous faire atteindre tellement elles sont évidentes. Excitant et rigolo aussi pour ce rappel de We Dit It Again, le vieux tour de force en cinq notes de Soft Machine qui reste la plus belle auberge espagnole de la musique. Robert Wyatt ne sera plus jamais une usine à nous fabriquer du plaisir au mètre, mais quand les conditions pourront être réunies à nouveau, j'espère qu'il y aura encore plus de monde pour partager ce qui est, à tous points de vue, exceptionnel.



Qu'est-ce qui fait courir le Tout-Paris à l'Espace Cardin ? Les batteurs japonais Ondeko-Za. Pourquoi courent-ils ? Parce qu'il n'y a rien de tel que la discipline, les vieux relents militaires et la vertu pour faire courir le Tout-Paris. La musique produite par ces jeunes athlètes zénisants en martelant avec des mailloches de la taille d'un bâton de flic leurs énormes tambours, produit un son impressionnant et aussi intéressant que celle des timbaliers de la Garde Républicaine. Le Tout-Paris devrait venir aux concerts en short et en chaussures à crampons. Comme des cheveux sur la soupe venait une scène du Kabouki dansée à ravir, une scène d'abstraction lyrique très remarquable. Ah ! monsieur, ces gens-là ne sont pas comme nous.

Il y a un article marrant et sympathique sur Eddy Mitchell dans Libé. J'aurais sûrement dû aller à l'Olympia. Eddy raconte qu'il va enregistrer avec...

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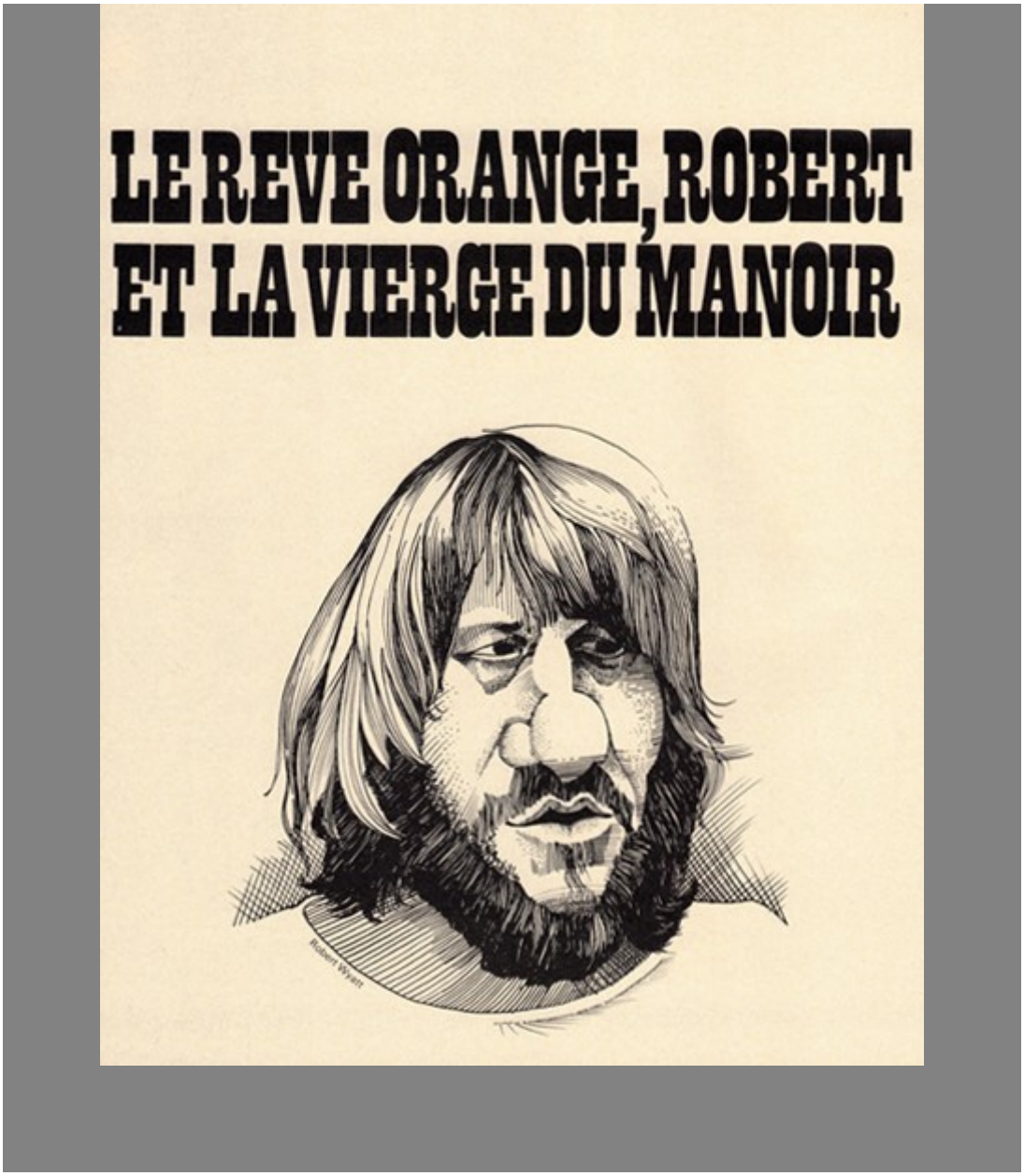
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Le rêve orange, Robert et la vierge du manoir - Rock & Folk - N° 98 - mars 1975

Le rêve orange, Robert et la vierge du manoir



Virgin, une belle histoire qu'on aimerait voir traduite en français.



Marco est sûr d'une chose, au moins: c'est qu'il n'ira jamais bosser dans une usine ou un bureau, fringué comme un pingouin, l'œil rivé sur la pendule en attendant l'heure de la sortie. Pour éviter cela, Marco sait qu'il ne dispose pas de trente-six solutions; il doit prendre son truc en main, vivre avec la culture qu'il a adoptée, et la faire proliférer. II aime la musique qu'il vend. Le problème, c'est qu'autour de lui, les Français n'ont pas trop l'air de vouloir prendre leur pop culture au sérieux. Ils n'y croient pas assez. Ou alors elle ne représente pas une alternative suffisamment forte pour les dévier de la tentation sécurisante du boulot pépère, de la bonne bouffe et du pavillon de banlieue. Pendant ce temps-là, des centaines de musiciens crèvent doucement, avant de tout larguer eux aussi.

On peut quand même penser que tout n'est pas impossible, irréalisable. Et, pour s'en convaincre, on va voir un peu comment se débrouillent les voisins. Culturellement, le concept pop est plus fort dans les pays anglo-saxons, plus ancré dans les mœurs. Et puis les jeunes Anglais, comme les jeunes Noirs des ghettos, sont très clairement conscients qu'il vaut mieux tenter sa chance comme musicien ou boxeur que de rester prisonnier ad æternam d'un long ruban de maisons toutes semblables, croupissant dans un salariat minable. Cette conscience, il faut la défendre, la protéger, lui donner les moyens d'exister. Et finalement, le show biz, comme alternative à l'usine, ça ne fait pas très sérieux. Bonnet blanc - blanc bonnet. Il a donc fallu, là aussi, reconsidérer le problème dans son ensemble.

Une fois le joint trouvé, tout peut aller très vite. A la fin des années 60, un garçon de 16 ans lance un magazine, « Student », où se retrouvent pêle-mêle les thèmes de la nouvelle culture. On y parle un peu de politique, on publie les textes les plus importants de Ronald

Laing, le grand pionnier de l'anti-psychiatrie, on évoque les mouvements communautaires, et on prend son pied avec le rock. Un genre d'Actuel, en mieux. Petit à petit, le rock and roll prend la meilleure part. Au point que, au moment où le journal perd trop d'argent, c'est lui qui va le sauver. Richard Branson, son fondateur, a en effet l'idée de le renflouer et s'en servant pour vendre des disques par correspondance, à des prix défiant toute concurrence - quelque chose comme 12 francs l'album. Ce qui est parfaitement réalisable, en supprimant quelques intermédiaires.

Virgin est né, et à partir de là commence une ascension fulgurante. En 71 s'ouvre la première boutique. Il y en a une vingtaine aujourd'hui, qui vendent les disques à des prix abordables par le commun des freaks. En même temps, on fait l'acquisition d'un manoir du 13e siècle, dans la campagne d'Oxford. Tout Londres viendra bientôt y enregistrer, de McCartney à John Cale en passant par Traffic. Cet ensemble sera bientôt doublé d'une unité mobile qui viendra en France pour un album du Gong. Enfin, en mai 73, le label proprement dit est lancé, avec Mike Oldfield, Gong, Faust, puis Kevin Coyne, Henry Cow, Beefheart... Des projets futurs prévoient le développement d'un service d'exportation, l'ouverture d'un magasin de vêtements à bon marché, le lancement d'une maison d'édition, et la création d'un service d'adresses et de renseignements, analogue à Release et au B.I.T., principalement axé sur les problèmes de l'avortement et de la contraception...

Dès lors, il ne s'agit plus seulement de hip business, d'une manière cool de faire des affaires sur une longueur d'ondes un peu différente à l'intérieur du monde capitaliste. Il y va aussi de la survie de la « communauté », de la prise en charge de ses acteurs, de la mise en lumière de leur musique, malgré tous les risques financiers que cela comporte. Il semble en effet que l'intérêt de Virgin se soit surtout porté jusqu'à maintenant sur les « losers », ceux dont personne ne voulait entendre parler dans les sphères officielles.

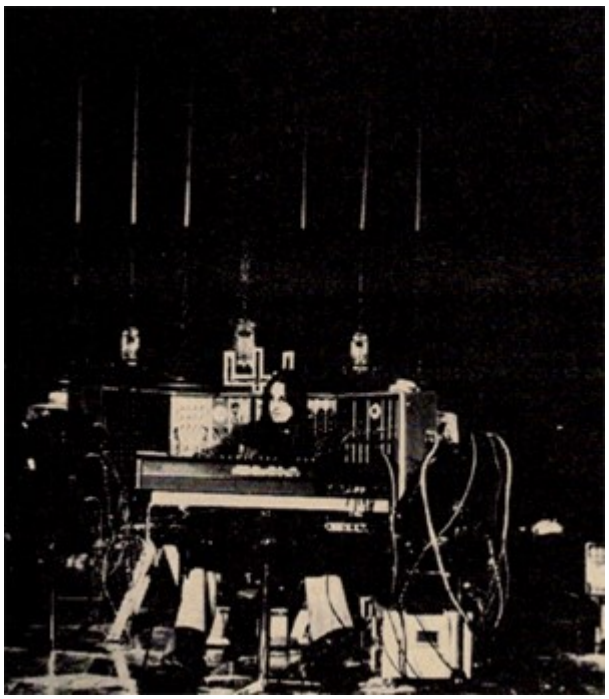
MANOIR

Et c'est ainsi qu'on découvre Kevin Coyne, musicien déchiré, éprouvant le besoin vital de présenter son univers au public, « to expose himself», comme disaient si bien Dylan et plus tard Morrison. Ou Henry Cow et son génial architecte, le guitariste Fred Frith, dont tout le monde aujourd'hui se dispute la collaboration. Ou Beefheart, à qui trop de dictateurs intellectuels refusent le droit d'évoluer à sa guise, comme jadis à Dylan, Zappa et autres géants du rock. Ou encore ces jeunes Français qui doivent aller chercher en Angleterre des gens capables de comprendre leur musique et de l'aimer assez pour oser la produire : Cyrille Verdeaux, dont on entendra bientôt la merveilleuse « Clear Light Symphony » ; Didier Malherbe, qu'on retrouve un peu aux côtés de tous les musiciens de la maison, entre deux tournées du Gong ; et bientôt d'autres encore, si d'ici là quelque chose ne s'est pas réveillé dans la tête de nos fabricants de galettes de vinyl.

Dans un coin de la campagne d'Oxford, un immense manoir étend ses ailes. On croit qu'on va pénétrer dans un monde aristocratique de meubles hautains et de tapis de luxe. Et on se retrouve dans une communauté chaleureuse, intimement bordélique, où passent doucement les ombres souriantes de techniciens résidents et de musiciens en transit. En ce moment, c'est Tangerine Dream qui y enregistre son prochain album, un double vraisemblablement, qui servira de bande sonore à « Œdipe Tyran » de Sophocle, présenté au festival de théâtre de Chichester.

L'atmosphère est détendue. Excellent dîner, partie de billard, vin rosé, on est loin de tout, l'esprit tranquille, disponible pour la musique. Le studio est encombré jusqu'au plafond par les impressionnants synthés du groupe. Christoph Franke bricole dans un coin un morceau de l'écheveau inextricable de câbles et de fils colorés. Edgar Froese s'est retiré avec sa femme et son jeune fils. Peter Baumann taquine ses claviers. On n'a pas l'air pressé par le temps.

Froese : « Ce n'est pas comme à l'époque de Rolf - Ulrich Kaiser (leur premier producteur allemand). Il



Christoph Frank (Tangerine)

fallait toujours travailler avec une horloge dans le dos. Quand on est limité par le temps, on ne peut rien faire de bon. Bien sûr, il nous laissait toute liberté de créer ; il y a des choses de cette période qu'on aime beaucoup. Mais ici, on se sent vraiment plus libre. »

Curieux comme les musiciens ressemblent à leur musique. Quand on les écoute, en disque ou en concert, on ne s'attend pas à trouver de pétulants gaillards, flashy, freaky et tout. Des gens de bonne compagnie, certes, mais sérieux, comme leur travail, ou les références qu'ils citent - Debussy, Wagner, Stockhausen, Ligeti... Au début, pourtant, l'influence est surtout d'origine floydienne (cum- Barrett).

Froese : « On jouait une sorte de « free-form rock and roll ». La scène de Berlin, entre 66 et 69, était en pleine ébullition. Il y avait des expériences dans tous les coins, à tous les niveaux : politique, avec Rudi Dutschke; communautaire et anarchiste, avec Fritz Teufel (le diable) et Rainer Langhans ; musical, avec des quantités de groupes qui jouaient dans les clubs, sans interruption de 10 heures du soir à 6 heures du matin. On se marrait bien. Les gens pouvaient faire ce qu'ils voulaient, «free form». Toute cette atmosphère n'existe plus aujourd'hui: les gens ont commencé à s'ennuyer, à ne plus croire à rien. C'était vraiment dur. Parallèlement à ça, les groupes de rock devenaient de plus en plus bruyants, achetaient un matériel de plus en plus énorme, qui n'améliorait pas la qualité de la musique. On s'est alors trouvé devant un choix : ou faire comme eux, et augmenter le nombre de nos amplis, ou tout changer, recommencer à partir d'un nouveau point. On a préféré cela. La première année, ça n'a pas du tout marché. On se faisait jeter au bout de vingt minutes. Les gens ne comprenaient pas qu'on puisse jouer sans batterie. On ne faisait rien de « normal » à leurs yeux : ils ne pouvaient se référer à rien de connu, à aucune expérience du. même genre. On s'est alors demandé si quelque chose n'allait pas, chez nous ou dans le public. Mais il était trop tard pour revenir en arrière. »

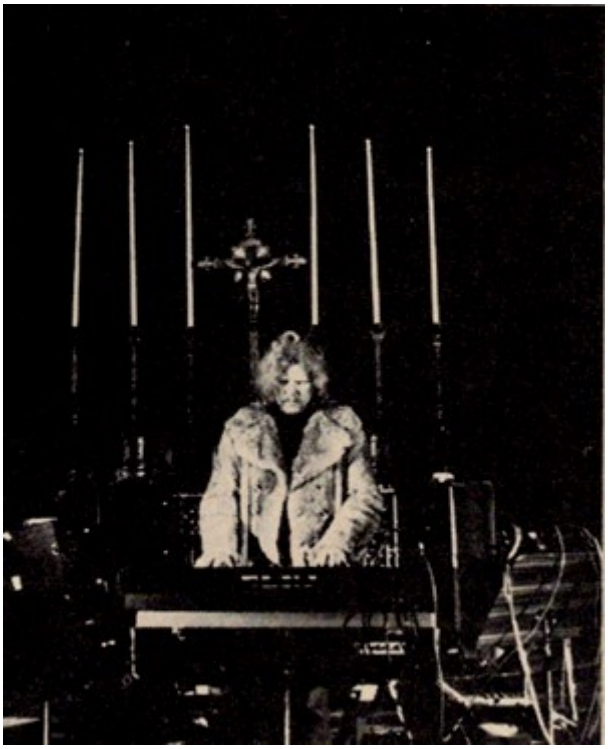
Alors Tangerine Dream a foncé tête baissée dans l'expérimentation, l'électronique, les méandres d'une technologie nouvelle, à base de synthétiseurs, de chambres d'écho, de bandes magnétiques, puisant des idées chez leur compatriote Stockhausen, comme d'ailleurs bien d'autres groupes allemands, Can en tête. L'idée principale étant de laisser faire l'imagination, de récupérer tous les bruits pour les intégrer à la masse sonore, de se laisser porter par les ondes en en épousant intimement les contours. Baumann et Froese : «Toute la partie technique de la musique était nécessaire pour trouver de nouvelles voies. Mais il ne faut pas conclure que nous ne sommes que de froids machinistes. Les gens pensent souvent que les machines pourraient faire tout le boulot toutes seules. En fait, aucune ne peut marcher si elle n'a été au

préalable programmée par un être humain.

La partie de doigts sur un synthétiseur en fait vraiment un instrument. Grâce à lui, on peut explorer des possibles plus facilement qu'avec une guitare. Cela n'enlève rien au flux émotionnel... »

Déjà, dans le studio, les synthés ronronnent doucement, clignotant de leurs mille lumières, tandis que, sans se presser, les pieds dans des chaussons, les trois compères s'installent derrière leurs claviers.

« On se sent très proches, on se connaît bien. On sait que lorsque l'un d'entre nous commence quelque chose, l'autre pourra se brancher dessus sans défaillance. Pour nous, c'est la seule manière de garder vraiment le contact avec l'audience. »



Edgar Froese (Tangerine)



Peter Baumann (Tangerine)

PORTOBELLO ET ROBERT

Retour à Londres. Après la magnificence mi-baroque mi-bohème du Manor, la petite pièce où répètent Henry Cow et Slapp Happy semble bien misérable. Pourtant, les génies et les elfes qui hantent cette modeste maison du fin fond de Portobello n'en sont pas moins hospitaliers. Beaucoup de gens y passent et profitent de l'indulgence de l'hôtesse du lieu pour déployer leur matériel et travailler des journées entières. Slapp Happy, c'est un joyeux trio composé, entre autres, d'un géant - débonnaire bien entendu - et d'une fille toute menue. Peter Blegvad et Dagmar chantent, accompagnés par Anthony Moore - coauteur de la plupart des textes : humour corrosif, «non-sensé», toute une tradition retrouvée, enjambant allègrement les débris d'un médiocre 20e siècle pour joindre les lumières d'un 18e décadent aux pâles lueurs d'un avorton de 21e.

Depuis peu de temps, la troupe d'Henry Cow s'est jointe à eux, apportant l'appui d'une

compétence musicale exceptionnelle, dans un effort conceptuel qui rejoint les grands compositeurs de l'aube de ce siècle, Debussy, Ravel, et surtout Eric Satie. Nul doute que pendant un moment on va juger cette musique comme «difficile» - alors qu'elle est d'une limpide clarté - et lui préférer le tonnerre brouillon des méga-amplis. Après... après on redécouvrira Slapp Happy + Henry Cow, et on leur reconnaîtra cette place providentielle qu'ils occupent dans la musique anglaise contemporaine. Comme aujourd'hui avec un certain Robert Wyatt...

Il habite un pavillon dans la banlieue Sud Ouest, charmant comme le sont les pavillons anglais. Il est allongé, souriant, tout accueil et toute amitié offerts sans détours. Surpris quand on lui dit que son album a été très bien reçu en France.

« C'est un problème, parce que les gens vont tellement attendre du prochain, sur lequel je travaille actuellement ! La plupart des gens de « Rock Bottom » y participeront, avec en plus Hugh Hopper. Fred Frith sera présent aussi, avec deux de ses compositions. A part ça, peu de projets, ou très isolés. Un concert en mai, avec Slapp Happy et Henry Cow. Retourner en France ? J'aimerais bien. Il y a juste un problème pratique, qui est énorme: voyager avec la chaise roulante. Dans la plupart des hôtels, c'est impossible. Il faut demander à des tas de gens de donner un coup de main sans arrêt, et c'est très ennuyeux. A Londres, ça peut aller, parce que je rentre chez moi après le concert.

Travailler avec un groupe régulier ? Je veux me libérer de l'idée de groupe. Quelque chose doit évoluer, et il n'y a pas assez de liberté au sein d'un groupe pour cela. Quelles que soient les idées que tu apportes, il faut les adapter à une section rythmique, à des solistes. Alors, ça limite la musique. Je me sens plus libre aujourd'hui. Par exemple, quand je ne veux pas de section rythmique, je peux très bien m'en passer. « The End Of An Ear » a été le premier essai de travail seul dans un studio. Cela m'a donné assez d'idées à réaliser pour plus tard. En un sens, ça a été le premier pas vers « Rock Bottom ». bien que je n'en aie pas été conscient à l'époque.

Depuis, beaucoup de choses ont changé. La plupart des musiciens que j'aime aujourd'hui et avec lesquels je travaille sont très différents les uns des autres. C'est pourquoi ils sont excellents : ils sont frais. Ces instrumentistes écrivent des choses difficiles à chanter, parce qu'ils ne pensent pas au problème du chant. C'est un bon exercice pour moi : ça tient éveillé. Je peux seulement jouer ce que je comprends, c'est-à-dire à l'intérieur de mes propres limites.

Et puis, quand tu vieillis tu deviens plus certain de ce que tu fais. Tu n'as plus envie de le laisser transformer par quelqu'un d'autre. Tu commences à vraiment savoir à quoi tu veux que ta musique ressemble. Il y a un truc bizarre avec elle : tu peux être un fasciste sans tuer personne. A ce propos, j'aime bien ce que dit Andy Warhol : « Les gens diaboliques sont OK, aussi longtemps qu'ils ne font rien. » J'entends par fascisme dans la musique le fait d'utiliser les gens pour accomplir une idée bien spécifique, de sorte qu'elle devient plus importante que ceux qui la servent.

Même si je dois indiquer quelque chose à Fred Frith, qui ne lui permettra d'exprimer ni son individualité ni la mienne, cela n'a pas d'importance. Ce qui compte, c'est la musique. La musique est égoïste... Je suis très heureux si je peux être utile à quelqu'un d'autre. Ce n'est pas par gentillesse. C'est par besoin biologique d'être un membre utile de la communauté. Mon problème est d'arriver à en faire un maximum sans blesser les autres et d'en tirer le meilleur profit.

- En France, on te considère un peu comme une légende...

- ... Si tu dis cela, c'est comme si tu parlais de quelqu'un d'autre. La plupart du temps, je suis plutôt paumé, je ne sais pas vraiment ce que je fais : je sens cela de l'intérieur. Quand j'accomplis quelque chose, je n'ai pas la moindre idée si c'est bon ou dégueulasse. Si quelqu'un en est heureux, c'est bien. Au moins, cela veut dire que je n'ai fait de mal à personne.

- C'est une idée qui semble te préoccuper...

- Tant de mal est fait ; je trouve cela effarant. On est des animaux conscients. Mais on n'a pas le contrôle du bien ou du dommage qu'on fait. Je ne me sens aucune allégeance envers une philosophie. J'apprends d'après ma sensibilité, ce que je touche, ce que j'écoute. - La pataphysique ? - C'était comme beaucoup d'autres choses, une simple question de vanité. On était flattés d'être reconnu par les gens. On répondait à cela de la manière qu'ils attendaient. A vrai dire, je ne connais pas grand chose à la pataphysique. Alfred Jarry... Je ne lis pas beaucoup, mais je peux lire Jarry n'importe quand. Beckett

aussi.

Il y a une certaine arrogance dans notre génération qui nous fait croire qu'avant la révolution du rock, les gens n'étaient que stupides et bourgeois, ce qui est faux. Il y a toujours eu des gens courageux et brillants, tout comme Mick Jagger, Keith Richard ou les Soft Machine... (sourire). De merveilleux auteurs de chansons bien avant Bob Dylan. J'aimerais bien enlever un peu de cette arrogance à notre génération.

- Mais le rock a eu le secours des média...

- Ouais... mais il y a bien plus de choses que ça au monde.

- Justement, en écoutant ta musique, on pense à celle du Moyen Orient ou de l'Afrique du Nord.

- Cela me réjouit beaucoup. Le continent le plus romantique pour moi est l'Afrique. Je sens que la musique d'Afrique du Nord, la musique berbère surtout, recèle de fantastiques possibilités qu'on peut utiliser. Cela m'a beaucoup influencé. Les voix surtout. Comment s'en servir, hors des chansons conventionnelles. Pas en imitant des instruments ; la voix elle-même est un instrument extraordinaire, très riche, et j'ai beaucoup d'idées sur les façons de l'utiliser.

Je voyage avec ma collection de disques... (sourire). J'aimerais connaître davantage ce qui reste des cultures de l'Amérique du Sud. Il est très triste qu'elles soient aujourd'hui détruites par l'homme blanc, comme celles du Nord au siècle dernier. (Il me tend un livre sur les Indiens Xingu.) Ils m'influencent beaucoup; ma façon d'écrire aussi. Pas que je sois allé là-bas. C'est simplement l'idée que j'en reçois. Par ailleurs, les gens sont très surpris si je leur dis que j'aime Ray Charles, parce que ça ne paraît pas dans ce que je fais. Je l'aime, parce qu'il allume mon imagination. Quand j'entends ce qu'il fait avec sa voix, je me dis que je peux bien voir ce que je vais faire avec la mienne. En trouvant son chemin, il m'inspire et me fait trouver le mien, sans que j'aie à le copier...»

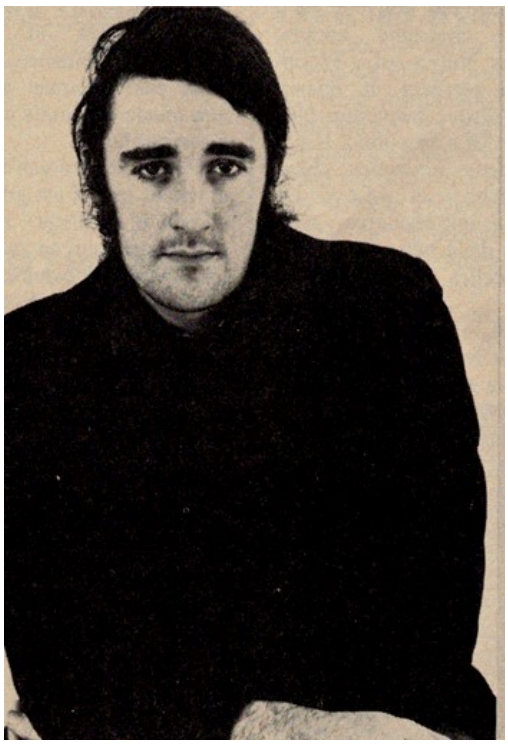
On voudrait ainsi parler pendant des heures, ne pas voir le temps passer, écouter les propos tout empreints de modestie et de connaissance de soi d'un homme d'expérience. Et l'on se retire sur la pointe des pieds, un peu honteux d'abandonner cette quiétude pour courir à des choses tellement plus futiles...

STEVE . . .

... ou retrouver, dans une autre campagne, un autre climat de douceur, de calme propice à un délicat travail de composition et d'enregistrement. A Little Bedwynn, tout près de la «frontière» galloise, Steve Hillage et quelques amis polissent l'album solo du flamboyant guitariste du Gong. Ici, ce n'est pas le Manor. La demeure est banale, en apparence : une des quatre ou cinq du village, en bordure d'une petite route. Au fond du pré est ancré le studio mobile de Virgin, à l'intérieur duquel s'affaire l'ingénieur maison, Simon Heyworth (à qui on doit la révélation de tous les trésors de cette nouvelle musique). Un câble le relie à la salle à manger où sont installés les musiciens. Aujourd'hui, c'est Didier Malherbe, qui répète un solo délicat, dont la partition, écrite le matin même, est épinglée sur un pilier en face de lui. Steve Hillage est assis à côté, cherchant à capter la sonorité exacte qui lui conviendra.

Son album peut être attendu comme un des grands événements musicaux de l'année à venir. On y retrouvera certains des thèmes les plus percutants de la dernière tournée du Gong, plus quelques compositions personnelles qui en avaient assez d'attendre dans un tiroir. On dirait que le cadre de Little Bedwynn convient à merveille à la réalisation de ce disque. Non pas que Steve soit un campagnard forcené. Il est même un des rares musiciens anglais de sa génération à ne pas vouloir jouer les ermites dans la chlorophyle, préférant plutôt rester dans la ville, au milieu des hommes.

Justement, à Londres, il habite en famille, avec les gens d'Henry Cow, de Slapp Happy... Famille: c'est bien le mot pour désigner toute cette bande de musiciens, surgis d'un underground peu probable, délaissés par le show biz, et qui, sans le soutien de Virgin,



Fred Frith (Henry Cow)

travailleraient dans des conditions beaucoup moins « cool ». Mais la bonne fée est passée, elle a vu ces enfants incroyablement dynamiques, créatifs et rêveurs à la fois. Et elle a pensé que, vraiment, il fallait faire quelque chose pour les sortir de l'ombre, rafraîchir le rock anglais, et offrir au public d'aujourd'hui une musique nouvelle, qui soit un peu le reflet de son état de conscience. A l'un, elle a donné la fortune (Mike Oldfield), à d'autres la simple joie de se faire - enfin - entendre. C'est une bien belle histoire quand même, qu'on aimerait voir traduite en français.

ALAIN DISTER

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A Londres des jeunes freaks en fleurs - Actuel - N° 51 - février 1975

A LONDRES DES JEUNES FREAKS EN FLEURS



> Zoom

Tandis que Virgin donne l'exemple, Mike Ratledge cultive l'émotion, Robert Wyatt passe ses journées à réfléchir et Bill Bruford garde son calme.

"Pour avoir du succès en Angleterre, il faut être soit complètement imbécile, soit donner l'impression que vous venez de vous lever de votre siège pour monter sur scène et vous proclamer un amateur. La seule chose qu'il ne faut surtout pas faire, c'est bien jouer. Ecrivez des paroles qui ont une "signification profonde, ou, mieux, aucun sens; volez quelques riffs à Terry Riley ; pour les solos, pastichez le jazz d'avant-garde d'il y a vingt-cinq ans, celui que tous les musiciens de jazz ont complètement oublié. Assurez-vous de jouer faux, évitez à tout prix les rythmes intéressants, et vous avez un de ces groupes "modernes" - ou un disque Virgin."

Boum. J'espérais trouver un défenseur de cette scène anglaise turbulente et excentrique, celle des Eno, des Robert Wyatt, des Kevin Ayers, la postérité de Soft Machine et les groupes des disques Virgin. Je me suis trompé de porte. John Marshall observe mon désarroi d'un oeil amusé, les autres membres de **Soft Machine** opinent du bonnet... "Je sais, il y a des dizaines de groupes anglais aujourd'hui qui copient l'ancien Soft Machine. Tous sauf nous. C'est un luxe que nous sommes seuls à pouvoir nous permettre."

" A quoi ressemble le nouveau Soft Machine, qui vient de commencer par un concert à la fac d'Assas une petite tournée française ? Rien de très différent de ce à quoi il nous a habitués depuis deux ou trois ans. Une introduction à deux pianos électriques, façon Terry Riley, des rythmes rock lourdement efficaces, quelques fracas électroniques, beaucoup de solos et d'improvisation. Le groupe a engagé un guitariste, visage de rongeur du musicien anglais typique, il a fait ses classes dans des groupes de rock anglais, loin du jazz et des musiques de recherche. Mike Ratledge passe son temps chez lui à démonter et remonter son synthétiseur. Il est le seul dans 1e groupe à s'intéresser vaguement à la musique contemporaine, et encore, il n'en écoute jamais. Les autres ? "La musique noire, Stevie Wonder. Le rock de la bonne époque, Hendrix, Cream, les Who." Avant de jouer, on se soûle à la bière, la sono est puissante, tout le monde se balance en rythme et Ratledge, le visage imperturbable, s'extériorise en de drôles de sursauts des coudes et des épaules. "On ne joue pas de la musique tarabiscotée. On fait ce qui vient naturellement: tout dans l'émotion. Contrairement à notre réputation, nous ne sommes pas des intellectuels. Nous sommes seulement intelligents." Le guitariste ricane: "Pas du tout, moi, je ne suis même pas intelligent!"

Le Soft Machine a bien changé, mais la scène anglaise qu'il a contribué à créer n'est pas morte pour autant. Souvenez-vous, il y a huit ans, l'acide bouillonnait dans les cervelles, une génération de musiciens, Pink Floyd et Soft Machine en tête, accommodaient le rock à des sauces bien étranges. Quatre ans plus tard, Soft Machine agissait comme catalyseur de ce vaste brassage entre musiciens de rock, de jazz et de musique contemporaine, dans des projets grandioses comme le Centipède, cet orchestre de cent musiciens venus de tous les horizons.

En 1975, les tentatives originales fusent de plus belle. Au centre du mouvement on trouve les disques Virgin, d'anciens freaks devenus des capitalistes rudement intelligents qui ont réussi à vendre cette musique réputée invendable (et dont **Actuel** raconte l'histoire dans son n° 37. en vente au journal, 4 F, merci). Grâce à eux les groupes grouillent, les disques pleuvent, les vieilles têtes reparaissent et les nouvelles se lancent: des noms familiers, Gong, Robert Wyatt, d'autres inconnus ou presque il y a un an, Mike Oldfield, David Bedford, Hatfield and the North, Egg, Coxhill/Miller, Kevin Coyne, White Noise, ou Henry Cow, dont le guitariste Fred Frith vient de sortir un étonnant album de guitare solo digne de Stockhausen. Virgin donne l'exemple, les grandes marques commencent à suivre. Island a engagé pour choisir ses groupes Richard Williams, ancien critique au **Melody Maker** où il défendait depuis longtemps les musiques d'avant-garde. Island produisait déjà King Crimson et Roxy Music, elle a signé Eno, Kevin Ayers, Nico, John Cale.


A LONDRES
DES JEUNES FREAKS
EN FLEURS

> Zoom

Robert Wyatt habite, comme la plupart des musiciens anglais, un pavillon dans la banlieue de Londres, grandes pièces peintes de couleurs vives et larges baies vitrées. Après le joyeux capharnaüm de la cuisine, on passe le dépouillement de la salle de musique - un piano à queue, un petit orgue électrique, un magnétophone, et les textes de quelques chansons soigneusement tapés à la machine. Il y a une cheminée dans le living room, tapissée de cartes de voeux, des piles de disques sur le sol et un mauvais électrophone. "En ce moment, j'écoute surtout du jazz, Thelonius Monk, Charlie Parker, Charlie Mingus".

Que fais-tu de tes journées ? "Je réfléchis. J'ai beaucoup d'idées, mais je les rejette toutes le matin suivant. Résultat : je suis en retard sur mon planning. Virgin aimerait que je sorte deux albums par an. Remarque, je pourrais facilement en faire dix, mais ils se répéteraient. J'aime que chaque album ait une bonne raison d'exister, et ne ressemble pas à la seconde partie du précédent. Alors je travaille dur, mais je progresse lentement."

Ce souci de ne pas se répéter, Wyatt l'applique jusque dans ses interviews. "Quand j'ai lu deux fois une de mes idées dans un journal, j'essaie de trouver autre chose." On tient là la clé du personnage : un esprit agile, en éveil, sans cesse occupé à faire reculer ses propres limites. Wyatt n'a pas attendu l'accident qui lui a paralysé les jambes pour tripoter les claviers et prospecter les mille usages insolites ou saugrenus de la voix humaine. Encore batteur dû Soft Machine, il appliquait quelques-unes de ses idées dans un étonnant album solo, "The End of an Ear". La brève existence de Matching Mole continue la démarche, un peu noyée dans les exercices de style de ce jazz-rock électrique qu'on vient de découvrir. Enfin, l'album "Rock bottom" se révèle si enthousiasmant qu'on se surprend parfois à considérer son accident comme une bonne aubaine.

"J'aurais aimé travailler avec Matching Mole de la façon dont je travaille à présent : une relation occasionnelle, détendue, qui ne Vous impose pas d'avoir à vous adapter constamment aux autres. Un groupe ressemble souvent à une prison. Je ne me vois plus en train de jouer en concert avec un groupe. Je travaille plutôt comme un peintre, petite

touche par petite touche. Est-ce que tu imagines David Hockney au Palais des Sports ? Il arrive avec sa toile sous les applaudissements de la foule et il peint pendant deux heures tandis que les gens crient "oh le beau bleu, ah! quel joli rouge ?" Non, vraiment, on se concentre mieux dans son atelier. D'ailleurs, je ne vais jamais aux concerts de rock. Je n'appartiens plus à ce monde."



> Zoom

Quand on lui parle de la scène anglaise, Wyatt évoque l'expérience historique du Centipède de Keith Tipett. "Le Centipède a été l'équivalent anglais du Jazz Composers Orchestra de Mike Mantler et Carla Bley : plus un événement social qu'une démarche musicale. Pour des raisons pratiques, les musiciens trouvent peu d'occasions de se rencontrer. Quand on arrive à faire jouer un grand nombre ensemble, ça crée des étincelles. L'impact reste énorme, même si tous les participants sont revenus aujourd'hui à leur élément familier. Pendant les premières répétitions, on a vu arriver les musiciens pop chevelus, les musiciens classiques aux cheveux courts, les musiciens de jazz entre les deux. L'année suivante, les classiques se défonçaient, laissaient pousser leurs cheveux et commençaient à improviser sur leur violoncelle pendant que les musiciens pop se rasaient le crâne et entraient en religion..."

Tu écoutes de la musique contemporaine ? "On en écoutait dans ma famille, j'ai grandi avec. En conséquence, elle ne me paraît pas si excitante. La véritable aventure a consisté pour moi à découvrir la musique populaire. Ma première idée musicale: et si on collait un morceau de Stockhausen sur une rythmique de James Brown ? Depuis, j'ai découvert tant de choses qui m'intéressent plus même si, superficiellement, elles paraissent moins nouvelles et moins dynamiques."

"J'adore le flamenco, qui doit certainement venir de la musique arabe: j'y trouve un côté blues, noir, quelque chose de complètement différent de tous les autres chants méditerranéens, qui ont fini par donner l'opéra. Le chant le plus extraordinaire que j'ai entendu, c'est celui de l'Inde du Sud, le carnatique m'a beaucoup influencé."

"J'aime nettement mieux écouter la musique que la jouer. Je ne ressens aucun plaisir physique à me servir d'un instrument, au contraire de beaucoup de musiciens avec qui je travaille. Je joue parce qu'il y a des choses que j'ai envie d'entendre et qui n'existent sur aucun disque. Mais je serais vraiment content si d'autres que moi s'en chargeaient. Je me recaserais dans la critique musicale." La musique de Wyatt dépasse de cent coudées les recherches confuses de la plupart de ses compagnons. Elle est lyrique et généreuse, ils tombent souvent dans la sécheresse et l'abstraction. Elle déborde d'humour, trop d'entre eux se prennent au sérieux. Elle évite tous les systèmes dans lesquelles ils foncent tête baissée, l'indigestion de synthétiseur, les compositions trop rigides, les tics hérités du Soft Machine.

On trouve à prendre et à laisser dans cette scène anglaise. A son passif, l'absence de swing, noyé dans les rythmes composés. A force de sauter d'un rythme à l'autre et de se refuser le répit d'une mélodie simple ou d'un tempo confortable, on se prend les pieds dans d'inextricables dentelles, toiles d'araignée musicales; bavardages instrumentaux (et pan sur Egg et Hatfield and the North). Autre excès: l'amateurisme inspiré, grand credo chez Eno et quelques autres, ne donne pas toujours des résultats enthousiasmants, les oeuvres d'Eno lui-même en fournissent un bon exemple.

Nous avons cherché quelqu'un qui puisse apprécier toutes les recherches avec distance et lucidité, mais aussi sympathie. Nous avons trouvé **David Bedford**, ancien pianiste du Whole World, le groupe de Kevin Ayers, l'arrangeur des disques de Kevin et l'auteur d'une version orchestrale des deux albums de Mike Oldfield, qui doit bientôt sortir sur disque. Dans ce milieu où tout le monde grappille un peu de musique contemporaine, il est le seul compositeur d'avant-garde bon teint, avec un diplôme de la Royal Academy of Music et un stage à Venise auprès du compositeur Luigi Nono ("Le premier mois, il m'a fait écrire des compositions pour une seule note.)

A son actif, une demi-douzaine de morceaux inclus dans des albums de musique contemporaine, et "Star's End", une composition de quarante minutes pour grand orchestre et guitare électrique, enregistrée par Virgin. Un bel édifice, dense, riche en rebondissements et d'un éclectisme de bon aloi. Bedford s'y promène des bruissements debussystes aux grandes nappes de Ligetti, alterne les passages planants et les dissonances exaspérées, et emprunte habilement à Mike Oldfield quelques unes des recettes de ses deux best-sellers.

"Quand on m'a proposé de faire partie du groupe Kevin Ayers, ça m'a amusé. Je trouvais ça romantique, je ne me rendais pas compte exactement. En fait, c'est du boulot, et du sérieux: faire six heures de route, jouer une heure et se taper encore six heures pour rentrer chez soi. Pour rien au monde je ne jouerai à nouveau dans un groupe.

Bedford a une noble allure avec ses cheveux et sa barbe bien taillés et prématurément gris. Assis en tailleur, il bricole le planeur télécommandé que Mike Oldfield lui a offert pour Noël. Aux murs, des livres de science-fiction (" J'en possède deux mille") et des télescopes. "L'autre jour, s'extasie Wyatt, il m'a montré Saturne pour de vrai, avec ses anneaux et tout. Je n'en revenais pas." Sur le vieux piano droit, sérieusement désaccordé, des partitions d'Elton John, "pour me délasser..." Dans la pièce à côté, ses deux filles regardent la télévision en couleurs.

Malgré son flirt avec le rock, Bedford reste un compositeur au sens traditionnel du terme. "Il y a autant de possibilités sonores dans un grand orchestre qu'avec tous les synthétiseurs du monde. Il reste encore beaucoup de musique sur partition à écrire.

"J'ai fait récemment une émission de radio avec Robert Fripp. Nous avons collé bout à bout des morceaux de Henry Cow, du New Phonic Arts et du Spontaneous Music Ensemble: du rock d'avant-garde, de la musique contemporaine et du free jazz. Personne n'a pu remarquer la différence...

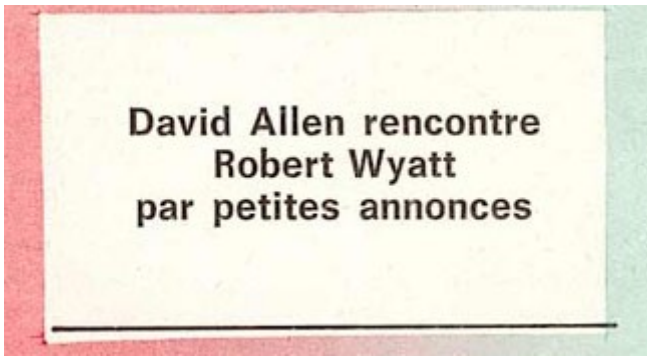
"Ce n'est qu'une ressemblance superficielle. Je ne vois pas de grandes réussites parmi tous les groupes de rock expérimental, mais ils travaillent dans la bonne direction, ils brisent les barrières, ils poussent les gens à s'intéresser à d'autres musiques, à Ravel ou à Stockhausen. Ce qui leur manque pour créer des oeuvres durables ? Une technique suffisante pour développer un morceau sur les vingt minutes que dure une face de disque, lui donner une forme, une structure.

"Pour Star's End", la structure découlait du thème, celui de l'entropie, une idée que l'on retrouve beaucoup dans la science-fiction moderne, Ballard ou Philip K. Dick. C'est l'idée de la décomposition, des choses qui retournent au chaos et à l'inorganisé. Je prends un accord ou un rythme, et les notes commencent à dérailler l'une après l'autre. J'accomplis aussi le mouvement inverse, car l'entropie procède par cycles, l'univers meurt et renaît. Le morceau finit très calmement, sur une note d'apaisement ou de résignation."

Parmi tous les groupes du nouveau rock anglais, il en est un qui les résume et les dépasse, sur disque comme sur scène : **Gong**. Eh oui. Ce bon vieux Gong, qui, à force de s'améliorer, est devenu un des meilleurs groupes du monde. Or, coïncidence admirable, ne doit-on pas reconnaître en **Daevid Allen**, le grain de sable qui a déclenché toute l'avalanche, au début des années soixante ?

Mike Ratledge expliquait dans une interview de 1972 : "Daevid Allen est arrivé chez Robert

avec deux cent disques de jazz, qui ont aussitôt circulé parmi nous. Je ne sais pas ce qui se serait passé sans cela." et Robert Wyatt confirme : "Le Soft Machine originel, c'était Daevid Allen : ses structures de raga, ses chansons, ses conceptions rythmiques et sonores, son goût pour les longues improvisations, et son jeu de guitare dingue: c'était le seul guitariste de son époque qui évitait les éternelles resucées de blues. C'est la première personne que j'ai rencontrée qui portait les cheveux longs et se défonçait."



"Mais non, objectera Daevid. Les véritables responsables, ce sont les Docteurs d'Octave, qui se servent des humains inconscients pour réaliser le plan cosmique. Depuis le début, ils ont manigancé de drôles de hasards. Tenez, pour tout commencer, cette petite annonce que Daevid passe dans le **Times** pour trouver une chambre à louer. La mère de Robert Wyatt y répond. Daevid débarque avec ses disques et ses idées bizarres, et voilà. Un autre exemple : en 1967, les services d'immigration britanniques refusent à Daevid la permission de rentrer en Angleterre avec le reste du Soft Machine. Je ne pouvais pas rester avec les Soft : j'avais joué un rôle d'initiateur, mon travail était fini. Et je n'étais pas assez malin pour m'en rendre compte. Le destin s'est chargé de me le faire comprendre."

En 1974, la tâche revient aux douaniers français, qui, par une nuit de pleine lune, arrêtent le batteur Laurie Allan avec un bout de H et lui interdisent de remettre les pieds en France. Conséquence : un ami commun leur présente **Bill Bruford**, que la brusque disparition de King Crimson a réduit au chômage depuis quelques semaines. Bruford, faut-il le préciser, est une de ces bêtes de la batterie dont les membres semblent spécialement taillés pour empoigner des baguettes et enfoncer des pédales. Specimen rare, il possède à la fois la versalité acquise à l'école du jazz moderne et la puissance dévastatrice des grands batteurs de rock.

Avec un nouveau musicien de cette trempe, Gong devient le "supergroupe" du rock moderniste anglais. Ceux qui l'ont vu pendant la seconde partie de sa tournée française s'en souviendront longtemps. A la salle Wagram par exemple : Tim Blake, entouré de trois synthétiseurs, commence par tisser des voiles translucides, un brouillard hallucinogène qui appelle l'esprit vers les grandes dérives. Le groupe chante le mantra, de plus en plus fort. "i a-o a-i ao, ai ao...", les forces maléfiques se dissipent. D'un coup, la section rythmique pilonne et la machine décolle droit vers les étoiles. Un laser dessine d'hypnotisantes spirales derrière la scène. Bruford envoie des grands paquets d'énergie qui cinglent les solistes, un grand vent gonfle les voiles de ce navire aérien qui entraîne derrière lui deux mille spectateurs pris de vertige. On ne redescendra pas pendant plus d'une heure, et, comble de bonheur, la fin vous dépose en douceur, la psalmodie "I am you and you are I" se fond lentement dans le silence.

Et pourtant, assure Gong, ce n'était qu'un concert très moyen. Steve Hillage a passé la soirée à se battre contre ses pédales, et seule la maréchaussée a permis à Tim de rentrer dans la salle. Pendant le concert, Richard Branson, le patron de Virgin, dissuadait un commissaire de police d'intervenir en force, à la suite d'un malencontreux coup de téléphone. A Actuel, on compatit : on a bien connu ça pour le concert des groupes allemands au T.O.P.

L'hôtel chinois en face de la salle Wagram sort tout droit du "Lotus Bleu", comme son patron chinois qui se tord les mains de désespoir devant la cohue des individus hirsutes. Bill Bruford garde un calme impérial au milieu de l'agitation et parle d'une belle voix de basse, l'accent cultivé. Il a la tâte bien ordonnée, un contraste absolu avec "l'anarchie flottante" chère aux vieux membres de Gong. "j'ai appris la batterie dans un cours de jazz qui se tient tous les ans au Pays de Galles. Il y avait Keith Tippett, Marc Charig, Nick Evans, tous les meilleurs musiciens anglais. J'avais pour professeur John Marshall, l'actuel batteur de Soft Machine. Je vivais sous une tente, et on travaillait toute la journée, par

petits groupes, à essayer d'arranger collectivement des morceaux."

Après à peine une demi-douzaine de concerts, Bruford s'est fondu dans la musique sans un accroc. "J'ai travaillé sur les disques, deux jours avant le premier concert. Je n'avais rien entendu de Gong auparavant. Pierre, l'ancien batteur, est imbattable, il a une frappe quasiment parfaite : question d'attaque, il faut retirer la baguette avant même qu'elle ne touche la peau". "C'est le même principe que le karaté" commente Didier Malherbe, dont le béret bleu marine s'orne d'un superbe oeuf sur le plat en plastique. Tout autour, il n'est question que de l'épineux problème du différend entre Byg et Virgin Records. "Je viens de voir le "Camembert" vendu 60 F chez Lido Musique, c'est ridicule !". Bruford parle chiffres d'un ton catégorique avec Tim et Didier. "J'ai discuté avec Branson. Gong continue à coûter beaucoup plus d'argent qu'il n'en rapporte. Vous ne pouvez pas continuer comme ça, c'est comme si vous passiez des vacances très longues et très chères." - "Que faire ?" - "Un disque d'or, c'est la seule solution. Sinon, vous finirez en prison." - "Mais Virgin ne va quand même pas nous traîner devant les tribunaux ?" - "Oh, tout peut arriver..."

De la table voisine, Daevid interpelle : "Hey ! j'ai une double-page de poèmes pour **Actuel**, je les envoie dès qu'ils sont traduits en français." Hey ! Daevid, on les attend toujours !

Jean-Pierre Lentin

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Les paroles de Robert Wyatt - Best - N° 77 - décembre 1974



LES PAROLES DE ROBERT WYATT

Twickenham, une banlieue calme du Grand Londres. C'est là que vit Robert Wyatt, dans sa maison spécialement aménagée pour atténuer les inconvénients de la paralysie des membres inférieurs qui le cloue sur une chaise roulante depuis son accident de l'an dernier. Wyatt n'a pas cédé au désespoir. Au contraire il manifeste une activité remarquable, qui s'est soldée notamment par la parution de "Rock bottom", un album superbe, et d'un single, "I'm a believer", reprise d'un vieux succès des Monkees qui a surpris et ravi tout le monde.
Robert Wyatt, outre son talent, bénéficie d'une particulière lucidité dans sa vision de la rock-music actuelle et il a frappé juste, étonnamment juste avec ses disques. Quand nous sommes arrivés chez lui, Robert essayait de faire fonctionner un vieil accordéon que sa femme, Alfie, venait de lui offrir. Alfie, ou Alfreda, qui dessina la si belle pochette de l'album, veille sur Robert, et son importance semble aussi grande dans sa musique que dans sa vie. Il nous fit écouter les bandes de son prochain single "Yesterday man", un hit anglais très commercial que Chris Andrews avait propulsé dans les charts voici plusieurs années. Parce que Robert Wyatt, fondateur de Soft Machine et de Matching mole, écoute aujourd'hui Buddy Holly et Lee Dorsey, enregistre des singles avec la plus grande aisance, tout en poursuivant une démarche musicale des plus originales. Il semble avoir tout compris, et c'est avec un large sourire, coiffé d'un incroyable chapeau de femme à voilette, qu'il s'apprêta à nous l'expliquer.

Christian Lebrun : Votre accident et le repos forcé qui l'a suivi vous a donné du temps pour écouter beaucoup de musique, beaucoup de disques, suivre ce qui se faisait actuellement. Est-ce qu'auparavant vous vous étiez désintéressé de ce qui se passait dans la rock-music ?

Robert Wyatt : Les seules personnes, en fait, qui peuvent suivre ce qui se passe sont les journalistes et ceux qui travaillent dans les maisons de disques, parce qu'ils reçoivent les disques gratuitement... Même à présent, j'ai un point de vue assez limité sur ce qui peut se passer, mis à part, par exemple, ce que sort Virgin ou quelque chose comme ça. Auparavant,j'entendais tout le temps des trucs. Mais, le problème venait plutôt de la différence entre la musique composée en vue d'être jouée sur scène et de la musique pour disques. Et celle qui m'a toujours intéressée est la musique pour disques, qui représente par rapport à la musique pour la scène une voie aussi différente que le cinéma peut l'être du théâtre. Les premiers disques que j'ai écoutés étaient des disques américains de jazz et il était absolument impossible de les reproduire sur scène. Même leurs auteurs ne pouvaient pas. Ce que j'aimais surtout dans ces disques, c'était la double grosse caisse. Et quand un groupe de jazz est sur scène, s'il y a une double grosse caisse, vous n'entendez

plus rien d'autre.
L'idée que je me fais d'un bon disque, c'est par exemple "Magical mystery tour" qui est à peu près impossible à jouer en scène. Une grande partie de ce que je chante nécessite d'être chantée très calmement avec un très fort accompagnement. De toute évidence, sur scène ce n'est pas possible. C'est ce paradoxe que j'aime dans les disques. Quand je chante en public, je dois crier. Et je n'aime pas crier.

C. L. : Comment s'est effectué l'enregistrement de "Rock bottom". Est-ce que Nick Mason, qui l'a produit, a eu une influence plus particulière sur son élaboration ?

R. W. : Cela s'est fait assez vite. J'ai passé une semaine à la campagne pour enregistrer le piano, la voix et quelques percussions. Puis j'ai apporté les bandes à Londres et Nick s'est chargé de la prise de son des autres instruments. Il m'a quand même fallu plus de préparation que d'habitude. Auparavant, quand j'enregistrais, une partie était écrite avant, mais le reste relevait d'"accidents de studios". Tandis que "Rock bottom" représente assez exactement les plans que j'avais en entrant en studio. J'avais écrit pas mal de notes sur un calepin. L'influence de Nick s'est surtout manifestée pour le mixage. Son système de mixage est assez opposé au mixage conventionnel de jazz. Il crée une sorte de "soupe" dans laquelle le solo n'est pas plus important que la rythmique. Tout est mélangé et c'est bien moins bateau et plus plaisant à chaque nouvelle écoute. Je crois que ça a été sa principale contribution, il a mis dans le mixage bien plus de subtilité que j'en aurais mis moi-même.

C. L. : Quelle est votre conception des paroles, des textes, dans votre musique ?

R. W. : En général, je dis qu'elles ne sont pas importantes, juste des sons. Mais, dans un sens, je sais que ce n'est pas vrai. J'ai une certaine fierté dans le choix des mots que j'utilise. Ce que je pense vraiment, c'est qu'en fin de compte cela n'a pas d'importance. Les gens que je préfère, en général, n'écrivent pas de paroles fantastiques. Un exemple évident : Randy Newman écrit des paroles fantastiques, Stevie Wonder non. Eh bien je préfère largement les disques de Stevie Wonder , parce que l'on sent qu'il travaille dans une optique purement musicale. Il n'y a rien de pire que ceux qui écrivent d'abord les paroles et les mettent ensuite en musique. Je peux toujous le deviner. Par exemple, sur le "Madcap Laughs", de Syd Barrett, il y a un poème de James Joyce qui est très joli, mais musicalement, c'est le morceau le moins intéressant. C'est souvent le cas également pour Joni Mitchell. Dès ce moment, on perd les valeurs purement musicales qui sont tellement différentes des valeurs littéraires. On est à un niveau beaucoup moins inconscient. Les meilleurs morceaux sont ceux qui ont des paroles stupides, ou pas de paroles du tout.



C. L. : C'est pour ça qu'on ne doit pas être surpris que vous enregistriez à la fois un morceau comme "Sea song" et un autre comme "I'm believer", parce que dans un cas comme dans l'autre les textes n'ont pas de sens précis. Dans l'un, les paroles sont subtiles mais occultées, dans l'autre elles sont carrément stupides.

R. W. : Oui, je pense qu'une bonne chanson, qu'une bonne musique doit pouvoir être appréciée de quelqu'un qui ne parle pas un mot d'anglais.

C. L. : Qu'est-ce qui vous a fait choisir plus particulièrement le "I'm a believer" des Monkees. Que pensiez-vous d'eux, à l'époque?

R. W. : Cela m'a semblé facile à chanter, convenir à ma voix. J'aimais bien les séries T.V. des Monkees et je ne me souciais pas de savoir s'ils étaient un vrai groupe et s'ils jouaient vraiment sur les disques. Je pensais que c'était une nette amélioration en matière de divertissement télévisé, que c'était beaucoup plus habile que ce qu'on avait l'habitude de voir. Et si j'ai enregistré "I'm a believer", c'est un peu pour attaquer le snobisme qui veut à tout prix démolir ce genre de divertissement léger. Ce qui est grave, c'est qu'on a remis en fonction toute cette terminologie séparant l'"art sérieux" et le "toc", qui était en vigueur lorsque j'étais tout jeune. Les années cinquante et soixante furent excitantes justement parce que cette

barrière avait disparu. Mais à présent tout cela réapparaît. Cependant, depuis quelque temps, il y a une certaine scène qui tend à changer cela, et c'est ce qui me plaît vraiment en elle.

C. L. : J'ai été, justement, très content d'apprendre que vous appréciez beaucoup Bryan Ferry et Roxy Music.

R. W. : Bryan Ferry est un très bon chanteur. Il utilise un matériel si éclectique et ne tient pas le moindre compte de la respectabilité des origines de sa musique. Il s'en moque.

C. L. : A quoi a tenu cette réapparition de la division musique/art et musique non sérieuse ?

R. W. : Cela est venu à la fois des publics et des musiciens. En ce qui concerne le public, c'est une loi biologique que toute communauté se divise en petits groupes, en petites bandes qui ont leur propre langage, et qui se sentent supérieurs aux autres groupes. Il y a une tendance naturelle à vouloir appartenir à un petit groupe de gens. Il serait idiot de s'en plaindre, parce que c'est juste la nature humaine qui veut ça. Ensuite, il y a le rôle des musiciens eux-mêmes. Bien des musiciens pensent appartenir à une sorte d'aristocratie. Ils envient énormément les grands artistes qui peuvent devenir, sur un plan culturel, des "barons", des "comtes", des "ducs" ("Earles", "Counts" & "Dukes"). Alors, ils essaient de créer une situation qui puisse leur donner cette position élitiste, ce statut culturel. Je pense que les musiciens sont coupables sur ce plan. Moi aussi, bien sûr, je l'ai été. Je n'essaye pas de me disculper, mais plutôt d'analyser.

C. L. : Avez-vous vu cette évolution se matérialiser lors des débuts de Soft Machine ?

R. W. : L'une des choses les plus embarrassantes avec Soft Machine, c'était les types qui venaient après le concert et disaient : "Je vous aime tellement plus que cette merde de soul-music. C'est tellement supérieur, parce qu'on sent bien que vous avez écouté Stockhausen..." Et je pensais : "Fuck Stockhausen !" parce qu'à l'époque il y avait Otis Redding qui faisait une musique merveilleuse.

C. L. : Est-ce qu'il n'y avait pas non plus chez les musiciens une certaine méfiance vis-à-vis du show business qui les aurait poussés à dresser cette barrière. Pour mieux contrôler leur personnalité et leur musique en quelque sorte ?

R. W. : Vous savez, le milieu de l'"Art" est aussi pourri que celui du show business, vraiment. On y trouve autant de pressions stupides, autant de tentations à la malhonnêteté, juste autant. Il n'y a pas plus de pureté d'intention dans l'art d'avant-garde que dans le show-biz. Il n'est pas personnage plus cynique que Stockhausen. Comparé à lui, Gary Glitter est un puriste... Le "moi" pur est juste un personnage ennuyeux de plus. Je ne deviens intéressant que confronté au public, par les disques ou les concerts. Alors, votre personnalité se trouve opposée à diverses situations plus ou moins ridicules. Et c'est cette contradiction, ce combat qui fait tout l'intérêt. Je n'ai aucune pureté à préserver. Si vous avez quelque qualité, quelque originalité, cela sortira tôt ou tard. Cela ne sert à rien de "pouponner".

C. L. : A vos débuts avec Wilde Flowers, à Canterbury, quel genre jouiez-vous ? De la soul-music ?

R. W. : En fait, non. Cela commença par des morceaux composés par Hugh (Hopper) ou Kevin (Ayers), et quelques-uns par Brian Hopper, ou moi-même. Et puis comme nous ne marchions pas très fort, nous nous transformâmes en orchestre "soul", ce qui était assez plaisant. Nous jouions des morceaux d'Otis Redding, de Mose Allison, quelques trucs de Dylan. Brian Hopper jouait des trucs de Chuck Berry. Ca évolua en une affaire de plus en plus professionnelle, et quand je les quittai, Hugh jouait de l'alto et ils faisaient le genre "Stax", tous les hits de Sam & Dave, etc. Ensuite, un par un nous allâmes à Londres et cela nous changea.

C. L. : Quel fut le déclic qui vous fit changer si radicalement ? La découverte de musiciens comme Terry Riley ?

R. W. : Non, parce que nous connaissions Terry Riley avant Wilde Flowers, par exemple. J'ai connu Daevid (Allen) et Terry Riley à Paris alors que je venais, à quinze ans, de quitter l'école. Le processus, en fait, fut pour moi inverse. J'ai d'abord été intéressé par la musique contemporaine, puis par le jazz moderne. Puis du jazz moderne, je suis passé à



Terry Riley et aux expériences de ce genre. Et c'est seulement après ça que j'ai commencé à écouter Ray Charles ou Mose Allison. Et seulement après je me suis intéressé au rock. J'étais assez en retard, en fait. Ce n'est que vers mes vingt ans que j'ai découvert le rock. Je pense que c'est la raison pour laquelle je suis particulièrement méfiant vis-à-vis des snobismes en musique. Parce que si vous suivez le même itinéraire que le mien, quand vous arrivez à Ray Charles, vous vous apercevez qu'il est tout aussi important que Terry Riley, sinon plus. En ce qui me concerne j'ai toujours été bien plus touché par la musique noire que par la musique européenne. Le rythm'n'blues, les vieux Cecil Taylor, Mingus sont, pour moi (pas pour Kevin, par exemple), plus émouvants que n'importe quel compositeur européen. A Londres, Soft Machine s'est simplement vite développé en une unité pour des concerts de deux heures et plus. Et nous y avons placé toutes les idées qui étaient restées inconscientes du temps de Wilde Flowers, et qui ont brusquement surgi.

C. L. : Comment Kim Fowley en est-il venu à produire le premier single de Soft Machine ?

R. W. : Ce qui était dingue pour nous, au début, c'est qu'on était prêts à faire des LP's, et les maisons de disques nous disaient : vous ne pouvez faire un album si vous n'avez pas eu un "hit" en 45 tours. Aux Etats-Unis, les groupes le faisaient pourtant déjà. Le public eut l'impression que les groupes anglais (c'est une pointe de chauvinisme...) étaient à la traîne des groupes américains. En fait, nous avions eu l'idée de faire des albums en même temps, mais les maisons de disques, ici, n'y étaient pas prêtes. En partie parce qu'elles étaient bien moins riches et puissantes que des sociétés américaines comme Elektra ou RCA, qui enregistraient déjà nombre d'albums des groupes de la West Coast, ou même à New-York. Et Kim Fowley vint à Londres et nous demanda aussitôt pourquoi l'on ne faisait pas d'albums, il ne pouvait le croire. Il nous proposa donc de faire ce "hit single". Mickie Most s'était proposé disant : "Je peux vous mettre dans les charts, mais il faudra faire les chansons que je propose, etc.", et nous avions dit non. Notre management fut complètement furieux après nous, parce que Mickie Most avait déjà lancé Lulu, Donovan, Jeff Beck, et qu'il ne faisait pas ce genre d'offres à n'importe qui. Notre management fut vraiment en colère, et, ensuite, ils ne se remuèrent plus beaucoup pour nous. Seuls des gens comme Kim, ou aussi Georgio Gomelsky, voulurent le faire. A l'époque, il n'y avait pas "Virgin"... Kim Fowley nous avait vus au premier concert à la Roundhouse. Il était par ailleurs, plus intéressé par le Pink Floyd, mais ils avaient déjà signé avec un autre Américain, Joe Boyd. Il essaya de faire agir notre management, il nous fit enregistrer plusieurs titres, mais il fut si écoeuré par le business anglais, qu'il finit par s'enfuir pour Los Angeles par le premier avion, paniqué...

C. L. : Combien de fois avez-vous tourné aux U.S.A. avec Soft Machine ?

R. W. : En 68, nous avons suivi Hendrix en tournée dans tout le pays. Puis nous nous sommes séparés. Définitivement. Puis nous nous sommes remis ensemble... Puis nous y sommes retournés en 70 ou 71, et ce fut le dernier travail que je fis avec eux. j'aime beaucoup l'Amérique, New-York en particulier, où l'on peut vivre trois jours et trois nuits dans la rue. Ce qui change de l'Angleterre où tout s'arrête à onze heures du soir. Mais, à chaque fois, il y avait une très mauvaise ambiance dans le groupe. La première fois, Kevin nous dit : "N'y pensons plus, tout est fini, je m'en vais." La dernière fois, Elton (Dean) voulait que je joue comme Jack DeJohnette, et moi, je ne joue pas comme DeJohnette. Et puis, je n'étais pas content parce qu'ils ne voulaient pas jouer les compositions de Hugh (Hopper), que je trouvais très intéressantes. Un morceau comme "Facelift" est je pense l'une des meilleures choses que nous ayons faites. Mais ils n'en voulaient pas parce que cela ne constituait pas de bonnes bases pour des solos. Ce n'était pas assez "jazzy" pour eux. Et puis, le fait d'être en Amérique intensifie sensiblement ce genre de disputes.

C. L. : Avez-vous toujours l'intention d'enregistrer un album de vos vieux

"standards" préférés ?

R. W. : Pas vraiment. Si je pouvais enregistrer un titre différent chaque jour, je le ferais. Mais cela coûte trop cher. Il y a des projets qui me semblent plus importants. Un album de vieux "hits" doit être en cinquième ou sixième position sur ma liste.

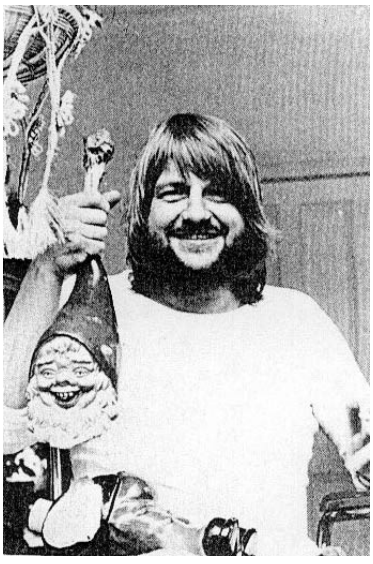
C. L. : Que trouve-t-on en première position, alors ?

R. W. : En ce moment, il y a Fred Frith (d'Henry Cow") qui a écrit une musique adorable, et j'essaye d'y adjoindre quelques paroles et quelques parties vocales. Je voudrais aussi enregistrer d'autres compositions d'Hugh Hopper. Ce qui m'intéresse aussi, en ce moment, c'est de faire des choeurs. Je l'ai fait récemment sur l'album de Brian Eno, et ça m'a beaucoup plu. Je ne l'avais jamais fait sur mes propres disques : des imitations de choeurs féminins. Il y a bien des possibilités dans ce domaine. Et puis, je fais des singles.

C. L. : Qu'est-ce qui vous a décidé à signer avec les disques Virgin ?

R. W. : Tous mes amis y sont. Dans la mesure où je ne veux pas avoir de groupe, et je veux emprunter des musiciens à d'autres groupes, ce sera bien plus facile, pour des problèmes contractuels, s'ils sont tous dans la même maison de disques. J'ai quelques amis qui sont chez "Island" et c'est assez difficile d'enregistrer avec eux. Ma première apparition sur Virgin a consisté en vocaux sur l'album d'Hatfield & The North, et dès lors, je ne me suis même pas posé le problème : c'est là que j'étais chez moi. Il y a deux manières de travailler pour une maison de disques : l'une consiste à scruter le marché, et voir ce qui est populaire : "Ho, ho / Les chanteurs avec quatre bras et les cheveux verts marchent bien en ce moment, il nous faut donc trouver des chanteurs à quatre bras et aux cheveux verts..." Le système Virgin est de regarder et trouver ce qui manque. Et ils savent ce qui manque, parce qu'ils tiennent depuis longtemps des boutiques de disques. Et, par exemple, ils me connaissaient bien parce qu'ils vendaient mon album "End of an ear", que l'on ne demandait et pouvait trouver que dans leurs magasins. C'était la même chose pour les groupes allemands également. il y a une intelligence que l'on ne trouve pas chez les grosses compagnies. Quand j'ai quitté CBS, les gens me disaient : "Tu es fou, avec CBS tes disques sont distribués dans le monde entier, avec Virgin ils le seront dans quelques boutiques minables..." Et le premier disque que sortit Virgin fut "Tubular bells" de Mike Oldfield qui grimpa les charts anglaises, américaines et du monde entier. C'était si drôle.

C. L. : Que pensez-vous des albums de Mike Oldfield ?



R. W. : Je préfère encore son jeu de guitare, en fait. J'ai joué quelque temps avec lui dans le Whole World de Kevin, avec Lol Coxhill et David Bedford. C'était vraiment bon. Je suis d'accord avec ce que Mike pense de ses disques. Il est sans prétentions. Il faut considérer qu'il écrivit "Tubular bells" à dix-neuf ans. C'est fantastique. Mais, en aucun cas, il ne s'agit d'une compétition avec Debussy... Il a une intuition fantastique. Ce qui me plaît, c'est qu'il reste fondamentalement un musicien folk. C'est une jolie contradiction de jouer de la folk-music avec 400 instruments. Je pense qu'il est très bon pour lui d'être utilisé par David Bedford dans son album "Star's end". Bedford comprend vraiment bien les orchestrations pour un groupe nombreux. Ce que fera Oldfield sera de plus en plus intéressant. Quel âge a-t-il maintenant ? Vingt et un ? De toute façon, je n'aurai pu le faire.

C. L. : Sur la dernière plage de "Rock bottom", avez-vous utilisé Oldfield comme une sorte de citation ?

R. W. : Je l'ai utilisé parce qu'il errait dans le studio, et que cela lui a plu soudain de le faire. Quand il décide quelque chose, de toute façon, il n'y a aucun moyen de l'arrêter. Mais d'autres comme Steve Hillage, comme Fred Frith, comme Phil Miller, auraient tout aussi bien pu le faire... C'est ce qui est bien dans le fait d'être chez Virgin...

C. L. : Avez-vous été satisfait par l'accueil fait à "Rock bottom" ?

R. W. : Je suis un peu ennuyé. Je n'avais jamais subi une telle avalanche de louanges. J'ai un peu peur que l'an prochain il y ait une réaction contraire du style : "Oh, après tout, il

n'est pas si bon que ça..." Ce n'est pas dramatique de toute façon. Je pense que les gens l'ont écouté plus facilement que "End of an ear", parce qu'il contenait plus de parties chantées. Ca a été très gentil, en tout cas.

C. L. : Etes-vous optimiste quant au développement de la scène musicale anglaise ?

R. W. : De la scène musicale mondiale, plutôt. Je ne suis pas particulièrement intéressé par les groupes de rock anglais modernes. J'ai été passionné par la révolution rock des années soixante, mais, aujourd'hui, je suis plus intéressé par la musique africaine, par exemple par ce que peut jouer Mongezi Feza, avec qui je suis totalement comblé d'enregistrer. Pour en revenir à la musique noire, c'est sa redécouverte qui nous a permis de mettre à jour ce qu'il y avait de plus intuitif et de plus originellement primitif en nous-mêmes.

C. L. : Que pensez-vous des groupes européens ?

R. W. : Assez curieusement, la plupart de ces groupes développent des idées trouvées il y a quatre ou cinq ans par les groupes auxquels j'appartenais. Ils en développent chacun un certain aspect. Mais j'ai abandonné, moi, beaucoup de ces orientations et suis dans quelque chose d'autre. Alors, je suis intéressé, je trouve ça sympathique, mais je ressens une certaine distance entre eux et moi.

C. L. : Avez-vous entendu Magma ?

R. W. : Oui. Ils sont très... impressionnants. mais ils ne me parlent pas... Ils parlent à quelqu'un d'autre. Ils font partie de ces musiciens qui ont à présent une technique suffisante pour reprendre et réutiliser l'héritage de la musique européenne. Pour moi, ils ont quelque chose de très wagnérien. Et toute cette grandeur de présentation tient, en fait, à ce qu'ils sont en compétition avec ces grands compositeurs. Ce qui n'est absolument pas mon cas. Leur utilisation des mots, et de leur language est pour eux quelque chose de très sérieux. La mienne ne l'est pas du tout. Elle est issue de l'écoute de nombreux comédiens anglais ridicules desquels j'aimerais faire partie. Même des poètes Edwardiens se sont amusés à cette destruction joyeuse de la langue anglaise. C'est de là que je viens. Une pure plaisanterie, c'est tout. Rien de sérieux, bien que les plaisanteries puissent être sérieuses... mais c'est une autre question.

C. L. : Pensez-vous faire des concerts régulièrement ? Pourrons-nous vous voir en France ?

R. W. : Nick Mason me pousse à venir en France, parce qu'il est vrai que tout y a toujours bien marché, autant pour eux que pour nous. Mais, bien que je ne veuille pas tomber sous la dictature de la chaise roulante, il faut bien reconnaître que voyager me pose tout un tas de problèmes aussi bien pratiques que médicaux, sur lesquels je ne veux pas insister. Ici, tout est étudié spécialement pour que j'aie un minimum de problèmes. Faire régulièrement des concerts me donne des responsabilités personnelles et sociales vis-à-vis des autres musiciens, ainsi que des gens qui paient pour vous voir. Et ça me rend absolument nerveux. Le problème est que ceux qui font les meilleurs concerts sont les gens comme Gong, qui travaillent, travaillent, travaillent à longueur d'année, ne cessent de tourner. Et c'est la seule façon d'être bon sur scène. Alors je pense que ça ne donnerait rien de bon de donner des concerts de temps en temps. Quant à tourner régulièrement, les problèmes pratiques seraient énormes. Et puis, si j'ai pu réaliser "Rock bottom" comme je l'ai fait, c'est parce que je n'avais pas toute cette pression sur moi. J'aurais pu le faire il y a dix ans, sinon. Former un groupe pour partir sur la route serait pour moi quelque chose de rétrograde, à présent.

Propos recueillis par Christian Lebrun

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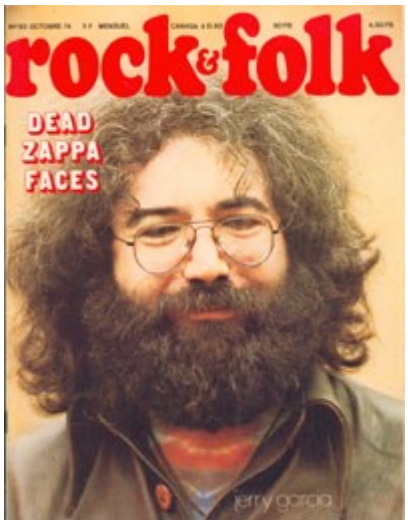
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Retour d'un ami - Rock & Folk - N° 93 - octobre 1974

RETOUR D'UN AMI



RETOUR D'UN AMI

On a eu peur qu'il ne soit plus jamais là. Mais Robert Wyatt est revenu...

Il était apparu sur la scène du théâtre des Champs Elysées, à moitié nu comme d'habitude, titubant comme d'habitude ; il s'était installé derrière ses caisses qu'il frappa furieusement deux heures durant pour accompagner musicalement le "ballet tragi-comique" de Graziella Martinez et Copi, alors seulement vedette de l'underground. une pièce qui s'appelait "Ste Geneviève sur une balançoire", à moins que ce ne fut... "dans une baignoire". Ce curieux petit homme aux cheveux blonds et fous, démoniaque, qui chevauchait sa batterie comme pour mieux la dompter, n'était autre que Robert Wyatt, membre d'un trio complètement inconnu du grand public mais familier pour la hip-société parisienne de l'époque : le Soft Machine ; derrière son orgue bariolé, visage science-fictionnesque, Mike Ratledge impassible faisait gronder son instrument, et sur le devant de la scène, Kevin Ayers les paupières peintes en bleu chantait "My Château".

Après ce concert, il y eut une fête dans les beaux quartiers, comme chaque fois que le Soft se produisait. Robert Wyatt y vint, tenant par la main une blonde d'un soir. Il paraissait maintenant tout petit et frêle loin de la fureur, de la fureur libérée par l'animal scénique qu'il était auparavant. Encore une fois, il semblait perdu dans un grand rêve secret, ou tout simplement ivre ou défoncé... ainsi, souvenir de cette soirée, la petite boîte dorée trouvée au pied de la batterie, écrin précieux pour l'expérimentateur psychédélique qu'il était. Le groupe ne s'était-il pas délibérément placé sous la domination spirituelle du maître William Burroughs, avec un petit détour par la pataphysique, juste pour ne pas trop se prendre au sérieux... une autre forme d'aventure pour l'esprit.

Un souvenir qui date déjà de plus de sept années. Robert Wyatt, ce peut être aussi l'image de ce diable au torse nu ruisselant de sueur, s'agitant sauvagement devant l'écran aux couleurs éclatées et mouvantes d'un light-show pour la "fenêtre rose" de Jean-Jacques Lebel au Palais des Sports, une furieuse nuit ; trop en avance pour être un succès... Robert Wyatt encore à Sigma, au sein du grand orchestre de Keith Tippett, et aux côtés, entre autres, de Fripp, Julie Driscoll, Zoot Money et Patto... ou bien dans la nuit froide et humide d'Amougies ; au Théâtre de la Musique pour un concert-apothéose, sa voix en écho, à l'époque du "Third", sublime réussite d'un parti-pris musical original : souvenez-vous de "Moon In June", etc...



C'est dire combien l'ex-batteur du Soft appartient à la mémoire d'un rock-critic, et donc tout autant à celle du public français. Il fait partie de ces rares personnages attachants de la rock-music dont la musique se confond avec la vie, sorte de ballade nostalgique avec parfois l'ivresse de parcourir des paysages musicaux nouveaux, la recherche d'une beauté que l'on croit vierge parce qu'enfouie dans un magma de sons inexplorés, au croisement de routes musicales diverses. Tel apparaissait Robert Wyatt quittant la Machine Molle pour tenter l'aventure solitaire, musicien contemporain vulnérable qui après un accident terrible, vient de réaliser une oeuvre maîtresse, "Rock Bottom". Mais avant cela, il y eut le Soft, "End Of An Ear" le premier album solo, la courte expérience Matching Mole et les deux albums qu'elle devait produire, sans oublier la participation aux tentatives musicales des amis de toujours comme Daevid Allen et son "Banana Moon", Kevin Ayers, etc...

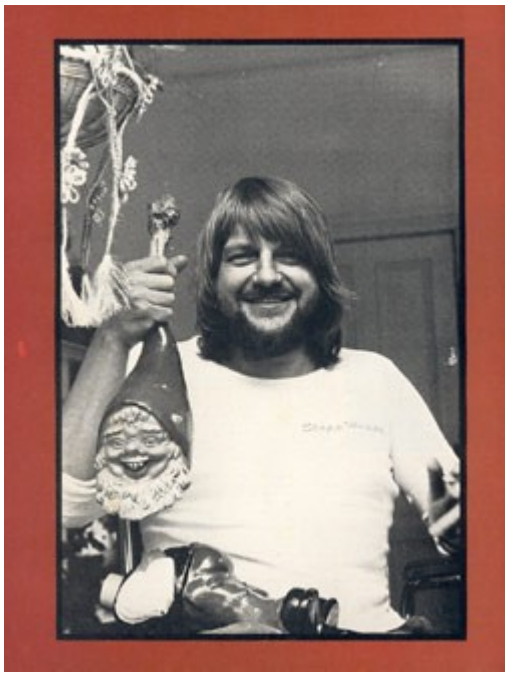
La voix en écho et les bras qui martèlent pour scander le chant.

En réécoutant les bandes exhumées par Gorgio Gomelsky et publiées dans la série "Rock Génération" chez Byg Records, on peut prendre la mesure de ce que fut le "creuset" Soft Machine, l'instant précis où la rencontre de quatre jeunes intellectuels en rupture de fac, ayant choisi l'aventure et le monde des marginaux de la rock-music, devait donner le départ à tout à un mouvement musical qui marquera la musique anglaise "progressiste". Des bandes "live" prises entre 62 et 67, à l'époque où Daevid Allen faisait partie intégrante du groupe. La voix de Robert Wyatt y est continuellement présente, curieusement étouffée et geignante, syncopée aussi - rien à voir avec le chant bluesy ou le rock hurlé, plutôt une plainte, un susurrement mais qui emprunte à la jazzitude (surtout au be-bop) sa scansion. Robert Wyatt ne fera que développer, en jouant notamment avec l'écho, la réverbération, ce style particulier, parfaitement original, qui lui fait utiliser sa voix comme un instrument, travaillant les sonorités des mots comme un instrument à vent les notes. Il nous est d'ailleurs rappelé dans le texte des pochettes du premier album du Soft combien Wyatt avait étonné Michael Zwerin, chroniqueur du Village Voice, en chantant note pour note le solo de Charlie Parker sur "Donna Lee". Mais cette voix a toujours été chargée d'émotion, à cause sans doute de son apparente fragilité. Que vous réécoutiez ces vieux témoignages des débuts ou bien les textes du tout nouvel album, la voix parfaitement anachronique a ce pouvoir de vous donner la chair de poule, vous transporter dans ce tréfonds de vous-même tellement plus jouissif parce que rarement atteint. Dans les bandes "live" de la série Rock Generation, tout est encore fonction de cette voix, c'est à dire que la musique est surtout d'accompagnement: Robert Wyatt contrôle d'autant mieux son chant qu'il en assure lui-même la structure rythmique.

Dès l'enregistrement du premier album officiel, celui-ci longtemps attendu après l'échec de la tentative de musique en 45t, cette voix va devenir un instrument, certes porteuse du texte mais aussi présente comme plainte, comme écho, comme élément humain dans un contexte de sons qui se veulent au carrefour du fantastique, de la dérision et du science-fictionnesque. Cette voix est alors maîtrisée, exploitée au service de cette musique pour le corps et l'esprit. Au son singulier de l'orgue de Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt ajoute ce drumming tout à la fois élégant et furieux, précis et torrentiel. Il faut dire que le batteur du Soft est héritier du jazz tout en ayant participé au mouvement anglais de la rock music des années 60. Il est et restera un des seuls musiciens de rock qui sachent frapper fort, "écraser" le tempo tout en swinguant.

Au côté de Mike Ratledge et de Kevin Ayers, il gravera enfin "Hope For Happiness", "Joy Of A Toy", "Save Yourself", etc..., qui appartenaient déjà à l'histoire du groupe, des chansons qui, après la Côte d'Azur française, Ibiza, avaient parcouru les chemins américains en première partie de la Jimi Hendrix Experience. Sur la première face, la voix de Wyatt domine et l'on peut entendre son drumming dans toute sa richesse au cours des longues minutes de "So Boot If At All". Sur la seconde face, sa voix cède en partie la place à celle de Kevin Ayers pour les non moins sublimes hymnes soft-machiniens que sont et resteront "We Did It Again", "Belle Comme Une Poubelle", et surtout " Why Are We Sleeping ". Pour

le volume II de la Machine Molle, Kevin Ayers a laissé sa place à un autre membre (depuis toujours) de la grande famille, Hugh Hopper, resté jusqu'à présent dans l'ombre des coulisses. Là, Robert est seul pour assurer toutes les parties vocales de cette oeuvre ambitieuse, sorte de symphonie rock'n'rollienne en hommage tout à la fois à la pataphysique et au dadaïsme avec ses collages de sons, ses textes absurdes. Le chant de Robert fait merveille dans cette oeuvre collective qui fait appel à l'électronique, aux ressources du studio et du travail sur bandes dont le batteur deviendra un habitué. De la même façon apparaîtront les cuivres pour décupler les sonorités.



> Zoom

On se dirige alors inévitablement vers une prise de direction musicale du groupe par Mike Ratledge, dont nous trouverons confirmation avec la sortie du "Third ", album/apothéose des recherches de la Soft Machine puisque présentant tout à la fois, à travers une synthèse originale, la jazzitude, l'électronique, les boucles sonores expérimentées par l'ami des temps ancien Terry Riley, mais aussi, plus pour longtemps encore, la voix de Robert Wyatt. Le groupe s'est ouvert : en font partie plusieurs musiciens de jazz anglais de l'orchestre de Keith Tippett, jeune pianiste ami du groupe. Robert Wyatt aura, dans ce disque double, sa face, " The Moon In June ". Dans cette plage, il va placer tout ce qui pour lui participe de son univers musical : ce goût du vertige sonore par le décuplement des sonorités grâce au travail sur les bandes, les échos, l'ivresse du son qui tourne, des accents de la voix susurrée. " The Moon In June " est alors compris par les initiés comme étant sans aucun doute un des plus beaux trips musicaux qu'ait jamais proposé la rock music, passionnante plongée dans les détours profonds de la matière sonore ; la preuve aussi que l'on peut utiliser la musique traitée électroniquement pour produire une oeuvre d'une troublante beauté, vibrante, voyage psychédélique des sons, comme sut le faire presque à la même époque Hendrix, avec certaines parties d'" Electric Ladyland ".

Porter sa solitude pour enfin couper le cordon ombilical d'avec la mère Soft.

Un grand quatre en relief sur un fond rosé, c'est l'album qui annonce la rupture douloureuse : Robert Wyatt ne chante plus. Il joue seulement de la batterie pour ce disque marquant un virage en direction de la jazzitude, du modernisme musical, mais qui nie l'émotion première, cette fascinante palpitation des sons, celle, il faut l'avouer, que donnaient les accents douloureux ou rêveurs de la voix de Robert. On dira que c'est Elton Dean qui poussa Ratledge à éliminer progressivement celui qui voulait s'obstiner à chanter, tout simplement, comme il devait nous le dire, parce qu'il aimait chanter. Il s'en alla essayer de continuer sa route solitaire. Mais on ne coupe pas aussi facilement le cordon ombilical. Robert Wyatt avait pourtant, comme pour combler une trop grande frustration, réussi un premier album solo, " The End Of An Ear ". Il était indiqué très clairement le pourquoi de cet album, par les mots " Robert Wyatt, out of work pop singer ". Des morceaux aux titres/hommages, signes d'amitié et de reconnaissance qui résument la personnalité de ce chanteur/batteur et expérimentateur dans un profond désarroi. Il y a " Las Vegas Tango ", pour célébrer le grand arrangeur et chef d'orchestre dont l'ceuvre l'a marqué musicalement, Gil Evans; un clin d'oeil au groupe Caravan, qui lui doit beaucoup; un autre à Daevid Allen, le vieux compagnon, et à Gilly Smith; à d'autres encore, Carla, Marsha ou Caroline, sans oublier " le vieux monde " ("et ce merci pour l'utilisation de ton corps, au revoir"). Voix wyattienne, jazz cool, piano électrique, inversion de bandes, traitement électronique maximal des sons, etc. pour ce "The End Of An Ear" pas assez maîtrisé, trop difficile pour connaître même un modeste succès public. Le disque passa presque inaperçu malgré ses évidentes qualités.

Mais la rupture d'avec le Soft, cela voulait dire pour Wyatt mettre sur pied pour la première fois son propre groupe, en assurer donc le leadership, position ô combien inconfortable pour ce musicien généreux et timide à la fois, à la peur paranoïaque des responsabilités. Il y eut une longue période d'attente, un album avec Daevid Allen et Pip Pyle pour Byg, où Robert put enregistrer cette vieille chanson de l'époque Canterbury,

composée par Hugh Hopper, " Memories ", et bien sûr des moments de libération totale grâce aux grandes parties improvisées. Et puis très rapidement le nouveau groupe naissait, enregistrait un album : Matching Mole... pied de nez à la Machine Molle. L'ex-Soft s'entourera pourtant de musiciens " familiers " comme David Sinclair, ex-Caravan lui aussi originaire de Canterbury et admirateur du Soft, le guitariste Phil Miller, élément de cette vaste école progressiste anglaise et qui participa à certains enregistrements de Caravan. Ainsi de Bill Mac Cormick et Dave Mac Rae... Si la plupart des compositions sont de Wyatt, il va s'effacer pour laisser une grande place aux interventions des solistes Phil Miller ou David Sinclair, comme dans " Part Of The Dance ", symbiose de l'ancien Soft et de la toute nouvelle tendance jazz-rock, celle de Weather Report par exemple.

Mais, incontestablement, Wyatt ne contrôle pas la musique comme sa position de leader et de pourvoyeur l'exige, il n'impose pas une direction précise suffisante pour donner une nouvelle dimension à cette autre Machine Molle/Matching Mole. On le verra notamment au cours de l'émission de TV " Rockenstock ", que le groupe vint enregistrer à Paris. Sans oublier le suicide que fut pour le groupe l'acceptation de se produire en première partie du show de John Mayall à l'Olympia. Le public sifflera le groupe parce qu'il était venu entendre un des vieux rescapés du british blues et non pas de la musique " avant gardiste ". Insuccès total au niveau du grand public, pratiquement pas d'engagements, trop peu de considération de la part de la presse anglaise toute puissante. Seuls, en France, les fidèles du Soft de la première époque, pour qui Wyatt a toujours été un grand musicien, témoigneront de l'intérêt pour le nouveau groupe de Robert, qui sera conduit à se séparer non sans avoir enregistré un second album, " Little Red Record ", bien plus ambitieux que le premier, produit, celui-ci, par Robert Fripp et avec la participation d'Eno au synthétiseur. Ce " petit disque rouge " a été conçu comme un tout, disque-concept où l'exploration des sons est maximale, où, par exemple, tous les morceaux de la première face s'enchaînent automatiquement. Insertion dans la musique contemporaine, le free, le disque ne présente aucune composition de Wyatt et on y entend très peu sa " silly voice " (magnifique chant dans " Gloria Gloom " et " God Song "). Un jour pourtant, malgré l'insuccès du moment, on reconnaîtra à ces albums leur valeur, celle de témoignage sur une avancée des sons à la recherche d'une synthèse de la jazzitude, de l'électronique et de la rock music. Ce qui semblerait enfin vouloir se produire avec " Rock Bottom ".



> Zoom

L'accident, la petite voiture, Virgin et sans doute le succès.

Il est tombé par une fenêtre d'un quatrième étage il y a quelques mois, à Maida Vale, lors d'une soirée donnée pour fêter la grande réunion de toute la famille Soft. Ils étaient tous là. Il n'en est pas mort par miracle, mais il reste paralysé à vie. Il devient un homme-tronc dans une petite voiture. Le monde du rock perd ainsi l'un de ses plus grands batteurs,

mais il va gagner un grand compositeur et chanteur; il suffit de se remémorer, comme nous le faisions au début de cet article, l'incroyable pourvoyeur d'énergie qu'il fut, pour ne pas avoir éprouvé une grande tristesse en regardant les photos de la pochette du disque d'Hatfield and the North, premier document où l'ex-batteur du Soft apparaît après son accident. On savait pourtant qu'il avait mis à profit son séjour à l'hôpital pour repenser son insertion et celle de sa musique dans le monde du rock, pour y écouter beaucoup de bandes, pour y enregistrer aussi des schémas pour sa musique future, au piano. Pour l'aider à envisager son retour, dans le monde du show-biz, sans trop de difficultés matérielles, le Pink Floyd et le Soft Machine donnèrent un concert ensemble, dont la recette lui fut versée. Petit à petit, il allait sortir de sa nuit " with a little help of his friends " : un album pour Virgin, la participation au concert du 1er juin avec Eno, John Cale, Nico et Kevin Ayers, la présence à ses côtés, pour son enregistrement et pour son premier concert de retour, le 8 septembre, de Mike Oldfield et Nick Mason.



> Zoom

Ce dernier aura joué un rôle décisif dans le come-back prometteur de celui qui, pour prouver qu'il n'a pas perdu son goût de la dérision, de l'absurde, se fera photographier pour la couverture du New Musical Express sur sa petite voiture et sur un escalier, ses musiciens l'entourant... eux aussi dans des voitures de paralytique : parmi eux, Mike Oldfield et Nick Mason, justement. Et puis, son album sorti, on voit la presse anglaise s'y intéresser, la critique délirer et les ventes s'accélérer comme si, ironie du sort, son accident avait été l'argument publicitaire nécessaire. " Rock Bottom " marque surtout l'accomplissement de la démarche musicale de Robert Wyatt, celle poursuivie, nous l'avons vu, depuis les débuts. Il a enfin trouvé, avec Virgin et les méthodes de travail du Manor, le cadre idéal pour travailler; le soutien d'un Nick Mason ou de Mike Oldfield lui apportant cet environnement amical qu'il a toujours revendiqué. Le résultat ne pouvait être que cette sublime symphonie, merveille de technique instrumentale et de travail en studio mais qui ouvre sur l'émotion, l'ivresse et le dépassement.

Robert Wyatt a enfin atteint cette synthèse idéale des sons qui annihile toute possibilité critique. Il y a sa voix, les percussions que ses mains peuvent encore produire, le piano et puis l'écriture musicale, cette mise en scène sonore que l'on peut parfaire grâce à la technologie du studio. Il y a donc Robert Wyatt, non pas diminué mais bien au contraire en position de force maintenant, puisqu'il va devenir aussi un grand vendeur de disques. Il peut alors regarder avec une distance toute de sagesse la scène anglaise et trouver que Bryan Ferry est une des personnalités les plus intéressantes parmi celles nouvellement apparues. Il pensait, en confiant cela à un journaliste, aux albums solos du leader de Roxy, c'est à-dire aux reprises de standards. Et d'envisager ainsi de faire de même, avec notamment " Do The Strand " de Bryan Ferry, " Goodbye Porkpie Hat " de Charlie Mingus, " Round About Midnight " de Monk ou bien " O oh Baby " des Miracles, " Georgia On My

Mind ", " Song For Che " de Charlie Haden, " Solitude " de Duke Ellington et même " Hey, Hey, We're The Monkees ". Voilà ce qu'il disait, il y a à peine plus d'un mois et, pour prouver sa suite dans ses idées, Virgin vient de sortir un 45t de Robert Wyatt chantant un hit célèbre des Monkees, " I'm A Believer "... Merci Robert de revenir, on avait besoin de toi !

PAUL ALESSANDRINI.

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Robert Wyatt - Jazz Hot - N° 291 - février 1973

ROBERT WYATT



Tout le monde a des héros, des gurus, des professeurs. Le mien s'appelle Daevid Allen. Il a travaillé à Paris avec Terry Riley qui avait notamment enregistré des bandes extraordinaires avec Chet Baker, quelque chose d'inouï. Daevid avait un professeur de batterie, George Mardowe, un néo-zélandais qui essayait de me faire jouer comme Philly Joe Jones et je n'y parvenais pas... Mon frère m'a fait écouter Ellington, le be bop, Cecil Taylor (« Looking Ahead » surtout), « Something Else » d'Ornette Coleman, le premier quartette de Don Ellis avec Jaki Byard qui enregistra pour Candid, « Mingus presents Mingus » : tout cela explosait dans ma tête.

Si à partir de telles influences jazzistiques j'ai néanmoins choisi de m'exprimer dans un autre langage (appelons, si vous le voulez bien, ma musique « Isolationist English Decadent Hippy Rubbish »), c'est que — c'est une banalité à dire — si l'on respecte les canons de la culture officielle, on ne parvient pas à s'exprimer. Il fallait cesser d'avoir des complexes vis-à-vis de la musique américaine, vis-à-vis du jazz. Je suis blanc et Anglais, voilà tout. Keith Moon, le batteur des Who, ne connaît rien au jazz, il s'en moque complètement, il n'a pas de complexes, et il joue bien : il faut faire comme lui… En travaillant avec Kevin Ayers, je me suis mis à aimer les mélodies simples et j'ai voulu chanter ; c'est ce que l'on appelle « pop music - je suppose. Ray Charles m'a également beaucoup influencé, le Ray Charles des chansons d'amour langoureuses sur fond de violons, j'aimais beaucoup cela.

Le trio de base des « Soft Machine » était limité sur le plan de l'écriture. Mike et Hugh voulaient écrire des choses plus élaborées. Alors j'ai été dans des clubs de jazz et j'ai découvert Keith Tippet et son groupe : c'était très fort à la fois sur le plan technique et sur le plan musical. Ils se sont joints à nous. Le grand orchestre de Keith Tippet — dans lequel il m'est arrivé de jouer — est un double phénomène social et musical, une occasion de rencontres pour des musiciens venant d'horizons extrêmement divers.
Aussi même quand la musique n'est pas exceptionnelle, il constitue un événement exceptionnel. En Angleterre c'est arrivé grâce à Keith Tippet et à Julie Driscoll, à New York grâce à Carla Bley et Mike Mantler avec la J.C.O.A. Tout le monde devrait avoir écouté « Escalator over the Hill » ; Carla Bley est quelqu'un d'indispensable et le monde serait un cauchemar si elle n'existait pas. Elle représente une part de sensualité, de sexualité, de

rêve. Elle parvient à retrouver la simplicité de Kurt Weil en faisant travailler ensemble musiciens amateurs et musiciens à la technique tout à fait éprouvée. Bien sûr tout n'est pas parfait : je ne crois pas par exemple, que Paul Motian soit le batteur idéal pour accompagner Jack Bruce et John McLaughlin. Il aurait mieux fallu Cobham : Jack Bruce et Billy Cobham, voilà une rythmique de rêve…

Elvin Jones, Sunny Murray, Milford Graves sont des gens très importants mais respectés, de la bonne révolution du jazz. Il a dix ans, j'écoutais déjà « Into the Hot », maintenant tout cela est reconnu. Aussi, je préfère m'inspirer de la simplicité, de l'évidence des bons batteurs de rock. Prenez Alan White, qui joue avec le Plastic Ono Band : il est fantastique ! On dit : « Ce n'est pas du jazz, c'est trop simple, ce n'est pas inventif », c'est faux. C'est le drumming pur, naturel. On veut ignorer Ginger Baker c'est une erreur, ce qu'il a fait avec Jack Bruce convient parfaitement à l'idiome électrique ; il a compris la dynamique de l'amplification, et l'on est injuste avec lui...

Quand on me demande si je suis un technicien de la batterie, je réponds parfois oui, parfois non. Mon professeur de batterie disait qu'Elvin Jones n'avait pas une technique énorme et qu'il y avait bien dix batteurs de studios de la côte Ouest qui étaient plus forts que lui sur ce plan-là : Stan Levey, Louie Bellson, Shelly Manne même. Cela n'a aucune importance, la technique, ce n'est pas ça, c'est quand les doigts peuvent exécuter les idées qui vous viennent. C'est vraiment quelque chose de personnel. Sonny Terry et Brownie McGhee sont de grands techniciens parce qu'ils arrivent à jouer ce qu'ils veulent, et n'importe quel harmoniciste aura beau jouer dix fois plus vite, s'il n'est pas capable de contrôler complètement ce qu'il fait, il n'a pas plus de technique. Personnellement je n'en ai pas assez pour réaliser tout ce que je veux. Quand j'ai des idées nouvelles, j'ai des besoins de techniques nouvelles, et réciproquement.

(Propos recueillis au magnétophone par Roland Szyfmanowicz)

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Soft Machine en trois dimensions - Best - N° 54 - janvier 1973



SOFT MACHINE EN TROIS DIMENSIONS

Je vous mijotais une méchante étude théorique sur la "famille Soft", avec panorama historique, analyse psychologique, thèse, antithèse et synthèse. J'y aurais mis en lumière, dans une superbe fresque, les mécanismes de la complexe évolution du Soft Machine et les rôles respectifs des groupes cousins (Gong, Kevin Ayers Whole World, Matching Mole, Just Us, Caravan) et affluents (Keith Tippett, Nucleus, Delivery). Si vous y avez finalement échappé, c'est que ce que m'ont raconté ces trois vétérans du Soft, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge, était tellement passionnant que j'en ai heureusement oublié tout ce que j'avais à dire sur le sujet et que je préfère vous livrer leurs propres commentaires. J'ai rencontré Robert dans l'appartement qu'il occupe au 22e étage d'une de ces gigantesques tours qui commencent à déparer Londres comme elles défigurent Paris. Matching Mole, le groupe qu'il avait formé peu après son départ du Soft, n'avait encore que quelques mois d'existence, et malgré les difficultés financières dans lesquelles il se débattait déjà, Robert était plein d'enthousiasme. Il me traça un portrait haut en couleurs de la Machine Molle, dans un parler anecdotique et plein de verve, à la fois très lucide et désordonné, comme si sa pensée précédait perpétuellement sa parole. Bien qu'assez amer, il n'avait rien perdu de cette spontanéité lorsque, quelques mois plus tard, il m'annonça la séparation de son groupe.



> Zoom

C'est ensuite Hugh que j'allais voir, dans l'ancien torpilleur aménagé en villa et amarré à une vingtaine de kilomètres de Canterbury, le berceau du Soft, où il habite en compagnie de son frère Brian et de leurs compagnes. Il révéla une personnalité très humaine et chaleureuse, et cette trompeuse apparence de froideur qu'on lui connait sur scène tient en fait à un caractère réservé, voire timide. C'était en juin dernier, Karl Jenkins venait juste de remplacer Elton Dean, et quelques jours plus tard je me rendais enfin chez Mike, dans son appartement londonien, aux murs tapissés de livres de toutes sortes. Lui aussi se montra plus ouvert qu'on pourrait l'escompter, mais m'impressionna surtout par un sens aigu de l'analyse, au crible duquel il se plait à passer ses propres dires.
Voici donc l'essentiel de ces trois conversations...

WYATT

Hervé Muller : Considérez-vous Matching Mole comme une continuation de ce que vous faisiez avec Soft Machine ?

Robert Wyatt : Ma contribution à Matching Mole, oui... Vous voyez, c'est deux choses. C'est moi qui prend ma chance à faire certaines choses que je voulais faire, comme chanter quelques pop-songs et jouer à nouveau un peu de piano, des choses comme ça. Et puis c'est un nouveau groupe. Il y a une part de chaque sur notre premier album, encore que l'ultime développement du groupe n'y soit pas représenté, Dave McRae (qui a remplacé Dave Sinclair) est maintenant devenu un élément d'importance centrale dans le son créé.

H. M. : Comment en êtes-vous finalement arrivé à prendre la décision de quitter le Soft Machine ?

R. W. : Ah! l'éternelle question... Bon, je vais essayer de donner une réponse différente si possible. Je suis fatigué de donner toujours les mêmes raisons, aujourd'hui je vais essayer de trouver quelque chose d'autre...

H. M. : Si cela peut vous aider, je vais vous livrer mes impressions. J'ai toujours eu le sentiment que, depuis le début, il y avait deux sortes de gens au sein du Soft Machine. Certains introvertis, faisant de la musique avant tout pour eux-mêmes, comme Mike, Hugh ou Elton, et d'autres, comme Daevid ou vous, plus extrovertis, ayant une conception communicative de la musique. D'où un conflit et un déplacement

HOPPER

Hervé Muller : Quand êtes-vous effectivement devenu un membre du Soft Machine ?

Hugh Hopper : Je n'étais pas membre de la formation originelle, avec Daevid (Allen), Kevin (Ayers), Larry (Knowlin) et Mike. Je n'ai rejoint le groupe qu'au départ de Kevin. Auparavant, j'étais roadie, mais je composais aussi - c'est mon frère Brian et moi qui avons écrit "Hope for happiness" - et je joue dans "Box 25/4 Lid", sur le premier album. Ce qui s'est en fait passé, c'est que Kevin en a eu marre et a quitté le groupe aux Etats-Unis, après la tournée avec Hendrix, en 68. Mike rentra mais Robert resta à Los Angeles, travailla là-bas, fit quelques démos. Pendant environ quatre mois, le Soft Machine cessa d'exister. Mais Probe, la compagnie de disques qui avait signé avec le groupe aux Etats-Unis, contacta Robert, réclamant le second album prévu par le contrat. Robert est donc rentré à Londres pour enregistrer avec Mike, et c'est alors qu'ils m'ont demandé de me joindre à eux. Mais, longtemps auparavant, j'avais déjà joué dans des groupes locaux (de la région de Canterbury) avec Robert, et aussl Daevid...

H. M. : A quelle époque ?

H. H. : Début des années soixante...

H. M. : Vous jouiez déjà de la basse, à l'époque ?

H. H. : Oui, c'est le premier instrument dont j'ai joué, dès le début. J'ai aussi joué un peu de saxo, dans des groupes de rock'n'roll! Mais la base de ma formation est quand même le jazz. Charlie Haden, des gens comme ça.

RATLEDGE

Hervé Muller : A une certaine époque, juste après "Fourth", pas mal de gens disaient que le Soft Machine ressemblait de plus en plus à un Elton Dean's Band. Rétrospectivement, maintenant qu'Elton a quitté le groupe, qu'en pensez-vous ?

Mike Ratledge : Non, je ne crois pas que cela fut exact. Vous savez, lorsqu'un musicien rejoint un groupe, il passe d'abord par un stade où il tend à rester assez discret, le temps de s'acclimater et de découvrir comment la formation fonctionne. Puis, lorsqu'il se sent suffisamment en confiance dans la situation qu'il occupe dans le groupe, il devient capable d'influer, de pousser dans la direction qu'il voudrait voir prendre. Au moment de "Fourth", de toute évidence, Elton en était arrivé là, et c'est peut-être ce qui, de l'extérieur, pouvait donner cette impression. Mais je ne pense pas que quiconque dans le groupe ait eu le sentiment d'être forcé dans une direction quelconque.

H. M. : Phil Howard n'était-il pas très exactement dans le même "trip" musical qu'Elton ?

M. R. : Oui, oui... Je pense que le groupe, tel qu'il se présentait avec Phil Howard, était à beaucoup d'égards tel qu'Elton concevait qu'il aurait dû être...

H. M. : Je vous ai vu jouer avec Phil Howard l'an dernier à Chaillot, puis six mois plus tard à l'Olympia, avec John Marshall. De toute évidence, vous paraissiez beaucoup plus satisfait...

M. R. : Oh, oui !

d'équilibre...

R. W. : La seule chose que je puisse en dire est... vous verrez comment Matching Mole va évoluer et comment Soft Machine va évoluer, et le contraste.

H. M. : Jouez-vous de la contrebasse ?

H. H. : Non, j'ai joué de la basse électrique dès le départ, et puis c'était trop tard.

H. M. : En fait, je ne vous ai jamais vu vous extérioriser autant en scène auparavant, c'était assez étonnant...



> Zoom

WYATT

H. M. : Rien que le contraste entre le premier album du Soft Machine et "4th" est assez effarant.

R. W. : Les deux premiers albums, et aussi "Moon in June" (sur "Third"), sont ma conception... Sur le reste, je suis... une sorte de batteur de session pour une intéressante nouvelle espèce de groupe de jazz, je suppose. Ça m'a plu... Mais, vous savez, c'est un peu un jeu de dire que telle personne au sein du groupe est ainsi et telle autre... Je veux dire, à une certaine époque, Elton et moi étions considérés comme les deux improvisateurs "free",et Mike et Hugh comme les compositeurs-arrangeurs. Vous pouvez faire tous les regroupements que vous voulez, et en tirer des conclusions intéressantes sur ce qui s'est passé, ce sera toujours vrai, d'une certaine façon, du moment que vous n'exagérez pas... Pourtant, l'élément qui pour moi représente une individualité vraiment magique au sein du Soft

HOPPER

C'est un instrument très dur. Roy Babbington, que nous utilisons parfois pour nos séances d'enregistrement, en joue depuis l'âge de douze ans !

H. M. : Daevid Allen n'était-il pas le leader d'un de ces groupes "pré-Soft" à Canterbury ?

H. H. : Oui... Il y a quelque chose qui me gêne à propos de Daevid prenant une orientation si résolument pop. Il était plus intéressant, plus original, auparavant. C'était un excellent guitariste de jazz, et il était aussi très ferré sur la musique électronique, Terry Riley, etc. C'est vraiment dommage qu'il se soit tourné vers la pop.

H. M. : N'est-ce pas là une attitude bien péjorative ?

H. H. : C'est une question de niveau... Il est devenu moins original à partir du moment où son objectif a été d'atteindre un public.

RATLEDGE

M.R. : Je m'en excuse...

H. M. : Non! Pourquoi ? C'était seulement surprenant parce que j'étais plutôt habitué à vous voir assez renfermé en scène...

M. R. : J'étais effectivement très content du groupe... Pourtant, ce concert de l'Olympia ne fut pas particulièrement bon, et c'est un horrible endroit pour jouer. Nous avions une sonorité atroce.

H. M. : Pensez-vous que le remplacement d'Elton par Karl Jenkins représente un changement très positif ?

M. R. : Absolument. De plusieurs façons. Et puis le fait qu'il joue du hautbois représente un changement d'instrument. C'est aussi un très bon pianiste.

H. M. : A ce propos, le fait qu'Elton, lui aussi, doublait déjà au piano électrique, vous a-t-il apporté beaucoup ?

Machine, celui qui a captivé mon imagination, c'est Hugh Hopper. Si c'est autre chose qu'un prévisible groupe de jazz moderne, la responsabilité en incombe plus à la présence de Hugh qu'à qui que ce soit d'autre.

H. M. : Rétrospectivement, quelle importance accordez-vous au premier album du Soft Machine ?

R. W. : C'est comme le souvenir de certains concerts de ce trio (avec Mike et Kevin Ayers) qui furent fantastiques, bien meilleurs que le disque. Il fut enregistré après environ un mois passé à New York, et c'était simplement une version condensée de ce que nous faisions en scène à cette époque. Kevin était étonnant - assez bizarrement, il était alors le plus original d'entre nous. En fait, ce furent surtout l'influence de Daevid (Allen) et de Kevin qui firent de Soft Machine un groupe "freaky", non pop, anticonventionnel. Pour ne prendre que deux exemples spécifiques, ce fut l'idée de Kevin de réaliser un effet de boucle, en utilisant le principe du "loop" de Terry Riley, dans "We did it again". Et bien sûr, pour commencer c'était Daevid qui nous avait fait découvrir Terry Riley. Et puis c'est Kevin qui écrivit la première figure en 7/4 que nous ayions jamais utilisée, et que Mike reprit pour "Easter's nose job". C'est autour de la ligne de basse de Kevin que Mike écrivit sa première composition. Auparavant, il ne s'était pas préoccupé d'écrire... Vous savez, parce que c'était le premier album, les gens croient que ce trio, c'était le premier Soft Machine. Mais le fait est que le Soft Machine original, c'était Daevid Allen, autour de Daevid, ses structures de raga, ses chansons, ses conceptions rythmiques et sonores, son idée de faire

H. M. : Pourtant, il me semble bien que les Soft des débuts créaient une pop music plus originale que ne l'est la musique des Soft d'aujourd'hui, dans un contexte jazz...

H. H. : C'est tout à fait exact, mais à l'époque, le Soft Machine faisait partie de tout un mouvement, l'U.F.O., le Middle Earth les light-shows de Mark Boyle etc., ce n'était pas simplement quatre personnages qui jouent ensemble, comme maintenant. C'est devenu quelque chose de beaucoup plus conscient.

H. M. : Comment s'est effectué le départ de Robert ?

H. H. : A l'issue de la tournée américaine, en juillet 71... Ça faisait déjà quelques temps que Mike et moi voulions qu'il parte, mais il faisait partie du groupe depuis si longtemps qu'il faisait un peu figure de leader... Finalement, c'est lui-même, je crois qui demanda à Sean (Murphy leur manager) d'arranger quelque chose pour qu'il puisse travailler en dehors du Soft Machine.

H. M.: Dans les faits, n'était-il pas déjà plus ou moins extérieur au groupe depuis un certain temps ? "Chanteur pop en chômage, actuellement batteur avec le Soft Machine", comme il s'intitulait sur la pochette de son album solo...

H. H. : Oui mais c'était aussi une attitude qu'il s'imposait. C'est typique de Robert, cette façon d'accentuer sa situation d'isolement.

H. M. : Quelle importance ce départ a-t-il eu sur l'évolution du groupe ?

H. H. : C'était un pas en arrière, parce que le Soft c'était avant tout Robert et

M R. : Oh oui! Je ne pourrais plus envisager de ne pas avoir un autre pianiste dans le groupe. Simplement, parce que du fait du fonctionnement de l'orgue, si je joue en solo rapide, je ne peux plus jouer d'accords.

H. M. : Considérez-vous l'abandon du chant comme définitif, pour Soft Machine ?

M. R. : Robert était le seul que cela intéressât encore, depuis le début du quartet avec Elton, vous savez...

H. M. : Cela signifie-t-il que la conception originelle du Soft Machine était plutôt celle de Robert, Kevin ou Daevid ?

M. R. : En termes de conception d'un groupe, et je ne crois d'ailleurs pas qu'on pense consciemment en de tels termes, ce qui importe vraiment, c'est qui compose le plus à un moment donné. Alors, si plusieurs membres écrivent des chansons...

H. M. : Qui écrivait le plus à ce stade ?

M. R. : Kevin. A l'époque où j'ai rejoint le groupe, il écrivait énormément. Il a dû écrire à peu près une soixantaine de chansons, dont nous faisions une dizaine environ. En fait, je dirais que Daevid et lui furent les originateurs du groupe qui devint plus tard le Soft Machine, bien qu'il ne s'appela pas encore ainsi lorsqu'ils commencèrent. Ils formèrent le groupe avec ce guitariste américain, Larry, et Robert (Wyatt) quitta les Wild Flowers (où il jouait en compagnie de Hugh et Brian Hopper) pour se joindre à eux. Ils s'appelèrent d'abord Mr. Head, puis divers autres noms, mals c'est seulement un peu après qu'à mon tour j'ai rejoint le groupe, que nous décidâmes de le baptiser Soft Machine,

de longues improvisations, etc. Et puis son jeu de guitare dingue, le seul guitariste alentour, à l'époque, qul ne fasse pas de l'imitation de blues. Il n'y a aucun doute pour moi que la figure centrale de cette époque, le grand inspirateur, fut Daevid. C'est lui qui me présenta à mon professeur de batterie, Georges Neidorf, c'est lui qui me présenta Terry Riley. Nous avons joué ensemble, Daevid, Terry Riley et moi, mais je jouais de la trompette... enfin, pas très bien, mais il m'a donné une chance d'essayer, personne d'autre ne le fit...

H. M. : Je me souviens que sur la pochette du premier album, effectivement, il est mentionné que vous jouez de la trompette...

R. W. : Oui, j'ai essayé un peu de vieux Don Cherry... Terry Riley a enregistré des bandes stupéfiantes de Chet Baker à la trompette, à Paris, en utilisant un écho "loop" tout à fait dans la ligne de ce que j'essaie toujours de développer avec la voix... A cette époque, aussi, Terry Riley faisait également des trucs satiriques très drôles, genre piano de cabaret... Daevid est la première personne que j'ai rencontrée avec les cheveux longs, la première personne que j'ai rencontrée qui prenait des drogues, la première personne qui faisait des bandes en "loop"... C'est pourquoi, rien de ce que les Mothers Of Invention ont fait ne m'a vraiment surpris beaucoup,

Mike. Mais c'était aussi un changement nécessaire, et important, pour nous. Robert et moi ne nous entendions plus guère personnellement, ça faisait trop longtemps que nous travaillions ensemble. Or, dans toute l'histoire du Soft Machine les divergences musicales et personnelles ont toujours été étroitement liées.

H. M. : J'aurais plutôt cru que les tensions étaient entre Robert et Mike, voire Elton...

H. H. : Ça variait... Les membres du Soft Machine se sont toujours mieux entendus en dehors du groupe. A l'intérieur du groupe, ça pouvait devenir très dur.

H. M. : Ne regrettez-vous jamais de ne plus avoir de chanteur ?

H. H. : Non. Je n'aimais pas le chant de Robert, de toute façon. Il y a très peu de chanteurs que j'aime. Hendrix était un de ceux-là. Et puis, je trouve qu'utiliser la voix humaine, c'est s'imposer d'emblée une limitation. Je suis plus intéressé par les sons produits par un instrument, ou électroniquement, parce qu'en elle-même la conception de chanson offre des possibilités bien plus limitées que la recherche sonore.

H M. : Mais Robert n'utilisait-il justement pas sa voix comme un véritable instrument ?

H. H. : Peut-être, mais c'était quand même la voix de Robert... Et puis je crois que je le connais trop bien, c'est très subjectif et personnel...

principalement parce que nous n'arrivions pas à nous mettre d'accord sur aucun des noms que chacun de nous avait imaginés... Mais je crois bien que Kevin et Daevid sont rentrés de Majorque avec en tête l'idée spécifique de ce groupe.

H. M. : Que faisaient-ils à Majorque ?

M. R. : Ce que tout le monde fait à Majorque...

H. M. : Comment Daevid a-t-il fait irruption dans votre groupe de Canterbury ?

M. R. : Il est venu vivre chez Robert quand celui-ci avait environ 14 ou 15 ans, quand nous étions tous au lycée. Je crois que c'était en réponse à une annonce que la mère de Robert avait passée dans le journal. Avec lui, Daevid apportait environ deux cents disques de jazz, c'était fantastique. Ils circulèrent parmi nous.. Je ne sais pas ce qui ce serait passé sans cela. (Presqu'à lui-même). Ça serait curieux de savoir, il faudrait y réfléchir ...

H M. : Le point de départ fut donc le jazz...

M. R. : La première entreprise que monta Daevid fut un trio avec Hugh et Robert, qui était en fait une sorte de combinaison de jazz et de poésie. Jouer et dire des poèmes en même temps. C'était vraiment fantastique. Ils utilisaient des bandes, aussi... Mais à Londres, ils ne réussirent pas à se soutenir financièrement. Ecoeurés, Daevid et Kevln partirent à Majorque, et Robert rentra



> Zoom

WYATT

parce que j'avais entendu Daevid le faire sur bande auparavant, avec Terry Riley et John Esam, un de ses proches amis. En fait, Daevid m'a fait découvrir toute une impossible façon de développer ma vie, à cette époque...

H. M. : Et Mike ? Quelle est son importance dans le développement du Soft Machine ?

R. W. : Un des caractères les plus insatisfaisants de la pop-music à l'époque, pour moi, était le fait qu'elle soit tellement basée sur la guitare. Je trouvais cela limité ; je voulais travailler avec des instruments qui puissent fournir un son continu totalement soutenu. Je voulais travailler avec un organiste, sauf que tous les organistes à cette époque, étaient de mauvaises imitations de Jimmy Smith ou de Booker T., ou faisaient du cabaret. Mais ce n'était pas le cas de Mike, et comme il utilisait à plein ses connaissances de musicien à clavier, qui de façon générale sont techniquement supérieures à celles que possédaient les guitaristes de l'époque, il fut un très important élément de développement. En ce qui concerne ce qu'il fait maintenant, je ne peux rien dire. Il compose, il joue, il explore ses rêves particuliers, je ne sais pas...

H. M. : Quel fut le rôle du frère de Hugh Hopper, Brian ?

HOPPER

H. M. : Et le départ d'Elton ?

H. H. : Il s'est effectué dans de très bons termes... Vous savez, c'était dans l'air depuis que Phil (Howard) était parti. Il est le batteur idéal pour Elton. Mais Mike et moi, il nous laissait très insatisfait. Alors nous avons auditionné d'autres batteurs, et lorsque nous avons trouvé John Marshall, nous avons demandé à Phil de partir. Ce dernier n'a en fait jamais vraiment été un membre à part entière du Soft Machine. John (Marshall) est beaucoup mieux intégré au groupe.

H. M. : Quel changement dans la forme musicale le remplacement d'Elton par Karl Jenkins est-il susceptible de provoquer ?

H. H. : Avec Elton, la part de l'improvisation , en scène, était d'environ 60%. Mais nous avions toujours une espèce de cadre pré-arrangé à l'intérieur duquel nous improvisions. Or, pour Elton, c'était encore une trop grande limitation. La composition ne l'intéresse pas, son domaine, c'est l'improvisation totale, sans aucune structure. Mike se situe à l'autre extrême, vers des formes musicales formelles. Et je me situe entre les deux.

H. M. : Qu'entendez-vous par "des formes musicales entièrement formelles" ?

RATLEDGE

à Canterbury, où il se joignit aux Wild Flowers. Pour en revenir au groupe tel qu'il était lorsque j'en suis devenu membre, nous ne faisions pratiquement que des chansons, mais très différentes selon leur auteur. Ce que faisait Larry était incroyablement folky. Robert c'était plus rock, et Kevin... c'était du Kevin ! Je me souviens qu'un morceau écrit par Hugh, "I should have known", était prétexte à de longues improvisations instrumentales, et plus tard ce fut "Hope for hapiness" qui joua ce rôle...

H.M. : Aimeriez-vous travailler à nouveau avec un guitariste ?

M. R. : Oui. En fait, j'y ai pensé... Je ne verrais aucune objection à jouer avec McLaughlin, par exemple... Grands Dieux ! Mais, voyez-vous, le problème n'est pas tellement d'avoir envie d'ajouter tel ou tel instrument, mais plutôt de trouver le musicien avec qui jouer, et surtout de s'en tenir au format de groupe qui fonctionne le mieux. C'est capital compte tenu que nous faisons beaucoup de scène, et, à cet égard, je crois que le quartet est le compromis idéal.

H. M. : Initialement, qui a eu l'idée d'ajouter des cuivres à la formation ?

M. R. : Assez curieusement, je crois que c'est Robert. Je ne sais pas si ce fut une fantaisie de sa part, ou ce

R. W. : Brian était un contemporain de Mike à l'école primaire... Hugh, Brian, Mike, Dave Sinclair et moi allions tous à la même école à Canterbury, mais Hugh et moi étions plus jeunes que Brian et Mike, et Dave était plus jeune que nous tous. J'allais voir Mike et Brian aux concerts de l'école, ils faisaient des duos pour piano et clarinette, Debussy et des choses comme ça, vraiment bons... La première fois que j'ai vu Mike, il chantait soprane dans la chorale de l'école, à la cathédrale de Canterbury. Je venais d'entrer dans l'école et je devais avoir onze ou dix ans, je pense, et Mike environ douze ans...

H. M. : Pourquoi Mike n'a-t-il donc jamais chanté avec le Soft Machine ?

R. W. : Je crois bien qu'il a complètement flippé quand sa voix a mué !

H. M. : Pour en revenir à Brian Hopper, il a composé pour le Soft Machine...

R. W. : Oui, mais vous voyez, Brian Hopper est un homme de science, un chercheur bio-chimiste. Aux dernières nouvelles, il étudiait des épidémies qui ravagent les récoltes de riz, je crois, pour trouver des moyens d'augmenter la production des céréales, ce genre de choses...

H. M. : On est loin de Soft Machine !

R. W. : Oui... Peut-être pas, au fond ? Toujours est-il que Brian, Hugh et moi, et Richard Sinclair, le futur bassiste de Caravan, avions un groupe (les Wild Flowers) pendant un temps à Canterbury, après que j'ai quitté l'école. Brian composait, jouait de la guitare et du saxo. Nous faisions des trucs de Chuck Berry, de Mose Allison, des chansons de Nina Simone, et quelques morceaux de Cannonball Adderley et de

H. H. : Entièrement composées, écrites et arrangées à l'avance. C'est le seul point de désaccord entre Mike et moi. Mais comme Karl compose lui aussi, il devrait être un facteur d'équilibre.

H. M. : Nucleus semble décidement faire office de réservoir à musiciens pour Soft Machine : John d'abord, et maintenant Karl...

H.H : Oui, c'est toujours le même milieu de musiciens. En fait, Karl était un ami de Nick Evans... et c'est ce dernier qui a suggéré que nous le prenions.

H. M. : Vous n'aviez jamais joué ensemble auparavant ?

H. H. : Nous avions seulement jammé une fois ensemble, à Paris... au Rock'n'Roll Circus ! Il y avait également Lyn Dobson, Elton, et puis Christian Vander à la batterie.

H. M. : Quelle est votre opinion sur Vander ?

H. H. : Il est un peu comme Phil, d'une certaine façon. Très bon, mais trop puissant, trop en lui-même quand il joue...

H. M. : Etes-vous satisfait de "5th" ?

H. H. : Non. Je trouve que le son en est trop léger, pas assez dense.

H. M. : Cela concerne-t-il plus particulièrement la face sur laquelle joue Phil Howard ?

H. H. : Non. Le jeu de batterie de Phil y est O.K. et l'autre face (avec John Marshall) me laisse sur la même impression. C'est le son de l'ensemble qui est en cause.

H. M. : Le départ d'Elton Dean ne va-t-il pas représenter pour la musique du Soft Machine, qu'il avait en tête, mais en ce qui me concerne, si j'ai réagi favorablement, c'est en partie parce que je commençais à trouver que le trio offrait des possibilités trop limitées, en ce qui concerne la composition. En fait, depuis, j'en suis venu à penser que nous n'avons pas su utiliser à plein ce que nous avions... Mais j'étais aussi intéressé par l'idée d'obtenir un soutien harmonique pour l'orgue, en solo.

H. M. : Ce fut donc l'époque du septet...

M. R. : Oui, ce fut le point de départ. Puis de sept nous sommes descendus à cinq puis quatre.

H. M. : Pourquoi ?

M. R. : Nous avons renoncé à trois des cuivres, parce qu'avec sept musiciens c'était vraiment trop encombrant. Sans parler des problèmes d'écho, qui existent de toute façon, mais étaient multipliés par sept. Technologiquement, nous n'avions pas l'expérience nécessaire pour contrôler un tel volume sonore, D'une certaine façon, c'était trop restreignant : à sept c'était toujours ou trop rigide, ou trop cahotique. Tandis qu'à quatre, on a bien plus de chances d'arriver à un équilibre harmonieux.

H. M. : Aimeriez-vous utiliser des musiciens supplémentaires pour vos séances d'enregistrement, cependant ?

M. R. : Oui... Ça dépend de ce que vous écrivez, vous savez... C'est à dire que si vous écrivez beaucoup, vous pouvez vous trouver parfaitement satisfait avec un quartet, parce que votre préoccupation immédiate en écrivant sera d'exprimer vos idées musicales sous une forme directement interprétable par le groupe... Evidemment,

Mingus... mais pour dépasser ce stade, il fallait laisser tomber tout le reste, et il n'était pas préparé à faire ça : il avait des examens à passer et ainsi de suite...

H. M. : Comment en êtes-vous venu à faire ce premier simple avec Daevid (début 67 sur Polydor) ?

R. W. : Ce fut grâce à Kim Fowley, un Américain.

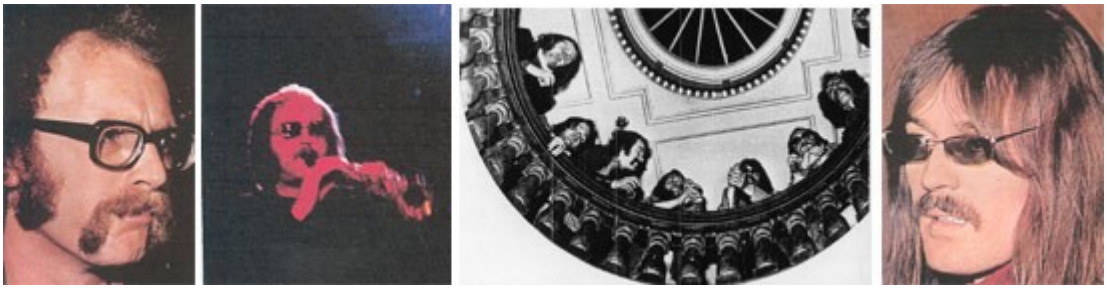
une certaine libération vis-à-vis du jazz d'avant-garde ?

H. H. : En fait, cela dépend toujours du genre de musique que chacun d'entre nous se plait à écouter pendant une période donnée. Et Mike a toujours été intéressé par le jazz moderne - par exemple, en ce moment, il écoute beaucoup Weather Report.

H. M. : Et vous ?

H. H. : John Coltrane, Miles Davis...

parfois, il vous vient une idée qui s'avère impraticable pour le quartet, mais ça n'a pas d'importance, vous ne vous y attardez pas, parce qu'à la base ce pour quoi vous écrivez c'est le prochain concert. Ce qui est curieux, c'est que lorsque vous vous retrouvez dans le studio pour enregistrer, ou disons, deux semaines avant, vous commencez à vous souvenir de ces idées que vous avez eu à l'origine d'un morceau et si ça en vaut la peine, et qu'il y a suffisamment de temps, vous arrangez ça avec des musiciens supplémentaires.



> Zoom

WYATT

La première fois que j'ai vu son nom, c'est sur la pochette du premier album des Mothers où il est dit qu'il y joue de l'"hypophone", ce qui en d'autres termes signifie... rien. C'est un freak d'Hollywood, un type formidable. Il était au premier Roundhouse que nous avons fait avec les Pink Floyd, et il était plus conscient des possibilités de ce que nous faisions que les Anglais, à l'époque. Il a persuadé notre manager de nous faire enregistrer ; il est venu chez nous, nous a donné de l'argent, a fait chanter ses chansons à Kevin toute la nuit. "Feellin' reelin' squeelin'", ce fut vraiment grâce à lui, Kevin ne voulait pas la faire, et Kevin avait cette autre chanson que j'aimais bien et que je voulais chanter, "Love makes sweet music". Kim a donc persuadé Chas Chandler de nous les faire

HOPPER

Certains trucs de musique électronique, également, comme les premiers travaux de Stockhausen.

H. M. : Jamais de rock ?

H. H. : Pas vraiment, si ce n'est des choses comme Miles Davis. (A titre indicatif, pendant les quelques heures que je passai chez lui, les disques que joua Hugh furent Weather Report, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy et aussi Patto, qu'il me présenta comme le genre de chanteur qu'il apprécie. Mais alors qu'il joua les trois albums précédents dans l'intégralité de leurs deux faces, il sélectionna deux titres sur celui de Patto).

H. M. : N'êtes-vous jamais tenté d'ajouter d'autres instruments à la formation du Soft Machine ?

RATLEDGE

Mais, d'une manière générale, parce que vous écrivez pour un groupe qui est sur la route, vous ne pensez jamais vraiment à composer pour un plus grand nombre de musiciens. Personnellement, ça ne m'est jamais arrivé, depuis l'époque du septet, et d'habitude, c'est lorsqu'on en vient à l'enregistrement que certaines possibilités m'apparaissent et que j'ajoute éventuellement quelque chose. Dans "Teeth", par exemple, la partition pour la grosse section de cuivres n'a été écrite que quelques jours avant l'enregistrement.

H M. : Considérez-vous donc le studio et la scène comme deux domaines totalement différents ?

M. R. : Oui.. Malheureusement, nous passons la majorité de notre

enregistrer, et nous fîmes aussi quelques autres trucs, qui ne furent jamais utilisés. Le meilleur enregistrement de cette période, avec Daevid, ne fut jamais sorti, c'était "Fred the fish", sur lequel je faisais un solo d'embouchure de trompette basé sur un solo de Rex Stuart, sur un vieux disque d'Ellington. Une magnifique chanson, que nous avions enregistrée avec Georgio Gomelski...

H. M. : Comment expliquez-vous qu'à l'époque le Pink Floyd ait percé, et pas vous ?

R. W. : Ils avaient deux avantages pour eux. D'abord, ils étaient intégrés dans ce milieu, cette communauté culturelle liée à l'underground de l'époque, ils avaient les bonnes relations et étaient raisonnablement à l'aise. Et puis, ils étaient bien meilleurs que nous, parce que Syd Barrett était absolument magique, il était une entité créative totalement épanouie dès ce stade...

H. M. : (Après avoir longuement discuté avec Robert de Matching Mole) **Quelle est pour vous la principale dlfférence entre ce groupe et Soft Machine ?**

R. W. : Financière. Ça veut dire que si un ampli grille, nous n'en avons pas de rechange, que nous ne pouvons pas avoir les micros qu'il nous faudrait, et que je n'ai même pas assez de baguettes de rechange. Ça veut dire que nous ne sommes même pas sûrs de pouvoir nous rendre au prochain concert parce qu'il nous faut louer un van, ça veut dire que Dave McRae ne peut parfols pas venir aux répétitions parce qu'il lui faut continuer à faire des sessions, ça veut dire que nous ne pouvons plus nous soûler...

H. H. : C'est intéressant du point de vue de l'écriture musicale, mais dans la pratique de l'interprétation, c'est difficile. A plus de quatre, on perd le sentiment de groupe. L'expérience du septet, qui dura trois mois, fut intéressante mais exténuante. Bien que les quatre vents jouent sur partition, on frôlait perpétuellement la catastrophe. Je crois que la formation actuelle représente le compromis idéal. D'ailleurs, le fait que Karl joue surtout du hautbois devrait quand même représenter un changement de sonorité intéressant.

H. M. : A ce propos, le fait que Mike se soit consacré de plus en plus au piano électrique n'a-t-il pas fait perdre à la sonorité du Soft Machine un de ses éléments les plus caractéristiques ?

H. H. : Il est certain qu'en temps qu'instrumentiste, Mike est devenu de moins en moins original avec les années, au fur et à mesure qu'il écoutait plus d'autres musiciens. A l'écoute de gens comme Chick Corea ou Keith Jarrett, il est passé au piano électrique et a fini par y consacrer l'essentiel de son activité. C'est assez dommage, car je pense qu'il était meilleur à l'orgue.

H. M. : Comment voyez-vous le futur ? Pensez-vous qu'il y ait un risque que vous et Mike vous sépariez jamais ?

H. H. : Je ne sais pas du tout... Ça dépend du déroulement des événements et si on travaille beaucoup. Quand vous jouez beaucoup, vous restez ensemble plus facilement, il y a moins de possibilités de divergence.

H. M. : Aimeriez-vous entreprendre quelque chose en dehors du Soft Machine ?

temps sur la route, et peut-être 2 % dans le studio. J'aimerais faire plus d'enregistrement... Ou plutôt pouvoir consacrer beaucoup plus de temps à chaque album, au lieu de devoir se précipiter...

H. M. : N'êtes-vous pas tenté par le moog-synthesizer ?

M. R. : Je m'en méfie un peu. Je crois que pour lui rendre justice il me faudrait passer six mois dessus, sérieusement... J'imagine qu'on peut s'en emparer, en tirer quelques effets sonores et les caser sur scène, mais ça ne m'intéresse pas. Je ne veux pas particulièrement être une dupe du synthesizer, vous voyez ce que je veux dire ? Par contre, je pense que maintenant, avec Karl, le groupe est beaucoup plus ouvert à l'emploi de bandes magnétiques. Pour Elton, tout ce qui n'était pas quatre bonshommes et leurs instruments était un peu suspect.

H. M. : La proportion des improvisations va-t-elle maintenant diminuer ?

M. R : Je ne sais pas... Pas vraiment, pour le moment ; mais il y aura une large place pour des choses qui, sans être vraiment des solos, ne seront pas non plus écrites, des sortes de textures de groupe... Le genre de situation où quatre musiciens jouent ensemble sans qu'aucun d'eux ne fasse vraiment un solo, mais sans rien de plus qu'une vague ligne directrice.

H. M. : Pensez-vous que sous sa formation actuelle le groupe soit plus stable ?

M. R. : Je déteste faire des prophéties... Je pense que d'une certaine façon nous sommes des individus assez similaires. C'est probablement la formation la plus homogène, en termes de tempéraments et

H. M. (Six mois plus tard, Robert vient me confirmer la séparation du groupe)**: Qu'allez-vous faire maintenant ?**

R. W. : Je ne sais pas encore exactement, mais de toute façon, ça n'aura rien à faire avec le public. Je vais devenir plus snob que Stockhausen, si c'est possible...

H. H : Oui, éventuellement, en particulier dans le domaine des sonorités électroniques. Mais cela représenterait beaucoup de travail, et si le groupe tourne bien cela risque de me laisser à la fois trop occupé et suffisamment satisfait...
(Moins de trois mois plus tard, cependant, Hugh m'invitait à venir écouter les bandes de l'album solo qu'il venait de terminer, et dont le titre prévu est "1984". Mis à part la participation de quelques musiciens, dont John Marshall (percussions), Pye Hastings (le guitariste de Caravan) et Gary Windo (saxo), il est effectivement essentiellement basé sur des effets électroniques réalisés à partir du propre jeu de Hugh à la basse, au saxo et aux percussions, et de l'aveu même de son auteur, s'apparente plutôt à la musique concrète.

de personnalités, que le Soft Machine ait jamais possédée.

H. M. : Mais ne pensez-vous pas qu'une des forces créatrlces du Soft Machine, par le passé, étalt justement l'opposition entre le caractère extroverti de certains de ses membres, et le caractère introverti des autres ?

M. R.: Je vois ce que vous voulez dire, et en termes de spectateurs, vous avez parfaitement raison. De toute évidence, ça peut marcher comme ça, mais ce n'est pas non plus nécessaire. Et j'ai à l'esprit plusieurs groupes qui ont des désaccords de personnalité monstrueux et qui ne sont pas particulièrement attirants... Et puis, ce n'est pas une situation très tentante. Ce qui se passe, dans les conditions où nous travaillons, c'est que les tendances musicales et personnelles se polarisent à l'extrême, après un temps. On est alors forcé dans des positions extrêmes, où les différences musicales et personnelles deviennent inséparables, et on ne sait jamais à quoi on réagit exactement. C'est un phénomène assez curieux. C'est ce qui s'était passé avec Robert, en particulier...

Et le 22 novembre 1972, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, John Marshall et Karl Jenkins sont entrés dans les studios CBS de Londres pour enregistrer le sixième album du Soft Machine...




> Zoom

Propos recueillis par Hervé Muller

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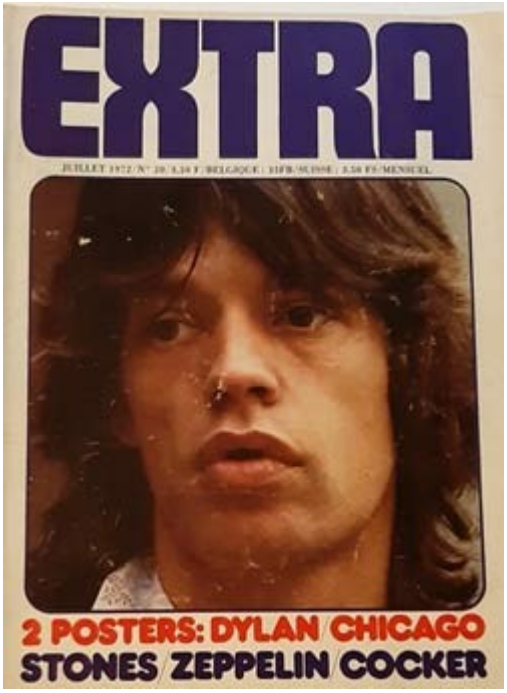
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Matching Mole et John Mayall à l'Olympia - Extra - N° 20 - juillet 1972



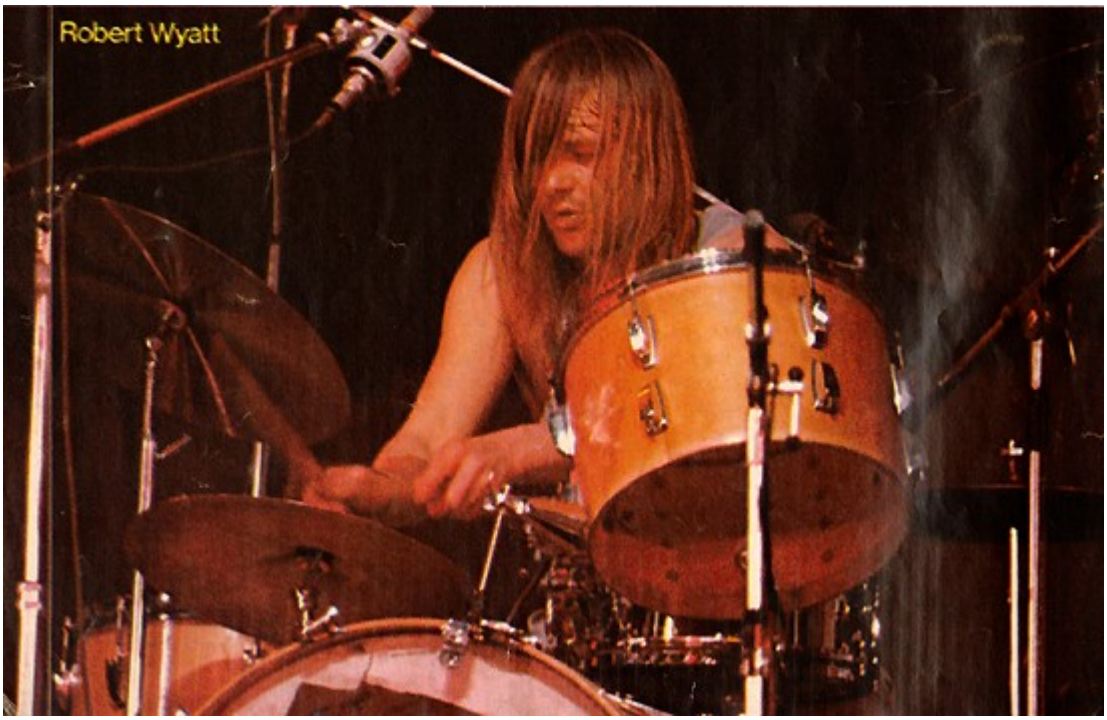
MATCHING MOLE ET JOHN MAYALL A L'OLYMPIA

Pierre Jahiel.

15 mai : **Matching Mole** et **John Mayall** sur la même affiche, celle de l'Olympia.

Affiche apparemment insuffisante d'ailleurs, puisqu'on pouvait librement allumer une cigarette sans mettre le feu au voisin. L'entrée de **Matching Mole** permet d'emblée de noter deux choses.

D'abord que c'est bien l'ex-batteur-leader de Soft Machine, **Robert Wyatt**, qui s'apprête ce soir à jouer le même rôle ; ensuite, qu'il y a parmi les têtes inconnues, celle du pianiste électrique, vue il y a quelques mois avec ce remarquable groupe qu'est Nucleus, lors d'un mini-concert à l'espace Cardin. La musique sera du même esprit du début à la fin : énergique, torturée, électrifiée au dernier degré. L'influence de John Mac Laughlin est évidente bien qu'elle soit probablement involontaire. Malheureusement, là où ce dernier décolle irrémédiablemeiit avec derrière lui toute une salle, Matching Mole ne sait que proposer une musique artificielle (sans sens péjoratif) vis-à-vis de laquelle, comme tout ce qui est artificiel, le public est entièrement libre. Il ne peut accepter cette proposition qu'au prix d'un effort, et une bonne partie de l'Olympia y était assez peu disposée ce soir-là. Wyatt est un excellent batteur, bien qu'affligé de trop de failles, possédant trop de lacunes. Il ne suffit pas qu'il considère avoir donné « un de ses mauvais concerts » . Wyatt est quelqu'un qui a besoin d'être entouré, et peut-être aussi d'acquérir du professionnalisme, pour ne pas dire de - conscience professionnelle -. Si je peux me permettre de vider mon sac, ce serait bien, si possible, que le bassiste comprenne qu'il n'est pas dans la peau de Jack Bruce.



John Mayall a l'air d'avoir dix ans de moins. Il a même amené sa mère. La chère femme couve son bambin du regard pendant que Nancy (Mayall) tente laborieusement de faire des progrès en photographie. Le centre d'intérêt de tout ce petit monde a l'air de bonne humeur et n'oublie pas son public parisien, auquel il n'hésite pas à lancer trois douzaines d'astuces entre chaque morceau. Soyons larges : la musique, car c'est bien de cela qu'il s'agit, est meilleure que jamais. Les musiciens, tous des jazzmen, excepté Keef Hartley (batterie), sont de véritables spécialistes du feeling. La griffe « Mayall » reste la dominante des sonorités d'ensemble, mais jamais elle ne fut aussi bien dosée, à sa place. Ne parlons pas bien sûr de « Turning point », une tentative certainement plus originale et réussie de fusion entre Mayall et le jazz. Tentative qu'il a d'ailleurs proclamée comme appartenant au passé, alors que quelqu'un lui réclamait * Room to move ». Reste à savoir si ce quelqu'un avait fait le rapprochement entre les deux périodes ou s'il réclamait ce morceau comme on réclame « Mamy blue » à Joël Daydé. Mayall, quant à lui semble l'avoir compris dans le mauvais sens. Il a peut-être eu raison dans ce cas précis et c'est son expérience qui l'a fait parler. Sa vulnérabilité première fait qu'il considère définitivement avoir un public (français ou non) d'environ douze ans sur le plan moyenne d'âge, et qu'il a décidé de s'y adapter plus clairement pour tout le monde. Voilà qui est fait. En fin de compte, la qualité de la musique n'en souffre pas — ou presque — et c'est bien là le principal.

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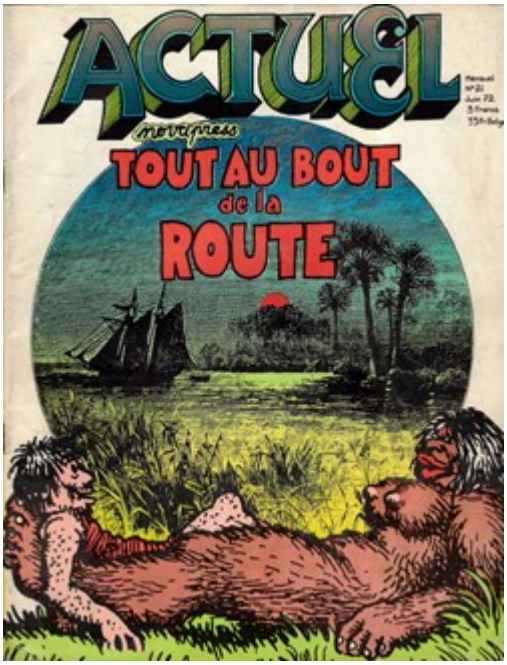
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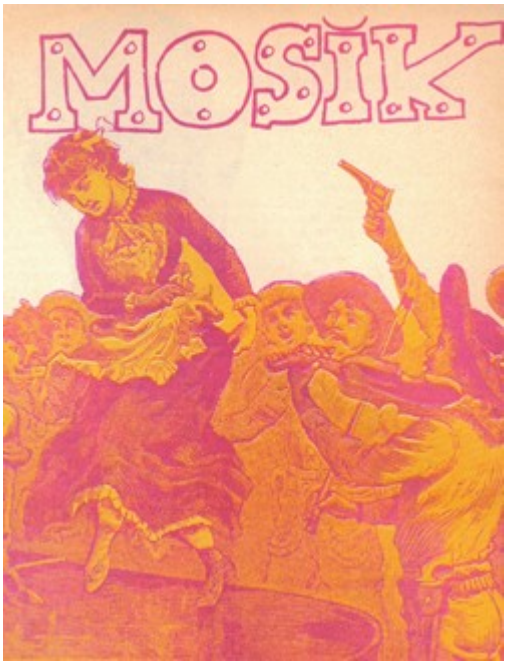
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Mozik - Actuel - N° 21 - juin 1972

MOZIK





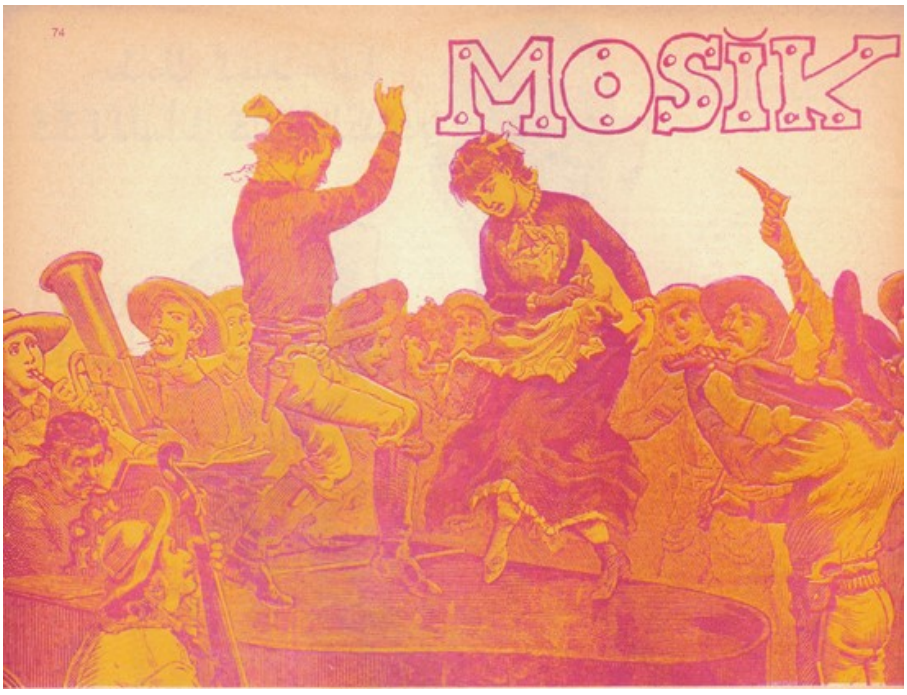
Fifth, le nouvel album de Soft Machine (CBS-import. Music Action) présente peu d'innovations par rapport à Fourth, le précédent, et poursuit cette « troisième période » du Soft dont tout élément rock est banni : Soft Machine s'est complètement fondu dans le jazz, substituant simplement aux influences free prédominantes dans Fourth celles des anciens accompagnateurs de Miles Davis, du pianiste Joe Zawinul en particulier, de Weather Report : pulsation souple et polyrythmique de la batterie, recours massif à l'improvisation, mélodies squelettiques, à peine reconnaissables, abondance des solos (d'orgue, de sax, mais aussi de batterie, de contrebasse), recherches de climats sonores étranges et raffinés grâce aux effets électroniques, ou encore ce bruit de gouttes d'eau dans « Drop ». La musique possède une beauté froide, distante, celle de formes abstraites et dépouillées, l'équivalent musical du « design » : bruit de fond idéal pour fin de soirée dans des intérieurs ultra-modernes, décorés par Vasarely, elle dégage un ennui profond, absolu, fascinant. Mike Ratledge semble avoir érigé l'uniformité en principe esthétique : jamais sans doute il ne s'était approché autant de Terry Riley, des paisibles nappes sonores de « Poppy Nogood » à qui l'introduction de « All white » ressemble étrangement.

Le départ de Robert Wyatt — qui n'était déjà dans Fourth que l'ombre de lui-même -- n'introduit que des changements de détail. Contrairement à toute attente la face

enregistrée avec le batteur Phil Howard reste la plus convaincante : son jeu complètement jazz, fait d'une pulsation unique, monotone, de longs chuintements de cymbales, convient mieux à cette musique linéaire. John Marshall, le nouveau batteur, n'apparaît pour l'instant que comme une version édulcorée de Wyatt. Son entrée dans le groupe marque pourtant le signe d'un retour à certains éléments rock. Puis le départ probable d'Elton Dean, qui n'a pas caché son mécontentement devant l'éviction de Phil Howard, relancera peut-être Soft Machine dans des expériences moins austères. On connaît la raison de cet inexorable dessèchement du Soft Machine : le départ de membres essentiels à l'équilibre du groupe, qui palliaient la froideur de Ratledge ou Hopper par l'humour et la folie. Daevid Allen et Kevin Ayers ont chacun donné naissance à de joyeux regroupements communiant dans l'esprit « pataphysique » du Soft Machine originel.



Robert Wyatt a suivi leur exemple, et Matching Mole est déjà un grand groupe, dont le premier album (Columbia-import. Music Action) ne présente que les balbutiements : enregistré avant même que le groupe ne se soit produit en public, avec un organiste (Dave Sinclair, ex-Caravan) qui a depuis lors quitté le groupe (Dave McRae. qui joue déjà du piano électrique dans l'album, le remplace), l'album représente plutôt un défoulement personnel de Wyatt, un divertissement pour se libérer des « frustrations accumulées au sein de Soft Machine » (ce sont ses propres dires) : il joue avec l'appareillage électronique, s'amuse à tirer des sons insolites du mellotron, démultiplie par l'écho ses borborygmes de nouveau-né, se permet tous les gags et les intermèdes. Il joue aussi des conventions en chantant, imperturbable « Voici le premier couplet, premier couplet, premier couplet (...) et maintenant le chorus — ou peut-être est-ce un pont — ou simplement un nouveau changement de tonalité... Et voici le second couplet, etc. ».



Matching Mole forme un album généreux et dispersé : chaque morceau constitue une expérience unique, de la ballade mélancolique (« Caroline ») aux improvisations rappelant

le Lifetime et John McLaughlin — et aussi Joe Zawinul, grâce au piano électrique cristallin de Dave McRae, le tout avec aisance, humour, brio : auprès de Matching Mole, le Soft Machine de Ratledge apparaît déjà comme un groupe de cosmonautes en orbite.

[...]

Jean-Pierre Lentin

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Méchamment rock - Charlie Hebdo - N° 78 - 15 mai 1972

MÉCHAMMENT ROCK



Alors, ces pieds ? Vous les mettez dans le plat ou vous attendez qu'on vous les pane ? Comment ? Vous ne voyez pas le rapport? Vous vous prenez pour Jean-Jacques de Bresson ! Allons, depuis le temps que ça traîne, ça aurait fini par se savoir : Soft Machine est mort(e?), vive Matching Mole.

Plantons le décor : Robert Wyatt, pataphysicien distingué et ci-devant batteur quitte Soft Machine pour des raisons musicales. En fait, parce que deux notions disparaissent de la musique du groupe. D'abord, l'idée de chanson, ou pour être plus précis, de « song ». Ensuite l'idée d'électricité. Soft Machine n'était plus qu'un quartette de jazz anglais amplifié. Et pour ce qui est du jazz, Robert Wyatt en a entendu de meilleur. Enfin, tout ça, c'est moi qui le dis, mais ça doit être à peu près ça. Pourquoi Soft Machine gâche-t-il (elle) sa position unique de seul groupe authentique de rock (sans référence au R'n'R, au R'n'B, au C&W, au tango chaloupé ou au chant grégorien), allez donc le savoir, bande de bons à rien. C'est comme ça. A titre de représailles, eh eh, Robert W. appelle son groupe Matching Mole, à cause de la traduction française de Soft Machine, Machine Molle.

Matching Mole, ça veut dire Taupe Appareillée. Ça sert à ça, la Pataphysique, comme disait Bosse de Nage. Autre jeu sur les mots, le titre d'un des morceaux dudit que dont je vous parle en ce moment, l'air de rien, « Dedicated to Hugh, but you weren't listening ». Tout le monde connaît un morceau des Soft intitulé « Dedicated to you, but you weren't listening » (ça t'était dédié, mais tu n'écoutais pas). Le Hugh en question, c'est Hugh Hopper, bassiste des Soft. Ça se prononce pareil, en anglais, « you » et « Hugh ». Comme ils s'aiment. Je vous raconte pas ça pour faire passer le temps ; c'est parce qu'avec ces gens-là, la musique, la vie, les petites pépées, les grandes engueulades et le riz complet, ce sont des

choses qu'on traite sérieusement, même en déconnant. Et si vous commencez à vous demander si tout ceci n'est qu'une lâche tentative publicitaire pour vous faire avaler un truc invendable, eh bien tant pis. Quand on aime vraiment une musique, on ne sait jamais par quel bout la prendre, surtout par écrit. Je trouve ça tellement beau, tout bêtement, que j'en ai ma sentimentalité qui m'en dégouline dans les bottes. J'aimerais, certes, que le tout soit un petit peu plus « commercial », un peu moins - privé », pour que le dernier des crétins aime ça tout de suite, sans explications, selon la vertu cardinale du rock. Ça sera pour le prochain. Sachez seulement, braves gens, que Matching Mole est composé de Phil Miller de Delivery à la guitare, de Bill MacCormac de Quiet Sun à la guitare-basse, et que l'organiste Dave Sinclair qui joue dans le disque, ex-Caravan, a déjà cédé sa place à Dave McRae, de Nucleus, groupe qui a également donné son tout nouveau batteur à Soft Machine. Parait que ce premier disque s'est réalisé dans des conditions difficiles. Ça ne s'entend pas (CBS anglais 638SO). Ah oui, R.W. joue du piano, du mellotron, quand même de la batterie, et chante.

Et les Soft, alors? Ce n'est pas de la merde, ma bonne dame, ce n'est seulement plus ce que c'était, que le batteur soit Phil Howard ou John Marshall. On ne peut pas être et avoir été, les carottes sont cuites, tant qu'y en a verse encore, passe-moi la daurade, je te passe le petit salé, et le reste. (Soft Machine, 5, CBS anglais 64806).

Publicité : Matching Mole en première partie (!) de John Mayall, le 15 mai, à l'Olympia.

Faustrol

P.S. : la couverture de Matching Mole est blanche, celle de Machine Molle toute noire.

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La Matching Mole à fleur de sens - Rock & Folk - N° 63 - avril 1972



LA MATCHING MOLE
à fleur des sens

Robert Wyatt est un petit rigolo: à peine avait-il quitté la machine molle qu'il reforme un nouveau groupe et l'appelle ... Matching Mole: peut-être pour lui la première occasion d'ironiser à propos du très sérieux Soft Machine... Il faut sans doute voir dans ce « très sérieux » une des raisons pour lesquelles il a décidé de quitter la bande sans demander son reste. Au revoir à Ratledge, Hopper et Dean (surtout à Ratledge), trois musiciens définitivement trop formalistes pour lui.

Hors de la scène, Robert Wyatt est un homme calme et réservé (pour utiliser ce bon vieux cliché...). Il pense beaucoup et parle peu. La batterie est pour lui l'occasion — plus que cela : la nécessité — de raconter ce qu'il ne sait pas raconter de vive voix. Derrière ses caisses, il éclate de volubilité, parfois jusqu'à la folie. Fou. Et pendant que, à l'intérieur de lui-même, tout un monde hypersensible se déroulait, parvenait à la fleur de sa peau et éclatait par ses baguettes, les trois autres compères du Soft continuaient paisiblement leur démarche intérieure (qu'il n'est nullement question de critiquer), jeu de réactions intellectuelles face à un thème donné. Physiquement, cela m'a toujours frappé de voir Wyatt se débattre avec ses baguettes, dans une grande orgie de cheveux, tandis que les trois autres essayaient de temporiser les ambiances bouillantes qui provenaient de derrière eux. C'est d'ailleurs certainement cette dualité, ce combat constant entre deux pôles, nullement provoqué mais tout à fait naturel, qui conféraient à la musique du Soft son équilibre.

Le combat a eu ses vainqueurs : au fur et à mesure de l'évolution du groupe, Robert Wyatt a marqué une désaffection de plus en plus évidente pour la musique du groupe, si l'on en juge par la discographie du Soft. Il occupe encore une place prépondérante sur le deuxième LP (« Rivmic Melodies/Esther's no job ») où l'aspect folie démesurée prend le dessus, notamment dans des morceaux comme « Out of tunes » et « Fire engine passing with bells clanging ». « Third » le montre déjà très différencié vis-à-vis des autres membres du Soft. Sa composition «

Moon in June » possède une ambiance différente, moins châtiée que celles des presqu'ésotériques Hopper et Ratledge. Puis plus rien. Si ce n'est un rôle de musicien de studio (excellent comme de juste) sur « Fourth ». Plus rien? Si: l'album « End of an Ear » qu'il a sorti sous son propre nom en 1970 et qu'il a enregistré avec quelques copains. Un album étonnant qui nous éclaire directement sur ce qui forme la personnalité de Wyatt. Combat presque constant entre d'une part une irritation, une mauvaise humeur et d'autre part un désir de simplicité, de douceur puérile. Des bruits partout, des tas de notes qui cognent et qui frappent, une batterie qui ne rythme pas (qui suggère) ou bien qui rythme trop, des voix, beaucoup de voix qui articulent confusément des comptines d'enfant. Un album de percussionniste, pratiquement sans aucune mélodie, dans lequel le moindre son produit devient rythmique. Une ambiance folle. Pas la folie des grandeurs, pas la démence paranoïaque. Simplement la théâtralisation musicale du monde quasi-fermé quasi-secret de Robert Wyatt.



Robert Wyatt, petit rigolo

Matching Mole, sur scène, c'est un peu cela. Un peu Soft Machine aussi, parce que l'on ne rejette pas en deux temps trois mouvements tous les automatismes acquis en plusieurs années. Et puis, il n'est même pas question de les rejeter. « Un an avant mon départ officiel, je savais déjà que j'allais quitter le Soft Machine, mais j'ai essayé d'en retirer un maximum ». Matching Mole n'est donc pas un essai de rupture, c'est plutôt un essai d'indépendance. « Aussi loin que je me souvienne, j'ai toujours utilisé le même mode d'approche pour jouer, écrire et travailler ». Le Soft constituait donc pour Robert Wyatt une sorte de plate-forme avancée d'où il pourrait aller plus loin dans sa propre démarche. C'est ce qu'il fait pour l'instant en compagnie de Bill McCormick (basse), Phil Miller (guitare), et Dave Sinclair (orgue), ce dernier faisant précédemment partie de Caravan.

Matching Mole se cherche encore, évolue tout en tensions internes, incisives, ou bien il freine et n'ose pas. Il manque certainement au groupe le désir d'aller quelque part, de savoir où aller. Robert Wyatt ne veut pas jouer au chef, et il a raison. Mais, de par sa position psychologiquement supérieure, les autres semblent attendre quelque chose de lui, un déclic, une indication. Le petit jeu des hésitations peut encore durer longtemps. Les musiciens ne se sentent pas responsables de la musique et quelquefois même, la relation chef/ exécutant semble être celle qu'ils préconisent. La tension monte lentement, l'irritation s'installe, devient insoutenable, aussi bien pour le musicien que pour l'auditeur. Incompréhension. Incommunication. Difficulté de jouer. Arrivé à un degré de saturation, de point de non-retour, éclatement. C'est le plus souvent Dave Sinclair, probablement le plus sensible au malaise, qui se décide à agir, en lançant le son derrière la stridence de son orgue. Et les trois autres suivent, se précipitent dans l'appel d'air ainsi provoqué. C'est une longue ruée derrière Sinclair, passionnante parce qu'issue d'une situation psychologique que l'on vient de vivre. Le taureau s'essouffle, l'illusion de liberté est atteinte par les musiciens, et la valse-hésitation s'installe à nouveau, ainsi que le doute. Jusqu'à une nouvelle course éperdue. Et ainsi de suite.

La machine de Robert Wyatt est toujours aussi précise, aussi suggestive. Mais elle ne sert qu'à soutenir les ambiances. Rarement elle les provoque. La basse de Bill McCormick possède un phrasé assez libre, qui chante parfois jusqu'au lyrisme, et qui remplace paradoxalement les déficiences et l'inefficacité de Phil Miller à la solo. Les sonorités que laisse échapper la guitare ne s'intègrent pas: elles sont trop propres dans le magma bouillonnant produit par les trois autres. Le fait que Phil Miller se réfugie constamment derrière son ampli semble être une indication qu'il est très peu sûr de lui-même et mal à l'aise dans le groupe. Il est rare de le voir pénétrer dans les rythmes et les mélodies. La guitare n'est décidément pas un instrument suffisamment respiratoire pour ce genre de musique à fleur des sens. Trop nette et trop inhumaine (métallique). On lui préférerait le

souffle free d'un saxo ou d'un cornet, qui permet plus de spontanéité et un contact plus intime, plus sensuel (la bouche) avec le son produit. La guitare possède des limites et ce n'est pas un hasard si elle n'est que très rarement utilisée par les musiciens de free jazz.

Matching Mole était fragile et passionnant. Il était prêt à se désintégrer, et ne l'a pas fait. Musique interne, autant que celle de Soft Machine, mais qui, au contraire de ce dernier, ressent le besoin de se justifier, de s'expliquer. Qui hésite et fait hésiter. Robert Wyatt, pour s'exprimer plus pleinement, veut se consacrer de plus en plus au travail de studio. Cela ne lui convient pas tellement, qu'on lui dise : « Exprimez-vous ici, sur cette scène, de 21 à 22 heures. » II a besoin de calme, de temps et de libération pour communiquer. End of an ear ?

J.L. Crucifix

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Soft Machine à Paris... - Extra - N° 13 - décembre 1971



SOFT-MACHINE à Paris . . .

Quoi qu'on veuille penser, il n'y a pas si longtemps que le « Monstre Public » manifeste son attention à la musique de **Soft Machine**. Cela va bientôt faire six ans que le **Soft** ont été oubliés dans le pays-même qui les a vu naître, ceci tout simplement parce que quelques personnes ont tout bonnement cessé de les écouter, parce que les journalistes ne se sont plus rendus à leurs concerts, parce que la plupart des maisons de disques ont préféré sortir des disques de crétins. Tous ces judas auraient pu dormir encore longtemps si un beau jour, **S.M.** n'avait pas fait l'affiche de la célèbre chapelle du jazz qu'est le Ronnie Scott's Club.

Il doit y avoir douze ans de cela, l'Angleterre entendait pour la première fois les balbutiements de ce qui allait devenir la machine molle. C'était à Canterbury, du côté de 1959. Pour passer le temps, deux étudiants adaptaient, à leur manière, des sonates de Milhaud et de Bartok, sans se priver pour autant d'écouter des musiciens tels que **Cecil Taylor**, **Ornette Coleman** et **John Coltrane**. Ces deux étudiants s'appelaient **Mike Ratledge** et **Brian Hopper**. Les qualités du premier s'exerçaient sur un clavier de piano, celles du second s'épanouissaient entre le bois de la clarinette et le cuivre du saxophone ténor. Très vite, le duo mua en quartet et accueillit en son sein deux autres musiciens : **Hugh Hopper** (basse) et **Robert Wyatt** (drums). Deux ans plus tard, en 1961, le quartet perdit **Brian Hopper** mais gagna, avec l'arrivée de son remplaçant, son premier nom : **Daevid Allen Quartet**. Expérience éphémère puisque le groupe, nouvellement constitué, ne tarda pas à éclater. Majorque vit donc le retour de **Mr Allen**, Oxford celui de **Mike** alors que, loin de se décourager, **Hugh** et **Robert** formèrent avec **Kevin Ayers** et **Brian Hopper** les **Wild Flowers**. Enfin, en 1966, ce fut la réunion **Allen - Ayers - Ratledge - Wyatt**, auxquels vint s'adjoindre un guitariste américain : **Larry Knowlin** ; **Hugh** a disparu. Le groupe prit d'abord le nom de **Mr Head**, puis, en s'inspirant de **W. Burroughs**, celui de **Soft Machine**.

Au départ de **Larry Knowlin**, dont les idées, quant à la ligne musicale à suivre, ne s'accordaient pas à celle des quatre autres, **Daevid** devint guitariste, laissant à **Kevin** le soin d'assumer le rôle de bassiste ; **Robert** chantait, **Mike** venait d'acheter son premier orgue et personne n'avait de nouvelles de **Hugh**. En dépit de leur tendance à user d'effets, alors qualifiés de « peu orthodoxes », et leur refus prétentieux de percer à travers la

masse, la musique de la machine molle ne cessa de se teindre d'un environnement plus brutal, toujours plus excitant. De plus, et ce bien avant beaucoup, dirigés par **Mark Boyle**, les effets de lumière destinés à intensifier l'assaut véritablement physique de leur musique, dont le groupe se fit le premier utilisateur, ne manquèrent pas, et de surprendre le spectateur et de conditionner l'auditeur.

En avril 1967, avec « Love makes sweet music - Feelin' reelin' and squealin' Ayers», échoua la première tentative d'accession au hit-parade. Trois mois plus tard, alors qu'éclatait aux U.S.A. le mouvement Flower Power, le groupe se retrouva en France, sur la côte d'Azur, pour l'inauguration d'une discothèque. A cette inauguration succéda l'accompagnement d'une pièce de **Pablo Picasso** (le Désir attrapé par la queue), lors du festival libre de Saint-Tropez. Monté à Paris, **S.M.** participera, au studio des Champs-Elysées à «Sainte-Geneviève sur le tobogan», spectacle situé à mi-chemin entre Dada et l'avant-garde. Au retour en Angleterre, **Daevid** se vit refoulé et S.M. devint un trio que Paris ne devait pas tarder à revoir dans l'accompagnement d'Ubu Roi à la biennale, puis en novembre au Palais des Sports pour « La fenêtre rose ».



En 1968, **Mike Jeffries**, manager des **Animals** et de **Jimi Hendrix**, proposa au groupe d'accompagner ce dernier dans sa tournée américaine. Très vite, l'entreprise dégénéra en une sorte de marathon où il fallait jouer nuit après nuit et rouler toute la journée ; les **Soft** ne dormaient pas plus qu'ils ne répétaient. La tournée n'eut pas, pour eux, le succès qu'ils étaient en droit d'espérer. Désireux de toucher un public plus large, le groupe réintégra pour un temps les studios d'enregistrement et sortit leur premier 30 cm qui, s'il se vendit bien aux U.S.A. et sur le continent, n'eut même pas la chance de sortir outre-Manche ; il fallut attendre que Probe label (E.M.I.) en accepte la distribution pour le voir enfin apparaître dans les rayons des disquaires de l'île. Mieux arrangé (remplacement de **Kevin Ayers** par **Hugh Hopper** après le retour des Etats-Unis), le second LP donnera de **S.M.** une image plus sophistiquée. «C'était très agréable pour moi de jouet du free, mais la nécessité d'écrire pour composer l'était nettement moins» (**Kevin Ayers**). Ce second LP, à l'opposé du premier, qui restituait essentiellement l'intensité de la scène, présentait un **Robert Wyatt** moins mis en évidence, ayant quelque peu rompu avec le chant, un **Mike Ratledge** sorti des solos de trente secondes, et surtout une basse beaucoup plus construite : celle de **Hugh Hopper**. Malgré la permanence d'une certaine préciosité,

l'auditoire s'élargissait.

Avides dans la recherche, les **Soft** laissèrent ensuite leur musique se grossir de cuivres. Tentative plus ou moins appréciée (concert de la Mutualité, décembre 1969), mais loin de ne pas se trouver enrichie si l'on en juge par «Third », troisième et double album. Quatre morceaux seulement ; deux de **Ratledge** «Slightly all the time» et «Out bloody rageous», un de **Hopper** « Facelift », enregistré en public, et un de **Wyatt** «Moon in June ». La sobriété était de la partie. De « Facelift', qu'introduit un étonnant solo d'orgue de **Mike**, rejoint par le soprano de **Lynn Dobson** à « Out bloody rageous », de changement de temps en changement de temps, la machine bouscule et écrase plus qu'elle ne s'est jamais permis de le faire. Parfois un peu submergeants, les cuivres répètent le thème tandis que les soli de **Mike** introduisent le tempo suivant. Avec les cuivres, et en leur permettant une grande liberté d'expression, **S.M.** et par là, la pop musique croisaient le jazz en élargissant son éventail. De ces cuivres (**Nick Evan**s, trombonne, **Lynn Dobson**, flûte-soprano, **Mark Charig**, flügelhorn et **Elton Dean**, alto-saxello, seul **Elton** subsistera en tant que membre à part entière du groupe. Connu pour avoir « sévi » au sein des **Hoochie Coochie Men** de **Long John Baldry** avec **Rod Stewart** et un pianiste, plus connu aujourd'hui sous le nom d'**Elton John**, c'est **Elton Dean**, qui, après le départ de **Robert Wyatt**, amena aux trois «anciens» le nouveau batteur **Phil Howard**. Beaucoup de changements au cœur de la machine... et pourtant elle tourne.

Bruno Ducourant

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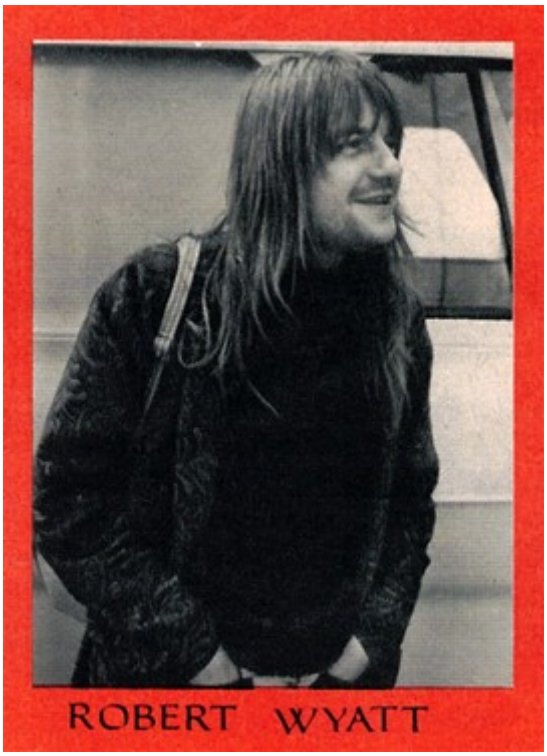
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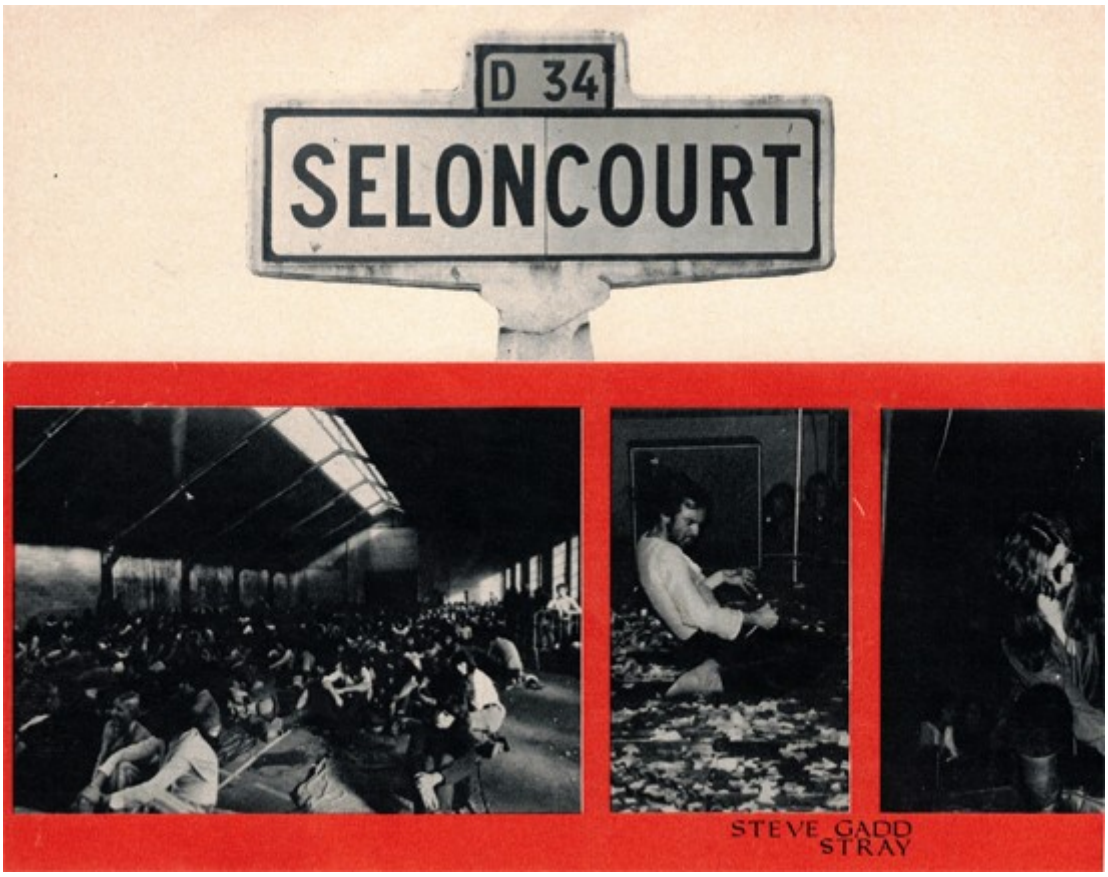
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Festival de Seloncourt - Extra - N° 12 - novembre 1971







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Seloncourt : A ce nom est maintenant indissociable celui de Festival.

Si vous n'y étiez pas, vous avez certainement entendu ou lu qu'un grand festival, organisé par Jean-Claude Rognant s'y déroulait les 18 et 19 septembre. Quelques surprises au programme puisque bon nombre de musiciens anglais se sont désistés.

Seloncourt, petite bourgade du Doubs (6.000 habitants), près de Montbéliard.

Le site : une grande salle dite «Omnisport», de construction assez ancienne (qu'importé), devant une grande place servant de parking et, à côté, un terrain aménagé en camping.

Samedi 15 h. Heure d'ouverture du 4e festival de pop musique de Seloncourt.

Déjà un millier de personnes sont assises dans la salle pour assister aux éliminatoires du concours de groupes amateurs. Parmi les dix formations à s'être présentées, quatre furent sélectionnées pour le lendemain :

Iris, Théorème, Hopeful, Psychose.

A 20 h, deux chanteurs de folk viennent à point. Après plusieurs heures de musique fortement amplifiée, il est agréable d'entendre le son d'une guitare sèche.

A 21 h un groupe français fort attendu : Ange. Pete Brown tient à les présenter lui-même, « Bonjour, tout à l'heure Robert Wyatt et moi viendrons jouer un petit morceau, mais maintenant je laisse la place à mes amis français : **Ange** ».

D'emblée, le public est conquis par « Le vieux de la montagne » puis « Dame Nation », deux compositions récentes. Christian quitte son orgue pour un tambourin et un micro. Son jeu de scène fait un peu penser à Roger Chap-man (Family). Une heure en leur compagnie passe vite. Ils sont rappelés par le public et remontent sur scène pour glorifier un ami à eux et c'est « Ballade pour un juteux ». Depuis maintenant trois mois que ce groupe est professionnel, on constate une très nette évolution, 6 h de répétition par jour, cela se voit et s'entend.

A 22 h 30, **Jenghiz Khan** venant de Belgique, passent à leur tour. Ils font une musique hard et leurs titres sont ceux gravés sur leur premier album « Well Cut ». Le soliste, également chanteur, possède une voix puissante et très aiguë. Il fut musicien de Vince

Taylor, on s'en rend d'ailleurs compte car sur scène, il joue jambes écartées et tremblantes en se penchant. Ils ont été très surpris par le public français qui resta très calme durant le temps où ils installaient leur matériel. C'est leur premier passage en France et ils nous connaissaient seulement d'après nos dignes représentants (public à Wight) de l'année dernière.

Il est 1 h, le dimanche matin, après une longue attente, due à l'installation de leur matériel, le premier groupe anglais Stray commence à jouer. Leur musique (hard rock) manque de diversité. Par contre, c'est un bon spectacle visuel (jeu de lumière, feu de poudre, bombe projetant des papiers, nuage de fumée). Leur répertoire est formé de leur 33 tours « Suicide ».

Un trio anglais leur succède : **Bachdenkel**. Leurs compositions sont originales et parfois violentes, mais ils ne semblent pas exploiter toutes leurs possibilités. Le son de la guitare s'identifie parfois à celui de l'orgue ou de la flûte.

4 h 30, **Pete Brown** et **Robert Wyatt** (Ex-Soft Machine) n'ont pas de problèmes de matériel puisqu'ils utilisent seulement une batterie et les bongos de Pete. Ils se lancent durant vingt minutes dans une improvisation de percussions jamais lassantes. Ils sont fort appréciés.

Deux musiciens de grand talent.

Avec eux, se termine le premier jour de ce festival. Pour le lendemain ou plutôt pour ce soir, il est 5 h du matin, est annoncé **Soft Machine**, première formule.

Dimanche 19 septembre, 15 h.

Finale du concours. Les quatre sélectionnés doivent jouer une demi-heure.

Iris de Montbéliard se classe premier. Rien de surprenant, étant donné leurs qualités musicales. Les vocaux sont jolis et bien en place Les compositions originales sont chantées en français.

Psychose venant de Paris prend la deuxième place. Ils possèdent également un répertoire personnel, anglais et français. Leur musique est hard rock et quelquefois, ils y incorporent un sax.

'Hopeful de Maçon se place en troisième position. Ils interprètent des morceaux de T.V.A. (Sweet Little 16 - Bad Scene) Jimi Hendrix. Grand Funk et Black Sabbath. Leurs interprétations n'ont rien à envier aux versions originales.

Théorème, Saint-Louis (Rhin). Ils ont composé un opéra pop : « la comédie humaine » dont ils extraient plusieurs morceaux chantés en anglais. Les titres traduits sont : Nombril, La route du vin (ils ne sont pas Alsaciens pour rien) et Maison.

A 18 h un groupe surtout connu dans l'Est : **Le Point**.

Trio composé d'un orgue, basse et batterie. Leur musique s'apparente à Nice dont ils ont été longtemps de fidèles interprètes, ainsi que du Soft. De bons musiciens qui, malgré leurs nombreuses tournées M.J.C., sont méconnus, dommage ! Ils composent tout leur répertoire et les vocaux sont en français.

19 h 30 - **Kleptomania** Un excellent groupe belge. Ils définissent leur musique comme étant du « rock un peu acide». Peut-être le meilleur groupe belge du festival. Ils portent bien leur nom, car la première chose qu'ils ont faite en arrivant sur scène, c'est de prendre le micro du présentateur, il leur en manquait un.

Le groupe suivant, belge également : **Lagger Blues Machine**. Malgré leur nom, ils ne font pas de blues, mais une musique de recherche avec pour base le classique. Cette influence vient de l'organiste. Leur musique est bien différente du commercial que nous connaissons des Wallace Collection. La Belgique a, elle aussi, une musique que nous gagnerions à connaître.

Pete Brown, fortement applaudi, vint lui-même présenter de vieux amis, son cheval de guerre : **War Horse**.

Ce groupe est formé d'un chanteur, un soliste, un organiste, un bassiste et un batteur. Un très bon groupe faisant une musique simple, sans grosses surprises, mais très «rentre

dedans». Ils interprètent plusieurs rocks. Le batteur a un jeu très rapide et jongle avec ses baguettes. Leur concert se termine dans un délire de sons et l'orgue d'abord bousculé se retrouve couché.

Le groupe suivant est une bonne surprise, puisqu'il n'avait pas été annoncé : **Daevid Allen Gong**.

Après une heure d'installation du matériel imposant de ce groupe, il est 0 h 30, lorsqu'il commence à jouer. **Gong** c'est : **Daevid Allen** (guitare, chant), Christian Iritsch (basse), Pip Pyle (batterie), Didier Malherbe (flûte, sax et soprano), Gilli Smyth (vocal).

Gilli possède parfois les intonations de Janis Joplin. Leur musique ? Ah oui ! Elle semble, par moments, tirée du folklore breton et presque sautillante (ayez un peu d'imagination), parfois elle semble s'apparenter à Pink Floyd par la recherche et les sons, aucune concession commerciale et très élaborée.

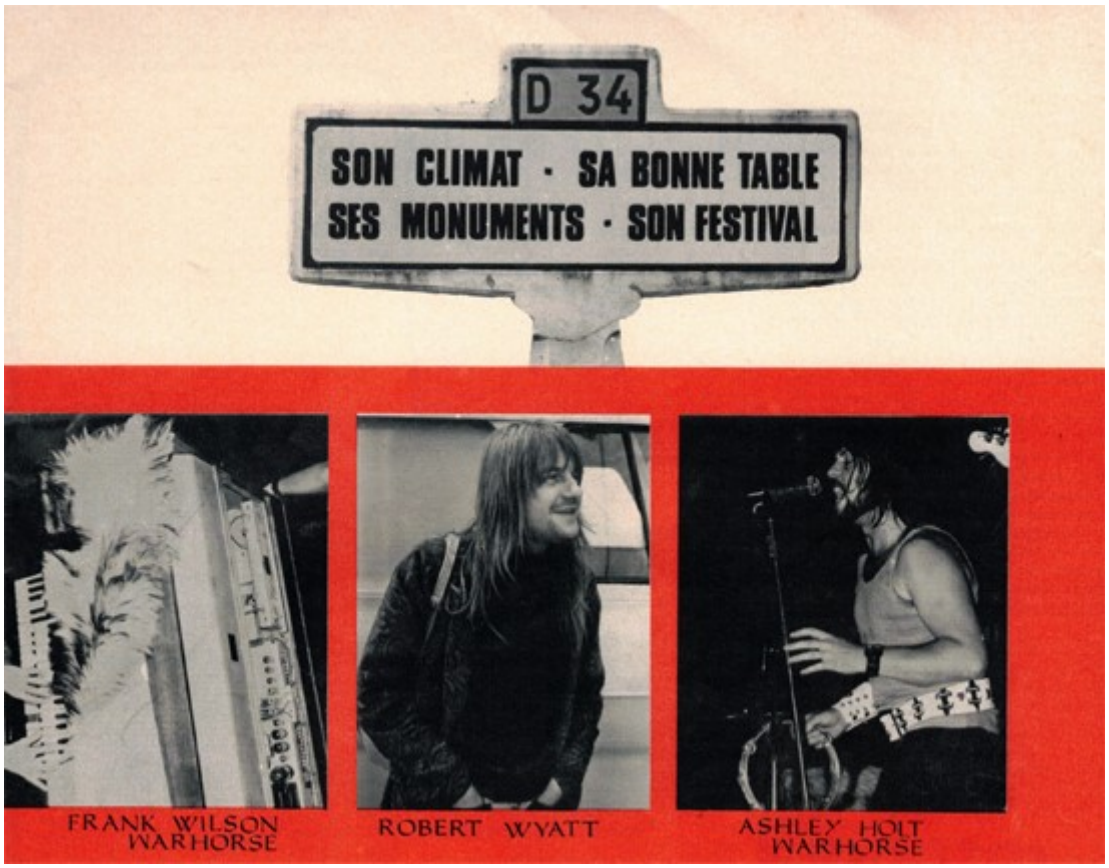
Il est 1 h 30, dans une demi-heure, le festival doit prendre fin.
Pour terminer un festival, rien de mieux qu'un vache de bœuf. Mais vraiment un super-bœuf avec la participation de **Gong** au complet, auquel se joignent **Kevin Avers** à la guitare solo et au vocal, **Robert Wyatt** donne un coup de main au batteur de Gong (à deux sur une double batterie, c'est logique), **Pete Brown** aux percussions, le batteur de **War Horse** au tambourin et vocal. Pendant une demi-heure c'est quelque chose «d'EXTRA». Ils improvisent sur la base d'un morceau du deuxième album de Soft. Le public qui somnolait est debout et tape dans ses mains. C'est ainsi que se termine le festival.

Ah! Un gars qui dit être venu spécialement de Paname veut nous faire entendre ses « chansons très engagées ».

Bon ! Branche-lui un micro, mais cinq minutes seulement, après on démonte.

Les groupes ayant eu le plus de succès pour le samedi, furent **Ange**, **Genghiz Khan** et le dimanche **Kleptomania**, **Lagger Blues Machine**, **War Horse**, **Gong** et surtout le bœuf de clôture. Trois mille personnes assistaient à cette grande fête et aucun incident n'est survenu. Cela vous dit quelque chose?

Guy Stoefler
Photos : D. Cazenave



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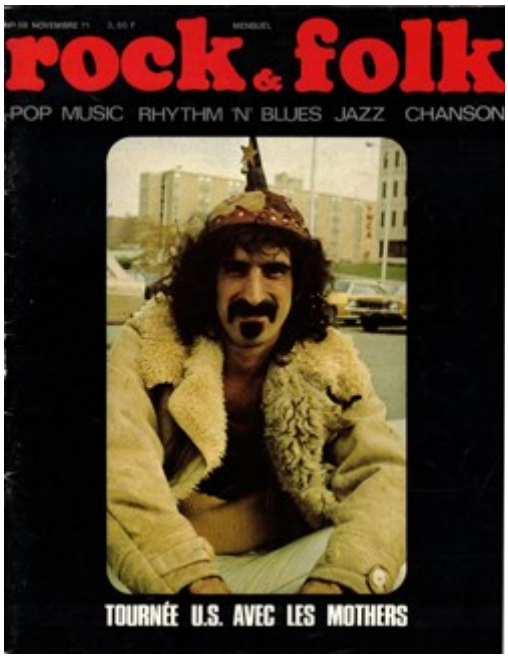
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Ange, Iris et Le Point - Rock & Folk - N° 58 - novembre 1971



ange, iris et le point

Seloncourt est un patelin qui n'a rien de folichon à première vue. Quelques maisons parmi des milliers d'autres maisons et quelques centaines d'usines. Belfort n'est pas trop loin, Sochaux tout près, avec un immense parking sur lequel sont soigneusement rangées les bagnoles Peugeot, bien propres, les chromes garnis de papier collant jaune, une véritable mer de tôle bien astiquée. Entre les maisons, ce que l'on voit du paysage est assez plaisant : le Jura s'incline, bien vert (la Suisse n'est qu'à 13 kilomètres).

Mais pourquoi tous ces petits patelins ont-ils des noms qui se terminent tous en « court » ? Audincourt, Hérimoncourt, Seloncourt ? Et pourquoi y-a-t-il dans cette région de France une activité pop que l'on peut qualifier d'intense, vraiment intense ?
C'est vrai, la contrée est sillonnée par des groupes de chevelus qui traînent dans de vieux camions (Peugeot bien sûr) de vieux amplis qui n'en peuvent plus, de vieux amplis qui crachent cependant leurs watts pourris dans tous les clubs et bals de la région. Serait-ce la pop des usines, analogue à celle qui secoue hystériquement des villes comme Détroit aux États-Unis, ou Liverpool en Angleterre ? Pourquoi pas... Il y a dans cette partie de la France, ainsi que dans le nord et dans le nord-est, un mouvement très vivace qui pousse les jeunes à jouer de la musique, pas seulement pour leur plaisir, mais surtout parce qu'ils en ressentent le besoin. Et, en général, ces groupes sont bons. Leurs qualités se situent même bien au-delà de leur talent ou de leur compétence en tant qu'instrumentistes, ou compositeurs. Elles tiennent au fait que lorsque ces jeunes types montent sur scène, ils se vident les tripes, parviennent à faire passer dans le public une grande partie de leur émotion ou de leur enthousiasme.



4e Seloncourt Pop Festival : sur scène, Hopefull.

A côté de ces groupes n'ayant pas encore atteint une maturité musicale certaine, il en existe d'autres qui, au contraire, se révèlent comme de véritables groupes professionnels, composés de musiciens compétents pouvant prétendre jouer un rôle capital dans l'évolution de la musique pop de ce pays. A Seloncourt, il y en avait trois, de ces groupes. Ange, Iris, et le Point.

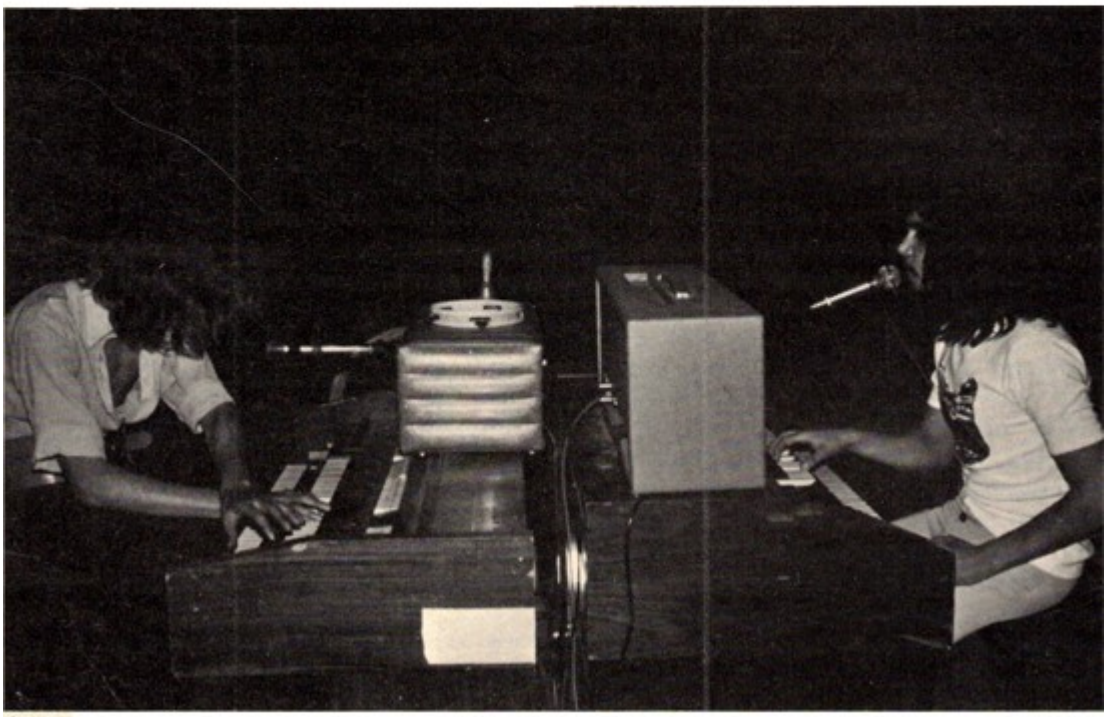
Je suis Dracula

Ange joua lors de la première journée de ce festival, le 18 septembre, et son show fut sans aucun doute l'un des moments les plus passionnants de ces deux journées. L'obscurité les aurait avantagés, ces musiciens dont la grande qualité est de créer un climat d'une densité absolument inouïe. La lumière qui tombait de la verrière avait trop tendance à diluer les couleurs, à agrandir le champ de vision, et le spectateur ne pouvait ressentir l'impact d'Ange comme il l'aurait fallu. Ce fut néanmoins un grand moment, qui aurait mérité de s'insérer en soirée, entre Genghis Khan et Stray, par exemple.

Ange, c'est deux orgues accolés, une guitare, une basse, et une batterie, une flûte et un cor de chasse qui swingue d'une façon étonnante. Et des cheveux partout. Le son, épais, fort, se propage en nappes minces, qui s'enflent soudain, se brisent, ou ondulent, selon l'humeur de Christian Decamps, organiste et chanteur, qui porte véritablement le groupe et le fait délirer, car il est « fou », Christian Decamps. De ces fous un peu géniaux, capables du meilleur comme du pire. De ces types qui, sur scène semblent de véritables démons, possédés par leur musique dont ils vivent à l'extrême les plus insensibles changements, les plus petits soubresauts. Une note le fera bondir, bras brisés et mains crispées, énormes yeux blancs Injectés de noir, et langue abandonnée. Et il parvient à chanter, il parvient à prononcer clairement les mots qu'il veut dire, ces chansons torturées dont on s'aperçoit qu'elles sont parfois de beaux poèmes : « Décembre enveloppe mon âme impure/Pour la plonger dans sa torpeur/Décembre m'injecte sa froidure/ Afin que janvier gèle mon cœur/Et dans mon ciel noir/La lune fait l'amour aux étoiles » (« Tout feu, tout flamme »). Decamps est également un être hanté par les spectres, les vampires, les choses parallèles, irrationnelles. Il le dit dans ce fabuleux morceau qu'est « Les vieux livres » : « Je suis Dracula et j'en ris de rage ». Et il faut le voir, hurler, en écumant presque : « Je suis Dracula ». Une grande mèche noire lui barre le front, qu'il a alors luisant, et ses yeux roulent, suivent la cadence infernale de la rythmique. Ange est un groupe qui, il y a quelques mois, paraissait bien jeune. Aujourd'hui, tous ont pris de l'assurance, du métier. Ils deviennent des professionnels, et si les co...ns ne les mangent pas, ils feront de (très) grandes choses. Faut bien se mouiller dans la vie, et il est bien plus important de le faire lorsqu'il s'agit de groupes français.



Christian Decamps.



Ange.

Pétards et fumée

Des qui ne feront rien du tout, par contre, ce sont les groupes belges que l'on nous demanda de considérer comme des vedettes. Nous avons reçu plusieurs lettres de lecteurs belges qui nous disaient : « Vos groupes français, c'est caca, nous, en Belgique, on en a des extras ».

Rien du tout, oui. Il paraît que Gengiz Khan est le meilleur groupe belge, on leur aurait même fait enregistrer un LP. Ce sera donc encore un disque de guitare jouée mécaniquement, à toute vitesse, une basse bien ronflante et la grosse batterie par là-dessus, qui ne marque pas de tempo parce que cette musique est tellement jouée sans motivations qu'elle n'a aucun véritable rythme. La musique de Gengiz Khan est de l'esbrouffe démagogique. Le soliste qui, assis, se lance dans un long solo bien scandé, juste ce qu'il faut pour faire taper dans les mains, ce n'est pas de la musique, ça, c'est l'art de provoquer un réflexe des plus primaires, de la part de l'auditoire. Qu'il y réussisse, bravo. Que le public réagisse, c'est normal (encore que ce ne fut pas le délire, loin de là !), il est venu pour ça. Que Gengiz Khan soit un bon groupe, non.

Lagger Blues Machine s'avéra un peu meilleur, mais il jouait beaucoup trop fort, dans cette salle de gym transformée. Le batteur, surtout.

Stray, qui succéda à Gengiz Khan (Lagger Blues joua le dimanche) s'exprime très bien, par contre. D'autant mieux qu'il n'a rien à dire et est donc parfaitement à l'aise. Tout ce qui les intéresse, les types de Stray, c'est de jouer à toute vitesse, très fort, plus fort que tout le monde, cette musique qui existe seulement grâce à la puissance des amplis, grâce aux watts, aux pédales fuzz, à l'écho, à la distorsion. Ils ne s'arrêtent que pour recommencer,

la même chose, dans le même accord. Après une heure de ce traitement de choc, chacun est tout à fait abruti, et personne ne distingue clairement ce qui se passe. La « musique » de Stray n'est plus qu'un brouillard de bruit, dont rien ne ressort. Le final, c'est tout d'abord un pétard/ bombe qui explose, tirant les spectateurs de leur torpeur, et des milliers de petits morceaux de papier qui s'envolent, un écran de fumée puante, colorée par les lumières qui clignotent depuis le début. Très éprouvant.

Backdenkel

Une chose bien, à Seloncourt : on pouvait aller faire un tour et retrouver une place. C'est rare, dans les festivals, de pouvoir se relaxer entre deux groupes. Un bon bol d'air après Stray, cela fait du bien, encore que l'air en question était plutôt frisquet : heureusement que ce festival n'était pas en plein air.

Jean-Claude Rognant, dont c'était là la quatrième réalisation dans le genre, a maintenant acquis une expérience appréciable ; il sait ce qu'il faut faire et ce qu'il faut ne pas faire. Pas de grands rassemblements, qui nécessitent une organisation énorme, mais des plus modestes, qu'il est pratiquement certain de réussir. Cette année, son plateau, plus ambitieux que celui des autres années, lui causa bien du souci, les groupes se décommandant sans arrêt, l'obligeant à faire des changements en catastrophe. Curved Air, prévu, ne vint pas (« Ils voulaient venir en avion-première-classe et une bagnole américaine pour chacun d'entre eux, je leur ai dit qu'ils pouvaient rester là-bas ! »). Mitch Mitchell s'est excusé, et Jack Bruce voulait un hôtel Hilton à Belfort. « Gallagher n'est pas venu non plus, il s'est fait plus ou moins truander par quelqu'un en France et il en a marre ». Impossible, de toutes façons, de faire venir un groupe vedette, genre Led Zeppelin. Les deux mille personnes qui se déplacèrent n'auraient pas suffi à payer les road managers. Il fallait jouer modeste, présenter quelques groupes anglais (« Ce sont eux qui attirent le monde ») et quelques groupes régionaux, ceux qui ont un nom.

Backdenkel, trio anglais résidant en France, est une sorte de fantôme. Beaucoup de gens, à Paris, connaissent ce groupe qui travaille dans une cave depuis des années. Des disques furent annoncés, que l'on ne vit jamais. Un LP sortira prochainement, chez Philips, et il risque de provoquer quelques remous, c'ar Backdenkel fait partie de ces groupes anglais qui, lorsqu'ils sont bons, peuvent faire des choses excellentes. Par malheur ils passèrent si tard et ils jouèrent si fort, eux aussi, tellement trop fort après tout ce que l'on avait subi au cours de cette soirée ! Quel dommage, car leur musique méritait d'être écoutée avec attention, ce guitariste merveilleux de technique et de doigté, qui sortait de sa guitare les sons les plus purs ou les plus fous, violant son instrument avec désespoir, interminablement, sans jamais relever la tête. Trois musiciens, seulement, qui se permettent de jouer une musique totalement inédite. Il faudra écouter très soigneusement le disque pour tenter de comprendre comment ce guitariste peut arriver à un tel résultat, aidé, il est vrai, par la basse à six cordes dont le rôle est très certainement prépondérant. Après, le bœuf que Wyatt et Pete Brown se sentirent obligés de faire parut bien vain. D'ailleurs, les deux compères s'en rendirent compte et cessèrent rapidement de taper l'un sur sa batterie, l'autre sur ses bongos.



Stray.



War Horse.

La musique et le show

Le concours des groupes amateurs fut gagné par Iris, groupe régional, habitué du Golf Drouot. Lui aussi s'est affermi, devient de plus en plus professionnel, rompu à la scène, et sa musique s'en ressent, plus concise, plus percutante. Elle a retrouvé une fraîcheur et un allant absents à une époque. L'organiste est bon, même dans son petit numéro à la Emerson, et tout tourne rond, nous aurons l'occasion d'en reparler, car Iris est un espoir, un solide. Le Point, par contre, c'est une certitude. Ce groupe, un trio orgue-basse-batterie, deviendra très bientôt l'un des plus grands. J'en connais peu qui auraient osé s'embarquer comme eux l'ont fait dans un « King Kong » signé Frank Zappa, et improviser

sur ce thème pendant plus d'une demi-heure, sans jamais se répéter, sans jamais ennuyer, et toujours une musique qui swingue, qui swingue de tous les côtés, du côté du bassiste, de celui de l'organiste, de celui du batteur dont les cymbales ne restèrent pas une seconde immobiles. Ils ont dit tout ce qu'ils avaient à dire, ce jour-là, ils ont montré tout ce dont le Point était capable en ce moment. Agréable de voir que des jeunes musiciens connaissent et comprennent si bien la musique de Zappa ou des Soft Machine, c'est bien de réaliser un beau jour que certains osent la jouer, peuvent la jouer, et en tirent quelque chose qui servira à élaborer leur propre musique. Le plus intéressant, c'est que cela s'est passé à Seloncourt, que le groupe en question, comme Ange, comme Iris, est originaire de la région, et que de Paris, il s'en contrefout... Combien y en a-t-il d'autres, de ces groupes, dans le Jura, en Bretagne, n'importe où ? L'ovation que recueillit le Point aurait pu être plus forte si le groupe s'arrêtait un instant, entre chaque morceau, laissait le public respirer, une seconde. Un petit détail...

Warhorse est un bon groupe de scène, et la scène est sa seule raison d'être : ce groupe anglais n'a qu'un but, faire le tabac, se défoncer, et donner du bon temps aux gens. Leur procurer une émotion physique la plus intense possible. Ils y parviennent très bien, à eux cinq. Ils jouent très fort, mais le son, propre, transmet parfaitement l'excitation d'une musique menée tambour battant, surtout que, sur le plan visuel, ce n'est pas mauvais non plus : ils se remuent comme des démons, sautent et se démènent. De vrais, d'authentiques professionnels, qui mouillent leur maillot, ne se foutent pas de la gueule du monde. Leur truc est calculé, minutieusement. Bien avant de faire valser son instrument, l'organiste l'a soigneusement débarrassé de l'ampli et des instruments de percussion auxquels il servait de desserte. Le batteur est un démon, lui aussi, qui entraîne les autres instrumentistes dans un galop échevelé. Faire un triomphe dans ces conditions est justifié et irréprochable. Warhorse l'a obtenu parce que son show est très bien conçu. Ce groupe, au moins, n'a pas eu besoin de faire la putain pour obtenir les faveurs du public. Il s'est imposé. Ceci dit, le disque de Warhorse est bien près de l'insignifiance.

Vivement que

Gong aussi a fait le tabac. Je n'en ai malheureusement vu que quelques secondes, et j'ai donc également manqué la jam-session avec Wyatt, Brown, Kevin Ayers. Il paraît que c'était bien, que ça clôturait d'une façon idéale ce festival, le quatrième festival pop de Seloncourt.



Robert Wyatt.

J.C. Rognant, après le succès remporté par celui-ci, espère bien en montrer un autre, l'an prochain. Peut-être pas au même endroit, peut-être au même endroit, il ne le sait pas encore. Tout ce que l'on peut lui souhaiter, c'est de pouvoir continuer, car il le faut, c'est important, de voir que cela peut marcher, sans problèmes, sans flics, sans vin rouge, sans grosse vedette. Juste ce qu'il faut de décontraction et d'organisation, de sérieux. Juste ce qu'il faut de musique exotique (anglaise), pour donner leur chance aux groupes du coin qui ont tellement de choses à dire que l'on va très bientôt les entendre, les entendre partout.

Car l'on commence à voir le bout du tunnel, les groupes vont chasser les idoles fanées. Ils sont en train de le faire. Ce sont eux, les groupes, qui, bientôt, vendront du disque. Ce sont leurs chansons qui iront dans les hit-parades. ÇA, c'est important. Mais je parle des groupes français, ceux qui parlent le langage de tout le monde. Les autres, c'est bien, mais c'est bien pour le pied. Ce n'est pas Zeppelin qui remplacera Claude François, c'est bien plutôt Triangle, ou Martin Circus, ou Ange, ou Iris, ou un autre. Vivement que. —

Jacques Chabiron

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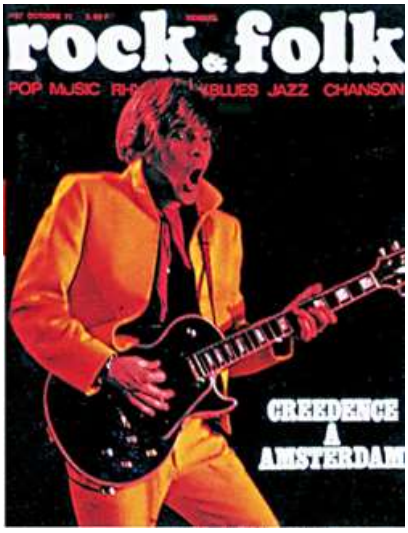
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Une fête pop ulaire - Rock & Folk - N° 57 - octobre 1971



une fête pop ulaire

Fête de l'Huma. Fête du peuple. Culture populaire; et toutes ces choses. Ouais. Tout de même, le sourire grince un peu, malgré la belle organisation. Et puis il y a des trucs qui m'échappent : je ne suis pas ouvrier, ne l'ai jamais été, et aurais bien du mal à le devenir. 40-48 heures par semaine, j'ai connu cela il y a longtemps, jusqu'à ce que je découvre que je pouvais gagner ma croûte en me faisant moins chier, parce que mon éducation me le permettait (me permettait de concevoir l'idée qu'on n'était pas obligé de s'écrouler dans un bureau 8 plombes par jour pour faire travailler sa matière grise). Les HLM, j'ai jamais su l'impression que cela faisait de vivre dedans. Quant aux patrons... C'était plutôt les profs, surgés, adjudants, avant les flics. Aussi, il y a des trucs que j'ai du mal à comprendre quand je mets les pieds dans une grande fête populaire française. D'abord parce que mon esprit critique bourgeois me fait penser que la culture populaire ce n'est peut-être pas ça. Une idée qui ne me quittera pas pendant deux jours : faut-il pour distraire les gens - c'est-à-dire, en principe, pour les rendre heureux - leur offrir le même barnum d'abrutissement que celui qu'ils côtoient tous les jours?

La bouffe d'abord. Il n'y avait pratiquement que ça. Évidemment, deux millions de personnes à nourrir... Mais alors, pourquoi ce manque total d'originalité dans la distribution, sinon dans les produits eux-mêmes ? Uniformité glauque et monotone des baraques de saucisses-frites, s'étendant à perte de vue, avec pour seule variante le nom d'une fédération quelconque. Les gens ont pourtant grand besoin de quelque chose de différent. Pour les réveiller un peu, d'abord. Politiser, c'est d'abord surprendre, au risque de déranger. Sinon, on retombe dans la crasse conditionnante, abrutissante, quotidienne (télé, journaux; le médium est le message...). Il ne faut pas hésiter à faire un pas de côté de temps en temps. A force de marcher dans les traces du voisin, on finit par s'enfoncer. Un pas de côté, c'était peut-être sortir des choses habituelles (les concerts pop, nous verrons cela plus loin). Taper autre part qu'au niveau du tube digestif. Il y avait trop de spectacles grotesques : je pense à ce malheureux éléphanteau soumis aux photographes de famille devant un tableau de jungle africaine. Et puis il pleuvait, le ciel était gris, bas, les nuages filaient au ras des HLM. On cherchait la joie... Elle était autre part. Chassée par un sérieux monumental, piétinant dans les flaques d'eau, bouffant une frite sans saveur, attendant en bâillant le résultat d'une loterie où revenaient toujours les mêmes petits lapins au milieu des potiches rosés. Une immense foire du Trône, sans chaleur, sans tendresse, sans rires. C'était samedi, et il pleuvait.

Roulant des idées noires et gluantes comme le ciel, j'errais de stand en stand à la recherche d'un éclair, d'une surprise, et ne trouvais partout que des copies conformes. Et pourtant. Attirés par les noms prestigieux de Joan Baez, des Soft Machine, ou du Gong, des centaines de milliers de jeunes erraient parmi la foule, sans doute cherchant comme moi quelque havre de chaleur tranquille. L'Huma 71, c'était un peu le grand festival qu'on

attendait depuis deux ans. Ils étaient bien là 300 000, qui tous écoutent la pop, en parlent, en vivent plus ou moins en attendant l'éclosion, la fête, la nouvelle culture, que sais-je encore? Comment se fait-il, dès lors, que parmi ces jeunes il ne se soit rien produit, qui ait pu justement être une promesse d'éclosion ? Comme : un journal, imprimé et distribué sur place, des boutiques offrant autre chose que des saucisses-frites, du théâtre de rue, des concerts improvisés, des centres d'information sur les communautés, les Mouvements de Libération de la Femme, les magasins gratuits, les écoles expérimentales, la drogue - origines, conséquences, le tout objectivé... Rien de tout cela. Le calme, le silence total. La France, c'est pas l'Amérique. Il serait peut-être temps qu'elle commence à vivre, cette fameuse nouvelle culture. A moins que l'underground lui soit plus profitable pour survivre. Même dans ce cas, il faudra au moins la défendre. Donc, s'organiser.



Restait la pop music. Ah ! la musique. Assis sur son cul, les bras croisés à 200 000 dans l'herbe mouillée, on est bien ensemble, communion et tout et tout. Les records ne font pas partie de mes préoccupations. 200 000 spectateurs pour les Soft Machine, c'est bien, ça fait un demi Woodstock ; et alors ? Combien parmi ces deux cent mille ont réalisé que ça fait beaucoup de monde, une majorité, qui a quelque chose à défendre ? Ne fut-ce que cette pop music qui est la base de sa culture. Les freaks abondent aujourd'hui dans notre beau pays. Un peu paumés. Très vulnérables, tiraillés entre les marchands de sapes, de disques, et de bonnes paroles que leur marché potentiel fait saliver. Illumination : à San Francisco, il y a quatre ans, les Diggers brûlaient l'argent et consacraient toute leur énergie à la création d'une véritable alternative au système qui nous étouffe. Pas avec des mots. Une alternative à l'argent, où tout était gratuit. Et cela marchait, très bien même. En France, les freaks, les jeunes en général (parce que dans ce système de vieillards, la jeunesse représente un anachronisme) se font rouler depuis le début par une masse de types qui les allèchent avec tout ce qu'ils croient leur manquer. Or, ce qui leur manque vraiment, totalement, c'est l'amour, la tendresse, et l'énergie qu'ils suscitent.

Je vous casse les oreilles avec des histoires de problèmes affectifs ? Essayez donc de voir où en sont vos rapports avec votre entourage... Toute personne qui entretient des relations avec vous sans amour, sans chaleur, se fout de votre gueule. Oh ! et puis je fais le moraliste dans un canard à 3 francs 50. Où vous vous masturbez devant Jagger pour vous aider à sortir de votre abrutissement familial, patronal et lycéen. De cela aussi il faudra sortir un jour. Et alors, quoi... ?

Vous voulez que je vous parle des Soft Machine et de mes copains du Gong. Parler de pop music... Là aussi on vous oriente et on vous dit qui qu'est bien et qui qu'est mal. Finalement, les canards pop vous manipulent comme France-Soir fait joujou avec la cervelle de votre papa. Le médium est le message (re). Heureusement, vous ne gobez pas tout. Ça serait tragique! Alors. D'abord, il y eut Steve Waring et Roger Mason, au palais de la moto. J'aime beaucoup la moto et je vous en recauserai. Il y avait là des machines pas possibles, des trucs insensés de 1937-39 (les années 30, pour la mécanique auto, moto, avion, on n'a jamais fait mieux). Des Vincent, Velocette, HRD, Ratier, qui ne se fabriquent plus, et c'est dommage, parce que ça avait autrement plus de gueule que les Honda d'aujourd'hui. Il y avait beaucoup de loulous en cuir crasseux, mais pas encore de Hell's Angels. Ah! Et puis sur une scène, juste derrière les vieilles meules, Mason, Waring, 12 cuillers à soupe, 3 tournevis, une pince-monseigneur, 2 clés anglaises, 4 triangles, un banjo, des cloches tibétaines et une guitare. Et tout ça faisait un bruit fantastique, parce que Mason les avait distribués dans la foule et qu'elle prenait un pied monstrueux avec. La participation ils connaissent et ce fut un très bon concert. Chaleureux. Après... après, il y avait bien un peu de free jazz, très loin, mais je n'étais pas trop préparé et je n'ai pas insisté. Restaient les Soft.



Il y avait bien 200 000 personnes, oui. Dont beaucoup criaient assis ! ce qui gênait pas mal l'écoute. Les Soft, ils ont un nouveau batteur - Phil Howard - pas du tout dans le genre Wyatt subtil et tout. Lui, c'est plutôt un roulement continu, plus qu'une ponctuation, un martellement dru, serré, obsessionnel. On doit pouvoir broder pas mal là-dessus. J'ai pensé à la section rythmique, de Miles Davis, trame sur laquelle se tissent sans problèmes les improvisations du grand Milou. Chacun des deux sets de Soft Machine fut délivré sans interruption, sans le moindre clin d'œil, répertoire ou autre. Elton Dean - qui joue aussi du piano électrique - et Ratledge se partageant à tour de rôle les honneurs de l'avant-scène. Musique trop forte, trop difficile, trop complexe pour être prise en une seule fois. Il faut la réécouter encore et encore pour, petit à petit, pénétrer la subtilité et l'incroyable richesse de son langage. Si possible dans le calme. Musique - petite pensée élitiste - qui a dû passer au-dessus de bien des têtes. Les Soft sont difficiles, parce que leur voie personnelle est elle-même difficile. Cela devait apparaître plus clairement dans le concert du lendemain. Beau dimanche, ensoleillé, effaçant les impressions moroses de la veille. La lumière était plus vive, les sourires plus nombreux. La boue était devenue poussière. A l'entrée, un homme de 61 ans qui faisait le tour du monde à pied en traînant un cercueil à roulettes offrait sa petite alternative, sa solution personnelle aux questions qui tournaient dans ma tête. L'odeur de friture était moins pesante, les couleurs des manèges s'étaient rallumées.

Sur scène, au fond, au lieu-dit la «discothèque», on commençait à installer le matériel de Magma. J'avais jamais vu encore. Un peu effrayé quand même, a priori, par les déclarations de Vander et ces signes agressifs rouges sur fond noir. On m'avait pas appris ça en Californie !I Et puis, la musique. Je ne sais pas combien de temps. Il y eut des moments pénibles, étouffants, une lourdeur indéfinissable dans la tête, comme des noix qui s'entrechoquent. Des moments légers, aériens, ténus. Des moments monotones, tristes remplissages sans saveur et puis à la fin, après une demi-heure étouffante, à hurler, arrêtez, foutez-nous la paix, un morceau tranquille, rassurant, bon, vous en faites pas, on est arrivés, tout va bien. Magma c'est la vie quotidienne à Paris en 1971. Avec ses rares moments de paix, de lumière, et son abrutissement total pour le reste, avec quand même, une porte ou une fenêtre en chacun de nous - et c'était peut-être ça le dernier thème. Le kobaien, c'est, mélangés, le speaker à la télé, les bagnoles, le voisin, les cris du père et de la mère, les ordres et les conseils distribués généreusement pendant 20-30 ans. Le kobaïen, c'est ce qui sort quand on presse la cervelle d'un homme adulte. Reste que l'on peut toujours s'inventer un langage à soi pour trouver une paix et qu'on peut toujours l'appeler « Kobaïa ».



Après, c'était le Gong. Bizarre, le Gong, en ce moment. Ils vont très, très bien, la planète verte est toute proche et serait même perceptible depuis que Robert Wyatt et Kevin Ayers se joignent occasionnellement au groupe. Le dernier se trouvait là, si bien que l'on eut quasiment deux concerts Soft : une resucée du premier album et l'autre, perpétuel. Bon. Souhaitons que le nom « Soft Machine » ne serve pas trop à cautionner la multitude de groupes formés par les éclopés du premier et dont la musique, de toutes façons n'a plus rien à voir avec celle que jouent aujourd'hui les seuls détenteurs du nom. Et apprécions la musique du Gong pour ce qu'elle est, farfelue, cosmique, camembert et pop music. Ni française ni anglaise. Gong, simplement. Elle se trouve justement en pleine transformation, sans doute grâce aux changements de personnel - section rythmique roulante de Pip Pyle - aux permutations-Daevid à la basse et Christian Trisch à la guitare dans les morceaux de sa composition. Un brassage toujours profitable. Peut-être que les musiciens anglais dans les groupes français vont leur donner un sang neuf et faire bouger la machine. Gong, sur scène, c'est toujours un plaisir. Ils ne sont pas constipés, et puis ils ont quelques bonnes idées sur l'action théâtrale. Et il en faut pas mal pour dégeler un peu le public français. Jamais vu un public pareil : tant qu'on ne le viole pas, il ne bronche pas. Il fallut l'arrivée sur scène de Kevin Ayers pour provoquer quelques remous. Kevin est incroyable. Une fille médisait après le concert que c'était le seul vraiment sexy. Les chanteurs et les musiciens pop en France, il faut bien le dire, ne sont pas très sexy. Pour la tronche, ils se prennent tous pour des dieux : tout dans le sourcil froncé et la main frémissante. Mais dans la hanche, l'attitude. Faites de la gymnastique ou du yoga, messieurs, ou allez revoir les vieux films d'Elvis « the pelvis ». La pop doit être sexy, charrier des vibrations sexuelles. « Quand j'écoute le Dead, j'ai envie de faire l'amour». Citation. C'est quand même pas demain qu'on verra Alice Cooper à la fête de l'Huma. Bon. Pour en revenir au Gong, la fin de son passage avec Kevin Ayers fut, bien entendu, à se lever les fesses pour gigoter un peu (on ne danse pas beaucoup en France dans les concerts pop.Sérieuuuuuux !...). Ils jouèrent « I dit it again », ça s'imposait. La prochaine fois, il y aura Robert Wyatt - donc deux batteurs... Le Gong est bien parti.

L'actuelle formation des Soft Machine clôturait le spectacle (...). Démarche radicalement différente. L'enthousiasme populaire baisse d'un cran ou deux. On redevient sérieux. On s'assied et l'on écoute; ça n'est pas forcément péjoratif : malheureusement, les Soft Machine sont un des seuls groupes que l'on puisse vraiment écouter. Je veux dire que le fait de les entendre ne suscite pas d'autres besoins - danser, gueuler, se décrotter le nez ou se barrer pour faire pipi - que de les écouter. Ce concert devait être moins long que celui de la veille. Et différent. Il est impossible que deux concerts des Soft puissent se ressembler. La texture même de leur musique les en empêche. Comme la veille, on retrouvait le martellement continu de Phil Howard. Mais Ratledge et Dean semblaient moins éloquents, laissant plus de place au rythme pur, basse-batterie. Hugh Hopper en profitait pour dire toutes les choses qu'il avait à dire. La musique de la Machine Molle est en effet construite de telle façon que n'importe quel (très) bon musicien devrait pouvoir s'y insérer. La section rythmique, par exemple, peut se multiplier. Les solistes aussi. Car il ne s'agit pas vraiment de solistes, puisque chaque musicien en est un. Je ne connais pas ce nouveau batteur, mais il semble que son arrivée au sein du groupe ait une importance énorme. Les phrases de Ratledge, Hopper et Dean collent à merveille à son jeu - encore que le cuivre pousse plus loin, plus haut, plus aigu les accents de son discours. Impossible à saisir, la musique des Soft Machine est sans doute la plus forte, et peut-être la plus violente qui vive aujourd'hui. Elle provoqua des commentaires passionnés (passionnels ?) à la fin du concert, ce qui prouve au moins qu'elle remue quelque chose dans la tête. C'est plutôt bon signe.

Alain Dister

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Wyatt - 10 batteurs - Best - N° 38 - septembre 1971





Génial drummer s'il en est, Wyatt est servi par une technique colossale et une imagination délirante (cette phrase est décidément un merveilleux poncif journalistique). Son style compliqué, beaucoup moins accessible que celui de Baker, est fouilléà l'extrême et pourtant toujours clair et net. On pourrait le comparer à Hiseman, pour son sens de la mélodie et son inspiration jazzistique, mais autant Hiseman est styliste, autant Wyatt est hard, et d'une violence parfois paroxystique (pas mal tourné, ça).

Son jeu est unique car il a fait une formidable synthèse entre le jazz, le rock, ses idées personnelles, le tout superbement emballé, sans un défaut ou trou quelconque**.**

Je préfère parler des premiers disques du Soft Machine, car ils semblent s'orienter de plus en plus vers le jazz, et je crois que l'apport de Wyatt a été bien plus grand quand il jouait le rock (car il jouait du rock, parfaitement, il le dit lui-même sur la pochette du premier Soft : « I'm only a rock'n roll drummer»).

C'est exactement le batteur qu'il fallait au Soft et à son style si particulier. En effet, la musique du-Soft (des premiers albums) est un rock très sophistiqué. Sur des bases de rock, ils greffent des formes fantastiques, des soli éblouissants ; les morceaux s'emboîtent à la faveur d'un break, d'une reprise toujours soigneusement pensée, l'esthétisme est toujours présent, la folie également et la virtuosité personnelle sans cesse sollicitée. Wyatt est à la hauteur de son rôle, énorme, superbe et généreux ; sa crinière blondasse cachant sa face grimaçante, secouée au rythme des pulsations qu'il déchaîne, par-dessus les délires de Ratledge et les vrombissements d'Hopper. On ne peut pas dire qu'il soit le meilleur batteur du monde. Aucun n'est vraiment le meilleur, et si je préfère Baker aux autres, c'est pour une simple question de goûts, il n'est pas le meilleur, disais-je, mais son apport à la musique le classe, sans hésitations pour personne — j'espère —, parmi les plus grands génies, aussi bien en pop qu'en jazz (ce qui n'est pas le cas de Baker).

Son drumming est étonnamment spectaculaire, bourré de roulements de charpies de cymbales, toujours plus fort. Ses rythmes ne sont pas moins sublimes : partant d'un rythme de rock très classique, il introduit ses idées, sa folie inventive et produit une trame

rythmique sans bavures, exubérante quand il le faut ou remarquablement belle et pleine de finesse dans les passages calmes de la musique. Ecoutez le merveilleux « Joy of a toy », certainement le plus beau solo de basse que j'ai eu la chance d'écouter. Dans « So Boot if at all », il prend un solo qui ridiculise 80 % de la production solistique, tout est là, la technique éblouissante, l'inspiration géniale, etc. Comme tous ces qualificatifs paraissent fades, cent fois ressassés ; écoutez plutôt ce solo, ce tourbillon irrésistible, ce Gulf-Stream qui vous laissera coi. Après vous rigolerez un bon coup en passant « Rat salad » ou autre merdouille visqueuse.

Wyatt, c'est un condensé habile de Hiseman et Moon... un grand, quoi... Nous pouvons ajouter à son immense talent à la batterie, ses qualités de chanteur. Sa voix est elle aussi unique en pop, très haut perchée mais sans aucune résonance, qui ajoute encore à la curieuse atmosphère créée par Soft Machine.

Jojo Starking

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The Soft Machine - Pop Music Superhebdo - 15 juillet 1971







L'Angleterre a été le berceau de la Pop Music. Voici une chose qui est reconnue par tous. Les Beatles ont été les grands vulgarisateurs d'un mouvement qui ne demandait qu'à s'épanouir. La musique n'avait pour but que de rendre les gens heureux. Les Rolling Stones apparurent. Ils mêlèrent, avec quelle réussite, le Rock'n'Roll au Rhythm'n'Blues. Avec Burdon et ses Animais, le Blues était de la fête, lui aussi. Voilà ce qu'était la musique populaire dans les années 1963/65. Telle était la musique la plus appréciée. Et puis, une autre forme de musique apparut. Elle fut immédiatement reconnue par un certain nombre d'individus, qui ne tardèrent pas à la qualifier d'intellectuelle. Les plus connus des groupes qui l'illustraient : Soft Machine et Pink' Floyd. On ne peut pas encore mesurer le tort que l'on a fait à ces groupes en définissant leur musique de cette façon. En fait, c'est de tout un public potentiel qu'on les privait d'un coup en laissant entendre que leur musique était réservée à une élite. En réalité, la musique de Soft Machine, aussi bien que celle de Pink Floyd, est ouverte à tous. Il suffit simplement de l'aborder comme on doit aborder toute musique, les oreilles et l'esprit en repos. Il ne reste qu'à se laisser bercer. La musique fait le reste. Soft Machine n'est pas un groupe, comme les autres. C'est surtout la cellule-mère d'une série de groupe qui se sont formés en Grande-Bretagne et en France : Gong, Kevin Ayers And The Whole World.

Mais reprenons à ses débuts l'histoire de la Machine Molle. Il y eut une époque, aux environs de 1962, où par un hasard extraordinaire, un petit groupe d'individus peu ordinaires pour l'époque put se réunir. Ces individus (qui seront à la base de Soft Machine et de sa progéniture), ont pour noms : Daevid Allen (guitare), Mike Ratledge (orgue), Hugh

Hopper (guitare basse), Robert Wyatt (batterie) et Kevin Ayers (guitare). Daevid Allen était un voyageur inlassable. Il venait d'Australie, son pays natal. Il était musicien, mais aussi poète. Sa vie dans les milieux « souterrains » de l'époque lui permit de rencontrer des musiciens reconnus aujourd'hui, dont La Monte Young et Terry Riley. Robert Wyatt non plus n'avait pas des goûts ordinaires. Son père, lorsqu'il avait 9 ans à peu près, l'avait initié à la musique de John Cage. Qui connaissait Cage à l'époque ? Et qui connait Cage aujourd'hui ? Pourtant, cet Américain a créé un des mouvements les plus importants de la musique contemporaine. Il a entrepris, notamment, de démystifier le musicien. La musique est accessible à tous. Tous (spectateurs et musiciens) participent à sa création. Prenez deux boftes de conserves et tapez. Vous êtes musicien. Cage est venu aux Halles de Paris cet hiver, et le concert (?) fut une merveilleuse réussite. Les éléments de la Machine Molle avaient reçu une éducation musicale tournée vers le Jazz. Ils jouèrent donc du Jazz. Mais les spectateurs ne venaient pas. Le groupe dut se disloquer. Chacun partit donc de son côté. Kevin Ayers et Daevid Allen voyagèrent. Mike Ratledge entreprit des études de philosophie. Et puis, quelque temps après tout ce beau monde se retrouva. Hugh Hopper n'était plus là. Il avait disparu sans laisser de traces. Le succès ne venant toujours pas en Grande-Bretagne, le groupe du bientôt s'expatrier. Ce fut en France qu'il fut enfin reconnu à sa vraie valeur. Il anima le spectacle de Picasso et Lebel : « Le Désir Attrapé Par La Queue ». Il joua aussi au Palais des Sports de Paris. Toui semblait aller pour le mieux, et pourtant la piemière séparation ne tarda pas à survenir. Daevid Allen quittait Soft Machine. Il reprenait sa canne de chercheur perpétuel. Les habitants de la planète Gong n'allaient pas tarder à le rejoindre. Gong né, le premier enfant de la Machine Molle se manifestait. Les liens des membres de Soft Machine et de Gong sont solides. Ils ne sont pas seulement musicaux, mais aussi, et surtout (il faut quand même le dire) intellectuels. Amen. Soft Machine continue donc avec trois membres : Robert Wyatt (batterie), Mike Ratledge (orgue) et Kevin Ayers (guitare). C'est dans cette composition que le groupe produisit son premier album intitulé tout simplement « Soft Machine». Sur la couverture, le graphisme tout à fait détaillé et en coupe d'une machine que l'on peut difficilement prendre pour une pompe à bicyclette. La musique de cet album porte la marque essentielle de Kevin Ayers. Voilà l'album le plus classique de Soft Machine. Les mélodies se rapprochent très sensiblement (mais à un niveau instrumental supérieur) des productions courantes de la Pop Music.



Les parties chantées sont extrèmement importantes, trait qui disparaîtra peu à peu. Merveilleuse réussite que cet album ("Hope For Happiness", "Save Yourself"...). Mais Robert Wyatt et Mike Ratledge ne pouvaient plus jouer cette musique. Ils voulaient jouer la leur : le Jazz, leur Jazz. Kevin Ayers partit pour d'autres cieux. Le deuxième enfant de Soft Machine naquit. Ce fut Kevin Ayers and The Whole World. Hugh Hopper remplaça Kevin

Ayers. Le groupe grava un second album, puis un troisième, intitulé « Third ». Leurs idées musicales se sont affermies. On joue du Jazz. On a même adjoint au groupe une section de cuivres. Le moins que l'on puisse dire, c'est que cet apport fut diversement apprécié. Je me souviens d'un concert donné à la Mutualité durant l'hiver 1969/1970. L'assistance était séparée en deux clans tout à fait opposés : une moitié sifflait et huait dès qu'un « cuivre » jouait une note. L'autre moitié se sentait obligée d'applaudir pour faire preuve de son soutien. Ce furent deux heures très divertissantes, mais peu propices à l'élaboration d'une musique de grande qualité. De ces « cuivres », qui comprenaient dans « Third » Elton Dean, Lyn Dobson et Jimmy Hastings, il ne reste plus aujourd'hui que le premier. Après ce disque, il fallait tendre sérieusement l'oreille pour entendre parler de Soft Machine. Bien sûr, le groupe jouait de temps en temps en France, mais les manifestations publiques étaient de plus en plus rares. Pas question de nouveau disque. La Machine Molle ne tournait plus. Heureusement, Robert Wyatt agissait comme dix. Il se donnait en tous sens, à la recherche éternelle de formes de musique qu'il aurait ignorées.



Sa participation au Centipede de Keith Tippett (gigantesque orchestre d'une centaine de personnes) est donc facilement explicable. Mais Wyatt avait aussi envie de jouer sa propre musique, celle qu'il ne pouvait créer dans le cadre plutôt rigide de Soft Machine. Il devait faire un disque solo. Celui-ci vient de sortir chez Barclay. Wyatt y donne libre cours à une imagination débordante. La musique est beaucoup moins construite que celle de Soft Machine. Wyatt y fait une nouvelle fois la preuve de sa virtuosité de batteur. La souplesse et la frappe de son jeu parviennent, une fois de plus, à toucher au domaine de la mélodie. En s'inspirant du Free Jazz, du Jazz classique, de musiciens comme Cage, ou Riley, Wyatt crée une musique profondément intéressante. Après cette réussite, on se mit à espérer la publication d'un album du groupe au complet. Ce fut « Fourth » (quatrième). Après « Third », c'était logique. Soft Machine n'a plus de composition fixe. Elton Dean et cinq autres musiciens ont participé à la réalisation de cet album. Soft Machine s'enfonce dans le Jazz. Les musiciens mêlent allègrement les sonorités les plus « classiques » aux passages les plus free. Le mélange n'est pas toujours convaincant, et si la maîtrise des musiciens n'est pas en cause, on doit bien reconnaître que cet album ne correspond pas au succès escompté. Seul, Hugh Hopper réussit à sauver ce disque. Ses compositions (qui occupent

toute une face) prouvent de façon absolue son assimilation du langage jazzistique. Il observe une grande unité de pensée et de ton en évitant de piocher un peu dans tous les tiroirs musicaux qui s'offrent à lui. Il ne reste plus qu'à attendre les prochaines productions de Soft Machine. Il serait dommage que le groupe tombe dans des égarements proches de ceux de Pink Floyd. C'est pourtant aujourd'hui que le groupe commence à être découvert par certains amateurs de Jazz. Soft Machine sera le seul groupe qualifié de pop (?) invité au Festival de Jazz de Newport en juillet prochain aux U.S.A.. Miles Davis (musicien de Jazz) avait été invité au festival pop de L'Ile de Wight. Il y côtoya les Who, Ten Years After, Jimi Hendrix. Ce fut la première véritable incursion du Jazz dans les festivals pop. Le Jazz de Davis se heurta à l'incompréhension de la plus grande partie du public, plus venue pour voir et écouter des Rock-bands. Peu importe, le phénomène est irréversible. Le Jazz et la Pop Music trouvent peu à peu un terrain d'entente (tout au moins parmi une certaine frange). Puisse Soft Machine faire preuve à Newport de la richesse d'un tel mariage.

Thierry Lewin

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La fin d'un voyage - Rock & Folk - N° 522 - mai 1971



LA FIN D'UN VOYAGE

Monterey, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Wight, Bob Dylan, une étape qui semble s'être achevée avec Woodstock : la rock music se diversifie, éclate en courants divers.



Robert Wyatt (Soft Machine)

> Zoom

Une aventure musicale, celle qui affecte toute une génération, toute une tradition dans laquelle elle baigne, emprunte des voies subtiles, mais d'une cohérence implicite : pour la pop music, une réaction contre, un désir de se définir en dépassant et en niant les structures traditionnelles pour construire un son authentique c'est-à-dire reflétant, témoignant du contexte social, des sources, retrouvant ainsi une correspondance avec une logique de la création. Aussi, vouloir résumer dix années de musique pop, c'est reconstruire l'histoire d'un mouvement populaire, celui d'une génération. Un recul historique est devenu nécessaire à ce stade de l'évolution, dans une période qui semble vouloir marquer un reflux. Car l'année 70, après l'apothéose de Woodstock, semble avoir sonné le glas d'un mouvement qui se voulait unitaire. Les années privilégiées qui s'annonçaient avec le festival de Monterey se sont définitivement éloignées avec le dernier festival de Wight. Monterey avait vu le premier grand rassemblement, symbolisé par l'irruption de Janis Joplin, des groupes de San Francisco, d'Otis Redding, et surtout de Jimi Hendrix. Mais 1970 marque la fin du voyage, la coupure sévère, sèche, brutale, avec la mort de Janis Joplin, d'Alan Wilson, et surtout de

Jimi Hendrix. La mort, aussi, des festivals, de ces rassemblements qui se voulaient de grandes fêtes. La fin des grandes parenthèses exubérantes et unitaires, la fin d'un temps qui masquait la confusion d'un voile artificiel, qui voulait inclure dans un tout protégé, en marge, toutes les expressions musicales, toutes les jeunesses et ainsi toutes les séparations de classe : une sorte de grande utopie mystique.

Mais ce voile s'est déchiré, pour laisser réapparaître la séparation des genres musicaux et de leurs motivations, révélant les divergences sociales de ceux qui reçoivent et exigent cette musique : à chaque classe sociale son expression spécifique. L'état présent s'explique par les multiples contradictions qui ont fini de miner cette musique, dans les rapports avec les mouvements politiques, le show business, etc. De même l'action d'une récupération par l'idéologie dominante provoque l'apparition de ces deux tendances contradictoires : d'une part, une production en plein accord avec les besoins du marché du disque, gommant, châtrant du scalpel de la bonne conscience toute différence qui pourrait, même inconsciemment, s'inscrire comme rejet, ou simple opposition à la société : c'est l'univers de la chanson, des bercements qui s'intègrent à l'ordre existant et ont pour rôle de désamorcer ; d'autre part, un mouvement esthétique d'avant-garde, ou de révolte, qui précède et annonce une radicalisation politique, une période troublée. Il ne s'agit pas pour autant d'affirmer politiques et révolutionnaires toutes les formulations musicales en opposition, que nous essayons de cerner dans leur diversité ; mais toutes témoignent d'une réalité existentielle.



Jim Morrison

les Doors
un groupe
d'opposition

De Presely à Anka

La révolution pop des années 60, qui devait engendrer le Vanilla Fudge, les Doors, le Jefferson Airplane, le Velvet, les Mothers, etc., aux USA, les Stones, les Beatles, les Yardbirds, les Animals, les Who, etc., en Angleterre, va descendre maintenant dans la rue, C'est-à-dire que les contradictions sociales et politiques se sont exacerbées ; aussi vient le moment de prendre position, de choisir son camp : soit se désengager, se replier (Dylan), soit provoquer à partir d'une révolte inconsciente, une prise de conscience de la révolution (Jefferson, Doors, Stooges, etc..

L'action ne se cristallise plus seulement sur la scène mais la pop est livrée à la rue, et la rue à la pop : nous en avons en France un remarquable exemple, mais il est utile de se rappeler que c'est le mouvement pop qui a fécondé la nouvelle gauche américaine. L'unité artificielle a volé en éclats ; les chemins maintenant, se séparent définitivement schématiquement, et ceci à l'intérieur même de la musique, tout se joue au niveau des rapports, des oppositions violence ou détente, expression musicale des rapports d'engagement violent ou de désengagement au niveau du quotidien. Engagement violent, total, ou désengagement, acceptation de l'ordre établi. On peut symboliser cette opposition entre musique d'action, musique des villes, et musique du repli, musique de la campagne. Et ceci très précisément pour l'état présent aux États-Unis. Ça l'Angleterre libérale, elle, a su éviter ou amortir, toute réaction violente, grâce à son moelleux matelas idéologique Elle a su conduire la musique pop à accepter un jeu respectable, et respecter le libre échange entre les musiciens et le show-business, sans que ceux-ci prennent conscience des contraintes que cette situation «harmonieuse» suppose. De là, cette singulière désincarnation de la musique pop anglaise en général. On retrouve donc une période qui correspond à celle du règne des Cliff Richard, Hélène Shapiro, etc., celle qui précéda le brusque réveil amorcé à Liverpool (les Beatles) et dans d'autres villes industrielles (les Stones).

Car, au début des années 60, l'Amérique et le monde entier vivent sous le règne de Paul Anka et autres chanteurs de charme pour teenagers, qui sont des remparts idéologiques pour brouiller et contrecarrer, noyer l'action violente des rockers des années 50 : Presley, Chuck Berry, Eddie Cochran, Gène Vincent, qui étaient, eux, les porte-parole des jeunes des faubourgs, des jeunes prolétaires. Mais il y eut de nouveau, après ce règne musical de la petite bourgeoisie, résurgence et éclatement des barrières avec l'apparition soudaine des premiers « groupes » : une violence, avec, souvent, une conscience de cette violence, un phénomène de rupture, de rejet dont elle témoignait ; c'est déjà l'appel à une vie autre, à une dénonciation de la société bourgeoise. Pour ce faire, plusieurs attitudes dans l'agression : celle qui s'exprime par les cris de révolte amplifiés par l'utilisation de la technologie (volume sonore) ; celle qui est appel à la jouissance immédiate, à la perversité, qui s'exprime par une provocation scénique érotique (Hendrix, Morrison) ; celle, enfin qui est appel à l'insurrection, au renversement des tabous, des contraintes. Ces premiers scandales d'un comportement outrageux furent ressentis comme profanateurs. C'était les débuts d'une explosion musicale créatrice dont les acquis demeurent toujours présents malgré répression et de récupération. Cette violence intérieure extériorisée était un témoignage, s'exprimant par une musique agressive par sa masse sonore que couvrait la voix du chanteur hurlant; l'apparition de cette musique coïncidait avec le transfert de la musique populaire noire chez les jeunes Blancs. Réaction à une société répressive, le blues,

chez les Animals, les Stones, les Yardbirds, mais aussi le Vanilla Fudge et les Doors, est transcendé, poussé à des dimensions paroxystiques. Mais la violence peut être aussi dans les accents satiriques et parodiques, obscènes, des Fugs et surtout des Mothers. C'est le mouvement musical des années 64 à 66, qui devait précéder la grande période unitaire, utopiste, qu'engendra le mouvement hippie, sa non-violence : le règne de San Francisco, un désir de concilier au-delà des classes sociales, des conditions sociales, économiques et politiques, tous les jeunes et toutes les particularités musicales. Le temps de la non-violence, de la jouissance extasiée, du retrait et du désengagement. Parallèlement, le show business avait su réintroduire dans ses circuits de contrôle le rock and roll qui devenait ainsi pop music : étiquette commerciale, amalgame hétéroclite de toutes les musiques rythmées, jouées par des « jeunes », et qui pourtant témoignaient encore de toutes les particularités et de préoccupations différentes : une action de brouillage idéologique par la pop consommation qui devait atteindre définitivement l'Angleterre, où, pourtant, le psychédélisme de la période hallucinogène devait permettre les brisures électro-acoustiques, la spatialisation de la musique du Pink Floyd ou celle du Soft Machine. Le « Sergeant Pepper » des Beatles, le «Saucerful of Secrets» du Pink Floyd marquaient l'apothéose et la fin d'une période.



Rick Wright et Nick Mason

le Pink Floyd
un groupe
spatial

Du cri au design

Où en sommes-nous, maintenant ? Comment se décomposent les différentes formes musicales du mouvement pop, à ce stade où les voies divergent radicalement ? Il est tout d'abord certain que la notion de pop music, amalgame éclectique (hétéroclite), n'est déjà

plus possible, vu la confusion idéologique qu'elle entretient. Il est devenu nécessaire de préciser les différentes orientations de cette musique, de définir les mouvements qui l'affectent, souvent contradictoires : les expressions d'un engagement ou d'un retrait. Aux USA, les groupes dans l'opposition au système restent les Doors, Steppenwolf, les Fugs, etc. ; de l'autre côté, on peut même dire dans l'autre camp, les chanteurs-poètes, missionnaires de la béatitude, qui renoncent à l'électrification ou ne l'utilisent que comme gimmick, champions de la tempérance (Crosby, Stills, etc., mais aussi Bob Dylan) ; ceux qui servent d'instrument de diversion : Blood Sweat and Tears, Chicago, mais aussi Creedence Clearwater ou Grand Funk. Il est évident que tous les nouveaux venus projetés sur le devant de la scène par la radio, la presse, sont pour la plupart des chanteurs et non plus des groupes. On privilégie l'individualisme pour retourner à la variété et à la consommation. On note aussi une impression de lassitude qui vient du débordement, du dépassement par les raz-de-marée de la rue des propositions musicales, chez le Grateful Dead, par exemple, qui amorce lui aussi un repli avec ses deux derniers albums, tournés vers le folk et le country. Le groupe s'éloigne de cette opposition violente qui s'exprimait dans la répétition, dans la durée, la fascination. Il reste pourtant des îlots protégés, des témoignages musicaux de réalités socio-politiques exacerbées dans l'univers trouble des États-Unis, qui s'expriment dans l'explosion apocalyptique, les cassures des structures, la perversion, le délire satirique, l'effroyable ou l'angoisse. Ce peut être Steppenwolf, simple affirmation martelée, lancinante, presque monotone, d'une férocité de voyou, que l'on retrouve aussi dans la perversité des Stooges, avec la violence du cri, l'érotisme provocateur; ce peut être Beefheart, et le démembrement d'un univers mental et musical ; et toujours Zappa, musicien sociologue, porte-parole symbolique d'une musique en rupture d'idéologie.

En Angleterre, il n'existe pratiquement plus aucun groupe de rupture. Car, si le rock and roll continue à marquer de son empreinte électrifiée et durement contrastée toute une large surface de l'univers pop anglais (Deep Purple, Mott the Hoople, etc.) la violence n'est qu'extérieure : comme une suite de schémas plaqués sur une absence de réalité émotionnelle, et qui se dénonce d'elle-même en intercalant des nappes de sentimentalité. D'autres groupes, par contre, essaient de se justifier musicalement, de ne plus « effrayer », mus par une sorte de complexe de la technicité qui est le résultat d'un subtil travail de sape de l'idéologie dominante : on veut prouver qu'on est avant tout musicien, que l'on réduit son attente à la seule musique ; la musique pop tend alors vers un classicisme suspect, une musique sereine, construite en châteaux de cartes de guimauve symphonique, d'orchestrations sans aucun lien avec la rock and roll music, qui tendent vers une respectabilité que l'on désire : arrangements subtils, grandes fresques harmoniques : Emerson, Lake and Palmer, King Crimson, Van Der Graaf Generator et ceux qui deviennent, loin de leur folie première, des esthètes culturelle-bourgeois, le Pink Floyd ; un Pink Floyd qui confronte sa musique à toutes les tentatives artistiques se voulant modernistes, d'une modernité très « design » (le film « More », les ballets de Roland Petit, etc.).

Mais il existe une nouvelle musique pop anglaise qui se cristallise autour d'un noyau, essayant, en marge, de trouver une identité originale : le groupe de Kevin Ayers, Syd Barrett, Robert Wyatt et dans une moindre mesure Pete Brown, Edgar Broughton, ou Hawkwind. Il s'agit pour eux de s'extraire d'un processus trop bien délimité de pop consommation, pour pervertir l'univers sonore de l'Angleterre : le pervertir, c'est-à-dire

amener l'inconnu à partir d'un connu, le guider sur des terres vierges, mais qui sont la définition du décor d'un théâtre des songes. Il peut s'agir aussi de subversion, celle du mental de celui qui reçoit, de celui qui donne, dans un contexte qui refuse cela à travers ses codes, ses institutions : des propositions pour de nouveaux chemins de la perception, dans le vertige insupportable, dans une folie excentrique qui est l'image d'une démesure. Pourront alors être englobés les acquis jazzy, pop, qui aideront à construire une musique spécifique et non plus d'imitation, dans une nouvelle logique de l'avant-garde contemporaine européenne. Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt (son album «The end of an Ear»), le Soft Machine, apportent de nouvelles structures, ce à quoi ne parviennent qu'extérieurement, plus dans leurs motivations que dans leur musique, Pete Brown ou Edgar Broughton, qui, eux, ne remettent pas en cause les rapports musique-voix, mots-sons et semblent conserver une certaine complaisance avec une rythmique pop traditionnelle.



Frank Zappa
un musicien
sociologue

Du fracas à la technique

Au départ, le Soft Machine fut la véritable plaque tournante de l'expérimentation, avec ce désir de construire une musique organique, c'est-à-dire qui plonge dans le son, pour trouver son essence même, le point zéro d'une explosion totale : aller jusqu'au bout de la fiction sonore, de la brutalité instrumentale, fracasser l'harmonie, à la recherche de la virginité du son. Le bloc incandescent se nourrissait de la violence du son électrique, avec des équivalents verbaux dans les mots déversés par la folie pataphysicienne de Daevid

Allen, ou d'un Kevin Ayers qui exorcisait ses phantasmes, enfance irradiée par les sons vomis. Car le son était vomissure totale, asservie pour être livrée au plaisir pervers, plaisir différent, outrageant. Une musique ouverte, un état privilégié de la possession totale, né de la profusion et de l'ivresse des sens mais qui ne pouvait se prolonger; car vint le besoin de comptabiliser les acquis, de chercher une nouvelle voie pour un possible sonore. La soif, nourrie de l'ivresse précédemment décrite, se devait de prendre une autre forme. C'est là que se produit par la nécessité d'un choix la rupture à plusieurs dimensions qui définira tous les courants du front de la nouvelle musique pop anglaise. Puisque vont naître les groupes de Kevin Ayers, mais aussi la nouvelle orientation du Soft Machine lui-même ; car son attitude s'est radicalisée, mais de manière autre, ce dont le quatrième album apporte confirmation. Le groupe a renié les artifices, a construit des structures fermes, précises. Il s'est livré à un travail de déconnexion des associations de notes, pour gommer l'émotion, il a nié les jeux de scène, la transe apparente, pour éliminer la théâtralisation extérieure, pour la porter à une dimension supérieure, épurée. Les mots vont alors disparaître, laissant la place à une rigidité, une construction harmonique sévère, la composition, privilégiée par opposition à la création spontanée.



Les Who (Roger Daltrey et Pete Townshend)

Car la grande nouveauté dans le monde de la pop ce sera (et ceci est rendu possible parce qu'il y a stagnation et affaissement de la violence) l'intrusion du jazz et des jazzmen qui viennent apporter leur technicité, leur expérience musicale : Tony Williams et son Lifetime, John McLaughlin, Keith Tippett, et les musiciens qui sont aussi ceux du Soft : Elton Dean, Marc Charig. Aux États-Unis, on assiste, de la même façon, à la promotion de Miles Davis au rang de pop star. Mais, si ce nouveau courant apporte, dans son mélange des musiques, une nouvelle richesse instrumentale, il nie par là-même l'expérimentation brute de l'instrument, la violence du fracas électro-acoustique, car, d'une certaine manière, il aseptise les sons baveux du rock. Le passage dans l'autre sens qu'effectuent If, Colosseum, Manfred Mann, Nucleus, etc., n'est, lui, qu'une redite du jazz de Ray Charles ou de Mingus, en passant par celui des Jazz Messengers. Mais ce qui semble le plus grave est la

désincarnation de cette musique, son absence de prise sur les réalités.

La grande utopie ?

Les conditions sont peu propices à l'éclosion de nouveaux groupes qui pourraient parer à cette marée de chanteurs individualistes. Il faudrait insister sur l'apparition d'un groupe comme Amon Düül qui prône, au même titre que Red Noise en France, l'improvisation totale héritée du free jazz : une musique qui repose sur l'aléatoire, le mouvement répétitif, les brisures électro-acoustiques violentes qui s'imposent dans la durée, notions nouvelles et essentielles dans la pop music, puisqu'elles représentent le rejet des cadres étroits et des stéréotypes du « morceau pop », du disque-accumulation de courtes pièces musicales, pour proposer de longues suites ouvertes. Ils essaient de retrouver au niveau de l'enregistrement la même violence et la même immédiateté du son que dans les passages « live ».



Mark Stein

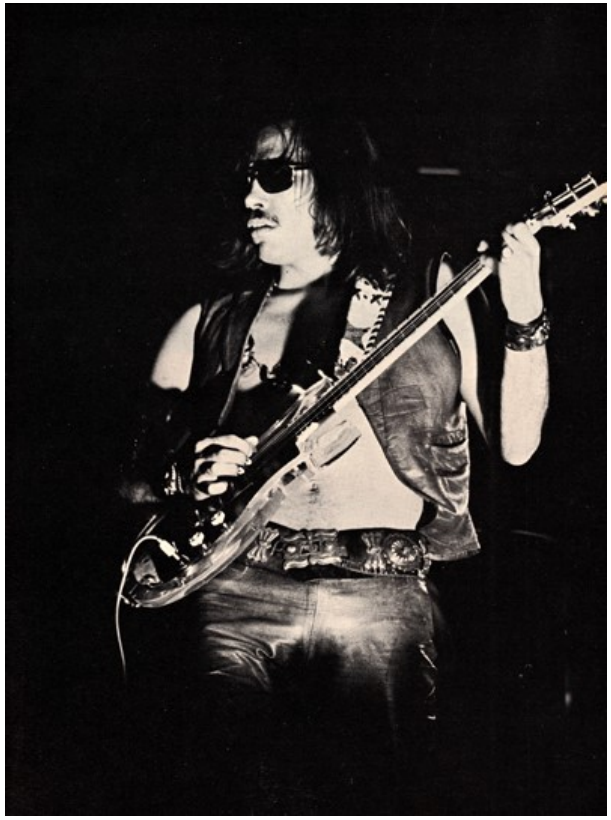
**Vanilla Fudge,
un groupe
du paroxysme.**

Si le reflux semble évident, clôturant ainsi une grande page idéaliste de la pop music, c'est que le temps de l'affrontement inévitable est arrivé. Le travail de récupération de l'idéologie bourgeoise a porté ses fruits en déjouant les pièges d'une contestation larvée, mais ne pourra éviter un phénomène de résurgence, celle d'une musique et d'un mouvement, les échos d'une déflagration.

Monterey, avec Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, fut la révélation, la porte ouverte sur une masse

d'aspirations, mais aussi la fuite, le voyage vers un monde trop vite rêvé. L'éparpillement des Beatles est d'ailleurs à l'image des courants divers, tentatives extrêmes qui agitent la pop music, de la commercialisation à la radicalisation dans le choix artistique.

Paul Alessandrini.



Steppenwolf (John Kay)

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Soft Machine - Jazz Hot - N° 272 - mai 1971

SOFT MACHINE



Le 31 janvier dernier devait avoir lieu au palais des Sports de Paris, un concert exceptionnel qui aurait réuni pour la première fois les trois groupes issus de Soft Machine. Nous ne reviendrons pas sur les très regrettables incidents qui empêchèrent le concert de se dérouler convenablement pour ne nous intéresser qu'à ce groupe extraordinaire qu'est Soft Machine. Il n'est en effet pas inutile, à une époque où les frontières Pop-Jazz tendent à s'effondrer, de présenter ces musiciens qui, dans le même esprit qu'un Frank Zappa mènent le jazz vers de nouveaux rivages.

1960 : à l'origine de Soft Machine, trois jeunes gens qui fréquentent la même école : Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge. Tous trois sont depuis longtemps passionnés de musique et passent le plus clair de leurs journées à écouter, les disques de Cecil Taylor, d'Ornette Coleman et de Mingus. Un jour un jeune guitariste australien, arrivé depuis peu en Angleterre et qui joue au célèbre Ronnie Scott Club de Londres, fait passer une petite annonce pour trouver un logement à la campagne. Parmi les réponses, il s'en trouve une venant de la famille Wyatt, les parents de Robert. Le contact entre David Allen et les autres membres de ce qui viendra la Machine est dès lors établi.

A cette époque, David fait de fréquents voyages à Paris. Au retour de l'une de ses escapades, il ramène avec lui un de ses amis, batteur de jazz, qui va donner des leçons à Robert Wyatt. Après quelque temps et s'étant assuré du concours de Hugh Hopper, ils forment un groupe, qu'ils qualifient de « free électrique. Puis, avec leur ancien condisciple, Mike Ratledge, qui joue du piano depuis longtemps déjà, ils sont engagés dans une boite : « l'Establishment ». Ils y jouent surtout du jazz et récitent des poèmes de David Allen. C'est durant cette période, que, de passage à Paris, David et Robert rencontrent le compositeur Terry Riley avec qui ils jouent quelques temps. L'influence de Riley sera d'ailleurs considérable dans la musique de Soft Machine. A noter, pour la petite histoire, que Riley fut aussi pianiste de bar à Pigalle.

1963 : leurs affaires ne marchent pas très bien, ils se séparent. Ratledge va continuer ses études à Oxford, tandis que Hopper et Wyatt jouent avec le groupe de jazz Wild Flowers. Allen, lui repart à Paris où il rencontre la poétesse Gilli Smith avec laquelle il fondera, mais cela bien plus tard, le Gong.

1965 : David Allen, éternel voyageur, part à Majorque où il retrouve Wyatt et le guitariste Kevin Ayers avec lesquels il envisage de reformer un groupe. Ils reviennent à Londres où

ils retrouvent Ratledge qui vient d'obtenir sa licence de philosophie (c'est pas n'importe qui) et un autre guitariste qui restera moins d'un an avec eux et qui répond au doux nom de Larry Nawlin. Le groupe comprenait donc Larry et Kevin aux guitares, Ratledge à l'orgue et Wyatt à la batterie et Allen à la basse. Ils prennent alors le nom de Soft Machine, titre d'un roman de William Burroughs (le Festin Nu, Nova Express) avec qui David avait travaillé en 1963.

1966 : Ils trouvent leur premier engagement à la Round House de Londres, dans le cadre des concerts organisés par John Hopkins, sous l'égide de son journal l'International Time (IT). Puis c'est l'UFO, que l'on a traduit par Unidentified Flying Objet et qui signifie en réalité Underground Freak Out (c'est quoi donc un freak ? C'est tout ce qui ne fait pas partie de la Grande Pièce Montée), l'UFO donc, haut lieu (quel paradoxe) du tout Londres souterrain, où ils jouent au même spectacle que le Pink Floyd qui interprétait à cette époque des morceaux beaucoup plus rock que maintenant et de toutes façons beaucoup plus intéressants. Ils y rencontrent aussi Mark Boyle que l'on peut sans doute considérer comme l'inventeur du light show (c'est lui qui en particulier eut le premier l'idée d'utiliser des diapositives chauffées). Avec lui et Gilli Smith ils créent des spectacles poétiques et jouent dans les musées (culturel, ça !). C'est le temps des expériences musicales comme par exemple l'introduction du hasard dans la musique (John Cage) : ils tirent au sort dans une boite des notes qu'ils assemblent ensuite (procédé bien connu en littérature employé par les surréalistes et en particulier par Burroughs). A la même époque ils enregistrent leur premier 45 tours qui n'eut en fait à peu près aucun retentissement. On peut se demander d'ailleurs comment une musique comme celle de la machine pouvait être un tant soit peu intéressante dans le cadre bien réduit d'un simple E.P. !



Toujours avec Boyle ils partent pour Saint-Tropez. Hugh Hopper quitte alors le groupe sans laisser de traces. Ils jouent dans le spectacle de Picasso et Jean-Jacques Lebel - Le désir attrapé par la queue, et également au Café des Art s de Jean-Marie Rivière. Puis ils rentrent en Angleterre où la police (là-bas aussi) refuse à David le droit d'entrer, pour une obscure raison de permis de travail. Il reste donc en France où il compose pour le studio Git le Cœur et participe avec Gilli à la Biennale de Paris (où Mark Boyle fut primé pour l'un de ses assemblages). Puis, il forme un groupe de pop le « Banana Moon - aujourd'hui devenu Ame Son. Maintenant, David Allen a formé le Gong qui est à mon avis le meilleur groupe français grâce à des gens comme Didier Malherbe au saxophone soprano ou Jerry Fields au violon. Revenons à la machine elle-même. 1967 : le groupe se produit durant les nuits de la fenêtre rose, au Palais des Sports (les concerts y avaient lieu à cette époque) ; ce fut le premier spectacle dit psychédélique en France, qui le fit connaître par un plus large public. De retour en Grande-Bretagne, ils enregistrent leur premier album qui porte surtout l'empreinte de Kevin Ayers ; c'est en effet lui qui en écrivit la plupart des arrangements, mélange de folk, de pop et de musique électronique — le tout gardant un

petit côté sauvage — musique ambiguë, mais dans laquelle on peut déjà sentir les influences de Terry Riley et du free jazz, et ce malgré les parties chantées fort nombreuses dans ce disque.

Kevin Ayers, parti pour fonder avec David Bedford le Whole World, que l'on a pu apprécier en décembre dernier à la Mutualité, cela malgré l'acoustique déplorable de la salle, la musique de Soft Machine va de plus en plus se tourner vers le jazz et la musique contemporaine, direction qui sera surtout évidente à partir de leur troisième album, le second étant en effet essentiellement composée de découpages musicaux superposés les uns sur les autres (cadavre exquis ?).

1969 : fin octobre, c'est Amougies. Le groupe, Hugh Hopper ayant, de nouveau remplacé Ayers, va inaugurer sa nouvelle formule. Il s'est en effet adjoint pour cette occasion quatre musiciens venant de l'orchestre du planiste Keith Tippet qui vient de le précéder sur scène, le résultat est fabuleux. Pour moi, le meilleur moment du festival avec Don Cherry. Avec cette formation, Us enregistrent leur troisième album appelé tout simplement « Third ». La musique y est évidemment orientée avant tout vers le jazz mais on y retrouve aussi fréquemment la trace de Riley et de Olivier Messiaen. En fait, Robert Wyatt et Elton Dean le saxophoniste du groupe (ils se produisent maintenant à quatre, parfois à cinq lorsque Nick Evans, lui aussi ex-saxophoniste du Centipède de Keith Tippet se joint à eux) voudraient jouer plus free alors que Hopper et Ratledge sont pour leur part plus attirés par la musique contemporaine. Il en résulte une sorte d'équilibre tout à fait favorable à la créativité du groupe. Certains ont vu dans « Third » une trop grande perfection qu'on a même qualifiée de glacée. A ceux-là, je rappellerai les extraordinaires concerts donnés l'année dernière au Théâtre de la Musique, concerts au cours desquels ils nous prouvèrent, s'il en était besoin, l'absolue maîtrise de leur art mais aussi leur esprit inventif au niveau de l'improvisation. A remarquer toutefois qu'aucun des musiciens ne tente de se mettre en valeur aux dépens des autres : chacun est au service de la Machine. Pareille rigueur n'exclut heureusement pas l'expression personnelle de la sensibilité de chacun de ses membres.

Le batteur du groupe Robert Wyatt vient d'autre part d'enregistrer chez C.B.S. un disque en solo « The end of an ear » disque tout à fait intéressant dans lequel on retrouve d'ailleurs Elton Dean et David Sinclair à l'orgue, qui est le leader du groupe Caravan avec lequel joua la Machine à ses débuts.

Soft Machine commence seulement à recevoir le succès qu'il mérite. Nous pensons qu'il n'était pas inutile de présenter aux amateurs de jazz l'un des groupes les plus originaux et l'un des plus intéressants qui se soit révélé au cours de ces dix dernières années. Que l'étiquette pop trop souvent galvaudée n'effraie pas le jazzophile : ce n'est pas pour rien qu'un homme comme Miles Davis s'est mis à cette musique.

Jean-François Touzé.

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Les soirées culturelles du Palais des Sports - Le Pop - N° 11 - mai 1971

LES SOIRÉES CULTURELLES DU PALAIS DES SPORTS



LA POP SANS FLIC, C'EST COMME UN HOT-DOG SANS MOUTARDE, UN SNACK-BAR SANS CAISSIER, UNE CAISSE DE BIERE SANS DECAPSULEUR, UN POTAGER SANS TOPINAMBOURS, UNE FAMILLE SANS IDIOT, UN JOUR D'ÉTÉ SANS AMBRE SOLAIRE, UN CADRAN SOLAIRE SANS OMBRE, ET Y'A PAS DE BEAUX TABLEAUX SANS OMBRE...

Pour Soft Machine on avait eu des entrées gratuites. En arrivant au Palais des Sports on a eu bien du mal à trouver un ouvreur pour les lui présenter. Lorsque nous en eûmes dégagé un de dessous des gravats, Il a éclaté en sanglots en nous disant que nos petits cartons on pouvait se les carrer dans le fion. Ce après quoi, entre deux spasmes, il les prit quand même, les sala, les moutarda avec les ingrédients qui passaient à sa portée et les avala d'un coup, d'un seul, faute de dents. C'est fou ce que les gens étaient nerveux ce soir-là. Heureusement que du côté de l'organisation ils avaient tout prévu et qu'ils avaient retiré les portes pour que les gens puissent pénétrer sans accrocs. A l'intérieur les gens trépignaient, on ne savait pas pourquoi, ils avaient tous un air de connivence, un léger sourire sur leurs lèvres purpurines. Alors que des gens entraient encore en masse sans mène présenter leurs billets au contrôle, tant ils étaient pressés de se lubrifier les oreilles à coups de pop, alors que d'autres cherchaient encore leurs places dans les piles de sièges entassés au milieu de la salle, de joyeux plaisantins firent partir une grenade lacrymogène dans un fou rire général. Quelques centaines de personnes démunies d'humour essayèrent de sortir, au risque de se retrouver dehors sans ticket de sortie. Vrai, ils étaient bizarres ce soir-là. Un rien excités, aussi.

Pourtant malgré l'anarchie (passez moi l'expression) apparente des comportements collectifs, l'observateur attentif aurait pu remarquer qu'une certaine solidarité semblait unir les membres de l'assistance. C'est ainsi qu'à un moment donné un jeune hirsute vint au micro dire que le service d'ordre éprouvait quelques difficultés à l'entrée, à gauche de la scène, qu'il n'arrivait pas à contrôler toutes les entrées. Des spectateurs bénévoles vinrent aider à cette formalité et relevèrent les gardiens en les attrapant qui par la main, qui par le nez, qui par le mollet avec les dents. Et tout naturellement l'entrée des nouveaux arrivants devint fluide, fluide, fluide. C'est à ce moment-là que les organisateurs, estimèrent sans doute qu'ils avalent fait assez de recettes, décrétèrent l'entrée libre, au risque d'ailleurs de mécontenter les quelques 2 ou 3 personnes qui avalent payé d'avance. Admirons en passant la sagesse des organisateurs qui mirent ainsi un terme à la triste notion de resquille.



Puis y'a des gens qui sont venus causer dans la sono: "Ce soir la musique Pop nous est rendue, elle nous appartient et nous ne nous en dessaisirons plus" c'est sûrement à cause de ça que tout le monde brandissait son poing, pour montrer qu'ils ne la lâcheraient plus. On était tendus mais heureux. Allez savoir pourquoi! Sur scène le spectacle commençait déjà, un jeune comédien déclamait des vers de circonstance : "Hé Lulu, tu viens merde, j'suis à droite de la scène, j'vais pas poireauter comme ça longtemps", un type très très excité réclamait du calme, un autre expliquait un jeu de société qu'il avait trouvé :"Dans ma banlieue, tous les mecs qu'ont des cheveux longs y s'font poisser à longueur de temps par les flics, y s'font tabasser la gueule, «alors nous on a décidé un truc, c'est qu'à chaque fois qu'un mec aura des ennuis avec les cognes on s'arrangera pour que ça fasse dix flics bons pour l'hosto, alors on vous conseille un truc c'est que tout le monde en fasse autant pour que les mecs à cheveux longs ne soient plus traités de pédés".

Puis Didier Malherbe empoigna son mirliton et dans le plus pur style free accompagna les harangues des représentants du Front de Libération des Jeunes. Entre deux chorus on a réussi à comprendre que les jeunes étaient décidés à ne plus se laisser marcher sur les pieds, à reprendre ce qui leur appartient, à mettre en pratique les valeurs qui sont les leurs, sans marcher dans une logique qui leur soit étrangère. Le reste de la soirée s'est effectivement passé en l'absence de toute logique aux yeux d'un observateur non directement concerné. Pour nous logique de l'événement c'est qu'au point de consommation où nous en sommes, les jeunes ont besoin de briser des portes et de dévaliser des buffets pour se faire leur fête. C'est donc que le système de distribution de la PoP est complètement suranné, hors d' usage, que la musique PoP n'a pas encore trouvé son vrai terrain d'expression, que le public PoP est déjà allé bien au-delà de ce qui lui est proposé et que c'est à la musique PoP de suivre ce mouvement.



Plus que les sièges et les portes il y a eu quelque chose de cassé au Palais des Sports et y'a gros à parier, puisque ça dépend de nous, que cette cassure ne nous privera pas pour autant de notre musique. Si plus personne ne peut louer de salles pour les concerts PoP c'est que leur place est ailleurs, dans la rue peut-être. S'il y a une contradiction entre la quantité de matériel nécessitée par la PoP et sa prestation dans la rue, c'est que les musiciens PoP se sont fourvoyés en faisant la course au matériel, c'est que les musiciens doivent adapter leur musique aux nouvelles conditions. Ceux qui ont pleuré l'autre soir de ne pas avoir entendu leurs petits Soft chéris, sont déjà inutilisables pour l'évolution de la PoP, un frein à son contenu révolutionnaire.

Les amateurs de PoP se sont chassés délibérément eux-mêmes du Palais des Sports en faisant éclater leur fête, c'était la première mesure d'hygiène qu'il fallait prendre. La musique PoP ne doit pas être une musique de consommation et c'est pour ça qu'au Palais des Sports tout a été consommé, sur place et sans permission.

Beaucoup moins significative fut, dans et surtout autour du même Palais des Sports, la rencontre ORDRE-NOUVEAU-GAUCHISTES. S'il y avait un événement auquel il fallait éviter de donner de l'importance c'était bien ce meeting d'Ordre Nouveau. Oui, oui, bien sûr, pourquoi en parler nous aussi ? eh ben puisque le mal est fait c'est pas une demi-colonne mal torchée qui va aggraver l'histoire. La connerie commence là où les gauchistes ont afflué exactement comme l'espéraient les organisateurs dudit meeting. C'est évident non? les fascistes prévoyaient un rassemblement de l0.000 personnes (bluff légitime) qu'ils n'auraient naturellement pas eu si une foule de gauchos et affiliés n'était venue grossir démesurément l'événement. C'était exactement le remue-ménage (qu'il ne pouvait créer à eux seuls) et l'épreuve de force (qui est le moteur de leur propagande) qu'ils recherchaient. Moralité de l'événement: sur les ondes, dans la presse, on ne lésine pas sur la violence de l'affrontement et le gauchiste moyen est magnifié par l'ensemble de l'opinion modérée (récupération?), tout le monde retrouve cette bonne vieille solidarité nationale contre l'envahisseur para-teutonique (nique?), cette vieille unité de pensée où s'abritait Pétain, tout le monde marche à fond dans le jeu de la terreur, autant de conneries qui permettent de faire des distinctions aussi délicieuses que celles sur le fascisme de Marcellin comme quoi il serait bien un homme d'ordre mais tout de même pas d'ordre fasciste.

Mais quoi, merde! qu'est ce qui est le plus dangereux, le fasciste qui se réfère ouvertement et sans équivoque à Hitler, à Mussolini, au Haine PéDé, au PFI ou le fasciste foncier qui réinvente ses méthodes, utilise des institutions dites démocratiques pour nous faire vivre dans un Dachau confortable. Lutter contre les fafs dans une bataille de rue c'est aussi con et aussi réac que pour un révolutionnaire de briguer un siège dans une assemblée, c'est rentrer jusqu' a la garde dans un circuit dont on ne peut être que les baisés. Quant aux gauchistes qui deviennent aux yeux de l'opinion des braves gosses pour avoir reçu une dégelée de la part des deux forces fascistes ce sont les grands empaffés de l'

histoire. Ils sont aussi connards que leurs pères et grands-pères qui partirent se faire ensanglanter la gueule sur les fronts de la première et deuxième guerre avec la bénédiction des familles, des curés et des patrons. Ce qui botte dans les chaumières c'est ce relent de vieille lutte, c'est cet avant-goût de troisième guerre mondiale à la manière des deux premières. Cette punition tant souhaitée à ces jeunes qui ne respectent plus rien et qui n'ont plus qu'une idée en tête: VIVRE. Le monde où ils pourront vivre ces jeunes, c'est pas les "bons" gauchistes qui le feront, c'est pas non plus avec l'aide des "braves" flics, ni avec ceux qui se font craindre (flics de Marcellin ou flics de Duprat), c'est avec ceux qui auront choisi de se faire leur monde plutôt que de se faire aimer ou détester. Vrai, des deux fêtes du Palais des Sports c'est certainement celle qui a atteint l'opinion dans son porte-feuille et dans son bon sens qui a été la mieux réussie et qui présage le plus sûrement de ce que sera le nouveau monde.



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HOME

Grande nuit underground au Palais des Sports - Pop Music - N° 44 - 28 janvier 1971



GRANDE NUIT UNDERGROUND AU PALAIS DES SPORTS

Dimanche 31 janvier à 21 heures au Palais des sports de Paris, Porte de Versailles, aura lieu un concert exceptionnel. Sont annoncés Iron Butterfly, Yes, Soft Machine, Kevin Ayers and The Whole World et le Gong avec Daevid Allen. Ce panorama est intéressant, tous les groupes présentés sont à la limite de la Pop Music de consommation et de l'Underground, c'est ce que vous expliquent nos rédacteurs.

La machine, le camembert **et le monde entier.**

A l'origine de la machine, un poète : Daevid Allen, un philosophe : Michael Ratledge, un lycéen : Robert Wyatt. La machine tourne, tourne, perd des éléments, s'en adjoint de nouveaux. Elle fait école et des petites machines gravitent dans son sillage : Le Gong, Kevin Ayers And The Whole World. Elles seront toutes réunies au Palais des Sports, la retrouvaille pourrait être intéressante.

TONY LEVIN

Alors que le mouvement pop n'en était qu'à ses balbutiements en Angleterre, la région de Canterbury était déjà le centre d'une importante activité musicale. Les responsables en étaient cinq jeunes

universitaires : un Australien, Daevid Allen, et quatre Anglais, Michael Ratledge, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper et Kevin Ayers. Ils formèrent un clan de musiciens qui, volontairement, allaient à l'encontre du son à la mode. Plus tard, ils prendront pour nom Soft Machine, en hommage à l'écrivain underground William Burroughs, lequel a donné à l'un de ses romans le titre " Soft Machine " (la machine molle). Ces cinq passionnés de Pop Music vivaient ensemble. Une même passion, celle du jazz, les liait. Lorsque des caractères aussi marqués que ceux de ces cinq hommes s'affrontent, l'issue fatale ne peut être que la séparation. Au départ, la formation se produisait en trio : Ayers, Ratledge et Hopper. Au sein du trio, l'apport de Kevin Ayers était prépondérant. Kevin n'est pas un adepte aussi fervent du Jazz que les autres, aussi fallut-il attendre la venue de Daevid et Robert pour que l'orientation du groupe soit jazzy.

Daevid avait joué dans un club de Jazz, le Ronnie Scott's, dès son arrivée à Londres. Robert Wyatt, encore lycéen, avait passé deux étés à Majorque chez un ami de son père, le poète Robert Graves, où il devint vite un habitué du Majorca Jazz Club. Mike Ratledege avait fait partie d'un groupe de Jazz et d'avant-garde. Au niveau des textes l'entente était totale. Daevid est poète ; Mike Ratledge, après avoir étudié la philosophie à Oxford, était parti étudier la poésie dans une université américaine. Cet attrait pour la poésie se retrouvera en bonne place dans leurs chansons. Soft Machine utilise de moins en moins de textes, seul Robert Wyatt continuera d'ailleurs à mettre des paroles sus ses compositions. L'évolution de Hugh Hopper et de Mike Ratledge est très intéressante, bien qu'elle déborde le domaine purement musical. Il semble évident pour toute personne qui les connait bien (et Robert Wyatt est de celles-là) que Hopper et Ratledge se sont beaucoup plus tournés vers eux-mêmes que vers l'extérieur, ce qui rend les contacts très difficiles. La relative rareté de leurs apparaitions publiques, le fait qi'il y ait presqu'un an que Soft Machine n'a pas fait de disque, n'est peut-être pas étranger à cet état de choses.



Nous en arrivons au moment où la machine commence à se disloquer. Hugh Hopper avait fui mystérieusement sans laisser de trace. Après avoir joué à Saint-Tropez dans le spectacle de Picasso et J. Jacques Lebel "Le Désir Attrapé Par La Queue", Daevid Allendut quitter le groupe. Les policiers anglais lui avaient interdit d'entrer en Grande-Bretagne. Daevid respecta le hasard, et d'ailleurs, il reconnaît : "Il était très dur de joeur avec Soft Machine. C'est surtout un truc d'orgue". Maintenant seul et libre, Daevid Allen va pouvoir aller jusqu'au bout de lui-même. Alors qu'avec Soft Machine, il était soumis à certaines restrictions, il va pouvoir donner libre cours à ses idées. Il commence avec "Banana Moon" qui deviendra Ame Son et puis il s'installe avec Gong pour s'y fondre rapidement. L'influence du jazz est toujours sensible. Pour enregistrer son premier album, paru chez Byg, il s'était entouré de Didier Malherbe, Didier Gewiffer, earl Freeman et Burton Greene. Il s'en détache de plus en plus pour composer une musique parfaitement originale. Les parties vocales ont une très grande importance parce qu'elles ne sont pas conçues pour se résumer à une récitation simpliste, mais plutôt pour se mêler aux instruments et pour contribuer à la création du tout : la musique de Gong.

La voix volontairement outrée, jouant avec les syllabes comme avec un instrument contribuant à créer la musique qu'il aime, refusant de parler de Soft Machine parce qu'au fond, déclare-t-il avec humour, "ce n'est qu'un camembert" (titre du second album de Gong).



GRANDE NUIT UNDERGROUND AU PALAIS DES SPORTS

LA MACHINE, LE CAMEMBERT ET LE MONDE ENTIER

THIERRY LENOIR

L'année 1971 pourrait être l'année : Yes

par G. JOSSERAND

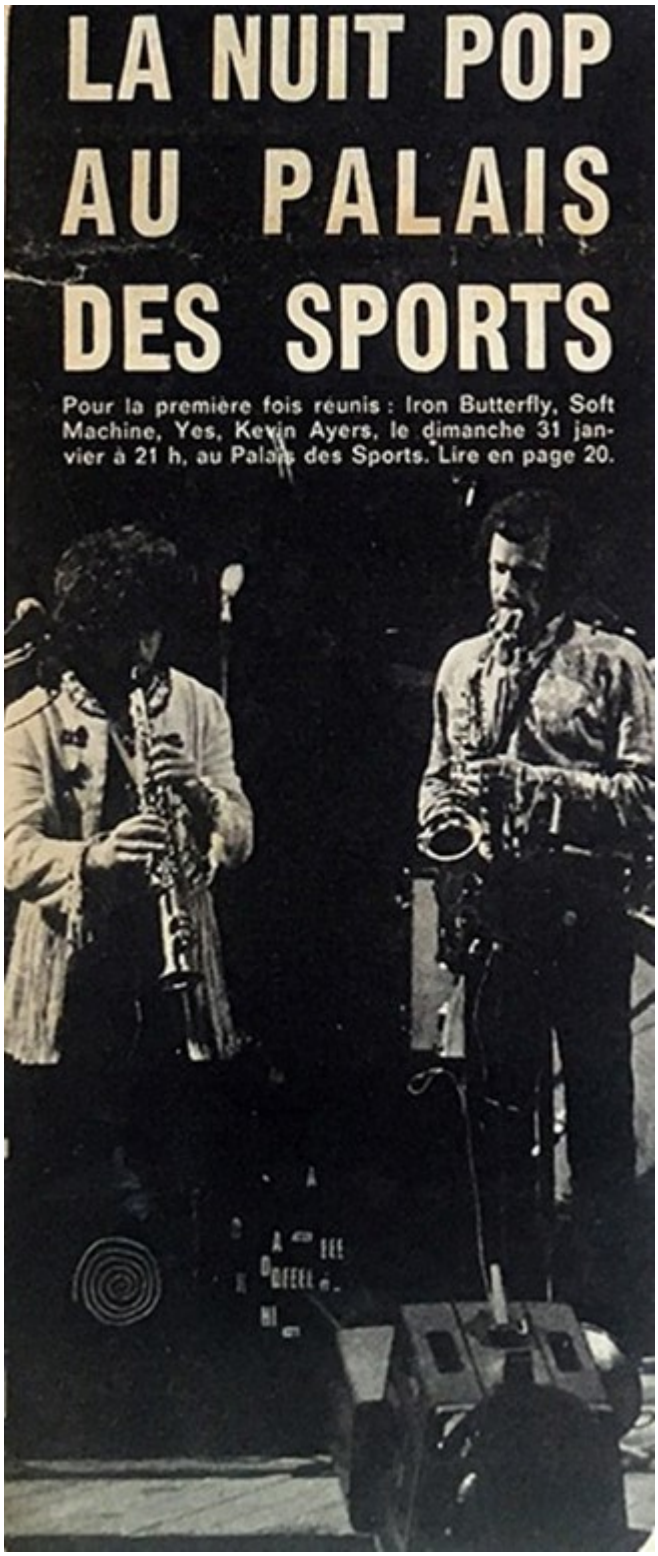
Le Papillon d'Acier cherche son vol sur l'Europe

Albert BOT

DISCOGRAPHIE

Revenons à ce qui reste maintenant de Soft Machine. Daevid Allen est parti, Kevin Ayers joue seul de la guitare. Le groupe avait déjà enregistré un 45 tours ("Love Makes Sweet Music" et "Feeling Reeling Sprealing"), il va enregistrer son premier album avec Robert Wyatt (batterie), Mike Ratledge (orgue) et Kevin Ayers (guitare). Le groupe possède une technique musicale qui contratse avec les productions de la plupart des groupes pop de la même époque. L'influence de Kevin Ayers y est très sensible (il participe à la création de la plupart des thèmes). Devant le renoncement presque total de Ratledge et Wyatt à imposer la musqiue qu'ils aiment vraiment, Kevin Ayers donne au groupe une conception "classique" de la Pop Music. Pourtant les traces de ce que sera Soft Machine sont déjà là par instants. Elles percent quand Ratledge se laisse aller librement dans un solo. L'influence de Terry Riley (compositeur de musique contemporaine avec lequel Robert Wyatt et Daevid Allen avaient joué) est très sensible ("We Did It Again") les parties chantées sont en grand nombre. Robert Wyatt et Mike Ratledge montrent déjà quels parfaits instrumentistes ils sont.

A cet égard, le décalage batteur-voix-orgue dans "Why Are We Sleeping?" est tout à fait remarquable. Ce disque si riche ne pouvait satisfaire totalement aucune des deux parties. Kevin Ayers quitta le groupe pour former Kevin Ayers Whole World, avec un musicien anglais de musique contemporaine, David Bedford. La musique du Whole World doit beaucoup à celle de Soft Machine. En passant à Paris récemment, les musiciens interprétèrent : "Why Are We Sleeping?" et "We Did It Again". La musique du groupe est très nouvelle. On a déjà entendu parler des associations musique contemporaine-musique pop



(Spooky Thoo-Pierre Henry par exemple), mais cette association n'était que provisoire et, de plus, les musiques ne faisaient que se superposer. Tout diffèrent est le Whole World, puisqu'il peut y avoir juxtaposition des deux genres. Kevin Ayers continue son chemin. Quand il quitta Soft Machine, il fut immédiatement remplacé par Hugh Hopper. Délivré de l'influence de Kevin Ayers, Soft Machine va enfin pouvoir créer sa musique originale. Le second album se présente comme un montage de thèmes différents par leur forme, leur durée et leur contenu.

La machine retourne au Jazz et se rappelle qu'au début Robert Wyatt et Hugh Hopper jouent dans un groupe de Jazz, le Wilde Flower... La machine fera donc du Jazz. Elle fait appel à quatre "souffleurs" anglais. Deux ont déjà joué dans l'album du Keith Tippett Group "You Are Here, I Am There". Ils ont pour noms Elton Dean et Nick Evans. Il y a aussi Lyn Robson, Jimmy Castings et Rab Spall (violon). C'est ce groupe qui enregistra "Third", le troisième album de Soft Machine. La musique est très nouvelle. Tout à fait différent de l'album précédent. Malgré l'adjonction de cinq personnes qui ont dû être (tout au moins au début), extérieures à la Machine, l'entente des nouveaux et des anciens Soft Machine est totale. A aucun moment un musicien ne cherche à se faire remarquer plus particulièrement. C'est une constante de Soft Machine, la musique jouée est la musique d'un groupe et non celle d'une personnalité. Robert Wyatt dit : "Nous avons chacun nos idées sur la musique. Nous avons les mêmes idées sur ce que nous devons jouer ensemble ou avec plus de liberté. Mais il y a des moments où je ne joue pas en fonction de la base linéaire qu'observe Hugh Hopper et où Hugh et moi ne soutenons pas Mike parce que nous sommes autre part. L'idée, après tout, n'est pas de créer quatre morceaux de musique, mais un seul". Avec "Third", les musiciens ont vraiment trouvé ce qui leur convenait, mais ce qui semble satisfaire totalement Hopper et Ratledge (puisqu'ils ne font rien d'autre), ne satisfait pas totalement Wyatt. Pour échapper à une certaine contrainte, à ce surplus de recherche incessante, Wyatt a voulu jouer avec le Whole World de Kevin Ayers pour revenir un instant à plus de simplicité. Après cette expérience, il joua avec le Keith Tippett Centipede (Soft Machine avait déjà joué avec cet orchestre de Jazz moderne au festival d'Amougies). Sa participation à l'album "Symbiosis", dans lequel il n'est qu'un musicien parmi les autres , s'est justifiée par la trop grande rigidité que Soft Machine exige de ses participants : "Symbiosis", c'est autre chose que je possède en moi et que je n'avais pu extérioriser avec Soft Machine. Son évolution est-elle arrivée à terme ? Les hommes ont-ils atteint leur but ? Vont-ils rester à un même niveau ou continuer à chercher ? La musique de Soft Machine est une musique vivante et

en perpétuelle évolution, créée et recréée sans cesse. Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge restent dans l'ombre. Robert Wyatt dépense son énergie sans compter à la recherche perpétuelle de quelque chose de nouveau. Kevin Ayers et Daevid Allen se sont fondus au Whole World et au Gong. La famille Soft Machine est arrivée à maturité, mais sa production n'est pas terminée.

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HOME

A l'est du nouveau ? - Rock & Folk - N° 50 - mars 1971





Cher Jean-Jacques,

C'est de Nancy que je t'écris cette petite lettre. Nancy où le soleil brille rarement ; Nancy où le touriste s'aperçoit que si les chauffeurs de taxi se targuent de ne pas faire de politique, la politique, elle, s'occupe des indigènes comme des touristes. J'ai vu la place Stanislas (Stanislas, c'était un roi déchu de Pologne qui avait marié sa fille à Louis XV, et pour ce, reçu le duché de Lorraine ; il fut le dernier des ducs et l'un des plus aimés pour sa magnificence et sa bienfaisance). Bref, à en croire la brochure traditionnelle sur la table de nuit de la chambre d'hôtel, Nancy est une ville joyeuse, jolie, saine et sérieuse...

Mais en fait, là n'est pas l'objet de ma lettre et je m'empresse de te remercier pour l'invitation au « Pop Lorraine Festival », dont tu as bien voulu me gratifier. La Lorraine était déjà renommée pour ses quiches, elle le sera maintenant par ses festivals. Attention, lorsque je dis festivaI, cela reste sans aucun rapport avec Wight, Woodstock. ou même Biot ou Valbonne. D'abord, aucun de ceux-ci n'était organisé au profit « des Noëls des enfants sans joie ». (Quel soudain engouement pour les bonnes œuvres, depuis quelques mois...). Ensuite, lorsqu'un festival se trouve saboté, il est assez rare que ce soit par ses propres

organisateurs; et bien à Nancy, c'était un peu ça. Enfin une nouvelle formule, où l'organisateur désorganise pour réorganiser, et prouve ainsi qu'il possède la situation en main. Ça mérite tout de même un drôle de bravo une telle démarche, et peu importent les moyens empruntés; d'ailleurs la raison du plus fort n'est-elle pas toujours la meilleure?



Enfin, l'affiche était copieuse et promettait presque d'être intéressante. Elle était si copieuse cette affiche, qu'Aynsley Dunbar et Skin Alley, pourtant annoncés en gros caractères, ne vinrent pas. En revanche, Triangle, non prévu au programme, se joignit aux nombreux groupes français déjà engagés. Parmi ceux-ci, cinq formations locales : Voodo Doctors, Substance, Carefully Done Patient, Mad and Mad et Iris auxquelles venaient s'ajouter Variations, Dynastie Crisis et... Komintern. Restaient Richie Havens, Art Ensemble Of Chicago (mais oui...), Soft Machine, Pete Brown et Tear Gas. Le tout pour 20 francs, ce qui n'est pas trop cher, même pour un hangar métallique au béton trop dur. Faut tout de même pas faire le difficile, surtout lorsque la bière est à 2 francs, le Coca à 2 francs, le sandwich à 2 francs et les waters à deux pas. On était mieux qu'la presse... pour vous dire. On rigolait bien d'ailleurs, car l'organisation leur avait délivré un laisser-passer qui leur permettait soit de se faire vider, soit de se faire taper mais de toute façon de se faire insulter. Le mot d'ordre des Angels Nancéens, c'était du genre : « Toi le journaliste, tu vas pas nous casser les couilles longtemps ». Là encore : bravo, car enfin, déterminer à vue de nez quels sont « les petits cons de la presse pop », les vider de l'emplacement, qui soi-disant leur était réservé, et cela sans arrêt, pendant près de deux jours, faut quand même le faire. Un grand merci au Judo-Club de Nancy.

Le premier groupe à monter sur scène, en l'occurrence Substance, fut d'un bout à l'autre, totalement inintéressant. Fort heureusement, la formation suivante, Carefully Done Patient, fut non seulement moins mauvaise, mais elle n'eut aucun mal à provoquer chez le public cette sorte d'enthousiasme dont l'intensité prouve à elle seule combien la France peut attendre de ses groupes, même si ce n'est pas pour demain. Le troisième de la liste, Mad and Mad, s'avéra être complété ce soir par un musicien d'Alice ; heureuse combinaison qui nous valut une excellente version de « You keep me hangin' on ».

Pendant ce temps-là, un minable Light-Show nommé Open Light nous éclaboussait de ses lumières fades et déprimantes ; seule fut vraiment appréciée la projection, partielle, de Monterey Pop en hommage à Jimi Hendrix et Janis Joplin, les courts métrages dits d'horreur, comme « La nuit du Loup-Garou », et « Le bal des vampires », ainsi que deux dessins animés fabuleux de « Woody Woodpecker » et un seul, malheureusement de « Loopy di Loop ».

J'allais presque oublier de te raconter l'inoubliable moment (un parmi tant d'autres), où un type, venu on ne sait d'où, s'est emparé du micro pour faire hurler à l'assistance un « Bravo » à Janis Joplin ;ce qui donnait à peu près : « Pour Janis. BRAVO... Elle chantait mieux que tous les autres... BRAVO... elle était belle... BRAVO... elle est morte... BRAVO... » Et pourtant personne n'a ri... En fait personne n'a bien compris cette démarche plutôt obscure, et on a tous repris en choeur ce que chantait si bien le public de Woodstock.

Il y eut encore un instant privilégié. Lorsqu'au son du pipeau, le soleil éclaira des milliers de visages, on se demanda alors si Nancy ne resterait pas la version française de Woodstock. Mais le miracle n'a pas eu lieu; il ne suffit pas d'avoir le même âge et de s'asseoir les uns à côté des autres sur le béton, pour former une communauté. » C'était bien la moindre des choses, que nous chantions ensemble : un festival c'est quand même une Grande Fête Musicale. Et puis toutes ces boîtes de bière vides, fallait bien les utiliser, puisqu'on pouvait pas les lancer. On était là pour consommer, oui ou non ? Tout à coup, on s'est tous souvenu qu'on était là pour la musique, et on s'est tous pris un sacré drôle de grand pied monumental avec Dynastie Crisis. « Vraiment pas mal, pour un groupe français », comme on dit à Paris.



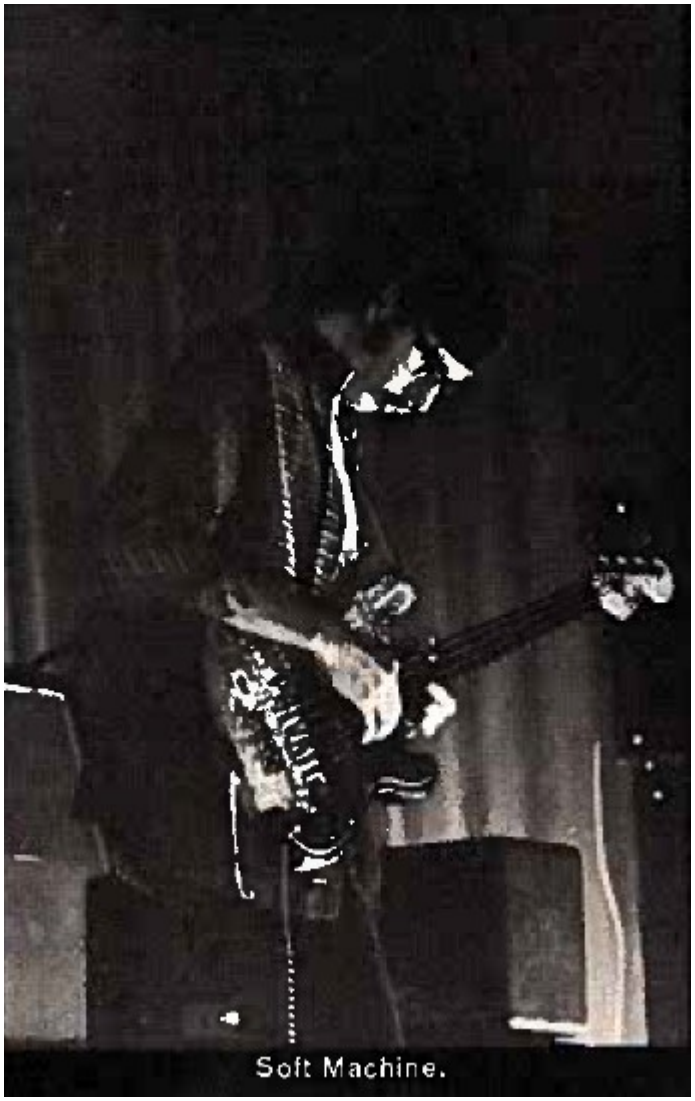
Triangle

Il faisait déjà un peu plus froid dans notre hangar, et cela explique sans doute le succès très mitigé qu'obtint l'Art Ensemble Of Chicago. Non qu'ait été déplorée la différence entre l'ancienne et la nouvelle formation, mais tous ces nègres avec des clochettes aux pieds, ça étonne un peu, quoi.

Richie Havens, tout le monde le connaissait bien, grâce à Woodstock bien sûr, c'est pourquoi on ne regardait que ses pieds. On les regardait tant ses pieds, qu'on ne s'apercevait pas que c'était mauvais, pour te dire. Richie était tellement content d'être venu jouer à Nancy, qu'il s'en est évanoui à sa sortie de scène. Quelle ambiance. Au fait : pendant qu'il jouait « Freedom » (comme dans l'film), les émules du Judo-Club du Nancy faisaient place nette derrière la scène. Quand on assiste à un festival, faut pas dormir par terre derrière la scène, c'est mauvais pour les reins (a fortiori lorsqu'ils prennent des coups).

« On a gentiment expliqué cela aux spectateurs haut perchés et, compréhensifs, ils regagnèrent le plancher des v... des Variations. » (*)

Après Richie Havens, nous pûmes nous délecter quelque peu avec Soft Machine. A Londres, ils ont entendu Soft Machine pour la première fois voilà trois ans, époque où ils jouaient au légendaire U.F.O. de Tottonham Court Road. En ce temps, le groupe comprenait Robert Wyatt, Mick Ratledge, Kevin Ayers et un bassiste australien. En dépit de leur tendance aux effets peu orthodoxes et leur refus prétentieux de percer parmi la masse, la musique n'en était pas moins brutale et excitante.


Soft Machine.

Il paraît même que les effets de lumière qu'ils utilisaient alors pour intensifier l'assaut véritablement physique de leur musique, étaient déjà les balbutiements du light-show d'aujourd'hui. Ils ont même tourné avec Jimi Hendrix. De cette première formation, seuls subsistent Mick Ratledge et Robert Wyatt, auxquels s'est joint Hugh Hopper. Tous regardaient Mick et personne n'écoutait l'organiste, on bavait devant Hopper, mais personne ne prêtait attention au bassiste ; seul Robert rassemblait oreilles et regards. Evidemment, personne ne fut réellement convaincu par Soft Machine et c'est sans doute bien dommage. Gong succéda à Soft Machine, et je ne te cacherai pas que, dans le genre tragique, mieux vaut voir « Lâchez les monstres »,

Bon. Voilà pour la première journée. Avant que je ne passe au récit de la seconde journée, je te laisse lire quelques lignes trouvées dans la presse régionale, et qui firent dire beaucoup de grossièretés aux fameux «petits cons de la presse pop


Variations.

». Je crois bien que c'est un journal Républicain de l'Est, ou quelque chose d'approchant ; toujours est-il que nombreux furent ceux qui le traitèrent d'« infâme torchon »... Enfin, je te laisse seul juge...

« Paris, obsédé par son image de marque, n'imagine un Festival de Pop Music qu'au Bourget (sans doute parce qu'une formation pop produit autant de décibels qu'un moteur de Caravelle) ou aux Halles désertées par l'accordéon-musette et la valse - cornet de frites. Nancy, sans complexe, a choisi le haut-lieu régional de la Société de consommation : les Soft Machine, à l'emplacement des machines à laver la vaisselle. Quel paradoxe !
Mais rien ne semble rebuter les jeunes gens qui arpentaient le secteur en bottes d'égoutier et béret basque, jouant au football avec une boîte de conserve, comme ils le faisaient plus jeunes sur un terrain vague.
C'est là-bas, au pied des cités anonymes, que fleurit la pop music : la guitare y a remplacé les gants de boxe, sur la route de l'hypothétique succès. » (*)

Le dimanche, ce fut Iris qui ouvrit, et je ne t'en dirai rien pour la simple raison que je n'eus pas le plaisir de les entendre. En revanche, j'ai bien entendu Triangle et il faut

reconnaître que ce n'est pas encore ça : beaucoup de vides et une tenue de scène qui laisse quand même à désirer. A leur décharge il faut cependant mentionner un fabuleux solo de batterie de Prévotat dont la technicité n'entacha en rien l'aspect musical recherché, bien au contraire.


Dynastie Crisis.

Nous avions été si sages, que Dynastie Crisis revint pour faire un tabac super génial, vraiment extra, quelle démence, on s'est pris un grand pied, plus que pour Carefully Done Patient. « Ça draguait sec dans tous les coins depuis une paire d'heures lorsque les « Carefully Done Patient » entrèrent en scène et commencèrent leur spectacle par un morceau percutant. Du spectacle, on en a eu : le chanteur avec sa présence scénique toujours aussi démente, Mick et sa touffe toujours aussi imposante, Jean-Pierre acharné et fritant sec et Michel, qui nous a étonnés tous par son nouveau style. Les amplis étaient à toc, mais ça crachait de la bonne pop. » Bref, il faudrait peut-être compter avec Dynastie Crisis, le jour où la France sera en mesure d'exporter, sans honte, un de ses produits musicaux. Pour mon compte, je retiens une excellente version de « I'm the walrus », plus proche de Spooky Tooth que des Beatles.

Après la partie « tu veux d'la musique, tu vas en avoir », ce fut, selon plusieurs observateurs, et parmi lesquels les petits cons précités (appelons-les X, ce sera plus simple), le chapitre sabotage. Sur scène : Variations. Premier morceau: « Free me », et soudain, hasard (?), coupure de courant. Genre de chose qui, inévitablement entraîne le mécontentement de l'auditoire : c'est très mauvais de retenir son enthousiasme, tous les docteurs vous le diront. On répare, on reprend et ça ressaute. Une fois passe encore, mais sept c'est tout de même un peu trop. Ce qui est d'autant plus étrange, c'est qu'à chaque fois la coupure provenait soit d'un disjoncteur sauté, soit d'une prise débranchée, et deux prises ensemble, cela ne se débranche pas tout seul. Ce sabotage (c'est le mot, non?), avait pour but 1° de détériorer le show des Variations, purement et simplement et 2° de retarder le programme, ce pour une raison bien précise.

Si le passage des Variations fut, malgré tout, beaucoup trop long et médiocre vers la fin, ils ont cependant su prouver, grâce à ces incidents, la maîtrise qu'ils avaient de la scène et leur persévérance à enlever le public. Enfin je n'imagine pas un seul groupe, anglais ou américain, acceptant de continuer de jouer dans d'aussi déplorables conditions ; C'est tout.

« Les Variations ont retrouvé leur public de Nancy. le public les a retrouvés en pleine forme avec leur jeu de scène terrible, leurs jeux de lumières déments. Tout le monde tapait des mains comme au bon vieux temps du twist de Johnny. Performance technique et musicale ». (*)



Comme l'ambiance était bien tombée, et qu'il commençait à faire froid (on a commencé à geler lorsque l'organisation a jugé préférable de couper le chauffage), on a allumé des feux un peu partout, comme à Woodstock... ou à Wight...

« Le Parc des Expo, hier soir, c'était Wight. Lorsque les humains se mettent en troupeau, ils ont souvent le même âge. Ici, c'était celui des conscrits. Auprès des jeunes recrues à l'air emprunté, avec leur sac de couchage roulé en baluchon, comme il était tentant de jouer les anciens combattants : « Tu te souviens, l'île de Wight, comme on grelottait ! Ici, au moins, il fait chaud ». Si chaud même que les premiers torses nus firent leur apparition dès 20 heures. On était venu comme à l'auberge du coin, celle où l'on « peut apporter son manger » : avec le litre de rouge, le saucisson et le camembert. 20 F les deux jours : trouvez un hôtel à ce tarif ! » (*)

Pete Brown n'arrangea rien et laissa à Tear Gas un public réduit à 500 personnes, public dont la seule envie était d'aller se coucher. Son passage fut trois fois trop long, et si ennuyeux, que les applaudissements de l'auditoire réveillèrent un bon nombre d'endormis dont le sommeil devait être bien léger. De toute façon, ceux qui dormaient encore, et il en restait, n'allaient pas tarder a sortir de leur léthargie, pour sombrer dans la musique agressive de Tears Gas.

Tear Gas, cela signifie gaz lacrymogène, et heureux sont les courageux qui ont vu et entendu ce qui fut, en fait, le meilleur groupe de tout le festival. Je vais même te donner leurs noms pour la peine : Davey Batchelor (vcl), Zal Cleminson (gtr et vcl), Eddie Campbell (org et vcl), Chris Glen {bs et vcl) et Wullie Munro (dms et vcl). J'ajoute qu'ils sont Écossais, tournent en Angleterre avec Deep Purple et ne sont pas loin d'être meilleurs que Led Zeppelin. Ils qualifient leur style de « Hairy Music », et possèdent d'ores et déjà deux Lps à leur actif (chez Pathé-Marconi). Tear Gas est sans nul doute dans la lignée des Who.

Tear Gas terminait, il était minuit, et nous attendions le dernier groupe du festival : Komintern. Seulement voilà, il était minuit, heure de clôture prévue. Je crois bien qu'il en a sonné des glas, lorsque la lumière s'est rallumée. Il faut croire que le coup était bien calculé : sept pannes de courant, ça représente à peu près le temps qu'aurait dû jouer Komintern. Première mesure : les mettre en fin de liste, deuxième : retarder le programme en sabotant Variations, troisième : mettre le contrat sous le nez de Komintern pour leur prouver que tout devait être terminé à minuit, et quatrième: faire courir le bruit que Variations avait été saboté par Komintern... BRAVO...

« Trois fois de suite, les Variations ont dû reprendre leur attaque, hier soir... à vide! Disposant d'un matériel fantastique, les Variations ne pouvaient supposer que leur sono fut pourrie. Las! les agissements (criminels) d'un orchestre concurrent et révolutionnaire leur avaient coupé le fil. Si bien que les Variations malgré tous leurs efforts, ne purent ensuite remonter le courant », (*)

Ce qui "clocha", ce fut le coup du contrat : à 0 heure une minute, nous étions lundi et dès lors c'était l'organisation qui n'avait pas respecté le contrat. Komintern fut donc payé, non sans mal et sans insultes à leur adresse. Remarque, ils s'en foutent, Komintern, de leur cachet pourri ; ils se sont fait voler un ampli alors qu'ils attendaient de monter en scène. Ils se foutent aussi du type fort bien attentionné, qui afin de brouiller encore les cartes, a accusé les Variations de ce vol. Ils n'étaient même pas fâchés, mais étonnés seulement de constater tant de saloperies en une seule soirée.

Je vais même te dire plus : en rentrant chez eux, ils se sont tous promis d'aller mettre trois cierges à Saint-Antoine ; l'un pour retrouver l'ampli, car il est hors de question pour eux d'en acheter un autre maintenant, le second pour le simili-Lennon et son Woodstock-simulacre, et le troisième, enfin, pour ceux qui, par divers moyens, les ont accusés de sabotage.

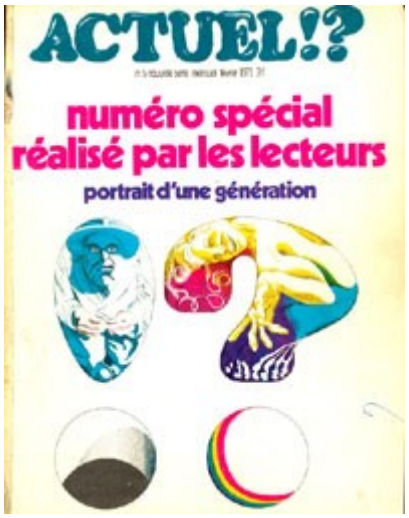
Tu vois, Jean-Jacques, combien lourde est la liste des incapables et des médiocres. Sois cependant certain que j'ai été ici plus honnête que ne le furent tes sbires deux jours durant.

Bruno Ducourant

(*) Citations extraites de l'Est Républicain (17 et 18-1-71).

Les éclaireurs du pop - Actuel - N° 5 - février 1971

LES ECLAIREURS DU POP



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les éclaireurs du pop

Après cinq ans de confusionnisme créateur, la musique pop anglaise éclate en plusieurs écoles, blues, folk, musique jazzy, et surtout Recherches contemporaines menées essentiellement par la grande famille des Soft Machine.

L'Angleterre libérale a su récupérer la révolte venue de Liverpool. Même si le Rock n' roll continue à imprégner la pop musique anglaise d'agressivité et de puissance sonore, il s'agit plus d'une coloration musicale que d'une véritable volonté de hurler sa rage. La plupart des groupes, à l'exception des Rolling Stones, révèlent "leurs bons sentiments", leur désir de ne pas s'opposer de front au système qui les entoure, par ce goût du joli, du mélo, de la chanson traditionnelle anglaise rythmée. Il n'émane pas du son cette atmosphère pesante et irrespirable de rébellion, de rejet, qui caractérise les sonorités des groupes américains sauvages comme Steppenwolf ou les Stooges, le MC5.

Deux directions musicales essaient de dépasser ces contradictions: d'une part explorer les ressources électroacoustiques de la musique occidentale contemporaine en y ajoutant cette pulsion, ce beat hérité du jazz, mais en dépassant la formule de la petite formation heavy pour tendre vers le symphonique (Soft Machine) ; d'autre part renouveler la chanson poétique, moderniser le non-sens, l'absurde ou la sophistication par la coloration électrique psychédélique (Kevin Ayers, Syd Barrett) . Une expérience tend vers la synthèse de ces différentes formulations, : le grand orchestre de soixante musiciens de Keith Tippett, le Centipède.

Le Soft Machine a bien changé, mais la scène anglaise qu'il a contribué à créer n'est pas morte pour autant. Souvenez-vous, il y a huit ans, l'acide bouillonnait dans les cervelles, une génération de musiciens, Pink Floyd et Soft Machine en tête, accommodaient le rock à des sauces bien étranges. Quatre ans plus tard, Soft Machine agissait comme catalyseur de ce vaste brassage entre musiciens de rock, de jazz et de musique contemporaine, dans des projets grandioses comme le Centipède, cet orchestre de cent musiciens venus de tous les horizons.

Si l'on remonte dans les premiers temps de l'histoire du Soft Machine, à l'époque où il se produisait à Saint-Tropez, pendant la biennale au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées où il accompagnait une pièce de Copi et les chorégraphies de Graziella Martinez, au temps de la

Fenêtre Rose, on peut avec le recul considérer la progression du groupe. Faisait encore partie du groupe Kevin Ayers, après le départ de David Allen. Le groupe vomissait le son, saturation des amplis et de la sono, avec une violence incendiaire. Le groupe livrait sa musique à l'aléatoire, aux rencontres de sonorités bien plus qu'aux harmonies ou à la construction. Comme un besoin de retrouver le point zéro du son, cette étape ultime de l'incandescence acoustique : briser le seuil du supportable pour toucher cet instant magique ou Ie son emporte tout et balaie la conscience, fait basculer dans les terres inconnues des sens. L'apport de la folie, l'étrangeté de la voix et des mots d'un Kevin Ayers aidaient à parfaire l'expérience, tout comme la démesure pataphysicienne d'un David Allen. Avec cette atmosphère trouble de fête orgiaque, d'exhibitionnisme dans les jeux de scènes, les attitudes de Robert Wyatt et Kevin Ayers. L'étape correspondait à un état d'exaltation, à une volonté de destruction du mental, des barrières intérieures.

La Machine molle a depuis digéré l'expérience pour toucher maintenant à ce stade de rigueur extrême. Mais toujours avec une volonté d'atteindre les seuils de l'inconnu du son, par d'autres voies: la composition, la construction, l'instrumental. L'agencement de sonorités soigneusement définies qui progressent à l'intérieur de structures fermes produit encore l'incantatoire, mais qui demande plus subtilement une concentration intense, un travail sur soi de l'auditeur. Car c'est une musique qui s'écoute, qui s'éloigne des trépidations du corps pour intérioriser son action.



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Le groupe a repensé ses influences musicales pour les faire siennes, utilisant la musique de Riley, de Cecil Taylor ou de Coltrane pour substituer une oeuvre réfléchie à une esthétique de l'éclatement du hasard. le Soft Machine n'a pas pour autant négligé les expériences précédentes. Ainsi le son de l'orgue a conservé son caractère grondant et fruste, ainsi des poussées de fièvre concentrées maintenant dans les passages free ménagés pour le saxophone d'Elton Dean ou la percussion de Robert Wyatt. Mais cette nouvelle dimension a entraîné l'élimination de tout exhibitionnisme : pour que l'essentiel soit la musique. Cette rigidité austère semble pousser Robert Wyatt à s'essayer à d'autres expériences. Un besoin chez lui de laisser exploser sa joie, son enthousiasme, un désir de liberté harmonique pour se perdre dans les vertiges de l'improvisé. Il devient presque l'une des pièces essentielles de toute cette révolution de la musique pop anglaise. On le voit au côté de Kevin Ayers dans le grand orchestre constitué avec des amis: Symbiosis ou dans celui de Keith Tippett. Mais il enregistre aussi sa propre musique dans un album récent "The end of an ear" (CBS), tentative pour concilier la voix, comme instrument, l'électro-acoustique dans le travail en studio sur les bandes, les recordings et les accents jazzy modernistes du piano électrique, avec la pulsion qu'il sait donner à une formation musicale. La notion de musique pop traditionnelle est dépassée. Souci de modernité également : chez Kevin Ayers et son Whole World, les textes, les chansons entrent dans un moule "dramatique" créé par les instruments. La musique est étrange, continuellement contrastée, désuète ou électro-acoustique, rockn'rollienne ou sentimentale, forcée ou calme. La fascination du Whole World vient de cette impression d'une théâtralisation. Kevin Ayers fait vivre tout un monde habité de ses phantasmes; de son charme, de son cabotinage d'enfant fou.



les éclaireurs du pop



Mike Ratledge parle

C'est pour concilier l'explosion, la construction, la musique classique, le jazz, le rock, l'improvisation, les choeurs que Keith Tippett a rassemblé un grand orchestre. l'unique oeuvre du jeune pianiste qui fut jouée à Sigma pour la deuxième fois est "Septober Energy". Une fresque impressionnante qui s'articule sur des masses sonores avec des changements de climat, Le blues classique (violons, basses acoustiques, violoncelles) , le bloc jazz (les cuivres), le bloc pop (guitares basses, électriques et batteries), le choeur (quatre choristes) . Le schéma musical s'il est soigneusement défini, ménage, à la manière des compositions pour grands orchestres de jazz, des passages ouverts à l'improvisation.

La mise sur pied de cette énorme machinerie n'a pu être réalisée que grâce à la participation enthousiaste de chacun de ses membres : Robert Fripp du King Crimson, Robert Wyatt et EIton Dean du Soft Machine, Zoot Money, et Julie Driscoll : c'est la première fois qu'un orchestre de ce style s'est constitué à partir de musiciens pop. Il y eut, certes, dans un passé récent, des tentatives d'osmose entre musiciens classiques et musiciens pop (signalons l'échec du Deep Purple avec le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra ou de Five Bridge des Nice), mais jamais cette répartition intelligente des composantes sonores qui pouvaient apporter la réussite musicale. La porte est maintenant ouverte aux tentatives de grand orchestre pop. La musique élaborée du Soft Machine, l'apport solitaire d'un Barrett, les excentricités vocales et musicales de Kevin Ayers, la tentative de fusion de KeithTippett : on sent comme l'existence d'une grande famille musicale, faite de talents divers, mais dont chacun des membres est prêt à se joindre à toute nouvelle initiative. Une cohérence interne de toutes ces musiques qui s'éloignent des révoltes de pacotille ou de la pop consommation.

Paul Inconnu

Mike Ratledge parle

Deux grands poufs blancs, un parquet ciré, une bibliothèque très garnie. C'est un décor d'esprit rigoureux, une atmosphère de travail, une intelligence rapide, des mots qui se bousculent. Sur la cheminée, ostensiblement exposé avec une note d'ironie, le diplôme de l'ordre de Ia Grande Gidouille décerné à M. Mike Ratledge. Londres. Mike Ratledge est l'organiste du Soft Machine, formé à la philosophie à Oxford, revenu vite à la musique et à la

composition. Il vit ici entre les ouvrages de musicologie, son piano et sa compagne, sans guère sortir, s'abritant jusqu'au regard derrière des petites lunettes bleues. Il parle peu, mais il a bien voulu s'expliquer pour Actuel.



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Considérez-vous que vous appartenez à la musique pop ?

Non pas vraiment, nous vivons un peu hors du circuit. Je n'ai pas vu le Pink Floyd, un des seuls groupes que je connaisse un peu, depuis trois ans.

Où vous situez vous: plus près du jazz, plus près de la musique contemporaine ?

Nous sommes très divisés sur ce point, Elton Dean par exemple, notre saxo, vient du groupe du pianiste de Jazz Keith Tippett et voudrait jouer plus free. Robert Wyatt, le batteur, est lui aussi attiré par une musique moins organisée. Hugh Hopper, le guitariste, évolue vers la musique électronique. Personnellement, je suis plus attiré par la musique contemporaine.

Ces divergences ne sont pas sources de conflit ?

Si. Mais moins qu'avant. Après trois ans de travail collectif, nous sommes parvenus à une musique à peu près stabilisée. Aussi pouvons-nous maintenant libérer des formes jusqu'ici un peu trop rigides, comme celles de notre album "Third". L'album "Fourth" que nous venons d'enregistrer est beaucoup plus free. Le Soft ouvre ses vannes : nous n'avons plus peur. Un certain manque de technique nous a longtemps paralysés. Nous avions toujours peur de perdre le tempo, nous serrions notre musique afin qu'aucune faiblesse ne puisse s'y glisser. Mais le perfectionnisme porte sa part d'illusion.

Etes-vous un groupe underground ?

Aucun de nous ne souhaite être l'objet d'un culte dans l'underground. Taylor Mead a bien défini l'essence de l'underground: faire quelque chose pour rien. Quand on vous demande un concert underground, l'organisateur commence à vous parler en termes d'art et de messages: vous savez aussitôt que vous n'allez pas toucher d'argent, et que vous devrez payer vos frais. C'est le refus de l'organisation : la scène sera un foutoir, la sono irrécupérable... L'Underground a eu ses succès. J'aimais bien l'UFO lorsque Hoppy (John Hopkins) l'organisait. Mais d'ordinaire, l'underground est bordélique.

On dit que vous êtes les intellectuels de la pop musique ?

Nous l'avons peut-être été, nous ne sommes plus les seuls. Un groupe comme "Beyond the Edge" a intégré d'anciens musiciens du conservatoire et un expert des percussions japonaises. C'est aussi le cas de "Curved Air" ...

Croyez-vous à l'avant-garde ?

Nous y croyons un peu, nous ne tenons pas à en faire partie. Nous croyons cependant à l'Art. Nous cherchons à créer une musique neuve et originale sans tenir compte du public.

De quand date le succès ?

En France, vers 1967, à la Fenêtre Rose au Palais des Sports, la première fête psychédélique de Paris. Puis au Bataclan. La France aime le jazz: c'était bon pour nous.

Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper et moi-même fréquentions la même école secondaire à la fin des années cinquante : voilà toute l'origine des Soft. Nous jouions ensemble. Nous ne nous intéressions pas au pop mais plutôt au jazz. A Cecil Taylor surtout, qui était notre dieu méconnu. David Allen avait ramené deux de ses disques de Paris. Il avait aussi amené deux cents disques de jazz, denrée rare dans l'Angleterre des restrictions d'après-guerre. Il nous a beaucoup influencés en nous faisant écouter Ornette Coleman, Miles

Davis et surtout Mingus et les premiers disques du groupe de Coltrane avec Mc Coy Tiner et Elvin Jones. Je suis alors parti à l'université d'Oxford. Les autres ont formé un trio très jazz. Ça n'a pas marché pour eux, ils crevaient de faim. David s'est tiré à New York, ceux qui restaient ont formé un groupe pop : c'était à l'époque -



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et un peu encore aujourd'hui - la seule méthode pour vivre en jouant de la musique. En 1964, le pop commençait à être pris au sérieux, l'ère post Beatles s'ouvrait. David Allen est alors revenu de New York avec Kevin Ayers. IIs ont constitué un nouveau groupe toujours à prétentions pop mais beaucoup plus fou. Leur idée: jouer la musique qu'ils aimaient et la nommer "musique pop". L'étiquette devait apporter le succès.

L'Université ne m'a pas renouvelé ma bourse, j'étais licencié en philosophie, j'avais des dettes, j'ai rejoint le groupe. David à la basse, Robert à la batterie, Kevin jouait de la rythm guitare, cela n'a pas trop bien marché. C'est à cette époque, fin 1965, que l'UFO a ouvert le club "underground", le début du psychédélisme en Angleterre. Ce fut notre premier vrai concert. David était en contact étroit avec l'underground depuis des années. Il travaillait avec le poète Michaël Horowitz, William Burroughs, ils donnaient des shows poétiques au musée d'Art Moderne de Londres. Nous avons partagé le premier concert avec le Pink Floyd que nous ne connaissions pas. Nous étions plus jazz : Ie Pink Floyd jouait des morceaux rock, comme Louie Louie ; sa musique n'était pas très intéressante, il n'avait alors guère de technique.

Y avait-il du monde ?

Tous les amis, tous les "freaks" de Londres. C'est à ce moment que l'underground, s'est trouvé une identité. Le public existait, on pouvait s'y joindre. Tout le monde avait envie d'en faire partie. Assez vite, c'est devenu un phénomène social, et une mode. La plupart des types sortaient de l'Université. L'UFO était vraiment bien, vivante. Il s'y passait des tas de choses. L'UFO a été fermée. Le mouvement a perdu ce pouvoir créateur, cette impulsion qui lui venait de sa 'concentration.

Vous circuliez dans les circuits artistiques et jouiez plutôt dans les musées ?

Oui. Une tournée en Angleterre nous avait valu de nombreux bombardements de bouteilles de bière. Le peintre, cinéaste, assemblagiste Mark Boyle nous a invités à jouer avec lui dans les musées. Il projetait des films, inventait le light show et nous jouions. L'UFO nous a créé un public plus pop.

A quelles expériences musicales vous livriez-vous alors ?

Nous tournions beaucoup autour de la musique contemporaine. Celle de John Cage par exemple. Nous avons expérimenté le hasard. Pour notre premier album, un air fut composé par tirage au sort des notes dans une boîte. Certains morceaux sortaient bien. C'était une source d'idées originales.

Nous avons cru reconnaître dans votre album " Soft Third " une certaine influence de Terry Riley?

C'est vrai, et plus particulièrement dans le morceau Out Bloody Rageous. Nous avons beaucoup écouté Terry Riley. David Allen, il y a cinq ans à Majorque, enregistrait encore des bandes avec lui. Il fréquentait le groupe Fluxus, avec Lamonte Young et bien d'autres. Mais nous ne pouvons pas encore dire si ce sont Terry Riley ou Olivier Messiaen qui nous ont influencés. Ils font partie de notre environnement sonore au même titre qu'une

ritournelle publicitaire à la radio. Quand une musique m'impressionne, c'est souvent qu'elle me séduit par une trouvaille technique. A titre d'exercice, j'essaie de l'assimiler. Il en reste toujours quelque chose, sans que je sache très précisement quoi.

L'apport de Terry Riley vous paraît-il important ?

Capital. C'est l'une des deux révolutions musicales du XXe siècle. La première fut l'introduction du hasard par Cage après la Deuxième guerre mondiale, la seconde celle du concept de répétition par Terry Riley.

Comment expliquez-vous que Riley intéresse le public pop ?

Sa musique est une musique de transe, une musique qui exerce une emprise immédiate.

C'est un peu la fin des progressions narratives en musique, des constructions bien organisées ?

Oui, cela me rappelle la réaction d'un critique américain à la musique de Cage. Pour lui, Cage, ses hasards et ses mathématiques, c'était la fin du monde, le début de la décadence : en dehors des accords, de leur progression, et de la tonalité, point de salut.

La répétition ne risque-t-elle pas d'être monotone ?

Je ne crois pas, j'écoute Terry Riley depuis des années et je ne m'ennuie jamais. La répétition crée un équilibre bizarre et toujours changeant, l'illusion du rythme sans rythme du tout. J'ai entendu Terry Riley jouer du saxo solo pendant six heures: sa répétition évolue. Il oppose deux phrases, A et B par exemple. et leur interréaction AB, AB, AB crée un rythme.

Que pensez-vous des derniers développements de la musique contemporaine ?

Elle vire vers le spectacle. Au moins sur la West Coast des Etats-Unis, Lamonte Young joue une note continue, vêtu de blanc et imperturbable : il impose un spectacle, une atmosphère, un état d'esprit.

Parallèlement, il compose un morceau pour papillon solo, il amplifie les bruits de leur vol dans une boîte fermée. Voilà une musique. Un autre exemple récent sur la côte Ouest : une femme, assise dans une chaise, est branchée sur des lampes par des fils électriques; une autre femme, aussi branchée, vient la toucher. Des lumières s'allument, Il n'y a pas de son. C'est pourtant de la musique.

Pourquoi ne faites-vous pas de théâtre ?

Nous avons trop d'ego. Pour nous, être face au public est déjà assez angoissant en soi.

Comment composez-vous ?

Une partie de la musique est écrite, l'autre improvisée, comme pour le jazz. Dans le troisième album, la composition avait trop grignoté l'improvisation. Le quatrième album sera plus équilibré.

Quand vous improvisez, suivez-vous des schémas précis et pré-établis ?

Parfois oui, parfois non. Pas de contrainte : l'improvisateur est en principe libre. II arrive que cela ne colle pas. On sent parfois que l'improvisation est bancale. Je joue ce qui me passe par la tête en réagissant à Hugh et à Robert. Idéalement, ce devrait être indépendant. Mais on se connait trop et la liberté est d'un accès difficile. Je connais les phrases qu'ils affectionnent et je peux un peu prévoir sur quelles routes ils vont s'aventurer. Chacun a ses trames. J'ai moi-même certains poncifs automatiques : improviser, c'est les combattre.

Vous répétez souvent ?

Une ou deux fois par semaine, avec des interruptions d'un ou deux mois.

Quels trucs électroniques utilisez-vous sur votre orgue par exemple ?

Un appareil qui déforme les sons et en accroît la distorsion. Une pédale amplifie les graves, une autre les aiguës. Nous n'utilisons pas encore le Moog Synthetizer, car c'est un

appareil au maniement compliqué: il est difficile de l'incorporer au son d'un groupe. Nous attendons un nouveau modèle, le VCS 3, sur lequel un ingénieur anglais travaille depuis dix-huit mois.



Vous pourriez jouer avec un musicien de musique électronique ?

Nous y avons pensé. L'ennui des bandes magnétiques, c'est qu'elles figent le jeu. Le groupe doit suivre, elles commandent son improvisation. C'est possible en studio, non sur scène.

Etes-vous prêts à jouer sur une bande de Terry Riley ?

Pas dans le cadre du Soft Machine. Je joue la musique de Terry Riley individuellement. Je l'ai aussi fait à la fin de 1970 avec quelques musiciens du groupe Beyond the Edge, aux "pop proms" du Roundhouse, ces concerts qui présentent les expériences du pop. Il est difficile de tenir longtemps en jouant du Riley. A la longue, on ne sait même plus ce que l'on joue: la répétition use.

Une position politique ?

Aucune, absolument aucune. Largement anticonformiste certes, mais vaguement socialistes. Très anti-mystiques, athées en gros. Nous n'aimons pas la magie, l'astrologie. L'hindouisme a été dévoyé dans le pop.

L'argent ?

Au cours des dix dernières années, il a été possible de faire beaucoup d'argent avec le pop. Ça a toujours été vrai pour des gens comme Presley. Aujourd'hui, le côté "star" est moins développé. Votre voisin d'en face fait un disque et gagne beaucoup d'argent. Il n y a pas une personne au monde qui ne connaisse pas, au moins indirectement, un groupe de pop qui a fait du fric. Alors ça attire de plus en plus de monde, comme les soit-disant intellectuels. Si on pouvait gagner un fric énorme en écrivant de la poésie, ça marcherait de la même manière. Et des millions de personnes s'intituleraient poètes.

Et vous ?

Je fais ce que j'aime faire. Ça paraît bizarre, mais je ne travaille pas pour des motifs économiques. J'ai des phantasmes sur le fric: je rêve de voler une banque, de faire de la publicité ou d'écrire un best seller. Mais je les réalise jamais, parce que je suis foutument paresseux, et que je suis pas du tout convaincu que ça marcherait.

Propos recueillis par Julien Vladimir

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Concert Pop' et guérilla - Le Monde - 2 février 1971

CONCERT POP ' ET GUÉRILLA



Par MARTIN EVEN

L'Ecole supérieure des travaux publics donnait dimanche sa soirée annuelle au Palais des sports. " Soirée pop' ", avaient décidé ses organisateurs, qui réunissaient à l'affiche du Palais des sports à Paris cinq groupes de bonne renommée : Soft Machine et ses deux dissidents (D. Allen et K. Ayers) plus Iron Butterfly et Yes. Rien qui mérite des bagarres. Cependant le prix des places (de 30 à 50 francs) était jugé trop élevé par certains jeunes spectateurs.

Hélas ! tout avait été réuni pour que se déclenche, une nouvelle fois, le socio-drame " contestation - répression ". Les forces de l'ordre étaient là, casques à visière et boucliers, l'arme au pied ; les forces du désordre également, casques de motocyclistes et slogans : " Concerts gratuits ! La pop' pour tous ! " Au début, on s'est un peu bagarré, puis les organisateurs ont ouvert les portes.

A l'intérieur, des orateurs de fortune s'emparent du micro : " Brûlons les voitures des riches ! Résistance populaire ! " Certains, mieux équipés, commencent à démolir les sièges, rangée par rangée. Une bombe fumigène explose. Puis les musiciens ramènent l'ordre dans la salle en commençant le concert.

C'est alors qu'un petit groupe parvient à fracturer les réserves des buvettes du Palais des Sports. Ce sont les chocolats glacés qui volent aux quatre coins de la salle, puis les caramels, les saucisses, le pain, les bouteilles de limonade, de bière, de vin, de whisky, le papier hygiénique qui sert de serpentins, les bordereaux comptables, etc. Tout est mis à sac. Tandis que les musiciens du " gong " jouent imperturbablement.

Vers minuit, alors que seulement deux groupes sont passés sur scène, les autorités demandent l'évacuation de la salle. " Restons tous ensemble, camarades ! " supplie un des orateurs. Mais, par petits groupes, les spectateurs déçus se replient.

Les pompiers maîtrisent un début d'incendie. A l'extérieur, des groupes attardés jouent à la guérilla, dispersés par les grenades fumigènes. Plus tard, les derniers combattants se replient par la rue de Vaugirard, où ils échafaudent des barricades de fortune, détruisent nombre de vitrines et pillent quelques étalages.

Bilan : des dégâts matériels considérables, des blessés - dont une dizaine de policiers - et vingt-six personnes mises à la disposition du parquet. Ce n'est sans doute pas demain qu'il y aura, de nouveau, un concert pop' au Palais des Sports, fût-il payant.

Les "Soft Machine" - Le Peuple - 17 janvier 1971



Extrait de : Le Peuple
Geknipt uit : Bruxelles
Date :
Datum : 17. 1. 1971

AU THEATRE 140 : « Les Soft Machine »

Ils sont les maitres incontestés de la pop music anglaise. Depuis 1959, grâce à une solide formation classique, grâce aussi à l'influence de la musique moderne de jazz, ils ont résolument choisi la voie de la difficulté en mariant étroitement un courant anticipatif et une nouvelle orientation musicale. Les Soft Machine étaient nés et depuis n'ont cessé d'influencer tout ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler le genre pop. Leur audience s'élargit au point qu'elle est aujourd'hui indissolublement liée à une évolution irréversible. Les « Soft Machine » sont entraînés dans un courant prospectif qui ira croissant et développera ses idées avant-gardistes, bénéficiant de la sympathie de toute une jeunesse.

Les Soft Machine ne réclament pas les encouragements bruyants de son public. Ils jouent sans s'arrêter selon une inspiration généreuse qui n'est pas nécessairement incompréhensible, formée et inutile. Tous ceux qui aiment — et ils sont nombreux — cette musique auront goûté cette phrase inscrite dans le programme : « Ecoutez les rêves, passez de l'autre côté du miroir. De là votre regard étonné va découvrir l'impensable beauté : le bruit et la musique sont une seule et même chose.

Certes, pour s'assimiler une musique aussi désintéressée, aussi délibérément expérimentale, il faut avoir éprouvé les joies d'une transformation lente amorcée par Milhaud ou Bartok, Cecil Taylor ou Coleman. Il faut surtout ne pas y pénétrer de plain pied avec un esprit imprégné des balbutiements et cette musique étonnamment riche. Il faut, au contraire repartir à la découverte d'une musique à laquelle vous n'avez jamais songé. Cela vaut la peine de faire cet effort d'imagination, de se payer le luxe d'un nouvel apprentissage musical. Ce n'est qu'à cette condition que la participation à la musique moderne devient un plaisir et une nécessité.

Les Soft Machine sont un bel outil de cette nouvelle connaissance...

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Le concert du 15/01/1971

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Les Soft Machine - La Dernière Heure- 16 janvier 1971

AU 140 - LES SOFT MACHINE



AU 140

LES SOFT MACHINE

Le Théâtre 140 a amené à Bruxelles pour deux jours un groupe de pop music, les Soft Machine (la Machine Molle).

L'orchestre, qui existe depuis plusieurs années, est formé par quatre jeunes Anglais. En compagnie de l'autre célèbre groupe « Underground » anglais, le Pink Floyd, ils sont considérés comme étant les maîtres incontestés de la pop music prospective anglaise.

Devant une salle comble, ils ont fait, pendant deux heures, la démonstration éblouissante d'une polyphonie parfaitement originale.

Les faisceaux des projecteurs faisaient tour à tour ressortir la virtuosité du clarinettiste C. David Allen), la maîtrise du guitariste (Kevin Ayers), l'excitation du batteur (Robert Wyatt), le jeu du pianiste (Mike Ratledge).

On pourrait peut-être reprocher à ces musiciens de ne pas créer un contact avec leur public. L'amplification presque insupportable, les effets musicaux très spéciaux rendaient difficile la participation des spectateurs. Mais où finit le bruit ? Où commence la musique ? Pour eux, bruit et musique sont une seule et même chose.

On peut aimer ou ne pas aimer cette musique d'avant-garde. En tout cas, ce groupe est un remarquable exemple de cette recherche tentée par plusieurs pour créer un nouveau son, de nouvelles harmonies.

Le titre du spectacle illustre cette tendance : les Soft Machine, un solfège révolutionnaire. — Ann. D.

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Le concert du 15/01/1971

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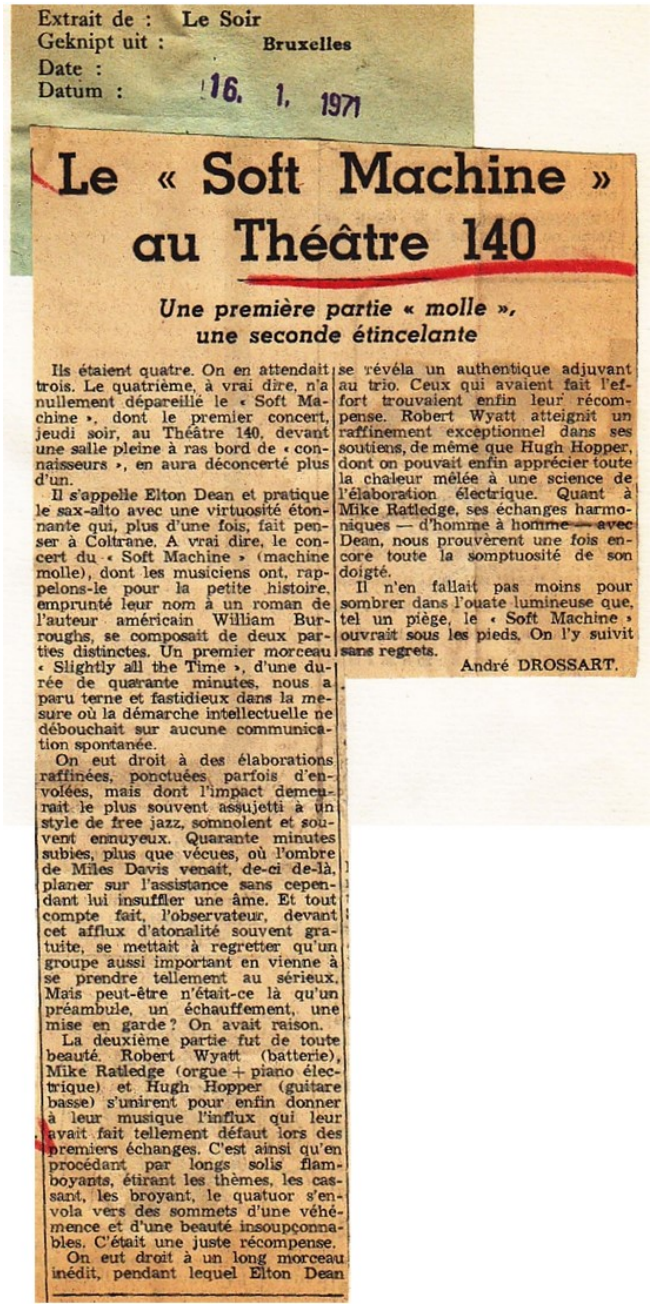
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Le "Soft Machine" au Théâtre 140 - Le Soir - 16 janvier 1971

LE "SOFT MACHINE" AU THÉÂTRE 140



Extrait de : Le Soir
Geknipt uit : Bruxelles
Date :
Datum : 16. 1. 1971

Le « Soft Machine » au Théâtre 140

Une première partie « molle », une seconde étincelante

Ils étaient quatre. On en attendait trois. Le quatrième, à vrai dire, n'a nullement dépareillé le « Soft Machine », dont le premier concert, jeudi soir, au Théâtre 140, devant une salle pleine à ras bord de « connaisseurs », en aura déconcerté plus d'un.

Il s'appelle Elton Dean et pratique le sax-alto avec une virtuosité étonnante qui, plus d'une fois, fait penser à Coltrane. A vrai dire, le concert du « Soft Machine » (machine molle), dont les musiciens ont, rappelons-le pour la petite histoire, emprunté leur nom à un roman de l'auteur américain William Burroughs, se composait de deux parties distinctes. Un premier morceau « Slightly all the Time », d'une durée de quarante minutes, nous a paru terne et fastidieux dans la mesure où la démarche intellectuelle ne débouchait sur aucune communication spontanée.

On eut droit à des élaborations raffinées, ponctuées parfois d'envolées, mais dont l'impact demeurait le plus souvent assujetti à un style de free jazz, somnolent et souvent ennuyeux. Quarante minutes subies, plus que vécues, où l'ombre de Miles Davis venait, de-ci de-là, planer sur l'assistance sans cependant lui insuffler une âme. Et tout compte fait, l'observateur, devant cet afflux d'atonalité souvent gratuite, se mettait à regretter qu'un groupe aussi important en vienne à se prendre tellement au sérieux. Mais peut-être n'était-ce là qu'un préambule, un échauffement, une mise en garde ? On avait raison.

La deuxième partie fut de toute beauté. Robert Wyatt (batterie), Mike Ratledge (orgue + piano électrique) et Hugh Hopper (guitare basse) s'unirent pour enfin donner à leur musique l'influx qui leur avait fait tellement défaut lors des premiers échanges. C'est ainsi qu'en procédant par longs solis flamboyants, étirant les thèmes, les cassant, les broyant, le quatuor s'envola vers des sommets d'une véhémence et d'une beauté insoupçonnables. C'était une juste récompense.

On eut droit à un long morceau inédit, pendant lequel Elton Dean se révéla un authentique adjuvant au trio. Ceux qui avaient fait l'effort trouvaient enfin leur récompense. Robert Wyatt atteignit un raffinement exceptionnel dans ses soutiens, de même que Hugh Hopper, dont on pouvait enfin apprécier toute la chaleur mêlée à une science de l'élaboration électrique. Quant à Mike Ratledge, ses échanges harmoniques — d'homme à homme — avec Dean, nous prouvèrent une fois encore toute la somptuosité de son doigté.

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Le concert du 15/01/1971

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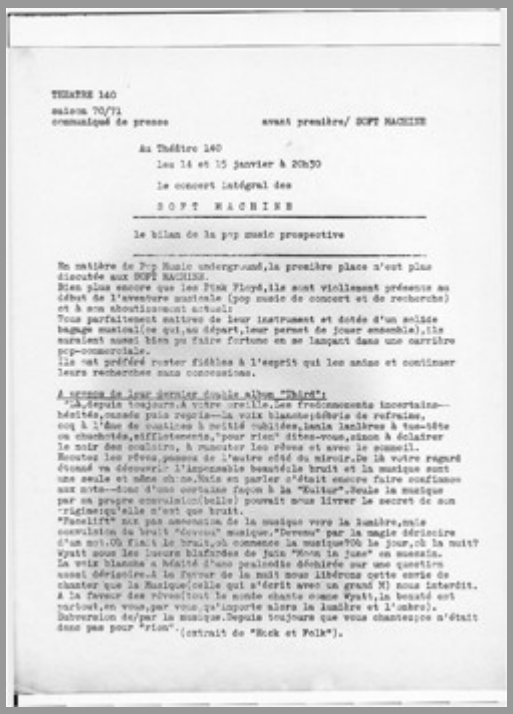
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Soft Machine. Le bilan de la pop music prospective (communiqué de presse) - Théâtre 140 saison 70/71



THEATRE 140
saison 70/71
communiqué de presse avant première/ SOFT MACHINE

Au Théâtre 140
les 14 et 15 janvier à 20h30
le concert intégral des
SOFT MACHINE

le bilan de la pop music prospective

En matière de Pop Music underground, la première place n'est plus discutée aux SOFT MACHINE.

Bien plus encore que les Pink Floyd, ils sont violement présents au début de l'aventure musicale (pop music de concert et de recherche) et à son aboutissement actuel:

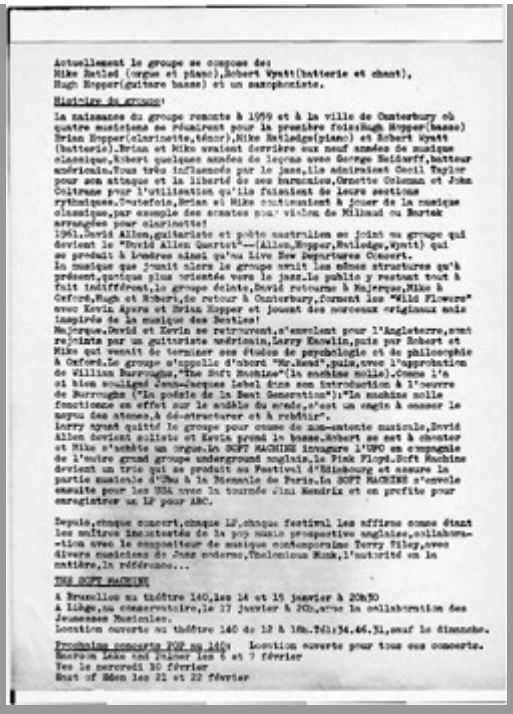
Tous parfaitement maîtres de leur instrument et dotés d'un solide bagage musical (ce qui, au départ, leur permet de jouer ensemble), ils auraient aussi bien pu faire fortune en se lançant dans une carrière pop-commerciale.

Ils ont préféré rester fidèles à l'esprit qui les anime et continuer leurs recherches sans concessions.

A propos de leur dernier double album "Third":

"Là, depuis toujours. A votre oreille. Les fredonnements incertains—hésités, cassés puis repris—la voix blanche ; débris de refrains, coq à l'âne de courtines à moitié oubliées, lanla lanlères à tue-tête ou chuchotes, sifflotements, "pour rien" dites-vous, sinon à éclairer le noir des couloirs, à rameuter les rêves et avec le sommeil. Ecoutez les rêves, passez de l'autre côté du miroir. De là votre regard étonné va découvrir l'impensable beauté: le bruit et la musique sont une seule et même chose. Mais en parler c'était encore faire confiance aux mots—donc d'une certaine façon à la "Kultur". Seule la musique par sa propre convulsion (belle) pouvait nous livrer le secret de son origine: qu'elle n'est que bruit.

"Facelift" non pas ascension de la musique vers la lumière, mais convulsion du bruit "devenu" musique. "Devenu" par la magie



Actuellement le groupe se compose de:
Mike Ratled (orgue et piano),Robert Wyatt(batterie et chant),
Hugh Hopper(guitare basse) et un saxophoniste.

Histoire du groupe:

La naissance du groupe remonte à 1959 et à la ville de Canterbury où quatre musiciens se réunirent pour la premiere fois:Hugh Hopper(basse) Brian Hopper(clarinette,ténor),Mike Ratledge(piano) et Robert Wyatt (batterie).Brian et Mike avaient derrière eux neuf années de musique classique,Robert quelques années de leçons avec George Neidorff,batteur américain.Tous très influencés par le jazz,ils admiraient Cecil Taylor pour son attaque et la liberté de ses harmonies,Ornette Coleman et John Coltrane pour l'utilisation qu'ils faisaient de leurs sections rythmiques.Toutefois,Brian et Mike continuaient à jouer de la musique classique,par exemple des sonates pour violon de Milhaud ou Bartok arrangées pour clarinette!
1961.David Allen,guitariste et poète australien se joint au groupe qui devient le "David Allen Quartet"--(Allen,Hopper,Ratledge,Wyatt) qui se produit à Londres ainsi qu'au Live New Departures Concert.
La musique que jouait alors le groupe avait les mêmes structures qu'à présent,quoique plus orientée vers le jazz.Le public y restant tout à fait indifférent,le groupe éclate,David retourne à Majorque,Mike à Oxford,Hugh et Robert,de retour à Canterbury,forment les "Wild Flowers" avec Kevin Ayers et Brian Hopper et jouent des morceaux originaux mais inspirés de la musique des Beatles!
Majorque.David et Kevin se retrouvent,s'envolent pour l'Angleterre,sont rejoints par un guitariste américain,Larry Knowlin,puis par Robert et Mike qui venait de terminer ses études de psychologie et de philosophie à Oxford.Le groupe s'appelle d'abord "Mr.Head",puis,avec l'approbation de William Burroughs,"The Soft Machine"(la machine molle).Comme l'a si bien souligné Jean-Jacques Lebel dans son introduction à l'oeuvre de Burroughs ("La poésie de la Beat Generation"):"La machine molle fonctionne en effet sur le modèle du monde,c'est un engin à causer le noyau des atomes,à dé-structurer et à robotiser".
Larry Knowl quitte le groupe pour cause de mésentente musicale,David Allen devient soliste et Kevin prend la basse.Robert se met à chanter et Mike s'achète un orgue.Le SOFT MACHINE inaugure l'UFO en compagnie de l'autre grand groupe underground anglais,le Pink Floyd.Soft Machine devient un trio qui se produit au Festival d'Strasbourg et assure la partie musicale d'"Oh à la Biennale de Paris.Le SOFT MACHINE s'envole ensuite pour les USA avec la tournée Jimi Hendrix et en profite pour enregistrer un LP pour ABC.

Depuis,chaque concert,chaque LP,chaque festival les affirme comme étant les maîtres incontestés de la pop music progressive anglaise,collaboration avec le compositeur de musique contemporaine Terry Riley,avec divers musiciens de Jazz moderne,Thelonious Monk,l'autorité en la matière,la référence...

THE SOFT MACHINE

A Bruxelles au théâtre 140,les 14 et 15 janvier à 20h30
A Liège,au conservatoire,le 17 janvier à 20h,avec la collaboration des Jeunesses Musicales.
Location ouverte au théâtre 140 de 12 à 18h.241.34.46.31,sauf le dimanche.

Prochains concerts POP au 140: Location ouverte pour tous ces concerts.
Mouroum Lake and Trainer les 6 et 7 février
Yes le mercredi 30 février
Beat of Eden les 21 et 22 février

> Zoom

dérisoire d'un mot.

Où finit le bruit, où commence la musique? Où le jour, où la nuit? Wyatt sous les lueurs blafardes de juin "Moon in june" en muezzin. La voix blanche a hésité d'une psalmodie déchirée sur une question aussi dérisoire. A la faveur de la nuit nous libérons cette envie de chanter que la Musique (celle qui s'écrit avec un grand M) nous interdit. A la faveur des rêves (tout le monde chante comme Wyatt, la beauté est partout, en vous, par vous, qu'importe alors la lumière et l'ombre). Subversion de/par la musique. Depuis toujours que vous chantez; ce n'était donc pas pour « rien ».

(extrait de "Rock et Folk)

Actuellement le groupe se compose de:

Mike Ratledge (orgue et piano), Robert Wyatt (batterie et chant), Hugh Hopper (guitare basse) et un saxophoniste.

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Les flamants mous - Actuel - N°2 - février 1970

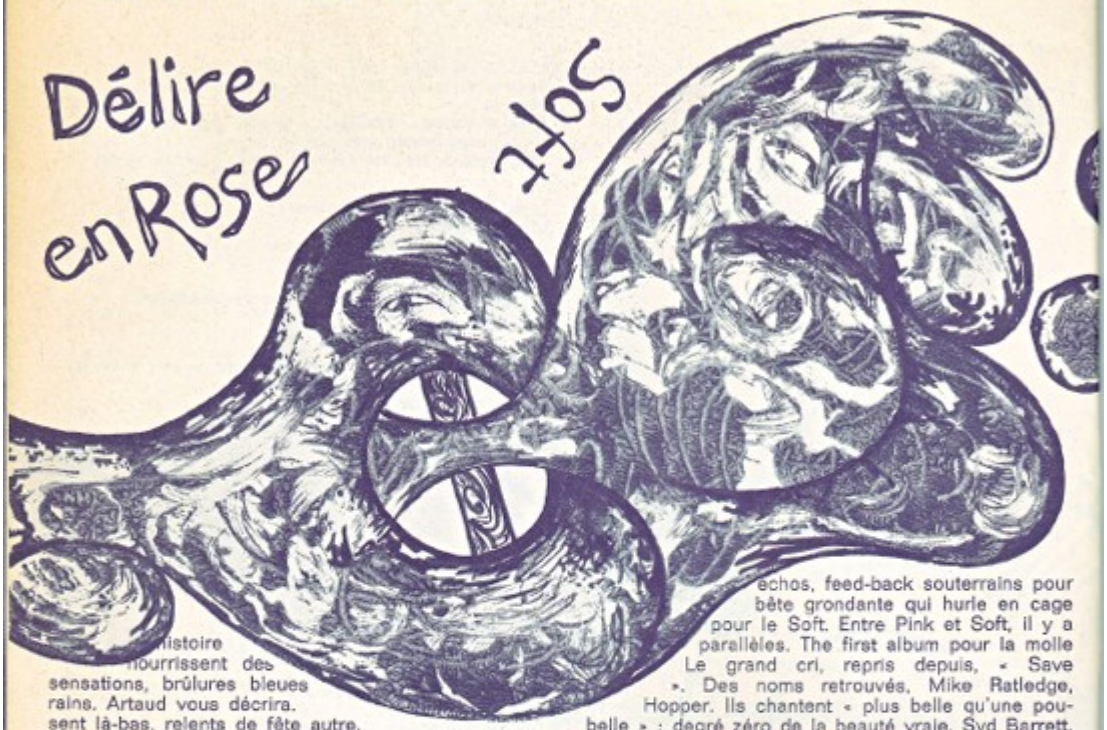
LES FLAMANTS MOUS - DELIRE EN ROSE



... que couvrent les cris fracas guitares amplifiées des voyous aux mains remplies de bruits. Gouffres des ivresses, sons pliés et fracas des violences pour toujours. Une histoire qui continue à se confondre. A cette époque , celle qui remonte dans le fond des temps de nos instants premièrement pop, Pink et Soft s'appelaient Syd Barrett, peut-être aussi Daevid Allen. Kevin Ayers, les autres oubliés... Le temps est long pour les retrouver. Mais là, derrière les murs des cymbales gigantesques, tons vibrants, Robert Wyatt, pêle-mêle, Soft avec Hendrix pour tourner dans l'au-delà de l'Atlantique. Nuits, baptêmes psychédéliques, bulles de couleurs éclatées aux nuits noires de l'U.F.O. (1).

Un nouvel âge... Angoissante pénétrante du son colorié. On emploie le mot de light-show. Puis le Pink et le Soft prennent des routes autres. Le Soft court sottement sur le sable d'or goudronné de la French Riviera: souvenez-vous... à Sant-Tropez, 1967, Soft plus Pablo Picasso, Soft Picasso-Machine dans le "Désir attrapé par la queue". Jean-Jacques Lebel, le même pour la "Fenêtre Rose", la biennale et "Sainte-Geneviève dans le toboggan" Graciela...

les flamants mous



histoire
nourrissent des
sensations, brûlures bleues
rains. Artaud vous décrira.
sent là-bas, relents de fête autre,
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échos, feed-back souterrains pour bête grondante qui hurle en cage pour le Soft. Entre Pink et Soft, il y a parallèles. The first album pour la molle
Le grand cri, repris depuis, « Save ». Des noms retrouvés, Mike Ratledge, Hopper. Ils chantent « plus belle qu'une poubelle » : degré zéro de la beauté vraie. Syd Barrett, qui va quitter le Pink, joue solo trait d'union des contraires Pink et Soft. Réécoutez. Enfoncez vos têtes des lendemains lugubres, dans la tempête des notes d'orgue vers l'éclatement souffreteux de la voix — Wyatt, des Soft. Enfoncez vos têtes des lendemains vides dans la tempête des échos, paysages subconscients vers l'éclatement — angoisse — dandy de la voix — Syd des Pink. Barrett est parti (2).

Il y aura, alors, après, « Saucerful of secrets ». L'histoire ne se confond plus du tout... Soft lâche Floyd, déjà s'écartèle Machine Pink. Penchez encore vos têtes des lendemains sans nom dans les contreplis des sons avortés, des mots caressés jusqu'au sang — scènes noires machines contre charme, tea-party Floyd. Un chemin alors sans détours, un film **More,** une musique de film Pink Floyd, un disque du Pink Floyd More. Pendant ce temps, Album II de la machine. Encore un nom retrouvé, celui qui prend la place de Barett, D. Gilmour. Album II donc, Dada rencontre Coltrane : « Dada was here ». Mais aussi « Pataphysical introduction ». Poésie crapulée, suintement des formes qui s'ouvrent plus grandes pour happer l'air chaud des sons noirs : Le Soft devient

> Zoom (Pdf)



Pink

utrée et lour
s'oppose Pir
de thé cosmi
lait électro
toire précéde
toire, nuage chanvrien contr
du Pink
tance de maté
d'objets à
toujours la ou

Le Soft, lui le
les cuivres
diaires... Un du
Pas d'his La
explosions cre un
Mason, batteur du Pink, reste,
désordre pour mieux se perdre
On pose Schoenberg pour Pink,
Terry Riley pour le Soft Une
dente au travers des contraires
Machine... fin 1969, début 1970. Un triomphe en France. L'histoire veut de nouveau se confondre et pourtant quelle histoire ? Photographie d'un temps affirmé en dépit de toutes les tentatives d'obstruction caractérisée ou de récupération doucereuse. 1969 donc, le Pink Floyd, théâtre des Champs-Elysée, la musique d'un soir. Donc le Soft Machine, au théâtre de la musique et dans les maisons ou la culture fréquente la musique d'autres soirs. La porte s'ouvre : musique en rupture, musique en arrêt, musique en

Soft
rticu-
assiste,
sent par
matériaux
compacts.
qu'importe jus-
s'étire en vagues
niste. Harmonies des
chœur, grand orchestre
nier nom oublié, retrouvé :
siste. L'histoire sépare les Pink
quelle histoire ? Désarticuler, arti-
ire, détruire, poser les formes au hasard
des rencontres, la lumière de nos survies pour l'éclatement de nos remparts, pour l'angoisse en poussière. Les cris/spasmes nous renvoient l'image de nos ténèbres. C'est la Machine molle qui se donne ainsi. Les casernes brûlantes, les harmonies suaves nous renvoient l'image de nos regrets, de notre nostalgie, c'est la machine rose déguisée en flamant. Plus de nom à retrouver, plus d'histoire à confondre. Raconter une histoire, quelle histoire ?

Paul Inconnu.

1. — Il y a trois ans, l'U.F.O. a connu une existence éphémère : Unidentified Flyng Objects, un club vite fermé par la police qui y flairait l'usage d'hallucinogènes. Ce fut le premier point de ralliement de l'underground londonien. Pink Floyd et Soft machine « fréquentent ». Tous viennent de Cambridge où ils se sont connus à l'école d'architecture ou au département de philosophie. Formations parallèles, ce sont en Angleterre les premiers intellectuels du pop.

2. — 1968. Syd Barret — « il était trop génial » — a quitté le Pink Floyd. Il chante seul. Depuis son départ, le Pink Floyd s'oriente vers une musique apparemment plus expérimentale.

3. — 1970. Deux nouveaux disques, les musiques divergent. Soft Machine Third marque l'évolution vers la musique contemporaine et, partiellement, vers certaines formes de free jazz évoquées par l'adjonction des cuivres. Pink Floyd, dans son Atom Heart Mother, fait appel aux chœurs. Au premier abord, le disque rappelle More ; au second, il séduit quand Tchaïkosvsky ne l'emporte pas sur Edgar Varese.

> Zoom (Pdf)

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Soft Machine à Caen + Soft Machine et le reste...ou Soft Machine, le premier pas vers autre chose - Best - N° 22 - mai 1970



SOFT MACHINE A CAEN

Dans le cadre des concerts de pop music organisés''dans sa salle, la Comédie de Caen recevait le 13 mars dernier les Soft Machine. La salle était pleine mais tout le monde était assis car les responsables avaient eu l'intelligence de ne pas vendre plus de place que la salle ne pouvait contenir de spectateurs.

Dans un silence absolu et dans une légère pénombre, les quatre membres du Soft Machine: Hugh Hopper (basse), Mike Rattledge (orgue), Robert Wyatt (batterie) et Elton Dean (saxophone, flûte) prennent possession de la scène et de leurs instruments. Une lumière orange vient baigner la scène donnant une ambiance de douce quiétude... Soudain, la musique éclate ! Tout doucement les musiciens se cherchent puis se trouvent. La fête commence : musique impalpable qui dure longtemps, qui s'éloigne, qui revient, insaisissable...

Le premier morceau durera quarante minutes... et ce sera l'entracte, les applaudissements polis. Le contact est quand même long à s'établir. A leur retour, le style a évolué. Avec un ensemble parfait, admirable, ils communient enfin avec nous. Leur style est toujours très progressiste mais le « beat » est là, net, syncopé! palpable... C'est en même temps un régal et une démonstration : « Vous voyez, nous jouons une musique froide mais lorsque nous le voulons, nous pouvons vous satisfaire pleinement, au-delà même de vos espérances. Mais c'est vous qui êtes en retard, pas nous... ». Et la Machine repart dans l'espace vers son domaine : la musique cosmique.

Le message a été compris semble-t-il. Les spectateurs-auditeurs se sont habitués à leur « sound ». La Machine Molle bien huilée avance doucement mais sûrement à pas feutrés vers un but fuyant. Quand l'atteindront-ils ? Jamais ! La progression est là, visible, mais la ligne d'arrivée recule au fur et à mesure (une pour rien) que la Machine se déplace. .

Bercés, violés, arrachés à leurs préoccupations quotidiennes, les spectateurs réagissent comme dans un rêve. Sans effets stromboscopiques, sans l'usage d'aucun stupéfiant, le voyage aventureux commence emmené par le saxophone impersonnel d'Elton Dean. Et

l'on s'étonne qu'à peine commencé le voyage s'achève déjà. Les Soft Machine ont déjà disparu. Il faut applaudir pendant cinq minutes pour qu'ils reviennent jouer un peu comme à regret. Il faudra recommencer à applaudir cette fois pendant dix longues minutes... Ils rejouent comme des professionnels sans âme, mais le public est satisfait. Il les laisse partir.

Un grand succès assurément. Pour la pop music, pour Caen, pour les Soft Machine et pour le public, qui manifestement a plus applaudi parce que les Soft Machine font grand bruit actuellement que par amour sincère. Le style du groupe est à la pop music ce que le « free » est au jazz. Le public n'est pas toujours prêt à cela. C'est peut-être finalement rassurant. Il ne fait pas de doute que c'est très certainement la musique de demain mais si cela est, il faut espérer que ce style ne soit pas le seul à prospérer. Dans un monde qui se déshumanise, on ne peut qu'appréhender une musique qui serait uniquement mécanique, uniquement froide... Il faut que les Soft Machine soient là demain, avec le Pink Floyd, pour que l'évolution se poursuive, mais il ne faut pas qu'ils soient là seuls... Il serait utopique de croire qu'ils sont les seuls à détenir la clé de l'évolution musicale. Ils y contribuent tout comme le Chicago, les Beatles ou le Led Zeppelin. Il serait bon que cela reste présent à notre esprit.

Roland GODEFROY, (Corresp. régional en Normandie.)

SOFT MACHINE ET LE RESTE...
ou SOFT MACHINE,
LE PREMIER PAS VERS AUTRE CHOSE

Les Soft Machine viennent d'achever leur deuxième tournée en France. Ils aiment bien la France et la France les aime bien. Tant mieux ! On a même fait du groupe — et ce n'est pas sans danger — « l'objet de la mode ». Pourquoi ? Qu'ont donc de particulier ces Soft Machine dont beaucoup ne prononcent le nom qu'avec une admiration passionnée ?

Je les ai vus récemment à Nantes où - fait très rare dans leur carrière — ils ont dû revenir sur scène après avoir été rappelés par un public à l'enthousiasme bien sympathique, même si parfois un peu indiscipliné. (Il faut savoir discerner les moments de repos, entre les morceaux, des moments de recueillement, pendant les morceaux... !) La première chose que l'on dit — ou que l'on devrait dire — en sortant d'un concert du Soft Machine, c'est le choc émotionnel que crée la beauté de leur musique. Cette musique est élaborée très intellectuellement, mais aussi très intelligemment. (Ce n'est pas forcément la même chose.) Elle n'est pas forme pure. Et c'est là qu'est le « miracle Soft Machine » : cette approche intellectuelle, loin d'entraver l'impact du choc émotionnel, le favorise, — sans quoi il n'y aurait pas de beauté. Je ne vais pas chercher à analyser cette musique, ce serait trop complexe ! Essayez : vous resterez ébahis ne sachant pas que dire, tellement c'est beau, ou alors les réflexions se bousculeront dans votre cerveau et il vous faudrait écrire un bouquin entier ! (De toutes façons, il vaut mieux les écouter !)

Ce soir-là à Nantes ils étaient accompagnés, comme depuis plusieurs mois, par Lyn Dobson (Elton Dean, lui, n'était pas là). Lyn Dobson est un multi-instrumentiste très talentueux qui a joué, entre autres, avec Manfred Mann, et a participé à l'enregistrement du premier L.P. de Humble Pie. Avec Soft Machine il joue de l'alto, du ténor, de la' flûte, de l'harmonica (!), et il chante. C'est certainement à l'alto et à la flûte qu'il s'intègre le mieux à la musique du Soft Machine et leur apporte vraiment quelque chose.

Inutile de présenter les autres « rouages » de la Machine... Le fait important c'est qu'au cours de cette nouvelle tournée ils ont, si besoin était, refait la preuve qu'ils étaient les seuls peut-être, avec le Pink Floyd, à créer quelque chose d'autre, de nouveau, de profondément différent. Hervé Muller écrivait récemment (BEST n° 18), dans un article sur Chicago Transit Authority, que s'il y avait à chercher quelque part un exemple de la fameuse synthèse « rock-jazz », les Soft Machine étaient peut-être le meilleur que l'on puisse trouver. De toutes façons, il ne sont pas que «ça», et ils vont beaucoup plus loin que tous les groupes américains, que l'on nous annonce tout à tour comme « les meilleurs du monde », (pourquoi pas champions du monde pendant qu'on y est?), tels Blood Sweat

and Tears, Chicago, Flock...

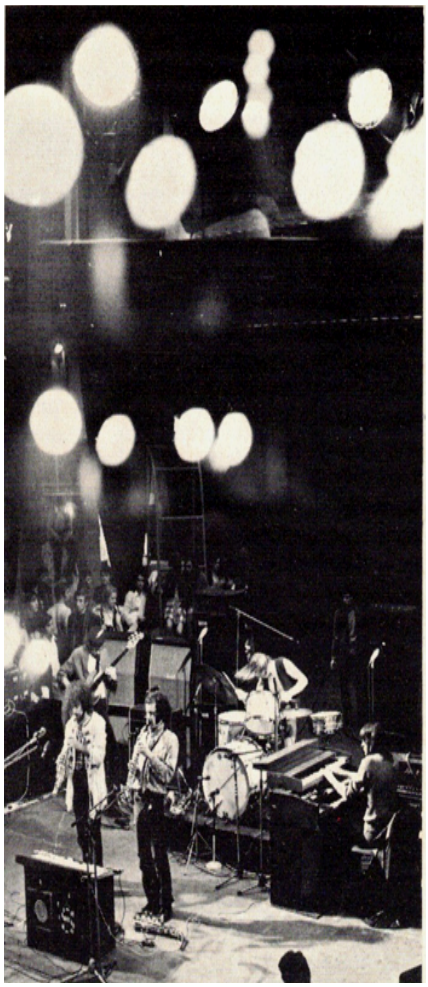


Photo : Jacques Bernard

Car les Soft Machine ont transcendé toutes leurs influences (qui sont peut-être toutes les influences), et ils sont parvenus à un tout homogène. Ce n'est pas (comme pour B.S.T., C.T.A., Flock) une juxtaposition, c'est une addition d'influences ; ceci dans la mesure où l'on peut dire que le résultat forme un tout indécomposable, indivisible, dans lequel on ne discerne que difficilement les influences initiales. Il y avait plusieurs éléments au départ, il y a un tout à l'arrivée. B.S.T.. Chicago, Flock, c'est du jazz et du rock. Soft Machine ce n'est ni l'un ni l'autre, c'est une somme. Chez les trois groupes américains il est possible de faire (en gros) la séparation entre l'élément jazz et l'élément rock (les deux termes pris dans leur sens le plus large). Chicago, par exemple : leur musique est avant tout une musique « rock », assez traditionnelle, (très structurée cependant) enrichie de cuivres qui leur donnent un aspect «jazz». Il en est de même de B.S.T., plus jazz pourtant — dans son esprit comme dans sa forme. De toutes façons il n'y a pas là véritable synthèse (ou alors elle est assez superficielle).

Les Soft Machine ont réalisé une synthèse beaucoup plus profonde, au niveau de l'essence même de la musique. Et cette synthèse est d'autant plus originale qu'elle n'est pas le but de leur recherche (contrairement à B.S.T., peut-être) mais son fruit. Le but des Soft Machine c'est la musique tout simplement. S'ils ont pu aller plus loin c'est qu'ils sont avant tout des compositeurs. Leur musique est construite du début à la fin, et les parties improvisées font partie de cette construction. (Contrairement au jazz pur où elles sont en général le prétexte du morceau). Le jazz ne mourra pas, le « rock », sous différentes formes, continuera son chemin. Les Soft Machine ne remplacent rien, ils sont le premier pas vers autre chose. Et nombreux, il faut l'espérer, seront ceux qui les suivront; là est l'avenir.de cette passionnante chose appelée « popular music ».

Pour le moment attendons la sortie du troisième L.P. de la fabuleuse Machine, prévue aux alentours de juillet pour la France, et — surprenante mais réjouissante nouvelle — du premier L.P. en solo de leur drummer Robert Wyatt... ! Quand on sait quel arrangeur-compositeur, et quel multi-instrumentiste assez incroyable il est... ça promet ! (Il peut jouer piano, violon, trompette, violoncelle, basse, guitare et, bien sûr — et comment ! — batterie...!) Ces Soft Machine, quand même !...

Olivier BULARD, (Corresp. régional en Loire-Atlantique.)

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Soft Machine - machine molle qui tourne rond - Pop Music - N° 12 - 18 juin 1970



Hautbois, Chalumeaux, Cervelas, Grande Basse, Flageolet, Flûtes traversières, Grande Flûte, Petit Basson, Grand Basson, Triple Basson, Petits Cornets noirs, Cornets blancs aigus, Cors, Saquebutes, Trombones, Oliphons verts, Galoubets, Cornemuses, Bombardes, Timbales, Tambours, Grosse caisse, Grandes orgues.

Telle est la composition de l'orchestre (1) de la grande Machine Molle qui a pris son nom à William Burroughs (avec sa bénédiction) , un de ses titres (« Pataphisical Introduction) à Jarry et tout le reste à personne, le Machine Molle qui va ce soir, Mesdames, Mesdemoiselles et Messieurs faire passer à la trappe ce qui peut vous rester dans le crâne de mélodies fuligineuses, d'harmonies cra-cra et de rythmes nolassounets : Soft Machine.

Mais de quoi s'agit-il ?

Tout est parti de Canterbury (?) au moment où les Beatles et les Rolling Stones commençaient à faire oublier le magma qui les avait précédé, aux jeunes anglais, puis ça devient un peu compliqué, ils étaient plusieurs et ils jouaient de la musique pas comme les autres et qui pourtant, sans aucun doute, était de la musique populaire, enfin, de la Pop Music. il y en avait un qui était tailleur de pierre mais aussi batteur et chanteur, mais surtout musicien, c'était Robert Wyatt. Un autre était philosophe, mais aussi organiste, mais surtout musicien, c'était Michaël Ratledge.

Un autre encore était poète, Australien, guitariste à la fois, mais surtout musicien, c'était Daevid Allen. Il y avait aussi un bassiste, Hugh Hopper qui disparut mystérieusement puisqu'en-suite ce fut Kevin Ayers, surtout des musiciens.

SOFT MACHINE



machine molle qui tourne rond

Tout ce joli monde débarqua à Londres et fit entendre des sons pas comme ceux du voisin dans un lieu depuis célèbre, à l'époque privilégié, chevaleresque et hautement romantique qui s'appelait Ufo, pour des raisons qui ne m'ont jamais parues très claires, et que les Français appellent Youfo.

Quelques miracles de plus et un 45 tours au titre impossible : L'Amour Fait De La Jolie Musique « Love iMakes Sweet Music » éparpillait de part le monde le nom : Soft Machine.

Comme c'est de plus en plus compliqué on peut dire que Kevin et Daevid sont allés planter leurs propres fleurs dans leurs propres jardins, que Hugh Hopper a retrouvé sa basse et que la formule Mike + Robert + Hugh = Soft Machine est vérifiée. Ou presque.

Est-il facile de faire de la «Pop Music» ? Demandez-le à la Machine Molle. Elle vous dira que c'est facile d'aimer la musique quand on y croit, de voyager, de manger, de dormir n'importe comment, n'importe où quand on est musicien, un peu moins facile quand le public attend d'un orchestre de danse genre perroquet à tubes, et peut être dans ce curieux métier, il est extrêmement utile d'avoir un peu trop de talent. Et qu'au bout de trois années de voyages de par le monde, de deux disques 30 cm et de beaucoup de mal pour faire connaître ces sons nouveaux, au moment même où tout va bien, la Machine est encore en train de se transformer. Et pourtant si un groupe avait droit au label, à l'appellation contrôlée « Pop Music », c'était bien Soft Machine.

Pas vraiment influencé par qui que ce soit — ou influencé par tout le monde — une musique totalement différente, nouvelle dans le cadre de ce que les Américains continuent avec bon sens à appeler « Rock ». Une musique sortie d'un orgue, d'une basse électrique et d'une batterie.

Mais voilà que la Machine aime aussi le Jazz, se souvient de « Wild Flower », la fleur sauvage, leur premier groupe de Canterbury. Pas pour faire du mauvais Jazz amalgamé à du mauvais Rock. Simplement pour engager quatre des meilleurs « souffleurs » Anglais, quatre jeunes fous qui n'ont pas peur des étiquettes et qui ne pensent pas que le mot « swing » soit une grossièreté.

Mark Charig c'est le flugelhorniste, Elton Dean et Lynne Dobson se partagent les saxophones, Nick Evans garde pour lui un des plus beaux sons de trombone du monde. Et la Machine a changé, la Machine va vous surprendre, vous prendre dans les infinis replis de cette musique toute neuve, de cette musique qui a le plus de chance de devenir la musique tout court. Parce qu'elle reste de la musique qu'on peut écouter sans lire la partition pour comprendre ce qui se passe, mais de la musique qu'on peut écouter toujours pour redécouvrir encore et encore le mystère de la Machine Molle. Soft Machine.

Pierre LATTES

(1) Chez Ubu en tout cas.

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Les Soft Machine au Petit-Quevilly - Paris Normandie - 2, 4 et 7 mars 1970



Jeudi 5 mars 1970

Le Petit-Quevilly,
Centre culturel Maxime Gorki,

Concert rock, 20h30

Paris-Normandie, lundi 2 mars 1970

Les Soft Machine jeudi soir au Centre Maxime-Gorki.

On en parle déjà beaucoup : les Soft machine seront au Centre Maxime-Gorki, jeudi prochain à 20 h. 30.

Les Soft-Machine ont conquis leur popularité avec une évidente qualité. Basée sur un noyau central, composé d'une batterie, d'un orgue, et d'une guitare qui a fait le succès du groupe cet ensemble peut s'adjoindre une section cuivre avec saxo-trombone et flugelhorn. Cela lui donne des couleurs nouvelles.

Mais la renommée des Soft Machine est désormais bien établie.

Ce groupe entend prouver que la " pop music " peut être quelque chose de valable, qu'on peut faire des recherches, y insérer le jazz et que la musique populaire, pour parler français, peut être de nos jours aussi riche et aussi agréable qu'elle le fut au temps de la valse et de la polka viennoises, pour ne citer que cet exemple.

Mais, il est certain que depuis ce temps, la technique a bien changé...

Pour ce concert exceptionnel, le retrait des places commence le mardi 3 mars, chaque jour de 16 à 19 heures, au centre Maxime-Gorki, rue Joseph-Lebas, près de l'avenue de Caen, à Petit-Quevilly, tél. 72 55-67.

Paris-Normandie, mercredi 4 mars 1970

Jeudi soir à 20 h 30

Les Soft Machine

Les Soft Machine, qui ont participé, mardi, à l'émission " Campus " donnent demain soir (jeudi), Petit-Quevilly : les Soft Machine Gorki, un unique concert dans la région. [sic]

Basé sur un trio orgue, batterie, guitare, le groupe britannique s'est récemment adjoint une section cuivres qui colorent notablement leurs interprétations. On les découvrira demain soir dans cette nouvelle formation.

Mais les retardataires n'auront pas à faire le déplacement de nelles " *[sic]* que Jean-Pierre Gros, ani- joueront *[sic]* joueront à bureaux fermés : il n'y a déjà plus une place de libre...

Paris-Normandie, samedi 7 mars 1970

COMPTE RENDU

Les Soft Machine Une stupéfiante révélation

Sans doute n'est-ce pas de la " pop music " dans le sens où on l'entend communément, mais une chose est certaine : ce que fait la " soft machine " est bel et bien de la musique.

Cet étrange quatuor qui joue devant un mur de baffles, ne se contente de produire généreusement des décibels : cette musique, très élaborée, va parfois très loin dans la recherche, dépasse les sentiers battus et adresse, par-delà un système sans cesse remis en cause, un message percutant, parfois étrange, jamais indifférent.

Un orgue – doublé de quelques octaves de piano – une guitare basse et une batterie auxquels s'est adjoint un quatrième musicien qui utilise plusieurs saxos ou bien une flûte : le quatuor jusque-là n'est pas très original. Pourtant, en allant plus loin, en défrichant des terrains peu courus, " la soft machine " crée une matière qu'on a vite fait de croire nouvelle : elle ose une atonalité souvent agressive, jamais gratuite.

On pense parfois à quelque sorcellerie : les recherches sonores qu'a tenté la soft machine, débouchant parfois sur des résultats impressionnants, envoûtant. Usant à la fois des possibilités des graves et des affolements des aigus – rendus par une clarinette folle – les musiciens mettent leurs auditeurs en condition tout en conservant un flegme très britannique.

Seul le batteur qui réalise un numéro sportif stupéfiant et exténuant est obligé à de spectaculaires démonstrations.

Le public qui débordait de partout dans le centre culturel Maxime-Gorki, a paru ébahi par cette musique. Cela n'a pas " chauffé " dur mais la soft machine ne semble pas vouloir ce résultat. Cette musique – qui s'apparente plus à la musique de chambre qu'au jazz – vise plus loin. Sur une apparence de facilité, ils explorent assez loin les possibilités de leur formation. Rien dans leurs compositions ne semble laissé au hasard.

On subit la soft machine, ses trouvailles crispantes, ses échappements fous, son travail en profondeur. La " machine " nous balance d'un extrême à l'autre, recréant presque un langage, sinon nouveau, du moins rénové. Si ses recherches peuvent se comparer dans certains cas à celle du free jazz, elles rejoignent à certains moments celles des compositeurs contemporains.

C'est pourquoi il convient de considérer ce travail avec un certain respect : d'autant que le résultat sort nettement de l'ordinaire.

Roger Balavoine.

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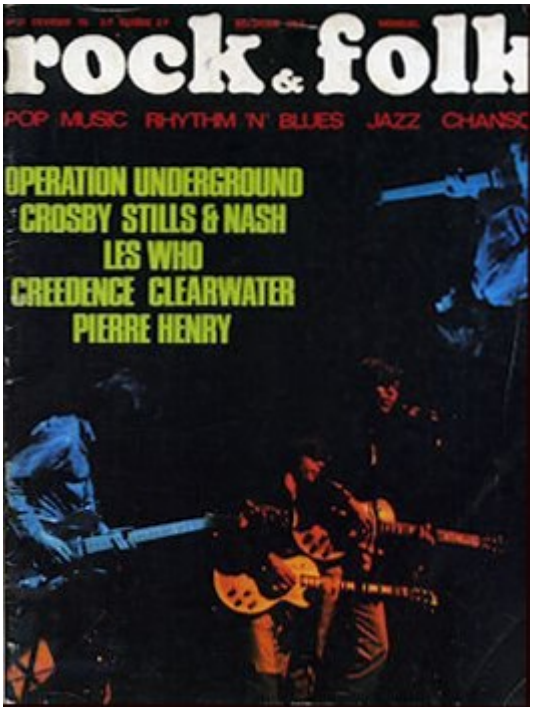
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Aventure Pop - Rock & Folk - N° 37 - février 1970



AVEN
TURE
POP

AVENTURE POP

A travers le voile fin des double-rideaux, la lueur d'un jour mourant pénètre dans la pièce, donnant un air vaguement inquiétant, creux d'ombres et taches de lumière, à la décoration pseudo-chinoise de l'endroit. Agité par un souffle imperceptible venu de la fenêtre, le lustre en papier au ventre enflé tourne doucement sur lui-même, changeant de couleur de minute en minute, s'assombrissant au même rythme rapide que le ciel de Provence. Le jeune homme perd pied et se regarde faire avec le peu d'attention qui lui reste, observant sa propre chute avec un détachement engourdi et heureux, comme il le ferait de celle d'un étranger. Paresseusement, il se laisse glisser dans le tiède engourdissement, et les éclairs de volonté qui secouent son esprit ne peuvent empêcher son corps de trouver un plaisir extraordinaire dans cette descente feutrée vers l'inconscience. De temps à autre, mais de plus en plus sporadiquement, sa main, dans un faible battement, agrippe la soie lisse du couvre-lit, sa paupière se soulève pour se refermer aussitôt sur un œil blessé par la lumière. Il va sombrer, enfin, quand un long cri de cuivre déchire le silence et le fait sursauter. Souffle bloqué, il se crispe et écoute, soulevé sur un coude. Mais, de nouveau, il n'y a plus que la familière rumeur de la ville qui monte vers lui, confuse, lointaine, et cette torpeur un instant déchirée par ce qui n'a peut-être été que l'ébauche d'un cauchemar. Encore, sa joue effleure la soie tiède, sa tête pèse comme une pierre sur le traversin. Une brève chute hachée. Et puis, comme des vertiges, les cris reprennent bientôt, et il sait qu'il n'a pas rêvé. Ils éclatent cette fois comme des fanfares à ses oreilles, fracassent le silence, roulent et tournoient entre les murs, s'enflent jusqu'au paroxysme avant de s'étouffer dans les tentures poussiéreuses, comme un air de fête morte qui s'éteint dans les ors et l'odeur des fleurs fanées. Mais cette fête-ci n'est pas morte, et ces cris qui sont les notes d'une musique instructurée, inarticulée, renaissent sans cesse, déferlent en cascades éclatantes, deux, trois voix enlacées dans leurs incohérences, tour à tour graves et criardes. Trois sons enchevêtrés et cependant distincts qui se bousculent, serrés, avides d'espace, hors de poitrines inconnues et d'instruments cachés, ébranlant de leur souffle furieux le piteux Jericho néonisé qui dresse sa façade aux abords de la Canebière.

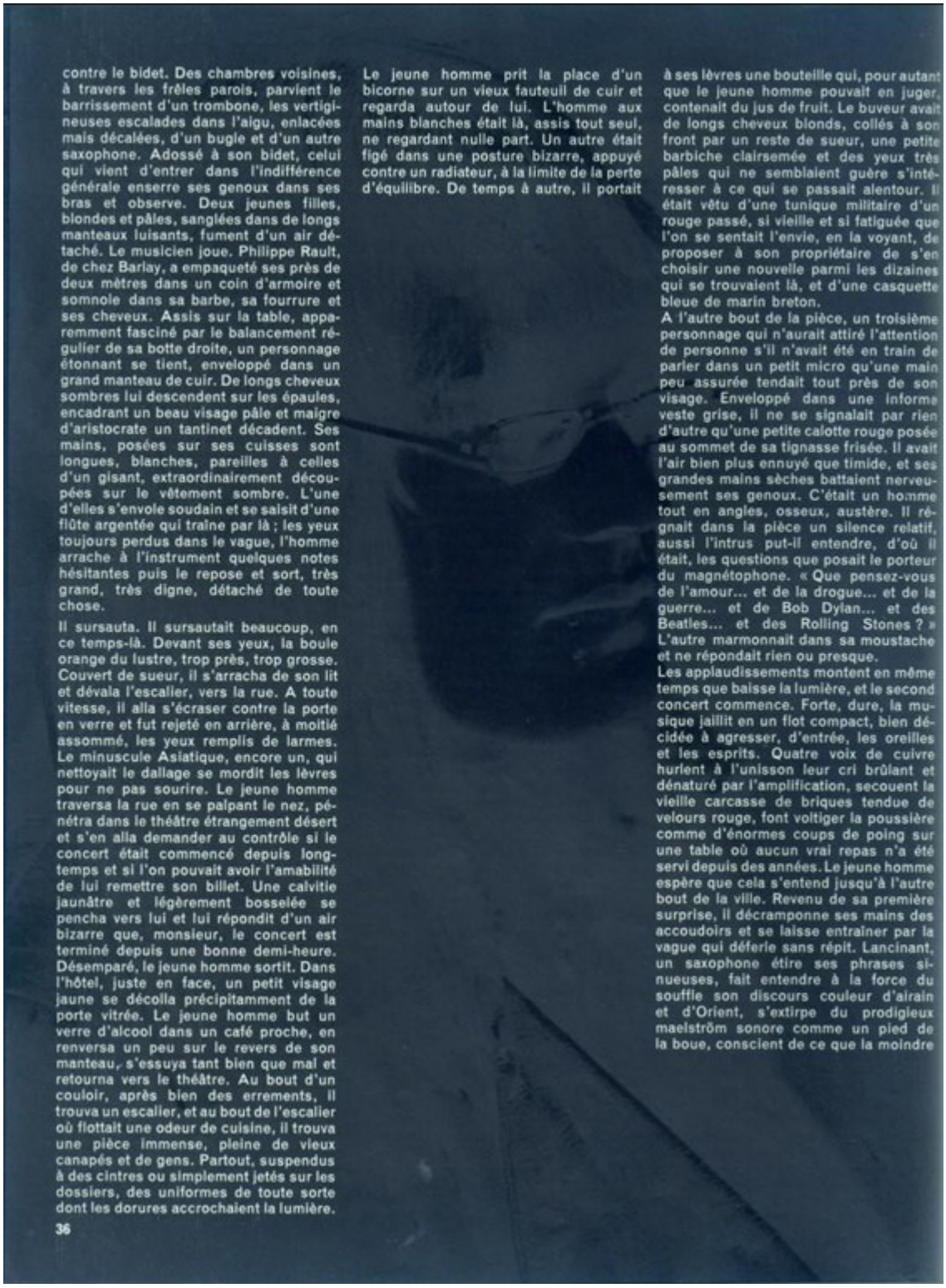
Un sourire aux lèvres, le jeune homme savoure un instant l'éblouissante cacophonie, puis il jette les bras devant lui et se redresse brusquement pour tomber pile dans ses bottes. D'un doigt, il repousse le rideau. Il reste un peu de soleil dans la rue, qui éclaire de biais la façade



hideusement barbouillée de mauve et de jaune d'un théâtre devant lequel se presse une foule en cheveux. Le rideau retombe, le jeune homme frotte ses yeux de ses poings, plonge son visage dans la faïence du lavabo. Il sort de sa chambre, en prenant bien soin de remettre en place la poignée de la porte qui lui est restée dans la main. Trois mètres de pauvre moquette plus tard, il débouche dans un hall minuscule où s'entassent quelques hommes aux mines effarées qui courbent l'échine sous la mitraillade sonore et tournent leurs yeux blancs dans tous les sens pour tenter de repérer l'origine de cette ahurissante tourmente. Derrière le bureau de la réception, un Asiatique efflanqué tente vaillamment de conserver l'air impénétrable de rigueur, mais le sourire qu'il laisse errer sur ses lèvres molles prend de plus en plus la forme d'un accent circonflexe à mesure que s'accroît le vacarme et que, de façon inversement proportionnelle, s'effrite sa belle sérénité. C'est, dans une saisissante reconstitution, l'expression qu'arboraient sur leur figure les patrons d'hôtels de Pompéi le jour où...

Une fois poussée la porte, tout au fond du couloir, le jeune homme reçoit en pleine face le souffle d'un saxophone et le spectacle d'une tignasse assise à même le plancher qui débite à perdre haleine de monotones successions de gammes. Autour de lui, par terre, sur le lit, sur la chaise, sur la table, un petit cénacle peu attentif se livre à diverses occupations, principalement lecture. Le jeune homme referme la porte, doucement, et s'installe à la seule place libre,

> Zoom



contre le bidet. Des chambres voisines, à travers les frêles parois, parvient le barrissement d'un trombone, les vertigineuses escalades dans l'aigu, enlacées mais décalées, d'un bugle et d'un autre saxophone. Adossé à son bidet, celui qui vient d'entrer dans l'indifférence générale enserre ses genoux dans ses bras et observe. Deux jeunes filles, blondes et pâles, sanglées dans de longs manteaux luisants, fument d'un air détaché. Le musicien joue. Philippe Rault, de chez Barlay, a empaqueté ses près de deux mètres dans un coin d'armoire et somnole dans sa barbe, sa fourrure et ses cheveux. Assis sur la table, apparemment fasciné par le balancement régulier de sa botte droite, un personnage étonnant se tient, enveloppé dans un grand manteau de cuir. De longs cheveux sombres lui descendent sur les épaules, encadrant un beau visage pâle et maigre d'aristocrate un tantinet décadent. Ses mains, posées sur ses cuisses sont longues, blanches, pareilles à celles d'un gisant, extraordinairement découpées sur le vêtement sombre. L'une d'elles s'envole soudain et se saisit d'une flûte argentée qui traîne par là ; les yeux toujours perdus dans le vague, l'homme arrache à l'instrument quelques notes hésitantes puis le repose et sort, très grand, très digne, détaché de toute chose.

Il sursauta. Il sursautait beaucoup, en ce temps-là. Devant ses yeux, la boule orange du lustre, trop près, trop grosse. Couvert de sueur, il s'arracha de son lit et dévala l'escalier, vers la rue. A toute vitesse, il alla s'écraser contre la porte en verre et fut rejeté en arrière, à moitié assommé, les yeux remplis de larmes. Le minuscule Asiatique, encore un, qui nettoyait le dallage se mordit les lèvres pour ne pas sourire. Le jeune homme traversa la rue en se palpant le nez, pénétra dans le théâtre étrangement désert et s'en alla demander au contrôle si le concert était commencé depuis longtemps et si l'on pouvait avoir l'amabilité de lui remettre son billet. Une calvitie jaunâtre et légèrement bosselée se pencha vers lui et lui répondit d'un air bizarre que, monsieur, le concert est terminé depuis une bonne demi-heure. Désemparé, le jeune homme sortit. Dans l'hôtel, juste en face, un petit visage jaune se décolla précipitamment de la porte vitrée. Le jeune homme but un verre d'alcool dans un café proche, en renversa un peu sur le revers de son manteau, s'essuya tant bien que mal et retourna vers le théâtre. Au bout d'un couloir, après bien des errements, il trouva un escalier, et au bout de l'escalier où flottait une odeur de cuisine, il trouva une pièce immense, pleine de vieux canapés et de gens. Partout, suspendus à des cintres ou simplement jetés sur les dossiers, des uniformes de toute sorte dont les dorures accrochaient la lumière.

Le jeune homme prit la place d'un bicorne sur un vieux fauteuil de cuir et regarda autour de lui. L'homme aux mains blanches était là, assis tout seul, ne regardant nulle part. Un autre était figé dans une posture bizarre, appuyé contre un radiateur, à la limite de la perte d'équilibre. De temps à autre, il portait à ses lèvres une bouteille qui, pour autant que le jeune homme pouvait en juger, contenait du jus de fruit. Le buveur avait de longs cheveux blonds, collés à son front par un reste de sueur, une petite barbiche clairsemée et des yeux très pâles qui ne semblaient guère s'intéresser à ce qui se passait alentour. Il était vêtu d'une tunique militaire d'un rouge passé, si vieille et si fatiguée que l'on se sentait l'envie, en la voyant, de proposer à son propriétaire de s'en choisir une nouvelle parmi les dizaines qui se trouvaient là, et d'une casquette bleue de marin breton.

A l'autre bout de la pièce, un troisième personnage qui n'aurait attiré l'attention de personne s'il n'avait été en train de parler dans un petit micro qu'une main peu assurée tendait tout près de son visage. Enveloppé dans une informe veste grise, il ne se signalait par rien d'autre qu'une petite calotte rouge posée au sommet de sa tignasse frisée. Il avait l'air bien plus ennuyé que timide, et ses grandes mains sèches battaient nerveusement ses genoux. C'était un homme tout en angles, osseux, austère. Il régnait dans la pièce un silence relatif, aussi l'intrus put-il entendre, d'où il était, les questions que posait le porteur du magnétophone. « Que pensez-vous de l'amour... et de la drogue... et de la guerre... et de Bob Dylan... et des Beatles... et des Rolling Stones ? » L'autre marmonnait dans sa moustache et ne répondait rien ou presque.

Les applaudissements montent en même temps que baisse la lumière, et le second concert commence. Forte, dure, la musique jaillit en un flot compact, bien décidée à agresser, d'entrée, les oreilles et les esprits. Quatre voix de cuivre hurlent à l'unisson leur cri brûlant et dénaturé par l'amplification, secouent la vieille carcasse de briques tendue de velours rouge, font voltiger la poussière comme d'énormes coups de poing sur une table où aucun vrai repas n'a été servi depuis des années. Le jeune homme espère que cela s'entend jusqu'à l'autre bout de la ville. Revenu de sa première surprise, il décramponne ses mains des accoudoirs et se laisse entraîner par la vague qui déferle sans répit. Lancinant, un saxophone étire ses phrases sinueuses, fait entendre à la force du souffle son discours couleur d'airain et d'Orient, s'extirpe du prodigieux maelström sonore comme un pied de la boue, conscient de ce que la moindre

> Zoom



faiblesse, la plus minime baisse de tension lui cassera les ailes et le refera plonger dans la tourmente qu'il survole à présent. L'homme secoue la tête et rugit, ancré au plancher de toute sa pesanteur, assis presque sur ses talons. A bout de souffle ou d'idées, enfin, un long moment plus tard, il cède et se retire en même temps que derrière lui se dessine une brève accalmie, quasi-silence traversé par une ligne mélodique aigrelette, ponctué par le cliquetis minuscule et dérisoire d'une baguette sur le haut d'une cymbale. Et puis l'homme à la casquette de marin, torse nu à présent, penche un peu la tête en avant et commence à frapper, de plus en plus vite, la peau de ses tambours, jusqu'à ce que l'œil ne puisse plus percevoir autre chose que le mouvement des cheveux blonds qui voltigent, frappés par des objets devenus invisibles mais extraordinairement bruyants. Un à un, avec une précision remarquable, les autres instruments viennent greffer leur propre son sur celui des tambours, et le climat redevient ce qu'il était un instant auparavant, dur, métallique, secoué de terrifiants fracas et de splendides excès, orgie dont la démence n'est qu'apparente tant les sept sorciers sont maîtres des brasiers qu'ils allument à plaisir, tant ils savent, à chaque concert (le jeune homme, entièrement enthousiasmé par ces musiciens, ira par la suite les écouter deux fois encore, dans d'autres villes), faire renaître leur musique, la créer et non pas la recréer. Brûlés par une sorte de flamme étonnamment intacte après des années et des années de stérile croisade, les trois membres de base du groupe connaissent encore, soir après soir, théâtre de province après maison de la culture, cette rage de jouer leur musique et de l'imposer partout où ils passent qui n'appartient en général qu'aux débutants et aux illuminés.

Dérapant dangereusement sur les claviers, les longues mains blanches que le jeune homme a tant regardées dans la chambre d'hôtel plaquent de stridents accords. Hiératique, son manteau de cuir frôlant le plancher, leur propriétaire se lance à corps perdu (à âme perdue, car son corps n'exprime strictement rien) dans une improvisation suraiguë, tirant de son instrument des sonorités comme on n'en entendit jamais auparavant. Et l'émotion naît, non pas seulement du rythme ou de l'harmonie, mais d'une autre chose bien plus indéfinissable, une sorte d'angoisse mordante ressentie tout à coup, quand cette musique hérissée, écorchée, implacable, chemine au plus profond du corps et de l'esprit. Chacun de ses éclats, dès lors, fouaille ; chacune de ses arrêtes vives déchire ; et elle est ressentie dans son ensemble, car elle fait alors partie intégrante de celui qui l'écoute, comme si elle naissait en lui, quelque part, profond. A moins que ce ne soit le spectateur qui fasse partie de la musique. Les pistes se brouillent, les schémas disparaissent, transcendés par une musique et des musiciens qui n'en manquent pourtant pas. Rien ne saurait clairement expliquer, songe le jeune homme, l'extraordinaire impact de cet art, tellement structuré dans sa lettre, tellement insaisissable dans son esprit. Les rêves perdent toujours de leur merveilleux quand ils sont revécus les yeux ouverts. Le rêve de ces trois hommes est intact et son fantastique susceptible d'être communiqué. Quelle alchimie ? Quel secret ? Quel pays ? Une ville, certainement, et grande, inhumaine, terrifiante dévoreuse. Et dans cette ville, trois petits bonshommes se promènent, voient ce qui est et non ce qu'ils voudraient voir, ajustent leurs rêves au décor fou que se sont donnés les hommes dans leur mégalomanie et réussissent à lui insuffler, l'espace de quelques notes de musique, quelque chose qui ressemble à un frisson de vie sous une carapace de béton.

« L'obscurité pèse sur la ville d'asphalte fumant, écrase les châssis des fenêtres, les réclames, les cheminées, les ventilateurs, les réservoirs, les échelles de sauvetage, les moulures, les ornements, les cannelures, les yeux, les mains, les cravates. Elle en fait des masses bleues, d'énormes blocs noirs. Sous le roulement compresseur, plus fort, toujours plus fort, les fenêtres laissent échapper de la lumière. La pression de la nuit fait jaillir du lait brillant des lampes à arc, comprime les blocs sombres jusqu'à en faire dégoutter de la lumière rouge, jaune, verte, dans les rues où les pas résonnent. Tout l'asphalte suinte de lumière. De la lumière gicle des réclames sur les toits, tourne vertigineusement dans les roues, colore des tonnes roulantes de ciel » (1).

En remplaçant lumière par musique, on obtient Soft Machine.

— PHILIPPE PARINGAUX.

(1) John Dos Passos — « Manhattan Transfer ».

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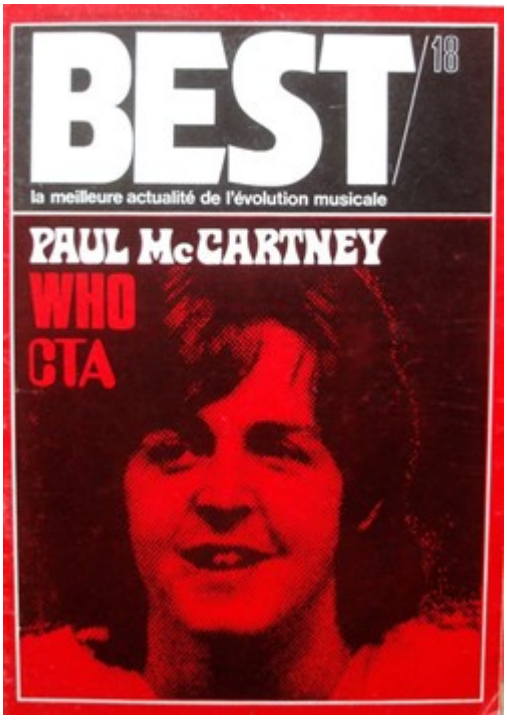
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Concert Soft Machine - Best - N° 18 - janvier 1970



CONCERT SOFT MACHINE

La grande salle de la M.A.L.S. (Maison des Arts et Loisirs de Sochaux) était pleine à craquer ce soir-la. Dans les coulisses, Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper écoutaient distraitement les questions que leurs posaient les fans qui avaient réussi à pénétrer derrière le rideau, et répondaient par monosyllabes. Robert Wyatt, lui, menait une discussion animée en un jargon semi-français, semi-anglais avec quelques " hippies " de passage. De l'autre bout du plateau nous parvenaient les sons étouffés d'un saxophone ou d'un trombone. Les cuivres se préparaient.



Quelques minettes, inévitable lot des musiciens rodaient çà et là, guettant un sourire ou un geste.

Bref tout était prêt pour le concert.

A l'arrivée des sept hommes sur scène, un léger murmure d'étonnement parcourut l'assistance. N'étaient-ils pas trois ces Soft Machine, dont les affiches noires et blanches couvraient les murs de la ville depuis une huitaine de jours.
Et la « Machine » commença à tourner. Ratledge, beau comme un dieu, laissait courir nonchalamment ses longs doigts sur le clavier. Hugh Hopper penché sur le manche de sa basse, mesurait, comptait, évoluait ses notes alors que Robert Wyatt déjà en sueur déchaînait des grondements de tonnerre sur sa batterie.

Calmement assis derrière leurs pupitres, feuilletant leurs partitions, ajustant les micros sur leurs instruments ou devisant gentiment malgré le déferlement de décibels qui sortaient de l'énorme sono, Mark Charig (flugelhorn), Elton Dean et Lynne Dobson (saxophones) et Nick Evans astiquant son trombone, attendaient.

Lorsqu'ils se levèrent et embouchèrent leurs instruments, l'étonnement fit place à la surprise la plus grande. Ces gens-là jouaient du jazz ! Et qui plus est du free-jazz.

Pourtant le mélange s'avéra plus qu'heureux. Un long solo de trombone acheva d'enlever le public et la " Machine " termina la première partie dans un déluge d'applaudissements qui couvrit presque le bruit des amplis.

Deuxième partie. Après un entracte houleux au cours duquel de jeunes excités tentèrent de semer la zizanie en cherchant des motifs politiques à la musique du groupe, le monstrueux engin à sept membres se remit en route. D'un magma sonore auquel l'oreille s'habitue, les ronflements exacerbés de la basse. la voix éraillée de Robert qui paraissait le lien moteur du groupe et d'extraordinaires chorus de saxes et de trombones. S'imbriquant l'un dans l'autre, les terrifiants rouages de la " chose " allaient une fois de plus écraser la foule figée. Les mandibules se refermèrent sur le spectateur victime consentante et lorsque la lumière revint dans la salle, un bref instant de silence glacé précéda l'ovation.

Quelques tonnes d'amplificateurs, des kilomètres de câbles et de circuits, quelques kilos de cuivres et de bois mus par sept insolites créatures venaient d'accomplir leur œuvre.

Hébété, le spectateur quittait l'antre où " la Machine molle " avait, ce soir, élu domicile, pour retomber dans les serres broyeuses de l'inévitable quotidien.

Jean M. Mareska



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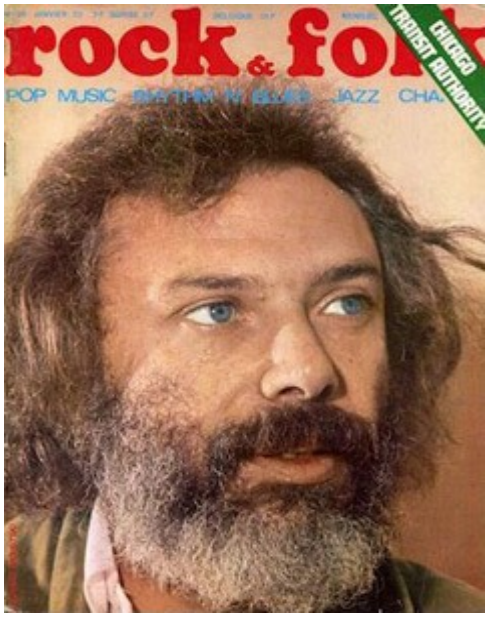
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La machine en France - Rock & Folk - N° 36 - janvier 1970

LA MACHINE EN FRANCE



Décor, personnages de la fête des sons, la deuxième d'une soirée qui en comportait trois : **Mutualité**, ilôt abrité au cœur d'un quartier continuellement "cerné" ; **personnages** : "la machine molle" qui a prolongé ses ramifications, s'est enrichie d'un matériel musical nouveau. **Les trois** (Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt, H. Hopper), plus une section de cuivres, et **les autres** (personnages de la fête ?) **spectateurs**. Mais quels spectateurs ? Ils n'appartiennent pas à la même famille que ceux qui assistaient le même soir aux deux" shows" du Transit Chicago Authority. Ici, groovy people et public intellectuel : nouveau public, mais dangereux car il ne reçoit pas les sons passionnellement, mais veut les disséquer : ils sont la monstrueuse machine de récupération, car possédant des références, ils veulent toujours "se référer" en face de toute "initiative". Mais ce public ne correspond-t-il pas à la nouvelle démarche musicale des Soft Machine ? C'est le problème que l'on se pose au cours du "sacrifice" (le sacrifié étant la spontanéité). Car il y a toujours sacrifice. J'entends par là que le spectacle musical n'est en rien une suite inanimée ou la reproduction schématique d'harmonies. Si la construction musicale est rigoureuse, si la trame orchestrale est soigneusement réfléchie, la mise en action définira la musique de l'instant.

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ROCK & FOLK ACTUALITES

la machine en france

SOFT MACHINE
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Seuls restent quelques accès de fièvre (improvisations free) qui se précipitent rageusement pour, de nouveau, s'estomper progressivement dans la couleur sonore ambiante. Mike Ratledge et Robert Wyatt, complices, structurent (dirigent) la masse ; et parfois, au-dessus de cette machinerie savante s'élève, frêle et frémissante, la voix du percussionniste. C'est cette transformation (évolution créatrice) qui procède d'une redéfinition de la couleur sonore propre à ce groupe, (par l'approfondissement des possibilités musicales, (intrusion des sons argentés) que le public (ce public ?) condamna. Le décalage déjà présent au début de l'expérience des Soft Machine, nous le retrouvons. La nouvelle dimension n'est guère tolérée : la dissonance que j'évoquais plus haut, conscience et condition de cette nouvelle dimension, ce public la ressentit comme opposition et donc rupture stérile. Pourtant élargir le champ musical est une des nouvelles richesses pour la pop music, pour aller vers l'éclatement des formes étroites engendrées par les petites formations. Les musiciens des Soft Machine veulent, pour que l'expérience soit concluante, établir des bases solides (mais non figées) pour aller en terrain découvert, afin de mieux progresser dans cette nouvelle direction-orientation : le symphonique. Aussi ne concèdent-ils rien, même s'ils doivent pour cela se couper de leur public : l'expérience

appelle toujours les échecs... ceux du public. Peut-être les Soft Machine, après Zappa, en seront-ils le second exemple. Ces quelques réflexions à chaud ne sont qu'une tentative pour essayer d'expliciter le malentendu. Les Soft Machine nouvelle formule appellent une progression étonnante de la musique pop, et leur importance comme initiateurs est considérable. Pourquoi?... A suivre...

PAUL ALESSANDRINI.

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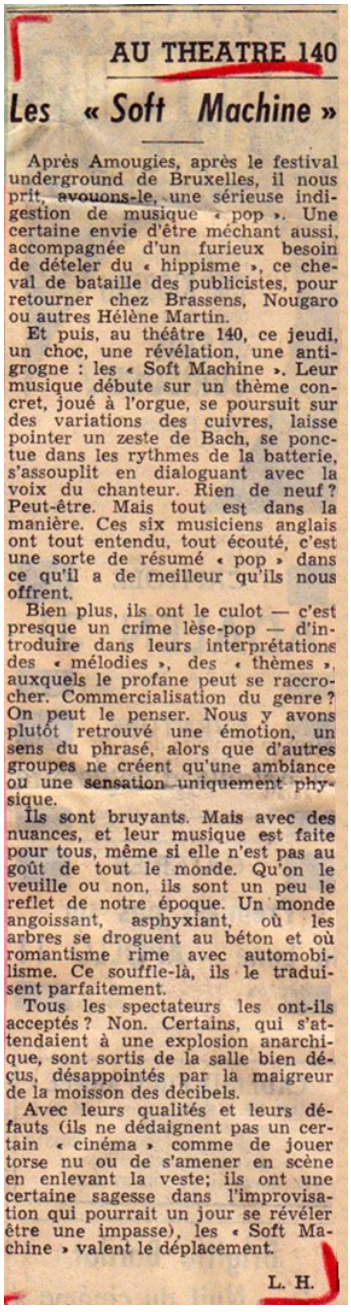
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Au théâtre 140 - Les "Soft Machine" - Le Soir (Bruxelles) - 29 novembre 1969

LES " SOFT MACHINE "



AU THEATRE 140

Les « Soft Machine »

Après Amougies, après le festival underground de Bruxelles, il nous prit, avouons-le, une sérieuse indigestion de musique « pop ». Une certaine envie d'être méchant aussi, accompagnée d'un furieux besoin de dételer du « hippisme », ce cheval de bataille des publicistes, pour retourner chez Brassens, Nougaro ou autres Hélène Martin.

Et puis, au théâtre 140, ce jeudi, un choc, une révélation, une antigrogne : les « Soft Machine ». Leur musique débute sur un thème concret, joué à l'orgue, se poursuit sur des variations des cuivres, laisse pointer un zeste de Bach, se ponctue dans les rythmes de la batterie, s'assouplit en dialoguant avec la voix du chanteur. Rien de neuf ? Peut-être. Mais tout est dans la manière. Ces six musiciens anglais ont tout entendu, tout écouté, c'est une sorte de résumé « pop » dans ce qu'il a de meilleur qu'ils nous offrent.

Bien plus, ils ont le culot — c'est presque un crime lèse-pop — d'introduire dans leurs interprétations des « mélodies », des « thèmes », auxquels le profane peut se raccrocher. Commercialisation du genre ? On peut le penser. Nous y avons plutôt retrouvé une émotion, un sens du phrasé, alors que d'autres groupes ne créent qu'une ambiance ou une sensation uniquement physique.

Ils sont bruyants. Mais avec des nuances, et leur musique est faite pour tous, même si elle n'est pas au goût de tout le monde. Qu'on le veuille ou non, ils sont un peu le reflet de notre époque. Un monde angoissant, asphyxiant, où les arbres se droguent au béton et où romantisme rime avec automobilisme. Ce souffle-là, ils le traduisent parfaitement.

Tous les spectateurs les ont-ils acceptés ? Non. Certains, qui s'attendaient à une explosion anarchique, sont sortis de la salle bien déçus, désappointés par la maigreur de la moisson des décibels.

Avec leurs qualités et leurs défauts (ils ne dédaignent pas un certain « cinéma » comme de jouer torse nu ou de s'amener en scène en enlevant la veste; ils ont une certaine sagesse dans l'improvisation qui pourrait un jour se révéler être une impasse), les « Soft Machine » valent le déplacement.

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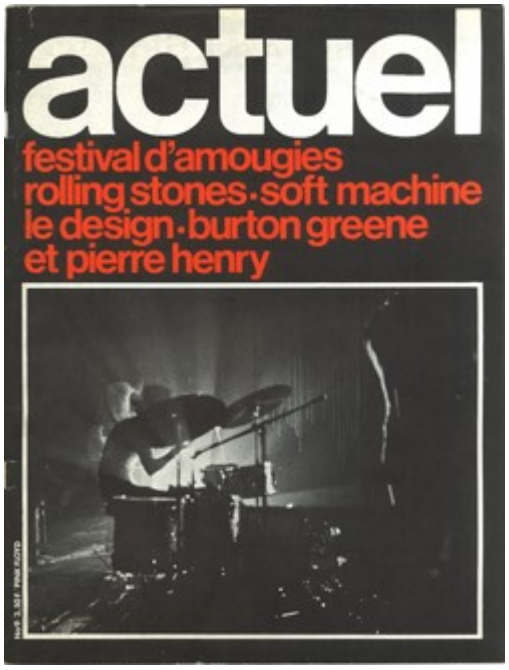
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Auto Soft Machine - Actuel - N° 9 - novembre 1969

AUTO SOFT MACHINE



[Le magazine ACTUEL de Jean Karakos, l'ancien, pas celui de Jean-François Bizot, demande aux musiciens de Soft Machine de se présenter chacun par quelques lignes: Ratledge écrit sur le Light Show de Mark Boyle, Hopper offre quelques croquis, quant à Wyatt, il imagine un faux interview avec UNE journaliste..]

S'il n'est pas le plus "populaire" des groupes, Soft Machine est l'un des plus grands, par la constante qualité de ses productions, par son refus de tout compromis avec la gloire, par son appétit. Il l'a encore prouvé pendant sa tournée en France. Soft Machine s'exprime aussi autrement que par la musique. Pour *Actuel,* Hugh Hopper (guitare basse) a dessiné, Mike Ratledge (orgue) expliqué l'oeuvre du fondateur des Light Shows, Mark Boyle, Robert Wyatt (batterie) a rapporté une interview de lui-même, soit-disant réalisée par le S.L.C. anglais. Trois pièces à verser au Dossier Soft Machine.



Pendant plusieurs années, Mark Boyle a mis au point les « Light Shows » accompagnant les concerts des Soft Machine, il s'est affirmé comme le précurseur des environnements lumineux de spectacles, tandis qu'il poursuivait une carrière de « peintre », ou, plus exactement, de créateur de structures murales remettant en question le regard de l'individu sur ce qui l'entoure. L'organiste des Soft Machine, Mike Ratledge, agrégé de philosophie, par ailleurs, démonte ici Mark Boyle.

Depuis la déclaration de Picabia : « l'art est le culte de l'erreur », l'art du XXème siècle est concerné par l'utilisation et les implications de l'indétermination dans le processus de création. Les œuvres des dadaïstes Tzara, Arp et Ernst sont parmi les premiers exemples d'utilisation des procédés *hasardeux*; plus tard, des musiciens comme John Cage, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman et autres seront de plus en plus préoccupés par les procédés aléatoires. La majeure partie des expériences hasardeuses ont limité leur action à des domaines spécifiques restreints de la création, par exemple l'utilisation de méthodes hasardeuses pour déterminer les matériaux à employer dans la composition, fixer le choix de certaines variables à ces méthodes, ou encore (dans Klavierstûck XI de Stockhausen) admettre l'indétermination de la structure générale, et ne retenir qu'une stricte détermination des éléments de composition. Toutes ces expériences sauvegardent, à quelque degré que ce soit, la fonction traditionnelle de l'artiste, le choix, la sélection et l'arrangement. Pour Mark Boyle, la *fonction* de l'artiste est de faire disparaître cette *fonction*; ses assemblages, projections et *Events* (événement très déterminé. Ndlr) montrent son acceptation totale de chaque partie du monde en tant que fait esthétique. Sélectionner, choisir ou arranger consiste à contrarier l'existence du fait. Pour Boyle, l'utilisation des procédés hasardeux est une condition nécessaire pour pouvoir affirmer l'égalité de chaque *morceau* de réalité, une condition nécessaire pour affirmer la valeur de *n'importe quoi* par rapport à *quelque chose*. Dans ses assemblages, il rejette absolument toute possibilité d'interférence à travers le choix et la sélection. De la manière suivante : le lieu géographique de sa construction est défini en projetant une fléchette sur un plan, localisée le plus précisément possible, la surface* qui sera utilisée est déterminée en jetant une équerre métallique qui délimite deux des côtés de « l'image »; un liquide plastique de caoutchouc est alors versé sur la surface à laquelle il adhère étroitement, puis le caoutchouc est retiré; Boyle verse ensuite dans le moule une sorte de mélange de gomme adhésive, l'*épikote,* qu'il retire finalement. Le résultat est une reconstitution exacte du lieu défini, sans aucune interposition de l'artiste, en fonction de laquelle le spectateur est obligé de remettre en question son attitude devant son propre environnement.

Le développement de l'œuvre de Mark Boyle révèle une diminution croissante du contrôle et de l'arrangement, un souci croissant d'objectivité. Ses premiers dessins et peintures montraient une grande tolérance envers l'incident et l'accident, qui anticipait sur son futur rejet global de l'élaboration et du contrôle; il dessinait les yeux fermés pour réduire le degré de contrôle de la conscience. Une de ses premières œuvres consistait à fixer un pot de peinture à l'angle du sommet d'un cylindre, puis à arracher le couvercle du pot; la peinture se répandait dans le cylindre et formait une mare à son pied. Cette construction révèle la nécessité de commenter les processus hasardeux qui sont responsables de sa formation. Si l'étendue du contrôle de l'artiste est minime dans ses premiers travaux, ce sont encore des *compositions*. Parlant, en mai 1965 (Bulletin de l'Institut des Arts Contemporains) de son activité à cette époque, même s'il s'agit surtout de son travail dans le domaine des *Events*, Mark Boyle avoue qu'il n'exclue pas l'arrangement (cette constatation a été plus tard reniée sur son exemplaire personnel) mais il admet aussi que « finalement, le seul moyen par lequel il soit possible de tout dire est la réalité ».

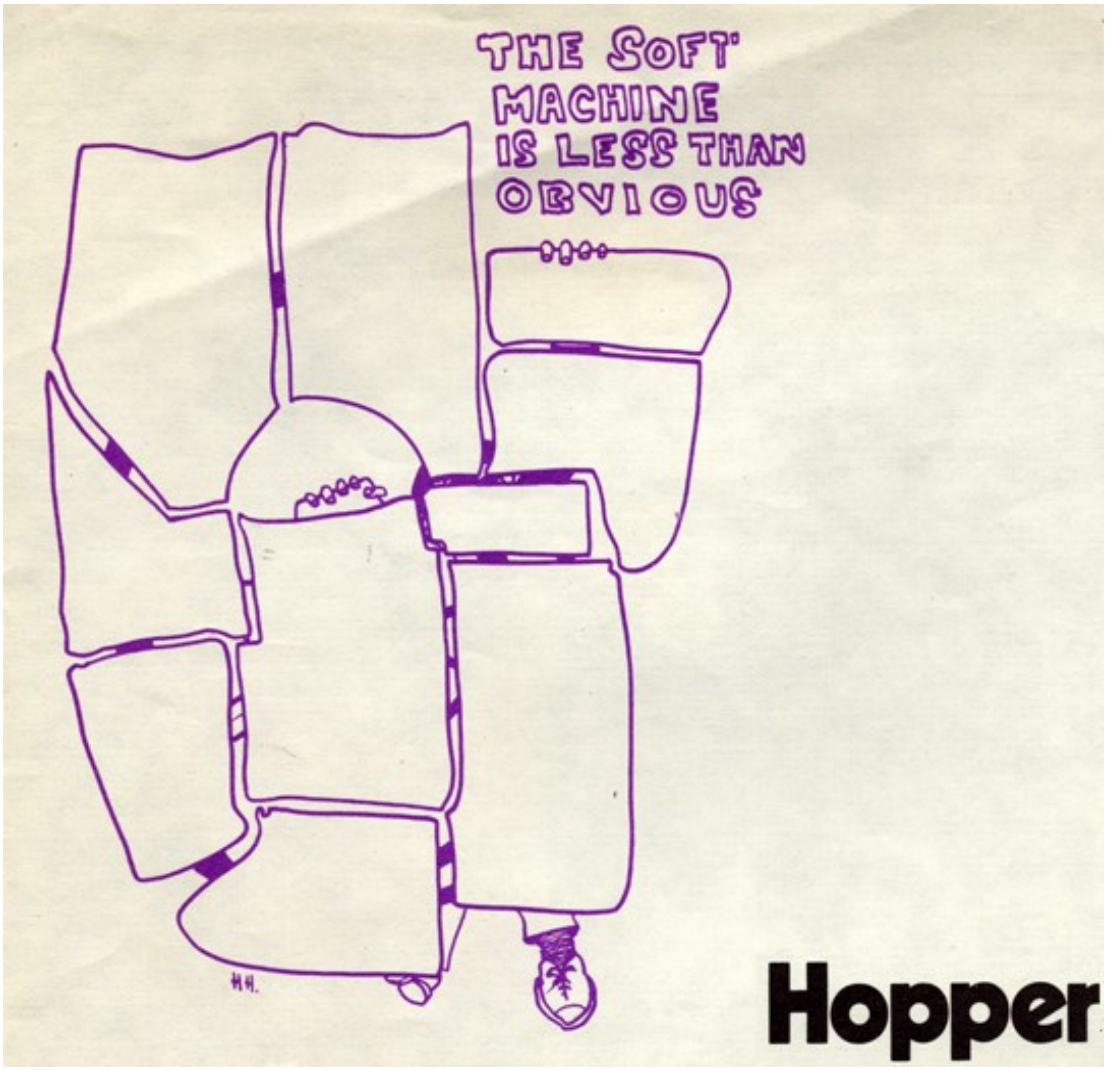
A peu près en même temps, Boyle commença des expériences avec des diapositives chauffées (sur un projecteur, ou entre deux lames de verre. Ndlr) et des projections de liquides bruts (eau, huile... etc) qui furent plus tard développées par les techniques complexes utilisées dans son « Laboratoire sensuel ». L'utilisation des projections de liquides limitent le degré de contrôle qui peut avoir l'artiste. Quand bien même certaines variables des effets peuvent être plus ou moins contrôlées par l'opérateur (couleur, vitesse, densité), les détails des effets chimiques sont finalement incalculables. L'opérateur projette les résultats organiques naturels des réactions chimiques à la chaleur, rendant visible un environnement qui serait normalement inaccessible. Chaque *Light Show* est une découverte de la complexité et de la beauté de la réalité, à la fois pour le public et pour le créateur. L'acquisition en 1966 de micro-projecteurs augmenta les niveaux de réalité que Boyle pouvait rendre accessibles. Le résultat en fut des pièces comme *Terre, air, feu et eau* et *Fluides et fonctions du corps*, dans lesquelles tous les liquides corporels

possibles, tels que le sang, la salive, la bile, le vomi et le sperme sont projetés sur un grand écran en même temps que les réponses d'encéphalogrammes et aussi d'électro-cardiogrammes d'un couple qui fait l'amour, tandis que les bruits des corps sont amplifiés dans toute la salle. Les assemblages et les projections de Boyle sont en fait des présentations de la réalité au spectateur. Ces présentations amènent le spectateur à redécouvrir l'aspect esthétique de notre environnement, caché jusqu'alors par des débris d'usages et d'habitudes, à s'éveiller à l'aspect esthétique des environnements. Un *Event* que Mark Boyle réalisa en 1965 est un exemple très clair de la nature de ce type de présentation. Voici à ce sujet ses propres mots. « Un dimanche de mars, nous avons amené plusieurs personnes, par l'entrée d'un immeuble indiqué *Théâtre*, le long d'un couloir jusqu'à une pièce occupée par des chaises de cuisine faisant face à un rideau de peluche bleu. On a ouvert le rideau et le public s'est retrouvé assis dans une vitrine, en train de regarder la rue ». Contrairement aux *Happening* américains et français, qui révèlent habituellement d'une invention dadaïstique de nouvelles réalités, en termes d'antécédents artistiques (cf. l'œuvre de Kaprow, Dine, Oldenburg), les *Events* de Boyle se satisfont d'une représentation directe de la réalité existante, sans aucune interposition de l'artiste. La différence est reflétée au niveau de la terminologie : tandis que *Happening* implique *action*, l'*Event* est le fait de quelque chose *qui arrive*; pour présenter un *Happening*, il est nécessaire d'agir, tandis qu'on ne peut agir sur un *Event*, il est suffisant de réaliser le fait que quelque chose se passe. C'est la découverte de ce qui arrive, alors que le *Happening* est une invention active. Le fait contre l'acte.

En 1967, Mark Boyle fut primé à la Biennale de Paris pour un de ses assemblages et il organisa un spectacle comprenant des projections du « Laboratoire sensuel », des chorégraphies de Graziella Martinez et la musique des Soft Machine. Le travail de Graziella Martinez est parallèle en intention à celle de Boyle, dans la mesure où elle s'attache aux possibilités chorégraphiques des objets familiers, par exemple la composition de danses à partir de lignes de mouvement suggérées et, en quelque sorte, déterminées par les contours des objets qu'elle incorpore à la danse : baignoires, tricycles, lits, cages et toboggans. Assister à un spectacle de Graziella Martinez fait redécouvrir les objets de la même manière que regarder un assemblage de Mark Boyle fait redécouvrir tout ce qui nous entoure. Le spectacle fut représenté avec un grand succès au Festival d'Edimbourg et à la Biennale de Paris. En 1969 Boyle souhaite étendre encore davantage ses recherches, dans son effort continu pour redécouvrir l'univers, à la fois pour lui-même et pour nous. La *structure* s'est progressivement affaiblie pendant toute l'histoire de l'art; le système diatonique a été remplacé par le chromatisme de Wagner qui ouvrit la voie au système sériel puis aux formes indéterminées de John Cage et autres. La responsabilité du public se trouve de plus en plus engagée dans le processus de structuration. L'art devient une attitude face à quelque chose qui arrive. Est-ce une *expérience esthétique* que de regarder un tableau de Jasper Johns ? Si, en déplaçant son regard de quelques degrés, on fixe le mur de la Galerie, est-ce moins une expérience esthétique ? L'œuvre de Mark Boyle montre l'osmose complète de la vie et de l'art. Boyle s'explique ainsi : « Le changement le plus complet qu'un individu puisse opérer face à son environnement, sans le détruire, est de réviser son attitude vis à vis de lui. C'est mon objectif... Naturellement, tout cela devrait *miner* la structure sociale, les hiérarchies artistiques, le système des expositions et les conseils municipaux. Mais je suis certain que nous parviendrons à vivre notre vie les yeux grand ouverts, que nous découvrirons l'excitation d'une exploration continuelle de notre environnement, en tant que objet/expérience/drame, de laquelle nous pourrons extraire une expérience esthétique si brillante et si forte que tout ce qui nous entoure sera transformé. »

Mike RATLEDGE

* (Boyle va sur les lieux déterminés par la fléchette sur le plan géographique . N de R)


THE SOFT
MACHINE
IS LESS THAN
OBVIOUS
Hopper



Wyatt

Le Soft Machine Ellidge Robert Wyatt. Un reportage de votre super-copine de « Teenage Rave », Miss Annie-Fannie.

L'ascension météorique des Soft Machine, des profondeurs du Sacré Underground aux glorieux sommets du Hit-Parade international est une histoire extra qui rivalise avec l'Ancien Testament lui-même. Depuis leur fabuleux premier album triomphal « Dance with

the Sensational Softies » jusqu'à leur dernier disque (beaucoup plus mûr, beaucoup plus vieux, tout aussi jeune et populaire) « Softly, Softly, for swinging levers only », enregistré avec les Classiques Cordes Emotionnelles du Théâtre National de l'Opéra Tibétain.

Si ce ne sont pas précisément les tripes des Soft Machine, c'en sont un membre essentiel que les parties de percussion de Robert Wyatt, éblouissantes, originales, complexes quoique pourtant cependant si charmantes et si simples, subtilement complétées par le chant sincère, spirituel, noble, lyrique qui a retourné sûrement environ un million d'estomacs pardon je veux dire de cœurs.

La première fois que j'ai rencontré le noble et déjà fort débonnaire, aimable, élégant, spirituel et révolutionnaire Robert Wyatt, dans un cratère de bombe désert aux alentours de Waterloo Station, j'ai été immédiatement violemment frappée en voyant à quel point il est vraiment noble, débonnaire, aimable, élégant, spirituel. Ce qui suit est un bref entretien que j'ai eu l'autorisation de réaliser sur l'épaisse moquette d'algues macrobiotiques au dernier étage luxueux de son immeuble sous-marin au large des Bahamas.

Vous voudrez bien remarquer que l'adoration et le succès qui ont suivi la succession des dix-huit numéros Un des Soft Machine au Hit-Parade ne l'ont pas changé d'un pouce du tout du tout.

AF : S'il vous plaît, voulez-vous me dire quelle a été l'influence sur votre musique de Olivier Messiaen, Terry Riley, Fats Waller, Cecil Taylor, Julian Hastings, Bêla Bartok, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Paul McArtney, Dionne Warwick et des Bee-Gees, sans parler de Kevin Ayers ?

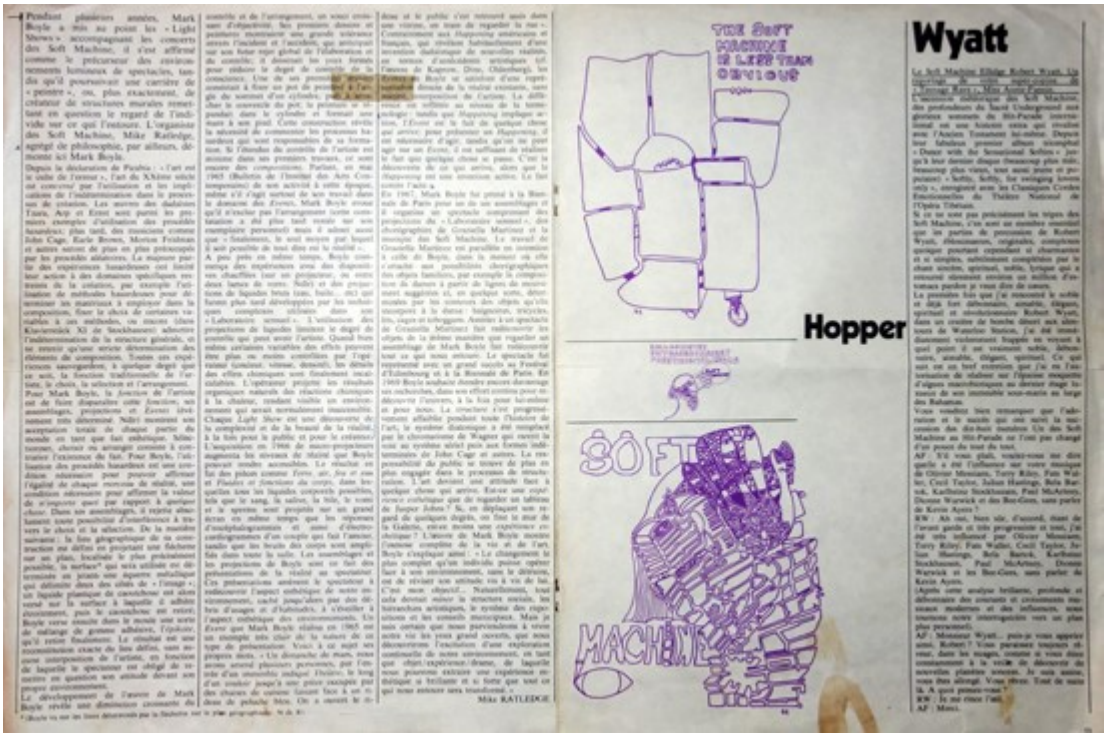
RW : Ah oui, bien sûr, d'accord, étant de l'avant garde et très progressiste et tout, j'ai été très influencé par Olivier Messiaen, Terry Riley, Fats Waller, Cecil Taylor, Julian Hastings, Bêla Bartok, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Paul McArtney, Dionne Warwick et les Bee-Gees, sans parler de Kevin Ayers.

(Après cette analyse brillante, profonde et débonnaire des courants et croisements musicaux modernes et des influences, nous tournons notre interrogatoire vers un plan plus personnel).

AF : Monsieur Wyatt... puis-je vous appeler ainsi, Robert ? Vous paraissez toujours rêveur, dans les nuages, comme si vous étiez constamment à la veilte de découvrir de nouvelles planètes sonores. Je suis assise, vous êtes allongé. Vous rêvez. Tout de suite là. A quoi pensez-vous ?

RW : Je me rince l'œil.

AF : Merci.



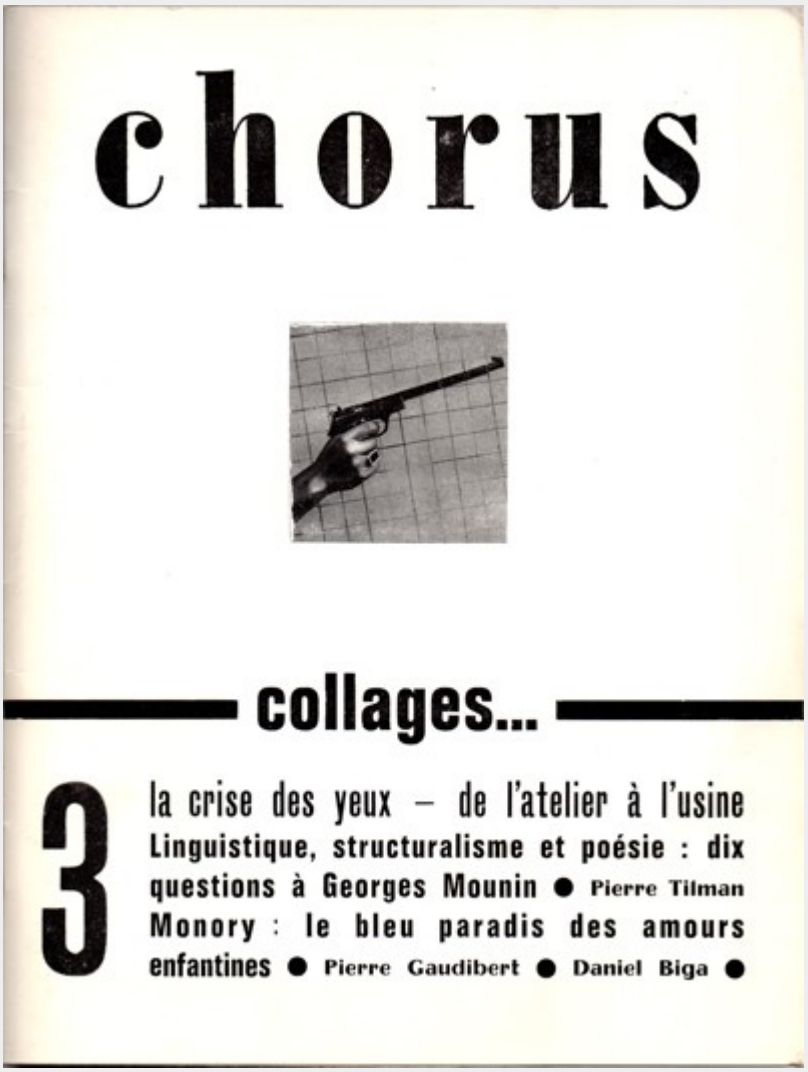
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Journal de notre bord - Concert Soft Machine - Chorus N° 3 - 4ème trimestre 1969

CONCERT SOFT MACHINE



JOURNAL DE NOTRE BORD

A deux heures du matin six bras maigres mettent la machine en marche et balaient les dernières séquelles de la réalité qui pourraient encore se trouver dans la salle. Pendant une heure — et rien qu'une heure — ROBERT WYATT (drms), MIKE RATLEDGE (o), BRIAN HOPPER (bs) ouvriront toutes grandes les portes sur autre chose. Mais comment dire l'océan, la beauté fulgurante des femmes, le sortilège d'une voix luciférienne ? Comment dire l'âme, la passion, la magie de ce groupe qui se situe quelque part sur la carte entre la Pop music mystique et le Free jazz? Avec la SOFT MACHINE la beauté entre en scène comme une strip-teaseuse. Quelles vêpres, quel meeting diront ce que la machine a suggéré en une nuit ? Plus que de la violence, mieux que de la virtuosité, naît, là une chose étrange que nos yeux, nos oreilles rendent encore informe mais qui a pris place sous la beauté psychédélique des projections. Et qui existe. Et qui bat neuf comme un cœur transplanté. A quatre heures du matin, sur le sinistre boulevard Voltaire, les enfants déguisés du BATACLAN ressemblaient aux pêcheurs du petit jour de « La Dolce Vita » qui découvrent sur la plage le monstre que la marée y a déposé. Et là, chacun dans sa solitude glaciale doit trouver un nom à cette voix qui a mal et appelle...

(disques Barclay)

F. V.



journal de notre bord

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(disques Barclay)

F. V.

YVES MARTIN :

POEMES COURTS SUIVIS D'UN LONG

Déjà le titre du dernier livre d'Yves Martin en sa provocante sécheresse indique bien que son auteur continue avec ténacité de tordre le cou à l'éloquence, au lyrisme, voire au chant.
On connait bien maintenant le style et l'écriture de l'auteur du PARTISAN : notations saisies sur le réel, « collages » nés

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du quotidien souvent le plus prosaïque. Éclatent ici et là dans ces poèmes ci comme par inadvertance, des joyaux, pierreries baroques et scintillantes qui dépassent la narration pure pour déboucher sur une poésie complexe sous sa fausse simplicité.
Avec ce livre, Yves Martin est devenu plus grave, plus inquiet. J'aime qu'en filigrane à ces textes une petite musique désenchantée et mélancolique se fasse entendre, c'est d'elle que naît l'inquiétude, c'est en lui restant fidèle qu'Yves Martin s'affirmera encore.

Guy Chambelland, éditeur.

F. V.

fabrice hélion
alain lance
pierre tilman
franck venaille

MAGLIONE

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Soft Machine - Best - N° 13 & 14 - août et septembre 1969



SOFT MACHINE

Au temps lointain du psychédélique, un des groupes vedettes des repaires des hippies, était les Soft Machine. A cette époque, leur recherche musicale et leurs light shows firent école.

Depuis, les goûts et surtout les modes ont changé mais les Soft Machine ont gardé un public fidèle et enthousiaste à Paris.

Et pourtant je ne connais pas un groupe plus rébarbatif… Personnellement ce sont de charmants garçons, musicalement, ce sont de sauvages égoïstes. Je ne vous énumérerai pas leurs divers et éblouissants diplômes. Cela étonne tellement qu'on puisse penser sous des cheveux longs !

Les Soft Machine ont choisi la musique pour se réaliser spirituellement. Ils n'ont, paraît-il, pas encore atteint leur but, mais ils nous ont déjà donné une musique surnaturelle, fantastique, sensuelle, pleine de délires et de fantasmagories hallucinogènes.

Où en sont-ils maintenant, après un long silence, des changements de guitariste et de maison de disques ? Pour « faire le point », ils m'ont emmenée chez le frère de Robert Wyatt qui habite à Montparnasse en tant que correspondant du Daily Express ». Là, nous avons pris du café en mangeant du fromage et des fruits en parlant de tout et de rien…

Les Soft Machine en ont assez de leur carrière actuelle.

Michael Ratledge : « Je ne veux plus que l'on nous reconnaisse seulement sur des vieux morceaux qui datent de deux ans. »

Ils recommencent à zéro : Kevin est parti parce que la tournée américaine a été trop longue.

« Vivre vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre ensemble s'est avéré impossible, nous ne nous entendions plus du tout, c'était devenu insupportable. Maintenant à Londres, en nous voyant et en jouant ensemble seulement de temps en temps, nous sommes de nouveau très amis.

C'est terrible ce que la routine et le surmenage des tournées peuvent être éprouvants pour le psychisme. Cela a été une expérience intéressante, nous avons remporté beaucoup de succès dans «

l'underground circuit ». Mais maintenant c'est terminé, nous sommes en train de préparer très sérieusement un L.P. qui devrait nous donner un nouveau départ sur des bases plus stables. Pour continuer à créer, il nous faut un but, et à part quelques « jam-sessions », les tournées n'ont rien de passionnant si ce n'est bien sûr l'aspect financier du problème. Et puis notre « underground public » était souvent aussi innocent que les plus jeunes teeny-boopers : ils nous trouvaient géniaux parce qu'ils ne comprenaient rien à notre musique.



- Et vous êtes contre le commercial ?

- Cela dépend duquel, si par hasard notre musique obtient un succès commercial, nous ne l'aurons pas voulu, ce sera le public qui en aura décidé ainsi. De toute façon, nous préférons être des précurseurs, ce qui est l'antithèse de l'aspect commercial. Nous voudrions donner à la pop music ce que le jazz moderne a apporté au jazz New-Orléans. Notre entreprise est donc à une vaste échelle et je ne sais pas si nous en verrons la fin ou la réussite. Mais son succès posthume ne me déplairait pas.

On ne parle pas souvent des Soft Machine et vous avez l'air de rester volontairement dans l'ombre. Pourquoi ?

Je ne voudrais pas qu'on parle de nous pour nos seules têtes ou même pour notre talent musical, nos virtuosités de musiciens. Je veux que l'on connaisse notre musique. C'est tout. C'est même assez comique parce que peu de personnes ne nous connaissent ou nous reconnaissent à Londres. J'ai été à la fois satisfait et horriblement gêné un jour des éloges dont m'accablaient quelques types qui s'exclamaient sur notre spectacle.

- Vous vous référez souvent au jazz, votre opinion est-elle que le jazz et la pop music sont conciliables ?

- Cela donnera surement quelque chose un jour et je souhaite que le groupe y soit pour quelque chose !

- Pour finir, dites-moi quelle est l'origine de votre sonorité si bizarre ?

- C'est infiniment simple : je jouais sur un orgue très faible, très mauvais même, alors j'ai ajouté une "fausse-caisse", j'ignore comment vous appelez cela."

Voilà donc tout le mystère : un simple bricolage.

Catherine Claude

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Soft Machine à Paris - Rock & Folk - N° 31 - août 1969

SOFT MACHINE A PARIS



Première tentative de concert pop en dehors du circuit traditionnel: premier et total succès. La salle du Bataclan remplie à craquer d'une foule de connaisseurs tout à fait sages et attentifs (le critique hyper-réactionnaire de France-Soir a fait ce qu'il a pu, il n'a pas réussi à voir des jeunes chevelus se battre au couteau ou se piquer à l'héroïne, ce fut donc, de son point de vue, un concert raté, qui ne lui fournit pas prétexte à un retentissant appel à l'ordre moral et à indigner ses mémêres-lectrices), alléchés par une affiche qui présentait quelques-uns des meilleurs groupes français et surtout, surtout, les Soft Machine.

Trois groupes émergèrent d'une première partie bien fournie: We Free, très prometteur, et surtout Martin Circus et le Triangle qui sont d'ores et déjà les meilleurs groupes pop français avec le Zoo. Nous reparlerons d'eux plus longtemps, ils le méritent plus que bien d'autres qui n'ont pour tout talent que de bons agents de publicité. Triangle, Martin Circus et Zoo, retenez bien ces noms.

Sur le coup d'une heure du matin, les trois rouages de la Soft Machine font leur apparition sur une scène plongée dans la pénombre, devant l'écran blanc qui, tout à l'heure, s'animera de couleurs et de mouvements invraisemblables. Un morceau, un seul, qui dure presqu'une heure (ou dix morceaux enchaînés, peu importe), une heure extraordinaire de musique tour à tour démente ou pacifiée, trois sons de puissance égale non pas superposés mais parfaitement intégrés les uns aux autres. L'important pour Mike Ratledge (o), Hugh Hopper (bs) et Robert Wyatt (dms), ce n'est pas tant de jouer des "air" , au sens traditionnel du terme, que de créer des climats sonores d'une beauté sans défaut et parfois étouffante.



Tous parfaitement maîtres de leur instrument et dotés d'un solide bagage musical (ce qui, au départ, leur permet de jouer ensemble, vraiment ensemble), ils auraient aussi bien pu faire fortune en se lançant dans une carrière pop-commerciale. Ils ont préféré rester fidèles à l'esprit qui les anime et continuer à leurs recherches sans concessions. Un jour viendra certainement où l'on reconnaîtra enfin tout ce que la musique de notre temps doit à des groupes comme les Soft Machine. Mais ce jour-là, il sera peut-être trop tard. Toujours est-il que ce concert fut splendide, qui fit littéralement plonger le public dans la touffeur d'une musique qu'il ne se lassait pas d'entendre.

Propulsé par la batterie fracassante de Wyatt et la basse de Hopper, Mike Ratledge se lança sans jamais s'y perdre dans de longues improvisations haletantes et saturées, subtil et percutant entrelacs de sonorités soigneusement choisies. Habiles, les doigts de l'homme fouaillaient les claviers pour en extirper la substance que les énormes amplis projetaient ensuite sur le public; habiles, les baguettes martelaient la peau des tambours pour créer des rythmes complexes et fouettaient les cymbales pour marquer le temps; habiles, d'autres doigts pinçaient les cordes de la basse pour établir bien solidement les fondations sur lesquelles repose tout l'ensemble. Habiles, les Soft Machine le sont, certes, mais il ne faudrait surtout pas croire qu'ils ne sont que cela: des virtuoses de l'électronique. Leur musique sait être chaleureuse, elle bouillonne d'une vie intense que ses créateurs n'essaient jamais de contenir, quitte à y laisser leurs dernières forces. Les hommes ont fait leur musique le don total de leur vie, c'est pourquoi il faut absolument entendre la machine pendant qu'elle a encore du souffle. Qui sait si demain...


soft machine
à
paris

Philippe Paringaux

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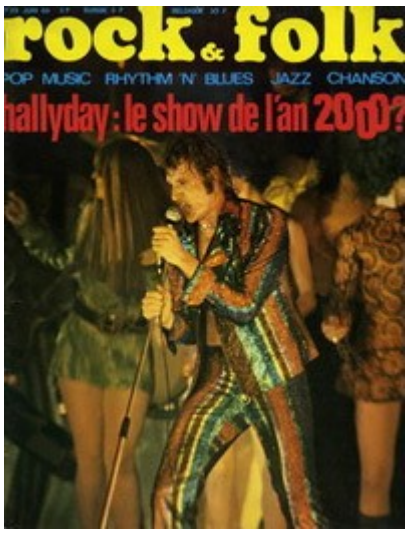
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Douce machine - Rock & Folk N° 29 - juin 1969



DOUCE MACHINE

Paradoxe, la popularité des Soft Machine en France a largement dépassé le petit noyau d'amateurs qui constitue leur seule audience. Et il n'est pas rare d'entendre certaines personnes qui se veulent "hips" parler avec des trémolos dans la voix d'un groupe qu'elles n'ont jamais entendu... Ne leur en veuillons pas trop: sans aucun disque, aucun concert et, bien entendu aucun passage sur les antennes, les Soft Machine auraient eu bien de la peine à devenir un groupe populaire. Si l'on ajoute que leur musique n'est pas spécialement destinée au grand public, on voit que la cause est difficile à défendre au pays de Sheila et de Claude François.

La Soft Machine a une longue histoire. Sa genèse remonte à 1959 et à la ville de Canterbury où quatre musiciens se réunirent pour la première fois: Hugh Hopper (basse), Brian Hopper (clarinette, ténor), Mike Ratledge (piano) et Robert Wyatt (batterie). Brian et Mike avaient derrière eux neuf années de musique classique. Robert quelques-unes de leçons avec George Neidorff, batteur américain. Tous très influencés par le jazz, ils admiraient Cecil Taylor pour son attaque et la liberté de ses harmonies, Ornette Coleman et John Coltrane pour l'utilisation qu'ils faisaient de leurs sections rythmiques. Toutefois, Brian et Mike continuaient à jouer de la musique classique, par exemple des sonates de violon de Milhaud ou Bartok arrangées pour clarinette !

1961. David Allen, guitariste et poète australien se joint au groupe qui devient le "David Allen Quartet" (Allen, Hopper, Ratledge, Wyatt) qui se produit à Londresainsi qu'au Live New Departures Concert. La musique que jouait alors le groupe avait les mêmes structures qu'à présent, quoique plus orientée vers le jazz. Le public y restant tout à fait indifférent. Le groupe éclate. David retourne à Majorque, Mike à Oxford, Hugh et Robert, de retour à Canterbury, forment les "Wild Flowers" avec Kevin Ayers et Brian Hopper et jouent des morceaux originaux mais inspirés de la musique des Beatles !



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La Soft Machine a une longue histoire. Sa genèse remonte à 1966 et à la ville de Canterbury où quatre musiciens se réunirent pour la première fois: Hugh Hopper (basse), Brian Hopper (clarinette, ténor), Mike Ratledge (piano) et Robert Wyatt (batterie). Brian et Mike avaient derrière eux neuf années de musique classique. Robert quelques années de leçons avec George Nobbett, batteur américain. Tous très influencés par le jazz. Ils admiraient Cecil Taylor pour son attaque et la liberté de ses harmonies, Ornette Coleman et John Coltrane pour l'utilisation qu'ils faisaient de leurs sections rythmiques. Toutefois, Brian et Mike continuaient à jouer de la musique classique, par exemple des sonates pour violon de Milhaud ou Bartok arrangées pour clarinette !

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Larry ayant quitté le groupe pour cause de non-entente musicale, David Allen devient soliste et Kevin prend la basse. Robert se met à chanter et Mike s'achète un orgue. Intensifiant leurs recherches musicales, ils en viennent à employer sur scène des bandes pré-enregistrées mais doivent abandonner ce système, faute de moyens techniques suffisants. La Soft Machine inaugure l'UNEFO en compagnie de l'autre grand groupe underground anglais, le Pink Floyd. Un light-man est bientôt adjoint à la formation en permanence: Mark Boyle, qui fit d'importantes découvertes en matière de light-show et fut le premier éclairagiste à faire partie intégrante d'un groupe.

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DOUCE MACHINE

Fig. 1620. — Interrupteur de M. Pouillet.

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Le seul disque enregistré jusqu'alors par le groupe était un 45 t "Love makes sweet music"/"Feelin'reelin' & squeelin' Ayers", sorti chez Polydor mais introuvable.

Depuis son retour des States, la Machine Molle a été reformée: Hugh Hopper a remplacé Kevin Ayers à la basse et à la guitare. Jusqu'alors, Hugh ne se "sentait pas en condition" pour jouer, mais, Kevin ayant décidé de se consacrer à la composition, Hugh a repris le flambeau et s'est mis, à son tour, à composer pour le groupe. Ayant ainsi fait peau neuve, la Machine a sensiblement changé sa façon d'interpréter les morceaux. Si le son est toujours le même, aussi sauvage et libre qu'auparavant, l'attention des musiciens se porte désormais sur des enchaînements de petits thèmes musicaux plutôt que sur de longues improvisations sur un thème donné. Cette nouvelle manière est finalement un moyen de structurer l'improvisation, expression de différentes attitudes face à la même idée. Pour illustrer cette nouvelle formule, la Machine Molle a enregistré, courant mars, un second LP à Londres. Mike a bien voulu me donner, au téléphone, quelques précisions sur la nouvelle musique du groupe: "Le son reste le même, mais la musique va plus loin,, elle est en quelque sorte plus sophistiquée. Il y a plus d'arrangements, plus de préparation et plus de notes aussi. C'est la même idée qu'auparavant, mais plus contrôlée..."

Une nouvelle jeunesse, donc, pour la Soft Machine qui intensifie ses passages sur scène. Il est certain que le public français aura bientôt l'occasion de la voir , cette Machine Molle, "plus belle qu'une poubelle", selon Kevin Ayers. Il existe quelque part une Machine merveilleuse, une Machine à oublier le temps.

JOCELYNE BOURSIER.

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Soft Machine - Best - N° 10 - mai 1969





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parler, ce fut très épisodiquement, et l'on n'eut plus guère l'occasion de les entendre, que ce soit en Angleterre ou dans le reste de l'Europe. Ils passèrent par contre beaucoup de temps aux Etats-Unis, où ils firent en particulier une tournée avec Jimi Hendrix. Enfin, c'est là-bas qu'ils enregistrèrent et sortirent leur premier L.P., à la fin de l'année, sous le label Probe. « Best » vous a déjà parlé de la surprenante pochette double de cet album produit par Chas Chandler et et Tom Wilson. Cela fait plus d'un an et demi que nous l'attendions, mais il en valait la peine.

Le Soft Machine est sûrement le plus « intellectuel » des groupes — ceci dit sans aucune nuance péjorative, bien au contraire : rappelons seulement que Mike Ratledge est licencié en psychologie et philosophie, qu'il remporta un prix de philosophie à Oxford — mais c'est aussi trois des plus extraordinaires et des plus originaux musiciens qui soient. Mike fit partie d'un groupe de jazz d'avant garde avant de joindre le Soft Machine. Kevin Ayers est maintenant à la fois bassiste et occasionnellement le lead guitar du groupe, mais surtout il en est l'arrangeur et c'est lui qui écrit le plus de morceaux. Robert Wyatt, le batteur, est de plus un musicien très complet puisqu'il joue également du piano, du violon, du violoncelle, de la guitare et de la trompette.

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Soft Machine - Actuel - 1968

SOFT MACHINE



Les Soft Machine, c'est le monde, c'est une femme, c'est un livre de William Burroughs, et plus exactement c'est un groupe Pop-Psychédélique de Londres. Quoi que ce soit, ils ont récemment fait une tournée aux Etats-Unis, en compagnie de Jimi Hendrix Experience. Enveloppés par le film de Mark Boyle, des projections abstraites les entourant de couleurs variées, les Soft Machine présentent un spectacle complet sur la scène, quoique inhabituel pour notre époque. Ils portent les accoutrements attendus pour cette performance (de longs cheveux tombant sur les épaules, des chapeaux de boutiques de gage, de toutes petites lunettes noires, des chemises multicolores, colliers, clochettes, etc.). Le batteur Robert Wyatt joue parfois seulement vêtu d'un bikini. En un mot, ils ressemblent à trois évadés capricieux.

Les choses ne sont pas toujours celles qu'elles apparaissent. L'organiste Michael Ratledge fit ses études à Oxford où il avait obtenu une bourse, remportant en 1964 le premier prix de philosophie, et plus tard, obtenant ses diplômes de philosophie et psychologie. Il se décrit lui-même comme étant: "un esprit calme mais absent... Je suis du genre de personne qui fait ce qu'il y a à faire. J'avais projeté de faire un travail progressif sur la poésie ... américaine, mais j'ai commencé trop tard pour pouvoir continuer... A la naissance de notre groupe nous eûmes beaucoup de difficultés sur le plan financier. Un jour, alors que je croyais que tout était perdu, et que nous allions devoir dissoudre le groupe, une amie de Kevin (Kevin Ayers, le troisième membre du groupe), lui donna son manteau de vison. Nous le vendîmes, achetâmes un orgue et commencèrent à jouer du Jazz d'Avant-Garde. Mais Londres n'était pas prêt pour nous. Alors nous décidâmes que nous pouvions jouer ce que l'on nous demandait, appelé "Pop", et avoir ainsi une chance d'être entendus."

Les parents de Robert sont libéraux et vieux amis avec Robert Graves. Robert passa deux été dans la maison de Graves à Deya (Majorque). Le poète et essayiste est quelque chose comme un héros pour lui.

Robert sourit facilement et bien. Quoique étant le plus excentrique des trois sur le plan habillement, il n'est pas inconscient du bagage qu'il porte ou de son influence sur les "non-conformistes".

"J'ai eu de durs moments pour me décider quant à mes cheveux, je les ai quand même coupés deux fois. Aucune sorte d'uniforme ne me tracasse. Mais quand je vis les Rolling Stones pour la première fois, je décidai que je devais aller dans cette voie, sans oeillères. Nous avons été catalogués comme "groupe psychédélique", ce qui implique que nous sommes tous acides, en dehors de la normale... et que tout tourne autour de nous dans une sorte de spectacle permanent. Je ressens cela. Ce que je fais, je le fais moi-même, et je n'ai besoin d'aucune drogue pour jouer de la batterie."

Kevin Ayers est beaucoup plus ce que l'on appelle "hippy". Durant la conférence de presse, il fut décrit comme suit : "...chanteur, guitariste basse, guitare solo, compositeur, arrangeur, illustrateur , poète, mangeur" . Il est né en 1944 à Herne Bay U.K. (Leo), et fit ses études à Singapour et à Chelmsford, dans l'Essex.

Il quitta l'école assez tôt et partit en voyage de Londres, de Canterbury plus exactement, passant par les Iles Canaries, Casablanca et Majorque, écrivant ses chansons en route. Il a le don pour écrire les chansons magiques les plus commerciales (Un garçon sauvage quand il est maussade).

Kevin est lucide et bon parleur.

"Notre musique, dit-il, est juste une extension des sottises que nous faisions quand nous vivions ensemble à Canterbury. C'est la manière que nous préférons pour passer notre temps, plus que jouer au golf ou au cricket. Le fait que nous travaillons, gagnons notre pain, est en quelque sorte accidentel. Quand nous jouons en concert, nous ne pensons pas à d'autres choses que le plaisir des gens qui viennent nous écouter. Notre musique est différente."

Comment est-elle différente ? Kevin nous dit encore :
"Je pense que c'est parce qu'elle n'est pas réellement basée sur le blues. Nous restons en dehors des conventions habituelles. C'est probablement pourquoi nous faisons autre chose. Les agents sont seulement intéressés par cela que s'ils peuvent prendre un peu d'argent. Je pense que cette tournée peut être un point de départ pour nos idées. La réponse du public a été fantastique." Les Soft Machine sont un des jeunes groupes pop faisant rapidement fortune les plus entendus.



Quand je rencontrai pour la première fois Michael, Kevin et Robert l'été dernier, ils avaient joliment échoué sur la Côte d'Azur française. Avec deux managers de route, ils étaient partis en tournée de Londres jusqu'à la Côte d'Azur, voyageant dans une camionnette sur laquelle était inscrit le nom du groupe: pleine de quincaillerie électronique. Ils étaient engagés pour travailler tout l'été au "Festival de la Bière" sur la plage de Saint-Aygulf. Après une semaine, ils étaient licenciés. Il semble que la mauvaise chose dans cela (le manque d'argent) faisait courir le monde dans une discothèque et personne ne buvait de bière.

Alors le trio erra autour de Saint- Tropez durant quelque temps, dormant sur les paliers ou sur la plage. Finalement, Jean-Jacques Lebel les engagea pour la seconde partie du "Festival Libre", et ils passèrent chaque nuit après Le désir attrapé par la queue", la pièce de Pablo Picasso. Ce fut une bonne époque, mais comme c'est si souvent le cas, ils furent payés en proportion inverse de l'engouement de leur propre musique.

Si éloigné qu'ils investirent plus que leur cachet en amplificateurs, micros, guitares et autres choses. Une nouvelle rentrée d'argent leur fut offerte par leur tournée aux Etats-Unis : 100 dollars par semaine. En dehors de cela, cependant, ils payèrent Boyle parce qu'ils pensent que ses projections sont essentielles, une opinion que leur manager ne partage pas.

Michael a écrit un papier sur Boyle : "Les événements de Mark Boyle sont contenus dans une présentation directe de la réalité qui déjà existe, sans aucune intervention de l'artiste par lui-même... Attendu que le "Happening" implique l'action, l'événement est l'effet du Happening : pour réussir un Happening, il est nécessaire d'agir, mais on ne peut agir sur un événement. Il suffit de réaliser le fait qu'un Happening demande. Un événement est une découverte de ce qui arrive, une invention active. (Le fait est aussi une action.)"

Boyle, un Ecossais au patois mélodieux et aux cheveux longs, a des yeux qui flambent avec chaleur et embarras. Il explique lui-même : "Le changement le plus complet d'un

individu peut être effectué dans son environnement; une brusque destruction de celui-ci peut changer l'attitude de l'individu par rapport à cet environnement. C'est mon objectif... Je suis certain que, comme résultat, nous alerterons tellement les gens, que nous découvrirons l'excitation de la remise en question de notre entourage comme un objet/expérience/drame, duquel nous pouvons extraire une expérience esthétique si brillante et si forte que notre entourage se transformera par lui-même."

En 1966, Boyle fit l'acquisition de fabuleux projecteurs qui rendirent possible la projection de ses pièces les plus ambitieuses intitulées "Terre, Air, Feu et Eau" et "Les fluides et fonctions du corps". Dans ce dernier, les fluides du corps humain, tels que le sang, la salive, la bile, la vomissure et le sperme étaient projetés sur un écran large avec les réponses d'un électro-encéphalogramme et d'un électro-cardiogramme d'un couple faisant l'amour, tandis que les sons du corps étaient amplifiés dans l'auditorium.

Quoique ses projections sur les Soft Machine soient un peu plus modestes, elles ajoutent une dimension visuelle excitante à la musique. Contrairement à de nombreux autres effets de lumière, il n'utilise pas de poses ni de gros plans d'aucune sorte. La lumière et le mouvement obtenus par des liquides chimiques sont déterminés par des facteurs de chance. Michael écrit :

"... Cette présentation rend possible au spectateur de redécouvrir l'aspect esthétique de notre environnement qui est devenu hideux par les abus d'usage et les habitudes, et de pouvoir être au courant des... environnements qui étaient auparavant inaccessibles pour nous."

Les Soft Machine ne font partie d'aucun établissement musical. Le nom de Jazz ne peut leur être attribué à cause de leur formation rock, instrumentalement et d'apparence. En même temps, ce n'est pas assez commercial pour être catalogué dans le monde du Pop. Et, quoique le Compositeur Earle Brown adore le groupe (il veut écrire une pièce pour eux), les musiciens "sérieux" ne peuvent considérer cette sorte de musique comme légitime. En dépit d'un occasionnel manque de contrôle et d'une tendance à s'étendre trop longuement sur ce qu'ils font, les Soft Machine sont un groupe unique et satisfaisant, une synthèse impressionniste d'éléments variés de Karl Heinz Stockhausen, John Cage, Omette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, et du Rock lui-même.

Leur son nuageux se déplace en des endroits inattendus de chemins étranges. Tout est filtré à travers un "Fuzz Box", gadget électronique destiné à distordre le son. Ils emploient énormément 1'improvisation collective. Les sets sont plus que des suites, chaque morceau entrant dans le suivant. Contrairement à la plupart des groupes de rock, les Soft Machine utilisent les crescendos et decrescendos et incorporent les silences. Je n'ai jamais entendu (et vu) quelque chose comme cela.

MICHAEL ZWERIN

Ce texte est la traduction de l'article de Downbeat, paru en juillet 1968.

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18 novembre : l'an 2000 ? - Rock & Folk - N° 14 - janvier 1968





Cet automne, la vague "hippie", ou plutôt son écume, atteint Paris sous la forme d'une imitation commerciale, comme d'habitude : en gros, une opération des marchands d'images ou de chiffons qui n'a pas tenu ses promesses. Cette fois, c'est le grand coup : on lance tout le folklore dans la bataille. La Nuit Psychédélique au Palais des Sports, c'est un peu la quinzaine anglaise des galeries machin. Les purs, ceux qui y croient, ne tarissent pas d'injures et d'amerturme sur l'apathie du public et le sabotage des exploiteurs : depuis J.-J. Lebel , qui essaiera vainement de créer un minimum de participation, de foi, jusqu'aux huit groupes anglais qui, pour l'occasion, avaient affrété un avion spécial : ils sont complètement écoeurés ; j'ai même entendu un des guitaristes hurler dans le micro : "c'est dégu... d'être dans un show de ce genre" - sans provoquer plus de réaction que sa musique. Robert, le batteur des Soft Machine, accusait même les organisateurs de sabotage à propos d'une sombre histoire de radio ou de salle : effectivement, le vendredi soir, d'interminables ballets-happenings sombraient dans la confusion, débordés par des migrations de spectateurs et de photographes cherchant "où quelque chose se passerait..."

D'autre part, le public, peu habitué à ce genre de foire, trouvait ça assez amusant, sans pourtant tomber dans le délire. Public hétéroclite, la grande réunion des hippies de Paris, presque tous anglais d'ailleurs, empanachés , portant des tuniques indiennes hautes en couleurs ou de splendides fourrures blanches ; ils pouvaient enfin parader librement dans leurs grandes tenues comme cela se fait couramment dans la rue à Londres ou à New-York. Et puis les autres, venus de tous les bords, par curiosité : les habitués du Golf Drouot, moitié hippies, moitiés blousons noirs ; l'un d'entre eux me dira : "C'est ça la musique hippie? Je croyais que c'était doux." Il semblait très déçu. Il y avait aussi des gens très bien, depuis Godard jusqu'à Terzieff et Annie Girardot ; ils trouvaient ça amusant.

Voilà, c'est ça, c'est amusant malgré tout, cette énorme surprise-partie où l'on peut se ballader, danser, écouter un peu et puis sortir son sandwich (ceux qu'on vend doivent être en or massif, encore un coup du business honni) ; on ne s'ennuie pas, même s'il y a du mauvais

plus que du bon : il suffit de savoir regarder, de se laisser aller à cette liberté où l'on ne connaît personne et faire tout ce qui passe par la tête, ou ne pas faire ; c'est tout de même mieux que ces boîtes à ambiance obligatoire ou ces sauteries contraintes; pas de représentation conventionnelle, de prétention, fais ce qui te plaît, ce que tu aimes ; si ça plaît aux autres, tant mieux, sinon tant pis.





Ça serait une formule à étudier pour ce Paris où l'on crève d'ennui guindé et d'amusement sur commande ; et puis elle a fait ses preuves à San Francisco ou à Londres ; elle est sans doute difficile à transplanter ; il manque l'essentiel, un terrain préparé, favorable ; il faudra habiter nos meubles Napoléon III ou Louis Philippe encore un bon moment.

Quant au spectacle sur la scène, s'il s'effilochait beaucoup trop en longueur et en vides, il comportait pourtant des choses bonnes et mêmes certaines très bonnes (vous aurez compris que je parle des Soft Machine ; c'est vrai j'avoue que ça a été le coup de foudre la première fois que je les ai entendus). Mais ne commençons pas par le pain blanc. Les happenings et autres ballets sont mieux passés la seconde fois que la première ; à partir du moment où les gens commençaient à comprendre qu'on était là pour s'amuser ensemble et pas pour en recevoir plein la vue ; et puis le Palais des Sports était à peu près rempli, alors que le vendredi il avait l'air d'un cirque abandonné où erraient quelques âmes en peine.

Les pitreries indo-hippies des "Exploding Galaxies" étaient presque amusantes sans être explosives ; j'ai revu le chef de la troupe, Mike, au centre américain du Boulevard Raspail, il y faisait, avec David Aellen (ex Soft Machine), une première expérience publique de cette "chose" encore mal définie, dite "psychédélique" ou "environnement" ou "pop", sorte de happening poétique où il faut créer un environnement total, c'est à dire s'adressant à tous les sens à la fois : de l'encens brûle (comme pour le living theater) et, pendant qu'une bande magnétique passe, où se mêlent la guitare, des bruits, des voix humaines et même des cuillères entrechoquées, on dit de la poésie plus ou moins automatique, murmurée, ou bien enflée jusqu'au cri ; "machine-poetry", "instant music", "mixed medias", c'est encore un peu confus, mais quand ça passe, l'idée est passionnante ; et puis, il y a trop de convergence entre des tentatives aussi diverses que, par exemple, celles-ci, celles du living theater, de John Cage, de Pierre Schaeffer, du laboratoire de l'O.R.T.F., etc... pour que cela ne débouche pas sur quelque chose; quoi, on verra, quand la technique sera un peu mieux maîtrisée ; beaucoup de gens commencent à s'y intéresser. Cela n'est pas si éloigné du laboratoire audio-visuel où se mêleraient sociologie, image, musique, expérience sur le langage dont m'a parlé Godard.

Mais revenons à nos moutons ; je cite d'abord, rapidement : de la bonne production anglaise conforme avec le guitariste Keith West, des "tomorrows", qui mériteraient de faire mieux que ça ; ce groupe utilise pour lumière de scène une série de flashes bleus qui donnent l'impression de voir un film au ralenti, l'effet est étonnant ; il y a aussi les "tubes" du Spencer Davis Group, qui font du bon sous-Rolling Stones. Les "serpents" en plastique



jaune et rouge du "plastic circus" descendent du plafond, sortis à la demande d'une drôle de machine, comme de la guimauve ; ils envahissent la scène puis la salle entière pendant que Lebel dit un texte d'Artaud.

Enfin, surtout, surtout, il y a les Soft Machine. On les a attendus longtemps mais ils ne décevront pas. "Incroyables machines" comme l'a crié quelqu'un dès leur entrée. C'est le seul moment où le public a été vraiment pris, "étonné" au sens fort. Si la musique psychédélique peut vraiment devenir quelque chose à côté du jazz, ils y seront pour beaucoup plus que les groupes américains comme les Jefferson Airplane ou les Velvet Underground qui, finalement, ne font rien de très nouveau - peut-être faut-il excepter Frank Zappa et les "Mothers", mais ils sont plus chansonniers que musiciens. Les Kaevin, le guitariste, commence par une chanson folk, presque douce, "My chateau", mais déjà dans sa voix de fausset, dans la dissonance de l'orgue électrique, on sent un faux calme, presque l'hystérie retenue ; et, sans transition...

Voici les grondements de l'orgue ; la sono est en permanence poussée au maximum, les projecteurs de la télévision s'éteignent ; alors commence ce que l'on ne sait pas comment appeler , ce spectacle total, cérémonie barbare ou futuriste ; pendant que les musiciens retrouvent l'état sauvage à travers l'électronique, le "sensual laboratory" projette ses explosions de lumières et de couleurs sur tous les écrans, de longues bulles mauves traversées de jaillissements de points rouges, des arborescences qui se développent au rythme de la musique, du torrent de résonances et de battements plutôt ; c'est hallucinant ; une sorte de kermesse du XXIème siècle. Chaque air dure au moins une demi-heure et l'on enchaîne sans interruption ; la batterie martèle ou mitraille, cependant que Mike, apparemment très calme alors que Robert est en transes, pousse l'orgue au paroxysme des grincements et des "fugues" dissonnantes : cela tient d'un complexe métallurgique, de la gare de triage, ou d'une tempête dans les câbles d'un pont suspendu. Pourtant, il y a un thème, et on le retrouve comme une pause, quand la voix aigre de Robert emerge de l'orage, sans qu'il cesse pour autant de battre. Mais les pauses sont rares ; ils ne sont pas ici pour ça ; ce qu'ils veulent, c'est une insistance, une violence venue du fond d'eux-mêmes qui brise, qui viole toute résistance ; après seulement, quand les barrières seront tombées, on pourra s'offrir un peu de dentelles et, soumis, on l'acceptera avec ses étrangetés.

Je n'ai pas compté combien de fois le guitariste assène "I dig it again", mais ça dure bien un quart d'heure, avec la batterie qui vous sonne les côtes d'un rythme qui devient deux fois puis trois fois plus long, seule l'imitation d'orgue d'Église est peut-être un peu facile... Le public n'en croyait pas ses oreilles ; les gens semblaient se réveiller d'un envoûtement qui les avait pris sans qu'ils s'en rendent compte ; tous ceux que j'ai interrogés ne pouvaient que dire "fantastique". Ils étaient sonnés, mais ravis. Alors "l'environnement" ça doit être ça. Je suis sorti, imaginant dans un futur proche ce genre de fête, de messe

électronique, magie de l'an 2000, avec, sous la voûte futuriste visualisée, les descendants reconnaissants des "pionniers".

Jean-François Vallée

Nota bene : les erreurs orthographiques de nom de musiciens ou de morceaux sont d'origine.

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Les Soft Machine : délire ou futur ? - Rock & Folk - N° 13 - décembre 1967

LES SOFT MACHINE : DÉLIRE OU FUTUR ?



On a déjà entendu parler d'eux dans les milieux bien informés, "in" ou "groovie" en d'autres mots. Ils furent les "choeurs antiques" un peu particuliers dans la pièce de Picasso, "Le désir attrapé par la queue" montée cet été sur la Côte d'Azur par J.J. Lebel et Victor Herbert. Ils ont participé à un "Dim Dam Dom" à la télévision. Il y a quelques jours, on se battait presque entre gens "bien" pour avoir accès au spectacle "psychédélique" du Studio des Champs-Elysées: "Ste Geneviève sur le tobogan", très dada quant aux arguments, très avant-garde par la mise en scène : ballets des "epilectic flowers" en collant - scaphandres prolongés de mains ou d'antennes, projection d'arborescences mouvantes, d'explosions de couleurs acides, à base de sueur et de sang paraît-il, pendant que les "Soft Machine" grinçaient, modulaient, sifflaient, éclataient et martelaient un rythme d'hystérie.

CÉRÉMONIE D'ENVOÛTEMENT

Je les ai revus au "Middle Of The Earth", boîte psychédélique de Londres : le "laboratoire" n'avait pas sorti le grand jeu des lumières, cela coûte trop cher. Mais le groupe se "donnait" à fond car on les enregistrait en prévision d'un prochain disque. Après une chanson toute douce, presque troubadour, où il s'agissait de jeune damoiselle et de château, la barbarie a commencé sans ménagement : Robert, vêtu d'un simple caleçon, ruisselait de sueur, de plus en plus "dingue" sur sa batterie ; une folie contrôlée pourtant, d'où une tension, une puissance telle que l'on se sent mal à l'aise : "Soft Machine", l'ambiguïté entre la fluidité lisse, le "cool" des machines électroniques, leur énorme puissance et leur déchaînement. Cette impression, Robert m'a confirmé qu'elle était juste et c'est celle qu'il voulait donner... De Mike, l'organiste, seules les mains menaient la danse, frappes, saccades et glissades ; son visage restait parfaitement immobile, guettant un signe de Robert pour réduire la haute tension, quand ce dernier commençait à chanter de sa voix de ténor, légère mais acide, presque crispante comme le bruit d'une abeille contre une vitre. Et cela a duré longtemps, tombant puis reprenant de plus belle: c'était comme la tentative confuse de réussir une cérémonie d'envoûtement, d'atteindre, par viol, les forces profondes de l'instinct et une participation presque primitive par le medium des amplis. Ils sont l'illustration parfaite du paradoxe de Mac Luhan, sociologue américain, mi-

charlatan mi-génial, des mass médias ; ces derniers, les sons, les images, les informations électriques, massives et instantanées, sont la chance, pour la société moderne, de retrouver le sentiment originel de participation, celui de la "tribu" ; "l'avant-garde", à New-York ou à Londres, dans le cinéma, la musique, les journaux, etc. est tout à fait polarisée par cette idée.

"Presque tous les groupes, ici ou en Amérique, fabriquent indéfiniment des sons et des mélodies pour livrer à la consommation, sous des formes plus ou moins nouvelles, les mêmes émotions, facilement identifiées et assimilées par le public. Nous voulons briser l'image, retrouver l'esprit du jazz, c'est à dire une expression authentique "sauvage" ("wild", associé à pur), mais la nôtre, cette fois, non celles des Noirs."

IL FAUT ÊTRE OUT

C'est Robert qui parle, avec ce drôle de sourire toujours entre les nerfs et les idées, ce sourire des jazz-men de la "New thing", animal et intellectuel en même temps. Robert ne peut tenir en place, grattant une guitare à moitié défoncée par son fils Sam, un petit diable de 2 ans ; ou bien dansant sur sa propre musique que débite sans arrêt une batterie d'énormes magnétophones. Il contraste avec les deux autres, étalant leurs longs corps maigres sur le lit ; ils articulent mollement une parole quand vraiment c'est indispensable : Mike, l'organiste, l'air hiératique derrière ses lunettes carrées, cerclées d'or ; et Kevin, le guitariste, chanteur à l'occasion qui se peint les yeux de longs pleurs violets, le seul du groupe à porter des couleurs : aujourd'hui, un ensemble en soie rose avec un haut de forme noir.

- Depuis combien de temps votre groupe existe-t-il?
- A peu près cinq ans; mais nous nous appelons les Soft Machine depuis un an seulement, nous avons pris le nom d'après un des titres de William Burroughs ; tous ses titres feraient de merveilleux noms de groupe," Festin nu " et les autres.
- Est-ce que votre style a beaucoup changé?
- Oui et non; Kevin, notre arrangeur, a environ soixante dix titres; beaucoup sont du "folk " traditionnel, mais nous faisons le genre de musique barbare que vous avez entendue, depuis le début, avant les groupes américains comme "Velvet underground" ou "Country joe and the Fish" qui, d'ailleurs, ne sont pas vraiment révolutionnaires, seulement en surface - autrefois les gens n'aimaient pas ça, ça leur déchirait les oreilles ; maintenant c'est "in"; alors, pour nous, il faut continuer "out" pour décider nous-mêmes notre "in", ne pas nous laisser piéger dans l'image qu'on veut de nous. Pour cette même raison, nous avons quitté "Polydor", qui veut nous téléguider, pour trouver une maison qui nous laisse libre...
- Vous aviez un autre guitariste, il y a trois mois ?
- David? Oui, il est parti ; il était un peu différent de nous ; le côté poésie d'avant-garde l'intéressait plus que ce que nous faisons ; mais nous pourrions très bien élargir la formation, avec d'autre instruments ; une fois , à Amsterdam, un saxo s'est joint à nous et ça a été formidable ; mais c'est très difficile de trouver quelqu'un : nous vivons tout le temps ensemble et ça pose des problèmes.
- La drogue?
- Nous ne fumons pas pour jouer, ça abrutit complètement ; seuls les Noirs peuvent faire ça. Le thé, les gauloises suffisent.
- Vous parliez d'élargir le groupe ; mais allez-vous continuer, et comment, vos expériences sonores en dehors des instruments traditionnels, comme lorsque Mike frotte le micro sous la cymbale pendant que vous battez, ce qui donne une sorte de grognement extraordinaire? Vous êtes les utilisateurs d'une "nouvelle musique" dans le domaine du pop comme il y en a une dans le "classique" ou le "jazz".

OUBLIER LES AUTRES

- Oui, et vous avez pu entendre les modulations graves ou aiguës que Kevin "joue" sur les amplis. Nous ne faisons pas de recherches systématiques ; seulement suivant l'inspiration du moment. Nous avons essayé un peu tout, même de brancher une émission de radio sur la guitare électrique, ou de poèmes enregistrés quand David était avec nous.
- Vous devriez essayer les ondes Martenot.

- Oui, mais c'est encore un peu cher.
- Quels sont les groupes "pop" que vous préférez ?
- Les Byrds, Dylan, les Mothers Of Invention.
- Mais les "Mothers" ne s'occupent pas tellement de la musique, ce sont les paroles qui comptent.
- Ça n'est pas vrai ; ils font autant de musique que Dylan ; il y a de longs récitatifs et moins d'effets peut-être ; mais c'est aussi musical que, par exemple, les chants des moines tibétains, ou dans un autre domaine, le blues.
- Et les autres, les Beatles, les Rolling Stones ou les groupes américains style "Jefferson airplane"?
- Je vous l'ai déjà dit tout à l'heure, ils font tous des variations sur le style, les thèmes inventés par les Beatles ; même ceux-ci ne se renouvèlent pas ; pas vraiment ; ils sont seulement parvenus à une merveilleuse virtuosité, à la maîtrise baroque de ce qu'ils font depuis le début.
- Alors, où cherchez-vous vos maîtres? Quelles musiques préférez-vous?
- Actuellement, nous essayons d'oublier les autres ; notre groupe est le seul qui compte pour nous ; pour moi, par exemple, Mike est le premier organiste qui fasse vraiment quelque chose de nouveau après Jimmy Smith (en toute modestie, mais vous comprenez dans quel sens je vous dis ça).



Cela dit, j'ai écouté beaucoup de musique indienne ou tibétaine ; j'aime aussi beaucoup le raffinement rythmique du jazz "brésilien" style Stan Getz, ou les "drums africains ou afro-cubains" quand ils ont un réel pouvoir hypnotique. Pour le jazz américain, Archie Sheep me semble plus complet que, par exemple, Cecil Taylor ; et mes voix préférées sont d'abord Billie Holiday, et puis Joe Tex, Stevie Wonder, et bien sûr Otis Redding ; Jimi Hendrix en fait un peu trop, et James Brown représente ce que les Noirs peuvent faire de plus artificiel, de plus mauvais quoi.
- Oui... je comprends ce que vous voulez faire maintenant ; pourtant, l'autre soir, au "Middle of the Earth", vous avez joué deux morceaux très longs et très intenses d'un bout à l'autre ; au premier, les gens étaient fascinés, mais j'ai eu l'impression qu'au deuxième, ils ont décroché au bout d'un moment ; peut-être y avait-il trop de déchaînements assourdissants et pas assez de soin dans la composition d'ensemble sur les thèmes? Ou bien il manquait de ces temps faibles où tous les musiciens de jazz se reposent, fument une cigarette et bercent le relâchement du public?



PARTICIPATION INTENSE

- Nous avons souvent ce genre de pause. (il règle un magnétophone et me fait entendre un air où effectivement, après un passage très fort, vient une improvisation beaucoup plus faible, quoique très rythmée.) Mais, de toute façon, nous ne voulons pas arrêter à la lassitude du public, aux limites des choses qu'il aime parce qu'il les reconnaît. Il faut aller au-delà, le forcer, il en a marre et puis il est repris, envoûté par quelque chose de nouveau qu'il découvre ; il commence à distinguer des formes dans la masse de

bruits qui l'a d'abord fasciné et puis étourdi.
- Un peu le genre "living theater", dans leurs exercices de concentration intense où il semble ne rien se passer à première vue, ou Andy Warhole et le cinéma "underground" de Londres et New-York, oeil tour à tour fixe et dansant qui scrute interminablement pour atteindre la trame profonde de l'ambiance.
- Oui, je pense que la comparaison est juste ; d'ailleurs, notre manager a fait partie du "living".

Un des passionnant groupes anglais de la "nouvelle vague"; ils sont encore plus dingues et plus cultivés que leurs augustes ainés.

- Autre chose, pourquoi sur scène, ne portez-vous qu'un slip ; est-ce pour choquer?
- Non, seulement je trouve plus sain, plus confortable d'être comme ça plutôt que dans une chemise où je transpire quand je deviens dingue. Et puis, de cette manière, il n'y a rien entre le public, la musique et moi ; le sentiment de participation est plus intense, plus physique. Faire l'amour est l'image la plus juste pour exprimer ce que je fais ; ça peut-être long et sensuel ou rapide et intense avec un temps où il ne se passe rien ; c'était peut-être comme ça l'autre soir. Ça dépend de l'humeur et de l'ambiance."

En effet, quand Robert de déchaîne, en nage, la bouche ouverte, il donne une impression animale, presque jusqu'au malaise ; pourtant je crois, comme il me l'a dit, qu'il garde toujours le contrôle de ce qu'il fait ; la preuve : il se met tout à coup à chanter tout en continuant à faire de la dentelle à la batterie, sans regarder... A ce moment, le téléphone sonne ; c'est un "ami" de Robert, un type très riche, qui leur demande de jouer pour un prix d'ami ; Robert le renvoie sans ménagement à son agent. Ce soir, ils vont jouer à Cambridge ; demain ils seront à Paris pour l'émission télévisée de Guy Béart. Je les quitte pendant que Mike se fait peindre une moustache et que Robert, en même temps qu'il règle les détails avec un géant habillé en tartare, s'habille en gris, comme toujours : "Avant, on s'habillait en couleurs, pour nous distinguer du public : maintenant c'est le contraire."

Au revoir, à Paris en décembre, à l'Olympia.

Jean-François Vallée

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Les "hippies" à la recherche d'adeptes... - Le Monde - 21 novembre 1967



LES " HIPPIES " A LA RECHERCHE D'ADEPTES...

Vestes bariolées et pantalons élimés, djellabas, serre-tête dans les cheveux et colliers autour du cou, ils ont, le temps d'un été, transformé un quartier de San-Francisco en réserve indienne. Et, traînant dans le défoulement des vacances leur ennui de jeunes vieillards, ils se sont réfugiés derrière des mots : dormir, manger, s'aimer, fumer, rêver, pouvoir des fleurs et de la musique, parvenant néanmoins à créer une expression, le " psychédélique sound ", entendez par là ce qui provoque en vous un effort de compréhension élevé, une secousse intérieure...

Cadets bâtards des " beatniks ", ils ont vécu ce que vivent les fleurs déjà fanées.

Toujours à l'affût d'une nouvelle mode, d'un nouveau " gimmik ", le " show business ", à New-York comme à Londres, s'est emparé avec gourmandise du " hippy " et de la danse " psychédélique ". Celle - ci permet, aux dires de ses adeptes, un épanouissement de la personne dans des décors " op' art " que des projecteurs éclaboussent de lumière en flashes multicolores. La conséquence immédiate fut, à Londres, la destruction à coups de hache de quelques postes de télévision et de quelques voitures, mais aussi l'éclosion d'un chef-d'œuvre enregistré par les Beatles, toujours prêts à sublimer un son, une mode, un rien.

A Paris, vendredi et samedi, ils étaient mille cinq cents au Palais des Sports (six mille places), certains déguisés en trappeurs, d'autres en tziganes, ou agitant mollement quelques clochettes, l'air hébété, attendant vainement qu'il se produise quelque chose sur une scène envahie par des groupes anglais ayant déjà fait leur temps : sur le coup de minuit, peut-être, lorsque l'éclairage transformait en homme de Cros-Magnon un musicien installé devant sa batterie en tenue de bain...

Trois jours auparavant, huit cents phares de voitures, quatre cent cinquante projecteurs, 3,5 tonnes de ferraille, cinq canons lançant dix mille fleurs, cent cinquante bombes de confettis, une dizaine de bombes d'encens et, sur trois écrans, un bric-à-brac où Frankenstein côtoyait Dracula, Rita Hayworth en Salomé et Buster Keaton constituaient un spectacle superbement délitant à l'inverse de ce qu'a rassemblé le label " hippy " à Londres ou à Paris. Il est vrai que Johnny Hallyday et autour de lui une équipe solide de régisseurs et de musiciens étaient les maîtres de cérémonie.

Claude Fleouter

Les futurs Beatles - Le Nouvel Observateur - 11 septembre 1967

LES BRUITS DE LA VILLE


Les bruits de la ville

Les futurs Beatles

Les futurs Beatles

"What do you want? What do you really want? Soft machine... Soft machine..." Une tendre voix de femme annonce à l'Electric Garden Club de Londres le nouveau "pop group" anglais "The soft machine". Il est en passe, dit-on, de détrôner les Beatles. Du coup, on dit les "Soft" alors qu'il faut dire la "soft machine" (titre d'une oeuvre de William Burroughs qui sera bientôt traduite en français). Ils sont quatre - que voici.

Daevid (avec un e, parce que ça fait plus moyen-âgeux) Allen : guitare, poèmes publiés dans "The Village Voice", le journal de Greenwich Village ; rêve de musique électronique, surnoms : Daevid-of-the-moon, Daevid Allen the alien (l'étranger) car il est australien; le plus attirant des quatre : bérêt écossais, veste bleue à col-fraise Henri IV, allure de Lord.

Kevin Ayers, véhément, romantique ; guitare ; collier de grosses perles de bois jaune, acheté aux Puces ; tunique verte de sultan ; poète lui aussi.

Mike Ratledge : petites lunettes bleues ; grand chapeau noir, veste de fourrure blanche ; joue de l'orgue avec générosité, diplômé d'Oxford ; étude de philosophie et de littérature : pianiste classique et de jazz ; joue Stockhausen, Erik Satie et Cecil Taylor.

Robert Wyatt : batteur ; jabot de dentelle ; tunique de cuir ; doux et doué ; peintre.

La première fois que je les ai entendus, c'était à Saint-Tropez où ils passaient en première partie du spectacle Picasso que présentait Jean-Jacques Lebel. Une musique violente, poétique, pleine d'humour, de "banana humour" selon eux, car, disent-ils, "connaissez-vous un fruit plus absurde que la banane ?". Ils ont tous les culots : par exemple, ils jouent pendant vingt minutes les cinq mêmes notes en chantant imperturbablement "I did it again" (j'ai recommencé). C'est drôle, mais c'est aussi très beau. Comme sont belles leurs chansons (ils en ont composé une centaine) sur les filles qu'ils ont eues, sur celles qu'ils n'ont pas eues, sur l'angoisse, sur l'amour, sur les lacs noirs ou les lacs blancs de leur vie. Ils improvisent constamment, ils changent brusquement de rythme, ils râlent, sifflent, hurlent, chuintent : tout leur est bon.

Aujourd'hui, pour les "Soft", c'est la gloire naissante. Ils ont joué au "Star Club" de Hambourg - où ont débuté les Beatles. Radio-Caroline passe régulièrement leurs disques. Ils ont fait des tournées dans toute l'Angleterre. Ils ont participé au "Technicolor dream", folle soirée qui eut lieu à l'Alexandra Palace de Londres, un soir de pleine lune, en mai dernier. C'est là que naquit le mouvement des "beautiful people" (célébré par les Beatles dans leur dernière chanson), ces garçons et ces fille vêtus d'habits orientaux et chargés de bijoux , qui distribuent des fleurs aux passants en leur disant : "Aimez-vous." Ils ont joué à la nuit psychédélique de Saint-Tropez et à Gassin, sous le chapiteau du "Désir" de Picasso. Ils se sont produits ces jours-ci au Festival d'Edimbourg et viendront peut-être en octobre à Paris pour la Biennale.

Yvette Romi

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"Le Désir attrapé par la queue" unique pièce écrite par Picasso redonne ses couleurs au surréalisme - Le Monde - 26 juillet 1967



"Le Désir attrapé par la queue" unique pièce écrite par Picasso redonne ses couleurs au surréalisme

Saint-Tropez, 25 juillet. - Cinquante mille dollars, c'est ce que risque de perdre, de son propre aveu, M. Victor Herbert, un Américain qui ressemble au Van Gogh des autoportraits, si le Désir attrapé par la queue, dont il est le producteur, ne fait pas recette. Deux cent cinquante mille francs d'investissements engagés par un ancien comédien qui a gagné quelque argent en plaçant des portefeuilles d'assurances : ceux qui ont eu projet de faire jouer ou de jouer la pièce de Picasso à Saint-Tropez ont pris la chose diablement au sérieux.

Ils ont été les seuls ou à peu près jusqu'ici, à leur grand dam. Les échotiers ne sont pas tout à fait étrangers aux démêlés que le metteur en scène Jean-Jacques Lebel a eus avec la municipalité de Saint-Tropez. Au deuxième acte, l'héroïne (la Tarte) ne devait-elle pas sortir complètement nue d'une baignoire ? Complètement nue avec des bas... Et le texte était l'expression en écriture automatique d'une sorte de délire sexuel. Alors les journaux s'emplirent d'entrefilets coquinement moralisateurs accompagnés de clins d'œil d'un air de dire : voilà bien Saint-Tropez.

C'était non pas se tromper (les chroniqueurs ne sont pas si ignorants), mais exploiter auprès du public le cliché fixé dans sa mémoire selon lequel Saint-Tropez est la ville de toutes les libertés, de tous les défoulements, de toutes les délices, en un mot la Capoue de notre époque.

Il faut dire aussi que MM. Herbert et Lebel ont sans doute été dupes de la même mythologie. Ils espéraient qu'en juillet-août, à quelques pas du Voom-Voom et dans la cour du Papagayo, il leur serait aisé de recruter une clientèle éclairée, réceptive et abondante.

Brighton et la place du Tertre

Étrange aberration ! Depuis Quelques années déjà, Saint-Tropez était en voie de devenir une station balnéaire démocratique et familiale. Mais en 1967 c'est pire que tout. Au train où vont les choses, on pourra bientôt envisager un jumelage avec Brighton ou Rimini. Déjà, comme si l'on était à Arcachon ou à Palavas-les-Flots, se multiplient des boutiques où l'on vend des bouées de sauvetage pour bambins et des barques gonflables à tête de

canard.

Le plus beau est sans doute que la fortune du port continue de reposer sur sa mauvaise réputation. Ces touristes qui s'agglutinent sous les tentes s'imaginent, le crépuscule venu, parcourir les ruelles d'une cité raffinée et un brin perverse. Ils n'en visitent guère que les décombres. A ce prix, ils pourraient aussi bien se rendre à Pompéi, qu'on s'est efforcé, elle au moins, de ne pas défigurer. Sans compter que là-bas les matrones et leurs filles feraient l'économie de l'accoutrement uniforme qu'elles se croient tenues de se procurer chez Vachon, Vachon devenu un magasin à prix uniques et que les hebdomadaires féminins persistent pourtant à présenter comme un temple de la mode...

Les campeurs, au demeurant, ne sont pas seuls à donner dans l'illusion tropézienne, et les yachts sont toujours nombreux, amarrés le long des quais. Pour les plus fortunés, on vient même de construire un luxueux hôtel, le Byblos, où la nuit coûte entre 80 francs (pour une personne) et 500 francs. On ne s'étonnera guère que, même en cette saison, on arrive à y trouver des chambres libres.

Mais après tout il importe peu que Saint-Tropez soit devenu l'endroit le plus propice à une méditation sur la mort. La ville continue de s'enrichir. De nouvelles boutiques, de nouveaux restaurants, s'ouvrent. Le quai est encombré de peintres qui, à longueur de journée, fabriquent des toiles dans le goût de celles qu'on débite au mètre carré sur la place du Tertre, à Montmartre. Un seul sujet : le port. Au fond, tout le monde a bien vieilli entre ces murs d'où les beatniks sont désormais de temps à autre refoulés.

Mme Bardot elle-même, conviée à la première du Désir attrapé par la queue, a. paraît-il, refusé. Offusquée ?

D'ingénieuses trouvailles

On concevra donc que dans cette atmosphère de platitude majoritaire et universelle, un peu de surréalisme, loin de paraître démodé, apporte une bouffée tonique. Ce n'était probablement pas à l'origine l'intention des organisateurs. Mais c'est de ce point de vue qu'on est en premier lieu porté à apprécier le spectacle offert sous une tente bleue, rouge et jaune dressée près du carrefour de la Foux. Le terrain, loué 5 000 F par mois par la commune de Gassin, est planté de pancartes qui prônent la " libre expression " et proclament le nom de " la pièce interdite ".

Disons tout de suite que M. Jean-Jacques Lebel, échaudé une première fois à Saint-Tropez qui l'a prié de déguerpir, a fait une ou deux concessions destinées à éviter que les chats ne fournissent prétexte à fustigation. Et aussi pour épargner la ruine du producteur si une interdiction venait à être prononcée. Alors, les bas noirs qui devaient être le seul ornement de la Tarte montent bien haut et rejoignent un très honorable cache-sexe qui a dû apaiser la conscience du policier des renseignements généraux assis au premier rang lundi soir, lors de la première.

Picasso, avant de donner son accord à la représentation, avait exigé que ne soit apportée aucune modification à la pièce qu'il avait écrite en 1941 et qui avait été mi-représentée, mi-lue à la fin de l'occupation, chez Michel Leiris, avec la participation de Camus, de Sartre et de Guéhenno, un soir où l'on se réunissait en hommage à Max Jacob, qui venait de mourir à Drancy. Mais l'auteur pardonnera sans doute aux comédiens ce petit coup de canif de dernière heure dans le contrat. Ils le méritent.

Les acteurs, parmi lesquels Jacques Seiler, Rita Renoir, Taylor Mead, ont eu des trouvailles ingénieuses. Le décor, les effets de lumière sur le long plateau, dont l'arc de cercle épouse le contour du chapiteau, ne manquent pas de poésie. Il fallait bien tout cela pour faire passer un texte qui comprend des phrases comme celle-ci : " Le bleu mou de l'archet, qui couvre de son voile de dentelle les roses du corps nu de l'amarante du champ d'avoine, éponge goutte à goutte la charge des petits grelots des épaules du jaune citron battant des ailes. Les demoiselles d'Avignon ont déjà trente-trois longues années d'âge. " Et l'on admettra aussi qu'il n'était pas commode de donner vie à des personnages qui s'appellent le Gros Pied, le Bout rond, le Silence, l'Angoisse grasse, l'Angoisse maigre, les Rideaux, et qui, à travers un symbolisme débridé, font passer le souffle de la cupidité, de la luxure, de la goinfrerie, de la mort, du rêve, du délire...

Certes, Picasso aurait probablement pu se passer d'être écrivain, encore mieux qu'Ingres jouait du violon. Mais il n'est pas indifférent que cette pièce, puisqu'elle existe, soit jouée. Telle qu'elle est interprétée, il s'en dégage d'ailleurs un je ne sais quoi qui remue l'âme on ne sait où. Il y a quelque paradoxe et quelque mauvaise foi, après lui avoir reproché son

caractère scandaleux, de faire aujourd'hui la fine bouche en disant qu'après tout il n'y a rien de si choquant que cela. Alors? Eh bien ! Il faut penser qu'on est en face d'un malentendu.

La deuxième partie du spectacle comprend un " happening ". Et on sait que le mot " happening " émoustille beaucoup de nos jours. Celui-ci se déroule sur fond cinématographique. Le film d'un accouchement, projeté à l'envers, fait rentrer le fœtus dans le sein maternel. Une voiture qu'on peint au pistolet, une femme nue sur le corps de gui on égorge deux poulets, constituent le reste de la trame sur laquelle chacun est invité à vivre son propre psychodrame. Il y a aussi pendant un quart d'heure une représentation d'" art total " dû à Ben. Les musiciens qui brûlent leurs partitions ou fracassent leurs violons ; un conférencier qui se demande pourquoi les spectateurs sont venus - ce n'est pas drôle à raconter. Ce n'est pas très nouveau non plus depuis Dada. On y prend plaisir quand même.

" Cela vaut bien un spectacle de cabaret ", commentait quelqu'un à la sortie. Assurément. Et sans doute le meilleur qu'on puisse trouver à Saint-Tropez - pardon - à Gassin. Mais si on a pu réunir une salle assez brillante et sympathique pour la première, il restera à remplir les gradins pendant un mois. Avec quel public ? Aux représentations précédentes, il y avait surtout des campeurs, et qui avaient plutôt tendance à demeurer bouche bée...

Michel Legris

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Une discographie de

Robert Wyatt



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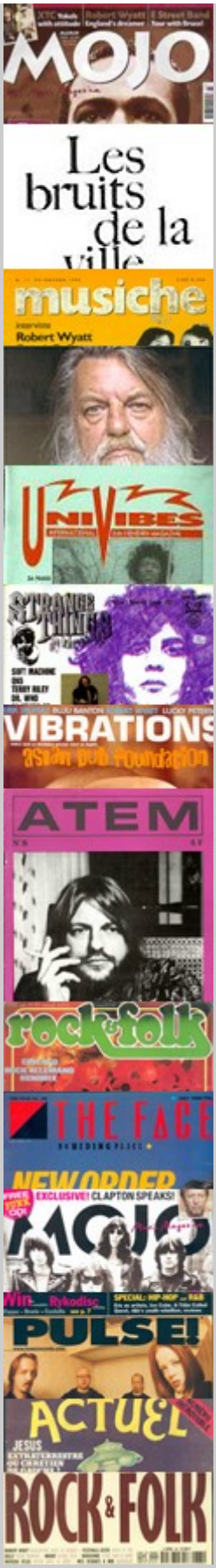
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ROCK BOTTOM



Robert Wyatt nel 2013, fotografato da sua moglie Alfreda Benge.

Il 26 luglio 1974 esce il secondo album solista di **ROBERT WYATT**, profondamente diverso dal precedente e sperimentale THE END OF AN EAR (1970).

Testo: **Alberto Popolla**

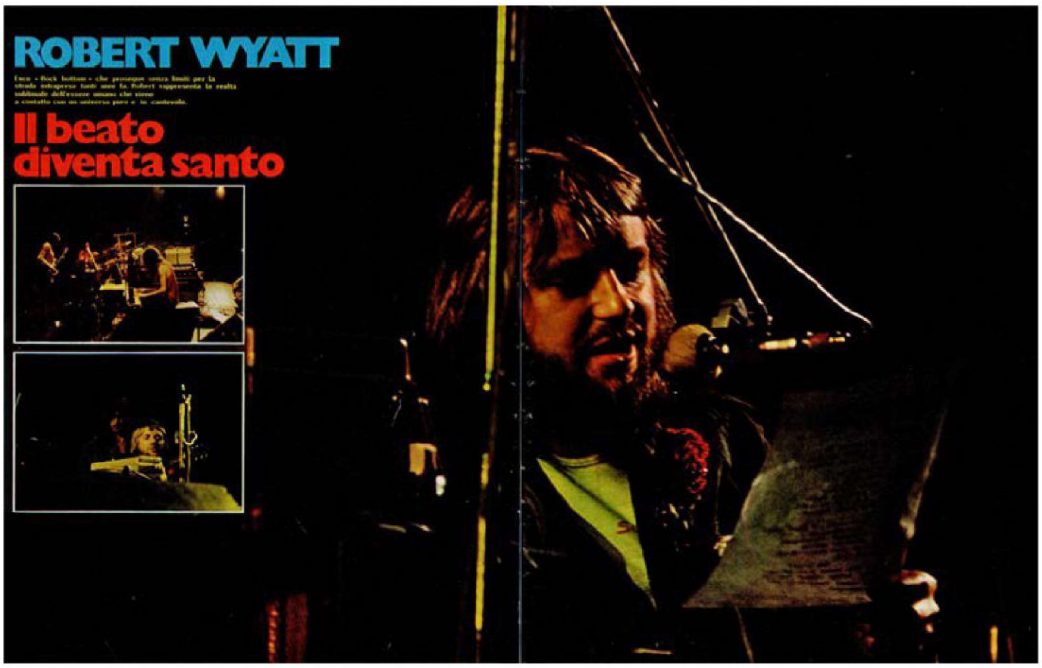
Il 1° giugno del 1973, durante una festa a casa dell'artista e poetessa Lady June, per il suo compleanno e quello di **Gilli Smith**, compagna di **Daevid Allen** e cantante dei Gong, Robert Wyatt, totalmente ubriaco, cadeva dal quarto piano riportando un danno permanente al midollo spinale, costringendolo per il resto della sua vita su una sedia a rotelle e mettendo fine alla sua carriera di batterista. Poco più di un anno dopo, il ventisei luglio del 1974, esce per la Virgin Records *ROCK BOTTOM*, unanimemente riconosciuto come uno dei più importanti e bei dischi di popular music. In questo lasso di tempo, di per sé breve, la vita di Wyatt e la sua carriera di musicista cambiano radicalmente, trasformando l'ex batterista dei **Soft Machine**, dei **Matching Mole** e di tanti altri progetti musicali in un autore e cantante di assoluto livello, nonché attivista politico e più in generale figura di riferimento per una larga schiera di musicisti, ancora più che in passato. ROCK BOTTOM rappresenta indubbiamente l'apice della sua carriera artistica, senza per questo sottovalutare i dischi e le collaborazioni precedenti e seguenti… un lavoro che si può benissimo dire perfetto in ogni sua componente, da quella musicale, ricca di riferimenti e suggestioni amalgamati meticolosamente, a quella testuale, profonda e sensibile, commovente per certi versi. Anche se molto della sua aura è dovuta all'essere un album uscito dopo il terribile incidente e quindi legato in qualche modo a quell'evento, in realtà venne in parte concepita tra la fine di dicembre 1972 e l'inizio del 1973, durante i due mesi di residenza a Venezia, al seguito di **Alfie Benge**, sua compagna e successivamente moglie (sposata lo stesso giorno dell'uscita del disco), grazie alla tastierina Riviera (oggi un cult), comprata per l'occasione.

Certo, probabilmente le musiche abbozzate in quei due mesi sarebbero state differenti se Wyatt avesse potuto ancora suonare la batteria o fosse stato in grado di avere un gruppo più o meno stabile. Tuttavia, il fatto di essere in parte concepito prima dell'incidente ci porta a vederlo non solo come il disco del Wyatt in sedia a rotelle, esclusivamente legato alla nuova condizione e ai postumi della difficile riabilitazione. Per spiegarci meglio, l'album contiene in sé le mille avventure musicali e influenze avute in precedenza, dai **Wilde Flowers** ai Soft Machine, alla frequentazione della scena jazz inglese e dei musicisti sudafricani residenti a Londra, ai contatti con il mondo psichedelico e alle suggestioni dada, alla patafisica, alla sperimentazione in generale. Un'apertura mentale e artistica che giunge, finalmente si potrebbe benissimo dire, a compimento proprio con ROCK BOTTOM, e che la nuova condizione di cantante e autore gli permette di dispiegare armoniosamente e con un singolare e straordinario equilibrio in questo album.

Anatomia di un capolavoro 1:
LO SPAZIO

"Alfie influenzò soprattutto la musica stessa, dato che certi miei lavori precedenti non le erano piaciuti: li trovava troppo densi, sovraccarichi. E così mi aveva consigliato: 'Perché non introduci più spazio, non lasci che si dipanino meglio come fanno Van Morrison e altri come lui?'. E mi influenzò molto positivamente, imparai a lasciare più spazio" (Wyatt in *Falsi movimenti. Una storia di Robert Wyatt*, Michael King Arcana Editrice, Milano, 1994).

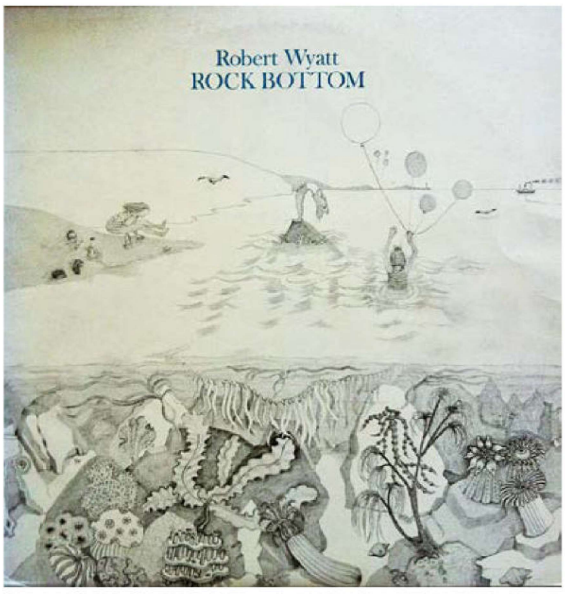
"Nick Mason aveva quel magnifico senso floydiano dello spazio. I Floyd avevano creato una nuova architettura. Quello era stato il loro grande contributo e il motivo per cui avevo scelto Nick. Tendevo da sempre ad ammucchiare le cose e a perdermi nel fitto dei dettagli. Lui mi disse solamente: 'Tutta roba buona ma dalle più spazio. Dà all'ascoltatore il tempo di respirare. Segui la corrente'" (Wyatt in *Different Every Time. La biografia autorizzata di Robert Wyatt*, Marcus O' Dair, Giunti Editore, 2015).



Sopra: «Ciao 2001» 41 (13 ottobre 1974).

Effettivamente, se c'è un elemento di radicale cambiamento rispetto a tutta la musica precedentemente suonata e composta da Wyatt, questo è proprio lo spazio, il respiro, il costante fluire della storia, la possibilità di essere avvolti dalle melodie e dalle sensazioni generate dalle composizioni. Messo a confronto con una qualsiasi altra opera dei Soft Machine o dei Matching Mole, questo disco sembra trasmettere un senso di rallentamento, di rilassatezza che dà la cifra stilistica generale. Non si tratta solamente della mancanza del furioso e irruente drumming di Wyatt: c'è l'uso sapiente delle suggestioni minimaliste che, invero, hanno sempre influenzato la musica dei gruppi di Wyatt, probabilmente dovute anche ai primi anni della sua carriera trascorsi a fianco di Daevid Allen. Ma questa volta l'elemento non è usato a fini ipnotici, bensì serve a dipanare lo svolgimento degli eventi, a creare per l'appunto spazio, in un'atmosfera costante di apparente stasi. La coda di *A Last Straw*, con le note singole di pianoforte che salgono e poi scendono inesorabili, solitarie, a lanciare la reiterata sequenza iniziale di accordi di *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*, splendido tappeto per le folate del trombettista sudafricano **Mongezi Feza** (Assagai, Elton Dean, Centipede), il regolare giro di basso di **Hugh Hopper** all'inizio di *Alifib*, il finale di *Alife* e lo sviluppo di *Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road*, con Wyatt che ripete incessantemente "can't you see them", e quella lunga coda caratterizzata dalla viola di **Fred Frith** (Henry Cow) e la costante e ripetuta baritone concertina di **Ivor Cutler** che sorregge la sua inconfondibile voce. Questo utilizzo di ambienti minimali, soavemente accennati, allarga la dimensione sonora, permette al brano di respirare, di svolgersi con la giusta misura, senza affastellare gli elementi.

Sotto: tre edizioni di ROCK BOTTOM. Le copertine (le prime due sono le originali, a destra la ristampa del 1994) sono opera di Alfreda Benge.





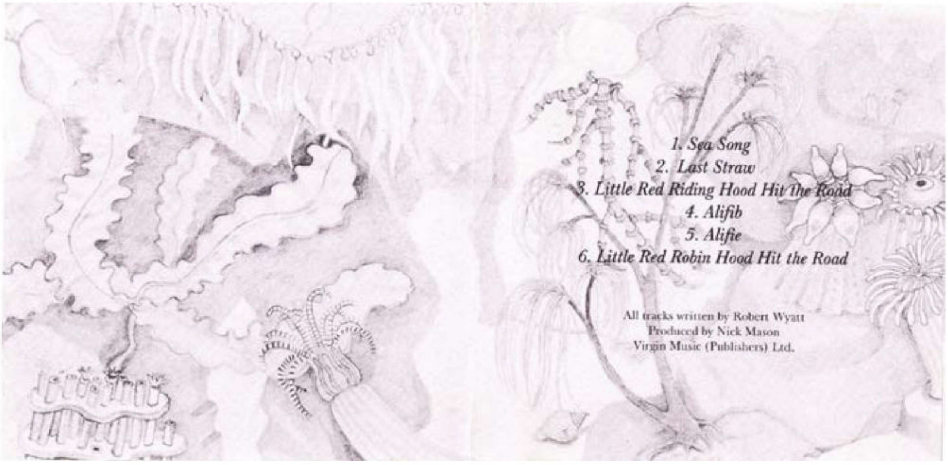


Anatomia di un capolavoro 2:
LE CANZONI

"A me piace la musica. Canzoni. Melodie"
(Wyatt, 2009).

"Essenzialmente voleva ancora fare canzoni. È molto legato alla canzone ed è per quello che nei Wilde Flowers era passato dalla batteria alla voce. Non avrebbe mai voluto abbandonarle". (Brian Hopper, fratello di Hugh e membro dei Wilde Flowers, su Wyatt in *Different Every Time*, 2015).

«NESSUN DUBBIO CHE FRA ALTRI CINQUANT'ANNI SI ASCOLTERÀ, SI PARLERÀ E SI SCRIVERÀ ANCORA DI ROCK BOTTOM»



ROCK BOTTOM è prima di tutto, o meglio soprattutto, un album di canzoni, di splendide melodie cantate, arrangiate in modo tale da far emergere le linee melodiche e i testi. Anche questo è un elemento nuovo, pur se solo in parte. Vero è che già in passato Wyatt aveva espresso grande capacità nel comporre brani, nel cantare canzoni, ma queste erano immerse in un mondo sonoro fatto di improvvisazioni, sperimentazioni, approcci avanguardistici; un mondo sonoro nel quale la melodia era uno dei tanti elementi atti a configurare un'estetica ricca e multiforme. La stessa *Moon In June* (THIRD, Soft Machine), insieme splendido esempio di composizione e chiaro presagio della futura rottura tra Wyatt e il resto del gruppo, è un insieme di canzoni organizzate come una suite e, pur nella sua estrema bellezza, l'esatto opposto della nuova concezione di spazio suggerita da Alfie e Mason per le nuove registrazioni. Ciò che accade ora è che i brani hanno una struttura certo elaborata ma perfettamente consonante, armonica, senza giustapposizioni. Non sono sparite le improvvisazioni, ma sono al servizio della canzone, ne arricchiscono la struttura senza appesantirla. Struttura che, ed è un altro elemento di livello, rifugge i classici cliché di strofe, ritornelli, bridge, assoli. In questo c'è la maggiore vicinanza al **Van Morrison** di *ASTRAL WEEKS (1968)*; la capacità di innovare la struttura dalla canzone, pur mantenendone la forma. Introduzioni, refrain, assoli, tutto è unito a formare quel flusso sonoro costante che permette alle melodie di stagliarsi limpide e indelebili, memorabili. Pur contenendo molte variazioni e segmenti, questa varietà e ricchezza di tutti i brani non si percepisce singolarmente ma viene apprezzata e accolta solo all'interno della canzone, anzi, è la canzone stessa.

Sopra: parte del libretto dell'edizione in Cd.

Anatomia di un capolavoro 3: IL JAZZ

"Io, Hugh Hopper ed Elton Dean perseguivamo un orientamento vagamente correlato al jazz. Robert Wyatt era fortemente contrario, il che è strano ripensandoci oggi, visto che era appassionato di jazz (Mike Ratledge in *Different Every Time*, 2015).

"L'idea stessa di essere più avanti suonando accordi strambi su metri bizzarri – come per dire: 'Oh, questa sì che è meglio della musica pop' – mi sembrava una cretinata. Quello che davvero mi piaceva della musica pop – come del jazz di una volta, quand'era ancora vera popular music – era la capacità, nelle sue espressioni migliori, di essere al tempo stesso musica intellettuale ma anche profondamente viscerale e intuitiva" (Wyatt in *Different Every Time*, 2015).

Le semplici triadi maggiori che introducono *Sea Song*, brano di apertura, tradiscono in parte il mondo sonoro al quale la precedente carriera di Wyatt ci ha abituato. Per un amante del jazz l'utilizzo di triadi in luogo di accordi di settima sembra spostare l'estetica in ambito rock o pop.



A destra: etichette del Cd (sopra) e del 33 giri (sotto).





Retro e disegni dal Cd.

Ma non bisogna dimenticare che tutto l'album è stato concepito da Wyatt grazie a una piccola tastiera, e soprattutto che è un autodidatta. Il suo approccio allo strumento certo differisce per esempio da quello di **Mike Ratledge**, o di altri tastieristi con i quali ha collaborato. E quindi, sia le successioni che gli accordi sono veramente frutto della sua creatività quasi per nulla mediata dallo studio accademico. Ma quella creatività ovviamente fa riferimento ai numerosi ascolti di quando era più giovane, ai dischi jazz così come alle tante collaborazioni avute nel corso della carriera. Questo approccio riesce a trasmutare nelle canzoni il sapore afroamericano, a creare l'atmosfera jazzy, malinconica, con una predominanza generale di tonalità minori, pur utilizzando spesso delle semplici triadi. Ad arricchire il panorama armonico Wyatt inserisce spesso delle tensioni, queste sì di uso jazzistico, come le quinte diminuite o le quinte aumentate, accordi semidiminuiti, passaggi cromatici, oppure accordi vuoti (solo prima e quinta), tutto materiale che scaturisce dall'utilizzo di tastiere in luogo di chitarre. È il panorama sonoro della scena di Canterbury, dove i tastieristi hanno avuto certamente più peso dei chitarristi.

La magia di R.B. è che Wyatt riesce a riportare il jazz in ambito *popular*, così come descritto dalle sue parole: il suono della tastierina Riviera colora tutto di *blue*, dandogli un sapore soffuso, intimo, ma che viene corrugato da suoni e note anomali, progressioni inaudite, melodie elaborate eppur spontanee, e gli interventi dei musicisti ospiti sui quali torneremo più avanti. Nulla a che vedere con il jazz rock, ma anche in gran parte lontano dalla tipica estetica canterburiana, soprattutto quella degli Hatfield and the North, o, ancora più distanti, dei National Health. Per certi versi siamo più dalle parti dei Caravan e dei primi Soft Machine, ma lo spessore è certamente maggiore, la qualità compositiva così come l'esecuzione è di un livello tale da porre queste composizioni al di fuori di quella scena, da cui peraltro ne prende le movenze. E siamo lontanissimi anche dal mondo *progressive*, con l'assenza di suite, di quadri, di tempi dispari e di virtuosismo solistico. È un mondo di assoluta originalità che non ha prodotto seguaci, se non i successivi lavori di Wyatt, ma solo ammiratori, dovuto in gran parte alla incredibile perfezione del risultato, impossibile da imitare.



Robert Wyatt e Alfreda Benge in una foto storica.

Anatomia di un capolavoro 4:
LA VOCE

"Quando provo a cantare è come un processo di eliminazione ed evito di fare qualunque cosa che non ritenga necessaria. Mi sento come se lavorassi in maniera primitiva" (Wyatt, 2009).

Uno dei motivi per il quale ROCK BOTTOM appare come un intoccabile, un quadro da guardare alla giusta distanza senza osare di volerlo riprodurre anche solo in parte, è la performance vocale di Wyatt. Assolutamente inarrivabile, morbida e flessuosa, che entra nelle note, e poi si adagia e plana sulla melodia armoniosamente. È una voce che si modifica, che interpreta, che improvvisa, con quel suo scat ispirato alle trombe con la sordina dell'orchestra di **Duke Ellington** o all'uso del wah wah in **Sly & the Family Stone** (cfr. Marcus O' Dair in *Different Every Time*, 2015). C'è l'utilizzo della voce come strumento, ricollegandosi in parte a ciò che accade spesso nei lavori canterburiani: Gilli Smith e Daevid Allen nei Gong, le **Northettes** con gli Hatfield and the North, **Amanda Parsons** con i National Health, e anche **Richard Sinclair** sempre negli Hatfield and the North. Ciononostante le improvvisazioni in *Sea Song* e *A Last Straw* sono di un livello probabilmente mai raggiunto prima, proprio per la limpidezza, la rilassatezza e la straordinaria inventiva di Wyatt.

Anatomia di un capolavoro 5:
I MUSICISTI

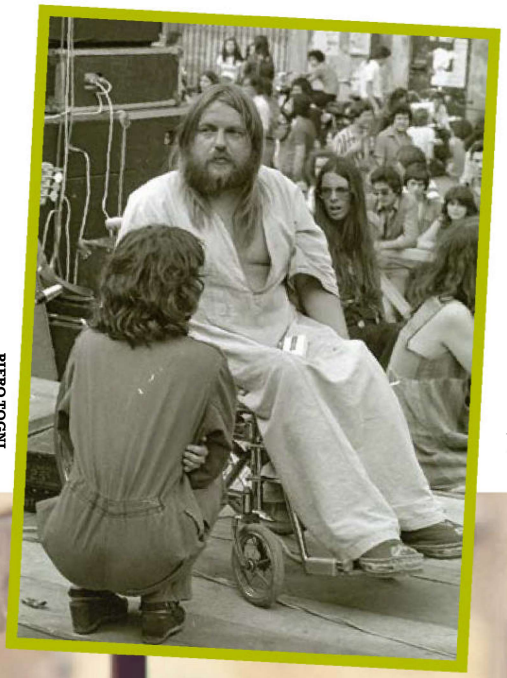
"La grande differenza con ROCK BOTTOM fu che, non facendo parte di un gruppo, potevo invitare determinati ospiti su brani specifici. Per esempio, c'erano due bassisti: Hugh Hopper suonò su certe cose con le quali pensavo che si sarebbe trovato a proprio agio e Richard Sinclair, altro amico del Kent orientale, intervenne su altri brani. Non è cosa che si possa fare normalmente senza provocare frizioni" (Wyatt in *Dfferent Every Time*, 2015).

"La scelta degli ospiti rifletteva l'ampiezza di gusti musicali di Wyatt" (O' Dair in *Different Every Time*, 2015).

Richard Sinclair, Hugh Hopper, Ivor Cutler, Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo, Laurie Allan, Fred Frith, Mike Oldfield. Questo l'elenco dei musicisti presenti su ROCK BOTTOM, oltre a Nick Mason in qualità di produt-

«ROCK BOTTOM È UNANIMEMENTE RICONOSCIUTO COME UNO DEI PIÙ IMPORTANTI E BEI DISCHI DI POPULAR MUSIC»

tore e Alfreda (Alfie) Benge alla voce, ma di lei parleremo successivamente. Che l'album rappresenti in gran parte la *summa* delle mille suggestioni e frequentazioni avute da Wyatt questo è ampiamente dimostrato dalla scelta dei musicisti, dalla varietà, peraltro poi organizzata e assemblata a costruzione di un'estetica omogenea. Abbiamo Canterbury (Richard Sinclair e Hugh Hopper), la psichedelia (Nick Mason e, in parte, Mike Oldfield), il jazz sudafricano e il free (Mongezi Feza e Gary Windo), la sperimentazione e l'avanguardia (Ivor Cutler e Fred Frith). Abbiamo una *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road* fatta scorrere al contrario con il basso di Sinclair sovrainciso (idea di Alfie Benge) come nella più tipica tradizione psichedelica, e le suggestive raffiche africane di tromba di Feza sempre su lo stesso brano, il basso profondo e insinuante di Hopper e quello più melodico di Sinclair, la batteria eterea e allo stesso tempo incalzante, potente, di Allan, la viola aliena di Frith insieme all'eccentrica voce di Cutler, la spazialità della chitarra di Oldfield e lo sporco free di Windo con le sue ance. Ognuno di loro al posto giusto nel momento giusto, con interventi misurati ma di grande fascino, tutto al servizio della composizione. Certamente non sarebbe stato possibile avere ROCK BOTTOM senza il contributo di questi musicisti.



PIERO TOGNI

Concerto di Robert Wyatt con gli Henry Cow a piazza Navona (Roma, 27 giugno 1975).

Anatomia di un capolavoro 6: LE PAROLE

"Mi imbarazza sempre molto il fatto che si pensi che parte del disco parli di me. Quando cominciò a lavorare sulle parole di *Alifib*, Robert cantava: 'Polly, my larder'. Allora gli chiesi: Chi è questa Polly? Se vuoi cantare di qualcuno, canta di me! Non fu propriamente un'idea sua: mi introdussi quasi a forza nel disco" (Alfreda Benge in *Falsi movimenti*, 1994).

"Nel verso finale di Sea Song, il semplice *ma rin*cuorante 'non siamo soli', riecheggia qualcosa che sia Robert sia Alfie dicono della loro relazione: quando si conob-



«LA FORZA DEI TESTI SI AMALGAMA PERFETTAMENTE ALLE ATMOSFERE MUSICALI, RENDENDO L'ALBUM ASSOLUTAMENTE OMOGENEO E BILANCIATO»

bero smisero di sentirsi soli" (Marcus O' Dair, 2015).
In ROCK BOTTOM convergono una serie di aspetti privati e artistici di Robert Wyatt che hanno molto a che fare con la sua relazione con Alfreda. L'invito a seguirla a Venezia a seguito delle riprese del film *A Venezia… un dicembre rosso shocking* di Nicolas Roeg (1973), dove lei avrebbe lavorato in qualità di seconda assistente al montaggio, lo costringe a uno stop forzato dai suoi numerosi impegni ma allo stesso tempo gli dà la possibilità di lavorare su idee e musiche nuove, di interrompere il turbinio di concerti e collaborazioni varie, di ascoltare i consigli e di riflettere. Una vacanza che consolida una relazione fertile, proficua, alla pari, e che diverrà ancor più stretta subito dopo l'incidente con la presenza costante di Alfie al suo fianco. È questa relazione affettiva che si dipana in un momento della loro vita assai particolare ad essere in gran parte al centro dei testi del disco; circostanze e contesto che verranno poi riversati, artisticamente, in parole. I numerosi riferimenti all'acqua, del quale la copertina disegnata da Alfie ne è un esempio lampante, sono uno degli aspetti più interessanti e visivamente potenti dei testi: da una parte il ricordo di una vacanza intensa passata tra i canali di Venezia con colei che diverrà poi sua moglie, dall'altra il riferimento al salto nel vuoto compiuto, fisicamente e artisticamente, ma anche il ritorno al grembo materno, il toccare il fondo del mare per poi risalire, il lasciarsi andare al flusso delle maree, e poi delfini, cuccioli di capodoglio, alghe aggrovigliate (*Sea Song*). È un mondo acquatico che viene enfatizzato anche da quel particolare suono della tastiera Riviera regalatagli da Alfie proprio a Venezia. Interessanti sono le tematiche che riguardano più propriamente il loro rapporto di coppia e sul quale Robert, durante la sua permanenza in ospedale, dove inizia a riprendere confidenza con la musica mettendosi a suonare la tastiera, ha avuto modo di riflettere. La pausa forzata gli permette di elaborare testi che, pur parlando in generale d'amore, non perdono il loro carattere dadaista, potremmo dire: Alfie come dispensa, come cena, e lei che risponde apostrofandolo "una vecchia crema sdolcinata" (*Alife*). Così come non vengono persi i giochi di parole, i nonsense, il famoso *fol de rol*, da sempre caratteristica fondamentale della scena di Canterbury: dalla serie di "no nit not" passando per "trip trip pip pippy pippy pip pip" in *Alifib/Alifie* che producono una sorta di tappeto ritmico, alle talpe d'acqua (probabile riferimento ai Matching Mole), alla stessa presenza di Ivor Cutler che declama "*Io e il porcospino facciamo scoppiare le gomme tutto il giorno*" (*Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road*). Un corredo testuale che ondeggia tra la decantazione di un rapporto finalmente maturo e duraturo, e le ombre che talvolta aleggiano sulle parole, alludendo in maniera poetica al drastico cambiamento avvenuto nella vita di Wyatt. La forza dei testi si amalgama perfettamente alle atmosfere musicali, rendendo l'album assolutamente omogeneo e bilanciato.

Coda

Tuttavia, questa parziale analisi non coglie pienamente l'essenza di ROCK BOTTOM, i significati e le emozioni che ancora oggi riesce a dare. Non spiega, e non potrebbe farlo, perché a distanza di così tanto tempo quest'album suona ancora attuale, intenso, coinvolgente, persino innovativo. Come in tutte le grandi creazioni artistiche, ci sono sempre aspetti che sfuggono alla disamina oggettiva. C'è quel senso di magia, di trascendenza che fa sì che quell'opera mantenga una sua natura misteriosa, insondabile, impossibile a spiegarsi. Una dimensione magica che la rende immortale. Nessun dubbio che fra altri cinquant'anni si ascolterà, si parlerà e si scriverà ancora di ROCK BOTTOM.

Un ringraziamento particolare a Gennaro Fucile e a «Quaderni d'altri tempi» (*quadernidaltritempi.eu*), dove questo saggio è apparso per la prima volta.



PIERO TOGNI

Robert Wyatt sul palco allestito a piazza Navona, quando lui e gli Henry Cow suonarono prima dei Gong. Il concerto avvenne durante la giornata per la depenalizzazione della marijuana, organizzato da «Muzak» e Stampa Alternativa (27 giugno 1975).

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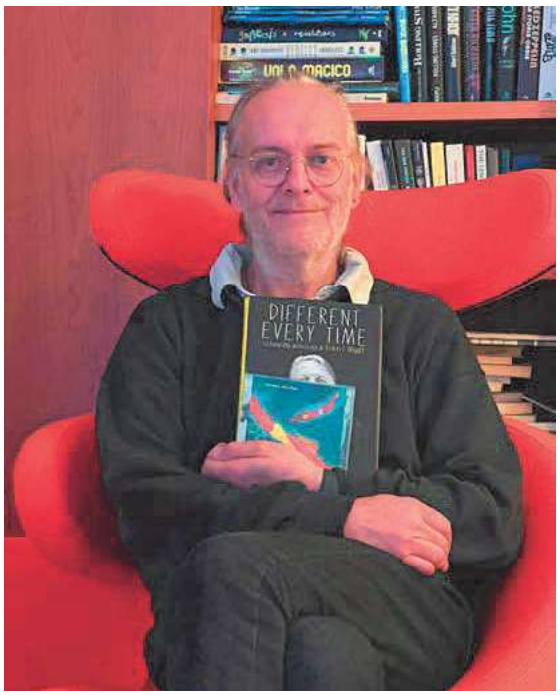
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Ascoltare ROCK BOTTOM, secondo lavoro solista di **Robert Wyatt**, è ancora oggi come entrare in una dimensione parallela: tra sperimentazione sonora e malinconia, canzoni d'amore anticonvenzionali e dialoghi impossibili, l'ex batterista dei **Soft Machine** scrive una delle pagine più importanti della musica contemporanea.

FINO IN FONDO

Testo: **Marco Olivotto***

Il 26 luglio del 1974, Robert Wyatt pubblica il suo secondo album solista, ROCK BOTTOM. Nello stesso anno **Peter Gabriel** lascia i **Genesis**, gli **Yes** incidono RELAYER senza **Rick Wakeman**, e i **King Crimson** si sciolgono, come avevano già fatto i **Van der Graaf Generator** due anni prima… possiamo affermare che il 1974 è il momento in cui si manifestano le prime avvisaglie del cambiamento che avverrà dopo la metà degli anni Settanta? Plausibile, anche se come sempre la macrostoria (quella del rock progressivo, in questo caso) e la microstoria (quella dei singoli gruppi) non sempre coincidono. Un tratto comune è che alcune delle band citate avevano allargato a dismisura i confini stilistici della loro musica nell'arco di pochissimi anni. Gli Yes nel giro di pochi album avevano creato un suono molto più ricco e sinfonico rispetto agli esordi. I Genesis passarono in quattro anni da TRESPASS a THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY, un album dal peso compositivo enorme. Tutte queste band entrarono in fibrillazione perché, in modi diversi, il loro peso crebbe fino a causarne il cedimento.



Marco Olivotto con l'album di Wyatt e il libro di Marcus O'Dair.

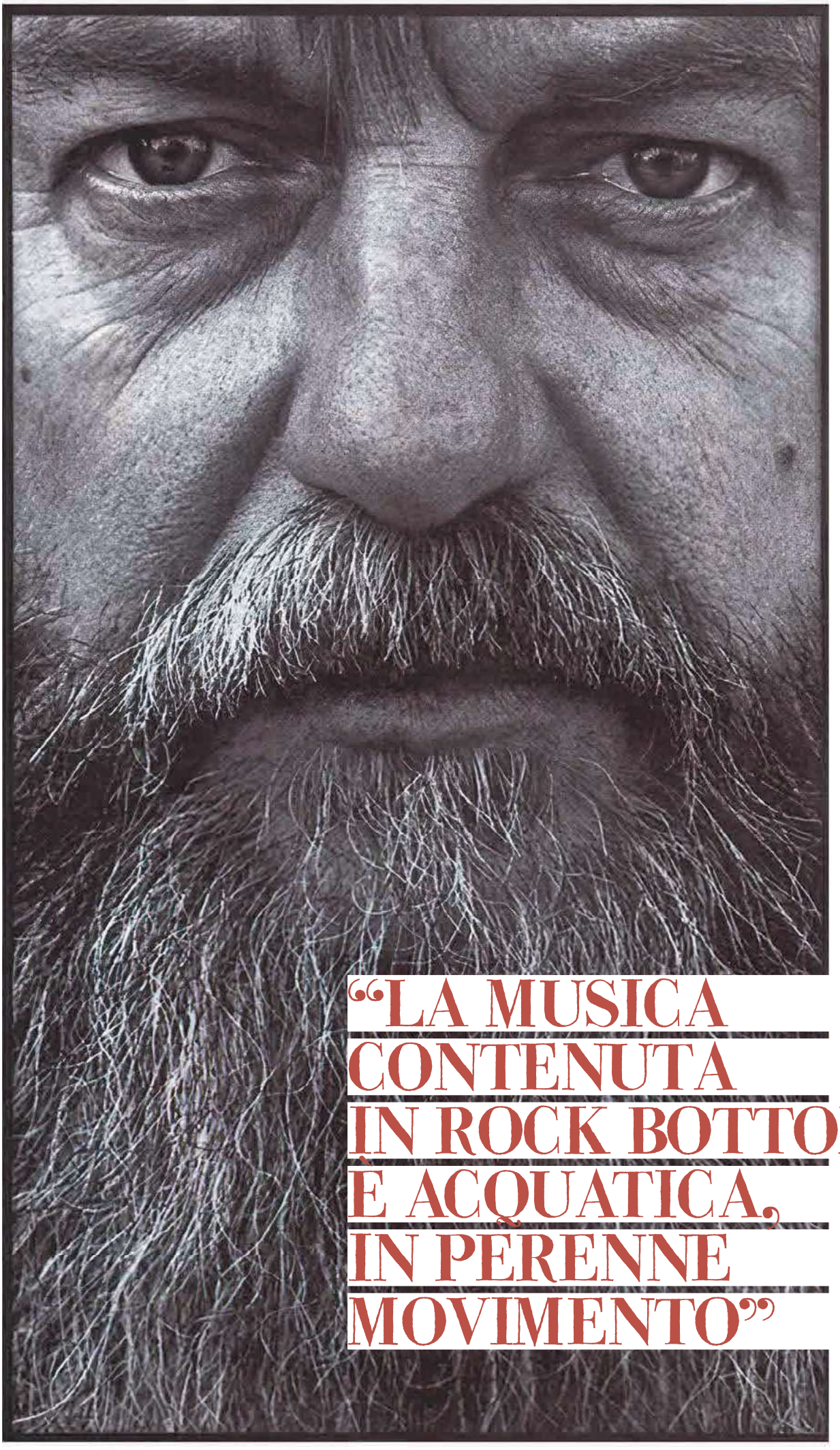
Prima della caduta

Robert Wyatt aveva già pubblicato un album solista nel 1970, THE END OF AN EAR, passato praticamente inosservato. C'è un parallelismo forte tra la *Moon In June* contenuta in THIRD dei Soft Machine – band della quale Wyatt faceva parte come batterista – e quel materiale, elaborato più o meno nello stesso periodo. TEOAE è un album decisamente sperimentale: difficile definire "canzoni" i brani, in primo luogo per la mancanza dei testi. La lettura di *Different Every Time*, la biografia di Wyatt scritta da **Marcus O'Dair**, descrive un artista inquieto: amava bere moltissimo, era un notevole donnaiolo ed era sempre in cerca di qualcosa. Questa inquietudine, canalizzata in una forma artistica vicina all'avanguardia, trasuda da ogni solco di THE END OF AN EAR. Non so se si trattasse di vera ricerca o dadaismo, ma propenderei più per la seconda ipotesi. È difficile definire il genere come "progressive rock", perché la parola "rock" sembra fuori luogo. È musica molto più vicina al jazz. E chissà perché questo accadde proprio a Canterbury, una cittadina poco più grande della mia Rovereto, vicina a Londra ma assai diversa dalla capitale.

Il rapporto con Nick Mason

Nick Mason è il produttore sia di TEOAE che di ROCK BOTTOM. Può sembrare sorprendente, ma spesso tendiamo a dimenticare che a Londra, all'epoca, era molto facile tessere contatti. Il compianto **Nic Potter** (bassista dei Van der Graaf Generator e autore di numerosi album come solista) mi disse che dovevo immaginare Londra come un enorme paese, dove nell'ambiente tutti conoscevano tutti. A pensare che **Jeff Beck** entrò negli **Yardbirds** per sostituire **Eric Clapton** e si trovò a fianco di **Jimmy Page**, gira un po' la testa. All'inizio degli anni Settanta, **Rick Wakeman** era un turnista richiestissimo, che lavorò con chiunque. Visto che l'ho ci-

*Musicista e produttore, Marco ha condotto la trasmissione *World Record* su Radio GBJ International Sound, analizzando in ogni puntata un album storico, senza preclusioni di genere.



Robert Wyatt
(Bristol,
28 gennaio 1945)

"LA MUSICA CONTENUTA IN ROCK BOTTOM È ACQUATICA, IN PERENNE MOVIMENTO"

GUIDO HARARI









tato, un giovanissimo Nic Potter frequentò per un periodo **Mick Jagger**, e immagino anche gli Stones. Jagger un giorno lo incontrò e si complimentò con lui per il secondo album dei Van der Graaf Generator, THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS WAVE TO EACH OTHER. Non dobbiamo quindi sorprenderci che Wyatt fosse vicino ai **Pink Floyd**, che agli esordi non erano certo quelli di THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON. I Soft Machine erano habitué dell'UFO, il famoso club di Tottenham Court Road dove i Pink Floyd fecero la loro gavetta. In seguito, furono proprio i Soft Machine a sostituirli. La storia della produzione di Mason è invece un po' complicata: dopo essere uscito dai Soft Machine, Wyatt aveva fondato i **Matching Mole** alla fine del 1971, ma li lasciò con due album all'attivo nel settembre del 1972. Nei mesi successivi iniziò a comporre alcuni brani (in parte a Venezia, come vedremo) e ci furono dei tentativi di riunire la band. A ridosso dell'incidente che rese Wyatt paraplegico, a Mason venne proposto di produrre il terzo album del gruppo, che però non venne mai realizzato. In realtà tutti i Pink Floyd furono vicini a Robert dopo l'incidente, al punto da organizzare un concerto per raccogliere fondi a suo favore. Guardando indietro, i Soft Machine parteciparono a THE MADCAP LAUGHS (1970) di **Syd Barrett**, certamente grazie a legami artistici nati all'epoca dell'UFO. Proba-

Discografia RW, da sinistra: THE END OF AN EAR (1970), MATCHING MOLE (1972), LITTLE RED RECORD (1972) e il 45 giri I'm a Believer edizione giapponese (1974).

Nel 1985 i Tears for Fears hanno pubblicato su 45 giri la cover di *Sea Song*.

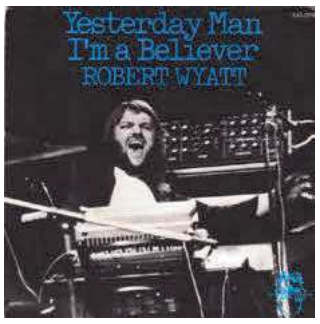
babilmente Mason finì per produrre ROCK BOTTOM al posto dell'album dei Matching Mole, soprattutto per aiutare Wyatt: non so chi avrebbe scommesso seriamente sulla carriera di un batterista paralizzato con velleità di cantante, il cui unico album da solista aveva avuto un impatto commerciale prossimo allo zero. Mason forse non si rese neanche conto di stare investendo nella realizzazione di uno dei capolavori assoluti della musica contemporanea.

Vita a Venezia

Nell'autunno del 1972, Wyatt si recò a Venezia con **Alfreda Benge**, per tutti Alfie, all'inizio della loro relazione. Lei lavorava nello staff di un film diretto da **Nicholas Roeg**. Robert non era particolarmente entusiasta all'idea di lasciare l'Inghilterra, anche perché era un maniaco iperattivo del lavoro. L'idea di fare una vacanza gli era estranea, ma alla fine accompagnò Alfie. A Venezia lei acquistò e gli regalò un piccolo organo, poco più che un giocattolo, suggerendogli di comporre dei brani per passare il tempo. Mi rendo conto di poter apparire troppo romantico, ma ogni volta che mi reco in quella città immagino Robert seduto in riva a un canale con il suo strumento. Vorrei pensare che abbia concepito i brani di ROCK BOTTOM così, ma so che in parte erano già stati scritti. Ogni volta che ascolto l'album ho la sensazione che il tempo si dilati. Venezia è per sua natura una città in cui il tempo è dilatato: tutto si muove a una velocità inferiore a quella del resto del mondo. Mi è capitato un paio di volte di passare la notte in città, ed è un'esperienza strana: quando è vuota, camminando per le calli immerse nel silenzio, a volte si sentono dei passi alle spalle. Poi ci si rende conto che è il riverbero del proprio passo, e si ha la sensazione di essere totalmente soli, nello spazio e nel tempo. Immagino che una permanenza prolungata come quella di Wyatt possa averlo fatto entrare in contatto con questa realtà, che si situa su un piano diverso da quello sensibile che sperimentiamo ogni giorno. Di certo la musica contenuta in ROCK BOTTOM è acquatica, in perenne movimento. Con un dettaglio inquietante: in una scena del film a cui Alfie collaborava, il protagonista (Donald Sutherland) cade da un ponteggio che crolla. Un presagio?

Il titolo

L'espressione inglese "rock bottom" si usa per descrivere uno stato così basso da non poter andare oltre. È un fondo di roccia: bam! In italiano useremmo l'espressione "toccare il fondo". Credo che ci sia un riferimento con l'impatto al suolo che Wyatt sperimentò la notte del 1° giugno 1973 cadendo da una finestra al quarto piano… in realtà l'incidente è in parte avvolto dal mistero. Lui non ne parla volentieri, anche se la versione ufficiale più accreditata è che sia semplice-











Robert Wyatt
ROCK BOTTOM
(1974, Virgin)

Side One
Sea Song
A Last Straw
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road

Side Two
Alifib
Alifie/Alife
Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road

Musicians: **Robert Wyatt** (vocals, keyboards, percussion, slide guitar, James' drum, Delfina's wineglass, Delfina's tray and a small battery) – **Mike Oldfield** (electric guitar) – **Gary Windo** (bass clarinet, tenor saxophone) – **Ivor Cutler** (voice, baritone concertina, harmonium) – **Alfreda Benge** (voice) – **Mongezi Feza** (trumpets) – **Fred Frith** (viola) – **Hugh Hopper** (bass guitar) – **Richard Sinclair** (bass guitar) – **Laurie Allan** (drums)
Produced by Nick Mason

mente caduto. Certamente era ubriaco oltre ogni limite, e forse si salvò perché cadde senza irrigidire i muscoli. In un'intervista, però, si lasciò sfuggire che si era consapevolmente buttato. Legò questo gesto alla sua esclusione dai Soft Machine, un'esperienza dolorosa che gli aveva causato una seria depressione. In quel senso, "rock bottom" potrebbe anche essere la causa del volo, più che il volo stesso: "I'm at rock bottom" significa anche "sono al livello (emotivo, psicologico) più basso possibile".

A partire dalla ristampa in Cd del 1998, la copertina originale di ROCK BOTTOM è stata sostituita da una nuova immagine, sempre a cura di Alfreda Benge.



Sea Song e la malinconia

L'album si apre con un brano pazzesco. Il testo sembra descrivere una relazione tossica, basata su una forma di follia. Contiene termini inequivocabili come "madness" e "lunacy". Il "lunatico" è spesso colui che presenta disturbi mentali in corrispondenza dei cicli lunari. Non a caso, il testo parla della "prossima luna piena" poche righe sopra. Il verso che adoro di più è "*You're terrific when you're drunk*". Ovvero, "Sei meravigliosa quando sei ubriaca". Implica che la normalità non si addice alla coppia, e si tratta naturalmente di Robert e Alfie: la canzone è dichiaratamente ispirata da lei. Detto questo, i due sono ancora insieme, a decenni di distanza. Un brano così non avrebbe trovato posto nel primo album di Wyatt: è una canzone, anche se venata da ispirazioni vicine al free jazz. Chiedersi "che accordo sta suonando qui Robert?" mi pare un modo errato di analizzare il brano. La domanda giusta è forse "che suono voleva ottenere?" L'effetto sonoro a volte deve vincere sulle regole armoniche. La mu-

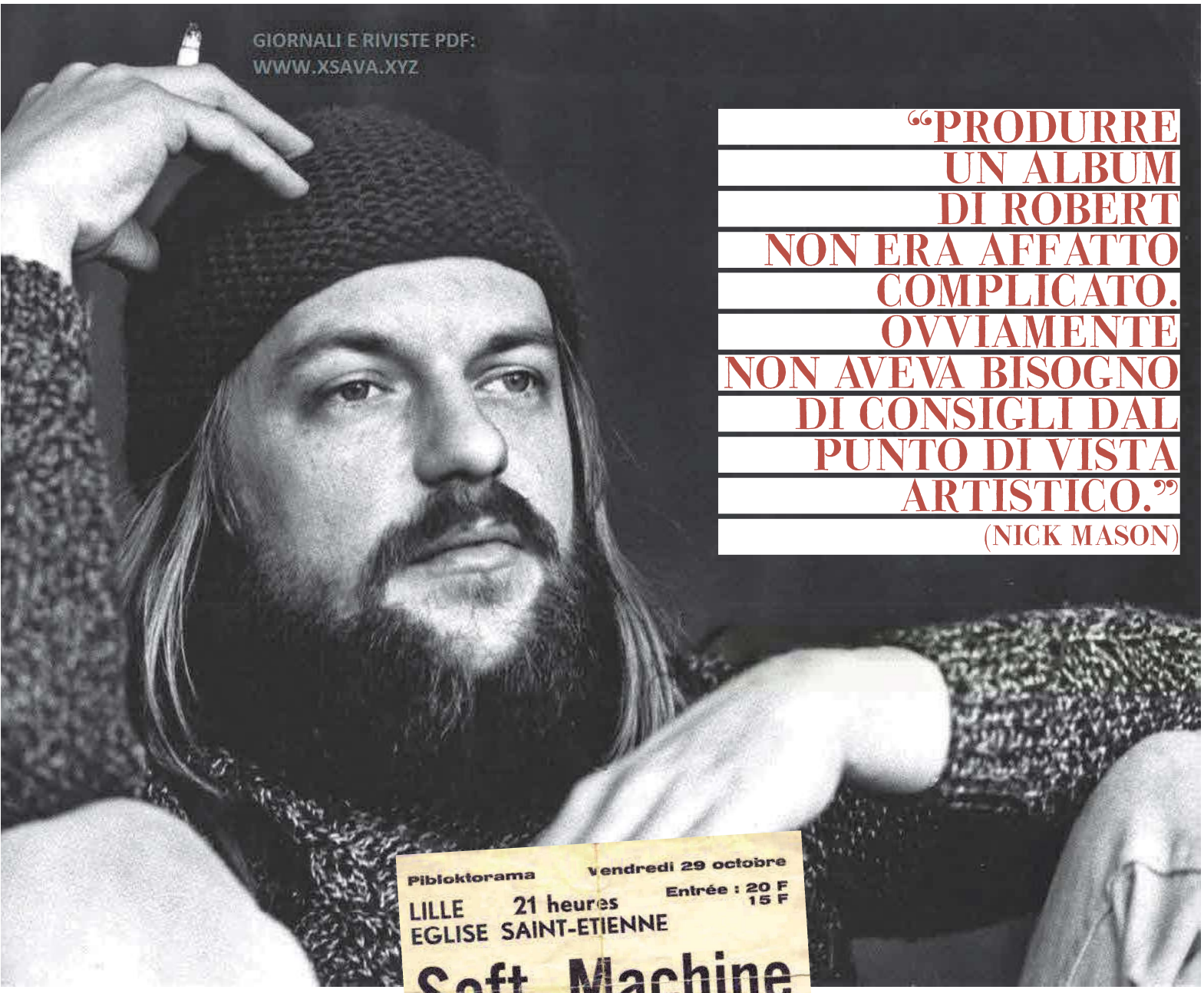








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> "PRODURRE UN ALBUM DI ROBERT NON ERA AFFATTO COMPLICATO. OVVIAMENTE NON AVEVA BISOGNO DI CONSIGLI DAL PUNTO DI VISTA ARTISTICO."
> (NICK MASON)

sica di oggi dovrebbe ricordarlo più spesso.

A Last Straw e le atmosfere pinkfloydiane

L'ambiente musicale era comune. I Pink Floyd così come i Soft Machine emersero da un magma di generi che spesso definiamo "Rock Psichedelico". I termini come sempre hanno una valenza relativa, ma è molto difficile immaginare cosa pensarono gli ascoltatori quando udirono certe sonorità per la prima volta. Mi vengono in mente anche esperienze precedenti, come certe soluzioni che i Beatles adottarono in REVOLVER e che giunsero a compimento negli album successivi. Di certo l'intenzione era, almeno in parte, quella di riprodurre gli stati alterati di coscienza indotti dall'utilizzo di droghe come l'LSD, all'epoca molto diffuso. Il solo di tromba "a bocca" di *A Last Straw* riporta direttamente agli esperimenti di THE END OF AN EAR e alle sue vocalizzazioni folli. Trovo anche molto interessanti le linee melodiche che Wyatt riesce a concepire, difficilissime da cantare per chi non abbia un controllo perfetto dell'intonazione. Nel canto, la voce passa da una scala a un'altra senza alcuno sforzo apparente, ci sono cambi di tonalità non preparati… Puro jazz, direi. Questo la dice lunga sulle qualità canore di Wyatt, che spesso ci ostiniamo a ricordare come "il batterista dei primi Soft Machine". Era un musicista completo, non un batterista, e lo ha ampiamente dimostrato.

Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road e la manipolazione sonora

Il trucco dei nastri al contrario venne usato da tutti, all'epoca, perché la tecnologia non metteva a disposizione i mezzi di oggi. Per fare qualcosa di estremo, si rovesciava il nastro. C'è stato un unico periodo nella storia della musica in cui questa operazione divenne impossibile: gli anni Novanta, quando molti studi di registrazione passarono al digitale, con i formati su videocassetta. Con quei sistemi non si poteva far scorrere il nastro all'indietro, mentre con i vecchi nastri analogici bastava invertire le bobine. Oggi invece è sufficiente un clic del mouse: qualsiasi software di registrazione lo consente. L'idea è passata di moda, ma rimane molto potente. Un esempio mirabile: in *Leave It Open* di **Kate Bush** (da THE DREAMING) alla fine si sente una strana

voce che canta una frase comprensibile… ma significa tutt'altro, se ascoltata al contrario. Kate registrò la voce diritta e poi la rovesciò, e per pura coincidenza ne uscirono suoni che sembrano parole di senso compiuto. Il senso vero del testo non si scopre però fino a che non si ascolta quella parte al contrario. Nella musica di oggi uno sforzo di ascolto simile è quasi impensabile, per colpa dell'approccio usa-e-getta alla fruizione di un album o di un brano, ma questi esperimenti apparentemente ingenui potevano essere realmente creativi. Inoltre, un suono al contrario è sempre straniante, e non c'è modo di ottenerlo se non invertendo il senso temporale della registrazione. La vera peculiarità dell'approccio di Wyatt, però, è che la parte rovesciata è lunghissima: un brano palindromo, in sostanza, perché la prima parte ha una base regolare, che poi viene invertita, per una durata totale che sfiora gli otto minuti. E poi in questo brano c'è anche la tromba (vera) di **Mongezi Feza**: un genio assoluto, con una tecnica e una sensibilità musicale uniche. Considero il suo lunghissimo assolo in questo brano uno dei migliori della storia, a prescindere dallo strumento e dal genere. La sua scomparsa all'età di trent'anni rimane molto dolorosa.



La copertina del «New Musical Express» del 24 agosto 1974 in cui viene annunciato il concerto di Wyatt & Friends al Drury Lane Theatre di Londra dell'8 settembre.

Alifib, *Alife*/*Alifie* e il linguaggio inventato

Questa è per me la vera canzone d'amore dell'album. Mi piace immaginarla come un nonsense: non perché le parole siano scritte a caso, ma perché davanti al puro suono il significante perde importanza. Si potrebbe scrivere un intero articolo solo su questa canzone: *Alife* è anagramma di "Alfie", ma è anche "A life", "una vita". Le parole, o meglio i suoni, sembrano articolare pensieri impossibili da esprimere, e proprio per questo il brano ha un potere emotivo enorme. Rispetto ad *Alifib*, il cantato è quasi un parlato. Lo chiamerei uno *Sprachgesang*, nel senso di Schönberg. Ed è disarmante l'intervento finale di Alfie, che risponde a Robert: "Be', cos'è un *bololey* quando è una sciocchezza?". Il tono è quello della mamma che sorprende il bambino con le mani nel vasetto della marmellata. C'è ironia, nel cuore della bellezza assoluta.



Alifib e il respiro come pulsazione ritmica

Questa è certamente la versione più vicina a come la canzone è stata composta. Ne esiste una versione straordinaria eseguita da Wyatt con il solo pianoforte. Questo brano è per me la vetta assoluta della sua carriera, nonostante alcune meraviglie prodotte in tempi successivi. Merito soprattutto del suo timbro di voce, di per sé inconfondibile ma portato qui a livelli stratosferici, e di quel respiro che funziona come una percussione smorzata. Impossibile dire se ciò che ascoltiamo è un pianto sommesso oppure l'espressione di beatitudine di un bambino attaccato al seno materno. Non riesco a pensare a qualcosa di definitivo su *Alifib*: rimane sempre un fondo (roccioso?) inespresso. Di certo è il punto di convergenza di molte linee di forza. Sono anche convinto che mai Wyatt avrebbe cantato il brano in quel modo se non avesse avuto quel tragico incidente.

Little Red Robin Hood e Mike Oldfield

C'è una curiosa coincidenza: TUBULAR BELLS uscì una settimana prima che Wyatt perdesse l'uso delle gambe. Il successo fu enorme, al punto che contribuì a instradare la Virgin Records di **Richard Branson** verso il successo che poi ebbe nel corso degli anni. Anche ROCK BOTTOM uscì per Virgin, e non escludo che l'idea di far partecipare Oldfield alle registrazioni venisse proprio da Branson, forse anche per ragioni di visibilità. A prescindere, il lavoro di Mike sul brano è spettacolare, a metà strada tra **Robert Fripp** e **Steve Hackett**. È anche assai diverso dal suo stile chitarristico più noto.

Il genere musicale di ROCK BOTTOM

Mi verrebbe da chiamarlo "Art Rock" se questo termine non rimandasse troppo a gruppi come EL&P o Gentle Giant, con i quali mi sembra che Wyatt abbia poco da spartire. Se lo intendiamo come volontà di superamento della struttura del brano pop, con aperture verso linguaggi considerati più colti, l'espressione ha senso. Semplice? Non lo so. Certamente ROCK BOTTOM suona molto intricato in certi punti, ma credo che una delle chiavi di lettura sia il "flow": un termine che trovo adatto a definire ciò che si suona quando non si pensa e si segue un flusso emotivo più che razionale. D'altronde, se si ascolta la formidabile cover di Wyatt di *I'm A Believer*, pubblicata come singolo nel 1974, non suona come un brano pop, ma come un brano di Wyatt. Ci sono musicisti che hanno il potere di permeare del proprio suono qualsiasi cosa facciano. Come se fossero loro, il suono. Robert è uno di loro, così come lo era **David Bowie**.

L'eredità di ROCK BOTTOM

I **Tears for Fears** non hanno mai nascosto il loro amore per Wyatt. *I Believe* è uno dei brani più intensi di SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR, e in copertina appare la scritta "Dedicated to Robert Wyatt (If he's listening)": un chiaro riferimento a DEDICATED TO YOU BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING, l'album del 1971 di **Keith Tippett**. Detto questo, trovo la loro cover di *Sea Song* poco incisiva, forse troppo levigata. Ma non è per nulla facile interpretare quella canzone… Per quanto riguarda i **Radiohead**, hanno una vena visionaria simile a quella di Wyatt, pur declinata in modo diverso. Mi piace però pensare che i Soft Machine suonassero come avrebbero potuto suonare i Radiohead negli anni Settanta, piuttosto che il contrario.

Il remix di ROCK BOTTOM

Onestamente, sono felice che non sia accaduto e spero che non accada mai. Se lo scopo fosse quello di recuperare sonorità sepolte nel master originale, così come hanno fatto di recente i **Pink Floyd** con ANIMALS, sarei perplesso: ROCK BOTTOM è perfetto così com'è. Sarebbe come prendere una fotografia di fine Ottocento, con tutti i graffi e i puntini del caso, e restaurarla digitalmente allo scopo di renderla "migliore". Avrebbe davvero senso? A volte "migliore" è impossibile, in realtà, oppure diventa "migliore, ma snaturato". Questo album non va toccato, a mio parere.

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Canterbury Tales

La voce per eccellenza di Canterbury: **Richard Sinclair** a 360 gradi sulla sua leggendaria carriera.

Intervista: **Mario Giammetti**

Sono ormai 15 anni che Richard Sinclair vive in Italia, più precisamente a Martina Franca (provincia di Taranto), in campagna, dedito a una vita un po' da vecchio hippy. Siamo andati a trovarlo appositamente per ricordare insieme a lui i passi più significativi di una carriera leggendaria, iniziata a metà degli anni 60 con i Wilde Flowers e proseguita, nel duplice ruolo di creativo bassista e splendido cantante, in formazioni, tra le altre, come Caravan, Hatfield and the North e Camel.

Vieni da una famiglia molto musicale.
Mio nonno era un fotografo, ma la domenica cantava l'opera nei dintorni di Canterbury. Diversamente dai vertici della chiesa d'Inghilterra, lui faceva musica Vaudeville di domenica ed era piuttosto noto per questo. Parliamo della fine del 900. Mio padre invece non era molto interessato agli studi, dunque mollò il liceo e divenne uno dei più apprezzati falegnami della zona. Ma era anche musicista (basso, batteria e banjo) e soprattutto cantante, probabilmente il migliore di Canterbury. Cantò tutti gli standard popolari dagli anni 30 e fino agli anni 80, quando morì, e, sapendo anche cantare il soul, si esibiva nei migliori ristoranti e teatri, specie nei circuiti delle cene danzanti in deliziosi hotel di lusso. Anche mia sorella era una brava cantante, ma all'età di 21 anni (quindi io ne avevo 12, essendo lei molto più grande) si sposò e si trasferì a Littlebourne.

Sei uno dei tanti immensi musicisti che hanno ruotato intorno ai Wilde Flowers, il progetto da cui ha preso vita il movimento di Canterbury.
I genitori dei fratelli Hugh e Brian Hopper andarono a sentire un'esibizione di mio padre e gli dissero: "I nostri ragazzi stanno formando una band". Così mio padre mi portò a casa loro, in un posto chiamato Tanglewood ai confini di Canterbury. Penso di essere stato il primo a unirsi a Hugh e Brian per formare una band, ma ancora non si trattava dei Wilde Flowers, quel nome arrivò solo quando fu chiesto a Kevin Ayers e Robert Wyatt di entrare nel gruppo. Proprio Robert trovò la definizione più divertente: "Siamo solo 'a bunch of tourists'". Ricordo il mio primo concerto con i Wilde Flowers, in un club chiamato Beehive. Quella sera, la signora Hopper cucì delle magliette di seta per tutti noi, come documentato da alcune foto in bianco e nero pubblicate dalla «Kentish Gazette». Ma, dopo un paio di concerti con i Wilde Flowers, ne ebbi abbastanza, perché solo più tardi loro sarebbero diventati molto inventivi, in quella fase non facevano musica originale, suonavano cose tipo Chuck Berry e prevaleva ancora quello stile di canto americano che andava così di moda. Ma il canto di Canterbury è un'altra cosa, più da ragazzi del coro.

Dai Wilde Flowers nacquero però i Soft Machine.
La prima volta che incontrai Kevin Ayers, a Tanglewood, teneva una bottiglia di Mateus Rosé in mano ma stava avvinghiato alla sorella di Pye Hastings, Jane, che allora si chiamava Jane Aspinall, in quanto sposata con uno degli uomini più ricchi d'Inghilterra. John Aspinall gestiva un club di gioco d'azzardo, accanto al quale c'era un *bunny club*, ma era anche il proprietario di un enorme zoo. E Kevin, che era semplicemente l'addetto alle pulizie della gabbia dei gorilla, gli rubò la moglie. Jane mise allora a disposizione un posto chiamato What the Hole per permettere alla band di fare le prove e stare lì. Di sicuro ci vissero per un po' Robert e Kevin, forse anche Mike Ratledge. Lì vidi svilupparsi i →





Caravan. Da sinistra: Pye Hastings (chitarra e voce), Richard Sinclair (basso e voce), Richard Coughlan (batteria), Dave Sinclair (tastiere).

«I Caravan ascoltavano Hendrix: Pye aveva tutte le idee sulla musica, ma suo fratello Jimmy era uno dei migliori, lo Stan Getz inglese»

Soft Machine e fu un'esperienza magica. Erano davvero una rock band, avevano due organi, un Hammond e un Lowrey, compreso uno di quei pedali della Lowrey che permette di abbassare di un semitono o di un tono. Amai il loro primo album anche se la voce di Kevin era sempre leggermente fuori tono. Ma c'era la sua chitarra, e poi il sound creato con voci molto basse non doveva necessariamente essere intonato.

Arriviamo ai Caravan.
Quando i Wilde Flowers finirono, il chitarrista e cantante Pye Hastings mi chiese se mi sarebbe piaciuto formare una band. Avevo già fatto quattro anni all'Art College e non mi andava di passarne li altri tre. Così ci provammo. Non avevo conosciuto realmente mio cugino Dave Sinclair fino ai 15 anni, perché i due rispettivi genitori non erano nello stesso campo. Ma mentre i Caravan cominciavano, Hugh Hopper, che era nei Soft Machine come *roadie* quando questi andarono in America, mi lasciò il suo basso. Anche David aveva un basso Cougar della Vox, ma un giorno mi disse: "Voglio diventare un tastierista". Suo padre gli comprò un Hammond A100 che poi sarebbe toccato a me e Pye trasportare. 360 libbre divise in due. Avevo 19 anni e io, David e Pye lavoravamo tutti in autostrada, sul Sevenoaks Bypass, dove io ottenni la migliore occupazione, perché ero abile con la lavorazione del legno. Quindi mi occupavo della posa in opera di pannelli, il che significava tenerli fermi, a 40 piedi di altezza, sotto la pioggia o sotto il sole con in mano un martello e qualcos'altro per tagliarli in modo da gettare del cemento sui ponti e su questi grandi archi paraboli-

La line-up dei Caravan nel 1971. Da sinistra: David Sinclair, Richard Coughlan, Pye Hastings, Richard Sinclair.





Hatfield and the North. Da sinistra: Phil Miller (chitarra), Richard Sinclair (basso), Pip Pyle (batteria), Dave Stewart (tastiere).

ci. Pye, invece, guidava (male) un autocarro con cassone ribaltabile e David penso facesse lo stesso. In sei settimane guadagnammo abbastanza denaro da affittare una casa per sei mesi a Whitstable, al numero 7 di Westgate Terrace. Quel periodo fu fantastico, ma fumammo molto hashish, perché uno dei nostri amici (che poi fu arrestato a Londra) ci aveva dato tutta questa roba oppiacea del Kashmir molto buona. Finimmo i soldi e le nostre amiche ci davano da mangiare. Fui io a rialzare tutte le assi del pavimento e a metterci sotto l'hashish. Ci avevano dato due grossi grumi ed è quello di cui vivemmo praticamente per tutto il periodo.

Cosa ricordi con maggior piacere dell'esperienza con i Caravan?
Il primo album fu senza dubbio il migliore. Voglio dire, il secondo è adorabile e il terzo è molto buono, ma continuava ad avvicinarsi al jazz. Scrissi due canzoni per IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK, *Winter Wine* e *Golf Girl*, dove seguii i consigli di mio padre, che mi aveva detto: "Se vuoi avere successo in una band pop ed essere un vero intrattenitore musicale, devi cantare filastrocche per adulti". E quello fu il mio primo tentativo di composizione. La relazione tra di noi all'inizio era eccellente, ma poi cambiò. Mio cugino David se ne andò un po' prima di me, credo per le stesse ragioni. Dopo WATERLOO LILY, lasciai anche io.

Poi fu il turno degli Hatfield and the North.
I Caravan ascoltavano Hendrix: Pye aveva tutte le idee sulla musica, ma suo fratello Jimmy era uno dei migliori, lo Stan Getz inglese. Al flauto assolutamente il numero uno. Questi altri amici, invece, erano molto più orientati verso il jazz rispetto a me, che sono più per un jazz tipo Bossa Nova. Pip Pyle e Phil Miller volevano suonare sempre insieme. Phil era semplicemente il più spettacolare ideatore di armonie alla chitarra, e forse solo oggi se ne riconosce adeguatamente il valore; Pip era il più adorabile compositore pop che conosca, faceva davvero bellissime canzoni con testi fantastici. Anche a me piaceva ascoltare John McLaughlin e Pat Metheny, e l'album INNER MOUTING FLAME del 1970 della Mahavishnu Orchestra fece il big bang, ma non l'avrei mai fatto se non mi fossi unito a Hatfield and the North, che io considero la prima band di rock progressivo. Ho sempre cercato, quando sono stato in una band, di farla suonare meglio e, per questo, ho studiato per 24 ore al giorno, ma sono sempre stato considerato una sorta di "tea boy", non ne sono mai stato il leader, anche se ci ho provato. Con gli Hatfield volevo suonare musica più fantasiosa, lontana dagli standard *middle of the road* e dalla ripetizione degli stessi accordi ogni sera nello stesso modo. Volevo davvero andare oltre.

Perché allora a un certo punto te ne andasti?
Alcuni dei concerti che facemmo furono molto difficili, per me. Loro erano bravissimi e certi brani erano davvero complicati da cantare, nonostante io canti normalmente a una velocità ragionevole. Ci provai con tutto me stesso, ma alla fine lasciai, perché la struttura delle canzoni non era più così interessante, per me. Finii l'esperienza Hatfield and the North con l'intenzione di fare una pausa, ma ora avevo una nuova bambina, Emily. C'è questo ritaglio di giornale dell'epoca che racconta di quando portai mia figlia da Simon Draper [discografico della Virgin] per dirgli: ⟶

"Ma insomma, noi siamo assegnati a te. Tu pagherai solo 3000 sterline per il prossimo album, come faremo a vivere?". Poco dopo questo episodio, si liberarono di tutti noi... Così andai a Majorca, perché ero stato invitato da Daevid Allen. Volevo prendermi un break e lui mi ospitò a casa sua, ma non funzionò. Mio cugino Dave mi raggiunse perché dopo esserci rientrato aveva lasciato di nuovo i Caravan, ma intanto la mia famiglia si era disintegrata: ricevetti una "Dear John Letter" da mia moglie. Io non sapevo nemmeno cosa fosse, fu Daevid a spiegarmi che si trattava di una lettera d'addio. Così, di ritorno, visitai il Marocco e Dio solo sa cos'altro. Ebbi anche una storia con la moglie di Kevin Ayers. Surreale. Rientrato a Londra, finii con l'occupare abusivamente abitazioni, poi tornai a Canterbury e trovai una nuova specializzazione, che consisteva nella lavorazione di legno e metallo, lavori per l'acqua e il gas e qualunque altra cosa si possa trovare in una casa. Ma ripresi anche pian piano a suonare.

Nel 1974 partecipasti a ROCK BOTTOM di Robert Wyatt.
Sì, e ne fui sorpreso, perché Robert non aveva litigato con Hugh Hopper, che è di gran lunga il miglior bassista della scena di Canterbury, ma evidentemente voleva un raggio più ampio e ci fece suonare tre brani a testa, anche se non siamo mai stati in studio contemporaneamente. Robert Wyatt era fantastico, perché riuscì a coinvolgere tutta questa gente che suonò sulle sue idee, sebbene in tempi diversi. Mi sarebbe piaciuto, per esempio, suonare con Fred Frith, un tipo strano che se ne stava per conto suo a fare rag con le sue corde. Veniva dagli Henry Cow e suonava anche il violino. In realtà avrei suonato con lui insieme a Lol Coxhill e al cantante Phil Minton, in una band formata in un istmo da qualche parte del centro dell'Inghilterra per un concerto da tenere in un castello bruciato organizzato da una qualche compagnia teatrale londinese... Tornando a Robert, lui è davvero un personaggio unico e vero, ma l'album è un po' triste: aveva perso da poco l'uso delle gambe, compose il disco quando era in ospedale, quindi le melodie e le canzoni erano fantastiche, ma davvero un po' disperate. Del resto, siamo tutti un po' disperati sul pianeta Terra. Quell'album però andò molto bene, e sono felice di aver dato il mio contributo, anche se non mi considero realmente un bassista, sono più un chitarrista che suona un'ottava più bassa e in maniera melodica.

Per un paio di anni sei stato anche nei Camel.
Ricevetti una telefonata da una persona di Canterbury di nome Laurie Small, che era la loro tour manager. Mi disse che i Camel volevano fare delle session con me, perché avevano bisogno di qualcuno che potesse cantare e suonare il basso nel loro prossimo album. Il motivo per cui ottenni il posto è che, poiché si era sbarazzato di questo meraviglioso bassista, che era perfetto per i Camel [Doug Ferguson, *nda*], Andy Latimer avrebbe dovuto suonare lui stesso il basso in alcune delle canzoni che aveva scritto. Una di queste, intitolata *Skylines*, era in realtà mia, ma non ho mai ricevuto royalties. Era in 6/8, il che non era un problema per me da suonare... non dopo essere stato negli Hatfield and the North! E poi nessuno di loro cantava. O meglio, lo facevano ma non molto bene. Così mi unii ai Camel e andai a fare le prove in questo piccolo studio, perché all'epoca non avevano ancora iniziato a registrare. Ottenni il lavoro solo come turnista, però le cose stavano funzionando, facemmo un bel tour in Germania e anche in Giappone. Fu davvero fantastico e loro erano la band più professionale in cui io sia mai stato. La musica è quella che è, ma è molto buona, specialmente quando Pete (Bardens) e La-

«Robert Wyatt è davvero un personaggio unico e vero, ma ROCK BOTTOM è un po' triste»

Robert Wyatt, curiosamente al basso, strumento che fu invece suonato proprio da Richard Sinclair e Hugh Hopper nel leggendario ROCK BOTTOM.





I Camel nel 1978. Da sinistra: Andy Ward (batteria), Mel Collins (fiati), Andy Latimer (chitarra e voce), Dave Sinclair (tastiere), Richard Sinclair (basso e voce), Jan Schoelhaas (tastiere). Richard è stato nel gruppo inglese per due anni (1977/78), registrando due dischi di studio (RAIN DANCES e BREATHLESS).

timer lavoravano insieme. Purtroppo, subito dopo RAIN DANCES del 1977, i due litigarono per il successivo BREATHLESS, e fu un vero peccato. Il batterista Andy Ward ed io andammo da Pete e gli proponemmo di provare alcune cose insieme, senza per questo rinunciare ai Camel. Facemmo qualche bella prova a Tunbridge Wells, ma Andy alla fine decise che era meglio andare con Latimer e penso sia l'errore più grande che abbia fatto nella sua vita. Insomma, all'improvviso Pete era fuori dalla band e mi fu chiesto un parere. Dissi che sarebbe stato bello chiamare mio cugino, Dave Sinclair. Ma Latimer scelse di usare due tastieristi, Dave e Jan Schelhaas, e questo rese il suono intrappolato. Era un peccato, sarebbe stata una band molto migliore se ci fosse stato solo Dave, anche se Jan è un grande tastierista. Ma Latimer voleva questo grande *ensemble* da poter dirigere.

A quel punto ti prendesti una lunga pausa.
Conobbi Heather, che oggi è mia moglie. L'avevo incontrata durante una festa, lei stava piangendo seduta su un lato del letto: "Il mio ragazzo sta vedendo un'altra donna e non vuole andarsene", mi disse. Le risposi che lo avrei buttato fuori e per un po' portai le mie cose nel suo bell'appartamento, in una delle più grandi case di Canterbury, che dava sulla cattedrale.

Poi vi trasferiste in Germania.
Sì, mi unii agli Skaboosh, in cui non cantavo ma suonavo il basso, verso la fine degli anni 80. Avevamo la base a Colonia e facevamo 800 spettatori in alcuni concerti all'aperto o nei jazz club. Partecipammo anche allo ZeltFestival di Friburgo, una kermesse stupefacente dove ho visto suonare gente come Bob Geldof e Pat Metheny, ma anche Il Circo di Stato Cinese (o qualcosa del genere) e il Balletto Reale di Russia! Me ne aveva parlato Andy Ward, e così decisi di trasferirmi nella Foresta Nera con Heather.

E proprio insieme a Andy riprendesti in mano l'aspetto creativo.
Lui stava suonando nella Germania meridionale dopo aver passato un brutto momento con i Camel: aveva avuto un esaurimento nervoso e si era ammalato al punto da tagliarsi i polsi, per cui non poteva più suonare con loro e fu allontanato. Ma poi aveva incontrato alcuni musicisti inglesi, tra cui Anthony Aldridge, un violinista che somigliava un po' a Mick Jagger ed era molto ⟶

«I Camel erano la band più professionale in cui io sia mai stato»



Una recente immagine scattata in Puglia di Richard Sinclair, che spesso si esibisce con artisti locali.

NOTE DI STILE

Richard Sinclair

Richard Sinclair è uno dei bassisti musicalmente più interessanti dell'età d'oro del prog rock. Il merito è tutto di una sensibilità strumentale straordinaria e sempre discreta. Le sue linee sono insistenti, creano un lavoro di tessitura ritmica e armonica fitto e mai noioso: non c'è un colpo di cassa di batteria, un cambio di accordo che non sia – non solo – assecondato in maniera puntuale, ma anche decorato con delicata fantasia melodica. Un bassismo equilibrato non per la quantità di note, che sono tantissime, ma per l'eleganza, il tono vellutato e la musicalità. Un pezzo su tutti per infatuarsi del bassismo di Sinclair è la suite capolavoro *Nine Feet Underground* dal terzo album dei Caravan IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK (1971): il suo basso si agita in un disegno melodico incessante che resta saldo al comando delle continue divagazioni progressive del pezzo tra assolo di organo e chitarra, cambi di atmosfera, impennate jazz rock. **GR**

attraente per le ragazze. Andy mi chiamò dalla Foresta Nera per dirmi che il suo gruppo era rimasto senza bassista. Ritrovandomi a suonare di nuovo con Andy, pensai di formare una band e la chiamai Caravan of Dreams, in cui cantavo e suonavo la chitarra, mentre del basso si occupò il *roadie* di Hatfield and the North, Rick Biddulph. Di base eravamo un trio, ma molte altre persone si unirono in seguito, tra cui Michael Heupel, un ottimo flautista, e poi Jimmy Hastings e, se era disponibile, mio cugino Dave Sinclair. Solo persone con cui volevo davvero suonare, perché quella era la mia carovana dei sogni. E il mio sogno era fare un album, che avrebbe preso forma tramite Barry Riddington. In verità lui avrebbe voluto un disco dei Caravan per la sua nuova etichetta, la HTD Records, ma penso di aver speso le 16.000 sterline dell'anticipo ancor prima che firmassimo il contratto!

So che attirasti anche l'interesse di qualche major…
In quel periodo ricevetti vari messaggi, uno era di Bill Levinson, che era il direttore marketing della Polygram in America. Mi disse: "Richard, sono il tuo fan numero uno". Pensai: "Fantastico. Forse posso fare uscire il disco dei Caravan of Dreams su Polygram". Così mi misi al lavoro con tutti questi fantastici musicisti, ma alla fine fu uno che non suona affatto e che si era professato il mio fan numero uno, Levinson, a spegnere gli entusiasmi: "Mi dispiace, non posso farlo, perché non penso tu riesca a vendere nei primi sei mesi 100.000 copie… Ho 600 gruppi del genere, nella maggior parte di questi cantano ragazze di 16 anni, o sono neri o usano i rollerblade". Uno dei concerti che feci fu a New York. Nell'occasione fui intervistato dal «New York Times»: nel giornale più importante apparve mezza pagina con una mia foto! Ma nessuno lo vide.

Risale al 1994 il tuo ultimo album solista vero e proprio, R.S.V.P., peraltro un gran bel disco.
Misi insieme la line-up che desideravo: Jimmy Hastings, Andy Ward, Pip Pyle, Hugh Hopper, Didier Malherbe, Kit Watkins, Dave Cohen… E anche Tony Coe, un fantastico clarinettista che meriterebbe di essere ben più famoso ma è penalizzato dalla sua paura di volare, che gli ha impedito tra l'altro di unirsi a un'orchestra moderna molto famosa in America. Con lui avrei fatto altre cose in trio, insieme allo strepitoso tastierista di Canterbury Dave Rees-Williams, ma nel mio album Tony suonò solo su due canzoni perché era troppo nervoso… Registrammo in una chiesa e persino lì aveva le vertigini! Il brano si intitolava *What In The World*, ma avrei dovuto intitolarlo *That Sunday In Church*.

Tuttavia, non hai disdegnato delle vere e proprie *reunion*.
Non sono mai stato fermo in una band, non ho mai permesso che potessimo annoiarci a vicenda e sono riuscito sempre a scappare per fare qualcos'altro. Ma è vero, a volte ho riformato quelle band. Diedi una mano per ricostruire i Caravan, dato che Pye si era fermato nel 1989. Mio cugino Dave ebbe però la sensazione che, se avessimo riformato la band originale, avremmo potuto partecipare alla serie di programmi tv chiamata *Bedrock*. Ci hanno suonato anche Asia, Hawkwind, Camel, Hatfield and the North, Gong… Io ho partecipato due volte, con Hatfield and the North e i Caravan. Mi occupai anche di mixare quei due concerti perché ero l'unico di noi che ci capisse qualcosa, ma per il resto c'era un team di 50 persone davvero molto professionale. Le telecamere erano fantastiche e fu un eccellente tv show. Ricordo che, durante le prove con

Hatfield and the North, fummo fermati tre volte: la prima per vedere il nostro look, la seconda per sentire come suonavamo e la terza per capire se l'intero show andava bene.

Vivi in Italia da molti anni ormai.
Ho suonato spesso qui, anche con i Caravan of Dreams. Ricordo un concerto a Sarzana con Jimmy Hastings, Rick Biddulph e Andy Ward. Fu l'ultimo show per Andy. Lui non suonava da tempo, così lo invitai a rilassarsi. Erano passati cinque anni e continuavo a dirmi che non avrei dovuto lasciarlo bere. E naturalmente fumava. A questo festival, c'era un'altra band che aveva con sé una bottiglia enorme di Jack Daniel's. Quella bottiglia finì nelle mani di Andy, che probabilmente se ne scolò subito un quarto. Poi, siccome andavano a letto presto, gli albergatori gli avevano detto di servirsi pure liberamente al bar. E così Andy Ward si improvvisò barista, con i risultati che puoi immaginare: quando salimmo effettivamente sul palco per il concerto, era praticamente andato. Fece comunque un lavoro ragionevole, ma nemmeno lontanamente rispetto a come sarebbe dovuto essere.

E il tuo legame con la Puglia?
Mi trovavo in Portogallo per un concerto quando ricevetti una telefonata da Domenico [Demola], che mi disse che mi voleva far suonare all'edizione 2005 del Fasano Jazz Festival. Ma aggiunse anche che voleva assolutamente che ci fosse Pip Pyle. In quel periodo Pip non stava molto bene, quindi per sicurezza convocammo un altro batterista, Mark Fletcher. E poi c'erano Phil Miller alla chitarra, Alex Maguire alle tastiere e Theo Travis ai fiati. Una volta giunti a Fasano, Domenico disse che avremmo dovuto chiamarci Hatfield and the North. Phil era proiettato ormai molto più verso il jazz e non voleva mai più suonare con gli Hatfield and the North dopo che era finito tutto, e io stesso non ero entusiasta di suonare quella vecchia musica. Ma alla fine lo facemmo e fu una bella festa per tutti. Da allora, ho piantato le tende in Puglia, dove mi dedico alla mia musica e ogni tanto mi piace suonare con musicisti locali.



Foto: Ada Donnarumma

Richard Sinclair nel 2005 al Fasano Jazz Festival. Per gentile concessione di Domenico Demola. In alto: Richard Sinclair si racconta a «Classic Rock», estate 2021.



«Non sono mai stato fermo in una band, non ho mai permesso che potessimo annoiarci a vicenda»

Non è stata, un'impresa da poco - Cultura Commestibile.com - N° 394 - 27 marzo 2021

Musica Maestro

Non è stata un'impresa da poco



di Alessandro Michelucci

Londra è incontestabilmente la capitale del rock britannico, ma ancora prima è la città dove si è sviluppato un fenomeno musicale di rilievo planetario. Naturalmente questo non sarebbe stato possibile se la città sul Tamigi non avesse ricevuto l'apporto decisivo di altri centri urbani sparsi in tutto il Regno Unito.

Pensiamo a Sheffield, patria del pop elettronico in auge fra la fine degli anni Settanta e l'inizio del decennio successivo. In altre parole, gruppi come ABC, Cabaret Voltaire, Human League... Eve Wood ha realizzato un bel documentario sul fenomeno, *Made In Sheffield: The Birth Of Electronic Pop I977-'82* (2004). Un'altra città importante è stata Manchester, dove sono nati fra gli altri Oasis, The Smiths e Van der Graaf Generator.

Canterbury merita invece un discorso a parte. Mentre nei casi suddetti e in tanti altri i gruppi sono nati nella stessa città ma hanno seguito percorsi autonomi, l'antica città del Kent è diventata famosa come sede di un movimento piuttosto unitario: non a caso è nata l'espressione *Canterbury sound*. A questo fecondo ambiente musicale è dedicato il libro *The Canterbury Sound in Popular Music: Scene, Identity and Myth* (Emerald Publishing, 2021), curato da Asya Draganova, Shane Blackman e Andy Bennett (ce ne occuperemo meglio). Parliamo di gruppi come Caravan, Hatfield and the North, Matching Mole e Soft Machine, nei quali si sono alternati e rimescolati moltissimi musicisti. Il più carismatico, e senza dubbio il più geniale, rimane Robert Wyatt. Il musicista, all'epoca batterista, ha perso l'uso delle gambe nel 1973, in seguito a una caduta dal quarto piano. All'epoca aveva già lasciato i Soft Machine e aveva formato un altro gruppo, i Matching Mole. Perdere l'uso delle grambe è una menomazione tremenda per chiunque, ma a maggior ragione per un batterista di 28 anni. Eppure Wyatt non si è arreso. Sostenuto dalla moglie Alfreda Benge, il musicista è riuscito a trasformare la tragedia nell'alba di una nuova stagione musicale. La batteria è stata sostituita dal piano e dalla tromba. Con queste nuove armi ha iniziato un

percorso singolare ed entusiasmante. Tre decenni segnati da una produzione discografica limitata ma ricca di perle, da *Rock Rottom* (1974) a *Comicopera* (2007). Senza dimenticare i numerosi singoli, gli EP e le collaborazioni con i musicisti più svariati, fra i quali Bjòrk, Cristina Dona, Phil Manzanera e Paul Weller. Poi, in un'intervista apparsa su *Uncut* nel dicembre del 2014, il musicista inglese ha annunciato l'intenzione di abbandonare l'attività. Nel suo stile, senza clamore, in modo normalissimo, come se avesse detto "Vado al cinema". E ha aggiunto: "Una cinquantina di anni in sella non sono pochi... Smetto con orgoglio, non voglio spegnermi".



Robert Wyatt è un musicista decisamente *sui generis*. Estraneo alla logica commerciale, ma al tempo stesso mai chiuso in una torre d'avorio. Comunista convinto, ma lontano anni luce dai *radical chic* e dalla sinistra salottiera. Le sue idee politiche traspaiono chiaramente da varie canzoni, ma non ha mai usato la musica come strumento di propaganda politica.

Per conoscere bene questo artista multiforme, ovviamente oltre ai suoi dischi, ci sono due libri particolarmente utili. Il primo è *Different Every Time* (Serpent's Tail, 2014, ed. it. Giunti, 2015, traduzione di Alessandro Achilli), la corposa biografia scritta da Marcus O'Dair, un giornalista inglese che collabora a numerose testate specializzate. Di questo libro abbiamo parlato ampiamente nel numero 113.

Il secondo è il recente *Side by Side. Selected Lyrics* (Faber & Faber, 2020). Il volume

raccoglie un centinaio di testi e poesie scritte da Robert e dalla moglie Alfreda (Alfie). Nella lunga parabola del musicista di Bristol la donna, disegnatrice di origine austriaca, ha svolto un ruolo importante. Lo ha sostenuto psicologicamente, è stata collaboratrice e ispiratrice, ma sempre con garbo, senza mai reclamare visibilità.

Il libro dimostra che aver lasciato la musica non significa andare in pensione. Le cose da fare sono ancora tante. La prima è la politica, alla quale Wyatt vuole dedicarsi più attivamente. Naturalmente la sinistra di cui parla il vecchio Bob non ha niente a che vedere con quella che circola dalle nostre parti. È una sinistra alcoolica, tosta, magari anche un po' nostalgica, ma animata dalla sincerità e dalla volontà di cambiare. Le stesse qualità con cui l'autore di *Rock Bottom* ha potuto regalarci mezzo secolo di musiche indimenticabili. Un cocktail irripetibile di rock, jazz, coriandoli zappiani e schegge latine, cementati da una creatività che ha sempre cercato di esplorare nuovi territori.

La sua non è stata un'impresa da poco, "no mean feat", come sottolinea acutamente Jarvis Cocker nell'introduzione di *Side by Side*.

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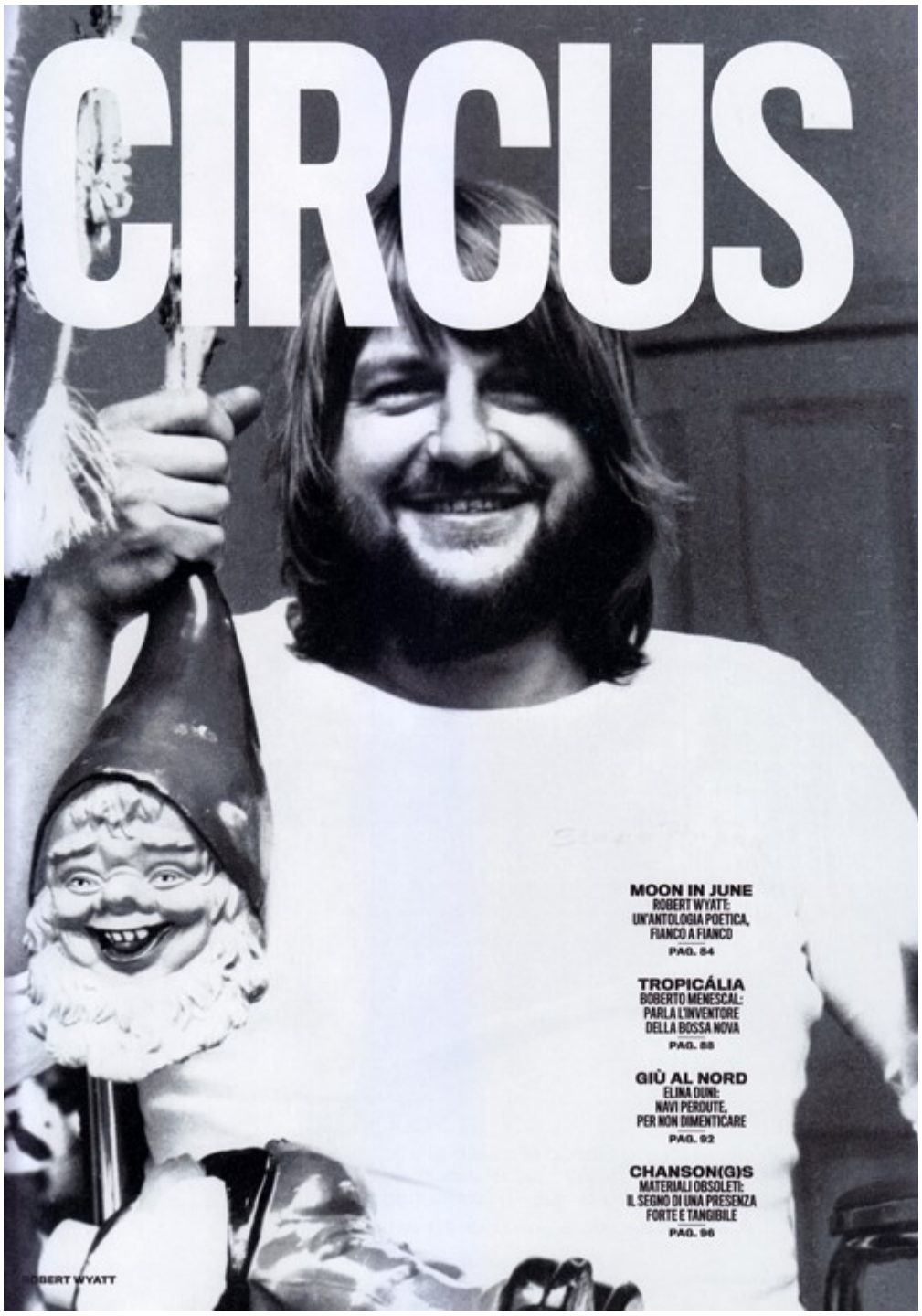
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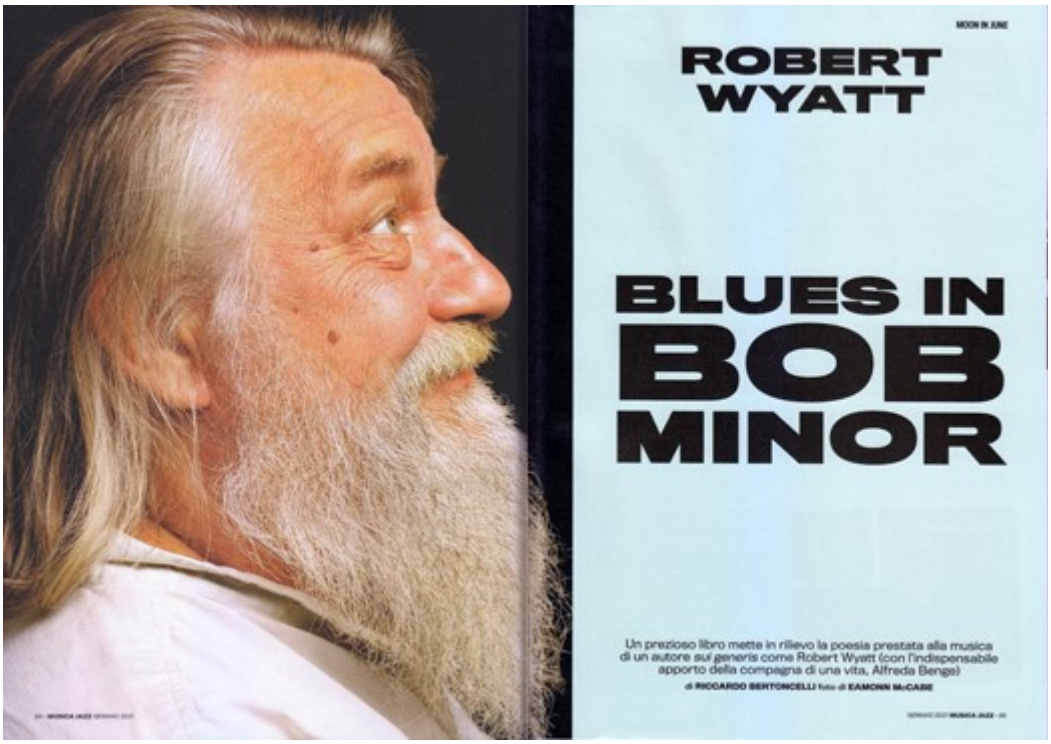


BLUES IN B MINOR

Un prezioso libro mette in rilievo la poesia prestata alla musica di un autore sui generis come Robert Wyatt (con l'indispensabile apporto della compagna di una vita, Alfreda Benge)

di RICCARDO BERTONCELLI
foto di EAMONN McCABE


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FORTE E TANGIBILE
PAG. 96
OBERT WYATT

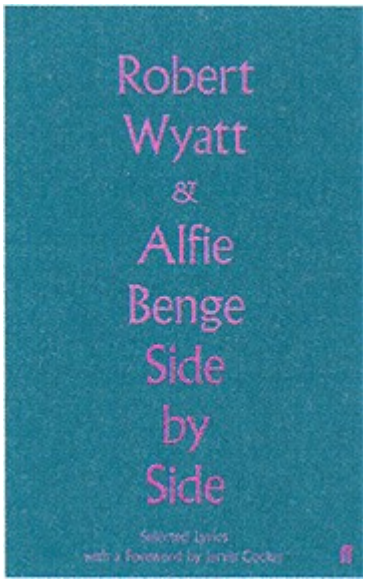


Robert Wyatt pubblicò l'ultimo disco tutto e solo suo tredici anni fa, «*Comicopera*». Fu più un tormento che un piacere, come ebbe modo di raccontare sconsolato; segregato per quasi un mese nello studio di Phil Manzanera al terzo piano di una casa, prigioniero della sua disabilità, giunse alla conclusione che quel gioco non valeva più la fatica, specie per lui, dichiarato uomo del Novecento che con il secolo nuovo non è mai andato troppo d'accordo. Due anni più tardi provò a fargli cambiare idea Gilad Atzmon, ma ne sortì giusto una collaborazione, *The Ghosts Within*. Basta, il tempo passa e la decisione, per quanto dolorosa, pare definitiva. Ciò non toglie che ogni tanto la venerabile barba bianca torni a far capolino, in forma di canzone o che altro, ed è una festa; come in questa fine d'anno, con il contributo all'ultimo album di Mary Halvorson, «*Artlessly Falling*», e un libro pubblicato da Faber & Faber che raccoglie la gran parte dei testi delle sue canzoni (più inediti), scritti da Wyatt e dalla moglie compagna musa Alfreda Benge. Robert e «la duchessa», come la signora fu dipinta in una memorabile canzone, stanno insieme da quasi cinquant'anni, da prima del fatale incidente; e il titolo scelto per l'antologia, *Side By Side*, è tutt'altro che di maniera, perché senza l'amore tenace, il sostegno, il pungolo di quella donna Wyatt difficilmente sarebbe riemerso dagli abissi per compiere le prodezze che ben sappiamo.

Alla Faber amano gli eccentrici di un rock che non c'è più, se è vero che qualche mese prima di *Side By Side* hanno pubblicato l'integrale dei testi di Kevin Ayers, *Shooting At The Moon*. Bella lettura che consiglio, e doveroso omaggio a quell'amato dandy, ma Wyatt è di un altro livello. L'unico che negherebbe una simile affermazione è proprio il diretto interessato, sempre modesto, sfuggente, pronto a nascondersi sotto il mouse o nel cassetto della scrivania, tanto da averci distratto per decenni. Non credo di parlare solo per me se dico che quando si ascolta una sua canzone la corrente porta verso la voce e il cielo di emozioni che si schiude d'incanto, lasciando i versi e tutto il resto in secondo piano. Questo non in assoluto, certo, e anche senza *Side By Side* sapevamo del fiero impegno civile dell'autore, del suo antirazzismo e anticolonialismo, della scelta di stare con i più umili e della pena sofferta per una sinistra che da tempo non ritiene più adeguata a difendere le istanze dei lavoratori britannici. Però vedere quei pensieri messi in fila e ben inchiostrati, pagina dopo pagina, tutti insieme pur con curiosi sbalzi temporali, fa una certa impressione, fa riflettere.

Questo signore che oggi sostiene di essersi ritirato perché «anche i macchinisti dei treni a 65 anni non guidano più» e la politica ormai lo attrae più della musica, di politica in fondo ha sempre parlato nei suoi testi, «politica» nel senso più nobile del termine, guardando con attenzione e passione alla società e ai suoi problemi. Credo che nei quarantanni e più del suoi lavoro di *lyricist* (di poeta, su, diciamo pure) non abbia mai scritto un testo così per fare, un testo astratto dalla sua vita vera, montato come un Lego con i mattoncini del mestiere. Il poeta può ordinare la sua opera come crede (e qui lo fa in

modo un po' oscuro, con tre capitoli né cronologici né tematici) ma gli argomenti appaiono e ritornano con solida continuità.

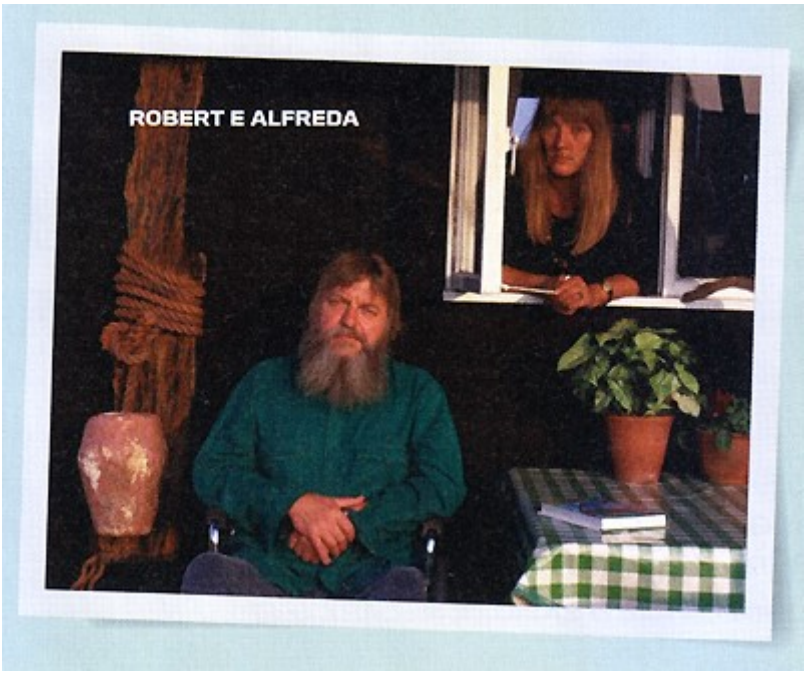


FIANCO A FIANCO
La copertina del volume della Faber & Faber che raccoglie gran parte dei testi poetici scritti da Robert Wyatt e dalla moglie Alfreda Benge e utilizzati per le canzoni dell'autore britannico.

Già nel 1971 il «bastardo bipede sfaticato» (autoritratto ufficiale) scrive *CP Jeebies*, arruffato acronimo per dire il Partito Comunista britannico e per pregare quei quattro gatti di rimanere così come sono, «anacronistici» però autentici; quindici anni dopo, eccolo ancora lì con *The Age Of Self*, a temere profeticamente il disfacimento del movimento operaio «come un castello costruito sulla sabbia», perché «dicono che la classe operaia non c'è più. Oggi siamo tutti classe consumatrice». Ma quello è solo uno spicchio del grandangolo da cui Robert scruta l'universo mondo, sapendo volare ben oltre la sua isola infelice. In un bellissimo pezzo dei Matching Mole, *Gloria Gloom*, scocca un verso memorabile, «per quanto tempo posso fingere che fare musica sia più importante / di combattere per il socialismo nel mondo?». È il 1972, Wyatt passerà la vita a risolvere quel conflitto conciliando gli elementi; farà musica e lotterà per un mondo più giusto, con testi di denuncia che segneranno con unghia forte «*Old Rottenhat*» e «*Dondestan*», 1985 e 1991, ma non brilleranno solo lì.

Il poeta indignato scrive *United States of Amnesia* e *Amber And The Amberines* per denunciare gli americani «poliziotti del mondo», come diceva Phil Ochs, commenta sarcasticamente lo sfascio del pubblico per il privato in *NIO (New Information Order)*, irride il perbenismo ipocrita in *Born Again Cretin* e inventa un esorcismo rap che sarebbe piaciuto ai Fugs con *Foreign Accents*, ripetendo ipnoticamente i nomi di Hiroshima e Nagasaki, del leader iraniano Mossadegh deposto a suo tempo dalla CIA e dello scienziato israeliano Mordechai Vanunu, imprigionato per anni e poi sottoposto a incredibili restrizioni della libertà personale per avere rivelato l'esistenza di armi nucleari segrete dello Stato di Israele. Sono giusto esempi, il ventaglio è più ampio e pervade ogni opera. Le lotte sociali appassionano Wyatt mentre la questione religiosa lo turba, lo confonde. È sempre del 1972 quella desolata «lettera a Dio», *God Song*, in cui il ragazzo vicino alla sua linea d'ombra si dispera per l'assurdità di un mondo che non capisce, per una religione che impone «regole

impossibili», per una divinità lontana che si rifiuta di mostrarsi. Tanti anni dopo, ai tempi delle ultime opere, quella confusa rabbia diventerà il sarcasmo di *Be Serious!*, scettico peana contro le certezze di tutte le fedi.



La sua filosofia di vita Robert Wyatt l'ha espressa al meglio il giorno in cui ha spiegato che «metterla in ridere è una faccenda molto seria. Alla lunga è l'unico modo che ho di prendere la vita. La prendo come uno scherzo, al di là della tragedia». Uno degli impagabili doni di *Side By Side* sta proprio lì, nei lampi di paradosso e ironia che percorrono i testi e non sono «intermezzi» per addolcire la medicina di argomenti gravi, e non riguardano solo gli spensierati (si fa per dire) anni giovanili. Il Wyatt dei Soft Machine scrive una «introduzione patafisica» in onore dell'amato Jarry, dialoga assurdamente con il figlioletto in *Dada Was Here* e sposa la tesi dei testi mutevoli, da riscrivere all'impronta; lo fa con il suo capolavoro giovanile, Moon In June, con una versione «dedicata» per una trasmissione BBC che il libro opportunamente preferisce all'originale. Mantiene quel gusto con i Matching Mole (memorabile *Signed Curtain*, degna di una «bustina di Minerva» di Umberto Eco) ma anche da grande non dimentica la lezione dei limerick, dei giochi di parole, degli scambi di senso. Segnalo *Rearranging The Twentieth Century*, una eruzione 2004 di «in the beginning was the bird/ And The Bird was Bop/ That's Be-Bop - short for BeelzeBop» e via così, anche se la mia preferita è *Blues In Bob Minor*, sorprendente gioco a incastro di citazioni & indignazioni che si può ascoltare su quel dimenticato capolavoro che è «*Shleep*». Bob Minor perchè il Major è Dylan, naturalmente, e la fonte originaria *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, con il suo flusso vertiginoso di immagini che serve a Wyatt per montare un caleidoscopio di storia antica e moderna, combinando il (non) feroce Saladino con Lester Young, Fats Navarro e il diplomatico Roger Casement sul tema della presunta superiorità dell'uomo bianco. Ancora una volta et et; vorticosi esercizi paroliberi e versi appuntiti scagliati come frecce contro una società che prosegue sulla sua cattiva strada.

C'è anche Alfreda «Alfie» nel libro, non si può dimenticarla, e non solo perché la seconda parte di *Side By Side* è sua, con i testi offerti al marito dagli anni Ottanta (da quanto par di capire, «la duchessa» sarebbe entrata volentieri in azione anche prima). Il suo è più un diario che un florilegio di versi, diviso per temi a partire da un viaggio in Spagna alla metà di quel decennio che diede alla coppia uno dei rari momenti di vita libera e serena. Ma Alfreda appare anche nella prima parte del libro, evocata più di una volta dal marito con liberi voli di fantasia; in *Alifib*, in *Sea Song*, stazioni classiche del culto wyattiano, nello scherzo di *The Duchess* che dicevamo e in un'altra deliziosa filastrocca mai messa in musica, che peccato, *The Road*. Lei è più discreta, Robert c'è nella sua vita ma nei testi è solo sullo sfondo. Fa eccezione *Just As You Are*, tenerissimo spaccato di vita nato da

una intuizione di Brian Eno ai tempi di «**Comicopera**». Per sfruttare lo studio un giorno in cui manca il tecnico, Eno ordina a Wyatt di comporre la traccia di una canzone in venti minuti e ad Alfreda nello stesso tempo di metterci un testo. La rapidità spinge Alfie a essere spietatamente sincera; e in quella pagina scritta di getto mette tutto il suo dolore e amore per l'uomo con cui ha passato la vita e che teme di perdere, schiavo dell'alcol e della depressione. «Non cambierò nulla della tua vita», scrive comunque facendosi forza, «cercherò di amarti in ogni caso, così come sei». È un promessa quando la canzone viene pubblicata nel 2007, è una certezza oggi, dopo un lieto fine di sobrietà che Alfreda festeggia nelle note.

«METTERLA IN RIDERE È UNA FACCENDA MOLTO SERIA. ALLA LUNGA È L'UNICO MODO CHE HO DI PRENDERE LA VITA: LA PRENDO COME UNO SCHERZO, AL DI LÀ DELLA TRAGEDIA»

Side By Side ha una introduzione di Jarvis Cocker che non dice molto ma ci sta bene; l'ex signor Pulp è un bel tipo e per inciso il suo disco dei mesi scorsi, «*Jarv Is*», vale l'ascolto. Ma anche le intro di Robert e Alfreda non sono decisive. Per capire l'opera e intenderne il senso bisogna spigolare tra le 190 pagine con i bei disegni della signora, e imbattersi per esempio in un testo come *Free Will And Testament*, che in una pagina racchiude una vita, una personalità e, *en passant*, qualche secolo di riflessioni filosofiche su chi siamo e a cosa siamo destinati. Anche Alfreda può spiegarsi meglio con un testo, e in sei versi soltanto. *Shelter From The Storm*.
«Lui non era alto / non più di un bidone con le ruote / ma era un gigante fra gli uomini. / Lei era alta / e grande come una quercia / con il cuore di un passerotto.»



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Robert Wyatt e Alfie Benge, il socialismo come scelta di vita - Il Manifesto - 12 Novembre 2020



quotidiano comunista

il manifesto

Robert Wyatt e Alfie Benge, il socialismo come scelta di vita

Letture. In un volume, «Side by Side», le preziose liriche della loro collaborazione umana e artistica

Per trovare il bandolo della matassa della collaborazione tra Robert Wyatt e Alfie Benge bisogna cercare fra le tracce del secondo disco dei Matching Mole, il *Little Red Record* uscito nel novembre del 1972. All'epoca Wyatt era impegnato a suonare la batteria nei Soft Machine e Matching Mole, ma per quel lavoro scrisse anche le liriche di tre brani. In un pezzo del bassista Bill MacCormick, Alfie è una delle voci che sentiamo chiacchierare, insieme a quelle di un paio di suoi amici: Gloria Gloom è l'inizio ufficiale della loro collaborazione artistica mentre iniziavano a condividere anche la vita, «in work and in play», come scrive Wyatt nella sua introduzione a *Side by Side – Selected Lyrics*, pubblicato da Faber & Faber.

«**IL MIO PRIMO** disco da post batterista fu Rock Bottom, nel 1974 – scrive – La prima canzone è per Alfie, ma lei non lo sapeva!». *Sea Song* è una canzone d'amore tenera, impertinente, feroce e sublime. Raffigura l'amata come una creatura semi umana – un po' pesce, un po' focena, un po' piccolo capodoglio, stella marina trascinata dalla corrente – la cui vera natura è selvatica, determinata dal ciclo delle stagioni e della luna. «La tua follia si sposa alla perfezione con la mia, non siamo soli», sono gli ultimi versi.

Side by Side è diviso a metà tra Robert e Alfie che all'inizio degli anni '80 – oltre a realizzare le copertine – realizza un desiderio che non aveva mai osato esprimere e comincia a scrivere le liriche per il marito. La selezione raccolta nel volume – arricchita da disegni di entrambi – per Wyatt non segue un ordine temporale: «La logica inorganica della cronologia non si applica sempre ai paesaggi sonori alcodelici delle mie canzoni», scrive. Le sue liriche provengono da quasi tutti gli album (ad eccezione di The End of an Ear e Dondestan), comprese le compilation *Nothing Can Stop Us*, *Solar Flares Burn For You* e *'68*, il *Live at Drury Lane* e da qualche collaborazione, oltre a un gruppetto di inediti. «Ma al centro di tutto ciò che ho fatto dalla metà degli anni '70 c'è Alfie. Viviamo e lavoriamo fianco a fianco», conclude nella sua introduzione.

Ironico e appassionato, sognante e lucido, accanto ai puri divertissement linguistici come *Alife*, *Signed Curtain* e *Soup Song*, Wyatt schiera riflessioni sul privilegio di essere bianchi (Hulloder), la deriva del Partito Comunista Britannico (*CP Jeebies*) che abbandona la lotta di classe (tema che ritorna in *The Age of Self*) e temi di perdurante attualità come la continuità storica del colonialismo razzista (*The United States of Amnesia*). *Foreign Accents* consiste di nove parole ripetute come un mantra: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Arigato, Konnichi wa, Mordechai Vanunu, Mohammad Mosaddegh.

LA SEZIONE di Alfie Benge si apre con gli anni '80 a Barcellona, dove lei e Robert andarono a svernare in un paio di occasioni. Benge teneva un diario che scriveva in un bar al crepuscolo, quando la città tornava ad animarsi. In genere allo scoccare del secondo brandy arrivava un impeto di creatività che si materializzava in una poesia. A quei versi Wyatt attinse anni dopo in un momento di afasia lirica, poi cominciò a commissionarle i testi: «Mettere le parole in bocca a qualcuno la cui mente e preoccupazioni conoscevo così bene era molto più facile che farlo per uno sconosciuto. Adoravo le sfide e i piaceri del mio nuovo lavoro part-time», scrive Benge nella sua introduzione. Mentre la sezione di Wyatt è divisa in parti numerate, la sua ha titoli tematici – Spain, Birds, Conflict, Love and Loss, Random Ditties – che lasciano trapelare le vicissitudini della coppia in quasi cinquant'anni di convivenza: la storia dietro Just As You Are è straziante nella sua schietta umanità («Per fortuna la situazione si è risolta con l'aiuto di incontri settimanali con gli Alcolisti Anonimi nella sede dell'Esercito della Salvezza, convenientemente situato in fondo alla nostra strada»).

SE UN VOLUME completo di tutte le liriche di Wyatt-Benge sarebbe dovuto più che auspicabile, i brevi passaggi riportati in *Side by Side* invogliano a leggere i diari di Alfie, popolati da una galleria di ritratti di expat britannici, nonne galiziane, venditori ambulanti africani, modelle americane che giocano a ping pong per abbronzarsi meglio («I loro seni, scoperti, sono marroni in modo uniforme, come marshmellow al caffè. Non si muovono molto quando le ragazze colpiscono la palla. Sconcertante»).

Nella prefazione al volume Jarvis Cocker, oltre a raccontare divertenti aneddoti personali che lo legano alla scoperta di Robert Wyatt, sottolinea la scottante attualità del contenuto politico delle sue canzoni («Un'enciclopedia dei crimini del capitalismo») e il ruolo di Alfie nel documentare i piccoli momenti di bellezza per cui vale la pena continuare a lottare. Quella di Alfie e Robert è una visione del mondo umanista globale e particolare, scrive Cocker, e la loro opera testimonia il lavoro necessario per mantenere salda una relazione con il passare degli anni: il socialismo come scelta di vita anziché come mero credo.

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Artchipel Orchestra & Phil Miller - Truly Yours - Musica Jazz - N. 838 - Settembre 2020



ARTCHIPEL ORCHESTRA & PHIL MILLER

TRULY YOURS



TUTTI INSIEME
(IN ORDINE SPARSO)
Marco Fior, Marco Mariani, Michele Marrano, Alberto Bolettieri, Rudi Manzoli, Andrea Ciceri, Germano Zenga, Rosarita Crisafi, Alberto Zappalà, Carlo Nicita, Stefano Montaldo, Luca Pedeferri, Andrea Serino, Luca Gusella, Giuseppe Gallucci, Gianluca Alberti, Stefano Lecchi, Naima, Faraò, Serena Ferrara, Francesca Sabatino, Francesco Forges, Fernandino Faraò.

*Dopo "**Play Soft Machine**", che allegammo alla rivista nel 2014, **Musica Jazz** torna a pubblicare un nuovo lavoro dell'orchestra diretta da **Fernandino Faraò** e questa volta dedicato alle musiche di **Phil Miller**, che con Artchipel aveva già collaborato nel 2011.*

di CLAUDIO BONOMI
foti di PAOLO ARALDI

Delivery, Matching Mole, Hatfield and the North, National Health, In Cahoots.

Nomi che evocano per ogni appassionato delle musiche di Canterbury paesaggi sonori indescrivibili, sempre sospesi tra tradizione melodica, *progressive*, jazz e avanguardia. Tra gli artefici di quei paesaggi figura Phil Miller, raffinato virtuoso della chitarra elettrica e compositore, scomparso nell'ottobre del 2017 a soli 68 anni. Un musicista dallo stile non omologabile descritto efficacemente da Jonathan Coe, fan *ante litteram* di Canterbury e dintorni, nel suo ultimo romanzo *Middle England* attraverso le parole del protagonista Benjamin Trotter che rivela a un'intervistatrice quanto la freschezza e l'originalità combinate a un ripensamento completo della forma della musica degli Hatfield and the North e di Phil Miller siano stati determinanti nel decidere di diventare uno scrittore.

Nonostante la complessità delle trame con continui cambiamenti di metro e di chiave, le composizioni di Miller, chiarisce Coe/Trotter, risultano davvero orecchiabili, piacevoli. Un equilibrio perfetto tra ricerca sonora e ricchezza melodica. Sta proprio qui la magia di Miller, musicista lontano anni luce dallo stereotipo del chitarrista rock, quasi da apparire un semplice gregario, ma, allo stesso tempo, sempre essenziale e determinante nell'architettura del suono sin dai tempi dei Delivery, il suo primo gruppo creato nel 1966 a soli 17 anni con il fratello Steve al piano e voce, Pip Pyle alla batteria e Jack Monck al basso. Una magia che l'Artchipel Orchestra, collettivo milanese guidato dal batterista, compositore e direttore d'orchestra Ferdinando Faraò, ha riacceso con «*Truly Yours*», il cd che trovate questo mese allegato a *Musica Jazz.*

«QUESTO ALBUM COMPLETA UN CICLO DURATO NOVE ANNI, INIZIATO NEL 2011 CON IL LAVORO SULL'ALBUM *"NEVER ODD OR EVEN"* E PROSEGUITO FINO A OGGI»

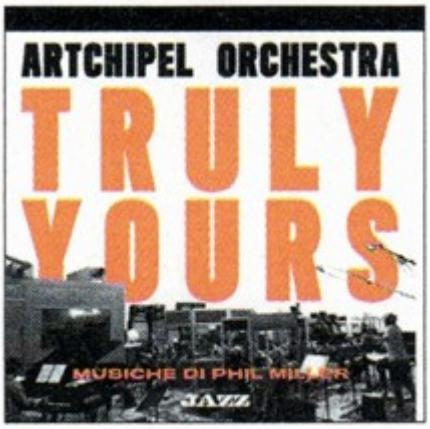
L'album contiene sette composizioni che interessano diverse fasi della carriera del musicista - compositore inglese e spaziano dagli inizi degli anni Settanta con, per esempio, *Nan True's Mole* e *Calyx* (periodo Matching Mole e Hatfield and the North) alla seconda metà degli anni Ottanta con *Second Sight* e *Truly Yours* (periodo In Cahoots). L'Artchipel non è nuova a questo tipo di operazioni avendo in passato già esplorato e riarrangiato composizioni di musicisti e gruppi del *progressive* e del jazz britannico. Molti ricorderanno, per esempio, l'album «*Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Play Soft Machine*» allegato al numero di settembre 2014 di *Musica Jazz*.

«Questo nuovo lavoro - esordisce Faraò - rappresenta un po' la chiusura di un cerchio in quanto il primo contatto con Phil avvenne nel 2011 in occasione della lavorazione di «*Never Odd Or Even*», il primo album dell'Archipel Orchestra. Allora Phil fu molto felice di partecipare al progetto e registrò le sue parti di chitarra in due brani di Alan Gowen, *Arriving Twice e Shining Water*, mentre declinò l'invito a contribuire a un brano di Dave Stewart (*Tenemos Road*, dal primo omonimo album dei National Health, *ndr*). Poi ci fu la grande occasione mancata di suonare insieme all'edizione 2014 di Fasano Jazz. Su invito del direttore artistico Domenico De Mola, l'Artchipel avrebbe dovuto suonare due set: uno dedicato alle musiche di vari gruppi della scuola di Canterbury con Miller ospite e uno

dedicato a quelle dei Soft Machine con ospiti Keith Tippett e Julie Tippetts. Purtroppo all'ultimo, a causa di un improvviso problema di salute, Miller dovette dare forfait. Da allora, siamo rimasti in contatto con la promessa reciproca di combinare qualcosa insieme tanto che Miller aveva più volte espresso il suo gradimento riguardo al fatto che vi fossero delle versioni delle sue composizioni per orchestra o per grandi organici.

Quando hai deciso di dedicare un intero album alle composizioni di Miller?

A dire la verità, mi è sempre frullata in testa l'idea di fare qualcosa. Forse in ragione di quella mancata occasione nel 2014. Però non vorrei definire questo lavoro un omaggio. E non si tratta nemmeno di un'operazione nostalgia. Si è trattato semplicemente di completare un ciclo durato nove anni e iniziato nel 2011, quando l'Artchipel ha cominciato a lavorare all'album «*Never Odd Or Even*», e proseguito, negli anni successivi, con gli album dedicati alle musiche dei Soft Machine e di Lindsay Cooper. Ecco, «*Truly Yours*» va inquadrato in questo contesto e, dunque, non c'è nulla di celebrativo e, soprattutto, nessuna volontà di autocompiacimento. Il nucleo centrale resta sempre la musica.



LARGO SPAZIO AI SOLISTI

«in questo album – racconta il leader Ferdinando Faraò – non ci sono molte parti collettive o frutto di improvvisazioni, ma sono i solisti ad essere quasi sempre in primo piano».

Come hai scelto i brani di «*Truly Yours*»?

L'idea primaria è stata quella di offrire all'ascoltatore una panoramica, la più vasta possibile, dell'opera musicale di Miller con l'intento di valorizzarne le peculiarità come compositore. Ho quindi scandagliato l'intera sua produzione e nella selezione dei brani mi ha aiutato molto Alessandro Achilli. Ovviamente, la scelta è caduta su quelli che si prestavano meglio a una rilettura in chiave jazzistica e a un arrangiamento per big band. Ma devo dire che poi, alla fine, a prevalere è stato il gusto personale. Quando poi il progetto era già in fase di maturazione è arrivata la possibilità offerta dal sito Phil Miller - The Legacy (philmillerthelegacy.com), curato dalla moglie di Miller, Herm Mew, e da suo figlio Kyle, di poter fruire liberamente degli spartiti delle composizioni che figurano in «*Truly Yours*». Non tutti, per la verità: per esempio, lo spartito di *God Song* non era ancora stato caricato sul sito e, quindi, dovemmo richiederlo direttamente a Herm e a Kyle che lo fornirono senza problemi, dimostrando una grande sensibilità e generosità. La stessa generosità di Phil che, prima di morire, dette disposizione di creare il sito in questione dal quale chiunque potesse ascoltare e scaricare gratuitamente l'intera sua discografia. Una dimostrazione di grande prodigalità assolutamente non comune, che fa capire lo spessore di Miller sia come musicista, sia come uomo. Si tratta di un sito che consiglio a tutti di visitare in quanto è funzionale esclusivamente alla musica con nessuno intento celebrativo: ogni brano è raccontato e «radiografato» da Miller con osservazioni su strutture formali, strutture armoniche, scale, aspetti ritmici. Note che mi hanno aiutato moltissimo nel creare gli arrangiamenti.

Se dovessi descrivere la grandezza di Miller come chitarrista e compositore a una persona che non conosce i suoi lavori, come lo racconteresti?

Miller era caratterialmente un tipo schivo cui non piaceva mettersi in mostra. Direi, un antidivo per antonomasia. Anche il suo modo di suonare, quasi rannicchiato su se stesso, era in qualche modo sintomatico di una personalità complessa con un approccio mai autoreferenziale. A livello musicale, lo definirei un instancabile ricercatore dal punto di vista armonico. E questo si comprende benissimo leggendo proprio le sue dettagliatissime note che accompagnano i brani, dove arriva ad indicare percorsi armonici assolutamente inediti.

Per esempio in *Calyx*, una delle sue composizioni-manifesto, indica una serie di scale nominate in base ai canoni dell'armonia jazz e altre le definisce semplicemente *unnamed* (senza nome) in quanto non codificate da nessuno. Sono scale che non si trovano nemmeno nei trattati fondamentali di armonia del Novecento come quelli di Vincent Persichetti o Nicolas Slonimsky. L'armonia è stata, dunque, il centro di gravita della sua attività come compositore e da ciò è scaturito un linguaggio chitarristico assolutamente originale e innovativo.

Passiamo quindi ad analizzare il nuovo lavoro dell'Artchipel brano per brano.

Si inizia con *Above & Below*, composizione che fece la sua prima apparizione ufficiale nell'ultimo lavoro di Alan Gowen, «*Before A Word Is Said*» pubblicato nel 1982, e che venne ripresa da Miller in diversi contesti, diventando quasi un obbligato nei concerti degli In Cahoots.

Esatto. È un brano di forte impatto che si sviluppa in crescendo e raggiunge il climax con un'improvvisazione collettiva con tutti i fiati dell'orchestra in primo piano. Un'improvvisazione che anticipa lo svolgimento del tema. È, dunque, un brano anomalo a livello strutturale in quanto il tema non viene suonato all'inizio, ma alla fine. Si tratta di una *overture* perfetta a «*Truly Yours*».



Fernandino Faraò

Restando negli anni Ottanta e al periodo degli In Cahoots, formazione dove Miller è stato leader e principale compositore, hai scelto due brani tratti da loro primo album «*Cutting Both Ways*» del 1987.

Esatto, e si tratta di *Second Sight* e di *Eastern Region*. Il primo è un brano jazz con la ritmica che va in quattro, in pratica uno *swing*. Lo schema è quello classico con il terna e l'alternanza degli assolo. A tal proposito, in questo album non ci sono molte parti collettive o frutto di improvvisazioni, ma sono i solisti ad essere quasi sempre in primo piano. In questo caso, gli assolo sono firmati da Germano Zenga al sax tenore e da Luca Gusella al vibrafono, che hanno dovuto affrontare una prova molto impegnativa in quanto i giri armonici di *Second Sight* sono davvero ostici. Il mio consiglio ai solisti, dopo aver attentamente ascoltato l'originale in cui l'assolo è eseguito da Elton Dean, è stato quello di «costruire» le loro parti non basandosi sugli accordi ma seguendo una sorta di «second line» rappresentata dal tema lasciato sottotraccia. Per quanto riguarda *Eastern Region* le voci, come tradizione dell'Artchipel, giocano un ruolo di primo piano. Voci che non ci sono

nella composizione originale. A parte questo, la struttura dell'arrangiamento rispecchia abbastanza fedelmente quella genuina creata da Miller.

***Truly Yours*, brano che dà il titolo all'album, proviene sempre dal repertorio In Cahoots e precisamente da «*Split Seconde*» del 1988.**

Sia il brano, sia il titolo mi sembravano ideali per onorare il genio di Miller. e, come la maggioranza delle composizioni del chitarrista del periodo In Cahoots in particolare, si prestava benissimo a una rilettura in chiave jazzistica anche di tipo ortodosso.

Un altro gruppo di brani risale ai gruppi «storici» di Miller, Matching Mole e Hatfield and the North. Dal secondo album dei Matching Mole, «*Little Red Record*» del 1972 prodotto da Robert Fripp, hai scelto *Nan True's Hole* e *God Song*.

L'ARMONIA È SEMPRE STATA IL CENTRO DI GRAVITÀ DELL'ATTIVITÀ DI PHIL MILLER COME COMPOSITORE

Il primo brano è caratterizzato da un riff ossessivo, che ho trascritto in quanto lo spartito della composizione non era ancora disponibile sul sito. È una composizione di forte tensione, scandita da una voce recitante che legge il testo originale del brano, scritto da Robert Wyatt. Anche in questo caso ci siamo attenuti alla versione originale dei Matching Mole. *God Song* è, invece, l'unica composizione in «*Truly Yours*» che è stata arrangiata da Francesco Forges, flautista, compositore e docente, ma anche cantante. Sono molto contento che Francesco sia tornato a collaborare con l'Artchipel e credo che in *God Song* abbia fatto un ottimo lavoro, contribuendo a valorizzare le intricate linee vocali che la caratterizzano, interpretate alla perfezione della voce solista Serena Ferrara. Serena è una presenza storica dell'Artchipel e gioca sempre un ruolo determinante nelle cosiddette *circle songs*, i momenti di improvvisazione collettiva delle voci.

Dal repertorio degli Hatfield and the North hai invece scelto *Calyx*, brano che appare nell'omonimo album di debutto della band risalente al 1974.

È un brano meraviglioso, caratterizzato da una notevole complessità intrinseca, che non poteva mancare in questo lavoro. Qui le voci, che sono da sempre un vero e proprio «marcatore» del *sound* dell'orchestra, sono ancora una volta protagoniste con Naima Faraò che canta la melodia eterea e irregolare della *ballad* e con Francesco Forges che dialoga con il sax baritono di Rosarita Crisafi. Un dialogo astratto e atonale al quale aggiunge colore il flauto di Carlo Nicita che sottolinea ed enfatizza la struttura armonica del brano. Le composizioni di Miller si caratterizzano per un apparato melodico fortissimo e, dunque, anche rispetto ai progetti precedenti dell'Artchipel, in «*Truly Yours*» vi è una presenza ancora più diffusa e importante delle parti vocali in tutti i brani dell'album.



Melodie apparentemente semplici da suonare o da cantare, ma che presentano notevoli difficoltà per chi le esegue. Per esempio, in *Calyx* ci sono degli intervalli davvero impegnativi da affrontare. Riguardo proprio al ruolo delle voci nel contesto dell'orchestra, nel corso degli anni c'è stata anche una reale evoluzione qualitativa: oggi non si soffermano più solo alla sottolineatura di alcuni passaggi tematici, ma contribuiscono a tutto lo sviluppo compositivo, interagendo con le parti strumentali e nelle improvvisazioni anche a livello estemporaneo o a chiamata. In questo senso, si sono rivelati molto preziosi gli insegnamenti di Adam Rudolph, compositore americano con il quale abbiamo collaborato e che ha sviluppato un sistema compositivo assolutamente innovativo chiamato *Cyclic Verticalism*. Si tratta di un metodo basato su cicli ritmici legati alla tradizione africana e indiana.

Com'è ormai tradizione, infine il cd si chiude con un tuo brano. Questa volta è *Esprit merveilleux*.

È nato istintivamente. Ero seduto al pianoforte e immaginavo di suonare davvero con Miller. In realtà non c'è alcun riferimento alle musiche del chitarrista inglese ma, riascoltandoo, ho trovato che si armonizzasse perfettamente con il resto. E che c'era una sorta di filo rosso che lo collegava alla narrazione musicale di «*Truly Yours*».

Quando prevedi di portare questo nuovo lavoro dell'Artchipel in concerto?

Il periodo, come sappiamo, non è certo tra i più favorevoli alle esibizioni dal vivo. La prima data utile potrebbe essere intorno alla fine di ottobre, in occasione della nuova edizione di JazzMi. Incrociamo le dita!

Claudio Bonomi

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Speciale Canterbury - Part 2 - Prog Italia - Gennaio-Febbraio 2019

SPECIALE CANTERBURY



Article complet (PDF)

Prosegue lo speciale sulla scena di Canterbury, nato come tesi presentata al conservatorio di Frosinone. La storia raccontata ha un occhio di riguardo per lo spirito jazz, innestato su quello canterburiano, "diverso" da ogni altra commistione.

Testo: **Alberto Popolla**
Storie aggiunte: **Guido Bellachioma**



SECONDA PARTE

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK

Il fascino di THIRD, inizio e fine di un percorso...

THIRD esce il 6 giugno 1970, quando i **Soft Machine** da due mesi sono diventati definitivamente un quartetto. Il sassofonista **Elton Dean** entra nel gruppo, unico superstite della sezione fiati che contribuisce a registrare questo doppio 33 giri, mentre gli altri abbandonano. D'altronde sono molte le difficoltà per suonare dal vivo con un organico così allargato, visto che include anche **Lyn Dobson**, sassofoni e flauto, **Marc Charig**, cornetta, **Nick Evans**, trombone.

Il disco, a detta di pubblico e critica, rappresenta l'apice della creatività del gruppo; quattro brani su altrettante facciate: uno composto da **Robert Wyatt** – e suonato quasi interamente da solo, l'affascinante *Moon In June* – uno da **Hugh Hopper** e due da **Mike Ratledge**. Il sound è nettamente più orientato verso il jazz-rock e la sperimentazione, il minimalismo di Terry Riley e certe atmosfere alla Frank Zappa. Soprattutto è in netta minoranza l'elemento pop, persino l'uso della voce è limitato a *Moon In June*, preludio alla separazione che avverrà poco tempo dopo. Proprio questa composizione di Wyatt, così lontana dall'approccio maggiormente tecnicistico degli altri brani e ricca d'inquietante vaghezza, è l'elemento che più distingue un album splendido. Molti considerano THIRD la "risposta" inglese a BITCHES BREW di Miles Davis, uscito il 30 marzo. La copertina, decisamente più "irreggimentata" delle precedenti, fornisce subito il segnale dei cambiamenti musicali avvenuti ben prima di ascoltare le composizioni; la grafica è curata da **John Hays**, che collaborerà coi Softs anche per i successivi FOURTH (1972) e FIFTH (1972). Il titolo è stato elaborato da quello originariamente ideato a mano, il nome del gruppo nella versione inglese è scritto in carattere tipografico Cinema, sostituito in quella americana dal Franklin Gothic. L'immagine interna, opera del tedesco Jurgen D. Ensthaler, vede i musicisti "stravaccati" in una camera da letto: la foto è stata scattata nella sua casa berlinese. Il suono è curato dai fonici Andy Knight (Deep Purple, Juicy Lucy, Golden Earring) e Bob Woolford (Barre Phillips, Evan Parker, Derek Bailey), mentre la produzione è della band. La conclusiva e lunga *Out Bloody Rageous* (19'), firmata da Ratledge, sarà inclusa nel loro album del 2018, HIDDEN DETAILS, anche se in due sezioni *Intro* e *Part 1*, insieme comunque più corte dell'originale.



FRANK HABICHT

Tra la fine del 1967 e il 1970 i Soft Machine passano da vivere in comune alla decisione di escludere Wyatt.









PROG
SECONDA PARTE

John Hays è il grafico di THIRD (a sinistra), FOURTH (a destra) e FIFTH. Sotto Daevid Allen (Roma, 17 aprile 2008), Didier Malherbe.

Daevid Allen e Gilli Smyth, poi ristampato come Gong – che uscirà nel marzo del 1970 in Francia, MAGICK BROTHER; l'artwork della copertina viene curato direttamente da Allen, mentre le immagini sono dei fotografi francesi Christian Rose (copertine per Pretty Things, Pink Floyd/*Nile Song*, Steve Lacy e John McLaughin, però fornisce la foto anche per il 45 giri *Quel poco che ho* di Al Bano, 1969) e Guy Lequerrec (appartenente all'Agenzia Magnum).

La magia dei primi Gong

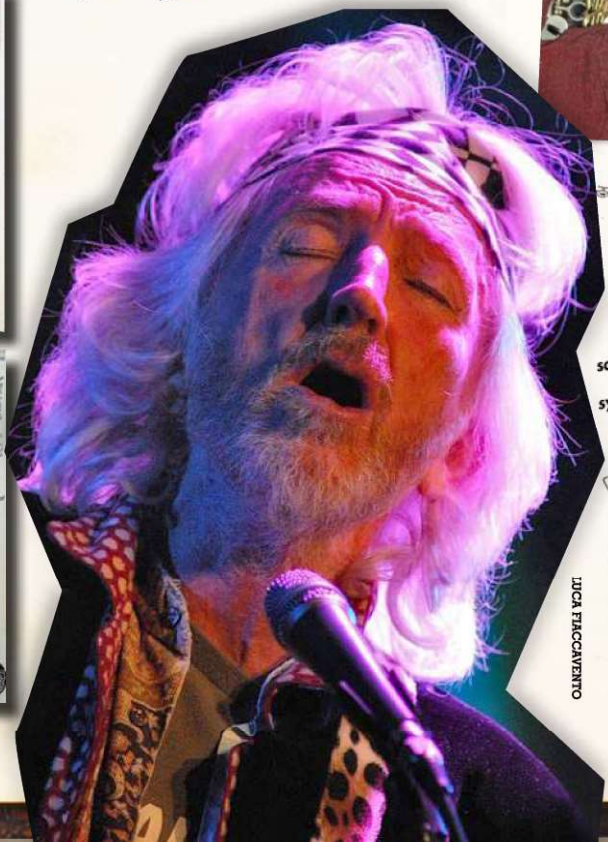
Intanto gli altri membri della compagnia continuano le loro attività. **Daevid Allen** riesce alla fine a consolidare per i suoi **Gong** la line-up: **Didier Malherbe** al sassofono contralto e al flauto, la sua compagna **Gilli Smith** al "soffio spaziale", **Christian Tritsch** alla chitarra e al basso, **Rachid Houari** alla batteria e alle percussioni (muore nel 1973 dopo l'incisione di THE FLYING TEAPOT, primo capitolo della trilogia RADIO GNOME INVISIBLE). A settembre inizia le registrazioni del suo primo Lp – a nome

«I Soft Machine con Third perdono la verginità canterburiana abbracciando la religione jazz-rock»











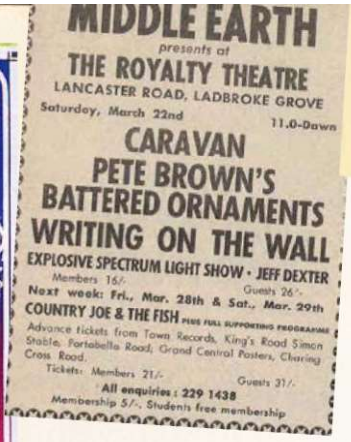
LUCA FIACCAVENTO

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK

Tra doppi sensi e romanticismo

I **Caravan** pubblicano nel settembre del 1970 il loro secondo album, IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN, I'D DO IT ALL OVER YOU, registrato a febbraio, nel quale partecipa, come ospite, **Jimmy Hastings**, flautista e sassofonista, fratello di Pye, loro chitarrista. La produzione è di **Terry King**, che sostituisce **Tony Cox** (Camel, Yes, Family, Trees, Spirogyra), presente nel primo omonimo disco (1969). King nel 1971 fonda la Kingdom Records e diventa il manager del gruppo; il contratto con lui dura fino all'agosto 1974. La copertina è curata da David Jupe (Steamhammer) mentre la foto che li ritrae immersi nel verde di Holland Park a Londra è di Richard Bennett Zeff (Free, Fairport Convention, Sandy Denny), già nel disco di esordio l'anno precedente. Sono presenti lunghe suite, improvvisazioni jazzistiche e brani pop tra atmosfere morbide e accelerazioni distorte. È il preludio al capolavoro IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK (aprile 1971), ritenuto, appunto, il loro miglior album: sicuramente è uno dei dischi fondamentali della scena di Canterbury e del rock inglese in generale.







Nel biennio ('70/71) i Caravan attraversano un vero e proprio stato di grazia.

IN THE LAND è l'album perfetto dell'iniziale spirito canterburiano.

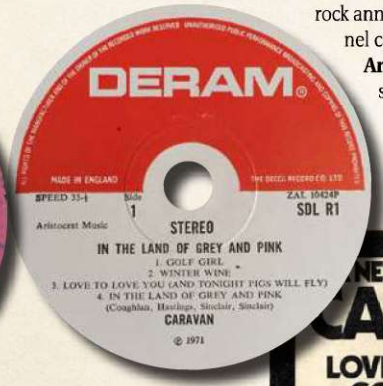
Il lato B è occupato dalla suite *Nine Feet Underground*, divisa in otto movimenti (forse il più popolare brano canterburiano, sebbene **Dave Sinclair**, autore principale, l'abbia definita "*un viaggio tipicamente giovanile*", composta mentre viveva in uno scantinato); la facciata A ha quattro tipiche pop song in stile Caravan. "*In questa opera il* jazz-rock *fa da accompagnamento a un viaggio onirico-musicale sviluppato da testi con elementi fantasy e favolistici*"[1] con un "*travolgente finale che unisce elementi di jazz, di psichedelia e di hard rock*"[2]. La produzione per la prima volta è di **David Hitchcock**, che è dietro anche a dischi di Genesis, Camel, Curved Air, Renaissance, Marillion, Pink Fairies, East of Eden, Mellow Candle. Il disegno di copertina (una delle icone del rock anni 70 e che per tanti ha Tolkien nel cuore) è opera di **Anne Marie Anderson**, morta di overdose a soli 24 anni. Ricorda **Richard Sinclair**: "*La copertina è stata realizzata da una giovane studentessa. Noi musicisti non la conoscevamo in quanto era stata contattata da Terry King, il nostro manager. Tutti noi Caravan abbiamo subito amato quel disegno. La mia canzone* In The Land Of Grey And Pink *è stata scelta come titolo del nostro terzo album perché si adattava meglio a raccontare una storia, quella del posto dove vivevamo: Canterbury. L'idea proveniva dal colore dei cieli nel tramonto invernale sopra la nostra città, quando provavano tutti i giorni per prepararci alla registrazione*". La bravissima pittrice inglese nel 1971 realizza anche le illustrazioni dei lavori d'esordio dei Fuchsia (folk prog dalla vena psichedelica) e del supergruppo Stud (rock blues duro, con la presenza di membri dei Taste, Family e Blossom Toes); la grafica è di Joe McGillicuddy per l'agenzia ROC Advertising.

Questo periodo vede il fiorire deciso di produzioni discografiche e concerti dei gruppi canterburiani.

Tiro al bersaglio con la luna

Kevin Ayers allestisce il **Whole World**, formato da un giovanissimo **Mike Oldfield** alla chitarra elettrica e al basso, **Mick Fincher** alla batteria, sempre **David Bedford** al piano e agli arrangiamenti, **Lol Coxhill**, esponente della scena improvvisativa inglese, già membro dei **Delivery** e sorta di "nomade" musicale al sassofono. SHOOTING AT THE MOON (registrato tra aprile e settembre 1970 agli Abbey Road Studios, edito a ottobre) alterna alcune tra le migliori canzoni di Ayers – *May I?*, *Clarence In Wonderland*, *Red Green And You Blue* – a lunghe esplorazioni strumentali – *Pisser Dans Un Violon*, *Underwater*. Il brano *Shooting At The Moon* è una riproposizione della vecchia *Jet Propelled Photograph*, che faceva parte dei demo registrati nel 1967 con i Softs. Peter Mew (Pink Floyd/UMMAGUMMA, Syd Barrett, Deep Purple), allora capo degli ingegneri audio degli studi, cura il suono, dopo averlo già fatto nell'esordio solista di Kevin, JOY OF A TOY (1969) e su UMMAGUMMA dei Pink Floyd (1969). La produzione è di **Peter Jenner**, anche importante manager (Pink Floyd, Roy Harper, Kevin Coyne, Clash, Billy Bragg), mentre la copertina è di Tomas Lipps/Tom Fu (che collabora ai pri-









Caravan nel 1970.

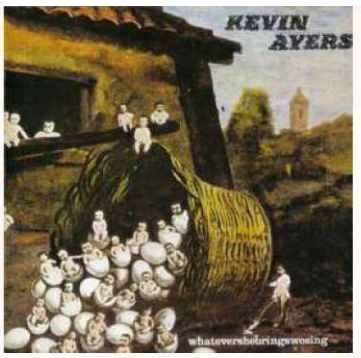


I Caravan immersi nel verde di Holland Park a Londra.

Note
1. It.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravan_(gruppo_musicale)
2. Ibid.

mi due capitoli della trilogia RADIO GNOME INVISIBLE dei Gong). François Gorin, ex giornalista di «Rock & Folk» e molto vicino ad Ayers, scrive nel 2013 dopo la morte di questo aggraziato menestrello fuori da ogni schema, persino da quelli praticamente inesistenti della scena di Canterbury: "*Se il regno del pop britannico fosse stato come il Paese delle Meraviglie di Alice, purtroppo esistente solo nella nostra immaginazione, il personaggio più confacente a Kevin Ayers sarebbe stato senza dubbio il Ghiro, che mentre dorme viene infilato nella teiera dalla Lepre Marzolina e dal Cappellaio Matto. Sembrava sempre stupito del mondo intorno, persino dalla sua musica. La sua nonchalance non ha mai smesso di supportare un talento musicale proteiforme*".

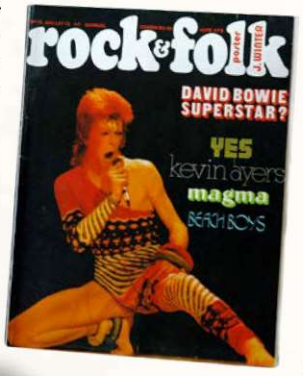
Il 1970, nonostante la morte di Hendrix, Morrison e Joplin, è un anno eccezionale per le musiche giovanili, soprattutto in ambito rock, ma non deve essere trascurato l'enorme successo di Miles Davis con BITCHES BREW, uscito proprio nell'aprile del 1970, e che aprirà il fecondo filone del jazz-rock. In questo fermento i musicisti di Canterbury sembrano trovarsi a proprio agio recitando, nel caso soprattutto dei Soft Machine, un ruolo di primo piano, sia in ambito propriamente pop rock che anche in quello jazzistico con THIRD.







WHATEVERSHE BRINGSWESING, poster Hendrix/Soft Machine americano, Robert Wyatt.



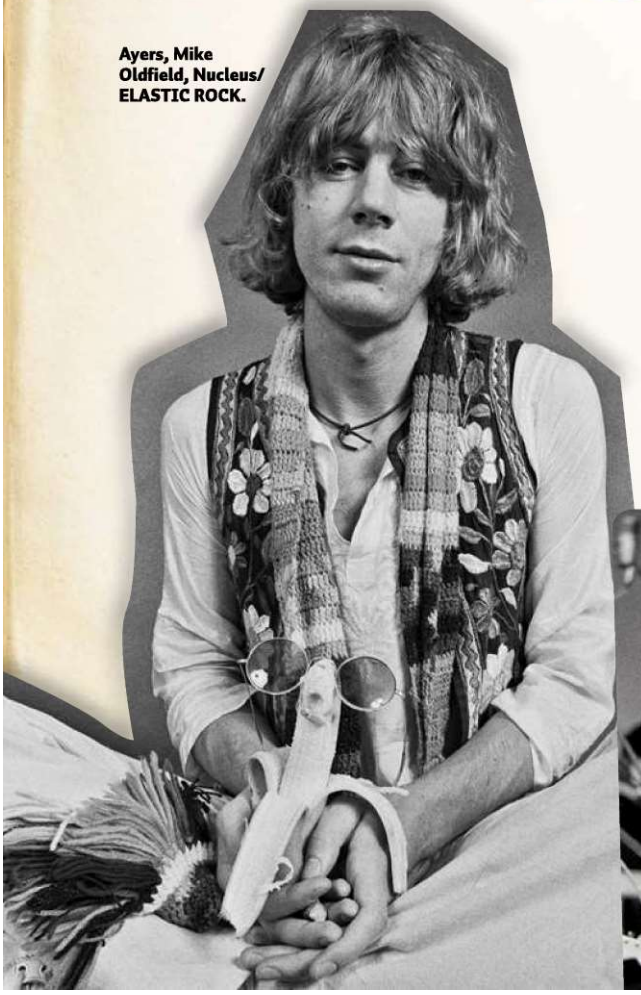
Robert e le contaminazioni jazz

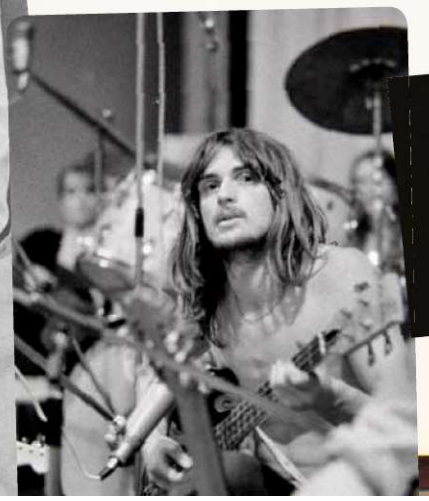
E proprio al jazz, suo amore adolescenziale, che Wyatt prova a fare riferimento con il primo lavoro solista, THE END OF AN EAR, pubblicato nel dicembre 1970 e da lui prodotto in modo assolutamente non convenzionale.

La registrazione di THIRD aveva lasciato molte tensioni all'interno dei Soft Machine con Wyatt che si sentiva isolato dal resto del gruppo[3]. Decide così di preparare un album dove potersi liberamente esprimere e mettere a frutto tutta una serie di idee e suggestioni, derivate dalle numerose frequentazioni con musicisti di estrazione jazzistica. Sulla copertina scrive: "*Robert Wyatt, cantante pop disoccupato (attualmente alla batteria nei Soft Machine)!*". In realtà, anche qui, il jazz è fonte di ispirazione ma l'approccio è decisamente libero da cliché e confini prestabiliti, una sorta di "*innovative mix of free jazz, rock and avant-garde music with liberal use of his signature vocal experiment*"[4]. Importanti sono i musicisti che partecipano alla registrazione, con Elton Dean troviamo **Dave Sinclair** all'organo, musicista non proprio vicino ad ambiti sperimentali e/o jazzistici. Rilevanti per lo spirito dell'album i personaggi a cui è dedicato l'album, in un modo o nell'altro riferiti alla scena di Canterbury: *To Caravan and Brother Jim* (Caravan e Jimmy Hastings), *To the Old World* (The Whole World di Kevin Ayers con cui Wyatt talvolta suona), *To Oz Alien Daevyd, and Gilli Smyth* (David Allen e Gilli Smyth), *To Saintly Bridget* (Bridget St John), *To Carla, Marsha and Caroline/For Making Everything Beautifuller* (Carla Bley, Marsha Hunt e Caroline Coon, la terza avrà importanza notevole nella vita di Wyatt), *To Mark Everywhere* (dedicata al fratellastro Mark Ellidge, che suona il piano nel disco), *To Nick Everyone* (Nick Evans). Tra i musicisti ci sono Marc Charig e **Neville Whitehead**, contrabbassista, bassista e liutaio neozelandese, che proviene dal sestetto di Keith Tippet/DEDICATED TO YOU, BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING, suona nei Just Us di El-



Ayers, Mike Oldfield, Nucleus/ ELASTIC ROCK.







Note

3. M. King *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 80
4. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 213

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK


Ian Carr/ Nucleus.

ton Dean e collabora con gli Isotope del chitarrista Gary Boyle (Trinity di Brian Auger).
Il brano più conosciuto, si fa per dire, è una riproposizione, in versione molto libera, di *Las Vegas Tango* del jazzista **Gil Evans**, divisa in due parti.
Con BITCHES BREW, THIRD, ELASTIC ROCK dei **Nucleus** del trombettista Ian Carr, la commistione tra jazz e rock incontra il favore del pubblico e dei musicisti su entrambe le sponde. È soprattutto in Inghilterra, a Londra in particolare, che l'incontro tra jazzisti e rocker, pur se anomali e sperimentali, produce una serie di progetti e lavori di notevole interesse, segnando ancora di più le vicende e le musiche dei canterburiani, che di questi incontri ne saranno i protagonisti, soprattutto dal lato Soft Machine.


Ian Carr/ Nucleus.

GIOVANNI COCCIA

L'energia di Tippett

È di questo momento creativo l'esperimento **Centipede**, portato avanti da **Keith Tippett**, pianista jazz al quale i Soft Machine avevano preso la sezione fiati del suo sestetto. Centipede non è un supergruppo ma una vera e propria orchestra di 50 elementi con all'interno jazzisti sudafricani e inglesi, Robert Wyatt, Elton Dean, musicisti della scena blues londinese, prog e di estrazione classica (soprattutto violini e violoncelli). L'album SEPTOBER ENERGY, registrato a giugno e uscito nell'ottobre 1971 per la Neon Records (fonico Mike Thompson, già con i Web del tastierista Dave Lawson, poi nei Greenslade) con la copertina dei fratelli **Martyn** e **Roger Dean**, rappresenta per certi versi l'utopia di una musica totale, priva di barriere e inclusiva, con all'interno suggestioni free, ritmi africani ed estetiche radicali. È un tentativo che non avrà lunga vita, ma influenzerà una parte dell'ambiente londinese, tra cui ovviamente i musicisti di Canterbury e anche altri esponenti del progressive inglese, primi fra tutti i King Crimson, non a caso **Robert Fripp** appare come produttore del disco (d'altronde ha grande stima per Tippett, che suona in ISLANDS del Re Cremisi, uscito a novembre in quello stesso anno, dopo aver partecipato nel 1970 a IN THE WAKE OF POSEIDON e LIZARD). Tippett già a gennaio 1971 aveva avuto la sua commistione con i Soft Machine, registrando DEDICATED TO YOU, BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING, titolo di un brano di Hugh Hopper (apparso nel 1969 su VOLUME TWO dei Softs). La splendida copertina è realizzata da Martyn e Roger Dean; la produzione è del sassofonista Pete King, che insieme a Ronnie Scott il 30 ottobre 1959 aveva aperto a Londra il Ronnie Scott Jazz Club, uno dei templi musicali europei. Ovviamente la versione stravolge completamente il brano originale e Robert Wyatt è presente in alcune parti alla batteria. Proprio in questo album è inclusa *Green And Orange Night Park*, che costituisce la sezione finale della suite *Septober Energy*, divisa in quattro parti.

Instancabile Wyatt e la sua uscita dai Soft Machine

Wyatt è certamente l'elemento più "vivace" di tutta la scena canterburiana. Avvia diverse collaborazioni, sospese al confine tra jazz e rock, con i sassofonisti **Gary Windo** e **Trevor Watts,** il batterista **John Stevens** e registra con Daevid Allen (BANANA MOON, dove c'è *Memories* di Hugh Hopper,

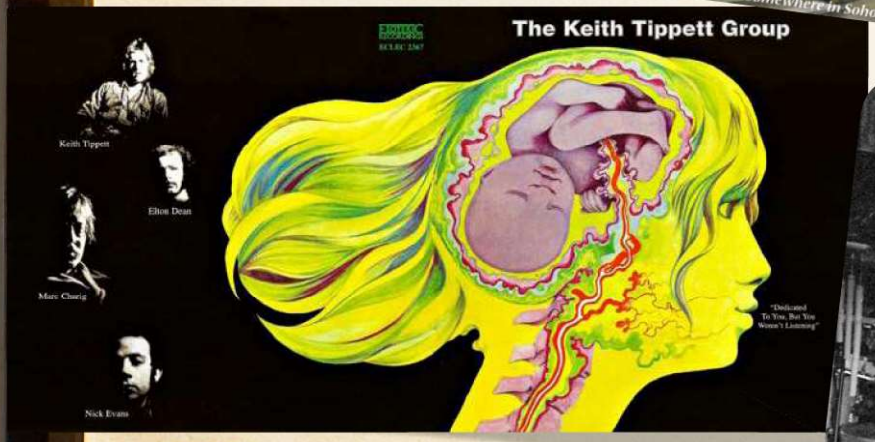
«Esiste una scena canterburiana prima di Third e un'altra, diversa, dopo Third. Quel disco ha cambiato molte cose»







Il doppio SOMEWHERE IN SOHO (2004) è stato registrato al Ronnie Scott, un mese e mezzo prima dell'uscita di THIRD, qui contenuto integralmente. In basso a destra Keith Tippett.





GIOVANNI COCCIA



ROBERTO MASOTTI







già in scaletta coi Wilde Flowers nel 1966 e incisa dai Soft Machine nei demo 1967, editi in moltissime edizioni tra cui FACES AND PLACES Vol. 7 e JET-PROPELLED PHOTOGRAPHS. Robert è presente anche su WHATEVERSHEBRINGSWESING di Kevin Ayers del gennaio 1972), ma l'elenco delle collaborazioni di Wyatt è lunghissimo e va da alcuni concerti dei **Gong** (con Kevin Ayers in formazione) a Paul Bley, Gary Burton, Terje Rypdal, Mongezi Feza e Dudu Pukwana.

Queste numerose partecipazioni sono anche il sintomo di una situazione difficile che Wyatt vive all'interno dei Soft Machine, dove è ormai in minoranza rispetto all'asse Ratledge-Hopper, sempre più orientata verso una musica strumentale, maggiormente vicina al jazz-rock che alla psichedelia o al pop stralunato dei primi tempi. Il quarto Lp dei Softs, FOURTH, pubblicato nel gennaio 1971, vede la presenza di Wyatt solo alla batteria e per la prima volta non c'è nessun brano cantato. Peraltro la musica effettivamente vira verso altri lidi, caratterizzata da "*brevity of thematic materials, and a greater emphasis on improvisation*"[5]. È l'ultimo atto prima della definitiva separazione. Robert Wyatt lascia il gruppo e si avvia a formare un nuovo progetto che comunque richiamerà nel nome proprio il gruppo da cui è appena uscito.



A sinistra Terje Rypdal, a destra Caroline Coon.

L'idea fissa di scambiare ruoli e gruppi

I Matching Mole, omofonia con l'ironica traduzione francese di Soft Machine, Machine Molle, si formano nel 1971, contemporaneamente al primo cambio di formazione dei Caravan. Quasi in una sorta di cammino parallelo, anche il gruppo fin lì più stabile della scena di Canterbury, dopo il successo del terzo album, IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK, così come era successo ai Soft Machine dopo THIRD, entrano in crisi. Nell'agosto 1971 l'organista **Dave Sinclair**, che non a caso aveva già collaborato con Wyatt in THE END OF AN EAR, lascia i Caravan ed entra a far parte del nuovo progetto dell'ex Softs.

E continuando con i parallelismi, a sostituire Sinclair nei Caravan subentra **Steve Miller**, già nei Delivery e fratello del chitarrista **Phil Miller**, anche lui nei Matching Mole. È questo il periodo dove le strade cominciano a separarsi ma anche a intrecciarsi in modo curioso. I Delivery, oltre a "fornire" i fratelli Miller, daranno il batterista Laurie Allan (che aveva rimpiazzato Pip Pyle) ai Gong e, come abbiamo visto, Lol Coxhill al Whole World di Kevin Ayers.

Con l'album MATCHING MOLE, aprile 1972, Wyatt ritorna naturalmente, anche se solo in parte, a quel mix surreale di jazz, rock, pop e sperimentalismo tipico dei primi Softs, ma con un'attenzione maggiore all'improvvisazione, soprattutto da parte di Phil Miller (d'altronde la chitarra nei Softs con Wyatt è decisamente di contorno fin dall'inizio; diventerà importante con l'ingresso di Allan Holdsworth, poi sostituito da John Etheridge). La presenza di un brano pop come *O Caroline*, scritta da Wyatt e Sinclair, riporta un po' alle atmosfere alla Kevin Ayers o alla Caravan, sicuramente è il marchio di fabbrica del Canterbu-

Da sinistra: Gary Windo, Delivery e The English Lake, dipinto della Coon.







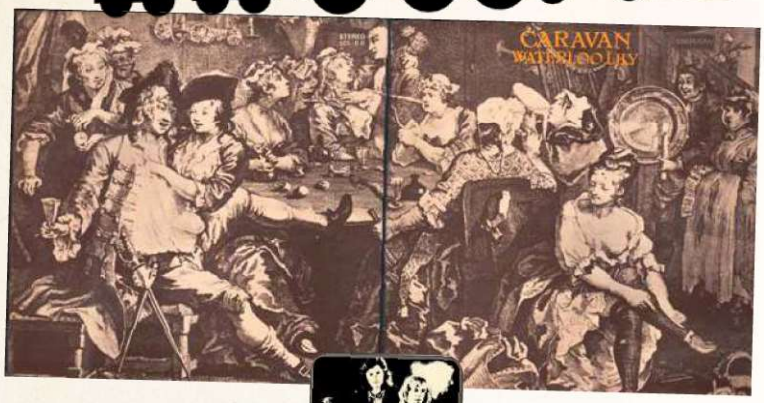
Note

5- J. Wicks, Innovations in British Jazz, Volume one, 1960-1980, Soundworld Publishers, Chelmsoford, 1999.

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK



THE CARAVAN EXPRESS





Matching Mole, 1972. A destra: copertina e pubblicità di WATERLOO LILY dei Caravan.

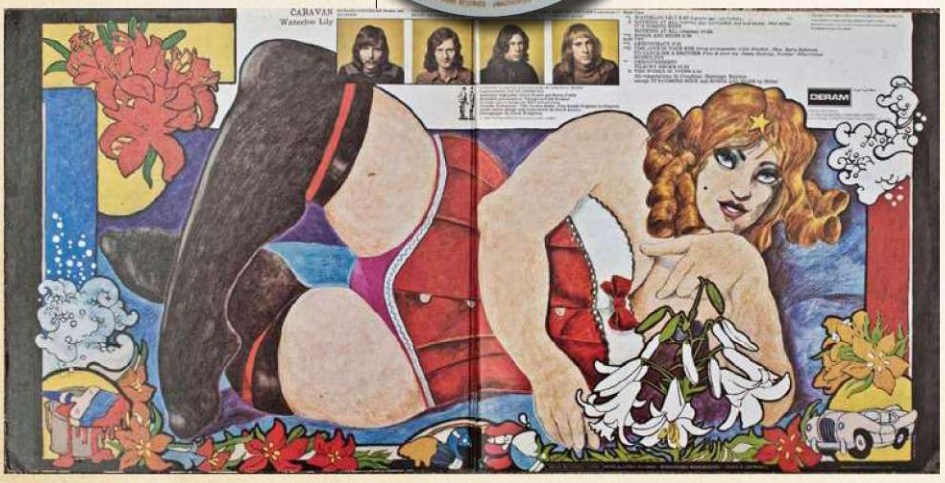
ry sound, le famose catchy pop songs unite a sperimentazioni e improvvisazioni. Questo brano diventa il manifesto dell'album, anche se non credo fosse l'intenzione di Wyatt ma al massimo della CBS, già rimasta "devastata" nelle aspettative dalla ostica sonorità di THE END OF AN EAR. La canzone è dedicata a **Caroline Coon**, che abbiamo già trovato su THE END OF AN EAR, attivista politica, eroina della controcultura, artista in senso lato; le sue foto sono sulle copertine dei primi Police, Slits e Clash, di cui è manager per un breve periodo. Wyatt con lei ha una tormentata ma stimolante relazione; *London Lady* degli Stranglers parla della Coon che dice: "*Anche Bob Dylan ha scritto una canzone per me*... She Belongs To Me". Questa affermazione viene discussa aspramente, perché non ritenuta veritiera. La bella illustrazione di copertina è opera del disegnatore inglese **Alan Cracknell** (Wild Turkey) e diventa una delle icone più rappresentative della musica inglese degli anni 70.

Quella signorina un po' così...

Un mese dopo, maggio, esce il quarto Lp dei Caravan – WATERLOO LILY – il primo con Steve Miller al posto di **Dave Sinclair** e, in qualità di ospiti, Lol Coxhill e Phil Miller. A questo punto, e non è una casualità ma forse reciproca influenza e trend del momento, c'è un maggiore spazio per l'improvvisazione e un sound più vicino alla fusion, nel senso migliore del termine. Prosegue la connessione ironica che gioca sui doppi sensi tra titoli, grafica e musica, questa volta più "carnale" che in precedenza. L'immagine esterna della copertina è del pittore **William Hogarth** (Londra, 10 novembre 1697 – Londra, 26 ottobre 1764), terzo quadro degli otto che compongono il ciclo A Rake's Progress (1733), incentrato sulla vita di Tom Rakewell. La scena ritrae il giovane nella RoseTavern di Covent Garden a Londra, un bordello smantellato nel 1776; l'originale, che è a colori, si trova insieme agli altri sette al Sir John Soane's Museum di Lincoln's Inn Fields a Londra. L'ironico disegno interno, che ritrae la fisicamente abbondante Lily in sgargiante abbigliamento intimo, è opera di **David Anstey** (Moody Blues, Khan, Mellow Candle, Savoy Brown, Chicken Shack), mentre le foto dei Caravan sono di **David Wedgbury** (Moody Blues, East of Eden) e la produzione ancora di David Hitchcock, che collaborerà con il gruppo fino al 1976 (BLIND DOG AT ST. DUNSTANS, il primo senza sarà BETTER BY FAR del 1977, quando verrà sostituito da Tony Visconti).

Disegno della prosperosa Lily all'interno della cover di WATERLOO LILY dei Caravan e copertina di FIFTH dei Soft Machine.



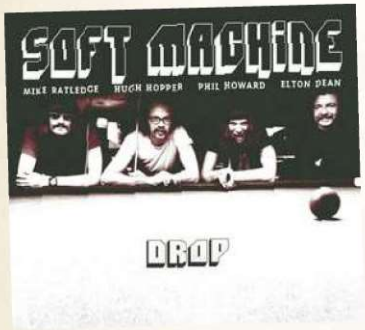


Soft Machine: alfieri del jazz-rock

A giugno esce FIFTH dei Soft Machine, e ormai il gruppo è inserito in pieno nel filone jazz-rock, con il suono del piano Fender Rhodes a sostituire spesso l'organo e la presenza nella facciata A di **Phil Howard** alla batteria (presente in DEDICATED TO YOU, BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING di Tippett e nel primo omonimo 33 giri solista di Elton Dean, 1971), sostituito nella B da **John Marshall** (che aveva partecipato ai primi tre album dei Nucleus – ELASTIC ROCK/1970, WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER/1971, SOLAR PLEXUS/1971, oltre che a SEPTOBER ENERGY dei Centipede – perché considerato troppo jazzista da Hopper e Ratledge. Il fonico **Gary Martin** (assistente di Offord per FRAGILE degli Yes, cura in A GLASS HOUSE dei Gentle Giant, per i SOFTS registra anche SIX e SEVEN) fa un lavoro certosino in un contesto non facile di dinamiche e piani sonori.







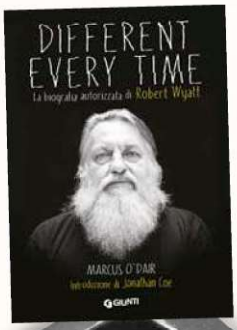


Soft Machine davanti alla Royal Albert Hall di Londra, 1970. A sinistra: copertine di SIX e del live DROP, una delle rare cose con Phil Howard (autunno 1971).

Che intrecci nel 1972!

Ma, si diceva sopra, è una fase di separazioni e intrecci che rende difficile la narrazione cronologica ma arricchisce lo spettro musicale. Elton Dean abbandona i Softs nel maggio 1972 e, a questo punto, del gruppo "canterburiano" rimane ben poco, se non il nome. I fratelli Miller lasciano e riprendono più volte i Delivery con le presenze di Richard Sinclair, che nel frattempo aveva lasciato i Caravan, **Dave Sinclair**, che aveva lasciato i Matching Mole, Lol Coxhill, Pip Pyle, **Roy Babbington** (contrabbassista aggiunto in FOURTH e FIFTH dei Soft Machine, in seguito sostituto stabile di Hugh Hopper, ancora oggi è in formazione), addirittura Didier Malherbe dei Gong come ospite in un concerto, fino ad arrivare alla costituzione di un nuovo gruppo: **Hatfield and the North**.

A novembre esce il secondo e ultimo disco dei Matching Mole, LITTLE RED RECORD, registrato durante l'estate, con Dave MacRae al piano elettrico, che, dopo l'uscita di Sinclair, indirizza il sound verso la *fusion*, ma con il solito mix di jazz, sperimentazioni e rock ad arricchire un lavoro innovativo e convincente. È provocatoria la copertina di **Bob Norrington** (Fleetwood Mac, Alun Davies, Trapeze, Roy Wood), che ritrae i musicisti vestiti come le guardie della Rivoluzione Culturale Cinese, evidente l'allusione al Libretto Rosso di Mao, anche se nei brani il messaggio politico non è poi evidente, tranne in "*Gloria Gloom: Sino a che punto posso fingere che la musica sia più importante di combattere per un mondo socialista?*". Riguardo la discussa immagine ricorda il bassista Bill MacCornick: "*A Robert non è piaciuta affatto quella copertina, anche se per me era spassosa e ironica*". Su *Different Every Time. La biografia autorizzata di Robert Wyatt* (uscita per la Giunti nel 2015 e ben tradotta da Alessandro Achilli) scrive Marcus O'Dair: "*Il disco era, senza dubbio, più robusto del primo. Questa volta il materiale era stato provato prima di entrare in studio e si avvertiva una maggiore coesione. Voce e strumenti erano più integrati. In LITTLE RED RECORD Wyatt il batterista jazz e Wyatt il cantante iniziano a coesistere*".



Da segnalare la presenza, come ospite, di Brian Eno al sintetizzatore e la produzione di Robert Fripp.

In questo ricchissimo 1972 agli Advision Studios di Londra, fonico Gary Martin, iniziano le registrazioni di 1984, esordio solista di Hugh Hopper (uscito nel 1973). È un lavoro ostico per il pubblico mediamente rock, dove Hugh elabora e sviluppa la sua passione per i tape loop, appresa anni prima da Terry Riley in compagnia di Daevid Allen. L'elenco dei

Soft Machine, 1974. Da sinistra (sopra) Jenkins, Ratledge, Marshall; sotto da sinistra Holdsworth e Babbington.







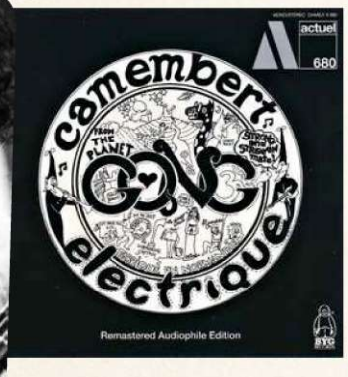


musicisti che partecipano alle session è eloquente e oggettivamente esplicativo di ciò che si definisce scena di Canterbury: Pye Hastings, Lol Coxhill, Gary Windo, John Marshall, Malcolm Griffiths, Nick Evans.

La folle giostra di CAMEMBERT ELECTRIQUE

Abbiamo lasciato da parte nella nostra narrazione le vicende di Daevid Allen e del suo progetto Gong. In un turbinio di cambiamenti di formazioni, concerti e tour in giro per l'Europa, progetti solistici e apparizioni in altri contesti, collaborazioni e fughe a Majorca, Daevid Allen e i suoi Gong pubblicano (anche se all'inizio solo in Francia) il loro primo vero Lp, CAMEMBERT ELECTRIQUE; registrato nel 1971 da maggio e settembre, pubblicato a ottobre. È una sorta di patchwork psichedelico che avvia il mondo fantastico del pianeta Gong, con incursioni jazzistiche, psichedelia, space rock e l'insostituibile follia di Allen, che dà una fortissima impronta al disco e al gruppo in generale. Alla batteria c'è Pip Pyle, che subito dopo abbandonerà il gruppo rimpiazzato da Laurie Allan, e Didier Malherbe (sassofono/flauto), anche lui tratto distintivo del sound del gruppo. La copertina è di Daevid Allen e il servizio fotografico di Phil Franks (Yes, Zappa, Incredible String Band, Hawkwind), nell'immagine interna c'è Sam, figlio di Wyatt.







Interno cover CAMEMBERT ELECTRIQUE.

In alto *Just Us* di Elton Dean (1973), sotto Hopper.



Daevid Allen in due immagini degli anni 2000.



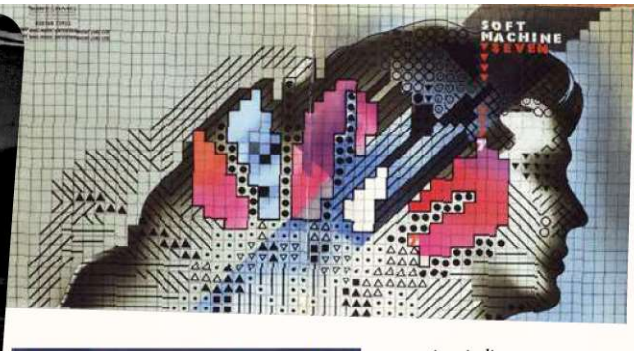
La crisi dei Softs e dei Caravan

Il 1973 e il 1974 sono anni decisivi per le vicende dei nostri musicisti. I due gruppi storici della scena di Canterbury, Soft Machine e Caravan, sono in netta crisi e, con continui cambi di formazione, producono alcuni album lontani dalle atmosfere e dalla creatività dei primi anni. Possiamo dire che, al di là del nome, effettivamente la musica di SIX (con **Karl Jenkins**, proveniente dai Nucleus, al posto di Elton Dean) e SEVEN (con Roy Babbington che rimpiazza Hugh Hopper) dei Soft Machine (entrambi gli album vengono pubblicati nel 1973) non ha più gli elementi tipici della scena di Canterbury. Così come FOR GIRLS WHO GROW PLUMP IN THE NIGHT (edito a ottobre 1973, senza Richard Sinclair e i fratelli Miller, ma con



PINO MAGLIARI







Geoffrey Richardson e Dave Sinclair, Caravan 1974.

A destra Hillage e Allen e sotto il chiostro della cattedrale di Canterbury.

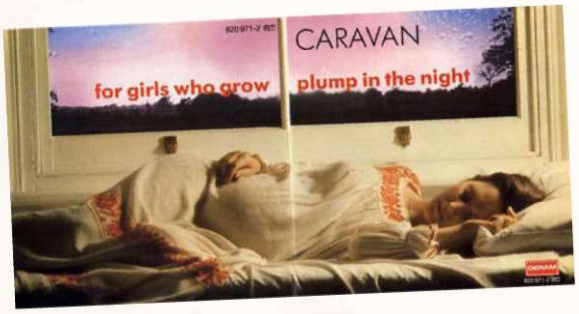
Dave Sinclair di nuovo all'organo) e CARAVAN AND THE NEW SIMPHONIA (live con l'orchestra classica) dei Caravan sono, anch'essi, lontani dal quel mix surreale di jazz, rock, sperimentalismo e pop song tipico della musica canterburiana.

Radio Gnome Invisible Trilogy

Chi seguita a proporre, con slancio e genialità, il fascino di quel sound è Daevid Allen con i suoi Gong. Tra il 1973 e il 1974 il gruppo pubblicherà la famosa trilogia di Radio Gnome Invisible, composta da FLYING TEAPOT (maggio 1973), ANGEL'S EGG (dicembre 1973) e YOU (ottobre 1974).

La formazione si stabilizza con l'arrivo del chitarrista **Steve Hillage** (Uriel/Arzachel, Khan) ma anche con il solito cambio di batteristi, Laurie Allan poi **Pierre Moerlen**: in quel momento i Gong costituiscono il versante più psichedelico della scena di Canterbury. La genialità di Allen viene accompagnata ora da un nucleo di musicisti validi tecnicamente e in grado di far volare il pianeta Gong nei meandri di una musica sognante eppur ironica e dissacrante, con larghi spazi all'improvvisazione sia di matrice jazzistica ed etnica che rock. E la costruzione testuale di una mitologia fantastica comprensiva di folletti, teiere volanti e pianeti lontani rende la trilogia gonghiana un *unicum* all'interno della storia del rock.









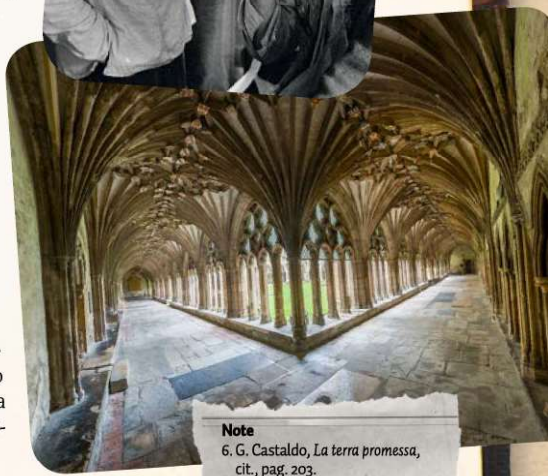
Karl Jenkins, teatro Brancaccio, Roma, 8 gennaio '74.



Allen manda tutti al diavolo

Purtroppo Allen è personaggio troppo lontano dallo star system e ancora più instabile per mantenere in piedi un gruppo comunque giunto ora a una sua pur modesta notorietà. Ed è vero anche che questa musica arriva forse troppo tardi, in un momento in cui le utopie della summer of love sono in fase discendente, sostituite da esteriorità, glamour, snobismo e una frammentazione[6] che nuoce e ghettizza proprio quelle musiche prive di confini certi, stabili. È da qui che i musicisti di Canterbury, prima pionieri e star del momento, iniziano la loro parabola discendente anche se solo dal punto di vista commerciale e non ancora da quello creativo. In ogni caso, come i Soft Machine e i Caravan, anche i Gong entrano in crisi con l'abbandono del gruppo da parte di Daevid Allen e della sua compagna Gilli Smyth. Il gruppo finisce nelle mani del batterista e percussionista Pierre Morlen dopo la dipartita anche di Steve Hillage, che lo porta sul versante jazz-rock ortodosso, vicino ai rinnovati Soft Machine. In Italia i Pierre Moerlen's Gong otterranno ottimi consensi di pubblico in molti tour.





Note

6. G. Castaldo, *La terra promessa*, cit., pag. 203.

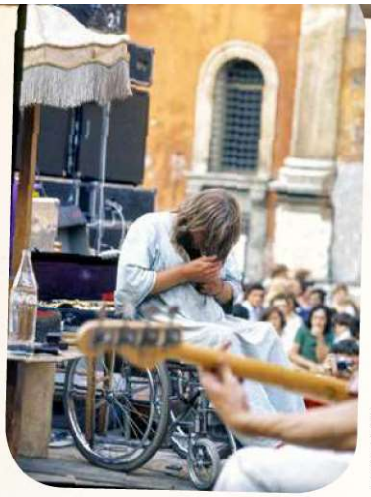
GIOVANNI COCCIA

Dopo niente più è lo stesso

Ma, dicevamo, il 1973 è momento centrale per la scena di Canterbury. Il 1° giugno di quell'anno Robert Wyatt, dopo aver fatto uso di una grande quantità di alcol, durante una festa cade dal quarto piano e perde definitivamente l'uso delle gambe. È la fine del Wyatt batterista, ma è l'inizio di un viaggio eccezionale come cantante e compositore.

Il 1974 vede una serie di concerti e uscite discografiche che tengono ancora alta l'estetica canterburiana, ormai priva dei gruppi più famosi perché "confluiti" in altri generi o semplicemente in crisi di creatività. Kevin Ayers e Robert Wyatt sono i responsabili di due importanti eventi live a Londra, uno il 1° giugno al Rainbow Theatre di Londra e l'altro l'8 settembre, ambedue tradotti in album. Il primo, a nome Kevin Ayers, John Cale, Nico, Brian Eno, vede la presenza anche di Wyatt e Mike Oldfield, ormai divenuto famoso con il suo TUBOLAR BELLS. Una sorta di supergruppo che comunque non ha nessun seguito, però mostra la capacità di Ayers di "colorare" la sua musica con musicisti di grande prestigio. JUNE 1, 1974, esce il 28 giugno.





PIERO TOGNI

Eno e Nico (sopra), Ayers e Cale (sotto). A destra Wyatt, Roma/piazza Navona, 1975.



«Il 1° giugno 1973 Robert Wyatt perde l'uso delle gambe. In quel momento nasce l'artista che tutti conosciamo... un grande artista dall'animo tormentato»

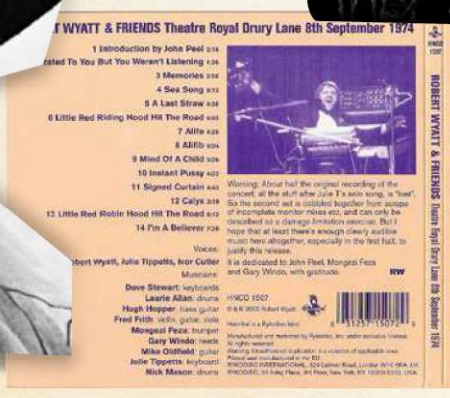


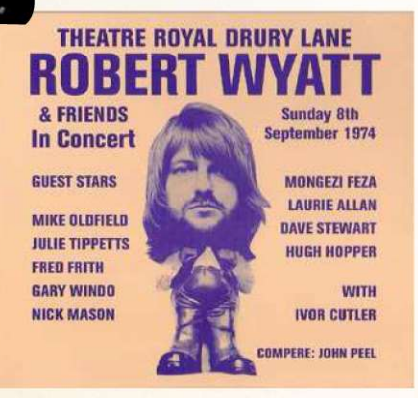
Julie Tippetts e Nick Mason.

L'altro concerto è a nome di Robert Wyatt con la partecipazione di numerosi musicisti legati alla scena di Canterbury, o comunque ad essa vicini: Hugh Hopper, Dave Stewart, Gary Windo, Laurie Allan, Mongezi Feza, Nick Mason, Fred Frith, Julie Tippetts, Mike Oldfield e Ivor Cutler. Il risultato della registrazione è eccezionale, con Wyatt stellare alla voce, accompagnato da una formazione di autentici fuoriclasse. THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE 8TH SEPTEMBER 1974 esce solamente a ottobre 2005 in Cd. Nella scaletta ci sono brani che appartengono a storie passate e nuovi gruppi: *Memories* di Hugh Hopper proviene dai remoti Wilde Flowers, mentre *Calyx* è il nuovo brano manifesto di Canterbury, scritto da Phil Miller per gli Hatfield and the North, e apparso a febbraio nel loro omonimo album di esordio. Ma ci sono anche molte canzoni dal capolavoro solista di Wyatt, ROCK BOTTOM, e brani dei Matching Mole. È come se, ora, la vecchia Canterbury avesse lasciato il posto a una nuova, meno arrembante ma più matura, riflessiva. È il momento delle collaborazioni, della costante ricerca del progetto nuovo vincente ma comunque fedele alla vecchia estetica, perciò indisponibile a compromessi.

Qualche mese prima di quel concerto, ripresosi dall'incidente (anche grazie all'aiuto di moltissimi musicisti a lui vicini), Wyatt incide il bellissimo ROCK BOTTOM, prodotto dal suo amico Nick Mason (Pink Floyd), opera introspettiva e pacata, difficilmente classificabile, dentro e allo stesso tempo fuori dal sound canterburiano: l'album esce il 26 luglio, giorno in cui nel 1953 è iniziata la rivoluzione cubana (d'altronde l'essere di sinistra di Wyatt è noto











a tutti, come il suo grande amore per Cuba e il mondo al di fuori della dominazione culturale anglofona nella musica). La copertina, minimale ma ricchissima, è opera della moglie di Robert, Alfreda Benge. L'elenco dei musicisti impegnati è significativo: Richard Sinclair, Hugh Hopper, Laurie Allan, Fred Frith, Gary Windo, Mongezi Feza, Mike Oldfield, Ivor Cutler. Il giornalista Ian MacDonald sul settimanale «New Musical Express» del 27 luglio si chiedeva: "*Può l'uomo Wyatt cantare il blues? ROCK BOTTOM è, insieme all'omonimo SLAPP HAPPY e BEING dei finlandesi Wigwam di Pekka Pohjola, probabilmente l'album meno derivativo nel linguaggio rock al momento. Se sei interessato alla vera esplorazione dei confini del rock, senza atteggiamenti intellettuali o pomposità morale, questo disco è il miglior acquisto del mese*".

La copertina di questa rivista trimestrale (agosto/ottobre 1962), dedicata alla serie televisiva Bonanza, appare all'interno del gatefold di HATFIELD AND THE NORTH.

Da sinistra: Barbara Gaskin, bio National Health, Henry Cow (Roma, Basilica di Massenzio, 20 luglio 1978), BANANAMOUR di Kevin Ayers.

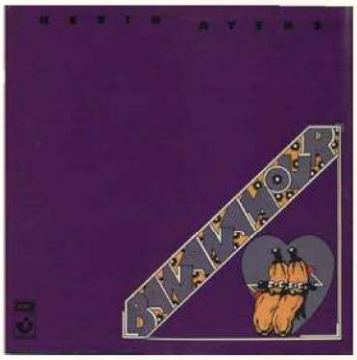
Magia Hatfield

A fine febbraio esordiscono gli Hatfield and the North, realtà che raccoglie un po' l'eredità dei gruppi storici di Canterbury, soprattutto i Caravan. Li avevamo visti alle prese con diversi cambi di formazione (ma questa sarà una costante di tutta la scena di Canterbury, in particolare per gli ultimi gruppi), ora con Richard Sinclair al basso, Pip Pyle alla batteria, Phil Miller alla chitarra e Dave Stewart (dagli Egg) all'organo e al Fender Rhodes, gli Hatfield pubblicano HATFIELD AND THE NORTH, registrato al Manor Studio tra novembre e dicembre 1973, produzione di **Tom Newman** e del gruppo stesso. La stimolante copertina gatefold è di **Laurie Lewis** (National Health, Hawkwind, Hopper/Dean/Tippett/Gallivan, Michael Mantler) e fa capire la stravagante complessità degli Hatfield, che nel più puro spirito canterburyano miscelano jazz, pop, psichedelia. Lewis: "*L'immagine di copertina è stata scattata nel 1973 con una fotocamera panoramica di grande formato a Reykjavik in Islanda, commissionata dal Museo di storia naturale di Londra durante l'eruzione vulcanica nelle isole Westman. Pip voleva qualcosa per evocare il Nord e le sue leggende, così ho cercato anche un'altra immagine che riflettesse la sua idea. Alla fine ho trovato un affresco di Luca Signorelli con una rappresentazione piuttosto selvaggia dell'Inferno di Dante. L'unione delle due foto senza far vedere la sovrapposizione è stata complicata in un periodo pre computer. All'interno ci sono un sacco di cose, tra cui i personaggi della serie tv* Bonanza". L'album è arricchito dalla presenza di Wyatt (alla voce nella stupenda *Calyx* di Phil Miller), Geoff Leigh degli Henry Cow ai fiati, Didier Malherbe dei Gong al sax tenore, il solito Jimmy Hastings al flauto e un trio di coriste, le Northettes, composto da Barbara Gaskin, Amanda Parsons e Ann Rosenthal. Musica complessa, ricercata, "*con sonorità ben definite che comprendono lunghe parti strumentali (durante le quali non mancano momenti di stravaganza e sperimentazione) e testi nonsense*"[7]. Le atmosfere sono adesso più vicine all'estetica progressive, eppure il sound canterburiano è inequivocabile, dovuto sia ai componenti, gli stessi ormai da anni, sia alle bizzarrie e alle sperimentazioni che ne fanno, dell'album, un piccolo capolavoro di sintesi.

L'anno successivo è la volta di THE ROTTERS' CLUB, registrato dalla stessa formazione ai Saturn Studios nel Sussex, tra gennaio e febbraio, fonico **Dave Ruffell**, responsabile anche di THE CIVIL SURFACE degli Egg. Ospiti Lindsay Cooper al fagotto, Tim Hodgkinson al clarinetto (entrambi membri degli Henry Cow), Mont Campbell al corno francese (dagli Egg, come Dave Stewart), Jimmy Hastings ai fiati (*as usual!*) e le Northettes alle voci. Con un'intera suite nella seconda facciata e una serie di brani sulla prima, tra cui un gioiello pop come *Share It* di Richard Sinclair, il disco ripercorre gli stilemi del precedente, musica "*dai complessi intrecci melodici e con ritmi inusuali*"[8]. La copertina è di Laurie Lewis. Ma il successo non arriva, forse è musica troppo ricercata, difficile da catalogare, e il rock è alle soglie di una nuova rivoluzione. Richard Sinclair abbandona e il gruppo si scioglie.

Storie che si chiudono, forse...

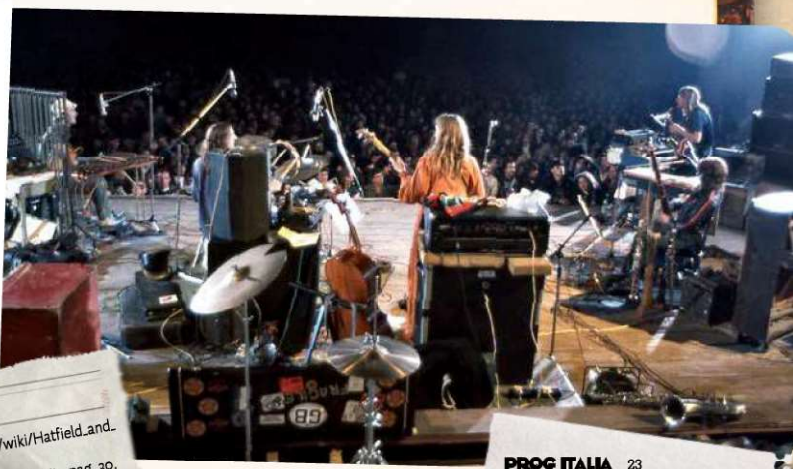
Robert Wyatt ha ormai intrapreso una brillante carriera solista e nel maggio 1975 pubblica RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD, copertina di Alfreda Benge, ancora prodotto da Nick Mason con l'aiuto di Robert: solito mix di jazz, songs e sperimentazioni varie che caratterizzano il suo stile, con chiari riferimenti a Canterbury (nel



GIOVANNI COCCIA

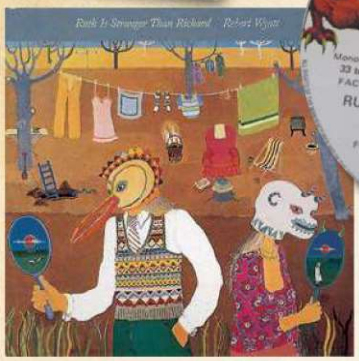


GETTY IMAGES



Note
7. It.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatfield_and_the_North.
8. Ibid., Bloody-Rageous, cit., pag. 30.

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK



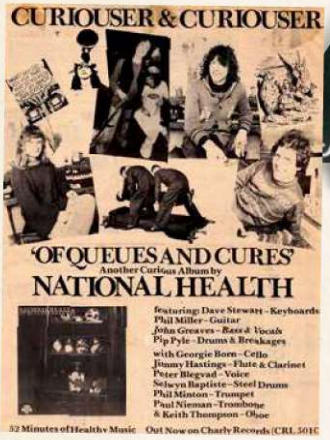




Sopra Jeff Berlin e Bill Bruford, sotto Allan Holdsworth e Dave Stewart.

disco è presente, come *Soup Song*, il rifacimento di *Slow Walkin' Talk* di Brian Hopper, suonata ai tempi dei Wilde Flowers).

Anche Kevin Ayers continua la carriera solista pubblicando lavori ancora validi come BANANAMOUR (1973, con Hillage, Ratledge, Wyatt, Archie Legget, David Bedford) e THE CONFESSIONS OF DR. DREAM AND OTHER STORIES (1974, con Ratledge, Lol Coxhill, Mike Giles, Oldfield, Ollie Hallsall, arrangiamenti di Simon Jeffes, poi leader della fantastica Penguin Cafe Orchestra); collabora con diversi musicisti ma ormai la vena creativa sembra agli sgoccioli e del sound di Canterbury non rimane quasi nulla. Così come per i Soft Machine, orfani di Hugh Hopper e poi anche di Mike Ratledge, o per i Caravan e i Gong, la musica è lontana da quel mix surreale canterburiano di cui rimane solo il nome e poco più. Resta da raccontare dell'ultimo gruppo che ancora tenta di coniugare jazz, rock, sperimentalismo e pop songs secondo le regole di Canterbury, i National Health.



Pubblicità del Bananamour Tour e vinile del secondo National Health.

Una supernova bruciante...

Nati dalla fusione tra Hatfield and the North e Gilgamesh, l'idea di Dave Stewart e **Alan Gowen** (tastierista dei Gilgamesh, gruppo con cui suonerà anche Hugh Hopper) era di costituire una vera e propria orchestra rock con due chitarre, due tastiere, tre voci femminili, un basso e una batteria. *"Alan avrebbe dovuto suonare il piano elettrico e il sintetizzatore (su cui mostrava una sorprendente abilità nonostante non ne possedesse uno) ed io l'organo Hammond, il piano elettrico e il pianet. Avremmo dovuto comporre entrambi e il gruppo avrebbe cercato di miscelare la mia musica pesantemente arrangiata e scritta con i pezzi più improvvisativi di Alan"*[9].



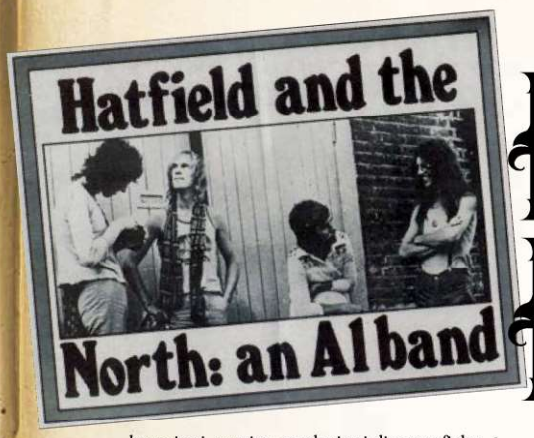
Ma la formazione che arriva al primo album, NATIONAL HEALTH del 1977, è composta da Dave Stewart, Phil Miller, Neil Murray al basso e Pip Pyle alla batteria (all'inizio c'era Bill Bruford). Tre i fonici impiegati: Brian Gaynor, Mike Dunne, Paul Northfield (il secondo con gli Yes, Darryl Way's Wolf, Flash, Hugh Hopper, Mott the Hople); la copertina è sempre di Laurie Lewis, ormai un marchio inconfondibile. Consueto elenco di ospiti con l'onnipresente Jimmy Hastings al flauto e clarinetti, Alan Gowen al synth e al piano elettrico, Amanda Parsons alla voce. La musica è ancor più strutturata e complessa di quella degli Hatfield, nonostante la formazione sia identica per tre quarti, ma si avverte la mancanza del gusto pop di Richard Sinclair e la sua voce. C'è un grande uso di ritmi composti (cosa che comporterà, agli inizi, una enorme difficoltà nel trovare un batterista) ma anche una morbidezza che riporta il tutto al sound di Canterbury. In ogni caso siamo molto vicini al tipico progressive inglese e certamente ai confini delle atmosfere canterburiane.

Anche il secondo album, OF QUEUES AND CURES, pubblicato nel dicembre 1978, ripercorre le tracce del primo disco: John Greaves (dagli Henry Cow) sostituisce Neil Murray al basso, mentre come ospiti ci sono l'onnipresente Jimmy Hastings ai fiati e Phil Minton alla tromba (Mike Westbrook, Lindsay Cooper, Lol Coxhill). Le atmosfere sono sempre piuttosto elaborate e non c'è molto spazio per l'improvvisazione, ma siamo sempre lì: Canterbury e dintorni. Il problema è che il rock è stato investito dall'onda del punk e non c'è veramente più spazio per una musica raffinata, composta, ricercata. I National Health sono l'ultimo gruppo stabile che tenta di rinnovare le musiche di Canterbury, ma sono fuori tempo massimo. Nel 1980 si scioglieranno lasciando il testimone a diversi progetti solisti, colla-



Note

9. Dave Stewart, "National Health. La storia segreta", in «Musiche» n. 10, estate 1991, pag. 12.



I SUONI, LE MUSICHE



borazioni, *reunion*, produzioni discografiche dei musicisti di Canterbury, in alcuni casi con successo (vedi Dave Stewart con Barbara Gaskin negli anni 80; il duo ad agosto 2018 ha pubblicato l'album STAR CLOCKS con Gavin Harrison e il vecchio amico Mont Campbell) ma nella maggior parte delle volte nelle pieghe del mercato discografico, di lato, spesso nascosti o ignorati.

Sotto Mike Ratledge/Soft Machine al teatro Brancaccio di Roma, con il supporto del Perigeo (8 gennaio '74).

«Lo stile di Ratledge e la voce di Wyatt sono tra i caratteri distintivi della scena di Canterbury»

Il mistero s'infittisce?

Fin qui le storie, le vicende e i racconti dei personaggi. Ma cosa determina, cosa caratterizza e che specificità ha la scuola di Canterbury? In alcuni casi determinarne e riconoscerne la musica è abbastanza semplice. Il motivo è la presenza costante di alcuni suoni, di alcuni strumenti che sono per l'appunto tipici della scena di Canterbury.

E allora è proprio da qui che partiamo, dall'individuazione di alcuni timbri, strumenti, effetti che hanno reso unico il sound canterburiano.

Primo fra tutti il suono dell'organo di Mike Ratledge, un suono inconfondibile anche perché modificato dall'uso del distorsore e, talvolta, dal wha-wha. Sembra che l'idea di usare un effetto fosse venuta a Mike per aumentare il volume del suo organo, un Lowrey Holiday Deluxe, acquistato in quanto più economico del famoso Hammond. Gli interessava anche avere la stessa potenza e incisività di una chitarra elettrica. "*We couldn't afford a Hammond, wich was the authentic article, so I was playing this weedy* (dal suono magro) *Lowrey and I wanted to approximate the power that Hendrix had*"[10].

Così la soluzione fu quella di comprare una fuzz box e collegarla all'organo. Questo suono distorto comportò un aumento generale del volume della band, che diventò talmente potente da ricordare in effetti il trio di Hendrix. Ma la fuzz box modificò anche il modo di suonare di Ratledge. Nelle pause tra una nota e l'altra il volume così elevato innescava spesso e volentieri il feedback, così lui iniziò a sviluppare una sorta di legato evitando il più possibile momenti di pausa e costruendo così il suo *soloing* caratteristico.

FABIO D'EMILIO



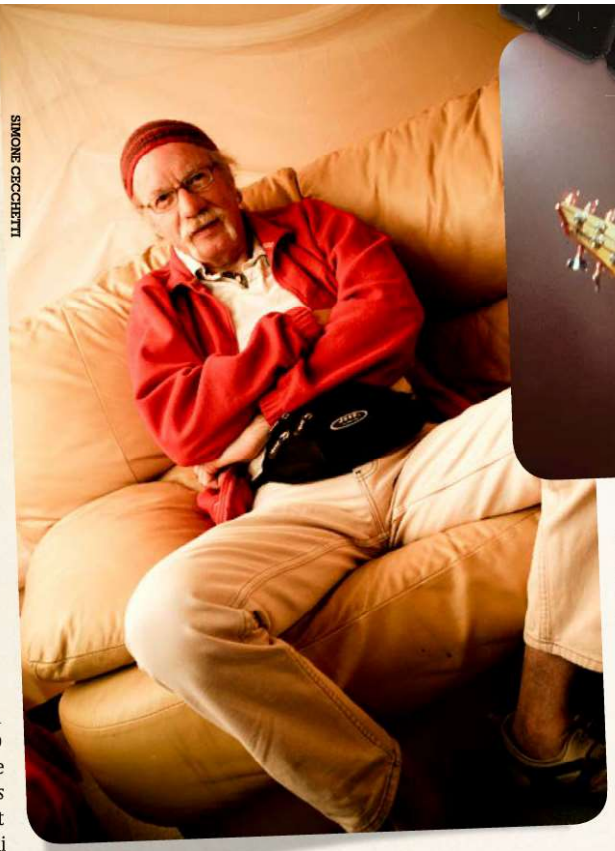
MIKE RATLEDGE

Note

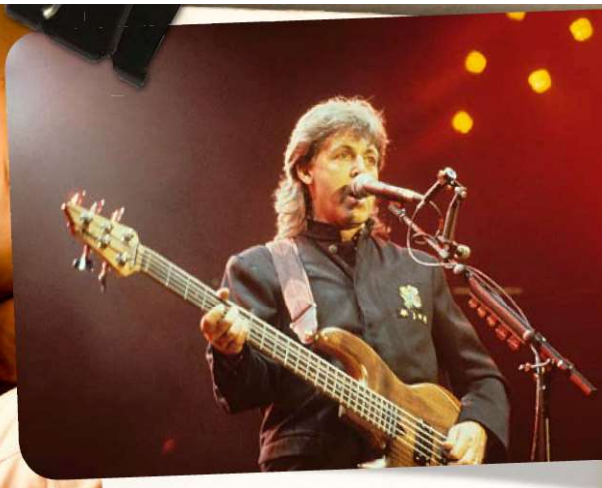
10. M. Ratledge in G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 91.

Organo che passione

Ma il suono dell'organo, possiamo dire, è certamente una caratteristica della scena di Canterbury. A parte i Gong (che utilizzeranno il Synthi A della EMS con **Tim Blake**, conosciuto come Crystal Machine, per *"creare onde sonore messe in sequenze, poi modulate o manipolate in tempo reale tramite l'utilizzo di vari effetti"*[11]) è presente in quasi tutti i gruppi ed è lo strumento base, insieme al piano elettrico, su cui si costruiscono quelle atmosfere così particolari. **Dave Sinclair**, con il suo Hammond, delinea fortemente il primo lavoro dei Caravan, così come Dave Stewart il primo disco degli Egg. Su *As I Feel I Die* e *For Richard*, da IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN... dei Caravan abbiamo addirittura l'organo di Sinclair distorto, alla maniera di Ratledge, accostando ancor di più il suono dei Caravan a quello dei Soft Machine. Lo stesso Sinclair usa la fuzz box anche nel primo disco dei Matching Mole e il wha-wha nella suite *Nine Feet Underground*, che occupa tutta la seconda facciata di IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK, mentre è di Dave Stewart il solo d'organo distorto su *Mumps* in THE ROTTERS' CLUB. Sempre Stewart utilizza l'effetto sul suo organo nei dischi dei National Health, ad esempio su *Step (for Amphibians) Part 2* in OF QUEUES AND CURES, oppure su *Tènemos Roads*, con atmosfere vicine ai Soft Machine.



SIMONE CECCHETTI



GUIDO BELLACHIOMA

Hugh Hopper (Roma, 21 aprile 2008). Paul McCartney (Roma, 24 ottobre 1989).



Dave Sinclair, 2018.

Quel basso aveva un'anima

Ma il distorsore, così tipico per una chitarra in quegli anni di rivoluzione rock e così anomalo per un organo, viene utilizzato pure da Hugh Hopper sul suo basso elettrico. Anche qui decisione certamente anomala, eppur efficace e distintiva, di un gruppo che era riuscito a crearsi, in poco tempo, un sound originale.

"Non sono assolutamente stato il primo a suonare il basso con il distorsore: il primo che ho ascoltato era quello di Paul McCartney su RUBBER SOUL (Think For Yourself) *dei Beatles. Adesso non ricordo esattamente ma credo che Mike Ratledge mi suggerì di attaccare il distorsore al basso, dato che lui già lo usava con l'organo. Durante le prove per* VOLUME TWO dei Soft Machine, *suonavamo tantissime parti all'unisono e perché riuscissero bene era necessario che il basso avesse altrettanto corpo dello strumento principale"*[12].

Hugh Hopper impiega il distorsore sul suo basso elettrico già nel primo disco dei Soft Machine, nell'unico brano in cui è presente in qualità di ospite, *Box 25/4 lid*, scritto da lui insieme a Ratledge. Ma è in *Hibou, Anemone And Bear*, terzo brano ma vero è proprio inizio di VOLUME TWO che la particolarità di quel suono emerge con prepotenza ed efficacia: è il basso distorto che lancia la composizione suonando la melodia.

Interessante notare che questo "stratagemma" è presente in altri dischi e gruppi della scena di Canterbury. Per esempio Kevin Ayers nella registrazione del suo 45 giri *Soon, Soon, Soon* (la vecchia *We Know What You Mean* dei Soft Machine), peraltro mai pubblicato (è presente come bonus track nell'edizione 2003 in Cd di JOY OF A TOY), apre il brano suonando il basso con il distorsore, alla maniera di Hugh Hopper in *Hibou, Anemone And Bear*. E Christian Tritsch, bassista dei Gong, lo utilizza in *Selene*, dal vivo negli studi della BBC per il programma di John Peel (uscito su Cd nel 1995 per la Strange Fruit dal titolo *Pre-Modernist Wireless BBC Radio Sessions*). Richard Sinclair collega il suo basso al wha-wha in *Chaos At The Greasy Spoon* su THE ROTTERS' CLUB, producendo un suono molto vicino a quello di Hugh Hopper, persino Bill MacCormick, bassista dei Matching Mole, modifica il suo basso in *Nan True's Hole* su LITTLE RED RECORD.

Voci uniche

Continuando la ricerca dei tratti distintivi della musica di Canterbury non possiamo che fare riferimento all'utilizzo della voce. Innanzitutto la versatilità, la dolcezza e l'incredibile incisività del timbro di Wyatt, riconoscibile appena inizia a cantare. Al suo timbro, peraltro, si avvicina anche Pye Hastings dei Caravan e suo sostituto ai tempi dei Wilde Flowers,

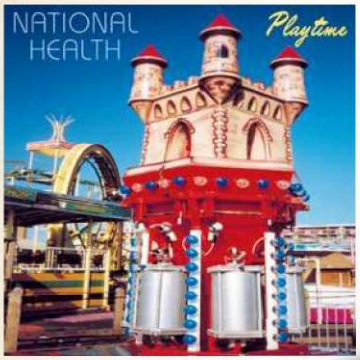
Note

11. M. Coralli, *Swingin' Canterbury*, Tuttle Edizioni, Camucia (AR), 2007, pag. 90.
12. Hugh Hopper in M. King, *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 64.









Dall'alto Richard Sinclair, SOFT MACHINE, Robert Wyatt, Pye Hastings, Elton Dean.



mentre il cantato di Richard Sinclair è di colore più scuro e sicuramente meno esteso di quello di Wyatt. A parte queste considerazioni, è l'uso della voce come strumento e non solo come linea melodica a farne un tratto distintivo della musica di Canterbury: "*la variante autoctona dello scat, sovente all'unisono con gli strumenti*"[13]. Wyatt svilupperà ancora di più l'uso della voce come strumento solista, ovviamente, dopo l'incidente che lo costringerà sulla sedia a rotelle, ma già in *Las Vegas tango (part 1)*, da THE END OF AN EAR, si possono ascoltare i suoi caratteristici vocalizzi completamente indipendenti da linee melodiche. È illuminante *Calyx* di Phil Miller (da HATFIELD AND THE NORTH) dove Wyatt "suona" la bellissima melodia senza parole e poi improvvisa sulle armonie del brano insieme a Richard Sinclair. L'uso della voce all'unisono con gli strumenti è invece presente soprattutto nei dischi degli Hatfields e in quelli dei National Health, grazie alle Northettes, il trio di coriste degli Hatfield and the North formato da Amanda Parsons, Barbara Gaskin e Ann Rosenthal, mentre con i National Health rimarrà solo la Parsons. Quest'ultima in *Tenemos Roads* canta la parte finale all'unisono con la chitarra, sostituendo il clavinet che aveva eseguito lo stesso tema all'inizio.

Le Northettes in *Son Of There's No Place Like Homerton*, su HATFIELD AND THE NORTH, all'inizio alternano nella melodia parole al cantato, un po' alla maniera di Wyatt, poi fanno da contraltare ai fiati, quasi fossero una sezione d'archi. In *Aigrette* – sempre dal primo disco degli Hatfields – il falsetto di Richard Sinclair canta all'unisono con la chitarra di Phil Miller.

Gilli Smyth dei Gong utilizza, per la sua voce, un echo unit che modifica il suo cantato in quella sorta di soffio spaziale tipico delle atmosfere del gruppo. E quel suo sussurrare, alternato al parlato e al cantato, l'avvicina talvolta proprio alle Northettes degli Hatfield o alla Amanda Parsons dei National Health.

Lo stesso Daevid Allen usa la sua voce in maniera anomala rispetto alla maggioranza dei cantanti rock, utilizzando giochi di parole o semplici filastrocche in maniera ritmica e ipnotica, in una sorta di scat psichedelico.

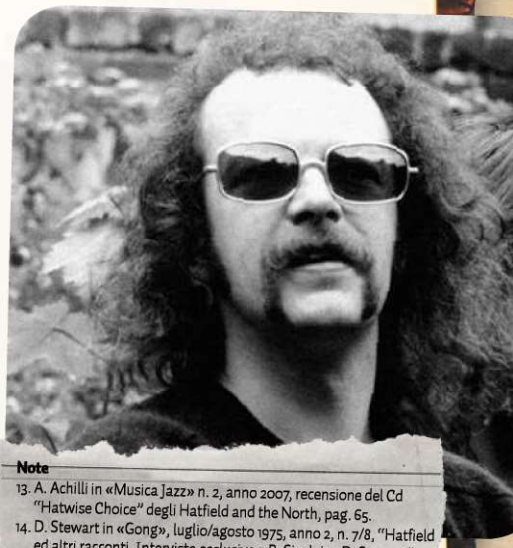


Inside Canterbury

Fino a ora abbiamo parlato di timbri, effetti e strumenti. Ora dobbiamo "entrare" all'interno delle musiche e analizzarle sulla base di alcuni aspetti accennati all'inizio. Prima di tutto il cosiddetto background jazzistico, o quantomeno la presenza importante di una matrice jazz nel suono di Canterbury. Secondo Dave Stewart la musica di Canterbury è "*uno stato d'animo malinconico, piuttosto tranquillo. Viene fuori usando accordi di none in minore e di settime in maggiore. Ed anche cantando con voci inglesi invece che con voci americane, e usando l'organo con i fuzz-boxes e tutti quegli altri elementi che creano quel tipo di suono. È importante pure l'uso di tempi strani come il 7/4 o il 9/8*"[14].



Per Ed Macan, nel suo libro *Rocking the Classics*, la differenza tra progressive rock e jazz-rock risiede proprio nella sintassi armonica: "*The harmony of jazz-rock is more chromatic, richer, and features many more ninth, eleventh and thirteen chords (often with altered notes), whereas the harmony of progressive rock is more modal, more exclusively triadic, and generally more austere*"[15]. Ed è quello che troviamo in gran parte delle composizioni made in Canterbury, ricche di accordi minori di nona e generalmente con un'armonia più complessa rispetto al rock. Ma è stato un processo avvenuto, anche abbastanza rapidamente, alla fine degli anni 60. Sempre secondo Macan, quando si parla del Canterbury sound di solito si fa riferimento



Note

13. A. Achilli in «Musica Jazz» n. 2, anno 2007, recensione del Cd "Hatwise Choice" degli Hatfield and the North, pag. 65.
14. D. Stewart in «Gong», luglio/agosto 1975, anno 2, n. 7/8, "Hatfield ed altri racconti. Intervista esclusiva a R. Sinclair e D. Stewart".
15. E. Macan, *Rocking the Classics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pag. 132.

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK

alla musica della metà degli anni 70, quindi a band quali Hatfields, National Health, Gilgamesh, cioè a gruppi effettivamente molto simili dal punto di vista armonico, mentre per Macan soprattutto agli inizi c'era molta differenza tra un gruppo e l'altro. In effetti, i primi lavori di Caravan e Soft Machine, dal punto di vista armonico, sono caratterizzati quasi esclusivamente da triadi. Se prendiamo *Magic Man* – da CARAVAN – e *A Certain Kind* – da THE SOFT MACHINE – due brani se vogliamo simili, ebbene entrambi sono costruiti su semplici triadi, a parte un accordo di settima di dominante per quanto riguarda i Soft Machine. È dal secondo disco che le cose cambiano. Su *Hibou, Anemone and Bear*, che abbiamo già visto per l'attacco con il basso distorto di Hopper, troviamo solo accordi minori di nona, spesso con passaggi cromatici o a distanza di terze minori. E anche i Caravan, pur se in misura minore, all'interno della suite *Can't Be Long Now* – da IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN... – proprio in corrispondenza con il solo di flauto di Jimmy Hastings, inseriscono un D mi- nor ninth eleventh che colora il brano di jazz. Possiamo quindi affermare che certamente gli inizi della scena di Canterbury hanno un legame più forte con il rock, la psichedelia in particolare, ma che l'evoluzione verso armonie più complesse è stata abbastanza rapida, anche perché facilitata da un elemento, questo sì presente fin da subito, fondamentale: l'improvvisazione.

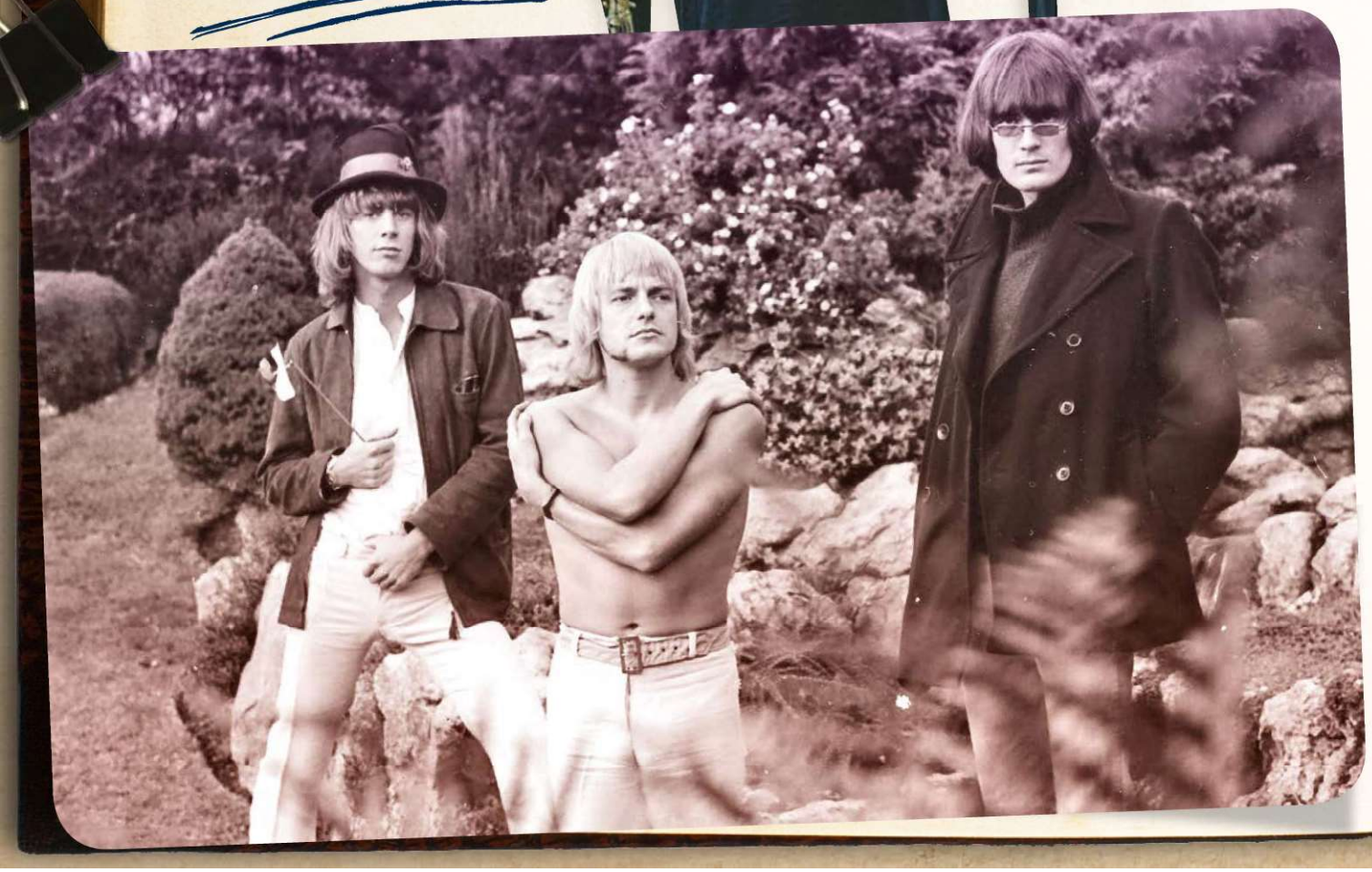
Non è scontato affermare che la vera particolarità dei gruppi di Canterbury risiede nella difficile miscela tra improvvisazione modale e composizione, spesso esplicata in lunghe suite o dal vivo. Anche qui all'inizio abbiamo improvvisazioni più legate all'estetica psichedelica, ma in *Hope For Happiness*, registrata dal vivo negli studi della BBC, il solo di Ratledge è già lontano dal fraseggio rock e certamente più vicino al jazz. Anche l'altro gruppo principale degli inizi, Caravan, adotta per il primo disco un modo d'improvvisare molto vicino ai gruppi beat psichedelici dell'epoca, ma già nel secondo la presenza di Jimmy Hastings ai sassofoni e flauti avvicina la band al jazz. Nella suite *Can't Be Long Now*, in corrispondenza del solo di flauto di Hastings, **Dave Sinclair** "apre" l'armonia del brano. Su IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK l'operazione viene sviluppata ancor di più dividendo il disco in una facciata

Jimmy Hastings coi Caravan a Perugia (9 giugno 1991). Sotto Soft Machine, 1967.



GUIDO BELLACHIOMA

«La musica di Canterbury era magica sin dall'inizio perché aveva cuore e idee in libertà»



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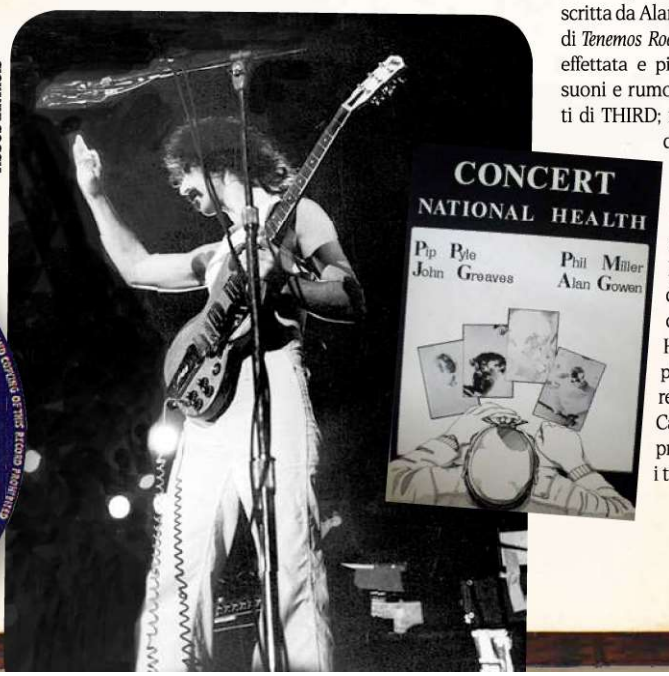


Sopra *In Cahoots* di Phil Miller. A sinistra MARCH (2002) e a destra SMOKE SIGNALS (2001), Cd postumi dei Matching Mole.

con brani pop (seppur con cambi anomali, spesso cromatici) e l'altra, la lunga suite *Nine Feet Underground*, con temi e improvvisazioni. Anche in questo caso Dave Sinclair suona accordi di settima o minori di nona in corrispondenza degli assoli di Jimmy Hastings – per esempio nel segmento A, *Nigel Blows a Tune* – muovendosi, ed è anche una caratteristica dei Soft Machine, di tono o semitono, riallacciandosi così all'improvvisazione modale di Davis e Coltrane. Ovviamente da THIRD in poi i Soft Machine aumenteranno la loro matrice jazzistica, grazie anche alla presenza di Elton Dean. Se il terzo 33 giri ha un perfetto equilibrio tra presenza di temi e improvvisazioni, con cambi di tempo, loop, vamp ed evoluzioni canore di Wyatt, FOURTH inizia a lavorare maggiormente sulla forma riff più improvvisazione, che da FIFTH sarà la cifra stilistica dei Softs. Possiamo benissimo fare un parallelo con i Caravan: se questi ultimi, da FOR GIRLS WHO GROW PLUMP IN THE NIGHT perdono i loro elementi jazzistici e/o improvvisativi assestandosi su una "normale" estetica rock pop, i Soft Machine, dal canto loro, da FIFTH abbandonano completamente i loro riferimenti al pop, configurandosi quale band di punta della corrente jazz-rock.

45 giri *Hello Hello* dei Caravan, Zappa a Roma (31 agosto 1973) e poster live National Health.





GIOVANNI COCCIA

L'estetica canterburiana passa di mano

Non è sbagliato dire che l'estetica canterburiana, nella prima metà degli anni 70, passa nelle mani, e nelle note, degli Hatfield and the North e dei National Health, con i Gong a rappresentare per certi versi ancora la prima scintilla del Canterbury sound, legati come sono a un suono psichedelico e folle. A voler continuare nello schematismo, nel passaggio da quella che in effetti è una sorta di prima fase della scuola di Canterbury, e cioè Soft Machine, Caravan, Kevin Ayers, alla seconda fase con Hatfield, National Health, in parte Matching Mole, si perdono gli elementi, pur così importanti, di avanguardia e sperimentazione, legati chiaramente a un periodo sicuramente più effervescente com'era quello di fine anni 60. Per essere più chiari: ciò che rende THIRD un manifesto di quella scena è la presenza non solo della matrice jazzistica e delle escursioni pop di Wyatt (*Moon In June* ovviamente), ma anche dei riferimenti a Terry Riley (i tape loops di *Out-Bloody-Rageous*), alle sperimentazioni sonore di Ratledge e Hopper, a cui si accostano anche gli arrangiamenti di Bedford per Kevin Ayers, con le incursioni free di personaggi quali Lol Coxhill o Gary Windo. È forse questo, insieme all'assenza dell'elemento swing, ciò che più allontana THIRD dalle atmosfere del Davis di BITCHES BREW, a cui più volte è stato accostato. Se ascoltiamo *Mumps* degli Hatfields notiamo sicuramente una maggiore complessità armonica e melodica a scapito però di una libertà improvvisativa, che invece si avvertiva persino nei Caravan, sicuramente più pop e meno legati a questo linguaggio. È come se la musica ora fosse più controllata, più rigidamente organizzata. In *Elephants* – da NATIONAL HEALTH – scritta da Alan Gowen e con la ripresa finale di *Tenemos Roads*, l'inizio del brano (chitarra effettata e piano elettrico a improvvisare suoni e rumori) sembra portarci dalle parti di THIRD; ma poi evolve in un ostinato del piano elettrico, dove la chitarra di Miller improvvisa nel suo tipico stile misurato e meditato, lontano dalle libertà aggressive e audaci di Elton Dean o di Ratledge, ma anche distante dall'eleganza rassicurante e levigata di Jimmy Hastings. Anche l'uso dei tempi dispari è leggermente differente tra quest'ultima fase del Canterbury sound anni 70 e la prima. Dove i Softs utilizzavano i tempi composti con un intento

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK







national health

In alto CARAVAN (1969). Sopra National Health live a Toronto, 11 novembre 1979. A destra Hatfield and the North live a Londra, 13 aprile 1974.

Hatfield and the North, 1975.

percettivo straniante[16], così come i Caravan o i Gong, i National Health e gli Hatfields (e ancor prima di loro gli Egg) ne fanno più un uso virtuosistico, di elaborazione criptica del brano.

Il 7/8 di *Pig* – da VOLUME TWO dei Soft Machine – suddiviso, all'interno della parte cantata da Wyatt in quattro battute 3+2+2, poi altre quattro in 2+2+3 per tornare al 3+2+2 per otto battute, con il 2+2+3 a enfatizzare un cambio melodico, è perfettamente funzionale alla melodia di Wyatt: attua l'effetto straniante di cui sopra. I Caravan, in *Hello, Hello*, da IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN... (uscito anche come 45 giri), utilizzano il 7/8, con suddivisione 3+2+2, nelle strofe e un 11/8 (3+3+3+2) sul ritornello, a movimentare un brano semplice nella struttura ma dall'incedere ambiguo, sfuggente. Il 25/8 del riff di *Elephants* ha invece finalità virtuosistiche, ancorate forse più a **Stravinski**, **Gentle Giant** o **Zappa**[17] che non a una ricerca di movimento o d'illusionismo psicoacustico[18]. Stesse atmosfere anche in *The Yes/No Interlude* di Pip Pyle, da THE ROTTERS CLUB degli Hatfield. Un 13/8 con suddivisione 2+2+2+2+2+3 preceduto da un 4/4 comunque elaborato all'interno, dove Dave Stewart improvvisa e crea una sorta di interludio ipnotico che alla fine sfocia in una delicata canzone in stile Caravan cantata da Richard Sinclair, scritta sempre da Pip Pyle. Anche qui l'uso del tempo dispari è orientato a intricare il brano, a complicarlo. Appare distante dal riff di *Facelift* di Hopper, su THIRD, dove il 7/4 è perfettamente "cantabile", regolare nel suo incedere e su cui si costruisce sia la melodia che l'improvvisazione di Ratledge. Ne accennavamo prima, ma va detto ancora qualcosa sugli elementi d'avanguardia presenti nelle improvvisazioni e nelle suite della musica di Canterbury. Oltre a una matrice jazz, spesso troviamo chiari riferimenti a **Terry Riley** o **Steve Reich**. Kevin Ayers, autore di *We Did It Again*, brano ipnotico che i Soft Machine suonavano talvolta di seguito per mezz'ora, all'interno della sua produzione pop rock ha spesso dei riferimenti a sperimentazioni e bizzarrie.

In *Stop This Train (Again Doing It)*, da JOY OF A TOY, utilizza la stessa tecnica di *We Did It Again*: riff suonato in modo ripetitivo e improvvisazioni free, con inizio rallentato e finale accelerato. Il brano, o meglio l'improvvisazione, di *Pisser Dans Un Violon* – da *SHOOTING AT THE MOON* – ricorda da vicino l'inizio di *Facelift*. E abbiamo già detto dei tape loops di *Out-Bloody-Rageous* ("*evoking comparisons to the work by Terry Riley on his albums IN C and A RAINBOW IN A CURVED AIR*"[19]), ma non possiamo non menzionare l'album solista di Hugh Hopper, 1984, "*in cui figurano lunghi brani eseguiti da solo usando dei loops...*"[20], sperimentazione che fa il paio con THE END OF AN EAR di Wyatt.

In ogni caso, improvvisazioni di natura jazzistica e/o di marca più sperimentale, free o avanguardia che dir si voglia, sono presenti e costanti in tutte le suite composte dai musicisti di Canterbury.

Suite che passione

La forma suite, all'inizio utilizzata per non creare pause tra un brano e l'altro e permettere di ballare ininterrottamente, nel periodo Wilde Flowers[21], assume sempre più importanza sia nel legare brani, frammenti di melodie e improvvisazioni l'uno all'altra, come nei Softs, Caravan o Gong, sia nel permettere che elementi di scrittura sempre più elaborati si leghino tra loro nel formare un unico brano, vedi National Health, Hatfield and the North o Gilgamesh.

La suite sarà un marchio di fabbrica per tutto il progressive rock (con legami nella musica classica o colta, ovviamente) e anche per la scuola di Canterbury sarà centrale, pur se sviluppata con maggiore omogeneità e meno legata a giustapposizioni di quadri tematici.

Accanto troviamo, costante in quasi tutti i prodotti canterburiani, le famose catchy pop songs di cui parlavamo nell'introduzione. Qui c'è l'imbarazzo della scelta ma è impossibile non iniziare con gli esempi illuminanti di *O Caroline* da MATCHING MOLE o *Share It* da THE ROTTERS' CLUB. Canzoni perfettamente orecchiabili, con un andamento anomalo, segnato da improvvisazioni o arrangiamenti particolari, come nel caso di *The Lady Rachel* di Ayers, da JOY OF A TOY, di una bellezza eterea e a tratti inquietante. I Caravan registrano nel loro album più bello, IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK, quattro canzoni potenzialmente "da classifica", con una menzione particolare per *Winter Wine* di Richard Sinclair, dove alla dolcezza del cantato si alternano passaggi cromatici e stacchi per nulla scontati. La matrice pop compare anche all'interno dei brani più lunghi, in brevi interludi o stacchi, o semplicemente nelle parti cantate e/o sussurrate. È una presenza che talvolta stempera le atmosfere più cupe ed è alternata alle parti improvvisate e sperimentali. I National Health, forse il gruppo più distante dalle atmosfere pop, in OF QUEUES AND CURES, inseriscono *Binoculars* di Pip Pyle, che presenta una parte cantata da John Greaves in puro stile Caravan, con passaggi cromatici e uso di triadi, dalle atmosfere delicate e soffici. E anche nelle loro composizioni più lunghe ed elaborate, *Brujo* di Alan Gowen – da NATIONAL HEALTH – c'è un frammento con un pedale in la maggiore e un arpeggio che include nona e tredicesima, con la voce di Amanda Parsons a lavorare su una melodia dai toni soffusi mentre il flauto di Jimmy Hastings improvvisa in modo pulito e discreto. Non è sbagliato affermare che in questi passaggi, frammenti o interludi comuni a tutti i gruppi e solisti di Canterbury, accanto a una vena sicuramente vicina al pop e al rock, c'è un legame sottile con il folk inglese, le ballate tenui e delicate del ricco patrimonio britannico, che tanta importanza hanno avuto sia nello sviluppo del rock che nell'emancipazione di certo jazz dai cliché americani.



Note

16. V. Caporaletti, *Esperienze di analisi del jazz*, Libreria Musicale Italiana, Lucca, 2007, pag. 225.
17. M. Coralli, *Swingin' Canterbury*, cit., pag. 113.
18. V. Caporaletti, *Esperienze di analisi del jazz*, cit., pag. 225.
19. Mark Powell nel booklet di Third dei Soft Machine, Sony/BMG, 2007, pag. 13.
20. It.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Hopper.
21. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 62.

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SOFT MACHINE Discografia UK • I CALIFFI Discografia

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SOFT MACHINE

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Il *Canterbury sound* è lo stile che ha caratterizzato i Soft Machine tra i migliori e più acclamati gruppi tra quelli facenti riferimento a questo stile esecutivo. Ripercorriamo la loro storia musicale iniziata discograficamente nel 1969 fino ad inizio anni '80.

Canterbury è una piccola cittadina non distante da Londra, nel Kent, ai limiti della costa orientale britannica. Molti italiani potrebbero rimanere perplessi nell'udire il suo nome pronunciato da un anglosassone madrelingua, abituati alla dizione piuttosto singolare di Sandro Paternostro, il quale era solito nominarla regolarmente nei suoi servizi giornalistici da oltremanica mettendola in connessione con un celebre arcivescovo. La sua fama, tra i britannici meno interessati all'anglicanesimo, è data per lo più dalle numerose vestigia dell'architettura medievale e dai verdi e frequentatissimi campi di cricket. Per gli appassionati di musica tuttavia è qualcosa di più. Si tratta infatti del luogo, simbolico per molti versi, dal quale proviene uno stile compositivo ed esecutivo particolarissimo che dalla cittadina ha derivato il nome, il *Canterbury sound,* stile di cui i Soft Machine sono tra i migliori rappresentanti.

Le origini della band risalgono ai primi anni '60 quando l'australiano Daevid Allen, già residente a Parigi, nel suo girovagare per l'Europa nelle vesti di artista bohémien, si stabilisce a Canterbury, ospite dei signori Wyatt il cui giovane figlio si diletta alla batteria. Nel 1963 Allen, Wyatt e un compagno di studi di quest'ultimo di nome Hugh Hopper, che suona il basso, formano il Daevid Allen Trio,

formazione alla quale sovente si aggiunge in qualità di ospite Mike Ratledge. Questo primo progetto ha breve durata, anche per la decisione di Allen di fare ritorno a Parigi. I musicisti superstiti si riorganizzano allora con l'appellativo di Wilde Flowers, sodalizio che vede schierati i due fratelli Hopper (ovvero, non solo il bassista Hugh ma anche suo fratello Brian al sax) Wyatt, Ayers e il giovanissimo Richard Sinclair.
I Wilde Flowers sono una formazione simbolo degli anni '60.
Al suo interno troveranno casa alcuni tra i più importanti esponenti della scena di Canterbury tra

DISCOGRAFIA UK



1967 **Love Makes Sweet Music / Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'**
45 giri/Polydor 56151 €200

1968 **THE SOFT MACHINE**
LP/Probe CPLP 4500 €150

Hope For Happiness / Joy Of A Toy / Hope For Happiness (reprise) */ Why Am I So Short? / So Boot If At All / A Certain Kind / Save Yourself / Priscilla / Lullabye Letter / We Did It Again / Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle / Why Are We Sleeping? / Box 25/4 Lid*
*Edito esclusivamente negli Stati Uniti



1969 **VOLUME TWO**
LP/Probe SPB 1002 €150

Pataphysical Introduction - Pt. I / A Concise British Alphabet - Pt. I / Hibou, Anemone And Bear / A Concise British Alphabet - Pt. II / Hulloder / Dada Was Here / Thank You Pierrot Lunaire / Have You Ever Bean Green? / Pataphysical Introduction - Pt. II / Out Of Tunes / As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still / Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening / Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging / Pig / Orange Skin Food / A Door Opens And Closes / 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom







1970 **THIRD** Doppio LP/CBS 66246 €100
Facelift / Slightly All The Time / Moon In June / Out-Bloody-Rageous



1971 **FOURTH** LP/CBS S 64280 €50
Teeth / Kings And Queens / Fletcher's Blemish / Virtually Part 1 / Virtually Part 2 / Virtually Part 3 / Virtually Part 4



i quali, oltre i già citati Wyatt, Allen, Richard Sinclair ed i fratelli Hopper anche Richard Coughlan, Dave Sinclair (fratello di Richard) e Pye Hastings, questi ultimi destinati a dar vita all'altra grande formazione-simbolo del movimento, i Caravan. Tuttavia, i Wilde Flowers non arriveranno mai alla sala d'incisione, forse in quanto più interessati all'attività dal vivo che non ad incidere dischi.
Nel 1966, David Allen fa ritorno in Gran Bretagna. Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, Ayers e Ratledge abbandonano a quel punto definitivamente il progetto Wilde Flowers e, dopo un breve passaggio a vuoto con il nome di Mister Head, scelgono di chiamarsi Soft Machine, ispirati dall'omonimo romanzo di William S.Burroghs, edito a Parigi dalla celebre casa editrice Olympia Press (la stessa nella quale si dovette rifugiare Nabokov per dare alle stampe il suo *Lolita).* La leggenda, più o meno verificata, include anche un miliardario americano incontrato sull'isola di Maiorca il quale, rapito dal suono della band, decide di finanziare strumenti, attrezzatura, spese di viaggio e tutto il resto, che all'epoca, costituiva una necessità spesso economicamente inarrivabile per una band agli esordi. La formazione così organizzata si guadagna immediatamente una certa fama al fianco dei Pink Floyd e di altri gruppi all'interno del neonato movimento psichedelico. Sono reclamati per suonare frequentemente presso i più celebri club della città quali il Marquée, la Roundhouse, l'Ufo e il Middle Earth, forti non solo della loro presenza musicale ma anche del loro apprezzatissimo *light show* curato dal marchio *Mark Boyle's Sensual Laboratory.* Partecipano anche alla performance per eccellenza della musica psichedelica, quel *14 Hours Tecnicolour Dream* entrato negli annali per la sua valenza simbolica all'interno della cultura alternativa britannica (la band però non compare né nel film documentario di Peter Whitehead, né nella colonna sonora omonima *Tomorrow Let's All Make Love In London).*
Dal punto di vista discografico il gruppo non produce molto. Soltanto un 45 giri con la Polydor (celebre per aver testato su singolo le migliori formazioni di quegli anni per poi lasciarsele sfuggire – fece lo stesso con i Van Der Graaf Generator) ed un nucleo piuttosto cospicuo di demo con il produttore Giorgio Gomelsky, celebre



per il suo legame con gli Yardbirds. Queste registrazioni costituivano di fatto un vero e proprio disco di esordio, anche se ancora non perfezionato, che tuttavia non vide mai la luce, pubblicato poi quasi di contrabbando diversi anni più tardi attraverso etichette di linea economica (*vedi note alla discografia*). Gomeslsky finanzia anche la presenza della band, quell'estate, in Francia sulla Costa Azzurra, allora luogo di ritrovo di una certa borghesia culturalmente all'avanguardia, dove tra l'altro prestano la loro opera per musicare una pièce di teatro surrealista di Picasso dal titolo *Le Désir Attrapé par la Queue*.
Al ritorno in Gran Bretagna la polizia di frontiera ha qualcosa da obiettare nei confronti di Allen (passaporto irregolare o qualche porzione di sostanze proibite di troppo – particolare che non è stato mai del tutto chiarito). In ogni caso per un australiano come lui Canterbury o Londra sono certo troppo piovose. Decide pertanto di stabilirsi definitivamente in Francia dove darà vita alla sua creatura più visionaria: i Gong.
Con la formazione limitata al trio Wyatt, Ratledge e Ayers, i Soft Machine si imbarcano per un tour di tre mesi che ha inizio nel febbraio del 1968 a supporto della Jimi Hendrix Experience negli Stati Uniti. La scelta è certo più di carattere estetico (le due band erano viste entrambe come rappresentanti di punta del movimento psichedelico) che non strettamente



1972 **FIFTH** LP/CBS 64806 €40
All White/ Drop / M C / As If / L B O / Pigling Bland



1973 **SIX** Doppio LP/CBS 68214 €50
Live Record: *Fanfare / All White / Between / Riff / 37½ / Gesolreut / E.P.V. / Lefty / Stumble / 5 From 13 (For Phil Seamen With Love & Thanks) / Riff II*
Studio Record: *The Soft Weed Factor / Stanley Stamps Gibbon Album (For B.O.) / Chloe And The Pirates / 1983*

musicale in quanto i due gruppi erano in realtà piuttosto distanti da un punto di vista sonoro ed esecutivo. Durante il passaggio a New York, tuttavia, la band ha modo di incidere il suo primo album, sotto la supervisione dell'ex-Animals, divenuto poi produttore di Hendrix, Chas Chandler. Questo primo lavoro viene pertanto edito solo negli Stati Uniti, dalla Probe, un'etichetta sussidiaria della ABC che nel corso degli anni si distinguerà per la pubblicazione di artisti popolari come gli Steppenwolf ma anche, e forse ancor più, per rare formazioni di hard/psichedelico quali Morgen, Saint Steven e Litter. Musicalmente l'album contiene, in fase embrionale, tutti gli elementi più caratteristici del *Canterbury sound* ed è spesso stato accostato al termine *dadaista*, ad indicare l'esaltazione degli elementi più istintivi e gratuiti rispetto alla parte raziocinante, logica e rispondente agli standard codificati. Nel disco si riscontrano anche palesi influenze del jazz, mentre la parte psichedelica, laddove riscontrabile, rimane sostanzialmente in subordine, identificandosi come un'idea di fondo senza particolari spunti sonori chiaramente identifica-

1975 **SEVEN**
LP/CBS
S65799 €100

Nettle Bed / Carol Ann / Day's Eye / Bone Fire / Tarabos / D.I.S. / Snowland / Penny Hitch / Block / Down The Road / The German Lesson / The French Lesson



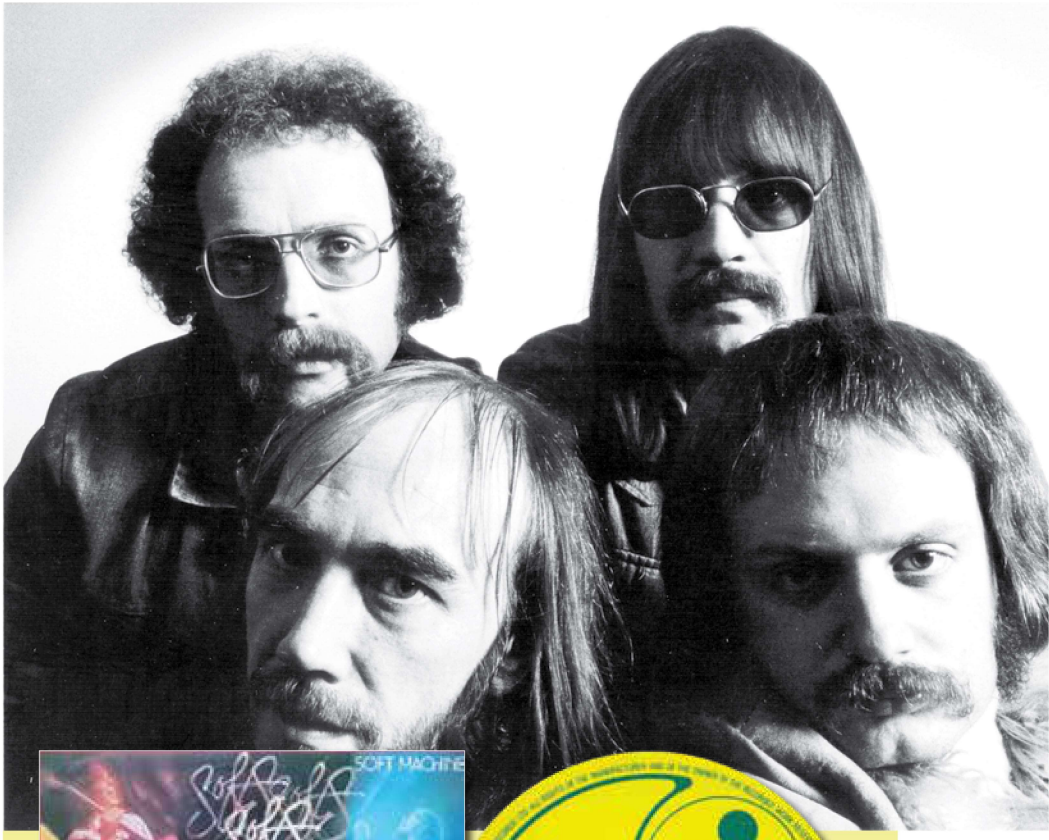
1975 **BUNDLES**
LP/Harvest
SHSP 4044 €40

Hazard Profile / Part One / Part Two / Part Three / Part Four / Part Five / Gone Sailing / Bundles / Land Of The Bag Snake / The Man Who Waved At Trains / Peff / Four Gongs Two Drums / The Floating World





bili all'ascolto. Ovviamente, al giorno d'oggi, con *l'orecchio di poi*, il disco è apprezzato anche dai collezionisti di rock progressivo; tuttavia di "progressivo" inteso come ricchezza, ampiezza, struttura e potenza dei suoni, il disco ha ben poco, anzi risulta un'opera piuttosto minimalista nella sua veste sonora più immediata. L'unica cosa certa di *Soft Machine* è che non è un disco "americano" risultando una vera e propria mosca bianca nel panorama del rock statunitense di quegli anni. L'album vende benino (ma nulla di trascedentale) aiutato graficamente da una copertina con una parte interna che ruota (anticipando di molto quella di *Led Zeppelin III*) e da una certa curiosità creatasi attorno alla band, ma il pubblico statunitense rimane nel complesso indifferente. Quello inglese, invece, neanche è a conoscenza della pubblicazione del disco di esordio (ancora un'analogia con i Van Der Graaf Generator).
Per un breve periodo ad Ayers si affianca un giovanissimo Andy Summers (destinato ad avere successo dieci anni più tardi con ben altri propositi musicali) ma viene presto licenziato, poi Ayers stesso abbandona, stanco dei continui spostamenti imposti dai tour, dando inizio ad una carriera solista il cui primo episodio *Joy Of A Toy*, edito nel 1969 per la Harvest, vede la collaborazione di quasi tutti gli ex-compagni, Wyatt in testa. La band opta pertanto per lo scioglimento ma la Probe pretende l'adempimento del contratto che prevedeva la realizzazione di due album. Vengono pertanto richiamati i fratelli Hopper, anche se solo Hugh, il bassista, entra in pianta stabile nel gruppo, mentre il sax di Brian rimane al livello di contributo esterno. Nasce così negli studi Olympic Sound di Londra *Volume Two*, un disco indiscutibilmente in linea con l'album di esordio, rispetto al quale probabilmente viene del tutto meno l'elemento psichedelico, sostituito da una dose ulteriore di jazz. Dalle note interne dell'edizione statunitense del disco si evince che la band è conscia della difficoltà delle intenzioni, stante l'autodefinizione datasi di *music for the mind* che *"impone una responsabilità cerebrale all'ascoltatore perché non potrete certo canticchiarla o farvela girare in testa mentre camminate per strada*". La verve dei Soft Machine per una forma di cantautorato d'élite commisto a sonorità che oggi definiremmo *canterburiane* trova conferma







1976 **SOFTS** LP/Harvest SHSP 4056 €35

Aubade / The Tale Of Taliesin / Ban-Ban Caliban / Song Of Aeolus / Out Of Season / Second Bundle / Kayoo / The Camden Tandem / Nexus / One Over The Eight / Etika





1978 **ALIVE AND WELL RECORDED IN PARIS** LP/Harvest SHSP 4083 €35

White Kite / Eos / Odds Bullets And Blades Pt I / Odds Bullets And Blades Pt II / Song Of The Sunbird / Puffin / Huffin / Number Three / The Nodder / Surrounding Silence / Soft Space



1981 **LAND OF COCKAYNE** LP/EMI EMC 3348 €30
Over 'N' Above / Lotus Groves / Isle Of The Blessed / Panoramania / Behind The Crystal Curtain / Palace Of Glass / Hot-Biscuit Slim / (Black) Velvet Mountain / Sly Monkey / "A Lot Of What You Fancy..."

nella partecipazione della band al completo a due brani del disco di esordio *The Madcap Laughs* di Syd Barrett.
Third, pubblicato nel 1970, doppio album all'interno del quale si succedono quattro lunghe composizioni, una per lato, è l'album della definitiva maturazione artistica, ma anche quello dove si consuma la frattura tra Wyatt, il cui stile triste e malinconico (un critico ebbe a definirlo "la voce più triste del rock") costantemente affiancato da testi surreali e nonsense, fatica a fondersi con la direzione oramai palesemente afferente al jazz-rock che sta prendendo la band. A conferma di ciò entra a far parte del gruppo il sassofonista Elton Dean (figura ricorrente in tutti i grandi album del jazz-rock progressivo di quegli anni dal leggendario doppio a nome Centipede fino a *Dedicated To You* di Keith Tippett) e viene ingaggiata una sezione di fiati. L'addio di Wyatt è la splendida *Moon In June*, che occupa per intero il terzo lato del doppio lp, una vera e propria perla del rock che solo in termini assai riduttivi può definirsi "progressivo" e che, di fatto, anticipa le atmosfere del primo album solista del batterista, pubblicato di lì a poco dalla CBS con il titolo *The End Of An Ear.* Nel successivo disco dei Soft Machine, *Fourth*, Wyatt risulta ancora presente ma sostanzialmente nelle vesti di mero esecutore musicale (seppur di altissimo livello) essendo la parte compositiva interamente nelle mani di Hopper, Dean e Ratlidge che adesso si dirigono decisamente verso il jazz-rock, ora nella sua forma maggiormente sperimentale e d'avanguardia, altrove maggiormente affine ai canoni tradizionali, facendo tra l'altro venire del tutto meno le parti cantate. A partire da *Fifth,* Wyatt abbandona definitivamente il gruppo, per dar vita ai suoi Matching Mole (omofono della traduzione in francese del nome Soft Machine) mentre gli altri proseguono sulla scia di un jazz-rock con molti tratti in comune con la *fusion* e che in qualche occasione non disdegna approcci all'elettronica. Dean si separa dalla formazione dopo *Fifth* e Hopper a sua volta, dopo la realizzazione del doppio album parzialmente dal vivo *Six,* sostituiti da validi musicisti quali Karl Jenkins e Roy Babbington, che tuttavia faticano a conferire originalità a composizioni sempre più afferenti al jazz-rock *mainstream*. In *Bundles* del 1975 la band torna ad integrare una chitarra nella figura del virtuoso ex-Tempest, Allan Holdsworth, ma finite le registrazioni dell'album, anche Elton Dean posa lo scettro lasciando il gruppo oramai privo di reali legami con il passato. Holdsworth e Jenkins porteranno avanti ancora per un po' le fortune della band, in verità senza destare ulteriori particolari emozioni, fino al disco dal vivo *Alive and Well Recorded in Paris*, definitivo il "canto del cigno" del gruppo, senza voler contare un tardo *Land Of Cockayne* quasi apocrifo del 1981 con l'ex Cream, Jack Bruce al basso. Le numerose ricostituzioni negli anni a venire, alcune comprendenti alcuni membri originali, altre del tutto prive, hanno avuto il merito di far conoscere il gruppo a chi magari nei primi anni '70 era ancora troppo giovane per poterlo aver visto in azione, ma hanno fatalmente mancato nel restituire, in tutto o in parte, l'atmosfera degli esordi e di quella particolarissima commistione tra rock, jazz ed avanguardia che aveva reso i Soft Machine una band unica ed irripetibile del panorama musicale.



Note alla discografia

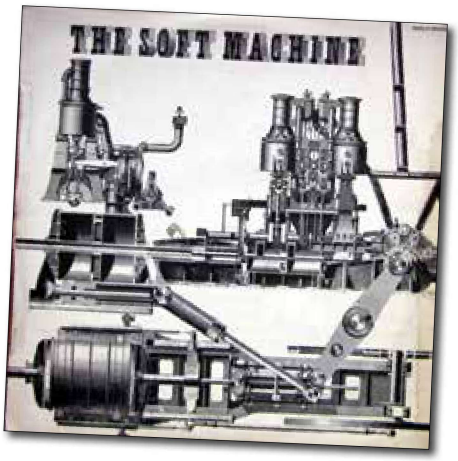
Il primo 45 giri della band, oltre che in Gran Bretagna, venne edito anche in Olanda, con una splendida copertina fotografica. Assai ricercato, ha lo stesso numero di catalogo dell'inglese e quota €350. Il primo album è stato edito, come già accennato, solo negli Stati Uniti, l'abbiamo comunque inserito nell'elenco per non lasciare la discografia incompleta. Non è particolarmente raro e la quotazione come sempre dipende in massima parte dallo stato di conservazione. Riedito con una copertina singola, priva di ruota girevole, in questo caso si è provveduto a "rivestire" con un adeguato bikini la ragazza che originariamente compariva nuda. E' stato edito anche in Francia (Barclay 920 082 €50) con una copertina bianca sormontata da un macchinario e, abbastanza incredibilmente, in Giappone (Probe SR 303 €500). In Olanda invece, per qualche strana ragione, vengono editi due lp contenenti ciascuno un lato tratto dal primo ed uno dal secondo disco, rispettivamente Stateside SSBP 156 (€70) e S&R International 20.165 (€70). Dall'album viene estratto anche il 45 giri *Joy Of A Toy / Why Are We Sleeping* edito negli Stati Uniti con catalogo CP 452 (€20) ed in Giappone (Probe HIT 1647). Quest'ultimo è certamente uno dei dischi in assoluto più rari al mondo. Difficile dare una valutazione, trattandosi dei Soft Machine probabilmente le cifre non dovrebbero raggiungere vette da capogiro, tuttavia una valutazione di 2.000 euro non sembra esagerata. Il secondo album in Inghilterra è stato edito, quasi contemporaneamente con etichetta nera e con etichetta rosa, quest'ultima rimane forse più rara.
Il terzo album è stato edito in Giappone con una copertina singola sulla quale campeggia l'immagine che, nella versione inglese, si trova all'interno. Stampato dalla CBS/Sony (SONP 50336-7) quota 120 euro ma la OBI è eccezionalmente rara. Questo è anche il primo album che viene edito, contemporaneamente al resto del mondo, in Italia. Stessa grafica e stesso numero di catalogo dell'inglese quota 80 euro. Anche per gli album che seguono la valutazione delle copie italiane risulta forse di poco inferiore alle inglesi ma non di molto. Per quanto riguarda i demo registrati ad inizio carriera con Giorgio Gomelski, questi sono stati oggetto di sfruttamento massiccio da parte di alcune *budget label* dopo che la band era divenuta famosa a livello internazionale. In Francia furono editi come *Faces And Places Vol.7* (BYG Records 529.907), in Germania semplicemente come *Soft Machine* (Metronome 2001 200-137), in Inghilterra e in Italia come *At The Beginning* (Charlie Records CD 300 014). In tutti i casi la valutazione non supera i 20 euro.

Le quotazioni riportate in discografia si riferiscono a dischi originali di prima stampa in perfette condizioni (mint).

















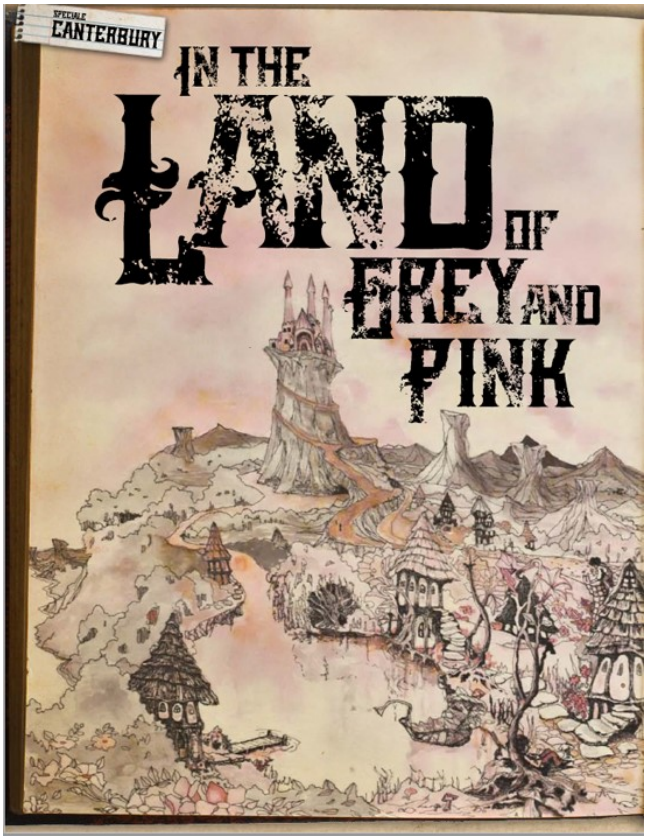


Speciale Canterbury - Part 1 - Prog Italia - 2018

SPECIALE CANTERBURY



Article complet (PDF)



PRIMA PARTE

I lettori di «Prog» Italia, gli amanti delle musiche di confine, perfino molti detrattori di qualsiasi idea musicale comporti l'utilizzo della parola "prog" sono particolarmente attenti a quello che viene ritenuto, anche vagamente, il "mondo" di **Canterbury**: quella scena stravagante che a metà anni 60 inizia a popolarsi di strani personaggi (i fratelli **Hopper**, **Robert Wyatt**, **Daevid Allen**, i cugini **Sinclair** etc.). Nel corso del tempo alcuni gruppi di quell'universo lasciano tracce importanti come **Soft Machine**, **Caravan**, **Hatfield and the North** e tanti altri. Da questo numero iniziamo la pubblicazione a puntate della tesi presentata al conservatorio Licinio Refice di Frosinone da un musicista legato ai nostri territori culturali. Era in trattative per pubblicarla con alcuni editori e allora noi ci siamo detti: "Perché non con «Prog» Italia?".

Testo: **Alberto Popolla**



Chi è Alberto?

Negli anni 80 è bassista dei neopsichedelici Magic Potion, formazione romana che ha inciso due album (1988 e 1989). Clarinettista, arrangiatore e compositore, ha suonato a New York, Chicago, Londra, Berlino, Bruxelles, Lisbona, Algeri e in molti festival italiani. Ha esplorato le diverse sonorità e le infinite risorse timbriche dei suoi clarinetti, attraversando ricerca e improvvisazione, scrittura e conductions, situazioni più propriamente jazzistiche, musica balcanica e klezmer. Ha promosso formazioni italiane ed europee, oltre a collaborare con musicisti provenienti da tutto il mondo. In questi ultimi anni si è dedicato con passione all'arrangiamento e alla composizione, prendendo ispirazione dal grande patrimonio blues e dalle affascinanti sonorità della cosiddetta scena di Canterbury e progressiva. È laureato in Lettere, indirizzo storico, presso l'Università La Sapienza di Roma, nel 2012 ha conseguito il diploma accademico di primo livello in Jazz presso il Conservatorio Licinio Refice, con una tesi sulla scena musicale di Canterbury.

L'impianto della tesi canterburiana

Introduzione – Confini – Un quadro storico – Racconti di Canterbury – I suoni, le musiche – Fol De Rol – The Rotter's Club – Cittadini onorari – Conclusioni – Appendice – Bibliografia – Discografia della scena di Canterbury – Discografia generale – The Canterbury Suite

«il suono di Canterbury è sospeso tra fremiti progressivi, spigolature jazz e d'avanguardia, schegge di psichedelia un po' freak, space rock e melodie rigogliosamente pop...»



Magic Potion: Popolla è il terzo da sinistra. Sotto Brian Hopper (Wilde Flowers Cd 2015).

La definizione di "scena di Canterbury" è sempre stata fonte di discussioni tra gli addetti ai lavori e anche tra gli stessi appassionati. Non solo, i protagonisti di questa scena hanno più volte contribuito a confondere le acque, spesso negando radici comuni tra i musicisti coinvolti o ridimensionando l'intera vicenda.

Nondimeno, il fascino che il suono di Canterbury esercita ancora su affezionatissimi ascoltatori e critici è qualcosa di così forte da resistere a mode, critiche e banalizzazioni, quasi fosse un culto, una sorta di religione laica. Ma dare delle coordinate precise o semplicemente elencare chi, come e dove abbia fatto parte di questa scuola rimane ancora difficile o comunque non così chiaro.

La nostra tesi si propone innanzitutto di delineare e analizzare i criteri di questa scena, perché spesso l'eterogeneità musicale e persino la stessa provenienza geografica sembrano non essere sufficienti a delinearne le caratteristiche, mettendone addirittura in dubbio l'esistenza stessa.

Al di là delle storie personali, delle biografie e degli aneddoti, è interessante andare al fondo della questione, analizzare prima di tutto le musiche dei protagonisti, e poi le parole, le vicende personali, così frequentemente intrecciate tra loro. Perché, alla fine di tutto, c'è l'esistenza di un gruppo di amici che si ritrova a suonare insieme, sotto differenti nomi, diverse etichette, ma alla fine insieme. E già questo dovrebbe, di per sé, confermare l'esistenza di una scena musicale. Ma, ovviamente, parliamo di musica e allora è lì che dobbiamo verificare analogie, approcci, stili, timbri, repertorio, influenze, testi e quant'altro si possa trovare in comune tra una serie di musicisti che, in parte, sono nati o hanno vissuto a Canterbury.

La questione verrà trattata, quindi, con un diverso approccio rispetto ai testi e agli scritti usciti in questi anni. Un approccio unitario, complessivo e non una trattazione gruppo per gruppo.



PRIMA PARTE



In alto la copertina di VOLUME TWO (1969). Da sinistra: Robert Wyatt, Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers e Mike Ratledge.

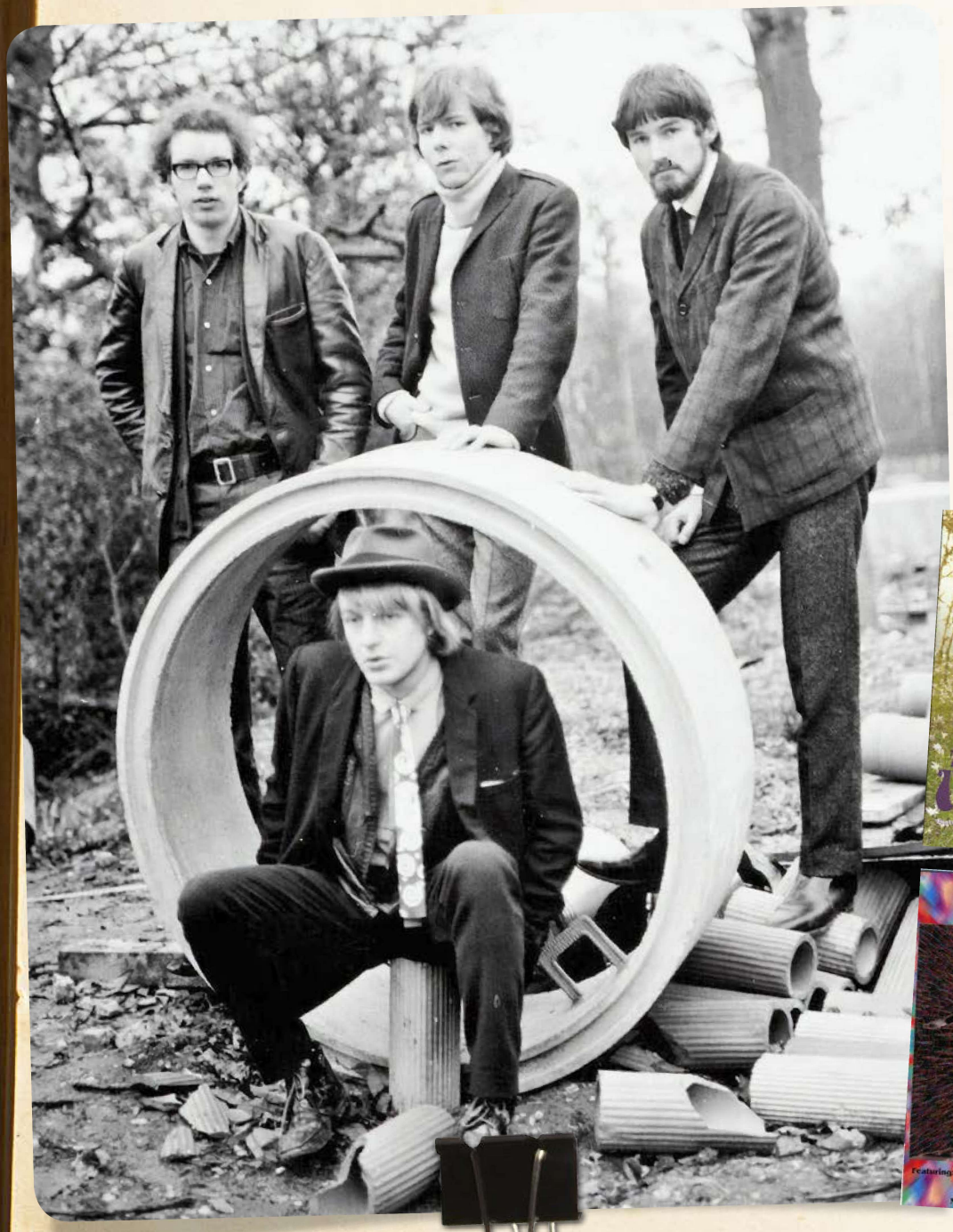
Come già accennato, il criterio geografico, fonte stessa del nome, è ambiguo e fuorviante. È vero che la storia s'innesca in questa piccola cittadina del Kent, sud-est dell'Inghilterra, ed è altresì vero che gran parte dei protagonisti nasce o vive lì negli anni 60, ma tutto ciò non basta e comunque non aiuta. Perché, alla fine, i Soft Machine si formano e giungono al successo a Londra, perché il chitarrista **Phil Miller**, per citarne uno, a Canterbury non è nato e non ha vissuto, perché i **Gong** si formano a Parigi. Insomma, a Canterbury nascono i fratelli Hopper (Brian e Hugh), i cugini Sinclair (Richard e David), Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt vive lì ed è lì che Daevid Allen finirà dall'Australia. È a Canterbury che questi tipici giovani inglesi degli anni 60 formeranno, come centinaia di altri loro coetanei in tutta la Gran Bretagna, il loro primo gruppo, i **Wilde Flowers**, ma tutto il resto, certamente il grosso, accade fuori da Canterbury. A questa difficoltà si aggiunge l'apparente estrema eterogeneità musicale prodotta dai protagonisti in questione. Si va dal jazz rock sperimentale dei Soft Machine al progressive rock dei Caravan, al pop stralunato di **Kevin Ayers**, alla psichedelia folle dei Gong. Ora, se è complicato, e forse

impossibile, utilizzare il criterio della stessa provenienza geografica per raggruppare tutti questi musicisti, sembra ancor più difficile trovare elementi comuni dal punto di vista musicale tra i diversi gruppi e singoli, tanto da far dire ad alcuni che la cosiddetta scena di Canterbury è solo un'invenzione giornalistica.

Cosa comporta allora tutto ciò? Una estrema ambiguità nel definirla, visto che né la comune residenza, né la musica stessa sembrano offrire appigli certi, oggettivi in un certo qual modo. E allora, a seconda dei punti di vista dell'appassionato o del critico, all'interno della scena canterburiana possiamo trovarci **Keith Tippett**, **Centipede**, i **Camel** o gli **Henry Cow**, così come tutta la discografia dei Soft Machine (cioè anche gli ultimi dischi, dove praticamente non suonava più nessuno degli elementi originari) o soltanto i primi quattro dove è presente Robert Wyatt, aumentando, se possibile, ancora di più la confusione.

Ma la presenza, nei diversi gruppi così come nei dischi, di uno stesso circuito di musicisti, con un'intercambiabilità non così frequente nel rock – e certamente più vicina al jazz, in questo senso – e l'esistenza di brani comuni ai diversi repertori, una sorta di veri e propri "standard" di Canterbury, sono elementi così forti da avvalorare, in ogni caso, l'esistenza di una "scena" musicale, certamente distinta sia dall'estetica romantico-classica del rock progressive che dall'esasperato virtuosismo del jazz rock inglese.

I Wilde Flowers sono stati il gruppo del big bang di Canterbury. Nell'altra pagina: i Matching Mole live e le copertine di NATIONAL HEALTH (1978) e OF QUEUES AND CURES (1979).



Confini

Come definire, quindi, una scuola che a prima vista sembra essere più un ritrovo di amici che una corrente musicale vera e propria?

In realtà esistono una serie di criteri con i quali possiamo tracciare dei confini all'interno dei quali collocare una serie di musicisti e gruppi, con i loro relativi prodotti discografici.

Certamente l'alta intercambiabilità dei protagonisti (o perlomeno alcuni di loro) ci permette di identificare comunque un'area comune, formata per l'appunto da una serie di musicisti che collaborano tra loro.

Ovviamente questo comporta un'affinità musicale, anche se le esperienze sembrano diverse, in alcuni casi distanti tra loro.

Ma questo è vero solo in apparenza perché, analizzando in profondità e con attenzione, è possibile rintracciare elementi musicali comuni a tutti i gruppi coinvolti, rivelando una traiettoria obliqua ma coerente e costante nel tempo con la quale i musicisti tracciano i loro percorsi artistici.

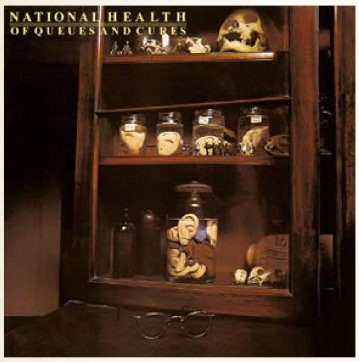
Alla base delle scelte, pur differenti, che i gruppi portano avanti, ci sono una serie di tratti distintivi che ci permettono di circoscrivere e definire con più chiarezza la scena di Canterbury.





PRIMA PARTE







«Tutti noi abbiamo messo il nostro cuore, la nostra anima e le nostre energie per cercare di produrre qualcosa di diverso e di nuovo»
Richard Sinclair

Innanzitutto ***"...the tension between complicated harmonies, extended improvisations, and the sincere desire to write catchy pop songs"***[1].
La presenza costante di stralunate e stranianti canzoni pop all'interno della produzione discografica canterburiana, è un elemento così forte da farne, per l'appunto, un tratto distintivo. Ed è la caratteristica fondamentale che alleggerisce e stempera le atmosfere talvolta cupe e ipnotiche vicine all'estetica progressive.
L'importanza dell'improvvisazione e la sua natura jazzistica, o comunque decisamente influenzata dal jazz.
Contrariamente ai tanti gruppi e musicisti attivi nella seconda metà degli anni 60 e prima metà dei 70, i protagonisti di Canterbury lasciano un ampio spazio all'improvvisazione, evidenziando spesso la loro distanza dagli stilemi rock blues o più propriamente beat. È chiaro che in questo campo esistono forti eccezioni, ma anche nei casi più estremi, nei prodotti più autenticamente pop, possiamo trovare tracce di questo loro retroterra. Talvolta l'improvvisazione assume i connotati della musica contemporanea, e questo dà ancora di più la cifra della distanza che intercorre tra la scena progressive vera e propria e la scuola di Canterbury.
Va detto, comunque, che il retroterra jazzistico è limitato all'ascolto, alla passione e, raramente, all'emulazione, non certo all'aver suonato propriamente jazz. Ma, forse proprio per questo, nei dischi e talvolta nei concerti sono presenti, quasi come fossero "cittadini onorari" di Canterbury, jazzisti anomali, eterodossi, vicini alle esperienze free e all'improvvisazione libera che in quegli anni era di casa a Londra.
A questi personaggi verrà dedicata una "coda" in questa tesi, perché il loro apporto è spesso decisivo nell'orientare in maniera totalmente differente la musica di molti protagonisti di questa storia.
L'utilizzo di tempi dispari e di lunghe suite può non sembrare un elemento specifico, ma nei fatti, unitamente alle improvvisazioni, determina un aspetto certamente distinto dal resto dei gruppi rock progressive.
Se la suite è comune a così tanti gruppi rock nel finire dei 60 e specialmente agli inizi degli anni 70, l'uso che ne fanno i musicisti di Canterbury è non solo quello di collegare tra loro i diversi brani ma di permettere al gruppo di improvvisare anche liberamente, nel caso dei Soft Machine per esempio, o di inserire le tipiche melodie pop di cui sopra.
Nell'ambito di una scrittura compositiva scevra da cliché e da influenze accademiche o propriamente jazzistiche l'uso dei tempi dispari è funzionale alla creazione artistica, anche se in alcuni casi (vedi



Pye Hastings negli anni 70.

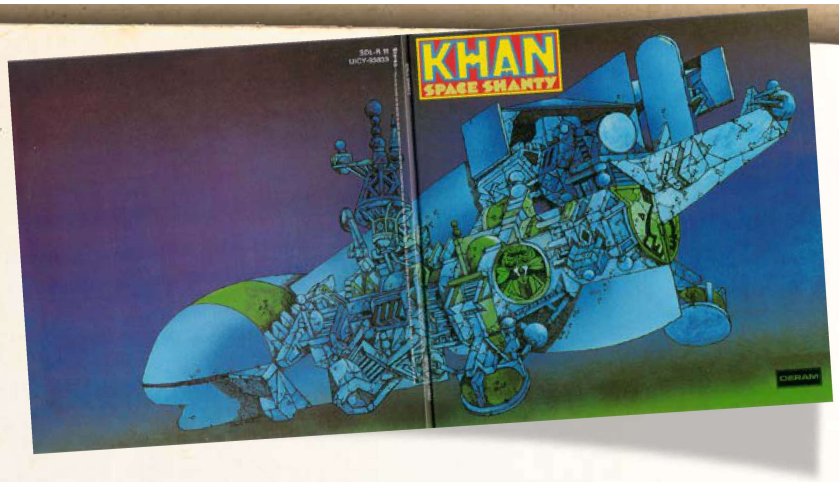
Note
1. Dave Wayne in http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/What: "Is Canterbury Music? The Fans' Opinions".

National Health) l'elemento virtuosistico è preponderante. Infine, ovviamente non ultimo in termini d'importanza, uno spiccato senso dell'ironia è tratto comune nei testi di quasi tutti gli artisti.

Spesso è l'autoironia, il nonsense, il famoso *british sense of humour* che assumono fondamentale rilevanza all'interno dei testi e ne fanno, anche qui, un elemento distintivo della complessa avventura.
Questa è la griglia analitica con la quale si analizzerà, in senso unitario, il materiale musicale (e testuale) canterburiano, cercando di dare contorni e riferimenti certi a un'estetica talvolta sfuggente e indeterminata, ma altresì forte, nelle atmosfere così tanto evocative, di una specificità indubbia ed effettiva.

Un quadro storico

L'arco temporale in cui si svolgono le vicende dei musicisti è poco più di un decennio, tra il 1965 e il 1975, con sconfinamenti vari, sia prima che dopo questi anni.
Riguardo i National Health, in realtà parliamo della seconda metà dei '70, ma obiettivamente il cuore della questione risiede in quel decennio che esprime, dal punto di vista musicale, una varietà di proposte di altissimo livello e che vede affermarsi il rock quale principale genere di riferimento dei giovani.
Il miracolo economico degli anni 50, soprattutto negli Stati Uniti, e poi anche in Gran Bretagna e nel resto d'Europa, produsse per la prima volta nella storia dell'occidente una massa di adolescenti in grado di "consumare" oggetti e musiche per il loro tempo libero e quindi di affermarsi come area omogenea, ben distinta dai bisogni e dalle esigenze degli adulti.
Questo trasformò l'industria musicale, che si ritrovò a disposizione un mercato diverso dal passato ma ricco di esigenze e affamato di novità.
La musica rock, spodestando in questo senso il jazz, "*divenne il mezzo multiuso per esprimere desideri, istinti, sentimenti e aspirazioni*"[2] del mondo dei giovani.
Le vendite dei dischi negli Stati Uniti, dal 1955 (anno di nascita del rock'n'roll) al



SPACE SHANTY, registrato tra dicembre 1971 e marzo 1972, è l'unico album dei Khan, con Steve Hillage e Dave Stewart.

Banana Moon Band con Daevid Allen, Gilli Smyth, Marc Blanc, Patrick Fontaine. Baleari 1968.

PHOTO 12/ UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES



Note
2. E. Hobsbawm, *Gente non comune*, RCS Libri, Milano, 2000, pag. 361.





A sinistra il primo album omonimo dei Caravan (1969).
I Caravan nel 1970: David Sinclair, Richard Coughlan, Pye Hastings, Richard Sinclair.

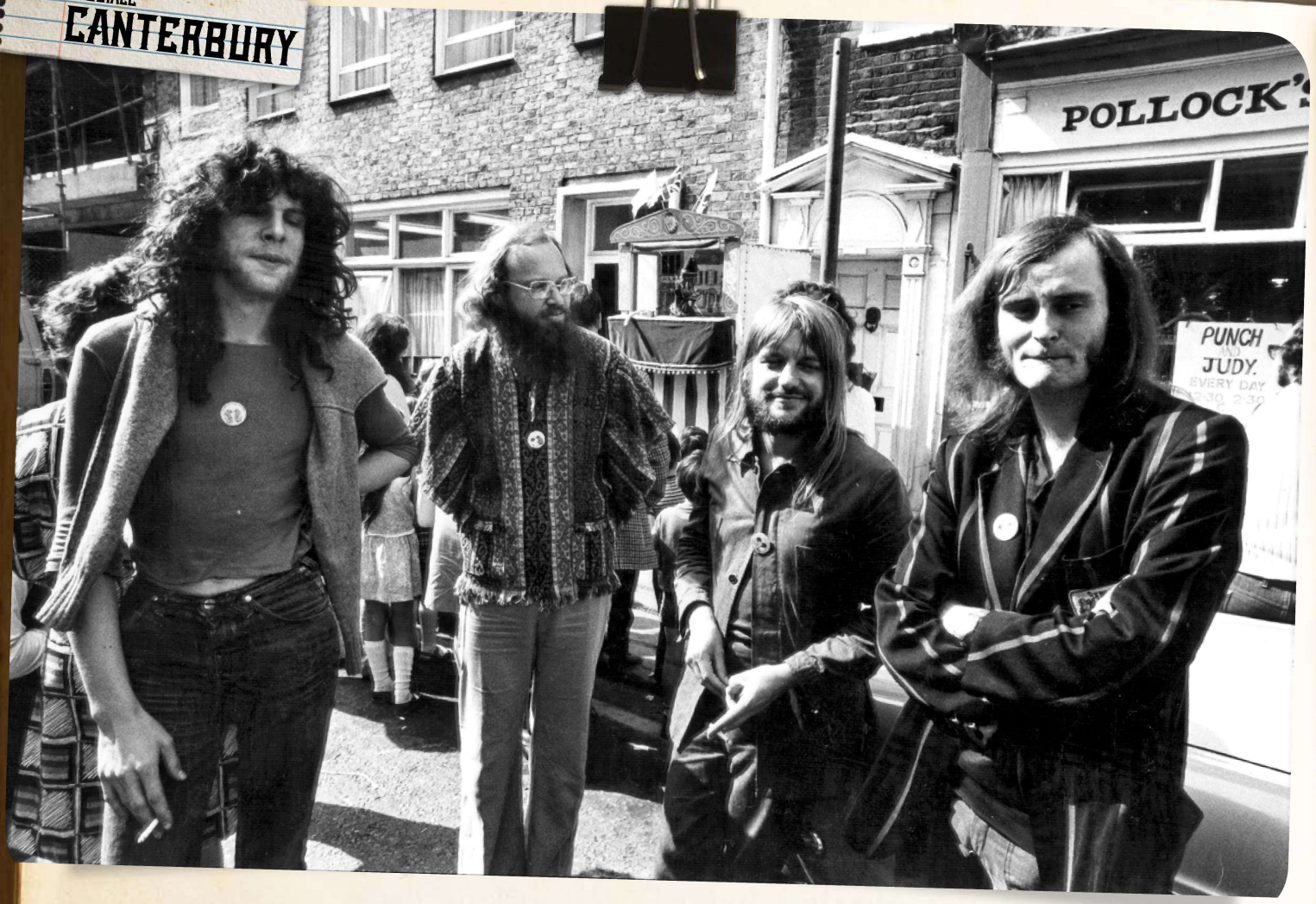
1959, crebbero con percentuali altissime rispetto al passato[3] e mostrarono le potenzialità che la nuova musica giovane aveva per l'industria discografica.
Industria che tuttavia, agli inizi degli anni 60, si trovò in difficoltà nel tentare di proporre cloni di **Elvis Presley** o personaggi non così dirompenti nell'immaginario giovanile come lo furono i primi cantanti rock'n'roll.
La registrazione del primo 45 giri nel 1962 da parte dei **Beatles** diede l'avvio a una nuova grande rivoluzione nell'ambito della musica pop a livello internazionale.
Per uno strano destino, il testimone della rinascita del rock passò dagli Stati Uniti al vecchio impero britannico ormai in decadenza, ma capace di riportarsi al centro della scena mondiale con la sua produzione artistica.
L'esplosione dei Beatles, in generale della musica rock inglese, è preceduta da una forte attività artistica che segue i binari dell'imitazione e, allo stesso tempo, dell'autonomia[4].
L'esempio dei folk singer americani porta alla presa di coscienza del patrimonio popolare inglese, sia in una dimensione più propriamente folk che sotto l'aspetto politico e militante. Il grande successo, nell'immediato dopoguerra, del jazz tradizionale "*… lascia il posto allo skiffle, una sorta di versione proletaria del rhythm and blues che si poteva suonare anche senza conoscere la musica e con strumenti d'occasione*"[5] ed è da qui che anche i Beatles passeranno.
Accanto alle imitazioni del rock'n'roll americano l'altro grande filone su cui si muove la musica inglese è il blues. "*All'origine corrisponde al mito crescente dell'America*"[6], ma agli inizi degli anni 60 diventa un fenomeno tipicamente britannico (anzi, londinese), con una serie di gruppi e musicisti importanti per gli sviluppi futuri della scena musicale anglosassone.



Kevin Ayers, Central Park, New York, febbraio 1977.

E il blues diventa un terreno comune dove suonano insieme i primi jazzisti inglesi e musicisti rock. Significativi, da questo punto di vista, sono i **Bluesbrakers** di **John Mayall** e i **Blues Incorporated** di **Alexis Korner**: qui "*muovono i primi passi personaggi del calibro di Mick Jagger, Brian Jones, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts (i Rolling Stones!), ma anche importanti esponenti del jazz inglese quali* ***John Surman***, ***Dave Holland***"[7] e il nostro **Lol Coxhill** (Alexis Korner, **Delivery**, Kevin Ayers, Caravan, Hugh Hopper).
È importante, per la nostra storia, sottolineare questa vicinanza e condivisione di esperienze tra jazzisti e rockers, perché poi questo elemento scomparirà nel corso degli anni e rimarrà presente solo nelle vicende dei musicisti di Canterbury.
Beat da una parte e rock blues dall'altra formano inizialmente quel grande fiume musicale che dà vita alla *British Invasion* dell'America e del mondo occidentale, che fa da colonna sonora ai sogni e alle aspirazioni dell'universo giovanile europeo e americano, che spinge migliaia di giovani ad affrontare la carriera musicale, seguiti in questo da manager, etichette discografiche, impresari. Il grosso impatto che ebbe il rock è solo un tassello della più ampia rivoluzione culturale che si ebbe, a livello mondiale, nel corso degli anni 60. L'insofferenza dei giovani verso regole, comportamenti, leggi e istituzioni fu dirompente e dal mondo anglosassone s'innescò l'esplosione.
L'universo giovanile esplorò e rivoluzionò tutti i linguaggi artistici, trovando in alcune città, prima fra tutte Londra, la *swingin' London*, la propria residenza eletta, il luogo dove poter sperimentare

Note
3. E. Hobsbawm, *Ibid.*, pag. 360.
4. G. Castaldo, *La terra promessa*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1994, pag. 94.
5. A. Carrera, *Musica e pubblico giovanile*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1980, pag. 83.
6. *Ibidem*, pag. 94.
7. G. Nanni, *Rock Progressivo Inglese*, Castelvecchi, Roma, 1998, pag. 17.



la "rivoluzione psichedelica", dove produrre quegli elementi di una società diversa, più libera, più giusta, più creativa.
Il **1968**, con la sua carica di gioia e di rivoluzione, spazzò vecchie consuetudini, antichi retaggi culturali, politiche reazionarie e impose al mondo intero l'idea che una rivoluzione, in alcuni casi solo culturale, in altri politica e sociale, fosse possibile. E il soggetto trainante fu quell'universo giovanile che diventò talmente importante da modificare profondamente e per lungo tempo gli assetti sociali, politici e culturali delle società occidentali e non solo.
Un tale sommovimento non poteva non toccare, in modo significativo, ovviamente tutte le espressioni artistiche e quindi anche la musica jazz.
L'esplosione del free negli Stati Uniti consentì ai musicisti europei un approccio più originale al jazz e all'improvvisazione, ponendo un serio argine ai fenomeni di emulazione che tanto avevano connotato le prime esperienze jazz nel vecchio continente.
È in Inghilterra, e soprattutto a Londra, che cominciano a intrecciarsi diverse esperienze tra loro e che verranno a maturazione agli inizi degli anni 70.
La musica improvvisata dei vari **Derek Bailey**, **Trevor Watts**, **Paul Rutheford**, **Evan Parker**, il jazz degli esuli sudafricani **Chris McGregor**, **Johnny Dyani**, **Dudu Pukwana**, **Louis Moholo**, **Mongezi Feza** (gli ultimi tre erano membri degli Assagai. Il loro secondo e ultimo album del 1971, ZIMBABWE, aveva la copertina disegnata da Roger Dean), il rumorismo e l'avanguardia degli **AMM** di **Keith Cardew, Eddie Prevost** e **Keith Rowe**, il Ronnie Scott Club con i vari **Mike Westbrook**, John Surman, Dave Holland e **John McLaughlin**, la già citata fucina blues di Alexis Korner e, ovviamente, il rock psichedelico dei Soft Machine e dei **Pink Floyd**, un calderone creativo e unico che solo una città come la Londra degli anni 60 poteva ospitare. "*L'interesse per la pittura, la poesia, la narrativa, il teatro, il balletto e la scultura, rese più urgente liberare la creatività dai confini formali che separavano i generi musicali e le arti tra di loro; poter suonare insieme quando le distanze si ricoprono con poche fermate di metropolitana, agevolò molto lo scambio quotidiano*"[8], e generò musiche "ibride", nuove rispetto al passato, in un fuoco di passione e creazione che non avrà più eguali.

> «*L'interesse per la pittura, la poesia, la narrativa, il teatro, il balletto e la scultura, rese più urgente liberare la creatività dai confini formali che separavano i generi musicali*»



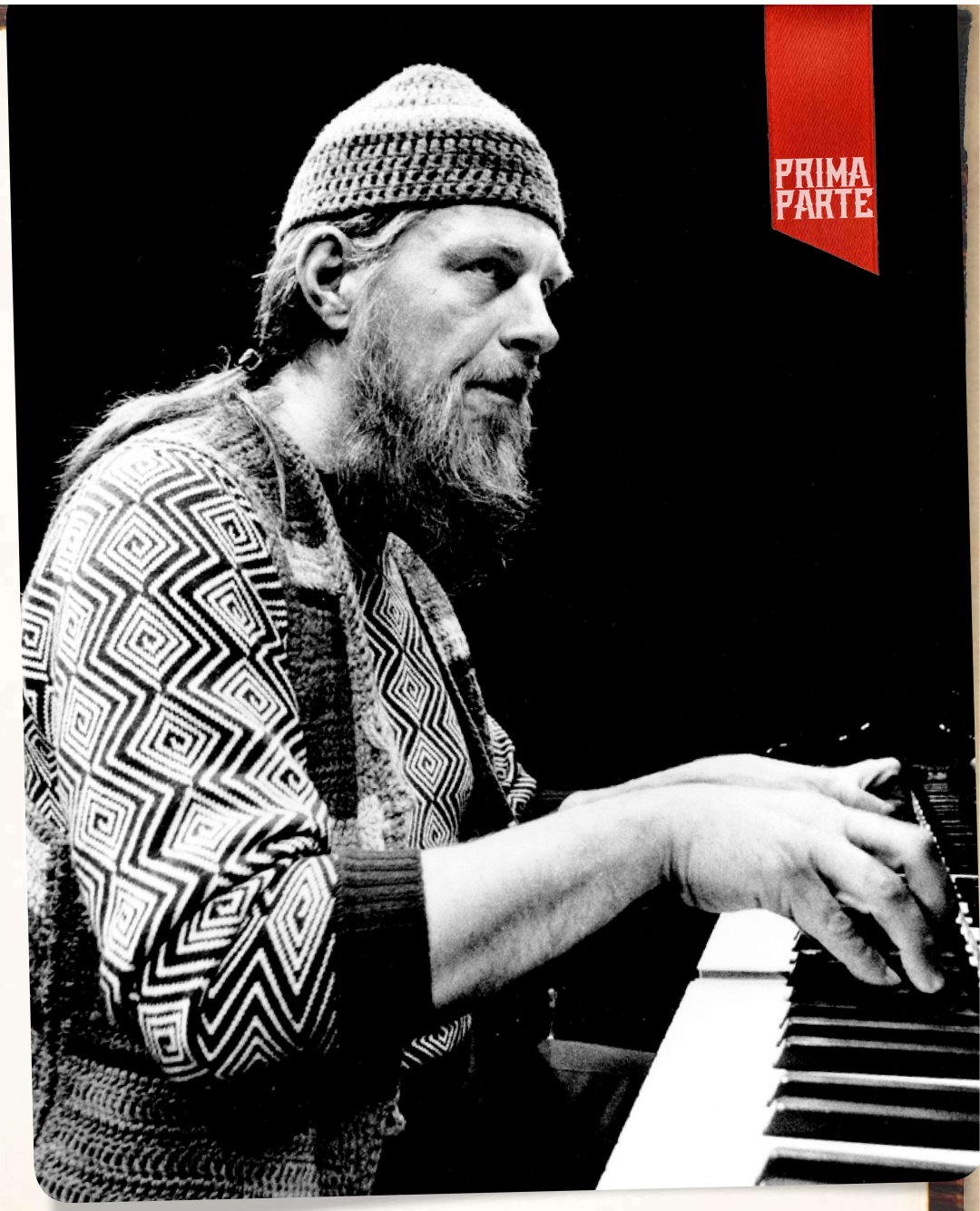
Sopra i Matching Mole: da sinistra Phil Miller, Dave McRae, Robert Wyatt, Bill MacCormick. Sotto Keith Tippeth.

GIOVANNI COCCIA

Ma la grande onda creativa, al volgere degli anni 70, comincia a ritrarsi, a "istituzionalizzarsi", con la moltiplicazione di stili e la professionalizzazione del musicista rock, ora più attento alle vendite e alle mode.

Note
8. C. Bonomi – G. Fucile, *Elastic Jazz*, Auditorium Edizioni, Milano, 2005





Se da una parte, tra il 1970 e il 1971, escono ELASTIC ROCK dei **Nucleus** del trombettista inglese **Ian Carr** (sul filone jazz rock aperto dal **Miles Davis** di BITCHES BREW), THIRD dei Soft Machine, SEPTOBER ENERGY dei Centipede di Keith Tippett (una sorta di Woodstock da studio di registrazione, con la numerosa presenza di musicisti jazz e rock inglesi), **BROTHEROOD OF BREATH** dei musicisti sudafricani esiliati a Londra, dall'altra l'inizio dei 70 vede anche la morte di tre fra i più grandi e famosi esponenti della scena rock internazionale: **Jimi Hendrix**, **Janis Joplin** e **Jim Morrison**. È come una sorta di canto del cigno, la creatività e la/le fusione/i si ritirano nell'alveo sicuro della stabilizzazione e della normalizzazione.

La crisi economica degli anni 70, acuita dallo shock petrolifero del 1973, pone le basi per un costante e definitivo abbandono di un modello di sviluppo non più sostenibile da parte del capitalismo. La piena occupazione, il welfare esteso che proprio in Gran Bretagna avevano trovato uno sviluppo crescente, cominciano a entrare in crisi e i sogni di rivoluzione si diradano lasciando il posto alla rabbia e alla disperazione di una disoccupazione sempre più estesa (nel 1977 esplode il punk, sempre a Londra) e di un allentamento delle tutele sociali da parte dello stato.

Dal punto di vista musicale negli anni 70 "*il rock perde quel suo imponente senso della marea montante, la sua creatività unidirezionale, per disperdersi in mille diversi campi. Se prima era un grande fiume, ora diventa un arcipelago*"[9]. È un fenomeno che toccherà anche il jazz, emarginato nei suoi sviluppi free e avanguardistici, ma di crescente popolarità nella sua fusione con il rock.

Proprio in Gran Bretagna l'originale scintilla creativa rimase accesa nei gruppi e nei musicisti della scena di Canterbury. Come fossero ancora legati a quelle atmosfere di sperimentazione e di scoperta continua, i "canterburiani", al di fuori (o spesso di lato) delle mode e delle correnti, continueranno a produrre musica con forti richiami innovativi (progressivi, diremmo) e con la voglia di continuare a essere il trait d'union tra diversi ambienti musicali una volta vicini e nel corso degli anni via via sempre più lontani. Accostati di volta in volta al jazz rock, alla psichedelia, al pop, al progressive, all'avanguardia, i musicisti di Canterbury manterranno, pur con mille difficoltà e non sempre con risultati ottimali, un approccio originale alla musica, innestando nel processo creativo elementi diversi e in alcuni casi lontani, frutto evidentemente della loro partecipazione ai movimenti alternativi degli anni 60.

Tutto questo non poteva accadere che in Inghilterra.

"*Riassumendo: un intreccio di circostanze plasmò a Londra un'intera generazione di musicisti; l'amore per i maestri americani, la passione per i toni insurrezionali del free, la fedeltà tutta inglese, indistruttibile, alla tradizione, al folk, il piacere di suonare blues, il divertimento adolescenziale del putiferio beat, la provocazione intellettuale suggerita dal gruppo Fluxus, le caleidoscopiche avventure nello spazio psichedelico e l'incontro ravvicinato con i fratelli sudafricani*"[10].



Sopra: il pianista sudafricano Chris McGregor e la copertina di un album dei suoi Brotherhood of Breath. A sinistra: Barbara Gaskin, voce degli Spirogyra, poi con Hatfield and the North, Egg, National Health. Dal 1981 forma un fortunato duo con Dave Stewart. Foto del 1982, Londra.

Note

9. G. Castaldo, *La terra promessa*, cit., pag. 202.
10. C. Bonomi – G. Fucile, *Elastic jazz*, cit., pag. 22.

RAGGENTI DI CANTERBURY

La storia e le storie dei nostri protagonisti prendono avvio dalla Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys di Canterbury. Tipica scuola secondaria inglese di una cittadina di provincia, la Simon Langton "*è sempre stata orgogliosa di essere una tradizionale scuola inglese in una tradizionale città inglese*"[1], e, come accadeva e accade tutt'ora, oltre allo studio i circa 500 ragazzi iscritti alla scuola erano incoraggiati a partecipare a numerose attività organizzate all'interno come lo sport, il teatro, l'arte e ovviamente la musica, con la presenza di un coro e di un'orchestra. "*Il fatto che più del 10% degli studenti sia coinvolta nel coro è un buon esempio di quanto seriamente la Simon Langton School prenda la musica*"[2].

«...e pensare che Canterbury è sempre stata piuttosto "sonnacchiosa", ma non aveva fatto i conti con la musica rock...»

È in questa scuola che si incontrarono i fratelli Hopper, Robert Wyatt e Mike Ratledge. Brian Hopper e Mike Ratledge, più grandi di due anni, cominciarono a suonare insieme per il solo fatto di aver entrambi un'istruzione musicale classica, Mike al pianoforte e Brian al clarinetto[3].

"*Registravamo e suonavamo insieme robe completamente improvvisate, liberamente ispirate alla musica colta contemporanea ma con riferimenti jazzistici sempre più marcati.*"[4]

Brian ricorda *245*, brano di **Eric Dolphy**, ma anche HOW TIME PASSES (1960) del trombettista **Don Ellis**: "*che ha stimolato ulteriori idee sull'integrazione della musica seriale europea del XX secolo con tempi inusuali – caratteristica distintiva dei futuri sviluppi da parte degli ex musicisti del giro Wilde Flowers* (il primo gruppo della scena di Canterbury)"[5].

Le loro passioni non erano limitate solo alla musica ma anche alla fotografia, alla poe-

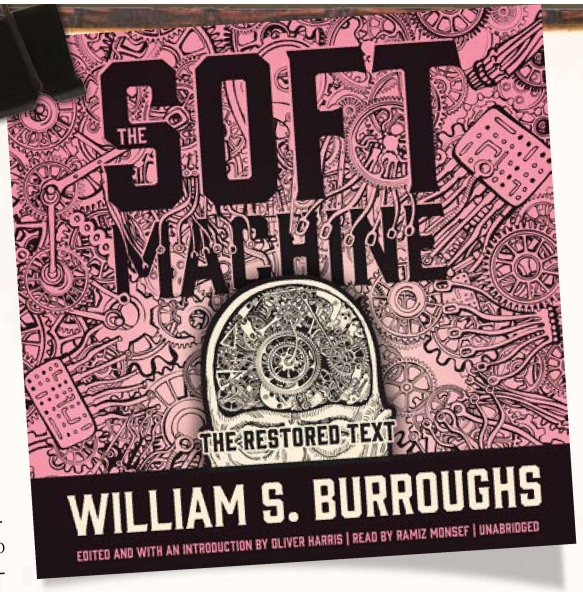


PHOTO 12/ UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Banana Moon Band, Baleari, 1968.

Note

1. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, SAF Publishing Ltd, London, 2005, pag. 23.
2. *Ibidem*, pag. 26.
3. Brian Hopper in *Falsi movimenti. Una storia di Robert Wyatt* di Michael King, Arcana Editrice, Milano, 1994, pag. 11.
4. *Ibidem* pag. 11.
5. *Tales of Canterbury. The Wilde Flowers Story. Brian's Tale*, di Brian Hopper, Voiceprint, Durham, 1994. VPB123CD limited edition 0097 of 2000, pag. 2.



sia e ai primi esperimenti multimediali[6], in una sorta di ricerca a tutto campo di un mondo differente da quello proposto dalla scuola, dall'educazione familiare e dal tipico conservatorismo cittadino e inglese in generale.

"*I miei primi contatti con Robert furono a scuola e a casa sua,* ***Wellington House****. Tutti noi ascoltavamo dischi di vario genere, soprattutto quelli che avevano a che fare con il jazz moderno, o talvolta con il blues… ma soprattutto con il jazz moderno*"[7]. La famiglia di **Robert Ellidge** (poi prese il cognome della madre, Wyatt) era una famiglia di ampie vedute, progressista e culturalmente impegnata; madre giornalista e padre psicologo industriale, professione che dovette abbandonare a causa di una grave malattia.

Fu proprio per le condizioni di salute di **George Ellidge** che Robert si trasferì con tutta la famiglia in un piccolo villaggio a sud di Canterbury, in una casa grande e confortevole, Wellington House, in grado di permettere al padre di Robert, su una sedia a rotelle, di vivere i suoi ultimi anni in condizioni accettabili.

Copertina di una delle molteplici edizioni del libro di William Burroughs. Sotto: due etichette e la copertina gatefold del primo album degli Hatfield and the North (1973).

Honor Wyatt, nel suo precedente matrimonio, aveva vissuto alcuni anni a Majorca perché era amica del poeta **Robert Graves** e tale amicizia sarà importante per la crescita di Robert. "*Molto importante per il futuro di Robert, George Ellidge amava la musica, suonava il pianoforte e ascoltava una gamma sorprendentemente ampia di generi. Ciò includeva le opere di compositori classici moderni come Shostakovich, Hindemith e Bartók, ma anche l'opera e il jazz*"[8].

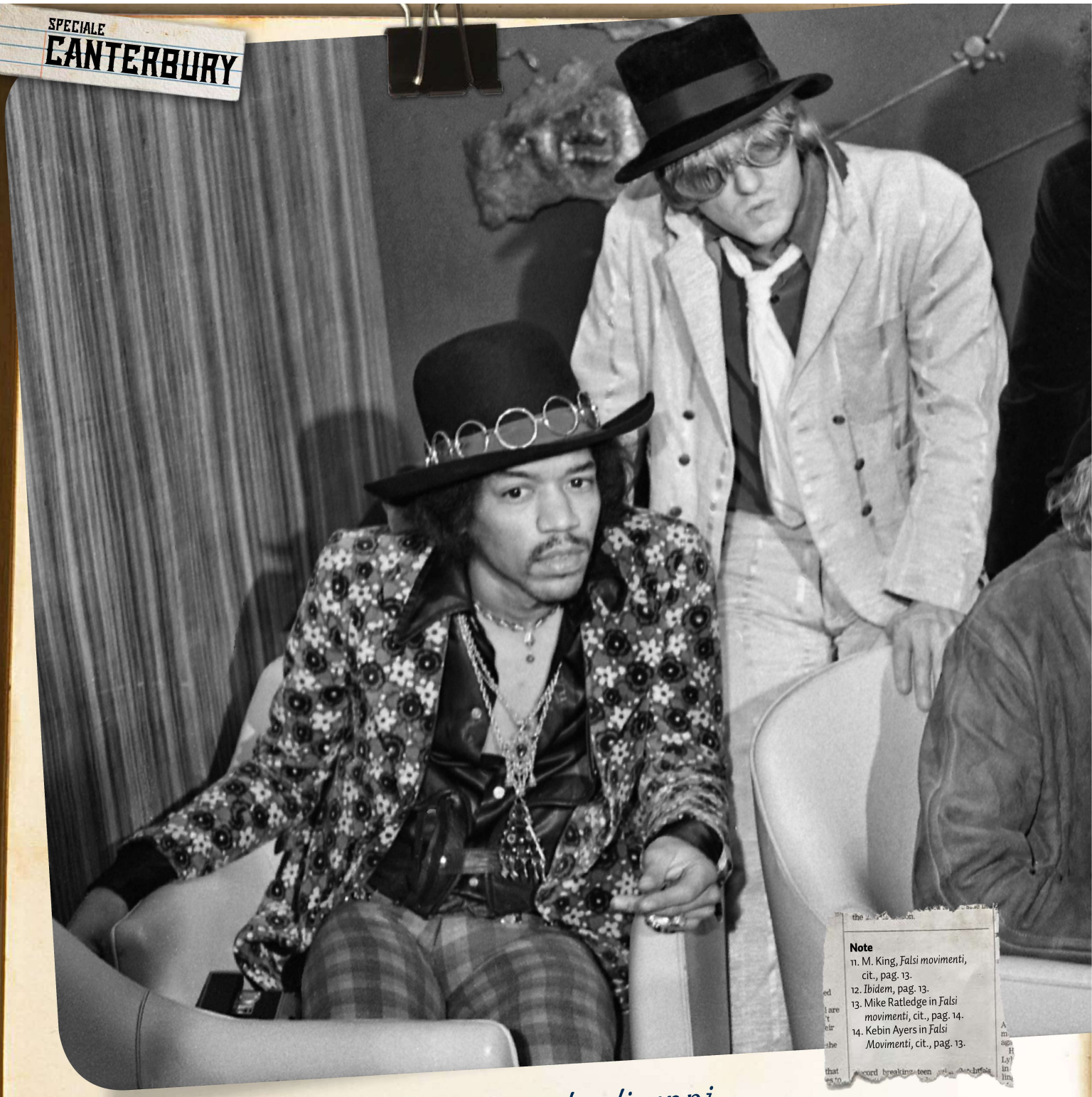
E grazie al fratello maggiore, **Mark Ellidge** (figlio del precedente matrimonio di George), che aveva una numerosa collezione di dischi[9], Robert divenne un vero appassionato di jazz. Fu questo interesse a metterlo in contatto prima con il suo compagno di classe Hugh Hopper, attratto all'inizio dal rock'n'roll, e poi con Brian Hopper e Mike Ratledge. Quest'ultimo chiese in prestito a Robert un disco di **Cecil Taylor** – AT NEWPORT 1957: THE GIGI GRICE-DONALD BYRD JAZZ LABORATORY AND THE CECIL TAYLOR QUARTET – pianista che Mike apprezzava molto e Robert ne fu onorato visto che la richiesta proveniva da uno studente più grande di lui[10].

Così questo gruppo di ragazzi iniziò a incontrarsi alla Wellington House, dove si ascoltava musica, si discuteva e si suonava, anzi s'improvvisava; Brian al clarinetto, talvolta alla chitarra, successivamen-



Note

5. *Tales of Canterbury. The Wilde Flowers Story. Brian's Tale*, di Brian Hopper, Voiceprint, Durham, 1994. VPB123CD limited edition 0097 of 2000, pag. 2.
6. B. Hopper in "*Falsi movimenti*", cit. pag. 11 e anche "*Tales of Canterbury. The Wilde Flowers Story. Brian's Tale*", cit., pag. 1.
7. B. Hopper in "*Falsi movimenti. Una storia di Robert Wyatt*", cit., pag. 13.
8. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 27.
9. R. Wyatt, *Dalla viva voce*, a cura di Claudio Chianura e Leila Tartari, Auditorium Edizioni, Milano, 2009, pag. 79.
10. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 30.



te al sax contralto, Hugh al basso, Mike al piano e Robert a tutta una serie di percussioni, tamburi, scatole di latta, persino una vecchia cornetta[11].

"*Qualche settimana prima del Natale 1960 a Wellington House venne accolto come pensionante un giovane beat australiano di nome Daevid Allen*"[12], arrivo che arricchì la compagnia di un elemento catalizzatore. Lui, più grande degli altri, aveva già esperienze di concerti, letture di poesie, presenze in compagnie teatrali di avanguardia, oltre a un'ottima collezione di dischi jazz.

"*Daevid aveva girato un po' e la sua influenza fu decisiva in quel momento a Canterbury*"[13], e con la sua presenza Wellington House divenne una sorta di oasi culturale dove, come testimonia Kevin Ayers, altro personaggio importante della nostra storia, "*accadevano delle cose, le persone discutevano e ricevevano un'istruzione e leggevano libri. Ammiravano quadri e ascoltavano musica. Io non facevo nulla di tutto ciò ma ero affascinato e trovavo quelle persone davvero interessanti. Ma sì, Wellington House era come un rifugio, era davvero come essere in un altro Paese*"[14].

Fu grazie a un amico di Daevid Allen, il batterista jazz **George Niedorf**, che Robert

«*Alla fine degli anni 60 quasi tutto era possibile... persino un tour americano con Jimi Hendrix e Soft Machine*»

Note

11. M. King, *Falsi movimenti*, cit., pag. 13.
12. *Ibidem*, pag. 13.
13. Mike Ratledge in *Falsi movimenti*, cit., pag. 14.
14. Kebin Ayers in *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 13.

DON PAULSEN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES





PRIMA PARTE

Wyatt iniziò a prendere lezioni di batteria e, in generale, le vaste conoscenze di Daevid allargarono il background culturale dei ragazzi che frequentavano Wellington House.

Comunque, nel febbraio 1963 Hugh Hopper e Robert Wyatt si trasferirono per un po' a Londra invitati proprio da Daevid Allen, e lì formarono un trio di jazz e poesia. "*Per qualche mese l'appartamento di* ***Belsize Park*** *si trasformò in una sala prove dove il Daevid Allen Trio improvvisò e sperimentò, spesso insieme ad amici in visita*"[15], tra i quali Brian Hopper e Mike Ratledge che in quel periodo studiava all'università a Oxford.

Secondo Mike Ratledge il gruppo eseguiva standard jazzistici e pezzi di Daevid senza distinzioni, "*suonavamo senza curarci di cominciare dal punto giusto. Probabilmente assomigliavamo in certi momenti a brutte copie di Cecil Taylor e in certi altri a pessime imitazioni di* ***Bill Evans***"[16].

In ogni caso, il Cd pubblicato come Daevid Allenn Trio nel 1994, LIVE 1963 per la Voiceprint, registrazione di una serata al Marquee club, reca solo composizioni originali, quasi tutti di Daevid Allen. È una sorta di puzzle con poesie recitate, sperimentazioni para jazzistiche, non-sense e humour. In un brano c'è anche Mike Ratledge come ospite. Tutto sommato niente d'indimenticabile, però è già presente la voglia di sperimentare, di cercare nuove forme espressive ancora non supportate, ovviamente, da esperienza e tecnica strumentale.

L'esperienza londinese finisce ben presto; Daevid va a Parigi, mentre in tempi differenti Hugh e Robert tornano a Canterbury.

Ma, come accennato prima, la vitalità e la creatività di Allen agivano anche a centinaia di chilometri di distanza. Infatti, a gennaio del 1964 Hugh raggiunge l'australiano per un breve periodo a Parigi, e lì comincia i suoi primi esperimenti su tape loops, affascinato sia da Daevid stesso che da un suo amico: **Terry Riley**.

Nel frattempo Robert si stabilisce per un po' a Majorca, dall'amico di sua madre, il poeta Robert Graves, invitando anche Kevin Ayers. I due talvolta suonano anche al locale **Indigo Jazz Club di Palma de Mallorca**. A fine estate del 1964 Daevid Allen li raggiunge portando con se un drum kit, che qualcuno aveva lasciato nel suo appartamento a Parigi, in regalo a Robert[17].

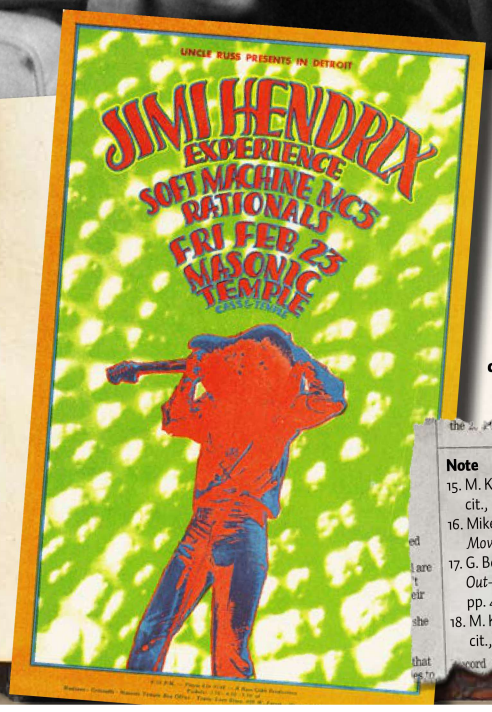
Nel frattempo in Inghilterra esplode il fenomeno delle radio pirata – fino alla Pasqua del 1964 il sistema radiofonico era stato monopolio della BBC – che cominciano a trasmettere per ore e ore la nuova musica giovanile che sulla BBC aveva uno spazio limitatissimo. E così il rock dei **Beatles**, dei **Rolling Stones**, degli **Who** diventa una musica di successo e di grande impatto per l'immaginario giovanile. Impatto che avviene anche sui fratelli Hopper (Brian al sax e Hugh al basso), che iniziano a essere affascinati dai gruppi beat, rhythm'n'blues e rock'n'roll dell'epoca. Così decidono anche loro di formare un gruppo beat.

Ingaggiano un giovane chitarrista che conosceva gli accordi delle canzoni dei Beatles e poteva anche cantare, **Richard Sinclair**, e, con il ritorno a Canterbury di Robert Wyatt (batteria e voce) e Kevin Ayers (voce e chitarra), formano i Wild Flowers, mutati poi in Wilde Flowers su idea di Kevin per un omaggio a Oscar Wilde. Daevid Allen invece rimane a Majorca.

Questa volta la base operativa si sposta nella casa dei genitori dei fratelli Hopper, **Tanglewood**, che vede un susseguirsi di prove su prove per arrivare ad avere un repertorio abbastanza vario e soprattutto in grado di far ballare i giovani dal vivo. Accanto a brani di Chuck Berry, Beatles, Rolling Stones, Who, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Bob Dylan trovano posto, nella scaletta dei Wilde Flowers, anche alcune composizioni di **Cannonball Adderley**, **Thelonious Monk**, **John Coltrane** e **Duke Ellington**[18].

Tuttavia chiara è la matrice di gruppo beat con vocazione al ballo e al divertimento, al servizio di platee giovanili nei piccoli club della provincia inglese. Confrontata con l'esperienza del Daevid Allen Trio di qualche anno prima, netta appare la differenza sia di intenti che di scelte musicali: dalle sperimentazioni free immerse nel sottobosco della controcultura londinese alla ricerca del successo e dell'emulazione verso i più famosi gruppi beat e rhythm'n'blues dell'epoca.

Ma i primi esperimenti, le discussioni e gli ascolti fatti a Wellington House avevano comunque lasciato il segno, tanto da affiancare alle cover di brani famosi un



Sopra: Jimi Hendrix, Robert Wyatt e Henry McCullough (Spooky Tooth) alla conferenza stampa per il tour The British Are Coming. Copter Cub, 30 gennaio 1968, New York City. A sinistra: il poster di uno dei concerti con Hendrix, Softs e MC5.

Note

15. M. King, *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 16.
16. Mike Ratledge in *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 16.
17. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pp. 49 e 50.
18. M. King, *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pp. 28 e 29.



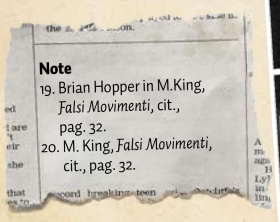
HENK WELTEVREDEN

crescente numero di composizioni originali, frutto anche della moda dell'epoca: con il successo dei Beatles moltissimi gruppi iniziarono a scrivere materiale originale.
Nel Cd, uscito nel 1994 per la Voiceprint, THE WILDE FLOWERS, ci sono provini con varie formazioni e registrati in anni diversi, ma sono chiare subito alcune cose: innanzitutto la vena creativa di Hugh Hopper, che compone quasi tutto il materiale, nel caso di *Memories* e *It's What I Feel* (*A Certain Kind*), sono brani che faranno parte del repertorio dei Soft Machine. Altro aspetto decisivo è l'esplosione di Robert Wyatt come cantante e non più solo come batterista. Una voce intensa, anche se ancora non sempre intonata, ma dal timbro così originale, stilisticamente vicina al mondo black e in parte jazzistico, insomma vero e proprio tratto distintivo di un gruppo fin lì non molto significativo.

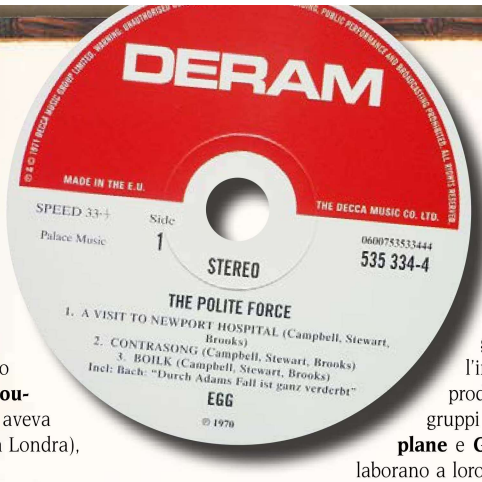
Hatfield and the North, presenti anche sul manifesto di un festival di marzo 1975 al Raimbow Theatre, uno dei più importanti club londinesi negli anni 70 (attivo dal 4 novembre 1971 al 24 dicembre 1971. Oggi è una chiesa pentacostale).



Ultima osservazione, la presenza e la rotazione, si comincia già da ora, di diversi musicisti che poi seguiteranno a incontrarsi negli anni successivi. **Richard Coughlan** alla batteria con Wyatt alla voce, **Pye Hastings** alla voce e chitarra a 12 corde con Wyatt ai cori e alla batteria, Mike Ratledge all'organo e al flauto (!). Se questo è frutto inaspettato e quasi non voluto, vista l'artigianalità dei provini, nondimeno è già un primo segno di condivisione di esperienze e amicizie. La musica dei Wilde Flowers, a ogni modo, scivola via abbastanza in fretta, un onesto beat condito da momenti in alcuni casi già significativi e intriganti, come *Memories* e *Hope For Happiness* (scritta da Brian Hopper), anche se ancora acerbi e suonati non bene.
Ma quello che accadeva in tutta l'Inghilterra, con l'emergere della psichedelia e quindi larghi spazi alle sperimentazioni e all'improvvisazione, aveva un effetto fortissimo soprattutto su Robert Wyatt, unito poi all'influenza ancora predominante di Deavid Allen e delle sue idee alternative.
"*Robert voleva davvero cambiare direzione ma non sapeva che strada prendere. Dava il suo contributo ai Wilde Flowers ma veniva anche spinto dagli altri a intraprendere qualcosa di nuovo e inaugurare percorsi completamente inediti*"[19]. Così, ancora una volta Majorca diventa fondamentale per le nostre vicende. Durante la Pasqua del 1966 Daevid Allen e Kevin Ayers, sempre ospiti del poeta Robert Graves, conoscono un ricco proprietario americano di night club, **Wes Brunson** e questi, dopo aver ingerito acidi e altre sostanze stupefacenti, dichiara di aver avuto una visione e di dover regalare un mucchio di soldi a persone che annunciassero la nuova era per servire Dio[20].
Kevin Ayers e Daevid Allen convincono Wes Brunson che sono loro le persone adatte a ricevere il finanziamento per mettere in piedi un gruppo musicale in grado di annunciare la nuova era.
E così accade; Brunson torna negli Stati Uniti, liquida le sue imprese e raggiunge in Inghilterra Daevid e Kevin, finanziando l'acquisto di strumenti musicali e l'affitto di un appartamento a Canterbury dove poter vivere e provare il repertorio del nuovo gruppo. I **Mister Head**, questo il nome scelto da Daevid Allen, vedevano Ayers alla chitarra ritmica, Allen al basso elettrico, Wyatt alla batteria e l'americano **Larry Nowlin**, conosciuto a Majorca, alla chitarra. Per due mesi Wyatt suonò sia con i Wilde Flowers che con i Mister Head, e i repertori dei due gruppi comunque avevano brani in comune, le canzoni dei fratelli Hopper.



Note
19. Brian Hopper in M.King, *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 32.
20. M. King, *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 32.



In estate i Mister Head si trasferiscono a Londra e nell'agosto del 1966 Mike Ratledge, da Oxford, raggiunge i suoi vecchi amici. A settembre Larry Nowlin abbandona il gruppo.
Decisi a cambiare nome alla band, la scelta cade sul titolo di un libro di **William Borroughs** (autore con cui Daevid aveva collaborato sia a Parigi che a Londra), The Soft Machine[21].

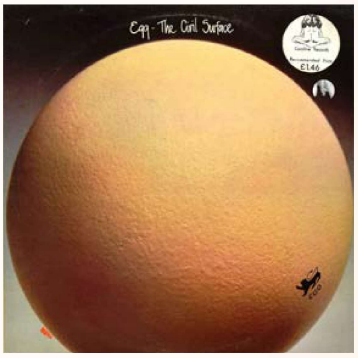
Note
21. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 74.

La nascita ufficiale dei Soft Machine avviene in un momento topico per la musica rock in Inghilterra e anche negli U.S.A. A fianco dei Beatles e dei Rolling Stones c'è una marea crescente di gruppi che infiammano le platee giovanili, e negli U.S.A. l'invasione britannica ha prodotto tutta una serie di gruppi come **Jefferson Airplane** e **Grateful Dead** che rielaborano a loro modo le idee musicali provenienti da Londra.
Ma è un momento particolare anche perché il rock inizia a mutare pelle; il brano di due o tre minuti non è più sufficiente a esprimere le innumerevoli idee dei musicisti e, grazie anche a un uso frequente di droghe, esplode la psichedelia, una musica intensa, sperimentale, ricca di soluzioni prima inesplorate, con suoni distorti e lunghe improvvisazioni, soprattutto dal vivo. Questa musica si collega immediatamente al mondo underground della controcultura londinese e si assisterà a memorabili concerti ed eventi all'UFO Club dove il palco sarà condiviso da decine di gruppi psichedelici e rock, insieme a situazioni più sperimentali (gli AMM di Rowe e Cardew divideranno spesso la serata con Pink Floyd e Soft Machine).
Da qui le strade della piccola comunità di Wellington House cominciano a disperdersi e, come annunciato nell'intro-

Etichetta e copertine dei tre album degli Egg: EGG (1970), THE POLITE FORCE (1971) e THE CIVIL SURFACE (1974).







Sotto: gli Egg. Da sinistra Dave Stewart (tastiere), Clive Brooks (batteria) e Mont Campbell (basso).



duzione, cercheremo di seguirne le vicende non gruppo per gruppo ma tenendo insieme, per l'appunto, i musicisti che condividevano lo stesso approccio alla musica.

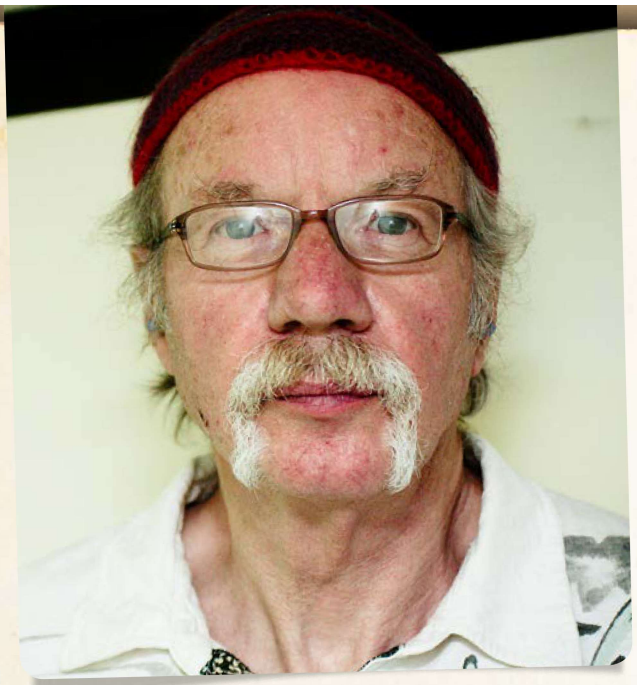
Nel febbraio del 1967 i Soft Machine pubblicano il loro unico singolo per la Polydor, *Loves Makes Sweet Music / Feelin', Reelin', Squeelin'*, prodotto dall'americano **Kim Fowley**.

Nell'aprile dello stesso anno, con **Giorgio Gomelski** come produttore, registrano una serie di demo che però vengono editi su disco solo nel 1971.

JET – PROPELLED PHOTOGRAPHS avrebbe dovuto essere il primo Lp per i Soft Machine, ma fortunatamente le registrazioni rimasero nel cassetto. La musica è effettivamente lontana da ciò che erano, e che saranno, i Softs: "*L'energia delle loro performance, il predominio dell'improvvisazione e la loro ibridazione con gli stili musicali più disparati sono evidentemente quasi totalmente assenti nelle demo*" [22]. Infatti il disco risulterà "*a series of anaemic pop singles*"[23], e giustamente osteggiato dagli stessi Softs. Significativa appare la scelta dei brani, con tre canzoni di Hugh Hopper che all'epoca non faceva parte del gruppo.

Intanto i Soft Machine erano diventati una delle attrazioni più importanti della scena londinese. Una serie di concerti a fianco dei Pink Floyd avevano portato i quattro al successo, sia pure non di massa, soprattutto dopo la partecipazione al più importante evento musicale dell'anno, il **14th Hour Technicolour Dream**, festival tenuto per sostenere il magazine alternativo **«International Times»**.

Nel frattempo la Gran Bretagna pullulava di gruppi rock, e c'era una frequente mobilità di musicisti tra una band e l'altra, anche in differenti generi musicali. A fine 1966 un giovane chitarrista di nome Phil Miller forma la sua prima band – **Bruno's Blues Band** poi Delivery – con suo fratello, il tastierista **Steve Miller** e un suo amico di infanzia, il batterista **Pip Pyle**. Steve Miller aveva già suonato blues, così la musica del gruppo è a cavallo tra il beat e il classico rock blues di quel periodo. Nel 1967 il primo bassista viene sostituito da **Roy Babbington** (poi nei Nucleus e ancora nei Softs) e, tramite conoscenze con le sue prime esperienze blues, Steve chiama il sassofonista **Lol Coxhill** a entrare in formazione.



SIMONE CECCHETTI

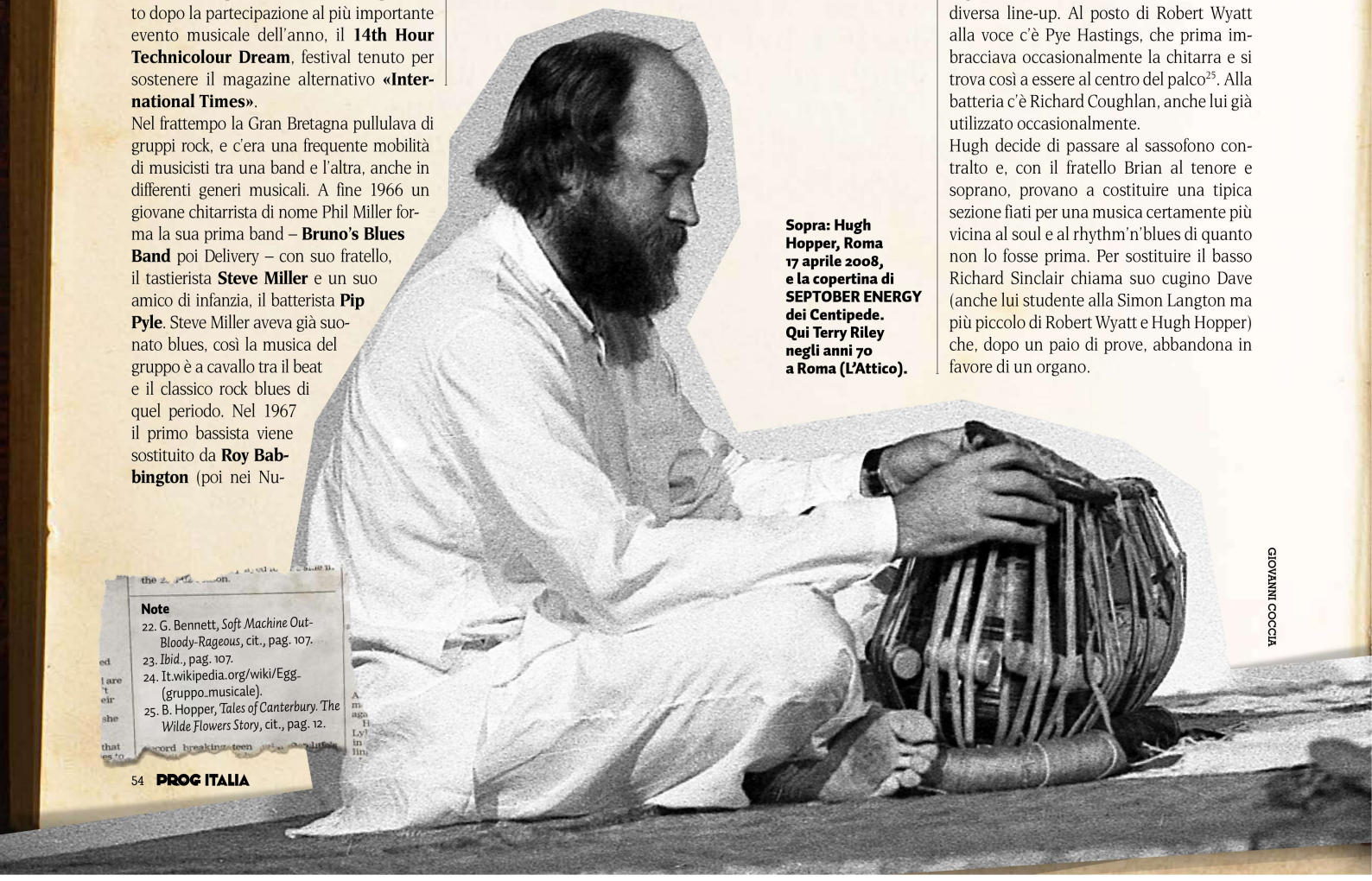


Sempre nel sottobosco psichedelico londinese dalle ceneri degli Uriel nascono gli Egg: **Dave Stewart** all'organo, **Steve Hillage** alla chitarra, **Mont Campbell** al basso e **Clive Brooks** alla batteria, semplicemente gli stessi componenti escluso Steve Hillage che comunque collaborerà saltuariamente. Musica elaborata, "*con atmosfere jazz, citazioni classiche e virtuosismi*"[24], gli Egg non riscuotono particolare successo, ma i musicisti saranno parte fondamentale della realtà canterburiana. Da notare un uso ampio di tempi dispari e, nei testi di Mont Campbell, il tipico *british sense of humour*.

A Canterbury invece i Wilde Flowers proseguono a suonare, ovviamente con una diversa line-up. Al posto di Robert Wyatt alla voce c'è Pye Hastings, che prima imbracciava occasionalmente la chitarra e si trova così a essere al centro del palco[25]. Alla batteria c'è Richard Coughlan, anche lui già utilizzato occasionalmente.

Hugh decide di passare al sassofono contralto e, con il fratello Brian al tenore e soprano, provano a costituire una tipica sezione fiati per una musica certamente più vicina al soul e al rhythm'n'blues di quanto non lo fosse prima. Per sostituire il basso Richard Sinclair chiama suo cugino Dave (anche lui studente alla Simon Langton ma più piccolo di Robert Wyatt e Hugh Hopper) che, dopo un paio di prove, abbandona in favore di un organo.

> «Scena di Canterbury? È inevitabile che inizi a suonare con le persone intorno a te, ma non ho sentito alcuna connessione musicale particolare con loro»
> Robert Wyatt



Sopra: Hugh Hopper, Roma 17 aprile 2008, e la copertina di SEPTOBER ENERGY dei Centipede. Qui Terry Riley negli anni 70 a Roma (L'Attico).

GIOVANNI COCCIA

Note

22. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 107.
23. *Ibid.*, pag. 107.
24. It.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egg_(gruppo_musicale).
25. B. Hopper, *Tales of Canterbury. The Wilde Flowers Story*, cit., pag. 12.







EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS

A sinistra il primo album dei Soft Machine. Sotto: ZIMBABWE degli Assagai, copertina disegnata da Roger Dean. Sopra: Allen allo Zu Festival di Giorgio Gomelsky (Entermedia Theater, New York, 7 ottobre 1978).

Ma il gruppo ormai aveva perso le sue ambizioni e per tutto il 1967 continuò a suonare solo a Canterbury e dintorni. Tutt'altra energia si respirava dalle parti dei Soft Machine. Dopo i successi londinesi, nell'estate del 1967 i Softs sbarcano in Francia per una serie di concerti e performance teatrali d'avanguardia. Al ritorno in Gran Bretagna Daevid Allen viene fermato alla frontiera a causa del visto scaduto e costretto a rimanere in Francia. Così, improvvisamente i Soft Machine diventano un trio, almeno per il momento.

Ad allontanare Daevid fu chiaramente un problema burocratico, ma comunque erano sorti, proprio in quella tournée, una serie di dissidi dovuti alla sua poca capacità tecnica nel suonare.

Dopo l'ultimo concerto "*Robert mi ha affrontato con rabbia, dicendomi di essere imbarazzato a suonare con me*"[26]. Daevid così tornò a Parigi e da lì ripartirà la sua avventura, musicale e non.

L'inizio del 1968 vede i Soft Machine in tournée con Jimi Hendrix negli Stati Uniti per tre mesi: hanno lo stesso manager. Hugh Hopper è il loro tour manager.

Contemporaneamente si sciolgono i Wilde Flowers e nascono i Caravan: Pye Hastings, Dave Sinclair, Richard Sinclair, Richard Coughlan. Negli Stati Uniti il gruppo registra il primo album ma non è per nulla soddisfatto della produzione, soprattutto Kevin Ayers.

Diviso in tre suite, THE SOFT MACHINE è considerato uno dei dischi più importanti della storia del rock progressive inglese, "*una vera fusione di rock, jazz e psichedelia di altissimo livello*"[27]. In forma ancora embrionale e approssimativa, già troviamo alcuni degli aspetti fondamentali della futura musica di Canterbury: la forma suite, le improvvisazioni dal vago sapore jazzistico, ovviamente le arie pop, qui predominanti, l'ironia e il non-sense. Un lavoro che tuttavia non riflette ancora ciò che la band suona dal vivo, e cioè quell'energia incredibile, che li porta a mantenere la line-up a tre (come Jimi Hendrix) e le lunghe improvvisazioni che caratterizzano le loro esibizioni live.

Nel maggio 1968 i Soft Machine ripartono in tournée per gli U.S.A., sempre a fianco di Hendrix, e con un nuovo membro, il chitarrista Andy Summers, allora negli Animals di Eric Burdon (presente nell'album LOVE IS del 1968) poi nei Police. Dopo due mesi lascerà i Softs. I nuovi concerti americani provocano ulteriori problemi all'interno del gruppo, sia musicali, tra Mike Ratledge e Kevin Ayers, con il primo più deciso su improvvisazioni e sperimentazioni mentre il secondo più orientato sul pop, sia di gestione nervosa e logistica dei componenti. Wyatt rimane per un po' negli Stati Uniti, mentre Kevin Ayers, stressato dalla tensione dei live e con sempre maggiori divergenze sulle direttive musicali da condividere, decide di partire per Ibiza e abbandonare il gruppo. A sostituirlo viene chiamato, naturalmente, Hugh Hopper, che proprio da poco aveva venduto il suo basso[28].

A Parigi Daevid Allen, con la sua compagna Gilli Smith e altri musicisti, forma una specie di collettivo musicale dedito a sperimentazioni sonore e altro: Gong. Con la formazione non ben definita, a marzo del 1968 i Gong vengono chiamati a suonare al Museum of Modern Art di Stoccolma insieme a **Don Cherry**.

Daevid partecipa anche agli scontri tra studenti e polizia nel maggio '68 a Parigi e, più in generale, rimane molto attivo nell'ambito culturale, partecipando a performances con il Living Theatre dell'attrice statunitense Judith Malina e del pittore/poeta Julian Beck, a eventi poetici e teatrali e, chiaramente, suonando.

A ottobre 1968 i Caravan all'Advision Studios di Londra iniziano le registrazioni per il loro primo album, dopo una serie di brillanti concerti tenuti a Canterbury e Londra (in un'occasione si esibiscono a fianco del Chris McGregor Sextet). Il 33 giri omonimo esce nel gennaio 1969 per la MGM/Verve e, nonostante le aspettative, non ottiene molto successo.

È "*un'opera abbastanza grezza ma godibile*"

Robert Wyatt



Note

26. D. Allen, *Gong Dreaming 1. From Soft Machine to the birth of Gong*, SAF Publishing Ltd, London, 2007, pag. 62.
27. G. Bennett, *Soft Machine. Out-Bloody-Rageous*, cit., pag. 140.
28. http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/softmachine/index.

che risente delle atmosfere beat e psichedeliche; si alternano momenti sperimentali ad altri segnatamente romantici, una caratteristica propria della band"[29]. Certamente più orientato sul versante pop rispetto al primo disco dei "cugini" Soft Machine, CARAVAN tuttavia mostra già alcuni segni delle future evoluzioni, prima fra tutte la suite presente alla fine del disco, *Where But For Caravan Would I?*, già del repertorio dei Wilde Flowers (durava tre minuti in più) e composta in parte da Brian Hopper, tipico esempio di collage di brani inseriti all'interno di una forma suite per l'appunto.

Nell'estate del 1969 Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper e Mike Ratledge partecipano alle session per JOY OF A TOY (edito dalla Harvest a novembre dello stesso anno), primo Lp di Kevin Ayers, definitivamente ripresosi dallo stress e deciso ad andare avanti con una carriera solista. L'album è ricco di splendide canzoni, anche qui con chiari segnali "canterburiani", che vanno dai testi surreali e autoironici ad atmosfere macchiate di jazz e spunti sperimentali, con gli arrangiamenti del compositore **David Bedford**.

A settembre 1969 esce il secondo lavoro dei Softs, VOLUME TWO, con la partecipazione di Brian Hopper al sassofono.

"*L'opera rappresenta la prima fusione tra il rock, la psichedelia, il dadaismo, il jazz e l'avanguardia mai realizzata da alcun musicista*"[30], con un magistrale equilibrio tra sperimentazione e pop, virtuosismo e nonsense: rimarrà unico nella loro storia. Ma a ottobre avviene una grande trasformazione in seno ai Soft Machine: al posto del sassofono di Brian Hopper viene ingaggiata una vera e propria sezione fiati, quella del pianista jazz inglese Keith Tippett. **Elton Dean**, sax contralto e saxello, **Lyn Dobson**, sassofoni e flauto, **Marc Charig**, cornetta, **Nick Evans**, trombone sono i jazzisti che entrano a far parte stabilmente nel gruppo, anche se solo Elton Dean rimarrà per alcuni anni. Secondo Mike Ratledge, "*l'idea di allargare il gruppo nacque dal fatto che scrivevamo sempre tanto – passavamo più tempo a comporre che a suonare – e ci toccava ridimensionare ogni volta le nostre partiture perché tre persone non possono fare più di tanto*"[31].

Questa formazione, ovviamente, non avrà vita lunga, anche per le difficoltà di amplificazione durante i concerti, ma registrerà il leggendario terzo album del gruppo, il monumentale THIRD (pubblicato a giugno 1970, senza Charig ma con Rab Spall, violino, e Jimmy Hastings, clarinetto basso e flauto).

PROSEGUE SUL NUMERO 22 DI «PROG» ITALIA, IN EDICOLA IL 20 GENNAIO 2019.



BIPS/GETTY IMAGES

Soft Machine, gennaio 1967. Da sinistra Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge e Daevid Allen.

Note

29. It.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravan_(gruppo_musicale).
30. It.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_Machine.
31. M. King, *Falsi Movimenti*, cit., pag. 71.

Robert Wyatt La Voce Sottile della Talpa Dada - Classic Rock El Visionari del Rock - 2017



ROBERT WYATT

LA VOCE SOTTILE DELLA TALPA DADA

Rara figura di batterista che è anche e soprattutto cantante, frontman, leader, Robert Wyatt, classe 1945, nato a Bristol, è stato tante cose diverse rimanendo sempre se stesso: il santino laico di un modo di intendere la musica. Una storia, la sua, cominciata a Canterbury nei primissimi anni Sessanta, culminata nella breve epopea dei Soft Machine e in un album solista irripetibile, ROCK BOTTOM. Una storia che prosegue ancora oggi.

Testo | Gabriele Marino



Généalogie

Di tutte le genealogie che attraversando la storia del rock ne segnano i corsi e gli snodi, quella del rock di Canterbury è una delle più importanti, vitali, intricate, divertenti. Qualcosa di simile accadrà poi, in un altrove e in un altroquando, a Louisville, nel Kentucky, alla fine degli anni Ottanta, per il post-rock di matrice punk. Lì tutto era cominciato con gli Squirrel Bait,



una band di poco più che adolescenti. A Canterbury, nel Kent (Inghilterra: niente a che vedere col Kentucky), trentamila anime adagiate sulle rive dello Stour, cento chilometri a sud-est di Londra, nella prima metà dei Sessanta *c'è fermento*. È il fermento del movimento beat, del movimento underground, del movimento studentesco: insomma, del Movimento, che mescola assieme, inscindibili, letteratura, arte, politica e vita. Anche qui i nostri eroi sono poco più che adolescenti. Dei ragazzini, a dirla tutta. Tutti tranne uno, che è un po' più vecchio ed è ammantato di un'aura esotica, di un'aria algida e sardonica, allo stesso tempo. È un tipo misterioso, un po' figura paterna e un po' cialtrone, è uno che ci è e che ci fa, una specie di guru venuto da lontano, per fare proseliti. Si chiama David, ma presto aggiungerà per vezzo distintivo una "e" al nome, diventano Daevid Allen. Australiano, chitarrista, poeta, beatnik, intellettuale do-it-yourself, nel 1960 prende il fagotto e si mette a viaggiare in lungo e largo per l'Europa. Arrivato in Inghilterra si sente a casa sua, incontra William S. Burroughs, si mette a fare il talent scout e fonda un *power trio* free jazz – siamo nel 1963, siamo a Londra – assieme a due che hanno sedici anni: Robert Wyatt (che all'epoca si chiama ancora Robert Ellidge e che ha conosciuto Allen perché i suoi genitori gli avevano affittato una camera vonella loro casa di Canterbury) alla batteria, e Hugh Hopper (compagno di scuola di Robert) al basso. Sedici anni.



Quello che sorprende non è tanto che in breve tempo il Daevid Allen Trio non riceva più richieste per suonare nei club, quanto che ne abbia ricevuto una, la prima. Siamo in piena epoca surf e beat, il free è ancora un non-linguaggio acerbo e per iniziati, mentre nella praticamente unica testimonianza che ci resta della cosa, Live 1963, registrato al Marquee londinese e pubblicato esattamente trent'anni dopo, quello che sentiamo è un tipico esempio di "too much, too soon", di "no commercial potential" (oltre che, certo, di "velleità che non corrispondono esattamente alle capacità"). Ascoltando, si capisce molto bene perché il tutto durerà giusto una manciata di esibizioni, spalmate nell'arco di una manciata di mesi appena. In queste smozzicature di free jazz che sembra suonato con dei giocattoli e da dei bambini, sentiamo un po' della chitarra aliena di Derek Bailey (che però in quel 1963 esordiva in un jazz ancora tradizionale con i futuri avanguardisti Tony Oxley e Gavin Bryars), e addirittura già Captain Beefheart, la No New York dei DNA, o il dada *bruitiste* degli Half Japanese. E anche il antautorato "no-folk" di Daniel Johnston, se questi lacerti devono servire da tappeti per gli sbraitamenti beat di Allen.



The Soft Machine nel 1967. Da sinistra: Daevid Allen, Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers. In basso, Mike Ratledge.

> zoom

Too much, too soon… Troppe visioni profetiche. A un certo punto, verso metà disco, nella jam si affaccia ospite il pianoforte di un altro ragazzo di talento, si chiama Mike Ratledge, ha diciott'anni, è un altro compagno di scuola di Wyatt e Hopper. Il gruppo finisce come deve finire e Allen se ne ritorna a Parigi, dove già era passato approdando dalla sua Melbourne e dove aveva già avuto modo di fare cose con Terry Riley (perché ognuno si sceglie i compagni di merende che si merita). Wyatt e Hopper, ancora sulla scia, estetica e fisica, dello zietto australiano (lo raggiungono a un certo punto a Maiorca, dove Wyatt prende pure lezioni di batteria da un vecchio jazzista spagnolo), mettono in piedi una band che più che una band è un collettivo, che più che un collettivo è un'idea, un'idea chiamata Wilde Flowers. Sono loro due e altri compagni di scuola e d'infanzia: il fratello di Hugh, Brian Hopper, e due ragazzi che si chiamano Richard Sinclair e Kevin Ayers. Ascoltare le registrazioni, anche qui, sbucate fuori ufficialmente solo trent'anni dopo, sparse tra la raccolta di demo e inediti THE WILDE FLOWERS e i quattro volumi di CANTERBURIED SOUNDS, fa un effetto davvero strano: aspri e allo stesso tempo succosi come frutti acerbi, vi ascoltiamo già tutti i tic e le firme della cosa che sarà poi il nostro Wyatt. C'è la sua voce elegantemente sgraziata, sottile, ondivaga e perturbante, c'è il gusto insistito per l'irregolarità di forme e strutture, per la diluizione delle atmosfere, per una certa

jazzizzazione del pop, per lo schizzo folle e improvviso. Soprattutto, rispetto alle tracce superstiti dell'Allen Trio, che in confronto sembrano punk-punto- e-basta, c'è in nuce tutta l'agrodolce fragranza delle migliori cose del primo grande frutto maturo dell'estro wyattiano, i Soft Machine.



Epicentro, assieme ai Caravan, e anche loro gemmazione di questi benedetti Wilde Flowers, della cosiddetta scena di Canterbury (etichetta che viene stiracchiata fino a includere Comus e Henry Cow, che di Canterbury non erano, ma che dei canterburiani erano amici e ne condividevano l'estetica), i Soft Machine hanno rappresentato in maniera quasi dizionariale *la musica che piaceva*, soprattutto ai giovani europei colti e ribelli, ma di educate letture, educate visioni ed educati ascolti, alla fine degli anni Sessanta. I Soft Machine erano uno di quei nomi, giusto per dire, sempre citati da Riccardo Bertoncelli, esempio par excellence di liberazione e di musica totale, di sperimentazione, di avanguardia pop: era la loro una "musica senza etichette", "uguale a se stessa e basta", una "musica per morire completamente". È attraverso i vari Bertoncelli di mezza Europa che i Soft Machine sono entrati nell'immaginario culturale di un'epoca, piccoli eppure grandissimi, messi come sotto una lente d'ingrandimento, radiografati, vagliati al metal detector. E Robert Wyatt ne era il punto focale. Sintomo e sintesi di un'epoca, anche nella loro parabola più tarda e meno celebrata, avendo rappresentato alla perfezione la transizione verso l'elefantiasi delle derive post-psichedeliche e post-prog, leggasi il jazz-rock, la fusion intrippata del BITCHES BREW di Miles Davis – nel migliore dei casi – e i manierismi barocchegianti-neoclassicheggianti-sinfonici dei virtuosi dello strumento di turno.

MACCHINE PERTURBANTI

«QUELLA DEI SOFT MACHINE
ERA UNA MUSICA SENZA ETICHETTE,
UGUALE A SE STESSA E BASTA, UNA MUSICA
PER MORIRE COMPLETAMENTE»
RICCARDO BERTONCELLI

"I Soft Machine nascono, ancora e di nuovo, sotto il segno duplice di Allen e di Burroughs, come chiarisce subito il nome, preso dal romanzo dello scrittore che, nel 1961, inaugurò la trilogia in cui applicava sistematicamente la tecnica del cut-up. Siamo nel 1966 e la band è composta da Wyatt, Ayers, Allen appunto e Ratledge. Allen rimolla molto presto, letteralmente bloccato al di qua della Manica per questioni di visti e permessi revocati e con in testa fantasmagorie tutte sue che necessitano di uno spazio tutto loro: andrà a creare i Gong, altro pilastro del suono e dell'immaginario canterburiano. Ayers resiste fino al primo disco, poi farà Kevin Ayers e basta. Cosicché, dal secondo album in poi, la formazione, pur sempre aperta a ospitate varie (Canterbury significa *collettivo e laboratorio*), diventerà Wyatt (voce, batteria), Ratledge (tastiere) e il ritornato Hopper (basso). I primi due album



> zoom

dei Soft Machine sono un caleidoscopio stordente di idee, di trovate, citazioni, ammiccamenti, gag, frammenti poetici, momenti (r)umoristici che dipingono alla perfezione gli anni di cui sono figli. Il primo, l'omonimo THE SOFT MACHINE, prodotto da due big come Chas Chandler (bassista con gli Animals e pigmalione di Hendrix) e Tom Wilson (produttore scansafatiche che aveva firmato però l'esordio di Velvet Underground e Zappa, il Dylan elettrico, Simon & Garfunkel, il free jazz più avant, nonché gli stessi Animals), viene registrato in aprile e pubblicato nel dicembre del 1968, mentre l'Europa è una sorta di barricata perenne tra libri, libretti rossi e molotov. L'effetto patchwork colto e disordinato è forte e i brani puntano a stordire l'ascoltatore, mimando quasi l'assalto fisico (fin dall'iniziale *Hope For Happiness*).

VOLUME TWO, che esce, autoprodotto stavolta, nel 1969, sembra in qualche modo addomesticare la formula, o comunque gestirla con maggiore oculatezza, regalando anche squarci di straordinario lirismo wyattiano, pur nell'autocompiacimento più programmatico del nonsense (la *Pataphysical Introduction* divisa in due segmenti) e tra omaggi espliciti a Zappa, a Hendrix, al guru della letteratura postmoderna Thomas Pynchon, a Schönberg. Robert porta la libertà, l'elasticità del jazz nel batterismo rock, ma senza perdersi negli shuffle dello swing, per carità: il suo orizzonte ideologico è quello del free e si sente forte e chiaro. La sua voce è uno sforzo di equilibrio continuo, il volo di un uccello colpito, che cambia rotta, ma non casca mai per terra e sparisce alto. Soprattutto, è una voce unica, al di là del complimento implicito che connota l'aggettivo, in senso stretto: non ce n'è un'altra simile, davvero "uguale a se stessa e basta".

Se nel disco che si chiamerà FOURTH (1971) c'è ancora Wyatt alla batteria, un Wyatt letteralmente muto, che non canta, perché l'andazzo ormai è quello, e con le ali tarpate, che neppure scrive nulla, in quel THIRD 1970) che è già comunque il disco di una band profondamente diversa da quei Soft Machine dada-sessantottini immediatamente precedenti, un disco che vede Wyatt all'angolo (le foto delle session lo ritraggono parcheggiato su una sedia, scazzatissimo), messo in minoranza politico-estetica da Ratledge e Hopper, in quel disco c'è l'alba di questo glorioso tramonto, un qualcosa che chiunque ami la musica vorrebbe poter testimoniare da vicino.

Su *Moon In June*, diciannove minuti che, sulla carta, sono null'altro che un taglia e cuci di spunti e appunti vari, di cose scritte in vari periodi e in posti diversi, mischiate a sbocconcellamenti di pezzi già editi e addirittura di brani di amici (neppure accreditati; sono due canzoni di Kevin Ayers), un brano che gli altri due Soft si sono praticamente rifiutati di contribuire a creare e allora Wyatt se l'è dovuto suonare e montare in quasi completa solitudine, su questo Frankenstein sconfitto, lungo diciannove minuti, nessuno avrebbe potuto scommettere. E invece il mostro salta fuori tutto vestito lucido di miele d'acacia, risultando di abbacinante, imprendibile bellezza. Non vogliamo togliere niente agli altri pezzi della collezione, *Facelift*, *Slightly All The Time* e *Out-Bloody-Rageous*, mirabili, avvincenti costruzioni progressive. Ma qui siamo – è un concetto che torna spesso, avrete notato – in un altrove, in un'altra dimensione. Si potrebbe facilmente indugiare nella retorica dell'ispirazione e dell'ineffabile nel maneggiare questa cosa qui, eppure la sua bellezza sfuggente è perfettamente spiegabile, sta tutta in un banalissimo, sapiente dosaggio di





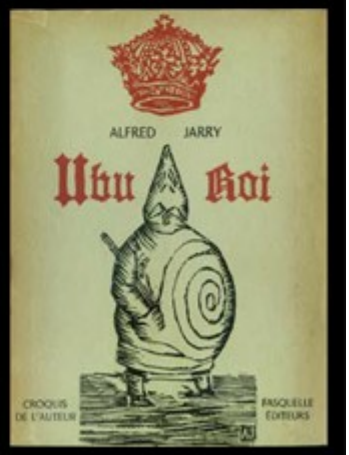


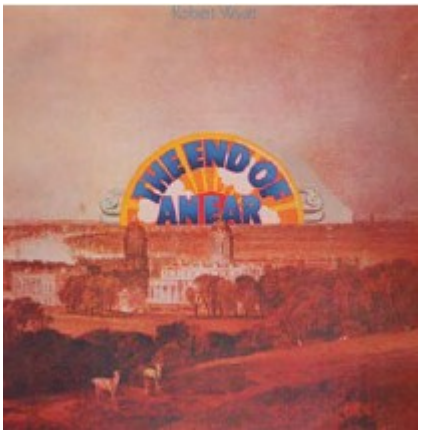
elementi. Cosa rara peraltro in un brano nella tradizione delle grandi suite del rock, da Sister Ray dei Velvet Underground in avanti, banco di prova per improvvisazioni, sperimentalismi collagistici e rumoristici per definizione. In *Moon In June* c'è la voce leggermente come soffocata, sul punto di non farcela, di Wyatt, una voce nondimeno agile e in grado solo lei d'inerpicarsi lassù. C'è una batteria legnosissima. Ci sono due note di basso. Due note di tastiere elettriche. Basta. E bastano a tratteggiare un'atmosfera densa e sospesa, che sembra raccontare la storia di un abbandono sognante, unico possibile antidoto al nonsenso delle cose della vita.

PATAFISICA: LA SCIENZA CON L'APOSTROFO

Nelle prime battute di VOLUME TWO, Robert Wyatt annuncia una scelta di melodie "rivmic" dell'Official Orchestra of the College of Pataphysics e rende evidente che questa, che il suo creatore definiva la "scienza delle soluzioni immaginarie", è materia gradita alla band. A teorizzarla per primo è lo scrittore Alfred Jarry, che nel 1893 in *Guignol* la fa introdurre a padre Ubu ("La 'patafisica [*con l'apostrofo*] è una scienza che abbiamo inventato, perché se ne sentiva generalmente il bisogno"). I princìpi di questa nuova scienza verranno enunciati nel suo *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien, pubblicato postumo* nel 1911, dove si chiarisce che a differenza delle altre scienze, che essa "ingloba e vanifica", la 'patafisica (l'apostrofo prima della *p* lo impone Jarry) non si occupa del generale ma del particolare, non delle regole ma delle eccezioni. Per essa, un fenomeno non va decifrato in modo univoco, come avviene per motivi di abitudine, perché in realtà ne esistono infinite interpretazioni.
Smisuratamente devoto all'alcol e all'assenzio, Jarry muore di meningite tubercolare nel 1907, a trentaquattro anni, ma il concetto di 'patafisica viene ripreso dai suoi seguaci; e più tardi sarà Boris Vian a stabilire l'equivalenza dei contrari ("È forse quello che spiega il rifiuto che manifestiamo di ciò che è serio, di ciò che non lo è, in quanto per noi è esattamente la stessa cosa, è 'patafisica").
Attratto molto presto da questa scienza delle scienze, Wyatt la tiene sempre ben presente, nell'arte come nel vivere. In fondo, con la sua impercettibile divisione tra assurdo e tragedia, nonché con i modi espressivi in cui sbocciano naturalmente ironia, paradosso e nonsense, la 'patafisica può anche essere utile a uno come lui, che vede la vita punteggiata da "scogliere a picco su luoghi oscuri", e che sin da ragazzo coltiva tendenze suicide. "Penso che la vita sia una cosa tetra", osserva patafisicamente a Marcus O'Dair in *Different Every Time: The Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt*. "Si dice sempre che il diavolo stia nei dettagli mentre io credo che il diavolo abbia la regia dello spettacolo e che sia Dio invece a nascondersi nei dettagli. Penso che lo show lo conduca il demonio, ma se hai fortuna e ti attrezzi, puoi cogliere comunque brevi momenti di bellezza. Solo così, prendendola al contrario, la vita per me ha un senso". **Mario Giugni**

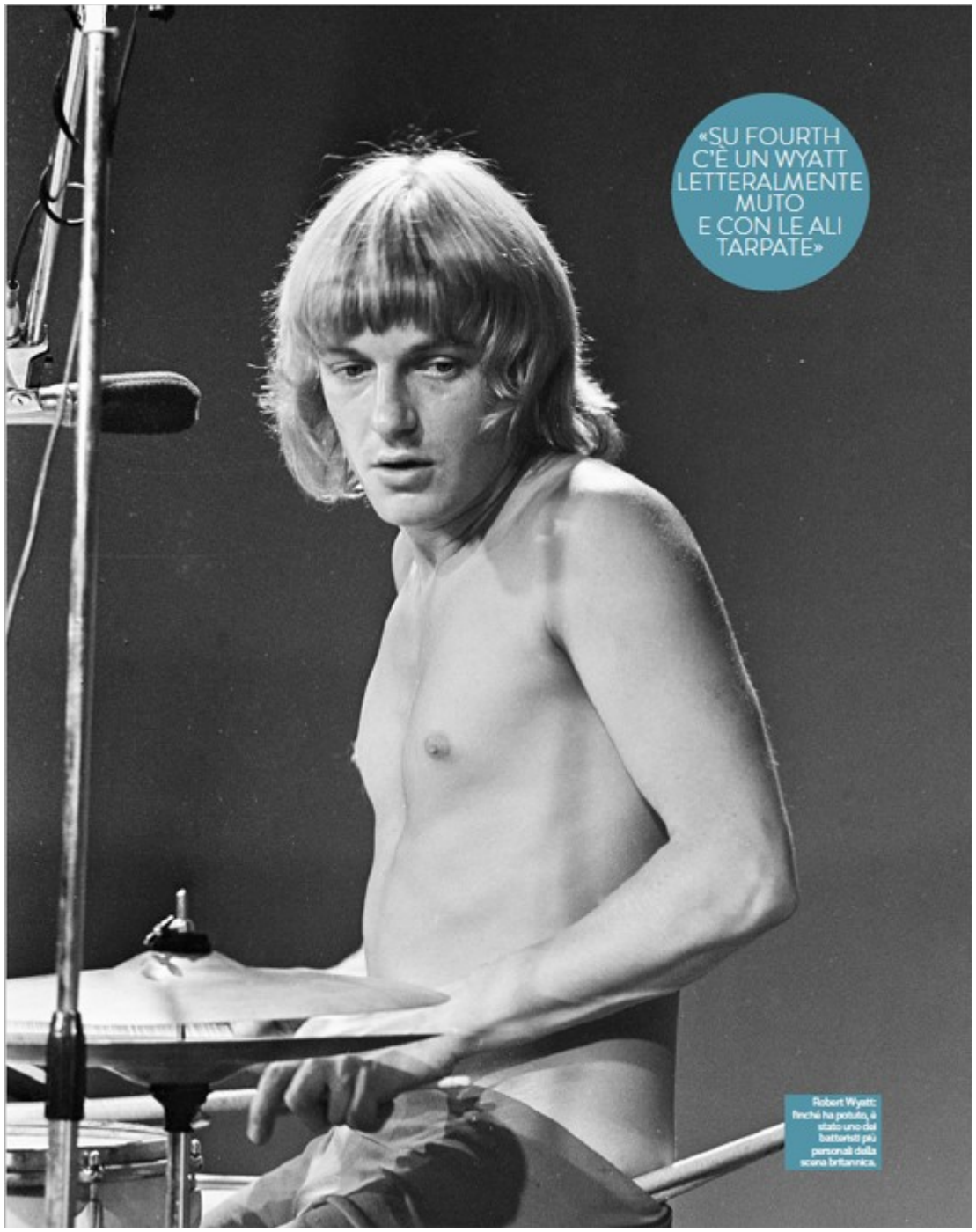






Wyatt qui trova l'equilibrio perfetto tra urgenza di dire e volontà di non compromettersi dicendo troppo, come fa dire bene al suo alter ego, in bilico tra ciò di cui si ha bisogno e ciò che si vuole. Quando il pezzo sembra ormai in procinto di stingere anch'esso nel jazzrock progghegiante che lo attornia, la voce di Wyatt decide di chiudere in bellezza e ricomincia a giocare con la propria coda, un po' planare di delfino sott'acqua, un po' Thema di Luciano Berio. Qui finiscono i Soft Machine di Robert Wyatt, i Soft Machine che sono stati Robert Wyatt, con uno dei suoi segni più maiuscoli.

Messo a mezzo servizio in casa propria, Wyatt coglie l'occasione per realizzare, quello stesso anno, 1970, il primo disco solistico, etichettato da uno di quei giochi di parole un po' bambineschi, un po' tetri e apocalittici che tanto gli piacciono: THE END OF AN EAR. Finisce un'epoca, ma lui continua. Bello, ispido e fragrantemente artigianale, l'album fa però un po' il gioco della svolta recente dei Soft Machine, perché non presenta brani cantati o anche solo vocaleggiati. È un disco ingegnosamente, ingegneristicamente creativo, avventuroso, suonato per la stragrande maggioranza in solitaria e frutto di meticolose sovraincisioni, in cui la sensazione della liberazione personale emerge palpabile. Ma a cui manca una cosa, *quella* cosa.



Robert Wyatt: finché ha potuto, è stato uno dei batteristi più personali della scena britannica.

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I Matching Mole in concerto al Roundhouse. Londra, 1971.

LA TALPA ABBINATA (COL CULO PER TERRA)

Nel 1971, Wyatt, separato in casa con quella che era stata la creatura sua, ne crea il Doppelgänger sfottò, fin dalla ragione sociale: Matching Mole, gioco di parole con il corrispettivo francese di Soft Machine (*machine molle*). La band si rifornisce dalla fucina di musicisti del giro Canterbury che Wyatt conosce da sempre come le sue tasche (due Matching Mole saranno poi i cardini degli Hatfield and the North, che, allo stesso tempo, sono uno spin off dei Caravan) e, come le band seminali da cui si era sviluppata tutta la genealogia canterburiana, avrà vita bruciante ed effimera. Due soli gli album all'attivo, utili a chiarire, al di là del valore specifico e qualora fosse ancora necessario, due cose importanti: il talento melodico di Wyatt (*O Caroline*, che apre l'esordio eponimo) e le sue posizioni politiche (MATCHING MOLE'S LITTLE RED RECORD è, maoisticamente, il suo "dischetto rosso").

Nel 1973 la band si sfascia, troppi fili, troppi giri la attraversano e più che articolarne i movimenti la legano, la paralizzano. Wyatt, per conto suo, è sempre più sbandato, lo stile di vita sregolato che la sua produzione musicale e il suo modo di presentarsi lasciano intuire ne sta segnando pesantemente il viatico. Come compagni di bevute, in gioventù, aveva avuto maestri come Hendrix e, pericolosissimamente, Keith Moon. Le loro sono lezioni che non si scordano. La band risorge con un rimpasto di formazione insperato e si appresta a registrare un terzo, nuovo disco. Ma. Però. Se la tragedia è una commedia rovesciata o, meglio, specchiata, vista negli occhi dell'altro, capiamo bene come la gag *slapstick* di scambiare una porta per finestra fa ridere molto poco, se a essere scambiata per porta è una finestra e ci si trova, ubriachi fradici di tequila e Southern Comfort (routine questa con sopra la firma di Moon), al quarto piano di una casa non propria. È il primo giugno del 1973. In cielo c'è la luna. Robert è a una festa, a Londra, e c'è mezza Canterbury suonante. Mette il piede fuori, a un certo punto. Vola giù. È fortunato, per due ordini di motivi. Non muore. E, come dirà lui stesso, trent'anni dopo: «Visto lo stile di vita che conducevo all'epoca, l'incidente la vita me l'ha salvata, perché me l'ha fermata». L'effetto collaterale di cotanta fortuna però è la paralisi totale della parte inferiore del corpo. Robert si rompe la schiena e il Wyatt batterista istintivo, timbrico e genialoide scompare in un istante. Resta l'altro Robert, l'altro Wyatt, che poi è in fondo quello più altro, quello più alieno e nonostante tutto più nostro. Nonché quello più influente e capace di tenerli assieme tutti quanti, col filo rosso sottile di una voce unica: il casinaro patafisico scatenato e il bozzettista di scorci lirici. Il ritorno su disco di Wyatt dopo l'incidente testimonia un lavoro che non è più accumulazione, stratificazione, ma panneggio, con qualche picchiettatura studiata ad arte. Ci sono tante cose dentro, molte peraltro pensate, decise e scritte prima del volo. Tante cose, ma ciascuna ha il suo spazio, il suo silenzio attorno.

WYATT DA VEDERE

Su YouTube si trovano varie interviste a Wyatt, alcune anche molto lunghe. Per esempio, quella condotta da Gavin Esler e caricata sul canale dell'università del Kent, di cui Esler, giornalista politico per BBC, è rettore. O la session di Q&A alla Purcell Room di Londra presente sul canale dell'etichetta Domino, risalente alla promozione di COMICOPERA. Di culto, l'apparizione a *Top of the Pops* del 1974, con Nick Mason dei Pink Floyd alla batteria, per presentare il singolo *I'm a Believer*. Abisso assoluto il piano & voce di *Sea Song* e *Alifib* tratto da un'apparizione alla tv francese datata 1975. Tornando indietro, all'epoca Soft Machine, abbiamo una *Moon In June* embrionale, ma che è *già lei*, di un quarto d'ora circa, tratta dall'esibizione del 22 agosto 1969 al belga Bilzen Jazz and Pop Festival. Altezza THIRD, si trova invece un intero concerto di un'ora, a Parigi, nel 1970 appunto, senza *Moon In June*, ma con la mitica *Esther's Nose Job* (da VOLUME TWO), con *Facelift* e *Out-Bloody-Rageous* e una lunga improvvisazione vocale di Wyatt. Gli sgoccioli della sua esperienza con la band sono fotografati in un *live*, superjazzistico e superprog, arzigogolato e concettoso, del 23 marzo 1971 a Beat Club, durante il quale, a un certo punto, Wyatt si abbandona e comincia a suonare, occhi chiusi, sudatissimo, la batteria con le mani, mentre "di là" si inseguono dispari e sinuose tastiere elettriche e sax superfree. Chiudiamo le segnalazioni di questi che sono tra i frammenti più ordinati e facilmente rintracciabili sparsi per il Tubo con un'apparizione di 25 minuti alla trasmissione francese *Ce Soir on danse*, anno 1968, con i Soft in trio Wyatt-Ratledge-Ayers e, ancora più indietro, siamo nel 1967, a *Dim Dam Dom*, dove i tre suonano, vestiti che bisogna vederli, un'arruffatissima *Hope For Happiness*.

Gabriele Marino



Qui sotto membri di Soft Machine, Gong e Matching Mole nel backstage del Wyndham Theatre di Londra, nel 1972. Sotto ritaglio stampa in cui si dà notizia dell'incidente occorso a Wyatt.









Wyatt breaks back

ROBERT WYATT, former Soft Machine drummer and leader of Matching Mole, was rushed to hospital with a broken back and other injuries after an accident at a party last Sunday.

Robert fell out of a fourth-floor window and suffered a fractured 12th vertebra and a broken leg. He is now in Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury, Bucks, which specialises in serious injuries.

He will definitely be in hospital for six months, bed-ridden for the first 12 weeks, and it will be some time before the possible lasting consequences of the injuries can be determined.

Robert was due to start rehearsing for the third album by Matching Mole which also includes Francis Monkman on keyboards and Gary Windo on tenor sax, as well as founder-member Bill Mc

Rehearsals will go ahead with another drummer, as yet unchosen, and on his recovery Robert will return, probably playing keyboards and percussion.

McCormick is also in hospital — having been taken into St Thomas's, London, on Monday suffering from acute

Ci sono dentro tanti amici, come sempre: il disco è prodotto da Nick Mason dei Pink Floyd e suonato da Mike Oldfield, Ivor Cutler, Fred Frith, Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair, tra gli altri. È personale questo disco, parla di quello che è successo, fin dal titolo un po' crudele, ma allo stesso tempo è capace di trascendere il momento e i perché del caso, diventando qualcosa di più grande, di più generale, di più astratto. Quando si parla di ROCK BOTTOM (1974), da sempre alto anzi altissimo nelle classifiche dei migliori dischi di popular music di tutti i tempi (come non ricordare l'argento fisso assegnatogli da Piero Scaruffi, dietro a TROUT MASK REPLICA di Captain Beefheart), non si parla praticamente mai di musica folk, eppure l'atmosfera stranitamente bucolica che vi si respira dentro fa pensare proprio a un folk d'altrove (di nuovo), come un folk lunare. In pieno contrasto con il titolo, ulteriore calembour dai recessi profondi dell'anima, quando non resta più che raschiare. Con il culo per terra, toccato il fondo, si può solo risalire, rischiare. Capolavoro intimista di dolore, sublimato in piccoli tocchi trattenuti di percussioni, tastiere e fiati, tappeto rosso sfilacciato ed elegantissimo per una voce mai così sofferta, mai così protesa oltre se stessa, basterebbero la tetra canzone d'amore fatta di brina e di nebbia che è *Sea Song*, basterebbe la filastrocca idiota e disperata di *Alifib* a fare di questo fondale, di questo "punto più basso" il punto più alto di tutta una carriera. Lo era già prima, sia chiaro, ma con ROCK BOTTOM Wyatt diventa per sempre uno dei santini assoluti dell'alternativismo musicale di quegli anni: ne è la mascotte. Cuore pulsante e prezzemolo della scena canterburiana in tutte le sue ramificazioni, nei Soft Machine aveva fatto tournée con la Jimi Hendrix Experience, era stato sfiorato da un Kim Fowley dall'occhio lungo (se li voleva accaparrare lui) e aveva suonato in segreto per il Syd Barrett cappellaio matto solista. Dopo l'incidente, Wyatt sarà guest fisso di tutta la scena avant/sperimentale che unisce art rock, prog, jazz rock, "unpopular popular music" e sperimentazione extra-accademica: suonando con Brian Eno, con gli Henry Cow, interpretando John Cage, arrivando, in anni più recenti, fino a Pascal Comelade e, significativamente, a Björk. Nel dispiegarsi del suo profilo da solista, acciaccato e nobile, la sua poetica si è andata affinando, certo, stilizzando, nessun dubbio, ma in fondo è sempre rimasta la medesima: un gioco surreale, orgogliosamente anche un po' naïf, con la materia musica e con la voce pensata come fiato di vita e strumento, trascinato da intuizioni folgoranti e da brucianti passioni. Anche a costo di apparire fuori fuoco, fuori posto. Altrove rispetto all'altrove suo proprio. Nello stesso anno di ROCK BOTTOM, per esempio, Mason gli produce anche un singolo che arriva fino a Top of the Pops, dove Wyatt, tra l'imbarazzo del network e probabilmente di almeno parte del pubblico (in sala e davanti agli schermi), si esibisce tutto storto com'è sulla sua carrozzina, in un playback fuori sincrono, a metà tra l'autoipnotizzato e lo scatenato. Il pezzo è una cover piuttosto fedele di *I'm a Believer* dei Monkees. Anni dopo farà sua Guantanamera (si trova nel disco di cover politiche NOTHING CAN STOP US, del 1982; dentro anche il gioiello *Shipbuilding*, scritto da Elvis Costello,

contro la guerra nelle Falkland), ma con un trattamento più personale, pesantemente influenzato dallo spirito dell'epoca e, quindi, tutta affilati strapazzamenti che andavano fatti per dire di essere new wave. Stefano Tamburini, nei panni del critico musicale Red Vynile, sulle colonne di «Frigidaire», non avrà peli sulla lingua nel portare all'estremo un'opinione certamente diffusa, almeno tra quelli che erano stati i fan barricadieri dei Soft Machine e del Wyatt folletto psichedelico, riguardo a operazioni del genere, indugiando nella descrizione di cosa gli avrebbe fatto, allo "storpio", per aver osato produrre certa "merda".

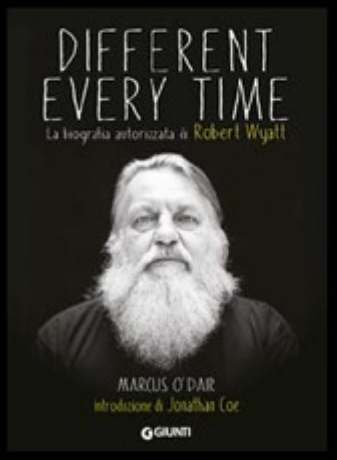


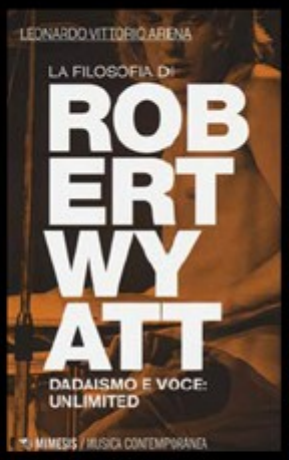






WYATT DA LEGGERE





Se la vicenda dei Soft Machine, tra le più seminali, come si dice, e comunque mitologizzate della storia del rock, non manca mai di occupare lo spazio meritato nei libri che trattano di psichedelia, prog, rock inglese e via discorrendo, fino a qualche anno fa non esisteva un vero e proprio *reference* dedicato sulla vicenda personale di Robert Wyatt uomo e artista. Nel 2014, però, è arrivato *Different Every Time (The Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt)*, scritto da Marcus O'Dair per i tipi di Serpent's Tail, con un'introduzione firmata dallo scrittore Jonathan Coe; in Italia il volume è arrivato grazie a Giunti l'anno successivo. Sempre al 2014 risale *La filosofia di Robert Wyatt. Dadaismo e voce: unlimited*, di Mimesis edizioni. Scritto dallo storico della filosofia Leonardo Vittorio Arena, professore a Urbino, l'agile volumetto si concentra sul rapporto etica/estetica in Wyatt o, meglio, sulle relazioni tra la dottrina marxista, cui da sempre il musicista si rifà, e la sua produzione musicale. Solo per collezionisti la serie di volumi intitolati semplicemente "MW" stampati, a partire dal 1997, dalla francese Ænchrages & Co., con i testi dei brani di Wyatt – e la loro traduzione francese a fronte – corredati da immagini "ispirate da" opera di Jean-Michel Marchetti; dal secondo volume in poi, i libri, cartonati e quadrati, includono anche un Cd audio. **GM**

COMICA FINALE

Ecco, il rapporto con le cover e quindi con l'altro da sé è una chiave d'accesso certamente laterale ma in fondo privilegiata per entrare dentro le dinamiche della musica di Wyatt. *Bricoleur* senza vergogna, remixatore ante litteram delle musiche sue, degli amici e delle figure che ne hanno influenzato il percorso musicale, Wyatt ha al momento congelato la carriera solistica, puntellata da episodi eccellenti (tutti citano almeno RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD, 1975; SHLEEP, 1997; CUCKOOLAND, 2003, e noi ci accodiamo felicemente), con la moglie pittrice Alfreda Benge sempre più coinvolta e determinante (nonché responsabile di praticamente tutte le copertine più iconiche del marito), con un disco *very Robert Wyatt*, che per il 30% almeno è un sorprendente disco di cover. Parliamo di COMICOPERA, anno 2007, disco dell'anno per «The Wire», storico e supersnob magazine di ricerca che, con gesto romanticamente demodé, lo ha preferito al capolavoro di un altro suo santino alt, stavolta recente, il produttore dubstep Burial, che proprio a fine 2007 aveva pubblicato il suo secondo – e, anche qui, al momento ultimo – album UNTRUE. COMICOPERA è un sorriso struggente, una mini-galleria di piccoli gouache, rigorosi e volutamente appesi storti al muro, organizzati in tre atti; ognuno di essi racconta una storia bella, che un po' fa ridere e un po' fa piangere. Uno dei picchi assoluti e, possiamo dirlo, francamente inattesi del disco, è la cover da pelle d'oca della già splendida *Del mondo* dei nostrani CSI. Canzone del mondo primitivo, di freddo, sangue, carne e lana, profondamente ferrettiana, Wyatt la fa sua e la grazia con la sua voce speciale, qui davvero fragilissima, come di chi sta per addormentarsi in letargo, emergendo ancora una volta come il maiuscolo bardo della musica che ci piace che è.

Gabriele Marino



Robert Wyatt ai Mojo Awards del 2005. Con lui: Jim Marshall, Robbie Shakespeare, Paul Weller, Suggs, Robert Cray, Sly Dunbar, Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Earle, Sinead O'Connor, Jimmy Page, Roy Harper, Slash, Bill Wyman, Chris Hillman, Dizzee Rascal, Romeo Stodart, Gaz Coombes, Jeff Beck.



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Different Every Time: la biografia autorizzata di Robert Wyatt - Jam tv.it - 15/05/2016

Different Every Time: la biografia autorizzata di Robert Wyatt

colloquio con Alessandro Achilli,
curatore dell'edizione italiana



Il fermento di Canterbury, i Soft Machine e la patafisica, l'incidente che lo rende "un ex bipede batterista" e *Rock Bottom*, uno dei capolavori degli anni '70. E ancora l'attivismo politico, il rapporto con il jazz e la musica colta, l'incontro con musiche e suoni altri, l'amore da parte di artisti di tutto il mondo. *Different Every Time* è la biografia autorizzata di Robert Wyatt, firmata da Marcus O' Dair e pubblicata da Giunti. Un testo eccezionale dedicato a una personalità tanto anomala quanto venerata della musica contemporanea: il curatore della versione italiana è Alessandro Achilli, giornalista di grande esperienza tra i più attenti alla scena di Canterbury e alle musiche di frontiera.

Alessandro, hai curato l'edizione italiana di *Different Every Time*: che tipo di lavoro hai svolto sul materiale originale?

Essenzialmente di traduzione, con quelle piccole aggiunte di informazioni che una traduzione comporta quasi sempre per rendere comprensibili certi riferimenti al lettore italiano. Alla fine di ogni mese inviavo a Marcus O'Dair la lista dei «dubbi del mese». E lui mi ha sempre risposto nel giro di poche ore. Inoltre per *Different Every Time* ho ricoperto alcuni ruoli «tecnici», come quello di redattore e impaginatore.

Prefazione di Jonathan Coe, un autore decisivo per la diffusione presso il grande pubblico – o quello non propriamente musicale – della musica di Canterbury.

Certamente nessuno più di lui ha contribuito a far conoscere quella musica al di fuori della cerchia degli appassionati, soprattutto grazie al suo romanzo *La banda dei brocchi*, anche se poi non so quanti dei suoi lettori siano andati veramente ad ascoltare l'album degli Hatfield & the North che dà il titolo al libro (in originale *The Rotters' Club*) e gli altri gruppi citati, che per lui furono e restano fondamentali.

Qualche anno fa, quando l'ho intervistato per *Musica Jazz*, gli ho domandato tra l'altro se il formarsi del gusto musicale del protagonista della *Band dei brocchi* avesse qualcosa a che fare con il personale percorso formativo dello stesso Coe, il quale mi ha risposto che effettivamente «un po' come quelli di Benjamin ma piu` lentamente, i miei gusti gravitarono sempre piu` verso le cose complesse. Avevo cominciato con le piu` morbide – tipo i Camel – e proseguito con i Caravan, che mi avevano portato agli Hatfield & The North, ai Soft Machine e poi agli Henry Cow, i piu` difficili; passo passo, mi spostai verso cose sempre piu` avventurose e dissonanti e d'avanguardia». E mi ha anche raccontato che fu proprio *La banda dei brocchi* a fargli conoscere di persona alcuni di quei musicisti, «perche´ mi prese una sorta di panico quando finii di scrivere il libro: all'improvviso mi venne in mente che – anche se la mia intenzione era quella di rendere omaggio alla band usando il titolo di un loro Lp – gli Hatfield avrebbero potuto non gradire. Sapevo che era un titolo escogitato da Pip Pyle e quindi scrissi per primo a lui, mi sembra tramite Dave Stewart (che mi diede l'indirizzo di Pip a Parigi); Pip mi rispose che per lui andava bene, che era contento che ci si ricordasse di quell'album. Ma non mi sono trovato faccia a faccia con nessuno di loro fino al giorno in cui a Parigi, mentre firmavo copie del libro, venne un tizio a farsi autografare la sua e mi resi conto che era John Greaves, il quale non era un ex Hatfield ma aveva fatto parte di National Health e Henry Cow. Era venuto apposta, dopo che lui e Pip avevano parlato del libro. Fu cosi` che feci il mio ingresso nella famiglia dei musicisti "canterburyani"».

Wyatt è una delle figure più legate a Canterbury: quanto si sente legato a quel luogo e alla musica di quella città?

Direi poco. Tieni conto che, dei suoi settantun anni, ne ha vissuti là meno di dieci: è nato a Bristol e solo quando aveva undici anni la sua famiglia (dopo aver vissuto a Londra e brevemente a Egham, nel Surrey) si è trasferita a Lydden, che dista una quindicina di chilometri da Canterbury: «Tra alcuni dei musicisti che abitavano a Canterbury posso forse vedere un collegamento: i fratelli Hopper, i Sinclair, Pye Hastings, Richard Coughlan. Ovviamente i Caravan, con il loro suono molto caratteristico. Ma non direi che io, Kevin [*Ayers*] o Daevid [*Allen*] facessimo davvero parte di quel mondo. Andavo a scuola a Canterbury ma poi alle quattro mezzo prendevo il bus e tornavo a casa. La sera non uscivo con loro. Non passavo con loro i fine settimana». E non appena poté se ne andò via: a Maiorca, a Parigi, a Londra, dove poi si stabilì poco dopo la nascita del figlio, nel 1966. In realtà noi sentiamo nella musica di Wyatt più affinità «canterburyane» di quante non ne individui lui, che forse lega a Canterbury anche tanti ricordi dolorosi: un tentativo di suicidio a sedici anni, la malattia del padre, «la sensazione di esser stato trascinato via da Londra proprio nell'eta` in cui cominciavo ad apprezzarla davvero», la campagna vista come «una vasta prigione a cielo aperto», le brutte esperienze scolastiche…

Il pubblico progressive è ancora oggi legato alla straordinaria avventura dei Soft Machine: Wyatt la sente come una semplice esperienza di gioventù o le conferisce maggiore importanza?

Credo che sia consapevole della sua importanza ma al tempo spesso non ami né parlarne né pensarci, perché non ha mai digerito l'idea di essere stato estromesso dal gruppo di cui

era stato cofondatore.

Ritieni che Wyatt sia una figura ascrivibile all'esperienza progressive? Lui si considera tale?

Per certi versi Wyatt è una figura anomala rispetto a qualsiasi contesto e ancor più a qualsiasi categorizzazione. È possibile – come fa benissimo il libro di O'Dair – tracciare tutte le coordinate del suo percorso artistico ma nessuna di esse serve a incasellare Wyatt all'interno di una precisa corrente stilistica. Men che meno il *progressive*. O'Dair dice che «Wyatt detesta la compiacenza di chi si considera *progressive*» e aggiunge: «Sicuramente i Soft Machine prendevano sul serio la propria musica; s'interessavano ai metri insoliti e preferivano le tastiere alle chitarre. Ma avevano ben poco in comune con gruppi tronfi e reboanti come Emerson Lake & Palmer o i peggiori Yes. Non ebbero mai copertine di Roger Dean o testi di fantasia ispirati a Tolkien ed e` impossibile immaginarli coinvolti in ridicolaggini come il *King Arthur On Ice* di Rick Wakeman».

Il primo giugno 1973 il tragico incidente: Robert ha metabolizzato quell'esperienza o ritieni ne sia ancora interiormente condizionato?

Lui dice: «Tutti pensano che per me sia un problema parlare dell'incidente. Ma non e` cosi`: semmai, mi crea parecchi problemi parlare di cio` che accadde prima dell'incidente. In *Rock Bottom* e nelle cose successive mi riconosco ma non ricordo e non capisco il mio io adolescente, il bipede batterista».

O'Dair riporta però anche il punto di vista della moglie di Wyatt, Alfreda Benge, che dice: «I danni che ha subi`to sono enormi e per certi versi ha tenuto loro testa negando; a mio avviso e` una strategia piuttosto buona. Gli dicono: "Ma tu neghi l'evidenza". "Si`, e` cosi` che me la cavo! Per favore, lasciate che neghi l'evidenza, che non abbia incubi per la perdita tremenda che ho subi`to, perche´ non potro` mai piu` fare una corsa o salire su un autobus senza farmi aiutare, perche´ dovro` sempre fare assegnamento su qualcun altro, non potro` mai arrivare allo scaffale in alto, non potro` correre ne´ suonare la batteria ne´ andar dietro alle gonnelle". Anche se non e` che abbia proprio smesso del tutto». In ogni caso, è inevitabile che Wyatt sia stato condizionato dalle conseguenze dell'incidente. Anche dal punto di vista artistico. Per esempio non ha mai voluto intraprendere la carriera del percussionista: «Non volevo fare quello che "un tempo era un batterista ma adesso suona i bonghi". Non mi piaceva l'idea; avrebbe attirato un pubblico pietistico. Volevo fare qualcosa altrettanto bene di prima ma diversamente».

A proposito di Alfreda Benge, ci dai un parere sul suo ruolo?

Normalmente quando si parla del contributo di Alfreda ai dischi di Wyatt si citano le copertine che lei ha creato per lui e le poesie di lei che lui ha musicato ma in realtà Alfreda ha sempre costituito per Wyatt una fonte d'ispirazione anche strettamente musicale: sia indirettamente (per esempio parlano di lei molte canzoni di *Rock Bottom* o anche *The Duchess*, su *Shleep*) sia direttamente, come quando suggerì a Wyatt di ascoltare *Astral Weeks* di Van Morrison per la sua gestione dello spazio o di sovraincidere il basso di Richard Sinclair sui nastri rovesciati in *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*.

All'indomani dell'incidente Wyatt pubblica *Rock Bottom*, disco amatissimo, tra le vette degli anni '70. È il suo lavoro più rappresentativo?

È difficile dire quale sia il suo lavoro più rappresentativo: ciascuno di essi rappresenta qualcosa di lui e quando a lui è parso che ciò non accadesse – vedi *Dondestan* – è ritornato in seguito sul disco già uscito, lo ha rimixato e ripubblicato. Certo è che *Rock Bottom* è il suo disco che ha avuto più riconoscimenti e credo anche maggiori vendite. Continua a vendere a ogni successiva ristampa e non per chissà quali campagne pubblicitarie (che nel suo caso non esistono) ma forse perché risulta quasi impossibile sottrarsi al suo incanto, se solo se ne viene toccati.

Wyatt sposa la politica e la militanza progressista: sono state un diversivo o in qualche modo hanno influenzato la sua composizione?

Sono parte integrante del suo modo di intendere la musica. Ma anche quando si dedica alle canzoni politiche le canta, come dice O'Dair, «senza punti esclamativi. Wyatt si

considera piu` un testimone che un attivista» e «non crede nel valore propagandistico della propria musica». Quando gli domandano se ritenga che la musica politica possa cambiare il mondo, Wyatt risponde: «Se Stevie Wonder o chiunque altro canta una canzone d'amore, non la si giudica in base alla sua efficacia o chiedendosi se con quella abbia conquistato la ragazza. Percio` quando canto *Caimanera*, che punta l'indice contro l'onta vergognosa del territorio statunitense a Cuba, vorrei che la canzone fosse giudicata indipendentemente dal fatto che gli Stati Uniti se ne siano andati o no dalla baia di Guanta´namo».

Come Peter Hammill e pochi altri, Wyatt ha resistito al punk e ha goduto della stima di personaggi estranei alla cultura jazz e rock, come te lo spieghi?

Forse per quella caratteristica che dicevo prima: la sua persistente anomalia rispetto a qualsiasi corrente stilistica con la quale abbia avuto a che fare.

Negli ultimi anni Wyatt ha visto accrescere il suo status di personaggio di culto, venerato e omaggiato da musicisti di tutto il mondo: secondo te che cosa affascina così tanto della sua figura?

Posso supporre che in ciò abbia un peso la sua modestia, non falsa ma – come emerge dal libro – reale fino ai limiti del patologico. E la sua arguzia, il suo forte senso dell'umorismo. O anche il fatto che, a fronte di un'enorme statura artistica, non si ponga mai su un piedistallo, né esibisca mai le tantissime medaglie. Hai ragione quando dici che negli ultimi anni è stato «venerato e omaggiato da musicisti di tutto il mondo»: traducendo il libro mi ha colpito la serata della premiazione dei Mercury, quando tante star andarono al suo tavolo e tra esse c'era Amy Winehouse. Ecco, ho trovato quasi commovente che una cantante così apparentemente lontana da lui volesse conoscerlo e parlargli.

Il 14 maggio l'apertura della XIX Edizione del Fasano Jazz sarà dedicata proprio a Wyatt, con la presentazione del libro e il concerto di John Greaves, che lui considera un suo erede artistico. Sei d'accordo? Pensi ci siano anche altri artisti che lavorano sulla falsariga di Robert?

Greaves ha una propria personalità artistica molto spiccata e originale, per tante cose diversa da quella di Wyatt. Con Wyatt ha suonato, fin dai tempi degli Henry Cow e di *Ruth Is Stranger than Richard*, e ciascuno dei due ha dichiarato più volte il proprio amore per la musica dell'altro: basti pensare alla predilezione di Wyatt per *Kew.Rhone* e alla *leadership* da parte di Greaves del gruppo Dondestan, dedicato al repertorio wyattiano. Ma i loro approcci alla musica differiscono sotto tanti aspetti: per esempio Greaves è un istrionico animale da palcoscenico con una solida formazione musicale, mentre Wyatt ha un approccio più istintivo alla musica (che non legge) ma soffre di un'autentica fobia del palco.

Altri artisti che lavorino sulla falsariga di Wyatt non sono facili da individuare, perché forse la sua prima lezione è quella di non lavorare sulla falsariga di nessuno, di non imitare neppure coloro dai quali si trae ispirazione. In tal senso potrei fare il nome di un Chris Cutler, che ha studiato e ammirato il Wyatt batterista ma ha sviluppato da subito un'estrema originalità sullo stesso strumento. Poi: certe canzoni di Peter Blegvad condividono lo spirito patafisico di Wyatt; e la vocalità di Richard Sinclair deve certamente qualcosa a quella di Wyatt, soprattutto sullo scat, e naturalmente molte canzoni degli Hatfield & the North avevano una vena wyattiana. Le poche voci capaci di misurarsi con il repertorio wyattiano si sono però dimostrate Julie Tippetts, le Unthanks, Elaine di Falco e Karen Mantler (per di più figlia di due delle migliori penne tra quante abbiano scritto per la voce di Wyatt: vedi *The Hapless Child* di Michael Mantler e le musiche di Carla Bley per *Fictitious Sports* di Nick Mason); e per altri versi Anja Garbarek e Mo^nica Vasconcelos. All'altezza non ne ho trovate altre: anzi, ho sentito fin troppi tentativi dagli esiti francamente imbarazzanti.

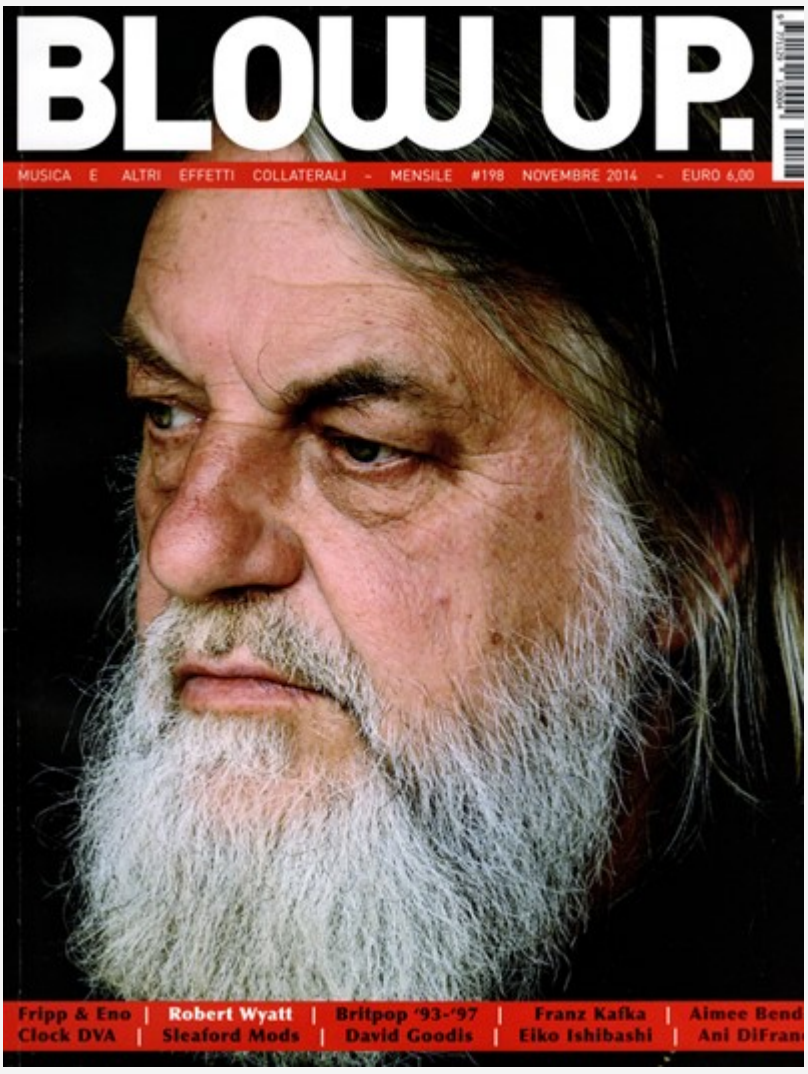
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Different Every Time - Robert Wyatt - L'avventurosa drammatica patafisica vita di un grande in una biografia fresca di stampa. - Blow Up - #198 - Novembre 2014

DIFFERENT EVERY TIME - ROBERT WYATT

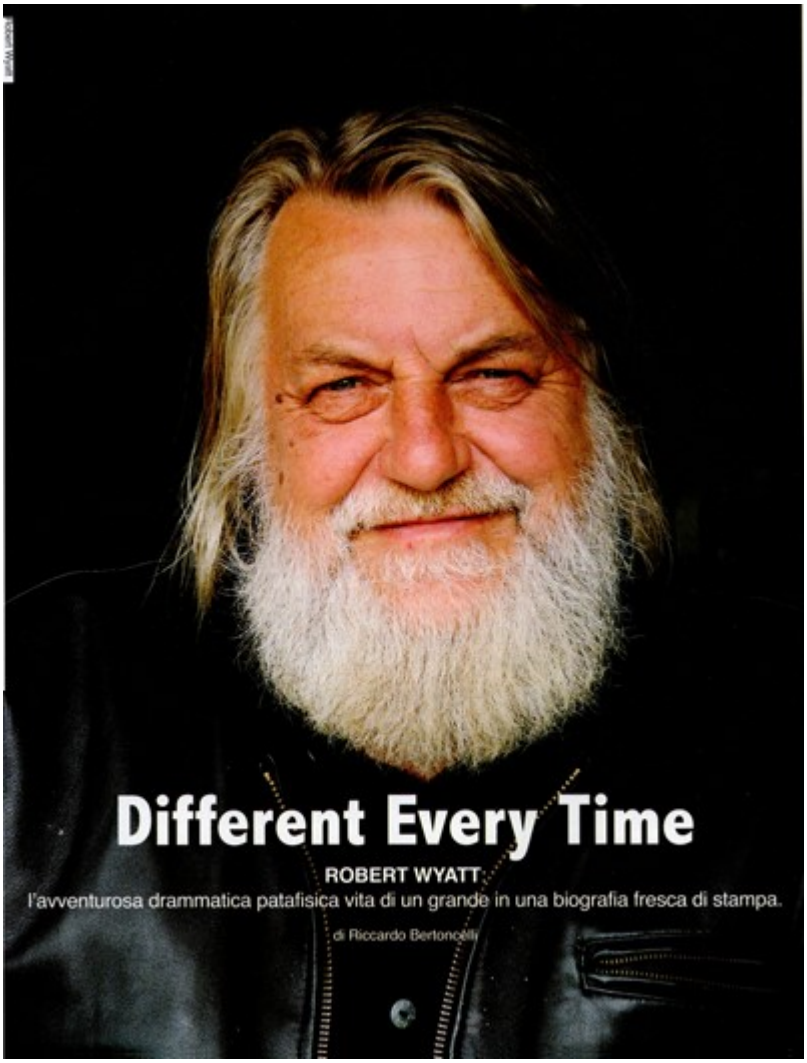


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"**METTERLA IN RIDERE** è una faccenda molto seria," dice Wyatt a un certo punto. "Alla lunga è l'unico modo che ho di prendere la vita. La prendo come uno scherzo, al di là della

tragedia".

Ho finito di leggere le quattrocento pagine di *Different Every Time*, "biografia autorizzata di Robert Wyatt" di Marcus O'Dair (Serpent's Tail, introduzione di Jonathan Coe), e trovo che questa meditazione *en passant* sia uno dei codici per decifrare non solo il racconto biografico ma tutta la vita artistica del nostro. Pur essendo un omone ingombrante, con la soma poi della sedia a rotelle su cui da quarant'anni è costretto, Wyatt, anzi Robert, lasciatemelo chiamare così per confidenza d'ascolto se non di persona, Robert è un elusivo Peter Pan che non ha mai smesso di volare in tanti luoghi con una leggerezza e una soavità disarmanti. Se gli chiedete conto delle tante imprese e meraviglie, vi risponderà abbassando il discorso e riversandoci una generosa dose di *humour*, perché l'epica non è mai stata nelle sue corde neanche quando scalava il cielo della fantasia con lancia da Don Chisciotte. Vi dirà che è sempre stato pigro e sfaticato, che solo per caso si è trovato a meravigliosi *crossroads* del Novecento musicale, vi segnalerà per filo e per segno i suoi limiti e le manchevolezze. A Robert Wyatt, insomma, la vita di Robert Wyatt appare una vicenda assolutamente *normale*; segnata certo dalla tragedia, divisa in due da quel volo fatale giù da una finestra scambiata per porta, però trascurabile, senza peculiarità degne di interesse. In questo stesso libro il protagonista volentieri sparisce, si acquatta tra ricordi di altri e poche sue parole, per riapparire alla fine con un sorriso e ringraziare stupito che qualcuno, com'è strana la vita!, ha passato giorni e mesi a interessarsi di lui e delle sue quisquilie - Soft Machine Jimi Hendrix UFO Club Matching Mole, per dire giusto qualche bruscolo, e Syd Barrett *Rock Bottom* Brian Eno *Shipbuilding* Manzanera Gilad Atzmon.



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Prima di questo ponderoso lavoro, accompagnato da un ricco archivio di immagini volutamente "povere", in rugoso bianco-e-nero, il *reference* per conoscere Wyatt era *Wrong Movements* di Mike King, un bellissimo almanacco, non so chiamarlo meglio, che compendiava la carriera fino al 1994 senza il filo di un racconto, semplicemente accostando eventi, ricordi e *memorabilia*. O' Dair ha fatto di più, raccogliendo le confidenze di Robert e

Alfie, sanguigna musa fin dai giorni di *Alifib*, intervistando figli, amici, parenti e legando poi tutto con filo cronologico. Non si è concesso voli pindarici, non ha sfoderato una lingua scintillante. Da devoto certosino ha messo in fila fatti, storie, collaborazioni, o forse sono stati quelle decine di opere e spettacoli e cammei a mettere lo scrittore in un angolo e a depositarsi spontaneamente sulla pagina. Alla fine il biografo ha preso la materia e l'ha divisa in due grandi capitoli, il "prima" e il "dopo" che ben sappiamo: "il batterista bipede" e "Ex machina". In mezzo c'è la famosa festa a Maida Vale, da Lady June, e il salto dalla finestra del bagno che il primo giugno 1973 costò a Wyatt la frattura dell'undicesima vertebra e la paralisi a vita degli arti inferiori. Alfie sostiene che a quella festa non volevano andarci, e vengono i brividi a pensare a quelle *sliding doors*. Robert ricorda che aveva bevuto tanto ma così tanto da potersi considerare ubriaco anche secondo i suoi molto tolleranti standard. Non era fatto di LSD, solo alcol, ma viveva in un simile stato di allucinazione e passò quelle ore come in un sogno. Nei sogni tutto è possibile, anche il suicidio, e in una delle varie ricostruzioni della serata Wyatt si è spinto fino a quella ipotesi. "Ammiravo davvero i Soft Machine, e pensavo che avessero fatto bene a mandarmi via. Così, come loro mi avevano buttato fuori, mi buttai anch'io".

Nessun appassionato sano di mente ha mai scelto di stare da una parte sola, i Soft Machine e non *Rock Bottom*, il batterista bipede *versus* il cantante a Cuckooland. La storia si prende tutta, e non solo per *par condicio*, e O'Dair la storia la racconta tutta, a cominciare dalla favolosa Wellington House, nella campagna del Kent, che Honor Wyatt e suo marito George comperarono un giorno degli ultimi '50 per andarci a vivere con i figli e affittare a pensione le molte camere d'avanzo. Più che una casa diventò un porto di mare, un approdo per curiosi e anime inquiete, e lì il giovane Werther, il giovane Robert, ebbe la sua iniziazione specie quando venne ad abitarci un australiano in giro per il mondo, Daevid Allen, di sette anni più vecchio - un fratello maggiore un levatore un tentatore, scegliete voi, che instillò all'adolescente curiosità e stimoli di musica e letteratura. Dopo di lui la Wellington House si popolò di Mike Ratledge, dei fratelli Hopper, del soave Kevin Ayers (le foto dei suoi diciott'anni sono una meraviglia) e si formò quel circolo di musicisti stampigliato nell'immaginario del rock alternativo - il germoglio della "scuola di Canterbury", con tutti gli ehm ehm che vedremo. Nel frattempo Robert aveva scelto come musica il jazz e come strumento la batteria, passava notti e giorni "in una immaginaria Harlem degli anni '40 da cui uscivo solo per mangiare e dormire" e trascurava la scuola ben sapendo di deludere le aspettative dei genitori, con una sofferenza che non lo avrebbe abbandonato mai. Le ombre nella sua vita si allungano ben prima dell'incidente di Maida Vale e la biografia non le nasconde, a cominciare dal suicidio lucidamente tentato nei giorni del Natale 1961.



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Wyatt ha passato la vita a minimizzare la portata di Canterbury e della sua presunta "scuola", negando che sia mai stata "l'equivalente britannico dell'Haight Ashbury". Abitava a Lyddell, ci tiene a precisare, *ben* dieci chilometri di distanza, a Canterbury andava a scuola ma tutti i giorni alle quattro e mezza aveva un bus che lo riportava a casa. Anche quando venne il tempo dei Wilde Flowers, "erano gli Hopper, i Sinclair, Pye Hastings e Richard Coughlan che abitavano in città. Fra loro vedo una connessione ma io, Daevid e Kevin non abbiamo mai fatto parte di quella realtà. Davvero non li frequentavo". Però, insomma, a furia di puntini sulle i si perde il senso della leggenda, che come O'Dair giustamente fa notare non è meramente geografica. "Il termine ha finito per rappresentare un certo stile rock psichedelico venato di jazz, pastorale, *very english...* con tempi complessi, una preferenza di tastiere rispetto alle chitarre e un modo di cantare convintamente radicato nell'East Kent là dove i cantanti dell'epoca posavano tutti da Delta *bluesmen*."

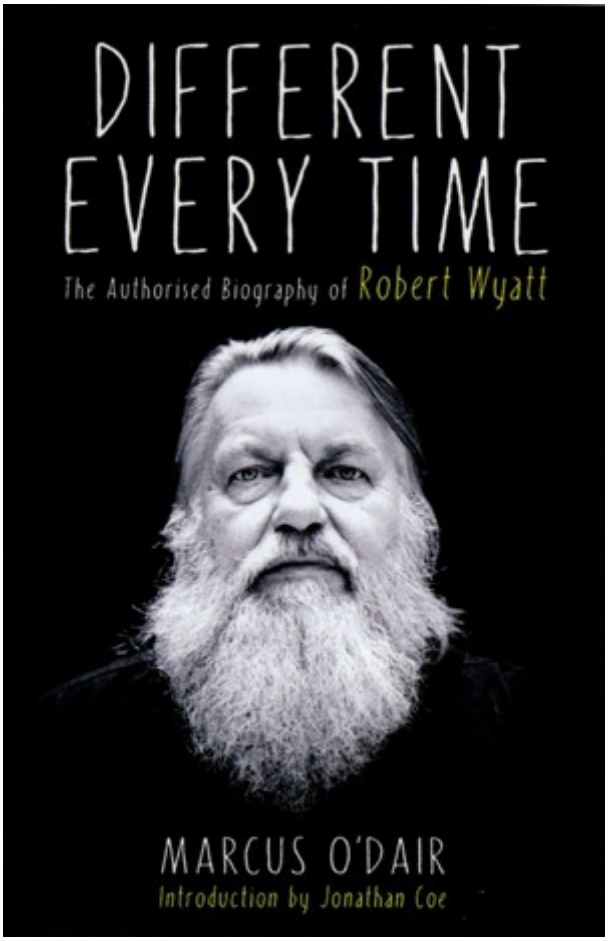
Fra l'altro il giovane Wyatt crescendo non passa troppo tempo a casa, sempre più spesso è a Londra e poi a Majorca, a Deià, ospite del mitico amico di famiglia Robert Graves, che lo chiama "Batty" per via della passione per la batteria. Pendolando tra i vertici di quel triangolo mette i primi mattoni del suo edificio, mentre sbarca il lunario alla London School Of Economics, dove il padre lo avrebbe certamente voluto; peccato che non faccia lo studente ma il lavapiatti alla mensa, anche se orgogliosamente ricorda che quello fu uno dei periodi più formativi della sua esistenza. La musica piano piano lo assorbe e gli dà occasioni, ai Wilde Flowers seguono i Mister Head e poi i Soft Machine, dal nome di un romanzo di William Burroughs. Al momento di assumere la sigla fatale, i provincialotti si fanno prendere dagli scrupoli e mandano Daevid a chiedere il permesso all'intrattabile Will in persona. L'appuntamento è alla stazione di Paddington. Allen spara d'un fiato la richiesta e Burroughs "sbattendo le palpebre come un alligatore ciancica un 'non vedo perché no'". Fatta!, da quel momento inizia la saga che durerà una ventina di scombinati anni (cinque per Robert), con avvicendamenti vertiginosi e meraviglie delusioni ferite ambizioni, e l'impressione anche che, per quanto amati, gli album rendano solo in minima parte l'energia e la fantasia della band.

Sono tali e tante le avventure del "batterista bipede" che O'Dair fatica a stargli dietro, sotto la fitta pioggia delle collaborazioni e curiosità e velleità, tra discografici improbabili e un manager con il pelo (Mike Jeffery, lo stesso di Hendrix), tra la Londra del Technicolor Dream e Dulwich, dove Honor Wyatt è tornata ad abitare alla morte del marito e dove il figlio reinventa con i suoi compagni un'altra "comune musicale" tipo Wellington House. Nel frattempo Robert è diventato padre di un maschietto, Sam, ma come non è stato figliolo irreprensibile nemmeno è genitore e marito modello, e si perde soprattutto nei lunghi mesi del 1968, quando i Soft Machine accompagnano la Experience in due folli tour americani di quelli che allora erano la regola - centinaia di miglia in bus, due spettacoli al giorno, carica-scarica-prova-interviste, un piccolo inferno che suscita nostalgie perfino della pioggia e della noia di casa, figuriamoci di una famiglia con giovane sposa e pargolo. Wyatt libera la testa in quei lunghi mesi in cui si attarda negli States (gli altri tornano prima, l'idea è che i Soft Machine non debbano esistere più), libera la testa ma da licenza al vizio e comincia a bere. Fino ad allora, incredibile ma vero, era stato un ragazzetto morigerato che disdegnava le droghe e ogni comportamento "illegale" fuori dall'ambito artistico.

L'alcol è la grande scoperta di quei giorni e la dannazione dei tempi a venire - un falso amico ingombrante. Robert suona sempre meglio e in contesti via via diversi, i Soft Machine sono il suo amore ma anche il suo limite perché non vogliono volare alto come lui. Per spiegare il suo "oltre" incide quell'album meraviglioso che è *The End Of An Ear*, ma non lo capiscono né i compagni né gli appassionati né buona parte della critica. Per quello se ne va o, meglio, si fa cacciare, con i sensi di colpa che dicevamo; per fondare i Matching Mole e scoprire che la storia non cambia, anzi peggiora, il denaro scarseggia a tal punto che è costretto a trovare altri lavori e i compagni dopo un po' diventano un peso o forse il peso è la difficoltà di Robert a guidare un gruppo, tanto costretto e sacrificato (a guidare un gruppo. Punto). I fans godono, quei dischi sono puro miele ma vedete come ogni tanto (spesso) l'apparenza nel mondo rock inganni? Per superare l'impasse Wyatt si rifugia a Venezia, inverno del 1972, dove la sua nuova compagna Alfreda Benge lavora alla sceneggiatura di un film di Nicholas Roegg con Julie Christie, *A Venezia un settembre rosso shocking*. Ha una casa sul canale della Giudecca, culla i pensieri allo sciabordare della laguna. Pensa a un nuovo disco, progetta un nuovo gruppo. Quell'album, *Rock Bottom*, sarà capolavoro e al tempo stesso maledizione; perché Robert finirà per completarlo nei sei terribili mesi di degenza allo Stoke Mandeville Hospital dopo l'incidente, una volta che il "batterista bipede" è finito in frantumi e l'uomo sulla sedia a rotelle è costretto a reinventarsi la vita, la carriera, tutto.

Una persona normale affonderebbe in quella pietosa crudele "machina". Robert no, la sua forza è straordinaria, la sua lucidità incredibile. Getta tutti i fantasmi nel pozzo più profondo, dimentica la vita e le ambizioni di prima e scava una strada nuova. Deve rinunciare alla batteria ma può affinare il suo straordinario falsetto e sbizzarrirsi con gli arrangiamenti più insoliti presso una etichetta, la Virgin, che finalmente gli da retta. Non si annuseranno mai troppo bene, lui, Alfie e Richard Branson, ma è un fatto che i primi due LP dopo l'incidente sono una delizia e il ritratto di un artista che non parla una lingua strana e profetica per artificio ma per geniale istinto. I Mingus, Monk e Rollins dei suoi quindici anni, il "flusso di coscienza" del rock psichedelico, gli spunti etnici di Mongezi Feza e degli amici sudafricani, la lezione humourale di Ivor Cutler e del "Goon Show", tutto si mescola in un magma caldo e colorato; quei due album sono un juke box dei sogni e ogni canzone è "different every time", come vuole l'indimenticabile incipit di *Sea Song* ("la prima vera canzone d'amore che ho scritto per Alfie").

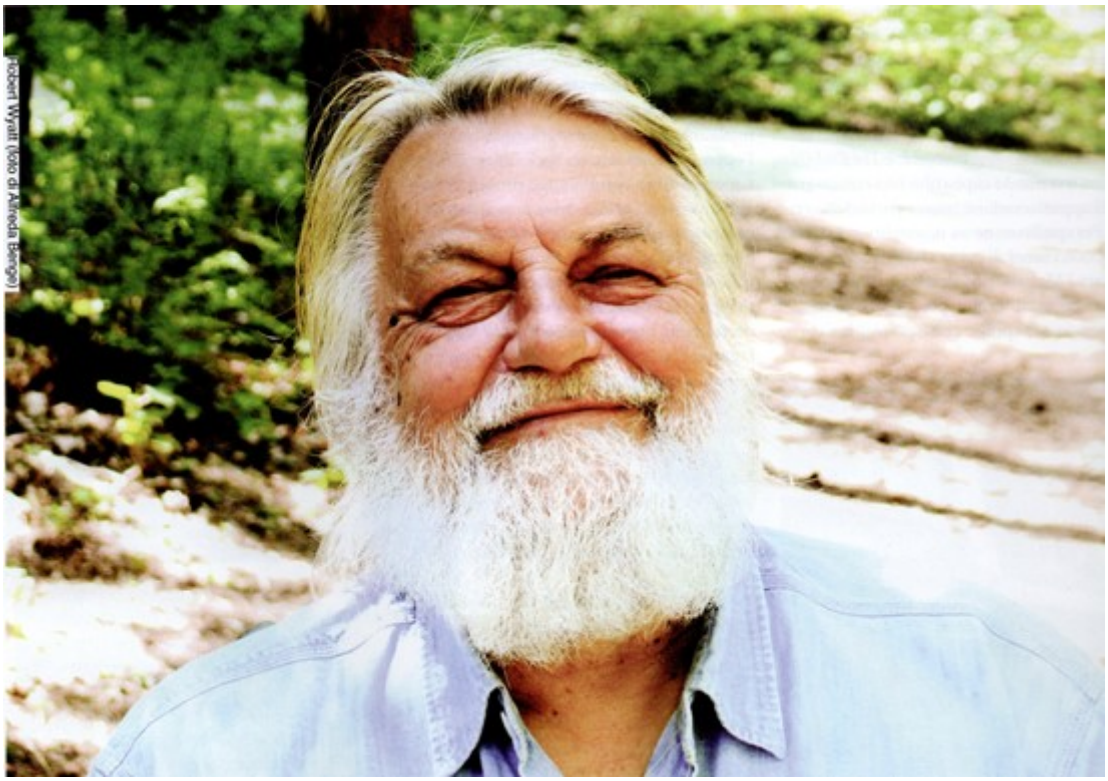
Con *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* si chiude l'illusione della "facilità". La nuova vita è fatica, ostacolo, una casa nei sobborghi di Londra con barriere architettoniche, la scoperta che suonare dal vivo è un tormento anche e soprattutto per problemi pratici - ci prova, al Drury Lane, a Parigi, a Roma, ma non è cosa. L'umore è altalenante, le canzoni non bussano più alla porta. Mentre la scena si complica e cambia pelle, Wyatt si defila in un angolo con la tentazione, a poco più di trent'anni, di togliere il disturbo. Anziché comporre preferisce informarsi, ascolta Radio Teheran, Radio Tirana o Radio Hanoi, scopre il cinema del Terzo Mondo, legge Frantz Fanon e Noam Chomsky, corrisponde con prigionieri politici di ogni parte del mondo. Il fuoco rivoluzionario che gli bruciava in petto già ai tempi di *Gloria Gloom* ("How long can I pretend that music's / More relevant than fighting for a socialist world") lo spinge a iscriversi al Partito Comunista Britannico, illudendosi per dieci anni che sia quella la sua casa. Ne uscirà ai giorni della caduta del Muro, disilluso ma convinto a non deflettere dalla sua idea di un mondo radicalmente nuovo, più tollerante, solidale, giusto.



Di quei suoi slanci e aspirazioni più che di astratte fantasie parleranno i testi quando con *Old Rottenhat*, 1985, Robert tornerà a esporsi in prima persona. Per dieci anni si è astenuto, limitandosi a interpretare canzoni di altri e usando per lo più il dimesso format del 45 giri. "Anche Elvis e Frank Sinatra facevano così", si giustifica con un ghigno, per quanto quei due non avessero in repertorio Violeta Parra e *Caimanera*, *Stalin Wasn't Stalling* e *Trade Union*. Wyatt sì, mette il cuore in quelle canzoni militanti ma si diletta anche con *Memories Of You*, commuove con una straziante versione di *Strange Fruit*, spiazza tutti con la *disco* melodica di *At Last I Am Free* degli Chic - lo Studio 54 a Wellington House. Elvis Costello e Clive Langer scrivono per la sua voce di cristallo *Shipbuilding* nei giorni storditi delle Falklands; è uno dei momenti più alti di quegli Eighties per altri versi così flebili.

Nel 1991 Robert e Alfie si trasferiscono a Louth, vicino a Hull. Il loro è un volontario esilio lontano da Londra, che li taglia fuori rallentando ancora di più i ritmi di vita: "ce ne

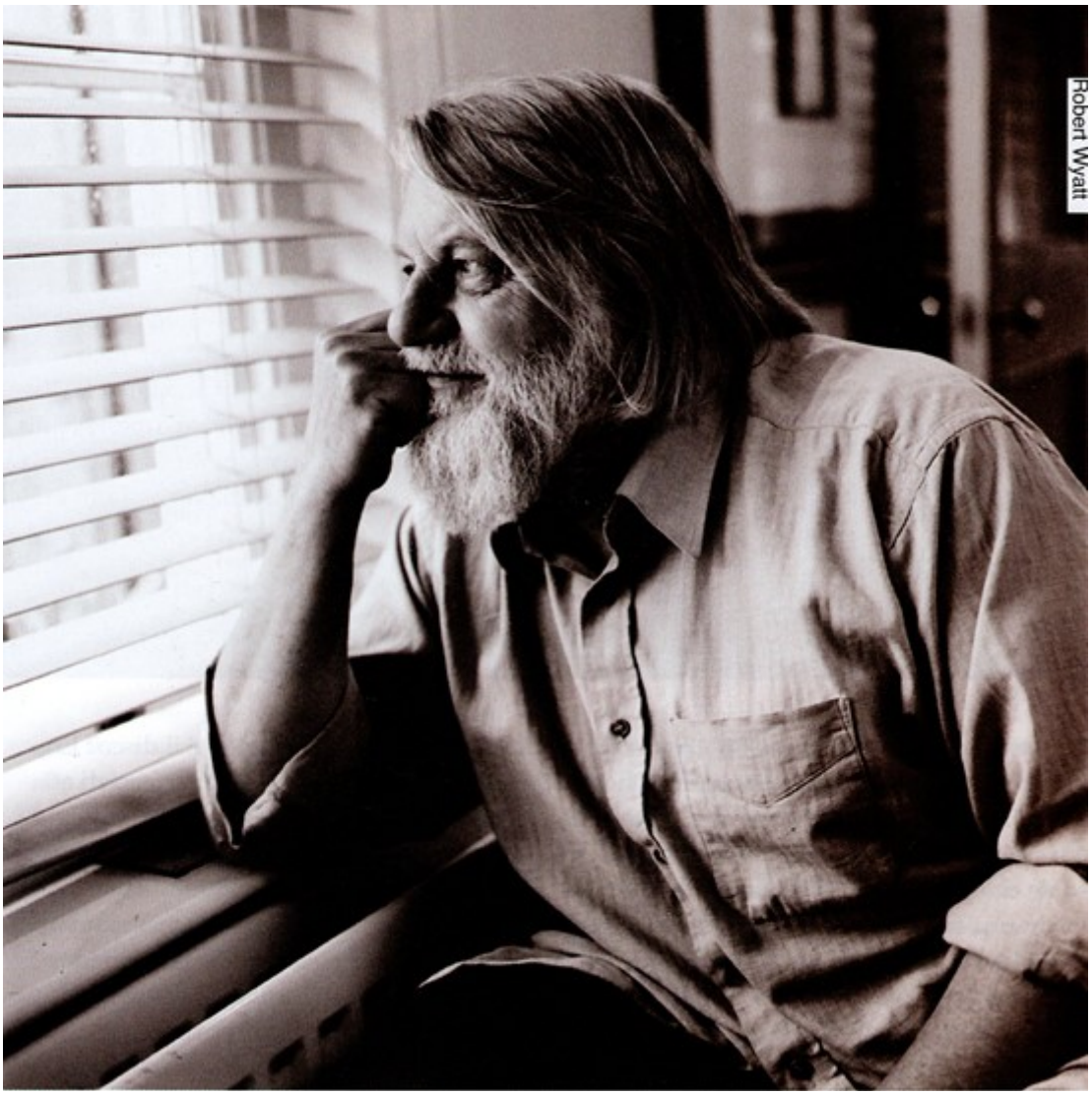
accorgemmo subito, ai tempi della prima guerra del Golfo," scherza Robert, "quando scoprimmo che non avevamo ambasciate nei dintorni davanti a cui manifestare". Quello stesso anno esce un nuovo LP di brani inediti, *Dondestan*, che ribadisce il nuovo gusto e il nuovo passo; cinque-sei anni tra un disco e l'altro e canzoni che non si affacciano più sul bordo dell'avanguardia ma meditano con serenità, rimembrano dolcemente, si abbandonano ai ritmi e ai modi dell'età matura. Ne seguiranno altri tre, fino a oggi, e la palma del migliore è contesa da *Shleep*, 1997, e *Cuckooland*, 2003: dolci pappe di musica con fantasie più jazz che rock e timbri delicati - chitarre discrete, liquide tastiere, la voce sottile della tromba o della cornetta. Anche così, in paesaggi di sogno, Wyatt non dimentica la vita vera; il nitido specchio della sua voce riflette anche quello, la tragedia del Medioriente, le prepotenze del potere, la persecuzione del popolo Rom, la Bomba Atomica, mentre con le fantasie vola a Parigi ricordando l'idillio tra Juliette Greco e Miles e con il cuore non esce di casa e regala ad Alfie una bella canzone di scorbutico amore, *The Duchess*. Con il tempo quei lavori gli sembreranno troppo laccati ed evanescenti, sospesi in uno stato di "fluidità gassosa". Così, quando nel 2007 tornerà a incidere, si impegnerà a cercare qualcosa di più solido, incisivo, "un chiaroscuro con tinte forti" che lo riporti a certo amato jazz dei suoi anni verdi, Mingus soprattutto. *Comicopera* viene a quel modo e lo soddisfa, "e al diavolo la continuità".



> Zoom

La maturità di Robert, quello sì è "un chiaroscuro con tinte forti". L'amore degli amici e degli appassionati. Le decine di collaborazioni a cui si presta con sorprendente docilità. La buffa corrispondenza che intrattiene con tanti, mettendo il francobollo su qualunque pezzo di carta gli capiti a tiro, un inserto di CD o una confezione di patatine, un fazzolettino o un ritaglio di quotidiano. L'orgoglio e la soddisfazione dell'edizione 2001 del "Meltdown", quando è direttore artistico e allestisce uno straordinario circo di musica con Terry Riley, Keith Tippett, Costello con Ivor Cutler, Tricky, David Gilmour, Bill Laswell, Cristina Donà, ribadendo nel più gioioso dei modi la sua, idea di musica senza confini. L'onore dei riconoscimenti accademici, a Liegi e proprio di recente a Canterbury. L'emozione nello scoprire che non ha solo un figlio come aveva sempre creduto, Sam, ma una figli anche, Alice, nata dopo che la moglie Pam aveva iniziato una nuova vita con il batterista dei Gong Pip Pyle. Sull'altro piatto della bilancia, le frequenti onde di depressione, le difficoltà finanziarie che lo spingono a cercare umili lavori extra musicali e la fatica proprio fisica del fare musica; ci vogliono tre mesi di duro isolamento al terzo piano della casa-studio di Manzanera per partorire *Comicopera*, con il sollievo finale per noi solo tristezza, che potrebbe trattarsi dell'opera ultima. "In fondo sono un uomo del Ventesimo Secolo, tutto quello che è accaduto dal 2000 a oggi lo considero tempo rubato". E poi l'alcol, il Lucignolo che non ha mai abbandonato Robert fino ad avvelenare la sua vita e quella di Alfie, il falso

amico allontanato con un disperato gesto di volontà a partire dal 2007, con l'aiuto di Alcolisti Anonimi. Sembrava che solo quello potesse dargli "fuoco e ali", spiega Wyatt in biografia citando Jean Rhys, si era convinto che con le sue fragilità e senza "il narcisismo egomaniaco" indotto da quell'additivo non avrebbe più saputo scalare le montagne del fare musica. Invece è riuscito a liberarsene e Alfie può dire di averlo ritrovato, "è bellissimo, ho ancora il mio compagno, il mio migliore amico".



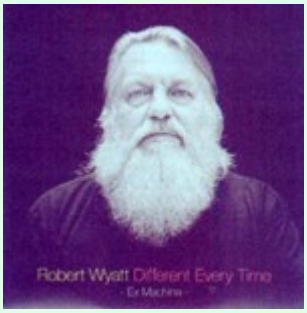
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Sono oltre quattrocento pagine, dicevamo, più una discografia ponderosa ma succinta perché per fare i pignoli (vedi il sito francese Disco Robert Wyatt) i dischi riconducibili al nostro uomo sono più di settecento (!) - non male per un "presunto minimalista". Mettete insieme tutto questo con le migliaia di incontri eventi avventure di una vita complicata e avrete un groviglio in cui è difficile trovare un filo conduttore. Marcus O'Dair però ci prova, butta lì fin dall'inizio una pista e ogni tanto ci torna; e la pista è Alfred Jarry con la sua Patafisica, "scienza delle soluzioni immaginarie", Jarry che incantò i Soft Machine giovani e benedisse il *Volume II* ispirando una doppia "pataphysic introduction". Era uno spirito tormentato anche lui, con la sua dieta di due litri di vino e tre di assenzio tutte le mattine che lo portò alla tomba a trenta-quattro anni, e wyattianamente giocava con la vita "sulla linea sottile, spesso impercettibile, tra assurdità e tragedia". Robert ne riconosce l'influenza, e non solo in gioventù o per uscire dalle secche dell'incidente; anche quando si iscrisse al Partito Comunista Britannico, al culmine dell'offensiva anticomunista dei Reagan e Thatcher, fu "una sorta di ribilanciamento patafisico Yin-Yang". Intuiva che quella storia era finita ma proprio per quello gli andava di sedersi al tavolo "dall'altra parte", prestando il proprio contributo a "un simpatico partitino di sogni infranti."

Torniamo al proverbio iniziale, a come prendere questa strana cosa che è la vita specie quando la si vuole vivere intensamente, a mente libera, a petto nudo. Il patafisico Robert

Wyatt: "Penso che la vita sia una cosa tetra. E si dice sempre che il diavolo è nei dettagli, mentre io credo che il diavolo abbia la regia dello spettacolo e che sia Dio invece a nascondersi nei dettagli. Penso che lo show lo conduca il demonio ma, se hai fortuna e ti attrezzi, puoi cogliere comunque brevi momenti di bellezza. Solo così, prendendola al contrario, la vita per me ha un senso."

Riccardo Bertoncelli



DIFFERENT EVERY TIME non è solo il titolo della biografia ufficiale di Wyatt per la Serpent's Tail ma anche di un doppio CD antologico appena pubblicato dalla Domino. E' un pezzo strano, sotto questo profilo perfetto per il soggetto che tratta, con un primo CD di "best of", *Ex Machina*, e un secondo, *Benign Dictatorhips*, che raccoglie (alcune, sparse, minime) schegge della incredibile serie di collaborazioni di RW nel corso dei decenni. A chi vada questo pacco dono vagamente natalizio non so. Ai completisti probabilmente, perché i neofiti resterebbero comunque sconcertati dalla varietà e incoerenza del materiale, continuando a non capire, e gli appassionati di lungo corso, *quorum ego*, avrebbero tante, troppe obiezioni, molte di più del piacere ricavato dall'ascolto. *To cut a long story short*, parlo come Robert, trovo che un "best" di Wyatt sia un'impresa semplicemente impossibile, come già è stato provato per esempio nel caso di Zappa. Troppe le sue facce e i suoi umori, appunto "different every time", per sbrigarsela in un'oretta; e poi naturalmente potremmo discutere per l'eternità e un giorno sulla selezione delle canzoni, perché *Yesterday Man* e non *I'm a Believer*, perché non *Sea Song*, per fortuna c'è *Moon In June* se no si chiamavano i carabinieri però manca *O Caroline*, e l'assenza fa male, e le ciliegie degli ultimi cesti sono davvero le più succose? Detto questo, l'ascolto è pur sempre delizioso e, aggiungerei, terapeutico; Wyatt canta davvero "sane songs for insane times", come scrive Jonathan Coe nella intro alla biografia.

Il wyattiano virtuoso per Natale potrebbe fare un'altra cosa, andare al sito www.hypergallery.com e godersi le stampe in vendita, tiratura limitata 100 copie, dei mitici disegni di Alfreda Benge per *Rock Bottom* e *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. Costano duecento sterline circa in prevendita, i proventi vanno ad Alfie, i pezzi sono tu ti autografati dall'autrice e controfirmati da Robert.

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I Soft Machine: Dell'Artchipel: Qui Le Fonti - Musica Jazz - N. 766 - Settembre 2014



I SOFT MACHINE DELL'ARTCHIPEL: QUI LE FONTI

Di Alessandro Achilli
Foto : A. Achilli

Dopo «*Never Odd Or Even*», che le è valso il titolo di formazione italiana dell'anno al Top Jazz 2012, l'Artchipel Orchestra ritorna con il cd allegato questo mese a *Musica Jazz* e dedicato a brani dei Soft Machine, scritti da Hugh Hopper e Robert Wyatt quando avevano fra i ventitré e i venticinque anni.

Il disco si apre con la *conduction* che serve da preludio a *Facelift*, composizione che in «*Third*» (pubblicato il 6 giugno 1970) è parimenti introdotta da un'improvvisazione. Una ***Facelift*** incisa il 10 giugno 1969 era già presente in «*Bbc Radio 1967-1971*», il migliore dei tanti live postumi dei Soft Machine, ma la prima pubblicata occupava un'intera facciata dei «*Third*» e combinava due registrazioni dal vivo dei gennaio 1970 con nastri fatti scorrere al contrario e altre alterazioni di studio.

Kings And Queens, incisa il 9 novembre 1970, viene dall'album successive, «4» (uscito il 28 febbraio 1971). Di poco precedente è la prima testimonianza live dei brano: Amsterdam, Concertgebouw, 25 ottobre 1970. L'arrangiamento Artchipel aggiunge alle parti strumentali un testo cantato: la prima strofa di *The Bird Did Prance — The Bee Did Play* di Emily Dickinson.

Noisette non esiste come tale nella discografia ufficiale dei Soft Machine, anche se sul «*Third*» la *Slightly All The Time* di Mike Ratledge (registrata il 6 maggio 1970) si conclude proprio con quel tema di Hopper seguito da quelle di *Backwards* dei tastierista. La prima apparizione documentata di Noisette è però in un concerto londinese dei 13 aprile 1969, mentre sul «*Bbc Radio 1967-1971*» se ne ascolta un'interpretazione dei 10 novembre 1969.

Noisette è uno dei due brani non arrangiati da Ferdinando Faraò ma da Beppe Barbera: l'altro è ***Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening***, che su «*Volume Two*» (inciso nel febbraio-marzo 1969 e pubblicato subito dopo) era un cangiante acquarello per voce,

clavicembalo e chitarra acustica, e nella versione Artchipel è affidato alle sole voci, ispirandosi liberamente all'arrangiamento per ance dei Delta Saxophone Quartet. Nel nostro cd, *Dedicated To You* è anche l'unico brano registrato nel piccolo Lift Studio anziché alle gloriose Officine Meccaniche (che il 14 gennaio e 25 febbraio 1967, quand'erano ancora studi Regson, ospitarono fra l'altro due sedute di Ellington).

Mousetrap non fu mai incisa in studio, benché fosse una presenza assidua nei concerti, come quello londinese dei 13 aprile 1969 e quelli pubblicati sui cd «*Noisette*», «*Facelift*», «*Somewhere In Soho* » (ristampato in lp con il titolo «*Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club*»), «*Breda Reactor*» (in lp: «*Live At Het Turfschip*»)e, in una registrazione del 10 giugno 1969, nel «*Bbc Radio 1967-1971*» (alcuni brani del quale - tra cui una *Mousetrap* del novembre '69 – erano già in «*Triple Echo*» e poi in «*The Peel Sessions* »).

Dopo cinque titoli di Hopper, ecco in fine ***Moon In June*** di Wyatt, uno dei quattro estesi brani che componevano il doppio lp «*Third*». La prima versione è stata restaurata l'anno scorso per il cd « '*68*» di Wyatt (vedi Riccardo Bertoncelli in *Musica Jazz* n. 12/2013) ma quella trascritta da Giovanni Venosta e arrangiata da Faraò viene dal solito «*Bbc Radio 1967-1971* »: la seduta è ancora quella del 10 giugno 1969, subito prima della quale Wyatt scarabocchiò un ulteriore (meta)testo, ripreso dall'Artchipel.



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Tutta questa girandola di date fa pure piazza pulita di un luogo comune della critica facilona: quelle che iscrive i Soft Machine (e in particolare il «*Third*») tra i seguaci di «*Bitches Brew*». A parte il fatto che il gruppo inglese è nato nel 1966 (quindi ben prima persino di «*Miles In The Sky*»), «*Bitches Brew*» esce il 15 maggio 1970 e dunque non può aver influenzato un disco inciso prima di quella data e contenente composizioni già nelle scalette *live* da più d'un anno; per non dire di *Moon In June*, che non solo viene registrata in prima stesura nell'ottobre '68 ma ingloba pure citazioni da *That's How Much I Need You Now* e *You Don't Remember* (incise dai Soft Machine nel 1967), oltre che da *Singing A Song In The Morning* e *Hat Song* di Kevin Ayers.

Alla luce delle improvvisazioni *live* di «*Middle Earth Masters*» (1967) pare piuttosto infondata anche la netta distinzione tra i Soft Machine «jazz» o «rock jazz» e quelli di «pop psichedelico». Né si può dire che fossero una formazione di *progressive rock*, la cui nascita è infatti ben posteriore a quella del gruppo e alle sue complesse partiture, basate su metri additivi e semmai influenzate da compositori come Bartók, Sostakovic e Don Ellis (che i tre ascoltavano fin da ragazzini) oltre che da soul, free jazz, r'n'b, Terry Riley, patafisica e musica indiana.

Il jazz, in particolare, fu per loro molto più determinante del rock. In una recente intervista a *DownBeat*, Wyatt ricorda: «L'anno (1967) in cui furono lanciati i Soft Machine è l'anno in cui morì John Coltrane. San John, per me. E mi viene in mente quel che succede nella foresta quando cade un albero davvero gigantesco. Improvvisamente si apre un vuoto nel sottobosco, dove nascono moltissimi alberelli che si protendono verso la luce del sole: è la vita che si riafferma. Ma quegli alberi giganteschi non spuntano da un giorno all'altro. Perciò nella mia mente — persino nel fiore irriverente della gioventù - la nostra apparizione

alla luce del sole è sempre stata legata all 'incomparabile bellezza di ciò che avevamo perduto».

Del resto, un diciassettenne Ratledge aveva parlato per la prima volta con il quindicenne Wyatt per chiedergli in prestito «*At Newport: The Gigi Gryce - Donald Byrd jazz Laboratory And The Cecil Taylor Quartet*» ed è noto che alla base dello stile solistico dello stesso Ratledge fosse l'idea di trasporre su un organo con distorsore e wha wha il pianismo tayloriano (un esempio di come i Soft Machine abbinassero spesso le sonorità più rock ai momenti più jazzistici, con il corollario altrettanto frequente di articolazioni jazzistiche celate nelle scansioni più rock).

Negli stessi mesi, quando gli adolescenti Wyatt e Hopper ebbero l'occasione di incidere un acetato con qualche coetaneo in una cabina pubblica di registrazione a pagamento, cantarono '*Round About Midnight* ed *Evidence*. Dal fratello maggiore, Wyatt ascoltava «Ellington, il bebop, Cecil Taylor, il primo quartetto di Don Ellis con Jaki Byard, "Mingus Presents Mingus"», mentre Hopper — pur riconoscendo il debito iniziale verso Paul McCartney, James Jamerson, John Entwistle e Larry Graham - si è sempre detto più influenzato da Haden, Mingus, LaFaro, Garrison e Ron Carter.

Benché all'epoca i brani dei Soft Machine non fossero mai stati suonati da una big band (arrivando tutt'al più ad aggiungere quattro fiati al trio Ratledge-Hopper-Wyatt), gli arrangiamenti jazzistici dell'Artchipel hanno dunque trovato un terreno già fertile. E ne ricavano i frutti saporiti colti dal nostro cd.

Alessandro Achilli



> Zoom

7 GIUGNO, FASANO TEATRI KENNEDY E SOCIALE

ARTCHIPEL ORCHESTRA + KEITH & JULIE TIPPETTS

Alla XVII edizione di Fasano jazz si è vista un'Artchipel Orchestra in versione *deluxe*, con Keith e Julie Tippetts in veste di ospiti d'onore e le immagini in movimento (sincronizzate con la musica e proiettate sullo schermo cinematografico del teatro Kennedy) di Au+, duo di sperimentazione audiovisiva formato da Fabio Volpi e Rosarita Crisafi. Per Ferdinando Faraò, direttore e arrangiatore del collettivo, si è trattata dell'ennesima conferma delle attenzioni e dei consensi che sta raccogliendo la scelta di focalizzare buona parte del repertorio Artchipel sulle composizioni di alcuni dei maggiori esponenti (centrali o periferici) della cosiddetta scuola di Canterbury.

Il concerto ha preso le mosse da partiture ormai entrate nel dna della formazione, come la toccante *Arriving Twice* di Alan Gowen e la serrata e iperbolica *Moeris Dancing* degli Art Bears, per arrivare, in conclusione della prima parte, a una briosa e scoppiettante rivisitazione di *Moon In June* di Robert Wyatt, della quale Filippo Pascuzzi (tranne una

parentesi swingante affidata a Serena Ferrara) ha interpretato con personalità le parti cantate senza scadere nel didascalico o peggio o nella mera emulazione.

Nella seconda parte, quasi interamente dedicata a composizioni di Hugh Hopper per i Soft Machine, hanno fatto la loro apparizione i coniugi Tippetts e la musica è divenuta più profonda e imprevedibile. Magistrale, per esempio, è stata l'esecuzione di *Kings And Queens*, che si presentava in una veste inedita grazie al variopinto e ritmico tappeto di note oblique e irregolari generate dal pianoforte preparato di Tippett e agli interventi della fisarmonica di Mariangela Tandoi. Convincente era anche il trattamento della crepuscolare *Noisette*, arrangiata dal pianista Beppe Barbera e illuminata da un sottile *groove* e da un impetuoso assolo di Massimo Falascone al sax baritono.

A chiudere la serata erano *Cider Dance* di Keith Tippett (il quale ha voluto che a condurre il ballo fosse la tagliente chitarra elettrica di un ispiratissimo Giampiero Spina) e, prima di una seconda versione di *Mousetrap*, un orchestrale *Happy Birthday* a Julie Tippetts, nata l'8 giugno.

Il concerto dell'Artchipel (che sarà messo in onda prossimamente da Radio3suite) ha avuto una coda la sera seguente con il duo pianoforte-voce dei coniugi Tippett: in un clima magicamente intimo e raccolto, la Couple In Spirit ha regalato al pubblico suoni, vibrazioni ed emozioni di rara purezza.

Claudio Bonomi

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Robert Wyatt, il comunista - Idee In/Oltre - Lunedi 17 Febbraio 2014





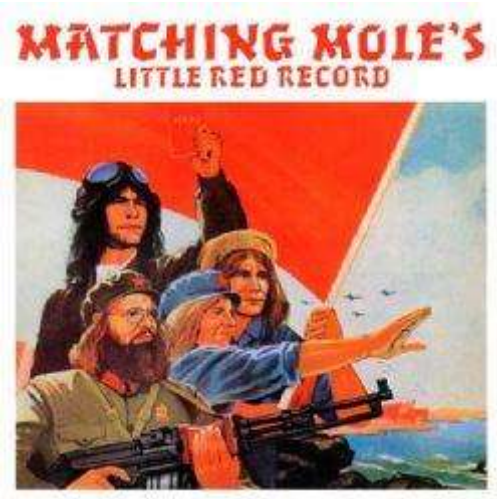
Robert Wyatt, il comunista

Per raccontare la variegata vita di **Robert Wyatt** ci vorrebbe un libro di diverse centinaia di pagine. Oggi vorrei approfondire un aspetto della sua vita poco conosciuto che ha a che fare con la musica solo in modo marginale e cercherò di farlo sopratutto con le interviste che nell'arco degli anni Wyatt ha rilasciato, lasciando trapelare di volta in volta piccole parti delle sue idee, del suo modo di pensare e del suo porsi di fronte la politica. Prima di iniziare dobbiamo premettere che **Robert Wyatt** non è mai stato un politico nel senso stretto del termine, non ha mai visto la politica come un lavoro, è stato semplicemente un'artista che in una ristretta fase della sua vita ha percepito con estrema urgenza la necessità di impegnarsi contro il razzismo, l'imperialismo occidentale, il capitalismo ormai imperante e in generale contro le enormi ingiustizie e diseguaglianze che vedeva ovunque. Per questo

motivo si iscrive al partito comunista inglese, non come dirigente o come personaggio di spicco, bensì da semplice militante che amava parlare, scambiare opinioni, approfondire argomenti con altri iscritti al partito. Ma sopratutto per lui la politica era un potenziale strumento per difendere i più deboli, una missione ideale fatta senza mai pensare, neanche per un attimo, a propri interessi personali.

La passione di Wyatt per la politica nasce tardi ed è una conseguenza di vari eventi che faranno crescere in lui una fortissima insofferenza verso tutti i generi di ingiustizia, soprattutto se rivolta verso i più deboli e indifesi della società. I suoi genitori si occupavano di politica in modo superficiale ma avevano le loro idee: "Erano due liberal immagino, mi avvertivano sempre di lavarmi le mani dopo aver toccato una copia del Daily Express. Per loro il Welfare State rappresentava tutto il senso del secolo scorso, tutto quello per cui era valso la pena combattere nel novecento". Nella sua giovinezza Robert pensa sopratutto alla musica, ma la sua formazione esula molto da quella di un musicista rock, la sua vera passione è il jazz, la musica dei neri americani. Ecco cosa dice in un'intervista del 1988: "La musica che prima di tutti mi ha ispirato è stato il jazz e le musiche ad esso imparentate. Oggi si parla tanto di world music, ma secondo me il jazz era già world music. La musica popolare occidentale è stata completamente trasformata dall'apporto dei neri americani, cioè gli afro-americani. All'inizio, sebbene non mi interessassi di politica, non mi capacitavo della disparità tra l'immensa ispirazione che traevo dalla meravigliosa cultura nero-americana e le condizioni delle persone di colore nel mondo che mi circondava. Non riuscivo a capirne il senso e così assunsi un atteggiamento protettivo. E quando cominci a difendere una musica, va a finire che prendi le parti di chi la fa. Perciò se la gente che nella vita ti ha dato più piacere di chiunque altro viene trattata come un problema e senti sempre qualcuno che dice che bisogna ridurne il numero, bè.. ti arrabbi. Non perchè sei buono o gentile, ma perchè difendi ciò che ami".

Il giovane Wyatt comincia quindi con un semplice senso di protezione verso i musicisti che ama, discriminati per motivi razziali. Ma questo per ora è solo un sentimento iniziale, Wyatt non pensa affatto alla politica, abbandona addirittura la scuola prima del diploma perchè, dice lui stesso: "Ero troppo impegnato a vivere". La sua vita è pienissima, suona con i Wilde Flowers, registra i primi quattro album dei Soft Machine, due con i **Matching Mole** e uno solista, partecipa a vari altri album tra i quali i solisti di Syd Barrett, suona dal vivo svariate volte con i Pink Floyd che insieme ai **Soft Machine** erano le band britanniche più famose della scena psichedelica di quegli anni. Partecipa al tour americano di Jimi Hendrix suonando insieme ai Soft Machine come gruppo di supporto. Finito il tour resta in America ospite di Jimi Hendrix dove conoscerà, tra gli altri, Frank Zappa col quale avrà buoni rapporti.



Nel 1972 pubblica il primo album in cui fa trapelare le sue idee politiche, lo splendido secondo album dei Matching Mole, la piccola registrazione rossa, **Little Red Record**. L'album dalla copertina chiaramente ideologica vede i quattro musicisti impegnati nella difesa di Taiwan. **Little Red Record** è un disco emblematico, che segna il superamento del periodo d'oro degli anni sessanta, che è ormai agli sgoccioli, e degli ideali della **Summer of Love,** che si sono scontrati contro un muro che appare indistruttibile se non con cambiamenti radicali di mezzi e proposte. Il passo è breve ma segna il passaggio di un'epoca, si passa dai fiori californiani a Robert Wyatt che imbraccia un mitra.

Gli eventi si susseguono e l'episodio più tragico della vita di Wyatt avviene il primo giugno del 1973. Wyatt cade da una finestra del quarto piano ma miracolosamente sopravvive e resta paraplegico, non potrà mai più suonare la sua batteria. Questo non può che portare grandi cambiamenti nella sua vita. Inizialmente sembra ovvia la scelta di abbandonare la musica, ma poi con l'aiuto della compagna Alfie e di vari amici tra cui **Nick Mason**, decide di continuare e pubblica il suo capolavoro, **Rock Bottom**.

Pubblicato Rock Bottom, Wyatt vive il suo secondo trauma. L'album, che nell'ambiente di Canterbury è reputato un capolavoro (oggi è considerato uno dei più importanti della storia del rock), è seguito dalla pubblicazione di un singolo, la cover di un brano dei Monkees, I'm a believer. Il successo è tale che Robert viene invitato a Top of Pops. Era il 1974 ma

purtroppo fu un'esperienza traumatica. Ecco come lui racconta gli eventi: "Andai a Top of the Pops e c'era quel balordo (il produttore Robin Nash) che mi disse: 'Le dispiacerebbe sedersi su un'altra sedia? Non sta bene mostrare una sedie a rotelle in uno spettacolo d'intrattenimento per famiglie'. Mi venne una rabbia! Mi pareva di perdere il controllo della mia vita. Rimasi atterrito da Top of the pops, dal mondo dei 45 giri, da quell'industria. Ero sopravvissuto senza classifiche fino ad allora e, fintantochè avessi avuto i soldi per un buon tè e per le mie sigarette avrei potuto continuare a vivere felice". I suoi amici, dopo questa assurda esperienza, organizzano un concerto in suo onore diffondendo manifesti dove erano tutti fotografati in sedia a rotelle per solidarietà (tra loro vedete Mike Oldfield e Nick Mason).



Questo episodio aveva fatto rinascere in lui una forte avversione verso ogni tipo di ingiustizia. Pochi mesi dopo un altro evento decisivo, la morte del suo migliore amico, il grande trombettista Mongezi Feza. La morte di Mongezi Feza ha tantissimi elementi sospetti, è effettivamente molto strano pensare come un giovane di trent'anni che ha sempre goduto di buona salute sia potuto morire in un ospedale britannico senza che nessun medico si accorgesse delle sue gravi condizioni. Ecco cosa ci dice Wyatt: "La morte di Mongezi mi colpì molto drammaticamente. Il motivo reale della tragedia va ricercato nel fatto che era venuto in Inghilterra per sfuggire alla tirannia del razzismo e vi aveva invece trovato la madre e il padre dell'apartheid. Credeva di scappare dagli orrori del Sudafrica e venne a vivere in quello che continuiamo a chiamare «mondo libero». In Inghilterra, anche se non esiste un razzismo ufficiale, è molto difficile adattarsi, se non si è bianchi. Nel suo caso, dovette rivolgersi a un ospedale psichiatrico, dove gli venne diagnosticata una forma di schizofrenia e dove morì inaspettatamente di polmonite doppia. È un fatto inaudito: la morte per polmonite doppia di una persona giovane che già si trova in ospedale è tutt'altro che inevitabile. Qualcosa mi dice che se fosse stato il principe Carlo non sarebbe morto; o anche, semplicemente, se fosse stato bianco. Credo che da ciò il mio processo di politicizzazione abbia ricevuto una forte spinta". Siamo nel 1975, Wyatt comincia a cambiare totalmente il suo modo di pensare: "A partire dalla metà degli anni '70, mi sentii molto confuso. La mia musica mi pareva totalmente inadeguata. Trovavo immensamente presuntuosa e ridicola l'idea della generazione degli anni '60 che si potesse migliorare il mondo con le sole canzoni di protesta. Cominciai a interessarmi maggiormente alla seria attività rivoluzionaria, cioè quella tesa al rovesciamento del potere". Wyatt decide di riprendere e completare gli studi che aveva interrotto da giovanissimo, sono anni in cui la sua attività musicale si fa molto più rara, dal 1975 al 1982 non pubblica più alcun album solista. "In quegli anni ero molto più interessato a leggere, studiare e guardare in TV quelle bellissime lezioni universitarie di alcuni professori di storia, letteratura o filosofia. Ritenevo che farlo fosse molto più utile di suonare". Wyatt decide quindi di iscriversi al partito comunista inglese, è il 1979. "La gente mi diceva: 'Come è possibile partecipare a un partito che ha le stesse probabilità di sopravvivenza di un cubetto di ghiaccio in un forno? Io rispondevo, 'Se sei stato un fan del free jazz e andavi ai concerti free jazz, dove il pubblico era regolarmente in numero inferiore ai componenti del gruppo, anche quando era costituito da sole tre persone, allora puoi anche pensare di unirti al Partito comunista". La verità è che Wyatt si iscrive al partito comunista come una sorta di extraterrestre, la sua visione ideale era talmente estrema da essere incompresa persino in quel partito. I suoi pensieri principali erano contro il razzismo e contro le politiche liberiste e colonialiste degli Stati Uniti, in particolare l'apartheid sudafricana occupava gran parte dei suoi pensieri. Stimava enormemente i veri combattenti rivoluzionari, come ad esempio i leader Sudafricani Joe Slovo e Mandela, Ascoltava con assiduità la radio appassionandosi ai vari problemi del terzo mondo. Era ormai convinto che la carica rivoluzionaria del rock degli anni sessanta avesse perso ogni credibilità. Wyatt non è mai stato una figura di spicco del partito, la sua natura schiva, introversa, lo impedivano. Dobbiamo immaginarcelo come un semplice attivista che preferiva la compagnia di un operaio che leggeva i libri di Marx nel tempo libero, piuttosto che di un leader del partito. Comunque si occupa tantissimo dei problemi del terzo mondo e in particolare del Sud Africa, ha una fitta corrispondenza con prigionieri politici sparsi in tutto il mondo, organizza e partecipa a convegni tra i quali ricordo Art against Racism and Fascism, varie manifestazioni e dibattiti in difesa dell'African National Congress, devolve gli utili di due EP del 1984 ai minatori in sciopero contro il governo Thatcher e continua a farlo a ogni successiva tiratura, si occupa con grande

passione della sanguinosa guerra del Guatemala,finanziata dagli Stati Uniti, alla difesa della Namibia. Vede nei paesi occidentali la causa principale del razzismo e della povertà dei paesi sottosviluppati: "Credo che l'Inghilterra sia particolarmente colpevole di quelle che succede in Sudafrica, cosi come lo sono i francesi nella parte orientale dell'Africa e il fatto che ora ci sono molti africani che vivono a Londra ci aiuta a parlare con questa gente e questa è un'occasione culturale importante". Dell'America dice: "Io penso che se non fosse per il jazz, sarebbe stato meglio che l'America non fosse mai esistita. Ma poichè il jazz è esistito, personalmente gliene sono grato". Le sue iniziative sono innumerevoli, a volte come protagonista, a volte come semplice attivista, a Wyatt non sono mai interessate le luci della ribalta. E' possibile vederlo in foto in cui vende per le strade il giornale del suo partito, il Morning Star.

Negli anni ottanta pubblica, in diversi 45 giri, varie reinterpretazioni di vecchie canzoni politiche che poi raccoglierà nell'album Nothing Can Stop Us. Tra i brani presenti abbiamo Arauco, canzone folk del cileno Violeta Parra, grido di disperazione dei capi indiani contro il colonialismo dei cristiani che, dice Wyatt, prosegue da quattrocento anni. Red Flag è una canzone tradizionale irlandese, divenuta successivamente inno dei partiti laburisti. Strange Fruit è una canzone americana degli anni trenta, una delle prime dove si parlasse apertamente del razzismo americano. Caimanera è una versione della cubana Guantanamera, dedicata ai cubani che hanno deciso di restare a Cuba in contrapposizione ai politici inglesi e americani che elogiavano chi espatriava negli Stati Uniti. Stalin Wasn't Stallin è il brano più ideologico, un elogio del regime sovietico, la reinterpretazione di un brano del 1943 scritto da un autore che è ancor oggi sconosciuto, o perlomeno quello che si crede essere l'autore, Bill Johnson, nega di esserlo: "Mi aveva divertito molto sapere che c'era questa canzone di cui non si riusciva a scoprire l'autore, perchè lui stesso non osava confessarlo, neppure per riscuotere le proprie percentuali". Il testo è uno sperticato elogio di Stalin, descritto come un grande orso che agguanta e uccide la bestia di Berlino (ovviamente Hitler), descritto come un essere demoniaco partorito dal diavolo in persona. Shipbuilding è un brano contro la guerra delle Falkland, scritto per Wyatt da Elvis Costello. Trade Unions è un inno sindacale suonato per convincere gli operai inglesi a iscriversi al sindacato. Born Again Cretin è l'unico brano scritto da Wyatt ed è una rivendicazione della sua libertà di parola. Ma Wyatt sa benissimo che la sua libertà di parola è solo una faccia della medaglia del capitalismo, lui può parlare mentre Mandela marcisce in carcere. Il titolo è anche una presa in giro dei Born Again americani, i rinati in Cristo, che sono una faccia ambigua ed inquietante di una società ormai allo sbando che non ha niente in cui credere ed è quindi capace di credere a qualunque cosa.



Wyatt vende il Morning Star insieme un delegato del partito comunista

L'attività politica di Wyatt continua ed è davvero impossibile elencare tutte le sue iniziative. Se esaminiamo questi anni e i suoi brani politici Wyatt appare come un marxista ottimista che ha la vera speranza di cambiare la società. Questa però col tempo è destinata a svanire. Ad un certo punto capisce come le sue idee siano destinate a scontrarsi con la dura realtà. Wyatt è un idealista che crede fermamente in tutto quello che fa, ma il mondo intorno a lui sta cambiando, sopratutto stanno cambiando le persone che gli stanno intorno. Una nuova generazione di giovani si sta facendo strada, siamo alla fine degli anni ottanta, un personaggio come Wyatt sta diventando un vecchio arnese di cui disfarsi. Nel 1987 Wyatt esce dal partito: "Sono uscito dal partito comunista perchè era ormai diventato solo un trampolino di lancio per sapientoni da tribune televisive o giornalistiche. Non vedo più alcuna differenza tra le posizioni del partito comunista-marxista e quelle dei socialdemocratici. Quando entrai nel partito, alla fine degli anni settanta, le persone che mi piacevano davvero erano spesso i vecchi e gloriosi antifascisti che si erano iscritti negli anni trenta e ne avevano viste tante. C'era un idraulico che, malgrado l'opportunità di fare carriera, aveva preferito rimanere un militante di base e viveva fino in fondo i propri ideali. Andavamo ai mercatini del Morning Star e mi innamorai perdutamente delle persone che li frequentavano. Ma poi rimasi deluso, quando arrivò un bel pò di gente molto più alla moda, quelli della generazione post-Beatles; se ne stavano lì a fare battute sarcastiche sui vecchi che ascoltavano Paul Robeson (cantante e attivista civile americano). Non mi piaceva affatto quella gente! Mi trattavano con apparente simpatia ma in realtà non avevano niente in comune con me: 'Oh, abbiamo un musicista, un fiore all'occhiello per la nostra

immagine!' Non mi interessava unirmi allo scherno della destra verso i vecchi comunisti".

Manca poco al crollo del comunismo, ma le idee di Wyatt non cambiano. "Molti di noi sono diventati bird-watchers, ma io non sono cambiato affatto. Morirò col marchio marxista-leninista impresso sulla mia spina dorsale. Non si tratta di quel che faccio o dico: è come il mondo mi appare,non mi aspetto che le altre persone mi seguano, ma io non abiurerò mai. Non vedo ancora alcuna altra seria analisi del mondo, per me l'abbandono del Marxismo sarebbe come se i creazionisti seguissero Darwin. Sono molto grato al Marxismo, lo considero inestimabile nella lotta contro l'apartheid. E penso che Joe Slovo (leader del partito comunista Sudafricano), sia stato un vero gigante tra gli uomini, un comunista di successo che ha saputo guardare la realtà."

Questa è la storia politica di Robert Wyatt, segnata dalla sua sincerità e dalla sua fortissima autonomia, le stesse caratteristiche che hanno segnato la sua carriera musicale. Wyatt non è mai stato interessato a fare cose che avessero un seguito, non ha mai cercato proseliti, sia nella musica che nella politica, ha sempre fatto quello che riteneva giusto fare, il senso di competizione che esiste tra i musicisti non ha mai fatto parte della sua mentalità. Chiudo proprio con queste parole che descrivono perfettamente la sua personalità e che dovrebbero essere lette e fatte proprie da tantissimi giovani musicisti e non solo musicisti: "Non ho mai sopportato la divisione tra successo e fallimento di cui parla l'industria pop, per loro un disco è un successo o un completo fallimento. Il mondo della cultura da cui vengo, che ho nella mia testa, non ha niente a che fare con tutto questo. Si tratta solo di persone che fanno il loro lavoro giorno per giorno. Invece ho visto musicisti andare nel panico per avere venduto meno copie di un loro collega. Tutto questo non mi riguarda. Non significa nulla per me l'avere molto, la ricchezza, il grande profitto. Voglio solo avere abbastanza soldi per vivere e stare con i miei amici. Se una persona compra un mio disco, è molto gentile da parte sua e gliene sono molto grato. Se a una persona piace ciò che faccio, questo è meraviglioso. Altrimenti vuol dire che ascolterà qualcos'altro."

Valerio d'Onofrio

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Robert Wyatt - Il Sessantotto di un patafisico - Musica Jazz - N. 757 - Dicembre 2013



ROBERT WYATT
Il Sessantotto di un patafisico

Un inatteso ritrovamento archeologico getta nuova luce sulla giovinezza di Wyatt. Lontano da Canterbury, fra Hendrix, Jarry e Perry Mason

Di Riccardo Bertoncelli

Moon In June

I Soft Machine prima versione si erano sciolti. Mike era tornato a Londra, Kevin si era trasferito a Maiorca. La casa discografica non sapeva dello scioglimento e fra l'altro doveva ancora pubblicare il primo lp, registrato già da sei mesi. Insomma, non avevo vincoli, e c'erano un po' di cose che volevo fare e che non potevo in una situazione di gruppo come quella di allora».

Robert Wyatt ambienta così un delizioso ed appena uscito, «'68», con quattro suoi provini registrati fra i Ttg Studios di Hollywood e il Record Plant di New York nel autunno 1968, tra ottobre e i primi di novembre. Jimi Hendrix, che ha appena condotto un tour americano con i Soft Machine di spalla, affitta quegli studi per stare dietro alla sua bulimia musicale e volentieri regala qualche ora al giovane batterista che nel corso del tour è diventato amico suo e di Mitch e di Noel. Le sedute di «*Electric Ladyland*» sono terminate da poco; Jimi ha altre idee ma da quelle sedute non cava granché. Robert invece spende bene il suo tempo. Mette a fuoco una serie di frammenti che gli fluttuano in testa e con il tempo prenderanno magica forma, e ha modo di metter mano a strumenti che nel quotidiano non potrebbe mai permettersi, tipo un organo Hammond su cui golosamente pasticcia. Alla fine si ritrova tre quarti d'ora di musica imperfetta ma stimolante, che sarebbe bello avere su un *master* ma chi può permetterselo? Si fa fare degli acetati; poi se ne dimentica e i nastri rimangono nella pancia profonda dei Ttg (che prendono il nome –

forse non tutti sanno che – da un reggimento dell'esercito israeliano in cui era arruolato il proprietario degli studi, il ruvido prepotente tecnico del suono Ami Hadami).

Wyatt è un fenomeno. Giura di avere una memoria di camembert, casca dalle nuvole quando qualcuno ritrova i nastri e lui nemmeno se ne ricordava; però se lo stimoli lascia gocciolare deliziosi aneddoti e piano piano prende forma uno straordinario racconto, che da un lato avvince e dall'altro fa digrignare i denti – perché Wyatt non ha mai deciso di scrivere per bene e di persona, con la sua lingua placida, con il gas esilarante del suo *understatement*, le memorie della vita? A ogni modo, i Soft Machine accompagnano la Experience in giro per l'America due volte nel 1968, in primavera e poi fra agosto e settembre. La seconda volta il tour finisce in California e lì Jimi decide di fermarsi, a Los Angeles, affittando una sorta di ampio bungalow a Benedict Canyon. Ha un letto che gli avanza e generosamente lo offre a Robert. Vuole la leggenda che quello spazio servisse ai produttori di *Perry Mason* per le registrazioni del telefilm; ma fra una serie e l'altra c'erano pause e il bungalow veniva messo a disposizione. Il ragazzo di Canterbury si tuffa nel delirante mondo della Plastic City ma uno scetticismo molto *Brit* ne protegge la sanità mentale. Non ne resta abbagliato, non si fa traviare da quel teatrino di Doors e Laurel Canyon, di Zappa e *Easy Rider* e Crosby, Stills & Nash. Lo stesso distacco mantiene quando ai primi di novembre si muove a New York, sempre seguendo gli spostamenti di Hendrix, e scopre che «della Mecca jazz che avevo costruito nella mia immaginazione non rimaneva più nemmeno l'ombra ». Una sera fa un salto al Village Vanguard e nota per strada un poveraccio che ha tutta l'aria del mendicante. È Wilbur Ware, gli dicono, e quasi non ci crede: Wilbur Ware! Quante fantasie ascoltando il suo contrabbasso nei dischi di Art Blakey, Monk e Trane.



A New York Wyatt va a stare da una amica, Phillys, ma si tiene in contatto con Jimi che gli offre ancora ritagli di studio. Passa un paio di mesi in un appartamentino al quinto piano di un palazzo del Greenwich, con una pianola elettrica in cucina su cui continua a rifinire la *sua* musica, quella generata da migliaia di ascolti giovanili che cominciano a dare frutto, quella che il primo album Soft Machine ha recepito solo in minima parte. Gli piace l'idea di canzoni poco ortodosse, che si dilunghino oltre lo schema dei tre minuti classici reso obsoleto dall'avvento del long playing; temi che appaiono e scompaiono, pause, cambi di passo – senza un senso preciso, con il gusto della sorpresa. *Moon In June* è da subito la creatura preferita. Fra i Ttg e il Record Plant ne registra una versione piuttosto evoluta, non così distante da quella «ufficiale» per il *Third* che prenderà forma nella primavera 1970. È sempre un bell'ascolto, con il testo che segue le lune del momento e questa prima volta è ambientato naturalmente «in New York State», ma non è la perla del nuovo disco; perché in parte la conoscevamo già (stava sul cd di materiali d'archivio «*Backwards*») e perché solo la prima sezione è autenticamente «americana», il resto viene da un provino di qualche mese più tardi una volta a casa, con l'aiuto di Hopper e Ratledge.

Anche *Slow Walkin' Talk* la conoscevamo, per via della stessa antologia e di varie raccolte hendrixiane, dato che il basso lo suona Jimi. È «una cosina alla Mose Allison» (per dirla come Robert nell'intervista- intro) scritta da Brian Hopper e adottata dal giovane Wyatt, che non se ne dimenticherà. Hendrix la ascolta e si offre di dare una mano, il nastrino è un bijou però finisce negli archivi, senza mai entrare nell'orbita Soft Machine. Ma a WyattLand non si butta via niente e anni più tardi, ai tempi di «*Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*», ecco che con qualche ritocco quella «chiacchierata a passo lento» diventerà *Soup Song* – più articolata, complessa, con la voce forte di due sax.

Con i distinguo ho finito per minimizzare metà del cd, ma non vogliatemi male, anche perché l'altra metà vale da sola il biglietto. *Rivmic Melodies* è la prima stesura della prima facciata di «*The Soft Machine Volume Two*», quella che i discografici vollero



cervelloticamente spezzettare in «brani», trovando a tutti i costi titoli per i diversi frammenti. Nel demo ritrovato c'è praticamente tutto, dalla Introduzione Patafisica al Pierrot Lunaire, compresa la parte dell'alfabeto inglese che però non è concisa come nella versione definitiva ma capricciosamente estesa, un gioco di echi, riflessi, rumori che allieterà l'animo dei canterburyani in ascolto. Al divertimento della musica si accompagna lo spassoso ping pong fra Wyatt e Hopper a proposito di chi ha composto cosa. Il mondo alla rovescia: Hopper sostiene che il suo nome venne usato solo per questioni di diritti, Wyatt giura che no, lui fu solo giardiniere di semini piantati dall'amico. Difficile stabilire chi abbia ragione, anche perché la memoria di Robert, lo abbiamo detto, ha *four thousand holes* come quelli di *A Day In The Life*. Quando i curatori della raccolta gli fanno ascoltare il quarto demo sopravvissuto, *Chelsa*, lui trasale e balbetta: mmmh, la musica dev'essere mia, e il testo non può che essere di Kevin Ayers, Chelsa era una ragazza di Canterbury che gli piaceva – però, davvero, non ricordo niente. Peccato che da ulteriori indagini emerga che il testo non è del povero Kevin ma di Daevid Allen, nella notte dei tempi Softs. In ogni caso il fascino della canzone (con un ballonzolante Hammond che fa quasi Procol Harum) non sta nei crediti bensì nello sviluppo musicale; ancora una volta nulla si perde, nulla si distrugge e qualche anno dopo, ai giorni dei Matching Mole, l'idea prenderà forma più precisa con il titolo di *Signed Curtain*.



In un bel libro di John McDermott con Eddie Kramer appena ristampato in Italia (*Jimi Hendrix Sessions,* Giunti) è scritto che Hendrix usò i Record Plant solo fino al 6 novembre 1968, per poi tornare a fare vita *on the road*. Quindi dobbiamo presumere che Wyatt smise di registrare intorno a quella data, e in capo a qualche settimana tornò in Inghilterra perché, parole sue, «avevo nostalgia di casa e mi mancava la pioggia». Il 1969 sarà un anno fondamentale per lui, l'anno del «*Volume Two*», la stagione della rifondazione Soft Machine senza più Ayers, prima in trio poi in quartetto con Elton Dean. In realtà, nonostante le prodezze, la vita di gruppo non fa per Robert e quei giorni passati in America da solo sono un riuscito esperimento e una sirena che presto lo porterà a «*The End Of An Ear*». Per lo smemorato protagonista, è questa la morale di «'68»: «È chiaro che stavo immaginando una vita artistica mia e non di gruppo, una musica che potessi realizzare da solo, come il pittore che avrei sempre voluto essere».

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Jimi Hendrix feat. Robert Wyatt Studio Recordings Guide - Alla Ricerca del Vinile Perfetto - 5 gennaio, 2013

Alla Ricerca del Vinile Perfetto

Jimi Hendrix feat. Robert Wyatt Studio Recordings Guide

Jimi Hendrix Experience & Soft Machine's 1968 USA Tour:

- Capitolo 4 (di 7) -



Jimi con Robert Wyatt e Henry McCullogh degli Eire Apparent durante il tour negli Usa del 1968

Ho approfittato delle vacanze natalizie per portare a termine un lungo lavoro iniziato qualche tempo fa e dedicato alle collaborazioni in studio di Jimi Hendrix con i Soft Machine e con Robert Wyatt in particolare.

Il post continua una delle Grandi Saghe del blog dedicata al tempo che la Jimi Hendrix Experience ed i Soft Machine passarono insieme ed iniziata qui.

Stranamente nessuno ha mai pensato di fare un album, o quanto meno un bootleg, con il materiale inciso in studio da Jimi Hendrix ed i Soft Machine. Eppure tra collaborazioni varie (tra loro o con altri) e jam session di materiale ce ne sarebbe abbastanza.

Mentre esistono centinaia di pagine scritte sul tour di Hendrix negli USA del 1968, però, meno di una su dieci di queste fonti accenna anche ai Soft Machine e spesso lo fa in maniera superficiale. (A volte ho anche dubitato che di questo argomento interessantissimo non fregasse niente a nessuno :)).

Per realizzare questo post, quindi, mi sono fatto un mazzo tanto ed ho dovuto scremare tantissimo materiale trovandomi quasi sempre di fronte ad informazioni scarse e spesso contrastanti tra di loro. Nella speranza di trovare qualche altro essere umano di lingua italiana interessato ai Soft Machine nel 1968, sono orgoglioso di presentare il primo post del 2013.

Data la lunghezza dell'articolo l'ho diviso in due parti.

Questa prima parte riguarda le collaborazioni accertate tra i due artisti rimandando ad un altro post le collaborazioni false, o quantomeno dubbie, e quelle accertate ma la cui versione pubblicata non è quella in questione.

Le collaborazioni in studio tra Jimi Hendrix & Robert Wyatt

Titolo	Data – Luogo	Attribuzione	Collaborazione
Day Tripper	Dec. 15, 1967, BBC Top Gear recording	Jimi Hendrix Experience	Robert Wyatt (backing vocals)
Slow Walkin' Talk	Oct. 25, 1968, T.T.G., Hollywood California,	Robert Wyatt	Jimi Hendrix (bass)
The Clown	Oct. 3, 1968, T.T.G., Hollywood California,	Eire Apparent	Jimi Hendrix (guitar) & Robert Wyatt e Noel Redding (backing vocals)
Calling All Devil's Children	Oct. 3, 1968, T.T.G., Hollywood California,	Jimi Hendrix Experience	Robert Wyatt (backing vocals)

Credits

A1 Jimi Hendrix Experience – Day Tripper

Tracklist: 1. Day Tripper 2. Spanish Castle Magic 3. Radio One Jingle 4. Getting My Heart Back Together Again 5. Wait Until Tomorrow

Line-up: Jimi Hendrix – guitar, vocals Noel Redding – bass, backing vocals Mitch Mitchell – drums, backing vocals Robert Wyatt – backing vocals on 1

Esibizione della Jimi Hendrix Experience al Playhouse Teathre di Londra per il programma BBC Top Gear. Il concerto è stato registrato il 15 dicembre 1967 ed andato in onda il 24 dicembre, la sera di natale.

Nel Brano Day Tripper, cover dei Beatles, Robert Wyatt è accreditato come "Backing Vocal".

Pubblicato originariamente nel 1988 sull'album Radio One (che tra l'altro attribuiva erroneamente i cori del brano a John Lennon), il concerto è poi uscito su diversi altri album, primo fra tutti l'ufficiale BBC Session dove veniva finalmente accreditato Wyatt.



15/12/1967, The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Playhouse Theatre, London, BBC Top Gear recording

Su un forum francese dedicato a Jimi Hendrix fanno giustamente notare che anche nel brano immediatamente successivo, Spanish Castle Magic, registrato la stessa sera c'è una seconda voce. Che sia di nuovo quella di Wyatt? La cosa non è confermata da nessuna parte ma chissà…

A2 Robert Wyatt – Slow Walkin' Talk



25/10/1968, T.T.G., Hollywood, sessions for demos

Tracklist: 1. Moon In June (*Wyatt*) 2. Rivmic Melodies (*Hugh Hopper – arr. Wyatt*) 3. Slow Walkin' Talk (*Brian Hopper*)

Line-up: Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals, piano, organ
Jimi Hendrix – bass on 3

Al termine del tour estivo del 1968, che portò in giro per gli Stati Uniti la Jimi Hendrix Experience ed i Soft Machine, sia Hendrix che Robert Wyatt restarono per un po' in California.

Durante la sua permanenza, Hendrix passò la maggior parte del tempo presso i mitici TTG Studios di Los Angeles (studi di registrazione che diedero vita ad album come *the Velvet Underground & Nico*, *Freak out* e *Absolutely Free* di Zappa, *Waiting for the Sun* dei Doors, *Animalism* degli Animals…).

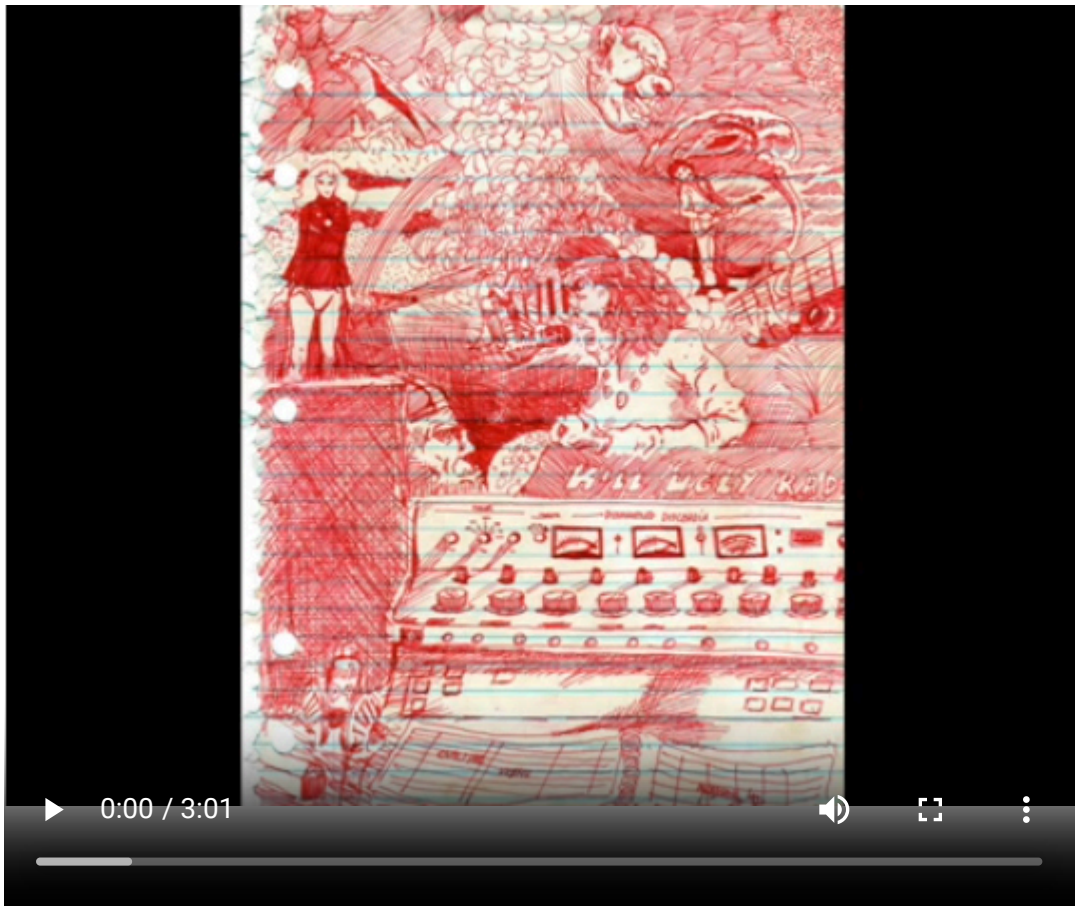
Anche Wyatt avrà modo di frequentarli per abbozzare alcuni brani che porranno le basi dei futuri Soft Machine e della sua carriera solista: *Moon in June*, versione embrionale del capolavoro assoluto di Wyatt che pubblicherà sull'album *Third*; *Rivmic Melodies* che sarà sviluppata diventando un intera facciata di Soft Machine *Volume Two* e *Slow Walkin' Talk* che diventerà *Soup Song* nell'album di Wyatt *Ruth is Stranger than Richard*.

Per quest'ultimo brano Hendrix si offrì di suonare il basso.

La registrazione, datata 25 ottobre 1968, è riportata in tutte le biografie di Hendrix ed è stata raccontata diverse volte dallo stesso Wyatt: **"E, visto che siamo arrivati a parlare dei tempi antichi, potresti dirci qualcosa della versione di *Slow Walkin' Talk* che incidesti nel 1968 con Jimi Hendrix al basso? Qual è l'Hendrix che hai incontrato e**

conosciuto? Era un gentiluomo del Sud, molto timido e garbato. L'unica registrazione esistente della nostra seduta è un acetato e quindi la qualità è molto vicina a quella di un pezzo di biscotto. Ero ancora là *(dopo la tournée statunitense dei Soft Machine come spalla al gruppo di Hendrix)*: il mio gruppo si era sciolto e quasi tutti i componenti erano tornati in Inghilterra. Sembrava proprio finita. Perciò ero rimasto per un po' negli Stati Uniti e Jimi si era gentilmente offerto di ospitarmi. Mentre ero a Los Angeles ebbi la possibilità di registrare qualcosa ma, non avendo un complesso, incisi solo le parti che ero in grado di suonare io. Quando ebbi registrato batteria, voce e organo, arrivò in studio Jimi: vide che avevo bisogno di un po' d'aiuto – a suo avviso mancava un basso – e me ne diede moltissimo. Fu veramente molto gentile." (intervista del 1994 uscita sul n. 17 della rivista "Musiche" nel 1996).

L'acetato fu restaurato poco dopo e pubblicato per la prima volta nella raccolta retrospettiva Wyattiana *Flotsam Jetsam* del 1994.



Finalmente nel 2013 è uscito *Robert Wyatt '68*, album contenente la versione integrale di queste session.

A3 Eire Apparent – The Clown

Line-up: Ernie Graham – rhythm guitar, vocals Eric Stewart – bass David Lutton – drums Jimi Hendrix – guitar Noel Redding and Robert Wyatt – backing vocals on "The clown"

Gli Eire Apparent erano un gruppo irlandese scoperto da Hendrix che accompagnò la Jimi Hendrix Experience ed i Soft Machine nel tour americano del 1968.
Terminato il tour anche gli Eire Apparent si fermarono negli Stati Uniti per registrare ai TTG Studios il loro primo ed unico album prodotto proprio da Hendrix nel quale suona anche la chitarra.

Robert Wyatt, anche lui rimasto in California ospite nell'appartamento di Hendrix, partecipa



31/10/1968, Eire Apparent, T.T.G., Hollywood, sessions for "Sunrise" LP

alla sessione del 31 ottobre facendo i cori assieme a Noel Redding nella canzone "The Clown".





Il nome di Wyatt compare a caratteri cubitali anche sul retro del disco.









Jimi Hendrix & Eire Apparent durante la realizzazione di Sunrise

A4 – Jimi Hendrix Experience – Calling All Devil's Children



21/10/1968, T.T.G., Hollywood, jam session

Line-Up – Jimi Hendrix (guitar) – Noel Redding (bass) – Mitch Mithcell (drums) – Hanger-ons included Robert Wyatt

Stesso periodo e stessi studi dei due brani precedenti questa non è una vera e propria collaborazione.

Quel giorno a Jimi girava bene per cui in piedi su una sedia improvvisò uno sketch a microfoni aperti imitando una specie di pastore protestante che spiega la bibbia ai Devil's Children, impersonati da una piccola folla di avventori che si trovavano per caso nello studio.

Tra quegli avventori che urlano e schiamazzano c'era anche Robert Wyatt che in quel periodo viveva ospite a casa di Hendrix e spesso passava le giornate ai TTG Studios.

Ci sono due foto che documentano il momento nella seconda delle quali si vede Wyatt.



Robert Wyatt è quello alla destra di Jimi con il bicchiere in mano e parzialmente coperto dall'asta del microfono

John McDermott nel suo "Jimi Hendrix Session" parla di ben 27 take del brano registrati quel giorno prima di arrivare al master. Nel bootleg TTG Studios ce ne sono 3, due delle quali con il pastore Jimi e la folla urlante di Misfits.

Per il momento mi fermo qui, ma la storia continua…

Anto Saluzzi

>> Questo articolo sul blog di Anto Saluzzi.

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Robert Wyatt - Un ritorno in trio - InSound - n° 54 - novembre 2010



> Zoom

L'uscita di un nuovo album di Robert Wyatt è sempre una bella notizia. Non c'è un solo disco del musicista inglese che non abbia riservato ai suoi ascoltatori almeno una piccola sorpresa, un qualche godimento, una bella canzone che valesse la pena di ascoltare e riascoltare. Qui, nel nuovo disco intitolato *For the ghosts within*, la sorpresa, o il momento più bello, è quando Wyatt intona, in chiusura, "What a wonderful world".

E noi riusciamo a credergli, come abbiamo creduto a Louis prima di lui: due voci tanto distanti, ma entrambe capaci di farci credere ancora qualunque cosa.

La vera novità del disco è però la collaborazione di Wyatt con il sassofonista e compositore Gilad Atzmon (con cui Wyatt ha già collaborato negli ultimi anni) e la violinista e compositrice Ros Stephen, che insieme a Wyatt firmano il lavoro. *For the ghosts within* raccoglie, insieme ad alcune riprese di brani di Wyatt, anche celebri standard come "Lush Life", "In A Sentimental Mood", "Round Midnight" e, appunto, "What a Wonderful World".

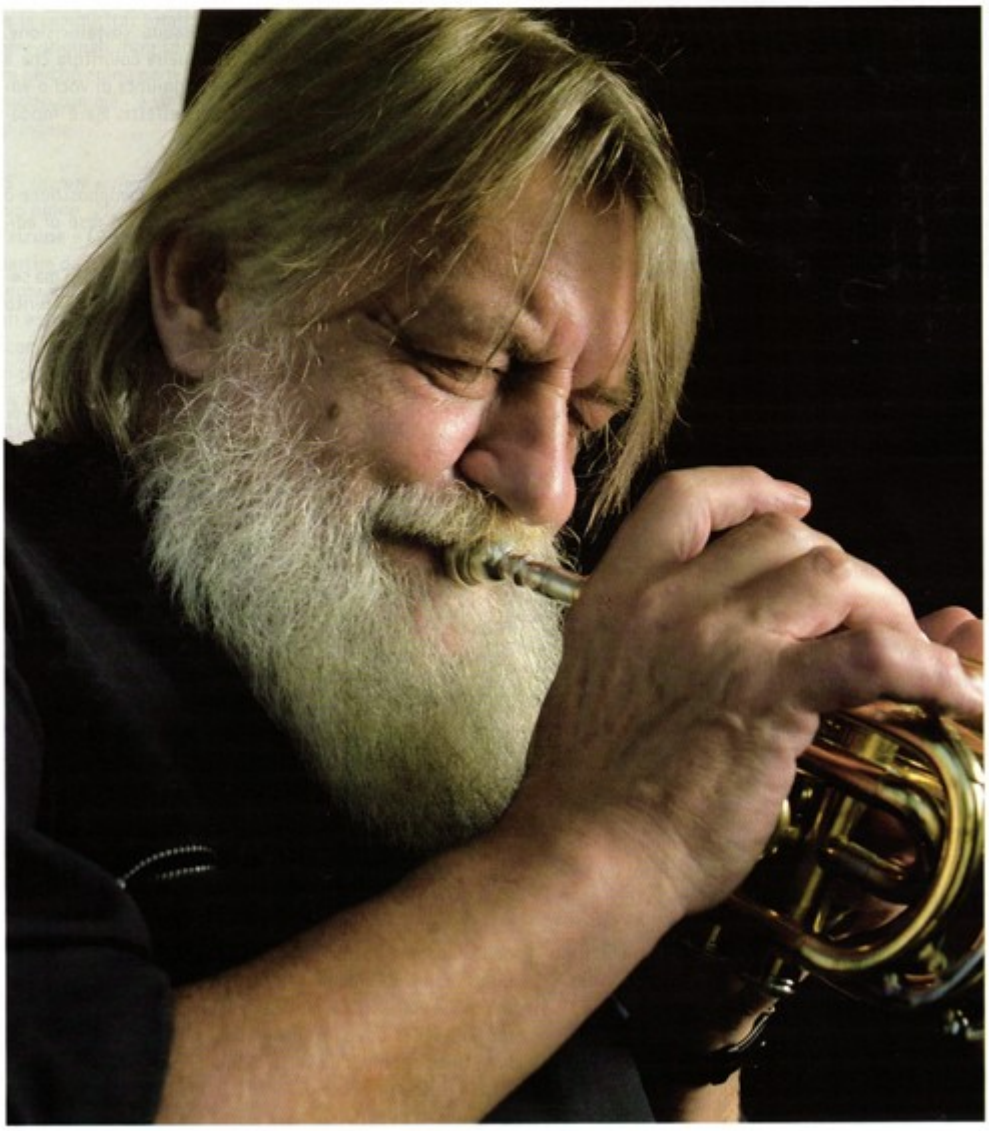
Non è un album compatto quanto avrebbe potuto risultare, perché si passa dal riadattamento di vere e proprie canzoni come "Maryan" o "At Last I'm Free" (originale degli Chic di Nile Rodgers) a pagine di sapore più contemporaneo, quelle in cui il sax di Atzmon e il violino di Stephens conducono il gioco, come nell'iniziale "Laura" o le originali "Lullaby for Irene" (musica della Stephen e liriche di Alfie Benge) e "The Ghosts Within" (musica di Atzmon e liriche di Alfie Benge).

Abbiamo sentito dalla viva voce di Wyatt com'è nata l'idea del disco, ed è stata un'ulteriore occasione di scambiare due parole con una delle persone più acute, disponibili e piacevoli dell'intera scena musicale.

ROBERT WYATT

Un ritorno in trio

CLAUDIO CHIANURA



IS - *Buongiorno Robert, ti aspettiamo sempre di ritorno qui a Milano e in Italia.*

Wyatt - Ho sempre dei bei ricordi di Milano e dell'Italia!

IS - *Molte persone mi chiedono se hai intenzione di tornare a trovarci...*

Wyatt - Oh, facciamo finta che sia morto *(Ride, NdR)*!

No, guarda, non prendo più l'aereo, non posso affrontare un security check in aeroporto, mi è ormai molto difficile viaggiare.

IS - *Dobbiamo trovare qualche altra maniera...*

Wyatt - Oh, l'altra maniera è fare dischi!

Il pubblico italiano è splendido e soltanto qualche tempo fa parlavo con alcuni amici dei momenti bellissimi che abbiamo trascorso in un festival comunista a Umbertide in Umbria anni fa... Per me e Alfie sono stati momenti magici. È un'amica cattolica ha aggiunto: "Ah, ma anche i festival cattolici sono belli!" E ci credo. So che in Italia avete festival davvero belli!

IS - *Nello stesso tempo le cose sono molto cambiate e non è proprio com'era più di trentanni fa.*

Wyatt - Certamente. Ma è sempre un Paese molto sorprendente. Avete così tanti santi, e mi piace l'idea che ogni giorno ci sia un santo diverso. Io ho santi differenti, lo sai, John Coltrane, Miles Davis e Jimi Hendrix...

Insomma, credo che dobbiate accontentarvi dell'immaginazione.

IS - *Ma si viaggiava anche prima degli aeroporti e dei security check, no?*

Wyatt - Ah, sì, ma era anche prima delle sedie a rotelle *(Ride, NdR*).



IS - *Ci siamo sentiti qualche tempo fa e la madre di tua moglie Alfie non stava affatto bene...*

Wyatt - Infatti, non è più con noi... E la seconda canzone del nuovo disco, "Lullaby fo Irene", è dedicata proprio a lei, anche se ha un significato universale. Il disco si intitola *For the Ghosts Within* ("per i fantasmi interiori") e Irene è il fantasma che Alfie porta sempre con sé. Può sembrare sentimentale mentre lo dico, ma è così... Arriva dal cuore.

Anzi, lascia che ti racconti un'episodio prima di passare giustamente alle domande sul disco. La madre di Alfie era polacca, ed era una donna molto combattiva. Alfie è nata nel 1940, la

Seconda Guerra mondiale era già in corso e Irene era solo una ragazza quando attraversò insieme ad Alfie l'Europa centrale su uno di quei vagoni bestiame aperti da un lato che vedi solo nei vecchi film. Alfie ha due ricordi precisi di quel viaggio: il primo è una fila di case in mezzo alla neve, completamente in fiamme. Immagina di essere in questo treno per il bestiame che si ferma per una ragione sconosciuta, quanto a lungo non si sa, e come fa una bambina stai giocando con una palla che rimbalza fuori dal treno scomparendo nella neve. E quando cerchi di guardare fuori per vedere dov'è finita la palla vedi tutte queste case in fiamme. La seconda cosa è una specie di macchia rossastra sul terreno innevato: si tratta di due partigiani jugoslavi che si sono ammazzati.

Bene, passiamo pure alle domande...

IS - *Oh, non ne sono tanto sicuro...*

Wyatt - Mi spiace averti gettato addosso questi ricordi, ma la seconda canzone del disco ha questo impulso molto forte. Ros era molto tesa perché non aveva mai inciso una sua canzone prima di allora. E Alfie ha scritto immediatamente le parole, come si trattasse di free-jazz, ma in un modo diverso.

IS - *Mi sono chiesto perché non abbiate scritto più canzoni nuove per il disco.*

Wyatt - Sì, capisco. È una specie di nonsense, perché non è un disco di Robert Wyatt. Il mio profilo è più evidente perché sono più vecchio, ma si tratta di un disco di Atzmon e Stephen. Quindi dimentica Robert Wyatt per un momento. Ros Stephen ha un progetto che si chiama Tiango Siempre, ed è innamorata della musica argentina. Ma è una musica sempre più organizzata, quasi come la musica classica. Così desiderava qualcosa di più folle e ha lavorato insieme a Gilad Atzmon che pratica molto l'improvvisazione. Hanno preparato questo disco e mi hanno chiesto di cantare la canzone "Laura", che risale agli anni Quaranta. Ho accettato perché sono due musicisti fantastici.

IS - *Archi e sax sono molto presenti, quasi come veri solisti. A volte sembrano quasi gridare, anche se con dolcezza.*

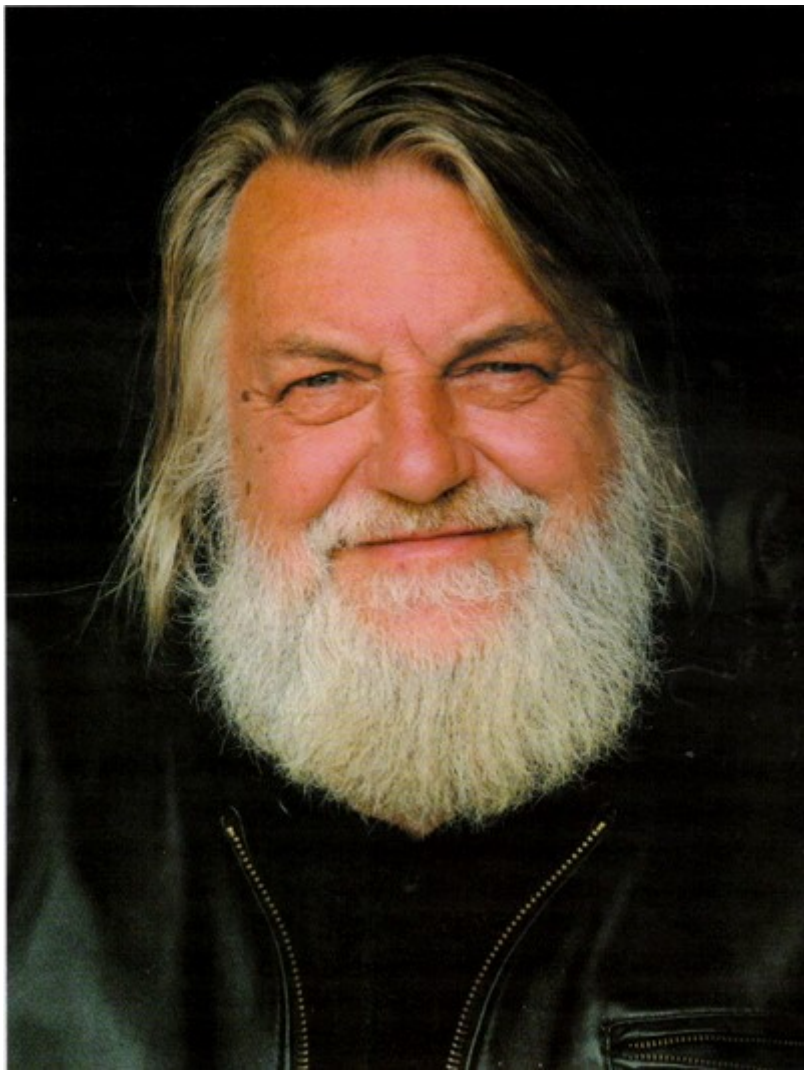
Wyatt - Questo è quel che intendo quando dico che non è un disco di Robert Wyatt. È una vera collaborazione. La gente pensa che io ami collaborare con altri musicisti, ma non è esattamente così. Di solito lavoro a un mio disco e poi chiedo ad altri musicisti di aiutarmi a migliorare il disco e renderlo più forte. Oppure altri producono un loro disco e mi invitano a cantare qualcosa.

In questo caso specifico si tratta quasi di un vero gruppo, come al tempo dei Matching Mole, per esempio.

È stato proprio un lavoro di gruppo. Sono stato il terzo a essere coinvolto. Ed è stato un po' difficile per me, perché non so leggere la musica, non sono molto veloce a lavorare... Non ho proprio la possibilità di fare tutte le cose che queste altre persone possono fare.

Sono sempre stato cosciente che non si trattava di un nuovo disco di Robert Wyatt, ma della celebrazione di altri due musicisti, e che il lavoro di mixaggio, editing e produzione dovesse essere assolutamente bilanciato ed equilibrato fra tutti. Gli strumenti dovevano avere lo stesso spazio. Si tratta di tre persone. E siamo amici. E questo è importante.

Nella terza traccia, "The Ghosts Within", la moglie di Gilad, Tali, ha cantato le parole che Alfie aveva scritto e siccome cantava così bene, mi sono detto: "Levati dai piedi Robert, lascia che sia lei a cantare questa canzone!".



IS - *Non è necessario essere dovunque...*

Wyatt - Esatto! Guarda la musica di Duke Ellington, o le canzoni di Billie Holiday, forse la più grande cantante del Ventesimo secolo, o quelle di Nina Simone: ci sono molte altre cose intorno e loro sono parte del tutto. Quel che va bene per Billie Holiday, va bene anche per me! Bisogna imparare a essere modesti, se qualcuno può fare una cosa meglio di noi, perché non lasciargliela fare? Facciamo parte di un gruppo, no?

IS - *Immagino che potresti anche lavorare nuovamente a un album non solo di canzoni, ma di lunghe tracce strumentali, in modo più simile ai tuoi primi album solisti...*

Wyatt - È difficile, perché non scrivo la musica e quindi sono limitato. Il controllo delle mie capacità rimane nell'ambito della musica folk, pop o disco. Semplicemente non ho la cultura o la disciplina per estendere la mia scrittura musicale. È vero che a volte ho fatto un po' di più, ho composto brani più lunghi, come nel caso di "Cuckoo Madame" qualche anno fa, influenzato dai compositori classici inglesi alla metà del Ventesimo secolo, oppure in "Sight Of The Wind", dall'album *Dondestan revisited*. Ma semplicemente non ho l'abilità e la conoscenza tecnica dei compositori classici, che servono a estendere le idee per più minuti. Così devo lavorare su delle miniature. Non è che questo mi faccia sentire inferiore o niente del genere. È come nell'atletica, dove qualcuno può correre sulle brevi distanze mentre altri sono ben equipaggiati per partecipare alla maratona.



IS - *Quaranta minuti possono essere troppi per chiunque, a volte...*

Wyatt - Sai quel che Mark Twain disse di Wagner? "La sua musica è meglio di come suona! (*Ride di gusto, NdR*)"

IS - *Come avete costruito l'album?*

Wyatt - Mi piace molto scegliere la scaletta. Mi è piaciuto iniziare qui con "Laura" perché si trattava dell'ultimo pezzo che non era stato inciso per il disco precedente di Ros e Gilad. La continuazione non dipende in questo caso dalla musica, ma dalle parole che suggeriscono qualcosa perduto nel tempo, quel che abbiamo perduto.

IS - *E il disco termina con la bellissima interpretazione di "What a Wonderful World"...*

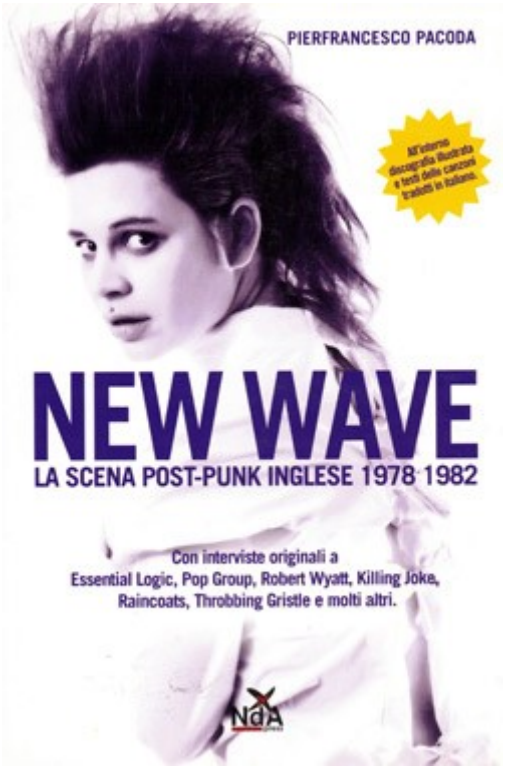
Wyatt - Questa interpretazione è forse la cosa più d'avanguardia che io abbia mai cercato di fare. Gran parte dei pezzi sono già noti, sono cose che avevo già fatto in precedenza. Così la prima cosa è stata interpretarla come se non fosse mai stata fatta prima, e che soprattutto suonasse autentica ora, in questo particolare momento. La nostalgia funziona solo perché qualcosa dal passato ti colpisce come se fosse altrettanto importante in questo preciso momento.

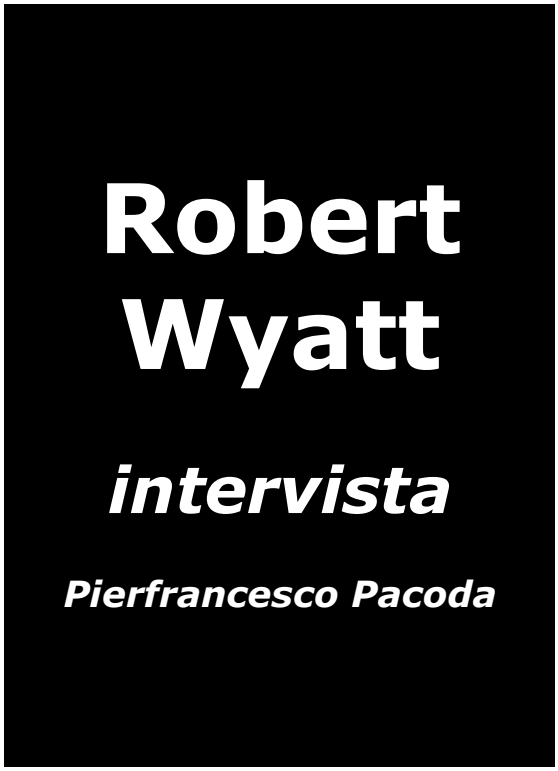
Claudio Chianura



Il nuovo album firmato da Robert Wyatt insieme a Ros Stephens e Gilad Atzmon si chiama *For the Ghosts Within* ed è pubblicato su etichetta Domino (distr. Self).

Robert Wyatt - New Wave La scena post-punk inglese 1978-1982 - NDA Press 2010





A qualcuno potrà sembrare fuori luogo includere Robert Wyatt nell'ambito dei musicisti rappresentativi della nuova ondata; altri, quelli che son cresciuti con il punk e acquistano oggi tutte le opere che Rough Trade stampa, si saranno interrogati, senza trovare risposta, sull'identità di questo non più giovane cantante.

Ad ascoltare, poi, la sua prima uscita per la label di Blenheim Crescent, la meraviglia sarà aumentata ancora, dapprima per il tipo di materiale inciso, *Caimanera*, un classico di Pete Seeger e una ballata di Violetta Parrà, insomma quanto di più atipico per le genti che affollano il negozietto dalle parti di Portobello, subito dopo per la maniera in cui il materiale è stato manipolato, per l'incredibile sensazione di pace, di rilassatezza che l'ascolto, inevitabilmente, procura. Melodie lineari, una pacatezza infinita a far da sfondo alla più bella voce che la musica giovane abbia mai partorito. Al di là dei generi, innanzitutto, perché *Caimanera* potrebbe essere stato registrato ai tempi di *Rock Bottom* o, al contrario, anticipare le future direzioni della nuova ondata. Quello di Wyatt è veramente un caso unico (Mayo Thompson a parte), appassionato protagonista di due differenti stagioni del rock, mai in maniera appariscente, da prima pagina dei rotocalchi specializzati, ma con eleganza e raffinatezza, senza sbagliare una prova, stupendo tutti a ogni disco, legandosi alle menti più fervide, non certo ai rockmen da classifica. Ricordare le tappe più importanti del suo viaggio attraverso la musica, vuol dire ricordare Soft Machine, Brian Eno, Daevid Allen, insomma l'underground più autentico e creativo. Così

come Eno (non è un caso!) lo ritroviamo oggi, vecchio saggio, a profondere insegnamenti ai giovanetti che per sperimentale intendono il sound dei Cabaret Voltaire. Pur senza voler nulla togliere ai manipolatori di strumenti elettronici che nella nuova scena abbondano, l'eleganza della citazione di Wyatt è lungi dall'essere superata dal sound occulto proposto, ad esempio, dalla scuola di Sheffield. Tutto ciò, ancora una volta, senza clamore, senza scomodare strane spiegazioni per giustificare la réntrée, soprattutto evitando di trasformare il fatto nell'evento dell'anno.

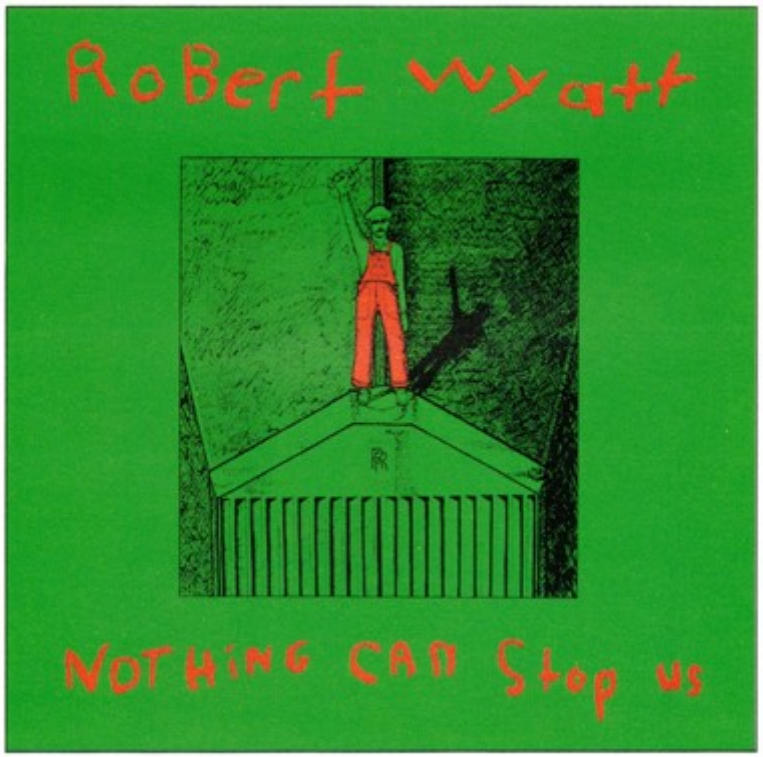
Così molti dei vecchi fans nemmeno sapranno che esiste una label londinese di nome Rough Trade, che opera con criteri non commerciali, scevra da calcoli di mercato, con il solo scopo di promuovere materiale altrimenti destinato a rimanere su nastro. Questo, certamente, con Wyatt non sarebbe accaduto, visto il rapporto con la potente Virgin, che aveva pubblicato le sue opere precedenti, ma il musicista, in linea con il suo modo di essere, ha voluto evitare parole roboanti e sprechi di pubblicità, meglio, allora, un singolo nel più prestigioso catalogo new wave che esista. Tutto tremendamente lovely, come si usa dire adesso, ma dall'artefice di *Moon In June* non potevamo, veramente, aspettarci di meno. Intanto è uscito un altro singolo, ennesima citazione, ancora una sorpresa, questa volta si tratta del rifacimento di una song delle Chic, gruppo funky-disco americano, *At Last I'm Free*.

Le parole di Wyatt, probabilmente sono le più ponderate tra quelle che abbiamo ascoltato, la ragione mi sembra evidente, le esperienze a qualcosa servono, l'aver osservato così tanti anni di rock, sempre dalla parte degli "estremisti", alla fine ha dato i suoi frutti. Nel musicista c'è, soprattutto, disillusione, la certezza, anzi, che tante speranze riposte nella musica, non si sono evolute nella direzione auspicata. La sua generazione ha creduto che cambiare il mondo fosse estremamente semplice, e la musica lo stava facendo. Ebbene, nulla di più drammaticamente sbagliato; se si vuole realmente incidere nei processi trasformativi della società, bisogna farlo utilizzando i tradizionali canali della politica, non le canzonette. Questa non è restaurazione, è semplicemente realismo, perfetta coscienza di un universo, quello rock, che continua a ingannare i suoi nuovi abitanti, i *punk rockers* dell'ultima ora.

Come logica conseguenza di tutto ciò, avendo constatato che non è la musica a muovere le masse, Wyatt è approdato alla politica vera, iscrivendosi al Partito comunista inglese e dichiarandosi interessato a una militanza di cui non riusciamo a intravedere i contorni. Forse i seguaci del delirare anarchico di Rotten non gradiranno le teorizzazioni del nostro che sostiene in continuazione la sua amara tesi: «Johnny Rotten, è un altro eroe romantico, un buon musicista pop, come Jagger, ma nulla di più...»

Ma il musicista continua la sua azione dissacrante, intaccando miti su cui sono cresciute le generazioni di una volta, parole sarcastiche, dunque, nei confronti degli amici di un tempo, dei compagni delle sfrenate avventure musicali di Canterbury, dove Wyatt è vissuto durante la gioventù e si è formato musicalmente.

La vecchia scena ne esce a brandelli, svuotata di qualsiasi carattere sacro che le era stato attribuito. Il suo stesso ruolo, a posteriori, riveduto con occhio critico e ogni volta che il discorso sconfina nei fasti di Canterbury, Wyatt non può fare a meno di sfogare la sua amarezza, cercando in ogni modo di cambiare argomento. Forse è proprio lui, questo straordinario sopravvissuto, l'inevitabile tratto d'unione tra le illusioni di un tempo e le speranze dei nostri giorni, che, nonostante tutto, sembrano essere autentiche. Le sue parole, sicuramente, inducono a tristi meditazioni, e tutto ciò non è spiegabile, assolutamente, con gli incidenti che hanno funestato la sua esistenza. Qualunque cosa succederà alla nostra ondata, ne siamo certi, Wyatt sarà già oltre, a indicare le future strategie.



Robert Wyatt – *Nothing can stop us* © (Rough Trade) 1982

«Robert, come mai dopo un periodo di silenzio così lungo, hai deciso di ritornare a incidere un disco, e perché lo hai realizzato per Rough Trade, un'etichetta indipendente che si sta distinguendo essenzialmente per il materiale new wave del suo catalogo?»

«Il motivo principale è che sentivo l'esigenza di lavorare, non si può stare sempre seduti a pensare. Ho scelto di incidere per Rough Trade perché non sono per nulla interessato alla politica culturale delle grosse case discografiche, la Virgin ormai si avvia a diventare la CBS americana, e, sinceramente, i vantaggi che poteva offrirmi non mi allettavano. I responsabili di quella label mi ripetevano di poter contare su un'ottima distribuzione, ma vendere dei dischi in Giappone non è la mia massima aspirazione, in questa momento. Rough Trade, almeno, non fa del colonialismo culturale!»

«Quali sono stati i motivi che ti hanno indotto a interrompere la tua attività per un lasso di tempo così lungo?»

«Se devo essere onesto non sono stato mai felice di fare il musicista, suonare, per me, non è stato mai naturale, e ancora adesso non lo è completamente. Sono diventato un musicista perché non c'era veramente null'altro che potessi fare, i risultati a scuola erano pessimi, ho cambiato tantissimi lavori, il cameriere, il modello in un istituto d'arte, ma era molto più facile e più divertente fare il musicista rock. Se non hai molti soldi il rock'n'roll è una maniera fantastica di invecchiare senza grossi problemi, potrà sembrarti semplicistico, ma è questo che mi ha spinto a tornare all'attività discografica.»

«Quali ritieni siano le più interessanti differenze tra la scena musicale psichedelica, di cui facevi parte quando suonavi con i Soft Machine, e la situazione attuale?»

«Non penso che, in fondo, ci siano stati dei cambiamenti radicali, allora come adesso il musicista rock non è per nulla pericoloso, ma anzi corrisponde in tutto e per tutto all'immagine dell'eroe romantico totalmente integrato.»

«Quando nel 1976 il punk scosse l'apatia totale che sembrava aver avvolto il rock, ti sei sentito coinvolto dalla cosa?»

«La mia prima reazione è stata di nostalgia, vedevo un'altra generazione credere di poter cambiare il mondo con la musica, sperare che l'establishment britannico potesse essere scosso dal punk ma Johnny Rotten era un'altra figura di eroe romantico, un bravo ragazzo buono per le pagine dei giornali, ma null'altro.»

«Tu, adesso, ritieni di essere parte del movimento new wave?» «Non lo so, certo apprezzo moltissimo gruppi new wave, come le Raincoats, ma mi sento molto più vicino a musicisti come Dudu Pukwana o Mongezi Feza, african dance music di qualche anno fa.»

«E la tua scelta di incidere una versione di *At Last I'm Free* degli Chic?»

«Adesso va di moda dire che la musica degli Chic è pessima, è disco music, non fa pensare, senza accorgersi che così si rinchiude in delle definizioni una materia che, per sua stessa natura, le rifugge. Non parliamo poi di chi accusa la disco di essere fascista, è solo dance music, il suo scopo si ferma lì.»

«E la tua versione di *Caimanera*?»

«Qui il discorso è un po' diverso, attualmente sono interessato a ristabilire un eventuale collegamento tra la folk music e la rock music, è un argomento sul quale si è fatta molta confusione, ancora adesso mi è difficile comprendere fino in fondo quali possano essere le connessioni tra questi due tipi di musica.»

«Ascoltando alcuni gruppi della nuova ondata, Scritti Politti in particolare, il primo riferimento musicale che mi è venuto in mente è stata la scuola di Canterbury...»

«Per quel che riguarda gli Scritti Politti, ed anche altre band, probabilmente l'influenza maggiore viene dai musicisti reggae. Insomma, così come la mia generazione non è riuscita a sottrarsi al fascino dei rifugiati sudafricani che suonavano qui (come Feza), adesso bisogna confrontarsi con la cultura giamaicana, senza scordare che un batterista rock difficilmente può competere con un suo collega giamaicano.»

«Il punk era una musica nichilista, amava scagliarsi contro tutto e tutti. Tu ritieni che la musica, invece, debba avere degli obiettivi precisi?»

«Se parli di obiettivi politici, non credo sia possibile, io sto solo facendo degli esperimenti che ritengo estremamente interessanti, realizzando i remake di cui dicevamo prima, di certo non voglio essere accusato di esotismo, di accostamento di stampo colonialista a culture musicali che non sono le mie.»

«Si parlava precedentemente delle influenze palesi che certa new wave, la più innovativa, in definitiva, ha ricevuto da situazioni musicali ormai lontane un po' di anni. Allora di veramente nuovo non c'è nulla...»

«Non è per nulla vero! Ci sono state delle innovazioni di carattere tecnico, ad esempio nella registrazione dei dischi di Public Image, e poi è mutato lo stile, il modo di porsi nei confronti della materia musicale. C'è molta meno riverenza adesso, più velocità, e poi ci si è scrollati di dosso la deleteria influenza della tradizione accademica, che invece è stata una costante della mia generazione.»

«Vedi ancora la gente con cui suonavi all'epoca di Canterbury?»

«Sono ancora amico di Dave Stewart e Pip Pyle (morto nel 2006, *ndr*), ma non ho più molti contatti con tutta quella gente, né ricordo con molto piacere quel periodo, francamente non è un bel posto Canterbury, soprattutto per viverci.»

«Ma come è stato possibile che in una città di provincia del genere, esplodesse tutto quel fervore musicale?»

«Guarda che la famigerata scena di Canterbury non è mai esistita fino a quando noi non ci siamo trasferiti a Londra, tutta la mitologia è nata da nostre discussioni a Londra. Finché son vissuto a Canterbury, quello che si faceva era ascoltare dischi di Omette Coleman e Max Roach e della Tamia Motown. Non c'erano altre attività possibili, Canterbury è una chiesa più alcune banche, tutto qui. Poi c'era un gruppo di studenti che facevano gli anarchici e che suonavano, giusto perché non sapevano cos'altro fare. Io, Kevin Ayers, Daevid Allen, tutta gente proveniente da famiglie agiate, e che quindi poteva permettersi di non conformarsi al grigiore della città.»

«Pensi che in termini di feeling sia possibile un paragone tra il periodo dei Soft Machine e quello attuale?» «Certamente! Io sono fermamente convinto che il motivo fondamentale del grande successo del punk sia nella nostalgia della pericolosità di un gruppo rock, naturalmente questa pericolosità è solo un'illusione, credo faccia piacere sentirsi in qualche modo partecipi di un atto che si immagina ai confini con il lecito. Per me è questa, poi, la ragione del mod revival e dei trionfi che una band come i Jam, palesemente ispirata agli Who degli anni cattivi, sta ottenendo.»

Discografia Essenziale 1978-82

Arauco/Caimenera, marzo 1980 (7", Rough Trade)
At last I'm free/Strange fruit, novembre 1980 (7", Rough Trade)
Stalin wasn't stallin'/Stalingrad, febbraio 1981 (7", Rough Trade)
Glass/Trade union (Dishari featuring Abdus Salique), agosto 1981 (7", Rough Trade)
Nothing can stop us, aprile 1982 (LP, Rough Trade)
Shipbuilding/Memories of you, agosto 1982 (7", Rough Trade)

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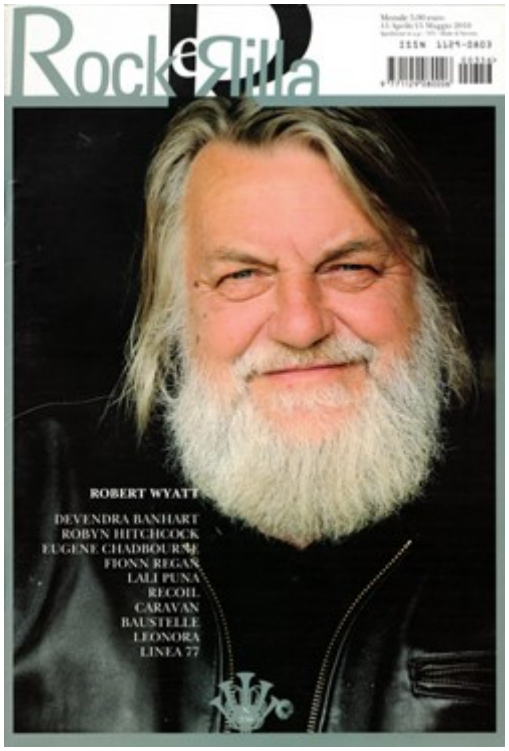
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Robert Wyatt - L'opera tragicomica di un mito vivente - Rockerilla - 15 Aprile/15 Maggio 2010

Robert Wyatt

L'OPERA TRAGICOMICA DI UN MITO VIVENTE

di Daniele Follero



> Zoom

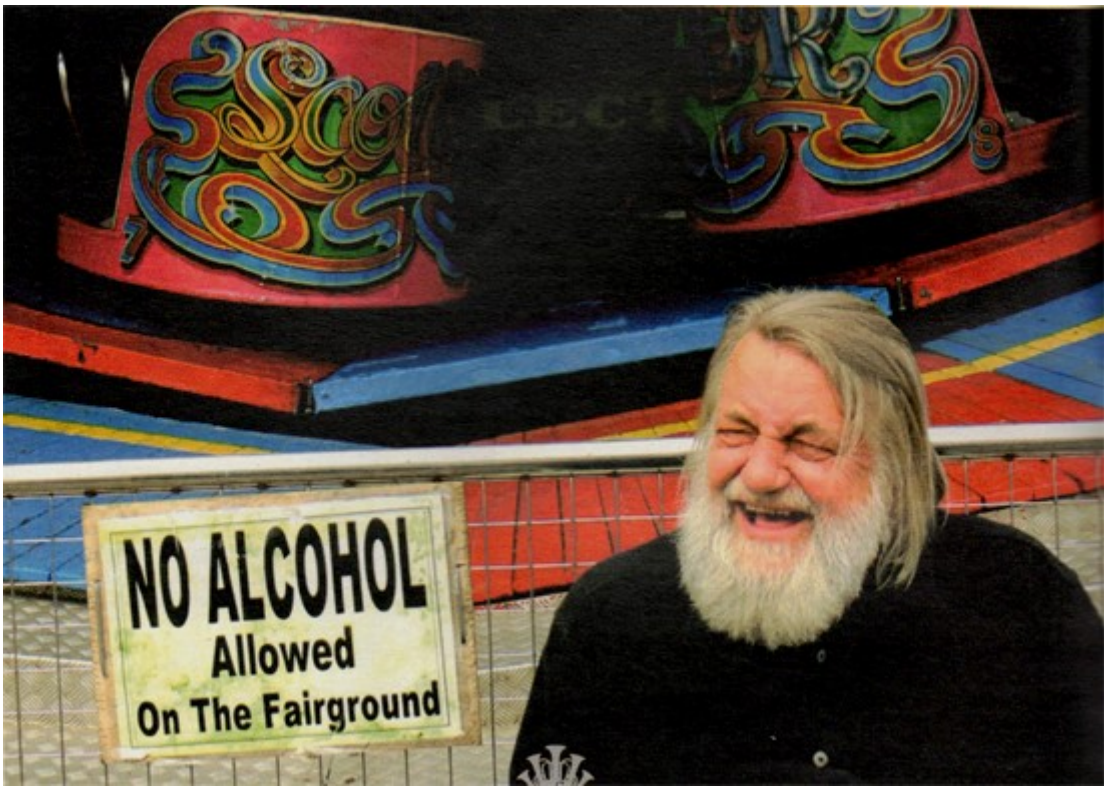
Non è mai stato un virtuoso né del canto né dello strumento (che fosse la tromba o la batteria), ma è un punto di riferimento fondamentale per molti musicisti e compositori; non ha mai amato registrare dischi, preferendo di gran lunga le esecuzioni dal vivo, eppure gli album che ha pubblicato in più di quarant'anni di carriera sono diventati delle pietre miliari della storia della musica del Novecento. Critico, scontroso, poco avvezzo al successo e alla sua gestione, personaggio cardine del rock progressivo inglese, Robert Wyatt è il simbolo di una generazione, ancor prima che un musicista. Una generazione che ha attraversato il rivoluzionario ventennio '60-'70 con l'obiettivo (raggiunto) di dare uno scossone al rock, accompagnandolo attraverso la sua maturità. Creativo per scelta e per necessità, Wyatt incarna il volto migliore di quel rock d'avanguardia, cresciuto con i Beatles, il jazz e la militanza politica e raccolto attorno alla fantomatica "Scuola di Canterbury", riferimento geografico inappropriato, ma diffuso, per definire l'ala sinistra del progressive rock britannico.

La storia di Robert Wyatt Ellidge comincia a Bristol, nel Somerset, dove nasce nel 1945 da George Ellidge, uno psicologo, e da Honor Wyatt, giornalista radiofonica e insegnante. Ma l'infanzia e la prima adolescenza di Robert si dividono tra West Dulwich (un sobborgo di Londra) e Lydden, un paese ad una quindicina di chilometri da Canterbury, dove i genitori gestiscono Wellington House, una *guest house* di 14 stanze che ospitava soprattutto studenti universitari. E' qui che il giovane Robert viene a contatto con Daevid Allen, una delle figure più importanti per la sua formazione artistica, che gli apre le porte della creatività senza confini e senza limiti, accendendo la miccia di un'amicizia e di una collaborazione entrambe felici e durature. E' proprio con Allen che

l'ancora acerbo batterista, fonda la sua prima formazione, il Daevid Allen Trio, completato dal bassista Hugh Hopper, un'altra figura che risulterà fondamentale per il futuro del rock d'avanguardia. Spintosi fino in Francia, però, il Trio si trova ad un bivio. Uno di quegli incroci del destino che, con il senno di poi diventano simbolici: al ritorno in Inghilterra, Daevid Allen, australiano, viene trattenuto alla frontiera francese per problemi con i documenti. L'evento, oltre a segnare la fine del progetto, determina la separazione dei tre e il definitivo trasferimento di Allen in Francia. Di lì poco, a Parigi nasceranno i Gong e in Inghilterra i Wilde Flowers, nucleo primordiale dei futuri Soft Machine.

Siamo nel 1965 e il rock muove i primi passi verso la sua definitiva emancipazione. La psichedelia è alle porte, ma Wyatt e compagni sono lontani da Londra, capitale del movimento, e legati indissolubilmente al jazz. Questo legame risulta fondamentale per la nascita del "Canterbury Sound", quella particolare sfumatura del progressive rock che ha sempre dato grande importanza all'improvvisazione. E che trova compimento nei primi quattro album dei Soft Machine, creatura nata dall'incontro tra Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Kevin Ayers e un redivivo Daevid Allen. Un quartetto, divenuto trio dopo la nuova defezione di Allen, che comincia ad esibirsi davanti ad un pubblico consistente grazie alla possibilità di accompagnare in tour Jimi Hendrix.

Dopo qualche anno, l'esperienza dei Soft Machine comincia a stare stretta alla creatività di Wyatt, che all'inizio degli anni Settanta comincia a spingersi oltre il gruppo prima attraverso collaborazioni (tra cui spiccano la big band Centipede e il progetto Symbiosis con Phil Manzanera, Dave Jarrett, Bill McCormick e Charles Hayward), poi incidendo il suo primo lavoro solista, "The End Of An Ear". Si tratta di un lavoro "difficile" all'ascolto, ma che già prelude alla raffinatezza stilistica del Wyatt solista. Abbandonati definitivamente i Soft Machine, il batterista e cantante da vita ai Matching Mole insieme a Dave Sinclair, Bill McCormick e Phil Miller. Ma la band, il cui nome deriva da un'assonanza con la traduzione francese di Soft Machine ("machine molle"), pur trasformandosi quasi subito in un esempio "classico" della "scena di Canterbury", dura poco più di un anno, lasciando in eredità due album imprescindibili: "Matching Mole" e, soprattutto, "Little Red Record".

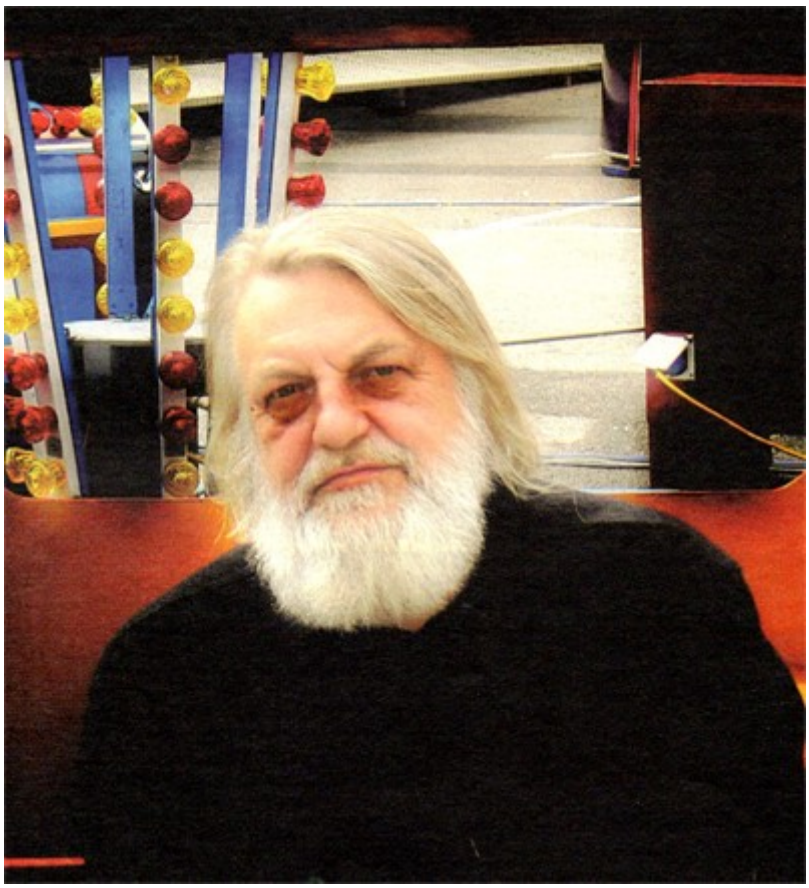


L'1 Giugno del 1973, la vita di Wyatt arriva ad un altro bivio, questa volta più tragico e definitivo. Ubriaco ad una festa, cade da una finestra del terzo piano rimanendo paralizzato dalla cintola in giù. Con il sarcasmo di chi ha accettato una nuova esistenza, Robert avrebbe in seguito commentato così la sua disgrazia: «Il dottore era stupefatto. Mi disse: 'Doveva essere proprio ubriaco per rimanere così rilassato mentre cadeva dal quarto piano'. Se fossi stato appena un po' più sobrio, probabilmente oggi non sarei qui: avrei teso tutto il corpo per la paura e quindi mi sarei fracassato».

Costretto ad abbandonare definitivamente la batteria, Wyatt si dedica quasi completamente alla carriera solistica con la sua voce come unica compagna. Una voce fine, che ama girare attorno alle note senza mai poggiarvisi su, ma capace di spaziare tra un vastissimo range di altezze. Una voce intensa, riconoscibile, "così singolare che la riconosceresti anche da una sola nota" (Carla Bley).

Il primo frutto della nuova esistenza di Robert è il più maturo. Uno di quei lavori inimitabili che segnano per sempre la vita di un artista. Prodotto da Nick Mason dei Pink Floyd, "Rock Bottom" è un album introspettivo, delicato, raffinato. Dopo le sperimentazioni di "The End of an Ear", Wyatt prova a confrontarsi con la forma canzone, anche se questa definizione sta un po' stretta a capolavori di squilibrato equilibrio come "Sea Song". Il pianoforte acquista un ruolo di primo piano, ma le numerose collaborazioni (Fred Frith, Mike Oldfield, Ivor Cutler) garantiscono una grande ricchezza strumentale.

Anche nel suo terzo lavoro solista, "Ruth is Stranger Than Richard" Mason siede in cabina di regia. Stavolta, però, il risultato è più marcatamente orientato verso le radici (free) jazz della musica di Wyatt. Gli anni '70 sono un periodo di grandi collaborazioni per Robert (Henry Cow, Hatfield and the North, Carla Bley), caratterizzato da un acceso attivismo politico che troverà la sua realizzazione pratica nell'iscrizione al Partito Comunista britannico. Il documento forse più bello e significativo di questo nuovo orientamento di un Wyatt sempre meno avvezzo al compromesso, è "Nothing Can Stop Us" (1982), un album tutto basato su rielaborazioni di canti politici e di lotta che spazia da classici come "Guantanamera" (ribattezzata "Caimanera") a "Shipbuilding" di Elvis Costello, una canzone sul conflitto nelle Falkland che gli fruttò anche un discreto successo di vendite.



> Zoom

"A partire dalla metà degli anni '70 mi sentii molto confuso. La mia musica mi pareva totalmente inadeguata. E trovavo immensamente presuntuosa e ridicola l'idea della generazione degli anni '60 che si potesse migliorare il mondo con le sole canzoni di protesta. Cominciai a interessarmi maggiormente alla seria attività rivoluzionaria, cioè quella tesa al rovesciamento del potere".

Percorrendo a tentoni gli anni '80 tra musica e attivismo politico, Robert, verso la fine del decennio, dopo aver abbandonato il Partito, si ritira con la moglie Alfie in Spagna, ritornando sulle scene solo sei anni dopo la pubblicazione di "Old Rottenhat", con "Dondestan", definito da lui stesso un "disco sullo sradicamento, sulla deriva". Alfie scrive,

lui suona quasi tutti gli strumenti: ne viene fuori un lavoro riflessivo e pacato, che qualcuno ha paragonato a "Rock Bottom". E arrivano finalmente anche i riconoscimenti della stampa, sigillo ad una carriera che pian piano lo sta trasformando in un mito vivente.

Le nuove generazioni di musicisti, da Chris Carter dei Throbbing Gristle a Ryuichi Sakamoto, gli chiedono collaborazioni e lui non rifiuta, aperto com'è sempre stato, alle nuove idee della musica sperimentale.

Il resto è storia recente. Una storia che racconta della graduale uscita dalle scene di Wyatt, intervallata, di lustro in lustro, da ritorni sporadici a produzioni più professionali e meno "casalinghe". Come nel caso di "Shleep" (1997), che segna il ritorno di Brian Eno e Phil Manzanera e si avvale della presenza di collaboratori di spicco come Paul Weller e Annie Whitehead. Ci vorranno altri sei anni per produrre nuovo materiale, questa volta prevalentemente dedicato alle canzoni ("Cuckooland", 2003)"e altri quattro ne passeranno prima dell'uscita di "Comicopera" (2007), autoritratto di un musicista già divenuto leggenda. Una leggenda che, per fortuna, continua a respirare.



COMICOPERANDO
A TRIBUTE TO THE MUSIC OF ROBERT WYATT
Modena, Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti 01/03

E' raro che venga tributato un omaggio ad un artista ancora in vita. Qualcuno potrebbe addirittura pensare che porta male. Ma nel caso di Robert Wyatt, leggenda vivente della musica del Novecento, ormai definitivamente ritiratosi dalle scene, salvo qualche sporadica comparsa discografica, il tributo acquista il senso di gratitudine per un musicista mai abbastanza stimato rispetto all'importanza che ha avuto per almeno tre generazioni di musicisti. Non è la prima volta che si omaggia la musica di Wyatt (in Italia ricordiamo il maldestro tentativo dei musicisti nostrani nell'album "A different you. Robert Wyatt e noi", cui partecipò lui stesso al fianco di Jovanotti e Max Gazzè), ma è forse la più importante.
Questa volta sono alcuni tra i suoi più grandi collaboratori e amici di sempre ad essersi riuniti per celebrarne il genio musicale. Basta leggere alcuni nomi l'uno a fianco all'altro, per avere la percezione dell'evento: Chris Cutler, Dagmar Krause, Richard Sinclair, Annie Whitehead, Gilad Atzmon. Il passato e il presente di Robert riuniti sul suggestivo palco del teatro modenese. Nove musicisti (la formazione è completata da Alex Maguire, John Edwards, Michel Delville e l'italiano Cristiano Calcagnile) e una scaletta che scava nel repertorio di Wyatt dagli anni dei Soft Machine ("Pataphysical Introduction") e dei Matching Mole ("O Caroline") fino al recente "Comicopera".
In alcuni casi si nota la mancanza di affiatamento tra musicisti così diversi e con poche prove alle spalle, tuttavia i momenti di grande intensità non mancano, come quando il sentito omaggio si materializza nella splendida voce della Krause in "Sea Song", probabilmente il simbolo stesso della musica di Wyatt. E' Richard Sinclair, però, con il suo timbro sottile e dolce, ad evocare più da vicino la figura di Robert, che sembra quasi comparire sul palco ed afferrare il microfono. Ma non c'è e non verrà. Sapere che è vivo, in questo caso, ci consola.





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Robert Wyatt - InSound - n°22 - novembre 2007



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ROBERT WYATT

A CURA DI CLAUDIO CHIANURA

Una delle voci più emozionanti del rock inglese, tra i protagonisti della cosiddetta Scuola di Canterbury negli anni '60, prima con i Wilde Flowers, poi con i Soft Machine e quindi con i Matching Mole, Robert Wyatt avvia una carriera solista e nel 1974, dopo un incidente che lo costringe sulla sedia a rotelle, realizza *Rock Bottom*, uno dei dischi più originali e affascinanti di tutti i tempi. Quindi una serie di singoli e poi di album mai banali, fino al penultimo, imperdibile, *Cockooland* e ora l'ultimo, Comicopera. Ecco la nostra intervista.

IS *- Quando ti rivedremo in Italia? L'ultima volta è stata almeno dieci anni fa a Torino, e poi ci siamo sentiti solo via telefono, per il libro di interviste* **Postcards from Italy***, ti ricordi?*

Wyatt - Certo che mi ricordo! Ma non viaggio più in aereo, adesso... Quando siamo venuti a Torino, l'ultima volta, abbiamo incontrato diversi problemi con il treno e la carrozzella nell'ultima parte del viaggio. Quindi la prossima volta dobbiamo trovare un treno migliore, o un altro sistema...

IS *- Magari potresti venire per quattro o cinque giorni solamente, durante la bella stagione.*

Wyatt - Sì, mi piacerebbe, sai che l'Italia è la mia nazione preferita!

IS *- È sempre un piacere ascoltare un tuo nuovo disco, questo in particolare mi riporta indietro ad alcune raccolte di singoli del passato che abbiamo tanto amato, è un lavoro quindi diverso rispetto ai precedenti, come* ***Shleep*** *o* ***Cuckooland****, probabilmente più leggero, in un certo senso*.

BREVE BIOGRAFIA

Nato Robert Ellidge, il 28 gennaio 1945 a Bristol, ha poi preso il cognome della madre, Honor Wyatt. Il 26 luglio 1974 ha sposato in seconde nozze Alfreda Benge (Alfie). È uno dei protagonisti della cosiddetta Scuola di Canterbury, riconducibile al progressive rock inglese. Autore di testi ironici e corrosivi, ha sviluppato il suo stile musicale unico fuori da ogni pressione di carattere commerciale. Interessato alla musica fin da giovane età, annovera tra i suoi compagni di scuola i fratelli Hopper, Hugh e Brian, Michael Ratledge, e i cugini Sinclair, Richard e David. Nei primi anni '60, Hugh Hopper, i Sinclair e Wyatt, insieme a un altro compagno di scuola, Kevin Ayers, trascorrono il loro tempo leggendo poesie, ascoltando jazz e facendo musica. I Wyatt ospitano nella propria residenza, tra gli altri, l'australiano Daevid Allen, sei anni più grande di Robert Wyatt. I due fanno amicizia e condividono l'amore per il jazz e uno spirito iconoclasta. Allen si trasferisce a Parigi nel 1964, Wyatt e gli altri compagni formano la rock band The Wilde Flowers.

Nel 1966 Daevid Allen, tornato da un soggiorno a Majorca con Kevin Ayers, propone la formazione di un nuovo gruppo chiamato The Soft Machine, rock band finanziata da un eccentrico milionario incontrato dai due sull'isola spagnola. Wyatt lascia i Wilde Flowers e si unisce come cantante e batterista; a loro, fresco di laurea a Oxford, si unisce come organista Ratledge. Il

Wyatt - Sì, nelle canzoni c'è qualcosa dei tipici pezzi degli anni '60, sono brani piuttosto diversi, per la maggior parte canzoni intese nel senso tradizionale, proprio come fossero canzoni folk. È stata una sorta di piccola vacanza, qualcosa di diverso, anche se ci sono Gilad e Orphy che suonano un duetto in "On The Town Square" o Orphy Robinson da solo in "Pastafari" mentre suo figlio giocava intorno al vibrafono... Piccoli dettagli. È un disco più semplice nel senso che è molto più chiara la distinzione tra le tracce.

IS *- **Cuckooland** era un lavoro molto bello, intenso, pieno di sapori forti... Comicopera è come una piccola vacanza anche per l'ascoltatore.*

Wyatt - Sì, è così.

IS *- Come hai scelto i pezzi di **Comicopera**? Ho apprezzato molto la scelta di "Stay Tuned", che è uno tra quelli che più amo di Anja Garbarek.*

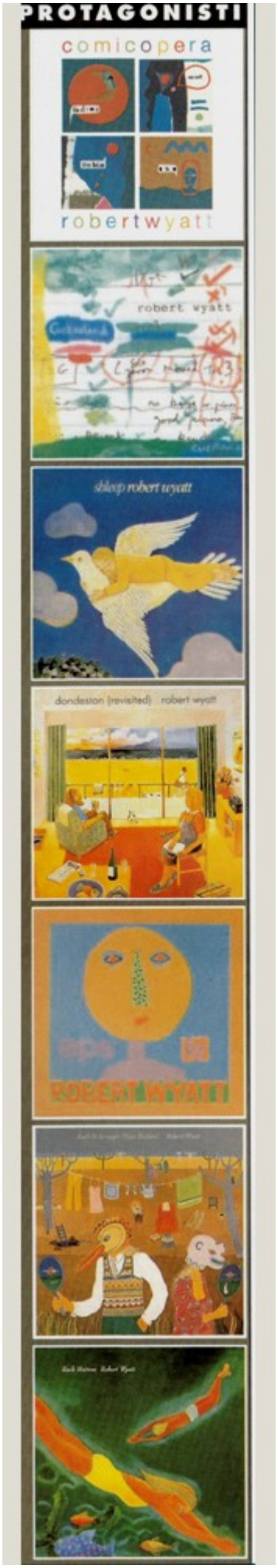
Wyatt - Sì, la ragione per cui l'ho scelta, insieme a un paio di pezzi italiani, è perché ci sono alcune cose nel continente che volevo fossero ascoltate dalla gente di area inglese. Per lo stesso motivo ho voluto che fosse ascoltata Cristina Dona: è talmente parte del mio mondo, nella mia testa, che ho voluto condividerlo. Ecco tutto!

IS *- La tua voce aggiunge sempre qualcosa alle canzoni, alle persone piace ascoltare canzoni già note reinterpretate da te. Vorrei chiederti qualcosa a proposito della forma che hai proposto. Alcuni musicisti hanno fatto lo stesso, ovvero cercare di lavorare anche sul formato cd, qualcosa di diverso dal solito. Il tuo è diviso in tre parti, come è successo?*

Wyatt - Non è stato pianificato in partenza. Quando tutto il materiale era pronto, mi è parso che prendesse tre corsi diversi, diverse parti, preoccupazioni. La prima tratta di amori e perdite personali, la seconda è un altro sguardo attorno all'essere inglese, la terza è come una considerazione: ok, qualcosa va bene, qualcosa è bello, qualcos'altro non va così bene, e alla fine mi sono ricordato che siamo dentro questa maledetta e sanguinaria guerra, senza nessuna buona ragione, e ho deciso improvvisamente che ne avevo abbastanza; quindi la terza parte parla delle diverse avventure da me vissute nel passato e di tutte le diverse idee della gente, i diversi sogni che vagano nella testa, il sogno della rivoluzione, di scrivere musica... una sorta di mistica famiglia cattolica del mondo... Insomma, diverse dimensioni mentali che si possono attraversare, quando la realtà diventa un tantino intollerabile, capisci. Oppure: è tutto realtà, ma il confinamento fisico da parte del mondo politico nel quale vivi potrebbe essere troppo condizionante per l'immaginazione.

IS *- Sei sempre stato motto consapevole rispetto a quanto succede nei mondo, e allo stesso tempo sempre ottimista, lo sei ancora?*

Wyatt - Ecco come stanno le cose: tutte le volte che puoi tagliare l'erba fino a un pollice dal terreno, ma può ancora crescere... Ecco, ogni generazione può fare un nuovo tentativo per fare del mondo un posto più decente. Potrei essere molto cinico, e dire che so che tutti hanno rinunciato. Ma non hanno rinunciato. Se guardi a tutta la realtà latino-americana, sta ribollendo, è in totale cambiamento, dal Venezuela al Cile, all'Argentina, al Perù. E La Bolivia, il primo vero leader politico indigeno in Bolivia, la donna che ora è



primo ministro in Cile ed era stata torturata da Pinochet. Queste cose non si possono uccidere, queste persone continuano a provarci, nell'interesse di queste persone è immorale dire che non vale la pena di lottare.

IS *- Patti Smith ha detto: non voglio arrivare alle persone della mia generazione, che hanno eletto Bush e fatto tante altre cose orribili, ma ai giovani, perché loro possono cambiare il mondo. Qual è la tua opinione, hai fiducia nei giovani, che possano fare qualcosa?*

Wyatt - Non è esattamente un fatto di fiducia nei giovani... Non è necessariamente una contrapposizione giovani/anziani, è solo che il bisogno di un certo tipo di autonomia, di una qualche sorta di giustizia nel mondo, è una forza sempre presente. Credo Chomsky abbia detto che c'è solo una cosa più forte delle forze armate degli Stati Uniti con tutti gli alleati e la loro élite affaristica, ed è l'intera popolazione del mondo. Penso che questa volontà di vita che ogni generazione possiede si manifesti, venga fuori in continuazione. Non ho mai particolarmente aderito alla mitologia della popolazione giovanile, perché mi sembra che sia arrivata insieme al marketing della rock music, e per i capitalisti era solo un nuovo mercato, un nuovo target. Non ha specifiche caratteristiche morali ereditate, può andare ovunque, è solo una forza che è lì, e la gente può prenderla e usarla. Per come stanno andando le cose oggi, non separerei le generazioni, perché molte delle migliori idee che ancora funzionano sono frutto delle generazioni precedenti. Per esempio, prima dicevo dell'America Latina. Non so quanto sia forte in Italia, ma qui c'è un forte movimento per il mercato equo e solidale, e non è solo una sorta di gruppo di pressione di sinistra. Ora anche i super-mercati pubblicizzano la presenza di caffè equo e solidale proveniente da qualche parte del mondo, intendendo con ciò che le persone che lavorano nelle piantagioni sono pagate e trattate equamente, e così via. Anche se è falso, se quando lo fanno non sono onesti, alla fine sanno che ci devono provare, non è solo un gruppo di pressione di sinistra, si tratta di ottenere il consenso generale: la gente ormai sa dello sfruttamento, della schiavitù umana praticata nell'emisfero meridionale per servire il ricco Nord, molto più che in passato. Le nuove generazioni lo sanno. Molti giovani fanno volontariato in Africa, hanno acquisito coscienza, e anche le stesse persone nei diversi paesi vittime del colonialismo, generazione dopo generazione sono molto acute e intelligenti. Per esempio, per tornare all'America Latina, la situazione imbarazzante nella quale si è venuto a trovare il capo di Benetton... Ha pensato al problema, e voleva proteggere il Sud America da questo capitalismo brutale, così ha comprato enormi appczzamenti di terra, ma il problema è che nessuno vi poteva abitare. E quando gli indios Mapuche, che in origine erano i proprietari delle terre, hanno cominciato a spostarsi e a costruire abitazioni, lui li ha fermati. Guardiamo agli argomenti di entrambe le parti. Lui diceva: occorre preservare quanto più possibile, visto che finora non abbiamo fatto che distruggere; e i Mapuche invece: è la nostra terra, vogliamo viverci.

quartetto debutta col singolo "Love Makes Sweet Music" nel 1967, mentre i restanti membri dei Wilde Flowers formano i Caravan.
Insoddisfatto dalla strada presa dai Soft Machine ormai al quarto album, Wyatt lascia nel 1971 per formare i Matching Mole, suggerito dalla pronuncia francese della stessa espressione "Soft Machine."
I Matching Mole pubblicano due album e suonano in tour per l'Europa fino a quando Wyatt scioglie la band verso la fine del 1972 a causa di problemi economici e stress vari. Durante una festa, il primo giugno 1973, Wyatt cade da una finestra del quarto piano e si rompe la spina dorsale, restando paralizzato dalla vita in giù. Nel libro Falsi movimenti spiega il suo punto di vista sull'accaduto: "La gente pensa che io abbia problemi a parlare del mio incidente... In realtà ho problemi a parlare di quel che avvenne prima dell'incidente... Il mio Io adolescente, il batterista bipede, non me ne ricordo e non lo capisco... Ora vedo l'incidente come una sorta di netta divisione tra la mia adolescenza e il resto della mia vita."
Dopo aver già esordito con il primo album solista The end of an ear, Robert Wyatt si concentra dunque sull'uso della voce e delle tastiere e nel 1974 pubblica Rock Bottom, una pietra miliare della musica rock meno commerciale. Inoltre, una sua versione del singolo "I'm A Believer" scala le classifiche inglesi di quello stesso anno.
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, l'album successivo, è ricco di accenti più jazz. Nella metà degli anni '70, Wyatt abbandona le scene, disgustato dal music business. Tornerà in pubblico nel 1980 con quattro singoli, più tardi raccolti nell'ep Nothing Can Stop Us. Nel 1982, ispirato da quei singoli stessi, Elvis Costello scrive un inno contro la guerra, "Shipbuilding", che immagina perfetto per l'interpreta-



Non esprimo un giudizio sulla disputa in corso, dico solo che è fantastico che ci sia una disputa in corso. Gli indiani Mapuche che non hanno avuto niente per centinaia di anni, e sono stati trattati come immondizia, stanno negoziando con un grosso capitalista occidentale di successo, e stanno anche cercando di coinvolgere altre persone nel rispetto della propria terra. Naturalmente gli indigeni hanno ragione, ma è anche vero che il capitalismo ci sta provando. Questo è un po' quello che sta succedendo nel mondo, e penso che sia degno di molto rispetto.

IS *- Pensi che la scena musicale sia migliore rispetto alla scena politica e sociale? È una cosa che abbiamo creduto in motti.*

Wyatt - In realtà, davvero, non l'ho mai pensato. Ho vissuto una forma di sviluppo molto ritardata. All'epoca in cui le persone pensavano all'ottimismo politico della generazione giovanile degli anni '60, io non ne facevo parte, pensavo a suonare la batteria, a ubriacarmi, alle ragazze. Ho cominciato a pensare a tutte queste cose troppo tardi. Ho semplicemente sempre avuto un istinto contro il razzismo, un istinto nel sentire l'uguaglianza delle persone, indipendentemente dalle diverse culture e apparenze, e tutto ciò mi ha spinto verso la sinistra, perché mi sembrava che più la gente andasse a destra più fosse razzista. Ma non ho mai creduto al mito dei giovani, che è stato confuso da un mix di nozioni romantiche del '900, alla qualità della gioventù, per definizione, che invece non è un'entità fissa, ma cambia ogni anno... Poi quello che succede è che pensano: ero ribelle quando ero giovane, ora ho una casa, una moglie e quindi sarò un conservatore. Questo è lo schema comune, perfettamente prevedibile, quindi non l'ho mai preso seriamente come idea politica, non ho mai creduto che il rock'n'roll potesse liberare il mondo. Neanche una volta.

IS *- Cosa pensi di questi grossi eventi nei quali la gente raccoglie fondi per l'Africa o simili?*

Wyatt - Spero che si divertano, credo che siano fantastici, importanti e utili soprattutto per le persone che li organizzano.

IS *- È un grande business...*

Wyatt - Non voglio esprimere giudizi, o forse non dovrei, va bene, ma è ancora la cultura dell'assistenzialismo e della carità, è sempre carità: bisogna fare qualcosa per i poveri, ma queste cose non cambiano niente. Se le cose andassero come dovrebbero, non ci sarebbe più nessun bisogno della

sti, Robert Wyatt è rimasto fuori dal mondo musicale per diversi anni, dopo la registrazione nel 1991 dell'album Dondestan. *Del 1997 è* Shleep, *album che apre una nuova fase più riflessiva e aperta alle diverse collaborazioni di amici musicisti come Brian Eno, Annie Whitehead, Phil Manzanera, tra gli altri. Quindi il bellissimo* Cockooland *e ora, in queste settimane, l'uscita di* Comicopera *(recensito sullo scorso numero di* IS*).*

Discografia selezionata come solista

- End of An Ear, *CBS, 1970.*
- Rock Bottom, *Virgin, 1974, (Thirsty Ear, 1998).*
- Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, *Virgin, 1975 (Thirsty Ear, 1998).*
- Nothing Can Stop Us, *Rough Trade, 1981 (Thirsty Ear, 1998).*
- The Animals Film Soundtrack, *Rough Trade, 1984 (Thirsty Ear, 1998).*
- Old Rottenhat, *Rough Trade, 1986 (Thirsty Ear, 1998).*
- Dondestan, *Gramavision, 1991 (Thirsty Ear, 1998).*
- Mid-Eighties *(registrato nel. 1982-86), Gramavision, 1993.*
- A Short Break, *Voiceprint, 1994.*
- Shleep, *Thirsty Ear, 1997.*
- Cockooland, *Thirsty Ear, 2003.*
- Comicopera, *Thirsty Ear, 2007.*

carità.

IS *- Ci sono molti tuoi amici musicisti inglesi in questo ultimo album, penso a Phil Manza nera, e molti altri. In che rapporti sei con loro, come mai hai pensato di coinvolgerli per il nuovo disco?*

Wyatt - Mi è successa una cosa molto bella, negli ultimi due o tre dischi: prima di tutto io e Phil abbiamo riscoperto un'amicizia, ora è sposato e ha un bambino, Jamie, e lavorare nel suo studio, incontrare il giovane tecnico del suono che ci lavora, è stato molto umano, amichevole. Poi è apparso anche Brian Eno, che abita a poche pedalate di bicicletta lì vicino, e sono venute altre persone ancora, il bassista Yaron Stavi, anche lui vive a poche fermate di autobus, portava il suo basso con il bus. Poi sono venuti altri amici, Annie Whitehead, molto importante per me, poi un amico di Yaron, Gilad Atz-mon, che suona nel suo gruppo. Con queste persone abbiamo poi cercato una maniera di lavorare, abbiamo creato una ventina di testi, anche con chi non pensava davvero di poterlo fare. Io cominciavo usando una parola, poi lei rispondeva a questa parola suggerendone altre... Io, Alfie, Phil e Jamie, Annie, Gilad e Yaron, abbiamo costituito un gruppo, anche se siamo un gruppo che si trova solo poche volte in alcuni anni, ma quando lo fa la sensazione è quella di una gran bella riunione di famiglia.

IS *- E come decidi di fare cover di altre canzoni più o meno note, anziché comparne di nuove?*

Wyatt - Volevo solo fare il disco più godibile possibile entro le mie possibilità. Così, naturalmente scrivo musiche e testi, ma mi fa anche piacere celebrare canzoni che già esistono, presentarle in una maniera diversa... Credo che sia proprio della tradizione folk: se c'è una canzone folk, tutti nella comunità la possono cantare, appartiene alla comunità. Penso di fare delle cover di altri autori proprio in questo senso, che si tratti di Anja Garbarek o di Carlos Puebla.

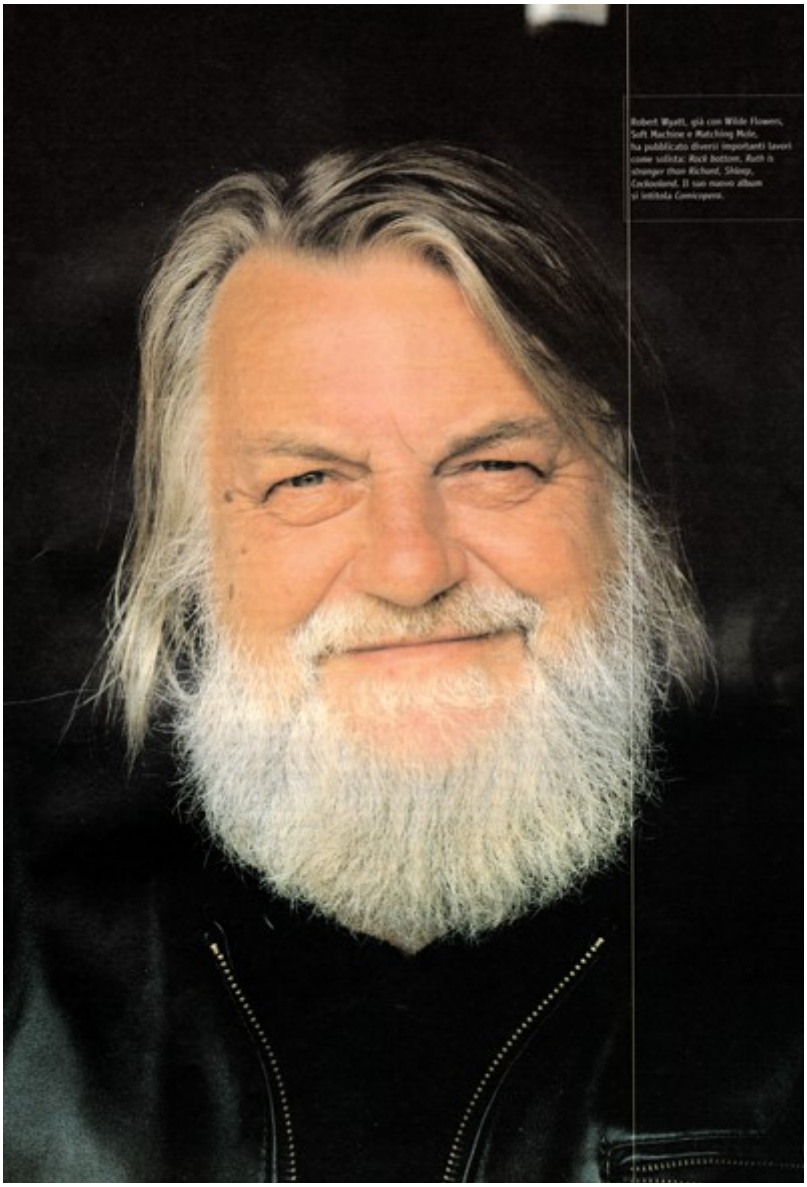
IS *- Alcuni hanno anche fatto tue cover, ma forse sono impauriti dalla tua voce così bella, no?*

Wyatt - Spero di no, so che Anja ha provato ad arrangiarle e ha detto che sono più difficili di quello che la gente a volte potrebbe credere, in realtà suonano piuttosto semplici, ma a volte ci sono delle piccole cose che succedono, dal punto di vista ritmico o armonico, che confondono le persone. Non posso far altro che scusarmi con lei, le ho scritte così, non pensavo che qualcuno sarebbe andato a controllarle!

IS *- Non sappiamo mai cosa farai nel prossimo album, se inviterai musicisti, suonerai nuovi strumenti, o userai un sampler... Come decidi di scegliere strumenti diversi?*

Wyatt - In realtà dipende dalla canzone. Ciascuna canzone mi sembra abbia una sua atmosfera, e mi chiede di essere presentata in una certa maniera. Ci sono alcune cose con le quali sono cresciuto, e che amo, come questo pezzo di trombone e sax tenore insieme, che ho usato piuttosto spesso in **Comicopera**, e arriva dall'ascolto di Charles Mingus negli anni '50. La strumentazione è simile a quella delle band jazz, ma con piccole canzoni. Ecco da dove arrivo, musicalmente. Lo stesso vale per la sezione ritmica, c'è un po' di ritmica rock, ma per la maggior parte è una specie di fumoso, ambiguo ritmo di un certo tipo di jazz, della mia generazione. Poi l'altra cosa sono le persone. Per esempio una delle ragioni per cui ho scelto Orphy Robinson a vibrafono e steel pan in questo disco, non è perché pensavo di volerci un vibrafono o uno steel pan, ma perché ci volevo Orphy Robinson. È cresciuto con i Jazz Warriors, Courtney Pine... e lui ha una maniera di suonare completamente diversa, eccentrica. Ho pensato: che curioso giovanotto, vorrei avvicinarmi a lui, alla sua maniera di lavorare, ecco perché mi sono rivolto a lui. Quindi normalmente è il carattere della persona che mi fa propendere per lo strumento. Per esempio, nel passato, non ero molto da chitarra rock, non appartengo al mainstream del rock basato sulla

chitarra, ma ho sempre pensato che due o tre bravi chitarristi avessero una tale forza di carattere, come Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera, e naturalmente David Gilmour, e che sarebbe stato bellissimo se avessero fatto capolino in un paio di tracce. Ma è perché sono loro come persone... Quello che mi piace di Paul non è tanto il fatto che suoni la chitarra, quello che mi piace di Paul, è Paul.



> Zoom

IS *- Quindi a volte sei il primo a essere sorpreso dalle tue canzoni.*

Wyatt - Sì, ho lavorato per quarantanni con degli amici, con altri normalmente non avrei lavorato, alcuni come Gary Windo sono morti, andati in un altro spazio... a volte mi manca quel senso di compagnia. In verità, quando sono venuto in Italia stavo vivendo un periodo di grande depressione, quindi ero triste, sono andato a parlare con delle persone, forse a Milano, non ricordo, e qualcuno nel pubblico mi chiese come mai non suonassi con altri musicisti, visto che avevo appena concluso un disco completamente da solo, forse era **Dondestan**. Ho pensato che questa persona avesse ragione: perché non chiedere ad altri musicisti? È stata la domanda di una persona tra il pubblico italiano a farmi cominciare a pensare: ma perché faccio sempre dischi da solo? Stavo cominciando a sparire nel mio mondo dei sogni, poi le persone come Annie e Phil mi hanno aiutato a uscirne. Sono comunque felice di aver fatto dischi da solo, sono stati importanti, mi hanno aiutato a capire che potevo fare ciò che ho fatto senza aiuto, una sorta di politica paraplegica, o qualcosa del genere!

IS *- E cosa pensi dei fatto che forse oggi la musica è più ricca, nei senso che le persone ascoltano musica proveniente da ogni parte del mondo, le cose si mescolano, anche tu l'hai fatto in passato, in un certo senso: non solo rock, non solo musica inglese, ma tante cose diverse che interagiscono. Oggi ascolti ancora molta musica?*

Wyatt - Sì, naturalmente. Però oggi ascolto cantanti più spesso di quanto non lo facessi prima. La base dei miei ascolti è sempre stata il main-stream jazz, che di per sé è già world music, una mescolanza di gente africana, ebrea, italiana, inglese, olandese... Il jazz mi ha condotto verso la world music, e naturalmente anche il rock'n'roll, ma non ascolto dei musicisti in particolare... Ascolto più voci femminili che maschili, penso che il motivo sia la complementarietà tra la voce maschile e quella femminile, per esempio Cristi n a Dona, Karen Mantler o Monica Vasconcelos, molto brava, che abita a Londra, e canta nella seconda traccia di **Comicopera**. Ha fatto un disco al quale abbiamo lavorato io e Alfie, con un titolo che parla da solo, ***HiHi***, davvero bello.

IS *- Hai anche lavorato con Bjork.*

Wyatt - Sì, è stato incredibile, penso che lei sia magnifica, un genio, quando ho sentito la sua voce al telefono non ci credevo, così inconfondibile, anche quando parla, poi è venuta per il disco e ci siamo divertiti, ma ti devo confessare che ero nervoso. Ero sorpreso che avesse sentito di me e pensato di fare qualcosa insieme.



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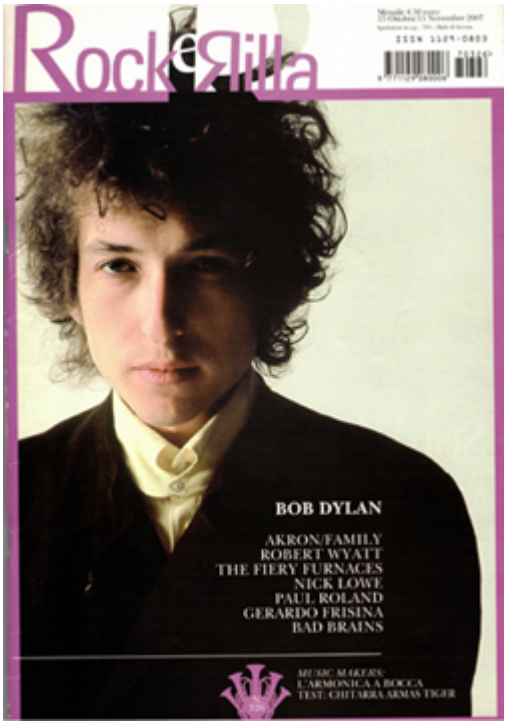
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Robert Wyatt - Ci fidiamo di lui - Rockerilla - 15 Ottobre/15 Novembre 2007

Robert Wyatt

CI FIDIAMO DI LUI di Domenico Caccamo e Giancarlo Costamagna



Quando, durante un'intervista su BBC4 in una trasmissione tributo a Robert Wyatt, l'intervistatore chiese alla moglie Alfie se avesse mai visto Robert in qualche modo depresso o triste per la sua situazione, lei rispose di getto: "Quando capita la ragione non è da ricercarsi nella sua invalidità piuttosto per le ingiustizie e le brutture che vede nel mondo; possiede al suo interno una forza enorme, straripante di energie positive".

La sua invalidità infatti non ha mai rappresentato un freno alla sua indomita creatività. Dalla dolce poesia di "Rock Bottom", alla denuncia politica dei desaparecidos con "Dondestan". Dall'escapismo poetico di "Shleep" alle sfumature sperimental jazz-noir di "Cuckooland". Il suo cammino creativo è stato davvero costellato di magiche emozioni ricche di stile e personalità. Oggi Robert Wyatt ritorna con un nuovo episodio, un'ode alla sua vita. Un tributo sincero all'amore ed all'amicizia. Un affare assai intimo. Intervistare Robert Wyatt è come parlare ad un vecchio amico che non vedi da tempo...

- Sono trascorsi quattro anni dal tuo ultimo lavoro, "Cuckooland". Al di là dell'impegno profuso per comporre il nuovissimo disco, sei stato oltremodo coinvolto in svariate collaborazione con David Gilmour, Steve Neive, Max Richter e Bjork. Quale tra queste consideri la più gratificante?

«Non sono in grado di stilare un elenco di preferenze. E' stato un onore ed un vero piacere ricevere tutte queste richieste di collaborazione. La più sorprendente è stata sicuramente Bjork la quale in occasione di una visita a casa mia si è mostrata davvero speciale, ricca di personalità, elettrica, intelligente, simpatica ed assai ispirata. Essere poi nell'opera di Steve Neive è stato meraviglioso. Muriel Teodori, che ha scritto l'opera di Neive 'Welcome To The Voice', è un'altra persona assai interessante. David Gilmour (Pink Floyd) è un vecchio amico

a cui non direi mai di no. Ed infine all'album di Max Richter ho regalato alcune parole, emozionandomi».

- Le collaborazioni sono state certo un'esperienza positiva, ma non hai mai pensato di produrre qualcuno. Ti è mai stato chiesto?

«Ci ho pensato anche se onestamente nessuno me lo ha mai chiesto. Mi piacerebbe. Tuttavia già i musicisti con cui collaboro sono profondamente liberi di muoversi in qualsiasi direzione sotto la mia ispirazione. Per esempio nel mio nuovo album Annie Whitehead, Gilad Atzmon e Paul Weller hanno espresso situazioni musicali totalmente diverse rispetto a quelle che normalmente sono soliti esprimere, ed è stato assai stimolante».

- Chi davvero ti piacerebbe produrre?

«Chissà, è difficile rispondere. So che Cristina Donà pubblicherà a breve un nuovo disco. Ecco mi piacerebbe produrre la Donà. Gradirei incontrarla nuovamente e fare qualcosa per lei. Posso infine aggiungere che ho appena iniziato uno sfumato lavoro di produzione per Monica Vasconcelos (che canta nella traccia n.2 "Just As You Are"), una favolosa cantante brasiliana trasferitasi a Londra. Sta preparando il suo album di debutto tutto in inglese con l'aiuto mio e di mia moglie Alfie, sui testi».

- Siamo rimasti un po disorientati dal titolo del nuovo lavoro "Comic Opera' or 'Comicopera'?

«E' un titolo buffo. Mi è stato riferito che il nome ha origini portoricane e significa "Buffa coppia". Tuttavia la mia scelta quando ancora ero all'oscuro di questo è stata quella di giocare quasi fosse un piccolo puzzle composto da alcune lettere dell'alfabeto».

- "Cuckooland' era diviso in due atti "Neither here" e "Not there", mentre "Comicopera" è invece composto da tre atti: "Lost In Noise", "The Here And The Now" e "Away With The Fairies". Puoi spiegarci come le singoli canzoni si collegano ai tre atti, cominciando con 'Lost In Noise'?

«Lost In Noise" è un pezzo che indaga situazioni assai personali ed in particolare la relazione tra un uomo ed una donna interrotta bruscamente da un evento luttuoso, un sogno a tinte scure, alle volete anche i legami più stretti possono conoscere una fine tragica».



E l'atto due: "The Here And The Now"?

In questa parte esploro più direttamente la realtà quasi fossi un viaggiatore errante in giro

per il Regno Unito dove ho visto paesaggi bellissimi ma anche cose tristi ed assai disturbanti».

Non ci resta che l'ultimo atto: 'Away With The Fairies'?

"Away With The Fairies" raccoglie mie considerazioni che attestano quanto sia "invidiabile" l'Inghilterra, che ha deciso di spedire soldati in altri paesi del mondo per portare morte : distruzione. Sono onestamente disgustato da questa situazione. Penso all'invasione dell'Iraq, un paese che mai aveva minacciato l'Inghilterra. Sono ormai troppe le volte in cui il nostro paese, l'Europa e l'America in virtù di un supposta missione di civiltà distribuiscono morte in paesi come Iraq, Libano, Iran e Siria. Missioni senza senso, colonialismo spicciolo, mascherato da voglia di esportare democrazia».

- Puoi citarci quali sono le canzoni di "Comicopera" a cui sei più affezionato?

«C'è una splendida canzone 'Del Mondo' che canto in italiano a cui collabora il Consorzio Suonatori Indipendenti, già apparsa in altra versione in "The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi", un tributo di artisti italiani nei miei confronti. E' un atto sincero che esprime i sentimenti messi a nudo. Poi amo particolarmente "Cancion de Julieta', un pezzo collegato a Garcia Llorca, un surrealista omosessuale che fu ucciso dai fascisti e che riporta alla mente il reale rischio rappresentato dal fanatismo politico-religioso. Ed infine "Hasta Siempre Comandante" (Carlos Puebla), una canzone della mia generazione a proposito del buon vecchio Che Guevara dove abbiamo cercato di combinare Cuban folk style music con elementi più moderni, coadiuvato dalle belle voci di Monica Vasconcelos e Karen Mantler».

- "Comicopera" miscela stili musicali svariati dal rock all'avant garde, dal pop al jazz, come sei riuscito a raggiungere l'equilibrio in questo caleidoscopio multicolore di stili?

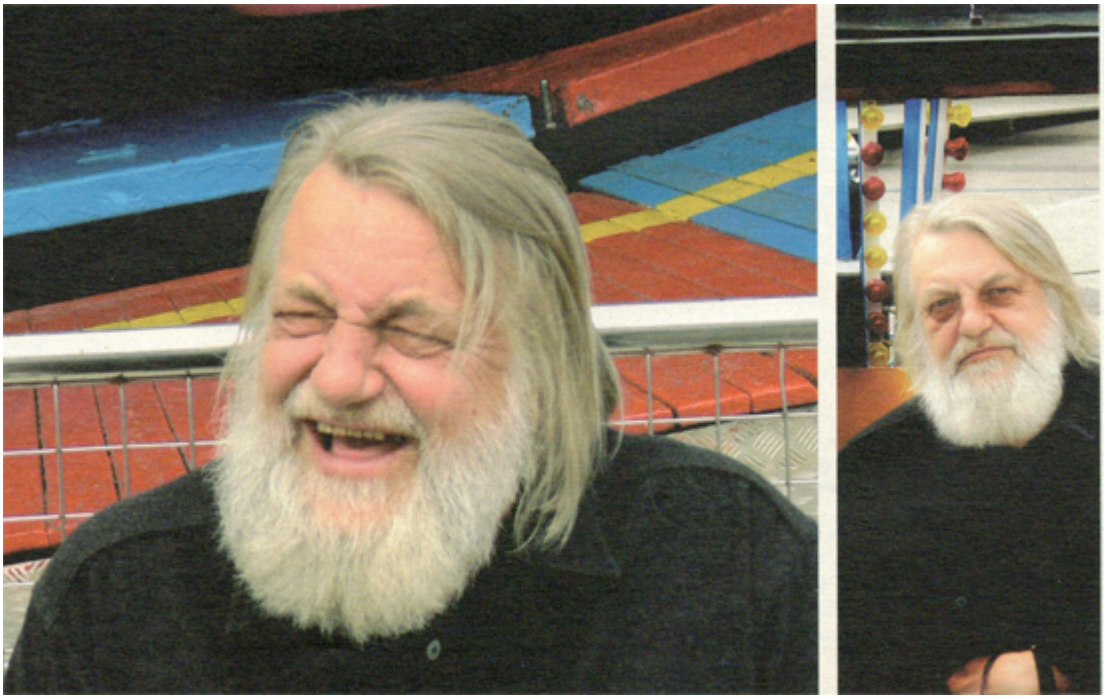
«E' stata una scelta squisitamente musicale. E forse a tratti era già successo nei miei precedenti lavori "Shleep" and "Cuckooland". E' stato magico e complesso interagire con tutti i musicisti coinvolti di volta in volta. Abbiamo mescolato più che sovrapposto i diversi stili e le differenti attitudini strumentali, .e ciò è stato possibile perché ormai ci conosciamo da oltre dieci anni e possiamo considerarci una piccola famiglia. Ed è stato emozionante riuscire ad avere insieme Brian Eno e Paul Weller, così distanti ma così vicini».

- Per noi 'Comicopera' rappresenta una sorta di percorso a ritroso che traccia la tua vita in musica a partire da 'Rock Bottom', sei d'accordo?

«E' proprio così, è un disco molto autobiografico. Un movimento graduale che nasce da un processo di profonda introspezione personale, poi muove verso le relazioni con altri soggetti e poi più avanti con la cruda realtà del mondo intero. E' assolutamente pertinente. Non ci avevo pensato così diffusamente ma credo che abbiate colto nel segno. E' un bel modo di descrivere il nuovo disco, credo che assuma persino più significato in questo contesto. Tuttavia non è stato intenzionale perché quando compongo musica non indago e scandaglio ciò che accade dentro me. In questo senso sono molto istintivo».

- Quali ritieni siano stati i momenti di più grande soddisfazione vissuti nella tua lunga carriera?

«Sicuramente una paio di momenti trascorsi con il mitico Mongezi Feza (morto di polmonite nel Dicembre 1975 all'età di 30 anni) che collaborò con la sua scintillante tromba a "Rock Bottom'. E poi suonare con Keith Tippett nel progetto dei Centipede "Septober Energy" del 1971 con la crema dei musicisti jazz rock inglesi di quel tempo».



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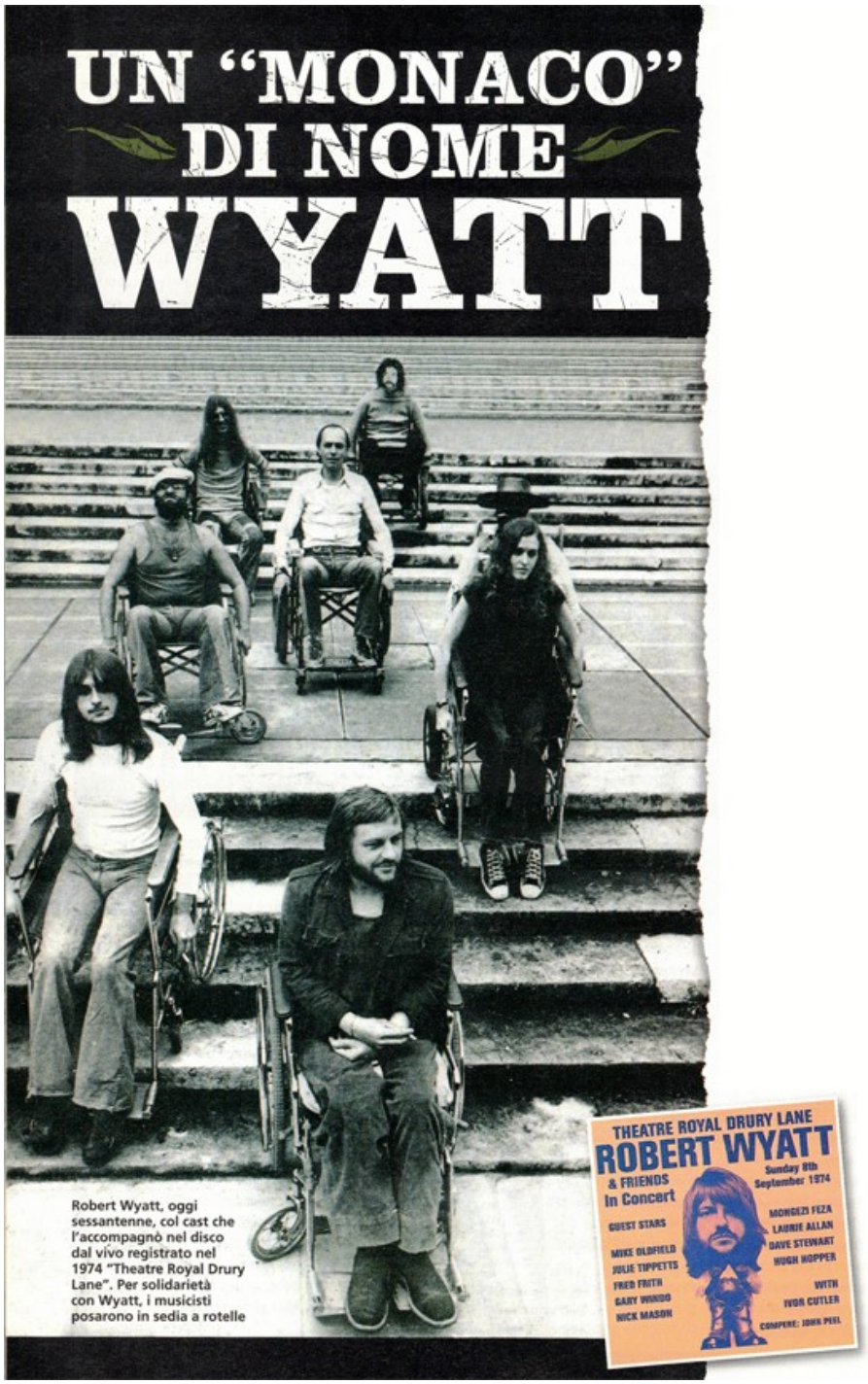
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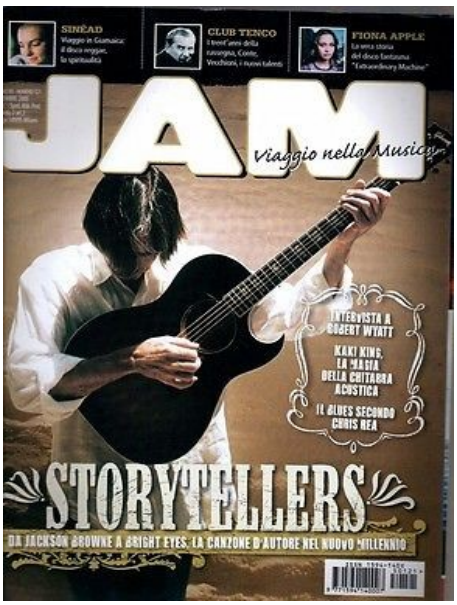
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Un "Monaco" Di Nome Wyatt - Jam - n° 121 - Decembre 2005





Esce la registrazione del solo concerto che Robert Wyatt ha fatto nell'intera carriera solista l'8 settembre 1974. Con lui sul palco c'erano Dave Stewart, Nick Mason, Mike Oldfield e altri. È un'ottima occasione per tornare a parlare con l'artista, condannato a stare su una sedia a rotelle: "L'incidente mi ha obbligato a diventare un musicista migliore, vivo come un monaco, sono un museo vivente di ricordi persi".

di Mario Giammetti

Aprendo il digipack di *Theatre Royal Drury Lane*, testimonianza del concerto di ben 31 anni fa (Londra, 8 settembre 1974) che soltanto adesso ha visto la pubblicazione ufficiale su etichetta Hannibal, si rimane subito colpiti dalla fotografia che ritrae alcuni giovani su altrettante sedie a rotelle. Un modo originale di solidarizzare con Robert Wyatt, quello con la barba in primo piano, che su una carrozzina ci fu inchiodato davvero quel maledetto primo giugno del 1973 quando precipitò da una finestra in circostanze mai del tutto chiarite.

Fu così che i suoi colleghi e amici (gente come Dave Stewart, Hugh Hopper, Fred Frith, Nick Mason, Mike Oldfield e altri ancora...) riuscirono a convincere Wyatt a salire sul palco per un concerto tutto suo. In pratica il primo e l'ultimo (dopo ci sarebbero state solo brevi apparizioni), e questo logicamente riveste il disco di una malinconia persino maggiore, che talvolta porta l'ascoltatore verso uno stato di dolore quasi fisico.

Una reazione che, certamente, non è consona al Robert Wyatt di oggi. Una persona solare alla faccia del suo stato (da quella carrozzina, purtroppo, non si è mai più rialzato), molto ironica e simpatica (come quando si mette a canticchiare O' *sole mio* con voce da tenore prendendo in giro i gondolieri veneziani, ricordando un suo soggiorno per accompagnare la moglie Alfreda Benge impegnata in un film girato sulla laguna). L'indole malinconica viene fuori soltanto a tratti, come quando ammette di non avere il computer e di non sentirne affatto la mancanza ("Vivo come una specie di monaco, anche se non predico alcun dio, semmai una dea... Mi piace comunicare, ma ho bisogno di solitudine"), o come quando, di fronte alla domanda su chi siano i nuovi musicisti che più lo hanno colpito di recente, dopo essersi preso una pausa lunghissima dice: "Non mi sento obbligato a rispondere. Sono un museo vivente di ricordi persi. È questa la mia funzione nel mondo. A parte quella di dimenticare i sogni". Amnesia che diventa pressoché totale se si tenta di scavare nel passato remoto. Come quando gli chiediamo cosa abbia provato a riascoltare i nastri del concerto. "A dire la verità" risponde candidamente "è stato come ascoltare qualcun altro. Sono stato felice di risentire queste canzoni e mi piace la libertà e l'incoraggiamento che ci hanno messo i musicisti. E stata davvero una fortuna aver registrato quel concerto, visto che non continuammo con quella band...".

Proviamo a stimolargli la memoria, ma con scarsissimi risultati. Quando gli domandiamo quanto fu dura per lui accettare la proposta dei suoi amici e chi fu il principale promotore dell'evento, la reazione è disarmante: "Non ricordo un singolo particolare di tutto questo. Se non avessi la registrazione non ricorderei nemmeno che iniziammo con *Dedicated To You Bui You Weren't Listening*, né tanto meno che finimmo con quella specie di carnevale musicale alla fine del bis... Quando tornai dall'ospedale gran parte delle mie energie erano tese a cercare di organizzare il modo di vivere in una casa su una sedia a rotelle, di risolvere i problemi pratici dovuti al cambiamento. Solo in seguito iniziai a pensare anche a come potevo restare professionale, a fare le cose il meglio possibile nella mia nuova condizione".

Possiamo però chiedergli come trova la sua musica suonata da quella superband... "Mi piace molto la sezione ritmica. Penso che Laurie Allan sia un batterista fantastico, perché capisce

completamente la tradizione jazz, ma sa anche pestare duro quando è necessario. E poi gli piace perdere il ritmo in uno o due segmenti, come usavo fare anche io, per poi rimettersi in riga in fretta... dei momenti pericolosi che adoro!".

Il concerto include anche tutte le canzoni di *Rock Bottom*, al tempo appena pubblicato. Ed è interessante notare che alcune di esse, nella versione live, suonano meno claustrofobiche rispetto alla versione di studio. "E possibile. Del resto *Rock Bottom* l'ho registrato in solitudine e solo in un secondo momento ho chiamato gli altri musicisti a cui far aggiungere le loro parti singolarmente. E questo è il modo in cui lavoro ancora oggi, è così che ho fatto tutti i miei dischi. Sotto certi aspetti, quindi, quel concerto ha rappresentato la prima volta in cui i musicisti hanno suonato insieme in simultanea con me che cantavo. Per me è stato un momento di scoperta, sentire il modo in cui i musicisti interagivano con me e fra di loro. Un po' come delle bolle di champagne aggiunte". Durante il concerto furono suonate anche alcune canzoni dei Matching Mole, band rimasta nel cuore di Wyatt. "Avremmo potuto fare molto di più, ma purtroppo non avevamo soldi né risorse. Sono state due band diverse: nella prima avevamo David Sinclair dei Caravan all'organo, nella seconda David McRae al piano elettrico. Mi piaceva molto lavorare con loro, anche se stavo vivendo questo momento di transizione fra il mio ruolo di batterista e quello di compositore di canzoni. A dire il vero penso che tutto ciò che ho fatto negli anni 60 sia stato un periodo di transizione".



A parte la decisione di non fare tour, viene spontaneo chiedersi se l'incidente ha cambiato anche il modo di comporre di Wyatt, che magari farebbe una musica diversa se non ci fosse stata quella disgrazia... "Il paradosso è che l'incidente mi ha obbligato a svilupparmi come musicista più velocemente... Il fatto è che ho sempre avuto difficoltà a lavorare in gruppo, ma ogni cosa ha i suoi tempi. Capii che con *Rock Bottom* avevo trovato il mio modo di lavorare e la mia voce. Con questo non voglio dire che fosse meglio o peggio, ma dopo aver lavorato dieci anni in studio e sul palco con delle band sentivo di avere imparato quello che mi occorreva per trovare finalmente la mia strada e realizzare la musica che avevo in testa...". Durante la sua carriera Wyatt ha anche registrato cover di canzoni molto diverse fra di loro, da *I'm A Believer* dei Monkees a *Shipbuilding* di Elvis Costello a *Biko* di Peter Gabriel. Come avviene la scelta? "Essenzialmente devono verificarsi due condizioni. La prima è che la musica si adatti alla mia voce. La seconda, che queste canzoni mi trasmettano qualcosa. Non le cerco consapevolmente, ma talvolta mi arrivano lo stesso, e mi permettono di fare qualcosa in maniera differente, obbligandomi e stendermi verso un'altra direzione. Sono eccellenti esercizi per la mia mente".

L'ultima volta che ci eravamo sentiti con Wyatt fu nei giorni in cui Bush e i suoi accoliti bombardavano l'Iraq. Sono passati due anni ma il pianeta non sembra davvero in uno stato migliore... "Ho appena ricevuto il nuovo disco di Sinéad O'Connor (vedi pagina 52, ndr), questo album registrato in Giamaica con un gruppo reggae. Contiene anche il brano di Bob Marley intitolato *War*. È una canzone diretta con parole molto semplici che dicono che, fin quando ci sarà un uomo che fa soprusi su un altro, l'odio sarà radicato e vi sarà guerra dappertutto: 'Guerra a Est, guerra a Ovest, guerra nel Nord, guerra nel Sud'. Credo davvero al messaggio di questa canzone, purtroppo: la guerra esisterà fin a quando ogni uomo o ogni donna non saranno trattati con uguale rispetto in ogni parte del mondo".

Parlando di donne, come è stato lavorare con Björk? "E fantastica. E stata a casa mia un paio di giorni, è una donna incredibilmente veloce mentalmente, una specie di animale selvaggio. A volte ti sembra di essere con una tigre, altre con una volpe. Ed è anche pericolosamente bella! Sono stato davvero onorato di ricevere il suo invito".

Se dovesse cominciare oggi, con chi gli piacerebbe suonare? "Con i musicisti con cui collaboro attualmente. Il problema è che non so se lo vorrebbero anche loro, se io fossi agli inizi".

Cuckooland è uscito due anni fa ed è un album meraviglioso. I fan di Wyatt sono ansiosi di ascoltare nuovo materiale... "Chiederesti a una donna che ha un bambino: 'Quando farai il prossimo? La prossima volta che ci incontriamo portami un altro figlio!'. No, la verità è che non ho idea quando succederà, devo aspettare che arrivi l'ispirazione delle muse".

Robert Wyatt - La mente di un bambino - Mucchio - N. 615 - Ottobre 2005



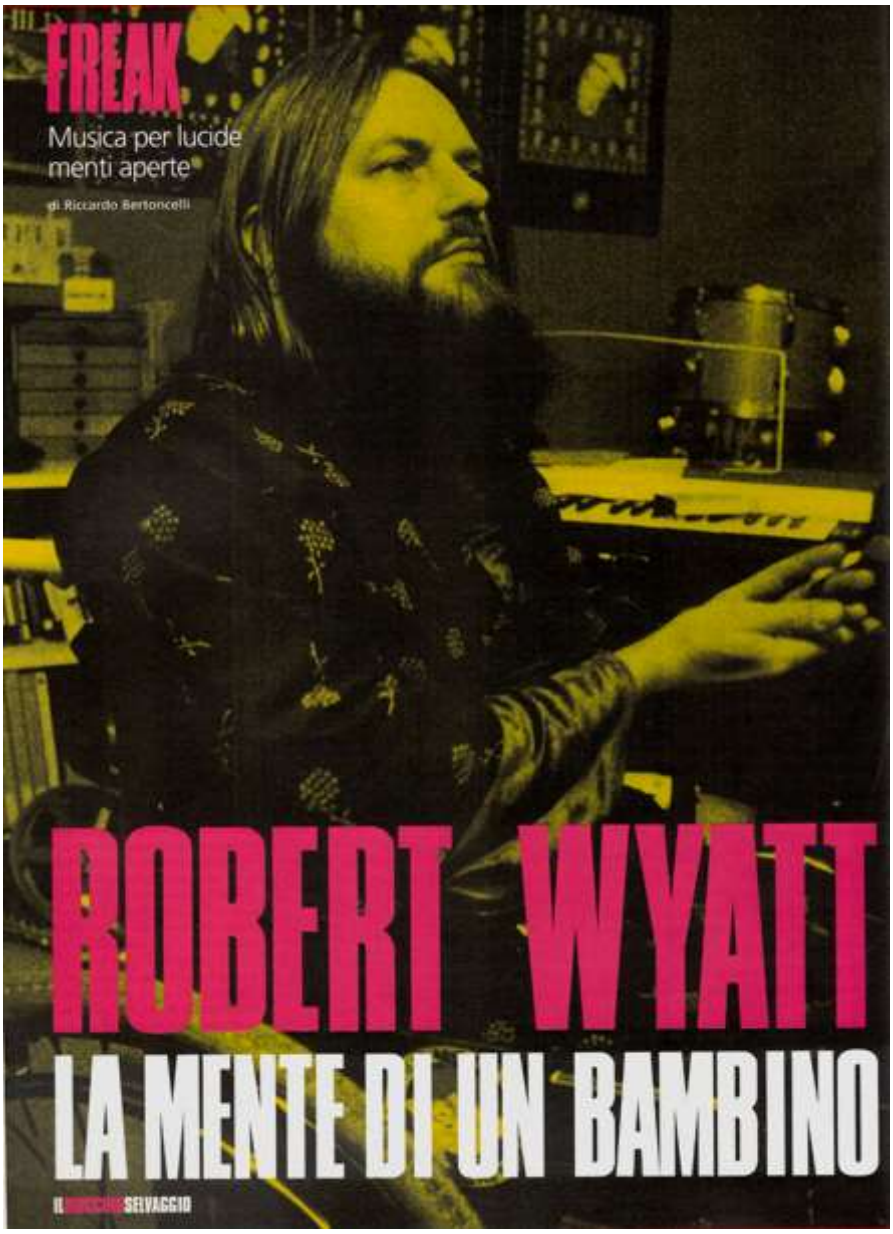
Robert Wyatt la mente di un bambino

In un teatrino nel cuore di Parigi, una umida sera di maggio dei miei ventitre anni (era il 1975), vidi finalmente Robert Wyatt su un palcoscenico. Finalmente. Lo avevo inseguito dai giorni di Moon In June, la meravigliosa filastrocca del Soft Machine terzo, e quando poi mi ero intrecciato con lui in quel vertiginoso *Las Vegas Tango* avevo abbandonato ogni ritegno - dovevo vederlo a tutti i costi. Ma Londra era lontana, in quei giorni di aerei niente affatto low cost, e a un certo punto arrivò la notizia che Wyatt aveva avuto un incidente, era caduto dalla finestra di un appartamento e si era spezzato la colonna vertebrale. Si era salvato per miracolo ma, costretto su una sedia a rotelle, dicevano che non avrebbe più calcato le scene.

Invece eccolo quella sera al Theatre des Champs Elysées, giusto due anni dopo, eccolo al pianoforte con gli amici Henry Cow per uno show che ricordo magico ma di cui in effetti rammento solo pochi dettagli: il palco arredato come un salotto, con poltrone e paralumi, l'entrata in scena e tutto il pubblico in piedi ad applaudire, a ringraziare, ma sì, a piangere. Troppa emozione, ecco perché non ricordo quasi niente. La stessa che mi ha preso l'altro giorno, quando ho messo nel lettore ed il nuovo disco di Wyatt, che è "nuovo" solo per il catalogo discografico ma risale appunto a quei giorni appassionati. No, non è il concerto di Parigi. È un altro show, tutto diverso, che era accaduto qualche mese prima a Londra e all'epoca del mio magone ai Campi Elisi non conoscevo; il primo effettivo spettacolo di Wyatt dopo l'incidente, 8 settembre 1974, al Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Per anni un nastro di quella serata ha navigato tra gli inferi dei bootlegs, con tutto lo zolfo e i gracidii del caso. Questa è un'altra cosa, suoni puliti musica che respira, e onore alla Rykodisc per averci fornito una fotografia così nitida di quel momento speciale.

Lo show lo aveva organizzato Richard Branson (proprio lui, il miliardario da Guinness - pensate un po' com'è cambiato il mondo) per onorare quello che all'epoca era un suo artista; a luglio per la Virgin era uscito Quella meraviglia di *Rock Bottom* e di lì a poco sarebbero iniziate le registrazioni di un altro bellissimo LP, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. Branson allestì quel po' po' di evento con un simpatico trucco che gli fa onore. Lo racconta Dave Stewart tra le righe di *Wrong Movements*, la fondamentale Bibbia di Mike King; il signor Virgin contattò i vari musicisti all'insaputa di Wyatt, assicurando a ognuno che Robert

teneva molto alla loro adesione, e al diretto interessato giurò che erano stati i musicisti a premere perché lui tornasse a esibirsi. Alla fine di questo balletto incrociato, si radunò uno splendido cast con Stewart, Hugh Hopper, Laurie Allan, Fred Frith, Mike Oldfield, Julie Tippett, Gary Windo, Mongezi Feza. Venne chiamato John Peel a presentare; e Ivor Cutler, con Phyllis April King, ebbe l'incarico di preparare la platea "con una selezione di canzoni e poesie".



Fu uno show concentrato, sta tutto in un cd. Ma certe volte il tempo non si calcola in minuti e ore, si misura in densità, si pesa emotivamente; e allora è un concerto lunghissimo, un viaggio delle meraviglie in posti lontani della mente e del cuore. Wyatt inizia bofonchiando una *Dedicated To You* di un minuto e mezzo. Fa così per timidezza, forse, per spirito di paradosso; una nervosa litania per sciogliere la lingua e acclimatarsi. Perché poi attacca *Memories* e tutto cambia. L'aria diventa dolce, calda, sarà quella l'atmosfera dello show, con occasionali lampi e piccole improvvise tempeste che guizzano e svaniscono. *Rock Bottom* era fatto alla stessa maniera, e lo show a un certo punto lo incorpora per intero: l'estatica dolcezza di *Sea Song*, di *Alifib*, di *A Last Straw* alternata al Carnevale folle di *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*. Sono le nuvole che si alternano nella mente di Robert giovane, nuvole nere di inquietudine e strazio e nubi candide, paffute, in cicli di innocenza - Robin Williams che guarda la volta celeste con occhi da bambino ne *La leggenda del Re Pescatore*. C'è il marchio dell'incidente, come non potrebbe?, ma mi viene da pensare che Wyatt sia sempre stato così, come in fondo siamo tutti, sul ciglio tra la tenebra e la luce. In lui ha prevalso la luce, e lo sguardo innamorato del puer eternus. Gli canta appunto quello Julie Tippett, nel bellissimo intermezzo di *Mìnd Of A Child*: e Wyatt a distanza di tanti anni la ringrazia - "È una canzone cruciale che esprime, più chiaramente di quanto io avrei potuto,

qualcosa di quello che all'epoca ci preoccupava: riafferrare la gaiezza seria e libera che appartiene al tempo dell'infanzia."



A un certo punto Wyatt abbandona *Rock Bottom* e si spinge più indietro, ai Matching Mole appena dietro l'angolo, a *Instant Pussy*, *Signed Curtain*. Sul programma è annunciata *God Song*, che purtroppo non va in onda; forse per questioni tecniche o forse perché, alla luce del drammatico incidente che Robert ha subito, quella ferma contestazione alla divinità rischia di prendere le sembianze di una bestemmia che non voleva essere. C'è invece *Calyx*, la canzone degli Hatfield And The North che era stato il primo atto musicale di Wyatt una volta dimesso dall'ospedale: bella e acrobatica, rischiando di spezzare le fragili corde vocali per quei guizzi improvvisi, su su.

"Sapevo che lo spettacolo sarebbe riuscito benissimo perché in fondo Laurie Allan, Hugh e Dave Stewart sono la sezione ritmica dei miei sogni. E pensavo: 'Mal che vada, quei tre e Fred Frith sapranno estrarre qualcosa dal cilindro'". In effetti la improvvisata band sembra ispiratissima, oltre che indovinata, con una menzione particolare per Fred Frith (avesse continuato con quei suoni £ curiosità!) e per il grande, misconosciuto Gary Windo - una intera orchestra, e neanche piccola, in un solo corpo e fiato d'uomo. Anche Wyatt è in gran spolvero, e per nulla impacciato; ma "quelli come me non pensano in fretta e lavorano meglio quando non hanno occhi puntati addosso", e allora saranno pochissime le occasioni di ritrovarlo ancora su un palco - quella "mia" sera a Parigi, una volta famosa a Piazza Navona "per l'apertura della campagna sulla depenalizzazione della marijuana contro le droghe pesanti", sempre con gli Henry Cow, e pochissimo altro.

Lo show del Drury Lane finisce con uno scarto d'umore, uno zompo improvviso dal malinconico sognante al fun fun fun. Robert e la sua Orchestra dalle Profondità Marine intonano una vecchia canzone di Neil Diamond per i Monkees, *I'm A Believer*, e ci giocano sopra per quasi sei minuti. Due giorni prima la Virgin ha pubblicato quel brano come facciata A del nuovo singolo di Wyatt. "Mi pare che in una intervista mi avessero chiesto quali fossero le mie dieci canzoni preferite - una specie di 'I dieci dischi rock che porteresti su un'isola deserta' - e io avevo subito accettato, perché mi diverto a stilare quegli elenchi. La lista finì in mano a Simon Draper della Virgin, che notò la presenza di quel vecchio successo dei Monkees e mi domandò: 'Dicevi sul serio?' Io avevo bluffato, lui era venuto a vedere e quindi risposi di sì. Entrai in studio e incisi *I'm A Believer*".

Riccardo Bertoncelli

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Robert Wyatt - Artista in piena libertà ma con aiuti dal jazz - Musica Jazz Anno 60 - N° 5 - Maggio 2004

Robert Wyatt - Artista in piena libertà ma con aiuti dal jazz

Molto spesso il cantante, compositore e strumentista inglese ha fatto ricorso ai campioni dell'improvvisazione: ieri Mongezi Feza o Evan Parker, oggi Annie Whitehead o Karen Mantler.



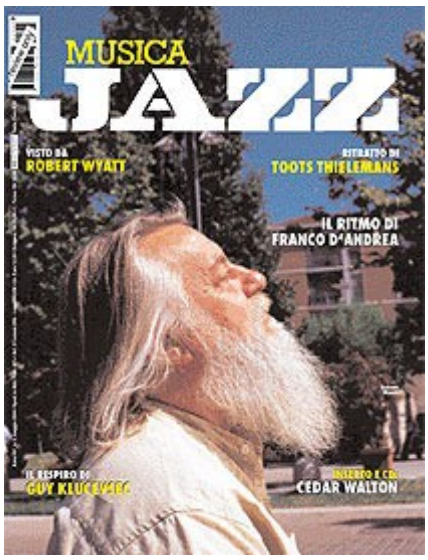
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Audio version of the interview by Alessandro Achilli from Radio Popolare (06/09/2003)

The complete paper version of the audio interview.

Com'è nato il tuo ultimo album, "Cuckooland"?

Ho pensato: "Nel 2005 avrò sessant'anni! Se non faccio qualcosa, il futuro è adesso". Sono sorpreso di essere tuttora qui, nel nuovo secolo: stavo giusto incominciando ad abituarmi all'altro ed ecco che mi prendono e mi buttano in uno nuovo, apparentemente simile ma bizzarro. Mi sento come depositato in uno strano luogo. A parte ciò, ho sempre accumulato schizzi, bozzetti: ci lavoro su per un mese o due, a casa, finché, qualcosa non m'interrompe. Ma pian piano accumulo materiali. E poi ci sono sei brani non scritti da me né da Alfie,



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tre dei quali sono della mia amica Karen Mantler.

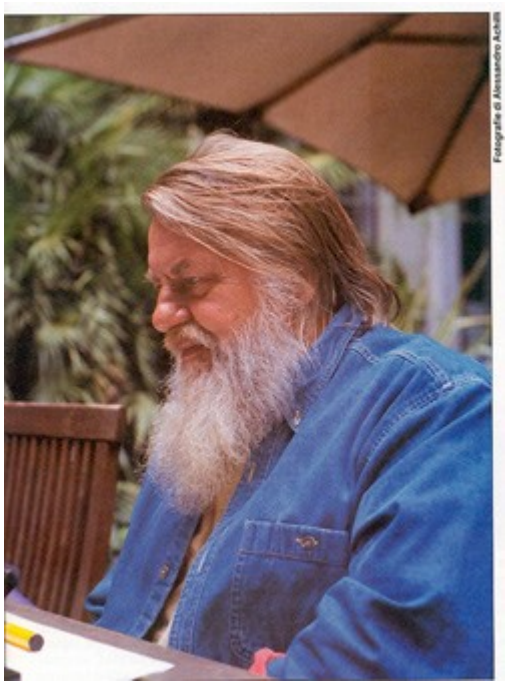
Come hai lavorato con lei?

Karen vive a New York ma nel 2002 è venuta in Europa con la band di sua mamma, Carla Bley, e per un concerto con Peter Blegvad a Ferrara. Si è fermata un po' da suo papà Mike e ne abbiamo approfittato per incidere insieme sei o sette canzoni scritte da lei: un buon modo per cominciare le registrazioni di "*Cuckooland*", perché c'erano le strutture, gli accordi e dovevo soltanto trovare un simpatico suonaccio di sintetizzatore. Benché in Europa i suoi dischi siano usciti quasi tutti per l'Ecm (*licenziataria della Watt di Carla Bley*), ho pensato che quelle canzoni non richiamassero alla mente le cantanti Ecm o l'ambito in cui lei lavora; e che sarebbe stato interessante decontestualizzarle, senza preoccuparmi di essere "corretto" e di non stravolgere, per esempio, le melodie. Perciò ho inserito in "*Cuckooland*" le sue canzoni di cui già esiste su disco la versione originale incisa da lei a modo proprio. così , chi non apprezza la mia interpretazione può recuperare gli originali: *Beware e Mister E* vengono da "*Farewell*" (X-traWatt), mentre *Life Is Sheep* da "*Pet Project*" (Virgin francese, che però non l'ha fatto circolare molto). Per le altre (che comunque non abbiamo concluso), aspetterò fin quando Karen non pubblicherà le proprie versioni.

Insieme interpretate anche *Insensatez* di Antonio Carlos Jobim e Vinicius de Moraes.

Ciò che mi piace della voce di Karen è che non corrisponde all'idea che si ha comunemente di una cantante jazz e certamente non è una cantante rock; possiede una specie di assoluta e spontanea chiarezza, semplicità, modestia. Trovo il suo modo di cantare molto in sintonia con il mio. Mi ricordava Astrud Gilberto e così ho voluto vedere se funzionava su Insensatez: direi proprio che - si - è nelle sue corde. Ho deciso di usare un ritmo che non fosse esattamente bossa nova e neppure un beat moderno; abbiamo ridotto il tutto a un disegno minimo di accordi e così via. È uno dei brani in cui si sente il karenotron, cioè la voce di Karen campionata su tutta la scala e suonata tramite una tastiera. È uno strumento, che è Karen: questo mi piace. L'ho chiamato così perché è un po' una versione evoluta del mellotron che suonavo con i Matching Mole. Lotto sempre contro la purezza degli strumenti elettronici, tentando di sporcarne il timbro.

Come hai scelto i musicisti ospiti e come hai impostato il rapporto con loro?



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In genere cerco di incidere i dischi in modo completamente autonomo e quindi sono preparato a lavorare da solo, com'è accaduto in "*Old Rottenhat*", "*Dondestan*" e nella gran parte di *Moon In June*. Adesso registro io le parti di voce, pianoforte, tastiere, tromba, cornetta, batteria e poi mi chiedo: "Di che cosa ha ancora bisogno questa canzone?". Non penso necessariamente a uno strumento ma a un musicista, perché se tra noi c'è un'intesa, un'empatia, quasi non importa che cosa suoni o in quale idioma suoni. Oggi come oggi, la prima cui mi rivolgo è Annie Whitehead, che è molto versatile: suona il trombone con Roswell Rudd e partecipa a concerti di free jazz ma anche a dischi delle Spice Girls o reggae e a parecchie altre cose. Tecnicamente ha una formazione molto più accademica della mia e così può aiutarmi ad analizzare meglio le mie canzoni, che molto spesso butto giù a

Robert Wyatt in un ritratto del settembre 2003 e, a fronte, visto da Alfie (sua moglie, la pittrice Alfreda Benge) sulle copertine di "*Dondestan*", "*Shleep*" e "*Flotsam Jetsam*".

istinto. Talvolta le indico in quali punti suonare oppure le chiedo solamente di darmi una mano con l'armonia. In *Just A Bit* volevo che entrasse intorno a metà brano per rafforzare le tastiere ma senza dare l'idea di uno strumento del tutto diverso: soltanto un'aggiunta discreta. Poi le ho detto: "Sul finale la voce si piega un paio di volte e tu potresti fare qualcosa di simile con il trombone", senza specificare che cosa. In *Lullaby For Hamza* ho arrangiato un paio di linee armoniche discendenti del trombone e ho voluto soltanto che registrasse tutta la canzone in una volta sola; lei suona la melodia più o meno come la canto io e poi, una o due strofe dopo, Jennifer Maidman (cui avevo chiesto: "Potresti suonare per tutto il brano? Questi sono gli accordi e questo è ciò che faccio io") improvvisa un assolo di fisarmonica. Registro tutto per conto mio e poi lavoro con gli altri individualmente, uno alla volta: "Potresti mettere qualcosa in questo spazio che ho creato?". Il più delle volte hanno molta libertà, anche se so dove li voglio, perché li voglio, quale suono voglio. In *Insensatez* l'armonica di Karen si limita a riprendere la melodia, perché volevo tenermi l'assolo per qualcos'altro. Non mi va che un disco sia una mera serie di assoli: ce ne sono ma volevo che fossero nei momenti giusti e così in quella bossa nova ho mantenuto uno stretto controllo su tutto tranne che sul finale, dove ho semplicemente chiesto a Gilad Atzmon di suonare, al clarinetto; e quindi si crea una sorta di tensione.

Annie Whitehead ha anche riarrangiato un bel po'di tue canzoni nel suo progetto *Soupsongs*: quel suo approccio ai tuoi materiali ha avuto a sua volta un'influenza sul tuo modo di comporre e arrangiare, quando ti sel dedicato a un nuovo disco?

Non ci avevo pensato ma credo che una delle ragioni per cui oggi arrangio i miei brani in questo modo sia l'aver ascoltato come Annie ha fatto suonare la mia musica da quella band. Annie, Janette Mason, Liam Genockey e gli altri membri di Soupsongs hanno trovato un elemento jazz nelle mie canzoni (anche se non l'avevo pensate come jazz), una specie di fluidità, che forse avrei voluto io fin dal principio se avessi lavorato con un gruppo. E questo mi ha incoraggiato. Alfie mi ha detto: "Potresti lavorarci sopra; non devono essere soltanto gli altri a farlo". Quando qualcuno reinterpreta le mie canzoni, le riascolto alterate da idee e prospettive differenti e, quando mi rimetto al lavoro, ho un'idea più ampia di come potrebbero essere.

In "Cuckooland" ci sono tanti ospiti ma tu stesso suoni di più.



> Zoom

Ho esteso le parti di batteria che prima suonavo soltanto con spazzole e piatti: ho cercato d'immaginare modi differenti di creare trame ritmiche e di tenere il tempo. Adesso vivo nel nord dell'Inghilterra ma fino a una quindicina d'anni fa abitavamo in un appartamento più vicino a Londra e meno spazioso: era carino ma i vicini si lamentavano se facevamo rumore e così la mia musica divenne sempre più essenziale, una specie di musica da camera da letto. Mi sta bene: posso lavorarci su come un monaco amanuense nella sua cella, inventando soluzioni come "*Old Rottenhat*". Invece nello spazio che ho adesso posso tenere tutti i miei piatti, il pianoforte, le percussioni, la tromba... E mi godo la possibilità di suonarli davvero. Faccio più rumore, più spesso: negli ultimi anni ho ritrovato sempre più il puro e semplice piacere fisico di suonare. Negli ultimi dieci anni mi sono poi dilettato a suonare la cornetta (partendo dalla tromba, cui m'ero dedicato per un paio d'anni quando ne avevo sedici) e improvvisamente ho scoperto che riesco a sentire meglio le note: forse ora conosco meglio la musica. E mi diverte molto, a casa, impratichirmi facendo karaoke con la tromba su ballad jazzistiche lente (mi danno il tempo di trovare la tonalità): Sarah Vaughan e cose del genere.

A quali trombettisti o cornettisti t'ispiri?

Be', alcuni sono proprio ovvi ma il mio principale ispiratore è Johnny Coles, che a partire dal 1958 lavorò con Gil Evans quando il trombettista non era Miles Davis, rispetto al quale Coles ha un modo di suonare più lieve, "domestico", cauto; in un certo senso è più vicino a Chet Baker ma è molto particolare. Tra i dischi che Coles incise con Evans, è davvero bellissimo "*Out Of The Cool*", dove c'è anche Jimmy Knepper al trombone. Lo consiglio caldamente anche a chi non saprebbe dire se gli piaccia il jazz: è jazz ma è come pura melodia dall'inizio alla fine.

Nell'idea dl abbinare una tromba alla tua voce ha avuto qualche peso il ruolo di Mongezi Feza nei tuoi dischi degli anni Settanta?

Immagino di si. Non mi sono mai trovato a mio agio con il solito voce-chitarra del rock. L'apprezzo quando sono altri a farlo e conosco bravi chitarristi rock - Mike Oldfield, Paul Weller, David Gilmour, Phil Manzanera. . . - ma sento che il complemento naturale della mia voce sia una tromba. Nella mia testa, l'abbinamento ideale è sempre stato quello con Mongezi, che morì quando avevamo entrambi trent'anni. Alla fine mi sono rassegnato a occuparmene personalmente.

Feza era uno dei jazzisti sudafricani che giunsero in Gran Bretagna negli anni Sessanta...

Il loro arrivo fu molto importante per Londra. Negli anni Trenta-Quaranta, il jazz era stato una sorta di *popular music* (comprendente anche ballo e canto) ma pure il luogo di un'incredibile espansione nelle idee armoniche, ritmiche e melodiche. Nei decenni successivi parve che si potesse solamente imboccare una strada o l'altra: o diventare una specie di orchestrina da ballo o addentrarsi nelle zone inesplorate del jazz, come per esempio l'improvvisazione totale. Fu allora che giunsero a Londra i sudafricani, i quali semplicemente facevano entrambe le cose e pure bene, come Dudu Pukwana e Mongezi che potevano felicemente suonare *township music* per tutta la notte - meravigliosa musica da ballo, musica per la comunità - e poi, rimanendo interamente se stessi, dedicarsi con la massima partecipazione al più sfrenato free jazz con Paul Rutherford, Evan Parker o Keith Tippett. Fu davvero una forza guaritrice. Portarono a Londra una tale *joie de vivre* (lo so: è un'espressione sciocca) che tutti li amarono. Per me e per moltissime persone con cui ho sempre lavorato o lavoro fu un grande momento. Annie Whitehead amava suonare con Dudu più che con chiunque altro. Harry Beckett, un bravissimo trombettista delle Barbados, fu come fulminato da Mongezi, non per la tecnica ma per il feeling, il timbro, l'intensità, la serietà con cui suonava; persino oggi gli vengono gli occhi lucidi quando lo ricorda. È insolito che un gruppo così piccolo di musicisti abbia un impatto così forte, specialmente in una città come Londra, tanto cauta e paranoica verso i nuovi arrivati: c'era una sorta di competitività, che i sudafricani spazzarono via.

Quali sono i tuoi batteristi preferiti?

Le registrazioni più antiche che ho sono quelle di Baby Dodds con Armstrong e altri: mi appassiona tutta la storia di quella che è diventata la batteria jazz, nata all'inizio del Ventesimo secolo riunendo gli strumenti a percussione delle *marching bands* di New Orleans (cassa, rullante, piatti. . .). Negli anni Quaranta ha incominciato a sviluppare un ruolo più fluido e ambiguo, non limitandosi più a marcare chiaramente il tempo. Verso la metà del secolo i jazzisti presero a inventare giochi interessanti con il tempo e l'armonia, cosicché ciascuno girava attorno alla melodia ma al tempo stesso la evitava, per così dire. Si affermarono Kenny Clarke, poi Max Roach e uno dei miei preferiti: Danny Richmond, il batterista di Mingus. È quello il periodo che davvero ispirò la mia decisione di suonare la batteria. In seguito il *drumming* del rhythm'n'blues (molto più simile a quello netto e solido come roccia del jazz delle origini) ritornò attraverso il rock'n'roll. Apprezzo molte cose del rock e le uso ma preferisco sempre quella sorta di ambiguità dei miei batteristi jazz preferiti. Per esempio, quando Elvin Jones suona tre o quattro battute d'introduzione a un nuovo assolo, è probabile che aggiunga anche una battuta extra, esattamente dopo il *beat*. Rovescia il *beat* come un calzino. Quindi i suoi partner devono realmente fare attenzione a dove si trovi. Amo i batteristi che non stanno mai sul beat ma ci giocano sotto, sopra, a lato! Ed è per quello che non suono davvero la batteria in modo rock; ciò che faccio è sempre meno rock e sempre più simile a uno schivare il traffico. *Rallentando, accelerando*, esitazioni: sono il mio pane. E mi pare che siano la cosa giusta per le mie canzoni.

Mi dicevi anche qualcosa di Jimmy Cobb...

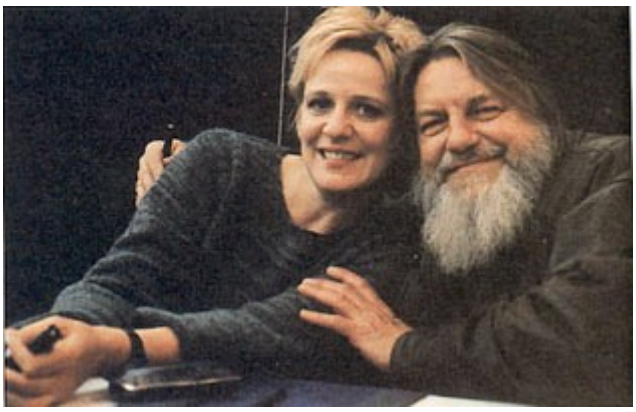
Un tempo non m'interessava molto Cobb - né Billy Higgins e altri batteristi "regolari" - perché ha uno stile assai semplice. Ma, quando ho tentato di riprendere la batteria dopo essere diventato paraplegico, ho pensato: "Che cosa posso realmente fare?" , perché

ovviamente non posso usare charleston e cassa, e così in tempi recenti ho incominciato ad ascoltare batteristi che facciano un uso minimo del charleston ma nondimeno swinghino e siano realmente completi. Mi sono interessato di più alla mera magia del percuotere, del tenere il tempo: *dèn dèn-ghedèn dènghedèn*. Da giovane cercavo sempre nuovi giochi percussivi. Adesso m'interessa particolarmente quel modo liscio, piano, di tenere il tempo che avevano Cobb e Higgins, soprattutto perché è divenuto un anacronismo: in *Trickle Down* suono *din dinghidin' tinghidin tsinghidin*; nessuno suona più un jazz così regolare. Cobb non è stato mai veramente apprezzato quanto meriterebbe, perché Davis ebbe batteristi spettacolari prima e dopo di lui, che così venne considerato semplicemente il tipo regolare nell'intervallo tra essi. Ma in realtà Davis incise alcuni dei propri dischi più belli nel periodo con Cobb, proprio perché questi lasciava così tanto spazio. In genere, chi ascolta "*Kind Of Blue*" (probabilmente il disco più fortunato di Davis) non resta colpito dalla bravura di Cobb, a meno che non sia lui stesso un batterista: io, da batterista, posso sentire che cosa *non* fa.

In *Trickle Down* e *Old Europe* la prospettiva jazzistica è più esplicita di quanto non sia mai stata nei tuoi album solistici.

Old Europe è un'evocazione del periodo della mia gioventù in cui scoprii il jazz, che stava ancora inventando se stesso. In *Trickle Down* volevo invece rovesciare un paio di consuetudini. Non amo affatto la fusion; molti se ne sorprendono perché ho un po' un piede nel jazz e uno nel rock ma proprio non mi dice nulla l'idioma musicale chiamato jazz rock: di solito, si tratta di jazzisti che si fanno crescere un pochino i capelli, adottano titoli spirituali per i propri album e fanno assoli su quello che pensano sia un ritmo rock (e in genere lo è ma suonato in modo molto virtuosistico e tuttavia con l'aria di chi fa girare i pollici). Non voglio insultare nessuno; è semplicemente una sensazione personale. Lo ho voluto invece ignorare del tutto la componente rock del jazz rock: al suo posto ho messo una fluida linea di basso *walking*, sulla quale non c'è alcun assolo vero e proprio. Ritmica e solisti si scambiano i ruoli: l'evento principale è la ritmica, le cui trame timbriche sono tessute dagli aggeggi di Eno, mentre gli assoli sono soltanto piccoli frammenti spezzettati, ricordi di assoli jazz sparsi tra i piatti.

I solisti non sono mai stati la tua passione...



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt con Annie Whitehead, Londra 1999.

Fin dai miei primi ascolti di jazz, soprattutto di modern jazz, mi sembrava di non capire gli assoli. Tutte quelle note, così veloci: non sapevo cosa fossero e non riuscivo ad ascoltarle. Ma ero affascinato dalla musica e dalla sua urgenza: quella combinazione di abbandono e rigorosa disciplina. Soprattutto, ciò che mi rese capace di ascoltare con autentico piacere fu il fatto che capissi le melodie poste all'inizio e alla fine di ogni brano jazz di quei giorni. In quanto melodie le si poteva imparare, cantare. È l'elemento canzone, che nel jazz è usato solamente come una specie di trampolino, per preparare il terreno al solista creando una sequenza di accordi e un ritmo. Lo invece amavo quei temi di per sé. Ed è ancora così: alcune delle mie canzoni mi sembrano trampolini per assoli jazz che poi non arrivano.

Hai anche registrato tue versioni di classici del jazz, sebbene arrangiati in un modo che non è esattamente jazz. Quali altri ti piacerebbe rivisitare?

Non saprei. Quando interpreto musica altrui, cerco un elemento puramente musicale che possa essere decontestualizzato. Qualunque brano - una canzone di Buddy HolIy, una bossa nova, una composizione di Monk - è associato a un determinato genere ma una melodia davvero bella dovrebbe essere abbastanza robusta da poterla sentire come nuova se si cambia idioma. M'è sempre garbato farlo. Se vivessi in salute per altri cent'anni, dedicherei un lungo progetto alle bellissime composizioni di Thelonious Monk: sarebbe delizioso rivisitarle tutte (una cinquantina) in modo non jazzistico, come miniature, quasi come certe brevissime pagine "aforistiche" di Anton Webern (e anche di Alban Berg).

Nonostante il tuo amore per il jazz, fai una musica che non viene definita jazz, neppure da te.

Be', prendiamo la musica andalusa: *Cante hondo*, flamenco... Ne troviamo tracce nei compositori non solo spagnoli ma anche francesi e in altri ancora ma alla fine il flamenco è flamenco: fondamentalmente è musica gitana spagnola ed è la loro lingua, inventata da loro. Le mie radici sono in una sorta di pop inglese e quindi non nella medesima cultura di Louis Armstrong e John Coltrane: la uso come una musa tra gli elementi che possono essere agevolmente tradotti e inseriti nella mia musica ma non tento di assumere un accento musicale statunitense. C'è chi ci riesce e talvolta lo desidero anch'io. L'ho anche fatto: per esempio, è evidente che in *Old Europe* suono la tromba evocando un certo jazz e che Gilad fa esattamente (e meravigliosamente) lo stesso al sax tenore. C'è anche chi riesce a impadronirsi di un'altra lingua: quella di Joe Cocker è una versione per lui perfetta di un modo di cantare *à la* Ray Charles. Per lui funziona e non è un limite ma l'idea di cantare a quel modo viene interamente da Ray Charles. Personalmente, alla lunga mi sento a mio agio soltanto quando faccio qualcosa con la *mia* voce, davvero a modo mio.

Comunque hai suonato con jazzisti importanti: per esempio con Paul Bley, nel 1971.

Proprio cosi: Con il grande Paul Bley, anche se ero troppo emozionato per rendermene conto. Era in tour Con Annette Peacock (all'epoca stavano insieme), la quale scopri che ero a zonzo; pensarono che fosse simpatico chiedermi di suonare la batteria con loro e io accettai. Il concerto si tenne al Country Club; lui aveva un muro di sintetizzatori e lei faceva esperimenti con la voce. Erano molto in anticipo sui tempi. Ero terrorizzato da Bley. Era grande amico di un altro canadese che sarebbe diventato mio amico: Paul Haines, il poeta che ha lavorato con Carla Bley e molti altri. Ma, essendo appena stato cacciato dai Soft Machine, ero proprio impaurito dai musicisti: "È ovvio che non ho i requisiti per lavorare con alcuno di loro". Quindi mi sentii davvero onorato dalla proposta di Annette, cui sarò sempre grato, perché mi aiutò a riguadagnare fiducia in me stesso. Fu meravigliosa. Da allora siamo rimasti sempre amici e ci teniamo tuttora in contatto.



> Zoom

In *Old Europe* si accenna alle "Indigo nights": è per caso un riferimento a quando, giovanissimo, suonasti per un'estate (nel 1964) come batterista con la ritmica residente dell'Indigo Jazz Club di Palma de Maiorca?

Non ci avevo pensato. All'Indigo c'era Ramón Farran: per me fu una sorta di mentore e io lavorai un pochino nel suo club. Suonavo, anche, ma per lo più distribuivo dépliant ai turisti e cose così. Il testo di *Old Europe* è di Alfie, che ha inserito certe immagini, brevi frasi in francese, parole tipiche del jazz di quegli anni, per fornire un contesto, un quadro generale. Per esempio trovi la parola "indigo" in *Mood Indigo* (eccone un'altra con cui mi cimenterei: bellissima melodia). Alfie è una pittrice e l'indaco è un colore particolare per lei. Inoltre conosce bene il jazz che amo, conosce Parigi e conosce quel periodo (siamo più o meno della stessa generazione). Ha un modo unico di scrivere e semplicemente funziona per me.

Quali sono i tuoi preferiti tra gli autori di canzoni?

Una canzone è fatta di parole e musica; ma alla fine ritengo che la cosa importante sia il suo suono. Quando scrive le parole di una canzone, Alfie sa che non funzionano come in una poesia. un buon testo di canzone non è necessariamente una bella poesia. Nell'ultimo anno non ho ascoltato tanta musica perché ho passato tutto il tempo a lavorare con Karen (ecco uno dei miei autori preferiti), Alfie e compagnia bella, e quindi per poter procedere ho spinto sullo sfondo le cose che ho ascoltato nel passato e da cui ho imparato nell'università del mondo, e mi sono invece concentrato di più sulle persone attorno a me e su ciò che facevamo. Perciò non mi vengono in mente tutti i miei preferiti ma. . . Be', Antonio Carlos Jobim e altri autori brasiliani. Cole Porter, perché era molto bravo sia con la

musica sia con le parole. I fratelli Gershwin: fantastici. Randy Newman, che ha scritto più di trent'anni fa la miglior canzone sulla situazione attuale - *Political Science*, sulla politica estera statunitense - e una bellissima *Gods Song*. Kurt Weill e Bertolt Brecht: la perfetta combinazione tra rigore delle parole e rigore della musica; Weill scrisse bellissime arie anche dopo gli anni berlinesi - ne ho cantata una, *September Song* - ma i frutti meravigliosi del sodalizio con Brecht restano ineguagliati.

Quali dischi ascolti di più?

Be', per esempio Gilad Atzmon ha inciso con Yaron Stavi e altri un disco intitolato "*Exile*". Nei primi due brani c'è Reem Kelani, una cantante folk palestinese che vive a Londra. E in tutto il disco Gilad esprime chiaramente la propria solidarietà con le persone che vengono dalla sua stessa terra ma paradossalmente hanno potuto sentirsi libere di lavorare insieme solamente quando ne sono state lontane. Gilad era nell'esercito israeliano; anche Yaron viene da Israele. Se ne sono andati perché non amavano il narcisismo spirituale. Sono jazzisti: a loro piace la libera comunicazione con tutte le culture, compresa quella araba.

Dal 1979 hai militato attivamente nel Partito comunista britannico, dal quale sei uscito una decina d'anni dopo: restando comunista?

Sì, perché l'alternativa sarebbe essere ex comunista, che è una delle professioni più codarde che si possano trovare nei media; insomma, ho troppo amor proprio per diventare ex comunista. Detto questo, mi considero comunista con la convinzione che sia ancora soltanto l'idea di una possibile alternativa di cui non si può fruire; lo stesso si può dire del cristianesimo, per esempio, ma ancora i cristiani continuano a cercare una via. Una cosa è certa: il modo in cui adesso gestiamo internazionalmente i rapporti militari ed economici porta inevitabilmente alla destabilizzazione e a conflitti senza fine. Il capitalismo è rivoluzionario, nel senso che dovunque arrivi cambia tutto, talvolta in modo positivo. Marx era molto impressionato dal capitalismo, perché muove ogni cosa e quindi si ha la possibilità di fare qualcosa di nuovo. Perciò non è onesto accusare i comunisti di essere rivoluzionari per il fatto che vogliono cambiare il mondo tradizionale: è già il capitalismo a farlo. Lo si può vedere ovunque: Africa, Sudamerica... Non può esistere un capitalismo stabile: deve sempre espandersi per sopravvivere. Conquistare di più, prendere di più. E allora le bombe che esplodono a caso nelle nostre città e gli scoppi irrazionali di odio e paura sono conseguenze inevitabili.

Alessandro Achili

UN GRAVE INCIDENTE NON HA FERMATO QUELLA SUA MUSICA IMMAGINIFICA

Nato nel 1945 a Bristol, Wyatt si trasferisce una decina d'anni dopo a Canterbury, dove la casa dei genitori diviene una sorta di cenacolo artistico e le musiche ascoltate sono quelle di Ceci Taylor, Schönberg, Webern, Stockhausen, Dolphy, Coleman, Coltrane, Sciostakovic, Hindemith, Bartók, Ellington, Elis, Byard, Mingus... Nel 1964 Wyatt è batterista e cantante dei Wilde Flowers: canzoni originali e *covers* di rhythm'n'blues, soul, pop e jazz (Cannonball, Coltrane, Ellington, Hancock, Monk, Timmons). Nel 1966 è trai fondatori dei Soft Machine (vedi recensione di "*Bbc Radio 1967-1971*", in *Musica Jazz* n.6 2003). Nel 1971 forma i Matching Mole: jazz elettrico inframmezzato da esperimenti e canzoni. Nel giugno 1973 cade da un quarto piano e perde l'uso delle gambe ma non la voglia di far musica.
Frequenti sono le presenze jazzistiche nei suoi album (in gran parte ripubblicati - o pubblicati per la prima volta - da Hannibal in Europa e Thirsty Ear negli Stati Uniti): Mark Charig, Elton Dean, Neville Whitehead, *Las Vegas Tango* (Gil Evans) e una dedica a Carla Bley in "*The End Of An Ear*" (1970); Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo e Laurie Allan in "*Rock Bottom*" (1974; c'è anche Hugh Hopper), "*Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*" (1975; ci sono pure George Khan e *Song For Che* di Charlie Haden) e in alcuni degli Ep e 45 giri tiuniti in "*Eps*" (1999), dove appaiono anche Dave MacRae, Hopper, *Memories Of You* (Eubie Blake), *Chairman Mao* (Haden) e '*Round Midnight*, Harry Beckett, Frank Roberts, Mogotsi Mothle e *Strange Fruit* negli altri 45 giri raccolti in "*Nothing Can Stop Us*" (1982); Philip Catherine, Evan Parker e Annie Whitehead in "*Shleep*" (1996-97); Gilad Atzmon, Yaron Stavi, Karen Mantler e Annie Whitehead in "*Cuckooland*" (recensito, con "*Solar Flares Burn For You*", in *Musica Jazz* n.12, 2003).
Sono incisi in solitudine "*The Animals Film*" (1981), "*Old Rottenhat*" (1984-85, con il canto più jazzistico) e "*Dondestan*" (1991, con un brano ispirato a *Boogie Stop Shuffle* di Mungus), come pure il *Billie's Bounce* (Charlie Parker) e il *Locomotive* (Monk) inseriti nell'antologia di rarità e inediti "*Flotsam Jetsam*" (1994; in altri brani suonano Windo, Feza, Hopper, MacRae, Jimi Hendrix, Nick Evans, Ray Babbington, Lol Coxhill, Lindsay Cooper, Jeff Clyne, Annie Whitehead).
A sua volta Wyatt ha partecipato a incisioni o concerti di jazzisti come Mike Mantler, Carla Bley, Lol Coxhill, Evan Parker, Paul Haines, Keith Tippett, Centipede, Symbiosis, Travor Watts, John Surman, John Stevens, Larry Coryell, Jean-Luc Ponty, Gary Burton, Terje Rypdal, Sugarcane Harris e altri ancora. Tutti dettagli sono in www.disco-robertwyatt.com e sopratutto in Mike King, *Falsi movimenti: una storia di Robert Wyatt* (Arcana, 1994).

3 pictures of Robert Wyatt by Alessandro Achilli :





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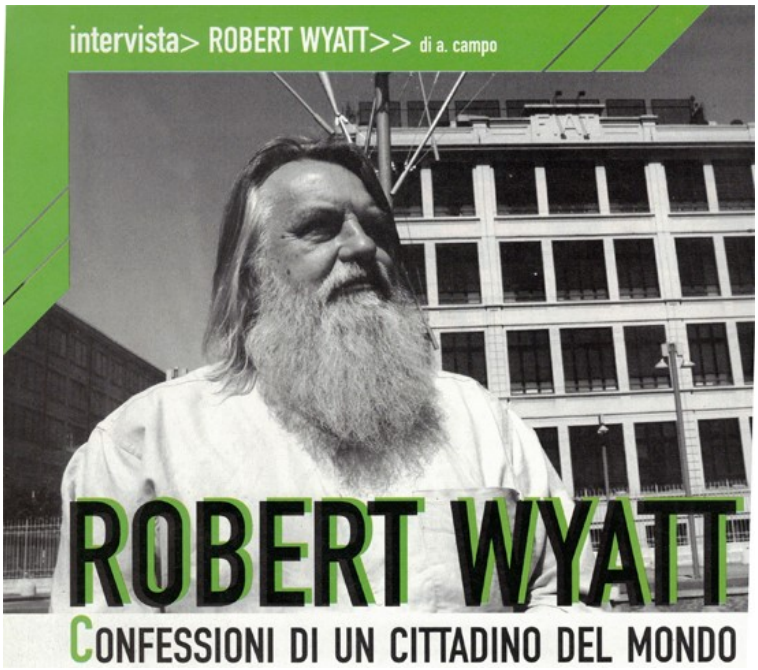
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Robert Wyatt - Confessioni di un cittadino del mondo - Rumore - N° 141 - ottobre 2003



La domanda più difficile arriva alla fine, dopo aver preso un po' di confidenza. A giugno facevano 30 anni dall'"incidente". Straordinario batterista e cantante dal timbro inconfondibile, prima nei Soft Machine e poi per conto proprio, con e senza i Matching Mole, e in generale personaggio chiave nella scena musicale inglese fra i tardi anni Sessanta e i primi Settanta, in bilico fra "scuola di Canterbury" e psichedelia "militante", Robert Wyatt ebbe allora uno scontro frontale col destino. Al culmine di un party piuttosto esuberante precipitò da una finestra: ebbe salva la vita ma la frattura delle 12^ vertebra lo rese paralizzato dalla vita in giù, condannandolo a vivere su una sedia a rotelle.



Aveva 28 anni. Ora va per i 59 e ha l'aria di un vecchio saggio. Gli chiedo se rifarebbe tutto quello che fece quella notte, eccessi inclusi... "No, ma non per la ragione che potresti pensare", risponde. "Non lo rifarei perché è seccante quando qualcuno ha una crisi simile in pubblico e imbarazza chiunque. Era una festa fantastica e di colpo, dopo che io caddi ubriaco dal quarto piano, la festa finì. Ho un senso di colpa per ciò che accadde. Ma sono le cose che fanno i ragazzi: richiamare l'attenzione su di sé in modo drammatico. La giovinezza è fatta di quello: nel mio caso gli eccessi erano un modo per semplificare la ricerca di me stesso, per trovare la mia strada e mettere a fuoco la mia identità artistica. Dunque non cambierei le circostanze: mi limiterei a rompermi la schiena in modo più discreto.

Fare musica è diventato da allora materialmente difficile per lui: niente tournée e rarissime apparizioni pubbliche. All'immobilità fisica Robert Wyatt oppone tuttavia un invidiabile dinamismo intellettuale. L'una cosa e l'altra lo rendono così outsider nell'accezione più pertinente del termine. Dischi quando capita: generalmente di qualità elevatissima, ancorché appartati rispetto al corso degli eventi musicali - da Rock Bottom, concepito durante la lunga degenza seguita all'"incidente", al nuovo Cuckooland. E' quest'ultimo a fornire il pretesto per la nostra conversazione.

QUAL È IL TUO APPROCCIO ALLA MUSICA, VISTO CHE NON LA PUOI AFFRONTARE COME "MESTIERE" A TEMPO PIENO?

"Devo inventare continuamente un modo di essere. Per ragioni pratiche: stare su una sedia a rotelle significa condurre un'esistenza diversa da quella della maggioranza delle altre persone - fare il paraplegico itinerante richiederebbe una quantità di soldi che non ho. Ma anche per come sono: negli anni Sessanta non ce la facevo a guidare un gruppo, né a sopportare di essere in gruppi guidati da altri. Ero insofferente al controllo altrui, ma nello stesso tempo non avevo la forza necessaria per esercitarlo. Perciò l'unico modo era di affrontare un progetto alla volta con le persone che a seconda dei casi mi sembravano adatte. Non ho mai pensato alla musica come al lavoro di una troupe che gira il mondo col suo spettacolo. Mi sono sempre immaginato piuttosto come un regista cinematografico. Sono una specie di film-maker..."

MA I REGISTI LAVORANO SU UNA SCENEGGIATURA, E MI DICEVI CHE PER CUCKOOLAND NON NE AVEVI UNA PRECOSTITUITA...

"Non avevo un piano...Ma adesso che mi ci fai pensare, quell'analogia è forse imprecisa. Diciamo che il momento in cui mixo il disco è come la fase di montaggio di una pellicola. Un film che mi ha influenzato tantissimo è Ombre: John Cassavetes lo ha costruito come fosse una jam session di jazz - aveva un tema su cui gli attori improvvisavano e solo alla fine, in fase di montaggio, lo ha organizzato in chiave drammaturgica. E' quello il bello dell'improvvisazione: che il senso si ricava alla fine, non viene imposto all'inizio."

I MUSICISTI CHE COLLABORANO CON TE - IN QUESTO CASO: BRIAN ENO, PAUL WELLER, DAVID GILMOUR, PHIL MANZANERA... - LO FANNO PER AMICIZIA O SINTONIA ARTISTICA?

"Accade in modo naturale, come bere una tazza di tè insieme. Niente di complicato, con grande rilassatezza. Ognuno entra dentro la storia con la sua personalità. Quando mi accingo a realizzare un disco, faccio conto solo sulle mie forze: non si sa mai.. .Poi arrivano. Non sono mai io a invitarli: sono troppo timido. Sanno che sto lavorando, si fanno vivi, capitano lì. Nessuno di loro ha responsabilità del risultato finale: quella spetta a me. In Forest c'è la chitarra di David Gilmour: si è portato il pezzo a casa e ci ha messo su qualcosa - effetti, piccole note, roba improvvisata... Brian Eno, invece, veniva in studio occasionalmente coi suoi strani aggeggi: ascoltava e diceva - 'Lasciami mezz'ora solo col computer, vorrei fare qualcosa su quella chitarra.' Io uscivo, mi facevo un té, poi tornavo e lui aveva combinato effettivamente qualcosa, anche se non so bene cosa! Lo stesso con Paul Weller: non gli avevo detto niente, nemmeno sapevo che sarebbe arrivato - è venuto mentre facevamo Lollaloop, mi ha detto che magari poteva metterci su due accordi di chitarra e così è stato."

WELLER È IL PIÙ GIOVANE DELLA COMPAGNIA, APPARTIENE A UN'ALTRA GENERAZIONE: COME LO HAI CONOSCIUTO?

"Ci eravamo incontrati a una manifestazione contro l'apartheid, anni fa. Poi ha lavorato con me a Shleep (il disco precedente, ndr): arriviamo da sponde musicali quasi opposte, eppure abbiamo trovato un punto in comune. Apprezzo come si applica sulle cose, il suo impegno e

la sua serietà, lo stile con cui combina musica e politica."

VERA NOVITÀ IN CUCKOOLAND È LA PRESENZA DI KAREN MANTLER, AUTRICE DI TRE BRANI. PUOI PRESENTARCELA?

"La conosco da quando era bimba: è figlia di Carla Bley e Michael Mantler, musicisti con cui ha collaborato a lungo in passato. Da adolescente era una punk, niente a che vedere col jazz o cose simili. Poi però ha cominciato a scrivere canzoni e curiosamente è affiorata l'influenza dei genitori, non saprei neanch'io dire bene come. Suona l'armonica con uno stile tutto suo, molto particolare. Ha un gruppo a New York, si esibisce nei bar e nei ristoranti: non ha grandi aspirazioni di carriera, ma dispone di un vero talento. Mi piaceva l'idea di far ascoltare le sue canzoni a un pubblico più ampio. Io ne sono affascinato."

Parla di lei come fosse una figlia, con affetto. Due volte padre, Robert Wyatt è anche nonno di due nipotini - e un terzo è in arrivo. Una famiglia creata con l'inseparabile compagna Alfie Benge: sovente autrice dei testi delle sue canzoni e da sempre illustratrice delle copertine degli album in cui esse confluiscono. Non fa eccezione Cuckooland.

UN DISCO DOPO SEI ANNI DI SILENZIO: INTANTO IL MONDO È CAMBIATO - IL BOOM DI INTERNET, L'11 SETTEMBRE, LA SECONDA GUERRA IN IRAQ...

"Non sono cambiamenti veri e propri: è l'evoluzione nella continuità di quello che io chiamo l'Impero Anglofono, che ha cominciato a esercitare il proprio potere durante il XX° secolo, mutuando da quello precedente l'idea del dominio imperiale. Vero: adesso è molto più forte che in passato, un vero totalitarismo su scala planetaria. E io provo vergogna a essere cittadino di una delle nazioni che lo incarnano."

QUALI DIFFICOLTÀ COMPORTA ESSERE UN INGLESE DISSIDENTE?

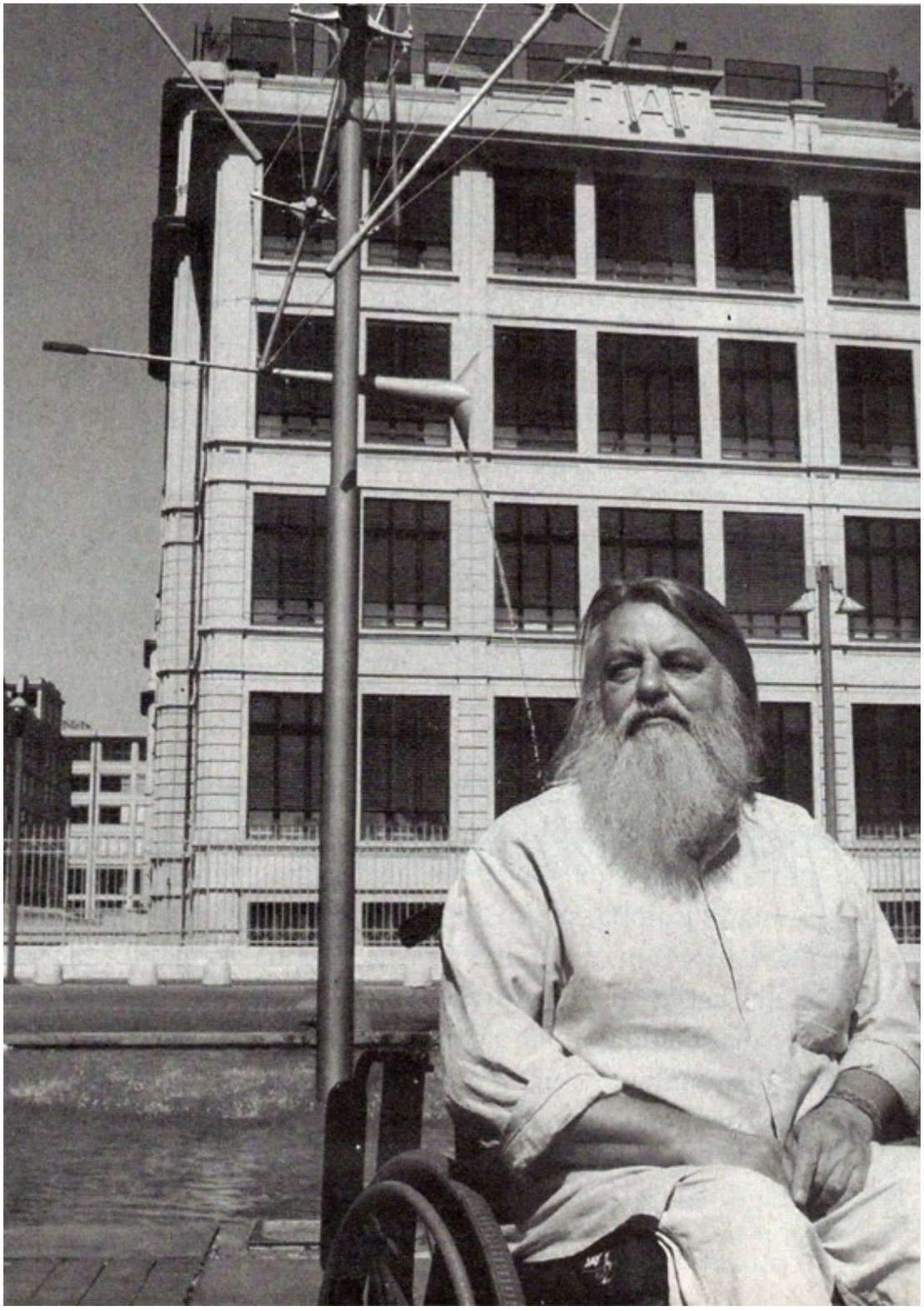
"Anche se non posso far finta di niente, evitando di pormi il problema di chi mi rappresenta nel mondo, personalmente rifiuto l'idea di identità nazionale. Per me una nazione non è altro che un luogo geografico creato per convenienze amministrative: un modo pratico per risolvere questioni come la distribuzione dell'acqua o dell'energia elettrica. Ma ciò non ha alcun significato metafisico: il nazionalismo è una religione come un'altra. Se guardi una carta geografica del pianeta ti rendi conto che i confini sono conseguenze burocratiche di decisioni politiche. Perciò non provo senso di identità con il paese in cui vivo. Mi piace molto parlare con Gilad Atzmon, che suona il sax in Cuckooland: in gioventù era soldato nell'esercito israeliano, ai tempi della guerra in Libano, e fu indottrinato con il narcisismo spirituale tipico di quello stato, ma era appassionato di jazz e aveva in testa un'idea di nazione immaginaria che andava in senso opposto, un luogo di inclusione anziché di esclusione. Perciò è emigrato, diventando cittadino inglese. E lo stesso vale per Yaron Stavi, che nel disco suona invece il basso. Pur arrivando da storie e retroterra completamente diversi, abbiamo in comune un'utopia - io vivo là."

IN CUCKOOLAND C'È UNA CANZONE INTITOLATA OLD EUROPE CHE DESCRIVE LA PARIGI DEL SECONDO DOPOGUERRA: PUOI SPIEGARNE LA GENESI ALLA LUCE DI QUANTO HAI APPENA DETTO?

"All'inizio avevo in testa solo la melodia: una specie di evocazione dei vecchi film francesi ed europei in bianco e nero, con l'eco delle musiche che li accompagnavano. E' stata Alfie a scriverne il testo, e quando lei compone non lo fa mai in modo razionale: parte da un'immagine o da una suggestione, qualcosa di piccolo e definito - un posto, un'epoca, una situazione: sovente astratta. Nel caso di Old Europe il risultato mi è piaciuto molto: Alfie mi conosce bene e sa che da giovane, quando ho scoperto il mondo, sono stato a Parigi, così come del resto anche lei, e che di quella città mi aveva colpito la ricettività culturale - il jazz era più popolare là di quanto fosse in America. E il titolo della canzone, "Vecchia Europa", allude proprio a quello: a quanto l'Europa possa essere un luogo accogliente..."

OPPONI L'IDEA DI EUROPA AL NAZIONALISMO LOCALISTICO?

"No, vale il ragionamento che facevo a proposito del 'sentirsi inglese': la costruzione di un'identità europea non può essere fatta a tavolino, per ragioni amministrative. Difendo però il concetto di Europa come luogo capace di accogliere nuove idee. Fu importante per me scoprire in gioventù la possibilità di una cultura fatta di identità multiple."



FAI ANCORA POLITICA MILITANTE? RICORDO CHE ERI ISCRITTO AL PARTITO COMUNISTA...

"Non c'è più un Partito Comunista in Gran Bretagna! Ha fatto harakiri. Finché c'era, ne facevo parte. E mi sento ancora comunista. Mi sembra l'unica via per rendere migliore il mondo, nonostante tutto. E' l'unica risposta al totalitarismo capitalistico."

TE LO CHIEDEVO PERCHÉ MI PARE CHE NEI VERSI DI ALCUNE CANZONI, LULLABY FOR HAMZA IN PARTICOLARE, ALL'ARDORE POLITICO SIA SUBENTRATA LA RASSEGNAZIONE: LE NINNE-NANNE COME UNICO ANTIDOTO CONTRO LE BOMBE...

"Anche quello è un testo scritto da Alfie. Per me spiegarne il senso sarebbe come voler interpretare ciò che Costello voleva dire con Shipbuilding (brano di cui Wyatt offrì un'interpretazione memorabile nel 1982, ndr). Ma ci provo, dico quello che significa per me.

Mi pare valorizzi il punto di vista delle vittime, quando invece a proposito della guerra si parla sempre degli eserciti, dei leader, delle Forze del Male, dei dittatori e dei loro corpi scelti, raramente della gente comune - medici, infermiere, agricoltori, insegnanti, ragazzi e bambini. Sono loro i grandi assenti dai notiziari. E Alfie prova compassione per le vittime dei bombardamenti: è cresciuta in Europa, subito dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, e ha visto i segni di quelle devastazioni, ha ascoltato i racconti dei sopravvissuti. Anche solo ricordare che quelle sono persone come noi, ed è dunque come se noi fossimo sotto i bombardamenti, è un atto politico. Si tratta di individui, non di numeri nelle statistiche. Migliaia di individui."

ALLA FINE DI CUCKOOLAND C'È UNA CANZONE ARABA: LA AHADA YALAM. E' GIUSTO INTENDERLA COME UN ACCENNO DI SPERANZA?

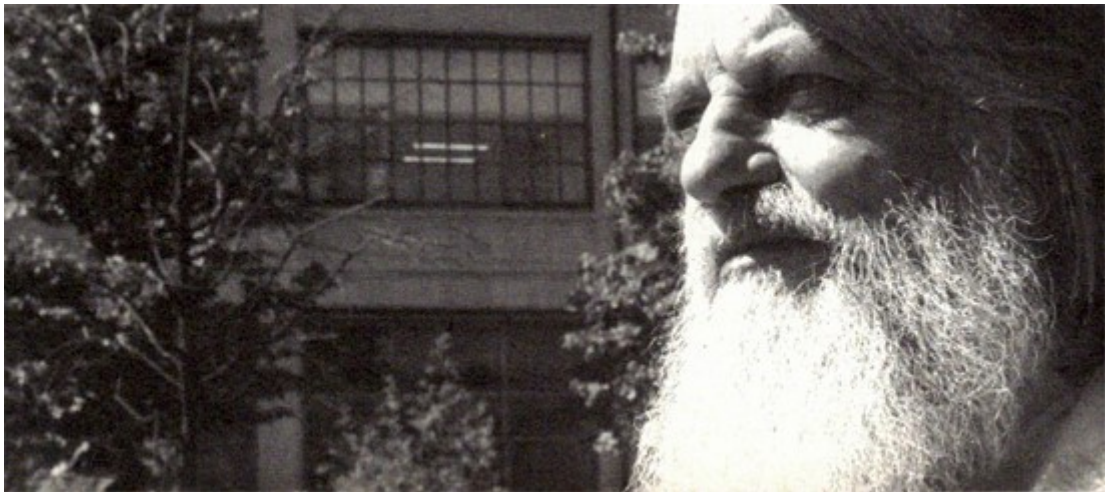
"Quando ho cominciato a preparare il disco non avevo idea di dove sarebbe andato a finire. L'ho capito a cose fatte. E quella canzone in coda, così come quella all'inizio (Just a Bit, ndr), gli da un senso. In fondo La Ahada Yalam dice solo che c'è la speranza che domani sia un giorno migliore di oggi: a volte accade. L'ha scritta Nizar Zreik, un arabo di Haifa, ma io l'ho conosciuta nella versione di Amai Murkus. Trovo fondamentali gli ultimi versi: 'Eppure so che le vittime di domani/renderanno un'alba nuova/più vicina. Ma chi può dirlo.' E' quel concetto, 'nessuno sa', a essere in qualche modo intollerabile. Il fatto che per un futuro diverso debbano essere sacrificate delle persone... Ma credo sia nella natura umana. Alla fine il potere della musica è quello: creare incantesimi, pregare gli alberi, le montagne e il mare, anche se magari alla fine scopri che là non c'è nessuno. Mi fa rabbia ancora adesso pensare alle amnesie storiche e politiche di cui l'uomo è costantemente vittima. Ma so d'altra parte che non può essere altrimenti. E' giusto che ogni generazione nuova cresca senza ricordare il passato: i giovani hanno delle cose da fare prima di doverci pensare su - sesso, lavoro, cibo... Portassero sulle spalle tutto il fardello della storia, non ci riuscirebbero. Perciò un po' di amnesia è necessaria. Col passare degli anni mi sono rassegnato all'idea che non puoi insegnare le cose: le persone devono sperimentarle sulla propria pelle. Tutto ciò che puoi fare è essere testimone del tuo tempo e trovare consolazione nelle persone che hanno una sensibilità simile alla tua."

INDUGIANDO ANCORA SULLE CANZONI DI CUCKOOLAND: PERCHÉ HAI SCELTO DI INCLUDERE LE COVER DI INSENSATEZ (ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM) E RAINING IN MY HEART (PORTATA AL SUCCESSO DA BUDDY HOLLY)?

"Sono due canzoni americane: anche se dare dell"americano' a un brasiliano può sembrare improprio. Ho sempre cercato di incorporare nella mia musica ciò che ho imparato ascoltandone altre. Le mie radici di compositore affondano nella musica popolare, nelle canzonette. Credo ancora nella forza che hanno e mi piace ricordare l'effetto che facevano su di me quando ero ragazzo: l'eccitazione di ascoltare Buddy Holly nei jukebox. Non che io sia in grado di riprodurla: posso conservarne :il ricordo, la sensazione vaga che mi ha lasciato in testa - perciò Raining in My Heart è diventata senza parole e tutt'altro che rock'n'roll. Quanto alla musica brasiliana, ricordo che prima dell'avvento del rock'n'roll quasi dominava il mondo con il suo linguaggio multiculturale: mi piaceva tantissimo."

MA ASCOLTI ANCORA LE CANZONI POP?

"In verità ascolto soprattutto i dischi di chi lavora con me: negli ultimi tempi quelli di Yaron Stavi e Gilad Atzmon, in particolare. Sono aperti stilisticamente e geograficamente. La musica pop non è più roba per me: non riesce a coinvolgermi. Me la facessi piacere, sarei un pedofilo culturale. Ma difendo l'idea di pop music da chi l'attacca dicendo che è spazzatura. So che effetto fanno le canzonette: la loro semplicità, qualcosa che tutti possono canticchiare divertendosi. Guarda questo giadino: ci sono le piante secolari, grandi e solide come i compositori importanti, e là ecco i fiori, che durano lo spazio di un mese, sono effimeri, e domani ce ne saranno altri al posto loro, ma sono altrettanto belli e hanno pari dignità - così è per le canzonette. Ci fossero solo gli alberi, il mondo sarebbe più povero."



Alberto Campo

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Robert Wyatt - La vita è un gregge - Rockerilla - N. 278 - ottobre 2003

Robert Wyatt

La vita è un gregge

di MAURIZIO MARINO



Incontrare Robert Wyatt vuol dire prima di tutto avere a che fare con uno di quei pochi personaggi del mondo della musica per i quali l'Arte è principalmente un interesse personale, una ragione di vita, e solo secondariamente uno strumento per vendere dischi. E non è certo una forzatura definire Wyatt uno dei pochissimi musicisti per i quali la parola "artista" non suona retorica né fuori luogo.

Poter conversare con un personaggio come Robert Wyatt, poi, è una di quelle cose che appagano e rasserenano, uno di quei traguardi sempre vagheggiati che il giornalista ha sognato fin da bambino, uno di quegli obiettivi che chi scrive di musica ha sempre tenuto nel cassetto dei "desiderata", con la segreta speranza che prima o poi quel sogno potesse realizzarsi.

E' dunque con un certo timore riverenziale che il sottoscritto si accosta all'incontro *face to face* con Robert Wyatt, che avviene in un rinfrescante pomeriggio di settembre nella quiete del giardino dell'Hotel Le Meridien di Torino. Ma sono sufficienti davvero pochi minuti per fugare ogni timore e per accorgersi dell'immensa umanità ed umiltà di quest'uomo che, giunto in Italia per promuovere il nuovo, bellissimo album "Cuckooland", ha accettato - dopo le domande di rito sul nuovo lavoro - di raccontarci in modo amabile e piacevole storie ed aneddoti tratti da una carriera che dura da circa quarant'anni...

- Da "Shleep" a "Cuckooland" sono trascorsi sei anni. Possiamo definire questo lasso di tempo come una lunga pausa di riflessione oppure semplicemente come un intervallo necessario a mettere insieme i nuovi brani nella miglior maniera possibile?

«Secondo me la quantità e la qualità non sono la stessa cosa. C'era un periodo in cui sembrava che le famiglie facessero a gara nel mettere al mondo i bambini: fino a non moltissimo tempo fa capitava di vedere madri che avevano dato vita a dodici o quindici figli! (*Ride. Ndr*) Altre famiglie però hanno creduto che mettere al mondo solo pochi figli potesse aumentare il tempo che si poteva dedicare a ciascuno di essi. Io appartengo decisamente alla seconda "scuola", ed anche se io e Alfie non abbiamo avuto figli, durante gli anni abbiamo fatto nascere alcuni dischi. Ci siamo dedicati ad essi in modo che non patissero la fame, che avessero una buona istruzione e dei bei vestiti. E' per questo motivo, dunque, che ho sempre preferito fare pochi dischi, evitando di affollare il mercato con uscite poco utili.

Fuor di metafora, "Cuckooland" è nato dopo sei anni perché prima i tempi per un altro album non erano ancora maturi. Molte canzoni di questo disco sono rimaste nel mio registratore portatile o anche nella mia mente per anni, semplici idee incompiute. Poi, in alcuni casi dopo molto tempo, ho deciso di riprendere in mano quelle idee e di dar loro una forma compiuta. Stavolta il lavoro di *team up* con Alfie è stato totale: in brani come "Old Europe", "Forest" e "Lullaby For Hamza", ad esempio, io ho scritto la musica e lei l'ha completata trovando delle parole stupende. In "Cuckooland" ho cercato di ritrovare le mie radici musicali: ho voluto includere diversi autori e diversi stili musicali. Ma alla fine il risultato è esattamente quello che avevo in mente: una raccolta di semplici *pop songs*, che tutti possono ricordare ed anche cantare con facilità».

- Io odio le definizioni ma credo che per "Cuckooland" possa essere abbastanza azzeccata la definizione di album "politico poetico". Credi sia ancora possibile, negli anni Duemila, comunicare alla gente qualcosa di importante con una canzone?

«Sinceramente non ne ho idea. Io sono prima di tutto un ascoltatore, poi un musicista, e solo in terza battuta un paroliere. Quel che mi emoziona nella musica viene prima di tutto dal suono, e a volte rimango estasiato da dischi sui quali non è registrata neanche una parola: credo che il "meta-linguaggio" della musica sia molto importante. Quando scrivo dei testi, dunque, aspetto che le parole "vengano fuori" dalla musica: a volte i miei testi sembrano non avere un senso compiuto perché, quasi come nei sogni, io cerco di cogliere solo le parole che vengono in superficie, quelle che mi colpiscono di più e che stanno meglio in armonia con i suoni. E' difficile, dunque, rispondere alla tua domanda: io non sono un sociologo, e quindi non sono qualificato ad analizzare questo fenomeno, però in cuor mio spero ovviamente che le mie canzoni siano servite almeno un po' a far riflettere le persone, anche se non ne ho mai avuto la pretesa...».

- Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, David Gilmour e Paul Weller sono i nomi più noti coinvolti in "Cuckooland". Ascoltando le canzoni del disco è facile percepire il grande senso di amicizia che ti lega a loro. Un senso di amicizia che è molto diverso dall'abituale "lavoro in studio" tra musicisti che si immagina di solito. Che ne pensi?

«Sono molto contento che tu abbia notato questo particolare. Io non ho mai distinto nella mia mente tra "persone famose" e "persone non famose", quindi è puramente casuale che personaggi come Brian Eno o David Gilmour si siano trovati a suonare nei miei album. Per me la musica, soprattutto ora. è prima di tutto "compagnia": è qualcosa di concreto e di vivo, non è un'idea astratta. Di conseguenza le persone che vengono a suonare sui miei dischi sono persone che stimo profondamente: sono degli amici con i quali mi piace trascorrere intere giornate insieme. Ogni brano di "Cuckooland" - così come ogni brano di "Shleep" - è stato registrato con una formazione differente, ma tutto questo non ha fatto altro che aumentare la spontaneità delle canzoni a cui abbiamo dato vita. Oltre ai nomi che hai citato, sul disco suonano musicisti poco noti ma eccellenti come Gilad Atzmon, Yaron Stavi, Jennifer Maidman: persone con cui è stato davvero un enorme piacere suonare ed improvvisare in studio».

- Alcune canzoni dell'album sono firmate da Karen Mantler. Puoi dirmi qualcosa in

più su di lei, e su questa collaborazione?

«Karen Mantler è la figlia dei jazzisti Michael Mantler e Carla Bley, da sempre miei grandi amici. A dire il vero lei da ragazzina non amava il jazz e la canzone: la sua attitudine era piuttosto punk. Karen però è sempre stata un'autrice nonché una musicista straordinaria: ho sempre notato che la sua sensibilità compositiva era in qualche modo simile alla mia. Le quattro canzoni che mi ha proposto mi sono piaciute da subito e dunque ho deciso di suonarle insieme a lei e di includerle sull'album. In progetto c'è anche l'idea di un suo album solista prodotto da me, che conterrà anche le versioni originali dei suoi quattro brani, ma è ancora presto per parlare di questo lavoro, che al momento è ancora allo studio...».

- "Old Europe" è un ricordo vivido e toccante della fugace storia d'amore tra Juliette Greco e Miles Davis. Tutto il brano riflette le atmosfere e i suoni della Parigi degli anni '40: puoi dirmi qualcosa in più su questa canzone che può in un certo senso suggerire l'idea di un cortometraggio sull'amore e sulla musica?

«Qualche giorno fa stavo proprio parlando di questo con Gilad Atzmon, che suona il sax su "Old Europe". In effetti questo brano narra una storia, e come tale può ricordare lo spazio circoscritto di un piccolo film. La storia di questo brano nasce da un ricordo personale che risale a quell'epoca: mio padre era un grande appassionato del cinema francese classico, e dunque l'immagine della Parigi di quegli anni mi ha sempre ispirato molto. Le parole del brano, comunque, le ha scritte Alfie, ispirandosi al ricordo di quella storia d'amore tra due personaggi noti al grande pubblico. La canzone è dedicata a Mike Zwerin, un grandissimo musicista jazz newyorkese che suonò spesso con Miles Davis e, come lui, si trasferì in Europa nel Dopoguerra. Ebbi modo di conoscerlo e di suonare con lui a fine anni '60 e porto ancora dentro me il ricordo del suo forte legame con la "Vecchia Europa" degli anni '50, la cui scena jazz era molto più cosmopolita e culturalmente matura di quella americana, che in quel periodo era limitata dalle chiusure del Maccartismo. Parigi era il centro di questo mondo, e i film di Louis Malle, di Godard e di altri registi catturano alla perfezione quel fermento jazz così vivo, in cui si colloca anche la vicenda di Miles Davis e Juliette Greco».

- Il testo di "Lullaby For Hamza" richiama alla mente una pagina della nostra storia recente, terribile e ancora non completamente voltata: la guerra contro l'Iraq. L'atmosfera di questo brano è commovente e molto "impressionistica": è il frutto di una reazione immediata alle notizie che provenivano da Baghdad?

«La canzone è in parte ispirata ad un articolo apparso su "The Guardian". Alfie si è identificata fortemente in questo brano, e ha voluto esprimere la necessità di qualcosa di innocente che si contrapponesse al rumore delle bombe. Così è nata l'idea della ninnananna per un bimbo iracheno, un piccolo bagliore di speranza contro l'orrore di una guerra paradossale e ingiustificabile, che è stata dichiarata nonostante in Iraq non ci fosse mai stato il benché minimo segno di ostilità nei confronti del mondo occidentale!».

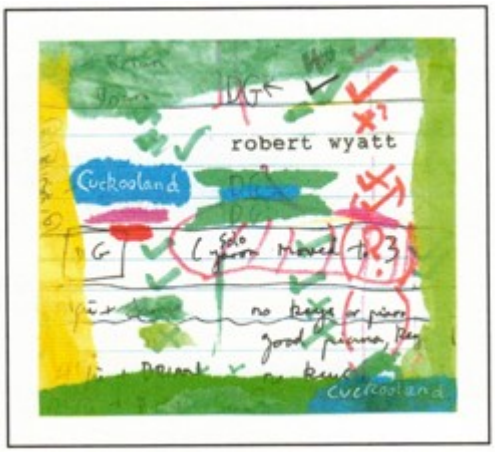
- Il tema del mondo arabo torna anche in "La Ahada Yalam", che punta l'attenzione sul conflitto palestinese-israeliano...

«Ho conosciuto questo brano del cantautore israeliano Nizar Zreik tramite un disco di sua moglie, Amal Murkus. Mi sono innamorato di questa canzone a tal punto da pensare di inserirla nell'album: unico ostacolo il fatto che la versione originale fosse in arabo, e per me cantare in questa lingua purtroppo è impossibile. Da questo, dunque, è nata l'idea di farne solo una versione strumentale, "traducendo" le parole in un nuovo arrangiamento. La cosa più bella legata a questo brano è stata la possibilità di eseguirne la musica insieme a due musicisti israeliani come Gilad Atzmon e Yaron Stavi, che hanno fatto proprio il significato di una canzone che inneggia alla pace in una terra martoriata come quella tra Palestina e Israele. La resa del brano mi ha soddisfatto a tal punto da farmi decidere di inserirlo in fondo alla scaletta, in modo che dopo queste note così malinconiche ma serene non ci fosse nient'altro».

- "Insensatez" è il tuo tributo ad Antonio Carlos Jobim, e forse è l'unica canzone d'amore "propriamente detta" di quest'album. Da cosa è nata la scelta di includere questo brano?

«Jobim è sempre stato uno dei miei autori

preferiti: la musica popolare brasiliana della sua epoca è stata una mia fissazione fin da quand'ero ragazzino, e credo mi abbia influenzato molto. "Insensatez" è un brano che ho sempre amato: mi intriga molto l'idea dell'"insensatezza d'amore" espressa dal cantante che si contrappone alla "sensatezza" di chi ascolta. Secondo me il testo di questa canzone trasmette una visione molto matura nei confronti dell'amore. La scelta di interpretare il brano di un autore così popolare potrebbe suonare strana a qualcuno ma per me l'unica cosa importante è fare i miei dischi nel miglior modo possibile, dando spazio a ciò che più mi emoziona...».



- Le canzoni incluse in "Cuckooland" appaiono meno strutturate rispetto a "Shleep" e potrebbero suggerire un parziale ritorno alle atmosfere di "Rock Bottom ". L'ispirazione jazz è presente in quasi tutte le tracce, mentre i suoni morbidi della bossanova e di certa elettronica appaiono di tanto in tanto. Cosa puoi dirmi dei tuoi ascolti recenti? Cosa apprezzi in particolare nella musica di oggi?

«Apprezzo molto la musica di oggi, anche se devo dire che le mie influenze odierne sono più un frutto del caso che di una vera intenzione. Mi è piaciuto molto, ad esempio, poter cantare nel disco della "vostra" Cristina Dona, così come mi ha fatto piacere che una band come i Gorky's Zygotic Mynci - che apprezzo molto - abbia interpretato alcuni miei brani. Mi piace molto, poi, il nuovo pop "nero" inglese, che secondo me negli ultimi anni è riuscito a diversificarsi molto da quello americano. In realtà, però, nella maggior parte del mio tempo libero preferisco ascoltare i vecchi dischi jazz della mia collezione, che riescono a riportarmi ad un periodo storico - quello degli anni '50 e '60 - al quale sono molto legato. Nei dischi di John Coltrane di quell'epoca, ad esempio, c'è un oceano di idee: ammiro immensamente l'"incertezza" e l'incompiutezza di quelle improvvisazioni *free*, che per me rasentano la perfezione! Con ciò non voglio però dire che nella musica di oggi non ci siano più lo spirito di avventura e di ricerca di un tempo: è solo che il mio modo di vedere e di vivere la musica è necessariamente legato a un'epoca che pian piano si sta allontanando...».

- La durata totale di "Cuckooland" supera i 75 minuti ma l'album è diviso in due parti separate, che ricordano per certi aspetti la suddivisione in due movimenti di "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard". C'è una particolare ragione per questa scelta?

«A registrazioni concluse ho pensato che il materiale inciso fosse troppo per un solo disco. Per un attimo ho pensato di realizzare un doppio album ma poi ho creduto fosse più saggio inserire una "pausa" tra la prima e la seconda parte del disco. In questo modo è come se l'ascoltatore avesse davanti due dischi anziché uno: il mio invito, infatti, è quello di iniziare l'ascolto indifferentemente dal primo oppure dal nono brano. E' anche per questo motivo, e per questa "indecisione d'ascolto", che ho deciso di intitolare le due partì "Neither Here..." e "...Nor There" (*ovvero "Né qui... " e "...Né lì". Ndr*)».

- Per concludere, rimane il grande desiderio di rivederti ancora su un palcoscenico in Italia...

«Mi spiace ma credo sarà impossibile. Io ho una terribile paura del palcoscenico: non riesco proprio più ad esibirmi davanti a un pubblico. Ai tempi di "Shleep" ho provato a tornare alle esibizioni live ma non mi sono trovato granché a mio agio: mi spiace molto ma per ora dovrete accontentarvi dei miei dischi e delle mie canzoni registrate...».

The End Of An Bar (Cbs, 1970). RR

L'inizio di tutto. Ma anche, per certi aspetti, l'epitaffio del Canterbury Sound "classico" (le esperienze Soft Madrine e Matching Mole sono solo lontane parenti di questo lp) che, lasciandosi in parte alle spalle le coloriture jazz e prog, cede il passo a qualcosa di ancor più smaccatamente avanguardistico. Un disco dalla fruizione ostica, largamente incompreso e sicuramente controverso, che presenta il Wyatt solista come uno dei più originali sperimentatori dei primi Seventies.

Rock Bottom (Virgin, 1974). RRRRR

"Rock Bottom" è il risultato di una parabola discendente e di una ascendente. In una maledetta notte del 1973, infatti, Wyatt vola giù da un balcone nel bel mezzo di un party psichedelico: la frattura della colonna vertebrale lo costringerà per tutta la vita su una sedia a rotelle. Ma, quando tutto sembrava perduto, il destino decide di "metterci una pezza" e Wyatt, aiutato dalle amorevoli cure della moglie Alfreda Benge e dalla sincera amicizia di un gruppo di compagni di strada vecchi e nuovi (Fred Frith, Hugh Hopper, Ivor Cutler, Richard Sinclair, Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo, Laurie Allan e il giovane Mike Oldfield), nel giro di pochi mesi è in grado di dare alle stampe uno dei lavori più profondi e sofferti dell'intero cantautorato anni '70. Ed è proprio pescando nel "fondo del rock" che Wyatt ritrova sé stesso: ritrova la voglia di vivere, la forza di esibirsi dal vivo (memorabile il suo concerto "solo" al Drury Lane Theatre) e soprattutto una capacità compositiva di rara suggestione, capace di fondere gli sperimentalismi degli esordi con un nuovo, commovente *mood* melodico dettato da mesi passati nel dolore più buio. Estremamente coeso e impossibile da isolare in momenti distinti, l'album è un viaggio surreale e metaforico nelle profondità dell'animo umano, un'incursione subacquea nei sentimenti più interiori e personali che, come in un racconto filmico, vengono fuori uno ad uno lasciando nell'ascoltatore una strana sensazione subliminare. La magia di episodi come l'ammaliante "Sea Song", la seducente "A Last Straw" e il singolare chiasmo che racchiude le sognanti "Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road", 'Alifib", "Alife" e "Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road", infatti, non si può descrivere con semplici parole.

Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Virgin, 1975). RRRR

Continuazione a tutti gli effetti di "Rock Bottom" (molti brani appartengono alle *sessions* del disco precedente), "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" non riesce forse a ripetere la magia del suo stupendo predecessore ma ammalia spesso e volentieri. Suddiviso in due movimenti ("Richard" e "Ruth"), l'album si dipana su trame maggiormente *jazz-orinented* e rag-giunge probabilmente il suo culmine nell'oscura "5 Black Notes And 1 White Note" (rilettura della "Barcarola" di Offenbach) e nella resa di "Song For Che" di Charlie Haden.

Nothing Can Stop Us (Rough Trade, 1981). RRR

Raccolta di singoli usciti negli anni precedenti, "Nothing Can Stop Us" racchiude covers eclettiche ed originali (si va dallo standard di Billie Holiday "Strange Fruit" ai canti politici "Caimanera" e "Bandiera Rossa", da "Arauco" di Violeta Parra a "At Last I'm Free" degli Chic), toccando il momento più memorabile in "Shipbuilding" di Elvis Costello, commovente ballata sulla guerra delle Falkland, aggiunta nella seconda stampa del disco. Molto bello anche l'unico brano a firma Wyatt, "Born Again Cretin".

Old Rottenhat (Rough Trade, 1985). RRR

Primo album in studio dopo ben dieci anni, "Old Rottenhat" calca pesantemente la mano sul tema politico e ricorda al mondo l'esistenza di guerre nascoste ("East Timor"), i pericoli dell'imperialismo e dei media ("The United States Of Amnesia", "The British Road", "Mass Medium") e così via. L'album, seppur discontinuo, apre una seconda fase nella carriera di Wyatt, caratterizzata da un maggior ricorso al formato-canzone e da atmosfere sempre più intimistiche e malinconiche.

Dondestan (Rough Trade, 1991). RRR

Concepito in coppia con la moglie Alfreda Benge (che in quest'album è l'autrice di quasi tutti i testi), "Dondestan" abbandona parzialmente la tematica politica (che rimane comunque protagonista in "Left On Man", "Lisp Service" e "New Information Order"), preferendo planare su territori lirici e sonori più astratti e sognanti (indimenticabili le atmosfere sospese di "The Sight Of The Wind" e "Catholic Architecture") che richiamano in parte "Rock Bottom".

Shleep (Hannibal / Rykodisc, 1997). RRRRR

L'album della definitiva "scoperta" di Wyatt arriva solo nel 1997, grazie alla Rykodisc che rilancia in grande stile la carriera del musicista inglese. Accompagnato da un cast di stelle

(Brian Eno, Paul Weller, Evan Parker, Phil Manzanera...), Wyatt fa il suo ritorno con un saggio d'eleganza d'altri tempi: scintillante negli arrangiamenti, geniale nelle melodie, "Shleep" è una parata di classici. Impossibile non citare "Heaps Of Sheeps", "Free Will And Testament", "A Sunday In Madrid" e la meravigliosa "Maryan". Uno dei dischi fondamentali degli anni '90.

Cuckooland (Hannibal / Rykodisc, 2003). V. recensione a pag. 45.

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L'uomo che sussurrava ai cavalli - Blow Up - N°65 - Ottobre 2003

L'UOMO CHE SUSSURRAVA AI CAVALLI di Bizarre



Esce "Cuckooland", nuovo album di Robert Wyatt. La nostra intervista.

Sei anni sono passati dall'ultimo CD di Robert Wyatt, "Shleep", del '97. Chi lo conosce è abituato a queste lunghe attese, ma vale ne sempre la pena: l'eccellenza con Wyatt è, oseremmo dire, consuetudine. E se il suo stile rimane inconfondibile e inimitabile (ancorché fonte di ispirazione per decine di band attuali, Radiohead in primis), di volta in volta piccole variazioni sul tema mostrano il corpus di un'opera mutare impercettibilmente, rimanendo stilisticamente unica e praticamente senza termini di paragone. "Shleep" era ricco e articolato, "Cuckooland" è più lineare e composto, forse perfino *orecchiabile*. Robert Wyatt, invece, è sempre uguale a se stesso: un uomo che si crede semplice e che traspira profonda umiltà, mentre invece risulta, dopo un'ora di conversazione, persona colta, vivace e di rara intelligenza. Sta a voi giudicare...

Allora Robert... era un bel po' di tempo che non facevi musica...

Beh, non è stato un tempo molto lungo dal punto di vista geologico! Per me è già sorprendente che sia mai riuscito a finire dei dischi, da sempre. Quando ne finisco uno, ogni volta penso, 'ci siamo, il serbatoio ormai è vuoto'... alla fine ne viene poi fuori un altro, ma non è una cosa che posso controllare. Per contro, quello che mi ha sempre sorpreso negli artisti che amo, è che per praticare la loro arte riescono sempre a creare ancor prima uno 'spazio', nelle loro vite e nelle loro menti, in cui fanno piazza pulita per potersi esprimere. Questa cosa per me è sempre stata estremamente difficile. La vita è già così complicata, che riuscire a ritagliarsi uno spazio di questo genere è di per sé estremamente arduo. Ogni volta che succede, colgo l'occasione al volo; non sono pigro...

Forse però gli artisti hanno anche la grande fortuna di fare quello a cui aspirano maggiormente, mentre moltissime persone sono frustrate per essere obbligate a

fare un lavoro ordinario quando magari vorrebbero dipingere o scrivere poesie...

Beh, per quanto riguarda le aspirazioni... se ci fosse un lavoro in cui potessi ubriacarmi parecchio, ascoltare vecchi dischi tutto il giorno e magari riuscire anche a farmi pagare... ecco, questa è la mia segreta aspirazione! *(ride di gusto, ndr)* Comunque ci sono due motivi importanti per fare dischi, che la rendono una cosa divertente. Il primo sono le idee: tutti ne hanno, devono uscire in qualche modo! E succede nei momenti più impensati, nel cuore della notte. E questo è divertente. Il secondo è più difficile da spiegare... è come scalare una montagna. Ti può piacere, può essere una tua passione, ma fondamentalmente è una cosa difficile, faticosa. È un po' un piacere masochistico, credo. E dopo la scalata più impegnativa dev'esserci un punto in cui improvvisamente tutto diventa più facile, immagino. Per la musica è la stessa cosa: nelle ultime due settimane di lavoro, quando si mixa il disco con i tecnici, è già tutto lì: si taglia, si fa editing, si fa ordine, ma il corpo del lavoro c'è, e si vede, si tocca, si *sente*. A quel momento è facile, e la soddisfazione è grande; ma prima è una scalata, è un lavoraccio.


Esce "Cuckooland", nuovo album di Robert Wyatt. La nostra intervista.

l'uomo che sussurrava ai cavalli

Prima hai parlato di vecchi dischi... cosa intendi per 'vecchi'? anche "Rock Bottom" ormai è un vecchio disco, no?

Non per me... non in termini di tempo geologico! *(ride ancora, ndr)* Per me è un disco molto recente. Credo che la maggioranza delle persone ami soprattutto i dischi che ha scoperto quando ha guardato per la prima volta oltre le mura di casa... qualunque fosse in quel periodo la musica, l'arte e la cultura; è completamente soggettivo. Per me, la giovinezza è stata negli anni '50. Andavo a scuola e la scuola era orribile; e più vivi una realtà orribile più hai bisogno di un'alternativa valida per staccartene. Ascoltavo la musica degli anni '50, Elvis, così come i dischi di avanguardia e di musica classica di mio padre, quelli jazz di mio fratello, o il pop di Eddie Cochran che sentivo nei caffè dove andavi per guardare le ragazze - perché tanto non avevo idea di cosa *dire* alla ragazze... Per farti un esempio: inizialmente ho sentito Omette Coleman perché era *nuovo;* adesso, ascolto esattamente lo stesso disco perché è *vecchio*.

Beh, credo che succeda un po' a tutti... ed è difficile dire se la qualità media della musica sia effettivamente calata o se banalmente è quello che si percepisce invecchiando...

La verità è una cosa molto soggettiva, no? Se ti innamori di una persona, quella è certamente una cosa vera, ma non significa che *tutti* se ne debbano innamorare...

La verità è una cosa molto soggettiva, no? Se ti innamori di una persona, quella è certamente una cosa vera, ma non significa che tutti se ne debbano innamorare... Bene, passiamo allora a qualcosa di sicuramente nuovo, "Cuckooland". Parliamo di alcune canzoni cercando lo spunto per allargare il discorso... ad esempio, *Just A Bit* parla di religione ma quello che mi incuriosisce è questa dedica a Richard Dawkins...

Dawkins *(studioso e scrittore inglese contemporaneo, che ha scritto numerosi testi di divulgazione scientifica, ndr)* è stato attaccato ultimamente in Inghilterra da alcuni gruppi religiosi, anche di sinistra, per aver ribadito più volte quanto la scienza sia molto *romantica*. Ad esempio pensa che l'astrologia, che ha sempre cercato una congiunzione della scienza con il mondo dell'irrazionale, non sia più necessaria: è sufficiente l'astronomia, perché porta con sé un livello di mistero e di magia altrettanto profondo. Così Dawkins sostiene che l'accusa che gli viene mossa, quella di sminuire la figura di Dio e del credo religioso, non abbia senso: il mistero della fede è insito nel mondo reale, e nelle leggi scientifiche. Personalmente sono molto interessato a questo punto di vista, perché credo che la magia della realtà sia superiore a qualsiasi credenza religiosa. Anch'io amo la magia e la ricerco costantemente, non mi piace che qualcuno me lo voglia impedire. Più in generale, l'origine di *Just A Bit* è stata lunga e travagliata. All'inizio voleva essere soltanto una canzone polemica, ma ormai sono stufo di usare la musica solo in quel modo - anche se l'ho fatto io stesso in passato; al contrario una canzone ti deve dare nutrimento spirituale, pace mentale... La canzone era nata dalla constatazione che tutti gli omicidi di massa, oggi, sono giustificati dalla religione. Ormai si usa Dio come scusa per commettere i più atroci delitti, e quando un uomo politico si proclama cristiano (Bush l'aveva fatto) inevitabilmente finisce con l'ordinare di uccidere altri uomini. Per cui il testo originale era molto più crudo e diretto, aveva strofe del tipo "Tutte le religioni sono completamente assurde", eccetera. Poi ho pensato che non potevo scrivere cose del genere, così estremistiche; mia nuora è cattolica, cosa avrebbe pensato? Ah, ah, ah!... e quindi la canzone si è stemperata, e ne ho approfittato per introdurre le mie idee sulla magia.

Segue *Old Europe*, con questa bellissima atmosfera che rimanda al jazz degli anni '50... e al periodo magico della Parigi esistenzialista di quei tempi.

Musicalmente la canzone è nata dall'immagine di un vecchio film francese in bianco e nero che mio padre amava molto. Non avevo testi, per cui ho chiesto ad Alfie di darmi una mano. Lei conosce molto bene i miei gusti, molti li condividiamo, ma sa essere più astratta di me nella scrittura. E la sua scelta è caduta in quel periodo storico in cui l'Europa, e la Francia in particolare, era particolarmente ricettiva, e reciprocamente generosa, nei confronti della cultura afroamericana. Credo che mai come in quel momento lo scambio sia stato significativo tra queste due culture, in ogni caso molto di più rispetto alla caricatura della vecchia New York.

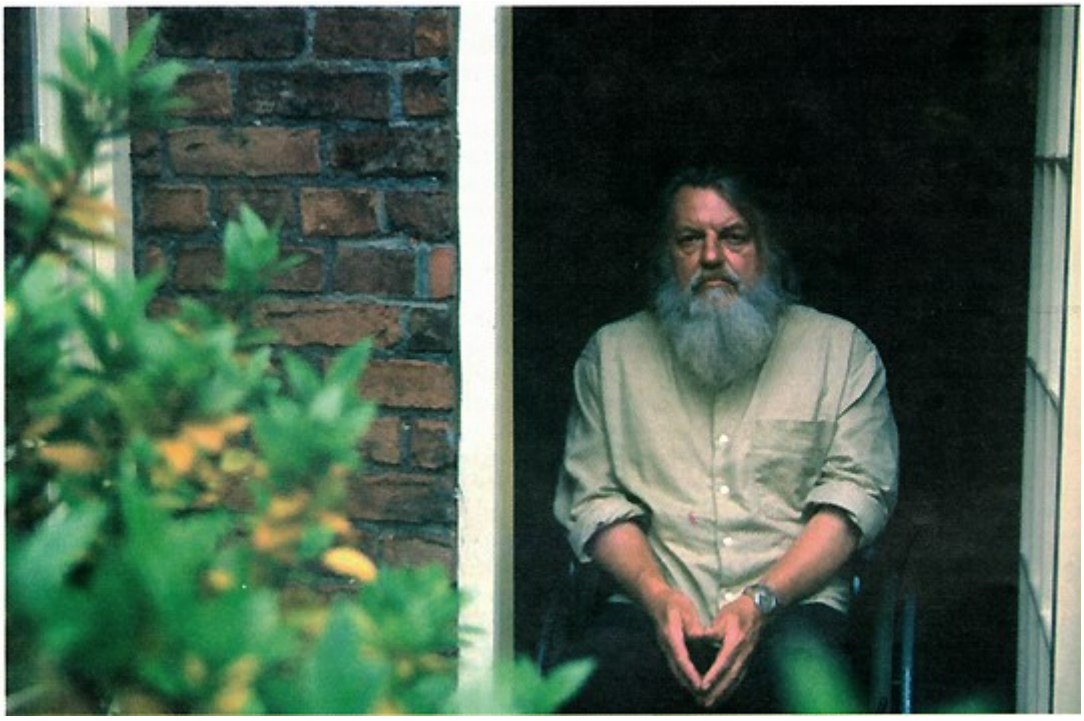
Ma anche allora c'era questa perenne contrapposizione tra persone che rivendicavano libertà d'espressione e altre che la volevano reprimere... e sarà successo lo stesso, immagino, nei primi concerti dei Soft Machine negli anni '60. Perché questo eterno conflitto?

Forse è un fatto semplicemente naturale e biologico, dopo tutto. Anche nel mondo degli animali, i vecchi maschi del gregge temono e osteggiano i maschi giovani, probabilmente perché sono coscienti della loro debolezza e mortalità.

Sì, ma a volte sono gli stessi giovani a fare opposizione, a mostrarsi più conservatori di un settantenne...

Oh, certo! Ma prendi questo esempio, Mike Zwerin, a cui è dedicata *Old Europe*. Mike è un musicista jazz newyorkese molto bravo, ha suonato anche con Miles Davis nei tardi anni '40, in "Birth Of The Cool" - quando il termine *cool*, lo dico ad uso dei giovani d'oggi, nacque per la prima volta! Ad ogni modo, a metà degli anni '60 Zwerin venne a vivere in Europa, perché era un uomo di cultura e cercava un posto più ricettivo per esprimersi. All'epoca scriveva di jazz per una rivista, e quando ci vide suonare, pur senza sapere esattamente cosa facevamo, fu uno dei primi ad accorgersi che era qualcosa di originale, di fresco. Avevamo evidentemente ascoltato jazz, ma non suonavamo jazz; idem per il rock, idem per il rhythm and blues. All'epoca Mike non era più giovane, ma divenne per i Soft Machine una sorta di padre adottivo, un bravo insegnante, e da allora siamo grandi amici.
Certamente chi è vecchio e ha paura di morire si sente minacciato da tutto e tutti, non solo

dalle novità. In certi club per soli uomini sono terrorizzati dall'idea di ammettervi le donne, ma è ovvio che il loro problema è un'insicurezza di fondo, solo chi si sente sicuro di ciò che fa accetta serenamente il fatto di dover morire. E al contrario oggi mi sembra che ci sia nel mondo una certa ricettività; conosco alcuni giovani, persino più giovani di mio figlio, che trovo estremamente generosi e aperti a osservare quello che succede.



E quale può essere allora la percezione della tua musica presso un pubblico giovane? In altre parole, se ammettiamo che agli inizi della tua carriera tu potessi essere considerato un'avanguardia, adesso pensi di esserlo ancora? Oppure sei diventato una della tante espressioni della *popular musici?*

Beh... ma che significa *Avanguardia! (altro scoppio di risate, ndr)* II problema è nella natura della parola. Capisco la domanda, che è più di natura sociologica, ma mi sento fortunato perché come musicista non devo preoccuparmi della risposta! Potremmo scriverci sopra un libro... ma credo che ci sia una sorta di assunto morale alla base della questione. Dalla metà del 19° secolo c'è stata una sorta di ammissione secondo cui il 'nuovo', il moderno, era meglio del passato. Il che in un certo senso è vero, ma a un certo punto ci si è accorti che il nuovo per esistere doveva distruggere qualcosa di vecchio, il che non sempre era positivo. Questa particolare 'crociata morale del nuovo' è sempre stata contraddittoria: ad esempio ad inizio secolo si traduceva, sia per il regime fascista che per quello comunista, nell'avere più fabbriche, nell'aumentare la produzione industriale. Il vantaggio di questa rivoluzione è che oggi abbiamo i cd, gli svantaggi sono conosciuti a tutti. La parola 'avanguardia' contiene la stessa contraddizione... non ne dico di più perché non ne avremmo il tempo!...

Ma praticamente, per tornare a questioni più vicine a noi, secondo te "Cuckooland" oggi è più accessibile al pubblico di quanto non lo fosse l'esordio dei Matching Mole trent'anni fa?

Non saprei proprio... nella mia collezione di dischi non faccio molta distinzione tra cose più o meno accessibili. Da bambino non avevo difficoltà ad ascoltare, per esempio, Stravinski; anche il jazz era facile da sentire, almeno fino al be bop e a Charlie Parker. Poi dovevi fare attenzione a cosa succedeva, altrimenti poteva sembrare uno sciame d'api in una bottiglia... anche se, una volta fatto lo sforzo, era una meraviglia. Sui miei dischi è ancora più difficile essere obiettivo...

Ci sono però nomi molto popolari, come David Gilmour, che fa un assolo riconoscibilissimo su *Forest*...

David è un altro esempio di quello che significa per me fare musica. Dimenticando il concetto di avanguardia di cui abbiamo parlato prima, il mio obiettivo adesso è, più che trovare nuovi linguaggi per esprimermi, raccogliere musicisti che normalmente non si frequenterebbero, per lavorare su un progetto comune che da soli non farebbero. E così in qualche modo il contributo particolare di ciascuno si chiarisce, e diventa efficace. Non importa se non è un nome molto conosciuto, come Yaron Stavi che suona il basso, o se al contrario è molto famoso come David Gilmour. Perché David, anche se è coinvolto in fantastici megaprogetti, prima di tutto rimane un uomo gradevolissimo e un ottimo chitarrista. Mi piace molto il modo con cui suona, perché le sue note sono chiare e pulite, e non nascondono il resto della musica, è trasparente come un cristallo...

Magari per lui suonare in un altro contesto è anche un'occasione di cambiare stile, rispetto alle prove un po' scadenti del suo recente passato...

Di questo non ne so nulla, non mi interessa. Per me quel che conta è riuscire a suonare con persone che apprezzo dal punto di vista umano, ancor più che professionale. Ai vecchi tempi suonavo con persone con cui non andavo particolarmente d'accordo, ma che dovevo frequentare perché erano i migliori sassofonisti, i migliori bassisti, eccetera. Ora sono stufo di questo metodo, ho un approccio completamente diverso, voglio persone che stimo e che apprezzo e voglio fare i miei dischi con loro. Nel caso di David, poi, è stato ancora diverso, perché l'ho rincontrato casualmente un paio d'anni fa e fu lui a darmi la sua disponibilità per fare qualcosa insieme. Quando mi è sembrato che potesse dare un contributo su *Forest*, è stato molto timido, si è portato il nastro a casa, l'ha studiato, ha fatto la sua proposta con molta cautela... e i suoi fans magari ora non apprezzeranno il fatto che ho lasciato la mia voce sulla sua chitarra!

E poi tra i vari contributi esterni c'è quello di Karen Mantler *(figlia di Mike Mantler e Carla Bley, ndr)*, che ha un valore particolare, vero?

Sono state le prime canzoni registrate per l'album. In passato avevo lavorato con Carla, la madre di Karen, ma quest'ultima quando era giovane era una punk, non sembrava affatto orientata verso il tipo di musica che facevo io; mentre invece ha sviluppato un forte interesse per il jazz negli ultimi tempi. Non solo ha due genitori che sono maestri eccezionali, ma su certe cose abbiamo un feeling incredibile... certe volte, suonando l'armonica, sceglieva esattamente le note che avrei scelto io per la tromba! E mi piace molto anche l'idea del duetto, un uomo e una donna che cantano, è carino, no? Specialmente perché la mia voce ora è limitata, non ha più l'estensione di una volta...

Ci sono alcune canzoni del disco, penso a *Lullaby For Hamza* o *Foreign Accents,* che rimandano al concetto di quanto l'uomo possa essere malvagio...

Sì. E quando tocchi questi temi puoi farlo in genere in due modi diversi. Il primo è scrivere in modo molto arrabbiato ed esplicito. Il secondo è usare una modalità più astratta, quella che infatti uso in *Foreign Accents*, adatta a mostrare più solidarietà con le vittime della crudeltà che non a fare un atto di accusa contro chi è stato crudele - forse ne dovrei citare troppi!... E poi è importante, per mostrarsi davvero vicino alle vittime, fare nomi precisi, invece di rimanere vaghi e generali. È un tema sicuramente classico, niente da dire. Per quanto riguarda *Lullaby For Hamza*, i testi sono di Alfie, e rimandano al fatto che mentre tutti sono concentrati sull'avvenimento della guerra ci sono persone che invece pensano a continuare la vita, dall'altra parte. Anche in questo caso però c'è un lavoro di astrazione, di metaforizzazione, che ormai è quello che mi è più congeniale.

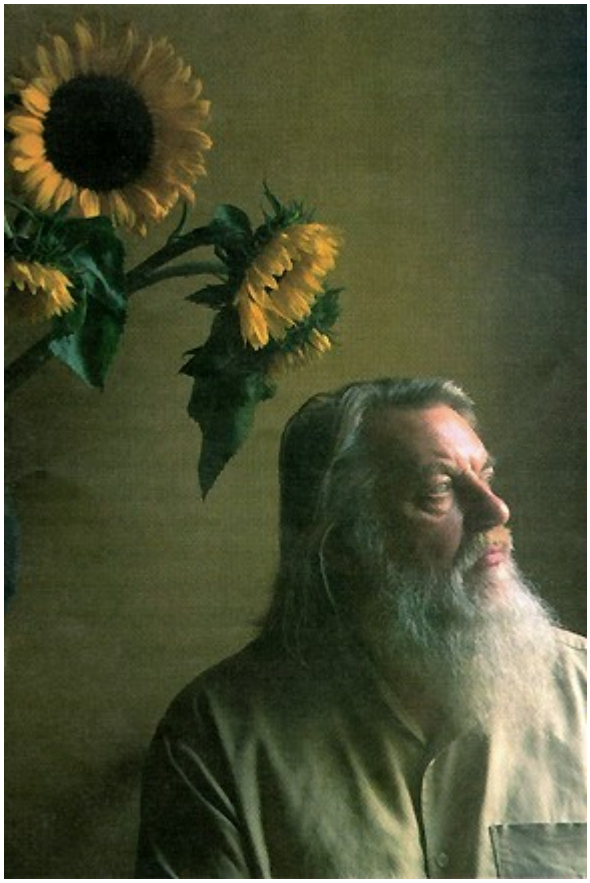
Tra l'altro il contributo di Alfreda è stato molto importante in questo disco, no?

È cruciale. Già in "Dondestan" e "Shleep" era stato importante, ma in questo caso, per la prima volta, il disco non sarebbe esistito senza il supporto di Alfie. Il testo di *Lullaby* era diventato un problema, è grazie a lei che lo abbiamo risolto. Ma ha anche idee sul piano musicale: per esempio in *Forest* c'è una piccola melodia country, è roba sua, cosi come la lieve citazione del *Bolero* di Ravel in *Lullaby For Hamza*. E poi, Alfie è infinitamente importante perché è la prima a guidarmi, a dirmi quando serve: "Attento Robert, stai stonando!..." *(ancora risate, ndr)*

Verso la fine del disco, le ultime due canzoni in particolare, le cose si complicano

un po'... sembrano essere canzoni più difficili rispetto al resto dell'album.

Sì, è vero, ho pensato che un ascoltatore che riesce a reggere fino a quel punto poteva permettersi di andare anche un poco oltre... sicuramente *Brian The Fox* è il momento più autoindulgente, per me: tastiere infinite, sequenza di accordi semplici, io che suono la tromba liberamente, divertendomi... volevo 5 minuti di libertà, diciamo. Per *La Ahada Yalam* mi spiace non averla potuta cantare in arabo, ma anche se in passato ho usato altre lingue l'arabo mi causa problemi... quindi mi sono appoggiato su Gilad Atzmon, il clarinettista, per avere un contributo significativo.



In generale, dal punto di vista musicale, c'è un riferimento particolare per "Cuckooland"? A me sembra che abbia parecchie somiglianze con "Old Rottenhat"...

Non ci avevo pensato... È difficile per me dare questo tipo di giudizio, a me sembra piuttosto di fare ogni volta lo stesso disco. È come se avessi un giardino, che ogni volta cerco di curare al meglio, tagliando le piante che non danno fiori e magari scoprendone di nuove, nascoste, che non erano state ben valorizzate prima...

E rispetto al fatto di suonare, hai cambiato attitudine? Perché in un certo senso si ha l'impressione che ci prendi molto più gusto di un tempo...

È verissimo, negli ultimi tempi ho davvero riscoperto il piacere fisico che può dare il fatto di suonare uno strumento, ed è dovuto a due motivi. Il primo è che abbiamo cambiato casa, e che prima non suonavo tanto perché ero in un piccolo appartamento e disturbavo i vicini. Adesso siamo in una grande casa, ho tutto lo spazio che serve, e tutta la libertà di cui avevo bisogno. Il secondo motivo è che alcuni anni fa avevo pochissimi soldi, e quindi per fare musica non potevo permettermi di pagare i musicisti... ho imparato per forza a fare da solo, e ora con lo spazio e la disponibilità in più per me suonare è davvero un piacere quasi animalesco. Anche nelle interazioni con gli altri: abitiamo tutti vicini, siamo affiatati, il fatto di incontrarci è importante anche come evento sociale.

Robert, hai vissuto 40 anni di musica, sei a due anni dai 60... come hai visto cambiare le cose in tutto questo tempo, c'è una maggiore ingerenza degli aspetti commerciali?

C'è sempre un problema con le istituzioni, per quanto riguarda gli aspetti commerciali di un'attività, ma non credo che siano più specifici al mondo della musica. È chiaro che le potenze militari e industriali controllano anche la distribuzione di prodotti culturali, e questo è molto triste. Vorrei che avessero le stesse possibilità i musicisti di strada del Perù o dell'Angola o dell'Italia o della Russia... è assurdo che lo dica io, che vengo dall'Inghilterra che ha l'egemonia in questo campo. Però, parlare sempre solo di musica o di calcio per dipingere il potere commerciale è un po' troppo facile, è caricaturale. Non sono contro i soldi, non sono contro il fatto di diventare ricchi; sono contro la diseguaglianza nella distribuzione delle risorse. Ora, detto da me, un vecchio con la barba, la cosa può sembrare un po' patetica, forse? Eppure mi ricordo perché ho iniziato tutto questo, ricordo che ero eccitato dal sentire pop music in un caffè dove c'erano delle ragazze. Quindi non me la prendo con i giovani che si avvicinano a questo mondo, e neanche con le persone che lavorano nell'industria discografica. Siamo tutti, in realtà, parte di questo sistema deviato. Non è colpa della pop music, è il meccanismo capitalista che andrebbe rivisto...

E cosa può fare un individuo, secondo te, per combattere l'assurdità di questo mondo?

Puoi sempre fare qualcosa. In tutti i campi. Per esempio, vista la situazione generale in Inghilterra e in tutto il mondo occidentale, stiamo assistendo a una migrazione di massa come forse mai prima. Ci sono pro e contro per la cosa, e senz'altro tra gli svantaggi c'è un aumento del razzismo nei confronti degli immigrati. Cosa si può fare? Cambiare il mondo no, non è possibile. Ma qualcosa sì: per esempio, c'è una nostra amica che ha creato un'organizzazione caritatevole, per aiutare gli immigrati rumeni in Inghilterra. Fornisce supporto alle famiglie, gestisce le difficoltà, caso per caso, a volte ci riesce e a volte no. Ma almeno esiste la possibilità, per alcune persone, di avere un sostegno e di riuscire nella loro impresa. C'è sempre qualcosa, nel tuo piccolo, che puoi fare.

Da parte tua, ti consideri ancora un comunista, anche se il termine è così fuori moda?

Sicuramente. Il Papa si considera ancora cattolico, dopo tutte le cazzate che hanno fatto, no? Ah ah! Quindi credo di avere anch'io ancora il diritto di restare fedele alle mie vecchie fisse...

Parlami ancora del tuo punto di vista sul pop... cosa ne pensi delle canzonette che si sentono alla radio? Ti piacciono?

Rispetto molto la pop music. Prima di tutto mi ha dato le basi per la mia professione; in senso lato gli interpreti pop di oggi sono l'equivalente dei musicisti folk di un tempo. E poi hanno un compito molto importante: quello di creare un... *(esita alla ricerca della parola giusta, ndr)* contesto, ecco, per favorire gli incontri tra giovani di sesso opposto. Ammettendo ciò, per giudicare il pop non puoi applicare altri criteri di giudizio se non "Funziona o no?". A volte, il fatto che un poster in una camera da letto sia efficace o meno ha una funzione estremamente importante, in un certo senso il futuro della razza umana dipende da quello, non so se mi spiego!... *(esplode nuovamente a ridere di gusto, ndr)* Cosa c'è di più importante di questo??? Tuttavia, dopo l'adolescenza, essere ancora ossessionati dal pop - il che succede, per motivi commerciali - è una sorta di pedofilia culturale. Può essere molto controproducente; è giusto esigere il diritto di crescere. Non voglio essere egemonizzato dalla cultura pop, ma la rispetto nel modo più assoluto. E poi sono sicuro che chi ha l'intelligenza di fare ottime canzoni pop è anche in grado di crescere, e di fare cose più evolute e 'adulte'. Non voglio fare esempi, ma Cristina Dona, che conosco bene, lo dimostra pienamente; ha un po' il senso della dignità di Joni Mitchell. E poi ci sono tantissimi grandi del pop, da John Lennon a Stevie Wonder. Quando sento una canzone alla radio, non me la sento di giudicarla. Non ho un gusto, non sono io il destinatario di quella musica. Ma sono sicuro che ci sono cose di grandissimo valore.

Con l'avvento della tecnologia digitale, la possibilità di fare musica si è estesa a un numero illimitato di persone; il risultato è che siamo invasi da una quantità abnorme di musica registrata, c'è una confusione pazzesca...

Elvis Costello diceva una bella cosa a questo proposito, che quando vai in studio a registrare sei in un posto molto speciale, e devi fare molta attenzione a quel che fai, stai vivendo un momento privilegiato e sfruttarlo appieno... sono molto d'accordo con lui. È senz'altro irresponsabile fare più dischi di quelli strettamente necessari, io stesso avrei potuto farne molti di più, ma non penso che avrebbe migliorato la *qualità* di quello che facevo... perché andare oltre a quello strettamente necessario? Forse per i più giovani è un'opportunità in più, può darsi... ma bisogna fare attenzione, anche per tutti gli altri prodotti l'offerta è in eccedenza, non solo per i dischi... di nuovo, non c'è una reale particolarità per la musica!

E riguardo all'esplosione dell'elettronica degli anni '90: come l'hai percepita?

È una buona cosa, specialmente per i club, che questa musica sia diventata così importante... Personalmente, sono certo che la gente questo può capirlo, non l'ho particolarmente assorbita: i paraplegici non fanno molto clubbing! *(si sbellica dalle risate, ndr)* In generale, non mi sento obbligato ad andare alla ricerca della musica, è lei che mi arriva in testa, da non so dove, e a cerco di assimilarla al meglio. Non sempre sono cosciente di questo processo. E poi ho anche uno spirito contraddittorio, ad esempio: c'è questa nuova musica brasiliana, che incorpora anche beat elettronici e nuovi suoni, che è davvero bellissima. Ma essendo anch'io interessato alla musica brasiliana, preferisco andare a riscoprire la vecchia musica di quel genere, ad apprezzare solo le armonie, con ancor meno percussioni che nella bossa nova. E questo, questa ricerca della bellezza, è una cosa che mi sento sempre di fare.

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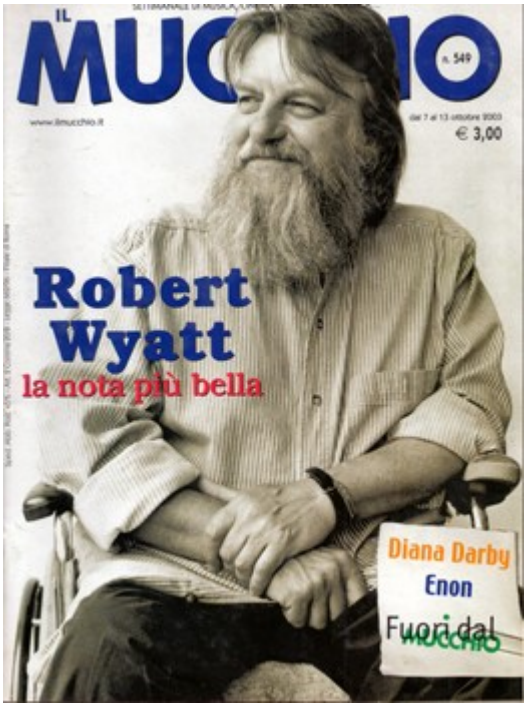
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La nota più bella - Robert Wyatt - Il Mucchio - N. 549 - dal 7 al 13 ottobre 2003



> zoom

Robert Wyatt la nota più bella

L'incontro del sottoscritto con Robert Wyatt - il primo da artista a giornalista, il seconde da artista a fan - avviene nel giardino dell'hotel Les Meridiens di Torino, attiguo all'ex complesso industriale del Lingotto presse il quale il Nostro, nel 1997 e 1998, è stato ospite dell'ormai defunto Salone della Musica. Nel primo caso Wyatt presentava al pubblico il suo ultimo album *Shleep*, appena uscito, un'opera splendida che lo aveva fatto conoscere a una nuova generazione di appassionati di musica senza schemi, curiosi di capire cosa ci facessero personaggi agli antipodi come Paul Weller e Brian Eno nel disco di questo gentile signore dalla lunga barba bianca e dagli occhi sorridenti.

Nella seconda occasione, Wyatt ringraziava commosso gli artisti italiani coinvolti dal Consorzio Suonatori Indipendenti nel progetto di un album tributo in suo onore, *The Different You*. Questa volta, il motivo dell'incontro, riservato agli addetti ai lavori, è l'uscita di un nuovo disco, *Cuckooland* (n. 548). Inutile dire che si tratta ancora una volta di un'opera dalla vivacità commovente, che fuga i timori di chi, non sentendo più notizie, se non sporadiche (qualche cameo, la direzione artistica di una recente edizione del Meltdown Festival, alcuni brevi frammenti incisi per la colonna sonora del documentario *Le peuple migrateur*), temeva di non poter più sentire su disco quella voce. Una voce straordinariamente comunicativa, a tratti fragile e sul punto di rompersi, sempre dotata di grazia assoluta. Una forte impronta emotiva sposata a vie sonore che da sempre fuggono la banalità senza mai rifugiarsi in recinti di snobismo e tentazioni di *arte alta e difficile*.

Un percorso popolare e politico, militante e coerente, che ha sempre trovato il modo di esprimersi, dai Soft Machine, ai Matching Mole, alle collaborazioni e infine alla lunga carriera solista, attraverso un linguaggio impermeabile alle definizioni. In *Cuckooland* la particolarissima vena emerge attraverso brani diversi tra loro, confluenza di jazz e riferimenti etnici, blues, elettronica e melodie inclassificabili. Brani che possono contare sull'apporto della moglie Alfreda Benge, di Karen Mantler, autrice di tre brani, dei soliti Eno e Weller, di un David Gilmour intento a

rispolverare la sua vena più blues, del jazzista Gilad Atzmon e di molti altri ancora, un'umanità varia che celebra l'umanità di un grande artista. Ecco *Cuckooland* nelle parole di Robert.

di Alessandro Besselva Averame





Che tipo di luogo è *Cuckooland* del titolo?

È una cosa un po' folle. C'è una *Cockooland* nella mia testa, e poi c'è una *Cuckooland* che rappresenta il mondo nel ventesimo secolo. È stato un suggerimento di Alfie, c'è un riferimento al cuculo in una delle canzoni di cui ha scritto il testo, *Cuckoo Madame*. Tuttavia, la ragione principale per cui mi piace è che ha una lieve assonanza con *Alice In Wonderland*. Il Paese delle Meraviglie è, per l'appunto, meraviglioso, ma allo stesso tempo è strano, bizzarro. E pure un poco spaventoso.

***Shleep* è nato dopo un periodo difficile, nel quale hai avuto problemi di insonnia. In un certo senso quell'album celebrava la liberazione dalla condizione di disagio in cui ti eri venuto a trovare. C'è stato, questa volta, un motivo forte che ti ha convinto a tornare in studio per registrare?**

Sono sorpreso di essere ancora vivo in un nuovo secolo, è una cosa che mi ha preso completamente alla sprovvista. Proprio quando inizi ad abituarti al precedente, se lo portano via e ne iniziano un altro (*risata*, NdI). E così mi sono trovato a essere ancora una volta completamente innocente di fronte al mondo, come chiunque altro. Osservo quello che accade intorno a me, ma poi mi accorgo di essere ancora vivo, quindi devo rimboccarmi le maniche, devo riprendere a fare il mio lavoro. È una bella sorpresa scoprire di essere ancora in grado di farcela. Nel corso degli ultimi anni, a casa - solo ultimamente, da una decina d'anni all'incirca, ho tutti gli strumenti a portata di mano, piatti, tromba, piano - mi sono divertito a suonare tutto quello che avevo a disposizione, un divertimento che aveva a che fare soprattutto con l'atto fisico in sé, e in questo modo ho racimolato per strada qualche frammento di melodia. Mi sono molto semplicemente reso conto che nella mia vita c'era uno spazio nel quale potevo mettere insieme tutta quella roba. Dopo i primi tentativi il materiale era nel complesso troppo minimale, da un certo punto di vista incompleto, e perciò dovevo escogitare un modo efficace per risolvere il problema. Per prima cosa, mi sono detto, potevo interpretare delle canzoni che già esistevano e che non avevo mai suonato prima, un paio di canzoni piuttosto conosciute, ma anche alcuni brani di Karen Mantler, artista che fa parte di tutta una categoria di musicisti giovani e validi che scrivono brani al di là dei generi, mi viene in mente anche Cristina Donà. Le canzoni di Karen non appartengono né al rock né al jazz, ma sono decisamente buone. Lavorare con persone del genere rende giovani, non si è

trattato solamente di incontraria e suonarne le canzoni, ma di un vero e proprio processo di ringiovanimento. Avevo un po' di testi pronti per la musica composta fino a quel momento, le parole di *Just A Bit* ad esempio, ma siccome Alfie si è divertita parecchio a scrivere i testi nei miei due lavori precedenti, *Dondestan* e *Shleep*, ha contribuito anche questa volta con parecchio materiale. Mi conforta sapere che mentre io scrivevo le musiche lei mi forniva il materiale da elaborare con la voce, il suo contributo ha in un certo senso completato la parte mancante. A quel punto abbiamo pensato che ci fosse materiale a sufficienza per entrare in studio. Occorre aggiungere che Phil Manzanera mi ha offerto l'opportunità di utilizzare il suo nuovo studio di registrazione londinese. Sono stato praticamente il primo ad entrarci lo scorso anno, e ci sono tornato al principio di quest'anno. Ha un'ottima acustica, la vernice sui muri è ancora fresca. Phil, poi, è una ottima persona, ti rende facile il lavoro.

In *Shleep* c'erano alcuni esperimenti non esattamente melodici, come *The Duchess* e *Was A Friend*. Mi sembra che questa volta tu abbia privilegiato soluzioni canore più lineari.

Si, sono d'accordo, ma non è stata una mossa Intenzionale, non ho mai dei piani quando realizzo un disco. Tuttavia mi sembra di ricordare di aver letto da qualche parte una frase di Igor Stravinsky, magari un po' pretenziosa ma seconde me illuminante, che spiegava come fosse possibile imparare ogni cosa sulla musica, la sua architettura ad esempio, traendo da altri idiomi concetti come struttura, forma, matematica della composizione e così via, mentre l'unico elemento che appartiene esclusivamente alla musica è la linea melodica. Col tempo il mio interesse per l'argomento si è intensificato. È una qualità specifica della musica, e mi sono completamente immerso, se vuoi, in questa ricerca melodica. È una qualità che riesce a emergere nelle situazioni più disparate, nel coro dei tifosi sugli spalti di une stadio ad esempio. È una cosa speciale, e ci finisco dentro nello stesso modo in cui un'ape si lascia attirare dai fiori più colorati (*risata*, Ndl). Ah, vorrei aggiungere un'altra cosa, un'altra frase che mi ha molto impressionato quando l'ho letta. Sono state scritte lunghissime analisi sul contributo che ha dato Charlie Parker al sassofono, sulle soluzioni che utilizzava dal punto di vista armonico. Beh, c'è una citazione dello stesso Charlie Parker che dice: "Cerco semplicemente le note più belle". L'ho trovata una dichiarazione dolcissima e ho pensato, giusto no? È quello che sto facendo in questa fase della mia vita di musicista Cerco prima di tutto la nota più bella.





Una delle canzoni di *Cukooland*, *Foreign Accents*, è un omaggio assai particolare a chi ha perso la libertà a causa delle proprie idee, idee in contrasto con la logica militare della distruzione di massa. È un brano oserei dire minimale, che ripete come un *mantra* nomi di luoghi e persone. Come ti è uscita ?

Sono partito da un suono, avevo tirato fuori una specie di giro *boogie woogie* al piano che poco alla volta sembra essersi inspiegabilmente trasformato in una progressione alla Michael

Nyman. È come se Nyman si fosse impossessato di me mentre ci stavo lavorando (*risata*, Ndl), una evoluzione che ha sorpreso me per primo. A questo si è allacciato il percorso sonore che disegnavano le parole che ho utilizzato, parole che mi piacevano molto. Si è trattato di un percorso a ritroso, tutto è partito dal suono di queste parole, trasformatosi in musica. Del resto, la parola stessa è musica. Mi piace parlare, usare le parole, ma essenzialmente quello che ho scelto di fare è realizzare dischi, e quindi creare musica. Sul motivo che mi ha spinto a fare determinate scelte a livello di contenuto, ecco, credo che in un certo senso si tratti della versione aggiornata di un mio vecchio brano, *United States Of Amnesia*. Entrambe le canzoni affrontano l'ipocrisia di fondo della politica estera anglo-americana.

Hai chiuso l'album con una versione strumentale di un brano originariamente cantato in arabo, *La ahada yalam*. Azzardo un'interpretazione : non sono davvero rimaste più parole per descrivere la tragedia del Medio Oriente ?

La ragione per cui si trova alla fine del disco è precisamente quelle : è al di là delle parole. Inoltre c'è une ragione pratica dietro alla scelta di registrarla in quel modo. Non sono in grado di cantare in arabo, non riesco neppure ad avvicinarmi al fraseggio della cantante, al modo in cui articola le parole. È una cosa che mi è già successa, in *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, quando abbiamo *Song For Che* di Charlie Haden, con Gorge Khan. Il suono nello specifico era quello di una sorta di fragile banda di strada latino-americana, e all'epoca pensai che non ci fosse nessun canto adatto ad accompagnarla, così la lasciai com'era. Ad un primo sguardo *La Ahada Yalam* sembra semplice, ma se la ascolti attentamente non lo è affatto. Gilad Atzmon, il sassofonista, pensava anche lui che si tratasse di un compito facile. Gli accordi di chitarra, ad esempio, potrebbero provenire da qualsiasi luogo del Mediterraneo, a un livello superficiale la struttura è semplice. Quando abbiamo iniziato a lavorarci, gli ho detto che non riuscivo a cantarla e gli ho chiesto se poteva suonarla per me. A questo punto devo aprire una parentesi su Gilad. Lui ha suonato moltissimo su questo disco, adattandosi di volta in volta alle esigenze del brano, mutando l'approccio per ogni canzone, lo stesso metodo che segue Annie Whitehead (*trombonista al lavoro su* Shleep e *su alcuni brani di* Cuckooland, Ndl), entrambi adattano la loro musica senza rinunciare comunque a dare una loro impronta. Gilad si chiede di che cosa può avere bisogno una determinata canzone, in che modo può essere utile, è molto bravo in questo. Trattandosi di un jazzista, l'operazione è molto veloce. Nel caso di *La ahada yalam* mi è particolarmente piaciuto il suo modo di suonare. La sua qualità più evidente è una intensa sincerità, che credo derivi dall'aver studiato musiche diversissime tra loro. La ragione per cui ha lasciato Israele ed è diventato cittadino inglese, nonostante sia molto orgoglioso della cultura ebraica, ne abbiamo discusso spesso, è che non voleva vivere in una cultura dominata da una sorta di narcisismo spirituale.



Prima che affrontassi questo giro di interviste in Europa, Alfie mi ha raccomandato di non mettere Gilad nei pasticci, e la cosa più divertente è che lui mi ha telefonato proprio prima che iniziassimo la promozione, perché sapeva che avrei avuto delle interviste con dei giornalisti israeliani, avvisandomi che essere associato a lui mi avrebbe messo nei guai laggiù! Comunque, in sintesi è accaduto qualcosa di simile al caso dei musicisti bianchi e neri che negli Stati Uniti lavoravano gomito a gomito molto prima che le persone comuni potessero farlo. lo penso che, per quanto triste, questa canzone rappresenti un piccolo momento utopico, un brano arabo suonato da un uomo che è stato nell'esercito israeliano e che poi se ne è andato, mandando al diavolo tutto, proprio perché non è un razzista, non è in grado di trovare quell'impulso in se stesso e quindi non può adottare l'attitudine di superiorità coloniale che gli viene richiesta, in particolare facendo parte di un esercito. Gli piace davvero la musica araba, e fa quello che fanno tutti i buoni artisti, celebra la diversità, non è spaventato dalle differenze, ha sufficiente fiducia in se stesso e nella sua arte per celebrare e abbracciare *l'altro* con la A maiuscola. È stato felice di provare la canzone insieme a Yaron, il contrabbassista della sua band. Quando ha iniziato a impararla ha fatto fatica, ha dovuto lottare, è stata l'unica occasione in cui l'ho visto faticare, mi ha detto che era più facile suonare Charlie Parker. Questo, come dicevo, a causa della melodia, che a prima vista sembra piuttosto monotona, mentre in realtà non è mai uguale a se stessa. Il risultato finale è stato splendido, si è messo lì a suonare e lo faceva così piano che nella stanza si riusciva a malapena a sentirlo. Si sentiva solamente nel microfono, in pratica *respirava* la melodia. È stato così bello che, non mento, i miei occhi erano umidi. Ho detto al telefono ad Amal Murkus, la cantante, che volevamo fare la canzone, e lei ne era entusiasta,

poi ho parlato con Nizar Zreik, autore del brano, una persona ottima, pregandolo di perdonarmi per aver interpretato il suo pezzo in un modo un po' distorto, una scelta non intenzionale ma un modo di riconoscerne l'importanza, sperando che la cosa venisse intesa nei modo giusto. Lui mi ha semplicemente risposto che era splendido il solo fatto di aver scelto la sua canzone, mi ha ringraziato e mi ha detto che ero libero di inciderla come meglio credevo. E così l'abbiamo messa alla fine di questo album così dannatamente lungo. Ho realizzato, magari qualcuno si augurerà che sia l'ultima volta che lo faccio, un cd *totale*, definitivo, che tuttavia è venuto fuori così lungo per una sorta di buffa casualità.

È vero, è un disco piuttosto lungo, però hai voluto inserire, all'incirca a metà scaletta, una lunga pausa. Nostalgia per il vinile?

Ho dovuto affrontare con la musica lo stesso problema che Alfie ha affrontato con l'artwork e la grafica. Abbiamo cercato di sviluppare *Cuckooland* in un contesto molto specifico, quello dell'lp. Alfie ha sviluppato l'idea dell'*aspetto* e della sensazione dell'lp, mentre io ne ho sviluppato l'estetica musicale, che è piuttosto organica. L'idea è quella di due metà che non sono esattamente delle metà, non sono identiche. Molte cose in natura prevedono due parti non uguali ma complementari: due occhi, due sessi, *ying e yang*, e così via. Presentarsi con un cd intero era troppo, un cd è come un battito di ciglia irrealmente allungato. Non posso farci nulla, è un formate che non mi piace. Non è un problema per le generazioni più giovani, ma per me continua a essere qualcosa di simile al salto che devono affrontare i registi quando passano a una nuova forma di tecnologia. Quando arrivano nuovi strumenti tecnici, questi rappresentano in qualche modo un'opportunità, ma d'altra parte, se fino a quel momento hai girato in bianco e nero, la situazione diventa drammatica perché hai troppa libertà, la disciplina di cui avevi bisogno se n'è andata. Così ho cercato di organizzare la musica secondo due metà complementari. Allo stesso tempo Alfie si è concentrata a pensare non una versione ridotta della copertina di un lp, ma una presentazione fisica della musica comunque insolita per un cd, e che allo stesso tempo potesse funzionare con quel formato. È quello che abbiamo cercato di fare, una scelta che non riguarda solo la musica ma l'album nel suo insieme.

Post-Rock Bottom

"Cerco semplicemente le note più belle", dice a un certo punto Wyatt nella chiacchierata con il nostro Besselva Averame, citando Charlie Parker, e in un nessun modo una singola frase potrebbe meglio riassumere una vicenda artistica (con quest'uomo cui non si può non voler bene, persino al di là del giudizio che si dà sulla musica, dire di una "carriera" sarebbe davvero fuori luogo) a questo punto ormai quarantennale. Tanto è difatti passato dacché il Nostro in quel di Canterbury (Simon Langston School) cominciò a dividere con il compagno di studi Hugh Hopper l'amore per il jazz passionale e spesso fuor di ogni schema conosciuto di Charles Mingus, di Ornette Coleman, di Thelonious Monk, di Cecil Taylor e presto anche un gruppo, che si sarebbe chiamato dapprima **Wilde Flowers**, in onore di Oscar Wilde, e poi **Soft Machine**, in onore di William Burroughs. Calderone in cui al fuoco dei liberati anni '60 bollivano jazz e pop, rock speziato di acido, blues e avanguardia, i Soft Machine con Wyatt gireranno l'America al seguito di **Jimi Hendrix** e confezioneranno tre album mirabili e diversissimi, in un affascinante tragitto che, partendo dal solido terreno della psichedelia ancora prossima al beat del primo e omonimo, li farà immergere, dopo i surreali voli di *Volume Two*, negli elettrici mari di *Third*, in cui al quel punto solo **Miles Davis** aveva nuotato. Si era fatto il 1970, le strade si separavano ed era il nostro eroe a trarne giovamento. Ove i Soft Machine si sarebbero cristallizzati, una volta esaurito il flirt con il free e Davis, in una fusion alla lunga frigida, Wyatt nel breve arco di un quinquennio avrebbe inscenato altre due o tre rivoluzioni, licenziando alcuni degli lp più arditi e poetici che la storia del rock ricordi. Se i due a nome **Matching Mole**, l'omonimo e *Little Red Record* (rispettivamente 1972 e 1973), possono essere visti come una capricciosa e melanconica estensione di *Volume Two*, l'esordio solistico *The End Of An Ear* a trentatre anni dalla pubblicazione è ancora un UFO che non si sa da che parte cominciare a maneggiare, collage in sempiterna mutazione di voci che si rincorrono fra tappeti di rumori e sbuffi fiatistici, pianoforti disposti al sentimentalismo e percussioni disposte all'impossibile. È probabilmente il primo disco cui si possa applicare l'etichetta "post-rock" e rimane uno dei più astrusi o (dipende dai punti di vista) entusiasmanti. Proibito in ogni caso non farci i conti.

Ma per quanto mi riguarda è *Rock Bottom*, AD 1974, l'album che ha riservato per sempre a

Robert Wyatt un cantuccio nel mio cuore, con le sue melodie tanto minimali quanto sofisticate e i suoi suoni avvolgenti e liquidi, di acquarellistica delicatezza. Inclassificabile quanto il suo predecessore ma tanto più gentile nel porgersi, con una grazia che commuove, infantile e saggia nel contempo. Un bizzarro incidente era costato nel frattempo a Wyatt, e per sempre, l'uso delle gambe. Non avrebbe mai più potuto suonare una batteria canonica, lui che del rock era stato fra i batteristi più notevoli, e negli anni la sua condizione lo avrebbe portato a diradare assai i concerti e poi ad abbandonarli del tutto (risale al 1981 la sua ultima apparizione pubblica, con le Raincoats). Ma non gli avrebbe naturalmente impedito di restare artista immane. Benché la sua evoluzione dopo l'ultima e straordinaria svolta di *Rock Bottom* si sia a ben sentire arrestata e questo già dall'ognimmodo meraviglioso *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, tangenziale al predecessore e datato 1975. Da allora Wyatt è stato a volte capace di incantare, ad esempio con la sequela di singoli per Rough Trade a cavallo fra '70 e '80 e con qualche pagina di quello che fino a pochi giorni fa era il suo ultimo lavoro (*Shleep*, 1997), ma non più di stupire, procedendo la sua arte per iterazioni differenziate da sfumature e nulla più. Nondimeno: come rinunciarci? Svetta dalla paralizzata cintola in su sull'aridità emozionale di troppa dell'altra musica odierna.

Eddy Cilìa

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Robert Wyatt - Musica noglobal - Musica (supplemento de la Republica - N. 386 - 25 Settembre 2003

ROBERT WYATT | L'INTERVISTA | I RACCONTI DEL CANTERBURY SOUND







TORINO. Proprio come quelle «cose vecchie» che gli stanno tanto a cuore, oggi che ha quasi sessant'anni («Cinquantotto, per la precisione»), questo signore con la barba lunga da Mosè sembra vivere in uno stato di grazia: il suo nuovissimo *Cuckooland* è un disco di sorprendente lucidità. Ma Robert Wyatt Ellidge è un signore che la grazia la corteggia da una vita. A metà degli anni Sessanta era in quella nazionale giovanile del rock alternativo che furono i Wilde Flowers. Poi vennero gli anni della grande, travolgente creatività dei Soft Machine e del loro *Canterbury sound*: cioè quella «scuola di Canterbury» che miscelò pop, folk, jazz e primo rock progressive. Quindi l'intricato esordio come solista (*End Of An Ear*) e il gioco fra melodia e sperimentazione dei suoi Matching Mole.
Il dramma che gli cambia la vita (e l'ispirazione) arriva nel 1973: una caduta dal balcone lo costringe su una sedia a rotelle, lui batterista. Quando gli consentono di rientrare in studio, la musica è più carezzevole e liquida: come le sei canzoni del capolavoro, *Rock Bottom*. Negli anni Ottanta Wyatt mette il suo leggendario «canto metafisico» al servizio di una musica che è pop nel senso più ampio e umanistico del termine: da I'm A Believer dei Monkees e Biko di Peter Gabriel alla straziante



Te Recuerdo Amanda **di Victor Jara. Incide album carichi d'intelligenza, idee e poesia: come *Old Rottenhat*, *Dondestan*, *Shleep* e, adesso, questo ultimo *Cuckooland*. Una volta ha detto: se il luogo è gradevole e c'è una tazza di te a disposizione, le interviste non mi pesano. Ha cambiato idea nel frattempo?**

«No. A volte sono molto confuso riguardo alle cose che faccio, per cui mi risulta utile ascoltare le opinioni altrui. Mi chiarisce le idee. In realtà nessun intervistatore è mai stato più incalzante di mia moglie Alfie: "Perché fai questo? Perché fai quest'altro?". Ogni volta le rispondo che non lo so, ma lei ci riprova sempre. Comunque è rincuorante rendersi conto che ci sono così tante persone che ascoltano attentamente ciò che faccio».

Davvero tante. Soprattutto in Francia e in Italia. Cinque anni fa un gruppo di artisti (da Max Gazzé a Jovanotti, da Mauro Pagani ai C.S.I. a Cristina Donà) le hanno dedicato un album-tributo, *The Different You*.

«Mah, anch'io mi sono sempre sentito molto a mio agio in Italia e in Francia. Al contrario dei miei connazionali: via, si sa che noi inglesi ci consideriamo una specie di casta a parte rispetto agli altri europei. Invece è come se la mia musica trovasse qui, in Europa continentale, una sua "patria emotiva", che non è, appunto, quella ufficiale del suo creatore».

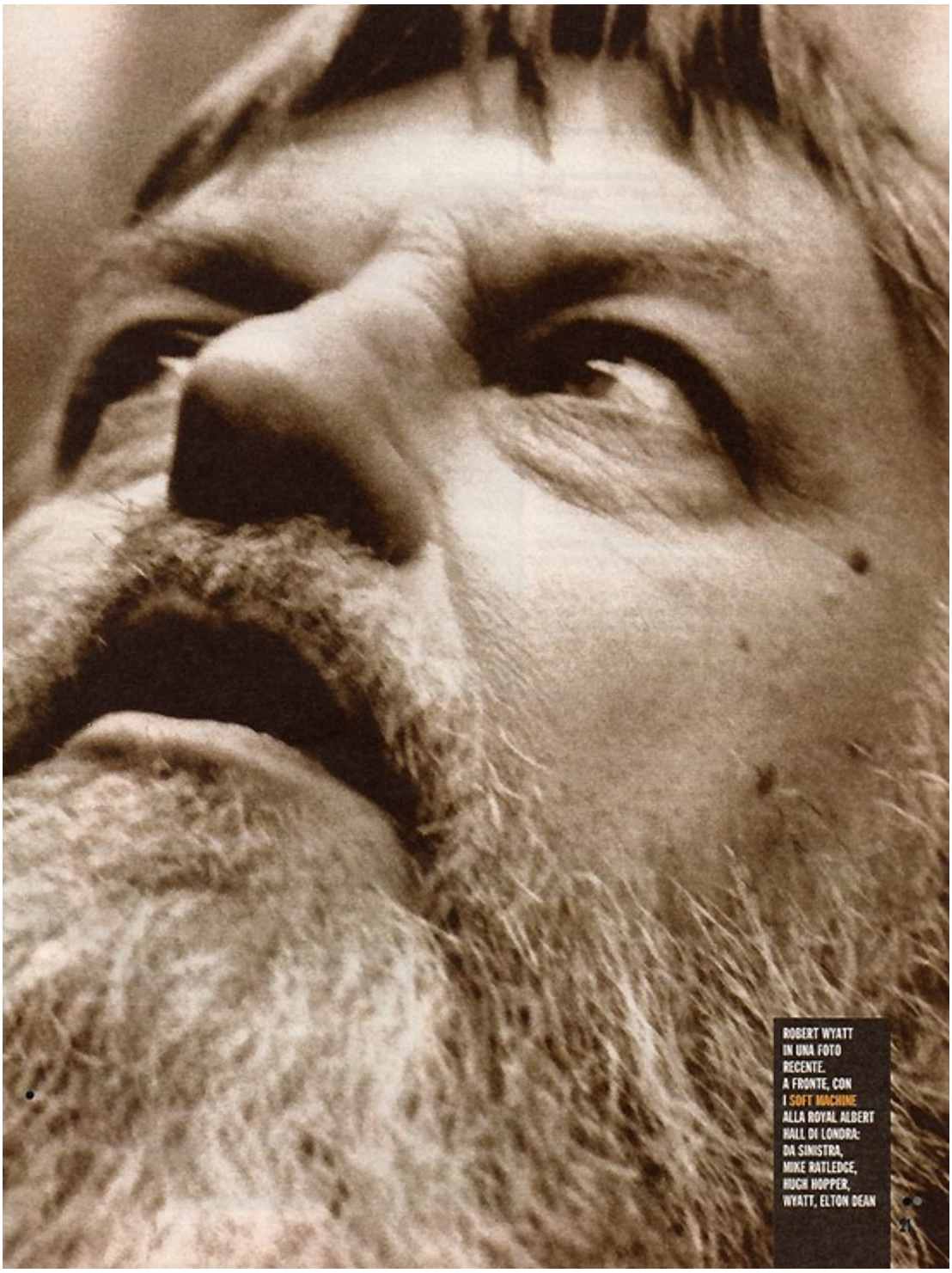
A proposito di differenze e caste a parte: venendo a differenze più prosaiche lei una volta si stupiva di fronte alla capacità degli italiani di bere molto vino mantenendo un comportamento, diceva, dignitoso.

«Questa è una cosa che non manca mai di sorprendermi, specie se la confronto con la barbarie in cui cadiamo noi inglesi appena abbiamo un po' di alcool in corpo. Ecco, forse per voi italiani Robert Wyatt è un vino invecchiato bene: fa piacere sorseggiarlo con calma. Mi piace questa vostra filosofia. Posso dirlo? Ritengo che gli gnocchi cotti al punto giusto siano un esempio di grande civiltà. E poi ho notato che le ragazze che si definiscono anarchiche riescono a essere molto più carine delle loro colleghe inglesi... Scherzi a parte: in Gran

Bretagna politica e cultura tendono a essere due concetti ben distinti. Per questa ragione il mio modo di fare musica viene considerato strano, poco comprensibile. In Italia e in Francia esiste un legame forte fra politica e cultura. E non sono io a dover ricordare l'importanza del pensiero di Antonio Gramsci. Ecco, quando inizio a scrivere una canzone su un certo argomento penso: "Gli italiani mi capiranno sicuramente meglio degli inglesi". Forse voi non ve ne accorgete perché, essendo direttamente coinvolti, percepite soprattutto gli errori e le inadeguatezze della vostra sinistra. Ma in Italia siete riusciti a creare un'interpretazione umanista della politica rivoluzionaria. Un'interpretazione a cui noi guardiamo con grande interesse e che nel Sudamerica, che io conosco bene, viene considerata un punto di riferimento».

Ecco: la sinistra è infine al governo in Brasile.

«Posso solo dire: "Buongiorno Brasile e buona fortuna". Le forze che si muovono contro una rivoluzione del tutto "gentile" e umana come quella di Lula sono potentissime: le più potenti al mondo. Qualche centinaio di chilometri a nord del Brasile si trova il primo impero mondiale totalitario nella storia dell'umanità. Date le circostanze, il solo fatto che il governo Lula cerchi di mobilitarsi contro la miseria e la corruzione è nobile e degno di rispetto".»



ROBERT WYATT IN UNA FOTO RECENTE. A FRONTE, CON I SOFT MACHINE ALLA ROYAL ALBERT HALL DI LONDRA: DA SINISTRA, MIKE RATLEDGE, HUGH HOPPER, WYATT, ELTON DEAN

Quest'esigenza di unire politica e cultura che l'ha indotta a inserire una grande quantità di note esplicative nel libretto di *Cuckooland*?

«È sempre mia moglie Alfie che scrive le note. Mi sono reso conto che, nei testi delle mie canzoni, certi riferimenti possono risultare molto criptici e così ho pensato di fornire dei chiarimenti. Non posso pretendere che tutti sappiano del colpo di stato orchestrato da Francia e Gran Bretagna che, nel 1953, depose il primo ministre iraniano Mohammad Mossadegh, oppure della vicenda di Mordechai Vanunu, lo scienziato nucleare imprigionato in Israele dopo aver denunciato la pericolosità di alcuni esperimenti che il suo paese conduceva segretamente. Un altro esempio: è chiaro che una canzone come **Forest** parla dell'olocausto dei popoli nomadi da parte dei nazisti. Ma è anche importante dire che a Lety, dove vennero sterminati decine di migliaia di rom, non c'è nessun monumento, nessuna targa che ricordi quella tragedia. Forse è un lavoro che avrei dovuto cominciare a fare prima. La musica resta la cosa più importante e non amo il ruolo del polemista. Chi vuole fermarsi all'ascolto ha il cd. Chi vuole andare oltre può consultare il libretto. Entrambi gli approcci sono corretti».

La collaborazione fra lei e Alfie è ormai più che trentennale. Vi capita mai di avere divergenze artistiche?

«La risposta è molto semplice: no. Forse perché agiamo in spazi diversi, poi mettiamo assieme ciò che ognuno di noi ha prodotto e, alla fine, il risultato è sempre maggiore della somma delle parti. Non mi piacciono i discorsi del tipo "dopo tanti anni di matrimonio siamo diventati una cosa sola". Alfie e io continuiamo a essere due entità ben distinte. Esistono degli stereotipi che vorrebbero descrivere il modo di essere del maschio e della femmina. Noi li incarniamo perfettamente: io quello della femmina e Alfie quello del maschio!».

Dice Bruce Cockburn, il rocker canadese impegnato e solitario, col quale lei ha molte affinità, che con il passare degli anni si fa sempre più fatica a non cadere nella banalità di certi stereotipi compositivi.

«Bruce Cockburn è un grande artista. Lo stimo. Ma a me accade l'esatto contrario. Comporre è una sorta di processo alchemico. Ancora oggi trovo strano che musica e parole possano viaggiare insieme. A volte accade senza fatica. Ma nella maggior parte dei casi non c'è una musica adatta per i miei pensieri e le mie sensazioni. Così come non ci sono le parole giuste per molta della musica che scorre nella mia mente. Sono sicuro che morirò senza aver detto il novanta per cento delle cose che vorrei esprimere in musica. Ecco perché non mi preoccupo degli stereotipi».

Quest'«impotenza creativa» è dolorosa o con l'esperienza diviene gestibile?

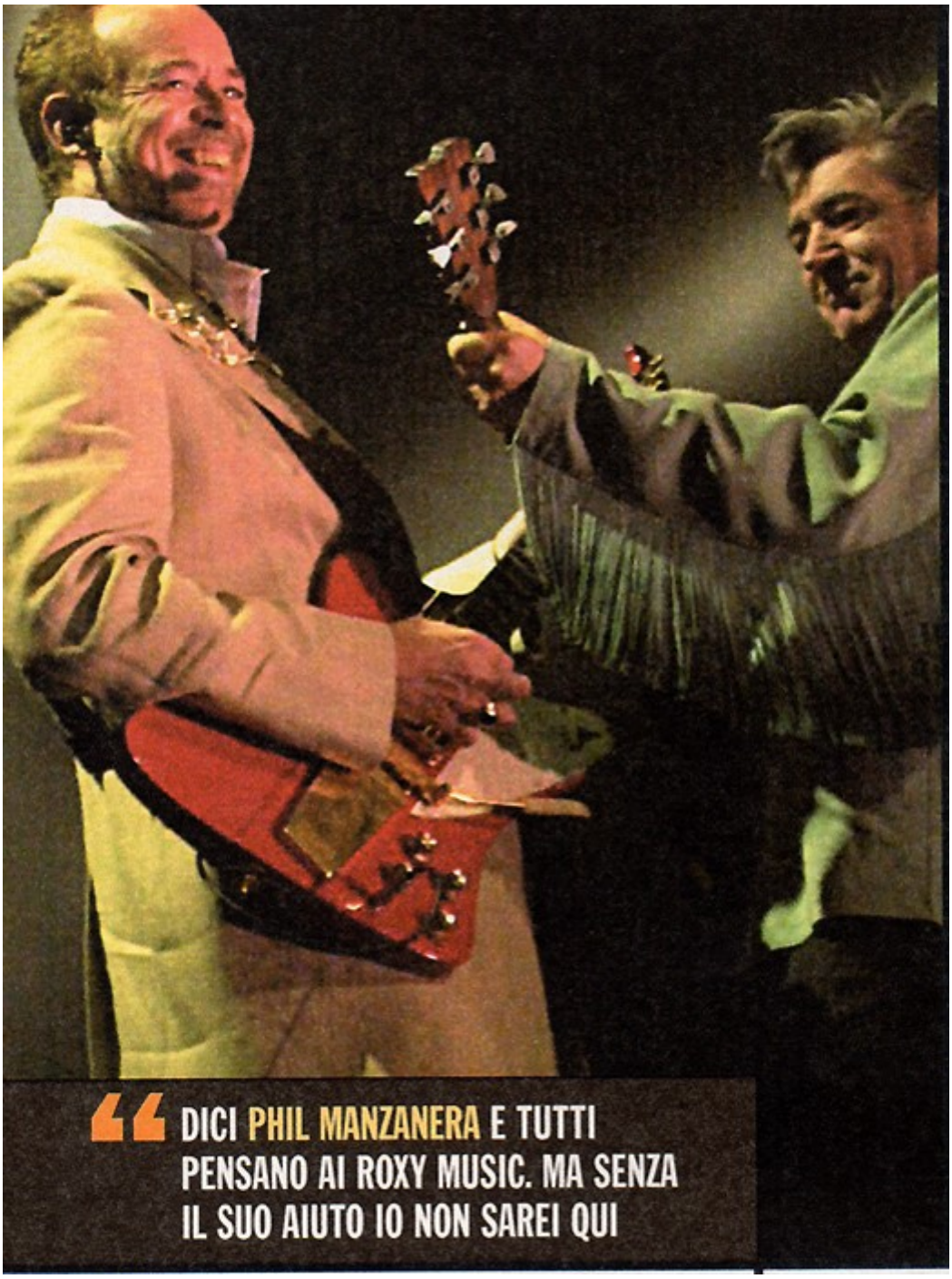
«No, non è troppo dolorosa. In genere mi diverto molto quando scrivo. Ad esempio, nel disco precedente, *Shleep*, c'è un pezzo che s'intitola **Blues In Bob Minor**. A quell'epoca stavo cercando di capire perché trovassi Bob Dylan di gran lunga più interessante degli altri suoi colleghi cantautori. Poi ho capito: dice un sacco di parole facendo strani rumori con la bocca. Forte di quest'intuizione e con l'aiuto di un po' di brandy (no, Alfie non era a casa...) il pezzo è venuto fuori in dieci minuti. Proprio come quando fai un buco per terra e, inaspettatamente, esce l'acqua».





La collaborazione con altri musicisti è importante?

«È fondamentale. Io ho bisogno dell'aiuto, diretto o indiretto, di persone come Alfie, come Karen Mantler o Phil Manzanera. Il mondo dovrebbe sapere quale grande musicista è Manzanera. Di lui molti conoscono solo la dimensione più ovvia, quella di chitarrista dei Roxy Music. Ma c'è un Manzanera molto più umano e "artigianale" che è poi quello con cui ho a che fare io».



Ecco: musica e artigianato. Nei suoi dischi lei utilizza spesso strumenti giocattolo o piccoli oggetti...

«Mettiamola così: io sono un musicista che quando prende in mano il più puro e il più nobile degli strumenti lo fa suonare come il più scadente dei sintetizzatori. Da sempre mi piace usare piccoli oggetti come quelli che ho registrato in chiave percussiva nel pezzo **Trickle Down**».

Il suo nuovo album sembra recuperare il suono liquide di *Rock Bottom*. Era questo che aveva in mente prima di iniziare le registrazioni ?

«Si, in *Cuckooland* ci sono affinità con *Rock Bottom*. Ma il punto di partenza sono state delle sensazioni che definirei inconsce. Fin da principio i pezzi sono venuti fuori pieni di accelerazioni e rallentamenti: un po' come accade nel jazz. Era come se alle melodie sfuggisse il terreno sotto i piedi. In effetti la mia musica è molto più affine al jazz che al rock: la cosa più rock che io abbia fatto è stata intitolare *Rock Bottom* un mio album! Ma ammetto che il mio modo di utilizzare le tecniche di registrazione deve quasi tutto al rock. I musicisti classici o jazz sono molto timidi in studio. Quando Yaron Stavi si è reso conto

dell'effetto che facevano due parti di basso su due piste diverse è rimasto stupito. Piacevolmente stupito, direi».

In passato lei ha interpretato canzoni pop come *I'm A Believer* o *At Last I'm Free*. Ci sono canzoni pop contemporanee che le piacerebbe cantare?

«Ci sono molte nuove canzoni che mi piace ascoltare. Quelle della vostra Cristina Donà, per esempio. Mi piace molto: l'ho conosciuta dopo un concerto a Torino qualche anno fa, il suo *Tregua* era un disco bellissimo (l'havotato migliore del '98 nella classifica annuale della rivista *Mojo* e ha suonato con lei in *Goccia*, *ndr*). Ma cantare il pop è un altro discorso. Il pop è musica giovanile: è legata alle tempeste ormonali e alla scoperta dell'altro sesso. E poi oggi molto pop è legato alla cosiddetta club culture. E, si sa, i paraplegici non ballano».

Un pezzo come *Old Europe*, vecchia Europa, lascia trapelare una certa nostalgia per il passato.

«Ultimamente preferisco dedicarmi alle cose vecchie, quelle che la vita moderna si è lasciata alle spalle. Questo vale per la musica, i film (quelli francesi in bianco e nero) la politica, le persone. Non è un sentimento morboso. Non è nostalgia. Io non le considero cose morte. Credo anzi che si trovino in uno stato di grazia. Proprio l'esatto contrario di come vedono il mondo Tony Blair e il suo sedicente New Labour Party. Loro pensano solo a stare aggrappati al presente per ottenere voti. Quando il sindaco di Londra, Ken Livingstone, ha approvato misure antitraffico ritenute impopolari, lo hanno accusato di volersi giocare la rielezione. Non riescono a pensare che si possa agire per il bene comune senza secondi fini».



Antonio Vivaldi

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Hasta siempre Robert Wyatt - Alias - 29 Giugno 2002

HASTA SIEMPRE ROBERT WYATT

Di Claudio Bonomi


Hasta siempre Robert Wyatt

I discorsi pericolosi di un lucido rosso

Tempo di tributi per Robert Wyatt che, proprio in Italia, sta vivendo autentici sprazzi di celebrità. Un ciclo, si fa per dire, iniziato nel '97 con la partecipazione di Wyatt al Salone del libro di Torino, proseguito poi l'anno successivo con la pubblicazione di *The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi*, compilation di sue canzoni rifatte da oltre trenta artisti nostrani riuniti sotto l'ala del Consorzio Produttori Indipendenti (dagli Area agli Almamegretta fino a Jovanotti) e con l'uscita del film *The Little Red Robin Hood*, toccante affresco in bianco e nero di Carlo Bevilacqua e Francesco di Loreto che documenta l'evoluzione artistica di Wyatt, dai primi concerti psichedelici dei Soft Machine alle registrazioni di *Shleep* con Brian Eno e Phil Manzanera. E, sempre nel '98, Wyatt canta *Hasta siempre comandante* nel disco di Maurizio Camardi, *Nostra Patria*.

Il resto è quasi storia dei nostri giorni: dalla collaborazione con Cristina Donà, maturata nella malinconica *Goccia* ai riarrangiamenti del progetto *Soupsongs*, capitanato dalla trombonista Annie Whitehead, che ha fatto tappa proprio l'anno scorso in Italia al Teatro Dal Verme di Milano con un concerto che i presenti ricorderanno per un bel pezzo (in scaletta una *Sea song* da brivido cantata da Julie Tippets). L'ultimo link in ordine di

tempo di Wyatt con il Bel Paese porta la firma di Claudio Chianura, giornalista e autore di un recente libro su Tom Waits uscito per Auditorium Edizioni, che ha confezionato per Stampa Alternativa/Nuovi Equilibri (collana Sonic Book) un minibook con ed allegato dall'emblematico titolo *Postcards from Italy*.

Chianura ha riunito quattro preziose interviste rilasciate da Wyatt che ritraggono l'artista in diversi anni ('80, '86, '97, '01), due delle quali già apparse su un volumetto, pubblicato sempre per Stampa Alternativa nell'86. Interviste che svelano un personaggio realmente «fuori dagli schemi». Che parla dì tutto, dall'impegno politico al rapporto con i musicisti che hanno collaborato con lui, dimostrando un'onestà intelletuale e un understatement non comune. Con risposte mai scontate, lucide e autoironiche. Ad esempio, quando gli viene chiesto dì spiegare il perché di una così grande attenzione nei suoi confronti {siamo nel '97), risponde: «Non ne ho idea. Spesso sì suppone che molti musicisti rock siano votati alla morte per overdose, mentre io sono ancora vivo e la gente sembra sorprendersi per questo». Le interviste sono corredate da foto e da una discografia con l'opera omnia del musicista inglese che comprende anche collaborazioni e tributi.

Fino a qui l'omaggio editoriale. Meno prevedibile il complemento sonoro curato da Walter Prati, compositore e musicista di ricerca, tra le sue collaborazioni figurano artisti del calibro di Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Lytton, Thurston Moore ecc, che da sempre è impegnato sul fronte della contaminazione/iterazione tra elettronica e strumenti musicali tradizionali e tra musica scritta e improvvisazione. Una filosofia che sposa anche nell'approccio a Wyatt. «Robert mi ha spedito le tracce vocali di *Duchess*, una delle canzoni contenute nel suo ultimo cd *Shleep*, che mi sono servite per elaborare le tre versioni che sono contenute nel cd allegato: la prima mette insieme un trio d'archi, la voce di Wyatt e la mia parte improvvisata di violoncello, mentre le altre due combinano sempre le voce di Wyatt con sonorità più tradizionali, quasi di matrice rock, con basso e chitarra elettrica. In tutti e tre i frammenti c'è l'idea di decomporre la linea melodica del brano di Wyatt combinando l'idea della composizione (ad esempio, il trio d'archi della prima versione è tutto scritto), con quello dell'improvvisazione».

L'ascoltatore, abituato alle linee melodiche del musicista di Bristol, può rimanere spiazzato da questo mix che coniuga tradizione colta, composizione e improvisazione. Ma si tratta di un'operazione genuina che merita rispetto e che va oltre cover e remix che spesso producono solo l'effetto di far rimpiangere le versioni originali. Piuttosto che donare una canzone del repertorio wyattiano con performance vocali piatte e prive di pathos, Prati preferisce sviluppare un discorso originale in linea con la filosofia di Wyatt, che è sempre stata quella di rivoluzionare/contaminare i linguaggi. Dentro la melodia di una canzone di Wyatt, Prati ha cercato e trovato la «sua» melodia. E questo è forse il tributo più compiuto che si poteva realizzare.

• INCONTRI • CARTOLINE DA BRISTOL • I discorsi pericolosi di un lucido rosso

A Robert Wyatt, l'idea che altri «manipolino» le sue composizioni non disturba. «Amo che altri le eseguano, quel che faccio è solo realizzare la prima idea, non certo tutto quello che si potrebbe fare, con la mia musica». Parlando di *Postcards from Italy* dice: «II progetto mi è piaciuto. L'artwork della copertina mi fa apparire un tipo feroce. Fantastico».

E delle tre variazioni realizzate da Walter Prati sulla tua voce cosa pensi?

So che è un amico di Evan Parker. Evan è un tipo che viaggia parecchio e incontra molte persone che io non posso incontrare o che non potrei comunque avere la possibilità di conoscere. Sono molto contento del lavoro di Prati: specialmente la prima variazione con gli archi è molto bella. Sfugge a qualsiasi classificazione. È proprio nello spirito del mio lavoro.

Come spieghi questo crescente interesse per Ì tuoi lavori in Italia?

Sinceramente, non so rispondere. Non viaggio, non faccio concerti e davvero non so cosa succeda là fuori. Una possibile spiegazione potrebbe essere questa: il mio lavoro è apprezzato in quei paesi dove esiste una comprensione della mia visione politica, del mio credo. Penso che in Italia molta gente abbia saputo cogliere questa dimensione. Lo stesso succede anche in Francia. Credo che ci sia anche una motivazione artistica. Per esempio, mi piace moltissimo Maurizio Camardi, il suo modo di suonare, la sua musica, la sua band. Un bravissimo musicista con il quale ci siamo intesi a tutti i livelli, non solo sul piano musicale e abbiamo realizzato una fantastica versione di *Hasta siempre comandante*, uscita su un cd de *il manifesto*. La stessa intesa si è sviluppata anche con Cristina Donà. Devo dire che, alla fine, siamo tutti musicisti e rispondiamo solo alla musica.

In *Shleep*, il tuo ultimo lavoro solista che risale al '97, suoni la tromba. Lo stesso fai in alcune delle tue recenti collaborazioni come in *Vozero* di Phil Manzanera o in *Goccia* di Cristina Donà. Continuerai anche in futuro?

Devo farlo, non ho altra scelta. Le mie note alte stanno sparendo. Mi sto trasformando in un basso, non molto profondo, ma in un basso. Quando ero giovane riuscivo a raggiungere le note più alte, oggi non più. E ho due modi per ovviare a questo problema: la prima è suonare la tromba e la seconda è lavorare con cantanti donne.

Stai lavorando a un nuovo progetto solista?

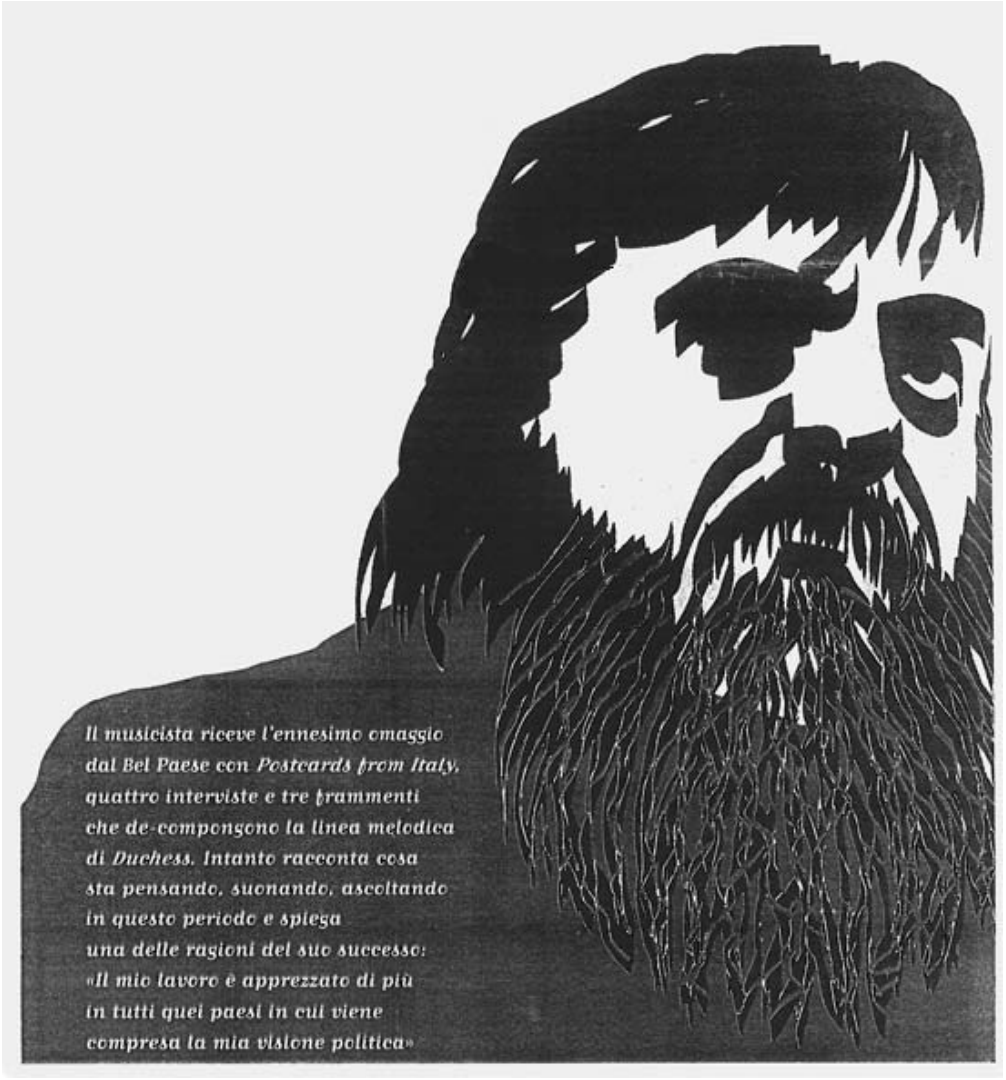
Sì, ma non parlo mai in anticipo di quello che sto facendo. Riguardo alle collaborazioni, mi piace sempre lavorare con determinate persone. Ma mi sento più a mio agio quando lavoro da solo, completamente solo come è successo in *Dondestan*. È meno difficile e costoso. Eppoi in questo modo non ho niente da dover spiegare.

Che dischi stai ascoltando in questo periodo?

Sono molto affascinato da alcune band franco-arabe. Fanno una musica realmente autentica, mediterranea come il flamenco o la musica napoletana. Quando l'Europa incontra altre culture, il risultato è sempre straordinario.

Si potrebbe definire una nuova musica etnica?

No, non mi piace questa definizione. Etnico è una parola codarda per dire "non abbastanza bianco". Mi raccontava Amal Murkus, un'artista araba di Haifa, cantante bravissima, che nei negozi di dischi in Israele, dove lei vive, i suoi cd sono catalogati sotto il genere etnico. Mentre i dischi degli artisti israeliani sono inseriti insieme a quelli inglesi o americani, i cd di musica araba vengono così relegati in una sorta di ghetto. Bisogna quindi stare molto attenti a usare questa parola. Etichettare la musica come etnica è discriminante e finisce per escludere un mondo musicale dallo scenario di un moderno dibattito intellettuale. E questo è un discorso molto pericoloso.



Robert Wyatt, in une illustrazione di Luca Varaschini, dalla copertina del libro-cd "Postcards from Italy"

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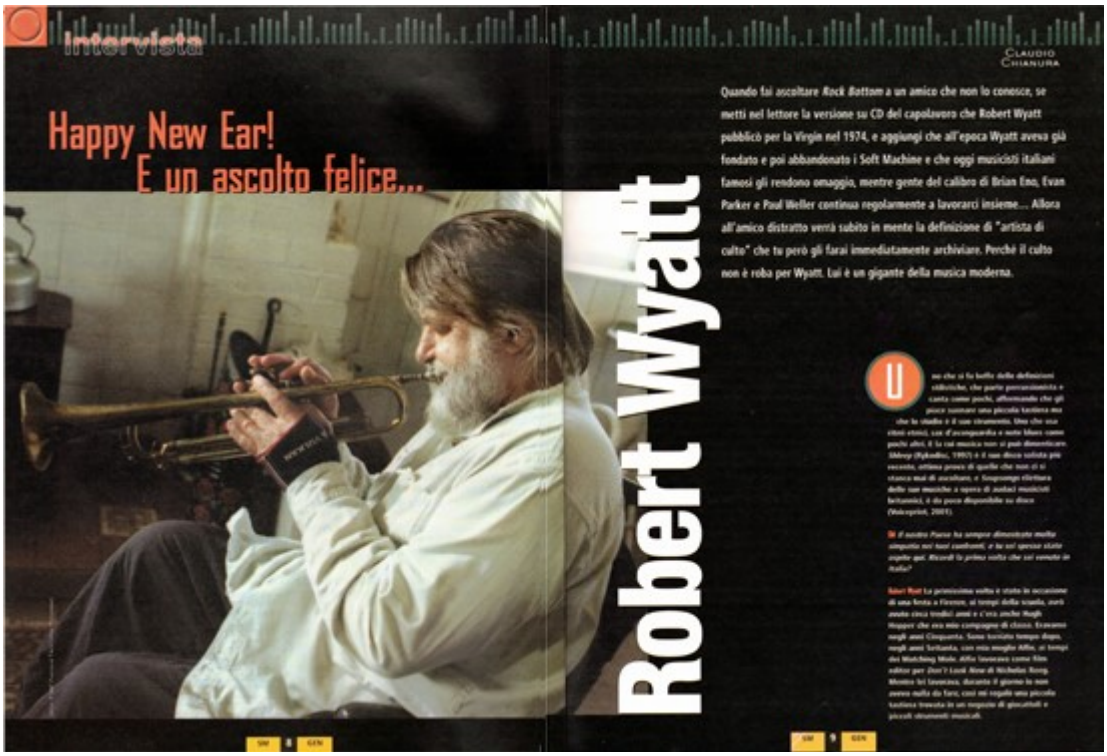
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Happy New Ear! E un ascolto felice... Robert Wyatt Intervista - Instrumenti Musicali - # 249 - gennaio 2002







CLAUDIO
CHIANURA

Quando fai ascoltare *Rock Bottom* a un amico che non lo conosce, se metti nel lettore la versione su CD del capolavoro che Robert Wyatt pubblicò per la Virgin nel 1974, e aggiungi che all'epoca Wyatt aveva già fondato e poi abbandonato i Soft Machine e che oggi musicisti italiani famosi gli rendono omaggio, mentre gente del calibro di Brian Eno, Evan Parker e Paul Weller continua regolarmente a lavorarci insieme... Allora all'amico distratto verrà subito in mente la definizione di "artista di culto" che tu però gli farai immediatamente archiviare. Perché il culto non è roba per Wyatt. Lui è un gigante della musica moderna.

Uno che si fa beffe delle definizioni stilistiche, che parte percussionista e canta come pochi, affermando che gli piace suonare una piccola tastiera ma che lo studio è il suo strumento. Uno che usa ritmi etnici, sax d'avanguardia e note blues come pochi altri. E la cui musica non si può dimenticare. *Shleep* (Rykodisc, 1997) è il suo disco solista più recente, ottima prova di quelle che non ci si stanca mai di ascoltare, e *Soupsongs* rilettura delle sue musiche a opera di audaci musicisti britannici, è da poco disponibile su disco (Voiceprint, 2001).

SM *Il nostro Paese ha sempre dimostrato molta simpatia nei tuoi confronti, e tu sei spesso stato ospite qui. Ricordi la prima volta che sei venuto in Italia?*

Robert Wyatt La primissima volta è stato in occasione di una festa a Firenze, ai tempi della scuola, avrò avuto circa tredici anni e c'era anche Hugh Hopper che era mio compagno di classe. Eravamo negli anni Cinquanta. Sono tornato tempo dopo, negli anni Settanta, con mia moglie Alfie, ai tempi dei Matching Mole. Alfie lavorava come film editor per *Don't Look Now* di Nicholas Roeg. Mentre lei lavorava, durante il giorno io non avevo nulla da fare, così mi regalò una piccola tastiera trovata in un negozio di giocattoli e piccoli strumenti musicali.

Quella tastiera aveva un suono particolare,



con un leggero effetto di vibrato. Cominciai a scrivere le canzoni di *Rock Bottom*. Quello è stato un po' l'inizio di tutto. Il contesto in cui mi trovai a concepire quel disco fu completamente diverso da tutto ciò che avevo fatto in precedenza. Stavo preparando il materiale per il terzo disco dei Matching Mole e sarebbe stato davvero ottimo, quando ebbi l'incidente che mi spezzò la schiena costringendomi su una sedia a rotelle. Così dissi al gruppo di non aspettarmi, perché loro dovevano continuare a lavorare. La strada era un po' segnata, perché già sul primo disco dei Matching Mole ero andato in studio e avevo registrato per conto mio delle tastiere. Mi piaceva davvero suonare le tastiere, cosa che naturalmente non potevo fare quando suonavo la batteria. Registrare *Rock Bottom* in un certo senso mi liberò, potevo suonare le percussioni se volevo, ma fondamentalmente si trattava di tastiere e voce e potevo controllare esattamente la relazione fra le diverse parti armoniche. Lo strumento che utilizzo davvero però è lo studio di registrazione. Ancora prima avevo registrato delle session per John Peel e avevo pensato che potesse essere una sfida interessante quella di entrare in studio senza alcuno strumento. Niente gruppo, niente musicisti, niente strumenti. Suonando solo quel che avrei trovato nello studio. Ne venne fuori una sessione di circa venti minuti. Era per me ormai maturo quel modo di lavorare.

SM *Spesso i tuoi dischi sono diversi fra loro perché caratterizzati proprio da una certa libertà. Lunghe suite oppure canzoni pop vere e proprie. Come pensi alla forma dei tuoi album a questo rispetto?*

RW Ci sono almeno un paio di dischi che non erano originariamente progettati per essere delle raccolte. Per esempio *Nothing Can Stop Us* o più recentemente cose come il cofanetto pubblicato dalla Rykodisc. Questi brani erano stati concepiti singolarmente o almeno a coppie. E sono stati messi insieme dalla casa discografica perché si trovassero in una forma più stabile. Ma quando compongo, e questa è una cosa in cui sono stato influenzato da una certa ideologia improvvisativa, dalla free music che ho ascoltato sin da ragazzo, la forma nasce in una fase successiva. Nel mio caso è stato l'opposto della scrittura conservatoriale in cui la forma viene prima della composizione, lo non posso scrivere in quel modo. Anche dal vivo una certa forma viene data naturalmente, c'è una specie di evento organico, dall'inizio alla fine, non puoi suonare per un'ora di seguito, e quindi una certa forma è necessaria. Nel mio caso invece trovo quasi intimidatorio pensare prima alla forma. Così tendo principalmente a preoccuparmi del fatto che ogni momento sia giusto. E se sono sincero riguardo a quel che sto facendo, allora ci sarà una consistenza finale nella sequenza musicale. La forma emerge autonomamente alla mia percezione, anche sorprendendomi. Lavoro un po' come un animale, non sapendo esattamente cosa sto facendo fino a che questa forma si evidenzia.

SM *Quando hai cominciato a lavorare in questo modo? Perché non si trattava di una consuetudine nella scena jazz, sulla quale ti sei formato.*

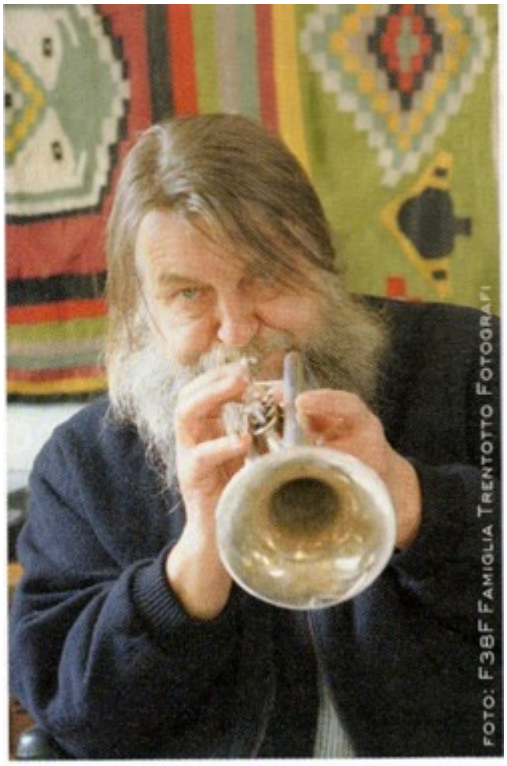
RW Penso si sia trattato soprattutto di necessità, quando iniziai a scrivere "Moon in June" con i Soft Machine. Gli altri componenti del gruppo non erano a loro agio e potevo sentire che non capivano realmente perché facessi le scelte che stavo facendo. Inoltre è difficile cantare e suonare le percussioni allo stesso tempo. Cosi mi convinsi che sarebbe stato meglio se io avessi suonato tutte le parti. Nello studio c'era un Hammond, un basso... Tolsi così gli altri musicisti e me stesso dall'imbarazzo di lavorare controvoglia. Non sono la persona giusta per dire agli altri quel che devono fare.

SM *Ma poi nei tuoi dischi non hai rinunciato a impiegare strumenti di ogni genere: hai*

usato anche la tromba, il violino e altro ancora... Come scegli di usare certi strumenti invece di altri?

RW Non penso tanto in termini di strumentazione, ma di persone con le quali ho voglia di lavorare. Mi piace pensare a una buona compagnia che lavora per il disco. Per esempio con gli Henry Cow, il motivo per cui c'era Fred al violino o alla chitarra era semplicemente perché si trattava di lui, più che per lo strumento. C'erano centinaia di fantastici musicisti, ma cercavo quel particolare spirito che Mongezi Feza sapeva infondere al disco. Se non ci fosse il trombone di Annie Whitehead non ci sarebbe probabilmente alcun trombone sul mio disco. A volte mi capita di sentire musicisti chiusi in una particolare condizione, come è successo a me quando suonavo la batteria. E so che potrebbero fare cose diverse se solo si cambiasse il contesto in cui agiscono. Mi stuzzica l'idea di quel che potrebbe accadere in tal caso. Ma come ho già detto, spesso tutto comincia dal fatto che apprezzo le persone, prima che i musicisti. Non si tratta spesso di musicisti particolarmente abili dal punto di vista tecnico, ma di gente che conosce solo tre o quattro accordi rock. Altre volte è gente che non viene dal rock e dal folk. Tutto questo non ha importanza per me. Personalmente conservo una sorta di mentalità pop, per cui magari un po' in ombra alla base della mia musica ci devono comunque essere un ritmo, un'armonia... Gli elementi basilari della musica. Il modo in cui ci relazioniamo tra musicisti è del tipo "è in Si maggiore o in Si minore?" oppure "è in quattro quarti o in cinque quarti?". Sono sempre questi gli elementi base che tutti noi abbiamo in comune. Deve funzionare così, se fai un assolo hai bisogno di sapere quali note stanno alla base, quindi, alcuni suoneranno entro i normali parametri dell'accordo, mentre altri come Evan Parker o Mongezi Feza faranno riferimento all'intera idea armonica. Dipende dal tipo di musica che ritieni appropriato in quella particolare situazione.

SM *A volte inizi a lavorare con la musica, altre volte si direbbe che il tuo lavoro su una canzone abbia inizio da un testo o da un'immagine che vuoi rendere musicalmente. Sono modi diversi di lavorare, naturalmente...*



RW Per me è sempre normale iniziare con la musica, cercando poi le parole che sembrano meglio adattarvisi. Se fossi un pittore la musica sarebbe il paesaggio, che si tratti di sabbia, campi, qualunque colore del cielo... E quando si tratta di popolare quel paesaggio ecco la scelta delle parole. Ho imparato lavorando con Michael Mantler e con Carla Bley. Come loro prendono un testo e lo utilizzano in musica. Questo è molto comune nell'opera lirica, per esempio, dove la composizione parte da un libretto. Nell'opera inglese invece il risultato è sempre troppo recitativo, nel tentativo di illustrare il testo. Per questo credo che l'opera in Italia o in Germania, sia più potente. In Inghilterra è come se non si capisse che le parole devono essere funzionali alla musica, tutto deve servire alla musica. Penso sia una cosa che Miles Davis ha detto: "La musica è molto gelosa". Non le piace essere trascurata.

SM *Vuoi parlarmi della tua collaborazione con Cristina Donà?*

RW Certo. Sono stato invitato al Salone della Musica di Torino dove ho avuto modo di vederla esibirsi. Questo è normale, come sai. Capita di vedere artisti che non ti colpiscono particolarmente. Ma invece lei fu... Non so, completamente fuori dal genere rock femminile alla moda, sai cosa intendo. Non era quel tipo di ragazza arrabbiata come tante artiste americane o inglesi. C'era una sorta di fascino in quello che faceva, non era di quelli che sembrano voler sembrare più punk di un punk e via dicendo. Era così naturale. Lo stesso la sua musica. Non potevo capire bene le parole, ma mi sono piaciute le sue canzoni. Ogni

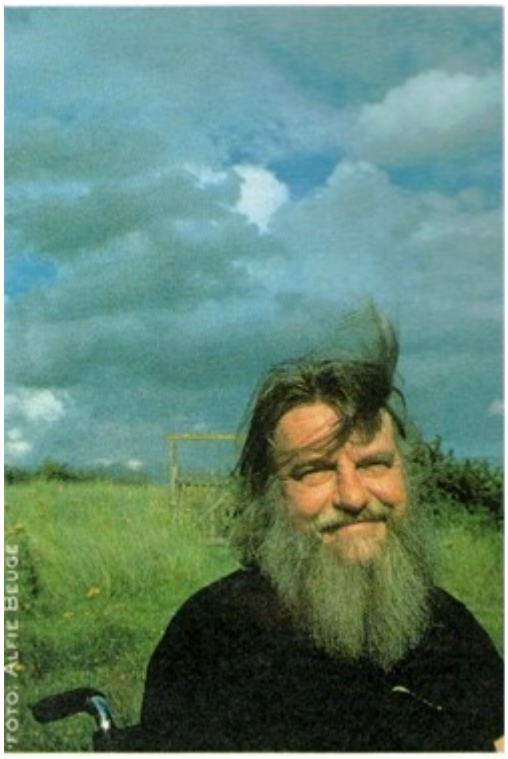
canzone sembrava avere una sua ragione e lei canta molto bene, in un range dinamico molto ampio: può gridare al momento giusto ma sa anche sussurrare. È davvero un'ottima musicista. E per quanto riguarda la mia partecipazione al suo disco, avrei potuto aggiungere qualcosa a più d'una canzone, ma questo avrebbe aggiunto solo del rumore. Nel brano "Goccia" contenuto in *Nido* ho trovato invece che ci fosse dello spazio perché io potessi dare un contributo con ulteriori idee melodiche restando parte dell'intero contesto.

SM *E poi c'è stata l'esperienza del Meltdown Festival...*

RW C'è un fantastico piccolo gruppo di persone che lavora a quel Festival e che fa il lavoro più duro. L'idea del Meltdown è quella di invitare un direttore artistico diverso ogni anno. Così sono stato chiamato per l'edizione 2001 e sono stato felice di invitare musicisti che non avrei mai pensato di poter chiamare altrimenti, come Max Roach per esempio. Ma la mia principale preoccupazione è stata che non fosse un festival internazionale finto dove tutti devono per forza parlare inglese. Volevo che fosse meno asettico, più aperto alle diversità. Ecco perché il festival è stato fantastico, per me. Vedere musicisti palestinesi e israeliani sullo stesso palco insieme è stato molto commovente. Veder suonare rifugiati turchi e somali è stato più importante ancora che assistere agli eventi maggiori del Festival. Ecco quel che mi interessa, non guardare sempre verso ovest ma anche verso est.

SM *Com'è nato il progetto Soupsongs ?*

RW Mi è stato proposto di lavorare a una particolare esecuzione delle mie musiche, ma ho detto che preferivo starmene nelle retrovie, cosi si è pensato di proporre ad altri di arrangiare le diverse melodie. Inizialmente ho pensato a musicisti che già avevano fatto una cosa simile, come è avvenuto in Austria. Ho pensato anche ai musicisti italiani che avevano collaborato al disco *The Different You*. Ma il piccolo budget a disposizione non permetteva di chiamare musicisti dall'estero e pagare loro il viaggio e quant'altro. Dunque abbiamo deciso di coinvolgere musicisti britannici, come Annie Whitehead che aveva già suonato anche in *Shleep* e altri musicisti che normalmente suonano cose diverse ma che sapevo potessero eseguire le mie musiche. Sono stati invitati a eseguire queste musiche al London Jazz Festival e quindi in altre occasioni fino alla registrazione pubblicata su etichetta Voiceprint.



SM *E ora possiamo aspettarci un tuo nuovo disco?*

RW Al momento è appena terminato l'editing di due mie canzoni per un film francese, intitolato *Il popolo migrante*, una colonna sonora con un paio di mie canzoni e una di Nick Drake. I distributori giapponesi vogliono poi pubblicare su vinile i miei CD e farne un'edizione speciale. I giapponesi sono molto divertenti in questo, cercano di fare l'opposto di quel che si fa di solito. Mi hanno chiesto di aggiungere un paio di canzoni inedite, così ho registrato qualcosa di breve qui a casa.

SM *Perché non lavori a qualche progetto dal vivo?*

RW Perché ho paura del palcoscenico. Quando stavo dietro la batteria mi sentivo più protetto. Come una cassiera dietro la cassa in un negozio. Ma le ultime due volte che sono salito su un palco stavo quasi per svenire dalla paura. È difficile da spiegare. A volte usano mie musiche per installazioni, com'è avvenuto a Lione recentemente. Ma non riesco davvero a stare davanti al pubblico. È

come quando c'è qualcuno che disegna o fa dei ritratti per strada e la gente gli sta dietro le spalle per guardarlo lavorare. Mi farebbe perdere tutta la concentrazione e credo che in parte il problema stia anche nella mia scarsa disinvoltura tecnica. Quando suoni dal vivo ogni cosa è il primo tentativo. In studio mi ci vogliono a volte quattro o cinque prove prima di ottenere la giusta interpretazione. E poi l'inizio va bene ma non la parte finale, e così via. Non ci sono cose che trovo davvero facili da fare nel mio lavoro, e preferisco farle da solo. E poi c'è la difficoltà pratica di andarsene in giro su una sedia a rotelle, prendere l'aereo...

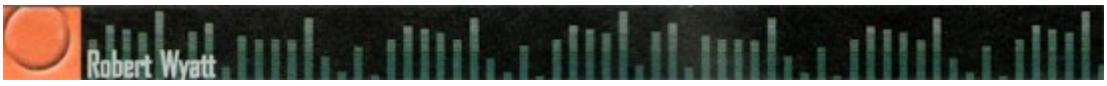
SM *Diversamente da te, molti artisti agiscono in un alone di ambiguità senza assumersi responsabilità sulla qualità del proprio lavoro. Altre volte il pubblico non coglie completamente il significato del lavoro di un musicista...*

RW Non spetta a me dire agli altri quel che devono o non devono fare. Personalmente credo di non guardare troppo fuori di me in quello che faccio. Mi piace fare cose che mi vengano comode e sono il primo ascoltatore della mia musica. Se quel che faccio ha un senso per me, spero che possa averlo anche per gli altri. Non credo di dovermi troppo preoccupare di quel che il pubblico comprende della mia musica. Sarebbe troppo faticoso. Il pittore Mark Rothko si infuriò parecchio quando una sua grande tela venne acquistata per la sala conferenze di una grande compagnia di affari. Come molti artisti della sua generazione, temeva di essere usato dall'establishment economico. Così rifiutò di vendere l'opera asserendo che era stata realizzata solo per gente vera. Capisco perfettamente queste ragioni, ma alla fine se l'artista mette nella propria opera tutte le informazioni necessarie e corrette alla sua comprensione, lì termina la sua responsabilità. E se il pubblico non comprende a fondo, è responsabilità del pubblico, non più dell'artista.

Claudio Chianura

Discografia essenziale come solista

The End Of An Ear, 1970
Rock Bottom, 1974
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, 1975
Nothing Can Stop Us, 1981
Old Rottenhat, 1985
Dondestan, 1991
Shleep, 1997



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MATCHING MOLE



> Zoom



Il viagio sotteraneo delle talpe in armi

Di Francesco Caltagirone

I Want You Still Caroline

La "Luna di Giugno" aveva esaurito il suo corso, nascondendosi dispettosa dietro le spesse nuvole del Kent. Robert Wyatt e i Soft Machine erano ai ferri corti. La schematica struttura del gruppo di Mike Ratledge, l'obiettivo di una tecnica sempre più simmetrica e perfetta stavano stretti al funambolico batterista, smanioso di sperimentare nuovi percorsi e linguaggi, in nome di una musica senza frontiere, svincolata da mode e tendenze.

Il 4 Settembre 1971 Melody Maker annuncia un clamoroso, forzato ma inevitabile divorzio. Non a caso la nuova creatura che balena nella mente brulicante di Bob si chiamerà Matching Mole, sigla che letta alla francese riecheggerà la "morbida macchina" pensata dallo scrittore ribelle William Burroughs. Ad Agosto la separazione è definitiva. Mr. Ellidge non concepisce periodi di stasi. Ha già in mente il gruppo che sarà. David Sinclair, classe 1947, fiaccola di Canterbury, per tre anni e mezzo geniale tastierista dei leggendari Caravan. Nello stesso mese di Agosto aveva chiuso con la storica band ma manteneva una profonda passione per la forma canzone e un'abbondante creatività melodica. Phil Miller, nato nel 1949, già chitarrista dei Delivery e a lungo partner di Roy Babbington, del fratello Steve, Laurie Allan, Pip Pyle e Lol Coxhill. Bill MacCormick, nato bassista per necessità, leva del 1951, conclusi gli studi aveva militato nei Quiet Sun, gruppo che non sarebbe sopravvissuto alla sua defezione.

Quinto membro aggiunto, ospite straordinario, Dave MacRae, estroso pianista australiano, innamorato di Cecil Taylor e da poco giunto in Inghilterra con un bagaglio di esperienze quali l'orchestra di Buddy Rich, i Nucleus di Ian Carr e una collaborazione con Sarah Vaughan. Curioso delle avanguardie che crescevano nell'area londinese, MacRae incontra Wyatt nel corso di una serata all'insegna dell'improvvisazione e non nasconde il suo entusiasmo ad affrontare un'esperienza musicale del tutto nuova. Miller porta in dote le canzoni che aveva scritto al tempo dei Delivery.

Ma l'ex drummer dei Soft Machine non si sente leader. Attraversa un momento di crisi esistenziale, ambisce a essere una parte del tutto, a caricarsi grazie anche allo slancio degli



altri. In quel periodo conosce una ragazza austriaca, pittrice, Alfreda Benge, in piena sintonia con le ideologie che lo infervorano e con le mire di composizione e sperimentazione. "Alifib" sarà sua inseparabile compagna e collaboratrice per gli anni a venire. Non spira un vento favorevole sul cammino delle talpe. I mezzi economici sono scarsissimi e di conseguenza le attrezzature, non sempre all'altezza delle esigenze, soggette a furti. Ma il pubblico che aspetta i Matching Mole al debutto discografico, alle prime esibizioni dal vivo, difficilmente giustificherebbe tanta povertà riferita a musicisti dai trascorsi prestigiosi. L'autunno e l'inverno del 1971 vedono il nuovo gruppo preparare i pezzi che costituiranno l'album di esordio per la CBS.

Nel frattempo Wyatt non si concede tregua. Accompagna quale percussionista i Gong di David Allen in Francia, si fa vedere con il sassofonista Gary Windo al Ronnie Scott's, partecipa all'album di Kevin Ayers **Whatevershebringswesing**, presenzia alla serata dei Centipede di Keith Tippett, alla Royal Albert Hall. È un ininterrotto accavallarsi di impegni che culminano in un breve tour tedesco assieme a Don "Sugar Cane" Harris per il Berliner Jazz Tagen e con una presenza nel quartetto del vibrafonista Gary Burton. Suona la batteria per Paul Bley, partecipa a una serata dei Symbiosis, mutati in A Quartet per la defaillance di Gary Windo, sostituito da Elton Dean. Quando sono pronti per incidere, i Matching Mole sono al verde, registrano in uno studio semi-abbandonato, al freddo, perseguitati da incidenti tecnici e intoppi che sembrano avere qualcosa di soprannaturale. Ciò avviene fra il Dicembre '71 e il Febbraio '72, mese in cui viene effettuato il missaggio. Nello stesso periodo il gruppo effettua una tournée in Belgio e in Olanda, culminata con un concerto completamente votato all'improvvisazione, tenuto in quel di Bruxelles. **Matching Mole**, con la sua curiosa copertina, illustrata da Alan Cracknell, riproducente due occhialute talpe che fuoriescono dalle tane, viene pubblicato il 14 Aprile 1972. Tutte le composizioni sono firmate da Wyatt, eccetto **Part Of The Dance** di Phil Miller e la fortunata **O Caroline**, a nome anche di Dave Sinclair. Con questo capolavoro, pubblicato in una versione ridotta, come singolo insieme a **Signed Curtain** l'8 Luglio dello stesso anno, il mito della band spicca il volo. Con voce chimerica e sognante, accompagnandosi al pianoforte, Wyatt sembra soffiare in un vetro, elargendo una delle più struggenti e fragili canzoni d'amore mai sentite. Un inizio elegiaco che leva il sipario su una scena fiabesca, nel liquido rimbalzare delle tastiere, fuse in un'impalpabile fluidità. È questo il terreno comune con Sinclair, innamorato delle ballate e riluttante a disegnare un lavoro lontano da quella concezione. **Instant Pussy** sembra benedire essenze bluastre che rimbalzano fra alambicchi. Bob imposta trasparenti vocalizzi, sottilissime tele di ragno. Batte sui tamburi ma è come se stesse incidendo un tatuaggio. **Signed Curtain** illumina Wyatt a contatto con il plenilunio.



È la voce di un essere umano mutato in libellula da un sortilegio. Sospende il tempo, ne interrompe lo scorrere. Dave imperversa con l'organo, MacRae lancia piccole frecce sonore dal piano elettrico. Il finale si stempera in onde distorte, acide. Chiude la facciata lo strumentale **Part Of The Dance**, di Phil Miller, pastiche canterburyano, cuore dell'improvvisazione, danza di spade per strumenti lasciati allo stato brado. A poco a poco i suoni svaporano come un sogno del mattino. **Instant Kitten** e la voce di Wyatt sfrondata dalla parola sembra un'innodia stellare. Le ottave di Sinclair pennellano acquerelli asciugati sotto il ciclo della Cattedrale. È il suono dei Caravan, lunga vita a loro. Poi la musica si

stempera in un'aurora boreale fra teleferiche sospese da qui alla Sesta Luna. **Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening**, omaggia Hopper e l'eccentrica Musa protettrice della Morbida Macchina. Non c'è soluzione di continuità fra le tracce, c'è il gusto della suite. **Beer As In Braindeer** e gli strumenti si inseguono in vicoli sempre più angusti. La chitarra di Phil si imbizzarrisce, percorre una traccia iperbolica. Anarchia sonora, pulviscolo, tramestii dal sottosuolo. Ecco ciò che pretende l'estro di Robert. **Immediate Curtain** lascia fluire dalla sua tastiera un suono incombente come una pioggia di meteoriti che si infrange sull'atmosfera. È una rapsodia del sogno. È un' onda di frequenze oniriche che si alza lentamente e tutto avvolge.

Il Libretto Rosso di Bob

Non passerà molto tempo fra la pubblicazione del primo disco e quella del secondo. Il volo dei Matching Mole è una meteora, un lampo. Ragioni organizzative, economiche, favoriranno presto quella frenesia tipica di Wyatt a cambiare il corso dei propri itinerari, a mettere tutto in discussione.

David Sinclair ha la testa ai Caravan, alle melodie, alle belle canzoni e non resiste a lungo. Il suo futuro saranno gli Hatfield And The North. Il posto lasciato presto vacante viene riempito da Dave MacRae che si installa a tempo pieno all'interno della band. In tour come "opening act" di John Mayall in Francia, i Matching Mole riscuotono addirittura più consensi del bluesman inglese ma non ottengono la riconferma per il proseguimento degli show in Germania. In primavera, battono a tappeto Inghilterra e Scozia, salgono sulla ribalta dell'Olympia di Parigi il 15 Maggio 1972. L'estate è un susseguirsi di impegni che sottolineano la crescente fama di Wyatt e soci. Date a Birmingham e Liverpool, l'Europop Festival a Ostenda. Interrompe questo vorticoso tour de force la registrazione del programma BBC Live In Concert, avvenuta il 27 Luglio e messa in onda a Settembre. Poi si riprende: Marquee Jazz and Blues Festival a Reading, in Belgio con Curved Air e Lindisfarne. Il 25 Agosto iniziano le registrazioni del nuovo album.



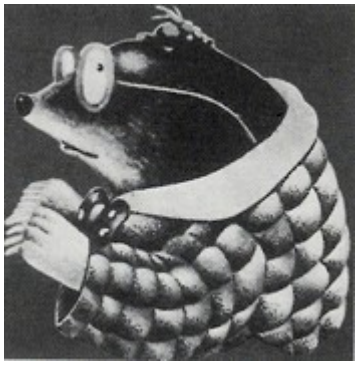
Ultimato alla fine dello stesso mese, **Matching Mole's Little Red Record**, sempre etichetta CBS, uscirà il 27 Ottobre. La produzione del secondo lavoro viene affidata a Robert Fripp, la cui fama di arcigno accentratore troverà conferma in una gestione spiccatamente assolutista. A farne le spese sembra sia stato il chitarrista Phil Miller, dicono addirittura soggiogato dalla personalità del leader dei King Crimson. Ospite d'onore è il "non musicista" Brian Eno, al V.C.S.3., sul brano **Gloria Gloom**. Ulteriori contributi sono forniti da Dave Gale, dall'attrice Julie Christie e da Alfreda, moglie di Robert, mimetizzati sotto nomi d'occasione. La copertina è un adattamento di un tazebao propagandistico cinese, inneggiante alla riconquista armata di Taiwan. I visi dei soldati di Mao-Tse-Tung sono sostituiti dai ritratti di Dave MacRae che imbraccia una mitragliatrice, di Bill MacCormick che brandisce il noto libretto rosso, di Phil Miller che impugna una bandiera scarlatta e di Wyatt che, berretto stellato in testa, sembra indicare il sol dell'avvenire. Sicuramente una provocazione nell'Inghilterra "tory", fermamente anticomunista. Ma Wyatt non si nasconde dietro le proprie idee, manifestando senza reticenze un inossidabile credo politico. Un atteggiamento che manterrà fieramente, come militante attivo e pugnace e che, è ben lecito pensare, gli sia costato in termini di ostracismo e isolamento. Il "piccolo disco rosso" punta le luci sul brillante talento di Dave MacRae che finalmente può agire da protagonista. Il suono si è fatto più circoscritto, concentrico. L'assenza di Sinclair oblitera le propensioni armoniche, e l'occhialuto piano player può girare a ruota libera. Spilli sonori sul suo piano elettrico. La più coraggiosa delle sperimentazioni prende il sopravvento. Anche sul piano canoro Wyatt si inerpica su pendii scoscesi, manipolando le corde vocali con l'audacia di Icaro, l'incoscienza di un titano. **Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away** di Dave MacRae sorprende magnetici suoni sul piano. L'ombra di Terry Riley sorveglia le salmodie di Wyatt, i suoi inni del subconscio. Tutte le parti cantate saranno di sua composizione, nessuna firma sui singoli brani. Con **Marchides** il rumorismo saggio dell'australiano rovista lande vergini, davanti al puntuale picchiettare del basso di MacCormick, ai pieni percussivi del più mirabolante drummer del Regno Unito.



In **Nan True's Hole** la voce di Bob dondola sull'erta di scoscese scale tonali, mentre riaffiora la Fender affilata di Phil Miller che si esalta in lussureggianti assoli. Filastrocche scandite da voci maschili e femminili estremizzano il gusto del non-sense. Con **Righteous Rumba** Miller preferisce l'acustica, in **Brandy As In Benj** le divagazioni sul piano elettrico paiono ricordare il piglio dei Soft Machine. La seconda facciata accoglie in **Gloria Gloom** il tocco straniato di Brian Eno. C'è un'atmosfera cupa, minacciosa, da ultimo giorno. Angosce metropolitane, voci subumane provengono da un'oltretomba tecnologica. Siamo lontani anni luce da **O Caroline**. Tuttavia, **God Song** rimane un capolavoro di asimmetrica melodia, la gemma abbacinante del disco, l'apogeo del canto di Wyatt, baciato dalle Muse. Per toccare simili vette bisognerà aspettare **Rock Bottom** e la sua immacolata bellezza. Suono nervoso, sincopato, nella **Flora Fidgit** di MacCormick dove le tastiere di MacRae fluttuano liberamente. Il disco si chiude con gli eleganti passaggi di **Smoke Signal**, composizione di MacRae. Rifrazioni di luce cosmica, discese negli abissi, umori primordiali e una batteria che innalza cattedrali.

Little Red Record non è un disco facile per i tempi, ma è foriero di un vento nuovo, una folata che si posa un momento e scompare non si sa dove. I Matching Mole proseguono imperterriti come un fiume in piena. A Settembre sono alla Queen Elizabeth Hall di Londra, in Olanda e Belgio, di spalla ai Soft Machine per un breve tour. Improvvisamente Wyatt getta le carte in aria, scioglie il gruppo. Odia essere un capo, fiuta nuove situazioni. Sono le lunghe pressioni del bassista Bill MacCormick a spingerlo poi verso una riconsiderazione della questione. Bob pensa a un quartetto formato da Gary Windo al sax tenore, Dave MacRae, pianoforte e piano elettrico, Ron Mathewson, contrabbasso, e se stesso, batteria e voce. Il progetto WMWM. Un gruppo che non si sarebbe collocato in una precisa categoria musicale, un ensemble di margine, missionario dell'improvvisazione, fra jazz e rock, in un territorio che potrebbe essere chiamato "nowhereland". I quattro registrano qualcosa, vanno al Ronnie Scott's con Richard Sinclair, (nobile stirpe predestinata). Ma come l'Araba Fenice i Matching Mole stanno per rinascere: Francis Monkman, ex Curved Air, alle tastiere, Gary Windo al sax, Bill MacCormick al basso, Wyatt ai tamburi, voce. Viene contattato Fred Frith degli Henry Cow, ardente fan di Bob, ma non se ne fa niente per il risentimento del suo gruppo d'appartenenza. I nuovi Matching Mole che la stampa musicale inglese aveva incautamente salutato come ricostituiti, si riuniscono informalmente a Notting Hill Gate, a casa di Alfreda, per arrotare i ferri del mestiere. La Virgin Records che raggruppa sotto gli

scudi l'emergente Mike Oldfield, fantasmagorico sortiere di **Tubular Bells** e la band di Frith, contatta i neonati Mole. Domenica primo Giugno 1973, alla festa di compleanno di Lady June, a Maida Vale, whisky e vino precipitano Robert dalla finestra di un quarto piano.



La frattura della dodicesima vertebra e la rottura delle gambe lo costringono lungamente allo Stoke Mandeville Hospital di Aylesbury. Il suo futuro sarà inchiodato su una sedia a rotelle. Si spezza anche il proposito di rigenerare i Mole e Bob ritornerà a lavorare nove mesi dopo, quando canterà con gli Hatfield And The North che i suoi ex compagni Phil Miller e David Sinclair avevano inventato.

Di uno dei più suggestivi e mitizzati gruppi della storia del rock, resta un'ulteriore testimonianza, nei venticinque minuti di BBC Radio Live In Concert pubblicato in CD dalla Windsong nel 1994. Registrato al Paris Theatre di Londra nel Luglio del 1972, il disco presenta i Matching Mole nello spolvero della vena creativa, con MacRae faro indicatore. Cinque brani soltanto, ma rappresentativi della loro espressione selvaggia e libertaria, dissennatamente dada. In un unico respiro dove è impossibile delimitare i confini, i numeri si susseguono senza sosta. **Instant Pussy**, in cui Wyatt adopera la voce come uno strumento sacrilego. I suoi vocalizzi levitano come una piuma in una sorta di liquido amniotico. Il canto è uno specchio deformante dove le immagini sonore si alterano senza posa. **Litheing And Graceing**, inedito di Phil Miller, individua una chitarra nostalgica del Sud Inghilterra. Il disco è una discesa libera di barbagli rubati al jazz. Sono le tastiere di MacRae nella bislacca **Marchides** la cometa inseguita dagli altri strumenti. L'orchestrazione è al parossismo. Ancora il Phil Miller di **Part Of The Dance** con un arpeggio gentile, soffitto di una stanza alchemica. Cadono i diaframmi, è un irrefrenabile espandersi di vibrazioni. La breve **Brandy As In Benge**, ulteriore inedito, inizia in sordina, ammiccante, ed esplode in un fuoco d'artificio.

È il testamento dei Matching Mole, sodalizio sfortunato ma prodigo di idee, fatalmente relegato in una nicchia dorata. Quando la malinconia reclama il suo spazio e vuole immergere nel suo inchiostro blu, il vecchio vinile freme sotto la puntina, scricchiola, fruscia, soffre, sfrigola una nenia a cui ci abbandoniamo senza difese.

" *I love you still Caroline...*"

"Robert Wyatt - Così Lontano, così vicino... " in the same issue

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Robert Wyatt - Così Lontano, così vicino... - Late For The Sky - numero 50 - Gennaio 2001



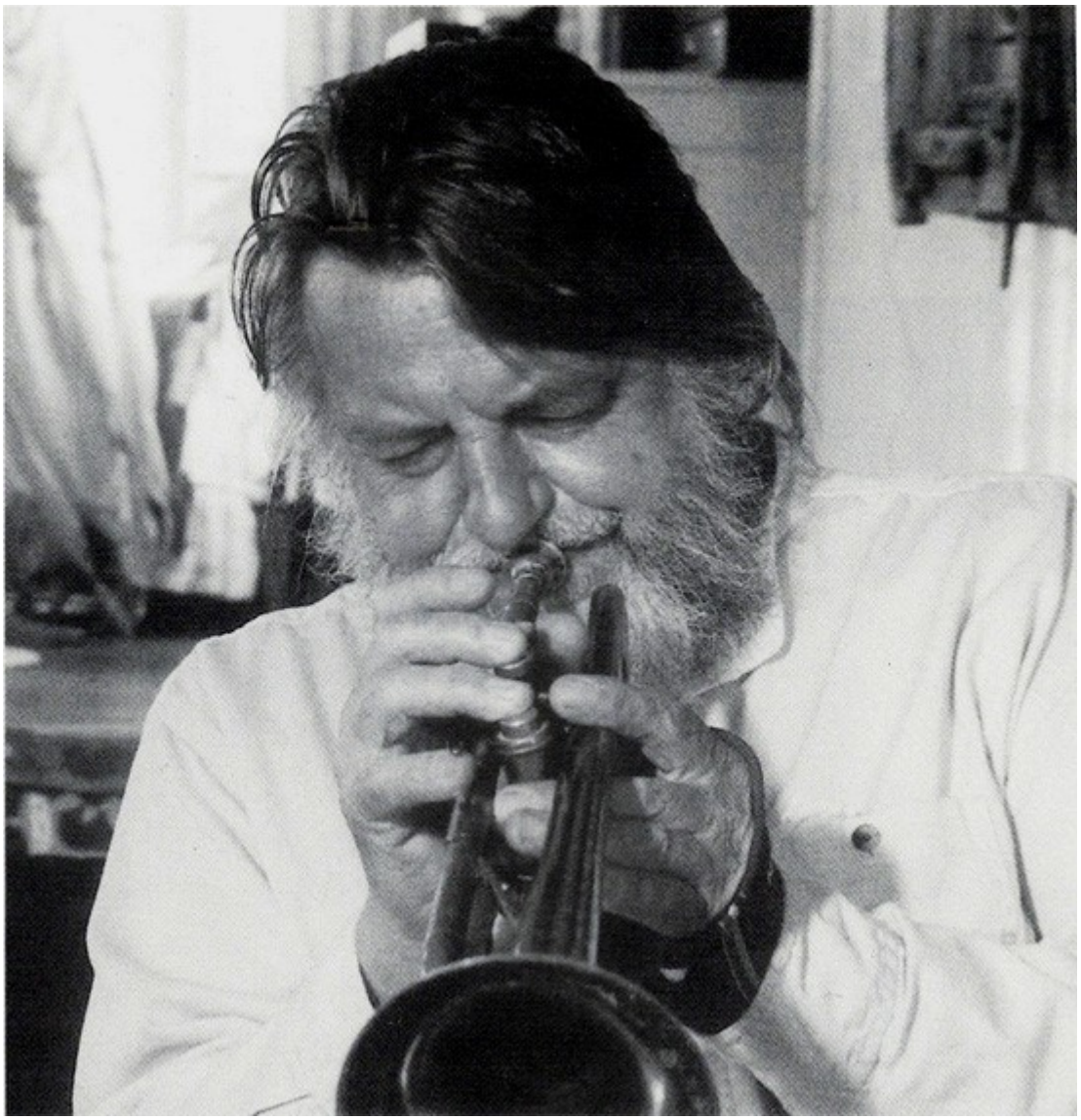
ROBERT WYATT

Così Lontano, così vicino...

Di Marco Tagliabue

Esistono emozioni tali che, per il modo che hanno di interagire con la tua sensibilità, di toccare le corde più riposte del tuo io, ti avvisano in maniera chiara e ineccepibile, fin dal primo momento, che non ti abbandoneranno mai più per il resto della tua esistenza. Capita assai di rado, è vero, ma capita. Robert Wyatt entrò nella mia vita nella torrida estate di una Milano di tanti anni fa. Avevo appena tolto il cellophane da **Third** dei Soft Machine e mi apprestavo a passare una notte in loro compagnia: l'indomani avrei dovuto partire di buon mattino e per un pugno di ore non era certo il caso di mettersi a dormire... Nel silenzio irreale della notte, dove ogni cosa giunge misteriosa e ovattata, **Moon In June** fu l'astronave che mi condusse in uno strepitoso viaggio nei luoghi oscuri della mia coscienza, attraverso infinite pazze traiettorie che dal buio della mia camera puntavano diritto alla scia luminosa di qualche sperduta via lattea. Quella voce e quella musica, con forza maggiore di una testata contro il muro, avrebbero contribuito in maniera netta a cambiare per sempre i miei connotati. La voce di Robert, quel filo di fiato esile e struggente capace di assottigliarsi senza perdere mai il suo vigore, messaggero di infinita tristezza e melanconia, è invero capace di donarti una serenità che non è di questo mondo; la sua musica, così spesso scarna ed essenziale, e quell'organetto, metà strumento e metà giocattolo, dal quale nascono tutte le sue canzoni, bastano a farti capire che, anche oggi, non c'è bisogno di altro per fare grande la musica.

E se per un attimo riuscirete a liberare la vostra mente da post-rock e drum'n'bass, jungle e trip-hop, exotica e techno-lounge..., a sottrarre una manciata di minuti all'affannosa ricerca dell'ultimo imperdibile album del mese, ad accantonare i dischi dell'anno e i capolavori di un minuto, sarete pronti per ripercorrere, una volta ancora, l'avventura musicale e umana di Robert Wyatt, l'esule che è impossibile non amare perché è, a suo modo, il più grande di tutti. Nella metà degli anni '60 Canterbury era ancora, semplicemente, Canterbury, tranquilla cittadina inglese famosa, tutt'al più, per le amene novelle di Geoffrey Chaucer; Robert, nativo di Bristol, vi si era trasferito all'età di dieci anni per studiare piano, violino, tromba e batteria prima di venire investito, come tanti in quel periodo, dall'irrefrenabile uragano della musica pop. I Wilde Flowers, attivi dal 1964 al 1966, vedono accanto a Wyatt l'amico di sempre Hugh Hopper. Il gruppo non consegnerà alla sua epoca nessuna testimonianza musicale diretta (la raccolta **Tales Of Canterbury: The Wilde Flowers** verrà assemblata solo molti anni più tardi, nel 1998, dalla benemerita Voiceprint) ma la sua importanza sarà enorme: autentica fucina della futura scena di Canterbury darà origine, oltre ai Soft Machine, ai Caravan e agli Hatfield And The North.



La magnifica avventura dei Soft Machine (e mi si perdoni la presunzione di considerare tali solo quelli con Robert Wyatt in formazione) fu contrassegnata da quattro album costantemente in anticipo sul loro tempo, cui toccarono inevitabilmente in sorte il favore della critica e l'indifferenza del pubblico. Dagli esordi con David Allen e Jimi Hendrix ospite alla chitarra solista nel battesimo a 45 giri, **Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'/Love Makes Sweet Music** del 1967, il gruppo, dopo aver perso per strada il futuro Gong, giunge l'anno successivo all'album di debutto con una formazione a tre elementi che contempla Mike Ratledge alle tastiere, Kevin Ayers voce/basso e Robert Wyatt alla batteria. **Volume One** e il suo seguito del 1969, **Volume Two**, con Ayers rimpiazzato da Hugh Hopper per quella che sarà la formazione definitiva del gruppo, sono due splendidi esempi di musica psichedelica/progressiva con contaminazioni jazzistiche in equilibrio fragile ma ancora perfetto. **Third**, del 1970, segna un avvicinamento a composizioni di più ampio respiro, con le sue quattro facciate occupate da una suite ciascuna a firma di un solo membro della band, e, nello stesso tempo, prelude a una decisa virata verso atmosfere più marcatamente jazz-rock, tanto che l'album, da molti considerato il capolavoro del gruppo, viene spesso indicato come una sorta di controaltare inglese al Miles Davis di **Bitche Brew**. **Third** è altresì purtroppo preludio alla disgregazione del con: plesso: Robert Wyatt, che già aveva faticato a far digerire la sua **Moon In June** a Mike Ratledge, verrà di lì a poco letteralmente estromesso dalla band per mano del suo nuove aspirante timoniere, che gli concederà solamente -bontà sua- un ruolo da session man di lusso nella successiva prova discografica dei Soft Machine, **Fourth** del 1971, l'ultima con Robert in formazione. Fra i due album intanto, a sancire l'ormai definitivo allontanamento dal gruppo, Wyatt trova il tempo di tenere a battesimo il suo esordio solista, **The End Of An Ear** del 1971. Approfittando della fiducia in lui riposta dalla CBS, che gli aveva lasciato piena libertà di movimento presagendo un'opera in stile **Moon In June**, Robert stravolge completamente le regole del

gioco, realizzando il suo disco più ostico e coraggioso, un album il quale, oltre che ascoltare, è perfino difficile tentare di definire o di inquadrare.

La fine di un orecchio, ovvero di un modo di concepire e ascoltare la musica, è quello che viene necessariamente richiesto, o meglio imposto, a chi giunge al cospetto di questa prova: risentito oggi, a quasi trent'anni di distanza, **The End Of An Ear** suscita forse sensazioni addomesticate rispetto a quelle selvaticissime prodotte dai primi ascolti (tutto questo tempo sarà pure servito a qualche cosa!), ma conserva ancora intatta la sua veemente carica rivoluzionaria. Provate ad ascoltare ad esempio **Las Vegas Tango**, posta in apertura e ripresa in chiusura del disco, con le sue allucinate sovrapposizioni vocali, o il proto-free-jazz di brani quali **To Saintly Bridget, To Mark Everywhere** o **To The Old World**, o ancora le tastiere dissonanti di **To Caravan And Brother Jim** e **To Carla, Marsha And Caroline**. **The End Of An Ear** è insomma al tempo stesso punto di partenza e punto di non ritorno: chiuso un capitolo, toltisi tutti i sassolini dalle scarpe, Wyatt si sarebbe rimesso in gioco, si sarebbe rituffato nella mischia: la morte annunciata dal titolo lo avrebbe condotto, per sua e nostra fortuna, a una e più mirabolanti reincarnazioni.

La prima delle quali sono i Matching Mole, con David Sinclair alle tastiere. Phil Miller alla chitarra e Bill Mac Cormick al basso, gruppo che. nelle intenzioni di Wyatt, doveva rappresentare una sorta di continuità, magari solo in senso ironico, con l'esperienza precedente (la pronuncia inglese di Matching Mole ha una dizione simile a Machine Molle, traduzione francese di Soft Machine). La loro avventura (che ci ha raccontato Francesco Caltagirone nelle pagine che precedono) dura solo lo spazio di due album usciti a pochi mesi di distanza fra loro nel 1972, ma la loro eredità e la loro ramificazione nell'albero genealogico di Canterbury sono, al solito, di prim'ordine. Archiviato forse troppo repentinamente, il progetto Matching Mole sta per essere riesumato quando, durante un party evidentemente troppo psichedelico. Robert decide di scendere dal terzo piano senza usare le scale, rimediando uno spaventoso volo e diverse lesioni alla spina dorsale che lo avrebbero relegato per sempre su una sedia a rotelle. Era la primavera del 1973.

*" Tutta la gente che ho incontrato pensa che il mio incidente sia stato la più grossa tragedia che mi potesse succedere. In realtà da quando sono uscito dall'ospedale ho sposato Alfie e ho realizzato **Rock Bottom**, da lì è cominciato il periodo più felice della mia vita: improvvisamente, da quel momento, tutto è diventato semplice e chiaro".*

La leggenda vorrebbe **Rock Bottom** (1974) concepito dal musicista durante i sei mesi di convalescenza, attorniato dalle amorose cure di Alfreda Benge, la compagna di una vita, e da un manipolo di amici fidati fra cui Nick Mason, Mike Oldfield, Fred Frith, Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair... in realtà, come più volte affermato dallo stesso Wyatt, la stesura del futuro capolavoro, che nel progetto originale avrebbe dovuto costituire il terzo album dei Matching Mole, iniziò prima dell'incidente, anche se, inopinabilmente, assunse la sua forma e il suo contenuto definitivo durante la lunga degenza in ospedale. Storia o leggenda, quella che ci rimane è una delle opere capitali del nostro tempo, un disco che, fin dallo splendido acquerello di copertina, celebra la vita in tutti i suoi aspetti più profondi, trasformando in positivo tutto ciò che essa sembra esprimere in negativo. E poco importa che il miracolo si compia attraverso sei brani di malinconia infinita: ciò che deve risultare chiaro è che in essi non vi è la minima traccia di arrendevolezza o di disperazione: solo una grande, grandissima forza interiore che giunge incompromessa fino all'ascoltatore. Si prenda a esempio **Sea Song**, manifesto del disco e, se mi consentite, dell'arte di Wyatt tutta. Si ascolti Robert sussurrare una delle melodie più struggenti che siano mai state messe in musica, con un basso e un manipolo di tastiere e percussioni a fare da soave contrappunto alla magia della sua voce: impossibile rimanere insensibili al fascino di questa canzone, impossibile non scoprire un brivido nuovo a ogni nuovo ascolto. **Rock Bottom** rappresenta, insomma, una delle icone della nostra musica e se, come presumibile, lo avete già in bella mostra nella vostra discoteca, non dimenticate di tenerne una copia nella cassetta del pronto soccorso: di fronte al senso di svuotamento cui ci condanna la vita del nostro tempo qualche minuto di pelle d'oca è sempre medicina assai efficace. Solo un anno dopo, nel 1975, fa la sua comparsa nei negozi il nuovo lavoro di Robert Wyatt.



Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard deve innanzi tutto fare i conti con la pesante eredità del capitolo precedente: bissare un capolavoro è responsabilità che può condurre alla resa delle armi e Wyatt, persona intelligente, non ci prova nemmeno. Opera frammentaria, corale, sulla quale pesa un senso di transitorietà e incompletezza, l'album inanella comunque tracce di prim'ordine quali **Team Spirit**, scritta con Phil Manzanera e Bill Mac Cormick, e la lunga suite che comprende i tre episodi di **Muddy Mouse/Muddy Mouth**, in collaborazione con Fred Frith, intervallati dalle digressioni jazzistiche di **Solar Flares** e **Five Black Notes And One White Note**.

Dopo **Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard** per avere fra le mani un nuovo album ufficiale di Robert Wyatt bisognerà attendere fino al 1986. Undici anni inframmezzati da un cambio di etichetta (Wyatt lascerà la Virgin, che aveva pubblicato i due dischi del dopo Matching Mole per passare alla Rough Trade), da una pigrizia di fondo, non disgiunta da problemi di ordine più materiale, che indirizza l'artista sui formati più facilmente realizzabili e vendibili del 45 giri e dell'EP (le numerose pubblicazioni di quegli anni verranno raccolte in **Nothing Can Stop Us** nel 1981, **Robert Wyatt 1982/1984** nel 1984 e, più recentemente nel 1999, nel box **EP's By Robert Wyatt**) t da un impegno politico sempre più profondo culminato, nei primi anni '80, con l'iscrizione al partito comunista britannico,

Old Rottenhat, l'album che segna il ritorno al formato più esteso, è il lavoro più apertamente politico di Wyatt. Scarno e minimale nelle musiche (Robert fa quasi tutto da solo alle tastiere), il disco concede poco alla melodia (con la sola splendida eccezione del singolo **The Age Of Self**) e ancora meno alla diplomazia: feroci gli attacchi all'imperialismo americano (**The United States Of Amnesia**), alla borghesia capitalista (**Alliance** "*Penso che la cosa che più ti spaventa di ogni altra/sia il sapere che hai bisogno dei lavoratori più di quanto*

DISCOGRAFIA ESSENZIALE

Con i Wilde Flowers:
- Tales Of Canterbury: The Wilde Flowers (antologia, Voiceprint 1998 LP)

Con i Soft Machine:
- Volume One (Probe 1968 LP)
- Volume Two (Probe 1969 LP)
- Third (CBS 1970 LP)
- Fourth (CBS 1971 LP)

loro abbiano bisogno di te"), agli ultimi scampoli di guerra fredda (**East Timor**), alla società dei consumi (**The Age Of Self**), alle manipolazioni degli organi di informazione **(Mass Medium**).

Old Rottenhat, boccone di non certo facile digestione, rimane comunque una tappa fondamentale nel percorso di Robert Wyatt: di lì a poco il crollo del muro di Berlino (al 1989 risale anche l'uscita dal partito comunista, in disaccordo con le linee più morbide adottate della nuova classe dirigente per garantirne una snaturata sopravvivenza) avrebbe accentuato il carattere di mosca bianca dell'artista, orgoglioso di continuare a professarsi socialista in mezzo alla sepoltura di tante ideologie, contribuendo al suo progressivo isolamento artistico e umano. Sono cinque anni di buio assoluto quelli che preludono a **Dondestan** (1991), l'album del ritorno in grande stile di un artista della cui esistenza i più si erano ormai dimenticati. **Dondestan** (Dove sono) è un album dedicato a un generale concetto di "dissolvenza", relativo a ideologie, persone o cose che, improvvisamente, scompaiono senza lasciare traccia di una storia, la loro, che magari era perfettamente radicata nella realtà da decenni o secoli. Il lavoro, che si avvale del contributo della moglie Alfie per buona parte delle liriche, è forse quello che, per le atmosfere intimiste e la forza poetica, si collega più direttamente al mitico **Rock Bottom** di tanti anni prima; Robert, ancora una volta, suona quasi tutto da solo, batteria compresa, eccezion fatta per il basso del vecchio amico Hugh Hopper in **Lisp Service**. Tutto il disco viaggia su livelli di assoluta eccellenza, in alcuni casi (**Catholic Architecture, Worship, Left On Man, Sight Of The Wind**) sfiora addirittura la perfezione. I testi pescano ancora molto nel sociale (**GB Jeebies** è una polemica missiva a ciò che rimane del partito comunista britannico, **Dondestan** uno swingante tributo ai desaparecidos di tutte le parti del mondo) ma l'impeto delle esperienze precedenti viene stemperato dalla poesia di Alfie che scandaglia anche la meno frequentata sfera più intima ed emozionale.

Con i Matching Mole:
- Matching Mole (CBS 1972 LP)
- Little Red Record (CBS 1972 LP)

Robert Wyatt:
- The End Of An Ear (CBS 1970 LP)
- Rock Bottoni (Virgin 1974 LP)
- Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Virgin 1975 LP)
- Nothing Can Stop Us (raccolta di brani apparsi su singoli ed EP, Rough Trade 1981 LP)
- 1982/1984 (raccolta di brani apparsi su singoli ed EP, Rough Trade 1984 LP)
- Old Rottenhat (Rough Trade 1985 LP)
- Dondestan (Rough Trade 1991 LP/CD)
- A Short Break (Voiceprint 1992 EP)
- Floatsam Jetsam (antologia con inediti e rarità, Rough Trade 1995 CD)
- Shleep (Rykodisk 1997 CD)

Altri sei anni, intervallati dallo scarno e casalingo EP **A Short Break** (1992) e dalle rarità raccolte lungo tutta la parabola artistica di Wyatt in **Floatsam Jetsam** (1995), per giungere a **Shleep** (1997), l'ultimo magnifico appuntamento che il suo genio ci ha, al momento, riservato. Dolcemente cullato fra le candide ali di una colomba, nel bel mezzo di un soave sonno liberatore, Robert sembra invitarci dalla copertina a seguirlo nel girovagare senza meta dei suoi sogni: le musiche e le melodie che ci accompagneranno sono semplicemente quanto di meglio l'artista abbia prodotto dai tempi di **Rock Bottom**... Saranno con noi in questo viaggio amici vecchi e nuovi quali Hugh Hopper, Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno, Evan Parker, Paul Weller... **Shleep** abbandona completamente l'esasperato intimismo dei lavori precedenti a favore di atmosfere più solari e collettive, finanche l'inesauribile vena di malinconia sembra stemperata nella dolce rilassatezza che solo la dimensione onirica può dare: una brezza pungente e liberatoria che accarezza anche i testi, mai come ora disgiunti dalla realtà che attende inesorabilmente al risveglio. Dall'iniziale **Heaps Of Sheeps**, farcita di diavolerie *Enotroniche*, all'epilogo strumentale di **Whole Point Of No Return** una mirabile summa delle musiche wyattiane per un pugno di canzoni al di fuori e al di sopra del tempo: scampoli di jazz, blues, soul, progressive, musica latina e perfino rap, quel rap che aveva del resto già inventato Bob Dylan fin dai tempi di Highway 61 (**Blues In Bob Minor**); in mezzo alcune delle sue più belle canzoni di sempre: **Maryan, Was A Friend, Sunday In Madrid** e, su tutte, **Free Will And Testament**, ballata morbida e sublime. Dal suo bucolico esilio in patria, vicino a gente che non lo conosce e lo considera semplicemente un vecchio paraplegico, Robert passa le giornate a cercar di dar scacco matto ai propri ricordi, cullato dalle orchestrine jazz dei suoi calzoni corti: scarsi i segnali che giungono dal nostro mondo, qualche CD inviato dagli amici, pochi giornali e ancora meno TV. Chi lo ama è ormai abituato a questi lunghi silenzi, a questi anni di attesa prima che qualcosa o qualcuno rimetta in moto il meccanismo: sappiamo bene che ogni disco potrebbe essere l'ultimo e che, presto o tardi, la sua indomita ricerca dell'assoluto lo condurrà al suono perfetto e definitivo: il silenzio. Sono sicuro comunque che questo momento è ancora al di là da venire, ma quando mi assale lo sconforto, e ogni tanto succede, torno un attimo con i miei pensieri a quella magica notte di tanti anni fa, riprendo

coraggio e mi precipito, come ogni giorno, a scrutare fiducioso l'orizzonte...

VIAGGIO NEL LINCOLNSHIRE

Non so esattamente cosa dire. Ho l'impressione di metabolizzare le cose importanti della mia vita solo dopo che è passato molto tempo. Robert è un personaggio straordinario, tanto quanto sua moglie Alfie, questo è certo; come è fuori dall'ordinario trovarsi in casa loro a girare un video, quello di *Goccia,* brano in cui Robert ha inserito la sua intensità in modo spettacolare. Ci eravamo già incontrati nel 1997, al Salone della Musica di Torino, e allora non avrei mai immaginato che gli eventi mi avrebbero portato sin qui. Di lui conoscevo l'assoluta imprendibilità, questa sfuggevole mancanza di solidità in musica.



La musica eterea, impalpabile eppure così presente, esattamente ciò che è lui in carne ed ossa: leggero e presente. Siamo in sette. Io, Gigliola (costumista), Silvia (truccatrice), Elena (Mescal) Roberta (produzione), Francesco e Carlo (registi). Francesco Di Loreto e Carlo Bevilacqua (i due registi) conoscono molto bene Wyatt. Sono loro che hanno girato "Little Red Robin Hood", un meraviglioso documentario del 1998 a lui dedicato, quindi sanno anche che a Robert non piace molto essere ripreso. Io spero solo che la nostra presenza non risulti troppo pesante per un'entità così fragile. Ci rechiamo alla "dimora del mare", quella dove vanno Alfie e Robert di tanto in tanto, alternando un piccolo paesino tranquillo come Louth alla meravigliosa atmosfera marittima, per certi versi più elettrica. Abbiamo passato un giorno intero da loro senza mai sentirci a disagio, anche se quel giorno ero quasi tentata di trattenere il respiro per non disturbare. Lì abbiamo girato parte del video. È un'atmosfera davvero fiabesca. Siamo in una casetta di legno, nera fuori, coloratissima dentro; c'è un giardino tutt'intorno e il suono, solo il suono del mare che si infrange contro scogli che non vediamo. Non si vede il mare, perché il terreno a un certo punto si alza e fa una piccola montagnetta proprio davanti alla casa. Però si fa sentire, il mare della costa: piano piano si sta mangiando la terra. Una casetta di legno, dicevo, dipinta di nero (forse per trattenere il calore). Dentro bianca e gialla con tanti piccoli oggetti da studiare. " *Un giorno sono entrati i ladri"* racconta Alfie *"ma non hanno portato via nulla. Sono tutte cose di pochissimo valore".* Per fortuna la grazia non si misura con il denaro. Robert ama conversare e raccontare, come ama profondamente Alfie e il suo ruolo di madre e amante. Nonostante sia fine giugno fa un gran freddo. *"Su questa costa volano uccelli che vengono dalla Russia"* mi dice Robert e questo particolare mi fa salire un brivido lungo la schiena. Il raffreddore che a volte mi coglie ci fa interrompere le riprese, ma tra una tisana alla propoli di Alfie e qualche battuta riusciamo ad avere materiale sufficiente per il video.
Il sorriso di Robert è un sorriso autentico che si allarga fino a raggiungere gli

occhi azzurri; sta lì fuori casa a salutarci con Alfie, come quando siamo arrivati e non ci sono davvero parole per ringraziare.

Cristina Donà

...A PROPOSITO DEL LAVORO SVOLTO IN "GOCCIA"

Quattro fasi: facile, difficile, facile e difficile.

1) Facile: ascolto la canzone di Cristina notte e giorno, sobrio e ubriaco, sino a saturarmi, sinchè non mi riempie e riconosco ogni momento anche prima che arrivi.

2) Difficile: col piano + cornetta tiro giù le parti tecniche (gli accordi, la chiave, la "mappa" delle parole), il pattern di batteria, etc etc.

3) Facile: semplicemente improvviso durante l'ascolto utilizzando la voce, le tastiere, la cornetta. Questo per delle ore. Per qualche giorno. Anche qualche notte.

4) Difficile: Mi scrivo delle idee musicali che vengono da questo lavoro e poi le riduco a un minimo che ritengo efficace. Dopo questo processo cerco semplicemente di creare - ri-creare un'atmosfera di trance in studio.

Robert Wyatt

"Matching Mole - Il viaggo sotterraneo delle talpe in armi" in the same issue

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Little Red Robin Hood - Blow Up - N°9 - Gennaio/Febbraio 1999

LITTLE RED ROBIN HOOD

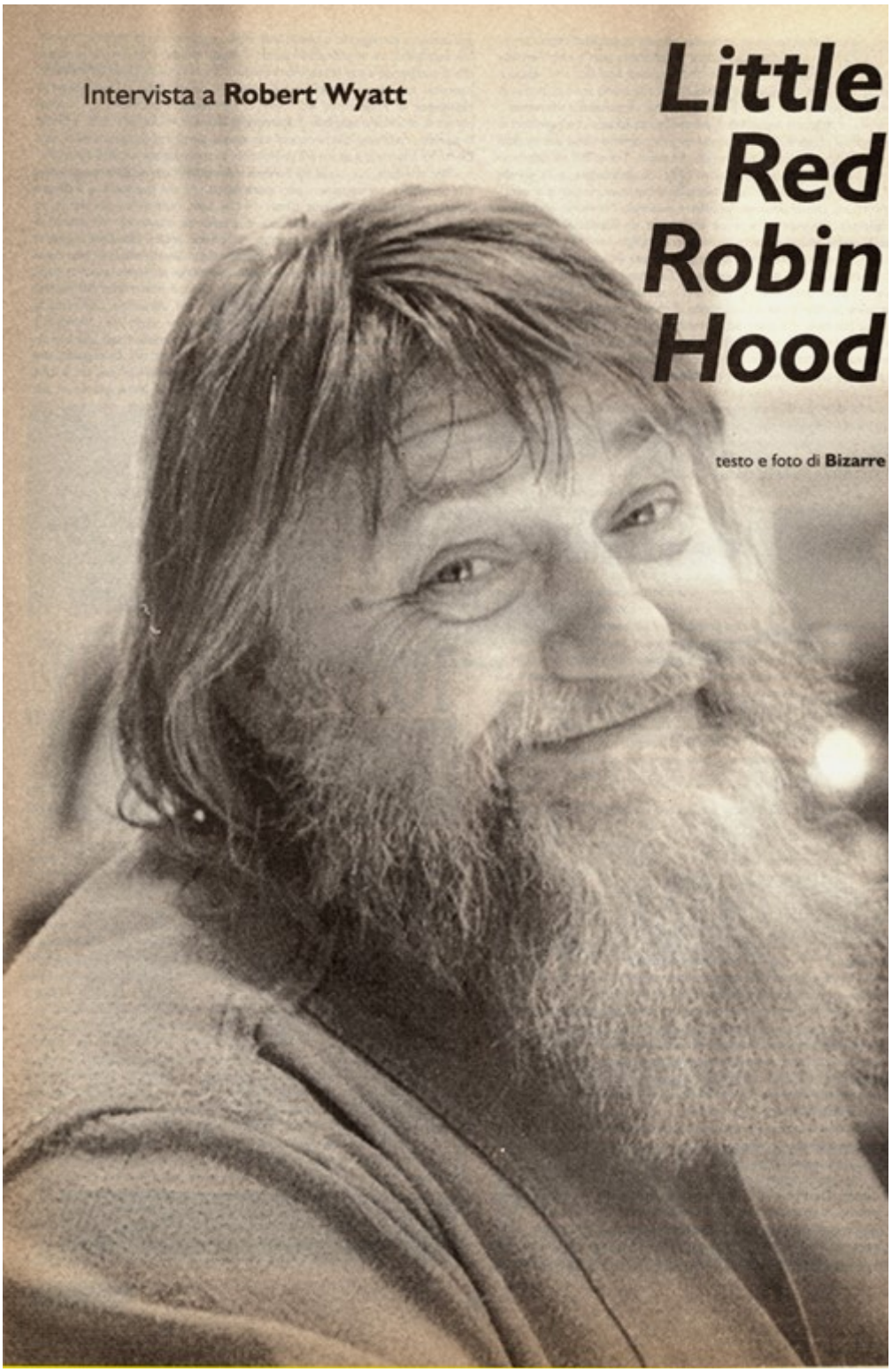


Un'intervista con Robert Wyatt, uno dei miti della mia gioventù?
Un grande onore, certo; ma quanto ardua potrà essere l'impresa, quanto peso avranno i condizionamenti dettati dagli inevitabili timori reverenziali?
Bene: a conti fatti, è stata un'esperienza non solo particolarmente interessante, ma tra le più gradevoli che mi siano mai capitate nella mia modesta carriera giornalistica. Merito di uno dei personaggi più umani, calorosi e mentalmente aperti dell'intero panorama musicale di oggi.

Robert Wyatt mi ha cambiato la vita. Non avevo ancora diciott'anni quando acquistai, senza sapere esattamente cosa mi aspettava, una ristampa dei primi due album dei **Soft Machine**. Dopo aver messo sul piatto il primo disco, e aver sentito il primo gemito di Wyatt su *Hope For Happiness*, capii che qualcosa era scattato. È un'esperienza sicuramente comune a tante persone che hanno un rapporto particolare con la musica, e ad altri sarà successo grazie ad un assolo di Miles Davis piuttosto che un riff dei Clash o un pattern di Derrick May; ma non ha importanza. Quel che conta è la sensazione di quei momenti, e non ce ne sono tanti, in cui ti arriva un marchio decisivo ad incidere la tua sensibilità, che senti essere indelebile e col quale dovrai fare i conti, e non solo come fruitore di musica, per il resto della tua esistenza.

Robert Wyatt mi ha cambiato la vita, e quando l'ho visto dal vero la prima volta, l'anno scorso al Salone della Musica di Torino, mentre si spostava sulla sua carrozzella in uno dei lunghi corridoi del Lingotto, non ho potuto fare a meno di dirglielo. Pur consapevole della sparata di adulazione retorica alla quale mi esponevo, l'ho voluto fare lo stesso, visto che per me non era altro che una verità vera. Beh, sapete cosa mi ha risposto? Con un sorriso

di un candore disarmante mi ha detto: "*Oh mio Dio, spero di avertela cambiata in meglio, vista la responsabilità!...*"



Ora sono le 17 del 9 Ottobre 1998 e il signor Robert Wyatt è proprio qui, davanti a me. Sulla poltroncina accanto alla mia c'è **Cristina Dona**: tra i due da tempo si è instaurato un feeling e un rispetto reciproco che già la dicono lunga sulla disponibilità e l'apertura mentale di Robert. Infatti, la sua naturale dimensione di uomo semplice e sincero ci mette davvero pochissimo a farmi perdere gli ovvi timori iniziali. Eppure non posso fare a meno di pensare di avere di fronte uno degli autori più importanti e rappresentativi del secolo...

Robert, ti capita mai di pensare di essere considerato un'icona? Non una rockstar, naturalmente, ma in qualche modo un personaggio di culto...

Assolutamente no, davvero! Sarebbe un'idea disastrosa... Ho vissuto una vita ridicola, faccio appena quello che so fare, e guadagno quanto basta per nutrire me e mia moglie... Tutto qua... Non ho proprio idea... Insomma mi sembra un'idea pazzesca, credo che nessuno dovrebbe "usarmi" come modello...

Beh, certo non corriamo il rischio di trovare i posters di Robert Wyatt nei negozi di dischi, e forse questo è un bene, perché significa che chi si avvicina a te lo fa perché ti conosce davvero...

Beh sai, non sono uno che va molto in giro, anche nel posto dove vivo la maggior parte della gente non sa nemmeno cosa faccio. A dire il vero credo che nella cittadina in cui vivo i più pensino che sono un derelitto che sta in strada a fumarsi sigarette... Non ascolto molto la radio, non leggo giornali musicali, quindi non ho molto idea di quello che succede... A volte è perfino imbarazzante, è come se tu ricevessi notizie da un tuo amico, che parla di te, ma in realtà sta scritto su un giornale! Capisci?...

Però è un dato di fatto che molti autori delle ultime generazioni ti citano più o meno apertamente come influenza, nel cosiddetto post rock ad esempio...

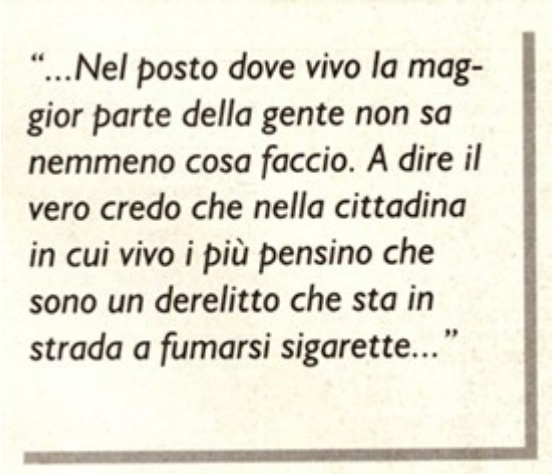
Beh, devo dirti che personalmente mi rendo conto che sono ancora un fan della stessa musica che ascoltavo quand'ero giovane; i miei "eroi" musicali adesso hanno sessanta, settanta, ottant'anni addirittura, e sono tutti musicisti jazz. Quindi in realtà mi sento ancora come un teenager che impara cose da queste persone, non riesco proprio a vedermi in un ruolo rovesciato. Perfino ora quando mi guardo allo specchio e vedo il mio barbone è uno choc, mi dico "Oddio, un vecchio! Sembra molto saggio per di più!" Ah, ah!
Ma dentro mi sento un vero adolescente. Quindi l'idea che io possa rivestire un ruolo diverso... Non dico che sia giusta o sbagliata, semplicemente io non riesco a calarmici.

Ma quando un gruppo come gli Ultramarine ti chiede di collaborare al loro disco, cosa pensi?

Ho pensato "Mio Dio, sono persino più giovani di mio figlio!". È la verità, è stata la prima volta che ho lavorato con persone così giovani, ed è stata una sensazione curiosa.

E com'è andata?

Oh, molto bene, molto bene... Ero molto impressionato dal fatto che volessero lavorare con un altro musicista senza badare all'età, perché a volte sei un po' prigioniero della tua età e della tua generazione. La musica per fortuna non è così, talvolta almeno trascende i gap generazionali.
Però insomma, non è che su questo argomento ci abbia pensato davvero, non voglio che pensi che adotti una vista sociologica sul rock o cose di questo genere... Non mi aspetto di far parte di alcunché, anzi penso che ogni generazione riesca in modo naturale ad inventare i propri codici, i propri linguaggi, il taglio di capelli... Quindi in conclusione non cerco di trovare la chiave dì lettura di ogni generazione, e non mi aspetto che loro siano interessati alla mia; a volte succede, bene, ma non credo si debba forzare nulla. È come quando da ragazzo stai ascoltando un disco ed entra in camera tuo padre e dice "Perbacco, che ritmo, questo sì che è un bel disco!..." Allo stesso modo sarebbe disgustoso che frequentassi come niente fosse persone molto giovani!



Beh, anch'io ho ben presente il problema di dover parlare di musica e dischi il cui pubblico ha dieci o quindici anni meno di me... A volte si ha l'illusoria pretesa di capire come si sentono queste persone, ma se non sei dentro lo stesso ambiente è molto difficile...

Certo, questo mi fa pensare a come ci siano tempi specifici per ogni cosa. Ad esempio nei tardi anni '70 qualcuno mi chiese cosa pensavo di Paul Weller, e io dissi, mi piace, lo rispetto moltissimo, ma, come dire, a distanza: lui ha la sua propria costituzione, un diverso background, eccetera. Ora, vent'anni più tardi, lui è considerato rock "da genitori", io addirittura "da nonni", e più o meno stiamo assieme nel cestino dei rifiuti... Certo non mi sento obbligato a seguire quello che c'è di nuovo per il pubblico giovane; ma mi sta benissimo che ogni settimana trovino un fantastico nuovo gruppo!..

Beh, la stampa inglese ha un po' il vizio di trovare un gruppo "fantastico" ogni settimana...

Ma magari esiste davvero! Voglio dire, sono sicuro che ci sono davvero molti nuovi gruppi fantastici, spesso quando li ascolto sembrano davvero fantastici, ma non per quello sento di dover entusiasmarmi obbligatoriamente. Certo che se c'è un'occasione per partecipare non mi tiro indietro, anzi ne sono felice.

Quando dici di sentirti giovane quanto trent'anni fa, è solo un'attitudine mentale o cos'altro?

È qualcosa di più, sono proprio le immagini nella mia testa, fondamentalmente immagini romantiche, che provengono da un tempo in cui i "teenagers" non esistevano. I teenagers furono inventati penso nel 1953, prima non esistevano, c'erano gli adulti e c'erano i bambini, e le persone nel mezzo erano seriamente imbarazzate. Quella è l'era da cui provengo, non c'era una tribù specifica per i teenagers...

Poi scoprirono che c'era mercato per i teenagers e li inventarono...

Giusto, li fecero diventare un investimento! Ma io provengo da un periodo anteriore, quando non c'erano, per cui in un certo senso sono scollegato da chi è più giovane di me di almeno dieci anni, sono cresciuto in un mondo culturalmente molto diverso. Ad esempio ics non ho la stessa "lealtà" che hanno certi giovani per le epopee della loro generazione, l'epopea rock e Bruce Sprìngsteen, o Bob Marley in Giamaica, Johnny Rotten in Inghilterra e così via. Non ho particolari legami con la generazione rock, in parte perché il legame che la mia musica ha col rock è piuttosto lasco, e poi perché io personalmente mi sono trovato vicino a cose che col rock non avevano niente a che vedere...

Questo era vero anche nei primi tempi, all'epoca dei Soft Machine?

Non so, non facevamo molta teoria, non ci parlavamo neanche tanto in realtà, suonavamo e basta, lo ero un po' irritato dagli altri, perché erano più vecchi dì me e avevano fatto

l'università, e in realtà io per loro ero solo il batterista, quello che faceva la scena, come secondo copione...

Quindi ti limitavi fare il batterista?

Assolutamente, e ricorda che il peggior batterista è quello che crede di saper anche comporre melodie per il gruppo...

Perciò hai smesso di suonare la batteria...

Ho smesso perché mi hanno fatto smettere loro!

Però eri anche il cantante!

Sì, ma a loro non piaceva...

No? Che cattivo gusto!

No, anzi gli piaceva sempre di meno col passare del tempo...

Per quello hai lasciato il gruppo?

Ho lasciato il gruppo perché sono stato cacciato dal gruppo. Mi sbatterono la pana in faccia.

(Robert sembra un po' turbato da questo ricordo; c'è un attimo di imbarazzo) Ricordi chi fu a farlo, fu Mike Ratledge?

Fu uno di loro, uno... Penso... Sì, fu lui.

Però hai mantenuto contatto con altri, come Hugh Hopper.

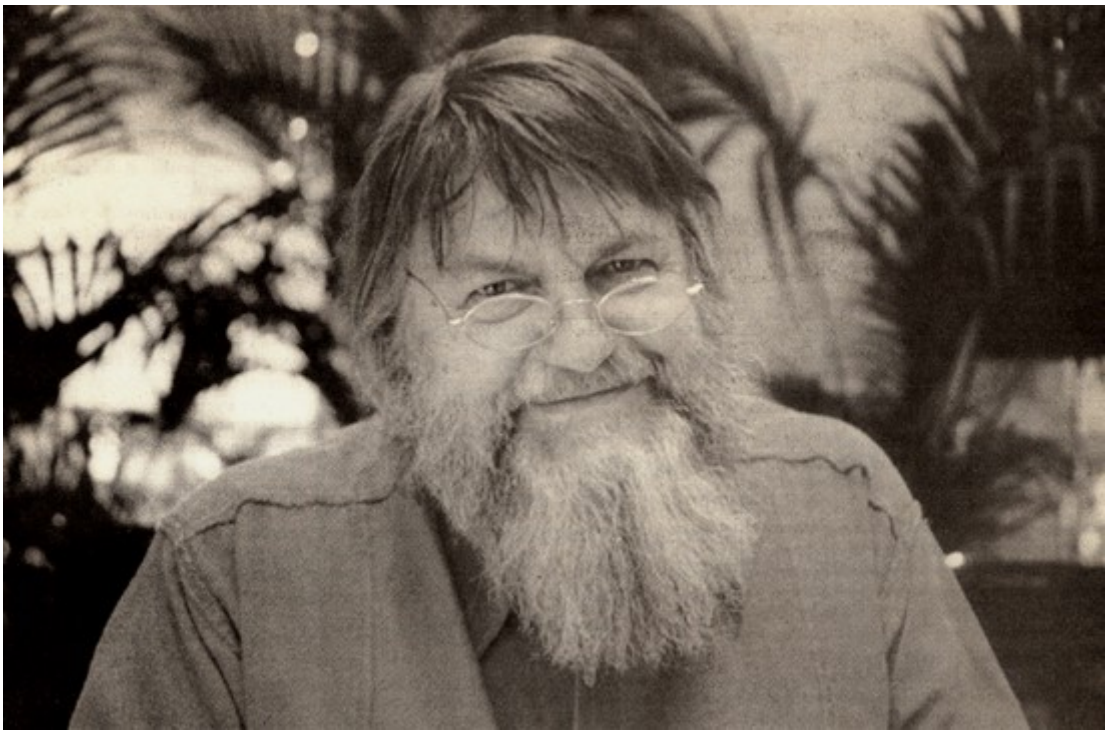
Beh, Hugh lo conosco da quando ho dieci o undici anni, con lui il rapporto si è sviluppato perché successe che in certe canzoni che lui componeva aveva bisogno di un cantante, come in Maryan*, lui non canta malgrado sappia scrivere canzoni bellissime. All'inizio mi sembrava un vero spreco, la prima che scrisse era* Memories*, allora decisi di cantarla, ci misi qualche parola e tutto partì da lì. Tuttavia siamo amici non penso che abbiamo molto in comune, penso che non approvi molto né le mie scelte politiche né il mio abituale consumo di alcool...*

Nel lungo tempo in cui sei stato nel rock business, hai notato un'evoluzione del contesto dai primi tempi ad oggi? Per esempio, ci può essere differenza tra un tour con i Soft Machine negli anni '60 e un tour di una rock band odierna?

Beh, è difficile risponderti visto che è da tempo che non vado più in tour, e non faccio più concerti. Ormai sono diventato completamente casalingo, non ho quasi più vita pubblica. Se vuoi per me quindi è cambiato completamente da quand'ero batterista, un mestiere che è ancora più atletico e teatrale di altri, sul palco.

In realtà vorrei sapere se pensi che ci sia una diversa attitudine, una diversa pressione su una band degli anni '90 rispetto a una degli anni '60.

Non saprei, davvero non credo di essere la persona più adatta a cui fare questa domanda... Chiedi a Cristina! Anche se temo non possa saperne molto sulla prima parte... (risate, naturalmente...)



Ok, cambiamo argomento, allora. Che mi dici del tuo impegno politico, in quale modo si collega con il contenuto musicale delle tue canzoni?

All'origine di tutto ci fu il fatto che la musica che mi ispirava era black music. Contemporaneamente notavo che al di fuori della musica i neri avevano uno status molto basso, nel mondo. Se segui da vicino il jazz e la storia della musica noterai qualcosa di molto commovente in ciò, perché anche se i musicisti neri americani non sono interessati alla politica, quello che fanno rappresenta una sorta di trionfo dello spirito sulla schiavitù. Non voglio apparire troppo sentimentale, ma è proprio così, allo stesso modo in cui lo è stato negli ultimi anni con il rap e la cultura hip hop. Attualmente non puoi immaginare la cultura americana senza il contributo della comunità nera, e questo secondo me è un vero e proprio trionfo, allo stesso modo in cui il contributo della comunità ebrea lo è nei confronti dell'olocausto... E quello per me il significato originale della politica, questa affermazione di sopravvivenza.
Ora io non posso dire di scrivere canzoni politiche, quando compongo lo faccio senza teorie preconcette di alcun tipo, sono istintivo, e rimango abbastanza sorpreso da quello che ne viene fuori. Sarebbe ridicolo che scrivessi pensando "Ora applico questa teoria, o quest'altra..." Non succede, in realtà lavoro come un animale...

E quello che ne viene fuori, la tua musica, la chiameresti "jazz"? In realtà è così difficile da classificare...

Beh, questo per me è una fortuna, perché si basa su molte influenze diverse, e siccome io non ho il problema di dover scrivere recensioni... Comunque non penso che si possa chiamare jazz, anche se è certo che non potrebbe esistere senza il jazz, così come il rock non potrebbe esistere senza il rhythm'n'blues. Questo non significa che il rock moderno sia rhythm'n'blues, non lo è, ma non potrebbe essere ciò che è se il rhythm'n'blues non fosse esistito prima.

Riguardo alla musica nera... Pensi che anche oggi possa avere una specie di ruolo predominante nella cultura musicale?

Potrebbe averlo, in effetti, anche se, e qui devo di nuovo mettere l'accento sulla mia età, i miei eroi musicali, quelli del jazz, suonavano per lo più pezzi strumentali, e spesso composizioni di altri autori americani, come George Gershwin ad esempio. C'era un'alchimia particolare tra questi compositori di origine ebrea e gli esecutori neri e la loro sensibilità, la loro fisicità, ed è questo che mi ha più colpito personalmente, nella mia formazione.

Ora, con il rap, e tutto quello che ne è conseguito, sicuramente sono state raggiunte più

persone, si è mosso un apparato industriale enorme, c'è già stato un certo ricambio... Insomma non è facile dire cosa ciò significhi in termini culturali. Ad esempio se un famoso atleta nero fa uno spot pubblicitario per una marca di calzature sportive, qual è il significato politico, chi è il vincitore? La marca, la gente nera, quelli che venderanno le scarpe?... Con il rap è la stessa cosa... Penso piuttosto che la vera rivoluzione del rap sia stata sul piano della comunicazione, quando per la prima volta ha recuperato le forme verbali veloci e divertenti dei dialetti neri della strada, e li ha portati in musica. Ai tempi della Tamla Motown ad esempio le canzoni erano musicalmente perfette, ma dal punto di vista dei testi si trattava spesso di stronzate... Vacue, senza senso. Il rap, anche quello offensivo, ha dei testi veramente potenti, la sua forza è quella di portare in musica il linguaggio vero della comunità nera.

Sai però che a un certo punto i dischi rap venivano comprati essenzialmente dalla comunità borghese bianca...

Beh, questo è successo molto spesso con la black music, i bianchi se ne sono appropriati e hanno celebrato il genere. Con il blues negli anni '60, ad esempio, c'erano persone come Miles Davis che non riuscivano a capirlo: "Perché ascolti la musica dei miei nonni, non vale niente!", diceva...

In questi ultimi anni c'è stata un'altra cosiddetta rivoluzione musicale, quella della musica elettronica proveniente dai rave della house di Chicago o dalla techno di Detroit...

Mo anche dal dub giamaicano...

O dalla disco music degli anni '70!...

Oh sì, certo!...

Alcuni pensano che la storia dei rave fosse effettivamente rivoluzionaria, visto che per una minoranza era un modo nuovo di esprimersi con una forma musicale nuova, senza testi, con suoni totalmente sintetici...

Beh, prima di tutto va detto che tutta la musica è fatta di suoni sintetici. Che ne so, il piano è totalmente artificiale, non cresce mica sugli alberi... Quindi tutta la polemica sui veri strumenti contro la musica elettronica non ha senso per me, assolutamente Per il resto non mi sento molto qualificato per parlarne, ma una cosa interessante della scena dance è il fatto di mettere il pubblico al centro della scena, senza star, senza performers, con la musica e i dj a comporre lo sfondo... Molto intrigante.

Sai però che certi dj, specialmente in Inghilterra, sono diventati stars a tutti gli effetti.

È vero. Poi succedono altre cose strambe, ho visto recentemente dei dj, in un'intervista televisiva, dichiarare che volevano andare in tour a suonare con veri musicisti: per loro è quella la nuova idea, è incredibile.

"...Beh, prima di tutto va detto che tutta la musica è fatta di suoni sintetici. Che ne so, il piano è totalmente artificiale, non cresce mica sugli alberi... Quindi tutta la polemica sui veri strumenti contro la musica elettronica non ha senso per me, assolutamente."

C'è qualcuno di questi personaggi che conosci e apprezzi, in particolare?

Sì, c'è quel giovane di Bristol, come si chiama... Alfie! (chiama la moglie seduta poco distante, ndi.) *Come si chiama quel tipo della zona di Bristol che abbiamo visto in TV?... Ah sì, Tricky! È un tipo affascinante, sai? Assolutamente...*

D'altronde ho sempre pensato che nel sound di Bristol ci fosse qualcosa che ricordava il Canterbury sound...

Ah mo guarda, io sono nato a Bristol, non a Canterbury! Non sono di Canterbury, sono solo andato a scuola lì, contro i miei desideri... Comunque, quello che dici può esser vero, ma io non sono uno che va a cercarsi le ultime tendenze musicali. Per esempio l'anno scorso, quand'ero qui, ho fatto parecchia promozione, e così ho conosciuto molta gente, soprattutto band italiane, che mi offrivano il loro ed da ascoltare, è anche quando ho sentito la prima volta Cristina cantare.

È stata quella la prima volta che hai preso contatto con i CSI per questo disco tributo?

No, è successo più tardi, dopo che ho ascoltato quella raccolta stupefacente, Matrilineare, con le donne anziane che cantano... Succede che in ambito rock ascolto più volentieri voci femminili che maschili, da Betty Carlton a gente dal taglio più pop come Sinead O'Connor e Bjork. Comunque tutto succede grazie alle persone che mi danno spunto per sentire cose nuove, cosa che faccio sempre volentieri. Quando vado io in un negozio di dischi istintivamente finisco col prendere edizioni su CD di vecchi dischi a 78 giri del 1915 o del 1920... Gracchianti, con voci tipo: (e si mette a cantare un'aria dalla melodia d'altri tempi... ndi.), *li adoro, assieme al vecchio jazz, mi fanno veramente impazzire, c'è la magia dovuta al fatto che sono totalmente andati, fuori dal tempo. Sarà che sto diventando vecchio..*

E la tua casa discografica non ti fa mai pressione?

Non faccio caso a qualsiasi tipo di pressione, e poi ora sono presi per le ristampe del mio vecchio catalogo, cosa che sta impegnando moltissimo Alfie per la modernizzazione delle confezioni per i CD. È più o meno quello il lavoro che farò nel prossimo anno, ho inciso solo due o tre pezzi ultimamente, di cui uno è Del mondo, la canzone dei CSI, più alcune altre collaborazioni.

Cosa ne pensi delle tue vecchie cose, ti ci riconosci ancora, le consiglieresti a qualcuno che non ti conosce?

Quando ripenso agli anni '60, vedo un'altra persona. Qualcun altro, non io, sembra uno strano ragazzo che ho conosciuto tempo fa, non sono io, e non riesco a ricordarlo. Perfino quando riascolto un disco che ho fatto a quei tempi, penso: dove abitavo, cosa mangiavo a colazione, come mi vestivo? Proprio non ricordo me stesso, non ci riesco. Tutto scomparso, finito in un sogno.

Quand'è nato il Robert Wyatt che conosciamo oggi, allora?

Nel 73, 74, non prima. Il mio primo vero disco è Rock Bottom.

E The End Of An Ear?

Mah, forse... No, in realtà non mi ci riconosco veramente, piuttosto il primo album dei **Matching Mole***, anche se quello è un disco di gruppo, non mio. Chiedo scusa agli altri membri del gruppo, ma riesco comunque a "ingoiare" quel disco nel mio mondo dei sogni... Dev'essere quella la prima volta in cui mi riconosco interamente. Con* **End Of An Ear** *non riesco a ricordarmi così "atletico", così veloce, non solo nel drumming, ma in tutta la composizione del disco; anche se per me fu un episodio molto importante, fu il mio primo tentativo di rottura coraggiosa col passato.*

Da lì in poi hai avuto maggiore controllo su quello che facevi?

Sì, anche se in realtà le cose non vengono mai come te le saresti aspettate, su questo sto ancora lavorando oggi. E poi è un piacere vedere gli altri che fanno cose mie, per me è un po' rivivere.

L'ultima domanda, Robert: qual è, giustamente, la domanda che vorresti che ti facessero e che non ti viene mai chiesta?

"Gradiresti un'altra tazza di tè"?

VV. AA.

The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi

(CD CPI) (18t-76:47)

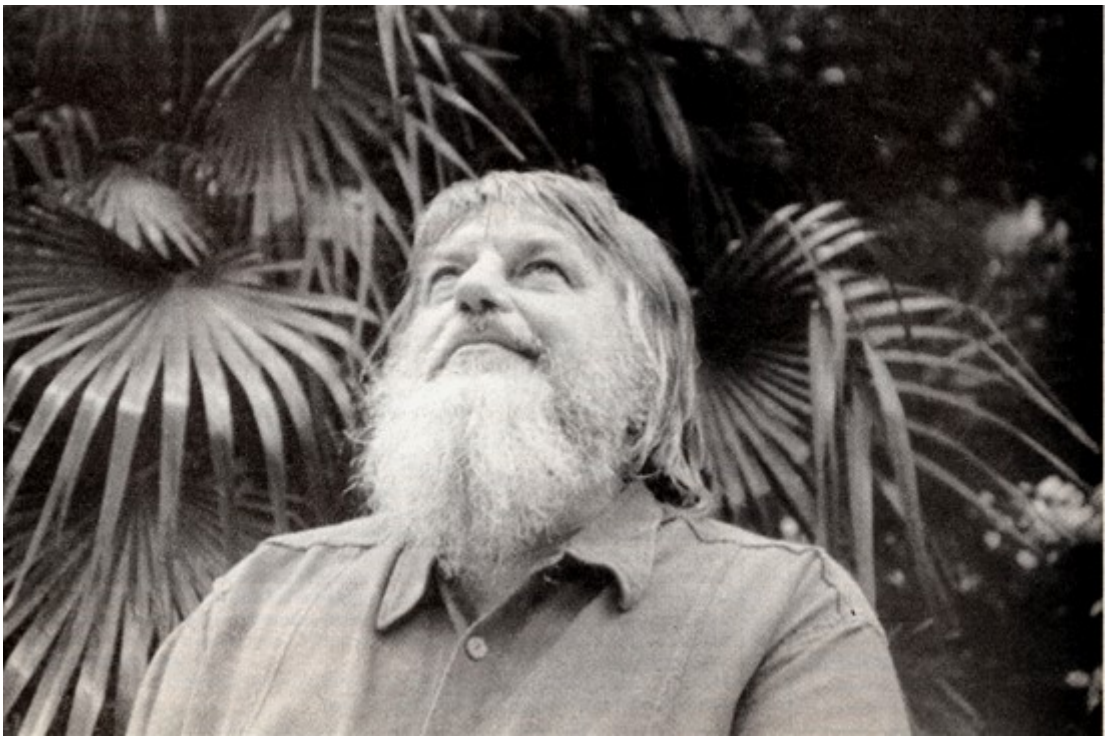
Robert Wyatt è un grande per due motivi elementari quanto ovvi: primo scrive delle canzoni eccezionali, secondo ne dà delle interpretazioni eccezionali; fine. Un album tributo come questo, che riunisce una trentina di autori più o meno affermati del panorama italiano, permette quindi di farsi un'idea di quanto possono valere le canzoni private del loro interprete naturale, e di quanto viceversa le interpretazioni riescano ad emergere al di là della composizione. Ora, lo si poteva immaginare in partenza, resta estremamente difficile, se non assurdo, pretendere di trovare lo stesso equilibrio degli originali, specialmente se i pezzi vengono affrontati a livello superficiale, e senza la necessaria partecipazione emotiva: banale la sdolcinatura che affiora dalla resa di *O Caroline* di **Max Gazzè** (paradossalmente scelta come singolo promo), insipida e senza profondità *Yolanda* (un pezzo nemmeno composto da Wyatt) di **Jovanotti**, imbarazzante e pomposa *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road* degli **Estasia**, ma l'inutile magniloquenza, così distante dall'originale, emerge *a tratti* come difetto anche negli stessi coordinatori dell'intera operazione, i **C.S.I.**, che rielaborano un pezzo uscito solo su singolo, *Chairman Mao*. Le riuscite effettive dell'album sono dovute a due scelte di campo abbastanza nette: c'è chi si affida alla bellezza intrinseca della canzone senza pretendere di imporre la propria presenza (**Ginevra Di Marco / Cristina Donà** con *Maryan*, **Andrea Chimenti / Mara Redighieri** con *Free Will and Testament*), e chi tenta più coraggiosamente la strada dell'arrangiamento particolare centrando l'obiettivo di rendersi almeno intrigante: **Almamegretta vs. Dub Colossus** in una sognante *Re-born Again Cretin*, **Marco Parente / La Crus** in una *Gharbzadegi* assolutamente irriconoscibile (fin troppo...), e gli accenti appena più duri ma fondamentalmente ben assestati di **Saro Cosentino / Franco Battiato / Morgan** (*Alifib*), **Giancarlo Onorato / Madaski** (*Left on Man*), **Giorgio Canali / Ulan Bator / Umberto Palazzo** (*Dondestan*). Per il resto cose più o meno accettabili in cui intervengono questioni di gusto personale, e ovviamente menzione speciale per la magica voce di

Robert in persona che canta con la solita ipersensibilità un brano tra i migliori dei CSI, *Del mondo*, che purtroppo un'altra volta si conclude con il solito, pretenzioso proclama di Giovanni Ferretti.
Resta da chiedersi l'opportunità, e il senso, di questa operazione. Ebbene, a costo di apparire ingenuo o retorico, mi sembra di percepire, attraverso le parole e le dichiarazioni di numerosi protagonisti del disco, una partecipazione e un affetto sinceri e incondizionati. Wyatt è davvero apprezzato da tanti, e se significato c'è in questo disco, si tratta proprio dell'amore che trenta autori che lui nemmeno conosceva gli vogliono dimostrare. Al di là di ogni altra considerazione, se lo merita. **(7)**

Little Red Robin Hood

(Video Cassetta CPI / Polygram) (60:00 ca.)
di **Francesco Di Loreto** e **Carlo Bevilacqua**

Presentato in anteprima al recente Festival della Musica di Torino, frutto del lavoro di tre anni di contatto continuo tra i due autori e Robert e il suo ambiente di vita nel paesino inglese in cui si è stabilito da anni, con in più frequenti escursioni occasionali presso personaggi che per un motivo o per l'altro hanno significato qualcosa nella vita di Robert (da Hugh Hopper a Dave McRea, da Paul Weller a Keith Tippett...), intervallato da significativi inserti storici degli anni '60, questo video è apparso d'emblée come un piccolo miracolo. Notevole la delicatezza con la quale viene fatta emergere la personalità sincera e profondamente umana di Wyatt, che traspare da un bianco e nero al contempo documentaristico ed elegante. Ottimo il montaggio dei vari inserti, specialmente le interviste agli altri personaggi, che contribuiscono in modo decisivo nel tratteggiare una persona squisita, per la quale tutti sono disposti a concedere volentieri parte di se stessi. Esemplare infine l'impiego degli spezzoni di musica, mai in eccesso, spesso commovente, sempre in perfetta sintonia con le immagini. Dedicato non solo ai fans, ma a tutti coloro che vogliono fare conoscenza con uno dei personaggi più distanti dalla hype del mondo musicale di oggi, eppure così ricco interiormente, sensibile e intelligente come pochi altri. **(8)**



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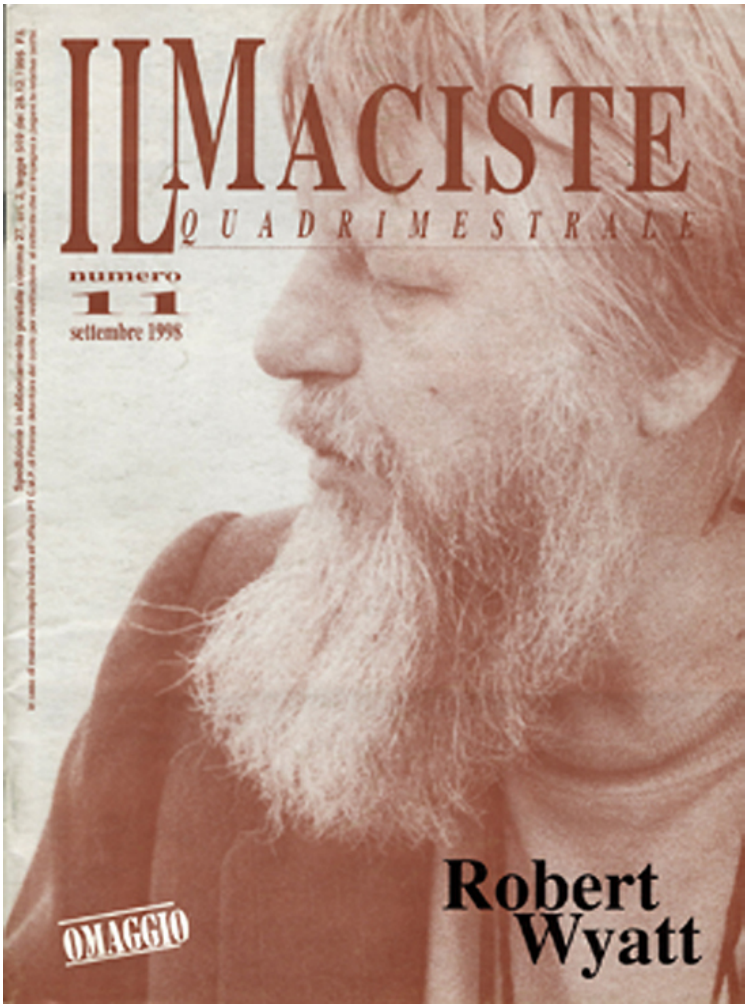
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Robert Wyatt - Il Maciste - Numero 11 - Settembre 1998

Robert Wyatt - Omaggio



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt

'I am simply stunned at the imaginative use to which these musicians and vocalists have put the Robertsongs they have chosen here: it's a great honour for me, and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. I was appalled to hear of the earthquake in Umbria when it happened. It is the nicest place Alfie and I have ever been to and we met the nicest people there. We are very pleased that profits make from the proposed concerts to publicise the tributo album will be going towards the victims of the quake.'
Roberty Wyatt

(ad uso e consumo esclusivo de 'Il Maciste')



O Caroline



IL MACISTE
N. 11 settembre 1998
Registrazione Tribunale
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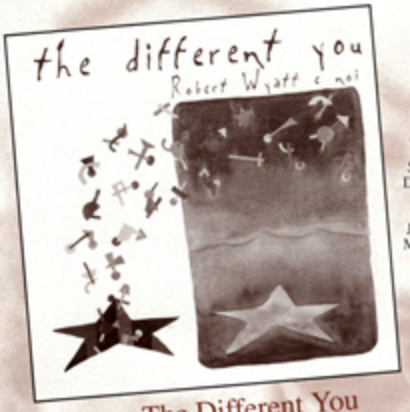
L'Angolo Del Magnelli' opinoso

Robert Wyatt vuol dire cuore e istintività, è quell'artista che io e i miei amici vorremmo vendesse tanti dischi perché i dischi li deve vendere chi ha **genialità**, chi **rischia**, chi **sperimenta**, chi ha **creatività** ed è per questo che quando lo abbiamo conosciuto al Salone di Torino ci è subito venuta la voglia di rendergli un omaggio, un nostro piccolo regalo alla sua grande genialità. Un anno intero di telefonate e fax pieno di sì, di forse, di sì definitivi (perché solo chi apprezzava le canzoni di Robert o le avrebbe apprezzate poteva partecipare al disco). Alla fine sono venute fuori **18** canzoni interpretate da **30** artisti che hanno partecipato anche in coppia. "Un gran lavoro di aggregazione" - nostro. "Un gran disco di bellissime voci" - grazie a loro. "Un susseguirsi di progressioni armoniche e di melodie significative" - grazie a Robert. Robert e Alfie, sua moglie, hanno benedetto il ed dicendoci che oltre l'emozione avevamo affrontato le canzoni con creatività. Ecco, per me dopo questa affermazione il disco è **finito**, tutto quello che ci sarà dall'uscita in poi sarà un gran giro di chiacchiere opportune e inopportune. Spero solo che chi deciderà di averlo nella propria discoteca presta sentire almeno un po' della passione che abbiamo riversato sulle note di Robert Wyatt. Basterà per fare un ottimo ascolto.

P.S. Anche perché i dischi sono fatti per essere ascoltati e non per **parlarne**.

Francesco Magnelli

> Zoom



The Different You
Robert Wyatt E Noi

"The Different You"
Robert Wyatt E Noi

Le presentazioni, i comunicati, i discorsi, onestamente ci imbarazzano.
Siamo musicisti, ci occupiamo di musica, di musica viviamo.
Per merito e per mezzo della musica, parliamo, comunichiamo, ci emozioniamo, incontriamo persone e luoghi, conosciamo le loro storie, ci affezioniamo ad esse.
E spesso il nostro cuore batte forte.

Molto forte.

E' successo quando anni fa scoprimmo Robert Wyatt e i Soft Machine.
Accade ascoltando la sua musica, le sue canzoni, la sua voce, quando parliamo o leggiamo di lui, della sua vita, della sua arte, del suo impegno civile, della sua immensa creatività.
Così é stato lo scorso autunno al Salone della Musica di Torino quando Davide Sapienza ci ha fatto incontrare e conoscere Robert Wyatt.
Ha battuto talmente forte da lasciarci senza parole, visibilmente inebetiti, commossi.
Quella notte nasce "The Different You" un disco dedicato a Robert Wyatt a cui partecipano trenta artisti accomunati da una grande passione per questo grandissimo artista.

Diciotto le canzoni "Sea Song", "Born Again Cretin", "O Caroline", "Alifib", "Gharbzadegi", "Little Red Riding Hood The Road", "Amber And Amberines", "Left On Man", "Maryann", "Yolanda", "A Day In Madrid", "Memories", "Free Will Testament", "Dondestan", "A Last Straw", "Chairman Mao", "5 Black Notes & 1 White Note", e una bellissima versione di "Del Mondo" dei C.S.I. interpretata da Robert Wyatt.

Gli artisti
Almamegretta, Area, Franco Battiato, Giorgio Canali, Andrea Chimenti, Saro Cosentino, CSI, Ci s'ha, Ginevra Di Marco, Dissoi Logoi, Cristina Donà, Dub Colossus, EstAsia, Max Gazzé, Page Hamilton, Here, In Circolo, Jovanotti, Julianna, La Crus, Madaski, Marlene Kuntz, Mira Spinosa, Morgan, Miko Nikaido, Giancarlo Onorato, Mauro Pagani, Marco Parente, Mara Redeghieri, Santo Niente, Ulan Bator, Robert Wyatt.

"The Different You"
Robert Wyatt E Noi
é dedicato a Robert e Alfie

Francesco Magnelli
Gianni Maroccolo

Info
"The Different You"
Robert Wyatt E Noi
uscirà su cd/mc – Cpi/Mercury, il 14 ottobre 1998 preceduto dal clip e dal cd-single-promo di "O Caroline", interpretata da Max Gazzé.
La direzione artistica dell' intero progetto é curata da Francesco Magnelli e Gianni Maroccolo.

"The Little Red Robin Hood"
uscirà su vhs-hifi stereo – CPI/PolyGram Video il 14 ottobre e verrà proiettato in anteprima al Salone della Musica di Torino in presenza dei due registi Carlo Bevilacqua e Francesco Di Loreto.

La presentazione di "The Different You" avverrà anch'essa al Salone della Musica dove interverranno gli artisti partecipanti al disco, e Robert Wyatt in persona.
Il Salone ospiterà anche una mostra fotografica su Wyatt curata da Bevilacqua e Di Loreto che prevede oltre 60 ingrandimenti 1x1,60 mt.
E' inoltre prevista una occasione live, data e luogo da definire, di presentazione del tributo con una band creata appositamente da Francesco Magnelli.

'The Little Red Robin Hood"

"Little Red Robin Hood" è un lungometraggio sulla carriera e sulla vita di Robert Wyatt, fondatore, cantante e batterista dei Soft Machine. Artista riservato e malinconico poeta del suono, ma allo stesso tempo disincantato e ironico, è un esempio unico nel panorama musicale contemporaneo. Trenta anni di evoluzione artistica e di storia di vita raccontati attraverso le testimonianze di Wyatt stesso, di Elvis Costello, Carla Bley, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Hugh Hopper, Nick Mason, David Mac Rae, Paul Weller, Andy Summers, e altri, inframezzate da rarissimi filmati di repertorio: dai primi concerti psichedelici degli anni '60 alle ultime registrazioni di "Shleep" con Brian Eno e Phil Manzanera. Un affresco in bianco e nero per una sensibilità musicale che non ha confini di stile, una vita dimessa e antieroica ma non limitata .... neanche dalla sedia a rotelle sulla quale Wyatt è costretto a vivere da venti anni in seguito ad uno stupido ma terribile incidente.

Carlo Bevilacqua
Francesco Di Loreto



Il film



> Zoom

Biografia essenziale

curata da Ginevra Di Marco

Robert Wyatt nasce nel 1945 da Honor Wyatt e George Ellidge. Cominciò a suonare all'età di dodici anni con amici e compagni di scuola in una cantina di casa, con strumenti di fortuna. I genitori pensavano che sarebbe diventato un pittore per il suo naturale e facile approccio al disegno e alla pittura, ma ciò non avvenne. Il padre suonava il piano e lo introdusse alla musica classica in un primo momento, al jazz poi.
Robert conobbe Hugh e Brian Hopper, Mike Ratledge e Dave Sinclair, poiché frequentavano la stessa scuola a Canterbury. Nella scuola c'era un jazz club e li organizzavano delle riunioni di ascolto e discussione di dischi jazz (Art Blakey, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor etc.)
Tra la fine degli anni '50 e gli inizi dei '60 la famiglia Ellidge prese una casa georgiana del '700, chiamata "Wellington House", che presto divenne meta e rifugio di molti musicisti e amici di Robert e della sua famiglia. Lo stesso Kevin Ayers, reduce da problemi di droga e incomprensioni continue con la sua famiglia, si recava a Wellington House dove trovava sempre accoglienza e calore: "era un'oasi culturale - racconta Kevin - dove si parlava, si leggevano libri, si guardavano quadri, si ascoltava musica."
Nel dicembre del 1960 approdò a Wellington House anche Daevid Allen, in esilio volontario da una piccola comunità artistica nel Melbourne. Daevid era a capo di un gruppo jazz come poeta e chitarrista e recitava con diverse compagnie di teatro. Fu Daevid che insegnò a Robert i primi rudimenti sulla composizione e sull'armonia, facendolo esercitare al pianoforte di casa.
Fra il 1963 e il 1964 Robert iniziò la sua attività musicale insieme a Daevid e ad altri amici, suonando dove capitava e senza ricevere compensi.
Robert si ricorda di quel periodo come di un momento difficile, ma di grandi e importanti esperienze. In un primo momento si avvicinò alla tromba ("facevo più rumori che suoni..."), poi nell'estate del 1964 suonò con musicisti che gli dettero l'opportunità di imparare a suonare la batteria. A Robert si unirà poi Kevin Ayers.
Di ritorno a Canterbury, nell'estate del 1964 i fratelli Hopper formarono un gruppo beat insieme a Richard Sinclair (chitarra) Robert Wyatt (batteria) e Kevin Ayers (chitarra e voce). Questo gruppo prenderà il nome di Wilde Flowers (la "e" viene aggiunta da Kevin in onore di Oscar Wilde del quale era un fervido ammiratore).

Fu un momento importante per la loro formazione musicale, ricco di scambi di idee: dopo il lavoro passavano molte ore insieme a parlare, discutere, ascoltare dischi e introdurre nella loro musica nuove idee, suoni e spunti.
Più tardi Wyatt diventò il cantante dei Wilde Flowers lasciando il posto alla batteria a Richard Caughlan. Continuarono a suonare a Canterbury, ovunque capitasse, perfino nelle scuole e negli intervalli tra un film e l'altro, in genere film per bambini, e venivano ricompensati con i biglietti per gli spettacoli della domenica.

R.W.:" Gli altri gruppi di allora suonavano principalmente cover, noi suonavamo soprattutto musica nostra, di ogni genere. Una delle caratteristiche della musica pop di quei tempi era di basarsi principalmente sulla chitarra. Io trovavo questo estremamente limitante. Noi eravamo alla ricerca di nuove sonorità, io ero attratto dagli strumenti che potessero produrre suoni ininterrotti, totalmente sostenuti. Volevo lavorare con un tastierista, ma tutti erano pessime imitazioni di Jimmy Smith. Poi conobbi Mike (Ratledge) che era un tastierista molto più competente di tanti chitarristi di allora. Mike fu molto importante per la mia crescita musicale".

Hugh Hopper: "La leggenda mostra Canterbury come una grande fucina di musica, ma in realtà non lo era. Voglio dire, le cose non accadevano fino a che non lasciavamo Canterbury per lavorare in altri posti come Londra o Parigi. Canterbury è sempre stata una città molto conservatrice e probabilmente questo ha fatto si che, come reazione, un gruppo di persone si ribellasse e esprimesse nuove idee."

Nacquero i "Soft Machine". Mike racconta che il nome lo presero da un libro di Burroughs che si chiamava, appunto, Soft Machine.

Si arriva al 1966. Il gruppo venne ingaggiato per una settimana, ma dopo mezz'ora di musica il manager li cacciò. Il pubblico non aveva mai sentito musica psichedelica e ci furono applausi e fischi in egual misura. Mark Ellidge (fratello di Robert) divenne il loro fotografo esclusivo e si offrì di mantenerli nei loro spostamenti. Nell'autunno parteciparono a varie serate, tra cui "I'lt Party" (il primo giornale underground), dove suonarono con Jimi Hendrix.

R.W.:" Ho riascoltato nastri e concerti di quel periodo dove io provavo a cantare e suonare la batteria, ma il risultato fu fallimentare. Riuscivo un po' a farlo nei Wilde Flowers, dove quando cantavo lasciavo per un attimo la batteria. Nei Soft Machine era tutto molto più difficile. Inoltre, siccome mentre noi suonavamo il pubblico aspettava altri gruppi o cantanti, per evitare fischi suggerii agli altri di legare insieme i pezzi così la fine di uno era l'inizio di quello seguente. Ci fermavamo solo quando lasciavamo il palcoscenico; fu così che nacque il nuovo stile dei Soft Machine con pezzi prolungati e di seguito".

Nei primi mesi del 1967 si esibirono nei college e nelle università del Regno Unito ma non ci sono registrazioni dei loro concerti.

Daevid Allen:" Noi venivamo dal jazz, ma suonavamo pop con una specie di sapore jazz. Aveva uno strano effetto, ma nessuno lo faceva, a parte i Doors e Arthur Brown".

R.W.: "Daevid Allen era un chitarrista geniale, l'unico che non suonava il blues. Intorno ai suoi pezzi, con quelle strutture e quelle concezioni del ritmo particolari, noi decidemmo di fare delle lunghe improvvisazioni. Non c'è dubbio che allora Daevid era l'elemento più importante del gruppo. La nostra musica non si adattava a nessuno schema esistente. La musica pop non offriva abbastanza spazi per l'improvvisazione e anche l'idea di avere una hit, ma di doverla suonare sempre nello stesso modo, per noi era impossibile".

Per i primi mesi del 1967 continuarono a fare concerti (parteciparono al Love Festival dove si faceva musica sperimentale, spettacoli teatrali e venivano proiettati film d'avanguardia; era il locale più "in" di Londra).
In aprile al Round House si unì a loro Mark Boyle che diventò il quinto elemento del gruppo, occupandosi della parte visiva con l'uso di luci, palle colorate, proiettori etc.
Continuarono a suonare in giro durante la primavera e l'estate, e in agosto tornarono in Inghilterra.
Daevid non poté rientrare perché sprovvisto del permesso di soggiorno, per cui lasciò il gruppo. Rimase a Parigi e formò i Gong.
I Soft Machine continuarono la loro attività e nel 1968 tennero una serie di concerti di spalla a Jimi Hendrix.

R.W.: "Jimi e i suoi musicisti erano molto gentili con noi. Alla fine del tour Mitch Mitchell mi regalò la sua batteria. Sapevano che non avevamo molti soldi e cercavano di aiutarci con delicatezza."

Più tardi vennero a sapere che veniva organizzato un nuovo tour con gli Experience per cui annullarono le loro date in Inghilterra. A loro si unì come chitarrista Andy Summers.
Partirono per il tour degli Stati Uniti, ma piano piano vennero travolti e annientati dalla vita americana, fatta di grandi alberghi, automobili lussuose, aerei privati. Il gruppo ebbe la sensazione di perdere la propria identità, si sentivano manipolati.

R.W.: "Nel 1968 era molto difficile vivere in America, ho visto delle cose terribili. Tutti abbiamo letto e conosciuto attraverso i giornali il razzismo, ma si riesce a comprendere qualcosa solo vivendo lì. Era tremendo vedere l'ostilità della polizia nei confronti di qualsiasi persona con i capelli lunghi."

Alla fine di settembre il gruppo si divise; Kevin vendette il suo basso a Mitch Mitchell e scappò a Ibiza; Mike ritornò a Londra e Robert rimase con Eric Burdon. La loro casa discografica non sapeva che il gruppo si fosse sciolto; il loro primo album non era ancora uscito benché fossero passati sei mesi dalle registrazioni.
Robert si ritrovò in studio di registrazione e buttò giù delle idee suonando tutti gli strumenti da solo. Era un sollievo non dover fare compromessi con nessuno .
La casa discografica si mise in contatto con Robert dicendo che il disco dei Soft era straordinario e che volevano pubblicarlo; Robert ribattè dicendo che ormai il gruppo si era sciolto e che ognuno stava facendo la sua strada, ma la casa discografica insistette.
Così Robert ricostituì i Soft Machine con lui alla batteria, Mike Ratledge alle tastiere, Hugh Hopper al basso. Il debutto fu fissato in America dove il disco salì al trentottesimo posto in classifica.

Nel febbraio e marzo del 1969 iniziarono le sessioni per "Volume Two" (secondo disco dei Soft Machine). Hugh colpiva l'immaginazione di Robert: usava il fuzz-bass (distorsore) dietro suggerimento di Mike che lo usava nell'organo.

R.W.: "Non ho mai pensato che le registrazioni dei Soft Machine fossero in rapporto alla loro crescita. Noi portavamo nuovi pezzi in studio, li registravamo, due mesi dopo imparavamo a suonarli, poi però ritornavamo in studio con altre cose nuove che non sapevamo suonare bene. E' difficile trovare il meglio dei Soft Machine sui dischi. I dischi, in realtà, sono più un'indicazione di ciò che il gruppo era."

continua a pag.6

> Zoom



Devo premettere che Wyatt l'ho conosciuto quest'anno, con l'idea di questo progetto, ed è stata una sorpresa veramente meravigliosa. Il pezzo che abbiamo scelto è "Maryan", tratto dall'ultimo album. Mi piaceva particolarmente questo pezzo, e l'ho proposto a Cristina Donà. Ci siamo quindi trovate d'accordo su questo brano, rimettendo in discussione la scelta originaria del duetto, che doveva essere su 'O Caroline', un brano splendido ma forse un po' poco rappresentativo della sensibilità musicale di Wyatt.
Sono molto emozionata, perché Wyatt è sicuramente una scoperta grandissima per me. Erano anni che non ascoltavo una musica che mi trasmettesse così tanto. Ha una voce che mi accarezza il cuore, e mi piace tantissimo questa sua grande anima musicale, che tocca tutti gli stili. Mi piace questo suo modo semplice di fare musica, questo suo modo di suonare che vince su tutto e su tutti.

Ginevra Di Marco

Ho conosciuto Wyatt in ritardo, l'anno scorso, e meglio tardi che mai. Avevo ascoltato molto bene l'ultimo disco, e trovo che per un musicista ascoltare Wyatt sia molto interessante ed istruttivo. Poco dopo ho avuto l'occasione di incontrarlo di persona al Salone della musica di Torino, dove lui faceva una piccola conferenza e dove io suonavo per "Max Generation", e molto incoscientemente l'ho invitato a vedere il mio concerto, cosa che magari non avrei fatto se l'avessi conosciuto veramente bene, visto che è una persona abbastanza schiva. Me lo sono ritrovato la sera dopo il concerto a farmi i complimenti, cosa che mi ha molto lusingato. Più tardi, a gennaio, ho ricevuto una copia di MOJO, un giornale inglese, dove appariva una dichiarazione di Robert Wyatt che segnalava, come disco dell'anno, "Christina Dona" (senza accento e con l'h che fa molto 'international'). Questa cosa mi ha colpito moltissimo, innanzitutto perché è sorprendente che una persona che ha affrontato la musica in modo così serio e completo si interessi ad un progetto rock semplice come il mio. Sin da quando gli ho dato il mio disco, ho visto in lui una curiosità fuori dal comune: mi chiedeva continuamente dei testi, del progetto artistico, dei musicisti che collaborano con me, etc... E' stato un grande regalo per me vedermi su un giornale inglese, ed essere qui vuol essere la mia risposta, il mio regalo, il mio ringraziamento.

Cristina Donà

Di questo tributo si sapeva già da un po' di tempo. Era già tacitamente stabilito che avrei collaborato con i La Crus, ed era già stato scelto un brano, 'O Caroline'. Dopo un po' di tempo, in cui io stavo terminando il disco e i La Crus stavano lavorando alle loro cose, nessuno dei due aveva la testa su questo progetto, Gianni Maroccolo ha richiamato all'ordine e ci siamo quindi finalmente trovati a concretizzare questo progetto.
Non conoscevo bene Robert Wyatt come artista. L'ho incontrato al Salone di Torino, e come figura umana mi aveva molto impressionato: è successo che stavo per incominciare una specie di concerto per radio in uno stand. Lui prima di me stava facendo un'intervista, poi sarebbe toccato a me. Quando mi hanno passato le cuffie passava un suo pezzo (poi ho scoperto essere 'Alien', dall'ultimo album) e son rimasto subito colpitissimo dall'atmosfera del pezzo. Dopo gli ho dato il mio disco e la cosa che mi ha confermato l'impressione che avevo avuto, è che era lui ad essere curioso di un emerito sconosciuto che gli stava dando il suo disco, era lui a fare 1000 domande, a voler capire, etc...
Io nel frattempo ho cominciato ad ascoltare un po' di cose, e sul brano 'O Caroline', pur piacendomi un sacco, non riuscivo a trovare una chiave per mettermi in moto e lavorarci sopra. Invece con questo brano, 'Gharbzadegi' ho riconosciuto subito delle atmosfere, una struttura, delle melodie, per cui è stato un tutt'uno prendere lo strumento e suonarci sopra.
Quando l'ho fatto sentire a Gigi e Cesare, c'è stata una cosa che ha intrigato tutti, ovvero che si tratta di un brano in cui Wyatt intreccia le sue voci, una sopra l'altra, e questo si presta moltissimo ad un duetto.

Marco Parente

Io non ho scelto il brano. Con Alex, il terzo La Crus (che è un fan pazzesco di Robert Wyatt) avevamo cercato dei brani di Robert Wyatt che fossero più vicini ad una struttura di canzone. Avevo scelto 'O Caroline', poi ho saputo da Fabio del Consorzio che era già stata scelta da Cristina Donà e Ginevra, e le abbiamo quasi obbligate a scegliere un altro brano... Poi una mattina sono arrivato in studio e mi sono trovato questo pezzo, che nell'arrangiamento di Marco ha comunque una struttura-canzone. Mi piace, sono contento di fare questo pezzo per due motivi: primo, perché riusciamo finalmente a concretizzare una collaborazione con Marco Parente, dopo aver suonato dal vivo insieme ed esserci promessi varie volte di far qualcosa insieme in studio; secondo, perché le cover che ho fatto precedentemente (Tenco, Ciampi, Conte, Detonazione) sono tutte cover che ho scelto io, e misurarmi con un brano non scelto da me è comunque interessante e stimolante.

Mauro Ermanno Giovanardi - La Crus

Robert Wyatt per me è 'Dondestan'. Non lo conoscevo assolutamente prima, quando è uscito quell'album per una circostanza del tutto fortuita (forse mi piaceva la copertina) l'ho comprato e mi sono trovato a farlo girare in ciclo tutte le notti per sei mesi. Mi serviva per rilassarmi: Wyatt è molto rilassante, come musicista. Quando si è trattato di fare questo omaggio, per me era una scelta obbligata. Inoltre, 'Dondestan' è un pezzo che offre la possibilità di confrontarsi con altri musicisti, pur barando. Si bara, perché dentro a quel pezzo non c'è niente: c'è un pianino, una voce, c'è un ritmino che gira, quindi si può ripartire da zero per costruire qualcosa che magari non ha niente a che fare col pezzo, pur mantenendo intatto il senso del pezzo e soprattutto il testo, che pur essendo semplicissimo è di una profondità inaudita. 'Dondestan', che per me che non conosco lo spagnolo vuol dire 'dove cazzo stanno?', o probabilmente non vuol dire niente, è una canzone che parla della non possibilità del popolo palestinese di vivere da una qualche parte, con parole molto semplici. E la semplicità della scelta è proprio questa: poterci confrontare con dei musicisti che affrontano questo tema barando, perché essere sempre corretti non è facile, e poi è divertente anche barare.

Giorgio Canali

Non conoscevo Robert Wyatt, poi la scorsa estate ho acquistato un suo cd e mi è piaciuto moltissimo, tanto da spingermi a comprare le altre sue produzioni discografiche. Dopo le date con i C.S.I., Francesco Magnelli mi ha parlato del progetto di tributo a Wyatt ed ho subito pensato che era una strana ed interessante coincidenza. Alla richiesta di partecipare al tributo ho risposto in modo entusiastico. Però subito dopo mi sono chiesto quale cover potevo rifare dal repertorio di Wyatt. Ho così scoperto una cover di Robert di un brano scritto da Pablo Milanes, intitolata "Yolanda". Ho scelto quindi di coverizzare una canzone d'amore, credo la canzone d'amore più bella che esista. Non mi sentivo di rifare un pezzo di Wyatt che trovo un artista complesso e distante dalle mie cose. Sono molto contento di come ho cantato in "Yolanda", penso che sia una delle più belle cose che abbia mai fatto con la mia voce. Sono pienamente soddisfatto della scelta, non avrei mai potuto rifare un brano originale di Wyatt, sarebbe stato come andare agli Uffizi, vedere un quadro di Raffaello e cercare di riprodurlo a casa.

Jovanotti

Quando ci hanno chiesto per la prima volta di fare una specie di tributo alla musica di Robert Wyatt noi ci abbiamo pensato un po' su, sei sempre spaventato nell'affrontare cose di questo genere. Wyatt è un musicista eccezionale, una persona per cui sentiamo molto rispetto, e quindi quando c'è rispetto c'è anche timore, hai paura di sporcare, rovinare... Appena abbiamo trovato due giorni di buco nel tour, siamo venuti qui nello studio di Mauro Pagani, che è uno studio perfetto per cose di questo genere: pieno di roba 'vintage' (che poi è un modo elegante per definire la roba vecchia), ci sono amplificatori, chitarre degli anni '60 e '70... insomma, ci siamo trovati subito precipitati nell'atmosfera giusta. Abbiamo convocato i musicisti che stanno lavorando con noi in tour, che comunque avevano già collaborato alla produzione del nostro ultimo disco. Uno è il bassista-chitarrista Dub Colossus, che è il fondatore dei Transglobal Underground, uno dei primi gruppi che in Inghilterra ha dato il via alla scena elettronica contaminata con cose arabe ed indiane, un gruppo a cui ci sentiamo molto vicini, e Nick (questo il suo vero nome) è una persona molto disponibile. E anche Julianne, che è la vocalist che ci accompagna in tour, una ragazza con una voce molto soul. Quello che volevamo fare era un pezzo molto lento, un po' psichedelico, che si richiamasse in qualche modo a quello che fa Robert Wyatt. Abbiamo preso dei campioni da una cassetta (la voce e un po' di batteria) e ci siamo divertiti a registrare le cose così come si sarebbero registrate un po' di tempo fa. Gennaro ha registrato la batteria vera, l'abbiamo passata in un vecchio amplificatore, microfonata con un vecchio microfono, ricampionata... finché non abbiamo raggiunto la pasta sonora che ci interessava. Speriamo che piaccia a Robert Wyatt quando lo sentirà.

Rpiss - Almamegretta

Il primo disco di Robert Wyatt che ho conosciuto e che ho ascoltato è stato 'Soft Machine IV'. La prima impressione che ho avuto è stato lo scintillio di questa sapienza inglese, il mondo del rock anglosassone non inquinato da quello che era il sogno di quel periodo, un sogno in cui anche noi come gruppo eravamo coinvolti, quello del progressive magniloquente ed altisonante. Invece già loro avevano questa tendenza quasi minimalista di scrivere un po' all'osso: strutture scarne, molto nervose, armonicamente colte. E diciamo che i miei interessi musicali sono nati con i Soft Machine e sono rimasti molto legati a questo tipo di mondo.
La scelta del brano è stata in realtà 'pilotata' da Francesco Magnelli. Magnelli mi ha mandato una cassetta con 4 pezzi ed io ho scelto 'Amber And The Amberines', primo perché mi sembrava meravigliosamente affascinante questa specie di inno di chiesa cantato con questo armonium solo, ipnotico, dove non succede niente. L'unica cosa che succede all'interno del giro è questo cambiamento di tempo, dal tempo in 2 al tempo in 3, sullo stesso metronomo. Il pezzo armonicamente è interessante e presenta anche una sfida, perché è un brano che non ha aperture. La sfida che il brano offre è mettere le mani nella struttura compositiva e creare qualche varco, rispettando quest'andamento ipnotico. Ho deciso di trascurare quel cambio di tempo tra il 2 e il 3, ho pensato che introducendo delle altre aperture armoniche dovevo mantenere una continuità di tempo e qualcosa di ipnotico che continuasse sotto. Spero che Robert Wyatt mi perdoni.

Mauro Pagani

> Zoom

Dalla primavera in poi il gruppo tenne concerti in Inghilterra, Francia, Olanda, e Belgio e nell'autunno il trio diventò un settetto. L'idea di aumentare il gruppo nacque dalla necessità di poter avere più strumenti che suonassero realmente le parti che loro componevano. Questo, comunque, portò a non poche difficoltà sia dal punto di vista organizzativo che dei rapporti umani.
Nel 1970 iniziarono i primi screzi e le prime incomprensioni fra Robert, Mike e Hugh.

R.W.: "Mi sentivo depresso perché Mike e Hugh odiavano "Moon In June" per cui dovetti fare tutto da solo; mi sentivo abbandonato e rifiutato e decisi di fare un album da solo. Chiamai Elton Dean, Marc Charig e mio fratello Mark al pianoforte. Il disco si chiamò "The End Of An Ear" e i titoli delle canzone furono dedicati a personaggi a me cari".

Nel frattempo Keith Tippett aveva lavorato ad una composizione allargata per un grande gruppo di musicisti che si chiamò "Centipede".
I Centipede furono l'ennesima occasione per Robert di esplorare nuove forme musicali e questo lo portò a partecipare a molte session che si facevano in quel periodo. Si usava infatti, allora, mescolarsi e scambiarsi fra musicisti per sperimentare e ricercare nuove forme di espressione musicale. Robert amava molto la sperimentazione e questo fu il motivo principale del litigio con i Soft Machine.
Non contento, Robert formò anche i Symbiosis detti anche Soft Robert, un gruppo al massimo della sperimentazione, dove chiunque poteva suonare. Alla base era composto da Robert alla batteria, Steve Florence alla chitarra, Gary Windo al sassofono e Mongezi Feza alla tromba.
L'attività di Robert continuò dividendosi tra i Soft Machine e i Centipede, ma piano piano si fece strada in lui la sensazione che quando suonava in contesti diversi dai Soft Machine riusciva a fare molte più cose e ad approcciarsi alla musica in modo molto più soddisfacente.
Nel giugno del 1971 i Centipede registrarono l'lp intitolato "Septober Energy" poi continuarono i loro concerti in America.
Nel settembre di quell'anno Robert lasciò i Soft Machine.

R.W.: "Non c'era più niente in comune fra noi, ci eravamo divisi l'uno dall'altro. Ognuno stava andando nella propria direzione e ciò che andava bene a uno non andava bene all'altro. In realtà eravamo insieme dall'inizio perché nessuno di noi conosceva nessun altro e , a essere onesti, alla fine fui buttato fuori dal gruppo".

Nell'autunno del 1971 Robert ebbe un lungo periodo di depressione e un suo amico gli fece conoscere Alfreda Benge (Alfie), una persona che aveva in comune con lui passioni politiche, creative e esperienze di vita affini. Robert si mise quindi alla ricerca di nuovi musicisti fra i quali Dave Mc Rea e tutto il 1971 lo passarono a provare le session per un disco che uscì per la CBS. Il gruppo si chiamava Matching Mole, o piuttosto Machine Molle che è la traduzione francese di Soft Machine. Il gruppo era formato da Robert voce e batteria, David Sinclair alle tastiere e piano, P. Miller alla chitarra e B. Mc Cormick al basso.

R.W.: "I Matching Mole furono la tappa successiva; non avevo un gruppo e sentivo che era il tempo di formarne uno. Chiamai alcuni musicisti come Bill Mc Cormick e Dave Sinclair che stava abbandonando i Caravan. Egli divideva con me l'interesse per canzoni semplici. Avevo composto qualche canzone che volevo fare e suonavamo scambiandoci i giri armonici. Ero molto soddisfatto del primo album. Tuttavia non avevamo soldi e attrezzatura e registravamo in uno studio abbandonato dalla CBS che era anche molto freddo."

Dal 3 al 14 gennaio registrarono il primo album dei Matching Mole.

R.W.: "Avrei fatto il disco comunque, anche se non fossi riuscito a formare un gruppo. Allo stesso tempo desideravo formare un gruppo perché le mie idee si sviluppano meglio quando altri musicisti interagiscono con me con la loro fantasia. Mi tirano fuori il meglio.".

Nel febbraio del 1972 i Matching Mole andarono in Olanda e in Belgio, in aprile girarono la Gran Bretagna come supporter a John Mayall e l'8 maggio registrarono il singolo "O Caroline".
In agosto cominciarono le sessioni per il secondo lp che terminarono il 31. Il disco venne prodotto da Robert Fripp.
A settembre partirono per un tour di spalla ai Soft Machine e in una di queste date c'erano anche i Genesis.
Nel 1972 la band di Wyatt si sciolse.

R.W.: "Matching Mole finì perché io non ho le qualità del capo, non voglio gestire le cose, la gente vuole che sia io a gestire perché sono più conosciuto degli altri. Quando suonavamo ero il centro dell'attenzione, ma io volevo essere solo un quarto del gruppo e non volevo interessarmi di questioni che non fossero la musica".

Nel febbraio del 1973 McCormick chiese a Robert di riformare i Matching Mole e anche di costituire parallelamente un quartetto con Gary Windo. C'erano vari progetti, tra cui un contratto con la Virgin, un concerto con Mike Oldfield e un altro progetto con Nick Mason.
Il primo giugno Robert venne a sapere che era stato organizzato un grande party nell'appartamento di Gilli Smith per festeggiare il compleanno di Gilli (1 giugno) e di Robert (3 giugno).
Wyatt cadde giù da una finestra dell'appartamento, venne portato in ospedale con una frattura alla dodicesima vertebra e una gamba rotta.
Dovette stare immobile per dodici settimane e in ospedale per sei mesi; ci volle del tempo per valutare la gravità dell'incidente. Doveva cominciare a provare per il terzo album dei Matching Mole, ma le prove andarono avanti con un altro batterista.

R.W.: "Questa è la dinamica dell'incidente: nell'ordine, vino, whisky, Southern Comfort poi... la finestra. Il dottore rimase sbalordito e mi disse: "Dovevi essere realmente ubriaco per cadere in maniera così rilassata!" Se io fossi stato un po' più sobrio oggi non sarei più qui, mi sarei irrigidito dalla paura e mi sarei fracassato. E' stata lunga ed è stata molto dura, ma almeno la parte superiore di me funzione anche se non sono sicuro della mia testa... La gente pensa che io abbia problemi a parlare del mio incidente, ma non è vero. Ho più problemi a parlare di quello che era la mia vita prima dell'incidente. E' stato un avvenimento che ha portato un netto cambiamento alla mia vita".

Robert uscì dall'ospedale a novembre e venne sostenuto dall'affetto della famiglia e degli amici. Julie Christie gli regalò una sedia a rotelle e i Pink Floyd annunciarono un concerto di beneficenza dei Soft Machine in favore di Robert il 4 novembre al Rainbow Theatre. In quell'occasione furono raccolte 10.000 sterline di cui Wyatt ne ricevette solo 7.000; di questo Honor Wyatt si rammaricò in un articolo su un giornale.
Robert ricominciò piano piano a vivere, cercando di non drammatizzare la sua situazione, ma cercando di fare più seriamente quello che poteva fare: cantare.
Subito dopo l'incidente si sposò con Alfie che fu ed è tuttora l'ispiratrice di molte canzoni di Robert.
Nel febbraio e marzo 1974 iniziarono le registrazioni di "Rock Bottom".

R.W.: "La vera influenza di Alfie è proprio sulla musica. A lei non piaceva la musica che facevo prima, perché troppo piena di parti strumentali. Così mi consigliò di lasciarmi andare, alla stregua di Van Morrison, o artisti come lui. Questo ebbe un'ottima influenza su di me".


Rock Bottom

"Rock Bottom" venne riconosciuto dalla critica come un vero e proprio capolavoro.
Nella classifica dei lettori del Melody Maker del 1974 Robert venne votato dietro a Leon Thomas come cantante internazionale; dietro a George Melly come cantante maschile britannico e a Parigi vinse un premio per "Rock Bottom" come miglior album solista dell'anno.

Dal 15 al 22 marzo iniziarono le registrazioni per "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard".


Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

R.W.: "I soldi allora erano veramente un problema costante per me; pensavo con invidia agli scrittori, ai pittori che possono lavorare per ore solo con una penna, un foglio di carta, una tazza di thé e un sandwich. Per i musicisti è molto più difficile: gli studi di registrazione sono molto costosi e io non mi sento a mio agio".

In maggio e giugno Robert suonò in Francia, in Inghilterra e anche supportando i Gong.
Partecipò poi, nell'autunno, a un'opera di M. Mantler con Carla Bley di cui poi uscì un disco.
Nel dicembre del 1975 morì Mongezi Feza.

R.W: "E' stato un grande musicista, io avevo molti progetti nel cassetto da sviluppare con lui. La sua morte ha avuto su di me un effetto drammatico, soprattutto per il fatto che egli scappò dall'Africa per problemi di razzismo per poi ritrovarsi con gli stessi identici problemi in Inghilterra. Qui infatti è morto in un ospedale, perché non è stato curato in maniera adeguata. Questo non sarebbe accaduto se fosse stato bianco. Tutta questa storia ha creato in me una forte spinta a impegnarmi politicamente.
Dalla metà degli anni '70 in poi mi sentivo confuso, sentivo che la musica che facevo era inadeguata. Era vanitoso e ridicolo da parte della generazione degli anni '60 pensare di poter rendere il mondo migliore solo cantando canzoni di protesta.

continua a pag.8

> Zoom

DEL MONDO: Mi viene ancora la pelle d'oca a pensare alla prima volta che ho sentito "Del Mondo" cantata da Robert Wyatt. La cosa che ho detto a Magnelli è che è un po' una specie di glorificazione dei CSI, della nostra storia. Pensare che Wyatt s'innamora di una canzone dei CSI, vuol sapere cosa dice, chiede la traduzione del testo, decide che vuole rifarla e per di più cantando in italiano, proprio perché le parole e la musica sono così legate tra di loro che tradurle vorrebbe dire fare un'altra cosa, è una vera e propria glorificazione per i CSI. Raffaello Sanzio, che è una compagnia teatrale che mi piace moltissimo, dice di sé "dall'iconoclastia alla supericona": Ecco, questo è un po' quello che è successo, rispettate le differenze, ai CSI in quest'occasione.

CHAIRMAN MAO: All'inizio pensavamo di prendere una canzone di Wyatt, di tradurla e di farla nostra. Ritrovandoci di fronte la versione che lui ha fatto di "Del Mondo", la prima cosa che abbiamo capito è che non potevamo essere da meno. I buoni maestri in ogni modo sono una garanzia per avere buoni allievi. Per cui l'idea di poter tradurre una sua canzone e quindi interrompere questo rapporto magico tra il testo e la musica ci sembrava veramente un'idea sgradevole. Per cui, la prima cosa che io ho pensato è che ogni essere umano, nella vita, indipendentemente da quello che fa, c'è un momento in cui dovrebbe stare zitto. Beh, era il mio momento per stare zitto. Anche perché Ginevra, mentre facevamo le prove della canzone, facendo la traccia della mia voce, ha tirato fuori una voce maschile bellissima. Ginevra non è una corista nei CSI, è un pezzo della voce dei CSI, e l'altro pezzo sono io. Una voce maschile ed una femminile, insieme, mescolate, a contrasto, in sintonia tra di loro: questa è la voce dei CSI. In realtà questa voce ha tante sotto-voci, ed io non volevo assolutamente perdere la voce maschile di Ginevra. Chissà mai che non arrivi la voce femminile di Giovanni... non si sa, in ogni modo la voce maschile di Ginevra c'era e andava mantenuta. D'altra parte, non potevo non esserci io, per cui la cosa che è stata fatta è questa: sulla coda della versione di "Del Mondo" di Wyatt io ho tradotto la prima parte della canzone "Presidente Mao", e poi ho dichiarato la mia impotenza (giacché io non sono un cantante ma la voce maschile dei CSI) a continuare su questo terreno. Ho trovato la mia occasione, come cantante, per stare zitto una volta. Credo che ci abbiamo guadagnato tutti, compresa la musica.
Che i CSI siano un grande gruppo musicale, non devo dirlo io, che sono l'unico che non ha un'accezione musicale alla storia. Considerare i CSI solo un gruppo musicale è un po' un torto ai CSI ed un torto anche alla musica, perché i CSI riescono a portarsi dietro qualcosa che ha molto più a che fare con la vita che con la musica, che però ha trovato tramite la musica il modo migliore per esprimersi. Non c'è neanche merito, è un dato di fatto. Perciò cose che possono apparire "escamotage" rispetto ad altre situazioni, in realtà rispetto alla storia dei CSI è un problema di cuore, non un problema di convenienza. Uno è padrone di non crederci, io potrei anche non crederci se non riguardasse me. Ma che ci credano gli altri non è significativo, l'importante è che ci crediamo noi.

Giovanni Lindo Ferretti

Robert Wyatt, il mare e io
Attratto da un'aria inclinata - un orizzonte d'autunno, quando il mare somiglia a un enorme meccanismo abbandonato - ho fatto conoscenza con la pendenza delle sue liriche che inclinano come le musiche, alla fine di un'estate. Era, credo, il 1977, io ero ragazzo e musicista, e ascoltai con anni di ritardo "Rock Bottom". La musica di Wyatt aveva su di me un effetto di piccola vertigine poiché parlava eloquentemente e disegnava nella mia testa un paesaggio: quell'orizzonte di mare inclinato, come se tutta l'acqua del mondo si fosse spostata a destra. Poi nel '93, siccome le cose sembrano cambiare nella vita, ma dentro si rimane sempre gli stesso, ho trovato "Dondestan" e ho rivisto quel mare, l'autunno e una lucida malinconica condanna alle 'politiche' sbagliate del mondo. Wyatt per me è un monaco sulla spiaggia, di un ordine inesistente, e la timbrica aliena della sua voce scava con la lentezza inesorabile dell'acqua. Ho voluto dare una luce più cupa del suo "Left Of Man", l'ho voluta più lenta e ossessiva, perché il testo, la sua lucidità è sorprendente, scavasse ancora di più; volevamo mantenere levità, eppure creare un fondale pesante, mantenerci dalle parti di un certo mare generale, massiccio e amaro, nel quale le parole galleggiassero sovvi, cattive, sinistre e convincenti. Lavorare per immagini. Ma per me Wyatt rimane l'esempio di un saggio che mi dà le spalle e fissa attentamente il mare. Un mare minaccioso, inclinato, simbolo totale delle cose da comprendere.

Giancarlo Onorato

Abbiamo scelto un pezzo con una linea melodica che ci piaceva molto. Tranne il bassista, che è un fan di Robert Wyatt, nessuno aveva mai ascoltato l'originale. Credo comunque che l'approccio migliore per rifare un brano è quello di non conoscerlo. In questo modo è molto più divertente lavorare su una canzone scritta da altri. Questo progetto è un sogno di Magnelli e Marocolo ed aver partecipato, anche se in maniera un po' obliqua, al loro sogno, mi fa estremamente piacere. Robert Wyatt è un figo, uno che ha sempre fatto quello che voleva senza compromessi. Ho un grande rispetto per lui. Ho letto da qualche parte che la casa discografica gli aveva bloccato i finaziamenti per "Rock Bottom", e siccome mancavano ancora dei suoni di tromba lui gli ha fatti con la bocca. Il nostro metodo di lavoro al brano è stato un po' inusuale. Abbiamo preso una frase e ci abbiamo ricamato sopra. Non ci interessava lavorare sull'originale, esiste già e non riusciremmo mai a rifarlo così bene. Nel brano c'è Page Hamilton degli Helmet che ha suonato la chitarra, l'attrice giapponese del film "Tokyo Decadence" e i Marlene Kuntz.

Mauro Teho Teardo (Here)

La mia partecipazione è stata una collaborazione ad un brano scelto da Gianfranco Fornaciari. Non conoscevo il lavoro di Wyatt, però mi sono piaciute le sue canzoni che ho successivamente sentito. Mi dispiace non averlo incontrato prima, ma non rientrava nei miei ascolti. Il pezzo nel quale ho cantato mi piace anche se preferisco le cose più strane di Wyatt.

Mirka Valente (Mira Spinosa)

Personalmente non conoscevo Wyatt, ma ho potuto avvicinarmi alla sua musica attraverso Francesco Magnelli. Ci è stato proposto di rifare "Sea Song" e subito ci siamo innamorati di questa canzone. Credo che il tributo a Wyatt sia una bellissima storia ed anche un riconoscimento dovuto ad un grande artista. Wyatt ha delle grandissime melodie vestite in maniera strana e questo lo rende del tutto particolare. Ha sicuramente influenzato tantissimi artisti. Per i Ci S'ha è stato un onore partecipare a questo tributo. "Sea Song" originariamente era suonata con le tastiere, strumento che noi non abbiamo in formazione, quindi abbiamo lavorato sulla melodia riarrangiandola in maniera chitarristica, con un basso che ricorda lontanamente una tastiera.

Massimiliano Gambinossi (Ci S'ha)

Wyatt lo conosciamo dagli anni settanta, dal periodo dei Soft Machine e delle successive trasformazioni. Il brano che abbiamo scelto è stato fatto in tempi strettissimi, anche se ci siamo divertiti moltissimo nel rifarlo. Il pezzo originale aveva le tastiere suonate da Brian Eno, sostituite nella nostra cover da una cornamusa. Il tributo a Robert mi sembra decisamente interessante, è un personaggio importante per la musica degli anni settanta, un artista che successivamente ha influenzato tantissimi musicisti. Credo che gli anni settanta siano stati il periodo più creativo per la musica. Tutto quello che è arrivato dopo deriva da quegli anni.

Franco Parravicini (Dissòi Lògoi)

Faccio musica da più di vent'anni ed ascolto Robert Wyatt dal periodo dei Soft Machine. L'ho poi seguito nei Matching Mole e nella sua attività solistica. Appena ho saputo di questo progetto, che io vedo anche come riconoscimento ad una carriera importantissima, mi sono trovato entusiasta nel parteciparvi. Un plauso al Consorzio che ha pensato di realizzare un tributo a Wyatt. Robert è uno dei pochi artisti che ha sviluppato il concetto di crossover, infatti ha da sempre posseduto l'abilità nel trasformare qualsiasi tipo di genere musicale, dal pop al jazz, in una sua personale forma espressiva. Inoltre Wyatt ha la capacità di circondarsi di musicisti e produttori che valorizzano al meglio le sue idee ed il suo talento. "Memories" è un brano che ho trovato in una raccolta di rarità. La versione che ho preso come riferimento risale al 1974, un periodo molto felice, artisticamente parlando, per Wyatt, ed era interessante perché essendo un pezzo non scritto da lui, ma dal bassista dei Soft Machine, lasciava libero Robert di interpretare la canzone nelle vesti di cantante. Non conoscevo le caratteristiche vocali di Mirga, ma lei ha saputo cantare su una canzone praticamente già costruita su determinate sonorità. Non era facile entrare immediatamente in quello che è lo spirito della canzone. Non posso che farle i miei complimenti.

Gianfranco Fornaciari (In Circolo)

Ho scelto di cantare "Free Wyll And Testament" dall'ultimo cd di Wyatt perché era da diverso tempo che non sentivo un disco così bello. Bello è stato anche cantare con Mara, una voce che amo particolarmente.

Andrea Chimenti

Personalmente conoscevo Robert Wyatt di nome, sapevo che era stato il batterista dei Soft Machine, ma non avevo mai approfondito la sua arte. Magnelli mi ha proposto di rifare "O Caroline" ed io ho accettato subito molto volentieri. Appena mi sono avvicinato a Robert acquistando il suo ultimo lp, mi sono del tutto appassionato a lui, lo trovo incredibile, la sua arte emana delle melodie fantastiche ed una enorme musicalità. Ho cercato di metterci tutto il mio amore nel rifare una sua canzone. Un tributo a lui è un progetto fantastico, Wyatt è un personaggio eccezionale. Abbiamo cercato di riprendere lo spirito freak di "O Caroline", suonaldola con un tono un po' più scanzonato, chitarra acustica, batteria (che manca nell'originale). Mi fa molto piacere che la mia cover sia stata scelta come primo singolo. Posso solo dire che ho grande stima per tutto il Consorzio e per il loro lavoro.

Max Gazzé

> Zoom

Cominciai a interessarmi a una seria attività rivoluzionaria che portasse al cambiamento del potere".

Nel 1978 iniziò così per Robert un'intensa attività parallela alla musica. Robert e Alfie iniziarono a frequentare l'Open University assistendo a lezioni, assemblee, convegni sulla comunicazione, la politica e sul rapporto tra l'Europa e gli altri paesi.

R.W: "Questo diventò per me molto più interessante che stare con i musicisti e suonare strumenti. In quel periodo incominciammo ad andare al London film Festival, una vera esperienza psichedelica. Abbiamo visto 30 film in 15 giorni, anche provenienti dal Senegal o Giava. E' stata un'esperienza straordinaria, una raffica di stimoli che non sentivo dalla scoperta del jazz da adolescente."

Nel dicembre del 1978 partecipò all'lp di Brian Eno "Music For Airports". Soddisfazione alternativa la trovava leggendo, ascoltando trasmissioni radio a onde corte dalle nazioni del secondo e terzo mondo e iniziando a scrivere con prigionieri politici. Questa attività portò Robert a iscriversi al Partito Comunista nel 1979.
Nel 1980 Robert partecipò a un 45 giri "Arauco/Caimenera", canzone folk che esortava i grandi capi indiani a liberarsi dai colonialisti. Fece una versione di "Guantanamera", l'inno nazionale cubano.

R.W:" Ho deciso di cantarlo perché si è scritto tanto delle migliaia di cubani che hanno lasciato Cuba e io pensai di dover cantare per i milioni di cubani rimasti."



Partecipò ad altri progetti politicamente impegnati.
Il 1981 fu un anno molto intenso in cui Robert partecipò a molte registrazioni con diversi gruppi come gli Scritti Politti.
Partecipò a una trasmissione radio e nell'agosto prese parte a una session per "The Animal Film" con Julie Christie, un lungometraggio sulla natura umana e sulle atrocità che l'uomo infligge sugli animali.

R.W:" Il jazz fa parte della mia cultura, ma l'unica cosa che mi suona convincente è quello che faccio. Non sono un nero americano di Harlem, sono un tipo inglese nato nel 1945. E' stato un lungo processo trovare la mia voce".

Nel 1982 partecipò a un 45 giri, "Man To Women" per Marsha Hunt, ma non fu portato a compimento. Partecipò al disco degli Scritti Politti e registrò due canzoni, mentre a luglio con Elvis Costello registrò "Shipbuilding".

Elvis Costello: "E' stata un'esperienza molto bella per me sia come produttore che come cantante: la voce di Robert con quei suoi toni malinconici ha incantato chiunque lo ascoltasse, tanto che il lato "politico" della canzone è passato in secondo piano".

R.W: "Mentre la maggior parte dei compositori crea le proprie idee mentre é sotto la doccia, nel bagno o in mezzo al traffico, io che sono molto eccentrico cerco di esprimermi quando siedo al piano e mi metto a comporre".

Grazie alle vendite del 45 giri di "Shipbuilding" Robert e Alfie interruppero le loro vacanze per una serie di interviste alla radio e alla televisione, sui giornali di musica pop. Il 29 maggio partecipò con Elvis Costello al video di "Shipbuilding"
In autunno registrò un disco con i Working Week e "Venceremos / Bottom End" dedicato al popolo del Cile e alla memoria di Victor Jara.
Nel dicembre registrò "Amber And The Amberines" che sta per Granada e Granadesi: é il nome di una prova militare per partecipare ad un'eventuale invasione di un'isola caraibica. Dopo l'invasione americana di Granada Robert e Alfie andarono a protestare all'ambasciata e li incontrarono Chris Searle che, sconvolto dall'accaduto, disse che voleva fare una canzone. Così avvenne.

R.W: "Il mio rapporto con la musica é molto tradizionale. Penso agli accordi, alle armonie, al ritmo, al tono. Poi cerco di cantare e subentra l'energia emotiva. Non mi indirizzo consapevolmente verso uno stile preciso. Quello che faccio é più o meno prevedibile. Non faccio parte dell'innovazione."

Nella primavera del 1984 registrò un disco di cover dal titolo " Work In Progress". I pezzi che lo copongono sono "Biko" (Peter Gabriel), "Yolanda" (Pablo Milanes), "Te Recuerdo Amanda" (Victor Jara), "War Without Blood" (Sconosciuto)

R.W: "In questo periodo ho deciso di cantare canzoni di protesta tra cui "Biko" che era un pacifista che non ha mai partecipato ad un'azione criminosa prima di essere condannato a morte. Hanno dovuto reinterpretare le leggi del Sud Africa in seguito, per giustificare la sua morte."

Il 19 giugno registra "This Is The End" Robert suona e alla voce c'é Alfie.

"Questa canzone significa molto per me perché mia moglie é la persona che ha dato più senso alla mia vita".

Nell'ottobre registrò "The Last Nightingale" un ep i cui proventi andarono a sostenere lo sciopero dei minatori inglesi.
Il 14 novembre cominciarono le registrazioni per il nuovo lp "Old Rottenhat" dedicato a Michael Bettany: era un inglese che proveniva dalla classe operaia, era un conservatore e fece carriera nel servizio civile britannico. Quando arrivò a un'alta carica fu tradito e alla fine fu imprigionato per alto tradimento per aver dato informazioni ai russi che non erano altro che agenti del controspionaggio.



Old Rottenhat

R.W: "A me risulta difficile comporre musica, ecco perché preferisco fare cover o entrare in progetti di altri. La parola "creatività" é una mistificazione. Per me è come pescare, dondolare una linea su una tastiera sperando che accada qualcosa."

Nell"agosto del 1986 partecipò al cd di Paul Haines "Darn It!" che comprendeva poesie di Paul Haines musicate da vari artisti tra cui Carla Bley, Jack Bruce e altri.
Nel novembre il regista Juan Bufill girò un film intitolato "The Voyage Of Robert Wyatt", un profilo sulla sua carriera.

R.W: "Penso che la voce sia uno strumento interessante perché é l'unico strumento che ognuno può usare in qualsiasi modo. Qualsiasi "rumore" fa la voce, questo non é mai secondario al significato delle parole. In questo senso é uno strumento molto ricco, ma anche molto difficile. Un tempo io usavo la voce cercando di essere simile a uno strumento. Pensavo che fosse da eccentrici solo sviluppare velocità e estensione di ottave. Mi imbarazza ascoltare quei cantanti che fanno cose con la voce come non farebbero mai in una conversazione telefonica, mi sembra un po' una limitazione. Io canto come parlo."

Nel febbraio del 1987 a Barcellona partecipò al cd "Repulsion" dei Claustrophobia.
Nello stesso anno Robert e Alfie cambiarono casa e si trasferirono da Twickenam a Louth, una cittadina di campagna nel Lincolnshire. Robert lasciò il partito comunista.

Nel 1988 partecipò al "Cospiracy International Project", lp realizzato con C. Carter.

R.W: "Fu la prima volta che la mia voce fu trattata come si fa quando si campiona: avevano dei nastri che tagliavano in piccoli frammenti e li ricucivano sulla base. Fu una reale collaborazione".

Nel 1989 Robert lavorò per il disco di Ryuichi Sakamoto " Beauty"

R. Sakamoto:" Lo conoscevo dai tempi dei Soft Machine ma la cosa che mi piaceva di più era il suo singolo "At Last I 'm Free". Avevo bisogno della voce più triste del mondo per cantare "We Love You", una canzone sull'amore. E quella era la sua voce."

Gigi Marinoni pubblica in quell'anno il libro di Robert Wyatt su Stampa Alternativa con intervista e foto.

R.W.: "Prima di tutto il resto io sono un vero minimalista perché le mie composizioni rimangono essenziali. Conosco dei musicisti che dicono di essere minimalisti ma in realtà fanno solo grosse quantità di minimalismo".

Il 18 febbraio 1991 iniziarono le registrazioni di "Dondestan" al Chapel Studios.

R.W: "In generale io suono gli strumenti da solo perché credo di riuscire a dare più personalità alla mia musica, non certo perché credo di suonare meglio di un bassista o di un pianista. Il lato nuovo di questo lavoro é che i testi delle canzoni erano delle poesie di Alfie; mi piacciono molto le sue poesie perché c'é molto di non detto. Chiamai il disco "Dondestan" perché aveva un doppio significato: in spagnolo significa "dove stai andando" e, sempre in spagnolo, ricorda qualcosa della repubblica euroasiatica. Qualcosa come dichiarare se stessi indipendenti da qualcuno o qualcosa. Io spesso mi sento in esilio da non so quale paese e anche tante persone che conosco sembrano essere degli esiliati. E' un disco sulla mancanza di radici, questo lo si sente sia nelle canzoni che nei testi di mia moglie".

Robert, Alfie e altri collaboratori cominciarono a lavorare a un film su "Dondestan" che poi venne trasmesso da molte televisioni europee.

> Zoom

R.W: "La mia esperienza soggettiva é probabilmente poco attendibile, come quella di qualsiasi persona. Non vorrei sapere cosa cambierebbe se scrivessi la mia storia, anche perché ho cercato di cancellare le esperienze più terribili dalla banca della mia memoria per riguadagnare la fiducia in me stesso, a spese della verità obiettiva".

Dopo una pausa di qualche stagione Robert è rientrato in studio di registrazione, tra l'inverno e la primavera del 1996. L'anno successivo è quindi uscito "Shleep" pubblicato dalla Rykodisc (che ha reso disponibili proprio in queste settimane altri cinque



Shleep

vecchi album di Wyatt). "Shleep" vede la partecipazione di vecchi e nuovi amici, da Phil Manzanera a Brian Eno, da Evan Parker a Paul Weller, da Philip Catherine a Chikako Sato, da Alfreda Benge a Annie Whitehead. Il nuovo disco di Robert è stato salutato con copertine su riviste specializzate, recensioni entusiastiche, complimenti e retrospettive.

R.W.: "Phil Manzanera mi ha generosamente ospitato nel suo studio, il Gallery, e ho così potuto lavorare senza l'assillo di guardare l'orologio. Ho scritto e composto in un ambiente rilassato come se fossi rimasto nello studio di casa. Inoltre sono rimasto molto contento che alcuni musicisti, amici vecchi e nuovi, siano passati a dare una ventata di freschezza al mio lavoro. Tutte queste collaborazioni sono arrivate in maniera molto naturale, senza forzature da parte di nessuno".

Nel 1997 Robert partecipa ad un convegno al Salone della Musica di Torino, dove incontra/conosce i C.S.I.

Nell'ottobre del 1998 esce "The Different You - Robert Wyatt E Noi".



The Different You - Robert Wyatt E Noi

Il Vento Del Lincolnshire

Un vento fortissimo batteva l'asfalto mentre arrivavamo a Cleetorphes, tanto che era difficile da parte di mio fratello Roberto tener dritta l'automobile. Ci siamo fermati, appena fuori città, per fare una ripresa del paesaggio e Carlo aveva le mani gelate. Non appena arrivati a casa di Robert Wyatt lui ci ha detto: "Is the wind of Lincolnshire". Nonostante Robert si sia rivelato sin dai primi istanti una persona estremamente disponibile è stato comunque necessario, almeno da parte mia, che trascorresse un po' di tempo per far coincidere la percezione diretta del personaggio con quanto fino ad allora da me immaginato. Robert e Alfie (sua moglie) si sono adoperati affinché l'imbarazzo iniziale svanisse quanto prima e lui ci ha descritto il suo primo drum kit formato da uno stendibiancheria con fili di metallo e da una vecchia Olivetti di suo padre. Non è più riuscito a riprodurre un suono per lui così "giusto". Mentre continuava a raccontarci delle origini della sua carriera, ha sfogliato la sua rubrica e ci ha fornito contatti utili per il proseguo del nostro lavoro. Singolare è il ritratto che ci ha fatto di Jimy Hendrix da lui considerato come un adulto in mezzo ad un gruppo di ragazzini, personaggio camaleontico in grado di avere rispetto e di trasformare la sua musica a secondo del tipo di platea che aveva di fronte. Un'altra curiosità è stata quella di apprendere che Robert ha un cofanetto di dieci dischi con tutte le canzoni di Roberto Murolo, del quale ammira l'assoluta autenticità. A suo parere la totale organicità del lavoro di Murolo deriva dal suonare e cantare le canzoni tutte allo stesso modo. Alfie ci ha raccontato di quando Robert, all'inizio della loro relazione, si è letteralmente "piazzato" nella sua casa con l'intento di non allontanarsene fino a quando non avesse terminato di ascoltare tutta la collezione di dischi jazz. Il passatempo di Robert, quando si trova nella sua casa al mare, è il birdwatchin', come un naturalista in erba, si diletta nella arte della classificazione. Forse un po' per deformazione professionale, un po' per magia, segue l'evoluzione del canto nelle diverse specie. Un ritmo di bossanova accennato da Robert sul tavolo della sala da pranzo, Alfie stappa una bottiglia di vino rosso e Carlo segue il ritmo di bossanova fuori tempo, ma Robert continua impassibile ormai completamente immerso nel fluire metronometrico del suo tempo. Non esistono distinzioni di stile nella sua poetica musicale, ma una continua compenetrazione tra elementi colti e popolari, tra armonie arcaiche e tempi in undici quarti, tra introspezioni filosofiche e sottile ironia politica. "I valori secolari della famiglia cristiana, ma quali valori!....They haven't read the book". Soup Song, vi sembrerà curioso, ma quel sabato sera Alfie aveva preparato una zuppa di verdure.... There's a mushroom on my eyelid, there's a carrot down my back, I can see in the distance, a vast quantity of beans.....Ed oltre ad essere molti fagioli, la zuppa era effettivamente squisita. Alla fine della giornata, mentre stavamo salutando Roberto ed Alfie, ci siamo resi conto che il vento non aveva cessato di soffiare ed un altro leggero elemento di preoccupazione ci aveva assaliti: dover affrontare nuovamente la terribile M25 una volta arrivati nei pressi di Londra.

Francesco Di Loreto







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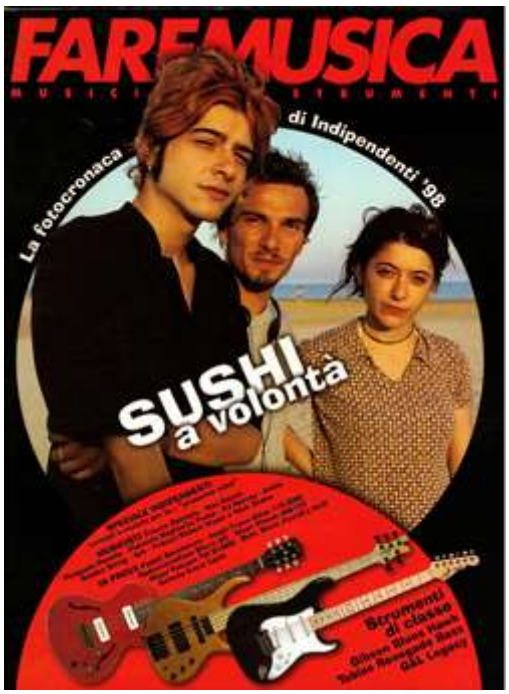
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Io E Robert - Faremusica - N° 202 - 1998

PROGETTI Il Consorzio produce Wyatt (e lo presenta a Fare Musica)

IO E ROBERT



A pensarci meglio fu Piero Pelù a farmi riscoprire Moon in June dei Soft Machine e a farmi tornare la voglia di riscoprire quegli anni '70 che avevo liquidato troppo frettolosamente ma che in realtà mi avevano formato musicalmente. L'approccio alla musica totalmente libero da schemi, pregiudizi, mode, con le sue immancabili implicazioni sociali, filosofiche, politiche e la speranza di un mondo dove la creatività non aveva limiti, dove il "mercato" non esisteva, dove ai concerti non si pagava dove la musica era di tutti! Si suonava per comunicare e per esprimersi, per entrare in contatto con gli altri, e soprattutto si sperimentava e forse si osava di più. Molto di più. Intendiamoci, io ero ancora un pischello, ma mentre ascoltavo la hit parade di Luttazzi e mi sorbivo Canzonissima alla tv ero terribilmente attratto e affascinato da questi capelloni che cercavano di cambiare il mondo al grido di Love and Peace!

Più vedevo i capelli a caschetto di Paul Mac Cartney e il caschetto della Caselli, più adoravo i Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, i Black Sabbath, gli Who, i Soft Machine, i Rolling Stones e se al cinema andava per la maggiore il Morandi "soldato innamorato, non degno di lei", per me esistevano soltanto Tommy, P.F. at Pompei, Monterey, Woodstock. Poi d'improvviso il buio... il terrorismo, la violenza, la paura. Non capivo bene cosa succedeva, e ascoltavo musica, ascoltavo Wyatt.

Poi gli anni '80... il punk, la wave, i Litfiba. In quel periodo ricordo che Wyatt lasciò i Soft Machine e dopo l'esperienza con i Matching Mole e il grave incidente, iniziò un nuovo percorso come solista minimalista, quello che più adoro e a cui sono più legato.

Ho passato tre anni in giro a suonare all'estero e ho di quel periodo un ricordo bellissimo, scalfito in modo indelebile nel cuore. Sette amici in viaggio su un vecchio 242 scassato a 80 orari per l'Europa, poi l'Australia, il Canada, l'Unione Sovietica. La colonna sonora, sempre la stessa: Robert Wyatt, giorno e notte...

DI GIANNI MAROCCOLO

Mi ritrovavo spesso ad ascoltare i suoi dischi con Aiazzi e con Magnelli e a passare con loro nottate a discutere delle sue melodie, dei suoi testi, degli arrangiamenti. Ascoltavo Wyatt quando decisi di lasciare i Litfiba. In volo per Mosca le cuffiette del mio walkman amplificavano le note di *Old Rottenhat* mentre io e Zamboni senza rendercene ancora conto, parlavamo già del Csi. Mi rendo conto che Wyatt è stato ed è per me una sorta di "faro" in mezzo alla nebbia, un punto di riferimento costante da sempre presente nella mia vita e nel mio percorso musicale. Ma oltre che prezioso compagno di viaggio, uno dei più grandi musicisti contemporanei, da accomunare come intensità e spessore a Frank Zappa, Philip Glass, Brian Eno, Charlie Mingus. Una voce assolutamente unica capace di arrivarti dritta al cuore qualsiasi cosa canti e con un espressività che sembra venire dal profondo dell'anima. Un uomo che con amore si è sempre impegnato contro l'ingiustizia e per la salvaguardia dei diritti civili nel mondo.



GIANNI MAROCCOLO, EMOZIONATO, AL COSPETTO DEL MAESTRO

Una persona buona, umile, disponibile, discreta. Ho sempre amato la sua musica, la sua voce, ma forse quello che più mi lega a Wyatt è la malinconia. Niente a che vedere con la tristezza sia chiaro, la malinconia è un sentimento meraviglioso. Va aldilà del triste, dell'"allegro" e credo possa avere a che fare con la sensibilità di ognuno di noi, con la nostra capacità (o volontà?) di conoscere, di capire, di scavare a fondo.



ROBERT WYATT; IN BASSO A DESTRA, DISEGNI DELLA MOGLIE ALFIE.

Sensibilità appunto e amore totale. Condizioni dell'animo/a con le quali si affronta la vita, l'arte, la musica e che spesso diventano scintille essenziali, come nel caso di Wyatt, di una creatività e di un talento che non ha paragone alcuno nella storia della musica contemporanea.



The Different You nasce da una sorta di debito personale nel confronti di questo grande artista a cui devo molto. Quando io e Francesco decidemmo di mettere in piedi questo omaggio a Wyatt, avevo paura di non farcela ad arrivare in fondo... coinvolgere trenta artisti non è facile, e poi, liberatorie, contratti, discografici perplessi, fans puristi incazzati e col fucile puntato, critiche di ogni genere... e invece... l'unica cosa che conta ora è che ciò che abbiamo fatto piaccia a Robert Wyatt. Di questo breve viaggio ho già dei bellissimi ricordi, primo fra tutti il nostro incontro con Wyatt al Salone della Musica. E poi... leggere la lettera di Wyatt che ci comunica di voler cantare *Del Mondo*, ascoltare il provino per telefono in religioso silenzio con Wyatt che poi domanda se il suo italiano è corretto e si scusa per averci chiamato dieci minuti in ritardo perché impegnato nell'ascolto di un disco di Leonard Cohen - che non poteva interrompere prima

della fine. E poi... arriva la prima canzone, *Yolanda*, con Lorenzo che ci chiama alle quattro di mattina per sapere se ci è piaciuta. E poi...

Gianni Maroccolo



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Melodie per sogni interattivi - Faremusica - N° 192 - Novembre 1997

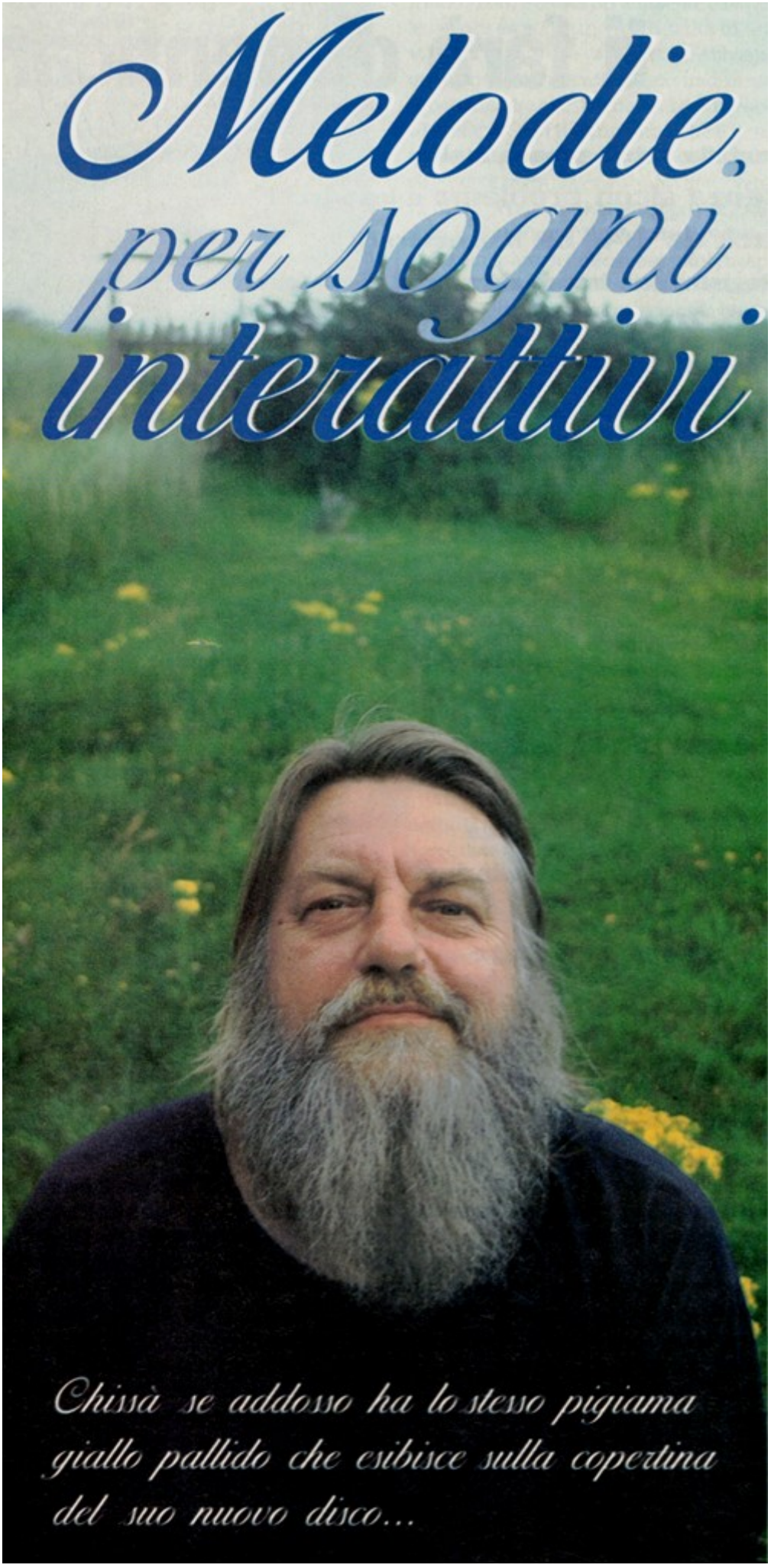


Melodie per sogni interattivi

de Elio Bussolino

COPERTINA Robert Wyatt

Melodie per sogni interattivi



Chissà se addosso ha lo stesso pigiama giallo pallido che esibisce sulla copertina del suo nuovo disco...

"Più comodo di così non potrei essere", ci assicura subito Robert Wyatt all'altro capo del telefono. L'abbiamo raggiunto a casa sua qualche giorno prima dell'uscita di *Shleep*, l'album che rompe un'altra delle sue ormai abituali e lunghissime pause discografiche e, benché l'orologio segni quasi le tre del pomeriggio, la voce che Ryuichi Sakamoto ebbe a definire come la "più triste del pianeta" ci confessa di essere ancora a letto e con una fumante tazza di tè a portata di mano. Naturalmente, la sua non è pigrizia: noi non siamo davvero i soli ad aver voglia di parlare con lui dopo tanto tempo e la sua infermità lo porta a stancarsi molto facilmente.

Non a scalfire l'amabilità della persona, tuttavia, quella mitezza di maniere che la sua voce fragile lascia trasparire ogni volta dalle canzoni che intona.

Tanto che conversare con lui diventa presto piacevole almeno quanto ascoltare quelle asimmetriche, delicate e preziose melodie alle quali ci ha abituati.

Molto spesso il processo creativo che conduce alla realizzazione di un album è descritto con la metafora del viaggio. Ebbene, se tale immagine può adattarsi anche al tuo caso, vuoi raccontarci da dove *Shleep* è partito e quali sono state le sue tappe principali?

"In questi anni ho sempre continuato a scrivere canzoni. L'ho fatto ogni volta che pensavo di avere una buona idea in testa e senza finalizzare per forza la cosa ad un nuovo album. Questo almeno fino ad un paio d'anni fa, quando in seguito ad un incidente ho cominciato a patire per un brutto esaurimento nervoso. Questo mi ha letteralmente bloccato e gettato nel panico: non ero più sicuro di nulla, niente riusciva a soddisfarmi davvero e avevo l'impressione sempre più nitida di essermi avviato verso un lento e irreversibile destino. La mia fortuna è stata quella di avere degli ottimi amici intorno a me, gente che mi ha aiutato a superare quei momenti con grande pazienza e dedizione. In questo senso direi che questo disco è proprio il frutto generato dall'enorme aiuto che queste persone hanno saputo darmi tanto sul piano spirituale che su quello materiale. Non credo di aver mai avuto una compagnia altrettanto numerosa di quella coinvolta nelle canzoni di questo disco e la cosa si spiega per l'appunto con il grande bisogno che avevo di sentirmi qualcuno sempre vicino. Per quanto riguarda il materiale riunito in *Shleep*, una parte risale addirittura al periodo di *Dondestan*. E' questo il caso di *Alien*, un tema che avevo scritto insieme alle canzoni di quel disco, ma rimasto a lungo senza un testo. Alla fine l'ho passato a mia moglie Alfie, perché provasse lei a comporre dei versi adatti, una cosa che non faccio normalmente perché in genere sono io ad adattare le sue parole alla musica che scrivo.

Così avevo fatto per i testi di *Dondestan* e così ho fatto anche per quelli del nuovo album. Ormai ho realizzato che le sue poesie ispirano la mia musica molto più facilmente dei versi che posso scrivere io, probabilmente perché hanno un suono molto più naturale, evocano immagini molto più chiare e precise di quelle che sono in grado di descrivere con le mie parole. Un altro aiuto fondamentale alla realizzazione di questo disco è venuto poi da Phil Manzanera, che mi ha messo a disposizione il suo studio senza alcun limite di tempo. Questo è importantissimo per me, visto che sono tutt'altro che veloce nel lavoro di registrazione, che non sono mai completamente soddisfatto di quello che faccio."

Vien quasi da concludere che senza l'aiuto di Alfie avremmo dovuto aspettare ancora a lungo questo disco.

"Questo è sicuro. Del resto è così dai tempi di *Rock Bottom*, e anche se Alfie stavolta non canta, posso tranquillamente affermare che il disco è suo almeno al cinquanta per cento."

Nelle note di copertina hai scritto di aver passato intere settimane insonni nel tentativo di scrivere i versi di una canzone: non trovi che sia un prezzo troppo alto da pagare quando puoi in effetti contare sempre sul suo aiuto?

Robert Wyatt non trattiene una risata prima di rispondere: "Credo che tu abbia perfettamente ragione. Il fatto è che non sempre Alfie è contenta del modo in cui io uso le sue poesie e allora per evitare lunghe discussioni con lei cerco di arrangiarmi da solo."

Continuiamo a parlare di testi. L'impressione è che man mano che passano gli anni la politica trovi sempre meno spazio nelle tue canzoni. Come lo spieghi? "

Uhm, a dir la verità, questo non è esattamente ciò che sento dentro di me. Ovviamente non posso e non voglio scrivere la stessa canzone due volte. Tornando indietro agli anni'80,

credo di essere stato sottoposto a pressioni troppo pesanti affinché mi facessi portavoce delle istanza contro la politica della destra conservatrice in Gran Bretagna e questo mi ha portato ad essere via via più cauto, a mettermi sulla difensiva nel timore, per altro più che teorico, di venir strumentalizzato. E tutto questo è emerso in maniera sempre più evidente nelle mie canzoni, ma anche nella vita di tutti i giorni. E tuttavia posso dire in tutta sincerità che tutto ciò che scrivo e osservo nelle mie canzoni continua a riflettere completamente la me opinioni politiche, è parte imprescindibile di esse, del modo in cui io vedo i rapporti fra le classi, le relazioni fra il poter politico e quello economico. Io credo sia molto difficile comprenderle senza cogliere anche il marxista che c'è in me. Anche quando non sto parlando esattamente di politica. Il fatto è che da essa non si può prescindere. La politica dovrebbe aiutare tutti a vivere meglio ed è certamente parte di ogni momento della mia vita, anche se non direi che è la sola cosa di cui valga la pena di parlare."

Ne parliamo ancora, tuttavia, perché mi piacerebbe conoscere il tuo giudizio sui primi mesi di governo del Partito Laburista?

"Guarda, ad essere completamente sincero, mi hanno interessato molto di più i risultati delle elezioni francesi che non di quelle che si sono svolte in Inghilterra. Il fatto è che secondo me si esagera l'effettivo peso politico del mio paese. Quando seguo i vari meetings dei primi ministri delle grandi potenze industriali, non faccio altro che sentire parlare della Bundesbank, dell'euro e del deficit pubblico di questo o di quel paese. Mai una volta che riesca a leggere o ad ascoltare le opinioni della gente comune. E' come se il mondo fosse abitato soltanto da banchieri! In ogni caso, quello che avverto intorno a me è un clima sicuramente più sereno, la gente sembra aver ritrovato un po' più di fiducia nel futuro e questo senso direi che è anche merito del cambiamento del partito alla guida del governo."

Una curiosità: non hai messo una "h" di troppo nel titolo del nuovo disco?

"Si, è vero: quella parola in effetti non esiste in nessun dizionario inglese. Sovente mi piace inventarne di nuove e quella in particolare allude ad una sorta di sonno interattivo, e dunque anche a dei mondi interattivi. "

The Whole Point Of No Reuturn è il solo brano dell'album a non portare la tua firma, ma quella di Paul Weller: è quello un segno in più della tua ammirazione per lui?

"Certamente. Io gli sono molto grato per aver accettato di darmi una mano nel disco senza chiedere nulla per sé. E' un eccellente musicista e soprattutto una persona molto cordiale e disponibile. Ho riscontrato in lui un'attitudine, una serietà professionale assolutamente ineccepibili, doti abbastanza rare in altri personaggi che godono di analoga fama e così presi dal loro ruolo pubblico da finir spesso per posare soltanto e diventare antipatici e noiosi. Don Elvis Costello e Jerry Dammers lui è ino dei pochi musicisti appartenenti ad ina generazione diversa dalla mia che io timo moltissimo. "

La prova che i vecchi amici non si dinenticano mai viene invece da Was A Friend, la canzone che hai scritto insiene a Hugh Hopper, tuo vecchio compagno nei Soft Machine, Come mai, però, ui non ha partecipato alla registrazione di quel brano?

"Il fatto è che io vivo nel nord dell'Inghilterra, piuttosto lontano da tutti i muicisti che conosco, tutta gente che in efetti abita nel Sud del paese. I miei contati con loro sono per altro molto sporadici e spesso quando decido di cercarli scopro :he hanno cambiato indirizzo e numero li telefono. Questo è precisamente quanto ! successo quando ho cercato di rintracciare Hugh. Ma poi, vedi, inizialmente per j juesto disco non ho chiesto nulla a nessuno. Volevo fare tutto da solo, perché questo mi avrebbe obbligato a dare il massimo di me stesso. Mi sono rivolto ad altre tersone solo quando mi accorgevo che da olo non ce l'avrei fatta ad ottenere esattamente quello che volevo."

Hai mai sentito il desiderio di rimettere insieme i Soft Machine?

"Guarda, io da quel gruppo sono stato buttato fuori e neppure adesso ne conosco le ragioni. Nessuno mi ha mai spiegato nulla. Non ero più utile a una band che diventava sempre più sofisticata, mentre ai loro occhi io ero una persona troppo impulsiva, primitiva e in sostanza incontrollabile. Tranne Hugh, degli altri ho perso completamente le tracce e non so nemmeno che cosa facciano ora. Al contrario ho mantenuto buoni rapporti sul piano musicale e personale con molte persone che hanno collaborato con me successivamente: Mike Mantler e Carla Bley, John Greaves e diversi musicisti sudafricani."

Torniamo a parlare delle canzoni di *Shleep* e di *The Duchess* in particolare. A me suona come una filastrocca per l'infanzia: era giusto quello il modello al quale ti

sei ispirato?

"Si, effettivamente si tratta di una filastrocca per bambini. Io amo molto quel genere di composizioni, perché rimanda alle radici più autentiche della musica popolare. Esiste una filastrocca molto antica su un duca assai stolto ed è a quella che mi sono ispirato per scrivere *The Duchess*. La mia storia riguarda una duchessa molto astuta, ma in fondo si tratta della stessa cosa. Io amo molto i contrasti fra gli elementi di una canzone e qui per esempio ho cercato di contrapporre l'estrema semplicità delle parole a una certa ricercatezza della musica."

Mentre scorrevo le tue note relative alla stesura di *September The Ninth*, non ho potuto fare a meno di ripensare a certe scene di *Uccelli*, il film di Alfred Hitchcock. Immagino che anche tu abbia avvertito le medesime suggestioni quando ti sei vista la casa completamente assediata da passeri e rondoni. E' così?

"In realtà, io ho avertito una sensazione completamente opposta: a me sembrava che tutti quegli uccelli fossero lì per manifestare amore e amicizia. Io credo che Hitchcock avesse un po' umanizzato i suoi uccelli, così come ha fatto Spielberg con lo squalo di *Jaws*. Quel che voglio dire è che ciò che lui ha descritto come qualcosa di minaccioso e alieno, io e Alfie lo abbiamo vissuto come vicino e solidale. E' bello poter condividere lo stesso pianeta con queste creature."

Non ci sono cover versions nel programma del nuovo disco: hai forse perso interesse per questo genere di cose?

"Il fatto è che diversi di questi brani sono frutto di collaborazioni con altre persone e, in un certo senso, è un po' come se io interpretassi qualcosa che ti porta a cercare di entrare nel personale mondo poetico di un autore e io credo di aver fatto proprio questo mentre lavoravo con i vari Paul Weller, Philip Catherine, Mark Kramer su queste canzoni. Il brano di Paul Weller che hai già menzionato è poi una sorta di scherzoso tributo a Bob Dylan. O almeno così noi l'abbiamo voluto intendere."

C'è qualcosa di particolarmente stimolante per te nella musica di oggi?

"Francamente non saprei proprio che cosa rispondere. La cosa certa è che la mia collezione di dischi diventa sempre più vecchia. La musica per me è qualcosa che trascende la categoria temporale, qualcosa completamente separato dalle varie mode del momento. Nella mia testa la musica ha sempre continuato a circolare con molta lentezza e non ha mai avuto nulla a che fare con i successi radiofonici della settimana o cose del genere. A me sono sempre interessate le sue caratteristiche più intime e essenziali. Anche se ascolto continuamente musica, quando compongo non ho mai in mente dei modelli precisi. La sola cosa che seguo sono le idee che mi passano per la testa, e la maggior parte di esse arrivano direttamente dalla musica che ascoltavo quand'ero ancora un ragazzino."

Forse mai come in questo periodo musica popolare ed establishment son venuti a trovarso tanto vicini. Penso pe resempio ai reciproci e reiterati attestati di stima fra Noel Gallagher e Tony Blair, ma anche all'attuale assenza di una scena musicale alternativa davvero influente. Che cosa pensi tu a queso riguardo?

"Forse mi sbaglio, ma mi sembra di ricordare che Frank Sinatra, per esempio, fosse sempre molto amico del presidente degli Stati Uniti e che anche Bach fosse molto legato alle massime autorità del suo paese. Tutto sommato, non mi sembra una gran novità che pop music e establishment vadano d'amore e d'accordo. L'idea che la musica popolare sia qualcosa di intrinsecamente ribelle appartiene ad una visione quanto mai fantasiosa e ottimistica del mondo. Prendi anche uno come Elvis Presley: benché mi piaccia tantissimo, non ho mai trovato nulla di seriamente antagonista e ribelle nelle sue canzoni e nei suoi film. Il fatto che Tony Blair manifesti tanto interesse per il rock è del tutto naturale, visto che verosimilmente è quella la musica con la quale è cresciuto. Non credo proprio che questo dipenda dal fatto che possa avere idee particolarmente alternative o radicali. Paul Weller mi ha raccontato un piccolo aneddoto che riguarda lui e Blair. Poco prima delle elezioni, Tony Blair era capitato nello studio dove egli stava registrando con i Simply Red e Mick Hucknell volle fare le presentazioni. Da buon politico, Blair gli strinse calorosamente la mano, ma Paul si chiede ancora adesso quante delle sue canzoni il futuro primo ministro conoscesse davvero..."

ROBERT WYATT - SHLEEP

Hannibal/I.R.D.

Vola addormentato sul dorso di una grande colomba bianca il Robert Wyatt che la moglie Alfreda Benge ha ritratto sulla copertina di *Shleep*, placido e leggero come le sognanti melodie che lo riportano alla ribalta discografica sei anni dopo l'uscita di *Dondestan*. Sotto di lui le nuvole, un colle verde e un pugno di case: un paesaggio da fiaba per l'infanzia, un quadro idilliaco che parla di grande serenità interiore, di piena e armonica partecipazione alla bellezza della natura. L'impressione è per altro subito confortata dalle veloci note autografe che introducono il disco, dalle parole che il cinquantaduenne musicista di Bristol rivolge all'indirizzo degli amici di vecchia e recente data che gli hanno dato una mano a realizzare queste nuove undici canzoni - da Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno, Hugh Hopper, Evan Parker e Philip Catherine fino a Chucko Merchan, Chikako Sato e Paul Weller - e dalle poche righe vergate per descrivere l'oasi naturalistica all'estuario dell'Humber presso la quale sorge la dacia che ha fornito a lui e alla moglie Alfie gli spunti compositivi per alcuni dei titoli più elegiaci della presente raccolta. Dell'artista inquieto e incontentabile così come del militante comunista che ha riletto e reinterpretato le varie *Venceremos*, *Song For Che*, *Caimanera*, *Biko* e *Shipbuilding*, tuttavia, non si sono perse completamente tracce: ecco allora le lunghe notti insonni passate a contare le pecore e a mettere insieme i versi delle canzoni che non hanno potuto avvalersi del contributo di Alfie o di Hugh Hopper - testimonianza delle quali sono ancora una volta le note di copertina e le parole di *Heaps Of Sheeps* - la febbrile tensione che innerva un brano come *Blues In Bob Minor*, la quasi frenetica cronaca di una gita in compagnia del suocero riassunta in *A Sunday In Madrid* e gli intimi dubbi esistenziali affacciati dal testo di *Free Will And Testament*. Ciò che insieme alle raffinate, ma tutt'altro che impalpabili, partiture di Wyatt impedisce a *Shleep* di insabbiasi nella pura contemplazione di un universo distante e immaginario - *Alien* -, nella nostalgica rimembranza - *Was A Friend* -, o nel deliquio poetico di *September The Ninth*, *Out Of Season* e *Maryan*. E alla fine la gioia di ritrovare la sua voce esile e quasi sempre velata di malinconia, le sue sofisticate armonie, la sua insaziabile voglia di spingere sempre oltre la propria ricerca poetica e musicale, non può fare a meno di accompagnarsi ad una punta di rammarico: quello di sapere che con ogni probabilità Wyatt ci farà attendere un altro lustro abbondante prima di dispensare un altro saggio della sua squisita arte.



OTTO

(E.B.)

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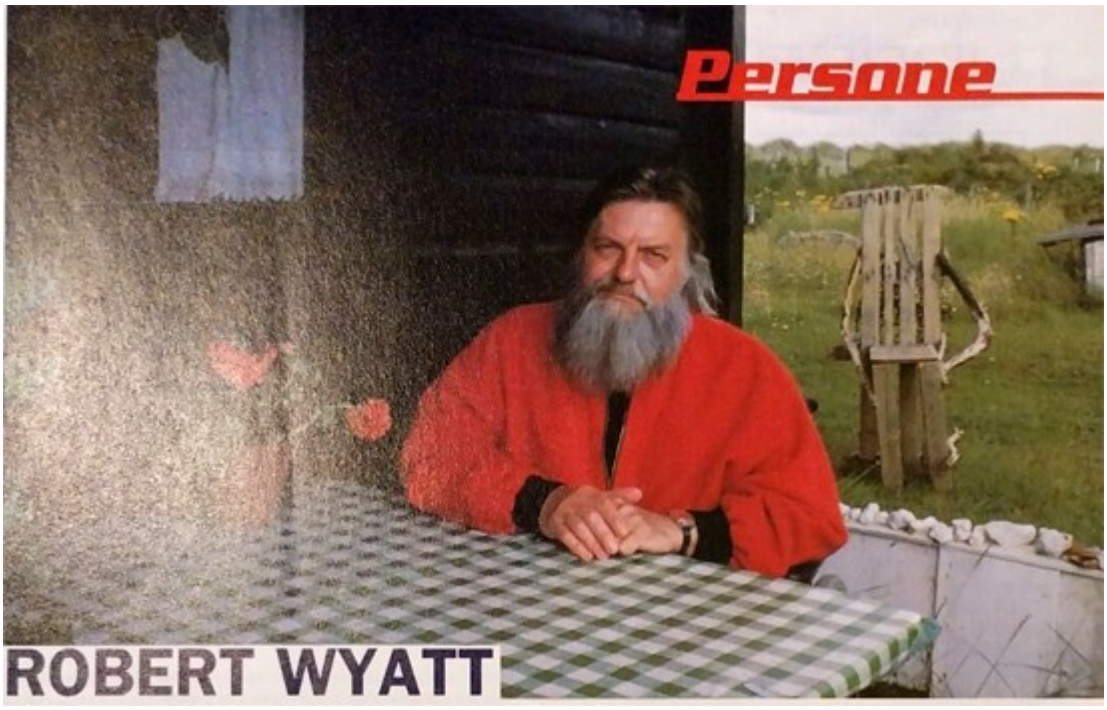
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Robert Wyatt - Persone - Rumore - N° 69 - ottobre 1997



ROBERT WYATT

E' in circolazione un disco nuovo di Robert Wyatt: ecco una notizia. E inoltre, sabato 18 ottobre, l'autore sarà a Torino per la seconda edizione del Salone della Musica. A far che? "Non lo so! Non ne ho la più pallida idea! E' buffo essere convocato in un bel posto e non sapere per quale ragione", risponde. "In realtà credo dì essere stato invitato per partecipare a un incontro pubblico in cui avrò come interlocutore il signor Bertoncelli." Racconterà in quella occasione la sua lunga storia, immaginiamo: una storia cominciata più di trentanni fa... "Per me è stata una vera sorpresa durare cosi a lungo," dice, "non ho condotto un'esistenza molto prudente, infatti." Eccesso degli eccessi, la caduta dal balcone di una casa che ospitava un party "psichedelico": era il 1973. Da allora Wyatt vive su una sedia a rotelle e conduce un'esistenza segnata da disagi e sofferenze. "Sono reduce da un periodo piuttosto difficile," racconta, "un paio di estati fa mi è capitato un incidente, sono caduto dalla sedia e ho dovuto rimanere per un po' in ospedale. E poi ha avuto qualche problema nervoso, una specie di collasso, e per alcune settimane ho sofferto di insonnia.



Ecco perché ho combinato poco ultimamente, avevo perso il ritmo lavorativo. Continuavo a scrivere versi, comunque, e mi sforzavo anche di suonare: alcune delle idee del disco nuovo arrivano proprio di là." Il disco è intitolato Shleep, un vocabolo che non compare in alcun dizionario inglese... "E' una parola che mi piace moltissimo, :anche se non non ha alcun significato preciso. Per me è un modo di definire un sonno agitato, interrotto... E in un altro senso può essere sinonimo di life vita." Un disco denso e struggente come solo i suoi sanno essere: ce n'è a proposito uno del passato a cui Shleep potrebbe essere accostato? "Per certi aspetti direi Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard: anche in quel caso fui aiutato da amici, Brian Eno come adesso, e poi Fred Frith, i due sassofonisti, Gary Windo e George Khan, e ancora Bill McCormick al basso e Laurie Allen alla batteria. Fu una specie di disco 'sociale'." Lo stesso accade in Shleep, alla cui fattura hanno contribuito in forme e misure diverse, oltre a Eno e al suo ex socio di Roxy Music Phil Manzanera, tanto l'onnipresente Paul Weller quanto il jazzista dissidente Evan Parker. Come far convivere caratteri artistici così diversi? "Shleep è forse l'unico luogo dove possono convivere, infatti... Sono stato molto attento nello scegliere come collaboratori persone con cui potessi sentirmi a mio agio, e ovviamente non si sono trovate tutte in studio contemporaneamente, anzi alla fine ciascuna è venuta per conto suo. Quando lavoravo con Brian c'era solo lui, e quando lavoravo con Paul c'era solo Paul: sarebbe stato davvero complicato trovarsi in gruppo, stare insieme nella stessa stanza, avremmo avuto sicuramente problemi di comunicazione." Ovviamente si tratta di un'opera che ha poco a che spartire con lo scenario musicale circostante... "Lo conosco poco, siccome non ascolto più la radio e in televisione seguo soltanto le commedie e i programmi scientifici. Però mi è capitato di ascoltare qualcosa e ci sono artisti che mi piacciono: Björk, per esempio, è un gran personaggio e apprezzo l'attitudine che ha." Che dire allora del Britpop considerato da Tony Blair "una risorsa culturale della nazione"? "Non sapevo avesse detto questo..." A proposito degli Oasis... "Non riesco a pensare in quei termini a cose del genere, mi pare fuori luogo parlare di 'risorse culturali'... E non mi piace questo spirito da conquistatori del pianeta, anzi è esattamente l'opposto di quello che vorrei vedere. Vorrei vedere un'Inghilterra più aperta alle altre culture: ecco una cosa che mi farebbe molto più effetto di questa spavalderia anglofila." Robert Wyatt come outsider, allora? "Una domanda del genere deriva dalia convinzione che ognuno debba avere un'identità precisa da affermare, ma io non ne ho bisogno: uso gli orecchi e gli occhi per avere un contatto con il mondo, non per ascoltare e guardare me stesso."

Alberto Campo

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Robert Wyatt intervista & Robert Wyatt disc jockey - Musiche N°17 - Primavera 1996

INTERVISTA



di Alessandro Achilli, Giacomo Borella e Paolo Chang

Tra la fine di novembre e l'inizio di dicembre 1994, Robert Wyatt era a Milano per la presentazione di *Falsi movimenti*, edizione italiana (pubblicata da Arcana) di *Wrong Movements*, il libro sui suoi trent'anni di carriera scritto da Michael King. Radio Popolare ne ha approfittato per proporgli un'intervista (trasmessa in diretta sabato 3 dicembre da Popolare Network) e un breve ciclo di programmi.

Intervista

Se ci fosse qualcuno in ascolto che non sa chi è Robert Wyatt, come potresti aiutarlo?

Innanzi tutto voglio scusarmi perché non parlo italiano: l'Inghilterra è un Paese barbaro e non capiamo le lingue altrui. Passando alla vostra domanda, purtroppo non ho la minima idea di quel che direi: credo che la cosa migliore sia che Robert Wyatt venga inventato da altri. Non ho un'immagine mentale dell'oggetto dei nostri discorsi e per di più non sono introspettivo. Dunque, non saprei proprio che cosa rispondere a chi mi chiedesse chi ero. Gli direi: "Fammi un'altra domanda, per cortesia" *(ride)*. Ma, seriamente, forse dovrei essere più responsabile: ho passato l'infanzia suonando la batteria e per il resto della mia vita ho continuato a prendere lezioni cantando canzoni.

***Falsi movimenti* è la prima vera biografia che esce su di te. Anni fa, Stampa alternativa pubblicò un libretto che però era dedicato prevalentemente a traduzioni di testi di canzoni. Esistevano già altre biografie?**

No, che io sappia. C'era quello di Stampa alternativa e… Ma non so che cosa sia realmente una biografia o per quale motivo venga in mente a qualcuno di scriverne una o perché qualcuno dovrebbe leggerla ma è bello che ci siano persone a cui interessa. Non penso che si possa scrivere un'autentica biografia perché la mia vita è segreta e strana e neppure io la conosco: dunque, non credo proprio che qualcun altro possa conoscerla.

Infatti Mike King precisa nell'introduzione che non ha voluto scrivere una biografia ma una cronistoria della tua carriera, escludendo i pettegolezzi e tutto quanto non attenesse alla tua musica.

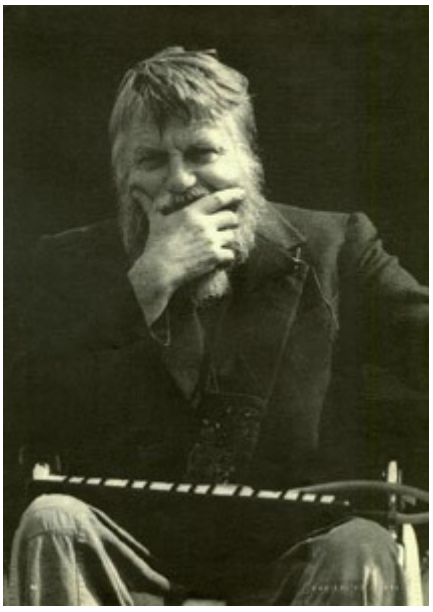
È vero, è così.

Vorremmo chiederti qualche cosa sul tuo rapporto con l'industria discografica, in

questi anni. Sappiamo che ci sono state varie traversie, addirittura cause legali, per la pubblicazione della musica dei Soft Machine. E abbiamo sentito che non ricevete alcunché per le ristampe in cd dei vostri vecchi lavori né - ed è il colmo - per i vari materiali inediti (tipo Wilde Flowers, Matching Mole alla Bbc eccetera) che si vedono oggi in circolazione...

Sì, abbiamo moltissimi problemi. Sapevamo che avevamo perso quasi ogni forma controllo e possibilità di guadagno sui vecchi dischi; non sapevamo che cosa fosse successo ma effettivamente c'erano dischi nostri, a nostro nome, che non avevamo mai visto né ascoltato. Tuttavia, pensavamo: "Quando i dischi verranno ripubblicati in cd, forse potremo riuscire a fare in modo che più persone (noi compresi) ci guadagnino". Il sindacato dei musicisti ha cercato di aiutarci a rintracciare gli impresari e a mettere le case discografiche di fronte alle proprie responsabilità ma sia i manager sia le case discografiche hanno serrato i ranghi e sono spariti tutti alle Bahamas o chissà dove. Non si può combattere contro quella gente: sarebbe proprio una perdita di tempo. Riceviamo soldi per alcune cose: mia moglie Alfie mi ha fatto riconoscere un certo controllo su qualche canzone (o altro) qui e là ma fondamentalmente è tutto un gran casino. Ci vorrebbero non so quanti soldi per intraprendere un'azione legale da cui ottenere un qualche controllo effettivo. Ma non è così per tutti: credo solo che siamo stati sfortunati. **(1)**

Nel 1981 hai effettuato una serie di registrazioni per *Un certo discorso* di Rai Radiotre. Come giudichi l'importanza assunta dalla radio o dalla tivù (vedi Mtv) nella produzione di progetti di molti musicisti (alcuni dei quali vengono poi fatti uscire sul mercato discografico)? (2)



> Zoom

Rimasi davvero impressionato da quel programma. Non riesco a immaginare una trasmissione del genere in Inghilterra o negli Stati Uniti. Trovo che l'idea di coinvolgere un musicista per una settimana, mostrando come lavora, fosse ottima. Sembra che le idee politiche nascano e muoiano senza lasciare traccia ma mi pare che certe teorie sulla democratizzazione dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa avessero guadagnato un po' di terreno qui da voi, anche se so bene che adesso quasi tutte le radio e televisioni italiane sono proprietà di una sola persona, con tutto quello che comporta. In Inghilterra, non sarebbe possibile neppure l'idea di un programma come quello: non ci se l'immagina neanche.

A proposito di radio, su *Falsi movimenti* c'è la traduzione italiana di un tuo articolo - "Voci lontane" - in cui raccontavi il tuo grande innamoramento, all'inizio degli anni ottanta, per l'ascolto delle radio a onde corte e quindi delle trasmissioni da posti lontanissimi del mondo. Puoi parlarci di questa passione? È ancora viva? Da dove arriva?

Allora in Inghilterra c'era la sensazione o, meglio, veniva fatta circolare l'ideologia che il nostro apparato delle comunicazioni di massa fosse molto pluralistico e desse conto di tutti i punti di vista: era una grossa millanteria. In particolare, il Bbc World Service aveva la fama (che resiste tuttora) di faro di verità e luce per il mondo intero. Be', ho avuto esperienze interessanti con le persone del Bbc World Service. Per esempio, poco dopo aver inciso - su Old Rottenhat - una canzone intitolata East Timor (che è una colonia orientale dell'Indonesia), venni intervistato da loro e non mi fu consentito di parlare del commercio d'armi tra l'Inghilterra e l'Indonesia: la maggior parte delle loro armi viene dalla Gran Bretagna. Non mi fu concesso - da quel noto faro di verità che è Bbc World Service - di parlarne. Dunque, quando si ascoltano le radio da altri Paesi ci si rende davvero conto di quanto si possano vedere diversamente le cose. Per esempio, nel periodo delle grande campagna sull'Iran (quando rischiammo forse di entrare in guerra contro di loro) era molto interessante ascoltare la radio iraniana. Non dico che qualcuno possa darti la verità (Radio Mosca, Radio Kabul o chissà chi) ma solo che quando senti i differenti metodi con cui ciascuno cerca di promuoversi - persino i diversi atteggiamenti verso la propaganda e le rispettive idee di "buona propaganda" - intuisci quale varietà di modi di pensare possa esserci al mondo.

L'esperienza dell'ascolto di radio a onde corte ti interessava molto anche dal punto di vista musicale…

Fu particolarmente importante negli anni settanta e ottanta, prima che l'Inghilterra, l'America o il mondo occidentale inventassero la world music: prima dell'invenzione dell'idea, peraltro molto buona, di ascoltare musica da tutto il mondo, se si voleva capire che cosa ascoltassero gli altri popoli era necessario sintonizzarsi sulle stazioni a onde corte. E non solo per la musica in sé: c'erano radio arabe e nordafricane che trasmettevano il canto del Corano, per ore, ed era stupefacente. È un modo completamente diverso di intendere la radio.

Ci viene in mente che su *Flotsam Jetsam* c'è un brano, *War without Blood*, che in origine doveva apparire su *Work in Progress*: abbiamo letto che avevi sentito quella melodia a Radio Mosca e che, dopo averla trascritta e riarrangiata, le avevi adattato un nuovo testo e l'avevi incisa. Che canzone era in origine?

La sentii alla radio e mi piacque tantissimo! La trasmettevano ogni tanto e io me la registrai su una cassetta. Era già una canzone; semplicemente, la trovavo molto piacevole ma non capivo il testo, cantato in russo. È una canzone pop russa e c'è da segnalare un buffo atteggiamento al riguardo. Intanto, si sentiva dire spesso: "Oh, è tremendo all'Est, sai? Non possono procurarsi i dischi rock occidentali!". E io rispondevo: "Avete mai provato a trovare un disco pop russo in Inghilterra? È ancora più difficile!".

E che cosa dice il testo che hai scritto tu?

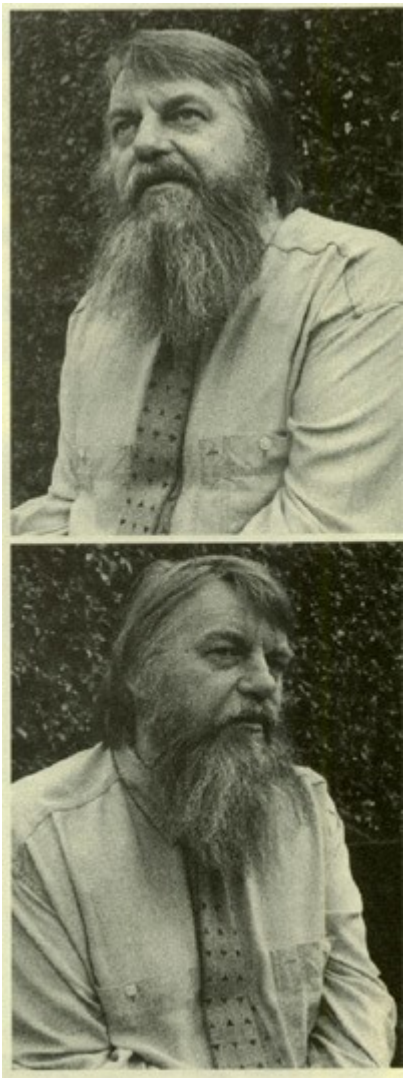
Be', mi pare che alla base ci fosse la mia volontà di scherzare con le idee sulla propaganda, perché un'altra ironia della sorte è che noi parlavamo… Forse gli ascoltatori più giovani non lo sanno ma una delle cose che si dicevano ai vecchi tempi della Guerra fredda era che i malvagi comunisti fossero assai esperti nella propaganda. Pur essendo comunista, devo invece dire che la propaganda comunista era per lo più una stronzata bell'e buona, in confronto alla nostra: non avevano idea di come si facesse. Se si cerca un maestro nella propaganda, bisogna rivolgersi al Papa o a gente del genere. I comunisti non ne hanno idea: innanzi tutto, hanno la tendenza a dichiarare il proprio punto di vista, a dire da che parte stanno. E così è molto facile distruggere le loro argomentazioni, per il fatto stesso che non vengono occultati. Se ci pensate, le argomentazioni della destra non insistono quasi mai sull'importanza delle gerarchie economiche: battono invece sulla religione, sulla famiglia, sulle antiche virtù e su qualunque altra cagata ma mai sul nocciolo della loro ideologia.
In quella canzone scherzavo con l'idea che in realtà sono gli occidentali i maestri della propaganda: intendevo in qualche modo dire che noi occidentali avevamo già vinto una guerra incruenta molto prima del 1989, poiché sappiamo che un'intera generazione di ragazzini russi vuole andare nei McDonald e ascoltare dischi rock occidentali. Ma va bene: se si ritiene che il cibo dei McDonald sia il più straordinario di tutta la storia dell'umanità, allora quella è una grande vittoria. Congratulazioni, capitalismo!

Nel 1984 incidesti due brani insieme a Chris Cutler, Lindsay Cooper, Tim Hodgkinson (ovvero metà degli ex Henry Cow) e Bill Gilonis per sostenere il lunghissimo sciopero dei minatori inglesi contro il governo Thatcher. Che ricordo hai di quell'esperienza, che contribuì a finanziare lo sciopero devolvendo ai minatori gli incassi di tutta la tiratura?

Riascoltare questo brano *(appena trasmesso in radio)* mi ha stupito perché - dato che furono probabilmente vendute tutte le copie, compresa la mia - non lo sentivo da un sacco di tempo. È stato molto bello riascoltarlo. Tantissime persone fecero tutto quel che poterono per sostenere le famiglie dei minatori, perché il governo stava proprio cercando di prenderli per fame. Non era solo questione di dare un pochino d'aiuto, inviando derrate alimentari e altro, ma anche di mostrare alle comunità di minatori che non tutti in Inghilterra volevano annientarle.

Che cosa ti ha lasciato il rapporto con gli ex Henry Cow, protrattosi nel tempo in varie forme?

Ritengo che gli Henry Cow fossero un grande complesso, sia collettivamente sia individualmente: erano e sono musicisti eccezionali e anche i differenti progetti cui si dedicano adesso sono *tutti* interessanti. Fu un vero onore che mi chiedessero di



> Zoom

lavorare con loro. E la musica di Lindsay Cooper è molto interessante. Mi piacque molto tutta l'esperienza con loro e per la verità esistono altri brani registrati con gli Henry Cow, dal vivo eccetera, che non mi pare siano ancora usciti su cd.

Molti di quei lavori sono stati pubblicati da Recommended, l'etichetta fondata da Cutler. Volevamo chiederti la tua opinione circa la scelta di quei musicisti che fondano case discografiche e gestiscono direttamente tutte le fasi del proprio lavoro.

Naturalmente è una buona idea ma sarebbe errato pensare che è tutto come nelle etichette indipendenti di rock. Certi musicisti sono indipendenti per scelta ma ci sono anche molte persone nel mondo che fanno dischi e non hanno alternative: non avrebbero comunque alcuna possibilità di entrare a far parte del mainstream e quindi non hanno deciso deliberatamente di essere cani sciolti ma sono stati esclusi. Nutro il massimo rispetto per le etichette autogestite ma guardo quella situazione da un altro punto di vista. Per esempio, ho sempre ritenuto che la Melodiya - l'etichetta di stato russa - fosse la migliore delle indipendenti, anche se certi miei amici pensano che esagerassi un po' *(ride)*. Ma, seriamente, ci sono talmente tante persone - al di fuori del grande sistema occidentale di Cbs, Virgin eccetera - di cui dovremmo tenere conto… È difficile da dire… Credo che esista il pericolo di una nuova specie di narcisismo culturale, se guardiamo solamente a quelli di noi che si sono volutamente tirati fuori da quel sistema. È solo un rischio ma potrebbe esserci chi pensa che, quando esiste un sistema e un antisistema, il quadro sia completo. Credo che il vero problema politico sia che la maggior parte delle persone nel mondo è al di fuori del sistema semplicemente perché ne viene respinta.

Nel 1972, in *Gloria Gloom*, scrivevi: "Sino a che punto posso fingere che la musica sia più importante di combattere per un mondo socialista?". Ti è accaduto di pensare quanto sia ancora attuale quel verso?

Vi dirò: Fred Frith odiava quel verso. No, non Frith: Fripp! Robert Fripp *(che produsse il disco dei Matching Mole su cui apparve)* odiava quel verso. Mi chiese: "Robert, lo pensi davvero?". Non voleva proprio sentirlo. Comunque, fu buffo. E non so quanto si sentisse a proprio agio metà degli altri musicisti del complesso: "Che cosa sta cantando Robert?". Ma, comunque, è una domanda e non una risposta: "Sino a che punto?". Ed è una domanda difficile, per me. A volte penso di essere un animale politico che canta canzoni e altre volte di essere un cantante che canta cose politiche. Dipende *moltissimo* dalle circostanze. In questo preciso istante, penso che forse sono solo un cantante e non dovrei rivendicare troppo la mia importanza politica *(ride)*. Ciò nonostante, se dovessi prendere una decisione etica, morale, in contrasto con un principio estetico, scarterei l'opzione esteticamente soddisfacente in favore di quella morale o etica o politica. Più semplicemente, preferisco un uomo brutto ma buono a uno bello ma cattivo. Perciò, l'estetica non è la mia preoccupazione principale. O, piuttosto, sono dell'idea che lo scopo di un'estetica d'avanguardia sia proprio quello di far sì che ciò che si considerava brutto possa essere bello.

Che è poi, in qualche modo, l'estrema conseguenza di quel che pensa LaMonte Young quando dice: "Se definiamo bello ciò che apprezziamo e ci interessiamo a ciò che troviamo bello, alla fine saremo sempre interessati alle medesime cose (cioè, quelle che già apprezziamo). Non mi interessa il bello; mi interessa il nuovo, anche se potrebbe essere disgustoso".

Ha detto così? Ben detto, LaMonte!

Vorremmo parlare di quella che a tutt'oggi è la produzione più recente a tuo nome (antologie escluse): cinque brani registrati in casa come una sorta di quaderno di appunti musicali. Come è nato *A Short Break*?

Semplicemente, stavo facendo qualche piccolo esperimento a casa, in vista di una futura registrazione in studio con tutti i crismi. E ho pensato: "Be', forse, anche gli schizzi originali, le idee di partenza, possono avere un valore, così come a volte di un pittore è interessante vedere semplicemente gli schizzi preparatori. Forse a qualcuno interessa ascoltare come sono gli schizzi prima che li elabori trasformandoli in prodotti finiti". Poi, alla fine, non li ho mai perfezionati: sono rimasti solo schizzi. È un cd di soli venti minuti e - siccome mi seccava che qualcuno potesse pensare: "Venti minuti, una cassettina: non è un granché" - ho preteso dalla Voiceprint l'assoluta certezza che venisse venduto a un prezzo molto basso, perché era musica che avevo voluto realizzare in economia, solo brani brevi registrati con poca spesa. Non deve mica essere sempre una gran festa, no?

Come hai incominciato a scrivere testi per le tue musiche?

Inizialmente, aggiungevo parole alla musica per una sola ragione: lo strumento che suono è una bocca e una delle cose che si fanno con essa è dire parole, anche se credo che sia probabilmente un uso improprio, ché dovrebbe servire solo a mangiare.

Su *Falsi movimenti* dici che a un certo punto avevi cominciato a pensare che fosse più giusto usare la voce evitando tutte quelle cose che non si farebbero nel corso di una comune conversazione telefonica. Anziché usare quei toni pomposi, alterati, che usano i cantanti rock, la tua ricerca si è orientata verso un modo di cantare più possibile vicino a come si parla nella vita quotidiana. Il che ti ha portato tra l'altro a lavorare maggiormente sui testi e meno sul tuo particolarissimo *scat*. Dunque, non ti sentiremo più usare la voce in modo più simile a uno strumento musicale?

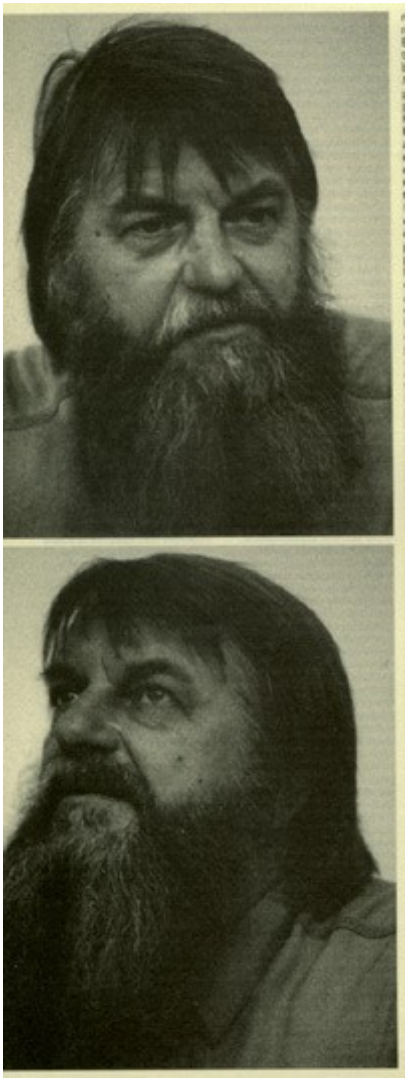
Non ho intenzione di dire che cosa non farò più in futuro. Ogni volta che mi formo un'opinione sull'uso della voce, è retrospettiva: nel momento in cui la elaboro, è finita, è troppo tardi. Che farò in futuro? Non so proprio: dipende dal giorno, dall'impulso del momento. Capita che un certo brano musicale richieda un certo tipo di interpretazione. Con i testi è lo stesso: a volte ho davvero qualcosa da dire, da cantare, e altre volte non c'è l'ho ed è meglio sviluppare una certa idea solo musicalmente. Non c'è alcuna regola: non ho regole, per quanto mi riguarda. L'unica è che non devo fare qualcosa dopo che ha smesso di entusiasmarmi: non devo fare nulla per un momento di più di quello in cui la sento veramente. È la mia unica regola. Una delle cose che ho più ammirato nella cultura del flamenco è che viene considerato normale che un cantante di flamenco accetti un ingaggio, stia seduto cinque minuti davanti alla folla enorme che è venuta a sentirlo e poi dica: "Non va, non mi sento nella disposizione giusta". Il concerto viene cancellato e nessuno reclama. Se la cultura rock fosse altrettanto flessibile, forse prenderei in considerazione l'ipotesi di fare qualche concerto, perché avrei sempre la libertà di cambiare idea all'ultimo momento (ride). Ma non sto parlando sul serio: non c'è nessuna possibilità che possa cantare in pubblico, perché morirei di paura prima di aprir bocca.

C'è qualche autore di canzoni che ti ha colpito particolarmente negli ultimi anni?

Ooh! Che domanda difficile!
(Ci pensa su e prende appunti.)
Temo che i vincitori dei miei oscar siano tutti morti: di gran lunga, i migliori parolieri, quelli che hanno saputo usare meglio le parole nelle canzoni, sono persone come Fats Waller e alcuni altri autori degli anni trenta, senza alcun dubbio. Trovo che nel rock i testi siano proprio delle gran cagate, al confronto. Ciò detto, l'altro giorno ho conosciuto un fotografo che mi ha raccontato di essere amico di Joni Mitchell e mi ha parlato del suo modo di lavorare, il che mi ha ricordato quanto sia fantastica sia come musicista sia come autrice di canzoni: dunque, devo assolutamente citare Joni Mitchell. La trovo piuttosto moderna… "Be'" penserete voi, "non è giovanissima." Non m'importa proprio: neanch'io sono molto giovane e quindi non m'importa. Per me, tutti sono moderni, finché non muoiono. C'è un altro problema: ascolto soprattutto musica strumentale o comunque non cantata in inglese. Le canzoni che ho ascoltato più spesso di recente? Moltissima musica brasiliana: amo sentir cantare in portoghese ma non comprendo le parole. Tuttavia, l'altro giorno ho sentito un testo che mi è parso grande: in *Shopping for Melodies* dei Melody Four - Steve Beresford, Lol Coxhill e Tony Coe - c'è una canzone di Beresford sulla sua perduta fidanzata dallo spazio profondo. Viene da un altro pianeta e il suo nome è Janet. Fantastico! È così assurdo! Una donna spaziale che si chiama Janet perché viene da un altro pianeta! Questo sì che è ispirato! Adesso, Steve Beresford balza direttamente in testa alla classifica: è il più grande paroliere di tutti i tempi per il *coraggio* di aver messo in rima

planet con Janet. Meraviglioso. Per di più, l'idea che qualcuno lassù possa chiamarsi Janet ha cambiato completamente la mia idea del tipo di vita che potrebbe esserci nel resto dell'universo.

La più recente (3) delle tue frequentissime collaborazioni, che speriamo di vedere presto pubblicata, è con John Greaves, altro ex Henry Cow. C'è qualche criterio particolare in base al quale accetti le collaborazioni che ti vengono proposte? Quali ricordi con maggior soddisfazione?



> Zoom

Non ho mai usato la parola *collaborazioni*. Se chiedo a qualcuno di suonare nelle mie registrazioni, sono un dittatore. Il mio metodo è la dittatura a turno: se lavoro per John Greaves, faccio quel che vuole; se sto lavorando per gli Henry Cow o per Chris Cutler, faccio quel che vogliono loro; e se loro lavorano per me, voglio che facciano quel che io chiedo. Non sembrerà molto democratico ma funziona. Di conseguenza, la musica migliore viene dalle idee una sola persona, benché siano in molti a suonare. Ogni brano musicale è in genere concepito da una sola persona ed è importante che abbia le idee chiare. Non stiamo parlando di distribuzione delle risorse alimentari: quindi, non credo che costituisca una minaccia per la democrazia.

Ed è per quello che esistono le *composers' orchestras*.

Certo, è vero, anche se *composers' orchestra* è quasi un ossimoro. Normalmente non chiedo io di collaborare con altri. Nella maggior parte dei casi sono loro a rivolgersi a me. Se posso, e se penso di poter fare quel che mi chiedono, ci provo. Le mie collaborazioni preferite: be', sapete anche voi a chi ho chiesto di lavorare per me, su dischi come *Rock Bottom* o *Ruth is Stranger than Richard*. Recentemente sono stato coinvolto in parecchie collaborazioni che mi sono piaciute molto. Una è quella con John Greaves: ho registrato tre sue canzoni ma non credo che abbia ancora trovato un'etichetta che pubblichi il disco, ammesso che l'abbia terminato. Ho anche inciso una canzone con il chitarrista belga Philip Catherine, un suo classico intitolato *Nairam*, per cui ho scritto un testo: la canzone ha una forma palindroma e così l'ho chiamata *Marian*. Scusate, non intendevo palindroma: il palindromo mantiene immutato il significato quando letto in senso inverso; questa invece assume due significati distinti a seconda del senso di lettura. Mi piace molto ma anche in questo caso non so quando Catherine finirà il disco. Poi ho registrato qualcosa per un musicista *dance* belga, J. Bogaert, scrivendo anche il testo e parte della musica di un brano che si chiama Igor Mortis. E ho scritto e cantato le parole di *Free Will & Testament* per il disco di Hugh Hopper e Kramer, *A Remark Hugh Made*.

Hai citato *Rock Bottom*, un album cui collaborarono molti musicisti del tuo giro e della cosiddetta scuola di Canterbury. Pip Pyle ha scritto il testo di una canzone, *What's Rattlin'*, per l'ultimo disco di Richard Sinclair, dove dice che non ne può più della gente che gli chiede puntualmente: "Che cosa sta facendo Mike Ratledge? Che cosa sta facendo Kevin Ayers?". E così via: le solite domande su Canterbury. Domande che - ce ne siamo accorti alla conferenza stampa di presentazione di *Falsi movimenti* - vengono rivolte anche a te. Condividi l'insofferenza di Pyle?

Probabilmente uno dei motivi per cui Pip è così caustico è che, a quanto mi risulta, non è mai stato a Canterbury e non so neppure se abbia mai conosciuto di persona Ratledge e Ayers, né se abbia mai suonato con loro o persino se li riconoscerebbe incontrandoli per strada. Dunque, dev'essere particolarmente difficile per lui rispondere a quelle domande. Quanto a Canterbury: così come il cristianesimo è stato inventato settant'anni dopo la

morte del pover'uomo, anche la "scena di Canterbury" è stata inventata molto tempo dopo, dall'esterno. Da quel che ricordo, nessuno a Canterbury pensava che facessimo parte di una qualche scena. Ricordo invece molto bene che volevamo andarcene da Canterbury. È tutto ciò che rammento. Agli estranei, i musicisti raggruppati sotto quell'etichetta sembrano un assortimento di persone che hanno qualcosa in comune ma dall'interno non ricordo un grande rapporto. Ho allacciato amicizie molto migliori e rapporti più stretti in seguito, negli anni settanta e oltre. Perciò, naturalmente a me non secca se mi fanno del genere. Ognuno ha il diritto di porre le domande che più gli piacciono e non si possono dettare agli altri i loro interessi. Devo dire noi musicisti dovremmo essere onorati da qualunque cosa voglia sapere chiunque, se gli interessa: dovrebbe lusingarci il fatto che ci sia qualcuno interessato a una qualsiasi delle cose che abbiamo fatto. Perché diavolo protestare? La si dovrebbe considerare una fortuna!

E, visto che siamo arrivati a parlare dei tempi antichi, potresti dirci qualcosa della versione di *Slow Walkin' Talk* (pubblicata su *Flotsam Jetsam*) che incidesti nel 1968 con Jimi Hendrix al basso? Qual è l'Hendrix che hai incontrato e conosciuto?

Era un gentiluomo del Sud, molto timido e garbato. L'unica registrazione esistente della nostra seduta è un acetato e quindi la qualità è molto vicina a quella di un pezzo di biscotto. Ero ancora là *(dopo la tournée statunitense dei Soft Machine come spalla al gruppo di Hendrix)*: il mio gruppo si era *(temporaneamente)* sciolto e quasi tutti i componenti erano tornati in Inghilterra. Sembrava proprio finita. Perciò ero rimasto per un po' negli Stati Uniti e Jimi si era gentilmente offerto di ospitarmi. Mentre ero a Los Angeles ebbi la possibilità di registrare qualcosa ma, non avendo un complesso, incisi solo le parti che ero in grado di suonare io. Quando ebbi registrato batteria, voce e organo, arrivò in studio Jimi: vide che avevo bisogno di un po' d'aiuto - a suo avviso mancava un basso - e me ne diede moltissimo. Fu veramente molto gentile.

Un'ultima domanda: che cosa ti dà speranza, in questo momento?

Ah! Be', sono sempre stato molto colpito… È difficile da dire, scusatemi… Più vado avanti con gli anni, più mi colpiscono proprio le persone comuni che lavorano e badano ai propri cari, procurano loro cibo a sufficienza, escono per andare al lavoro o semplicemente gestiscono la propria vita. È molto difficile e quando penso che milioni di persone fanno solo quello, senza tante storie, sono sbalordito: trovo che sia un'impresa fantastica. Non è un pensiero originale: ricordo che una volta chiesero a Randy Newman chi fosse il suo eroe e lui rispose, più o meno: "Chiunque faccia il proprio lavoro, guadagni quanto basta per dar da mangiare alle persone che dipendono da lui, si prenda cura dei propri bambini e delle persone che ha intorno, e viva la propria vita senza troppo casino". Quello è il suo eroe e sono sempre più colpito proprio dalla quantità di persone che non conosco che tirano avanti, nonostante tutte le difficoltà. La gente è terrorizzata dalla quantità di violenza, omicidi e aggressività che c'è nel mondo ma a questo punto penso che sia davvero stupefacente che ce ne sia così poca.

(ha collaborato Marina Petrillo)

NOTE

1. Va però segnalato che l'etichetta Voiceprint si è impegnata a corrispondere ai musicisti tutte le percentuali e i diritti relativi a due album retrospettivi che sta per pubblicare: il primo è Soft Machine Paradiso 69, edizione legale di un bootleg uscito nel 1969 per la Priscilla Records (con il titolo Soft Machine 69) e riedito su cd nel 1989 dalla Amazing Discs (con il titolo Turns on Paradiso); il secondo è una registrazione dal vivo (effettuata nel settembre 1970) di The Garden of Love di David Bedford/William Blake, eseguito dai Whole World (con Wyatt) insieme alla London Sinfonietta diretta da David Atherton. Sempre la Voiceprint ha pubblicato la compilation Artists with Disabilities, che comprende tre brani con Wyatt, e darà forse alle stampe il lavoro di Greaves citato nell'intervista e Roar, l'album inedito (inciso nel 1970) della Amazing Band, che in quella come in altre occasioni ospitava tra le proprie file il nostro uomo.

2. Su Flotsam Jetsam appaiono due dei brani incisi in quell'occasione: Billie's Bounce e Born Again Cretin. Quest'ultimo verrà sostituito, nell'edizione statunitense (Rykodisc), da un altro estratto da quelle sedute: Revolution Without "R". Un'altra differenza sarà udibile nel brano di Gary Windo, Now Is the Time, in quanto la Rykodisc ha utilizzato un nastro in condizioni sensibilmente migliori. Il brano con gli Slapp Happy è stato recentemente ripubblicato nell'antologia Raccolta differenziata 2, gli stacchi di Radio Popolare, Mercury 1995

3. Era la più recente quando venne registrata l'intervista. Il 25 marzo, Wyatt ha inciso insieme a Barbara Dickson una versione di una canzone degli Abba! Altre sue apparizioni recenti o future non citate nell'intervista comprendono un cd dell'artista francese Serge Faubert, la raccolta di registrazioni rare o inedite di Gary Windo curata da Mike King per la Cuneiform (Flesh and Bones, prevista per il 1996) e Lucky Scars dei Fish out of Water.



> Zoom

ROBERT WYATT - DISC JOCKEY

a cura di Alessandro Achilli



> Zoom

Quella che segue è la trascrizione integrale del programma di Robert Wyatt per Radio Popolare. Per le prime tre puntate, registrate a Milano negli studi dell'emittente senza soluzione di continuità (come fossero un unico lungo programma), Wyatt ha fornito preventivamente la lista dei brani che intendeva trasmettere e i curatori del programma (Achilli e Borella) li hanno reperiti con l'aiuto di Giovanni Venosta e Claudio Sessa. Una volta rientrato in Inghilterra, Wyatt ha poi registrato altre due puntate - in casa, tra dicembre e gennaio - e ha composto e inciso un'apposita sigla (in tre versioni differenti), che è stata successivamente aggiunta anche alle puntate precedenti. Il programma è stato trasmesso da Popolare Network a partire dal 13 marzo 1995, ogni lunedì alle 16 e 30 (con traduzione simultanea in italiano) e ogni sabato alle 17 (la versione originale in lingua inglese).

RadioPopolare

Robert Wyatt dj at Radio Popolare

(18/3 - 15/4/1995)

More info

0:00 / 37:46

Puntata 1

0:00 / 27:46

Puntata 2



Prime tre puntate

Ho scelto l'alternativa all'alternativa, che è Roberto Murolo. - Quando vogliamo passare una serata italiana, a casa, io e Alfie (Alfie è la mia metà) ascoltiamo Puccini e anche la Nuova compagnia di canto popolare. Ma poi beviamo sempre più vino e alla fine deve esserci Roberto Murolo; a volte Alfie balla un po' o robe simili e piangiamo e rievochiamo i giorni felici in Umbria e tutte le giornate meravigliose che abbiamo trascorso in Italia. Credo che Alfie abbia cercato di educarmi, per molti anni - perché ha buon gusto in tantissime cose: nel vestirsi, nell'ascoltare musica, nel comportarsi -, e una delle cose che ha tentato di insegnarmi è "come bere", perché io, d'abitudine, bevevo come i nordeuropei (che lo fanno solo per ubriacarsi) e lei mi ha detto: "Guarda come bevono gli italiani: bevono durante i pasti e poi, per lo più, smettono". Così, quando siamo venuti in Italia, ha avuto occasione di dimostrarmi come vivere bene restando civili. E dunque: grazie Italia e grazie Roberto Murolo per essere parte di ciò. A casa abbiamo centinaia di canzoni di Murolo, una compilation molto nutrita, e quando ascoltiamo non faccio caso ai titoli delle canzoni ma mi piacciono tutte: apprezzo la semplicità e la chiarezza delle sue interpretazioni.

Roberto Murolo, *Marechiare*.

Quando penso ad Alfie, penso a Roberto Murolo ma, quando le ho chiesto che cosa le sarebbe piaciuto ascoltare, mi ha risposto: "Marianne Faithfull", una donna che ammiriamo molto: "*The Ballad of Lucy Jordan*". Ho cantato in un disco dove c'è anche Marianne Faithfull - *Many Have no Speech*, musiche composte e arrangiate da Michael Mantler - e credo che la sua interpretazione, in quel caso, sia stata proprio stupefacente. Tutto il suo modo di cantare in quel disco. Purtroppo non ci siamo effettivamente incontrati, in studio, ma ci incontriamo sul disco. Questa è la Faithfull che piace ad Alfie.

Marianne Faithfull, *The Ballad of Lucy Jordan* (da *Broken English*).

Abbiamo appena ascoltato *The Ballad of Lucy Jordan* di Marianne Faithfull, scelta da Alfie.
Ora vorrei proporvi una canzone di cui Alfie ha scritto il testo e io la musica. Credo sia assurdo che metta su un mio brano ma anche in questo caso è solo per Alfie. Non so perché questo programma si stia trasformando in un omaggio ad Alfie ma comunque… non è qui e quindi la porto con me, proprio perché in questo momento non c'è. Il brano è *Catholic Architecture*. Quando siamo andati in Spagna, la cosa più fastidiosa che abbiamo visto, che le ha ricordato la sua infanzia cattolica, è stato del vetro rotto su un muro intorno a certe case con simboli religiosi all'interno. Ha ricordi molto brutti dell'educazione cattolica ricevuta da bambina, sia in Austria sia anche in Polonia, e credo che questa canzone esprima molto bene una paura del modo in cui quel tipo di educazione cerca di instillare nei bambini un enorme senso di colpa e di ansia, che lei esorcizza nella sua

poesia *Catholic Architecture*.

Robert Wyatt, *Catholic Architecture* (da *Dondestan*).

Era la poesia con cui Alfie esorcizza la sua infanzia cattolica europea.
Ora, Alfie e io abbiamo visto *Heimat* alla tivù inglese. Alfie non è inglese: è nata in Europa centrale e i suoi genitori venivano da luoghi differenti. Per lei è stato molto interessante vedere un programma intitolato *Heimat* - ovvero "patria", "casa" - perché Alfie non ha, nel modo più assoluto, alcun senso di patria: non ha proprio *heimat* ma per lei è stato molto toccante vedere immagini ambientate in Europa più o meno negli anni in cui nasceva. Abbiamo guardato *Heimat* e ci ha coinvolti molto, soprattutto la prima serie. All'inizio, non capivo molto le parole; ero attratto dalla musica: straordinaria. C'erano i sottotitoli ma il mio contatto diretto con il film è avvenuto tramite le immagini e la musica, che ho trovato fantastica.

Nikos Mamangakis, *Prolog* e i cinque brani successivi (dalla colonna sonora di *Heimat*).

Questi erano i primi sei pezzi della prima serie di *Heimat*.
Passiamo alla seconda serie, che ci ha interessato molto, perché parlava della nostra generazione, quella nata negli anni quaranta. È ancora molto difficile per noi - e soprattutto per lei - rapportarci alle ansie e preoccupazioni degli anni quaranta, degli anni della guerra, ed è stato - come dicevo - molto interessante vedere come alcuni giovani tedeschi cercassero di affrontare lo stesso retaggio psicologico, che condividiamo con loro: benché durante la guerra fossimo su fronti avversi, condividiamo uno stesso retaggio storico. Comunque, vorrei farvi sentire un po' della musica meravigliosa scritta per la seconda serie di *Heimat*.

Salome Kammer, *Schlaflied für Arnoldchen* (dalla colonna sonora di *Die Zweite Heimat*).

Era la canzone per il giovane figlio Arnoldino.
Mi piacerebbe semplicemente concludere l'ascolto di questi estratti da *Heimat* con l'adattamento del tema principale scritto da Mamangakis per la seconda serie, giusto per ricordarmi tutta l'esperienza completa di *Heimat*: l'"Esperienza *Heimat*".

Nikos Mamangakis, *Titelmusik* (dalla colonna sonora di *Die Zweite Heimat*).

Adesso, tanto per cambiare, parlerò ancora di Alfie, a proposito del prossimo pezzo, tratto dalla colonna sonora della *Doppia vita di Veronica*. Alfie appartiene alla stessa generazione di Kieslowski; è venuta dalla Polonia con sua mamma, da bambina, ed è arrivata in Inghilterra quando aveva più o meno sette anni; ho come la sensazione che, se fosse rimasta in Polonia, avrebbe sicuramente frequentato una di quelle fantastiche scuole di cinema polacche e sarebbe poi diventata una famosissima regista cinematografica dissidente polacca e ora sarebbe molto brava; ma poiché venne invece in Inghilterra, dove tutti sono liberi, la sua carriera si disintegrò completamente e non accadde mai nulla di simile. Ha studiato cinema e fantasticando immagino *La doppia vita di Alfie*, di Alfreda Benge, perché ho in mente una Alfie parallela che non è mai stata fregata dal venire in Inghilterra, conoscere me e robe simili ed è invece rimasta in Polonia, divenendo una regista cinematografica. Le piace molto Kieslowski - che molti non amano, trovandolo deliberatamente ermetico o altro - ma Alfie è completamente in sintonia con lui e si è molto commossa per la *Doppia vita di Veronica*. È un film che mi ha colpito, perché sento molto di vivere in un mondo di possibilità parallele, di vite mai vissute che vedo nella mia mente, sempre: è una specie di tortura psicologica, che un film come questo mi aiuta a esorcizzare. Quindi, un po' di musica dal film di Kieslowski, per favore…

Van den Budenmayer (1), *Concerto in E Minor* (dalla colonna sonora della *Doppia vita di Veronica*).

Adesso mi piace Dylan più di quanto mi piacesse negli anni sessanta. Non mi interessava molto, allora, perché ero più preso dalla musica nera. In seguito, venni a sapere che Robert Zimmerman, da ragazzo, era stato un appassionato di rhythm'n'blues; che amava molto la black music. E così, provai una sorta di empatia verso quelle radici: non aveva copiato la musica nera ma aveva avuto grande considerazione di moltissima black music. La mia stima per Dylan è cresciuta con il passare degli anni: per me è una di quelle persone come Marc Chagall, uno dei grandi artisti ebrei del ventesimo secolo. Robert

Zimmerman è un ottimo musicista e la gente pensa che sia solo un buon poeta o robe simili ma a me piace anche quando canta stronzate, perché ha una bellissima voce. Forse, prima o poi, inciderò una delle sue canzoni. Ho molti progetti, sapete. Questa è *Lay Lady Lay*. La canto io, prima: lay lady lay; ops, non ci riesco; lay lady lay; no, non ci riesco; lay lady lay; no, non ci riesco, dimenticatevelo, fanculo; lay lady lay across my… no, non ci riesco, fanculo! Canto le canzoni di Dylan quando sono in bagno ma non qui, in pubblico.

Bob Dylan, *Lay Lady Lay* (da *Nashville Skyline*).

Mi pare che ci sia una sorta di snobismo nei confronti di Nashville e della musica leggera; e penso che per lo più i musicisti non lo condividano. Forse la musica pop è semplice, elementare, ma può essere altrettanto valida di qualsiasi altro genere di musica. Naturalmente, mi infastidisce il modo in cui viene immessa sul mercato: tutta l'industria del pop è uno schifo, è disgustosa, lo so. L'industria del pop è un ambiente disgustoso ma non è colpa della musica, che è semplicemente una forma moderna di folk ed è ridicolo prendersela con Dylan perché suona musica folk moderna, pretendendo che si dedichi invece a una qualche specie di finta musica vecchio stile. È folle, non vuol dire nulla: è un grande cantante, che cosa volete? Ma torniamo a Zimmerman. Nel 1968 ebbi la fortuna di viaggiare un po' (*in tournée*) con Hendrix, che era un grande ammiratore di Dylan, e per la verità fu proprio perché Dylan piaceva così tanto a Hendrix che cominciai ad ascoltarlo un pochino anch'io. Mi pare che, più o meno in quel periodo, Hendrix stesse registrando alcune delle canzoni di *Electric Ladyland* - ma non ricordo esattamente - e che stesse cominciando a suonare *All along the Watchtower* anche dal vivo. Non ne sono sicuro ma in ogni caso trovo che la sua sia semplicemente una grande versione *bluesy*, molto potente, con molta energia, e credo sia una delle versioni di canzoni di Dylan più amate dall'autore.

Jimi Hendrix, *All along the Watchtower* (da *Electric Ladyland*).

Era Hendrix. Una delle grandi virtù della musica pop è che usa la ripetizione; fin troppo, a volte. Ma Hendrix sapeva esattamente come usarla e la usò bene. Vorrei che Bartók avesse avuto un modo di pensare un po' più pop quando compose il *Concerto per violino*, che stiamo per ascoltare. Si apre con una sezione che avrei voluto continuasse… Be', vi faccio sentire come avrei voluto che fosse: cominciamo. Vai Bela.

Bela Bartók, *Violin Concerto* (primo mezzo minuto).

(Sulla musica) Fermati proprio qui. Ecco, questo è il guaio. Lui pensa: "Ho fatto abbastanza, so che tutte le cose intelligenti cambiano, c'è un sacco di varietà eccetera eccetera". Stronzate! Riprendiamo il brano dall'inizio, adesso. Avrebbe dovuto ripetere questa sezione! Ascoltatela e immaginatela suonata da tantissime balalaiche o robe simili, per venti minuti circa: ecco che cosa ci sarebbe voluto, prima che entrasse il violino. Si va:

Bela Bartók, Violin Concerto (primo mezzo minuto) (*Wyatt doppia con la voce il contrabbasso)*.

(Sulla musica) Mettiamola ancora una volta, Bela, e poi andiamo avanti e ascoltiamo il resto. È bello come prosegue ma avrebbe proprio dovuto far durare di più quella frase di apertura, perché è davvero meravigliosa.

Bela Bartók, *Violin Concerto (Wyatt doppia con la voce il contrabbasso e poi il violino).*

(Sulla musica) In realtà anche il resto è molto bello e quindi lasciamolo andare: proseguiamo l'ascolto.

La grande cosa di Bela Bartók, storicamente, è che veniva dall'Europa centrorientale, dove la tradizione della musica folk possiede elementi che mancano alla musica folk occidentale, uno dei quali è la vivacità ritmica. È vero che molte musiche folk possiedono vivacità ritmica ma una delle caratteristiche della musica folk ungherese - e ceca, russa, bulgara - è la complessità ritmica: non suonano semplicemente tempi ternari o quaternari ma anche in sette, undici, tredici e così via. Nel nostro secolo, quell'idea è stata introdotta nella musica occidentale da vari compositori; tra coloro che portarono nel jazz l'uso di tempi più complessi c'è il grandissimo pianista Lennie Tristano. E *Turkish Mambo*, con la sua sovraincisione di più piste di pianoforte, fu uno dei primi esperimenti con le tecniche di registrazione effettuati negli anni cinquanta. Così descritto, potrebbe far pensare a un

freddo esercizio tecnico ma credo che *Turkish Mambo* sia un'opera musicale veramente incisiva, per quanto breve.
Quindi

Lennie Tristano, *Turkish Mambo* (dall'album *Lennie Tristano*).

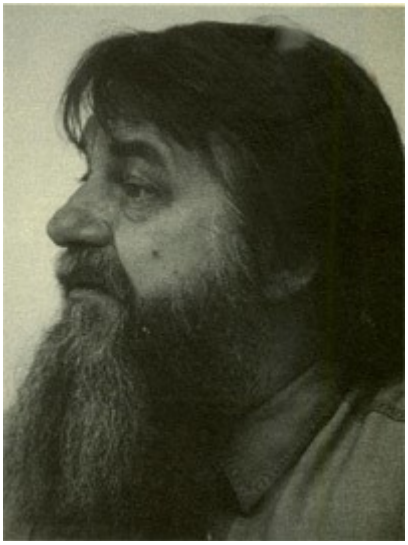
Dal punto di vista discografico, credo che il primo brano di free jazz mai registrato sia stato *Intuition* di Lennie Tristano. Ora sentiremo un musicista, Ornette Coleman, che lavorò con un altro pianista - di nome Paul Bley -, il quale portò moltissime innovazioni, come Tristano. Ma Bley non partecipò alle prime incisioni di Coleman, che vennero pubblicate, effettuate invece da un quartetto senza pianoforte: secondo me, quello che stiamo per ascoltare è uno dei più grandi quartetti della storia del jazz, con Don Cherry, Charlie Haden e naturalmente il grande Ed Blackwell alla batteria, da New Orleans (e da New Orleans provengono i migliori ritmi quanto meno del Nordamerica o anche di tutta l'America, con l'eccezione di Cuba). E quindi: che quartetto! E *Embraceable You* è naturalmente uno dei brani più belli. È una canzone di Gershwin: George e Ira Gershwin ma, dato che Ira scriveva le parole e questa versione non è cantata, è tutta di George. George Gershwin è uno dei grandi compositori che passarono il confine tra ciò che era chiamato "classica" e il jazz. Uno di essi era Kurt Weill, che scriveva solo cose che i più trovassero facile ascoltare ma che allo stesso tempo possedevano in ogni istante la finezza e la minuziosità della musica più complessa che io possa comprendere. Tornando a Coleman, il modo in cui suona Embraceable You è come capovolto. Non so proprio… Sulla copertina dice: "La suoniamo nel modo in cui vengono normalmente eseguiti gli standard" ma non è per niente vero. Non è affatto così che vengono normalmente affrontati brani come *Embraceable You*. Non so che cosa facciano ma è magnifico.

Ornette Coleman Quartet, *Embraceable You* (da *This Is our Music*).

(Sulla musica) E vorrei invitarvi ad ascoltare attentamente come il contrabbasso di Charlie Haden accompagna l'assolo: è bellissimo, perfetto, ogni nota è un gioiello.

Era l'Ornette Coleman Quartet. Ma in realtà era essenzialmente il suo trio più Don Cherry: l'Ornette Coleman Trio, in pratica, con Charlie Haden, Ed Blackwell e… l'altro membro del quartetto era George Gershwin, immagino.
Ora qualcosa di più classico, musica statunitense tra le due guerre: *Minnie the Moocher*, una di quelle canzoni sulla droga scritte molto prima che il rock "inventasse" le droghe. Erano già state inventate negli anni trenta e *Minnie the Moocher* è tutta un'allusione alla cultura statunitense delle droghe di quell'epoca. Dal grande Cab Calloway… Credo che spesso gli artisti come Cab Calloway - entertainer molto buffi e divertenti - non vengano visti come artisti molto seri. È completamente sbagliato. Per me, Cab Calloway era un grande artista. Comunque: *Minnie the Moocher*. E, sentite: se volete il surrealismo, i suoi testi erano surreali senza che neppure tentasse di esserlo. Era un surrealista naturale, già.

Cab Calloway, *Minnie the Moocher*.



Be', è davvero difficile trovare qualcosa da mettere dopo Calloway. Il vero spettacolo è finito con Cab Calloway ma penso che Miles Davis potesse suonare dopo chiunque, soprattutto se torniamo a George Gershwin, con un altro dei suoi classici: *Summertime*. Davis la suona con Gil Evans e quel che mi piace di questo arrangiamento è la sua estrema concisione ed essenzialità: non fanno appello al potenziale emotivo della canzone, limitandosi invece a suonarla in modo diretto e preciso e penso che proprio per questo risulti tanto forte. Dunque, Miles Davis e Gil Evans. E ascoltate la deliziosa batteria che fa l'orologio a pendolo.

Miles Davis & Gil Evans, *Summertime* (da *Porgy and Bess*).

> Zoom

Erano Miles Davis e Gil Evans con *Summertime*.

Una delle illusioni relative all'arte è che gli artisti possano vivere in pace e armonia in tutto il mondo. È come quando si pensa che la natura sia tutta armonia, mentre invece è come una battaglia incessante. Una volta assistetti a un concerto di Miles Davis e Cecil Taylor, che non erano buoni amici. Davis era il nome principale della serata e quindi avrebbe dovuto suonare per ultimo ma rifiutò, dicendo: "Non voglio che qualcuno debba sentire Cecil Taylor prima di ascoltare me e dunque suonerò per primo". Così, Davis suonò per primo e Taylor per secondo e fu comunque una grande serata. Secondo alcuni, tensioni e robe analoghe tra i musicisti hanno la loro utilità. Se ne può discutere: io so per esperienza che possono aiutare l'adrenalina a mettersi in circolo eccetera. Se poi la musica è di quel livello, mi può star bene. Dunque, ora voglio proporvi qualcosa di Taylor, rispettando la richiesta di Davis: prima Davis e ora Taylor. Come sappiamo, Cecil Taylor è uno dei più grandi interpreti di semplici ballad sentimentali per pianoforte di tutti i tempi e qui ci propone una grande ballad sentimentale: *This nearly Was Mine*, di Rodgers e Hammerstein, ed è più o meno una melodia, più o meno jazz, più o meno qualcos'altro ma non esattamente nulla di tutto ciò; ed è bellissima.

Cecil Taylor, *This nearly Was Mine* (dall'omonimo album Candid).

Dunque, questo è Cecil Taylor che distrugge completamente una graziosa ballad sentimentale.
E ora un ritratto più affettuoso del passato: Charles Mingus che rende omaggio a Jelly Roll Morton, in un modo che non penso Morton avrebbe apprezzato particolarmente. Ma non importa: semplicemente, lo porta oltre. Ho avuto la fortuna di vedere Mingus parecchie volte e ognuna di esse si colloca tra le esperienze musicali più emozionanti della mia vita: era così vitale! Spero che, nonostante gli anni trascorsi, un po' di quella vitalità sprizzi ancora dal disco. Sia Morton sia Mingus usavano, come dire, schemi armonici e ritmici davvero insoliti per le proprie epoche. Morton, in particolare, fu molto innovativo e immagino che una delle ragioni per cui Duke Ellington era molto paranoico nei suoi confronti fosse che Morton aveva e metteva in pratica idee tecniche e armoniche avanzatissime. Mi sembra che questo omaggio di Mingus sia più un tentativo di rendere il jazz del passato altrettanto complesso di quello moderno, perché, agli albori del jazz moderno, musicisti e appassionati avevano un atteggiamento molto liquidatorio verso la musica precedente, considerandola quasi troppo facile e piacevole, mentre credo Mingus rivendicasse il passato come parte della storia della grande musica nera, da cui Jelly Roll Morton. E lo fece sin dall'inizio: apprezzava tutta la storia della musica.

Charles Mingus, *My Jelly Roll Soul* (da *Blues and Roots*).

Comunque, se per caso vi state chiedendo come mai molta della musica che metto sia vecchiotta, la risposta è che anch'io sono un po' vecchio: se volete musica più giovane, dovete trovare un disc jockey più giovane; a me va bene. In ogni modo, questa è musica registrata al tempo in cui venne inventata e quindi sarà sempre nuova. Anche quando Mingus reinventa Jelly Roll Morton, l'approccio è del tutto nuovo. Direi che c'erano Jackie McLean al contralto e Jimmy Knepper, un grande trombonista, e naturalmente Dannie Richmond, il batterista meglio vestito di tutti gli Stati Uniti, a quel tempo: molto molto bravo, un batterista eccellente ma sottovalutato. E al contralto anche John Handy, un musicista incantevole: tutta la sezione contralti era ottima; anche su *Mingus Ah Um* e vari altri dischi grosso modo di quel periodo. Una delle formazioni migliori. E citiamo ancora una volta il batterista: Dannie Richmond, un batterista magnifico, eccellente.
Ora abbiamo Charles Trenet. Ricordo che mio fratello maggiore aveva questa canzone su un 78 giri, quand'ero bambino, e la trovavo proprio bellissima, anche se non ne sapevo nulla. Alfie mi ha detto che forse Charles Trenet era un collaborazionista e allora vaffanculo: non sentiremo *La mer* cantata da lui ma da Zozo Shuaibu, convocato da Steve Beresford per un disco su Trenet. Su questo disco c'è qualcuno con cui ho qualcosa in comune: Tony Coe, un musicista originario di Canterbury. Abbiamo studiato nella stessa scuola ma lui ne è uscito subito prima che vi entrassi io; negli anni sessanta, era un clarinettista di jazz tradizionale. Tony Coe è uno dei più grandi musicisti che ci siano: può suonare assolutamente qualsiasi cosa, senza eccezioni. È una di quelle persone come Dave MacRae: quasi *troppo* bravi, perché sono talmente duttili che qualcuno potrebbe pensare che sia facile comandarli a bacchetta, se non fosse che possiedono anche una loro *voce* molto netta, che li tiene al riparo da rischi simili. Comunque, questo è un disco che Steve Beresford ha inciso con persone di quel livello e tra l'altro è uscito per la Nato, un'etichetta meravigliosa. Sono stato anche in corrispondenza con Jean Rochard (*fondatore e direttore dell'etichetta*). Trovo che sia una casa discografica estremamente valida e so che lavora molto con Tony Coe. Tantissimi dischi Nato contengono riferimenti all'esperienza degli indiani americani e quindi non mi stupisce che il nome dell'etichetta derivi da quello di un cugino di Geronimo e non abbia nulla a che fare con l'Alleanza atlantica; mi fa anzi molto

piacere. Tornando a noi: una bella canzone in un'eccellente versione e dunque gustatevi

Steve Beresford and his Orchestra, *La mer* (da *L'extraordinaire jardin de Charles Trenet*).

Era *La mer* di Charles Trenet, cantata magnificamente da Zozo Shuaibu.
Anche se mi imbarazza, vorrei concludere con uno dei miei adattamenti di poesie di Alfie. In parte perché voglio stare con Alfie fino alla fine - nella musica come nella vita *(ride)* - ma soprattutto perché *La mer* mi ha fatto venire in mente quando Alfie vide due suore in riva al mare, al tramonto, e le ritrasse in modo molto affettuoso nella poesia da cui ho tratto il testo di *Worship*. Tra l'altro, adesso che ho una nuora cattolica devo imparare a essere più tollerante e lasciare da parte un pochino della mia ostilità istintiva verso qualunque cosa abbia a che fare con la Chiesa e il cattolicesimo, anche se il papa non mi piace proprio; ma ci sono suore molto simpatiche - ne sono sicuro, ne ho anche conosciuta qualcuna - e credo che quelle due non avessero alcuna colpa dei problemi della Chiesa cattolica. Le osservammo e ispirarono ad Alfie quella breve poesia, che trovo bellissima, e dunque questa canzone è per Alfie e per le due suore.

Robert Wyatt, *Worship* (da *Dondestan*).

(verso la fine, subito dopo "And the sun sets") E il sole tramonta su questo programma *(ride)* per gli ascoltatori di Radio Popolare. Spero che la musica che ho mandato in onda vi sia piaciuta. Qui è Robert Wyatt. Molte grazie per la vostra attenzione.

Quarta puntata

Buongiorno, sono Robert Wyatt e qui ci sono alcune cose che mi piacciono.

Little Richard, *Tutti Frutti*.

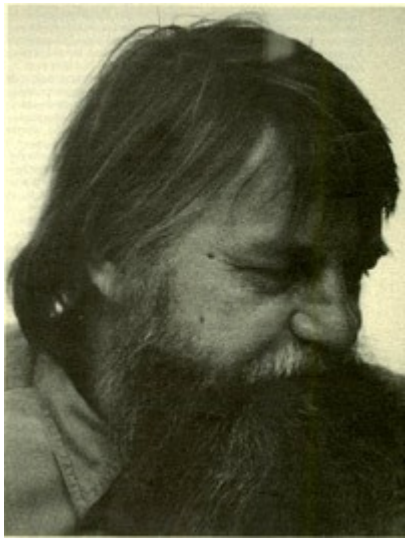
Era Richard Penniman con la vecchia e famosa canzone d'amore italiana *Tutti Frutti*.
E ora… passiamo il confine meridionale.

Irakere, *Las Margaritas* (dall'lp *The Legendary Irakere in London, Volume 2,* Jazz House jhr009).

Las Margaritas dai leggendari Irakere. In realtà, non eravamo a sud del confine, perché era un concerto del grande complesso cubano al Ronnie Scott's di Londra. E lo straordinario sax soprano era quello di Herman Velasco (non so se la pronuncia sia giusta). Anche rispetto alla media cubana, Irakere è un complesso straordinario e alcuni dei migliori concerti cui abbia assistito a Londra negli anni ottanta erano degli Irakere, un gruppo davvero stupefacente.
E fin qui ci siamo ma vi starete chiedendo come mai non vi abbia mai fatto ascoltare alcunché dalla Turchia e dunque adesso vi proporrò qualcosa di turco. Si tratta di Toulaï con François Rabbath. Toulaï è una cantante, François Rabbath un eccellente contrabbassista e questa è una poesia che Nazim Hikmet scrisse al pittore Abidin per chiedergli: "Abidin, potresti dipingermi un ritratto della felicità?".

Toulaï & François Rabbath, *Abidin* (testo di Nazim Hikmet, musica di Erdan Buri).
Massimo Giuntoli, *Frrr!!!* (dal cd *Giraffe*, rbc1007) *(fino a "Oh, pardon!", cui risponde con formule di cortesia in francese)*.

Mi spiace che non parlo italiano. So dire qualcosina in altre lingue ma anche in quelle non molto. Che disdetta!
Dunque, era Massimo Giuntoli dal suo cd *Giraffe*: il brano si chiamava *Frrr*!!! Tra l'altro, il cd ha una



> Zoom

copertina molto bella, di Paola Bertozzi.
Uno dei vantaggi dell'ingresso nella Comunità europea è che potremmo imparare qualcosa sulla civiltà da alcuni dei popoli che l'hanno inventata. Mio padre è in Italia, adesso È morto là, in una cittadina dove avrebbe voluto andare ad abitare con mia madre per il resto dei suoi giorni: Ariano. È stato sepolto laggiù e mia madre è rimasta molto colpita da come - anno dopo anno, da allora - la gente del luogo si sia presa cura della tomba, mettendo fiori e così via. Benché fossi già stato in Italia in gita scolastica (a Firenze e in alcuni altri posti), non avevo mai veramente capito quanto possa essere civile un luogo finché non siamo andati in Umbria, al locale festival rock, dove abbiamo conosciuto persone come Stefano Pepoloni e Sergio Perozzi, tra Perugia, Umbertide eccetera. Ce la siamo proprio spassata e ho incominciato a imparare come bere con moderazione, mangiando, insieme alla pastasciutta; in Inghilterra è stata importata la pasta ma non il modo civile di mangiare intorno a un tavolo - bevendo moderatamente le cose adatte - che avete in Italia. Quando siamo partiti per Milano, quest'ultima volta, ci è stato chiesto di portare del parmigiano fresco e noi ne abbiamo comprato dei grossi pezzi, il che non ha nulla a che fare con il brano che stiamo per ascoltare dal grande pianista cubano Gonzalo Rubalcaba, tratto da un lp che si chiama *The Blessing* ed è dedicato a Sandino.

Gonzalo Rubalcaba (autore e pianista), *Sandino* (da *The Blessing*, con Charlie Haden al contrabbasso e Jack DeJohnette alla batteria).

Torniamo in Europa per un po' di *jotas*: abbiamo trovato questa cassetta in Spagna e non è esattamente flamenco. Questa è una *jota de Aragon*. (2)

Jota(s) de Aragon, *La hermosura de la jota* (cassetta spagnola).

Jotas de Aragon. Sono convinto che in un mondo ideale avrebbero un grande successo. Vi leggo tutto il titolo: *La hermosura de la jota bienvenida Argensola la alcorisana y el pastor de Andorra*. Perché ve l'ho fatta sentire? Be', mi piace! Immagino che mi ricordi l'esperienza di viaggiare per l'Europa, scovando il tipo di musica che pur appartenendo ai vari luoghi è in qualche modo quasi nascosta in essi.
E ora, un altro tipo di nostalgia: la nostalgia per le sigarette, visto che ho smesso di fumare nel maggio scorso e questa si chiama *Smoke Gets in your Eyes*. La sentiamo da colei che venne definita da Orson Welles "la donna più affascinante del mondo": Eartha Kitt.

Eartha Kitt, *Smoke Gets in your Eyes*.

Avete ascoltato Robert Wyatt che proponeva alcuni dischi che pensava potesse farvi piacere ascoltare. Vorrei ringraziare Radio Popolare per avermi dato la possibilità di indulgere a ciò. Non ho un impianto molto costoso, qui a casa: non è di altissima qualità, che spero sia stata compensata dalla qualità della musica.
E ora, è proprio venuto il momento di una favolosa sigla:

Robert Wyatt, *Radio Popolare* (versione lunga).

Ho appena sentito che c'è qualcuno alla porta: dev'essere Alfie che rientra, sapete. Be', ora devo andare a salutarla.
Ciao.

Quinta puntata

Qui Robert Wyatt. Scusate se non parlo italiano ma non lo so fare. Comunque, qui c'è un po' di musica che mi piace.
Questo è un brano di Chris Cutler ma non è lui a interpretarlo. Si chiama *Justice*. Le parole sono di Cutler, la musica di Lindsay Cooper ed è interpretato da un gruppo austriaco, The More Extended Versions, da un piacevole cd intitolato - ha ha, buona questa! - *Dedicated to You but You Weren't Listening*. (3)

The More Extended Versions, *Justice* di Cutler/Cooper (dal cd D*edicated to You but You Weren't Listening*, ev0003). (4)

Era la versione dei More Extended Versions di *Justice*, di Lindsay Cooper e Chris Cutler. Un gruppo austriaco: Christoph Kurtzmann alla voce, Helmut Heiland alla chitarra, basso eccetera.
E ora vorrei proporvi due brani ispirati ai versi del poeta canadese Paul Haines. Il primo è la versione di Derek Bailey di Art in Heaven e il secondo un brano di Carla Bley intitolato *Rawalpindi Blues*, interpretato da Jack Bruce al basso e voce, Don Pullen al piano, Leo Nocentelli alla chitarra e… ah, Robbie Ameen e Marvin Smith alle batterie.

Derek Bailey, *Art in Heaven* (da *Darn It!*, American Clavé amcl 1014/18: musiche su poesie di Paul Haines).
Jack Bruce, *Rawalpindi Blues* (musica: Carla Bley; testo: Paul Haines; da *Darn It!*).

Entrambi i brani ascoltati provengono da un doppio cd intitolato *Darn It!*, su etichetta American Clavé.
La voce di Jack Bruce mi fa sempre venire in mente l'opera - in un certo senso ha una bella tessitura operistica - e quindi ho pensato di proporvi una frammento di una vera opera lirica di Anthony Davis, intitolata *The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. Qui sentiamo Hilda Harris - nella parte della sorella maggiore di Malcolm, Ella - e Timothy Price, nella parte del giovane Malcolm.

Anthony Davis, *Child's Aria / Ella's Aria* (testo: Thulani Davis / Christopher Davis; dal doppio cd *The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, Gramavision/Rykodisc r2-79470).

Un'opera di Anthony Davis, intitolata *The Life and Times of Malcolm X*.
E ora, volete sentire un grande batterista? Eccolo qui: è Ralph Peterson. Questo è il suo quartetto che suona *Sneak Attack*.

Ralph Peterson, *Sneak Attack* (da *Ornettology*, cdp7982902).

Ornettology e il titolo del brano era *Sneak Attack*: Ralph Peterson alla batteria, Melissa Slocum al contrabbasso, Brian Carrott al vibrafono e Don Byron alle ance.
Ciò che abbiamo ascoltato di più la scorsa estate, dato che passavamo molto tempo all'aperto, sono stati gli uccelli; a volte è difficile riconoscerli dal canto e così Alfie mi ha comprato alcune cassette che aiutano a farlo

Woodland Birds (cassetta della Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, sui Silvidi).
(Contenuto della cassetta) il luì grande e il luì piccolo emettono entrambi il verso uìt ed è spesso difficile distinguerli ma quello del luì grande è quasi bisillabico e forse lievemente lamentoso *(canto del luì grande)*. Quello del luì piccolo è quasi monosillabico e distintamente allegro e sommesso *(canto del luì piccolo)*. Ecco un confronto, con il luì grande per primo *(voci di luì grande e luì piccolo)*.
(Fine della cassetta; riprende Wyatt) Alcuni uccelli fanno *(fischia)*, altri fanno *(fischietta)* e altri ancora fanno *(fischietta con un fraseggio vagamente bop, riferendosi evidentemente a un altro Bird)*. Certo, ce ne sono anche che fanno: "Aah, aaah" ma di quelli parleremo un'altra volta.
Intanto, ho letto sui giornali che ai giovani piacciono le musiche dal ritmo marcato. Ho trovato un solo brano che rispondesse a tali requisiti - di un gruppo che si chiama Ultramarine - ed è un pezzo dance, mi dicono.

Ultramarine (con Jimmy Hastings e Robert Wyatt), *Happy Land* (versione rimissata, dal minicd *Barefoot*, Blanco Y Negro).

C'è una sola canzone con cui posso concludere questo programma per Radio Popolare ed è *Ciao ciao bambina*, da uno dei più grandi film musicali: *Svenklangs Kuintett*, un film svedese sui primi passi di un complesso di dilettanti, molto commovente.
Voglio solo ringraziare moltissimo Radio Popolare per avermi invitato a fare ascoltare un po' di dischi che mi piacciono e spero solo che qualcuno sia piaciuto anche a voi.
Ciao.

Svenklangs Kuintett, *Ciao ciao bambina* (voce: Eva Remaeus).

(trad. di aa)

NOTE

1. Probabile pseudonimo assunto da Zbigniew Preisner quando firma musiche intradiegetiche.

2. Danza aragonese, di Navarra e parte di Levante.

3. Ride perché è titolo di un brano dei primi Soft Machine, poi utilizzato da Keith Tippett come titolo di un proprio lp (cui partecipò Wyatt) e parafrasato da Wyatt con i Matching Mole (*Dedicated to Hugh, But You Weren't Listening).*

4. La versione originale, su *Letters Home* dei News from Babel, era cantata da Wyatt.



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Robert Wyatt - Segnali di una falsa immobilità - Late For The Sky - numero 15 - Marzo 1995





Robert Wyatt

Segnali di una falsa immobilità

a curadi Marco Grompi

La recente visita in Italia del musicista inglese, coincisa con la presentazione del libro edito dall'Arcana (del quale scriviamo più avanti) e con l'uscita di due CD, ci ha fornito l'occasione per incontrarlo e per parlare con lui. Apriamo quindi questo numero con l'intervista a Robert Wyatt, anche perché, nella sua vita, non è che ne abbia rilasciate molte.

LE MACCHINE MOLLI E ALTRE FOLLIE DI UN *BIPEDE BATTERISTA*

Per parlare in modo esauriente di Robert Wyatt occorrerebbe scrivere un libro. Un libro senza troppi fronzoli, limitato ai fatti e capace di ripercorrere la sua biografia attraverso la cronologia completa di tutti i concerti e di tutte le registrazioni dei gruppi che l'hanno visto protagonista (Wilde Flowers, Soft Machine e Matching Mole), nonché di tutte le sue performance come solista o come collaboratore con altri artisti. Già, perché Robert Wyatt non si è limitato ad essere il batterista, il fondatore e l'anima di gruppi che meritano di stare, con i Pink Floyd del primo periodo, tra coloro che, nei tardi anni '60, hanno contribuito maggiormente a dare un'impronta duratura alla scena psichedelica inglese. Dal 1970, infatti, ha pubblicato a suo nome un non elevato numero di album-manifesto della libertà in musica: da **The End Of An Ear** a **A Short Break** (l'ultimo mini-CD a suo nome, prodotto nel 1992), passando attraverso il salto nel vuoto del 1973 (quando durante un party, completamente ubriaco, si gettò dalla finestra del quarto piano e, da allora, perse completamente l'uso delle gambe), e **Rock Bottom** (il mitico disco del 1974 che quasi lo

rendeva una superstar), il percorso artistico di Wyatt è stato immenso e variegato, zeppo di errori e di intuizioni geniali, con frequenti incursioni in territori musicali assolutamente distanti dal rock, ma difficilmente etichettabili come jazz, avanguardia, world music o chissà che altro. Recentemente, due raccolte discografiche hanno cercato di riassumere la sua vita artistica: la prima è **Going Back A Bit: A Litlle History Of Robert Wyatt** (Virgin Universal, 1994), un doppio CD retrospettivo dal 1969 al 1991 con qualche traccia rara o inedita che, se da un lato può deludere il fedele collezionista, da un altro è vivamente consigliabile come avvio alla conoscenza del personaggio, specialmente per quanto riguarda il periodo 1974-1976, di cui si ha una folta rappresentanza di singoli e di estratti da **Rock Bottom** e **Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard**. Diversamente, **Flotsam Jetsam** (Rough Trade, 1994) è un CD che comprende materiale rarissimo o assolutamente mai-edito-prima, che traccia un profilo obliquo del Wyatt "musicista-cantante dalla voce triste" attraverso apparizioni radiofoniche, collaborazioni estemporanee (Symbiosis, Claustrophobia, The Happy End) o più durature (Matching Mole, Lol Coxhill, Gary Windo). Tra le varie chicche, segnalo un brano del 1968 con (udite, udite!) Jimi Hendrix al basso (**Slow Walkin' Talk**). Personalmente, credo che **Old Rottenhat** (1985) e ancor più **Dondestan** (1991) siano due tra le cose più belle e *sentite* degli ultimi dieci anni, per cui è ovvio che ne consiglio quantomeno un ascolto attento a chiunque sia stufo della "solita musica".

Il libro ideale che sarebbe necessario scrivere per riassumere la sua vicenda artistica, personale e politica (Wyatt è stato per molti anni un fervente attivista del partito comunista inglese) ora c'è, è stato pubblicato dall'editrice Arcana, scritto da Michael King, curato da Alessandro Achilli e s'intitola "Falsi Movimenti". Proprio in occasione della sua presentazione ho potuto approfondire il Wyatt-pensiero.

Cosa ne pensi di "Falsi movimenti"?

Michael King mi ha scritto dal Canada, dicendomi che voleva scrivere la mia storia. Gli dissi che io non mi ricordavo molto di come erano andate le cose. Ma lui disse: "Ok, io mi ricordo!". La cosa divertente è che quando gli dicevo "Quel giorno del 1975 ero a Cambridge..." lui spesso mi correggeva: "No, quel giorno eri a Norwich". E il bello era che quando i nostri ricordi discordavano, era molto più probabile che fossi io a sbagliarmi. Non so come abbia fatto. Da un certo punto di vista continua a stupirmi che a qualcuno veramente interessi sapere tutto ciò che ho fatto nella mia carriera, anche se ciò mi lusinga molto. Penso che la versione italiana del libro sia un ottimo lavoro, molto ben fatto, molto ben curato e anche migliore della sua versione originale pubblicata in Inghilterra qualche anno fa, perché sono stati corretti alcuni errori ed è stato aggiornato al 1994. Da un altro punto di vista un po' mi disturba, in quanto io faccio molta fatica a rapportarmi con tutto ciò che ho fatto prima dell'incidente. La gente pensa che l'essere diventato paraplegico sia stata la mia più grande tragedia. Ma, di fatto, da quando sono definitivamente uscito dagli ospedali, tra il 1973 e il 1974, ho sposato Alfie (Alfreda Benge, pittrice, fotografa, poetessa e, da allora, sua inseparabile compagna, ndr), ho fatto **Rock Bottom** e molte altre cose che fanno parte dell'inizio del periodo più felice della mia esistenza. Improvvisamente, tutto è diventato per me più chiaro, più semplice. E' stato davvero così.

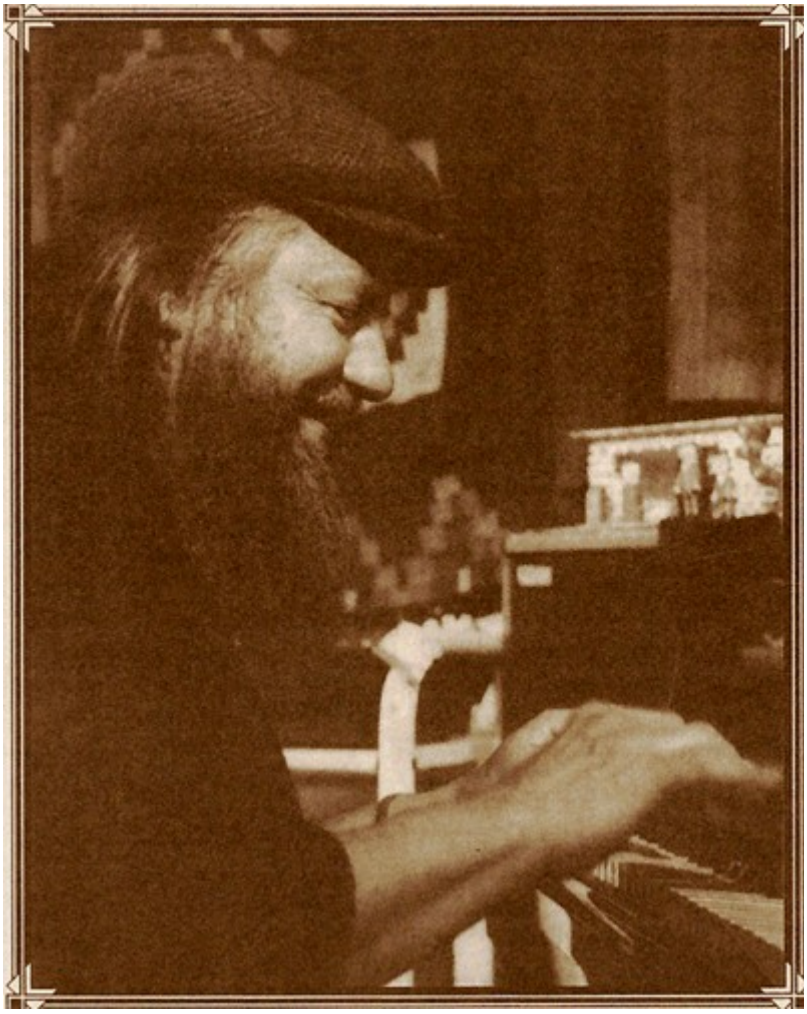
Allora perché, secondo te, la gente ti chiama "la voce triste"?

(dopo una lunga pausa, ndr)... Credo che dovresti chiederlo alla gente... (ride, ndr). Forse è vero... (altra pausa). Forse è perché non mi sento del tutto a mio agio in questo mondo. Ancora non ho trovato quale sia il significato della mia permanenza qui. Non ho ancora capito la mia funzione come essere umano.
Probabilmente, qualcosa di questa mia ansia interiore traspare nella mia voce. Ma, artisticamente, la mia attitudine è verso lo scherzo, il divertimento. Mi piace ridere, divertirmi in ciò che faccio. Non sono per nulla interessato, professionalmente, alle tragedie, alla sofferenza. Per esempio, secondo me, non è un caso che i migliori comici, almeno in Inghilterra, siano ebrei.

Come mai, allora, secondo te, di tutte le sfaccettature della tua personalità la critica ha sempre dato più risalto all'aspetto più triste?

Posso reputarmi fortunato se la gente trova sufficientemente interessante ascoltarmi. Di certo non posso dire loro "come" devono ascoltare il mio lavoro. Io mi ritengo totalmente libero di produrre la musica che voglio, così come chi la ascolta è totalmente libero di interpretarla come crede, a seconda della propria sensibilità. Come disse il poeta americano T.S.Elliott "probabilmente, chi legge le mie poesie le capisce molto meglio di quanto possa capirle io". In un certo senso, è come se si stipulasse un contratto in cui si prevede che il musicista faccia mezza strada e l'ascoltatore faccia l'altra metà. Esattamente la metà del percorso appartiene alla creatività dell'ascoltatore, solo l'altra metà del processo mi

appartiene.



GLI ERRORI DI UN INGUARIBILE OTTIMISTA

Una delle tue qualità artistiche più rilevanti è la continua ricerca in avanti, la necessità di muoversi sempre verso qualcosa di nuovo. Tu hai detto: "L'influenza più concreta su di me è quella che deriva dal cercare di non ripetere gli errori precedenti". Eppure, ogni nuova direzione sembra provenire a sua volta da un errore.

Il mio lavoro è davvero un'avventura entusiasmante, perché non riesco a vedere ciò che sto facendo finché il lavoro è finito. Solo allora riesco a valutarlo con un certo distacco. Credo che non sia così solo per questo lavoro, ma per la vita in generale.

Credi di aver fatto molti errori nella tua carriera?

L'intera geografia della mia carriera è disegnata dal rimbalzare continuamente, alla cieca, da un errore ad un altro. Invecchiando, si perdono molte cose, ma dicono che si diventi anche più saggi. Tuttavia, non serve a nulla, dato che sto solo imparando ora quello che avrei dovuto fare quando avevo ventì-trent'anni. E adesso che sto arrivando ai cinquanta, dato che non ho mai avuto cinquantanni prima, non ho assolutamente idea di come si faccia, per cui sono sicuro che sbaglierò ancora e che finirò con il fare qualche altra stronzata.

Cosa pensi di operazioni discografiche come la raccolta della Virgin Universal *Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt*, la ristampa in CD degli album dei Matching Mole o la recente pubblicazione del live del 1972 dello stesso gruppo *BBC Radio One In Concert*?

Non credo di avere ancora sentito il live dei Matching Mole, mentre per le ristampe hanno fatto un ottimo lavoro, anche se il doppio della Virgin Universal mi sembra una specie di museo. Non lo capisco. E' organizzato in senso cronologico, ma io avrei preferito farlo diventare un nuovo pezzo di musica. Ho comunque molte difficoltà a trattare con il mio passato.

Spesso esprimi insoddisfazione per le registrazioni dei Soft Machine, in quanto sostieni che le versioni pubblicate sui dischi non erano state provate a sufficienza, mentre poi, dal vivo, pian piano i brani miglioravano con la pratica. Non hai mai pensato di organizzare il materiale dal vivo in una pubblicazione contenente le migliori performance?

Sarebbe stata una buona idea, ma c'è il fatto che quando si sciolsero i Soft Machine il manager di allora si tenne tutto il materiale e anche tutti i soldi. Noi non abbiamo più alcun controllo su quel materiale, nemmeno oggi. Non so nemmeno dove siano i nastri. Ogni volta che esce del nuovo materiale non so neppure da dove venga.

Come è nato un disco come *The End Of An Ear*?

All'inizio, la Cbs diede a tutti i componenti dei Soft Machine la possibilità di fare un disco solista e io decisi di essere completamente libero in questo progetto.
Mi rendo conto che oggi sembra patetico e melenso. Volevo solo aprire i rubinetti e far scorrere tutto, in completa solitudine e in completa libertà. Volevo *sognare* la strada del disco attraverso il disco stesso. E' stato un atto di coraggio, o forse di stupidità, o entrambe... non so, fate voi... E' strano come con i risultati di momenti assolutamente spontanei ti ci ritrovi a convivere per sempre... Sono stato comunque contento del risultato, perché ha definitivamente liberato la mia voce, il mio modo di suonare le tastiere. Mi ha completamente aperto la mente.



Sei ancora in contatto con Hugh Hopper?

Sì, l'ho sentito al telefono qualche giorno fa perché insieme abbiamo appena terminato una lunga battaglia legale per cercare di avere un benché minimo controllo sulla musica che abbiamo fatto insieme. E' stato un fallimento. Del resto, è colpa nostra: noi siamo artisti... lasciamo il business agli altri... (ride, ndr). I musicisti di oggi non sono più così stupidi. Noi, ingenui, pensavamo fosse sufficiente creare solo un po' di arte. A quei tempi era troppo sofisticato politicamente credere che uomini d'affari e artisti potessero vivere e lavorare insieme. Comunque, non tutti hanno avuto cattivi manager, siamo noi che siamo stati sfortunati. In alcuni casi sono stati ottimi: vedi, ad esempio, i Pink Floyd.

Sei ancora in contatto con loro?

Ho sentito di recente Nick Mason, perché una canzone finita nell'antologia della Virgin è stata presa da un suo disco. Mi dispiace molto che i membri originali del gruppo non siano più amici fra di loro. Mi piace molto Roger (Waters), come mi piace molto Rick (Wright), solo che adesso si odiano. E' come quando una coppia di tuoi amici divorzia: tu ami entrambi, ma non sai più di chi devi rimanere amico... (ride, ndr)... o a quale dei due telefonare.

Hai sentito i loro lavori recenti?

Ad essere sincero no. Non ascolto molta musica rock. Recentemente ascolto molto la musica napoletana. Ho un cofanetto di Roberto Muralo... (canticchia una tarantella, ndr). E' musica completamente libera dal cinismo, non vuole essere per forza intelligente, non ci sono artifizi. Una cosa divertente è che negli anni '70, io e pochi altri eravamo gli unici ad ascoltare ed a trovare interessante, ad esempio, la musica bulgara e balcanica, mentre oggi... è praticamente di moda. All'epoca se ascoltavamo la musica folk russa ci dicevano: "Ah, voi siete proprio dei fottuti comunisti!" Oggi, invece, è apprezzata da molti che mi vengono a dire: "Ohh, ascolta qui!". Mi viene da mandarli affanculo, l'ascoltavo già vent'anni fa!.

Quando uscirà un nuovo disco tuo?

Non saprei dire. Negli ultimi due anni, nella mia vita privata si sono affollati un gran numero di problemi pratici e contingenti che mi hanno distratto molto. Vivere come paraplegico in un paese dove oggi stanno scomparendo i servizi sociali mi fa un po' paura. Io e Alfie stiamo attraversando un momento difficile in cui siamo troppo impegnati a risolvere problemi pratici quotidianamente. Per fare la tua musica devi essere più rilassato, come in una specie di sogno.

Con la tua reputazione, se lo volessi, potresti fare un disco con un cast eccezionale...

Mi innervosisce molto il chiedere ad altri musicisti di fare qualcosa con me. Un problema deriva forse dal fatto che non ho mai organizzato attorno a me uno staff che lavorasse per me, siamo solo io e Alfie. Così, anche quando vedo questo libro, o voi che siete qui ad intervistarmi, mi chiedo cosa ci faccio qui, come mai. Per me è già abbastanza difficile riuscire a cantare una canzone in modo intonato e della quale non sia imbarazzato. Credo di aver perso molta confidenza in tutto ciò quando sono stato allontanato dai Soft Machine. Nella mia testa deve esserci stato uno shock nel momento in cui il gruppo si è voluto liberare di un giovane energico ed entusiasta per voler fare la musica da adulti. Probabilmente, ciò mi ha lasciato una specie di complesso di inferiorità verso chi è davvero musicista.

L'esperienza del cosiddetto *Canterbury Sound* è stato un momento unico: credi che in futuro quel tipo di musica possa nuovamente ispirare situazioni uniche e irripetibili?

Non lo so. Del resto, quello che ha ispirato noi era così diverso da quello che abbiamo creato... E' molto difficile intravvedere un legame nel tramandare l'ispirazione. In un taccuino, il pittore Paul Klee dice che non importa, una volta visto l'albero e i suoi frutti, quale sia il processo chimico che c'era prima di arrivare a ciò. E' un processo assolutamente misterioso come le persone filtrino nelle loro teste delle cose per crearne altre. Spero comunque che la storia sia gentile rispetto a quei giorni, perché sarebbe fin troppo facile oggi essere crudeli al riguardo. E' sempre facile deridere dopo coloro che, prima, cercavano di fare qualcosa di nuovo.

In Italia è sempre stata molto forte la tua immagine di attivista del partito comunista. Dopo la tua uscita da esso, nel 1989, cosa ti è rimasto di quella esperienza?

A dire il vero, è stato il partito a lasciare me e non viceversa... (risate, ndr)... io sono ancora qui. Non sono proprio un attivista, sono troppo nostalgico per essere un attivista. Quando sono nato, alla fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, in Inghilterra è stato avviato un tipo di programma politico - economico - sociale di stampo socialista del tipo: scuole per tutti, ospedali per tutti, una specie di senso di mutua responsabilità. La mia infanzia è stata tutta trascorsa durante la *primavera* di questa idea. Forse può essere una sorta di nostalgia per la mia infanzia... (ride, ndr). Quello che succede oggi, invece, è l'opposto. Un medico ti può dire: "Ciò di cui tu avresti bisogno è questo, ma con i soldi che puoi permetterti di spendere ti posso fare solo quest'altra cura". Forse la prossima generazione si abituerà a questo, ma io vivo tutto ciò come un incubo. Quando ero giovane, guardavo i problemi del mondo come a qualcosa al di fuori della mia persona, di cui era però giusto e necessario preoccuparsi. Oggi, invece, mi rendo conto che molti di questi problemi mi riguardano direttamente, in prima persona.



Tuttavia, credo che gli aspetti più brutali del capitalismo non si manifestino qui in Europa, ma nei paesi più poveri del mondo. Tutta la nostra economia si basa su un equilibrio estremamente instabile e il nostro crescente benessere non fa altro che nascondere sempre più l'instabilità dei meccanismi su cui si basa.

Credi che nel panorama artistico-musicale stia accadendo lo stesso tipo di "appropriazione" culturale da parte dell'occidente nei confronti dei paesi più deboli?

Non credo che sia una questione "culturale". I rapporti economici di forza tra il nord e il sud rivelano chiaramente che ogni tipo di scambio (e quindi non solo culturale) tra nord e sud si fondi su basi ineguali. E' a tutti gli effetti uno scambio ineguale.
Personalmente non sono interessato ad una vendetta verso il mondo capitalista o il pensiero capitalista, sarebbe troppo infantile e ridicolo. Del resto, i businessmen fanno al meglio ciò che sanno fare e mi direbbero: "Beh, fottiti, così va il mondo!". L'unica cosa che posso dire è che tutto ciò non è bello e che l'umanità sta entrando in un nuovo secolo con le stesse contraddizioni che aveva ai primi del '900. Da questo punto di vista le cose non sono cambiate molto. Poi ti dicono che la gente di colore oggi è affermata e che non è più discriminata come cent'anni fa: abbiamo politici, sportivi, uomini di successo di colore, e così via... ma il fatto è che ci prendiamo i migliori per integrarli nel nostro sistema e rafforzarlo.

Tornando alla musica, c'è un qualche tuo lavoro di cui ti senti particolarmente soddisfatto?

Direi che **Dondestan**, senza dubbio, rappresenta al meglio la musica che c'è nella mia mente. A dire il vero, non leggo mai le recensioni dei miei lavori e se mi capita di leggerne una pessima penso: "Ah, sì, questo ha colto nel segno!". Non leggo le recensioni perché arrivano troppo tardi: trattano di cose che ormai esistono e che non posso più cambiare. Spesso, alcuni dei musicisti con i quali ho lavorato in passato pensavano che non fosse legittimo ciò che stavo facendo musicalmente. Con il tempo ho imparato che quando un artista di sinistra viene criticato brutalmente, come è capitato a me, non è mai detto chiaro che la critica è generata dal fatto che è di sinistra, ma sembra che ci sia sempre qualcosa che non va con lo stile, con la forma...è un attacco obliquo, mai diretto. E' impossibile che uno ti dica in faccia: "Non sono per niente d'accordo con te e con le tue idee per cui non mi piace quello che fai!". Ho pensato molto a questa cosa, ma non sono ancora arrivato ad una conclusione.

Il tuo sembra essenzialmente un universo poetico. *Dondestan* nasce addirittura dalle poesie di tua moglie Alfie. Che cos'è per te la poesia?

Non ho mai deliberatamente scelto di abbracciare o di rifiutare in toto la poesia. Nel caso di **Dondestan** sono stato profondamente toccato dalle poesie di Alfie perché mi sembravano già pronte per essere cantate. Le parole, anche prima del loro significato, avevano già un linguaggio musicale. Credo che le canzoni, in generale, appartengano ad una specie di magica zona di transizione tra il conscio e l'inconscio. Le parole più efficaci in una canzone non sono necessariamente quelle che hanno più senso, ma quelle che vengono da una specie di "trance". E' un concetto difficile da analizzare: è come certe filastrocche per bambini in cui le parole non hanno senso, ma la ripetizione o il suono di esse danno una

ragion d'essere. Non so come ciò possa accadere, in quanto quando noi analizziamo le parole ci basiamo su di esse senza tener conto del perché le pronunciamo con un certo suono, con una certa intonazione o una precisa musicalità. In pratica, non sappiamo come mai, musicalmente, abbiano un certo effetto su di noi. Ad esempio, c'è un intervallo musicale che mi intriga molto (infatti lo uso spesso) e sono convinto che sia anche il primo suono che ho prodotto quando sono venuto al mondo. Mi ricordo che il mio primo suono parlato è stato: "Mami" (lo pronuncia sillabandolo e con intervallo di note differenti, ndr). Questo intervallo è una terza minore. Non so spiegare il perché, ma è estremamente toccante, efficace. Questo intervallo, combinato con le parole, è come un suono di base, primordiale, inconscio, innato. I poeti lavorano in quest'area.



So che non ami particolarmente parlarne, ma hai qualche progetto per il futuro?

Ho registrato recentemente tre canzoni con un "disco-man" belga chiamato Joe Bogaert. Mi ha mandato alcuni nastri chiedendomi se potevo cantare qualche canzone e mi è piaciuto farlo. E' interessante perché non ho mai fatto nulla del genere prima: se qualcuno di un ambiente musicale così distante dal mio vuole davvero lavorare con me, significa che nella sua mente di musicista sta avvenendo un grande cambiamento. L'ho fatto perché mi è stata data la possibilità di entrare in questi nuovi territori, anche se poi ho potuto constatare che i meccanismi della pop music sono terribilmente lenti: certi canoni, come ad esempio l'uso di ritmi serratissimi, erano già stati ampiamente esplorati molti anni fa. L'industria della musica pop è terribilmente conservatrice ed è quindi abbastanza raro che mi attragga. Mi sentirei oppresso e frustrato dal fatto di non poter fare una canzone di sei-sette minuti, se lo voglio, solo perché non potrebbe essere trasmessa da MTV o alla radio. Ci sono troppe, fotture, inutili regole nella musica pop! Ogni pezzo musicale ha una sua durata naturale, che non deve essere imposta da qualcuno o da qualcosa. Comunque, amo molto le belle pop-song, ma odio tutta la cultura che ci sta dietro. Non c'è alcuna libertà al suo interno.

Del resto, sei sempre stato al di fuori dei circuiti della musica pop...

Sì, comunque non credo affatto che i musicisti pop siano inferiori o meno dotati. Ne stimo molti e alcuni sono davvero dei musicisti straordinari. Penso solo che si facciano troppi problemi. Recentemente ho inciso dei brani con John Greaves, altre cose con il chitarrista belga Philippe Catherine e c'è stato anche un progetto con Hugh Hopper. La cosa davvero frustrante è l'enorme quantità di tempo che passa tra quando registri e quando le incisioni vengono pubblicate.
La cosa comunque più assurda è che a tutt'oggi io continui a non avere la benché minima idea di come sia organizzato il mondo del business discografico e, soprattutto, di come organizzarmi per poter ricavare dei soldi da tutto questo... (ride, ndr). Tante volte il lavoro

mi rende nervoso perché... non si può vivere di sole idee. In qualche modo devo anche mangiare! (sogghigna, amaramente, ndr).

E' difficile essere un artista di culto?

No, beh... forse in un certo senso... No, è ok, non posso lamentarmi.

Un grazie particolare a Claudio Galuzzì della rivista "Rumore " che ha condotto gran parte di questa intervista (pubblicata sul numero 37 di Febbraio 1995) e a Davide Sapienza che l'ha resa possibile. Le fotografie pubblicate in questo servizio, e anche la copertina di questo numero di Late For The Sky, sono tratte dal libro di Michael King "Falsi movimenti" edito dall'Arcana Editrice. Late for the Sky desidera ringraziare anche Claudio Sorge, direttore di Rumore, per la cortesia dimostrata.



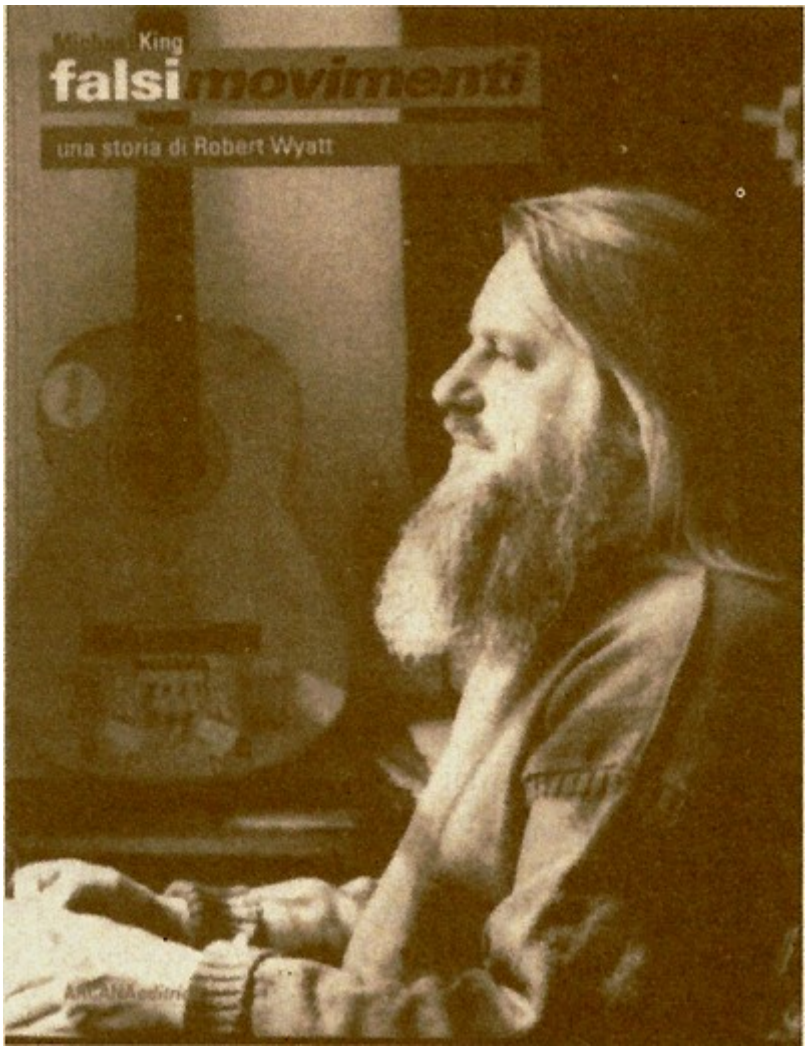
Falsi Movimenti

Una storia di Robert Wyatt

di Roberto Anghinoni

Innanzitutto, brava Arcana. Pubblicare oggi in Italia, ma anche ieri o domani, un libro dedicato a Robert Wyatt è senza dubbio una decisione editoriale coraggioso che spero, ma senza illusioni, possa essere supportato da un generoso successo. Chi era, chi è Robert Wyatt lo avete scoperto nelle pagine precedenti, lo avete ascoltato dalla sua stessa voce. Questo libro, riccamente curato nei dettagli informativi, si può tranquillamente definire una saporita manna per tutti gli amanti della musica progressiva inglese, dai Wild Flowers in poi. Può inoltre essere anche motivo di orgoglio per l'editrice milanese il fatto di offrire al suo pubblico un testo che, nella versione italiana egregiamente curata da Alessandro Achilli, è stato riveduto e aggiornato da Michael King, l'autore del volume, dopo ulteriori informazioni e puntualizzazioni da parte dello stesso Wyatt.

Musicalmente parlando, a grandi linee, la figura dell'ex batterista significa Wild Flowers, Soft Machine, Matching Mole e, soprattutto, Robert Wyatt. Lo stesso artista inglese ha confidato come le sue cose migliori siano racchiuse nello scrigno di **Rock Bottom.** Su un particolare di questa biografia ricca di dati, di curiosità, di scalette di concerti, di impressioni e di pensieri vorrei riflettere. Nel libro, Wyatt confida che oggi vede l'incidente che lo ha privato dell'uso delle gambe come un passaggio fra l'adolescenza e la maturità. Leggendo queste parole ho subito pensato a Joseph Conrad e alla sua "Linea d'ombra". Mi piace pensare che ci si una trasparente analogia fra la scrittura autobiografica dell'autore polacco, curioso esploratore di mondi, con il Wyatt esploratore di universi sonori. Una linea d'ombra che avverte come sia ora di dimenticare i "luoghi" della prima gioventù. E la nave del capitano Conrad che rimane immobile in un mare sciaguratamente calmo somiglia alla carrozzella del comandante Wyatt che, altrettanto immobile, si interroga e riflette. Questo viaggio, questa avventura nell'intimo e nel profondo di un'anima è raccontata in questo libro che parla di musica ma che è soprattutto un ritratto autentico dell'uomo Robert Wyatt. E per rimanere nella nostra similitudine, oltre la linea d'ombra, il "il gemello del bipede drummer" ha saputo inventare una nuova luce che ancora oggi è scintillante, dopo trent'anni di carriera. Nel libro sono anche raccolte numerose testimonianze dei suoi amici "storici", da Costello a Fred Frith, da Richard Sinclair a Hugh Hopper, a Kevin Ayers. Oltre la calma apparente, oltre alle difficoltà evidenti, oltre all'incertezza per il futuro Wyatt trasmette serenità e coerenza intellettuale. Anche solo per questolo dobbiamo considerare un grande del nostro tempo.



Michael King

FALSI MOVIMENTI

(Una storia di Robert Wyatt)

A cura di Alessandro Achilli
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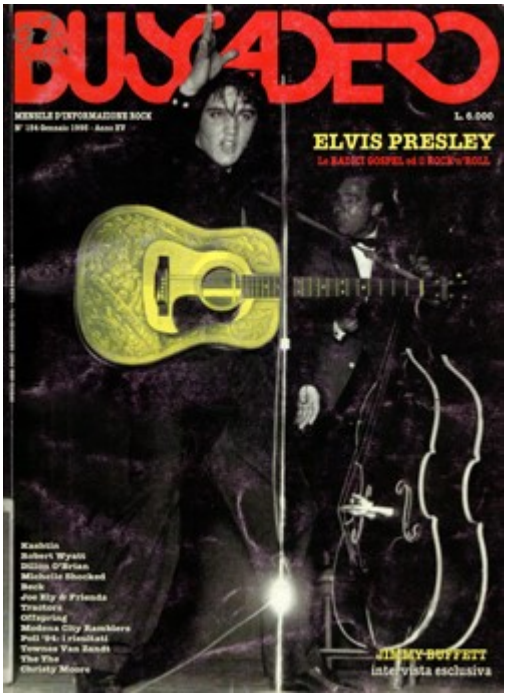
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Robert Wyatt - Appunti per chi vorrà approfondire - Buscadero - N° 154 - Gennaio 1995

ROBERT WYATT
APPUNTI PER CHI VORRÀ APPROFONDIRE



Pochi giorni dopo aver redatto una prima stesura di questo articolo, chi scrive ha avuto il piacere di incontrare personalmente Robert Wyatt in occasione della presentazione milanese di «Falsi Movimenti», il libro sul musicista scritto da Michael King e pubblicato in Italia da Arcana nella traduzione di Alessandro Achilli. Anziché tradurre le conversazioni piacevolmente sostenute nei consueti schemi dell'intervista, è sembrato più interessante incorporare le frasi udite dalla viva voce di Wyatt nel testo biografico già esistente, a mo' di commento. A chi legge giudicare se sia stata una buona idea o no.

1. LE ORIGINI

L'infanzia e l'adolescenza di Robert Wyatt devono essere state felici. Cresciuto in una casa nei dintorni di Canterbury che era una specie di crocevia intellettuale ed umano animato dalla madre Honor, giornalista radiofonica ed insegnante, il giovane Robert viene ben presto a contatto co tutte le realtà più stimolanti degli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta in campo musicale, letterario ed artistico in generale. Nel 1960, casa Wyatt vede giungere in qualità di pensionante il «beat» australiano Daevid Allen che Robert elegge immediatamente a suo eroe personale. Nel 1963, Daevid, Robert ed un altro amico, Hugh Hopper, si trasferiscono a Londra, dove condividono il monolocale di Daevid con un'altra conoscenza, Kevin Ayers. Nello stesso anno, debutta sulle scene il Daevid Allen Trio, formato da Daevid, Hugh e Robert con ulteriore aiuto di un altro studente di Canterbury, il pianista Mike Ratledge. Dopo vari cambi di formazione, viaggi ed esperimenti musicali e non, nel 1965 nasce un quartetto chiamato Wilde Flowers, formato da Robert alla batteria, Brian Hopper al sax e chitarra, Richard Sinclair alla chitarra, Hugh Hopper al basso e Kevin Ayers alla voce. Altri cambi, altre formazioni fluttuanti, ritorno di Daevid Allen e nel 1966 qualcosa cambia.

2. NELLA MACCHINA SOFFICE

II nome viene tratto da un libro di William Burroughs, «The Soft Machine», e la prima formazione vede riuniti Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge e Daevid Allen. Il 15 ottobre 1966, una gigantesca festa organizzata per il lancio di «IT», il primo giornale underground britannico, vede il quartetto protagonista insieme ad un altro gruppo esordiente, i Pink Floyd («Certo che mi piacerebbe incontrarli nuovamente, Roger Waters e Richard Wright erano miei grandissimi amici, ed anche gli altri, ma adesso come si fa? È come essere amici di una coppia che poi divorzia, non sai più se frequentare lui o lei»).

La festa di «IT» segna l'inizio ufficiale della stagione psichedelica del gruppo, ospite regolare dell'«UFO Club» e degli altri locali dell'epoca.

All'inizio del 1967, esce il primo 45 giri firmato Soft Machine, «Love Makes Sweet Music», ed il 29 aprile dello stesso anno la macchina partecipa al festival dell'Alexandra Palace «14 Hours Technicolor Dream», apice della fase più autentica dell'underground.

Sempre nel 1967, i Soft Machine divengono «obtorto collo» un trio, grazie ai doganieri britannici che negano a Daevid Allen il visto di ingresso al ritorno del gruppo da un «tour» francese. Con questa formazione, i Soft iniziano a perfezionare il proprio «light show», entrando in una fase che oggi si definirebbe «multimediale» («performance» in scena, luci ad effetto, musica concreta, vestiario da «choc» visuale, ecc.).

L'anno successivo, il gruppo intraprende un «tour» statunitense che dura oltre due mesi, come supporto dell'Experience di Jimi Hendrix. È un'esperienza che, sebbene compiuta in un costante stato di «totale ubriachezza», per usare le parole di Wyatt, viene ricordata con particolare soddisfazione.

Al termine del «tour», il trio si ritrova in sala d'incisione per incidere «The Soft Machine», l'album di debutto.

È un disco ricco di idee, poetico ed energico, trasognato e sperimentale, che spazia dal tormentone ayersiano di «We Did It Again» alla sospensione estatica dell'introduzione di «Hope For Happiness» (conosciuta in Italia grazie ad un remoto «Carosello» televisivo), dalla delicatezza di «Joy Of A Toy», delizioso motivetto strumentale, all'urgenza wyattiana di «Save Yourself». Il trio sembra voler viaggiare in tutte le direzioni, e forse commette qualche errore di ingenuità, ma la gioia di suonare e di provare qualcosa di nuovo che si respira in ogni solco lo rendono tuttora degno di essere ricordato («Da un certo punto di vista invidio i musicisti classici, che suonano un'arte che già esiste. Il guaio per loro è però che anche chi li ascolta ha dei modelli cui richiamarsi, mentre quando sperimenti nessuno sa mai cosa si stia facendo, neppure chi suona»).

Dopo alcuni mesi trascorsi col futuro Police Andy Summers come quarto elemento, il gruppo approfondisce la sua ricerca sonora, e Hugh Hopper rimpiazza Kevin Ayers al basso. Nel frattempo, Wyatt comincia ad abbozzare il suo capolavoro, «The Moon In June» («A volte qualcuno mi chiede il testo, allora io mi metto ad ascoltarla al giradischi e... non capisco le parole»).

Nel settembre 1969, il nuovo trio, con l'aiuto di Brian Hopper ai fiati, pubblica «Volume Two». L'album rappresenta il punto di maggiore equilibro raggiunto tra le diverse tendenze artistiche dei componenti la «macchina soffice», unendo felicemente l'anarchia programmatica di Wyatt al rigore compositivo di Hopper e Ratledge. Verso la fine dell'anno, iniziano a delinearsi i Soft Machine della formazione più famosa, quella coi fiati, per intendersi: Elton Dean, Lyn Dobson, Mark Charig e Nick Evans.

Il 6 giugno 1970 viene pubblicato il doppio «Third», vertice assoluto dei Soft, un album in cui i talenti di Wyatt, Hopper, Dean e Ratledge brillano al massimo. Per la parte wyattiana, viene consegnata alla storia la versione definitiva di «Moon In June», un amalgama perfetto di improvvisazione, melodia, canto e perizia strumentale. Tutto sembra andare per il meglio, eppure è proprio in questa fase che le prime incrinature del rapporto fra Wyatt ed il resto del gruppo cominciano a manifestarsi.

In sintesi, il conflitto è tra l'atteggiamento «situazionista» di Wyatt, che preferisce far scaturire la musica da un approccio teso alla scoperta nell'atto stesso del suonare, e le tendenze di Ratledge ed Hopper a dedicare sempre più spazio alla musica scritta e sempre più tempo alle prove («Avevo come l'idea di andare bene perché ero quello giovane ed entusiasta, e finché il mio entusiasmo serviva. Ma poi, quando gli «adulti» volevano mettersi a suonare sul serio, allora mi mettevano da parte»). Nell'agosto del 1970, Wyatt dà sfogo alle proprie idee artistiche in «The End Of An Ear», album solista sulla cui copertina si definisce «cantante pop disoccupato» («La CBS aveva deciso che ognuno dei Soft Machine potesse incidere un album solista, e allora io ho aperto i rubinetti. Non so se

sia stato un atto di coraggio, di stupidità o entrambe le cose. Però mi ha liberato, ha liberato la mia voce ed il mio modo di suonare»).

L'amarezza di fondo, combinata all'eccitazione del campo libero, produce un disco difficile ma affascinante, che passa da momenti melodici di pura dolcezza a complesse ed ardue stratificazioni vocali e ritmiche. Alcoolico e lucidissimo, «The End...» è il grido di Wyatt, la rappresentazione dei Soft Machine come avrebbero potuto essere, una prospettiva incompiuta di cose a venire.

Da qui in poi, il rapporto fra Wyatt ed i Soft è la storia di una separazione, consumata specialmente nei confronti di Mike Ratledge (nel 1986, a Reggio Emilia, Wyatt dichiarò che non avrebbe più voluto neppure sedersi nella stessa stanza con Ratledge).

Mentre il «cantante disoccupato» esplora nuove direzioni con la «big band» dei Centipede, fondata dall'amico Keith Tippett, il batterista dei Soft Machine partecipa all'incisione di «Fourth», ossia il trionfo della linea «jazzistica» di ispirazione davisiana, che viene pubblicato nel febbraio 1971.

Nel settembre dello stesso anno, il «Melody Maker» annuncia in prima pagina l'abbandono dei Soft Machine da parte di Wyatt, ed è davvero «la fine di un'era» («Sarebbe bello poter rivedere il materiale «live» del gruppo, ma il manager dell'epoca si è tenuto tutto, soldi e nastri, e quando ogni tanto salta fuori qualche incisione inedita del gruppo non so neppure io come sia successo, e chi l'avesse in mano»).

Fortunatamente, in questo periodo Wyatt incontra Alfreda Benge, che da allora è la sua compagna inseparabile, la «Alfie» di tante canzoni, e questo contribuisce non poco a salvarlo da una depressione che avrebbe potuto essere senza uscita.

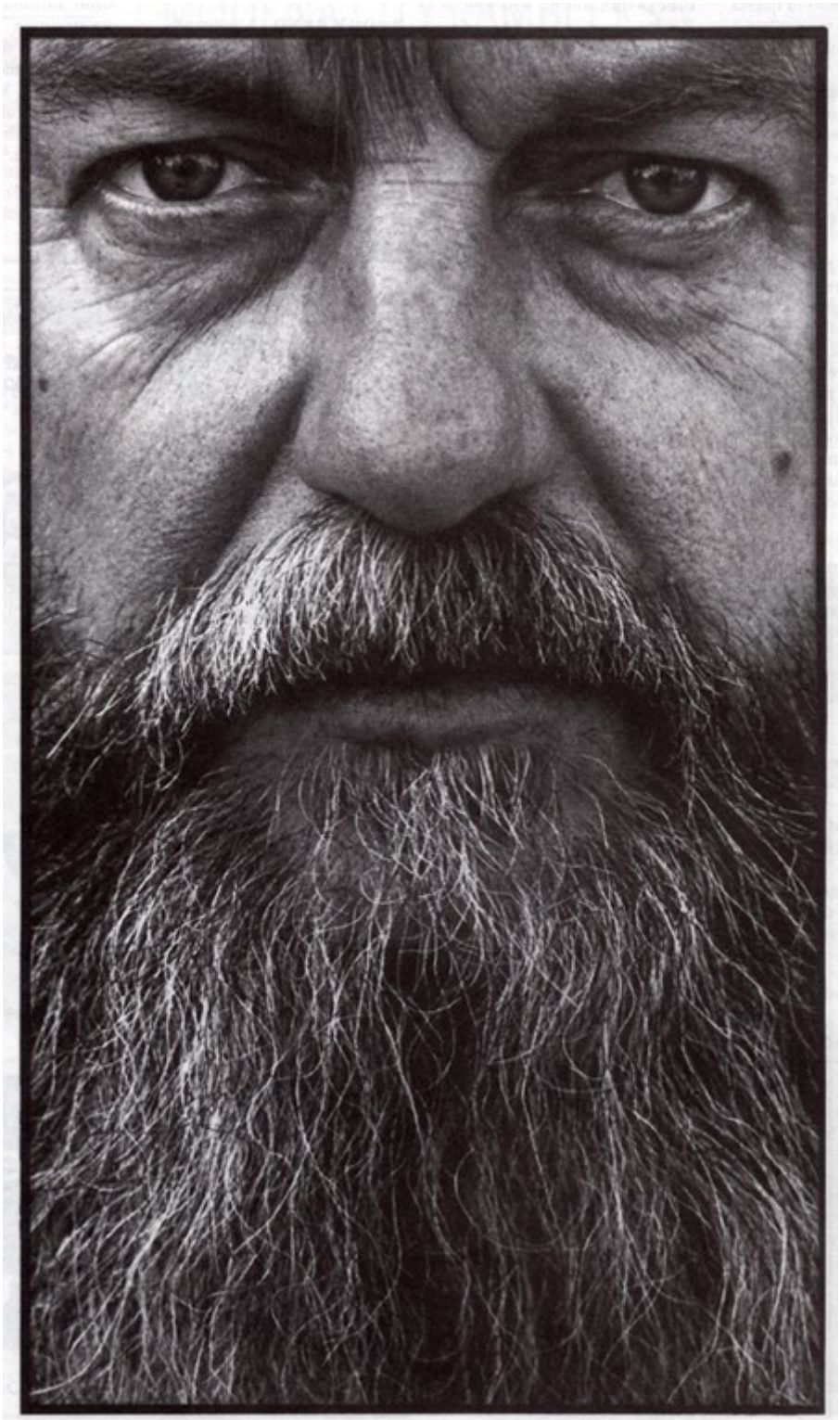


foto Guido Harari

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3. TALPE E DINTORNI

Dopo aver suonato in un quartetto «free» chiamato Symbiosis ed aver partecipato al «Violin Summit» coprendosi di gloria in veste di batterista, Wyatt avverte che è giunto il momento di iniziare una nuova fase.

Il nuovo si chiama Matching Mole, ovvero «le talpe che si incontrano», ma in francese è chiara l'assonanza con «Machine Molle», e quindi con «Soft Machine». I Matching Mole sono un quartetto composto da Wyatt, David Sinclair (ex Caravan) alle tastiere, Phil Miller alla chitarra e Bill Mac Cormick al basso. Nell'aprile del 1972, dopo sofferte sedute di

registrazione, afflitte da problemi tecnici indotti dalla scarsità di denaro disponibile, esce «Matching Mole». È un album incantato ed onirico («Instant Pussy»), venato da una sincera semplicità che può assumere tinte candidamente infantili («Signed Curtain») o struggentemente romantiche («O Caroline»), e che in altri momenti si colora invece di un'inquietudine quasi sinistra («Immediate Curtain»), espressione di un «lato oscuro» che a volte affiora nel mondo wyattiano.

Il nostro gioca a trecentosessanta gradi, impiegando voce, batteria, piano e mellotron e sentendosi per la prima volta dopo anni padrone della situazione.

Durante la registrazione del disco, Sinclair abbandona e viene definitivamente sostituito da Dave MacRae, un tastierista neozelandese già presente in qualità di ospite. Con l'ingresso di MacRae, che condivide con Wyatt il gusto per suonare in situazioni «anarchiche», il tiro del gruppo si alza, e nell'ottobre del 1972 esce «Little Red Record», prodotto da Robert Fripp («Fripp era estremamente dogmatico e autoritario, aveva ridotto Phil Miller alla frustrazione più totale, perché non gli piaceva nessun chitarrista che non fosse lui stesso. Oltretutto era anche un tipo di destra, che una volta ci disse che non apprezzava poi così tanto lavorare con della gente che viveva sulle spalle del Welfare State»). In sintonia con le idee di Wyatt, da sempre spontaneamente orientate a sinistra, la copertina del disco è in puro stile «realismo socialista, e ritrae il gruppo in tenute dell'esercito rosso cinese, molto «patriottiche». La musica vede aumentare le dosi di improvvisazione, i confini tra un brano e l'altro si fanno incerti e nascono almeno due capolavori, «Gloria Gloom», in cui Wyatt si chiede su un sottofondo controllato da Brian Eno se la musica sia davvero «più importante della lotta per un mondo socialista», interrogativo che oggi non sembra interessare come prima, e «God Song», dolcissima invettiva al Creatore («la prossima volta mandaci una figlia sexy/qualcuno che possiamo capire»).

Con la fine dell'anno, e col crescere dei problemi economici ed etilici, finiscono anche i Matching Mole. All'inizio del 1973, la situazione si presenta incerta, si parla di una nuova formazione con Francis Monkman, Gary Windo e Bill MacCormick, ma le cose prendono una piega imprevista e drammatica.

4. INCIDENTE E ANNI SETTANTA

II 1° giugno 1973, Robert Wyatt precipita dalla finestra di un quarto piano durante un party, tradito da un miscuglio micidiale di alcoolici. Sopravvive, ma le gambe restano paralizzate, ed è la fine del «batterista bipede». Nell'ottobre, ancora quasi degente, partecipa all'incisione del primo disco degli Hatfield And The North, prestando la sua splendida voce a «Calyx», e nel novembre torna definitivamente a casa a Twickenham. Nel frattempo, per alleviare una situazione economica difficile, i Soft Machine ed i Pink Floyd organizzano due concerti di beneficenza al Rainbow Theatre, ed altri amici, tra cui l'attrice Julie Christie, compiono altri atti di generosità.

Non potendo più dedicarsi alla batteria, Wyatt decide di concentrarsi sul canto e sull'uso delle tastiere, e nel febbraio/ marzo 1974 entra in sala di registrazione per incidere «Rock Bottom».

Registrato con l'aiuto di alcuni amici fidati, fra cui Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair, Laurie Allan, Fred Frith e Ivor Cutler, il disco è unanimemente considerato il capolavoro dell'artista, nonché uno degli album più significativi dell'intero decennio. «Rock Bottom» è una meditazione struggente ed appassionata tradotta in musica, un messaggio di serenità nonostante tutto che, a vent'anni di distanza, non si riesce ad ascoltare senza restarne profondamente coinvolti. Dalla dolcezza maestosa di «Sea Song», canzone assolutamente meravigliosa, si passa al clima visionario di «A Last Straw» ed alla corsa mozzafiato di «Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road», pervasa dalle sonorità echeggianti e vorticose della tromba di Mongezi Feza. Di seguito, «Alifib» e «Alife» sono filastrocche infinitamente meste, che portano lentamente verso la declamazione finale e visionaria di «Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road», affidata alla voce lunare di Ivor Cutler, che solleva interi brandelli di inconscio sino alla soglia della consapevolezza, lasciando chi ascolta senza sapere esattamente dove si trovi. Lo stesso giorno dell'uscita del disco, il 26 luglio 1974, Robert e Alfreda si sposano. In settembre, Wyatt collabora con Brian Eno in «Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy» ed alla fine dell'anno «Rock Bottom» riceve a Parigi il prestigioso «Gran Prix Charles Cros» come disco rock dell'anno.

Alla fine di maggio del 1975, la Virgin toglie letteralmente dalle mani dell'artista «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard», per l'ansia di bissare il successo di «Rock Bottom» e di contenere i costi («la mia situazione economica è quella che è, non posso permettermi di collaborare con chi vorrei, perché generalmente i musicisti vogliono essere pagati»). Il disco lascia

insoddisfatto lo stesso Wyatt, ma contiene diversi ottimi brani, tra cui «Team Spirit», cui collabora Brian Eno, e «Muddy Mouth», un liricissimo duetto tra il canto di Wyatt ed il piano di Fred Frith.

In giugno, Wyatt si esibisce a Roma, in piazza Navona, con gli Henry Cow, ed in autunno partecipa all'incisione di «The Hapless Child» con Mike Mantler.

Negli anni successivi, Wyatt dirada l'attività musicale e comincia ad interessarsi seriamente all'attività politica, giudicando quest'ultima «più interessante». Mentre sul piano musicale nel 1978 si segnala un notevole contributo wyattiano a «Music For Airports» di Brian Eno, il versante politico vede l'artista iscriversi al partito comunista britannico nel 1979.

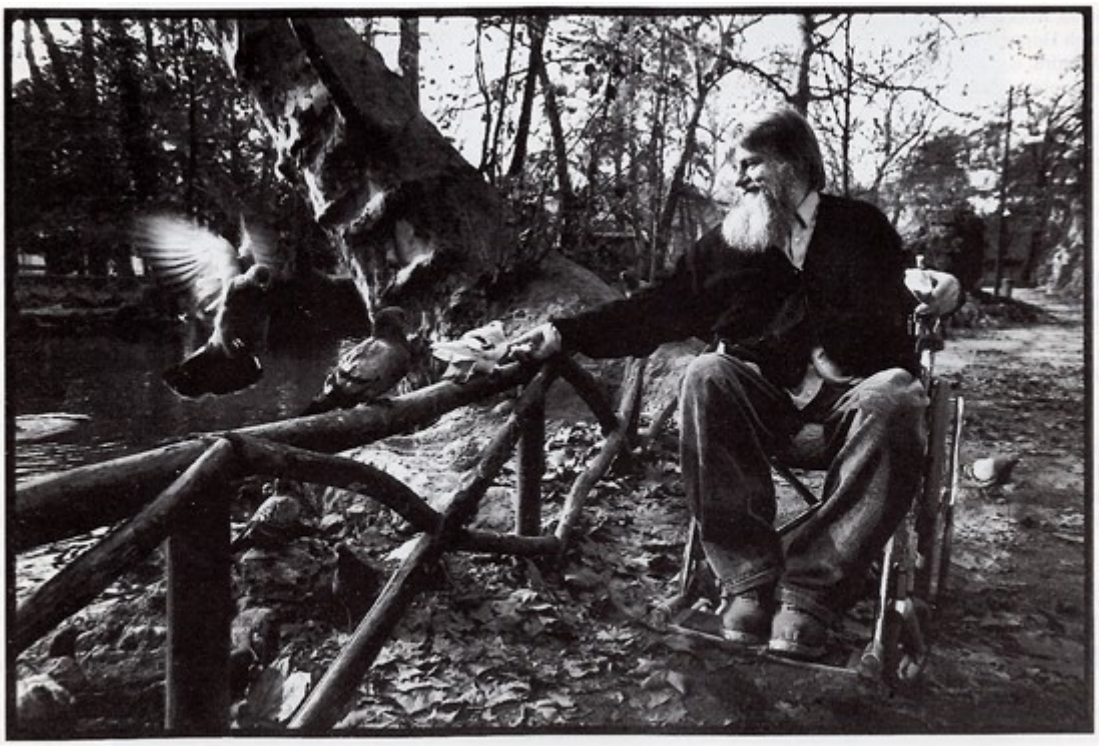


foto Guido Harari

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5. DAGLI ANNI OTTANTA AD OGGI

Con l'inizio degli anni Ottanta, Wyatt sembra realizzare che fare musica non significa necessariamente scrivere canzoni («Elvis e Frank Sinatra non hanno mai scritto una canzone in vita loro», dirà in un intervista riportata in «Falsi Movimenti»), e comincia ad interpretare brani altrui. A volte si può trattare di standard jazz, come «Memories Of You» e «Round Midnight», interpretati in modo superlativo e personalissimo. In generale, tuttavia, si può dire che la maggior parte della produzione di questo periodo sia influenzata dall'impegno politico.

Risalgono ai primissimi anni Ottanta «Arauco», «Caimanera», la splendida e malinconicissima «At Last I Am Free» e «Born Again Cretin» crudele gioco di parole dedicato alla setta dei «Born Again Christian».

Nel 1981, Wyatt incide l'angosciante colonna sonora di «The Animals» un documentario sulle atrocità commesse dall'uomo nei confronti degli animali. Nel 1982 esce «Shipbuilding», una canzone di Elvis Costello contro la guerra delle Falkland che Wyatt interpreta come se fosse sua, ottenendo fra l'altro anche un certo successo di vendita.

Due anni dopo, è la volta di «Work In Progress», un EP contenente la versione wyattiana di «Biko», inno di Peter Gabriel, «Yolanda» del cubano Pablo Milanes e «Te Recuerdo Amanda» del cileno Victor Jara, vittima di Pinochet.

Con il 1985, la vena politica dell'artista trova un'espressione più organica con uscita dell'album «Old Rottenhat», in cui la radicalità dei testi si fonde con la migliore vena

creativa musicale, toccando il vertice in «Alliance», «The United States Of Amnesia» e «Gharbzadegi», costruita su un'affascinante sequenza di accordi pianistici. Un caso a parte è poi rappresentato da «P.L.A.», cioè Poor Little Alfie, una dolcissima canzone d'amore per Alfreda Benge. Verso la fine della decade, Wyatt assiste al mutamento delle caratteristiche del partito e dei suoi componenti, molti dei quali gli sembrano solo assetati di carriera e di potere, ed abbandona la politica militante. Per il lato musicale, si segnala la partecipazione a «Beauty» di Ryuichi Sakamoto nel brano «We Love You».

Nel 1991, il nome dell'artista torna su tutti i giornali specializzati grazie alla pubblicazione di «Dondestan», che Wyatt stesso definisce «un disco sullo sradicamento e sul galleggiamento». Le atmosfere sono un po' più pensose di quelle di «Old Rotthenhat», e forse avvincono maggiormente. Sul piano delle curiosità, è da notare fa versione Wyattiana del rap («Shrinkrap»), mentre i brani più affascinanti sembrano essere le solitudini di fronte al mare di «Costa» e «The Sight Of The Wind», le atmosfere jazzate di «Worship», che potrebbe figurare tra i classici del genere e le riflessioni di «Left On Man».

L'anno successivo, il mini cd «A Short Break» porta cinque nuovi brani, registrati su un semplice quattro piste in casa «qui, adesso, senza trucchi di studio, solo cinque schizzi astratti, cartoline dal fronte casalingo (devo prendermi, qui e là, qualche po' di tempo per un breve intervallo)». Nel 1993, Wyatt collabora con gli Ultramarine per il loro album «United Kingdoms» («la prima cosa che ho pensato quando mi hanno chiesto di lavorare con loro è stata: Dio mio, sono più giovani di mio figlio») componendo le melodie vocali di alcuni brani.

I progetti in corso sono un'incisione con John Greaves, ex Henry Cow, ed un brano con il chitarrista belga Philip Catherine, e la storia va avanti («Alfreda ed io non stiamo ringiovanendo, e viviamo un po' isolati. Col tempo quasi mi vergogno di suonare quando c'è gente, e spostarci non è semplice. Fortunatamente, è bello vedere ogni tanto delle facce amichevoli come qui»).

6. CELEBRAZIONI

Come si è detto all'inizio, l'Arcana Editrice ha appena pubblicato una bella edizione italiana della biografia di Robert Wyatt scritta da Michael King, «Falsi Movimenti» («è venuto da me, e mi ha chiesto se potevo aiutarlo. Gli ho risposto che non mi ricordavo più di tante cose, e lui ha replicato: non importa, le ricordo io. Così, se per caso una volta dicevo che un certo giorno era stato a suonare a Birmingham, lui mi diceva che non ero vero, che quel giorno invece ero nel tale e nel tal altro posto, ecc.... Da non credere»). Il libro è una narrazione cronologica della carriera musicale dell'artista, non contiene chiacchiere inutili o pettegolezzi ed è corredato da una parte iconografica molto curata, ricca di foto, articoli di giornale, corrispondenza e quant'altro.

Senz'altro consigliabile anche per la quantità di testimonianze originali di altri artisti, da Andy Summers a Hugh Hopper e da Elvis Costello a Joe Boyd, che rendono la vicenda molto viva e realistica.

Sul piano delle celebrazioni sonore, è stata pubblicata (non in Italia) un'antologia della Virgin, che in un doppio CD raccoglie una panoramica sull'arte di Wyatt molto completa, anche se non particolarmente ricca di inediti e rarità. Si intitola «Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt». Chi non conoscesse l'artista può benissimo cominciare da qui, mentre gli wyattiani incalliti non troveranno nulla che più o meno non conoscano già. Diverso discorso, quasi diametralmente opposto, deve farsi per un'altra antologia, questa volta edita dalla Rough Trade, che si intitola «Flotsam Jetsam». Qui si tratta di un album singolo, che contiene diverse cose interessanti, come «Slow Walkin' Talk» con Jimi Hendrix al basso, la prima stesura di «Moon In June», una intensissima «God Song/Fol De Rol» in duetto con Francis Monkman nel dicembre 1972 e una versione di «Born Again Cretin» incisa nel 1981 per «Un Certo Discorso» programma benemerito di Radiotre.

Come si vede, un disco adattissimo per chi pensava di conoscere tutto dell'artista. E con questo, per stavolta possiamo finire qui. Buon ascolto.

Michele Paparelle

POSTCRITTO

Per completare il discorso sulle celebrazioni Wyattiane, va aggiunto che di recente è uscito per la collana «BBC Radio I Live In Concert» un mini CD dedicato ai Matching Mole. Si tratta di cinque brani registrati al Paris Theatre il 27 luglio 1972, «Instant Pussy», «Litheing

And Graceing», «Marchides», «Part of the dance» e «Brandy As In Benge». Insieme alla «No Alf Measures» compresa «Flotsam Jetsam», questi episodi costituiscono una preziosa testimonianza della dimensione «Live» del gruppo, e rivestono interesse anche per i non collezionisti. M.P.

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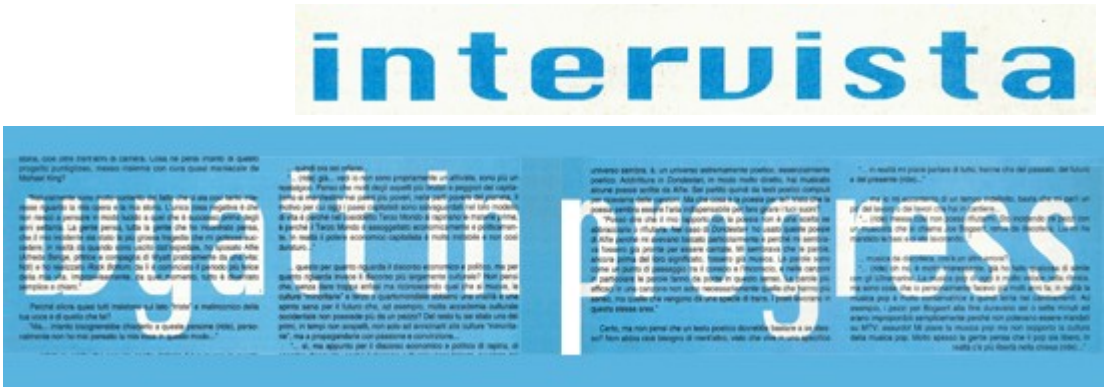
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Wyatt in Progress - Rumore N° 37 - febbraio 1995



Devo dire molto sinceramente di avere un paio di difficoltà per cominciare. Da una parte perché ammiro troppo la tua musica; dall'altra perché penso che il tuo modo di fare arte abbia dei momenti così intimi che spesso rendono superflua la parola. Mai come nel tuo caso la musica parla da sé.

Allo stesso tempo però sono molto attirato dalla tua personalità, per questo credo mi entusiasmava l'idea di poterti conoscere, di parlarti da vicino. L'occasione era l'usciata di *Falsi Movimenti*, libro che raccoglie la tua storia, cioè oltre trent'anni di carriera. Cosa ne pensi intanto di questo progetto puntiglioso, messo insieme con cura quasi maniacale da Michael King?

"Naturalmente sono molto contenta del fatto che ci sia cosi tanto interesse riguardo la mia opera e la mia storia. L'unica cosa negativa è che non riesco a pensare in modo lucido a quel che è successo prima degli anni settanta. La gente pensa, tutta la gente che ho incontrato pensa, che il mio incidente sia stato la più grossa tragedia che mi potesse succedere; in realtà da quando sono uscito dall'ospedale, ho sposato Alfie (Alfreda Benge, pittrice e compagna di Wyatt praticamente da una vita: Ndl) e ho



realizzato *Rock Bottom*, da lì è cominciato il periodo più felice della mia vita. Improvvisamente, da quel momento, tutto è diventato semplice e chiaro."

Perché allora quasi tutti insistono sul lato "triste" e malinconico della tua voce e di quello che fai?

"Ma... intanto bisognerebbe chiederlo a queste persone (ride), personalmente non ho mai pensato la mia voce in questo modo..."

... infatti io credo che non sia esatto definire il tuo lavoro in questo modo, è riduttivo, c'è anche molta gioia in quello che fai e trasmetti...

"... è vero, ma forse la mia tristezza è data dal fatto che non mi sento a mio agio nel mondo e che ancora non ho capito cosa sono qui a fare. Non ho ancora capito a fondo la mia funzione come uomo su questa terra. Probabilmente allora è la voce, anche se la mia attitudine artistica è per lo scherzo, non c'è dubbio. Mi piace divertirmi e prendermi in giro. Non sono interessato in modo professionale, in quanto artista, alle tragedie. Credo anzi che alla fine siano proprio le persone che hanno sofferto molto a provare poco interesse per le tragedie."

... si, è però un dato di fatto che delle diverse sfaccettature della tua personalità, giocosità e leggerezza ironica sono sempre restate in ombra; invece quasi sempre si è esaltata la malinconia e una tristezza d'animo che non rendevano la giusta complessità del tuo fare musica...

"... già credo di essere fortunato per il fatto che la gente mi ascolta ed è interessata a quel che faccio. Oltre questo io non posso dare a chi mi ascolta la chiave di lettura, triste o allegra, per capirmi. T. S. Eliot ha detto che il lettore delle sue poesie probabilmente le capiva meglio di lui che le aveva scritte. In ogni caso credo che nell'arte ci sia una specie di contratto; l'artista fa mezzo percorso e l'altra metà la deve fare il fruitore. Alla fine quello che voglio dire è che solo la meta del processo creativo è mio."

Una delle cose credo più affascinanti del tuo carattere è il non accontentarsi mai, una specie di inquietudine che ti tiene costantemente sveglio su quello che succede in giro e allo stesso tempo ti spinge a sperimentare e a non fermarti mai sulle cose acquisite...

"... sì, questo è molto vero..."

... sfogliando infatti il libro mi ha colpito molto una tua frase a proposito di cosa significhi per te l'influenza maggiore per andare avanti: "cercare di non ripetere gli errori della volta precedente". Pochi riescono ad ammettere, in posizioni pubbliche come la tua, di fare continuamente degli errori e di lottare e lavorare per superarli.

"Certo, c'è una cosa importante da dire. Tu non riesci mai a cogliere la reale importanza di quello che sti facendo finché non l'hai finito del tutto. Solo alla fine riesci a misurare con un certo distacco quello che hai fatto. E questo non riguarda solo l'arte, ma la vita in generale. Per questo sono d'accordo su quanto hai letto: ogni errore si può quasi dire che sia un cambiamento."

Un altro aspetto del tuo modo di fare arte, molto amplificato in Italia, è l'impegno politico. Dopo la scelta maturata negli anni ottanta, nel 1989 se non sbaglio sei uscito dal Partito comunista inglese. Cosa ti è rimasta di quell'esperienza e perché ti sei allontanato?

"Oh no, in realtà è il Partito Comunista che mi ha lasciato (ride)..."

... quindi ora sei orfano...

"... (ride) già... vedi io non sono propriamente un attivista, sono più un nostalgico. Penso che molti degli aspetti più brutali e peggiori del capitalismo si manifestino nei paesi più poveri, nelle parti povere del pianeta. Il motivo per cui oggi i paesi capitalisti sono

salvaguardati nel loro modello di vita è perché nel cosiddetto Terzo Mondo si rapinano le materie prime, è perché il Terzo Mondo è assoggettato economicamente e politicamente. In realtà il potere economico capitalista è molto instabile e non così duraturo..."

... questo per quanto riguarda il discorso economico e politico, ma per quanto riguarda invece il discorso più largamente culturale? Non pensi che, senza dare troppa enfasi ma riconoscendo quel che si muove, le culture "minoritarie" e terzo o quartomondiste abbiano una vitalità e una spinta sana per il futuro che, ad esempio, molta accademia culturale occidentale non possiede più da un pezzo? Del resto tu sei stato uno dei primi, in tempi non sospetti, non solo ad avvicinarti alle culture "minoritarie", ma a propagandarle con passione e convinzione...

"... sì, ma appunto per il discorso economico e politico dì rapina, di scambio diseguale, anche il discorso culturale viene falsato, svuotato dal paese e dalla cultura egemone. Faccio un esempio banale: ci sono fantastici giocatori di calcio africani che per fare la loro fortuna devono venire ad offrirsi in occidente. E' inevitabile così che vengano a fare la fortuna dei clubs europei. E' inevitabile perché il mercato gira a senso unico. In sostanza: noi ci pigliamo il meglio dal Terzo Mondo..."

... non solo ci prendiamo il meglio, ma mandiamo loro tonnellate di scorie radioattive ogni settimana, forse per rendere così le loro coste un po' più simili alle nostre tra qualche anno...

"... (ride) già, già. Del resto io non auspico nessuna vendetta contro il mondo capitalista. Non sono così infantile. I businessmen fanno il loro mestiere molto bene e purtroppo, è molto triste ma è così, la situazione colonialista alla fine di questo secolo è uguale a quella del secolo scorso. Sotto aspetti diversi ma forse ancora più devastanti."



Parlavamo prima degli anni settanta: dall'uscita dall'ospedale, del matrimonio con Alfie, di una nuova energia e vitalità. Ma gli anni settanta hanno visto anche una specie di ciclo chiudersi per Robert Wyatt. La fine degli anni settanta ti hanno visto sterzare verso alcuni silenzi, ripensamenti, e si è dovuto aspettare parecchio tempo prima di vedere risultati nuovi. Cosa è stato? Un cammino personale verso nuove strade da battere; oppure, come per molti della tua generazione, il punk e i sommovimenti di quegli anni hanno scoperchiato la crisi?

"Tutte e due le cose insieme, penso. Anche se alla fine il punk non ha fatto molto bene alla musica, troppe chitarre! Ma mi piaceva l'attitudine del punk, il modo di porsi e di essere,

quello sì era interessante. Era una specie di onestà che mi sembrava salutare, genuina..."

... e tu in quegli anni stavi cercando ancora qualcosa di nuovo, o sbaglio?

"No, è il mio spirito inquieto che continua a cercare. Ma a quei tempi io, più che punk o rock in genere, ascoltavo molto reggae. Musica che ha avuto una grossa influenza sul punk, ma soprattutto musica espressione della gente povera, di una cultura sottomessa. Mentre questa gente era controllata continuamente dalla polizia, invece di stare quieta e tranquilla, parlava con questa musica di una maestosità e di un orgoglio personali fortissimi."

Dopo tanta storia parliamo un po' del Wyatt di questi ultimi anni. Il tuo universo sembra, è, un universo estremamente poetico, essenzialmente poetico. Addirittura in *Dondestan*, in modo molto diretto, hai musicato alcune poesie scritte da Alfie. Sei partito quindi da testi poetici compiuti per ricavarne delle canzoni. Ma che cosa è la poesia per te? Visto che la poesia sembra essere l'aria indispensabile per fare girare i tuoi suoni?

"Posso dire che il mio rapporto con la poesia non è una scelta se abbracciarla o rifiutarla. Nel caso di *Dondestan* ho usato queste poesie di Alfie perché mi avevano toccato particolarmente e perché mi sembrava fossero già pronte per essere cantate. Mi sembrava che le parole, ancora prima del loro significato, fossero già musica. Le parole sono come un punto di passaggio tra il conscio e l'inconscio, e nelle canzoni in particolare le parole fanno da ponte in questo senso. Le parole più efficaci in una canzone non sono necessariamente quelle che hanno più senso, ma quelle che vengono da una specie di trans. I poeti lavorano in questa stessa area."

Certo, ma non pensi che un testo poetico dovrebbe bastare a se stesso? Non abbia cioè bisogno di nient'altro, visto che vive in uno specifico poetico che già contiene un suo ritmo e una sua musicalità? Non è aggiungere troppo accostandolo alla musica? O almeno, non c'è differenza secondo te tra il testo per una canzone e una poesia che può vivere da sola?

"E' possibile. Ma è anche vero che molto spesso quello che noi oggi abbiamo come testo scritto, ad esempio i Salmi della Bibbia, all'inizio erano cantati. Potrei aggiungere che la parola poetica, il testo poetico è pensato per essere letto o sentito una sola volta, o poche volte; mentre la musica, un pezzo musicale è già progettato per essere sentito molte volte. Questa è una differenza grossa, mi sembra. Se tu presenti la poesia come musica, è l'occasione per ascoltare la poesia in un altro modo." So che non ami particolarmente parlare delle cose che farai o potrai fare, dei tuoi progetti futuri...

"... in realtà mi piace parlare di tutto, tranne che del passato, del futuro e del presente (ride)..."

... ma io mi accontento di un tempo indefinito, basta che mi parli un po' del lavoro o dei lavori che hai in cantiere...

"... (ride) messa così non posso rifiutarmi. Sto incidendo tre pezzi con un musicista che si chiama Joe Bogaert, remix da discoteca. Lui mi ha mandato le basi e ci sto lavorando..."

... musica da discoteca, cos'è un altro errore?...

"... (ride) oh no, è molto interessante, già ho fatto qualcosa di simile con gli Ultramarine. La musica pop di oggi è molto veloce nella ritmica, ma sono cose che io personalmente facevo già molti anni fa; in realtà la musica pop è molto conservatrice e quindi lenta nei cambiamenti. Ad esempio, i pezzi per Bogaert alla fine duravano sei o sette minuti ed erano improponibili semplicemente perché non potevano essere mandati su MTV: assurdo! Mi piace la musica pop ma non sopporto la cultura della musica pop. Molto spesso la gente pensa che il pop sia libero, in realtà c'è più libertà nella chiesa (ride)..."

... del resto la tua adesione al pop non è mai stata molto grande. Sarà il tuo approccio multiculturale e ironico, il tuo carattere, ma mi sembra che Robert Wyatt non si è mai fatto impressionare dalle regole...

"... sì, può essere vero... Sto lavorando anche ad un pezzo per Philip Cutrin, chitarrista jazz belga, pezzo a cui io ho aggiunto il testo; un'altra cosa con Mark Kramer, newyorkese della Shimmy Disc; alcuni pezzi con Hugh Hopper, mio vecchio compagno e svariate altre collaborazioni. Anche se devo dire che è frustrante il passaggio tra la registrazione del materiale e poi l'uscita effettiva sul mercato. Passa un sacco di tempo e si è già avanti, da un'altra parte. Un'altra cosa frustrante è che dopo tanti anni non ho ancora capito come è organizzato il mondo del business (ride), come si deve far per ricavare dei soldi da tutto

questo lavoro (ride). Questo a volte può anche rendere nervosi, visto che alla fine si deve anche mangiare..."

... è gratificante ma non molto semplice fare il personaggio di culto, allora...

"... già. Ma va bene così, non ci sono problemi. E neanche rimpianti."

Claudio Galuzzi

Un ringraziamento particolare va a Alessandro Achilli e a Marco Grompi per la disponibilità dimostrata.

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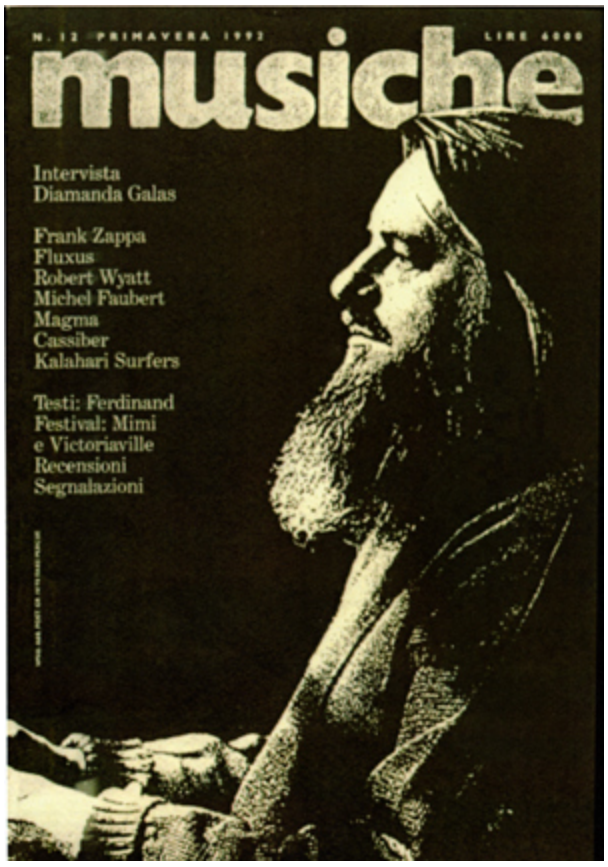
Robert Wyatt - Musiche N°12 - Primavera 1992

ROBERT WYATT

Mi chiedo spesso di che cosa vivrò nei prossimi dieci anni. Non puoi pretendere che la gente continui ad ascoltarti quando c'è così tanto da sentire. Ma poi incroci le dita sperando che ce ne siano abbastanza da permetterti di pagare le bollette del gas (1).

Dondestan
(Rough Trade 1991, lp e cd)

di Alessandro Achilli



La storia, ormai, dovrebbe esser nota ai più: verso la metà degli anni ottanta Alfreda Benge e Robert Wyatt decidono di svernare in Catalogna, dove Alfreda scrive *Out of Season*, una serie di poesie sull'esperienza di "vivere fuori stagione in una località di villeggiatura estiva e su come le cose, decontestualizzate, divengano simili a relitti alla deriva".

Dopo il definitivo ritorno in Inghilterra, per qualche anno Wyatt non compone più canzoni:

"Ho fatto cose come scrivere articoli per il *Morning Star* su argomenti come la musica folk bulgara, le stazioni radio estere o, nel caso del mio ultimo pezzo, Courtney Pine. Ho anche scritto lettere a chiunque le pubblicasse e a molti che non l'avrebbero fatto. Non molto, no? Sono probabilmente diventato la versione di sinistra di quegli anacronistici generali a riposo che vergano lettere furiose al *Daily Express*: solo che io scrivo alla Bbc".

Piano piano, però, le poesie di Alfreda iniziano a far girare per il verso giusto certe rotelline

nella mente del musicista ("quando qualcosa ti è molto familiare, diventa quasi come una canzone nella tua testa. Non posso dire che sia una regola ma è questo che è accaduto"), che per la prima volta nella sua carriera viene tentato dall'idea di comporre musica su testi preesistenti. La partecipazione (insieme a Evan Parker, Roswell Rudd, Derek Bailey e altri) a un progetto (mai pubblicato) di Kip Hanrahan incentrato su poesie di Paul Haines lo fa riflettere una volta di più su quanto possa essere stimolante lavorare su testi altrui, soprattutto se non si considera lo scrivere canzoni come il proprio mestiere:

"Ho cominciato come batterista, e poi sono diventato solo un cantante, perché era l'unica cosa che potessi fare bene una volta ritrovatomi su una sedia a rotelle. Non sono mai stato un autore di canzoni nel senso di occuparmene a tempo pieno. Quando ho abbastanza idee, comincio a lavorarci sopra. Ci dev'essere una ragione per ogni disco che faccio".

E la ragione per *Dondestan* è proprio *Out of Season*:

"Improvvisamente l'impresa cessò di somigliare alla scalata di una montagna. La musica iniziò a prendere forma nella mia testa.
Così ho cantato una mezza dozzina delle sue poesie e ho scritto appositamente alcune delle mie solite robe soltanto per il finale".

Non resta che trovare uno studio di registrazione e The Chapel, poco distante da casa, sembra adatto all'uopo: "Han montato rampe in modo che potessi arrivare ovunque e di fatto sono vissuto là per due settimane. C'era anche un cuoco che mi preparava i miei pasti vegetariani". È lì che Wyatt registra il disco, suonando lui stesso (come anche negli ultimi lavori) tutti gli strumenti, compresi alcuni elementi di batteria che già avevano fatto la loro apparizione su *Chairman Mao* e su alcuni brani di *Old Rottenhat*, anche se soltanto ora si sente finalmente la gioia ritrovata di giocare con le bacchette su pelli e metalli:

"Adesso uso solamente la parte superiore del kit. Soltanto un paio di timbales e i piatti. Per anni ho pensato che non ci sarei riuscito, perché mi era sempre piaciuto usare charleston e cassa, ma poi mi sono ritrovato a suonare a casa ascoltando dischi di jazz e mi sono accorto che potevo farcela.
Be', c'è voluto un bel po' per trovarmi a mio agio con l'idea di essere io stesso un gruppo e ad accettare il fatto di non essere più un vero batterista. Ora ho imparato ad apprezzare la parte superiore del kit, e a elaborare linee di basso, e anche un metodo per suonarle io stesso, in modo che le canzoni mi risultino complete e coerenti. Il mio problema era solo che quella parte dello scrivere canzoni relativa alle parole non veniva oliata da un po', dato che scrivere lettere o chiacchierare è del tutto differente da scrivere testi che dovranno essere ascoltati più volte".

Come è stato rilevato da più parti, *Dondestan* è forse quello fra i lavori dell'artista che più si avvicina a *Rock Bottom*, il disco che, diciassette anni fa, fu unanimemente salutato come un capolavoro e che tutt'oggi è opinione diffusa ritenere la vetta insuperata dell'opera wyattiana. Una valutazione, quest'ultima, che deve certamente qualcosa alla prassi nostalgica di considerare come la migliore di un artista l'opera attraverso la quale lo si è scoperto e di rimpiangere con essa la propria giovinezza. Nondimeno, *Rock Bottom* seppe riunire e rappresentare egregiamente i tratti salienti della miglior vena compositiva dell'autore (così come la si era conosciuta con le prime canzoni per i Soft Machine, culminate nell'indicibile *Moon in June*, e poi nei lavori in proprio e con i Matching Mole), e allo stesso tempo costituì una prefigurazione di quanto avrebbe saputo offrire lo Wyatt a venire.

Motivi storici e affettivi, dunque, congiurano in molti ascoltatori nel non accettare il paragone fra i due dischi. Se si deve dar retta alle proprie orecchie, però, il primo approccio con *Dondestan* è fulminante: impossibile non sentire che i primi tre brani sono fatti della stessa pasta delle antiche *Sea Song*, *Last Straw*, *Alifie* e *Alifib*; dell'ultima, in particolare, *The Sight of the Wind* (un brano "sull'ineffabilità delle cose") riprende anche l'idea del ritmo tenuto da inspirazioni-espirazioni, usandola per eludere una scansione troppo marcata del sette quarti. L'accostamento al disco del '74 (in ogni caso tutt'altro che negato dall'autore) è dato soprattutto dall'atmosfera che si respira, dal passo di questi brani e da vari elementi sparsi (l'incipit – organo, pianoforte e piatti – di *Catholic Architecture*, quello di *Lisp Service*, con quel modo di piegare la voce e quella melodia) ma non è da sottovalutare la componente timbrica, dove fra le stratificazioni di tastiere affiora



PROFILI

Robert Wyatt

spesso (*Costa*, *The Sight of The Wind*, *Left on Man*…) quell'organo che tanta voce in capitolo ebbe allora:

"Sono entrato in *Dondestan* più che in qualsiasi altra cosa dopo *Rock Bottom*. L'organo che usavo su *Rock Bottom* si chiama Riviera. Se lo procurò Alfie, per pochi soldi, in un negozio di giocattoli in Italia. È un organo giocattolo da tre o quattro ottave e si ruppe alla fine degli anni settanta, e io pensai che fosse un fatto simbolico. Ma, dopo che siamo venuti qui nel Lincolnshire, Alfie mi suggerì di farlo riparare e mi parve una buona idea. È una delle ragioni per cui sono stato in grado di riprendere da *Rock Bottom*. Si sentono gli stessi timbri: è esattamente lo stesso organo, e non lo fanno più".

Ciò che differenzia di più il nuovo album da quello inciso all'indomani dell'incidente è semmai la più totale assenza di musicisti ospiti, doppiamente significativa se si pensa alle parti solistiche che furono loro affidate al tempo: gli assoli di Hopper su *Alifib*, Windo su *Alifie* e Oldfield su *Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road* sono senza alcun dubbio fra i migliori registrati nelle rispettive carriere, e insieme a quelli di Sinclair, Feza, Frith e dello stesso Wyatt (alla voce-strumento, agile e ispirata) hanno contribuito non poco a fare di *Rock Bottom* un evento epocale. Tolti quelli, però (e le parti di Ivor Cutler o Laurie Allan), la distanza tra i due dischi suonerebbe certamente inferiore alle apparenze, senza per questo risolversi in un appiattimento dell'uno sull'altro.

Sarebbe infatti sciocco non voler vedere anche le notevoli differenze e il tempo intercorso, del quale *Dondestan* non maschera la consapevolezza: chi intendesse continuare a scandagliare il passato dovrebbe comunque allargare la propria visuale a *The Animals Film* – per certe scelte sul sintetizzatore (per esempio l'inizio di Costa) –, o a *Shipbuilding* – per l'indolenza dell'incedere, e le coloriture blues del pianoforte accompagnato sulle spazzole, di *Worship* (2) – o addirittura a *The Last Nightingale*, se si fosse abbastanza perversi da confrontare i modi di articolare "in a puddle mirror" (ancora *Costa*) e "of a broken mirror" (*Moments of Delight*).

Giunti a questo punto, per andare fino in fondo occorrerebbe anche riascoltare le registrazioni per *Un certo discorso* (Rai Radio3, marzo 1981) per trovare qualche precedente a *Shrinkrap*, un curioso omaggio – in chiave del tutto personale – alla musica rap, della quale vengono riprese solo le componenti ritenute più originali, vale a dire tutto il lavoro sullo studio ("come fanno a infilare così tanta roba proprio fra quelle due battute? Roba da non credersi!") e le modalità del cantato-recitato ("quando si parla, le parole sono musica atonale; e la batteria è prevalentemente atonale; il rap è molto liberatorio, lavora solo su ritmi e rime: ecco dov'è la musica, non nelle note"), a discapito di altre, considerate molto più convenzionali (come per esempio le linee di basso). L'orchestrazione di *Shrinkrap* fa caso a sé: dove gli altri brani sono giocati soprattutto sulla giustapposizione di sintetizzatore, organo e pianoforte – punteggiata dal basso (campionato) e dalla "batteria" e asservita alle evoluzioni del cantato –, qui troviamo una serie di espedienti di studio (per esempio il piatto e il tom con spazzole registrati al contrario), un set più consistente di percussioni e l'uso di "voci" di batteria elettronica suonate in tempo reale; il ritmo (testardo) più che quello del rap ricorda, anche timbricamente, certi ostinati del primigenio *The End of An Ear*, non a caso uno dei dischi dove il morbido macchinista scavò più a fondo nelle risorse dello studio.

Perché si ritorni al passo dei ricordi iniziali è però sufficiente che rientri l'organo ad annunciare Cp Jeebies, sarcasticamente dedicata al partito comunista inglese (Communist

Party of Great Britain, cioè Cpgb), verso la cui attuale politica Wyatt si è dichiarato molto critico, nonostante (o proprio per) la lunga militanza fra quelle file, segnata da una concezione del rapporto con la propria attività artistica che ricorda da vicino quella che fu di un altro grande compositore comunista, Cornelius Cardew:



"Volevo restare fedele alla linea del partito e vedere cosa potevo cavarne fuori. Volevo lavorare più come un membro del partito cui capita di cantare, che come un musicista che trascina la politica dentro la musica. Allo stesso tempo, giunsi alla conclusione che era sempre più difficile prendere sul serio il rock come cultura alternativa e minaccia al vecchio ordine".

Cp Jeebies dà il via alla parte del disco di cui Wyatt ha scritto anche i testi, esplicitamente politici – come è nel suo stile – ma pregni della modestia di chi non è interessato a far credere di poter mobilitare Grandi Masse per Giuste Cause: "Penso che l'artista abbia, assai più modestamente, il ruolo di testimone: cerco soltanto di fare un notiziario migliore di quelli che continuano a sodomizzare la mia radio!"

Left on Man e *Lisp Service* parlano di colonialismo:

"C'è colonialismo a go go. Tutto il dibattito politico era incentrato su Est contro Ovest, ma ho sempre pensato che la vera spaccatura fosse fra Nord e Sud, vale a dire lo sfruttamento dei paesi sottosviluppati da parte di quelli industrializzati. E ho trovato proprio deprimente il bombardamento della strada di Bassora durante la guerra del Golfo – quando si stavano ritirando – e tutta l'euforia che l'ha circondato".

Il cantato di *Left on Man* è quello che più si avvicina alle venature jazzistiche che assumeva su *Old Rottenhat*), qui chiamate a mostrare le stimmate lasciate dall'amore per Billie Holiday mentre un coretto – à la Marvin Gaye, secondo alcuni – mette alla berlina i classici modi di non rispondere ("simplify, reduce, oversimplify") a ciò che l'antimperialismo del testo asserisce:

"Marvin Gaye è molto vicino al mio cuore. C'è qualcosa di trasparente nelle sue tessiture, è come un mare con vari strati e cose dette sottovoce. Ma in realtà l'ispirazione principale è stata quella del gruppo Irakere. Hanno questa cosa cubana dove un paio dei tipi mettono giù gli strumenti e fanno una cosa in coro. Ho pensato: "Mi piace così tanto quando lo fanno loro; perché non essere io il gruppo? Non posso forse mettere giù le mie trombe e tromboni e fare lo stesso?".

Lisp Service, invece, è l'unico episodio in cui il processo di scrittura è avvenuto in senso inverso, mostrandoci uno Wyatt paroliere alle prese con una partitura di Hugh Hopper. Un'esperienza analoga aveva già dato frutti eccellenti in tempi non lontani *(Amber and the Amberines*), per non parlare di tutte le perle softmachiniane firmate dal binomio a partire da *Memories* (giacché delle precedenti non si conoscono tracce registrate). Il livello di quest'ultima collaborazione non è assolutamente da meno, collocandosi anzi fra i punti più emozionanti dell'album, a dispetto del fatto che la partecipazione del baffuto bassista si sia limitata alla composizione della musica (il basso che si sente è *chiaramente* riprodotto da una tastiera). Il testo è nato come risposta a un video di Billy Joel, che commentava le immagini di tremendi massacri di cui si sono macchiati gli Stati Uniti nel corso di svariate guerre con l'allegro ritornello "We didn't start the fire / It's been burning since the world began":

"*We Didn't Start the Fire* mi tormentava. Ho pensato: "Ehi tu, insulso stronzetto! L'avete proprio aperto voi quel cazzo di fuoco! Se dici 'noi', posso rivolgermi a te come 'voi'". Non ascolto spesso le parole, ma lui stava dicendo "ascoltami, ho qualcosa di serio da dirti", e io ho pensato "faresti meglio ad avercelo".



La voce attacca, quasi infastidita, con la calma dolente di chi vuole trattenersi, ma non può mascherare con la ragionevolezza una rabbia sgomenta e sale solenne, moltiplicata dalla registrazione, per sottolineare i passaggi più duri, le accuse più dirette e vibranti:

"Saccheggi, omicidi, / incursioni da costa a costa, / cari vecchi giorni di sangue, / e ora mi dite / che dovrei imparare a trattare con tutti voi / inchinarmi a voi e lodare gli Dei per / tutto ciò, tutto ciò / che avete vinto per noi. / Dopo tutto quello che era successo prima, / non c'è stata nessuna amnesty / international, / nessuno che vi controllasse".

È raro scoprirsi così profondamente toccati da due soli minuti di musica e parole ed è singolare scoprire a ogni ascolto quante nuove ed emozionanti sfumature siano racchiuse in tanta semplicità.
Le note conclusive sono quelle di *New Information Order* / *Dondestan*, proposte senza soluzione di continuità: la prima punta con desolatezza l'indice verso la privatizzazione dilagante e lascia che sull'accordo finale della tastiera salga il ritmo gioioso e incalzante della seconda che, aguzzando l'orecchio verso gorgheggi kurdi e ritmi uzbeki, dice come in una filastrocca del diritto alla terra di Kurdi e Palestinesi. Prima che il ritmo veloce venga sopraffatto da un cupo accordo tastieristico – misteriosamente imparentato con i luoghi d'acqua di *Twin Peaks* – si inseriscono in ruolo solistico le percusioni, che danzano su una giostra di sincopi, rullate e controtempi con l'esuberanza di chi abbia atteso fin dal primo momento l'occasione per uscire allo scoperto (come di fatto aveva già lasciato eloquentemente intendere l'iniziale *Costa*).

O, forse, era un'attesa che durava già da molto, molto prima…

Alessandro Achilli

Note:

1. Questa e tutte le citazioni che seguono sono estrapolate e tradotte da interviste apparse fra settembre e ottobre sulle riviste *Spin*, *Q* e *The Wire*. Tali interviste, per inciso, paiono stranamente simili a quelle apparse più recentemente sulla stampa specializzata italiana – peraltro adusa a spacciare come conversazioni "uniche", "originali" ed "esclusive" appunti da conferenze stampa o addirittura raffazzonate traduzioni da riviste estere (con i classici actually che diventa "attualmente", *release* scambiato per *realize* e così via), non peggiori, comunque, di quelle riservate alle interviste di prima mano (indicativi al posto di congiuntivi, "poemi" per poesie, "cimbali" per piatti, "facilità" per attrezzature o mezzi o servizi, "socialismo realista" invece che realismo socialista, Paul Haines trasformato in "Paul Heinz", Kip Hanrahan in "Skip Hanraham", parole o addirittura intere frasi lasciate in inglese – non sempre corretto: le fanny songs non saranno per caso *funny songs*? – ecc. ecc. ecc….).

2. *Shipbuilding* fu proposta a Wyatt (spedendogli una cassetta per posta) nella convinzione che sembrasse una sua canzone: con un paradosso temporale si potrebbe dire che era proprio *questa* la canzone a cui si riferivano.

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Robert Wyatt

Heavy Mental

Senza dubbio definire Wyatt un musicista cerebrale non è azzardato. Però non dobbiamo fermarci qui. Nelle sue canzoni, sin dai tempi dei gloriosi Soft Machine, ci sono tantissime cose. Provate a leggere la minuziosa descrizione che ci ha fatto del suo ultimo disco "Dondestan".



Robert Wyatt è tornato. Si dice così, di solito, quando un musicista importante fa uscire finalmente un nuovo album a suo nome dopo diversi anni di assenza dal mercato discografico. Dall'ultimo disco firmato Robert Wyatt - l'incisivo "Old Rottenhat" del 1985 - di anni ne sono trascorsi sette. Alcune sue sporadiche collaborazioni con altri artisti - come quelle con Jerry Dammers, Working Week e, soprattutto, Ryuichi Sakamoto (splendida la voce di Robert nello stravolgimento di "We Love You" dei Rolling Stones, uno dei brani migliori dell'album "Beauty") - non sono bastate a lenire l'attesa. Troppo poco, infatti, per accontentare gli estimatori (il termine fans, in questo caso, sarebbe fuori luogo) di questo grande artista, che ha scritto pagine inossidabili della storia musicale degli ultimi trent'anni. Tutto nasce, negli anni '60, dalla magica Canterbury di quel periodo, con una serie di incontri e di collaborazioni importanti che portano, nel '67, alla formazione dei Soft Machine, decani, insieme ai Pink Floyd, del suono psichedelico londinese, con le loro lunghe improvvisazioni jazzate. Robert - allora batterista -lascia la band dopo quattro albums, per formare, nel 1971, i Matching Mole, artefici di due affascinanti LP in cui Wyatt dà prova, tra l'altro, delle proprie capacità di autore di testi e di arrangiatore, con nostalgie canzonettistiche a metà strada tra l'ironia corrosiva e il divertissement beffardo.



Un'avventura intensa ma piuttosto breve, stroncata definitivamente, nel '73, da un'incidente che priva Wyatt dell'uso delle gambe, ma non della sua genialità. Nel '74 esce subito, infatti, un capolavoro come "Rock Bottom", in cui Wyatt, costretto ad abbandonare la batteria, comincia a sviluppare il suo inconfondibile stile vocale e tastieristico. Dopo un singolo di successo con un'aspra cover del brano dei Monkees "I'm Believer", si impegna anche a livello politico con Henry Cow e il Rock In Opposition Movement. Qualche sporadica perla solistica - come lo splendido album intitolato "Nothing Can Stop Us" - e poi, negli anni '80, il ritorno nelle classifiche inglesi con il brano "Shipbuilding", scritto da Elvis Costello e inserito in un altro album-capolavoro, "1982-1984". Tutto questo prima del già citato album "Old Rottenhat". Dell'ultimo LP, intitolato "Dondestan" (spagnolo per "Dove Stanno") ci ha parlato lo stesso Robert Wyatt nell'intervista, realizzata nella sua casa del XIX secolo a Lincoln, dove il musicista vive ormai da tempo con la sua immensa collezione di dischi, i suoi strumenti e il suo piccolo studio di registrazione privato. Con lui vive sua moglie Alfie, poetessa, autrice, tra l'altro, proprio di gran parte dei testi di "Dondestan", tratti da una raccolta di vecchie poesie scritta verso la metà degli anni '80, durante la permanenza dei due coniugi in Spagna, e intitolato "Out Of Season". Anche per questo l'ultimo album di Robert Wyatt è un disco di tale ricchezza, dal punto di vista sia tecnico sia contenutistico, che l'autore stesso ha voluto presentarcelo brano per brano.

Buon ascolto!

Giampiero Cara

ROBERT ALLO SPECCHIO

E' raro che un artista descriva in modo dettagliato quello che c'è dentro e intorno alle sue canzoni. Robert Wyatt è un'eccezione anche in questo. Ecco "Dondestan" nelle sue parole.

■ "**Costa**", il primo brano è una delle cinque poesie di Alfie scritte in spagnolo e musicate da me. parla della vita in un paese sottosviluppato. In Spagna, la musica è molto vicina a sonorità arabe e nordafricane. Il grido Muezzin è simile al flamenco, credo. Come dice la gente, una volta oltrepassati i Pirenei, cominci già a trovarti in Africa. La canzone, comunque, è dedicata proprio ai paesi sottosviluppati.

In "**Sight Of The Wìnd**" la maggior parte delle sonorità percussive è costituita dalla mia respirazione. Questo è il ritmo di 7/4 che si sente in sottofondo. L'effetto brillante è dato da un vecchio organo elettronico Riviera che comprai a Venezia nel 1973 per 40 sterline. Non ci sono sonorità dure; il piano è stato usato solo per le note basse e qui e là si possono sentire degli zufoli irlandesi. Un titolo alternativo per questo brano era "Light Of The Soul". Parla di una spiaggia coperta di rifiuti durante l'inverno.

"**Worship**" e **"Catholic Architecture**" anche se sono diverse musicalmente, sono legate dalla comune tematica cristiana. La seconda è stata ispirata dalla vista di due suore su una spiaggia della parte meridionale di Barcellona. Doveva essere un pezzo impressionistico di pianoforte, ma poi l'ho trasformato in un brano di jazz acustico facendo molto uso delle spazzole.

Su "**Shrink Rapì**" qualcuno mi ha detto che ricompare la vena umoristica che caratterizzava i primi due album dei Soft Machine. In ogni caso, il tipo di musica mi è stato ispirato proprio dal testo di Alfie, che mi sembrava adattarsi perfettamente allo stile rap. L'argomento trattato è l'esasperazione generata dalle cure di vari psicoterapeuti, che costano tanto e non portano a nulla dal punto di vista della ricerca della propria anima. Per me, è stata anche una buona scusa per rimettermi ai tamburi.

"**CPGB's**" è invece una canzoncina stramba in 3/4, con delle strane sonorità di tastiere e un organo a bocca che sembra un trombone. Il testo riguarda la mia militanza di dieci anni nel Partito Comunista inglese.

Con "**Left On Man**" ho cercato di amalgamare varie influenze: ho usato tastiere giapponesi e percussioni latino americane come timbales e maracas. Il testo parla della superficialità con cui gli Stati Uniti trattano le cose dell'America Latina.

"**Lip Service**" è solo una ballata con un suono di tastiere molto opaco. Non c'è alcuna ritmica. La musica è stata scritta da Hugh Hopper, mio vecchio amico e compagno nei Soft Machine.

Alla Famiglia Reale è dedicato "**N I O**". Le lettere del titolo stanno per New Information Order. All'inizio era piuttosto informe, ma poi è stato molto ben prodotto. E' stato inserito, comunque, soltanto sul CD ed è il brano più lungo dell'album.



Robert Wyatt (ultimo a destra) ai tempi dei Soft Machine insieme a Hugh Hopper
e Mike Ratledge. Nella pagina d'apertura, una recente immagine del musicista.

La title-track "Dondestan", in un certo senso, è un brano simile a "Stalin Wasn't Stalling", contenuto nell'album "Nothing Can Stop Us" dell'81, per il fatto che anche

questa canzone usa in maniera ironica un tono da raduno socialista. Nel CD, l'atmosfera del brano precedente introduce questo, che è dedicato a tutti i diseredati.

Dopo aver commentato il suo disco brano per brano, Robert Wyatt ritiene opportuno rivelare che il segreto del suo stile è proprio il vecchio organo Riviera che domina tutti i suoi album da solista: "Mike Oldfield mi ha insegnato a regolarlo in modo da ottenere una certa brillantezza sonora. Quando cominciai ad usarlo, la maggior parte della musica rock era costruita principalmente sulle sonorità piuttosto dure della chitarra elettrica. Io trovavo, invece, che il suono di quest'organo si adattasse molto meglio alla mia voce. Oggi, tuttavia, non è più cosi insolito sentire sonorità simili".

Wyatt è molto modesto rispetto alle sue capacità di musicista, ma il fatto che egli si trovi a dover fare tutto da una sedia a rotelle rende le sue creazioni ancor più notevoli. "Definirei primitivo il mio approccio alla tecnologia. Spesso non conosco neppure i nomi degli strumenti che uso. Più che altro, armeggio con un po' di macchinari finché riesco a mettere insieme in maniera accettabile tutti i rumori che ne escono. In questo mi ha aiutato moltissimo il tecnico del suono Matthew Arnold, che è stato molto bravo. A proposito, lo sai che mentre lavoravamo sui pezzi in sala di registrazione, ad incidere in uno studio vicino al nostro c'erano i Wet Wet Wet?". Il futuro discografico di Robert Wyatt è affidato ad un contratto verbale con l'etichetta Rough Trade. Non si considera un musicista, ma piuttosto "uno di quei pazzi uomini sandwich che vanno in giro a dire delle cose". Politicamente, è rimasto orientato a sinistra e crede fermamente in scrittori americani come Noam Chomsky che fanno di tutto per demistificare la disinformazione del capitalismo corporativista. "Le idee politiche sono quelle che occupano per la maggior parte del tempo la mia mente. La musica mi viene così, non so da dove".

Mark Prendergast © S.I.N. - 1992 (Trad. G.C.)

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Del corso del tempo Robert Wyatt - Faremusica - N° 128 - Novembre 1991

MUSICISTI

Nel corso del tempo

Robert Wyatt



FM 30



A sei anni da Old Rottenhat, il musicista inglese torna a far sentire la sua voce. E lo fa con l'intensità e la limpidezza che gli sono consuete. Giancarlo Susanna lo ha raggiunto telefonicamente nella sua casa in Inghilterra.

Nel mirabile equilibrio tra il lirismo descrittivo dei versi di Alfreda Benge e l'impegno politico di quelli dello stesso Wyatt, il suo nuovo disco, *Dondestan*, è un'opera che ci riconsegna un artista assolutamente atipico.

Con Wyatt è facile parlare e non si corre il rischio di restare intrappolati nel gioco delle parti che spesso è un rifugio per chi intervista e chi viene intervistato. Aiutati dalla tenera immagine della copertina di *Dondestan*, potevamo quasi immaginarlo accanto a una finestra affacciata sulla campagna.

E in questa dimensione, che suggerisce al tempo stesso distacco dalla velocità frenetica degli avvenimenti e profonda partecipazione emotiva, il lungo silenzio di Wyatt assume contorni inediti e imprevisti. "*Non ho molto il senso del tempo* - afferma - *il tempo passa e io non me ne rendo conto. Mi sembra che ci sia un Natale ogni cinque minuti. Credo che i1 problema sia questo: io vivo in una scala temporale sbagliata* (ride)*, Io sono una persona che pensa lentamente, in un certo senso, e noi viviamo in un 'epoca di mezzi di comunicazione veloci, di informazione veloce, di digestione veloce. Io, dal punto di vista biologico, non sono cambiato, non mi sono adattato; vivo ancora nell'età della bicicletta, il mio cervello non è ancora nell'epoca delle automobili. Ho bisogno di tempo per pensare*".

Questa lentezza nel mettere alla prova la propria creatività non è quindi vissuta come difficoltà o come un problema.

"*Un problema è che non vivo vicino a Londra e così non ho intorno a me molti musicisti che conosco, Devo essere musicalmente autosufficiente. Vedo pochissime delle persone che frequentavo una volta. Vivo con mia moglie Alfie, sua madre e un cane, e ho pochi amici in città, che non sono musicisti. Questo mi deve bastare e mi sta bene, ma vuole anche dire che devo trovare più risorse in me stesso. Il momento decisivo per me, per questo disco, è stato la scoperta delle poesie di mia moglie. Era difficile lavorarci, perché questi versi non sono stati scritti per diventare canzoni, non sono stati scritti perché io li cantassi. Alfie ha scritto delle poesie per sé stessa. Questo voleva dire che io non dovevo utilizzare le normali strutture forti delle canzoni per molte di queste poesie; dovevo inventare delle strutture che andassero con maggior naturalezza insieme alle parole*".

La *differenza* delle canzoni con i testi di Alfreda Benge va dunque al di là di quella evidente e immediatamente percepibile che attiene agli argomenti - dalla politica di Wyatt alla contemplazione lirica della realtà di Alfie - e ha agito perfino sulla scrittura musicale, le ha dato la ricchezza di un punto di vista diverso. "*Le poesie sono quasi fotografie di un periodo o di un tempo preciso. Ci sono immagini assolutamente concrete in tutte le sue poesie. Alfie ha seguito un corso di regia cinematografica e penso che veda le cose quasi come un regista. Questo è uno stimolo meraviglioso, per la voce".*

La solitudine di questo artista straordinario - la cui opera, difficilmente catalogabile, abbraccia ormai più di due decenni - dipende in gran parte dall'incidente che lo ha immobilizzato su una sedia a rotelle, ma non sembra pesargli più di tanto. Wyatt non avverte - o lo avverte soltanto in parte - il bisogno di collaborare con altri musicisti.


"L'ultimo concerto l'ho fatto proprio a Roma, nel 1973..."

"Per questo non credo che ci sia una regola. Ogni brano quando arriva è come se arrivasse nella mia mente - fa le sue richieste, le sue domande. Così può accadere che la musica su cui lavoro io possa suonarla da solo, che non richieda del virtuosismo strumentale, che richieda soltanto che gli strumenti siano adatti alla voce. Ma per altre canzoni ho bisogno di un pianista come Dave McRae per suonare, per essere sicuro che gli accordi siano quelli giusti. Qualche giorno fa stavo ascoltando un vecchio nastro di Mongezi Feza (il trombettista scomparso pochi anni or sono, n.d.r.) *e posso immaginare il suono della sua tromba come un complemento molto buono per la mia voce o come un'alternativa ad essa in un disco. Vorrei che Mongezi fosse ancora qui".*

Un altro dato essenziale, oltre a quello della collaborazione con altri artisti, è il confronto con il pubblico, un misurarsi nell'esecuzione dal vivo della propria musica che appare sempre più faticoso e improponibile per Wyatt.

"E' molto difficile organizzare una cosa del genere e così ho deciso di non farlo. L'ultimo concerto l'ho fatto proprio a Roma, a Piazza Navona, con gli Henry Cow. E' stato divertente, ma anche fisicamente ora non sono così forte. Ricordo che dopo il sole (era l'estate del 1973, n.d.r.) *e un po' di birra ero molto stanco e facevo fatica per dare il meglio di me e controllare la voce. In studio, se mi stanco, posso aspettare e ricominciare, ma in un concerto devi suonare quando sei lì... Non potrei garantire il controllo sulla qualità".*

Fra le sue molte qualità, Dondestan possiede quella della chiarezza, della perspicacia nell'analisi politica e sociale. Nel temperamento di Wyatt non c'è l'irruenza tipica degli esponenti del combat rock, ma le sue affermazioni hanno in ogni caso una forza incredibile. Nell'epoca del "tramonto delle ideologie" e della "morte del consumismo", la voce di Robert Wyatt continua a cantare a favore dei deboli e degli sfruttati, contribuendo all'edificazione di un'informazione realmente alternativa.

"Ogni dieci anni un settimanale pubblica una foto di Karl Marx in copertina e scrive che il marxismo è finito. I giornalisti occidentali hanno cominciato a scrivere cose del genere già nel 1923... Aspettiamo e vediamo cosa succede (ride). Quel che so è che non riesco a immaginare un'analisi del mondo che abbia un qualche senso senza una comprensione del marxismo; nello stesso modo è impossibile capire l'evoluzione senza Darwin. Mi sembra impossibile negare l'importanza di questa analisi. Il sistema in cui viviamo mette sempre i potenti contro i deboli, divide la gente che dovrebbe essere unita. E' la natura stessa del sistema, ma spero di sbagliare... A me non interessano i sistemi. Se il sistema morisse, entreremmo in un 'era di pace e di prosperità per tutti e io sarei la persona più felice del mondo".

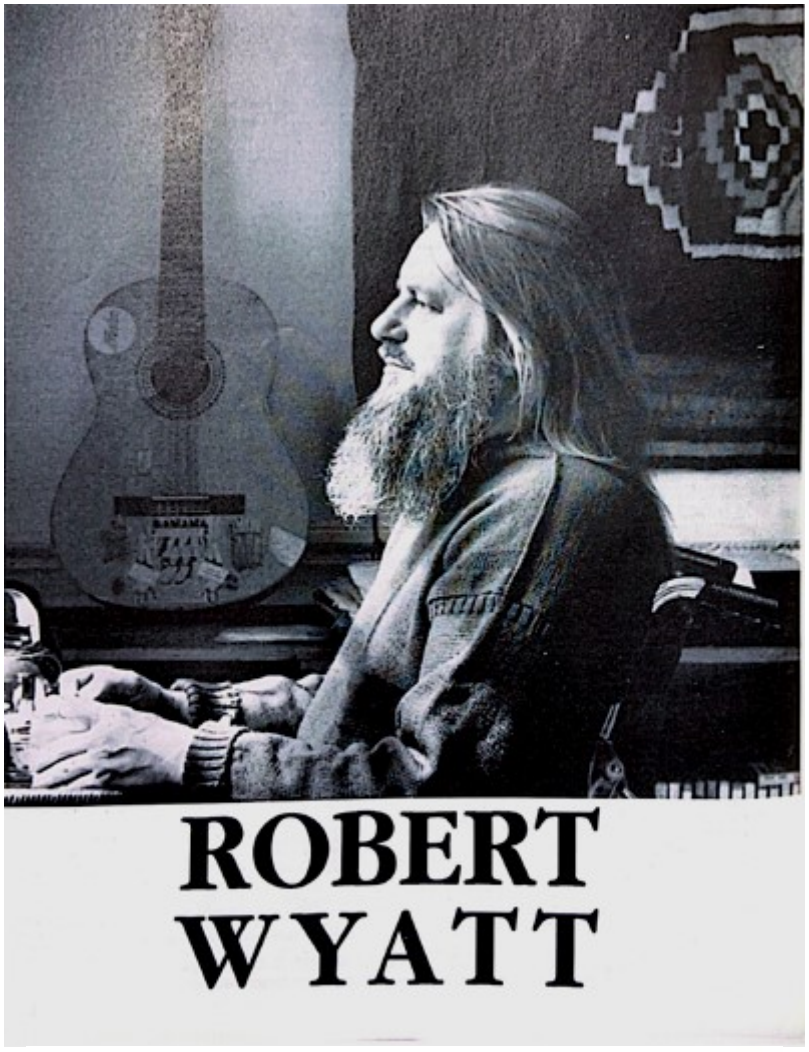
Giancarlo Susanna

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Robert Wyatt - Rockerilla - N. 134 - ottobre 1991



di Domenico Caccamo

Introduzione

II ritorno di Robert Wyatt con il suo nuovo gioiello "Dondestan" - Dove sono? - rompe il silenzio durato ben sei anni e non può che destare piacere a tutti coloro che, come il



sottoscritto, hanno sempre apprezzato sia i suoi lavori che l'artista in tutta la sua capacità espressiva, politico-intellettuale, vocale e lirica. "Dondestan" è una collezione di canzoni, in parte scritte dalla moglie Alfie, basate sulla musica di Robert Wyatt.

Dato lo spessore del personaggio, l'affetto che mi lega ai suoi vecchi lavori e la particolarità dovuta alla sua lunga assenza, era inevitabile che avviandomi verso il "Tara Hotel" di Kensington, in un caldo tardo pomeriggio di agosto, per incontrare Robert e Alfie, avvertissi dentro di me un certo nervosismo. Nervosismo che si i però immediatamente dileguato quando lo stesso Robert, dopo avermi salutato, mi ha candidamente confessato di essere anche lui piuttosto nervoso poiché era da tanto tempo che non rilasciava interviste. Dopo questa reciproca confessione si è instaurata una atmosfera rilassata ed amichevole che ha accompagnato la lunga intervista (durata oltre 4 ore) di cui vi dò qui di seguito un parziale resoconto.

* * *

- Sono trascorsi sei anni dall'uscita del tuo "Old Rottenhat" ed oggi, finalmente, questo silenzio si è rotto con l'uscita del brillante "Dondestan". Dimmi Robert, oltre all'impegno che hai avuto nel mettere insieme il tuo LP, cosa è successo nella tua vita in questo periodo.

Bob: "Dall'uscita dell'ultimo LP ci siamo trasferiti fuori Londra, in quanto Alfie non voleva più abitare nella casetta di Twickenam e cambiare casa è un big deal. Ora abitiamo in una country house nel Lincolnshire dove, essendo più spaziosa, posso finalmente avere la mia stanza dove tenere tutti i miei strumenti, piazzare la mia batteria e più di ogni altra cosa suonare i miei dischi di musica jazz a tutto volume anche in piena notte, senza disturbare gli inquilini del piano di sopra. Ora, avendo più spazio mi posso muovere liberamente, posso girare per la stanza (spin around) e giocare come un bambino.."..

- Su "Dondestan" ho sentito un suono frequente di batterla. Questa è la prima volta che la suoni dopo tanto tempo? (Robert si limita a suonare brushes e cymbals).

Bob: "C'è voluto un bel po' di tempo a suonarla, anche se non pienamente in quanto non posso fare uso dei piedi. Mi limito a fare uso dei cimbali e delle spazzole ma tutto il resto manca. Ho cercato di suonare le percussioni in "Old Rottenhat" e "Work in Progress", mentre in "Dondestan" ho avuto più libertà di movimento".

- In "Old Rottenhat" ci sono atmosfere differenti sia rispetto a "Rock Bottom" che al tuo ultimo "Dondestan". A mio parere "Dondestan" sembra essere la continuazione di Rock Bottom"...

Bob: "Sono contento che lo pensi. Mi sento come se ci fossero torrenti di idee nella mia mente che solo raramente esploro in pieno e forse è la prima volta dall'uscita di "Rock Bottom" che mi sento di nuotare nel mio fiume per un intero album. Non ho mai avuto bisogno di cambiare tanto per cambiare. Ho sempre cercato di trovare il giusto 'noise', il giusto sound, le parole adeguate al mio feeling del periodo. Comunque sono d'accordo sul fatto che ci sia una certa continuità tra "Dondestan" e "Rock Bottom".
Questa volta la scelta delle liriche è stata di Alfie che ha una parte importante in "Dondestan". Tutta la A side e la prima song della B side sono state scritte da lei.

- Alfie, questa è la prima volta che scrivi poemi e collabori musicalmente e direi pienamente, con Robert (la sua voce l'avevamo ascoltata in "Rock Bottom" e in duetto in "Work In Progress"). Lo scrivere poemi è stato qualcosa che hai sempre sentito di fare o la tua principale ispirazione è sempre stata la pittura?

Alfie: "Devo dirti che non è stata una collaborazione nel senso stretto della parola in quanto questi poemi già esistevano facendo parte di una collezione di 25 di essi che ho scritto in Spagna durante un lungo inverno. Robert, a metà della realizzazione del suo disco, andava alla ricerca di different inputs, gli ho presentalo i miei poemi che poi segretamente he put into music. Penso che se mi avesse chiesto di scrivere canzoni per la sua musica non l'avrei mai potuto fare. Questi poemi sono una esperienza non solo mia, ma anche di Robert perché quando li ho scritti lui stava con me ed il feeling che ci sta dentro è quello provato anche da lui. Sono molto contenta che Robert ha scelto i miei poemi!.

- A questo punto Robert ridendo e lisciandosi la sua lunga barba, aggiunge.

Bob: Devo dire che ho colonizzato i poemi o ancora meglio li ho 'cannibalizzati' *(ridendo)*. Comunque, quando volevo fare dei cambiamenti di verso o ripetere un verso chiedevo sempre il suo permesso. La sua risposta è stata sempre:

"I poemi sono di mia proprietà ed il modo in cui le canti sono fatti tuoi. Fai come ti piace..." *(altra risata*). C'erano altri poemi anche loro pieni di immagini ma quelli che ho scelto li ho trovati più vicini al mio modo di suonare e cantare...

- Dimmi Alfreda, il tuo mondo poetico e vicino a quello di Robert o esplori situazioni differenti...

Alfie: "Se ti riferisci al fatto che negli ultimi anni le canzoni di Robert sono state più politiche, mentre le mie sono meno politiche, sono d'accordo. Infatti, anche se politicamente abbiamo le stesse idee, io le esprimo nelle mie liriche in modo meno vistoso rispetto a Robert. Ad esempio, in "Costa" c'è la descrizione del posto colonizzato dai turisti. Questo posto è privo di facilità di servizi per la gente che ci vive per tutta la vita. C'è la mancanza di gas, per cui devi usare le bombolette e ogni volta che piove c'è sempre un enorme buco nel mezzo della strada. In estate il suo aspetto è più nuovo e splendente... ma solo per i turisti. Io direi che i problemi del mondo li vedo allo stesso modo in cui li vede Robert con la sola differenza che li descrivo in modo differente. Penso che una poesia deve essere più ambigua di una canzone. Non sarebbe stata una poesia se allo stesso tempo avessi messo troppo in chiaro la mia politica".

- Così ogni tua poesia ha un significato ben preciso. Non è frutto di immaginazione, in quanto ha a che vedere con ciò che circonda la società ed il suo ambiente...

Alfie: "Descriverei i miei poemi come "Socialismo Realista" anche se qualcuno non lo condividerebbe. Tutto quello che descrivo esiste e non è una immagine da me inventata. Tutte le 25 poesie da me scritte rappresentano quadretti che ho commentati con parole non avendo avuto il tempo necessario per dipingerli. L'unico frutto d'immaginazione è la descrizione del "Sea God", una presenza raccontata da una monaca..."

- Robert, l'ultima volta che ho sentito la tua voce è stata nella tua collaborazione data nell'album degli Happy Endings "Turn the World Upside Down" (album uscito lo scorso anno per la Cooking Vinyl). Cosa puoi dirmi in proposito...

Robert: "Quella degli Happy Endings è fra le più belle bands da me vista e sentita. Tutto è successo durante un Miners Benefit. Sai, quando in Inghilterra c'è una battaglia delle Trade Unions molti gruppi simpatizzano con la lotta ed organizzano dei concerti per fare sentire la gente felice ed unita, mentre i media cercano di rovinare tutto specialmente quando la politica di sinistra è coinvolta.

Gli H.E. erano in uno di questi concerti di beneficenza, notarono la mia presenza tra il pubblico ed alla fine del concerto mi chiesero se ero disposto a cantare una canzone per il loro successivo LP. Well, non me lo son fatto ripetere due volte. Mi piace molto il loro stile di adattamento di vecchie canzoni..."

- Negli ultimi 20 anni hai dato la tua collaborazione a quasi 40 dischi, dal rock al jazz allo sperimentale. Looking back, quale di queste collaborazioni è stata di tua grande soddisfazione?

Robert: "Devo dirti che riguarda la collaborazione ad un album non ancora uscito e che ho registrato alcuni anni fa. Ho cantato il brano di un poeta canadese, con il quale sono

divenuto amico, che si chiama Paul Heinz (il quale ha anche collaborato con Carla Bley ed altra genie ed è anche amico del sassofonista Evan Parker). La canzone che ho cantato si chiamava "Kurtsy" con Evan Parker al sax soprano. E' stata una grande gioia e soddisfazione avere E. Parker con me. Purtroppo il disco non ha ancora visto la luce! E' stato prodotto da Skip Hanraham che fa centinala di cose in America...".

- Questo vuoi dire che la tua soddisfazione si realizza quando collabori con musicisti jazz. Il jazz è un tuo innato amore...

Robert: "Il jazz è la musica che ho più ascoltato da quando ero giovane. Mi piace il tocco leggero del ritmo che c'è nel jazz, è più fluido, ha un senso ambiguo in quanto il ritmo non a molto accentuato e devi essere tu ad immaginare un po'. I jazz musicians che mi piacciono e che conosco, gente come Gary Windo, George Khan, Mongezi Feza, Dave McRae etc..., possono fare tanto con le loro idee musicali che io non posso fare con la mia voce. Questa è la gente che chiamo per aiutarmi...".

- Se i musicisti che hai citato sono quelli che chiameresti per aiutarti, come mai non hai chiesto i1 loro aluto nel realizzare "Dondestan"?

Robert: "Forse perché dentro c'è un po' di para-politica (*grande risata!*). A volte, forse per vanità, voglio vedere quanto posso fare da solo. Dopo tutto, mi piace suonare i brushes e i cimbali così come mi piace trovare le note nel plano e cantare. Quindi perché non provare a mettere tutto insieme e sentire cosa esce fuori? Questo non lo faccio molto spesso ma quando provo cerco di amalgamare il tutto in modo coerente. Avrei potuto invitare alcuni musicisti ma non è stato necessario. Beh, mi piace la sfida".

- C'è un unico musicista che inviti a darti una mano In "Lisp Service" ed è il tuo vecchio amico ex Soft Machine, gruppo del quale tu hai fatto parte, il bassista Hugh Hopper!

Robert: "Io ed Hugh siamo stati amici dall'età di 11 anni, frequentavamo la stessa scuola. Lui ha scritto la prima canzone che ho cantato e che nessuno ha mai ascoltato. La canzone si chiamava "Memories" che lui ha scritto quando era molto giovane. Mi ricordo che lui suonava ed io cantavo, sperimentavamo altre cose con nastri e così via. Lui scriveva canzoni ma era troppo timido per cantarle e grazie al cielo io potevo farlo per lui. Sai, Hugh essendo un bassista è un background musician. Una delle ultime canoni che ho ripreso è stata "Amber And The Amberines" che si trova su "Work in Progress". Con Hugh c'è un grande affiatamento anche se un po' nervoso perché non parliamo mai di politica".



- Sei in contatto con i tuoi ex colleghi dei Soft Machine e Matchlng Mole, o non ti importa niente di loro!

Robert: "Il mio migliore amico era Dave McRae. il tastierista dei Matching Mole, che essendo un Neo-Zelandese sposato con una ragazza del suo paese, è tornato nell'altra parte del pianeta. Mi piacerebbe tanto rivederlo ma è troppo lontano. L'ultima volta che ha suonato per me è stato in "Round About Midnight". Dave sa come dare il giusto suono alle

mie canzoni così come è stato nel caso di "Memories of You"... Il suo tocco di piano è unico...".

- Dimmi, ti ha influenzato il suo modo di suonare le tastiere?

Robert: "Quello che più mi piaceva di lui, era il fatto che fosse uno dei pochi esperti di musica jazz disposto ad aiutare gente alla quale piaceva il jazz ma non lo suonava, come nel mio caso. Dave è il miglior keyboardist che ho conosciuto. Devo dirti che mi è staio di grande aiuto...".

- Tu hai ripreso alcune belle songs (At Last I'm Free, Strange Fruit, Shipbuildlng...}. Ci sono state due pop bands che hanno ripreso due tue canzoni: Tears for Fears (Sea Song) e recentemente il gruppo Horse Latitude con "O Caroline" dall'album dei Matching Mole. Quale è stata la tua reazione quando ti hanno chiesto il permesso di riprenderle? Ti sono piaciute le loro versions?

Robert: "Mi fa molto piacere che altri musicisti riprendano mie canzoni. Ad esempio penso che i Tears For Fears hanno rifatto "Sea Song" meglio di me. Un'altra cover che mi piace molto è stata fatta da un musicista Basco, "The Age of Self". Anche questa è una versione che forse a suo modo, arricchisce l'originale. Riguardo "O Caroline" ripresa dalla band Horse Latitude ti confesso che non ne sapevo l'esistenza e ti ringrazio per avermene parlato... anche perché... le cover ti fanno entrare in tasca un po' di soldi, il che non è poi tanto male perché ne ho proprio bisogno...".

- Tu sei uno del pochi musicisti coinvolti nella politica. E' noto infatti che negli anni passati sei stato molto impegnato nel Partito Comunista Inglese. Qual è oggi il tuo rapporto con esso?

Robert: "Beh, a dire il vero il mio rapporto col Partito Comunista Inglese non è più tanto stretto come nel passato. Il fatto è che non condivido la linea politica adottata dai nuovi dirigenti che, pur di sopravvivere, hanno ammorbidito notevolmente la vecchia strategia 'Alternativa", Può darsi che mediante questa 'sterzata' il partito riesca a sopravvivere, ma, anche se così fosse, io non credo che questa sarebbe una vittoria quanto una sconfitta perché così facendo il partito perde la sua identità. Ma, comunque andrà a finire, io non ho nessuna intenzione di unirmi a questa che per me è una 'farsa'. Comunque; nel mio nuovo album c'è una canzone intitolata "CP Jeebies" nella quale spiego quale è oggi la mia relazione con il Partito Comunista..."

- Lasciando da parte le vicende specifiche del comunismo Inglese. Alla luce degli eclatanti eventi politici degli ultimi anni quale pensi che sia oggi il ruolo del comunismo in campo mondiale?

Robert; "Devo confessarti che sono realmente molto depresso di fronte a questo comunismo che pare stia chiudendo battenti un po' ovunque, Io credo che il problema più grande del comunismo sia quello di scrollarsi di dosso il ruolo 'subalterno' interpretato negli ultimi decenni. Certo non sarà facile, ciononostante credo che, di fronte ad un sistema capitalistico nel quale le sperequazioni tra ricchi e poveri vanno assolutamente riuscire a mantenere vivo l'ideale di una maggiore eguaglianza".

- Negli ultimi anni molti musicisti hanno indirizzato il loro impegno politico verso una causa ecologica, vedi ad esempio Sting e la battaglia contro la distruzione della "Rain Forest". In che modo ti senti coinvolto in questo tipo di causa?

Robert: "Vedere musicisti come Sting che si interessano della situazione degli indigeni che vivono in Amazzonia non può farmi che piacere. In queste vicende, infatti, l'intervento e l'impegno di una Star può avere un impatto ed una capacità di denuncia molto forti. Naturalmente il problema ecologico non riguarda solo l'Amazzonia ma molti altri paesi in via di sviluppo dove la macchina del potere sta trasformando l'ambiente per i propri interessi economici. Anche se la mia musica non può pienamente esprimere ciò che penso riguardo le tematiche ecologiche, come persona mi sento molto coinvolto in questi problemi. Non a caso lo ed Alfie siamo stati tra i primi membri di una organizzazione inglese chiamata "Friends of the Earth".

Parliamo un po' del tuo nuovo album "Dondestan". Mi sbaglio o questo titolo ha qualcosa a che vedere con la vicenda americana del Desaparecidos? .

Robert : "Beh, per quanto la tua sia una interpretazione un po' drammatica credo che potrebbe andare bene, In effetti con questo titolo io ed Alfie volevamo riferirci ad un concetto più generico, che potrei definire di 'dissolvenza', che concerne tutte quelle situazioni in cui qualcosa che sembrava radicato nella realtà sembra scomparire senza

lasciar tracce. Potrebbe riguardare appunto i desaparecidos così come il Communist Party o i turisti che dopo l'estate scompaiono dalle città di mare o ancora, ed in realtà proprio a questo si riferisce la title track, "Dondestan" è una domanda che riguarda la scomparsa dei Palestinesi. Dove sono i Palestinesi che sono stati buttati fuori dal Kuwait e da tanti altri paesi? Che fine hanno fatto?

- Puoi descrivermi con poche parole il concetto di questo lavoro?

Robert: "Cercherò di spiegartelo in modo semplice e breve. per me fare un disco è come fare un viaggio che può iniziare ovunque e potrebbe finire nello stesso posto. Nel caso di questo disco le tappe principali del viaggio sono stati i poemi di Alfie, le mie "Fanny Songs" dal caratteristico stile melodico e la ricerca di un suono che abbinasse atmosfere tipiche di musica europea con influenze di musica araba", *(A questo punto Robert mi dà una lunga spiegazione di come si è tradotto in questo disco il viaggio dal punto di vista della tecnica compositiva. Un intricato percorso che parte da LA minori, passa da scale diatoniche, accenti, intervalli... per ritornare infine agli accordi iniziali)*.

- Comunque per quanto mi riguarda i1 tuo stile rimane ancora caratterizzato da atmosfere romantiche e delicate con dentro anche dello sperimentale.

Robert: "Sono contento che la pensi cosi perché, per quanto non usi più quel tipo di stratagemmi drammatici che usavo in passato, per me creare una canzone rimane ancora un processo di'sperimentazione' proiettato ad amalgamare nel modo migliore le 'immagini' evocate dai stesti con le sensazioni dei ritmi e dei suoni. Nel caso di 'Dondestan' questa ricerca ha rappresentato una 'sfida' ancor più difficile che in passato, perché ho dovuto confrontarmi con i poemi scritti da Alfie cercando di coglierne l'essenza per poi rifletterla nella musica".

- E tu Alfie, come hai vissuto questa collaborazione?

Alfie: "²Non so se sono molto brava a descrivere questo tipo di cose, anche perché nessuno mi ha fatto mai domande in proposito. Ciò che ti posso dire e che i testi scelti da Robert li ho scritti quando stavamo in Spagna e descrivono le atmosfere di quei luoghi: la vita attorno alla spiaggia, quelle particolari atmosfere invernali, molto pacifiche ed un po' desolate, nelle quali pare non accadere nulla di nuovo ed invece ad uno sguardo più attento tanti piccoli particolari si rivelano in tutta la sua suggestiva unicità. Basti pensare a quegli incantevoli e sempre mutevoli tramonti che mi hanno dato tanta ispirazione per la mia pittura".



- A proposito di pittura, che rapporto c'è tra la musica ed i tuoi quadri?

Alfie: "Beh, c'è una relazione molto stretta. Infatti, se quando dipingo per me stessa i miei quadri nascono da qualcosa di specifico che ho visto e che mi ha divertito o emozionato, quando invece disegno le copertine per i dischi di Robert tutto nasce dalla musica, mi siedo ascolto la musica e cerco di tradurla in immagini... Nel caso di "Dondestan", però, le cose sono andate in maniera un po' diversa. Questa volta infatti ho adottato uno stile più narrativo che immaginifico, in quanto quello che volevo era soprattutto riprodurre l'atmosfera molto intima che c'era tra noi in Spagna".

- Oltre che scrivere i testi e disegnare le copertine, tu hai delle fugaci apparizioni in voce sia su "Rock Bottom" che in "Work in Progress". Pensi che in futuro potresti coinvolgerti di più anche nel cantare?

Alfie: "Potrebbe essere un'idea ma veramente non credo che ciò accadrà perché Robert canta molto meglio di me. C'è però un'altra cosa che mi piacerebbe fare nei dischi dì Robert...".

- Vuoi dirmi di che si tratta?

Alfie: "Beh... mi piacerebbe suonare la batteria!...".

- Perché sai suonare la batteria?

Alfie: "No, non proprio. Però ho sempre avuto un debole per questo strumento, tanto che ho speso molto tempo della mia vita per andar dietro a dei batteristi". *(A questo punto Alfie e Robert si guardano ammiccanti ed iniziano a ridere in maniera un po' complice. Chiedendo se posso conoscere le ragioni di questa risata vengo a sapere che, prima di Robert, Alfie ha avuto altre sei storie d'amore vissute tutte con dei batteristi).*

- Alfie. Potresti spiegarmi 11 significato della canzone 'The Sight Of the Wind".

Cosa intendi per "La vista del vento"?

Alfie: "Beh, si tratta di sensazioni. Non si può vedere il vento quanto i suoi effetti. Le carte e le buste di plastica che si impigliano in qualcosa poi si impennano e volano via, gli alberi che si piegano, l'ululato del vento. Per me il vento è come una forza invisibile e positiva che pulisce le spiagge dalia sporcizia buttata dalle persone disegnando delle piccole dune e lasciando tutto come se fosse di nuovo 'vergine'".

- Robert, credo che "Cathedral Architecture" sia l'unica canzone dell'album che ha momenti di piena felicità. Per quanto mi riguarda trovo infatti che generalmente i1 tuo modo di fare musica sia più melanconico, nel senso che le suggestioni emotive ispirate dalle tue canzoni non sono tanto esuberanti quanto molto interiori e delicate.

Robert: "Questa e una domanda molto interessante. "Cath. Arch.", che è stata scritta da Alfie, si potrebbe definire anche una canzone antirazzista e umanitaria. Oggi sempre di più si stanno erigendo barriere tra i popoli, si tende ad emarginare coloro che sono stranieri o diversi: gli Arabi, i Palestinesi, gli zingari, gli immigrati... Noi diciamo: non escludere non odiare la gente diversa ma confrontati con essa e cerca di conoscerla. Noi crediamo che tutti possono insegnarci qualcosa e darci felicità... Comunque c'è una cosa che vorrei dire. Per quanto molte mie canzoni abbiano dei testi impegnati non vorrei sembrare un monaco. In realtà io mi sento molto più comico o un commediante di quanto la gente non pensi. Con questo voglio dire che oltre ai testi impegnati, mi piace molto scrivere testi semplici e giocare con le parole. Direi che provo ancor oggi un piacere quasi infantile nel giocare con la fantasia, nello sparpagliare le parole qua e là per poi ricomporle in un puzzle sempre mutevole".

- Ma cosa mi dici riguardo la mia Impressione sul carattere melanconico della tua musica?

Robert: "Beh. Senza dubbio nella mia musica c'è molta di questa che tu chiami melanconia, ma non vorrei che la gente prendesse questo come qualcosa di negativo. In un certo senso credo che nella mia musica si possa trovare lo stesso paradosso che c'è nel canto del blues e del flamenco. Anche lì trovi atmosfere che apparentemente sono piene di tragedia e sconfitta, ma in realtà quelle sono canzoni che celebrano la vita nei suoi aspetti più intensi, capovolgendo ciò che sembra negativo in qualcosa di positivo".

- La melanconia e la tristezza che abbiamo trovato in "Rock Bottom" erano nate dopo l'incidente che ti ha paralizzato?

Robert: "Non direi pienamente. Questo lo hanno tirato fuori tutti i critici musicali che hanno recensito il disco. Tu sei il primo che si addentra nel saperne un po' di più. Devo dirti che quasi tutto il disco è stato concepito in Italia, a Venezia nell'isola della Giudecca. Ricordo che mi trovavo lì con Alfie, la quale era impegnata a lavorare con dei suoi amici... Neanche a dirlo era d'inverno quando ormai la grande ondata turistica aveva lasciato Venezia ai Veneziani. Quando Alfie era impegnata io andavo in giro. Durante una dì queste passeggiate ho trovato questo organo, che ancora oggi caratterizza parte del mio suono e che uso anche in "Dondestan", che ha una marca strana "Riviera" che non credo sia una marca famosa pur avendo l'unico suono che mi da piacere e che si addice al timbro della mia voce. Il giorno in cui il mio piccolo organo "Riviera" si romperà, finirò di fare dischi. Ancora, per farti sapere, "Rock Bottom" è stato concepito a Venezia prima del mio incidente. Anche parte dei testi sono nati lì e poi il tutto è stato ancor più sviluppato in ospedale dopo il mio incidente".

L'ultima cosa che voglio chiederti riguarda i tuoi progetti futuri. Pensi che farai alcuni concerti per promuovere "Dondestan"?

Robert: "Credo che non avrei più lo spirito adatto per fare concerti. Ricordo che l'ultima volta che sono stato on stage con gli Henry Cow a Piazza Navona in Roma mi sono sentito molto stanco e nervoso. Il fatto è che fisicamente non mi sento più tanto forte per affrontare tutto lo stress ed i disagi di un tour. Per fare un paragone si potrebbe dire che oggi mi sento più un regista cinematografico che un attore teatrale. Ormai mi sento molto più a mio agio a lavorare e creare in studio e tradurre questo in una esibizione dal vivo sarebbe molto difficile".

*** * ***

Questa è stata l'ultima risposta ufficiale catturata dal mio registratore. In realtà la mia conversazione con Robert ed Alfie è andata avanti sino a tardi, accompagnata da frequenti

tazze di te e caffè e da dolcetti portoghesi. Quando infine, ed ora ormai quasi notte, ho lasciato l'albergo mi sono ritornate in mente le prime parole che Robert mi aveva detto: " Alfie mi dice sempre che le persone che ascoltano la mia musica sono matte!". Non proprio matte da legare avrei voluto dire, caro Robert, ma da lasciare libere di tuffarsi insieme a te in quell'oceano fatto di suoni ed armonie nate per dare sensazioni di pace spirituale che saziano il proprio animo, intraprendendo un viaggio di cui tu stesso sei il navigatore, God bless you both.

Ringrazio Gareth 'ma mate' Davies della Rough Trade Rec. per avermi organizzalo l'appuntamento con Robert. Un ringraziamento va anche al mio collega DJ Guglielmo 'Willie' Di Lorenzo for his help.

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Robert Wyatt Un'intervista - Musiche N°1 - Primavera 1988

UN'INTERVISTA



Ci sono diversi motivi che ci spingono a pubblicare questa intervista a Robert Wyatt (oltre, ovviamente, all'enorme stima per l'uomo). Su tutti, il fatto che non è un'intervista concessa ad una rivista musicale, o alla redazione musicale di qualche genere di pubblicazione, bensi ad una rivista politica *(Mambi,* Revista de la Brigada Antonio Maceo en Espãna, n. 9, luglio '87).
Di conseguenza, la possibilità di approfondira alcune tematiche meno frequentate dagli intervistatori abituali ci interessava, ed è stata più forte della schematizzazione che ha comportato il passaggio dall'inglese allo spagnolo: una schematizzazione che, elidendo la malinconica serenità, la ricchezza di sfumature e l'ironia che non di rado vestono le parole di Wyatt, faceva spesso sembrare le idee tagliate con l'accetta, e contro la quale poco ha potuto la bella traduzione di Daniela Zanin.
Vale forse ricordare, allora, quanto disse il Nostro, in un'altra occasione, a proposito della sua idea di socialismo: «È più un coinvolgimento emozionale che razionale, per me. Mi sembra che il socialismo dia più possibilità ad un maggior numero di gente di avere più dignità che non altri sistemi. Allora penso di essere un socialista».
0 la risposta che diede a chi gli chiedeva se pensava di rimanere tutta la vita iscritto al PC inglese: «Non penso razionalmente di uscire dal partito, per la sola ragione che essere ex-comunista mi pare più presuntuoso che essere comunista».

Alessandro Achilli

Robert Wyatt
Un'intervista

di Gloria Baste Pascual

Le idee si affollano nella mente, tante cose nuove da conoscere, tante da chiedere, emozione prima dell'incontro con Robert e Alfie, la sua compagna, che, come lui stesso dice «è al corrente molto più di me delle cose che accadono nel mondo», parliamo di Cuba, dell'arte e un po' di tutto; innanzitutto cominciamo col bere un bicchiere di rhum parlando dei suoi pezzi ispirati alla nostra cultura — quali *Caimanera* e *Yolanda*.

Perché li hai scelti, Robert?
Io ho interpretato canzoni cilene molto tristi di Violeta Parra e Victor Jara e non amo essere considerato uno che canta solo cose tristi, per questo cerco canzoni con un po' più di effetto di quelle della cultura cilena, culture con un po' più d'allegria. Troppe delle mie canzoni sono tristi, visto che, stando in Inghilterra, non posso produrre altro che questo, e, cercando canzoni che mi ispirino felicità, ho incontrato quelle cubane. Nel mio paese si parla molto della cultura cubana al di fuori di Cuba, di musicisti jazz che se ne sono andati, ma secondo me i musicisti migliori vivono a Cuba, per esempio il gruppo Irakere e molti altri, come Donato Poveda, del quale ho ascoltato una canzone, *La Campana de cristal*, alla televisione, o come il trombettista Arturo Sandoval, il quale spiega molto bene il fenomeno della cultura al di fuori di Cuba, come cioè sono state rubate idee della musica cubana o di Porto Rico, e appropriandosene si parli della «salsa» come di qualcosa di proprio; i gruppi degli Stati Uniti vanno bene per ballare, però sono molto meno evoluti che quelli cubani, che si sono occupati a lungo di musica africana, e ogni giorno progrediscono nella loro arte.

Robert, perché Yolanda?
Perchè con la mia tecnica abbastanza limitata posso cantarla, e quando qualcosa mi piace e posso farlo, lo faccio.

Prima parlavi di popoli e canzoni allegre e tristi: la differenza, in questo momento, fra il Cile e Cuba, le loro situazioni politiche e sociali, è ben grande. Credi che Cuba stia passando un momento allegro?
Io non conosco Cuba direttamente, come artista però viaggio tramite l'arte, non è necessario mettere piede in un luogo, e questa mescolanza di culture spagnola e africana mi interessa molto, ora sto iniziando a leggere Nicolàs Guillén, e, anche se per me è difficile leggere in spagnolo, mi piace molto. Inoltre ho visto a Londra dei film cubani *(Memorias del subdesarrollo, Hasta cierto punto, La ùltima cena,* etc.), leggo Fidel, e quando riesco a sintonizzarmi sulle onde corte con Radio Habana, la ascolto, ed è per questo che sono al corrente di quello che succede a Cuba; ho terminato da poco di leggere l'intervista di Fidel con due giornalisti nordamericani, e credo che questo libre dica molte cose importanti, tra le altre, lui parla delle Olimpiadi e dice cose molto importanti sul mondo; anche se so che non dobbiamo avere il culto della personalità, credo che lui sia l'uomo di questo secolo, un grande pensatore con molta sensibilità per le piccole cose. La società avanza, questo è un motivo per essere allegri.

Che ripercussioni ha avuto la visita del gruppo Irakere in Inghilterra?
Gli Irakere hanno ottenuto reazioni molto favorevoli a Londra, dove la loro visita si è prolungata; hanno suonato al Ronnie Scotts, che è uno dei luoghi sacri del jazz, e lo hanno riempito di gente ogni volta: Ronnie e i suoi amici non si occupano di politica, però la scoperta della musica cubana li ha impressionati favorevolmente, e li ha riempiti di orgoglio; al contrario, una mia amica ha girato un filmato su di loro per la televisione inglese, e io stesso un'intervista, che non sono mai stati trasmessi. La tv parla tanto di «scoprire» gruppi latinoamericani, però non di Cuba, e si dice che è libera, questo è molto triste.

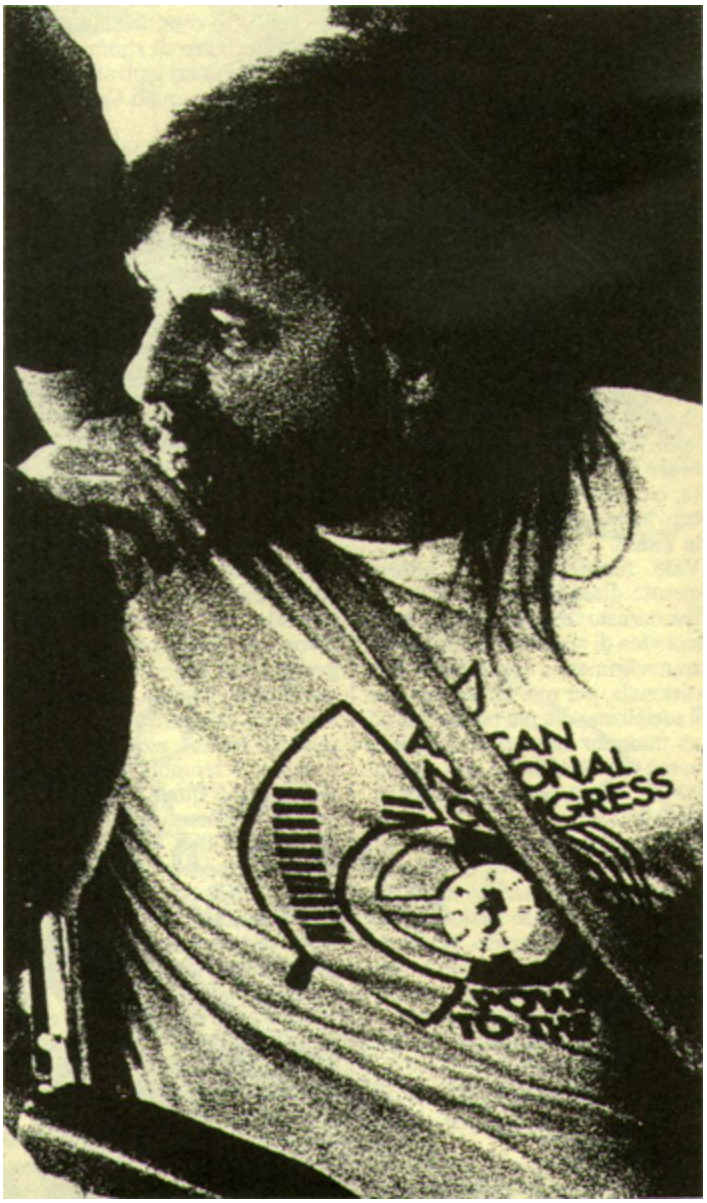
È il potere dei mezzi di Comunicazione di massa; però si riescono anche a pubblicare cose come Mambi...
Chiaro, qui per esempio si parla di «catalanismo», ma io non credo che sia la cultura castigliana ad opprimere la catalana, bensi che sia la cultura del nord, quella anglosassone (Inghilterra e Stati Uniti) che opprime le altre culture: qui arrivano tutti i film, per brutti che siano, di questi paesi, vengono i loro divi, li si intervista, vengono anche i loro gruppi musicali; si sta ereditando molto di queste culture: questa si, è un'oppressione.

Si, è cosi che stanno dominando il mondo, sanno che il popolo che domina culturalmente lo fa anche economicamente, per questo se ne sono andati dall'Unesco,non permettono che gli altri popoli alzino il capo.
La propaganda della destra è molto facile da leggere, noi non sappiamo fare bene la propaganda: è necessario trovare la forma più semplice possibile per dire le cose; io ho lo stesso problema con la mia musica, perché il difficile è trovare la

forma giusta, e io sono convinto che sia molto noiosa; in questo hanno ragione quando dicono che noi comunisti siamo tristi; questo depliant turistico, per esempio, ha delle fotografie di Cuba cosi belle che convincono più di qualsiasi tipo di propaganda.

È che in questo momento il terreno importante di lotta, è quello dell'informazione e dell'immagine: per questo i tuoi dischi sono cosi importanti.
Ti ringrazio, però il fatto è che io non posso cambiare quello che faccio, la mia musica è cosi, e non sarebbe onesto che facessi un altro tipo di musica, per questo dico sempre che è meglio ascoltare il gruppo Irakere o qualcun altro, piuttosto che i miei dischi, perché loro suonano molto meglio, e questo va bene.

Beh, però tu stai parlando di gruppi appoggiati dalla loro società e che hanno potuto lavorare sulla musica a tempo pieno e uscire, per dimostralo, all'esterno del paese.
Si, ma dobbiamo fare uno sforzo per mantenere questa qualità, saper essere semplici davanti alle platee per farci conoscere in tutto il mondo. I punk, per esempio, hanno fatto molte cose con poco denaro; ci teniamo ad essere in grado di fare la musica più interessante: a me attualmente, preoccupa molto l'idea del «come» presentarsi artisticamente, credo che la forma sia una parte dell'arte.



Quali sono le basi del tuo impegno per l'Africa?
Ho molti amici che dal Sudafrica si sono rifugiati a Londra, per la maggior parte musicisti, specialmente dopo la morte del mio migliore amico, Mongezi Feza, che credeva di scappare dagli orrori del Sudafrica e venne a vivere in quello che continuiamo a chiamare «mondo libero»; è morto all'età di 31 anni in un ospedale psichiatrico, considerato uno schizofrenico. I paesi occidentali sono cosi, sono pieni di cose di queto tipo... Molta gente viene qui pensando che sarà libera, come Mongezi... era un trombettista favoloso! Credo che l'Inghilterra sia particolarmente colpevole di quelle che succede in Sudafrica, cosi come lo sono i francesi nella parte orientale dell'Africa e il fatto che ora ci sono molti africani che vivono a Londra ci aiuta a parlare con gente del mondo sottosviluppato, e questa è un'occasione culturale originale, che ti avvicina al discorso politico... C'è molta altra gente che ha molto da dire, però, chissà, forse non capisco bene la loro cultura o la loro arte, mentre con gli africani per me è più facile capire i loro problemi.

Come inglese ti senti responsabile di quello che succede li?
Le banche inglesi, l'Inghilterra è responsable di quello che succede li, l'apartheid è essenziale per gli interessi dei conservatori che vivono li, e c'è molto denaro inglese nell'apartheid, negozi, imprese, che hanno rapporti con l'Africa: il marito del primo ministro, il nome della quale mi è odioso pronunciare, e una gran parte dell'industria inglese e statunitense dipendono dall'uranio che viene da una colonia del Sudafrica, la Namibia, e in questa situazione si vedono tutti i problemi del mondo. In questa colonia gli USA aiutano a reprimere lo SWAPO, perché vogliono piazzarvi delle basi contro il nord dell'Angola; cosi gli Stati Uniti sono giunti all'apartheid, contro la gente. Si confondono le cose, poiché si fa credere che l'apartheid stia aiutando a migliorare il paese, etc.: la realtà è che il razzismo è aumentato con l'aiuto nordamericano.

Abbiamo ascoltato il tuo disco dedicato allo SWAPO...
Per me non è un disco molto buono: preferisco l'originale, che è stato fatto senza il mio aiuto; i temi sono di un gruppo della Namibia, io non ho scritto niente, lo fanno meglio senza l'aiuto di noi inglesi, però la nostra collaborazione è servita perché il disco avesse maggior risonanza mondiale: è per questo che hanno richiesto il nostro aiuto.

Robert e Alfie, vi piace vivere in Inghilterra?
Non ci piace, però abbiamo molte cose là, la famiglia, i cani. Forse se non avessi avuto l'incidente vivrei a Cuba, in Mongolia o in qualche altro paese socialista, però attualmente sarebbe molto difficile, visto che loro hanno già abbastanza problemi da non doversi occupare anche di un paraplegico.

Però tu puoi essere motto di aiuto...
Si, certo, il nostro aiuto dall'Inghilterra può essere utile, in ogni caso mi fa paura viaggiare, e inoltre ho molti altri problemi, come il costo dei viaggi.

Come vedi la sinistra in Europa?
Non vedo cambiamenti in un futuro immediato. Per esempio, non voglio partecipare alle prossime elezioni inglesi, non voglio perché i partecipanti sono tutti troppo simili, con alcuni aspetti differenti, ma dicono tutti le stesse cose; non posso lottare onestamente in Inghilterra per un cambio radicale; io e i miei amici ci rompiamo la testa pensandoci, e credo che l'importante sia che stiamo nel mondo, che è abbastanza piccolo, e difendiamo quelli che hanno un po' di terra socialista da qualche parte. È questo che dobbiamo difendere.
Il PC inglese parla solo di problemi interni, e di come cambiare le cose, sperando che succeda qualcosa, ma attualmente si possono fare anche molte altre cose per aiutare la gente che sta tentando molto seriamente di costruire delle società socialiste, e per me l'importante è dare loro un sostegno, appoggiarli e non solo preoccuparsi dello sviluppo inglese.



Robert Wyatt e Alfreda Benge (KC)

I partiti comunisti, in questa parte dell'Europa sono caduti in una trappola dialettica, e si sono allontanati dalla realtà pratica di cambiare il mondo...
È che ci sono due mondi socialisti.

A Cuba attitalmente si stanno facendo dibattiti molto interensanti riguardo al futuro della

società...
Si, nel film Hasta cierto punto c'è una critica importante a determinate situazioni che si verificano non solo a Cuba, ma in vari paesi socialisti: l'importante è avanzare e fare autocritica sui passi falsi.

Qual è la tua opinione sulla religione e il suo potère?
È qui che si vede chiaramente il legame tra il rinnovato fascismo del Papa e i suoi amici cileni, per esempio. Si rivela chiaramente il Vaticano, e la sua ideologia; tre o quattro anni fa, quando sostenevo che questo Papa era un po' di destra, nessuno lo credeva, dicevano che era simpatico, e ora possiamo vedere chiaramente che la sua amicizia con Pinochet e la realtà hanno dimostrato che è un uomo pericoloso, con molto pptere e senza alcuna responsabilità; mi sorprende un po' che siano in pochi a criticarlo, tutto il mondo ha paura a parlar male di lui.
Stavo leggendo, in un libro di uno scrittore inglese, che alcuni vedono una frattura all'interno della Chiesa, determinata dall'incidenza del protestantesimo in Inghilterra e Germania, però credo che tutte queste varianti del cristianesimo riconducano comunque al Vaticano. Alcuni sostengono che «risolvendo i problemi dell'America Latina, anche lì la Chiesa diventerebbe una, unica». Se è vero che esiste una Chiesa underground, è altrettanto certo il grosso potere del Vaticano; è necessario rompere questo potere, e in questo momento è difficile, visto che tutti i leader della sinistra stanno sforzandosi di non essere «stalinisti» né «dogmatici», per essere più «moderni». La destra, al contrario, è sempre più dogmatica, e questo mi spaventa, perché non è un gioco di parole. Quello che stanno facendo gli USA in America Latina è una cosa molto seria, e non è molto diverso da quello che faceva Hitler in Europa, però Reagan è ancora più sadico, più monomaniaco e meno onesto di Hitler. Questo è il pericolo reale che grava attualmente sul terzo mondo.



> Zoom

Quali sono attualmente i tuoi progetti?
In questo momento non ne ho; sono parecchi anni che non so cosa fare. Ora sono qui a Barcellona perché me l'ha chiesto la tv catalana, che è venuta qui per fare un programma. Faccio quello che mi chiedono. La cosa certa è che la musica non è al centro dellia mia vita, non so cosa sia al centro, però non c'è la musica; ma non so fare altre cose, e così devo continuare, anche se non mi

interessa per niente essere un grande artista, non so perché, ma me ne manca la voglia. Sono un po' perso, ma è stata una costante della mia vita: da bambino non avevo l'idea di fare musica, e bisogna che succeda qualcosa perché io decida cosa vorrei di più essere...

Continueremo a lottare...
Si, questo sì, è esattamente quello che voglio fare, e farlo bene. Non sono un leader, prendo le idee degli altri, le canzoni degli altri e ci lavoro su, come questo disco che mi hanno chiesto di fare i miei amici dello SWAPO, per esempio. che ho fatto, e non è stata mia l'idea. Questo mi interessa molto, essere sempre disponibile a collaborare con gente come loro; però non sono io a dover decidere quello che deve fare lo SWAPO, né nessun altro. La solidarietà in Europa è colonialista: invece di aiutare, discutono di come dovrebbero fare le cose i nicaraguensi, o in Namibia, etc.; questa a mio parere è una visione colonialista délia solidarietà. Vivo in un paese ricco, e non posso dire a un uomo o a una donna che hanno delle responsabilità verso le proprie società, che io non ho, cosa devono fare. Non voglio essere questo tipo di uomo di sinistra; quello che voglio fare è aiutare e devono essere loro a dirmi cosa e come devo fare per aiutarli. Perché sono loro che stanno lottando.

Ogni paese deve fare la sua rivoluzione e la solidarietà deve essere al servizio dei popoli che la realizzano. Se servono abiti, medicine, una canzone, etc., bisogna darglieli perché possono avanzare nella loro rivoluzione, che fra l'altro non abbiamo fatto né in Spagna, né in Inghilterra.
Chiaro.

.....



Sono le otto di sera, il sole è tramontato, Robert e Alfie si preparano ad andare ad un concerto dei loro amici della rupe flamenca di Castelldefels.

traduzione di Daniela Zanin

Note
1. Giacomo Pellicciotti, «L'inconoclasta cosciente. Intervista a Robert Wyatt», Gong, anno II n. 6. giugno 1975.
2. Pascal Bussy. «Robert Wyatt», Tago Mago, troisième trimestre 1981.

Chi fosse interessato ad approfondire alcuni aspetti della cultura cubana citati nell'intervista può provare a procurarsi: Giovanni Salvioni. L'Africa nera a Cuba. Tradizione popolare e poesia di libertà di Nicolàs Guillén, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 1974 (ndt)

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Carta Stampata - Rockerilla - N. 83-84 - Luglio/Agosto 1987

CARTA STAMPATA



ROBERT WYATT
a cura di Gigi Marinoni
Stampa Alternativa
(L. 10.000)

I lettori meno giovani ricorderanno gli smilzi libretti di contro-informazione musicale e miscellanea controculturale pubblicati da *Stampa Alternativa* nei primi anni 70. Nel periodo punk e negli anni della più cupa new wave, la gloriosa Agenzia si è defilata dalla mischia dell'editoria musicale, continuando però a sfornare minuscoli quanto godibilissimi libriccini e 'contenitori' di racconti, favole e illustrazioni (da *Hesse* a *Carroll*, da *Beardsley* a *Erté*), come pure manuali di cucina naturale e testi ecologici.

Ultima nata, in questa biblioteca formato taschino, è la rivista *Cart.* curata da Enrico Sturani: il primo numero (L. 6.000) rappresenta una vera e propria alternativa al pomposo catalogo della mostra veneziana dedicata ad *Arcimboldo*, con dodici cartoline arcimboldesche realizzate da valenti grafici e artisti, e una quantità di articoli fra il colto e il faceto sulla cartolina (una forma d'arte a misura di tutte le borse). Gli ultimi mesi, ve ne sarete accorti, hanno riportato in auge forme e miti dell'epoca *freakedelica*. Forse e presto per dire se si tratta di un fuoco fatuo o di una vera e propria inversione di tendenza - ad ogni modo può essere un piccolo indizio utili e anche il fatto che il buon Marcello Baraghini abbia riaperto le porte alla musica. Per primo, sì è affacciato timidamente in libreria un volume dedicato ai *Joy Division,* con traduzioni dei testi e un dischetto sette pollici contenente quattro rarità. Poi sono arrivati altri nomi di sicuro richiamo (*The Smiths*, *Cure*), e un volume dedicato al caro vecchio Wyatt, di cui diremo subito. Infine, è in stampa una vera e propria rivista trimestrale con allegato sonoro, chiamata *Vinile*. Con i giornali che cominciano a sbavare sui tafferugli ai mega-concerti, mi pare proprio di essere ritornato teenager... se son rose fioriranno!



Dunque, vediamo in cosa consiste questo volume semplicemente intitolato "Robert Wyatt", un nome che dalle nostre parti non ha bisogno di tante presentazioni: due lunghe interviste realizzate in tempi diversi, testi originali con traduzione tratti da momenti diversi della pluriennale carriera (comprese collaborazioni e brani composti da altri), discografia completa, per un totale di un centinaio di pagine. In più, dischetto omaggio in vinile rosso (ovviamente) con un brano assolutamente inedito preparato appositamente da Robert per questa iniziativa ("Chairman Mao" sei minuti e rotti, una canzone ironica e minimale, sulla falsariga dell'apprezzato "Old Rotten Hat"). "Noi vi diamo del materiale: a voi elaborarlo ed usarlo come volete", scrive il curatore del volume. In effetti una fredda operazione filologica avrebbe stonato col carattere dolce, disponibile e sincero di Wyatt: molto meglio desumere idee e ricordi dalla sua viva voce. Però qualche paginetta storico-introduttiva, ad uso dei giovani che non hanno vissuto gli anni della scuola di Canterbury, certo non avrebbe guastato. Lo stesso dicasi per qualche testo surreale del periodo *Soft Machine*.

Questo libro è un 'atto di amore', e come tale va accettato o rifiutato, con tutti i piaceri e crucci della stampa underground del tempo che fu: la carta riciclata, lo spontaneismo, le 'traduzioni in cuffia' (vedi p. 42 del volume sui Cure), il gusto per l'innocuo furtarello (no copyright!), ma - in fin dei conti - a battere è un cuore g-rosso così.

Distribuzione: Nuovi Equilibri, C.P. 97, 01100 Viterbo.

Vittore Baroni

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Alfreda Benge and Robert Wyatt's Mass Medium - Rockerilla - N. 66 - febbraio 1986

ROBERT WYATT

ALFREDA BENGE and ROBERT WYATT'S MASS MEDIUM

Testo e foto di VITTORIO AZZONI



Wyatt non è un Siddharta. Wyatt fa filosofia con le sue canzoni. Wyatt non guarda la televisione. Wyatt: i duri non ballano mai. Wyatt non entra nelle classifiche. Wyatt è capace di pensare. Wyatt non gioca a bridge. Wyatt non scherza quando ride. Wyatt non mangia la frutta sciroppata Dal Monte perché importata dal Sud Africa.

L'abbiamo incontrato a Twickenham nella sua casa di molto fuori mano, a due passi dalla corrente del fiume. Con lui in giardino la moglie, Alfreda Benge, pittrice tra il naif e il surreale.

Credi che "Old Rottenhat" sia stato influenzato dalla tua passione per la musica orientale?

E' un punto, questo, a cui è arrivata molta gente; ma quando cominciai a comporre l'album, la mia unica preoccupazione era di creare qualcosa di valido. Penso che oggi, mentre provo un 'a solo', o una linea melodica, sottendo anche influenze musicali tipiche del medio oriente. Perché? Perché uso determinate scale e una costruzione orizzontale che appartengono a quella cultura; così come chi fa del rock 'classico' si riferisce per forza a matrici sonore specifiche del rock. Pertanto si tratta di influenze molto indirette, non consciamente premeditate.

Sei interessato anche all'aspetto timbrico degli strumenti orientali?

Credo che la musica orientale abbia una relazione piuttosto importante con quella occidentale, in quanto la maggior parte degli strumenti 'europei' classici sono derivati da quelli medio-orientali (come l'oboe per esempio). Nel tempo, lo strumento classico ha acquistato in raffinatezza perdendo però in potere espressivo. Infatti se ascolti uno di quegli strumenti a fiato ad ancia doppia, provenienti dal Medio-Oriente come il sanai, ti rendi conto di come il suono sia 'very powerful', incredibilmente più forte di quello di un qualsiasi oboe corrispondente al derivato europeo. Una delle ragioni per cui mi sono accostato al jazz è che ho conosciuto, all'interno del mondo occidentale, una generazione di 'black musicians' che ha saputo rivitalizzare la natura degli strumenti: penso subito al sax, per esempio. E' ancora attraverso il jazz che ho scoperto tutti i tipi di musica etnica e folk esistenti al mondo.

L'ultima live performance a cui ho assistito è stata quella di un gruppo di esuli turchi e curdi residenti a Londra: un fiato, una batteria e giochi di danze, senza microfoni o accorgimenti tecnici, con una carica così potente da ridefinire il contenuto di concerto in raduno, assemblea: in breve, rito. Ciò mi ha colpito non tanto per il suono ma perché non condivido il concetto della musica occidentale come colonizzatrice del mondo.

Pensi di aver tradotto quest'idea all'interno di "Old Rottenhat"?

Sfilare dalla matassa le varie influenze è un'operazione complicata, anche perché alla fine la mia musica suona come mia musica; gli strumenti che uso in pratica sono sempre quelli. E non ho cercato di suonare musica araba o cose del genere: c'è chi a ragione lo fa meglio di me. Il gruppo etnico relativo a certa musica è consapevole che il suo canto, il suo fare musica, gli permettono di esistere; poi se qualcun'altro, di altra cultura, si impossessa della sua musica trasferendola come decorazione alla 'western rock music', quella gente resta ancora inosservata, inascoltata, quindi non percepita, e le cosiddette 'influenze' vanno ad ingrassare solo una forma d'imperialismo culturale accumulativo.

Si' confeziona un cattivo patchwork dal gusto veramente kitsch, allo stesso modo di quando si ascoltano rifacimenti/stravolgimenti di musica classica occidentale ad opera di gruppi che utilizzano strumenti elettrici ed elettronici magari con tanto di batteria...

Esattamente: non si rispetta la musica pertanto non si rispetta la gente.

La tua ricerca dell'essenza attraverso la semplicità riesci a interpretarla come il frutto della natura umana che col tempo è destinata a recuperare una matura dimensione di 'fanciullino'?

Preferisco riferirmi all'immagine dei pellerossa americani per cui la vita dell'uomo si svolge disegnando un cerchio. E' diversa dall'idea che considera il tuo carattere come un'entità che continua a svilupparsi durante tutta la tua vita. Trovo più logico il concetto di varie fasi autonome in cui si compiono diversi viaggi attraverso una serie di modi d'esistere. Un viaggio poi non è qualitativamente migliore degli altri; ora io sono preoccupato dell'essenza; ieri non lo ero, e chissà se domani lo sarò ancora!?

Hai rimpianti per qualche viaggio passato?

Non mi piacerebbe vivere al condizionale ed una cosa è certa: se non fossi passato attraverso precedenti stadi probabilmente ora non mi troverei in questa fase. Conosco per esempio altre persone che hanno cominciato, all'opposto di me, con la musica tradizionale, convenzionale, o comunque semplice, e poi si sono proiettati verso un bisogno d'innovazione e di complessità.

Come commenti il progetto chiamato "The Last Nightingale" in relazione alla portata di una Band Aid?

Non vorrei contrastare la Band Aid per quanto riguarda la proporzione delle due operazioni, mentre cerco di fare una distinzione sul tipo di contenuto sociale. La lunga tradizione della carità verso il povero è una lunga tradizione del ricco; è un ideale molto nobile ma ciò per cui noi abbiamo cantato è il 'potere ai poveri', cercando di spezzare il comodo recipiente della carità. In politica la domanda chiave è 'chi detiene il potere?', e da lungo tempo il povero non ha questo potere; la sua posizione non mi sembra realmente migliorata. Non credo che ciò per cui abbiamo cantato possa essere supportato da qualche maggiore e importante uomo politico. Molte persone che sono felici di sentirsi dispiaciute per la gente del terzo mondo sono allo stesso tempo terrificate all'idea che questa gente possa maturare

un reale controllo della loro vita: ma solo perché questo potere potrebbe, un giorno, costituire una minaccia al 'nostro' potere.

Perché, a proposito dei minatori, il rock delle charts si è fatto sentire solo ai concerti, nei casi migliori, e non attraverso specifiche produzioni discografiche?

Penso che siano fieri di foraggiare i poveri. Ma per il povero, l'avere un lavoro sicuro, in modo da modificare la sua condizione, potrebbe innescare uno strano eco che arriverebbe a certe orecchie col significato di: "Ha troppo!".

In termini prioritari, tuttavia, deve essere buona cosa che la gente, quando allunga una mano al mondo, preferisca dedicarsi al vecchio mondo che non all'Occidente. Quella stessa gente ha visto che molte persone non hanno nemmeno quelle necessità di base che noi consideriamo scontate per vivere una vita dignitosa. Se l'enfasi può aiutare a far pensare ad una giusta politica sulla relazione ricco/povero, allora ben venga. Quando poi il tempo stringe è chiaro che se il denaro è diretto al bisogno è sempre una cosa positiva...

Alfreda: Mi è capitato di fare delle illustrazioni per un 'children book' destinato all'Etiopia. Dopo avere accettato ho scoperto che c'erano sessanta diverse persone che in qualche modo sostenevano il punto di vista di Margaret Thatcher: per incrementare le vendite del libro ho dovuto firmare un autografo sulla stessa pagina vicino alla firma del primo ministro. Ma in questo caso il fine giustifica i mezzi.

Robert: Allo stesso tempo però il governo sta stendendo un nuovo piano d'interventi per esportare tecnologie militari in Sud Africa; in altre parole sta incrementando lo stato di terrorismo bianco in quelle zone. Questo è il nocciolo della carità! Il problema è che si tratta di un espediente, parzialmente efficace, ma sempre molto limitato. Improvvisamente la compassione si spegne e spuntano, al suo posto, le macchine da guerra: e questo cambiamento avviene nelle medesime persone! Anche il papa, mentre prova dolore per il povero, vuole fatalisticamente che egli rimanga nella sua condizione di povero. *(Sono note le reazionarie posizioni Vaticane contro "La teoria della liberazione" in Africa e Sud America - n.d.d)*.



Nel tuo album c'è qualche testo particolare in cui credi si possa emblematizzare il tuo punto di vista politico?

"East Timor", perché anche in Indonesia esistono simili problemi. "East Timor" è una parte del mondo dove molte persone sono state fatte massacrare, e vengono massacrate tuttora con l'appoggio dell'Occidente. Ma quasi tutto l'album è una denuncia contro la distorsione dei metodi coi quali l'Occidente si affaccia verso il resto del mondo.

Come ti poni di fronte alla strategia della 'ripetizione' in musica?

La maggior parte della musica che preferisco contiene elementi ripetitivi; l'intero business della dance music - nel senso più ampio della parola - è basato sull'effetto accumulativo della ripetizione. Non c'è bisogno di teorie accademiche per giustificare come questa forma musicale primitiva sia diffusa un po' in tutte le parti della terra.

Con i Soft Machine c'era un pezzo chiamato "We Did it Again" in cui tentavamo la ripetizione della semplicità come accumulo e liberazione di forze molto forti. Chi fa nuova musica dovrebbe capire che non si tratta soltanto di creare centinaia di nuovi rumori quando si vuole produrre con originalità!

Ho ascoltato molta musica tribale nera ai tempi della mia batteria e la gente diceva che era molto semplice proprio perché ripetitiva. Ma quando si suonano delle linee ripetitive, minimali, ciò che si forma nella mente non appartiene alla categoria delle cose semplici. Nella testa cambia il modo di accostarsi all'ascolto anche se la materia d'ascolto resta fissa. Sono i diversi livelli di accumulazione che determinano diversi livelli di percezione e quindi di risposta. Così abbiamo sperimentato queste cose ripetendo per più di 150 volte la stessa frase. Allo stesso tempo c'erano molte correnti d'avanguardia europee che discutevano questi argomenti quando su altri livelli culturali, in molte diramazioni musicali folk, si operava con concetti analoghi da chissà quanti secoli.

E' stata una scelta personale quella di non chiamare nessun altro musicista per la realizzazione del nuovo album, o in realtà questi brani non hanno alcun bisogno di apporti esterni?

Diciamo che mi è parsa la via più conveniente per raggiungere l'obiettivo di semplicità che mi sono posto. In questo contesto un bassista non sarebbe stato migliore di una bass-line; mentre in "Strange Fruit' era esattamente il contrario.

Alfie: moglie, pittrice e...

Di solito, quando si progettano più copertine per uno stesso disco esistono motivi di mercato legati anche alle diverse culture dei paesi dove si vuole rivolgere la distribuzione. Per "Nothing Can Stop Us", uscito prima in Italia con una cover, poi in Inghilterra con un'altra, quali scelte di base ci sono state?

Alfreda: Dalla descrizione che mi hai fatto, e questa notizia mi risulta del tutto nuova, la copertina dell'edizione italiana è stata sicuramente ricavata da un quadretto che dipinsi a suo tempo per la rivista Gong: allora mi chiesero qualche disegno per corredare un servizio sui testi di Robert... Ma personalmente non ho autorizzato nessuno ad usare quelle cose, nemmeno tanto belle, per operazioni di questo tipo!

Di solito per il design di un disco di Bob, o mi limito alla sola scelta della cover, la cui immagine può anche essere un mio vecchio dipinto (Work in progress, Nothing can stop us), quando si tratta di un remake; oppure quando lui scrive i pezzi, come in "Rock Bottom", allora disegno qualcosa di specifico che tende ad integrare il suo lavoro con il mio. In "Shipbuilding", per esempio, ho scelto un quadro non mio perché mi sembrava l'immagine più adatta per quella canzone non sua. Il singolo poi è uscito con quattro differenti copertine corrispondenti a quattro parti dello stesso enorme 'mural'.

Le copertine di "Rock Bottom" e di "Ruth & Richard" sono nate da un'impressione generale delle rispettive produzioni?

No, direi piuttosto da impressioni relative ad un pezzo particolare: in "Rock Bottom", Sea Song, e in "Ruth & Richard", Muddy Mouth.

Robert: Vorrei aggiungere che noi due abbiamo in comune un concetto: la musica e le immagini possono anche essere abbastanza dissimili tra loro, ma ciò che può legarle è la parola: è il testo quindi che suggerisce un rapporto tra musica e immagine.

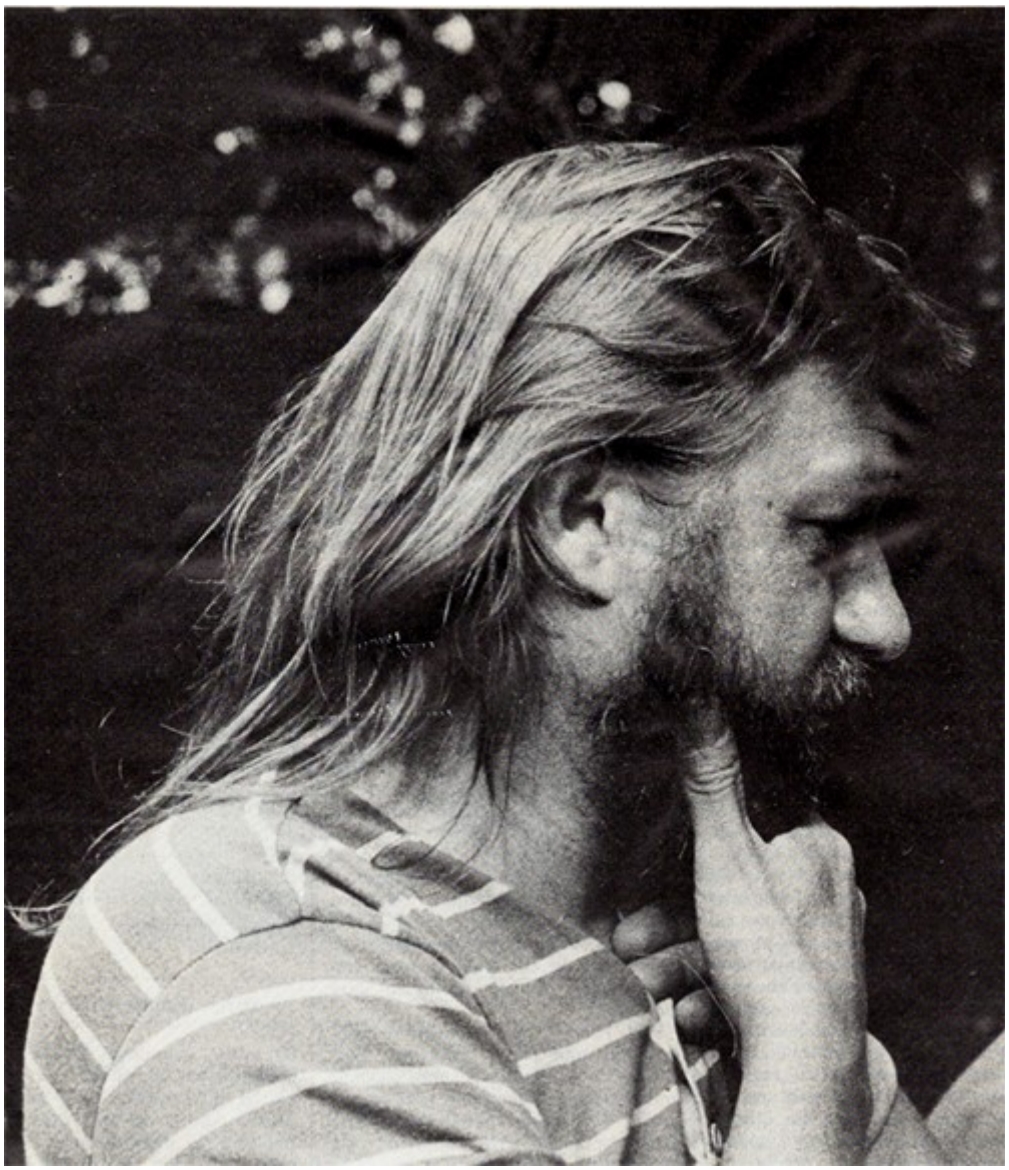
Alfreda: Non in "Work in Progress" comunque, dove lo stimolo è nato dalla musicalità del linguaggio sudamericano.

Come percepisci un'interpretazione grafica del dato sonoro al di là d'ogni funzione meramente pubblicitaria?

Alfreda: Sento di avere l'autorità per decorare il suo lavoro perché mi sento parte di esso...

Robert: Mentre lavoro Alfie conosce e partecipa alle mie canzoni per il semplice fatto che vive con me. Da qui nasce anche un legame con il testo: perché spesso le parole che canto provengono in buona parte dalle nostre conversazioni. Non esiste una distinzione di ruoli, lei un'artista ed io un musicista: come persone il nostro interesse è quello di svilupparci sempre più apertamente. Per cui esiste già una connessione umana prima ancora di quella artistica. L'una innesca l'altra automaticamente. Così scrivo cose che interessano entrambi. Ed Alfie conosce le mie canzoni non tanto perché viviamo sotto un unico tetto, ma perché chiede di vivere con esse.

Alfreda: Se per un pezzo di Bob dovesse intervenire qualcun'altro nella realizzazione grafica sarebbe un insulto: non credo proprio che altri possano averne il diritto...



> Zoom

Essendo una pittrice sei logicamente influenzata da uno stile 'grafico' piuttosto che da uno 'fotografico'. Esiste qualche altra ragione meno apparente di questa tua tendenza?

Alfreda: La fotografia non mi piace particolarmente. Generalmente intendo l'artwork in modo piuttosto astratto e credo che la musica di Robert abbia ben poco a che fare con un tipo di visualizzazione fotografica. Preferisco invece consolidarla come un 'child work'; quindi non abbastanza vecchia per avere dei rapporti con il medium fotografico.

Robert: Tra le cose che mi diversificano da molti altri 'rockers' c'è anche il rifiuto di progettarmi visualmente. Per loro il 'sembrare', l'apparire, fa parte dell'azione. Mentre per me ciò che è 'look' non rientra nell'espressione del mio 'act'. Anche perché non potrei sfruttare in nessun modo la mia somiglianza con una vecchia patata!

Il rock è costruito attorno ai bisogni e ai falsi bisogni del mondo giovanile. In questo momento stiamo discutendo sul contenuto dei dischi mentre spesso il rock come fenomeno si limita a sostanziare un discorso che è 'attorno' alla musica e che riduce il problema ad una rappresentazione di stili, mode; esprime il bisogno d'una immediatezza d'impatto la cui natura è tipicamente televisiva: così si aspira solo alla superficie degli oggetti, degli argomenti, dei problemi.

Alfreda: Impacchettare un disco di Bob secondo tecniche pubblicitarie che mirano ad un astuto graphic design, magari con costi di diverse centinaia di pounds, e con lo scopo di aiutarlo a vendere, sarebbe una menzogna. Perché attraverso un simile procedimento si infrangerebbe la sua personalità di 'amatore'. Lo invece mi sforzo di trasferire 'amichevolmente' e con maggior naturalezza possibile questa sua umana amatorialità così come cerco di evitare ogni tattica di marketing. Quando compose "Rock Bottom" era il periodo in cui le copertine spingevano molto l'immagine truccata, sensazionale, che doveva colpire lo sguardo a tutti i costi. E personalmente scelsi di oppormi alla tendenza "Hypnosis" con un semplicissimo disegno a matita, privo di colori, il cui sfondo bianco poteva essere 'completato' dalle impronte delle dita, più o meno sporche, che si sarebbero posate sulla copertina. Il rapporto di fruizione con l'immagine non era quindi passivo perché in quel modo l'ascoltatore avrebbe depositato delle 'tracce' personali, scrivendo una storia del contatto, della manipolazione, sin dal momento dell'acquisto. Inoltre non vi erano espressi dei legami vincolanti al trend culturale di quel periodo: e oggi, a dieci anni di distanza, si può verificare maggiormente la sua totale estraneità temporale, la sua non databilità. In questo senso, per esempio, i dischi dei Soft Machine erano terribili in quei moduli tipicamente sixties!

E a proposito delle covers di "Work in Progress" e "82-84"?

Alfreda: La prima è stata combinata con la musica di "Yolanda" e...

Robert: A dire la verità quel disco doveva intitolarsi "South of the Border" per significare il confine del nuovo gruppo di canzoni...

Alfreda: Per la raccolta "82-84" volli rappresentare una bandiera rossa stretta in mano da un omino. Con assoluta libertà. Ma quando la casa discografica americana ricevette il materiale qualcuno mi telefonò dicendomi: "Noi crediamo che questa copertina non rifletta il prodotto: è un disegno da dipartimento per l'infanzia!" Poi il tipo s'innervosì quando si accorse che ero proprio la moglie di Wyatt. Allora Jeff Travis sistemò la faccenda comunicando che se non avessero utilizzato quel disegno sarebbe saltato tutto il progetto.

Robert: Tra l'altro hanno scelto di pubblicare i testi ma con un sacco di errori. Ho quindi spedito gli originali e sto aspettando ancora adesso di vederli corretti. Ma sai, a volte trovo piuttosto discutibile separare il testo dalla musica. Se vuoi fare delle affermazioni piuttosto dure in una canzone, e realizzare ciò che la gente si aspetta, dovresti fare anche una musica dura: il punk per esempio era una musica arrabbiata, aveva liriche arrabbiate ed una musica veloce: con una forte connessione interna, 'naturale' e 'logica', tra le due parti in gioco. La mia esperienza con la musica rivoluzionaria che si pratica intorno al mondo m'insegna che i rapporti non sono sempre così semplificati. E infatti alcune delle più efficaci e forti canzoni rivoluzionarie latino-americane hanno un sound molto romantico, soft; la stessa cosa vale anche per le canzoni degli stati sudafricani. Mentre in una situazione opposta puoi trovare un album di una rock band suonare in modo violento, provocatore: ma con lo stesso contenuto di una carriola zeppa di dolce cioccolato, in termini di messaggio! Ecco perché mi piace giocare la partita con questa 'contraddizione', allo stesso modo di Alfie.

Il caso della copertina per il disco americano è chiaramente un buon esempio: non era certo il quadro che si aspettavano di trovare a fianco di Biko e Victor Jara quello di Alfie! Non era una tipica immagine tragica! Ma è attraverso una combinazione inattesa delle forme e non per questo meno vera, che si crea una sfida del contenuto.

Se ci fosse stata una distribuzione del disco in Unione Sovietica avresti colorato con la stessa ironia una bandiera a stelle e strisce?

Alfreda: No, sono da una parte sola.

Per concludere uno sguardo al vostro ultimo lavoro...

Alfreda: Quando i bambini 'cockney' vedono qualcuno con un cappello in testa intonano cantilene del tipo: "I've Got an Hat But It's Not Like that old Rottenhat". E' un lazzo dialettale.. il titolo.

Non so cosa la copertina voglia rappresentare, essere: è qualcosa di completamente astratto e si riferisce piuttosto agli argomenti trattati nel disco, in una parola sola al mondo. Dovrebbe avere una chiave di lettura internazionale, come una sorta di esperanto visivo.

Robert: Alfie mi ha raccontato di questa espressione cockney e me ne sono subito innamorato; anche se non saprei spiegarti il perché. Allo stesso modo di "Rock Bottom" l'influenza del pittore sul musicista è anche nel titolo. Quando scrivo musica si creano degli elementi visivi nella mia mente, dei 'paesaggi': e se ascolti il disco senza ascoltare le parole puoi anche pensare che non sia cambiato molto nella mia musica, nelle atmosfere, in tutti questi anni; ma sarebbe solo un'illusione: perché le liriche non sono più irreali, sognanti e fantastiche.

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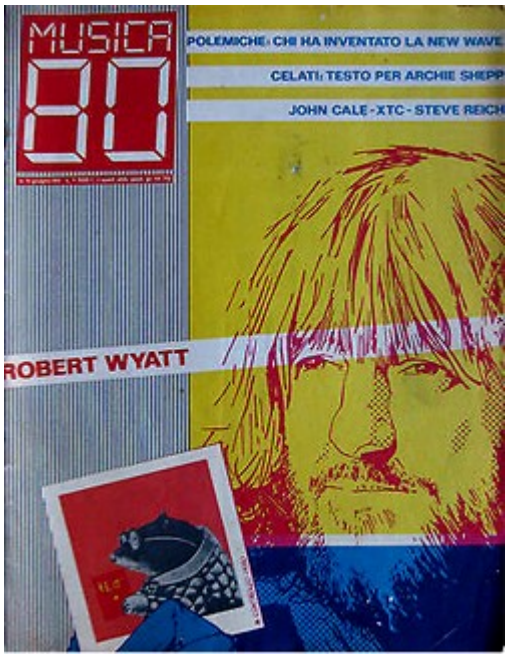
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Wyatt a uso dei giovinetti - Musica 80 - N. 5 - Giugno 1980



Come un piccolo Duchamp di Canterbury ha preso la tessera del P.C. d'Inghilterra Il rock guantanamerico



Ritorna il «morbido macchinista»

Wyatt a uso dei giovinetti

1. Tradurre Wyatt per i più giovani, ecco un buon «fioretto» per il mese mariano. Quel nome tra gli altri del catalogo Rough Trade potrebbe ingenerare degli equivoci. Un **neorocker** del suburbio londinese, con la chioma al sapor di colla e le mani lunghe acute, unghie laccate di metallo? O proprio lui (qualcuno pescherà il nome in fondo alla memoria), lui il «macchinista» che torna e, per ingraziarsi le folle, veste giubboni pesanti e striscia i capelli di violenza?

Wyatt è altro. Non potremmo giurare di averlo visto tra rue des Écoles e il Boulevard di Sebastopoli, un giorno di maggio di dodici anni fa; ma era a Ibiza certamente, in epoche non sospette, e a Cannes quando si vagheggiò una Libera Repubblica del Sole, altro modo di far «controcultura», e ad Amsterdam e a Londra ai tempi della luce in faccia a quattro giovani sulla pedana del Marquee (Pink Floyd). Quel che potrebbe bastare a taluni per dirlo: «un reduce». E a Canterbury, primi anni '60, lui stesso confessò certe feste di musica «proibita», sedute d'ascolto per gustar Coleman e i rhythmandbluesici, e metterli poi in pratica, e di adunate simili oggi non se ne fa più. Si cerchi di capire. Quello che noi definimmo, non senza azzardo, «un piccolo Duchamp del sessantotto britannico», quello suonava la batteria e cantava e suonava, ma non si sarebbe mai detto musicista e basta, mai trincerato dietro il diritto/dovere di fare intrattenimento. Quel nome rubato a Burroughs, **The Soft Machine**, e una celebre introduzione «patafisica», dunque Jarry, e un flirt giovanile con la «coda» di Picasso, e il Terry Riley sospeso tra le «note circolari» di **Facelift**, e il succo di Gil Evans maliziosamente spillato **in fondo all'orecchio**; piccoli segni che avvisavano di una elettrica curiosità, disponibili tutti, loro e gli altri di quella che fu la **swingin' London**, a uscir dalla pigrizia & comodità, a cercare, a dir problemi, a far cultura, dunque, dolce utopia cui va la nostra tenerezza d'oggi.



L'impegno l'impegno, ma in Wyatt, a trovarlo, devi munirti di arnesi insoliti, e lasciarti andare, e accettar la sorpresa; sopra tutto, una effervescente ironia che tramuta anche la più cupa delle meditazioni, l'affanno beckettiano di **Signed Curtain** («This is the first verse and this is the chorus. Or perhaps it's the bridge. And this is the second verse, second verse. It could be the last verse. It's probably the last one») che si tira su per i capelli, un «dischetto rosso» che placa subito il suo probabile marxismo per uno straordinario colloquio con Dio, «scusami perché sono ubriaco», la batteria con la bocca di **Las Vegas Tango**, i rumori rumori rumori di **Moon In June**, la Macchina Morbida che diventa Molle, **mole**, talpa, la **canzone d'amor** (Caroline!) che si ama o si spregia o infine che? Il gioco rimanda alla vita, il gioco è la vita; al pari del Dingo Allen, suo vecchio compagno d'armi, Wyatt fa spettacolo coi desideri e con gli affanni, usando il rock come fatidica chiave per «cifrare» la vita di ogni giorno, con quanta piccola terapeutica «magia».

Suonava la batteria, quel tale, e da buon «fornaio» di Canterbury sapeva le dosi di zucchero per tramutare in dolce lo stile degli amati maestri **black**. Ricami in punta di bacchetta, mano leggera leggerissima, il metallo dei piatti più che la pelle tesa dei tamburi; di quel suo stile «liquido» son debitori una intera generazione, i Chris Cutler e Laurie Allan e Pip Pyle consegnati alla storia rock. Quando non poté più battere, ritrovò gusto nel canto: e anche lì, un singolare, personalissimo stile, una «voce qualunque» che t'arruffava i sentimenti, un soffio stillante capriccio, e malinconia, e mistero, e per quella ricchezza, forse, suonava fragile, sul punto sempre d'incrinarsi, e ti veniva di accompagnarlo, con affetto e speranza.

Ricordo una sera a Parigi, maggio del 1975, un teatro di stucchi e frivolezze sui Campi Elisi. Wyatt provava a farsi crescere una seconda pelle; qualche mese prima, a Londra, al Drury Lane, aveva fatto la sua discreta **rentrée**, cantando suonando per la prima volta dopo il fatidico incidente. Fu bello rivederlo in forma: un applauso scrosciante quando entrò, imbarazzato, su sedia a rotelle, su un palcoscenico addobbato come un salotto, paralumi e sedie di paglia; poi ritrovare quella voce che non smetteva d'essere intrigante, di interrogare maliziosamente la vita, in cerca di **pathos** per contraddirlo subito, con uno scoppio di risa. Ultimi giorni di Canterbury; decidemmo quella sera di conservare un ritaglio d'amore per il musicista comunque fossero poi andate le cose, qualunque sorte potesse toccare ai «surrealpasticcieri» pronipoti di Chaucer.

2. Scene dalla vita dell'artista.

Un giorno del 1966, al Dreamland di Margate, a un «concorso per voci nuove» organizzato da Radio Caroline. Richard Coughlan si rifiuta di prender posto alla batteria e i Machine, in quattro, affidano le loro chances a un determinatissimo Wyatt. Le sue parole & musica cucinano un aggressivo menù: **You Put A Spell On You** , **Sunny**, **Papa's Got A Brand**

New Bag. Vincono.

Al Technicolor Dream, aprile del 1967, la grande festa della psichedelia londinese. I Machine sono la grande attrazione. In un vortice di luci/profumo di canapa, i quattro si dispongono sul palco: Wyatt, capelli lunghissimi, dietro la batteria; Ratledge, alto e sinistro, all'organo elettrico; Ayers, belletto sulle guance, cappello da **cowboy** sormontato da due alette metalliche, al microfono; Allen con chitarra, volto «patafisico» e casco da minatore, con luce accesa.



Il Dottar Faustroll in persona si scomoda per Wyatt, Ratledge e Ayers, «piccoli figli Ubu». A loro va l'**Ordre de la Grande Gidouille**, massima onorificenza patafisica, ottima insegna inutile che non toccherà ad alcun altra «stella» della musica rock. È il 1969, buon auspicio per gli anni migliori della Macchina. Una festa a Maida Vale, il primo di giugno 1973. Wyatt, ubriaco, si lascia andare da un balcone procurandosi fratture in tutto il corpo. Resta paralizzato, costretto a una sedia a rotelle.

All'ospedale di Stoke Mandeville, per sei mesi, un **buen retiro** assai meno confortevole di quello dylaniano a Big Pink. Wyatt rinuncia a rifondare i Matching Mole, com'era nelle intenzioni, e si organizza da solo. Scrive **Rock Bottom**.

1976. I fans che già han trasalito per quel singolare revival (**I'm A Believer**!) non hanno più notizie. Una rivistina londinese, **Liquorice**, rintraccia l'artista e gli fa esplicita richiesta di un articolo. Wyatt invia un «optimistic diary» dove scrupolosamente passa sotto silenzio la musica: parla di **Amnesty International**, della **Real Società per la Difesa degli Uccelli**, delle tribù Seminole in America, dell'aumento del Prodotto Nazionale Lordo della Cecoslovacchia.

3. Non sapresti dire se l'umiltà del nuovo Wyatt discenda da una qual virtù musiliana del personaggio, sfuggita a indagini passate, o sia conseguenza di quel mai risolto conflitto di cui dice **Gloria Gloom**, «se più importante far musica o combattere per la rivoluzione socialista». Comunque sia, l'artista degli Ottanta rinuncia a ogni ambizione/progetto in tema di «nuova architettura musicale» e riscopre il piacere di fare intrattenimento, col gusto curioso, peraltro, che il carattere gli impone. D'ora innanzi, saranno tante **I'm A Believer** della nostalgia e della tenerezza, primitivo alfabeto della comunicazione musicale, o «canzoni popolari», condite appena di malizia, per illustrare il **comunismo** che l'artista serba gelosamente; il tutto nella forma semplice del 45 giri, che i tempi del «lungo respiro» sono terminati forse con Ruth e Richard. Wyatt ha già in mente una collana: **Guantanamera**, il canto **indio** di Pete Seeger che furoreggiò nei primi '60, **Stalin Wasn't Stallin'**, una vecchia ballata del Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet, **Strange Fruit**, un «jazz caldo» della Billie Holiday, addirittura **At Last I Am Free**, recentissimo frutto della vendemmia **disco**, a firma degli Chic. Li pubblicherà col tempo, riunendoli magari in un **Paper Bag**, alla maniera del metallico **box** di Johnny Lydon. Nei ritagli di tempo, un occhio anche al catalogo Rough Trade, accudendo a qualcuno di quei **new rockers**; sta per uscire l'album d'esordio degli Scritti Politti, di cui Wyatt è oggi produttore.

(Immaginiamo una serena maturità per l'artista - la casa di Twickenham ben ordinata, l'arredo discreto, le tinte tenui, come in certe tempere dell'amico Peter Schmidt. Un grande

quaderno, sullo scrittoio, conterrà **la musica**; fogli e fogli di vecchie canzoni, riportate con grafia semplice, linda, i Drifters dei diciott'anni, Redding e Sam & Dave, un Manfred Mann ricordato a fatica, **Feelin 'Reelin Squeelin'** e altre melodie «aliene». Solfeggio e canto, tutte le mattine, a un vecchio pianoforte verticale. «Jogging spirituale», è possibile?, per impazzire con garbo, che è forse quello che i tempi richiedono).

Riccardo Bertoncelli

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Robert Wyatt - L'uomo venuto dal presente - Muzak 8 - Dicembre 1975



Robert Wyatt

L'uomo venuto dal presente

Voce, strumenti a fiato e tastiera. Ogni imprevisto, anche l'incidente che gli ha tolto l'uso della gambe, è realtà da capire e esprimere. Questa la ricchezza di Robert Wyatt

Wyatt è un personaggio chiave nella musica britannica: ha concorso più volte a innovarla, prima quale membro del gruppo Soft Machine, poi con un album « solo », End of an Ear. Le sue composizioni più note di di questo primo periodo — Save Yourself, Moon in June della mente umana », veno altrettanti punti fermi nell'evoluzione del pop inglese.

Se si avverte una « proiezione, Las Vegas Tango — sodi paura, Wyatt non è presente. Se ci sono concetti, angoscia del non provato, canoni e pregiudizi in un gruppo musicale, Wyatt non ci suonerà mai, né mai li ascolterà. Intende sottolinearlo: « Io odio le cose inesistenti e guardo avanti, indietro, di fianco e sotto di me, come se mi trovassi immerso in una sfera ».

Nel 72, dopo un bel concerto al King's Cross Cinema da mezzanotte alle due, disse a proposito: « Io credo nel reale, in tutto ciò che esiste, nel conoscibile e nell'inconoscibile. Voglio provare ad esprimerlo con un solo tocco di bacchetta sulle pelli ». Wyatt, con il suo gruppo Matching Mole, viveva nel presente.

La suite incise come Instant Pussy-Signed Curtain-Part of the Dance sul primo album dei Matching Mole è la prima chiara anticipazione del Wyatt attuale. Dal vivo, egli la svolge in due ore di suoni improvvisati e canta « questa è la prima strofa, questa è la seconda strofa, questo è il ritornello, o forse un passaggio, o qualsiasi altra parte della canzone che sto cantando » su una base totalmente informale, con il tempo che slitta e segue un ordine diverso dai 7/4 o 13/8 codificati. "



Robert Wyatt al Muzakconcerto

Vengono dalla suite gli spunti per il secondo « The little red Record », che presenta Wyatt sempre più ironico ed incomprensibile a chi tenta di renderlo « personaggio del pop ». In realtà lo svolgimento è ben misurato, quasi previsto, più costruito della media usuale. Solo a tratti l'opera avrà seguito. Il Wyatt di oggi ha lasciato ad altri quel modo di comunicare, s'è rimesso da un incidente che gli ha impedito l'uso sciolto della batteria. Le nuove opere hanno centro nella sua voce, in strumenti a fiato e a tastiera. Egli ha ancora una forma coraggiosa d'esprimersi se non altro perché ha pur l'accortezza di immaginare ogni imprevisto come fattivo ed accettarlo come parte integrante della propria evoluzione musicale: « Se avessi continuato nel ruolo di batterista / cantante, Rock Bottom non sarebbe mai uscito dalla mia mente. Ho risolto logicamente anni di frustrazione e di ricerca in buona parte frenata da cause esterne... Con Rock Bottom ho capito il lavoro che ho da svolgere, sono musicista e non più cantante disoccupato ».

Le sue parole sanno di convinzione, evitano in ogni modo la disfatta. Rock Bottom è un altro atto essenziale al progresso della musica contemporanea. Vogliamo sottolineare l'importanza del Wyatt più recente, l'uomo che ha stima incondizionata per il gruppo Henry Cow, l'autore di Ruth is stranger than Richard, il collaboratore di Carla Bley, Mike Mantler e Edward Gorey in un lavoro di prossima pubblicazione: egli si è staccato dalla pura ricerca per adeguarsi a canoni da lui sperimentati. Alle sonorità inusuali preferisce comunque il timbro di un pianoforte, segno di maturità acquisita, all'impazienza di progredire sostituisce una seria applicazione. Ci si trova di fronte a un Wyatt costante, almeno nella scelta dei metodi da adottare. Egli ha svolto le intuizioni geniali connesse al « momento » e le ha fatte logica. La sua musica s'è rivolta di conseguenza: dal jazz e dal pop seguita a trarre il proprio linguaggio pur mantenendosi al di fuori di essi.

Questo non significa indecisione, ma reale impegno, impossibilità da parte di Wyatt di rimaner legato all'uno o all'altro aspetto musicale, sia nella forma che nei contenuti che man mano gli si crede di attribuire con esattezza. Ruth is stranger than Richard è opera di non minor valore delle altre e la propria intima coerenza è effettivamente più sottile, più difficile da cogliere.

Fra le parti di pianoforte e voce, fra un'indicativa Song for Che scritta dal jazzman Charlie Haden per la sua Liberation Music Orchestra, fra Solar Flares ed un brano ispirato dal compositore Offenbach, si coglie la volontà di una posizione intellettuale.

Non più il Wyatt « alla ricerca di una nuova terra », dunque anche se, di tanto in tanto, ama ancor la beffa e la dissacrazione, ama ancora distruggere e osservare senza aver voglia di costruire.

Mauro Radice



Note su Robert Wyatt

Alcuni accenni sulla vita di Wyatt: nel 1963 inizia con i Wilde Flowers quel movimento di ricerca musicale che viene erroneamente definito «scuola di Canterbury », sperimenta la simbiosi fra jazz, musica elettronica e concreta, elabora studi sul be bop di Thelonius Monk e Charlie Parker in particolare, sulla possibile compenetrazione della musica nel colore e da ultimo nella luce (« flusso d'energia immateriale », nelle sue parole), sulla conseguente ricezione e risposta immediata del pubblico. Dal 1967 suona con la Soft Machine in centri di ricerca, in galleria d'arte, accompagna in tournée Jimi Hendrix e si associa nell'esperimento visivo a Mark Boy le, creando uno spettacolo « totale » chiamato Sensual Laboratory.

I tempi del « diverso a tutti i costi » hanno punto nel 1967 all'avvenimento globale di Saint Tropez. Ma la ricerca di uno sbocco musicale oltre il « jazz » e il « country rock », se con i termini intendiamo l'aspettare canonizzato di tali « generi », è appena iniziata. E Bob Wyatt sarà un passo avanti agli altri. Poco prima di collaborare al quarto album della Soft Machine, Wyatt realizza da titolare End of an Ear, sul quale appare una autodefinizione: « Cantante di pop disoccupato ». Sono presenti all'incisione amici di Canterbury e svariati nomi del jazz inglese, fra cui Phil Miller e Nick Evans. Alla fine del 71, Wyatt forma Matching Mole, con i quali incide due LP. Il gruppo, ad organico aperto, vede inizialmente l'apporto di David Sinclair alle tastiere, poi sostituito

da Dave Me Rae,

Bill Me Cormick al basso e Phil Miller alla chitarra. Appena iniziata la stesura del terzo album, con Gary Windo al sax e Francis Monkman a chitarra e sintetizzatori, Wyatt cade dal balcone di una villa, perdendo quasi completamente l'uso delle gambe. Il Wyatt di ora è diverso, più maturo, evoluto. Non sta a noi entrare in merito alla sua personalità, non abbiamo né il diritto né la pretesa di farlo. Soltanto che la sua opera, dall'angoscia intellettuale degli inizi, si è trasformata. Wyatt è consapevole del suo stato, e da tale continuerà a comporre e a suonare. E' ancora fra i massimi artisti contemporanei in grado di comunicare alle masse, anche se l'ultimo album da titolare, Ruth is stranger than Richard, appare come il più sofferto e radicale dell'intera sua produzione.

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Robert Wyatt - Satori in Londra - Ciao 2001 - N. 24 - 22 Giugno 1975

"SATORI" A LONDRA



> Zoom

"Satori" a Londra

Esce in questi giorni "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", il nuovo album di Robert Wyatt che vede la partecipazione di Fred Frith, Mongesi Feza, Gary Windo, Eno, Laurie Allan...

Manuel Insolera ne delinea i caratteri musicali, mentre Daniel Caroli incontra Robert, parlatore vivace, ma distratto, nella sua splendida abitazione londinese. Esclusivo.

INTERVISTA SUSSURRATA

LONDRA

Giro per Londra in uno splendido pomeriggio quasi estivo, fino ad arrivare al distretto residenziale di Richmond, poco più in là, a Twickenham, c'è la splendida abitazione di Robert Wyatt. Sono piuttosto stupito: come può un musicista che non ha mai conosciuto grandi successi discografici e che da quasi due anni è paralizzato (dopo una rovinosa caduta dal quarto piano di una casa di Maida Vale, durante un party scatenato) permettersi un simile lusso? Più tardi verrà a sapere, da gente ben informata, che l'edificio è stato donato a Robert, dopo l'incidente, da un'ammiratrice, l'attrice Julie Christie.

Avevo già incontrato l'ex Soft Machine, ex Matching Mole eccetera alcuni giorni prima, presso gli uffici della Virgin: ma era già tardi e c'eravamo limitati a due chiacchiere convenzionali in un pub (« Che confusione qui a Portobello Road! Sono mesi che non esco di casa, e penso che non mi muoverà da Twickenham ancora per parecchio tempo, dopo l'esperienza di oggi »), davanti a una birra, accordandoci per l'appuntamento.

Mi aveva fatto un certo effetto veder quest'uomo, evidentemente provvisto di notevole forza interiore, inchiodato su una sedia a rotelle; ma poi, conversando con lui, m'ero reso conto che Robert riusciva a non farsene un problema.

E' lui infatti che viene ad aprirci e porta poi del té, dopo averci fatto accomodare nella « living room » ma Alfie, la moglie inseparabile, resta sempre nei dintorni per dare, se necessario, una mano.

La conversazione dura oltre un'ora, ed è molto interessante perché Wyatt si rivela un abile e vivace parlatore, talora distratto ma sempre spontaneo, che entra subito nel vivo del discorso: « Non mi sento tenuto a fingere di amare, o di suonare, il rock & roll. Questo non perché io mi consideri vecchio: ho trent'anni, ma mi ritengo ancora un adolescente, dato che ho in testa una strana idea seconde cui raggiungerò una vera maturità soltanto a cinquantacinque anni. Lo dico perché le uniche cose che io riesca a sentire con piena partecipazione sono i capolavori di grandi jazzmen come Elvin Jones, Charlie Mingus, Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gilespie, Sonny Rollins. Si, anche Pharaoh Sanders e Don Cherry, ma non mi prendono molto i miei amici Gary Windo e Mongezi Feza però sono stati parecchio influenzati da loro. Quanto alla Mahavishnu Orchestra e cose del genere, mi pare siano cosi dominate dal virtuosismo, dall'abilità manuale, che finiscono per ridursi ad un prodotto per « teen-ager » (come negli anni '60 le storie su Alvin Lee, la chitarra più veloce, o su chi faceva il pezzo più lungo e sciocchezze del genere). Intendiamoci, il rock non mi dispiace, ma trovo soddisfazione solo nei classici del jazz inoltre sono un fan degli Henry Cow, particolarmente di Tim Hodgkinson e di Fred Frith ».



Arriviamo, quindi, al nuovo lavoro: « Questo nuovo LP è stato realizzato molto in fretta, concedendo quindi un ampio margine alla spontaneità. Non mi sono preoccupato di stare a controllare il lavoro dei musicisti, tutta gente per cui nutro la massima stima. Naturalmente però certe scelte sono mie: ad esempio, ci sono ancor meno chitarre che in "Rock Bottom" (per un motivo ben preciso: le sonorità di questo strumento — sia elettrico sia acustico — mi sono venute a noia) mentre hanno un notevole risalto il pianoforte, il cui suono attualmente mi affascina, e i sassofoni di Gary Windo e del pakistano George Kahn. Altri strumentisti il cui contributo è stato determinante: l'ex Gong Laurie Allan (batteria), l'ex Matching Mole Bill McCormick (basso) e il trombettista Mongezi Feza, che già era apparso in "Rock Bottom". Mongezi era impegnato in una tournée proprio durante il periodo delle registrazioni, ma siamo riusciti ugualmente a farlo intervenire per realizzare un pezzo con lui, una sua composizione. In un paio di brani c'è Fred Frith, che compare curiosamente come pianista e cantante. E poi Eno è stato molto d'aiuto, non solo come strumentista: abbiamo usato le sue carte, le "Oblique Strategies", per risolvere certi problemi, e hanno funzionato bene; Eno è un gran personaggio, veramente intelligente e sensibile, mi piace lavorare con lui.

« Non sono mai stato molto entusiasta della scena "live", ma adesso mi sento un po'

frustrato per il fatto di essere soltanto un artista discografico. Questo crea una certa tensione, che si risolve per me proprio nel lavoro in studio. Registrare sta diventando per me una passione: quando compongo, penso in termini di combinazioni di strumenti, di sonorità. Naturalmente, anche se cerco di indovinare prima cosa sarà più utile, facendo in un certo senso una programmazione, so benissimo che le sfumature migliori sono poi quelle che vengono fuori inattese proprio mentre si stanno realizzando i pezzi. Il fatto è che mi sono accorto che lo studio di registrazione è uno strumento di per sé, che bisogna saper usare per i propri fini (non è una gran scoperta, lo so, Phil Spector c'era già arrivato più di dieci anni fa): purtroppo, è uno strumento molto costoso e quindi non lo si può sfruttare come si vorrebbe. Avendo il tempo necessario, sarebbe possibile fare cose incredibili: me ne sono accorto lavorando sui missaggi di questo album; certi brani hanno assunto una coloritura imprevista e molto più significativa semplicemente perché abbiamo dato più volume a uno strumento piuttosto che a un altro, o perché abbiamo accostato due basi registrate indipendentemente. Non fraintendermi, però: mi guardo bene dal dare eccessivo peso all'aspetto tecnico. Per me, fondamento della musica è l'intuizione: l'intelletto deve restare in funzione subordinata, anche perché non credo che sia in grado di seguire effettivamente quello che succede quando si suona (beh, parlo di musica ad un certo livello, naturalmente) »

Riferisco a Robert alcune affermazioni di Kevin Ayers sui Soft Machine: la tensione che esisteva tra i vari componenti, la delusione di non aver raggiunto i risultati che la formazione prometteva. « Tensione? Avrebbe potuto dirti chiaro e tondo che si litigava tutto il tempo. Per me in particolare é stato duro il periodo prima della mia uscita, con Ratledge e Hopper che avevano creato in me un complesso d'inferiorità con le loro arie da intellettuali e l'apparente disinteresse in ciò che proponevo io. Ma francamente preferisco non parlare di queste faccende ».



Gli chiedo allora di dirmi qualcosa sui suoi progetti immediati: « Dovrei fare dei concerti a Londra e a Parigi con gli Henry Cow le prove inizieranno nei prossimi giorni. Nel frattempo sto completando delle registrazioni con Ivo Cutler. Poi, a più lunga scadenza, mi attende un bel periodo di riposo in campagna, presso amici. Quanto a presentare dal vivo il materiale di "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", ci sono varie difficoltà: la mia scarsa mobilità, innanzitutto, poi il problema di riunire musicisti occupati con attività personali, e infine la questione di ottenere in concerto la stessa resa che su disco: in studio per esempio puoi usare un accompagnamento ad alto volume su cui viene inserita una parte vocale appena sussurrata. Come si può fare una cosa del genere "live"? Nessuno sentirebbe il canto. Insomma, per ora non si parla di tournée promozionali o cose del genere ».

Un vero peccato.

Daniele Caroli



ANCORA IL CANTO DELLA MENTE

La grave sciagura che ha reso Robert Wyatt paralizzato per sempre, ha operato anche un miracolo positivo: e cioè che la produzione di Robert, prima cosi rara, è andata di colpo aumentando E questo. è da ritenere, soprattutto perché l'immobilità forzata si sta rivelando per Robert un motivo di calma, di introspezione, addirittura, anche se sembra assurdo, di serenità.

La serenità sconvolgente di Wyatt si avvicina di molto al « satori » Zen, all'illuminazione, alla comprensione che nulla è comprensibile, che si acquisisce soltanto quando si è tutto compreso. Di pari passo, l'umorismo (caratteristica fondamentale di tutta l'arte e di tutto « l'essere » wyattiano, sia prima che dopo la disgrazia) è il retaggio di derivazione Dada, di cui Robert si fà incarnazione vivente oggi, a cinquant'anni dalla precoce e volontaria morte di uno dei movimenti culturali più vitali e rivoluzionari del nostro secolo, che ci ha donato artisti del calibro di Erik Satie nella musica, Louis Aragon e Tristan Tzara nella letteratura, Francis Picabia e Max Ernst nella pittura e l'arte grafica, volendo citare soltanto pochissimi nomi.

Se è vero (ed e vero) che Dada fu soprattutto una forma dello spirito, se è vero, come è vero, che il Satori zen e una metamorfosi dello spirito, se infine è vero, (come è vero) che queste due esperienze sono alla base dell'arte e dell'essere di Wyatt, allora possiamo affermare per lo meno due cose: che la musica di Robert Wyatt è musica spirituale (o « canto della mente », se preferite una terminologia laica): e che tra l'arte e la vita di Robert non c'è alcuna differenza, essendo l'arte la sua vita, e la sua vita l'arte. La terza osservazione, che si evince da tutto il discorso, è che Robert Wyatt è un artista del nostro tempo, non più appartenente soltanto alle semplici pastoie di una pretesa « cultura pop », ma più generalmente appartenente alla cultura senza altre aggettivazioni.

Detto questo, è detto tutto. L'ultimissimo album di Wyatt, « Ruth is stranger than Richard » appena uscito in Inghilterra, è una gemma ineguagliabile, che completa il discorso del precedente, altrettanto splendido, « Rock bottom », e più in generale di tutto l'itinerario wyattiano.

Da un punto di vista strettamente musicale, si potrebbe dire che il « canto della mente », in « Rock bottom » strutturato principalmente sulle tastiere, qui si arricchisce di una dimensione fiatistica, di una tecnica jazzata, che però trascendono il jazz, si astrattizzano, diventano pura e smaterializzata componente del « canto ». E in più, la voce insuperabile, sfasata, magica di Robert e in più, l'apporto creativo e strumentale della gente del calibro di Frith (degli Henry Cow), dei fiatisti Mongesi Feza, Gary Windo e Nisar Ahmad Khan, del « genio elettronico » Eno, di Laurie Allan e Bill McCormick rispettivamente alla batteria e al basso.

Per quanto riguarda lo spirito del disco, rivedetevi tutto quanto si è detto più sopra: al di là rimane l'emozione pura, l'estasi della contemplazione: situazioni spirituali (mentali), queste, indescrivibili, ineffabili : il Bello è tutto ciò che ci fa piangere mentre vorremmo ridere, e ridere mentre vorremmo piangere.

Manuel Insolera

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Muzakoncerto - Muzak 4 - Luglio 1975



Muzakoncerto

Ph. Piero Togni

Eravamo 50 mila, niente biglietto, nienle cancelli niente polizia: non è un sogno di socialismo, ma è già molto.

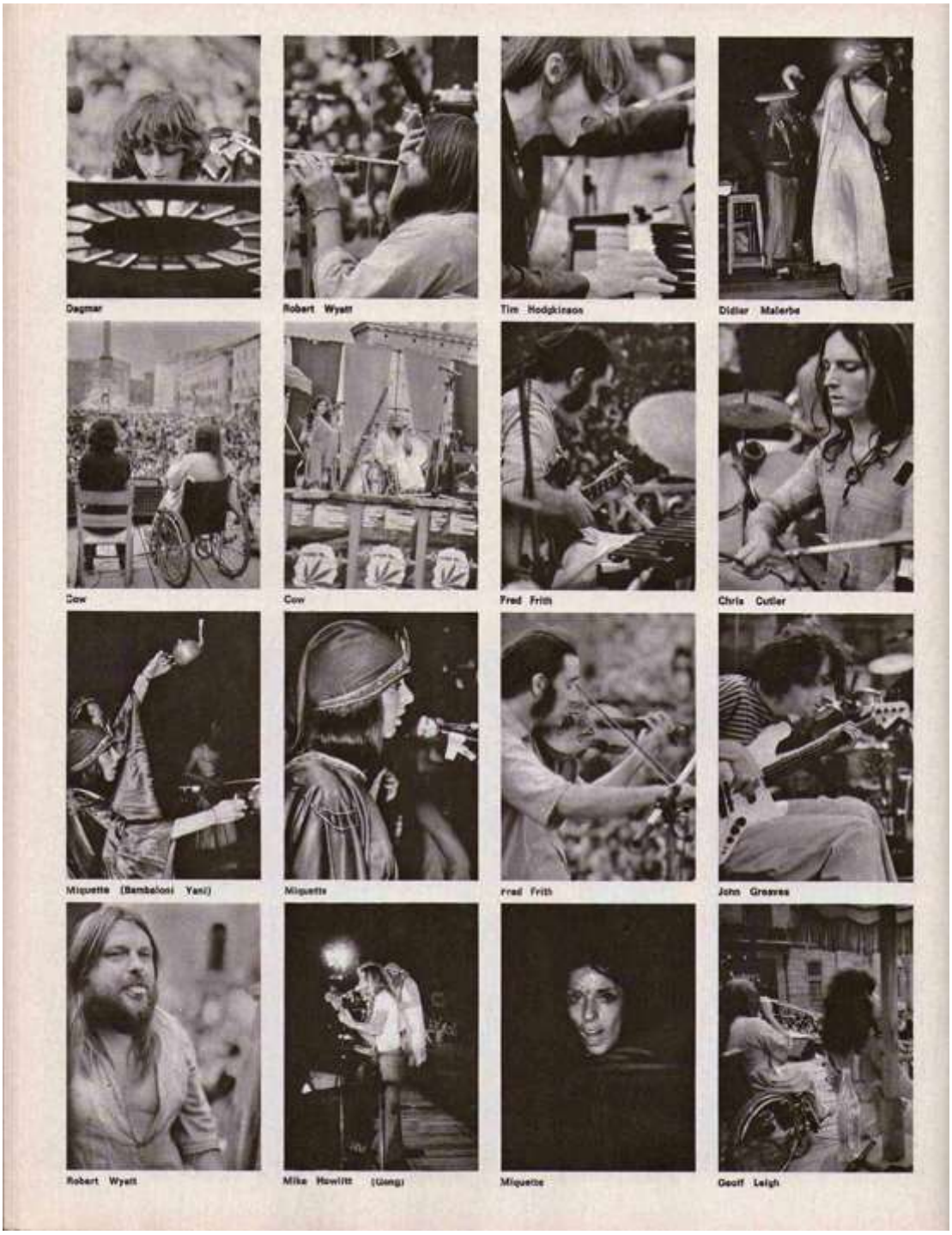


Robert Wyatt — Il manifesto del Concerto - Design Ettore Vitale — I 50.000 di p.zza Navona

> Zoom

Piazza Navona, 27 giugno: una giornata memorabile, lo diciamo senza paura. Per Roma, per tutto il movimento, per là cultura di tipo nuovo che vogliamo costruire. 40-50 mila giovani, venuti un po' da tutta Italia certo per ascoltare tre complessi di prestigio, ma anche per lottare, per. esprimere la loro solidarietà alla nostra iniziativa di una campagna nazionale per la depenaliazzione della marijuana.

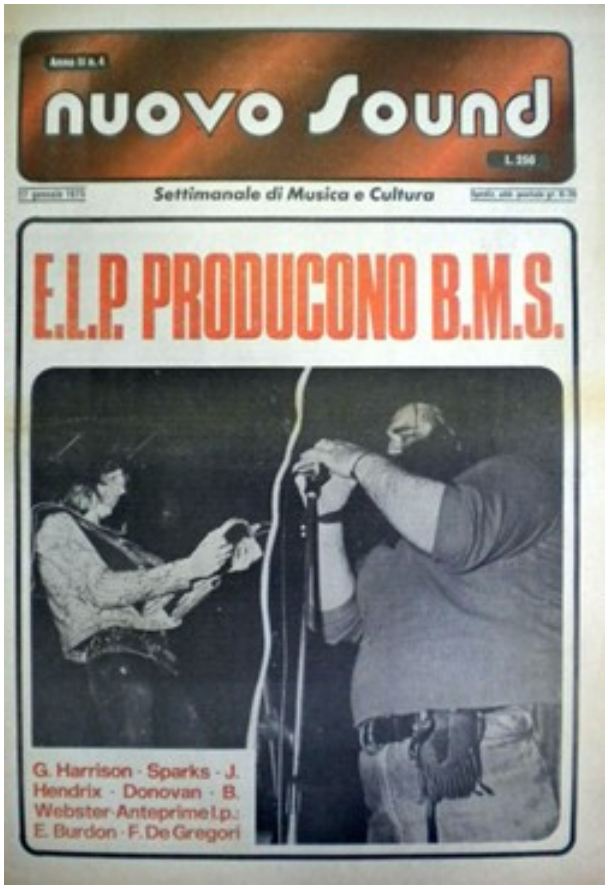
Come abbiamo scritto sul giornale speda della festa « cultura è stare insieme, riconoscersi in un progetto, vìvere e festeggiare». Il 27 giugno ne abbiamo avuto conferma piena: niente biglietti, niente perquisizioni, niente servizio d'ordine con fascetta rossa al braccio sguardo fiero e passo marciale. Niente discorsi lunghi e noiosi, nessuna necessità di comunicare a parole quello che era nell'aria e che ciascuno di noi vedeva chiaramente, sentiva: eravamo li non per caso, non era, lo riaffermiamo la situazione di piccolo ghetto d'oro, il concerto-lager finito il quale uno si ritrova a solo a fare i conti con le contraddizioni e i pesi di sempre. Un concerto non fa socialismo: ma forse ìl 27 giugno, data memorabile, ha dato un impulso notevole a un movimento di tipo nuovo, un movimento che sappia, appunto, far cultura, imporsì, farsi sentire, vivere anche la musica come un momento nuovo e non marginale della lotta.



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt - Nuovo Sound - 27 gennaio 1975





Twickenham, un tranquillo sobborgo situato nei pressi di Londra. E' là che vive Robert Wyatt, nella sua casa attrezzata in modo tale da attenuare gli inconvenienti procurati dalla paralisi alle membra inferiori che lo costringe su una sedia a rotelle dopo l'incidente dell'anno scorso.

Wyatt non ha ceduto alla disperazione. Al contrario ha dimostrato di possedere una volontà di fare veramente eccezionale, e questo soprattutto dopo la comparsa sul mercato di "Rock Bottom", un album veramente pregevole, e di un 45 giri "I'm a believer", una nuova versione di un vecchio successo dei Monkees che ha meravigliato tutti.
Robert Wyatt, oltre al suo talento, possiede una particolare lucidità nella visione della rock-music attuale ed ha giustamente sorpreso con i suoi dischi. Quando siamo arrivati a casa sua, Robert stava cercando di far funzionare un vecchio accordeon (un tipo di fisarmonica) che sua moglie, Alfie, gli aveva regalato. Alfie (il suo vero nome è Alfreda), che ha disegnato la copertina del suo ultimo album, veglia su Robert e la sua presenza appare talmente importante sia nella sua musica che nella sua vita.

Egli ci ha fatto ascoltare il nastro del suo prossimo 'singolo', ''Yesterday man", un successo inglese molto commerciale che Chris Andrews aveva lanciato molti anni fa.

Perché Robert Wyatt, fondatore dei Soft Machine e dei Matching Mole, ascolta oggi Buddy Holly e Lee Dorsey, registra dei 'singoli' con la più grande disinvoltura e tutto ciò seguendo un indirizzo musicale tra i più originali?

E' questo che abbiamo cercato di scoprire con l'intervista che segue.

Nuovo Sound: L'incidente in cui sei incorso ed il riposo forzato che l'ha seguito ti hanno dato del tempo per ascoltare molta musica, molti dischi e tenerti al corrente su ciò che veniva fatto in questo campo. Forse precedentemente ti eri disinteressato di quello che avveniva nel mondo della rock-music?

***Robert Wyatt**: "Le sole persone che possono seguire tutto quello che avviene sono i giornalisti e coloro che lavorano nelle case discografiche perché ricevono i dischi gratuitamente.*
Anche adesso mi ritengo assai poco informato su ciò che avviene e potrà avvenire nel nostro mondo se facciamo eccezione, per esempio, per tutte quello che viene pubblicato dalla "Virgin" o da qualche altra casa discografica simile. Precedentemente, ascoltavo spesso delle registrazioni. Ma il problema sorgeva piuttosto dalla differenza tra la musica composta in vista di essere proposta durante i concerti e la musica per i dischi.
Quella che mi ha sempre particolarmente interessato è la musica per dischi, la quale presenta nei confronti della della musica per i concerti le stesse diversità che intercorrono tra il cinema ed il teatro.
I primi dischi che ho avuto modo di ascoltare erano dei dischi americani di jazz e devo dire in tutta sincerità che era assolutamente impossibile, riproporli sulla scena. Anche i loro autori non potevano. Ciò che apprezzavo di più in questi dischi era la doppia gran-cassa.
Quando un gruppo jazz è sul palco, se c'è una doppia gran-cassa voi non sentirete nient'altro che quella.
Un'idea di cosa intendo io per 'buon disco', la si può avere ascoltando "Magical Mystery Tour" dei Beatles che è a mio giudizio, pressoché impossibile da riproporre durante uno spettacolo "live".
Gran parte di quello che io canto necessita di essere eseguito con molta calma ed un forte accompagnamento. Evidentemente questo sulla scena non è possibile. E' questo paradosso che amo di più nei dischi. Quando canto in pubblico, invece, devo urlare; e non mi piace affatto urlare".

N.S.: Come è stata effettuata la registrazione di "Rock bottom". Forse Nick Mason, che l'ha prodotto, ha influenzato in modo" particolare i diversi brani?

***R.W.**: "L'album è stato realizzato in un tempo abbastanza breve. Ho passato quasi una settimana in campagna per registrare il piano, la voce e qualche percussione. In seguito ho portato le registrazioni a Londra e Nick si è incaricato di incidere gli altri strumenti. Precedentemente, quando registravo, una parte della mia musica era scritta prima, ma il resto risultava dall'improvvisazione. Al contrario "Rock bottom" rispecchia abbastanza fedelmente i piani che avevo approntato prima di entrare in studio. L'influenza di Nick si è manifestata soprattutto durante l'operazione di missaggio. Il suo sistema è abbastanza diverso da quello impiegato nel jazz.*
Egli da vita ad una specie di 'soup' nella quale la sezione solista non è più importante della ritmica. Tutto è ben ordinato e più piacevole ad ogni nuovo ascolto. Io credo che in ciò sta il principale contributo apportato da Nick: egli ha dimostrato nel missaggio molta più acutezza d'ingegno di quanta ne avrei potuta avere io".

N.S. : Quale è il tuo concetto per quanto riguarda i testi nella tua musica?

***R.W.**:"In generale, io dico che le parole non sono importanti; ma in un certo senso so che questo non è vero. Io pongo abbastanza attenzione nella scelta dei testi che poi utilizzerò.*
In generale, però, i musicisti che io preferisco non scrivono delle parole eccezionali; un esempio evidente: Randy Newman scrive delle parole fantastiche, Stevie Wonder no. Ebbene, io preferisco di gran lunga i dischi di Stevie Wonder perché dal loro ascolto appare chiaro come egli sì occupi soprattutto della parte musicale.
A mio giudizio non c'è niente di peggiore che scrivere prima i testi e poi musicarli. E te lo posso sempre dimostrare. Per esempio in "Madcap Laughs" di Syd Barrett è incluso un brano il cui testo è tratto da un poema molto bello di James Joyce ma musicalmente è il meno interessante. La stessa cosa accade sovente per Joni Mitchell. In questi casi si perdono quei valori musicali che sono cosi diversi da quelli letterari. I pezzi migliori sono quelli che hanno delle parole "stupide", o non ne hanno affatto ".

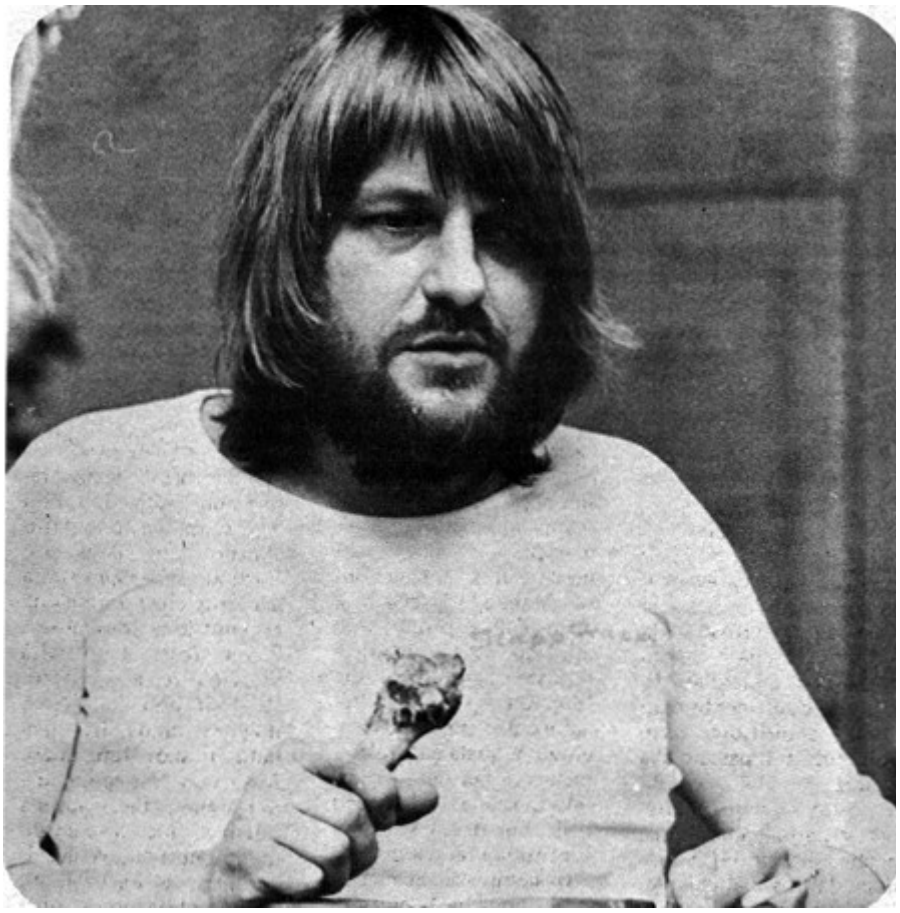
***N.S.**: E' per questo motivo che non ci si deve meravigliare quando tu incidi ora un brano come "Sea song" ed ora uno come "I'm a believer", perché in entrambi i casi i testi non hanno un senso preciso. Nel primo brano le parole sono sottili ma dal significato oscuro, nel secondo alquanto stupide.*

***R.W.**: "Sì, penso che una buona canzone e una buona musica deve poter essere apprezzata anche e soprattutto da chi non parla l'inglese."*

***N.S.**: Che cosa, in modo particolare, ti ha spinto ad incidere "I'm a believer" dei Monkees.*

All'epoca come li giudicavi?

***R.W**.: "Innanzitutto devo dire che questa canzone mi è sembrata facile da cantare, adatta alla mia voce. Mi piacevano molto le serie TV dei Monkees e non mi sono mai preoccupato di sapere se erano dei veri musicisti e se erano loro a suonare sui dischi. Pensavo soltanto che era un netto miglioramento in materia di show televisivi e che ciò che ci veniva da essi proposto era molto più valido di quelle trasmissioni che avevamo l'abitudine di vedere. E se ho inciso "I'm a believer" è stato un po' anche per attaccare quello snobismo che vuole a tutti i costi demolire questo genere di divertimenti 'leggeri'. Ciò che è grave, è che hanno rispolverato e rimesso in uso quella terminologia che mira alla separazione dell'arte 'seria' da quella 'leggera', la stessa in vigore al periodo della mia giovinezza.*
Gli anni '50 e '60 furono veramente "eccitanti" perché questa barriera era scomparsa. Adesso, finalmente, ci sono alcuni artisti che tendono a mutare la situazione che si è creata, ed è proprio questo che mi piace di più in loro ".



N.S.: Al tempo del tuo debutto con i Wilde Flowers, a Canterbury, quale genere musicale seguivi? Forse la soul-music?

***R.W.**: "Non è proprio così. Inizialmente eseguivamo dei brani composti da Hugh (Hopper) o da Kevin (Ayers) e qualcuno da Brian (Hopper) e dal sottoscritto. Solo in un secondo momento, poichè non riscuotevamo molto successo, siamo passati. al soul. Proponevamo dei pezzi di Otis Redding, di Mose Allison ed anche di Bob Dylan, Brian Hopper e di Chuck Berry. Poco più tardi lasciai il gruppo che ormai annoverava tra i brani del suo repertorio tutti i successi della "Stax records", di Same & Dave, ecc.. ".*

N.S.: Che cosa vi ha spinto a questa trasformazione così radicale? Forse la scoperta di musicisti come Terry Riley?

***R.W.**: "No, perché conoscevamo Terry Riley ancora prima di formare i Wilde Flowers. Ho conosciuto Daevid (Allen) e Terry Riley a Parigi quando, all'età di quindici anni, ho lasciato la scuola. Il processo, infatti, è stato per me inverso. Innanzitutto mi sono interessato della musica contemporanea, poi del jazz moderno. In un secondo momento sono passato dal jazz moderno a Terry Riley e ad altre esperienze di questo genere. Ed è stato solo dopo questo periodo che ho cominciato ad ascoltare Ray Charles o Mose Allison; e più tardi il rock. Ero molto in ritardo, infatti è soltanto verso i vent'anni che ho scoperto il rock. Credo*

che questa sia la ragione principale della mia diffidenza nei confronti di certi "snobismi" nella musica.
Se eseguite il mio stesso itinerario, quando arrivate a Ray Charles vi accorgerete che egli è importante come, se non di più, di Terry Riley.
Per quanto mi concerne, io sono stato sempre più attratto dalla musica "nera" che da quella europea. Il rhytm & blues, i vecchi Cecil Taylor, Mingus, ecc, sono per me molto più interessanti che qualsiasi altro compositore europeo.
Tornando ai Soft Machine; è a Londra che teniamo i primi concerti la cui durata supera le due ore. E' in questo periodo che riusciamo a realizzare e sviluppare tutte quelle idee che avevamo dal tempo dei Wilde Flowers".

N.S.: Che cosa stai per preparare?

R.W.: "In questo momento, c'è Fred Frith (degli 'Henry Cow') che ha scritto una musica molto bella, e sto cercando di aggiungervi delle parole ed in genere delle parti vocali. Vorrei anche registrare delle composizione di Hugh Hopper.
Un 'altra cosa che mi interessa in modo particolare in questo momento è quella di fare dei cori. Ne ho fatti recentemente nell'album di Brian Eno, e devo dire che mi sono molto divertito. E' una cosa che non avevo mai fatto sui miei dischi. Prossimamente realizzerò anche dei 'singoli'"


nuova sound
Interviste
ROBERT WYATT

***N.S.**: Che cosa pensi degli LP di Mike Oldfield?*

***R.W.** : "II suo modo di suona re la chitarra è uno di quelli da me preferiti. Ho suonato per un certo tempo insieme a lui quando era con i Whole World di Kevin, con Lol Coxhill e David Bedford. Era veramente bravo. Sono d'accordo con ciò che Mike pensa dei suoi prodotti. E' un musicista senza pretese. Inoltre bisogna considerare che ha composto "Tubular Bells" a diciannove anni.*
E' fantastico! Ma non si tratta di un caso, né tanto meno di una gara con Debussy... ma soltanto di un intuito musicale eccezionale.
Quello che mi piace di più di lui è che fondamentalmente resta un musicista folk. E' una simpatica contraddizione quella sua di suonare della folk-music con 400 strumenti. Credo che gli sia servito molto l'aver collaborato con Bedford per le registrazioni del suo album "Star's end": Bedford è un vero esperto per quanto riguarda le orchestrazioni. Dopo queste esperienze, ciò che farà Oldfield risulterà sempre più interessante.
Quanti anni ha, adesso? Ventunanni? ad ogni modo, io non avrei potuto fare lo stesso".

N.S.: Sei ottimista per quanto riguarda il futuro della scena musicale inglese?

***R.W.**: "Piuttosto, della scena musicale mondiale. Non mi interessano molto i gruppi di rock inglese moderni. Sono stato particolarmente attratto dalla rivoluzione-rock degli anni'60, ma oggi sono più attratto dalla musica africana, per esempio da Mongezì Feza con il quale sarei veramente felice di registrare. Per tornare alla black-music, è la sua riscoperta che ci ha permesso di portare alla luce ciò che di più intuitivo e di più originalmente primitivo in noi".*

***N.S.**: Quale è il tuo giudizio sui complessi europei?*

R.W. *: "E' abbastanza curioso, molti di questi gruppi sviluppano delle idee nate quattro o cinque anni fa, in altri complessi di cui ho fatto parte. Ciascuno di essi ne sviluppa un certo aspetto. Ora io, ho abbandonato molte di quelle strade e ne ho intraprese delle nuove. Insomma, posso dire di essere interessato a ciò che questi nuovi gruppi fanno, lo trovo simpatico, ma mantengo, per lo meno sotto il profilo musicale, una certa distanza tra loro e me".*

N.S.*: Pensi di intraprendere dei tour? Verrai anche in Italia?*

R. W. *: "E" Nick Mason, mio carissimo amico, che mi ha più volte detto di tenere qualche concerto e non solo in Inghilterra. Ma sebbene io non voglia cadere sotto la dittatura della sedia a rotelle, bisogna riconoscere che i1 viaggiare mi pone una serie di problemi sia di origine pratica che e soprattutto medica sui quali non voglio molto insistere.*
Qui, tutto è approntato per ridurre al minimo i miei problemi. Tenere regolarmente dei concerti mi creerebbe delle responsabilità sia di carattere sociale che personale nei confronti degli altri musicisti e del pubblico che interverrebbe. Tutto questo mi rende particolarmente nervoso.
Il problema è che coloro che tengono i migliori concerti sono musicisti come Gong che lavorano, lavorano, lavorano tutto l'anno senza mai fermarsi. E' questo l'unico modo per presentare dei buoni spettacoli. Allora penso che non riuscirei a fare niente di buono tenendo dei concerti solo di tanto in tanto.
E poi avrei potuto fare tutto questo dieci anni fa, ora significherebbe tornare troppo indietro e fare troppi sacrifici. "

Augusto Sciarra

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Intervista a Robert Wyatt : L'iconoclasta cosciente - Gong - anno 2 N. 6 - giugno 1975

Intervista a Robert Wyatt:

L'ICONOCLASTA COSCIENTE



La mia prima visita a casa di Alfie e Bob aveva fruttato, per quanto riguarda la nostra rivista, i deliziosi quadretti illustrati da Alfie e i poetici testi da **Rock Bottom** (vedi Gong n. 2-75). Ma l'incontro aveva coinvolto anche altri aspetti, più personali, che esorbitavano da un normale rapporto di lavoro. Perciò, a parte il mio amore per la musica di Wyatt, c'era da tempo il desiderio di rivedere gli amici e di parlare con loro un po' di tutto. Di musica, certo, ma pure di altro: che so, di politica, di paesi, di genti, di amici comuni, eccetera eccetera.

E così una domenica pomeriggio dello scorso aprile, rischiarata da un tiepido sole anglosassone, ho bussato ancora una volta alla casetta bianca di Twickenham. Gioia di ritrovarsi e subito attorno al tavolo del soggiorno a raccontarsi varie cose.

Robert era appena reduce dal primo missaggio del suo ultimo LP per la Virgin. L'album, che appare in questi giorni anche sul nostro mercato, s'intitola **Ruth is Stranger Than Richard** e alla sua registrazione hanno partecipato Bill MacCormick al basso, George Khan e Gary Windo ai sax, Laurie Allan alla batteria ed Eno. Era inevitabile perciò che a casa Wyatt ancora si respirasse l'aria della nuova impresa, pur senza la minima forzatura in senso promozionale-mercantilistico, mentre Alfie era tutta presa dagli schizzi-progetto per la copertina del disco. Ma è ora di far parlare Robert...

Gong: Anzitutto mi preme di sapere qualcosa di più sulla tanto decantata scena di Canterbury, quella che secondo le storie ufficiali avrebbe dato origini e vita a tutta una scuola musicale.

Robert: Be', è difficile, perché confondo sempre il periodo che va da quando ho lasciato la scuola fino a quando ho cominciato a lavorare regolarmente in un complesso. Era un periodo molto confuso. C'è solo uno sbaglio in quello che si dice comunemente: l'idea che la città di Canterbury fosse un ambiente stimolante. È una cittadina del sud inglese molto snob e molto provinciale, ed era piuttosto ostile e indifferente alla nuova musica o a qualsiasi cosa nuova. Ma forse, per noi era una cosa buona nel senso negativo, perché abbiamo reagito con più forza contro la vita piatta di questa città, complessivamente parecchio

conservatrice. A me Canterbury ricorda soltanto alcuni dei miei compagni di scuola che avevano i miei stessi gusti. Principalmente Hugh Hopper, suo fratello Brian e Dave Sinclair. Per molta altra gente Canterbury era solo un incidente geografico. Ci trovavamo lì solo per andare a scuola prima dell'università. Più tardi mi sembrava già un posto diverso. Infatti ero molto stimolato dall'idea di lasciare Canterbury, dopo l'incontro con Daevid Allen, per andare a Parigi, a Londra, a Maiorca e incontrare molta gente nuova.



Daevid mi ha insegnato a non preoccuparmi degli esami a scuola e roba del genere, perché c'erano tante altre cose da fare. Insomma per me Canterbury era come una prigione dalla quale siamo riusciti a scappare. Non è certo un posto di cui sento la nostalgia.

Daevid era più vecchio di noi e aveva già trascorso degli anni a sviluppare le sue idee. Quando io l'ho incontrato, avevo soltanto l'esperienza della scuola e dei miei genitori. Allora il mio interesse artistico era piuttosto passivo. La mia idea dell'arte era di guardare i quadri, leggere i libri e ascoltare i dischi. Ma Daevid mi dimostrò l'ovvio, che cioè l'arte non sta nel leggere ma nello scrivere, non sta nel guardare i quadri ma nel dipingerli, non sta nell'ascoltare musica ma nel registrare nastri. È una posizione molto più attiva, molto diversa dal processo di educazione normale. Lo scopo di quel tipo di educazione è di impaurirci con i grandi personaggi degli ultimi due-trecento anni, per impedirci di fare anche noi qualcosa di creativo. E per me Daevid era una figura molto liberatoria. Voglio dire che gli placeva il jazz ma non si preoccupava se non poteva suonare come Charlie Parker, gli piaceva dipingere ma non si preoccupava se non poteva dipingere come Paul Klee. Aveva molto coraggio e questo è davvero importante.

Gong: Quando hai iniziato a suonare, quali erano i generi di musica che t'interessavano di più?

Robert: Mio padre mi aveva allevato con la musica europea del ventesimo secolo e anche con un po' di jazz. Credo che nel periodo in cui incontrai Daevid fossi più interessato al jazz e alla pittura. Ma a quel tempo mi sembrò più interessante scegliere la musica, perché avevamo in mente tante cose che nessuno aveva ancora fatto nella musica, mentre nella pittura c'era già tanta gente che sperimentava le nostre idee. Mi piacevano la musica e la pittura ugualmente. Ma non riuscivo a immaginare che cosa di nuovo potessi fare nella pittura. Mentre nella musica ero affascinato da diverse cose, dal jazz a Ray Charles, e potevo prevedere varie possibilità interessanti nell'usare molti elementi diversi di molte musiche diverse. Ecco perché questa divenne così importante per me.

Gong: Oggi si parla molto di musica di gruppo. Pensi che la musica che nasce dai gruppi sia molto più proficua di quella che deriva dai singoli musicisti?

Robert: Credo che sia una grandissima limitazione l'idea che le nuove proposte debbano per forza venire dai gruppi. Prendiamo il caso della prima Mahavishnu Orchestra. Il suo successo commerciale stava proprio in un fatto di limitazione iniziale dei singoli. Ma mi pare che tutti quelli che suonavano nei dischi della Orchestra suonassero meglio prima di entrare nella Mahavishnu. McLaughlin suonava meglio con John Surman o con Miroslav Vitous. E anche Billy Cobham lo preferivo prima. Forse perché era più semplice da seguire. Uno riesce pure a capire le pressioni che portano alle limitazioni della formula, alla formazione di un gruppo rock, per fare più soldi, per suonare in tournée...



Ma è pur sempre una formula e, quando la impari, ne conosci anche le possibilità e allora lo spirito dell'avventura sparisce. Ti rimane solo da decidere se questo è fatto bene oppure no. È soltanto un fatto di artigianato e niente di più. Ti assicuro che oggi a un Billy Cobham preferisco di gran lunga Laurie Allan.

Gong: Qual era il tuo approccio alla batteria? Hai mai pensato a diventare un virtuoso?

Robert: No, non sono mai stato un batterista puro. Mi interessava di più la forma complessiva della musica, la sua organizzazione, l'arrangiamento dei vari pezzi, insomma. La batteria era solo il suono che facevo io e qualche volta era pure piacevole smettere. Ci sono dei bei pezzi anche senza la batteria e io ero avvantaggiato da questo fatto, mentre gli altri musicisti dovevano suonare sempre. La batteria è uno strumento molto comodo perché una sola persona può contemporaneamente controllare molti suoni. Ma mi interessava piuttosto l'arrangiamento dei pezzi, l'equilibrio fra improvvisazione e arrangiamento, la possibilità di combinare pezzi strumentali con canzoni. La batteria era solo uno degli strumenti, non era una cosa in se stessa. Certo mi piacciono alcuni soli di batteria. Naturalmente mi piace Elvin Jones: se più gente suonasse come Elvin Jones, sicuramente la batteria mi interesserebbe di più. Ma purtroppo non si trova facilmente chi suona come Elvin... Lui è il più grande batterista che abbia mai sentito: l'ho trovato sempre più interessante di quanto non sia mai stato un Billy Cobham. Ancora oggi preferirei ascoltare qualcosa come **Africa Brass** di Coltrane che qualsiasi disco della Mahavishnu.

Gong: Come vedi la situazione musicale attuale rispetto a quella degli anni '60? Molti oggi parlano di crisi, di stasi creativa, di riflusso, di supercondizionamento industriale...

Robert: in questo momento ci sono due direzioni quasi opposte che sono molto forti. Una comprende musica d'avanguardia, idee d'avanguardia, ricerca pura. Mentre l'altra è più legata all'idea del socialismo: la musica per la gente, fatta dalla gente. Questo è il contributo della cultura popolare. Al contrario, certa gente cosiddetta d'avanguardia di 10-15 anni fa aveva idee completamente fasciste per quanto riguarda la musica popolare. Penso che ciò sia molto sbagliato. Ma ora c'è il grande problema di come capire e di come utilizzare questa musica: cioè musica da cantare e da ballare, senza fare dello snobismo. Nello stesso tempo molti di quelli che fanno musica popolare trovano il tempo di ascoltare, per esempio, anche parecchie cose attuali della musica di avanguardia europea e le utilizzano nella loro musica secondo il grado di comprensione che riescono a maturare. È insomma un periodo in cui molta gente impara da altri, come anni fa non si faceva. Oggi molti di quelli che io conosco si sentono spesso poco sicuri, ma penso che essi non debbano dare troppo peso allo scoraggiamento, perché questo è un periodo molto importante e stimolante, che è venuto fuori proprio da tanta precedente confusione. Può darsi che oggi ci siano pochissimi capolavori di perfezione, ma è più importante l'evolversi di tutta la musica nel suo complesso. Gente di idee e tradizioni tra le più differenti si incontra e naturalmente è una situazione caotica, un po' pazza. Ma credo sia una fase necessaria.

Gong: Ma non ti sembra che ci sia troppa gente ora che approfitti di questa situazione confusa, per ingannare gli altri a proprio vantaggio?

Robert: È la vita... Voglio dire che se una città viene bombardata, c'è molta gente che ne approfitta e fa dei saccheggi. In un disastro è sempre possibile che succeda così. In tutte le

rivoluzioni ci sono un mucchio di comportamenti scorretti: fa parte dell'insieme. Non c'è da preoccuparsene più di tanto, perché gli esseri umani sono spesso degli animali molto cattivi. Però non mi preoccupo di essere così pessimista. Chi si preoccupa si aspetta che l'uomo sia un animale meraviglioso, molto di più di quanto io mi aspetti. Non penso neanche che noi uomini siamo gli animali più intelligenti su questo pianeta. Forse siamo i più furbi, ma non siamo certo molto morali. Penso, comunque, che la cosa più importante sia la ricerca.

Gong: Qual è la tua posizione politica, anche in rapporto alla tua musica?

Robert: Be', le canzoni ingannano un po'. In un certo senso trovo che sono molto più cinico di uno come Randy Newman. Perché lui presenta l'altra faccia, la parte più brutta della natura umana, e va bene. Ma lui lo fa perché pensa di migliorare le cose, mentre io non ho nemmeno quella speranza. Trovo solo abbastanza speranza per scrivere. Ma non sono esattamente un cinico, perché è un termine più negativo di quello che io sento dentro. Penso che sia arrogante credere che, dopo la rivoluzione o dopo che abbiamo sistemato il mondo per il meglio, le cose saranno completamente risolte, perché gli uomini sono potenzialmente buoni. Non vedo una ragione per crederci. Non si può avere tutto. Se si riesce a creare qualche oasi di felicità, sarà bellissimo. Sono sempre contento quando le idee del socialismo si propagano nel mondo. Mi meraviglia che gli esseri umani, solitamente così crudeli, l'abbiano pensato e organizzato così bene. È più un coinvolgimento emozionale che razionale per me. Mi sembra che il socialismo dia più possibilità a un maggior numero di gente di avere più dignità che non altri sistemi. Allora penso di essere un socialista. Ma non sono un idealista. Penso che la cosa più interessante di questo secolo a livello generalizzato sìa l'allargamento del voto democratico, oppure il nuovo peso dei sindacati. Ma vedo tutto ciò da una certa distanza, non lo vivo dall'interno. Non sventolo la mia bandiera rossa, dicendo «andiamo!» o cose del genere, perché sarei ugualmente contento di vedere gli esseri umani sostituiti dal mondo animale.



Gong: Qual è, secondo te, il ruolo di un artista nella società odierna?

Robert: Penso che nelle arti esistano un po' tutti i ruoli sociali. Ad esempio ci sono quegli artisti che vogliono mantenere l'idea dell'eroe individuale superiore agli altri. Ma quest'idea è proprio il contrario di qualsiasi forma di socialismo: mi sembra una farsa. In realtà loro fanno solo ciò che la comunità gli richiede. Non penso comunque in genere che noi musicisti abbiamo molto controllo sulla musica: facciamo quello che vuole la società. Molta gente pensa che l'artista sia come il custode dello spirito della comunità. È vero solo in parte. Il tuo ruolo viene imposto dalla gente che ti sta intorno. Comunque credo sia molto importante che uno si senta libero di scegliere e che possa dare il suo contributo personale. Obbiettivamente non è una buona giustificazione. Certe volte alcuni dei più importanti

capolavori provengono da situazioni sociali tra le più contraddittorie e molta arte noiosa viene dalle situazioni sociali più avanzate. Per esempio, l'arte cinese era forse molto più interessante prima che venisse il comunismo. Ma se dovessi scegliere, certo sceglierie Mao Tse Tung e molta arte «brutta»...

Gong: Parliamo ora delle influenze nella tua musica: per esempio, riconosci di essere stato influenzato dall'Arte-Dada?

Robert: Sì, credo di essere stato influenzato dalle stesse motivazioni che mossero i dadaisti. Essi erano cresciuti in una società in cui una grande importanza era attribuita al comportamento razionale, al potere della logica, all'importanza della proporzione matematica. Ma forse la mente umana non funziona così. La mente è più anarchica di quanto le sia stato concesso dalla cultura europea fino a questo secolo. Penso che le stesse pressioni, che spinsero al movimento dada, oggi spingono la musica a varie culture lontane dalla tradizione europea. Per capire ciò che hanno fatto i dadaisti, è necessario comprendere quali regole hanno infrante. Hanno dimostrato che alla mente umana deve essere data maggiore libertà di quanto non consentisse la cultura europea. Ma ora che accettiamo questo dato come vero, è più necessario, spero, essere coscientemente iconoclasti.

Gong: Ci sono altre influenze nella tua musica?

Robert: Torno sempre alla stessa influenza fondamentale che sono i neri d'America. La cosa più interessante accaduta in questo secolo, dal punto di vista culturale, è stata l'esplosione della cultura nera dall'interno dello sfondo provinciale e conservatore dei pionieri bianchi in America. L'idea che i neri usino gli strumenti europei è per me ancora la cosa più stimolante. Quello che Cecil Taylor riesce a fare con il pianoforte (così lontano dall'uso previsto da chi in Europa aveva disegnato lo strumento) trovo che sia una delle cose più eccitanti.

Questo succede quando si mescolano insieme le varie culture. In questo momento io sto imitando coscientemente alcuni «trucchi» del jazz. Nel mio ultimo LP, una facciata è interamente dedicata all'uso cosciente delle influenze del jazz. In fondo è una ricerca per darmi più coraggio a trovare cose in me stesso, almeno più di quanto ci riescano altri stimoli.

Gong: Come giudichi le concezioni di musicisti come Terry Riley, Philip Glass o La Monte Young?



Robert: Trovo che hanno la stessa posizione che avevano i dadaisti. Sono molto coscienti di distruggere e ricreare allo stesso tempo la tradizione europea. In un certo senso, però, mi pare che alcuni abbiano ancora troppo rispetto per questa cultura. Ad esempio uno come Stockhausen sembra sentirsi in concorrenza con gente come Wagner o Beethoven. In Europa esistono vari metodi di far musica: hai il compositore, il musicista e il direttore d'orchestra, che fa una specie di mediazione tra i due. Gente come Cage e Young ha sperimentato la possibilità di dare più libertà al musicista come compositore. Sono molto fieri delle nuove scoperte che hanno fatto in campo musicale. Ma Miles Davis questo lo stava facendo parecchio tempo prima. Miles sa esattamente come creare certe situazioni attraverso la combinazione perfetta dei membri di ogni nuova formazione. Secondo me Miles è più avanti. L'avanguardia in Europa non si fida abbastanza della sua facoltà d'intuito. Credono ancora nell'idea del pensiero concettuale e razionale. Forse è arrogante parlare così, ma è la mia reazione a tutto quello che sento in giro. Se dovessi parlare di un grande compositore all'avanguardia, direi subito Davis o Mingus. Il modo in cui hanno combinato tutte le varie qualità delle diverse musiche, e hanno sviluppato la combinazione compositore-musicista, è fantastico.

Gong: Di tutte le esperienze che tu hai fatto con i gruppi, dalla Soft Machine al Matching

Mole, quale ti ha aperto più la mente?

Robert: Su tutto quello che ho fatto negli ultimi dieci anni, nella ricerca di scoprire le relazioni migliori fra la composizione e il modo in cui la musica viene suonata, lavorando con altra gente o solo, le mie conclusioni sono molto semplici. Più certo sei di come la musica debba venir suonata, meno musicisti sono disposti a lavorare con te, perché diventi più sicuro delle cose che vuoi. Adesso lavoro con tre o quattro musicisti e abbiamo molto in comune. Il cambiamento da un gruppo a un altro è stato solo un processo di ricerca di situazioni nelle quali lavorare. Certo, molto dipende dal trovare gente con cui comunicare. L'unica difficoltà sta nel fatto che più strana è la musica, meno gente riesci a trovare, sia come pubblico che come musicisti con cui lavorare. Molta gente oggi pensa che la musica si sta sviluppando nei gruppi. Ma non sono molto convinto che il gruppo come unità di lavoro continuativa sia la risposta ideale per tutti i nuovi problemi della musica. Io credo che, tutto sommato, formare un gruppo fisso risolve certi problemi, ma impone enormi restrizioni alle idee personali dei singoli. In questo momento, quasi tutti quelli con cui lavoro sono gente che generalmente non suona nei complessi. Gary Windo, per esempio, non riesce ad adattarsi a nessun gruppo. George Khan, il tenore, è stato per anni uno sperimentatore, ma non ha mai trovato un gruppo che lo soddisfacesse. E così è stato per Laurie Allan: il suo temperamento non gli ha mai permesso di inserirsi stabilmente in un gruppo. Così è anche per Bill MacCormick e per Eno.

Gong: Com'è andato finora **Rock Bottom**?



Robert: Penso che stia andando bene tutt'ora. Ha venduto dappertutto più di quanto mi aspettassi. Ero contento di fare quel disco e c'era gente interessata a comprarlo già prima che lo terminassi. Infatti c'è molta più gente adesso interessata alla mia musica di quanta ce ne fosse all'epoca di Matching Mole. In un certo senso è una bella sorpresa, perché non me l'aspettavo proprio. Forse la stampa ora è più interessata di quanto lo fosse prima.

I giornalisti della stampa specializzata una volta erano molto più conservatori e tradizionalisti. Ma non conosco di sicuro quel successo che hanno certi gruppi rock. Il mio, probabilmente, è solo un piccolo successo.

Gong: Mi pare che questo ultimo tuo LP sia meno unitario di **Rock Bottom**, meno sereno...

Robert: Forse perché sono diventato più di cattivo umore, meno tranquillo. **Rock Bottom** era il prodotto di molte frustrazioni precedenti, di certi tentativi di creare alcune cose... Era il risultato di un'unica linea di pensiero. Ma questo disco è molto più sperimentale: mi inserisco in situazioni piuttosto sconosciute per me. Stavolta ho rischiato dì più.

Gong: Hai qualche progetto di concerto dal vivo prossimamente?

Robert: Non me lo ricordare, ne ho uno nella prima metà di maggio a Parigi al teatro degli Champs-Élysées: devo essere pazzo! Non ho la minima idea di cosa fare in pubblico. Tutte le mie idee oggi sono basate sul tono dì voce basso, non mi piace gridare. Prima tutta la mia musica in pubblico era concentrata sulla batteria. Ma adesso canto solo e questo mi rende molto nervoso, perché c'è questa pressione a essere spettacolare in pubblico, eccitante e roba del genere. Io non suono più così. Non mi piacciono questi grandi concerti pop con immense folle di giovani: mi piace il piccolo club con cinque ubriachi o posti simili. A Parigi sarà un concerto degli Henry Cow e io canterò solo alcuni pezzi con loro. Sono nervoso perché, quando canto, non è per cantare in pubblico. Per me il canto è qualcosa che faccio con il pianoforte. È un problema di piccoli dettagli, di intonazione, della frase esatta, eccetera. Tutto l'insieme in pubblico è solo un enorme gesto, e io non sono Stevie Wonder. Non riesco a fare tutto quello che fa lui. Sento che ci vuole qualcosa di più drammatico in un concerto. Mi sento stupido io sul palcoscenico.

Gong: Perché hai scelto Parigi?

Robert: Non ho scelto: mi hanno chiesto, implorato molte volte di fare un concerto lì. Poi hanno scoperto che avevo cantato con gli Henry Cow in pubblico e mi hanno invitato insieme a loro. Era un trucco! Ho dei nastri di quel concerto: sono terribili, cantavamo molto male... Sono davvero pazzo!

Giacomo Pellicciotti

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Robert Wyatt - Il beato diventa santo - Ciao 2001 - N. 41 - 13 Ottobre 1974

IL BEATO DIVENTA SANTO



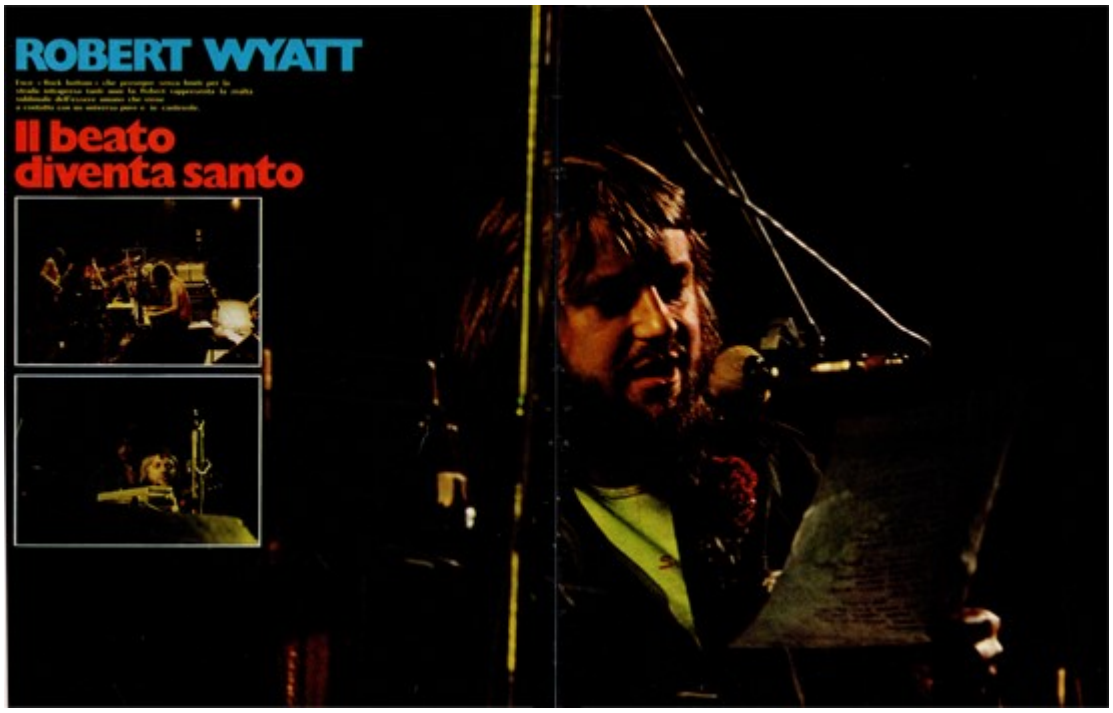


Se la nostra musica è veramente l'espressione più appariscente di tutta una nuova cultura, alternativa perché rinnovata dalle fondamenta; se il gusto della canapa e della psichedelia ne è realmente una parte integrante, come innegabile realtà di fatto; se è proprio vera la nuova constatazione che anche un insieme di note e di suoni, se accostati in un certo modo, può esprimere un potenziale politico-rivoluzionario a volte più efficace e immediato di un intero volume di disquisizioni verbali; se la regione più intima della psiche umana è realmente poesia universale e percezione di infinito; se, infine, è vero che la liberazione del corpo non può essere subordinata, ma deve procedere di'pari passo con la liberazione della mente: allora Robert Wyatt l'Emarginato, il Grande Escluso dalla festa del Konsumo, è forse veramente il più autentico Santo assolutamente laico espresso da questa nuova cultura (limitando l'esame esclusivamente alla sua ramificazione musicale).

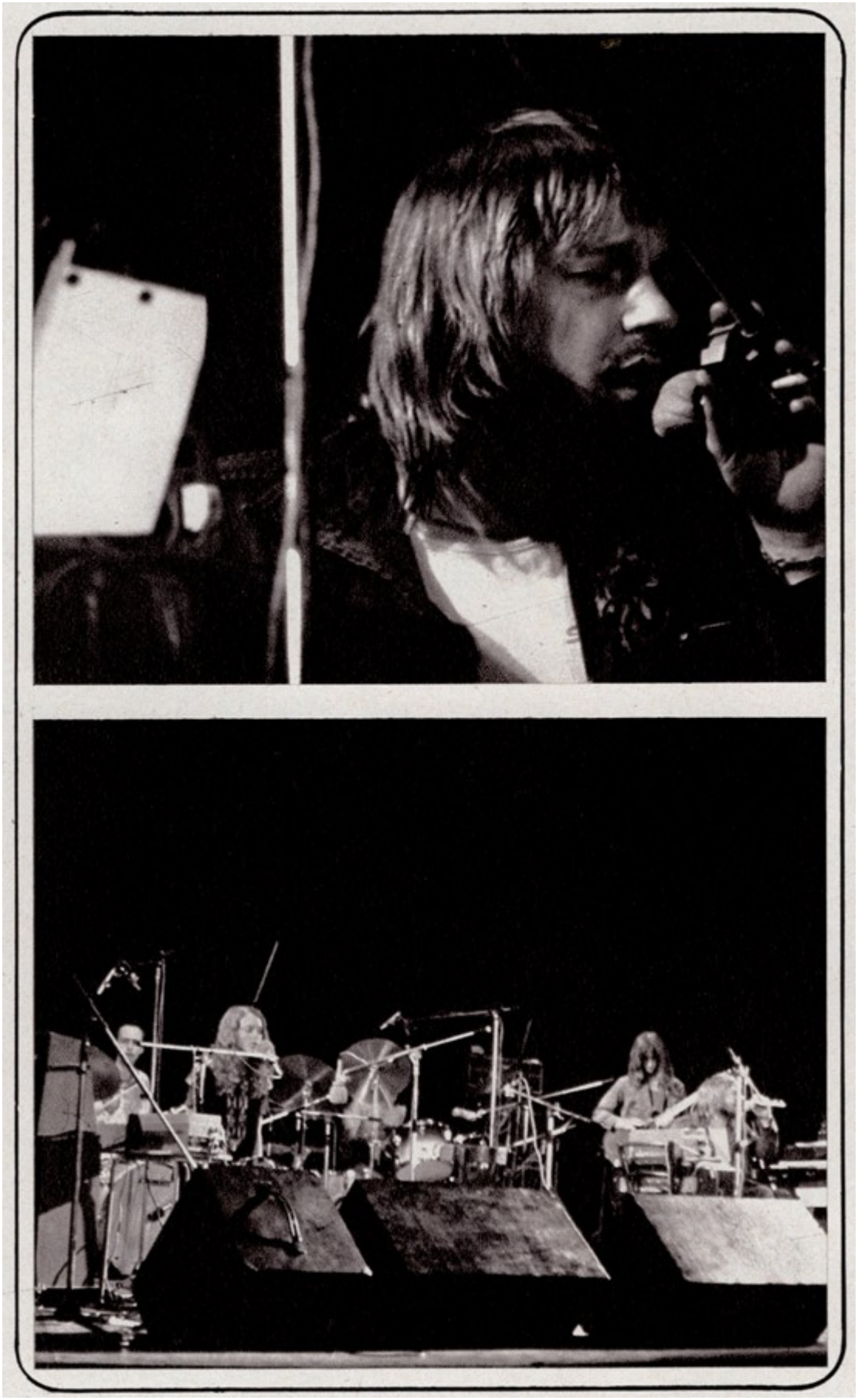
La musica di Robert Wyatt potrebbe essere definita come tentativo di rappresentare la realtà subliminale dell'essere umano, sfrondato dagli ideologismi di potere inculcatigli fin dalla nascita e restituito, nella sua pura verginità rivoluzionaria, a contatto con un universo di Idee altrettanto pure e rivoluzionarie. Ascoltare un disco di Wyatt equivale, come

minimo, al porsi una scelta ben precisa, e lo « scegliere », come insegna Sartre, è l'unico basilare modello di primigenia azione rivoluzionaria che l'individuo possa porsi per affermare sé stesso come tale; per cui tutto ciò che ti costringe ad una scelta reale è, potenzialmente, un fatto rivoluzionario. L'ascolto della musica di Wyatt ti pone la scelta se rifiutarla in blocco (e con questo semplice gesto, rifiutare la sua lezione di introspezione, accettare le regole del potere e, in ultima analisi, negarsi alla rivoluzione) o accettarla, se non subito in blocco, per lo meno in via sperimentale (e con questo, aprire la coraggiosa strada che porta ad una reale conoscenza di sé stesso, dalla quale deriva una reale aspirazione a conoscere e poi accettare gli altri, e, da ultimo, ad agire con essi).

Non me la sento, per parlare di Wyatt e della sua musica, di usare una determinata fraseologia tecnicistica da critico, che sarebbe l'arma migliore per neutralizzare tutti i suoi più reali significati: Wyatt non merita questo, perché è una persona che ha sempre, coerentemente, lottato con questa metodologia. Stette con i Soft Machine nei primi gloriosi anni Dada-ribelli, e non esitò ad abbandonarli quando essi adottarono una musica che, pur restando pregevole ad avanguardistica, non era però più rivoluzionaria, nel senso di indurre a una scelta, a una presa di coscienza alternativa. E se ne andò, dunque, non senza aver deposto in quel nucleo tanto amato un'ultima, colossale perla di commiato: «The moon in june », l'inno mentale e liquido che copre la terza facciata di « Third », album stupendo ma già stigmatizzato dalle prime ombre dei futuri compromessi.



> Zoom



Cosa Robert abbia fatto negli anni sconnessi che sono seguiti, lo si può soltanto immaginare ascoltando i suoi dischi, le rare gemme di una saggezza sconvolta e cambiata dalle fondamenta, che egli ci ha avaramente distillate, facendoci spasimare. «The end of an Ear » è stata la prima, e a tutt'oggi, ancora, forse la più fulgida, la più intimamente sconvolgente: la mappa torturata di un itinerario alla liberazione psico-fisica, il manifesto intimamente

politico di una rivoluzione esistenziale prima ancora che culturale, come base imprescindibile per la messa in atto di una futura rivoluzione reale.

Robert Wyatt è anche la personificazione di una scuola (peccato che il termine sia cosi inadeguato, così storicamente compromesso) di musicisti che hanno il suo stesso approccio verso la realtà: approccio il cui minimo comune denominatore è da ravvisare in un certo disincantato umorismo che si pone, nell'ambito della creazione artistica, come reale forza dissacrante: uno « spirito » che è il diretto discendente dello Zappa degli esordi, e che è comune a tutta una famiglia di musicisti freaks, dai Caravan ai Gong, e di cui l'asse portante è costituito, appunto, dal trio Robert Wyatt-Kevin Ayers-Daevid Allen, detti anche i « fratelli della banana ». In effetti, la banana esprime per loro tutta una reale filosofia esistenziale, come mi spiegò Daevid Allen stesso qualche mesetto fa: « La Banana è quell'oggetto la cui buccia può farti scivolare, eliminando di colpo il tuo falso bagaglio di dignitosa serietà e facendoti sprofondare nel ridicolo ». Senza contare, aggiungo, che la banana è anche un simbolo lisergico, un simbolo sessuale e, infine, diciamolo, è anche buona da mangiare...

Con questa gente, di solito, Wyatt crea i suoi gioielli; con alcuni di essi formò i Matching Mole, scioltisi dopo averci regalato due nuovi sfrigolanti manifesti di « saggezza sconvolta »: « Matching Mole » e « The little red record ». Poi, Wyatt è scivolato sull'imprevedibile buccia di banana del suo destino: ora è paralizzato. Addio alla sua batteria meravigliosa... Addio? Forse no: per la Virgin, esce ora un nuovo gioiello, « Rock Bottom », nel quale, oltre a cantare (cantare? Che razza di definizione restrittiva!) con la sua orribile-stupenda voce dell'Anima & Basso Ventre, il Santo ricama arazzi purissimi su tutti i tipi di tastiere, e al suo fianco c'è gente del calibro di Richard Sinclair, Hugh Hopper, Mongesì Feza, Gary Windo, Mike Oldfield (vedi foto), tutti accorsi al suo richiamo. Cercare di descrivere « Rock Bottom » è assurdo. Tutto questo articolo è già da sé un (confuso) tentativo di definirlo. Paradiso è Sinfonia Futurista, sberleffo i rivelazione di un sublime di marca underground, tremore e bellezza: « Rock Bottom » non è soltanto un disco, è, sopratutto, un « test » rivoluzionario.

Manuel Insolera

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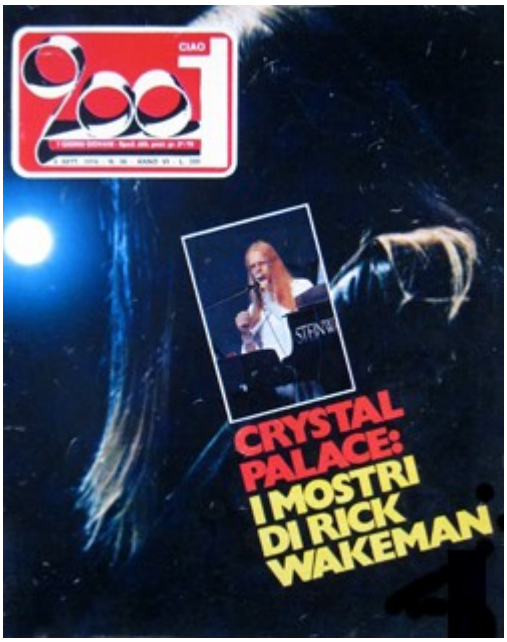
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Soft Machine "Third" - Ciao 2001 - N. 36 - 8 Settembre 1974







Ecco il secondo di una serie di servizi coi quali si vuol segnalare criticamente, ritornando indietro nel tempo, quegli albums che rappresentano un « avvenimento » nella favola del pop.





Il *Third* dei Soft Machine è uno di quei rari dischi su cui ben si può impostare un discorso di « epoca nuova » - - una grossa rete tesa tra lo ieri e l'oggi, un avamposto prima della Grande Città che poi sarebbe il pop maturo e completo (quello che abbiamo avuto e oggi, abbiamo perso, intendo dire).

Ragioniamo, infatti: quante cose facciamo discendere da quel « mitico » avvenimento? Quanti sono i complessi e le idee che leghiamo a doppio spago a quegli ottanta minuti di fuoco e danza e luce? C'è Robert Wyatt che ancor oggi si dimena sulle medesima assi, ci sono i Caravan che hanno bevuto sino all'ultima goccia di quel liquido fortissimo, ci sono i Just Us che recitano con obliqua memoria quella sana lezione: e poi Hatfield and the North, poi la buonanima di Kevin Ayers, poi Henry Cow e i Khan sconosciuti -- quanto basta per incorniciare un disco e mangiarlo sino in fondo, e capire il perché d'i Tanto sconquasso...

Soft Machine Third nasce nel 1969, ed è la seconda o terza grande « cosa » che il pop Inglese inventa dopo i funerali della banda Rolling-Beatles. Prima ci sono stati i Pink Floyd, prima è venuto il verbo capito male 'di Donovan: grosse occasioni che pure non hanno saputo spazzar via i ciarlatani dalla scena, e ancora vivono i mezzucci di un irridente hard-rock e gli altri tossiscono con le pergamene della cultura santa e occidentale... possibile che nessuno si accorga di quello che manca, la musica grande e spettinata, il jazz ferito a morte e curato malissimo, il suono fremente fremente (imprendibile)?

I Soft Machine hanno cinque anni sulle spalle, e qualche migliaio di esercizi gli uni diversi dagli altri. Sono nati in quartetto, si sono ridotti e moltiplicati, hanno diviso cervello e denaro per finire e ricominciare l'istante dopo: e tra le loro mani sono passati mille generi, dal jazz duro al rock più marcio, a una sbilenca psichedelìa che in fondo è stata il talismano della loro poca popolarità. Con quella musica in mano (starnuti strumentali, vocine allo zabaglione, piccole marcette cacofoniche - ritmo) il complesso ha infatti disegnato due LP's almeno, spinto da un Robert Wyatt bellissimo quanto testardo nelle sue decisioni - (già affiora il dubbio e si profila lo scontro: da una parte Robert e la pazzìa scalcinata, e l'amore per le capriole e il gusto per una capovolta geometrìa, dall'altra Ratledge e la voglia di un clima più asettico, diciamo un jazz elegantemente stravolto, diciamo un affilato gioco d'arabeschi...) - ma poi molte cose sono cambiate, il trio dei primi albums è diventato quartetto, e c'è un sax, c'è Elton Dean che freme in gabbie coltraniane

e Hugh Hopper non più disposto a tacere e una serie di collaboratori che bussano alla porta, che accadrà dunque?

Soft Machine Third viene fuori da questa intricata situazione. Ognuno vuol narrare la propria fiaba, nessuno pare accettare la sintonìa del prossimo; e pure, in una scacchiera tanto dissestata, sa imporsi un clima magico e terribile, un'atmosfera dì velluto e di tenui colori che nessuno (nemmeno i Soft medesimi, se solo escludiamo il fiore matto del 5) saprà mai raggiungere nel seguito della storia. La bellezza dell'opera sta in questo, fondamentalmente: ché ognuno va per la sua strada e suona il suo strumento e traccia le linee personali, e sembra dimenticarsi del resto, ma poi tutto coagula, va a parare in aree comuni, si fa denso e solido e « completo ». Non parliamo strumentalmente, certo, dove invece la comunione è data per sicura ed affermata a grandi strilli in ogni riga del disco: ma nell'ambito della composizione, se è vero che Ratledge, Hopper e Wyatt sputano sentenze diversissime chiedendo a turno la parola e Dean, quello che pure non compone niente, ha idee lucidissime e cinicamente personali, qualche migliaio d'anni luce dì distanza dagli altri.

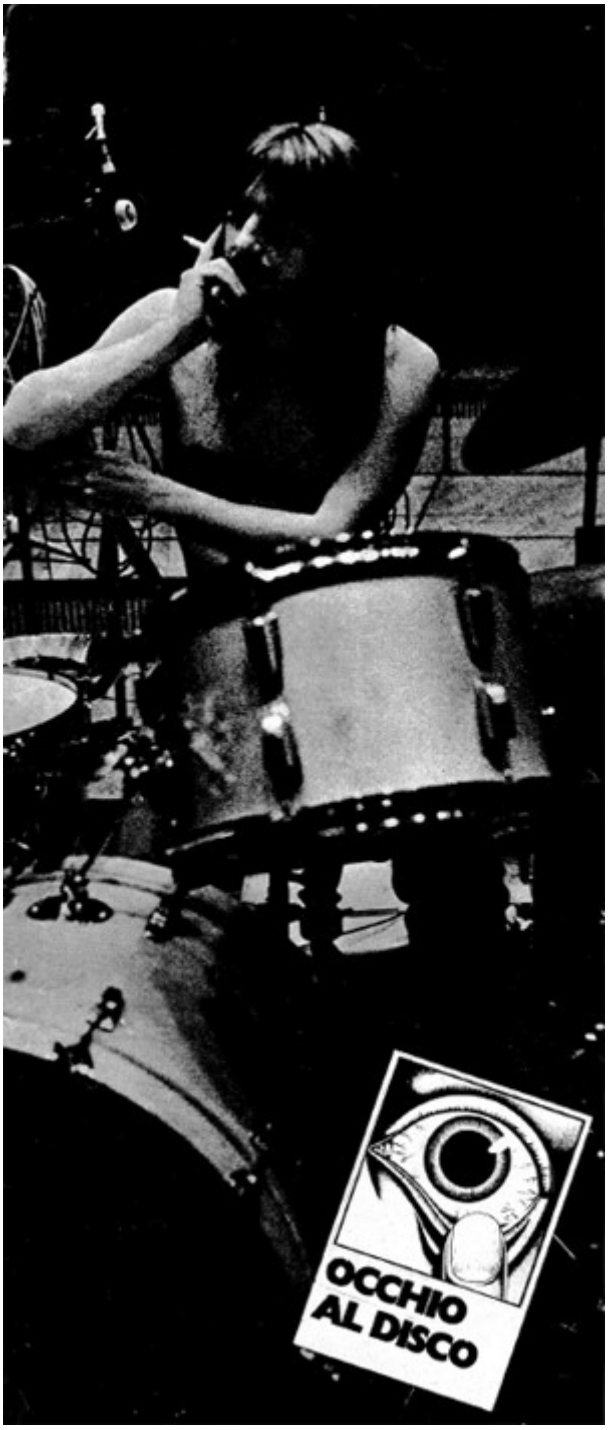


> Zoom

Insomma, cento tasselli da comporre, mille emozioni su cui lavorare e rapida altalena di stili: un'alchimìa pericolosa che pure riesce completamente, nel nome della immaginazione sfrenata e della fantasia da sogno. Gli strumenti viaggiano lungo elastiche traiettorie, si incontrano e poi fuggono concedendo poco all'intimo orgoglio - manca l'aria per gli assoli e si procede più che altro a cervelli uniti, tutti si muovono a passi eguali, le misure sono perfette... Lo spettro di Riley va e viene, a zampillar note con spiccioli d'ingenuità, e gli fanno corona ombre rivisitate di *bigband* (perché no?), parole vaganti di sperimentalismo, vernici ritmiche sorte dal nulla - nessuno è padrone della musica Soft Machine!

Facelift, M brano iniziale, (sono quattro le composizioni, una per facciata, lunghe e dense così come i brani dei LP's precedenti erano brevi e on po' senza sale...) è un collage luminosissimo di Mike Ratledge, dove già si agita il folletto animatore del disco — cambi di umore, breaks d'emozioni, colori pallidi e luci violente. C'è del rumorismo gratuito, all'inizio, un omaggio ingenuo a un certo infinito sonoro; e poi gli strumenti corrono senza catena, ora blandi ora irritati, in una sfera musicale che pur se confusa riesce ad abbagliare egualmente. Ratledge,

soprattutto, mette in mostra alle tastiere quel suo ispido « fare strumentale » che poi diverrà « classico » in tutta la parabola Soft Machine: un colpo ai registri acuti, e lunghe fughe piene di idee e di ripensamenti, senza mai staccar le mani dai dolci tasti.



Tutto si volge con tranquilla eccitazione, linearmente ma con scoppi e cambi di scena un po' dappertutto; e dunque Ratledge tace e poi riappare e poi cede il posto a Dean (suo il finale spettacoloso, con un certo jazz rivisitato febbrilmente), e poi s'inchina pure a Jimmy Hastings, flautista amico e collaboratore, che regala qualche scampolo di saggezza a Ian Anderson e compagni nel corso di un mirabile a solo condotto in perfetta unione con Wyatt.

Slightly All Time, il secondo brano, rincara la dose, ripulendo da eccessi e sbavature la tela Soft, regalando il sapore eccitante di un suono libero e tranquillo, calibratamente lontano da aspre avventure. Anche qui il quadro muta di continuo, anche qui gli strumenti fanno girar la testa nella beata calma raggiunta: e Hopper è protagonista di un elettrico inizio, Wyatt regala il meglio di sé con morbida bravura, Dean salta con forza tra lirismo e vigore, in una fiera di « ottime cose » dove una volta di più lo stile perde i connotati e la lingua, si srotola invano - jazz, nuova musica o che altro? Va detto soprattutto, ad ogni modo, del nuovo linguaggio espressivo imposto alla gente; la chitarra non esiste, mangiata in fretta e con gusto, e i fiati (Dean raramente da solo, e più spesso in eccellenti impasti con Nick Evans, Lynn Dobson e il già citato Hastings) regalano manciate di « cose nuove », facendo capire che ancie e ottoni non devono certo morire nell'orto stretto di jazz « classico » o di perfido R&B. Una lezione in più, che va ad aggiungersi al grande arcobaleno Pink Floyd; saranno queste le spinte decisive che porteranno il pop alla più devastante maturità, alle opere decisive e solenni del '69-71, quando la timbrica del nuovo genere toccherà vertici esaltanti ben oltre il panorama di basso-chitarra-batteria.

Out Bloody Radgeous, il secondo brano di Ratledge sulla strada dell'album, non fa che riprendere questo tema di nuovo jazz stravolto con violenti accessi fiatistici, con Dean e Evans scatenati in rapide serpentine eccitanti. Le frasi sono concise sino alla nevrosi, il ritmo s'impone all'ascoltatore mozzando in due il respiro; e forse c'è un solo difetto, che talvolta pesa e talvolta no, quella patina non sgrezzata degli strumenti, quel « portare il suono » confuso e un po' irritante che stride molto con la dolce brillantezza della musica. Ma la cosa più notevole del brano sta nel « cappello » e nella fine, in quel piccolo affresco tastieristico voluto da Ratledge dove i rumori descrivono cerchi e grandi figure, e nascono e muoiono gli uni vicinissimo agli altri; un omaggio a Terry Riley che il *group* avrà ben presente anni più tardi, quando con minor ingenuità (e un pizzico in più di « mestiere ») verrà fuori il *Soft Weed Factory*, piccolo gioiello del sesto album.

L'ultimo brano, l'incredibile *Moon in June* di Wyatt, suona un po' come beffa ed elemento di rottura, in tanta limpida geometrìa. Nella sfera di cristallo del complesso, nel mondo di

spigoli appuntiti e di vetri lucenti, di vibrazioni elettritche e perfette, Wyatt getta infatti bucce dì banana, cartacce e detriti mentali, tutto il peso, insomma, del suo cervello approdato a sconcertanti Conclusioni dopo mille anni di pensamento. Così la volta celeste scricchiola e si piega, e il sole prende a risplendere « dall'altra parte »: e il jazz-non jazz del complesso si tappa la bocca, per consentire l'avvento di una miracolosa sonorità dove nulla è più definito e tutto, a cominciare dalle spiegazioni, ha da essere inventato.

Il ritmo si spezza di continuo, la batterìa è petulante sino all'insulto fisico; e Wyatt canta, sputa parole, ci assalta con marmellata di voce, facendo leva su quei falsetti allucinati che un giorno ci imprigioneranno senza pietà, nella ragnatela Matching Mole. Si va avanti così, sul piano inclinato di un suono trovato per strada, con l'organo noioso e pure decisivo, con il basso ormai altrove, con cento giochi di prestigio che vanno dal coniglio estratto per le orecchie alla torta in faccia. E non è che la danza si attenui col passar del tempo, che i minuti portino noia e sonnolenza e distrazione: anzi, l'orgasmo sta proprio alla fine, quando Ratledge pone mano all'organo e scrive vorticosamente, quando ogni cosa scoppia e assistiamo increduli a un insano chiacchierare strumentale la più bella cosa di Robert dopo *Las Vegas Tango*!

Crollano muri da ogni parte, insomma, e l'aria è ormai irrespirabile; e con dischi come questo, e come Ummagumma e come il primo e pur ambiguo King Crimson il funerale Beatles è completo, la festa è al culmine e attende solo l'impazzimento necessario. A questo punto le torri sono state conquistate, il jazz non è più un mostro sacro, il libro della tradizione è ficcato in gola e così oltre: e davvero alla luce del disco sembra intravvedersi una strada grande e piena di fiori stranissimi, con l'immaginazione finalmente in cielo e tutta una serie di operazioni demistificatrici dove più del genere e dell'« importanza stilistica» conta il risultato, l'avvenimento sulla pelle.

Non sarà così, o almeno la ruota non girerà completamente in questa direzione: ma poco importa, in fondo, se di quella illusione restano opere come questa, se rimane l'allucinato vivere di *Moon in June* o il bellissimo enigma, di *Slightly All Time*. Se resta il mondo pazzo e colorato dei Soft Machine « veri », quelli che con Zappa, il Dylan « giovane », i Jefferson e uno sparuto drappello di altri coraggiosi dipinsero i muri dei nostri sogni pop, tanto e tanto tempo fa...

Riccardo Bertoncelli

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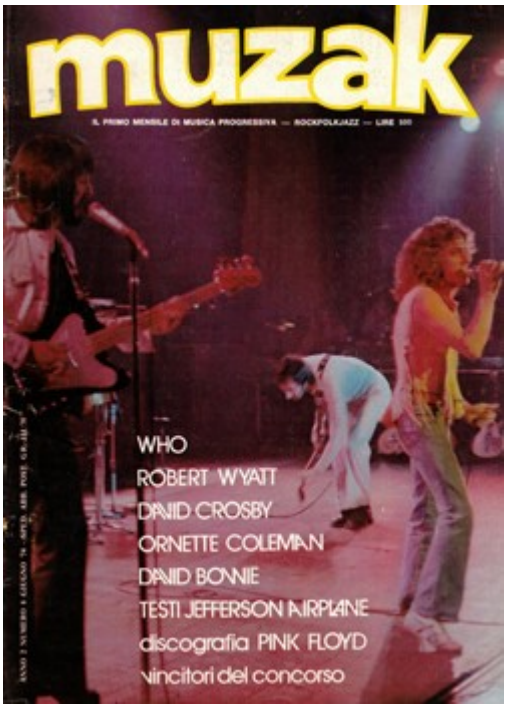
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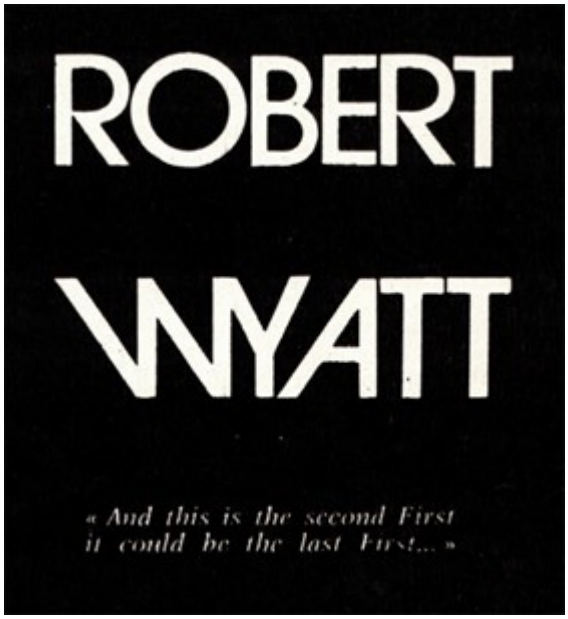
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Robert Wyatt - Muzak - Anno 2 - Numero 8 - Giugno 1974





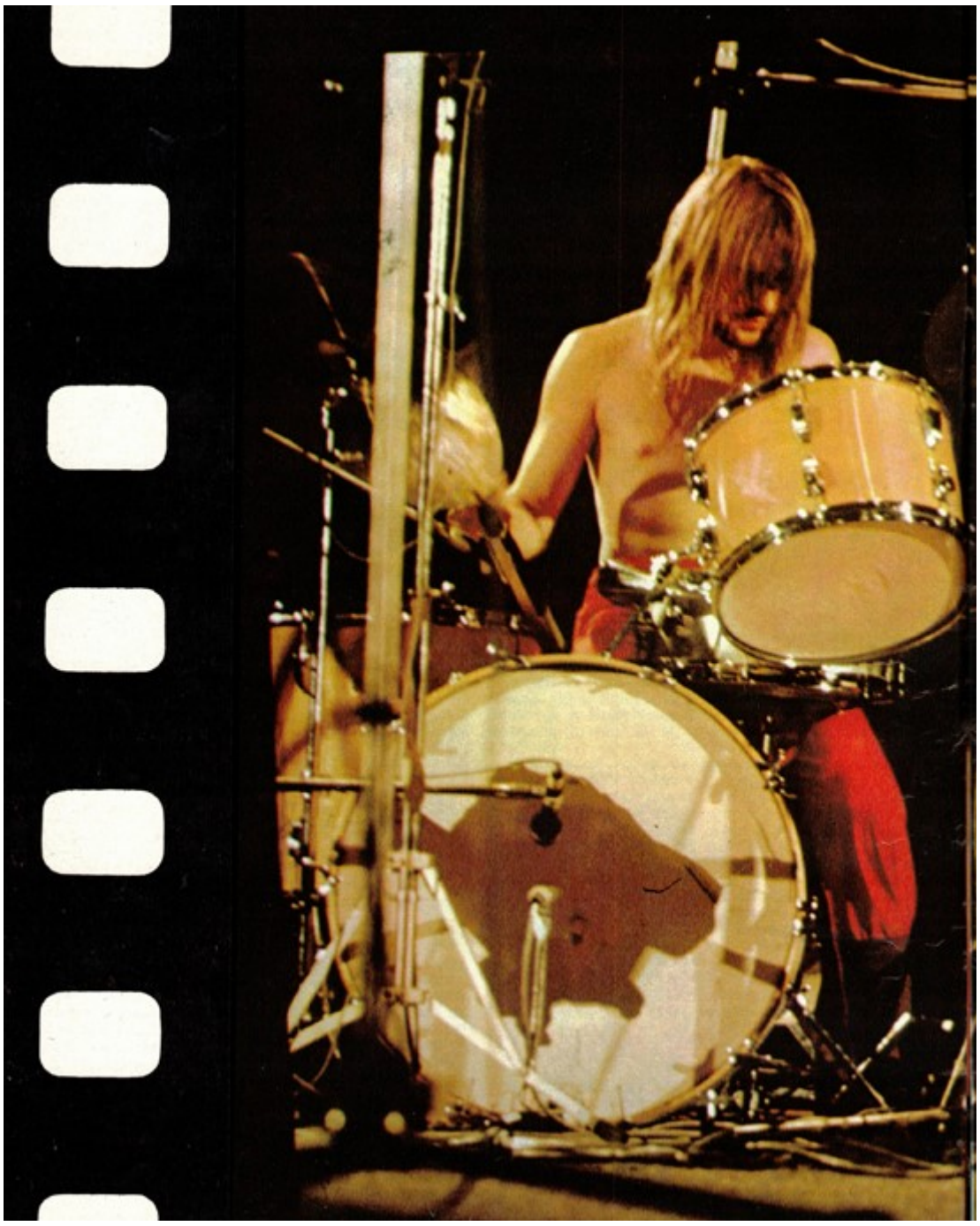
...un apprendista dentista di Canterbury, attratto in egual misura dal free di Cecil Taylor, il bop di Charlie Parker, l'elettronica ed i pot-head-pixies dell'amico Daevid Allen (The Alien Daevyd), suo compagno di viaggio nei Wilde Flowers prima e nei Soft poi, bande di hobbit alla ricerca di Qualcosa...

Why Are We Sleeping? ci chiedeva già Bob in tempi lontani, dai solchi di un album inciso per caso negli States, dopo una serie di concerti come spalla di un promettente chitarrista di colore, J.H.; e già allora c'era qualcosa che ti entrava dentro, forse l'esile roca quasi femminea voce ed i suoi scarni messaggi a doppio senso, « Save Yourself! », forse la certezza del mondo bacato e fiabesco nascosto dietro le più sottili sfumature del suono.

Wyatt riuscirà a cantare l'alfabeto, poco più tardi, nelle terre « psichedeliche » e dissacranti di « Volume Two », tra una citazione dada ed un'esplicita confessione dela propria totale incapacità di sintonizzarsi sulla lunghezza d'onda della Vita Ufficiale, del RRRealismo a tutti i costi: un collage provocatorio ma lucidissimo che è la foto di un'era, l'autodistruzione finale che prelude a tempi terribilmente più costruttivi.

Per esplodere: « Moon In June » (su « Third »), un piccolo grande miracolo di elettricità che chiunque ricorda come il momento più lirico della pur lunga storia dei Soft, e che rappresenta in assoluto uno dei più fascinosi esempi di « pop »: perché la sua realtà è la nostra, è il nodo alla gola di chi sente vivere dentro di sé un mondo troppo complesso, troppo profondo per poter essere espresso con strumenti comuni... ma che sa trovare l'estasi, la gioia, la disperazione nelle cose più semplici e più ignorate, una dimensione umana che dietro l'angolo della paranoia. Un'operazione tesa a scavare impietosamente nella mente di chi ascolta, giocando con irritante naturalezza sulla ricettività di ogni senso. E tutto questo per un solo istante di smarrimento o di consapevolezza, un ricordo ancestrale ed un dolore di oggi...

> Zoom



WYATT

Chi è dunque questo personaggio enigmatico (?) e sfuggente, semplice ma labirintico, che tutti hanno sentito nominare ma che pochi conoscono davvero, lo stesso che rifiutava l'invoincombenti sul suo vecchio gruppo rifugiandosi (nel luzione ed il cerebralismo 1970!) in opere stupefacenti come « The End Of An Ear »? Che riusciva a portare un calore quasi mediterraneo nella sua poesia, che si proclamava ispirato da « Alice nel paese delle meraviglie » e che rifiutava di parlare del suo passato, sempre teso alla ricerca, dell'attimo, del presente?

«End Of An Ear», si diceva, è la chiave essenziale per penetrare il suo mondo: sogni che il Melody Maker ha pensato bene ignorare, e che non possono certo essere venduti a peso, o funzionalizzati alla ricerca del « migliore » di un referendum straccione. Sono i tempi in cui imperversa un Ginger Baker, e ci si può anche dimenticare di chi cerca (già, Robert è un «batterista ») nuove dimensioni in ogni singolo momento della propria espressione: ma il disco non lascia certo il tempo di perdersi in quisquilie tecniche, di osservare la

raffinatezza e la pulizia del gioco strumentale di Wyatt.

Perché l'impatto avviene a mille livelli, tutti egualmente significativi ed importanti: e l'elemento che lega e coordina ogni grido, intuizione, immagine sfugge ad ogni classificazione di comodo. Da una parte il recupero di alcuni temi (o meglio, non-temi) di derivazione jazzistica, alla ricerca di una libertà assoluta da qualsiasi schematismo o limitazione: il pensiero come unica forza motrice, e pochi scarni strumenti ad esplorare in assoluta autonomia il proprio mondo, senza mai scontrarsi o castrarsi a vicenda, ma conservando una perfetta coordinazione ed unità di fondo. Dall'altra musica che vive ogni singolo particolare con incredibile attenzione, ma che non perde mai di vista i propri scopi: un messaggio importante ripetuto in mille forme ma sostanzialmente semplicissimo.

Dove l'ascoltatore diviene finalmente il punto di partenza, e non il terminale del suono, abbandonando la propria « storica » passività; dove gli stimoli al ribaltamento di ogni assioma formale si fanno violentissimi, ed ogni stantia formula schiava della musica-consumo muore di morte naturale.

Interpretiamo come deliri brani come « Las Vegas Tango », se vogliamo: ma a ben vedere c'è tutta una limpida chiarezza d'intenti dietro alle morbide-magiche acrobazie del suono, capace di minare seriamente la cultura mistificante su cui lo show-business ha fondato la sua opprimente potenza.

Oltre i livelli della nostra percezione! ci ammonisce Bob: non è sempre tempo di « good vibrations », e questo è il momento buono per un radicale rinnovamento. Il simbolico orecchio del titolo, sembra sogghignare il nostro, in realtà non ha fine: a meno che noi stessi non vogliamo porre limiti precisi (culturali, sensoriali, emotivi...) alla capacità di Ascoltare, di comunicare, di esprimere.

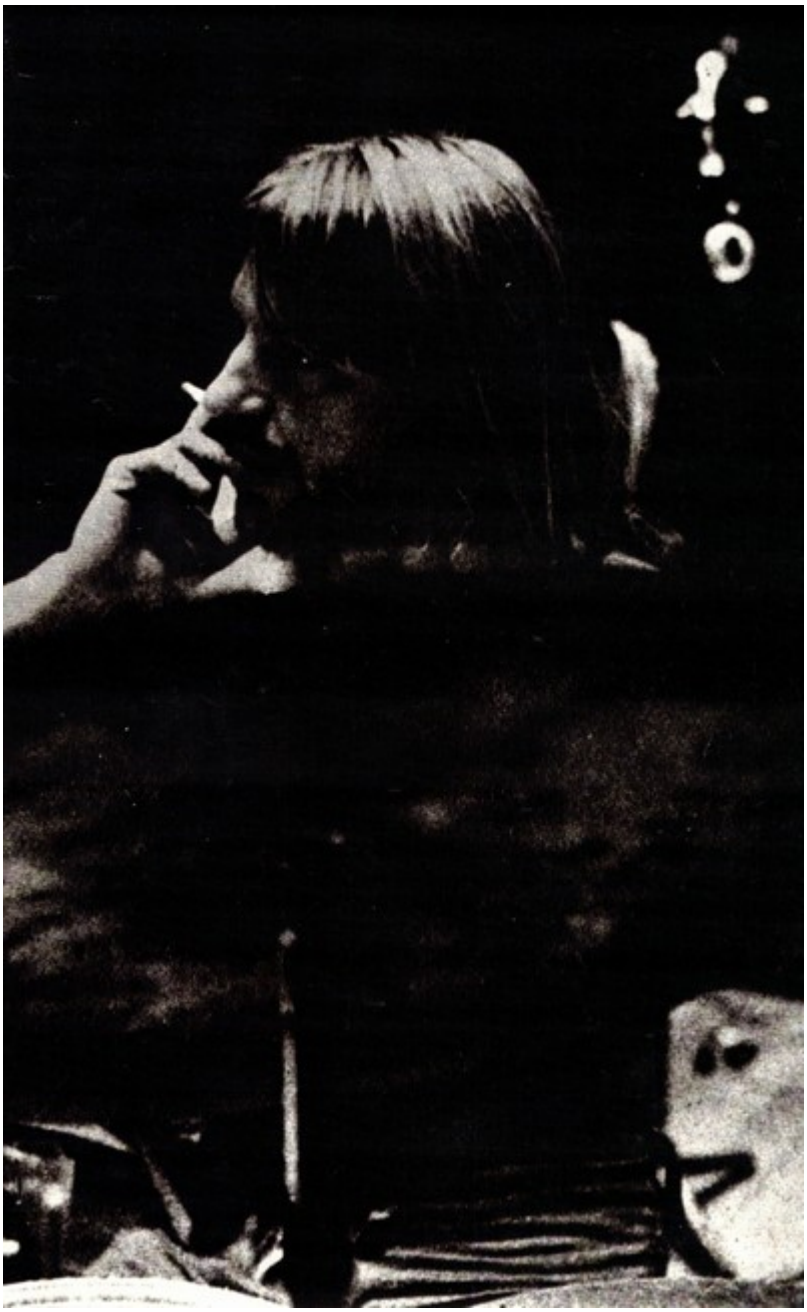
Un segnale di fumo che troppi sono impreparati a ricevere, e che cade tristemente nel vuoto: certo, non è semplice né comodo accettare di rimettere in discussione *ogni cosa*, e miriadi di Ten Years After e di Simon & Garfunkel sorridono dalle pagine dei giornaletti...

Ma il seme è stato gettato: ed anche se il successo commerciale resterà sempre un sogno lontano, la figura del musicista ne resterà comunque profondamente influenzata. Bob lascia i Soft Machine, prigionieri del gelido Dean, e tenta un'avventura davvero sua con i compagni di sempre, Phil Miller, David Sinclair... il gruppo si chiamerà Matching Mole (da un'assonanza con la traduzione francese di « Soft Machine », e cioè « Machine Molle »): ma le strade battute saranno ben lontane da quelle predilette da Ratledge.

Fin dal primo album: che forse non è un capolavoro come « End Of An Ear », ma che tenta di continuare il discorso di « Moon In June » con un'ancora più vasta scelta di toni e colori, ritornando nello stesso tempo ad una maggiore linearità. Pochi momenti sperimentali, molte atmosfere delicate e dolcissime, da « Caroline » — un vecchio motivo d'amore scritto a 14 anni — a «Signed Curtain»: e stupende armonie vocali ad accavallarsi e a dissolversi, trascinando irresistibilmente ogni fibra del tuo corpo in meandri tutti da scoprire. Bob mostra di essere, oltre che un musicista poliedrico e completo, un abile alchimista del suono: le note del suo mellotron godono di una fluidità incantevole, e la successione delle atmosfere riesce sempre viva, accattivante, convincente.

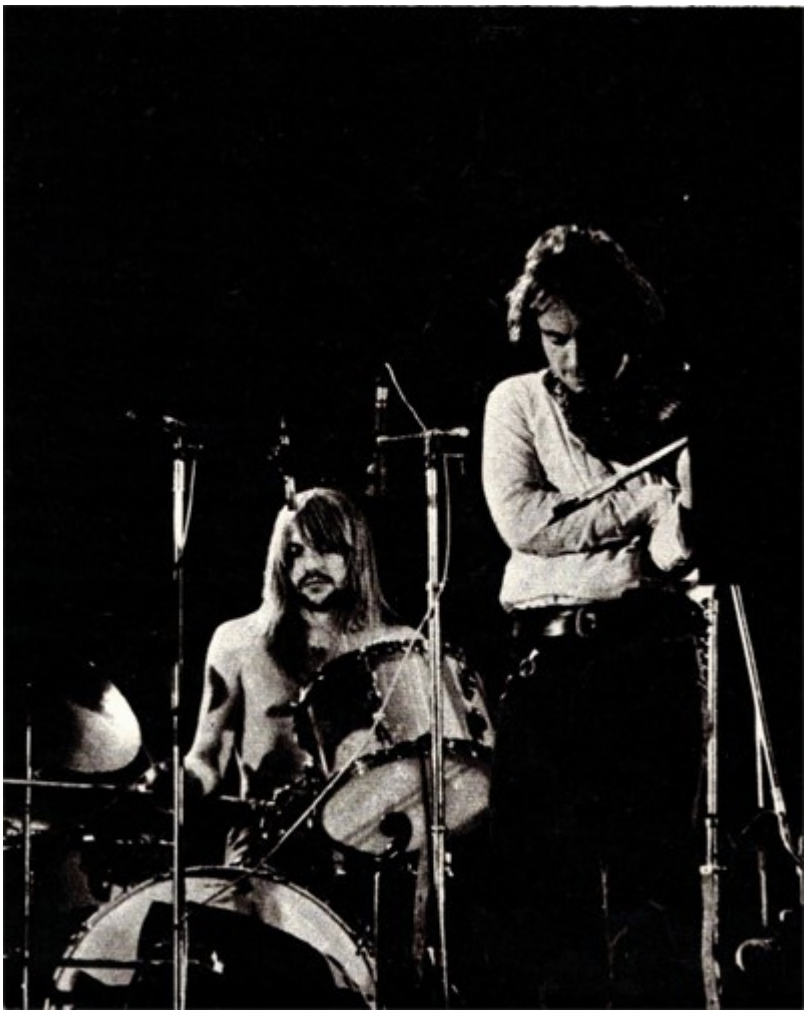
L'organo di Sinclair, il suo caratteristico timbro « sporco » e leggero a cadenzare ogni situazione, nebbie impalpabili e frasi appena sussurrate, o la chitarra perennemente distorta di Miller... ogni elemento concorre con invidiabile semplicità alla concretizzazione di ogni spunto: l'improvvisazione diviene automaticamente la unica vera direttrice, ed il respiro di chi suona entra in sincronia con la creazione stessa.

Un lavoro, un'altra gemma: ma anche qui l'aggancio con il grosso pubblico non riesce: « II Sound manca di spettacolarità », e così le figure dei musicisti: i Bowie ed i Cooper covano nella ombra, e troppe persone hanno perso gusto e sensibilità nel frastuono dei decibel in eccesso, nelle melensaggini senza cuore dei Tops Of The Pops. Quando esce « Little Red Record » (e la copertina, con i musicisti vestiti da Guardie Rosse a sventolare il libretto, è un'ultima amara stilettata per chi vive di miti ed icone, di schemi schemi solo schemi) la terra è già bruciata: sarà il colpo di grazia per tutte le illusdoni residue.



Dave McRae, più jazzistico, etereo e metallico di Sinclair, è il nuovo pianista: il suono sembra ritornare sulle strade più complesse dei migliori Soft, pur conservando i suoi caratteristici elementi fantastici e visionari. C'è una nuova ansia di ricerca, in ogni caso: la comprensione della necessità di un'espressione dinamica si traduce in una continua tensione verso una nota, un'idea diversa e più significativa, e nemmeno la produzione di Fripp riesce a frustrare la felicita « anarcoide » di momenti come « Gloria Gloom » o « Righteous Rumba ». I Matching Mole afferrano la sostanza più densa del tuo corpo e la fanno vibrare, in una molteplice serie di combinazioni sonore che riescono sempre ad entrare in intimo rapporto con la sensibilità di chi ascolta; un magma strumentale ipnotico, straordinariamente immaginifico ed « in sintonia », destinato ancora una volta a coinvolgere nella perfezione di ogni sfumatura.

Ma è la fine, decretano i mostruosi conformismi dei media, troppo occupati ad inseguire burattini rigurgitanti lustrini: la fiaba finisce all'incontrano, abbandonando i suoi protagonisti senza gloria né denaro né fama né soddisfazione. Mc Rae sceglie i Nucleus, Miller torna con i vecchi amici di Canterbury in Hatfield And The North; Wyatt ha la magra consolazione di vedere pubblicato « New Violìn Summit », con la sua esibizione al festival di Berlino nel 71, e di essere per questo riconosciuto (era ora...) come uno dei « più brillanti batteristi europei ». Il resto è cronaca. Nel giugno 73, durante un party, Bob vola da una finestra al quarto piano. La prognosi è riservata, e la cartella clinica parla di una paurosa serie di fratture: Wyatt vivrà, ma le sue gambe resteranno per sempre paralizzate.



Un dramma che si consuma in silenzio, solo poche righe della « stampa specializzata » — l'uomo non fa notizia —, la costernazione degli amici di sempre, il lavoro dei nuovi Matching Mole (Bill McCormick, Francis Monkman, Gary Windo) stroncato sul nascere. Dopo dieci anni di attività Bob si ritrova con cinque sterline in banca (sic), e la prospettiva di una lunghissima convalescenza.

Quattro mesi dopo l'incidente, Soft Machine e Pink Floyd — già compagni di stenti in notti londinesi del '67, l'UFO ed i primi sussulti di pop — si esibiscono devolvendo l'intero incasso al musicista, mentre si aprono altre sottoscrizioni. Vengono raccolte diecimila sterline: Robert annuncia la sua intenzione di *continuare*, anche solo come cantante o tastierista. D'altronde — si riflette — è un vero pluristrumentista: suonava la chitarra con Allen in « Banana Moon », il basso, perfino la tromba in un trio parigino di tanto tempo fa, accanto a Daevid Allen ed al piano di Terry Riley... una formazione di boogie woogie, proprio così...

E poi lo abbiamo ritrovato in un mattono di maggio, una foto sull'album di Hatfield And The North che ce lo presenta distrutto, inchiodato ad una sedia a rotelle, ma ancora la sua inconfondibile voce per pochi istanti, e già centinaia di mondi che si aprono...

Continuare. Robert Wyatt ci ha regalato l'incanto del momento e la complessità del pensiero, abbandonando i paurosi e gli imitatori sulle comode strade del « rock-jazz » o di qualsiasi altro discorso troppo semplice; è divenuto un paria della scena inglese per trovare una conoscenza illimitata — e le sue opere sono fonti inesauribili di spunti ed idee, il passato ed il futuro... —, con una determinazione lontana da ogni calcolo utilitaristico quanto lucida e beata, paga della propria stupenda consapevolezza.

Marco Fumagallì
Foto: Roberto Masotti

DISCOGRAFIA

1970 « The End Of An Ear » (CBS)
con i Soft Machine:
1967 « Rock Generation: The Soft Machine » (Byg)
1968 « The Soft Machine » (Probe)
1969 « The Soft Machine Volume Two » (Probe)
1970 « Third » (CBS)
1971 « Fourth » (CBS)
con i Matching Mole:
1972 « Matching Mole » (CBS)
1973 « Little Red Record » (CBS)
con altri artisti:
1971 Daevid Allen: « Banana Moon » (Byg/actuel)
1972 Ponty, Sugar Cane Harris, Brantner, Urbaniak: « New Violin Summit » (MPS)
1974 Hatfield And The North (Virgin)

ROBERT WYATT

Una figura apparentemente quanto mai anacronistica nella propria coerenza, e che serve egregiamente a farci comprendere come la gestione della sempre e comunque affidata a ben altri crani.
Bob ha avuto il coraggio di addentare la routine ed il risaputo, sacrificando la possibilità di una tranquilla carriera — e proviamo a pensare al pallore dei Soft Machine di oggi, ibridi e poveri di spirito — per incarnare silenziosamente la propria purissima fame di sogni e di Emozioni, per aprire in assoluta autonomia una inesauribile strada di autentica ricerca.
E proprio questo è il suo maggiore merito: avere scardinato senza troppi clamori i cancelli soffocanti del «genere musicale», ma anche di avere rifiutato la comoda aureola del «genio underground»...
Per regalare *a tutti* un suggerimento prezioso, un modo di vivere dentro la realtà e fuori dalla realtà, in una limpida ricerca di...

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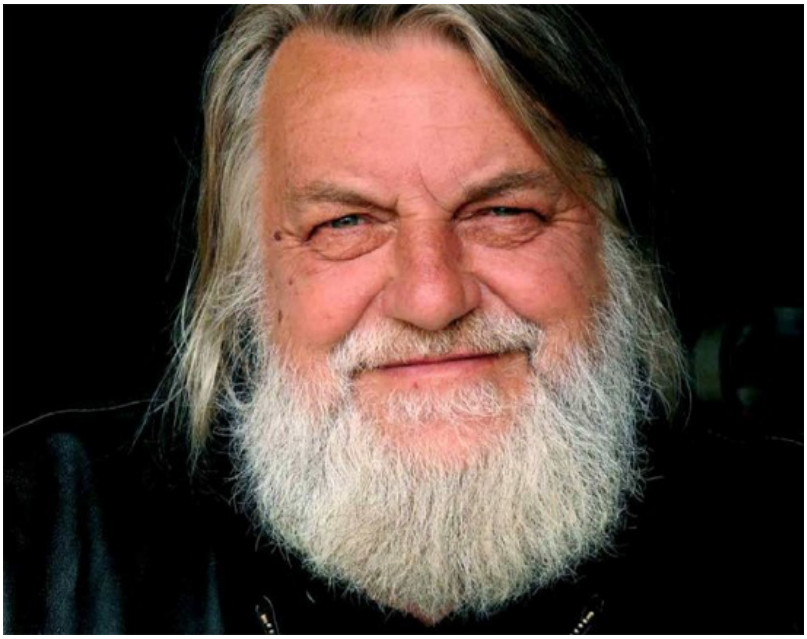
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Robert Wyatt Rock Bottom: Experimentele vrijheid - Heaven #3 - Mei/Jun 2024



ROBERT WYATT

Experimentele vrijheid



ROBERT WYATT, DE CHARISMATISCHE DRUMMER/ZANGER OP DE EERSTE VIER PLATEN VAN DE BRITSE BAND THE SOFT MACHINE, VIEL OP 1 JUNI 1973 UIT EEN RAAM EN ZOU DAARVAN NOOIT MEER VOLLEDIG HERSTELLEN. ZIJN VERDERE LEVEN BLEEF HIJ AFHANKELIJK VAN EEN ROLSTOEL. WAT DOET DAT MET EEN MENS? MEDIO 1974 VERBAASDE HIJ VRIEND EN VIJAND MET ROCK BOTTOM. IN DEZE VIJFDE BIJDRAGE VAN WIM BOT EN PETER DE RUITER STAAN ZIJ STIL BIJ DIT MEESTERWERK. EERDERE STUKKEN VAN BOT EN DE RUITER GINGEN OVER JIMI HENDRIX' LEGENDARISCHE LIVE VERTOLKING VAN *MACHINE GUN*, HET ALBUM L.A. WOMAN (1971) VAN THE DOORS, HET DEBUUTALBUM (1972) VAN ROXY MUSIC EN OVER-NITE SENSATION (1973) VAN FRANK ZAPPA EN THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION.

ROCK BOTTOM is het fraaie en onbetwiste meesterwerk van Robert Wyatt (79), een musicus die een speciaal plekje in ons hart heeft. Hij is de schepper van een uniek oeuvre, dat gekenmerkt wordt door een samenspel van meerlaagse keyboards, subtiele percussie en een bijzondere, breekbare, hoge stem. Wyatt excelleerde als drummer, maar niet minder als zanger in de jaren dat hij met The Soft Machine aan de weg begon te timmeren. Hij was een van de oprichters van deze experimentele band en de spil. Wyatt drumde tijdens concerten vaak met ontbloot bovenlichaam, in een stijl die gerust uniek mag heten, ook met zijn handen en af en toe zelfs met zijn vuisten. Soms raakte hij volledig in trance en leek hij ver weg. Hoeveel alcohol en drugs hij er in die tijd doorheen joeg, geen idee. Weinig was het niet.

Wyatt heeft een kleine schare trouwe liefhebbers. Er zijn nogal wat mensen die zijn keyboardwerk zenuwslopend gepriegel vinden en zijn falsetto irritant. Smaken verschillen en dat is maar goed ook. Voor ons is Wyatt een artiest die diverse soorten muziek in een volstrekt eigen idioom heeft verwerkt, dat vanzelfsprekend schatplichtig is aan The Soft Machine en de progressieve bands van de Canterbury scene, zoals Caravan en Matching Mole, maar daar uiteindelijk bovenuit stijgt. Vooral omdat Wyatt in zijn composities en interpretaties en met zijn ijle zang altijd zocht naar totale muzikale vrijheid, zoals een vogel in de lucht. Het is muziek die ademt en ruimte schept. ROCK BOTTOM is een hoogtepunt. De enige albums die naar ons idee in de buurt komen van zo'n zoektocht zijn de meest jazzy platen van Joni Mitchell, zoals HEJIRA uit 1976.

Drama

Robert Wyatt kreeg bekendheid als drummer en zanger van The Soft Machine die eind jaren zestig indruk maakte met hun experimentele, psychedelische sound. Het een plaatkant lang durende jazzy *Moon In June* van dubbelaar THIRD (1970), gecomponeerd door Wyatt, is een voorbode van zijn latere solowerk. Wyatt werkte als drummer in de herfst van 1970 ook nog mee aan het album FOURTH, maar verliet de band al snel na de studio-opnames. Hij zegt zich nu nog maar weinig van die tijd te kunnen herinneren en er niet met plezier aan terug te denken. Hij spreekt zelfs over een traumatische ervaring, traumatischer dan de val uit het raam en de verlamming die erop volgde. Hij richtte de groep Matching Mole op en maakte in 1970 ook nog eens het soloalbum THE END OF AN EAR.





Maar Wyatts echte solocarrière begon - daar zijn alle critici en ook hijzelf het over eens - pas na dat grote drama in zijn leven: de val uit een raam in totale dronkenschap op een feest op 1 juni 1973, waardoor hij vanaf zijn middel verlamd raakte. Na een maandenlang verblijf in het ziekenhuis kwam hij in een rolstoel terecht en was het drummen met zijn voeten voorbij. Voor altijd.

ROCK BOTTOM lijkt op het eerste gehoor een aangrijpend verslag van dit persoonlijke drama. Zes nummers, drie per kant, het ene nog mooier dan het andere; sommige echt liedjes, andere uitdijende experimenten. *Sea Song* is de majestueuze opener, een fantastisch liefdeslied over zijn vrouw en muze Alfreda (Alfie) Benge, met een door Indiase klassieke muziek beïnvloed langdurig orgel-outro. *A Last Straw* lijkt het drama aan te kondigen en heeft subtiel slidegitaarwerk van Wyatt zelf. In *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road* hoor je het moment van de val en een onheilspellende solo van de Zuid-Afrikaanse trompettist Mongezi Feza, over stormachtige percussie, keyboards en angstaanjagende zang (*Oh no, I can't stand it, Stop please*) heen. Bijzonder is dat het tweede deel van het nummer, het achterwaarts gespeelde eerste deel is, waar alleen bassist Richard Sinclair overheen speelt. Sinclair vergeleek die ervaring eens met een Lsd-trip. Het nummer én de eerste plaatkant eindigen met een voordracht van spoken word-kunstenaar avant la lettre Ivor Cutler.





Linksboven: drummer bij The Soft Machine in 1967; Rechtsboven: in het ziekenhuis na de fatale val in 1973, met zijn vrouw Alfie; Links: oorspronkelijke hoes van Rock Bottom; Boven: hoes van heruitgave

Op kant B staan *Alifib* en Alifie, wederom liefdesbetuigingen aan zijn vrouw Alfie. *Alifie* bevat een conversatie met haar met een maffe surrealistische tekst en prachtig saxofoonwerk van Gary Windo. De nummers beginnen met de hoorbare ademhaling van Wyatt als percussie-intro. Het afsluitende *Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road* begint als een meeslepende Canterbury-klassieker, met de viola van Fred Frith en karakteristiek gitaarwerk van Mike Oldfield, en ook deze plaatkant eindigt met een door Cutler voorgedragen tekst.

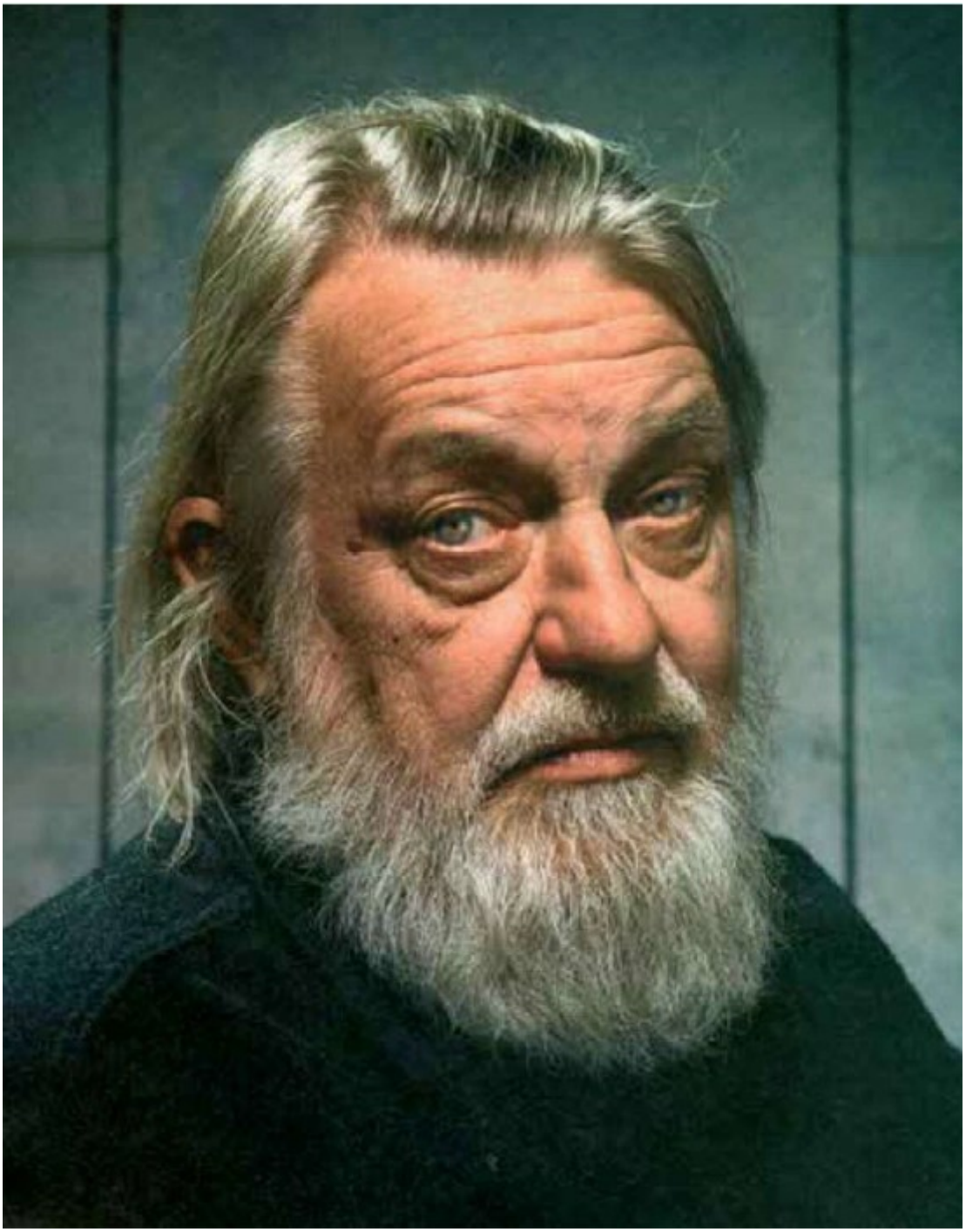
Onderwater

ROCK BOTTOM lijkt een direct verslag van het ongeval, maar die wat voor de hand liggende interpretatie is bedrieglijk. Nogal wat van het materiaal was namelijk al vóór de val geschreven in Venetië, waar Alfie deel uitmaakte van de filmcrew van Nicolas Roeg die er de thriller *Don't Look Now* opnam. Wyatt componeerde veel op het daar door Alfie aangeschafte goedkope Riviera-orgel dat zo karakteristiek is voor de sound van ROCK BOTTOM en later solowerk. Producer Nick Mason - de drummer van Pink Floyd - koos op suggestie van Mike Oldfield voor een meersporenopname van het in vergelijking met andere merken nogal bescheiden orgel. De lagunestad bood volgens Wyatt de inspiratie voor *Sea Song*.

INTENS MAAR OOK ZACHT EN GERUSTSTELLEND, DE ABSTRACTE SCHETSEN VAN PIJN, VERLIES EN LIJDEN

Toch is de traumatische ervaring van de val wel van invloed geweest op het eindresultaat. In het ziekenhuis werkte Wyatt onder soms moeilijke omstandigheden verder aan de nummers. Daardoor kon hij de muziek naar eigen zeggen in vrijheid doordenken en ontwikkelen. ROCK BOTTOM is zodoende een album geworden met een volstrekt eigen klankbeeld en een unieke sfeer. Zoals de Engelse Wikipedia het samenvat: 'Intens maar ook zacht en geruststellend, de abstracte schetsen van pijn, verlies en lijden op het album worden afgewisseld door levendige flitsen van liefde en herstel'.





De zang van Wyatt is van een droevige kwetsbaarheid, soms tegen het valse aan, maar o zo mooi. Wyatt heeft meermaals gezegd dat de verlamming paradoxaal genoeg een bevrijding voor hem was: hij was geen drummer meer en geen lid van een band, maar een muzikant die zelfstandig kon componeren, een unieke zangstijl wist te ontwikkelen en bevriende gastmuzikanten kon vragen mee te spelen op zijn platen. Hij gaat zelfs zover te zeggen dat als God de rolstoel had uitgevonden, hij mensen die als natuurlijk alternatief had moeten aanbieden voor benen. Het beeld dat Wyatt voor ogen had bij het schrijven van de tracks voor ROCK BOTTOM was dat van de zeebodem: 'Op de bodem van de oceaan zijn dingen die even raar en gek zijn als wat mensen zich voorstellen bij Mars. En muzikaal lijkt mijn landschap meer en meer onderwater te zijn. Je kunt geen directe analogieën maken tussen muziek en visuele stimulansen, maar ik heb fysieke landschappen in mijn hoofd. Ik herinner me dingen door ze me voor te stellen. Het was een soort wijde tuin, maar niet op het land maar onder water.' Hij zei dat de terugkeer naar het water een artistieke verbeelding van een stap terug in de menselijke evolutie was. Uit de tekst van Sea Song blijkt hoe Wyatt het waterthema verbond met de liefde:
You look different every time/You come from the foam-crested brine/It's your skin, shining softly in the moonlight/Partly fish, partly porpoise/Partly baby sperm whale/Am I yours?/ Are you mine to play with?

Kinderlijk

Hoe belangrijk het waterthema voor Robert Wyatt moet zijn geweest, blijkt onder meer ook uit het hoesontwerp van Alfie; een pentekening waarop we strandscènes zien aan de bovenzijde en aan de onderzijde een onderwatertuin. Ze tekende het als een soort minimalistisch antwoord op de populaire, kleurrijke en meer uitbundige hoezen van Roger Dean voor Yes. Bij de heruitgave van ROCK BOTTOM uit 1998 maakte ze een tweede, kleurrijker ontwerp, ook met een onderwaterthema. Over zijn muzikale stijl merkte Wyatt op: 'Wat ik doe past niet in een categorie die ik zou kunnen benoemen. En dat is geen poging om bewust anders te zijn. Het is gewoon niet hetzelfde: het is geen rock-'n-roll, het is geen jazz, het is niet modern klassiek, het is geen folk. Het bestaat gewoon niet als genre. Het is als een dier van de Galapagos-eilanden, een soort onderwatereend. Gewoon iets dat het bleek te zijn.' Wyatt noemde wel belangrijke muzikale invloeden: Pink Floyd en dan vooral de toetsen van Rick Wright, Indiase klassieke muziek en ASTRAL WEEKS van Van Morrison.

ROCK BOTTOM heeft goed beschouwd ook wel iets kinderlijks. Wyatt houdt van de 'naïeve' tekeningen van de late Paul Klee en van de bijna primitief aandoende werken van Picasso en sprak over de 'schoonheid van iets wat slecht gedaan wordt.'

ROCK BOTTOM werd door de muziekpers heel positief ontvangen. Steve Peacock van het muziekmagazine *Soundz* schreef: '...het vertegenwoordigt alles dat Robert tot een muzikant, zanger en componist maakt zonder concurrenten en weinig gelijken.' *Melody Maker* en *New Musical Express* noemden het album in hun eindejaarslijstjes en stelden het op één lijn met Dylans BLOOD ON THE TRACKS. Het album is door de jaren heen geliefd gebleven en wordt door veel muziekkenners gezien als een van de meest bijzondere albums aller tijden. *New Musical Express* plaatste het in 2015 op plek 358 van de 500 beste albums ooit. Na verschijnen trad Wyatt op in het Londense Theatre Royal Drury Lane met een band met de meeste muzikanten van het album. Naast de tracks van het album stonden onder meer ook nummers van Matching Mole op het programma en in de toegift speelde Wyatt zijn versie van de Monkees-hit *I'm a Believer*, dat ook voor hem een hitje werd. Een albumregistratie van dit concert verscheen in 2005.

Shipbuilding

Sinds ROCK BOTTOM heeft Wyatt met tussenpozen aan zijn oeuvre gebouwd, met hoogtepunten zoals OLD ROTTENHAT (1985), SHLEEP (1997), CUCKOOLAND (2003) en COMICOPERA (2007). De vierde kant daarvan is niets anders dan doodse stilte, maar wél met een fraai op het vinyl gekrast gedicht. Deze albums bevatten sommige van zijn allerbeste nummers: *The Age Of Self*, *Free Will And Testament*, *Just As You Are* en *Beware*. Befaamde muzikanten als Eno, Paul Weller en Phil Manzanera spelen erop mee.



De nummers ademen dezelfde sfeer als ROCK BOTTOM. Heel bijzonder zijn ook de singles en ep's die hij aan het begin van de jaren tachtig maakte, met diverse covers zoals een hartverscheurende, trage versie van *At Last I Am Free* van Chic en een ijzingwekkende uitvoering van *Strange Fruit* van Billie Holiday. Het allermooiste uit die periode is zijn versie van de anti-oorlogssong *Shipbuilding*, die Elvis Costello voor hem had geschreven, over de Falklandoorlog, de scheepswerven en de tragiek van niet-terugkerende soldaten. De uitvoering van Costello zelf met de trompetsolo van Chet Baker is prachtig, maar de uitvoering van Wyatt maakt nog meer indruk. Piano, akoestische bas, bekkens: tegen deze sobere achtergrond stijgt de stem van Wyatt tot grote hoogten:

It's all we're skilled in/We will be

shipbuilding/With all the will in the world/
Diving for dear life/When we could be diving for pearls

"WAT IK DOE PAST NIET IN EEN CATEGORIE DIE IK ZOU KUNNEN BENOEMEN. EN DAT IS GEEN POGING OM BEWUST ANDERS TE ZIJN."

Het werk van Wyatt inspireert door de jaren heen veel andere artiesten. Het Franse Orchestre National de Jazz maakte een pracht van een coverplaat met jazzy orkestarrangementen en medewerking van artiesten als Rokia Traoré en Arno. In 2010 maakte Wyatt met de componist/saxofonist Gilad Atzmon en componiste/violiste Ros Stephen FOR THE GHOSTS WITHIN, met bewerkingen van eigen nummers en jazzstandards in een klassiek idioom. Het Britse folkduo The Unthanks bracht dit jaar een livealbum uit, met zes nummers van Antony and the Johnsons en negen van Wyatt. The Unthanks spreken over twee van de meest avontuurlijke songbooks van de laatste vijftig jaar.

Zorgeloosheid

In 2014 maakte Robert Wyatt bekend te stoppen als muzikant. Ter gelegenheid daarvan verscheen in dat jaar een voortreffelijke, door hemzelf geautoriseerde biografie van Marcus O'Dair, *Different Every Time*. (Al eerder, in 2002, verscheen de fraaie documentaire *Free Will and Testament*.) Ook kwam er bij de biografie een dubbel-cd uit met dezelfde titel. Het eerste deel, getiteld EX MACHINE, bevat hoogtepunten van zijn eigen werk, opvallend genoeg zonder nummers van ROCK BOTTOM - op een live-uitvoering van *A Last Straw* na. Ergens ook wel logisch, want ROCK BOTTOM zou in zijn geheel op zo'n verzamelaar moeten staan. Buitengewoon verrassend is de tweede cd, BENIGN DICTATORSHIPS, die bestaat uit nummers van andere artiesten waaraan Wyatt bijdroeg. Want hij werkte mee op meer dan 200 albums van veel uiteenlopende musici. Op de compilatie staan onder meer Björk en John Cage. Voor ons waren het onbekende nummers, van een zeer hoog niveau, een ware schat.

Helemaal stoppen deed Wyatt ook weer niet. Zo schreef de Amerikaanse jazzgitariste Mary Halvorson speciaal voor hem drie nummers voor het album ARTLESSLY FALLING (2020) van haar groep Code Girl. Wyatt zingt die nummers, waarvan *Lemon Trees* tot de hoogtepunten in zijn oeuvre behoort.

Wyatt is een van de muzikale smaakmakers van de laatste ruim vijftig jaar en ROCK BOTTOM staat nog steeds als een huis. Terugkijkend zei hij daarover tegen het tijdschrift *Mojo*: 'Wanneer ik eraan denk hoe vanzelf het ging en hoe impulsief ik toen was. Het werd gemaakt met een soort zorgeloosheid, waardoor het waarschijnlijk nog steeds als fris overkomt op mensen. Ik maakte het min of meer ter plekke. Het leek destijds eenvoudiger.'

Wetende wat Wyatt in 1973 overkwam krijgt 'een soort zorgeloosheid' een volstrekt andere lading.

WIM BOT EN PETER DE RUITER (MET DANK AAN ERIK VERHOEF)

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Heaven - Vijfde jaargang - nummer 6 - nov-dec 2003

ROBERT WYATT



'Eigenlijk ben ik een komediant'

Robert Wyatts nieuwe cd CUCKOOLAND ligt sinds eind september in de winkels ligt. De muziek is van hem, de teksten zijn goeddeels van zijn levensgezellin Alfreda Benge, Alfie voor de 58-jarige muzikant. De rolstoel brengt Wyatt af en toe in 'de stad', Louth in Lincolnshire. "We merken zoetjesaan dat we ouder worden."

Was je drijfveer om zes jaar na je vorige album, weer een plaat te maken?

Die lange periode ertussen ligt niet aan wat ik vilde, maar voor een groot deel aan de omstandigheden. Ik heb stukjes muziek, daar moet ik een geschikte tekst bij vinden. Alfie heeft stukken tekst zonder muziek. Ik ga me niet meer lopen haasten, ik neem er de tijd voor om iets moois te maken. Natuurlijk besef ik dat er naarmate je ouder wordt, steeds minder toekomst is. Maar juist dan wil ik er zeker van zijn dat het in orde is."

De meeste stukken speel je met andere musici. Ooit zei je in een interview in Melody Maker juist dat je graag alleen werkt, zodat je vrijheid hebt en niemand iets verschuldigd bent. Hoe is dat te rijmen?

"Dat is inderdaad een probleem. Aïs je een plaat opneemt moet je wel met anderen werken, en ik wil alleen werken met mensen die met mij samenspelen omdat ze dat leuk vinden, niet omdat ze zich verplicht voelen, of, erger nog, omdat ik me verplicht voel. Je baalt pas goed als iemand wie je iets schuldig bent, meespeelt op jouw plaat en dat niet goed doet. Het is dan heel lastig dat weg te werken zonder problemen te krijgen. Dus speel ik zo veel mogelijk zelf, dan is het mijn verantwoordelijkheid."

Bij mensen als Brian Eno, David Gilmour en Phil Manzanera ligt dat anders?

"Zeker. Ik ken ze al dertig jaar. Dave had me, toen ik hem bij een eerdere gelegenheid hielp bij een concert, beloofd dat hij op mijn volgende plaat wel iets wilde spelen, als ik dat wilde. En hij speelt op FOREST pedalsteel. Er komen nog steeds geregeld oude vrienden langs. Paul Weller bijvoorbeeld, die kwam gewoon een avondje naar de studio van Phil Manzanera en we hebben lekker zitten spelen en samen wat gedronken. David woont ver bij me vandaan, helemaal in het zuiden, dus die zie ik eigenlijk alleen in de

studio. Die jongens hebben natuurlijk een heel ander levensstijl dan ik. En Brian is een echte kunstenaar op het gebied van elektronica. Hij woont vlakbij Phils studio, waar hij op de fiets heen komt, hij rijdt geen auto. En die 'speeltjes' waarvan in de informatie sprake is, is een soort compacte drumcomputer waarop je rechtstreeks met je vingers speelt. Die gebruik ik bijvoorbeeld op *Trickle Down*."



De Karenfoon heet naar Karen Mantler?

"Hij heet eigenlijk Karenatron, die naam hebben we bedacht voor een soort stemgeheugen dat je aan een keyboard koppelt. Karen zong een serie noten. Die werden in het ding ingevoerd en op exact die hoogte en met hetzelfde timbre gereproduceerd. Vooral waar ze daar nog bij zingt ook, geeft dat een prachtig effect."

Op Cuckooland staat heel veel muziek voor een cd, ruim 75 minuten. Moest je zo lang wachten tot bepaalde mensen beschikbaar waren om dingen af te ronden en begon je intussen met extra materiaal opnemen?

"Nee, het materiaal lag grotendeels wel vast. Raren droeg ook een paar nummers bij. Daar lag het niet aan. Maar soms ben je opeens met veel nummers tegelijk in de afrondingsfase en dan gingen Jamie Johnson en ik in de studio van Phil zitten om de zaak af te ronden. Die studio is trouwens net nieuw, ik geloof dat wij de eerste gebruikers zijn, zelfs nog voordat Phil er zelf iets heeft opgenomen."

Ik wind het soort geluid op Cuckooland erg fraai. Heel licht, maar toch af en toe nogal big-bandachtig.

'"Dat heeft te maken met dat ik weer steeds meer ben gaan drummen. Niet of nauwelijks drummen blijkt meer een psychologische handicap dan een lichamelijke. Ik luisterde gewoon veel naar drummers die weinig basdrum en hihats gebruiken zoals Billy Higgins, daar heb ik veel door geleerd. Nu gebruik ik de contrabas in plaats van de basdrum. Dat gaat ook prima, en ik krijg een heel transparant geluid, absoluut geen brij, luister maar naar *Trickle Down*. En natuurlijk scheelt het dat ik zelf de productie doe, samen met Jamie. Op bepaalde momenten denk ik, is Jamie belangrijker geweest dan ik, omdat hij alles tot een samenhangend geheel heeft helpen maken, dat was erg belangrijk werk."

En wat daarbij jouw persoonlijke inbreng?

*Ik beslis uiteindelijk wel over iets weglaten of toevoegen, het gebruik van welke instrumenten op welke plek, maar Jamie voelt me perfect aan, hij heeft ook SHLEEP geproduceerd. Dus hoef ik maar zelden in te grijpen. Ook Alfie luistert kritisch mee en wijst me erop wanneer ik iets niet helemaal zuiver zing, dan moet het opnieuw."

Op sommige nummers is je stem veel duidelijker, harder opgenomen dan op andere. Is dat opzet?

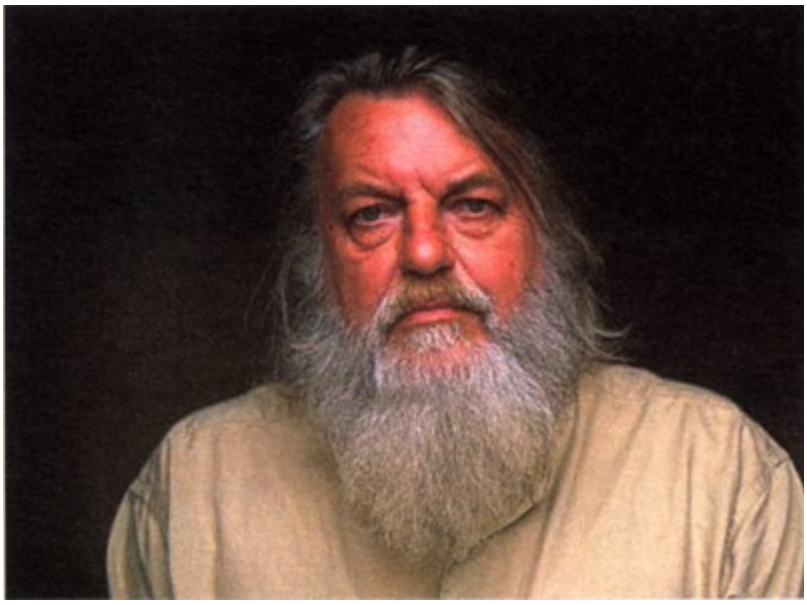
"Niet altijd, we regelen het geluid ter plaatse en doen wat we op dat moment denken dat in orde is. Als je achteraf analyseert kom je dan soms tot interessante conclusies, toevalligheden haast. Op *Just A Bit* zing ik bijvoorbeeld zachter, moeder aarde wordt overspoeld door ruis en verstoring en dat wilde ik uitbeelden, hoewel we daar op dat moment niet bewust aan dachten. Creatieve processen blijven altijd onvoorspelbaar."

Je geeft op je informatiesite aan dat je register beperkter is dan vroeger. Op de opnamen is daar weinig van te merken, ik vind dat jouw stem erg jong klinkt voor een man van 58. Ik vind ook dat de sound die je op Cuckooland gebruikt, lijkt op die van Rock Rottom van bijna dertig jaar geleden.

"Mijn register is nu ongeveer een half octaaf kleiner dan eerst. Maar mijn stemgeluid zelf is inderdaad niet zo veel veranderd. Als ik wat gedronken heb haal ik de A boven de middelste C op de piano, maar meestal kom ik maar tot de G. Vroeger wel tot de C of D. Dat je dat op de plaat niet zo opvalt is doordat ik meer vrouwen laat zingen, die komen hoe dan ook veel hoger. Bovendien zijn vrouwen leuk, in de studio en daarbuiten. De sfeer is heel anders als er meerdere vrouwen zijn, erg goed is dat. Eigenlijk zou het fifty-fifty verdeeld moeten zijn. De hele rockscene wordt toch al veel te veel door mannen overheerst. Wanneer je kijkt in de jaren zestig en zeventig zie je haast allemaal honderd procent mannelijke groepen: Stones, Beatles, Who, Faces, ga maar door. Groepen as de Airplane, met Grace Slick en acts als Janis Joplin waren zeldzaam. Gelukkig spelen vrouwen nu een grotere rol, ik houd van vrouwen."

Ga je nog iets doen, bijvoorbeeld optreden, om deze cd te promoten? Laat je gezondheid dat toe, en hoe is die in het algemeen?

"Ik doe alleen deze interviews. Ik heb geen conditie meer om op het podium te staan, al is het in een rolstoel. Dus treed ik in principe ook niet meer op. Ik heb over het algemeen niet te klagen voor zover dat kan heb ik wel geluk gehad. Alfie gezondheid is wat minder, we merken toch wel dat we zoetjesaan ouder worden."



Hoe actief is je leven nog? Het commentaar dat ik van sommige mensen krijg, is dat ze de plaat somber vinden, weliswaar met sprankjes hoop, maar toch over het algemeen pessimistisch.

"Wat betreft het eerste: ik ga geregeld de stad in en daar rijd ik dan met mijn rolstoel rond, wat soms best gevaarlijk is. Af en toe ga ik richting Londen om de studio in te gaan. Maar ik denk dat er weinig kans is dat ik deze winter naar de concerten van Karen in Frankrijk ga, waar ze mijn nummers zingt. Mijn huis moet worden verbouwd, het moet wat rolstoelvriendelijker worden. Ik heb gewoon een handicap en wie weet kost me dat tien jaar van mijn leven. Dus je zou me, om op het tweede te komen, wel een pessimist kunnen noemen, maar dan een die niet somber wil zijn. Ik vind grappen en moppen geweldig en beschouw mezelf ook wel als een komediant. In oude stomme films zie je dat

type ook wel, een komediant die met een volkomen serieus gezicht allerlei gekke dingen doet. Daardoor wordt het extra grappig."

Maar je teksten zijn vaak toch niet mis te verstaan? Robert wil de wereld redden, is een veel gehoord commentaar.

"Klopt, maar wat wil je, met die mentaliteit van ons Engelsen. We willen nog steeds de vereld regeren of in elk geval meneer Bush daar bij helpen. Dus reageer ik op wat de média in dit land je elke dag naar het hoofd slingeren. In die zin van het woord zou je me een reactionair kunnen noemen, iemand die overal op reageert. Maar ik vermoed dat de regering, voor zover die mensen me kennen, me ook in andere opzichten wel reactionair vinden. Ik heb trouwens ook niet de illusie dat een musicus de wereld zou kunnen redden. Ik wil gewoon iets moois laten horen, iets dat afsteekt tegen al die reclameachtige zooi. Tegelijk wil ik me afzetten tegen de arrogantie van de Engelssprekende landen. Daar wil ik niet bij horen. Dus krijg je zoiets als ik heb gemaakt."

Ben je van plan over zes jaar weer met zo'n briljant album te komen?

"Ik heb plannen genoeg, maar ik heb geen idee hoe alles gaat lopen. Ten eerste word je steeds beïnvloed door alles dat je hoort, en ook jouw eigen idee over hoe iets moet klinken verandert steeds. Bovendien ben ik dan 64, ik kan er weinig over zeggen."

Willem Hurkmans

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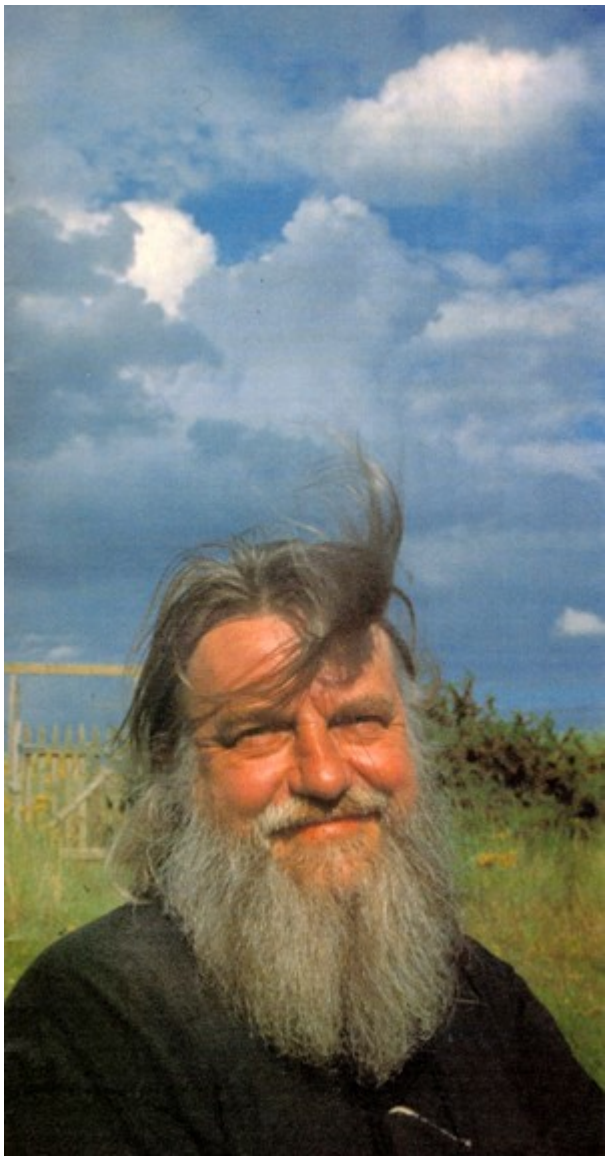
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Robert Wyatt - Het laatste levensteken - Oor - N° 25/26 - 13 december 1997





> Zoom

Wyatt bleef echter muziek maken, soms met lange tussenpauzes. Elementen uit pop, jazz en wereldmuziek werden tot een uniek harmonisch geheel gemaakt. Zijn laatste *Shleep* was een goede aanleiding deze boeiende anti-sterweer eens op te zoeken.

Zes jaar lagen er tussen zijn vorige plaat Dondestan en Shleep, zes jaar waarin het nodige met Wyatt is gebeurd. En een album opnemen gaat hem ook niet bepaald gemakkelijk af.

'Het heeft vijf jaar geduurd om van allerlei brokstukken die ik had een geheel te maken. Een plaat maken is voor iemand als ik, die niet veel platen verkoopt, een kostbare aangelegenheid. Het is ook behoorlijk zenuwslopend om alle praktische zaken die erbij komen kijken in goede banen te leiden. Ditmaal kwam Phil [ex-Roxy Music gitarist ***Phil Manzanera***] mij te hulp door zijn studio aan te bieden. We betaalden ervoor, maar konden vrij ons gang gaan zonder de gebruikelijke tijdsdruk, waardoor alles vrij ontspannen kon verlopen.

'Kort na *Dondestan*, in 1993, raakte ik in een depressie verzeild waarvan ik dacht dat ik er niet meer levend uit zou komen. Ik dacht dat ik als een oude indiaan zou sterven, maar ik ben er nog steeds, zoals je ziet. Ik ben weer muziek gaan maken, omdat dat het enige is dat ik kan. Ik heb geprobeerd mijn demonen te bezweren met muziek. Als je het op kunt schrijven, kun je er gemakkelijker mee omgaan. De diepe zelfvervreemding die ik doormaakte, komt tot uitdrukking in *Free Will and Testament*, waarvoor ik een stukje pianomuziek gebruikte dat Kramer [die van Bongwater en Shimmy Disc] mij ooit had gestuurd. De woorden kwamen snel. Het is het testament van een moment. Terwijl ik het opnam, voelde ik mij meteen een stuk gelukkiger, ook door al die mensen om mij heen. ***Paul Weller*** begreep meteen waar het mij in dat nummer om ging. Hij zei: Het gaat veel verder dan het probleem van één persoon. Het zijn vragen die waard zijn gesteld te worden. Dat gaf mij een goed gevoel. Hij werkte ook heel consciëntieus aan zijn partij.

'Ik vond het een eer dat Paul aan mijn album wilde bijdragen. Hij moest er zelfs zijn eigen plaatopnames enkele dagen voor in de steek laten, wat ik zelf nooit gekund zou hebben. Ik heb altijd een zwak voor Paul gehad. Hij heeft een voor een popster opmerkelijk karakter: Niet die humeurige, verongelijkte adolescentenhouding, die je vaak ziet en die volgens mij nogal misplaatst is als je ziet hoe slecht jongeren het in de derde wereld hebben. Niet dat kunstmatig gecreëerde zelfbeeld van de tragische, aan drugs verslaafde popster, dat mij behoorlijk op mijn zenuwen begint te werken. Paul is rechttoe-rechtaan, zowel tegen

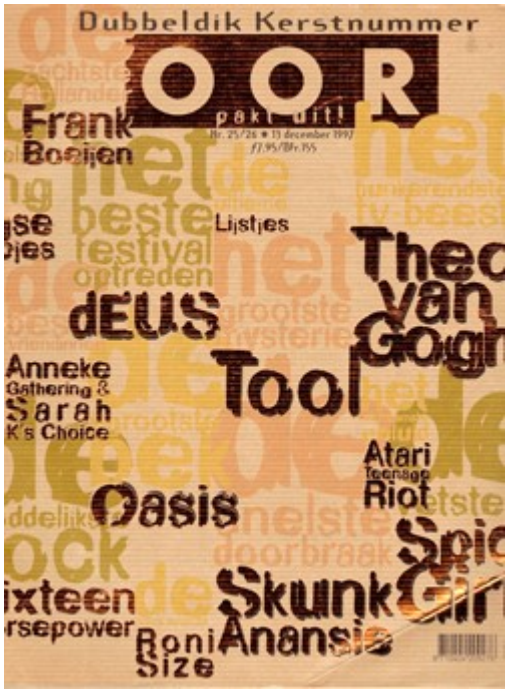
anderen als tegen zichzelf. Als hij fouten maakt zijn het eerlijke fouten die iedereen kan zien.'

De in 1945 geboren Wyatt is afkomstig uit een artistieke familie. Zijn vader George Ellidge en zijn moeder Honor Wyatt waren schrijvers en behoorden tot de kring van intimi rond Robert Graves *(I Claudius e.a.*). Als kind werd hij meegenomen naar opera- en balletvoorstellingen waar hij steevast in slaap viel, behalve bij het Afrikaanse ballet van Catherine Durham. 'Het moeten de ritmes zijn geweest die mij wakker hielden,' zegt hij er achteraf van. 'Ik was vanaf mijn tiende erg geïnteresseerd in zwarte muziek. Ik had een oudere broer die rhythm & blues-platen had. Ook woonde ik een tijdje in Parijs waar ik allerlei Franse films heb gezien met jazz-muziek. Ik luisterde ook wel naar rock & roll, vooral naar Eddie Cochran en Buddy Holly, maar ik was een snobistisch ventje. Ik luisterde liever naar Mose Allison dan naar Elvis Presley. Nog steeds, eigenlijk. Ik zat net tussen de jazz- en de popgeneratie in. Onder jazz-fans was ik een van de jongste, onder popfans een van de oudste.

'Amerika was de plek waar de Europese muziek en de Afrikaanse elkaar vonden. Daar is de jazz uit voortgekomen en ook de pop. In de jazz zag je hoe zwarte Amerikaanse musici de muziek gingen spelen van Russische joden als Irving Berlin en George Gershwin. Er loopt een ononderbroken lijn van opwinding door de zwarte muziek vanaf het begin van de eeuw tot op heden.

'De popmuziek van de jaren zestig wordt vaak gezien in de sfeer van opstand en rebellie, maar ik geloof niet dat wij nu zo rebels wilden zijn. Het was meer een reactie op de ouderen die onze cultuur verwierpen of belachelijk maakten. Daardoor is die generatie zich gaan verdedigen en kreeg je een tegencultuur. Maar aanvankelijk was alles vrij onschuldig. Een avontuur in sensualiteit, meer was het niet.'

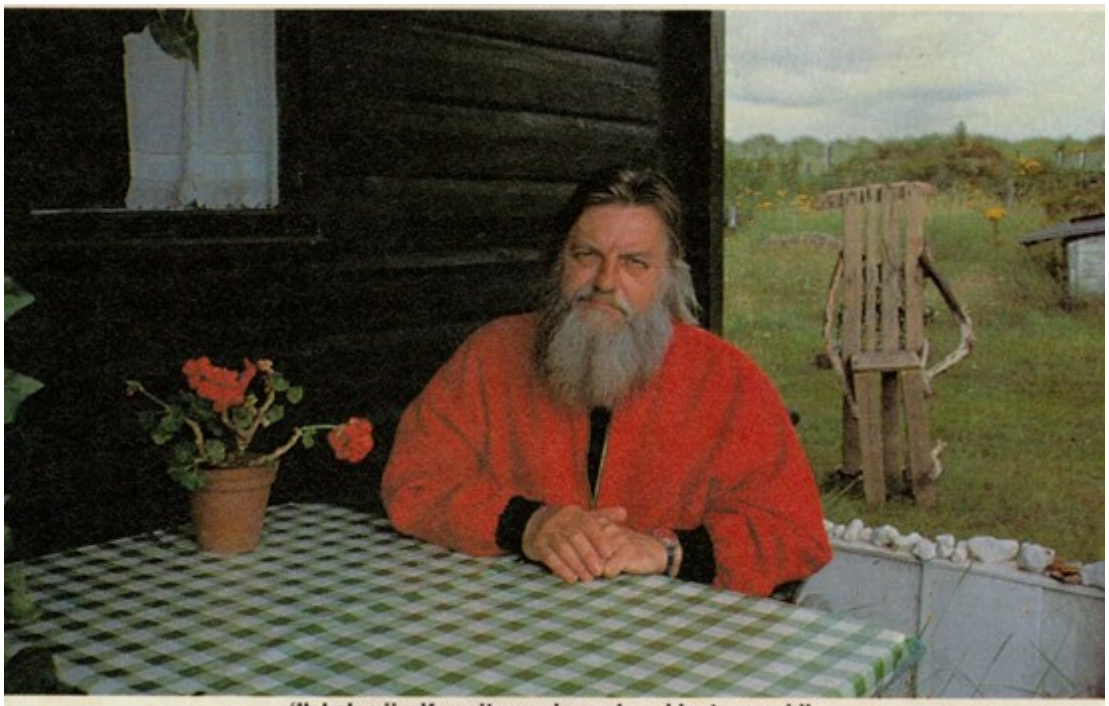
Robert praat niet graag over zijn jaren met Soft Machine, de groep waarmee hij in de jaren zestig korte tijd triomfen vierde. 'In mijn hoofd associeer ik die tijd met problemen. Ik heb altijd problemen gehad met de muziekindustrie, met in een groep zitten of een eigen groep hebben. Ik had er eenvoudig het temperament niet voor. Het is een harde business en niet iedereen speelt eerlijk spel. Ik voelde mij verloren en angstig. Laat mij maar alleen muziek maken. Ik had ook medelijden met de mensen die met mij moesten werken, want ik was meestal dronken. Ik heb erg veel fouten gemaakt. Het was wel een goede leerschool voor me. Popmuziek wordt geassocieerd met jeugd, maar omdat ik zo'n langzame denker ben, begin ik nu pas te begrijpen hoe muziek functioneert.



'Pas na mijn ongeluk begon ik als persoon beter te functioneren. Het klinkt misschien gek, maar pas door het maken van *Rock Bottom* kreeg ik een beetje vaste grond onder de voeten. Ik durfde voor het eerst toetsen te spelen. Je kent die grap over drummers die zo nodig denken meer te kunnen. Dat bezorgde mij een tijdlang een complex, zeker met zulke goede instrumentalisten in mijn omgeving.

'Ik realiseer mij dat mijn muziek erg Engels is, want dat is de cultuur waaruit ik voortkom. Ik houd niet zo van het narcisme van de Engelsen, dat typerend is voor voormalige imperia, en daarom probeer ik er altijd zoveel mogelijk musici uit andere culturen bij te halen. Phil is Cubaan van oorsprong, Chucho de bassist komt uit Columbia; er is een violiste uit Japan en een Afrikaanse percussionist.'

Robert heeft *Shleep* opgedragen aan twee overleden vrienden. Een van hen was ***Ronnie Scott***, eigenaar van de befaamde, naar hem genoemde Londense jazz-club. 'Hij behoorde tot de tweede generatie Russische joden die erg veel invloed heeft gehad op de Britse cultuur, met name in de jazzmuziek, het cabaret en de beeldende kunst. Ronnie is voor mij erg belangrijk geweest. De titel *Shleep* is ook een quasi-Jiddisch woord.'



'Ik heb mijzelf nooit een zingende soldaat gevoeld'

Enthousiast begint hij te vertellen dat hij onlangs grootvader is geworden. 'Ik was in de jaren zestig getrouwd met Pam en uit die relatie is onze zoon Sam geboren. Het huwelijk hield niet lang stand, maar wij zijn altijd vrienden gebleven. Er waren in de jaren zestig zoveel geweldige vrouwen en meisjes die een belangrijke rol speelden in de muziekscene, maar volledig uit de geschiedschrijving zijn verdwenen. Zonder die vrouwen hadden de mannen het nooit gered.'

Robert deelt nu al ruim 25 jaar zijn leven met ***Alfreda Benge***, een kunstenares van Poolse afkomst met een Oostenrijks paspoort. 'Zij heeft het na een aantal mislukte pogingen opgegeven om te proberen de Britse nationaliteit te verwerven. Zij wil het nu ook niet meer.' Alfie illustreerde al veel plaathoezen van Robert, maar is later in toenemende mate bij het schrijven van songs betrokken geraakt. Robert vergelijkt haar met Yoko Ono en zegt dan: 'Zij is tamelijk verlegen, maar ik wil haar erbij betrekken. Zij heeft mijn leven gered, dus zij is belangrijk.'

Een van de centrale nummers op het nieuwe album is *Alien*, waarvoor Alfie de tekst aanleverde. 'Wij zaten op een middag naar een zwerm zwaluwen te kijken die om ons huis vloog en hadden het er over hoe die vogels soms drie jaar lang in de lucht blijven. Echte buitenaardse wezens. Zij hoeven niet te landen om te kunnen rusten, zij leven op hun vleugels. Ik zag al snel de vergelijking met de steeds strenger wordende immigratiewetten in ons land, met name ten opzichte van politieke vluchtelingen. Zo kreeg de song ineens een politieke lading. Het is in dat verband heel aardig dat de tekst afkomstig is van Alfie, terwijl de musici die op het nummer spelen oorspronkelijk afkomstig zijn uit Columbia, Afrika en Cuba!

'Ik heb nooit bewust het besluit genomen om politiek getinte nummers te schrijven, nooit problemen opgezocht, maar aan het begin van de jaren tachtig zag ik hoe de koude oorlog werd gebruikt als excuus voor allerlei walgelijke acties in de Derde Wereld. Onder het mom dat landen moesten worden behoed voor het communistische gevaar werden allerlei gemene, kleine oorlogen uitgevochten in Afrika, Nicaragua en het Verre Oosten. Ik heb dat nooit zo'n goed excuus gevonden en dat kwam tot uitdrukking in mijn werk. Ik heb mijzelf nooit een zingende soldaat gevoeld, nooit politieke speeches afgestoken. Mijn songs komen altijd in een soort trance tot stand en dan heb je weinig controle over wat er gebeurt. Ik werk altijd erg instinctief en analyseer mijn werk nooit terwijl ik ermee bezig ben.'

Toch is Robert lang lid geweest van de Britse Communistische partij, totdat deze - in Roberts woorden - harakiri pleegde. Over het failliet van het Marxistische gedachtengoed merkt hij op: 'Ik hoop maar dat het kind niet met het badwater wordt weggegooid. Er

waren een hoop naamloze helden actief in die beweging, goede mensen die voor de underdogs in de samenleving opkwamen. De ambitieuze lieden aan de top werden door minder nobele motieven gedreven, maar dat zie je altijd: het tuig komt altijd boven drijven.'

Bert van de Kamp

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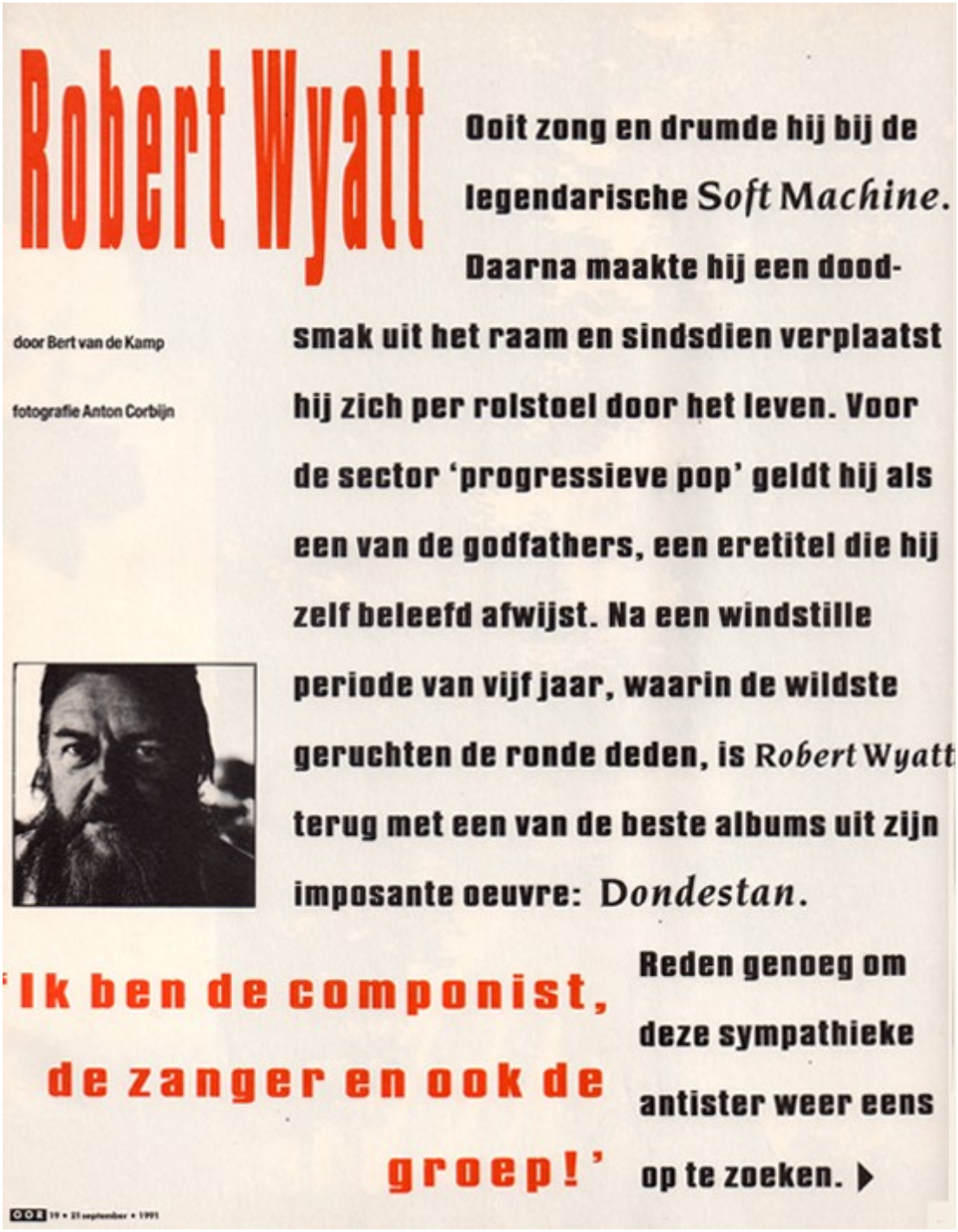
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Robert Wyatt 'Ik ben de componist, de zanger en ook de groep' - Oor -nr. 19 - 21 september 1991



Robert Wyatt

door Bert van de Kamp

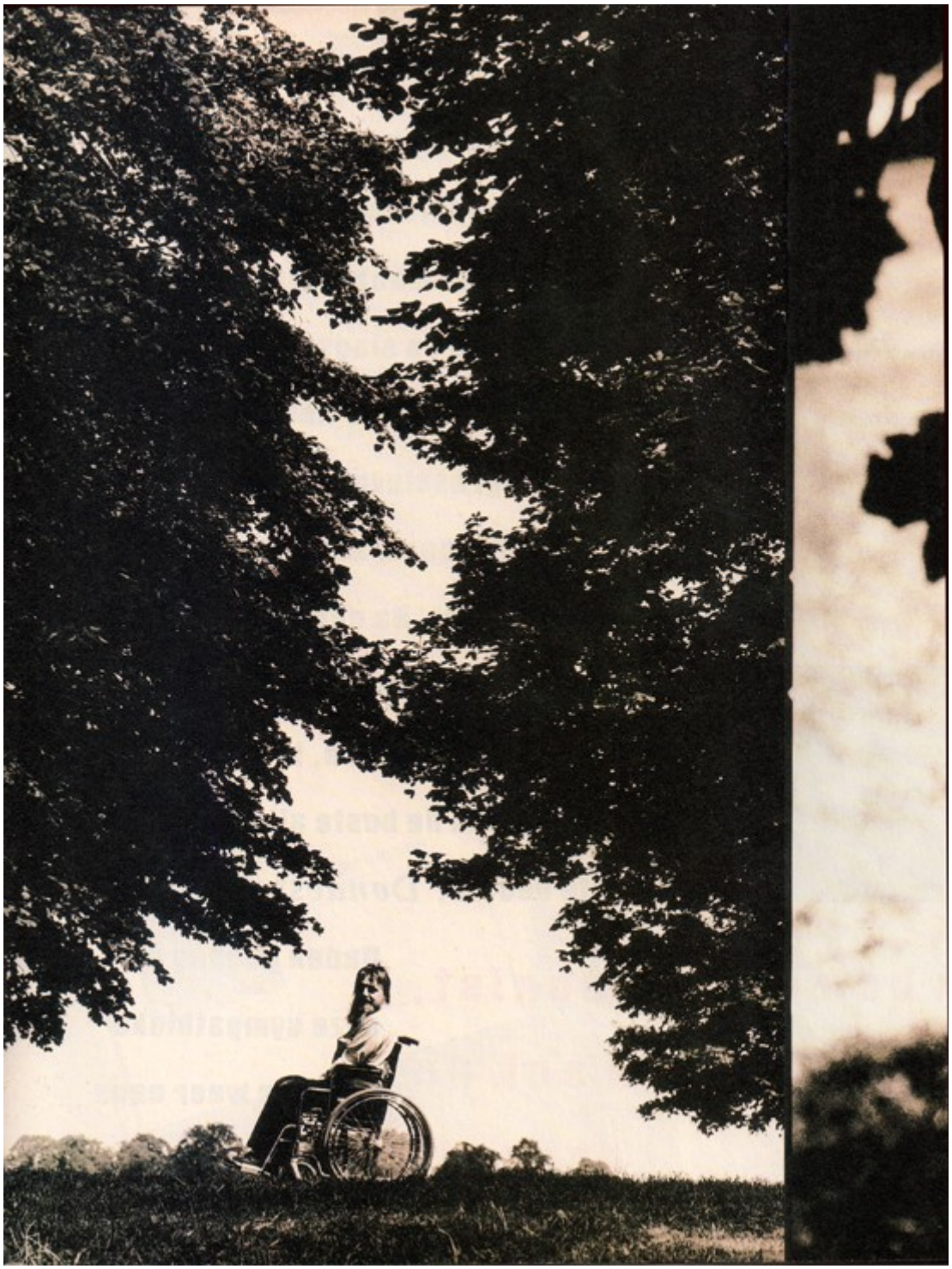
fotografie Anton Corbijn

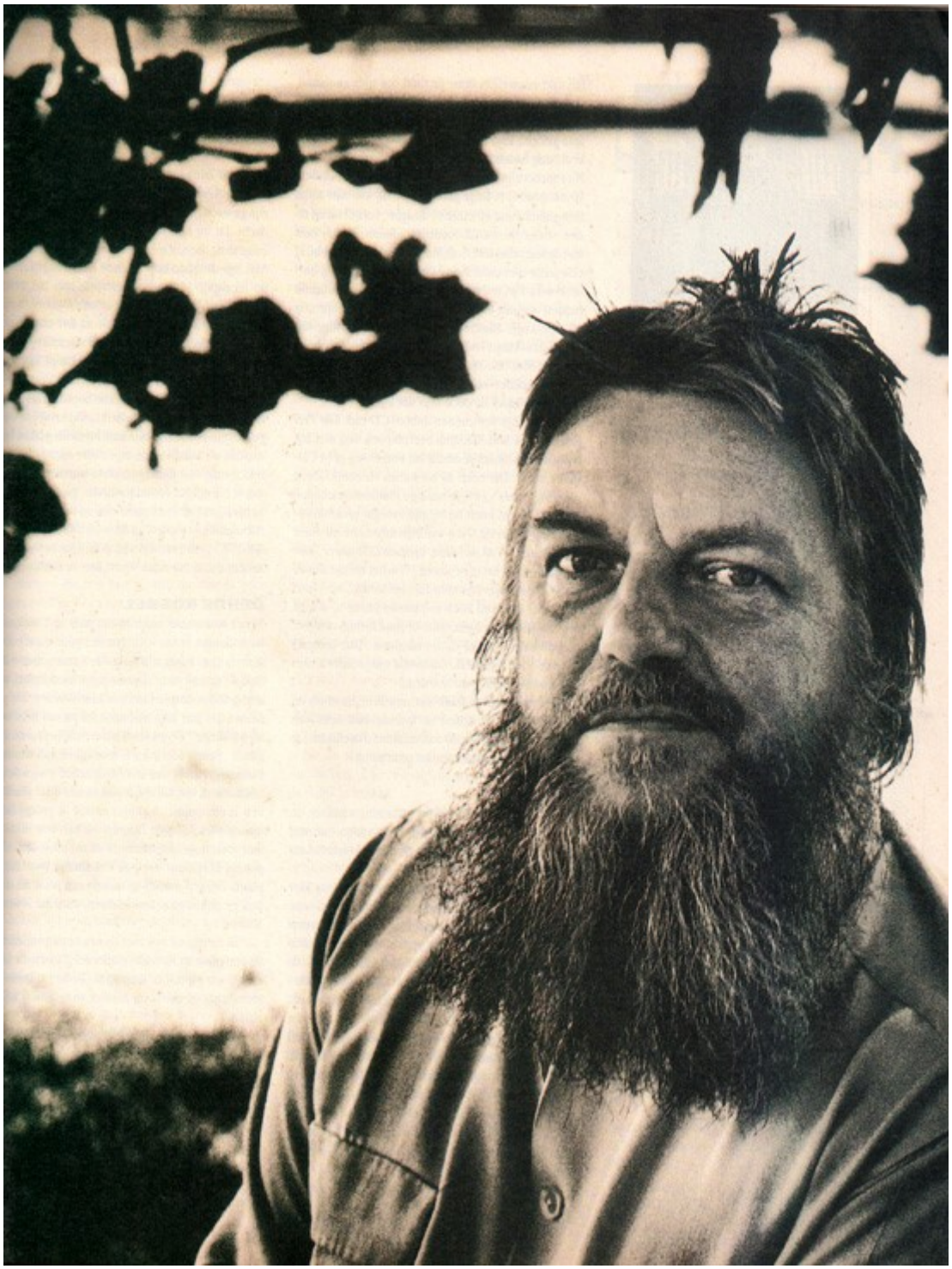
Ooit zong en drumde hij bij de legendarische *Soft Machine*. Daarna maakte hij een doodsmak uit het raam en sindsdien verplaatst hij zich per rolstoel door het leven. Voor de sector 'progressieve pop' geldt hij als een van de godfathers, een eretitel die hij zelf beleefd afwijst. Na een windstille periode van vijf jaar, waarin de wildste geruchten de ronde deden, is *Robert Wyatt* terug met een van de beste albums uit zijn imposante oeuvre: *Dondestan*.

'Ik ben de componist, de zanger en ook de groep!'

Reden genoeg om deze sympathieke antister weer eens op te zoeken.

OOR 19 • 21 september • 1991





Hij lijkt nauwelijks door de tand des tijds aangetast sinds ik hem voor het laatst zag. Zijn halflange sluike haar en geruststellende baard omranden zijn vriendelijke gezicht. Zijn ogen fonkelen als hij praat over wat hem bezig houdt: muziek en politiek. In die volgorde. Niet zozeer zijn eigen muziek, want daar heeft Robert Wyatt geen al te hoge pet van op. Hij kan zijn eigen stemgeluid maar moeilijk verdragen, vertelt hij en de drie veelgeprezen, invloedrijke albums die hij ooit met de legendarische Soft Machine maakte heeft hij al vele jaren niet meer beluisterd. Sterker nog: zij ontbreken in zijn overigens fenomenale platencollectie (vooral veel jazz en wereldmuziek). 'Als iets onprettig afloopt, krijgt alles restrospectief een onprettige bijsmaak,' verklaart Robert zijn geringe behoefte om op zijn Soft Machine-tijd terug te blikken. 'Het is net als bij een pijnlijke echtscheiding wanneer je ook niet meer met plezier de oude foto's bekijkt.'

De onlangs verschenen dubbel-CD met *The Peel Sessions* van Soft Machine heeft hij ook nog niet beluisterd, aanvankelijk omdat hij simpelweg geen CD-speler bezat. Die heeft hij nu wel en via bemiddeling van employees van zijn huidige platenmaatschappij (Rough

Trade) heeft hij bij zijn vroeger platenmaatschappij Virgin de CD's van zijn meesterwerk *Rock Bottom*, uit '74, en de follow-up *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* weten los te peuteren. 'Via het meisje aan de balie. Die meisjes zijn meestal heel aardig,' verklaart hij. 'Nee, niemand hoeft mij toestemming te vragen om CD's uit te brengen, want er staat in mijn contract een clausule over *all future mediums*. Dat contract loopt in '95 af, geloof ik, dus tot die tijd proberen ze er nog zoveel mogelijk uit te halen.'

Niettemin schandelijk dat mijnheer Branson en zijn kornuiten de artiest in kwestie niet eens een CD'tje toesturen. Maar zo zit de wereld in elkaar. De kassa moet rinkelen en verder geen gelul.

IJSSCHOTS

Hoe goed de muziek van Soft Machine vandaag de dag nog altijd klinkt, Robert kan niet anders dan met gemengde gevoelens aan die periode uit zijn leven terug denken.

'Het was altijd een geweldig gevecht voor me. Het heeft vele jaren en nog meer alcoholica geduurd voor ik een beetje zelfvertrouwen kreeg. Toen ik de groep moest verlaten, was al dat vertrouwen weer in één klap verdwenen en kon ik weer vooraan beginnen. Ik zag die breuk als een bevestiging van mijn bange vermoeden dat al dat vertrouwen op niets was gebaseerd. Ik zie die hele periode dan ook als een periode van paniek: alsof je je in de brandende zon op een snel smeltende ijsschots staande probeert te houden. Ik ben ervan overtuigd dat ik ervan heb geleerd, maar ik kan er niet objectief over praten. Het was mijn nooduitrusting van die tijd. Wellicht dat ik van bepaalde optredens genoten heb, maar ik weet het niet meer. Mijn huidige nooduitrusting begint bij Matching Mole.'

Matching Mole was de groep die Robert in '71 oprichtte. De naam was een Engelse verbastering van het Frans voor Soft Machine: Machine Môle. Een voorbeeld van Roberts typische gevoel voor ironie. Na twee albums met die groep bracht hij het solo-album *The End Of An Ear* uit, waar dit blad zijn naam aan heeft ontleend. In juni '73 volgde de noodlottige val uit het raam tijdens een feestje. Apestoned zou hij zijn geweest, zegt de een. Nee, hij had LSD geslikt en dacht dat hij kon vliegen, weet de ander. Doch de enige drug die een rol speelde was een legale: alcohol. Met zijn dronken kop meende Robert het feestje via de regenpijp te moeten verlaten, met het bekende gevolg. In '74 bracht hij het album *Rock Bottom* uit, geschreven in de periode vlak na het ongeluk. Een even indringend als ontroerend *document humaine* dat regelrecht aan het onderbewustzijn lijkt te zijn ontsproten. Daarna volgde een reeks singles, mini LP's en nog enkele albums, die hoofdzakelijk getuigden van Roberts sterke betrokkenheid bij het wereldgebeuren. Politiek gezien nam hij stelling links van het midden en fulmineerde tegen alle onrecht in de wereld zonder ooit demagogisch te worden. Hij werd lid van de Engelse communistische partij, maar bleef zichzelf : een uiterst bescheiden en beminnelijk mens. Albums als *Nothing Can Stop Us* ('82) en *Old Rottenhat* ('85) getuigen van die politieke betrokkenheid zonder dat de typische Wyatt-humor ontbreekt.



DERDE KOEBEL

Wyatt woont niet meer in het huis in Twickenham, waar ik hem in het verleden een paar maal bezocht, maar is samen met zijn Alfie (de kunstenares Alfreda Benge) na een paar Spaanse jaren momenteel woonachtig in het dorpje Louth in Lincolnshire. De reden dat wij zes jaar lang taal noch teken van hem vernamen is simpel: Wyatt vindt het creatieve proces uiterst zwaar. 'Songs schrijven is moeilijker dan drummen. Bovendien wil ik niet telkens dezelfde song schrijven, ofschoon ik dat blijkbaar wel steeds doe! (lacht). Ik ben de componist, de zanger en ook de groep! Ik werk dus op verschillende fronten. Ik heb een muziekkamer waar mijn instrumenten staan, maar ook mijn platen. Het komt dan ook regelmatig voor dat ik in plaats van zelf muziek te maken een plaat uit de kast trek en ernaar ga zitten luisteren, want dat is werk dat al af is!

'Ik zie mijzelf ook niet als een beroepsmusicus die de ene plaat na de andere aflevert. Daarvoor komen de ideeën bij mij te langzaam. Ik ben telkens weer verrast als er weer een nieuwe song in mij blijkt te zitten.'

Lang voor het in de mode kwam, werkte Robert al met Afrikaanse musici en verzamelde hij muziek uit verre windstreken. 'Dat is bijna een tweede natuur voor me geworden,' verklaart hij, 'Dat is ook logisch als je met jazz en blues bent opgegroeid, waarvan de wortels in Afrika liggen.' Zijn grootste ambitie was ooit om de derde koebel van links in een Cubaanse ritmesectie te spelen. 'Ik ben al aan het oefenen,' lacht hij, 'Op *Dondestan* gebruik ik drie verschillende koebellen die Alfie voor me gekocht heeft.'

Door zijn associatie met Spanje (Robert is familie van de grote dichter Robert Graves, die zijn hele leven op Majorca woonde) heeft hij de flamenco-muziek leren waarderen, maar jazz blijft toch zijn grootste liefde, met name de muziek van John Coltrane en Charlie Mingus.

LAATBLOEIER

De jaren zestig zijn voor Robert geen bron voor nostalgische overpeinzingen. Hij herinnert zich alleen hard werken en zenuwslopende repetities. 'Ik vocht met het drumstel. Ik vocht om mijn muzikale ideeën naar buiten te brengen. Niets negatiefs, maar wel teveel strijd om met veel nostalgie op terug te kijken.

'Ik hou er geen romantische opvattingen over de jaren zestig op na, maar je moet goed begrijpen: mijn jeugd lag niet in de jaren zestig, maar in de jaren vijftig! Ik ben in '45 geboren. Ik heb waarschijnlijk een romantisch beeld van die tijd, dat zich uit in het feit dat ik alle jazzplaten probeer te verzamelen die ik toen goed vond. Als fan van die muziek projecteer ik een beeld van volstrekte harmonie op de jazzwereld, die toen misschien helemaal niet bestond. Ik heb dat nodig en wil daarin niet graag gedesillusioneerd worden, want ik ontleen er een hoop inspiratie aan. Daarom wil ik mensen die tien jaar jonger zijn dan ik geen desillusie over de jaren zestig bezorgen.

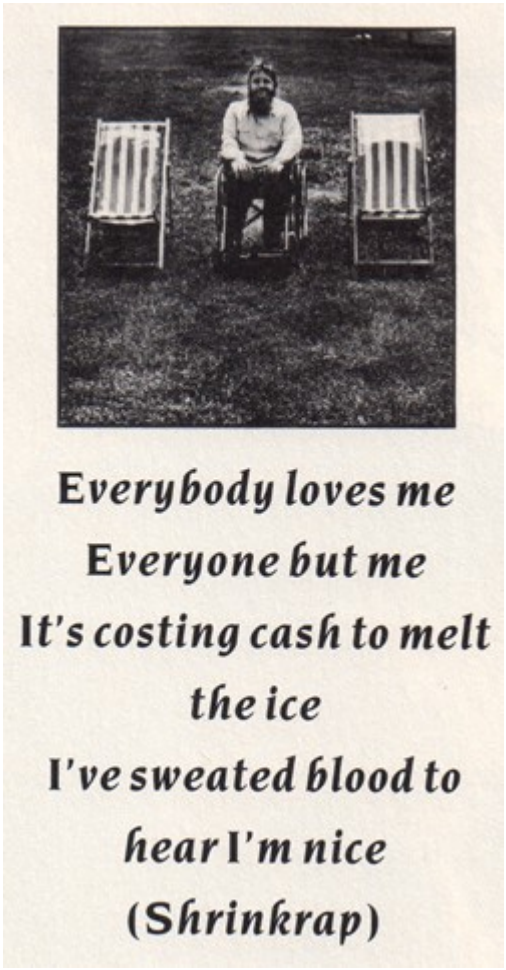
En over het veelgenoemde idealisme van die jaren: 'Ik ben een laatbloeier. Ik ben mij pas tegen het einde van de jaren zeventig, nadat punk en reggae op elkaar gebotst waren en het 2-Tone-label van start ging, van een aantal zaken bewust geworden, zowel politiek als sociaal en cultureel. Dat was een opwindende tijd, die mij deed denken aan de opwinding die ik in de jaren vijftig voelde bij die jazzmuziek. Ik ben in geestelijk opzicht eigenlijk van de jaren vijftig overgestapt in de jaren zeventig en heb de jaren zestig overgeslagen.'

Wanneer ik opmerk dat het voor mensen die juist zijn werk met Soft Machine bewonderen niet zo leuk is om dit soort dingen uit zijn mond te vernemen is zijn reactie even simpel als doeltreffend: 'Je kunt in een restaurant toch genieten van de gerechten, ook al heeft de kok het in de keuken te druk om er zelf van te genieten?'

Op de vraag of wij hem nog ooit op een podium zullen mogen begroeten reageert hij: 'Nee, dat durf ik niet meer aan. Ik heb halverwege de jaren zeventig nog een paar maal in mijn rolstoel op een podium gezeten, maar ik viel bijna flauw van de zenuwen.'

SPAANSE BRANDY

Dondestan bevat vier songs op tekst van Alfie (Robert: 'Kant en klare gedichten die ik op muziek gezet heb') en vijf met teksten van Robert zelf. De Alfie-songs hebben eenzelfde surreële kwaliteit als het meeste van *Rock Bottom*, terwijl Roberts teksten meer politiek getint zijn. Op *Shrinkrap* na, waar hij zichzelf op de psychologische pijnbank legt. 'Die twee soorten songs complementeren elkaar op een aardige manier.' De vier gedichten van Alfie zijn in Spanje gemaakt. Alfie: 'Ik heb altijd gedichten geschreven, maar mijn Engelse gedichten klinken nogal agressief, omdat zij voortkomen uit kwaadheid of ergernis. In Spanje kon ik echt van dingen houden en dat geeft de gedichten een minder agressieve



toon.

En de Spaanse brandy heeft meer poëzie dan Engels bier.' De hoes van *Dondestan* (Spaans voor: 'Waar zijn zij?') is een tekening van Alfie, die de huiskamer in Spanje voorstelt: Robert zit voor het raam met een hoofdtelefoon op, terwijl Alfie een opschrijfboekje op haar schoot heeft. Honden, katten, een wijnfles met glazen en een uitzicht op zee. Waar zijn zij? Een toepasselijke titel.

In de titelsong neemt Robert het op voor de Palestijnen, een volk zonder land. 'Wij die wel een eigen land hebben waar wij wonen moeten begrip kunnen opbrengen voor de gevoelens van hen die dat niet hebben. Dat is alles wat ik heb willen zeggen.' De tekst van *Lisp Service* is een reactie op het nummer *We Didn't Start The Fire*, dat ten tijde van de golfoorlog een hit was (van Billy Joël). Robert: 'Zoiets is makkelijk gezegd. De machtigen zeggen dat altijd: Die mensen maken er een rommeltje van en wij bieden alleen maar hulp. Wij zijn aardige politieagenten. Dat gaat echter voorbij aan onze historische verantwoordelijkheid. Dat rommeltje is mede door ons veroorzaakt. Wat hebben de Britten gedaan om Groot Brittannië te worden? Je hoeft alleen maar naar Schotland, Wales en Ierland te kijken. Alle Westeuropese landen hebben een dergelijk verleden. Wat er in de derde wereld gebeurt is een gevolg van het gewelddadige gedrag van onze voorouders. Je kunt als verkrachter je leven beteren en zeggen: ik ben nu geen verkrachter meer, ik ben nu een aardig mens dat anderen wil helpen. Maar de slachtoffers van die verkrachting blijven slachtoffers. Die zelfvoldane hypocrisie probeer ik duidelijk te maken.

'Ik zou mij liever bezighouden met van het leven genieten en muziek maken, maar je wordt voortdurend met de neus op de feiten gedrukt. Je zit naar jazz op de radio te luisteren en er volgt een nieuwsbulletin, waarin over de *'gijzelaars* in Libanon wordt gesproken en in één adem over de *gedetineerden* in Israël. Gedetineerden? Zijn dat geen gijzelaars dan? Dat is niet consequent. Ik *moet* mij daar dan wel druk om maken, omdat ik anders niet meer kan functioneren. Ik hou onmiddellijk op met het doen van politieke uitspraken als ik niet meer door dat soort zaken geprovoceerd wordt. Dan zou mijn leven een stuk prettiger zijn (lacht). Als iemand mij duidelijk kan maken hoe wij met de gevolgen van ons koloniale verleden in de derde wereld moeten omgaan, dan zal ik met alle plezier elke ideologie die je maar wilt opgeven en mij nog uitsluitend te bepalen tot mijn *fucking* jazz-platen.'

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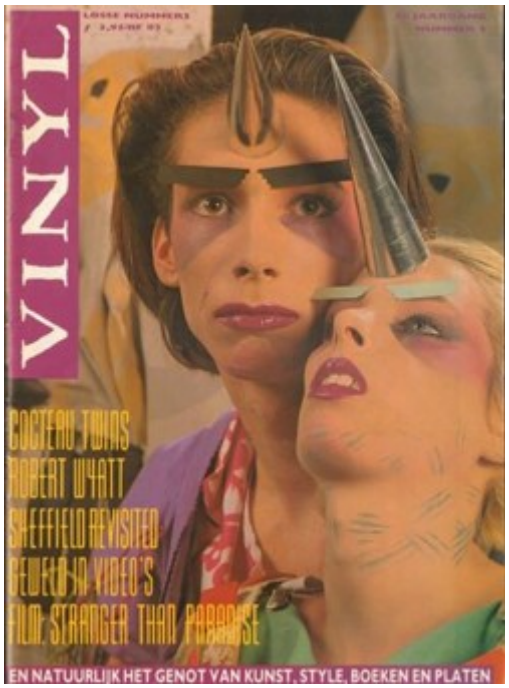
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De Internationale Robert Wyatt - Vinyl - February 1985

DE INTERNATIONALE

ROBERT WYATT



...over de goeie ouwe tijd wil hij absoluut niet praten en als naïeve idealist te boek staan zeker niet. Robert Wyatt ziet alleen bepaalde verbanden in de stand der dingen. Voldoende realist om te zien dat zelfs zijn muziek maar entertainment is en wij onze luxe aan de uitbuiting van de derde wereld te danken hebben. Een gesprek over cultureel imperialisme: 'De hele wereld luistert naar in het Engels gezongen popmuziek omdat de distributiekanalen voor het grootste deel in handen zijn van de Engelssprekende landen'...

Teks : PETER VAN BRUMMELEN
Fotografie : FRAN VAN DER HOEVEN

KEURIG OP tijd arriveren we in de opgegeven straat in de Londense buitenwijk

Twickenham. Een lichte twijfel bevangt ons als we ontdekken dat er twee deuren getooid zijn met het nummer 57 en dat geen van beide een naambordje draagt. Kruis of munt dan maar? Niet nodig, een nadere bestudering van de deuren biedt uitkomst. De deur waarop middels stickers steun wordt betoogd aan de stakende mijnwerkers verschaft zonder twijfel toegang tot de woning van de geëngageerde popmuzikant Robert Wyatt.

Het interieur van huize Wyatt ademt de sfeer van een derde wereldwinkel. Zo'n beetje ieder onderdrukt volk heeft in de vorm van een affiche een eigen plaatsje aan de wanden. Wyatt zoeft als een deelnemer aan de paralympics in zijn rolstoel door de woning en presenteert drie bakken koffie. Op de draaitafel toeteren en pingelen onze landgenoten Willem Breuker en Leo Cuypers er lustig op los. Met inachtneming van de eerder telefonisch overeengekomen voorwaarden (a. er wordt letterlijk geciteerd, b. de heer Wyatt zal niet worden afgeschilderd als een in een Londense buitenwijk wegkwijnende naïeve idealist en c. er zal niet worden geluld over de 'good old days' ['cause there weren't any']), beginnen we aan het interview. Lachend vertelt Wyatt desgevraagd over zijn toetreding tot de Engelse communistische partij: 'Well, een paar jaar geleden hoorde ik iets over een internationale communistische samenzwering met het doel de macht van het grootkapitaal, de NAVO en meer van dat soort kwaads omver te werpen. Ik dacht: mooi, dat is echt iets voor mij, daar moest ik me maar eens bij aansluiten.'

In Nederland is er binnen de communistische gelederen sprake van een botsing tussen de oude garde en een vernieuwing nastrevende jonge lichting. Speelt iets dergelijks ook in Engeland?

'Ja, althans zo beschrijven die zogenaamde nieuwlichters zelf wat er aan de hand is. Wat er werkelijk plaatsvindt is dat een nieuw soort middleclass-elite de macht van de oude en geharde vakbondsleden probeert over te nemen. De partij wordt overspoeld door hoog opgeleide, welbespraakte en mediabewuste jonge leden, die denken dat ze zeer modern zijn door veelvuldig begrippen als feminisme en nucleaire ontwapening te hanteren. Van enige binding met de werkende klasse is geen sprake. Ze doen mij vooral aan hippies denken. 'Love and peace', verder komen ze niet.

'Al snel nadat ik lid ben geworden, ontdekte ik dat de partij maar bitter weinig voorstelt. De Engelse communistische partij heeft eigenlijk maar een goed punt en dat is het uitstekende dagblad The Morningstar. Voor de rest is het niet meer dan een stel onbetekenende academici. Mijn lidmaatschap moet je ook niet al te belangrijk opvatten. Communisme en socialisme, het zijn van die enorm brede en rekbare begrippen. Ik omschrijf mijn politieke visie liever als internationalisme.'

Wat houdt dat in het internationalisme?

'Ik vind het de grootst mogelijke nonsens om over politiek binnen een land te praten. Je kunt volgens mij alleen iets zinnigs over politiek zeggen als je het geheel op wereldniveau beschouwt. Het belangrijkste gegeven binnen de internationale politiek is de absolute alleenheerschappij van de Verenigde Staten. Onze cultuur, onze produktiemethodes, alles staat onder directe invloed van Amerika. Het idiote is dat die gigantische invloed door vrijwel iedereen, inclusief de gevestigde oppositie, als normaal wordt beschouwd. Ik zie hier in de rijke landen, in tegenstelling tot in de derde wereld, voorlopig dan ook nog geen beweging opkomen die zich daar krachtig tegen zal verzetten. Degenen die werkelijk lijden, die op traditionele wijze worden uitgebuit zijn de mensen in Thailand en Taiwan, de Zuid-Amerikaanse boeren en de mijnwerkers in Zuid-Afrika. Zij vormen het internationale, voor het rijke Westen ploeterende proletariaat. Het is heel moeilijk om de mensen hier dat in te laten zien. Politiek wordt meestal gezien als iets dat zich binnen de eigen nationale grenzen afspeelt. Als je het bijvoorbeeld over het proletariaat hebt, dan wordt er alleen gekeken naar de arbeiders in het eigen land. Die zijn er een stuk beter aan toe dan vroeger, dus... "what's the problem?" Wat ze niet inzien is dat het kapitalisme een volkomen internationaal verschijnsel is. De koffie die jij nu zit te drinken is verbouwd in Malawi, zo ongeveer een kolonie van Zuid-Afrika waar de bevolking moet werken onder omstandigheden die in weinig onderdoen voor slavenarbeid. De tabak die je rookt, idem dito. Al onze luxe is gebaseerd op de uitbuiting van de derde wereld. Alles grijpt in elkaar. Het is volkomen onjuist om politiek te zien als iets wat zich binnen een land afspeelt."

KARL

Op welke theoretici is jouw internationale visie gebaseerd?

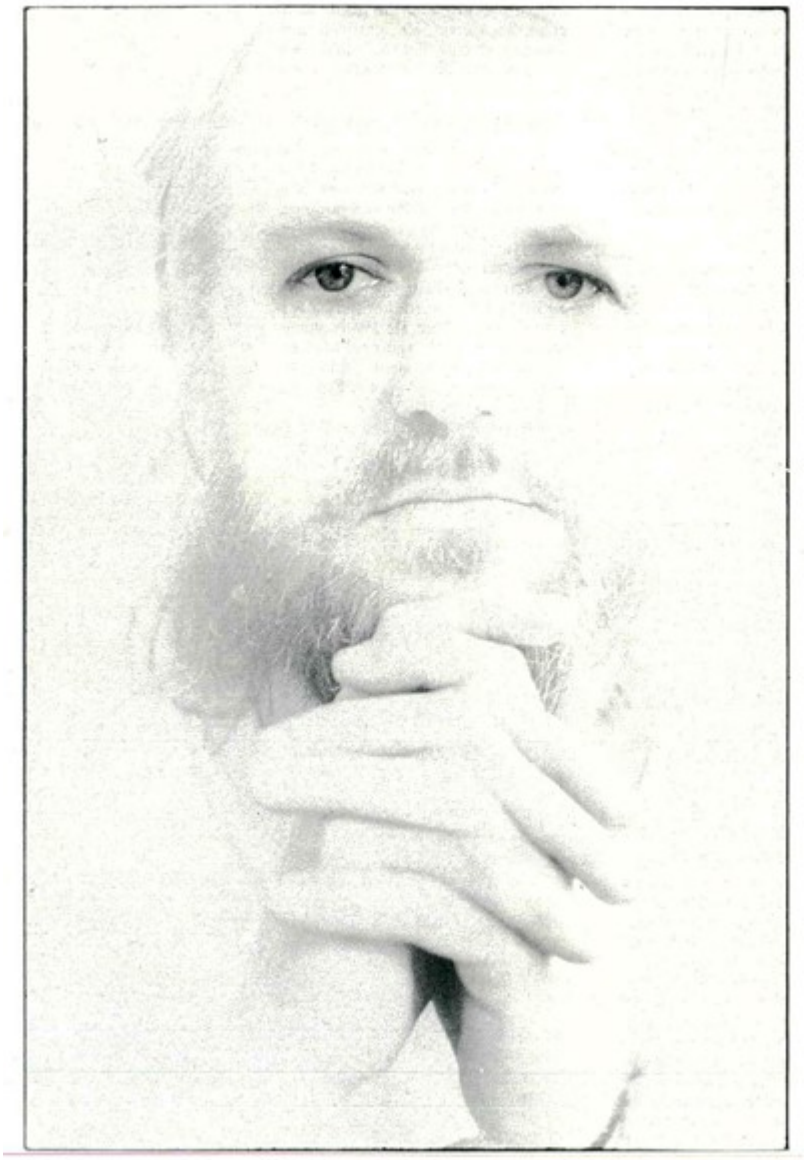
'Niemand die zich met politiek of economie bezighoudt kan om Marx heen. Zelfs rechts niet. Een tijdje geleden zag ik bijvoorbeeld op de cover van Newsweek een groot portret van Marx met daarboven in grote letters "Marx is dood". Kijk, als je honderd jaar na je overlijden nog de voorpagina van een rechts weekblad weet tehalen, dan moet er toch wel iets bijzonders aan de hand zijn. Marx bijdrage is so belangrijk dal werkelijk niemand er om heen kan. Het is als met Darwin en Freud, je kunt argumenten tegen ze inbrengen, maar je kunt ze nooit ontkennen. Mijn denkbeelden zijn voor een zeer groot deel gebaseerd op het werk van Marx."

Cynici beweren dat Marx een negentiende eeuwse denker is en dientengevolge geen enkele oplossing kan bieden voor de hedendaagse problemen.

'Tot voor vijf jaar geleden meende ik ook dat het onzin was om iemand uit de vorige eeuw bij onze moderne problemen te slepen. Maar als je de politiek op een internationaal niveau beschouwt, dan stuit je telkens weer op de analyses van Marx, en ook Lenin. Neem bijvoorbeeld de manier waarop de multinationals te werk gaan. Ze worden nog immer groter en groter en hebben bijna de gehele derde wereld in hun macht. Dat is gewoon Lenins klassieke imperialismetheorie in de praktijk. Een ander voorbeeld: als de Verenigde Staten het weer eens hoogdravend over het behoud van het christendom in Midden-Amerika hebben, dan hebben ze het in werkelijkheid over het behoud van hun economische controle. Dat christendom interesseert ze werkelijk geen ene moer. Dergelijk bedrog heeft Marx feilloos blootgelegd. Ik zie Marx vooral als een groot historicus. Een Marxistische analyse van de geschiedenis leidt exakt tot wat er zich momenteel op internationaal niveau afspeelt. Maar natuurlijk, Marx is een negentiende eeuwer en draagt dus onvermijdelijk de beelden en vooroordelen van zijn tijd met zich mee. Ik ben ook beslist geen volgeling van het evangelie volgens Sint Marx. Maar ik geloof niet dat je iets kunt begrijpen van wat er in de wereld aan de hand is zonder iets van Marx te begrijpen.'

Hoe zie jij de relatie tussen popmuziek en politiek?

'Het valt mij op dat discussies over dit onderwerp altijd over de tegen het establishment gerichte popmuziek van mensen als John Lennon, Johnny Rotten, Elvis Costello en The Special AKA gaan. Zulke mensen leveren hele opbeurende bijdragen, maar wat volgens mij in dit verband veel belangrijker is, is de immense macht van datzelfde establishment over de popmuziek. Evenals de film-en televisie-industrie maakt de populaire muziek deel uit van het kapitalistische stelsel. Een van de opvallendste kenmerken daarvan is de macht van de Engelssprekende landen, Amerika en Engeland bezitten een vrijwel absolute controle over de communicatiemarkt. De hele wereld luister naar in het Engels gezongen popmuziek. Niet omdat die muziek zo fantastisch is, maar omdat de distributiekanalen voor het grootste deel in handen zijn van de Engelssprekende landen. Kijk naar Nederland: jullie hitparades staan vol Engelse en Amerikaanse groepen en zelfs Nederlandse groepen zingen in het Engels. Dat is toch een waanzinnige situatie. Ik zou me daar als Nederlander bijzonder kwaad om maken. Het lijkt wel alsof jullie gekoloniseerd zijn door de Engelssprekende landen! Het feit dat de hele wereld naar Engelstalige popmuziek luistert is terug te voeren op de tijd dat Engeland nog, zoals Amerika nu, een wereldmacht was. Ik zie reikhalzend uit naar tekenen van verzet tegen dat Anglo-Amerikaanse monopolie binnen de populaire cultuur. Zingen in je eigen taal is wat dat betreft al een heel mooi symbool'.



ENTERTAINMENT

'Ik voel me uiterst oncomfortabel binnen de rock-industrie, een industrie die tot op haar grondvesten verrot is. Wat voor goeds iemand ook binnen het kader van de popmuziek probeert te doen, hij ontkomt nooit aan het feit dat hij deel uitmaakt van het kapitalistische systeem. Ook ik ben daar een onderdeel van, simpelweg omdat ik geld nodig heb.'

Dit is de eerste keer dat ik iemand hoor toegeven dat hij muziek maakt om geld te verdienen.

'Ik kan natuurlijk wel allemaal verheven verhalen gaan zitten ophangen, maar muziek maken is voor mij gewoon een baan. er dient op de een of andere manier brood op de plank te komen en toevallig is het enige wat ik kan muziek maken. Idealen over de effecten van mijn muziek? Kom nou toch, zie je me soms voor een overjarige hippie aan of zo? Voor zover je door middel van muziek al iets zou kunnen veranderen, is dat voor mij met het kleine beetje dat ik verkoop zeker niet weggelegd. Ik probeer het publiek te vermaken door platen te maken. En als ze mijn platen kopen, dan kan ik eten, zo simpel ligt dat. Het is entertainment, meer niet.'

Ik zou jouw muziek toch niet direct als entertainment omschrijven.

Dan snap ik eerlijk gezegd niet waarom je er dan naar zou luisteren. Het hangt er natuurlijk wel vanaf wat je onder entertainment verstaat. Sommige mensen zien in kunst

niets meer dan decoratie. Anderen zien kunst als een spiegel of een hamer. Voor mij is kunst een medicijn. Het beurt ons op en dat is wat ik bedoel met entertainment. Entertainment klinkt als iets onbelangrijks, iets onbenulligs. Maar dat bedoel ik niet. Kunst prikkelt ons verstand en ons gevoel en dat is uitermate belangrijk. Het beroerde is alleen dat kunst door het establishment wordt aangegrepen om haar eigen positie te verstevigen. En daarom is kunst in de meeste gevallen niet meer dan een kwakzalversmedicijn. Als je hier een protestplaat opneemt, dan wordt dat meteen benut door het establishment: 'Kijk eens hoe gelukkig en vrij je wel niet bent. Je kunt gewoon een protestsong opnemen en niemand houdt je tegen. Dat bewijst toch wel hoe fantastisch ons systeem is!' Kritische popmuziek heeft vrijwel altijd een effect dat volkomen tegenovergesteld aan de boodschap is. 'Gevaarlijke' popmuziek wordt getolereerd, aangemoedigd zelfs, omdat op die manier energie die anders wel eens voor werkelijk gevaarlijke zaken aangewend zou kunnen worden in de kiem kan worden gesmoord.'

Met constant dat idee in het achterhoofd moet jij je als kritisch popmuzikant in een uiterst frustrerende positie bevinden.

'Inderdaad, als kritisch popmuzikant dien je dan ook gewapend te zijn met een flink ontwikkeld gevoel voor humor, haha. Het enige wat ik in mijn toestand kan doen is zoveel mogelijk verzet bieden, vooral geen concessies doen. Ik vergelijk mijn positie wel eens met die van de verzetsbewegingen tijdens de tweede wereldoorlog. Op zichzelf konden zij niets doen om zich van de Nazi's te bevrijden, maar zij waren wel in staat het ideaal van een alternatief, het licht aan het einde van de tunnel, levend te houden.'

'Mijn persoonlijke medicijn is bijvoorbeeld het opnemen van YOLANDA, een song van de in Zuid-Amerika immens populaire Cubaanse popster Pablo Milanes. De enige Cubanen die we via de gebruikelijke kanalen te horen krijgen zijn de dissidenten en de vluchtelingen. Gelukkige Cubanen lijken niet te bestaan. Ik luister veel naar Radio Havanna, en als ik daar dan een nummer van Pablo Milenes, een gelukkige Cubaan, hoor, is dat heel bevredigend. Dat bewijst dat niet iedereen zich naar de wil van de Verenigde Staten hoeft te schikken. Zo'n nummer neem ik dan graag op. Dat is prima voor mijn moraal.'

KUNST

De laatste jaren zing je hoofdzakelijk over situaties in de derde wereld. In tegenstelling tot vroeger lijk jijzelf niet meer in je songs voor te komen.

'Datgene waar ik over nadenk en wat ik zie, dat ben ik zelf. Ik ben niet het type dat zich de hele dag met de bestudering van zijn eigen zieleroerselen bezighoudt. Misschien ben ik daarom ook eigenlijk wel niet de juiste persoon om als kunstenaar door het leven te gaan. De enige persoon die iets over mijzelf zou kunnen zeggen, zou iemand anders zijn. Als je ergens naar kijkt, dan zie je niet je eigen ogen, je ziet wat je ziet. Ik kan mijn eigen ogen niet beschrijven, want ik kan ze niet eens zien. Ik houd er vooral van om over dingen te zingen. Op zichzelf is dat een vorm van verzet tegen het alomheersende idee binnen de moderne kunst dat de kunstenaar zich aan iedere vorm van sociale verantwoordelijkheid dient te onttrekken. Het vertroetelen van je eigen kleine breintje en je vooral niet inlaten met die grote boze wereld daarbuiten is weer heel modieus in artistieke kringen. Een dergelijke werkwijze zou bij mij hoogstwaarschijnlijk tot claustrofobie lijden.'

Op je elpee ROCKBOTTOM bezong je toch op een hele persoonlijke manier je eigen ervaringen. Voel je nooit weer de behoefte om je op een dergelijke manier te uiten?

'Dat internationalisme waar we het al eerder over hadden is voor mij iets heel persoonlijks. Het feit dat we in een heel kleine wereld leven, dat we nauw verbonden zijn met ogenschijnlijk ver verwijderde volkeren, is voor mij de meest opwindende ontdekking die ik ooit gedaan heb. Die ervaring verwerk ik onder andere door songs van artiesten uit de derde wereld te coveren. Voor mij ligt dat even persoonlijk als de songs op ROCKBOTTOM. Ik pak de zaken echter anders aan. Je zou het kunnen vergelijken met de ontwikkeling van kind tot volwassene. Als kind ontwikkel je op school je eigen spieren en je eigen taal. Dan volgt een periode waarin je die spieren en die taal gaat toepassen in de echte wereld. Ik houd niet van het idee van de kunstenaar die voor altijd op de speelplaats blijft rondhangen uit angst zijn zuiverheid te beschadigen.'

Je bent nu al zo'n twintig jaar actief binnen de popmuziek. Je muziek wordt nog altijd als belangrijk beschouwd en jonge mensen als Elvis Costello, Ben Watt en Working Week vragen je met hen samen te werken. Vleien dat soort dingen je?

'Zeker! Ik kan me goed herinneren dat ik in '77 samen met mijn vrouw een punkconcert bezocht. We waren allebei doodnerveus. We waren te oud en zagen er helemaal verkeerd uit. Onze verwachting was dat we zo ongeveer neergeknald of opgevreten zouden worden. Maar zo gauw we binnenkwamen was het van: 'Hello, nice to see you'. Dat was echt heel leuk. Ik had altijd het idee dat er binnen de rockmuziek maar een wet bestond en die luidde dat je na het bereiken van een bepaalde leeftijd niet meer meetelde. Dat mensen die half zo oud waren als ik naar mijn muziek luisterden en dat iemand als Elvis Costello me vroeg met hem samen te werken, kwam voor mij als een complete, maar wel zeer aangename verrassing.'

Samen mei Mike Ratledge en Kevin Ayers vormt drummer Robert Wyatt aan het einde van de jaren zestig de groep Soft Machine. De eerste elpees van deze roemruchte jazz-rockformatie vallen vooral op door het hoge en hese stemgeluid van Wyatt. Om boven het lawaai van zijn drumstel uit te komen heeft deze een volkomen unieke zangstijl ontwikkeld. Na vier elpees verlaat Wyatt Soft Machine en richt de groep Matching Mole op. Een val uit een raam doet hem in '73 voor de rest van zijn leven in een rolstoel belanden. De verwerking hiervan vindt plaats op de solo-elpee Rockbottom*, het hoogtepunt uit Wyatt' Carrière. Zijn zich vooral in een sterke betrokkenheid bij de derde wereld uitende politieke bewustzijn krijgt gestalte op de opvolger* Ruth is Stranger than Richard*. Na een lange tijd van stilte duikt Wyatt in '8O plotseling weer op als hij voor het Rough Trade-label een reeks singles opneemt, die later gebundeld worden op de elpee* Nothing Can Stop Us*. De elpee bevat hoofdzakelijk covers van uiteenlopende nummers als de Zuid-Amerikaanse klassieker* Caimanera*,* At last I'm Free *van Chic en Billy Holidays* Strange Fruit*. Het speciaal voor hem door Elvis Costello geschreven Shipbuilding levert cultheld Wyatt zowaar een bescheiden hit op. De mini-elpee* Work In progress *bevat onder meer covers van songs van Victor Jara en de Cubaanse popster Pablo Milanes. Wyatt's meest recente produkt is de samen met de ex-leden van henry Cow opgenomen plaat* The Last Nightingale*, waarvan de opbrengsten bestemd zijn ter ondersteuning van de Engelse stakende mijnwerkers.*

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Robert Wyatt - Ter Nagedachtenis aan de gevallenen - Vinyl #28 - September 1983

ROBERT WYATT ter nagedachtenis aan de gevallenen



Robert Wyatt, ooit de zweetharige zanger/drummer van Soft Machine, sprong dronken door een raam. Hij verblijft sindsdien in een rolstoel maar liet toch weer van zich horen middels platen en gedichten.
Pas werkelijk in de schijnwerpers kwam hij echter weer door Costello's Shipbuilding. Dus opnieuw: interviews, tv, fotosessies. En dat terwijl hij het liefst in zijn woning vlakbij barcelona zit. Vanwege de rust en het klimaat.

Tekst : Griselda Visser.

De Albany Empire in de buitenwijk Deptford, zuid-Londen, verrijst in al haar post-moderne glorie temidden van grauwe huizenblokkenen verweerde winkelpuien. Op dinsdagavonden is de Empire een geliefd toevuchtsoord voor vele Londense 'mobile knives', daar ex-Squeeze zanger Glen tilbrook er zjin 'Yow Club' organiseert , synoniem voor een discotheek annex live-optredens van bekende musici.
Op een stralende middag in mei vormt de Empire de locatie voord de televisieregistratie van het Channel 4 live-programma Loose Talk. Overal kabëls, koptelefoons, camera's, een regelmatig paars aanlopende regisseur en de o zo hulpvaardige juffrouw van de catering die ons tot tweemaal verzoekt de zaal te verlaten. – 'Nee, dank u, we komen voor Robert Wyatt'. – 'Dan zullen Jullie toch buiten moeten wachten'. Gelukkig verschijnt dan als reddende engel de PR-jongen van Rough Trade die ons vriendelijk meeloodst naar de foyer, waar Robert op ons wacht.

Een wrede speling van het lot heeft er voor gezorgd dat de voormalige drummer/zanger

van de legendarische Soft Machine voor de rest van zijn leven aan een rolstoel gekluisterd is, doordat hij jaren geleden, op een feest, in een dronken bui door een raam is gesprongen. Een benefietconcert werd georganiseerd door een aantal vrienden, de actrice Julie Christie schonk Robert en zijn vrouw Alfreda een huis in Twickenham, maar spoedig zette de kille stilte in. *Far from the madding crowd* luisterde hij naar volksmuziek uit Zuid-Amerika, China en Japan, radio-uitzendingen uit alle delen van de wereld en wijdde zich aan de dichtkunst. Eind jaren '70 verschenen er enkele platen en gedichten, maar het is de single Shipbuilding (N.B. voor de tweede keer uitgebracht!) die Robert opnieuw in de schijnwerpers zet.
Zijn elpee Nothing can stop us bevat onder meer Spaanse nummers, een coverversie van Billie Holiday's S t r a n g e Fruit en het als monologue extérieur voorgedragen gedicht Stalingrad van Peter Blackman.

Elvis

Hij glimlacht verlegen wanneer er aanstalten wordt gemaakt om het interview te beginnen. ‘Eh… als er een vraag is die ik moellijk vind om te beantwoorden slaan we die maar over, goed?’

Je legt een grote interesse voor Spaanse, revolutionair getinte nummers aan de dag, getuige onder andere het nummer Caimanera.

‘Spaans is altijd een van m’n favoriete talen geweest. Ik heb’t twee jaar gestudeerd en ook al beheers ik het niet tot in de vingertoppen het is een heel melodieuze taal voor me en prettig om in te zingen. Die nummers op de elpee zijn volksliederen en ademen ook die volksgeest uit .. dat temperamentvolle, levendige, dat spreekt me heel erg aan’.

Hoe is de samenwerking met Elvis Costello tot stand gekomen?

'Wel, Elvis had 't nummer Shipbuilding geschreven en de tape naar Rough Trade gestuurd met het verzoek of ik 't wilde zingen. Ik kon me prima verenigen met de strekking van het nummer (gericht tegen de Falklandoorlog) enne.. (lacht) ik voel me zeer gevleid dat ik benaderd ben om het te vertolken'.
De single Shipbuilding verschijnt in vier verschillende uitklaphoezen op de markt, ieder bedrukt met een detail van de schilderingen die Stanley Spencer in opdracht van een oorlogscomité vervaardigde ter nagedachtenis aan de gevallenen in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. De wandschilderingen bevinden zich in het Londense Imperial War Museum.



ROBERT WYATT

Elvis

Robert Wyatt, ooit de zweetharige zanger/drummer van Soft Machine, sprong dronken door een raam. Hij verblijft sindsdien in een rolstoel maar liet toch weer van zich horen middels platen en gedichten. Pas werkelijk in de schijnwerpers kwam hij echter weer door Costello's Shipbuilding. Dus opnieuw: interviews, tv, fotosessies. En dat terwijl hij het liefst in zijn woning vlakbij Barcelona zit. Vanwege de rust en het klimaat.

Tekst: Griselda Visser

Ter nagedachtenis aan de gevallenen

Foto

Licht

'Ik kende die schilderingen niet, mijn vrouw Alfreda, die zelf schilderes is, heeft me attent gemaakt op Spencers werk'.
Een oorlogsmonument dat, verscholen achter betonnen museummuren, nieuw leven en betekenis ingeblazen krijgt.

Ben je nog steeds geïnteresseerd in politiek?

'Jazeker (de lichte ogen schieten vuur), natuurlijk zelfs, het is een belangrijk onderdeel van m'n leven. Alleen… ik ben geen voorstander meer van het dogmatisch Marxisme, ik pleit voor relatieve toepassing van de marxistische doctrine, dus al naar gelang de situatia - - - - - *[onvolledige zin/phrase incomplète]*.

Foto

Hoe ervaar je het om weer in the picture te zijn?

'Tsja.. weet je, ik ben al een tijd bezig met muziek en ik beschouw het als een combinatie van plezier en een mogelijkheid om in m'n bestaan te voorzien. Ik ben heel blij met het succes van Shipbuilding, maar ik ga op dezelfde weg voort, ik blijf de dingen doen die ik altijd heb gedaan...'

Een journalist schreef eens dat de schrijver Robert Graves van vérstrekkende invloed op je is geweest in je jonge jaren…

'O ja, ik weet welk artikel je bedoelt, maar dat is niet waar. Robert Graves was een vriend van m'n ouders die in de jaren '30 op Mallorca zijn gaan wonen, we kwamen veel bij hem over de vloer. Maar die journalist heeft er een heel verhaal omheen gesponnen om me interessanter te doen lijken.

Tijd voor de fotosessie. 'Zeg, ik wil niet alleen op de foto, after all, it takes two for an interview'.
Inmiddels zijn de repetities voor Loose Talk in volle gang. Robert zal tezamen met Elvis Costello geïnterviewd worden. Als visuele attractie zal de promotievideo van Shipbuilding vertoond worden, waarin naast Costllo en Wyatt Steve Naieve van The Attractions en Mark Bedford van Madness te zien zijn.

Presentatrice Vivien Goldman, gehuld in een gifgroen gewaad, repeteert haar teksten die een satirische kijk op actualiteiten vormen, de performance-kunstenaar Bruce McLean zorgt voor de nodige hilariteit, Costello en Wyatt zijn in druk gesprek verwikkeld.

Licht

De dame van de make-up maakt haar ronde en voorziet de gasten van de nodige oorlogskleuren. Costello protesteert, maar krijgt er duchtig met de rougekwast van langs.
Om vijf uur gaat de zaal open en het jeugdige publiek stroomt binnen. Veel Joboxers-petten, Tears For Fears-staartjes en nog meer moois. De regisseur verzoekt iedereen dringend om op het aangegeven sein flinkt te applaudiseren. Eerste poging: 'Nou, nou jullie zijn hier toch voor je plezier?' Tweede poging: 'Ja. ho maar!'

17.30 u. Loose Talk in de ether, gesprekken, grappen, reclames tussendoor en dan is het de beurt aan Wyatt en Costello. Robert praat met zachte stem, geeft korte antwoorden, laat het gesprek eigenlijk aan Costello over. Elvis is duidelijk op z'n gemak en praat gedecideerd: 'De melodie voor Shipbuilding is geschreven door Clive Langer, die me de tape meegaf toen ik op toernee ging door Australië. Het nieuws over de Falklandoorlqg bereikte ons op derdehands wijze via de Australische pers en was sterk gedramatiseerd. Ik zag alles in een ander licht, waarschijnlijk ook omdat ik er zo ver vandaan stond.

Het idee van Shipbuilding is op twee niveaus in het nummer verwerkt: de Falklandoorlog en het wegvallen van de scheepsbouw in Engeland als belangrijke bron van inkomsten. Het verbaast me niet dat de single nu pas succes heeft, het heeft even moeten duren eer men de zinloosheid van die oorlog inzag...'

Z'n bijtende kritiek vindt grote publiekelijke bijval. Robert deelt mee dat hij in de nabije toekomst enkele nummers van Costello en Clive Langer gaat opnemen, de samenwerking blijkt vruchtbaar.

De laatste minuten van het programma tikken weg, maar het indringendste beeld blijft hangen: Robert Wyatt die tegen een achtergrond van verlaten scheepswerven en met tegenlicht gefilmde scheepsboegen zingt:

'It's just a rumour that was spread around town
Somebody said that someone got filled in
For saying that people get killed in
The result of this shipbuilding...'

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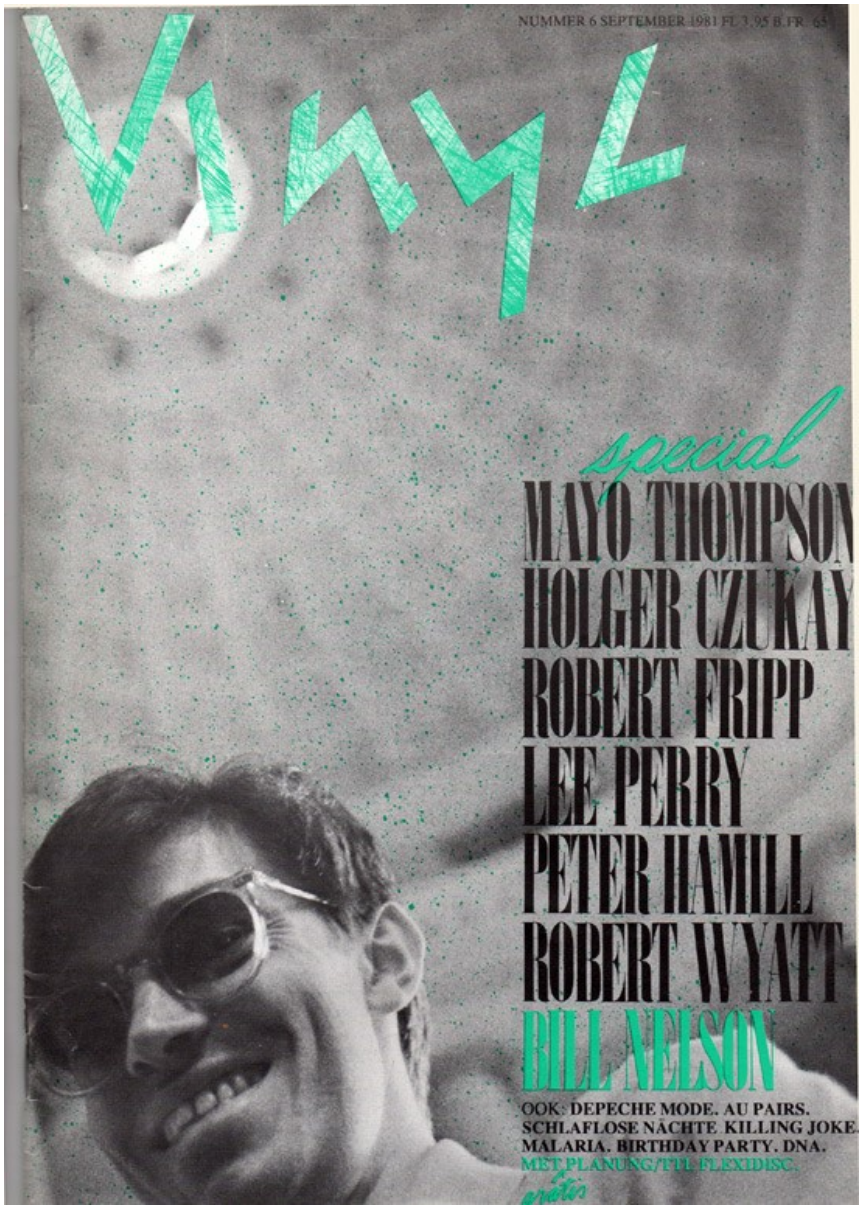
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Robert Wyatt - Vinyl - Nummer 6 - September 1981

ROBERT WYATT



ROBERT WYATT

SOFT MACHINE 1, 2 EN 3, EEN SOLO-LP, EEN NIEUWE BAND: **MATCHING MOLE.** DAN EEN ONGELUKKIGE VAL DIE HEM VOOR DE REST VAN ZIJN LEVEN AAN EEN ROLSTOEL ZAL KLUISTEREN. EEN HEL, ZEKER ALS JE DÁÁRVOOR ALS DRUMMER JE BROOD VERDIENDE.



Harold Schellinckx

ROBERT WYATT IS EEN BIJZONDERE FIGUUR, ZIJN INVLOED OP HET WERK VAN VELEN ERKEND, MAAR TOCH ONDERSCHAT, ÓÓK DOOR HEMZELF. ZIJN KARAKTERISTIEKE STEMGELUID, MANIER VAN ZINGEN EN DE UNIEKE WIJZE WAAROP HIJ DIT MET ZIJN DRUMMEN COMBINEERDE ZIJN DE DINGEN DIE HET OUDERE WERK VAN GROEPEN ALS **THE SOFT MACHINE** BLIJVEND INTERESSANT MAKEN.

NA ZIJN RELATIEVE HERSTEL LEGDE **ROBERT** ZICH TOE OP HET WERKEN MET PIANO EN ANDERE TOETSENINSTRUMENTEN EN KREEG HIJ DE KANS ZIJN ORIGINELE EN VAAK BIZARRE GEVOEL VOOR MELODIE EN HARMONIE VERDER TE ONTWIKKELEN. DIT VERWERKT MET HET TRAUMA VAN ZIJN ONGELUK RESULTEERDE IN *'ROCK BOTTOM'*, EEN VAN DE MEEST INDRUKWEKKENDE LANGSPEELPLATEN DIE HET AFGELOPEN DECENNIUM IS VERSCHENEN. NA EEN TWEEDE SOLO-LP VOOR **VIRGIN** *(RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD)* WORDT HET EEN TIJDLANG STIL ROND **ROBERT WYATT.** TOT HIJ, KORT GELEDEN, WEER IN DE OPENBAARHEID TRAD MET EEN SERIE SINGLES VOOR **ROUGH TRADE.**

WAT WAS DE REDEN OM, TOEN JE BESLOOT WEER IETS TE GAAN DOEN, DIT VOOR **ROUGH TRADE** *TE DOEN, EN NIET VOOR* **VIRGIN?**

'IN FEITE IS HET EIGENLIJK NIET ZO, DAT IK WEGGING BIJ **VIRGIN,** MAAR . . . DE *'RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD'*-LP DIE IK GEDAAN HAD WAS ERG DUUR EN IK MOEST MET OPNEMEN STOPPEN VÓÓRDAT HET ECHT AF WAS. DIE PLAAT HEEFT ONTZETTEND VEEL GELD GEKOST, GELD DAT NOOIT IS TERUGGEKOMEN. IN FEITE BEN IK **VIRGIN** NU NOG STEEDS EEN KLEIN KAPITAAL SCHULDIG. EN . . . HET LEEK ZO'N STOMME MANIER VAN WERKEN, ZO VEEL GELD UITGEVEN EN GROTE SCHULDEN MAKEN . . . IK WOU DAT IK EEN BAANTJE HAD WAARMEE IK GELD VERDIENDE, IN PLAATS VAN 'T ENKEL UIT TE GEVEN. HET WAS NIET EENS PRETTIG OM TE DOEN, ALLES LEEK WAANZINNIG. *I WANTED TO DROP OUT JUST AS MUCH AS SOME BUSINESSMEN MIGHT WANT TO DROP OUT.*

HET IS MOEILIJK ALS JE JE MET ROCKMUZIEK BEZIG HOUDT OM TE ZEGGEN DAT JE HET NIET MEER LEUK VINDT. HET HOORT *'A LABOUR OF LOVE'* TE ZIJN. MAAR IN FEITE IS HET OOK MAAR EEN BAANTJE. DE REDEN DAT IK NA VERLOOP VAN TIJD TOCH WEER DE DRAAD MIN OF MEER OPPIKTE WAS DOODEENVOUDIG DAT IK NIETS ANDERS KAN DOEN. IK BEN IN DE DERTIG NOU, TE JONG OM HIER MAAR WAT TE ZITTEN EN LANGZAAM DOOD TE GAAN. IK BEN WELISWAAR TE OUD VOOR ROCK 'N' ROLL MAAR TE JONG OM . . . VOLWASSEN TE ZIJN. DAAROM GA IK DOOR.'

WAAROM SINGLES EN GEEN NIEUWE LP?

'IK HAD HET IDEE OM BEPAALDE SONGS TE DOEN, MAAR GEEN MUZIKALE CONTEXT. DE SONGS HADDEN EEN BEPAALDE THEMATISCHE, MAAR GEEN MUZIKALE SAMENHANG. WAT DE MUZIEK BETREFT WAS MIJN BELANGRIJKSTE INTERESSE UIT TE ZOEKEN HOE JE EEN IDEE ZO SIMPEL EN DUIDELIJK MOGELIJK OVER KUNT BRENGEN, WAT HET TEGENOVERGESTELDE IS VAN WAT WE TIEN JAAR GELEDEN DEDEN, TOEN WE EEN IDEE IN EEN ZO GECOMPLICEERD MOGELIJKE VORM PROBEERDEN UIT TE WERKEN. EN VOOR DIE SIMPELE VORM IS DE SINGLE HET MEEST NATUURLIJKE MEDIUM.

DE SONGS OP DE SINGLES ZIJN SONGS UIT VERSCHILLENDE TIJDEN EN VAN VERSCHILLENDE PLAATSEN, DIE LANGZAMERHAND VERLOREN LIJKEN TE GAAN, TENMINSTE HIER. MIJN VOORNAAMSTE REDEN OM ZE OP TE NEMEN WAS DAN OOK EENVOUDIGWEG EEN PAAR, NAAR MIJN MENING, GOEIE OUWE SONGS TE BEWAREN, TOTDAT ZE OVER EEN PAAR JAAR DEFINITIEF IN DE VUILNISBAK TERECHTKOMEN.'

KUN JE IN HET KORT IETS OVER DE AFZONDERLIJKE SINGLES VERTELLEN?

CAIMANERA?

'IK HOU VAN **CUBANEN,** IK BEN ERG ONDER DE INDRUK VAN **CUBANEN,** IK BEDOEL NIET DEGENEN DIE WEGGAAN, MAAR DEGENEN DIE BLIJVEN. IK BEN HET ZAT DAT MENSEN ME VERTELLEN DAT IK ZE MOET HATEN, IN DE KRANTEN, OP DE RADIO. IK VIND DAT EEN BELEDIGING VOOR MIJN INTELLIGENTIE EN MIJN MENSELIJKHEID, ALS ANDEREN MIJ VERTELLEN DAT IK ZE MOET HATEN, OMDAT ZE ZICH NIET GOED GEDRAGEN, NIET DOEN WAT DE **BRITSE** EN **AMERIKAANSE** REGERINGEN HUN ZEGGEN DAT ZE MOETEN DOEN. IK KAN HET STANDPUNT VAN DE REGERINGEN WELISWAAR NIET VERANDEREN, MAAR IK KAN WEL DUIDELIJK MAKEN DAT IK MET HUN STANDPUNT NIETS TE MAKEN WIL HEBBEN. EN **CAIMANERA** BOOD MIJ EEN GELEGENHEID OM **HARRY BECKETT** EEN FLUGELHORN-SOLO TE LATEN SPELEN. IK HEB ZIJN NAAM VERGETEN TE VERMELDEN OP DE SINGLE. BIJ DEZE DUS.'

STRANGE FRUIT?

'HOEWEL DE TWEE SONGS OP DEZE SINGLE ALLEBEI ERG DROEVIG ZIJN, ZIT ER EEN GRAPPIG SOORT IRONIE IN HET FEIT DAT ZE GECOMBINEERD ZIJN. ZE KOMEN UIT **NEGER-AMERIKA,** ALLE TWEE, MAAR ZO'N DERTIG - VEERTIG JAAR UIT ELKAAR. **STRANGE FRUIT** IS HET OUDE **NEGER-AMERIKA,** DE ZWARTE AMERIKAANSE MUZIEK WAARMEE IK BEN GROOTGEBRACHT, EEN **BILLY HOLLIDAY**-SONG, EN DE **CHIC**-SONG AAN DE ANDERE KANT . . . **CHIC** WAS OP HET MOMENT DAT IK DE PLAAT MAAKTE DE MEEST MODERNE **ZWART-AMERIKAANSE** MUZIEK. EN ER BESTAAT EEN IRONISCH CONTRAST TUSSEN DIE OUDE JAZZ-SONGS EN HET WERK VAN DE MODERNE DISCO-COMPONISTEN. EN KIJKEN NAAR DIE ONTWIKKELING . . . EIGENLIJK IS HET EEN HEEL SIMPLISTISCH SPELLETJE EN IN FEITE ZOU IK DIT NIET MOETEN VERTELLEN, HET IS ZOIETS ALS EEN GRAP UITLEGGEN, MAAR . . . DAT WAS HET IDEE.'

STALIN?

'**STALIN** IS ZUIVER IRONISCH. HET ORIGINEEL IS VAN HET **GOLDEN GATE QUARTET,** DIE HET IN DE VEERTIGER JAREN DEDEN. 'T IS PRE-ROCK, WEER BLACK MUSIC, HOEWEL JE HET NIET ZO SNEL ALS ZODANIG HERKENT. DAT ORIGINEEL IS PERFECT. DE BALANS IN HET ORIGINELE KWARTET, DE DYNAMIEK IS ZÓ FANTASTISCH. NADERHAND HEB IK MEER DINGEN GEHOORD VAN **BILL JOHNSON,** DIE HET GESCHREVEN ÉN GEZONGEN HEEFT. BIJVOORBEELD EEN SONG DIE BEDOELD IS ALS WAARSCHUWING VOOR DE GEVAREN VAN NUCLEAIR ONDERZOEK, WAT BEHOORLIJK GEAVANCEERD WAS VOOR DIE TIJD. VERDER VEEL TRADITIONELE GOSPELMUZIEK, MAAR EEN HEEL INTERESSANTE GROEP, INTERESSANT MATERIAAL. DE GROEP WAS POPULAIR IN DE OORLOGSTIJD, EN TOEN WAS HET NIET ZO CONTROVERSIËEL WAT ZE ZONGEN OMDAT TOENDERTIJD DE GEALLIËERDEN SOWIESO DE **RUSSEN** HIELPEN OM DE OORLOG TEGEN **DUITSLAND** TE

WINNEN. EEN SONG ALS **STALIN** WERD NIET BESCHOUWD ALS IETS SUBVERSIEFS, EN DAAROM IS HET GRAPPIG OM HET NU TE ZINGEN.'

HET GEDICHT VAN **PETER BLACKMAN** *AAN DE ANDERE KANT?*

'**PETER BLACKMAN** IS EEN DICHTER DIE OP DIT MOMENT IN **LONDON** WOONT, MAAR OORSPRONKELIJK UIT **WEST-INDIË** KOMT. IK WAS ERG VERRAST HEM TE VINDEN, OMDAT . . . . HIJ IS IN FEITE EEN ERG TRADITIONELE DICHTER MET KLASSIEKE OPVATTINGEN OVER GEDICHTEN, MAAR DE INHOUD IS OP ZN MINST BESCHAMEND EN VAAK ONAANVAARDBAAR VOOR MODERNE **ENGELSEN.** NIET OMDAT HET OUDERWETS IS, MAAR OMDAT DE UITDAGING OM ECHT NA TE DENKEN OVER WAT HIJ ZEGT, TE VEEL VOOR HEN IS. IK VIND HET ZONDE DAT IEMAND ALS **PETER,** DIE ZO VEEL TE ZEGGEN HEEFT EN ZO HARD WERKT, NAUWELIJKS GEHOORD OF GEZIEN WORDT. NIET DOOR DE OUDERE GENERATIE, OMDAT HET NIET TOT HUN ESTABLISHMENT BEHOORT. NIET DOOR DE JONGEREN OMDAT HIJ NIET JONG IS EN DAAROM VERVELEND EN . . HET IS DOODZONDE.

ALLE SINGLES HEBBEN DAT GEMEENSCHAPPELIJK, HET ZIJN DINGEN DIE JE GEMAKKELIJK OVER HET HOOFD ZIET. DINGEN DIE WAARDEVOL ZIJN. IK BEN ERG GEINTERESSEERD IN DE HALF VERBORGEN WERELDEN DIE BINNEN ONZE SAMENLEVING BESTAAN, ONOPGEMERKT DOOR DE MEESTEN, VER VAN ALLE PUBLICITEIT. DENK BIJVOORBEELD AAN GROEPEN DIE DE MUZIEK VERZORGEN BINNEN EEN BEPAALDE ETHNISCHE OF RELIGIEUZE GROEPERING. DE MEEST FANTASTISCHE DINGEN KUN JE DAAR ONTDEKKEN ALS JE DE MOEITE NEEMT ER NAAR TE ZOEKEN. HET LIJKT ZO BELACHELIJK OM **SCIENCE-FICTION** VERHAALTJES TE MOETEN BEDENKEN OVER IETS ALS 'SIMULTANE UNIVERSA', TERWIJL ZE RONDOM ONS ZIJN, EN NIEMAND MERKT ER IETS VAN.'

'DAT ER MEER POLITIEK DAN OOIT TEVOREN IN MIJN WERK ZIT IS EEN GEVOLG VAN HET FEIT DAT POLITIEK EN DENKEN OVER DE WERELD, DE AFGELOPEN JAREN, EEN STEEDS GROTERE ROL IN MIJN LEVEN IS GAAN SPELEN. MIJN LEVEN IS OP DIE MANIER VERANDERD EN OP DEZELFDE WIJZE VERANDERT DE MUZIEK DIE IK MAAK. DE MEESTE DINGEN WAAR IK ZELF NAAR LUISTER ZIJN DAARENTEGEN NIET POLITIEK GETINT. EN VEEL VAN DE ÉCHT POLITIEKE MUZIEK IS DENK IK VEEL RELEVANTER DAN WAT IK DOE. MENSEN ALS **THE AU PAIRS, LINTON KWESI JOHNSON** PRATEN NÚ OVER SPECIFIEKE DINGEN. MIJN WERK IS MEER . . BIJNA POLITIEKE NOSTALGIE.'

ROCKMUZIEK VAN TEGENWOORDIG, HOE KIJK JE DAAR TEGEN AAN?

EERLIJK GEZEGD HOOR IK NIET ZO VEEL. IK WEET ER NIET ECHT VEEL VAN. ALLES WAT MIJ IN DE LOOP DER JAREN ECHT GEÏNSPIREERD HEEFT WAREN DINGEN ALS JAZZ, VAN BOP TOT **CHARLIE PARKER** EN **JOHN COLTRANE** EN MEER RECENT FILMS, **WENDERS** EN **FASSBINDER.** NIETS IN ROCKMUZIEK HEEFT ME OOIT ECHT ZOVEEL GEÏNTERESSEERD ALS DEZE DINGEN. MAAR DAT MOET JE ABSOLUUT NIET ALS KRITIEK OPVATTEN, IK WEET ER NIET GENOEG VAN. TOEVALLIG MAAK IK DEEL UIT VAN EEN GENERATIE, EEN GROEP MENSEN DIE ALLEMAAL IN ROCKBANDS TERECHTKWAMEN. VOORNAMELIJK OMDAT WE NIETS ANDERS KONDEN BEDENKEN OM TE DOEN. IK KAN HET NIET OBJECTIEF BEKIJKEN.

HET LAATSTE CONCERT DAT IK GEZIEN HEB WAS **BLACK UHURU.** DANSMUZIEK FASCINEERT MIJ. WAT VOOR MIJ SPECIFIEK WAS IN JAZZ, TOEN IK VOOR HET EERST HOORDE, WAS HET VERSCHIL MET DE KLASSIEKE MUZIEK WAAR MIJN OUDERS NAAR LUISTERDEN, WAS HET GEBRUIK VAN DANSRITMES. ALS IK VOOR MIJN PLEZIER NAAR POPMUZIEK LUISTER, DAN ZOEK IK DAAR NAAR, EN MEESTAL VIND IK DAT IN BLACK MUSIC. VAAK IS HET MUZIEK WAARVAN MENSEN TEGEN ME ZEGGEN DAT DE TEKSTEN NIET SERIEUS GENOEG ZIJN, OF ZO IETS, MAAR DAN ZOEKEN ZE IETS WAT HELEMAAL NIET GEBODEN WORDT EN KIJKEN ZE NIET NAAR WAT ER WÉL IS. ZO SIMPEL IS DAT.'

HOE STAAT HET MET JE EIGEN WERK OP DIT MOMENT? WAAR BEN JE MEE BEZIG?

'D'R KOMT BINNENKORT EEN NIEUWE SINGLE, *GRASS,* EEN SONG VAN EEN VRIEND VAN ME, **IVOR CUTLER.** NIET POLITIEK, MAAR GRAPPIG. EN IK WERK SAMEN MET **GREEN** VAN **SCRITTI POLITTI** AAN MUZIEK VOOR EEN FILM EN NOG IEMAND ANDERS HELP IK MET FILMMUZIEK, ALLES UITSLUITEND MET INSTRUMENTALE TECHNIEKEN. MAAR 'T KAN BEST DAT HET NIKS WORDT. IK ZEG ER OP DIT MOMENT LIEVER NIET TE VEEL OVER.'

NIEUWE **ROBERT WYATT**-SONGS?

IK BEN DIT JAAR, SINDS DE SINGLES, ZO VEEL BETROKKEN GEWEEST BIJ PROJECTEN VAN ANDEREN, DAT HET ER NIET VAN LIJKT TE KOMEN. MAAR *'BORN AGAIN CRETIN'* OP DIE **ROUGH TRADE/NME** COMPILATIE CASSETTE, WAS MIN OF MEER EEN NIEUW BEGIN. 'T IS ECHT DE ENIGE SONG DIE IK IN JAREN GESCHREVEN HEB, WAARIN IK MIJN EIGEN GEDACHTEN COMBINEER MET DE MANIER WAAROP IK MOMENTEEL MET MUZIEK BEZIG BEN. **'ROBERT WYATT** SINGING **ROBERT WYATT'**, IETS WAAR IK ZEKER MEE DOORGA. MISSCHIEN VOLGEND JAAR, IK WEET HET NIET. IK HEB GEEN PLANNEN. IK KIJK WAT ER GEBEURT EN REAGEER DAAROP.'

EN JE ZOEKT OOK BINNEN DAT EIGEN WERK NAAR DE SIMPELE, DUIDELIJKE VORM?

'JA, IK PROBEER DE ESSENTIE VAN IETS TE VINDEN, WAT ZIJN DE VIER BELANGRIJKE TONEN, EN WAAROM. DE MEESTE DINGEN DIE IK DOE ZIJN GEBASEERD OP NIET MEER DAN VIER AKKOORDEN, EN TEGENWOORDIG UITSLUITEND IN VIERKWARTSMAAT. HOE DAT UITPAKT . . . IK WEET 'T NIET. MAAR MIJN MUZIKALE CARRIÈRE IS NOOIT GEBASEERD GEWEEST OP ME AFVRAGEN OF IETS ACCEPTABEL IS OF NIET. DAT IS GEEN GOEIE MANIER. 'T ENIGE DAT IK KAN ZEGGEN IS, DIT INTERESSEERT ME, IK HOOP DAT HET JOU OOK INTERESSEERT.'

ALLE INSTRUMENTEN DIE JE NOU GEBRUIKT, BEN JE MET HET BESPELEN DAARVAN PAS BEGONNEN NA HET ONGELUK?

'NEE, NEE. IK HEB ALTIJD AL VERSCHILLENDE INSTRUMENTEN BESPEELD. OP *'MOON IN JUNE'* OP **SOFT MACHINE 3** BIJVOORBEELD DEED IK ALLE TOETSEN ÉN BAS EN GITAAR, HOEWEL IK DAAR NOOIT DE CREDITS VOOR KREEG. DE ANDEREN VONDEN HET MAAR NIKS WAT IK WOU, ZODAT IK 'T WEL ZELF MOEST DOEN. IK WEET NIET MEER WAT ZE PRECIES ZEIDEN TOEN ZE DE STUDIO UITGINGEN, IETS ALS: 'HET IS IN IEDER GEVAL BETER DAN DE ROMMEL DIE JE VROEGER DEED'. IK VOELDE ME VRESELIJK ONGELUKKIG BINNEN **THE SOFT MACHINE.** HET WAS EEN VERNEDERENDE SITUATIE OMDAT IK ECHT BEWONDERING HAD VOOR WAT DE ANDEREN DEDEN, TERWIJL ZIJ ALLES WAT IK DEED ONBENULLIG PRULWERK VONDEN.

ALS IK DIE OUWE DINGEN HOU HOOR DENK IK SOMS WEL DAT ZE GELUK HADDEN, MAAR TOCH, 'T WAS IN EMOTIONEEL OPZICHT MOEILIJK, OM IN ZO'N SITUATIE TE WERKEN. DE ANDEREN WAREN IN HET ALGEMEEN SLIMMERE EN SNELLERE DENKERS, IK WAS ALTIJD DEGENE DIE ER HET LANGST OVER DEED OM EEN NIEUWE GECOMPLICEERD STUK TE LEREN, IK MOEST EEN TAPE MEE NAAR HUIS NEMEN, ENZOVOORTS.

IK WAS DE IDIOOT VAN DE BAND, GEEN MUZIKANT, NEE, DE DRUMMER. IK RAAKTE VRESELIJK GEDEMORALISEERD. ZE ACCEPTEERDEN ME ENKEL ONDER DE VOORWAARDE DAT IK ZOU STOPPEN MET PROBEREN EEN ZANGER TE ZIJN EN MET SONGS TE SCHRIJVEN. MIJN ENIGE MOGELIJKHEID WAS DRUMMEN BIJ HUN MUZIEKSTUKKEN. EN DAT DEED IK AAN DE ANDERE KANT WEER GRAAG. MOEILIJK, 'T WAS EEN SUCCESVOLLE BAND. IK KON HET WEL BEGRIJPEN, IK WAS VEEL MINDER GESCHOOLD DAN DE ANDEREN EN MIJN IDEEËN VONDEN ZIJN NAÏEF. EN DE ZANG WAS VRESELIJK, VIND IK NOU ZELF. IK BEGRIJP 'T WEL, MAAR ENKEL KRITIEK GEVEN IS SLECHT, IEDEREEN HEEFT AANMOEDIGING NODIG.

HET IS ALTIJD EEN PROBLEEM VOOR MIJ GEWEEST OM GENOEG ZELFVERTROUWEN TE VINDEN OM TE DOEN WAT IK DENK DAT GOED IS. DAT IS BIJVOORBEELD EEN REDEN WAAROM IK **JOHNNY LYDON** BEWONDER, *'JUST GO AHEAD AND FUCK IT'*. IK DENK DAT DAAR ERG VEEL MOED VOOR NODIG IS. IK RAAK ZO SNEL ONTMOEDIGD DOOR AFKEUR, GEBREK AAN RESPECT EN WAARDERING, DE ANGST DAT ANDEREN ME UITLACHEN, ME BEHANDELEN ALS DE KLEINE JONGEN DIE OOK IETS WIL DOEN. MISSCHIEN TE VEEL. SOMS WEERHOUDT HET ME ERVAN OM IDEEËN UIT TE VOEREN. IK BEN NIET IEMAND DIE VEEL SCHRIJFT EN NOG STEEDS VEEL TE NERVEUS IS OM DINGEN IN HET OPENBAAR TE DOEN. VROEGER DRONK IK ONTZETTEND VEEL OM MIJN ZENUWEN DE BAAS TE BLIJVEN, MAAR DAAR HEB IK TENMINSTE MEE KUNNEN STOPPEN.'

ROBERTS POEDEL PROBEERT OP DE BANK TE SPRINGEN, MAAR DE POGING MISLUKT. 'ZE IS NIET MEER ZO SNEL ALS VROEGER. ZE HEEFT IETS AAN D'R POOT . . . WAT EEN FAMILIE, HÈ?' HET GELACH IS SPONTAAN EN HARTELIJK, DE EROP VOLGENDE STILTE IETSJE LANGER.

'SOMS WOU IK DAT IK VOLLEDIG ANONIEM KON WERKEN, DAT IK IDEEËN KAN HEBBEN EN ZE UITVOEREN, ZONDER DAT MIJN EIGEN PERSOONLIJKHEID DAARBIJ IN KWESTIE KOMT. IK HOU ER NIET VAN IN DE SPOTLIGHT TE STAAN. HET IS DENK IK TEGEN MIJN NATUUR OM IN HET OPENBAAR TE WERKEN. MIJN MUZIKALE INTERESSE KOMT OOK NIET VOORT UIT HET VERLANGEN EEN PERFORMER TE ZIJN. MIJN BENADERING IS MEER DIE VAN EEN SCHILDER OF EEN SCHRIJVER, WIENS WERK GROTENDEELS IN ISOLATIE PLAATS VINDT. EN ALS HET PRODUKT DAN BIJ HET PUBLIEK KOMT, IS HIJ ER ZÉLF NIET MEER.'

HAROLD SCHELLINCKX

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Robert Wyatt 'Ik hou van alles waar je lawaai mee kunt maken' - Oor - nummer 9 - 7 mei 1980





Door Bert Van De Kamp **Foto's : Anton Corbijn**

HET NIEUWS DAT ER OP HET ROUGH TRADE-LABEL EEN DRIETAL nieuwe singles van Robert Wyatt zou gaan verschijnen, was een hartverwarmende verrassing. In 1975 verschenen zijn laatste plaatprodukties: de elpee *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* en de single *I'm A Believer*, daarna was het lange tijd stil rondom zijn persoon.

Daar ik nog altijd de beste herinnerinneringen bewaarde aan ons vorige gesprek (OOR 18, 1974) greep ik de gelegenheid om opnieuw met hem te praten met beide handen aan. Wyatt is een van die mensen die niet alleen helemaal weg is van muziek, maar er bovendien nog heel verstandig en geestig over kan praten. Een ware fan, die het nog altijd betreurt dat hij zelf niet meer achter het drumstel plaats kan nemen: een ernstige val maakte in 1973 een even abrupt als definitief einde aan een tot dan toe bijzonder succesvolle drummersloopbaan (Soft Machine, Matching Mole). Veroordeeld tot de rolstoel weet hij dat gemis nog aardig te compenseren door met alles wat zo binnen handbereik komt enthousiast op tafels te slaan wanneer er een plaat op staat. Een ware percussiefreak: 'Ik hou van alles waarmee je lawaai kunt maken.' Vlak na zijn val maakte Robert het indringende conceptalbum *Rock Bottom*, dat duidelijk maakte dat hij als muzikant geenszins was

uitgerangeerd.

HETZELFDE HUIS IN TWICKENHAM, zuid-west Londen, dezelfde bank, dezelfde vriendelijke ogen, dezelfde zachte, hoge stem. Hij begint meteen druk te praten, rijdt zich naar de keuken om thee te maken en praat gewoon door. Zijn vrouw Alfie (de kunstenares Alfreda Benge) verkeert in het buitenland, maar wordt die avond thuis verwacht. Zijn zoon Sam (11) draait een plaatje van de groep Madness en blijkt al even enthousiast over muziek te kunnen praten als zijn vader. Robert: 'Die hele Ska-revival heeft ervoor gezorgd dat je de muziek van mensen als Don Drummond en The Skatalites weer overal kunt kopen. Een paar jaar terug viel er bijna niet meer aan te komen.

Grappig dat Sam nu van dezelfde muziek houdt als ik twintig jaar geleden. Hij danst erop. Dat heeft hij pas ontdekt: het plezier van het dansen op die Ska-muziek. Als je dat ziet, dat gaat eigenlijk iedere conversatie te boven.

'Ik luister naar erg veel soorten muziek: jazz, rock, maar ook veel volksmuziek. De laatste tijd stem ik regelmatig af op radio Sofia: wat er in die Bulgaarse volksmuziek gebeurt, vind ik erg opwindend. Waar ik zo weinig mogelijk naar luister zijn artiesten zoals ik.'

Wat hij daarmee wel mag bedoelen? Wel, de Engelse middleclass-dropout bohemiens,' lacht hij, 'de teruggetrokken excentriekelingen!

'Zie je: de rockwereld is een verzamelplaats van ideeën die elders al geruime tijd als zijnde ouderwets losgelaten zijn, zoals het idee van de eenzame romantische held. Barclay's bank-cheques zijn bullshit, maar in de rock & roll geloven ze er nog steeds heilig in! Mensen die elders nog geen tien minuten aan het woord zouden komen, worden in de rockwereld vorstelijk behandeld!' Robert moet daar zelf hartelijk om lachen.

DE BIZ

'De bizniz is chaotisch. Het is erg moeilijk een rechtvaardige deal te krijgen. Ik ben ergemakshalve van uitgegaan dat mijn banden met Virgin na al die jaren van totale contactloosheid opgehouden zijn te bestaan, temeer daar ze generatiegenoten als Slapp Happy, Henry Cow, National Health en Ivor Cutler al vele jaren geleden geloosd hebben. Ik heb nu die singles gedaan voor Rough Trade, waar ze de artiest een heel wat betere behandeling geven dan elders. Het is erg moeilijk voor een alternatieve set-up om zich te handhaven. Je moet toch telkens met de 'anderen' in de slag. Dat is het totalitaire van het kapitalisme in onze zogenaamde vrije wereld: je hebt geen andere keus dan aan het systeem mee te doen. Er zijn op dat gebied geen Utopia's.'

Vervolgens begint hij me eerlijk en open uit te leggen hoe hij zich zonder het maken van platen of het doen van optredens financieel weet te redden.

'Een vriend(in) van Alfie, die filmster is, heeft het huis gekocht, dus er is geen huur. Dan heeft The Pink Floyd een aantal jaren geleden een benefietconcert voor me gedaan, bless them, er zijn een paar royaltycheques geweest voor Rock Bottom en Alfie verdient wat met haar schilderijen en haar medewerking aan films. Ik krijg bovendien tien pond per week transportvergoeding van de sociale dienst. Weet je: ik heb niet zo veel geld nodig. Ik ga zelden op reis en eet nooit in restaurants. Het meeste geef ik uit aan sigaretten en grammofoonplaten.'

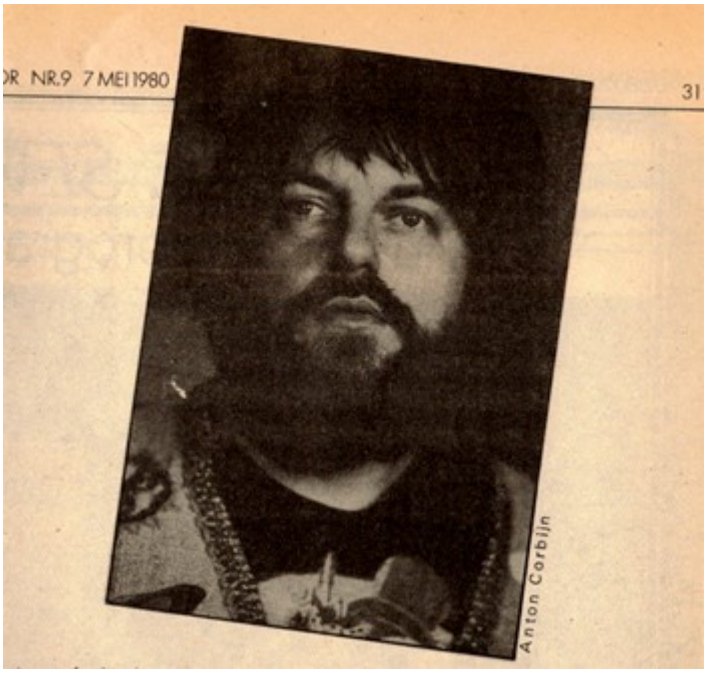


De jaren met Soft Machine en Matching Mole spelen daarbij geen rol. Dat geld, zo het er is, gaat naar anderen. Robert houdt zich niet meer bezig met dat verre verleden: "Wanneer ik eraan terug probeer te denken, zoals nu, omdat jij mij erover vraagt, dan komt alles me zo ver en vaag voor. Wat ik me herinner, is wat ik er later over gelezen heb. Het is als het terugdenken aan je vroegste jeugd, het is zo ver weg. Nee, die platen draai ik niet meer, ik heb ze niet eens meer in huis. Het enige waar ik van onder de indruk was, waren de

composities van Hugh Hopper. Hij was met Carla Bley, Thelonious Monk en Ornette Coleman een favoriete componist uit die tijd. Mijn herinneringen aan de muziekbiz zijn niet bepaald de meest gelukkige. Ik ga ook erg weinig met muzikanten om, tegenwoordig. Vroeger bestond mijn kennissenkring louter uit muzikanten. Nick Mason heeft me nog wel eens opgebeld. Hij wil dat ik een nummer zing op de solo-elpee die hij aan het maken is. Nee, ik kan niet veel zinnigs op je vraag antwoorden. Ik voel me als een soldaat aan wie gevraagd wordt hoe het was in de loopgraven (lacht)!'

CULTUURBEWUST

'Ik kom uit een erg cultuurbewust milieu, muzikaal gezien ben ik grootgebracht met Bela Bartók, Hindemith en Ray Charles. Ik heb altijd geprobeerd, een zo breed mogelijk muzikaal perspectief te houden. Ik zal echter altijd bij discussies over 'serieuze' muziek versus populaire de zijde kiezen van de populaire muziek. Ik heb een grote afkeer van de arrogantie binnen de academische muziekwereld. Zelfs het discussiëren over de eventuele kwaliteiten van popmuziek valt vaak buiten de orde. Wat mij in de popmuziek aanspreekt, is op de eerste plaats de fysieke, sensuele oriëntatie. Er is voor iedereen wat te halen. Wie zijn fysieke opwinding zoekt bij marsen en machinegeweren, kan terecht bij een bepaald soort rock-muziek. In een land als Venezuela schijnt romantische candlelight-muziek zo ongeveer de meest subversieve muziek te zijn, omdat het te sexy is. In de rock & roll is sex een van de meest subversieve elementen en dat vind ik uitstekend. Wat je er verder mee doet, blijft natuurlijk een tweede. Dansen op een zaterdagavond is toch geweldig? Dat is heus niet door Hollywood bedacht. De mensen dansen al eeuwenlang op zaterdagavond. Het macho-element in bepaalde rock & roll is als een krijgsdans, het heeft niet zozeer met sex te maken als met zaken als macht en territorium. Al deze dingen zijn gebaseerd op natuurlijke instincten, die in een handomdraai kunnen omslaan in monsterlijkheden.'



Professor Wyatt analyseert het fenomeen rock & roll. De term is vooroorlogs. Hij refereert aan negerliederen met titels als *Rock Me Daddy All Night Long*, vertelt geamuseerd over de connotaties met de gospelsong. 'Het woord 'rock' heeft een religieuze gevoelswaarde: rock of ages. Ik heb eens een gospelsong gehoord die getiteld was: *The Rock That Doesn't Roll*. Grappig nietwaar? Toen de blanken de term in de jaren vijftig adopteerden, hebben ze al vrij snel het woordje 'Roll'weggelaten!

'Er zijn erg veel mensen die heilig in de rock & roll geloven: van Pete Townshend tot Fred Frith. Zij kunnen zich soms als ware missionarissen opstellen tegenover mensen die dat geloof niet delen: Goeie hemel, hij leeft zonder Rock, de arme man, we moeten hem helpen! Zelf heb ik daar geen last van. Je kunt zonder rock & roll zeker zo gelukkig worden.'

REGGAE

'Ik geloof ook niet zo in de mythe dat rock & roll de werkende klasse een stem heeft gegeven. Ik denk dat het niet anders is als bij andere vormen van populaire muziek en volksmuziek. De gelijkheidsidee is net zo groot in Turkse volksmuziek of wat dan ook. Rock & roll is verstedelijkte volksmuziek en heeft daar alle eigenschappen en kwaliteiten van.'

Al snel volgt hierop een soms nogal technisch exposé van de kwaliteiten van de diverse soorten Oosterse volksmuziek.

'Ik herinner me nog goed hoe trots we tien jaar geleden waren dat we in verschillende maatsoorten konden spelen. De Bulgaren lachten om onze drie- en vierkwartsmaat, zij spelen net zo gemakkelijk elfden, zevenden en dertienden achter elkaar. Ze nemen niet eens de moeite om te tellen. Toch klopt het, omdat ze het zo aanvoelen, net zoals wij 4/4 aanvoelen.

'In veel van die Oosterse muziek staan de diverse slaginstrumenten centraal, daarnaast is er altijd wel een of andere rietblazer. Net als in de jazz. Wat de drumkit zo interessant maakt, is dat het een strikt atonaal instrument is temidden van tonale instrumenten. Haar problemen zijn dan ook niet van harmonische of melodische aard, hoewel ze er wel aan gerelateerd zijn. Wanneer je een discussie wilt over de a-tonale muziek van deze tijd, bestudeer dan drummers en wat ze gedaan hebben.

'De drumkit is zo fucking exciting. De historie van percussie-instrumenten en drums staat centraal in de historie van iedere muzieksoort, al wordt dat niet algemeen erkend. De kit is in het begin van deze eeuw ontstaan door verschillende percussie-instrumenten, die altijd door afzonderlijke personen bespeeld werden, te combineren. Je had mensen als Babe Dodds. Daarna zijn er diverse revoluties geweest. Je had Kenny Clarke's bebop-revolutie, later Tony Williams, de meester, die als een waanzinnige iedere permutatie ervan onderzocht en een sensueel instrument maakte van al dat metaal en hout. Elvin Jones, Owen Jones, Jack DeJohnette.... allemaal enorm belangrijke figuren in de geschiedenis van het instrument. Of wat Ska en Reggae met de drumkit hebben gedaan: dat is ook van heel groot gewicht. Het constante zoeken naar de off-beat, waardoor de syncopatie van de jazz geen syncopatie meer was.



Het voortdurende zoeken naar de 'lift between the beat' en de stukjes daartussen als focuspunt nemen om op in te gaan. Als drummer kun je dat alleen doen wanneer iedereen weet waar hij mee bezig is. Reggae heeft niets te maken met rhythm & blues of rock & roll, wel met Latijnsamerikaanse ritmen. Het Bossanova-drummen hief de tirannie van de snaredrum op, maakte gebruik van kleine tom-toms, van rimshots, het gaf een heel andere benadering van bassdrum en bekkens. Het gebruik van de kit als een sensueel instrument. Caraibische muziek, van Venezuela tot de Zydeco van Louisiana is voor mij nog steeds een onuitputtelijke bron van ontdekkingen en muzikaal plezier. Wat rock interessant maakt, is dat het sommige van deze elementen heeft overgenomen.'

DE SINGLES

Wyatt legt me uit dat het luisteren naar muziek voor hem de afgelopen jaren veel aangenamer was dan het zelf maken ervan.

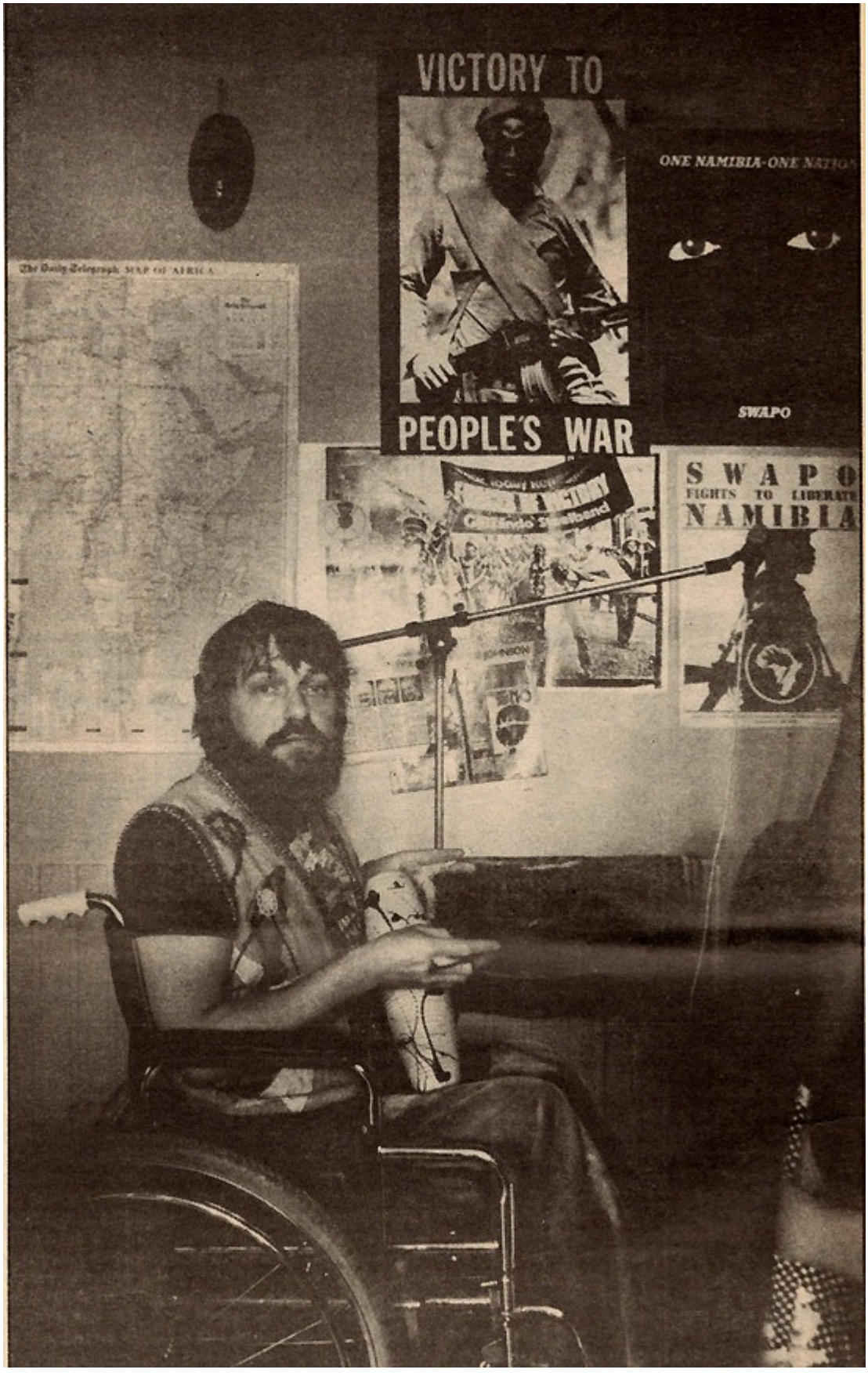
Ik ben meer geïnteresseerd in wat al aanwezig is, het te onderzoeken door het zelf te spelen of te zingen. Ik geloof niet dat er in de wereld een tekort is aan aardige liedjes.'

Een verfrissende gedachte. Er zijn al genoeg middelmatige songschrijvers die ons met hun eigen composities opschepen omwille van de royalty-cheque. De drie singles die Robert via Rough Trade laat verschijnen, bevatten dan ook louter covers van composities van derden. De eerste, en tot dusver de enige die is uitgebracht, bevat twee Spaanstalige songs: *Arouco* van Violette Parra en het overbekende *Caimanera*, dat in Robert's versie wordt teruggebracht tot haar oorspronkelijke revolutionaire intenties. De tweede single bevat een

zeer merkwaardig lied dat Robert voor het eerst in de oorspronkelijke uitvoering van het Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet op de radio hoorde: *Stalin Isn't Stallin'* (vert. Stalin draait er niet omheen) over de rol van de Russen in de strijd tegen Hitler's regime. De derde single zal Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit* en Chic's *At Last I'm Free* bevatten.

Geen eigen composities deze keer. Fijntjes refereert Robert aan het feit dat de grootste helden van de populaire muziek, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra en Elvis Presley, nimmer een eigen compositie hebben opgenomen.

'Laatst was er een jongen van Scritti Politti hier. Die bezorgde me enigszins een schuldgevoel vanwege het feit dat ik zo weinig produceerde.'



> Zoom

Wanneer ik daarop stel dat zijn manier van bezig zijn met muziek het intense luisteren, het denken en het praten erover, allerminst passieve recreatie, maar wel degelijk een soort van 'werk' is, reageert hij: 'Ik verveel me in ieder geval geen moment.'

EUFORIE

Over zijn vriendschap met de enige jaren geleden overleden Afrikaanse trompettist Mongezi Feza: 'Mongezi was een van de weinige muzikanten, met wie ik erg bevriend ben geweest. De omstandigheden waaronder hij stierf, waren nogal verdacht. Hij was in een psychiatrische inrichting opgenomen vanwege geconstateerde schizofrenie. Twee dagen voor zijn dood werd er een dubbele longontsteking geconstateerd. Ik lag zelf in het ziekenhuis met een gebroken been, dat was na mijn eerste ongeluk, toen ik het telefoontje kreeg. Ik was daar goed ziek van. Je sterft niet op 31-jarige leeftijd aan een dubbele longontsteking. Dat is flauwekul. En dat van die schizofrenie is ook flauwekul. Van blanke kunstenaars wordt een zekere mate van excentriciteit niet alleen getolereerd, maar zelfs verwacht. Een zwarte kunstenaar wordt ervoor opgepakt. De euforie die je in het begin van de jaren zeventig in de jazz-scene hier had, vanwege de komst van Zuidafrikanen als Chris McGregor, Dudu Pukwana e.a., daar is nu weinig meer van over. De meeste van die muzikanten, die toen zo'n vitaliserend effect hadden op de muziek hier, zijn later nogal terneergeslagen door het soort van leven dat je als zwarte Afrikaan hier hebt.

'De verkiezingsoverwinning van Mugabe zie ik als een historische gebeurtenis van de eerste orde, wat er ook verder uit voort mag komen. De taal van de politiek wordt weer eens ontmaskerd. Je ziet nu hoe mensen een totalitair regime in Zuid-Afrika verdedigen tegenover een democratisch gekozen regering in Zimbabwe. Wat betekent zo'n woord als 'democratie' dan verder nog?'

Aan het slot van ons gesprek brandt een levendige discussie los rond het thema kunst versus maatschappij.

'Een groot probleem voor links. Kunst is versiering, het prikkelen van de zintuigen buiten de praktische dagelijkse behoeften om. Marx heeft daar nooit over geschreven en daarom hebben de Marxisten er ook zo weinig over te zeggen. Ik ben ook nog maar een beginneling in het denken daarover. Ik ben grootgebracht met het idee dat iets dat mooi was, ook altijd 'waar' was: *truth is beauty, beauty is truth*. De belangrijkste revolutie in mijn hoofd is geweest het besef dat dat niet waar is. Hoe meer kunst je nodig hebt, hoe verder je van hot ware leven af staat, dunkt mij. Persoonlijk heb ik erg veel kunst nodig. Ik omring mij met alles wat ik mooi vind. Trek je conclusie maar.

'Mijn grootste ideaal is nog eens in een Cubaanse ritmesectie de derde koebel van links te bespelen. De euforie van de anonimiteit, een onderdeeltje te zijn van een vreselijk goeie ritmemachine.'

Er verschijnt een brede grijns op zijn gezicht. Dan zet hij een plaat op.

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Her gaat weer goed met Robert Wyatt - Oor - nummer 18 - 11 september 1974



Bert
von de Kamp

***

And there was this adult pain
Down deep in the soul
Because of which was laughter.

Ifeanyi Menkiti
(The Black-Book,
Random House, N.Y.)

Lebanon Park is de naam van een rustig straatje in de Londense buitenwijk Twickenham. Het huis van Robert Wyatt is geen luxueuze villa; er staat ook geen dure sportwagen voor de deur. Robert Wyatt is geen ster, of beter: hij is het wel, maar slechts een selekte groep mensen weet het. En Robert zelf? Hij heeft er geen behoefte aan een ster te wezen, hij is een gewoon mens. Een gewoon mens gebonden aan een rolstoel. Dat wel. Een val uit een raam op de derde verdieping, tijdens een enigszins uit de hand lopend feestje, nu ongeveeer l jaar geleden, maakte van de fameuze drummer van groepen als Soft Machine en Matching Mole een invalide. Het ongeluk zelf en de traumatische ervaringen daarna werden verwerkt in een muziekstuk, dat onlangs op de plaat verscheen: 'Rock Bottom', een plaat die duidelijk maakte, dat Robert over het ongeluk heen was en dat de rock-wereld weer duchtig rekening moest houden met hem. Als drummer is hij afgewerkt, maar zijn bewonderaars kenden in hem al jaren een begaafd komponist en een uiterst op merkelijk vokalist. Wyatt beschikt over een uniek stemgeluid, dat hij als een volwaardig muziekinstrument gebruikt. Het was vooral zijn gezang dat aan de befaamde eerste twee Soft Machine albums hun aparte charme gaf. Bij

mijn bezoek aan het huis in Lebanon Park trol ik een uiterst blijmoedige Wyatt aan, uiterst spraakzaam, geestig en vol ideeën en plannen voor de toekomst.



Zijn vrouw Alfie, met wie hij kort daarvoren officieel in de echt was verbonden en die ook in belangrijke mate bijdroeg aan 'Rock Bottom', is duidelijk een van de belangrijkste oorzaken van Roberts goeie humeur. Een ontzettend goed wijf, die in diverse opzichten een welkome hulp voor Wyatt is. Wanneer hij zich tijdens het gesprek in nogal pittige bewoordingen uitlaat over een bekend zanger/song-schrijver maant Alfie hem tot voorzichtigheid: 'Dat wordt gedrukt hoor.'

Wanneer ze het met een bepaalde uitspraak van Robert oneens is, laat ze dat ook duidelijk merken. Van de voornoemde zanger / songschrijver nam Robert onlangs een kompositie op, die in Engeland als single zal worden uitgebracht: 'I'm A Believer', vooral bekend geworden in de uitvoering van The Monkies. Ik had de single juist gehoord en begon met hem daarover iets te vragen.

- Wat is het idee achter die single?

Wyatt: 'Wel, eh .... eigenlijk hebben we de single eerst opgenomen en pas daarna kwam het idee. Je kan het zien als een poging om vrede te sluiten met de vijand. Ik wil graag bijdragen aan de vrede tussen diverse soorten musici, die ervan uitgaan dat ze elkaars vijanden zijn en dat lijkt me niet nodig.

Ik wilde een song opnemen, die simpel en duidelijk was, niet dubbelzinnig, maar eenduidig. Fundamentele etnische muziek van de Amerikaanse stam, primitieve muziek uit het midden van de twintigste eeuw. Dat is het eigenlijk.

- Een leuke definitie van popmuziek.

'Ik denk dat er 2 faktoren zijn, die iets romantisch maken. Ten eerste afstand, geografische afstand. Bijvoorbeeld: ik kan je een Ethiopische plaat laten horen, die precies klinkt als Gary Glitter, maar men staat er veel sympatieker tegenover, omdat het van buiten het eigen kringetje komt. De tweede faktor is tijd. Wanneer je een popsong laat horen die 500 jaar oud is, noemt men dat volksmuziek en vindt het geweldig, weet je. Maar bij volksmuziek van de eigen stam of de eigen tijd komt er ineens een soort snobisme in het spel en wordt er op neergekeken en het wordt moeilijker om ernaar te luisteren.

Dat is misschien het diepere idee achter de single, maar uiteindelijk is dat nu ook weer niet zo belangrijk. Het is een leuke song om te zingen. Ik had juist ontdekt hoe ik het op de piano moest spelen en vond het leuk om te doen. En er is nog een andere reden. Dat is dat ik de song op de achterkant graag nog eens wilde opnemen. Die song is 'Memories',

geschreven door Hugh Hopper. Het is het eerste dat ik ooit zong en dat me deed besluiten om meer te gaan zingen, omdat ik het heerlijk vond om te doen. Ik heb het al eens eerder opgenomen, maar deze versie heb ik gedaan met Fred Frith op viool. Behalve dat ik het al tijden in mijn hoofd heb om het nog eens op te nemen, levert het hopelijk ook nog wat geld op voor Hugh.'

VULGARITEIT

'Fred Frith en Hugh Hopper zijn voor mij de meest belangrijke komponisten op het ogenblik. Een nummer als 'Memories' is dan ook een goed voorbeeld van wat ze kunnen. Het idee dat de meeste mensen van hem hebben is dat ze alleen maar bezig zijn met uiterst komplekse muziek, die refereert aan allerlei vormen van jazz en Europese muziek en dat is ook zo, dat is erg belangrijk, maar wat ze zo bijzonder maakt is dat ze allebei in diepste wezen erg pure en melodieuze komponisten zijn. Dat is de basis van alles wat ze doen, de rest is meer dekoratie, naar mijn mening.'

- Wat vind je in het algemeen van singles?

'Ik geloof niet dat het single-werk slechter is dan wat dan ook. Je kunt 'n heleboel doen in 3 minuten, je kunt er dingen in doen, die nog niemand voor je gedaan heeft. Neem bijvoorbeeld Phil Spector. Die heeft de mogelijkheden vergroot, de standaard verhoogd door zijn singles met de Righteous Brothers en Ike & Tina Turner. Het is verbazingwekkend hoe goed singles kunnen zijn. Het is ook verbazingwekkend hoe sommige mensen in staat zijn om enorm vervelende singles te maken, maar dat gebeurt ook in de jazz en in de Akademische muziek. Het maakt de singles niet slechter dan andere muziekvormen.

- Noem eens wat goeie recente singles.

'Eh.... Ik hou van Bryan Ferry's interpretaties van songs van anderen. Hij heeft een goeie stem. En die exentrieke jongen, Steve Harley, ik vind 'm erg goed. Ik weet niet hoe zijn nieuwe groep zal klinken, het lijkt erop dat het 'n konventionele rock-band wordt, maar zijn singles waren erg goed en eh ... de Maria Muldaur-single was goed, goeie produktie. Ik heb vorig jaar in het ziekenhuis erg veel naar de radio geluisterd, want er was weinig anders te doen en ik hoorde zo allerlei muziek waar ik normaal niet naar luister.

Wie ik ook erg goed vind is Roy Wood, die is groots, hij is in werkelijkheid dapperder dan wie dan ook, want hij stoort zich totaal niet aan de goede smaak, hij wil de totale vulgariteit, er is geen limiet en dat vind ik een erg goeie houding.'

- Zijn favoriete groep is de Carpenters.

'Ja, de Carpenters, die zijn erg goed, I like them, Ik hou zelfs van de Osmonds als ze zingen: 'You Are The Sunshine Of My Life' als het Barber-shop Quartet.'

TIETJES

- Ik vind 'Rock Bottom' erg goed. Onder andere omdat je er meer op zingt dan op je vorige werk.

-'Ja, dat is ook waarom ik er gelukkiger mee ben dan met het oudere werk. Dat is een van de positieve gevolgen van het ongeluk. Ik hoef me nu niet meer zo op andere dingen te konsentreren en dat komt het zingen ten goede. Kijk, in het verleden was ik voortdurend met verschillende dingen tegelijk bezig. Het drummen op de eerste plaats. Je konsentreerde je helemaal op het spel van Elvin Jones en dan was er plotseling Tony Williams en daarna wilde ik gaan zingen en schrijven probeerde grappige teksten te schrijven en een eigen band te leiden en de hele psychologie van een groep bleek erg moeilijk en dat leidde nog meer af. Dus los van de muziek: je had een groepje mensen, ieder met zijn eigen dingen in het hoofd, zijn eigen dromen en het kost je veel tijd om daartussen een zekere harmonie tot stand te brengen. Ik merkte dat met Matching Mole:

ik raakte nagenoeg alle greep kwijt op mijn eigen muzikale doelstellingen in mijn pogingen om voldoende ruimte te kreëren voor de andere musici. Daardoor kwam het ook dat ik op die platen weinig zong. Daarnaast probeerde ik ook om ideeën terug te brengen tot hun kortste vorm. Dat is een nuttige oefening. Als een bepaalde song twee koepletten had met een zinnige inhoud, dan vond ik het niet nodig om een ervan nog eens te herhalen. Dat is ook de moeilijkheid bij singles: niet het samenpersen van een stuk muziek tot 2½ minuut, maar het uitrekken van een idee van 1 minuut tot 2½ minuut. Iedere single bevat dan ook ruwweg 1 idee, dat dan driemaal herhaald wordt. 'I'm A Believer' is wat dat betreft een prima voorbeeld.

- Je hebt dat procédé ook nog eens geparodieerd.

'Pardon? '

- Het nummer 'Signed Curtain' van de eerste Mole-elpee.

'Ja, dat was een parodie, een grapje daarover, zeker. Maar het was een affektieve parodie, want ik bewonder de mensen echt, die binnen die 2½ a 3 minuten iets goeds tot stand kunnen brengen. Dat is erg moeilijk, het is een moeilijke lengte.

Nu ik niet meer in een groep zit, kan ik mijn eigen ideeën meer uitwerken en eerlijk: ik hou meer van zingen dan van wat dan ook. Zingen is momenteel wel mijn belangrijkste muzikale uitdrukkingsmogelijkheid. Ik moet nu ook wel, ik kan weinig anders, maar ik geloof dat dat erg goed voor me is. Het is ook erg opwindend om de mogelijkheden van je eigen stem te onderzoeken en te ontdekken.'



- Je zingt weinig in de lagere regionen.

'Nee, niet veel. Zie je: ik ben eigenlijk geen normale man, ik was bijna een meisje, ik had ook tietjes' (gelach).
Alfie: 'Doe je armen eens omhoog.'
Robert: 'Ik heb ook geen haar onder mijn armen, zie je. En dit hier (wijst op baard) is alleen wat dons, geen echte baard.

De platen waar ik ook het beste bij mee kan zingen zijn platen van Dionne Warwick en Peggy Lee.'

BLOOT

- Je gaat je ook wat meer op de keyboards richten, heb ik begrepen.

'Ja, dat is ook uit nood geboren. Ik moest het voor mijn plaat zelf doen, omdat ik het niemand anders toevertrouwde. Maar ik zie het vooral als werk. Zo gauw ik een goeie elektrische pianist tegenkom, die precies speelt zoals ik het hebben wil, dan doe ik het ook niet meer zelf, denk ik. De eigenlijke lol zit voor mij in het zingen.'

- Wat vond je van het drumwerk op je plaat?

'Wel, als ik het nog zou kunnen en ik zou me er werkelijk echt op toeleggen, dan zou ik waarschijnlijk precies zo spelen als Laurie. (Laurie Allen, voormalig drummer van de groep Gong, BvdK). Een hele goeie drummer.'

- Wie is Ivor Cutler (Tekstdeklamatie op 'Rock Bottom') ?

'Ivor Cutler is een dichter, een zeer interessant mens. Ik ken hem al sinds de tijd dat ik zo groot was (wijst aan), wel, ik ben nog zo groot, weér zo groot, beter gezegd, maar toen ik staande zo groot was (gelach), toen kende ik hem al. Hij is onderwijzer, draagt vreemde, grote hoeden en was precies de man die ik zocht voor de job.'

- 'Rock Bottom' kwam op me over als een behoorlijk 'heavy' album op een persoonlijk nivo.

'Het is precies de plaat geworden, die ik wilde maken. Het zijn de ideeën van het laatste jaar. Ik heb nu weer totaal andere ideeën, maar dit was een stap die genomen moest worden. Het was niet zo zeer een bewuste, persoonlijke, expressie. Het komt vooral door het zingen, dat men dat denkt. De menselijke stem is meer dan welk ander muziekinstrument iets dat onmiddellijk als een uiterst persoonlijk expressie-middel gezien wordt, maar ik was er echt niet op uit om mezelf bloot te gooien, om te laten zien wat voor een prachtig mens ik toch wel ben, dat was het niet.'

- Verschillende passages leken direkt uit het onderbewustzijn te komen.

'Daar heb je wel iets. Ik had een punt bereikt, waarop het werkelijke leven de dingen waar ik altijd mee bezig was had weggedrukt. Vroeger schreef ik dingen met erg duidelijke specifieke betekenissen en eh.... bijvoorbeeld: ik was erg grof ten opzichte van god en hij deelde een klap uit en dat soort dingen. Dat was erg ingrijpend en er bleef daarna niets meer over. Ik kon ook niet meer schrijven op die zelfbewuste wijze, waarop ik vroeger schreef. '

'Ik wilde ook geen plaat met 'free vocals',' want ik kon niet genoeg gevarieerde geluiden vinden, dus begon ik zomaar te schrijven, automatisch. Het grootste deel i van 'Rock Bottom' is zo ontstaan: automatic writing, zonder me


Het gaat weer goed met Robert Wyatt

van het een of ander rekenschap te geven. Het had inderdaad al slapende geschreven kunnen zijn, dus daar heb je gelijk in. Daarna heb ik het natuurlijk bewerkt en met behulp van mijn gedachten, spitsvondigheid en dat soort zaken ten slotte het eindprodukt gemaakt. Maar het is zeker het meest automatische dat ik ooit gemaakt heb.'

DILEMMA

- Kun je iets meer zeggen over je nieuwe ideeën?

'Ik wil een plaat maken met konventionele dansritmen, lichamelijke muziek, iets wat ik al een hele tijd niet gedaan heb. Eigenlijk ben ik niet zo heel produktief. Ik schrijf erg weinig nieuwe dingen. Daarom heb ik ook het plan om mijn eigen versies van komposities van anderen te gaan arrangeren en opnemen. Hiermee bedoel ik niet zozeer werk als dat Monkies-singletje, maar werk van weinig bekende komponisten zoals Mongesi Fesa. Die heeft enkele verbazingwekkende Afrikaanse dans-werken geschreven. En verder denk ik aan mensen als Lol Coxhill en Hugh Hopper. Hugh heeft nog een tamelijk groot aantal tapes met komposities, die Soft Machine had moeten opnemen, maar dat is niet gebeurd. Fred Frith heeft een aantal komposities aan mij doorgespeeld, waar ik woorden bij moet maken en daar ben ik momenteel ook mee bezig. Die muziek is bedoeld om in de toekomst door de een of andere groep te worden uitgevoerd.'

- Wat was dat precies voor een dilemma, waarover je zong in: 'Moon in June'?

'O, dat is eigenlijk heel simpel. Ik schreef die song in Amerika in 1969 geloof ik. Ik had het daar erg naar mijn zin, had er nieuwe vrienden gekregen, maar tegelijkertijd voelde ik dat ik me er nooit helemaal thuis zou voelen, dat ik me altijd een bezoeker zou blijven voelen en daar gaat de song over. Moest ik in New York blijven, wat ik lange tijd van plan was of zou ik teruggaan naar huis De Soft Machine lag toen uit elkaar, de anderen waren al eerder terug gegaan naar huis, maar ik was in New York gebleven.

- Er waren mensen die dachten dat het ging over het dilemma of je wel of niet bij de Soft Machine zou blijven.

'Nee, de Soft Machine was afgelopen. Geen probleem. De Soft Machine was definitief afgelopen aan het eind van '68. (En na mijn grijns:) Over de jaren daarna wil ik niets horen.'

Er werd nog lange tijd in een aangename sfeer doorgepraat over allerlei muzikale en non-muzikale zaken, waarbij Roberts filosofische kwaliteiten zich duidelijk manifesteerden. Een en ander zou op deze plaats echter te ver voeren.

Op 8 sept. j.l. beleefde Robert Wyatt zijn come-back op het podium als leider van een groep zeer selekte musici, allen goede vrienden: Mike Oldfield, Julie Tippett (Julie Driscoll), Fred Frith, Hugh Hopper, Mongezi Fesa, Ivor Cutler, Nick Mason (Pink Floyd), Laurie Allen e.a., namen die voor een groot deel ook in dit verhaal genoemd werden. Hoe een en ander verlopen is, was bij het ter perse gaan van dit nummer nog niet bekend.

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Koebellen en Bekkenslagen - Aloha #21 -van 10 februari tot 24 februari 1973





June, mijn "landlady" is net als ik in juni jarig, een tweeling dus. We besloten dan ook om een gezamenlijk verjaardagsfeest te geven in onze flat in Maida Vale. Daar we prakties dezelfde kennissenkring hebben, was dit erg gemakkelijk te realiseren. In de gang hadden we een bar gemaakt en in de keuken een "buffet froid". Toevallig was ook de bevriende franse popgroep GONG in London, waarvan de zangeres (Gilly) ook in juni jarig was en die werden natuurlijk ook uitgenodigd.

Het was erg gezellig Archie, Kevin, Martine, Robert Wyatt etc. Er zijn veel kamers in deze flat die door diverse mensen worden bewoond, maar het was dus een open huis en iedereen kon zich neervlijen in een omgeving die het beste bij zijn mood paste.

Omstreeks middernacht kwamen Keith (Richard) en "Stasch" (Prince Stanischlaus) me even feliciteren, wat een ontzettende verrassing was, want ik had ze niet eens uitgenodigd... !

Een paar uur later trok ik me met Kevin, Keith en Stasch terug op mijn kamertje, wat als een oase was met alle oosterse tapijten en kussens. Op de klanken van Sibelius hebben we toen even de "presentjes" van Keith uitgeprobeerd; Toen ik in de aangrenzende badkamer mijn handen ging wassen, hoorde ik opeens iemand HELP ME! ! HELP ME ! ! roepen, daar er niemand anders in de badkamer aanwezig was, keek ik uit het raam en zag daar mijn

beste vriend Robert Wyatt 4 verdiepingen lager op straat liggen: hij was uit het raam gesprongen. Als in een nachtmerrie rende ik terug naar mijn kamertje, waar ik Kevin vroeg onmiddellijk een ambulance te bellen, terwijl ik de andere gasten optrommelde en ze in taksies naar TRAMPS (een populaire diskoteek) bracht. Na ze een drankje te hebben aangeboden (de meeste mensen wisten niet eens wat er was gebeurd) ben ik vliegensvlug weer naar huis gereden.

De ambulance was al vertrokken en de politie was June en Kevin aan het ondervragen.

Robert was volslagen sober (nuchter) toen dit gebeurde en er was geen enkele aanwijzing dat hij depressies had. Na eindeloos wachten kregen we de volgende dag het nieuws dat Robert zijn rug had gebroken en volslagen verlamd was !!!! Na een kleine kollekte in onze vriendenkring waren we in staat om Robert over te brengen naar een private hospital, gespes jaliseerd in terapie van verlammingen. Op dit ogenblik verblijft hij daar met zijn vriendin (Elfie),die in staat was om een kamertje in het ziekenhuis te huren, om konstant bij hem te kunnen zijn.

Er is een kleine kans dat hij in ongeveer 9 maanden tijd zich een beetje kan bewegen en/of lopen. Wat een afschuwelijk eind van een verjaardagsfeest ! Ondertussen ben ik weer een beetje bijgekomen van de grote schok die Roberts ongeval me gaf en bereid me voor om volgende week een toelatingseksamen te doen voor de dramaschool CORONA in London, waar ik dolgraag een basisopleiding zou willen ontvangen om in staat te zijn volgend jaar één van de aangeboden filmrollen te aksepteren. Voor dat eksamen moet ik een stuk Shakespeare voordragen (in 't engels) en ik heb al diverse malen bij vrienden tuis geoefend, maar iedere keer weer schiet iedereen in de lach dus moet ik maar voor de spiegel oefenen! DO AS YOU ALLWAYS DO - FOR A CHANGE...

Margaret

foto : barend toet


EEN VERSCHRIKKELIJK FEEST IN LONDON

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KOEBELLEN EN BERKKENSLAGEN

Stealers wheel, elpee van Stealers Wheel (A&M)

Little Red Record, elpee van Matching Mole (CBS)

A Song Or Two, elpee van Cashman & West (Dunhill)

Some Things Coming, elpee van Delaney (CBS)

bert jansen
foto gijsbert

Sommige platen komen op zeer beslissende of moeilijke tijden in je leven. Opeens blijkt dan tot je verbazing dat je een hoop van je frustaties kunt terugvinden in die bepaalde plaat. (Johnny's Song van Stealers Wheel). Die muziek blijft voor jou ook altijd inherent aan die tijd in je leven. Misschien zal ik niet objektief genoeg erover kunnen schrijven. Stealers Wheel is een prachtplaat. Probeer eens aan een vriend duidelijk te maken waarom je verliefd bent op iemand. Het zal je moeilijk vallen, Gerry Rafferty's plaat Can I Have My Money Back heeft altijd een speciaal plaatsje gehad in mijn platenrek. Hij hoort bij een soort individuele muziekmakers, die een warm plekje in mijn hart veroverd hebben. Skip Spence, Ry Cooder, Todd Rundgren, Dave Mason en Gerry Rafferty.

Op de Alohaburoos hoorde ik twee weken geleden via de draadomroep een ontroerend muziekje. Ingeleid door een treurig harmonium zong een groffe stem een droevig liedje over het te laat komen. Desgevraagd vertelde Pim Oets dat het hier ging om een track van de Stealers Wheel elpee, waar Gerry Rafferty ook het een en ander mee te maken had. De volgende dag klonk dat nummer in mijn nieuwe huis en lag de wonderschone hoes aan mijn voeten op het nieuwe bruine hoogpolige tapijt. Nu is het zo, dat Stealers Wheel onverbiddelijk verbonden is aan mijn nieuwe woonruimte en soms even plaats heeft moeten maken (op de draaitafel) voor een paar andere platen waar ik verderop iets over zal vertellen.

Negen maanden geleden vormden Gerry Rafferty en Rab Noakes (allebei uit de Schotse

muziekscene) samen met Joe Egan en Paul Pilnik een groep. Tony Williams en Rod Coombes werden respektievelijk als bassist en drummer aangetrokken en Stealers Wheel was een feit. Rab Noakes besloot als vele anderen een solokarriere op te bouwen en verliet de groep. Plannen voor een elpee waren er ook al gauw, demotapes werden gemaakt en opgestuurd naar het bekende producersduo Leiber/Stoller. (Ga je vroege rock&roll en Presley opnames maar eens na. De naam Leiber/Stoller zal dan veelvuldig opduiken). En negen maanden na het oprichten van de groep aanschouwde een elpee, geproduceerd door Leiber/Stoller, het levens licht. Kant een opent met Late Again. Dit nummer is representabel voor de hele elpee. Het begint met een harmonium, een stem zingt in, na twee coupletten vallen andere stemmen in en dit is het sein voor bas en drums om ook mee te gaan doen.


HET BESPREEKWEZEN

KOEBELLEN EN BEKKENSLAGEN

MOFFENPOP

MELK WEG

De aanzet tot het refrein wordt gegeven door een vijftiger jaren scheursax (Leiber/Stoller'). Stuc k In The Middle is de titel van de volgende track. Een Beatle-achtig nummer maar dan iets rauwer, zeer geperfektioneerd opgenomen met koebellen en harde bekkenslagen. Another Meaning is een zacht langzaam nummer met veel oewaaa's en een mistige steelband. Nmr 4 kant 1 I Get By, Peter Frampton rock, voor mij het zwakste'nummer van de plaat. Het laatste nummer van kant l neigt ook weer sterk tot een vergelijking met de Beatles, Outside Looking In is de titel en zeker niet het sterkste nummer van de plaat. Kant 2 is kwalitatief het sterkst. Johnny's Song is een wondermooi stukje muziek kwa tekst en indeling. De gitaarsolo lijkt zo weggestapt te zijn van de legendariese Derek and the Domino's elpee, Next To Me, een nieuwe aanpak van de bossa die de hele dag in je hoofd blijven zitten. Wachtend op het groen worden van het oversteek-licht betrapte ik mezelf erop dat ik keihard dit nummer stond te zingen, een moderne gospelsong van Stealers Wheel. Resumerend: Stealers Wheel is nu al een van de beste elpees van 1973, een vergelijking met Gerry Rafferty's solo elpee gaat niet op, het lijkt erg op de Beatles maar het is het niet. Joe Egan heeft een prachtige stem en een duidelijk stempel op deze plaat gezet, Leiber/ Stoller weten wat produceren en opnemen is, en ik zou graag een avondje met Gerry en Joe willen doorzakken, want ik geloof dat het aardige drinke-broers zijn, en problemen hebben we allemaal.

Verder staat er achterop de hoes een aardig tekstje wat ik je niet onthouden wil: We know that you believe you understand what you think we said, but we are not sure you realise that what you heard is not what we meant.
(Laatste nieuws: Gerry Rafferty heeft de groep verlaten en is vervangen door eks-Spooky Tooth Luther Grosvenor, en bassist Tony Williams is vervangen door De Lisle Harper).



foto gijsbert

Over naar het jongste produkt van Robert Wyatt's groep Matching Mole. Wyatt's beslissing om uit de Soft Machine te stappen kwam indertijd zeer sympatiek bij mij over. Ook ik zag het niet meer zitten bij dat overjazzte stelletje. Nou doet mijn hardgrondige hekel aan toeters (wat voor dan ook) een behoorlijke duit in het zakje. In ieder geval heb ik de Soft Machine gelaten voor wat ze was, en me beperkt tot het luisteren naar alleen de eerste twee elpees. Nog steeds met zeer veel genoegen. Toen Wyatt's beslissing bekend werd sloeg mijn hart een slag over en kreeg ik weer hoop. Ik rekende op een soort Soft Machine van het eerste uur maar dan zonder toeters. Matching Mole's eerste elpee stelde me door enkele achteraf onverklaarbare redenen diep teleur, en benieuwd keek ik uit naar het tweede eksemplaar. En dat is er nu, heet Little Red Record, Maoachtig schilderij op de voorkant en zelfs het rode boekje ontbreekt niet. Maar ik had het alleen maar geslaagd gevonden als de elpee dan ook rood zou wezen. Welk een teleurstelling overvalt als je tussen al het roods opeens een zwarte vinylschijf uit de hoes trekt. Luisterend naar de muziek kan ik weinig verband vinden tussen de overdadige kommunistiese sfeer op de hoes en het geluid van de plaat, behalve een flard gezang op kant een: The communists are here. Overtuigd van het feit dat ik niet de enige ben die is afgeknapt op de Machine, kan ik deze plaat van harte aanbevelen aan die mensen die met me meevoelen, dwz nog regelmatig de eerste twee Soft Machineplaten draaien. Little Red Record bevat "oude" Machinemuziek in een nieuw jasje. Wyatt's vokale partijen zijn nu wel bekend maar verrassen nog steeds. (Op de plaat staat een aardig liedje over god, het heet dan ook God Song,
wat door Wyatt bekend doch zeer prachtig wordt gezongen. Het is wel het enige "konventionele" muziekje op de plaat). Dave Mcrae is een goede vervanging voor Ratledge, en Phil Miller vervult de rol die Kevin Ayers vroeger placht te spelen. Roxy Music's Eno speelt mee op de VCS3 synthesizer, en King Crimson's Robert Fripp produceerde het geheel. Al met al vind ik het een zeer goede plaat en verkeer in de mening, dat ik niet de enige zal blijven. De Hollandse persing van CBS is niet al te best net zoals bij de derde Soft Machine elpee. Tenslotte blijft Robert Wyatt de aardigste en sympatiekste popartiest die ik ken.

En nu over naar de afdeling Puin, Nummer een in deze populaire reeks is een plaat van Cashman en West geheten A Song Or Two. En bij die hoeveelheid had het beter kunnen blijven. Nietszeggende Simon en Garfunkel, Greenfield en Cook, Bolland en Bolland muziek wordt ons door deze twee heren gebracht. Iets te hippe grijnzende meneren zo te zien op de hoes. 't Is allemaal natuurlijk weer met Amerikaanse perfektie opgenomen. Een uitstekende stereodemonstratieplaat of leuke kadooplaat voor die moderne bovenburen met hun Af gaans e windhond en laarzen met dikke zolen. De heren schrijven ook leuke teksten. Lees dit maar eens: A junkie steals, a mayor deals, who knowd what's coming next. Een zeer slechte plaat. Nummer twee in onze populaire reeks PUIN is een scheet van de heer Delaney, eens de mannelijke helft van Delaney&Bonnie. Maar dat zal wel voorbij zijn getuige zijn solo-elpee Somethings Coming. Het enige goede wat wijlen het Duo heeft

voortgebracht was hun aandeel in de solo-elpee van Eric Clapton. En dan nu Delaney alleen. God bewaar me wat een onbegrepen muziek. Mijn hekel aan toeters had ik al eerder opgespeeld maar deze plaat slaat alles. Stoonde Ramblers of zoiets, een ondoorzichtige brij van muziek met als enige steunpunt de wrakke stem van Delaney. Een zielige, niet uit de verf gekomen, poging om iets "swingends" te kreëeren. Delaney is vreemd gegaan, met alle slechte gevolgen die zo'n daad in zich kan hebben. Een zeer, zeer, zeer slechte plaat. (Op het nummer Thank God wordt gezongen: Thank God for Rock&Roll. Maar dat was toch iemand anders, of vergis ik me nou? Sorry Chuck).

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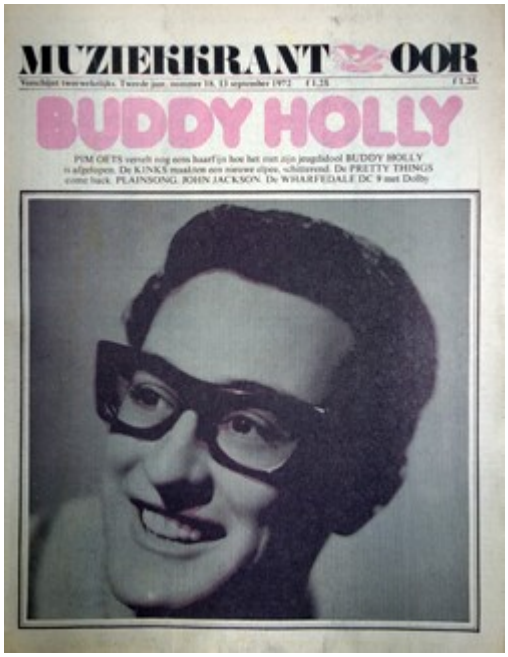
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Soft Machine + Matching Mole - Oor - nummer 18 - 13 September 1972

SOFT MACHINE + MATCHING MOLE


MUZIEKKRANT OOR

BUDDY HOLLY

PIM OETS vertelt nog eens haarfijn hoe het met zijn jeugdidool BUDDY HOLLY is afgelopen. De KINKS maakten een nieuwe elpee, schitterend. De PRETTY THINGS come back. PLAINSONG. JOHN JACKSON. De WHARFEDALE DC 9 met Dolby

mike ratledge : geschreven muziek wordt belangrijker voor soft machine

De huidige formatie van de Soft Machine, die nu iets minder dan twee maanden optreedt, bestaat uit de vertrouwde Hugh Hopper en Mike Ratledge op respektievelijk bas en orgel, plus twee vluchtelingen uit Ian Carrs Nucleus, drummer John Marshall en Karl Jenkins die hobo, bariton en elektriese piano speelt.
Toen Robert Wyatt de groep verliet om Matching Mole te beginnen moest Soft Machine de ekstra kleurrijkheid van een menselijke stem in hun arrangementen missen, een ontwikkeling die aanleiding was tot een konservatieve, kritiese aanval in Engeland, waar men de groep 'nietsontziende cerebraliteit' verweet. Ik vroeg Mike Ratledge naar z'n reaktie op het gezeur over 'lineaal-rock (meetlat-rock).

'Het is belachelijk. Ik vind 't waanzin. Denken is zeker 't laatste wat ik op het toneel doe. Wat opwinding en kompaktheid betreft is deze groep veel verder dan de vorigen, vooral de versie die speelde op de eerste kant van Soft Machine.'

- Dat album kreeg ook z'n portie kritiek.

'Ja... op een vergelijkende basis die helemaal niet toepasselijk was. Als een groep uit elkaar gaat, kijken mensen altijd naar de nieuwe formatie in het licht van de vorige, één die misschien vijf jaar samen zal hebben gespeeld. In ons geval had de nieuwe samenstelling maar een week met elkaar gespeeld, voordat we de opname voor de tweede kant moesten maken en,



omdat 't kontrast zo naakt en publiekelijk was, omdat 't was opgenomen, gebruikten de critici een basis van vergelijking

'die helemaal niet terecht was. Trouwens, die studio sessies waren helemaal niet zulke gelukkige gelegenheden. Nadat Phil Howard was vertrokken, voelde Elton zich erg onzeker... zo voelden we ons trouwens allemaal. En toen John 't van Phil overnam had ie maar een paar dagen de tijd om de nummers te repeteren en helemaal geen kans om er een beetje in te komen, hoewel ik vind dat hij 't erg goed voor elkaar heeft gekregen."

- En Soft Machine 6? Wanneer verschijnt die?

'We beginnen er in oktober aan te werken. Op 't ogenblik denken we eraan om één set in de studio te doen en één 'live' op te nemen, en een dubbel album uit te brengen. Maar dat staat absoluut niet vast.

Karl is bezig om er veel voor te schrijven en ik ook.'

- En Hugh? 'Hugh is bezig geweest met z'n solo-elpee '1984', dus hij heeft de laatste tijd niet veel tijd gehad om iets voor de groep te doen. Het is een avant-garde jazz plaat met elektroniese werk en John heeft de percussie gedaan. Verder zijn er Lo Coxhill, Pye Hastings, Gary Windo, Malcolm Griffiths en Nick Evans op te vinden.'

Dankzij moeilijkheden met het geluid tijdens het eerste optreden van de groep in King's Cross Cinema in Londen was 't moeilijk om een oordeel te vormen over de nieuwe formatie. Ze spelen zeker met meer kracht en nadruk, en er is meer vierkwartsmaat in omloop dan anders.

Ratledge: 'Dat komt door Karl die veel van normale tempi houdt en er veel in schrijft. We zijn inmiddels over de geluidsmoeilijkheden heen gekomen en de groep komt over als een homogene eenheid, die geloof ik, meer is ingesteld op wat er aan de hand is zonder dat één van ons er echt de nadruk op hoeft te leggen.

'Geschreven materiaal is belangrijker voor de groep geworden dan in tijden het geval is geweest, in zoverre dat we er meer plezier aan beleven om de geschreven gedeeltes te spelen. We ratelen er niet meer snel door heen om in de vrije kontreien terecht te komen. Er zit een nieuw soort beheersing in de muziek . . . wat misschien de indruk zou kunnen geven dat 't meer steriel en akademies wordt . . . maar in feite is dat helemaal niet zo. Het is heel opwindend . . . de kick dat er voor de eerste keer volkomen overeenstemming in de groep heerst. Het is nooit eerder zo geweest, en daardoor waren onze optredens veel wilder of veel minder interessant.'

Karl en John hebben heel wat tijd met elkaar in verschillende groepen gespeeld, John heeft nog een tijdje met Jack Bruce gewerkt tussen de periodes in dat hij met Nucleus en De Softs speelde. 'John is de ideale drummer voor ons. Hij krijgt 't voor elkaar om ongelooflijk strak en tegelijkertijd heel krachtig te zijn. Hij past heel goed bij Hugh en ze stellen elkaars spel erg op prijs ... en daarnaast, dankzij 't feit dat ze elkaar zo lang kennen, zijn hij en Karl op de piano heel kompakt achter mij als ik soloos maak'.

'Karl? ' Hij heeft een klassieke hobo opleiding gevolgd en hij heeft een tijdje bij de Welsh National Orchestra gespeeld. Hij heeft een heel goed melodiese gevoel dat vooral naar voren komt in de freeform tussengedeelten. Hij zorgt ervoor dat iedereen echt naar elkaar luistert, in plaats van maar wat rond te klooien.'

- Een groep, die zichzelf dermate heeft gevonden als de Soft Machine zal zeker geen moeite hebben om goed te spelen, maar hoe zit 't met de mensen die gewoon niet begrijpen wat ze met hun muziek willen? , Mike? Heb je daar raad voor?

'Ga vooral niet de maten zitten tellen. Misschien vinden we 't interessant om een elf-achtste te spelen, maar uiteindelijk moeten we even goed in elf-achtsten spelen als we dat in een vierkwartsmaat doen, want uiteindelijk gaat 't alleen maar om goed spelen. Onze maten doen er niet toe. Je moet naar ons luisteren zoals je naar elke rock groep zou luisteren... als een muzikale ervaring'.

Ian McDonald.

robert wyatt :
woorden zijn voor mij in de eerste plaats dingen om met je mond te doen

Robert Wyatt's splintergroep heeft zojuist z'n tweede voltooid, 'The little red record'. Een aanzienlijke verbetering ten opzichte van de eerste, die ze opnamen, toen zij net bij elkaar waren, eind 1971.
Robert Wyatt vertelde, tijdens opnamen in de CBS Studios: 'Het is voor het eerst dat onze ideeën goed zijn uitgewerkt. Het enige verschil is dat we nu een producer hebben, Bob Fripp van King Crimson. Eerst was ik wat huiverig om iemand van buiten de groep te nemen, maar het werkte uitstekend.

Alles wat het album zou kunnen zijn, zàl het zijn; dankzij Fripp. Ik ben hem er erg dankbaar voor, temeer omdat hij het erg druk had met de nieuwe King Crimson line-up en toch ons hele project zeer serieus heeft gedaan.' Alhoewel we goede vrienden zijn, begrijpen we mekaar wel eens niet goed en waren we een beetje angstig om aan het project te beginnen. Maar hij heeft de voor een producer net benodigde kombinatie van arrogantie en nederigheid om ons aan de gang te houden. Hij had niet meer kunnen doen om dit album klaar te krijgen. Alhoewel er binnen de groep nog heel wat geargumenteerd werd over de mix toen ik ze verliet, geloof ik dat dit het beste album wordt dat Wyatt maakte sinds de dagen van het eerste Soft Machine album en een van de beste van dit jaar. Het heeft alles in zich: Het sublieme piano-werk van de uit de jazz afkomstige David McRae (die eerder dit jaar David Sinclair verving) in snelvuur nummers als 'Brandy as in Benj' en in dreigende dingen als 'June Brides'. Daarnaast de konstant bezige, stuwende bas van Bill MacCormick, die af en toe uitbarst in imposante fuzz-solo's als in 'March Ides', Het gitaarwerk van Phil Miller, erg goed in 'Lithing and Gracing', en natuurlijk het vrolijke ramwerk, van het op ieder nummer aanwezige Robert Wyatt gedrum.



Wat 'The little red record' vooral speciaal maakt is de aanwezigheid van een paar echte songs, iets waar Robert sinds Soft Machine 2 niet veel zin in had. Het album begint met een koorachtig McRae-Wyatt nummer: 'Drinking my Politics away in the middle of the day' en halverwege kant een is een voordracht achtige passage: 'Righteous Rhumba'.

'Ondanks de politieke achtergrond van alle songs, is het géén concept-album' haast Robert zich te verklaren. 'Woorden zijn voor mij in de eerste plaats dingen om met je mond te doen, en geen boodschappen, al zijn ze op zich zelf zinvol. Ik denk dat ik wat aan de onzekere kant ben, omdat het geruime tijd geleden is dat ik een hoop songteksten schreef. En ik ben een beetje bang dat mensen er meer in willen vinden dan ze bevatten."

Het beste nummer is een Miller-Wyatt compositie, nu nog 'Gods song' geheten maar dat kan nog veranderen in 'Randy Newman Too". De reden hiervoor kun je op Newman's 'Sail Away' vinden. Gezongen met loutere akoestische gitaarbegeleiding klinkt het als een tragische mix van 'Dedicated to you, but you weren't listening' en John Lennon's 'Julia'.

Andere vocalen vinden we op McCormick's 'Gloria Room' waarop ook Eno van Roxy Music synthesizer speelt naast een koor van mompelende beroemdheden als 's werelds mooiste filmster, Julie Christie. Zij heeft de groep de laatste tijd de - zo broodnodige - financiële steun gegeven en Bill's andere nummer op dit album is aan haar opgedragen via haar studio 'bijnaam 'Flora Fidget'. Het instrumentale sluitstuk is een bewogen geluid-schilderij door Dave Mc Rae: 'Smoke Signal' welk nummer met 'Gods Song' strijd om de beste compositie op de plaat. Er zijn weinig nummers geweest die zo hart-brekend waren als dit, sinds 'A day in the Life' van 'Sergeant Pepper'.

Volgens Dave is het een magische groep: 'Wanneer we een off day hebben zijn we werkelijk kloten, maar als het lukt, gaat het fantastisch. Het merendeel van de plaat is er in geslaagd de magische zijde vast te leggen en ik ben er erg blij mee'.

En terecht. Laten we hopen dat Matching Mole, als ze in ons land spelen in de stemming zijn voor wat magie. Met de new-look Soft Machine samen op één konsert, zullen de vonken er zeker van af vliegen, en alle zaalhouders raden we aan nieuwe asbest bekleding te nemen.

Je bent geschift als je niet gaat.

Ian MacDonald.



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Nieuwe groep Robert Wyatt - Aloha #25 -van 7 april tot 21 april 1972



NIEUWE GROEP ROBERT WYATT

Nog goed herinner ik me dat hele dunne exemplaar van Hitweek, januari 1969. Het Hitteam lag toen met griep in bed en de krant werd toen maar gevuld met onder meer een enorm interview van Bram de Zwaan met John en Yoko. Verder was er een halve pagina gevuld met een recentie van de eerste Soft Machine elpee. Nou ja, vullen is misschien niet het juiste woord, want die plaat was bijna niet te beschrijven. Het was eigenlijk een poging om ons, hit-lezertjes, duidelijk te maken, dat er iets geweldigs, iets nieuws verschenen was. Het ging over drie jongens die één muziek maakten. Een organist die heel erg goed zat te orgelen en een geluid maakte dat we nog niet eerder uit een orgel hadden horen komen. Een bassist die nu eens geen deel uitmaakte van de ritme-sectie, maar gewoon een heel eigen stuk muziek maakte. En dan die drummer. Hij drum-de niet: hij maakte muziek op zijn trommels. Bovendien kon hij prachtig zingen. Ondertussen weten we wat er verder gebeurt is. Er werd van bassist verandert en er werd een blazerssectie aantoegevoegd. Zij die het in de Doelen door de VPRO opgenomen konsert op de band hebben (de mijne is overigens wel aan vernieuwing toe, dus mogen ze het wel weer eens uitzenden, -Wim!) weten wel dat die veranderingen niet geheel ongunstig waren. Maar het is ontzettend moeilijk nieuwe muziek op een zelfde peil te blijven maken en vooral bij Robert Wyatt kwam een ontevreden gevoel. Zijn spelen vormde niet meer die ene brok muziek van eerst. Tijdens de konserten in het najaar van '70 (ook opgenomen door de VPRO) was dat wel te merken. Hij werd aktiever buiten de Soft Machine. Zo speelde hij vaker met Kevin Ayers, maakte een solo elpee (The End of an Ear) en deed veel met Keith Tippett's Centipede project, (later Symbioses).



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CAPTAIN BEEFHEART BAKT ZE WEER BRUIN

Alweer enige tijn geleden, omstreeks februari, verschoen tamelijk geruisloos een nieuwe elpee van Captain Beefheart & his Magic Band. Voorwaar weer prachtig werk van deze freak der freaken! De plaat, waarbij een vel met alle teksten, is getiteld: 'The Spotlight Kid'. Producer is Don van Vliet, alias Captain Beefheart zelf. Hij maakte ook nog wat tekeningen achter op de hoes. De groep bestaat momenteel uit oude getrouwen, Beefheart, Zoot Horn Rollo, Rockette Morton en Drumbo en nieuwelingen Ed Marimba en Winged Eel Fingerling. In de tien nummers die de plaat bevat, horen we weer tiepieze Beefheart-

NIEUWE GROEP ROBERT WYATT

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Voor promotie van hun tegenvallende vierde elpee kwam de Soft Machine in maart '70 nog terug, met Robert die voor het publiek althans lekker bezig was maar voor zichzelf had hij het wel gezien. Toen de Soft Machine enige tijd geleden weer eens in het land was, was er dan ook een nieuwe drummer.

Van Robert hoorden we enige tijd niets meer, en toen was hij opeens hier met een nieuwe groep. Ze waren op toernee door België en Nederland. Ik hoorde ze spelen in Paradiso. En Jesus wat was dat goed! Net zoals het Hitteam toendertijd moeite had met het beschrijven van de nieuwe Sound van de Soft Machine, zo vind ik het moeilijk onder woorden te brengen wat ik gehoord heb. Het was helemaal iets nieuws. Ze speelden ruim anderhalf uur, en in die tijd heb ik de prachtigste dingen gehoord. Om te beginnen een grandiose Robert. Zowel drumwerk als zang. Hij zong vaak trouwens, en prachtig. En dan Phil, wiens gitaar vaak klonk als een orgel, en het orgel dat vaak klonk als een gitaar. Achter het orgel, niemand minder dan Dave Sinclair, van Caravan. Hij vertelde dat Phils broer nu bij Caravan speelt, dat er nu meer met een piano gewerkt wordt en dat de sound daardoor wel verandert was. Weet dus wat je te wachten staat wanneer ze in maart komen (Waarom niet in Amster-dam?) Door Robert en Dave waren er zo nu en dan bekende thema's te horen van resp-Soft Machine en Caravan. Maar ook stukken die heel erg aan Pink Floyd deden denken, beter dan ik het Pink Floyd ooit heb horen doen.

Ach ik weet niet zo goed wat ik verder ervan moet zeggen. De bassist kleunde er af en toe

wel eens naast. Maar ja, het was pas hun vierde optreden. Het enige andere belangrijke dat ze me nog vertelden is dat ze een plaat hebben opgenomen bij CBS en dat ze in april of mei weer terug zijn. Daarna gingen ze naar bed omdat ze de volgende dag 'two gigs' hadden. 'One in Aindhoven and one in Rotterdam.'

Oncko Grader

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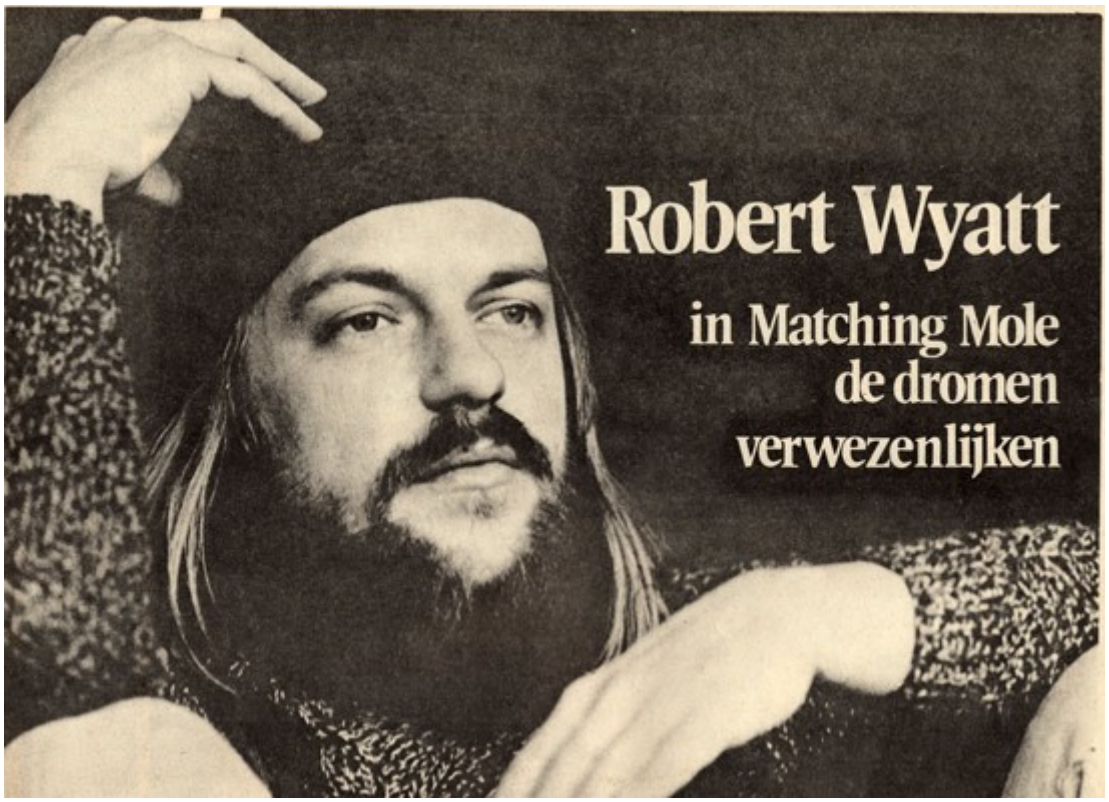
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Robert Wyatt in Matching Mole de dromen verwezenlijken - Oor - nummer 5 - 15 maart 1972



'

Je moet dat album zien als een soort uitverkoop van ideeën, waarmee ik al lange tijd rondliep en die ik nu wel eens kwijt wilde. Met de muziek van de groep heeft die plaat niet zo veel te maken'.

Dat zegt Robert Wyatt (27), ex-drummer en zanger van de Soft Machine, over het debuutalbum van zijn formatie Matching Mole, dat op 7 april door CBS in Engeland wordt uitgebracht.

Wyatt richtte Matching Mole eind oktober vorig jaar op, nog geen twee maanden



nadat hij uit een groeiend gevoel van onvrede en onvrijheid de Soft Machine had verlaten. De eerste, die hij voor zijn onderneming wist te interesseren, was organist Dave Sinclair, die net werkloos was geworden doordat hij uit de groep Caravan was gestapt. Wyatt en Sinclair kennen elkaar al van de lagere school.

Vervolgens werden gitarist Phil Miller en basgitarist Bill McCormick aangetrokken. Wyatt kent hen ook al jaren. Miller maakte een paar jaar geleden deel uit van de groep Delivery, waarin blaasvirtuoos Lol Coxhill ook een tijdje heeft gespeeld. Phill is de broer van Steve Miller, die Dave Sinclair als organist bij Caravan opvolgde. De 20-jarige McCormick zat een paar jaar geleden nog op school. Hij was lid van het Soft Machine-achtige muziek voortbrengende groepje Quiet Sun, dat nooit helemaal van de grond is gekomen en inmiddels ter ziele is gegaan.

Matching Mole (de naam is afgeleid van Machine Mole, het Franse equivalent van Soft Machine) bevindt zich nog duidelijk in een beginstadium. Wyatt en de anderen zijn nog druk bezig allerlei dingen, muzikaal en niet-muzikaal, op poten te zetten. 'Ik wist niet', zegt Wyatt, 'dat er zo veel praktische beslommeringen aan het oprichten van een groep vastzaten. Je moet je met zo veel zaken bezighouden, geluidsapparatuur, geldzaken, noem maar op. Het leidt je ontzettend van de muziek af.

Psychiatrisch rapport

Anderhalf jaar heeft het geduurd voordat Robert Wyatt de beslissing nam de steeds meer de thematische jazzkant opgaande Soft Machine, waarvan hij bijna 5 jaar deel heeft uitgemaakt, te verlaten. Over die beslissing zegt hij nu: 'Als ik alle gedachten, die daarbij een rol hebben gespeeld, zou opschrijven, zou ik er zonder moeite een boek mee kunnen vullen. Dat zou dan meteen een soort psychiatrisch rapport zijn. Die vijf jaar Soft Machine hebben zo ontzettend veel voor me betekend. Ik heb zo veel van mijn identiteit in die naam gestoken. Zo veel van mijn emoties en energie zijn in die groep gaan zitten. Dat is aan een buitenstaander niet in een paar cleane zinnen uit te leggen'.

'Toen ik over mijn vertrek begon na te denken, dacht ik dat ik meer te verliezen dan te winnen zou hebben. Maar naarmate de tijd verstreek en hoe groter mijn gevoel van onvrede werd over de weinige ruimte, die ik binnen de Soft Machine had om mijn muzikale ideeën uit te werken, des te meer kwam ik tot de overtuiging dat ik alleen maar kon winnen door de groep te verlaten. Door mijn vertrek kon ik de, laten we het noemen: dromen, die ik altijd voor me had moeten houden, gaan verwezenlijken'.

Een deel van die dromen is volgens Wyatt al gerealiseerd in het begin april uit te brengen debuutalbum. De langspeler, die op het moment gemixed wordt, zal bestaan uit acht nummers, vijf van Wyatt, twee van hem en Sinclair en één van Miller. De groep nam de plaat omstreeks de jaarwisseling op.

David McRae (elektrisch versterkte piano) verleende op enkele nummers medewerking. Net als op zijn vorig jaar uitgebrachte solo-album, 'End of an ear', zal in verschillende composities te genieten vallen van Wyatts intrigerende en improviserende stemgeluid.

Wyatt hoopt dat de debuut-LP goede kritieken zal krijgen. Hij zegt: 'Ik zou het fijn vinden als de plaat zuiver op muzikale gronden werd beoordeeld en dat mijn verleden als Soft Machine-muzikant er zo veel mogelijk buiten werd gelaten'. Hij deelt mee dat plannen voor een tweede album zich al in een redelijk ver gevorderd stadium bevinden. Het zal waarschijnlijk in mei in een studio bij Parijs worden opgenomen met productionele assistentie van de Australiër en ex-Soft Machine-gitarist David Allen.

Nog emotioneel bij betrokken



Over zijn Soft Machine-verleden wil Wyatt niet zo veel kwijt. 'Ik ben er soms nog zo emotioneel bij betrokken. Misschien kan ik er over een paar jaar wat afstandelijker over praten'.

Hij wil niet zeggen welke periode van zijn vijf jaren Soft Machine het interessantst voor hem waren. Het is ook hem opgevallen dat velen de laatste tijd hun interesse in de groep van Ratledge c.s. zijn kwijtgeraakt, maar hij wil daar niet op ingaan. En ook hij heeft de geruchten gehoord dat de Soft Machine misschien binnenkort zal ophouden te bestaan, maar daar is eveneens geen commentaar op te krijgen. Zegt te weten dat Elton Dean en drummer Phil Howard, die recentelijk werd vervangen door John Marshall, van plan zijn binnenkort iets in groepsverband te gaan doen. Of Mike Ratledge en Hugh Hopper ook plannen in die richting hebben is hem onbekend.

Met zijn vroegere groepsgenoten heeft hij nog nauwelijks contact. 'Ik heb ze voor het laatst live horen spelen eind vorig jaar op het Berlin Jazz Festival. Ik was toen in Duitsland, waar ik een paar concerten deed met de groep van Jean-Luc Ponty. Daarin speelde ook de Westduitser Wolfgang Dauner. Ik heb een geweldige bewondering voor hem. Hij is één van de grootste musici, die ik tot nu toe ontmoet heb'.

Wyatt denkt dat het waarschijnlijk nooit meer tot een samenwerking tussen hem en de Soft Machine zal komen. 'Alleen met Hugh zal ik contact blijven houden. Met hem heb ik altijd erg goed kunnen opschieten. Als ik hem ergens mee kan helpen, zal ik het zeker doen. Hij is ook altijd bereid geweest mij te helpen. Hij heeft al gezegd dat hij composities, waarmee hij binnen de Soft Machine niets kan doen, aan mij wil geven. Op het debuutalbum heb ik een song geschreven, die aan hem is opgedragen'.

Groep heeft toekomst

Robert Wyatt gelooft dat Matching Mole zeker kansen voor de toekomst heeft. Hij is voornemens de komende maanden al zijn tijd en energie in de groep te steken. Plannen voor een nieuwe solo-LP heeft hij er al voor laten schieten.

Matching Mole maakte op 22 en 23 januari de Engelse debuutconcerten in Watford (voorstadje van Londen) en in het Londense Roundhouse. De kritieken op deze optredens waren lovend. De groep oogstte ook veel waardering tijdens de eerste concerten op het Europese vasteland, die op 19 en 20 februari in Amsterdam, Rotterdam en Eindhoven werden gegeven.

Het is zo goed als zeker dat Matching Mole hier van half tot eind maart weer van de partij is. Dan zal een door Mojo te organiseren toernee langs het Nederlandse clubcircuit worden gemaakt. In april toert Wyatts formatie wat door Engeland en in mei staan er concerten in Oostenrijk, Duitsland en Frankrijk op het programma.

Laatstgenoemd land en Nederland behoren al jarenlang tot Wyatts favoriete naties. 'Ik zou hier in Holland wel maanden achter elkaar op toernee willen. Ook al. omdat we de komende maanden waarschijnlijk toch niet zo veel concerten in Engeland zullen doen als gevolg van de electriciteitsellende. De laatste tijd zijn in Engeland tientallen popconcerten afgelast en verwacht wordt dat de naweeën tot in april of mei merkbaar zullen zijn. De fijnste concerten heb ik altijd die in Holland gevonden. Er is hier een grote muzikale interesse, in de grote steden en ook op het platteland. Dat is een groot verschil met

Engeland. Wat me daar tegenstaat is de arrogantie, waarmee popgroepen vaak worden behandeld.

In Frankrijk heb ik ook altijd fijn gewerkt, maar de laatste jaren is het daar minder interessant geworden. Frankrijk, en trouwens ook Duitsland, begint meer en meer een politiestaat te worden en dat is ook in de popscene te merken. Eén van mijn laatste concerten met de Soft Machine was in Parijs. Vlak voordat we begonnen te spelen, braken er enorme vechtpartijen uit tussen de politie en studenten. Voor het podium werden vuren gestookt. Dat is niet zo'n prettige sfeer om muziek in te maken'.

Willem Hoos

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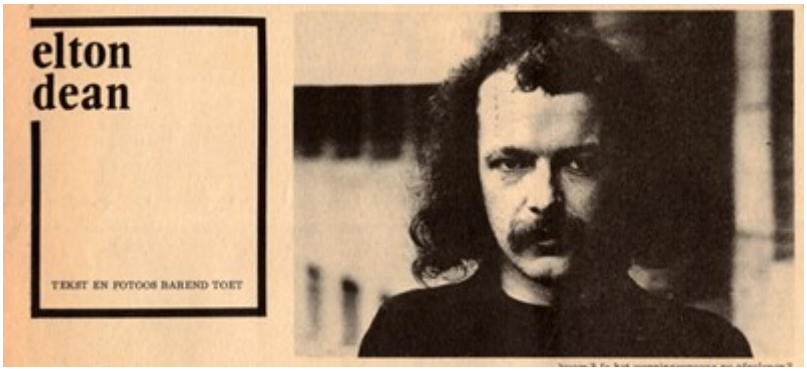
Soft Machine draait weer op volle toeren - Oor - nummer 2 - 15 april 1971





De Soft Machine heeft - merkwaardigerwijze - nogal een koude douche gekregen van de pers tijdens hun recente toer door ons land. Mijns inziens volkomen ten onrechte werd de groep ervan beticht 'monotoon' en 'ongeinspireerd' te hebben gespeeld. Het gaat me hier overigens niet zozeer om het brengen van een eigen mening over de kwaliteiten van de groep, van mij mag je het lelijk vinden. Wat ik alleen niet begrijp, is dat vrijwel niemand probeert uit te vissen waarom de Machine de laatste tijd zoveel veranderingen in z'n muziek aanbrengt. Een aantal voor de hand liggende waarnemingen worden gewoon niet gedaan of men wijdt er geen woord aan in de kritieken. In de onderstaande interviews - een met elk van de leden van de groep - wordt op die punten uitgebreid ingegaan. Oor's inziens komen er dan dingen voor de dag, die wel wat duidelijker belicht hadden mogen worden en die veel verklaren over de fase, waarin de groep thans verkeert.

TEKST EN FOTOOS BAREND TOET



Elton Dean speelt ongeveer 1 ½ jaar bij de groep. Voor die tijd zat hij als beroepsmusicus in verschillende groepen.
Hij speelde o. a. met Long John Baldry en Elton John in Bluesology. Naast de Soft Machine maakt hij deel uit van Centipede, de 50 mans groep van Keith Tippet.

BT: Je begon gelijk met Lynn Dobson en twee anderen in Soft Machine.

ED: 'Ja, we begonnen met een blazerssectie van vier man.'

BT: Jij had toen niet zo'n grote rol in het geheel.

ED: 'Zo nu en dan een solo, we deelden de soloos onder elkaar. Er was veel bladmuziek.

BT: Veel vaste arrangementen?

ED: 'Mike en Hugh schreven alles. Het is trouwens nog zo dat zij vrijwel alles schrijven. Alleen is alles veel losser en vrijer.

BT: Je schrijft nu toch ook zelf?

ED: 'Een beetje hier en daar, ik hou er niet zo van. Ik hou meer van spelen. Wat ik doe is zeer minimaal. Soms geef ik de richting aan van een paar maten, veel verder gaat het niet.'

BT: Toen de blazers voor het eerst in jullie muziek opdoken, was het eigenlijk meer als versiering van een al bestaande manier van musiceren. Het was geen nieuwe muziek.

ED: 'We hadden veel problemen met het geluid. Veel gerotzooi met de apparatuur. We hebben het nooit voor elkaar gekregen. In feite beginnen we er nu pas achter te komen.'

BT: De anderen gingen weg, waarom?

ED: 'Om verschillende redenen. Er was ander werk voor ze en de apparatuur was niet goed en de ekonomiese situatie van de groep.'

BT: Maar denk je dat er een rol was voor allemaal ?

ED: 'Ja we gebruiken ze soms nog. Nog een paar dagen terug hadden we een radiouitzending, waarin vier blazers meededen. Het is gewoon niet prakties voor toernees en optredens. '

BT: Een vorige toer hadden jullie wel Lynn Dobson mee. Die paste, geloof ik, niet zo goed bij de rest van de groep ?

ED: 'Hij wilde weg en wij wilden dat hij wegging. Hij vond zichzelf belangrijker dan de rest. In het begin was het wel goed, maar er zijn wat botsingen geweest tussen hem en de rest. Dan zeg ik niet teveel.'



BT: Sommige van de stukken van het laatste jaar, vooral op de 'Fourth' elpee, doen sterk aan jazz denken. Ben jij gelukkig met die ontwikkeling ?

ED: 'Dat is waarschijnlijk mijn invloed in de groep. Ik kwam van een jazzgroep. Ik speelde bij Keith Tippet voor ik in deze groep terechtkwam. Daarvoor speelde ik in allerlei rock 'n roll groepen, soulbands, Bluesology, Soulpushers.'

BT: Die verandering naar jazzelementen in jullie muziek. Hoe werd die tot stand gebracht? Door schrijven? Schreef je in die periode werk voor de groep?

ED: 'Nee; mensen die met elkaar spelen, beinvloeden elkaar. De richting moet haast wel veranderen als er nieuwe leden in een groep komen.'

BT: Vanmiddag (na het zondagmiddagconcert van 21/3 jl.) viel het me op dat de stukken die jullie speelden van 'Fourth' veel losser klonken dan op de plaat.

ED: 'Er staat veel geschreven werk op die plaat. Hugh en Mike gaven aan waar de improvisaties konden komen. Nu zitten we er wat beter in, op toneel wordt het allemaal veel losser. Het improvisatie-element groeit daardoor. We improviseren nu ook veel meer, vrijwel alles is vrij, je werkt op een schema, maar verder ben je vrij.'

BT: Ik kreeg de indruk dat, vooral in de ensemble-stukken, het karakter van de oudere stukken van de groep weer sterker naar voren kwam als op de laatste platen en tijdens het voorlaatste concert.

ED: 'Ik ken die oude stijl niet zo goed. De eerste elpee heb ik nog nooit gehoord. Ik geloof dat ze toch niet meer in die stijl schrijven.'

BT: Wat betekent Centipede voor je?

ED: 'Je kunt er mee lachen, (grinnikt). Het is meer een sociale aangelegenheid. Vijftig man op het toneel.'

BT: Hoe versterk je het geluid van je toeters? (voor slimme lezertjes, de vragensteller heet Toet).

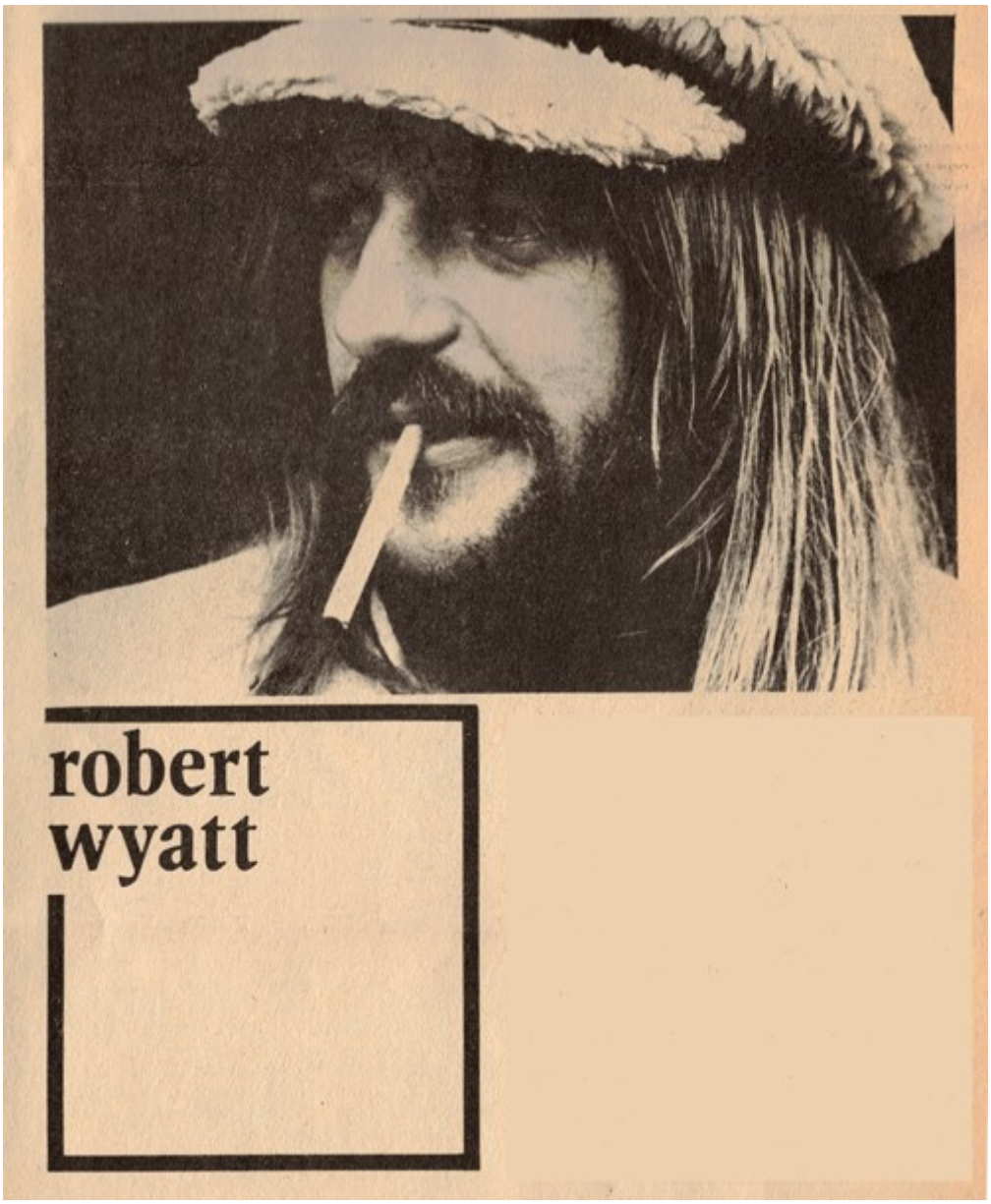
ED: 'Er hangt een klein soort mikrofoontje in het gebogen gedeelte van de saxofoon. Er zit niets op het toetsengedeelte (bedoeld worden de vingerkleppen of hoe die dingen in vaktaal mogen heten).'

- BT: Heb je geen problemen met een metaalachtige klank met dit soort versterking?

ED: 'Ja, vooral met de altsax. Met de sopraansax en de saxello is het geen probleem, die hebben van zichzelf een scherper geluid. Ik hou daar wel van. Het past goed bij Mike's orgel, vooral in de vibrato's. Met houten blaasinstrumenten is het overigens nog moeilijker om ze te versterken.'

BT: Denk je dat je nu beter past in het geheel van de muziek dan toen je er pas bijkwam? Is het wenningsproces nu afgelopen?

ED: 'We hebben nogal wat wijzigingen meegemaakt in die tijd. Eerst alle wisselingen mol blazers, vier, twee en toen een. Ik weet het niet, waarschijnlijk zijn we er nog niet helemaal. Maar ik denk wel dat mijn rol groter is geworden in die tijd. In het begin beschouwde ik mezelf niet als groepslid, het was een baantje. Maar sinds de andere blazers weg gegaan, ben ik meer betrokken geraakt bij wat er gebeurde. Nu is het kontakt ook persoonlijker. Ik heb meer te maken met de mensen en met wat er in hun hoofden omgaat, het is meer een groep geworden.'



BT: Wat gebeurde er deze zomer? (van de zomer waren er sterke geruchten dat Robert de groep zou verlaten. Hij toerde met Kevin Ayers' Whole World en vertelde dat hij niet meer met Soft Machine wilde spelen).

RW: 'Ik weet het nog niet precies. Ik heb er nog niet voldoende afstand van genomen. Nog geen algemeen beeld. Maar er zijn wel details, die me duidelijk zijn. Ik werkte met andere mensen, met Kevin en Centipede en in paniek. En dezelfde angst heb ik jaren gehad over m'n zingen. Ik hou van zingen. Maar ik weet niet hoe ik hét aan moet pakken. Ik ben niet echt... Ik wil niet zingen... Ik vind het fijn m'n stem te gebruiken, ik kan er dingen mee doen, maar ik wil niet klinken als anderen. Er is niemand die ik als voorbeeld zou willen nemen. Met drummen zijn er veel mensen die ik goed vind, maar ik ken niemand, die een geluid heeft dat ik zou willen zingen. Het zal langer duren voor ik weet hoe het wel moet. Dat is een permanent probleem voor mij.!

BT: Vond je het fijn een plaat te maken?

RW: 'Eh.. . ja... ik weet het niet zeker. Ik wilde altijd al een volledig ongestruktureerd stuk muziek spelen. Ik denk dat het misschien beter zou zijn geworden als ik het zes maanden, eerder of later gedaan zou hebben.

BT: Wat vind je goed op de plaat?

RW: 'Wat ik goed vind ? Neville Whiteheads bas. Hij speelt eigenlijk geen bas meer in de vroegere betekenis van het woord. En hij had toen een dubbele bas met een prachtig geluid. En.,.... (stilte) dat is het zo'n beetje, (grinnikt).'

BT: Er staat niet zoveel zingen op.

RW: 'Je bedoelt 'End of an ear', dat is de enige song. Maar er staat wel veel gezang op, veel gezang en weinig zingen.'

BT: Was dat je bedoeling?

RW: 'Nee, maar dat was waar ik op dat moment toe in staat was.'

BT: Vind je de vokalen op 'Moon in June' goed?

RW: 'Nee, ik heb het verneukt. Ik vind de backing goed. Ik vind het arrangement heel goed, daar was ik blij mee, niet met het zingen. Ik was te nerveus, te aarzelend.'

BT: Dat past toch goed bij het stuk? Je zingt 'I'm in a dilemma'.

RW: 'Ja. Het is te persoonlijk, het zijn geen dingen die je in het openbaar zegt. Ik ben verbaasd als iemand ze echt begrijpt, de moeite doet er zich in te verdiepen. Ik begrijp niet hoe iemand ze kan volgen. Ik kan geen enkele reden verzinnen waarom iemand er zich in zou verdiepen, tenzij... De enige reden waarvoor iemand mogelijkerwijs geinteresseerd zou kunnen zijn, is dat je mij bent en dat je geïnteresseerd bent in een soort amateur psycho-analyse.,'

BT: Jouw zingen is altijd nogal persoonlijk geweest.

RW: 'Nerveus is een beter woord, vind ik.'

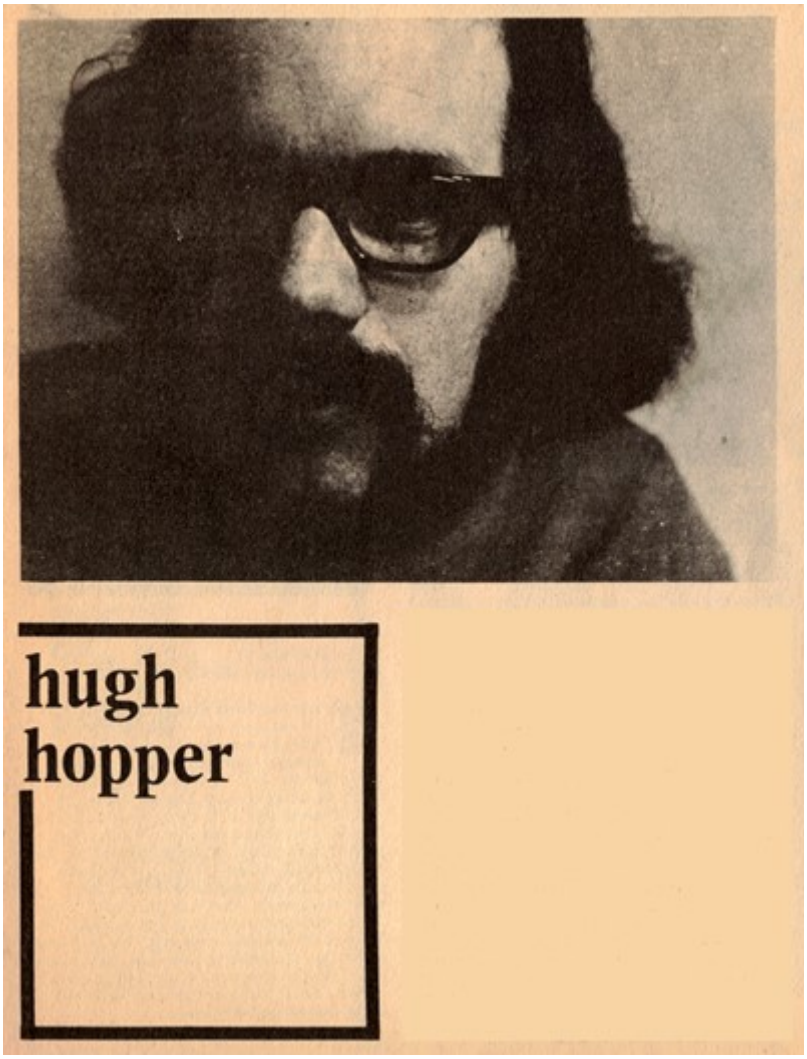
BT: Verzin je de woorden terwijl je zingt?

RW: 'Nee. De meeste van de woorden zijn zeer, zeer zorgvuldig voorbereid. Alles wat ik zing, is duizendmaal overwogen. Ik denk dat ik meer tijd besteed heb aan de paar woorden, die ik geschreven heb, dan aan iets dat ik ooit op drums gedaan heb of aan iets dat ik in het algemeen gedaan heb. De manier waarop ik het gebruik is spontaan, maar wat ik zeg niet.'

BT: Ik heb het idee dat het materiaal van 'Fourth' op het toneel heel anders klinkt dan op de plaat.

RW: 'Ik geloof dat Hugh en Mike weer meer geven om het optreden als zodanig. Ze waren een tijdlang meer geïnteresseerd in komponeren, maar er is nu meer evenwicht tussen spelen en schrijven.
Het beste dat je van onze platen kunt zeggen, is dat er goed over nagedacht wordt. Er zitten veel originele gedachten in. Goede composities. Maar wij schijnen er in de studio's nooit zoveel van terecht te brengen. Daarom moeten we nu een live album maken, geloof ik.'

BT: Moet je technies



erg goed zijn om jullie muziek te spelen?

HH: 'Je moet goed kunnen spelen, maar niet beter dan bij andere soorten muziek. Je moet een bepaalde hoeveelheid techniek hebben om op de luisteraar over te kunnen brengen wat je bedoelt. Maar als je dat eenmaal hebt, kun je alles spelen. De gecompliceerdheid is niet zo'n faktor. Misschien hebben wij een beetje betere techniek dan de gemiddelde popgroep, maar het zal niet veel schelen.'

BT: En het publiek, is het geen moeilijke muziek voor publiek?

HH: 'Ik hoop het niet, ik zie onze muziek niet als moeilijk.'

BT: Je hebt de laatste tijd niet veel geschreven.

HH: 'Nee, ik heb ongeveer negen maanden niets geschreven. '

BT: Waarom niet?

HH: 'Ik heb er geen zin meer in.'

BT: Waarom niet?

HH: 'Omdat ik er geen zin meer in heb. Ik ben meer geïnteresseerd in wat er in de groep gebeurt. Er gebeuren zoveel dingen in onze muziek op het toneel. Ik heb er niet aan gedacht wat te schrijven.'

BT: Komt dat doordat het nu weer bevredigender speelt met de groep ?

HH: 'Dat is waarschijnlijk een van de voornaamste redenen. Ik schreef toch nooit zoveel. Ik ben heel lui, weet je. Meestal schreef ik trouwens in de lente. Ik weet niet waarom.'

BT: Draai je je versterker ver open?

HH: 'Ik speel met het grootste volume dat ik kan krijgen zonder vervorming. Hij staat ongeveer halverwege. Als je hem hoger draait, verbeter je het geluid niet. Als je hem te hard hebt staan, kun je alleen maar hard spelen, dan heb je geen nuance meer. Ik speel er liever op dan dat ik iedereen het toneel afblaas.'

BT: Welke pedalen gebruik je? (Bedoeld worden pedalen waarmee het geluid van het instrument gevormd kunnen worden tijdens het spel).

HH: 'Een fuzz en een wah-wah.'

BT: Wat voor bas heb je?

HH: 'Fender. '

BT: Het viel me op dat je de bas soms als een volwaardig solo-instrument bespeelt. Is er bij jullie nog een scheiding tussen ritme en solo-instrumenten?

HH: 'Alle instrumenten zijn gelijk bij ons. Elton kan ritme spelen, hij is trouwens nog een geval apart door het geluid van zijn instrumenten. Hij zit vaak in de hoge registers. Maar voor de rest geldt het. Soms vind ik het nog wel een soort imitatie, maar het werkt ook wel goed. We hebben veel flexibiliteit.'

BT: Dat betekent dat jij niet alleen in de ritmiese ondergrond een rol speelt maar ook in de 'echte' muziek.

HH: 'Ik zit er ergens tussen in.'

BT: Zou je bassist in een andere groep kunnen zijn?

HH: 'Ik zou het wel kunnen, maar ik denk niet dat ik het wil. Tenzij het net zo'n soort band is.'

BT: Naar welke muziek luister je?

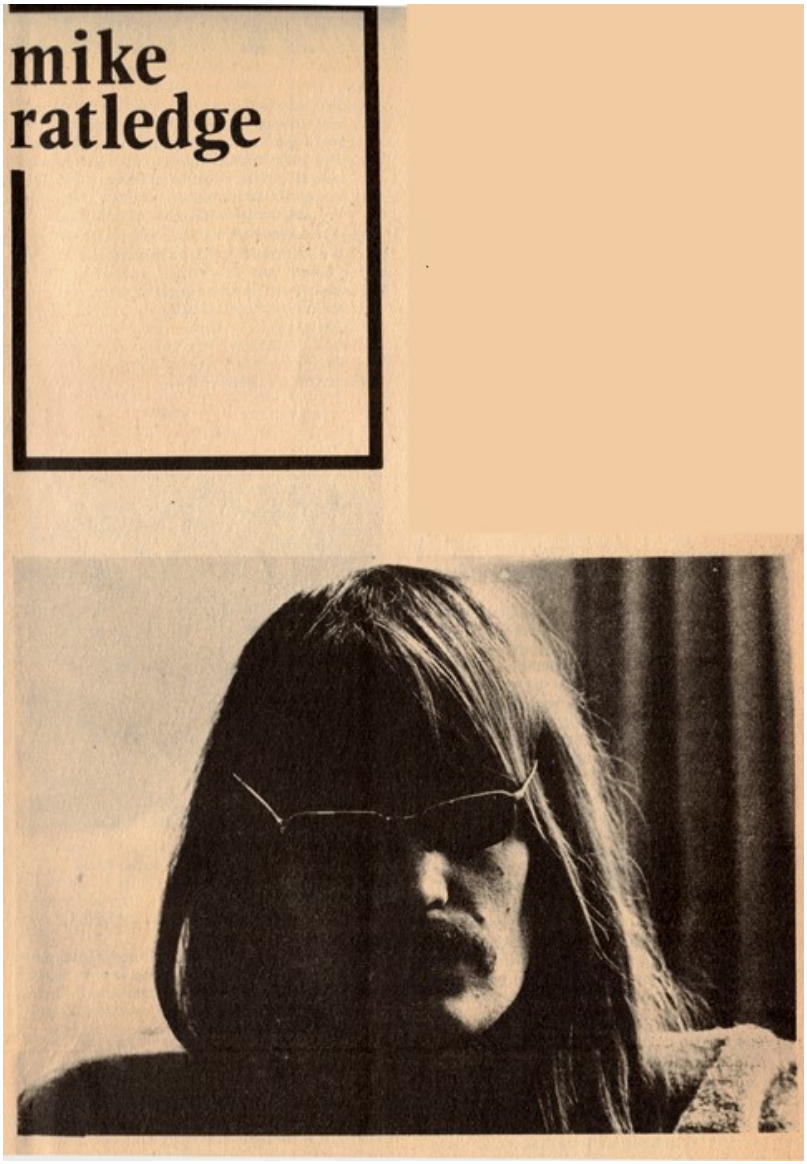
HH: 'Meestal naar jazz, Miles Davis en zo.'

BT: Speel je wel eens met anderen?

HH: 'Niet veel, we hebben wel wat sessie werk gedaan met Kevin Ayers en voor Syd Barrett. Ik hou er niet altijd van. Soms is het goed, maar vaak nogal teleurstellend. Je bent geneigd het makkelijkste te doen. Terwijl je tot bevredigender resultaten komt als je langer met elkaar speelt.'

BT: Waarom is Kevin weggegaan, denk je?

MR: 'Eigenlijk is hij niet weggegaan, de hele groep bestond niet meer. We gingen uit elkaar na dat jaar in Amerika met Jimi Hendrix. Ongeveer zeven maanden was het, avond aan avond optreden. En Kevin en ik kregen er allebei genoeg van. Er was geen tijd om te repeteren, je leefde voortdurend op je zenuwen. We waren volslagen oververmoeid. Elke dag bracht je ongeveer vier uur door in een vliegtuig. We konden ons niet bezig houden met nieuw repertoire, geen nieuwe nummers schrijven.



Elke avond was je gedwongen jezelf te herhalen. Muzikaal leidde het nergens naartoe. Dat wilden we niet meer. Kevin en ik hielden ermee op. We zouden in de toekomst wel weer gaan samenwerken. En Robert bleef in Amerika.

Maar toen ik in Londen terugkwam, bleek dat we een plaat moesten opnemen. Dat was kontraktueel geregeld, daar konden we niet onder uit. Inmiddels was Kevin naar Mallorca vertrokken. Na een paar weken kwam Robert terug en we moesten de studio in. Kevin was nog weg. En het moest snel voor elkaar komen. Robert en ik schreven wat materiaal en we zochten een bassist. We konden Kevin vragen, maar hij houdt niet erg van geschreven materiaal en hij houdt ook niet van snel werken. Wij hadden iemand nodig die dat wel kon. En toen dachten we aan Hugh, die we allang kenden en die voldoende kennis had om het te kunnen en we namen die plaat met hem op.'

BT: Waarom zijn jullie na die twee eerste elpees naar een andere maatschappij gegaan?

MR: 'Dat was een overeenkomst, die aan allebei de kanten nogal wat problemen met zich mee heeft gebracht. Zij hadden problemen omdat wij niet naar Amerika terug wilden. We wilden er niet heen omdat we er zo lang gezeten hadden, we wilden er eigenlijk helemaal niet heen. Bovendien betekende een toer door Amerika toen een stevig verlies. Het kostte ons geld. Maar er was eigenlijk meer aan de hand. Uiteindelijk stemden wij toe erheen te gaan en toen kon de manager geen toer bij elkaar krijgen. En wij waren boos en zij waren boos en er waren allerlei vreemde dingen aan de hand met de verkoop van onze eerste elpee in Europa. En ook met de tweede, want het distributie-apparaat werkte nog niet goed. Het was een gloednieuwe maatschappij.'

BT: Wat voor rol speelde jullie eerste manager ?

MR: 'Mike Jeffries? Als ik er nu op terugkijk, heeft hij ons belazerd. Het geld dat we met de eerste elpee verdienden, hebben we nooit gezien. We wisten niet beter. Het enige dat we eraan overhielden, was een toer met Hendrix. Jeffries had Hendrix en de Animals, dus wij dachten dat we goed zaten. Hij was de eerste manager die we hadden, die voldoende kapitaal had om in ons te steken. Maar hij heeft het nooit gedaan. We werkten op een percentage basis. Dus hij stopte ons overal, zodat hij zijn percentage kon opstrijken. Hij heeft nooit goed geweten wat hij met ons aanmoest. Hij bleef er op aandringen dat we toptien materiaal moesten spelen en dat weigerden wij natuurlijk. Het enige goede dat we in die tijd deden, was te weigeren toptientroep te spelen.'

BT: Hebben jullie nu de juiste balans tussen werk en vrije tijd?

MR: 'Dat is een van de moeilijkste dingen. Als je het goed bekijkt is het hebben van vrije tijd even belangrijk als dat van werk. Alleen is een goede verhouding moeilijk te krijgen. Meestal werk je te hard of te weinig. Je moet eigenlijk erg veel vrije tijd hebben, waarin je niet altijd aan muziek hoeft te denken en tijd, waarin je wat kunt schrijven en dergelijke. Als je avond aan avond werkt, kun je alleen je materiaal veranderen via improvisaties.'

BT: Is jullie materiaal veel veranderd de laatste tijd?

MR: 'Het is losser geworden en het samenspel is beter. We zijn met dit materiaal gelijk de studio ingegaan en dat is wel te horen. We hadden het niet voldoende in de vingers. Nu wel. Onderweg is het allemaal veel meer gaan leven. Met al onze platen tot nu toe, hebben we deze fout gemaakt, met net geschreven materiaal de studio in te gaan. Dan ben je je er nog te bewust van.

BT: Jij en Hugh, houden jullie meer van komponeren dan van spelen?

MR: 'Nee, dat is niet zo. Ik hou wel van schrijven, maar evenveel van spelen. Op het moment zelfs erg veel. Misschien is het wel waar geweest, afgelopen zomer concentreerde ik me meer op schrijven. Toen gingen we door een nogal onbevredigende fase in ons spel. Dat is veranderd. Ik houd er niet van voortdurend op stap te zijn. Toeren zijn te verdragen, als ze niet langer dan een week of twee duren.'

BT: Is er veel nieuw werk? Hebben jullie de laatste maanden nieuwe dingen geschreven?

MR: 'Nee, we schrijven niet veel meer. Hugh wil het helemaal niet meer, geloof ik. Hij denkt dat hij er geen zin meer in heeft. En ik heb zelf ook al een lange tijd niets meer geschreven. Ik heb de laatste maanden alleen een kort tussenstukje geschreven en Elton heeft er een paar gemaakt. En Robert schrijft niet meer. En ik weet ook nog niet of ik wat zal schrijven als we terugkomen.'

BT: Men zegt vaak dat jullie experimentele muziek maken. Is dat zo?

MR: 'Niet echt. De enige aanspraak die wij kunnen maken op het predikaat avant garde is dat we een aantal oude modernistiese begrippen geleend hebben van andere gebieden en ze hebben toegepast in pop. We gebruiken sommige dingen, die nooit in pop gebruikt werden en die al jaren in moderne klassieke muziek gebruikt werden. Niet in jazz.'

BT: Jullie muziek krijgt toch meer jazzelementen.

MR: 'Dat is Elton. Hij komt uit een jazz-groep. Elton is erg belangrijk voor de groep de laatste tijd.

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Robert Wyatt van de Soft Machine - We zijn doodsbang voor elkaar - Aloha #36 - 4/9 tot 18/9 1970



robert wyatt van de soft machine

WE ZIJN DOODSBANG VOOR ELKAAR

Foto en tekst: Barend Toet

Tot voor kort dacht ik om een of andere reden, dat de Soft Machine een van de hechtste groepen was, die er zo rondlopen. Het soort muziek dat ze maken eist gewoon, dat men goed met elkaar kan opschieten. Meer dan bij een groepje als de Free moeten Hopper, Wyatt, Ratledge en Dean elkaar aanvoelen en begrijpen, anders is muzikale 'kommunikatie' uitgesloten. Zodra er moeilijkheden in die kommunikatie ontstaan, merk je dat aan de muziek. Het was ook een soort kommunikatie-stoornis, die er de oorzaak van was dat Kevin Ayers indertijd de groep verliet. Die dingen zijn moeilijk precies onder woorden te brengen. Meestal prevelt men wat over 'verschillende nivo's' of 'andere golflengte'. In het geval van Kevin kwam daar nog bij dat hij volledig afknapte op het leven tijdens de verschillende toernees, vooral de bezoeken aan de V. S. waren hem teveel. Een Andere kwestie was het verdwijnen van fluitist Lynn Dobson. Tijdens het laatste Mojo-konsert in het Concertgebouw was hij er nog bij, maar tijdens het Holland Pop Festival ontbrak deze niet geringe muzikant.

Robert Wyatt: 'Dobson hebben we eruit getrapt. Het was een boef en een klootzak, een zeer lullig persoon. Hij was een onbetrouwbaar element. We mochten hem geen van allen.

Muzikaal voldeed hij goed, maar je moet ook met elkaar kunnen leven. Al onze beslissingen zijn primair muzikaal, maar de rest moet ook kloppen.'

Goed, Dobson was kennelijk nogal een zak Goed, Dobson was kennelijk nogal een zak en werd daarom verwijderd, dat is nog niet in tegenstrijd met mijn ideeën over de hechtheid

van de rest van de groep. Maar de laatste tijd gebeuren er dingen, die er niet zo hecht uitzien. Wyatt heeft aangekondigd - en de daad bij het woord gevoegd - dat hij met Kevin Ayers en The Whole World mee gaat doen als de Soft Machine geen verplichtingen heeft. In de praktijk betekent dit, dat Robert veel meer met Ayers mee zal doen dan met Ratledge en Hopper. Die twee zien namelijk steeds minder in reizen en trekken en houden de agenda gesloten, Wyatt wordt dus een soort free lance drummer. Die term gebruikte hij ook tegen Jan Donkers, die hem wat vragen stelde tijdens Piknik. Overigens staat dat niet vast, want de volgende dag zei Wyatt tegen mij: 'Zei ik dat? Ja, gisteren was ik in een bui om dat soort beslissingen te nemen, maar vandaag weet ik het weer niet,'



PAGINA 11 ALOHA

robert wyatt van de soft machine:

WE ZIJN DOODSBANG VOOR ELKAAR

foto en tekst: barend

In de verschillende gesprekken die ik met Robert had, was dit soort vaagheid troef. 'We zijn allemaal een beetje in de war deze zomer', zei hij ter verklaring. Die warrigheid maakte het interviewen wel moeilijk, maar niet vervelend, Wyatt is een vriendelijke jongen, die zich makkelijk uit. De donderdag, dat Piknik werd opgenomen, gingen we 's middags ergens wat eten. De tent had alleen patat en kroketten. Dus werden het patat en kroketten, die niet bepaald het enthousiasme verhoogden. Terwijl de vermoeide troep met enigszins lange tanden de bleke stukjes aardappel naar binnen werkte, zat Robert lekker te eten en bier te drinken, tevreden met het feit dat er tenminste iets te eten was. Ik heb nog nooit iemand gezien die zich zo makkelijk en volkomen aan een situatie aan weet te passen. Hij kan slapen waar en wanneer dat nodig is. Op deze toer, die belachelijk inspannend was - zes konserten, een teeveeoptreden en een radio-programma in vier dagen - leefde Wyatt volkomen ontspannen en tevreden, terwijl de rest steeds vermoeider en sjagrijniger werd.

Wyatt: 'Daar moet je aan wennen. Het komt er op neer dat je alleen mag eten als je slaapt of speelt. Dat is nu al vier jaar zo en 't zal wel niet meer veranderen.'

Twee dagen later zaten we aan de Amstel, in de uitspanning 'Het Kleine Kalfje', dronken bier met cognac, zeer lekker, de drank waarop Robert leeft en praatten over het hoe, wat en waarom in de Soft Machine vandaagdedag. Na een half uur vertellen over hopper (een teruggetrokken figuur, die buiten woont en niets anders doet dan zich toeleggen op het schrijven van muziek) en Ratledge (idem, alleen woont hij niet buiten), kwam Robert tot de slotsom dat hij niets meende - en alles meende - van wat hij net gezegd had en dat ik het maar liever niet gebruiken moest: 'Zie je, we zijn vrienden. Elke keer hoor ik mezelf zeggen 'Mike dit en Hugh zus' en dan voel ik 'Sorry Mike, sorry Hugh'. Ik zou er niet zo vanaf komen als zij er bij waren. We voelen ons momenteel niet zo lekker. Verschillen voortdurend van mening. We zijn bij elkaar gekomen omdat we zo verschillen. Daardoor liep het allemaal, je vangt elkaar op, de reacties complementeerden elkaar. Maar de laatste tijd…

Hugh en Mike worden steeds meer schrijvers. Ze vinden dat ze zich daar op toe moeten

leggen, Hugh is op het land gaan wonen en schrijft de meest ongelooflijke dingen. Hij zou nooit zo produktief kunnen zijn als hij onder de druk van het voortdurend optreden stond.

Doordat we haast niet meer optreden, wordt ons spel stijf, ongemakkelijk vind ik. Mike en Hugh nemen afscheid van een stuk als het geschreven is. Dan is het af. Ze hebben het niet nodig elke avond hetzelfde te spelen. Ik wel. Voor mij gaat een stuk pas leven als er drie of vier avonden per week op gewerkt is. Ik leef juist tijdens het toeren.

- Die stijfheid viel mij ook op tijdens jullie spel op 't Holland Popfestival. Ik vond ’t niet half zo goed als een ½ jaar geleden in 't concertgebouw. 'Het Concertgebouw, dat was nog in de goeie, ouwe tijd, in die heerlijke dagen, dat je de hele dag aan balans en geluid kon werken. Dan zaten we de hele dag al in de zaal, werkten aan het geluid, hadden een geweldige tijd om ons aan de ruimte en de sfeer aan te passen. Bovendien werkten we met mensen die we goed kenden. Alles ging lekker en op 'n goeie manier. Dan gingen we lekker eten in 'n goed restaurant. Logies dat je dan goed speelt. Het popfestival, dat is een andere geschiedenis. Ten eerste houden we niet van festivals. We speelden er omdat Berry het organiseerde. De sfeer is gedesorganiseerd. Groepen spelen nooit op de afgesproken tijd. Je wacht de hele dag zonder dat je iets kan doen. De geluidskwaliteit is ook altijd een gok. In een kwartier je geluid in elkaar flansen, is gekkenwerk. Bovendien kun je jezelf niet horen in de open lucht. Je geluid verdwijnt. Verder had ik ongelooflijk de pest aan het publiek. Ze gooiden blikjes naar John Surman, waarschijnlijk de beste muziek van het festival werd het slechtst ontvangen. Voor Mungo Jerry komen ze, de hufters. Ik was in tranen toen ik het toneel opstapte, dan kun je niets verwachten.

Barre Phillips, hun basgitarist, is een Charly Parker op de bas. Niemand hoort het. Als hij over tien jaar in armoede sterft, dan gaan ze misschien luisteren.

Voor ons klappen ze wel, wij zijn beroemd - hé men de soft machine ! - maar ze luisteren niet.

Popfestivals zijn kut. Kut met blaren.'

Over de groep: 'We zijn nooit een jolig stel geweest. Altijd bitter. We scheuren elkaar aan flarden. We zijn altijd op zoek geweest naar een soort kern, een waarheid. Met een soort masochisties plezier, geven we elkaar ervan langs.'

'We zijn denk ik de armste big name groep, die ooit bestaan heeft. We hebben altijd en alleen maar financiële problemen. We zijn de slechtste kapitalisten, die er bestaan. We hebben gewoon niet het vermogen om geld bij elkaar te houden. We tekenden een kontrakt met een schurk. Mike Jefferson verdiende het geld dat onze eerste elpee opbracht. De eerste plaat was een hit in Holland, de poen ging naar Jefferson.' (Die financiële toestand bracht de Machine uiteindelijk bij CBS, die ze een zeer goed kontrakt heeft aangeboden.)

'Wij zitten in een chroniese onzekerheid. Altijd op de grens van het onbekende, dat is zeer slopend op den duur. Soms heb je een periode nodig om weer een beetje te zien, waar je mee bezig bent.

We zijn niet uit elkaar, we zijn niet bij elkaar. Onze vriendschap is niet afgelopen, we zitten in een fase dat we elkaar niet moeten zien. We moeten een paar honderd kilometer van elkaar vandaan blijven, daarom zit ik nu aan de Amstel.

De Soft Machine is een overeenkomst voor het leven. De onzekerheid betreft alleen de vorm, niet het voortbestaan van de groep. We zijn echt vrienden, en vriendschap verandert wel, maar verdwijnt niet zo snel. '

- Heb jij enig idee in welke muzikale richting jullie ontwikkeling gaat?

'Wij volgen onze neus. Ik kijk nooit naar de horizon. Dat laat ik aan mensen over, die verder van onze muziek af staan. We staan er te dicht bij. Je moet niet vergeten dat ons gebied volslagen onbekend is. Er wordt gewerkt met nieuwe strukturen. Je merkt wel waar het op uit draait. '

'We staan allemaal achter ons instrument. Ieder lid heeft de beschikking over een soort informatie, die de anderen niet hebben. Informatie - uit zelf-edukatie, de enige vorm, die wat betekent - en beheersing hebben veel met elkaar gemeen. Ik geef je een voorbeeld. Informatie, zoals ik het opvat, zit in een soort put, die je door jezelf te ontwikkelen, hebt gegraven. Dus die informatie is alleen voor jou toegankelijk. Het gaat hier om emotionele informatie. Bij het samenspelen moet je vertrouwen op de vermogens - en de informatie -

van je medespelers. Zij hebben iets, wat jij niet hebt. Als je elkaar dan niet vertrouwt, kun je niet samen werken. De toegang tot die bron of put geeft je het recht zelf beslissingen te nemen. Daarom heeft ieder lid van de groep een soort macht over de anderen. In een zekere zin zijn we doodsbang voor elkaar. '

'Ik weet dat ik nogal abstrakt ben. Het is veel makkelijker een muur te schilderen, die een ander neergezet heeft, dan zelf een muur te bouwen. Ik zal de muur verven, die jij neergezet hebt. Je had het over het effekt van 'on the road' zijn. Hugh en Mike willen wel eens weten waar die weg naar toe gaat. Zij funktioneren momenteel beter aan de tekentafel - ze ontwerpen een atlas. Ik ben liever onderweg. Onderweg komt er wat uit m'n handen. '

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Interview : met Soft Machine - Aloha #20 - van 23 jan tot 6 febr 1970



Na afloop van het Soft Machine konsert maakte Paul Scherder uit Bussum een gesprekje met leden van de Soft Machine in de kleedkamer van het Konsertgebouw. Helaas was er geen tijd meer de daar gemaakte foto's af te drukken, maar die komen nog.

Vraag: Hoe denk je over mensen als John Lennon.

Robert Wyatt: Hij zingt erg goeie songs.

Vraag: Maar bijv. dat laatste album dat hij gemaakt heeft.

Robert: Ik heb het nog niet gehoord.

Vraag: Het wordt gevuld met zingende vogels en dichtklappende deuren snap je wel.

Robert: Nou ja, je moet.het eerst horen, weetjewel. Je kan deuren heel gevoelig dichtslaan. Het ligt eraan hoe je het doet. Lennon is een erg goede musicus, dus ik veronderstel dat hij het wel goed doet, snap je?

Vraag: Van wat voor soorten muziek ga je uit als je componeert.

Robert: Ik denk van pop en ik luister trouwens heel veel naar pop, en ook naar soul. Dat swingt erg. Drummers als bij Arthur Brown, daar heb ik erg veel van geleerd. Erg ontspannen, maar je voelt dat ze het gewoon kunnen.

Vraag: Is dat ook je favoriete muziek, pop.

Robert: Ja, eigenlijk wel, hoewel Miles Davis mijn favoriete artiest is.

Vraag: Maar dat is toch jazz.

Robert: Dat heeft er heel weinig mee te maken, Miles Davis is gewoon mijn favoriete artiest en de muziek die hij maakt noemt men jazz, maar dat is louter toeval. Vraag: Hoe zou je de muziek noemen die jullie maken. Robert: Dat is niet te zeggen, daar zitten zoveel dingen in. De een noemt het jazz, de ander underground of pop of rock. Maar dat is niet belangrijk. Je moet muziek ook niet gaan verklaren. Je moet muziek laten voor wat het is en niet in vakjes stoppen. , Terwijl er iemand met jus d'orange langs komt, begint Robert piano te spelen. Hij is nog drijfnat van het glas water dat hij tijdens het concert over zich heen gooide tegen de hitte.



Vraag: Jij hebt net gespeeld en nu ga je weer spelen. Ben je nooit moe. Rust je nooit uit.

Robert: Nee, ik vind uitrusten gevaarlijk. Sommige mensen rusten te veel uit en gaan eraan dood. Ik ben ook haast altijd met iets bezig.

Vraag: Hoe vindt het publiek het dat er zomaar nieuwe mensen in de kern van de Soft Machine binnengedrongen zijn.

Mike Ratledge: De meeste mensen nemen het wel erg positief op gelukkig, dat is erg fijn.

Vraag: Op jullie 2e elpee komen ook al blazers voor, zijn dat dezelfde mensen.

Mike: Nee, dat zijn Robert en ik.

Vraag: Vonden jullie het unfair tegenover het publiek om dus in studio's d. m. v. opnames over elkaar dingen te doen die jullie live niet maken en hebben jullie daarom 2 blazers aangetrokken?

Mike (begint te lachen): Nee, natuurlijk niet, in de kunst is alles toegestaan, zijn er geen principes. In de kunst mag je alles doen wat je wilt om het geheel beter te maken. Niets is verboden. Weetjewel. Nee, er lagen gewoon nog enkele stukken die we niet konden maken zonder blazers. We hebben nu trouwens veel meer mogelijkheden. We waren met zijn drieën een beetje uitgepraat. En we willen voorkomen dat we op een dood punt blijven steken.

Vraag: Maar op die manier hou je altijd groepen die goeie platen maken, maar live volkomen afgaan.

Mike: Dat hindert niets. Het is net als een kok. Je kan een kok hebben die een hele goeie biefstuk kan maken, maar van een slaatje niets terecht brengt. Als je een biefstuk wil eten moet je naar hem toe gaan, maar als je een slaatje wil hebben moet je naar een ander gaan.

Vraag: Jullie gaan nu naar Duitsland. Wat verwacht je daarvan.

Hugh: Niets. Je moet van niets uitgaan, dan valt het altijd mee.

Vraag: Wat gaan jullie daarna doen.

Robert: Daarna gaan we werken aan een 3e LP in Engeland. Dat wordt weer andere muziek, veel swingender.

Vraag: Wat deed je voordat je bij de Soft Machine terecht kwam.

Lynne Dobson (soprano-tenor-saxofoon- mondharmonika, dwarsfluit-sitar): Toen zat ik op de Art School in Engeland en deed daar verschrikkelijk kunstzinnig weetjewel en daarna heb ik verschillende keren gewoon als begeleiding gewerkt o. a. bij. Georgie Fame, maar ik kreeg gewoon geen kans om te doen wat ik wilde en dat krijg ik hier wel.

Vraag: Hoe denk je over de Soft Machine.

Lynne: Ik had dus wel platen van ze gehoord en die vond ik wel goed, maar wat ze live maakten toen ik ze voor het eerst zag, was ontstellend goed. Toen dacht ik echt hier zou ik bij willen zitten, zoiets als dat had ik nog nooit gehoord. Het zijn ook erg sympathieke jongens.

Vraag: Naar wat voor muziek luister je het meest.

Lynne: Ik luister in principe niet meer naar pop omdat ik bang ben dat ik dan alles ga imiteren. Ik luister meest naar Bach, Tsjaikovsky en naar Aziatische en Afrikaanse muziek.

Vraag: Hoeveel tijd hebben jullie nodig gehad om ingespeeld te raken.

Lynne: 1 week, dat was nl. de tijd die we hadden. Het was hard studeren, maar het is gelukt.

Vraag: Hoe lang is de Soft Machine van plan nog door te gaan.

Mike: Zolang als het publiek het wil.

Paul Scherder - foto's guy knaeps


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Mike Ratledge van de Soft Machine - Aloha - Juni 1969

mike ratledge van de soft machine:

JE LEEST OVER AL DIE AVANT GARDE GROEPEN EN ALS JE ZE HOORT SPELEN ZE GEWOON BLUES.....



Hierbij een interview van Fletcher Watkins met organist Michael Ratledge van de Soft Machine. Het verscheen eerder in OZ.

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JE LEEST OVER AL DIE AVANT GARDE GROEPEN EN ALS JE ZE HOORT SPELEN ZE GEWOON BLUES.....

Tien jaar geleden waren de huidige leden van de Soft Machine (in hun eigen woorden) irritante kleine hippies in Caterbury.
Ze luisterden veel naar Mingus, Cecil Taylor, Webern en andere klassieke en moderne musici. De volgende vijf jaar speelden ze soms samen, maar vormden pas een groep toen het Daevid Alen Quartet ontstond (de groep werd in Down Beat vermeld als exponent van de roerselen van de avant garde jazz in Engeland).
De drummer kwam uit een pure popgroep, The World Flowers. De organist, Mike Ratledge, kwam uit Oxford, gaf zich te laat op voor zijn studie filosofie en begon met ze te spelen. David Allen deed in die tijd aan jazz/Poetry, Elektroniese muziek en India's beinvloed werk.
Ze werkten het gebruikelijke boekje met namen af en eindigden met de Soft Machine, een groep die zeer hechte popnummers speelde om daarna over te gaan tot losser geimproviseerd werk.
In het eerste jaar was er geen gebrek aan club- en college-schnabbels, het verplichte af en aan gerij over autoweg M 1. Toen er de eerste zomer vrijwel geen werk was vertrokken ze naar Zuid Frankrijk om te spelen in een door Ian Knight en Keith Albarn in polystereen ontworpen en gekonstrueerde club. De Franse politie sloot de club omdat hij 'ongewenste individuen' aantrok. Ze trokken verder langs de kust. Toen lukte het een aantal promoters (Victor Herbert, Jean Jacques Lebel en Allan Zion, regisseur van de film 'Who's crazy?' met The Living Theatre) de groep te laten optreden in het Picasso spel 'Le Desir atrappé par la queue'. Daarna volgden optredens voor de Franse teevee, in Amsterdam af en toe een Britse show. Lead-gitarist Daevid Allen werd de toegang tot Engeland ontzegd omdat hij geen werkvergunning meer kreeg (later verliet hij de groep).
Gedurende deze periode trokken ze de aandacht van mensen die niet direkt bij de popwereld betrokken waren. Amerikaanse komponisten als Earl Browne zeiden: 'De S.M. speelt de muziek die ik wil schrijven'. Mark Boyle verzorgde vanaf het begin de lichtshow bij het werk van de groep. Ze kwamen terug uit Frankrijk, gingen met Mark Boyle's Sensual Laboratory naar Edinburgh, en daarna naar de Biennale in Parijs waar Boyle de skulptuurprijs won. Ze speelden daar op een happening die 'St. Geneviève et le tobogan' heette en begeleidden de dans van Graziella Martinez.
Direkt daarop volgde een Amerikaanse toer met Hendrix. Ze werkten drie maanden lang in Amerika. In New York namen ze met producer Tom Wilson (bekend van zijn werk met Dylan, The Mothers, Animals en de eerste die een plaat met Cecil Taylor maakte) hun eerste elpee op. Daarna volgde weer een toer van drie maanden door Amerika met Hendrix. De groep is nu weer terug in Engeland en werkt aan een tweede elpee. Na hun Amerikaanse ervaringen hopen ze 'live' optredens zoveel mogelijk te beperken, mogelijke Continentale toers met Ronnie Scott en Roland Kirk uitgezonderd.
Ten tijde van het interview waren ze aan het repeteren voor de tweede elpee. De groep is onlangs uitgebreid met een nieuwe bassist.

Fletcher Watkins: Is de Soft Machine een Underground groep?
Mike Ratledge: Dat kan twee dingen betekenen. Worden wij beschouwd als onderwerp van een cultus in de Underground? En daarvan kan ik niet zeggen of het al dan niet waar is. Dan is de vraag of het wel zo wenselijk is. Ik zou zeggen dat niemand van ons deel zou willen zijn van een cultus in de Underground. De Underground is in principe zoals Taylor Meade dat beschreef: 'Iets doen voor niets' en dat is in ieder geval wat er van geworden is. Als een promotor je vraagt op te treden ten bate van iets Undergrounderigs en hij heeft het steeds over de Kunst die je te bieden hebt, dan weet je vrij zeker dat je er geen cent voor krijgt, dat je zelfs je eigen onkosten moet betalen. Het betekent ook dat er geen organisatie is, dat het podium een puinhoop is, de aanwezige geluidsinstallatie rotzooi en de rest ook. Maar de Underground heeft natuurlijk ook gezorgd voor goede dingen. De UFO was goed toen Hoppy het dreef. Hij dreef het goed. Maar meestal is de Underground een puinhoop.
F.W. Zou je liever niets meer met de Underground te maken hebben, er uit verdwijnen en een boel geld verdienen, als Hendrix bijvoorbeeld?
M.R.: Ik zou nooit van z'n leven in de positie van Hendrix willen verkeren voor zover het zijn werkschema betreft en de invloed die dat op hem heeft. Ik zou nooit maandenlang aan het rondzeulen willen zijn, elke avond willen werken en nooit repeteren. Ik bedoel, na drie jaar nog steeds nummers spelen als "Hey Joe" voor een publiek dat duidelijk laat merken niet te luisteren naar wat je speelt, want het herkenningsapplaus aan het begin is altijd sterker dan dat als je klaar bent. Dat is alles wat ze interesseert.
F.W.: Het leven buiten het optreden lijkt vaak een nachtmerrie. Hoe is het?
M.R.: Precies zoals de verhalen, als je met Hendrix werkt in ieder geval wel. En reizen met een popgroep in de Verenigde Staten is een soort luxueus vagevuur. Je verblijft in Hiltons en het eerste dat er gebeurt als je opstaat is een tocht per Cadillac Fleetwood naar het vliegveld. Een andere Cadillac brengt je dan meteen weer naar het hotel. Je verfrist je en daar staat de Cadillac Fleetwood weer klaar om je naar je optreden te brengen en daar weer terug naar het Hilton. Dan slaap je. Tenslotte verwoest het elk besef van waar je ergens bent. Er wordt met je omgesprongen als met een stuk bagage. Je hebt niets te zeggen over de richting die je leven inslaat. Het doet denken aan die experimenten waarbij ze ratten de beheersing van hun lichaam ontnemen. Tenslotte lijd je zeer onder een ontpersoonlijking, een verlies van identiteit. Het klinkt wat zwaar, maar zo is het. Er is niet langer een 'Ik' dat reist, het reizen beheerst jou , iets als 'plaats' bestaat niet meer omdat dat door de lucht verziekt wordt. En Amerika is zo ingericht dat het elk individueel verschil tussen plaatsen ontkent. Dat is de blauwdruk voor Amerika.
F.W.: Goed.
M.R.: Wat bedoel je 'Goed'? Ik ben nog niet klaar.
F.W.: O.K. Hoe denk je over Amerikaanse groepen?
M.R.: Je hebt The Mothers en de Spirit. Dat waren de enige twee groepen waarin ik geinteresseerd was, of van onder de indruk was. Er zijn vier soorten groepen. Ten eerste de groep die zijn instrumenten technies voortreffelijk beheerst en ook eigen ideeën heeft. De tweede heeft die ideeën wel, maar mist de instrumentale vaardigheid. Dan komen de groepen die geen ideeën hebben, maar wel hun instrumenten beheersen. Tenslotte zijn er dan de groepen die ideeën noch techniese vaardigheden bezitten.
F.W.: Maar ze hebben publiciteit.
M.R.: Ja. De Mothers en de Spirit vallen in de eerste kategorie. Er zijn duizenden anderen die in de tweede of derde kategorie vallen. Of bluesgroepen die blues arrangementen beter spelen dan de mensen het oorspronkelijk deden. Dan zijn er bizarre Underground groepen in steden als Chicago die ideeën hebben maar er technies weinig van kunnen, zoals de MC5. Maar de meeste groepen zijn het noemen niet waard omdat ze technies zo'n puinhoop zijn.
F.W.: En de Doors?
M.R.: Het interessante van de Doors heb ik nooit gezien, of het zou als sociologies verschijnsel moeten zijn. De Doors geven alle kleine teenyboppers in Amerika de kans te denken dat ze iets avant-gardisties diggen terwijl het absoluut niet zo is. De Doors hebben alle symptomen die er bij horen. Ze hebben die tot volgeling oppeppende teksten, de sex-figuur Morrison die zich op het podium aftrekt, zodat hij een echte beeldenstormer is en je een beeldenstormer vereert, iemand die de muziek op geen enkele manier vooruit helpt. Ze spelen maar oude blues rifjes, ze maken op het podium muzikaal nauwelijks indruk, muzikaal technies

zie verder op kant 16



een fotografie van de beach boys uit 1963 (omdat ze toch zo weinig veranderd zijn)

ONGEEVENAARD !

Over de komst naar Nederland en het optreden in A en R'dam van de Beach Boys valt, na hun eerste optreden waarover enkele maanden geleden al uitvoerig werd bericht, weinig nieuws te melden. Immers, het optreden van de heren was wat perfectie, enthousiasme en vakmanschap betreft van hetzelfde ongeëvenaarde nivo. Evenals de eerste keer werd ook nu in hoog tempo een reeks grote hits afgewerkt op een manier die nauwelijks voor de geraffineerde plaatversies onderdeed. Het was voor de oprechte Beach Boy liefhebber een overdonderende ervaring, de jongens zogenaamd wat achteloos over het podium te zien lopen (in prachtige smetteloos witte pakken, vooral Mike Love's pij was erg mooi), om dan, op een of ander geheim teken, collectief en feilloos, in een vierstemmig Barbara Ann of I get around uit te barsten. Deze, onsterfelijke nummers, en andere hits als Good Vibrations, Darling, God only knows en nog erg veel meer, allemaal even goed. De geluidsverzorging was, vergeleken met de legendarische vorige maal, iets minder, waar het aan lag was niet geheel duidelijk maar de perfecte balans van toen werd nu niet steeds gerealiseerd. Evenals de vorige maal hadden de Beach Boys het op het podium zeer naar hun zin, ze zijn nog altijd erg op het Nederlandse publiek gesteld (compliment). Mike's humor was opnieuw een beetje flauw en gezocht maar ach, nietwaar?
Geen Papa-Oom-Mow-Mow dit keer (hoewel Mike het wel even snel in Barbara Ann verwerkte) wél het schattige a-capella liedje Their hearts were full of spring en Bruce Johnstons eigen etude die ook, het publiek was door het dolle heen, met een orkaan van applaus werd beloond. Voor ons mogen de Beach Boys nog vaak terug komen.
Tja, het voorprogramma hé. Frits Boer had ons al lang lekker zitten maken met enthousiaste verhalen over Paul Revere & the Raiders, maar die vielen eigenlijk nogal tegen. Op zichzelf nog wel beter dan wat we gemiddeld aan Nederlandse groepen in voorprogrammaas horen, maar veel te vlak, te grijs, vooral in vergelijking met datgene wat na de pauze te horen viel en ook in vergelijking met wat de jongens op de plaat doen. De presentatie was bovendien nogal irritant, erg flauwe humor en pluimstrijkerijen aan het adres van het publiek. Toch ben ik wel blij dat ik ze tenminste even gezien heb.

Pim de With

de soft machine

vervolg van kant 9

stelt het niks voor en hun geluid is verbazingwekkend zwak. In vijf jaar heeft de popmuziek talloze doorbraken veroorzaakt, maar zij bezitten geen enkele trek die met die doorbraak te maken heeft. Hendrix zorgde voor een verzengend geluid. Maar zij hebben niet eens een Sound indentiteit. Muzikaal gesproken brengen ze niets in.

F.W.: Hoe pas je groepen als de Jefferson Airplane in jouw schema?

M.R.: De Airplane en Big Brother & The Holding Company zijn het onderwerp van een grote cultus van de Amerikaanse Underground. Ik heb de Airplane niet 'live' gehoord, maar ze moeten dan veel beter zijn dan op de plaat. Op de plaat zijn ze voor mij wat te keurig en de solisten zijn ook niet wat je van ze verwacht. Ze hebben in ieder geval sterke stemmen. Maar in Amerika is er in principe nog steeds een Blues tyrannie. Big Brother & The Holding Company is geen avant-garde groep. Het is meer een overdreven beladen, Superhete bluesgroup. Je leest in Engeland in de kranten over de Amerikaanse avant-garde, die namen, en als je ze hoort zijn het gewoon bluesgroepen.

F.W.: Jullie begonnen als een pure jazzgroep en gingen toen pop maken. Meestal loopt het anders en begint de groep met blues en eindigt met een avant-garde reputatie. Maar jullie hadden nooit een bluesgroep.

M.R.: Dat jazz/pop gedoe is nogal moeilijk. Er zijn twee types: de jazzgroep die pop gaat maken en de popgroep die aan vage jazz gaat doen. Don Ellis en Gary Burton zijn de pop in gegaan en op een of andere manier zijn ze toch iets kwijtgeraakt. Terwijl het met popgroepen die iets jazzerigs doen daar minder last van hebben. Jazzgroepen die aan pop gaan doen zien meestal niet zo goed waar het in pop om gaat. Ze maken hun strukturen simpeler, maar wat pop zo belangrijk maakt, is de 'Sound'. Het opwindende van de Sound is iets wat Don Ellis en Gary Burton niet kunnen maken. Zo verliezen ze iets aan beide kanten. En dat terwijl popgroepen die met jazz bezig zijn, als ze goed zijn, die opwinding op peil weten te houden. Het beste voorbeeld in dit opzicht is dat van de Mothers, hoewel dat natuurlijk geen Jazz/Pop groep is, zo'n middenweg is er niet. Maar ze gebruiken jazzelementen, en ze hebben jazz solisten. Maar evengoed hebben ze die stevige Rock-Sound bewaard. Met de Spirit is het net zoiets.

F.W.: Hebben jullie ook zo'n stevige Rock Sound?

M.R.: Het is stevig. Ik weet niet of het Rock is. Het is zeer vervormd en individueel.

F.W.: Als iemand die hits fabriceert (zoals Spector dat deed) naar je toekwam en je vroeg iets voor hem op te nemen, zou je dat dan doen?

MR: Nee, en vooral omdat je nooit kan uitrekenen wat nu een hit wordt. Het is een risiko. En zo zou je iets op gaan nemen, dat noch een sukses is, noch leuk om te doen. Het enige dat je moet doen is wat je echt wilt doen. Stel je voor dat Jim Webb met een lied naar me toekwam. Dat is een beter voorbeeld. Ik zou er geen bezwaar tegen hebben het op te nemen als ik het een goed lied vond, maar dan niet als de Soft Machine. Dat zou niet fair zijn tegenover het kleine publiek dat we hebben. Maar ik houd er erg van met andere mensen te spelen, wat voor muziek ze ook maken. Als Kevin een smakelijk singeltje zou willen maken, zou ik geen bezwaar hebben met hem mee te spelen, maar niet als Soft Machine. Dat zaait maar verwarring bij de konsument.

FW: Hoe reageer jij op pop-journalisme?

MR: Het grootste bezwaar vind ik dat alle journalisten staan buiten de sfeer waarin wij zitten, ze bespelen geen instrumenten en hebben in ieder geval nooit in een popgroep gespeeld. En waarschijnlijk hebben ze tot voor zeer kort niet naar pop geluisterd, in ieder geval niet vóór de Beatles. Ze beschikken over niet genoeg kennis van zaken om te kunnen oordelen. Het zou akseptabel blijven als ze zich er toe zouden beperken te vertellen van wie ze wel en van wie ze niet hielden. Maar jammergenoeg proberen ze muzikale argumenten te geven als ze schrijven van welke muziek ze houden. Die muzikale argumenten worden dan meestal een serie cliché's die mensen rondtoeteren, maar die niks te maken hebben met de mensen waarover ze schrijven. Een voorbeeld is Tony Palmer die voor de Cream kwaliteiten opeist die de groep niet bezit. Hij zegt dat ze de struktuur van de gewone popsong akkoorden uitbreiden, terwijl ze in principe steeds blues strukturen gebruiken, en meer dan wie dan ook. Hetzelfde geldt voor al die groepen die tot avantgardisten gebombardeerd worden. Het doet me denken aan de jazz vroeger, toen ze jazz respektabel probeerden te maken door jazzmusici te vergelijken met Strawinsky & Schönberg & Bartok. Maar dit vertroebelt de vorm omdat elk medium zijn eigen syntaxis heeft. Vergelijkend beoordelen werkt alleen maar verwarrend in dit opzicht. Het doet het eigen karakter van het medium geweld aan, net als filmkritici die schrijven in termen van de toneelkritiek. Daarmee loop je voorbij aan de essentie van de film. Dus zitten Tony Palmer en die anderen, als ze over de Beatles spreken als beter of even goed als Schubert of Schönberg of wat dan ook, er naast voor wat pop bijzonder maakt en anders. Zulke vergelijkingen zaaien meer verwarring dan dat ze verhelderen. Afgezien van het feit dat het om ongewenste praktijken gaat.

FW: Hoe zou jij dan de Soft Machine in jouw termen evalueren?

MR: Dat is moeilijk. Ik geloof dat we allerlei dingen gebruiken die de moderne Jazz nu gebruikt. De meest recente nummers worden gekenmerkt door maatindelingen als 13/4 en 9/4. Wij neigen naar een meer kompositoriese basis, weg van het idee van een cyclies vers dat herhaald wordt. Wij zijn bezig het idee van een lied als een herhaalde A B A struktuur te verlaten. Bij ons gaat het om een goede vijftien minuten muziek zonder dat die zich herhaalt, maar dan meer als klassieke muziek als je dat zo wilt zien, maar dat wil dan niet zeggen dat we Jazz/Pop zijn of klassiek. Dat zeggen is alleen maar verwarrend. We hebben een rechtdoorzee popgeluid, net zo goed als het zeer gepolijst, direkt en onmiddellijk is. De meeste popkritiek schijnt gebaseerd te zijn op dat zinloze vergelijkende principe. Met zeggen dat wij aan Coltrane of Cecil Taylor doen denken kom je niet veel verder.

FW: Nou, speciaal jullie klinken me vaak als die mensen in de oren.

MR: Dat zou soms wel eens zo kunnen. Maar ik weet dat iedereen in de groep van Coltrane gehouden heeft in een of ander stadium en het groepsgevoel dat hij genoot was iets waar men van hield. Maar ik denk toch liever dat we het geassimileerd hebben. Omdat hetgeen het spreken over ons, of elke andere groep, de moeite waard maakt, juist datgene is dat hen onderscheidt van degenen waardoor ze beinvloed zijn.

FW: Bestaat er een popmusicus die zelfs Coltrane maar benaderd. Sorry hoor?

MR: Zeker niet voor zover het de techniek betreft. Maar er zijn elementen die popmusici wel hebben en Coltrane niet, en andersom. Voor mijzelf geloof ik niet dat pop in een stadium gekomen is waarin ik liever naar wat voor popgroep dan ook zou luisteren dan naar Coltrane. Ik zou hoe dan ook liever naar Coltrane luisteren. Weet je, rare die je bent, het is nergens voor nodig zo'n eksklusieve keuze te maken. Iedereen probeert het te rangschikken in termen van eksklusieve voorliefdes.

FW: Wat vind je van de huidige aanspraken voor de popmuziek, aanspraken die ik nogal onzinnig vind, dat het de komplete afspiegeling is van onze tijd, omdat de popzangers de beste vertolkers van de kern van die tijd zijn?

MR: Zoals McIntyre zou zeggen: Dat is óf triviaal, óf onzin. Of je maakt het tautologies waar in termen van retrospektieve kritiek, omdat elke artist altijd heeft nagedacht over zijn tijdperk, hij heeft geen keus. Of het is toch onwaar omdat de mensen die je in de pop tegenkomt zeker geen aanleiding hebben dat in dergelijke termen uit te drukken.

FW: Sommigen van hen doen wel deze pretentieuze aanspraken.

MR: Er zijn ook een heleboel andere mensen die dat doen. We overschatten allemaal onze importantie, en vaak is dat nodig om door te kunnen leven. Als je niet zou denken dat je iets deed dat de moeite waard was, zou je het nooit doen, dus is het onvermijdelijk.

FW: Ik geloof dat het belang van popmuziek nogal wordt opgeblazen. Waarom wordt er zo'n groot belang aan gehecht?

MR: De laatste tien jaren was het mogelijk veel geld te verdienen met pop. Voor iemand als Elvis Presley heeft het altijd gegolden. Maar nu is de sterren-verering niet zo sterk meer. Vandaag zijn het de buurjongens die een plaat maken en sukses hebben of geld verdienen. Er is niemand die niet via een of ander een popgroep kent die een bom duiten gemaakt heeft. Dus trekt het meer en meer mensen aan, zoals intellektuelerige mensen en wie dan ook. De mogelijkheid is er zóveel geld te verdienen. En in het begin van de vijftiger jaren had je in Engeland een grote kloof tussen de levensgewoonten van de verschillende klassen. Michael Tippet had altijd een heel verhaal over 'high brow' en 'low brow' cultuur. Tegelijkertijd werden allerlei dingen meer toegankelijk.

FW: Dus als poëzie mensen aan fortuinen geholpen had zouden we nu waarschijnlijk duizenden dichters vinden, is dat je redenering?

MR: Als je met poëzie zeer veel geld kon verdienen zou het op die manier doorwerken. Geld betekent dat je A) een sociaal sukses bent, B) talloze meiden hebt, C) verbazingwekkende publiciteit geniet, D) beschikt over een groot publiek omdat je zonder dat niet aan geld kon komen, E) het met een persoonlijke konfrontatie te maken heeft. Als al deze dingen ook voor poëzie zouden gelden zou de dichtkunst door duizenden beoefend worden.

FW: En hoe zit het met jou?

MR: Ik doe alles waar ik maar zin in heb. Het klinkt vreemd, maar ik doe niets om louter ekonomiese motieven. Ik fantaseer wel over het doen van iets voor geld, als het beroven van een bank of grote advertentiezwendelaars, of het schrijven van een klote roman. Maar ik zal het nooit doen.

FW: Waarom niet?

MR: Omdat ik zo koleerterig lui ben en ik ook niet erg geloof dat die dingen ooit zouden werken.

Om het interview te beginnen was het nodig vast te stellen wat de Soft Machine niet deed.

MR: Er is eigenlijk niets dat ons verbindt met mensen als Cage op het punt van werkmethoden. We doen niet aan van die kansspelen als het gooien van I Ching, het werken met willekeurige IBM kaarten of het opwerpen van muntstukken. Soms schreven we stukken waarbij de noten toevallig waren, of de ritmiese struktuur. Maar dat is niet onze basis-methode.

FW: Toch spelen jullie een lang nummer dat 'We did it again' heet. Waar ging dat over? Het duurde vijf of zes minuten.

MR: Iedereen in de groep zag het op een andere manier. Robert zag het als een manier om zo'n dertig minuten of zo Souldrummen weg te geven. Kevin zag het hele idee van het herhaalde figuur als een soort geestelijke bevrijding, het uiteindelijke effekt.

FW: Door te vervelen?

MR: Hij vond dat als je iets als vervelend zag, een kernbegrip uit Zen, je het tenslotte belangrijk zou vinden. En er zit iets in dat als je steeds naar iets luistert dat steeds hetzelfde herhaald wordt, je geest de struktuur ervan elke keer verandert, het gehoor went er aan of het dwingt het te veranderen, wat weer lijkt op de dingen die Terry Riley doet. Ik zag het voornamelijk als een irritante bron.

FW: Voor jezelf of voor het publiek?

MR: Ik zag het met het oog op het publiek. En de enige keren dat ik het wilde gebruiken was als ik eigenlijk 'Barst' tegen het publiek wilde zeggen. Maar Kevin wilde het zoveel mogelijk gebruiken. En Robert zag het ook wel als een gebaar. Kevin zag het voor de helft vanwege zijn Geestelijke Bevrijding en voor de andere helft om te laten zien hoe Hip we waren. Die ostinato technieken, ik zag het voornamelijk als een bron van irritatie.

Fletcher Watkins.

OM

DE MOOISTE KRANT VAN NEDERLAND



Het 6e nummer van OM is uit, terwijl het 4e en 5e nog gedrukt moeten worden. Om nr. 4 is het befaamde reeds lang geleden aangekondigde Zwartboek dat inmiddels is uitgegroeid tot 'zwart-op witboek van de welvaart'. Dit nummer van Om verschijnt dit najaar bij de Arcanum Pers van Ton Kronenburg.

Het zwartboek geeft een beeld van de negatieve bijeffekten van onze zgn vooruitgang en als witboek loopt het de sporen van een opbloeiend alternatief na. Het zwart-op-witboek verschijnt als reuzestrippocket (formaat Barbarella). Het 5e nummer is gewijd aan de Justitie/Gevangenis e.d. waarin o.a. ook het alternatief ter sprake komt. Het Nationaal Bureau voor Reclassering zal dit uitgeven en via Om zal 'n bepaalde hoeveelheid gratis verspreid worden. (Indien een brief met postzegels naar de Omredaktie wordt opgestuurd, wordt dit nummer 'free' toegestuurd. Het zesde nummer dat nu weer in de 'handel' is (oi-we-woi!) bevat een schat aan gegevens over jezelf. Koop je spiegelbeeld voor f 1,50. Verkrijgbaar bij Athenaeum (spui), Allard de Lange (damrak), Bas (leidsestr.), Marnixkelder, Headshop, Antiquariaat (prinsegr.), Rarekiek (runstr.), Fantasio, en verder op straat als je geluk hebt.

Dit nummer bevat een affiche over de brievenpagina (+ 60 bij 40 cm) gemaakt door Theo Niermeyer, prachtige cartoons, schitterende strips over sex in de sixties en luchtvervuiling, grafieken-artikelen over het SySteem, 'n Aquariusbulletin, 'n artikel uit 'the Digger Papers', iets over het binnenkort verschijnende hollandse diggerblad HAPT HOLLAND, geen advertenties.

Het op stapel staande 7de nummer is voor een groot gedeelte gewijd aan de 'Motherfuckers' een 'stedelijk-guerilla organisme' dat op allerlei manieren het systeem infiltreert en opfokt. Verder een artikel over 'pop Terreur' in het Magies Centrum dat de akties van o.a. Buro Sneek (rinkel de kinkel werk aan de winkel) en Buro de Kraker (doet het steeds vaker) behandelt, een artikel van Gary Snijder over: 'Boeddhisme en de komende revolutie', een nieuw Aquarius Bulletin, Diggerteksten, poster van Johan van der Keuken, tekeningen van Rob Geenink en Lies Jansen, strips van o.a. Willem, cartoons etc. Kijk uit voor Om nr. zoveel!

Kopij, kommunikatie, kontakten, kontanten, OM, Keizersgracht 2a Amsterdam.

WILD MAN

Bij het laatste bezoek van The Mothers of Invention hadden we het al over Wild Man Fischer, een ontdekking van Frank Zappa. Op de voorpagina van deze krant zie je een leuke kiek van Fischer, in het gezelschap van zijn moeder. De foto is te vinden op de hoes, klaphoes, waarin de eerste dubbelelpee van Fischer verpakt is. Een dubbelelpee die zeer belangrijk is en waarover in de volgende Aloha meer te lezen zal zijn. Voor mensen die daar niet op kunnen wachten : Het nummer van de plaat is Reprise/Bizarre 6332 en behalve Fischer zijn op de plaat ook de GTO'S, RODNEY BINGENHEIMER, KIM FOWLEY en natuurlijk ook Frank Zappa te horen.



rektikatie

PARDON-REKTIFIKATIE...

Ach, ach, vurige kolen op ons hoofd. Die Beatagenda, weetjewel, daar stond in de vorige Aloha in dat de Pink Floyd zou werken in Amsterdam op 7 juni in Paradiso. En dat was niet zo. Door een onverklaarbaar misverstand (kommissie van onderzoek is benoemd, weetjewel) van onze Beatagendakomputer, waren we een beetje in de war. De heer Fred Wessels, artistiek leider van Paradiso vroeg ons U allen te berichten dat de Pink Floyd niet op 7 juni (dat was dus fout) maar op donderdag 10 juli aanstaande in Paradiso optreedt. De desbetreffende komputer is ontslagen. De Direktie.

Soft Machine Elpee - Hit Week - N° 18 - 17 Januari 1969



Zoals oplettende radioluisteraars al gemerkt hebben is DE ELPEE VAN DE SOFT MACHINE UIT, en dat ook al in dit landje. De Soft Machine, onze (ons= Nederlands', en ook wel Hawee's) Soft Machine is eindelijk dan toch met een elpee op deze mart vertegenwoordigd. Een tijdje geleden was het al in deze kolommen te zien, en even later kregen wij een exemplaar van Robert Wyatt toegestuurd, maar mede dankzij de gezondheidstoestand van de hitredaktie komt er nu pas wat meer over die elpee. Dat heeft z'n voordelen, want we hebben de plaat nu enige weken achter elkaar dag en nacht gedraaid. De plaat die direkt al zo prachtig was, die groeide en groeide maar en dat hield niet op. Oehoehoe, wat waren wij verschrikkelijk blij met die plaat van de Soft Machine !!!! Heus, ga nou niet je schouders ophalen, ga nou niet misprijzend staan grijnzen of giegelen, doe dat vooral niet, WANT DE PLAAT VAN DE SOFT MACHINE IS EEEN VAN DE BELANGRIJKE, pardon, BELANGRIJKSTE, PLATEN VAN DE LAATSTE TIJD.

Hup, het is verreweg de meest opzienbarende plaat die er de laatste jaren in Engeland verscheen, het is de eerste plaat met een nieuw geluid uit Engeland. We wisten het natuurlijk allang, beter dan de Pink Floyd en wat voor modernisties goeds er verder uit Engeland kwam. Maar die Britten zagen het helemaal niet hoor. Dat volkje op dat eiland liet de Soft Machine verrekken zodat ze nauwelijks in Engeland konden optreden, laat staan platen maken. Gelukkig maakte de Soft Machine een Amerikaanse toer in het gezelschap van de Jimi Hendrix Experience. Dat was een waanzinnig suksesvolle toer voor Jimi, en naar nu blijkt is de Machine er terecht ook beter op geworden. Wat er in Engeland nooit van wilde komen gebeurde in Amerika godzijdank wel : de platenbazen zagen wat voor groep er bestond die nog geen elpee had gemaakt en even later was de Soft Machine gekontrakteerd voor een geheel nieuw sub-label van ABC Paramount, het 'Probe' label. De mensen van 'Probe' lieten er geen gras over groeien: ze charterden niemand minder dan Torn Wilson om de plaat te producen (officieel is hij met Chas Chandler co-producer, dat is natuurlijk een lachertje, kontraktueel is Chas wel hun producer, maar met een beetje fantasie kan je wel nagaan wat je naast én de Soft Machine én Torn Wilson nog als meneer Chas Chandler daaraan kan toevoegen), ze zorgden voor prachtige opnamen en een zeer duur uitgevoerde mooie hoes (een zeer mooie klaphoes waarin je achter draaiende raderen de jongens van de groep ziet zitten) en het resultaat was een mijlpaalplaat van de eerste orde die tot onze grote vreugde ook meteen de Amerikaanse elpee top 100 in schoot. En dat met de langverbeide eerste elpee van een in de Verenigde Staten nog tamelijk onbekende groep, de eerste elpee van Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers en Michael Ratledge, de eerste elpee van de Soft Machine.

Goed, nou hebben we over van alles geluld, maar nog niet over de muziek op de plaat. Kijk, uit het voorgaande moet iedereen begrepen hebben dat het om iets zeer belangrijks gaat. Wat de muziek betreft hebben we zeer veel zin om met ons vergriepte hoofd te zeggen dat die voor zich zelf moet spreken. Luister naar de plaat en je hoort het zelf wel. Nou ja, dat kan natuurlijk niet. En nou willen we niet schijnheilig of lui zijn, maar toch is het zeer zeker zo dat je vooral bij zo'n plaat als de Soft Machine plaat het allemaal zelf moet horen.

Het gaat namelijk om een nieuwe aanpak, jawel, een nieuwe aanpak, maar dan ook echt iets behoorlijk anders dan we tot nu toe hoorden. Het gaat om drie jongens die één muziek maken. We bedoelen : niet een organist, een basgitarist en een drummer die ontzettend goed goed aan het orgelspelen, bassen en drummen zijn, maar drie jongens die in de eerste plaats een stuk muziek aan het maken zijn. Er zit iemand te drummen, en te bassen iemand te orgelen ook natuurlijk. Maar kijk nou naar de bezetting, dan verwacht je een goeie organist en twee redelijk sekunderende begeleiders. Ho, mooi dat het iets heel anders is hoor. Om nog eens in traditionele termen te denken: je hoort een briljante drummer slagwerken op een manier die we in de moderne pop niet kennen. Hij blijkt ook te zingen met een fragiel stemgeluid. De organist zit driftig te spelen, zeer hard zit hij te orgelen, maar eigenlijk heeft hetgeen dat hij doet niets te maken met wat wij van organisten gewend zijn. Geen Jimmy Smith, geen Bach-gezeur, maar allerlei klankenregens die met niks te maken hebben behalve met de muziek die de Soft Machine maakt. Hetzelfde geldt voor de basgitaar. Geen ritmiese ondersteuning, geen slaafs ge-tonketonk, ook geen echte melodiese lijnen, maar in samenspel met de twee andere instrumenten een prachtig muziektapijt.

Nou weet je nog niks als je de plaat niet gehoord hebt zal je denken. Dat is ook zo. Daarom kunnen we alleen maar zeggen dat drummer/zanger Robert Wyatt verschrikkelijk, ontzettend schitterend drumt. Geartikuleerd is wel het woord dat er het meeste mee te maken heeft. In vrijwel alle nummers ontbreekt een vast doordreunend ritme, maar hoor je Robert op een afgrijselijk feilloze manier aangeven hoe een stuk muziek aangepakt wordt, opgebouwd is en verder gaat Dat is voor een gedeelte

fabelachtige techniek, maar nog veel meer die nieuwe aanpak. Het zijn geen briljante melodieën die je hoort, ritmies zit het wel gekompliceerd in mekaar, maar verder gaat het juist helemaal om het direkte, de emotie, gekanaliseerde emotie die zo prachtig tevoorschijn komt. Het swingt best zo af en toe, maar daar gaat het niet om. Je hoort serene stukje klassiekerige muziek en dan weer keiharde pop. En dat allemaal in twee gehelen: de voor- en achterkant van de plaat. Geen nummers meer, maar grotere gehelen. Noem het twee suites, of twee 'Concertinetta's' voor mijn part. De ene kant zou je dan 'Hope for happiness' kunnen noemen, want dat is het waar het in dat gedeelte om draait. Allerlei variaties in spanning, verschillende sferen die worden uitgedrukt en dan een mooi stemmingsvol einde. Een zeer sereen einde met kerkerig (denk nou niet aan de Procol Harum) orgelspel aan het einde in 'A certain kind'. En op de tweede kant 'Save yourself' en 'Lullabaye letter' dat dan weer eindigt in het prachtige 'Why are we sleeping', maar dan wel via het zeer doorhengsterige 'We did it again', het rudimentaire 'nummer' dat we ons nog opperbest herinneren van het optreden in Amsterdam, (hoei, hoei). Het valt op dat de belangrijkste man in dit alles, drummer/zanger Robert Wyatt, eigenlijk weinig aan het repertoire heeft bijgedragen. Des te meer frappeert het, hoe Robert wel al de teksten zo verschrikkelijk lief zingt en hoe die jongens die muziek als zo'n geweldige eenheid weten te brengen. En dan nog iets, er is nog een (eigenlijk twee, zijn er) persoon dat heeft meegeschreven, het gaat om H. Hopper (en B. Hopper). Hugh Hopper is de naam en hij is de nieuwe bassist van de groep mogen we zeggen. Of nu Kevin echt gitaar is gaan spelen weten we niet, maar het zit er wel in. Het zit er in dat een verrijkte Soft Machine, nog rijker dan die van deze plaat, muziek aan het maken is, En dat belooft wat voor verdere platen.

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Soft Machine + Jimi naar Amerika - Hit Week - N° 21 - 9 Februari 1968


HIT WEEK WIT

POPCONCENTRATIES

POPBELANGENGROEPEN PROBEREN DE MACHT TE GRIJPEN ALS VERONICA MOET OPHOUDEN

bob dylan; even aan de nieuwe sound wennen

gaat't snel achteruit met de engelse groepen?

Het management van de Animals heeft deze maand voor alle groepen die daar zijn ondergebracht een toer naar Amerika georganiseerd. Ex-bassist Chas Chandler maakte aparte packages voor ERIC BURDON & THE ANIMALS + THE EIRE APARTMENT, THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE + THE SOFT MACHINE en tenslotte ALAN PRICE. Al deze groepen zullen de top clubs en gigantiese 'hall' aan de Oost en Westkust met een bezoek vereren (Whiskey A Go-Go, Fillmore, en ga zo maar door). De HENDRIX/SOFT MACHINE package zal in Boston niet op mogen treden, omdat men daar zeer geschrokken was van zijn schaamteloze optreden toen hij in een MONKEES Package optrad. Geen nood deze keer, in Los Angeles staat een optreden in het vooruitzicht met niemand minder dan THE ELECTRIC FLAG (Mike Bloomfield) en de steeds populairder wordende BLUE CHEER. De ALAN PRICE SET toert meer op eigen houtje door Amerika, ook al omdat de groep niet overal op tijd kon zijn vanwege ALAN'S vliegangst. ALAN reist dan ook per boot heen en weer naar Amerika. Waarschijnlijk is het meest belangrijke van het hele getoer de kans die de tot nu toe steeds gruwelijk onderschatte SOFT MACHINE zou moeten krijgen. Oh ja, nog even Jimi Hendrix, er komt zeer gauw een nieuwe singel van 'm uit. Daarop zingt hij een vers van DYLAN'S laatste Elpee, 'All along the watchtowers'.

SOFT MACHINE + JIMI NAAR AMERIKA

Het management van de Animals heeft deze maand voor alle groepen die daar zijn ondergebracht een toer naar Amerika georganiseerd. Ex-bassist Chas Chandler maakte aparte packages voor ERIC BURDON & THE ANIMALS + THE EIRE APARTMENT, THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE + THE SOFT MACHINE en tenslotte ALAN PRICE Al deze groepen zullen de top clubs en gigantiese 'halls' aan de Oost en Westkust met een bezoek vereren (Whiskey A Go-Go, Fillmore, en ga zo maar door). De HENDRIX/SOFT MACHINE package zal in Boston niet op mogen treden, omdat men daar zeer geschrokken was van zijn schaamteloze optreden toen hij in een MONKEES Package optrad. Geen nood deze keer, in Los Angeles staat een optreden in het vooruitzicht met niemand minder dan THE ELECTRIC FLAG (Mike Bloomfield) en de steeds populairder wordende BLUE CHEER. De ALAN PRICE SET toert meer op eigen houtje door Amerika, ook al omdat de groep niet overal op tijd kon zijn vanwege ALAN'S vliegangst. ALAN reist dan ook per boot heen en weer naar Amerika. Waarschijnlijk is het meest belangrijke van het hele getoer de kans die de tot nu toe steeds gruwelijk onderschatte SOFT MACHINE zou moeten krijgen. Oh ja, nog even Jimi Hendrix, er komt zeer gauw een nieuwe singel van 'm uit. Daarop zingt hij een vers van DYLAN'S laatste Elpee, 'All along the watchtowers'.



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The Soft Machine stal de show - Hit Week - N° 13 - 15 Dec. 1967

elektriese muziek en lichteffekten in concertgebouw

THE SOFT MACHINE STAL DE SHOW

ook dank zy de geweldige lichten van THE SENSE LABORATORY

Er is dus weer zoiets geweest. Zo'n popkonsert waarop we in spanning hebben zitten wachten. En het was inderdaad niet mis. Hoewel toch wel even anders dan we eerst dachten. Want er waren tegenvallers, of eigenlijk : één tegenvaller, het optreden van de Electric Prunes namelijk. Maar daar stond een optreden van de Soft Machine, begeleid door een ongelooflijk lichtspel, tegenover dat die teleurstelling meer dan goed maakte. Het moet nog maar eens gezegd worden : zulke avondjes uit moeten er meer komen. Er zijn mensen genoeg die regelmatig in een komfortabele omgeving van fantastiese pop willen genieten. Het zullen er veel meer worden naarmate er meer van zulke optredens georganiseerd worden.


HIT WITHEEK WIT

in februari eerste europese internationale pop festival in rome

elektriese muziek voor lichaam en geest

de radio

We zijn eigenlijk zo weinig' gewend dat we nu al gauw blij zijn. Wat weer niet wil zeggen dat we met alles tevreden zijn, maar wel dat we voorlopig nog zeer enthousiast voor van alles openstaan. Daarom waren er ook heel wat mensen naar het Concertgebouw gekomen, ook al ging het om een minder bekende groep als The Electric Prunes. Heel wat goed geklede mensen rookten, hun sigaretje en hun wierookstaafje terwijl ze opgingen in de (hm) elektriese kosmos van de moderne Pop. Die begon al vrij aardig met het optreden van de Zipps. De jongens uit Dordrecht schotelden (zeer kosmies, UFO'S nietwaar) ons de beste lichtshow voor die we ooit in Nederland gezien hebben. En die het tegen een groot aantal buitenlandse lichtshows best kan opnemen. Met statiese en borrelende dia's en gekleurde lampen, al dan niet ritmies meespelend waren de Zipps zeer enthousiast bezig. En het deed het zeer in het Concertgebouw. Wat hun muziek betreft zijn de Zipps de laatste tijd niet zo schokkend vooruitgegaan ; het is, vooral ritmies, eigenlijk'n beetje teveel het recht op en neer werk. Maar best goed hoor, al was het zangwerk van Philip Eizerman een

beetjete weinig geartikuleerd. Daarna was de Soft Machine aan de beurt.

Die is hier, getuige het enthousiaste herkenningsapplaus, dankzij de plugging van dit krantje al zeer bekend geworden. En terecht ! Van de Grote Drie avantgardistiese groepen uit Engeland (de andere zijn de Pink Floyd en misschien nu al niet meer-Tomorrow) de beste, hoewel ze in Engeland het minste sukses hebben. De laatste tijd werken ze met een driemansformatie : orgel, drums en bas. Hoewel ze door de verdwijning van hun gitarist wel wat missen komt dat in hun muziek niet zo naar voren omdat ze steeds werken met een groot brok geluid waarin de drums, het orgel, de bas en de stemgeluiden één geheel vormen. Het orgel wordt - net zoals bij de Pink Floyd en bv. de Doors-' nogal on-orgelig bespeeld (dat wil zeggen, zeer ver van de Jimmy Smith traditie vandaan). Het is een toetsenbord waar klanken uitkomen.



Zweverige, scheurende en ronde klanken. Drummer Robert is een afgrijselijk goede drummer die zowel solisties als begeleidend dingen doet, die geen enkele andere popdrummer hem na kan doen. En hij zingt ook nog verschrikkelijk lief, terwijl hij alleen maar een blauw slipje aan heeft. Niet te geloven hoor, die muziek hoewel er zo af en toe toch enige monotonie merkbaar was. Soms was dat de bedoeling, zo stond de bassist minutenlang achter elkaar te zeggen 'I did it again'. Dat ging maar door en door en nog eens door, terwijl de andere jongens er verschillende muzikale en ritmiese patronen achter zetten. Soms was het 'I did it again' ook tweestemmig te horen of met wat gekreun erachter. De jongens in de zaal voelden de zeer verre muziek (zeer lange nummers, weinig zang, komplex opgebouwde toestanden) wonderwel aan. Maar daar kwam ook bij dat er een lichtshow doorheen speelde die zeer prachtig met de muziek samenvloeide. Een lichtshow (hè, wat een woord eigenlijk) die met geen pen te beschrijven valt. Mark Boyle is de man achter de lichten. Hij gaf vroeger les op een kunstnijverheids school, maar kreeg daar de buik op den duur zo vol van, dat hij met lichten ging experimenteren. Met Joan Huls en John Claxton vormde hij 'The Sense Laboratory', waarmee hij de UFOclub Be Ins opluisterde. Dat niet alleen natuurlijk. Hij werkte voor zeer veel groepen en zijn Laboratory heeft zich ontwikkeld tot het mooiste dat er op het gebied van vloeistofprojektie bestaat. De laatste tijd werkt Mark vrijwel alleen nog met de Soft Machine, die hij de enige echte overgebleven Underground groep vindt.

De lichten van The Sense Laboratory zijn zeer mooi, zeer esteties op elkaar afgestemde kleurenvloeden die subtiel over de Soft Machine heenspoelden. Niet het schoolse ritmiese geknipper dat met de muziek mee probeert te doen. Toch ook weer niet een lichtspel dat niks met de muziek te maken heeft, maar meer in grote lijnen de sfeer blijft volgen. Tja, het valt met geen schrijfmachine te beschrijven, je moet het. .eh, zien eigenlijk. Gelukkig kan dat ook, Mark heeft namelijk een film van een uur gemaakt van .zijn lichtshow. Zeer goed, want zo kan iedereen ervan genieten. In Provadya bijvoorbeeld, want daar krijgen we die film. Hoera, plug, plug. De hoofdschotel van het avondje werd gevormd door de Elektriese Pruimen uit Californië. Nou, en die waren niet zo verschrikkelijk verteerbaar. Nu hadden die jongens hun uiterlijk niet mee : ze liepen in gebloemde Carnaby Street jasjes van twee jaar geleden terwijl er eentje zelfs een vogelverschrikkerskostuum aanhad. We wisten dat de jongens het best tot hun recht kwamen in de platenstudio onder leiding van iemand als Dave Hassinger. Dat betekende dat ze zeer gehandicapt werden door de niet feilloze geluidsinstallatie (zang weer zeer slecht te horen). Maar dat ze niet veel verder kwamen dan nogal lawaaiig en niet zo leuk, met zeer vervelende show hun nummers te brengen viel toch wel wat tegen. Een supersonies nummer als 'I had to much to dream last night' kwam er dankzij de goede leadgitarist ('n zeer goede) nog redelijk uit, maar 'Get me to the world on time' werd een onbeholpen aanfluiting. Als de zanginstallatie iets beter geweest was had alles misschien beter geklonken.

Nu hadden de mensen die midden door de Pruimenmuziek heen om de Soft Machine gingen roepen groot gelijk.

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Nieuwe psychedeliese club in Londen elke avond open - Hit Week - N° 51 - 8 Sept. 1967



"Kijk, als we nou geld gaan verdienen met deze klup, dan kopen we een grote boot zodat iedereen makkelijk en voor weinig geld van Amsterdam naar Londen en omgekeerd kan reizen". Deze zeer aangename volzin komt uit de omsnorde mond van Dave Howson. Dave organiseert samen met Neil Winterson een nieuwe Londense klup THE MIDDLE EARTH.

De Middle Earth-klup had enkele weken geleden nog een andere naam en een zeer slechte reputatie die de eigenaars een enorm verlies opleverden. Vroeger (nog niet zo lang geleden) heette de klup The Electric Garden. Enkele zeer gewiekste clubeigenaren zagen wel wat in een hippiesklup. Ze bekeken met zeer veel interesse de wekelijks zeer veel winst makende UFO-Wup. Een klup die er niet uitzag on die een zeer slordig programma bracht. Maar ondanks dat alles bezochten elke vrijdag avond duizenden hippies deze klup. Dat zette de zakenjongens aan het denken. In hun reeds draaiende striptease en italiaanse muziek-nachtklups bedachten zij een zeer geniaal plan. Ze zouden een grote morsige ruimte huren, die geheel zilver verven, vele lichteffekten aanbrengen, en advertenties in de specifieke bladen plaatsen die door de hippies gelezen worden. Kortom zonder al te veel kosten zouden ze een soort UFO-klup oprichten en veel gold verdienen.



Als klap op de vuurpijl zouden ze een eksklusief restaurant openen waar niethippies na concert of theaterbezoek rustig konden souperen en tegelijk ongestoord de hippies bekijken. Echte hippies bezig zien. Zo gezegd zo gedaan. Ze kochten een grote kelder-ruimte die ze met veel lichteffekten en zo opknapten. Een kassa, kellners, 'n stevige portier, advertenties in International Times en Melody Maker en de pret kon beginnen. De eerste avond kwamen er meer dan twaalfhonderd bezoekers. De organisatoren wreven zich glunderend in de handen. Mensen die' International Times wilden verkopen werden er natuurlijk uitgezet. De kellners haalden natuurlijk snel de glazen weer weg als die leeg waren en vroegen dan na korte tijd of er nog wat gedronken kon worden. Mensen die op blote voeten liepen of die zeer vreemde kleding droegen moesten natuurlijk ook de deur gewezen worden. Nee, de eigenaars waren zeer tevreden met de resultaten van die eerste avond. Ze waren daarom verbaasd toen er maar 250 gestropdaste lieden kwamen opdagen de tweede avond en toen er de derde avond maar

honderd saaie pieten van de hippe lichteffekten kwamen genieten vielen ze om van verbazing. Nog meer verbijsterd waren ze toen International Times geen advertenties meer wilde opnemen. En hun verbazing kende bijna geen grenzen meer toen IT met een grote tegen aktie begon. Om een laag verhaal kort te houden. De nachtklup eigenaars hebben een psychodeliese nachtklup willen maken om veel geld te verdienen aan de zogenaamde flowerchildren. Maar hun opzet toonde ontstellend weinig begrip voor deze generatie. Het gevolg was dat de hippies wegbleven en dat de klupeigenaars voor een volledig bankroet kwamen te staan.

Dave Howson zegt:" Die eerste avond ben ik ook geweest, maar ik vond de sfeer zo ontzettend ellendig dat ik sindsdien niet meer geweest ben. De organisatoren waren een soort gangster-achtige figuren. De portier was onsympatiek en de kellners waren van dat ellendige soort dat je probeert uit te zuigen. Een onrelekste sfeer." Twee weken geleden hoorde Dave van een vriend dat Electric Garden eerdaags failliet zou gaan. Zonde van de ruimte natuurlijk en daarom zocht hij de eigenaars op. Deze lieden waren hem echter gesmeerd en hadden de schulden afgewenteld op een betrekkelijk jonge, aardige zakenman die ook in het projekt betrokken was.



Dave Howson en Neil Winterbottom besloten om van hem de ruimte te, huren. Dave had al eens de grote Alexandra-Palace Love-In georgaseerd en hij had wel zin om een permanente ruimte met deze sfeer te organiseren. De eenzaam achtergebleven organisator van de Electric Garden was allang blij dat er belangstellenden waren en deze week wordt de ruimte definitief overgedragen aan Dave en Neil. Dat wil dus zeggen dat Electric Garden is overgedragen aan de Underground. Er wordt nu geen alcohol meer verkocht, maar thee en koffie. Macrobiotese boterhammen en limonade. Overdag is de ruimte beschikbaar voor groepen die willen repeteren. Er zaleen Free-Store komen. Dat wil zeggen: een winkel waar je kleren en zo gratis kunt meenemen of brengen. Er komen wasmachines en douches zodat je je er totaal kunt wassen en op den duur zullen bepaalde etenswaren ook gratis worden verstrekt. Middle Earth is nu alle avonden open behalve op Vrijdag (want dan draait UFO). Op Maandagavond zal John Peele zijn programma Perfumed Garden brengen. Op dinsdag zal steevast de nieuwe psychodeliese Zoot

Moneygroep: Dantalion's Charriot aanwezig zijn. Op woensdag zullen nieuwe, verse en nog onbekende groepen een kans krijgen terwijl er op donderdagavond alleen maar orientaalse/oosterse klanken te beluisteren zijn. In het week-end zijn er topgroepen, films, effecten en happenings. Eigenlijk zijn er alle avonden lichteffckten en films alleen zullen er in het week-end zeer speciale en verre systemen en effekten worden toegepast.

Er is dus een klup die elke avond open is en die de meest fantastiese dingen te bieden heeft. Vooral de volkomen lekkere en relekste sfeer van de hippies-kommune. Groepen als Jimi Hendrix, Eric Burdon en the Soft Machine en de Pink Floyd zullen er regelmatig optreden. Dave Howson is in ieder geval zeer opgewekt over zijn verse klup. Kontakt met de vorige eigenaars heeft hij via een advocaat. Hij streeft naar twee tot vier groepen per avond, free-food en free stores. Zeer hoog gehalte van de groepen die komen spelen wordt gewaarborgd. Elke morgen om een uur of 10 half elf
[... gratis. Vanaf ...[a certain time] .. entree voor niet-leden .... De winst die gemaakt wordt gaat terug naar de scene.]

[... above, three short illegible sentences...]

Dat wil zeggen: allerlei aktiviteiten worden gesteund (zoals die veerboot tussen Londen en Amsterdam bijvoorbeeld). Van de winst kan bijvoorbeeld ook een eiland gekocht worden waar dan een vreedzame hippiesschappij kan worden gesticht. Ook gaat de winst naar een stichting die de naam Release draagt. Met het geld helpt Release alle hippies die om de een of andere reden last met de politie krijgen. Door middel van geld en advocaten geeft Release elke hippie rechtsbijstand. Maar ook politiefondsen krijgen geld van Middle-Earth. En winst gaat de klup zeer zeker maken. Elke Vrijdagavond verdient de UFO zo'n ƒ. 10.000. Als je in Londen komt dan moet je er zeker even langs gaan. Middle Earth ligt in de Kingstreet (vlakbij een aantal markthallen) in de omgeving van Piccadilly Circus.



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The Soft Machine - Hit Week - mei 1967



> Zoom

**Dit is een foto van de
engelse groep THE SOFT MACHINE;**

Een groep di je vooral moet horen spelen op het podium met publiek (dus live). Hun eerste plaat heeft het in engeland niet gedaan. Toch is het een uitstekende plaat. Ook hier ziet Polydor er niet al te veel in. Toch kopen. Hugo van Baren is ook onder de indruk en daarom hieronder een gesprek met de drummer (boven 2e van links).

Robert Wyatt is de drummer en de lead-voice van de engelse avant -garde popgroep 'The Soft Machine'. Na afloop van zijn optreden in de UFO club in London had ik de gelegenheid even met hem te praten.

Kan Robert even de belangrijkste gebeurtenissen uit zijn leven aangeven?
'Het belangrijkste? Mijn geboorte in Bristol in 1946. Dan mijn werken in de Palma Jazz Club, daarna werkte ik bij een totaal onbekende groep: The Wilde Flowers' en nu werk ik bij de 'Soft Machine'.

Wie of wat hebben de voornaamste invloed op je gehad?
'Ik word voornamelijk beïnvloed in negatieve richting. Ik word bv sterk beïnvloed door dingen waarvan er veel te veel is op de wereld, bv Otis Redding en andere blues-jongens. Positief ben ik beïnvloed door Cassius Clay, die man weet zichzelf enorm goed te verkopen. Goed, hij gedraagt zich onbeschoft maar toch weet hij het te maken.'

Het schijnt tegenwoordig een gewoonte te zijn om gelijk maar langspeelplaten te maken. Ik denk bv aan de Cream, hoe zit dat bij de Soft Machine?
'Wat mij betreft kunnen we zo twee langspeelplaten volzingen. We hebben er genoeg materiaal voor. Maar dit hebben we niet in eigen hand; Polydor beslist. We zouden ook nog wel zes kleine platen kunnen maken. ideeën te over hoor.'

Tussen twee haakjes, is de naam Soft Machine taalkundig gezien enkelvoud of meervoud?
'Ha, ha, een hoop mensen schijnen daar mee te zitten, maar het is meervoud hoor. Ik geloof dat er ook een boek bestaat met de zelfde naam, daardoor zullen we wel beïnvloed zijn bij het zoeken naar een naam. '

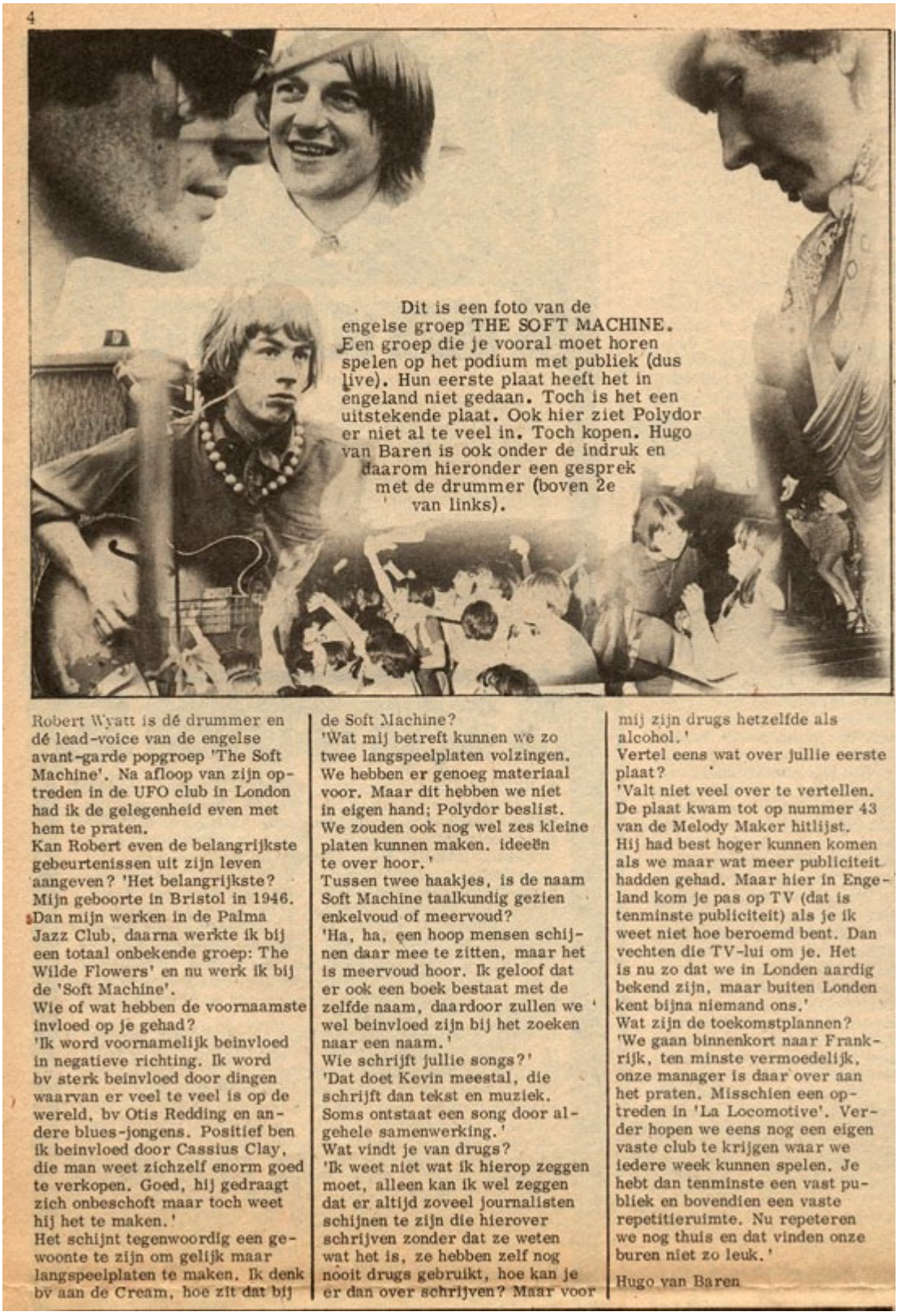
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Soms ontstaat een song door algehele samenwerking. '

Wat vindt je van drugs?
'Ik weet niet wat ik hierop zeggen moet, alleen kan ik wel zeggen dat er altijd zoveel journalisten schijnen te zijn die hierover schrijven zonder dat ze weten wat het is, ze hebben zelf nog nooit drugs gebruikt, hoe kan je er dan over schrijven? Maar voor mij zijn drugs hetzelfde als alcohol. '

Vertel eens wat over jullie eerste plaat?
'Valt niet veel over te vertellen. De plaat kwam tot op nummer 43 van de Melody Maker hitlijst. Hij had best hoger kunnen komen als we maar wat meer publiciteit hadden gehad. Maar hier in Engeland kom je pas op TV (dat is tenminste publiciteit) als je ik weet niet hoe beroemd bent. Dan vechten die TV-lui om je. Het is nu zo dat we in Londen aardig bekend zijn, maar buiten Londen kent bijna niemand ons.'

Wat zijn de toekomstplannen?
'We gaan binnenkort naar Frankrijk, ten minste vermoedelijk, onze manager is daar over aan het praten. Misschien een optreden in 'La Locomotive'. Verder hopen we eens nog een eigen vaste club te krijgen waar we iedere week kunnen spelen. Je hebt dan tenminste een vast publiek en bovendien een vaste repetitieruimte. Nu repeteren we nog thuis en dat vinden onze buren niet zo leuk. '

Hugo van Baren



4

Dit is een foto van de engelse groep THE SOFT MACHINE. Een groep die je vooral moet horen spelen op het podium met publiek (dus live). Hun eerste plaat heeft het in engeland niet gedaan. Toch is het een uitstekende plaat. Ook hier ziet Polydor er niet al te veel in. Toch kopen. Hugo van Baren is ook onder de indruk en daarom hieronder een gesprek met de drummer (boven 2e van links).

Robert Wyatt is dé drummer en dé lead-voice van de engelse avant-garde popgroep 'The Soft Machine'. Na afloop van zijn optreden in de UFO club in London had ik de gelegenheid even met hem te praten.

Kan Robert even de belangrijkste gebeurtenissen uit zijn leven aangeven? 'Het belangrijkste? Mijn geboorte in Bristol in 1946. Dan mijn werken in de Palma Jazz Club, daarna werkte ik bij een totaal onbekende groep: The Wilde Flowers' en nu werk ik bij de 'Soft Machine'.

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Hugo van Baren

> Zoom

[*English translation*]

Robert Wyatt is the drummer and lead vocalist of the English avant-garde pop group the Soft Machine. I had the opportunity to talk to him after their performance at the UFO club in London.

Can you tell us about the most important events in your life?
RW: The most important? My birth in Bristol in 1945. Then my work in the Palma Jazz Club, then I worked with a totally unknown group, the Wilde Flowers, and now I work with the Soft Machine.

Who or what have been the main influences on you?
RW: I am mainly influenced in a negative way. For example, I'm strongly influenced by things of which there is far too much in the world, e.g. Otis Redding and other blues boys. Positively I am influenced by Cassius Clay, that man knows how to sell himself very well. Well, he behaves rudely but still he knows how to make it.

It seems to be a habit nowadays to make long playing records right away. I'm thinking for instance of Cream. How about the Soft Machine?
RW: I think we can make two long playing records. We have enough material for that. But we don't have that in our own hands; Polydor decide. We could make six 'small records'.

By the way, is the name Soft Machine singular or plural, linguistically speaking?
RW: Ha, ha, a lot of people seem to be bothered by that, but it is plural. I think there's also a book with the same name, so I guess we were influenced by that when we were looking for a name.

Who writes your songs?
RW: Kevin usually does, he writes the lyrics and the music. Sometimes a song is created as a result of total collaboration.

What do you think about drugs?
RW: I don't know what to say, I can only say that there always seem to be so many journalists who write about it without knowing what it is, they have never used drugs, how can you write about it? But for me, drugs are the same as alcohol.

Tell us about your first single?
RW: There's not much to say. It reached number 43 on the Melody Maker hit list. It could have gone higher if we had had more publicity. But here in England you only get on TV - at least that's publicity! - when you're I-don't-know-how famous. Then those TV people fight over you. The thing is, we're pretty well known in London, but outside London hardly anyone knows us.

What are the plans for the future?
RW: We are going to France soon, at least presumably, our manager is talking about it. Maybe a performance at La Locomotive. Furthermore, we hope to get our own club one day, where we can play every week. At least you have a regular audience and also a regular rehearsal room. Right now we're still rehearsing at home and our neighbours don't like that very much.

Hugo van Baren

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Der zarte Gigant - Robert Wyatt wird 70 - Der Tagelsspiegel - 28. Januar 2015

Mit seiner Band Soft Machine gehörte Robert Wyatt zur britischen Progrock-Szene, als Solokünstler entwickelte er einen unvergleichlichen Stilmix aus Jazz, Folk, Rock und Kammermusik. Am Mittwoch feiert der Musiker seinen 70. Geburtstag.

Es passiert nicht allzu häufig, dass in der Popmusik etwas wirklich Neues beginnt. Wie unerhört Robert Wyatts Gesang Mitte der 70er war, merkt man, wenn man sich vorstellt, wie sich der Lauf der Popgeschichte ohne seinen Beitrag entwickelt hätte. Ziemlich unwahrscheinlich, dass einige der großen Pop-Stimmen der jüngeren Zeit, etwa Antony Hegarty oder James Blake, ja sogar Chris Martin oder Thom Yorke, ohne sein Vorbild Stars geworden wären. Wyatt hat dem Ausdrucksspektrum männlicher Sänger eine Verletzlichkeit hinzugefügt, die nie mit Selbstmitleid verbunden war – zu einem Zeitpunkt, als virile Kraftvokalisten wie Robert Plant die Rockmusik dominierten.

Schon bei Soft Machine, einer der führenden Bands der südbritischen Progrock-Szene, saß Wyatt Ende der 60er nicht nur am Schlagzeug, sondern übernahm bei vielen Stücken das Mikrofon. Seine zweite Band Matching Mole bot Ähnliches mit verändertem Personal. Es war dann ein Schicksalsschlag, der Wyatts Karriere in neue Bahnen lenkte. 1973 stürzte er bei einer Party in London aus dem vierten Stock. Er überlebte, von der Hüfte abwärts gelähmt. „Rock Bottom", ein Jahr nach dem Unfall erschienen, war nicht seine erste Soloplatte, aber diejenige, auf der Wyatt seinen unvergleichlichen Stil definierte. Die am Abgrund balancierenden Kunstlieder, die Jazz, Progressive Rock, Kammermusik und Folk verbinden und in denen Wyatt mit nadelspitzer Stimme fragile Melodielinien intoniert, sind Lichtjahre entfernt von allem, was in einer Hitparade auftaucht. Trotzdem gelang Wyatt 1974 mit einer Coverversion des Monkees-Hits „I'm A Believer" der Sprung in die Top 40. Sein Auftritt bei „Top of the Pops" sorgte für Wirbel, weil die BBC keinen Rollstuhlfahrer zeigen wollte – am Ende setzte sich Dickkopf Wyatt durch.



Der britische Musiker Robert Wyatt. Foto: Domino

Robert Wyatt hatte seine Nische gefunden, die er sich kommod einzurichten verstand. Ohne Zeitdruck arbeitet er an neuen Stücken, von einer eingeschworenen Fangemeinde sehnsüchtig erwartet. Neun Alben sind so in 44 Jahren entstanden, nicht allzu viel. Und doch hat jedes von ihnen Eindruck hinterlassen, nicht zuletzt bei anderen Musikern, was sich in einer Vielzahl von Kooperationen niedergeschlagen hat: Wyatt hat seine Stimme ebenso für Björk, Brian Eno oder Hot Chip erklingen lassen wie auf Kompositionen von John Cage oder Michael Mantler. Als überzeugter Marxist hat er in den 80ern gegen die Thatcher-Regierung angesungen, hat streikende Bergarbeiter unterstützt, den Falkland-Krieg in dem wunderbaren Elvis-Costello-Song „Shipbuilding" gegeißelt und Sympathie für lateinamerikanische Freiheitsbewegungen bekundet.

Auf dem Cover der kürzlich erschienenen grandiosen, über zwei Doppel-LPs verteilten Werkschau „Different Every Time" (Domino) blickt er mit mächtigem Rauschebart so stolz in die Kamera wie ein kubanischer Revolutionsveteran. Vermutlich muss man sich Robert Wyatt, der seit über 40 Jahren mit der Künstlerin Alfreda Benge verheiratet ist, als glücklichen Menschen vorstellen. Heute feiert der zarteste Sänger, seit es Popmusik gibt, seinen 70. Geburtstag.

Jörg Wunder

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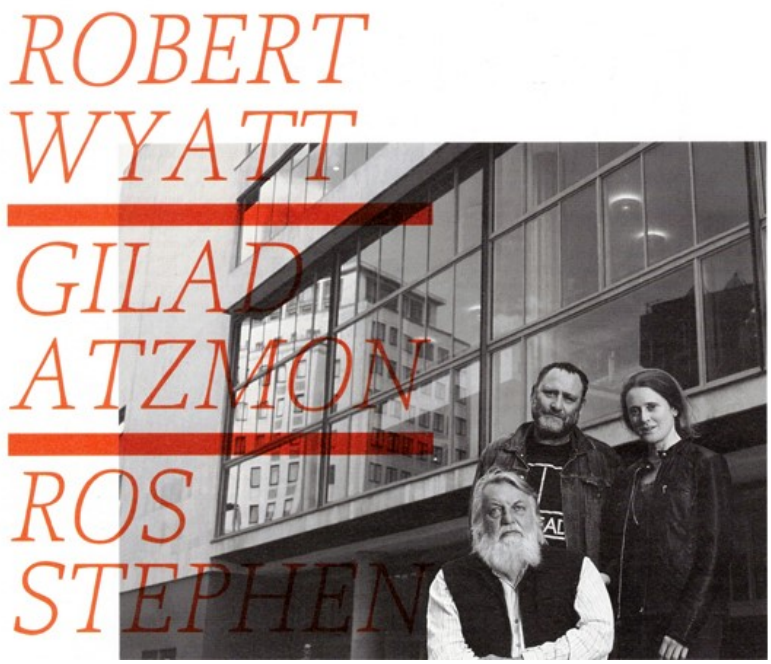
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Robert Wyatt Gilad Atzmon Ros Stephen - Platten sind wie Tattoos - Jazzthing & blue rhythm - Nummer 86 - November 2010-Januar 2011

PLATTEN SIND WIE TATTOOS



Drei Musiker, drei Backgrounds, drei Studios, drei Aufnahme-Sessions. Songwriter-Legende Robert Wyatt, Jazz-Grenzgänger Gilad Atzmon und die zwischen Klassik und Tango changierende Geigerin Ros Stephen verbindet auf den ersten Blick wenig. Und doch haben sie unter dem Motto „For The Ghosts Within" (Domino/Groove Attack) gemeinsam ein Album von schockierender Schönheit aufgenommen.
TEXT WOLF KAMPMANN FOTO ELKE MEITZEL



Robert Wyatt, Gilad Atzmon und Ros Stephen: Die drei Ungleichen interpretieren Jazzklassiker von Monk, Parker und Ellington, geben auch einige Songs aus Wyatts langer Laufbahn sowie neue Stücke zum Besten und beschließen das Ganze mit einer wirklich herzergreifenden Version von „What A Beautiful World". Doch der ultimative Wohlklang des Albums wird von elektronischen Störgeräuschen durchzogen, es wird sanft gerappt, und der kulturelle Bogen ist weit gespannt. Hart an der Grenze zum Kitsch, wird diese unsichtbare Demarkationslinie aber zu keinem Zeitpunkt überschritten. Man ist eher an eine genuine Mischung aus experimentellem Jazz und Wiener Salonmusik um 1900 erinnert. Im Rückgriff auf das Vertraute klingt diese CD nicht nur neu und ungewohnt, sondern entwirft im Klang eine Utopie vom Frieden im Zeitalter der Gegensätze. Für den Israeli Gilad Atzmon ein zentrales Anliegen. Dieser nahezu perfekten Klangwelt liegt jedoch ein langer Prozess in mehreren Etappen zugrunde.

Wusstet ihr von Anfang an, worauf ihr euch mit diesem Album einlasst?

Ros Stephen: Wir hatten keine Ahnung. Robert und Gilad hatten ja schon seit einiger Zeit miteinander gearbeitet. Kürzlich haben aber auch Gilad und ich gemeinsam ein Tango-Album aufgenommen. Das hat großen Spaß gemacht, und wir suchten nach neuen Ideen. Wir dachten an einen Sänger, der die Streicher und die Jazzgruppe ergänzt. Unsere Wahl fiel instinktiv auf Robert. Ich arrangierte ein paar seiner Songs für Streichquartett, damit er eine Ahnung bekam, wohin die Reise geht. Am Ende hatten wir eine lange Liste möglicher Stücke. Von da an arbeitete ich zielgerichtet an den Streicherparts, denn das war die Grundlage, die aufgeschrieben werden musste. Es war nicht einfach, uns drei an einen Tisch zu bekommen. Ich lebe in Bristol, Robert in Lincolnshire und Gilad in London. Wir konnten uns nicht einfach mal so besuchen und wieder zurückfahren. Deshalb erfolgte die Kommunikation hauptsächlich per E-Mail und Telefon. Ich schickte Ideen an Robert, und er schickte seine Ideen zurück an mich. Es dauerte über ein halbes Jahr, bis wir überhaupt mit den Aufnahmen beginnen konnten.

Gilad Atzmon: Der entscheidende Moment war, als Robert seinen Part aufnahm. Es bedurfte nicht mehr als vier Takte, um zu realisieren, dass wir etwas ganz Spezielles haben. Diese Kombination aus Roberts einzigartiger Stimme mit einem eher konventionellen Klanghintergrund war fantastisch. Von da an ging es darum, dieser Verbindung eine Form und tiefe Bedeutung zu verleihen.

Eure individuellen Stimmen verschmelzen ja derart, dass Saxofon und Gesang sich kaum noch voneinander abheben.

Robert Wyatt: Wenn man vertrautes Material benutzt, fließen unweigerlich all die Interpretationen ein, die man von diesem Stück kennt. Davon versuchte ich mich freizumachen. Unabhängig von all den Stilen und Haltungen, die mit den Stücken

verbunden waren, hinterfragte ich ihre Essenz. Ich fragte mich: Was sagt uns eine Melodie, die Duke Ellington in den Dreißigern geschrieben hat, heute? Noten und Akkorde selbst sind absolut zeitlos. Sie gehören nicht zu bestimmten Epochen oder Jahrzehnten, auch wenn wir sie damit assoziieren. Sie sind einfach da. Ros verstand die harmonischen Implikationen der Stücke. Sie spürte, was an ihnen schön und wichtig ist. Und Gilad mixte die Stücke, als wäre keine dieser Melodien je zuvor gespielt worden.

GA: Die Songs oder Alben, die das Verhältnis von Stimme und Solist am besten herausstellen - ich denke an Coltrane mit Johnny Hartman oder Cannonball mit Nancy Wilson -, repräsentieren etwas in der amerikanischen Kultur, das sich von der britischen Kultur grundlegend unterscheidet. Im Amerika jener Epoche waren fast immer alle Beteiligten daran interessiert, dem gesamten Song eine umfassende Bedeutung zu verleihen. Für mich als Saxofonist ist es eine immense Herausforderung, mit meinem Instrument die Stimme zu unterstützen und die Lücken zu füllen, anstatt ununterbrochen im Fokus zu stehen. Da das Saxofon und die Stimme auf diesen wundervoll arrangierten Streichern ruhen, nähern sich beide Elemente einander an und besetzen dasselbe Terrain. Das ist nicht ganz ungefährlich. Wir hatten es mit nostalgischen Melodien und nicht ganz unnostalgischen Arrangements zu tun. Das galt es hin und wieder zu durchbrechen. Ich wusste jedoch nicht so recht, wie. Schönheit beruht immer auf dem Wechselverhältnis von Konsonanz und Dissonanz. Konsonanz ist Kontinuität, Dissonanz ist Unterbrechung. Wenn etwas zu konsonant wird, ist es Kitsch, ist etwas zu dissonant, führt es nirgendwo hin. Die Nostalgie dieses Albums entfaltet nur ihre Wirkung, wenn es immer wieder Elemente gibt, die uns aus ihr auch herausreißen.

Warum habt ihr so viele Standards aufgenommen?

RW: Mit vielen dieser Songs lebe ich seit Jahrzehnten, aber ich kannte nur die instrumentalen Versionen von Jazzmusikern. Erst kürzlich hörte ich die Vokalversionen. In meiner Jugend hätte ich es strikt abgelehnt, die Songs auf diese Weise zu singen. Da liebte ich es eher rau und hart. Aber die Musiker, die damals Sänger begleiteten, zum Beispiel Nelson Riddle, hatten fundamentale Ahnung von Harmonik. Ich habe die Songs mit Ros und Gilad aufgenommen, weil ich wusste, dass auch sie diese Fähigkeiten haben, ein Stück auf seine Substanz zu reduzieren. Dieses Wissen gibt dir Freiheit und Sicherheit. Als ich meinen Part einsang, wusste ich, dass nichts schief gehen kann. Wie ein Rennfahrer, der weiß, dass er ein Rennen gewinnen wird.

Trotzdem habt ihr eure Parts ja unabhängig voneinander aufgenommen.

RW: Die Streicher mussten einfach zuerst aufgenommen werden. Das Studio, in dem ich meine Aufnahmen machte, ist zu klein, um ein ganzes Quartett aufzunehmen. Da können Rockgitarristen separat ihre Gitarrenparts einspielen. Ich arbeite dort oft allein. Für mich war das großartig, denn ich musste den Motor nicht anwerfen. Wenn ich den Kopfhörer aufsetzte, war die Musik schon da. Ich musste nicht mehr tun, als an Bord zu gehen.

Dafür klingt das Ganze aber erstaunlich organisch.

GA: Vielleicht waren wir Narren, als wir mit dieser Produktion begannen, vielleicht hatten wir am Ende einfach großes Glück. Es ist sehr ungewöhnlich, ein solches Projekt aufzunehmen, ohne dass der Sänger wenigstens die Melodie vorsingt. Als das Streichquartett seine Parts aufnahm, habe ich teilweise gesungen, und ich bin wahrlich nicht der beste Sänger.

RW: Das hat auch Vorteile. Ich trete ja nie live auf, sondern nehme ausschließlich Musik im Studio auf. Im Studio kann man improvisieren und diese Momente dann einfrieren. Irgendwann komme ich hinzu und lerne diese Augenblicke. Ich habe also Teil an einem improvisierten Prozess, kann aber dennoch auf meine Weise etwas beisteuern. Was da genau vorgeht, lässt sich nicht in Worte fassen. Ich brauchte nicht mehr rational zu denken, als ich diese Stücke sang. Ich war ganz woanders. Beim Essen und Sex hat man keine Anleitung, sondern es passiert einfach. So ist es auch beim Singen.

GA: Es war ganz klar, dass wir in diesem Projekt unterschiedliche Rollen innehatten. Ros war für die Arrangements und die Grundstimmung verantwortlich, Robert steuerte mit all seiner Erfahrung - er ist ja vor allem ein Produzent -den Gesang bei. Wenn er mit etwas nicht glücklich ist oder seinen Gesang nicht angemessen findet, wird er das unmissverständlich zum Ausdruck bringen. Er ist dann zwar sehr höflich, weiß aber genau, was er will. Und niemand wird ihn vom Gegenteil überzeugen. Ich habe die Lücken

aufgefüllt und das Album gemixt und somit fertiggestellt. Ros schrieb die Arrangements, wir trafen uns, Robert übernahm - und dann zerstörte ich die Aufnahmen komplett auf meine Weise. Vor zehn Jahren hätte der ganze Prozess in einem Studio ablaufen müssen, aber dank der aktuellen Technologie können wir diese Vorgänge separieren. Es ist viel billiger, wir können viel mehr experimentieren, und vor allem geraten wir uns dabei nicht in die Haare.

RW: Platten sind wie Tattoos. Wenn man sich „I love Lucy" in den Arm ritzt, sollte man auch aufpassen, dass man Lucy bis an sein Lebensende liebt. Ansonsten könnte es irgendwann Probleme geben. Mit Platten ist es genauso. Wenn man etwas auf Platte festhält, ist es für alle Zeiten da. Daran möchte ich aber bei der Arbeit gar nicht denken. Ich will mich nicht an schlechte Dinge gewöhnen, nur weil ich sie mir oft genug angehört habe. Wenn mir einmal etwas nicht gefällt, wird es mir auch später irgendwann nicht gefallen.

GA: Wichtig ist Transparenz. Manche Stücke klingen sehr kompliziert, aber ich finde sie einfach, weil sie transparent sind. Charlie Parker ist ein gutes Beispiel dafür. Jede Note ist klar. Auch Coltrane ist ungeheuer komplex, aber trotzdem bleibt es transparent. Eine Melodie wie „Giant Steps" kann ich singen. Auch Roberts Gesang ist sehr kompliziert, manche Harmonien sind sehr anspruchsvoll. Aber sie sind immer transparent. Sicher vermag Ros auf dem Computer Sachen zu schreiben, die niemand spielen kann. Jeder Musiker kann das heute. Niemand versteht diese Musik, aber sie existiert trotzdem. Wir nennen das in England Muso. Ich hoffe, es gibt nicht einen einzigen Muso-Moment auf der Platte. Zwar haben wir ausgefallene Rhythmen, aber ich komme eben aus dieser Art von Kultur. Wir kommen aus ganz unterschiedlichen Richtungen, aber wir teilen diesen unanfechtbaren Glauben an Einfachheit und Transparenz.

Also habt ihr dieses Level an Vervollkommnung durch verschiedene Stufen von Improvisation und Dis-Improvisation erreicht...

RW: Dazu brauchten wir viel Sensibilität füreinander. Es gibt Linien, die von einem Level zum anderen führen. In den Stücken offenbart sich ein bestimmter Raum, aber dahinter verbirgt sich stets noch ein weiterer Raum. Es geht um Licht. Jeder Song wird von drei unterschiedlichen Seiten beleuchtet. Gilad, Ros und ich bringen uns mit unserer ganzen Kreativität ein, aber es ist weder Gilads Album noch Ros' oder meines.

Viele Jazzstandards haben ja ihre ursprüngliche Bedeutung verloren, weil sie immer wieder gespielt werden und statt der Essenz nur die Hülle übrig bleibt. Wenn ihr sie spielt, bewahren sie ihre zeitlose Qualität und klingen trotzdem neu.

RW: Ein Song von Thelonious Monk ist wie ein Panzer konstruiert. Er ist so stark, dass man nahezu alles damit machen kann. Man wird ihn niemals zerstören. Viele Interpreten singen dennoch nicht den Song, sondern den Stil. Das ist ein Problem. Ich will nicht in irgendeinem Jazzmagazin lesen, dass wir eine weitere verdammte Band sind, die diese Standards neu interpretiert. Ich will mich vor der Hektik des Augenblicks schützen und etwas zum Ausdruck bringen, das ich noch nie zuvor gehört habe. Ich will nichts hören als die reine Musik. Unter all den Konnotationen, Stilen und Kommentaren steckt irgendwo der Song. Lasst uns an diesen Punkt vordringen. Es ist paradox, aber die Dinge, die uns am vertrautesten erscheinen, sind manchmal viel schwerer zu ertragen als die neuesten Sachen.

GA: Heidegger sagte: Man kann die Nase nicht sehen, weil sie zu nah ist. Diese Songs gehören zu den besten Stücken des 20. Jahrhunderts. Es ist verblüffend, wie viele Musiker die Schönheit dieser Lieder verfehlen. Ich selbst höre keinen Jazz mehr. Ich will nicht sagen, dass es keine großen Musiker mehr gäbe, aber ich habe genug an Coltrane und Cannonball. Für die Jahre, die mir noch bleiben, will ich jene Unschuld zurückgewinnen, die ich empfand, als ich mich in diese Kunstform verliebte.

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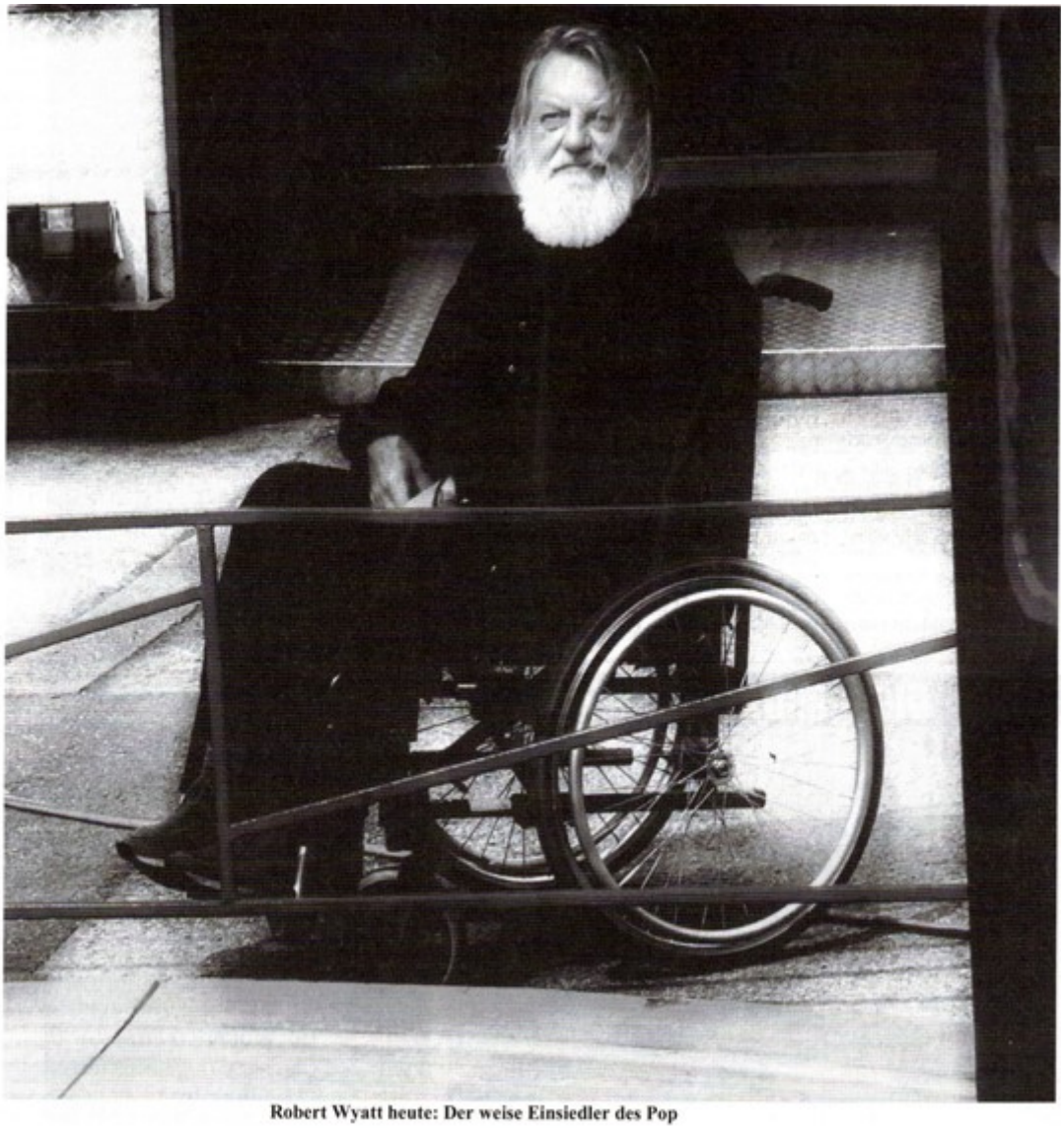
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> Zoom

Der Einsiedler

Obwohl sich Robert Wyatt fast völlig aus der gängigen Popmusik-Szene zurückgezogen hat, liefert er dennoch seit den 80er Jahren immer wieder völlig eigenständige Alben ab.



Robert Wyatt heute: Der weise Einsiedler des Pop

Robert Wyatt: Alt, gelassen und gut

Keine Frage: Wenn ein Popmusiker Grund hätte, verbittert zu sein, dann wäre es Robert Wyatt. Rausgeschmissen aus der Band, die mit ihm eines ihrer definitorischen Elemente verlor, querschnittgelähmt wegen der eigenen Dummheit und von seiner Plattenfirma aus schierer Ignoranz um einen weiteren Hit gebracht: Musiker sind aus weniger wichtigen Gründen zu unzugänglichen Eremiten geworden. Doch Robert Wyatt war und ist anders. Er hat es auch dank seiner Freundin Alfreda Benge, die selbst Künstlerin ist (und bis heute seine Cover gestaltet), gelernt, nicht nur mit seiner Behinderung umzugehen, sondern tatsächlich in der Popmusik aktiv zu bleiben.

Dabei sah es Ende der 70er und Anfang der 80er Jahre nicht danach aus, als ob er in der Lage wäre, abgesehen von Sessionaktivitäten wirklich im Geschäft zu bleiben, nachdem *Virgin* seine Coverversion von *Yesterday Man* ablehnte, obwohl er zuvor mit *I'm A Believer* einen richtigen Hit gelandet hatte. Begründung: Die Version sei zu gewöhnlich gewesen. Aber ein Musiker wie Wyatt lässt sich nicht so leicht unterkriegen und besitzt zudem mit seiner Stimme ein Organ, das einfach im Gedächtnis bleibt.



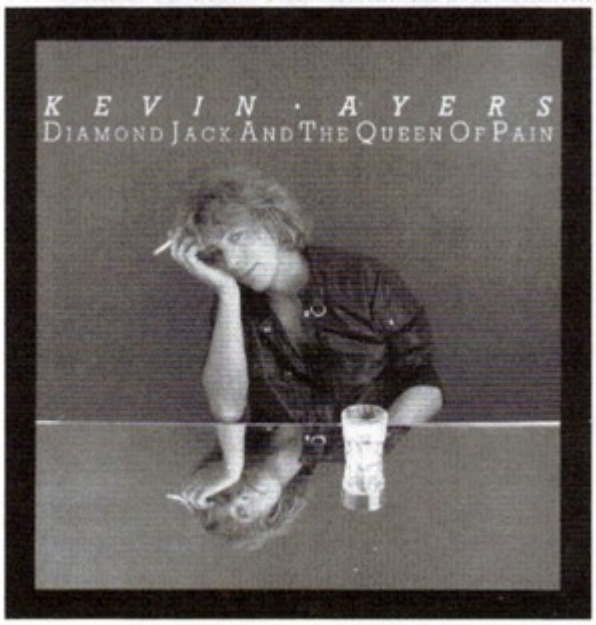
UK-LP: Harvest SHSP 4057

Dennoch kam das Angebot von *Rough Trade* 1980, er könne, wenn er wolle, drei Singles mit Material seiner Wahl aufnehmen, überraschend. Es hatte vor allem damit zu tun, dass Wyatt einer der wenigen Musiker war, der in den 60ern angefangen hatte, Musik zu machen, der Punk und die New Wave offen begrüßte und von ihr inspiriert wurde.

Doch die Singles, die dann tatsächlich erschienen, hatten vor allem damit zu tun, dass er seinen Horizont in den vorhergegangenen Jahren erweitert hatte. Auf zwei Lieder der Hoffnung aus Südamerika *(Arauco / Caimenera)* folgte ein Mix eines Chic-Covers mit einem Jazz-Klassiker *(At Last I'm Free / Strange Fruit)*, ehe er seine politische Überzeugung mit einem Lied aus dem zweiten Weltkrieg dokumentierte *(Stalin Wasn't Stallin' / Peter Blackman: Stalingrad)*. Tatsächlich war Wyatt seit den späten 70er Jahren Mitglied der kommunistischen Partei Englands, was er vor kurzem so kommentierte:

"Ich bin heute kein Kommunist mehr, weil es keinen mehr gibt. Es wäre, als ob man sagen würde, ich bin Jugoslawe. Die Sache, an der ich am meisten hänge, ist die alte linke revolutionäre Romantik, die meine Fantasie in den 70er und 80er Jahren gefangen nahm. So anachronistisch wie das sein mag ist es wahrscheinlich tiefer in mir verankert als der ganze Kunst - und Musik - Kram. Es ist mir geblieben und er bedeutet mit eine Menge." Angesichts dieser Aussagen war es nicht überraschend, dass Wyatt seinen zweiten Hit mit einer Single landete, die Elvis Costello gegen den Falkland-Krieg geschrieben hatte: *Shipbuilding* landete in England auf einem völlig überraschenden 35. Platz.

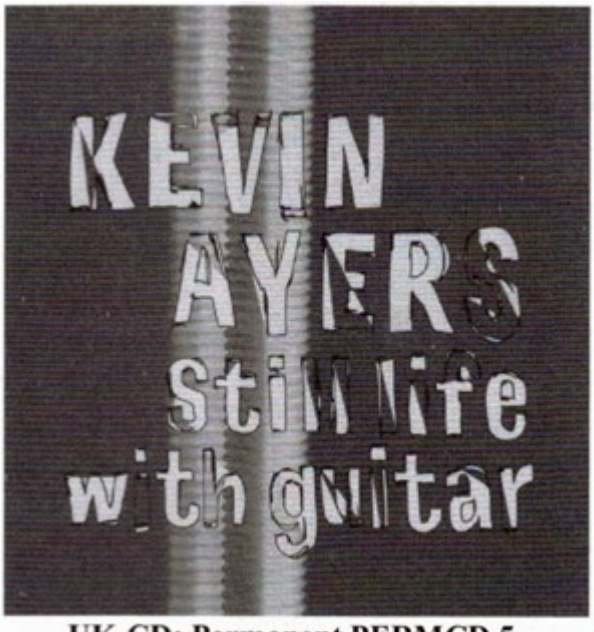
Prompt fasste *Rough Trade* die Singles auf dem Album *Nothing Can Stop Us* zusammen - inklusive der vierten Single, der Cutler-Coverversion *Grass*, bei der erneut nur die A-Seite von Wyatt kam - von dem tatsächlich zwei Versionen erschienen: Die eine 1982 ohne den Hit, die andere ein Jahr später mit ihm.



UK-LP: Charly CR 30224

Damit war Robert Wyatt wieder im Geschäft und das brachte ihm zunächst den Auftrag für die Filmmusik zu der Dokumentation *The Animals Film* ein, der nur einen Monat nach dem Singles-Sampler erschien. Danach war erst einmal wieder Pause, doch das hatte vor allem damit zu tun, dass Wyatt im Studio an einer neuen Platte bastelte. Zunächst erschien 1984 die 12"-EP *Work In Progress,* auf der seine Version des Peter Gabriel-Hits *Biko* bewies, wie gut er darin war, die Kompositionen anderer zu interpretieren.

Old Rottenhead 1985 jedoch zeigte, dass er nach wie vor völlig unberechenbar war. Denn vor sparsamen Hintergründen, die hauptsächlich durch Tasteninstrumente und das Schlagzeug gebildet wurden, dominierten Lieder und seine Stimme. Damit feierte er zwar nicht den großen Erfolg, den er mit *Shipbuilding* erreicht hatte, aber die LP war definitiv ein künstlerisches Statement, das seine widerborstige Individualität unterstrich, frei nach dem Motto: Ob es dir gefällt oder nicht, aber das ist meine Musik. Klar, dass mit einer solchen Einstellung ein Vertrag von einer großen Plattenfirma eher unwahrscheinlich war, doch das kümmerte Wyatt wenig: „Es könnte mir nicht gleichgültiger sein.



UK-CD: Permanent PERMCD 5

Ich habe einen Job Musik zu machen, aber ob es der Industrie gut oder weniger gut geht, ist mir absolut egal." Bei einer solchen Einstellung kann es nicht überraschen, dass seit *Old Rottenhead* gerade drei Produktionen mit neuem Material erschienen sind: *Dondestan* 1991, *Shleep* 1998 und

Comic Opera 2007. Das ist, verglichen mit der üblichen Produktionsrate aktiver Künstler und Bands nicht gerade viel, aber dafür ist jedes dieser Werke eines, das man lange anhören kann. Das liegt natürlich zum einen daran, dass er am liebsten alleine arbeitet. Es könnte aber auch Resultat zweier Dinge sein, die er in einem Interview 2008 eingestanden hat. „Ich habe nach wie vor zweimal in der Woche Alpträume, die mit Konzerten zu tun haben. Ich trank mich gewöhnlich unter den Tisch, um genügend Mut zu haben, aufzutreten. Sogar ins Studio zu gehen ist ein bisschen wie einen Gig zu spielen. Ich werde nervös." Doch wichtiger für sein Leben war, dass er seit seiner Jugend von Depressionen geplagt wird. Tatsächlich machte er schon mit 16 Jahren einen Selbstmordversuch und diese Traurigkeit hat sein Leben bis heute geprägt: „Depressionen haben mein Leben bestimmt und tun das immer noch. Ich weiß nicht genau, was das Wort bedeutet, aber wenn Ich wünsche mir wirklich, ich wäre tot und nie geboren worden den Kern trifft, dann ja. Ich mag das Leben, aber ich kann mir nicht vorstellen zu denken es ist großartig, zu leben.

Ich glaube, Leben ist etwas, das man bewältigen muss. Ehrlich gesagt, beneide ich die Toten. Ich will nicht tragisch klingen, aber ich finde das Leben einfach sehr hart." Bei dieser Einstellung kann man ersehen, was für eine Leistung seiner Frau Alfreda Benge es sein muss, mit ihm zusammen zu sein. Gleichzeitig muss man aber auch die Zähigkeit und die Vision des Mannes bewundern, der in seiner Karriere eigentlich keine schlechte Platte veröffentlicht hat und der nach wie vor ein unverbesserlicher Individualist geblieben ist. Das zeichnet ihn vor allem anderen aus.

Fortsetzung: Hugh Hopper

[Etrangement, cet article uniquement consacré à Robert Wyatt est illustré par 3 pochettes de disque de Kevin Ayers. Il comporte également un tableau de références discographiques de Hugh Hopper et Karl Jenkins (ci-dessous).]

Soft Machine (8)

von Frank Küster

Doppel-CD: BBC Radio 1971 - 1974

Die Soloplatten (6)
Hugh Hopper (2)

1994

CD: Hooligan Romantics
US: Fot Ponk Records 9
Tracks: Mais Non / Hi Fi Spanish Dreams / No Long Solos / The Moon In A Bottle / 2 P.M. / Partout / There You Were / Oldest Story Ever Told / Judou / Golden Section / Rodilla / Carousel / Miniluv / C'est Grace

1995

CD: Adreamor (Hugh Hopper & Mark Hewins)
UK: Impetus Records IMP CD 19423
Tracks: Urban Fox / Vortex One / Lizard / Snake River / Adreamor / Hyte / Vortex 3494 / Outerlude

CD: Carousel (Hugh Hopper Band)
US: Cuneiform Rune 67
Tracks: Shuffle Demons / Sinister Toilet / Carousel / Mais Non / Lock, Stock And Barrel / Convincing The Squirrel / Lux Beta / Sliding Dogs / Sonar / Wax Longa

1996

CD: Somewhere In France (Hugh Hopper & Richard Sinclair)
UK: Voiceprint VP 133 CD
Tracks: Long Lingers Autumn Time / Potted History / Keep On Caring / Cruising The Eastern Sky / Oldest Story Ever Told / Video Shows / Solidarity / Only The Brave / Colin-A-Dell

CD: Improvisations (Hugh Hopper & Alan Gowen)
UK: Voiceprint VP 186 CD
Tracks: Floating Path / Now What Exactly? / Zaparoshti / Ranova / A L'Ouest / Winged Trilby / Six Cream Bombs From Beaune / Rubber Daze

CD: Best Soft
UK: Mantra
Tracks: Hopper Tunity Box / Gnatprong / Spanish Knee / Lily Kong / Golden Section / Minipax 1 / Brass Wind Bells/Anguishi / Waffle Dust / Punkom / Minitrue Reprise / Oyster Perpetual / Lonely Woman

1997

CD: Huge (Hugh Hopper & Kramer)
US: Shimmy Disc SHIMMY 088
Tracks: Huge / Ten Mile Mean Streak / Tall As The Empire State / Manchester '96 / Waltz Of The Big Brains / She's Everything Mr. H. / Einstein & Hawkins / Celine's Final Breath / Texas Is Huge / Terry Southern Blues

1998

CD: The Mind In The Trees (Dean / Hopper / Clarke / Knight)
UK: Blueprint BP 274 CD
Tracks: Leaves On The Line / Sank Evan / Lightening Up Time / Delta Rambling / Zep-Tepi / Polly's Hottie / The Utsk-Kutsk Ostinato / For Small Mercis / Wurlitzer Jungle

1999

CD: Different (Hugh Hopper & Lisa S. Klossner)
UK: Blueprint BP 303 CD
Tracks: Lying There / Pack Light / And The Rain Falls / 20th Year / Story / Clouds / Dream Sequence / Was A Friend / Other World / Yr Protection / Strawberry Back / Come Come / 20th Year (Reprise)

2000

CD: The Swimmer (Jan Ponsford / Frances Knight / Hugh Hopper / Vince Clarke)
UK: Voiceprint VP 215 CD
Tracks: Scat Up A Tree / Nine Lives / True Story / Triple fff / Uszibarasc / Vinnie Goes To Trinni / Tongue In Groove / Geisterklavier / Boatwoman / In A Temperamental Mood / Crimson Lake / Underwater Scrabble / Tic Tac Original *UK: FLY 06*

2000

CD: Cryptids (Hugh Hopper & Lisa S. Klossner)
UK: Blueprint BP 337 CD
Tracks: As I Turn / Visitors / Still / Up For Air / Kissed And Stabbed / Hours In The Day / Long Walk / Of Course / Called To Speak / I See You / Night Must Fall

CD: Parabolic Versions
UK: Voiceprint VP 209 CD
Tracks: Long Lingers Autumn Time / The Moon In A Bottle / There You Were / Oldest Story Ever Told / C'est Grace / The Painter's Birthday / Indeterminacy / Iron Lady / Kate Come Late / When I've Grown Old / Red Poppies In The Corn / Was A Friend

2005

CD: Short Wave (Live) (Hugh Hopper / Didier Malherbe / Phil Miller / Pip Pyle)
UK: Voiceprint VP 347 CD
Tracks: The Fox / Saiseyes / Frankly Speaking / The Balladin / 2 P.M. / Partout / Midnight Judo / Shuffle Demons / Nan True's Hole / VZG / Et Alors ...

2007

CD: Numero d'Vol (Hugh Hopper / Simon Picard / Steve Franklin / Charles Hayward)
US: Moonjune Records MJR 014
Tracks: Numero d'Vol / On The Spot / Earwigs Enter / Free Bee / Get That Tap / Bootz / Shovelfeet / Bees Knees Man / Straight Away / Twilight / Some Other Time

2008

CD: Dune (Humi = Hugh Hopper & Yumi Hara Cawkwell)
US: Moonjune Records MJR 019
Tracks: Long Dune / Shiranui (Sea Fire) / Seki No Gohonmatsu (Five Pine Trees Of Seki) / Circular Dune / Scattered Forest / Hopeful Impressions Of Happiness / Awayuki I (Light Snow I) / Awayuki II (Light Snow II) / Distant Dune / Futa (Lid)

Mit Ndio

2005

CD: Airback
US: Cuneiform Rune 216
Tracks: Big Bombay / Last Night Of The Prawns / Mr. Barn / Landscapes / Soap / Mind Interception / Stromboli / Bone / Wise Men

Karl Jenkins

1976

Album: Rubber Riff
UK: Music De Wolfe DWS/LP 3331
A: Crunch / Pavan / Jombles / A Little Floating Music / Hi-Power / Little Miss B / Splot
B: Rubber Riff / Sam's Short Shuffle / Melina / City Steps / Gentle Turn / Porky / Travelogue

Album: Nomination (Karl Jenkins & Pete Milray)
UK: Music De Wolfe DWS/LP 3345
A: Speed Merchant / Montana / Wheeling / Time Machine / Fly Me / Hi-Dynamics / New Dawn
B: Nomination / Slick / Silver Bird / That Funky Feeling / Spearhead / Two Much / The Birth Of Man

1978

Album: Kaleidoscope (Karl Jenkins & John Saunders)
UK: Music De Wolfe DWS/LP 3378
A: Omega / Strata / Lazer / Frozen Clock / Kaleidoscope / Glider / Greasy Trucker / Spiral
B: Sunrays / The Wind / Speed / Silver Fish / Sweet Planets / Tides / Countdown / Stargazer

1979

Album: Push Button
UK: Music De Wolfe DWS/LP 3414
A: Hi Fly / Turn Pike / Jump Jack / Zig Zag / Heel & Toe / Push Button / Pop Stuff
B: Star Dance / Space Walk / News Nouveau / Mannheim '79 / Dream Daze / Funky Fursday / Struttin' Sam / Hot Shot / Battle / Jungle Juice

1982

Album: Movement (Karl Jenkins & Mike Ratledge)
UK: Rouge Music RMS/LP 138
A: Breakneck / Clockwork Racer / Pulse No. 1 / Googly / Three And Seven / Pulse No. 2 / Road Runner / X 100
B: Five Spot / Movement / Pulse No. 3 / Penny Farthing / Circles / Pulse No. 4 / Chicane / Marathon Man

1996

CD: Diamond Music (Karl Jenkins & The London Philharmonic Strings & The Smith Quartet)
D/UK: Sony BMG
Tracks: 1 - 3 Palladio (The London Philharmonic Strings) / 4 - 7 Adiemus Variations (The Smith Quartet) / 8 Passacaglia (In Memoriam Evelyn Mary Hopkins, 1903 - 1995) / 9 - 13 String Quartet No. 2 (The Smith Quartet)

1998

CD-Maxi: Mare Crisium (Sea Of Crises) / Palus Nebularum (Marsh Of Clouds) / Mare Australis (Southern Sea)
UK: Sony BMG

CD: Imagined Oceans
D/UK: Sony BMG 60668
Tracks: Mare Crisium (Sea Of Crises) Introitus / Lacus Serenitatis (Lake Of Serenity) / Mare Vaporum (Sea Of Vapours) / Mare Australis (Southern Sea) / Lacus Somniorum (Lake Of Dreams) / Lacus Pereverantiae (Lake Of Perseverance) / Lacus Doloris (Lake Of Grief) / Mare Undarum (Sea Of Waves) / Palus Nebularum (Marsh Of Clouds) / Sinus Iridium (Bay Of Rainbows) / Mare Imbrium (Sea Of Showers) / Lacus Temporis (Lake Of Time) / Lacus Lenitatis (Lake Of Tenderness) / Mare Crisium (Sea Of Crises)

2001

CD: The Armed Man: A Mass For Peace
D/UK: Virgin 7243 8 11015 2 0
Tracks: The Armed Man / The Call To Prayers (Adhaan) / Kyrie / Save Me From Bloody Men / Sanctus / Hymn Before Action / Charge! / Angry Flames / Torches / Agnus Dei / Now The Guns Have Stopped / Benedictus / Better Is Peace

2005

CD: Requiem
D/UK: EMI Classics 7243 5 57966 2 2
Tracks: Requiem: Introit / Dies Irae / The Snow Of Yesterday / Rex Tremendae / Confutatis / From Deep In My Heart / Lacrimosa / Now As A Spirit / Pie Jesu / Having Seen The Moon / Lux Aeterna / Farewell / In Paradisum / In These Stones Horizons Sing: Agorawd (Overture) Part I: Cân yr Alltud (The Exile Song) / Agorawd (Overture) Part II: Nawr! (Now!) / Grey (Llwyd) / Eleni Ganed (Born This Year) / In These Stones Horizons Sing

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"Che Guevara ist eine Ikone, die den Zeitgeist überlebt hat." - Galore - N° 33 - November 2007

Robert Wyatt „Che Guevara ist eine Ikone, die den Zeitgeist überlebt hat.“

INTERVIEW : ANDRÉ BOSSE | FOTOS : RENE SHENOUDA



05.09.2007, Paris. Das Viertel St. Germain-des-Prés wirkt wie gemalt. Die Sonne scheint, es herrscht gemütliche Betriebsamkeit. In einem kleinen Hotel in der Rue St. Jacob wartet Robert Wyatt im Innenhof. Er raucht, trinkt Tee, hustet - am Ende simultan mit Lebensgefährtin Alfie Benge, die am Nebentisch andere Dinge erledigt.

Mr. Wyatt, ich darf Ihnen gratulieren, denn man hat ein Verb nach Ihnen benannt. „Wyatting" (1) bedeutet: die vorsätzliche Irritation eines Publikums durch schwierige Musik.

Robert Wyatt: Ich hörte davon, aber ich würde das niemals selbst machen, (überlegt) Einmal ist es aus Versehen passiert. Ich war 15 und lud ein Mädchen, das ich sehr mochte, zu einer Tanzveranstaltung im Jugendclub ein. Ich brachte selber eine Platte mit, Dizzy Gillespies „School Days". Ein sehr humorvolles Album, aber nicht umkompliziert. Als sie anlief, guckten mich die anderen Jungs äußerst irritiert an.

Und das Mädchen?

Sie schämte sich für mich, wurde rot und nahm den nächstbesten Jungen mit einem Motorrad.

Glaubten Sie wirklich, Sie würden mit der Jazzplatte auf der Teenagerparty ankommen? Oder spürten Sie einen missionarischen Auftrag?

Nein, ich dachte wirklich: Das müssen die doch mögen, das ist gut. (lacht) Wobei ich mir heute denke, dass es eher am Motorrad des anderen Kerls lag, nicht an mir oder Gillespie. Sie wollte eben nicht mit dem Bus nach Hause. Menschen sind bequem.

Wie groß schätzen Sie Ihre Fähigkeit ein, sich in andere Menschen hineinzuversetzen?

Ich gebe mir Mühe, offen zu sein und Respekt für die Ansichten und Handlungen anderer zu haben. Da ich seit meinem Unfall körperlich ein recht passives Leben führen muss, ist geistige Beweglichkeit für mich sehr wichtig. Also begeistere ich mich generell für Charaktere und Perspektiven.

Ihr neues Album „Comicopera" (2) steckt voller Charaktere.

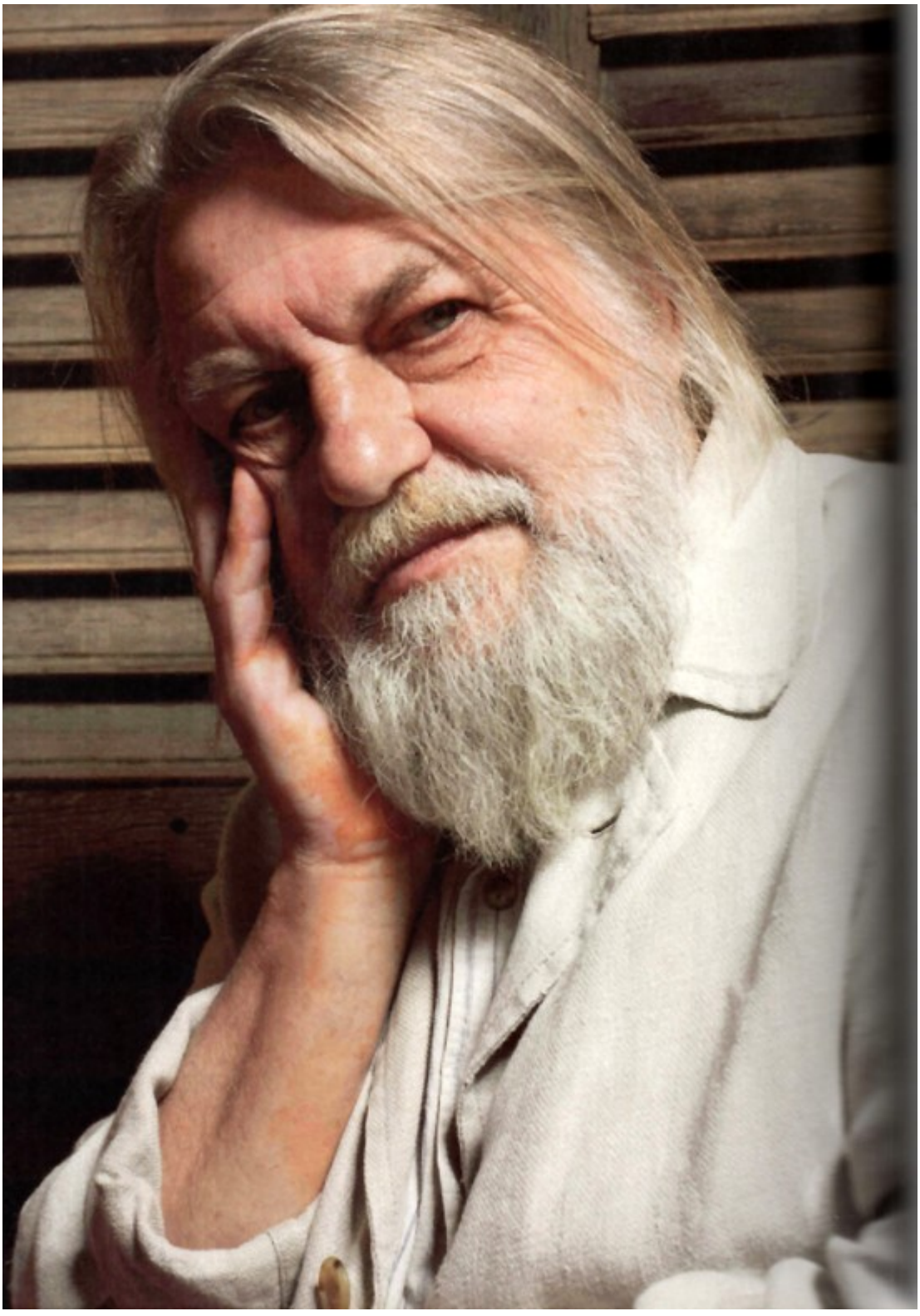
Ja, es ist wie ein Roman, nur dass es keine Prosa, sondern Lieder enthält. Daher dachte ich, ich nenne es eine Oper.

Glauben Sie, dass es Autoren - ob von Opern oder Romanen - gelingen kann, sich komplett von den Figuren, die sie erschaffen, zu distanzieren?

Ich vermute, dass das nicht geht. Als Autor lasse ich sie reden, handeln, singen, und daher sind sie ein Teil meiner Persönlichkeit. Aber ich mag viele Personen aus meinen Liedern nicht besonders. Einer ist zum Beispiel sehr nihilistisch; er lamentiert, es gäbe keinen Gott und er fände keinen Halt. Ein Jammerlappen! Ich hingegen genieße viel Halt. Ich habe Freunde, eine Frau und ein Telefon, (lacht)

Mögen Sie den Bomberpiloten aus Ihrem Song "A Beautiful War"?

Es gab eine Zeit im Zweiten Weltkrieg, als britische Piloten tatsächlich eine ehrenvolle Mission zu erfüllen hatten. Damals manifestierte sich die Einschätzung, der Bomberpilot erfülle eine sehr noble Aufgabe. Diese Meinung hat sich gehalten, jedoch müssen die noblen Flieger heute scheinbar wahllos ausgesuchte, unsinnige Ziele bombardieren. Ich habe versucht, mich in diese unschuldige Selbstgerechtigkeit eines Soldaten, der seine Pflicht zu erfüllen hat, hineinzuversetzen.



„Die simple Unterscheidung zwischen Ausbeutern und Ausgebeuteten ist noch immer das beste Instrument zur politischen Analyse."

Wie weit sind Sie gekommen?

Ich habe begriffen, dass die Unschuld eines

Soldaten nur dann funktioniert, wenn man den Begriff des Feindes völlig losgelöst von menschlichen Merkmalen definiert. Sobald Sie daran denken, dass der gegnerische Soldat Familie und Freunde hat, ist es mit der Unschuld dahin. Das ist der Grund, warum kluge militärische Führer so erpicht darauf sind, Kriege wie Computerspiele zu erklären. Wichtig war mir übrigens beim Zusammenstellen des Albums, dass danach ein Lied aus der Perspektive der Ausgebombten kommt.

Sie sprachen gerade von Ihrer geistigen Beweglichkeit. In Ihrer Karriere als Musiker haben Sie sehr verschiedene Arbeitsweisen ausprobiert.

Und alle haben mir Angst bereitet! In den ersten zehn Jahren war ich Schlagzeuger und Sänger einer Band. Schlagzeuger sind im besten Sinne Teilnehmer in einem Gruppenprozess, weder die Diktatoren noch die Diktierten. Es ist ein im Grunde unmöglicher Spagat, aber ich habe mir zehn Jahre lang Mühe gegeben. Dann kam der Unfall, und der Status des autonomen Künstlers war meine einzige Chance weiterzumachen. Es gibt übrigens keinen Grund, mein Weitermachen unabhängig von finanziellen Fragen zu verstehen. Ich brauchte damals schnell Geld, und bis heute mache ich Musik, weil ich Geld benötige.

Warum gehen Sie dann nicht mal auf Tour? Die Menschen lechzen danach, Sie wieder einmal live zu sehen, und Geld könnten Sie damit auch verdienen.

Nein. Was soll ich auf der Bühne? Meine Angst wäre unermesslich.

Zur Person

Robert Wyatt wurde am 28.01.1945 in Bristol geboren. Ab 1966 war er Sänger und Schlagzeuger der einflussreichen Psychedelic-Band The Soft Machine. Er verließ die Band Anfang der 70er und gründete kurzzeitig Matching Mole. Während einer Party in London stürzte er 1973 aus dem Fenster des dritten Stocks; seitdem ist er querschnittgelähmt und sitzt im Rollstuhl. Wyatt konzentrierte sich auf seinen Gesang und lernte Trompete. Er veröffentlicht in unregelmäßigen Abständen Soloalben, darüber hinaus ist seine Stimme auf Alben von Björk oder David Gilmour zu hören. Der erklärte Alt-Kommunist lebt mit seiner Frau, der Illustratorin und Dichterin Alfreda Benge, im englischen Louth.

Für die meisten Musiker definiert sich das Glück durch den direkten Kontakt zum Publikum. Warum macht es Ihnen Angst?

Wenn ich nur an die Menschenschlangen vor den Hallen denke, an die gewaschenen Haare, die Paare, die sich einen Abend der Zweisamkeit versprechen, die Väter, die ihre Söhne mitnehmen, damit sie Robert Wyatt sehen. (lacht) Ich kann die Verantwortung dafür nicht übernehmen.

Aber es ist doch nur ein Abend.

Eben, und ich kann unmöglich wissen, was die Leuten an genau diesem Abend von mir wollen. Dafür bin ich nicht professionell genug.

Haben Sie denn genug Selbstbewusstsein zu glauben, dass Ihre Platten die 15 Euro wert sind, die sie im Laden kosten?

Ganz ehrlich: Die Möglichkeit, dass Geizkragen sie umsonst aus dem Internet laden können, wirkt auf mich beinahe beruhigend. (lacht) Aber das Entscheidende ist: Ich bin nicht dabei, wenn sie das Album hören. Ich kann ihre Enttäuschung nicht sehen. Können Sie sich daran erinnern, wie der Kunstlehrer im Unterricht seine Runden machte und hinter ihrem Rücken stehen blieb? Konnten Sie dann mit ruhiger Hand

❶ Wyatting

An das Internet angeschlossene Jukeboxen verfügen über ein grenzenloses Repertoire – ein Umstand, den Musikfreunde in den USA und Großbritannien für besondere Späße nutzen. Sie wählen an Freitagabenden in vollen Pubs absichtlich verquere, unrhythmische, schwere Tracks aus. So läuft statt der Scissor Sisters etwa Brian Enos Ambient-Experiment „Thursday Afternoon" oder Tracks von Robert Wyatts komplexem „Dondestan"-Album. In England prägte ein bekennender Jukebox-Verstörer für diese Praxis das Verb „to wyatt".

weitermalen? Ich zumindest war schockgefroren.

Sie nennen Ihre neue Platte eine komische Oper. Was ist komisch an einem Thema wie Krieg, das sich durch das Album zieht?

Die Tragödie in ihrer altgriechischen Bedeutung erzählt von den Problemen der Götter und von den schrecklichen Konsequenzen für uns Menschen, wenn wir die Götter herausfordern. Das jedoch langweilt einen alten Atheisten wie mich. Das Komische handelt dagegen vom Leben auf der Welt. Wir sind nicht mehr als clevere Affen und neigen dazu, unsere Leben durch Religion oder Künste zu idealisieren. (überlegt) Und sicher auch durch Liebe.

Ist Liebe also nur eine Illusion?

Sie ist die tatsächliche Chance, sich in Jemandem zu verlieren und trotzdem seine Identität zu behalten. Ich glaube, dass das Selbst im Grunde eine Erfindung der Menschen ist. Auch wenn wir authentische Eigenschaften unseres Selbst entwickeln, sind diese doch vor allem von der Umwelt und vom Zeitgeist beeinflusst. (überlegt) Ich bin in der glücklichen Position, dass immer wieder Menschen auf mich zukommen und mich fragen, ob ich für sie singen und musizieren möchte. Leute wie Björk oder David Gilmour nehmen es auf sich, dass ich meine Unsicherheit in ihr Projekt einbringe. Sie vertrauen darauf, dass aus dem, was sie in mir sehen, und dem, was ich tatsächlich leisten kann, etwas Neues entsteht. Wäre Identität nicht flexibel, wäre dieser künstlerische Prozess nicht möglich.

Gefragt zu sein ist ein echter Luxus.

Für mich nicht, denn es macht mich nervös. Ich muss abwägen, was die Fragenden in mir sehen und was ich ihnen bieten kann. Sie müssen wissen, dass mir in musikalischer Hinsicht alles schwer fällt. Das einzige Instrument, an dem ich wirkliche Fähigkeiten hatte, war das Schlagzeug. Und das kann ich nicht mehr spielen.

Noch einmal zurück zur Identität: Wissen wir Menschen manchmal mehr über andere als über uns selbst?

Es ist eine sehr menschliche Eigenschaft, als Nichtwissende unseres Selbst wenigstens den Anderen zu verstehen zu wollen. Dabei sind viele Lebensläufe ziemlich beliebige Konstruktionen. Die Bäckerin in meinem Heimatort backt nur Brote, weil sie den Bäcker geheiratet hat. Das ist der einzige Grund. Selbst unsere Eltern sind im Grunde nur zwei Fremde: Gestatten, Vater und Mutter - keine Widerrede! Wir neigen dazu, uns vor dieser Beliebigkeit zu schützen, indem wir listige Begriffe wie Berufe und Familien



❷ „Comicopera“

Alle Schubladen bleiben zu, Robert Wyatt verweigert sich weiterhin jeder Einordnung. Seine neue Songsammlung beginnt mit zwei Liebesliedern, in der Folge wechselt Wyatt die Rollen: Er wundert sich als Spaziergänger über tote Hasen am Straßenrand, gibt den glücklichen Bomberpiloten, sendet verstörende Signale eines Zerbombten, lässt globale Tanzmusik auf dem Marktplatz spielen. Am Ende verweigert er sich dem Englischen aus Scham vor den Kriegen der anglo-amerikanischen Regierungen, und singt wundersame Lebensutopien auf Spanisch und Italienisch. „Comicopera“ ist auf Domino/Rough Trade erschienen.

erfinden, die Bedeutung suggerieren.

Halten Sie Nationalbewusstsein auch für solche Erfindungen?

Nun ja, es ist etwa nicht zu verleugnen, dass ich englisch bin. Es steckt in meinen Genen. Aber ich sehe nicht ein, dass allein aufgrund dieser Zugehörigkeit andere Engländer, die sich Politiker nennen, für mich sprechen und mich vertreten dürfen. Ich mag es auch nicht, wenn es in den Nachrichten heißt: Die Amerikaner verkünden dies, die Briten jenes. Das Problem sind nicht die Nationen, sondern die Art, wie sie repräsentiert werden.

Sie traten Ende der Siebziger der Kommunistischen Partei bei. Wie enttäuscht sind Sie heute vom Kommunismus?

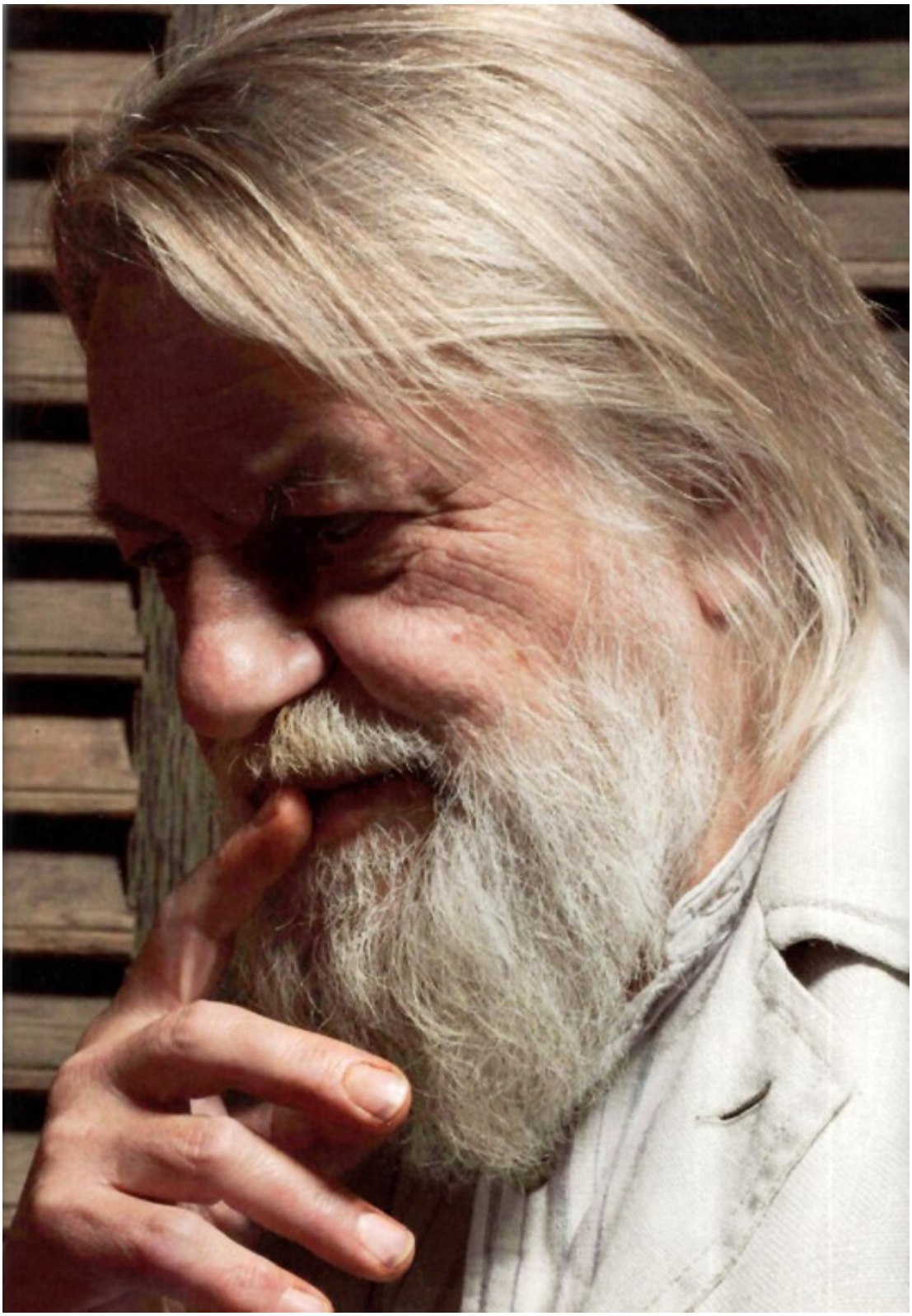
Ich bin von der Umsetzung enttäuscht, aber die Idee existiert weiter. Die analytischen Instrumente eines Karl Marx sind weiterhin gültig und zwar nicht nur für einen Altkommunisten wie mich. Wenn wir heute von religiösen oder kulturellen Konflikten reden, entstehen diese in Wahrheit auf der Basis ökonomischer und militärischer Ungleichheit. Ich halte die simple Unterscheidung zwischen Ausbeutern und Ausgebeuteten noch immer für das beste Instrument zur politischen Analyse.

Sind es nicht vielmehr Glaubensfragen, die heute die Konfliktlinien bestimmen?

Wer diese Probleme nur religiös deutet, übersieht, dass es auch dabei um Besitzverhältnisse geht. Der Konflikt in Nordirland war oberflächlich gesehen ein Problem zwischen Katholiken und Protestanten. Die Wurzel des Konflikts liegt jedoch darin, dass die Protestanten als Vertreter des britischen Empires die Wirtschaft und die Polizei bestimmten, während die Katholiken die Arbeiterklasse repräsentierten. Es war ein lupenreiner Klassenkampf! Das gilt auch für das Problem in Palästina, dem Mutterkonflikt zwischen Christentum und Islam. Das Machtgleichgewicht dort ist völlig aus der Balance geraten. Es ist wichtig, sich mit kulturellen oder religiösen Unterschieden zu beschäftigen, aber die wahren Wurzeln versteht nur, wer die marxistischen Begriffe kennt.

Sie schließen Ihre neue Platte mit einem Song von Carlos Puebla. Es ist eine Hommage an Che Guevara.

Es ist nicht meine erste Hymne an ihn. Viele sagen, er sei heute nur noch ein Posterboy, eine Art revolutionäre Reklame - aber das ist die Heilige Mutter Maria auch. Mir ist es egal, ob Ches Gesicht auf Postern in Wohngemeinschaften oder Handtaschen gedruckt wird. Auch wir Atheisten haben unsere kleinen Heiligen, und Che Guevara ist einer diesen Ikonen, die den Zeitgeist überlebt haben. Ich sage nicht, dass die Erinnerung an ihn die Welt retten kann, aber ebenso wenig bin ich bereit, ihn als Irrung meiner kommunistischen Jugend abzutun.



Immerhin spielt die Linke in Lateinamerika heute wieder eine bedeutende Rolle.

Ja, und ich bin voller Hoffnung, wenn auch nicht optimistisch. In Kuba hat sicher nicht alles so funktioniert, wie man es sich gewünscht hätte, aber die Insel ist noch immer ein Paradebeispiel für Stolz und Unabhängigkeit. Schauen Sie sich an, wie sehr Diego Maradona Fidel Castro vergöttert. (lacht) Aber es gibt auch ernsthaft gute Entwicklungen. Hugo Chávez in Venezuela ist nicht unumstritten, aber er ist ein Politiker, der in Kolumbien mit Geiselnehmern verhandeln kann, weil er dort respektiert wird. Chile hat mit Michelle Bachelet eine Premierministerin, die von Pinochet gefoltert wurde und jetzt das Land regiert. Auch in Brasilien und Argentinien gibt es einen neuen Geist, durchaus im Sinne von Che Guevara. Es ist kein Geist, der den großen Industrienationen gefällt, mir jedoch gibt er Hoffnung. Die Mächtigen können eine Generation zermalmen, vielleicht sogar zwei. Aber

einen Geist können sie nicht zerstören.

„Es ist nicht zu verleugnen, dass ich englisch bin. Aber ich sehe nicht ein, dass allein aufgrund dieser Zugehörigkeit andere Engländer, die sich Politiker nennen, für mich sprechen und mich vertreten dürfen."

Discografie (Auszug)
The Soft Machine
Third (1970)
Matching Mole
Matching Mole (1972)
Robert Wyatt
Rock Bottom (1974)
Nothing Can
Stop Us (1982)
Dondestan (1991)
Shleep (1997)
Cuckooland (2003)

Sehen Sie die Gefahr, dass der Westen den Geist ignoriert und nur Oberflächen wie Che Guevara-Poster oder kubanische Musik adaptiert?

Eine Analogie findet man in der Geschichte der schwarzen Kultur. Noch bevor es Ansätze für eine Gleichberechtigung zwischen Schwarzen und Weißen in den Vereinigten Staaten gab, waren die Schwarzen bereits als Bühnenmenschen akzeptiert. So lange sie sangen, war immer alles gut. Heute hat sich die schwarze Kultur eine Hegemonie erkämpft. Jeder noch so weiße Popmusiker will heute den alten Soulsound aus Philadelphia hinkriegen. Die alten Sklavennationen bestimmen heute die Weltkultur. Die Vertreter des alten britischen Empires wären überrascht, wenn sie wüssten, wem die britischen Kinder heute nacheifern. (grinst)

Genießen Sie es, wenn revolutionäre Gedanken funktionieren?

Sagen wir: Ich respektiere revolutionäre Gedanken wie etwa den radikalen Feminismus. Der These, dass Frauen die Welt erschaffen haben und Männer nun dabei sind, sie zu zerstören, kann ich nicht viel entgegensetzen. Ob aber ein Matriarchat die Lösung aller Probleme ist, weiß ich auch nicht.

Sie haben dieser und anderen Utopien am Ende Ihres Albums Platz geschenkt.

Ja, ich stelle in diesem letzten Akt mögliche Lösungen vor. Ein Stück ist eine totale, freie Improvisation. Es mag wie ein Experiment klingen, aber dahinter steckt die Ideologie, dass frei improvisierte Musik den Verstand befreit, damit auch den Menschen und schließlich die Welt. Ich habe keine Ahnung, ob sich daraus jemals nutzbare Anwendungen ergeben werden. Ich nehme diese schönen Ideen einfach als verrückte Wunschträume, die wir schlauen Affen uns ausdenken, um in unserem Leben endlich einen Sinn zu sehen.



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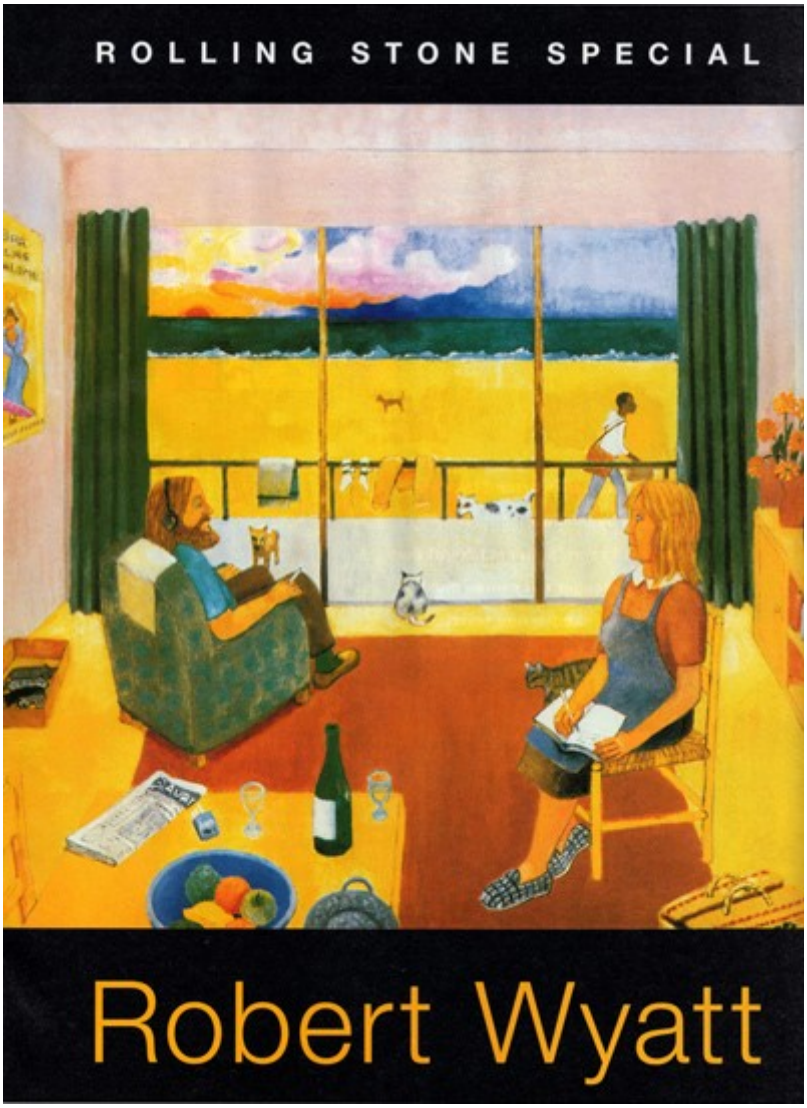
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Sketches of Pain - Rolling Stone N° 10 - Oktober 2007

SKETCHES OF PAIN



> Zoom

Sketches of Pain

Von Maik Brüggemeyer

Mit seinem Fall aus dem vierten Stock eines Londoner Wohnhauses begann für ROBERT WYATT 1973 ein neues Leben. Seitdem kämpft der ehemalige Schlagzeuger mit seinen musikalischen Unzulänglichkeiten und trotzt ihnen immer wieder einzigartige Lieder ab



Es ist ein malerischer Spätsommermorgen im sechsten Pariser Arrondissement. Die Sonne scheint auf die von den Schläuchen der Balayeurs aus den Vorstädten noch nassen Straßen, an denen Galérien, Modehäuser und Verlage residieren. Nach dem Krieg war hier die Bohème zu Hause. Saint-Germain-des-Prés war in den späten Vierzigern der Schauplatz der Romanze zwischen Miles Davis und Juliette Gréco - und der Liebe des Existenzialismus zum Bebop. In Clubs wie Boris Vians "St. Germain" in der Rue Saint-Benoît kehrten Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir und Albert Camus ein, wenn sie ihre Schreibstube, das Café "Les Deux Magots", verlassen hatten, um Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie oder das Modem Jazz Quartet spielen zu sehen.

Ganz in der Nähe, in der Rue Jacob, sitzt ein rauchender rauschebärtiger Mann im Innenhof eines unscheinbaren Hotels vor einer Tasse Erkältungstee mit Honig und gerät ins Schwärmen: "Dieses Viertel ist wie der Himmel auf Erden, voll mit fantastischen Erinnerungen und der ganzen Geschichte des Jazz. Ja, das ist der Ort, an dem all die Magie meiner Jugend zu Hause ist. Hier zu leben - ich würde es lieben. Aber praktisch ist es nicht möglich, ich komme hier ja nicht mal ohne fremde Hilfe auf die Straße."

Wir sind nicht vorbereitet

Seit seinem volltrunkenen Sturz aus dem vierten Stock eines Wohnhauses in Maida Vale, London, sitzt Robert Wyatt im Rollstuhl. Am 1. Juni 1973 ist das passiert. Einen Tag später wollte er mit seiner neuen Band ins Studio gehen und Lieder aufnehmen, die er im vorherigen Winter in einem alten Haus auf der italienischen Insel Guidecca geschrieben hatte. Dort hatte er mit seiner Freundin Alfreda Benge - die man aus Wyatts Songs und Interviews heute als "Alfie" kennt -, und der Schauspielerin Julie Christie gewohnt.

Der Blick auf die Bucht von Venedig, das geheimnisvoll schimmernde Wasser, die Eidechsen an den alten Mauern, die Gondolieri, Gigolos und Gigoletta, die in der Nachsaison in den Bars saßen und "O Sole Mio" sangen - all das spiegelte sich in der Musik und den Texten wieder, die er schrieb, während seine Mitbewohnerinnen in der Stadt einen Film mit dem Regisseur Nicolas Roeg drehten: "Don't Look Now" - "Wenn die Gondeln Trauer tragen". Benge als zweite Schnittassistenz, Julie Christie natürlich als Hauptdarstellerin.

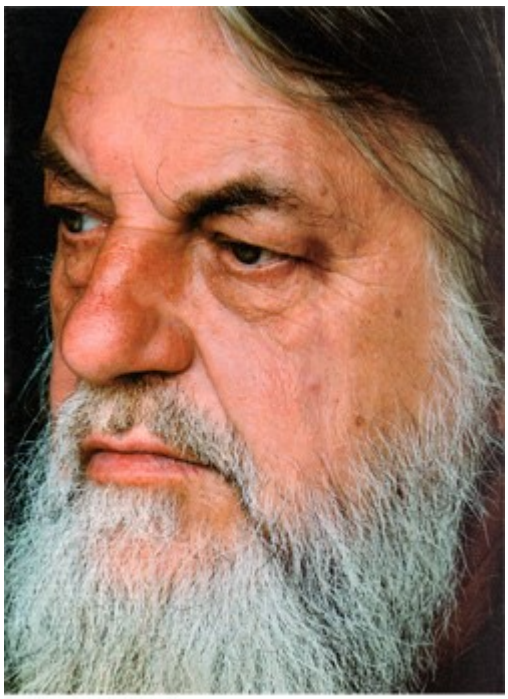


Photo : Alfie Benge

> Zoom

We are not prepared - wir sind nicht vorbereitet- war laut Roeg die Botschaft seiner schaurigen Daphne-Du-Maurier-Verfilmung. Wie recht er haben sollte - Robert Wyatt war laut Benge nicht der Einzige aus dem Umkreis der Filmcrew, dem später Schreckliches zustieß.

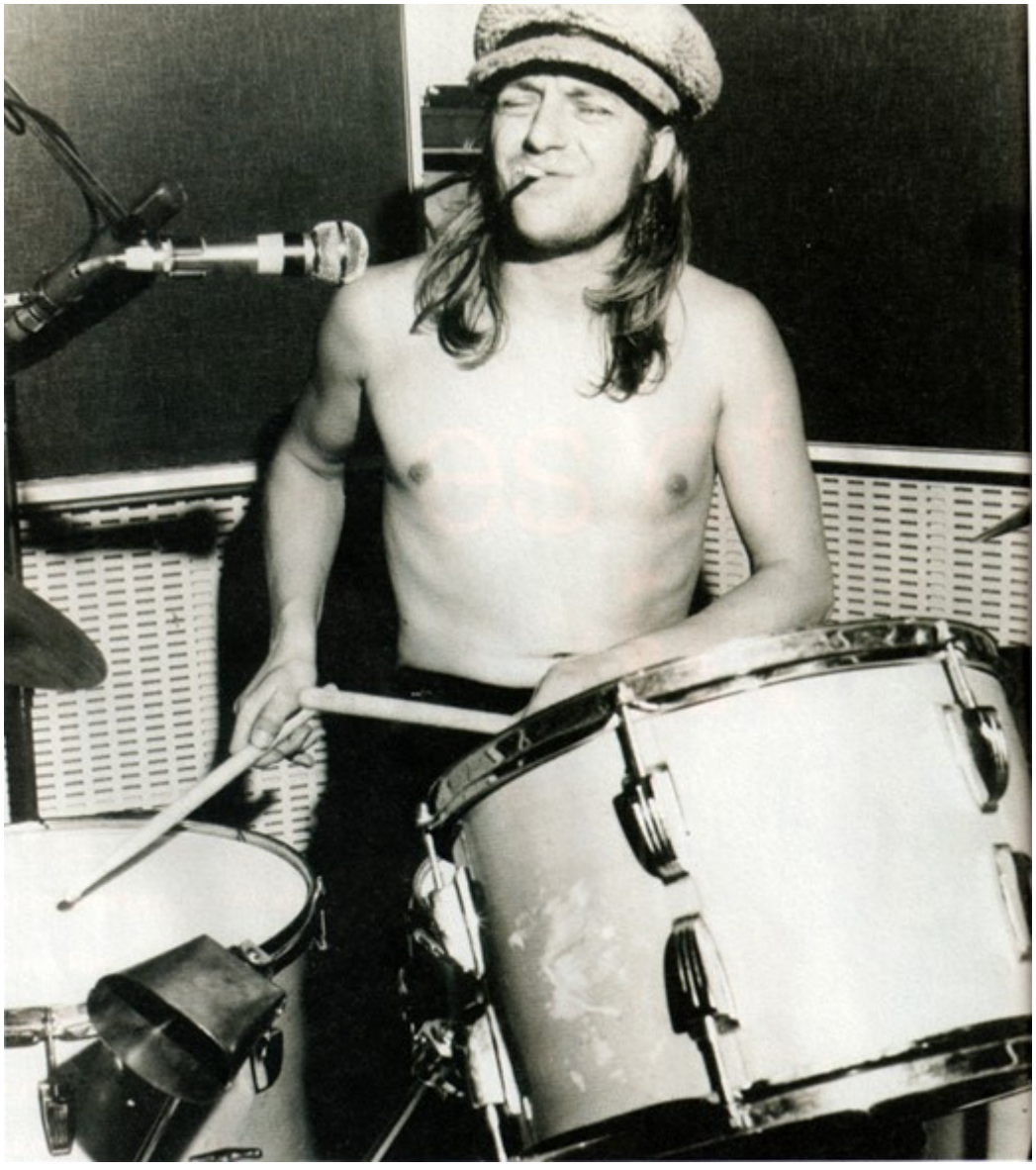
Nach dem Unfall konnte Robert Wyatt nicht mehr ohne fremde Hilfe zurück zur Magie seiner Jugend, der Weg zum Jazz war ihm versperrt. Die wilden Improvisationen, die er als furioser und virtuoser Schlagzeuger mit Soft Machine und Matching Mole gespielt hatte, waren genauso Geschichte wie der Bebop von Saint-Germain-des-Prés. "Wenn ich heute Videos von mir sehe, wie ich damals Schlagzeug gespielt habe, denke ich - *fuck man* - das ist ja eine sadistische olympische Anstrengung", kichert er. Es scheint, als sei er froh, dass er diese Phase seines Lebens hinter sich hat. "Die Kunst heißt Verdrängung", meint seine Frau Alfie später.

"Manchmal fühlt man sich wie im Gefängnis", gibt Wyatt zu und hebt hilflos die Arme. "Aber eine Art Lebenskraft fordert, dass man einen Weg da raus findet. Und wenn man ihn nur im eigenen Hirn findet." Er wiegt seinen Kopf nach links. "Aber ich weiss nicht, ich meine, wenn jemand im Gefängnis sitzt und ihm erlaubt ist, zu schreien: Lasst mich raus!, mag das eine gute Katharsis sein, aber sie bringt ihn nicht wirklich nach draußen." Da wackelt der Bart, Wyatt legt seinen Hals nach hinten über die Lehne seines Rollstuhls und sieht ein bisschen aus wie Winnie The Pooh.

Falls Wyatt, als er 1974 nach seinem achtmonatigen Krankenhausaufenthalt zurück ins Studio ging, geschrieen haben sollte, dann trifft auf ihn die Definition eines Dichters zu, die der dänische Philosoph Sören Kierkegaard am Beginn seines Hauptwerks "Entweder - Oder" aufstellte: "Ein unglücklicher Mensch, der tiefe Qualen in seinem Herzen birgt, dessen Lippen aber so geformt sind, dass, indem der Seufzer und der Schrei über sie ausströmen, sie klingen wie eine schöne Musik."







Sadistische olympische Anstrengung: Wyatt als Schlagzeuger bei Soft Machine (o.), zu Zeiten von Matching Mole (r.) und bei den Aufnahmen zu „*Rock Bottom*“ 1974

Beschränkt auf seine hohe, zwischen den Geschlechtern schwebende Stimme und die kleine italienische Orgel, auf der er die Stücke geschrieben hatte, spielte er sich mit Hilfe von Musikern wie Soft Machines Hugh Hopper, Caravans Richard Sinclair, Fred Frith und dem jungen Mike Oldfield in einen Zustand, in dem die Schwerkraft außer Kraft gesetzt schien und seine Behinderung nicht mehr ins Gewicht fiel. Die naiven Liebeslieder an den weiblichen Körper im Allgemeinen und seine Freundin Alfie im Speziellen klangen, als kämen sie direkt vom Meeresgrund vor Venedig.

"*Rock Bottom*" bediente sich der Techniken des Jazz - der freien Improvisation, dem Spiel mit Phrasierungen -war aber formell weit davon entfernt. Man hat das Gefühl, der Unfall war für Robert Wyatt am Ende eine Befreiung von den Fesseln der Virtuosität und der elitären Haltung der Prog-Rocker und Fusion-Jazzer. Eine Tragödie mit Happy End. Und am Tag der Albumveröffentlichung heiratete Robert Wyatt seine Alfie.

"Es gibt dieses Sprichwort", meint Wyatt, "eine Tür geht zu, eine andere öffnet sich. Da ist in meinem Fall was Wahres dran. Wenn man sich daran gewöhnt hat, etwas auf eine bestimmte Weise zu tun, und diese Möglichkeit wird einem dann genommen, muss man in seinem Inneren nach einer Lösung suchen. Und die kann man finden. Irgendwas findet man immer. Das ist das Prinzip."

Der Jazz und die abstrakte Wahrheit

Dem Prinzip des inneren Auswegs scheint auch Wyatts neues Album "*Comicopera*" zu folgen. Der Titel erklärt sich von den alten Griechen her. Die ja im Theater zwischen Komödie und Tragödie unterschieden, wobei letztgenannte sich um die Macht des Schicksals und die Götter rankte - an die der alte Kommunist Wyatt aber selbstverständlich nicht glaubt. Daher wählte er die komödiantische, das heißt die die menschlichen Eigenarten betreffende Form. In drei Akten spielt er sich vom Privaten zum Weltpolitischen und von dort zum Utopischen. Und wie in seinem Leben, sind auch auf "*Comicopera*" alle Ereignisse um eine Katastrophe herum ausgerichtet: den so genannten "Krieg gegen den Terror".

In dem neuen Song "A Beautiful War" singt Wyatt aus der Sicht eines US-Bomberpiloten von einem Luftangriff auf Beirut. Im folgenden Stück trägt er einen von insgesamt fünf Texten vor, die Alfreda Benge für das Album schrieb: "Out Of The Blue" schildert die gleiche Situation aus der Sicht eines Opfers. Dieser dialektische Moment, der alles über den Krieg zu sagen scheint, ist typisch für die Zusammenarbeit der beiden. Ihre Gedanken scheinen geradezu komplementär.

"Das Album begann als eine Sammlung unterschiedlicher Songs", erklärt Wyatt. "Warum am Ende ein kohärentes Konzept entstand? Weil Alfie und ich jeden Tag zusammen verbringen und die Welt sehr ähnlich wahrnehmen. Es war sehr einfach, die Stücke am Ende in eine richtige Reihenfolge zu bringen. Das Vertrauen in eine solche Herangehensweise kommt natürlich aus dem Jazz. Die Idee hinter einem Jazz-Solo ist ja, dass der Solist zwar zu schnell ist, um die Bedeutung jeder Note zu erfassen, doch wenn er zentriert ist und in der richtigen Tonart spielt, hat sein Spiel eine organische Kohärenz."

Im letzten Akt der "*Comicopera*", den Wyatt selbstironisch "Away with the fairies" - in anderen Sphären, jenseits der Realität - genannt hat, sucht er nach Auswegen aus der kriegerischen politischen Realität. Er findet sie außerhalb der anglo-amerikanischen Kultur und der englischen Sprache. Etwa im mystischen Feminismus von "Del Mondo" - einem Song der italienischen Band C.S.I. - und in der surrealistischen Dichtung Frederico Garcia Lorcas.

"Die ältere Generation der Radikalen, aus der ich komme, hat unterschiedlichste Fluchtwege geschaffen, die alle wundervoll und stimulierend sind", meint Wyatt. "Nur die Idee, dass sie einen realen Frieden und eine Alternative repräsentieren, wie man in der modernen Welt zurechtkommen kann, scheint mir bei aller Sympathie doch vermessen. Ich glaube nicht, dass die modernen Kunstbewegungen den Status Quo infrage stellten. Wer das glaubt, ist *away with the fairies*. Aber deshalb sind sie noch lang nicht lächerlich. Menschen können nicht allzu viel Realität vertragen."

Traditionen, die von der ANGLO-AMERIKANISCHEN KULTUR überrollt wurden, kehren zurück. Es gibt wieder mehr kulturelle Autonomie.

Ob das der Grund ist, dass er am Ende sogar noch einmal Carlos Pueblas post-revolutionären *Hasta Siempre Comandante* singt? "Ich glaube, an dem Song lässt sich genau ablesen, wie alt ich bin", lacht Wyatt, "vermutlich sogar mein exaktes Geburtsdatum." Ende der Siebziger war er in die Kommunistische Partei eingetreten und hatte sich geweigert, weitere Alben für die Majorfirma Virgin aufzunehmen. Stattdessen machte er bis zum Ende seines Vertrages lieber Singles mit Protestsongs, Arbeiter- und Befreiungslieder für das Indie-Label Rough Trade. Schon da sang er ein Lied von Carlos Puebla, *Caimanera*. "Die kubanische Revolution war die grosse Romanze unserer Generation, als wir jung waren", meint er leicht belustigt und krault seinen Bart. "Aber diese Lieder haben eine neue Relevanz bekommen, jetzt wo die große Mächte ihre Gewehre wieder gen Osten gerichtet haben und die anderen Teile des sogenannten kapitalistischen Empires nach neuen Wegen der Unabhängigkeit und Autonomie suchen."

In Lateinamerika gebe es gerade spannende politische Entwicklungen, so Wyatt. Michelle Bachelet, die einst vor Margaret Thatchers großem Freund General Pinochet floh, sei heute chilenische Staatspräsidentin. In Bolivien bekleide mit Evo Morales zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte Lateinamerikas ein Indio das höchste Amt des Staates, in Venezuela wende sich Präsident Hugo Chávez gegen die Interessen ausländischer Investoren, weil er die Ölreserven seines Landes lieber einsetzen wolle, um die dortige Armut zu bekämpfen. "Es gibt Anzeichen, dass Lateinamerika nach einer eigenen Form von Fortschritt strebt, so gesehen ist *Haste Siempre Comandante* für mich kein anachronistisches Lied. Aber was heute fehlt - und was ich persönlich sowieso niemals hatte -, ist dieser blinde Optimismus der Linken. Der hat mich nie überzeugt. Selbst als ich in der Kommunistischen Partei war, dachte ich, dass im Kampf der Reichen und Mächtigen gegen die Armen und Schwachen logischerweise *(lacht)* die Reichen und Mächtigen gewinnen."

Man kann natürlich argumentieren, dass Wyatt ein Ideologe der alten Schule ist, immer US-kritisch und sozialismusfreundlich war, und daher politisch und ästhetisch mit dem neuen Album einfach dort weitermacht, wo er immer schon gestanden hat. Und er würde einem sogar zustimmen. Doch das auf "*Comicopera*" ausgedrückte Verlangen, außerhalb der anglo-amerikanischen Kultur nach Bedeutungen und kulturellen Strategien zu suchen, scheint wieder Konjunktur zu haben. Ja, die Platte trifft sogar ziemlich genau den Zeitgeist. Nicht nur Oberflächenphänomene wie Balkan-Pop oder der Auftritt von Madonna mit Gogol Bordello beim "Life Earth"-Konzert deuten darauf hin, dass auch im Pop mittlerweile nach Ausdrucksformen jenseits des westlichen Mainstreams gesucht wird. Der in Venezuela aufgewachsene Devendra Banhart singt lateinamerikanische Folksongs, viele Künstler lauschen wieder auf die Kultur und Sprache ihres Herkunftslandes. "Und eine signifikante Nummer von Argentiniern, deren Eltern mit Rockmusik aufgewachsen sind, interessieren sich wieder für ihre eigene Kultur, spielen zum Beispiel Tango", führt Wyatt den Gedanken weiter. "Traditionen, die von der anglo-amerikanischen Popkultur überrannt wurden, kehren zurück. Es gibt wieder mehr kulturelle Autonomie auf der Welt. Stimmt, das ist ganz und gar nicht *away with the fairies*, das ist eine bessere Wirklichkeit."

Auf "*Comicopera*" finden sich einige Vertreter dieser "besseren Wirklichkeit". Musiker aus China, Brasilien, Italien und Israël sorgen für eine stilistische Vielfalt und geben dem Album eine Originalität, die charakteristisch ist für die besten Wyatt-Werke. "Hinter dieser Buntheit steckt kein ideologischer oder politischer Gedanke, eher ein ästhetischer", meint Wyatt. "Ich mag biologische Vielfalt. Ein Garten mit Blumen und Gemüse ist mir lieber als eine Monokultur. Die ist langweilig und gefährlich. Und gerade wenn man, wie ich, auf einer Insel lebt, sind nicht die Einwanderer das Problem, sondern die Inzucht."

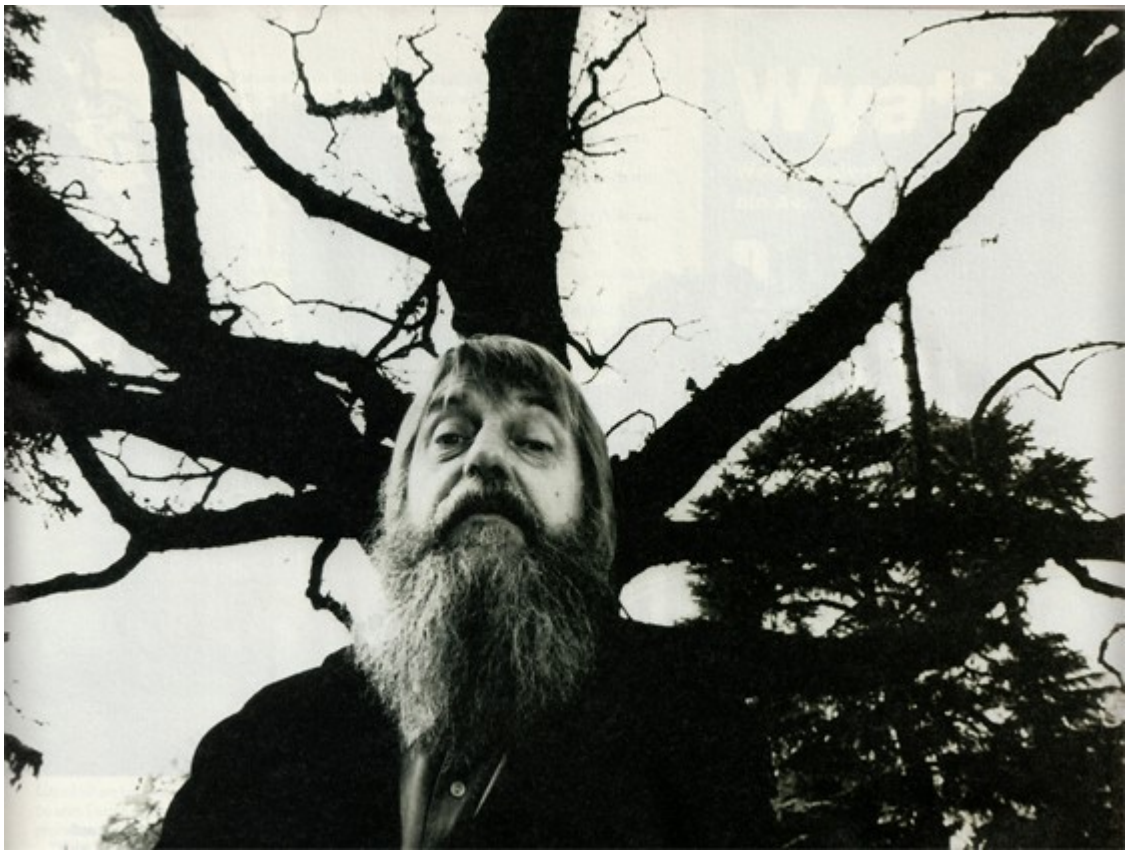


In dieser multikulturellen Mischung ist sogar Platz für den Blues. Dabei hat Wyatt diese Form früher so gut es ging gemieden, weil ihm die britische Bluesbewegung in den Sechzigern nicht geheuer war. Es schien ihm unfair, dass sich die Leute plötzlich für schwarze Musik interessierten, nur weil sie von weißen langhaarigen Jungs gespielt wurde. "Bestandteile des Blues verwendet natürlich jeder, weil es einfach die wundervollste Akkordfolge des 20. Jahrhunderts ist", meint er. "Sie ist unendlich flexibel. Man könnte eine Eddie Cochran-Aufnahme nehmen, die Geschwindigkeit verändern und sie in die Mitte eines Coltrane-Solos einsetzen - und es würde passen."



So richtig wohl fühle er sich beim Einsatz des Blues aber erst seit dem Ende der Apartheit, grinst er halbironisch. "Als Mandela aus dem Gefängnis kam, dachte ich, okay, hier ist etwas Wichtiges passiert, der Rassismus ist nun offiziell illegal. Das heißt nicht, dass er tot ist, natürlich nicht, aber die afrikanische Kultur ist aus dem Kerker befreit worden -fühle ich mich nicht mehr so schlecht, wenn ich sie benutze."

Auch wenn sich die einzelnen Elemente von "*Comicopera*" benennen lassen kommt man dem Klang dieser Platte so nicht näher. Eine Multi-Kulti-Platte ist es sicher nicht, weil hier nicht mit Vielfalt geprotzt wird. Mit dem Sound verhält es sich ähnlich wie mit dem inhaltlichen Konzept - oder einem Jazzsolo. Aus der Spontaneität des Zusammenspiels entsteht eine organische Kohärenz. Trotzdem ist " *Comicopera*" natürlich kein Jazzalbum. Eher ein Swing der Möglichkeiten - ein Robert-Wyatt-Album eben. Ein sehr gutes sogar. "Es gibt Musiker, die auf Sicherheit bedacht sind und in einem Idiom arbeiten, das schon existiert", erklärt Wyatt.



Wyatt bei den Dreharbeiten zum Video für seine Single „Shipbuilding“, das Elvis Costello zu einer Melodie von Clive Langer für ihn schrieb (o.l.) und in den späten Siebzigern und Neunzigern in London und Louth

"Und das ist vollkommen okay. Mingus ist tot, Ellington ist tot - da ist es schön, dass es Leute gibt, die das, was sie geschaffen haben, lernen und so konservieren. Ich arbeite auch mit Musikern, die das tun. Aber für mich liegt das Abenteuer darin, unter all den Geräuschen meine eigene Stimme zu finden, Sachen umzustellen und neu zu erfinden, dass sie sich so

anfühlen wie etwas Eigenes."

Just As You Are
Jahrelang war Wyatt ganz auf seine eigenen Fähigkeiten angewiesen, weil er nicht das Geld und nicht die Möglichkeiten hatte, mit anderen Musikern Alben aufzunehmen. Es war für ihn nach seinem Unfall schwer, in der kleinen Londoner Wohnung, in der er mit seiner Frau lebte, überhaupt neue Musik zu komponieren. "Arbeiten war dort fast unmöglich", erinnert sich Benge, die sich mittlerweile-um uns nicht beim Interview zu stören — an einen anderen Tisch ein paar Meter entfernt gesetzt hat. "Alle haben immer uns besucht, weil wir mit Roberts Rollstuhl nicht in ihre Häuser reinkamen."

So entstand in den Achtziger nur ein einziges, musikalisch großenteils eher schlichtes Album, "*Old Rottenhat*". Ende der Achtziger verkaufte Benge die Wohnung, und die beiden zogen nach Norden. Ins kleine Städtchen Louth in der Grafschaft Lincolnshire. Dort haben sie seitdem ein kleines Häuschen für sich, und Wyatt hat endlich einen Raum, in dem er ungestört Musik machen und alte Jazz-platten hören kann. "Es ist sehr angenehm dort", sagt er. "Es gibt einen kleinen Marktplatz, wo ich eine Tasse Tee und eine *sausage in a bun* bekomme. Und Alfie hat es uns in den fast 20 Jahren, die wir dort jetzt leben, sehr nett gemacht. Immer, wenn ein bisschen Geld von einer Platte reinkommt, steckt sie das wieder in einen Umbau oder eine Ausbesserung."

Sein einziges Problem sei die Langeweile, sagt Wyatt. "Ich versuche, mir mein Interesse für das, was um mich herum geschieht, zu bewahren. Auch wenn das Louth natürlich nicht besonders viel ist." Er erzählt, wie er manchmal den Schwalben zuschaut, wenn sie ein seltsames Spiel spielen.

"Es ist wie ein Fahrradreifen im Himmel. Eine Schwalbe fliegt hoch und wirft eine Feder hinab, die anderen tauchen hinterher, um sie zu kriegen, und kurz bevor sie auf dem Boden landet, nimmt eine von ihnen die Feder auf und steigt hoch, um sie wieder fallen zu lassen." Er schaut mich gespannt an und verschüttet ein bisschen von seinem Tee auf der Untertasse. "Man sagt ja immer, Tiere würden nach einfachen Instinkten funktionieren", fährt er fort" "aber es gibt absolut keinen biologischen Grund dafür, warum sie dieses Spiel spielen - sie haben einfach nur Spaß daran." Er strahlt, sieht mich an, senkt seinen Kopf. "Das klingt vielleicht, als sei es vollkommen bedeutungslos, aber diese Einsicht verändert für mich die Welt und macht sie interessanter."

Für mich liegt das Abenteuer darin, unter all den Geräuschen meine EIGENE STIMME zu finden, Sachen neu zu erfinden, dass sie sich so anfühlen wie etwas Eigenes.

Diese kindliche Begeisterung spricht auch manchmal aus seiner Musik. Wenn er sich etwa zu Beginn des neuen Songs "Beautiful Peace" an einen Spaziergang erinnert, den er als jugendlicher Robert Wyatt Ellidge (so sein vollständiger Name) unternahm, und erstaunt beschreibt, wie er zwei tote Hasen neben einer Styroporschachtel am Waldrand liegen sah. "Nur wenn ich mich in einem Zustand befinde, in dem ich die Dinge so betrachten kann, als hatte ich sie noch nie zuvor gesehen, kann ich kreativ sein", sagt er.

Das erste Album, das in Louth entstand, war Anfang der Neunziger "*Dondestan*", von der Presse damals als Comeback gefeiert. Wyatt bediente sich hier erstmals an den Texten seiner Ehefrau. Alfie hatte bei ihrem gemeinsamen Aufenthalt in Spanien im Winter zuvor einige Gedichte geschrieben, und Wyatt vertonte sie ohne ihr Wissen. "Er hat es mir erst erzählt, als fast alles fertig war", strahlt sie. "Und ich fühlte mich sehr geschmeichelt, denn ich wusste, dass er das nicht nur tut, weil die Gedichte von mir sind."

Doch die Arbeit allein in dem kleinen Haus in Louth stellte Wyatt auch vor Probleme: "Jede Idee, die ich habe, muss ich erst selbst erlernen", so Wyatt "Ich kann das nicht einfach so spielen, ich muss manchmal wochen-oder monatelang üben, bis ich meinen Ideen gerecht werde. Mein Komponisten-Ich ist auf mein Musiker-Ich oft nicht gut zu sprechen. Sogar in der Einsamkeit habe ich diese typischen Band-Streitereien."

Wyatts Vertrauen in seine musikalischen Fähigkeiten war noch nie sehr groß. Daher hat er wohl auch bis heute verwunden, wie ihn seine Kollegen von Soft Machine ihn im August 1971

ausboteten. Er spricht nicht gern darüber und bezeichnet die Zeit bei seiner alten Band als den größten Fehler seines Lebens. Die Selbstsicherheit des von seinem musikalischen Instinkt geleiteten Wyatt hat sicher unter der Konfrontation mit den musiktheoretisch geschulten Ratledge und Hopper gelitten. Aus Angst zu versagen, finanziert Wyatt jedes seiner Alben zunächst selbst, bevor er das fertige Produkt einer Plattenfirma anbietet.

Mitte der Neunziger ging er in ein Studio in Lincolnshire, um mit den Arbeiten für den Nachfolger von *"Dondestan"* zu beginnen. Nach drei Tagen, die ihn ungefähr 2000 Pfund kosteten, hörte er sich die Aufnahmen an und hasste sie. Die Vorstellung, Geld, das er nicht hatte, für Musik auszugeben, die er nicht mochte, stürzte ihn in eine tiefe Krise. Er erlitt einen Nervenzusammenbruch und musste behandelt werden. Als er sich erholt hatte, lud Ex-Roxy Music-Gitarrist Phil Manzanera ihn in sein neues Studio in London ein und bot ihm an, für einen Pauschalpreis so lange aufzunehmen, bis er mit dem Ergebnis zufrieden wäre. Auf diese Weise entstanden "*Shleep*", der Nachfolger "*Cuckooland*" und auch das neue Album "*Comicopera*".

Mein KOMPONISTEN-ICH ist auf mein MUSIKER-ICH oft nicht gut zu sprechen. Sogar in der Einsamkeit habe ich diese typischen BAND-STREITEREIEN.

Mittlerweile ist aus den Musikern, die sich seit "*Shleep*" zu den Sessions für jedes neue Robert-Wyatt-Album in den Gallery Studios versammeln, sogar eine Art kleine Band geworden, zu der neben dem Toningenieur und Gitarristen Jamie Johnson und Studiobesitzer Phil Manzanera auch die Posaunistin Annie Whitehead, der israelische Saxofonist Gilad Atzmon, sein Landsmann, der Bassist Yaron Stavie und sogar Paul Weller gehören. "Ich kann kein Musikstück schreiben und sagen, hier gehört ein Saxofon hin und hier eine Flöte", schüttelt Wyatt den Kopf. "Ich muss den Charakter der jeweiligen Musiker kennen. Das habe ich von Mingus und Ellington gelernt. Jeder im Orchester hat eine eigene Stimme. Das macht die Musik lebendig. Deswegen gebe ich jedem Musiker seinen Raum. Ich mag es wenn Annie ihren großen Moment hat oder Gilad und ich hinten sitzen kann und nur meine kleinen Metallstückchen, meine Mülleimerdeckel aufeinanderschlage - *crish, crash, crish, crash*. Es geht mir bei einem Album nicht um einen abstrakten Sound, ich genieße die Gesellschaft dieser Musiker."



Der Chet-Baker-Fan **Wyatt** findet **auch in der** englischen **Provinz aufmerksame Zuhörer**

(o.). Wyatt 2007 auf dem Jahrmarkt in Louth, sich - wie er sagt - ,,an die Freuden **der** kindlichen **Fantasie erinnernd" (u.)**

Die Arbeit an den letzten drei Alben habe ihm bei seinem Kampf gegen die tödliche Langeweile sehr geholfen, sagt er. Man müsse immer wach und interessiert bleiben bei diesen Musikern. In dieser Hinsicht scheint auch Brian Eno über die Jahre ein wichtiger Kollaborateur und Freund geworden zu sein. Es sei schwer zu erklären, was es neben einigen Melodien und Synthesizer-Sounds eigentlich genau sei, was er zu den Alben beisteuere, rätselt Wyatt. Benge schaut zu uns herüber - ihr fällt eine Bezeichnung dafür ein: "kreativer Enthusiasmus".

Als Benge und Wyatt an einem Tag während der Aufnahmen zu "*Comicopera*" im Studio saßen und nicht arbeiten konnten, weil der Toningenieur krank geworden war, kam Eno vorbei. "Ich hatte gedacht, wir quatschen ein bisschen, wie wir es häufig tun, doch dann sagte er: 'Let's do something.' Er ist ein *Do-aholic*", lacht Wyatt. Eno schlug vor, Robert und Alfie sollten zusammen einen Song schreiben. "Wie war das noch mal genau, Alfie?", fragt Robert, und Alfie setzt sich zu uns an den Tisch.

Robert: Also, ich spielte diese Phrase auf dem Klavier, so ein simples Country-Godspel-Ding.

Alfie: Dann sagte Brian: "Okay, Alfie, wir brauchen Text. Denk dir eine Phrase aus. "Ich wählte "You're never going to change a thing." Aber wie schreibt man von dort aus einen Text zu einem Country-Song? Hm, dachte ich, er muss persönlich sein und ehrlich - und es sollte um Beziehungen gehen.

Robert: (in *meine Richtung)* Etwas, das jeder versteht, das ist die Regel.

Alfie: Also habe ich mich an der Realität bedient. Es geht in dem Text um ein Problem, das damals zwischen uns stand.

Robert: Also hat sie es in den Song eingebaut. Da ist es nun. Es war nur ein Spiel, aber Alfie war sehr böse auf mich damals.

Alfie: Und ich sagte, wenn der Text ehrlich sein soll, dann muss das im Text vorkommen.

Robert: Okay, hab ich gesagt, kein Versteckspiel jetzt. Aber sie schrieb auch einen Teil, in dem ich auf ihre Vorwürfe antworte, so dass ich meine Würde bewahre *(lacht).*

Alfie: Meine Liebe zu ihm ist an Bedingungen geknüpft, er muss sich benehmen. Er stellt dagegen nie irgendwelche Regeln auf, ich kann machen, was ich will. Das ist ziemlich unfair, und darum geht's in dem Song.

Robert: Sie war sehr gütig zu mir, sie hat mir eine Ausstiegsklausel am Ende des Songs gegeben.

Man hört den beiden gerne zu, wenn sie erzählen. Wenn sie miteinander reden und Gesten austauschen, wie man das wohl nur kann, wenn man fast 35 Jahre zusammenlebt - und das nicht nur auf einer alltäglichen, sondern auch auf einer kreativen Ebene. Aber es liegt doch eine Melancholie, eine große Traurigkeit über dieser Harmonie, wenn man weiß, welches Problem in "Just As You Are" zwischen ihnen stand. Alfie erzählte mir davon, aïs Robert ein anderes Interview führte, und ich musste an Paul Simons sentimentales "René And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War" denken, als ich die beiden später gemeinsam Tee trinken sah.

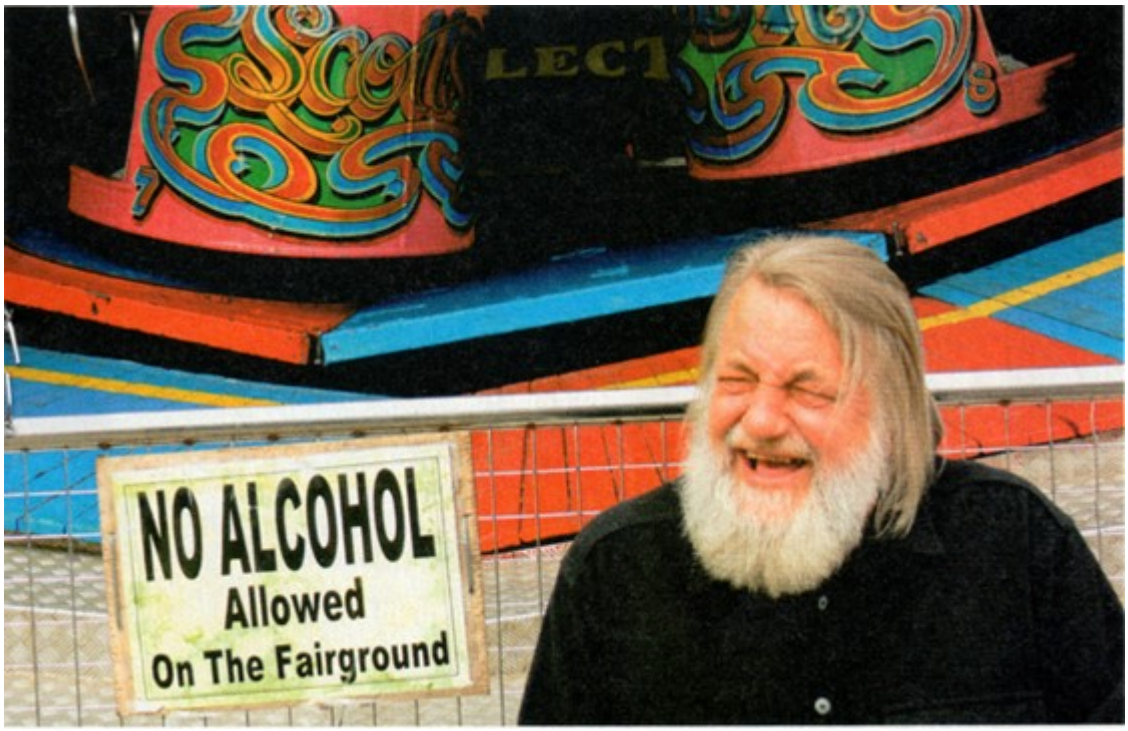
"Es wird immer schwieriger für ihn, die ganze Verantwortung zu tragen, die mit einem solchen Album verbunden ist", so Benge. "Er hasst es, sich zu wiederholen, also fängt er jedes Mal wieder ganz von vorne an. Das einzige Instrument, das er virtuos beherrschte, kann er nicht mehr spielen, sein Stimmumfang nimmt ab, weil er älter wird. Und weil es ihm an Selbstsicherheit fehlte, fing er an zu trinken. Und wurde praktisch ein Alkoholiker. Und wenn er trank, fühlte ich mehr sehr einsam. Ich wollte meinen alten Robert zurück, denn er ist ein kluger Kopf, dessen Gesellschaft ich nicht missen möchte. Ich habe ihm 30 Jahre gegeben, und ich will mindestens noch einmal 20. Deshalb habe ich die neue Platte gehasst, weil sie meinem Freund, mit dem ich mich immer so gut unterhalten habe, das antut."

"Das kannst du ruhig schreiben", sagt Wyatt, der seine Sucht mittlerweile im Griff hat, später. "Der Alkohol war Teil der Schlacht." Mit der Seele eines Kindes, dem Kopf eines Jazzers, dem Herz eines Kommunisten, der Stimme eines Dichters, den Zweifeln eines aus

dem Paradies der Jugend Vertriebenen und dem Leben eines 62-jährigen Alkoholikers und Rollstuhlfahrers aus Louth, Lincolnshire hat Robert Wyatt auf bewegende Weise davon erzählt, was es heißt, ein Mensch zu sein. Durch seine magische Fähigkeit, Schmerz in Schönheit zu verwandeln, hat er dabei die privaten und weltpolitischen Tragödien in einer "Comicopera" aufgehoben.

Drei Alben lang habe er ständigen Zuspruch von seinen Musikerfreunden gebraucht, um zu erkennen, dass er alle kreativen Ideen, die er habe, nun herauslassen müsse. "Ich habe einfach keine Zeit mehr, noch langer zu warten", sagt er und kratzt sich an der Wange, wo drei große, schwarze Altersflecken den unbarmherzigen Lauf der Zeit zu bestätigen scheinen. "Früher dachte ich immer an die Zukunft, aber die Zukunft ist jetzt, näher komme ich ihr nicht."

Am Ende unseres Gesprächs schwebt vom Himmel eine Feder in unseren Hinterhof und lässt sich auf Robert Wyatts Kopf nieder. Er schaut nach oben und sagt mit kindlicher Stimme: "Thank you, bird." Ich bin mir sicher, dass er auch Charlie "Bird" Parker dankte.



Wyatting

Was passiert, wenn Jukebox-User die Avantgarde fur sich entdecken

Die ,,New York Times"-Kolumnistin Wendy McClure verbrachte einen Abend nach Redaktionsschluss in einer dreckigen Bar namens ,,Rossi's", in der eine ans Internet angeschlossene Jukebox stand, die meist Popmusik dudelte. Doch irgendjemand musste zu später Stunde Brian Enos ,,Thursday Afternoon" gewählt haben, ein Ambient-Stück, in dem ein einziger, ferner Klavierakkord sich eine Stunde und 50 Sekunden lang immer und immer wieder wiederholt. McClure stand den Track fasziniert und paralysiert bis zum Ende durch. ,,Stellen Sie sich vor, sie würden den Blechzylinder in einer Musikbox durch ein

aus Nervenenden gefertigtes Möbiusband ersetzen", beschrieb sie die Szene in ihren Text ,,Unhappy Hour" in der ,,New York Times"-Rubrik ,,True Life Tales" am 4. Juni 2006. Die anderen ,,Rossi's" Besucher sollen von diesem Abend nicht ganz so begeistert gewesen sein.



Der amerikanische Musikkritiker Simon Reynolds (,,Rip It Up And Start Again") verlinkte McClures Artikel in seinem Weblog und bekam eine Menge Zuschriften von Leuten, die ihm versicherten, dass das enervierende Spiel mit der ,,infinite Jukebox" schon längere Zeit sehr beliebt sei.

Die Situationisten, die es sich in den Fünfzigern und Sechzigern die Realisierung der Versprechungen der Kunst im Alltagsleben zum Zielgesetzt hatten,wurden als Ahnherren dieses nervenaufreibenden Spiels ausgemacht. Carl Neville, ein 36-jähriger Englischlehrer aus London, schrieb, die perfekte Art und Weise, einen geschäftigen Freitagabend in einer der angesagten Bars seines Heimatortes Ramsgate aus dem Ruder laufen zu lassen, sei es, Robert Wyatts Album *..Dondestan"* aufzulegen. Mittlerweile habe sich das schon zu einem Ritual entwickelt: ,,0nce a month when I visit family and friends we go ‚Wyatting'." So kam die kulturelle Guerilla-Taktik zu ihrem Namen. Auch Alben des Mahavishnu Orchestra, der Einstürzenden Neubauten und des japanischen Noise-Projects Merzbow seien schön verstörendes Jukebox-Futter, schrieb Neville weiter und schlug vor, in New York eine spezielle ,,Wyatt Squad" zu gründen.

Schwer vorstellbar, dass Robert Wyatt diese elitäre Strategie gutheißt, wo er doch jahrelang bei Soft Machine selbst von kulturellen Snobs gepeinigt wurde. Doch vom englischen ,,Guardian" um eine Stellungnahme zu seinem Einzug in die Sprache des Pop gebeten, sagte er, er fühle sich sehr geschmeichelt, ein Verb geworden zu sein.

Er würde selbst niemals Wyatting betreiben, lacht er, als ich ihn darauf anspreche. ,,lch würde niemandem eine verstörende Platte aufdrängen, der sie nicht freiwillig hören will. Meine Musik ist nur für Leute, die sie mögen. Ich habe einen jungen Mann getroffen, der sagte: ‚lch liebe deine Musik, aber meine Freundin hasst sie.' Wenn sie's nicht mag, spiel's nicht, habe ich ihm gesagt. Liebe ist wichtiger, kümmere dich um die Frau. Mensch, das ist dein Leben. Was ich tue, ist nur eine Platte. *Fuck my record,* spiel, was sie mag", lacht er kopfschüttelnd. ,,Einer meiner besten Freunde vor 20 Jahren war ein Jazzkritiker namens Brian Case. Der mochte meine Sachen überhaupt nicht. Er hat sie dann einfach ignoriert und so getan, als sei ich einfach nur ein Jazzfan, der mit ihm gerne alte Platten hört."

Der Kontrakt mit der **Zeichnerin**

Mit der ehemaligen Kunststudentin Alfreda Benge führt Robert Wyatt seit über 35 Jahren eine kreative Lebensgemeinschaft



Benges visuelle Umsetzung der Textzeile „Alifie my larder“ – „Alfie meine Speisekammer“ von Wyatts Meisterwerk „Rock Bottom“ (o.)

Das ist gut, dass du auch mit ihr sprichst", sagte Robert Wyatt vor meinem Interview mit seiner Frau Alfreda „Alfie" Benge. „Sie ist die dunkle Seite dieses Mondes. Jedenfalls ist sie der Ernsthaftere von uns beiden, nun, es braucht zwei zum Tango tanzen."

Die beiden lernten sich 1971 bei einem Matching Mole-Konzert kennen und kurz darauf bei einem Kinks-Konzert lieben. Vorgestellt hatte sie einander Wyatts erste Frau Pam, die zu der Zeit schon mit dem gemeinsamen Sohn Sam beim Gong-Schlagzeuger Pip Pyle lebte. Benge hatte Ende der Fünfziger den Jazz für sich entdeckt und ist sich sicher, dass Wyatt zu Beginn ihrer Beziehung mindestens genauso sehr an ihrer Plattensammlung interessiert war wie an ihr.

Benge, Tochter eines österreichischen Grenzsoldaten und eines polnischen Mädchens, war nach Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs mit ihrer Mutter und ihrem Stiefvater, einem englischen Soldaten, nach London gegangen und hatte dort Ende der 50er Jahre begonnen, Kunst und Film zu studieren. Als sie Wyatt kennenlernte, stand sie kurz vor ihrem ersten größeren Job als zweite Schnittassistentin für Nicholas Roegs „Don't Look Now". „Ich wusste, dass ich Robert verlieren würde, wenn ich ohne ihn zu den Dreharbeiten nach Venedig fahren würde", erzählt sie. Also bot sie ihrem Freund an, mitzukommen und kaufte ihm ein kleines Keyboard, damit er tagsüber beschäftigt war.

Als die beiden nach England zurückkamen, wollte Benge in England weiter beim Film arbeiten, doch nach Wyatts Unfall gab sie ihren Job auf. „Ist mir nicht beson-

ders schwer gefallen", sagt sie heute. „Die Filmindustrie hat nichts mit dem Filmemachen zu tun, wie man es an der Filmhochschule lernt. Als ich sah, wie Nicolas Roeg von den Geldgebern unter Druck gesetzt wurde, merkte ich, dass ich nicht die Kraft habe, es dort zu etwas zu bringen."

Wyatt bot ihr an, das Cover für sein nächstes Album *„Rock Bottom"* zu entwerfen – und so begann sie sich wieder stärker für die Malerei zu interessieren. Auf dem *„Rock Bottom"*-Stück „Alifie" – einem Wortspiel mit den Worten „alife" und „Alfie" – singt Benge sogar mit. „Er sang ‚Alifie my larder'. Und ich war sehr betrunken und sagte: ‚Ich bin keine Speisekammer. Darauf will ich dann aber schon antworten.' Also schrieb ich ein paar Zeilen für den Song und sang sie dann auch."

Schon auf Matching Moles *„Little Red Record"* war erstmals ihre Stimme zu hören gewesen, doch als Sängerin tauge sie nicht, meint sie. „Ich trage gern ein paar Geräusche bei, von denen man nicht weiß, dass sie von mir sind. Auf allen Alben ist was von mir drauf. Einmal spielte er mir eine Aufnahme von sich am Keyboard vor und ich sagte: ‚Da fehlt ein bisschen von diesem Summen, diesem sssssssss.' Und er sagte: ‚Okay, geh in den Aufnahmeraum.' Und ich mache: ‚Sssssss'. Jeder denkt, das wäre das Keyboard, aber das bin ich."

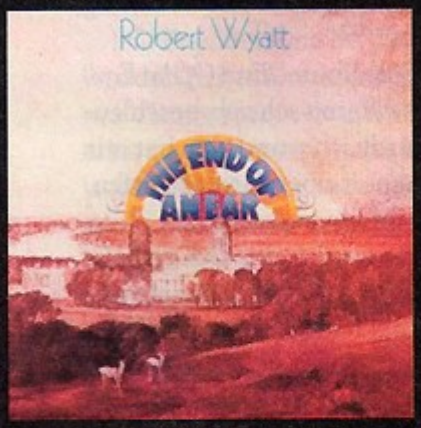
Benge hat seit *„Rock Bottom"* alle Albumcover für ihren Mann entworfen, und auf *„Dondestan"* vertonte er erstmals einige ihrer Gedichte, die sie unter dem Titel „Out Of Season" über ihren gemeinsamen Winteraufenthalt in Spanien geschrieben hatte. „Auf *‚Shleep'* hat er auch einige davon verwendet", so Benge, „aber bei dem Stück ‚Alien' sagte er zum ersten Mal: ‚Hier ist die Musik, schreib einen Text dazu.' Das hat mir wirklich Spaß gemacht, und ich sagte, mehr davon."

Auf dem nächsten Album, *„Cuckooland"* schrieb sie an fünf Stücken mit, eines davon – „Lullallop" – ist sogar ganz von ihr. „Texten ist meine liebste Beschäftigung", sagt sie. „Es macht mir mehr Spaß als die Malerei, weil man nie vor einer leeren Leinwand steht. Alles, was man tun muss, ist zuhören und sich etwas ausdenken. Außerdem kann man es im Liegen tun – und man muss keine Pinsel auswaschen."



At Last I Am **Free**

Die Robert Wyatt/Matching Mole Diskografie Von Maik Brüggemeyer



THE END OF AN EAR *(1970)*
„Robert Wyatt, out of work pop singer" steht auf dem Cover zu Wyatts erstem Soloalbum. Doch von Popmusik kann auch auf „The End Of An Ear" nicht die Rede sein – und von Gesang im hergebrachten Sinne auch nicht. Wyatt nutzt seine Stimme eher wie ein weiteres Instrument, formt Laute, keine Wörter. In „Las Vegas Tango", einem Stück von des Jazz-Arrangeur Gil Evans, das *„The End Of An Ear"* eröffnet und beendet, scheint sein Mund – oder vielmehr sein Körper – gleich ein ganzes Orchester zu ersetzen. ★★★★

MATCHING MOLE: MATCHING MOLE *(1972)*
Der Bandname ist ein Spiel mit der französischen Übersetzung von Soft Machine – machine molle. Mit dem ersten Album seiner neuen Gruppe scheint Wyatt an den Geist von *„Volume Two"* anknüpfen zu wollen, dem letzten Albam seiner alten Band, das ihm gefiel. Zum Mellotron, das er im Studio fand, gelingt ihm außerdem eines seiner schönsten Liebeslieder: „O Caroline". ★★★1/2



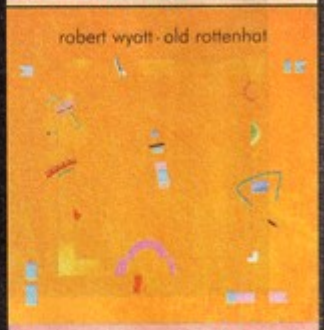
MATCHING MOLE: LITTLE RED RECORD *(1972)*
Ein weitaus wuchtigeres, muskulöseres und komplexeres Album voll Improviation und *dada politics*. Besondere Höhepunkte sind allderings die Stücke, die dieser Formel nicht folgen: das atmosphärische „Gloria Glomm" mit Brian Enos Synthesizer und der eher traditionelle „God Song": „Next time you send your boy down here/ Give him a wife and a sexy daughter/ Someone we can understand." ★★★



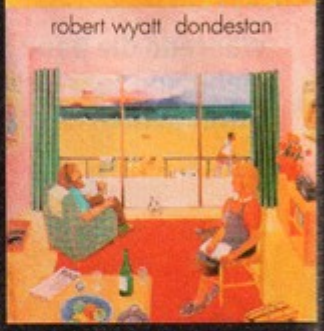
ROCK BOTTOM *(1974)*
Über der Produktion liegt die Tragik des schweren Unfalls und die Mystik der Entstehung dieser Songs auf einer Insel vor der Lagune von Venedig. Wyatt schafft sich in diesen fünf in einem Meeresparadies spielenden Liebesliedern einen subaquatischen Rückzugsort und kehrt zugleich in das Paradies seiner Kindheit zurück. Eine der schönsten, originellsten und geheimnisvollsten Platten der populären Musik. ★★★★★



RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD *(1975)*
Ein wieder stärker am Jazz angelehntes Ensemble-Album, auf dem Brian Eno, Phil Manzenera, Bill McCormick und Fred Frith als Komponisten und/oder Musiker mitwirken. Wyatt lässt wieder mehr Raum für Improvisationen und absurden Humor. ★★★★



OLD ROTTENHAT *(1985)*
Er habe Songs schreiben wollen, die nicht von der politischen Rechten missbraucht werden können, so Wyatt über diese großenteils musikalisch eher schlichten politischen Songs. Das von einem synthetischen Beat angetriebenen „The Age Of Self" klingt fast hitverdächtig, „Gharbzadegi", das ein Motiv aus John Coltranes „A Love Supreme" aufgreift, ist Wyatts schönstes Stück. ★★★1/2



DONDESTAN *(1991)*
Der Umzug von London ins eigene Haus in Louth wirkt wie eine Befreiung. Wieder im Alleingang aufgenommen mit Klavier, Synthesizern, Zimbeln und der alten italienischen Spielzeugorgel von *„Rock Bottom"* ist *„Dondestan"* das beste und vielschichtigste Album seit dem Meisterwerk von 1974 . Die Hälfte der Stücke sind Vertonungen von Alfreda Benges Gedichten, die andere Hälfte politische Songs Marke *„Old Rottenhat"*. ★★★★1/2



SHLEEP *(1997)*
Ein helles, impressionistisches, fast Pop-affines Album, das mit seiner Schlafen/Wachen-Motivik fast klingt, als habe der alte Kommunist Wyatt sich ins Private zurückgezogen. Freud ist dieses Mal wichtiger als Marx. Erstmals wieder mit einer Band aufgenommen, spielen dieses Mal auch Gitarren eine größere Rolle. Paul Weller gibt Wyatt sogar den Blues. ★★★★



CUCKOOLAND *(2003)*
Das musikalische Kollektiv von *„Shleep"* kombiniert mit der Liebe zum Bebop sowie den Keyboard-Sounds und der lyrischen Dichte von *„Dondestan"*. *„Cuckooland"* wirkt wie ein Panoptikum des Wyattschen Schaffens. Ein langes, vielgestaltiges Album, das allein von Wyatts Präsenz zusammengehalten wird . ★★★★1/2

Geoff Travis, Chef des Rough-Trade-Labels, konnte Wyatt ein halbes Jahrzehnt nach seinem letzten Album zu einem Comeback bewegen. Albumtechnisch noch an Virgin gebunden, nahm Wyatt fünf in ihrer Spontaneität von den Nachwirkungen des Punk beeinflusste Singles mit Arbeiter-, Befreiungs- und Protestsongs auf – aber auch mit Chics „At Last I Am Free". Die letzte Single wurde die bekannteste: das von Elvis Costello und Clive Langer speziell für Wyatt geschriebene „Shipbuilding". Die ersten vier Singles wurden mit zwei Bonus-Stücken – Wyatts Song über Nelson Mandela „Born Again Cretin" und dem Arbeiterlied „Red Flag" – als Album unter dem Titel *„Nothing Can Stop Us"* (★★★1/2) veröffentlicht.

„Shipbuilding" kann man heute auf der Sammlung *„EPs"* (★★★★) nachhören, einer Box mit fünf CDs in EP-Länge. Dort finden sich neben Wyatts Versionen von „I'm A Believer" und Chris Andrews „Yesterday Man" auch rare Stücken wie eine Live-Version von „Calyx", Tracks von Compilations, die Soundtrackarbeit zu Victor Schonfields Low-Budget-Dokumentation „The Animals", die 1984 veröffentlichte EP „Work In Progress" und vier gelungene Remixes von Stücken des *„Shleep"*-Albums. Leider fehlt die EP „The Peel Sessions" von 1974, ein berührendes Dokument des frühen Solokünstlers Robert Wyatt. Diese Aufnahmen wurden mit weiteren BBC-Stücken, einem weiteren Soundtrack und neuen, mit Hugh Hopper aufgenommenen Tracks 2003 auf der Raritäten-Compilation *„Solar Flares Burn For You"* (★★★1/2) kompiliert.

Das Mini-Album „A Short Break" (★★★), eine Sammlung von *home recordings*, die im Sommer 1992 entstanden, hätte sich von Länge und Gestalt ebenfalls für die *„EPs"*-Box angeboten. Fünf rauschende, teilweise auch dumpf klingende Soundskizzen, die in ihrer Unfertigkeit allerdings einen großen Charme versprühen.



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Canterbury Tales - Rolling Stone N° 10 - Oktober 2007

CANTERBURY TALES



Canterbury Tales

Von Rob Chapman

Auf das Kapitel SOFT MACHINE mag Robert Wyatt heute nicht mehr angesprochen werden. Dabei war die grenzenlose Experimentierlust seiner ersten Band durchaus wegweisend für seine späteren Solo-Jahre

Ich erinnere mich nur noch an das Klimpern von Kleingeld auf dem Boden, dann verlor ich das Bewusstsein. Die Centimes waren aus meiner Hosentasche gefallen, als ich flach auf den Rücken knallte. Ich sah die Landkarte einer dunklen Insel, in strahlenden Farben von unten beleuchtet. Ich hatte noch nie etwas Vergleichbares gesehen."

Ein Blumenkind, das anno '67 seine psychedelische Initiation beschreibt? Ein in den UFO Club verirrter Tourist vielleicht? Nein, wir befinden uns im Sommer '63, und dieser Australier, Daevid Allen, war Versuchskaninchen in Paris bei einem von Bill Burroughs' teuflischen Experimenten.

„Sie hatten die Traummaschine an mir ausprobiert, wissen Sie: eine Glühbirne, die in der Mitte einer Pappscheibe hing, und in der Pappe waren lauter kleine Löcher. Wenn man nun die Augen schloss und die Scheibe sich mit der exakten Geschwindigkeit einer 78er-Schallplatte drehte, dann – hatten sie ausgerechnet – deckte sich die Drehung der Perforationen genau mit den Rhythmen des Gehirns. Und man bekam unglaubliche Farbhalluzinationen."

Allen hat in der Vergangenheit schon viel über kosmische Seltsamkeiten und Kontakte mit bekifften Elfen erzählt. Und trotzdem: Dieser exzentrische, schlaksige alte Hipster, der mir hier bei sich zu Hause in Glastonbury Geschichten erzählt, ist ein ernstzunehmender Zeitzeuge – so was wie ein vergessenes Bindeglied zwischen Beats und Hippies. Und die Band, die er einst gründete, Soft Machine, benannt nach einem Burroughs-Roman, war schon Underground, als es noch gar keinen Underground gab.

Anfang der 60er Jahre logierte Allen im „Beat Hotel", einem Haus links der Seine in Paris, das von der berüchtigten Madame Rachou geführt wurde. Madame hatte für den französischen Geheimdienst gearbeitet und hielt nun – diplomatisch versiert – die Polizei auf Abstand, während ihre Klientel exilierter Dichter, Maler und Dope-Dealer ihren Tätigkeiten nachgingen. Kerouac gehörte dazu, Gysin, Orlovsky, Ginsberg – „eine ganz eigene Szene in jedem Zimmer", wie Allen es formuliert.

Seine erste Zusammenarbeit mit Burroughs ergab sich 1962, als er zu einer Theaterfassung von „The Ticket That Exploded" die Musik lieferte. „I was the friendly straight with those guys", grinst er. „Das Acid kam damals direkt aus der Sandoz-Fabrik. Man nahm ungefähr 18 dieser kleinen Tabletten. Es gab noch ein anderes, das Romilar hieß und das wir auf Ibiza nahmen. Da war irgendein unbekannter psychedelischer Wirkstoff drin, der einen in die verrücktesten Zustände versetzte. Die Locals nannten uns die Romilar-Armee."

Foto: BIPS/Getty Images

> Zoom



Unbeschwerte Tage in Canterbury: Der australische Beat-Literat Daevid Allen (l.) hatte die Band ins Leben gerufen, die schon bald Namensgeber der sogenannten „Canterbury Scene" werden sollte

> Zoom

Wir blenden langsam über zu einem jungen blinden Passagier auf einem Schiff, das aus dem Hafen von Melbourne ausläuft... Allen hatte seine Heimat 1960 verlassen und geschworen, er werde nie zurückkehren. "Die töteten die Aborigines immer noch wie Kängurus", sagt er gequält. "Diese Rednecks aus dem hintersten Norden sahen da keinen Unterschied. Es war ein grauenhaftes Klima, über das heute noch meist geschwiegen wird. Und kaum komme ich in Paris an, sitze ich neben einem Klavier, an dem Bud Powell spielt." Allen listet die Jazzidole auf, die er in Paris sah: Mingus, Monk, Dolphy, Rollins...

Er trampte nach England und landete als Mieter im Wellington House in Canterbury. Diese Kreativinsel gehörte der Rundfunksprecherin Honor Wyatt und ihrem zweiten Mann, dem Psychologen George Ellidge. Als Bohemians alter Schule hatten sie Verbindungen zum

Dichter Robert Graves und dessen Künstlerkolonie in Deya auf Mallorca. Allen freundete sich sofort mit ihrem frühbegabten 15-jährigen Sohn Robert an. "Wir hatten die gleichen Platten, also sprachen wir automatisch dieselbe Sprache", sagt er über den zukünftigen Soft-Machine-Drummer. "Er war damals ein Wunderkind - malte, spielte Klavier und so weiter. Geistig war er schon genauso weit wie ich, was mir jetzt nicht besonders schmeichelt, aber er war einfach sehr weit für sein Alter."

Während andere von Skiffle träumten, waren Wyatt und seine Schulfreunde Hugh und Brian Hopper und Mike Ratledge eindeutig experimentell drauf. Hugh Hopper hörte Omette Goleman, erkundete die Basslinien von Charlie Haden und erinnert sich an einen Wyatt-Haushalt voller eklektischer Geräusche, von Bartok bis Be-bop, Strawinsky bis Varese: "Sagen wir so - es war klar, dass Robert kein Bankangestellter werden würde." Hugh, Brian und Steve bastelten in den frühen 60ern einfache Bandschleifen und suchten im Radio nach obskurem Jazz auf AFN oder BBC Third. "Da lief noch viel Avantgarde, im Gegensatz zu heute", sagt Hopper spitz. "Aber mit der Ankunft von Daevid Allen wurde Jazz viel zugänglicher für uns. Er brachte ungefähr 500 bedeutende Platten mit - Monk, Mingus, Miles, Cecil Taylor und so weiter —, die dann zwischen uns rumgingen.

Auch wenn sie selbst kulturell alles andere als rückständig waren, geben doch alle seiner künftigen Mitstreiter Allen als die galvanisierende Kraft an. Bandschleifen? Dieser Mann hatte schon Schleifen mit dem Meister aller Schleifen gemacht, mit Terry Riley. "Die waren alle im 16/17tel-Talk", reflektiert Allen. "Ich war schon der erfahrende Traveller, ihr großer Beatnik-Bruder, also nahmen sie mich zum Vorbild. Was später natürlich gegen mich arbeitete", seufzt er. "Man muss seine Vorbilder immer töten. "



Da waren's nur noch Drei: Ayers, Ratledge und Wyatt (oben, v.l.) tourten 1968 mit der Jimi Hendrix Experience (r.) durch die USA. Kevin Ayers stieg anschließend aus und wurde durch Hugh Hopper ersetzt (r.u.)

Aus Nächte langen atonalen Exzessen im "Wellington House" und bei Hoppers gleichermaßen toleranten Eltern entwickelte sich schließlich ein prägnanter, lokaler Sound. Später wurde ein Mythos daraus, dass künftige Mitglieder von Soft Machine und Caravan mal dieselbe Postleitzahl hatten. Mike Ratledge winkt ab: "Das war nur ein geografischer Zufall." Hopper stimmt zu: "Regelmäßig fragen mich irgendwelche deutschen Journalisten nach der ‘Canterbury-Schule’, und rückblickend klingt das bestimmt toll. Aber in Wahrheit war Canterbury ein kleines konservatives Städtchen, in dem nicht viel passierte. Es gab ja bis Ende der Sechziger nicht mal eine Universität."

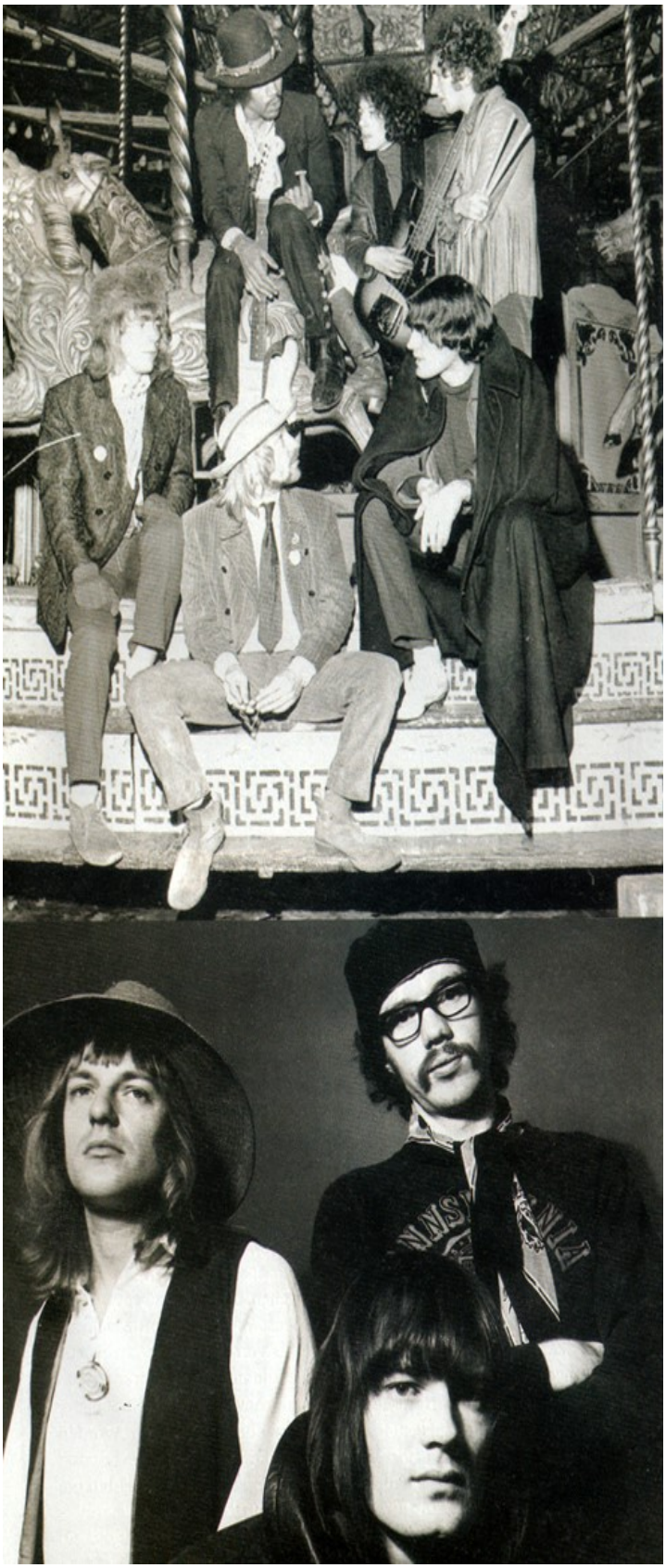
In dieser Phase versuchten sich Allen, Hugh Hopper, Wyatt und Ratledge als Jazzband. Sie ergatterten ein Engagement in einem Londoner Club, aber nachdem sie doch etwas schräger klangen als Oscar Peterson, wurden sie nach vier Abenden vor die Tür gesetzt. Sie spielten auch einen Gig am "Institute of Contemporary Arts" mit Burroughs und Gysin und einen Jazz & Poetry-Abend im "Marquee", dessen wenig schmeichelhaftes Ergebnis auf CD erhältlich ist ("Live 1963", auf Voiceprint), samt angenehm selbstironischer Sleevenotes von Allen.

Als Allen aufging, dass er kaum der nächste Charlie Christian oder Wes Montgomery würde, beschloss er, Vollzeitdichter zu werden - und machte sich mit seinem Freund Kevin Ayers auf den Weg zu Robert Graves'Haus in Deya. Er schwärmt von Nächten mit Gitarren und Gedichten und von der kostenlosen Logis. Bei einem dieser regelmäßigen Inselaufenthalte begannen sie vom Pop zu träumen. "Kevin Ayers hatte ein paar Beatles-Platten und ‘Still I'm Sad’ von den Yardbirds. Wir nahmen Acid, und ich dachte: 'Mensch, vielleicht kann ich ja das, was ich früher gemacht habe, einfach Pop nennen und doch meinen Lebensunterhalt

verdienen.' Aber dafür musste ich meine Gitarre erst mal der Rock'n'Roll-Sprache anpassen."

Die Sache hatte nur einen Haken: Allen hasste Rock'n'Roll. Bis heute trägt er auf der Bühne ein T-Shirt mit einem Bild von Elvis, unter dem "Dead Redneck" steht. "Buddy Holly, 'Rock Around The Clock', das ganze Zeug - ich hasste es", sagt er trocken. Ratledge empfand ähnlich: "Es interessierte uns eher als kultureller Kick denn als musikalischer. Eine Band gründen - das war die Lizenz zu tun, was immer man wollte, und dem Ganzen dann einen verkaufsträchtigen Namen zu geben. Pop-musik. Als wir anfingen, war Kevin der Einzige mit einer Pop-Perspektive."

Im Fernen Osten aufgewachsen, kam der 17-jährige Ayers 1961 nach Canterbury. "Man hatte mich von London da hingeschickt, nach einer Drogenrazzia. Ein Polizist griff mir in die Tasche, zog einen Klumpen Hasch raus, den ich mir nie hätte leisten können, und sagte: 'Hallo, was haben wir denn hier?' Sie schickten mich für zwei Wochen ins Erziehungsheim. Als der Fall vor Gericht kam, wurde er mangels Beweisen eingestellt, und der Richter sagte, ich solle London verlassen, weil es ganz offensichtlich ein schlechter Einfluss für mich sei." Und wie landete der junge Kiffer dann bei der Avantgarde von Canterbury? "Ich hatte von Musik keine Ahnung. Alles, was ich kannte, war 'The Sound Of Music' und chinesischer Pop noch aus Malaya. Zu Daevid und den anderen zog es mich, weil sie einfach vielseitigere Interessen hatten als irgendwer sonst dort. Daevid war ja ein Schock für das System, er hatte skandalös alternative Ansichten. Ein Original. Allerdings stand er damals mehr auf Lyriklesungen als auf Songs - und ich hasste Lyriklesungen. "



Im Wein trinken und feiern schon geübt, hatte Ayers seine erste musikalische Canterbury-Kollaboration als Bassist und Gitarrist der semilegendären Wilde Flowers. "Der Name hatte nichts mit Flower Power zu tun", erklärte Wyatt dem Autor Jonathon Green. "Wir lebten auf dem Land, und Hugh Hopper hatte ein Buch, das eben Wild Flowers hieß. Er hat sich das ausgedacht, glaube ich." Wie üblich gab es kein großartiges Konzept - künftige Mitglieder von Caravan und Soft Machine kamen und gingen nach Laune. Ayers, Wyatt und Hugh Hopper reisten zwischendurch auch einfach los und schlossen sich Allen in Paris oder Mallorca oder Marokko an - wo der Straßenmusikerhut gerade hinfiel. Ratledge blieb in Oxford und machte seinen Bachelor. Brian Hoppers Compilation von Probemitschnitten und

Demos der Wilde Flowers, 1994 veröffentlicht, enthält einen eklektischen Mix aus Soul, Jazz, und Avantgarde-Pop, den Sound von gleich mehreren Bands auf Identitätssuche. Und doch sind alle frühen Softs-Motive erkennbar: die skurillen Texte und eckigen Arrangements der Hopper-Brüder, Ayers eigene klar strukturierte Songwritingkunst, Wyatts seltsamer, beseelter Gesang.

"Wenn ich diese Tracks heute höre, kann ich den Einfluss der Zombies erkennen", sagt Hopper. "Und den der English Birds, mit Ron Wood: drei Krachgitaren, viele Akkordwechsel. Eine der ganz großen vergessenen Bands." Aus Allens etwas distanzierterer Perspektive war es alles etwas zu amtlich. "Die Wilde Flowers litten unter dem Kollegenrespekt-Syndrom: Damals war es für jede Band *de rigeur,* 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag' mit dem korrekten Gitarrensound und dem richtigen Feeling spielen zu können - aber sie kriegten das nicht hin", lacht er.

Im Sommer 1966 nahmen Allens Beatcombo-Pläne, die er im Romilar-Nebel der Balearen geschmiedet hatte, langsam Gestalt an. Drei Tage Acid-getränktes Chaos mit einem Clubbesitzer aus Tulsa namens Wes Brunson kulminierten darin, dass Brunson Ayers und Allen einen großen Teil seines Vermögens versprach, wenn sie damit den *love vibe* im Zeichen des Wassermanns verbreiten würden. "Aber gern", sagten sie. "Wir brauchen Instrumente, Verstärker und einen Raum zum Proben." So entstand das Quartett Mr Head, das aus Ayers, Allen, Wyatt und Gitarrist Larry Nolan bestand. Die Band beteiligte sich bei Beat-Wettbewerben von Melody Maker und dem Piratensender Radio London, und die Agenten des Musicbiz horchten sofort auf. Mr Head spielten kurz mit dem Gedanken, sich in Nova Express umzubenennen, bevor sie sich dann doch bei einem etwas bekannteren Burroghs-Roman bedienten. Ratledge kam aus Oxford. Soft Machine war geboren.

Wyatt erinnert sich: "Wir tröpfelten nach London und formierten uns neu, einer nach dem anderen. Daevid Allen kannte Kevin Ayers, der Bass spielte und Songs schrieb. Kevin wiederum kannte das Büro der Animals, wo Hilton Valentine und Chas Chandler schon als Manager arbeiteten, und die nahmen uns auf der Basis von Kevins Songs unter Vertrag. Sie wollten was Kommerzielles. Chas suchte immer nach Slade, und irgendwann fand er die ja auch - in der Zwischenzeit musste er sich eben mit Leuten wie uns und Jimi Hendrix rumschlagen. Kevin besorgte uns den Deal. Er mochte Bossa Nova und Calypso; Ray Davies und die Kinks, die solche Elemente schon früh benutzten, hatten ihn stark beeinflusst."

Bei Chandler unter Vertrag, verbrachten die Softs das zweite Halbjahr '66 mit Demoaufnahmen. Zusammen mit Pink Floyd spielten sie wegweisende Underground'Shows bei der "Notting Hill Free School" und im "Roundhouse". Wie Pink Floyd bevorzugten sie auf der Bühne die Improvisation. Im Gegensatz zu Pink Floyd fehlte ihnen allerdings ein skurriler kleiner Song über einen Transvestiten, der sie in die Popcharts katapultiert hätte. "Auf der ersten Soft-Machine-Single (‘Love Makes Sweet Music') hört man den ganzen Gruppendruck damals", sagt Allen über ein Debüt, das fast klang wie Simon Dupree — wäre da nicht der hohe, flehende Gesang von Wyatt gewesen.

"Ich schrieb den Song in einem maroden Hotel in Hamburg", erinnert sich Ayers, "nachdem sie uns aus dem ‘Star Club' rausgeschmissen hatten. Ich mochte früher wie heute richtig gute Popsongs, und ich fand, mit ‘Love Makes Sweet Music' hatte ich einen hingekriegt. Hätten wir einen guten Produzenten gehabt, uns eine Backingband geleistet und dann auch noch den Sänger ausgewechselt... *(er bricht in Gelächter aus),* dann hätte es ein Hit werden können. Pink Floyd waren damals unsere Rivalen, und als ‚Arnold Layne' rauskam, dachte ich: ‘Fuck, ist das gut!' Ihre frühe Sachen entfachten eine Manie, während bei uns nie etwas manisch war, außer vielleicht in kurzen Momenten auf der Bühne. Wir waren wohl alle zu logisch, zu clever. Nie richtig spontan und entfesselt."

"In den Medien waren alle überrascht, wie intelligent wir seien", sagt Allen. "Ein Typ von der BBC war erstaunt, dass Mike tatsächlich aus Oxford gekommen war, um in einer "Popband' zu spielen."

Bald wurden die Softs einem anderen Management-protegé Chandlers vorgestellt: Jimi Hendrix. "Kevin kam von Mike Jeffreys Büro in der Wardour Street Zurück", erinnert sich Daevid Allen, "und sagte: ‘Hey, kommt mal und schaut euch diesen unglaublichen Gitarristen an. Er ist besser als Jeff Beck.' Und Jeff Beck war mein Lieblingsgitarrist!"

Wyatt: "Hendrix war ja für viele Leute wahnsinnig wichtig. Für mich auch - und wenn nur deshalb, weil er Mitch Mitchell am Schlagzeug so viel machen ließ, und das gab mir Raum für das, was ich am Schlagzeug machen wollte. Wir verwendeten viele Jazzideen, für die in dem eingeschränkten Takthalte-Zeug, das ich bis dahin gespielt hatte, kein Platz war. Es war das Gegenteil von dem, was Nick Mason bei Floyd machte: Er war ein Metronom, und genau das brauchten sie. Für elektronischen Rock war das der passende Ansatz - aufgeräumt, sparsam.

Leute wie ich und Mitch *spielten* wahrscheinlich zu viel, aber damals fanden wir das aufregend."

Im Frühling '67 bekamen Soft Machine einen Termin wochentags im "Speakeasy". Allen schwärmt von unbegrenztem Getränkekonsum und Endlos-Jams mit Hendrix. "Ich hab ‘Purple Haze’ das erste Mal dort unten gehört", staunt er, "und es klang mir wie klassische Musik. In den Charts konnte ich mir das nicht vorstellen. Ich meine, wie sollten die Charts so was je unterbringen?"

Während die Top Ten sich tatsächlich in der Lage erwiesen, den "wild man of rock" unterzubringen, war das UK von den Softs weniger begeistert. Sobald sie London oder die Uni-Szene verließen, mussten sie - wie auch Pink Floyd - fest-stellen, dass in der Provinz ein ganz anderer Zeitgeist herrschte. Immer mit den perfekten Kontakten gesegnet, schlossen sich Soft Machine nun dem Riviera-Jetset an. Im Sommer 1967 spielten sie eine Reihe von Happenings in Südfrankreich, bei denen die Creme der Pariser Hautevolee erschien: Bardot, Delon, Godard. "In den Augen der Pariser hob uns das für die nächsten paar Jahre auf eine Ebene mit den Beatles und Stones", ist sich Allen sicher. Für Ayers war der Gig in St.Tropez ein unwiederholbarer Moment musikalischer Erleuchtung: "Die besten Ideen hat man doch, wenn man naiv ist. Die frühe Band hatte etwas Magisches, und da sollen Robert und Mike mal versuchen, mir das Gegenteil zu erklären. Später wird man sicher raffinierter, aber inhaltlich wird's deswegen kaum besser."

Die Euphorie von St.Tropez hielt nicht lange. Bei der Rückkehr nach England wurde Allen in Dover die Einreise verweigert. Die Begründung war ein abgelaufenes Visum, aber in Wahrheit hatten die Zöllner einfach eine unerwünschte Person erkannt. Der australische Kiffer wurde nach Frankreich zurückgeschickt. Allen ist bis heute nicht ganz sicher, ob er aus der Band fiel oder doch eher gestoßen wurde. Er war immer mehr Katalysator als Musiker gewesen (sein Spiel auf den frühen Soft'Machine-Demos ist, höflich gesagt, etwas unfokussiert), und wenngleich er betont, es sei "befreiend" gewesen, "aus dem Land geworfen zu werden, das Beste, was mir passieren konnte", und aufgeregt von Paris im Jahr 1968 erzählt, so hat er doch ganz offenkundig das Gefühl, dass der Grenzvorfall dem Rest der Band gut in den Kram passte. Der Abschied von
ihrem großen Beatnik'Bruder markiert das Ende von Soft Machine Phase eins. "Ich nahm die Sache erst richtig ernst, als Daevid draußen war und wir nur noch ein Trio waren", räumt Ratledge ein. "Erst da begann ich für die Band zu schreiben."

Während einer Pause ihrer ersten großen US'Tour im April 1968, ein ganzes Jahr nach *"Piper At The Gates Of Dawn",* konnten sie endlich ihr erstes Album aufnehmen. Produzent Tom Wilson hatte mit Dylan gearbeitet und beim Debüt von Velvet Underground. Doch trotz dieser Referenzen und einiger großartiger Stücke entstand ein lebloser, undynamischer Mix. "Wir fingen mit ein paar sehr guten Ideen an", räumt Ayers ein, "aber dieses Album war amateurhaft, schlampig, schlecht produziert - ein Alptraum, wenn ich heute zurückblicke. Wilson telefonierte ständig nur mit seinen Freundinnen. Wahrscheinlich hielt er uns für einen Haufen kleiner weißer Stinker, die diese verkopfte Katzenmusik spielten."

Das Album mit dem auffälligen Drehscheiben-Cover erschien schließlich im November 1968 auf dem Label Probe. Einige Tracks auf "*Soft Machine*" waren aus Material aus den "Wellington House" Tagen adaptiert. Die "head is a nightclub"- Zeile in Ayers bahnbrechendem "Why Are We Sleeping" entstammte einem Jazzgedicht von Daevid Allen. Der vielleicht schönste Moment auf dem Debüt war Ayers Instrumental "Joy Of A Toy" (nach einem Track von Ornette Coleman betitelt), Später für Ayers' Solodebüt reaktiviert.

"*Soft Machine*" war während einer Tour mit Hendrix in einer einzigen, viertägigen Session aufgenommen worden. Im Gegensatz dazu nahm Hendrix sein ausuferndes Meisterwerk *"Electric Ladyland*" während desselben Konzertmarathons über sechs entspannte Monate verteilt auf. "Im ersten Abschnitt dieser Tour mit Hendrix gab es Momente reinster Magie", sagt Ayers. "Ich erlebte Hendrix als sehr freundlichen, sehr melancholischen Typen. Er wurde emotional wie finanziell über den Tisch gezogen, und er musste eine enorm dicke chemische Rüstung anlegen, bevor er auf der Bühne zu Jimi Hendrix werden konnte."

Die Tour, die sich über den größten Teil von 1968 hinzog, hätte die Softs fast endgültig getrennt. "Im zweiten Teil der Tour wurde ich Makrobiotik-Fanatiker", erinnert sich Ayers. "Ich trank nicht mehr, rauchte nicht mehr, und das vertrug sich mit der Tourneeroutine überhaupt nicht. Einen zweistündigen Gig übersteht man nun mal nicht mit einem grünen Apfel, einem Glas Wasser und einer Schale Reis."

Hugh Hopper war zu dem Zeitpunkt der Roadie der Band. "Wenn ich heute zurückblicke, denke ich: Toll, ich war mit Hendrix auf Tour", lacht er. "Dabei hab ich von der Musik nicht viel mitbekommen. Damals hatte man ja keine 16 Spezialtrucks so wie heute. Da waren nur

ich und Hendrix' Roadie mit einem LKW - immer am Beten, dass wir rechtzeitig zur nächsten Halle kamen."

Ayers war nicht weniger erledigt. Er floh nach Ibiza, um wieder ins Gleichgewicht zu kommen. "Mike und Robert waren musikalisch ungleich versierter als ich, und ich glaube, meine Schlichtheit langweilte sie", sagt er über seinen Abgang. Ich lernte Terry Riley und Gil Evans in New York kennen, und mir gefielen auch die ganzen Jazzstücke, die Daevid und Robert mir vorspielten, aber das überstieg alles mein musikalisches Verständnis, und ich hatte auch kein Interesse, irgendwas aus reinem Selbstzweck im 19/7tel-Takt zu spielen. Diese 'Fusion-Musik', oder wie immer man das nannte, gefiel mir auch nie. Mir waren der Jazz, wie er am Anfang klang, und der Rock, wie er am Anfang klang, viel lieber. Fusion schien den Musikern mehr Spaß zu machen als den Zuhörern. Leute, die sich gegenseitig ihre Virtuosität um die Ohren hauten, um zu demonstrieren, wie kompliziert sie sein konnten." Er lacht hämisch. "Also ging ich mit meiner Schlichtheit anderswo hin und verlor diese Familie. Da ich damals in einem sehr klaren spirituellen Zustand war, bereitete mir das keinen großen Kummer. Es traf mich erst später, dass ich diesen Leuten nicht mehr nah war."

Ayers schenkte seinen Bass Mitch Mitchell ("Solche Sachen mach ich heute noch: ‚Nimm mein Haus, mein Auto, meine Frau.'Ich brenne die Brücken hinter mir ab.") - Soft Machine lösten sich quasi auf. Ratledge war nach der US-Tour ähnlich ausgebrannt wie Ayers. Wyatt steckte in Los Angeles mit Hendrix zusammen und hegte vage Pläne für eine Solokarriere. Aber sie waren vertraglich verpflichtet, Probe Records ein zweites Album abzuliefern. Ayers wollte seine sonnige Zuflucht nicht verlassen, also holten Ratledge und Wyatt Hugh Hopper als permanenten Ersatz.



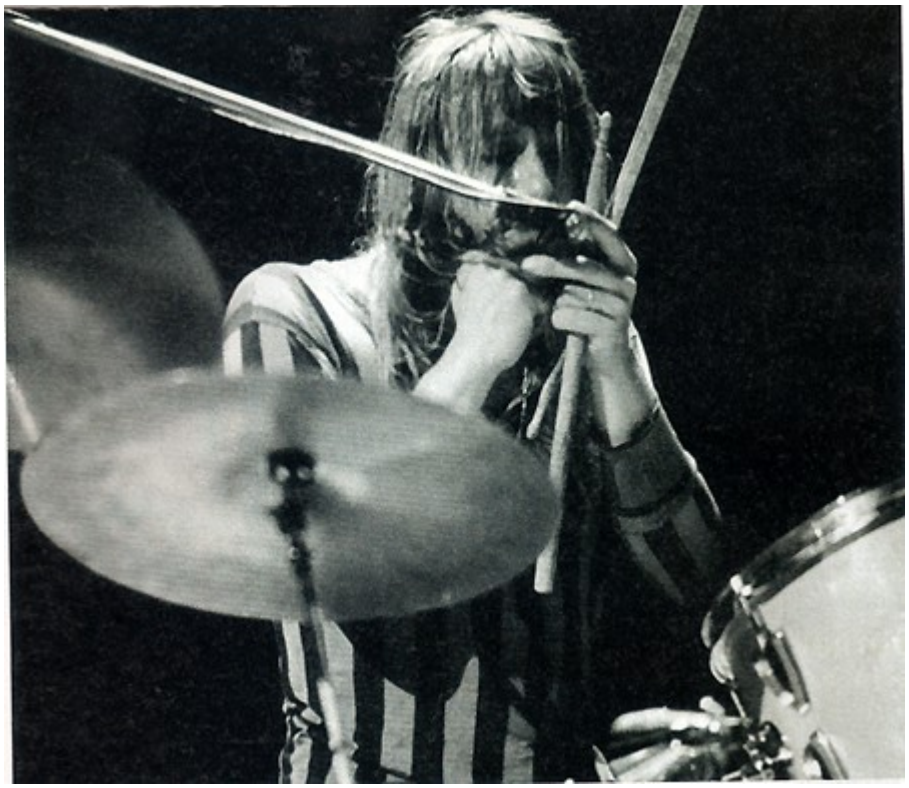
Beginnend mit Wyatts Einführung in "the official orchestra of the college of pataphysics" und einer schülerhaften Wiedergabe des britischen Alphabets, wurde aus dem resultierenden Pflichtalbum ein Canterbury-Klassiker. Voller selbstmythologisierender kleiner Anspielungen nimmt uns "*Soft Machine Volume 2*" mit zurück in eine Zeit, als Pere Ubu noch eine literarische Figur von Alfred Jarry war und keine Band aus Cleveland. Daevid Allen beschrieb mir die von Jarry erfundene Pataphysik als "Schöpfung eines spirituellen Manifests in absurder Form, indem man ein ernstes Thema in eine absurdistische Struktur versetzt" - etwas, was er mit seiner späteren Band Gong zur Kunst erhob. Ayers wandte das Prinzip auch in seiner Arbeit nach Soft Machine an, vermutlich zum Nachteil seiner Karriere. Gebeten, die Wirkungsweise der Pataphysik genauer zu erklären, spricht Ratledge vage von der "Wissenschaft des Unmöglichen" und davon, "die Prämissen wissenschaftlicher Gewissheiten zu pervertieren". Und wie haben Sie das auf die Musik übertragen? "Haben wir doch gar nicht. Nicht ansatzweise. Soll das ein Witz sein?" Er schüttelt sich vor angemessen

absurdistischem Gelächter.

Die meisten Tracks auf "*Soft Machine Volume 2*" gehen in einander über—im Jazz damals ein durchaus übliches Stilmittel, wobei Robert Wyatt den Soft-Machine-typischen Einsatz der Durchgängigkeit später eher als Verteidigungsmechanismus gegen feindseliges Publikum rechtfertigte: Ohne Pausen kann man nicht so gut buhen. Aber um 1970 wurden derartige Maßnahmen zunehmend unnötig. Im Sommer dieses Jahres, und vermutlich auf der Höhe ihres Ruhms bei den Kritikern, wurden Soft Machine eingeladen, bei den hochkulturell respektierten "Proms" in London zu spielen. Sie waren kein Haufen hirniger Langhaariger mehr, die ihrem Publikum den Rücken zuwandten - jetzt hatten sie Prestige. Ratledge gab sich einmal mehr typisch ungerührt. "Wir hatten vorher schon zweimal in der Albert Hall gespielt. Es war einfach ein Gig von vielen. Man zeigte sich damals nie von irgendetwas überrascht. Die Organisation war allerdings ein Alptraum. Das Equipment hing in Spanien fest, und einen ordentlichen Soundcheck gab's auch nicht."

Beunruhigender noch: Der Proms-Auftritt übertünchte ernsthafte Differenzen innerhalb der Band. Die Veröffentlichung ihres Doppelalbums "*Third*" kurz vor dem Albert-Hall-Gig zeigt eine offenere Jazz-Ausrichtung. Von der Triobesetzung fühlten sie sich zunehmend eingeengt, und so wurde die Band nun um Vertreter der aufkeimenden englischen Jazzrockszene wie Elton Dean, Lyn Dobson und Nick Evans verstärkt. Das Album, in mancher Hinsicht die Kulmination vieler maßgeblicher Impulse von Soft Machine, war größtenteils instrumental und enthielt ausgiebige Solo-und Ensemble-Jams.

Es gab eine Ausnahme: Wyatts klassische Montage übers Leben von einem New Yorker Hotelzimmer aus gesehen, "Moon In June" - bei dem sich die anderen allerdings geweigert hatten, mehr als marginal mitzuwirken. Das traf Wyatt hart - ein wesentlicher Grund für seinen späteren Ausstieg aus der Band. Er war immer schon der extrovertierteste Softmaschinist gewesen - er trommelte wild mit wehenden Haaren, während Hopper und Ratledge steif über ihren Instrumenten kauerten - und trieb immer einsamer in einem Meer intellektuellen Gefrickels. Um die Schranken zu sprengen, spielte er damals nebenher bei Keith Tippett's Centipede, Kevin Ayers And The Whole World oder dem Spontaneous Music Ensemble.



Während die Band (l. mit Ratledge, Hopper, Wyatt und Elton Dean) immer mehr zum Jazzrock abdriftete, fühlte sich Wyatt zunehmend deplatziert. Unter seinen kopfbetonten Kollegen galt er als unberechenbare Diva.

Ich erinnere Hugh Hopper an eine Anekdote, wonach ein puristischer Progfan um 1970 hinter die Bühne kam, um den Softs zu einem tollen Auftritt zu gratulieren, und dabei lästerte, eine Woche zuvor hätten die Zuschauer Geno Washington And The Ram Jam Band ertragen müssen. Wyatt habe geantwortet: "Wenn wir könnten, würden wir auch so spielen." "Oh, unbedingt", bestätigt Hopper. "Ich weiß noch, wie Robert mal Phil Chen traf, den Bassisten

von Jimmy James And The Vagabonds, und wie er von den Temptations'Basslinien begeistert war, die Chen spielte. Aber Robert bezog auch einfach gern Gegenpositionen: Wenn die ganze Band freaky und avantgardistisch war, dann schwor er prompt einen Monat lang auf Steeleye Span, nur wegen der Wirkung, die das hatte."

Kurz nach dem Proms-Gig nahm Wyatt selbst sein Soloalbum "*End Of An Ear* " auf. Laut den Linernotes, die er für das 97er-Reissue des Albums schrieb, beschleunigte das seinen Ausstieg bei den Softs. "Vielleicht wurde ich - und man hat mir nie gesagt, warum - kurz danach von denselben Leuten aus meiner Band geworfen, die ursprünglich ich mal eingeladen hatte mitzumachen", bemerkte er.

"Das war viel komplizierter als Kevins Ausstieg, der ganz freundschaftlich verlief ", räumt Ratledge ein. (Es hatten seither sogar sämtliche Softs nochmal zusammengefunden, um auf Ayers'erstem Soloalbum zu spielen.) "Aber nach der Tour mit Hendrix waren die Dinge zwischen Robert und allen anderen polarisiert. Hugh und ich verfolgten eine vage jazzorientierte Richtung. Robert war heftig dagegen, obwohl er ja ein leidenschaftlicher Jazzfan war. Aber er hatte klare Vorstellungen von Pop'musik einerseits und Jazz andererseits. Ich glaube, er hatte wie Kevin die konzeptionelle Entscheidung getroffen, dass Pop Pop bleiben sollte, und Jazz Jazz."

"Die ganze Situation in den USA wurde sehr kompliziert", weiß auch Hopper. "Manchmal stand Robert von seinem Schlagzeug auf und ging, weil ihm nicht gefiel, was wir spielten oder geschrieben hatten. Es gab aber auch Abende, an denen wir uns hinter seinem Rücken über ihn lustig machten. Es war tatsächlich so schlimm geworden. Mike und ich könnten Robert nicht leiden und er uns auch nicht. Wir waren eben kühl und kopfbetont, während er sehr offen und impulsiv war. Bei einem recht alkoholisierten Abend im "Ronnie Scott's" sagte er zu jemandem: 'Ich wünschte, ich fände eine neue Band.' Und wir anderen sprangen alle auf und sagten: 'Prima, nur zu!' Robert wurde definitiv vertrieben aus der Band, die für ihn seine Band war. Und darüber scheint er heute noch genauso verbittert wie eh und je."

Soviel habe ich erfahren, als ich Wyatt wegen eines Beitrags zu diesem Artikel kontaktiere. Zurück kommt eine Postkarte mit seiner typisch kindlichen Kritzelschrift und schiefen Diktion. "Ich habe immer noch Alpträume - auch im wachen Zustand", schreibt er. "Ich träume, mein Ausschluss wäre nur eine vorübergehende Laune gewesen, und ich würde wieder in die Herde aufgenommen. Dann wache ich auf. Wie schlimm meine Deportation aus SM für mich war? Tja, als ich mir das Kreuz brach, kam ich leichter damit klar. So schlimm."

"Keine zwei Leute in der Band hatten dasselbe im Sinn — deswegen war sie so eigenständig, und deswegen ging sie nach ein paar Jahren auch auseinander", erinnerte sich Wyatt bei einer anderen Gelegenheit. "Im Grunde war es ein anhaltender Prozess des Zerfalls, dass wir immer neue Leute dazuholten, um die Lücken zu füllen. Was in den 60ern selten war - die meisten Bands waren ja recht stabil. Aber wir bastelten ständig rum und warfen uns gegenseitig raus oder liefen davon, bis irgendwann alle Falten ausgebügelt waren und eine gewöhnliche britische Jazz-rockband daraus wurde. Ich weiß nicht, was am Ende passierte. Irgendwann hörte ich nicht mehr hin. Ich hörte schon nicht mehr hin, als ich noch dabei war. "

Rob Chapman





THE SOFT MACHINE *(1968)*
Das aberwitzige, in wenigen Tagen auf der US-Tour mit Jimi Hendrix aufgenommene Debüt, auf dem Soft Machine über ein Jahr nach ihrer ersten Single beginnen, den psychedelischen Popsong zu dekonstruieren. Viele der Stücke stammen noch aus der Zeit der songorientierten Vorgängerband The Wilde Flowers, doch Ratledges wuchtige Orgel und Wyatts tobendes Schlagzeug liefern – wie es in den *liner notes* heißt - „shock values of unstructured composition". ★★★

VOLUME TWO *(1969)*
Hugh Hopper ersetzt Kevin Ayers, der verschrobene Pop macht Platz für mehr Jazz, an die Stelle der Songs treten Suiten. Der Da-da-Geist des ersten Albums ist geblieben. Der Sound des oft um eine Bläsergruppe erweiterten Trios ist voller, Ratledge hat seine schwere Orgel gegen ein tänzelndes Klavier eingetauscht, und Wyatt glänzt als Arrangeur und Vokalist. Hier hat die Band den Punkt erreicht, an dem die Fusion von Jazz und Rock nicht mehr nach Jazzrock klingt. ★★★★

THIRD *(1970)*
Ein Doppelalbum, auf jeder Seite ein 19-minütiges Stück. Avantgarde Jazz und Elektronik in höchster Komplexität. Elton Dean, der wenig später zur Band gehören wird, spielt hier erstmals Saxofon. Ratledge und Hopper haben das Interesse am Songformat und Wyatts Gesang verloren. So musste der sein „Moon In June" großenteils alleine aufnehmen. Ein Liebeslied, zugleich ein Lied über Liebeslieder, progressiv und dies zugleich reflektierend – der Höhepunkt im Soft Machine-Katalog. ★★★★1/2

4 *(1971)*
Durch Elton Dean, der nun festes Bandmitglied ist, liegt der Fokus ganz auf Jazz, die Elektronik ist verschwunden, Songs gibt es auch keine mehr. Der vormalige Sänger, Arrangeur und Komponist Robert Wyatt ist auf seinem vierten und letzten Album mit Soft Machine nur noch Schlagzeuger. Diese Rolle füllt er aber auf diesem warmen, süffigen Album gewohnt eigenwillig aus. Er wird ihnen danach fehlen. So dynamisch wie auf *„Fourth"* spielte die Band bis zu ihrem Ende nie wieder. ★★★1/2

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Robert Wyatt Heimwerkerkönig - Jazzthetik - Oktober 2007



ROBERT WYATT

Heimwerkerkönig

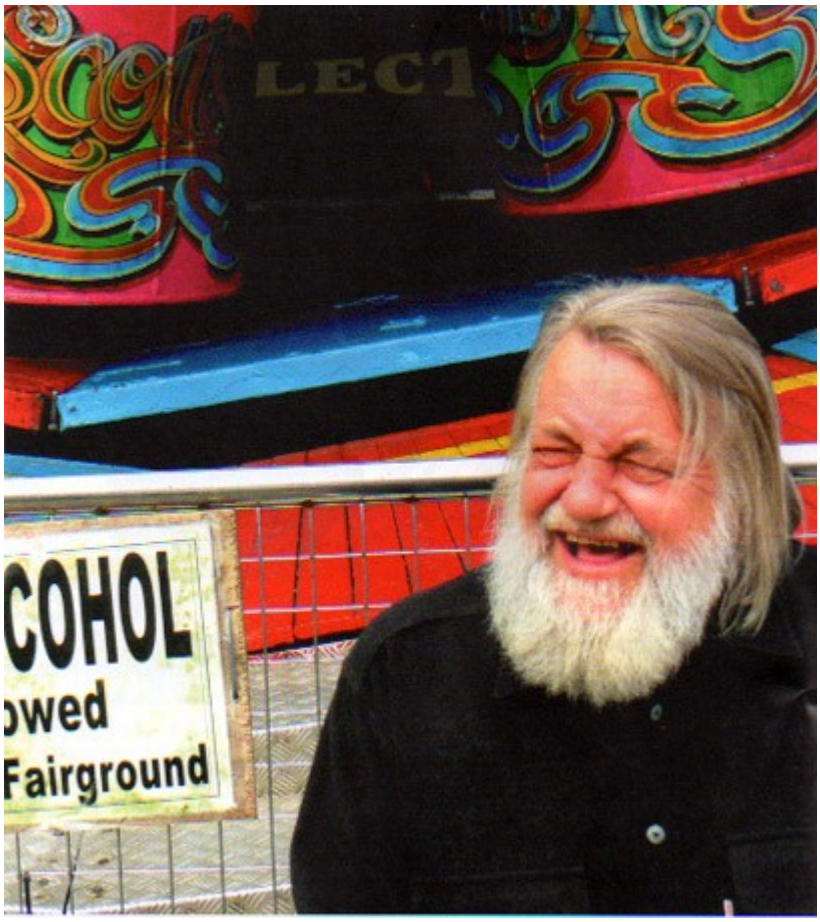
In den letzten paar Monaten war Robert Wyatt kaum ansprechbar. Er befand sich auf Tauchstation. Sonst die Geselligkeit in Person, vergräbt er sich, wenn er sich in die Arbeit an einem neuen Album vertieft: »Wenn ich schreibe, komponiere, muss ich mich in einen trancehaften Zustand versetzen, sonst gelingt mir nichts. Es geschieht alles völlig instinktiv. Ich bin dann wie eine Schwangere, die morgens im Badezimmer aus Versehen Zahnpasta isst«, sagt er.

Basics

»Wenn ich zuvor Pläne mache oder Konzepte, schränkt mich das ein. Ich denke nicht im Voraus, sondern hinterher«, fügt er hinzu. Und jetzt ist das neue Album *Comic Opera* im Kasten und Robert Wyatt sitzt wieder etwas entspannter zuhause und sinniert über Gott und die Welt nach - und über Musik.

In seinem Zimmer, das sich gleich links neben der Eingangstür befindet, steht ein Klavier, andere Instrumente liegen verstreut herum: eine Trompete, Keyboards, Trommeln und Maracas. Ein Regal voller Langspielplatten steht an der Wand. Auch der Wasserkocher darf in einem englischen Haushalt nicht fehlen. Ab und zu wird eine Tasse Tee aufgebrüht. In diesem Raum hat Wyatt die Basis-Tracks seines neuen Albums aufgenommen. »Ich wollte, das es so lebendig und spontan wie möglich klingt, wie eine Gruppe von Musikern, nein, wie eine Gruppe von Freunden, die miteinander musizieren«, erklärt Wyatt. »Musik ist nicht nur ein abstraktes Vergnügen. Es ist Gesellschaft, Zusammensein. Man ist ja mit Leuten sehr intensiv zusammen, wenn man eine Platte aufnimmt. Was mir an der Musik von Duke Ellington oder Charles Mingus immer imponiert hat, ist, dass jedes Instrument als Person identifizierbar ist. Es ist eine Gruppe von Individuen in einem Raum.«

Comic Opera lautet der Titel des neuen Albums - komische Oper also. Kein Grund zur Panik! Wyatt hat nicht vor, die Nachfolge von Pavarotti anzutreten. Der Terminus »komisch« bedeutet in diesem Kontext nicht witzig oder lustig, sondern bezeichnet den Umstand, dass der Inhalt sich um menschliche Dinge und Eigenheiten dreht anstatt um das Treiben der Götter und das Walten des Schicksals-Themen, die lange allein der Tragödie vorbehalten blieben, die ein Privileg des Adels war.



Wie bei der klassischen »0pera Comique» Frankreichs, aus der die komische Oper im 18. Jahrhundert entstand, hat Wyatt den Zyklus seiner sechzehn Songs in drei Akte unterteilt. Die Lieder folgen keinem stringenten Handlungsstrang, sondern beziehen sich eher lose aufeinander, manchmal mehr, manchmal weniger. Was recht fröhlich und unbefangen beginnt, verdunkelt sich im dritten Akt zu einem düsteren, beklemmenden Klagegesang. Wyatt tritt dabei in den verschiedensten Rollen auf. Er ist Bomberpilot in »A Beautiful War« und das Kriegsopfer in »0ut of the Blue«. Der Zusammenhang ist evident.

Kaum setzt die Musik ein, ist klar, wer singt, so individuell klingt Wyatts Stimme, die, je älter er wird, umso brüchiger, verletzlicher und trauriger wirkt und auch gar nicht mehr so hoch. »Ich verliere jedes Jahr einen halben Ton an Stimmumfang«, kommentiert er seinen Alterungsprozess lapidar. Ein anderes typisches Merkmal sind Wyatts verschlungene Melodien, die nicht ins übliche Popschema passen. Dazu kommt eine Klangwelt, die so verhangen, gedämpft und verwischt ist, dass sie die Stücke in eine ganz eigentümliche Atmosphäre taucht. Alle drei Bauelemente machen die Musik unverwechselbar. Zweifellos: Wyatt ist ein Solitär.

Die Kompromisslosigkeit und Unbeirrbarkeit, mit welcher der 62-Jährige seine künstlerische Vision verfolgt, hat ihm den Ruf eingebracht, einer der wenigen Unbestechlichen im Pop-business zu sein. Das hat ihn in den letzten Jahrzehnten zu einem Vorbild der Independent-Rockszene gemacht, ja fast zum Heiligen, über jede Kritik erhaben. Der Wechsel der Plattenfirma, den er mit *Comic Opera* vollzog, wird seine Glaubwürdigkeit noch erhöhen. Zehn Jahre lang war Wyatt bei Hannibal/Rykodisc unter Vertrag. Als das Indie-Label vor ein paar Jahren von einem Major geschluckt wurde, hat sich Wyatt gleichfalls verabschiedet und bei der Independent-Firma Domino unterschrieben, wo auch die Arctic Monkeys und Franz Ferdinand daheim sind.

Der Fluch der frühen Jahre

1945 in Bristol geboren, fing Robert Wyatt als Teenager an Schlagzeug zu spielen. Aus einer alten Schreibmaschine seiner Mutter, einer Holzkiste und einer Spielzeugtrommel bastelte er sich sein erstes Drumset. Später erhielt Wyatt richtigen Schlagzeugunterricht.

In Mitte der sechziger Jahre schloss er sich mit Schulfreunden in Canterbury zur Formation The Wilde Flowers zusammen, aus der Soft Machine hervorging, die Gruppe, die Wyatts Ruhm begründete. Als Schlagzeuger von Soft Machine stand er Ende der 60er Jahre im Zentrum einer vibrierenden Szene in London, die mit psychedelischen Sounds, Klangcollagen, esoterischen Scat-Gesängen, langen Improvisationen und wabernden Lichteffekten für Furore sorgte.

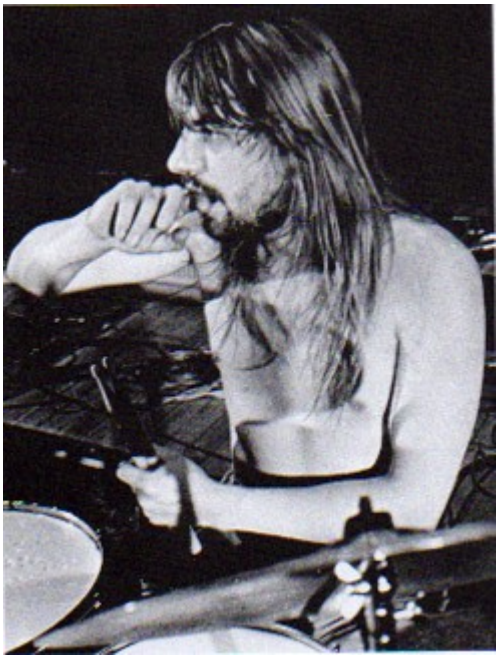
Soft Machine avancierte zu einer der führenden Bands des psychedelischen Underground von Großbritannien und erlangte durch ihre kompromisslose Musik weltweite Berühmtheit. Fünf Jahre lang spielte Wyatt bei Soft Machine. Man tourte mit Jimi Hendrix durch Amerika, trat auf großen Popfestivals auf, war Gesprächsstoff in den Medien.

Doch der Starruhm kreiert seine eigenen Monster. Spannungen und Rivalitäten traten auf. Es kam zum Bruch. Wyatt wurde aus seiner eigenen Gruppe hinauskomplimentiert, was ihn zutiefst verletzte. Bis heute kann er nicht über den Split reden, ohne dass Verbitterung in ihm aufsteigt. Er gab nicht auf. Innerhalb kurzer Zeit hatte er eine neue Band beisammen: Matching Mole. Dieses Mal war er der Bandleader, was andere Probleme aufwarf.

»Bei Soft Machine hatten wir mit nichts angefangen und es so weit gebracht, dass wir endlich gutes Equipment kaufen konnten. Und dann warfen sie mich hinaus«, erzählt er mit Groll. »Lassen wir mal die persönlichen Kränkungen beiseite - ich hätte etwas von dem Geld gut gebrauchen können. Ich hatte nichts und musste wieder ganz von vorne anfangen, was sehr schwierig war, zu viel für mich - schon auf einer ganz praktischen Ebene. Etwa: Wo können wir proben? Wir fanden ein Übungslokal. Dann wurde unsere Bassgitarre gestohlen, und wir konnten uns keine neue leisten. Es war absolut lächerlich».

Für Robert Wyatt wurde der Druck immer unerträglicher. Er fühlte sich außerstande, den Verpflichtungen und der Verantwortung eines Bandleaders nachzukommen. »Ich war völlig überfordert, all diese Leute zu organisieren. Die geschäftliche Seite und das Geld - ich konnte nicht damit umgehen!«

Wyatt wählte den Notausgang. »Normalerweise meinen die Leute, es muss schrecklich gewesen sein, als ich meinen Unfall hatte. Aber in Wirklichkeit war es kein richtiger Unfall. Seit ich 16 war, hatte ich wiederholt versucht, Selbstmord zu begehen. Allerdings bin ich körperlich ziemlich robust, schwer zu töten. Es waren nicht wirkliche Selbstmordversuche, eher warf ich mich - bildlich gesprochen - aus dem Fenster der Situation, in der ich mich befand. Das letzte Mal tat ich es dann sprichwörtlich», erzählt er. »Mit Matching Mole hatten wir zwei Alben aufgenommen, und ich sah einfach nicht, wie wir die dritte Platte zusammenbekommen sollten. Das Rückgrat zu brechen, hätte mich umbringen können, aber es tötete nur eine Hälfte von mir, wobei die andere, die überlebte, viel besser funktionierte als ich als Ganzes. Es veränderte schlagartig die gesamte Situation. Das Rückgrat zu brechen, war ein guter Karriereschritt.« Puuuh!!! So viel rabenschwarzen Humor kann nur ein Engländer haben.



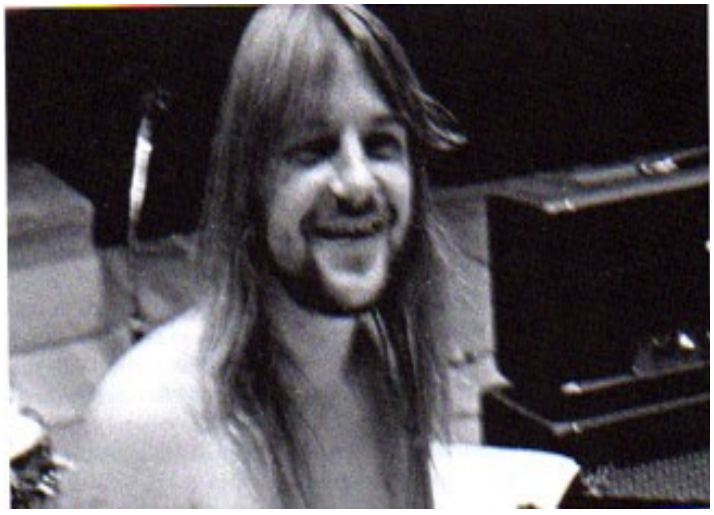
Abgeschiedenheit

Louth heißt das kleine Marktstädtchen in der Grafschaft Lincolnshire, wo Wyatt lebt. In den Nordosten von England hat es ihn vor Jahren verschlagen, als er sich immer mehr aus dem Musikbusiness zurückzog.

Er fährt nur noch selten nach London, in die Welthauptstadt des Pop, um ein Konzert zu besuchen oder in eine Kunstausstellung zu rollen - oder um Schallplattenaufnahmen zu machen. Das Gallery-Studio in West-London des ehemaligen Roxy-Music-Gitarristen Phil Manzanera hat Wyatt für *Comic Opera* erneut in Anspruch genommen, wo er schon die beiden Vorgängeralben fertigstellte. Hier fühlt er sich wohl und kann ungezwungen arbeiten.

Wyatts rotes Backsteinhaus ist im Eingangsbereich mit einer Betonauffahrt versehen, um mit dem Rollstuhl problemlos ins Gebäude hinein- und herausfahren zu können. Seit seinem Unfall im Jahr 1973 ist er auf den fahrbaren Untersatz angewiesen, mit dem er erstaunlich wendig herumflitzen kann. Kaum hat man an der Haustür geklingelt, hört man auch schon das Geräusch der Räder und dann geht die Tür auf.

Seine Frau, die Malerin und Poetin Alfie Benge, hat im Obergeschoss ihre Zimmer. Für Wyatts kreativen Output ist sie unverzichtbar, schreibt Texte, diskutiert Inhalte, liefert die Bilder für die Covergestaltung, ermuntert und verwirft. Sie ist Sparringspartner, unerlässlich fürs kreative Pingpong. Ohne Alfie geht bei Robert Wyatt nicht viel. Alfie hilft auch gelegentlich seiner Produktivität auf die Sprünge. Während andere Popmusiker Songs wie am Fließband produzieren und jährlich mindestens ein neues Album vorlegen, bringt Wyatt vielleicht gerade mal ein Lied pro Jahr zustande, wenn es gut läuft auch zwei oder drei. Im Durchschnitt gibt es jedes Sehaltjahr ein Album: Die letzte Einspielung *Cockooland* erschien 2003, das Album davor (*Shleep*) 1997. »Ich muss Besorgungen machen, aufräumen, kochen, Rechnungen bezahlen. Dann kommt vielleicht noch der Klempner, weil ein Wasserhahn tropft. Wie soll man da Lieder schreiben?«, entschuldigt sich Wyatt. Musik macht er eher nebenher und hauptsächlich für sich alleine. Er werkelt in seinem Musikzimmer herum, spielt ein bisschen Trompete oder Kornett, klimpert auf dem Klavier, experimentiert auf dem Keyboard mit Klängen und Rhythmen und bastelt an ein paar Songideen, die er auf Kassette oder einem Fetzen Papier festhält und in irgendeine Schublade stopft. Wenn er irgendwann einmal wieder darauf zurück-kommt, wird vielleicht ein Lied daraus. »Einen Song zu schreiben dauert so lange, wie es eben dauert. Da kann man nichts forcieren«, stellt Wyatt fest. »Zuerst gibt es den Keim einer Idee, wobei es manchmal Jahre braucht, bis ein Song daraus wird.«



Ich muss Besorgungen machen, aufraümen, kochen, Rechnungen bezahlen. Dann kommt vielleicht noch der Klempner, weil ein Wasserhahn tropft. Wie soll man da lieder schreiben ?

Außer von seiner Frau Alfie lässt Wyatt sich von niemand etwas sagen. In seinem Universum scheinen die Imperative der Plattenindustrie außer Kraft gesetzt - Gesetze von Verkäuflichkeit und Hörerfreundlichkeit. Moden und Trends kümmern ihn wenig. Wyatt ist ein Heimwerker, der fast alles selber macht und erst bei der tatsächlichen Aufnahmesession ein paar Musikerfreunde hinzuzieht. Auf seinem neuen Album waren wieder einige alte Bekannte mit von der Partie: Brian Eno, Paul Weller und Annie Whitehead. Auch Saxofonist Gilad Atzmon und Bassist Yaron Stavi gehören mittlerweile zum inneren Zirkel sowie Toningenieur, Mixer und Bassgitarrist Jamie Johnson, Sohn von Alan Johnson, Wirtschaftsminister unter Tony Blair und aktuell Bildungsminister im Kabinett von Gordon Brown. Und dann taucht auf einem Song von *Comic Opera* eine uralter Kompagnon wieder auf: Tastenmusiker David Sinclair, mit dem Wyatt schon Mitte der 60er Jahre bei den Wilde Flowers spielte und den er später in seine Band Matching Mole holte.

«Wenn ich eine Platte mache, spiele ich anfangs die meisten Instrumente selbst und verwende Monate darauf, ja manchmal Jahre, der beste Cymbalspieler oder der beste Perkussionist, Trompeter, Keyboardspieler oder Sänger zu sein«, erklärt Wyatt. «Allerdings gibt es Spezialisten, die das, was ich aufgenommen habe, weiterbringen können. Solche Musiker hole ich dazu, um die Songs zu verbessern und ihre Möglichkeiten auszuloten.»

Politik und Kunst

Trotz seiner Distanz zum Musikbusiness und der Privatheit seiner Existenz lebt Robert Wyatt nicht im Elfenbeinturm - ganz im Gegenteil. Die Vorstellung von Kunst als einer Traumwelt, in die man vor der garstigen Wirklichkeit flüchtet, ist ihm zutiefst suspekt. Wyatt begreift sich als politischen Künstler, jemand, der eingreift und Stellung bezieht. Als einstiges Mitglied der kommunistischen Partei Großbritanniens verfolgt er das Zeitgeschehen sehr genau - aus linker Perspektive. Michael Moore und Noam Chomsky heißen seine Gewährsleute. Die krisenhafte Weltlage treibt ihn um.

Etliche seiner neuen Songs machen dezidierte Aussagen gegen Krieg und Gewalt. »You planted all your everlasting hatred in my heart«, hört man ihn in der Rolle der Opfer singen. Auch dass er drei Lieder auf seiner Neueinspielung in Italienisch und Spanisch singt, will er als Protest gegen die angloamerikanische Politik von Blair und Bush verstanden wissen, obwohl das kein Novum ist. Schon früher sang er lateinamerikanische Revolutionshymnen in der Originalsprache.

Jede neue Platte verlangt Wyatt ein Wagnis ab. Es geht darum, die Diskrepanz zwischen Kunst und Leben zu überbrücken, sich aus den Sphären des Schönen in die Niederungen des Alltags hinunterzulassen. »Um Kunst zu machen, muss ich mich abkapseln, weil das tägliche Leben eine zynische Distanz zu allem produziert, auch zu den Künsten«, erklärt Wyatt. »Auf der anderen Seite missfallt mir der Narzissmus der Künste, die Idee - wie in der Religion -, dass man sich aus der Welt in einen geistigen Bereich zurückzieht, wo alles besser ist.«
Diesen Widerspruch gilt es auszuhalten, wenn er schon nicht aufzulösen ist. Mit jeder neuen Platte versucht Robert Wyatt erneut die Gratwanderung. Bisher ist er noch nicht abgestürzt.

Aktuelle CD:
Robert Wyatt: Comic Opera (Domino / Rough Trade)

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Fuck You, Donald Rumsfeld! Robert Wyatt - Spex N° 272 - Dezember 2003



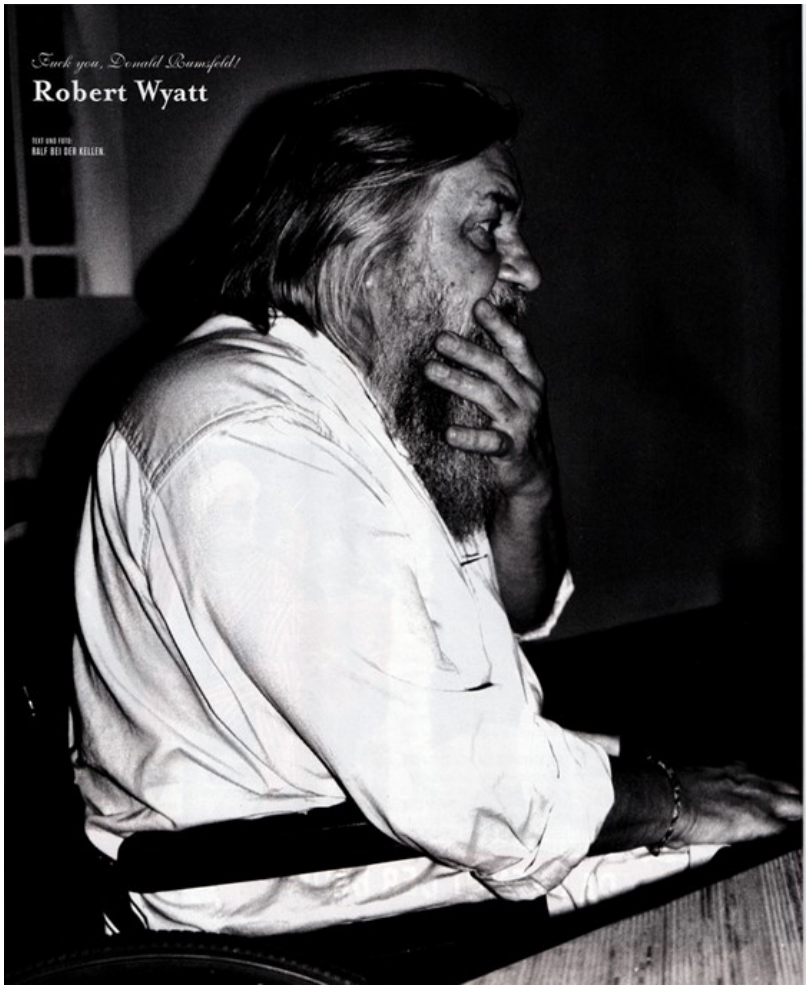
Fuck You, Donald Rumsfeld!

Im September 1991 trat ich meinen Zivildienst in der ambulanten Altenpflege meines Heimatdorfs an. Nach drei Wochen starben plötzlich, aber nicht ganz unerwartet, fast alle Patienten meiner Schicht. Dadurch war ich nicht nur zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben massiv mit dem Tod konfrontiert, sondern hatte auch noch eine Menge freier Zeit. Was also tun, um nicht zu sehr ins Grübeln zu kommen? Am sinnvollsten schien mir damals, mit meinem alten 200D zur Filiale einer Elektrokaufhauskette zu fahren, die auf halber Strecke zwischen unserem Dorf und der nächstgrößeren Stadt neu eröffnet hatte. Dort gab es eine extrem gut sortierte Tonträger-Abteilung und so begann ich, mich in meinen freien Stunden von A bis Z durch die CD-Regale zu hören. Als ich eines Tages bei »S« angekommen war, hörte ich zum ersten Mal die Stimme von Robert Wyatt. Die CD hieß schlicht «Volumes 1 & 2«, die Band The Soft Machine; hier war Wyatt Ende der 60er Schlagzeuger und Sänger. Und ich hörte diese Stimme, die Wyatts Mutter einmal mit den treffenden Worten charakterisierte: »It sort of gets you in your solar plexus". Sie ist mir danach nie wieder aus dem Ohr gegangen - vielleicht weil die ihr innewohnende Melancholie und Traurigkeit zu meinem damaligen Zustand passte.

In dem Monat, der auf diese erste Begegnung folgte, wurde Wyatts Album »Dondestan« veröffentlicht (was u.a. in SPEX mit einem großen Artikel gewürdigt wurde - schon komisch, 12 Jahre später hierzu sitzen und einen ähnlich Artikel zu schreiben ...). In der folgenden Zeit kaufte ich alle verfügbaren Aufnahmen mit Wyatts Stimme, und so erschloss sich nach und nach auch seine Lebensgeschichte. In den späten 60ern als einer der innovativsten Schlagzeuger Englands gefeiert, brach sich Wyatt 1973 bei einem Sturz aus einem Fenster während einer Party das Rückgrat und sitzt seitdem im Rollstuhl. Wyatt sprach im Nachhinein oft von der Notwendigkeit des Sturzes - er habe ihn gezwungen, sich auf seine eigentlichen Stärken zu besinnen: sein Songwriting und seinen Gesang. Im Laufe seiner Solo-Karriere mutierte Wyatt vom introspektiven Eigenbrödler («Rock Bottom«, 1974) zum multikulturellen Jazzer (»Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", 1975) zum politischen Aktivisten (»Nothing Can Stop Us«, 1982, »0ld Rottonhat«, 1985); nach seinem Rausschmiss aus der kommunistischen Partei Englands wieder zum Eigenbrödler («Dondestan«, 1991) und plötzlich zur durch Namedropping unter Kollegen hip gewordenen Ikone (»Shleep«, 1997). Sein neues Album »Cuckooland« vereint all diese Ansätze, ist geradezu ein Kompendium all dessen, was Robert Wyatt ausmacht. Und natürlich steht auch hier wieder seine Stimme im

Vordergrund.

12 Jahre nach meiner ersten Begegnung mit ihr treffe ich an einem sonnigen Septembernachmittag in London den Menschen, zu dem diese Stimme gehört. In einem Cafe sitzt Zeitung lesend ein ergrauter Mitt-50er, dessen Bart und lange Haare ihn für eine Rolle in »Der Herr der Ringe« prädestiniert hätten. Wir kommen sofort ins Gespräch, Wyatt ist die Sympathie und die Unkompliziertheit in Person, Bei ihm ist seine Frau Alfie, die Coverart sowie 50% der Texte zum neuen Album beigesteuert hat.



> Zoom

»CUCKOOLAND« IST MIT GESCHLAGENEN 75 MINUTEN DAS LÄNGSTE ROBERT WYATT-ALBUM EVER. WAS IST PASSIERT?
Robert Wyatt: Es hätte noch langer sein können, einige Songs musste ich sogar kürzen. Außerdem werde ich in ein paar Jahren 60, und ... die Zukunft ist Jetzt; alles, was ich noch machen will, muss ich jetzt machen.

EIN SONG AUF DEM ALBUM HEISST »OLD EUROPE». IN IHM BESCHREIBST DU PARIS IN BEN FRÜHEN 50ERN, EINEN JAZZCLUB UND DIE BEZIEHUNG ZWISCHEN MILES DAVIS UND JULIETTE GRECO, WAS BEDEUTET DIR DAS?
RW (stolz, affirmativ): Alfie und ich waren gerade in »0ld Europe». Und ich bin mit meinem Herzen noch immer in dem Old Europe, das im Song vorkommt. Ich war natürlich zu Jung, um zu der beschriebenen Zeit in dem Jazzclub zu sein. Der Titel bringt mich zum Lachen, weil er natürlich sagt: ... and fuck you, Donald Rumsfeld!

Alfie: And thank you, Joschka Fischer, (beide lachen)

RW: Wo wir schon mal dabei sind: Nicht nur in Europa ist Kultur entstanden, jeder Ort der Welt hat eine eigene Kultur hervorgebracht. Aber die Ironie der augenblicklichen Situation ist, dass Europa oft ein Zufluchtsort für Künstler aus Amerika war, die zu Hause nicht sonderlich geschätzt wurden. Jazz ist ein Beispiel dafür. Europa kümmert sich um einige Träger der amerikanischen Kultur besser als die Amerikaner

selbst. Und wenn ich mich wiederholen darf: Fuck you, Donald Rumsfeld! (lacht) Du bist Europa etwas schuldig! Du solltest dankbar sein. Ich weiß, es klingt fast opportunistisch, so etwas zu sagen. Aber ich habe mich noch nie so europäisch gefühlt.

AUF DEM TITELTRACK IST DIE KUCKUCKSMUTTER NICHT ALS EIGENNÜTZIGE PERSONLICHKEIT PORTRÄTIERT, DIE IHR EI IN FREMDE NESTER LEGT, DAMIT SIE SICH NICHT WEITER DARUM ZU KÜMMERN BRAUCHT, SONDERN ALS EINE PERSÖNLICHKEIT, DIE VOM VERLUST DES EIGENEN KINDES STARK BERÜHRT WIRD, DIE ABER GLEICHZEITIG NICHT AUS IHRER HAUT KANN, IHREN INSTINKTEN BLIND GEHORCHEN MUSS.
RW: Ich fand dieses Gedicht von Alfie. Sie schrieb es, als sie einen Kuckuck beobachtete.

A: Dieser Kuckuck kam zwei Wochen lang jeden Tag. Er suchte im hohen Gras nach Würmern. Als ich ihn zuerst sah, dachte ich: Oh Gott, der blöde Kuckuck. Aber dann begann ich, über sein Leben nachzudenken. Mir wurde klar, dass die Kuckucksmutter nach Afrika fliegt, bevor ihr Baby geboren wird, und dass das Kuckuckskind seine leiblichen Eltern nie kennen lernen wird. Ich dachte: Was für ein schrecklicher Lebensanfang. Ich fühlte schließlich Sympathie für den Kuckuck und mir wurde klar, wie oft man Menschen, die man nicht wirklich kennt, aburteilt, ohne zu wissen, welche persönlichen Tragödien hinter ihrem Verhalten stehen.

RW: Ich sage das nicht, weil sie hier ist, aber: Dieses Album würde ohne Alfies Input wahrscheinlich nicht existieren. Vor allem, weil meine Texte in den letzten Jahren kürzer und kürzer geworden sind. Ich ersetze sie durch mäandernde kleine Trompeten-Melodien. Das Kornett ist eher eine Verlängerung meiner Stimme. Ich habe in den letzten 20 Jahren eine halbe Oktave an Umfang verloren. Aber ich will keine Platte machen, die sich komplett in der unteren Mitte des Notensystems abspielt. Also ersetze ich die fehlenden Töne mit dem Kornett. Du musst es sehr exakt spielen - ok, ich finde immer einen Weg, schludrig mit den Dingen umzugehen - aber du kannst nicht einfach sagen: Na, irgendwo da oben wird der Ton schon sein, so wie du das mit der Stimme machen kannst.

DEINE STIMME IST OFT ALS DIE TRAURIGSTE STIMME, DIE JEMALS AUFGENOMMEN WURDE, BEZEICHNET WORDEN.
RW: Ich bringe nie vorsätzlich irgendeine spezielle Emotion in meinen Gesang mit ein - ich versuche lediglich, die Töne zu treffen und ein Kanal für musikalische Ideen zu sein. Welche Emotionen bei den Hörern entstehen, kann ich nicht vorherbestimmen. Ich liebe es, Spaß zu haben. Trotz der ganzen Tragödien, die um uns herum geschehen, ist das Größte, was ich sehen kann, eine Komödie überdimensionalen Ausmaßes. Aber ich kann den Menschen nicht diktieren, was sie hören sollen - oder was sie fühlen sollen. Das ist nicht meine Aufgabe

AUF DEM ALBUM GIBT ES EINE MENGE SONGS ÜBER BOMBEN.
RW: Alfie und ich leben in «Bomber County«, Lincolnshire. Früher gab es dort nur Felder - heute sind die Hälfte der Felder Startbahnen. Ok, ich übertreibe - aber das tun Künstler nun mal. Während wir das Material für diese Platte vorbereiteten, konnten wir das Brummen der Düsen vernehmen, als eine weitere Generation von mutigen Helden auszog, den »Ausländern« eine Lehre zu erteilen. Es war in der Luft, du hast es in der Nase gespürt. Schrecklich. Es ist aber auch schrecklich, wie die Presse sich gierig auf dieses Thema stürzt. Ich denke, das ist auch Teil der menschlichen Natur. Und wenn ich das denke, dann werde ich traurig.

DA KOMMT DER KUCKUCK IN UNS ALLEN ZUM VORSCHEIN.
RW: Absolut.

Text und Foto : Ralf bei der Kellen

»Cuckooland« von Robert Wyatt ist bereits via Hannibal Records/Indigo erschienen.

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Ein Kuckuk als Kosmopolit - Jazzthetik - Oktober 2003



> Zoom



EIN KUCKUCK ALS KOSMOPOLIT

ROBERT WYATT

Was sagt die traurigste Stimme der Welt, wenn man sie in London trifft und sie Robert Wyatt gehört ?

Von Rolf Bei der Kellen

Rückschreiten, um fortzuschreiten

»Sailing downstairs to the Northern Line, watching the shine of the shoes.« Mancher mag jetzt stutzen und sich fragen, warum ein Artikel über Robert Wyatt mit einem Zitat von Nick Drake beginnt. Treten Sie bitte einen Schritt zurück: London, Donnerstag, der 4. September gegen 18 Uhr, ich komme vom Interview mit RW. Die Themse nach Norden überquerend (die Tower Bridge zur Rechten), merke ich plötzlich, dass ich der Einzige bin, der in diese Richtung geht. Mir entgegen eilen Scharen von Menschen in schwarzen Anzügen und Aktenkoffern - ein Bild wie aus einem Kinks-Song, lauter »Mister Pleasants«. Als ich zum Ende der Brücke gelange, sehe ich, wie sich dort der Strom der Schwarzberockten teilt und alle, die nicht über die Brücke gehen, in den Eingang zur U-Bahn hinabsteigen. Dabei schauen fast alle nach unten, um sich nicht gegenseitig auf ihre polierten Schuhe zu treten.

Und plötzlich, 31 Jahre nachdem Nick Drake den Song »Parasite« für sein Album *Pink Moon* aufnahm, weiß ich plötzlich, was er mit der eingangs zitierten Textzeile meint. Und ich ahne noch etwas, nämlich, wie sich diese beiden britischen Exzentriker, Wyatt und Drake, Anfang der 70er Jahre gefühlt haben müssen. Beide schwammen gegen den Strom. Beide schufen durch die ihnen auferlegten Einschränkungen Meisterwerke. Bei Nick Drake war es wahrscheinlich eine schwere Depression, die ihn dazu brachte, *Pink Moon* 1972 nur mit Stimme und Gitarre aufzunehmen, denn er konnte kaum noch andere Menschen um sich herum ertragen. Bei dem Schlagzeuger Robert Wyatt war es der Sturz aus einem Fenster, der ihn im Juni 1973 für den Rest seines Lebens an den Rollstuhl fesselte und der ihn 1974 sein erstes Solo-Album *Rock Bottom*, ein absolutes Meisterwerk, aufnehmen ließ. Nick Drake hat Krankheit und Isolation nicht überlebt. Robert Wyatt dagegen hat mit seinem neuen Album *Cuckooland* das beste Album seit *Rock Bottom* aufgenommen.

Treten wir, um das Phänomen Robert Wyatt besser beleuchten zu können, einen weiteren Schritt zurück: 1962 annonciert die Familie Wyatt in der Zeitung ihres Heimatortes Canterbury ein Zimmer. Auf die Anzeige meldet sich Daevid Allen, ein durchgeknallter australischer Beatnik. Er zieht ein und gründet mit dem Sohn des Hauses sowie dessen Schulfreunden Hugh Hopper und Mike Ratledge eine Band, die seine Gedichte mit amateurhaftem Jazz unterlegen. Außerhalb der Band hören die Freunde Platten von u.a. Thelonious Monk und Cecil Taylor. Nach dem Abdriften von Allen werden aus der Band die »Wilde Flowers«; Schulfreunde wie David Sinclair und Kevin Ayers kommen in die Band. So wie diese Gruppe zur Keimzelle für Soft Machine, Gong und Caravan wird, werden Soft Machine später zum Inspirationsquell für viele andere Musikrichtungen. Sie waren neben Nucleus eine der ersten Bands, die eine Art Jazzrock spielten. Und wenn man die Gründungsmitglieder von Krautrockbands nach prägenden Einflüssen befragt, wird immer

wieder Soft Machines *Volume 2* genannt.

Wyatts Einfluss als Musiker wächst bis heute, was sich - wieder analog zu Nick Drake - an der Häufigkeit ablesen lässt, mit der andere Künstler ihn als Einfluss zitieren. Die Konstante seiner Karriere ist seine Stimme, die jemand einmal als »the best non-voice in the business« beschrieb und von der seine Mutter sagte: »It sort of gets you in your solar plexus.« Nachdem sich Wyatt den Ruf erworben hatte, einer von Englands innovativsten Schlagzeugern zu sein (durch sein Spiel in Soft Machine, wechselnden Jazzgruppen und seiner eigenen Formation Matching Mole), der nebenbei auch noch singen konnte, fiel er 1973 bei einer Party in London aus dem Fenster. Er selbst sagte später einmal zu diesem Unfall: »Es schien mir einfach der normalste Weg, die Party zu verlassen.« Er zwang ihn dazu, sich auf das Singen beschränken. Nach *Rock Bottom* nahm Wyatt 1975 das Solo-Album *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* auf. Mit seiner Version des Neil-Diamond-Songs »I'm a Believer« landet er überraschend auf Platz eins der britischen Charts. Danach hörte man nur noch vereinzelt von ihm; Wyatt betätigt sich als politischer Aktivist, tritt der kommunistischen Partei Englands bei und nimmt politisch gefärbte Singles für Rough Trade auf, aus denen 1982 die Compilation *Nothing Can Stop Us* entsteht. 1985 erscheint *Old Rottenhead*, eine ebenfalls sehr politische Platte. Herausragender Moment dieser Zeit ist die Single »Shipbuilding«; ein Song, den Elvis Costello speziell für Wyatt schrieb. 1991 erscheint *Dondestan*, ein fast schon minimalistisches Album, auf dem Wyatt fast alles selbst spielt und das bis heute eine der traurigsten Platten überhaupt ist. 1997 erscheint *Shleep*, ein Album, das mit einem ungewohnt großen Staraufgebot (Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera) aufwartet und fast völlig unpolitisch ist. 2002 beginnt RW mit der Arbeit an *Cuckooland*. Das Gebaren der USA in den letzten zwei Jahren haben auf diesem Album den politischen Wyatt der 80er wieder zum Leben erweckt. Die oft großflächigen Keyboardeinsätze (die man nur jemandem wie ihm nachsehen kann) erinnern an *Rock Bottom* und die karg instrumentierten Songs mit seinem Snaredrumspiel an *Dondestan*. Dieses Album erscheint als Kompendium aller Stile, die Robert Wyatt je benutzt hat. Auch die Besetzung ist wieder opulent: David Gilmour und Paul Weller spielen Gitarre, Annie Whitehead Posaune, Gilad Atzmon Saxophon, Flöte und Klarinette, Karen Mantler singt und spielt Keyboards.

Ich bitte Sie jetzt, wieder näher zu kommen: Ich treffe Robert Wyatt in einem Café mitten in London. »Wo kommst du her? Berlin? Da war ich das letzte Mal, als du wahrscheinlich noch so (hält die Hand auf ca. 1,50 m Höhe) groß warst!« Hallo Onkel Robert, aber ganz so klein war ich damals nicht mehr, denn Wyatt meint seinen Trip nach Ost-Berlin zum »Rock für den Frieden«-Festival 1984. Wir entfliehen dem lauten Café in einen kleinen, durch ein Fenster nur spärlich von Tageslicht erhellten Raum. Währenddessen bekommt seine Frau Alfreda Benge (die sich als Alfie vorstellt) einen Anruf vom UNCUT-Magazine, für das Robert Wyatt im letzten Jahr den Song »Love« für eine John-Lennon-Tribute-CD aufgenommen hat. »Sie wollen wissen, ob du einen Song für eine Clash-Tribute-CD aufnehmen kannst.« Ich krame nach meinem Mikroständer, denn was nützt einem das tollste Mikrophon ohne Ständer? Robert weiß es: »Eine ganze Menge. Ich habe schon oft Mikrophone ohne Ständer benutzt, ich lege sie auf aufgerollte Klamotten oder so was.« Ich sage, dass ich dem Ständer noch eine Minute Zeit gebe, wenn er bis dahin nicht da ist, dann müssen wir eben improvisieren. Wyatt lacht: »Ruf doch einfach in deine Tasche: Ich warne dich, wenn du jetzt nicht rauskommst ...!« Überhaupt lacht Robert Wyatt viel. Ist dies der Mann, dem so viele Menschen die traurigste Stimme der Welt attestiert haben?

What's new ?

Ralf Bei der Kellen: *Cuckooland* ist 75 Minuten lang. So lang war noch keins deiner Alben.

Robert Wyatt: Einige Songs mussten sogar gekürzt werden, was ihnen wirklich gut getan hat. Außerdem werde ich in ein paar Jahren 60, und ... Die Zukunft ist jetzt; alles, was ich noch machen will, muss ich jetzt machen.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Eine ganze Menge der Songs auf *Cuckooland* handeln vom Altern.

Alfie: Stimmt. Es geht oft um die Vergangenheit, Dinge, an die man sich erinnert und die einem etwas bedeuten, wie z.B. in dem Song »Old Europe«.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Ihr wart gerade dort, nämlich in Paris.

Robert Wyatt: *(stolz)* Ja, ich war gerade in Old Europe. In meinem Herzen bin ich noch immer in dem Old Europe, das im Song vorkommt. Ich habe versucht, »uneindeutige«

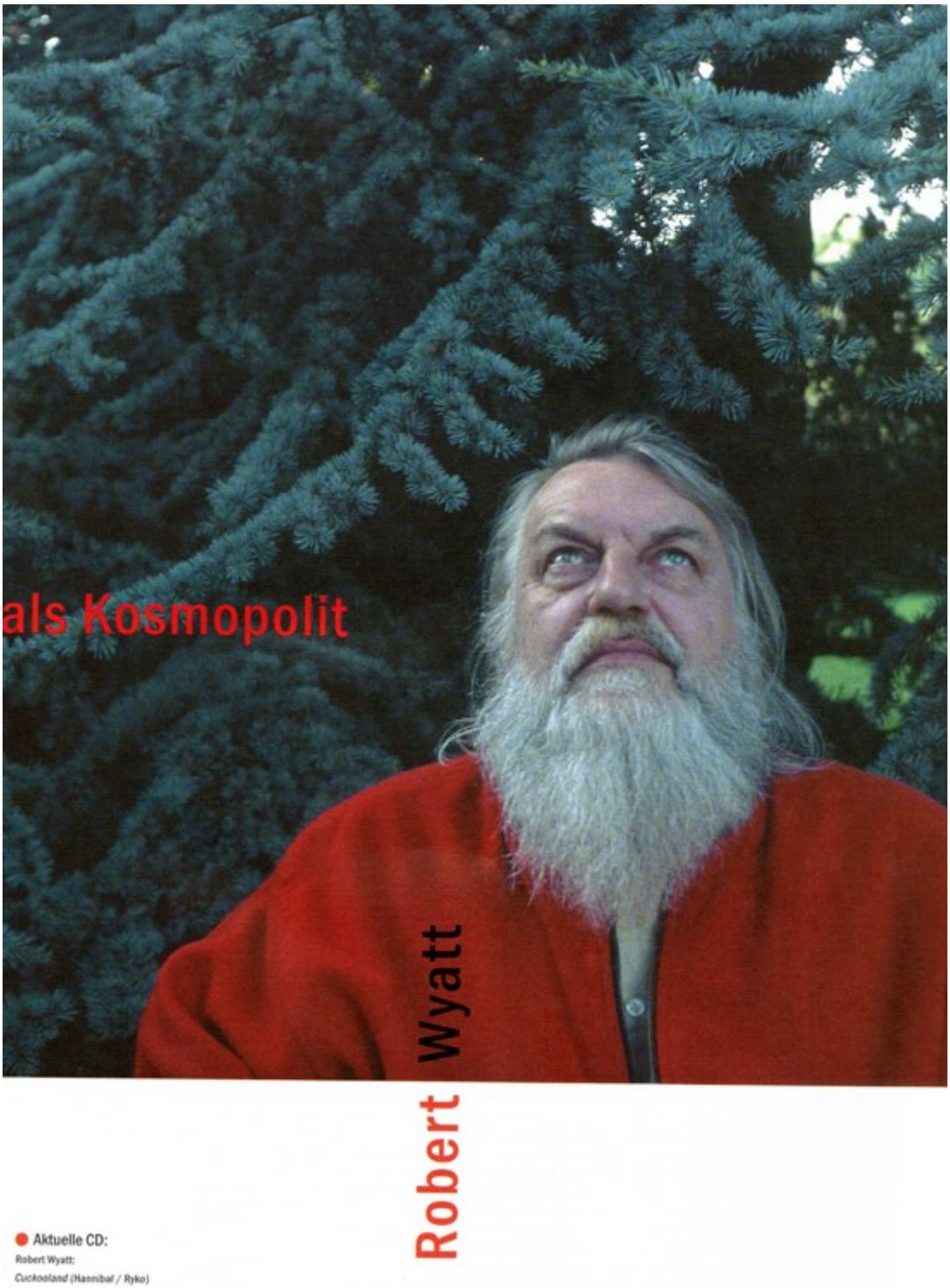
Perkussion mit viel *accelerando* und *rallentando* zu spielen, eine Form, die sich durch die Geschichte des Jazz immer stärker entwickelt hat und die der Rock dann wieder auf die Basics zurückschraubte. Also habe ich viel mit Besen geübt. Das war anfänglich alles, was ich von dem Song hatte. Dann sagte ich Alfie: In diesem Song will ich an einen imaginären Schwarzweiß-Film vom Kontinent aus der Generation meines Vaters erinnern. Selbst wenn Alfie einen allgemeinen Standpunkt einnimmt, arbeitet sie ihn durch eine sehr spezifische Bildhaftigkeit heraus, die oft wirkliche Begebenheiten spiegelt. Diese Arbeitsweise ist ideal für mich, weil sie genau weiß, welches die magischen Momente in meiner Jugend waren, als die Welt wie ein Ort zum Wohlfühlen aussah. Ich war natürlich zu jung, um zu der beschriebenen Zeit [der Song spielt im Paris der 50er Jahre] dort zu sein. Aber unser Freund Mike Zwerin war damals dort. Er ist eine Verbindung zu dem, was mich inspirierte, als ich jung war. Und natürlich bringt der Titel mich zum Lachen, weil er sagt: ... and fuck you, Donald Rumsfeld!

Alfie: Und danke, Joschka Fischer, (*beide lachen*)

Robert Wyatt: Die Ironie der augenblicklichen Situation ist, dass Europa oft Zufluchtsort für Künstler aus Amerika war, die zu Hause kaum wertgeschätzt wurden. Jazz ist ein Beispiel dafür. Europa kümmert sich besser um einige Träger der amerikanischen Kultur als die Amerikaner selbst. Wenn ich mich wiederholen darf: Fuck you, Donald Rumsfeld! (*lacht*) Du bist Europa etwas schuldig! Du solltest dankbar sein. Ich weiß, es klingt fast opportunistisch, so etwas zu sagen. Aber ich habe mich ehrlich noch nie so europäisch gefühlt. Ich habe aber auch nie zuvor wirklich darüber nachgedacht.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Lebt Mike Zwerin noch?

Robert Wyatt: Oh ja, und er schreibt immer noch für die HERALD TRIBUNE. Seit einem halben Jahrhundert fährt er regelmäßig nach Paris, er begreift sich mittlerweile als »Parisian«. Vor einer Woche gingen wir zusammen in einen kleinen Jazzclub in St. Germain, und dort spielte Rene Urtreger, der Pianist, der mit Miles Davis spielte, als dieser in den 50ern in Paris war. Zwerin hat 1948 selbst mit Miles gespielt, er war in der ursprünglichen Birth-of-the-Cool-Band. Er hat also eine Verbindung zu der Musik, mit der ich aufwuchs. Und er war einer der Menschen seiner Generation, der sich sehr für das interessierte, was wir später machten. Er ist immer ein Freund gewesen.



Ich glaube da eine Beziehung ausgemacht zu haben: Die Leute, die Jazz kreiert haben als eine Art Gewebe, eine Art Rhythmus, den man auf alles anwenden kann, waren natürlich Black Americans. Aber Jazz entstand nicht in Afrika, sondern in einem Land, das sich vollkommen aus Immigranten - die meisten freiwillig, manche gezwungenermaßen - zusammensetzte. Die Periode, die für mich die Essenz des Jazz ausmacht, ist die erste Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, bis ca. 1960. Außer der Struktur des Blues kamen die meisten der Akkordfolgen von jüdisch-amerikanischen Komponisten wie z.B. Gershwin oder Irving Berlin. Und ich denke, es ist diese typische Chemie aus melancholischen Melodien, die die Juden aus Europa mitbrachten, und deren Interpretation durch schwarze Musiker. Das war eine ganz neue Verbindung. Und das bedeutet der Begriff Jazz für mich auch heute noch. Auf *Cuckooland* spielt z.B. der Saxophonist Gilad Atzmon, ein Exil-Israeli, der jetzt mit palästinensischen Flüchtlingen in London Musik macht. Er spielt mit uns auf einem Song, den eine Frau in Haifa auf arabisch geschrieben hat. Ich bin sehr froh, dass Musik existiert. Sie kann ganz andere Orte erreichen. Wenn du dagegen in der Tageszeitung über Menschen derselben Volkszugehörigkeit liest, hört es sich an, als ob nichts Gutes dabei

herauskommen könnte.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Du bist 2001 zum ersten Mal seit fast 20 Jahren live aufgetreten, als Gast bei einem David-Gilmour-Konzert. Heißt das, dass du wieder öfter auf der Bühne zu sehen sein wirst?

Robert Wyatt: Ich brachte David dazu, solo aufzutreten, wozu er sonst eigentlich zu schüchtern ist. Also ohne fliegende Ballone und so ein Zeug. Seine Bedingung war, dass ich auch etwas machen müsse. Worauf ich sagte: David, ich will nicht auf die Bühne. Worauf er erwiderte: Macht nichts, es gibt jetzt Mikrophone, du musst gar nicht auf die Bühne. Und ich dachte: O.k., wenn es un-be-dingt sein muss. Sie schoben mich einfach nur einen Meter aus dem Backstageausgang heraus, gaben mir ein Mikrophon und sagten: Mach es einfach. Sobald du fertig bist, schieben wir dich sofort wieder backstage, wo schon ein Brandy wartet. Dann fiel mir ein: Hey, ich kenne den Text gar nicht! Sie gaben mir einen Zettel: Hier ist dein Text. Ich sagte: Ist doch dunkel draußen, ich kann gar nichts lesen! Worauf sie entgegneten: Die Schrift ist groß, und du bekommst ein Licht. Und ich dachte: Oh fuck, da kommst du nicht wieder raus! (lacht) Aber auftreten werde ich definitiv nicht mehr. Ich hatte so viel Angst. Wenn sich alle Augen auf mich richten - das kann ich nicht, (leise) Nicht mehr.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: In den letzten Jahren ist viel Archivmaterial von Soft Machine veröffentlicht worden; seit Neuestem gibt es auch eine CD mit alten Sachen von dir auf Cuneiform. Wie kommt das?

Robert Wyatt: Cuneiform hatten ein paar Tapes von mir von der BBC bekommen, von denen sie dachten, es sei interessant, sie zu veröffentlichen. Sie hatten aber nicht genug Material für eine ganze CD. Also schickte ich ihnen ein paar Sachen, die ich in letzter Zeit zu Hause aufgenommen hatte, solo und mit Hugh Hopper. Was mich besonders an den Aufnahmen von 1972 gefreut hat, war, dass ich vergessen hatte, wie gut Francis Monkman am Piano war. Das brachte mich zum Nachdenken, wie wohl die dritte Matching-Mole-LP gewesen sein könnte. Dann gibt es Bootlegs von Konzerten mit falscher Geschwindigkeit und mit schlechtem Sound, furchtbare Dinger. Aber Ryko hat jetzt die Originalbänder gefunden. Wenn *Cuckooland* erst mal veröffentlicht ist, werden wir nach Wegen suchen, die Aufnahmen zu säubern, um sie herauszubringen. Schon allein, um den Leuten zu zeigen: Hey, es war zwar nicht perfekt, aber besser als die Bootlegs. (*lacht*) Was ich vergessen hatte, war, wie verdammt laut ich früher gesungen habe! Was aber auch davon gekommen sein kann, dass ich trank, bevor ich auf die Bühne gehen konnte.

Postnatale Kuckucksdepression

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Auf dem Titeltrack ist die Kuckucksmutter nicht als eigennützige Persönlichkeit porträtiert, die ihr Ei in fremde Nester legt, damit sie sich nicht weiter drum zu kümmern braucht, sondern als jemand, der vom Verlust des eigenen Kindes stark berührt wird, der aber gleichzeitig nicht aus seiner Haut kann, seinen Instinkten blind gehorchen muss.

Robert Wyatt: Hey, wenn wir das so hätten sagen können, dann hätten wir nicht soviel dran arbeiten müssen, weil genau das die Essenz des Songs wiedergibt. Ich fand dieses Gedicht von Alfie, das sie schrieb, als sie einen Kuckuck beobachtete.



> Zoom

Alfie: Dieser Kuckuck kam zwei Wochen lang jeden Tag. Er suchte im hohen Gras nach Würmern. Als ich ihn zuerst sah, dachte ich: Oh Gott, der blöde Kuckuck. Aber dann begann ich, über sein Leben nachzudenken. Mir wurde klar, dass die Kuckucksmutter nach Afrika fliegt, bevor ihr Baby geboren wird, und dass das Kuckuckskind nie seine leiblichen Eltern kennen lernen wird. Ich dachte: Was für ein schrecklicher Lebensanfang. Ich überlegte, woher dieses Verhalten kommt, es muss da doch einen evolutionären Grund geben, so was wie postnatale Depressionen der Kuckucksmutter, die nicht mit ihrem Kind klarkam. Und das ist dann vielleicht in die Gene eingebaut worden. Ich fühlte schließlich Sympathie für den Kuckuck, und mir wurde klar, wie oft man Menschen, die man nicht wirklich kennt, verurteilt, ohne zu wissen, welche persönlichen Tragödien hinter ihrem Verhalten stehen.

Robert Wyatt: Ich sage das nicht, weil sie hier ist, aber: Dieses Album würde, glaube ich, ohne Alfies Input nicht existieren. Vor allem, weil meine Texte in den letzten Jahren kürzer und kürzer geworden sind. Ich ersetze sie durch mäandernde kleine Trompeten-Melodien. Mein Kornettspiel ist dagegen eher eine Verlängerung meiner Stimme, die in den letzten 20 Jahren eine halbe Oktave an Umfang verloren hat. Aber ich will keine Platte machen, die sich komplett in der unteren Mitte des Notensystems abspielt. Also verlängere ich sie mit dem Kornett. Du musst es sehr exakt

spielen - o.k., ich finde immer einen Weg, schludrig mit den Dingen umzugehen - aber du musst genau wissen, ob du B oder B flat spielst. Du kannst nicht einfach sagen: Na, irgendwo da oben wird der Ton schon sein, so wie du das mit der Stimme machen kannst.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Du bist von der Musikpresse oft als Besitzer der traurigsten Stimme, die jemals aufgenommen wurde, bezeichnet worden. Bist du eine traurige Person?

Robert Wyatt: Ich bringe nie vorsätzlich irgendeine spezielle Emotion in meinen Gesang mit ein - ich versuche lediglich, die Töne zu treffen und ein Kanal für musikalische Ideen zu sein. Welche Emotionen bei den Hörern entstehen, kann ich nicht vorherbestimmen.

Alfie: Aber du bist keine traurige Person. Und jammern oder klagen tust du auch nicht.

Robert Wyatt: Ich liebe es, Spaß zu haben. Trotz der Tragödie ist das größte, was ich sehen kann, eine Komödie von überdimensionalem Ausmaß. Aber ich kann den Menschen nicht diktieren , was sie hören sollen oder was sie fühlen sollen. Das ist nicht meine Aufgabe.



Das Brummen der Düsen

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Auf dem Album gibt es eine Menge Songs über Bomben.

Robert Wyatt: Das liegt an der Zeit. Zudem leben Alfie und ich in »Bomber County«, Lincolnshire, wo es früher nur Felder gab, und heute sind die Hälfte der Felder Startbahnen. O.k., ich übertreibe - aber das tun Künstler nun mal. Während wir das Material für diese Platte vorbereiteten, konnten wir das Brummen der Düsen vernehmen, als eine weitere Generation von mutigen Helden auszog, den Ausländern eine Lehre zu erteilen. Es war in der Luft, du hast es in der Nase gespürt. Und das ist furchtbar. Was aber auch furchtbar ist, ist, wie die Presse sich gierig auf dieses Thema stürzt - ich denke, das ist auch Teil der menschlichen Natur. Und wenn ich das denke, dann werde ich traurig.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Auch hier wieder: der Kuckuck in uns allen.

Robert Wyatt: Absolut.

Alfie: Die Bezüge auf die Bomben kommen in meinen Texten vor. Meine Mutter ist polnisch, und mein Vater war Österreicher, meine Kindheit verbrachte ich im Europa des 2. Weltkrieges. Meine Mutter und ich verließen Dresden am Tag vor der Bombardierung der Stadt. Danach hatte ich viele Jahre Alpträume von Bombern, obwohl ich mich nicht bewusst daran erinnere. Die Bomber, die über den Kuckuck flogen, übten nur. Aber jedes Mal, wenn ich dieses Geräusch höre, bekomme ich Angst. Ich stellte mir vor, dass die Kinder im Irak genauso lange Alpträume haben würden wie ich.

Ralf Bei der Kellen: Die letzte Frage: Was war am schwierigsten daran, Robert Wyatt zu sein?

Robert Wyatt: Zu Lernen, in Maßen zu trinken.

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Robert Wyatt - Schläfer erwarcht! - Spex - Oktober 1997



ROBERT WYATT

Schläfer erwacht!

Bis heute hat Robert Wyatt sich nicht an abgesteckte Claims für glänzende Songs und freie Sounds gehalten. Er ist ein Avantgardist, der beim Singen die Töne trifft, und ein Popmusiker, der keine Angst vor großen Takten hat. Seit seiner Zeit bei Soft Machine verlangte er nach Hörern, die ebenfalls zwischen Monkees und Mingus pendeln können. Nach sechs Jahren Pause ist jetzt sein Album »Shleep« erschienen.
DETLEF DIEDERICHSEN traf den Mann mit der traurigsten Stimme der Welt.

Foto: IRIS GARRELFS.

Robert Wyatt macht einen fröhlichen und gelassenen Eindruck. Er ist stolz auf seine neue Platte, und die diversen Schicksalsschläge, die ihn in seinem Leben ereilten (seit einem Unfall im Frühjahr 1973 ist er an den Rollstuhl gefesselt), hat er anscheinend gut verarbeitet. Seine Rede ist gespickt mit Witzen und Wortspielen, bisweilen verfällt er regelrecht ins Alberne, und wer ihn nur als den zerknitterten, alten Finsterling mit Rauschebart kennt, der einem etwa vom September-Cover der "Wire" entgegenblickt, ist über seinen lebensfrohen Übermut erstaunt.

Robert Wyatts neue Platte "Shleep", ein Konzeptalbum zum Thema Schlaf, ist seine beste Platte seit "Rock Bottom". Das hat man über "Old Rottenhat" und "Dondestan" zwar jeweils auch gesagt, aber diesmal stimmt es eben wieder. Seine Musik läßt sich weder mit zeitlichen, noch mit stilistischen Kategorien beschreiben. So wie seine Musik immer ähnlich und doch immer neuartig ist, so pendelt er zwischen Free Jazz, Pop und etlichen anderen Stilen, ohne sich jemals in einem niederzulassen. Dabei ist nichts, was er tut, beliebig, nichts spielerisch,

sondern jede künstlerische Entscheidung wohlüberlegt. Das schlaumeierische Zitat oder die demonstrative Referenz sind seine Sache nicht. Man könnte ihn als Wegbereiter moderner Klangwelten verstehen, der ganz im Sinne gegenwärtiger Soundpropheten einer der ersten war, der mit Loops (etwa auf seiner ersten Solo-LP "The End Of An Ear", und Dub (man höre etwa "Instant Pussy" auf der ersten Matching-Mole-LP) gearbeitet hat. Andererseits stehen im Zentrum seiner Arbeit Kompositionen, also Harmonien und Melodien, und immer wieder kokettiert er damit, daß er eigentlich ein Popsänger ist: "Ein Freund sagte mir erst kürzlich: Du könntest Pop-Platten machen. Du triffst beim Singen die Töne und machst bei Popsongs eine gute Figur. Aber ich bekäme Klaustrophobie. Ich mag Pop, aber ich könnte mich nicht darauf beschränken. Ich mag MTV nicht, sowas interessiert mich nicht, es ist mir egal. Die Musik mag ich manchmal, aber die ganze Wirtschaft dahinter ist mir völlig fremd. Ich kenne Menschen, die glücklich in diesen Gewässern schwimmen, ich habe auf dieser Platte mit zwei oder drei davon gearbeitet. Aber es paßt in keiner Weise zu mir. Ich habe gehört, daß Wölfe, die zu lange vom Rudel getrennt leben, nie wieder in einem Rudel funktionieren könnten. Ich komme mir manchmal vor wie solch ein Wolf."



> Zoom

Ein Rudel, zu dem Robert Wyatt früher gehörte, hieß Soft Machine. Im Zeichen des Revivals von Art-, Kraut-und Prog-Rock werden sie nun auch im großen Stil wiederentdeckt. Die Geschichte der Band und seines Rauswurfs konnte man im Juni-Heft von "Mojo" lesen: "Ich sage Ihnen, wie schlimm das war, mir das Rückgrat zu brechen, war einfacher zu ertragen. So schlimm war es. "Die Trennung von Soft Machine traumatisierte ihn regelrecht: "lch habe immer noch Träume, in denen mein Rausschmiß wieder rückgängig gemacht wird und ich wieder in der Band willkommen geheißen werde. Dann wache ich auf."

Nach Soft Machine probierte Wyatt mit Matching Mole eine neue Band auf die Beine zu stellen, doch dann passierte der Unfall, und was das dritte MM-Album hätte werden sollen, wurde "Rock Bottom" - jene von Wyatts Platten, die allgemein als Meilenstein, Meisterwerk und Platte für die Insel empfunden wird. Es erschien mit "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" noch eine weitere Platte, dann folgte eine Zeit, in der er sich lieber aktiv in Englands kommunistischer Partei, denn als Musiker bestätigte: "Es gab dafür verschiedene Gründe. Einer war der Tod von Mongesi Feza, ein anderer mein zerrüttetes Verhältnis zu Virgin. Sie unterstützten mich nicht darin, einen Weg jenseits der Popmusik zu finden. Ich mag Popmusik, aber ich haßte diesen ständigen Druck, musikalische Kompromisse einzugehen. Ich bekam außerdem so wenige Prozente, und Studiozeit ist so teuer - es hätte zwanzig Jahre gedauert, bis ich etwas daran verdient hätte. Das nahm mir einfach die Motivation. Aber ich fand schon immer, daß der Kapitalismus einem die Motivation raubt, etwas Sinnvolles zu tun. Es sei denn, man ist der Kapitalist. In dem Fall ist es großartig. Leider sind die meisten von uns keine Kapitalisten, sondern arbeiten nur für welche."

Anfang der Achtziger begann Wyatt auf Betreiben von Rough-Trade-Chef Geoff Travis wieder mit dem Plattenmachen, allerdings in großen zeitlichen Abständen. Auch zwischen seiner neuen Platte "Shleep" und ihrem Vorgänger "Dondestan" liegen wiederum sechs Jahre."1992 fiel ich aus meinem Rollstuhl und brach mir beide Beine", berichtet Wyatt. "Ich mußte deswegen in so einem Rollstuhl herumfahren, wie man ihn in Komödien gelegentlich sieht, wo beide Beine gerade nach vorne ragen - in Filmen rollen diese Rollstühle meist irgendeinen

Hügel hinunter, während aufgeregte Menschen hinterherrennen. Jedenfalls konnte ich damit nicht zum Piano, und es kostete mich meine Konzentration. Ein Jahr später hatte ich einen Nervenzusammenbruch. Es hatte mit meinem ersten Unglück nichts zu tun, so was kann jedem passieren. Während dieser Zeit war ich zu fast nichts in der Lage. Allerdings schrieb ich zu der Zeit die Texte zu "Free Will And Testament" und "Was A Friend". Außerdem litt ich unter jener Schlaflosigkeit, die dazu führte, daß Alfie den Text zu "Heaps Of Sheep" schrieb. Obwohl ich wenig tat, war es also dennoch eine fruchtbare Zeit. Es war wie bei Vulkanen: Auch wenn von außen nichts zu sehen war, bereitete sich innen einiges darauf vor, herauszukommen."

Der Titel "Shleep" - heißt das, daß Sie sich nicht entscheiden konnten zwischen "Sheep" und "Sleep"?

ROBERT WYATT: Das zum einen. Andererseits gefiel mir das Wort, weil es wie Phantasie-Jiddisch klingt. So reden die Cockney-Juden immer: "Money - shmoney", "Sleep -shleep". Das habe ich allerdings erfunden. Der Untertitel ist "A fat chance to dream". Alfie fiel später ein, daß Shakespeare diesen Ausdruck, "a chance to dream", als Umschreibung für Schlaf benutzt hat. (*"Alfie*" ist *Alfreda Benge, Künstlerin, Dichterin und Wyatts Freundin* seit Anfang der 70er Jahre.) Das hatte irgendwo noch in ihrem Unbewußten rumgespukt. Das sind so die Dinge, die man immer in sich trägt: Shakespeare, die Bibel... Es war Jedenfalls keine bewußte Referenz.

Die Platte beginnt ja mit einer vergleichsweise poppigen, teilweise funky Nummer: "Heaps Of Sheep". Wollten Sie den Zugang einfach halten?

Ich nicht. Es war Joe Boyds Idee, er ist der Chef von Hannibal, meinem Label, und er wünschte es sich möglichst weit vorne auf der Platte. Aber ich kann meine Platte natürlich so zusammenstellen, wie es mir gefällt. "Heaps Of Sheep" entwickelte sich zu einem rhythmisch mehr geraden, vorwärtsgerichteten Stück, als es meine Songs normalerweise sind. Das lag daran, daß Brian Eno, den ich eingeladen hatte mitzuspielen und zu-singen, so viel Spaß daran hatte, daß ich ihn fragte, ob er den Song nicht produzieren wolle. Er gab ihm eine völlig neue Struktur. Vielleicht ist es das, was ihn so zugänglich macht. Es ist aber auch ein ziemlich simpler Song. Allerdings sind eigentlich alle meine Songs im Kern simple Popsongs. Ein weiterer Grund, warum er eine gute Eröffnung ist, ist, daß er das Thema der Platte deutlich macht, denn die meisten Lieder handeln von Schlaf, Schlafstörungen, Wiedereinschlafen, Träumen und so weiter. Da schien es passend, mit diesem Song anzufangen.¨

"The Duchess" mußte ich mir über Kopfhörer anhören, um seine ganze Komplexität zu bemerken. Vorher war mir die kinderliedartige Melodie und der seltsame, spielerische, fast besoffen klingende Umgang mit dem Text aufgefallen, aber erst so bemerkte ich die seltsam gegen- und miteinander wirkenden musikalischen Schichten.

Ja, ich habe den Song von der Struktur her völlig auseinandergenommen. Die Basis ist dieser alte Kinderreim: "The Grand Old Duke Of York/he had ten thousand men/he marched them up the top of the hill/and he marched them down again." Ein Witz über einen blöden General. Ich nannte den Song "The Duchess" wegen des Bezugs auf den Duke Of York und weil ich ihn schrieb, als ich mich mit Alfie betrank, und er über Alfie ist, glaube ich, die von Natur aus Aristokratin ist.

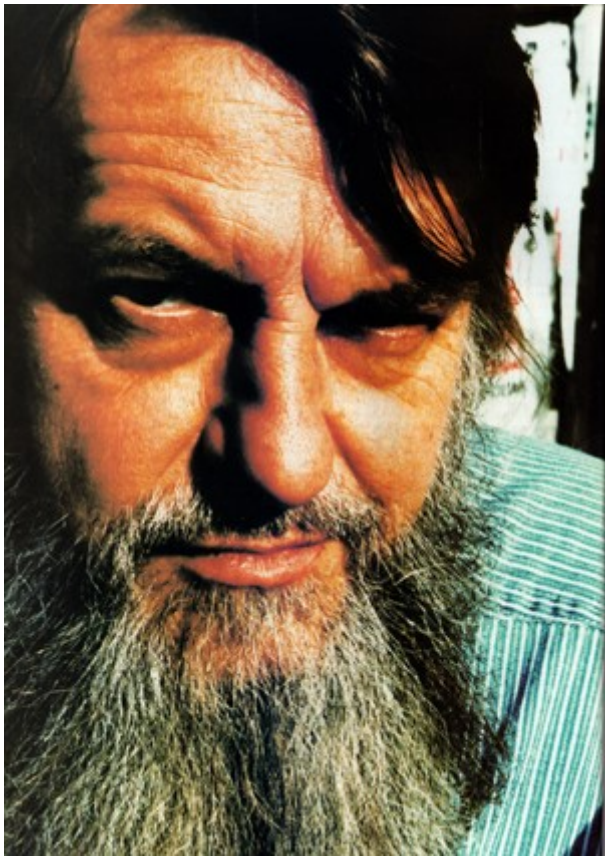
Ich habe immer diesen Effekt gemocht - Benjamin Britten hat das häufig getan -, wenn man ein Kinderlied nimmt und es aus seinem angenehmen, freundlichen Kontext herauslöst, es in ein seltsames Land verpflanzt. Normalerweise versuche ich nicht bewußt, andersartige oder interessante Musik zu machen. Ich will nur, daß es gut klingt. Aber in diesem Fall habe ich darauf geachtet, daß jeder Teil der Musik in einem anderen Takt ist und daß der Song und die Solos in anderen Tonarten als die Keyboard-Basis sind. Ich mußte mich beim Singen enorm konzentrieren, um nicht aus Versehen in die richtige Tonart zu rutschen. Den Takt wollte ich ständig wechseln, damit es keinen Ruhepunkt gibt.

Warum haben Sie die More Extended Versions gesampelt?

Das ist meine Rache an allen, die mich gesampelt haben. Nein, im Ernst: Es ist von der Platte "Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening", auf der sie einige Stücke von "Rock Bottom" covern. "Maryan" und der Song danach, "Was A Friend", sind beide über das Zurückkehren nach langer Abwesenheit: Man kommt zurück, alles ist etwas anders und man fühlt sich etwas unwohl. Der Teil, den ich von den More Extended Versions gesampelt habe, ist aus einem Song von "Rock Bottom", in dem ich mich bei jemand entschuldige - bei wem, weiß ich nicht mehr. Aber es schien mir die perfekte Verbindung zwischen diesen beiden Songs zu sein.

"Was A Friend" hat eine beruhigende, fast hypnotisierende Melodie, darunter köchelt jedoch eine gewisse Nervosität, die sich gelegentlich in wilden Beckenschlägen entlädt.

Ja, nur für ein Wiegenlied ist es zu geschäftig. Genau wegen dieser Dinge erschien mir "Shleep" der perfekte Albumtitel zu sein, je langer ich darüber nachdachte. Die Musik schrieb Hugh Hopper. Er schickt mir ab und zu Kompositionen, die zu simpel sind für die Jazz-Gruppen, mit denen er spielt. Seit fast vierzig Jahren nun schon benutze ich jene seiner Stücke, die für seine eigenen Zwecke zu schlicht sind, aber für meine weniger sophisticateden Bedürfnisse genau richtig. So auch dieses Stück. Im Text geht es um Scham, darüber, von Scham heimgesucht zu werden. Die Version, die Hugh mir schickte, klang nach Schlafwandeln. Das paßte nicht zu dem Text, den ich dazu geschrieben hatte. Denn darin geht es um schwere Schlafstörungen, um die Unmöglichkeit, einen heilsamen Schlaf zu finden. Es ist eher Schlaf als Strafe. Deswegen klingt es so nervös.



> Zoom

Sie spielen selber den Baß, der mir sehr gut gefällt.

Es hat mir auch viel Spaß gemacht. Ich wußte nicht, wen ich hätte bitten sollen, so zu spielen - ein Rock-Bassist hätte ganz anders geklungen, ein Jazz-Bassist auch. Also mußte ich es selber übernehmen. Ein paar Riffs habe ich von Charlie Haden gestohlen, muß ich zugeben, und die Idee, auf der Baß-Gitarre komplette Akkorde zu schrammeln, wie ich es hier gelegentlich tue, so drrroooongg, habe ich von Blur. Deren letzte Single beginnt nämlich mit einem Power-Akkord auf dem Baß. Was für eine großartige Idee, dachte ich mir (lacht).

Im Booklet von "Shleep" erzählen Sie die Entstehungsgeschichte von "September The Ninth" (ein Schwalbenschwarm vor dem Haus der Wyatts). Ich finde, daß die Musik diese Geschichte fast illustriert: All diese Bläser, die sich zu Beginn des Songs, von sonstwoher kommend, langsam in dem Track niederlassen...

Absolut. Es ist nicht meine Absicht, Programm-Musik oder illustrierende Musik zu machen, aber ich denke auch nicht, daß ich hier einfach nur eine Übersetzung des Texts in Musik habe. Ich habe viel Zeit damit verbracht, vor dem Piano zu sitzen und zu versuchen, ein Gefühl für Alfies Text zu bekommen. Wir hatten es ja zusammen erlebt, es war an einem Morgen, früh um sieben, und ein Riesenschwarm Schwalben landete rund um unser kleines Haus an der Küste. Wir wachten beide davon auf und sahen uns die Szenerie vor der Tür an.

Es war unglaublich, normalerweise sieht man Schwalben nur in kleinen Familien, aber hier waren Hunderte um uns herum. Wir wußten, daß es das gibt, hatten darüber gelesen und es im Fernsehen gesehen. Aber es ist etwas anderes, wenn hier zwei Leute sind, und dann sind da diese Hunderte von anderen... Leuten sozusagen, um einen herum... Sie hatten keine Angst, dazu waren sie zu eindeutig in der Überzahl, und sie hatten etwas Wichtiges zu tun. Es war ein phantastisches Erlebnis für uns beide, und ich bin normalerweise nicht in der Lage, solche Dinge in Worten auszudrücken. Aber Alfie schreibt wichtige und manchmal triviale Erlebnisse in ein Tagebuch, und gelegentlich arbeitet sie einen Tagebucheintrag in ein Gedicht um. Das ist dann schon die Hälfte eines Songs. Ich war besonders berührt von ihrer Aussage, daß sie, als die Schwalben davonflogen und sich wieder auf ihren Weg nach Afrika begaben, sich wünschte, sie könnte mitfliegen. Das sagt einiges über die Traurigkeit und Unzulänglichkeit der menschlichen Existenz. Wir könnten sehr arrogant sein in unserer Gewißheit, am oberen Ende des Baums zu sitzen. Aber hier an diesem Morgen hatten wir das sichere Gefühl, eine überlegene Lebensform zu beobachten.

Haben Sie die Bläserparts notiert oder waren sie improvisiert?

Ich dachte dabei an jene Band von Charles Mingus ohne Trompete, mit Jimmy Knepper, Shafi Hadi und John Handy. Die Themen waren so konstruiert, etwa auf "Mingus Ah Um", daß jeder Musiker in seinem eigenen Stil spielen konnte - ich schätze mal, er hatte das von Duke Ellington. Ich war sehr froh, Annie Whitehead für dieses Stück gewinnen zu können, denn sie kann sehr flüssig, unmetallisch Posaune spielen.

Sie kann auch sehr metallisch spielen, fast wie Albert Mangelsdorff, ziemlich kräftig. Aber sie kann eben auch sehr weich spielen. Evan Parker ist sehr gut in einer Sache, die er in seinen eigenen Bands fast nie macht, nämlich zu spielen mit einem vorgegebenen harmonischen Fixpunkt und der Freiheit, ihn zu benutzen, aber auch zu verlassen. Also fast wie Eric Dolphy: atonal spielen in einem tonalen Kontext, und zwar so, daß man immer doch die Anziehungskraft des tonalen Schwerpunkts spürt. Ich habe Evan einfach alle Freiheiten gelassen, nur als er mich fragte, ob er Tenor oder Sopran spielen soll, entschied ich mich für Tenor. Annie kam danach dazu. Zuerst wollte ich eigentlich nur, daß sie den Baß unterstützt. Aber sie wollte probieren, das Thema zu spielen, und wie sich das Arrangement am Ende entwickelte, liegt zu einem großen Teil an ihr. Sie improvisierte ein komplettes Posaunenarrangement um die von mir bis dahin erarbeitete Struktur. Alfies Beitrag zu der Produktion des Stücks war, zu verhindern, daß ich den Klang meiner Stimme stärker verfremde, wie ich es ursprünglich vorhatte.

Bei "A Sunday In Madrid" fällt auf, wie die Vielzahl der Worte und Silben, die sehr gegenständlich verschiedene seltsame Erlebnisse in Madrid beschreiben, im Gegensatz stehen zum eher konturlosen, drony Backing.

Ja, sowas mag ich. Nicht, weil ich pervers bin, sondern einfach, weil solche Dinge, die Suche nach immer wieder anderen Rahmen, mein Interesse aufrechterhalten. Ich habe keine Lust, einen Song zu schreiben und ihn dann in den naheliegenden Kontext zu stecken. Das käme mir vor wie ein Cartoon, bei dem die Bildunterschrift nochmal beschreibt, was ohnehin zu sehen ist. Das wäre eine reine Tautologie, jede Sache sollte ihren eigenen Sinn haben.

Den Text schrieb Alfie zu einer Reihe Fotos, die sie gemacht hat, als sie mit ihrem Vater in Madrid war. Was mir daran gefiel, war, daß es sich anhört, als wäre es eine Art Reise der Halluzinationen durch eine surreale Traumlandschaft, dabei sind es absolut akkurate Bildbeschreibungen. Wir haben die Fotos, um es zu beweisen.

Als letztes Stück auf der Platte haben wir Ihre Cover-Version von Paul Wellers Style-Council-Song "The Whole Point Of No Return".

Ja, ich dachte mir, es sei besser, es instrumental aufzunehmen, denn der Text klang aus meinem Mund irgendwie nicht richtig. Er klingt richtig aus seinem. Ich wollte trotzdem gerne das Stück spielen. Ich wollte die Leute daran erinnern, daß Style Council eine Band war, die eine Menge guter Ideen hatte. Heute sagen viele, Style Council sei Pauls Phase in der Wildnis gewesen. Aber ich habe dort mein Leben verbracht; ich fühle mich sehr zu Hause in dieser Wildnis. Ich wollte mein eigenes kleines Tribut an diese Band aufnehmen und mich auf diese Weise auch bei Paul bedanken, denn er hat einige Tage Arbeit in meine Platte gesteckt, dabei war er gerade mitten in den Aufnahmen zu "Heavy Soul". Er hat von mir auch kein Geld genommen, also ist dies meine Art, zu ihm Danke zu sagen.

Auf dieser Platte sind mal wieder fast alle Gesangsparts von Ihnen selber gesungen. Hätten Sie nicht mal Lust auf ein Duett?

Nun, Alfie kommt hin und wieder dazu, so in der Art von Caspar, the friendly Ghost. Das letzte Wort von "Free Will And Testament" singen wir sogar zu dritt: Alfie, Paul Weller und

ich. Unser kleines Tribut an die Ikettes. Aber sonst singe ich tatsächlich fast alles selber. Ziemlich onanistisch, nicht wahr? Nun, "Heaps Of Sheep" ist so eine Art Duett mit Brian Eno, zumindest singt er sehr viel darin. Darüberhinaus gibt es eine ganze Menge Leute, mit denen ich gesungen habe oder singen möchte. Die meisten sind tot. Aber einige leben noch.

Zum Beispiel?

Was jetzt - die Lebenden, die Toten oder die dazwischen?

Fangen wir mal mit den Lebenden an.

Ich fand immer die Idee gut, mit einer Frau zusammen zu singen. Ich liebe die Sachen von Marvin Gaye und Tammi Terrell. Jahrelang hatte ich Anette Peacock im Hinterkopf. Aber ich verrate solche Dinge lieber nicht, bevor ich's tatsächlich tue. Im Fall von Anette habe ich das getan, und dann las sie es in einer Zeitschrift, bevor ich mit ihr persönlich darüber reden konnte. Jedenfalls ist es nie dazu gekommen. Also behalte ich weitere Ideen lieber für mich. Mir gefällt, wenn Alfie die tiefere Stimme singt und ich die höhere. Das klingt cool.

Was mir noch auffiel, als ich gestern direkt hintereinander "The End Of An Ear" und "Shleep" hörte: Man kann beide Platten keiner Ära zuordnen, man kann noch nicht mal sagen, wieviel Zeit zwischen ihnen liegt oder welche von den beiden die neuere Platte ist.

Es freut mich, das zu hören. Ich habe nie an Fortschritt in der Musik geglaubt: Wagner ist nicht besser als Mozart, Coltrane nicht besser als Louis Armstrong, Paul Weller nicht besser als Jimi Hendrix. So funktioniert das nicht. Es läuft eher so, daß zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt jemand seine Stimme findet. Und dann geht es nur darum, ob es authentisch ist oder nicht. Und was authentisch ist, ist außerhalb der Zeit. Das fiel mir auch auf, als wir in Italien waren: Die am frischesten aussehenden Bilder waren die ältesten. Oder schauen Sie sich alte ägyptische Bilder an. Wurde ein neuer Maler so malen, und hätte es diese Bilder vorher nie gegeben, würde er eine Revolution in der Kunstwelt auslösen. Aber es ist die Malerei des alten Ägypten. Wenn man also über meine Musik sagt, sie sei zeitlos, empfinde ich das als sehr großes Kompliment.

Man könnte Ihnen aber auch vorwerfen, daß alles, was sich seit "The End Of An Ear" musikalisch getan hat, von Ihnen anscheinend nicht wahrgenommen wurde.

Doch, wurde es, aber... Gerade gestern fragte mich jemand, was ich von Drum'n'Bass halte. Es war ein Mißverständnis: Ich dachte, er meinte diese großartige Platte von Charlie Haden und Ed Blackwell in Montreal. Aber das ist für mich auch neue Musik, und es ist schade, daß nicht mehr Leute diese Platte gehört haben. In jedem Fall vermeide ich es nicht bewußt, beeinflußt zu werden. Wie gesagt: ich habe ein Baß-Riff von Blur geklaut.

Robert Wyatt über:

SYD BARRETT: Sehr netter Junge, sehr schweigsam. Er bat uns, auf »The Madcap Laughs« zu spielen. Wir probten, versuchten die Songs mit ihm zu lernen, und dann sagte er plötzlich: Das war's. Er hatte es aufgenommen und war damit zufrieden. Wir waren ziemlich überrascht. Ich würde nicht sagen, daß er verrückt war. Er war ein intelligenter Mensch und ein ungewöhnlicher Songwriter in einem verrückten Geschäft. Wie er darauf reagierte, war, wie soll ich sagen, unüblich normal.

RICHARD BRANSON: Er ist nicht bösartig, aber er ist hinterhältig. Er ist ein Prankster. Und weil er nie in seinem Leben arm war, weiß er nicht, wie bedrohlich es sein kann, wenn er Spiele spielt mit dem Leben anderer Leute, glaube ich. Für ihn gab es immer Sicherheit, er kennt keine existenzbedrohenden Probleme. Darüberhinaus ist er unendlich gierig. Er möchte alles besitzen, alles kontrollieren. Er ist ein Megalomaniac. Andererseits möchte er aber auch, daß ihn alle lieben. Er ist wie Amerika.

MONGESI FEZA: Als Mongesi Feza starb – er war 31, derselbe Jahrgang wie ich – war ich unglaublich aufgebracht. Ich hatte ihn mir als zukünftigen musikalischen Partner gewünscht, vielleicht wegen meiner alten Liebe zu Chet Baker – diese Zusammenarbeit von Gesang und Trompete. Jedenfalls, als Mongesi starb, wurde mir zum ersten Mal klar, daß die Politik die Musik kaputtmacht. Es war nicht meine Entscheidung, mich mehr um Politik zu kümmern, die Politik torpedierte mein Leben. Mongesi war verarscht woden: Er hatte gedacht, er hätte Glück gehabt, weil er der Apartheid entkommen war, aber er hatte es in England fast genauso schwer. Sein Tod war absolut überflüssig und passierte unter ausgesprochen verdächtigen Umständen. Ich rede jetzt nicht von einer Verschwörung, aber er wurde einfach völlig ignoriert, als er krank war. Als er starb, brach es mir einfach das Herz, und ich verlor völlig mein Vertrauen in dieses angeblich so freie Rock-Business, alles kam mir so hohl vor. Statt dessen engagierte ich mich lieber in der Anti-Apartheid-Bewegung. Politische Veranstaltungen erschienen mir einfach viel bedeutungsvoller als Rockkonzerte.

ELVIS COSTELLO: Sehr netter Mensch. Er ist eine Quasselstrippe, gegen ihn bin ich schweigsam. Er ist voller Enthusiasmus, ganz unzynisch. Er liebt einfach Popmusik und weiß alles darüber und nicht nur darüber, auch über Klassische Musik und Jazz. Er hat eine enzyklopädische Speicherkapazität, ist aber auch sehr produktiv.

TONY BLAIR: Ich weiß nicht viel über ihn. Aber es gibt hier ein Radioprogramm, das »Ten Island Discs« heißt. Es läuft schon seit ich mich erinnern kann, seit meiner Kindheit, jede Woche, immer mit einem an-

deren prominenten Studiogast. Er war auch einmal eingeladen, und obwohl ich es nicht gehört habe, kann ich mit Sicherheit sagen, daß seine Auswahl die langweiligste in der Geschichte dieser Sendung war. Weil wahrscheinlich jede Platte ausgesucht wurde, um einer speziellen Zielgruppe zu gefallen, die er erreichen wollte. Ich finde Jospin *(französ. Premierminister)* besser. Er tut das, was ein Oppositionsführer tun sollte, der plötzlich an die Regierung kommt. Nämlich zu sagen: Wir sollten uns jetzt mal über ein paar andere Dinge den Kopf zerbrechen als die vorige Regierung. Er hat den Mut, das zu tun.

JIMI HENDRIX: Er war ein netter Mann. Sehr leise und Gentleman-artig, sehr erwachsen. Sie haben »Spinal Tap« gesehen? Gut, denn ich finde, jeder sollte es gesehen haben. »Spinal Tap« erzählt natürlich die volle Wahrheit, aber es fehlt eine Figur, die diese ganze Geschichte erträglich macht, und das wäre ein Hendrix oder ein Paul Weller. Typen, die nicht nur narzistische Angeber sind, sondern wirkliche Menschen, Erwachsene, die Rockmusik spielen. Ich glaube, er war einer davon. Er war sehr camp, das haben viele Leute nicht mitbekommen. Ein bißchen wie Prince oder Little Richard. Ich meine, man weiß, daß Little Richard homosexuell ist – das war Hendrix bestimmt nicht.

ENGLAND: Das Problem, das England hat, ist, daß wir einfach nicht zivilisiert genug sind. Ich glaube, daß die Römer, als sie England erobert haben, nicht lange genug geblieben sind, um den Job zu erfüllen. Wir sind ein halbzivilisierter Haufen keltisch-sächsischer Hooligans. Sie hätten wenigstens lange genug bleiben können, um uns beizubringen, wie man Wein herstellt. Das haben sie immerhin in Deutschland getan.

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Ist es noch Wyatt ? - Spex - Oktober 1991



(bis zur Weltrevolution...)



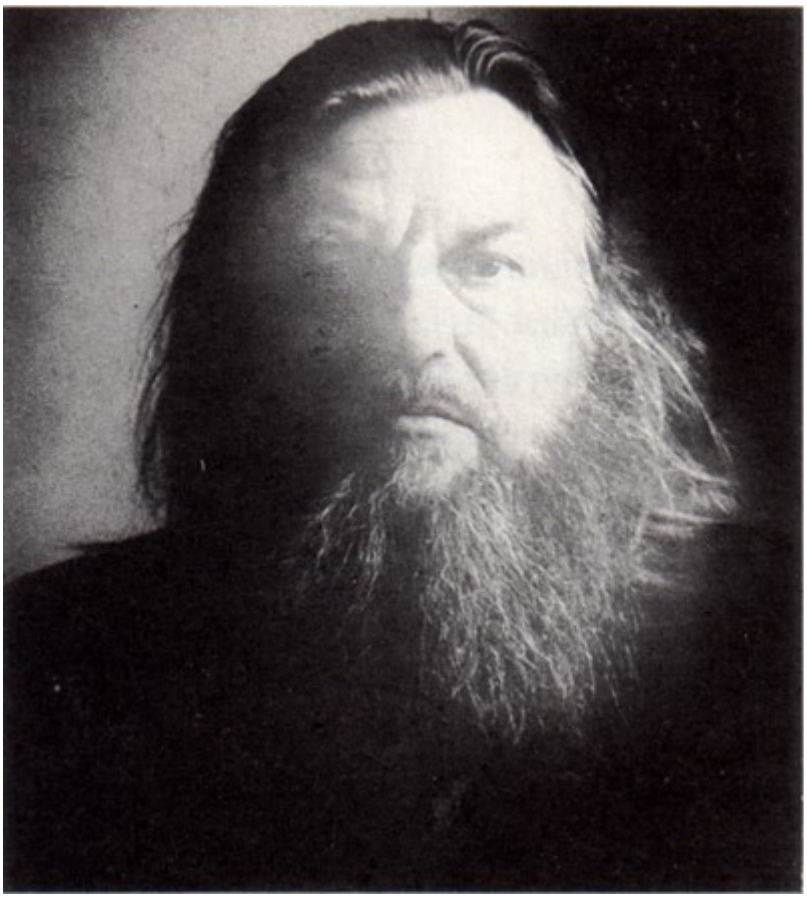
Lange hat Robert Wyatt, der große, alte Raucher und Rollstuhlfahrer der britischen Linken geschwiegen. Doch als er seine Stimme wieder erhob (siehe SPEX 9/91), da war sie süß als wie der Gesang stalinistischer Sirenen.

TEXT: MICHAEL RUFF

Ein Date mit Robert Wyatt provoziert die Rekapitulation mehrerer Schichten Vergangenheit und eines Gefühls der Stringenz- oder besser der Erinnerung daran. In einer Zeit, wo jeder allzugern bereit ist, Geschichte(n) für sich umzuschreiben, die Facts von Gestern und Heute hinter unheimlicher Zukunftsangst verschwinden und so viel widersprüchliche Information in den internationalen Datenbänken gespeichert ist, daß die zehnfache Erdbevölkerung jeden Tag am Computer sitzen müßte, um alles auszuwerten, taucht plötzlich ein einsamer Punkt auf, an dem eine lange Linie hängt. Ein seltener Fall. Soft Machine, Bruch der Wirbelsäule. "Stalin Wasn't Stalling" sind nur einige Marken darauf. Die neueste ist "Dondestan".

Der Mann sitzt zurückgelehnt in seinem Rollstuhl, raucht ununterbrochen und ist sichtlich erfreut, nach seiner Meinung gefragt zu werden. Das Hotelzimmer ist ein vernetztes, elektrisches Robot-System, eins der wenigen in dieser Riesenstadt, das auf seine Bedürfnisse zugeschnitten ist und auf jeden Fingerzeig reagiert. Technischer Fortschritt macht's möglich. "Wie Charlie Chaplin in 'Moderne Zeiten'", witzelt sein Bewohner. Zusammen mit Lebensgefährtin Alfreda Benge wurde Robert Wyatt für eine Woche in diesen Raum gebucht, um sich anläßlich seiner neuen Platte der internationalen Presse zu stellen. Überraschend großes Interesse an einem Mann, dessen höchster Bekanntheitsgrad ca. 20 Jahre zurück liegt und der sich in den Achtzigern outputmäßig auf ca. zweieinhalb Plattenlängen beschränkte. Gelegenheit also, unter kalauernden Überschriften wie "Wyatt

Riot" oder "Wyatt Line Fever" etwas über den Zusammenhang von fast entrückt-schöner Musik und kommunistischer Gesinnung anzustellen, wie es nicht nur die Londoner Wochenblätter gern tun. Da er kaum in der Lage ist, all die alten Plätze dieser Stadt, in der er wichtige Phasen seines Lebens zubrachte, auf eigene Faust zu besuchen, beschränkte sich sein kurzer Ausgang auf den für ihn wichtigsten Ort, Ronnie Scott's Jazz-Club in Soho. Es war dort, wo der Mann Anfang der Sechziger Jahre alles über Melodie, Improvisation und emotionale Tiefe instrumentaler Jazz-Musik lernte, was ihm von der Plattensammlung her noch fehlte. Als The Soft Machine sich Mitte der Sechziger formierte, verarbeiteten sie Jazz-Einflüsse in bislang ungehörter Weise. Ungleich z.B. zur Graham Bond Organisation hatten sie keinen nennenswerten R&B-Background und bedienten sich auch nicht des(damals populären)Tanzbeats, auf dem sich leicht alle möglichen Erkennungsmelodien der Musikgeschichte verteilen ließen. Es schien, als hätten sie aus der Jazz-improvisation die Möglichkeit entwickelt, Melodien endlos zu machen, anstelle sie auf ein paar Takte festzulegen. Und doch waren sie immer noch eine Pop-Band. Obwohl sie mit die ersten waren, die sich weigerten, in dieser Zeit, als "klassische Pop-Songs" gleich dutzendweise geschmiedet wurden, Pop-Singles abzuliefern, experimentierten sie fröhlich mit simplizistischen Pop-Themen, verstärkten und verzerrten ihre Instrumente wie eine psychedelische Rockband, waren lebendiger Bestandteil der Londoner Club-Szene, hatten ein professionelles Management und tourten Amerika mit Jimi Hendrix, obwohl sie nichtmal einen Gitarristen in der Band hatten. (Kevin Ayers, am Anfang kurz dabei, spielte live Baß. Wyatt haßt im übrigen fast alle Gitarristen außer Phil Miller). Zu sagen, daß Wyatt als Drummer und Sänger wichtigster Mann der Band war, wäre sicher falsch. In ihrer besten Phase waren sie ein perfekt ausgepegeltes System aus kühler Spiel-Intelligenz (Keyboarder Mike Ratledge), neutönerischen Klangexperimenten (Bassist Hugh Hopper) und Wyatts zwischen Naivität und Respektlosigkeit wechselnder Liebe zu allem, was in der Musik das Gefühl anspricht bzw. Dasein mit Leben erfüllt. Glaubt man Schilderungen von damals, so war Wyatt der Partykönig, der zwischen ein paar Drinks alle Anwesenden miteinander bekannt machte. 1974 sah ihn eine dieser Parties beim Versuch, die Regenrinne hinabzuklettern, von der Höhe des dritten Stocks abstürzen. An seiner Musik änderte dieser Unglücksfall kaum etwas. Soft Machine hatte er nach der vierten LP verlassen ("Wurden zu kompliziert"), seinen eigenen Stil in der Gruppe Matching Mole (2 LPs) und dem ersten Solo-Werk "The End Of An Ear" ausgearbeitet. "The Moon In June" war schon 1970 (auf Soft Machines Do-LP Thirds") erschienen und hatte Wyatts Stil auf Jahre hin definiert: ein Song, der alle Sensibilitäten balladesker Schönheit zeigte, während das musikalische Arrangement nur das Ziel verfolgte, jedes einzelne Gefühl jeder einzelnen Zeile zu transzendieren und seine Umgebung auf Eindrücke abzutasten, die in keiner festen Songstruktur einen entferntesten Platz gehabt hätten. So wurde der Song zu einem 18minütigen Spiel, das die Basis des Wyatt'schen Heimweh-Monologs mit einer Musik zusammenbrachte, die gleich eines Museums-Rund-gangs jeden Aspekt des Gefühls zur künstlerischen Überwältigung freigibt und aus melancholischen Stimmungen eine farbige Erlebniswelt macht. Diesen Stil perfektionierte er auf "Rock Bottom" (1974, inkl. des mächtigen "Sea Song", an dem sich vor einigen Jahren mal Tears For Fears versuchten).



Während Wyatts Aufnahmen bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt eng mit seiner Herkunft, der Canterbury-Scene (Softs, Caravan, Egg, Hatfield & The North) zusammenhingen, markierte "Ruth Is StrangerThan Richard" (1975) einen Wechsel in seiner Wahrnehmung in Richtung Third World Music (besonders Afro-Jazz im Stile von Chris McGregor/Dudu Pukwana, also Südafrika bezogen) als Ausdruck des weltweiten Kampfes gegen Unterdrückung und für bessere Lebensumstände. Robert und Frau Benge wurden Mitglied der kommunistischen Partei, und er prägte den Satz, daß es mehr Spaß machen würde, auf Partei-Meetings zu gehen als mit Musik sein Geld zu verdienen und zog sich aus dem Business zurück.

Wyatts kommunistische Denkungsweise ist im Grundsatz geprägt von der Erkenntnis, daß die große Mehrzahl der Erdbewohner weder Zugang zu fließend Wasser, regelmäßigen Mahlzeiten oder gar einfachster Bildung hat. Ein Faktum, daß bei allen technologischen wie philosophischen Fortschritten seit der Kolonialzeit auf die lange Bank geschoben wurde. Berühmte Sätze wie "I'm not a broad liberal thinker, It's funny to hear people talk about post-cold-war-this and post-history-that", "I have always known I could kill. I am not a Christian" brachten ihm den Ruf eines genuinen Betonkopfs, waren aber eher Ausdruck einer Persönlichkeit, die auf ideologischem Gebiet eher naiv, sprich nahe am (linken) common sense funktioniert und insofern wenig Verständnis für die ideologischen Probleme einer Linken hat, die meint, auf jede winzige soziokulturelle Verschiebung in den Metropolen reagieren zu müssen. Jedenfalls entledigte sich Wyatt des Gedankens der eigenen Wichtigkeit auf seine Weise und ließ erst 1980 wieder von sich hören. Die Form, die er für seinen Wiedereintritt wählte, ergab sich aus dem Zeichen der Zeit wie aus dem Schrecken, der ihn durchzuckt haben muß, als er beim Twiddeln am Radio-Weltempfänger plötzlich "The Moon In June" (oder war's was anderes?) zu hören bekam, und zwar in einer Sendung von Radio Free Europe! Also machte er eine Reihe 7"-Singles für das damals super-glaubwürdige, super-dedicatete Rough-Trade-Label, die an seinen überraschenden Charts-Erfolg von 1974, einer Version des Neil-Diamond/Monkees-Hits "I'm A Believer", anknüpften, Songs, die im Gegensatz zu seinen bisherigen Eigenkompositionen jedweder Ambivalenz und Vieldeutigkeit abhold sind und in keinster Weise von der politischen Rechten für ihre Zwecke mißbraucht werden können. In seinen Augen: kubanische Traditionals, ein amerikanisches Anti-Hitler-pro-Stalin-Singspiel, Südstaaten-Blues, Chic, Ivor Cutler, später noch ein triefiges Elvis-Costello-Arbeiterlied und Peter Gabriels Ode an Stefan Biko. Obwohl gegen Ende der Serie zu leichter Plattheit ausgewalzt, funktionierte das Prinzip der klassisch-musikalischen Interpretation oft mißbrauchter Popsongs wie ein

Schlüssel in Sachen persönlicher Wahrheitsfindung zwischen zur Massenrezeption gedrillten Pop-Manipulationen und der ohne Zweifel vorhandenen, menschenverbindenten Wahrheit genialer Hits.

"Mich inspirierte die Idée, vor einem Backing-Beat den Text lediglich zu ohne dabei an Melodie zu denken, ähnlich wie ein Rapper das tut."

1985 kam "0ld Rottenhat" und zeigte wieder kühles Desinteresse an allem außer den Thesen des amerikanischen Linguisten Noam Chomsky, einem Mann, der prima erklären konnte, warum in den Achtzigern Kapitalismus Pop war und in den Siebzigern nicht. Danach: Abwesenheit. Das Wyatt'sche Prinzip

Es ist nicht die Abwesenheit von Stampfrhythmen, Belly-Bassläufen und grundlegenden Gitarrenakkorden/offensichtlichen Samples, die Wyatts Musik-nicht nur seine eigene, auch die alles individuellmuckerhafte wegstreichenden Bearbeitungen von Fremdkompositionen - gänzlich von allen Übereinkünften zwischen Musikindustrie, Medien und Konsumwilligen verschieden macht. Es ist seine Stimme, und genau wie jemand, der nicht viel mehr als seine Stimme und seine Überzeugung besitzt, macht er die Musik seiner Stimme untertan, läßt Keyboards klingen wie die kühlere Schicht unter dem warm austretenden Lüftchen seiner Worte und Klangmalereien. "Dondestan" (das spanische "Wo sind sie"/Donde, auf ein Stammesgebiet komprimiert) ist in diesem Sinne seine Republik, und nur wenige ihrer Gebiete überschneiden sich mit dieser (metropolischen Abteilung der) Welt. Ich persönlich halte das für die schönste Musik dieses Planeten. Sie erweckt den Wunsch in mir, mich endlos ihrem Zauber hinzugeben und weisen Worten zu lauschen, sei es unter dem Vorzeichen, daß am Ende aller Klassenkämpfe das Paradies erreicht sein wird oder dem anderen, das besagt, daß im Falle einer drohenden Niederlage der heutige Zustand allemal genießenswerter ist als der morgige.

Die Wurzel dieser blätternden, blätterhaften Schönheit zwischen Klang und Analyse liegt in dem Wyatt'schen Widerspruch, daß politische Überzeugung nichts mit Handwerk zu tun hat, die mögliche Verwendung des Ergebnisses des Handwerks dagegen sehr viel mit der Überzeugung.

Eine Stimme, die allein unvergleichlich, im Multitrack-Duett unmindblowing klingt. Eine Stimme, die das britische Alphabet, fremde Sprachen, Popsongs und Propaganda durchfühlt hat. Gibt es Schönheit im Gesang eines Kommunisten? Sind Worte Schall und Rauch? Wie fühlt es sich an, feste Texte zu singen?

Wyatt: "Entscheidend war für mich die Erkenntnis, daß die menschliche Stimme keineswegs wie ein Instrument anzusehen ist. Im Jazz-Bereich - und der wichtigste Einfluß war für mich instrumentaler Jazz-herrscht die gegenteilige Einschätzung vor, aber ich bin der Meinung, daß die Stimme etwas ganz anderes ist. Sie ist nicht mit Trompeten oder Klavieren zu vergleichen, denn jeder von uns kann sie benutzen. Wenn ich eine Stimme höre, erwarte ich ganz andere Dinge. Ich erwarte Worte, und ich habe mich dazu entschieden, für sie Verantwortung zu übernehmen, und nicht so zu tun, als seien sie ein Sound unter vielen. Mein Ohr konzentriert sich automatisch auf die Stimme. Es geht mir nicht um Botschaften, aber wenn ich den Mund *(benutze hier den Ausdruck mouth, der im Englischen sowohl Mund wie Sprache bezeichnen kann, Anm.d. Verf.*) benutze, will ich Worte benutzen, und sie müssen richtig sein. Das funktioniert oftmals besser, wenn es nicht meine eigenen sind.

SPEX: "Dondestan" ist Plattentitel wie auch Bildüberschrift für Alfredas Cover-Gemälde. Was haben beide miteinander zu tun?

"Das Bild zeigt mich und Alfie, wie wir in einem Kaninchenstall von Fremdenzimmer den Winter an der spanischen Mittelmeerküste verbringen, ein paar Meilen südlich von Barcelona. Das war Ende der Achtziger, als ich einige Beiträge für das katalanische Radio zu machen hatte. Es war Winter, ein verlassenes Geisterdorf mit hunderten herrenloser Viecher, die einmal gekauft, dann verlassen darauf warteten, daß jemand sich ihrer annimmt. Tja, und dann waren ausgerechnet wir da, die unser halbes Geld dafür ausgaben, die Tiere zu füttern und impfen zu lassen undsoweiter. Wo waren all die Menschen? Wir sprachen einen der wenigen verbliebenen Dorfbewohner darauf an und der meinte, daß sie wenigstens keinen Verein gegen Gewalt an Kindern benötigen würden. Da setzen sie andere Prioritäten als wir in England."

Der islamische Einfluß: In Europa ist Spanien das einzige Land, wo ein

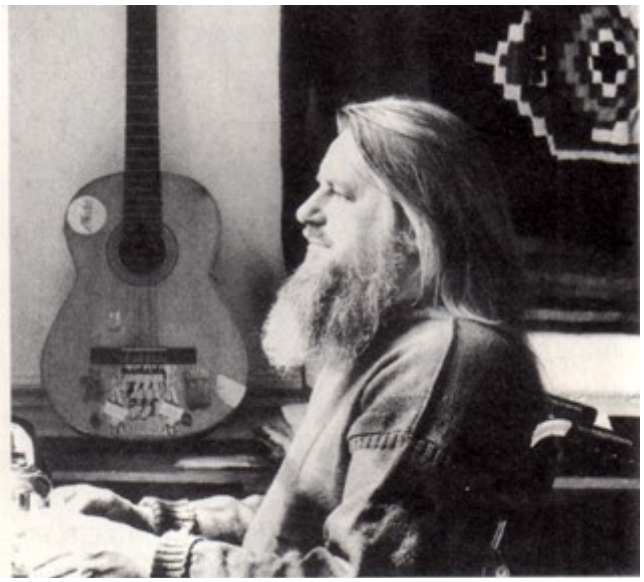
erwachsener Mensch unbeachtet im Straßengraben verrecken kann (Christentum die einzige Religion, die ausdrücklich von Liebe redet?)

"Richtig, ein Flamenco-Sänger klingt wie ein Koran-Sänger. Es gibt eine Theorie, die das berühmte 'Ole' auf 'Allah' zurückführt (*'Hallo' übrigens auch, Anm.d. Verf.*). Für uns war es das Land, in dem wir uns in unserer Identität am wenigsten sicher fühlen konnten."

Das Cover-Gemälde scheint mir trotz aller formalen Richtigkeit ein störendes Element zu beinhalten. Im Gegensatz zu ihrer Gestaltung von "Old Rottenhead" scheinen die dargestellten Dinge und Personen Ausdruck zu zeigen, Position zu beziehen. Das setzt sich auch in der Musik fort. Der aufstörendste Song ist wahrscheinlich "Shrinkrap"...

"Ein Text von Alfie, in dem sie sich über teure Therapien und über Selbstmitleid als Weg zu persönlicher Anerkennung lustig macht. Mich inspirierte die Idee, vor einem Backing Beat den Text lediglich zu sprechen, ohne dabei an Melodie zu denken, ähnlich wie Rapper es tun. Wie vielleicht zu hören ist, war das nicht unbedingt eine bewußte Entscheidung - den gesamten Song hat eigentlich der Brandy geschrieben, dieser billige dreijährige spanische. Zum Schluß saß ich am Klavier und probierte ein paar Läufe aus. An denen habe ich bis zum Schluß nichts mehr geändert. Ich wollte dies Gefühl des Ausprobierens und der Freude daran erhalten."

Die Platte wirkt insgesamt wie in zwei Teile geteilt. Während der zweite Teil sehr sprunghaft ist, wirkt der erste eher pittoresk...



"Das mag damit zusammenhängen, daß Alfies Texte bescheidener sind als meine. Was meine angeht, so akzeptiere ich jederzeit den Einwand, sie würden arrogant wirken. Alfies sind das Gegenteil, obwohl unsere Ideen, die Welt betreffend, sehr ähnlich sind. Sie beschreibt einfach detailliert, was sie gesehen hat. Die beiden Nonnen aus 'Worship' sind wirklich dortgewesen, und eine von ihnen kauerte sich nieder. Das war's. Und sie wußte nicht einmal, daß ich den Text für einen Song verwenden würde, aber da ich dabei war, als sie ihn schrieb, fühlte ich mich als Teil der Lyrik. Mein Problem ist ja immer, daß ich viel mehr Musik schreibe als Texte. Da sich meine Ideen über die Jahre kaum verändert haben, fällt mir selten mal ein neuer Text ein."

Mir scheinen ihre Texte sehr viel mit Erlebnissen in der Natur zu tun zu haben, wozu mir zwei Dinge einfallen: ein Timothy-Leary-Satz aus den Sechzigern, wo er feststellt, daß Menschen, die an die Kraft der Natur glauben, meist Sozialisten sind, und die heutige Erkenntnis, daß niemand mehr an die Kraft der Natur glaubt, dafür jeder meint, er müsse sie beschützen.

"Wenn Menschen von Natur sprechen, dann meinen sie meist lebendige Dinge. Bei Alfie ist das anders. Sie kann auch eine weggeworfene Plastiktüte bemitleiden, was doch etwas ziemlich besonderes ist. Sentimental würde ich das jedenfalls nicht nennen."

Eine Stimme, die allein unvergleichlich, im Multitrack-Duett unmindblowing klingt. Eine Stimme, die das britische Alphabet, fremde Sprachen, Popsongs und Propaganda durchgefühlt hat.

In 'Worship' oder 'Catholic Architecture' wird Natur als etwas dargestellt, das dazu geeignet ist, menschliche Standpunkte und Symbole zumindest zu relativieren.

"Sicher, wir konnten die ganze Zeit diese kleinen Dramen am Strand beobachten. Ehrfurchtgebietende Sonnenuntergänge, verschwindende Fußspuren... eine immense, aber sanfte Gewalt."

Nach dieser Formulierung muß ich fragen, ob du diese Wahrnehmungsweise für eine spezifisch weibliche hältst?

"Möglich. Eine interessante Idee. Muß ich mal drüber nachdenken, haha. Ich dachte immer, das seien nur unsere Gefühle, aber vielleicht steht sie in Verbindung zu einem kollektiven weiblichen Gefühl, das mir verschlossen ist."

Kommen wir zum harten Stoff. "CP Geebies" ist wohl das "Wo sind sie?" im Hinblick auf die Kommunistische Partei?

"Auch als langjähriges Parteimitglied hat mir die Situation irgendwie Vergnügen bereitet, die Partei in einem kompletten Durcheinander von Ausflüchten, Entschuldigungen und Tarnfarben im Sande verlaufen zu sehen. Das war der andere Grund, die Platte 'Dondestan' zu nennen. Auf der ersten Seite geht es um Einzelheiten, auf der zweiten deckt sie alles ab, was uns zur Zeit beschäftigt, Sorgen macht oder zum Lachen bringt."

Was ist der Zustand der Partei? Bist du überhaupt noch Mitglied?

"Nein. Sie hat mich verlassen, haha. Vor Jahrzehnten dachte ich immer, ich sei der letzte Hippie, aber das stimmte nicht. Sie sind heute überall. Jetzt bin ich vielleicht der letzte Kommunist. Aber das stimmt auch nicht. Es gibt Aktivitäten überall im Land, und ich kann nicht einmal behaupten, von allen gehört zu haben. Aber es scheint, als ob es sehr viele Menschen gibt, die mir verwandte Ideen vertreten. Sie wissen nur nicht immer, daß es kommunistische Ideen sind. Also mache ich mir um das Fortbestehen der kommunistischen Idee keine Sorgen. Ein Problem ist nur die Organisation. Die Tageszeitung 'Morning Star' existiert noch und ist die einzige Alternative zur herrschenden liberal-konservativen Presse. Aber sie ist so isoliert, daß sie sich weder eigene Photographen noch Auslandskorrespondenten leisten kann und daher ihre Informationen von denselben Agenturen beziehen muß."

In "Left On Man" beantwortest du den Vorwurf, du würdest Zusammenhänge zu stark vereinfachen, mit der Bemerkung, daß Albert Einstein das auch getan hätte. Steht der historische Materialismus für dich auf einer Stufe mit der Physik?

"Es geht mir um die Feststellung, daß es Menschen gibt, die sich vor Vereinfachungen fürchten. Sie verstecken sich hinter einer angenommenen, unauflöslichen Komplexität der Dinge. Wenn ich sagen würde. die Palästinenser haben keine Heimat, würde die Antwort lauten, oh, der Nahe Osten ist ein sehr viel schichtiges Problem. Was ja auch stimmt, nur ist es kein Grund, zu einem Faktum keine Stellung zu beziehen. Einstein hat schließlich nicht die Komplexität der Physik beschrieben, sondern einen Strang Wahrheit in der Komplexität gefunden, die den Rest aufgehellt hat."

"Lisp Service" ist derjenige von dir selbst getextete Song, der den meisten Punch hat. Die Musik schrieb dein alter Soft-Machine-Kollege Hugh Hopper. Gibt es weitere Pläne?

"Hugh ist seit vielen Jahren einer meiner besten Freunde. Er schreibt die schönsten Melodien, die ich je gehört habe, aber da er selbst nicht singt, gibt es auch keine Texte. Ich würde gerne zu seiner Musik singen aber es gibt da ein Problem: Ich müßte die Texte heranschaffen, und da er meine politischen Überzeugungen nicht teilt, möchte ich unsere Freundschaft nicht dadurch gefährden, daß ich ihn mit eindeutigen Texte brüskiere."

Michael Ruff

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Robert Wyatt - Canterbury Nachrichten - September 1987



W Y A T T , Robert

7":

- Yesterday man / I'm a believer — 74 F Virgin 640 059 PS PS
- I'm a believer mono / stereo — 74 US Virgin VR 56000

CD:

- Late 70's-Early 80's / Old rotten hat (2 CD-Box) — 87 J Rough Trade Japan 27 JC - 195

Bei weitem das Erfreulichste der letzten Zeit (da es ja musikalisch kaum was Neues gab) ist das Robert WYATT-book von Gigi MARIONI bei der Stampa Alternativa (Italien). Neben einem Interview und einigen Statements von Robert WYATT (natürlich-leider- in italienisch), enthält es eine Menge Texte von seinen Solo-alben, von MATCHING MOLE und seinen Singles und Maxis. Das Interessanteste dabei ist natürlich die beigefügte Single mit unveröffentlichtem Titel:

- Chairman mao (one-sided, red vinyl) — I SCONC 002 PS

Der Titel stammt von den Sessions zu "Old rotten hat" und man muß sich fragen, warum so ein toller Song nicht auf die LP oder wenigstens auf die CD (Platz genug gibt's da ja) kam. Nun ja, glücklicherweise kommt man jetzt ja doch noch dazu, ihn zu hören.

Mittlerweile auch als CD erhältlich: Michael MANTLER - The hapless child, D, Watt 4 und Ben WATT - North marine drive & Summer into winter, UK, Cherry Red CD BRED 40; beide CDs mit Beteiligung von Robert WYATT.

Robert Wyatt: „Shipbuilding"

Ja, wie heißt er noch gleich?! Der Junge im Rollstuhl. Richtig. Robert Wyatt. Ich mag's nicht besonders. Klingt wie Bowie vor 12 Jahren. Produktion und Arrangement sind abgrundtief schlecht. So, als würde die Hilton-Bar-Band spielen. Zumindest spielt er mit Musikern – und nicht mit einer Rhythmus-Box.

Ich habe auch Soft Machine nie besonders gemocht. Sie waren prätentiös, eine Kultgruppe. Es gab und gibt tausende von Jazzmusikern, die weitaus besser sind."

meinte Les Holroyd von BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST



Chairman Mao — Robert Wyatt

> Zoom

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Robert Wyatt - Zwischen Realität und Tagtraum - Spex - Oktober 1981





Manche sagen. Gastfreundlichkeit sei eine besonders positive Eigenschaft der Engländer. Wie dem auch sei, so hat sich dieses Vorurteil doch wieder mal bestätigt. Robert Wyatt hat mich nämlich so herzlich aufgenommen, daß ich mich bei ihm zu Hause eher wie ein guter alter Bekannter als wie ein deutscher Reporter fühlte. Diese vertraute Atmosphäre war dann wohl auch die beste Voraussetzung für das Zustandekommen des folgenden Gesprächs:

R.: (blättert in der letzten Spex) Find ich sehr gut, die Au Pairs.

?: Kennst du auch welche von den deutschen Gruppen?

R.: Nein, nur die von früher wie Can und so.

Aus der anderen Richtung

?: Man hört, daß du dich ziemlich von dem distanzierst, was du zu frühen Soft Machine-Zeiten gemacht hast.

R: Ja, manchmal habe ich gesagt, das war alles Mist. Es war dumm, so etwas zu sagen, weil es damals für mich wohl wirklich das Beste war, was ich machen wollte und konnte. In der Zwischenzeit habe ich mich aber sehr verändert, ich sehe eben Vieles anders und kann mich nun mal nicht mehr so recht mit dem identifizieren, was ich früher gemacht habe. Vielleicht war es sogar besser als das, was ich jetzt mache. Ich bin nicht in einer objektiven Position, um das zu beurteilen.

?: Wie waren damals eure Auftritte?

R.: Es ist schön, wenn die Leute deine Musik mögen und, naja, du willst auch davon leben. So arbeiteten wir damals und hofften, daß es genug Leuten gefällt, um für unsere Musik hinreichend bezahlt zu werden. Wir haben oft in Clubs gespielt, wo gewöhnlich nur Musik zum Tanzen lief. Und die Hälfte des Publikums war enttäuscht, daß man zu unserer Musik nicht tanzen konnte. Die anderen sagten: „Das ist ja toll, was ihr da macht! Diese intellektuelle Musik ist doch viel besser als Tanzmusik-" So trafen wir auf Zuhörer, die für Tanzmusik nichts (mehr) übrig hatten. Aber wir kamen genau aus der entgegengesetzten Richtung. Unser Background war die eher akademische Jazzmusik, und wir machten eine Reise auf die populäre Musik zu. Bei unseren Gigs hatten die Leute nie getanzt, weil wir einfach keine Tanzmusik spielen konnten. Es ist wirklich schwer, gute Tanzmusik zu machen. Wenn du eine schlechte Reggae-Band hörst, verstehst du, was ich meine. Ich hatte immer absoluten Respekt vor scheinbar einfacher Pop-Musik und populärer Musik, weil sie für mich in gewisser Weise die moderne Fortsetzung der Folk-Tradition darstellen. Und weil wir das nicht konnten, haben wir etwas Anderes gemacht. Was mir aber dabei absolut nicht gefiel, war, daß manche Leute, die unsere Musik körten, sich als etwas Besseres vorkamen gegenüber den „Dummen", die höchstens Tanzmusik verstehen können. Aber vielleicht hinterfrage ich das Alles auch zuviel?

?: Was machen eigentlich jetzt die Leute, mit denen du in der Soft Machine gespielt hast? Elton Dean und Hugh Hopper spielen, soweit ich weiß, in wechselnden Jazz-Formationen. Und Mike Ratledge?

R.: Ich habe wirklich keine Ahnung, was die jetzt alle machen. Ich habe keinen Kontakt mehr zu ihnen. Es ist wie eine Scheidung nach einer Heirat. Zum Schluß konnten wir nicht mehr gut miteinander umgehen. Wir waren zwar freundlich zueinander. Aber das hat uns damals alle schon sehr mitgenommen. Wir haben uns gegenseitig überbeansprucht. Es war wie ein kleiner Krieg, bei dem wir uns gegenseitig ganz schön verletzt hatten. Guten Kontakt habe ich eigentlich nur noch zu Pip Pyle (früherer Hatfield and the North — Schlagzeuger) und zu den Leuten, die in Henry Cow waren {Chris Cutler. Tim Hodgkinson und Fred Frith).

?: Vor Jahren wurde das Soft Machine Triple Echo herausgebracht, ...

R.: Ja, das war kriminell. Sie fragten uns, ob sie alte Tapes und Demos zusammen mit neueren Aufnahmen auf einer LP-Kassette herausbringen könnten. Und wir hatten nichts dagegen. Auf unsere Vorstellungen wurde dabei aber überhaupt nicht eingegangen. Wir hatten gar keinen Einfluß auf die Zusammenstellung. Sie hatten nun mal all diese Tapes und wollten noch mehr Geld aus der Soft Machine herausholen. Wenn das Geschäftliche Überhand nimmt, dann braucht eine Schallplatlengesellschaft keine Musiker mehr. Es war so, als wenn wir alle gestorben wären. Okay, ich bin sehr behindert, aber ich lebe noch.

Ich habe noch nicht aufgehört...

Auf die Essenz der Dinge

?: Bei deinen neueren Aufnahmen beziehst du dich auch auf Pop-Songs, wie etwa die Edwards/Rodgers-Komposition „At last l am free", die auch auf der 1. Chic-LP zu finden ist.

R.: Ja. ich glaube, es war wirklich eine gute Übung für mich, mal einen so gut konstruierten Pop-Song zu singen. Ich hatte damit keinen großen Hit und es ging mir auch nicht darum, das Original so gut wie möglich zu kopieren. Ich singe und spiele das ja auch ganz anders, nur das Tempo ist gleich. Ja, die Stücke, mit denen ich wirklich am zufriedensten war, basierten gerade mal auf 2-3 Akkorden, vgl. „Stalin wasn't stallin'". Ich bin hauptsächlich an der Essenz von Dingen interessiert. Sound und Rhythmus sind mir sehr wichtig. Meine Tendenz ist es, das Material für einen Song auf ein Minimum zu reduzieren. Ich bemühe mich, all das Überflüssige, was nichts Echtes mehr hinzufügt, wegzulassen. Ich will herausfinden, wie wenig man tun muß, um noch ein gutes Musikstück zu machen. Vielleicht hat das auch sehr damit zu tun, daß ich älter werde. Früher wollte ich noch Alles ausprobieren. Ich variierte die Geschwindigkeit, experimentierte viel und machte Dinge komplizierter. Und jetzt bin ich eben hauptsächlich an den bloßen Elementen interessiert.

?: Magst du die Slits?

R.: Oh, ja. Die Slits finde ich hervorragend; z.B. „In the beginning, there was rhythm" und „Man next door" sind zwei so ungeheuer gute Singles, für mich zwei der besten Songs, die eine englische Gruppe je gemacht haben. Was mich auch interessiert: Ich habe da eine Platte von einer bulgarischen Percussionsgruppe. Sie bringen im Gegensatz zu englischen Folkloristen wirklich sehr komplexe Rhythmen, die selbst ich kaum verstehe.
Ich arbeite auch mit indischen Tabla-Spielern. Es ist wirklich eine sehr schwierige Disziplin. Tabla ist wohl auch das einzige Percussionsinstrument, auf dem ein Amateur keinen guten Sound erzeugen kann. Ich bin froh, daß ich die Gelegenheit habe, mit Tabla-Musikern zu spielen. Auch auf meiner letzten Single waren ein Tabla und ein Shehnai Spieler, beides Inder dabei.

?: Du hast ja auch auf Nick Mason's „Fictitious sports"-LP mitgemacht. Was hälst du von dieser LP insgesamt?

R.: Ich hab sie noch gar nicht gehört.

?: Was?

R.: Nick hat mir halt noch kein Exemplar zugeschickt.

?: Die letzte LP vor „Fictitious Sports", an der du maßgeblich beteiligt warst, war doch die 1976 erschienene „Silence"-LP, auch mit Carla Bley und Mike Mantler. Dann gab es ja eine lange Pause, bis du im letzten Jahr deine erste Single auf Rough Trade herausgebracht hast?

R.: Hm,... Ich glaube schon. Ich kann mich kaum daran erinnern, was in der Zwischenzeit war. Ich lebe stets in einer Art Tagtraum. Manchmal vergeht eine Woche oder ein Monat, in dem viele interessante und aufregende Dinge geschehen, ohne daß ich dabei ein sichtbares Resultat erkennen kann.

Ich habe oft Leute getroffen, bin in Kinos gegangen oder Ähnliches. Es gibt aber auch andere Wochen, in denen ich mich gar nicht so besonders gut fühle, und ich nehme in irgendeinem Studio in ein paar Stunden etwas auf. Das ist es eben, was für die meisten zählt, aber ich vergesse solche eine Woche vielleicht vollständig. Was also wirklich in meinem Leben passiert, was ich erlebe und wahrnehme ist nun mal nicht auf einer Schallplatte zu finden.

Von Ereignissen

herumgetragen





R.: Ich kämpfe nicht sehr, um mir Situationen zu schaffen, die mir gefallen könnten. Ich habe auch keine konkreten Pläne; ich lasse Vieles auf mich zukommen. Die einzigen Entscheidungen, die ich treffe, sind negativ: „Ich will dies nicht tun, ich kann das nicht tun ... u.s.w.", bis mir schließlich noch höchstens eine Alternative übrigbleibt. Wenn etwas schwierig aussieht, dann begeb ich mich eben zu etwas Anderem, was mir leichter erscheint. Daher ist mein Verhalten sehr von äußeren Geschehnissen bestimmt. Ich glaube, ich habe in erster Linie nur deswegen angefangen, Musik zu machen, weil es für mich damals wohl die günstigste Alternative war. Alles Andere erschien mir viel zu schwierig.

Seit den 70'er Jahren ist die praktische Seite meiner Tätigkeit als Musiker immer schwieriger zu realisieren, einfach weil ich im Rollstuhl bin, und daher leb ich auch nicht mehr das Leben, das Musiker so führen. Es ruft halt kein Manager mehr an, der sagt: „Bring mal eben den PA rüber". Nichts dergleichen. Bis zu einem gewissen Grade wehrte ich mich anfangs gegen diese Situation, aber später kümmerte ich mich auch mehr um andere Dinge. So kam ich dann zu ganz anderen Aktivitäten, ohne es so recht zu bemerken.

Ich bin oft ins Kino gegangen; das fällt mir zu den späten 70'ern ein. Meine Frau, die beruflich damit zu tun hat, hat mich oft zu interessanten Filmen mitgenommen. Es war vielleicht die größte und stimulierendste Sache für mich, all diese Filme zu sehen. Ich bin eben seit vielen Jahren nicht mehr in der Lage, selbständig herumzufahren. Sicher waren die Filme für mich auch eine geistige Kompensation dafür, daß ich behindert bin. Und so hab ich mich auch manchmal nicht darum gekümmert, ob die Filme gut oder schlecht waren. Es ging mir einfach darum, eine andere Lebensperspektive zu erfahren. Ich bekam fast Platzangst, als ich immer zu Hause saß und so viel TV sah, wo dauernd eine englische oder amerikanische Version von irgendwas abläuft. Ich fühlte mich eingeschlossen. Daher hatte das Kino schon einen befreienden Einfluß auf mich, mehr als das, was musikalisch in den späten 70'ern passiert ist. Mir ist zwar nicht bewußt, ob und wie sich diese Erfahrungen auf meine jetzige Arbeit auswirken, aber diese Sache ist mir immernoch wichtig.

(Robert philosophiert dann über die Träume seines Hundes, der gerade etwas unruhig im Zimmer herumläuft:) Ich würde sonstwas darum geben, wenn ich sähe, was er träumt.

?: Wenn es soviele andere wichtige Dinge im Leben gibt, sollte man sich nicht an Stelle mit Musik besser z.B. im sozialpolitischen Bereich engagieren?

R.: Ich kenne das Gefühl sehr gut, wenn man nach dem besten Weg sucht, sich selbst zu engagieren. Ich kann manche Dinge nun mal physisch nicht realisieren, weil ich eben im Rollstuhl bin. Manche Leute, die mich besuchen, sagen, es sei ganz nett und sehr relaxed hier. Aber so fühle ich mich nur über die Hälfte meiner Zeit, in der anderen Hälfte bin ich oft sehr frustriert, denn ich muß ein weitaus zurückgezogeneres Leben führen als es mir lieb ist. Manchmal möchte ich, ... ich weiß nicht... vielleicht an der Front sein und den Angolanern helfen gegen die Südafrikaner zu kämpfen. So kann ich oft nicht die Menschen erreichen, mit denen ich mich verbunden fühle

?: Das siehst du vielleicht zu sehr aus deiner Situation. Das Problem besteht doch wohl auch für diejenigen, die aufgrund ihrer körperlichen Verfassung eher dazu in der Lage sind, ihre Ideen zu verwirklichen?

R.: Ja, natürlich. Ich weiß nicht, wie ich Entscheidungen treffen würde, wenn ich einen größeren Aktionsspielraum hätte und ob ich dann die Dinge tun würde, die ich eigentlich vorhätte zu tun.

Die gewisse Anonymität

R.: Ich glaube, daß ich mich in erster Linie gar nicht so sehr ausdrücken will, um „mein Zeichen" zu hinterlassen. Die Hauptsache ist für mich, in meinem Leben viele interessante Dinge zu erfahren. Manchmal ist eine gewisse Anonymität schon sehr gut. Ich kannte jemanden, der damit ein echtes Problem hatte. 1968 war ich oft mit ihm zusammen. Ich meine Jimi Hendrix. Er war niemals in einer anonymen Situation, denn er war entweder auf der Bühne oder in einer vom Manager errichteten Schutzzone. Wenn du nicht mehr irgendwo sein kannst, wo dich niemand kennt und wo du machen kannst, was du willst, dann vermißt du wirklich etwas Wesentliches.

?: Bezieht sich der Alifib/Alifie-Song auf deiner Rock Bottom-LP auf deine Frau?

R.: Ja, es ist aber auch ein Wortspiel bzgl. „Alive" Und „Fib" bedeutet im Englischen eine kleine Lüge.

?: Ich frag das nur, weil ich vor etwa einem Jahr in einer stressigen Situation war. Da habe ich dieses Lied sehr oft und sehr gern gehört.

R.: Das find ich schön. Es ist gut zu wissen, jemandem etwas geben zu können. Ich glaube, viele (Musiker) wissen gar nicht, was ihr Tun für eine Auswirkung hat. Sogar wenn man einen klaren Grund hat, etwas zu tun, so können sich dennoch die Gefühle und Gedanken eines Hörers sehr von den eigenen unterscheiden.

(In einer Kneipe Nähe Roberts Wohnung erzählte Robert u.a. noch eine kleine Episode aus früheren Zeiten:)

R.: Als ich 1974 meine erste Single ,,I'm a believer" machte, da meinte jemand während der Aufnahme zu mir, ob ich nicht etwas vom Ende des Stückes an den Anfang setzen könnte, weil der Disc-Jockey Tony Blackburn solche Intros nicht mag. Und ich dachte mir, Moment mal, nie zuvor hat mir jemand gesagt, was ich auf einer Platte machen soll, nur um es jemandem Recht zu machen.

?: (Kann ich mir doch nicht den schlauen Schlußgedanken verkneifen: Punk hat doch Einiges verändert!) Hier noch eine Übersicht an Schallplatten, an denen Robert Wyatt maßgeblich beteiligt war:

LP's:
The Soft Machine
Soft Machine Vol. l
Soft Machine Vol. 2
Soft Machine 3
Soft Machine 4
Soft Machine — Triple Echo
Robert Wyatt — End of an ear
Robert Wyatt — Rock bottom
Robert Wyatt — Ruth is stranger than Richard
Matching Mole — 1

Matching Mole — Little red record
Mike Mantler — The hapless child
Mike Mantler — Silence
Nick Mason — Fictitious sports
Singles:
I'm a believer
Yesterday man
Arauco/Caimanera
At last l am free/Strange fruit
Stalin wasn't stalling
Grass

Wolfgang Hanka

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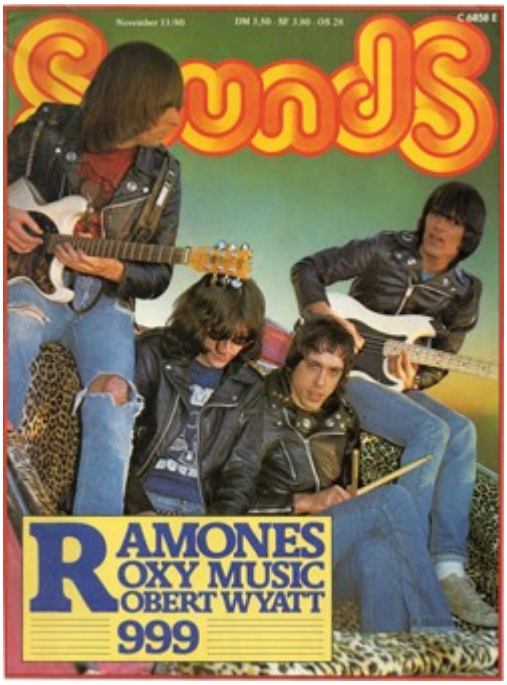
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Der stille Wyatt bricht sein Schweigen - Sounds - November 1980




Der stille Wyatt bricht sein Schweigen

Dieser Mann hat gerade vier Singles aufgenommen. Die erste ist ein chilenisches Volkslied. Die zweite ist eine Chic-Nummer. Die dritte ist eine pro-stalinistische Gospelhymne aus den Vierzigern. Die vierte stammt aus der Feder von Ivor Cutler.

Von Graham Lock

zu widmen, es ist komisch..., das ist... Ich bin Jahrgang 1945, schau mal, und es gab gewisse Grundsätze in unserer

Dieser Mann hat gerade vier Singles aufgenommen. Die erste ist ein chilenisches Volkslied. Die Zweite ist eine Chic-Nummer. Die dritte ist ein pro-stalinistische gospelhymne aus den Vierzigern. Die vierte stammt aus der Feder von Ivor Cutler.

Von Graham Lock

Ich wollte ergründen, warum man Robert Wyatt, The Red Robbo Of Twickenham" nennt. Robert Wyatt starrt in die feuchte Luft. "Weiß nicht... Vielleicht bin ich trotz meiner selbst politisch geworden, denn eigentlich mach' ich mir ja lieber ein paar schöne Tage. 'Er lacht 'Ich wäre gern ein Hedonist."

Er zögert, runzelt die Stirn. "Aber da ist noch was anderes... Ich brauchte mich dem Frimer wohl nicht mehr so zu widmen, es ist komisch... das ist... Ich bin Jahrgang 1945, schau mal, und es gab gewisse Grundsätze in unserer Generation, gewisse Dinge, die man halt nicht mehr machte, so wie Elite-denken in der Form von Rassismus einfach diskreditiert war, man tat es eben nicht.

Alle haben gedacht, daß dieser Scheiß endgültig weg war, dieses "Recht" der westlichen Länder, den restlichen Teil der Welt wie ungezogene Straßen-bengel behandeln zu können. Aber jetzt kommt es wieder angekrochen, und im nachhinein wirkt es so, als hätte es nur eine kurze Pause gemacht.

Dabei geht es nicht nur um die Konservativen, nicht nur um Politiker, sondern um die gesamte Kultur... Wie dieser versteckte Rassismus im Radio, der die Phrase "ernste Musik" fur nichts außer die europäisch-akademische Musik benutzt.

Diese Einstellung gedeiht jetzt wieder, und mich hat das sehr getroffen, da ich dachte, es wäre vorbei. Ich bin glücklich dabei gewesen, loszugehen, Lieder zu singen und rumzumachen und so. Ich würde sowas immer noch viel lieber machen, aber die ganze Basis, der ge-samte Konsens, den ich für gegenwärtig hielt, ist anscheinend nicht mehr da, und ich bin wirklich... alamiert."

Wyatt rutscht unruhig in seinem Rollstuhl hin und her. "Und einer der Gründe, warum ich in die Kommunistische Partei eingetreten bin, ist der, daß ich gelernt habe, daß alle Ideen, die sich in der Kultur und in der Musik äußern, allein keine effektive Kraft haben, Dinge zum Besseren zu wenden, Sie können Dinge nur andeuten, oder bestätigen, aber ändern können sie nichts."

Südamerikanische Folksongs

Er schaut in den Himmel, als ob er Hilfe suchen würde, und seufzt. "Und ich mache immer noch das einzige, das ich kann — Musik — und das gründet sich auf die Annahmen, die ich früher mal hatte, daß Kunst eine echte Macht wäre usw. Und ehrlich gesagt weiß ich nicht, wie ich mir die ganzen Einblicke, die ich seit Beginn meiner Musikerlaufbahn außerdem noch hatte, nutzbar machen soll. Ich sehe heutzutage alles im Lichte der Politik, aber als Musiker glaube ich, daß meine erste Aufgabe die Musik ist, und wie oft du auch von Songs verlangst, daß sie deine eigenen Voreingenommenheiten reflektieren sollen, so gibt es doch musikalische Gesetze, die festlegen, daß Songs ihr eigenes Wertsystem besitzen müssen."

Wieder runzelt er die Stirn, darauf ein Achselzucken. "Dies ist ein Teil meiner Probleme. Ich fühle mich nicht wohl dabei, unter solchen Voraussetzungen meinen Lebensunterhalt zu verdienen. Ich fühle mich wirklich in der Falle und sehe auch keinen Ausweg. Ich weiß tatsächlich nicht, was ich tun soll, so einfach ist das."

Wir sitzen im Garten seines Hauses in Twickenham und diskutieren seine Rückkehr zu Plattenaufnahmen. Die letzte Single, "Arauco"/"Caimanera", die erste seines Vier-Single-Projektes bei Rough Trade, signalisierte das Ende ungebrochenen Schweigens seit seiner 1975er-LP RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD.

Die erste Überraschung bei diesen Singles ist ihre Unterschiedlichkeit: zwei südamerikanische Folksongs, Protest-Jazz a la Billie Holiday, Chic, Ivor Cutlers Schrullen, und, am merkwürdigsten, eine Multi-Track Acapella-Version von "Stalin wasn't Stalling", einem pro-stalinistischen amerikanischen Propaganda-Song, zur Zeit des zweiten Weltkrieges, vom Golden Gate Jubilee Quartett erstmals gesungen. Außerdem plant Wyatt noch, auf zwei Single-Seiten selbst gar nicht in Erscheinung zu treten — "Stalingrad" ist ein Gedicht, geschrieben und gelesen von Peter Blackman, und "Trade Union" ist die Arbeit von Disharhi, einer Gruppe bengalischer Papierarbeiter und Folk-Musiker aus Londons East End.

Die zweite Überraschung ist der politische Einschlag dieser Singles. Wyatt: "Arauco stammt von der chilenischen Folk-Sängerin Violetta Parra und ist eine verzweifelte Aufforderung an alle Indianerhäuptlinge und die Kulturen und Gemeinden, die sie repräsentieren, aufzustehen und die christlichen Kolonialisten zu verjagen. Verzweifelt deshalb, weil die Unterdrückung schon seit 400 Jahren regiert und nicht mehr viele Indianer übrig sind.

Und die Leute sagen: "Oh, sowas kommt vor, Rassen sterben halt aus". Rassen sterben nicht

aus, sie werden umgebracht.

Pinochet verkauft ihr Land an die ausländischen Geschäftemacher, was nichts anderes bedeutet, als daß die meisten Indianer entweder sterben müssen oder in Slums an die Fabriken verfüttert werden, ausgebeutet in den schlimmsten Jobs im Bergwerk. Und wenn man sagt: 'Was hat das mit uns zu tun?' Nun, unsere Regierung ist einer der Hauptgeldgeber.

Lynchjustiz im Süden

'Caimanera' ist eine Version von 'Guantanamera', das die kubanische Nationalhymne ist. Ich singe es... weil in der Presse soviel über tausende Kubaner stand, die Kuba verlassen haben. Da dachte ich, ich singe halt ein Lied für die Millionen, die dort geblieben sind."

Und dies ist der Mann, der früher bei Soft Machine das Alphabet sang.

Robert Wyatts erste bemerkenswerte Arbeit war die des Drummers/Sängers von Soft Machine, jener Band, die Ende der Sechziger zu Bedeutung aufstieg, als Führer (zusammen mit Pink Floyd) der damaligen "neuen Welle" von größenteils instrumental spielenden Art-Rock Bands, die die Ankuft von Psychedelia und hoher Ernsthaftigkeit im englischen Rock verkündeten. Ihrem heutigen Ruf als Pioniere der Fusionierung von Jazz und Rock tritt Wyatt mit einem Grinsen und ein paar Anekdoten entgegen.

"Manchmal war es wirklich peinlich. Da kommen ein paar Kids nach dem Gig zu dir und meinen 'Oh, toll, diese intellektuell stimulierende Musik, letzte Woche war es furchtbar, da spielte hier Geno Washington & the Ram Jam Band und alle haben nur getanzt', und du kannst mir glauben, hätten wir damals so gut wie Geno Washington spielen können, und dann noch vor seinem Publikum, dann hätten wir lieber das gemacht, keine Frage.

Wir waren einfach nicht sehr gut,konnten nicht sehr gut sein. Unser Publikum bestand, naja, größenteils aus Snobs. Ich denke, wir hatten das auch so verdient, bei der blöden Musik, die wir spielten. Das Gute an den Endsechziger-Konzertbesuchern war, daß sie immer vollgeknallt waren, und deshalb konnten wir stundenlang Scheiße spielen und damit durchkommen.



Soft Machine '69: Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper

Wyatt bleibt im Einklang mit seinen Theorien über die soziale Impotenz des Künstlers, indem

er behauptet, daß er ihrer "schönen *Melodien*" aufgenommen habe. Nichtdestotrotz: korrespondiert ihr Inhalt — eine heavy Mischung aus politischer Aussage und unklaren persönlichen Reflexionen — mit unheimlicher Sicherheit über die Möglichkeiten und Konfusionen, mit denen er momentan kämpft.

Sein nachstes Werk wird "Strange Fruit"/"At last I'm free" sein. "Strange Fruit", im Original in den Vierzigern von Billie Holiday gesungen, war eine Reaktion auf die Lynchjustiz in den Südstaaten. In Erinnerung an die vielen Anti-Rassismus-Aufkleber, Poster und Flugblätter an Wyatts Zimmerwänden muß ich fragen, in welchem Maße die Wahl dieses Songs von seiner Beschäftigung mit dem Anti-Rassismus beeinflußt worden ist.

"Mir fällt es auf, daß viele Leute so reden, als seien diese Dinge Vergangenheit, besonders die Amerikaner — Lynchjustiz im Suden, Mord an Indianern usw. Wenn man aber über die Kräfte, die dahinter stecken, spricht, dann gibt es sie immer noch, die Leute sind immer noch dieselben.

Nimm mal Süd-Afrika — ich denke, daß, würde es nicht den wachsenden Widerstand der Afrikaner geben, die USA, England und Westeuropa es gerne in eine weitere Mondlandschaft verwandeln würden. Wir wissen, daß die USA aktiv auf der Seite der Anti-SWAPO-Kräfte stehen, genau wie die Engländer und Franzosen. Diese Art von Rassismus ist mindestens so schlimm wie damals zur Zeit der Lynchjustiz."

"Strange Fruit" unterstreicht Wyatts Behauptung am deutlichsten, daß die Singles waren "wie Sketche, ohne Dekoration, nur ein Dokument einiger Stücke, die ich mag". Alle sind größtenteils allein eingespielt, der Sound ist nackt und etwas holperig — Baß, Keyboards, und Wyatts hohe, wehleidige Stimme, die in düsterer Behutsamkeit steigt und fällt.

"At Last I'm Free", jenen Song der Disco-Band Chic, wählte Wyatt aus, weil es eine "schöne Ballade" sei.

Obwohl dieser Song keine augenfälligen politischen oder persönlichen Referenzen besitzt, so scheinen bestimmte Textzeilen doch eine pikante Note im Bezug auf Wyatts heutige Probleme als Musiker anzuschlagen. Es mag Spekulation sein, aber man kann ihn als Abschiedslied fur Wyatts Rock'n' Roll-Illusionen verstehen.

"At last I'm free, I can hardly see in front of me. "

1971, Robert Wyatt verläßt Soft Machine und gründet die Band Matching Mole. Nachdem diese zwei Alben veröffentlicht hat, besäuft sich Wyatt auf einer Party irgendwann 1973 fürchterlich, fällt aus einem Fenster im vierten Stock, und knallt auf den Bürgersteig und bricht sich das Rückgrat. Heute ist er querschnittgelähmt und für den Rest seines Lebens in den Rollstuhl verdammt.

Nach diesem Unglücksfall bleibt Wyatt eine Zeitlang in enger Verbindung mit der Musik. Zwar konnte er kein Schlagzeug mehr spielen, aber Keyboards, diverse Handtrommeln und Gesang waren ihm nach wie vor möglich. Das Comeback-Album - ein zweites Solowerk (das erste, THE END OF AN EAR, noch aus der Soft Machine-Zeit, bleibt eines der bewegendsten und unterbewertetsten Meisterwerke der Siebziger, hat CBS gerade wiederveröffentlicht). Ein Werk mit wirklichem Siebziger. Ein Werk mit wirklichem Tiefgang — das Thema von Absturz und Genesung besitzt einen emotionalen und musikalischen Zusammenhalt, der außerdem nur noch von Van Morrison's ASTRAL WEEKS erreicht wurde.

Bewußtsein der Welt gegenüber

Viele sahen dieses Album als eine Biografie seines Unfalls, aber Wyatt streitet dies ab.

"Eigentlich habe ich das meiste Material vor dem Unfall geschrieben, deshalb glaube ich, daß sein Zusammenhalt musikalischer Natur ist; ich hatte einen bestimmten Satz von Ideen, den ich die ganzen 40 Minuten lang durchgehalten habe."

Nach dem nächsten Album RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD und zwei verblüffenden Cover-Versionen, den Singles "I'm A Believer" und "Yesterday Man" nahm Wyatt lange Zeit nichts mehr auf. Warum?

"Meine anderen Interessen drängten sich in den Vordergrund. Ich dachte, ich könnte kein Musiker-Leben mehr führen — Sachen wie Auftritte erwiesen sich als viel zu schwierig — und es ist schwer, ein Musiker zu sein, wenn man nicht das entsprechende Leben führen kann, denn es ist dann nicht etwas, das du bist, sondern nur ein Teil der Organisation, wie Anlage, Roadies, Manager, Repertoire, Tourpläne. Und so wurde es für mich immer schwerer, meinen Schwung beizubehalten. All die romantischen Ideen von Wichtigkeit verblichen dann schnell. Die Sachen, die ich begann, für wichtig zu halten, hatten mit diesem Job nichts zu tun. Ich meine, die Leute, mit denen ich heute rede, was ich zu meinem Vergnügen tue... zum Beispiel schaue ich mir gerne Filme darüber an, was in der Welt so passiert, und dagegen wirkt Rock'n' Roll so... winzig."

Paradoxerweise hat Wyatts Bewußtsein der Welt gegenüber, seit er im Rollstuhl sitzt, dramatisch zugenommen. Heute ist er ein begieriger Leser und hört regelmäßig Radiosendungen aus aller Welt. So ist es auch kein Wunder, daß er diese fortschreitende Enttäuschung dem Rock'n' Roll gegenüber erfuhr, diese Veränderung der Werte, und diese Verstrickung mit politischen Dingen. Warum nimmt er dann aber jetzt wieder Platten auf?

Wyatt zuckt die Achseln, etwas mutlos. "Man braucht Jahre, um sich irgendetwas aufzubauen, und so blieb mir nichts anderes übrig, als wieder ins Rock-business zurückzukehren, denn ich kann nichts anderes." Er zögert, rutscht in seinem Stuhl, runzelt die Stirn. "Die Rückkehr zur Rockmusik... Für mich ist es wie ein komischer Alptraum, in dem ich wieder die Kleider trage als wäre ich 15. Alles paßt einfach nicht mehr, sehr merkwüdig."

War es das, was du meintest, als du neulich sagtest, daß die Ruckkehr ins Musikgeschäft wie eine Niederlage sei?

"Eine Niederlage nicht, denn ich lebe ja noch. Aber es erstaunt mich, daß ich es noch einmal mache. Ich dachte, ich würde mich in eine andere Richtung bewegen — wohin weiß ich auch nicht, ehrlich. Es wäre schon interessant zu wissen, wo ich sein würde, wenn ich nicht in diesem Stuhl saße...

Ich erkundigte mich bei der Jobvermittlung nach Arbeit. Alles, was sie mir anbieten konnten, war hier in der Nachbarschaft Schachfiguren anzumalen, und meine Frau Alfie und ihre Mutter meint dazu, tu das nicht, du verkaufst dich zu billig, du bist Musiker'."

Wyatt hält die Spannung zwischen seinem Enthusiasmus für die Politik und auch für die Musik nicht für fruchtbar, sondern für eine absolute Sackgasse. Und seine Angst, daß die Politik — stark vereinfacht ausgedrückt — in den Augen seiner Hörerschaft die Musik verderben könnte, führt ihn manchmal so sehr in die Verteidigung, daß es schon komisch wirkt. So auch, als er die Wahl von Ivor Cutlers "Go and Sit upon the Grass" als eine seiner Singles zu erklären sucht.

"Ich mag den Song, denn er macht sich lustig über Leute wie mich. Er sagt "*do not mind if I thump you, when I am talking to you, I have something important to say*"."

Meinst du, daß deine Songs den Leuten Schläge versetzen? Unglauben liegt in meiner Frage.

Wyatt überlegt. "Nun, ich mache mich gerne über mich lustig, denn es gibt da diese fürchterliche Sache, die immer dann zu passieren scheint, wenn man über andere Dinge als gerade Musik und Spaß spricht... Man wird dann leicht zu einer Art Cliff Richard der Linken."

"Und das," so lacht Robert, als er in die linken Schatten zurückrollt, "ist ein hübscher Gedanke für den Hinterkopf."

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Die Geschichte der Soft Machine: Teil 3
DIE SANFTE AVANTGARDE

Von Winfried Trenkler



Teil zwei unserer Soft Machine-Story schilderte die kreativste Phase der Gruppe. Kevin Ayers und Mike Ratledge's unterschiedliche Charaktere vertrugen sich nicht mehr miteinander. Kevin mußte gehen, und für ihn kam Hugh Hopper, ein ideenreicher und zurückhaltender Bassist, der sich mit dem „Eierkopf" Ratledge viel besser verstand. In dieser Zeit kamen dann ihre besten Platten raus: VOLUME TWO, THIRD und FOURTH. Nie war ihre Musik origineller und abwechslungsreicher. - Der dritte und letzte Teil der Story schildert die Positionskämpfe innerhalb der Gruppe, die diversen Umbesetzungen und den daraus resultierenden Einfluß auf ihre Musik.

Was nach dem Erscheinen von "THIRD" beginnt, ist ein schleichender Identitätsverlust der Soft Machine. Begleitet von einer langwierigen Abwanderung der "guten Seele" dieser Band, von Schlagzeuger Robert Wyatt. Eigenartigerweise erlebt die Gruppe in den nächsten zwei, drei Jahren einen ebenso allmählichen Aufstieg. Nur nicht innerhalb der Szene, in der sie einst gestartet ist, im Pop, sondern im Gesichtsfeld der Jazzer und Jazzfreunde. Jazz-Rock wurde die Vokabel für ihre und ähnlicher Gruppen Musik. In dieser Reihenfolge unterstellt das Doppelwort, daß es sich um jazzigen Rock handelt. Doch wenn die Kniebeuge einstiger und vermeintlicher Rockbands vor dem Jazz so tief reicht, wie z.B. bei der Soft Machine der folgenden Jahre, sollte man vielleicht eher von Rock-Jazz reden. Es waren nämlich auch die

Jazz-Polls, in denen die Soft in Erscheinung trat und schließlich lauter erste Plätze einnahm, nicht die Rock-Polls.

Erste „Popband" im Ronnie Scott's

Zunächst umgab die Soft Machine immer noch das Image der Popband. So konnte es Ende April, Anfang Mai 1970 als kleine Sensation notiert werden, daß Englands Jazz-Club Nummer eins, der Londoner Ronnie Scott Club, zum erstenmal eine Popgruppe einlud. Vierzehn Tage lang gastierten die vier in diesem Top-Etablissement. Ihr Repertoire, das nicht ausreichte, mehrere verschiedene Abende zu gestalten, ging Mike Ratledge auf den Wecker. Der Anspruchsvolle fühlte sich peinlich berührt und gestand ein: „Ich ziehe mit einem Repertoire lieber durch die Lande, setze mich dann eine Weile ruhig zu Hause hin und lasse mir etwas Neues einfallen. So muß ich am selben Ort und eventuell demselben Publikum nicht Abend für Abend dasselbe vorsetzen." Mike machte sich zu seinem eigenen Gefangenen. Er war schließlich derjenige, der besonders auf Struktur in der Musik gedrungen hatte, der von einem „free blow" — von spontanem Spiel — nicht viel hielt. Seine Improvisationskünste hielten sich zudem in Grenzen.

Elton Dean hatte andere Probleme. Er gab sich alle Mühe, seine freien Teile für Improvisationen im Stile seiner Heroen wie John Coltrane, Joe Farrell und Stanley Turrentine zu nutzen. Er kämpfte verbissen gegen den imaginären zweiten Bläser, der ihm zur Seite gestellt werden könnte. Als Klubgäste in der Pause seinen Auftritt über den grünen Klee lobten, strahlte er wie ein Musterschüler und antwortete: „Sagt das mal Mike!" Der Organist dachte nämlich immer wieder daran, die Stelle von Lyn Dobson neu zu besetzen. Elton Dean war noch immer der bescheidene freundliche Kerl, der sich hochrappeln mußte und gerade eine Chance dazu geboten bekam. In dem Maße, wie die Soft Machine bei Jazz-Freunden an Ansehen gewann, nahmen Elton Deans Ruhm und Hochmut zu.

Während Mike Ratledge zwischen den drei abendlichen Ronnie Scott-Auftritten stumm im Souterrain kickerte, gab Robert Wyatt pro Spielpause mindestens zwei Runden Drinks aus, machte glatt eine Handvoll Konversationen und im Schnitt zehn Leute miteinander bekannt. Der Auftritt war für ihn ein Teil der großen Non-Stop-Party. Er nahm sich die Freiheit der Abwechslung vor allem in den lautmalerischen Gesangseinlagen, viel weniger beim Trommeln. - Mike konnte dieses „Gesinge" nie ausstehen.



Soft Machine '71: (v. l.) Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratlege, Phil Howard und Elton Dean

Robert und die Whole World

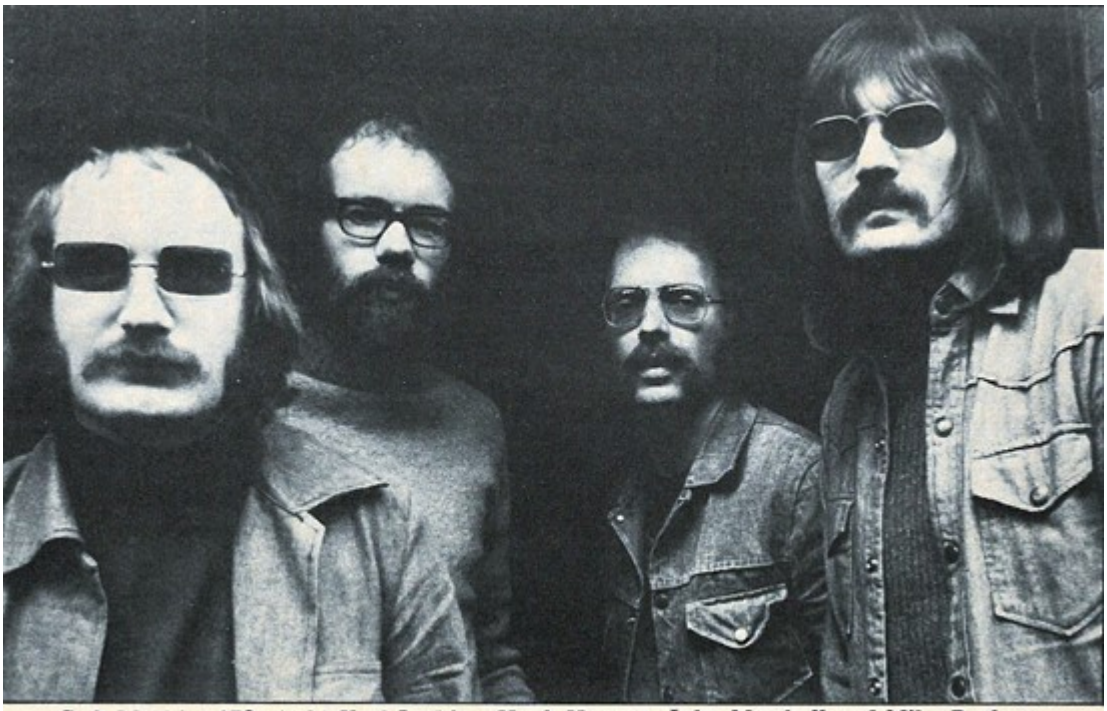
Hugh war still wie immer. Er zog zusammen mit seiner Frau wenig später sang- und klanglos aus dem Haus in West Dulwich, in dem einst die ganze Soft plus Mutter Wyatt plus Kevin Ayers plus Gruppenfreundin gewohnt hatten, aus. Die Hoppers waren die ersten. Alle ändern folgten binnen weniger Wochen. Man mußte auseinanderrücken, um die Beziehungen untereinander nicht zu zerstören. Unterdessen kamen sich Elton Dean und Mike Ratledge näher. Dem umgänglichen und kommunikationshungrigen Robert wurde in dieser Gesellschaft langsam kalt. Er wechselte zu Kevin Ayers und seiner Whole World (u.a. mit Mike Oldfield-heute bekannt und erfolgreich durch TUBULAR BELLS-, dem Sonderling Lol Coxhill [Saxophon] und dem modernen Komponisten David Bedford an der Orgel). Doch nach kurzer Zeit schon beklagte er, daß diese Band ihre außergewöhnlichen Talente verschludere. Es fehle an jeder halbwegs disziplinierten Arbeit. Und das war für jemanden, der schon so große Schwierigkeiten hat, sich selbst zu organisieren, absolut nicht die rechte Umgebung. Noch im gleichen Sommer kehrte Robert in den Schoß der Soft Machine zurück. „Um sich wirtschaftlich wieder sicherzustellen", wie Soft-Manager Sean Murphy nicht ohne Sarkasmus anmerkte. Man kann sicher sein, daß sie Robert nur wieder hereinließen, weil sie inzwischen keinen Ersatz gefunden hatten.

Vom Pop zum Free-Jazz

Schon im Oktober 70 stellt sich die Reunion Wyatt — Soft als mißlungen heraus. Robert wird hier nicht mehr warm und entbehrt jeder Inspiration. Bei einer Blitz-Tournee durch Holland sieht und hört man ihn nur noch fade auf dem Schlagzeug herum haspeln. Er., demonstriert geradezu seine soziale Außenseiter-Position in der Band. Und er zahlt es ihr überdies heim, indem er einen anständigen musikalischen Beitrag verweigert. Dafür bastelt er umsomehr an seinem Soloalbum. Eine sehr freie LP. Mit Hilfe einiger neuer und alter Freunde. Das Übergewicht haben die Vertreter des Free Jazz (Elton Dean, Marc Charig). Es erscheint später unter dem Titel THE END OF AN EAR (leider nie in Deutschland).

Mit der Soft Machine nimmt Robert im Herbst 70 sein viertes und letztes Album auf, FOURTH. Spätestens von diesem Opus an wird die Gruppe reihenweise als Free Jazz Band angesprochen. Elton Dean, der inzwischen auch noch elektrisches Klavier hinzugenommen hat, treibt diese Entwicklung mächtig voran. Er beginnt, Mike Ratledge aus seiner beherrschenden Rolle zu verdrängen. Die Musik wird in der Tat immer freier. Hugh Hopper experimentiert auf seine Weise. Weniger jazzig, eher ein heranwachsender Moderner. Ihm gehört die B-Seite von FOURTH. Der Sound hat seine Eigenart fast völlig eingebüßt. Die Jazz-Freaks finden eine Menge Virtuosität vor, über die sie sich ehrfurchtsvoll auslassen können. In anderen Ohren klingt fast alles gehetzt und angestrengt. Der Appeal an den Körper fehlt so gut wie ganz.

1971 geht es nach Skandinavien. Mit der zweiten US-Tournee ist ein Auftritt auf dem Newport Jazzfestival verbunden. Sie treten einige Abende neben Miles Davis auf. (Nicht, daß Miles Davis sie in seine Konzerte „geholt" hätte, wie öfters behauptet.) Wie Robert berichtet, interessierte sich der Alt-Meister überhaupt nicht für die Soft Musik. Roberts Wertschätzung für Miles Davis und einige andere Jazzbands hindert ihn nicht festzustellen, daß sie, die Soft Machine, besser spielten, als ihre alten Heroen. Robert strengte sich noch einmal an. Einmal war Amerika eine Herausforderung. Zum ändern ließ er sich zu einem „kriegerischen" Zusammenspiel mit Mike und Elton hinreißen. Bald nach der US-Tour steigt Robert endgültig aus. Er bleibt zunächst allein. Es gibt Differenzen mit dem Manager der Soft über das, was er mitnehmen kann und nicht. Er fühlt sich benachteiligt und steht jedenfalls so gut wie ohne Mittel und eigene Anlage da. Aber er glaubt zu dieser Zeit eh nicht mehr daran, daß er mit ändern Leuten zusammen Musik machen kann. „Der Zwang zu Kompromissen verdirbt doch fast alles." Doch bis zum Ende des Jahres hat er schon wieder Mut gefaßt. Er gründet mit Phil Miller (Gitarre, ehemals bei Delivery), David Sinclair (Orgel, früher und jetzt wieder (!) bei Caravan) und Bill McCormick (Baß) die Gruppe Matching Mole. (Eine Spielerei mit Worten. Die Franzosen stellten die Soft Machine oft als „Machine Mole" vor.) Nach einigen Umbesetzungen und zwei Alben war diese Band am Ende -vor allem, weil es an den nötigsten Dingen fehlte, z.B. an einem Bus, mit dem man zu den Konzerten fahren kann.



Soft Machine '72: (v.l.) Karl Jenkins, Hugh Hopper, John Marshall und Mike Ratlege

Beide, die Soft Machine und Robert Wyatt, spielen auf den Berliner Jazztagen 1971. Robert begleitet Sugar Cane Harris und trommelt zum Supertreff der Geiger. Er hört sich den Auftritt der Soft an, mit Phil Howard am Schlagzeug. Elton Dean hatte ihn dem Rest der Band empfohlen. Die beiden bliesen und trommelten nun ungeheuer drauflos. Mike zog zunächst mal mit. Die Band sprang dem Hörer förmlich ins Gesicht. Wahnsinnig schneidend und aggressiv. Laut bis zum Gehtnichtmehr. Phil Howard ließ seine übergroße Bekken-Galerie nie zur Ruhe kommen. Es zischte ständig. Es lag wie ein akustischer Schleier über der ganzen Musik. Außerdem begnügte sich Howard auch sonst nicht mit wenig. Er rappelte ohne Unterlaß wie mit sieben Armen. Den einen ging's auf den Wecker, die Technik-Schau schien ihnen überflüssig und neurotisch. Andere lagen dem Trommler wegen seiner Virtuosität zu Füßen. Unter ihnen auch Robert Wyatt in einer fast entwürdigenden Szene. Nach dem Berliner Philharmonie-Auftritt eilte der technisch weniger potente aber ideenreichere und gefühlvollere Wyatt zu Howard, wie von einem Minderwertigkeitskomplex getrieben, und lobte und fragte seinen Nachfolger: „Da bei dem 15er-Takt, wie hast du es bloß fertiggebracht, da 16 zu schlagen. Unglaublich. Das könnte ich ja nie!"Nicht, daß er ihn lobte, war das Sonderbare, sondern wie er ihn lobte. Er machte sich selbst zum Würstchen und den ändern zum- angebeteten Star.

Ende der Free-Jazz-Phase

So sehr die Free Jazz Fans nun auch jubelten, Phil Howard hielt sich nicht allzu lange in der Band. Noch im Frühjahr 72 wird ihm der Abschied nahegelegt. Er ist noch auf der ersten Hälfte der fünften Soft-LP FIFTH zu hören. Ein großer Teil der Musik für dieses Album wird mit dem nächsten Schlagzeuger noch einmal eingespielt, mit John Marshall. Besonders Hugh Hopper hatte keine Lust mehr, mit Phil zu arbeiten. Denn der Trommler deckte den Baß völlig zu. Mike stellte später fest: „Phil und Elton stimmten sehr miteinander überein. Aber sie hatten eine völlig andere Vorstellung von der Richtung unserer Musik wie Hugh und ich. Elton und Phil wollten nie Noten spielen, sondern sich am liebsten nur hinstellen und drauflosspielen. Für sie schien Energie das Wichtigste an der Musik zu sein. — Außerdem konnte man mit Phil keinen anständigen Sound hinbekommen. Sein Schlagzeug war einfach zu laut und gewaltig." Im Frühjahr 72 stieg Schlagzeuger John Marshall ein. Ihn hatten die Softs schon, einmal angepeilt, als Robert endgültig weg war. Doch da war John noch in festen Händen, in der Band von Jack Bruce.

Elton Dean geriet langsam ins Hintertreffen. Mike und Hugh setzten der sogenannten Free-Jazz-Phase ein Ende. Der Bläser hatte sich aber schon ein Ventil für seine in der Soft Machine behinderten Bedürfnisse geschaffen und noch 1971 die Band Just Us gegründet. Zudem hatte er auch ein Soloalbum produziert. In der Just Us wirkten Phil Howard, Nick Evans (Posaune) und Green, ein Ex-Roadie der Softs (Baß), mit. Im Sommer 72 folgte Elton

Dean Phil Howard nach. Für Elton kam Karl Jenkins. Damit war aus der Soft Machine zur Hälfte eine alte Nucleus geworden. Denn John und Karl gehörten beide zur Erstausgabe jener Jazz-Rock-Band. Sie kannten sich aber schon noch länger, hatten beide in Graham Colliers Band und in Ronnie Scotts Band mitgespielt. Karl brachte nun viel mehr ein als man normalerweise von einem einzigen Mann erwarten kann. Er ist ein hervorragender Oboist und Pianist in einem. Sein Bariton-Saxophon sorgte für eine dritte neue Klangfarbe. Außerdem ist Karl als ein fleißiger Komponist bekannt. Mit soviel neuen Impulsen ging es in eine entspannte Phase, wie die Gruppe sie schon lange nicht mehr erlebt hatte. Am auffälligsten ließ sich die Entkrampfung an Mike Ratledge ablesen. Er legte jedes prätentiöse Gehabe ab, wurde locker und gelöst wie nie zuvor.

So ging es an die Produktion ihres sechsten LP-Werks. SIX wurde wieder ein Doppelalbum. Die Hälfte davon live. Aus zwei Mitschnitten während der England-Tournee im Herbst 72. John Marshall liegt zwischen Robert Wyatt und Phil Howard. Er hat die Stärken von beiden und läßt die Fehler seiner Vorgänger vermissen. Technisch besser als Wyatt vermeidet er aber jede aufdringliche Schau seiner Fähigkeiten. Und sehr richtig konstatiert der Neuling John: „Die vorausgegangene Formation mit Phil und Elton hat der Soft Machine großen Schaden zugefügt," Hugh, Mike und Karl sitzen dabei, als John diesen kernigen Satz losläßt. Keiner widerspricht ihm.



Soft Machine '74: (v. l.) Jenkins, Alan Holdsworth, Ratlege, Roy Babbington und Marshall

Hugh Hopper verläßt die Gruppe

Sie machen jetzt eine Musik, zu der man, wie Mike sagt, wieder mit dem Fuß wippen kann. Der Körper und der Pulsschlag des Hörers werden wieder mitbedient. Der Mut zu faszinierenden Monotonien kehrt wieder zurück. Von der Art, wie die Band sie in ihren glanzvollen Anfangszeiten draufhatte. Das „We Did It Again" von Kevin Ayers liegt gar nicht weit entfernt von solchen Ratledge-Kompositionen, wie „Gesolreut" und „Stanley Stamps Gibbon Album" oder einer Karl Jenkins-Nummer wie „Soft Weed Factor". Wenn diese auch komplexer sind, so ähneln sich die Musiken zumindest sehr von der Stimmung her.

Außerdem drücken diese Kompositionen die Überzeugung aus, daß man Musik kaum mit dem Ratio-Teil des Gehirns aufnimmt oder aufnehmen sollte. Die Soft Machine gibt solchen Aufklebern wie „Musik zum Mitdenken" (Offenbach Post) eine klare Absage.— Man fragt sich, was dieser ganze Pseudo-Intellektualismus in der Musik soll. Ratledge fragt sich das übrigens auch. Er, der soviel Konstrukt in die Musik der Gruppe gebracht hatte, meint inzwischen auch, daß Musik zuerst mal etwas zum Genießen ist.

Zurück zu SIX. Darauf kündigt sich der nächste Soft Machine-Abgang an. Hugh Hopper entpuppt sich nämlich als der immer extremere Experimentator. Wer „1983" mit

verbundenen Augen hört, würde eher auf einen Neutöner als auf eine Rockgruppe tippen, von welcher Sorte auch immer. Dasselbe trifft auf sein 1973 veröffentlichtes Soloalbum 1984 zu. 1984 breitet eine faszinierende Stimmung aus. Eine fast antikörperliche Musik. Dennoch mit einem exakten Timing, ein gekonntes Spiel mit Pausen und Clusters. Dazu eine ausgefallene schwüle Klangfarbe und starke Räumlichkeit. Aber ein ganz anderes Bier als der Rest der Musik. Hugh hat Sachen im Kopf, die er innerhalb dieser Band nicht mehr ohne weiteres verwirklichen kann. Schon gar nicht auf der Bühne. Da er kein Kämpfer ist, weicht er einfach still aus. Er verläßt die Gruppe nach dem großen Auftritt auf dem Great Easter Circus 73 in der Dortmunder Westfalenhalle. Inzwischen hat er sich der East Wind des Japaners Stomu Yamashta angeschlossen. Für ihn kommt der enorm erfahrene Bassist Roy Babbington herein. Babbington gehörte zu jener alten Delivery-Familie (Phil, Miller, Lol Coxhill ...). Er hatte auch schon auf FOURTH als Gast mitgespielt und zählte eine Zeitlang zur Nucleus. Auf dem deutschen Festival des Jahres 73 in Scheeßel erntet diese Soft-Formation einen eindrucksvollen Publikumserfolg. Keineswegs die Band, die für einen elitebedürftigen Outsider-Kreis im Keller oder Auditorium Maximum spielen muß.

Mit dieser Besetzung nimmt man SEVEN auf. Ungewohnt kurze und viele Stücke. Es wird fleißig komponiert. Keine sensationellen Neuerungen. Und wenn Mike schon gleich innerhalb der ersten Minuten seine Orgel im Stil von anno dazumal entlangfegt, im gleichen Sound, in derselben aufgekratzten Art, dann kann man nur gähnen. Das ist selbst als Reminiszenz nicht mehr witzig. Den stärksten Sound und eine geradezu magische Anziehungskraft erreicht die Band, wenn Mike und Karl sich aufeinander einspielen. Ihre E-Klaviere, parallel geschaltet, gehören zum Schärfsten, was man heutzutage an Musik hören kann.

Dennoch überrascht es nicht, wenn sich die Band einen fünften Mann ranholt. Zum erstenmal seit Ur-Zeiten wieder ein Gitarrist: Alan Holdsworth. Auch er aus dem Kreis der Nucleus-Spieler. Zumindest hatte er dort eine Weile mitgespielt, bevor er dem Rockpublikum als Gitarrist in Jon Hisemans Tempest bekannter wurde. Es war mal wieder ein neuer Sound fällig. Mike setzte sich mittlerweile auch an den Synthesizer, ohne jedoch dieses Modeinstrument besonders zu strapazieren. Er war vor Jahren ein Pionier, was die Erweiterung und Verfremdung der Orgel anbelangt, aber er war einer der letzten Organisten, der sich des Synthesizers bediente. Die große neue Kurve schienen die vier nicht allein aus sich heraus kriegen zu wollen. Alan findet die Partnerschaft aufnahmebereiter, inspirationshungriger Könner vor. Die weiche Maschine beginnt, sich abermals zu wandeln. Eine harte, starre Maschine wäre auch schon hundertmal zu Bruch gegangen.

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Die Geschichte der Soft Machine - Teil 2 - Die Sanfte Avantgarde - Sounds - Januar 1974

Die Geschichte der Soft Machine Teil 2

Die sanfte Avantgarde

Canterbury, Hauptstadt der Grafschaft Kent, bekannt durch seine Kathedrale und die berühmte Universität, ist eigentlich nicht der Boden, auf dem gewöhnliche Rock-Gruppen wachsen. Diese kleine Stadt ist das Mekka spezifisch britischer Konservativität, und so ist es kein Wunder, daß diese Umgebung dort beheimatete Musiker und Gruppen prägt und ihre Musik sich aus dem Einheits-Rock-Brei herausheben läßt. Teil 1 unserer Story schilderte die Anfänge der sanften Avantgarde: Vom David Allen Trio über die Wild Flowers zur Soft Machine.

von Winfried Trenkler

Kevin (Ayers) und Mike (Ratledge) haben sich musikalisch nicht mehr viel zu sagen. Für Kevin sollte ein Konzert mehr einer großen Party gleichen als einer Vorstellung. Man trifft sich, trinkt sich einen an, ist guter Laune, locker, und dazu gibt es Musik, einfache Musik, Songs. Alles nicht so genau, so streng. Mike hingegen zog es geradezu zwanghaft vom Einfachen zum Komplexen. Für den scheuen „Eierkopf" mit maskierender Sonnenbrille scheint Musik allmählich allein eine Sache des Verstandes zu werden. Seine Kompositionen geraten immer komplizierter. Die Arrangements, die er der späteren Bläserfront der Soft vorsetzt, machen den alten Profis reichlich zu schaffen.



Wieder zu dritt

Anstelle von Kevin kommt Hugh Hopper in die Band. Er hatte sich seinen Freunden eh schon wieder genähert, als Roadie auf der langen US-Tournee. „Hugh war fähiger. Er konnte auch Noten lesen. Die Stücke konnten fortgeschrittener werden. Die erdverbundene, unbekümmerte Direktheit von Kevin ging verloren. Das war der Preis." So Mike Ratledge. — Hugh mußte erst mal eine ganze Zeitlang üben. Er hatte sich nicht mit der Absicht getragen, Kevin zu verdrängen. Daß die Wahl von Robert und Mike auf ihn fiel, hatte ihn überrascht. Die beiden hatten sich eine ganze Reihe Bassisten angehört und waren schließlich zu der Ansicht gekommen, nicht unbedingt den größten Könner sondern die „richtige Persönlichkeit" zu nehmen.

Zu dieser Zeit erfuhr die musikalische Entwicklung der Softs einen gewaltigen Schub. Jeder einzelne war im Trio stark gefordert. Ihm stand zugleich ein großes Betätigungsfeld offen. Hugh benutzte den Baß halb wie eine Sologitarre. Als einer der ersten, der einen Verzerrer am Baß anschloß, erzeugte er eine Menge Töne, von denen man zunächst nicht wußte, ob sie von der Orgel oder von ihm kamen. Vom Baß kamen sprunghafte Einführungen in neue Stücke, er schlug das Thema an. Hugh emanzipierte seinen Baß von der Verpflichtung, „nur" das Bum-Bum der Grundstruktur zu liefern.

Hugh war der selbstgenügsamste Charakter unter ihnen. Von einigen Musikstunden abgesehen, die ihm nichts eintrugen, hat er sich alles selbst beigebracht. Zunächst mal Saxophon, später dann den Baß. Die produktivsten Monate seines Lebens, erinnert er sich, hat er allein auf Mallorca zugebracht. Noch vor der Soft. Er hatte sich eine Weile von der Musik zurückgezogen und seinem Hobby, dem Malen, gewidmet. Es macht ihm auch schon vor seinem Anschluß an die Gruppe nichts aus, auf eine seiner Schulbildung angemessenen Berufskarriere zu verzichten. Ein Jahr lang fuhr er z. B. bei der Army LKWs. Er ist kein Mann, der viel redet und der auch niemals Schlagzeilen macht. Spricht man ihn an, antwortet er bereitwillig und freundlich und ruhig. Und selbst beim Üben ist er außergewöhnlich leise. Ihm reichen sein trockener E-Baß - ohne Verstärker! - und seine Vorstellungskraft. Er hat zwar eine Menge komponiert, aber nur wenig Nachdruck darauf verwandt, daß seine Stücke auch von der Band gespielt werden. In aller Stille fast mauserte er sich zu dem experimentellsten Tonsetzer der Softs. Doch merkte das Publikum das erst später. Robert (Wyatt) meinte, ohne jede Kritik, über ihn: „Er würde mit jedem zusammen spielen, Hauptsache der andere macht gute Musik, ob's ein Faschist, ein Kommunist oder der Teufel ist". Die Ansichten anderer Leute lassen ihn kalt, solange sie ihn nicht behelligen. Er schätzt seine private Zurückgezogenheit und gewährt sie auch allen anderen. Er lebt seit Jahren mit seiner Frau in einem Hausboot auf der Themse in Kent. - Als seine musikalischen Einflüsse nennt er den amerikanischen Komponisten Terry Riley, James Brown, Bartok, Ravi Shankar, Gil Evans und Jimi Hendrix.



Die Soft Machine in der berühmten Trio-Besetzung: Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge und Hugh Hopper

Mike Ratledge

Äußerlich schienen Mike und Hugh sehr ähnlich zu sein. Schweigsam, zurückhaltend und selbstgenügsam. Doch so mancher empfand seine Zurückhaltung als Hochmut und Arroganz, andere erspähten hinter der selbstsicheren Art eine verkrampfte Unsicherheit. Die Ticks mit der Sonnenbrille oder dem Ledermantel konnten einem tatsächlich wie fetischistische Schutzmechanismen vorkommen. Selbst in dunkelsten Räumen und in keinem Gespräch nahm er die dunklen Zwicker ab. Jahrelang trug er ein und denselben Ledermantel. Fuhr man in die Konzerthalle, legte er ihn in der Garderobe ab. War die Soft Machine dran, warf er ihn schnell um, stellte am besten noch den Kragen hoch und kam so auf die Bühne. Das erste, was er da tat, war, den Ledermantel auszuziehen und über die Lehne seines Orgelstuhls zu hängen. War der letzte Ton verklungen, griff er auch schon das gute Stück und zog es sich an. In der Garderobe angelangt, flog das Ding auf den nächsten Haken. „Ich bin sehr schüchtern," sagte er eines Morgens in einem Hotel in Groningen. Eines der historisch wenigen Male, daß er ein Gespräch von sich aus begann. Doch viel weiter kamen seine Bekenntnisse auch an jenem sonnigen Wintertag nicht. Doch ein paar Sätze ließ er noch über seine Musik fallen: „Ich versteh nicht, wieso man meine Musik avantgardistisch nennt. Das stimmt einfach nicht. Ich weiß überhaupt nicht, als was ich meine Musik bezeichnen sollte. Einfach Musik, das ist alles." Wenn man diese Worte hört, fallen einem tausend andere Rockmusikanten ein, die sich gar so gern und bequem in dieselbe Sprachlosigkeit betten, um mit ihr zugleich in höhere Sphären davonzuschweben. Dabei war Mike's erstes Medium früher vor allem die Sprache.

In der Schule hatte er sich bei wissenschaftlichen Streitgeprächen hervorgetan und die Lehrerschaft in Verlegenheit gebracht. Er bekam ein Stipendium für Oxford, um neue Sprachen zu studieren. Stattdessen aber entschied er sich für Psychologie und Philosophie. In beiden Fächern bestand er glanzvoll. Nebenher studierte er Soziologie, machte eine Untersuchung über Jugendkriminalität mit und erwarb ein Stipendium für Amerika durch eine Arbeit über moderne amerikanische Dichtung. Zum Entsetzen seines Vaters, eines gestrengen Schulrektors; gab er diese hochgeistige Laufbahn auf und wurde ein langhaariger Musikant. Er war auf Primus erzogen worden, war in der Schulzeit einer, nicht nur in der Klasse, sondern in der ganzen Schule. Und er ist heute wieder einer, schon seit zwei oder gar drei Jahren: nach den Wählerstimmen des Melody 'Maker gilt er als bester Jazz-Organist Englands.

Als Schulprimus genoß er nicht nur das Wohlwollen der Lehrer sondern auch das der jüngeren Schüler, zu deren Aufsicht er bestellt war. Er ließ nämlich alles durchgehen, was er hätte melden müssen. Auf jene Zeiten geht auch Roberts Wertschätzung gegenüber Mike zurück. Roberts Mutter, in deren Haus die Band eine Zeitlang lebte, erinnert sich, daß Robert eines Tages glückselig aus der Schule nach Hause kam: „Mike Ratledge hat heute mit mir gesprochen." Mike bekam in seinen jungen Jahren jede Menge Klavierunterricht. U. a. beim Kantor der berühmten Kathedrale von Canterbury. Der bläute ihm mit Akribie und Metronom eine exakte Technik ein. Inspirieren tat ihn das alles überhaupt nicht. Die Liebe zu seinem eigenen Klavierspiel setzte erst ein, nachdem er sich ab 17 Jahren mit zeitgenossischen Jazzern wie John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor und Miles Davis befaßte. Zu seinen wesentlichen musikalischen Einflüssen zählen die unterschiedlichsten Komponisten: Guillaume de Machaut aus dem 12. Jahrhundert (der Schöpfer der ersten abendländischen polyphonen Messe), Josquin de Prés (14. Jahrhundert), Terry Riley, Pierre Boulez, Claude Debussy und Eric Satie.

Auch er ist ganz versessen darauf, sich in seine abgeschirmte Privatsphäre flüchten zu können. Robert war in all den Jahren ihres gemeinsamen Musizierens nie in Mikes Londoner Wohnung. Mike hat Probleme im Umgang mit anderen Leuten. Sein überdurchschnittlicher Intellekt hilft ihm da wenig. Erst in den letzten Jahren hat sich sein Verhalten entspannt. Es hat sich wohltuend auf die Musik ausgewirkt.

Robert Wyatt

Robert war das Sprachrohr der Gruppe nach außen. Innerhalb gab er jedoch nie den Ton an. Anders als Hugh und Mike war er ein umgänglicher, geschwätziger und überaus sozialer Typ. Die Soft Machine hat ihm weit mehr zu verdanken als sein überaus einfallsreiches Schlagzeugspiel. Er war der einzige, der eine warmherzige, publikumsfreundliche Ausstrahlung mit auf die Bühne brachte. Er war das Gefühl der Gruppe. Für den Zuschauer schienen die anderen zwei nicht viel davon zu haben. Nach außen gekehrt und um Sympathie werbend, zeigte Robert reichlich unverhüllt, wie er empfand. Und wenn sich die Musik der Ekstase näherte, dann hing sein Kopf vornüber, die lange blonde Mähne verhängte sein Gesicht, über seinen nachten Oberkörper flössen Ströme von Schweiß und er brachte es fertig, ganze Strecken lang, wie ein naiv Besessener nur noch auf „ l" zu schlagen. Nach dem spektakulären Konzert in der Royal Albert Hall am 13. August 1970 klagte er darüber, daß sie die vom Publikum so stürmisch geforderte Zugabe nicht mehr spielen durften: „Ein Konzert ist für mich wie ein Liebesakt. Nach der Musik entspannt man sich, hängt ein bißchen rum, plaudert mit ein paar Leuten, gleichsam ein Vorspiel für den nächsten Bühnenauftritt. Ich meine, ich geh' nicht mit einer Frau ins Bett, zieh meine Sache durch, steh auf und verschwinde."

Schwer zu verstehen, was ihn seiner selbst so unsicher gemacht hat. Er war einer der besten Schlagzeuger Englands. Das wußte er auch. Doch andererseits konfrontierte er sich allzusehr mit weltweitem Maßstab und bekam dann das deprimierende Gefühl, einen Tony Williams („Er ist mir um Lichtjahre voraus.") doch niemals einholen zu können. Außerdem war da das aus den Schulzeiten übernommene Unterlegenheitsgefühl gegenüber Mike. Hugh z. B. scherte sich einen Teufel darum, ob Mike das potentere Gehirn war oder nicht. Es warf ihn um keinen Millimeter aus der Bahn. Robert hingegen hatte einen masochistischen Charakterzug mitbekommen. Unvermeidlich steuerte er sich immer wieder in nachteilige Situationen hinein, in denen er Federn lassen mußte und auf das Mitleid der anderen angewiesen war. Nur ein Beispiel: was auf dem National Jazz and Blues Festival 1969 in Plumpton wie ein Unfall aussah, war in Wirklichkeit Roberts alkoholisierte Überreaktion. Zweimal fiel zu Beginn ihres Auftritts der Strom aus. Beim zweiten Mal schlug Robert frustriert ins Schlagzeug, fiel unkontrolliert vornüber und ließ sich wegtragen. Betrunken, die Verletzung war weniger als eine Schramme. Er war vor dem Auftritt so nervös gewesen, daß er sich einen antrank. Der Auftritt der Softs war dahin.



Als Quartett: (v. l.) Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt und Saxophonist Elton Dean

Wespen im Gehirn

Mike, Hugh und Robert stellten von Ende '68 bis Herbst "71 den Kern der Softs dar. In dieser Zeit brachten sie drei ihrer bisher sieben Alben heraus: VOLUME TWO, THIRD und FOURTH. Gemessen an ihrer eigenen Entwicklung und gemessen an dem Stand des Rock allgemein ist VOLUME TWO (Probe CPLP 4505) ihr stärkstes Album. Sie waren nie origineller und unverwechselbarer. Die Einflüsse von Miles Davis, John Coltrane u. a. sind nicht zu überhören, aber ihr naiver Mut zu lockeren, unprätentiösen, klanglich-atmosphärischen Kompositionen und Beigaben stand noch im Vordergrund. Zwar strengte sich Mike schon gewaltig an, doch seine Affinität zu den großen virtuosen Meistern des Jazz hatte noch nicht die faderen Früchte späterer Werke gezeitigt. Roberts fröhlich-unbefangene Art schlug noch kräftig durch. Sein schwebender, kühler Echo-Gesang, ein einmaliges Sound-Element, alles andere als schwerwiegende, schwerverdauliche Jazzkost. Eben Pop im urtümlichen Sinn — entgegenkommend, unprätentiös, auf Gefallen gerichtet, das nicht erst erackert und angelernt werden muß. Der prägende Soft Machine-Sound kam noch mehr von Mike. Seine Orgel ist bis heute einmalig in der ganzen Rock- und Jazzszene. Eigentlich mehr ein Zufall. Als er sich eine Orgel kaufte, fehlte ihm das Geld für eine Hammond. Er erstand stattdessen eine Lowrey, Typ: Holiday de Luxe. Damit wich sein Sound schon mal erheblich von 99 % aller Organisten ab. Hinzu kommt, daß er nie mit Leslie spielt. Jene routierenden Lautsprecher, die den Orgelklängen ihre typische schwirrende Bewegung geben. Auf der Lowrey stehen ihm verschiedene Vibratogeschwindigkeiten zur Verfügung. Er nutzt diesen Effekt weidlich aus, ebenso wie die etwas abweichende Registratur, die er mit der Linken fleißig bedient, während seine Rechte wie wild über die Tasten jagt. Mike war einer der ersten, die die Orgel mit dem Verzerrer koppelten, meist nur für die Gitarre reserviert. Damit erzeugte er jenes einmalige'Surren und Schnurren, das ein englischer Pop-Kritiker als den unverwechselbaren „Wespe-im-Gehirn-Sound" beschrieb - das markanteste Klangelement der Soft. Zudem hat Mike ein Wha-Wha-Pedal angeschlossen, mit dem er seidenweiche, wallende Klangschleier webt, in aller ätherischen Ruhe und Leichtigkeit, vor

allem dann, wenn die anderen mit solistischen Anstrengungen in den Vordergrund rücken.

Die Soft Machine zählte zu den ersten psychedelischen Bands Englands. Der Aufstieg des „Ufo" und des „Middle Earth," jener unvergessenen Undergroundclubs, ist mit ihrem Namen eng verbunden. Sie zählte zu den Pionieren des multimedialen Bühnenauftritts. Noch im Spätsommer '69 trieben ihre ekstatischen Ausflüge, getaucht in eine faszinierende Lightshow, die Tausende im Londoner Roundhouse in den Wahnsinn. Doch eben dieser Auftritt, wenige Tage vor jenem National Jazz- and Blues-Reinfall, war einer ihrer letzten „Underground-Auftritte". Sie beklagten die enervierende Desorganisation in diesen Klubs. Wichtiger war wohl, daß sie, allen voran Mike, sich dieser Szene nicht mehr zugehörig fühlten. Sie steuerten mit vollen Segeln auf eine Musik zu, die noch keinen Namen hatte. 1969 im Herbst hieß es noch „Die unklassifizierbare Soft Machine". Mehrere Monate später prägte die Londoner Rock-Kritik das Wort „Jazz-Rock",gerade um die Musik der' Soft Machine und die neuere Musik vom Miles Davis und Frank Zappa mit einem Etikett zu versehen.

Nach dem 69er Jazz -und Blues- Festival von Plumpton holte sich die Soft Machine die Bläsergarde der Keith Tippett Group herein: Elton Dean (Altsaxophon), Mark Charig (Kornett) und Nick Evans (Posaune), dazu den Dean-Freund Lyn Dobson (Tenor- und Sopransaxophon, Flöte und Mundharmonika und Gesang). Sie hatten angefangen, sich zu langweilen, die Drei. Behaupteten Mike und Hugh. Ihre klanglichen Möglichkeiten wären auf die Dauer zu beschränkt. Ende Oktober 69 haben die sieben Premiere, auf dem ersten Pariser Pop-, Jazz- und Moderne Musik-Festival, das nur nicht in Paris stattfand, sondern auf dem belgischen Acker bei Amougies. Die reinen Trioteile klingen hinreißend, Roberts Stimme schwebt glockenrein durch das riesige Zelt. Der Bläserblock hinterläßt einen ungeschliffenen Eindruck. Mike hat ihm ein Paket vertrackter Arrangements vorgelegt. Die vier haben ihre Mühe, die Noten bei der Saukälte in Mütze und Mantel abzuspielen. Die Bläserfront bröckelt in den kommenden Wochen ab. Während einer Frankreichtournee scheiden Nick Evans und Mark Charig aus. Zwischen Elton Dean und Lyn Dobsen braut sich eine Rivalität zusammen. Während der ersten Deutschlandtournee der Soft Machine im Januar 1970 (Kiel, Hamburg, Berlin) spielen sie noch nebeneinander. Lyn manövriert sich in die schwächere Position, indem er sich die Solidarität der ändern Bandmitglieder durch überzogene Soloimprovisationen während der Auftritte und durch harte Geldforderungen gegenüber dem Manager verscherzt.



Zu lange Solos: Lyn Dobson bei einem der wenigen Konzerte, bei denen er mitspielte. Hier mit Elton Dean

PHOTO : M. Szuic Krzyanowski

Im Frühjahr 70 kommen die Softs zum großen Popfestival in der Kölner Stadthalle bereits ohne Lyn. Hier hat das Quartett Mike, Robert, Hugh und Elton Premiere. Es ist die Zeit von THIRD (CBS S 66 246), ihrem dritten Album, einer Doppel-LP. Hugh Hopper fängt mit seinen Experimenten an. Er zerschneidet die Mitschnitte zweier Live-Auftritte und setzt sie auf der ersten Seite des Albums in dem Stück „Facelift" neu zusammen. Die Technik der Soft Machine, Blöcke ,und Bausteine der Musik, wie Filmpassagen durch überraschende Schnitte und eigens ausgeklügelte Überleitungen aneinanderzufügen, erfährt so eine neue Variante. Streckenweise dreht er die Musik um und läßt sie entgegengesetzt laufen, während ein anderer Teil geradeaus weitergeht. Musik wie surreale Bildüberlagerungen, wie verfremdete Kollagen. Mike Ratledge bekommt zwei der vier Albumseiten für seine Kompositionen. Weitläufige Strukturen, faszinierende, sich wiederholende Akkordmuster vom E-Klavier zu seinen eigenen Orgelsoli und zu Elton Deans Saxophon-und Saxelloläufen.

Die Seite vier ein Tribut an Terry Riley, kleine Klavierfiguren, in erhöhter Geschwindigkeit, z. Z. umgekehrt, rollen wie flimmernde Perlenschnüre ab. Robert schwelgt in Erinnerungen an VOLUME TWO und seine New Yorker Zeiten.

Fortsetzung folgt

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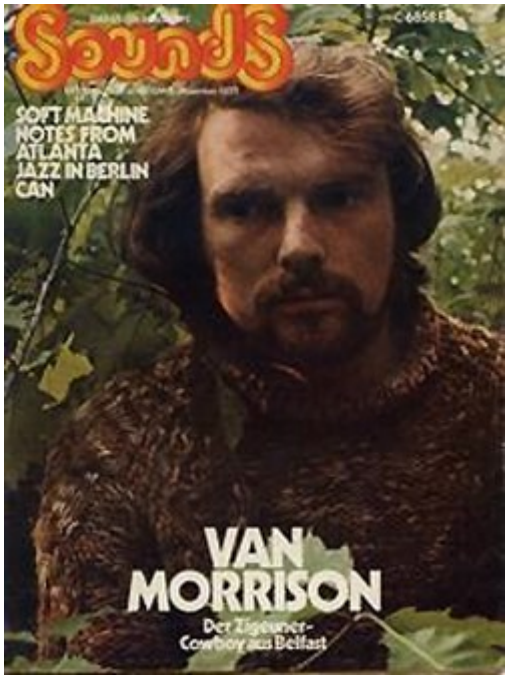
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Die Geschichte der Soft Machine - Teil 1 - Die Sanfte Avantgarde - Sounds - Dezember 1973

DIE GESCHICHTE DER SOFT MACHINE · TEIL 1
DIE SANFTE AVANTGARDE



von Winfried Trenkler

London wurde nicht aus eigener Kraft zur Metropole der Popmusik, sondern weil die „Provinzen" es reichlich mit musikalischem Nachwuchs versorgten. Ein Beispiel dafür ist Liverpool. Aber im Hinterland des Vereinigten Königreiches blühten Popszenen eigenen Stils auf. Nicht nur in den Zentren des großstädtischen Proletariats wie Newcastle, Glasgow und Birmingham sondern z. B. auch im vergleichbar kleinen Canterbury. Wer von der Canterbury-Szene redet, meint vor allem zwei Gruppen: Soft Machine und Caravan. Aber außerdem gehören die Wild Flowers, Kevin Ayers, Gong, Matching Mole und Just Us dazu.

Die Hauptstadt der Grafschaft Kent liegt im Schatten ihrer geschichtsträchtigen Kathedrale, ist Sitz eines Erzbischofs und hat eine Universität. „Die meisten Leute hier sind dementsprechend konservativ und kommen sich als etwas Besseres vor," beschreibt Robert Wyatt, der frühere Schlagzeuger der Soft Machine, die Atmosphäre. Er hat sie zu spüren bekommen. Vor allem Anfang und Mitte der 60er Jahre. „Den wenigen Leuten, die es wagten, hier mit langen Haaren rumzulaufen, blieb gar nichts anderes übrig, als eng zusammenzurücken. Diese Ablehnung von außen hat die Entstehung einer echten sozialen Szene ungemein beflügelt."

Wild Flowers

Einer war ihnen allen zunächst voraus. Sein Beispiel ermutigte die anderen, die vorgezeichneten Pfade gutbürgerlicher Karrieren zu verlassen, er war der Katalysator: Daevid Allen. Ein aus Australien eingewanderter Gitarrist und Poet. U.a. erhöhten 200 bis 300 Jazz-LPs seine Anziehungskraft beträchtlich. Auch der Schulprimus und spätere Soft Machine-Organist Mike Ratledge fühlte sich angezogen. Er kann sich noch gut erinnern, wie

die künftigen Soft Machine und Caravan andauernd bei Daevid rumhockten und sich endlos Musik anhörten. Bis sie mehr oder weniger alle dieselben Vorlieben entwickelten: Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Thelonius Monk und Ornette Coleman. Canterburys hoffnungsvolle Popmusikanten teilten quasi dieselbe musikalische Umgebung.

Daevid Allen gründete 1961 zusammen mit Hugh Hopper und Robert Wyatt ein Trio. Hugh spielte sowohl Baß als auch Saxophon. Er war ein Klassenkamerad von Robert. Eigentlich sollte es das Daevid Allen Quartett sein, mit Mike Ratledge als viertem Mann am Klavier. Aber vollzählig waren sie nur, wenn in Oxford Ferien waren.

Nach dem modernen Jazz übte die indische Raga einen starken Einfluß auf die Musik dieser Band aus. Sie beteiligte sich auch reichlich an den damals in England gängigen „Jazz and Poetry"-Veranstaltungen. Obgleich die drei es auch in London versuchten, eine ausreichende finanzielle Grundlage brachten sie auf die Dauer nicht zustande. Sie waren in jeder Weise zu ausgefallen und von der Öffentlichkeit zu wenig gefragt. Sie gaben schließlich auf. Daevid ging nach Mallorca. Robert und Hugh folgten ihm. Sie mischten sich unter die englischen Jazzer, die zahlreich durch Mallorcas Nachtclubs tingelten. Robert spielte eine Zeit mit John Mealing, dem späteren Organisten von If und Paßport zusammen.



Hugh Hopper



Caravan: (v. l.) Die Hastings, Richard Sinclair, Richard Coughlan und David Sinclair

Eines Tages hatte Robert das selbstgefällige Getue der Klub-Jazzer satt und entschloß sich, in die Popszene überzuwechseln. John Mealing schlug die Hände über dem Kopf zusammen; „Bist du verrückt, deine Talente so zu verschleudern? !" Doch Robert konnte dieser Aufschrei nur wenig beeindrucken. Er fand, daß die Musiker endlich viel mehr auf das Publikum eingehen sollten, eben genau so, wie es im Pop bereits geschah. Was er auf Mallorca erlebt hatte, waren Künstler, die sich in vornehmer Distanz niederließen und jeden Schritt der Annäherung dem Publikum überließen. Robert und Hugh fuhren zurück nach Canterbury und gründeten die Wild Flowers.

Dazu heuerten sie noch drei andere an: Hughs Bruder Brian, Kevin Ayers und David Sinclair. Brian war Mike Ratledge's Jahrgang. Er hatte eifrig Klarinette gelernt und an der Schule mit Mike klassische Klavier/Klarinette-Duette gespielt. Bei den Wild Flowers blies er wie sein Bruder Hugh auf dem Saxophon. Er sollte später bei Soft Machine immer wieder Gastrollen spielen. Kevin war der Lead-gitarrist und Sänger. - Man muß sich die Geschichte erzählen lassen wie Robert und Kevin sich kennenlernten. Zu einer Zeit, als „lange Haare haben" noch alles bedeutete, galt Robert wegen der blonden Mähne in seinem Freundeskreis als eine exotische Rarität. Eines Tages entdeckten paar seiner Kumpanen in dem Nest Berne Bay, nicht weit von Canterbury entfernt an der Küste gelegen, auch ,,so einen Typen". Sie meinten, daß diese beiden unbedingt mal zusammenkommen müßten. Also arrangierten sie ein Treffen dieser zwei Vögel, mit unerwartet großem Erfolg. Kevin merkte, daß er mit Leuten, die gern Musik machten, besser auskam, als mit den meisten anderen. Er fühlte sich ohnedies nicht recht wohl in England. Zwar in Berne Bay geboren, hatte er seine Kindheit in Singapur verbracht. Halb im Dschungel. Auch heute flüchtet er noch aus England, wann immer sich die Gelegenheit dazu bietet. - David Sinclair, später Organist bei Caravan, war ursprünglich Baßgitarrist. Dieses

Instrument übernahm er zunächst auch bei den Wild Flowers.

Soft Machine

Es war 1965/66. Die Wild Flowers spielten mal bei dem einen mal bei dem anderen zu Hause. Sie ließen Visitenkarten in verschiedenen Farben drucken und verteilten sie, wo immer sie konnten, um sich zu empfehlen. Aber niemand wollte sie hören. Bis eine Schule sie schließlich für einen Tanzabend verpflichtete. Dort jedoch atmete man auf, als es vorbei war. Und bei diesem einen Job blieb es. Jedenfalls solange Robert noch in der Gruppe war. Niemand wollte ihre Musik hören, die sie selbst als „progressiven Soul" bezeichneten. Sie haben auch nie eine Platte bespielt. - Ein kleines Wunder, daß Robert von seiner wohlwollenden Absicht, dein Publikum entgegenzugehen, nicht schnell die Schnauze voll hatte.



Daevid Allen gründete in Frankreich die Gruppe Gon

Die Gruppe hielt diese Besetzung sechs Monate bei. Dann schob man Kevin ab.

Er war ein zu schlechter Gitarrist und zeigte wenig Eifer, seine Fähigkeiten zu verbessern. Robert konzentrierte sich auf den Gesang, und herein kam Schlagzeuger Richard Coughlan. Außerdem noch ein gewisser Graham Sykes. David Sinclair ging weg und kaufte sich eine Orgel. Etwas später gesellte sich Pye Hastings hinzu. Als er gesehen hatte, wie schwach Kevin auf der Gitarre war, wuchs der Ansporn, sein bislang ambitionsloses Gitarrenspiel zu forcieren. Und schließlich stieg Davids Cousin Richard Sinclair am Baß ein. Sie lebten alle zusammen in einem Haus außerhalb von Canterbury.

Pyes bildschöne Schwester ließ sich damals einem schwerreichen jungen Herrn antrauen. Er wurde dann einer der beiden Finanziers, die ihr Geld in die Wild Flowers investierten. Natürlich in der Hoffnung, daß es sich auch mal auszahlt. Das lat's nur nie. „Tja, da hätten sie sich was Besseres einfallen lassen müssen," gestehen die Caravan-Leute heute mit einem zweideutigen Lächeln ein. Sie konnten dem Publikum nicht mal ihren eigenen Lebensunterhalt aus der Hosentasche ziehen. - Die Wilden Blumen verwelkten im Juni 1967.

Als Kevin bei den Wild Flowers rausgeschmissen wurde, war das mal wieder so eine Gelegenheit, „old grey England" für eine Weile zu verlassen. Sein Ziel: Mallorca. Nicht allzu lange, und er kam mit Daevid Allen zurück. Sie brachten einen amerikanischen Gitarristen namens Larry Knowling mit und steckten voller Pläne. Der „sogenannte progressive Tamla

Motown-Kram" der Wild Flowers interessierte sie nicht. Sie wollten eine eigene Band aufmachen, weniger konventionell, *freaky* und mit einem eigenen Stil. Es gelang ihnen bald, Robert den Flowers abspenstig zu machen.

Die Wünsche beim Schwanz gepackt

Das geschah alles noch 1966. Eine Weile spielten sie zu viert. Dann nahmen sie Mike bei jenem Wort, das er Robert und Kevin einmal gegeben hatte : „Wenn ihr einen Pianisten braucht, dann ruft mich an." Es war so weit. Nach einem glänzenden Abschluß in Psychologie und Philosophie kam Mike aus Oxford, legte die akademische Karriere auf Eis und vervollständigte die neue Gruppe. Sie spielten unter den verschiedensten Namen. Eine Weile z. B. als Mr. Head. (Um zu zeigen, daß sie es im Kopf hatten und auch nur für den Kopf spielten? Nicht für die Beine?) Als sie Ende '66 zusammen mit Pink Floyd und Eric Burdon zur Eröffnung des Londoner U.F.O.-Club spielten, nannten sie sich dann The Soft Machine. Zuvor hatten sie William Burroughs' Einverständnis eingeholt, seinen Romantitel verwenden zu dürfen.

Larry Knowling erwies sich als Fehlgriff. Man trennte sich. Daevid Allen übernahm die Leadgitarre. Außerdem präparierte er zu Hause Tonbänder, die er während der Bühnenauftritte abspielte. Damals eine echte Neuerung auf der Pop-Szene. Aber sie ließen es fallen, weil ihnen auf die Dauer das geeignete Equipment dazu fehlte.

Soft Machine spielten niemals, was man abwertend ,,Teenybopper-Music" nennt. Aber genau das war's, was die Mehrzahl der jungen Briten damals hören wollte. Und da man nicht ohne Unterlaß vor den paar Freaks im U.F.O. spielen konnte, zogen die Softs durch die Clubs. Sie versuchten es zumindest. Und starben fast jedesmal einen schlimmen Tod. Sie nahmen eine Einladung in eine Hamburger Diskothek an. Zwei Wochen waren vereinbart. Nach paar Tagen flogen sie raus. Dann versprachen sie sich mehr von dem „gehobeneren" Publikum der Universitäten. Aber auch das ging daneben. Die Jungakademiker wollten was zum Tanzen haben, nicht solchen „Mist". Des öfteren kreuzten sich zu dieser Zeit ihre Wege mit denen der Pink Floyd. Die erlebten an den britischen Uni's auch gerade ihr Waterloo. Der sensible Syd Barrett zitterte schon vor jedem Auftritt. Solange die Leute auf die Bühne gesprungen kamen und brüllten: „Warum spielt ihr uns nicht was Anständiges zum Tanzen?!", ging's ja noch. Doch als die erste Bierflasche in Roberts Schlagzeug krachte, wurden sie vorsichtig. Sie wandten sich nun mehr dem Kontinent zu.

Im Sommer 1967 tingeln sie durch Frankreich. Sie leben im Auto und halten sich so weit südlich wie möglich. Sie sollen die Auftritte ihres Lebens haben: auf dem Freien Festival von Jean Jacques Lebel und Alan Zion am Rande von St. Tropez. Tag für Tag spielen sie vor, zwischen und nach dem losen Theaterstück von Pablo Picasso ,,Wie man die Wünsche beim Schwanz packt". Ein ganzes Parkgelände ist abgeriegelt und für das Festival reserviert. Gleich hinter der Zaunhecke muß ein jeder seine Garderobe abgeben. Die vollständige. Bis auf die Haut. Es ist warm genug. Ganz Paris flüchtet zu dieser Jahreszeit in den Süden, In St. Tropez weilen auch gerade kulturbeflissene Pariser Fernschleute. Einige Redakteure schließen die Soft Machine in ihr Herz. Die ersten Auftritte im französischen Fernsehen lassen nicht mehr lange auf sich warten. Entsprechend gewinnen die Softs die Gunst des Publikums im ganzen Lande. Frankreich-Tourneen sind seitdem immer sichere Erfolge,



selbst wenn sie über 30 Städte führen. Im Herbst klopft ihnen gar die Regierung auf die Schulter. Das Jugendministerium verleiht ihnen einen Preis für den besten musikalischen Beitrag zur Freizeitgestaltung für Jugendliche von 14 Jahren aufwärts.

In Holland ist es der Herausgeber der Popzeitschrift Aloa, der an Soft Machine einem Narren gefressen hat. Seine publizistische Unterstützung kurbelt ihre Beliebtheit gewaltig an. Bis Soft Machine schließlich lieber in Holland spielen als irgendwo sonst. Mike : „Wir waren eigentlich nie eine richtige Popgruppe. Aber wir spielten in der Regel vor Pop-Publikum. Das ging lange Zeit und oft schief. Wir mußten uns praktisch erst eigenes Publikum schaffen. Die Leute an das heranführen und gewöhnen, was sie von uns zu erwarten haben." Offenbar gelang ihnen das auf dem Kontinent viel eher als in England.

Als Sie im Sommer '67 aus Frankreich zurückkehren, lassen die britischen Einwanderungsbehörden Daevid Allen, nicht mehr ins Land. Er hatte und bekam keine Arbeitserlaubnis. Er mußte auf den Hacken umdrehen und ließ sich in Frankreich nieder. Später gründete er in Paris die Gruppe Gong. Soft Machine machten als Trio weiter. Sie waren eine der ersten Gruppen Englands, die mit Lightshows arbeiteten.

Dabei hatten sie es nie mit Amateuren zu tun, sondern erfreuten «ich der Zuneigung des phantasievollen Malers, Happening-und Lichtkünstlers Mark Boyle. Sie gestalteten zahlreiche Auftritte gemeinsam. U. a. auf dem 67er Edinburgh Festival und auf der Pariser Biennale.

Tiefpunkt USA

Als sie ihren ersten Vertrag mit einem Londoner Manager machten (über fünf Jahre!), fühlten sie sich geschmeichelt, daß sich in London überhaupt jemand für die Provinzler interessiert. Zur Unterzeichnung werden sie luxuriös empfangen. Ein schönes Zimmer. Jeder von ihnen läßt sich auf einem kleinen, kostbaren Teppich nieder. Man reicht ihnen Mokka. Auf diese Weise verführt, das Kleingedruckte zu überlesen, trauen sie sich auch nicht, an dem einen oder anderen Paragraphen zu mäkeln. Von diesem Tag an befanden sie sich fest in der Hand des Herrn Mike Jeffries. Mit dem Kleingedruckten hatte er sie völlig eingesponnen, er konnte so gut wie alles bestimmen. Welche Auftritte die Gruppe wahrnimmt, wann eine Platte gemacht wird, in welchem Studio und mit welchem Produzenten usw.

Daß es der Ex-Animal Chas Chandler war, der in einem New Yorker Club das Gitarrenwunder Jimi Hendrix entdeckte, nach England holte und unter Vertrag nahm, ist weithin bekannt. Aber daß Chandler der Juniorpartner von Mike Jeffries war, wissen nur wenige. Mit anderen Worten: auch Jimi Hendrix landete in Jeffries' Netz. Und als der Musikantenhändler begriff, was für einen Fisch er da eingefangen hatte, siedelte er in die USA um und konzentrierte sich ganz auf seinen kommenden Weltstar.



Weiter als Trio: Hopper, Wyatt und Ratledge

1968 bündelte er Hendrix und die Soft Machine zu einer Mammut-Torunee durch Amerika zusammen: sieben Monate lang waren sie fast jeden Tag unterwegs. „5 % der Tageszeit spielen, 80 % auf Reisen," erinnert sich Mike mit Grausen. „Wir konnten weder üben noch ein neues Stück schreiben. Dieser Lebensstil war für mich absolut undiskutabel." Da waren Kritiken, die der Gruppe eine glanzvolle Zukunft prophezeiten, auch kein Trost mehr. Am Rande dieser Tour spielten sie im New Yorker Museum of Modern Art. Aber selbst im Tempel der modernen Künste klang die Soft vielen Kritikern zu avantgardistisch, und man etikettierte sie als die „futuristischen Beatles". Ganz unter dem Eindruck dieses Auftritts pflichtete Lillian Roxon in ihrer Rock-Enzyklopädie bei: „ .. und in einigen Jahren, wenn wir ihre Mixturen von John Cage, Stockhausen, Cecil Taylor und Ornette Coleman erst richtig verstehen können, werden wir dem (‚futuristische Beatles') zustimmen." Aber das zählte alles wenig. Am Ende der US-Tortur machten Soft Machine Schluß. Robert blieb gleich noch eine Weile in New York. Mike und Kevin zogen sich zurück.

Gegen Ende dieses Amerika-Aufenthalts kommt endlich die erste LP zustande, THE SOFT MACHINE (Probe CPLP 4500). Lange davor hatten sie es mal mit einer Single versucht, „Love Makes Sweet Music". Aber sie ließ sich in keiner Hitliste blicken. Es sollte die einzige Single der Soft Machine bleiben. Ihr Debutalbum entschädigte ihre Anhänger voll für das lange Warten. Aneinandergestrickte Songs mit einfallsreichen Arrangements, zum größten Teil aus der Feder von Kevin. Mehrere Co-Produktionen des Trios und Stücke von beiden Hoppers. Die B-Seite entspricht trotz der sieben Titel einem komprimierten Live-Auftritt. Robert zeigt sich als einzigartiger Sänger, und Mike spielt eine absolut ausgefallene, *freaky* Orgel, Kevins Baß tut sich ein bißchen schwer. Ein Verkaufserfolg wird es nicht. In den USA ist die Band noch zu unbekannt und in England kommt die Platte nie heraus. Wegen Schwierigkeiten zwischen den Plattenfirmen. Die englischen Läden müssen es importieren. Also erreicht es nur die emsigen Liebhaber. In Holland jedoch geht sie richtig los, und der Eingangssong „Hope For Happiness" wird zu einem Radio-Hit.

Als Robert aus den USA zurückkommt, möchte er weitermachen. Er kann zwar Mike wiedergewinnen, aber Kevin bleibt endgültig weg, er will vor allem nicht mehr mit Mike zusammenspielen.

Fortsetzung folgt



Soft Machine 1966: (v. l.) Robert Wyatt, Daevid Allen, Mike Ratledge und Kevin Ayers

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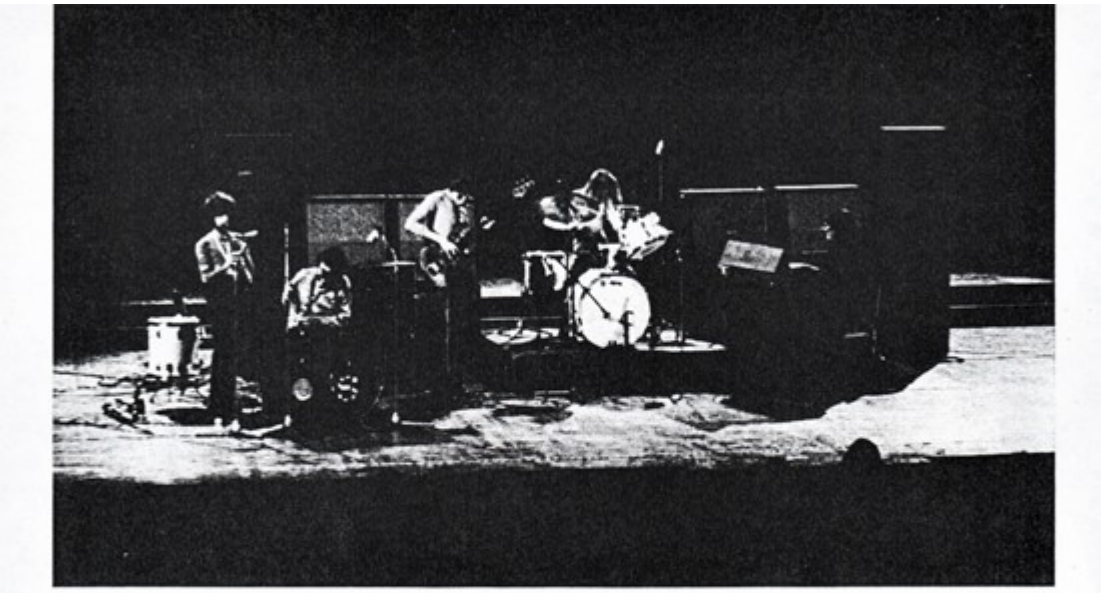
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Soft Machine - Sounds - #17 - April 1970



"Für die erste halbe Stunde nach jedem Konzert bin ich kein Mensch mehr", Robert Wyatt, der untersetzte und athletische Drummer der Soft Machine läßt sich in den Sessel einer Amsterdamer Hotelbar zurückfallen und greift sich seinen Cognac. Wer soeben die letzten beiden Stunden im nur wenige Schritte entfernten Concertgebow verbracht hat, der glaubt ihm das gern. Er muß, wie die vier anderen Musiker dieser Gruppe, erschöpft sein von der dicht gerafften und dennoch so langen "Veräußerung" seiner musikalischen Ideen. Auf der anderen Seite lassen sie ein zum Platzen aufgeladenes Publikum zurück, daß sich in einem noch so explosiven und langen Applaus nicht vom inneren Druck der Emotionen entlasten kann, die durch die Fülle eben dieser musikalischen Eindrücke aufgetürmt worden sind. Die Tageszeitungen am darauffolgenden Tag und die nächste Ausgaben der Musikzeitschriften überschlugen sich: bis zu dem Ausruf "Das Konzert des Jahres!", und dabei war es, erst der 17.Januar. 1970. Um es vorwegzunehmen, zu so einem gelungenen Brückenschlag zwischen Musikern und Publikum kam es auf dieser Tournée nicht immer, in der darauffolgenden Woche spielten sie in Kiel, Hamburg und Berlin, und dort sah es z.T. anders aus.



SOFT MACHINE

In Holland aber befindet sich die Soft Machine in ihrem ureigensten Land, dort wird sie, wie auch in Frankreich und Belgien, zu den größten der angelsächsischen Musikgruppen gerechnet. Obwohl nie als Single produziert, spielten holländische Sender ihr "Hope for Happiness" von der ersten LP wie einen Hit ohne Unterlaß. Der Belgische Rundfunk, der in seinem täglichen "Nouveau Cap de Nuit" der kreativen Pop-Musik mehr Raum gibt als alle bundesdrepublikanischen Sender zusammen, spielte einen Tag nach dem großartigen Musikfestival von Amougies im letzten Herbst eine dreiviertel Stunde lang aus dem Set der Soft Machine vom Vortage. Wenige Wochen später waren zwei Konzerte der Gruppe in Belgien angesetzt. Derselbe Rundfunk unterbrach sein Morgenprogramm und kündigte großartig die in Amougies so erfolgreiche Soft Machine an, und spielte gleich abermals l0 Minuten aus jenem Konzert. Die im vorigen SOUNDS angekündigte Verleihung eines jährlichen Preises des französischen Kultusministeriums an die Soft Machine darf keineswegs als ein Zeugnis für "angepaßte" Musik angesehen werden, im Gegenteil, die Preisverleiher haben gegenüber "höherer Stelle" nur mit Mühe ihre "Köpfe retten" können, sie haben nämlich den jugendverderbenden Charakter dieser Musik nicht erkannt.

Genug der Popularitätsbeweise von weit her. Lobeszitate wird man allemal für jede Sorte Musik zusammenklauben können. In diesem Zusammenhang sollten sie dennoch in zweierlei Hinsicht dienen: wenn es stimmt, daß sich heutzutage bestimmte Gruppen von Menschen in verschiedenen Ländern viel mehr ähneln, als manche andere Gruppen innerhalb derselben Nation, also Z.B. jene Sorte junger, langhaariger, wenig arbeitsbesessener u.s.w. Leute in Amsterdam, London, und Hamburg mehr gemein miteinander haben als mit sogenannten Landsleuten anderer Provenienz, dann kann man nunmehr die Gewißheit aussprechen, daß die Soft Machine, die am 4. April zum ersten Mal vor großem deutschen Festival-Publikum in Köln auftreten wird (u.U. noch davor in Hamburg) *ihr* Publikum in diesem Lande finden wird. Zweitens waren die Zeugnisse breitgestreuter, enthusiastischer Aufnahme als Belege gedacht, die Soft Machine von dem ihr von einigen prätentiösen Kritikern aufgeklebten Etikett, eine intellektuell-akademische Musik zu machen, zu befreien.

Kurz nachdem Wyatt sich etwas nach jenem Konzert erholt hatte, wurde er von einem Interviewer in Beschlag genommen. Eine der Fragen hieß "Als was würden Sie Ihre Musik denn selbst bezeichnen?" Wyatt: "Laut, sehr laut." Und diese Antwort war nicht als ein leicht arroganter Scherz gemeint. Im ersten Moment spürte man deutlich seine Hilflosigkeit, der eigenen Musik einen Namen zu geben, und so wählte er eines von vielen Merkmalen, die diese Musik beschreiben könnten, aber es gibt eben keine Bezeichnung, die mit einem Wort eine Vorstellung dieser Musik vermitteln kann. "Progressiver Pop", "Jazz Rock" und ähnliche Markenbezeichnungen verleiten zu leicht' zu Mißverständnissen. Sie erfassen z.B. einfach überhaupt nicht, die Bemühungen der Soft Machine, sich vom Jazz abzusetzen. Wohl wird mancherorts behauptet, die Gruppe sage von sich, sie spiele Avantgarde-Jazz, das ist ein Irrtum oder eine statusheischende Lüge. Musik kann niemals von den Menschen, die sie machen, und von der Art und den Situationen in denen sie

veranstaltet wird, abgelöst werden. In den Augen der Musiker der Soft Machine ist das Jazz-Geschehen von einigen Attributen umgeben, die sie selber unbedingt vermeiden wollen, z.B. das Flair des Elitären, das dem Jazz in vielfaltiger Gestalt anhängt.

Lyn Dobson, Multiinstrumentalist (Flöte, Tenor- und Sopransaxophon, Mundharmonika) der Gruppe, spielte eine Zeit lang auch mit "Free-Jazz" Leuten, als ihm beim Oben plötzlich eine, wie er meinte, schöne Melodie einfiel und er spielte, unterbrachen die anderen und fragten abweisend: "Was? Eine Melodie?". In der Soft Machine ist Dobson frei, wie ein "Free Jazzer" zu blasen und seine Soli mit unmittelbar zugänglichen Melodien zu bereichern. Er ist aber nicht nur frei, sich selbst nach seinen Vorstellungen zu entfalten, sondern es wird auch von den anderen erwartet, daß ein jeder in der Lage ist, seinen Beitrag so aufzubauen, daß nicht nur ein Mit-Spielen herauskommt, sondern daß ein zusätzliches Element in die Musik als Ganzes eingebracht wird.

Dabei spielt z.B. die Wahl der Instrumente keine Rolle, das ist jedem selbst überlassen. Dobson nutzt zur Zeit jede freie Minute, sein ohnehin schon beeindruckendes Sitar-Spiel zu vervollkommnen, aber er hat sie noch nie mit auf die Bühne gebracht. Wyatt meint dazu: "Wahrscheinlich wird er sie eines Tages mit zum Üben bringen, und er wird allein von sich aus anfangen, sie mit einzubauen."

Der Baßgitarrist Hugh Hopper hat sein Instrument aus der weit verbreiteten Unterwürfigkeit unter die Solostimmen herausgeholt. Diese emanzipative Entwicklung vollzog sich bei ihm vor allem im letzten halben Jahr, er hat Wyatt des öfteren dazu gebracht, sein Schlagen zu vergessen und ihm mit offenem Mund zuzuhören. Die Koppelung an eine Fuzz-Box, die Hopper sehr effektiv und oft überraschend einsetzt, schafft Klänge, deren Erzeugung man eher bei den Baßpedalen der Orgel vermutet. Der individuelle Orgelsound von Michael Ratledge ermöglicht es, nach hundert Orgeln seine Orgel sofort blind herauszuhören. Dem Schulprimus und glänzenden Oxfordabsolventen Ratledge ist es wohl vor allem zuzuschreiben, daß die Soft Machine als superintellektuell hochgestempelt wurde. Was der sonst sehr gehemmte und schüchterne Ratledge bei visuell unterkühlt wirkender Spielweise an der Orgel freiläßt, gemahnt bei aller Komplexität an eine wahre Flut von Triebabfuhr. Mit den angeschlossenen Fuzz- und Wha-Wha-Pedalen und bei einer hervorragenden Technik steht ihm eine Vielfalt von eigenwilligen Klangfarben und Schwingungsmanipulationen offen, wobei ihm der ausgefallene Klang seiner Orgel noch entgegen kommt, eine Lowrey Holiday de Luxe. Selbst bei der wahnwitzigen Geschwindigkeit der Läufe seiner rechten Hand, kann man Manipulationen einzelner Töne noch wahrnehmen, die Kontakte innerhalb einzelner Töne reißen ab und springen nach kaum wahrnehmbaren Bruchteilen einer Sekunde wieder an. Manchmal finde ich, daß er ganze Reihen von Tönen halb zu Tode quält, gewiß, das ist Empfindungssache, aber nachempfindbar, das weiß ich bereits. Auf der anderen Seite, und sehr häufig in abrupten Wechseln erzeugt er ein seidenweiches, nahtloses Wha-Wha, das sich mit einem Solo von Elton Dean oder Lyn Dobson zu einem seltsamen, für die Soft Machine typischen Sound vermischt. Elton Dean, der vor Jahren mit Soul angefangen hatte, mit einer irischen Show-Band durch Deutschland zog, der schon alles an den Nagel gehängt hatte, als ihm sein einziges Instrument gestohlen wurde, dann doch wieder von Long John Baldry zum Weiterspielen ermuntert wurde, und eines Tages, von sich selbst überrascht, begriff, daß er auch Jazz spielen kann, fürht seit einiger Zeit ein Doppelleben: Er spielt zur gleichen Zeit noch in der englischen Keith Tippett Jazz Group. Bei kollidierenden Terminen hat meist die Tippett Jazz Group den Vortritt. In beiden Gruppen fühlt er sich wohl, und kann er sich musikalisch entfalten. Sein Spiel auf Alt-Saxophon entzieht sich völlig meinen Versuchen, es in Worten zu beschreiben.

Es war während der erwähnten Tournee, als die Pause zwischen den beiden langen und geschlossenen Sets fortzufallen begann. In Hamburg geschah es zum ersten Mal, daß sie nach den ersten 40 Minuten nicht von der Bühne gingen, sondern nach weniger als einer Minute mit der Orgelintroduktion zu dem zweiten, etwa eine ganze Stunde dauernden Set begannen. Einige Male lief es noch nach dem alten Muster, aber inzwischen ist es zu einem Strukturelement ihrer Live-Musik geworden. überflüssig zu sagen, daß Drummer Robert Wyatt, ununterbrochen den zeitlichen Ablauf einteilende Rhythmen schlägt, außergewöhnlich aber erscheint seine Vielfalt von Mustern und Rastern, mit denen er die Aufgabe, ein ständiger Halt und Orientierungsfaden für alle anderen zu sein, erfüllt. Dabei hat er Bewegungsspielraum, mit Michael Ratledge trägt er ganze Kämpfe aus, von denen das Publikum normalerweise gar nichts mitbekommt. Seine Schlagtechnik weicht von der orthodoxen Weise, aus dem Handgelenk zu schlagen, ab. Er setzt die Schläge meist im Oberarm an, das bewirkt einen höheren Kräfteverschleiß. Einer technischen Perfektion à la Lehrbuch nachzujagen interessiert ihn und alle anderen nicht im geringsten. Technik hat für sie nur insofern Bedeutung, als jeder von ihnen genau die Fertigkeiten beherrschen muß, die ihn in die Lage versetzen, all das machen zu können, was man in seinem Kopf an Vorstellungen entwickelt hat und gern realisieren möchte, also nichts anderes als diese

Kongruenz zwischen Ideen und dem Können, diese Ideen umzusetzen. Darüberhinaus wird Technik zur Farce, und dient nur dazu, oberflächliche Techniker zum Jubeln zu bringen.



Als Hopper in die Gruppe eintrat, war er völlig aus der Obung, dennoch gab man ihm den Vorzug vor vielen anderen brilliant aufspielenden Gitarristen, es ging nämlich vielmehr um die Wahl der "richtigen" Persönlichkeit (das Problem hatte sich gestellt, als der jetzt solo gehende Kevin Ayers ausgeschieden war, etwa zum Jahreswechsel 68/69.) So formuliert Wyatt denn auch das Hauptproblem der Gruppe, solange sie existiert: Es ging darum, die "richtigen" Individuen zusammenzubringen, dagegen wird alles andere eine sekundäre Frage. Die Technik bleibt ein wichtiges Problem, und der technische Stand aller fünf Musiker einmal gewaltsam abstrahiert, sucht in der Pop-Welt seinesgleichen. Denn die musikalischen Ideen der Soft Machine sind eben derart reichhaltig und komplex und

intuitiv, daß sie sich ein gewaltiges Repertoire an handwerklichem Können zulegen muß, um ihre Vorstellungen am Instrument gerecht werden zu können.

Die meiste Musik komponiert z.Zt. Michael Ratledge, an zweiter Stelle Hugh Hopper. Sie spielen ihre Kompositionen auf Band und geben das dem Drummer, der dann vor dem Problem steht, seinen Part dazu einzuüben. Die beiden Bläser, die nach dem jahrelangen Bestehen des Kerntrios, hinzukamen, sind zum Teil streng an Komposition und Arrangement gebunden, verfügen darüberhinaus aber über die erwähnten Freiräume.

Würde ein Interviewer die obligate Frage nach den Einflüssen stellen, oder geschickter fragen, welcher Musik die einzelnen Musiker gern zuhören, dann kommt so ein seltsames Spektrum heraus, daß die ganze Unzulänglichkeit, aus der Summe der *Einflüsse* etwas Wesentliches der durch sie neu entstandenen Musik zu erfassen, mit einem Schlage sichtbar wird. Ratledge ist von Guillaume de Machaut, einem französischen Komponisten des Mittelalters, begeistert. Dessen Messe de Notre Dame ist die älteste überlieferte polyphone Messe der abendländischen Musikliteratur. Außerdem von Josquin de Prés, der lebte ein Jahrhundert später. Wie man auch im Interview Februar-SOUNDS nachlesen kann, hört er fast täglich Coltrane. Darüberhinaus ist er stark an Terry Riley interessiert, von dem er gern Kompositionen aufgreifen und verarbeiten möchte. Robert Wyatt hört gern Sly and the Family Stone und prophezeit, daß man eines Tages die Drummer hinter James Brown, nicht ihn selbst und seine Musik, angemessen würdigen wird, für ihn sind sie ungeheuer wichtig, obgleich er keinen ihrer Namen zu nennen weiß. Außerdem mag er die Magical Mystery Tour, daß die Beatles und die Stones so gut wie die einzigen Gruppen seien, die bei ihrer Musik niemals Kompromisse gemacht hätten. Lyn Dobson, früher auch einige Zeit bei Manfred Mann, überhaupt ein musikalischer Spätzünder - vor 19 hatte er kein Instrument richtig angefaßt - unterliegt stark asiatischen Einflüssen, während des Live-Auftritts begegnet das einem am ehesten bei seiner Gesangseinlage, seine Stimme wie ein Instrument handhabend, kann er den Zuhörer bei einiger Phantasie ins tibetanische Hochgebirge versetzen. Coltrane bedeutet ihm viel, alles andere im Jazz wenig. Während der kurzen Zeit mit der Humble Pie, als er an deren LP mitarbeitete, gewann er eine große Meinung von Steve Marriott, kein Techniker sondern ein Vollblutmusiker. Für Hugh Hopper war die ganze Tournee im Januar zugleich eine Art Hochzeitsreise, ich kam so gut wie nie dazu, mit ihm zu reden.

Aufschlußreicher als alle Interviews und alle Beschreibungsversuche, den vorliegenden einbegriffen, fand ich eine fettgedruckte Notiz in der Lokalzeitung von Groningen am Tage nach dem dortigen Konzert der Soft Machine, sie nahm den ganzen Raum ein, der für eine Besprechung vorgesehen worden war. Sie lautete etwa: ich sollte hier über das Konzert der Soft Machine schreiben, aber ich kann es nicht mehr, man kann nur hingehen und sie sich anhören.

Die dritte LP der Soft Machine ist in Produktion, die Gruppe bemüht sich ihren derzeitigen Live-Auftritt so getreu wie möglich auf diese Platte zu bringen. Hoffentlich gelingt das.

Winfried Trenkler
Fotos : *M.Szulc Krzyzanowski*

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Soft Machine - Sounds - #15 - Februar 1970



Da sind zunächst einmal MIKE RATLEDGE, der alle Keyboard-Instrumente, vor allem aber eine besonders für ihn konstruierte Lowrey-Orgel spielt, die ihm größere Möglichkeiten als eine normale Orgel gibt, und Schlagzeuger ROBERT WYATT. Diese beiden bilden den Nukleus der Soft Machine. Zuerst war KEVIN AYERS der Bassist, der jetzt unter eigenem Namen, aber mit Hilfe der Soft Machine seine erste eigene LP gemacht hat (JOY OF A TOY - Harvest SHVL-763). Seit Anfang 69 ist an seine Stelle HUGH HOPPER getreten, der eine völlig neue Auffassung von der Rolle des Bassisten in die Gruppe gebracht hat (hören Sie ihn, wenn er seine Fuzz-Box gebraucht!) Gelegentlich spielte BRIAN HOPPER, Hugh's Bruder, Saxofon mit der Band.

Auch ein Nichtmusiker spielt eine wichtige Rolle: Mark Boyle, der für die Auftritte der Band eine eigene, spezielle Lichtschau vorführt.
"Mark Boyle's Licht-Präsentationen," so schreibt Mike Ratledge in einer kurzen Studie über Boyle "ermöglichen dem Publikum, den ästhetischen Aspekt unserer Musik wieder zuentdecken, der durch ständigen Gebrauch, also durch Gewöhnung leider versteckt war." Boyle arbeitet nur mit flüssigen Chemikalien, und Licht, Farbe und deren Bewegungen entstehen per Zufall.

Jetzt, da Soft Machine langsam Anerkennung (und besser bezahlte Jobs) findet, können sie sich einen alten Wunsch erfüllen, nämlich zusätzlich auch mit Bläsern zu arbeiten. Beim Festival in Amougies stellten sie sich zum ersten Mal mit der 4-köpfigen Bläsergruppe von Keith Tippett vor. Hugh erklärt: "Früher spielten wir wesentlich freier und improvisierten mehr. Doch jetzt interessiert uns Arrangieren und Komponieren, und wir haben jetzt eine Menge völlig arrangierter Passagen. Wir schreiben alle, auch Robert Wyatt, vor allem aber Mike Ratledge."

Da die Leute von Tipett in letzter Zeit immer öfter unabkömmlich sind, haben sich Soft Machine zwei andere Bläser geholt, mit denen sie nun ein Quintet bilden, das sich Ende Januar auch in Hamburg, Kiel, Hannover und Berlin zum ersten Mal einem deutschen Publikum vorgestellt hat: ELTON DEAN spielt Altsaxofon, und LYN DOBSON ist ein Multi-Instrumentalist, der zwar auf dem Tenorsax am besten ist, aber auch Flöte, Sopransax und Mundharmonika recht gut zu handhaben weiß.

SOFT



Soft Machine (left to right) Robert Wyatt, Michael Ratledge, and Hugh Hopper.

MACHINE

Ein Interview von Mary Moore

Soft Machine ist eine der ganz wenigen Bands in der Popmusik, die nicht nur originell, sondern auch schöpferisch und inventiv ist. Ihre Musik kennt keine Kompromisse,sie ist einmalig und befriedigt selbst höchste Ansprüche (der zeitgenössische amerikanische Komponist Earle Brown liebt Soft Machine abgöttisch).

Soft Machine ist nicht nur eine eindrucksvolle Synthese verschiedener Elemente, die von Karl-Heinz Stockhausen und John Cage über Julian Hastings und Terry Riley, Ornette Coleman und Cecil Taylor, bis hin zur Rockmusik selbst reichen, Soft Machine ist vielmehr auch lebendiger Beweis dafür, daß zeitgenössische Popmusik, dort wo sie am besten ist, eine Kunstform ist, die obendrein noch den Vorteil hat, populär zu sein.

Aber die Popularität der Soft Machine in Ländern wie Amerika, Frankreich und Holland weitaus grösser als in ihrem eigenen Mutterland England. "In Städten wie Amsterdam sind die Leute neuen Klängen gegenüber aufgeschlossener als in Großbritannien," meint Hugh Hopper. So ist es auch kein Wunder, daß man Soft Machine öfter im Ausland als in England hören kann. Mike Ratledge, der in unserem Interview die Fragen von Mary Moore beantwortet, ist ein gebildeter Mann. 1964 gewann er an der Oxford-Universität den ersten Preis in Philosophie, später holte er sich dort noch Diplome in Psychologie und Philosophie. Neben Robert Wyatt wirkt er auf allen bisher erschienenen Platten der Soft Machine mit. Von den ersten 2 Singles (u.a. "Love Makes Sweet Music" & "Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'") auf englisch Polydor, über die erste LP mit Kevin Ayers (1968, Probe CPLP 450O) bis hin zur bislang letzten LP mit Hugh Hopper (1969, Probe CPLP-4505). Als nächstes wird eine Live-LP geplant.

Fortsetzung SOFT MACHINE

Ihr Sound ist erschreckend schwach. Sie besitzen nichts von den Dingen, die die Popmusik in den letzten 5 Jahren so interessant gemacht haben. Hendrix hat einen neuen, brennenden Sound gefunden, doch die Doors haben keinerlei Klangidentität. Musikalisch steuern sie nichts bei.

Wie passen Gruppen wie Jefferson Airplane in jene Bewertungsskala, die Sie vorhin genannt haben?

Jefferson Airplane ist eine große kultische Figur des amerikanischen Untergrunds. Ich hab sie niemals live gesehen, doch wahrscheinlich sind sie besser als auf ihren Platten, wo sie für meine Begriffe zu sauber klingen, und die Solisten nicht den Ruf bestätigen, den sie haben. Natürlich sind sie im Gesang sehr stark. Doch grundsätzlich existiert in Amerika die Tyrannei des Blues. Um Erfolg zu haben, muß man einfach Blues spielen. Man liest zwar in England in Zeitschriften über diese und jene amerikanische Avantgarde-Gruppe, doch wenn man sie dann hört, stellt sich heraus, daß sie nichts anderes als eine Bluesgruppe sind.

Sie haben als Jazzgruppe begonnen und sind dann zum Pop Übergegangen. Das ist nicht typisch, denn meistens starten die Gruppen als Bluesbands und enden mit einer avantgardistischen Reputation. Aber Sie sind niemals eine Bluesgruppe gewesen.

Diese Jazz-Pop Sache ist recht eigentümlich. Es gibt zwei Arten. Die Jazzgruppe, die sich zum Pop wendet, und die Popgruppe, die halbwegs zum Jazz kommt. Don Ellis und Gary Burton haben sich zum Pop hingewendet und in bestimmter Hinsicht dabei einiges verloren. Wogegen diese Gefahr bei Popgruppen, die zum Jazz kommen, nicht besteht. Jazzgruppen, die Pop machen, tendieren dazu, die elektrisierende Spannung, die der Popmusik eigen ist, zu zerstören. Sie tendieren dazu, einfach nur die Strukturen des Jazz zu simplifizieren, doch die Popmusik lebt ja gerade von ihrem gewaltigen Sound. Das ist es was Bands wie die von Gary Burton oder Don Ellis nie erreicht haben. Sie verlieren also von den Charakteristiken des Jazz sowie des Pop. Während Popgruppen, die Jazz spielen, niemals die Spannung des Pop einbüßen, falls sie gut sind. Bestes Beispiel ist Frank Zappas Gruppe. Da hat man nie das Gefühl, daß sie zwischen zwei Strömungen schwimmt. Sie haben Jazz-Solisten und sie benutzen Jazz-Strukturen, trotzdem haben sie den harten Rock-Sound. Spirit ist ein anderes Beispiel.

Besitzt Ihre Gruppe auch diesen harten Rock-Sound?

Er ist hart, ja, aber ich weiß nicht, ob unsere Musik Rock ist. Sie ist sehr individuell und sehr entstellt.

Wenn jemand, der Hits produziert, zu Ihnen käme und Sie bitten würde, für ihn aufzunehmen, würden Sie das machen?

Nein. Hauptsächlich weil man einen Hit nicht vorausberechnen kann. Es ist ein Glücksfall. Also mache ich nur das, was mir wirklich Spaß macht (Pause). Angenommen Jim Webb würde mit einem Song zu mir kommen. Das wäre ein besseres Beispiel. Mir würde es nichts ausmachen, davon eine Single zu machen, wenn der Song gut ist. Aber nicht als Soft Machine. Das wäre unfair gegenüber unserem Publikum. Doch ich liebe es sehr, mit anderen Leuten zu spielen, gleich welche Musik die machen. Falls der Bassist unserer Gruppe eine schöne Single machen wollte, ich würde mitspielen. Aber, nochmals, nicht als Soft Machine.

Wie reagieren Sie auf Pop-Journalismus?

Das Hauptproblem ist, daß alle Journalisten außerhalb von uns stehen, d.h., sie spielen kein Instrument. Wahrscheinlich haben sie niemals Pop gehört, bis die Beatles kamen. Meistens besitzen sie auch keine Musikkenntnisse. Ich würde es akzeptieren, wenn sie nur sagen würden, was sie mögen und was nicht. Aber unglücklicherweise wollen sie immer gleich musikalische Gründe angeben. So sind mittlerweile serienweise Beurteilungs-Klischees entstanden, die jeder x-beliebig benutzt. Da gibts in England Tony Palmer, der Dinge über die Cream gesagt hat, die sie überhaupt nicht besitzt. Er sagte, sie würden die Struktur der gewöhnlichen Popsong-Harmonien erweitern, während Cream in Wirklichkeit mehr als jede andere Band immer noch die alten Bluesriffs verwendet. Auch daß man zu viele Dinge der Avantgarde zurechnet, laste ich den Kritikern an. Es erinnert mich immer irgendwie an die Zeit als der Jazz aufkam, wo man, um Anerkennung zu erlangen, Jazzmusiker mit Stravinsky, Schönberg oder Bartok verglich. Jetzt sagen auch einige Leute wie Palmer, die Beatles wären besser als Schubert oder Schönberg. Sie reden damit genau an der Sache vorbei, denn das ist es nicht, was Pop so speziell, einzigartig und

unterschiedlich zu diesen Komponisten macht.

Wie würden Sie also Soft Machine mit Ihren eigenen musikalischen Vorstellungen beurteilen?

Das ist schwer. Ich glaube, wir verwenden viele Dinge, die auch der moderne Jazz heute benutzt. Seit einiger Zeit spielen wir mit 13/4 oder 9/4 Takteinteilungen. Wir tendieren zu einer immer mehr, und später völlig, kompositorischen Basis, also weg vom zyklischen Songformat mit seinen regelmäßigen Wiederholungen. Weg von der immer wiederkehrenden AABA Form eines Songs. Hin zu Songs als komplette Kompositionen. Wir arbeiten mit Strukturen, die denen der klassischen Musik ähneln, wenn Sie so wollen, wo also 15 Minuten oder länger komponierte Sequenzen ineinander übergehen ohne sich zu wiederholen. Dennoch haben wir einen richtigen Pop-Sound, insoweit unsere Musik schnell, direkt ist und sich verschleißt. Meistens basiert ja Kritik auf diesem sinnlosen System des Vergleichens. Zu sagen, wir sind wie Coltrane oder Cecil Taylor, hilft niemandem wirklich unsere Musik zu verstehen. Es ist auch sinnlos, uns mit Leuten wie John Cage im Hinblick auf die Arbeitsmethoden zu vergleichen. Wir arbeiten nicht mit Zufallsmethoden wie I Ching oder IBM Computerkarten, oder mit Münzenwerfen und ähnlichem. Wir haben zwar von Zeit zu Zeit ein solches Zufallsstück geschrieben - wo jede Note und jede rhythmische Figur durch Zufall entstand -, doch das ist nicht unsere normale Arbeitsmethode. Eins unserer frühen Stücke, "We Did It Again", basierte auf dem Zen-Konzept, wonach etwas Langweiliges durch ständige Wiederholung am Ende als interessant empfunden wird. Dabei haben wir uns etwas von den Dingen beeinflussen lassen, die Terry Riley macht.

Aber manchmal klingt Ihre Musik tatsächlich wie die Leute, die Sie eben erwähnt haben.

Das mag manchmal zutreffen. Ich weiß, daß jeder in der Band zu irgendeiner Zeit einmal unheimlich auf Coltrane gestanden hat. Doch ich bin sicher, daß wir alle diese Einflüße assimiliert haben. Und das macht es vielleicht erst interessant, über uns, oder jede andere Band, zu sprechen, nämlich darauf hinzuweisen, was unsere Musik von all den Leuten unterscheidet, die uns irgendwann einmal beieinflusst haben.

Entschuldigung, aber gibt es denn auch nur einen Popmusiker, der als Musiker an Coltrane herankäme?

In technischer Hinsicht ganz sicher nicht. Doch die guten Popmusiker besitzen Dinge, die Coltrane nicht hat... und umgekehrt. Ich persönlich würde niemals sagen, daß ich lieber als Coltrane jede Popgruppe hören möchte. Ich höre mir Coltrane beinahe jeden Tag an. Sehen Sie, Sie Idiot, ich sehe einfach nicht ein, warum es immer diese exklusive Auswahl geben muß. Jeder versucht doch nur sein Urteil im Hinblick auf exklusive Vorlieben aufzubauen.

Was halten Sie von jenen Aussprüchen, die es heutzutage gibt, Aussprüche, die ich für voreilig halte, wonach Popmusik eine komplette Reflektion unserer Zeit sein soll, und Popsänger ihre besten Interpreten?

Das ist entweder trivial oder falsch - wie McIntyre sagen würde. Entweder beweist man tautologisch mit den Mitteln der retrospektiven Kritik, daß zu allen Epochen der Künstler seine Zeit reflektiert hat, daß er keine andere Wahl hat, oder aber es ist einfach falsch, weil nämlich die Leute, die man in der Popmusik trifft, ganz sicher keinerlei Motive haben, die Zeit in der wir leben auszudrücken.

Doch einige von diesen Leuten behaupten das allerdings von sich selbst.

Auch Leute in anderen Bereichen tun das haufenweise. Wir alle überschätzen unsere eigene Bedeutung, und sicher ist das häufig sogar lebensnotwendig. Wenn Du nicht von Dir annehmen würdest, daß Du etwas Wichtiges tust, würdest Du es doch sein lassen. Auch das ist etwas Unumgängliches.

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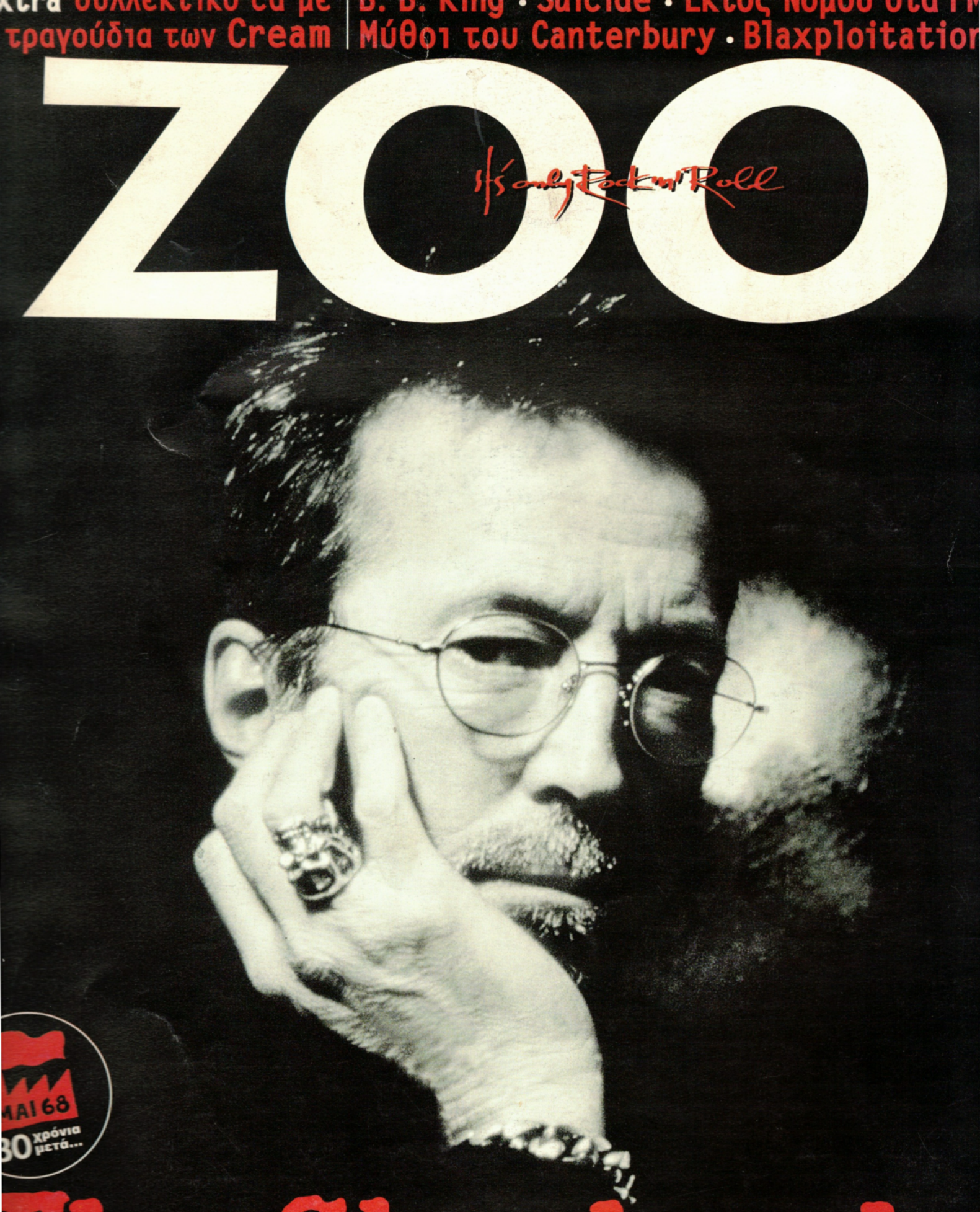
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DELIVERY - MATCHING

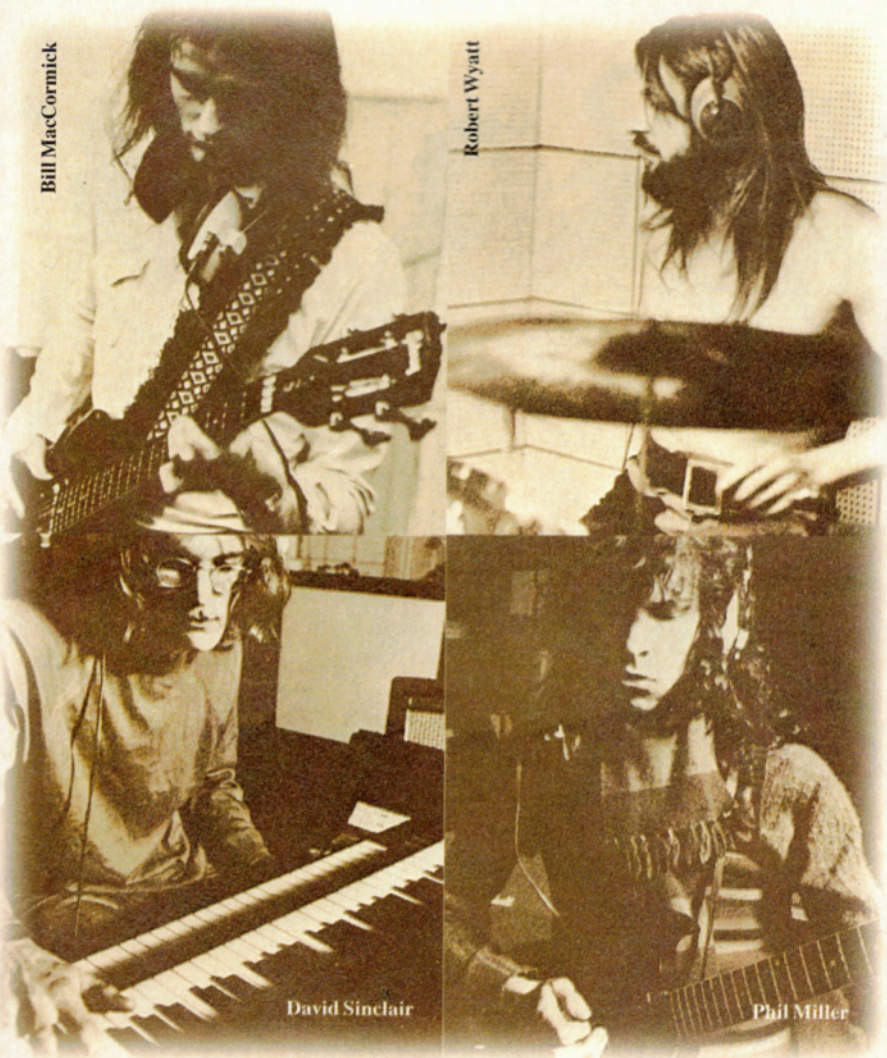
Χώρια από τα κλασικά και βασικά ονόματα που καθόρισαν με ακρίβεια τα όρια του Canterbury Rock, υπήρξαν και κάποια άλλα που ξεκίνησαν από την ίδια περιοχή, αλλά οι στόχοι τους ήταν διαφορετικοί. Σε αυτή την κατηγορία ανήκουν οι **Delivery**, οι οποίοι από την αρχή έδειξαν προτίμηση στο rhythm 'n' blues. Παραδόξως όμως, τα περισσότερα μέλη αυτής της μπάντας συμμετείχαν ενεργά κατόπιν στην εξέλιξη του Canterbury Rock και αυτός είναι ο μοναδικός λόγος που περιλαμβάνονται σε αυτό το άρθρο, αφού ούτε το μοναδικό album τους σημείωσε ιδιαίτερη επιτυχία, ούτε βασικά ανήκουν στον "ήχο του Canterbury".

Όλα ξεκίνησαν από τον φαλακρό σαξοφωνίστα **Lol Coxhill**. Το 1967, ενώ οι φίλοι του, οι **Wilde Flowers**, έπαιζαν μέσα στα μπαρ του Kent, αυτός συμμετείχε σε έναν άλλο συνασπισμό της περιοχής, τους **Gass**. Οι Gass, έχοντας παρασυρθεί από το ξέσπασμα του βρετανικού rhythm 'n' blues, διασκεύαζαν επιτυχίες γνωστών blues συνθετών.

Βλέποντας ότι σε αυτό το group δεν υπάρχει μέλλον, ο Coxhill σκέφτεται να σχηματίσει μια άλλη μπάντα. Έτσι, στις αρχές του '68 δίνει σχήμα και μορφή στους Delivery, προσλαμβάνοντας σπουδαίους μουσικούς όπως τον drummer **Pip Pyle**, από τους **Chicken Shack** του **Stan Webb**, τον μπασίστα **Jack Monk**, με μεγάλη ιστορία πίσω του αφού από τις αρχές των sixties ήταν μέλος πολλών συγκροτημάτων, και τους αδελφούς **Miller**: **Steve** *[πιάνο, όργανο, τραγούδι]* και **Phil** *[κιθάρες]*. Αρχικά οι Delivery διασκεύαζαν κι αυτοί δημοφιλή blues κομμάτια πριν αρχίσουν να ενσωματώνουν περισσότερα jazz στοιχεία στον ήχο τους. Με αυτή τη μορφή διατηρήθηκαν περίπου έναν χρόνο, γιατί ο Monk δυσανασχέτησε με την απραξία τους και έφυγε. Τον αντικατέστησαν αμέσως με έναν σπουδαίο μπασίστα, τον **Roy Babbington**, που τα επόμενα χρόνια θα εξελισσόταν σε super session μουσικό. Αυτή την περίοδο ο Coxhill γνωρίζει μια καταπληκτική τραγουδίστρια με θαυμάσια φωνή, την **Carol Grimes**, ό,τι έπρεπε για το στιλ τους.

Γεννημένη το 1944, ξεκίνησε να τραγουδάει στα folk clubs στις αρχές των sixties. Το 1965 όμως σχηματίζει την πρώτη της μπάντα, τους **Race**, οι οποίοι παίζουν rhythm 'n' blues. Το 1969 ηχογραφεί με τους επίσης rhythm 'n' blues **Babylon** ένα single, αλλά αποχωρεί προσωρινά από το προσκήνιο λόγω της εγκυμοσύνης της.

Η δυνατή bluesy φωνή της έδωσε άλλη διάσταση στα τραγούδια των Delivery. Επηρεασμένη από την **Janis Joplin** *[αν και η χροιά της φωνής της μου θυμίζει περισσότερο την **Genya Ravan**]*, δίκαια απέκτησε το παρατσούκλι "η βρετανίδα Janis".



Μαζί της ηχογράφησαν το album ***"Fool's Meeting"*** και το single ***"Harry Lucky"*** / ***"Homemade Ruin"*** *[ακολούθησε πολύ αργότερα άλλο ένα single, το **"I Don't Wanna Discuss It"** / **"I'm Walking"**, το 1977]*. Το *"Hurry Lucky"*, αν και δεν ανέβηκε στα charts ούτε σημείωσε επιτυχία, εν τούτοις απαγορεύτηκε η μετάδοσή του από το B.B.C. Όλοι οι δίσκοι εμφανίστηκαν στην **B&C**, μία μικρή εταιρεία που είχε στο ενεργητικό της σπουδαία ονόματα του βρετανικού Underground, όπως τους **Atomic Rooster**, **Hannibal**, **Ginhouse** κ.α. αλλά δεν είχε τη δυνατότητα προώθησής τους. Μόνο οι Atomic Rooster είχαν την ευκαιρία να κάνουν και δεύτερο lp στην B&C. Όλα τα υπόλοιπα groups εξαφανίστηκαν μετά από ένα album.

Το *"Fool's Meeting"* πέρασε απαρατήρητο, παρόλο που εκτελεστικά ήταν ανώτερο από πολλές δουλειές συγχρόνων τους. Η αδιαφορία του κοινού ανάγκασε το group να διαλυθεί, τον Μάιο του '71. Πρώτος αποχώρησε ο Lol Coxhill για να ενισχύσει τις τάξεις των **Whole World** του **Kevin Ayers** *[βλ. προηγούμενο τεύχος]*. Ο Babbington έπαιξε στους **Ovary Lodge** και αργότερα βρέθηκε στους **Soft Machine**. Τον Pyle θα τον συναντήσουμε αρχικά στους **Gong** και μετά στους **Hatfield & The North**. Η Grimes βρέθηκε προσωρινά στους εξαιρετικούς **Uncle Dog** του κιθαρίστα **Dave Skinner**, στη συνέχεια ακολούθησε solo καριέρα με τρία ενδιαφέροντα προσωπικά albums, συμμετείχε σε ηχογραφήσεις των **Kala**, **Chilli Willi & The Red Hot Peppers**, **Andy Roberts** και **Tom Robinson** και έκανε ένα single το 1982, συνοδευόμενη από τους **Blockheads** του **Ian Dury**.

MOLE

Το καλοκαίρι του '71, ο Coxhill επέστρεψε στους παλιούς του συνεργάτες, τους αδελφούς Miller, για τη δημιουργία μίας νέας μπάντας μαζί με την πρώην τραγουδίστρια των **Fairport Convention**, **Judy Dyble** και τον drummer **Laurie Allan**. Το group επέζησε μόνο λίγους μήνες, εξαιτίας διαφόρων προβλημάτων που προέκυψαν με τα συμβόλαια των μουσικών, και δεν ηχογράφησαν τίποτα. Το όνομά τους ήταν **D.C. & The M.B.'s** *[αρχικά των ονομάτων Dyble, Coxhil & The Miller Brothers]*.

Από τότε ο Coxhill εγκαταλείπει κάθε προσπάθεια σχηματισμού νέου group, αφοσιώνεται στις προσωπικές του δουλειές και στην παραγωγή. Ο Steve Miller ενώνεται με τους **Caravan** για την εγγραφή του ***"Waterloo Lily"***, στη συνέχεια κάνει δύο albums μαζί με τον Coxhill, τα ***"Coxhill-Miller" [1973, Caroline C1503]*** και ***"The Story So Far... Oh Really?" [1974, Caroline C1507]*** και εξαφανίζεται από το προσκήνιο.

Ο PHIL MILLER ΟΜΩΣ ΣΥΝΕΧΙΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΔΕΙΧΤΗΚΕ ΣΕ μεγάλη μορφή του Carterbury Rock. Σχεδόν αμέσως δέχτηκε μια πρόταση από τον **Robert Wyatt** να μετάσχει σε ένα νέο super group που είχε στα σκαριά ο drummer των Soft Machine. Φεύγοντας από τους Soft Machine ηχογραφεί το solo album ***"The End Of An Ear"*** και αποφασίζει να σχηματίσει τους **Matching Mole**. Δική του ιδέα ήταν να μεταφράσει στα γαλλικά το όνομα των Soft Machine *[Machine Molle]* και με μια μικρή παραλλαγή κατέληξε στο Matching Mole.

Εκτός από τον Miller, ο Wyatt προσκάλεσε τον οργανίστα των Caravan, **David Sinclair** και τον μπασίστα **Bill McCormick** των **Quiet Sun** *[από τους οποίους ξεκίνησαν την καριέρα τους ο κιθαρίστας των **Roxy Music**, **Phil Manzanera** και ο drummer των **This Heat**, **Charles Hayward**]*.

Οι τέσσερίς τους μπήκαν στο studio τον Δεκέμβριο του '71 και ηχογράφησαν το πρώτο ομώνυμο album τους στη **CBS**. Όλες οι συνθέσεις ανήκουν στον Wyatt, εκτός από το ***"O Caroline"***, που το συνυπόγραψε με τον David και ομολογουμένως ήταν το καλύτερο κομμάτι του δίσκου, και το ***"Part Of The Dance"*** του Miller.

Το *"O Caroline"* που κυκλοφόρησε και στις σαράντα πέντε στροφές *[με το **"Signed Curtain"** στη β' πλευρά]* υπήρξε ένα από τα μεγάλα χαμένα singles των seventies. Ήταν αφιερωμένο στην τότε κοπέλα του Wyatt και θρυλική rock δημοσιογράφο, **Caroline Coon**. Ίσως να φταίει η φωνή του Robert που κάνει τα τραγούδια της α' πλευράς να μοιάζουν με


Carol Grimes

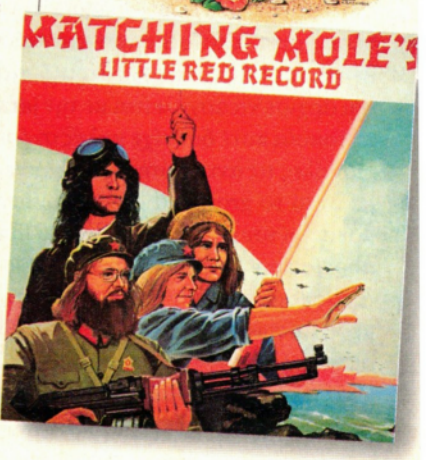
αυτά των αρχικών Soft Machine, ενώ στη β' πλευρά που είναι instrumental το ύφος τους προσεγγίζει τους Caravan. Παραδόξως, το πιο πειραματικό track είναι το μεγάλης διάρκειας *"Part Of The Dance"* του Miller. Ήταν φανερό πως ο Wyatt επεδίωκε να κινηθεί σε άλλους δρόμους από αυτούς των Soft Machine. Ενώ ο δίσκος βρισκόταν στο στάδιο του remix, ο Sinclair φεύγει από το group και τη θέση του παίρνει ο session οργανίστας **Dave McRae**.

Μαζί του οι Matching Mole μπαίνουν για δεύτερη φορά στο studio για το επόμενο album τους ***"Little Red Record"*** - το κατεξοχήν "κομμουνιστικό" lp του rock. Στο εξώφυλλο οι τέσσερίς τους ντυμένοι σαν στρατιώτης, εργάτης, αγρότης και αεροπόρος της κινέζικης επανάστασης, κρατούν την κόκκινη σημαία και τη "σκέψη του Μάο". Ο δίσκος κυκλοφόρησε το 1972, πάλι στη CBS, με παραγωγό τον **Robert Fripp** *[King Crimson]*.

Οι συνθέσεις, πιο πολύπλοκες, δείχνουν τη διάθεση των δημιουργών να πειραματιστούν περισσότερο, παρά να κατευθυνθούν σε συγκεκριμένες μουσικές βάσεις. Ο ρόλος του Wyatt έχει περιοριστεί, αφού και οι τέσσερις μοιράζονται τώρα εξίσου τα κομμάτια.

Το γεγονός αυτό *[όπως και το γενικό αποτέλεσμα του lp]* μάλλον δυσαρέστησε τον Wyatt, που αποφάσισε να ψάξει για νέους συνεργάτες. Δυστυχώς όμως δεν πρόλαβε, εξαιτίας ενός τραγικού δυστυχήματος. Ένα βράδυ έπεσε από το παράθυρο του σπιτιού του και χτύπησε άσχημα στη μέση, με αποτέλεσμα να μείνει παράλυτος σε όλη την υπόλοιπη ζωή του. Διέλυσε εντελώς τους Matching Mole και στράφηκε στις προσωπικές ηχογραφήσεις. Ο McRae προσχώρησε στους **Pacific Eardrum** και ο Mc Cormick ακολούθησε τον παλιό του φίλο Manzanera στους **801**. Ο Miller μαζί με τους Sinclair θα συνέχιζε στους ανεπανάληπτους Hatfield & The North.





CAROL GRIMES & DELIVERY

singles

Hurry Lucky / Homemade Ruin ..... *[1970, B&C CB 129]*
I Don't Wanna Discuss It / I'm Walking ..... *[1977, B&C BCP 2]*

album

*** Fool's Meeting** ..... *[1970 B&C CAS 1023]*

MATCHING MOLE

single

O Caroline / Signed Curtain ..... *[1972, CBS 8101]*

albums

**** Matching Mole** ..... *[1972, CBS 64850]*
**** Little Red Record** ..... *[1972, CBS 65260]*

HATFIELD & THE NORTH

Μπάντα-πρότυπο του ήχου του Canterbury, παρόλο το μικρό χρονικό διάστημα της ύπαρξής τους *[1972-75]* κι αυτό για δύο βασικούς λόγους: πρώτον, κάθε μέλος του group είχε ήδη καθιερωθεί παίζοντας σε προηγούμενες μπάντες της περιοχής και δεύτερον, η μουσική τους ενέκλειε ακόμα τον ελιτισμό, τον λυρισμό και την ομορφιά αυτού του μουσικού ιδιώματος, τη στιγμή που το έντεχνο rock είχε φορέσει τον αποκρουστικό μανδύα της φρικαλέας techno progressive έκφρασης.

Οι **Hatfield & The North** σχηματίστηκαν τον Οκτώβριο του 1972 από τον οργανίστα **David Sinclair**, ο οποίος είχε εγκαταλείψει τους **Matching Mole**. Η αρχική μορφή τους περιλάμβανε τον κιθαρίστα του ίδιου group **Phil Miller** και τον αδελφό του, **Steve**. Ο τελευταίος έμεινε μόνο έξι εβδομάδες και μετά έφυγε. Τη θέση του πήρε ο ξάδελφος του Dave, **Richard Sinclair**, ο οποίος παράτησε τους **Caravan** μετά το τέταρτο album τους, ***"Waterloo Lily"***. Πίσω από τα τύμπανα κάθησε ο **Pip Pyle** των **Delivery**, αφού πέρασε ένα μικρό διάστημα με τους **Gong**. Ονομάστηκαν έτσι από μια διασταύρωση δρόμων έξω από το Λονδίνο *[μάλιστα για ένα μεγάλο διάστημα οι οπαδοί τους έκλεβαν τις πινακίδες που σηματοδοτούσαν τη διασταύρωση]*.

Άρχισαν τις πρόβες και η πρώτη τους παράσταση δόθηκε τον Νοέμβριο του '72 σε ένα ξενοδοχείο του Folkstone. Μερικές μέρες αργότερα και αφού η πρώτη τους εμφάνιση είχε προξενήσει ιδιαίτερη εντύπωση, ο David Sinclair αποφασίζει να ηγηθεί των Caravan και φεύγει από το group αφήνοντάς τους ξεκρέμαστους.

Σε αυτή την κρίσιμη στιγμή *[παραμονές μιας ευρωπαϊκής περιοδείας]* ο Pyle έδωσε τη λύση. Θυμήθηκε τον σπουδαίο οργανίστα των **Egg** και **Khan**, **Dave Stewart** και ήταν σίγουρος πως μονάχα αυτός ταίριαζε στον ήχο του group. Ο Stewart ήταν όντως διαθέσιμος, αφού μετά από τα groups αυτά δεν έπαιζε πουθενά αλλού. Ο Pyle είχε κουβαλήσει και μια ταινία με πρόχειρες ηχογραφήσεις των Hatfield αλλά μάλλον δεν χρειάστηκε, αφού ο Stewart πήρε αμέσως την απόφαση να ενωθεί μαζί τους.

Από την αρχή όμως ο Dave ένιωθε πως οι Hatfield ήθελαν κάτι διαφορετικό από αυτό που μπορούσε να τους δώσει. Είχαν εξοικειωθεί με τον ήχο του David Sinclair και του Steve Miller και πάνω σε αυτόν τον ήχο είχαν δομήσει τις συνθέσεις τους. Έτσι ο Stewart αναγκάστηκε να νοικιάσει ένα ηλεκτρικό πιάνο και άρχισε να ασχολείται με την jazz με την οποία ποτέ δεν είχε καλές σχέσεις. Παρόλες τις αντιξοότητες, διέκρινε ότι με αυτό το group θα διευρύνονταν οι μουσικοί του ορίζοντες. Η νεο-κλασική πορεία των Egg τον τροφοδότησε με άπειρες μουσικές γνώσεις. Όμως είχε μείνει πίσω στον τομέα του αυτοσχεδιασμού και εκεί χρειαζόταν δουλειά. Συχνά, στις πρώτες τους συναυλίες, σε κάποια σημεία σταματούσε να παίζει ή τους συνόδευε με απλά ακόρντα, επειδή δεν ήξερε πού θα καταλήξουν.



Με τον ερχομό του άλλαξε και η τύχη του group, αφού σε μία συναυλία τους γνώρισαν τους **Richard Branson** και **Simon Draper**, οι οποίοι μόλις είχαν ιδρύσει τη **Virgin Records** σχεδιάζοντας να προωθήσουν οτιδήποτε αντιεμπορικό. Οι Hatfield υπέγραψαν στην εταιρεία, πήραν 2.000 λίρες προκαταβολή και με αυτό το ποσό αγόρασαν το ηλεκτρικό πιάνο και ένα van για τις μετακινήσεις τους. Συγκεντρώθηκαν περισσότερο στη σύνθεση των κομματιών γιατί η Virgin απαιτούσε κάποιον δίσκο από αυτούς, ο οποίος δεν άργησε να έρθει.

Το πρώτο τους album ***"Hatfield & The North"*** κυκλοφόρησε στο τέλος του 1973 και αποτέλεσε τη βίβλο του ήχου του Canterbury. Μεγαλοφυείς συνθέσεις, όπου όλα τα μέλη συμμετέχουν αλλά ο καθένας αφήνει τη δική του σφραγίδα. Ο Richard ερμηνεύει θαυμάσια και γράφει τους περίεργους αλλά και τόσο παραστατικούς στίχους, κάνοντας σπουδαία δουλειά με το μπάσο *[πουθενά αλλού δεν τον άκουσα να καταφεύγει σε τόσο όμορφα σχήματα]*, ενώ ο Dave όχι μόνο προσαρμόζεται αμέσως, αλλά κάποιες από τις δυνατότερες συνθετικές στιγμές του ανήκουν. Ο Pip νομίζω ότι αισθάνεται περισσότερο άνετα από όλους, χρησιμοποιεί και κάποιες τεχνικές του **Wyatt**, ενώ ο Phil παίζει κιθάρα με θαυμαστό τρόπο. Θα ήταν άδικο αν προσπαθούσα να ξεχωρίσω κάποιο κομμάτι. Όλα μαζί συγκροτούν αυτό το εξαίσιο album. Και οι τέσσερις μουσικοί δουλεύουν με έναν απαράμιλλο συγχρονισμό, ελέγχουν τα πάντα. Εκεί όμως που πραγματικά δείχνουν το μεγαλείο τους είναι στις live εμφανίσεις, όπου κατορθώνουν και εκτελούν ακόμα πιο εντυπωσιακά τα ίδια θέματα. Στον δίσκο τούς βοηθούν και κάποιοι φίλοι και φίλες του παρελθόντος. Ο Wyatt τραγουδάει στο ***"Calyx"***, τη μεγαλειώδη σύνθεση του Miller, πνευστά παίζουν οι **Geoff Leigh** *[των **Henry Cow**]* και **Jeremy Baines**, ενώ στα φωνητικά βρίσκουμε τις **Amanda Parsons**, **Barbara Gaskin** *[των **Spirogyra**]* και **Ann Rosenthal**.

ΜΕ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΔΟΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΣΚΟΥ αναλαμβάνουν να διεκπεραιώσουν νέες περιοδείες, κυρίως εκτός Βρετανίας όπου είναι δημοφιλέστατοι. Στην Ολλανδία, επειδή οι οπαδοί των Caravan είναι φανατικοί, η υποδοχή είναι απρόσμενη. Μάλιστα, σε δύο εμφανίσεις, οι διοργανωτές θεώρησαν καλό να τους παρουσιάσουν ως Caravan. Στη Γαλλία, όπου οι **Soft Machine** και οι Gong ήταν μυθικά groups, τους θεωρούν συνεχιστές αυτής της κουλτούρας, αφού ο Phil είχε παίξει στα albums του Robert Wyatt και ο Pip είχε περάσει από τις τάξεις των Gong.

Όμως τα πράγματα δεν πάνε καλά με την εταιρεία. Εκτός από την προκαταβολή, δεν πήραν καθόλου χρήματα από τα ποσοστά που δικαιούνταν, τη στιγμή που οι Sinclair και Pyle είχαν οικογένειες να

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θρέψουν. Μάλιστα, η γυναίκα του πρώτου ήταν έγκυος και έμενε σε ένα εγκαταλελειμένο σπίτι με άλλους άστεγους καταληψίες hippies. Η Virgin κέρδιζε εκατομμύρια λίρες από τις πωλήσεις του ***"Tubular Bells"*** του **Oldfield** και η πολιτική της ήταν ίδια με αυτή των πολυεθνικών. Οι Hatfield δεν είχαν στην κυριολεξία ούτε τα πλέον απαραίτητα *[π.χ. τρόφιμα και ενοίκιο]* και πίεσαν τον Branson για ένα μικρό δάνειο. Αυτός τους έδωσε μόνο διακόσιες λίρες με την προϋπόθεση να του δώσουν άλλο ένα album. Κάτω από αυτές τις άθλιες συνθήκες το group μπαίνει στο studio για δεύτερη φορά, μετά από ενάμισι χρόνο. Αφού το υλικό υπήρχε, ο δίσκος τελείωσε σε λίγες μέρες. Είχε τίτλο ***"Rotter's Club"*** και ηχούσε σαν φυσιολογική συνέχεια του προηγούμενου. Ακόμα και ο τρόπος με τον οποίο συμμετείχαν τα μέλη στις συνθέσεις είναι ίδιος: όλοι εξίσου. Εκτός από ένα εισαγωγικό θέμα του Miller, όλη η β' πλευρά ανήκει στον Stewart. Το ***"Mumps"***, που διαρκεί περίπου είκοσι λεπτά, χωρίζεται σε τέσσερα μέρη και μας θυμίζει τις παλιές καλές στιγμές των Egg *[αποφορτισμένες ίσως από το κλασικίστικο ύφος]*.

Τα ***"Share It"*** και ***"Don't Matter Anyway"*** του Sinclair ηχούν σαν να πειραματίζονται οι Caravan στις αρχές των Soft Machine, ενώ οι συνθέσεις των Pyle και Miller εγκλείουν τη δύναμη των Hatfield. Παρούσες και οι τρεις κυρίες του προηγούμενου lp στα φωνητικά, ενώ ο παλιόφιλος από τις μέρες των Caravan, **Jimmy Hastings** παίζει πνευστά, ο **Mont Campbell** *[των Egg]* γαλλικό κόρνο, και δύο μέλη των Henry Cow, οι **Lindsay Cooper** και **Tim Hodginson**, διάφορα πνευστά. Το *"Rotter's Club"* πήγε καλύτερα από το προηγούμενο αλλά όχι στον βαθμό που θα δικαιολογούσε τη συνέχεια της μπάντας στο μουσικό προσκήνιο. Οι τέσσερις μουσικοί απολάμβαναν να παίζουν μαζί, αλλά οι συνθήκες δεν τους το επέτρεπαν.

Έτσι, μετά από ένα αποχαιρετιστήριο κονσέρτο στο Winning Post, διαλύθηκαν ήρεμα. Ο Stewart επανασχημάτισε τους Egg για την ηχογράφηση του *"Civil Surface"*, εμφανίστηκε στο lp ***"Fish Rising"*** του **Steve Hillage** και για ένα διάστημα έπαιξε μαζί με τον Robert Wyatt, ο οποίος εν τω μεταξύ είχε παντρευτεί τη γυναίκα του Pyle, **Pam**. Στη συνέχεια συνάντησε τον οργανίστα **Alan Gowen** των **Gilgamesh** και μαζί με τον Phil Miller ομαδοποίησαν τους σπουδαίους **National Health**. *[Οι Gilgamesh συχνά έπαιζαν μαζί με τους Hatfield & The North.]*

Το 1979, η Virgin, επειδή θεώρησε ότι δεν είχε αποκομίσει ικανά ποσά και δεν είχε "αποσβέσει" το κεφάλαιο Hatfield & The North, έβγαλε στην αγορά ένα τρίτο lp, το ***"Afters"***, το οποίο ήταν συλλογή. Περιείχε κάποια κομμάτια live από μία δωρεάν, μη κερδοφόρο συναυλία που είχαν δώσει στο Rainbow Theatre, όπου είχαν παίξει τα ***"Halfway Between Heaven & Hell"***, ***"Oh, Len's Nature"*** και ***"Lying & Gracing"***.

Όλα αυτά βρίσκονται στις συλλογές ***"Over The Rainbow"*** και στο διπλό ***"V"***. Επίσης συμπεριλαμβανόταν το μοναδικό single τους, και τα υπόλοιπα tracks ήταν παρμένα από τα δύο albums. Η Virgin για άγνωστους λόγους το απέσυρε από την αγορά, με αποτέλεσμα να είναι πιο σπάνιο από τα κανονικά lps.

ΤΟ 1990, Η ΜΠΑΝΤΑ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΥΓΚΡΟΤΗΘΗΚΕ ΑΠΟ ΤΑ αρχικά μέλη και έδωσε μια συναυλία για λογαριασμό του τηλεοπτικού καναλιού Central TV. Το show ηχογραφήθηκε και κυκλοφόρησε μονάχα σε cd, με τίτλο ***"Live 1990"***.

Ας επιστρέψουμε όμως στη συνέχεια της ιστορίας μας. Το σπίτι του Gowen απετέλεσε το πνευματικό καταφύγιο των National Health *[που ονομάστηκαν έτσι από τη μάρκα του σκελετού των γυαλιών του Stewart]*. Εδώ άρχισαν να πειραματίζονται πάνω στη φύση της μουσικής και να επιλέγουν τους συνεργάτες τους. Ο Gowen προσκάλεσε τον κιθαρίστα των Gilgamesh, **Phil Lee**, αλλά αυτός προτιμούσε τη σύγχρονη jazz και έτσι άφηνε ελεύθερο το πεδίο στον Phil Miller. Τη θέση του μπασίστα κέρδισε ο Mont Campbell, παλιός φίλος του Stewart από τους Egg. Επειδή η μουσική ήταν instrumental, θέλησαν σε κάποια σημεία να υπάρχουν και φωνητικά. Έτσι προσκάλεσαν την **Amanda Parsons**. Το μεγάλο πρόβλημα ήταν ο drummer. Ο Stewart από την αρχή ήθελε τον Pip Pyle, αλλά επειδή το όλο σκηνικό θα θύμιζε επανασυγκρότηση των Hatfield & The North, αποφάσισαν να βάλουν αγγελίες στα μουσικά έντυπα. Τελικά η απάντηση ήρθε από εκεί που δεν την περίμεναν, από τα γραφεία της Virgin, όπου ο γνωστός drummer των **Yes**, των **King Crimson** και άλλων groups **Bill Bruford**, τους τηλεφώνησε για να συνεργαστούν. Η πολυμελής αυτή μπάντα *[δύο οργανίστες, δύο κιθαρίστες, ένας μπασίστας, μία τραγουδίστρια και ένας drummer]* άρχισε να δουλεύει συλλογικά και τα πρώτα αποτελέσματα αυτής της δουλειάς ήταν εντυπωσιακά. Το ***"Clocks & Clouds"*** του Stewart θύμιζε τις καλύτερες στιγμές των Hatfield & The North. Ο Gowen έγραψε το ***"Brujo"*** *[που θα εμφανιζόταν περιορισμένο στα δέκα λεπτά στο πρώτο τους lp]* και το ***"Bells"***, μια πολύπλοκη σύνθεση, ό,τι έπρεπε για αυτοσχεδιασμούς. Τα ουσιαστικότερα κομμάτια παραδόξως ανήκαν στον Campbell, παρόλο που απουσίαζε από το προσκήνιο. Τόσο το ***"Paracelsus"*** όσο και το ***"Agrippa"*** θα μπορούσαν να χρησιμοποιηθούν στο soundtrack κάποιου παρανοϊκού φιλμ, ενώ το ***"Zabaglione"*** ξεφεύγει από τη σφαίρα της περιγραφής. Αυτά και κάποια άλλα κομμάτια αποτελούσαν το ζωντανό ρεπερτόριο των πρώτων ημερών. Όμως, μετά τις πρώτες εμφανίσεις, ο Phil Lee αποφασίζει να τους εγκαταλείψει *[κατάντησε κιθαρίστας στην μπάντα του **Charles Aznavour** κάπου στη Γαλλία]*.



Ακολουθεί ο Bruford, ο οποίος σχεδίαζε να χρησιμοποιήσει τους National Health ως προσωπική του μπάντα για να κατακτήσει την Αμερική. *[Τότε ηχογράφησε το πρώτο προσωπικό του lp, στο οποίο τον βοήθησε ο Stewart.]* Ο τρίτος που έφυγε ήταν ο Campbell, ο οποίος δεν ήταν αποφασισμένος να συνεχίσει τη ζωή του δρόμου, των περιοδειών, των φτηνών ξενοδοχείων και της κάκιστης διατροφής. Ο Steve Hillage τους βοήθησε να τελειώσουν με το ζόρι την περιοδεία αλλά ούτε αυτός ήταν διαθέσιμος. Έτσι οι υπόλοιποι είχαν να αντιμετωπίσουν δεκάδες προβλήματα. Έπρεπε πρώτα απ' όλα να





βρουν αντικαταστάτες. Προσέλαβαν τον νεαρό μπασίστα **Neil Murray** *[από τους **Colosseum II** και Gilgamesh]* και τελικά τον Pip Pyle ως drummer. Το πιο δύσκολο μέρος όμως ήταν να βρουν εταιρεία για να κάνουν το πρώτο τους album, αφού υπήρχε διαθέσιμο υλικό. Όμως τα πράγματα είχαν αλλάξει. Το ξέσπασμα του punk είχε μετατρέψει την ιδεολογία όλου του μουσικού κόσμου. Οι εταιρείες είχαν ανακαλύψει νέο "προϊόν" προς εκμετάλευση και οι **Sex Pistols** υπογράφοντας διαδοχικά στις **EMI**, **A&M** και Virgin επιβεβαίωναν με τη στάση τους ότι κάθε πολυεθνική μπορεί να έχει τη δική της κερδοφόρα punk μπάντα. Κάθε τι το progressive αντιμετωπιζόταν με σκεπτικισμό και καχυποψία, αφού οι θηριώδεις techno progressive βλέψεις εκείνων των "δεινοσαυρικών" συγκροτημάτων είχαν διαμελίσει την υφή του rock. Οι απορρίψεις και οι αρνήσεις με γελοία προσχήματα άρχισαν να απογοητεύουν τους μουσικούς. Τώρα είχε έρθει η σειρά του Gowen να φύγει, αφού είχε πρόταση να παίξει μουσική στο κωμικό σέξι μιούζικαλ *"Let My People Come"*, ενώ τους παράτησε και η Amanda. Οι National Health, αφού δεν μπορούσαν να υπογράψουν συμβόλαιο με κάποια εταιρεία, περιόδευαν συνεχώς. Την άνοιξη του '77, ο Stewart βοηθούσε τον **Hugh Hopper** στην εγγραφή του album ***"Hoppertunity Box"***. Τεχνικός ήχου ήταν κάποιος **Mike Dunne**, ο οποίος είχε ένα studio, και όσα groups του άρεσαν τα άφηνε να ηχογραφούν δωρεάν. Οι Stewart και Dunne έγιναν φίλοι και έτσι οι National Health γράφουν το πρώτο τους album τον Μάρτιο. Ενώ ξεκίνησαν οι τέσσερίς τους, προστέθηκαν η Amanda και ο Gowen, όχι ως μέλη αλλά ως βοηθητικοί μουσικοί, και ο Jimmy Hastings στο φλάουτο.

Περιείχε δύο δεκαπεντάλεπτες συνθέσεις του Stewart, τα ***"Tenemos Road"*** και ***"Elephants"*** *[η δεύτερη σε συνεργασία με τον Gowen]* που καθήλωναν τον ακροατή. Παρόλο που η εποχή ήταν επικίνδυνη για τέτοιου είδους πειραματισμούς, το group δεν δίσταζε να ενισχύει τις βάσεις του Canterbury Rock. Και από τις υπόλοιπες τρεις συνθετικές στιγμές, οι δύο ανήκουν στον Stewart υπό τον κοινό τίτλο ***"Borogoves"*** ενώ το *"Brujo"* το υπογράφει ο Gowen. Έχοντας έναν δίσκο έτοιμο αλλά μην έχοντας εταιρεία, οι National Health συνεχίζουν τις περιοδείες σε Γαλλία και Ολλανδία. Σε αυτό το διάστημα φεύγει και ο Murray *[για να κάνει καριέρα με τους **Whitesnake** και **Black Sabbath**]* και στη θέση του έρχεται ο **John Greaves** των Henry Cow. Με τον ερχομό του άλλαξε και η τύχη του group. Ο διευθυντής της **Charly Records**, **Joop Visser**, άκουσε προσεκτικά το πρώτο τους lp και αποφάσισε να το κυκλοφορήσει μέσω της θυγατρικής **Affinity**. Το γεγονός χαροποίησε τα μέλη και τους έδωσε το κουράγιο να συνεχίσουν.

Μετά από μία εξαντλητική τουρνέ όπου εμφανίστηκαν ως support του Steve Hillage, μπαίνουν στο studio για δεύτερη φορά, για να ηχογραφήσουν το καταπληκτικό ***"Of Queues And Cures"***. Ένας πράγματι δυνατός δίσκος όπου το εξής γεγονός ανεβάζει περισσότερο την αξία του: εκτός από το ***"Squarer For Maud"***, ένα περίφημο εντεκάλεπτο θέμα του Greaves που θυμίζει πρώιμους Henry Cow *[ο **Peter Blegvad** των **Slapp Happy** τραγουδάει, η **Georgie Born** παίζει τσέλο και ο πανταχού παρών Jimmy Hastings κλαρινέτο]*, όλα τα υπόλοιπα κομμάτια δομήθηκαν και τελειοποιήθηκαν μέσα στο studio, κατά τη διάρκεια των ηχογραφήσεων. Για παράδειγμα, το ***"Collapso"*** του Stewart, μία παρανοϊκή ιδέα με steel drums βασισμένη σε μία κακοφωνία ρυθμού calypso, ηχογραφήθηκε κατά τη διάρκεια της δεύτερης πρόβας. Η Born προτιμούσε να παίζει τσέλο στην αυλή του studio μέσα στα δέντρα κι έτσι οι εγγραφές αυτού του οργάνου είναι εξωτερικές. Δύο ακόμα κομμάτια του Stewart, τα ***"The Bryden 2-Step"*** *[parts I και II]* εγκλείουν όλη τη φιλοσοφία της μουσικής του Canterbury. Ο Phil Miller δίνει όλο του τον εαυτό στο ***"Dreams Wide Awake"*** και ο Pyle παίζει με εξαιρετικό τρόπο στο δικό του δωδεκάλεπτο ***"Binoculars"*** *[εδώ έχει και ένα αξιοθαύμαστο solo φλάουτου από τον Hastings]*. Δηλαδή κάθε μέλος δίνει το δικό του πνεύμα στα βασικότερα θέματα του δίσκου.

Η ΣΥΝΕΡΓΑΣΙΑ ΜΕ ΤΟΝ BLEGVAD ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ BORN ΠΗΓΕ καλά και ο Stewart τους πρότεινε να ενωθούν με το group. Όμως, όπως αποδείχτηκε, επρόκειτο περί μεγάλου λάθους, αφού και τα δύο νέα μέλη προέρχονταν από διαφορετικές σχολές που βασίζονταν περισσότερο στον αυτοσχεδιασμό. Όταν προσπάθησαν να δώσουν περισσότερη έμφαση σε αυτό το στοιχείο, ο Stewart δυσανασχέτησε και μετά από μία μεγαλειώδη εμφάνιση στην τηλεοπτική εκπομπή του **Bob Harris**, *"Old Grey Whistle Test"*, τους εγκατέλειψε. Αυτοί συμπλήρωσαν το κενό με *[ποιον άλλον;]* τον Gowan αλλά μετά από μερικές παραστάσεις διαλύθηκαν οριστικά.

Ο Stewart ακολούθησε τον Bill Bruford στην Αμερική, και όταν επέστρεψε στη Βρετανία ίδρυσε την **Broken Records** και ασχολήθηκε με παραγωγές. *[Οι μετά το 1980 δραστηριότητές του είναι πολλές και ίσως αναφερθούν στο μέλλον.]* Οι Pyle και Miller εμφανίστηκαν πολλές φορές σε διάφορες μπάντες και σήμερα παίζουν μαζί στους **Incahoots**. Η Amanda Parsons εργάζεται σε ένα τηλεοπτικό κανάλι, ο Mont Campbell γυρίζει όλη τη χώρα και ηχογραφεί folk καλλιτέχνες, ο Greaves εγκαταστάθηκε στο Παρίσι και δουλεύει ως session. Ο Alan Gowen πέθανε πάμφτωχος τον Μάιο του '81 από λευχαιμία. Για να τον τιμήσουν, τα αρχικά μέλη των National Health επανασυγκροτήθηκαν και έδωσαν μία παράσταση για να μαζέψουν τα έξοδα της κηδείας του. Το γεγονός ηχογραφήθηκε και κυκλοφόρησε σε δίσκο από την ανεξάρτητη **Lounging** με τίτλο ***"D.S. Al Coda"***. Το group εδώ έπαιξε αποκλειστικά συνθέσεις του Gowen που είχε γράψει είτε για τους National Health είτε για τους Gilgamesh.

HATFIELD & NORTH

single

Let's Eat [Real Soon] / Fitter Stoke Has A Bath ..... *[1974, Virgin V.S. 116]*

albums

** **Hatfield & The North** ..... *[1974, Virgin V 2008]*
** **The Rotters Club** ..... *[1975, Virgin V 2030]*
* **Afters** ..... *[1979, Virgin VR 5]*
Live 1990 ..... *[1991, Ninety 6 / Móvo cd]*

NATIONAL HEALTH

albums

** **National Health** ..... *[1978, Affinity AFF 6]*
** **Of Queus And Cures** ..... *[1978, Charly CRL 5010]*
* **D.S. Al Coda** ..... *[1983, Lounging LA 2]*

LADY JUNE

Τον περίεργο τίτλο ***"Lady June's Linguistic Leprocy"*** είχε ένας από τους πιο αινιγματικούς δίσκους της σκηνής του Canterbury. Ελάχιστοι γνώριζαν ποια ήταν η "μυστηριώδης **Lady June**", και μετά από είκοσι χρόνια αποκαλύφθηκε όλη η αλήθεια γι' αυτόν τον δίσκο.

Πολλοί πίστευαν πως επρόκειτο για το όνομα ενός super group που περιλάμβανε τον **Kevin Ayers**, τον **Eno** και τον **Pip Pyle**. Όμως έκαναν λάθος. Η Lady June ήταν υπαρκτό πρόσωπο και το αληθινό της όνομα ήταν **June Cambell Cramer**. Σπούδασε ζωγραφική σε ένα κολέγιο τέχνης και στις αρχές των '60s κατοικούσε πότε στην Ιταλία, πότε στην Ελλάδα και συχνότερα στην Ισπανία. Στην Palma της Μαγιόρκα συναντάει τον **Daevid Allen**, την **Gilli Smyth** και τον Kevin Ayers. Μαζί τους και ο Τεξανός εκατομμυριούχος **Wes** που τους χρηματοδοτεί για να φορμάρουν τους **Soft Machine**. Η Lady June δουλεύει ως φωτομοντέλο, ζωγραφίζει και γράφει ποίηση. Τους πίνακές της τους υπογράφει ως **June Onion** και αντί για υπογραφή κρεμάει ένα μικρό κρεμμύδι.

Μέχρι το 1967 έχει γίνει διάσημη και τροφοδοτεί τις γνωστότερες λονδρέζικες γκαλερί με έργα της. Νοικιάζει ένα τεράστιο σπίτι με δώδεκα δωμάτια και φιλοξενεί κάθε underground φυσιογνωμία. Οι Soft Machine, ο Kevin Ayers, οι **Gong**, οι **Hatfield & The North**, ο **David Bedford**, οι **Hawkwind**, οι **Henry Cow**, ο **Tim Blake**, ο **Steve Hillage** είναι μόνο μερικοί από τους φιλοξενούμενούς της. Πλαισιωμένη από τέτοιους φίλους δεν μπορούσε παρά να δείξει έντονο ενδιαφέρον για τη μουσική. Στις αρχές του '70 δίνει μερικές οπτικοακουστικές παραστάσεις. Μέσα σε ένα φαντασμαγορικό show που δημιουργούν τα φώτα και οι πίνακές της, απαγγέλλει ποίηση συνοδευόμενη από κάποιους από τους φίλους της που παίζουν μουσική. Τριγύρω της διάφοροι ζογκλέρ, ακροβάτες, κλόουν, κάνουν τα δικά τους νούμερα. Η μπάντα ποτέ δεν έχει σταθερή μορφή και πάντα εξαρτάται από το ποιοι είναι ελεύθεροι για να παίξουν μαζί της. Τότε πρωτοχρησιμοποιεί το ψευδώνυμο Lady June.

Το 1972 την βρίσκουμε αναμεμειγμένη στο Διεθνές Καρναβάλι Πειραματικού Ήχου στο θρυλικό club Roundhouse μαζί με τους Hillage, Tim Blake *[ο οποίος είχε δώσει "συνέντευξη" στη Lady June προκειμένου να κερδίσει τη θέση του roadie στους Gong· αργότερα θα αποδεικνυόταν πολύτιμος συνεργάτης του group]*, David Bedford και **Lol Coxhill**. Επίσης δίνει αραιές παραστάσεις συνοδευόμενη από τους Henry Cow, Lol Coxhill, **Ivor Cutler** και **Ron Geesin** στο Paradiso του Amsterdam. *[Κάποια από τα shows έχουν ηχογραφηθεί σε κασέτες]*.

Στις 31 Μαΐου δίνει ένα πάρτι στο σπίτι της για να γιορτάσει τα δικά της γενέθλια *[3 Ιουνίου]* και της Gilli Smyth *[1 Ιουνίου]*. Σε αυτό το πάρτι ο **Robert Wyatt** υπό την επίδραση παραισθησιογόνων θα βγει έξω από το παράθυρο, θα κρεμαστεί από το λούκι και στη συνέχεια θα πέσει και θα σπάσει τη σπονδυλική του στήλη, μένοντας ανάπηρος για το υπόλοιπο της ζωής του, ένα γεγονός που άλλαξε όλη την ιστορία του Canterbury.



Το 1974 δίνει την πρώτη παράσταση του show ***"Uppers & Downers"***, από το οποίο τα ποιήματα θα αποτελέσουν τη βάση του album *"Linguistic Leprocy"* και θα εκδοθούν σε μία ανθολογία από τη **Virgin**.

Η ΙΔΙΑ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑ ΕΝΔΙΑΦΕΡΘΗΚΕ ΚΑΙ ΓΙΑ ΤΑ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΑ της σχέδια. Έτσι η Lady June υπογράφει στη θυγατρική της Virgin, **Caroline** για ένα album. Μέσω της Caroline η Virgin κυκλοφορούσε οτιδήποτε αντιεμπορικό και εξτρεμιστικό για την εποχή, σε πολύ χαμηλή τιμή. Η June άρχισε να δουλεύει προσπαθώντας να μελοποιήσει κάποια ποιήματά της βοηθούμενη από τους **Archie Leggett**, Pip Pyle και Lol Coxhill. Αν και αυτή η δουλειά υπάρχει σε κασέτες, η June δεν φάνηκε να είναι ικανοποιημένη από το αποτέλεσμα. Έτσι έστειλε το βιβλίο με τα ποιήματα στον Ayers και τον παρακάλεσε να γράψει τη μουσική. Αυτή τη φορά το αποτέλεσμα ήταν εντυπωσιακό. Ένα ιδιόρρυθμο καλειδοσκόπιο μουσικής, ποίησης, σκόρπιων φράσεων. Όλα τα κομμάτια είναι γραμμένα από τον Ayers, εκτός από τα ***"Optimism"*** του Eno και το ***"Am I"*** της **Kim Solomon** *[κόρης του συγγραφέα **David Solomon**]*.

Η εγγραφή έγινε στο studio του **David Vorhans** *[του εγκεφάλου πίσω από τους **White Noise**]* και μάλιστα ο ίδιος συμμετέχει στη σύνθεση ***"Touch-Downer"*** που κλείνει τον δίσκο.



Υπάρχει άλλο ένα κομμάτι που απουσιάζει από τον δίσκο, το οποίο ήταν σύνθεση του Wyatt. Ήταν το πρώτο που έγραψε μετά το ατύχημά του. Ίσως είναι το ***"Apricot Jam"***, του οποίου ως δημιουργός αναφέρεται ο **Sunny Sax** με τους **Sunshine Orchestra** και το οποίο συμπεριλαμβάνεται μέσα στο lp ***"The Story So Far... Oh Really?"*** των Coxhill και **Stephen Miller**.

Η Lady June όλα αυτά τα χρόνια μέχρι σήμερα συνέχισε ακούραστη τις καλλιτεχνικές της εκδηλώσεις, πότε με εκθέσεις ζωγραφικής, πότε με ποιητικές βραδιές και πότε με μουσικά happenings. Σήμερα κατοικεί στην Deya, δίπλα στο σπίτι του Ayers, και ταξιδεύει σε όλο τον κόσμο ζώντας μέσα στη μαγεία της δημιουργίας.

HUGH HOPPER - ELTON

Μία σύντομη ανασκόπηση, για τη συνέχεια, της συνεργασίας δύο κορυφαίων μουσικών που μας έδωσε μερικά έξοχα δείγματα του Canterbury Rock. Οι ιστορίες και των δύο καθώς καθώς οι περιπέτειές τους με διάφορες μπάντες και οι συνεργασίες τους, είναι πράγματι αρκετά μπερδεμένες και θα προσπαθήσω όσο γίνεται να ξεμπλέξω τα πράγματα.

Ο μπασίστας **Hugh Hopper** και ο σαξοφωνίστας **Elton Dean** γεννήθηκαν αμφότεροι το 1945· ο πρώτος είναι γέννημα θρέμμα του Canterbury ενώ ο δεύτερος κατάγεται από το Nottingham. Τον Φλεβάρη του '69 ο Hopper παίρνει τη θέση του **Kevin Ayers** στους **Soft Machine** και μαζί τους ηχογραφεί το ***"Volume Two"***. Την ίδια χρονιά παίζει μπάσο στο πρώτο lp του Ayers ***"Joy Of A Toy"*** και μαζί με τους υπόλοιπους Soft Machine στο ***"Madcap Laughs"*** του **Syd Barrett** *[ανεπίσημα δίχως να αναφέρονται τα ονόματά τους]*.

Ο Elton Dean πρωτοεμφανίζεται στους θρυλικούς **Bluesology** μαζί με τον **Long John Baldry**, τον **Marc Charig** και τον **Reg Dwight** *[ο οποίος χρησιμοποιεί το όνομα του Dean και βαφτίζεται **Elton John**]*. Όλα αυτά γύρω στο 1967-68, περίοδο από την οποία σώζεται μονάχα ένα τραγούδι, το οποίο συμπεριλήφθηκε στη συλλογή της **Polydor**, ***"Rare Tracks"***. Βέβαια, πριν τον Dean οι Bluesology είχαν ηχογραφήσει δύο singles.

Στη συνέχεια, ο Dean ενσωματώνεται στο σεξτέτο του τζαζίστα **Keith Tippett** *[συζύγου της **Julie Driscoll**]*, και μαζί τους γράφει το lp ***"You Are Here I Am There"***. Ολόκληρο το σεξτέτο *[εκτός του περκασιονίστα **Alan Jackson**]* θα παρευρεθεί στην εγγραφή του album ***"1969"*** της Julie Driscoll, μαζί με κάποιους άλλους μουσικούς που θα αποτελούσαν τον πυρήνα αργότερα των θρυλικών **Nucleus**. Η ομάδα των πνευστών του σεξτέτου *[Dean, Charig και **Nick Evans**]* τον Οκτώβριο του '69 θα ενωθεί με τους τρεις Soft Machine και θα περιοδεύσουν. Κάποιες σκόρπιες ηχογραφήσεις αυτής της περιόδου θα εμφανιστούν αργότερα στο lp ***"Triple Echo" [1977, Harvest SHTU 800]***.

Οι Hopper και Dean συμμετέχουν στο διπλό lp ***"Third"*** των Softs αλλά ο δεύτερος προτιμάει το δικό τους group, τους **Just Us**, με μέλη τους φίλους του Charig, Evans *[στα πνευστά]*, **Jeff Green** *[μπάσο]* και **Phil Howard** *[drums]*. Στη συνέχεια βοηθάει τον **Robert Wyatt** στο σόλο album του ***"End Of An Ear"*** *[μαζί με τον Charig]*. Οι τρεις τους *[Wyatt, Dean, Charig]* θα βρεθούν και στην ηχογράφηση του lp ***"Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening"*** του Tippett. Όπως βλέπετε, η ομάδα των μουσικών του Canterbury είναι ενεργός, δραστήρια και πανταχού παρούσα.

Οι ίδιοι καλλιτέχνες θα είναι μεταξύ των πενήντα που θα βοηθήσουν τον Tippett στο μεγαλεπίβολο διπλό lp ***"Septober Energy"*** *[1971]*.

ΤΟΝ ΜΑΙΟ ΤΟΥ '71 Ο DEAN ΘΑ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΕΙ ΤΟ ΠΡΩΤΟ του προσωπικό lp βοηθούμενος από τους Just Us. Όμως αυτή η περίφημη μπάντα δεν θα έχει συνέχεια, αφού οι Soft Machine προσλαμβάνουν τον drummer Phil Howard στη θέση του αποχωρήσαντος Wyatt. Με αυτή τη μορφή οι Softs θα δουλέψουν πάνω στο μισό του πέμπτου τους album ***"Fifth"***, αφού μετά από μερικούς μήνες ο Howard θα φύγει. Με τον **John Marshall** των Nucleus θα ολοκληρώσουν τη δουλειά.

Στον Hopper δεν αναφέρομαι ξεχωριστά, γιατί όλο αυτό το διάστημα ανήκει στους Soft Machine, μέχρι να τον βρούμε, το 1973, να ετοιμάζει το πρώτο του προσωπικό lp ***"1984"***. Ένας πειραματικός δίσκος, όπου προβάλλεται περισσότερο ο ίδιος παρόλο που συνοδεύεται από μεγάλους μουσικούς όπως οι **Lol Coxhill**, John Marshall, Nick Evans και **Gary Windo**.

Αμέσως μετά την κυκλοφορία του δίσκου, εγκαταλείπει τους Soft Machine αλλά αμέσως ενώνεται με τους **East Wind** του **Stomu Yamashta**. Εδώ για πρώτη φορά συναντάει τον κιθαρίστα **Gary Boyle** και συνεργάζεται με αυτόν στο lp τους Γιαπωνέζου, ***"Freedom Is Frightening"***.

Ο Dean αφού συμμετέχει ως session στα ομώνυμα lps των **Heads, Hands & Feet** και του **Reg King** *[τραγουδιστής των **Action**]*, και στα δύο προσωπικά albums του τραγουδιστή των **Manfred Mann**, **Mike Hugg** *[**"Somewhere"**, **"Stress And Strain"**]* βρίσκεται για λίγο με το ολλανδικό progressive fusion συγκρότημα **Supersister**.



Hugh Hopper

Τον Μάρτιο του '74 ενώνεται πάλι με τον Hopper για την εγγραφή του δεύτερου προσωπικού δίσκου του Hugh, ***"Monster Band"***. Βασικά πρόκειται για την εγγραφή μίας παράστασης στο Bordeaux όπου συνοδεύονται από δύο Γάλλους μουσικούς και από τον drummer **Mike Travis**. Δεν μπορώ να πω ότι το συνεργείο εγγραφής βρέθηκε εκεί την κατάλληλη μέρα, αφού σε κάποια άλλη παράσταση ανέβηκαν στη σκηνή ο Lol Coxhill και η **Laurie Allen**.

Στα μέσα της ίδιας χρονιάς, ο Hopper δέχεται την πρόσκληση του Boyle να προσχωρήσει στους καταπληκτικούς αλλά τόσο παρεξηγημένους **Isotope** *[στη θέση του μπάσιστα **Jeff Clyne**]* και να παίξει στο δεύτερο ομώνυμο album τους. Το περισσότερο υλικό εδώ με διαφορετική μορφή είναι παρμένο από το *"Monster Band"*.

Εκείνη την εποχή ο Dean βρίσκεται στην μπάντα του **Georgie Fame**, τους **Blue Flames** και τον συναντάμε στο album του **Alexis Korner**, ***"Mr Blues"***. Με το ξεκίνημα της νέας χρονιάς του 1975 βάζει σε ενέργεια ένα μεγαλεπήβολο σχέδιο· οργανώνει μια πολυμελή super μπάντα, τους **Ninesense**, που περιλάμβανε έξι μουσικούς πνευστών: Dean και **Alan Skidmore** στα σαξόφωνα, **Radu Malfatti** και Nick

DEAN

Evans στα τρομπόνια, Marc Charig και **Mongezi Feza** στις τρομπέτες. Επίσης οι Tippett *[πιάνο]*, **Harry Miller** *[μπάσο]* και **Louis Moholo** *[drums]* συμπληρώνουν την ομάδα.

Οι Ninesense έδωσαν λίγες παραστάσεις, και τον Μάρτιο του '76 έκαναν το δισκογραφικό τους ντεμπούτο με το lp ***"Oh! For The Edge"*** στην ανεξάρτητη **Ogun** που στο κατάλογό της περιλάμβανε μόνο παρόμοιες avant garde jazz-rock δουλειές. Ήταν μια ζωντανή ηχογράφηση στο Λονδίνο· στη συγκεκριμένη εμφάνιση η μπάντα ήταν οχταμελής *[λόγω ασθένειας του Malfatti]*.

Ως δεύτερος τρομπετίστας χρησιμοποιήθηκε ο **Harry Beckett**, εξαιτίας του αιφνίδιου θανάτου του Feza. Εν τω μεταξύ, ο Hopper εγκαταλείπει τους Isotope στη μέση της εγγραφής του τρίτου τους album, ***"Deep End"***. Παρόλο που παίζει σε περισσότερα από τα μισά κομμάτια, το όνομά του εμφανίζεται μονάχα στη δική του σύνθεση, ***"Fonebone"***.

Παρόλα αυτά δεν τους κράτησε κακία και τους προσκαλεί να τον βοηθήσουν στο τρίτο του προσωπικό lp, το περιβόητο ***"Hoppertunity Box"***. Μαζί του παίζουν και άλλοι εξαιρετικοί μουσικοί όπως ο **Dave Stewart**, ο Dean, ο Charig, ο Windo κ.α. Ο δίσκος βγήκε στη νορβηγική **Compendium Fidardo** σε περιορισμένα αντίτυπα και γι' αυτό είναι δύσκολο να αποκτηθεί.

ΤΟ 1976 ΦΑΙΝΕΤΑΙ ΝΑ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΠΑΡΑΓΩΓΙΚΗ ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΓΙΑ τους δύο φίλους. Μαζί με τον Tippett και τον drummer **Joe Gallivan** κάνουν ένα ακόμα lp στην ίδια νορβηγική εταιρεία, το ***"Cruel But Fair"***.

Μέλη των Ninesense, συμπεριλαμβανομένου και του Dean, συχνά παίζουν μαζί με τους **Brotherhood Of Breath** του **Chris Mc Gregor** ενώ τον Μάιο ο Dean βρίσκεται στην εντεκαμελή ορχήστρα **Arc** που συνοδεύει τον Tippett. Θα παραλείψω σκόπιμα τους δίσκους όπου έχει εμφανιστεί ως session γιατί ο χώρος είναι περιορισμένος και θα περάσω στην επόμενη δουλειά του. Στο τέλος του '76 σχηματίζει ένα εφήμερο κουαρτέτο με τους Tippett, **Chris Laurence** *[μπάσο]* και Louis Moholo *[από τους **Culture Shock** με τους οποίους είχε παίξει ο Dean]* για το album ***"They All Be On This Old Road"***.

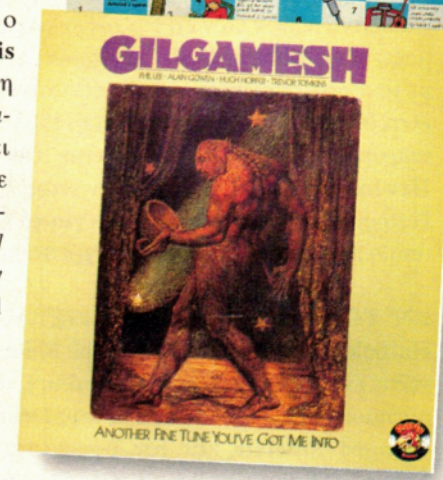
Το 1977 φαίνεται πως ήταν εξίσου πολυάσχολη χρονιά με την προηγούμενη, αφού το όνομα του Dean συνδέεται με τρεις κυκλοφορίες. Πρώτα μία πειραματική δουλειά που στο πρόγραμμά της περιλαμβάνει δύο σαξοφωνίστες, τους Dean και Alan Skidmore.

Το ***"El Skid"*** που βγήκε στην αγορά τον Φεβρουάριο, συνέχιζε τη παράδοση των avant garde jazz-rock δίσκων όπου φιγουράριζε το όνομα του μεγάλου σαξοφωνίστα. Εδώ συμμετέχει ο drummer John Marshall και ο μπασίστας Chris Lawrence.

Η στενή συνεργασία του με τον Joe Gallivan δεν περιορίζεται μόνο στις ζωντανές εμφανίσεις για τη προώθηση του προηγούμενου δίσκου, αλλά οι δύο τους δημιουργούν ένα νέο lp, το ***"The Cheque In The Mail"*** με τον τρομπετίστα **Ken Wheeler** ως τρίτο μέλος. Παράλληλα ο Dean ηχογραφεί το δεύτερο album των Ninesense, ***"Happy Daze"*** - όπου έχει επιστρέψει ο Malfatti - ενώ με τον Hopper ενσωματώνονται στην μπάντα της **Carla Bley** *[που περιλάμβανε κυρίως Αμερικάνους μουσικούς]*.

Στις αρχές του '78, οι δύο φίλοι αποφασίζουν να οργανώσουν μια νέα μπάντα, η οποία θα μπορούσε να μετακινείται εύκολα στην ευθεία που ενώνει τον ήχο του Canterbury με τη σύγχρονη jazz. Στη προσπάθειά τους να ανακαλύψουν τους κατάλληλους συνεργάτες, κατέληξαν στον drummer **Dave Sheen** και στον οργανίστα **Alan Gowen,** ο οποίος όμως οδηγούσε ένα δικό του σχήμα, τους **Gilgamesh**. Αυτοί είχαν δημιουργηθεί στις αρχές του 1975 και ήταν μια ταλαντούχα ομάδα έμπειρων και επαγγελματιών μουσικών, οι περισσότεροι από τον χώρο της jazz, που προσπαθούσαν να ανακαλύψουν μια νέα μουσική φόρμα, ένα υβρίδιο της avant garde, της σύγχρονης jazz και του jazz rock.





Εκτός από τον Gowen, οι υπόλοποι ήταν ο εκλεκτός κιθαρίστας **Phil Lee**, ο μπασίστας **Jeff Clyne** *[ένας super session με σπουδαίο παρελθόν]*, ο drummer **Michael Travis** *[των **Atlantic Bridge**]* και η **Amanda Parsons** *[φωνητικά]*. Ο Gowen είχε παίξει για μικρό διάστημα με τους **Assagai** *[μία εκπληκτική afro rock μπάντα]* και τους **Sunship**, πριν ενωθεί με τους **National Health**.

Τόσο γνωστοί και πεπειραμένοι μουσικοί δεν χρειάζονται ιδιαίτερες συστάσεις και αμέσως τους δέσμευσε η **Virgin** μέσω της θυγατρικής της, **Caroline Records**. Εδώ γράφουν το εξαιρετικό πρώτο τους album με συμπαραγωγό τον Dave Stewart. Όλες σχεδόν οι συνθέσεις ανήκουν στο Gowen και ξεχωρίζουν οι τριλογίες ***"One End More"***, ***"Island Of Rhodes"*** *[τιμή μας]* και ***"We Are All"***. Μετά την κυκλοφορία του δίσκου, ο Gowen ακολούθησε την πορεία που ήδη ανέφερα, και τον Απρίλιο του '78, μέσω του Stewart, γνωρίζεται με τους Dean και Hopper. Δέχεται την πρότασή τους να συμμετάσχει στο νέο τους συγκρότημα **Soft Head**. Περιοδεύουν στη Γαλλία και οι παραστάσεις ηχογραφούνται για το μέλλον, αλλά σχεδόν αμέσως κυκλοφορεί το album τους ***"Roque Ellement"***.

Εδώ υπάρχει μια περίφημη αναπροσαρμογή της σύνθεσης των Ninesense ***"Seven For Lee"*** και σχεδόν μία αγνώριστη εκτέλεση του ***"Seven Drones"*** από το lp *"Cruel But Fair"*. Ο εφήμερος αυτός συνασπισμός δεν κράτησε πολύ, αφού ο Dean ενώνεται με τους **Ark** για μια σειρά συναυλιών *[που οδήγησαν στην ηχογράφηση του διπλού lp **"Frames"** στην Ogun]*. Παράλληλα ο Gowen επιθυμεί να επαναφορμάρει τους Gilgamesh ως κουαρτέτο αυτή τη φορά, με τον παλιό του συνεργάτη Phil Lee, τον Hugh Hopper στο μπάσο και τον **Trevor Tomkins** στα drums. Και εδώ το περισσότερο υλικό γραμμένο από τον Gowen γύρω στο 1977-78, παρόλο που δείχνει να αγνοεί ποια θα είναι η επεξεργασία του, αφού δεν έχει στο μυαλό του συγκεκριμένη εικόνα του group που θα τον συνόδευε. Έτσι παρατηρούμε μία καθολική κυριαρχία των keyboards ενώ οι υπόλοιποι μουσικοί συμμετέχουν στους αυτοσχεδιασμούς. Όμως τα μέλη των Gilgamesh δεν έχουν δέσιμο ούτε συνοχή μεταξύ τους. Άλλωστε τι μέλλον μπορεί να έχει μια μπάντα όταν ηχογραφεί κάθε τρία χρόνια; Μετά τη διάλυσή τους, οι Gowen και Hopper ενώνονται πάλι με τον Dean και με τον drummer Pip Pyle στη θέση του Sheen, και αυτή τη φορά ονομάζονται **Soft Heap**. Και πάλι η **Clarly** δέχτηκε να στεγάσει τη νέα αυτή παραδοξότητα. Το ομώνυμο album τους ήταν ένα ανορθόδοξο πάντρεμα μελωδικής jazz και avant garde rock, όπου ο Dean παίζει μερικά από τα ομορφότερα σαξοφωνικά θέματα που έχω ακούσει από αυτόν. Τις παραμονές μιας τουρνέ στη Σκοτία, ο Hopper φεύγει



από το group και στη θέση του έρχεται ο **John Greaves**. Έτσι το group μοιάζει σαν επανασυγκρότηση των National Health, αφού μόνο ο Elton δεν υπήρξε μέλος τους. Τους Soft Heap βοήθησε στην ηχογράφηση ο Charig. Όμως το καλοκαίρι του '80 ο Hopper θα συνεργαστεί ξανά με τον Gowen για τον τελευταίο δίσκο που θα κάνουν μαζί, ***"Two Raibows Daily"***. Συγχρόνως, ο Dean με τους παλιούς του συνεργάτες θα κάνει άλλον έναν δίσκο, το ***"Boundaries"*** και το 1983 θα επαναφορμάρει τους Soft Heap με τον **Mark Hewins** στη θέση του αποθανόντος Gowen. Ηχογράφησαν μερικά sessions για το BBC τα οποία παραμένουν ανέκδοτα μέχρι στιγμής.

ΕΝ ΤΩ ΜΕΤΑΞΥ, Ο ΚΙΘΑΡΙΣΤΑΣ ΤΩΝ Hatfield, National Health κλπ. Phil Miller οργανώνει ένα super group του Canterbury, τους περίφημους **In Cahoots**, με μέλη τους Dean, Pyle, **Richard Sinclair** και τον οργανίστα **Peter Lemer**, με βασικό στόχο να επιτρέψει σε καθέναν μουσικό να αναπτύξει ελεύθερα τις δικές του ιδέες. Και αυτή η super μπάντα ηχογράφησε για λογαριασμό του BBC κάποια session που μένουν ακυκλοφόρητα, όπως και μια συνεργασία των Hopper και Sinclair που πιάνει σκόνη σε κάποιο ράφι.

Το 1984, ο Hugh ομαδοποιεί ένα εφήμερο τρίο, τους **North & South** και γράφει μαζί τους κάποια κομμάτια, εκ των οποίων μονάχα ένα, το ***"Amber And The Amberines"***, θα εμφανιστεί με αυτή τη μορφή στο ep του Robert Wyatt, ***"Work In Progress"*** και αργότερα στο album ***"1982-4"***.

Αυτή τη χρονιά είναι η σειρά του Pyle να φορμάρει μία νέα μπάντα, τους **Equipe Out**, όπου συμμετέχουν οι δύο φίλοι Dean και Hopper, μαζί με τον **Didier Malherbe** των Gong *[σαξόφωνο]* και τη **Sophia Domancich** *[keyboards]*.

Στις αρχές του 1985 έχουμε το δεύτερο album της συνεργασίας Dean / Hopper / Tippett / Gallivan, ***"Mercy Dash"***, όπου το μεγαλύτερο μέρος του υλικού είχε γραφτεί στο παρελθόν. Μεταξύ των κομματιών και μια καταπληκτική διασκευή του ***"Calyx"*** των Hatfield & The North *[το ίδιο έχει διασκευάσει και ο Wyatt]*. Τον Απρίλιο, ο Dean πάλι με το κουαρτέτο του μας χαρίζει ένα ακόμα album, το ***"The Bologna Tape"***.

Αυτό το διάστημα και οι δύο συνεργάτες σχηματίζουν ή συμμετέχουν σε διάφορους εφήμερους συνασπισμούς, που δεν θεωρώ σκόπιμο να αναφέρω αφού δεν υπάρχει ηχογραφημένο υλικό.

Το φθινόπωρο, επιτέλους οι Equipe Out κάνουν το πρώτο αξιόλογο ομώνυμο album τους που θα μείνει ακυκλοφόρητο μέχρι το 1987.

Στο τέλος της δεκαετίας του '80 και μέχρι τη δεκαετία που διανύουμε, οι Elton Dean και Hugh Hopper έχουν συμμετάσχει σε πάρα πολλά συγκροτήματα, έχουν εμφανιστεί εκατοντάδες φορές σε εφήμερους και μη σχηματισμούς ή ως μέλη των συγκροτημάτων που ήδη αναφέρουμε, ενώ είναι μάλλον δύσκολο να απαριθμήσω τις session δουλειές τους. Σίγουρα ο ρόλος τους στην εξέλιξη του Canterbury Rock είναι ανεκτίμητος.

σημ. Στη δισκογραφίες, με ** σημειώνονται τα απολύτως απαραίτητα albums και με * τα απαραίτητα για κάθε δισκοθήκη.

σημ. Η συνέχεια στο επόμενο τεύχος: Gong

ELTON DEAN

albums

* **Elton Dean** ..... *[1971 CBS 64539]*
* **Oh! For The Edge** ..... *[1976 Ogun OG 900 / Με τους Ninesense]*
They All Be On This Old Road ..... *[1976 Ogun OG 410 / Με τους ELton Dean Quartet]*
El Skid ..... *[1977 Vinyl VS 103 / Με τον Alan Skidmore]*
The Cheque In The Mail ..... *[1977 Ogun OG 610]*
* **Happy Daze** ..... *[1977 Ogun OG 910 / Με τους Ninesense]*
Boundaries ..... *[1980 Japo 60033]*
The Bologna Tape ..... *[1985 Ogun 530 / Με το Elton Dean Quartet]*
Welcomet ..... *[1986 Impetus 18612 / Με το Elton Dean Quartet]*
Duos ..... *[1988 ED Tapes / κασέτα]*
Trios ..... **[1989 ED Tapes / κασέτα]**
If Dubois Only Knew ..... *[1995 Voiceprint VP 194 / Μόνο cd με τον Paul Dunmall]*

HUGH HOPPER

albums

* **1984** ..... *[1973 CBS 65466]*
* **Monster Band** ..... *[1974 Atmosphere IRI 5003]*
* **Hoppertunity Box** ..... *[1976 Compendium Fidardo - 7 / Νορβηγική έκδοση]*
Two Rainbows Daily ..... *[1980 Red Records Rouge I]*

E. DEAN / H. HOPPER / K. TIPPETT / J. GALLIVAN

albums

* **Cruel But Fair** ..... *[1976 Compendium Fidardo 4]*
Mercy Dash ..... *[1985 Culture Press lp? 2001]*

GILGAMESH

albums

** **Gilgamesh** ..... *[1975 Caroline CA 2007]*
* **Another Fine Tune You Got Me Into** ..... *[1978 Charly CRL 5009]*

SOFT HEAD

album

* **Roque Element** ..... *[1978 Ogun 0527]*

SOFT HEAP

album

* **Soft Heap** ..... *[1978 Charly CRL 5014]*

EQUIPE OUT

album

* **Equipe Out** ..... *[1987 52 Rue Est RE 004]*

PHIL MILLER

albums

Cutting Both Ways ..... *[1987 Impetus IMP 18615]*
Split Seconds ..... *[1988 Reck 8]*

A. GOWEN / P. MILLER / R. SINCLAIR / T. TOMKINS

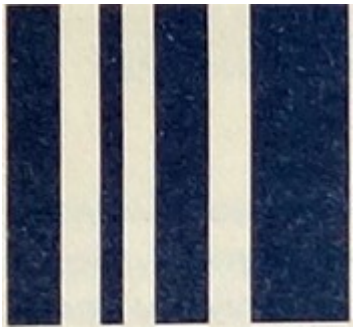
album

Before A Word Is Said ..... *[1982 Europa]*

Robert Wyatt Η μεγάλη επιστροφή - οξ υ - Νοέμβριοε 1997



Robert Wyatt Η μεγάλη επιστροφή



Μετά την ελεγεία υπάρχει μόνο μέλλον. Κι αυτό φαίνεται να το γνωρίζουν όλοι οι λάτρεις της σύγχρονης μουσικής, ειδικά όταν λέξεις σαν κι αυτές του John Cage στριφογυρίζουν στον αέρα. *«Η Τέχνη είναι μια αλλιώτικη μορφή γκρίνιας»*. Αυτό, όμως, που παραμένει δύσκολο είναι να μπορείς να ξεχωρίσεις εκείνους τους μικρούς ήρωες που, παθιασμένα, ξέρουν γιατί γκρινιάζουν. Και ίσως εκεί

τικούς ήρωες της σύγχρονης μουσικής. Αυτούς που έστω κι αν ποτέ δεν τους άγγιξαν τα φώτα της δημοσιότητας, ήξεραν ότι αυτό που κάνουν, το κάνουν επειδή στη μικρή αυτή ζωή αξίζει να γκρινιάζεις περισσότερο για τα πράγματα που αγαπάς. Ή γι' αυτά που μισείς με όλη σου τη δύναμη.



Ο **Robert Wyatt** είναι ένας από αυτούς τους ήρωες. Τριάντα χρόνια στην υπηρεσία του καλού. Για όσους δεν τον ξέρουν, το νέο του άλμπουμ (μετά από έξι χρόνια), με τίτλο **«Shleep»**, είναι μια καλή ευκαιρία να μάθουν πώς οι καλές παρέες κάνουν καλή μουσική. Γιατί παρέα με μερικούς καλούς φίλους (**Phil Manzanera**, **Brian Eno**, **Paul Weller**, **Evan Parker**, **Alfreda Benge** και **Annie Whitehead**) ο **Wyatt** ηχογράφησε ένα

λογία του, αλλά μόνο στον εσωτερικό συναισθηματικό κόσμο που το διαχέει. Σίγουρα, το **«Shleep»** είναι τόσο καλό, τόσο πρωτοποριακό, τόσο εφευρετικό και τόσο συγκινητικό, όσο και οτιδήποτε έχει ηχογραφήσει ο Robert Wyatt στο παρελθόν. Κι αυτό μετράει πιο πολύ από κάθε λεπτομέρεια της προσωπικής του ζωής, από την ασυχία που τον κυριεύει, από τις πολιτικές του πεποιθήσεις, από την αγωνία του να κινηθεί πέρα από τον κόσμο της επιφανειακής ποπ κουλτούρας. Γι' αυτό, ίσως να μην έχει καμία σημασία, αλλά μια μέρα εύχομαι να ακούσω εκείνον τον techno δίσκο που θα έχει το βάθος και την ηχηρότητα του **«Rock Bottom»**, του πρώτου άλμπουμ που ηχογράφησε ο Robert Wyatt, μετά το πέσιμό του από τον τέταρτο όροφο κατά τη διάρκεια ενός πάρτι. Ένα πέσιμο που του στοίχισε μια ζωή σε αναπηρική καρέκλα. Αυτό είναι εδώ και πολύ καιρό το όνειρό μου.

Γεια σου Robert. Πώς αισθάνεσαι; Αισθάνομαι πολύ καλά. Αλλά αισθάνομαι ότι θα πρέπει να σου πω κάτι πριν ξεκινήσεις με τις ερωτήσεις σου και πριν το ξεχάσω.

Πες μου... Θα ήθελα να ζητήσω συγγνώμη από τους Έλληνες γιατί εμείς οι Άγγλοι ποτέ δεν επιστρέψαμε αυτό που καλούμε «Ελγίνεια Μάρμαρα». Ξέρεις, ελπίζαμε ότι η επόμενη κυβέρνηση θα ήταν διαφορετική, αλλά απ' ό,τι φαίνεται δεν αλλάζει πολύ το πολιτικό σκηνικό της χώρας μου. Αλλά πίστεψέ με. Ο άνθρωπος που ευθύνεται για αυτή την υπόθεση δεν του κόβει και πολύ. Δεν πιστεύω να βρίσκεται στο ίδιο πόστο για αρκετό καιρό και ίσως τελικά βρουν κάποιον εξυπνότερο να τον αντικαταστήσει. Γι' αυτό ξαναπροσπαθήστε σε λίγο καιρό πάλι.

Εντάξει... Ποτέ δεν μπορείς να ξέρεις. Πιστεύω βαθιά μέσα μου ότι οι Άγγλοι στην πλειοψηφία τους θα ήταν ευτυχισμένοι αν παίρνατε πίσω αυτό που σας ανήκει. Αλλά ας σταματήσω να σπαταλάω την ώρα σου. Σε ακούω...

Τι ήταν αυτό που σε έσπρωξε να σπάσεις μια σιωπή έξι χρόνων και να ηχογραφήσεις ένα καινούργιο άλμπουμ; Μάλλον το γεγονός ότι ποτέ δεν έπαιξα τον ρόλο ενός κανονικού ροκ σταρ. Ποτέ δεν έπαιξα σε συναυλίες, κι έτσι ό,τι θέλω να δώσω στους ανθρώπους το δίνω μέσα από τους δίσκους μου. Για τριάντα ολόκληρα χρόνια αυτό έχω μάθει να κάνω. Αυτή είναι η δουλειά μου. Ακόμα κι όταν μετά από τόσα χρόνια σκέφτομαι ότι έγινα μουσικός, μένω έκπληκτος. Δεν το περίμενα ποτέ. Φυσικά πάντα αγαπούσα τη μουσική, από μικρό παιδί. Αλλά το μοναδικό πράγμα που μπορώ να κάνω, εκτός από τηγανητά αυγά, είναι να παίζω μουσική. Είναι αυτό που πρέπει να κάνω τον περισσότερο χρόνο. Τη μουσική την έχω στη ζωή μου, όπως έχω κι ένα ζεστό μπάνιο που κάνω πριν πέσω για ύπνο. Μερικές φορές όμως, ίσως όχι τόσο συχνά, έχω μερικές ιδέες κι έτσι λέω, ας κάνω έναν καινούργιο δίσκο μ' αυτές.

Πώς ξέρεις ποιες ιδέες θα σε οδηγήσουν σε έναν καινούργιο δίσκο; Δουλεύω βασισμένος πάντα στο ένστικτό μου. Σαν το ζώο που ψάχνει την τροφή του. Η μοναδική επέμβαση που γίνεται στη μουσική μου είναι κατά τη διάρκεια της ενορχήστρωσης. Στη μηχανική δομή του ήχου. Αλλά η πραγματική δουλειά δεν γίνεται από τη συνειδητή σκέψη μου. Έτσι λοιπόν έψαξα για βοήθεια σε ανθρώπους που ήξερα, όπως έκανα και με τον προηγούμενο δίσκο μου. Συγκεκριμένα, όταν ανακάλυψα τα ποιήματα της γυναίκας μου. Όταν βρήκα τη μουσική μέσα στις λέξεις της, είχα ήδη τρία, τέσσερα τραγούδια έτοιμα. Ή όταν είχα κάποιο κομμάτι μουσικής χωρίς στίχους, η Alfie πήρε την κασσέτα κι έγραψε στίχους για τα αγόρια μας. Ήταν πραγματικά πρωτότυπο να δουλέψουμε μαζί έτσι.

Από που πηγάζει η ηθική της δουλειάς σου; Χα, χα, χα! Δεν έχω ηθική στη δουλειά μου. Δεν ξέρω. Ίσως να έχουν όλοι οι υπόλοιποι βρετανοί προτεστάντες... Χα, χα, χα! Δεν θέλω να υπάρχει καθόλου θρησκευτική πίστη στην ομορφιά της δουλειάς και του μόχθου. Προτιμώ να κοιμάμαι. Και να τρώω. Αλλά φυσικά, όσοι θέλουν να πάρουν κάτι από τον κόσμο, πρέπει να του δώσουν πίσω κάτι άλλο.

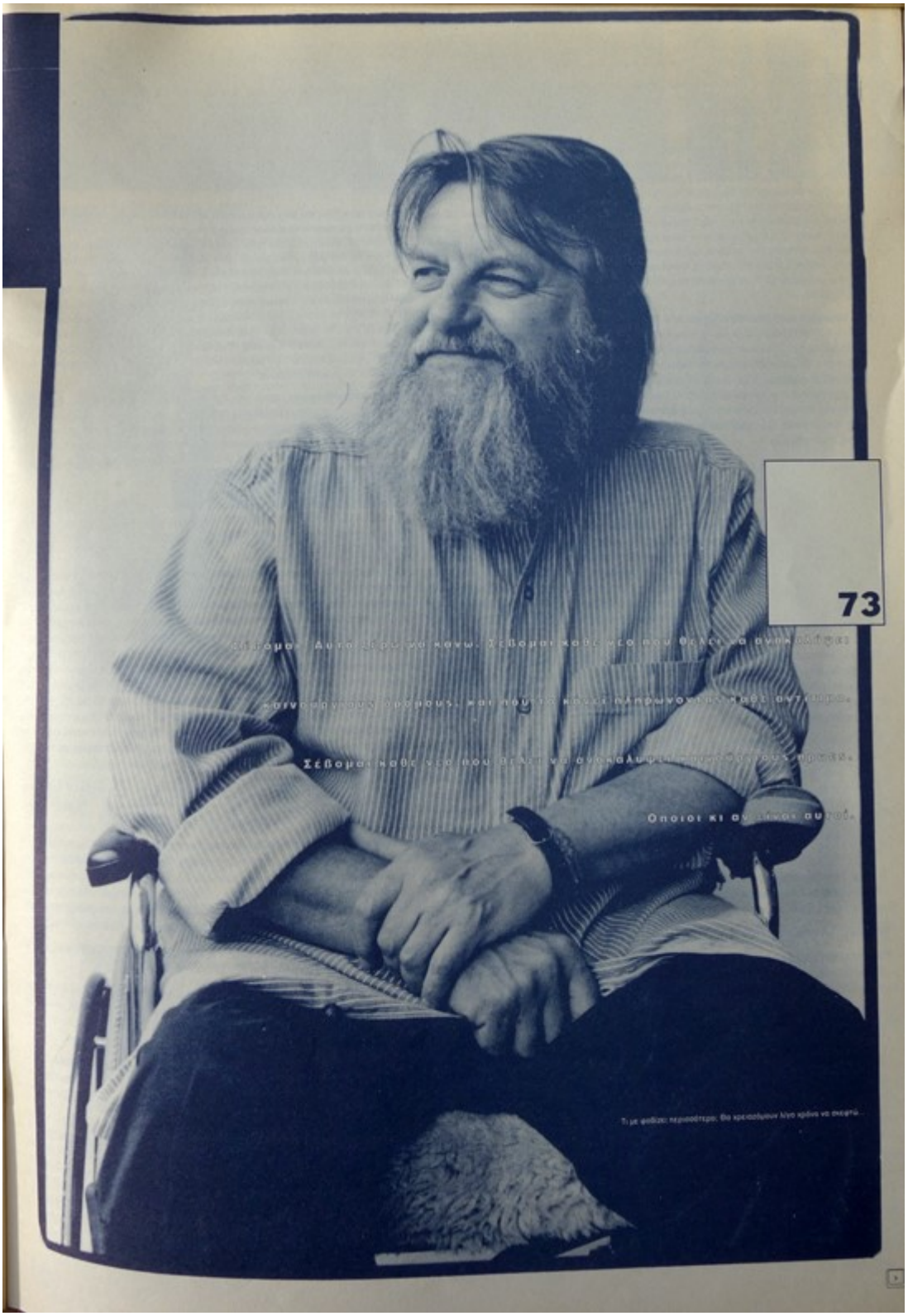
Θυμάσαι ποια ήταν η πρώτη συναυλία που πήγες και σε ενθουσίασε; Χμμ, ενδιαφέρουσα ερώτηση. Ναι, η πρώτη που θυμάμαι ήταν μια αφρικανική ομάδα. Λεγόταν, θυμάμαι, Catherine Duncan's African Ballet. Ήταν περισσότερο μπαλέτο παρά μια ροκ συναυλία. Ήμουν μάλλον επτά χρονών τότε. Σίγουρα δεν ήταν η πρώτη που με πήγαν οι γονείς μου, αλλά είναι η πρώτη που θυμάμαι. Και θυμάμαι που ήθελα να πετάξω, να ανέβω στη σκηνή και να φύγω παρέα με τους ανθρώπους του μπαλέτου, όταν έπεσε η αυλαία.

Πώς αποφάσισες να έρθεις σε επαφή με τους συγκεκριμένους ανθρώπους στο τελευταίο σου άλμπουμ; Η αλήθεια είναι ότι τα τελευταία χρόνια ήμουν πολύ μόνος. Είχα πολλές κρίσεις άγχους. Προβλήματα υγείας. Ένιωθα πολύ άσχημα. Μια μέρα σκέφτηκα ότι για να επανέλθω στην κατάσταση φυσιολογικής λειτουργίας μου, θα έπρεπε να αποκτήσω λίγο περισσότερο θάρρος και να βγω να δουλέψω. Χρειαζόμουν βοήθεια γι' αυτό. Χρειαζόμουν παρέα. Κι ένα πράγμα που μου αρέσει στη μουσική είναι η καλή παρέα.

Σίγουρα είχες μια πολύ καλή παρέα όταν έγραφες το δίσκο σου... Ναι, γιατί όταν φτιάχνω έναν καινούργιο δίσκο δεν υπάρχουν μόνο οι αφηρημένες σκέψεις μου. Είναι μια καλή παρέα που βάζει τάξη σ' αυτό το αφηρημένο χάος. Ναι, στη συγκεκριμένη περίπτωση ήταν μάλλον εύκολο επειδή γνωρίζω αυτούς τους ανθρώπους χρόνια, έχω ξαναδουλέψει στο παρελθόν μαζί τους, έχω αγαπήσει τις δικές τους δουλειές. Έτσι, λοιπόν, γνωρίζοντάς τους τόσο καλά, γράφεις ένα τραγούδι, κι αυτόματα ακούς αυτόν τον παλιό σου φίλο μέσα σ' αυτό το τραγούδι. Ήταν πολύ τυχερό το γεγονός ότι ο Phil (Manzanera) είχε χρόνο στο στούντιό του. Και μάλλον γνωρίζεις ότι οι ώρες στα στούντιο κοστίζουν μια περιουσία. Ο Phil με βοήθησε πάρα πολύ και ποτέ δεν ανησύχησα για την ώρα που έτρεχε. Έδωσε καινούργιες ιδέες στην παραγωγή κι έπαιξε και στο «Alien». Πιθανόν, γνωρίζεις ότι έχουμε και κοινούς φίλους.

Σαν τον Brian Eno; Ναι... Ή τον ηχολήπτη και κιθαρίστα Jamie Johnson.

Πώς ήταν που ξαναδούλεψες με τον Eno μετά από τόσα χρόνια; Έπαιξε keyboards σε τρία κομμάτια. Σ' ένα από αυτά το διασκέδασε πάρα πολύ και ήθελε να τραγουδήσει κιόλας. Νομίζω ότι το ξέρεις ότι αυτός ο άνθρωπος είναι σκέτη απόλαυση στο στούντιο. Είναι πραγματική έμπνευση. Τόσο για την πλαστικότητα του ήχου, όσο και για μένα. Ξέρει περισσότερα για τα στούντιο από όλους όσους έχω γνωρίσει. Ξέρει πώς να δίνει ζωή στις ηχογραφήσεις. Κι



> Zoom

έτσι τελικά τον ρώτησα αν είχε τον χρόνο να κάνει την παραγωγή και να το μέδρει και δέχθηκε να το κάνει. Είμαστε φίλοι τόσο καιρό. Θυμάμαι που πήγαινα στο στούντιό του κι έπαιζα λίγα κρουστά ή τραγουδούσα... Έχουμε πολλές διαφορές, αλλά μάλλον αυτό είναι που μας ενώνει. Και πάνω απ' όλα, μας αρέσει η παρέα που κάνουμε μεταξύ μας.

Ωραία. Άς αφήσουμε για λίγο τη μουσική. Θα ήθελα να μου πεις ποιο κομμάτι της ζωής νομίζεις ότι σου έχει προσφέρει αυτό που ήθελες πραγματικά. Καταλήγοντας συναλλαγή, θα έλεγα η ίδια η ζωή. Όλα τα πρόσωπα που γνώρισα. Ναι, μάλλον αυτό είναι. Οι φίλοι... Και πιστεύω ότι πολλοί θα συμφωνούσαν.

Υπάρχει κάτι που σου λείπει από την καθημερινή ζωή; Όχι, από αυτά τα πράγματα που κάνω εδώ και χρόνια. Αυτό που ίσως μου λείπει είναι ένας σεισμός. Ένας πολιτισμικός σεισμός που θα ταράξει την ανθρώπινη κοινότητα. Ιδιαίτερα στην Αγγλία. Δεν έχει να κάνει με τους δάσκαλους. Όλοι γνωρίζουν τον Tony Blair, την Πριγκήπισσα Diana... Έχει να κάνει με ένα δημοφιλές συναίσθημα που θγαίνει στην επιφάνεια, γύρω απ' αυτούς. Και υπάρχει κάτι πολύ πιο ανθρώπινο και δημοκρατικό που συμβαίνει αυτή τη στιγμή στη χώρα. Ευτυχώς, όλα τα θεατρικά κατάλοιπα του περασμένου αιώνα αρχίζουν να εξαφανίζονται και να κάνονται στο παρελθόν. Υπάρχει ένα νευρικό, αλλά ζεστό και φιλικό συναίσθημα στην Αγγλία αυτή τη στιγμή. Ξαφνικά, οι απλοί άνθρωποι, αυτοί που κάποτε γελούσαν με τις μικρές μειονότητες, με τους μαύρους, με τους ομοφυλόφιλους, αυτοί οι άνθρωποι έχουν ξεμείνει σε μια ακονομένη γωνία.

Γιατί συμβαίνει αυτό ξαφνικά σήμερα στην Αγγλία; Δεν ξέρω γιατί, εκτός από το γεγονός ότι ποτέ στην Αγγλία δεν είχαμε μια πετυχημένη λαϊκή επανάσταση. Και ποτέ δεν θα έχουμε. Το αποτέλεσμα παραμένει ότι πάντα θέλαμε να γίνουμε μια μικρή Αμερική. Απλά, πιστεύω ότι όλη αυτή η συντηρητική γραμμή της θικτωριανής εποχής δεν είναι χαρακτηριστική για το πώς αισθάνεται σήμερα ο κόσμος στην Αγγλία. Σήμερα το βλέπεις καθαρά αυτό στη χώρα. Περισσότερο απ' ό,τι μπορούσες να το δεις πριν από δέκα χρόνια. Ίσως να βρίκαμε το δρόμο που θα μας οδηγήσει στην πραγματική αγγλική ταυτότητα. Μερικές φορές σκέφτομαι ότι η πρώτη χώρα που ψυχολογικά και φυσιολογικά αποικήθηκε από τη Βρετανική Αυτοκρατορία, ήταν η Αγγλία.

Κάποτε είχες ανακατευτεί με τους Ultramarine. Αυτό ήταν χορευτική μουσική, και μάλιστα όταν άρχισε να σκηματίζεται όλη αυτή η μεγάλη φυλή των νέων ηλεκτρονικών ονομάτων. Αυτό είναι αλήθεια, αλλά ήταν περισσότερο μια χάρη που μου είχε ζητήσει ο Geoff Travis της Rough Trade, όταν είχε σκηματίσει τότε την κανούργια του εταιρεία, την Blanco Y Negro. Ήθελαν κάποια φωνητικά και τότε μου πρότεινε ο Geoff να σταματήσω να παίζω με τους φίλους μου και να ασκοληθώ με κάποιους νεότερους άντρες. Το διασκέδασα, αλλά έξρεις, ήμουν πάντα ετεροφυλόφιλος. Ποτέ δεν με ενδιέφεραν οι νέοι άντρες... (γέλια). Πλάκα κάνω, αλλά μια και το ανέφερα, μερικά από τα κομμάτια του **«Shleep»** θα κυκλοφορήσουν σε κάποια πιο χορευτικά remix. Εμμ, όχι τόσο για να παίζονται στις πίστες, αλλά μια διαφορετική προσέγγιση.

Δεν έχεις προσέξει ότι όλοι αυτοί οι νέοι άνθρωποι φαίνεται να διασκεδάζουν πάρα πολύ με αυτό που κάνουν; Φυσικά. Είναι απίστευτο το πόσο καλά περνάνε όλα αυτά τα παιδιά με τη νέα αυτή μουσική που φτιάχνουν. Εντάξει, εγώ σ' αυτή την κατέκλα δεν μπορώ να χορέψω, αλλά όλη αυτή η δημιουργία που θγαίνει μέσα από νέα μυαλά τα οποία χειρίζονται νέα τεχνολογία είναι καταπληκτική. Και δεν πιστεύω ότι η τεχνολογία είναι μειονέκτημα στη σύγχρονη μουσική. Το πιάνο είναι ένα κομμάτι εξελιγμένης τεχνολογίας. Βέβαια, στη δική μου περίπτωση, δεν κουβαλάω κάτι ανάλογο με το φανόμενο της χορευτικής κουλτούρας. Δεν απορρίπτω τη θα παίξω, με τη θα το παίξω, αν θα είμαι μοντέρνος ή αν θα ακούγομαι παλιομοδίτικος. Όσο με ενδιαφέρει να ανανεώνω τα μουσικά μου ένστικτα, άλλο τόσο, την ίδια στιγμή με ενθουσιάζει που μπορώ ακόμα και σήμερα και χρησιμοποιώ ένα παραδοσιακό μουσικό λεξιλόγιο.

Βρετανικά παραδοσιακό; Σκεδόν, ναι. Όχι όμως φυλετικά παραδοσιακό. Δεν το εννοώ έτσι. Το σκέφτομαι περισσότερο σαν κομμάτι της Βρετανικής κουλτούρας. Αυτής της κουλτούρας που εδώ και δεκαετίες έχει τόσο βαθιά επηρεαστεί από τη μαύρη Αμερική. Αυτό είναι το στοιχείο μου. Ο συνδυασμός της μαύρης Αμερικής και των λευκών παιδιών της Αγγλίας. Εκεί είναι οι ρίζες της μουσικής μου. Για παρά-



δειγμα, αν με ρωτήσεις, αισθάνομαι όλο και περισσότερο ενθουσιώδης για το φανόμενο που λέγεται George Gerswin. Όσο πιο πολύ γερνάω, άλλο τόσο γερνάνε και το γούστο μου... (γέλια)

Άς κάνουμε μια βόλτα στο παρελθόν. Θυμάμαι που είχα αγοράσει το άλμπουμ με το soundtrack που είχες κάνει στο «The Animals Film» και που ένα βράδι είδα αυτή την ταινία στην κρατική τηλεόραση. Ήταν μια από τις καλύτερες στιγμές της κρατικής μας τηλεόρασης, πιστεύω. Όμως τότε ήταν που όλοι έμαθαν ότι είχες ενωθεί με το Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα, πράγμα, βέβαια, που δεν αποτέλεσε ποτέ καμία έκπληξη. Τι θυμάσαι από εκείνα τα χρόνια; Θυμάσαι τη μουσική του έργου; Αν ναι, τότε θα μπορείς να καταλάβεις ότι όλη αυτή η αγάπη που έβγαινε μέσα από τα τραγούδια μου και τη μουσική μου ήταν ένα είδος μίσους για τον David Owen. Μερικοί πιστεύουν ότι είναι ένα άρρωστο παιχνίδι διαστροφής, μια άσκηση παρακμής, όταν τραγουδάς τραγούδια αγάπης με μια φωνή που περισσότερο θρηνεί, παρά αγαπάει. Όλα τα κομμάτια μου εκείνης της εποχής ήταν τα σκήματα που με βοήθησαν να μεταφέρω στον κόσμο το μίσος μου για την πολιτική κατάσταση της Αγγλίας τότε. Σήμερα δεν το κάνω αυτό.

Γιατί; Επειδή δεν χρειάζεται να υπάρχει οργανωμένη ευελξία ανάμεσα στις λέξεις και τη μουσική. Δεν χρειάζεται να κάνω κάτι επειδή έτσι πρέπει να το κάνω. Έτσι κι αλλιώς η μουσική μου (τότε και τώρα) πηγάζει από την ίδια πηγή.

Ποια είναι τα δυνατά και τα αδύνατα σημεία σου ως μουσικός; Η βασική μου αδυναμία είναι ότι ενθουσιάζομαι εύκολα όταν βρίσκω κάτι που να δουλεύει, έτσι όπως το έχω σκεφτεί. Ένα τραγούδι, μερικοί στίχοι. Είμαι πολύ εύκολα ευτυχισμένος μ' αυτό που κάνω. Ίσως μερικές φορές να έπρεπε να σκέφτομαι λίγο περισσότερο. Δεν έξρω για τα δυνατά μου σημεία... Έχω όμως ένα τυχερό σημάδι στη ζωή μου. Ακόμα αγαπάω τους ίδιους δίσκους από τότε, όταν ήμουν δέκα χρονών παιδί.

Πες μου έναν! Του Miles Davis, το «Porky And Bess». Τον αγάπησα όταν θγήκε και τον αγαπώ κάθε μέρα από τότε!

Αυτό το τυχερό σου σημάδι σε κρατάει ευτυχισμένο στη ζωή; Έχω πολλούς φίλους που καθημερινά κάνουν το ενδιαφέρον τους για τα αγαπημένα τους πράγματα. Συχνά γίνονται κυνικοί, βαριούνται. Ποτέ δεν βαριέμαι. Ναι, αυτό είναι το τυχερό μου σημάδι. Αισθάνομαι τυχερός επειδή με κρατάει ευτυχισμένο.

Και μια τελευταία ερώτηση. Συνεχίζεις να ακούς ακόμα το Ράδιο Μόσχα; Όχι. Το έκανα τότε που ενδιαφερόμουν γι' αυτό. Όταν εκπροσωπούσε μια προσπάθεια να δείξει μια διαφορετική πλευρά του κόσμου. Σήμερα δεν φαίνεται να θέλει κανένας να το κάνει πια.

Σ' ευχαριστώ πάρα πολύ για τον χρόνο σου Robert κι εύχομαι κάθε επιτυχία με το «Shleep». Κι εγώ σ' ευχαριστώ. Μόνο πριν κλείσουμε, θα ήθελα να σου απαντήσω σ' εκείνη την ερώτηση για το τι με φοβίζει. Έξρεις, υπάρχει ένα ρητό στην Αγγλία που λέει ότι «ο δρόμος για την κόλαση είναι στρωμένος με καλές προθέσεις». Λοιπόν έξρεις τι με φοβίζει; Ότι όταν πεθάνω και ρίξω μια ματιά πίσω μου, θ' ανακαλύψω ότι πλήγωσα περισσότερους απ' όσους βοήθησα!

END

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Αυτή η ιδιότητα που διαβλέπεις στους σημερινούς ανθρώπους έχει να κάνει με την αλλαγή της κυβέρνησης; Είναι μια ιδιότητα που έχει να κάνει με τους ανθρώπους κι όχι με τους πολιτικούς. Σήμερα οι άνθρωποι κοιτάζουν ο ένας τον άλλον και έξρουν ότι κανένας δεν βρίσκεται ψηλότερα από τον άλλο. Αυτή η ιδέα δεν υπήρχε πριν μερικά χρόνια. Είναι ένα όμορφο συναίσθημα όταν το ζεις γύρω σου. Είμαι αρκετά γέρος για να είμαι οπτιμιστής, αλλά για την ώρα μού φτάνει αυτό το πανέμορφο συναίσθημα.

Γιατί λες ότι είσαι γέρος για να είσαι οπτιμιστής; Έχω δει μέσα σε όλα αυτά τα χρόνια τόσες πολλές «νέες εποχές» να έρχονται, μέσα από τόσο αποκαλυπτικές ιδέες και τελικά αυτό που φαίνεται είναι ότι το ανθρώπινο είδος είναι τόσο μπερδεμένο που δεν μπορεί να αντέξει μια «νέα εποχή». Βιολογικά δεν αλλάζουμε. Άρα δεν είναι λογικό να περιμένεις μια ριζική αλλαγή στις ανθρώπινες αξίες.

Υποθέτω ότι δεν πρέπει να είσαι και πολύ ευτυχισμένος με τον Blair... Ω, δεν με ενδιαφέρει καθόλου αυτός ο τύπος. Έξρεις τι με ενδιαφέρει; Οι άνθρωποι που τον ψήφισαν. Με άλλα λόγια, οι άνθρωποι που τον ψήφισαν για να απαλλαγούν από τους συντηρητικούς. Αυτοί με ενδιαφέρουν. Αυτός απλά επιλέει στην επιφάνεια. Μαζί με τους φίλους του. Κι αυτούς στο Heritage Department που δεν θέλουν να σας δώσουν πίσω τα αγάλματα. Και να σκεφτείς ότι δεν είναι καν τόσο έξυπνοι όσο οι Γάλλοι. Ο Blair δεν συγκρίνεται στην εξυπνάδα με τον Chirac, ο οποίος μπορεί να κάνει ό,τι κάνει, αλλά τουλάχιστον δείχνει ότι έχει κουράγιο να το κάνει.

Τι σε φοβίζει περισσότερο; Νομίζω ότι από παιδί έχω μια ψυχική ασθένεια με το άγχος. Οπότε ό,τι φοβάμαι δεν έχει καμία ουσιαστική σημασία. Δεν έξρω. Υποθέτω... Πολύ καλή ερώτηση για να την απαντήσω τόσο σύντομα. Χμμμ...

Μπορούμε να την προσπεράσουμε αν θέλεις. Ναι, θα χρειαζόμουν λίγο χρόνο να σκεφτώ.

Τότε ας μιλήσουμε πάλι για μουσική. Πού βλέπεις να κατευθύνεται η σημερινή μουσική; Μια φορά ρώτησαν τον Stan Kenton, τον μεγάλο τζαζίστα, στα 50s, πού κατευθύνεται η τζαζ. Κι αυτός απάντησε: «Εγώ την Τρίτη θα κατευθύνομαι για το Κλήβελαντ» (γέλια).

Πολύ καλή απάντηση. Ελπίζω να μη μου πεις ότι θα πας κι εσύ στο Κλήβελαντ. Όχι (γέλια). Θα μείνω μάλλον εδώ. Τον τελευταίο χρόνο είχα αφοσιωθεί στη δουλειά με τους φίλους μου και την Άβε, οπότε δεν είχα χρόνο να ακούσω πολλά πράγματα. Αλλά ακούω πάντα σχετικά πράγματα, που έχουν να κάνουν με την παρέα που δουλεύω. Για παράδειγμα, απόλαυσα το rock-drumming του Steve White, του ντράμερ του Paul Weller. Κι αυτή η γυναίκα, η Βjork, είναι καταπληκτική. Ο Michael Nyman, ο John Taverner... Αυτοί μου αρέσουν πάρα πολύ.

Πώς βλέπεις όλη αυτή τη χορευτική κουλτούρα; Είναι πολύ όμορφη. Μου αρέσει γιατί δίνει στον κόσμο την ευκαιρία να βρει μια φαντασιακή φυλετική ταυτότητα, αν και δεν πιστεύω ότι είναι ευγενικό να κρυπκάρεις τους φαντασιακούς κόσμους των άλλων ανθρώπων. Δεν μου αρέσει όταν κάποιος είναι αγενής απέναντι στους τζαζ ήρωές μου, οπότε δεν θέλω να είμαι αγενής στους dance ήρωες των άλλων.

Πιστεύεις ότι είναι εύφορα χρόνια για νέους ήρωες; Σέβομαι. Αυτό έξρω να κάνω. Σέβομαι κάθε νέο που θέλει να ανακαλύψει καινούργιους δρόμους, και που το κάνει πληρώνοντας κάθε αντίτιμο. Σέβομαι κάθε νέο που θέλει να ανακαλύψει καινούργιους ήρωες. Όποιοι κι αν είναι αυτοί.

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Robert Wyatts vidunderlige, tidløse verden - Deichman Musikkbloggen - oktober 2024



Robert Wyatts vidunderlige, tidløse verden

- Wyatt var aldri den som øvde mest eller kunne flest skalaer, men han kunne til gjengjeld gi et blikk på verden som tilførte noe som var annerledes - noe skjørt, lyrisk, sårt, men også optimistisk og fandenivoldsk, sier Thomas Hylland Eriksen, som sammen med Øivind Hånes er aktuell med boken Book Bottom - Historien om Robert Wyatts album Rock Bottom på Hærverk Forlag.

Tekst: Jan-Olav Glette / Foto: Kari Spjeldnæs, Julia Esther Elle

De to forfatterne Øivind Hånes og Thomas Hylland Eriksen går grundig og engasjert til verks der de lanserer begrepet 'nordsjømusikk' og demonstrerer hvordan tilfeldigheter, personlig eiendommelighet, utforskertrang og vilje skaper et særegent musikalsk verk som står seg godt i dag 50 år senere. Med dybde og perspektiv gir de både konteksten albumet oppstod fra og nærstudier av enkeltlåtenes klanger og lyrikk. I samtale med Deichman musikk kan du bli bedre kjent med forfatter Øivind Hånes, de to forfatternes samarbeid, fascinasjonen for albumet Rock Bottom, Wyatt generelt og de involverte musikerne.



Øivind Hånes. Foto: Julia Esther Elle



Thomas Hylland Eriksen på Helge Høibraatens hagefest 2023. Foto: Kari Spjeldnæs

Øivind, kan du fortelle lesere, som ikke kjenner deg fra før av, hvem du er i norsk musikk- og kulturliv (tilsvarende presentasjon av Thomas finner man i saken om Moose Loose)?

ØH: Utdannet pianist og musikkpedagog. Begynte som musikkjournalist i 1982 da jeg fikk senebetennelse og måtte ta en lang pause fra spillingen. Spilte i ulike band, ville egentlig bli komponist, men oppdaget i 1991 at jeg kunne skrive skjønnlitteratur, og da var det ingen vei tilbake. Har utgitt en del plater, produsert flere, og antallet bøker nærmer seg vel 30. Har også skrevet noen operalibrettoer.

Når og hvordan oppdaget du musikk og hva var det som fascinerte?

ØH: Som spedbarn oppdager man jo lydene i rommet der man er, man vokser inn i dem og med dem. Dessverre husker man ikke detaljene fra så langt tilbake, så mye av denne påvirkningen er underbevisst. Det første jeg husker er nok at foreldrene mine sang, ikke bare når jeg skulle sove om kvelden, men til alle døgnets tider. Jeg tror folk sang mye mer på den tiden. Min mor hadde med seg gitaren sin på jobben, og damene på fabrikken sang sammen i middagspausen. Faren min spilte fiolin og bratsj og var med i Drammen Byorkester. Han øvde derfor på stemmene sine nesten hver dag, noe jeg fikk med meg. Jeg har ikke klart for meg når jeg skjønte at dette bare var deler av en helhet og ikke hele musikken. Dessuten spilte han slåtter og folkemusikk sammen med sin bror når denne var på besøk hos oss. De reiste rundt med felene sine i fjellregionen rundt Røros på 1930- og -40-tallet og spilte til dans, og gjenopplevde nok denne tida gjennom samspillet mange år etterpå.

Den 18. september 1974 kjøpte jeg mitt første stereoanlegg for en del av konfirmasjonspengene. Den dagen kjøpte jeg også mine tre første LP-plater: Uriah Heep, Deep Purple og Santana. Jeg hadde ei tallerkenhylle på rommet mitt, og ambisjonen var å kjøpe ei ny skive hver måned. Dette klarte jeg, og jeg husker veldig godt den høstdagen i 1975 hvor tallerkenhylla var full: Det var plass til tolv plater i den.

Jeg førte et nøyaktig kartotek over alle plateinnkjøp fra starten og fram til 1986, og det er fascinerende å se hvordan nysgjerrigheten driver et ungt menneske fra skanse til skanse. Man begynner i mainstreamen og havner etter hvert i nisjene. Dette er utvilsomt et tema man kunne skrive ei egen bok om: Hvordan utvikles og raffineres personlig musikksmak.

9. juni 1979 kjøpte jeg Rock Bottom i Trieste i Italia, og den gjorde et så dypt inntrykk at jeg 45 år seinere faktisk har vært med og skrevet bok om den.

Fortell om egen spilling og musikerkarriere.

ØH: Foreldrene mine kjøpte piano den 29. juni 1971. Den sommeren ble det åpenbart at

jeg hadde et talent for musikk, så jeg begynte å ta pianotimer hos musikkpedagogen Egil Borgersen i Mjøndalen. Dette var lenge før de kommunale musikkskolenes tid, men heldigvis var det en høyskoleutdannet pedagog i nærmiljøet der jeg vokste opp. Slikt var langt fra noen selvfølge dersom man bodde utenfor de større byene. Etter ni måneder på pianokrakken satt jeg og spilte Bach og Beethoven på min første elevkonsert i juni 1972. Intet øye tørt.

I 1980 kom jeg inn på konservatoriet med piano som hovedinstrument. Jeg var selvsagt glad for å ha fått en sånn studieplass, men samtidig var det her problemene begynte. Du lar ikke en ung mann på 20 år som er full av hormoner og eventyrlyst sitte og trille med Haydn og pusle med fingersetting. Da vil man noe ganske annet. Jeg oppdaget sensasjonell musikk hver eneste uke både innenfor rock, pop, jazz, postpunk, synthpop, elektronisk musikk og samtidsmusikk. Dessuten den magiske hybriden progressiv rock, hvori opptatt Canterburyrocken.

I tillegg var det en fysisk dimensjon jeg savnet i det klassiske: Jeg ville danse! Musikk og bevegelse henger for meg nøye sammen, og den koblingen fantes jo ikke i den klassiske musikken. Ikke i samtidsmusikken heller for den saks skyld, men her var det i hvert fall klangverdener som satte i gang fantasien og den indre billedproduksjonen i meg.

Jeg tror denne diskrepansen mellom hva jeg måtte spille og hva jeg faktisk ønsket å drive med var årsaken til at jeg fikk senebetennelse: Jeg brukte muskulaturen feil fordi jeg var anspent. Dette reddet meg. Jeg fikk konservatoriets forventninger og krav på avstand, og kunne vie meg til låtskriving og egne innspillinger. Jeg gikk ut av konservatoriet i 1985 uten fullført eksamen på hovedinstrument, men fikk likevel jobb som både klaverlærer på videregående musikklinje samt rektorstilling i en kommunal musikkskole, så dette har aldri vært til hinder for noe som helst.



Øivind Hånes på en svensk bensinstasjon. Foto: Julia Esther Elle

Når og hvordan oppdaget du fanziner, magasiner og musikklitteratur, og hvilken betydning har de hatt for deg som menneske?

ØH: Det er umulig for folk som er vokst opp med internett å fatte hvor begrenset tilgang vi hadde på informasjon om musikk før dette nettverket av datamaskiner bredte seg ut over jordkloden. NRK var eneste tilgjengelige kanal på FM-båndet og spilte pop og rock én time i uka. Man kunne høre musikk fra utlandet på mellombølgen, men kvaliteten på mottaket var ytterst variabel. Konsekvensen av dette var at musikkavisene Nye Takter, Puls og Ballade kom til å spille en stor rolle som kilder til opplysning. Beat var for mye cowboyrock for meg, så den lot jeg ligge. Fanzinene var et bra supplement, spesielt KITSCH. Og selvsagt leste jeg engelske musikkaviser, især NME – New Musical Express. Her oppdaget jeg skribenter som Paul Morley og Ian Penman, som skapte litteratur ut av sine opplevelser med den nye musikken. Det ga kraftig resonans i meg.

Jeg tror alt dette har med å gjøre med at vi mennesker har ulike former for magnetisme i

oss: Det som bergtar noen lyttere, forblir meningsløst for andre. Sagt på en annen måte: Noen vil betale for hva andre betaler for å slippe. Noen faller i staver over Brian Eno og Stockhausen, mens andre rocker vilt til Bruce Springsteen og Rolling Stones. Vi er forskjellige, og heldigvis for det.

Når begynte du selv å skrive og hva får du ut av det?

ØH: Jeg begynte på min første roman i 1969, da jeg var ni år gammel. Det var en western, men jeg ga opp etter sju håndskrevne sider. De siste ordene lyder slik: «Slutt på grunn av kjedelig tema.»

Men lenge før det: Hvor kommer det fra, dette punktet i et liv hvor barnet plutselig blir i stand til å omgjøre bokstaver til mening? Vanskelig å si og umulig å huske, men la meg gjøre et forsøk: Til fireårsdagen i januar 1964 fikk jeg en dyp tallerken fra Egersund Flint med to katter i midten og alfabetet påtrykt langs kanten. Jeg skjønte at bokstavene var byggeklosser med helt spesielle egenskaper og lærte meg både å lese og skrive ved kjøkkenbordet. Et par ganger i måneden lånte min far bøker på biblioteket i Drammen. Slik ble jeg utover våren 1964 presentert for Pippi Langstrømpe og hennes eksentriske verden. Pippi løftet hesten sin, og jeg leste om dette i bøkene, en biotop av bokstaver som snart ble til pregnante ord jeg selv erobret og visualiserte.

Virkelig sugende skulle lesningen først bli da jeg begynte på skolen og oppdaget indianerbøkene. Forsmaken kom da jeg like før skolestart i august 1966 fant et eksemplar av Prærieblad på gata i Krokstadelva. Helten i serien het Davy Crockett, og nå fikk jeg for alvor øynene opp for hvilke landskaper som skjulte seg der borte på det amerikanske kontinentet. Endeløse skoger og svartstille sjøer, høye fjell, elger store som høyspentmaster og bjørner digre som hus. Da jeg i august 1966 begynte på skolen, var jeg allerede godt bevandret i amerikansk natur og frihetskamp.

Da jeg ni år seinere begynte på gymnaset, var jeg moden for verdenslitteraturen. Vi var tre-fire stykker i klassen som hadde kommet til dette stadiet i vår lesning, og utvekslingen av erfaringer og synspunkter på det vi leste var uvurderlig. Dessuten hadde vi en dritbra norsklærer som oppmuntret oss til å lese litteratur med kjøtt. I dag ville man vel heller si «proteiner», med mindre man er landbruksminister fra Senterpartiet.

Jeg ville jo bli musiker og komponist, og tanken om selv å skrive hadde aldri slått meg før jeg fikk senebetennelse og måtte ta en lang pause fra spillingen, men selv da holdt jeg meg til plate- og konsertanmeldelser. Dikt, romaner og noveller var fortsatt ikke en del av den planlagte framtida mi. Dette kom først ramlende ned i meg fredag 7. september 1990, da jeg kom over en annonse for en romankonkurranse i forbindelse med 100-årsjubileet for utgivelsen av Knut Hamsuns Sult. Hamsun var 30 år da denne kom ut, og konkurransen var derfor kun åpen for folk som var født etter 1. januar 1960. Siden jeg er født 5. januar det året, fikk jeg en underlig følelse av at noen prikket meg bak øret da jeg leste dette. Fristen var 1. mars 1991. Jeg skreiv et manus som ble ferdig 27. februar og sendte det inn. Seks uker seinere ringte noen og sa at jeg var en av tre prisvinnere. Da gikk det opp for meg at jeg hadde oppdaget en ny del av framtida mi.

Det aller beste med å skrive må vel være at man får tid til å tenke lange tanker, samt at alt du har opplevd kan brukes litterært. Ikke bare de direkte personlige erfaringene, men også alt det som skjer med folk du snakker med, ting du leser om, hører om eller ser på TV. ALT kan brukes. Fascinerende.

Kan dere fortelle om hverandre som musikkformidlere og interesserte?

THE: Da vi var enda yngre enn vi er nå, altså i første halvdel av åttitallet, var Øivind for meg først og fremst musiker og musikkskribent. Han utvidet feltet både som original og presis musikkanmelder og, litt senere, da han startet Sogar sammen med Arvid Skancke-Knutsen, et estetisk formfullendt og innholdsmessig dristig tidsskrift som dessverre bare varte i et snaut år. Øivind har alltid hatt evnen til å sette ord på det ordløse, og ofte må du legge øret helt inntil for å fatte dybden i det han sier. Han oversetter musikk til poesi, kan du si. Det er mye musikk i romanene hans, men kanskje enda mer i diktene. Han har i mange år fått meg ikke bare til å høre på musikk jeg ellers ikke ville ha oppdaget, men også til å oppdage nye dimensjoner i musikk du tror du kjenner godt. Dette opplevde jeg nå sist da vi skrev denne boka sammen. Men Øivind er også en flott musiker og komponist. Solo-CD'ene hans fra tidlig nittitall – den første heter Afraid of Getting Enormously Fat – er mesterverk. Originale, med mye humor, kompleksitet uttrykt på en enkel måte.

ØH: Thomas og jeg har i alle år utvekslet tanker om den verdenen vi lever i, musikk inkludert. Vi har levd ulike liv på den måten at Thomas har vært verden rundt som antropolog og professor, mens jeg har levd langt mer monomant med skriving og spilling.

Jeg bodde ni år i Aurland, en kommune i Indre Sogn med 1800 innbyggere, mens Thomas har svevd mellom alle kontinenter med mulig unntak av Antarktis. Men på tross av ulikhetene opplever jeg at Thomas også har denne kjernen av ustoppelig vitebegjær og nysgjerrighet som gir seg utslag i en evig sult på ny musikk. Der tror jeg vi er like som tvillinger, selv om det kommer til uttrykk på forskjellige måter. Og viktigst av alt: Vi er begge store entusiaster, vi lar oss begeistre! Robert Fripp sa engang at «Du kommer ikke i mål bare på entusiasme, men du kommer heller ingen vei uten.» Der inne er det en visshet om en sannhet som vi deler.

Hvordan ble dere kjent?

THE: Det må ha vært i Hjelmsgate 3, da jeg var med i Gateavisa-redaksjonen og Øivind var bidragsyter. I perioder har kontakten vært sporadisk, men allltid rett på sak, enten vi snakker om sopp, nobelprisvinnere eller Brian Eno. Det er kanskje det som kalles å være på bølgelengde.

ØH: Det stemmer. Det var i begynnelsen av mars 1983. Jeg hadde akkurat vært to uker i London, og kom opp i redaksjonen til Gateavisa med en artikkel jeg hadde skrevet fra besøket i verdensmetropolen. Jeg hadde lang svart frakk, stripete bukser i svart og gult, samt lange skinnstøvler. Dessuten bar jeg en badge med bilde av David Bowie på frakken. Dette provoserte et par av de tilstedeværende anarkistene i redaksjonen, som jo visste meget godt at Bowie noen år tidligere hadde kjørt rundt i London i åpen bil og gjort nazihilsen til folket, antakelig proppfull av kokain og garantert uten evne til å tenke klart. Men jeg ble plutselig avkrevd en forklaring på hvorfor jeg gikk rundt med bilde av en sånn fyr på frakken min, noe jeg ikke var forberedt på i det hele tatt – jeg likte jo bare musikken hans. Især de tre platene Low, Heroes og Lodger, den såkalte Berlin-trilogien. Men da kom Thomas meg til hjelp. Han mente at man måtte skille mellom musikeren og den narkotiserte privatpersonen Bowie, noe som der og da ble min livline.

Hvilken funksjon har musikk i livene deres?

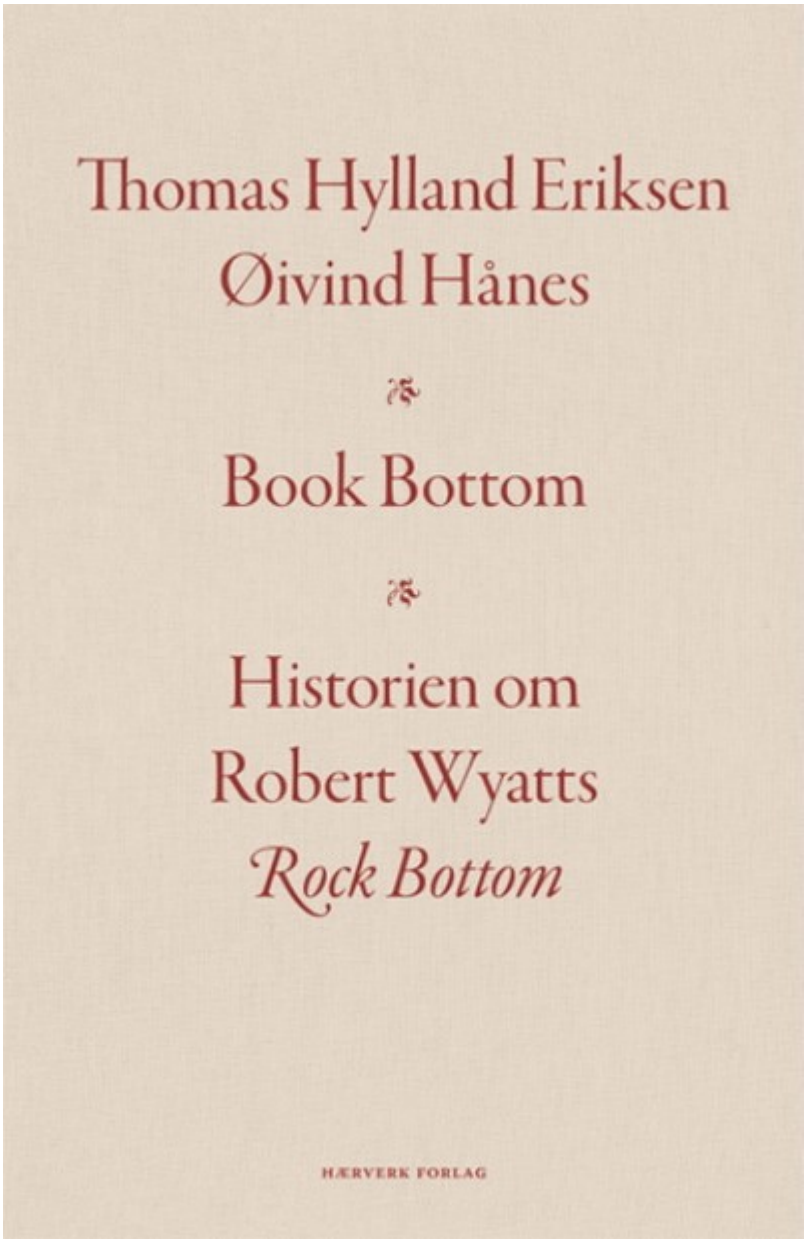
THE: Jeg spiller selv lite, og har et begrenset register, men opplever alltid å komme i kontakt med meg selv og omgivelsene på nye måter enten jeg improviserer på klarinett eller spiller sax i et band. Musikken er uten tvil eldre enn språket, og kommuniserer i andre registere. Da jeg var guttunge, altså før jeg oppdaget rock og jazz, elsket jeg Beethoven og Mozarts symfonier. Jeg lå på stuegulvet, lukket øynene og ble brakt til andre verdener. Det ligger en magi i musikken som gjør verden større og gir oss mennesker nye måter å erkjenne omgivelsene på. For meg, som er en uforbederlig pratmaker, er det befriende å slippe unna språket. En dag uten musikk er en mislykket dag. I verste fall får jeg plystre og synge litt på egen hånd mens jeg dæljer løs på et glass med en skje og dasker meg på venstre lår.

ØH: Den setter lyd på det jeg tenker, og jeg kunne aldri ha vært den foruten.

Hva var det som gjorde dere til radarpar og de riktige forfatterene til en bok om dette formidable albumet?

THE: Ideen var Øivinds, må det innrømmes, men vi utfyller hverandre godt både på stil og innhold, og det viste seg å gå forbausende greit å flette bitene våre sammen.

ØH: Vi er jo et klassisk radarpar. Thomas er kondoren som svever over landskap og hav og utreder de store linjene om samfunnsforhold, tidsepoke og kulturelle strømninger, mens jeg er kirurgen som dissekerer musikken og tekstene.



Hvordan har dere to samarbeidet om research og skriving av denne boken?

THE: Hmm … tjaaa … vi sendte hverandre noen brokker og bruddstykker underveis, men selve skrivingen gikk fort. En viktig del av arbeidet bestod i noen utsøkte lunsjer, ofte hjemme hos Øivind, men jeg slo også til med en franskinspirert fiske- og skalldyrsuppe jeg fremdeles står inne for. Da snakket vi oss mest inn i stemningen og retningen uten å gå i detaljer. Etter å ha satt stemningen og fortært nevnte lunsjer – Øivind er jo også soppekspert og mesterkokk – visste vi hvor vi ville og gikk dit. Researchen bestod for en stor del i å sende lenker til obskure opptak som var arkivert på YouTube av andre entusiaster. Og så en del tips om bøker og artikler. Jeg snublet for eksempel over en akademisk bok om Canterbury-skolen på engelsk og en tykk, nærmest leksikalsk bok om det samme på fransk, skrevet av Aymeric Leroy, Canterbury-stilens fremste arkivar.

ØH: Det stemmer det som Thomas her sier. Vi har rett og slett vært inne i ei rørgate av konstant utveksling av tanker og innfall. Brukt de kildene vi har funnet og delt disse med den andre. Til slutt er resten nærmest bare protokoll.

Fortell om deres eget forhold til jazz, prog og Canterbury-scenen?

THE: Jeg har for min del vært progger i hele mitt liv, i vid forstand. De som tror at prog utelukkende er sjelløs flinkismusikk og at de typiske progbandene heter sånne ting som Yes og ELP, ville hatt glede av å utvide perspektivet. Altså, jeg må vedgå at jeg fremdeles elsker alt av Yes til og med 1977, men det finnes så mye annet. Jeg oppdaget Gentle Giant og King Crimson i tenårene, og derfra gikk veien blant annet til avantgardeband som Henry

Cow og Magma, psykedelisk spacerock som Gong, lavmælt avantgardisme à la Brian Eno, og ikke minst Peter Hammill og Van Der Graaf Generators intense inderlighet, tysk krautrock og ikke minst Canterbury-familien fra Soft Machine og Caravan til Hatfield & The North og National Health. Mange av undersjangrene er stadig i utvikling, selv om mye av det beste ble laget i tiåret 1967–1977, som er det egentlige sekstitallet. Men bevares, det foregår stadig mye nyskaping, og norske band er i høy grad på kartet. White Willow og andre prosjekter Jacob Holm-Lupo er involvert i har mange hengivne lyttere, mens Panzerpappa viderefører både Canterbury og den radikale Rock in Opposition-bevegelsen. Wobbler fra Hønefoss gjør det bra internasjonalt, og det er vel fortjent.

Jazzen befinner seg et stykke unna mye av dette. Eno har påvirket nesten alt som finnes av populærmusikk de siste tiårene, men ikke jazzen. Dave Stewart, som var sentral i Hatfield og National Health, sa en gang at jazz for ham er grusomt kjedelig fordi den lett blir så forutsigbar. Samtidig er det mye jazz i proggen, innimellom, ikke minst hos Wyatt. Han kom fra Charlie Parker, ikke fra The Beatles. Han synger av og til som en saksofonsolist, og Soft Machine gikk i retning av jazz et år eller to før han sluttet i bandet; de kom fra psykedelisk pop og endte i et landskap i slekt med Miles Davis, som kom fra akustisk jazz, i 1970. I dette øyeblikk hører jeg på Digging In fra 1993, en plate med Phil Millers band In Cahoots, og om du må sette en merkelapp på denne fine, urene, lyriske plata, må det være jazzrock, som ellers er en upresis sekkebetegnelse. Miller var kanskje den viktigste gitaristen i Canterbury-skolen, og da de spilte sammen, sa Wyatt stolt om sin unge medmusikant at «han vil heller spille feil enn å spille en note som har vært brukt før.» For Miller gikk veien fra Canterbury mot jazz og noe blues, men andre valgte andre veier, eller kanskje snarere krøllete stier. Stewart klippet håret rundt 1980 og begynte å lage lekker pop for voksne med partneren Barbara Gaskin, for eksempel. Den stadig langhårede Steve Hillage, som spilte i Khan med Dave Stewart før han ble med i Gong, gikk i retning av elektronisk musikk og ble en slags husgud for band som The Orb, men som produsent var han også med på å gjøre Simple Minds til et spennende band. Så denne familien av søkende, eksperimenterende folk som hadde øvd mye og lært mange skalaer som de riktignok maltrakterte underveis, kunne bevege seg i mange retninger da festen var over rundt 1977.

ØH: Dette er jo igjen et spørsmål som kunne danne utgangspunkt for ei bok i seg selv. Jeg tror alt dette handler mye om instinkt og mageføelse. Man kommer til verden, oppdager musikk og begynner å nøste. Dersom man er disponert med den rette nysgjerrigheten og oppdagertrangen, havner man før eller siden i Canterbury. Det blir som med vin: Når du først får tenning, ender du før eller siden opp i Piemonte og Burgund for rødviner, samt Tyskland og Østerrike for riesling, druen som lager verdens beste hvitviner.

Hvorfor Robert Wyatt?

THE: Wyatt var aldri den som øvde mest eller kunne flest skalaer, men han kunne til gjengjeld gi et blikk på verden som tilførte noe som var annerledes – noe skjørt, lyrisk, sårt, men også optimistisk og fandenivoldsk. Du kjenner igjen stemmen hans etter et nanosekund, den har en signatur som bare er hans egen, som et fingeravtrykk. Han liker all musikk bare den ikke er forutsigbar og kjedelig. Hvilken annen progger ville ha fått en hit med The Monkees' «I'm a Believer»? Og hvem andre enn Wyatt kunne skrive en bitter og sint tekst om dem som sviktet venstresiden til verdens vakreste melodi, nemlig «Alliance»? Men vår bok handler ikke om hele Wyatts virke; den har dessuten vært skrevet alt, av Marcus O'Dair – men om hans mesterverk, Rock Bottom.

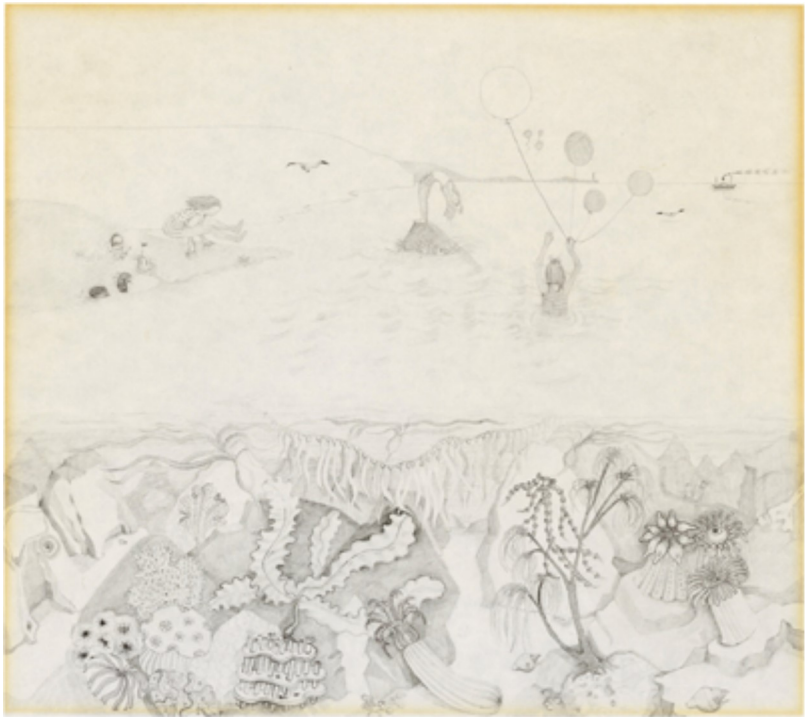
ØH: Wyatt er en av disse ytterst sjeldne fuglene som ikke ligner på noen andre, på noe annet. Jeg fikk nærmest sjokk da jeg hørte Rock Bottom for første gang. Da hadde jeg vært inne i rocken i snart fem år, og dette var et kvantesprang.

Hvilken posisjon har Wyatt, Soft Machine og Matching Mole i dag som inspiratorer for ny musikk og referansepunkt for musikklyttere?

THE: Det er vanskelig å si. All musikk forholder seg til tidligere musikk, og slik har det vært iallfall siden middelaldermunken Guido d'Arezzo la grunnlaget for moderne notasjon rundt år 1000. Matching Mole kom aldri helt i mål og etterlot seg et par spennende, men springende LP'er, men Wyatt og tidlig Soft Machine er fremdeles referanser for mange. Noen av dem som har vært så heldige å få Wyatt med på platene sine, er Björk, Anja Garbarek og Carla Bley. Vi kunne ha ramset opp mange navn, men det er ikke poenget, snarere at musikken flyter som en uregjerlig elv med mange bekker og bielver for den som har et åpent sinn. Du snapper opp litt herfra og derfra og koker din egen kompott av det du finner, med noen ingredienser som bare er dine egne. Og Wyatt har sluppet mer oppi gryta enn mange er klar over.

ØH: Det kan jeg faktisk ikke svare på, siden jeg ikke er i den posisjonen selv. Men jeg tror

nok på generelt grunnlag at unge musikere som hører Wyatt for første gang reagerer som Thomas og meg: Med dyp undring og en uslukkelig lyst til å høre mer.



Hva er det som gjør at Rock Bottom har tålt tidens tann så godt og fortsatt så interessant?

THE: Jeg vil si tidløsheten og hudløsheten; det er gjennom sin ytre enkelhet at den ikke kan tidfestes. Den kunne ha vært laget når som helst siden rundt 1968. «Hva ER dette for noe?» kan noen spørre når du setter den på, for den ligner ikke på noe annet. Hvis du får dem til å lytte, hører de sfærenes musikk, sjelens hvisken, sorg og savn, fisk og sjøgress, menneskenes molefonkne lengsler, men også absurde ordspill, kjærlighet, drømmer og snodige fantasier. Den er som Wyatt selv, enkel utenpå, men kompleks inni.

ØH: Stemmen, stemningen, låtene, orgelet, arrangementene og produksjonen.

Hvordan forholder den seg til, og skiller seg fra, hans andre skiver?

THE: Først og fremst er den helhetlig, den er et episk dikt som begynner på side 1 som en svak krusning på overflaten og ender i et kraftfullt crescendo, og så gjentas progresjonen på side 2. Selv om Wyatt jobber intuitivt, er det en struktur i Rock Bottom som skaper en innramming for all galskapen, innfallene, det uventede som kommer underveis. Plata krever litt tid, kanskje tre gjennomlyttinger uten fikling med mobilen, men den gir deg da en gave som du aldri kommer til å glemme. Wyatts senere plater er også fine, noen av dem funklende juvéler, som hans siste, Cuckooland fra 2007, men det er stemningene og ikke minst Riviera-orgelet fra Rock Bottom som aldri slipper taket.

ØH: Jo, dette har med helheten å gjøre, og dessuten er det noe helt vidunderlig inderlig over denne musikken. En varme, en sårhet, en ydmykhet.

Her er noen stikkord jeg vil at dere skal si litt om forholdet deres til, og hva de kan fortelle om Robert Wyatt og Rock Bottom.

Nordsjøen

THE: Dette grunne havstykket, som historisk har koblet så mange mennesker sammen, har mange lag som er i ferd med å bli glemt på grunn av oljeplattformene og ikke minst flyreisene. Hvor reiste de første vikingene for å lage faenskap? Joda, over Nordsjøen til Lindisfarne. Jeg er en Nordsjømann. Jeg elsker torsk og krabbe og blåskjell og lukten av tang, måkeskrik og bølgeskvulp, og synes det er fint at vannet ikke er krystallklart, for så kan du fylle dybdene med hva du vil. Og sånn er musikken til Wyatt også. Du må fylle inn

litt selv.

ØH: Ja, hva er det med musikken rundt Nordsjøen? Den gangen, rundt 1970, dukket det i hvert fall opp masse spennende musikk i dette området, og da vi begynte å skrive Book Bottom oppdaget vi at mye av den beslektede musikken hadde sin opprinnelse nettopp her. Så da oppfant vi like godt begrepet Nordsjømusikk.

Canterbury

THE: Jeg har vært der et par ganger. Det er en prektig, velstelt by med orden i de små rosehagene og søppelbøtter som blir tømt jevnlig. Og temmelig døll, for å være ærlig. Det er kirken og universitetet som danner grunnmuren. Samtidig er det en by med så mye trygghet at den oppfordrer til opprør – ikke av den krakilske og hatefulle typen, men den fandenivoldske varianten. Ikke sant, kaninene står i veikanten, kuene gresser bortenfor, humla suser og far er på kontoret, og i rekkehuset står mødrene og brygger te mens sønnene har inntatt kjelleren der de spiller merkelig musikk i 11/8-takt. Sånn ser jeg iallfall for meg Canterbury på sekstitallet. Og tro om det ikke er litt sånn fremdeles?

ØH: Her må jeg fortelle en morsom historie: Den eneste gangen jeg har vært i Canterbury, var i slutten av mars 2011. Vi bodde i Whitstable, østersbyen over alle, og tok en dagstur til Canterbury. Mens vi sitter i andre etasje på bussen inn til sentrum av byen, kommer plutselig en mann i rullestol kjørende mot oss på fortauet. Han hadde langt, hvitt hår og skjegg, og helt spontant utbrøt jeg: «Og der kommer Robert Wyatt!» Selvsagt var det ikke ham, men det var jo litt av en tilfeldighet …

Alfreda Benge

THE: Nedlatende kunne man omtale Alfie som Roberts «muse», altså den skjønne kvinnen som gav det mannlige geniet inspirasjon. Hun hadde trolig dæljet til meg med staffeliet om jeg sa noe sånt til henne. Nei, Alfreda Benge har ikke bare designet alle platecoverne til Wyatt og skrevet noen tekster, men hun har vært med på å skape auraen til musikken hans. Hvis du ser på omslagene, legger du merke at de er så lite brautende og påståelige som det går an. De hvisker til deg, og budskapet er anarkistisk og anti-patriarkalsk. Robert ble politisk bevisst gjennom Alfie, og han ble et helere menneske. De grodde sammen til en symbiotisk enhet.

ØH: Jeg ser av og til for meg Robert og Alfie som to sju-åtte år gamle barn som småkjeder seg på en hyttetur. De sitter ved et bord en sein kveldstime og tegner og fargelegger og lager små historier om karakterene de skaper på papiret. Det virker som om Robert og Alfie har klart å bevare barnet i seg på en helt unik måte. En herlig naivisme som ikke går i stykker på tross av livets små og store vanskeligheter.

Soft Machine: Third

THE: På dette tidspunktet var Soft Machine på vei inn i en ny inkarnasjon. Du hører på en måte overgangen fra psykedelisk progpop til progjazz mot slutten av Volume Two, som er dominert av Mike Ratledges orgel og hvor blås – i dette tilfellet Brian Hopper – kommer til sin rett. På Third er det bare fire låter, én per plateside, og mange kjennere regner Hugh Hoppers «Facelift» som bandets desiderte høydepunkt. En av Norges fremste Soft Machine-kjennere, nemlig sosiologen og saksofonisten Lars Mjøset, er en av dem. Det er en fantastisk dobbelt-LP, nyskapende og fremdeles i stand til å fortelle oss noe nytt, helt på nivå med Bitches Brew om ikke bedre. Mike Ratledge var enorm både som manisk organist og sober komponist. Han fortsatte i Soft Machine noen år til og gjorde fine ting, men han mistet tenninga på midten av syttitallet og har senere uttalt at den siste plata han virkelig nøt å spille inn, var Third. Wyatts bidrag, «Moon in June», viste ham at det gikk an å gjøre spennende ting ganske på egen hånd, og er markant forskjellig fra de tre andre platesidene, som har snedige akkordprogresjoner og blåserrekke. Teksten på «Moon in June» er stort sett improvisert, og den er forskjellig i alle versjonene jeg har hørt. Selv om Soft Machine i omskiftelige inkarnasjoner fortsatte å utgi plater i en årrekke – og for meg har alle noe ved seg, enda så ulike de er – var «Moon in June» den siste låta de spilte inn med sang. Det er ikke rart at Wyatt følte seg fremmedgjort senere, og lenge etter at han hadde sluttet i bandet, eventuelt fått sparken, sa han at han følte om Soft Machine slik palestinerne føler om Israel, nemlig at «Hey, this used to be mine!».

ØH: Her nekter jeg å hoppe etter Wirkola.

THE: Du kunne ha hoppet først, Øivind, men sånn ble det nå engang ikke denne gangen. Da hadde jeg blitt stående, stivfrossen og vettskremt, på hoppkanten.

Patafysikk

THE: En karikatur på vitenskapen, der det som utforskes er det ubestemmelige, paradoksale, som de fleste kanskje benekter eksistensen av. Patafysikken går ut over metafysikken og er i slekt med dadaisme, surrealisme – og Canterbury-retningen i prog. Grensen mellom humor og alvor er vanskelig å få øye på, og ofte er den uansett en avsporing.

ØH: En herlig måte å senke skuldrene på i en til tider altfor høytidelig verden!

Radikalitet

THE: Wyatt ble gradvis mer og mer opptatt av globale spørsmål, kritisk til USA-imperialismen og de voksende klasseforskjellene i hjemlandet. Han spilte inn flere latinamerikanske kampsanger, blant annet av Victor Jara, og noe av det underlige ved Wyatts forhold til politikk og estetikk er at enkelte av de fineste sangene hans, som «Alliance,» har en bitter tekst om politikere som sviktet venstresiden: «You say you're self-sufficient/But you don't dig your own coal», sunget med en raspende, inderlig tenorstemme til verdens vakreste melodi.

ØH: En konservativ er enten for feig til å slåss eller for feit til å løpe. Wyatt er verken feig eller feit, selv om han ikke kan løpe. Men jeg tror at veldig mange som begynner å se på hvordan verden rundt seg fungerer, blir oppbrakt og opprørt av all urettferdigheten som kommer til syne.

Fysisk lammelse/Ulykke og rullestol

THE: «I had to lose my legs to find my feet», sa Wyatt en gang. Han så dobbeltheten i lammelsen: Du mister noe, og så viser det seg at du får noe annet som kan være like verdifullt. Flere av oss burde tenke slik, ikke for å dyrke invaliditet og sykdom, men for å se mulighetene i livet. Wyatt ble en stor og klok mann i rullestolen, men ikke før. En annen progger vi har et forhold til, nemlig Robert Fripp, har alltid vært opptatt av å finne balansen mellom frihet og disiplin. Wyatt fikk denne erkjennelsen gratis. Rock Bottom ville aldri ha vært det samme uten rullestolen.

ØH: Her kan jeg bare slutte meg til det Thomas sier.

Viljen til å eksperimentere

ØH: Er ikke viljen til å eksperimentere intimt knyttet til nysgjerrighet? I begynnelsen vil alle musikere etterligne andre, men etter hvert, dersom nysgjerrigheten er til stede, vil de søke ut over dette og kanskje finne noe som virkelig er deres eget. Dette skjedde utvilsomt med Wyatt.

Å synge som et blåseinstrument

ØH: I begynnelsen var stemmen og sangen. Alle blåseinstrumenter er jo i bunn og grunn en forlengelse av stemmene våre.

THE: Og det er stadig flere forskere som mener at musikken kom før språket. Det får jeg til å stemme.

Heltoneskala

ØH: I motsetning til skalaer i dur og moll har heltoneskalaen bare trinn som er like langt fra hverandre, og den har verken begynnelse eller slutt. Når Wyatt bruker den som han gjør på Rock Bottom, gir dette en merkelig følelse av noe som ikke er bundet i tid og rom.

Riviera orgel

ØH: For et lykketreff at Alfie kjøpte dette lille orgelet til Robert da de var i Venezia vinteren 1973! Det er jo bare et banalt instrument i plast med tre oktaver, men det har en vibratofunksjon som er helt genial. Hør for eksempel på denne låten med Scritti Politti, hvor Wyatt spiller sin klassiske Riviera med langsom vibrato:

Store deler av Rock Bottom er badet i lyden fra dette merkelige instrumentet, noe som bidrar sterkt til det unike soundet Wyatt her skapte i samarbeid med produsenten Nick Mason. Mesterverket «Alifib», som åpner side 2, er et av de flotteste stykker musikk jeg noen gang har hørt, og en viktig årsak til det er nettopp dette lille orgelet.



Utover veldig grundige presentasjoner av de medvirkende musikerne på platen og egne opplevelser av og med albumet inkluderer dere også noterekkefølgen.

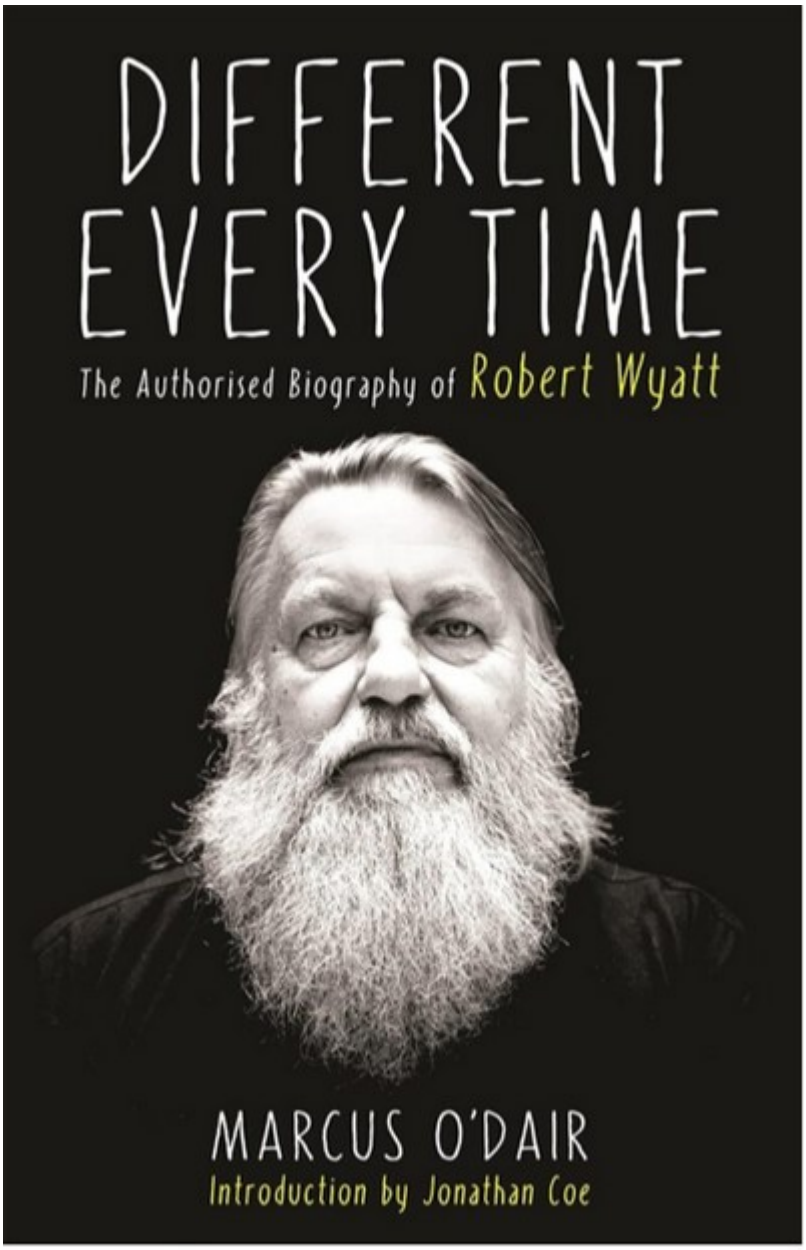
Fortell om hvordan valget av akkorder og toner kan fortelle om Wyatt – og samarbeidspartnerne han henter inn – som komponist og musiker.

ØH: Da vi gikk i gang med skrivingen, oppdaget jeg at det var naturlig for meg å inkludere en omtale av akkordprogresjonen og arrangementene i de enkelte låtene. Wyatt har jo aldri studert komposisjon, men hans akkordsammensetninger er veldig raffinerte. Låtene er liksom alltid på vei vekk fra utgangspunktet, selv om de beviselig alltid kommer tilbake til starten og gjentas. Men følelsen er så annerledes, og akkordrekkefølgen er av stor betydning her. Dessuten synes jeg det er påfallende at tekster om musikere og plater som regel unngår det reint musikkfaglige, det meste handler om klassiske fan-ting, om hvorfor den og den plata og låta og artisten er så jævlig bra og så videre. Og dersom du begynner å lese akademisk faglitteratur om musikk, er sjansen for at du faller i søvn av kjedsomhet nokså stor. Så for meg var det viktig å finne et blandingsforhold som passet til denne utgivelsen.

Hvilket forhold har dere til andre dybdeanalyser av enkeltalbum og/eller diskografier som 33 1/3 -serien, Norske albumklassikere-bokserien og liknende?

THE: 33 1/3 oppdaget vi veldig sent, så den har ikke påvirket vårt prosjekt overhodet. Norske albumklassikere, derimot, ligner mer. Den består jo av korte bøker om enkeltplater. Jeg har lest en del av dem, og blir slått av bredden og mangfoldet i tilnærminger, fra roadtripen, som Marius Liens drivende flotte bok om Knut Reiersruds mesterverk Tramp til det personlige møtet med noe nytt, som Jan Inge Reilstad om Stavangerensemblets Ta ein kjangs!. Fine bøker begge to, men på veldig forskjellige måter. Dette forteller oss at musikken er et språk som fortjener mange fortolkere og oversettere.

ØH: Jeg tror faktisk ikke jeg har lest andre enn den som Thomas skreiv om Moose Loose. Jeg er så presset på hva jeg bør, kan og må lese at jeg stort sett eliminerer de to førstnevnte kategoriene. Livet er ikke uendelig, og det er fortsatt altfor mye skjønnlitteratur jeg ennå ikke har lest. Det eneste som er sikkert, er at vi kommer til å forlate dette livet i dyp sorg over alle de flotte bøkene vi aldri rakk å lese…

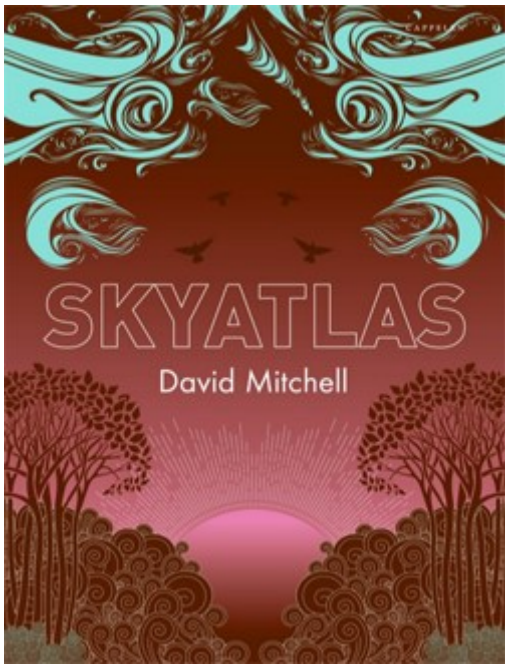


Hva slags forhold har dere til Marcus O'Dair: Different Every Time: The Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt?

THE: Det er en god bok, en klassisk biografi fra vugge til alderdom, godt researchet og godt skrevet. Men den var ikke en hovedkilde for oss. Det finnes så mye om Wyatt der ute, stort og smått, og vår bok er ikke primært faktabasert, men emosjonell og eksistensiell, vi forsøker å komme på innsiden av musikken, og det gjør aldri O'Dair. Dessuten avviste han oss på en litt kort og uhøflig måte da vi tok kontakt. Det kunne han ha spart seg. Kanskje

han hadde en dårlig dag.

ØH: Jeg synes den er både informativ og bra. Godt håndverk, masse interessant stoff å ta tak i.



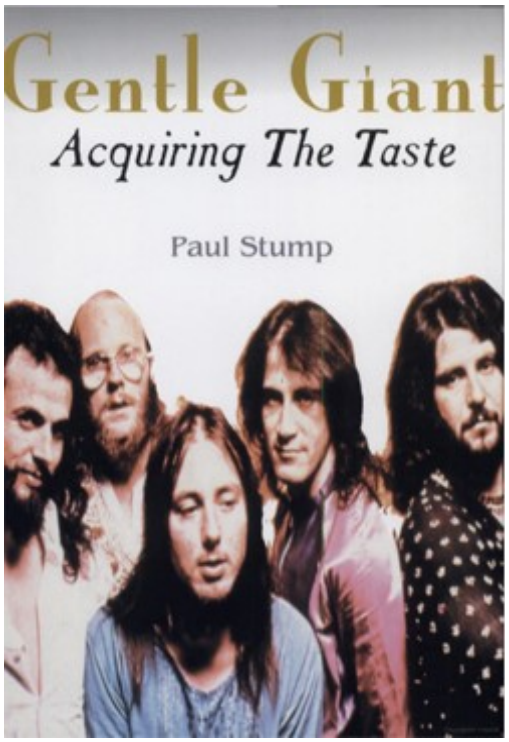
Hvordan kan en slik bok om enkeltplater være med å åpne opp et verk og skape interesse hos nye og tidligere lyttere?

ØH: Når jeg tenker tilbake på den tida da jeg selv var rundt 20 år, var jeg veldig glad for å finne denne typen bøker om musikk jeg akkurat hadde oppdaget, så det tror jeg vi skal være trygge på: Dette kommer til å bli lest også av yngre mennesker.

Boken kommer både på norsk, engelsk og dessuten som lydbok.

Fortell om deres eget forhold til lydbøker.

THE: Opprinnelig hadde vi tenkt å utgi boka utelukkende på engelsk. Men det gikk trått. Jeg har flere engelske forlag, men de er akademiske alle sammen, så vi hadde ingen snarveier eller noe stort kontaktnettverk.



ØH: Lydbøker er et utrolig spennende felt! Det er krevende, men også veldig gøy, å lese dem inn, og i motsetning til vanlige bøker på papir og på skjerm kan de brukes til multitasking, noe jeg tror kommer til å bli mer og mer viktig i årene som kommer. Folk tror jo at de har det veldig travelt, og da kan ei lydbok være løsningen. Men den ligger også musikken nærmere enn papir- og skjermboka. Det er lyd, og det første vi hørte som spedbarn var jo nettopp det: Lyd.

Fortell om forlaget deres, Hærverk Forlag, og samarbeidet med dem.

THE: Det er takket være forfatteren og lydskulptøren Bjørn Hatterud at vi kom i kontakt med dem. Jeg snakket med ham om prosjektet, og han mente Hærverk kunne være interessert. Han hadde rett. Vi hadde kjent disse gutta perifert i flere tiår, og som unge hadde vi mer felles enn vi kanskje var villig til å innrøme, først og fremst som en indre opposisjon mot det nye, selvtilfredse, oljerike Norge som rev alternativhuset Stenersgate 1 for å bygge Oslo City. Det var de gale åttiåra, som for oss var preget mer av svarte klær og bleke ansikter, sær crossovermusikk og generell motstand enn av glattslikka og hjernedød pop – fra postpunk til støymusikk og andre undergrunnsband, som het sånne ting som Einstürzende Neubauten, The Residents og Tuxedomoon/Blaine L. Reininger. Vi tilhørte samme subkultur, i vid forstand, som Harald Fossberg og John Ege.

Jeg kjente ingen av dem godt, men vi kjente ganske godt til hverandre den gangen for førti år siden, og jeg visste at de var til å stole på. De har ikke skuffet oss, men gjort en fantastisk jobb med vår lille bok. Den ser ut som et kunstverk og er deilig å holde og bla i. Bengt Olsson, designeren, må nevnes i samme åndedrag som John og Harald. Han har løftet denne teksten opp minst én divisjon.

ØH: Thomas og jeg har jo gitt ut på to av de største norske forlagene – Aschehoug og Gyldendal – i over 30 år, så det var veldig gøy å komme til noe helt annet, et knøttlite tomannsforlag ved navn Hærverk, hvor alt gikk i en helt annen hastighet. Vidunderlig ubyråkratisk. Vi vil gjerne utgi flere slike bøker hos dem i årene som kommer!

Kan dere til slutt velge fem litterære bøker, rockebiografier og fem nyere låter hver som har gjort inntrykk på dere?

THE: Jeg får til noen, men ikke fem av hver – det er ikke så lenge siden sist du stilte meg det samme spørsmålet, Jan-Olav. Jeg synes én av hver er nok, i RWs ånd: Mindre er mer.

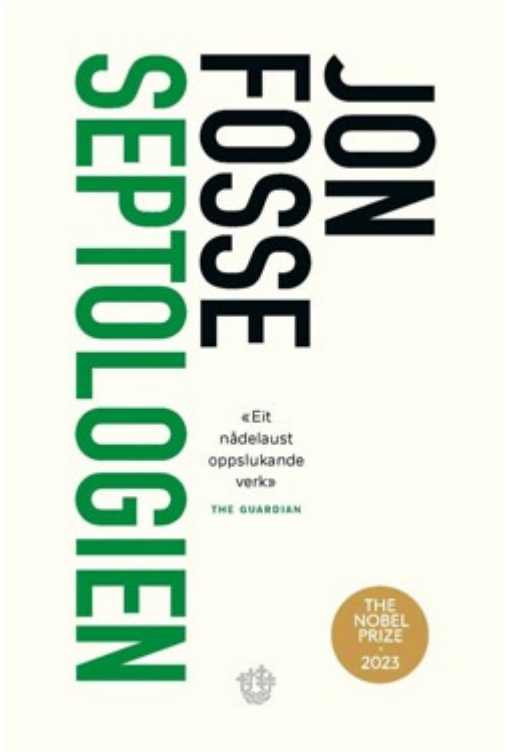
Litterær bok: Jeg kunne ha nevnt en av Øivinds, men jeg kan ikke det altså, så derfor slår jeg til med David Mitchells Cloud Atlas, Skyatlas i norsk oversettelse. Den er et Wunderkammer og overflødighetshorn av syv historier som fletter seg sammen, fra en seilskute over Stillehavet til et postapokalyptisk inferno. Mitchell skriver tidstypiske pastisjer og leker seg med stiler og sjangere, og samtidig er han så god forteller at du blir like grepet av den ulykkelige forleggeren i England som av den gravende journalisten i California med skumle gangstere i hælene.

Rockbiografi: Hmm … jeg har med skam å melde ikke lest mange nok til å gi noe veldig godt svar, så jeg er nødt til å si Paul Stumps bok om Gentle Giant, Acquiring the Taste. De fantes som band mellom 1970 og 1980, og hadde – til forskjell fra Soft Machine – en ganske stabil besetning av virtuose multiinstrumentalister. De laget musikk med elementer fra barokk og engelsk folkemusikk, hint av jazz og noe som bare var deres eget, som firstemt sang og ditto blokkfløyte, fremført live på scenen. Samtidig ble de aldri stjerner, og det er mange spørsmål om Giant som Stump finner svar på. Gentle Giant har hatt enorm innflytelse i progverdenen, men velstående ble noen av dem først da de begynte å jobbe for plateselskaper. Me veit det, men me liga det ikkje, som sørlendingen sa da han ble minnet om at Jesus hadde gjort vann til vin.

Shabaka Hutchins er en av de mest kreative og allsidige saksofonistene for tiden, og jeg har tenkt på ham som vår tids Coltrane, men nå har han tatt et skritt tilbake og spiller mykere og mer lavmælte blåserinstrumenter på sine siste to skiver. Denne låta, fra plata Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace, er uendelig og bunnløs. Shabaka klarer på en måte å komprimere hele regnbuen av menneskelige







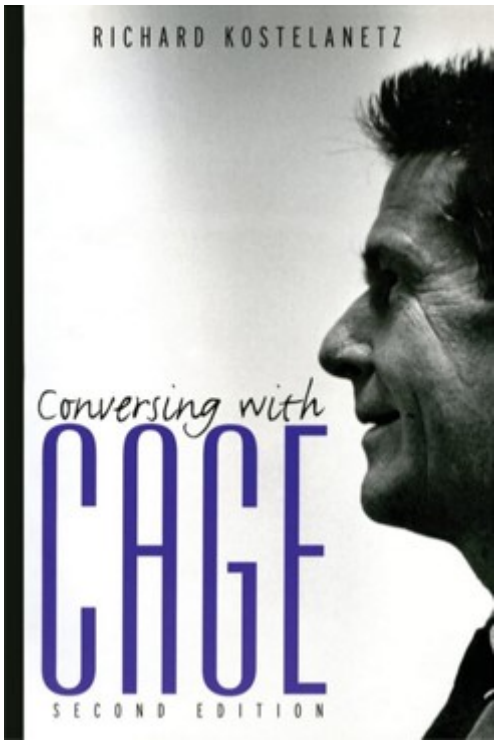
følelser uten at jeg skjønner hvordan han gjør det.



Men jeg må nevne en til. I det siste har jeg hørt mye på Jakko M. Jakszyk, som befant seg i utkanten altfor lenge, helt til han ble medlem av den siste inkarnasjonen av King Crimson som vokalist, gitarist og – jada – fløytist. Jakszyks plater er en utsøkt miks av fengende låter og prog, dynket i vemod og melankoli. Jeg anbefaler å begynne med dobbelt-CDen The Bruised Romantic Glee Club.

Første CD er hans egne låter, mens den andre består av hans tolkninger av musikk som betyr mye for ham. Der er det litt Soft Machine fra Wyatt-tiden, men også Henry Cow, King Crimson og mer. «Pictures of an Indian City» er direkte morsom, en versjon av Crimsons gamle låt med tabla og sitar.

ØH: Litterære bøker er enkelt, det er her jeg befinner meg til daglig. Fra de siste årene kommer jeg ikke utenom Jon Fosses Septologien, ei heller Olga Tokarczuks Før plogen din over de dødes knokler. For ikke å snakke om Herta Müllers Pustegynge. Du godeste gudeste. Noen forfattere får til ting jeg knapt trodde var mulig med ord.



Den beste biografien over en musiker og komponist jeg har lest, må være den i tegneserieform om Karl-Heinz Stockhausen med tittelen Stockhausen: Der Mann, der vom Sirius kam, som utkom for to år siden. Hvordan tekstforfatteren og tegneren har klart å fange Stockhausens person, historie og musikk med tekst og tegninger på papiret, er helt fantastisk.

Andre flotte bøker i denne sjangeren er Richard Kostelanetz' Conversing With Cage, om komponisten og filosofen John Cage, dessuten Brian Enos selvbiografi A Year With Swollen Appendices, Paul Morleys bok om David Bowie kalt The Age of Bowie samt Eric Tamms bok Robert Fripp: From King Crimson to Guitar Craft, som jeg veit hadde den langt morsommere arbeidstittelen From Crimson King to Guitar Craft mastermind.

Låter:

De siste 20 årene har jeg stort sett hørt musikk mens jeg skriver, og da for det meste Brian Enos stillferdige ambientplater. Jeg trenger en bakgrunn som er stabilt dynamisk og som holder meg inne i en bestemt atmosfære, og da er denne musikken helt ideell. Siden jeg så godt som aldri hører radio, er det ikke så mye jeg kan bidra med her. Men noe får jeg jo med meg, og jeg synes Daft Punk har laget storartede ting. «Lose Yourself to Dance» er en fantastisk låt. I parentes bemerket: Før jeg leste tittelen trodde jeg for øvrig at de sang «Losers have to dance» - hahaha!



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Omsider Fri - DN Dagens Naeringliv - Fredag 23. januar 2015

OMSIDER FRI



MUSIKK
AUDUN VINGER



Neste uke fyller Englands mest snodige nasjonalskatt Robert Wyatt 70 år. Snodig mest fordi han til nasjonalskatt å være aldri har vært spesielt populær, ikke selger plater og aldri holder konserter. Musikere elsker ham, fra David Gilmour til Paul Weller til Björk.

Wyatts karriere går helt tilbake til midten av sekstitallet, da han som syngende trommeslager og sexsymbol i The Soft Machine var en viktig brikke i Londons swingende psykedelia/prog-miljø. Med sin solokarriere har han derimot innredet sitt helt eget rom, der jazz, pop, samtidsmusikk og et åpent verdenssyn har gitt hans spinkle stemme enorm kraft. Inspirert av Alfred Jarrys patafysikk, Edward Lears nonsens-vers, Marx' skrifter og Monks piano. Hans musikk er totalt unik, umiddelbart gjenkjennbar, politisk ladet og dypt rørende.

I morgen formiddag skal hans biograf Marcus O'Dair holde et foredrag om mannen, som en del av heldagsseminaret Off The Page på Kunstnernes Hus i Oslo, der også størrelser som Arto Lindsay, Maja Ratkje og Savage Pencil skal snakke om musikk og kunst. Arrangørene kunne like



Bok
Marcus O'Dair
«Different Every Time – the authorized biography of Robert Wyatt»
(Serpents Tail)



Cd
Robert Wyatt
«Different Every Time – Benign dictatorships»
(Domino Records)

gjerne viet en hel dag til Wyatts liv og virke, hans musikalske kunstnerskap, livsfilosofi og personlige historie er nemlig blant de mest fascinerende fra britisk rockhistorie.

Det blir ytterligere tydelig i O'Dairs bok «Different Every Time» som ble utgitt før jul, parallelt med to retrospektive musikksamlinger under samme tittel. Boken er lettlest og informativ, og selv om det er merkbart at forfatter og objekt er blitt godt kjent de siste årene (Wyatt har sunget med Ninja Tune-duoen Grasscut som O'Dair er en del av) har den heller ikke karakter av hagiografi. Forfatteren er ikke redd for å avfeie deler av Soft Machines musikk med Wyatt totalt til fordel for hans musikk på egenhånd, og vil i likhet med Wyatt selv dempe betydningen av hele «Canterbury-sounden» som bandet sammen med blant annet Caravan er beryktet for. Det viktigste kom etterpå.

Wyatt hadde riktignok en fabelaktig bohemoppvekst blant kunstnere og poeter, hørte på Cecil Taylor, møtte Georges Braque, og var oppkalt etter familievennen og mentoren, poeten Robert Graves. Og hans musikalske ungdomsvennskap med Daevid Allen (senere Gong) og Kevin Ayers (senere flotte soloalbum) kan han jo takke omstendighetene for.

Sammen med Pink Floyd var Soft Machine de fremste lydleggerne av psykedeliadelen av the swinging sixties, og Wyatt var noe av en villmann bak trommene – den første nakne trommeslager? I alle fall var han ekstremt populær blant kvinner han møtte på sin vei. At han var gift og hadde barn hadde ikke tidsånden noen problemer med.



Bandet delte management med den nyankomne Jimi Hendrix og turnerte sammen med ham, men musikken tok kjapt en annen, mer støvete retning.

Han fikk noen år senere sparken fra sitt eget band, i frustrasjon startet han det strålende prosjektet Matching Mole (en referanse til den franske oversettelsen av soft machine), før alt med ett forandret seg. Han var dypt alkoholisert, tidvis deprimert, og musikalsk uforløst, så han er snar om å kalle ulykken, da han i kraftigere festform enn ellers falt ut av et vindu i fjerde etasje, en ny start. De nye begrensningene ga ham muligheter til å skape. Det er likevel ikke få eksempler på veltede rullestoler, brekte ben, fyllekuler, prestasjonsangst og skrivesperrer i boken. Utrolig nok har han kun avholdt én hel



54 Etterbørs

Norskamerikaner

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Omsider fri

Det var da Robert Wyatt fikk ut av et vindu og ble lam fra livet ned at han endelig kunne begynne å lage sin vidunderlige musikk.

Hans musikk er totalt unik, umiddelbart gjenkjennelig, politisk ladet og dypt rørende

MUSIKK AUDUN VINGER

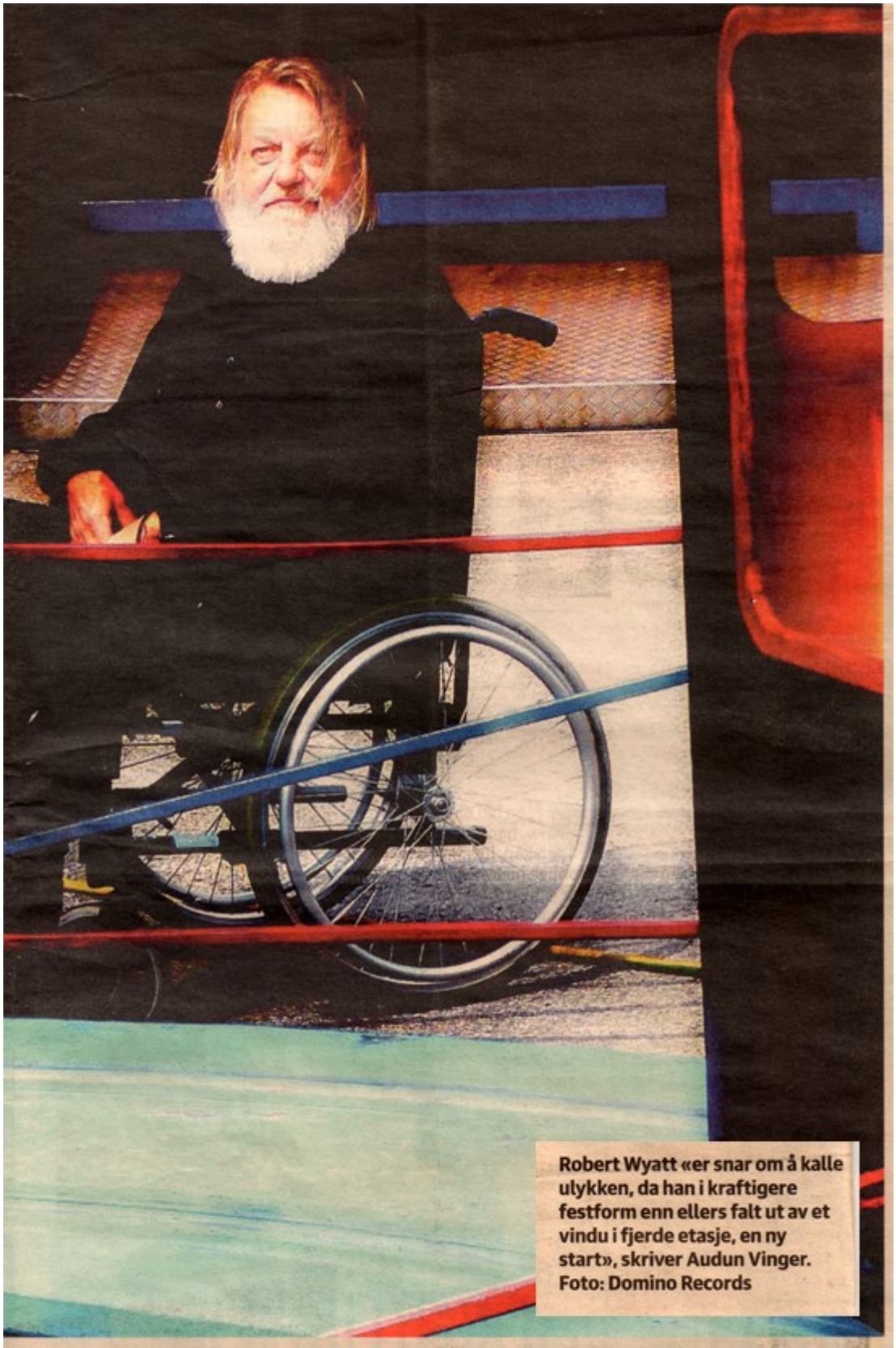
55 Etterbørs

På nettbordet

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Robert Wyatt «er snar om å kalle ulykken, da han i kraftigere festform enn ellers falt ut av et vindu i fjerde etasje, en ny start», skriver Audun Vinger. Foto: Domino Records

konsert, på Drury Lane-teateret sammen med flere musikalske storheter. Men det er over 40 år siden. Heldigvis ble det tatt opp og utgitt flere tiår senere.

Den mest betydningsfulle personen i hans liv, er utvilsomt hans kone siden 1974, Alfreda «Alfie» Benge, en kunstner, filmarbeider og it-girl som har tatt vare på ham, vært hans muse, vært hans manager, hans politisk aktivist-kamerat, laget alle plateomslag og i senere år tillegg skrevet tekster for ham. Denne boken er i tillegg en styggvakker kjærlighetshistorie om dem.

Av de to samlingene som er kommet, er helt klart volum to, med undertittelen «Benign Dictatorships» mest interessant (den første er også veldig god, men det er smakebiter fra utgivelser man uansett burde skaffe seg). Her har Wyatt samlet sine personlige isfjelltopper fra



de oppsiktsvekkende mange gjesteopptredenene han har med andre artister. Jeg var rett og slett ikke klar over at han har gjort så mye ved siden av, med kjente og ukjente artister i et vidt spekter, og at det gjennomgående holder slikt høyt nivå. Det er nettopp slike opptredener, skjult på andres utgivelser, som gjør samleplater til et verdig format. Her finner vi nordiske popartister som Anja Garbarek, Jeanette Lindstrom og Björk, britiske kjemper som Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno og Nick Mason, jazzkomponistene Carla Bley og Michael Mantler, og mye mer. Det er, heldigvis for artistene, ikke alltid slik at Wyatt stjeler showet, det er mer slik at de har fått et ekstra fantastisk instrument med i besetningen - hans eiendommelig skjønne stemme og musikalske hender. Det Wyatt derimot er flink til å stjele, er det mentale eierskapet til andres låter. Mye av det beste han har gjort er skrevet av andre. Selvfølgelig Elvis Costellos bittersøte hit «Shipbuilding», som da også opprinnelig er skrevet til Wyatt, en av mange sanger om krigføringens og maktens konsekvenser i Wyatts katalog.

En gripende versjon av Monkees-låten «I'm a believer» ble hans første single for Richard Bransons nystartede og den gang svært alternative plateselskap Virgin, men hans aller fremste bedrift og min personlige favoritt er den intense tolkingen han gjør av discobandet Chics ballade «At last I am free». Som han synger: «I can hardly see in front of me». Gratulerer med dagen!

Audun Vinger skriver om musikk og bøker i Dagens Næringsliv

Audun Vinger

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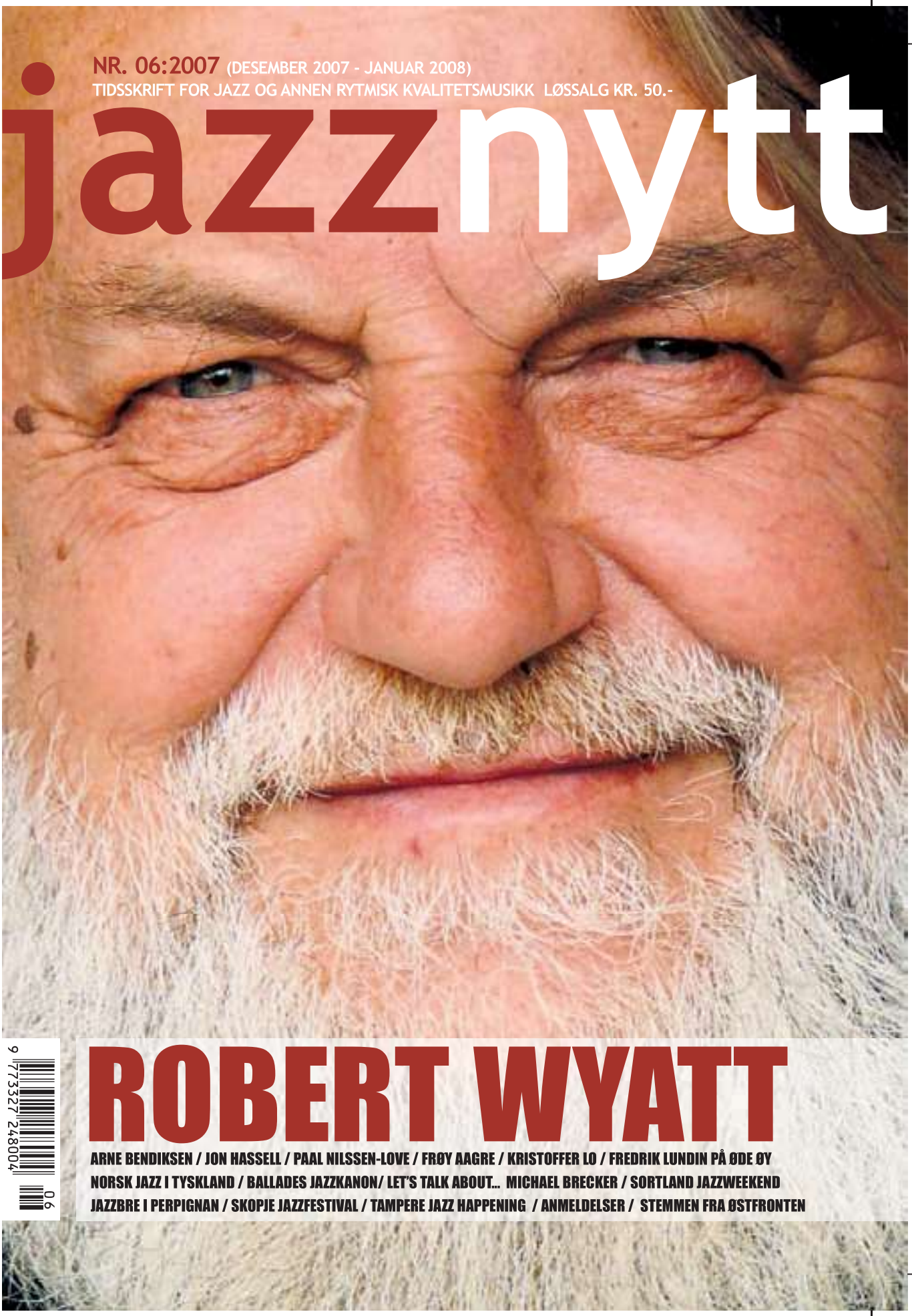
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jazznytt



ROBERT WYATT

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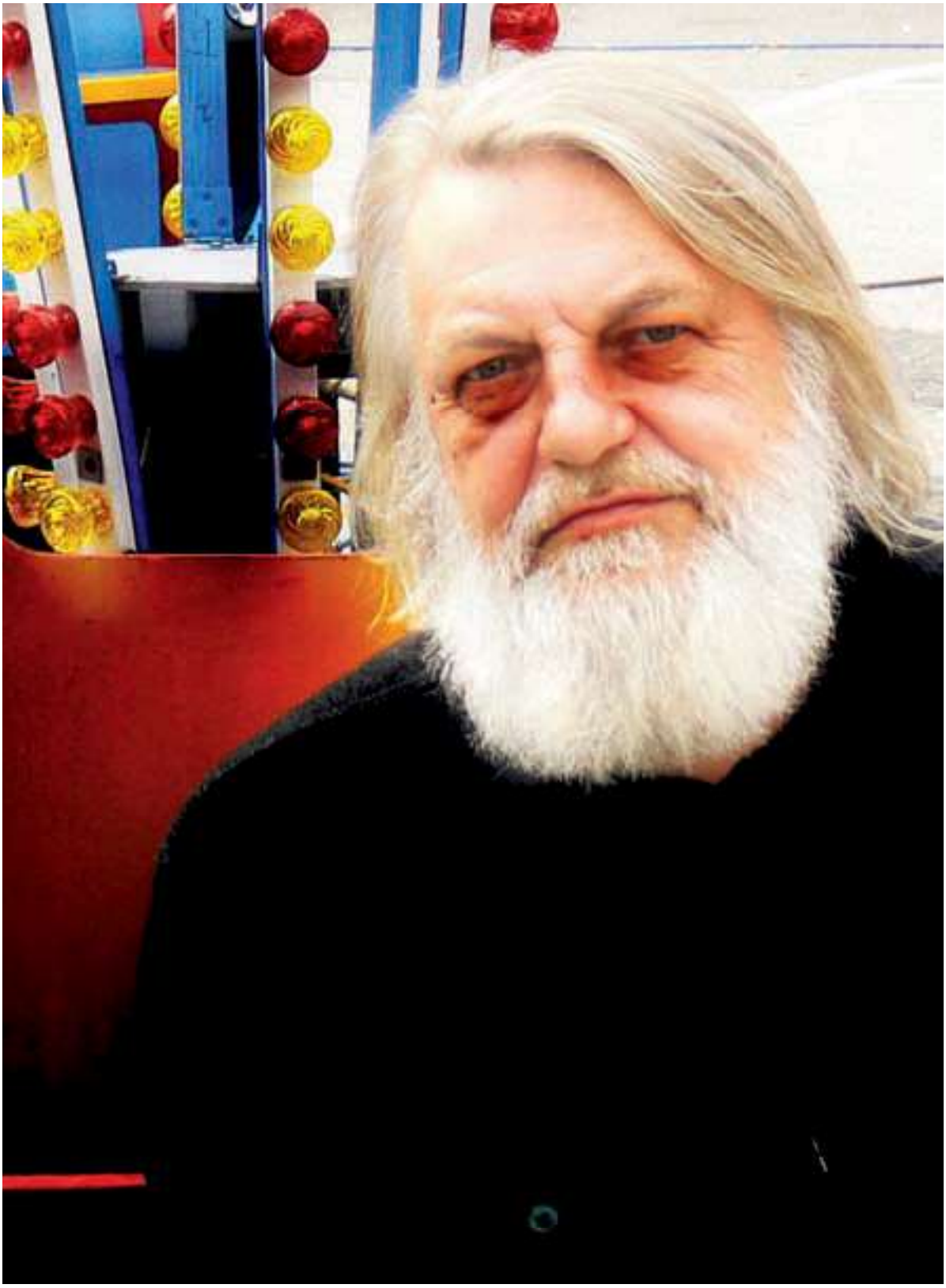
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STEMMEN FRA RULLESTOLEN



Namnet Robert Wyatt er uløyseleg knytt til Soft Machine - eit avantgardistisk psykadelikaband som prega den britiske rockescenen på 1960 og 70-talet. Han deltok på dei første utgjevingane til bandet, inkludert «Soft Machine Three», sett på av dei fleste som den beste utgjevinga deira. Her syng og spelar Wyatt trommer på «Moon in June». I 1973 drakk han seg sanselaus full på fest og fall ut av eit vindauge i 3. høgda. Etter det blei han lenka til rullestolen.

TEKST: STUART NICHOLSON OMSETJING: LARS MOSSEFINN
FOTO: ALFIE WYATT







Til venstre: Soft Machine anno 1970. Robert Wyatt i midten. Under: The Peel Session 1974

I ettertid har Wyatt helde fast ved den konstante eksperimenteringa som medverkande på innspelingar med alt frå Pink Floyd til Mike Oldfield og Bjørk. Heile tida har han vore politisk medviten. I 1983 kom han inn på Top 40 for første og einaste gong i karrieren med antikrigsballaden «Shipsbuilding», ført i pennen av Elvis Costello. Som venstreorientert, antirasist og anti-imperialist kjem politiske tema ofte til overflata i Wyatts eigen musikk.

Sjølv etter å ha passert 60 held den kreative raptusen fram med uforminska styrke. I 2004 var han nominert til ein «Mercury Prize», den gjevaste popprisen på dei britiske øyar, saman med namn som The Streets, Basement Jaxx og Amy Winehouse for albumet «Cuckooland». Det blei ikkje nokon pris på det avangardistiske albumet, men som Wyatt ironisk slo fast fekk dette tilstrekkeleg fart i platesalet «til å betala for eit sårt tiltrengt handikappbad».

Musikken hans, ofte med brilliante og hardtslåande tekstar, blir ikkje kalla, men er jazz. Han følgjer ivrig med og kjøper mange jazz-CDar i månaden hjå den lokale plateforhandlaren i Louth i Lincolnshire der han bur saman med kona Alfreda «Alfie» Benge. Han er ofte tilstades på konsertar og er ven med mange av dei fremste jazzmusikarane på øyriket. Fleire av desse har bidrege på eit eller fleire av dei 12 albuma han har gjeve ut i eige namn.

Domino

Etter å ha kome på kant med plateselskapet sitt i kjølvatnet av «Cuckoland», blei han signert av «Domino Records». Ikkje akkurat eit annonymt indie-selskap med listetoppar som Artic Monkey og Franz Ferdinand i stallen. «Domino»s grunnleggjar Laurence Bell byrja med å lisensiera obskure amerikanske utgjevingar for den britiske marknaden frå husveret sitt i Putney i London. Den enorme internasjonale suksessen til Artic Monkey forandra alt, og gav Bell fridom til å signera dei han ynskte. At valet fall på ein 62 åring som spelte inn musikken sin på soverommet sitt gode 30 mil frå London, er eit klart teikn på at Wyatt framleis betyr noko som den monomane «singersongwriter» han er.

- Korleis blei du knytt til «Domino»?

- Heldigvis for oss var der ein forleggjar som jobba for «Ryko Disc», ein svært samvitsfull forleggjar, og han gjekk frå «Ryko» til «Domino» då «Ryko» blei raida av ukjende amerikanske spekulantar. Me hadde ein stad å flykta til, sa han, og spurde meg om eg ikkje kunne ta ein prat med «Domino». Med min kjennskap til selskapet fann eg det usannsynleg at dei ville ha ein på etiketten som var tre gonger så gamal som alle dei som var på etiketten frå før. Me kom godt overeins og dei redda meg. Eg er svært takksam!

«Comic Opera»

- Korleis blei «Comic Opera» til? Blei kvar enkelt song til først og så sette du dei inn i tre suitar?

- Ja, nett slik. Det er tenkt å vera ei reise i lyd, men så mykje sagt, må det leggjast til at enkelte tema refererer til musikken og teksten. «Comic Opera» er delt inn i tre akter. Første akt heiter «Lost in Noise» og handlar om eit par som sklir frå kvarandre, ulike måtar relasjonar kan gå i oppløysing. Første songen, Anja Garbarek-songen «Stay Tunes», er litt tvetydig. Den andre, Alfies song, «Just As You Are» handlar om svik, og den tredje «You You» handlar om å drøyma om nokon når ein vaknar. Den fjerde «A.W.O.L» dreiar seg om smerteleg tap - å sjå for seg nokon med Alzheimer som har mista minnet. For nokon som er på feil side av dei seksti, på feil side i høve til perspektivet frå ungdomskulturen er dette eit tema med stadig skarpare brodd. Eg skal ikkje ta for meg heile albumet på denne måten, men eg kjem i hug ei rekkje hendingar i andre akt som heiter «The Here And Now»: Her er det ein fyr som er ute på ei pilgrimsreise og ser etter ein plass å slå seg ned. Han ser seg om i England, denne rare og litt gamaldagse plassen - ein plass ein kan få fnatt av, kanskje, men så hugsar han at landet er i krig og drep tusenvis, torturerer dei og Gud veit kva anna. Han blir så deprimert. I tredje akt, «Away with The Fairies» gjev han det engelske på båten og blir borgar av ein imaginær dimensjon der andre moglegheiter blir ein realitet.

- Eg lurte på grunnen til at han gav det engelske på båten! Tilbake til første akt og komposisjonen «Just As You Are». Eg elskar trompetsoloen din der og lurer på kva bakgrunn du har som trompetar?

- Litt pussig det der. Som tenåring gjorde eg det forferdeleg dårleg på skulen, men eg var med på ein del valfagsaktivitetar som innebar at eg prøvde meg på fiolin. Det var ikkje instrumentet som sådann som plaga meg, men musikken, tolkinga av musikken gjorde meg deprimert. Til far min si store fortviling droppa eg det og bytte fiolinen mot ein trompet. Eg må med skam vedgå at eg ikkje fekk fatt i det av just same grunn. Eg likte å spela instrumentet, men fiksa ikkje å lesa 'blekkene', så eg slutta, men eg bar i meg gode minne om faktisk å laga lydane. I ungdommen brukte eg i mange år å ha eit trompetmunnstykke i jakkelomma. For ti år sidan fann Alfie ein gamal trompet i baggasjerommet på ein bil, trur eg, og ho spurde om eg ikkje ville prøva meg på denne. Ho likar å finna ting som eg kan spela på. Eg fann slik glede i å spela at eg tok bryet med å utvikla min eigen teknikk, kva tonar som var kor. Så stor glede har eg hatt av å spela instrumentet at eg har spelt på dei siste platene mine frå og med «Sleep» i 1997. Hobbyen min no er å spela Sarah Vaughan-plater og læra n minera på den politiske arena på forferdelegaste vis, blir dette for meg ei present og sterk uro.

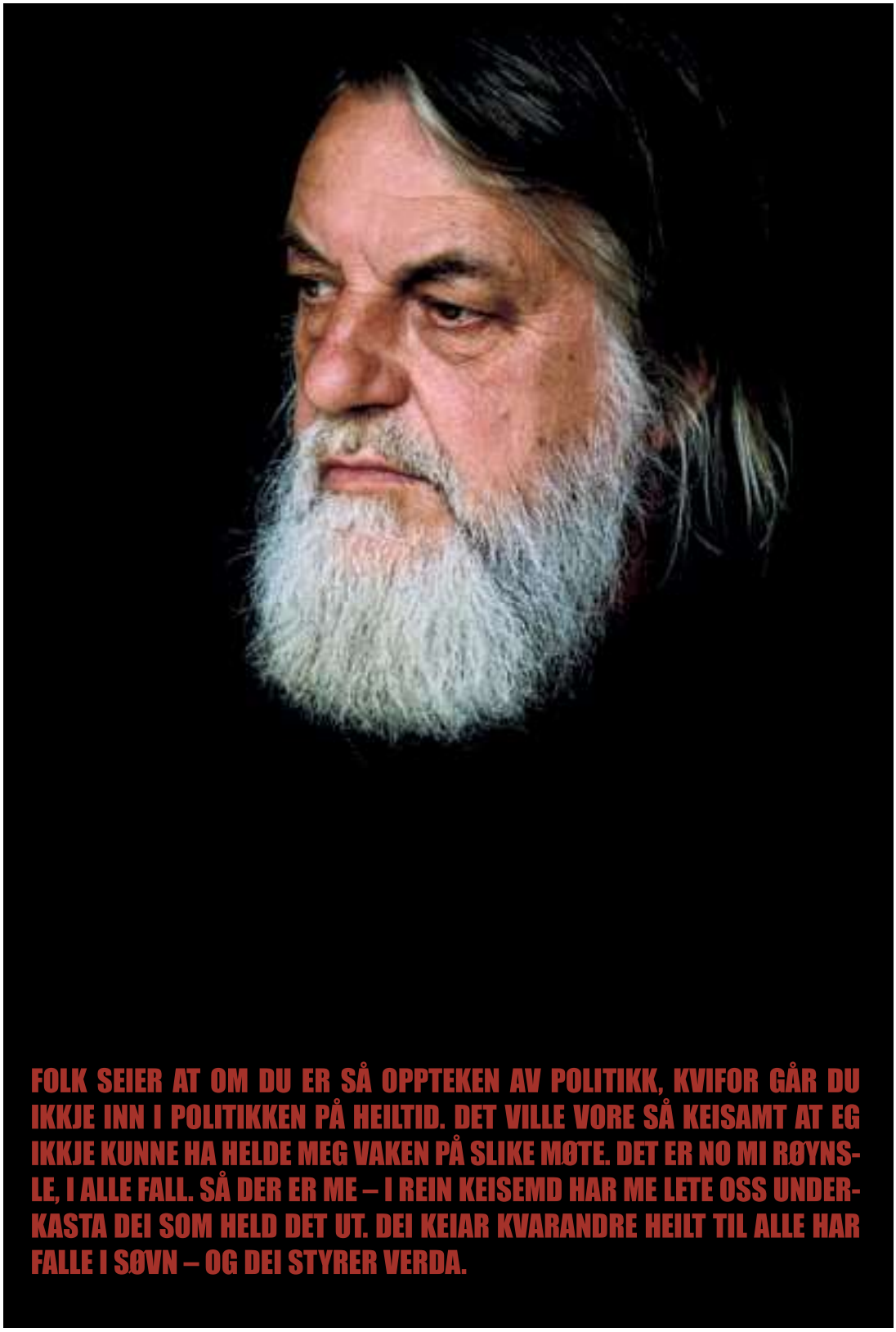
- Og «Mob Rule» handlar om det absurde i å gå til krig?

- Ja, eg er glad du la merke til det. Den tek utgangspunkt i å gå inn i demokratiske prosessar ved å gå på lokalpolitiske møte. Det er som mangt eg skriv - det byrjar med noko spesifikt lokalt, men eg inkluderer det berre i den grad det resonnerer utover det private. Ein eller annan skreiv om makt at ein nøkkelfaktor i er å få folk til å kjeda seg til underkasting. Har du nokon gong vore på eit lokalpolitisk møte forstår du at dette er ei treffande beskriving av korleis dette fungerer. D.v.s. - etter ei stund sluttar du å gå på slike møte. Folk seier at om du er så oppteken av politikk, kvifor går du ikkje inn i politikken på heiltid. Det ville vore så keisamt at eg ikkje kunne ha helde meg vaken på slike møte. Det er no mi røynsle, i alle fall. Så der er me – i rein keisemd har me lete oss underkasta dei som held det ut. Dei keiar kvarandre heilt til alle har falle i søvn – og dei styrer verda.

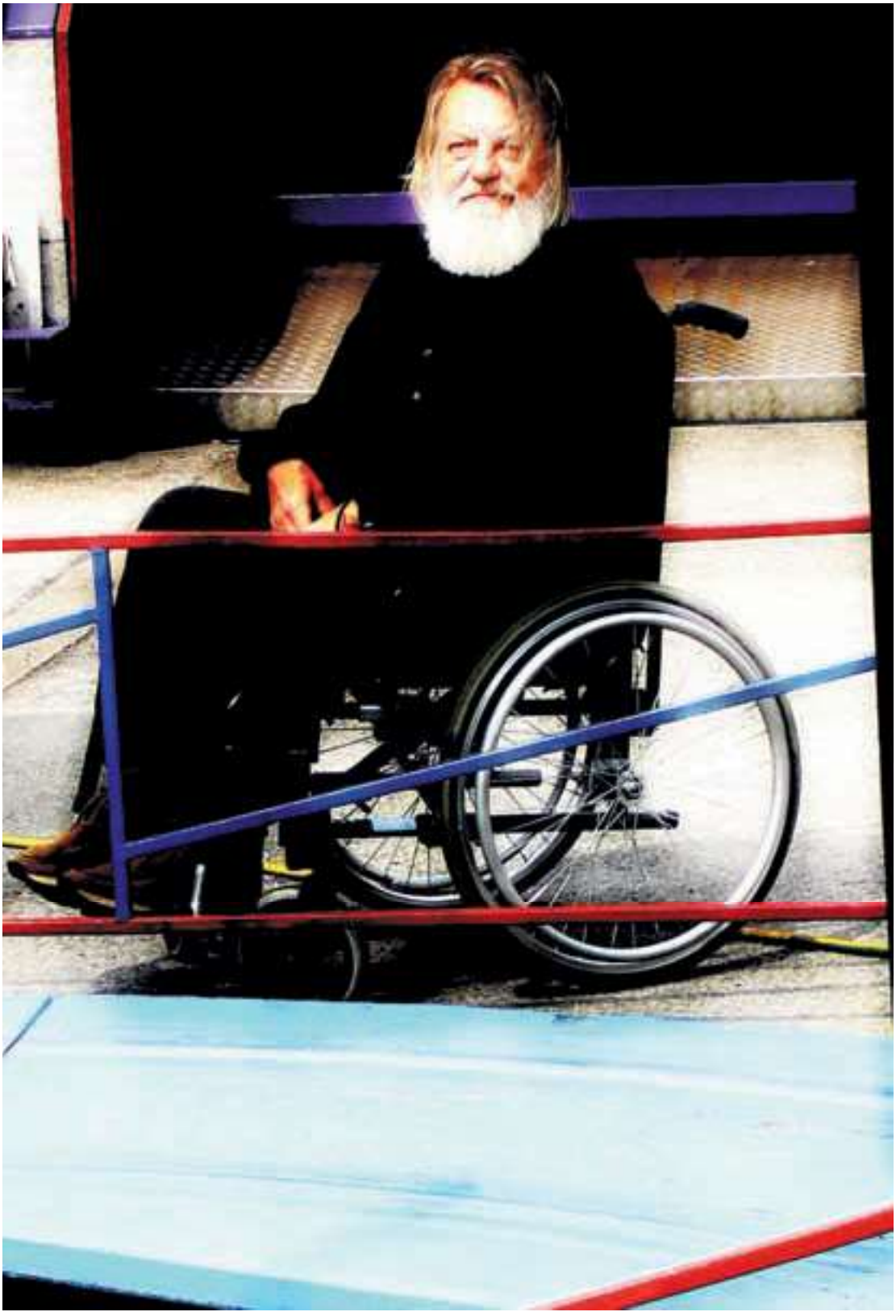
Komposisjonsprosessen

- Kan du seia noko om den kreative prosessen når du skriv ein song. Dei framstår alle som komplette musikalske skapningar, så detaljrike. Høyrer du dei for deg slik når du komponerer, eller utviklar du dei i studio til det kjennest rett?

- Du har rett i det første. Eg kjenner det på meg når eg har noko. Om det ligg i teksten, melodien eller i ein akkord, eller vonleg i ein kombinasjon av desse, har eg noko levande, noko reelt eksisterande, eit verkeleg såkorn. Om det hadde blitt sådd, hadde det blitt ein plante av det. I den forstand er det fastlagt. Eg tek ikkje ikkje tak i noko i vona om... Oi! Det var ein fin akkord. Kanskje eg kan bruka han til noko. Det må vera meir enn det. Når eg skriv heime, veit eg at det er noko der. Det må berre avdekkjast. Eg har ikkje prosedyrar utover det. Eg skulle ynskt eg hadde, for då hadde eg laga mange fleire plater. Nokre av desse ideane må hengja saman i ein slik grad at eg er trygg nok til å ta dei med til studio og få hjelp av andre musikantar. Har eg ein låt, men ikkje finn heilt ut av det, trør Alfie støttande til med tekst som me testar ut, og plutseleg har me ein song. Av og til har eg ein lapp med tekst som Alfie har skribla ned i dagboka si. Eg låner dette, og spør: «Har du noko i mot at eg nyttar dette som grunnlag for ein song?» Så rutinar fins ikkje. Det liknar meir på å samla rekved enn å komponera, ærleg talt.



FOLK SEIER AT OM DU ER SÅ OPPTEKEN AV POLITIKK, KVIFOR GÅR DU IKKJE INN I POLITIKKEN PÅ HEILTID. DET VILLE VORE SÅ KEISAMT AT EG IKKJE KUNNE HA HELDE MEG VAKEN PÅ SLIKE MØTE. DET ER NO MI RØYNSLE, I ALLE FALL. SÅ DER ER ME – I REIN KEISEMD HAR ME LETE OSS UNDERKASTA DEI SOM HELD DET UT. DEI KEIAR KVARANDRE HEILT TIL ALLE HAR FALLE I SØVN – OG DEI STYRER VERDA.



Coveret på Wyatts seneste CD «Comic Opera»





På Top of the pop på BBC 2

- «On Town Square» spelar Gilad Atzmon saksofon. Kan du seia noko om korleis dette samarbeidet kom i stand?

- Eg blei varsla om Gilad - Eg trur det er rette måten å seia det på! Varsla av jazzkritikaren i «The Morning Star», ei lita, men perfekt utforma avis på venstresida. Han sa: «Har du høyrt Gilad? Har du høyrt han spela? Har du høyrt han snakka? Har du lese det han skriv? Han er ein ekstraordinær mann». Eg høyrde han på konsert og lytta til eit par CDar, og - fantastisk! I byrjinga tenkte eg at han måtte vera ein slags «Don Quixote»-karakter. Kva er det som skjer? Ein heilt annan angrepsvinkel. Me er vane med komikarar som går laus på politikken. Dei er ofte meir seriøse enn politikarane, og politikarane er ofte heilt ufrivillig meir morosame enn komikarane. Først og fremst blei eg som musikar slått av klarinettspelet hans. Han hadde ein spesiell autoritet frå Levanten i spelet sitt. Han hadde tydlegvis lytta til arabisk eller det me kallar musikk frå Midtausten. Samstundes kunne han som det mest naturlege servera ein Benny Goodman-solo, noko som er ganske uvanleg, for ikkje å seia heilt unikt. Eg høyrde han live, og han hadde verkeleg lete seg utfordra av det kvitglødande i ein Coltrane-solo også. For å setja kruna på verket er han svært morosam på eit modig vis. Ikkje på Ronnie Scotts måte. Meir likt Mort Sahl eller ein av desse komikarane som presenterte svart humor på 1950 og 60-talet, Lenny Bruce, slike typar. I staden for å snakka om Amerika, snakka han om Israel, heimlandet sitt, noko som gjev han haugevis med fiendar. Når eg spurde om han kunne gjera noko for meg, svara han: «Å arbeida med meg, kan skaffa deg ein masse problem». Eg svara Gilad: «Du kjenner ikkje meg. Eg var med i komunistpartiet i 10 år. Eg kjenner bråk! La oss skapa ein allianse av utstøytte, og kom og hjelp meg å laga nokre plater». Noko han gjorde til gagns. Han er ein fryd å arbeida med. Han elskar å spela. Eg har nettopp fått den siste CDen hans «Refuge». Det er ei heilt nydeleg plate med kvartetten hans, eit meisterverk. I ei rettvis verd burde denne mannen ha vore j.... berømt. Herregud! Gilad angrip eigentleg tredje verdskrigen. Gudane skal vita at han har ting på gang.

Folkelege element

- Eg la merke til at du i eit intervju sitert Mingus, som sa at om musikken mista røtene sine i song og dans, så var den ikkje viktig lenger. Kan du utdjupa dette?

- Eg er glad du tok opp dette. Når eg tenkjer meg om, så får alle slike forbodsutsegner det til å skurra i meg. Eg er samd med Charlie Parker, reglar fins ikkje i det heile. Eg er overraska over at eg sa det. Det eg kan seia er at eg personleg får pustevanskar om eg ikkje finn noko som relaterer seg til song og dans i eit musikkstykke. Det er det heile. Til sjuande og sist er det folkelege elementet avgjerande for ein som kom inn i musikken via rockegrupper og ikkje via konservatorium eller intellektuelle sirklar. Eg må høyra det, og det gjer eg - i Stravinskij's «Vårofferet». Ein fagott innleier - tydlegvis med ein russisk folkemelodi. Det er byrjinga av «Vårofferet». Der har du folkemusikk. Det næraste me kjem dette no er i popmusikken, som faktisk talar til folk. Folk som er skrudd saman på ein måte som MacDonald's ville ha beundra. Mi meining er no at dei som brukar folkemusikken, spelar verkeleg musikk. Og i høve til dansemusikken er det ikkje mogleg å svara på. Om nokon spelar og lokalet er fullt av dansande, så er det eit vakkert syn og noko ein ikkje kan argumentera imot. Musikk kan vera så mykje anna når eg tenkjer etter. Fjernt i slekt på ein måte, men om du som døme ser på transen i Sufi-tradisjonen, der dei virvlande dervish'ane er ein kitsch måte å fortelja kva det går ut på , så når dei ein slags ekstase, og det fenomenet er i mange typar musikk jorda rundt - Afrika, Det fjerne austen og James Brown. Den mest seriøst Sufi-inspirerte musikaren eg kjenner, er Evan Parker. Parker spelar til dømes ikkje noko du ville forbinda med ein låt, og ikkje kan du dansa til det, men det er utan tvil sterkt og viktig det han held på med. Så dette er mitt høve til å modifisera det sitatet frå meg som du refererte. Det næraste eg kjem dette i mine ting er å få Orphy Robinson til å spela duett med seg sjølv på kuttet «Pastafari» (på «Comic Opera») og eg la på eit rytmespor i 7/4. Det er ein takt og eit tonalt senter der, men som med Eric Dolphy, som smett inn og ut av det rytmiske og harmoniske, det er der heile tida ein eller annan stad.

Reisa vidare

- Dette er det 12. albumet ditt – ei musikalsk reise – men kor frå og kor går reisa?

- Det var eit hyggeleg spørsmål, merkeleg nok ganske introspektivt. Dette vil berre halda fram. Du veit, ungar har kjemisett. Kva skjer om ein har sennep og appelsinjus i ein bolle med svovelsyre. Det held eg på med - å blanda ting som normalt sett ikkje ville blitt blanda. Kva skjer om ein får Orphy Robinson på oljefat og Gilad på tenor? Korleis ville det bli om eg prøvde å syngja på eit språk eg ikkje kan, italiensk til dømes? Kva skjer om eg får ei ung, kinesisk jente frå Manchester til å syngja som ein teremin på Anja Garbareks song? Kva skjer med Paul Weller om du tek vekk den rocka rytmeseksjonen. Det er berre spanande å sjå kva som skjer. Det er ikkje ein freistnad på å skapa nyhende eller skapa noko av ingenting. Det er berre å sjå kva som skjer når ein set dette saman med noko anna.

- Er du overraska over at det er blitt 12 album?

- Det visste eg ikkje. Eg er overraska over å ha levd så lenge, så – ja!

- Kor vil musikken ta vegen i framtida?

- Det var noko som slo meg med folkemusikk. Eg har alltid skydd den. Eg har sett på det som eit lett bedragersk omgrep, men eg vart skaka og rørt av Rachel Uthank og plata «The Bairns», eit album av ei folkemusikkgruppe frå Northumberland. Eg høyrde på den fordi dei gjer ein av mine låtar, men hovudsakleg spelar dei folkemusikk både frå by og land. Eg har verkeleg tenkt på dette. Eg har møtt Billy Bragg for grunnleggjande å forstå ulike lands folkemusikk og den djupare meininga med den. Den har autoritet og er ein del av historien, men eg veit ikkje heilt kva eg vil med det. Eg tenkjer seint. Eg køyrer alltid turistvegen for å koma frå A til B.

- Det er eit stort potensiale å grava fram. Eg tenkte på Jan Garbarek som inkorporerer joik i si frasering.

- Det stemmer, og eg beundrar han mykje. Det er eit hyggeleg samantreff at eg jobbar med ein av songane til dotra hans på «Comic Opera». Eg møtte Jan på ein jazzfestival i London, og eg nemnde at eg nyss hadde lytta på noko frå Anja Garbareks plate. Eg fortalde at ho hadde sendt meg plata, og låtane var heilt fantastiske, og at eg hadde lyst å gjera ein av dei på mi neste plate. «Gjer det!» sa han. Så eg tenkte, greit, Jan Garbarek har sagt at eg skal gjera det så det held for meg. Som sagt så gjort, og den var så passande at eg plasserte den først for den slår an tonen mykje betre enn noko eg kunne ha skrive sjølv!

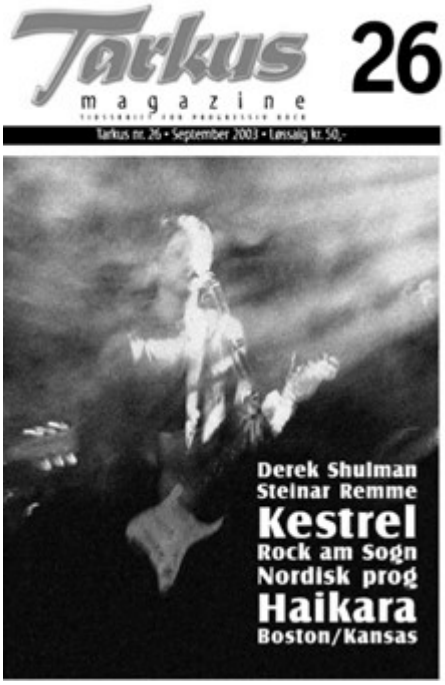
- Ein del jazzmusikarar har sagt at dei nyttar element frå sin eigen folkemusikk for ikkje å høyra amarikansk ut.

- Det plagar ikkje meg. Tidlegare song eg som ein amerikanar. Vel, ikkje som ein amerikanar, men som ein som syng som amerikanarar, slik som Van Morrison eller fyren frå Small Faces (Rod Stewart), men eg svitsja til cockney etter ei stund! Som Ray Davies og hans like. Eg kan ikkje syngja med annan aksent enn den eg snakka på skulen i East Kent blanda med mor mi sin BBC-variant av engelsk. Eg likar også Noel Coward, ein skikkeleg overklasse engelskmann. Så temaet kvernar i hovudet mitt. Eg var aldri særleg interessert i song. Det var ein grunn for å sleppa å læra seg å spela eit instrument, men no er eg interessert i det som eit instrument i seg sjølv. Så eg lyttar songarar. Folkemusikken har kome øvst på saklista.

- Me avventar med interesse utviklinga.

- Eg seier berre at eg for augneblinken er interessert. Har ikkje idé om kva det vil føra til, men det opptek meg.

Soft Machine - Tarkus - nr. 26 - September 2003



Soft Machine

Soft Machine regnes av mange for å være kanskje det definitive Canterburybandet. Sammen med Caravan vokste det ut av psykedeliapopbandet The Wilde Flowers, og sammen mer Pink Floyd, var de et av de mest populære bandene på den store undergrunnsscenen i London på slutten av sekstitallet. De gjennomgikk en hel rekke personellbytter, noe som også satte sitt preg på plateproduksjonen.

De tidlige tider

Bandets tidlige musikk kan vel best beskrives som improvisasjoner som avbrytes av sanger som henter like mye fra jazz og engelsk music hall-humor som det er rock. Dette tidlige bandet besto av Kevin Ayers på gitar, Robert Wyatt på trommer, Mike Ratledge på orgel og etterhvert Hugh Hopper på bass.

På debutalbumet *Volume One* (1968) viser de et band som er i ferd med å ta et steg langt unna det de fleste andre engelske band syslet med. Sangene bindes sammen med improviserte passasjer og en haug med lydeffekter som i våre dager helst kan karakteriseres som flaue, eller til nød sjarmerende. Spillingen er av høy kvalitet, og særlig Ratledges

orgel og Wyatts trommer plasserer dette i en helt annen divisjon enn det meste annet som var å oppdrive på den engelske undergrunnsscenen. Skiva ble forsøkt produsert av Chas Chandler (mannen som oppdaget Jimi Hendrix), men det påstås at bandet gjorde mesteparten mens han satt i telefonen.



Det neste albumet, *Volume 2* (1969), inkluderte et nytt medlem, bassisten Hugh Hopper, som før hadde vært bandets roadie. Hans massive fuzzbass ga bandet et helt unikt sound, og de ble godt mottatt av rockepublikummet. Dette resulterte bl.a. i at de kunne turnere sammen med Jimi Hendrix. På denne skiva fjerner de seg litt fra debutens galskap og putter inn lengre og mer komplekse komposisjoner der de gjør bruk av bl.a. en blåserrekke. Etter denne skiva slutter Ayers, og bandet var nå en trio av Hopper, Ratledge og Wyatt.



Volume One

Third (1970) er vel kanskje det mest klassiske albumet med den tidlige besetningen. På denne skiva var blåserne enda mer en del av gruppas sound, og komposisjonene varierte mellom komplekse, ned-

skrevne komposisjoner og krevende improvisasjoner. Men oppe i det hele var det fortsatt en plass for det lyriske og melodiske, og Robert Wyatts vokal på *Moon In June* er et av den tidlig progens mer spesielle øyeblikk. Skiva var et dobbeltalbum med fire låter, og viste at bandet var helt i forkant av både prog og det som etter hvert skulle bli fusion.

Hvileløs vandring

Men med *Third* var det akkurat som om de gikk litt tomme for den piffen som ga dem det særegne soundet deres. *Fourth* (1970) gled over i mer pregløs fusion, og med *Fifth* hadde Robert Wyatt forlatt skuta. Selv om skiva kan oppleves litt langdryg til tider, så mener jeg at *Fifth* (1972) har flere høydepunkter enn *Fourth*. Låtene har fortsatt mye preg av improvisasjon, og særlig Elton Deans sax står i fokus i skivas flytende, nesten Pink Floyd-aktige stemninger. Mike Ratledges orgel og el.pianospill setter fortsatt særpreg på musikken, men den umiddelbare varmen og sjarmen er på vei ut.



Third

Før *Seven* (1973) forlot Hopper bandet, og inn på bass kom Roy Babbington, en mer typisk jazzbassist, inn. Dette albumet er det siste som har en rest av den gamle sjarmen, humoren og uforutsigbarheten. Med bandet merkes av at saksofonisten Karl Jenkins begynner å få litt vel mye å si, og noen av låtene er pregløs syttitallsfusion som bare er skrevet for å kunne putte inn mest mulig soloer.

På oppfølgeren *Bundles* (1975) ble Ratledges tilstedeværelse enda mer marginalisert gjennom inntreden av den unge og fremadstormende gitaristen Alan Holdsworth, som på dette albumet gjør en bemerkelsesverdig god jobb. Jenkins spiller også

mer synth enn sax, og soundet på denne skiva låter faktisk friskere og mer inspirert enn på lenge. Fortsatt er det mer typisk fusion enn prog, men skiva viser så absolutt at bandet fortsatt kunne litt hvis de bare ville.

Men Ratledge gikk lei, og forlot bandet. Med det siste originalmedlemmet ute, ble det full plass til Jenkins og hans lite varierende komposisjoner. Alan Wakeman, fetter til Rick, kom inn på gitar, men skiva *Softs* (1976) er i manges ører en ganske platt og kjedelig affære uten mål og mening. Omtrent like meningsløst var livealbumet *Alive and Well in Paris*, som viste et band som levde men ikke akkurat kunne sies å føle seg vel...



Bundles

På *Land of Cockayne* (1981), er det lite eller ingenting som minner noe som helst om det gamle Soft Machine, og skiva er vel i gavnet et soloalbum for Jenkins komposisjoner med musikere som Alan Holdsworth på gitar og Jack Bruce på bass. Et orkester hjelper også til, men særlig inspirerende er det ikke. Etter dette gikk bandet fullstendig i oppløsning.

I ettertid har mange av musikerne fra bandet gjort seg gjeldene i en rekke musikalske sammenhenger. John Marshall og Karl Jenkins er ettertraktede jazzmusikere, Alan Holdsworth er en legendarisk gitarist, Mike Ratledge har gjort suksess innen reklamefilmmusikken, Hugh Hopper holder fortsatt koken innenfor den mer typiske Canterbury-proggen og Robert Wyatt har gitt ut en rekke perler av noen soloalbum.

Anbefalte skiver

Volume 1
Galskap satt i noe som kan minne om et system.

Third
En god start for å få tak i det mer jazzete soundet til bandet.

Bundles
Tung, tøff og rett så vellykket gitarbasert fusion.

I etterkant har det kommet en rekke utgivelser av typen live og arkivinnspillinger. Sjekk ut hjemmesiden til cuneiformrecords.com og se hva du finner der.



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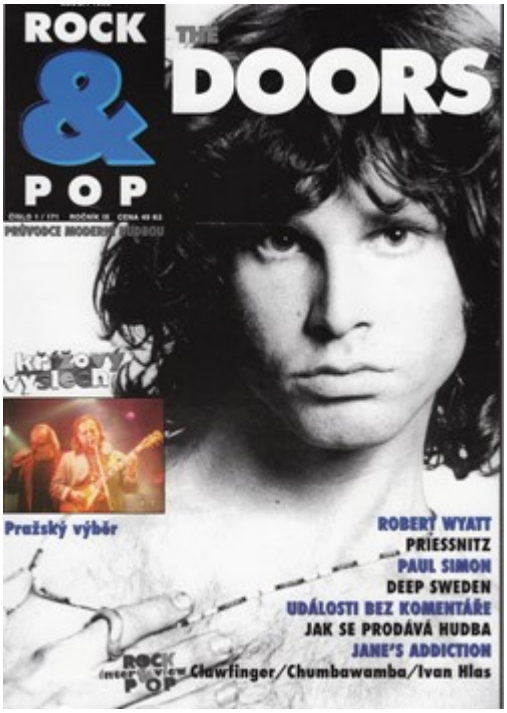
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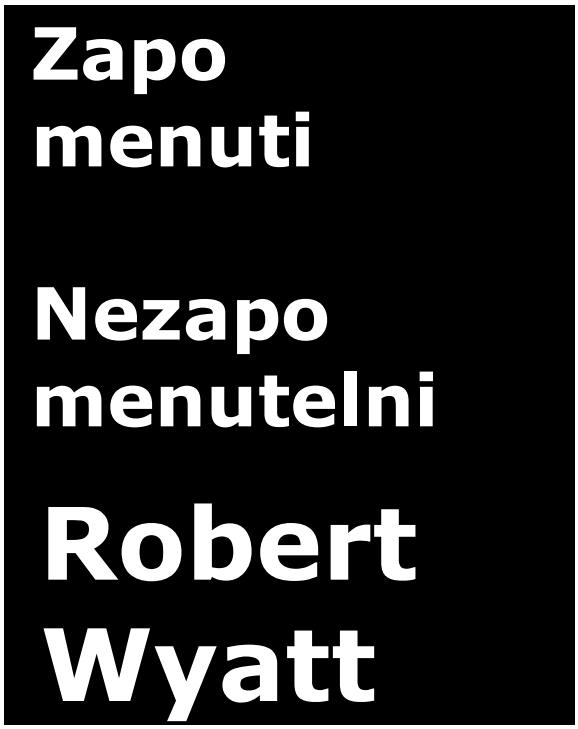
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zapomenutí nezapomenutelní

Miloš Latislav / foto archiv

ROBERT WYATT



Robert Wyatt je nezapomenutelný, ale rozhodně ne zapomenutý. Už třeba jen proto, že loni v září vydal fantastické nové album. Jenže místa v časopise je málo a navíc Wyattova story logicky navazuje na loňský seriál o Canterburské scéně, takže protentokrát neberte název rubriky tak úplně vážně. Na světové hudební scéně není moc takových umělců, jako je Wyatt. Tenhle inteligentní a mnohostranný zpěvák, bubeník a hráč na řadu dalších nástrojů získal už v raném stadiu své kariéry statut vyloženě kultovní postavy, který si díky vyrovnanosti své produkce udržel dodnes. Jeho hudba a názory měly značný vliv na hnutí Rock In Opposition i pozdější indie scénu 80. let.

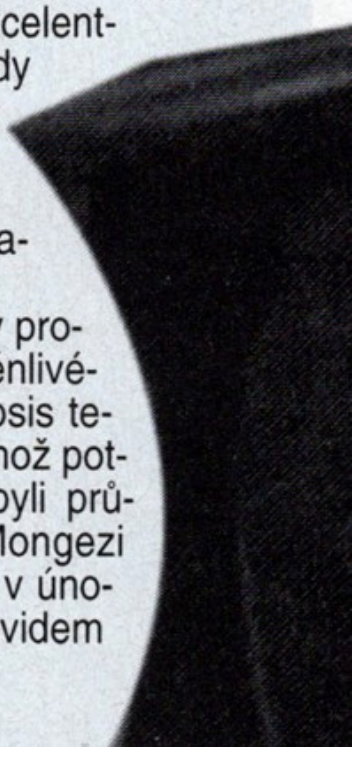
DOBA HLEDÁNÍ

Narodil se 28. ledna 1945 v anglickém Bristolu jako Robert Wyatt Ellidge. Do dvaceti používal celé jméno nebo jeho druhou část po otci, psychologu Georgi Ellidgeovi, později už vystupoval takřka výhradně pod příjmením své matky, učitelky a novinářky Honor Wyattové. V prvním roce Robertova věku rodina přesídlila do Londýna, roku 1955 pak do Lyddenu, deset mil jižně od Canterbury

v hrabství Kent. Rodinné prostředí bylo velmi otevřené a liberální a hudba v něm měla své nezastupitelné místo, i když to byla především klasika. Starší bratr Mark Ellidge však Roberta už někdy v jedenácti seznámil s moderním jazzem a tak není divu, že vedle houslí a trubky začal vnímavý mladík brzy hrát také na bicí. Jazz zajímal i řadu Robertových spolužáků z canterburské Simon Langton School, například bratry Hugha a Briana Hopperovy, Mikea Ratledge a Davida Sinclaira. Spousta pozoruhodných věcí se koncem padesátých a začátkem šedesátých let děla ve starém gregoriánském domě Wyattových rodičů, zvlášť když se tu objevil australský beatnik Daevid Allen. Následující události, vznik víceméně rhythm & bluesových Wilde Flowers a poté experimentujících Soft Machine, to vše bylo popsáno v první části seriálu o Canterburské scéně v sedmém čísle loňského ročníku, takže jen několik připomenutí. Robertovo působení ve Wilde Flowers je zachyceno na CD ***The Wilde Flowers*** (Voiceprint 1994), obsahujícím většinu demonahrávek skupiny, z toho asi polovinu s jeho sólovým zpěvem. Dalším dokumentem Wyattova rodícího se pěveckého stylu i raných autorských pokusů jsou nahrávky původní sestavy Soft Machine (tedy ještě s Allenem) ze sedmašedesátého, vydané pod několika názvy (nejspolehlivěji k mání na CD ***Jet Propelled*** firem Charly nebo Spalax) a samozřejmě první dvě alba skupiny. Na dvojalbum ***Third*** z roku 1970 umístil Wyatt svou zásadní skladbu *Moon In June*, ta však byla jeho posledním příspěvkem do repertoáru Soft Machine, kteří směřovali k čistě instrumentálnímu fusion stylu. Vztahy v kapele se zhoršovaly, a ač se Robert k odchodu zatím nerozhodl, začal se poohlížet i po jiných příležitostech k vyžití. Nejdřív se na pár koncertů přidal k jazzově improvizačnímu Amazing Bandu trumpetisty Mala Deana a v červnu '70 s ním natočil LP ***Roar*** (vyšlo však teprve loni na CD firmy FMR). Poté začal vystupovat s kapelou ex-kolegy Kevina Ayerse The Whole World (předtím se interpretačně podílel i na obou dosavadních Ayersových albech) a v létě se odhodlal k natočení své první sólovky ***The End Of An Ear***. Wyattovou původní ideou bylo udělat improvizovanou nahrávku s jihoafrickým trumpetistou Mongezim

Fezou a dalšími členy big bandu Brotherhood Of Breath Chrise McGregora. Ti však nebyli tou dobou v Anglii a tak se spokojil s kolegou ze Soft Machine Eltonem Deanem (altsaxofon, saxello), členy jeho vedlejší kapely Just Us Markem Charigem (kornet) a Nevillem Whiteheadem (kontrabas), Davidem Sinclairem z Caravan (varhany) a bratrem Markem na piano. Album se na první poslech jeví veskze šíleným (leccos napovídá už slovní hříčka v názvu), ale při bližším ohledání lze narazit na řadu postupů, rozvinutých v pozdější Wyattově tvorbě, především hypnotické opakování jednoduchých podkladových motivů a bezeslovný scatový zpěv. Vzápětí po vzniku sólové desky si všestranný Wyatt zahrál jako jeden ze tří bubeníků na druhé LP The Keith Tippett Group ***Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening*** (Vertigo 1971). V listopadu se ocitl ve stejné pozici v avantgardním padesátičlenném orchestru Centipede, v němž se sešli hudebníci z Tippett Group, King Crimson, Nucleus, Blossom Toes a dalších kapel. Zkrácená verze Tippettovy dvouhodinové suity pro dvojalbum ***Septober Energy*** (RCA 1971) však byla natočena po sérii koncertů až v červnu následujícího roku.

Mezitím stihli Soft Machine v nejsilnější sestavě Wyatt, Ratledge, Hopper, Dean zhusta koncertovat a během podzimu '70 stvořit své nejjazzovější LP ***Fourth***. Album i koncertní záznamy z následujícho období (jeden obzvlášť zdařilý právě vydává pod názvem ***Virtually*** americká firma Cuneiform) jasně ukazují, jak excelentním a osobitým bubeníkem tehdy Wyatt byl, ač o sobě v tomto směru neměl valné mínění. V květnu '71 byl dokonce vyhlášen hráčem měsíce v britském magazínu Beat Instrumental.



Hektické období kulminovalo: v prosinci '70 se Robert přidal k proměnlivému freejazzovému tělesu Symbiosis tenorsaxofonisty Garyho Winda, jehož potkal v Centipede (dalšími hráči byli průběžně Tippett, Nick Evans, Mongezi Feza, Roy Babbington a další) a v únoru příštího roku natočil s Daevidem Allenem jeho LP ***Banana Moon***.

Po mimořádně úspěšném americkém turné Soft Machine v červenci Wyatt skupinu konečně opustil. Příčinou byly přetrvávající rozdílné představy o dalším hudebním směřování.

NA VLASTNÍCH NOHOU (A KOLECH)

V srpnu se Wyatt potkal s australským pianistou Davem MacRaem, kterého shledal ideálním pro založení nové kapely. Jeho studiové závazky to však zatím znemožnily a tak se členy Matching Mole (šlo o hříčku s francouzským překladem jména Soft Machine) na podzim '71 stali Dave Sinclair, kytarista Phil Miller a basista Bill MacCormick. Zatímco skupina nacvičovala repertoár pro chystané album, kapelník ještě do konce roku příležitostně koncertoval se Symbiosis, Centipede či dalšími přáteli. Nedlouhá existence Matching Mole už byla v této rubrice také popsána (R&P 11/97), takže jen pro doplnění: Na debutu ***Matching Mole***, navzdory očekávání obsahujícím minimum předem připravených a zpívaných písní, si Wyatt, podobně jako na své sólové desce, zaexperimentoval s klávesami, především s mellotronem. Název i obal (se stylizovanou kresbou kapely, inspirovanou pohlednicí z Čínské lidové republiky) dvojky ***Little Red Record*** poprvé upozorňují na Wyattovo pozdější politické zaměření. Po rozpadu Matching Mole na podzim '72 si Robert párkrát zahrál s klávesistou Francisem Monkmanem z Curved Air a pohostinsky vystoupil s novou kapelou Phila Millera Hatfield And The North. První dva měsíce nového roku strávil se svou přítelkyní, výtvarnicí Alfredou Benge v Itálii a po návratu začal na MacCormickovo naléhání uvažovat o sestavení nových Matching Mole, v nichž měli figurovat ještě Monkman a Windo. Dřív se však rozjel víceméně improvizační projekt WMWM s Windem, MacRaem a kontrabasistou Ronem Mathewsonem.





1. června, těsně před zahájením zkoušek nových Matching Mole, došlo k osudnému úrazu, když Robert při jednom večírku vypadl v opilosti z okna ve čtvrtém patře. Byla z toho zlomená noha a fraktura obratle s následkem ochrnutí spodní část těla, pro bubeníka samozřejmě tragédie. Wyatt ale naštěstí neztratil chuť do života ani hudby. *„Z bubeníka, který trochu zpívá, jsem se stal zpěvákem, který trochu bubnuje“*, okomentoval to později. Ještě před propuštěním z nemocnice v listopadu '73 nazpíval píseň *Calyx* na debut Hatfield And The North. Staří přátelé Pink Floyd a Soft Machine uspořádali dva koncerty v londýnském divadle Rainbow, jejichž výtěžek pomohl Robertovu znovuzapojení do života.

V únoru a březnu '74 pak vzniklo v produkci bubeníka Pink Floyd Nicka Masona Wyattovo životní dílo, album ***Rock Bottom***. Hrají na něm hlavně basisté Hugh Hopper a Richard Sinclair a bubeník Laurie Allan, svou troškou přispěli i Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo, Mike Oldfield (kytara), Fred Frith (viola), Ivor Cutler (recitace) a Alfreda Benge (hlas). Wyatt sám kromě zpěvu hraje na perkuse, klávesy, kytaru, vinné sklenky a další drobnosti. Deska odráží nejen v abstarktních, pocitových textech jeho silný vztah k Alfredě Benge, s níž se přesně v den vydání desky, tedy 26. července 1974 oženil. *„Alfie měla skutečný vliv přímo na hudbu samotnou, protože byla nespokojena s mými staršími věcmi, připadaly jí příliš zhuštěné, přeplněné. Řekla mi: 'Proč si tam nenecháš trochu víc prostoru, nech tomu volnější průběh, jako Van Morrison a tihle lidi'. A to byl pro mě velmi dobrý podnět.“*

V květnu Robert párkrát vystoupil s Hatfield And The North (pro tuto příležitost napsal k původně bezeslovné skladbě *Calyx* text), jako perkusista si zahrál na koncertě Kevina Ayerse s přáteli v divadle Rainbow (viz album ***June 1, 1974***), se Slapp Happy v pořadu BBC Top Gear a společně s Windem na koncertní poctě zesnulému Malu Deanovi. V srpnu natočil na podnět Simona Drapera z Virgin singl s coververzí skladby Monkees *I'm A Believer,* který se dostal do britské Top 30. 8. září se konal v Londýnském divadle Drury Lane velkolepý koncert na oslavu Robertova návratu na scénu, při němž doprovodnou kapelu vytvořila rozšířená sestava z ***Rock Bottom***. O dva dny později zahrál Wyatt sólově v BBC Top Gear (zachyceno na EP *Peel Sessions*), velký ohlas

mělo i jeho vystoupení v televizním programu Top Of The Pops s písní *I'm A Believer*, v níž ho doprovázeli Frith, MacRae, Mason, Richard Sinclair a Andy Summers. V září Robert ještě stihl natočit perkuse a doprovodné vokály na debut Briana Ena ***Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*** (Island 1975). V anketě Melody Makeru za rok 1974 skončil na druhém místě v kategorii britských i mezinárodních zpěváků a ve Francii dostalo LP ***Rock Bottom*** cenu Grand Prix Charles Cros jako rockové album roku - čtyřiasedmdesátý byl tedy pro Wyatta, nanávratně upoutaného na kolečkové křeslo, rokem triumfů.

V maximálním nasazení pokračoval Robert i v dalším roce. V lednu nazpíval skladbu *Frontera* na sólový debut kytaristy Phila Manzanery ***Diamond Head*** (Island 1975) a v březnu začal natáčet své další album ***Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard***. Pojal ho jako částečný návrat ke svým jazzovým kořenům, pročež se tu objevil například *Song For Che* jeho favorita Charlieho Hadena nebo *Sonia* Mongeziho Fezy v jihoafrickém stylu kwela. Druhá strana desky obsahuje několik vokálních duetů s pianem Freda Fritha, pocházejících z jejich rozsáhlejšího společného projektu, bohužel však nerealizovaného. Na nahrávání se vedle většiny hudebníků z předchozího alba podíleli ještě Bill MacCormick, Brian Eno, basista John Greaves a saxofonista Nisar Ahmad Khan. Přestože jde opět o excelentní dílo, nebyl Wyatt s výsledkem tak docela spokojen - jeho původní představy totiž nebyly pro finanční náročnost studiové práce zcela naplněny a tak 'Ruth' znamenala na dlouhou dobu



konec jeho sólových aktivit. Společné koncerty s Frithovou kapelou Henry Cow v květnu a červnu (zachyceno na dvojalbu Henry Cow ***Concerts***, Virgin 1976) pak byly na mnoho let posledním Robertovým vystoupením na pódiu.

Na podzim ho oslovili Michael Mantler a Carla Bley, aby nazpíval Mantlerovo album ***The Hapless Child*** (Watt 1976), založené na příbězích spisovatele Edwarda Goreye. *„Robert má originální hlas, poznáte ho v každé notě, kterou zazpívá a to je velmi vzácné. A taky umí intonovat“*, zdůvodnila tuto volbu Carla Bley. Po kratším váhání Wyatt nabídku přijal, protože Bleyová, Mantler i další hudebnící na desce (Steve Swallow, Jack DeJohnette) patřili k jeho dlouholetým favoritům. Výsledek je pozoruhodný a znamenal začátek dodnes trvající spolupráce, jejímž dalším plodem bylo následujícího roku LP ***Silence*** (na němž zpívá ještě Kevin Coyne). Mezitím však zemřel v jedné londýnské nemocnici následkem nedostatečné péče Mongezi Feza. Wyatt je dodnes přesvědčen, že by k tomu nedošlo, kdyby byl Mongezi bílý. Smrt přítele jen uspíšila jeho příklon k levicové a protirasistické politice.

HUDEBNÍK? POLITIK? UMĚLEC!

Začátkem šestasedmdesátého ještě Wyatt hostoval na albech Garyho Winda (***Steam Radio Tapes***, nevydáno), Jana Steelea a Johna Cage (***Voices***

And Instruments, Obscure 1976) a projektu General Strike (***Will Of The People***, nedokončeno), v letech 1977 a 1978 už to byly jen drobnosti na Enových deskách ***Before And After Science*** (Island 1977) a ***Ambient 1: Music For Airports*** (EG 1979). Rok 1978 byl ve znamení Robertova zájmu o vysílání krátkovlnných rádií a filmovou produkci východní Evropy i třetího světa, o rok později se stal členem britské komunistické strany.

Díky Carle Bley se tehdy Wyatt naštěstí vrátil také k soustavnější práci na hudebním poli. Nazpíval vynikající album ***Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports*** (Harvest 1981), které je autorskou záležitostí Bleyové, hraje na něm její kapela (včetně Garyho Winda) a producent Nick Mason, pod jehož jménem deska vyšla, tu pouze bubnuje. Během svých politických aktivit se Robert seznámil se šéfem firmy Rough Trade, který mu nabídl možnost dalšího nahrávání. Myslel si tehdy, že není schopen pro sebe napsat dost kvalitních písní, ale pak mu došlo, že *„Elvis a Sinatra nenapsali v životě jedinou píseň, tak proč bych si s tím měl dělat hlavu?"* Od ledna 1980 začal za pomoci rozličných hudebníků s natáčením singlů s písněmi, které ho zaujaly z hudebních i politických důvodů: kubánskými *Arauco* a *Caimanera* (původně neoficiální kubánská hymna *Guantanamera*), *At Last I Am Free* od pop kapely Chic, *Stalin Wasn't Stallin* (americký patriotický song z období druhé světové války) a tak dále. Skladby ze čtyř singlů s dalšími dvěma písněmi pak vyšly v březnu '82 na LP ***Nothing Can Stop Us***. Pozdější reedice obsahují navíc ještě nádhernou skladbu *Shipbuilding*, kterou pro Wyatta napsal Elvis Costello.



Od roku 1980 začaly zase houstnout vokální i instrumentální příspěvky na albech kolegů: Kevina Coynea (***Sanity Stomp***), dívčí kapely Raincoats (***Odyshape***), s níž si koncem jedenaosmdesátého opět zazpíval živě, pozdějšího člena Everything But The Girl Bena Watta (***Summer Into Winter***) a dalších. EP *The Animals Film*, soundtrack k filmu Victora Schonfelda o právech zvířat, je čistě Wyattovou prací, stejně jako další EP s převzatými skladbami (mj. Gabrielův *Biko*) *Work In Progress*. Na podzim 1984 nazpíval Wyatt i dvě písně na EP ***The Last Nightingale***, zosnované Chrisem Cutlerem na podporu stávky britských horníků a v létě následujícího roku konečně dodělal další album s původním materiálem, nazvané ***Old Rottenhat***. V převážně pomalých, smutných písních se doprovází jen na klávesy a perkuse.



V druhé půli osmdesátých let postupně polevovaly Wyattovy politické aktivity, až nakonec rozčarován vystoupil z komunistické strany. Z jeho tehdejších prací je nejpodstatnější pěvecká účast na albech ***Letters Home*** (ReR 1986) souboru News From Babel a ***Many Have No Speech*** (Watt 1988) Michaela Mantlera. Roku 1991 se dočkali Robertovi stále velmi početní obdivovatelé jeho šestého alba ***Dondestan***, pokračujícího v linii předchozí desky, o rok později přibylo ještě doma natočené mini CD ***A Short Break***. V posledních letech je Wyattův hlas k zaslechnutí na albu britské dvojice Ultramarine ***United Kingdoms*** (Blanco Y Negro 1993), na excelentní kolekci Johna Greavese ***Songs*** (recenze v R&P 11/97) a v jedné skladbě nového Mantlerova projektu ***School Of Understanding*** (ECM 1997). A samozřejmě na nejnovějším albu ***Shleep***, jehož recenzi najdete v tomto čísle.

Diskografie:

The End Of An Ear (CBS 1970)
Rock Bottom (Virgin 1974)
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Virgin 1975)
Nothing Can Stop Us (Rough Trade 1982)
The Animals Film (EP, Rough Trade 1984)
Work In Progress (EP, Rough Trade 1984)
Old Rottenhat (Rough Trade 1985)
The Peel Sessions (EP, Strange Fruit 1987)
Dondestan (Rough Trade 1991)
A Short Break (mini CD, Voiceprint 1992)
Mid-Eighties (Rough Trade 1993, obsahuje EP Work In Progress, LP Old Rottenhat a několik dalších nahrávek)
Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt (2 CD Virgin 1994, kompilace, obsahující několik raritních a nevydaných nahrávek)
Flotsam Jetsam (Rough Trade 1994, raritní a dříve nevydané nahrávky)
Shleep (Hannibal 1997) ◆

Milos Latislav

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Rock Bottom, al habla con la directora María Trenor - Ruta 66 - 19 diciembre, 2024



Rock Bottom, al habla con la directora María Trenor

María Trénor está en boca de todo amante de la música y de las películas de animación gracias a *Rock Bottom*, película recién estrenada que está cosechando magnificas criticas y acaba de ser nominada a los Premios Goya.

Es la primera pieza larga de cine de animación para María Trenor, licenciada en Bellas Artes por la Facultad de San Carlos de la U.P.V. de Valencia. *¿Con qué la lavaré?*, en 2003, consiguió quince premios de diferentes festivales nacionales e internacionales; desde el Festival de Berlín al Festival de Cine Independiente de Lisboa, pasando por Cinema Jove, Animadrid, Medina del Campo, etc. La película también transitó por festivales como Sundance, Festival de Cine de Guadalajara-México o Versión Española, y se programó en varios de los Institutos Cervantes que hay repartidos por el mundo.

Con el corto de animación *Exlibris*, de 2009, fue nominada a los Premios Goya y obtuvo el Trofeo Caja Madrid a la mejor Dirección Artística en ALCINE 2010. A ese premio le siguió otro, el TELSON a la película española con los mejores efectos audiovisuales en la Semana de Cine Experimental de Madrid dirigida por José Luís Borau.

Como os hemos comentado antes, ahora ha estrenado *Rock Bottom*, película de animación sobre ese músico tan extraordinario que es Robert Wyatt. *Rock Bottom* es también el título de una de las obras maestras de Robert. Entrevisté a María en relación a todo esto y más. Que disfruten la charla.

Una película de animaciónpara adultos sobre Robert Wyatt suena a ejercicio muy arriesgado.



(Foto: Estrella Jover)

¿Por qué Robert Wyatt?

Primero, su valor como músico es indiscutible. Wyatt ha sido una figura clave en la música desde los años 60, comenzando con su trabajo más notable con el grupo Soft Machine y años más tarde desarrollando una carrera en solitario que ha influido a innumerables artistas. Su estilo único, que combina el rock, el jazz y la música experimental, ha dejado una huella profunda en la escena musical.

En segundo lugar, su historia personal es igualmente inspiradora. Después de un trágico accidente que lo dejó en silla de ruedas, Wyatt continuó creando música transformando su adversidad en arte. Su resiliencia y su capacidad para reinventarse son lecciones de superación. Porque Robert Wyatt no solo es un músico influyente, sino también un ser humano con una historia conmovedora. Su vida y obra ofrecen un buen material para hacer una película. ¿Por qué de animación? Porque la animación no tiene límites de representación y es el medio perfecto para representar la psicodelia de aquella época y transformar las imágenes sonoras en visuales.



¿Cómo fue conocerlo en persona y cómo reaccionó a tu propuesta?

Nunca sabes con lo que te vas a encontrar cuando se trata de un autor de culto, un genio. Te preguntas si será un ser inalcanzable subido a un pedestal. Pero, nada más lejos de la realidad. Robert Wyatt es un ser humano maravilloso, tierno, cercano y generoso. Él y su mujer Alfreda Benge nos dieron una cálida bienvenida en su casa de Louth. Mientras le hacían una entrevista, le hice un retrato y luego me atreví a cantarles mientras nos

comíamos una ensaimada que les trajimos de Mallorca. En ese ambiente tan cercano me atreví a hacerle la propuesta de la película a lo que él respondió enseguida que sí. Una vez de vuelta a España, le mandé varias ilustraciones que representaban escenas de la película y le gustaron mucho.

Alfreda Benge, la esposa de Wyatt, es ilustradora. ¿Opinó sobre tu trabajo? ¿Aportó ideas o te dio consejos? ¿Te dejó carta blanca?

Alfreda Benge es una fantástica artista visual que ha ilustrado varias portadas de los discos de Robert Wyatt. El correo electrónico al que envié los bocetos es de ambos, así que también tuve la bendición de Alfreda. No obstante, tuve carta blanca para proceder con libertad.

La película ha tenido una acogida muy buena, tanto dentro como fuera de nuestras fronteras. ¿Te esperabas tantos elogios de la prensa y de los fans de Wyatt?

Cuando acabas una película y estás inmersa en ella durante tanto tiempo, creo que pierdes perspectiva y necesitas tiempo y reposo para juzgarla desde fuera, desde una posición más objetiva. Sabía que nos habíamos dejado la piel haciendo esta película pero no ha habido mayor sorpresa y recompensa que la respuesta tanto de la prensa como de los fans de Robert Wyatt. Ha sido emocionante ver llorar a fans viendo la película y leer el feedback de la prensa valorando positivamente una película arriesgada y diferente.



Rock Bottom - Trailer

¿Robert y Alfreda han podido ver la película?

Desafortunadamente, no. Hemos querido ir a Inglaterra para compartir ese momento con ellos pero no ha sido posible porque la salud de ambos no es buena. Están muy delicados y ya no reciben visitas. Me da mucha pena pero entiendo que en esas condiciones prefieran mantener su intimidad. Les hemos enviado un DVD. A ver si tienen la oportunidad de verla y nosotros de saber qué les ha parecido.

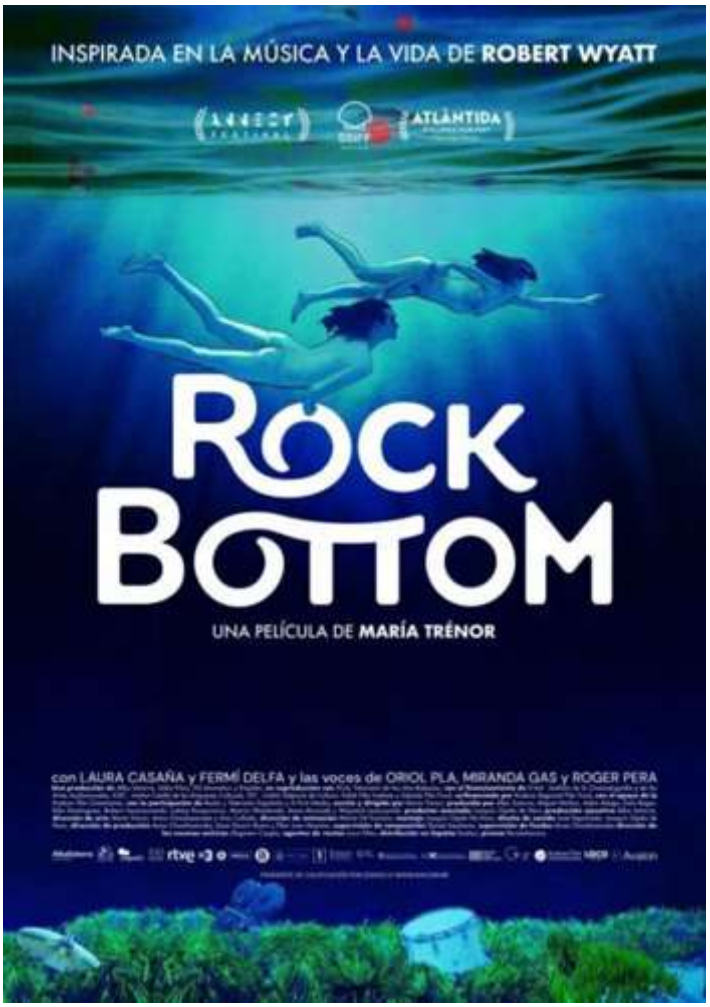
¿Cuál es la diferencia de este proyecto respecto a *¿Con qué la lavaré?* y *Exlibris*?

Del cortometraje al largometraje hay mucha diferencia. Significa pasar de trabajar con 4 ó 5 personas de tu confianza a un equipo con cientos de personas. El proceso de producción y el presupuesto en juego no tienen nada que ver. Es un salto abismal en todos los sentidos. Muchas veces da vértigo. Pero, ver tu película acabada y que se pueda ver en cines comerciales es muy gratificante. No obstante, considero a los directores de cortometrajes tan artistas y creativos como los directores de largos.

¿Han sido influencia para ti películas como *Planeta Salvaje* de René Laloux en donde la música de Alain Goraguer jugaba un enorme papel? ¿O las ilustraciones

de Mati Klarwein o el mismo Marc Chagall?

La cinta de René Laloux ha sido una referencia y ya me encantaría que *Rock Bottom* se convirtiera en una película de culto como *Planeta Salvaje*. La banda sonora de Goraguer complementa perfectamente la narrativa visual, utilizando una mezcla de sonidos orquestales y elementos electrónicos que refuerzan la sensación de extrañeza de la película. La música siempre ayuda a establecer el tono emocional de las escenas.



En cuanto al artista plástico Mati Klarwein, conocido por su estilo único que fusiona elementos del surrealismo, el simbolismo y la cultura pop, es una influencia fundamental, ya que representa la época en la que se sitúa *Rock Bottom* y él mismo formó parte ese importante círculo artístico en Deiá (Mallorca) y fue el creador de muchas de las portadas de vinilos tan conocidos como el *Abraxas* de Santana.

Estoy muy emocionada porque en breve voy a conocer personalmente a su hija Seraphine, que ha sabido de la película y también quiere conocernos. Por último, aunque no haya sido consciente, es probable que Marc Chagall me haya influenciado. Procedo del mundo de las Bellas Artes más que del audiovisual y la mayoría de mis referencias son pictóricas.

¿Qué discos han influenciado en tu visión del mundo?

Mi madre es muy cinéfila y cuando yo era pequeña en mi casa siempre había discos de bandas sonoras de películas musicales como West Side Story u Oliver Twist. Asimismo, había muchos discos de música clásica. La mayoría de los conciertos a los que he asistido son de música clásica, música antigua (barroca y renacentista), música contemporánea y electroacústica. Considero que los sonidos de los objetos también son música. De ahí que me atraiga tanto la parte experimental de la música de *Rock Bottom*.

Como es lógico, los discos que más me han influenciado son *El Cancionero del Duc de Calabria* del siglo XVI, una música muy potente que ha atravesado los siglos y que fue el elemento fundamental de mi primer cortometraje *¿Con Qué La Lavaré?* y, por supuesto, *Rock Bottom*, motivo principal de mi primer largometraje.

¿Tienes en mente volver a crear algo similar con algún otro artista de sensibilidad tan profunda como la de Robert Wyatt?

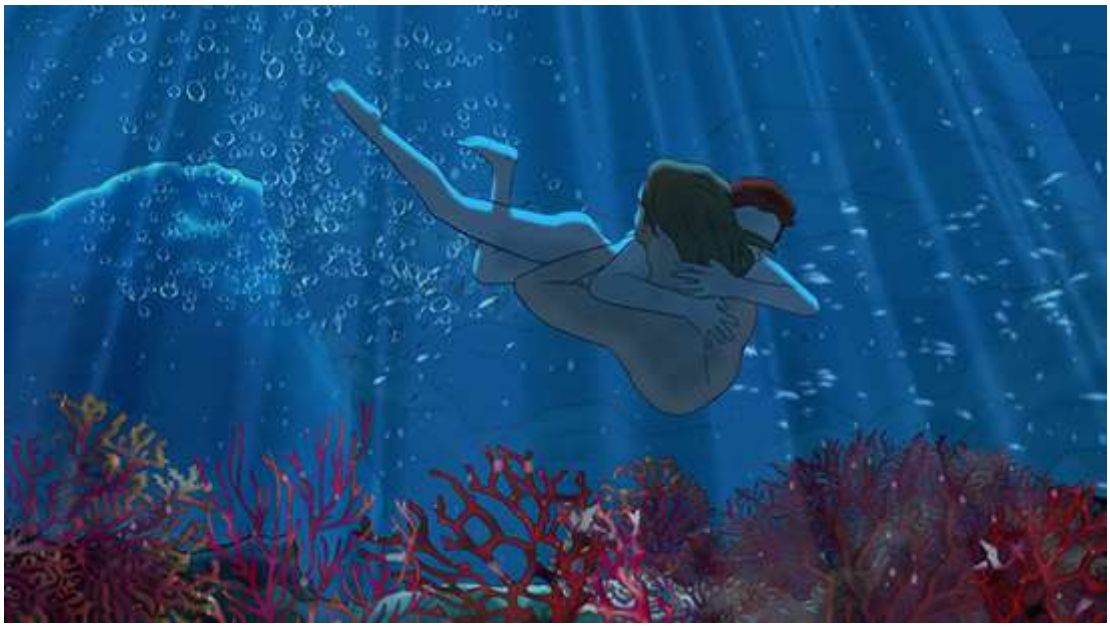
Hay biografías de músicos que merecen ser llevadas a la pantalla, como la de Nick Drake, que ya me sugirió usted muy acertadamente en otra entrevista.

¿Te gustaría diseñar alguna portada para un disco?

La verdad es que me encantaría que me lo propusieran y me parecería divertido ilustrar cualquier estilo musical. La portada es la primera impresión que los oyentes tienen del álbum, así que sería todo un reto crear algo que capture la atención y transmita el espíritu que hay detrás de la música.

La película también describe la importancia de la mujer en el papel no solo de musa o de simple pareja del artista, sino que Alfreda tiene el mismo protagonismo que Robert o quizás más.

Al principio, el protagonista masculino tenía mucha más importancia y fue Alba Sotorra, la productora, la que sugirió que equilibráramos los roles de los dos en la película y, realmente, la historia mejoró. La película refleja la falacia de la revolución sexual de la mujer en la era hippie, donde las mujeres seguían realizando las tareas del hogar en las comunas, tal y como lo habían hecho sus madres y abuelas en sus casas. Con respecto a la historia concreta de Robert Wyatt y Alfreda Benge, ellos mismos se consideran una sola persona. Creo que no es fácil encontrar una historia de amor tan potente como la suya.



¿Podrías plantearte publicar la historia en formato comic? Creo que muchos amantes de la música también lo son de los comics y tendría buena acogida.

Me encantaría sacar un cómic de la película, creo que funcionaría muy bien. A ver si conseguimos animar a la productora Domino Records para que saque una reedición especial del disco con el cómic. Sería un recuerdo precioso del 50 aniversario del disco.

Me ha encantado como muestras la permisividad de las fuerzas del orden con los extranjeros en una época en donde el español de a pie prácticamente solo tenía derecho a callarse.

(Hay que recordar que Robert ha vivido en España en diferentes etapas de su vida)

Durante los años de la dictadura, Franco quería dar una imagen de país abierto y tolerante para atraer el turismo extranjero, de ahí la diferencia de trato que tenían las fuerzas del orden entre los nacionales con respecto a los foráneos del norte.

La película es prácticamente un viaje lisérgico y hace hincapié en la utilización de las drogas como algo rutinario. ¿Crees que el empleo de sustancias alucinógenas ayudaron a la creación de muchas obras de arte, ya sean del cine, de la música o de la pintura? ¿Y si el precio que pagaron muchos de ellos valió la pena?

El uso de drogas y alcohol entre artistas es un tema complejo que ha sido objeto de debate durante décadas. Muchos artistas, desde músicos hasta pintores y escritores, han explorado el uso de sustancias como una forma de inspiración, liberación creativa o escape de la presión que conlleva la vida pública y la búsqueda de la perfección en su arte. En mi caso, no me hace falta. Me coloco directamente escuchando la música de *Rock Bottom*.

***Rock Bottom* significa estar "al nivel más bajo posible". ¿Lo que sucedió con el disco fue un renacer para Robert Wyatt? ¿Su vida se estabilizó para bien tanto sentimentalmente como artísticamente?**

(Recordemos que Robert quedó parapléjico antes de la grabación del disco, tras una caída accidental desde una ventana)

Rock Bottom significa, efectivamente, tocar fondo. Sin embargo, el mismo Robert Wyatt reconoce que perder las piernas (teniendo en cuenta que él las necesitaba para tocar la batería) le hizo tener otro tipo de libertad.

Yo creo que el accidente supuso un punto de inflexión brutal en su vida, llevándolo a reinventarse como artista y a profundizar en su expresión musical. A pesar de todas las dificultades, logró convertir su experiencia en la obra maestra que es *Rock Bottom*.

Texto: Laurent Berger

Fotos cedidas por María Trénor

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Robert Wyatt. Maestro de maestros - Heraldo de Aragon - 1 de Junio de 2024


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ROBERT WYATT MAESTRO DE MAESTROS

Se nos va. Es una pena pero se nos va. Robert Wyatt (Bristol, 1945) ya no reconoce a la gente que le cuida y es incapaz de mantener una conversación. A ver si consigo mantener su atención cinco minutos. Este hombre con otros majaretas fue el creador de lo se dio en llamar Canterbury Sound, un disparate colorido, mezcla de jazz pop y folk con otras piezas como Kevin Ayers o Daevid Allen para que los encerraran a todos. Pero eran buenos, créame y su música también.

Se montó en una locura sonora con los mencionados que se llamó Soft Machine y maravilló a parte de la raza humana, preferentemente sajona. El nombre del grupo debía traducirse por «Máquina blanda» y ésta no era otra cosa que el cuerpo humano.

Wyatt tocaba (y muy bien) la batería. Se apañaba con los teclados y cantaba. Esa voz mezcla de niño enfadado y abuelete bonachón. La vida misma reunida en sus vibratos. Distinto pero molón. A los 28 vio que sus Soft Machine ya no estaban por la labor y lo echaron del grupo. Tras una ingesta descomunal del alcohol en una fiesta de músicos de la época se tiró por la ventana. Cuatro pisos. Espalda rota. Parálisis permanente de sus piernas. Pero salió vivo, no es poco.

Robert Wyatt tiene en su haber uno de los discos más estremecedores de la historia de la música. Se llama 'Rock Bottom' (1974) y la mayor parte de su material se compuso o arregló en su silla de ruedas con la ayuda de Alfie, su compañera eterna.



ARS SONORA / JUANJO BLASCO 'PANAMÁ'

Robert Wyatt. Maestro de maestros

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El maestro ha editado 15 discos más, recomendables todos. Dese el gusto de escuchar 'Dondestan' o 'Nothing can stop us' con su versión de 'Guantanamera' (aquí 'Caimanera') bella hasta la lágrima. Pero, en fin, Robert Wyatt se nos va. La Soft Machine , la máquina blanda, su cuerpo, no resiste más. Su música nunca fue fàcil pero aproveche y acérquese a este fenómeno de la naturaleza. Es oírlo para creerlo. Una voz y composición de otro mundo.

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Juanjo Blasco 'Panama'

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Entrevista A María Trenor - rockthebestmusic.com - 14/11/2022

ENTREVISTA A MARÍA TRENOR

Hay un gran número de delicatessen que nos rodean y que pasan por nuestra vera sin poder accederse a ellas por justamente esa falta de criterio y de difusión. Pocas son las revistas que realmente sorprenden cada mes con su contenido, mojándose y arriesgando al comunicar lo que necesita ser comunicado…The Wire, Wax Poetics, Pitchfork, The Quietus apuestan por divulgar muchos palos, extendiendo la cultura ya sea heavy, Jazz, Rap, cine, etc…

Por ello esta entrevista es en mi opinión merecedora de nuestra atención; es lo que me gustaría leer en algún medio. Una persona que se implica en crear algo sobre un artista que prácticamente está en el olvido para muchos —sobre todo en este país— que ha sido influencia de cientos de grupos, desde Bjork a Elbow. Un hombre que es más grande que muchos que van pavoneándose de su trayectoria y que el al contrario, siempre buscó la humildad y la discreción.

Este proyecto —que ha sido realizado por una española, más concretamente una valenciana— seguramente tendrá mucha más repercusión en el extranjero que aquí.

María Trenor es Licenciada en Bellas Artes por la Facultad de San Carlos de la U.P.V. de Valencia. Su primera pieza de cine de animación como directora fun, "Con qué lavaré" en 2003, con el que consiguió quince premios de diferentes festivales nacionales e internacionales, desde el Festival de Berlín, al Festival de Cine Independiente de Lisboa, pasando por, Cinema Jove, Animadrid, Medina del Campo, etc. También participa en los festivales como Sundance, Festival de Cine de Guadalajara-México, Versión Española y se programa en varios de los Institutos Cervantes repartidos por el mundo.

Con Exlibris que lanza en 2009 es nominada a los 25 Premios Goya y obtiene el Trofeo Caja Madrid a la mejor Dirección Artística en ALCINE 2010, el premio TELSON a la película española con los mejores efectos audiovisuales en la Semana de Cine Experimental de Madrid dirigida por José Luís Borau, y destaca por su participación en ANIMADRID 2010 entre 56 cortos internacionales y 8 nacionales.

Becada por la AECID (Agencia española de cooperación y desarrollo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores) desarrolla el proyecto cinematográfico de sensibilización contra la violencia de género ¿Dónde estabas tú? en España, Filipinas y Mozambique.

María Trenor ahora mismo prepara su próximo y más ambicioso proyecto, un largometraje musical de animación titulado "Rock Bottom", sobre la figura del músico británico Robert Wyatt. En inglés, Rock Bottom, hace referencia a esa profundidad abisal del estado de ánimo en la que no penetra luz alguna.

Robert Wyatt-Ellidge, batería, cantante y compositor británico, es uno de los músicos más importantes de la escena musical de Canterbury como baterista de Soft Machine y Matching Mole. Tras un accidente que le dejó postrado en una silla de ruedas de por vida, su carrera se enfocó en crear una serie de discos que tuvieron y siguen teniendo una

influencia mayor en gran cantidad de músicos que van desde Bjork a Tears for Fears pasando por David Sylvian o Radiohead.

Wyatt siempre estuvo abierto a participar con músicos de diferentes estilos, aunque sus discos son siempre piezas de orfebrería, donde se mezclan muchos matices únicos que resaltan con su particular tono de voz. Destacando su obra maestra "Rock Bottom" premiada con el galardón Charles Cros de l´Académie Française, es uno de los discos más importantes de la historia del rock.

Enfundado en una portada creada por su mujer Alfie Benge, que se ocupará de ilustrar todas sus portadas a partir de ese momento, ha compartido junto a ella una vida llena de amor, arte y dificultades hasta ahora en donde María Trenor se atreve con esta fresca animación a reavivar la importancia de este músico.



> Zoom

ENTREVISTA A MARÍA TRENOR.

Lo primero que tengo que decir es que Robert es un ángel, una de las personas más especiales y carismáticas que he conocido. No soy nada mitómana y no me impresiona la gente famosa, aunque respete y admire su trabajo. Pero Robert y Alfie son dos seres especiales que, a pesar de su experiencia vital, genialidad artística, cultura y capacidad intelectual, guardan una sensibilidad y frescura muy difíciles de encontrar hoy en día.



¿Por qué una película de animación sobre Robert Wyatt?

Rock Bottom es un largometraje musical de animación basado en las canciones del álbum e inspirada en la vida del músico británico de culto Robert Wyatt y su pareja la letrista y artista visual Alfreda Benge. No obstante, no se trata de una biopic. Rock Bottom dibuja algunas pinceladas sobre su vida, pero la pareja protagonista es mayoritariamente la recreación de una generación de artistas nordeuropeos que a finales de los años 60 y principios de los 70, buscaron el paraíso de la libertad en las costas de España (Ibiza, Mallorca, Cadaqués, Almería…) que, curiosamente, vivían en plena dictadura militar.

Rock Bottom se desarrolla casi en su totalidad en el entorno de Deià (Mallorca), y nos muestra una vida recluida en un mundo casi deshabitado, que quiere dar la espalda al primer boom turístico que experimentaba el resto de la isla, como una demostración de las nuevas formas vitales y heterodoxas que se experimentaron a principios de la década de los setenta, pasado ya, el tiempo de las comunas hippys.

Vivían casi de la providencia y querían sentirse en completa conexión con la naturaleza, sin horarios, sin prisas, tranquilos, viendo abrirse y cerrarse las flores cada día, viendo las olas o disfrutando de la luna, para después plasmarlo en sus creaciones.

¿Por qué una película de animación?

Para mí, es la única manera de poder ilustrar la poesía y las sensaciones complejas y abstractas que uno siente al escuchar la música y las letras del álbum. La animación permite representar la fantasía, los sueños y las alucinaciones de una manera ilimitada. Hubo gente que me preguntó que por qué no hacía una biopic de Robert Wyatt y Alfreda Benge en "live action" de Rock Bottom, y seguramente no lo puedan entender hasta que escuchen el álbum.

¿Como surge la idea?

La idea surgió de una manera bastante casual, cuando acompañé en 2013 a unas amigas periodistas de Mallorca a realizar una entrevista a Wyatt a Inglaterra. Ya era fan del álbum Rock Bottom y había fantaseado con hacer una animación, pero lo que realmente me impulsó a querer hacer una película fue conocerlos en persona y quedar impresionada por su carisma y calidad humana.

¿Cómo fue conocerlo en persona y cómo reaccionó a su propuesta, a sus bocetos?

Conocerlo fue una de las experiencias más bonitas de los últimos años. Fueron tan

abiertos y acogedores desde el principio que fue muy fácil conectar con ellos. Así que esto me facilitó mucho las cosas a la hora de sentirme lo suficientemente cómoda como para proponerle hacer una película basada en Rock Bottom; a lo que él respondió en seguida que, por supuesto, que le encantaba la idea.

Alfreda, siendo ilustradora igualmente, ¿cómo vio su trabajo? ¿aportó algunas ideas, consejos, o le dejo carta blanca?

Soy admiradora del trabajo artístico Alfreda Benge. Me parece genial tanto en su faceta como ilustradora como letrista. Creo que es una artista integral. En realidad, la gestación y desarrollo visual de la película es bastante reciente, y las circunstancias no han sido nada propicias para volvernos a ver. Teníamos planeado visitar a Robert y Alfie en Inglaterra con la productora de la película, Alba Sotorra. Por desgracia, entre la pandemia y que ambos han pasado por un proceso de salud muy delicado no ha sido posible. No obstante, he mantenido el contacto con Robert vía email y me consta que está entusiasmado con la idea de la película. Espero tener el placer de volvernos a encontrar presencialmente y mostrarles de primera mano cómo va la producción.

Ha ganado muchos premios anteriormente por sus trabajos. ¿Qué ha significado este proyecto a diferencia de "Con qué la lavaré" o "Exlibris", con el que obtuvo una nominación al Goya?

Este es mi primer largometraje, pero en mis cortometrajes anteriores siempre he construido visualmente partiendo de la música; como ha sido el caso de Rock Bottom. Para mí, el sonido supone más del 70% en importancia de una película. Procedo del mundo de las Bellas Artes, pero también tuve algo de formación musical (por desgracia, empecé tarde) y confieso que nada me ha llenado en mi vida tanto como cuando estudiaba música. Así que encuentro en el cine de animación el espacio perfecto donde se encuentran las Artes Visuales y la música. ¿Qué más puedo pedir?



He podido constatar en las redes sociales que muchos fans de Robert y/o de Soft Machine no tenían ni idea de esta película. ¿Se va a poder ver con facilidad en cine? ¿Va a tener el apoyo de alguna plataforma o poder comprarse en formato DVD? ¿Se va a sacar algún disco con la BSO?

Queremos estrenar la película en el 2024 coincidiendo con el 50 aniversario del álbum Rock Bottom. Estamos planeando una campaña junto con Domino Records para llegar a todos los fans de Robert Wyatt.

Esperamos estrenar en un festival de Clase A, como ha sido con mis anteriores películas. De esta forma, tendremos una buena plataforma para promocionar la película internacionalmente para llegar no solo a los fans de Robert Wyatt, sino a un público mucho más amplio. Luego seguiremos el recorrido por festivales internacionales.

En España estrenamos en cines y haremos campaña para los Goya. Estuve nominada con mi anterior corto, a ver si con el largo lo ganamos.

Sobre ventas a plataforma, a nivel nacional, de momento, por nuestra estrategia de financiación, estamos priorizando la televisión pública.

Lo de las ventas a televisiones y plataformas internacionales vendrá después. Si la película tiene éxito en festivales, seguro que las plataformas la querrán. ¡Crucemos los dedos!

¿Cómo cree que van a reaccionar los seguidores del que fuera el batería de Soft Machine?

Los fans de Robert Wyatt son a los que más me importa que les guste la película, no decepcionarlos y estar a la altura para ellos; después de Robert y Alfie.

¿Cómo le gustaría que vean su trabajo? ¿Bajo qué prisma?

Espero que gocen de nuevo el álbum con el valor añadido de los dibujos y la historia, que son el hilo conductor que entrelaza las canciones del álbum. Espero que disfruten con las imágenes y la historia que he imaginado escuchando Rock Bottom.

Sus dibujos son muy personales, con un estilo propio, algo que me encanta. Veo algo de ilustradores como Mati Klarwein. ¿Qué opina sobre el trabajo que desarrolló en tantas portadas míticas de la música?

Mati Klarwein marcó toda una estética en las portadas de la época y, sin duda, es una fuente de inspiración para la imagen visual de Rock Bottom.

¿Han sido influencia para usted películas como el "Planeta Salvaje" de René Laloux; en donde la música de Alain Goraguer jugaba un enorme papel?

Por supuesto. ¡Ya me gustaría que la película Rock Bottom se convirtiera en un filme de culto y ganara en Cannes, como "el "Planeta Salvaje"!

Todavía me asombra la originalidad y derroche de imaginación del diseño de los personajes y los escenarios. La música es fundamental para crear esa atmósfera fantástica, opresiva y surrealista. Con otra música hubiera sido algo totalmente diferente. Pero creo, si no me equivoco, que Alain Goraguer la compuso ex profeso para la película, y, en mi caso, tanto la historia como las imágenes parten de la música.

¿Cómo empezó en el mundo de la ilustración? Los dibujantes valencianos siempre han tenido un papel importante en España, como puede ser Paco Roca. ¿Han sido en algún momento referente en su trabajo o en su pasión por la ilustración? ¿Este último u otros artistas?

Guardo el dibujo con el que gané mi primer premio a los cuatro años en un concurso de un periódico regional, me gusta dibujar desde muy pequeña. España ha sido un referente en el mundo del cómic y, efectivamente, Paco Roca es un artista del que siempre se puede tomar como referente actual porque es extraordinario. En mi caso, me siento muy atraída por el cómic underground. Me gusta mucho Nazario y por supuesto, Robert Crumb y su discípulo Peter Bagge, Alison Bechdel y los ilustradores Tom de Finlandia y Jean Cocteau en su faceta como dibujante.

¿Qué protagonismo tiene en su vida personal la música, ahora y a lo largo de su vida?

Creo que te he respondido anteriormente: nada me ha llenado más que cuando estudiaba música.

¿Qué discos han influenciado su visión del mundo y sus trabajos?

Crecí cantando todas las bandas sonoras clásicas: Oliver Twist, West Side Story, Grease, etc. En la universidad iba a un club de Jazz y a muchos conciertos de música clásica, concretamente, me gustaba la música antigua (Tomás Luis de Victoria, Juan de la Enzina) y fue entonces cuando descubrí un CD de Jordi Savall "El cancionero del Duque de Calabria" que es música valenciana del Renacimiento, que contiene la bellísima pieza musical "Con qué la lavaré" que inspiró el cortometraje del mismo nombre que cambió mi vida profesional y artística.

Al mismo tiempo, descubrí la música electroacústica que me impulsó a realizar mi siguiente cortometraje "Exlibris".

Y, finalmente, conocí el álbum Rock Bottom a través de un amigo fan de la música de Robert Wyatt, que ha sido mi fuente de inspiración artística. No concibo de ninguna manera la creación sin la música.

Tras este trabajo, ¿tiene en mente volver a crear algo similar con algún otro artista de sensibilidad tan profunda como por ejemplo Nick Drake, Bill Fay, o Fred Neil por poner algunos ejemplos?

Adoro tanto la música como el personaje de Nick Drake y merecería un largometraje musical. ¡Me acabas de dar una idea!

¿Conoces la revisión de Rock Bottom por la North Sea Radio Orchestra junto a John Greaves y la cantante italiana Annie Barbazza?

Sí, la conozco. A raíz del proceso de investigación necesaria para la realización de la película Rock Bottom, he llegado a descubrimientos sorprendentes. Y esta adaptación orquestal me parece una propuesta muy interesante.

¿Conoces el trabajo en muchas portadas de discos del ilustrador belga Jean Michel Folon?

Es gracioso porque conocía la portada del disco de Keith Jarrett pero no sabía que era de Michel Folon, muchas gracias por dármelo a conocer. Resulta curioso que sus ilustraciones hayan sido utilizadas como portadas de discos porque me parece que, al igual que las pinturas de René Magritte, no tienen sonido. Desde Kandinsky pasando por el fotógrafo Koldo Chamorro que ha teorizado sobre la relación entre la imagen visual y el sonido; pero creo que soy especialmente sensible a ello.

¿Te gustaría diseñar alguna portada para un disco?

Por supuesto.

¿Y para qué artistas estarías dispuesta?

Cualquiera supondría un reto excitante; aunque no me guste su música.

Laurent Berger

>> L'interview sur le site de Rock The Best Music

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Robert Wyatt, en búsqueda del 'cinturón rojo' - El Periodico - 22 agosto 2020

Robert Wyatt, en búsqueda del 'cinturón rojo'

elPeriódico

Jordi Bianciotto

'



El músico británico, miembro fundador del grupo Soft Machine, pasó dos inviernos de los años 80 en Castelldefels, en un apartamento frente a la playa Grabó un documental del programa 'Arsenal' (TV3), compuso temas para el álbum 'Dondestan' y disfrutó de la peña flamenca de Gavà y de Radio Tele-Taxi.

Bien mirado, puede haber un punto de confluencia entre las marejadas oníricas de las canciones de **Robert Wyatt** y el estado de trance que desprende el cante más jondo. Pero lo que de verdad **fascinó del flamenco al músico inglés fue la expresión de periferia**, obrerista, de resistencia antiglobalizadora, transmitida como valor familiar genuino en

entornos como la peña de Gavà, que visitó en los años 80 durante sus **dos estancias en Castelldefels**.

¿Cómo fue a parar Wyatt, el cofundador del grupo del rock de vanguardia **Soft Machine**, a aquel apartamento de la calle Estrella de Mar, frente a la playa, que luce en la portada del álbum 'Dondestan' (1991)? No era tan extraño que eligiera estas latitudes: ya había pasado **fragmentos de su juventud en Deià (Mallorca)**, donde se afincaron sus padres en los años 30. Su madre, Honor Wyatt, periodista, formó parte del círculo de Robert Graves, y sin buscarlo, el club de expatriados británicos acabaría derivando, en los 60, en la comunidad hippie de creadores pop como Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers y el mismo Robert.

Una terraza con luz

En 1982, la esposa de Wyatt, Alfreda Benge, Alfie, tenía un trabajo como ilustradora de un libro infantil. "Estábamos en Inglaterra, era invierno, hacía frío y **pensamos que estaría bien ir a un lugar con una luz bonita**", contaba al autor de este artículo hace cerca de 20 años. Eligieron Castelldefels, donde pasaron los meses del frío pagando un alquiler más bajo de lo que les costaba la calefacción de su casa inglesa.

No sabían que iban detrás de sus pasos dos jóvenes conspiradores contraculturales, **Manuel Huerga** y **Juan Bufill**, tipos capaces de plantarse, un par de años antes, en su casa en Twickenham, tan solo para saludarlo, aprovechando una ruta en Interrail. Tenían oscuras intenciones. "Queríamos hacer un documental sobre él, pero no nos salían los números", explica Bufill, que se recuerda sin rodeos como un hombre "obsesionado" con el autor de 'Rock bottom', con quien tuvo ocasión de departir. "Me dijo que había venido aquí huyendo de los ingleses".

Tres años después, Bufill era guionista de **'Arsenal', en TV3**, espacio que dirigía su amigo Huerga, y el proyecto del documental pudo por fin tomar forma. **A finales de 1986, Robert y Alfie volvieron al apartamento**, "en una planta baja, para no subir escaleras, con una terracita". Recordemos que Wyatt iba en silla de ruedas después de caer, en 1973, desde varios pisos de altura durante una fiesta loca regada con "un ponche muy rico". De esa segunda estancia surgió '**El viatge de Robert Wyatt**', un episodio que dirigió Bufill, mientras Huerga daba la vuelta al mundo preparando 'Arsenal Atlas'. **Una de las (muchas) delicias del programa, hoy inconcebiblemente fuera de circulación** en el océano 'on line'. Incluyó una canción, 'Born again cretin', grabada en directo, a voz y piano, en el plató de Sant Joan Despí.

De Robert a Roberto

El matrimonio se quedó, de nuevo, algunos meses, cada vez más atraído por las pistas culturales y políticas que intuían a su alrededor. En particular, aquello que se conoció como '**cinturón rojo**'. "En Inglaterra, su ideología iba a contracorriente, y **bromeaba diciendo que aquí había más comunistas que en Polonia**", recuerda Juan Bufill. Queriendo sumergirse en el mundo de la inmigración, disfrutó de la **peña flamenca de Gavà**, donde le daba a la **botella de vino turbio gallego**. Se convirtió en un habitual. "'Ha venido Roberto', decían cuando aparecía".

Wyatt quiso colaborar con un músico local y, aunque le atraía el flamenco, sus rigores le imponían respeto, y por eso fue a parar, vía Bufill, al **heterodoxo dúo Claustrofobia, con quien grabó el tema 'Tu traición**', que incluía un verso de Nicolás Guillén y terminaba clamando "contra el imperialismo y los medios de comunicación de masas". **Pedro Burruezo**, cantante del tándem, recuerda a un Wyatt "muy solidario con la inmigración" y le recuerda en el apartamento **escuchando Radio Tele-Taxi**. "La primera vez pensé que igual andaba despistado, pero luego me di cuenta de que no era ninguna casualidad". Burruezo fue un día a comer paella con él y se percató de que apartaba en el plato los calamares, el pollo... "Le pregunté y me dijo, en castellano: '**hay demasiados animalitos muertos'. Yo ahora soy vegetariano, pero entonces no lo era y aquel fue mi primer contacto con este mundo**".

En algunas canciones de 'Dondestan' se observan reflejos de aquel segundo invierno en la playa. '**Sight of the wind', por ejemplo, con esas figuras de arena, moldeadas por el viento**. Roberto y Alfie no han vuelto por aquí, pero Juan Bufill, su admirador más fiel, mantiene el hilo directo. "De vez en cuando, todavía nos mandamos algún correo".

>> **The original article (Spanih version)**
>> **The original article (Catalan version)**

Footage of the video "El viatge de Robert Wyatt"

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Así será 'Rock Bottom', la película de animación sobre el pionero de la música psicodélica Robert Wyatt - Valenciaplaza.com - 13/09/2018

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Así será 'Rock Bottom', la película de animación sobre el pionero de la música psicodélica Robert Wyatt



El proyecto sobre la vida del ex Soft Machine se desarrollará

en València con un presupuesto de unos 4 millones de euros

En inglés, la expresión *rock bottom* hace referencia a esa profundidad abisal del estado de ánimo en la que no penetra luz alguna. El sentimiento de degradación física y emocional extrema –lo que nosotros llamamos "tocar fondo"- dio título al disco más celebrado de Robert Wyatt. Un álbum que el músico británico comenzó a componer premonitoriamente meses antes de sufrir el accidente que partiría su vida en dos. La noche del 1 de junio de 1973, uno de los pioneros de la escena psicodélica británica –como vocalista y batería de **Soft Machine**, y posteriormente de **Matching Mole**- se precipitó como un saco de plomo desde el cuarto piso de un edificio donde se celebraba una fiesta para **Pink Floyd**. Robert Wyatt, que por entonces contaba 28 años de edad, se partió la espina dorsal y quedó parapléjico.

Los ocho meses que pasó en el hospital dieron mucho de sí. No sirvieron para apartar al músico de sus problemas con el alcohol y las drogas, pero paradójicamente pusieron los cimientos de una nueva y fructífera etapa en su trayectoria artística, en la que cambió la batería por el piano. "Asumí que hacer giras ya sería demasiado problemático. Me di cuenta de que a partir de ese momento tendría que centrarme en las grabaciones, y cantar más –señalaba el propio Wyatt en 1998-. Por otra parte, vi que podría escoger a músicos distintos para cada canción. Que tampoco tendría que utilizar los mismos instrumentos en todas mis composiciones. Perder las piernas me dio otro tipo de libertad". A principios de 1974, Robert Wyatt se trasladó a una casa de campo en Wiltshire cedida por la mecenas española Delfina Entrecanales, donde grabó esta obra maestra del art rock y la psicodelia.



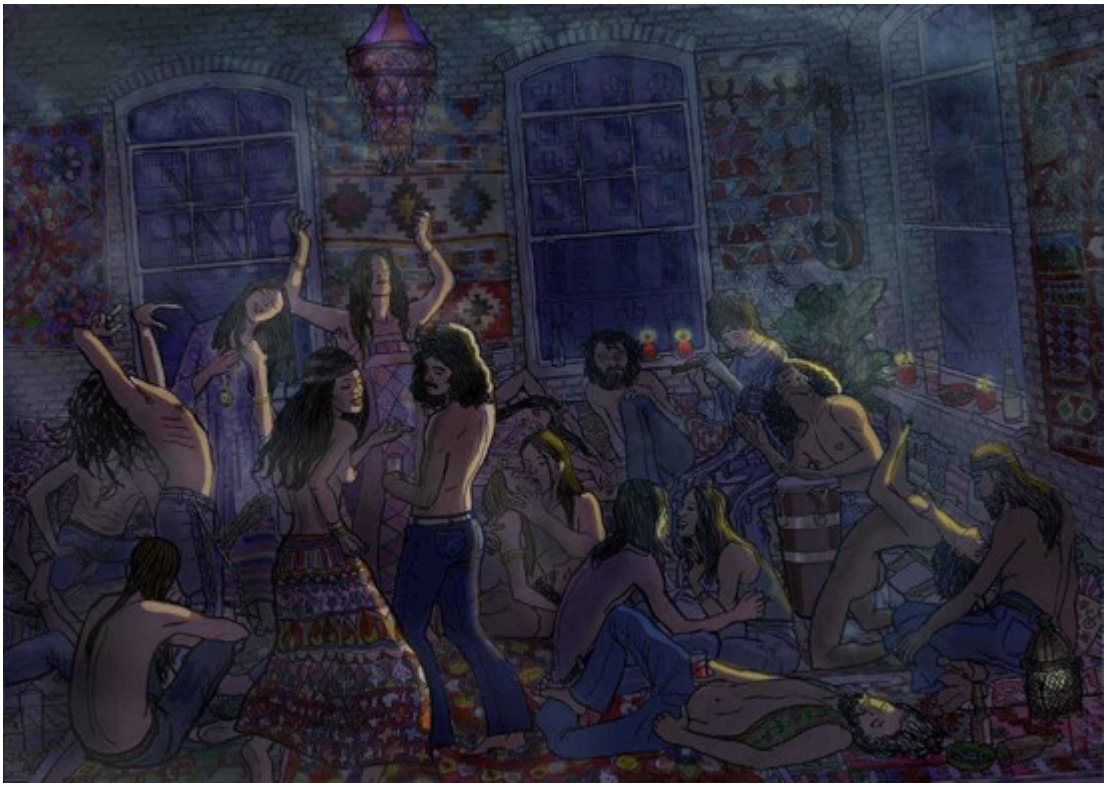
Rock Bottom es un disco transformador, que bascula de forma indefinida desde las atmósferas sombrías hasta el éxtasis emocional. Es clásico y experimental. Complejo estructuralmente, pero fácil de navegar. Una gema extraña. Además de su mujer -la artista **Alfreda Benge** (Alfie), creadora de la portada del disco y de muchas de las letras de la trayectoria de Wyatt en solitario-, éste contó con la ayuda de músicos como **Mike Oldfield**, **Fred Frith**, **Richard Sinclair** (Caravan) y **Hugh Hopper** (ex Soft Machine), además del productor **Nick Mason** (más conocido como batería de Pink Floyd). Esta colección de cinco canciones –y menos de 40 minutos de duración- erigió a Wyatt como uno de los compositores más importantes de la música del siglo XX. Su larga nómina de admiradores confesos incluye artistas como **Brian Eno**, **David Bowie**, **Björk** o **Thom Yorke** de Radiohead.

La gestación de Rock Bottom y la historia de amor con Alfie -que se casó con él meses después del accidente y todavía continúa a su lado-, son el telón de fondo de una película de animación que llevará al cine por primera vez los años de juventud de Robert Wyatt. A pesar de estar basada en personajes y hechos reales, y de contar con el beneplácito del propio artista, ni el fondo ni la forma de este proyecto se asemejan al de un documental o un biopic al uso. Se trata más bien de una fabulación dotada de una narrativa no lineal y una estética experimental, que combina la artesanía y la gestualidad de la animación clásica en 2D con la tecnología del 3D.



El contexto histórico de la película –el momento de declive de la contracultura hippie a principios de los setenta- tendrá gran protagonismo. También la relación de Wyatt con España, concretamente con el pueblo mallorquín de Deià, donde se concentró parte de la comunidad hippie expulsada de Ibiza entre 1970 y 1971. El escritor Robert Graves (*Yo, Claudio*), que residió en esta localidad durante más de treinta años, acogió al músico durante una etapa fundamental en su vida.

El proyecto, que acaba de recibir una ayuda del Instituto Valenciano de Cinematografía, está liderado por la ilustradora y cineasta valenciana **María Trenor** (ganadora de 15 premios en festivales como la Berlinale con su cortometraje *Con que la lavare?*, y candidata a un Goya por el corto de animación ExLibris); el guionista y dibujante **Joaquín Ojeda** (conocido por sus trabajos en televisión y películas galardonadas como *El Cielo Sube* o la mencionada *Con que la lavare?*), y el director de animación **Raúl Colomer** (quien también ha participado en producciones como *ExLibris* o *El vendedor de humo*, ganadora de un Goya en 2013). El equipo se completará con 60 profesionales especializados en animación en 3D. Se grabará en lengua inglesa, tendrá unos 80 minutos de duración e implicará dos años y medio de trabajo. El presupuesto estimado es de 4 millones de euros.



Con el beneplácito del propio Wyatt

"Todo comenzó con una visita casual que hice a Robert Wyatt en su casa de Louth en 2014. Yo acompañaba a un amigo que estaba entrevistando a artistas del norte de Europa que habían vivido en las comunidades hippies de Deià (Mallorca) en los años setenta. Me sorprendió el enorme carisma que tenía. Yo hacía tiempo que quería dar el salto al largometraje… hacer algo artística y técnicamente interesante. De repente surgió la idea: ¿por qué no hacerlo con un personaje inspirado en Wyatt? Se lo propuse y le pareció muy bien".



También han contado con su beneplácito para las canciones de la banda sonora, que incluirán las canciones de *Rock Bottom* y otras de su proyecto anterior, Matching Mole.

"En animación siempre se tiende a jugar en terreno seguro, pero nosotros queremos darle mucha importancia a la experimentación tecnológica –señala Colomer-. Queremos encontrar una forma distinta de contar historias reales a través de la animación, alejándonos del automatismo de la producción industrial. El mayor reto será llevar al 3D el estilo gráfico de María, que es muy expresionista, plástico y gestual". Es, en su opinión, un buen momento para hacer rodar el proyecto, puesto que, "después del efecto Pixar, que ha hecho mucho daño a la animación para adultos", ahora vivimos un renacimiento de este tipo de cine.

Otra de sus preocupaciones es huir de los clichés estéticos que siempre han rodeado a la contracultura hippie. "Todo eso del *flower power* no tiene nada que ver con la verdadera estética underground de principios de los años setenta", explica Trenor. Ella se siente mucho más cerca del estilo inquietante de ilustradores como Mati Klarwein y de

películas de culto como *Planeta Salvaje* (René Laloux, 1973) y *The Wall* (Alan Parker, 1982).

Marta Moreira

>> L'article sur le site de Valenciaplaza

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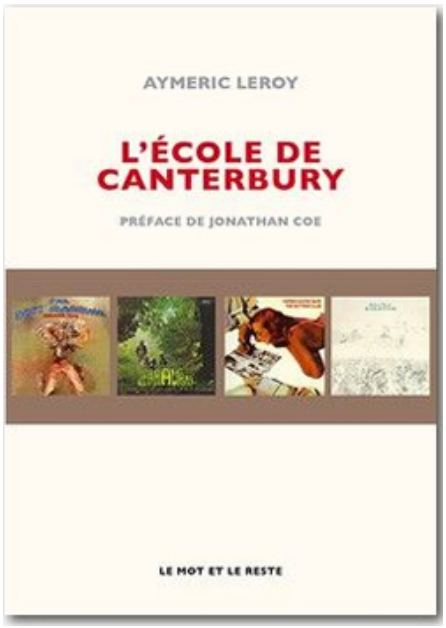
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Aymeric Leroy - La Escuala de Canterbury - El Chamberlin - N° 18 - Noviembre 2016





AYMERIC LEROY LA ESCUELA DE CANTERBURY

L'ECOLE DE CANTERBURY - AYMERIC LEROY - Le mot et le reste.
Marsella (France), 2016.
ISBN 9782360541973.
736 Paginas. 33 Euros.
lemotetlereste.com

Un libro, o mas bien una biblia, como algunos quieren llamarlo ya. Si quieres conocer todo sobre este movimiento musical britânico nacido en esta pequeña ciudad de Kent, en el extremo sudeste de Inglaterra, sobre el rio Stour, a 86,4 kilómetros de Londres, tienes dos posibles direcciones: la de Éditions Le Mot et Le Reste, o la de su autor, un apasionado de nombre Aymeric Leroy...

El Chamberlin. ¿Cuàndo y por qué has tenido la idea de este libro?

Aymeric Leroy. La idea de hacer un libro sobre este tema nació a principios de 1999, y yo pienso que venía impuesto mes por la acumulación de matérial, tanto en el marco

de mi sitio Calyx desde 1996, como en el de la revista Big Bang (1), desde 1993. Pensar en pasar del ejercicio de la crónica a un libro me parece, con la distancia, presuntuoso; pero, por ingenuidad más que por pretensión. Yo imaginaba que una vez reunido el matérial, el libro nacería por si mismo, un poco como por magia. Evidentemente, no hay nada de eso. Durante dos o très años, me he dedicado a la búsqueda en bibliotecas, examinando cuidadosamente la prensa musical francesa y extranjera, y entrevistando a mucha gente. Así he podido compenser la falta de informaciones de determinados grupos o ciertos périodos y encontrarme en posición de abordarlos con el nivel del detalle que me parecia justificado para cada uno, sin tener en cuenta una jerarquía basada en la notoriedad o el éxito.
En 2003, con el fin de obtener una subvención del Centre National du Livre, finalicé un capîtulo y una propuesta del sumario, pero en realidad la estructura evolucionó considerablemente más adelante. La idea de una división por fechas en forma de agenda no se impuso hasta bastante tarde. Al principio, pensaba proponer capítulos tratando cada uno de un grupo, o de un período de un grupo, pero eso no funcionaba, y estoy contento de haber encontrado esta solución que me parece mucho mejor.

El Chamberlin. Intentas justificar el principio de este libro la denominación "Escuela de Canterbury". Es cierto que este término invita a hablar de Soft Machine o Caravan, pero ¿por qué, en tu opinión, era necesario que se llegara a admitir esta noción de una vez por todas?

Aymeric Leroy. No quiero dar una importancia excesiva a lo que no deja de ser un obligado ejercicio de estilo para justificar la existencia de semejante obra y su titulo. Definir el estilo Canerbury no es en sí una postura de calidad artística, sino simplemente la localización de un centro de gravedad estilística, que explica por ejemplo que yo hable más de **Hatfield and the North** que de **Gong**, aun cuando este último merecerîa seguramente por si mismo un libro aparte. Sin embargo, este ejercicio de estilo no me parece del todo banal, en la medida en que permite a pesar de todo explicar lo que esta música haya podido tener de original, de novedosa y de única en el paisaje musical de su tiempo. Con evidentemente una preferencia personal aunque nada exclusiva. Soy consciente que las músicas que me gustan no son forzosamente aquellas que tuvieron una mayor resonancia en su época, y al contrario. No se trata pues de que yo diga lo que es injusto de este estilo -aquí no se conoció un éxito mayor de público, crítica o comercial-.

La definiciôn que yo propongo mezcla elementos de fondo (un colorido jazzy, un gusto por las métricas impares y cambiantes, textos absurdos o auto referenciales) y de forma (el órgano saturado, la discreción o la ausencia de guitarras, una forma de cantar anti-teatral) no reclama ser una verdad demostrada. Por eso, no es completamente objetiva. Está, creo, alimentada de todo aquello que yo he podido leer o escuchar sobre el tema, tanto músicos como periodistas o simples oyentes. Dudo que los primeros tengan que reconocerse forzosamente, pero espero el beneplácito de los últimos. Después de todo, es la conciencia popular quien tiene la última palabra para légitimar tal o cual denominación como dar nombre a una corriente artística. En cierta medida, no hago más que ratificar, en lo teorizante de una manera más amplia, lo que la posteridad de aquí en adelante tenía reservado a esta música.

El Chamberlin. Para encontrar todos estos detalles fue necesario la colaboración de los músicos, sobre todo para **Soft Machine**, con esas diversas versiones de las mismas piezas. ¿De qué manera lo hicieron personas como **Hugh Hopper**, **Richard Sinclair** o **Robert Wyatt**?

Aymerïc Leroy. Todos se han mostrado muy colaboradores, pero evidentemente en el caso de **Robert Wyatt** su reticencia es bien conocida al abordar el periodo de **Soft Machine**. Desde mi principal entrevista con él, en 2001, no he dejado de utilizar estrategias desviadas para sonsacarle algunas frases, sin gran éxito. Se ha mostrado mucho más abierto en **Rock Bottom**. Más recientemente, en la entrevista



Aymeric Leroy

para el libreto de **'68**, le he encontrado más sereno y elocuente. A **Hugh Hopper** le entrevisté personalmente pero también he sido muy correspondido por correo cuando ha sido posible y ha dado muestras de una gran disponibilidad, tanto como **Pip Pyle** o **Dave Stewart** sobre todo.

Con **Richard Sinclair** he cruzado e intercambiado cartas con frecuencia de manera informal. Aparte de una entrevista comûn con **Phïl Miller** (y con **Pip Pyle** poco antes de su fallecimiento) en el festival *Baja Prog* en Méjico, en 2006; he sacado mucho de otras entrevistas, esto es a lo que he estado obligado hacer con **Mïke Ratledge**, que era el portavoz de **Soft Machine** en los años setenta, aunque apenas se mostrara deseoso de desahogarse cuando nosotros hemos llegado a cruzarnos con él.

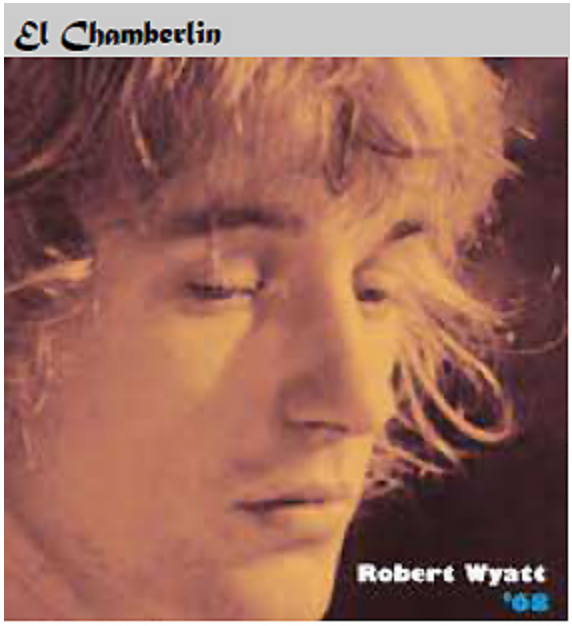
En lo que concierne a los detalles factuales, los músicos no son siempre las mejores fuentes. No queda otra solución que hacer de ratas de bibliotecas y recuperar los testimonios. Con a veces la divina sorpresa de caer con tal o cual persona que haya tenido y conservado cuadernos de apuntes. ¡A veces no se está muy lejos de un trabajo de investigación policial!

El Chamberlin. El libro está prologado por **Jonathan Coe**, un autor muy próximo a estos músicos (sobre todo por su libro *The Rotters' Club*, aparecido en 2001). ¿Cómo contactas con él?

Aymeric Leroy. Yo habia leido ya *Testament à l'Anglaise* cuando apareció *Bienvenue au club* [el libro francés] en 2001. Habia descubierto su pasión por la escena de Canterbury en ese libro. En 2002, él vino a Paris para un pequeno concierto promocional del CD (9th & 13th) que él habia sacado en Tricatel. Me présenté a él después del concierto y me aseguró que conocía mi sitio Calyx, y pensaba incluso mencionarlo en la suite (*The Full Cirde*), cosa que finalmente él no hizo. Para la suite, nosotros nos hemos carteado con frecuencia, sobre todo en los conciertos de reforma de **Hatfield and thé North**, en Londres o Canterbury, como corresponsal de vez en cuando.

Cuando vino a Paris a presentar *Expo 58*, él mismo me propuso que queria firmar un prólogo, que yo acepté gustosamente, ante todo porque era totalmente legitimo, habiendo visto estos grupos en una época en la que yo era bien joven para interesarme, y conociendo muy bien los discos y, en ciertos casos, a los propios músicos, pero también porque su notoriedad de escritor podía atraer la atención de mi libro a un público que ignorase por completo esta música.

El Chamberlin. ¿Por qué tener que hablar de **Soft Machine** de cabo a rabo? Idem de **Gong** (sin **Daevid Allen**)...



Robert Wyatt, *'68*

Aymeric Leroy. Hay dos proyectos paralelos en este libro: el primero, por el que tengo el mayor interés, era explorar el centro de lo que yo experimento como la esencia del estilo Canterbury, que yo sitúo en alguna parte entre el ***Volume Two*** de **Soft Machine** y **Hatfield and the North**; el segundo era tener en cuenta las legítimas consideraciones de los lectores de un libro titulado de esta manera, y luego abordar también los grupos o los periodos no forzosamente más "canterburianos" de las formaciones más emblemáticas. En el caso de **Gong**, hay de sobra una paradoja, puesto que el período más "canterburiano" del grupo es sin duda el que sigue inmediatamente a la salida de **Daevid Allen**, dominado por **Steve Hillage** que venía de publicar **Fish Rising**.

En lo que concierne a **Soft Machine**, lo confieso, he ido mucho más allá de la fase "canterburiana" de su evolución musical, cuando he abandonado en el camino a ciertos músicos en sus proyectos en solitario. Así se investiga. Digamos que es el privilegio del nombre.

El Chamberlin. Describes muy bien en coda grupo el interés que ha representado (o no) en una determinada estética musical que ha marcado a muchos de nosotros en estos años fértiles que fueron los finales de los años sesenta y los años setenta. ¿Qué piensas de la influencia que estos músicos de una periferia normal de una Inglaterra en total revolución hayan podido tener sobre la culture musical europea?

Aymeric Leroy. Personas como **Pierre Lattes** o **Jean-Pierre Lentïn** (2), desgraciadamente los dos ya fallecidos, hubieran dado interesantes opiniones para reflexionar en este asunto, sobre todo en lo que respecta al cariño particular de Francia por esta música.

Más allá de una atracción general por el pop anglosajón, y británico en particular, había en la escena de Canterbury especificidades que gustaban a !os franceses: una parte intelectual, aguda, contrabalanceada por un gusto por lo absurdo y el humor. En el sentido contrario, estos músicos tenían la vista puesta menos en América que sus contemporáneos, y, luego, eran réceptivos a inventos franceses como la Patafîsica.

Hay evidentemente una parte involuntaria, también en todo esto. **Robert Wyatt** cuenta a menudo que sus reposiciones a veces "desfasadas" son al principio intentos de una fiel imitación de los originales; pero que, a pesar suyo, se impone su personalidad musical. La imitación está pues mal hecha, pero es precisamente eso que la convierte en un acierto. Veo algo bastante similar en la escena de Canterbury en general: una reapropiación de músicas llegadas del extranjero, de los Estados Unidos en primer lugar, pero transfigurada por un ADN británico que estos músicos no podian quitarse de encima. **Wyatt** subraya a este respecto el papel de **Kevin Ayers** quien asumía su acento inglés sin tratar de imitar a los americanos; el mismo **Ayers** me explicó que él no podía elegir, que era incapaz de tener otro acento que no fuera el suyo, ¡y eso es lo que además le daba rabia!



Caravan 1980

El Chomberlin. ¿Cuál es tu posición personal con respecto a este movimiento? ¿No es de lo más asombroso que sea un francés el que haya descrito con minuciosidad esta aventura típicamente inglesa?

Aymeric Leroy. Soy consciente de lo paradójico, incluso generacional. Mi encuentro con esta música era improbable, y el hecho que yo sea conferido hasta este punto todavía más. Puede ser que yo sea la prueba que decididamente hay una afinidad muy profunda entre esta música y Francia. Difícil de decir.

En mi caso personal, es la exploración de músicas de este periodo, que me han atraído enseguida a una época [a mediados de los años ochenta] cuando lo que se escuchaba en las ondas era bastante espantoso, lo que me ha llevado primero en dirección a Inglaterra antes que Estados Unidos, y en el seno de la escena británica -digamos "progresiva" en general-, hacia sus matices más "jazzy", en este caso la escuela de Canterbury. Pero fue menos debido a la connotación jazz en sí misma que por el hecho que el abanico de estilos me parecio de lo más completo: en el Canterbury, se tiene a la vez todo lo que me interesa del progresivo, sin el aspecto conceptual un poco pesado y lo cutre de los refritos clásicos, y esta sofisticación jazz, en el fondo (riqueza armónica, improvisación) como la forma (utilización de vientos y metales). Es una excelente síntesis de todo lo que me interesa en música.

El Chamberlin. ¿Qué piensas de las reacciones (más bien entusiastas) en internet, reacciones mayontariamente británicas?

Aymeric Leroy. De momento, a un mes tan sólo de la publicación, las reacciones son todavía parciales -es necesario darle tiempo, ¡en esta situación!- e informales, recibidas sobre todo durante algunas firmas que he hecho. Para las verdaderas crónicas, ¡habrá que esperar un poco! Pero, al menos los decepcionados no tratan a herir mi sensibilidad, las respuestas son muy entusiastas. Creo que el libro tiene cualidades objetivas, que se basan en la cantidad de informaciones resueltas y con el interés de la historia contada y



National Health 1976

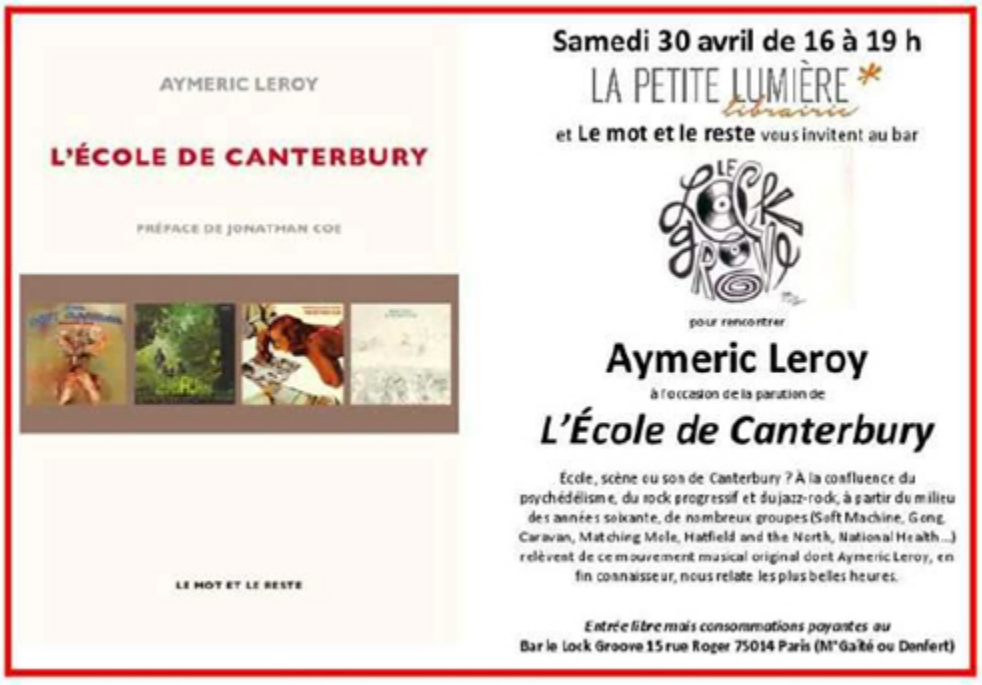
músicas evocadas. Mi aportación
personal, critica y literaria, está menos omnipresente que en los libros precedentes, y espero que incluso aquellos que no compartan mis preferencias o no les gusten los análisis encuentren materia para contentarse -dejo mucho la palabra a los propios protagonistas, y también a mis colegas críticos de la época-. Mi objetivo es simple, es el mismo que para mis otros libros (3), y espero haberlo ejercido de nuevo: enriquecer la escucha de los discos, que quede lo esencial, revelando los secretos y el contexto en el cual han sido creados. El mejor cumplido que se me puede hacer, y lo escucho a menudo, es que mi libro invita a escuchar los discos y a descubrir en otros lo que no se había visto.

PHILIPPE RENAUD. Traducción **Chema Chacón**. Originalmente en la revista Improjazz# 225. Junio 2016. Cuenta con el permiso del autor de la entrevista.

(1) http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/ y http://www.bigbangmag.com

(2) **Pierre Lattes** y **Jean-Pierre Lentin** fueron periodistas, escritores, productores en émiseras de radio y télévision francesas, tanto pûblicas como privadas, con programas relacionados preferentemente con la mûsica y la cultura en général.

(3}Pink Ftoyd (edición francesa) Le Mot et Le Reste, 2009. Rock Progressif. Le Mot et Le Reste, 2010. King Crímson (edición francesa) Le Mot et Le Reste, 2012



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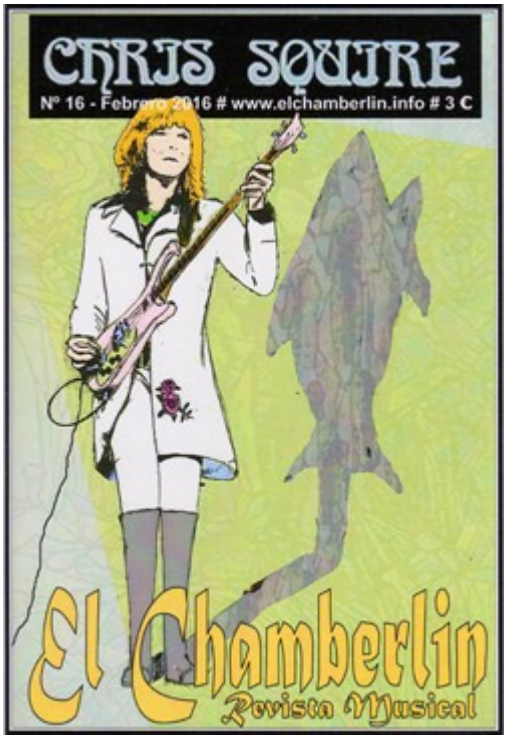
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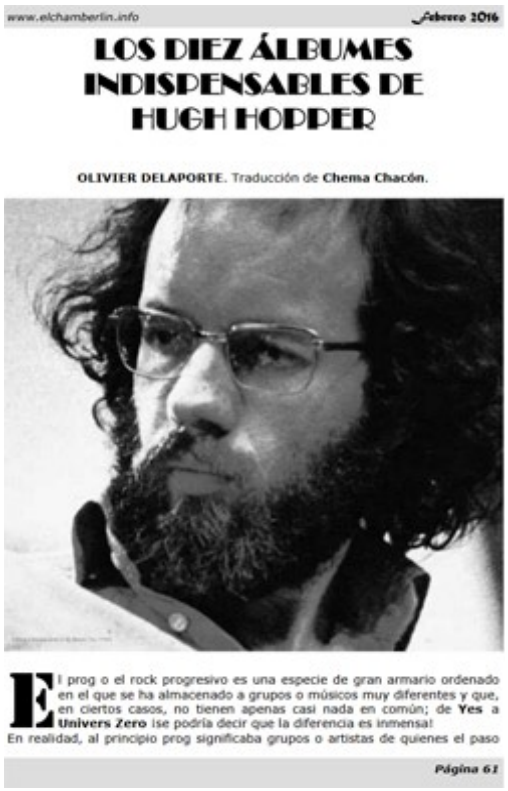
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Los diez álbumes indispensables de Hugh Hopper - El Chamberlin - n° 16 - Febrero 2016

LOS DIEZ ÁLBUMES INDISPENSABLES DE HUGH HOPPER




www.elchamberlin.info Febrero 2016

LOS DIEZ ÁLBUMES INDISPENSABLES DE HUGH HOPPER

OLIVIER DELAPORTE. Traducción de Chema Chacón.

El prog o el rock progresivo es una especie de gran armario ordenado en el que se ha almacenado a grupos o músicos muy diferentes y que, en ciertos casos, no tienen apenas casi nada en común; de Yes a Univers Zero ise podría decir que la diferencia es inmensa!
En realidad, al principio prog significaba grupos o artistas de quienes el paso

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Olivier Delaporte
Traducción de Chema Chacón.

El prog o el rock progresivo es una especie de gran armario ordenado en el que se ha almacenado a grupos o músicos muy diferentes y que, en ciertos casos, no tienen apenas casi nada en común; de **Yes** a **Univers Zero** ise podría decir que la diferencia es inmensa!

En realidad, al principio prog significaba grupos o artistas de quienes el paso consistía en hacer evolucionar una base musical que más o menos todo el mundo entendía, y que se designó como pop-rock. Pero si algunos músicos simplemente hicieron evolucionar el género

rock, otros crearon francamente una nueva identidad musical retomando la energía del rock, pero también la improvisación del jazz o la sofisticación de la música contemporánea. Si hoy la música de **Henry Cow** se nos ha vuelto familiar es siempre interesante intentar imaginar la desorientación que ha ejercido en los oídos de la época. Para enredar todavía más las cosas existen grupos donde la música evoluciona considerablemente, y a veces en poco tiempo; este fue el caso de **Soft Machine** que en apenas un año va a dar un gran salto, ese año activo de mediados de 1969 a los primeros meses de 1970.

Dos músicos van a influenciar el curso de las cosas durante este período: **Elton Dean** y **Hugh Hopper**. Mientras que **Robert Wyatt** y **Mike Ratledge** son todavía permeables a numerosas influencias, **Hopper** y **Dean** parecen claramente atraídos por la música instrumental, improvisada y muy definidamente influenciada por el jazz. Esto que está muy claro para **Elton Dean**, es más ambivalente en **Hopper**; de hecho, la técnica de amplificación de su bajo (fuzz) le va a permitir enganchar sonidos que se asemejan unas veces a la guitarra eléctrica, otras al sintetizador. Él y **Ratledge** quedan seducidos por los sonidos masivos presentes en el rock gracias a la guitarra, a este respecto te sugiero la escucha de ***Grides***, un directo de **Soft Machine** grabado a principios del año 1971, donde el sonido del bajo de **Hopper** y del teclado de **Ratledge** nunca han estado tan próximos.



Estamos pues en la época donde estos músicos producen una música muy difícil de clasificar y que se le llama todavía prog: ***Leg End*** de **Henry Cow** o ***Third*** de **Soft Machine**. La ambivalencia existirá todavía durante algunos años en **Hatfield and the North** o en los primeros álbumes de **National Health** o de **Gilgamesh**. ¿Dónde colocar estos discos, en el jazz rock, en el rock? No, ¡en el prog! Esta ambivalencia ha hecho que todos estos músicos hayan creado un público además de haber conseguido seducir masivamente al público rock o jazz. La principal notoriedad de **Fred Frith** en el campo del rock no es mucho más elevada que la de **Pip Pyle** al lado de los aficionados de jazz. El único que ha adquirido finalmente sus cartas de nobleza en el jazz es sin duda **Elton Dean**, hasta el punto de que algunos de los que le siguen desconocen no solamente que él ha formado parte de **Soft Machine** sino además que él no ha abandonado nunca totalmente este entorno, manteniéndose en grupos como **Soft Heap** o **Soft Works** durante toda su carrera.

Puesto que estas columnas son las de una revista de jazz y de impro **(1)**, me parece interesante evocar a un músico que no se beneficia en realidad de la consideración de los públicos de ninguno de estos dos estilos pero que, como escribo más arriba, se está fraguando su propio público. Sin embargo, **Hugh Hopper** merece sobradamente figurar en las discotecas de aficionados al jazz en todo caso, de estos y de los que saben escuchar la música tal como es, sin tener demasiado en cuenta clasificaciones asignadas por los biógrafos y otros críticos musicales.

A pesar de todo y a favor del público, ¡puede decirse que **Hopper** no ha puesto de su parte! En el momento donde se le hubiera podido capturar al fin en la categoría de jazz o jazz-rock iría a maquinar con guitarristas para producir álbumes claramente orientados al rock, como con el grupo **Glass Cage** o también **Brainville**. Es cierto que el eclecticismo no se percibe siempre como una cualidad; debido a esto, para un cierto número de aficionados al jazz, **Hopper** se queda siempre en el purgatorio, incluso en el infierno. Voy a intentar que salga.

La ocasión me viene dada con esta serie que le es consagrada en forma de diez CDs publicados por el sello Gonzo, de los cuales ya se han publicado los nueve **(2)** primeros números. Estas líneas permiten también rendir homenaje al echado en falta **Michael King**, quien nos ha abandonado hace unos meses **(3)**, ingeniero de sonido fabuloso habiendo restaurado con un infinito respeto numerosas grabaciones, todas ellas excelentes.

Es Michael King quien ha trabajado en la constitución de esta retrospectiva magníficamente realizada. King era además un sincero admirador de Hugh Hopper. Se supera a sí mismo con esta serie. Cada uno de estos diez CDs, con la excepción del primero y del último, se centran en un grupo concreto y el conjunto de estos discos cubre mayoritariamente los años 1990 a 2000.



Soft Machine en 1970, Elton Dean, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper y Mike Ratledge

En efecto, si durante los años 1970 la trayectoria musical de **Hugh Hopper** se quedó bastante limitada al prog, desde mediados de los años 1980 hasta su muerte se han multiplicado las experiencias musicales y los encuentros; estos dos decenios estaban muy poco documentados antes de la llegada de esta colección. Pero antes de evocar estos diferentes grupos comencemos lógicamente por el primer volumen que se presenta bajo la forma de una compilación, estando particularmente bien pensada.

Volume 1 – Memories

Si en el seno de **Soft Machine Elton Dean** y **Hugh Hopper** eran quienes manifestaban el atractivo más claro hacia el jazz, los centros de interés de Hopper estaban en esta época más dispersos, como testimonia el álbum ***1984***, grabado en el verano de 1972. Este disco está muy alejado del free jazz de la época pero, sin embargo, es este alejamiento lo que debió captar la atención de los aficionados al género. En efecto, el collage casi esquizofrénico que constituye este disco es un desafío a la conveniencia musical, al menos tan importante como los más grandes clásicos del free.



Portada alternativa del disco 1984 (1973)
en la reedición de 1979 del sello
Atmosphere Records

Choque frontal entre **Lovecraft**, **Terry Riley** y el Rhythm & blues, así se podría resumir este disco en el cual se encuentra la primera versión de 'Miniluv', una composición que va a jalonar estos diez volúmenes encontrándose en buen número de ellos. Por la diversidad de las grabaciones que constituye ***Memories Vol. 1*** ilustra pues, bastante bien, la amplitud de miras de **Hugh Hopper** y se comprueba por tanto una excelente introducción. Era difícil no comenzar por **Soft Machine** ya que sin decir que todo comenzará aquí para Hopper, la máquina blanda ha sido a pesar de todo la rampa de lanzamiento.

Reemplazando a **Kevin Ayers** en 1969, Hopper es el primero de los dos músicos que van a influenciar di grupo **Soft Machine** en una dirección más instrumental y experimental. Pero el título 'Memories' que inaugura, o casi, esta compilación está más en el espíritu de ***Two*** que de ***Third***.



Volume 1 - Memories - introduction disc

1. Memories
Hugh Hopper's Demo with Soft Machine
Recorded August 6th, 1969. Regent Studios, London
Hugh Hopper, bass guitar/acoustic guitar; Mike Ratledge, piano/organ; Robert Wyatt, drums/vocals

2. Was A Friend – Hugh Hopper Franglo Band
Recorded May 29th, 2004. St. Jean-aux-Bois, France
Patrice Meyer, electric guitar; Pierre Olivier-Govin, saxes; Hugh Hopper, bass guitar; Francois Verly, drums

3. Shuffle Demons
North & South
Recorded August 23rd, 1995. Aberdeen, Scotland
Steve Kettley, tenor saxophone; Paul Flush, keyboards; Hugh Hopper, bass guitar; Mike Travis, drums/percussion

4. Playtime
Hugh Hopper Interprets Alan Gowen
Recorded circa 2002. Whitstable, U.K.
Hugh Hopper – computer programming

5. Debonaire
Hugh Hopper Franglo Band
Recorded May 29th, 2004. St. Jean-aux-Boix, France
Patrice Meyer, electric guitar; Pierre Olivier-Govin, saxes; Hugh Hopper, bass guitar;
Francois Verly, drums

6. MGH
Hugh Hopper & Nigel Morris
Recorded circa 2002. California and Whitstable, U.K.
Hugh Hopper, fuzz bass; Nigel Morris, drums/percussion

7. Long Piece
Hugh Hopper Computer Collage
Recorded circa 2002. Whitstable, U.K.
Hugh Hopper + Many Friends = Many Surprises

Quien abre, o casi, es la voz de **Hugh Hopper** porque de hecho es el primer sonido de este CD, una voz que va a presentar cada pieza; ***Memories Vol. 1*** se presenta pues como una especie de emisión de radio en la cual se podría dar carta blanca a **Hopper** y la idea se revela un acierto que funciona muy bien. Más de treinta años separan la primera de la segunda pieza, el disco continúa con la 'Frangloband', luego a continuación es 'North & South'. No voy ahora a detenerme sobre estas dos formaciones cuando son ellos dos el objeto de dos volúmenes posteriores. Lleguemos primero a otros tres títulos de este álbum. El primero es 'Playtime', una composición de **Alan Gowen** con el cual **Hopper** tocó regularmente en la segunda mitad de los años 1970. Fundador de **Gilgamesh** y co-fundador de **National Health**, se puede decir que Gowen ayudaba a Hopper a sublimar su atracción

por el jazz rock. Pero la complicidad entre estos dos músicos iba más lejos; en efecto, 'Two Rainbow Daily', que ellos grabaran en 1980, no tiene mucho que ver con las sonoridades del jazz rock de la época, este álbum va más allá del simple dúo intimista que parece. La reinterpretación de 'Playtime' que se puede escuchar en este primer volumen suena más "eléctrica" pero constituye un bello homenaje a esta complicidad. En el registro de las curiosidades que hacen de esta introducción un CD indispensable se encuentra también un dúo con **Nigel Morris**. Aquí también los dos músicos tienen un background común que se remonta a los años 1970, en la época en la que Hopper durante un tiempo tocó con Isotope.



Isotope, 9 de enero de 1975, Gary Boyle, Nigel Morris, Hugh Hopper y Laurence Scott

Pero desde los años 1980 **Nigel Morris** trataba con el free jazz siendo uno de los tres miembros del **Paul Rutherford Trio**, con **Paul Rogers**. Este dúo **Hopper / Morris** se coloca en la categoría de los inclasificables, **Morris** toca en la regrabación todo un conjunto de percusiones sobre la cual **Hopper** llega a incorporar su bajo, no solamente el título es muy acertado sino que además viene a completar la discografía de **Morris** que es más bien escasa. Este primer volumen se termina con un collage de diversas fuentes sonoras, músicas, voces, ruidos efectuados por Hugh y que nos reenvía a la época de ***1984*** donde él había utilizado por primera vez ese proceder de bucles sonoros presentándose en la época como uno de los precursores de un efecto hoy más de democratizado. Salvo que en la época de ***1984***, no había ordenadores que permitieran el muestreo del sonido, iél llegaría a trabajar con la cinta magnética y las tijeras de edición! En el momento de la salida de ***Memories Vol. 1***, en 2013, todo salió a pedir de boca y la suite no ha decepcionado como veremos.

Volume 2 – Frangloband

Del **Hugh Hopper** músico, y también compositor, son precisamente estas composiciones que han sido escogidas con preferencia para esta serie. Trataremos pues el segundo volumen bajo este ángulo, puesto que ofrece un punto de vista apasionante.

Volume 2 - Frangloband, como su nombre indica, presenta al bajista de Canterbury acompañado de un grupo francés. El guitarrista **Patrice Meyer** toca con **Hopper** desde mediados de los años 1980; los otros dos músicos, **Pierre-Olivier Govin** y **Francois Verly** se unirán más tarde.

Este disco, que reproduce un concierto dado en *Triton* en 2003, se abre con 'Facelift', la pieza que inicia precisamente ***Third*** de **Soft Machine** y que marca de verdad el impacto de **Hopper** en el grupo. Para estos y los que están en relación a 'Facelift' surge forzosamente una pregunta: cómo se puede tocar esta pieza después de más de treinta años tras las versiones explosivas que se han podido escuchar en los diferentes directos del grupo, puesto que durante los años 1980 **Hopper** había dejado un poco de lado este título.



Frangloband en la sala Spirit of 66 el 30 de mayo de 2004, Patrice Meyer, Pierre-Olivier Govin, Manuel Denizet y Hugh Hopper)

La obertura del tema es bastante rigurosa, casi geométrica en los arreglos y para devolverle esta rigurosidad, **Hopper** y **Meyer** han echado mano de algunos artificios sonoros; sin llegar a sacar del olvido el sonido de su fuzz bass de la época, **Hopper** le devuelve sin embargo un sonido bastante cortante, mientras que **Meyer** da a su guitarra el estilo de una syntax a lo **Holdsworth**. A pesar de todo, no se vuelve a los ambientes de batallasas electrónicas o de desenfreno pirotécnico a lo **Ratledge**, pero el guiño está. Cuando la pieza se instala en su fase más rítmica, **Verly** la aborda de manera menos directa que lo hacía **Wyatt**, platillos y tambor entran más en juego.



La lección que se saca es que 'Facelift' permanece aún hoy como un formidable terreno de improvisación donde algunos músicos actuales faltos de ideas deberían inspirarse. Podrían también inspirarse de 'Shuffle Demons', otra composición de **Hopper**, no tan antigua como aquella pero, con todo, muy próxima a lo que se hacía en el prog en la gran época y sobre todo en el primer **National Health** (véase 'Tenemos Roads'). Sobre un ritmo que queda poco más o menos idéntico durante toda la pieza, esta se desarrolla en cuatro descripciones constituyendo, cada una, una mini composición en un grupo con, cada vez, un ambiente singular. Basta con escuchar esta versión aquí para darse cuenta que el tema es una fuente de improvisación más o menos inagotable.

'Howny Brownie' marca el interés de **Hopper** por el ritmo y blues puesto que este tema habría podido salir todo seguido de un grupo de blues rock. Para este título, **Hopper** muestra que la simplicidad de una composición puede de hecho permitir a los músicos liberar toda una energía de interpretación, es el caso aquí; y el final repetitivo hubiera podido durar tres o cuatro minutos más, que uno no se cansaría.

Por último el ineludible 'Miniluv'. Visiblemente **Michael King** consideraba este tema como importante puesto que lo ha reservado en cinco de los diez volúmenes y, en efecto, esta composición responde a mi parecer a una



Caricatura de Hopper realizada
por Jos Thommassen incluida en el libreto
de este Volumen 2

genialidad, como lo ha sido 'Acknowledgement' para **Coltrane**. Estas dos piezas que aparentemente no tienen nada que ver tienen, de hecho, un punto en común y esto permite abordar una transición ideal sobre ***North & South volume 3*** puesto que 'Miniluv' figura también.

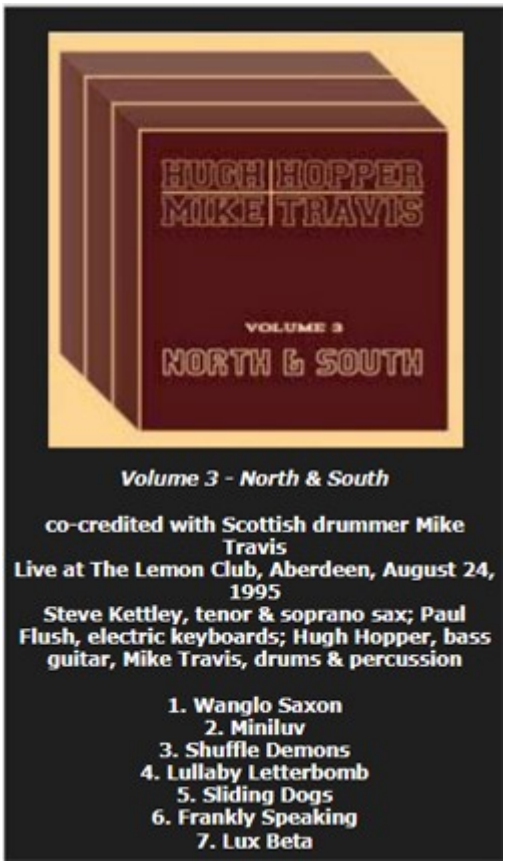
Volume 3 – North & South

Este tercer CD es también uno de los más largos de toda la serie, durante más de una hora recoge un concierto dado el 24 de agosto de 1995 en un pequeño club de Aberdeen. Está acreditado a **Hugh Hopper** y **Mike Travis**. Aunque **Hopper** y **Travis** no se han cruzado en el camino regularmente, todo esto ya comenzó con **Gilgamesh** veinte años antes, el grupo que se puede escuchar en este disco ha tenido una vida bastante corta y es una lástima a la vista de las impresiones que proporciona la escucha.

El público parece bastante limitado a un pequeño número, se deduce en todo caso una impresión de intimidad y la sensación que el grupo no estaba allí ni para demostrar ni para impresionar, sino simplemente por el placer de tocar. Basta escuchar la entrada de **Steve Kettley** al saxofón en composiciones como 'Miniluv' o 'Shuffle Demons' para convencerse de lo que tiene que ver con músicos que no hacen figuración.

Había evocado la relación que se podía apreciar entre 'Acknowledgement', de **Coltrane** y 'Miniluv'. En realidad, esta relación reside en el hecho que en los dos casos el bajo sugiere el ritmo pero también la melodía. En ambas, el tema melódico propuesto es bastante simple pero su intrincación en el ritmo hace una base extremadamente sólida para él o los improvisadores, así como para el grupo que le apoya. **Kettley** lo demuestra tanto en el sentido de volar literalmente con una soltura desconcertante. Veremos en el volumen 4 cómo esta composición es abordada por un dúo de saxo y trombón.

Dos títulos más adelante, **Hopper** sorprende con 'Lullaby Letterbomb', una composición que ha tocado poco y menos aún grabado. Parece haber salido de la imaginación de un compositor de Trinidad, aporta un toque exótico inesperado y en su momento, se dijo, se quería escuchar a algunos percusionistas locales para realzarla más. Uno se da cuenta que **Paul Flush** ha modificado el sonido de su teclado para sacar sonoridades próximas a un steel drum. Una mención particular puede ser otorgada a Flush por sus elecciones sonoras. Realmente los sonidos en boga en los teclados de los años 1990 hicieron a veces daño en los oídos, tanto que están "marcados" por su época, pero **Flush** supo moderar todo esto variando los ambientes.



Volume 3 - North & South

co-credited with Scottish drummer Mike Travis
Live at The Lemon Club, Aberdeen, August 24, 1995
Steve Kettley, tenor & soprano sax; Paul Flush, electric keyboards; Hugh Hopper, bass guitar, Mike Travis, drums & percussion

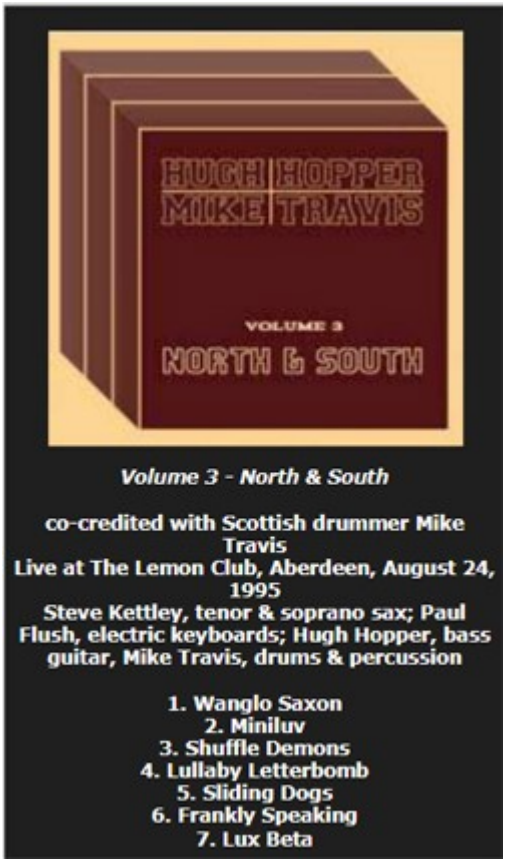
1. Wanglo Saxon
2. Miniluv
3. Shuffle Demons
4. Lullaby Letterbomb
5. Sliding Dogs
6. Frankly Speaking
7. Lux Beta

Los dos últimos títulos son un homenaje muy claro a la música negra. 'Frankly Speaking', cuya marcha no descabalaría en un álbum jazz funk, y sobretodo 'Lux Beta', que es la composición más bluesera que **Hopper** ha podido imaginar. Aquí todavía **Paul Flush** se adapta produciendo el sonido de un órgano. Esta pieza termina de forma muy apropiada por un feeling tranquilo, un concierto tocado más o menos cerca de sus oyentes. Este disco es probablemente uno de los más intimistas de toda la discografía de **Hugh Hopper**, singularidad que él comparte con el volumen siguiente.

Volume 4 – Four by Hugh by Four

Otro grupo, otro ambiente con **Four by Hugh by Four**, dicho de otra manera, 4 de **Hugh** tocados por 4. Se trata pues de un cuarteto y aquí también el grupo es único en la discografía del bajista. Este álbum ocupa un lugar específico no solamente en esta serie sino más generalmente en la discografía de **Hugh Hopper**; de hecho, es uno de los raros al no incluir ni teclado ni guitarra, esto hace suponer que el bajo estará más claramente presente de lo habitual. El grupo está pues constituido por **Robert Jarvis** al trombón, **Oscar Schutze** a la batería y **Frank Van Der Kooy** al tenor y al clarinete bajo (primer título). Este último es el más conocido puesto que había tocado en la banda de **Hugh Hopper** al principio de la formación y **Hopper** había tocado en su propio grupo, N.d.i.o.

'Was A Friend', que será objeto de un tratamiento particular en el último volumen es una composición de una total tensión donde **Hopper**, después de una introducción más bien virtuosa, pasa a un registro más "minimalista" concentrándose en una sola nota o casi, que él obtiene golpeando la cuerda de manera rítmica, este motivo de aspecto lancinante crea un verdadero clima y esta tensión sube progresivamente a la mitad de la pieza. Hasta ahora han sido pocas las ocasiones de escuchar esta composición como las tres siguientes que siguen.



'Virus Day', es un ritmo de tempo medio pero los músicos no se duermen ni mucho menos. En 'Wrong Gong', **Hopper** propone un tipo de tema repetitivo basado en ocho notas un poco en la forma de una tambura en la música indú. Aquí se encuentra el interés que **Hugh** siempre tuvo por la música llamada minimalista, que constituye uno de los puntos de anclaje de ***1984***. Este disco relativamente corto que se ha grabado en 2000 en Holanda acaba con 'Miniluv', y la versión que se toca ofrece todavía un punto de vista nuevo sobre la esencia de esta composición. En primer lugar, durante los primeros segundos donde toma posesión el baterista, su forma de tocar podría hacer pensar que va a abordar el tema con un ritmo reggae, pero la sensación desaparece cuando abandona casi enseguida el contrapunto rítmico para tocar en una igualdad más bien binaria que remite más al rock. A pesar de todo esta puerta brevemente entreabierta hace pensar que una guitarra rítmica al lado del bajo podría dar una bella interpretación a la forma reggae de este título. No pasan más que unos segundos antes de notar los "bucles" repetitivos tocados por el saxofonista y el trombonista a modo de introducción; bucles que, en particular **Van Der Kooy**, reutiliza a mitad de la pieza. El propio **Hopper** también se concentra sobre esta manera de abordar el tema haciendo variar muy progresivamente la firma melódica de este tema de tal manera que se le reconoce siempre atrás, al fondo. 'Miniluv', por su capacidad de acoger la repetición de cortos encadenamientos de notas posicionándose en la base, muestra toda la fascinación que esta manera de abordar la música ha producido en **Hopper**, pero también sobre generaciones de aficionados que se han abandonado a la contemplación auditiva escuchando a **La Monte Young**, **Terry Riley** o **Steve Reich**. Recuerdo haber evocado ya el tema en las columnas de esta misma revista [Improjazz (N. del T.)] durante una entrevista dedicada a **Trevor Watts**, en la que nosotros habíamos llegado a esta cuestión abordando los primeros discos del **Spontaneous Music Ensemble**, así como los de **Moiré Music**.

Four by Hugh by four viene a ser quizás (con el volumen 8), de los diez, el que seducirá más a los oyentes menos atraídos por el prog. Es sin duda el más "jazzista" de esta

colección, pero sus composiciones guardan sin embargo el sabor que sólo un músico que viene de otra parte del jazz es capaz de dar. Es también por la constitución del grupo que toca estos temas, uno de los más intimistas, desde luego menos que el quinto volumen que es en dúo.

Volume 5 – Heart to Heart

Este nuevo volumen, así como los dos siguientes, nos van a permitir cruzarnos con algunas de las figuras legendarias de la escuela de Canterbury sin necesida de sumergirse en el prog de los años 1970. Esto comienza con este volumen, a través del dúo **Hugh Hopper** / **Phil Miller**, titulado **Heart to heart** y grabado en Amsterdam en 2007. **Miller** y **Hopper** han seguido caminos paralelos durante los años del prog, **Delivery**, **Hatfield and the North** y **National Health** para el primero; **Soft Machine**, **Isotope** y **Gilgamesh** para el segundo. Habían ya tocado juntos durante este período pero se encontraron oficialmente en la formación **In Cahoots**, con la que **Hopper** va a tocar al principio. Se reencontraron nuevamente en Short Wave pero se volverá a hablar en poco tiempo.



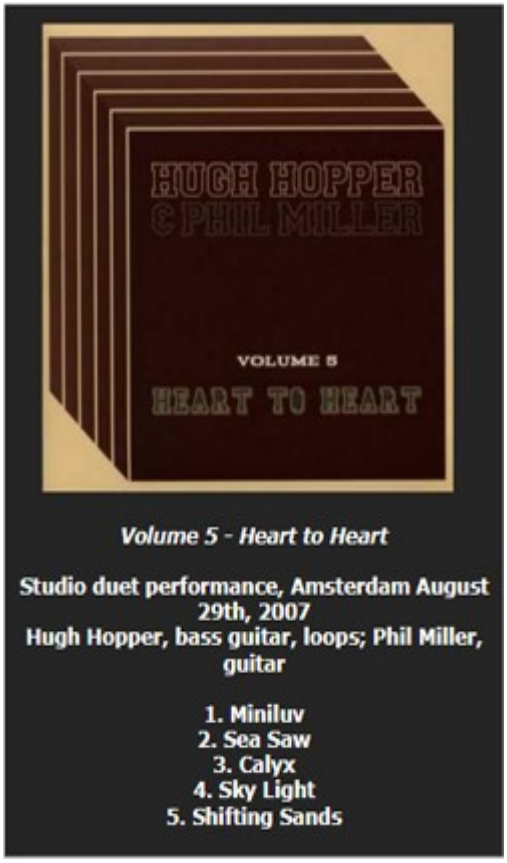
Hugh Hopper y Phil Miller, Amsterdam, 29 agosto 2007

En la discografía de Hugh Hopper los dúos son poco numerosos, el que viene a la memoria es evidentemente Two rainbows daily (junto a Alan Gowen), este ambiente de conversaciones amigables entre dos músicos que no tienen nada que demostrarse, ni entre ellos ni a los oyentes.

Para esta sesión cada uno aporta una composición: 'Miniluv' por Hopper y 'Calix' por Miller, esta última habiendo hecho su aparición en la época de Hatfield and the North, se encuentran otras versiones y especialmente con Elton Dean. Menos destacable que 'Seven for Lee', de Dean, dirán algunos, sin duda menos contundente igualmente que 'Miniluv', 'Calyx' sin embargo es un magnífico tema que empuja al lirismo pero no sucumbirá nunca en el exceso en manos de estos músicos. Se trata verdaderamente de un justo equilibrio entre sentido melódico e improvisación. Las otras tres piezas están más basadas en la impro que en la composición, pero con algunos reparos a pesar de todo.

'Sky light' es una pieza con atmósfera que revela una cierta tensión y a la que no faltaría

más que una batería para que se la sitúe al lado del rock. Detrás del bajo se encuentra un discreto bucle que da la impresión que Hopper está pregrabado con un fuzz bass como en la época grande. 'Shifting sands', que acaba el álbum es una larga pieza de más de 18 minutos que contiene varias fases. Un bucle repetitivo sostiene los primeros intercambios que no parecen tomar una dirección muy definida pero que va a abandonarse bastante rápido, y el ambiente va a calmarse hasta el punto de convertirse en casi plano. Aparecen entonces nuevos "samples" de bajo discretos y repetitivos, después los dos músicos se reasientan plenamente para cerrar la pieza en un ambiente, de nuevo, más rítmico. Difícil decir si esta sesión está del lado del jazz o del rock, está claro que el sonido de la guitarra de Miller y su manera de utilizar el control del volumen hace inclinarse más por el segundo término pero la calidad de las improvisaciones remiten, sin embargo, al jazz. Al finalizar este quinto volumen uno no puede sino felicitarse una vez más ante la idea y calidad de esta serie.





Hugh Hopper y Alan Gowen en 1978

Volume 6 - Special Friends

Phil Miller nos acompaña todavía en el volumen siguiente, uniéndose con **Pip Pyle**, otra figura del prog, para un grupo donde el personal varía en las dos últimas piezas. Conocido bajo el nombre de **Pip Pyle' Short Wave** esta formación también ha realizado gira como **Hugh Hopper special friends**. Un álbum de **Short Wave** se publicó en los años 1990, bastante decepcionante pero este sexto volumen viene a superar plenamente la frustración y eleva definitivamente las dudas sobre el potencial de este grupo. Para los amantes instruidos del prog el primer título 'For Alan' indica claramente a quien se dirige la dedicatoria, se trata

de **Alan Gowen** por supuesto, con el que Hopper ha tocado a menudo desde finales de 1970. Es una balada donde **Didier Malherbe** ofrece un muy buen solo de flauta con la justa necesidad de lirismo, **Miller** le acompaña quedando bastante discreto. Una versión muy corta de 'Sliding dogs', tocada a continuación es totalmente diferente a la que se encuentra en el volumen 3, mucho más rock en cierta manera; esto restablece en cierto modo el background [trayectoria] de esta composición que figuraba por primera vez en dos versiones en el álbum ***Monster Band*** (1973). 'Midnight Judo' me recuerda la cuarta parte de la suite 'Slightly all the time' ('backwards') (**Soft Machine, *Third***). 'Midnight Judo' no es de ninguna manera una recuperación sino que uno tiene la sensación que **Hopper** se inspiró de ese tema más antiguo para esta composición más reciente.



'Miniluv' que nos ha acompañado prácticamente desde el inicio de este itinerario permite a **Phil Miller** brillar en un solo que sin ser incisivo está sin embargo tocado con mucha convicción. Después es 'Wanglo saxon', una composición que se ha podido apreciar en ***North and South*** y que está tocada aquí un poco casi en el mismo estilo. 'Wanglo saxon' vuelve enseguida para introducir al grupo que va a tocar en las dos últimas piezas, Malherbe es reemplazado por **Elton Dean** al alto y el grupo está aumentado con un pianista. La sucesión de estas dos versiones es interesante puesto que la segunda lectura aborda el tema de manera más aflorada, más restringida. Aunque sin transición, el grupo engancha con una improvisación de más de 17 minutos que constituye una de las atracciones de este sexto volumen. Sin que se pueda identificar un tema, hay una rítmica que da una cierta dirección y cada músico improvisa por turno. De manera asombrosa **Elton Dean** no está particularmente incisivo en esta última parte, su forma de tocar aparece finalmente como bastante próxima a la de **Didier Malherbe** que le ha precedido en los otros 5 títulos. Esta larga improvisación es magnífica, no da ocasión de una demostración de fuerza del uno u otro músico sino ilustra más bien una gran coherencia del grupo y de improvisadores seguros ellos mismos y convincentes.

Volume 7 - Soft Boundaries



Si **Miller** había asegurado la continuidad entre los volúmenes 5 y 6, es **Elton Dean** quien es el nexo entre este volumen y el siguiente. Titulado **Soft Boundaries** este séptimo volumen viene de hecho a completar la discografía más bien escasa de un grupo que no habría por desgracia de durar mucho tiempo. Formado en 2004, la trayectoria de **Soft Bound** se paro con la muerte prematura de **Elton Dean** en 2006. Un sólo disco está disponible: ***Live at Le Triton 2004***, grabado el 17 de junio. Constituido por **Hopper** al bajo, **Dean** al saxo, **Simon Goubert** a la batería y **Sophia Domancich** a los pianos acústico y eléctrico, esta última no era una novata en el ambiente post Canterbury puesto que se la encontrará, sobre todo al lado de **Pip Pyle**, en los años 1990. Este directo en Triton era más que prometedor y tiene bastante bien olvidadas frustraciones puesto que era evidente que el grupo había tocado mucho más que las cuatro piezas que contiene. Aquí están pues las previsiones satisfechas con este séptimo volumen, el cual añade dos piezas del concierto del 17 de junio 2004 y otras dos de un concierto dado un año más tarde.

Antes de abordar la música en sí, es necesario que haga un pequeño repaso a la dinastía "Soft". A pesar de que **Soft Head** o **Soft Heap** no estaban del todo hechos en la línea del heroico **Soft Machine** del período ***Third***, ***Fourth*** o ***Fifth***, estos grupos se replanteaban la idea directriz, el buen lado jazz rock podríamos decir, a saber la energía del rock exceptuando las preocupaciones virtuosas. Lo que era igualmente interesante en estas dos formaciones era la ausencia de guitarrista, como en el periodo bisagra de **Soft Machine**. Pienso en efecto que si hubiera habido un guitarrista en ***Third*** y en los dos siguientes, nunca **Ratledge** y los demás hubieran podido llegar a ocupar el espacio musical como lo han hecho; cada uno sabía hasta qué punto en el prog un guitarrista ocupa naturalmente un sitio importante. Una de las razones por las cuales yo no he sido personalmente nunca muy entusiasta al respecto de **Soft Machine Legacy** al considerar por cierto que hubiera preferido con creces un teclado a los diferentes guitarristas que han pasado por ese grupo. Así **Soft Bound** inmediatamente ha encarnado en lo a mí concierne una especie de herencia de **Soft Head** o **Soft Heap**. Herencia sin duda alguna, pero la música es totalmente actual. Naturalmente si uno se basa en ***Live at Le Tritón*** se podía argumentar que la aparente modernidad se debía por cierto en que tres de las cuatro composiciones eran actuales, sólo 'Kings & Queens' venía del repertorio de **Soft Machine.** Sin embargo la interpretación de este "¡estándar!" no se hizo al pie de la letra. ¡Esto teniendo también en cuenta que **Simón Goubert** y **Sophia Domancich** revisaban aún su filosofía de bachiller cuando los dos ingleses estaban ya en las carreteras desde hacía tiempo!



Para los aficionados de **Soft Machine** es siempre interesante escuchar la relectura actual de determinadas composiciones, de hecho los diferentes "Softs", Head o Heap, han mayoritariamente tocado un repertorio inédito y han retomado poco. Así, descubriendo la lista de títulos de este séptimo volumen la febrilidad

no va a dejar de invadir a los aficionados de la máquina blanda periodo ***Third***.

Soft Bound Live At le Triton 2004

Es 'Slightly all the time' la que abre el disco y la suite compuesta mayoritariamente por **Ratledge** está tocada en su integridad sin apenas rearreglo alguno. El carácter de esta composición que se despliega en sus diferentes fases produce siempre su efecto. **Elton Dean** aparece más bien discreto y es **Sophia Domancich** quien sale del apuro. Ella está al piano eléctrico lo que parece bastante lógico dada la historia de este tema, aunque no busque en modo alguno imitar a **Ratledge**. Utilizando su experiencia de jazz ella reactualiza completamente la composición. Su forma de tocar está naturalmente marcada por su gran diferencia (en edad) y ella no ha recurrido a ningún efecto sonoro particular, que descansa únicamente en sus solos o sus puntuaciones rítmicas. El espíritu de la pieza está ahí pero sin la menor traza de un aburrido revival. A este estadio de la escucha se espera con impaciencia la segunda versión que termina el CD preguntándose cuál es la buena razón que ha podido empujar a **Michael King** a elegir por segunda vez este título y no otro.

El segundo título que es además el último extraído del concierto del 17 junio 2004 es The lonely sea and the sky'. Ya alternado en el segundo volumen, esta pieza proviene de hecho de ***Hopper Tunity Box***, grabado en 1976. Aquí se encuentra uno de los aspectos más interesantes de esta formación, a saber: que incluso si una parte de las raíces provienen del prog, el grupo no busca resucitar este período. Como por ironía además, **Domancich** se instala en el piano para esta pieza, es solamente en el segundo tiempo que regresa al piano eléctrico. Esta elección es realmente interesante, por cómo a su lado **Elton Dean** toca el saxello en un estilo de total moderación, y con un sonido magnífico pues él tenía el secreto, ¡el conjunto da a la pieza un aspecto francamente clásico! Esta pieza de tempo medio que apareciera como una especie de respiración plana en ***Hopper Tunity Box*** en un ambiente más bien de rock/experimental, se va a convertir en 2004 en una balada más que respetable pues la sólida composición se demuestra plenamente.

Damos a continuación un salto de un año para encontrarnos el 11 de junio de 2005 en el mismo lugar y con el mismo grupo o casi, para las dos últimas piezas de este volumen. 'Spanish Knee' contiene uno de los aspectos más singulares de esta formación, a saber, su capacidad de liberar energía de rock sin por ello estar en el jazz rock. Esto ya es lo que podía experimentarse en **Soft Head** o **Soft Heap** pero no francamente en **In Cahoots** por ejemplo. Este clima proviene sobre todo de **Simon Goubert** que marca el ritmo de manera mucho menos binaria que lo haría un baterista en un contexto jazz rock. Él es más sutil pero su despliegue de energía a lo **Elvin Jones** da a esta pieza un relieve singular que no se encuentra forzosamente en el jazz. **Elton Dean** siempre al saxello es más incisivo, y **Sophia Domancich**, sin imponerse, da pruebas de pertinencia.



Detalle de la contraportada de Soft Bounds -Live at Le Triton 2004

Al final llega la segunda versión tan esperada de 'Slightly all the time'. Al cuarteto se añade un segundo saxofonista, el francès **Jean Michel Couchet** que se encuentra en varios discos de **Goubert**. No conociendo por otro lado la discografia de este músico, no puedo confiarme

nada más que en su prestación en este título. Visiblemente inspirado por la pieza y sin duda también por el grupo, él libera un solo muy cautivante, enérgico sin ser expresivo a ultranza. La pareja que forma con **Dean** es muy eficaz y apetecería tener más de un sólo título. Es también **Simon Goubert** quien está puesto delante con un solo de batería que una vez más podría recordar a **Elvin Jones**. El tema está de nuevo tratado en estas diferentes fases pero con foco más basado en los solistas. Sobre el conjunto de estos cuatro títulos **Hugh Hopper** permanece más discreto, no tomando apenas la palabra en solitario pero la pertinencia de sus contribuciones, en concreto en las figuras rítmicas que aporta en la primera versión de 'Slightly all the time', hace que uno se fije sin problema.

Este séptimo volumen es pues de importancia por la calidad de su contenido y porque viene a completar la más que escasa discografía de **Soft Bound**. Pero sobretodo una reflexión me viene al término de esta escucha y considerando que este grupo no ha tocado prácticamente más que en un solo sitio: "el Triton"; ime pregunto mucho qué hacen los programadores de festivales y pienso sobre todo en aquellos que trabajan en invierno o en las afueras pintadas de azul!**(4)** Cómo las diferentes formaciones de **Hugh Hopper** han podido permanecer ajenas a estos acontecimientos. Es cierto que **Hopper** no ponía de su parte, obstinándose en permanecer siendo inglés durante toda su vida. Y sí, desgraciadamente, para una parte de la inteligencia del jazz en Francia el pasaporte americano deja todavía una calidad por sí misma. No saben lo que se pierden. El octavo volumen aporta una flagrante demostración.

Volume 8 - Bass on Top

Este octavo título intriga en primer lugar por su personal. A los lados de **Hugh Hopper** se encuentra en efecto el baterista **Aharon Kaminski** que viene más bien del rock alternativo, el productor e instrumentista **Meidad Zaharia**, fundador en otros tiempos del sello Mio Records, el saxofonista **Pierre Olivier Govin** (**Frangloband**) y finalmente el célebre pianista **Slava Ganelin**, quien fue en otros tiempos el alma del **Ganelin Trio**. Un piano, una batería y percusiones, un saxofón, loops y samples... Con semejante personal y frente acrobacias tales **Hugh Hopper** nos ha habituado a que uno se pregunte qué género de música nos espera puesto que se trata de una sola improvisación dividida en cinco partes.



Pero lo que intriga más todavía es lo que se nos da a conocer en las notas del libreto, a saber: que la sesión estaba normalmente prevista para dos. Inicialmente el productor quería grabara **Kaminski** y **Ganelin**, pero con la escucha de la sesión, **Zaharia** había tenido la idea de añadir un bajo, el de **Hugh Hopper** en una regrabación. Después **Pierre Olivier Govin** está incorporado también con el mismo procedimiento. Al principio se podría creer en un re-make de 1984 y por tanto también en una banda sonora en coherencia con el clásico de **George Orwell**. Todo es como en 1972, un bajo eléctrico en tensión, con sonido desmultiplicado y con drone inestable, todo dominado por sonidos apenas identificables pero pudiendo hacer pensar en una lejana multitud agitada. Pero poco a poco **Kaminski** y **Ganelin** toman posesión y el fuzz bass desaparece en beneficio de un bajo simplemente eléctrico. Se entra en la segunda fase y una extraña impresión puede atravesar al oyente en este momento, la sensación de una modernidad ya oída. Es en lo que se caracterizan la segunda y tercera partes de esta pieza, ese sonido aparentemente con referencias al prog, pero de una sutileza tal que uno duda en los remarques. Al principio de la segunda parte la música puede remitir a ***Leg end***, o **Unrest** de **Henry Cow** en lo que se refiere a la improvisación, pero sin por ello decir

que se está en el jazz. Los ritmos, el posicionamiento de los solistas no evoca directamente al jazz. Es en concreto el enfoque de **Pierre Olivier Govin** que instala el clima, no imponiéndose él como lo haría casi de forma natural un saxofonista de jazz, él se instala un poco a la manera de un **Geoff Leigh**, desapareciendo antes que uno le preste demasiada atención. **Slava Ganelin** es, en cuanto a él, bastante reconocible, autor de sus agitados asaltos inmediatamente temperados por una calma asegurada tal como los libraba en el **Ganelin trio**. Poco a poco, sin embargo, las referencias ritmicas al jazz se instalan pero sin nunca identificarse totalmente a este estilo.

En el cuarto movimiento **Govin** endosa, esta vez más claramente, la costumbre del saxofonista de jazz en una pieza que podría hacer pensar en una versión actual de **Soft Heap**. Algunas discretas manipulaciones sobre el sonido del saxo remiten una vez más al trabajo sonoro efectuado en los dos primeros [álbumes de] **Henry Cow**. **Kaminski** por su parte hace demostración de una buena inventiva tanto en la batería como en las percusiones, puesto que la manera de tocar con el sonido contribuye tanto al aprovechamiento del ritmo como al simple respeto del tempo. El bajo de **Hugh Hopper** está muy bien aprovechado en la mezcla con un sonido un poco diferente del que nos tiene acostumbrado a escuchar viniendo de él. Se añadieron sonidos graves que hacen que el sonido del instrumento esté más presente, pero también un poco más apagado, haciéndole planear como una sombra persistente sobre el grupo entero. La improvisación se calma totalmente en su última fase, el bajo ha desaparecido para dar lugar a discretos loops con la fuente bastante desconocida, el saxofón está también eclipsado y los misteriosos loops forman un tapiz detrás de la batería de **Kaminski** que se aplaca y el piano de **Ganelin** que toma aires de **Satie** o de un **Mal Waldron** introspectivo.



Slava Ganelin actuando en Lituania con el Ganelin Trio Priority

Este octavo volumen ocupa un lugar particular en el seno de toda la serie. En efecto, ***North & south***, ***Frangloband*** o **Soft Boundaries** se inscriben en una especie de tratamiento del pasado al presente. Pero ese Bass of Top propone una música enteramente nueva. En efecto, aquí no hay temas familiares como se pueda encontrar en las otras formaciones, la organización de la música es inédita e incluso si se encuentran trazos del pasado, este se ve reapropiado por el músico de una manera totalmente nueva. Del mismo modo, los miembros de este grupo así como las circunstancias de la grabación, revelan una selección inédita. Si en las diferentes formaciones de los primeros volúmenes se encuentran músicos que comparten un pedestal común, el prog o el post prog, aquí todo es distinto. Ni trazo de prog ni de **Kaminski** ni de **Ganelin**. **Pierre Olivier Govin** demuestra ser un músico que hubiera podido tener un camino aún más largo con **Hugh Hopper**, y aparece en este volumen como totalmente en fase con la evolución musical que perseguía el bajista. Este disco es también un mensaje póstumo a todos aquellos que actualmente tocan incansablemente una música que data de 40 años, convencidos de estar a la vanguardia y preguntándose al mismo tiempo porqué venden tan pocos discos. Para esta larga improvisación **Hopper** demuestra cómo influencias tan gloriosas sean las que sean no deben hacer función de cortapisa sino que deben permitir, al contrario, una reactualización de la música.

Volume 9 - Anatomy of Facelift

El volumen nueve se presenta bajo apariencias engañosas; en efecto, cuando se propone cinco veces el mismo título 'Facelift' podría creerse que se destina sobre todo a los oyentes versados en musicología. Cinco veces la misma pieza ino se puede seducir nada más que a aficionados de profundos estudios musicales! Pero el hecho es que estas cinco versiones son totalmente diferentes y presentan cada una un verdadero interés. De modo que uno no se cansa en modo alguno de este disco a pesar de su constitución. Sin pretender disertar sobre 'Facelift como lo haría un musicólogo; a pesar de todo, es necesario detenerse sobre la singularidad de cada versión porque el álbum representa bien el título que tiene; en realidad, es una anatomía de esta composición a la cual estamos invitados.

'Facelift' es el título que abría ***Third*** y por el que se introdujo pues la mutación que **Soft Machine** efectuó en menos de un año. Si 'Sightly all the time' u 'Out bloody rageous' soltaron en realidad las amarras en el primer período de la máquina blanda, 'Moon in june' y 'Facelift' fueron el nexo. Aún siendo instrumental, 'Facelift' conservaba el aspecto directo propio del rock. Menos sofisticado que las dos composiciones de **Ratledge**,

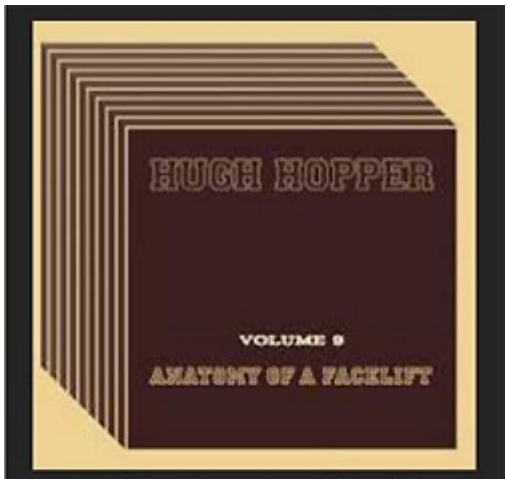


Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper y Mike Ratledge

['Facelift'] permitía al grupo no desorientar más que moderadamente a su auditorio, si se me permite decirlo. Es justamente en parte éste el motivo que **Hugh Hopper** aborda en la introducción de este CD donde él expone que no habiendo hecho estudios musicales particulares de sus composiciones sean más bien simples, citando como ejemplo contrario a **Mike Ratledge**, quien teniendo nociones teóricas sobre la música le permite componer de manera más compleja. El propósito de **Hopper** subrayando que una composición de apariencia simple puede hacerse más compleja según la manera de quien la aborda va a estar ilustrada por la selección y la sucesión que quiso **Michael King**, quien va a secundar, en efecto, a una complejidad gradual del título.

Este comienza por la que es probablemente la versión más rock de 'Facelift', grabada el 25 de junio de 1969 en París; esta versión es una de las raras en trío y ella da a entender lo que se podría llamar el esqueleto de la composición. Desprovista de la introducción a la cual la pieza será adosada por la suite, uno entra inmediatamente en el chorus inicial y en lo sucesivo célebre. La manera de tocar el bajo de **Hopper** está bastante concentrada en un espectro limitado, a la manera de un bajista de rock, **Wyatt** tiene una poderosa forma de tocar; los dos músicos estando favorecidos por la mezcla, es por lo que se puede hablar del esqueleto del título. Lo que acentúa la dimensión rock de esta primera interpretación es también el sonido tan crudo del órgano de Ratledge que toma a veces acentos de guitarra eléctrica. Su solo es impresionante y el **conjunto** del trío despliega toda la energía de un grupo de rock. Cuatro meses después el ambiente evolucionó sensiblemente. Ahí todavía uno se asienta directamente en el título pero el trío de base está aumentado por **Elton Dean** (saxo alto), Lyn Dobson (flauta y saxofón), **Marc Charig** (trompeta) y **Nick Evans** (trombón).

Cierto que el sonido es un poco confuso y uno tiene dificultad para distinguir a cada uno de



Volume 9 - Anatomy of Facelift

Five live performances of Hugh's signature composition, Facelift, as performed by Soft Machine, 1969 through 1971. Booklet includes extracts from Lois Frith's University Thesis: Anatomy of Facelift
Mike Ratledge, organ, piano; Hugh Hopper, bass; Robert Wyatt, drums; Elton Dean, alto sax, saxello (3-6); Lyn Dobson, soprano sax (3-4); Nick Evans, trombone (3); Mark Charig, cornet (3)

1. Facelift (Workshop Session, Cremo Italy, March 3rd, 2007)
2. Facelift (Le Bataclan, Paris, June 25th, 1969)
3. Facelift (Festival Amougies Belgium, October 28th, 1969)
4. Facelift (Fairfield Halls, Croydon, January 4th, 1970)
5. Facelift (Havikodden Arts Centre, Oslo, February 28th, 1971)
6. Facelift (Turfschip, Breda, March 21st, 1971)

estos músicos pero esto, resulta claramente compensado, con la llegada de los arreglos que vienen a incorporarse al tema de base. Estos arreglos así como los solos dan a esta pieza una dimensión menos cruda, más sofisticada. Los solos son privilegiados en la tercera versión, fechados el 4 de enero de 1970, se asemejan a la grabación de ***Third***. Hay menos solistas potenciales puesto que los vientos se reducen a **Dean** y **Dobson**, pero de golpe la dimensión jazz aparece más evidente puesto que hay más sitio para la improvisación. Es también la primera vez que el título no se tocó directamente sino que se presentó durante unos cuantos calmados minutos antes de la llegada de la pieza propiamente dicha.

Las dos últimas versiones son interesantes porque aportan también una evolución un poco inesperada. Se vuelve a la fórmula en trío, aun cuando en la escucha uno podría creer que hay dos órganos. La primera de estas dos versiones está grabada el 27 de marzo de 1971 en Noruega; la introducción un poco lenta de la pieza se prolonga y durante un instante uno cree incluso que el título va a tomar una dirección un poco free pero esto se calma muy rápido. La soltura de **Ratledge** en cuanto a hacer juegos malabares entre el órgano y piano eléctrico recuerdan el ambiente de los primeros **National Health**. Los habituales habrán comprendido que yo quiero describir por aquí sonoridades bastante refinadas pero de repente el bajo de **Hopper** toma un sonido claramente más afilado y el tema suena. Sin embargo, **Ratledge** mantiene este clima un poco jazz rock durante toda la pieza, **Wyatt se** queda bastante discreto en su manera de marcar el ritmo. La versión siguiente, separada un mes de la que venimos escuchando, se instala un poco de la misma manera con la diferencia que la introducción lenta es más breve, el tema llega más de repente y **Wyatt** retoma una forma de tocar más masiva. Las improvisaciones de **Ratledge** son también más directas y comprometidas. Se aprecia al término de este recorrido que escuchar cinco veces el mismo título no ha sido aburrido ya que las versiones seleccionadas son diferentes y todas interesantes. La selección muy juiciosa de **Michael King** ha venido a ilustrar a la perfección el propósito de **Hugh Hopper** recogiendo la diferencia entre el título y la manera de abordarlo. Esto parece evidente en el jazz pero lo es menos en una música que tiene una parte de sus raíces en el rock.



Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Lyn Dobson y Elton Dean en 1971

Pero esto abre también una interrogante en relación con la cohorte de homenajes a los gigantes del jazz al cual uno tiene derecho después de tan largo tiempo. ¿El mejor homenaje consiste en volver a tocar el tema o apropiárselo para hacer cualquier cosa nueva? En menos de dos años están comprendidas estas cinco versiones de 'Facelift' y en este corto lapso de tiempo el título ha evolucionado mucho. Pero haría falta entonces volver a Volume 2: Frangloband y que se rememorase la versión de 'Facelift' que figura para convenir que aquella marcó seguramente un poco de audacia y aparece como un poco moderada a la luz de esto que se viene escuchándose.

Volume 10 - Was A Friend

Queda pues un décimo volumen que aparecerá a principios de septiembre **(5)** [2015]], que contendrá sobre todo un reencuentro de **Hopper** y **Chris Cutler** asi como una versión de 'Was a friend' **(6)**, por el trío de **Denis Colín**.

Dado el nivel de los nueve primeros títulos, hay pocas posibilidades para que este último volumen decepcione. La idea de publicar estos CDs separadamente y no bajo la forma de una caja es correcta en cuanto a que deja la posibilidad a cada uno de favorecer lo que se desee escuchar incluso cuando, en mi opinión, los diez volúmenes son indispensables tal y como son, y en cuanto a que cada capítulo da valor al grupo de esta colección. Es necesario señalar también, una vez más, el excelente trabajo de organización y de compilación efectuado por **Michael King** quien demuestra de nuevo la exigencia de calidad que ha marcado sobradamente todos los títulos sobre los cuales ha trabajado, tanto para su sello como para los que le pasaron lista; uno no podía imaginar mejor homenaje a la música de **Hugh Hopper**. Para ser completo del todo, sin que eso no sea reivindicado por el sello Gonzo, esta serie parece salir en cantidad muy limitada puesto que algunos ejemplares son ya un poco difíciles de encontrar. Finalmente, en el mismo sello podréis encontrar algunas otras reediciones importantes en relación con **Hugh Hopper**. Hay sobre todo los dos álbumes del cuarteto **Hopper**, **Dean**, **Tippett**, **Gallivan** a saber, ***Cruel but Fair*** y ***Mercy Dash***. Presente igualmente en el catálogo encontramos la reedición del álbum ***Monster Band***, de **Hopper**, asi como un Live de 1971 de **Soft Machine** junto a **Daevid Allen** y **Gilly Smith**.



Volume 10 - Was A Friend

Various rare tracks, including duets with drummers Chris Cutler (Henry Cow) & Seb Rockford and concluding with Hugh final musical performance: Was A Friend, performed by Denis Colin Trio, 2008
Robert Wyatt, vocals, piano (1 & bonus); Chris Cutler, drums, electronics (2); Seb Rochford, drums (3); Jeff Sherman, acoustic & bass guitar (4); Denis Colin, bass clarinet (5); Julien Omé, guitar (5); François Verly, percussion (5)

1. Was a Friend (Bresse-sur-Grosne, November 1983/Kent, April 1995)
2. Full Flight (Nozart Festival, Cologne, March 3rd, 2007)
3. Flight Full (Roundhouse, London, October 27th, 2006)
4. Dim_04 (Washington/Kent, 2007)
5. Was a Friend (Kerava, Finland, June 7th, 2008)
bonus: Round Midnight (Kent, circa 1960)

(1) Originalmente este artículo se publicó en la revista francesa **Improjazz**. (N. del T.)

(2) Cuando se publicó originalmente el artículo solo se habian publicado los 9 primeros títulos. Actualmente ya se ha publicado el 10 y último.

(3) Michael King falleció el 2 de marzo de 2015. Puedes leer una entrevista con él en **El Chamberlín**, n° 15 (N. del T.)

(4) Frase irónica por parte del autor que recuerda a festivales que, con una tradición de decenios, se organizan en París y alrededores apoyados por instituciones oficiales de la ciudad como el Festival Sons d'hiver (desde 1991, en Val-de-Marne y Paris) y Banlieues Bleues (desde 1984, organizado por dicha asociación, en Seine-Saint-Denis y otros extrarradios de Paris) N. del T.

(5) El articulo original se publicó en septiem¬bre de 2015 pocas fechas antes de la edición del último volumen.

(6) 'Was a friend' era el título genérico que Michael King tenía pensado para la salida de esta colección.

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¡Entrevista a Robert Wyatt! - Tribulaciones - 24 enero, 2014

¡ENTREVISTA A ROBERT WYATT!



Uno de los nombres más respetados y creativos de la escena del rock progresivo y la vanguardia británica, miembro fundador de Soft Machine y dueño de una notable carrera solista, concedió un extenso y profundo reportaje -algo no muy habitual en su larga trayectoria- a una periodista argentina desde su residencia en las afueras de Londres. Vale la pena compartirlo.

Por Mario De Cristófaro

Entrevista: Julieta Desmarás
Fotografías: Cuneiform Records

Nació en Bristol, Gran Bretaña, en el año 1945. Baterista y miembro fundador de Soft Machine, una de las bandas prominentes de la escena del rock progresivo de mediados de los '60. Hace pocos meses, el sello estadounidense Cuneiform editó una nueva compilación de Robert Wyatt, con material inédito y grabaciones de su época en la banda. "'68" se trata de música que creó en Estados Unidos tras la extenuante gira norteamericana junto a *The Jimi Hendrix Experience*. El material está en cd y vinilo; un lujo de colección.

En 1966, utilizando el nombre de uno de los libros de William Burroughs, Wyatt forma Soft Machine, junto a Kevin Ayers quien se encargó del bajo y las voces, el tecladista Mike Ratledge y el guitarrista australiano Daevid Allen. Esta formación primaria, de Soft Machine, fue una de las que definieron la psicodelia británica,

presentándose en diversos clubs en Londres a lo largo de 1967. Desafortunadamente en 1968, por problemas con su visa, Daevid Allen deja la banda. Convertidos en trío, se unen a la gira de Jimi Hendrix's Experience (sí, el mismísmo Hendrix era su fan y les prestó un colchón para que se quedaran tocando en EEUU) durante sus conciertos brindados a principios de1968. La banda también tocó en varios discos de artistas reconocidos entre ellos, Syd Barret. Compositor, cantante, percusionista y multi-instrumentista, Robert Wyatt es un hombre reservado y misterioso, se toma su tiempo para revelar lo preciso, como si en él refugiase sólo lo onírico y esencial. Dice que es hijo del jazz y del alcohol, pero nosotros sabemos que es mucho más que eso.

¿Cómo fue la rutina de hacer música con Syd?

Sus tiempos en el estudio eran irregulares, por lo tanto teníamos que volver un par de veces para encajar. Era buena onda y tranquilo. (Suelta una carcajada) Me sorprendió muchísimo cuando decidió dejar la toma de un ensayo en su disco editado (The Madcap Laughs, 1970).

David (Gilmour) es un verdadero caballero con cierto porte aristocrático donde enmascara sus emociones más sinceras

Como solista, colaboraste varias veces con otro integrante de Pink Floyd, David Gilmour. ¿Cómo es la experiencia cada vez que se encuentran?

Fui convocado por el London Festival Hall como curador invitado por unas semanas y lo invité a tocar. Ese concierto fue fantástico. Él no venía tocando públicamente y se dio todo de manera muy natural. Un tiempo después, participó en mi disco "Cuckooland" en el tema Forest, dónde realizó un increíble solo con slide. Posteriormente toqué la trompeta en una pieza instrumental para su disco "On an Island". David es un verdadero caballero con cierto porte aristocrático donde enmascara sus emociones más sinceras.

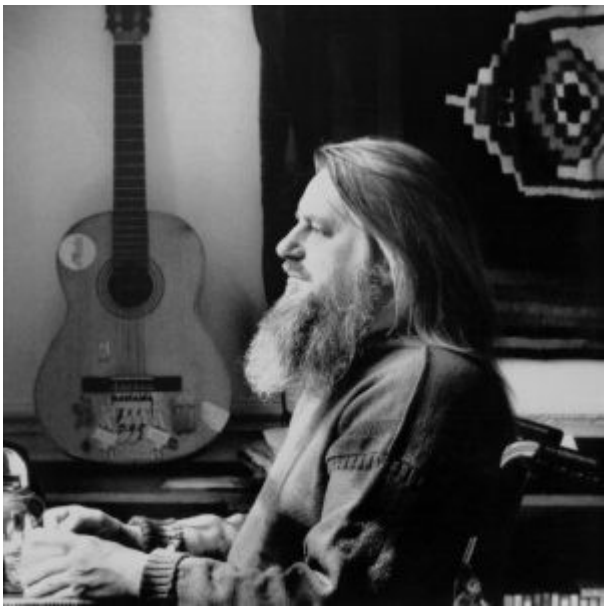
Tu padre tocaba el piano y tu madre era periodista, creciste en un ambiente creativo ¿recordás las primeras melodías y pinturas que te impactaron?

Conocí a mi padre cuando tenía unos seis años (¡es una larga historia!). Profesionalmente era psicólogo. Lo recuerdo tocando adaptaciones de canciones sencillas para poder cantar juntos. La primera que me viene a la mente es Away in a Manger y adaptaciones de temas populares y divertidos como Little Brown Jug, how i love thee y las más tristes, como Sweet Molly Malone. Luego, cuando yo tenía ocho años, agarró esclerosis múltiple y no pudo tocar más. Coleccionaba vinilos de Benjamin Britten, Ravel, Bartok.

También le gustaba el jazz de la pre-guerra como Ellington, Django y Fats Waller. A mi madre le gustaba Monteverdi y la música popular de su juventud, el charleston por ejemplo. Pero lo que realmente me transportó fueron sus preciosos libros de arte. Pasé mis años escolares en mi cuarto tratando de pintar.

Soy un afortunado de haber sido testigo de mis héroes: Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk, Charles

Mingus, John Coltrane.



¿Qué te aportó el jazz que no te dio el rock o el pop?

Mi era de descubrimiento fueron los 50. Conozco gente que piensa que la cultura musical de su juventud fue la mejor y vivieron bajo esos estándares el resto de sus vidas. El jazz de los 50 fue rejuvenecido por Charlie Parker y el be-bop. Soy un afortunado de haber sido testigo de mis héroes: Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane. A veces siento que podría emocionarme hasta las lágrimas por todo lo que me brindaron. Pero me encanta que la música pop pueda unir a la gente y por supuesto que mi primer trabajo pago fue tocar música pop en fiestas locales. No hay nada como cuando la gente se para y empieza a bailar lo que estás tocando. Es un servicio, como el de un cocinero. Y estoy agradecido a los Beatles por poner en el mapa a la música británica, que es principalmente un fruto de los ritmos afroamericanos.

HAY UN MUNDO MÁS ALLÁ

Robert Wyatt, además de ser el batero original de SM, mantuvo una prolífera carrera musical. Va del jazz al rock psicodélico, del rock al pop, del pop al bossa-nova, simplemente porque quiere y puede. Incursionó con soberbias versiones músicos latinoamericanos como Victor Jara, Violeta Parra, y Antônio Carlos Jobim, a quienes admira por su arte y compromiso político.

"Sentí interés al ver que la verdadera cultura revolucionaria no necesariamente tiene que gritar. Por los años '70 estaba atrapado en una especie de claustrofobia músico-cultural, debido a un elitismo excluyente que existe en los vastos imperios comerciales".

Un poco cansado del rock rebelde porque sí, paró su oreja hacia otro campo musical:

"El rock se distinguió por su música rebelde, pero tener el pelo largo y burlarte de la generación de tus padres no necesariamente es luchar por la justicia en el mundo real. Así que pensé, ¿qué está pasando más allá de esta cultura narcisista anglo-americano? Por lo tanto, después de haber aprendido un poco de español, me mantuve alerta a las posibles canciones de los trovadores, tanto en España como en Latinoamérica. Eso me dio la oportunidad de celebrar esas canciones que imaginaban un mundo basado en la ayuda mutua", declara.



Se mostró contento al conocer que en nuestro país hay un proyecto colectivo para juntar bronce y poner en lugar de donde yace un monumento a Julio Argentino Roca, el Monumento a la Mujer Originaria. Por momentos parece un trovador de estos tiempos: *"Latinoamérica está en movimiento, generando cosas por ella misma y a su manera, finalmente. Mientras Gran Hermano al norte de la frontera está distraído por los acontecimientos del mundo al norte de la línea*

ecuatorial."

Su álbum "Nothing Can Stop Us Now" tiene canciones folk y versiones de intérpretes de países sudamericanos. Disco influenciado por la voz de trovadores latinos y que se vio afectado por el negocio musical. *"Virgin records no me permitía hacer música para otra compañía discográfica y se quedaba con mucho dinero de nuestra venta, no nos dejaba ni siquiera con lo justo para vivir. Lo que nos salvó fue conocer a gente post punk en Rough Trade Records. Ellos se arriesgaron a juntar nuestros singles y se aseguraron que nos llevásemos bien con otras compañías discográficas"*, recuerda Wyatt. Dentro de ese trabajo está "Shipbuilding" escrita por Elvis Costello, y un claro manifiesto en contra de la guerra de Malvinas. Wyatt es sincero: "*Nosotros, los europeos, hemos pisoteado y tenemos bajo nuestras suelas tantas culturas vulnerables devastadas que deberíamos, al menos, saber decir 'lo siento'"*. Fiel a su postura pacifista sentencia los resultados de la era tacheriana en el universo cultural y musical. "*Pienso en eso como 'la era Reaganomía', la era en la que los ricos y poderosos se les dio poder sobre los gobiernos electos, incluso, los ricos se hicieron más ricos y los pobres cada vez más pobres. Hoy en día sigue siendo el caso de muchos países del mundo"*, reflexiona.

Alejado del ruido de ciudad, Wyatt vive en las afueras de Gran Bretaña con su esposa Alfie. Su mujer no es sólo una musa, sino que juega un rol muy importante en la obra de Robert.

No estoy deliberadamente ni fuera ni dentro de la gran industria musical.

Hay una frase tuya en la que te referís a tu mujer, Alfie: "De no haber existido ella, me habría dedicado a beber hasta morir escuchando a Thelonious Monk". ¿Cómo es trabajar con tu mujer?

Varios de los poemas que ella escribió fueron canciones, y su arte adornó todas las portadas de mis discos. Es una persona muy apasionada por las cosas. Sabe reflejar muy bien sus sentimientos, y cómo conjurarlos en palabras para que luego yo pueda cantar. Una verdadera escritora, fuerte y hermosa.

¿Cómo logras mantenerte a salvo de cualquier contaminación posible producto del negocio de la música?

No estoy deliberadamente ni fuera ni dentro de la gran industria musical. Simplemente, no veo necesario orientar o encajar mi trabajo en un mercado determinado. Me considero muy afortunado de haber vivido de esta manera. Varios de mis artistas favoritos fueron comercialmente exitosos (Stevie Wonder, Pablo Picasso), y otros que también admiro (Charlie Parker, Frida Kahlo) no lo fueron. Mi amor por lo que han hecho es igual.

¿Cuál es tu pensamiento acerca de la religión?

Por más de que no haya ninguna evidencia verificable de un dios benigno, muchas culturas tienen religiones. Sin embargo pienso la religión más en relación con el Arte. Ahí es donde está el mundo de los sueños.

La utopía es otra fantasía religiosa y ya tenemos suficientes.

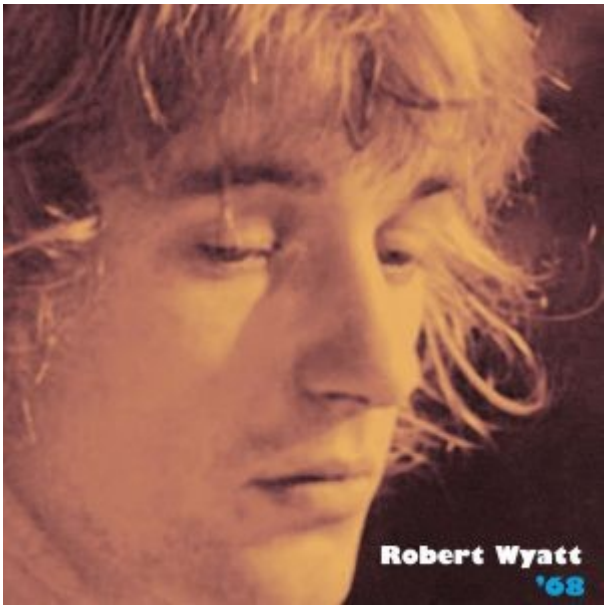
¿Es preocupante que los jóvenes no tengan sueños políticos? ¿Estamos viviendo un mundo sin utopías?

No veo que sea preocupante pero sí espero que no estemos viviendo en un mundo utópico. La utopía es otra fantasía religiosa y ya tenemos suficientes.

HISTORIA DE "68"

Bajo el sello estadounidense Cuneiform, se editó una nueva compilación de Robert Wyatt, con material inédito y grabaciones durante su época en Soft Machine. "68" se trata de música que creó luego de que Soft Machine terminara de tocar como banda soporte durante las dos giras que dio su amigo y fan, Jimi Hendrix por todo Estados Unidos. El resto de los integrantes de SF volvieron a Inglaterra y él decidió quedarse y ver qué onda unos días más. Según palabras textuales de Wyatt, originalmente no había intención alguna de sacar un álbum con los temas que figuran en el disco. Simplemente se dio así. *"Son canciones experimentales.*

Sobre todo de autodescubrimiento. Quería desafiar, por primera vez, mi capacidad de grabar solo en un estudio. Lo que me divierte en retrospectiva es ver que estaba involucrado con el reto instrumental y listo para definir qué cantar o cómo. Claramente estaba tratando de trazar mi música en el mapa" declara Robert.



"68" es un álbum donde se puede percibir los cimientos de un músico elevado, cuyo único desafío es superarse con música. Un must have para los amantes de este barbudo explorador de culturas que canta –y cuenta – el mundo, armado nada menos que de su poesía.

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Gramola galáctica: Una tarde con Robert Wyatt - El Pais - 11 de marzo de 2014

EL PAÍS
EL PERIÓDICO GLOBAL

Gramola galáctica: Una tarde con Robert Wyatt

A finales de los ochenta, mi mujer y yo fuimos a Castelldefels a conocer a Robert Wyatt y a su esposa, Alfreda Benge, guiados por Juan Bufill y su compañera, Maria Pilar Tirbió. Bufill (poeta, cineasta experimental, crítico de arte y muchas cosas más) era entonces el principal heraldo de Wyatt en Barcelona, por no decir en España. Él me descubrió, casi una década antes, el deslumbrante *Rock Bottom*, su obra maestra. En los primeros setenta, Wyatt era para mí el batería y cantante de Soft Machine. Primer encuentro: en el disco doble *Rock 71* (*Rock Buster*, en el original), "el de la portada del forzudo" (luego sabríamos que era un joven Schwarzenneger), donde aparecía el tema *To Mark Everywhere*. Nunca me volvió loco Soft Machine, aunque parece que tenían un directo de impresión, no en vano se los llevó de gira Jimi Hendrix.

Segundo encuentro: la maravillosa *Oh Caroline*, compuesta y cantada por Wyatt con Matching Mole, el grupo que fundó en el 72, tras dejar Soft Machine. No sé si antes o justo después de grabar el disco de Matching Mole hizo su primer álbum en solitario, *The end of an ear*. Me hizo una ilusión loca cuando lo pillé en un cajón de ofertas, pero la parte *free* me pareció latosa y aparqué su nombre.

Hasta que aparece Bufill con su espada flamígera y me dice: "Abre esas orejas y escucha *Rock Bottom*". También me dijo: "Escucha de nuevo la excepcional versión de *Las Vegas Tango*, de Gil Evans, en *The end of an ear*". Tenía razón. Bufill casi siempre tiene razón. Sobre los orígenes de *Rock Bottom* circulan dos versiones, la (más o menos) oficial y la legendaria. Estamos en 1973. La acción tiene lugar en la casa de la pintora June Campbell Cramer (en arte, Lady Jane), mitad musa mitad tutora excéntrica de los principales miembros del rock progresivo inglés de la época (o *Canterbury Sound*: Soft Machine, Caravan, Gong, Henry Cow, Hatfield and the North, etc), que vive en Maida Vale, en Londres. Wyatt se ha metido de todo, como la mayoría de los asistentes, pero solo él tiene



la mala fortuna de caer por una ventana abierta. Según unos, era un tercer piso; según otros, el quinto. Da igual: no se mató de milagro, pero se cascó la columna vertebral y quedó paralítico de por vida. Acerca de la ingesta fatal, Wyatt recordaba "un ponche que estaba buenísimo, aunque nadie sabía muy bien lo que contenía".

La versión legendaria me gusta más, por algo es legendaria. La fiesta está en su apogeo y Wyatt se ha llevado a una chica al lavabo (o viceversa). Su novia, Alfreda Benge (a partir de ahora Alfie, porque hubo confianza), se percata de la maniobra y comienza a aporrear la puerta. A Wyatt le entra una paranoia del nueve y se dice "He de salir de aquí". Y sale por la ventana, olvidando que está en un tercer o quinto piso. ¿Algún dato a favor de esta versión? La foto que, según algunos, se hicieron a modo de felicitación navideña al año siguiente, en la que Wyatt está ya en silla de ruedas, muy sonriente, ataviado con una túnica multicolor, y a su lado, con humor negrísimo, Alfie Benge empuña un cuchillo de trinchar venado. No, no les pregunté sobre la veracidad de la leyenda: me pareció un asunto inconveniente. Puede que la foto aludiera a una doble culpa: la de él por engañarla, la de ella por llamar frenéticamente a la puerta del lavabo y, en cierto modo, propiciar el vuelo paranoico.

Seamos justos: fotos siniestras aparte, Alfie Benge estuvo siempre a su lado (se casaron poco después del accidente) y fue capital en su recuperación. "De no haber sido por ella", nos dijo, "yo no habría hecho nada. Bueno, sí: habría bebido hasta la muerte escuchando a Thelonious Monk".



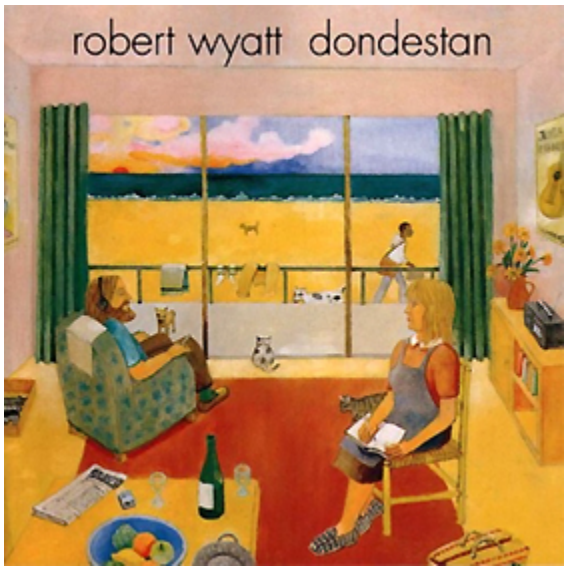
Más leyendas. Yo estaba convencido de que *Rock Bottom* era un álbum que surgió como una respuesta emocional al accidente y fue grabado en Venecia, recién salido del hospital. Error parcial. Supe aquella tarde que no lo grabó en Venecia. Lo compuso en Venecia (en buena parte) con un teclado casi de juguete, durante el rodaje de la terrorífica *Don't Look Now* (*Amenaza en la sombra*), de Nicholas Roeg, en la que trabajaba Alfie. "Quizás por eso es tan acuático", dijo Bufill. Y, nos dijo Wyatt, lo completó y grabó en Inglaterra, en el 74, producido por Nick Mason, el batería de Pink Floyd.

Es evidente, sin embargo, que se hizo después de la caída. *Rock Bottom* está empapado en dolor: basta escuchar esa

voz increíble, siempre a punto de romperse o de echar a volar. Pensé entonces: cada vez que vuelva a ver *Amenaza en la sombra* veré a Wyatt acercando las manos al teclado, manos temblorosas pero fuertes, Wyatt luchando por salir a flote mientras el agua de un canal subterráneo y oscuro se desborda y sube hacia la luz.

Curiosamente (o no), grabó también ese mismo año una inesperada versión de *I'm a believer*, la canción que escribió Neil Diamond y cantaron los Monkees en 1966, y que se convirtió en el mayor éxito de su carrera y trepó a lo alto de las listas británicas. El productor de *Top of the Pops* se negó a que la interpretara en directo porque lo de la silla de ruedas, dijo, "podía resultar deprimente para el público familiar", pero cuando los miembros de su banda aparecieron sentados en sillas de ruedas en la portada del *New Musical Express* no le quedó más remedio que tragar.

En 1975 publica *Ruth is stranger than Richard* (que durante mucho tiempo se vendió, en disco doble, junto con *Rock Bottom*). A partir de ahí yo le pierdo la pista hasta los primeros ochenta, cuando reemerge con *Nothing Can Stop Us*, un disco muy combativo (acababa de afiliarse al Partido Comunista británico) y, sobre todo, con una serie de versiones majestuosas que publica Rough Trade (y en España, Nuevos Medios): *At Last I Am Free*, de Chic, *Round Midnight*, de Thelonius Monk, *Memories of you*, de Andy Razaf y Eubie Blake, y, joya de esa corona, *Shipbuilding*, de Costello y Clive Langer. Aquí yo también me había armado un lío. No es estrictamente una versión, aunque haya acabado pareciéndolo: Costello y Langer la escribieron para Wyatt, que la grabó primero, en 1982, y Costello la cantó un año más tarde en *Punch the Clock* (1983).



Wyatt y Alfie Benge recalaron por primera vez en Castelldefels en esa época, en el invierno de 1982, y en la apropiadísima calle Estrella de Mar, y al escuchar ese nombre recordé una imagen: mi amigo llegando a la casa de los Wyatt en Londres y viendo, a través de las cortinas de su ventana, un coral rojo, como si vivieran bajo el agua. Nuestra visita debió tener lugar entre el otoño del 86 y la primavera del 87. Vinieron a rodar un espléndido documental de Juan Bufill, *El viaje de Robert Wyatt*, para el programa *Arsenal*, que dirigía Manuel Huerga en TV3, la cadena catalana: se filmó en otoño-invierno del 86/87, se estrenó en febrero de 1987, y fue el primer monográfico sobre su vida y su obra. Yo le llevé un disco (no recuerdo ahora si de Allen Toussaint o de Jimmy Reed) porque había leído en algún lado que andaba loco buscándolo. Lo agradeció mucho pero no pudo escucharlo, porque en el apartamento de Castelldefels solo tenían un lector de cassetes y, quizás, cedés.

Aquel apartamento es el que aparece, pintado por Alfie, en la portada de *Dondestan*, que salió en 1991. Era un lugar muy modesto, con muebles de veraneo; algunos carteles de flamenco en las paredes y, sobre todo, una terraza con un gran ventanal que daba a la playa. Allí escribieron las letras (Alfie) y músicas (Wyatt) de ese disco, en el que aparecen algunos personajes de aquellos días, como el vendedor ambulante que cargaba grandes cajas de objetos africanos y trataba de venderlos en aquella franja de playa, en pleno invierno, cuando no había ni un comprador posible. La tarde que llegamos, Wyatt y Alfie se reían de un grupo de modelos, hombres y mujeres, de cuerpos atléticos, que hacían ejercicios gimnásticos y se fotografiaban a pocos metros de su ventana.

"No es el espectáculo más apropiado para un paralítico", bromeó Wyatt.

Les recuerdo como dos reyes nórdicos, de ojos claros y melenas rubias, casi blancas.

Wyatt parecía también un cruce entre Neptuno y un patriarca ruso, por su larga y pobladísima barba. No tomaban el sol, pero estaban muy morenos: gracias a la terraza, el sol y el aire del mar llegaban hasta ellos.

De la playa había llegado también un gato al que llamaron Lobueno.
Alfie le había puesto ese nombre porque el animal estaba cojo y ella había visto en un restaurante un baldosín con la siguiente frase:
"Lo malo viene volando y lo bueno cojeando".
El gato había dejado preñada a la gata titular, que estaba en un cajón de la sala amamantando a varios gatitos. María Pilar se llevó uno de ellos.
Le pregunté a Wyatt si seguía siendo comunista. "Más que nunca". Odiaba, nos dijo, el "narcisismo cultural" europeo. "Empezando por los ingleses, que siguen siendo imperialistas sin imperio". Le interesaban todas las músicas, y casi cada noche iban a una peña flamenca de Gavà, porque había actuaciones y podían comprar casetes. Allí le llamaban "el inglés" o "Roberto". Bufill tradujo al castellano los poemas de Alfie en *Dondestan* porque Wyatt quería leerlos en aquella peña.

Poco más puedo contar, periodísticamente hablando. Fue una velada estupenda, pero no tomé ni una nota y bebimos incontables botellas de vino turbio (al parecer, la bebida española favorita de los Wyatt), que Alfie, Pepita y María fueron a buscar varias veces a un bar gallego. Tampoco recuerdo, por cierto, como volvimos a casa. Aquella tarde escuchamos mucha música (flamenco, sobre todo) y, ya a punto de despedirnos, Wyatt le preguntó a Bufill por algunos artistas españoles con los que pudiera hacer algo. Bufill le habló, en mi vaporoso recuerdo, del entonces dúo formado por Javier Navarrete y Alberto Iglesias, pero él quería algo "más español", y echó sobre el tapete los nombres de Gato Pérez y de Claustrofobia.

Bufill estaba convencido de que la unión de Gato y Wyatt (con Wyatt como productor, o teclista, o segunda voz, o una mezcla de todo ello) podía dar un resultado excepcional. Wyatt parecía interesado, porque le atraía la mezcla de rumba y ritmos latinos. El proyecto no cuajó. Gato había escuchado a Soft Machine pero no a Wyatt. Vale, ningún problema. Le llevamos unos discos. Le gustaron, aunque no acababa de verlo claro, y la cosa quedó en el aire.

En esa época teníamos una cierta vocación de productores, mitad productores mitad mánagers, y el plural incluye también a Francisco Casavella, DJ Ragnampiza y Joan Riambau (entre otros). Queríamos relanzar la rumba catalana y conseguimos algunos bolos para quienes más nos gustaban: logramos que Estrellas de Gracia actuaran en el Festival de Pineda de Mar y que Ramonet cantase en Costa Breve, el club que dirigía Fede Sardá y que visitábamos con frecuencia.

La propuesta de Claustrofobia salió adelante: Wyatt cantó en un castellano un tanto escuálido el tema *Tu traición*. Y los Claustrofobia, por cierto, ni siquiera incluyeron el nombre de Bufill en la lista de agradecimientos del disco.
Tras escuchar de nuevo en selecto programa doble *Sea Song* (de Rock Bottom) y *Mambo*, una de las piezas más oceánicas de *La Catedral*, creo que al que teníamos que haberle presentado para una *joint venture* era a Sisa. Bueno, todavía estamos a tiempo.

Para Juan Bufill y Maria Pilar Tirbió

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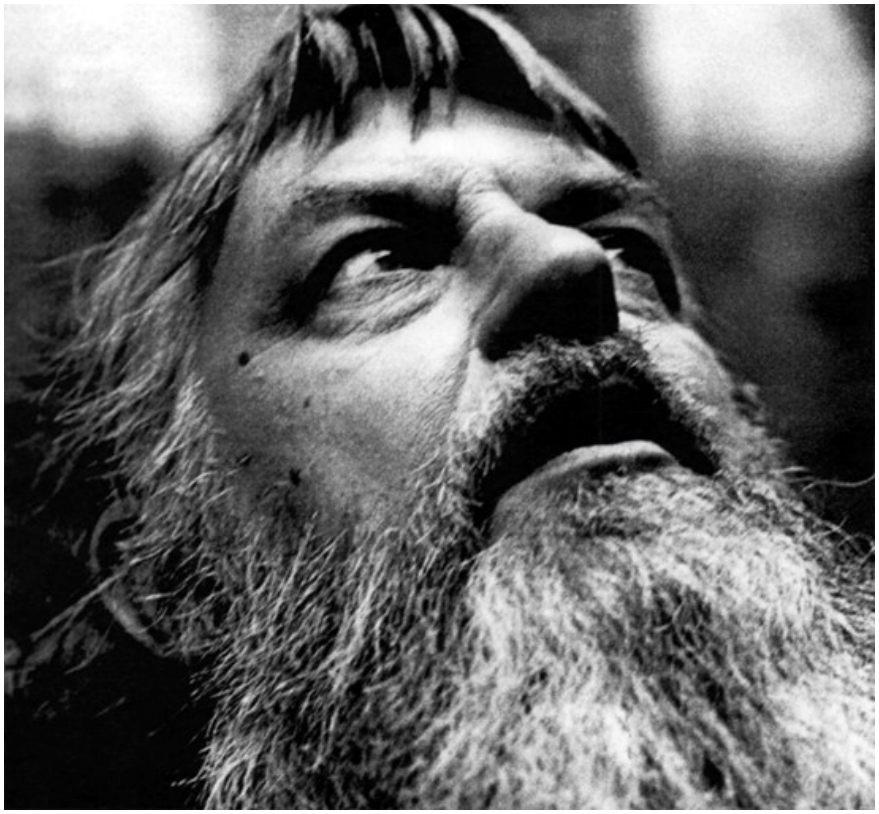
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Sonido - El País - 27 de octubre de 2007

Sonido Wyatt

El alcoholismo y otros fantasmas acechaban a Robert Wyatt, legendario batería de rock, durante la concepción de su último disco, *Comic opera*. En esta entrevista habla de la felicidad que halla en una silla de ruedas y de su incesante búsqueda de la belleza.

Por Iker Seisdedos



MAL QUE LE PESE a Gladys, la rubia oxigenada que atiende la oficina de turismo, no abundan las razones para venir a Louth, un pueblo del norte de Inglaterra donde las casas se organizan en filas de granate melancolía. Con la estación de tren más cercana a 45 kilómetros, el lugar es tan improbable como otro cualquiera para servir de hogar a una leyenda del rock en silla de ruedas. Robert Wyatt se mudó aquí a filiales de los ochenta en busca del hábitat menos hostil posible que su poco dinero pudiese pagar. Los granjeros y comerciantes de Louth descubrirían con los años que el grandullón sonriente que se daba impulso con guantes de esquí por las aceras del pueblo fue en otra vida batería de Soft Machine, mítico grupo de la escena de Canterbury que hizo historia del rock, la psicodelia y el jazz a finales de los sesenta.

Lo que en su caso equivale a decir en otra vida; antes de aquella mala noche del muy ebrio 1973 en la que Wyatt creyó volar y cayó por la ventana de un cuarto piso en una fiesta de Pink Floyd. El médico que lo atendió de urgencia esa madrugada dijo que, de no haber estado tan sumamente borracho, el paciente habría opuesto alguna resistencia y el impacto hubiese resultado mortal. "Fue un buen movimiento para mi carrera", explica en esta entrevista Wyatt con tanta distancia que casi parece un abismo.

Pero eso sucederá más tarde. El día del encuentro (el lunes 8 de octubre) fue también el del lanzamiento en el Reino Unido de *Comic opera*, otro de sus brillantes tratados de jazz pop confesional y el noveno disco de la carrera que inició en solitario sobre el alféizar de una ventana. Para celebrarlo, la pequeña tienda de discos local organizó una firma de álbumes y unas cien personas llegaron de toda Inglaterra a presentar sus respetos a Wyatt.

Al término del desfile de aficionados, el músico, de 62 años, recibe al periodista en su casa georgiana de ladrillo oscuro y una sola planta. Aquí vive entre discos, cuadros e instrumentos con su suegra y su mujer, Alfreda Benge, *Alfie*, una tímida y enérgica inglesa de ascendencia austropolaca. Alfie y Robert contrajeron matrimonio cuando, tras un año de convalecencia, él salió del hospital sobre ruedas, "en el primer día de primavera en un larguísimo invierno".

Además de compañera, Alfie es autora de las letras originales de *Comic opera*, así como de las distinguidas ilustraciones de los discos de Wyatt desde el paisaje a lápiz de la portada de *Rock bottom* (1974), considerado su obra maestra. "De no haber existido ella, me habría dedicado a beber hasta morir escuchando a [el pianista de jazz] Thelonious Monk", aclarará Wyatt después. "Soy un cocinero terrible, no soy capaz de vestirme solo, ni puedo administrar mi dinero. En nuestro contrato, a mí me toca hacer discos"..

De ese particular acuerdo nace una de las carreras más fascinantes del rock contemporáneo. Más que un tipo con un estilo propio, Robert Wyatt es un género en sí mismo. Podría ser su voz, ese lamento ahogado que Ryuichi Sakamoto definió como "el sonido más triste del mundo". Podría ser esa intimidad agradable como el agua templada que brinda el fondo de la trompeta tocada por el propio Wyatt sin demasiada destreza. O quizá sea esa mezcla entre el jazz del que proviene y la melancolía del pop perfecto hacia la que camina.

La suma de todo esto hace de cualquiera de sus lanzamientos un acontecimiento raro pero siempre relevante. Si el último, *Cuckooland* (2003), fue escrito bajo los efectos del 11-S y recibido como una de las obras más singulares del año, *Comic opera*, que cuenta con una nómina de colaboradores similar a aquél (Brian Eno, Paul Weller o Phil Manzanera, entre otros), se mueve en terrenos más personales. Maneja, con todo, la misma descamada sinceridad de siempre. Una virtud (o un defecto) que convierte una tarde con Wyatt —charlar, escuchar discos de jazz, y bucear en el océano desmitificador de sus recuerdos— en una de las experiencias más singulares del periodismo musical.

La inusual franqueza está presente desde la bienvenida. "Estoy preocupado por la salud de Alfie. Nos han llamado del hospital por algo relacionado con el corazón. Peligroso para unos ancianos campeones del fumeque como nosotros", es lo primero que suelta Wyatt tras las presentaciones. Después, en una entrevista que se prolongará durante más de cuatro horas, admitirá: "Gran parte de mi problema es decir siempre la verdad".

PREGUNTA. No veo mucho de cómico, ni de operístico en su último disco.
RESPUESTA. Pues a mí me da risa. Y algunos pueden pensar que hoy meter una canción sobre el Che [*Hasta siempre comandante*] podría ser un chiste.

P. ¿Niega la cualidad melancólica que se atribuye a su obra?
R. Lo que digo es que nunca hago nada conscientemente Triste. Ni siquiera Rock bottom, que se asume nacido del trauma de quedarme parapléjico [fue en parte concebido en su convalecencia]. Lo siento, no es cierto. Algo debe de haber, sin duda, cuando tanta gente lo ve así. Pero en aquellos días no me sentía especialmente triste.

P. ¿Y cómo se sentía?
R. Salir del hospital fue como abandonar la prisión. El estímulo físico del aire fresco y el tráfico en las calles después de meses de reclusión fue una experiencia casi psicodélica. ¡Vida! ¡Árboles! ¡Gente! ¡Música! Fue un día increíble. Por supuesto que había ansiedad, pero no sentí rabia. Todo era por mi culpa. Por borracho e idiota. Sólo teníamos 15 libras en este mundo, nos fuimos a un pub a celebrarlo. Pero hablábamos del disco, ¿no?

P. Claro. Lo ha dividido en tres actos, como ya es costumbre en usted.
R. Me gustan los episodios musicales de 20 minutos. Porque soy un tonto anacrónico. Adoro la vieja distribución de los elepés. No ordeno las canciones en términos musicales, sino de la secuencia de las letras. La primera parte va sobre el amor y la pérdida. La segunda, sobre sentirse incómodo como inglés. Y la tercera, sobre reconciliarse con las ideas políticas que siempre me conmovieron. Veo mis canciones como un jardín salvaje. Soy un jardinero que está enamorado de la belleza orgánica de lo que se trae entre manos. Por eso me siento fascinado a mis sesenta años con alguien como Nat King Cole. De joven no lo apreciaba porque no era lo suficiente crudo para mí. Ahora, en cambio, tras cuarenta años de tocar instrumentos y cantar, he acabado valorando lo difícil que es dar una nota correctamente. Sólo una bella nota. Escasean.

P. ¿De qué va *Just as you are*, el dueto con Monica Vasconcelos, es una de las flores más conmovedoras de su último jardín?
R. No lo sé, se lo tendrás que preguntar a Alfie. Ella la escribió. Alfie...
"Vamos Roben, sabes perfectamente la respuesta", responde ella misteriosa. La aclaración llegará más tarde, cuando, en un aparte, diga: "¿Quiere conocer el verdadero significado de la canción? Hace unos meses Robert estaba empezando a tener un serio problema con el alcohol. Y comenzó a mentirme. Este tema es un mensaje de mí para él. Estás bebiendo demasiado, amigo. Ya basta. Decir: mi amor, tras todos estos años, sigue siendo condicional". Después, Wyatt corroborará la confidencia. Lleva un par de meses asistiendo a reuniones de Alcohólicos Anónimos y maneja la clase de dialéctica del rehabilitado. Cuando, a la hora de la cena, la entrevista continúe en un restaurante, Wyatt rechazará el ofrecimiento ("sólo un *limoncello*, Robert") de una camarera algo ajada. "El trago que márcala diferencia no es el último", dirá solemne. "El que lo cambia todo es el primero".

P. El alcohol es una constante en sus letras desde aquel "eres maravillosa cuando estás borracha" que abría *Rock bottom*.
R. Ya entonces estaba camino de convertirse en un problema. Hay quien dice que si empiezas a saltar por las ventanas es un mensaje de que algo marcha mal. Como soy un poco retrasado, me cuesta llegar a las conclusiones. Hace 34 años de la ventana.

P. ¿Qué sucedió esa noche?
R. No lo voy a contar [largo silencio] aunque lo recuerdo perfectamente. Puedo revelar lo que pasó, pero no por qué.

P. Bien... ¿Qué pasó?
R. Me caí de una puta ventana porque estaba demasiado borracho [golpea su plato contra la mesa]. ¿Vale? Me pusieron sedantes durante seis meses. Luego estuve consciente en el hospital hasta cumplir un año.

P. Disculpe si le he irritado. ¿Escribe Alfie las letras porque usted prefiere no hacerlo?
R. Me es difícil. Tengo mucha más música que palabras. Escribí letras durante años, pero solían ser sonidos guturales.

P. O letras como aquella en la que se limitaba a describir lo que sucedía musicalmente. Éste es el primer verso, éste es el puente, sigue el estribillo...
R. En un momento pensé, oh, no sé lo que pensé... ¿Sabe qué? Siento haberme enfadado de ese modo antes. Si no puedo decir algo totalmente fresco sobre algo me crispo. Porque

las entrevistas me parecen interesantes. No hay dos iguales. Y aquel episodio no es que sea doloroso o dramático, es sólo que no hay nada nuevo que decir. Aunque suene chocante, yo no contemplo aquel accidente como algo malo. Fue un nuevo comienzo. Puesto que mi vida es mejor después que aquello, mucho mejor, de hecho, no lo veo como una tragedia. Es sólo un cambio. Y en mi caso, a pesar de las dificultades obvias, soy una persona más feliz. La gente que no se ha roto nunca la espalda piensa: qué terrible vivir así. Pero es algo que sucede. i*Bang*! y a otra cosa. Parecido a un animal salvaje cuando está en la jungla. Llega un helicóptero, le atrapa con una red, y al poco está en una reserva en Tanzania. Y piensa: cojones, dónde están mis amigos, mis árboles... y al final se da cuenta de que está en un lugar más seguro. Si fuese religioso, diría que fue un don. Esto me recuerda la mejor mala crítica sobre mi trabajo que nunca leí. "Como mucho nos temíamos, Wyatt se cayó aquel día sobre su cabeza" irisas].



Robert Wyatt (tercero desde la izquierda), con la formación de Soft Machine de 1970. Foto: Francis Fowke

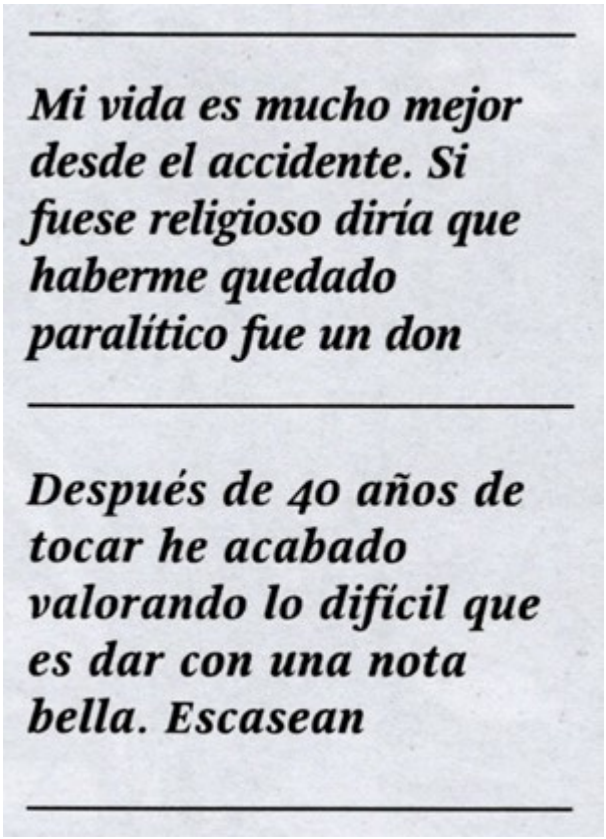
P. ¿Cómo era antes de aquello?
R. Un batería borracho que aprendía trucos tan útiles como el método más rápido posible para acabar pedo: tequila y whisky a intervalos. Me lo enseñó Keith Moon [batería de The Who). No sé... Debía de ser un cabrón porque me echaron de Soft Machine...

P. Fue por razones personales.
R. No lo sé, no dijeron nada. Somos ingleses. No expresamos sentimientos. Seguramente toda la conversación se redujo a: "Que te folien, tío".

P. Aquella primera formación hacia 1967, con Mike Ratledge (teclados) y Kevin Ayers (bajo), siempre pareció más una reunión de individualidades...
R. Nunca fuimos un grupo normal. Pero en cierto sentido fue culpa mía. Yo conseguí que esos músicos que nunca habrían tocado juntos se pusiesen a ello. Mike dejó la universidad por mi insistencia. Incluso cuando Kevin abandonó el grupo y se fue con sus maravillosas canciones, metí a Hugh [Hopper, bajista]. No habría funcionado sin mis indicaciones. No era un líder. La batería no lidera, como tampoco el motor conduce el coche.

P. ¿Ha mantenido la amistad con ellos?
R. No siempre. Hace poco vi a Kevin Ayers. Estuvo muy bien. Aún siento nostalgia de aquellos días en Deià. Los dos solos. Éramos jóvenes, entusiastas, estábamos borrachos y era maravilloso.
Para entonces, Wyatt ya había coincidido en su infancia con varios de los miembros de Soft Machine en el colegio Langton, en Canterbury, un centro liberal que pareció la mejor opción de enseñanza a sus padres, un psicólogo aficionado al jazz y una periodista, ambos intelectuales progresistas. La primera mujer de su padre fue secretaria de Robert Graves en Mallorca y, cuando a los 16 años, Wyatt dejó la escuela para buscar la libertad en Deià, se instaló en la casa balear del escritor. Allí conoció a Ayers, futuro miembro de Soft

Machine, y a Daevid Alien, que fue parte del grupo hasta que la negación de un visado le obligó a quedase en París, donde acabaría fundando Gong, otra banda seminal de la psicodelia británica. Ayers compartió las tareas vocales con Wyatt antes de abandonar el grupo tras el magistral debut, que titularon 1 a secas, en una costumbre, emplear los ordinales, que se mantendría como un sello de la banda.
El grupo se convirtió con su defensa del jazz-rock, el pop psicodélico y la patafísica en una institución de la boyante escena *underground* londinense. Fueron años de giras estadounidenses con Jimi Hendrix, de vivir la gran vida del rock y todo eso.



Cuando Wyatt fue despedido después de la intensa grabación del tercer álbum, bautizó su nuevo proyecto como *Matching Mole* (topos idénticos, en su traducción del inglés), un juego de palabras intencionadamente irónico que jugaba con la traducción francesa de Soft Machine. Y entonces, llegarían el accidente y los años de la creatividad. Los discos de mediados de los setenta como *Rock Bottom* o *Ruth is stranger than Richard* y hasta el éxito. Su versión de *I'm a believer*, viejo tema de Neil Diamond, alcanzó el número uno de las listas británicas y convirtió a Wyatt en el único artista en la historia del célebre programa de la BBC *Top of the pops* que actuó en silla de ruedas.
No hay mucha explicación en las brumas de su memoria para el silencio que siguió a aquellos años, cuando la pareja se mudó a la Costa Brava e interrumpió la producción discográfica. De aquel limbo, Wyatt regresó a principios de los ochenta como un artista comprometido. Se afilió al partido comunista, repartió pasquines en las calles de Londres y adoptó el español como idioma de combate. También se abonó, una constante en su trabajo posterior, a las versiones. "Alfie siempre me compra ropa en las tiendas de beneficencia", explica Wyatt. "Es lo mismo con las canciones. Voy al mercado de segunda mano y me quedo con las que me sientan bien".

P. Tras la caída del muro de Berlín abandonó el partido. ¿Ya no le veía el sentido a la militancia?
R. Superé la etapa. Pero sigo creyendo que el comunista es el mejor de los partidos. Te unes al laborista, cosa que he hecho un par de veces, y no te dicen:



"Pongámonos a discutir", sino "apoya al candidato de tu distrito". En el comunista te ponen a leer. Mis diez años en el partido fueron mi universidad.

P. Pero mantiene cierta liturgia de los gestos. Al final de *Comic Opera* renuncia a cantar en inglés por vergüenza.
R. Me avergüenzo de ser inglés. Estoy incómodo con que el idioma se haya convertido para los negocios en lo que el latín para la Iglesia. Es demasiado poder para una estúpida y pequeña isla.

P. ¿Son éstos los tiempos más nefastos que ha conocido?
R. Lo peor llegó con el triunvirato de Blair, Aznar y Berlusconi. Estuvimos frente al rostro del infierno. Lo único bueno que hizo Blair fue destruir con él a estos dos tipejos. Sólo me ha tocado una vida en el planeta y resulta que la tengo que vivir en esta mierda de situación. Moriré y todo seguirá igual. Eso me deprime.

P. ¿Teme a la muerte?
R. La espero con ganas. Si tuviese que vivir para siempre moriría [risas]. Estoy harto de luchar.

P. ¿Cuál es su mayor temor entonces?
R. Hacer daño a los demás por mi falta de tacto e insensatez. Cuando bebo hago daño a la gente. Física, no, pero sí mentalmente. No es adrede, es como tropezar con alguien sin querer. No soy bueno viviendo con cuidado. Mi mayor temor es ése: el miedo a la vergüenza.

Comic opera está editado en Domino/PIAS.

Soft Machine
Soft Machine 1 & 2
Big Beat (1968)



La edición reúne los dos primeros discos de Soft Machine, uno de esos grupos más influyentes que exitosos. A medio camino entre el pop psicodélico y el jazz rock, contiene lo mejor del Wyatt batería. Polirrítmico, irónico y divertido. Esencial.

Robert Wyatt
Rock bottom
Thirsty Ear (1974)
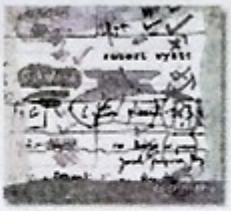


Suele considerarse la gran obra individual de Wyatt. La leyenda lo asimila con el periodo de convalecencia del músico tras el accidente que lo dejó parapléjico. En realidad, la mayoría del material estaba escrito antes. Involuntaria melancolía.

Robert Wyatt
Nothing can stop...
Thirsty Ear (2005)



Recopilación de los sencillos de versiones que Wyatt publicó a principios de los ochenta, en la cumbre de su activismo político. De Chic a Billie Holiday o Ivor Cutler, cualquier tema adquiere un nuevo sentido en la voz única del músico.

Robert Wyatt
Cuckooland
Hannibal (2003)



Más escorado al jazz brumoso (la trompeta de Wyatt es protagonista), es una obra que trata tanto del desconcierto del nuevo desorden mundial como del artista en su lacónica madurez. Fue considerado por gran parte de los especialistas el mejor disco de su año.

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Robert Wyatt - Rockdelux - RDL 213 - Diciembre 2003

Robert Wyatt

El que fuera batería de Soft Machine rompe seis años de silencio con "Cuckooland", enigmático visionado de las tensiones globales del siglo XXI sobre un fondo ingrávido, inquieto, mágico. *"El mundo vuelve a estar oscuro / Necesito tu canción de cuna"*. Todos la necesitamos. **Marea alta**



Los veteranos del lugar sabrán que un accidente fatal, cuando cayó por una ventana durante una fiesta en junio de 1973 (según describió, "*el accidente siguió este orden: vino, whisky, Southern Comfort y entonces la ventana*"), no fue suficiente para frustrar la larga, dosificada y siempre intrigante carrera discográfica del batería de Soft Machine, postrado desde entonces en una silla de ruedas. Los que no lo sean, que tomen nota de pequeñas biblias como "**Rock Bottom**" (Virgin, 74) y "**Nothing Can Stop Us**" (Rough Trade, 82), de sus paisajes nublados y de su angustia interior, antes de proclamar que Sigur Rós es un grupo revolucionario.

"**Cuckooland**" (Hannibal-Ryko-Naïve, 2003) transpira algo de la compleja epopeya personal de Robert Wyatt en setenta y cinco minutos de oleajes vivenciales desengañados, de *angst* contemplativo adaptado a un lenguaje musical falsamente balsámico que, como indica el autor, "*no es ni rock ni jazz*". Un disco que Wyatt construyó a lo largo de dieciocho meses junto a su esposa, la letrista e ilustradora austríaca Alfreda Benge ("*Alfie y yo trabajamos mucho en pareja*", revela Wyatt) y diversos colaboradores, y que habla, también y sobre todo, de las tensiones globales del nuevo milenio. Conclusión: el horror nos acompaña. De Hiroshima a Bagdad. Amarga reflexión para un músico siempre comprometido con el izquierdismo que en su día homenajeó a Violeta Parra y Víctor Jara y cuyo activismo le llevó a ingresar en el Partido Comunista Británico.

"*Un segundo, por favor. Si me permites, voy a buscar mi taza de té*", solicita Wyatt, con voz jovial, desde el otro lado de la línea telefónica. Acomodémonos.

Da la impresión de que "Cuckooland" es un disco influido por el tenso clima político que vive el planeta desde hace dos años...
Normalmente me siento feliz por el simple hecho de vivir mi propio sueño. Pero ahora eso

no es posible. Hay una locura general que me afecta. A mí y a Alfie, quien escribió muchos de los textos. Pero no es una elección nuestra, sino que las cosas son así. En Gran Bretaña tenemos un gobierno en el que no podemos confiar.

¿Son la angustia o la irritación política buenas herramientas para componer música?
Creo que no. Pero con la música puedes tratar de llegar a gente que tiene las mismas dificultades que tú. Eso es todo.



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¿Son la angustia o la irritación política buenas herramientas para componer música?
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¿Te sientes un pesimista global?
Nunca me he sentido ni particularmente pesimista ni optimista; no tiene sentido.
Es imposible hacer una generalización respecto a todo el mundo. ¡Hay tantos lugares distintos y tanta gente diversa! Pero ahora me entristece ver que ya nunca en mi vida veré un gobierno británico honesto. Eso me entristece.

El mundo es, efectivamente, diverso, pero hay algo común a buena parte de él: su estado de guerra permanente...
Por supuesto. Hay una gran presión del sistema económico que sólo beneficia a los ricos de occidente. Es lamentable comprobar que, desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial, ha habido un largo proceso de reaparición de ciertas formas de *colonialismo.*

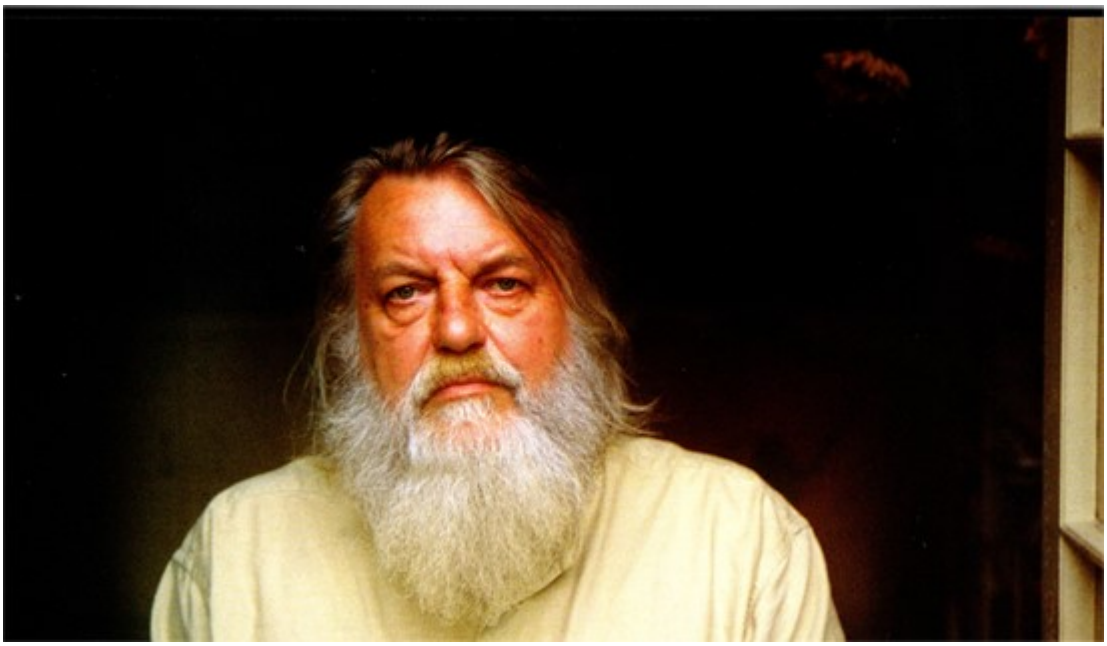
"Cuckooland" está estructurado en dos bloques: *"neither here...", "... ñor there"* ("ni aquí...", "... ni allá"). ¿A qué responden esos enunciados?
Tienen que ver con la idea de la desubicación. Vienen de mi reflexión sobre *la cantidad de gente desplazada que hay en el planeta. Por ejemplo, "Forest" alude a los gitanos, un pueblo permanentemente desplazado. Uno de los músicos del disco, Gilad Atzmon* (saxo, flauta, clarinete), *es judío de origen centroeuropeo; procede de una familia que se trasladó a Gran Bretaña. Así que ahora es británico. Pero ha grabado un disco titulado "Exile" porque dice que ese estado, el exilio, es permanente para ellos. Yo no digo si eso es bueno o malo. Sólo hablo de ello.*

Brian Eno y David Gilmour formaron parte, en los setenta, de cierta escena de rock progresivo o de vanguardia próxima a la de Soft Machine. Pero, ahora, ¿qué te une a ellos?

Vinieron un poco por accidente, y ambos hicieron unas pequeñas contribuciones muy amablemente. Dave es una gran persona y un gran músico, y de Brian Eno... ¿qué puedo decir? Es un hombre generoso y amable. Como Paul Weller; somos amigos desde mediados de los noventa y nos conocemos bien. Todos ellos han puesto un poco de color y brillo al disco.

¿Crees que a tu música le falta color y brillo?
Siempre he tenido problemas con los discos de cantantes. Las voces suelen tener un rango de posibilidades estrecho en comparación con los instrumentos. Tiendo a preferir los instrumentales, con más colores y matice. Por eso, como yo canto, no quiero que mis disco suenen simplemente como los de un cantante. Me gusta trabajar en texturas distintas, y todo aquél que pueda ayudarme a crearlas es muy bienvenido.

Años atrás adaptaste piezas latinoamericanas, de "Guantanamera" a "Te recuerdo, Amanda". Ahora has grabado "Insensatez", de Antonio Carlos Jobim y Vinícius de Moraes.
Alfie dice que es lo más vanguardista que he hecho nunca (ríe). *Parece que ha sorprendido mucho. Siempre me ha gustado la música popular de todo el mundo, de antes de que llegaran los grandes "bulldozers" del rock'n'roll y lo reventaran todo* (vuelve a reír). *En mi infancia y mi juventud, en los cincuenta y sesenta, había música popular muy hermosa. Me encantan muchas músicas latinoamericanas, como el tango. Me gustan esas ideas melódicas. Y, por otra parte, creo que era oportuno hacer una canción brasileña debido al momento que vive ahora ese país, con ese esperanzador intento de gobierno democrático. Grabar esa ha sido como saludar a Brasil y* desearle suerte.



> Zoom

¿Confías en el experimento de Lula da Silva?
Bueno, el Banco Mundial y organizaciones como la OTAN son tan fuertes... Les están presionando mucho. Hacer algo que no gusta a los estadounidenses siempre comporta muchos problemas.

Un amigo tuyo, Pascal Comelade, dice que está en contra de la idea de progreso en la música. Considera que no hay que esperar siempre ideas nuevas de un artista; que esa visión es un cliché del periodismo. ¿La compartes?
(Ríe). *Bueno, en nuestra civilización hay una idea de progreso que viene de los últimos ciento cincuenta años, con el avance de la tecnología. En el mundo occidental la gente vive más años ahora que entonces. Pero en términos de arte es difícil hablar de progreso considerando que biológicamente los seres humanos somos los mismos que hace miles de años. Las ideas artísticas de los antiguos egipcios o de los indios americanos de hace mil años quizá son más excitantes e inspiradoras que cualquier cosa actual. No hay razón por la cual debamos pensar que cualquier forma* de música *popular actual sea necesariamente mejor que lo que se hacía, por ejemplo, en la primera mitad del siglo XX. Lo que sí hacemos es desarrollar nuestro propio lenguaje; cada época tiene su forma de decir las*

cosas. Hay una singularidad. Todos somos únicos. Y es algo maravilloso que debemos celebrar. Pero, en términos de cultura juvenil, es cierto que cada generación quiere su propio imaginario, ser reconocido frente a sus hermanos mayores y sus padres. Eso es razonable; responde a una necesidad biológica.

Da la sensación de que Comelade y tú vivís en mundos propios, poco permeables al exterior. ¿Cómo lo hicisteis para encontraros en el mini-álbum "September Song" (Disques du Soleil et de l'Acier, 2000)?
No trabajamos en el mismo lugar. Pascal había estado animándome durante más de veinte años, en momentos buenos y malos, mandándome cartas y postales: "Espero que estés bien"... Me emocionó mucho. Y encuentro su música más que encantadora; detrás de esa ingenuidad aparente, hay una actividad intelectual. Pero no sé si repetiremos la colaboración. Trato de concentrarme en mis propias ideas, en intentar liberarlas. Lo que yo hago no es ni rock ni jazz, sino un proyecto propio que me resulta más fácil manejar por mi propia cuenta.

El nombre de Soft Machine está ahora en boca de diversos grupos, desde Spiritualized hasta Sigur Rós. ¿Alguna reflexión al respecto?
¿Qué bandas? Ah, sí, alguien me ¡as ha mencionado. ¿Si las he escuchado? Pues... no, debo decirlo. Pero, en fin, cuando empecé había gente mayor que yo que me influyó, y seguro que ellos tampoco tienen ni idea de quién soy yo (ríe). *Quizá sea una pauta que* se *repite.*

¿Crees que la prensa es demasiado perezosa al citar siempre "Rock Bottom" como tu mejor disco?
No. Me hace feliz ver que existe ese reconocimiento. "Rock Bottom" fue un disco con el que abrí mi propio camino. Tenía que inventar una nueva forma de hacer discos, y ése fue mi primer paso. Pero aprecio todos mis discos porque he sido parte de ellos. No los juzgo. Es como tener hijos: habrá la chica bonita que gusta a todo el mundo, pero como padre también amarás al chico raro que no gusta a tanta gente. Por otra parte, no salgo mucho de mi vida doméstica y no sé muy bien lo que piensa la gente sobre mi trabajo.

¿Temes las opiniones?
Me dan miedo los juicios en general. Los exámenes, los controles de la policía, las situaciones competitivas... No me gusta estar en una situación en que alguien diga si esto es mejor o peor que otra cosa...

Intuyo que no apreciarás mucho a la crítica musical...
¡Oh, sí! Me siento muy afortunado por el hecho de que haya gente que preste atención a mi música, la escuche y piense en ella. Eso me impresiona. Por otra parte, mi madre era periodista... (ríe).

En la última parte de la conversación, el entrevistador no puede evitar curiosear sobre un período poco comentado de la biografía de Wyatt: su estancia en Castelldefels, población costera de la Barcelona metropolitana, a mediados de los ochenta, en dos períodos de seis meses cada uno. *"Guardo una cierta nostalgia de Barcelona. Mi esposa tenía un trabajo como ilustradora de un libro infantil. Estábamos en Inglaterra, era invierno, hacía frío y pensamos que estaría bien ir a algún lugar que tuviera una luz bonita. Y fuimos a Castelldefels, donde pagábamos por el alquiler menos de lo que costaba la calefacción de nuestra casa en Inglaterra".*

De aquella Barcelona preolímpica recuerda, sobre todo, *"el mercado de la Boqueria, la Rambla, el barrio chino, el frontón, la Fundació Miró y el flamenco y la cultura andaluza que había en Cataluña".* Su presencia despertó el interés de algunos periodistas y músicos. "Me *invitaron a hacer un programa de televisión, 'Arsenal', y también canté con una pareja muy maja, Claustrofobia* - colaboró en su disco "Repulsión" (Justine, 87) -. *Estaría bien volver a verles".* Hasta aquí el momento *revival.* Wyatt sigue mirando hacia adelante, aunque sus planes de futuro inmediato no sean muy sofisticados. "Reformar la *cocina y el cuarto de baño: éste es mi próximo proyecto".* Nos queda "Cuckooland" para amenizar los próximos seis años de espera.

Jordi Biancotto

POESÍA EN ROJO Por QUIM CASAS

La presente selección de discos de Wyatt tan sólo pretende orientar. Podrían estar **"Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard"** (Virgin, 75), **"Dondestan"** (Rough Trade, 91), el hermoso EP "A Short Break" (92) o el último álbum, **"Cuckooland"** (Hannibal-Ryko-Naïve, 2003). Pero los escogidos le definen tan bien como los ausentes.



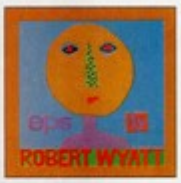
"ROCK BOTTOM"
(VIRGIN, 74)
La reflexión tras el accidente. La vida en una silla de ruedas. El blues como emoción más allá del género. La voz como instrumento. La música como pentagrama político sin recurrir a las consignas. La trompeta de Mongezi Feza, el amigo africano que se iría para siempre. Los juegos de palabras y las canciones que no necesitan palabras. Prolongación de una carrera irreprochable –The Wilde Flowers, Soft Machine, Matching Mole y el primer disco en solitario, ***"The End Of An Ear"*** (CBS, 71)– que es a la vez el punto de partida de una nueva trayectoria. *"Sea Song"* y *"Alifib"*, lo más grande.



"NOTHING CAN STOP US" (ROUGH TRADE, 82)
Wyatt inició con el respaldo de Rough Trade su etapa más politizada. No tuvo reparos en versionar temas ajenos y comprometidos para dar su visión, hastiada y combativa, del desequilibrio social. **"Nothing Can Stop Us"** no fue grabado como un álbum, sino que compendia los cinco singles editados entre 1980 y 1981, pero posee una concluyente unidad de estilo y hace poesía sonora de la lucha de clases: *"Caimanera"* (Carlos Puebla), *"Strange Fruit"* –que Billie Holiday cantaba en homenaje a las víctimas del Ku Klux Klan–, *"Arauco"* (Violeta Parra), *"At Last I Am Free"* (Chic)... El arte verdadero de la versión.



"OLD ROTTENHAT"
(ROUGH TRADE, 85)
Tras la epopeya melancólica de ***"Rock Bottom"*** y el cancionero popular, Wyatt regresa introvertidamente al pop con **"Old Rottenhat"**, alcanzando niveles de sedosa fascinación e hipnótica arquitectura que le sirven para reflexionar sobre el diálogo con el enemigo, la edad del egoísmo, lo absurdo de las fronteras, la historia, la noticia y los rebaños de mentes independientes de Chomsky. *"The Age Of Self"*, *"The British Road"* y *"Gharbzadegi"* son piezas capitales para el futuro sonoro de su intermitente obra de los noventa. El disco entero, junto al EP "Work In Progress" (84), está incluido en el CD ***"Mid-Eighties"*** (93).



"EPS"
(HANNIBAL, 99)
Un recopilatorio fundamental, ya que recoge los singles y maxis de Wyatt que fueron concebidos independientemente de los álbumes. Incluye, entre otras excelencias, los dos primeros singles para Virgin tras el accidente, *"I'm A Believer"*/*"Memories"* y *"Yesterday Man"*/*"Sonia"*; el 12" de 1982 con *"Shipbuilding"* –el tema escrito por Elvis Costello sobre la guerra de las Malvinas– y las más jazzísticas *"Memories Of You"* y *"Round Midnight"*; el EP "Work In Progress" (84), que contiene su sentida versión de *"Yolanda"* de Pablo Milanés; y la maoísta *"Chairman Mao"*, una rareza de 1987.



"SOLAR FLARES BURN FOR YOU" (CUNEIFORM, 2003)
Lo viejo y lo nuevo. Wyatt mira hacia atrás y rescata una sesión radiofónica de la BBC al desnudo, de 1974, y otra con el teclista Francis Monkman de 1972, tras la disolución de Matching Mole. Interludia con el sinuoso e inédito tema para el corto experimental "Solar Flares Burn For You" (73) –incluido aquí en formato Quicktime– y desvela tres piezas recientes como complemento al álbum ***"Cuckooland"***. En dos de ellas, grabadas el pasado invierno, Wyatt (corneta y teclados) y su viejo amigo Hugh Hopper (*loops* y bajo) tejen un ambient jazzístico y oscuro. La otra, *"The Verb"*, embellece la sencillez. ■

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"El flamenco es lo profundo" - El Pais - 7 jun 1999

EL PAÍS

"El flamenco es lo profundo"

Entrevista: ROBERT WYATT [EP] CANTANTE

No deja de palmotear sobre cualquier superficie que encuentra (una mesa, el salpicadero de un automóvil) buscando nuevos ritmos de percusión. "La música es mi vida", dice. Robert Wyatt (Bristol, 1945) lleva la batería en la sangre, pese a ir en silla de ruedas desde una caída que tuvo durante una borrachera, en 1973. Aquello no lo arredró. Ahora acaba de publicar Eps, una caja de CD"s que contiene todos sus grandes singles, como la versión que hizo de Shipbuilding, de Elvis Costello, o Te recuerdo, Amanda, de Víctor Jara. Su pasión por García Lorca le ha llevado hasta Granada, en donde intervino en el programa de Canal 2 Andalucía Imaginaria y saboreó el flamenco. "El flamenco", afirma, "es lo profundo, es la música soul de Europa". Pregunta. Una vez dijo que el mundo no necesita desesperadamente las canciones de Robert Wyatt.

¿Es eso cierto? Respuesta. El mundo no necesita mis canciones. Creo que hay demasiadas canciones ya. Para mí, lo importante es escuchar lo que pasa. Creo que sólo en determinados momentos se necesitan las canciones, pero no cada minuto del día durante las 24 horas. Hay demasiados discos.

P. ¿Es por eso por lo que pasa tanto tiempo entre un disco suyo y otro?
R. No soy una fábrica de hacer discos. En 30 años he hecho ya muchos discos. A mí lo que me gustó siempre era hacer singles. Pero ahora cuesta demasiado dinero publicarlos. Además, mi trabajo es componer, cantar, tocar la percusión, tocar los teclados, y preparar cada uno de estos aspectos necesita su tiempo. Y una canción no llega a mi cabeza cada día, por cierto.

P. En algún momento definió sus propias canciones como "periodismo sonoro de agitación"...
R. Eso fue hace 20 años, cuando la derecha retornó al poder en Gran Bretaña. Me di cuenta de que en ese momento yo tenía que decir algo. Consideré que no había que hacer un arte perfecto, unas canciones técnicamente perfectas, sino hablar inmediatamente, cantar con urgencia. Por suerte era la época del punk rock y en ese momento no importaba que una canción sonara mal, sino en decir las cosas inmediatamente.

P. Usted abandonó el Partido Comunista, pero ¿sigue siendo comunista?
R. Si solamente hay dos respuestas a esa pregunta, como sí o no, entonces debería responder que sí, que sigo siendo comunista. En política me definiría como marxista-pesimista.

P. ¿Por qué le atraen tanto García Lorca, Víctor Jara o Pablo Milanés?
R. Porque escribían con humanidad. Lorca, además, escribía música, era más abstracto. Hay poemas suyos que no logro comprender del todo, pero me encanta la musicalidad que tienen. Lorca escribía con el alma. P. Se le suele comparar con Tom Waits.

¿Qué le parece?
R. Bueno, supongo que es porque más o menos somos de la misma generación. Desde lejos da la impresión de que hay parecidos, que tenemos algo en común, pero la verdad es que no escucho mucho lo que hace, no lo conozco mucho. Me haría más feliz que me compararan con Compay Segundo.

P. ¿Por qué siente tanto afecto por España?
R. No es sólo por España, sino por todos los países hispanos, Cuba, Argentina... No sé por qué razón, el idioma hace que la música sea diferente. En todos los países en los que se habla español la música es especial. Como el son cubano... o el flamenco. El flamenco es lo profundo, es la música soul de Europa, es la música negra. No sé si es una tontería lo que voy a decir, pero creo que los gitanos son como los negros del delta del Mississippi. Cuando oigo flamenco es como si oyera cantar puro blues.

Jesus Arias

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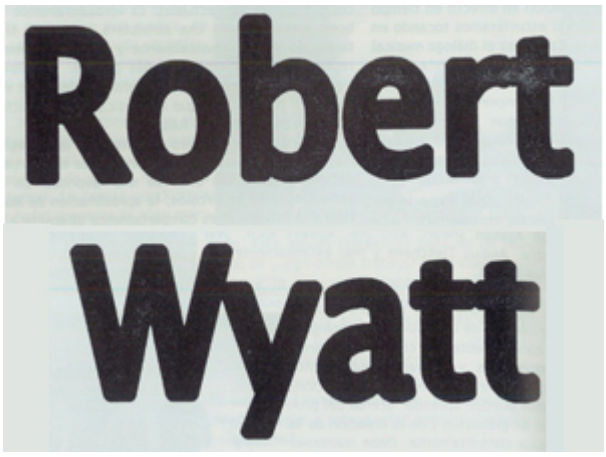
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Robert Wyatt - Margen - N° 14 - Verano 98





El éxito comercial sin precedentes de *Shleep* corona la obra de un artista cuyo principal talento es jugar maliciosamente con las paradojas. Este disco dinamita los santuarios musicales y consagra las colaboraciones artísticas inéditas en canciones irónicas que contradicen su compleja arquitectura. Desde *Rock Bottom*, Robert no había concebido ningún disco tan emotivo. Era necesario que recayera un poco el entusiasmo suscitado por este álbum para encontrar a su autor...

Por fin era posible hablar con Robert sin estar irresistiblemente obsesionado por el recuerdo de melodias de Shleep... En una conversación que duró más de tres horas, Robert

habló mucho de su juventud, de música, un poco de política... Para él esta charla ponía fin a una serie de entrevistas concertadas con la prensa internacional.

Un olor de Vacaciones presidia este mediodía de invierno, acentuado por los cristales de Coteaux du Loire y por el tic tac de las agujas del péndulo. Robert Wyatt y Alfie Benge son gente muy acogedora y su casa no podía ser menos. El salón es el centro de la vida común. Allí está la cadena estéreo y el lector de CD's. La portada de *Best of…* de los Coasters al lado de una foto donde John Peel posa en compañía de Robert. Aquí, se prefiere la madera y el vinilo al hierro y al plástico. El orden de las preguntas rápidamente cede el lugar a una conversación vagamente caótica. Alfie, ausente en la entrevista, hace furtivas reapariciones.

Robert y Alfie aman la Europa Continental. Alfie es de origen austro-polaco y Robert no deja escapar la ocasión de intercalar una palabra o una frase en francés o en español. Tiene una afición particular por los juegos de palabras: *Shleep* asocia el sueño y los corderos que cuenta para ayudarse a dormir. En el pasado ha combinado el bilingüismo: asi, Matching Mole era un guiño fonético y franco-inglés a Soft Machine.

Se acordaba de una lejana participación en la televisión francesa donde Robert, con la cara tapada por un pasamontañas, presentaba trozos de Little Red Record en francés...

Francia y America

"*Fui educado en un atmósfera continental. Mís padres pasaban largas temporadas en España y asimilaron sus hábitos culinarios. En nuestra casa se comía ajo y cebolla: perfumes que irritan el olfato de los británicos. Pero es en París, donde pasé algunos meses al final de los años 50, donde descubrí el jazz y el cine. Es alli donde vi "Ascenseur pour l'échafaud" (Ascensor al Patíbulo). No entendia una palabra de lo que decía Jeanne Moreau pero descubrí a Miles Davis y Barney Wilen: ¡un momento de puro placer!*

Iba a la escuela del barrio con el hijo de unos amigos de mis padres que habían estado en la Resistencia durante la guerra. Al final de mi estancia hablaba francés. Se oxidaría después. A veces lo intento: cuando un periodista de Liberation vino a verme tras la aparición de Shleep insistí para que ia entrevista se desarrollara en francés. Mis lagunas fueron decisivas paro que pasáramos rapidamente ali inglés... Para un proyecto de Mike Mantler leí una poesía de Soupault. Mi forma de pronunciar los diptongos franceses, "l'oeil" por ejemplo, tiene el don de enfadar a Alfie".

Robert sigue la actualidad cultural francesa muy de cerca: su cine, su canción (Jean-Louis Murat), su música (Pascal Comelade) no tiene secretos para él. Tiene una afición particular por el jazz francés de los años 50 ó 60, un tema que el desarrolla particularmente bien...

"El jazz francés se revalorizó con los solistas americanos. Pienso en Rene Urtreger, Pierre Michelot, Jean-Francois Jenny-Cíark, Mimi Perrin, Jacques Lousier... Se les subestima, sin duda, a la vista de su carrera "popular", pero su sensibilidad es patente. En los años 50, la escena francesa descubrió a gente como Chet Baker o Miles Davis... En América, el jazz estaba concebido como una musica ligera, en Francia se le imprimió seriedad y los artistas de color encontraron refugio. Los jazzmen americanos eran tratados con respeto. Se sentían a gusto para tocar. El grupo de Miles Davis era mixto: dos negros, tres franceses. Esta combinación interétnica no tiene nada que ver con el imperialismo sino con las buenas maneras. Esta combinación fue decisiva: gracias a ella Miles pudo liberarse de las estructur melódicas y explorar su talento como improvisador. Creo que hay también una conexión historica entre Francia y America, entre el viejo continente y la cuna del jazz: Sidney Bechet era un criollo de Nueva Orleans... En un contexto personal y subjetivo considero que mi forma de cantar está más influenciada por la trompeta de Miles Davis en "Ascenseur pour l'échafaud" que por la voz de cualquier cantante.

Robert está dolido por el imperialismo del interior" que castiga a los americanos y lo condena a la ignorancia de sus raices y de su historia...

"Con Soft Machine fuimos de gira a USA como teloneros de Jimi Hendrix. Ero en eí 67 o en el 68. Me desconcertaba por aquel entonces la falt de cultura de los afro-americanos. ¡ignoraba hasta el nombre de Langston Hughes! No solomente su historia les era desconocida, tambié su

propia cultura musical. Esta cultura del olvido raientizó el proceso evolutivo normal de la cosas... Entonces, par diversas razones, no se puede ser sensible a la música de Wynton Marsalys lis y se debe recordar que es uno de los grandes. Por su simplicidad y su actitud abierta, él es un de los grandes conocedores del patrimonio musiccal afro-americano. No debemos olvidar que los años 30, 40 y 50 para los jóvenes del ghetto es la Edad Media. Sin duda él familiarizó a su gente con su cultura".



Folklore y Rock

Al principio de los años 80 Robert produjo una serie de singles para el sello Rough Trade dejó su impronta en clásicos del pop (*I'm a Believer* de los Monkees, *Yesterday Man* de Chris Andrews), un himno (*La Internacional*) y los proyectó en otra dimensión. No debemos olvidar su interès por la canciones populares sudamericañas (*Arauco*, *Caiminera*) y otros clásicos del jazz (*Strange Fruít*). Robert se reencarnaba literalmente en cada una de estas recreaciones haciendo gala de un simbolismo rebelde ciertemente intenso. Coincidenca, en francia Jean Rochard proponia diferentes proyectos basados en el jazz y el folklore.

"Considero que Nato es uno de los mejores sellos europeos junto a ECM... Fue Tony Coe quien me hizo escuchar mis primeros discos de Nato. En Les Voix d'Ixtassou, es José Menese quien canta Hasta la Victoria. Es necesario apuntar que José Menese no es solamente uno de los interpretes más autenticos en el canto gitano, sino que es un sincero militante comunista... Como anécdota, decir que el nombre de José Menese aparece en Dondestan en la reproducción de un cartel de un espectáculo flamenco. Quedé impresionado por el proyecto de Jean que ofrecía algunas similitudes con algunos aspectos de mi propia producción de los años 80. Pero su trabajo es más sofisticado. Jean Rochard me invitó a participar en algunos de sus proyectos pero mi lentitud en mi trabajo personal, lo que a veces me angustia terriblemente, me impidió hacerlo".

En Gran Bretaña La Revolución Industrial erradicó el folklore. Robert no está particularmente interesado por los movimentos "revivalistas" aunque valore La voz de June Tabor... Los hijos espirituales de los Joe Hill, Ewan McCall y Woodie Guthrie no están necesariamente allí donde se piensa que se esconden...

"Hace dos años participé en un concierto de Billy Bragg como protesta por el embargo americano de Cuba - ¡que bella ironía cuando todos sabemos que los americanos son los apóstoles del mercado libre!- Después del concierto, celebramos una pequeña fiesta donde Bill y yo charlamos animadamente. Él me habló de su compañero Paul Weller. Paul y Billy son auténticos músicos folk. Perpetúan y reinventan a la realidad del momento su propuesta. Una tradición de canción protesta con creaciones que están destinadas a formar parte de una variada audiencia. En mi opinión son sucesores de los compositores anónimos de siglos pasados. Aquella gente que tenia una función no sólo artística sino también de crítica del sistema social y algunas veces incluso de agitadores. En otro contexto el disco de Denez Prigent me sorprendió. Es necesario tener unas raices bien arraigadas para sobrevivir a la era Disney".

Es en 1976 cuando los Sex Pistols van a revolucionar el panorama musical popular inglés mientras los artistas de la generación Stones-Beatles estaban disfrutando las mieles del éxito. Las estrellas del rock y el jazz infravaloraban este movimiento que les parecía una apología del

amateurismo. Es en Rough Trade, el sello británico que encarna lo mejor de la aparición de una escena post-punk, donde Robert graba *Born Again Cretin*, una canción que hostiga a la derecha fundamentalista cristiana. En ese tema, Robert bordea a Stiff Little Fingers. pero también a Scritti Polititi y su cantante Green, cuya voz estaba lejanamente inspirada por la de Robert Wyatt.

"La importancia del punk-rock no fue tenida en cuenta por muchos músicos y artistas que se pueden calificar de "innovadores". Sin duda porque ellos estaban aburguesados y los burgueses menosprecian la cultura popular. No hay nadie más reaccionario que Andy Warhol al final de su carrera. El punk-rock ha sido una expresión musical particularmente ofensiva y aunténtica, Johnny Rotten me ha hecho reír porque tenia algo de cruel y de despiadado en sus textos y su forma de cantarlos. Su arrogancia lo volvia impermeable a la mirada de los demás y sus conviciones. Pero lo principal a propósito del punk no era su lado novedoso, nada más lejos, era su lado primitivo, ofensivo e instintivo... En la época de Matching Mole los músicos estaban respaldados por su propia actitud al tocar piezas cada vez más complejas. Me impresionaban mucho sus facultades atléticas, pero esta estética no hacia latir mi corazón. No, lo que hacía latir mi corazón era más simple que todo eso: tos Especials y el movimiento 2-Tone, su mezcla de idiomas rock y jamaicano y de ídeas politicas interesantes. Pero la música punk no aceptó mi propuesta, sólo fue un lapso intermedio".

Experimentación, canción y política

Moon In June del *Third* de Soft Machine y *Caroline* con Matching Mole anunciaban la nueva faceta de Robert como cantante y compositor. La mezcia de su voz y melodias complejas provocan algunas turbulencias...

"Trabajo con músicos de jazz. Adoro el jazz, pero la "hermandad" del jazz inglés guarda sus distandas. Distancias amables. Las personas que trabajan conmigo son excepciones: Annie Whitehead, Evan Parker... La música de Evan Parker es como un impulso eléctrico. Para mi no es mùsica "complicada", ¡no más"complicada" que la forma de cantar de Johnny Rotten! Él deja hablar a su corazón y esto es ¡simplemente fantastico! En la época de Matching Mole habia ya esta dualidad: los músicos de jazz no tomaban al grupo en serio. El grupo no funcionaba como era debido. Se puede tomar el ejemplo de Dave McRae que era un músico de sesión muy solicitado. Eligió mal entre las giras con Matching Mole y sus misiones sedentarias: finalmente se fue a Australia con su mujer... En cuanto a mi forma de cantar es natural y su color también. Es una voz humana como la de Murat en vuestra propia casa. Las experimentaciones vocales, que hice en The End of an Ear se realizaron inspirando las palabras en lugar de expirarlas. La voz es un instrumento de comunicación que trasciende la lingüistica. Los sonidos de una lengua cantada ofrecen muchos niveles de lectura y el texto no es lo más importante... Puedo vibrar con el sonde una voz venida de Mongolia pues la emoción que sugiere me embelesa".



Robert ha reivindicado siempre la indisoluble relación entre arte y política. Esto no se manifiesta con la emisión gratuita de puntos de vista, sino por la práctica de una filosofía.

"La idea de vanguardia no es interesante porque traza los fundamentos de una cultura cerrada y mantiene una élite privilegiada. Esto funciona a niveles de lenguaje y de vocabulario. La belleza es una noción típicamente burguesa y una fuente de exclusión. Max Ernst dijo: "Nada de restas". Sé que puede sonar tópico pero en el fondo es la forma de ser fiel a uno mismo... El humor puede ser ofensivo. Dada y los surrealistas lo han demostrado en su tiempo. Hasta los músicos populares, los juglares de la Edad Media que iban de pueblo en pueblo, utilizaban el humor como una forma natural de rebelión.

La farsa y la ironia son un arma".

Creación y mezcia de géneros

Robert es un oyento atento y ante las modas se muestra circunspecto y vigilante. Su obra, desde su contribución a Soft Machine hasta Shleep tienen prácticamente una dimensión conceptual, cede más a su instinto que a las nuevas corrientes tecno y drum'n' bass. Un detalle que lo distingue de sus coetáneos...

"Los fenómenos de la moda tienen una influencia determinante en la evolución musical. Pienso que en los años 20 es el boom de la canción popular americana, esencialmente judia, y de la música popular negra que ha permitido al jazz desarrollarse. En ciertas épocas, y la nuestra es una, las barreras entre las gentes y los géneros se disipan. Los artistas de rock y los artistas de jazz trabajan juntos pero hay un frontera casi inapreciable entre las mezclas oportunistas y la simbiosis natural de los estilos. Es verdad que un nuevo sonido es excitante pero es necesario que su nacimiento esté motivado por un sentimiento profundo."

El proceso de creación en Robert es un fenómeno lento. Seis años separan *Dondestan* de *Shleep*... Cada uno de sus álbumes es una arquitectura sofisticada de canciones que exigen una atención y un sentido particulares, arreglos y colaboraciones differentes...

"Para Shleep, Phil (Manzanera, guitarrista de Roxy Music) me hizo un gran favor. Me dijo que me to tomara con calma y que él se encargaba del tema del estudio. Esto contribuyó a realizar este álbum. Me libré de los contratiempos habituales, el barullo de la gente que tienen mucho que hacer en poco tiempo. Liberarme de todas las tensiones que generaban en mi casa todos los períodos de grabación. Sin su amistad no hubiera podido invitar a Paul Weller (ex-Jam y Style Council) y Evan Parker... Dos artistas que navegaban en aguas diferentes y que no se hubieran encontrado jamás... Shleep me ha permitido reencontrarme con viejos amigos y lograr su colaboración de forma fructífera..."

Aunque Alfie y Robert sueñan con el sol de España, están confortablemente instalados en un entorno apacible que ofrece las ventajas de la ciudad sin presentar los inconvenientes de la vida del campo. Esta proximidad del mundo rural fue un elemento determinante en la realización de *Shleep*. El éxito de este último álbum ha permitido adquirir los derechos de los discos precedentes de Robert (excepción hecha de la compilación Rough Trade) y ve el futuro de forma serena. Ha compuesto muchos títulos para un próximo disco y cuando se conoce la lentitud del proceso creativo de Robert no se necesita ser adivino para augurarle una buena producción...

Nadie puede pararle...

René Guyomarc'h
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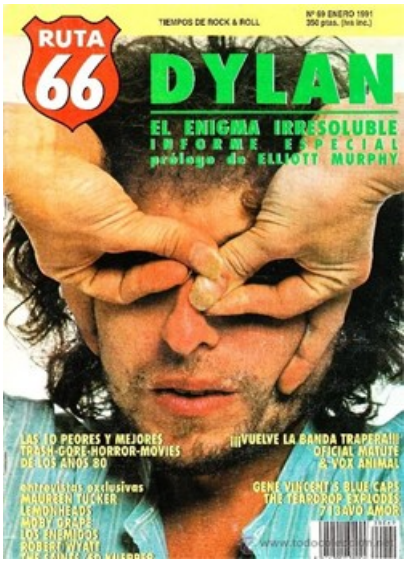
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Robert Wyatt - La Gravedad No Existe - Ruta 66 - N° 69 - Enero 1991

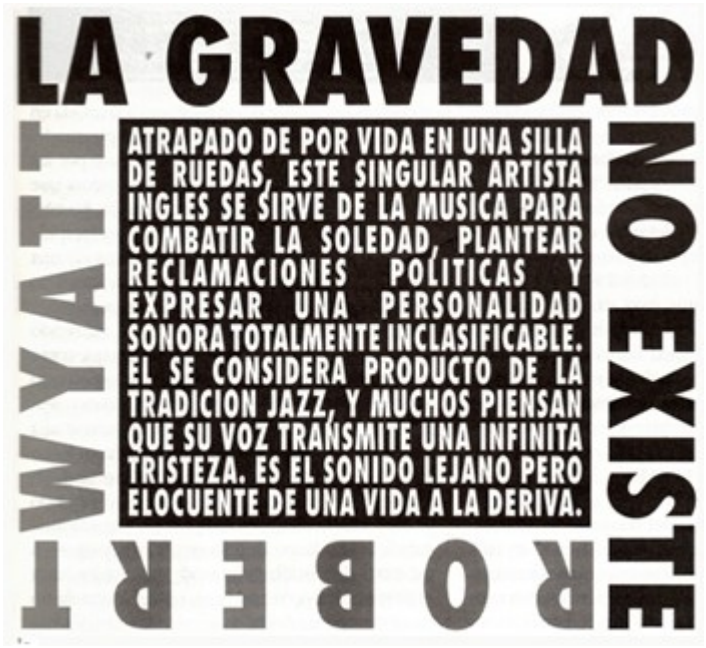
ROBERT WYATT - LA GRAVEDAD NO EXISTE



Por RAFA CERVERA

¡Atención, estimado lector rutero! Lo que viene a continuación no es fácil de digerir. Pasearse a través de la obra y las palabras de Robert Wyatt apenas tiene que ver con el contenido habitual y especializado de esta tu revista. Robert Wyatt es un hombre que apenas se relaciona con el rock, que vive totalmente ajeno al discurrir de la música pop y que dice sentirse mucho más identificado con el jazz o el folklore del Tercer Mundo que con lo último de lo último en materia independiente. Es más, Robert Wyatt posee una extensa discografía en la cual, lo último que podrás encontrar, son vestigios de rock & roll, al menos, tal y como lo solemos degustar. Y ahora es cuando tú te preguntas con toda la razón: ¿qué hace este individuo entre mis melenudos favoritos?

Que Wyatt fuera batería de los sofocantes Soft Machine es hoy un hecho que tiene más que ver con la casualidad histórica que con los deseos del interesado. Si hay algo que haga de él un elemento incomparable dentro de la música pop-un marco en el cual él se niega a enclavarse- es que piensa, trabaja, crea y vive de espaldas a ella. Por poner un ejemplo, Robert Wyatt es un socialista irredento, alguien dispuesto a versionear «La internacional» con tanta alegría como los Fuzztones lo hacen con una pieza de los Sonics. Y es que su sonido ha funcionado en diferentes escalas a lo largo de los casi 20 años que lleva trabajando en solitario. Formado sobre unas bases estrictamente jazzísticas, Wyatt se crió en la ciudad inglesa de Canterbury, lugar de nacimiento también para el grupo Soft Machine, amalgama de psicodelia, sinfonismo y abstracciones jazzies que situaron al batería en el mismísimo ojo del huracán del rock psicodélico.



En 1991, aquellas aventuras parecen como una broma del tiempo. Así lo asegura al menos el viejo Wyatt, feliz y relajado por la aparición de su nuevo elepé, «Dondestan». Es su primera señal de vida musical en casi 6 años, colaboraciones aparte. Su discográfica en España ha logrado arreglar una entrevista telefónica con el músico, un personaje afable y terriblemente entrañable que está encantado con el interés que ha despertado su resurrección discográfica.

CONTRACORRIENTE

Dice la leyenda que Wyatt abandonó Soft Machine -el grupo en el que también se inició Kevin Ayers- debido a su «creciente seriedad». Fue en 1971, cuando la banda había lamido las mieles del éxito, encaramada entre lo más destacado del underground británico, teloneando a Jimi Hendrix y Pink Floyd. Para contrarrestar los efectos de la experiencia, fundó Matching Mole (que quiere decir lo mismo que Soft Machine, pero en francés), iniciándose como letrista y cantante. Dos años después, sobrevino la tragedia: Wyatt se rompe la espina dorsal a consecuencia de una caída. El whisky y tres pisos de distancia entre los efluvios del alcohol y la dura realidad del suelo estuvieron a punto de segar de cuajo su carrera. Los médicos aseguraron que jamás podría volver a andar, y muy posiblemente, tampoco volvería a tocar. Desde entonces vive unido a su silla de ruedas, aunque nunca ha dejado de ejercer como músico.

«Si miro hacia atrás con nostalgia», *dice el entrevistado*, «*en lo* último que suelo pensar es *en los años 60. Tiendo a recordar más el antes y el después. La época anterior, los 50, fueron estupendos. Era lo suficientemente joven como para no tener que trabajar y eso siempre está muy bien. En la escuela era un desastre y las chicas, a pesar de mi interés, tampoco se me daban demasiado bien. Pero escuchaba mucho jazz, montones de disco. Los 50 fueron estupendos. Y los 60 un caos, en mi caso, sólo pude desarrollar un claro sentido musical de lo que hacía en los 70, cuando empecé a hacer discos como «Rock Bottom» o «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard». Pero los 60 fueron como si yo no hubiese estado allí realmente. Cuando pienso en aquellos días es como ver a alguien en una vieja foto: apenas puedo reconocerme*».

Lo que de verdad ayudó a Robert Wyatt a concentrar su talento fue el periodo de convalecencia que, tras el accidente, le tuvo retenido en un hospital durante 6 meses. El producto de aquella etapa se tornó en vinilo y, bajo el apelativo de «Rock Bottom» -producido por Nick Mason en 1974-, redescubrió a su autor. Junto al ya mentado «Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard» (1975), conforma la cúspide creativa del artista a lo largo de la| borrosa década de los 70. Wyatt también llegó a saborear el éxito comercial con una personal versión de «I'm a believer». Ateniéndonos de nuevo a la mitología rock, hay quien asegura que cuando el programa Top of the Pops convocó a Wyatt para que hiciese el

playback de rigor con el tema, éste se presentó con toda una banda... en sillas de ruedas, Mike Oldfield incluido.

- ¿Crees que el rock era mucho más interesante y espontáneo en tiempos pasados?
- Siempre me ha interesado la música que no está demasiado acabada ni demasiado pulida y ante todo, me gusta la música tocada por gente que de verdad siente lo que hace. En cuanto al rock actual, no estoy seguro de que merezca la atención que recibe. Supongo que todo se debe al gran apoyo económico con el que cuenta. Pero entonces, ¿qué tenía de bueno el rock & roll? Muy sencillo, que todo el mundo podía tocarlo. Era algo amateur y sentido. Ahora es justo lo que no debe ser, música de una aristocracia millonaria, con enormes presupuestos. Ya no es lo que solía ser.

- ¿Hacia dónde piensas que evolucionará la música pop en los próximos años?
- ¿El pop? Oh, la música pop no me interesa, que evolucione hacia donde quiera, no me siento parte de ella. Gran parte de la música que escucho y que más disfruto es música nada comercial y casi nunca angloamericana. Me gustan casos como el de esa banda de rock gitana, Ketama, que han obtenido un cierto éxito fuera de sus fronteras. Es bueno que se rompa el monopolio del lenguaje inglés. También me gusta ver que cada vez hay más mujeres trabajando como músicos. Pero básicamente el pop es la música de esta era industrial. Personalmente, hay tanta música y tan diferente que no me importa si es o no pop.

MÚSICA COMBATIVA PARA TIEMPOS DE DESIDIA

Su entrada en la década de los ochenta fue algo más que acertada. Con un pasado como el suyo, plagado de nombres inherentes al jazz-rock y la experimentación, noviazgos con Fred Frith y Robert Fripp, Robert Wyatt no era el prototipo a adorar en plena temporada new wave. Su fichaje para Rough Trade demostró lo contrario. Unos cuantos sencillos sirvieron para asentar con todo respeto su nombre entre las oleadas de nuevos talentos británicos: «Arauco», «Grass» -un tema de Ivor Cutler-, una versión de Chic. Y la estremecedora «Shipbuilding», agrio fresco de la Inglaterra bajo el domino de la Thatcher que firmara Elvis Costello Elepés como «Nothing Can Stop Us» (1982) y «Old Rottenhat» (1985) desvelaron bajo la quebradiza sensibilidad del músico se escondía un agrio observador político. Desgraciadamente, Robert Wyatt no es un tipo marcado por la premura en lo que a grabaciones se refiere. Salvo algún otro sencillo y colaboraciones de lo más variopintas (Ryuichi Sakamoto, Chris & Cosey, Kip Hanrahan), su nombre ha estado ausente de la actualidad musical durante años.

¿Por qué has tardado tanto tiempo en volver a grabar un disco?
Bueno, nunca sé exactamente qué hacer con mi vida, y todavía sigo sin saberlo; es algo que me ocurre desde que dejé la escuela: no sé qué hago en este mundo. Hasta me sorprendo cuando veo los discos que he hecho. Siempre que hago algo es porque alguien me lo ha sugerido; en este caso fue mi esposa, Alfie (Alfreda Benge, poetisa). Un buen día dijo, «mira, Robert, ya es hora de que hagas un disco». Así que me dije, «vale, de acuerdo».


LA GRAVEDAD NO EXISTE

ROBERT WYATT

ATRAPADO DE POR VIDA EN UNA SILLA DE RUEDAS, ESTE CINGALAR ARTISTA INGLES SE SIRVE DE LA MUSICA PARA COMBATIR LA SOLEDAD, PLANTEAR RECLAMACIONES POLITICAS Y EXPRESAR UNA PERSONALIDAD SONORA TOTALMENTE INCLASIFICABLE. EL SE CONSIDERA PRODUCTO DE LA TRADICION JAZZ, Y MUCHOS PIENSAN QUE SU VOZ TRANSMITE UNA INFINITA TRISTEZA. ES EL SONIDO LEJANO PERO ELOCUENTE DE UNA VIDA A LA DERIVA.

DISCOGRAFIA DE UN ROBINSON INGLES

- ¿Tiene eso algo que ver con que varios de los textos de «Dondestan» sean de Alfie?
- Sí, la puse a trabajar a ella también. Fue como un castigo por haberme obligado a componer de nuevo, soy muy perezoso. Tenía muchas ideas en la cabeza pero me faltaba una motivación, una clave para sacar afuera todas esas emociones. Algunos de los poemas que dieron lugar a las canciones del elepé fueron escritos en España. Hacía tiempo que buscábamos un paisaje que nos inspirase, un cambio respecto a nuestra vida cotidiana. Esa es otra de las razones por la que no había grabado nada últimamente.

- En relación a obras anteriores, «Dondestan» es un disco menos orientado políticamente. Es más descriptivo, muy emocional. Sin embargo, el título parece tener claras connotaciones de denuncia.
- Si, es un punto interesante. Incluso los poemas de Alfie contienen esa especie de desorientación… En España vivimos en un sitio llamado Castelldefels, al sur de Barcelona. Era temporada de invierno, cuando todo es más barato, y yo tenía un trabajo para la TV catalana. En esa época, la gente que está ahí en verano ha desaparecido. Hay una atmosfera extraña que te desorienta. «Dondestan» podría significar eso: ¿dónde esta todo el mundo?, aquí no hay nadie… excepto una pareja de monjas y algunos perros. A partir de ahí surgieron canciones más políticas y abstractas, aunque al terminar el disco descubrí que, inconscientemente había seguido hablando de esa sensación de pérdida, de desesperación, de sentirse a la deriva como un barco sin ancla. Supongo que ambas cosas van unidas.

NO ES POP

Aunque Robert Wyatt está cercano a los planteamientos de la música pop, todo se reduce a más casualidades. Amigos y colaboradores (Working Week, Jerry Damners, Ben Watt) y una comedida militancia en el género. Salvo excepciones, el Wyatt de la pasada década suele ser un tipo adepto a las construcciones extravagantes y los tempos medios. Solo que tiende a cantar y tocar cosas de Pablo Milanés, Thelonius Monk y Víctor Jara, a mezclar su educación jazzie con todo tipo de recursos roqueros hasta edificar un estilo incomparable. Escuchar su versión de «Strangers in the night» (en el álbum «Miniatures») es la mejor manera de introducir a un neófito en el mundo de Robert Wyatt: un mago del bricolage musical, un prestidigitador naif que sabe perfectamente como subvertir con sutilidad las estructuras convencionales.

- **¿Te consideras un músico de rock?**
- Es difícil contestar a eso. Lo que más hago es escuchar música, me encanta oírla todo el día, soy un adicto a diferentes estilos. Se puede decir que ante todo soy un oyente ya que la música es un buen método para conocer otra gente, algo especialmente importante en mi caso, ya que estoy en una silla de ruedas y no salgo demasiado. Tener discos es una forma de tener todo tipo de visitas en casa. Siempre prefiero escucha música a hacerla. Si

hiciese lo contrario acabaría encerrado en mi propio mundo, y quiero conocer otros. Pero contestando a tu pregunta Alfie dice que probablemente sea un cantante de jazz.

- ¿Qué tipo de música escuchas con más asiduidad?
- Mi amor original fue el jazz, pero a partir de ahí he desarrollado mi interés en varias direcciones. Gracias a gente como John Coltrane o Miles Davis terminé interesándome por algunos tipos de música española, y cuando digo española supongo que me refiero a la andaluza. Las características del flamenco son particularmente interesantes porque a veces se utilizan escalas e ideas que asocio con sonidos árabes e indios.

LA VOZ DE LA CONCIENCIA

Hay una generación de músicos británicos que está fuertemente influenciada por Robert Wyatt. Se trata de aquellos que han apoyado activamente la, lucha contra la supremacía del partido conservador, gente que no sólo comparte el estilo sino también la crítica política que el ex batería ha derramado en obras como «Nothing Can Stop Us» u «Old Rottenhat». Identificar a Wyatt con la vieja izquierda es ya un tópico, y por lo tanto, un detalle que ha contribuido a crear una imagen un tanto exagerada del artista. Si bien es cierto que sus textos bordean en algunas ocasiones el sermón político, su postura no es tan previsible como cabría esperar.

- ¿Cómo ves los acontecimientos sociopolíticos que han ido sucediéndose en Europa en los últimos meses?
- Hay algunos detalles verdaderamente aterradores. He sabido que, por ejemplo, en la antigua Alemania del Este, para ejercer como médico debes probar que tienes una ascendencia alemana pura, al menos en una generación. Es terrible, lo más parecido que puede haber a un resurgir nazi. Muchos médicos y profesores alemanes están trabajando como porteros porque no son alemanes puros, lo cual es algo muy preocupante. Si continúan habiendo erupciones como ésta me temo el futuro que nos espera. No me sorprendería si el próximo siglo apareciesen unos cuantos gobiernos fascistas en Europa, tanto en el este como en el oeste.

- ¿Crees que los movimientos ecológicos son una nueva forma de movimiento político progresista?
- Bien, un buen marxista debería estar pensando siempre en estas cosas. Engels y Marx lo hacían; una de sus principales críticas al capitalismo es que éste ejercía el poder sin responsabilidad. Por ejemplo, esa gente que llega a un país tropical para abastecerse de caucho, sin importarles si se devasta todo un bosque; una vez terminan, se trasladan a otro para hacer lo mismo. El único problema con los partidos verdes es que evitan las cuestiones de poder político. No puedes preocuparte sólo de ser bueno con los animales, no es suficiente.

- ¿Qué opinión te merecen las estrellas del pop que se empeñan en comprometerse en temas políticos y sociales a los que aseguran defender desinteresadamente?
- Oh, creo que no se les puede medir a todos por el mismo rasero. Lo preocupante es que se intente hacer caridad con ese tipo de asuntos porque lo que se termina generando es más colonialismo cultural: gente de países ricos ayudando a los de los países más pobres. Si realmente quieren ayudar que colaboren para que ciertas naciones dejen de explotar a otras. En cuanto a los músicos, siempre hay que observar de quién se trata.

- Entonces, ¿crees que existen casos de ese tipo intachables y honestos?
- Hay gente que piensa, «me reportará un gran prestigio el colaborar en la próxima gira de Amnistía Internacional». Pero también me consta que hay gente responsable al respecto; Sting utiliza su influjo en los media de un modo muy responsable, no dudo de su sinceridad. Claro que también podríamos considerar las cosas de otra manera. Por ejemplo, escuchas una canción en la que un tipo dice, «te amaré el resto de mi vida» y sabes perfectamente que el que canta eso ha amado a media docena de mujeres en la última semana. Así pues, ¿qué está diciendo? Supongo que es muy difícil escapar a las presiones del marketing.

- Ryuichi Sakamoto dijo en una ocasión que tienes una de las voces más tristes del pop, ¿estás de acuerdo?
- No lo sé, no imprimo deliberadamente una u otra emoción a lo que canto. Cuando canto tan sólo trato de ordenar la música correctamente, como si todo fuese instrumental. De hecho, mucha de la gente que me influencia y admiro son instrumentistas, trompetistas y

cosas así. Quizá es que no estoy creando emociones deliberadamente: es como una foto, cuando ves a alguien que no expresa absolutamente ninguna emoción; da sensación de tristeza.

- ¿Te interesan los grupos de la escena independiente británica?
- La verdad es que no me entero demasiado. No estoy muy conectado con los media en general, llevamos una vida como muy apartada del resto del mundo. Conozco muy pocas cosas y no suelen ser precisamente las últimas novedades. Los músicos ingleses que más admiro no son nuevos: Paul Weller, Ian Dury.

- ¿Y Billy Bragg?
- Sí, es un gran tipo. Ha hecho algo similar con el rock a lo que Winton Marsalis hizo con el jazz. Pero mi modelo de compositor sigue alguien como Paul Weller.

No está muy claro cuánto tiempo habrá de pasar hasta que Robert Wyatt haga su siguiente disco («nunca sé qué ocurrirá después»). *Pero sí tiene claro que es* «fan de esa banda gallega, Os *Resentidos; son mucho mejores que muchos de los nuevos grupos de por aquí». Dice que hace 20 años que no ve* a Kevin Ayers y hasta se extraña de que haya grabado un disco no hace mucho. Robert Wyatt, genio y figura, vive en una órbita privada de la que sólo nos llegan noticias de vez en cuando. Inencasillable, tan cercano del mundo real y a la vez tan distante.



DISCOGRAFIA DE UN ROBINSON INGLES

Con SOFT MACHINE
«Love makes sweet music/Reelin' Feelin' Squealin'» (EP, 1967)
«VOLUME TWO»(LP,1969)
«THIRD» (2 LPs, 1970)
«FOURTH»(LPJ971)
«TRIPLE ECHO» (3 LPs, 1977)
«LIVE AT THE PROMS 1970» (LP, 1988)
«THE SOFT MACHINE TURNS ON CD» (Peel Sessions; LP, 1990)

Con MATCHING MOLE
«O Caroline/Signed curtain» (Sn, 1972)
«MATCHING MOLE» (LP, 1972)
«MATCHING MOLE'S LITTLE RED RECORD» (LP, 1973)

En solitario
«THE END OF AN EAR»(LP, 1974)
«I'm a believer/Memories» (Sn, 1974)
«ROCK BOTTOM»(LP, 1974)
«RUTH IS STANGER THAN RICHARD» (LP, 1975)
«Yesterday man/ Sonia» (Sn, 1977)
«Arauco/Guantanamera» (Sn, 1980)

«At last I'm free/Strange fruit» (Sn, 1980)
«Grass» (single compartido, 1981)
«From man to woman» (Sn, 1982)
«NOTHING CAN STOP US» (LP, 1982)
«Stalin wasn't stallin'/Stalingrad» (Sn, 1982)
«Shipbuilding/Memories of you/Round midnight»(Mx, 1982)
«THE ANIMALS FILM» (Banda sonora; LP, 1982)
«Work in progress EP» (Mx, 1984)
«OLD ROTTENHAT» (LP, 1985)
«The last nightingale/On the beach at Cambridge»(Mx, 1985)
«The age of self» (Single compartido, 1985)
«The wind of change/Namibia» (con los Swapo Singers; Sn, 1985)
«Peel sessions» (Mx, 1987)
«DONDESTAN»(LP,1991)

Temas en recopilaciones
«MINIATURES» (LP, 1980; tema «Strangers in the night)
«RECOMMENDED RECORDS SAMPLER»
(2 LPs, 1982; tema «La internationale»)
«THE LIBERATOR» (LP, 1989; tema «Pigs»)

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Robert Wyatt - El extraño genio de la profundo - Disco Express - Num. 369 - 2 Abril 1976



EL EXTRAÑO GENIO DE LO PROFUNDO

UNA LUCHA VITAL POR SUPERAR LA ESTETICA VOCIFERANTE

Ya ha superado la barrera de los treinta años. Incluso ha superado el paredón de su incapacidad física. Cuando Robert Wyatt se defenestró allá por el 73 se pensó que desaparecería del panorama rock el legendario batería de Soft Machine. Pero la profecía sólo era parcialmente cierta. Su accidente hizo surgir en él una nueva creatividad instrumental y una nueva vivencia generadora de inspiración. Hay que hablar desde entonces de dos Wyatt: su etapa anterior al auto-vuelo en picado y la posterior, siempre sentado.

Su primera época tuvo varios escalones. Junto a varios amiguetes luego famosos (Ratledge, por ejemplo) tocaba ya desde el año 59. En el David Allen Quartet (61) rodeaban al poeta-guitarrista loco australiano, Hugh Hopper (b), Mike Ratledge (teclas), y Wyatt. De aquí pasó a formar junto a Ratledge, Mal Dean (trompeta) y Rab Spall (violín) un grupete denominado The Korean War (63). Hasta ahora el jazz presidía sus acciones pero su siguiente paso será de aire pop al quedar creados los Wild Flowers (64) con Hugh Hopper, Kevin Ayers (gt), Brian Hopper (saxo), Richard Sinclair (gt. rítm.) y Wyatt. Con solo darle otro empujoncito ya lo tenemos como miembro fundador de Soft Machine junto a Ratledge, Ayers, Allen y Larry Nolan (gt). Desde entonces aguantó todos los cambios que fue sufriendo la banda hasta que a finales del 70 graba el último Lp con ellos. Un año más tarde se iría definitivamente. Su aparición baterística y vocal en esos 4 LP's fue respaldada por la co-autoría en doce temas y la aportación de tres temas propios, dos en el «Volume Two» y

uno, de veinte minutos, en el «Third», tema en el que según confesó Ratledge todo el trabajo de órgano y piano eléctrico es del propio Wyatt salvo el último solo.

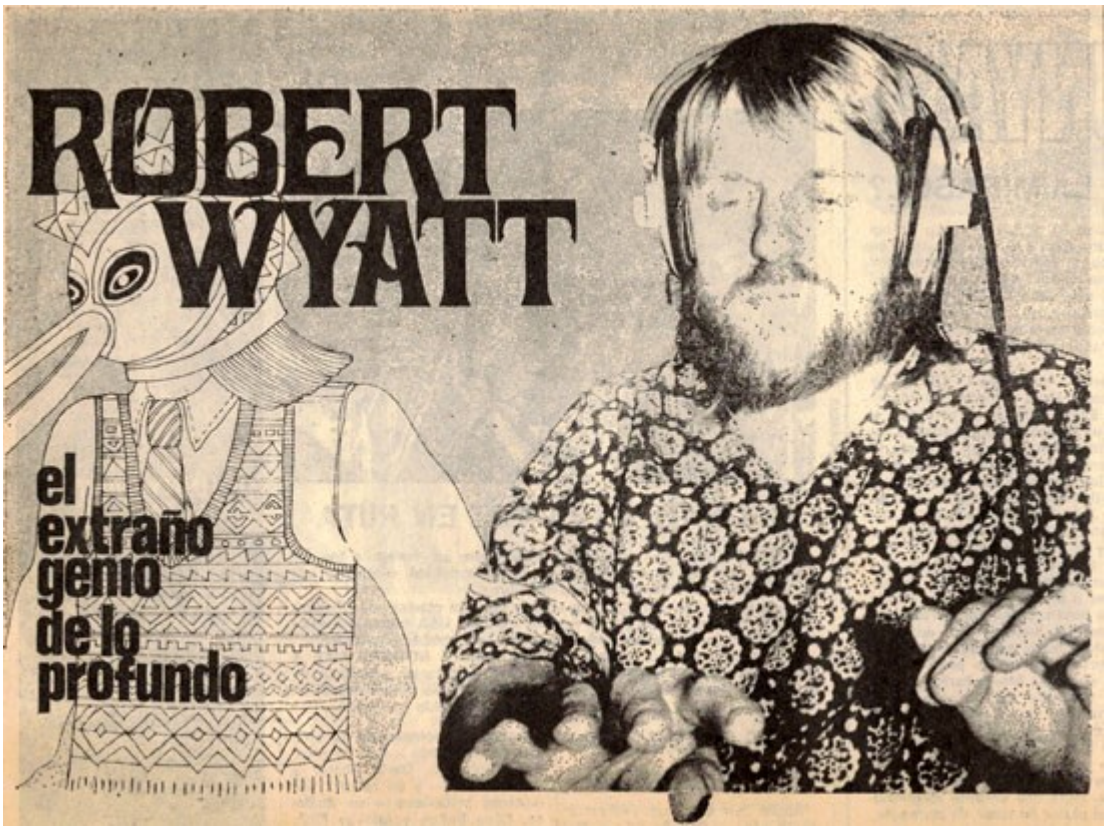
Pero Robert empezó en el mismo 70 con actividades extra-machinescas. Primero con los Whole World de Kevin Ayers (que dejó S. M. en el 69) participando en la grabación de «Shooting at the Moon». Luego con la Amazing Band creada por los antes citados Mal Dean y Rab Spall cuyo violín aparece en el «Third») y junto a Mick Brannan (saxo alto), Chris Francis (saxo tenor), Top Topham (gt.), Jim Mullen (bajo, luego gt. con Brian Auger y Vinegar Joe), y Miriam Spall (voz). Pero la actividad decisiva es con su propio grupo con quien completa su primer Lp como solista, «THE END OF AN EAR» (Dic. 70) acompañado por Elton Dean (saxo), Marc Charig (corneta) y Neville Whitehead (b). En sus palabras el disco es un montón de «cosas totalmente free en diversas combinaciones, con todo el desmadrado sonido burlón que Zappa descartó hace 5 años y con el que yo estoy divirtiéndome al ra cantidad». En el sampler «Rock 71» se incluye un temita super-extraño y cachondón de la Carla Bley, «To mark everywhere», perteneciente al tal Lp.

Coincidiendo con la aparición del disco Wyatt anuncia la creación de Symbiosis, otra banda de free —loco con el piano— voz legendario Zoot Money, Nick Evans (trombón), Mongezi Feza (trompeta), Gary Windo (tenor), Steve Florence (gt.) y Roy Babbington (b). Luego se añadió en la batería el futuro Hatfield Pip Pyle. Por esta época estuvo de un activo increíble apareciendo en discos de Lol Coxhill («Ear of beholder»), Daevid Allen («Banana Moon», donde toca bat, gt solista), Centipede («Septober energy») y Syd Barrett («The madcap laughs»).

En agosto 71 deja Soft Machine definitivamente y participa en el Festival de Jazz de Berlín respaldando al tándem violinístico de moda: Ponty, Sugarcane, Urbaniak y Brantner. Poco después forma su grupo Matching Mole, una banda que el célebre John Peel describiría como de «Mahavishnu con sentido del humor». Wyatt escogió para esta ocasión a Phil Miller (gt, ex-Delivery), Bill McCormick (bajo, ex-Quiet Sun) Dave Sinclair (teclas ex-Caravan) y después al australiano Dave McRae (piano eléctrico) con quienes grabó «Matching Mole» y en el mismo 72 «Little Red Record» (sin Sinclair) con la colaboración de Eno y sus cacharros electrónicos. El humor burlón desde luego era una de sus características y se evidenciaba en letras como esta: «Qué haces en la Tierra, Dios?. La próxima vez que envíes aquí a tu hijo dale una esposa y una hija sexy», o en incluir un diálogo entre prostituta y cliente inexperto.

Cuando aparentemente todo iba en canoa y Wyatt escribía temas para el tercer Lp de los Matching, aparte de colaborar de nuevo con Ayers en su «Whatevershebringswesing», se le ocurre caerse desde un tercer piso cuando asistía a una fiesta. Como resultado aparece una nueva imagen del rubio a partir de ahora ex-batería: esclavo d e una silla de ruedas.

Su estado de ánimo se va recobrando lentamente y tras un año de inactividad y replanteamíentos mentales vuelve a aparecer en alguna actuación de Ayers y colabora en el primer Lp de Haftield & The North. Sus viejos amigos no le olvidan en la histórica actuación del «June 1,74» y allí va a tocar pequeñas percusiones.



Su aparición como solista se producirá en julio de ese año en un festival a beneficio de los familiares del ya mencionado Mal Dean. Precisamente ese mes se ponía a la venta «ROCK BOTTOM» del cual ya se habló en estas páginas (ver D. E. n.° 319). Le acompañaban en la aventura Richard Sinclair (b), Hugh Hopper (b), Mongezi Feza (trompeta), Gary Windo (woodwind), Fred Frith (viola), Mike Oldfield (gt), el viejete cachondo Ivor Cutler (voz, concertina), Laurie Allan (bat) y la mujer de Wyatt, Alfreda Ellidge (alias A. Benge, en la intimidad, Alfie) que diseña la carpeta y canta. Sí hay algún disco trágico de principio a fin no cabe duda que es éste. La voz se hace fantasmal, atormentada, las teclas producen acordes obsesivos, introvertidos, cálidos, sin pizca de frivolidad o de brillantez egocéntrica. El bajo subyace como línea de reflexión y opacidad. La guitarra de Wyatt se tiñe de misticismo oriental en su única aparición. Incluso una canción de amor como «Sea song» está inmersa en lo tétrico gracias a un conseguí d í s i m o efecto de melotrón sobre el que un piano rabioso se quiere imponer .El caos psico-físico se patentiza dolorosamente en «Little Red Riding Hit The Road» en el que la voz lucha por emerger entre la telaraña anudada ñor los instrumentos de viento.

En relación fonética y emocional con su mujer Alfie están los temas «Alifib» y «Alife». La ansiedad, la agonía incluso hacen su aparición con un dramatismo exasperado al que los saxos clarinetes de Windo añaden la connotación de la queja desesperada. «Profundo» es la traducción del título y en verdad que es el justo. El trabajo de Wyatt en teclas, voz y percusiones es seguramente de lo mejor que haya hecho en su vida, haciéndote olvidar sus años de batería y completando, sin intención, uno de los pocos «álbum concept» que valen la pena de principio a fin.

Por este tiempo su ánimo mostraba de nuevo el aire burlón de su primera personalidad, pues a un crítico del Melody Maker le espantanó lo siguiente: «Miembro a miembro me estoy desintegrando. No podré tocar la batería nunca más y como fumo 60 pitillos diarios la voz se me secará en un par de años, además, como el envenenamiento alcohólico se apodere de mi no seré capaz de escribir canciones y me convertiré en un patético zombi sentado frente al piano. Sin duda, poco después, la parálisis afectará mis manos y finalmente cuando todas mis facultades se hayan atrofiado me convertiré en crítico y me iré contigo al MM.».

Los franceses conceden al disco el Premio de La Academia Charles Cross. Al poco tiempo lanza un single con el tema «I'm a believer», una re-re-re-creación del clásico tema compuesto por Neil Diamond para los Monkees. Le acompañan Fred Frith, Richard Sinclair y Nick Mason. Meses más tarde la Virgin se niega a lanzar también como single el tema «Yesterday's man» y lo incluye en el sampler «V». Toca en el 2.° disco de Eno. Un año

después del plimer plástico ya está acabado el segundo «RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD» que ahora se ha publicado aquí. Inferior al anterior pues se conjuntaron una serie de circunstancias discográficas televisivas que le desanimaron profundamente y le llevaron a hacer un disco porque el contrato le exigía. La inspiración de Wyatt ha de buscar ayuda en Frith, o en Offenbach, o en Brian Hopper. Nick Masón, pink floydiano él, sigue produciendo y en los créditos encontramos a Laurie Allan Bill McCormick, Gary Windo, John Greaves (b), Nisar Ahmad Khan (saxos), Eno (sintet, gt.), Frith, y la trompeta de Mongezi Feza con quien ya no podrá contar nunca más pues falleció estás navidades.

Empieza el asunto con «Soup song», una melodía convencional y alegre que aprovecha Wyatt para decirnos cómo se hace una sopa mientras Windo se desgarra con su saxo culinario.

Sigue un agradable tema de Feza para su lucimiento (ahora suena como un auto-homenaje) mientras la batería de nuestro héroe suena de nuevo. Buena antesala para la mejor pieza del disco, «Team spirit», una adaptación del tema «Frontera» que compusieron Wyatt y Manzanera para el Lp de éste último. Allí Robert cantaba en español demostrando que había estado su temporadita de rigor en Mallorca y que le gusta leer a Samuel Beckett pues el textito se las traía. La adaptación es preciosa y supera aquel tema con facilidad. La letra comunica esa desesperanza en su invalidez física y el miedo que le produce sentirse depender de los demás. Los dos saxos crean el climax propicio mientras la voz se agarra al piano. El trabajo de Mc Cormick es sencillamente fabuloso. Por si alguien duda de la ideología de Wyatt nos ofrece una sentida versión de la «Song for Che» que el contrabajista Charlie Haden elevó a inmortal en su Lp «Liberation Music Orchestra». Aquí se le da un marcado ceriz funerario. Escucha cómo batea leí ex-Gong Laurie Allan.



"El único corte compuesto especialmente por Wyatt es «Solar flares», donde nos re-encontramos con cierto aire hipnótico y onírico. La voz y teclas desarrollan este tema cautivador y sencillo. La misma broma d e irrealidad cargada ahora de experimentación es la que se observa en «5 black notes & 1 white note». Para finalizar un dueto piano (Frith) — voz (Robert) con premeditados cambios d e acorde por parte del miembro de Henry Cow y de registro por parte del segundo. El buen Robert no ha podido evitar que el disco acabe con tristeza. Mucha tristeza. Toda la que en estos momentos tiene Robert en su cabeza.

Ruth es más extraña que Richard y Robert lo es más que los dos juntos. Tal vez por eso pueda llegar de nuevo a la genialidad de lo profundo. De momento en Septiembre - 75 estaba trabajando junto a Carla Bley (teclas), Jack Dejohnette, (bat) y Steve Swallow (b)

en un disquete con temas de Michael Mantler y Edward Gorey, titulado THE HELPLESS CHILD AND OTHER GOREY STORIES.

Antonio de Miguel



DISCOGRAFIA

—**SOFT MACHINE:** single «Love makes sweet music»
Volume One (68).
Volume Two (69).
Third (70).
Fourth (71).
—**KEVIN AYERS & THE WHOLE WORLD:** «Shooting at the Moon» (70).
—**AMAZING BAND:** Creo que llegaron a grabar un Lp en el 70.
—**ROBERT WYATT:** «The End of An Ear» (70).
—**LOL COXHILL:** «Ear of the beholder» (71).
—**DEAVID ALLEN:** «Banana Moon» (71).
—**CENTIPEDE:** «Septober energy» (71).
—**SYD BARRETT:** «The madcap laughs» (71).
—**NEW VIOLIN SUMMIT** (71).
—**KEVIN AYERS:** «Whatervershebringswe sings» (72).
—**MATCHING MOLE:** «Matching Mole» (72).
«Little Red Record» (72).
—**HATFIELD & THE NORTH (74).**
—**«JUNE 1,74»** (74).
—**ROBERT WYATT:** «Rock Bottom» (74).
Single «I'm a believer» (74).
—**ENO:** «Taking tiger mountain (by strategy) (75).
—**PHIL MANZANERA:** «Diamond head» (75).
—**ROBERT WYATT:** Single «Yesterday's man» (en sampler «V») (75).
«Ruth is stranger than Richard» (75).

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En Menorca, de week-end con Robert Wyatt - Vibraciones - Noviembre 1975



en Menorca, de week-end con robert Wyatt

POR JM. MARTI,
FOTOS : CARRERAS MOYSI

Kevin Ayers dixit; "**Cuando llegué a Canterbury en seguida conocí a los beatnicks locales. Eran muy extraños en comparación con los demás y estaban muy metidos en el jazz. Las cosas estaban centradas en casa de Robert Wyatt, porque allí estaban la música, las drogas y el sexo. Yo no estaba interesado en la música por aquel entonces pero terminé uniéndome a ellos. Solíamos emborracharnos... ¡La historia de mi vida!... y cuanto más nos enrollábamos tocando, mejor salía.**"

Esto sucedía hacía 1963, el año siguiente nacieron los Wilde Flowers y después Soft Machine. Son los orígenes de la Escuela de Canterbury, Wyatt, Ayers, Sinclair, Allen, Ratledge...

Ahora Robert Wyatt ni bebe ni fuma otra cosa que dorados Benson & Hedges o azules Rothmans, pero tiene una mujer, Alifie, rubia, alta y corpulenta, con hermosos y fuertes senos que se adivinan a través de los largos y escotados vestidos que siempre lleva con cara de eterna gruñona, imagen maternal que no esconde su papel en la vida de Robert. En cuanto a la música admite que disfruta más escuchando que haciéndola y que si la hace es porque hay sonidos que le gustaría oír y los debe hacer él mismo. Pero tampoco creo que Wyatt a raíz del accidente que lo dejó imposibilitado en una silla de ruedas, sea alguen que haya renunciado a nada, ni que su vitalismo congénito se haya difuminado en la amargura. Y como músico, a pesar de que se quite importancia a sí mismo, es uno de los más completos de su generación y para demostrarlo, el mejor álbum del año (apreciación completamente subjetiva) es suyo. "Rock Bottom" ha sido mi disco durante todo el invierno pasado y me sigue sorprendiendo cada vez que lo escucho. Cuando se lo dije me agradeció muchísimo la deferencia y casi estuve a punto de explicarle las historias que me sucedieron en torno a su música. Pero no fue ésta la onda del primer encuentro con Robert y Brian Eno en casa de un amigo común en Mahón, extraña ciudad-pueblo,

cosmopolita y provinciana, capital de ta isla desde que los ingleses estuvieron en Menorca, perfecto lugar, lleno de matices, mezcla de culturas y... calma. Al abrir la puerta tropecé con la imagen de Wyatt y corno por impulso le dije ¡Hola! como si lo conociera de toda la vida, pero es que su imagen me era tan familiar, coincidía tanto con lo que yo imaginaba, que no pude por menos. Al fondo una divertida imagen de Eno —pelo corto hacia delante disimulando su incipiente calva, jeans y camiseta negra sin mangas— me saludaba. Un auténtico turista despistado que distaba años luz del serio y concluyente Eno que conociera en Londres.

—Tú también te has cortado el pelo —me dijo.

Alrededor de la mesa las mujeres de ambos se enfrascaban en la típica lectura de revistas y a un lado sonaba fuerte "Quiet Sun", el álbum que Manzanera ha grabado con su antiguo grupo y en que también ha participado —cómo no— Eno. Una ligera tensión en el ambiente, me pareció que habían olido a periodista y cuando esto ocurre, los artistas suelen desplegar en abanico su susceptibilidad. Eno, sin embargo, se mostraba mucho más amable que Wyatt, quizá porque ya me conocía, pero éste sacó su sarcasmo cuando, en parte para cachondearse, pusieron el primer disco de Neu en plan ale-mano-cósmico. Yo no seguí muy atentamente la conversación, pero en un momento escuché el nombre de Tangerine Dream, y aunque tampoco sea un fan de los Dream no los considero comparables con Neu. Así que me aventuré a dar mi opinión. Robert asintió con la cabeza y tras un silencio dijo:

—Cualquier Barry White lo hace igual o mejor.

—No veo que haya comparación posible.

—Si claro, como que Barry White es gordo, negro y feo y hace estos sonidos con la boca, es una mierda. Pero los otros que son altos y rubios y lo hacen con máquinas son cojonudos...

Me dejó bastante cortado y me salí como pude. Más tarde, cuando ya se iban le propuse a Robert una conversación más larga para el día siguiente, a lo que me contestó:

—Si tú quieres..., podernos hablar de Barry White...

—Bueno, podemos discutirlo...

(Conste, que como puedes imaginar el diálogo se desarrolló en inglés, con lo que quedó mucho más bonito. —**"If you want, we can talk about Barry White."** —Ok, we can talk about it.) Pero al día siguiente, viejos amigos diseminados por las islas, pacíficos y relajados amigos, consiguieron que me olvidara de muchas cosas, entre ellas la cita, lo que me proporcionó un día más de estancia en Menorca, algo que agradecer. Así, al tercer día, después de la hora playera, me presenté en un pequeño chalé de Binibeca, el pueblo de pescadores más bien imitado de España. En una casita a menos de veinte metros de las olas y a un paso de la playa, decorada como todas las casas de veraneo, unos cuantos muebles stándar salpicados de las diversas pertenencias de sus habitantes. Saludo a Eno enfrascado en un plato de espaguetis con salsa y a los demás personajes excepto a Robert que sale un rato más tarde. Sobre una cómoda, un tocadiscos escupe música ininterrumpidamente, sin parar. Con Carlos, el amigo común que nos había presentado, localizamos una "casette" del White con la que sorprender a Robert.

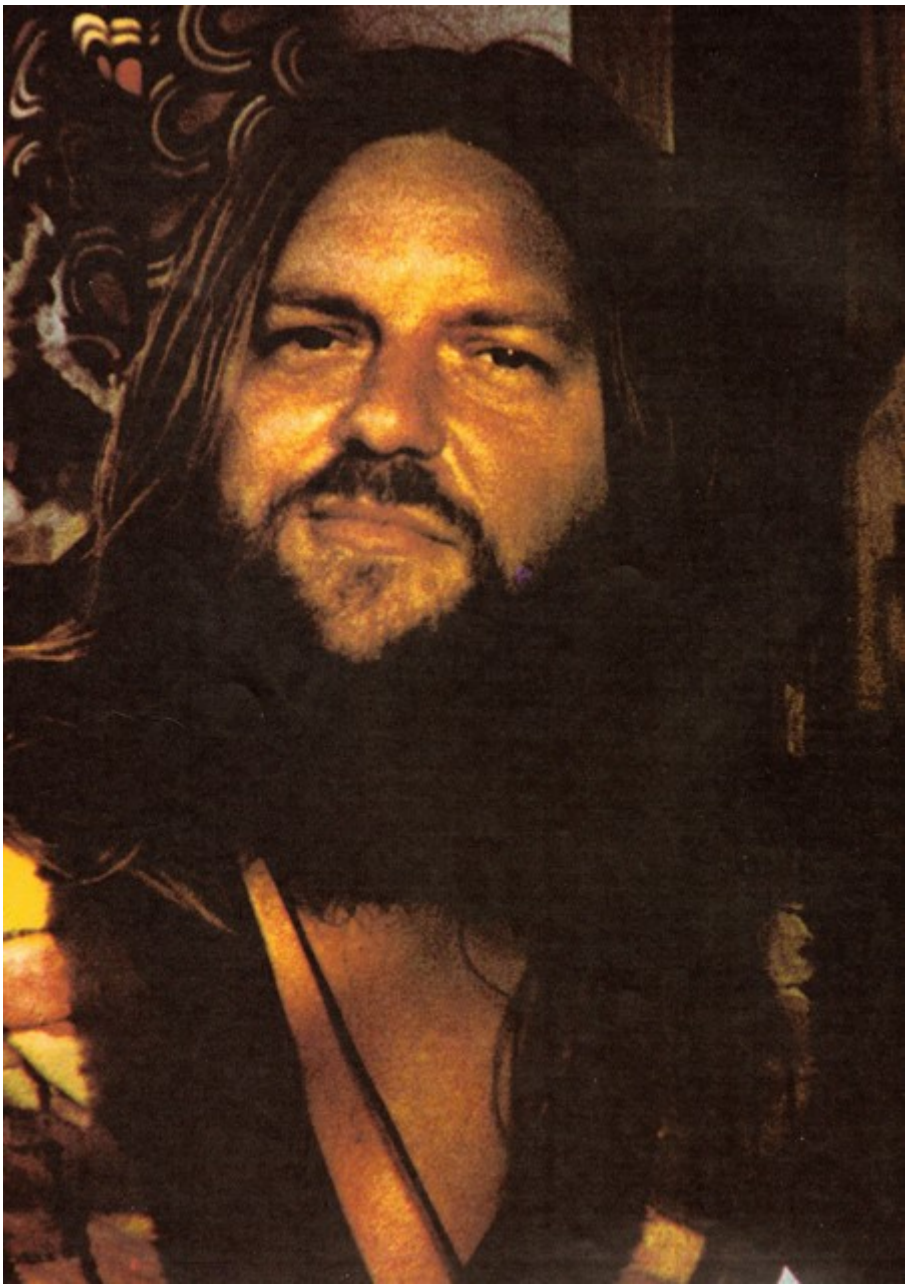
—"Oh, muchas gracias. Pero no te creas que yo soy un fan de este señor, simplemente ocurre que tengo un gran respeto por la música popular. Me merece toda la consideración posible el mundo del clásico show-biz, el espectáculo concebido en un sentido popular. Hay una lar-ga y considerable tradición en el mundo de lo que podríamos llamar varietés, es algo que siempre ha existido y que responde a una necesidad real, quizá no tan sofisticada como la que otros sostenemos. Personalmente yo no tengo nada en contra de ello, únicamente ocurre que no formo parte del tinglado.

Mientras tanto Eno escurrió el bulto inhibiéndose completamente de la conversación, marchándose al jardían a tomar café. Durante el resto de la tarde, e incluso después, cuando fuimos a pasear por Mahón, se mantuvo entre cortés y distante, quizá herido en su susceptibilidad de artista y **star**. Pienso que podría deberse al hecho de que yo entrevistara a Robert y no a ék Asi que cambiaron tos papeles, si el primer día era Robert el que no quiso saber nada, luego resultó un personaje fantástico con el que me entendí perfectamente. Así que pude le solté el rollo de mi amor por "Rock Bottom" aprovechando para renegar un tanto de su último disco "Ruth is stranger than Richard".

—"Estoy de acuerdo contigo, a mí tampoco me gusta demasiado, pero tiene una explicación; mientras que Rock Bottom era el resultado final de un proceso de experimentación, "Ruth is..." es un trabajo de experimentación, una investigación que puede llevarme a una obra posterior. Por eso es relativamente poco compacto, si se quiere falto de coherencia".

El disco contiene dos historias diferentes, en una cara Ruth, critica a Richard mientras que en la otra ocurre lo contrario, y desde luego, la cara en la que habla Ruth es mucho mejor que la de Richard. Parece que Wyatt haya tenido una deferencia para con el personaje femenino y él se encarga de confirmármelo. Pero poco a poco, el café, la soleada tarde mediterránea de principios de otoño nos impulsa a convertir la entrevista en tertulia de café e inevitablemente a hablar de política, era imposible hablar de otra cosa a finales de septiembre pasado...

—"... ¡Claro!, yo, políticamente votaré siempre laborista, sin embargo, muchos pop-stars se han declarado decididamente conservadores y hasta cierto punto bastante reaccionarios. El gobierno laborista les exige cantidad de dinero como impuestos y reaccionan contra él. Gente como Rod Stewart, los Faces y hasta los Stones, hacen propaganda conservadora, y de hecho influyen considerablemente en una masa de votantes que por simple fanatismo pueden votar conservadores en las próximas elecciones. Aunque también hay excepciones, por ejemplo los Floyd, a pesar de ser millonarios mantienen una postura bastante aceptable, Masón me decía una vez que se ponía nervioso siempre que algún ministro laborista hablaba por TV renegando de los ricos y aumentando los impuestos. ¡El gobierno laborista, aquel por el que había votado! Y, sin embargo, me confesaba que a pesar de todo él no podía votar por la derecha, ni creía que pudiera hacerlo nunca."



> Zoom

—Pero ésta es una postura muy ambigua, se trata sólo de un pequeño sentimentalismo nostálgico que solo tiene valor como anécdota.

—"Si claro, pero es que esto de llegar a ser "star" es algo que proporciona mucho dinero y el dinero es una espiral. Por ejemplo, resulta que el dinero invertido en negocios no paga impuestos, pues bien, la mayoría de millonarios del "rock" invierten en negocios de todo tipo, principalmente en aquello relacionado con el tinglado musical. Pink Floyd, por ejemplo, acaban de montar unos estudios de grabación en Londres con lo que se han salvado de pagar impuestos. Y esto a su vez da más y más dinero y cada vez se es más rico y de ahí se pasa a una posición de poder de la que es muy difícil salirse."

—Es el eterno dilema de integrarse o no, aunque el signo de los tiempos, quizá como respuesta a la frustración de nuestra generación, sea el volver a jugar desde dentro.

—"Y da la casualidad de que precisamente el clásico individuo inteligente que adopta una postura relajada ante la vida y no le obsesionan ni el dinero ni la fama ni todas estas cuestiones, precisamente por esto, por la lucidez que le proporciona esta manera de pensar, es el que acaba haciéndose rico y triunfando en lo que se ha propuesto. Yo no quiero hacerme rico, sólo me gustaría vender

suficientes copias de cada álbum como para que me permitieran hacer el siguiente."

—Pero aunque tu postura sea quizá más honrada, por otra parte, la gente que hace música popular, en el más amplio sentido del término, que es la que se hace rica, es mucho más realista en su planteamiento inicial, dejando a un lado planteamientos más intelectuales y sofisticados que solo llegan a una minoría más o menos amplia."

—"Si, te lo admito, se peca de exceso de sofisticación e intelectualismo. No tengo nada que decir. Pero estos temas llevan siempre a callejones sin salida, no por la discusión en sí sino porque hay algo que falla en general."

—Hay algo que falla en general y muchas cosas se hallan en franca decadencia, el "rock" inglés, por ejemplo, ha quedado reducido a unos pocos grupos para minorías y el resto son productos de consumo. ¿No?

—"Esto tiene una explicación. Concretamente, al final de los cincuentas se suprimió en Inglaterra el servicio militar obligatoria. El ejército era algo que tradicionalmente ocupaba la primera juventud de cualquier inglés. Con estos años libres la gente llenó las Universidades y los Colleges, pero en aquel tiempo, mientras que las pruebas de acceso a cualquier carrera técnica eran muy difíciles, no ocurría lo mismo con las Art Schools en las que era muy fácil entrar. Fue la época dorada de las Escuelas de Arte, había libertad absoluta de experimentación, unas inmensas posibilidades creativas y muy buenos profesores. El resultado fue una generación de artistas de los que un buen tanto por ciento se dedicaron a la música (Eno, Sid, Barret...) e hicieron posible el boom musical inglés de la década pasada."

—Bueno, ¿y ahora por qué ya se ha acabado?

—"Porque ahora las escuelas de Arte se han convertido en algo mucho más institucionalizado, y tas pruebas de acceso son muy difíciles, y porque esto es algo que sucede así, de una manera irregular, las situaciones y los lugares propicios para hacer algo se dan durante temporadas. Durante cinco años lo que realmente vale la pena es hacer "rock" en Inglaterra, pero luego se acaba y resulta que lo interesante es hacer de antropólogo en el Perú, o jugar al tenis en Bolivia. Es mejor así, porque sino, al final, las cosas acaban aburriendo y las historias se empiezan a repetir."



Eno, de espaldas. Esta vez la entrevista no iba con él.

Robert nos pregunta por una tienda de discos en la que pueda comprar unos cuantos álbumes de cantaores de flamenco. Se aprueba por unanimidad ir hasta Mahón y de paso tomarse unas copas. Así que tras la típica historia de ponerse en marcha, el camino discurre en un bonito atardecer salpicado de blancas casas hasta meterse en una ciudad teñida de los últimos calores del verano, con las terrazas de los bares aun bastante llenas y un público colorado y paseante mirador de escaparates. Entramos en una tienda de discos en busca de algún disco de Agujetas de Jerez, Gerena o Manolo Caracol. La primera tentativa resulta infructuosa pero Eno se ha comprado...
¡Oh! "Blood on the tracks" de Dylan, y Wyatt ha localizado un viejo Miles Davis, "Move On", el de la portada amarilla y asegura que no lo había visto nunca y se lo lleva. La segunda tienda está mucho más surtida, increíblemente surtida, lo tienen todo allí tras mostrarle al dueño un disco de Wyatt, el single "i'm a believer" en el que aparece su foto y decirle que era aquel señor que venía con nosotros, nos instalamos y empezamos a barajar discos y discos. Con Julio, el sevillano que venía con nosotros le hacemos una selección de cantaores. Agujetas, Caracol, Menese, Gerena, Camarón de la Isla, Diego del Castor, y casi todo lo lque pudimos localizar.

—"Lo que más me interesa del flamenco es la utilización de la voz más que la guitarra, el cante jondo. Además ahora estoy particularmente interesado y obsesionado porque hace poco leí un ensayo sobre el nacimiento del "blues" americano a mediados del siglo pasado, y establece una comparación con la consolidación del flamenco en Andalucía. Las coincidencias son increíbles, casi fecha por fecha a nivel sociológico hay una simetría total en cosas como su extracción popular, de trabajo rural, de raza segregada."

Y como por un sortilegio todo el mundo empieza a encontrar piezas de museo entre el surtido de discos, olfateando entre el cartón, viejas grabaciones de "jazz", reliquias nostálgicas de todo tipo.

—Ya no compro nunca "rock" inglés, no me interesa, con la excepción de lo que hacen mis amigos, lo cual naturalmente sigo, estoy más interesado en abrirme, en conocer la música que se hace por el mundo, tanto música americana como de

cualquier sitio."

Por allí encima aparece el "Diamond Head" de Manzanera y le pregunto a Robert por el significado de "Frontera" la canción que canta él en español.

—La tetra es absolutamente surrealista…

—"¡Oh no!, no es tan complicado como te parece, es simplemente un ejercicio de español que había en un libro de idiomas. Juntando todas las frases salío esto. No es que intentara cantar en español, sino que utilicé los sonidos que me daba el texto como sí fuera música, olvidándome de los espacios entre palabras y de los acentos."

Sentados en el Bar Andalucía, en la plaza Robert estaba como un niño con zapatos nuevos mirándose el paquete de discos que había comprado. Un par de copitas de ginet llenaron el tiempo que me quedaba para coger el avión. Una despedida rápida, de esas en que uno se avergüenza un poco de salir tan disparado. Eno se muestra amable tras hacerse el estrecho toda la tarde, me dice que va a venir a Barcelona unos días, y de pronto me acuerdo de que no le he hecho aún una pregunta de las más típicas y casi obligada, que Robert explique los proyectos que tiene en perspectiva.

—Estoy grabando en el último álbum de Carla Bley después de que dejara la Jack Bruce Band. El grupo lo forman... (y aquí yo raudo y veloz intento apuntarme los nombres, al final le pido a Robert que me lo escriba, y cuando me devuelve el bloc, leo:) **El grupo se llamará "Goreysongs y el personal será; Words; Edward Gorey, Music; Mike Mantler, Keyboards; Carla Bley, Bass; Steve Swallow, Drums; Jack de Jonette, Voice; Richard Nixon..."**

—¡Cómo! ¿quién es este Richard Nixon?

—"Es que como soy muy modesto no he querido poner mi verdadero nombre..."

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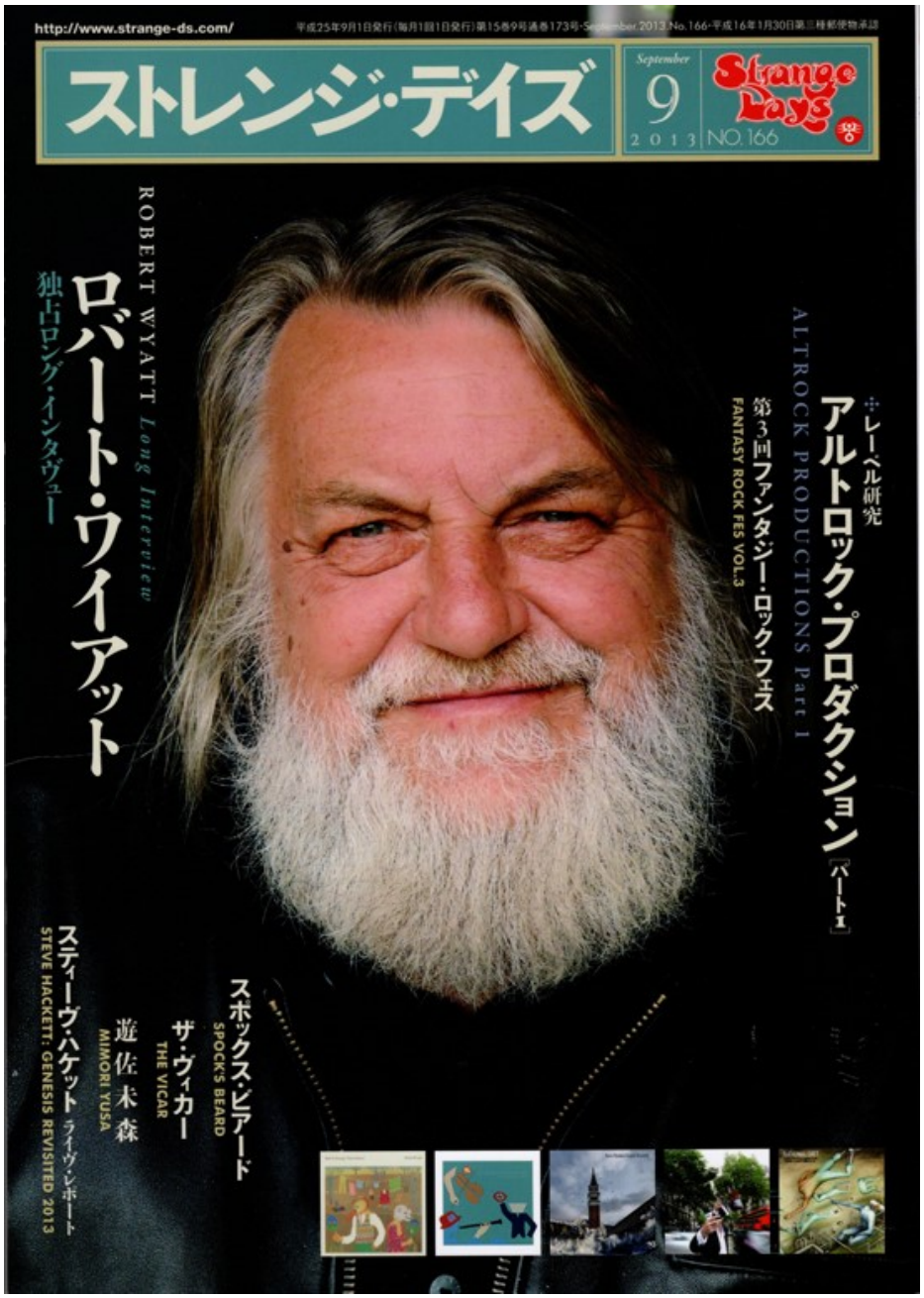
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Robert Wyatt - Long Interview - Strange Days - N° 166 - September 2013

ROBERT WYATT





ロバート・ワイアット
robert wyatt
独占ロング・インタヴュー
Long Interview

60年代中・後期から現在まで連綿と続くカンタベリー・シーン。その源泉の一人として知られるアーティストがロバート・ワイアットである。不慮の事故で車椅子の生活を余儀なくされてからも精力的な活動を続け、デヴィッド・ギルモア、ビョーク、ブライアン・イーノ、ポール・ウェラーなど、多くのアーティストに多大な影響を与え続けている。そんな彼がストレンジ・デイズのインタヴューに応じてくれた。今もまだカンタベリー・シーンの中心に鎮座し、大きな存在感を誇るロバート・ワイアットの超貴重なスペシャル・インタヴュー。

インタヴュー＝ミカエル・ビヨルン
訳＝池田聡子

僕がロバート・ワイアットに初めてインタヴューしたのは、10代後半の頃だった。僕はロンドン郊外にある彼の自宅に招かれ、偉大なロック・スターに会ったことにすっかり圧倒されていた。以来彼は、音楽的にもまた人間性の面においても僕にとってはずっと偉大なヒーローだった。

けれども僕が今回のインタヴューのために彼とコンタクトをとったとき、〝言うべきことはもうない〟とはっきりと断られてしまった。ロバート・ワイアットは、オリジナル・アルバムにボーナス・トラックをたくさん追加収録した最新のリイシュー盤に非常に不満を持っているようだった。

しかし何度かEメールを交わすうちに、ロバートは打ち解けてくれて、インタヴューすることに同意してくれた。彼の怒りは、ユニークで見事なオリジナル・アルバムへの強烈なプライドに征服されているという感じを持った。ようやく彼と話をすることができたとき、ロバートはとてもいいムードで、親近感に満ちた笑いでいっぱいだった。僕は10代の学生に戻った気がして、思いやりがあって、思慮深い彼の姿勢にすっかり魅せられてしまった。

◉

――早速ですが、あなたとインタヴューをして、掲載前にそのインタヴュー原稿を送りたいと思っています。

「そのことは前にも聞いたよ。でも僕はどんなものであれ検閲みたいなことをするのは好きじゃないんだ。僕は自分が考えていることはどんなことでも話すし、きみは自分が書くことをどんなことでも書けばいいんだ」

――わかりました。ありがとう！

「ただきみは、このことについて語るのは自分の考えであったことをはっきりさせるべきだ。ある街にやってきた司教についてのジョークがあるのを知っているかな。司教が街に着くと、一人のジャーナリストが彼に訊ねた。〝あなたは、わたしたちの街の赤線地区を訪れる予定はありますか？〟と。司教は答えた。〝きみたちの街には赤線地区があるのか？〟。すると、翌日の新聞の一面には――まるでそれが司教の目的かのような表現で――〈司教は〝この街に赤線地区はあるのか？〟と訊ねた〉と飾るんだ（笑）」

――わかりました。それでは、マッチング・モウルについて話をしたいのですが……これは僕の考えで、あなたのではありません！

「そうだな（笑）」

――マッチング・モウルは、ソフト・マシーンをフランス語にした〝マシーン・モール（Machine Molle）〟にかけているものですよね。

「ああ、フランス語でソフト・マシーンのことだよ。だから僕は単にソフト・マシーンを続けると思っていたんだ。なぜ完全にその名前を失ってしまうことになったのかわからなかったからね」

――あなたがソフト・マシーンとしてフランスにいた際、実際に〝マシーン・モール〟と呼んでいたんですか？

「ああ、彼らはそう呼んでいたよ。僕のちょっとしたジョークだったんだ。それがすべてさ。誰もその名前を所有していなかったから、実際誰でもソフト・マシーンと名乗ることができた。マッチング・モウルのレコードを〝ソフト・マシーン5〟とか〝ソ

> Zoom

フト・マシーン6〟とかって呼んでいたのはすごく面白かった。だけどそうしているうちに〝そう呼ばなくても気にしなくていいんじゃないか〟って思ったんだ（笑）」

――もともとこのバンドはどのようにスタートしたんですか？

「それが覚えてないんだ……どうやってビル・マコーミックのことを知ったのか思い出すことができない。彼は僕を知っていた。彼はフィル・マンザネラの学友だったからね。彼らがまだ若かった頃、ソフト・マシーンのコンサートに来ていたんだ。まあ、それは別として、本当にわからないんだよ。デイヴ・シンクレアはもちろんキャラヴァンの頃から知っていた。それからデイヴ・マクレエ……いったいどうしてデイヴ・マクレエのことを聞いていたんだろう？……おかしなことに思い出すことができない。だいたい50年くらい前から僕は音楽で生計を立て始めた。それから10年くらいは、ライヴで仕事をしていて、毎日ノンストップでドラムを叩いていた。1973年から今までドラムを叩いていないけど、たくさんやってきてから、覚えているのは難しいんだ」

――マッチング・モウルではどういう音楽を作ろうとしていたのでしょう？

「子供の頃、僕が聴いていた音楽は、父親が聴いていた音楽……基本的にクラシックだった。その後兄が自分のジャズのレコードを家に持ってきたんだけど、そのLPもかなり長いものだった。僕はそれに慣れていた……実は、僕にとって革新的だったのは、ポップ・レコードのような3～4分の短い曲を作ることだったんだ。その曲が商業的であるかはどうかということには興味なくて、2～3分で1曲を完成させるというアイデアだけだった。普通の人がプログレッシヴ・ミュージシャンに対して考えるものとは反対の方向だ。プログレッシヴ・ロックの人たちはまずロック・ミュージシャンとしてスタートして、その後壮大な作品を作るようになっていくからね」

――つまり長いものから短いものというのは、違う方向にあるという……。

「別の方向にあるんだ。僕たちがどこで出会ったかというのは興味深いけど、僕はその方向には進んでいなかった。僕にとっての50年代のドラマティックな発見はポップ・ミュージックだったんだ。僕は子供の頃ポップ・ミュージックを聴いたことがなかったからね。だから〝これは面白い！1曲作って、3分後に止めるだけなんだ〟って思ったんだ」

――（笑）。

「僕の父はヒンデミット、ストラヴィンスキー、バルトークのようなレコードを持っていた。僕にとっての音楽は、いかに長いかというものだった。それから兄はデューク・エリントンやチャールズ・ミンガス、ギル・エヴァンスなどのレコードを持っていた。それはある種、長くなっていったものだった。そういうふうに僕は音楽について考え始めた。うまくやろうとはしなかった。僕は、人が耳にする初めの部分について慎重に考えるけど、終わりの方はもっとも弱いトラックを置くというやり方が好きじゃなかった。実際、僕はレコードの終わりのインパクトは、レコードの初めと同じ

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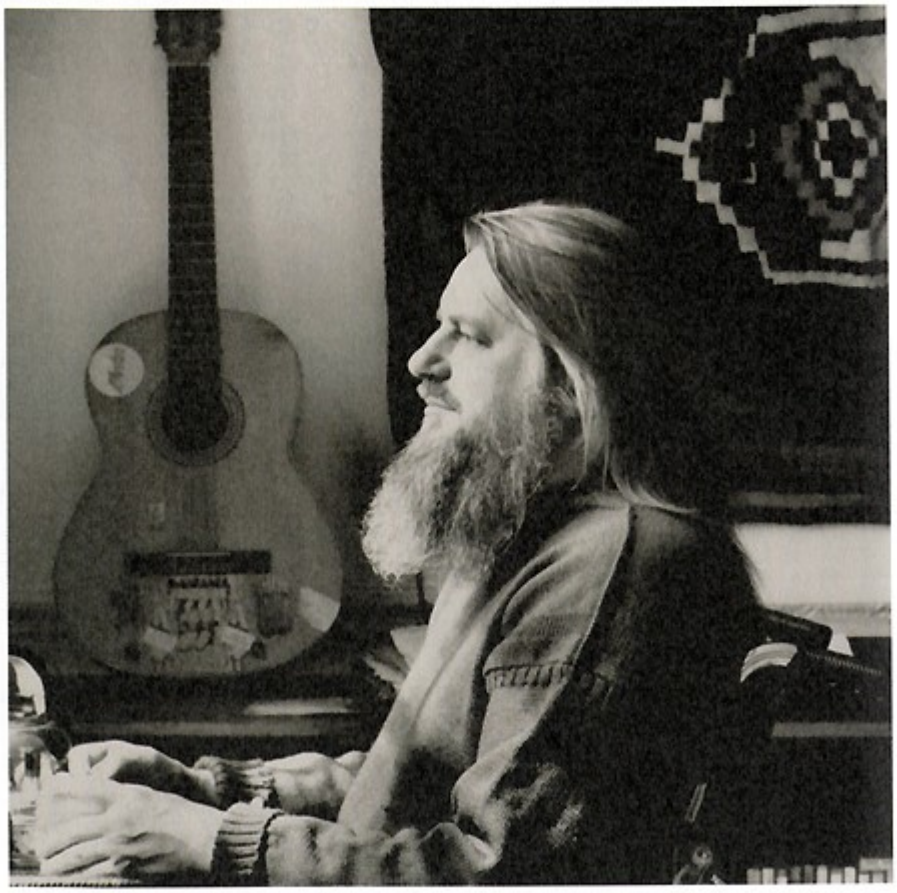
くらい強いものだと思うんだ。レコードの最後の音……シンフォニーとやったもののように……は、それが止まると、そこに漂っているものなんだ」

――マッチング・モールのファースト・アルバムではポップ・ソング「オー・キャロライン」で終わらないで、それで始まっています。

「いや、僕はまだそこまで手が回っていなかった。だけど、よくデイヴ・シンクレアの支持に回った。ポップ・ミュージックを見下している人たちと一緒のときは、非常にディフェンシヴになったよ。そして〝やってみるといいよ。そんなに簡単じゃないから〟って言うんだ。だけどその一方でポップ・ミュージックじゃないものは何でもただ大袈裟で退屈なものだと考えている人たちに囲まれると、僕も動揺してしまう。なぜそこに闘いがなければならないのかわからない。そんなことをしないで、その違いを楽しむべきじゃないか」

――どのようにその音楽を組み立てようとしたのですか？

「僕たちはオール・セインツ・ロードって



Robert Wyatt

> Zoom

いうところに住んでいたんだけど、悲惨なところだった。1階と2階に部屋を持っていて、1階にすべての楽器を置いていた。当時そこはとても貧しくて荒れ果てたところだった。僕たちはかなり大きな音を出すことができたし、騒ぎ立てる隣人もいなかった。だからこそそこにいたんだ。そしてまさにほとんど演奏していた。ジャズのように、いろんなものに相対するように楽器を演奏していた。僕はジャズのプロセスを逆に行ってみたかった。そうすると一つのプランからスタートするけれども、インプロヴィゼーションは最新のタイプのものになる。ファースト・アルバムで、フィル・ミラーと僕で大部分のテーマを作った。歌が入っていない曲か、もしくはある種パターンだけのメロディかのどちらかだった。だけどこれらのパターンの扱い方は無限のヴァリエーションがあった。リズム・パターンを続けるか、ハーモニーのパターンにするか。そしてその他のあらゆるものが変化するんだ。フリージャズからとても影響されていたんだけど、僕はある種ロック・サウンドをベースにしたものにしたかった。ロックのコンテクストの中での自由が欲しかったし、当時は珍しかったと思うんだ。何かを変えるということだ。それはレコーディングの編集において行なう。僕たちは何時間も型にはまった作業に耐えた。だけどそのプロセスは、ずっと機能しているものを見つけ、機能していないものはすべて捨てることだった。それが、このレコードのCD再発で僕を動揺させたものだ。彼らは、機能していたものでも扱わなかったものをすべて入れたんだ。とにかく……率直に言えば、僕を慌てさせた。なぜならオリジナルのLPは、たまに聴くリスナーにとってはランダムに聴こえるかもしれないけど、実はそうではないからだ。僕は人が思ったように聴こえるものが好きなんだ。それは結構簡単で、彼らはそれについて考える必要はない。僕たちは〝アートレス〟って呼んでいるんだ。僕はアートレスな（作りものではない）アートが好きなんだ。人はランダムだと思う。でもランダムじゃない。ちょうどいい引用がある。セザンヌの言葉だったと思う。〝人々は、わたしの絵をまるでそれらがあまりに早急に描かれたもののように見えると思う。それは彼らがあまりに早急に見ているからだ〟（笑）」

――デイヴ・シンクレアは、あなたがポルトガルから彼を電話で呼び戻したと話していました。あなたはグループに彼を入れたいと本当に決めていたのですか？

「もちろんズート・マネーといった非常にいいオルガン奏者を何人か知っていた。だけど概して僕が知っていたキーボード奏者は、ジャズ・プレイヤーか、ジャジーなブルース・プレイヤーだった。それはそれで素晴らしいけれど、すでに存在しているイディオムだ。確かに、インプロヴァイズすることに興味を持っていて、クラシカルで伝統的なものをやっていた素晴らしいキーボード奏者もいた。だけど僕は、彼らは、僕がスウィング、もしくはグルーヴと考えるものに強い概念（興味）を持っていないこと気がついた。だから一緒にプレイするミュージシャンを見つけることはとても難しかった。僕は、きみたちが特定のイディオ

> Zoom

ムに属していると見なす人たちは欲しくなかった。僕は音楽から特定のアイデアを得ることはなかった。アイデアはたいてい絵画から得ていたんだ。ボナールはドガとは似ても似つかないし、ドガはゴッホとは似ても似つかない。そしてゴッホはカンディンスキーとは似ても似つかないものだ。彼らは一つのものに適合しようとしているようには見えない。彼らは彼ら自身の言語で展開している。そして僕はそれをしてくれる人、ただ〝ああ、これはジャズのものだね〟とかそういったことを考えない人が欲しかったんだ。僕は以前に行なわれたことのない何かを本当に探し求めていたんだ」

――『Little Red Record（そっくりモグラの毛語録）』では、他のミュージシャンたちは音楽を発展させることに、より大きな役割を担っています。

「その通りだね。彼らはお互いにもっとよく知っている間柄だったし、僕と仕事をすることにももっと慣れていた。だから彼らは自分たちがどんなもののために曲を書いているかわかっていた。これはまた『そっくりモグラの毛語録』はもっとダメになりそうだったことを意味している。なぜなら、ファーストでのプレイは民主的だったけれども、編集では僕がすっかり独裁的だったからだ。僕は自分たちが作る次のレコードでは、他の人たちに対して、彼らがやりたいことをやらせなければならないと感じた。彼らがやりたいことは何でも。だからデイヴ・マクレエは曲を作ったし、ビル・マコーミックも曲を作った。フィル・ミラーも作品を作った。もともとアルバムはそんなふうに論理的ではないんだ」

――アルバム・タイトルはそうは思えませんが……？

「人はそうだと考えるけれど、それほど政治的なことではない。僕は当時政治的なことには特別興味はなかった。アルバム・タイトルはただのジョークだったのさ。誰もが、〈毛沢東語録（Little Red Book）〉のことを意味すると考えるけど、列車についてのイギリスの児童書の名前、〈ちいさなきかんしゃレッドごう（Little Red Engine）〉から取ったのさ。レコードには非常に単純化した社会主義のレトリックがあった。僕はそれを意味したのかどうかはわからない。おそらく何について話していたかもわかっていなかった。だけど毛沢東主義者を模したアルバム・カヴァーのアイデアは、僕のものじゃなくて、レコード会社のものだった。僕たちは何も関係していなかったんだ。僕はジャケットには当惑したよ。なぜなら世界でもっとも穏やかな人間であるかわいそうなデイヴ・マクレエは、恐ろしい銃を渡されていた。虫も殺さない彼にはとてもアンフェアなことだったよ」

――いくつかの楽曲はニックネームで書かれていますね。

「そう、そうしたことに興味ある人がいるかどうかわからないけど、〈Gloria Gloom〉は僕の妻のアルフィー（アルフリーダ・ベンジー）のことだし、〈Flora Fidgit〉は女優のジュリー・クリスティーのことだ」

――そしてデイヴ・ゲイルと合わせて、彼らは〈Die Mutter Korus〉ですね。

「その通りだよ。僕は最近またデイヴ・ゲイルに会ったんだけど、彼は映画か何かを作っていたよ。実は彼は、ピンク・フロイ

> Zoom

ドの友達だったんだ。僕が背骨を損傷したとき、〝ロバートのためになぜコンサートをやらないんだ？〟って言ってくれたのは彼だった。だから僕はデイヴには感謝することがたくさんある。それに彼はアート・カレッジの頃からのアルフィーの友人だ」

――アルフィーとジュリーは二人ともレコードで語っています。

「確かにね。デイヴ・ゲイルもそこにいる。彼はとてもおかしなものを作っているんだ。彼らの話を聞くことができれば、彼がウールのものを着たがることについて聞けるよ。彼はいつもウールのものを着るのが好きなんだ。ちょっとおかしな神経症的なものだけど、より安心感を感じさせるらしい。ジュリーは、何らかの理由で初めての客と娼婦になることに決めた。そしてアルフィーは、彼らがいったい何について話しているのかと思っている。とにかく僕たちはそこにすべてのものをそのままにした。僕たちはそれに楽しみがあったんだ」

――ジュリーの最初の客は女性のようですが……？

「ああ、そこには含みがあって、デイヴ・ゲイルは間違いなく興味を持っていなんじゃないかな。彼はウールのものでいっぱいっぱいなんだ。だけど僕は考え抜かれていたとは思えない。彼らはミュージシャンと同じくらい即興でやっていたと思う。それはまた普通は決してやらないやり方だ。楽器の統一性を保ち、いくつかの声を入れる方法をトライして、成功させることは非常に興味深かったし、面白いことだったけど、いつもではなかった」

――レコードは少し混沌としていますね。ロバート・フリップはまるで思いがけないプロデューサーのように思えます。

「そうだね、わかっているよ。なぜ僕が彼に頼んだのかわからなかったと思う。おかしなことに、僕の息子が昨日やってきて、僕とフリップが、何かのフェスティヴァルだったと思うけど、向かい合って話している写真を見つけたんだ。それはとても楽しい写真なんだけど、僕は全然覚えていないんだ。僕は彼のバンドを聴いていたのか、あるいは僕が彼に何かを聴かせていたのかも覚えていない。僕たちが1965年イギリスで仕事をしていた頃、そこで僕が知っていたバンドは本当にいなかったんだ」

――フィル・ミラーは、フリップに畏敬の念を持っていたのでスタジオでのレコーディングが難しいと考えていましたね。

「ああ、ビル・マコーミックはそう言っているよ。実際ビルはいつもそうみたいだ。彼はほとんど慢性的と言えるほどシャイで、決して人を見ないんだ。だけどそれが本当であるなら、それに全く気づかなかったことを言うのが恥ずかしいよ。僕はジミ・ヘンドリックスとのツアーを行なっていたから、その後素晴らしいギタリストの存在によって、畏敬の念に打たれることをイメージすることはとってはとても難しいことだったんだ」

――ブライアン・イーノもアルバムに参加しています。

「そうだね。ビル・マコーミックがフィル・マンザネラの友人だったことから彼のことを知っていたんだ。ビルは彼に〈Gloria Gloom〉のイントロを頼んだんだけど、彼

> Zoom

は自分のスタジオでそれを作ってきて持ち込んだだけだった。だから僕たちはそれに手を加えたんだ」

――彼はスタジオにシンセを持ち込み、デイヴ・マクレエがレコードでそれを使っていると思うのですが……。

「ああ、おそらくそれが正しいんだろう。僕は完全に忘れてしまっているよ！　そうだね、その通りだよ。イーノは控えめなやり方でレコードに貢献している。彼がやっていることがわからないくらいさ。デイヴ・マクレエは彼自身がキーボードについて創意に富んでいる。とにかくある種クレイジーなやり方でファズ・ボックスやペダルを使うんだ。けれども確かに彼はブライアンのために試していることが満足だったんだ」

――1993年のBGOでの『そっくりモグラの毛語録』のCDリリースの際には、A面とB面が入れ替わっていました。僕はあなたはもともとあのアルバムをそうしたかったのだと読んだのですが……。

「その通りだね。それについては確証がなかった。結局、僕は基本的に〈Gloria Gloom〉にブライアンのイントロを入れたアルバムでスタートすると決めた。そして僕は入るにはあまりにも長くかかりすぎると思った。テーブルに食べ物を持ってこられるくらいだって」

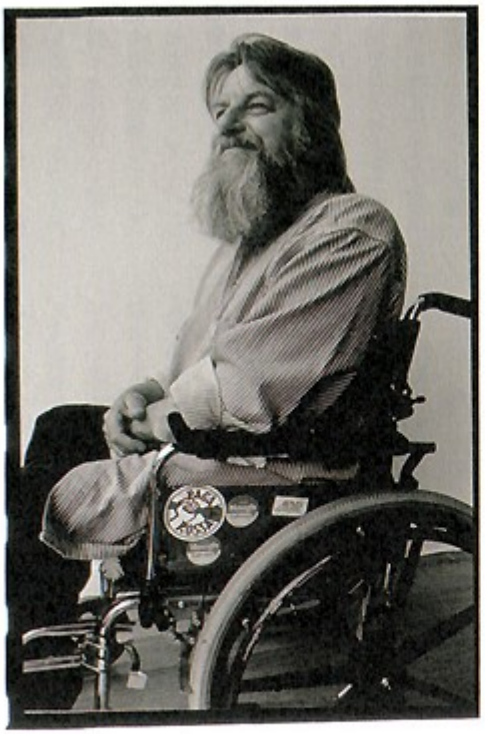
――（笑）。

「だから僕はしばらくしてそれをやめた。僕の『ルースはリチャードより不思議』の時と全く同じアイデアだった。異なるヴァージョンでA面B面は交換したんだ」

――つまり楽曲の構成については重要だと考えていたということですか？

「ああ、そうだ。そのために責任を取った。誰かが取らなければならないからね。本当に誰も知らなかった。そう考えていたフリップでさえもね。完璧な音楽作品のためにすべてのトラックはそこにあるんだ。僕は常にそう考えたい」

――ファースト・アルバムのレコーディングの後CBSはスタジオを閉めたためマッチング・モウルがそこでの最後のバンドとなりました。『そっくりモグラの毛語録』では、新しいスタジオでの最初のバンドです。



> Zoom

「そうなんだ！　それも忘れていたよ。確かにそうだよ！　かわいそうなデイヴ・シンクレアはその冷たいスタジオにいた。僕はすっかりそのことを忘れていたよ。だけどとはいえそれは僕たちにあまり影響を及ぼさなかった。若い頃は、知っているところでなら眠ることができるというものさ（笑）」

――スタジオがそんなに寒かったということは、スタジオに入る前に音楽のパターンを発展させていたのではないか、と思うのですが……？

「そうとは限らない。僕たちは自宅でレコーディングはしなかったからね。だから僕はスタジオで試していたものがたくさんあったと思う。僕たちは、考える必要がないくらいにみんながそのパターンに十分に慣れ親しむためにリハーサルをしていたんだ」

――僕は、その他のカンタベリーのアルバムのようなサウンドなので、マッチング・モウルのファースト・アルバムの方が好みだったんですが、聴き込めば聴き込むほど、『そっくりモグラの毛語録』の方をより好きになっていくんです。

「僕もまさに同じリアクションだったよ。きみと連絡を取るようになってから、それらのアルバムを聴いていたんだ。ファースト・アルバムは全く一貫した作品で、僕たちがやろうとしていたことを理解していて、それをやったものだ。セカンド・アルバムは、もっともっと無頓着な作品なんだけど、だからこそ非常に面白いんだということがわかる。そして僕は、ヴァリエーションや異なるテイクを聴くことはかまわない。そういったものは異なる面を見せてくれるからね。CDの場合、間違いなく、より聴くべきものがある『そっくりモグラの毛語録』のCDだ。今僕はそれを聴いてより心地いい。全く同意するよ。それが逆になる。ファースト・アルバムでは、エクストラ・トラックやシングルの繰り返しにはとても不満だ。ただメチャクチャだということがわかる。だからきみに同意するよ」

――マッチング・モウルのCD再発には満足していない？

「僕は、オリジナルの78回転のレコードであっても、ヴィニールのLPであっても、2面あるものが好きなんだ。そしてそれぞれおよそ20分持つLPの2面があることがとても面白いことにいつも気づく。とてももったいぶっているように聴こえるけど、僕はとてももったいぶった男なんだ。だけど人生の多くはだいたい不均衡な二等分だということがわかるはずだ。実際、目にしても、腕にしても、男と女にしても、みんな対のものだ。スプラウトが育っていくのを見れば、最初に目にするのは片方と、もう片方が交互に出てくる葉だ。それらは全く同じではない。僕はレコードの一面が、もう一面と同じものだけれども全く異なっているというアイデアが好きだ。ここは文字的な同義語はなく、言葉で表すことはできない。A面とB面は僕にとって何かを意味したという感覚があるだけだ。特にマッチング・モウルのファースト・アルバムにもあったが、その後のセカンドでもまたあり、また『ロック・ボトム』でも『ルースはリチャードより不思議』にもある。CDになったときでも、僕は少なくとも二つのパートに分ける傾向がある。異なるパートがあって、それがどんなタイプの形式でも、そ

> Zoom

れぞれがだいたい20分くらいの長さのものが、トイレに行ったり、もう一杯飲み物を取りに行ったりしなければならないことなしで、一つの音楽作品を聴くにはちょうどいい長さのように思えるんだ。だからそう考えていたんだ。だけど一方で、僕は大きな塊の中にそれらをすべて一緒に入れてしまうのには満足しない。なぜなら終わりまで聴いているままにできるレコードを作りたかったからだ。もしきみがオルタナティヴ・テイクがあったり、同じようなものがもう一度あるようなレコードを作るとすると、それがアーカイヴや歴史的な記録のためのものなら問題ない。だけどもともとの役目では機能しない。1枚のレコードはかけて、終わりまでそのまま聴くものだ。それがオリジナルのもののアイデアだった」

――短命のバンドでしたが、その間、たくさんのライヴを行ないました。

「ああ、僕たちはたくさんライヴをやった。そしてプレイするのは本当に楽しかった。僕はテーマの部分を変えるのが好きだった。オリジナルの〈Marchides〉のように、デイヴはテンポを完全に外したりするインプロヴィゼーションを欲しがった。ルバート(rubato)とか、歌詞があるものなら何でも。僕はそういうライヴには不安があった。だから僕はその下にある種のパルスを入れ始めた。僕はフリージャズが好きな分だけ、テンポからあまり外れたものでは全く落ち着けない。僕がジャズやロック・ミュージックについて本当好きだったものの一つは、そういったフィジカルな動きだった。だからそれを入れるか、もしくは拍子をわずかに変えたりする傾向があった」

――セカンド・アルバムのAB面はひっくり返したことには、ライヴで演奏したことが影響していたんですか？

「そうだね。おそらくまさにそういうことだったと思う」

――バンドを解散することにした時の思い出は何かありますか？

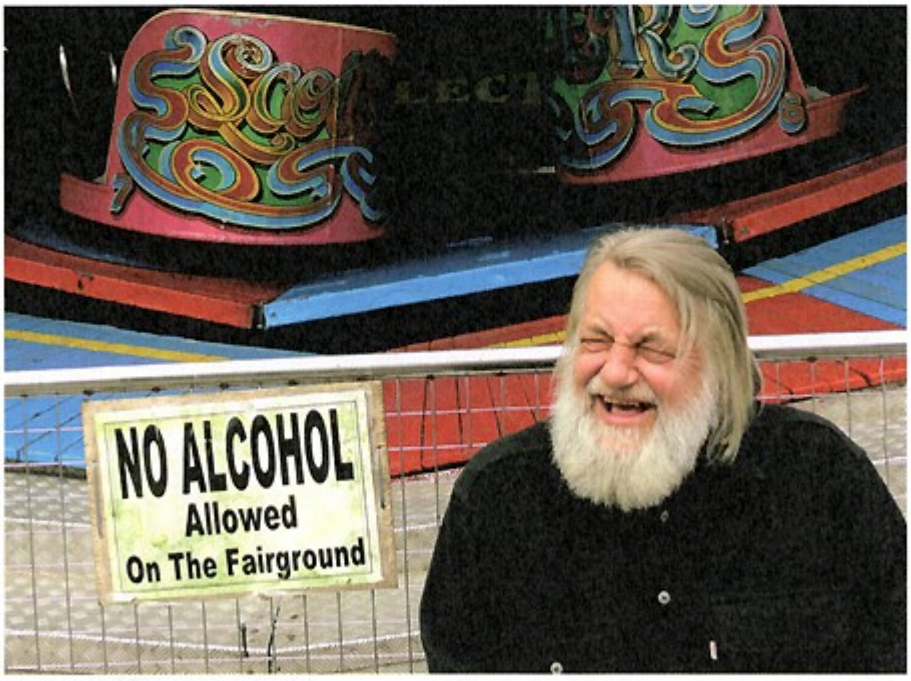
「ソフト・マシーンにおいて僕はフォロワーになり得ないことを悟ったんだ。そしてマッチング・モウルでも僕はリーダーになり得ないということがわかった。だからこの二つのグループを後にしたんだ。そしてそれから僕の心に浮かんだんだ！　僕にインスピレーションを与えた輝きの瞬間はこうだった。〝ロバート、お前はバンドにいなきゃいけないってことはないんだ！　そんな決まりはないぞ〟。ロック・グループは、だいたい軍の徴兵が終わった時にスタートするから、僕はいつも軍に入る猶予として見なしていたんだ。60年代初期には、すべての若者は数年間外国を占領するために軍に入った。そして座ってビールを飲みながら、地元の女の子をひっかけたりしていた。そして彼らが兵士を入隊させるのをやめると、ビートルズがドイツに行って、まさに同じようなことをやったんだ（笑）。僕はいつもグループみたいなものにいなければならないと思っていたけど、そうじゃなかったんだ。そうする必要はなかったんだ！　結局は僕は開放されたんだ……人は僕のことを皮肉屋だと思うだろうけど……、だけど僕は車椅子になることによって開放されたんだ。バンドはもはや可能性ではなかった。それはパラドックスだけど、僕は

> Zoom

今、起こったことに全く満足しているよ」

――でもマッチング・モウルの発展形の話がありましたね。

「デイヴ・マクレエはジャズ・ロック・トリオを結成したかったんだ。そして僕はジャズ・ロックの道を進みたくなかった。僕はジャズ・ロックとして知られるようになったものを好きじゃないんだ。ジャズ・ロックをやっている本当に素晴らしい人たちはいるけど、ちょっとご都合主義のように見えるんだ。ロック・ミュージシャンを妬んでいるジャズ・ミュージシャンはそうやっていて、〝わたしは彼らよりも上手く楽器を弾ける。髪を伸ばして、神秘的な名前をつけて、ホーン奏者を排除して、ギタリストを入れよう。そうすれば僕たちは彼らよりもロックだってうまくできる〟って考えているんだ。だから僕はジャズ・ロック・バンドにはいたくなかった。キーボード奏者については本当に考えようとしていた。そして僕が見つけた素敵な人は、カーヴド・エアでプレイしていたフランシス・モンクマンという男だった。彼にはジャズの素養



Robert Wyatt／写真提供：HosTess Entertainment

> Zoom

はなかったけど、僕は、のちにアメリカの〝Cuneiform〟というレーベルで発表されていたラジオ放送で彼と仕事をしていた。彼はクラシック畑出身で、素晴らしく、またとてもイマジネイティヴだった。だけど僕はどうすべきかわからなかった。そして〝僕はジャズ・プレイヤーだけど、セッション・ミュージシャンのようにプレイしないゲイリー・ウィンドーみたいな誰かが欲しい。おそらくまたビルなんだ〟って思った。僕はそれに取り組んでいて、それとともに何曲かは想像ができていた。だけどただそれだけで1年も費やすっていうことを想像できていなかった。だから……窓から落ちることによってそのすべてからある種救われたんだ。別の惑星に行ったんだ(笑)。別の世界にね」

——ソロ・アーティストとして、残りのキャリアであなた自身がリーダーだったわけですね。

「そうだね、その通りだよ。僕が僕自身に指示する。そこには悪感情はない」

——昨年、あなたがバブでワークショップを行なっているのをYou Tubeで見ました。そこではあなたの音楽を何曲か再生していました。

「ああ、2回あったね。〈Wire〉誌のためのものと、ロンドンのカフェOTOのためのものだ。彼らは日本人が経営している音楽のためのヴェニューを持っているんだ」

——日本でそういったことをやることに興味がありますか?

「日本には行ったことはあるけど、実はもう旅行はしていないんだ。もう飛行機にも乗らない。問題は、妻は僕より年上だということだ。彼女は70代になっていて、あまり調子がよくない。彼女は健康と闘ってきた。僕は自分の人生の大部分でかなり利己的で、自分のことをやってきた。僕はもっとマイホーム型の人間になろうとしているんだ。日本人は素晴らしいから日本には行きたいとは思っている。日本から素晴らしい手紙や美しい贈り物など、ラヴリーなものを受け取っているよ。ある人が新しいレストランの名前を付けてほしいと頼んできたんだ。僕は〝ハッピー・マウス〟と名付けたよ。それに日本人の隣人もいる。だけど僕はもう旅に出ることができない。確かにミュージシャンたちはそこでプレイすることを愛している。そして僕はそれを逃してしまっているのは悲しいと感じる。だけど僕はもうそれに対処することはできないんだ。僕は自分の障害について話すことには興味はない。なぜならきみたちが集まるように、大部分はほとんど僕を集中させて、自分の人生を単純化させるという利点だったからだ。だけど来年には70歳になるし、健康上の問題も抱えているんだ。僕はかつてできていたことをすることができない。日本には感謝している。日本人は東洋のイタリア人っていう感じだね。なぜなら僕が元気を得る二つの場所は、理解があって、親しみのある反応をしてくれる。それは西欧ではイタリアで、東洋ではもちろん日本だ。この二つの場所で聴いてくれる人たちは、間違いなく長年にわたって僕に最高の励ましをくれたんだ」

——今日はありがとうございました。

「最初の方できみにちょっと難しい時間を与えたのは申し訳ない。きみが言うように僕は個性の強いミュージシャンなんだよ!」

> Zoom

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Soft Machine & Canterbury Scene revisited - Strange Days N° 165 - August 2013

ROBERT WYATT





ソフト・マシーン&カンタベリー・シーン再訪

SOFT MACHINE &
CANTERBURY SCENE
REVISITED

特集

SOFT MACHINE &
CANTERBURY SCENE
REVISITED

70年代のブリティッシュ・ロック・シーンの一角を成すカンタベリー・シーン。それはアーティストが離合集散を繰り返しながら形成したプログレッシヴ・ロックのラビリンスであり、英ジャズ・ロックの一大コロニーとも言える。そんなカンタベリー・シーンに残された重要作が6月から7月にかけてリイシューされることになった。カンタベリー・シーンにおいて重要な位置を占めるデイヴ・シンクレア、ソフト・マシーン・レガーシーのインタヴューを織り交ぜながら、現在へと続くカンタベリー・サウンドの魅力に再び迫った。

ソフト・マシーンとカンタベリー・シーン再訪

鬼形智

すべては、ソフト・マシーンから始まった。該当バンドの多くがイギリス南東部に位置するケント州カンタベリー出身だったことから、いつしか〈カンタベリー・シーン〉と呼ばれるようになったムーヴメントはソフト・マシーンからスタートしたのだ。

厳密にいうならば、カンタベリー・シーンの源流はマシーンの前身的バンドのワイルド・フラワーズにまで遡ることができるかもしれない。時は1961年、カンタベリー名士の子弟や芸術家の卵が通うことで知られるサイモン・ラングストン・スクールで、ロバート・エリッジ（ワイアットは芸名）とマイク・ラトリッジとブライアン・ホッパーが出会ったことから歴史はスタートする。父親が放送作家で母親はジャズDJを務めたことがあるという音楽一家に育ったワイアットの元に集った彼らは、母親が所有するマンションを溜まり場として音楽や芸術や文学について語り合うようになり、やがてブライアン・ホッパー（G）と弟のヒュー・ホッパー（B）、ワイアット（Ds）、ラトリッジ（K）でバンド活動を開始した。

ワイアットがカンタベリー・カレッジ・オブ・アートに、ラトリッジがオックスフォード大学に進学したことによりバンドは解散したが、すぐにワイアットは学校をドロップ・アウトしてスペインへ放浪の旅に出かけ、そこでオーストラリア出身のデヴィッド・アレンと出会った。アレンとワイアットはヒュー・ホッパーを加えて63年にデヴィッド・アレン・トリオ名義でロンドンでライヴを行ない、カンタベリーに戻ってバンド活動を再開。そこに加わってきたのがケント州ハ





(above) left to right: Robert Wyatt, Elton Dean, Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge (1969年) photo by Barry Wentzell
(below) left to right: Karl Jenkins, John Marshall, John Etheridge, Mike Ratledge, Roy Babbington (1975年) from John Marshall's archive

ーンベイ出身でカンタベリー大学に進学したケヴィン・エアーズ（G、Vo）とリチャード・シンクレア（B）で、彼らはワイルド・フラワーズというバンド名で活動をスタートし、エアーズが放浪の旅に出たあとはリチャード・コフラン（Ds）とパイ・ヘイスティングス（G）が加わるなど、メンバーは流動的だった。一介のローカル・バンドだったにもかかわらず、ワイルド・フラワーズの音源が残っており発掘CD化されているが（ブライアン・ホッパーが録音マニアだったらしい）、確かにそれらの音源はモダン・ジャズ／現代音楽／ビート文学／前衛芸術に加え、これはあまり指摘されないことだがR&Bやソウル・ミュージックの影響がうかがえるものとなっている。たとえば、ファルセットで囁くように歌うスタイルやテンション・コードを多用したアレンジは、明らかに当時のブリティッシュ・ロックではなくブラック・ミュージックの手法を取り入れたものだ。すでに60年代の時点で、現代音楽と黒人音楽という水と油のような存在を融合して独自のロック・ミュージックを作り上げた彼らのセンスには、驚くよりほかはない。

放浪の旅を終えたデヴィッド・アレン、ケヴィン・エアーズ、大学を卒業したラトリッジがカンタベリーに戻ってきたことから、ワイアットはワイルド・フラワーズを脱退し（残ったメンバーはヘイスティングスを中心にキャラヴァンへと発展）、アレン（G）、エアーズ（B）、ラトリッジ（K）、ワイアット（Ds）、そしてアメリカ人のラリー・ノーラン（G）の編成で66年8月に新バンドを開始。バンド名はラトリッジの提案でウイリアム・バロウズの小説からソフト・マシーンと名乗るようになった。ノーランはすぐに脱退するも彼らは4人組で活動を継続し、ロンドンのUFOクラブなどでのサイケデリック・シーンで話題を集め、ジミ・ヘンドリックスのマネージメントを手掛けていたチャス・チャンドラーと契約を交わし、デビュー・シングル「Love Makes Sweet Music」でレコード・デビューを果たした。この後ジョルジョ・ゴメルスキーのプロデュースでアルバム用のマテリアルを録音するがバンド側がリリースを拒否（この音源は、のちにいろいろなタイトルで発掘リリースされた）、アレンがビザ問題でイギリス入国を拒否されフランスに渡るなどのアクシデントも発生しソフト・マシーンはエアーズ、ラトリッジ、ワイアットのトリオ編成となる。

68年にマシーンはサポート・ギタリストにアンディ・サマーズを迎えた編成で、ジミ・ヘンドリックスの全米ツアーのオープニング・アクトを務め好評を得て、ツアー終了後にニューヨークでレコーディングした正



2



1. 「Love Makes Sweet Music / Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'」
Polydor / 56 151 / 1967 [UK]
2. 「Love Makes Sweet Music」
1 Polydor / 65 151 / 1967 [Netherlands]

式デビュー作『ソフト・マシーン』を米ブローブ・レーベルよりリリースする。しかしながら、ツアーに疲弊したエアーズはイビザ島へ逃避、ワイアットはアメリカに残るもラトリッジは帰国とバンドは解散状態にあった。ところがアルバムの売れ行きが予想以上によかったためブローブは2作目を要求、ワイアットとラトリッジは当時ローディを務めていたヒュー・ホッパーを加えた編成で活動を再開してセカンド・アルバム『ヴォリューム2』をリリースした。ここからマシーンの変遷の歴史が始まったと見ていいだろう。その理由としては、彼らがミドル・クラス出身の経済的に恵まれた子弟で、イヤになったら逃走する傾向にあったことが挙げられる。ハングリーなロック立身出世物語とは無縁の立ち位置は、バンド形態の流動化と音楽性の変遷を招く結果となったのだ。

ブリティッシュ・ジャズ・シーンから4人のブラス隊を迎えて7人編成となった69年10月から、マシーンのジャズへの接近が始まった。残留したエルトン・ディーン（サックス）を含む4人編成となったマシーンは新たにCBSと契約し、ジャズ・ロック色を強めた2枚組アルバム『3』をリリースする。しかしながらシリアスなジャズ・ロック路線にワイアットは反発、ケヴィン・エアーズのバック・バンドなどの対外活動



from Elton Dean's archive, left to right:
Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Phil Howard, Elton Dean（1971年11月）

や初ソロ・アルバムのリリースなどでマシーンから距離を置き始め、ついにワイアットのヴォーカル・パートが消えたマシーンの4作目『4』を最後に脱退してマッチング・モウルを結成することになった。残されたラトリッジ、ホッパー、ディーンは後任ドラマーとしてフィル・ハワードを迎えるも、あまりにもジャズ的な彼はすぐに脱退し、元ニュークリアスのジョン・マーシャルが加入して5作目『5』を発表。マーシャルのロック寄りなビートはフォーマル指向のラトリッジ&ホッパーに歓迎された反面、フリー指向のディーンの脱退を招くことになる。代わりの管楽器奏者として加入したのは、これまた元ニュークリアスのカール・ジェンキンスで、作曲とキーボードにも長けていた彼の存在によって、マシーンはロックとジャズと現代音楽を混交した、いわゆる〈カンタベリー・ミュージック〉を確立した。6作目『6』のライヴ・サイドでの白熱とスタジオ・サイドでのクールネス、7作目『7』での浮遊感あふれるサウンドは、マシーンがすべての音楽的要素を包括した総合芸術に到達したことを雄弁に物語るものである。以降もメンバーと音楽性を変遷をさせつつ81年まで活動を続けたマシーンであるが、彼らのクリエイティヴィティが最も横溢していたのは、CBSレーベル時代だったと言っていいだろう。

INTERVIEW

ソフト・マシーン・レガシー インタヴュー
SOFT MACHINE LEGACY

インタヴュー＝ミカエル・ビョルン
訳＝池田聡子

僕がジョンと話したとき、素晴らしい雰囲気だった。この日彼は、エディンバラにいるはずだったが、チケットの手違いで、ロンドンにいた。それは珍しくロンドンに陽が降りそそぐ春の日曜日の1日だった。だからジョンはよく笑い、本当に楽しんでいた。彼は楽しい話をたくさんしてくれた。キース・ティペットとのツアーや新生ソフト・マシーン・レガシーのアルバム『The Burden Of Proof』……これは、彼らの最高傑作と評されている。最近のラインナップによって生まれる活気を証明している作品で、全体的に好意的なレヴューがほとんどだ。しかし一方でアルバムは重荷も背負っているのか？　本当は何を証明しているのか？　ジョン・エサリッジにインタヴューを試みた。これを読んで、答えを見つけ出してほしい！

●

――ニュー・アルバムは本当に素晴らしいですね。

「申し分のないものになったようだ。僕たちは完璧なインプロヴィゼーション・アルバムを作るつもりだったから、ある意味ではかなり驚きだよね。だけどマネージャーの役割もやっているレオナルドは、〝メロディのある楽曲とインプロヴィゼーションをミックスしたアルバムを作りたい〟って言ったんだ。実際それはすごくいい考えだった」

――そのレオナルド・バヴコヴィッチの役割というのは？

「僕たちはレオナルドのために集まったんだ。彼は〝バンドを作りたいんだ〟って言った。彼は、エルトン・ディーン、ヒュー・ホッパー、そしてオリジナル・メンバーのアラン・ホールズワースとジョン・マーシャルをつかまえた。その後アランが抜けてしまったので、彼は僕を電話で呼び出した。そして彼は言ったよ。〝いいかい、僕はこのバンドをやりたいんだ〟ってね」

――なぜレコーディングをイタリアで行なったんですか？

「ベッペ・クロヴェッラはソフト・マシー

ンとマイク・ラトリッジの大ファンなんだ。彼は、イタリアのキーボード奏者で、スタジオを持っている。レオナルドは、イタリアに行って、たくさんのパスタを食べて、すごく太って、レコーディングをやるべきだっていう考えを持っていた。だから僕はすぐに始めて、何曲かを書いた。そしてセオ（・トラヴィス）も何曲か書いた。とても楽しかったよ。僕たちはとても楽しい時間を過ごし、ちょっと仕事もこなした。それから僕たちはロンドンに戻って、それをすべてまとめて、ミキシングして、すべてがうまく収まるようにするためにたくさんの時間を費やした」

――その多くをスタジオでライヴ・レコーディングしたのですか？

「ああ、インプロヴィゼーションはすべて間違いなくスタジオで生で録ったものだ。それが唯一のやり方だからね。だって、インプロヴィゼーションではオーヴァーダビングすることはできないから。すべてのノイズやエフェクトは、ライヴで聴くのと同じようにそこで起こったことだ。僕とテオは、自分たちのルーパー・ペダルをいじったり、リヴァースしたりしている。それがすごく楽しいんだ（笑）。だけどあまりたくさんの道具やエフェクトを使っていないという点では非常に60～70年代的だね。あまりたくさん使っていないからノイズが多いという点でもね」

――レヴューの多くで、〝新鮮な〟とか〝大胆な〟といった言葉が使われています。

「そうなんだ！　それはいろんな意味で正しい。第一に、僕たちはそれほどたくさんプレイしない。レコーディングに入ると、僕たちはあらゆる種類の新しいものを持ち込む。だから新鮮ではなくなることはないんだ。それに、自分がオリジナルを聴いたことがあるかどうかは確かじゃないんだけど、昔の楽曲〈Kings And Queens〉も入れた。もちろん僕個人的な意味でだけど、オリジナルを知らない方がよりクリエイティヴにできるっていうことがわかる。僕たちは、ヒューと一緒にこの曲をやり始めたんだけど、ヒューはそれを持ってきただけだ。僕たちは、マイク・ラトリッジの時代がどうだったかということを知らなくて、最初からプレイしたんだ」

――アルバムはどのように構成していったのですか？

「アイデアは……実は僕のアイデアだったと思うんだけど……みんなが各々ソロとデュオをするというものだった。僕は〈Kitto〉で、ロイ・バビントンは、〈Going Somewhere Canorous?〉でやった。そしてジョンは小品〈ISP〉をやった。みんながちょっとしたソロをやって、そしてみんながデュオをやった。たとえば、ジョンとセオによる素晴らしいデュオ作品〈The Brief〉のようなね。〈They Landed A Hill〉は僕とセオだ。彼はピアノで2～3のコードを弾き始めて、僕はそれにただ加わっただけさ。僕がエルトンとやったものだ。僕はセオに〝ただ演奏を始めてくれ、そして演奏しよう〟って言ったんだ。ただスタートして、終わったという、ナチュラルなものだった」

――作曲された楽曲にもすごくヴァリエーションがあります。「Fallout」は、キング・クリムゾン

の影響を感じますし、「Black And Crimson」はキャメルの感じがあります。

「それらの楽曲はセオが書いたんだ。彼は非常にキング・クリムゾンに傾倒している。そうだね、〈Fallout〉が初期のキング・クリムゾンみたいに聴こえるっていうことに、僕も同意するよ。おそらくセオも同意するだろう。彼はかなり若いけど、70年代のプログを愛して育ってきた連中の一人だ。今は、スティーヴン・ウィルソンとツアーをやっているよ。僕の音楽にもあったものだ。僕がソフト・マシーン作品を取り上げるのが好きな理由の一つは、70年代のフュージョン……この言葉を使うのは嫌いなんだけど……が僕の領域の一つだったということなんだ。その後僕は自分の人生にもっとストレートなジャズが入り込んでくるんだけど、僕の本当の領域だったのは70年代のもので、僕はそれが本当に好きなんだ」

――一方〈Pie Chart〉は、ブルージーなナンバーです。

「僕のアイデアは、チャーリー・ミンガスの〈Goodbye Pork Pie Hat〉のコードを作ったものを書くというものだった。だからこの曲に〈Pie Chart〉ってつけたんだ」

――〈Pump Room〉はアルバムの中では非常にヘヴィな曲です。

「そうなんだ、ヘヴィになってしまったんだ。僕が、アリルド・アンダーセンとジョン・マーシャルとのトリオのために書いた曲だ。『In House』っていうアルバムに収録されている。僕たちはずいぶん前にソフト・マシーンとその曲を演奏し始めた。だけどここに収録されているのはそれとは完全に異なるヴァージョンだ」

――その音楽が非常にエキサイティングであるとすれば、〝レガシー〟をとって、ただソフト・マシーンと呼んでもいいのではないのですか？

「僕たちがこのグループを始めたとき、バンドの歴史に対するある種礼儀を持ってスタートした。ロバート・ワイアットやマイク・ラトリッジ、ケヴィン・エアーズ……そしてデヴィッド・アレンといった人たちへのある種敬意とでもいうのかな。ソフト・マシーンの歴史をみると、多くの人たちが在籍してきた。けれどもヒュー・ホッパー、エルトン・ディーン、僕、ジョン・マーシャルは、個々のパーソナリティという点で力強いラインナップだった。僕たちはそれをソフト・マシーンと呼ぶこともできた。おそらく僕は他の人たちに対して賛否を問うべきなのかもしれない。〝ただソフト・マシーンってしたらどう？〟ってね。僕たちは……10年近くやってきたんだ。たくさんの場所で……こうしたことにそれほどうるさくないイアリアではどちらにしてもソフト・マシーンと呼ばれているよ」

――アルバム・タイトルの『Burden Of Proof（証明責任）』というのはどういう意味ですか？

「特別な意味があるわけじゃなかった。僕が自分の曲用に考えたタイトルなんだ。それから僕たちはこれがアルバム・タイトルにいいって思ったんだ。本当だよ。他に理由はないんだ。だけどそれと〝レガシー〟というのはある意味よく調和している。僕はこれをすごくよく考えたわけじゃない。だけど実は〝証明責任〟というタイトルが合っているっていうことは、僕たちがソフト・マシーンであるという僕たち自身の証

明であるっていうことかもね！」

――それこそ僕があなたに言ってほしかったことです（笑）。

「その通り！　今それを考えると、おそらく潜在的にそうだったんだ。みんなこれがアルバムに素晴らしいタイトルだって考えていたんだからね。そしてある意味そうなんだと思う。このアルバムは、ソフト・マシーンの全歴史におけるどの作品と比べても素晴らしいと言えると思うしね。だからおそらく潜在的に僕たちがこのタイトルを気に入っていた理由だったんだと思う。レオナルドもすぐにこれを選んだしね」

――今後計画しているレコーディングの予定はありますか？

「いやいや、僕たちはこのアルバムを出したから、2〜3年はこのアルバムのことになるだろう。今僕たちはいくつかギグをやって、これをプレイする必要がある。だけどそれは素晴らしいものになるよ。去年の10月、僕たちがやった小さめのツアーの終わりの頃、フランクフルト・ジャズ・フェスティヴァルでゲストとしてキース・ティペットを迎えてのハイライトとなったんだけど、それは信じられないほど素晴らしかったんだ！　バンドはとても素晴らしいプレイをしていた。そして僕たちは本当にそれをする必要がある。ロイとジョン……そしてもちろん僕自身も……は、それほど若くなくなっているから、今これをやるということが必要なんだ」

――ライヴで演奏するのは好きですか？

「僕は二つの理由からソフト・マシーンと一緒にプレイするのが大好きなんだ。一つは、70年代に戻って、自分が28歳だった頃のような気分にさせてくれるから。もう一つは、僕がごく稀に機会を得るプレイするチャンスを与えてくれるからだ。僕は自分の演奏時間の65％をアコースティック・ギターを演奏するのに使う。僕はそれが本当に好きなんだ！　だからそれをもっとたくさんやりたい。9月にロンドンでギグを3回やる。それから今も言ったようにキース・ティペットとやるんだけど、それは素晴らしいものになるだろう」

――キース・ティペットと全ツアーをやるのだと思っていましたが……？

「それについては話さなければならないことがたくさんある。僕たちが実際に抱える問題の一つは、多くのギグは非常に短い告知しかできないということだ。たとえば、僕たちが非常に人気のあるイタリアのような国では、コンサート前2ヶ月くらいまでブッキングはしないみたいなんだ。だけど僕やセオのような人たち……そしてジョン・マーシャルやロイも……もっと何ヶ月も前にスケジュールはふさがってしまっている。だからそうした問題が出てしまうんだ」

――日本でのコンサートの予定はないんですか？

「もちろん、やりたいよ。日本に行くのは大好きだよ。ソフト・マシーンと日本に行って、プレイするのは僕の大好きなんだ。ただ僕は旅行することにそれほど熱心じゃない……。だけど日本にいくことは、本当に好きだ。日本には2回行ったことがあるけど、気に入っているよ。非常に異なる文化がある。ただアルバムのレヴューは素晴らしいものをもらったけど、公演予定はないよ。僕は日本でライヴをしたいんだ！」

The Soft Machine



Probe / CPLP 4500 / 1968
ユニバーサル / UICY-75650(SHM-CD,紙) / 2013.6.26

ジミ・ヘンドリックスの前座で回った全米ツアー終了後、ニューヨークで録音されたデビュー・アルバム。楽曲指向のエアーズ、プレイヤー指向のラトリッジ、両者の中間的立場のワイアットという三者の異なる音楽性が微妙なバランスを保ちつつ、ライヴの勢いをそのままパッケージングした傑作だ。変拍子の未使用とサイケデリック・ポップ色の強さゆえに番外編的な扱いを受ける作品ではあるが、歪んだトーンのオルガン・ソロと反復リフの快感というマシーン・サウンドの根幹となる要素は、すでに提示されている。実はビルボード31位を記録したヒット作で、歯車が回るギミック・ジャケの米オリジナル盤は意外にも見つかりやすい。（鬼形）

Volume Two



Probe / CPLP 4505 / 1969

脱退したエアーズと同等の作曲力を持ちプレイヤー気質が遥かに上回るヒュー・ホッパーの加入により、作曲面とインスト・パートが充実し、曲の大半が8分の7あるいは4分の7拍子で埋め尽くされる変拍子アルバムとなった2作目。各楽器にファズをかけて音色を均質化しソロとバッキングの垣根を取り払ったサウンド、短い曲を組み合わせたというよりは大曲の流れの適当な箇所にインデックスを打って言葉遊び風のタイトルをつけるコンセプチュアル・アート指向、ジャズ・ロックというよりはヒップなイメージを演出するためのジャジーなスタイルの導入など、のちのマシーン、ひいてはカンタベリー・サウンドの原型は本作に存在する。（鬼形）

Third



CBS / 66246 / 1970
ソニー / SICP-30162～3 [Blu-specCD2,紙] / 2013.6.26

Disc 1: 1.Facelift / 2.Slightly All The Time / 3.Moon In June / 4.Out-Bloody-Rageous
Disc 2: 1.Out-Bloody Rageous (Live) / 2.Facelift (Live) / 3.Esther's Nose Job (Live)
※曲目データ：ソニー / SICP-30162～3

69年10月のツアーよりキース・テイペット・グループ出身のエルトン・ディーン(Sax)、ニック・エヴァンス(Tb)、マーク・チャリグ(Tp)とセッション・マンのリン・ドブソン(Fl)が加わり、一時期は7人編成となったマシーンは、やがてディーンが残留したクァルテット編成で英CBS移籍初作品となった本作をリリースする。アナログ2枚組で20分弱のナンバーを各面に1曲ずつという構成(CDは1枚で4曲)、抽象的なジャケット・デザイン、単に（3作目）を冠したアルバム・タイトルには当時のシーンを席巻していたフリー・ジャズあるいはブラス・ロック（シカゴと同じCBSだったし）の影響が感じられるが、内容はジャズのイディオムをロックのフィールドで再構成したオリジナリティあふれるものだ。とくに1曲目の冒頭におけるライヴ音源のコラージュという手法は、基本的にテープ編集を是としないジャズとはベクトルが異なっており、その発想はロックというよりも現代音楽に近いものがある。牧歌的にスタートし中盤から後半にかけてのインプロヴィゼーションが白熱するワイアット作のヴォーカル曲も秀逸。70年8月ロイヤル・アルバート・ホール公演を収録したボーナス・ライヴ・ディスク付。（鬼形）

●解説：岩本晃市郎／鬼形 智

SOFT MACHINE ALBUMS

Fourth



CBS / 64280 / 1971
ソニー / SICP-30164[Blu-specCD2,紙] / 2013.6.26

前作に引き続き多彩なゲストを迎えて制作された4作目は、ベースが繰り出す変拍子リフに乗って管楽器とオルガンがインプロヴィゼーションを展開するというスタイルを築き上げた彼らが、事前にアレンジメントが施された構築型ジャズ・ロックを試行したという点において異色作といえるものだ。ホッパーのエレクトリック・ファズ・ベースとロイ・バビントンのアコースティック・ベースの絡みや、従来作以上にファズとワウなどのエフェクターを多用するラトリッジのオルガンなど、音色の追求が始まったのも本作から。歌物ナンバーどころかスキャットさえ禁じられたワイアットだが、ドラムスに専念した演奏のテンションは高い。（鬼形）

Fifth



CBS / 64806 / 1972
ソニー / SICP-30165[Blu-specCD2,紙] / 2013.6.26

アナログA面がフィル・ハワード、B面がジョン・マーシャルとドラマーが短期間で交代したのは、ジャズ指向を強めていたとはいえ、ストレート・アヘッドな4ビートのグルーヴを叩き出すハワードのドラミングは、本質的にフリー・ブロウイングに否定的だったラトリッジ&ホッパー組には合わなかったのだろう。それほどまでに、アルバム前半でのファンク度の高さはマシーン史上において異質な雰囲気を放っている。逆に、もっとインプロヴィゼーションを極めたかったエルトン・ディーンにとっての足りなくなったことも事実であり、マーシャルが叩くナンバーでは当時の彼らしからぬメロウな感覚のプレイが聴けるのが面白い。（鬼形）

Six



CBS / 68214 / 1973
ソニー / SICP-30166[Blu-specCD2,紙] / 2013.6.26

新曲中心のライヴとスタジオ録音からなるアナログ2枚組（CDは1枚）。スクエアな8ビートを得意とするマーシャルのドラミングは構築された楽曲を指向するラトリッジ&ホッパー組にとって理想的なもので、ディーンと交代で加入したジェンキンスは管楽器奏者としてだけでなくキーボーディストとしても確かなテクニックを持っており、バンドは2台のキーボードが織り成す複雑なリフを演奏可能とした。スタジオ録音盤は、複数のミニマル・フレーズの積み重ねで誰も弾いていないメロディが立ち昇ったり、残響音とサウンド・エフェクトの絡みの面白さを追求したりと、この時期の彼らの現代音楽への傾倒ぶりを表す楽曲が並ぶ。（鬼形）

Seven



CBS / 65799 / 1973
ソニー / SICP-30167[Blu-specCD2,紙] / 2013.6.26

演奏の自由度よりも楽曲の構造を重視する方向性は、ついにホッパーの脱退を招いてしまった。ドスの効いた重低音でバンドをリードしていたホッパーから、通常のベースよりオクターブ高い音域を持つ6弦ベースでメロディアスなフレーズを奏でるロイ・バビントンへの交代によってリフが構築度を増し、キーボードと管楽器がベースの呪縛から解き放たれたかのごとく軽やかに舞う。本作で初めて本格的に導入されたシンセサイザーもサウンドに浮遊感を与えており、半分だけ色がついた夢とでもいうべき不思議な感覚を醸し出している。バンド結成当初より彼らが追求し続けてきた"リフの反復による快感"は、本作で完成形に近づいた。（鬼形）

SOFT MACHINE ALBUMS

Bundles　収束



Harvest / SHSP 4044 / 1975
エアー・メイル / AIRAC-1667[Blu-spec CD,紙]

もともとは管楽器奏者として加入してきたカール・ジェンキンスが作曲家／キーボーディストの資質を前面に出してきたため、代わりのソロ・プレイヤーとしてアラン・ホールズワース（G）が加入。リフの谷間を軽やかに飛翔するようなギター・ソロは、前作まで意識的に避けられてきたドラマ性をバンドに持ち込んでおり、それはジャケット・デザインが抽象画から具象画に変化しアルバム・タイトルが数字でなくなったことにも象徴されている。マーシャルの記憶によれば、アルバム前半のナンバーは音質的に満足いくサウンドではなかったが、ホールズワースのプレイが最も冴えているファースト・テイクを採用したとのことだ。（鬼形）

Softs



Harvest / SHSP 4056 / 1976
エアー・メイル / AIRAC-1668[Blu-spec CD,紙]

モード的な奏法を得意としていたラトリッジがゲスト扱いとなり、専任管楽器奏者アラン・ウェイクマンを迎えてキーボードと作曲に専念できるようになったジェンキンスが完全に主導権を握ったことによって、前作では試行段階にとどまっていたコード進行の妙味を中心とした作曲法が開花する。コードの変遷によって楽曲が進行していく部分とモード・ジャズが入り混じったモーダル／コーダルの手法が随所で見られるのが本作の特徴だ。ホールズワースに負けない高速フレーズをフル・ピッキングで弾きまくるジョン・エサリッジのアグレッシヴなギター・ワークや、難なくユニゾン・フレーズをキメるパビントンの職人芸も光っている。（鬼形）

Alive & Well (Recorded In Paris)



Harvest / SHSP 4083 / 1978
エアー・メイル / AIRAC-1669~70[Blu-spec CD,紙]

マシーンがクロスオーヴァー路線からレゲエやファンクあるいはディスコーテクノといった多彩なリズムを導入した総合的なインスト音楽への移行を試みたライヴ盤。アルバム前半を占める組曲形式の新曲は、アンビエント・ミュージック↓レゲエ↓ギター早弾きをフィーチャーした高速フュージョン↓怒涛の変拍子リフにヴァイオリン・ソロが絡むマシーン流ジャズ・ロックといった彼らの持てる要素を詰め込んだ力作である。ラスト飾るエレクトロニック・ナンバー「ソフト・スペース」は、マシーンがデビュー当時から追求していた「リフの繰り返しによるトランス感覚」が、最終的にテクノ的な表現形態に至ったという流れを物語っている。（鬼形）

Land Of Cockayne



EMI / EMC 3348 / 1981
エアー・メイル / AIRAC-1682[Blu-spec CD,紙]

ストリングス、コーラス隊、当時の最新鋭機材シンクラヴィアを起用した優美な音色が心地よく響くマシーン名義の最終作。劇伴音楽制作で磨かれた能力を最大限に発揮したニューエイジ寄りのサウンドが極上で、グルーヴィなエレクトリック・ピアノのソロと音程のズレを気にしないジャック・ブルースによるフレットレス・ベースも聴きどころ。ドラマ性を重視した楽曲主義への移行の帰結は、イージー・リスニング・フュージョンだった。ドラッギーな酩酊感を音楽で表現することからスタートしたマシーンの歴史が、「コカインの地」なるタイトルを持つアルバムで大団円を迎えたのは、ある意味において妥当な結末だったのかもしれない。（鬼形）

SOFT MACHINE ALBUMS

SOFT WORKS / Abracadabra



Tone Center / TC 4029 2 / 2003

エルトン・ディーン、ジョン・マーシャル、ヒュー・ホッパー、アラン・ホールズワースからなるバンドの唯一作。当初はソフト・マシーン名義での活動を希望したが許諾が下りず、ソフト・ウェアに変更するもすでに名称登録があったため、結果的にソフト・ワークスというバンド名となった。キーボーディストの不在をホールズワースの独特なヴォイシングによるギター・シンセで補い、リラックスしたムードのなかでギターと管楽器がソロを取るジャズ・ロックに仕上がっている。後からオーヴァーダビングしたギターが少々浮き気味な面はあるものの、ソフト・ヘッドやハットフィールド&ザ・ノースのカヴァーも含む演奏は素晴らしい。（鬼影）

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY / Live In Zaandam



Musea / FGBG 4617.AR / 2005

ソフト・マシーンのメンバーによって結成されたカンタベリー・シーン期待のニューグループ、ソフト・ワークスは期待通りのアルバムを発表してくれたが、予想通り1枚のみの作品で解散した。

本作はその後結成されたソフト・マシーン・レガシーが05年にオランダのザーンダムで行なったライヴの模様を収録したアルバム。アラン・ホールズワースに代わって加入したジョン・エサリッジのプレイからはまさに英国ジャズの香りが漂い、今は亡きヒュー・ホッパーとエルトン・ディーンの演奏は70年代のソフト・マシーンを彷彿とさせてくれる。エサリッジのソロ作からの選曲もあるマニア必聴の1枚。（岩本）

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY / Soft Machine Legacy



Moonjune / MJR008 / 2006
ストレンジ・デイズ・レコード / SDCR-1001 ※廃盤ジャケ

歴史は繰り返す。ソフト・ワークスをアルバム1枚で脱退したホールズワースの後任として参加したのはジョン・エサリッジだった。バンド名をソフト・マシーン・レガシーに変更した彼ら初のスタジオ録音作はソフト・ワークスとは異なり、エサリッジのストレートかつエネルギッシュなプレイをフィーチャーした白熱のジャズ・ロックが繰り広げられている。メンバー全員がジャズ寄りのフィールドで活動を展開していたにもかかわらず、渋さの追求には走らずに、むしろ70年代よりもギラついたプレイを聴けるのが嬉しい。ディーンもホッパーも故人となってしまったが、ロイ・バビントンとセオ・トラヴィスを迎えて現在も活動を継続中。（鬼影）

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY / Live At The New Morning



In-akustik / INAK 9076 2CD / 2006

2005年12月、パリにある老舗のジャズ・クラブ、ニュー・モーニングで行なわれたステージを収録した2枚組ライヴ・アルバム。

ジョン・エサリッジのソロ「アッシュ」やソフト・マシーンの「4」収録の「キング・アンド・クイーン」などの演奏を味わうことができる。また映像を収録したDVDも同時リリースされているので、当時の彼らの姿を見ることもできる。エサリッジやジョン・マーシャルの白熱のドラム・ソロなど聴きドコロいっぱいのアルバムは、ソフト・マシーン・ファンなら持っていたい1枚だ。06年2月8日にエルトン・ディーンが急逝してしまったため、本作は彼の追悼盤となってしまった。（岩本）

SOFT MACHINE ALBUMS

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY / Steam



Moonjune / MJR016 / 2007

エルトン・ディーンの他界により、ジョン・エサリッジ(G)、セオ・トラヴィス(Sax、Fl)、ヒュー・ホッパー(B)、ジョン・マーシャル(Ds)の4人となってリスタートを切ったソフト・マシーン・レガシーが07年に発表したセカンド・アルバム。

レコーディングはイギリスのサリー州テンプルにあるテンプル・スタジオ。このスタジオは、コロシアム~テンペストのドラマーとして活躍したジョン・ハイズマン所有で、アルバムのエンジニアをハイズマン自身が手がけている。

アルバムの内容は前作を踏襲したもので、随所に現れる70年代のソフト・マシーンを彷彿とさせるサウンドにはグッとくるファンも少なくないだろう。(岩本)

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY / Live Adventures



Moonjune / MJR036 / 2011

エルトン・ディーンに続き、ヒュー・ホッパーまでも失ったソフト・マシーン・レガシーが、ロイ・バビントンを迎えて09年にオーストリアとドイツで行なったパフォーマンスを収録したライヴ・アルバム。メンバーは、ジョン・エサリッジ(G)、セオ・トラヴィス(Sax、Fl)、ロイ・バビントン(B)、ジョン・マーシャル(Ds)の4人。

ソフト・マシーンの「ソフツ」収録の「ゾングス・オブ・アイオロス」、「アライヴ&ウェル」で聴ける「ザ・ノッダー」などの楽曲は、古き良きソフト・マシーンの時代へと導いてくれるが、同時に攻撃的なインプロヴィゼーションは21世紀における進行形としてのソフト・マシーンの姿も伝えてくれる。(岩本)

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY / Burden Of Proof



Moonjune / MJR052 / 2013
ディスクユニオン / DUCT014 / 2013.5.29

1.Burden Of Proof / 2.Voyage Beyond Seven / 3.Kitto / 4.Pie Chart / 5.JSP
6.Kings And Queens / 7.Fallout / 8.Going Somewhere Canorous? / 9.Balck And Crimson / 10.The Brief / 11.Pump Room / 12.Green Cubes / 13.They Landed On A Hill

前作『スティーム』から6年ぶりに発表された3枚目のオリジナル・アルバム。大筋で前作、前々作と同じ方向性を持っているが、70年代のソフト・マシーンが持っていた"プログレッシヴ・ティスト"も味わえる嬉しい1枚となった。純粋なジャズでもなくビートの効いたロック・サウンドでもないカンタベリー・サウンドは、だからこそ時代に流されず多くのファンに長い間にわたって愛され続けてきたに違いない。そしてワイルド・フラワーズに始まり、ソフト・マシーン、キャラヴァン、エッグ、カーン、ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース、ナショナル・ヘルスと幾重にも分かれた源泉が、45年の時を越えて再び一つの点で交わる時、やはりその核となるのはソフト・マシーンであり、13年の現時点では本作ではないかと感じる。枯れることによって味わい深くなるジャズでもなく、シンフォニックに突き進むプログ・ロックでもない彼らのサウンドは、止まったり進んだりするゼンマイ仕掛けの時計のように気まぐれだ。新しくて古い、古くて新しいカンタベリー・シーンは、21世紀になってもすこしずつ増殖しているようだ。70年テイストと現在の空気感が混ざりあった本作が、それを物語っているようだ。(岩本)

SOFT MACHINE ALBUMS

カンタベリー・シーンと呼ばれて

岩本晃市郎

これまで何人かのカンタベリー系と呼ばれるアーティストにインタヴューを試みてきたが、彼らはカンタベリー・サウンドやそれについて聞くといつも妙な顔をする。まるで〝カンタベリーって何?〟というように。そして話がなぜ多くのグループが長続きしないのか、またどうしてメンバー・チェンジを繰り返すのか、ということになると、また同じように〝それがどうした?〟という顔をする。ジョン・マーシャルも、ジョン・エサリッジも、デイヴ・シンクレアも、リチャード・シンクレアも、ディヴ・スチュアートも、ケヴィン・エアーズも、みんな同じ反応をする。彼らにとってはそんなことはどうでもよく、おそらく考えたこともなかったんだろう。それでも質問に対し確実に答えてくれたのは、ジョン・マーシャルとカール・ジェンキンスで、ジョン・マーシャルは、カンタベリー・サウンドについて、それは「ロックのドラマーがジャズをやった音楽」という明快な答えをくれた。カール・ジェンキンスと面会したのは、彼がアディエマスで成功を収めた後だったせいもあるが、ソフト・マシーンの再結成などにまったく関心がなく、どうも自身がカンタベリー・シーン出身と呼ばれるのも嫌らしい。

確かにカンタベリー・シーンやサウンドというのは、カンタベリー地方で生まれ育ったような錯覚に陥るが、実際にはそうではない。始まりは、ロバート・ワイアットの母親が経営するウェリントン・ハウスだったかもしれない。そこにケヴィン・エアーズが転がり込み、デヴィッド・アレンが間借りし、そうやってソフト・マシーンはでき



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1. KEVIN AYERS「Whatevershebringswesing」Harvest / SHVL 800 / 1972
2. GONG「Magick Brother」BYG / 529.305 / 1969

あがり、ヒュー・ホッパーやマイク・ラトリッジによるセッションが行われていたかもしれない。しかし、ケヴィンがイビザに行き、デヴィッド・アレンがフランスに止まったことによってカンタベリーの系譜は拡散してきたように思える。

やがてソフト・マシーンはファースト・アルバムをリリースするが、メンバーの相次ぐ脱退でグループは名前こそ同じだが、アルバムによって、時期によってまったく異なる方向性を示すことになる。始まりはウェリントン・ハウスでも、その源泉はワイルド・フラワーズでも、カンタベリー・シーンを、70年代ブリティッシュ・ロックの一角を成すまで押し上げたのも、そこに出入りするアーティストたちであり、表現の場としてのライヴ・ハウスなのだということがわかる。

カンタベリー系と呼ばれるグループの音がどこか共通しているのは、ある一定のミュージシャンがグループを作っては解散し、また新しいメンバーと新しいグループを作るからだ。ミュージシャンの顔ぶれは同じなので、たとえば、ベースとギターが同じとか、キーボードとドラムスが同じとか、という組み合わせは、まったく別の音楽を生み出すことはない。だから彼らを一つの集団として考えれば、つまりカンタベリー・シーンという30人編成のグループと考えれば、いろいろと理にかなった理論が展開できるはずだ。

しかし、ケヴィン・エアーズによればカンタベリー・サウンドは初期のソフト・マシーンに集約されるという。その理由は初期ソフト・マシーンには音楽以外のいろいろなカルチャーが詰まっているからだ。すでにケヴィンは他界し、二度と話すことは叶わないが、カンタベリー・サウンドとは初期ソフト・マシーンそのものを示していると言いたかったのではないだろうか。カンタベリーで出会ったアーティストたちが作り上げたカルチャーがその後様々なアーティストにまで影響を及ぼし、その結果、ヘンリー・カウやスラップ・ハッピーまでをも巻き込むさらに大きなシーンとなって現れることを考えれば、ケヴィンの言ったことは妄想や思い込みではない。

アラン・ホールズワースはUKを脱退する時に、ライヴではレコードと同じ演奏をしてほしいと願うエディ・ジョブソンに向かって言った。〝どうして毎晩同じメンバーと同じ演奏をしなければならないのか〟と。彼の発言にカンタベリーの離合集散の歴史が見え隠れするようだ。



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4

1. V.A. [V] Virgin / VD 2502 / 1975
2. HENRY COW [The Henry Cow Legend] Virgin / V 2005 / 1973
2. SLAPP HAPPY [Slapp Happy] Virgin / V 2014 / 1974
4. STEVE HILLAGE [Fish Rising] Virgin / V 2031 / 1975

デイヴ・シンクレアは語る

インタヴュー＝ミカエル・ビョルン
訳＝池田聡子

ロバート・ワイアットに対して、大きくて、今日まで続くしっかりとした賞賛があったにも関わらず、デイヴ・シンクレアは、マッチング・モウルという音楽のるつぼのような場所では全く居心地のよさを感じなかった。それでも実験音楽とジャズが、唯一無二とも言える彼のファズ・オルガンに出会うとき、彼らの音楽はもっとも明るく輝いている。デイヴのプレイは、「Part Of The Dance」と、ソフト・マシーン的なサウンドの「Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening」の複雑性にメロディックな要素を加える。「Instant Kitten」でのシンクレアは、ソロでもメロディ・ラインの演奏でも、『ウォーターフルー・リリー』時代のキャラヴァンがもう作り出すことのできなかったクラシックなサウンドを生み出している。デイヴは、オルガンをカンタベリー・ミュージックの特徴的なサウンドに変えただけではなく、キャラヴァンのクラシック曲「For Richard」や「Nine Feet Underground」「The Dabsong Conshirtoe」を作り出した。彼はまたマッチング・モウルの「オー・キャロライン」を書き、ポップ・ヒストリーに貢献している。だからロバート・ワイアットが〝デイヴはピアノを弾き、そして僕はドラムを叩く。僕たちは音楽を動かし、いくらか楽しみがあるようにしよう〟といって歌を始める理由があるのだ。その理由を見つけだそう。

●

――あなたは、ロバート・ワイアットのソロ・アルバム『ジ・エンド・オブ・アン・イアー』でプレイしています。それがマッチング・モウルへの参加に繋がったのですか？

「実は、『ジ・エンド・オブ・アン・イアー』への参加についてはあまりよく覚えていないんだ。だけど弾いていることは確かだ。しばらくしてロバートは僕に連絡してきて、ソフト・マシーンと録った〈6月の月〉のデモを僕に送ってきた。彼は、すべてのキーボード・パートを僕に弾いてほしかったんだ。だけどデモを聴いたとき、僕は、マイク・ラトリッジの演奏の方が素晴らしいと本当に思っていた。だから僕はロバートにそう言ったんだ。それで実際にそれから何も起こらなかったんだ」

――あなたがキャラヴァンと行なった最後のものは何だったんですか？

「1971年8月、ブランプトン・レースコースで行なわれた大きなフェスティヴァルの後、僕はキャラヴァンを去った。そのフェスティヴァルで覚えているのは、僕は何かするためにフェスティヴァルのエリアから出たんだけど、自分のパスを持って出なかったから、再入場させてもらえなかったってこと。そこの人に〝実は僕は20分くらいでステージに出るんだ〟って言ったんだけど、彼らは〝ああ、わかっているよ。前にも同じことを言った奴がいるよ〟って答えたよ。結局僕は彼らを説得するのは諦めて、通り抜けるために周囲のフェンスを突破したんだ。ステージに上がるつもりだったから、とにかく入らなきゃならなかったからね。だけどそれが僕がキャラヴァンを脱退した理由じゃないよ（笑）」

――キャラヴァン脱退がマッチング・モウルの参加に至ったきっかけだったんですか？

「マッチング・モウルに関する限り、多くの人たちは、バンドを結成するために、僕たちが計画して、ロバートはソフト・マシーンを脱退し、僕はキャラヴァンを脱けたと思っている。だけど僕からしてみれば、当時

ロバートがソフト・マシーンを脱退していたことさえ知らなかったんだ。だからそんな議論は全く意味のないことだよ」

――本当は何があったんですか？

「僕がキャラヴァンを脱退してから1週間くらいして、カンタベリーのザ・セヴン・スターズっていうパブでジョン・マーフィーと会ったんだ。彼は、すごく熱心に僕と一緒に何か仕事をしたがっていた。そして僕たちは彼がギターを弾いたり、彼の曲をたくさん書いて楽しんだ。だけど9月か10月くらいに、彼は、彼の姉妹が住んでいたポルトガル南部のファロにハネムーンに出発してしまった。そして愚かにも……僕は自分に何か起こっているかわからなかったけど、僕たちは音楽でうまくいっていると思っていたんだ……全課程をヒッチハイクしてファロまで行った。たどり着くまで8日間かかったよ。途中僕はほとんど餓死してしまいそうだった。だけど何か不思議な理由で、ロバート・ワイアットは僕がどこにいるか見つけ出した。彼は僕に〈至急戻れ。母国がきみを必要としている！　今バンドを作っている。そこでプレイしてほしい〉っていう電報を送ってきたんだ。これがそのとき起こったことさ。

僕はその後とても不思議な時を過ごした。僕が持っていた最後のなけなしのお金を失くしてしまったからだ。それは僕がヒッチハイクしながら帰るまでの食べ物などを買うのに必要な6ポンドくらいなものだった。しょうがないから代わりに、ジョン・マーフィーが戻ったとき、車でリスボンに連れていってもらったんだ。そこで僕は英国大使館に行って、基本的に本国に送還されることになった。ただ彼らは僕に少しお金をくれた。だから僕はイギリスに戻る前に、電車でパリに行って、友達と1日ほどそこに滞在したよ」

――イギリスに戻ったとき、どんなことがあったんですか？

「ロバートにコンタクトをとった。当時僕は、ケント北部の海岸を下った、テムズ川河口を見渡せる、僕の知り合いが所有しているとても大きな家に住んでいた。ロバートはその家にやってきて、僕に僕のピアノで僕の曲をすべてそこで弾いてほしいと言ったんだ。だから1曲ずつ自分の曲を演奏した。詩が付いているものが何曲かあって、その他のものには詩はついていなかった。そして何曲かは半分くらいしか完成していない詩がついていた。その頃、僕はごく稀に詩を書いていたんだ。それから僕はこの1曲を演奏した。彼は、〝その曲もう一度プレイできるかな？〟って言った。だから僕はもう一度演奏した。そして結果的にそれが〈オー・キャロライン〉になったんだ。僕たちはそれを録って、デモ・テープを作ったんだ」

――レコーディング・セッションはどんな感じでしたか？

「12月か1月だったと思う。スタジオとても寒かったんだけど、実際そこにはちゃんとした暖房は何もなくて、小さな電気で暖めるものがあっただけだった。とても大きいスタジオだったのに、その全体を暖めるためにあったのは1つか2つの電熱線みたいなものだけだった。それで僕たちはみんな手袋をはめていた……ミトンをつけてキーボードを弾こうとしていたんだ！」

――現在、ロバート・ワイアットとの関係はどうなっているんですか？

「若い頃は、ものごとをそれほどよく考えずにやってしまうものさ。僕が自分のアルバム『Dream』のレコーディングをするために彼と会ったとき、ほぼ40年後にもう一度ロバートと一緒に仕事をするのは、僕にとってとてもいいことだった。僕たちは、アルバムに収録される楽曲をレコーディングしただけではなく、他のものもたくさんレコーディングした。面白いことに、今僕はリーダーで、彼がすべきことを彼に伝えなければならなかった。僕は、前もって彼にデモを送ったんだけど、彼はそれを全然聴いていなかったから、僕たちは最初からやらなければならなかった。だけどロバートは驚くほど才能のある人で、ブルースからジャズまで多彩な音楽的なバックグラウンドを持っているんだ」

MATCHING MOLE / Matching Mole　そっくりモグラ



CBS / 64850 / 1972
ソニー / SICP-30321 [Blue-specCD2, 紙] / 2013.7.24

1.O Caroline / 2.Instant Pussy / 3.Signed Curtain / 4.Part Of The Dance / 5.Instant Kitten / 6.Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening / 7.Beer As In Braindeer / 8.Immediate Curtain
Bonus Tracks
9.O Caroline (Single Version) / 10.Signed Curtain (Single Version) / 11.Signed Curtain (Take Two) / 12.Part Of The Dance (Take One) / 13.Memories Membrane / 14.Horse / 15.Sandwich
※曲目データ：ソニー / SICP-30321

アルバム冒頭を飾るカンタベリー史上最高の名曲「オー・キャロライン」のイメージに隠れがちであるが、実はインプロヴィゼーション主体の楽曲が大半を占める極めて前衛的な作品だ。ベースとワイアットのスキャットから成り立つ2曲目を経てピアノの美しいコード進行から始まる3曲目の歌詞は、「これが最初のヴァースです／次はブリッジ、あるいはサビです」といったデモ・テープ並みの言葉で綴られている。キメの応酬が頻発するインスト・ナンバーはともかくとして、不気味なメロトロンの音色が渦を巻くラスト・ナンバーに至っては何らかの実験的な試みがなされていたのではないかと推測できるものだ。本作のような遊びごころと探究心に満ち溢れたサウンドこそが、ジャズの方法論に縛られつつあったマシーンを抜けてワイアットがやりたかったことだったのだろう。ワイアットのポップ・センスに惹かれてキャラヴァンから移籍してきたデヴィッド・シンクレアは、のちに「もっとメロディ重視の歌ものをやりたかった」と回顧しているが、あくまでもワイアットが望んでいたのはマシーンと肩を並べるアヴァンギャルド・ミュージックだったことは、マシーンのフランス語読みをもじったバンド名にも表れている。

MATCHING MOLE / Matching Mole's Little Red Record　そっくりモグラ毛語録



CBS / 65260 / 1972
ソニー / SICP-30322 [Blue-specCD2, 紙] / 2013.7.24

後年にドラマーとしての自身に対するワイアットであるが、それは間違いであることが本作を聴けば理解できる。前作ではゲスト扱いだったデイヴ・マクレエ(K)が加入し、彼のジャズ寄りのプレイと本作ではソングライティングに加わらずドラマーとしての側面を強調したワイアットが細かくリズムを刻みながらタムを連打して繰り出すパルスによって、ポップでアヴァンギャルドで躍動的なジャズ・ロックが生まれたのだ。これはロバート・フリップのプロデュース・ワークによるものも大きかったのではないだろうか。フィル・ミラー(G)は「ミックスでギターの音量を下げられた」と不満気だったらしいが……。

ROBERT WYATT / The End Of An Ear



CBS / 64189 / 1970
ソニー / SICP-30323 [Blue-specCD2, 紙] / 2013.7.24

「6月の月」の歌詞をライヴでは大幅に改変して歌っていた当時のワイアットにとって、歌詞の内容はあまり重要ではなかったのかもしれない。ソフト・マシーン在籍時に制作した初のソロ・アルバムは全編で彼のヴォーカリゼーションと派手なドラミングを聴くことができるが、それらはすべてスキャットであり、しかもその多くはテープ速度の変更によって加工されている。ギル・エヴァンスのカヴァーはともかくとして、曲名の多くは仲間内の固有名詞をもじったものだ。本作に漂うリラックスしたムードと、すべてのモノに意味はないけれども面白い、といった世界観は、シリアス一辺倒になりつつあったマシーンへのアンチテーゼだった。

●解説：鬼形 智

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

ROBERT WYATT / Rock Bottom



Virgin / V 2017 / 1974

落下事故により下半身不随となったワイアットは、入院期間中に自身のドラマー生命が絶たれた事実と対峙し、本作の収録曲を作り始めたという。突然の不幸で味わったロック・ボトム＝どん底からの生還と、愛すべき妻との出会いによる精神的な救済、そしてピンク・フロイドのニック・メイスン（プロデュース）やマイク・オールドフィールド、フレッド・フリス、ヒュー・ホッパー、リチャード・シンクレアらカンタベリー仲間たちの支援を受けての復活。それらの劇的な出来事を感じさせず淡々としたナチュラルな姿勢で楽曲が紡がれていくからこそ、本作は多くの人々の心を打つのだ。これほどまで"喪失感"を美しく昇華した音楽はない。

ROBERT WYATT / Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard



Virgin / V 2034 / 1975

ヘンリー・カウ一派との親交を深め社会主義運動へ傾倒しつつあった時期に制作された復活第2弾。ジャズ・ベーシストの巨匠チャーリー・ヘイデンの「ソング・フォー・チェ」（†革命家チェ・ゲバラのこと）のカヴァーといったシリアスな楽曲と、ワイアットならではの微妙にねじれたユーモア・センスが交錯する作風には前作のような儚い美しさは薄れたが、決してクオリティは引けを取っていない。というよりも、マッチング・モウルが続いていたならばワイアットは本作のような音楽をやりたかったのではないかと想わせる部分もある。ちなみに、ルースは女性カメラマンで、リチャードは当時のヴァージン・レーベル・オーナーのこと。

ELTON DEAN / Elton Dean (Just Us)



CBS / 64539 / 1971
ソニー / SICP-30324〔Blue-specCD2、紙〕/ 2013.7.24

ソフト・マシーン在籍時にリリースされたエルトン・ディーン初のリーダー・アルバム。マシーンの『5』に参加したフィル・ハワードがドラムスを叩いていることもあって、『5』アナログA面のリズムをさらにスウィングし、インプロヴィゼーション・パートを引き伸ばした正統なブリティッシュ・ジャズに仕上がっている。ラトリッジ&ホッパー組が推しすすめる構築型ジャズ・ロックと現代音楽路線に対し、あくまでもフリー・ブロウイングを主張したディーンが、のちに「今のマシーンは刺激が足りない」という理由で脱退するのも納得できる内容だ。サクセロという変形サックスへの電気的音色処理も控えめで、独特な生音が堪能できる。

HUGH HOPPER / 1984



CBS / 65466 / 1973
ソニー / SICP-30325〔Blue-specCD2、紙〕/ 2013.7.24

ベーシストとして一流だけでなく秀でた作曲能力も備えていたヒュー・ホッパーは、それゆえにマシーン随一のアヴァンギャルド推進者であった側面が忘れられがちだ。したがって、73年リリースのホッパー初ソロ・アルバムをジャズ・ロック系ベーシストとしての彼を期待して聴くと、最初は当惑してしまうかもしれない。すべての楽曲タイトルにミニマル・ミュージックの〈Mini〉を冠した本作は、ベースの多重録音やエレクトロニック・ノイズのコラージュが渦を巻く前衛的なナンバーが大半を占めているからである。ソフト・マシーンが毒を秘めたアヴァン・ロック・バンドだったのは、ホッパーの存在が大きかったことを再認識できる作品。

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

INTERVIEW

ザ・リラティヴス・ウィズ・フィル・ミラー インタヴュー

THE RELATIVES WITH PHIL MILLER

インタヴュー＝ミカエル・ビョルン
訳＝池田聡子

リラティヴズは、1988年、ピブ・パイルの幼なじみのジャック・モンクと、オランダ人キーボーディスト、ウィレム・ヤン・ドローグによって結成されたグループだ。

ジャックは、ピブと、スティーヴとフィルのミラー兄弟とともにデリヴァリーのオリジナル・メンバーだった人物であり、また1972年には、シド・バレットとトゥインクとともに悲運のスーパーグループ、スターズも結成している。一方のウィレムは、オランダでカンタベリーのバンドとコンサートを行なったヘンク・ウェルトフレーデンと一緒にスリップオーヴァーでプレイしていた。

けれども、リラティヴズのデビュー・アルバム『Trans Europe Connection』は、2007年まで世に出ることはなかった。カンタベリーのテイストを漂わせた素晴らしいポップ・ジャズが満載だったが、あまりインパクトはなかった。けれどもこの夏、リラティヴズ・レコーズからニュー・アルバム『Virtually』がリリースされると、状況は変わってくるかもしれない。

バンドにはフィル・ミラーが加入し、ゲスト・ヴォーカリストとしてリチャード・シンクレアが参加している。それにもまして、サックスとフルート奏者のマーク・ハドリーが、70年代のカンタベリー・シーンにあっても不思議ではない、非常に純度の高いカンタベリー・メロディをいくつか提供している。カンタベリー・コネクションについてもっと知るために、マークの話を聞くことにした。

●

――リラティヴズはどのように結成されたのでしょうか？

「ウィレムは建築家になっていた。1988年、彼はロンドンでの建築プロジェクトのために数ヶ月過ごす必要があって、ヘンク・ウェルトフレーデンを通じてフィル・ミラーと連絡をとったんだ。フィルはたまたま

ジャック・モンクが自分の家の部屋を賃貸していることを知っていて、ウィレムとジャックが繋がることになった。

彼らが共通してカンタベリーに関心があるとわかったとき、ウィレムとジャックはいくつかの楽曲を一緒に書くことにした。僕はすでにジャックのバンドの一つでプレイしていた。だからジャックは、僕に関わりたいかって聞いたんだ。僕はイエスって言ったよ。僕たちはロッテルダムに行くことになった。そこでウィレムの友達が集まって、バンドを結成したんだ。僕たちはデモを何曲かレコーディングして、オランダでギグをやり始めた。そこからオランダとベルギーでツアーを続けたんだ」

――最初の年にすでにフル・アルバムをレコーディングしています。それは完成しなかったのですか？

「間違いなくレコーディングは終了したよ。素晴らしいアタリ・コンピュータが出た1989年くらいだった。これは基本的に僕の最初のコンピュータだったよ。このMIDIコンピュータ・システムのおかげで非常に複雑なものを本当に簡単に組み立てることができた。だからロンドンの僕のホーム・スタジオで制作した『Relativity』というタイトルの最初のCDでは、本当にたくさんのMIDIのプログラミングを使った。ただジャズではないことがわかったから、オランダ側が承認しなかったんだと思う」

――リラティヴズでの活動をもう一度始めたのは実際にはいつだったんでしょうか？

「2004年くらいに僕たちは再び集まった。ジャックと僕は、ロッテルダムまでまた旅をしていた。そして僕たちは『Trans Europe Connection』というスタジオ・アルバムを作ったんだ。数年後、僕たちはロッタルダムでのステージの一つを本格的にライヴ・レコーディングするというチャンスを得た。それで『Live In Rotterdam』というライヴ・アルバムを制作したんだ。

2011年くらいにジャックはまた、イン・カフーツで『Conspiracy Theories』を作った後にちょっと休みをとっていたフィル・ミラーと連絡をとった。そしてリハーサルを行なうのにロッテルダムに誘って、僕たちと2〜3回コンサートを行なったんだ」

――ドラマーにちょっと不満を持っていたのではないのですか？

「ああ。僕たちはいつもドラマーに問題を抱えていて、当時、僕たちのドラマーとそれ以上続けることができない状況だった。この頃ジャックがア・ビーチ・シュプリームという僕のクァルテットとステージを行なうために、僕が住んでいるコンウォールに来たんだ。彼はドラマーのダミアン・ロッドに会って、とても感銘を受けた。二人は非常にうまくいって、ジャックは、ダミアンと一緒に仕事をするのが僕たちにとって大きいと思ったんだ。それでリラティヴズの活動を、オランダから、イギリスをベースにすることにシフトすることにした。

僕たちはジャックが書いていた3曲の制作をスタートした。それから僕たちはフィル・ミラーにミックスしたものをいくつか送って、〝このプロジェクトに参加したいと思うか？〟ということを聞いたんだ。彼が〝イエス〟って言ってくれたとき、僕た

ちは何かが進んでいるのを感じたよ」

――フル・アルバムにはどのように発展させていったのでしょうか？

「さらに数曲入れることを決めた。もともとの計画は4曲入りEPを作る予定だったんだけど、去年の10月くらいに6曲の制作に入っていた。それから僕たちはロッテルダムのライヴ・レコーディングから可能性を見出していた〈Stately Waltz〉という曲を選んだ。それに改良を加えて使うことにしたんだ。そうやって7曲用意することができた。最後に……数年前に僕が書いて、常にカンタベリー的なところがあると感じていた〈On My Mind〉という曲があったんだ。ジャックはそれを本当に気にいってくれていたから、僕は彼のためにラフなデモを作った。

それから正式なヴァージョンをレコーディングして、クリスマス頃、フィルに送った。そして彼に言ったんだ。〝もし気に入ってくれたら、この曲にギターを入れることができる。だけどたぶん僕たちはロバート・ワイアットかリチャード・シンクレアがこの曲を歌うことを考えてくれるかどうか、彼らに聞くべきじゃないのかな？〟って。フィルはイタリアにいるリチャードに電話して、聞いてくれた。リチャードは〝ああ、もちろん。気に入ったよ〟って言ってくれた。リチャードは、歌をもらって2ヶ月後にはイタリアからファイルを送り返してくれたんだ。僕たちは、ワーク・ステーションのメイン・プロジェクトにそれを加えた。完璧だったよ。そして僕たちは、僕が長い長い間聴いてきた一番カンタベリー的な曲を手に入れたんだ」

――「Spaghetti」という曲はどのように生まれたのですか？

「フィルにギターを入れてもらおうというアイデアが浮かぶ前、ジャックにはおそらく完成形のヴァージョンを作り上げるまでかなり長い道程があったんだろう。ところが実は僕には自分の曲をやり始める頃には、もっと早い段階でフィルに参加してもらうチャンスがすでにあったんだ。だから実際には僕は、フィルがプレイしてくれるように〈Spaghetti〉という曲を書いたんだ。これも僕が数年前から持っていたテーマだった。この曲は、ある種ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースに対する敬意だといつも感じていた。フィルは、僕が彼にこんなふうにプレイしてほしいと思ったように本当に演奏してくれた。だから本当にうまくまとまっていると思うんだ」

――「Spaghetti」はアルバムの中でも傑出した1曲だと思います。

「きみが〈Spaghetti〉を際立った曲と考えているのは興味深い感想だと思う。ただ、僕がこれまで制作したあらゆる作品の中でももっとも熱烈な評価を受けたのは、〈On My Mind〉なんだ。僕は、それを〈ザ・ロッターズ・クラブ〉の本を書いたジョナサン・コーに送ったんだ。彼は気に入ってくれて、何人かの友達に送ってくれた。その中の一人が、スチュアート・マコニーで、BBCラジオ6の彼の番組〈Freak Zone〉でかけてくれた。だから僕個人としてはこの曲が傑出した作品だと思う。僕の考えでは、フィルとリチャードが参加して、こんなラヴリーなことをしてくれたこと自体が

素晴らしいと思うんだ。彼らは僕が10代の頃のアイドルだったんだから。だから彼らが実際に何かをやってくれたことは、僕の人生において、驚くべき経験なんだよ」

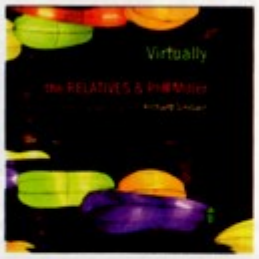
――アルバムの最初の2曲は、非常にスティーリー・ダンの流れにある曲ですね。

「長い間かかったけど、ジャックとウィレムと僕は、カンタベリーは別にして、自分たちのもう一つの繋がりはスティーリー・ダンだということがわかった。僕は、ジャズやその他の影響を融合させようとする曲の形は、スティーリー・ダンがカンタベリーとつながる部分だと思うんだ。そうすると、歌なんだけど、もっとシンフォニックになったもの、もしくは基本的にインプロヴィゼーションのための手段であると考えて、こうしたハイブリッドなものになってしまうんだ」

――今後の予定を教えてください。

「リチャード・シンクレアは、僕といくつかの作品を一緒にやりたいと思ってくれている。そして僕たちも彼といくつか作品を一緒にやりたいと思っている。だからおそらく二つの異なるプロジェクトをやることになるだろう。リチャードはアルバムを作りたいと思っていて、僕はリラティヴズのアルバムをもう一枚作りたいと思っている。それから僕はソフト・マシーン・レガシーのジョン・エサリッジを知ってるんだ。僕たちは何度か一緒にプレイした。僕の望みの一つは、ジョン・エサリッジをフィーチャーした作品を何曲か作るっていうことなんだ！」

THE RELATIVES & PHILL MILLER
Virtually



RelativesRecords (Order CD with 4 tracks)
http://www.relativesrecords.com/
2013

1.Going Down / 2.Leading the Fight / 3.Stately Waltz / 4.When? / 5.Spaghetti / 6.New Down / 7.New Ship In Town / 8.On My Mind

ザ・リラティヴズは伝説のアーティストによるビックリ仰天のグループだ。ビブ・バイルと親交が深く（幼なじみ）、あのシド・バレットとトゥインクが結成したスターズのメンバーだったジャック・モンクが、フィル・ミラーに加え、リチャード・シンクレアまでをも巻き込んで作り上げた集団だからだ。本作は彼らが2013年6月にリリースしたばかりの新作で、参加メンバーのビッグ・ネームに押しつぶされることのない素晴らしいジャズ・ロックを聴かせてくれる。ザ・リラティヴズの結成は1988年でデビュー作は07年に発表した「Trans Europe Connection」。11年にはフィル・ミラーをゲストに迎え、ロッテルダムで行なわれたライヴを収録した「Live In Rotterdam with special guest Phil Miller」をリリースしている。それにしてもなんという軽快さだろう。出たしから70年のカンタベリー・シーンにタイム・スリップだ。重鎮リチャード・シンクレアが参加しているのは「On My Mind」のみだが、この1曲でこのアルバム価値はグンと上がっていることは間違いない。カンタベリー・サウンド健在なり!!（岩本）

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH / Hatfield And The North



Virgin / V 2008 / 1973
EMIミュージック / VJCP-98006 [SHM-CD, 紙]

カンタベリー・ミュージックの金字塔的バンド。キャラヴァンのリチャード・シンクレア、スティーヴ・ミラー、マッチング・モウルのフィル・ミラー、ビブ・バイルらによって結成。ミラーが脱退し、デイヴ・スチュアートが加入。本作は73年にリリースされたデビュー作。カンタベリーらしいユーモアとウィットに富んだお遊びがジャジーでポップ、どこかノスタルジックな雰囲気と相まって唯一無二のサウンドを奏でる。それでいて非常に緻密に計算され練り上げられた楽曲とテクニカルな演奏で魅了する。ロバート・ワイアットも参加し、「ケリックス」で素晴らしいヴォーカルをきかせる。女性コーラスのザ・ノーセッツも素晴らしい。（祖父尼）

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH / The Rotters' Club



Virgin / V 2030 / 1975
EMIミュージック / VJCP-98007 [SHM-CD, 紙]

1.Share It / 2.Lounging There Trying / 3.(Big) John Wayne Socks Psychology On The Jaw / 4.Chaos At The Greasy Spoon / 5.The Yes No Interlude / 6.Fitter Stoke Has A Bath / 7.Didn't Matter Anyway / 8.Underdub / 9.Mumps: (i) Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut (Quiet), (ii)Lumps, (iii)Prenut, (iv)Your Majesty Is Like A Cream Donut (Loud)

カンタベリー・ミュージックに燦然と輝く金字塔。カンタベリー・シーン最高のメンバーが揃ったスーパーバンド。75年リリースのセカンド。前作はカンタベリーらしいユーモアとウィットに富んだお遊び的な感覚がジャジーでポップ、どこかノスタルジックな雰囲気と相まっておもちゃ箱的な雑多感を醸していた。本作では整理され上品で洗練されたものとなっている。緻密に練り上げられた楽曲展開とテクニカルなアンサンブルが巧みに織り交ぜられ、誇大妄想的な世界観を官能的な美しさでもって作り上げられている。まさに唯一無二の世界だ。シンクレアのヴォーカルが冴える軽快な「シェアー・イット」から彼らの世界が目まぐるしく流れるように展開していく。そしてミラーのうねるメロディアスなギター、スチュアートの独特のオルガンとエレピによる知的なキーボード、タイトでテクニカルなリズム・セクション、管楽器や美しいザ・ノーセッツの女性コーラスがゆったりと溶けあっていく。「ディドゥント・マター・エニウェイ」の珠玉バラード、心地よさが駆け抜けていく「アンダーダブ」、20分に渡る壮大な「マンブス」組曲など煌めく知的な感性に溢れたサウンドはいつ聴いても新たな発見がある極上の音楽。（祖父尼）

KHAN / Space Shanty　宇宙の船乗り歌



Deram / SDL-R 11 / 1972
ユニバーサル / UICY-20133 [SHM-CD]

エッグの前身バンド、ユリエル（アーザケル）に在籍し、大学進学のためにエッグを離れたヒレッジが71年に結成したバンド。クレイジー・ワールド・オブ・アーサー・ブラウンにいてのちにソロ作を出すニコラス・グリーンウッドらがメンバー。ゲストとしてデイヴ・スチュアートが参加（のちにエッグ解散後正式加入するも解散）。のちのヒレッジの方向性を窺わせるサイケデリックでスペーシーなカンタベリー・ジャジー・プログレの傑作。スチュアートの歪んだオルガンとヒレッジのうねるギターがめくるめく宇宙幻想を繰り広げていく。メロディアスでサイケな感触はまさにカンタベリー・サウンドの黎明期を感じさせる。（祖父尼）

●解説：岩本晃市郎／祖父尼淳／松井巧

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

ARZACHEL / Arzachel



Evolution / Z 1003 / 1969

エッグの前身ユリエルから発展したアーザケルの唯一作。スティーヴ・ヒレッジ(G、Vo)、モント・キャンベル(B、Vo)、デイヴ・スチュアート(K)、クライヴ・ブルックス(Ds)の4人で結成。ヒレッジが抜けた後エッグと改名。ヒレッジはのちにカーンを結成。カヴァー時代のユリエルから進歩し、アーザケルはオリジナル曲を演奏。ワイルド・フラワーズと並びカンタベリー・シーンの源流とされる。サウンド的にはサイケデリックなアート・ロックで暗くヘヴィなサウンドが特徴。その後のエッグへ繋がる方向性を確認できる。スチュアートのオルガンやヒレッジのギターは若々しさを感じる勢いのあるもので、すでに聴き応えがある。(祖父尼)

EGG / Egg



Deram Nova / (S)DN 14 / 1970

デイヴ・シンクレアと並び、カンタベリー・シーンを代表するキーボーディストの1人、デイヴ・スチュアートのバンド。前身バンドはユリエルで、デイヴ・スチュアート、モント・キャンベル、クライヴ・ブルックス、そしてスティーヴ・ヒレッジの4人。ヒレッジが大学進学のため脱退し、エッグとなる。スチュアートのオルガンを大きくフィーチャーしたオルガン・ロックだが、時代的にもサイケデリックなアート・ロック・テイストだ。彼らしい複雑かつ緻密に練り上げられた大仰な実験的サウンドがアグレッシヴかつ大胆に繰り広げられていく。クラシックの素養のあるキャンベルの影響もあるのかクラシカルな要素も強い。(祖父尼)

EGG / The Polite Force



Deram / SML 1074 / 1970

エッグの70年にリリースされたセカンド・アルバムで、クラシックやジャズなどが渾然一体となったプログレッシヴなサウンドは前作より格段の進歩を見せている。重厚でありながらカンタベリーらしいウィットが散りばめられたカンタベリー・シーンを代表する傑作。複雑で緻密な楽曲と整合感は見事でスチュアートとキャンベルの音楽的素養の豊かさを感じさせる。スチュアートのオルガンも後の特徴となる歪んだ音色も聴かせるようになり、場面場面で巧みに使い分けている。ギターの不在をオルガンで補うかのようだ。オーディションもやっていたようなので、ヒレッジの代わりはいないということで追求した結果なのだろう。(祖父尼)

EGG / The Civil Surface



Caroline / C 1510 / 1974

スチュアートがハットフィールド&ザ・ノースで活動中に一時的に再編され、ヴァージン傘下のキャロラインよりリリースされた3作目。ヘンリー・カウやハットフィールドのメンバーをゲストに迎えている。前作までの攻撃的で実験的なオルガン・ロックに加え、ハットフィールドでの経験を取り入れた音楽性はさらに緻密で実験的アヴァンな要素が色濃くなった作品だ。それぞれのメンバーの素養も感じさせるが、カンタベリーらしいウィットを随所に取り込んだサウンドは、カンタベリー・シーンを代表する作品といえる。ライヴでもオープニングに使用され、スチュアートがお気に入りだったという楽曲も収録。他にライヴ音源集もあり。(祖父尼)

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

SOFT HEAD / Rogue Element



Ogun / OG 527 / 1978

もともとはソフト・ヒープとしてヒュー・ホッパー、エルトン・ディーン、アラン・ガウエン、ピプ・パイルとして78年初頭に結成。78年5月のフランス・ツアーにパイルが参加できず、代わりにデイヴ・シーンが参加。メンバーの頭文字をとりソフト・ヘッドとして本ライヴ録音盤を残している。ソフト・マシーン系列とギルガメッシュ、ハットフィールド系列が合体した感じだが、サウンド的には即興演奏を重視したソフト・マシーン中期頃のジャズやフリー・ジャズ色が強い。緊張感溢れる求心力が彼らの充実ぶりを示している。オープニングの「セヴン・フォー・リー」は印象的なテーマとディーンの白熱のサックスが素晴らしい名曲。（祖父尼）

SOFT HEAP / Soft Heap



Charly / CRL 5014 / 1979

カンタベリーの重鎮、ヒュー・ホッパー、エルトン・ディーン、アラン・ガウエン、ピプ・パイルが集まり78年初頭に結成。一時ソフト・ヘッドとなるも79年に本作を制作。ホッパーやディーンが彼らのソロ作等で披露していたフリー・ジャズをベースにフリーキーにたたみ掛ける。緊張感溢れるシリアスな内容だ。パイルも手数の多さは変わらないが、これまでの印象と異なるシリアスに暴れ回るドラムが印象的だ。そこにアラン・ガウエンのリリカルなエレピやシンセが華を添えるという彼らしいオリジナリティが炸裂する作品。82年にはディーン、パイル、マーク・ヒューインズ、ジョン・グリーヴスの編成で録音を残している。（祖父尼）

GILGAMESH / Gilgamesh



Caroline / CA 2007 / 1975

アラン・ガウエンを中心としたカンタベリー・ジャズ・ロック・バンド、ギルガメッシュのファーストでカンタベリー・シーンを代表する傑作。ガウエンの煌めくようなキーボードが特徴で、フィル・リーのメロディアスなギターにニュークリアスのジェフ・クライン（B）やマイク・トラヴィス（Ds）のスリリングなリズム・セクションが緻密なアンサンブルを奏でる。コミカルなジャケ・アートのようにサウンド自体もカンタベリーらしい軽やかなウィットに富んでおり、アマンダ・パーソンズのスキャットが華を添えている。心地よく耳に馴染むサウンドは、ガウエンの真骨頂だ。オープニング曲の素晴らしさは鏡舌に尽くし難い。（祖父尼）

GILGAMESH / Another Fine Tune You've Got Me Into



Charly / CRL 5009 / 1978

白血病で亡くなってしまうアラン・ガウエンのバンド、ギルガメッシュ、78年のセカンド。ベーシストが前作のジェフ・クラインからソフト・マシーンのヒュー・ホッパーへ交代しているが他のメンバーには変更はない。前作の延長線上にあり、より洗練された美しいカンタベリー・ジャズ・ロックの逸品に仕上がっている。ガウエンの優しく包み込むような煌めくキーボードや流れるようなメロディアスなフィル・リーのギターがやはり特徴で、得も言われぬ叙情性とファンタジックな佇まいが魅力だ。もちろんヒュー・ホッパーが参加しての独特のうねりとグルーヴを感じさせるリズム・セクションも秀逸だ。前作と合わせて聴きたい。（祖父尼）

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

NATIONAL HEALTH / National Health



Affinity / AFF 6 / 1978

ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース、マッチング・モウル、ギルガメッシュ、エッグなどのバンドに在籍した強者達が集結したいわばカンタベリーのスーパーバンド。デイヴ・スチュアート、フィル・ミラー、ピプ・パイル、ニール・マーレイを核にアラン・ガウエン、アマンダ・パーソンズ、ジミー・ヘイスティングスらが参加。本作は78年のデビュー作。ハットフィールドの発展系ともいうべきサウンドで、より緻密で複雑、ジャジーで力強いサウンドとなっている。テンションの高さは尋常ではない。もちろんカンタベリーらしいウィット感はあるが、ややシリアスに迫ってくる。カンタベリー・ジャズ・ロックの集大成的サウンドだ。（祖父尼）

NATIONAL HEALTH / Of Queues And Cures



Charly / CRL 5010 / 1978

カンタベリー・シーンのスーパーバンド、78年に早くもリリースされたセカンド。彼らの創作意欲はピークに達していたのではないかと思えるくらい2作の楽曲レヴェルや完成度は高い。ニール・マーレイが抜け、ヘンリー・カウのジョン・グリーヴスが加入。それによって同傾向ではあるが、前作以上にシリアスかつアグレッシヴな展開やインプロがスピーディに繰り広げられている。緊張感溢れるアンサンブルは究極のカンタベリー・ジャズ・ロックであろう。彼らの残した2作はカンタベリー・ジャズ・ロックの傑作である。この後、82年に再結成し、白血病で亡くなったアラン・ガウエンに捧げる「D.S.アル・コーダ」をリリースした。（祖父尼）

KEVIN AYERS / Joy Of A Toy　おもちゃの歓び



Harvest / SHVL 763 / 1969
ユニバーサル / TOCP-71551

ソフト・マシーンを脱退しイビザ島に向かったケヴィン・エアーズがその地で書いた楽曲をもって帰国し、旧知の仲間の協力を得て作り上げたのがソロ・デビュー作となるこの「おもちゃの歓び」だった。EMIが設立した新興レーベル、ハーヴェストから69年11月にリリースされている。ポップ、ジャズ・ロック、サイケデリック、フォークと多種多様な音楽で表現されるケヴィン・ワールドまるでユーモアとウィットに満ちあふれたサーカスのようだ。デヴィッド・ベッドフォード、ロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパー、マイク・ラトリッジらによるサウンドはまさに、これぞカンタベリーII シーンを代表する1枚だ。（岩本）

KEVIN AYERS & THE WHOLE WORLD / Shooting At The Moon　月に撃つ



Harvest / SHSP 4005 / 1970
ユニバーサル / TOCP-71552

ライヴ要員として集められたデヴィッド・ベッドフォード（G、K）、マイク・オールドフィールド（B、G）、ミック・フィンチャー（Ds）、ロル・コックスヒル（サックス）によるザ・ホール・ワールドなるバック・バンドを従えて制作されたセカンド・ソロ・アルバム。

デビュー作と比べかなり実験的な内容となった本作だが、もしかしたらこの作品にこそケヴィン・エアーズの本質があるのかもしれない。アルバムのトップを飾る「メイ・アイ」や「狂人の囁き」で聴くことのできるポップなテイストと、間に挿入されたインプロヴィゼーションの落差は、このアルバムで初めてケヴィンに触れたリスナーを惑わせるかも。（岩本）

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

CARAVAN / CARAVAN　キャラヴァン・ファースト・アルバム



リチャード・シンクレアやデイヴ・シンクレア、パイ・ヘイスティングスを中心に伝説のワイルド・フラワーズを母体に結成されたキャラヴァンはソフト・マシーンとともにその後のカンタベリー・ミュージック・シーン形成に重要な役割を果たしたバンドだ。彼らの記念すべき69年リリースのデビュー・アルバム。なんといっても英国の田園風景を彷彿させるパイとリチャードのジェントルで優しいヴォーカル、デイヴの独特の味わいを醸し出すオルガン、緻密ながら全体に漂う心地よい浮遊感は、サイケデリックなポップ感覚と相まってカンタベリー・ミュージックの原点ともいえるサウンドとなっている。ジャケット・アートも秀逸だ。（視父尼）

Verve Forecast / VLP 6011 / 1968
ユニバーサル / UICY-20053 [SHM-CD]

CARAVAN / In The Land Of Grey And Pink　グレイとピンクの地



名曲「リチャードのために」を収録した「キャラヴァン登場！」に続く71年リリースの3作目。カンタベリー・シーンのみならずブリティッシュ・ロックを代表する名盤である。アルバム・タイトルの「グレイとピンクの地」と淡いピンクを基調としたファンタジックなジャケ・アートを彷彿させる桃源郷の世界へと誘ってくれる。その水先案内となっているのがデイヴ・シンクレアによる独特の音色のオルガンと優しく語りかけるジェントリーなパイとリチャードのヴォーカルだ。適度にポップながらこれまで以上にメロディアスでプログレッシヴなサウンドは、カンタベリー・ミュージックの金字塔ともいうべき高い完成度を誇っている。（視父尼）

Deram / SDL-R 1 / 1971
ユニバーサル / UICY-20131 [SHM-CD]

CARAVAN / Waterloo Lily



名作「グレイとピンクの地」リリース後、熱狂的な支持を受けながらも商業的には満足のいくものではなかった。それによってバンド内での不和が始まり、デイヴ・シンクレアが脱退し、デリヴァリーにいたスティーヴ・ミラーが加入する。本作は72年にリリースされた4作目で彼らの新境地であり転換期を迎えた作品。ミラーの加入によってよりジャズやブルース色が強くなった。弟のフィル・ミラーも参加している。とはいえパイやコフランらしいこれまでの風変わりな作風の楽曲も多く、「ナッシング・アット・オール」や次作への布石となる管弦楽器を導入したパイの面目躍如たる「瞳の中の愛」といった名曲も収録している。（視父尼）

Deram / SDL 8 / 1972
ユニバーサル / UICY-20132 [SHM-CD]

CARAVAN / For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night　夜ごとに太る女のために



前作で方向性の違いが明らかになったことでリチャード・シンクレアらが脱退し、ジェフリー・リチャードソン（ヴィオラ）他が加入しての5作目。カンタベリー・シーンのみならずブリティッシュ・ロックの名盤として名高い。大々的な管弦楽器を導入し、ポップな効き易さも備えながらジャジーでシンフォニックなカンタベリー・ミュージックを構築している。「メモリー・レイン・ヒュー」、「いのしの館」、「ヒー・オール・ライト＝チャンス・オブ・ア・ライフタイム」などの名曲が満載だ。夜の帳が下りて、幻想夜話がひっそりと紡がれていくようなそんなミステリアスなムードが全体に漂っており、本作の格調高さを印象づけている。（視父尼）

Deram / SDL-R 12 / 1973

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

VARIOUS ARTIST / Canterburied Sounds　カンタベリー・サウンドの誕生



MSI / MSIG-0860 ~ 3 [4CD] / 2013.5.25

Disc 1: 1.Feelin', Reelin', Squealin' (Caravan) / 2.Mummie (Robert Wyatt & Brian Hopper) / 3.Da-Da-Dee/Bolivar Blues (Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt) / 4.Orientasian (Brian Hopper & Robert Wyatt) / 5.You Really Got Me (Wilde Flowers) / 6.Thinking Of You Baby (Wilde Flowers) / 7.Man In A Deaf Corner (Brian & Hugh Hopper) / 8.If I Ever Leave You (Zobe) / 9.Stop Me & Play One (Robert Wyatt) / 10.Piano Standards 1 (Mike Ratledge) / 11.Belsize Parked (Brian & Hugh Hooper) / 12.Summertime (Caravan)

Disc 2: 1.Carazobe (Caravan & Zobe) / 2.Instant Pussy (Robert Wyatt) / 3.Esther's Nose Job (Soft Machine) / 4.Moorish (Robert Wyatt & Brian Hopper) / 5.Summertime (Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt) / 6.Indian Rope (Zobe) / 7.Drum Solo (Robert Wyatt) / 8.Mirror For The Day (Pye Hastings) / 9.Love Song With Cello (Robert Wyatt) / 10.As I Feel I Die (Caravan) / 11.Where But For Caravan Would I (Caravan)

Disc 3: 1.Slow Walkin' Talk (Robert Wyatt&Jimi Hendrix) / 2.Frenetica (Mike Ratledge&Robert Wyatt) / 3.Idle Chat - Mike Ratledge (Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt) / 4.3/4 Blues Thing In F (Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt) / 5.More Idle Chat (Zobe) / 6.The Pieman Cometh (Zobe) / 7.Liu-Bo (Robert Wyatt, Brian & Hugh Hopper) / 8.Kansas City/Rip It Up (Brian & Hugh Hopper & Pete Lawson) / 9.That's Alright Mama (Brian & Hugh Hopper) / 10.Tanglewood Tails (Brian & Hugh Hopper & Robert Wyatt) / 11.The Big Show/Central Park West/Songs (Zobe) / 12.If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You (Caravan)

Disc 4: 1.Slow Walkin' Talk (Zobe) / 2.Some-Of-The-Time (Mike Ratledge) / 3.Ghosts (Robert Wyatt & Mike Ratledge) / 4.With An Ear To The Ground You Can Make It (Caravan) / 5.Dalmore Rode (Brian Hopper & Robert Wyatt) / 6.Piano Standards II (Mike Ratledge) / 7.Johnny B Goode (Wilde Flowers) / 8.Cecilian (Brian & Hugh Hopper,Mike Ratledge & Robert Wyatt) / 9.Austin Cambridge (Caravan)

ワイルド・フラワーズに在籍経験があり、ヒュー・ホッパーは実弟。ソフト・マシーンの2作目にも客演しているサックス奏者。69年からはベガーズ・ファームの一員として活動を行ないながら、メンバーの事故死により解散を余儀なくされ、そのまま音楽から足が遠のいた悲運の人がブライアン・ホッパーである。その後彼は、別の仕事に就いたが、のちに音楽活動を再開してヒューやロバート・ワイアットとも共演するなど、カンタベリーの記憶は彼の中で生き続けていたようだ。

そのブライアンが突然発表したのが、個人的に所有していた録音テープから掘り起こした未発表音源集である。98年に『カンタベリー・サウンズ』と題されたコンピレーションが第1集から4集まで、ヴォイスプリントを通じて発売されている。最近出た『カンタベリー・サウンドの誕生』は、それら計4タイトルを4枚組ボックスセットにまとめた事実上の復刻盤だ。

収録されているのは、ワイルド・フラワーズ、同バンドに関わっていたホッパー兄弟、ワイアット、マイク・ラトリッジ、バイ・ヘイスティングス等のソロ名義、キャラヴァン、ソフト・マシーンの最初期録音などである。

たとえば、第1集のオープニングを飾る「フィーリン、リーリン、スクイーリン」は、ソフト・マシーンのファースト・シングルを、キャラヴァンが地元カンタベリーで行なったギグでカヴァーしたライヴ・ヴァージョン。彼らがワイルド・フラワーズという同じバンドから派生した兄弟バンドだったことや、ジャズ・ロックのソフト・マシーンがとりわけ初期にポップな要素を強く持っていたことなどを再認識させる興味深いトラックといえるだろう。

もっとも古いのは62~63年頃のトラック「ミイラ」。拙いながらもミニマルなギター・リフとヴォイス・インプロヴィゼーションの構成はワイアットとブライアンによるもので、すでにこうした実験的なカンタベリー・サウンドの特徴が明確に表れていることには感動を覚える。ワイルド・フラワーズと同時期に活動していたもうひとつのバンド、ゾベはブルージーなライヴ演奏を繰り広げている。どれもかなり昔のプライベート録音なので音質を云々できるレヴェルではないが、のちの代表作群で聴ける曲のもとになったデモ・トラック、たとえばマッチング・モウルの「インスタント・プッシー」をワイアットがピアノと声で表現した音源などは、これ自体が素朴な点も含めて非常に美しい余韻をもった仕上がりとなっている。録音が年代順に並んでいないのは資料的な意味で難点だが、ブライアンは純粋に作品としての価値も強調したかったのだろう。（松井）

CANTERBURY SCENE ALBUMS

Speced



Cuneiform / RUNE 90 / 1996

69年ロンドンで開催されたマルチメディア・ショウのタイトルがそのままアルバム名。ワイアット、ラトリッジ、ヒュー・ホッパー、ゲストとしてブライアン・ホッパーをサックスに加えたクアルテットでという『ヴォリューム2』と同じ編成で制作された音楽は、バレリーナの前衛的な踊りとシンクロさせている。96年のCD化の際は、当時コンサートのテクニカル・コンサルタントをしていたボブ・ウールフォードが再編集を担当。ファンはステージで実演することを切望したが、実際にはインプロヴィゼーションの編集テープをステージでBGMのようにして流した。ヒューのコメントによると、オリジナルはもっと長いものだったそう。

Noisette



Cuneiform / RUNE 130 / 2000

70年1月4日、英クロイドン・フェアフィールド・ホールで行なわれたソフト・マシーンのコンサートは、全盛期のメンバーにとってもファンにとっても特別な意味をもっている。このときのラインナップは、ラトリッジ、ワイアット、ホッパー、ディーン、リン・ドブソンの5人。傑作『3』の2曲目に収録されている「スライトリー・オール・ザ・タイム」の中のパートが、本作収録の「ノイゼット」「バックワーズ」からとられている。つまり、ステージで演奏されたオリジナルの形が聴けるのだ。とくに「バックワーズ」でのドブソンのフルート・ソロは聴きもの。公式の録音なので音質が良好なのも資料的および作品的価値を高めている。

Backwards



Cuneiform / RUNE 170 / 2002

キュニフォームがこの編集盤を通じて表現したことがあるとすれば、ジャズ・ロックのスタイルを本格的に推し進めた『ヴォリューム2』からその完成へと辿りつく『3』に至る道のりを追うことだろう。1曲目から3曲目までは70年5月の終わりに録音されたロンドン公演。4曲目から6曲目までは69年11月の終わりに録音されたパリ公演。69年版の「フェイスリフト」が8分半ほどであるのに対し、70年版のそれは19分近くまで拡大された。最後に収録されている「ムーン・イン・ジューン」は68年のワイアットのみの多重録音によるスタジオ・デモ（米ツアー時、したがって歌詞の内容も問題）と、69年イングランドでのデモをつなげたもの。

Somewhere In Soho



Voiceprint / VP262CD / 2004

70年4月20日～25日の間に行なわれたロンドン・ロニー・スコッツ・クラブ公演を収めた未発表ライヴ集。『3』の1曲目に収録されていた「フェイスリフト」の編成が、ラトリッジ、ワイアット、ホッパー、ディーンのクアルテットに縮小した時期の演奏にあたる。ホッパーの所有テープから起こしたCDは音質がいまひとつだが、ディスク1、2にそれぞれ一晩の公演の前半と後半がそっくり収められており、『3』の完成に向けてバンドが試行錯誤していた様子を在りのまま状態で確認することができるのが特徴といえるだろう。スタジオ・ヴァージョンと比べるとここでのインプロヴィゼーションはより長く構成も異なっている。

◉解説：松井 巧

SOFT MACHINE ARCHIVE DISC

SOFT MACHINE & HEAVY FRIENDS



BBC In Concert 1971
Huarecords / HUX067 / 2005 / org.1993

71年3月11日、ライヴ番組"BBCイン・コンサート"のためにロンドン・パリス・シアターで収録されたステージ・パフォーマンス。『4』から『5』にかけての時期でハワードとワイアット、ホッパーとバビントンがひとつのバンドの中で同時に演奏している。『3』やエルトン・ディーンのリーダー作を含むメドレーにヴェテランのロニー・スコット他多くのゲストが加わり厚みのあるアンサンブルとソロを繰り広げているのも特徴だ。93年に『BBCラジオ1・ライヴ・イン・コンサート』のタイトルで発売されていたのと演奏は同内容だが、ここでは新たに、ジョン・ピールの冒頭MCが追加された。新タイトルもMC内の発言に由来。

Floating World Live



MoonJune / MJR007 / 2006

75年1月29日独ブレーメンで行なわれたラジオ・ブレーメン放送用音源で、CD化はムーンジューンレコードによる2006年が初。75年といえば、アラン・ホールズワースが加入し、ハーヴェスト移籍後初のオリジナル・アルバム『収束』を発表した頃であり、73年12月にスタートした同ラインナップにとっては絶頂期のライヴ・パフォーマンスということになる(同年3月にはそのホールズワースも脱退する)。ラトリッジのオルガンが大きく後退しているのはオリジナル・アルバム同様。そのぶんエレクトリック・ギターが強い存在感を示しているのも同様だが、いまとなっては彼のヴァイオリンが聴ける点にも注目すべきだろう。

Middle Earth Masters



Cuneiform / RUNE 235 / 2006

ロバート・ワイアットの評伝本を執筆していたマイケル・キング(リール・レコーディングス)が米コネティカット州で自転車修理工をしていたボブ・ウールフォード(別項参照)から入手したライヴ・テープによる編集盤。ソフト・マシーンのライヴ音源の中ではデヴィッド・アレン在籍時に次ぐ古さで、彼がフランスに足止めを喰って離脱を余儀なくされた後の67年9月、ロンドンのミドルアース、ラウンドハウス、チョークファームでの演奏を収録。純然たるトリオ、ケヴィン・エアーズが作曲面で主導権を握っている、マシーンの1作目で聴けるスタジオ・ヴァージョンをはるかに凌駕するパワー、など、非常に興味深い点が多い。

Grides



Cuneiform / RUNE 230/231 / 2006

CDとDVDの2枚組というソフト・マシーンのアーカイヴの中でもとりわけ質、量ともに充実した内容を誇る。CD収録は、70年10月25日アムステルダム公演。『4』の制作期間中に行なわれたオランダ・ツアーの最終日にあたり、2、3作目のレパートリーのほか、『4』に収録される『ヴァーチャリー』、ライヴでしか演奏されなかった曲など、全盛期と一括りにできないこの時期ならではの貴重なトラック群だ。DVDの方は、オランダ公演のおよそ5ヶ月後に収録されたTV番組『ビート・クラブ』のためのスタジオ・ライヴ。オリジナル・テープからのマスターという最良のテイクで、インプロ・バンドとしての実力を堪能できる。

SOFT MACHINE ARCHIVE DISC

MATCHING MOLE / On The Radio



Hux / HUX 083 / 2006

94年に『ライヴ・イン・コンサート』のタイトルで発表されていた72年7月27日のロンドン・パリス・シアター公演に、同様のラジオ放送用ライヴ音源を加えた06年発表盤。収録順に、72年4月17日、同1月25日、同3月24日、同1月17日、同7月27日の公演となっている。「オー・キャロライン」のようなポップなヴォーカル曲は聴けないが、ワイアットの浮遊的なヴォイス・インプロヴィゼーションと深みのあるジャズ・ロック・スタイルに関しては申し分のない出来栄えだ。古い録音（1月17日、25日）はデイヴ・シンクレアとデイヴ・マクレエのツイン・キーボード。彼らのファズ・オルガンとエレクトリック・ピアノの共演も聴きものだ。

MATCHING MOLE / Smoke Signals



Cuneiform / RUNE 150 / 2001

マイケル・キングが企画発案と編集を行ない、キュニフォームのスティーヴン・フェイゲンバウム等がリマスターを手がけた編集盤。

カヴァーからするとファースト・アルバム絡みの選曲を想像するかもしれないが、実際はセカンド・アルバム主体の選曲および演奏。キーボードもすべてデイヴ・マクレエのみ。録音データが72年のヨーロッパとしか表示されていないのは、既出の未発表音源集との重複が明らかなためか、あるいは、そうした細かい客観データよりも、バンドの音楽性をバンド本来の志向に基づきリスナーに提示することを目的としていたためか。ほぼ切れ目なく繊細に紡がれたジャズ・ロックが美しい。

KEVIN AYERS AND THE WHOLE WORLD / Hyde Park Free Concert 1970



Voiceprint / RR002CD / 2008

ケヴィン・エアーズが自己のグループ、ザ・ホール・ワールドを率いて70年ハイド・パーク・フリー・コンサートに出演時の音源をカナダのリール・レコーディングスが公式CD化。デヴィッド・ベッドフォード、ロル・コックスヒル、マイク・オールドフィールド、ロバート・ワイアットというラインナップはごく短期間であり、それだけでも非常に価値ある未発表ライヴ音源。ワイアットの参加は音楽的な意味でも重要だ。「ディド・イット・アゲイン」「ホワイ・アー・ウェイ・スリービング」でのヘヴィでサイケなジャズ・ロックは初期のエアーズならでは。彼がソフト・マシーンにあのままとどまっていたら。そんな想像を逞しながら聴くと楽しい。

ROBERT WYATT & FRIENDS / Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8th September 1974



Hannibal / HNCD 1507 / 2005

73年6月1日の落下事故で入院とリハビリを余儀なくされていたロバート・ワイアットの復活を祝うコンサートは、74年9月8日ロンドン・ドゥルーリー・レーン劇場で行なわれた。当時の所属レーベルを運営するヴァージンのリチャード・ブランソンが音頭を取ったステージは、デイヴ・スチュアートを筆頭に、モンゲジ・フェザ、ローリー・アラン、ヒュー・ホッパーが集まり、ゲストとしてマイク・オールドフィールドやジュリー・ティペッツ、フレッド・フリス、MCとしてジョン・ピール等が集う豪華な内容となった。このときの音源を公式CD化したのが本作。新たなキャリアの幕開けにふさわしい力強い歌と演奏はいつ聴いても感動を呼ぶ。

●解説：松井 巧

CANTERBURY SCENE ARCHIVE DISC

publicité en 4ème de couverture



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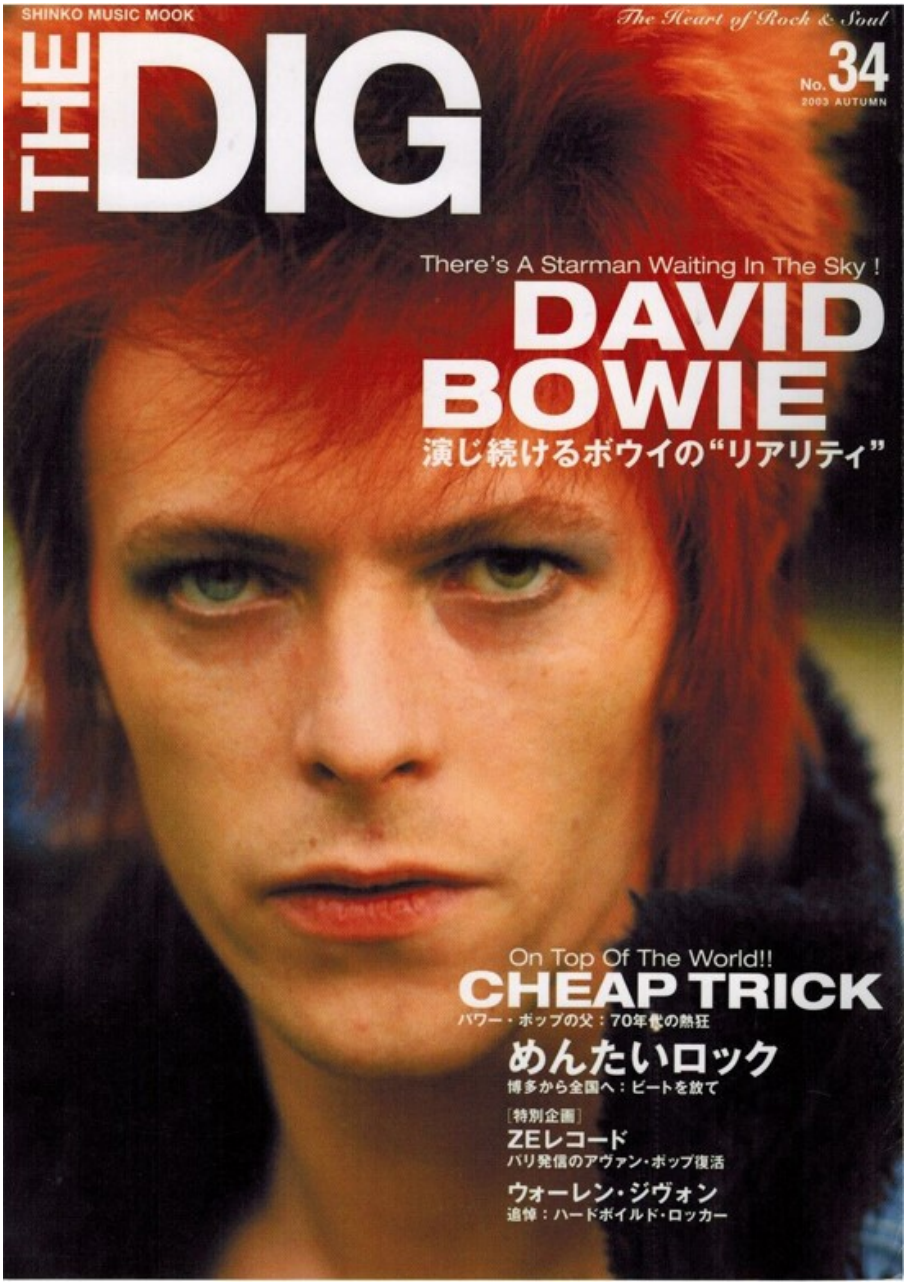
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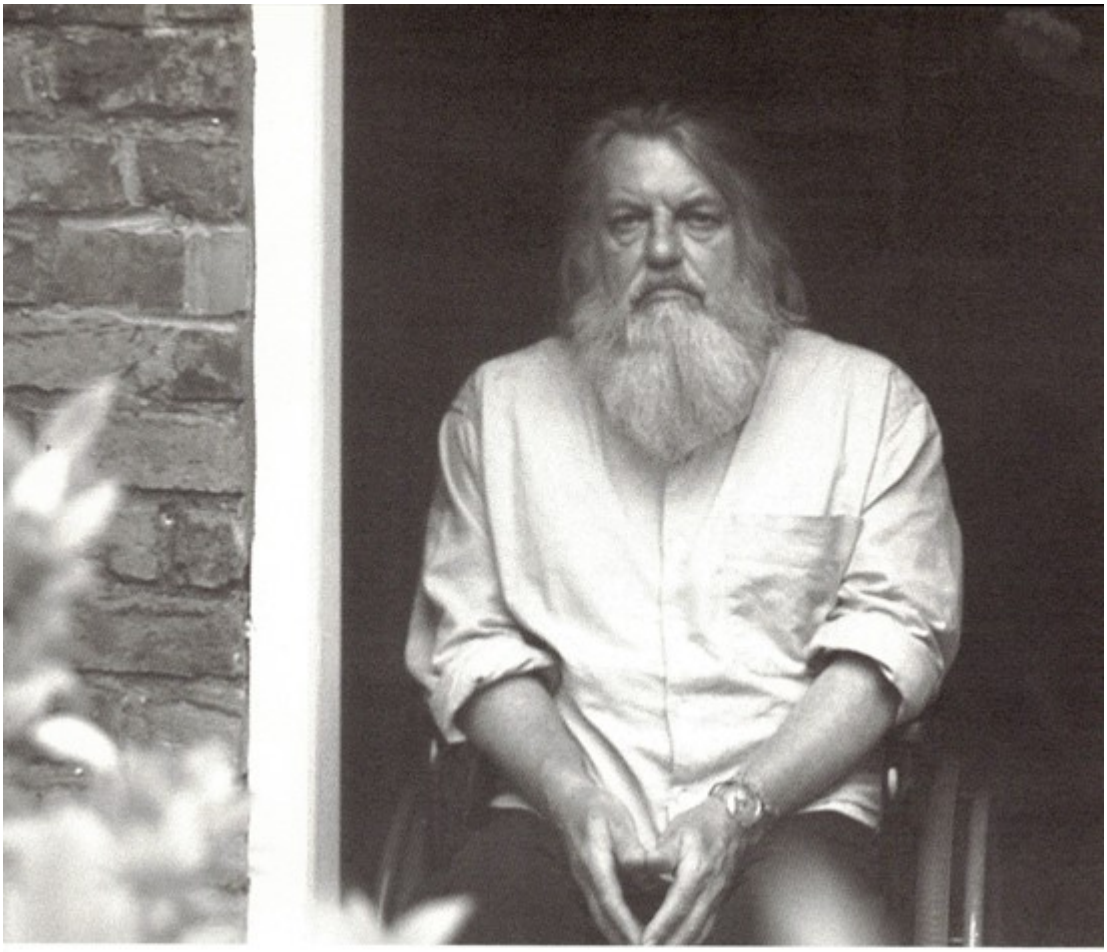
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Robert Wyatt - The Dig - N° 34 - 2003 Autumn

ROBERT WYATT





ROBERT WYATT

私はルーツに、過去のものにどんどん惹かれていっている

6年周期説を実践する新作『クックーランド』が遂に登場。
再びロバート・ワイアットに浸れる至福の時がやって来た！

インタヴュー・文／コラム●小山哲人　通訳●川原真理子

85年の『オールド・ロットンハット』、91年の『ドンデスタン』、そしてまだ感動を鮮烈に記憶している97年の『シュリープ』。ロバート・ワイアットのアルバムはなぜか正確に6年のインターヴァルでリリースされてきた。世紀が変わり、ニューヨークを襲った〈9・11〉を境に世界がかつてなく忌まわしい方向へ歩を進める中、伝説の巨人は6年振りに静かに身を起こした。いや、ワイアットはこの6年間を沈黙して過ごしたのではない。友人たちの作品にゲストで参加、また多くのファン、彼を慕うミュージシャンによって企画されたトリビュート作品やコンサートがあった。2001年には自身がディレクターとなってメルトダウン・フェスティヴァルを開催。精力的な活動を続けながら、堆積された彼の思考と感情が新作『クックーランド』には封入されている。ア

> Zoom



ルバムの冒頭、薄明の空間をさまようように吹かれるワイアットのコルネット・ソロ。前作『シュリープ』に満ちていた躍動、まばゆいばかりの生命感は再び胸の奥底にしまわれた。元ブロックヘッズ、現在はザ・オリエント・ハウス・アンサンブルを率いるギラド・アツモンと辿るオールド・ジャズへのノスタルジー。バディ・ホリーやアントニオ・カルロス・ジョビンの有名曲のカヴァーも用意されているが、過去への目線はあくまで不吉さを増すこの世界への対抗軸なのだ。カレン・マントラー、ポール・ウェラー、イーノら新旧の知人の助力を得て、ワイアットは大国が唱導するグローバリズムの網の目からは零れ落ちるもの、そして絶対に掬め取られない人間個々の尊厳を静かに訴えかける。アラブの女性シンガー、アマル・モコスの作品を取り上げた最終曲がアルバムの白眉だろう。キリスト教徒のパレスティナ人という複雑な出自を持つ彼女の祈りは、ワイアットという触媒を経て、音楽それ自体の純粋なカへと昇華されていく。



ワイヤット・ナンバーをカヴァーしたウェルシュ・バンド、ゴーキーズ・ザイゴティック・マンキのアルバム『Tatay』(1997)

不思議の国のアリスのように世界を見る

●2001年のメルトダウン・フェスティヴァルではディレクターを務められましたが、大規模なコンサートを企画するなんて初めてですよね。

「そうなんだ。あの時は私がフェスティヴァルのホストを務めたんだよ。毎年、別のホストを立てているんだが、2年前は私に白羽の矢が当たったというわけ。呼んだ面々の半分は私が選び、残りの半分はフェスティヴァルの主催者が決めた。そうして1カ月間に渡るコンサートを企画したんだが、とても楽しかったよ」

●メルトダウン・フェスにはゴーキーズ・ザイゴティック・マンキなども参加しましたが、新しい世代で気に入っているアーティストはいますか?

「ゴーキーズは以前、私の《Carolina》をウェールズ語でカヴァーしてくれた。あれはとんでもない言語でね、すごく難しいんだよ。私にとっては、ウェールズ語よりは日本語を覚えることの方がずっと簡単だと思う。私の中にもウェールズ人の血が流れているんだがね。でも、彼らは見事にやってくれた。妻のアルフィーが彼らのCDのカヴァー・アートを描いて以来の知り合いなんだ。他に新しいアーティストでは、ミス・ダイナマイト、クレイグ・デイヴィッドなんかが気に入っている。イギリスのブラック・ポップ・ミュージックが好きなんだ」

●今回のアルバムですが、タイトルにはどんな意味が込められているのでしょう?

「それはアルフィーが何年か前に歌詞を書いた《Cuckoo Madame》から来ているんだ。彼女は田舎で鶏のカッコーをしょっちゅう見ていたんで、あのタイトルはどうかと言い出した。どうしてか分からないけど、これがぴったりだと思えたんだよ。《Cuckooland》とは、《気のふれた場所(Mad Place)》という意味にも取れる。でもそれは、私が《気のふれた場所にいる》ということかどうかは分からない。この世界はちゃんとしているのかも知れないし、あるいは狂っているのかも知れない。私はまるで不思議の国のアリスのように世界を見ているんだよ。まあ、いずれにしろ私には《Mad World》のように見える。それが私のせいなのか、世界のせいなのかは分からないがね。それが《Cuckooland》の意味なんだ」

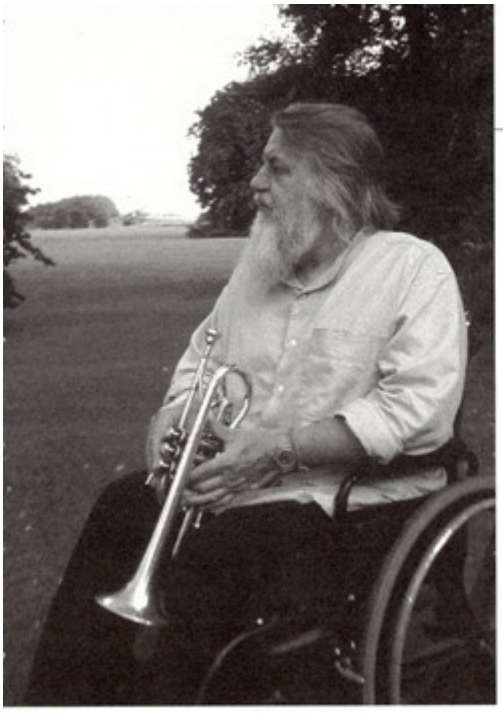
●録音はいつ頃から行われたのですか?

「レコーディングは2度に分けて行われた。最初は去年、カレン・マントラーとスタジオに入ったんだ。彼女はカーラ・ブレイとマイク・マントラーの間に生まれた娘でね。去年の夏、カレンが父親を訪ねてアメリカからヨーロッパへ来ていたところを捕まえて、セッションをしたんだよ。ロンドンにあるフィル・マンザネラのスタジオで6曲ほど録音し、その中から3曲を選んで今回のアルバムに収録した。その後、フィルのスタジオの改修工事のために一時中断し、今年の頭からまた作業を再開して完成させたんだ」

●彼女とのコラボレーションのきっかけとなったのは?

「カレンの両親、カーラとマイクとはも

> Zoom



う30年来の付き合いなんだよ。断続的にではあるが、ずっと音から一緒に仕事をしてきた。だからカレンも幼い頃から知っていたよ。当時はパンクできかん気の強い娘だったが、その後、自分が両親から多くのことを吸収していたことに気付いたんだろう。自分で曲を作るようになり、今では母親のバンドでハーモニカを吹いているし、父親の曲を歌ったりもしている。

カレンと友達になったのは、彼女の作曲の仕方が私のそれとマッチすると思ったからなんだよ。同じような音楽的アイディアを持っているんだ。彼女がハーモニカでソロを取るときの音の選び方とか、私がトランペットを吹くときの音とすごく似ている。だからきっと、一緒に曲を作ってみたら面白いんじゃないかと思ったのさ」

昔の民俗音楽、大衆音楽全般に対する興味

●今回のアルバムでは、ギラド・アツモンのクラリネットも印象的ですね。

「彼は今ではイギリス国籍を持っているが、元々は東地中海地方の生まれなんだ。彼のプレイが大好きなんだよ。それに、とても面白いソングライターでもある。われわれ二人とも、古い時代のジャズにノスタルジアを感じているんで、〈Oa Europa〉のような曲をやったんだ。私が何を歌いたいのか、そしてアルフィーの歌詞に込められていることを、彼はちゃんと理解してくれた」

●「Oa Europa」での彼のプレイは、クレズマー音楽の匂いもしますが。

「イスラエル人だったギラドは若い頃、もちろんクレズマー音楽をよくプレイしていた。クラリネットのプレイでは特に、ジャズとクレズマー音楽には共通性があるんだ。だから、アーティ・ショウとか、アメリカの偉大なクラリネット奏者はユダヤ人であることが多いんだ。それは彼らの両親の世代がクレズマー音楽に親しんでいたからだろう。ギラドのプレイにもそこからの影響がうかがえる。でも、それ以上のことではないね。ギラドはアラブやトルコの音楽にも造詣が深いし、とても幅広い引き出しを持っているんだ。私もアルフィーも、ロックンロール以前にヨーロッパをはじめとした様々な国のフォーク・ミュージックやポップ・ミュージックを聴いてきたんだ。クレズマーもそのひとつだよ。要するに、昔の民俗音楽、大衆音楽全般に興味があるんだ。ジプシー・バンドも好きだし、現代の有名なロマニー・バンド、タラフ・ドゥ・ハイドゥークスなんかも好きだ」

●「ヒロシマ／ナガサキ／コンニチワ／アリガト」と歌われる「Foreign Accents」は、我々日本人にはずいぶん奇妙に聞こえます。

「まず、おそらくは正しい発音で歌っていないことについて謝っておくよ（笑）。外国語で歌うのはとても楽しいんだ。まるでマントラのように聞こえてくるんだもの。でも、言葉は慎重に選んだよ。日本語だけでなく、イスラエルの科学者やイランの政治家の名前も歌っている。これはアメリカの外交政策の偽善についての歌なんだ。世界は常に目茶苦茶で、大量破壊兵器が存在するなどと彼らは言うが、それを実際に使用しているのは彼らだけなんだからね！　そこには明らかに偽善が存在する。こういう曲をやるには、少なくとも二つの理由が必要だった。まず、これは音楽なのだから良く聞こえなければならない。言葉の響きも大切だ。ちょっと待ってくれるかな？　庭の蜘蛛の巣に蝶々がひっかかってしまったみたいなんだ。（アルフィーに向かって）大丈夫かい？　逃げられたの？　それは素晴らしい！　ごめんよ、中断してしまって！」

●いいえ。

「今、外に座っているんで、いろんなドラマが常に展開しているんだ。自然はみんな仲がいいだなんて、嘘っぱちだよ。ここは戦場だ。さあ、続けよう」

●アルバムの最後の曲「La Ahada Yaqra」は鎮魂歌のように響きますね。

「これはアラブ語でね、アラブ人のソングライター、ニザー・ズライクと彼の妻、アマル・モコスが書いた曲なんだ。彼女にはメルトダウン・フェスでも歌ってもらった。ある午後にアラブ／イスラエル親交というイヴェントを設けてね。イスラエル人とパレスティナ人のミュージシャンを一堂に集めたんだが、音楽的にもとても価値のある出来事だった。ギラ

> Zoom

世界同時沸騰、ワイアットを巡る“熱”

ここ数年、ワイアットへのトリビュート・アルバム、コンサートが多数企画されている。その嚆矢となったのが、女性トロンボーン奏者、アニー・ホワイトヘッドを中心とするスープ・ソングス・プロジェクト。99年10月にパレス・シアターで行なわれたライヴの模様は本誌20号でも報告され、翌年には実況盤も発売された。また、とりわけ熱狂的なファンの多いイタリアとフランスではトリビュート・アルバムが制作されている。イタリア版にはマウロ・パガーニ、フランコ・バッティアートなど大物が名を連ね、フランス版ではパスカル・コムラード、クリンペライらがワイアット・ナンバーをカヴァー、ワイアット自身も語りと朗読で参加した。さらに今年の11月には「Dedicated To You」と題したトリビュート・ライヴがフランスで行なわれる。カレン・マントラー、ジョン・グリーヴスらの出演が決定しており、ライヴ盤の予定もあるらしい。

インタヴューでも語っているように、ワイアットは2001年のメルトダウン・フェスでホストを務めた。レジデンツ、レインコーツといった元祖オルタナ・ロックからジョン・サーマンやジャック・ディジョネット、アンドリュー・シリルらの実験ジャズメン、さらにテリー・ライリー、エルヴィス・コステロなどジャンルを越えた出演者の顔ぶれはいかにもワイアットらしい選者だろう。そして同フェスでのデイヴィッド・ギルモアのライヴにはワイアット本人もゲストで出演。実況DVD「デイヴィッド・ギルモア・イン・コンサート」（東芝EMI：TOBW3059）で本当に久し振りとなる生のパフォーマンスを見ることができる。近年、ワイアットのゲスト参加作品は非常に数多く、とてもここでは紹介しきれないが、意外性のあるのが2001年のフランス映画「Wataridori」のサントラCD（東芝EMI：VICP68484）。ヒーリング系のやや安直なバックトラックながら、やはりあの声が乗ると惹きつけられてしまう。



今年11月に開かれるトリビュート・ライヴ「Dedicated To You」の告知ポスター



英トリビュートのライヴ盤「Soup Songs Live - The Music Of Robert Wyatt」(Voiceprint)



伊トリビュート盤「The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi」(CPI)



仏トリビュート盤「MW pour Robert Wyatt」(In Poly Suns)

私の体はワインだらけ

●数年前、あるインタヴューで「カンタベリーの伝説なんて信じない」という趣旨の発言をしていましたね。

「デイヴィッド・アレンとケヴィン・エアーズ、特にケヴィンは素晴らしい曲を書いていた。ソフト・マシーンは実際にやったことよりももっと可能性を秘めていたと思う。プレイするのはとても楽しかった。あれをもっと発展させることも出来たんだろうが、機会がなかったんだ。人はそれをカンタベリーの伝説と呼ぶが、デイヴィッドはオーストラリア出身だし、ケヴィンはマレー半島育ち、そして私はブリストル生まれだ。一体、カンタベリーに何の関係があるのかと思ってしまうよ（笑）。それに、私は主にブラック・ミュージック、そしてジャズばかり聞いているんだ。人が思っているような音楽はまったく聞いていないんだよ」

ド・アツモンはパレスティナ人の言い分を支持しているんで、イスラエルを出てイギリス国民になったんだよ。彼はどんなかたちでも、植民地化計画に加担したくなかった。私は彼の立場を代弁できないが、考えはよく分かっている。ギラドはこの曲にすごく感情移入しているね。とてもソウルフルだ。アラブ語で歌えない私に代わって、クラリネットで歌ってもらった。美しすぎて私が入る余地はなかったよ。だからこの曲が最後なんだ」

●ヒュー・ホッパーらによるソフト・マシーン再結成プロジェクト、ソフト・ワークスのアルバムは聞かれましたか？

「聞く必要はないよ。どんな音なのか、私にははっきり分かっているから（笑）。ヒューには、まあ頑張ってくれたまえと言っておいたよ」

●来年で60歳を迎えられますが、あなたの歌、音楽への情熱はこれからどのように変化していくのでしょう？

「私は新しいものには特に執着していない。（最先端）というのは、とても居心地の悪いところだ。逆にルーツに、過去のものにどんどん惹かれていっているんだ。古代エジプトの音楽を録音したテープがあったらどんなにいいだろう！　私にとって、新しいとか古いとかとかは価値のあることじゃないんだ。私はベストを尽くすだけだ。これが卵だったら問題だがね。新鮮な卵のほうがいいに決まってる。でも、アーティストは別なんだよ」

●ワインと以ているかも知れませんね。

「そうだね！　その比喩は私にぴったりだ（笑）。私を食べ物にたとえるなら、私の体はワインだらけだろう！」


ロバート・ワイアット「クックーランド」（ビデオアーツ VACK-1269）

> Zoom

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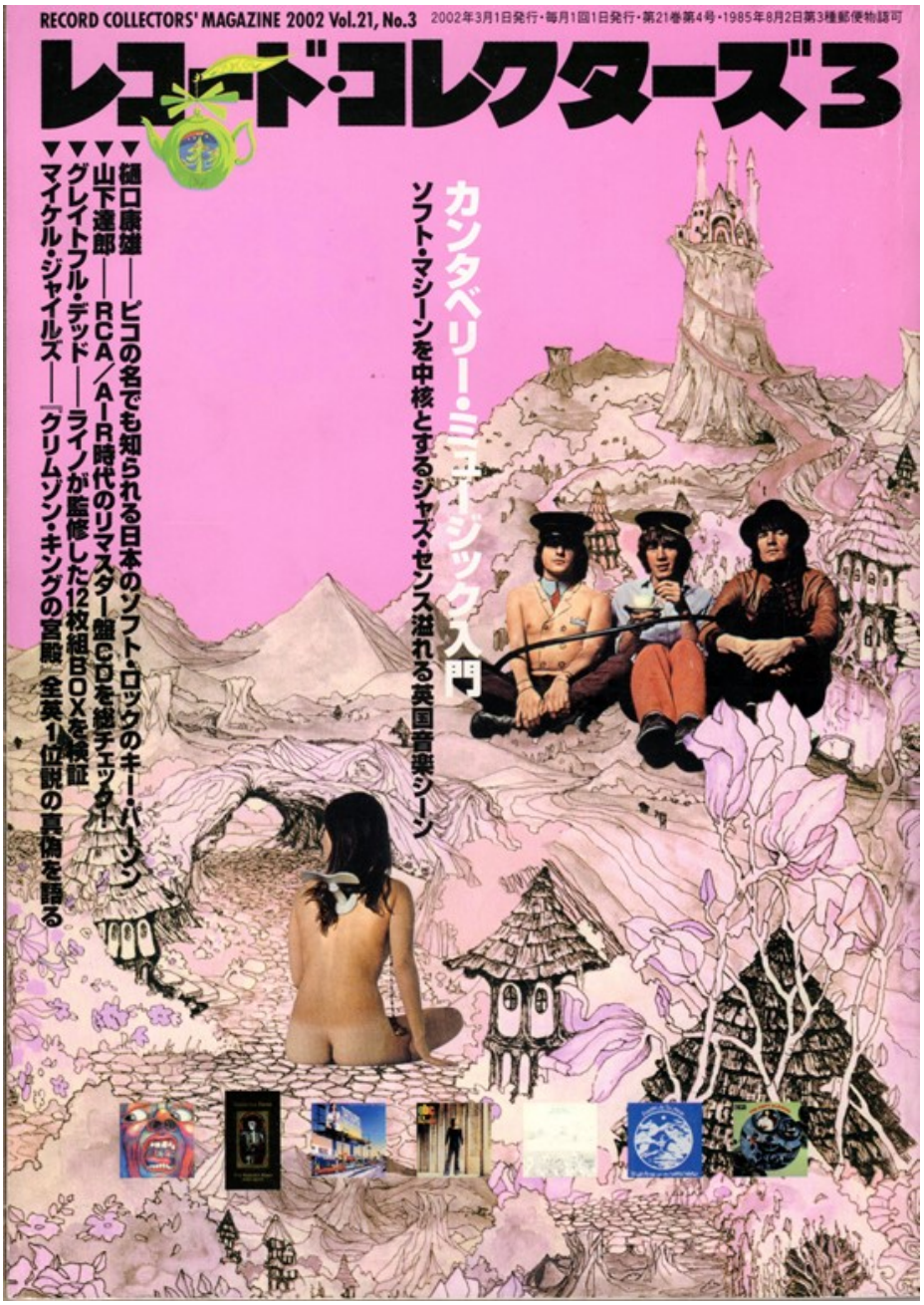
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CANTERBURY



> Zoom


SOFT MACHINE
特集
CANTER BURY
カンタベリー・
ミュージック
MUSIC
ジャズの新しい潮流の影響を受けながらイギリス独自の色彩感を持ったサウンドを創り上げた英国
カンタベリー出身のグループ、ソフト・マシーンを中核とする人脈の広がり、そして彼らが作り上げ
る音楽の総体。カンタベリー・ミュージックの輪郭はこうである。最先端の高度な音楽性と、カン
タベリーという歴史と伝統を強く感じさせる地名との絶妙の組み合わせが物語るように、彼らが奏
でるサウンドは一見難解でクールだが、どこか親しみやすさを感じさせる独特な響きを持つ。
昨年以来、イン・カフーツ、キャラヴァン、ケヴィン・エアーズなどカンタベリー系ミュージシャンの
来日が続き、CDリイシューも加速しつつある。カンタベリー探索の旅に出るなら今だ。

> Zoom



CANTER BURY

カンタベリー・ミュージック概論

起源となるワイルド・フラワーズから代表グループの70年代後半までの動き

坂本 理

注目されるカンタベリー・シーン

「カンタベリー・ミュージック」――もしそれがどんなものであるかを知らないとしても、あなたがロック・ファン、あるいはジャズ・ロック・ファンであるなら、多分どこかでそんな呼称に出くわしたことがあるだろう。60年代以降のブリティッシュ・ロック、プログレッシヴ・ロックのシーンの一角で大勢のミュージシャンがそこに参画し、他とは質の違う音楽を生み出していった。そんな音楽の呼び名だ。

ごく大雑把に定義すれば、ソフト・マシーンとその周辺の音楽を総称したのが「カンタベリー・ミュージック」だ。ソフト・マシーンのメンバーたちはイギリスの南東部に位置する地方都市、カンタベリー（正確には隣町のウィットスタブル）を出発点として音楽活動を開始し、多くの仲間たちがカンタベリーから後を追った。しかし、実際の活動はロンドンであったり、周辺ミュージシャンはカンタベリーとは何のゆかりもなかったりするので、彼ら全員にカンタベリー云々の話をすると「僕はカンタベリーには行ったこともない」と答えたりするだろう。しかし、関係者はそれがカンタベリー・ミュージックと呼ばれることを理解している。何故なら、その音楽がある種の連帯に基づくものであることを充分に意識しているからだ。

近年、カンタベリー・ミュージックが注目されるような出来事が続いている。ゴングが再三来日を果たし、昨年はイン・カフーツやステュアート&ガスキンの10年ぶりの再来日が続いた。残る現役大物バンド、キャラヴァンが遂にこの1月に初来日。3月にはケヴィン・エアーズやリチャード・シンクレアが来日する。一方、旧作アルバムのリイシューもいよいよカンタベリーに焦点が当たってきた。一昨年のゴングやカーンの紙ジャケット盤に始まり、キャラヴァンの名作群のボーナスつきリマスター盤（日本では紙ジャケット盤）が話題となり、今年はロバート・ワイアット

> Zoom





左：カンタベリーの聖ダンスタン通り。キャラヴァン "Blind Dog At St. Dunstans'" のジャケ（上）にも描かれた城門が見える
写真●赤岩和美氏（26、32ページも）

の紙ジャケット盤も登場する。その間、着々とカンタベリー関連の発掘音源盤が掘り起こされ、伝説が実像を結んできている。

　これだけの事実が重ねられれば誰でも思うだろう。今、カンタベリー・ミュージックが熱い、と。

　ここではそんな音楽シーンの概要を入門編として整理することにしよう。前提となることをふたつだけ押さえておいて欲しい。ひとつは、カンタベリー・ミュージックは決して過去に閉じたシーンではないということ。現在に至るまで脈々とその系譜は引き継がれ、さらに世界へと拡散を続けている。そうしたシーンのさわりだけをここでお見せする訳だ。もうひとつは、カンタベリー・ミュージックをジャンルとして捉えるとポイントがずれる可能性があるということ。少なくとも70年代の日本ではこのシーンを特にプログレッシヴ・ロックのサブ・カテゴリーとして理解していた傾向がある。しかし、彼らの音楽は決してプログレッシヴ・ロックに閉じてはいない。強いていうならジャズ・ロックの方が近いだろうが、そこにも閉じてはいない。そうしたジャンルを超越した運動体であり、同時にジャンル不問の音楽的方法論でもある、そんな柔軟性がカンタベリーならではの歴史を築いてきた。でも、ここでは話を簡明にしたい。なので、典型の部分だけを拾うことにする。だから入門編なのだとご理解いただきたい。

複雑だが親しみやすい音楽性

　カンタベリー・ミュージックは難しい。そんな声を聴くことがある。それはどういう意味なのか？

　ひとつにはあまりにもミュージシャンやバンドの数が多く、その全容が把握しきれないという全体量の問題があるかもしれない。彼らの活動は今もなお進行形であり、平気で国境を跨ぎ、その先で新たなシーンと連携していく。

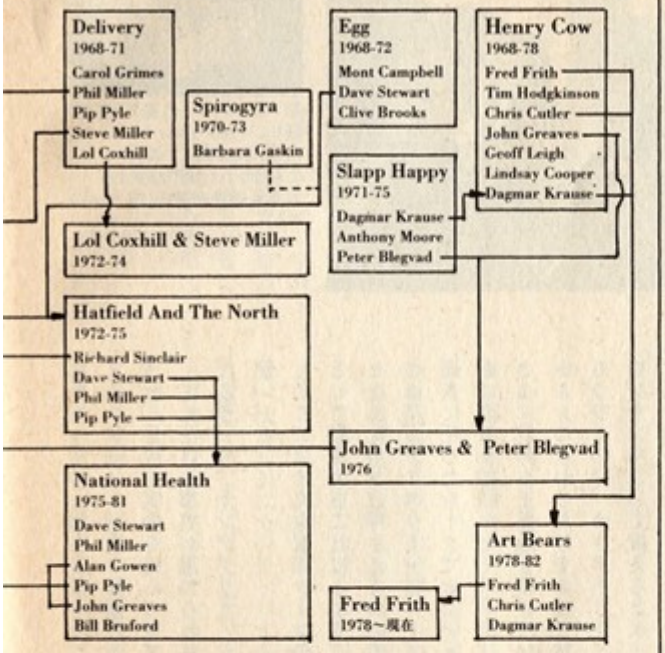
　また、カンタベリー・ミュージックの音楽的傾向を理解しにくいということもあるだろう。これだけバンドがあって、それぞれが固有のサウンドを追求している中で、では全体としてのカンタベリー・サウンドとは一体どんなものなのか？　そういう情報を提供している媒体もほとんどないだろうから、核となる部分を押さえないと輪郭をなぞるだけで一向に中に入れないかもしれない。

　そしてもうひとつ、カンタベリー・ミュージックそのものの抑制された表現スタイル、本当は凄い演奏をしているのにそうと気付か

> Zoom

カンタベリー重要メンバー／グループ概略図

作成●坂本 理



＊70年代後半までのカンタベリー・ミュージック・シーンで重要と思われるグループをピックアップしました
＊点線で囲まれたグループは、非カンタベリー・グループとみなします

せないようなポーカーフェイスぶり、複雑過ぎて普通に聞こえてしまう凝った楽曲作り、そうした独特の要素の面白さを学び取るのにリスナーとしての成熟を必要とするという事情がある。

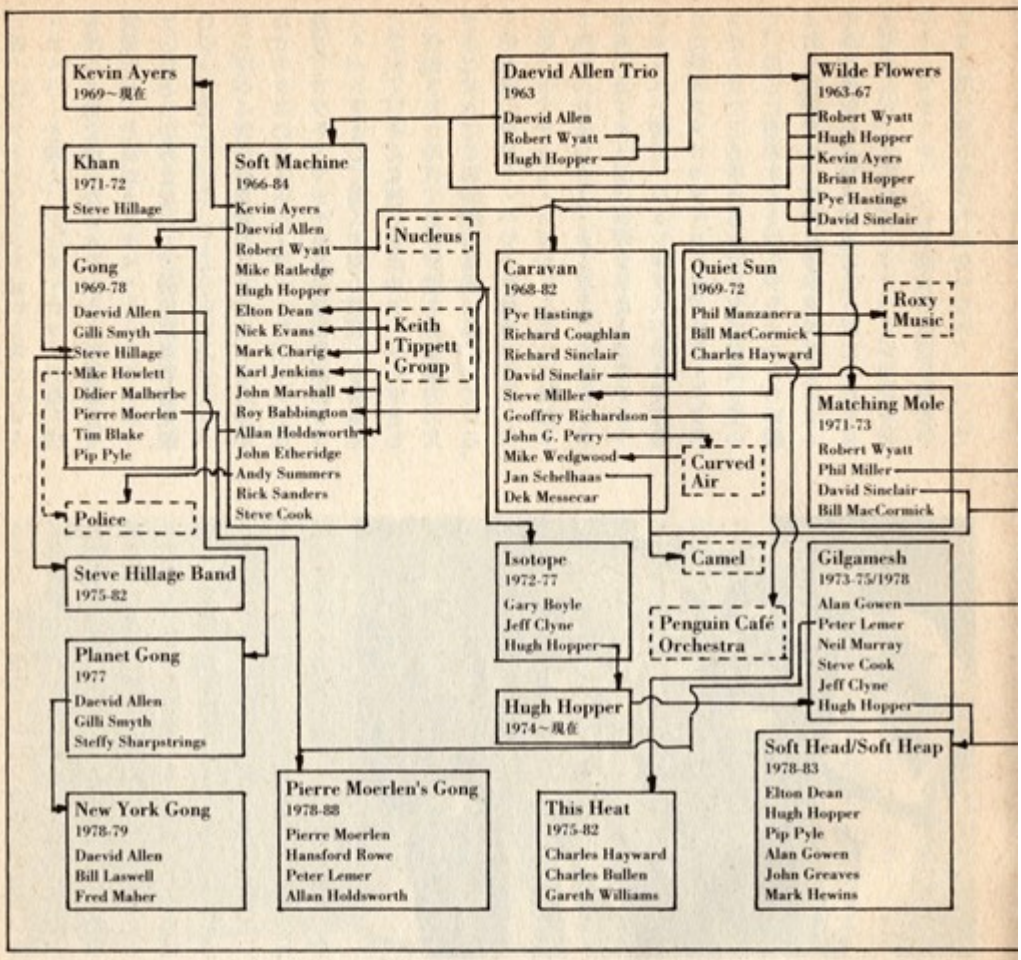
しかし、そんなに取っ付きにくい音楽なのかと言えば、否。むしろ驚くほどに親しみやすいというのがカンタベリー・ミュージックの特徴だ。そこを理解しないと無意味に難解さを読み取ろうとする迷路へと彷徨い込んで、疲れ果ててしまうだろう。音楽を音楽として楽しむのは当たり前。でもそこには1度では味わい尽くせない隠し味がいっぱいに仕込んである。そんな音楽としてカンタベリー・ミュージックを聴けば、やがてその魅力へと到達するだろう。簡単に判ったつもりになったら落とし穴があるけれども、肩肘張った音楽ではない。そこからスタートしよう。

60～70年代の入り組んだ人脈

ここに用意した簡単な人脈図をご覧いただきたい。これが60～70年代に登場するカンタベリー・シーンの主要グループの全容だ。移動線はとてもすべては載せきれないので、一部省略してある（線がなくても複数箇所に記載されているミュージシャンが多数いる）。バンドの沿革は一切無視して圧縮してあるし、この背景にまだまだ重要なミュージシャンが控えている（例えば、マイク・オールドフィールドやブライアン・イーノ）ことを考えると、非常に厚みのあるシーンであることがお判りいただけるだろう。隣接するシーンに多くの著名なアーティストがいることにもご注目いただきたい。例えば、ポリスやロクシー・ミュージックが深いところでカンタベリーに通じ、キャメルやカーヴド・エアーも密接に関連している。図示はしていないがキング・クリムゾンやブランドX、ホークウィンドとも様々なレヴェルで交錯してきた。ジャズ・シーンとの接点など多過ぎて書き切れない。それがカンタベリー・シーンなのだ。

カンタベリー・ミュージックのスタート・ラインは**ワイルド・フラワーズ**という60年代半ばにカンタベリーで結成されたR&Bバン

> Zoom



ドだった。彼らはウィルソン・ピケットの曲をコピーしたりしていた。このバンドが母体になってふたつの大きな枝が生まれた。ひとつがソフト・マシーン。もうひとつがキャラヴァンだ。この事実によってワイルド・フラワーズは伝説となった（93～94年に発掘されたワイルド・フラワーズ結成前のデイヴィッド・アレン、ロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパーによるデイヴィッド・アレン・トリオの63年のライヴ録音盤と、ワイルド・フラワーズの未発表発掘音源集によって、謎のヴェールが解き明かされている）。

66年に**ソフト・マシーン**が結成される。メンバーはデイヴィッド・アレン、ロバート・ワイアット、ケヴィン・エアーズ、マイク・ラトリッジの4人。67年にイギリスへの再入国を拒まれたアレンがバンドを離れ、ギターレスとなったことでラトリッジのオルガンが主役に踊り出る。このことでソフト・マシーンは全く独自の演奏スタイルを確立。こうした過程で弾き出されるようにバンドを飛び出したのが**ケヴィン・エアーズ**で、彼はサイケデリックな感性を生かしながらソロ活動を展開していく。マイク・オールドフィールド、デイヴィッド・ベッドフォード、ロル・コクスヒルらが彼のバンドで研鑽を積んだ。

> Zoom
> Zoom 2 (complete diagram)

残ったソフト・マシーンはベースにヒュー・ホッパーを迎え、ジャズ・ロック的な手法を用いて他に例のないオリジナルな音楽性を完成させ、それがカンタベリー・ミュージックのひとつの形となった。69年には新進気鋭のジャズ・ユニット、キース・ティペット・グループから管楽器奏者たちを迎え、その中からサックスのエルトン・ディーンがバンドに残り、ソフト・マシーンは一気に硬派のジャズ・バンドとして前人未到の領域へと踏み込んでいく。そんな彼らがロック・バンドとして評価された時代であり、彼らの影響力の大きさはすべてこの時期の活動に基づいている。

その後、ソフト・マシーンはロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパーを失い、代わって加わったサックス／オーボエ／キーボード奏者のカール・ジェンキンスによってフュージョンへと接近。ジェンキンスがかつて在籍したジャズ・ロック・バンド、ニュークリアスから次々と名手たちがバンドに合流していく。ここに登場するミュージシャンたちの顔ぶれも重要だが、純粋にカンタベリー・ミュージックという視点で見ると、既にずれを見せており、「カンタベリー・ミュージック＝ソフト・マシーン」という図式が成立し得ないことにも注意しなければならない。

一方、**キャラヴァン**はワイルド・フラワーズの最終メンバーたちによって68年に結成された。ソフト・マシーンとは全く異なる牧歌的なポップ・サウンドを追求し、人気者になっていく。彼らの音楽にもカンタベリー色は強く、変拍子の多用やデイヴィッド・シンクレアのオルガン・プレイにそれが現われている。バンドとしての勢いが加速したのは従兄弟同士であるふたりのシンクレアが離れ、ヴィオラ奏者のジェフリー・リチャードソンが加わってからだが、その頃からギタリストのパイ・ヘイスティングスがバンドを掌握し、ポップ化路線を邁進する。


キャラヴァン

このふたつの主軸の間で誕生した**マッチング・モウル**こそがカンタベリー・シーンの形成を促したのかもしれない。急速に先鋭的なジャズへと接近するソフト・マシーンに耐えきれず独立したドラマーのロバート・ワイアットがソロ・アルバム制作を目論見、レーベルの要請で急遽メンバーを集めることになったバンドだったが、ここに参加したのは元キャラヴァンのデイヴィッド・シンクレア、ロンドン北部で活動していたブルース・ロック・バンド、デリヴァリーのギタリスト、フィル・ミラー、ソフト・マシーンのロンドンでの活動拠点で直接影響を受けたクワイエット・サンのベーシスト、ビル・マコーミックだった。ここに初めてカンタベリー外の血が流入し、シーンがシーンとして拡大する成長点を確保したのだ。デリヴァリーのメンバーだったビップ・パイル、スティーヴ・ミラー、ロル・コクスヒル、ロイ・バビントンらはいずれもその後のカンタベリー・シーンに幾度となく登場することになる。逆にダイレクトな音楽的影響のもとに姿を現わした**クワイエ**

> Zoom

ット・サンの意味も大きく、フィル・マンザネラ、チャールズ・ヘイワードらのその後の音楽界全体への関与がカンタベリーの歴史的意義を裏付けていくことになる。

マッチング・モウルは短命に終わったが、その後フィル・ミラーがリチャード・シンクレア、ピップ・パイル、デイヴ・ステュアートと結成した**ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース**はカンタベリー・シーンの生んだ最高峰のグループとして不動の評価を得ることになる。この4人はまさにシーンの主役たちだった（図上のフォーク・バンド、スパイロジャイラからの点線はバーバラ・ガスキンの準メンバーとしての参加を表わしている）。

ハットフィールドも短命だったが、ロンドン北部で活動していたギルガメッシュからキーボード奏者のアラン・ゴーウェンが合流する形で**ナショナル・ヘルス**が結成される。これもカンタベリーのスーパー・グループと言うに相応しいバンドだった。しかし本来は華々しく活動しておかしくなかったにも関わらず、時代の逆風を受け、苦戦の歴史を辿る。後にベースで加わるジョン・グリーヴスはヘンリー・カウからの参入で、ごく短期間ながらリンジー・クーパー、ジョージー・ボーンらもヘンリー・カウからナショナル・ヘルスに加わる動きを見せた。


ナショナル・ヘルス

ヘンリー・カウはフレッド・フリス、ティム・ホジキンソン、クリス・カトラーらが極めて構築度の高い音楽を創造したバンドで、初期にはエッグとも強い連帯を示し、マッチング・モウル解散後に事故で下半身付随となったロバート・ワイアットへのリスペクトを表明。バンド解散後は世界中のアヴァンギャルド・ミュージシャンたちを統合するＲＩＯ（後のレコメン系）という組織を立ち上げることになる。カンタベリー拡大の一翼を担ったバンドだ。

ヘンリー・カウと深く関わった**スラップ・ハッピー**はドイツで結成され、イギリスに渡って活動したポップ・バンドで、メンバーたちはその後様々な活動を展開。四半世紀後に活動を再開し、２０００年に来日を果たしたのは夢のような事件だった。

もうひとつ重要なバンドが**ゴング**。フランスに取り残されたデイヴィッド・アレンが地元で結成したジャズ・ロック・バンドで、壮大なヴィジョンを持ったトリップ型ジャズ・ロックを極め、独自のユートピア思想と相俟って、国境を越え大きな影響力を持っていった。ゴングは多くの異性体を生み出しながら現在に至る長い歴史で自身がトゥリーを形成する人脈の坩堝となったが、例えば後にポリスを結成するスティングがゴングの周辺バンドに出没し、ゴングの名ベーシスト、マイク・ハウレットがポリス結成に大きく関与するなどの歴史も語れば切りがないほど詰まっている。ポリスに関して言えば、アンディ・サマーズが初期ソフト・マシーンのツアー・メンバーだったこと、ステュアート・コープランドがキャラヴァンと強い関わりを持つカーヴド・エアーのメンバーだったこともよく知られている事実だ。

> Zoom



クールなエレクトリック・ジャズ感覚

ソフト・マシーンの音楽／文化的背景からさぐるカンタベリー・シーンの魅力

小山哲人

カンタベリー・シーンの代表的アーティストについてその音楽的背景を語る、というのが本稿の主旨なのだが、これは結構やっかいな論題だ。ソフト・マシーンとキャラヴァンのメンバーの何人かが育ち（そして現在も居住し）、バンドが活動を始め、多くのアーティストが交流を重ねた地理的状況として〝カンタベリー・シーン〟は確かに存在する。しかし、その人脈から派生した数多くのバンドとその音楽を語るうえで〝カンタベリー・サウンド〟という冠は絶対的なものでないことを最初に確認したい。言うまでもなく、ソフト・マシーンをはじめとするカンタベリー・シーンのアーティストの音楽はその出立点から複雑な折衷性を背負っている。そしてマシーンとキャラヴァンだけに限っても、その音楽性は激しいメンバー・チェンジとともに大きく変化してきた。特定の一時期を切り取って音楽性を分析、解明したとしてもそれはバンドの全体像とイコールではないのだ。その後に続く多くのアーティストを対象とすれば事態はさらに複雑化する。網の目のように入り組んだファミリー・トゥリーの中で、いくつものバンドが生まれ、解散し、影響を及ぼし合ってきた。

また、本特集にも寄稿されている坂本理さんが以前書かれていたことだが、次のような問題もある。例えば英ジャズ界の重鎮クラリネット奏者、トニー・コーは生粋のカンタベリー生まれであり、キャラヴァンやロル・コクスヒル、リチャード・シンクレアと共演しているのにもかかわらず、彼をカンタベリー・シーンのミュージシャンとしてとらえるような見方はまずない。逆に、実際にはカンタベリーに行ったことすらないクワイエット・サン〜ディス・ヒートのチャールズ・ヘイワードはカンタベリー・シーンに組み込まれるのが普通だ。つまり〝カンタベリー・シーン〟とはローカリティの繋がりよりも、何らかの音楽／精神的共通項を優先して語られる呼称なのである。周知のように、70年代末以降のプログレッシヴ・ロックの衰退を乗り越えてカンタベリー・シーンの多くのアーティストは今日も現役で活動を続行中だ。30年前にはブリティッシュ・プログレのひとつの流派に

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すぎなかった〝カンタベリー・シーン〟は現在も世界各地で異種交配を繰り返し、拡散と増殖を続けている。外縁部からカンタベリー・サウンドとは何か、と規定するのはもはや無理だし、強引に体系化しても意味はない。ひとつ確実なのは、シーンを形成したすべてのバンド／アーティストが、初期ソフト・マシーン（66年～70年、ぎりぎりで71年まで）からの全面的な影響を自認し、それぞれのスタンスで音楽を継承、発展させたということだろう。ここではカンタベリー・サウンドという冠で個々のアーティストを十把ひとからげに括るのではなく、ファミリー・トゥリーの主幹となった該当時期のソフト・マシーンの音楽／文化的背景をいくつか示すことで、カンタベリー・シーンのアーティストに共通する魅力を探ってみたい。

フリー・ジャズ／現代音楽への関心

73年に米コロンビアから発売された〝The Progressives〟という2枚組LPがある。コロンビアが手持ちの音源から当時の尖鋭的ジャズを集めました、というお気楽なコンピレーションで、マハヴィシュヌ・オーケストラ、ウェザー・リポート、ドン・エリス、オーネット・コールマン、チャールズ・ミンガス、ビル・エヴァンスといった面々はさもありなんなのだが、そこに混じってソフト・マシーンとマッチング・モウルが収録されている点が少々ミソである。マハヴィシュヌとウェザー・リポートの生みの親、〝電化マイルス〟／マイルス・デイヴィスを筆頭に、ここに収められたジャズの巨人たちはソフト・マシーンの前身としてカンタベリー・ファミリー・トゥリーの源流に位置するワイルド・フラワーズのメンバー、すなわちロバート・ワイアット、ヒューとブライアンのホッパー兄弟、マイク・ラトリッジが、少年時代に大きな影響を受け、愛してやまなかったアーティストばかりなのだ。〝The Progressives〟の編纂者がこんなことを意図したはずはないが、ウェザー・リポートとミンガスのトラックに挟まれたマシーンの〝Pigling Bland〟を聞くと、60年代初めにカンタベリーの片田舎で育った少年たちが示した旺盛な音楽的好奇心、そこから現在まで綿々と連なっていく人脈と彼らが創造した音楽の豊穣さについて改めて感慨を深くする。



"The Progressives"
米Columbia●KG31574

90年代に入り、ソフト・マシーンやキャラヴァン、マッチング・モウルなどのBBC放送用音源、未発表ライヴが数多く製品化されてマニアを喜ばせたが、カンタベリー・ファンに最大の衝撃を与えたのは93、94年にヴォイスプリントから相次いでリリースされたデイヴィッド・アレン・トリオ（クォーテット）、そしてザ・ワイルド・フラワーズの発掘音源だろう。前者はデイヴィッド・アレンに率いられたホッパー／ワイアット／ラトリッジがジャズとポエトリー・リーディングの野心的な融合を試みた63年のライヴ。そしてソフト・マシーンとキャラヴァンの前身バンドとして、永らく伝説的な存在だった後者のCDには、エアーズ／ワイアット／ホッパー兄弟／リチャード・シンクレアという65年当時の編成での録音を中心になんと22曲もの演奏が収められていた。ワイルド・フラワーズ時代のデモ・レコーディングが存在することはずっと以前からマニアの間では知られており、筆者もテープ・トレードで入手したカセットで数曲を耳にしたことがあるのだが、それにしてもこれほどのヴォリュームで記録が残されていたとは思いもよらなかった。

30年もの間、オープンリール・テープ、アセテート盤、さらにバースネルなどの付随情

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報や写真などをきちんと保管していたのはヒュー・ホッパーの実兄、ブライアン。彼が発起人となったカンタベリー・アーカイヴ・プロジェクトはこれのみに終わらず、98年に発表された全4集からなる『カンタベリード・サウンズ』シリーズの編纂へ繋がっていく。初期ソフト・マシーンやキャラヴァンの珍しいライヴも含まれてはいたが、このシリーズの目的はホッパー兄弟やワイアット、ラトリッジたちがワイルド・フラワーズと並行して、あるいは無関係に行なっていた60年代初頭からの様々な即興演奏、音楽的実験に陽の光を当てることだった。乱暴にいえば、米国産R&Bやソウル・ミュージックのカヴァーからスタートしたワイルド・フラワーズはあくまでカンタベリー・ローカルのダンス・バンドであり、バンドの洗練とは別個にメンバーはフリー・ジャズや現代音楽への関心を具体化すべくプライヴェートな活動を試みていたのである。そのどちらにも深く関わったブライアンにすれば、ワイルド・フラワーズの音源だけでは「自分たちが当初想像したよりもずっと遠い地平まで結果的に発展することとなったこのムーヴメント」の本質を見極めることにはならないと感じたのではないか。カンタベリー・シーンを語る際、まっさきに俎上に上がるジャズとの関わりについては、ワイルド・フラワーズのCDに添付されたブライアン自身による解説が多くの示唆を提供してくれたが、『カンタベリード・サウンズ』に収められた実験記録はそれを検証するものだ。



ソフト・マシーン（左からロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパー、マイク・ラトリッジ）

独創的な解釈で演奏される変拍子

カンタベリーの伝説は60年頃、サイモン・ラングトン男子グラマー・スクールでの音楽好きの少年たちの出会いから始まった。ロバート・ワイアットとヒュー・ホッパーは同級生、一級上にはブライアン・ホッパーとマイク・ラトリッジ、一級下にはデイヴ・シンクレアがいた。ワイアットの母親がやっていたウェリントン・ハウスという下宿屋が彼らの音楽や芸術をめぐる議論と実験の場所となる。モダン・ジャズが大好きだったのは全員共通だが、年長のラトリッジとブライアンは特に前衛芸術にかぶれており、ジョン・ケージやシュトックハウゼンなどのクラシック・アヴァンギャルド、トマス・ピンチョンやウィリアム・バロウズの現代アメリカ文学まで、ラジオや輸入雑誌から情報を吸収するのに夢中だった。ほどなくしてウェリントン・ハウスにはドラッグのトラブルでロンドンを追われたケヴィン・エアーズ、さらにオーストラリア人の元祖ヒッピー、デイヴィッド・アレンまでが転がり込む。音楽観賞と議論に明け暮れてきた少年たちの興味が、実践へと向かうのにそれほど時間はかからなかった。

ブライアンはウェリントン・ハウスに集った少年たちに大きな感動を与えたジャズの一例として、エリック・ドルフィーの60年の初リーダー作『アウトワード・バウンド』に収

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Don Ellis
"How Time Passes"
Candid●LP9004 ◇ Candid◎CCD79004



Terry Riley
"Persian Surgery Dervishes"
仏Shandar●83.501～2

録されたスロー・ブルーズ「245」、そして同年のドン・エリスのアルバム『ハウ・タイム・パッシーズ』を挙げている。後年、ビッグ・バンドを率いて変拍子ジャズの開拓者となったエリスだが、ロン・カーターやジャキー・バイアードらとのクォーテットで録音されたこのアルバムではまだ変則拍子はほとんど登場しない。おそらくブライアンたちはLPのB面すべてを費やして演奏される長い即興組曲での自由闊達なインプロヴィゼイションから、演奏を開始するうえでのヒントを授かったのだろう。60年代中期、ドン・エリスは民俗音楽を参考に、奇数拍を混合したリズムを大胆に取り入れ、また自らもエレクトリック・トランペットを吹くなど実験的なサウンドに向かっていく。ウェリントン・ハウスの元住人、ワイアット／ホッパー／ラトリッジのトリオとなったソフト・マシーンがセカンド・アルバム『ヴォリューム2』で奇数拍子を見事に消化したジャズ・ロックを聞かせたのはその数年後だった。

「1966年と1967年には、多くのロック・グループがこのリズムの融合性を使って実験を始めたが、ソフト・マシーン以上に完全かつ効果的に使ったグループはなかった」

カンタベリー第2世代の新鋭として、73年にヴァージンからデビューするヘンリー・カウのドラマー、クリス・カトラーは著書『ファイル・アンダー・ポピュラー』の中でこう述べている。カトラーも言うように、変則拍子の導入は当時のプログレッシヴ・ロックのトレンドではあったが、ソフト・マシーンの変則リズムへのアプローチで見逃せないのはミニマル・ミュージック、特にテリー・ライリーからの影響だろう。『ヴォリューム2』のLPでB面すべてを占める「エスターの鼻手術（Esther's Nose Job）」のメドレーは4分の7、8分の7のリズムで終始展開する。フェイズをかけたベースとオルガンが交互にカウンターとなり、アドリブを取ったりと複雑な進行を見せるなか、ベースあるいはオルガンが提示するラインを追っていくと、4＋3に分割された基本リフはテリー・ライリーがテープ・ディレイを背景に任意で反復するリズムのパルス、旋律的ドローンの〝音型〟と酷似していることに気付く。

ライリーの作品ではカーヴド・エアーの名の由来となり、ザ・フーにも絶大な影響を与えた〝A Rainbow In Curved Air〟（70年）が有名だが、同作は多重録音によって音楽の基本構造が見えにくくなっている。ここでは単独のシンプルなライヴ・パフォーマンスを収めた72年作〝Persian Surgery Dervishes〟を参考作品に挙げておこう。マシーンの次作『サード』冒頭部ではライリー音楽をそのままシミュレイトしたようなオルガン・ソロもフィーチャーされた。バンドの創設者、デイヴィッド・アレンが63年頃、パリでライリーと一緒にテープ・ループを使った実験を行なっていた事実を鑑みれば両者の相関は当然ともいえるが、ソフト・マシーンがライリーの音楽を血肉化して完成させた変拍子の解釈は真に独創的であり、キャラヴァンをはじめ後に続くカンタベリー派の多くがこれに倣った。ファズ・ベースの長いサスティンが果たす新しい役割を含めて、この特徴こそがカンタベリー・サウンド最大の個性といえるのではないか。付け加えると、多分に感覚的な判断だ

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が、イギリスのジャズ・ロックと米国産クロスオーヴァー／フュージョンの識別点となるのもこのあたりだと考えられる。

電気的変調を加えたオルガンの音響

もうひとつ、初期ソフト・マシーンで音楽性の重要なキーとなったのが、マイク・ラトリッジのオルガンだ。ラトリッジは先述したようにマシーンのメンバー中でもいちばんのインテリで、現代音楽への興味からフリー・ジャズに目覚め、そこからジャズの歴史を溯るという普通と逆の音楽遍歴を辿ってきた。当初はピアノでセロニアス・モンクやビル・エヴァンスの自己流解釈を演奏していたらしいが、ファズ・オルガンのインプロヴィゼイションに先達からの影響を収斂させた。マイルス・デイヴィスのモード手法、ジョン・コルトレーンの〝シーツ・オブ・サウンド〟、セシル・テイラーのパーカッシヴなピアノ奏法を応用／合体、ノイジーに空間を埋めていくその激烈なアドリブのスタイルはソフト・マシーンのデビュー作（68年）の時点でほとんど完成している。煙ったようなトーン／テクスチャーを含めて、彼のオルガン・プレイの特徴はキャラヴァンのデイヴ・シンクレア、エッグ～ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース～ナショナル・ヘルスのデイヴ・ステュアート、ヘンリー・カウのティム・ホジキンスンへそっくり引き継がれた。

明確な根拠はないが、ソフト・マシーンがファズによるベースやオルガンの音色の電気的変調を重視したひとつの要因に、最初期にグループが活動の拠点としていたUFOクラブでの同僚、AMMからの影響も挙げられるかも知れない。シュトックハウゼンに師事したこともある現代音楽家のコーネリアス・カーデュー、マイク・ウェストブルックのジャズ・バンド出身のキース・ロウ、エディ・プレヴォストたちは、ギターやチェロ、管楽器に電気的増幅／変調を加えて大音量で即興演奏を行なった。ジャズ的なイディオムを完全に放棄したインプロヴィゼイションは、デレク・ベイリーによってより禁欲的なかたちで継続されるが、ロックのバックグラウンドをまったく持たないAMMが繰り広げるカオティックな音響のアナーキズムに、徹底した自由主義者であるデイヴィッド・アレンやロバート・ワイアットは同質の精神を感じ取ったのではないか。後年、ギター・インプロヴァイザーとしてデレク・ベイリーの後を追ったヘンリー・カウのフレッド・フリスが、キース・ロウの革新的なギター奏法に大きな影響を受けたことは言うまでもない。

『サード』『フォース』をリリースした70～71年期、マシーンはキース・ティペット・グループのホーン・セクションやロイ・バビントンのダブル・ベースなどを加え、拡大編成で活動する。急速にジャズに接近したこの時期のマシーンの音楽は、やはり『ビッチズ・ブルー』を嚆矢とする〝電化マイルス〟以降



AMM（左からキース・ロウ、コーネリアス・カーデュー、ルー・ゲア、エディ・プレヴォスト）

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のアメリカのジャズ・シーンの多様化／展開と無縁ではない。複数のパーカッションを加えてポリリズミックにうねる『ピッチズ…』の高揚に対し、マシーンのエレクトリック・ジャズはあくまで英国的な整合感を持って覚醒したリズムを刻む。が、エレクトリック・ピアノが放つクールな響きなど、空間処理に共通する感覚を看て取れるのだ。71年7月、マシーンはグループにとって2度目となるアメリカ・ツアーに旅立つ。ビーコン・シアターで行なわれたニューヨーク公演ではマイルス・バンドの前座を務めた。ニューヨークでのライヴを見たオーネット・コールマンが感激してマシーンのメンバーのためにパーティーを開いた、というエピソードも残っているが、ツアー終了後にワイアットはグループから解雇。ワイアットの後任はフィル・ハワード、そしてすぐにジョン・マーシャルへ替わった。マーシャルはグレアム・コリアー、ニュークリアスを経た生粋のジャズ・ドラマーだが、ジャック・ディジョネットのようなハイパーな8ビートも得意としていた。



MEV-AMM
"Live Electronic Music Improvised"
米Mainstream●MS5002
ローマで活動したMEVとのカップリング盤



マイルス・デイヴィス
『ピッチェズ・ブリュー＋1』
ソニー◎SRCS9714～5



"First Offenders"
Criminal●TAKE4

最後に、現在のような意味付けで〝カンタベリー・シーン〟という呼称が流通するようになったのはいつ頃からなのか、少し調べてみよう。ソフト・マシーンのLP3枚組アンソロジー"Triple Echo"(77年)付属のブックレットに掲載されたピート・フレイムによる人脈図にはすでに登場しているのだが、ここでの概念はファミリー・トゥリーに書かれた人脈的広がり以上の意味はないと思われる。80年にキャラヴァンのジェフリー・リチャードスンとルパート・ハインがプロデュースした"First Offenders"なるオムニバス・アルバムにも触れておきたい。これは当時カンタベリーで活動していたニュー・ウェイヴ・バンド9組を集めたLPで、残念ながら人脈的にも音楽的にも〝カンタベリー〟色は皆無。"New Music-Canterbury 1980"というサブタイトルは70年代までの〝古い〟カンタベリー・シーンしか意識していない。単なるローカル性を越えて、〝カンタベリー〟という呼称が何やら意味を持つようになったのはやはり80年代中期以降であるようだ。

筆者が以前、直接話を聞いたケヴィン・エアーズ、ヒュー・ホッパー、デイヴィッド・アレン、さらに先日会うことができたパイ・ヘイスティングスとデイヴ・シンクレアのいずれもが、〝カンタベリー・サウンド〟というような呼称はジャーナリズムやファンが作り出したイメージで、自分たちの音楽とはあまり関係ない、という意見を口にしていた。だが、それでも僕たちは、この愛すべき音楽群を前に、カンタベリー・ミュージックって何?と考えることを止めないだろう。現在も進行中のムーヴメントに対し、結論を急ぐ必要はない。代わりに、エアーズの発言を引用してこの文章を終わろう。

「俺達はそれほど上手くなかったし、あまりにも白人だった。だから自分達なりにためこんだネタを元にして、オリジナルの白人音楽をでっち上げたんだ。なんだか妙なものになったけどね」(『ロング・ムーヴメンツ～ロバート・ワイアットの足跡』青林堂刊)

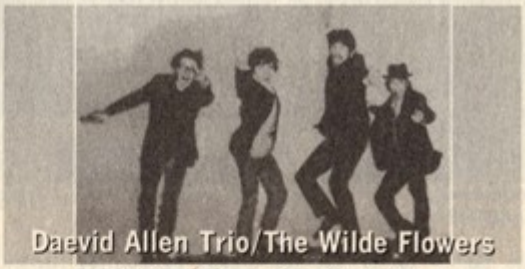
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主要アーティストのプロフィール

監修●小山哲人

赤岩和美　石川真一　大鷹俊一　岡田敏一　小野島 大
小山哲人　高橋道彦　立川芳雄　山岸伸一

- Daevid Allen Trio / The Wilde Flowers
- Soft Machine
- Caravan
- Robert Wyatt / Matching Mole
- Kevin Ayers
- Hatfield & The North / National Health
- Henry Cow / Slapp Happy
- Daevid Allen / Gong
- Hugh Hopper / Elton Dean (Soft Head / Soft Heap)
- The Keith Tippett Group / Nucleus
- Isotope
- Delivery / Lol Coxhill & Steve Miller
- Steve Hillage / Khan
- Egg
- Gilgamesh
- Quiet Sun / This Heat
- Spirogyra / Dave Stewart & Barbara Gaskin



Daevid Allen Trio/The Wilde Flowers

デイヴィッド・アレン・トリオ／ザ・ワイルド・フラワーズ

The Wilde Flowers

ソフト・マシーン、ゴング結成の鍵を握ったデイヴィッド・アレンは、じつはオーストラリア、メルボルンに生まれている。家具商として成功した家庭で裕福に育った彼は十代でビートニク文学に夢中になり、ヨーロッパを放浪するようになる。

カンタベリーで下宿したのが、ロバート・ワイアットの母親が経営するアパートで、年上のアレンの存在は、すでに自分たちでも音楽を始めていたワイアットとその仲間たちに多大な影響を与えることになった。アレンのギター、ヴォーカル（ポエトリー・リーディング?）を軸にワイアットのドラムス、ヒュー・ホッパーのベース、マイク・ラトリッジのピアノなどでロンドンに出向いてパフォーマンスをおこなったりするようになる（63年の録音が聞ける）。

その後、ワイアットはブライアン、ヒューのホッパー兄弟、リチャード・シンクレア、そしてイギリスで生まれマレーシアで育ったケヴィン・エアーズを加えた形でワイルド・フラワーズを結成する。事実上の結成は64年で、65年になるとライヴやデモ・レコーディングなどもおこなうようになるが、時々の事情からメンバーの出入りも激しくなり、また個々人の興味も様々に拡散するようになって自然消滅状態になっていく。こうした背景には、当然ソフト・マシーンの結成、活動の活発化があったことはいうまでもないが、カンタベリーの源流を語る上で欠かすことのできないのがワイルド・フラワーズである。（大鷹）

> Zoom



Soft Machine

ソフト・マシーン

ロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパー、ケヴィン・エアーズが在籍していたワイルド・フラワーズは、63年頃からカンタベリー地方で活動していた流動的なセミ・プロ・グループだったが、後にこのソフト・マシーンとキャラヴァンの母体となるカンタベリー・ミュージックの最初の重要バンドだ。66年中頃、ワイルド・フラワーズを抜けたワイアットが故郷に戻ってきた古くからの友人デイヴィッド・アレンとマイク・ラトリッジ、そしてエアーズと共に結成したのがソフト・マシーンである。すぐにロンドンへ進出した彼ら4人はピンク・フロイドやアーサー・ブラウンらと共に当時のアンダーグラウンド・ロックのメッカUFOクラブに出演し、ライト・ショウ仕立てのサイケデリックで実験的なパフォーマンスを行なって注目を集めることになる。そして67年1月ポリドールから1枚のシングルを発表するが、麻薬問題からのアレンの脱退等で3人が残されることになる。

3人はジミ・ヘンドリクスのアメリカン・ツアーに前座として同行し、68年春、ニューヨークでデビュー・アルバムを録音しアメリカのみで発表するが、ツアー等で消耗したグループは一度解体してしまう。しかし、サイケデリックでいながらも実験的でユーモラスなポップ感覚が同居しているアルバムの評判が良かったため、発売元のプローブの要請で、ワイアット、ラトリッジ、そしてヒュー・ホッパーの3人により69年に2枚目のアルバムが制作される。エアーズが抜け、ホッパーが加入したことでジャズ的な感覚が導入されたここでの彼らの音楽は、ワイアット流のダダイズム的ポップ感覚との合体でその個性が開花し、革新的なジャズ・ロック的グループへと変貌していく。

英国やヨーロッパへと活動の中心を移した彼らは69年秋、エルトン・ディーンら3人のキース・ティペット・グループの管楽器奏者を含む7人編成で英国ツアーを行ない、評価を高め英CBSと契約する。70年の大作2枚組『サード』からディーンが正式メンバーになり、即興的演奏とインタープレイというジャズ的論理を大胆に取り入れてつき進んでいった彼らは、続く4、5枚目のアルバムの時期にはフリー・ジャズ的色彩が強まったため、4作目でワイアットが脱退してしまう。5作目からニュークリアスのジョン・マーシャル（ds）が、6作目から同じくニュークリアスのカール・ジェンキンス（オーボエ、kbd）が加入。ディーンとホッパーが順に抜けていく72年後半頃からニュークリアス組が軸となり始めたために、バンドはミニマル・ミュージック的な要素を取り入れた独特のクールなジャズ・ロック的サウンドへと変化していく。

7枚目のアルバム発表後の73年秋、元テンペストのアラン・ホールズワース（g）が加入し、5人編成となった彼らはハーヴェストに移籍し、8作目の『収束』を75年に発表するが、唯一のオリジナル・メンバーだったラトリッジが脱退。これ以後78年の解散までジェンキンスを中心にしたニュークリアス周辺の人脈からなる技巧的なジャズ・ロック・フュージョン・グループとして活動していくことになる。

（石川）

> Zoom



キャラヴァン

キャラヴァンとソフト・マシーンは、カンタベリーにあるサイモン・ラングトン・スクールに通っていた学生たちが61年に結成したワイルド・フラワーズから派生したグループだった。リチャード・シンクレア(b、vo)はワイルド・フラワーズの初期メンバーのひとりで、リチャードとは別の時期ながらデイヴ・シンクレア(kbd)、パイ・ヘイスティングス(g、vo)、リチャード・コグラン(ds)もこのグループ後期に加わっていた。

この4人で67年から活動をはじめ、68年にヴァーヴからリリースした彼らのデビュー盤が"Caravan"だ。とはいえこの時期の彼らは、ロンドンのUFOクラブで派手な活動を展開するソフト・マシーンを横目に、住む場所もなく、ホールの裏手にテントを張ってレコーディングに備えたというほど苦労していたようだ。

運悪く英ヴァーヴも閉鎖になり、70年の2作目"If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You"で彼らはデッカ(3作目から傘下のデラム)に移籍、これが功を奏し、71年の3作目"In The Land Of Grey And Pink"でキャラヴァンは確かな手応えを感じさせるグループになった。

リチャード&デイヴ・シンクレアといえば、79年にキャメルのメンバーとして来日し、予想以上にジャズ色の濃い、強烈な演奏を聴かせてくれたことを思い出す。キャラヴァンとしての音楽性も、ジャズ〜ジャズ・ロック的な演奏とポップな作風や柔らかなヴォーカルが見事なバランスを保っていて、それがカンタベリー一派のなかでもキャラヴァン独自の個性になっている。ヴォーカルにも演奏にも歌ごころを感じるというか、独特の温かみがあるのだ。

しかし、この3作目をもってデイヴ・シンクレアが脱退(ロバート・ワイアットのマッチング・モウルへ)、かわりに元デリヴァリーのキーボード奏者スティーヴ・ミラーを迎えて72年に制作された4作目が"Waterloo Lily"だ。オルガン中心のデイヴとは違い、ミラーはピアノを得意とするキーボーディストで、それが新たな色合いになっている。しかし、このアルバムが出るとすぐにミラーが脱退、リチャード・シンクレアさえもハットフィールド&ザ・ノースを結成に動いてグループを離れた。

リチャード・シンクレアを失ったキャラヴァンは、ヴィオラなどを担当するジェフリー・リチャードスンを加えて73年に"For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night"をリリース、このアルバムではデイヴ・シンクレアがメンバーに戻り、ジョン・G・ペリーがベースを担当する5人編成になっている。以後、グループはメンバー・チェンジを繰り返しながら82年の"Back To Front"まで活動を続けていくことになるが、75年の"Cunning Stunts"は、全米チャート入り(といっても最高124位、全英チャート最高50位)もして、そこそこの成功も収めた。

90年に入るとグループは復活、パイを中心にした"The Battle Of Hastings"(95年)が制作され、この1月には来日もした。そして別の道を歩むリチャード・シンクレアはこの3月に来日し、日本のトリオ・ロス・オパピノスをバックにした公演を予定している。

(高橋)

> Zoom



Robert Wyatt/Matching Mole

ロバート・ワイアット／マッチング・モウル

Matching Mole

ケヴィン・エアーズやデイヴィッド・アレンとともにカンタベリー派を代表するミュージシャンだったロバート・ワイアット。いまやブリティッシュ・ロック界を代表する重鎮として、流行とは無縁の音楽活動を続けているが、その半生は激動に満ちたものだった。

1944年、イギリス・ブリストル生まれの彼は、ジャズ・ロック・バンド、ソフト・マシーンの優れたドラム奏者として一躍有名になったが、バンドの音楽性を巡り他のメンバーたちと衝突。71年9月にバンドを脱退し、3カ月後の同年12月、新たなバンド、マッチング・モウルを結成する。

元キャラヴァンのデイヴィッド・シンクレア(kbd)、元クワイエット・サンのビル・マコーミック(b)、元デリヴァリーのフィル・ミラー(g)、ニュークリアスのデイヴ・マクレエ(kbd)の技巧派5人によるこのバンドは71年にデビュー作『マッチング・モウル』をリリースする。

ワイアットがヴォーカルをとる楽曲はキャラヴァンに通じる牧歌的でポップなイメージに溢れ、インスト・ナンバーではフリー・フォームのジャジーなスタイルを追求するなど、ソフト・マシーンとはやや違ったアプローチがなされ、新たなファンを獲得した。しかし、続く2作目の『リトル・レッド・レコード』(73年)を聞く限り、彼が目指した新たなサウンドづくりが成功したとは言い難く、その目論見は事実上、とん挫する。

この後、一時休業を経て新生マッチング・モウルで3作目を出そうとリハーサルをするが、73年6月、悲劇が起きる。ワイアットがパーティの席上、泥酔し、5階の窓から落ちて背骨を折り、下半身不随になったのだった…。ドラマー生命を絶たれた彼だったが、カンタベリー派の仲間たちの支えで音楽活動を続け、約半年の闘病生活後、ソロ・アルバム『ロック・ボトム』(74年)をリリース。車いすでの生活ながら、シンガーとして奇跡の復活を遂げた。

未来の妻、アルフィーへの想いをはじめ、悲しい歌声の中にも喜びや希望が感じられる本作は、世界中の音楽ファンから感動を持って迎えられ、冒頭の「シー・ソング」は名曲として語り継がれている。翌年には『ルース・イズ・ストレンジャー・ザン・リチャード』をリリースし、名シンガーぶりとともに深みを増した音楽性も話題となった。

その後、しばらく音楽活動から遠ざかるが、80年代に入ってパンク／ニュー・ウェイヴ系の新興レーベル、ラフ・トレードから『ナッシング・キャン・ストップ・アス』(82年)、『オールド・ロッテン・ハット』(85年)といった名作群を発表。エルヴィス・コステロの手による「シップビルディング」のヒットもあって、若いファンも獲得すると同時に、熱心な共産党員でも知られる彼の作品群は、水墨画のような淡々とした歌声に加え、80年代には珍しい極めて政治的なメッセージを盛り込んだいぶし銀のような輝きを放っていた。

しかし90年代には共産党と決別。97年にはポール・ウェラーら多彩なゲストを招き久々の新作『シュリーブ』をリリース。ファンに健在ぶりをアピールし、各方面から圧倒的な評価を受けている。

（岡田）



ケヴィン・エアーズ

ケヴィン・エアーズは、ケント州の州都カンタベリーの北に位置する港町ハーン・ベイで、45年8月16日に生まれている。6歳から12歳の間は家族と共にマレーシアで暮らしたが、12歳の時に母親とカンタベリーに戻っている。16歳の時(60～61年)に学校をドロップアウトし、ロンドンに行くが、ドラッグ問題を起こし、母親の下へ戻ることを指示され、カンタベリーに帰った時に、ロバート・ワイアットらと知り合うことになった。ワイアットの母親が経営していた14室のアパートメント、ウェリントン・ハウスに集まる地元のミュージシャンや世界各地から来ていた詩人や芸術家などとの交流を持つようになり、ロック／R&B／ジャズや文学などに興味を持つようになったエアーズは、ビートニク的生活を体験するために、ワイアットらと64年にスペインのマジョルカ島で過ごしたこともあった。カンタベリーに戻ったエアーズとワイアットは、同じような放浪から戻り、ビート・グループを結成しようとしていたヒューとブライアンのホッパー兄弟の誘いを受けワイルド・フラワーズを結成することになった(ワイアットとヒューは63年にデイヴィッド・アレン・トリオで活動していた)。

しかし、エアーズは65年の夏にバンドを脱退し、イビザ島やアフリカへの放浪に出かけ、マジョルカ島で、デイヴィッド・アレンと再会(?)している。エアーズとアレンは再びカンタベリーに戻ると、ワイアットらと66年8月に新たなバンドを結成。当初はミスター・ヘッドなどと名乗っていたが、のちにソフト・マシーンと改名している。折からのサイケデリック・ムーヴメントの中、彼らはロンドンに進出し、アヴァンギャルドなパフォーマンスで注目を集めることになった。その時にジミ・ヘンドリクスのマネージャーだったチャス・チャンドラー(元アニマルズ)が、エアーズの作詩・作曲の才能に注目し、アニマルズなどに楽曲提供するために契約し、ソフト・マシーンのマネージメント契約も結んでいる。

ソフト・マシーンは、ジミ・ヘンドリクスの前座で2度のアメリカ・ツアーを行なうが、エアーズはツアーで精神を消耗し、68年12月にベース・ギターをミッチ・ミッチェル(ジミヘンのドラマー)に売り払い、ガールフレンドと共にイビザ島へと隠居してしまうのであった。

イビザ島での平穏な生活の中で音楽を再発見したエアーズは、アストラッド・ジルベルトの「イパネマの娘」などの穏やかな曲に魅せられ、初期ビートルズやラヴィン・スプーンフルのようなシンプルで美しい曲と、ランボーやボードレールに感銘を受けた詩も作るようになっている。こうした楽曲のデモ録音のためにロンドンに渡ったエアーズは、ピンク・フロイドのマネージメント、プラックヒル・エンタープライズと契約し、ハーヴェスト／EMIからソロとしてのデビューを飾っている。

その後、マネージメントからバック・バンド編成のアドヴァイスを受け、マイク・オールドフィールド(b)らを含むザ・ホール・ワールドなどいくつかのバンドも率いて活動してきたが、74年以来のパートナーだったオリー・ハルソール(g、92年没)の存在も忘れられない。(赤岩)

> Zoom



Hatfield & The North/National Health

ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース／ナショナル・ヘルス

Hatfield & The North

もちろん、ジャズ・ロックだけがカンタベリー・サウンドではない。けれども、独特のクールで緻密なジャズ・ロックがカンタベリー・サウンドのメイン・ストリームのひとつであることは事実だ。そして、その分野で頂点を極めたバンドが、ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース（以下ハットフィールドと呼ぶ）とナショナル・ヘルスなのである。

ハットフィールドのメンバーは、リチャード・シンクレア（b・vo、元キャラヴァン）、フィル・ミラー（g、元デリヴァリー、マッチング・モウル）、ピップ・パイル（ds、元デリヴァリー、ゴング）、デイヴ・ステュアート（kbd、元エッグ、カーン）の4人（ただし72年末の結成時には、キーボーディストがリチャードのいとこデイヴ・シンクレアだった）。このメンバーによってバンドは地道な活動を続け、74年3月にデビュー・アルバム『ハットフィールド・アンド・ザ・ノース』をリリースする。穏やかさと緊張感の同居した独特のサウンドは、ハットフィールドの名前とカンタベリーのミュージシャンたちの実力を世に知らしめた。そして、その後75年3月に発表された2作目の『ザ・ロッターズ・クラブ』は、カンタベリー・ミュージックを代表する傑作であった。

75年6月にハットフィールドは活動を停止するが、その後、アラン・ゴーウェン（kbd）の率いたジャズ・ロック・バンド、ギルガメッシュと合体するようなかたちで、新バンドのナショナル・ヘルスが結成される。当初はステュアート、ゴーウェン、ミラーに、フィル・リー（g）、モント・キャンベル（b）、アマンダ・パーソンズ（kbd）という大所帯で活動を行なっていた。この時代にはドラマーがおらず、ライヴではビル・ブルフォードやクリス・カトラーなどを招いていたらしい。そして77年に、ステュアート、ゴーウェン、ミラー、パーソンズに、ピップ・パイル（ds）、ニール・マーレイ（b）を加えたメンバーで、最初のアルバム『ナショナル・ヘルス』をリリース。ハットフィールドよりもジャズ寄りで濃密になったサウンドを披露した。その後78年には、ステュアート、ミラー、パイル、ジョン・グリーヴズ（b）の4人を中心に数人の管楽器奏者を加えた編成で、セカンド・アルバムの『オブ・キューズ・アンド・キュアーズ』をリリース。79年以降は、ゴーウェン、ミラー、パイル、グリーヴズの4人でライヴを行なっていたようだが、80年にバンドは活動を停止。そしてゴーウェンは、81年に白血病で他界してしまう。それを機にバンドは一時的に再結成され、ゴーウェンの曲を演奏した追悼アルバム『D.S. Al Coda』（81年）が発表された。このアルバムはナショナル・ヘルスの最高傑作だろう。

ハットフィールドもナショナル・ヘルスも、とくにリーダーはおらず、対等の立場でメンバーたちが互いを高めた。そして優れた演奏家を輩出し、カンタベリー・シーンの支柱となったのである。なおハットフィールドは、90年頃からデイヴ・ステュアートの代わりに女性キーボーディストのソフィア・ドマンシッチを加えて断続的に活動を行なっているらしく、その様子は『ライヴ1990』で聴くことができる。（立川）



Henry Cow/Slapp Happy

ヘンリー・カウ／スラップ・ハッピー

Henry Cow

ヘンリー・カウこそは、カンタベリー・トゥリーの中心部に位置する最重要グループのひとつである。ジャズ、ロック、現代音楽を機軸にインプロヴィゼーションを駆使した、エクスペリメンタルなアヴァンギャルド・ミュージックの極北とでも言うべき高度な音楽性は、時代のトレンドや風向きに決して左右されることなく、古代ギリシア建築のような風格と、瑞々しいまでの緊張感と、たとえようもない解放感を携え、いまなお古びることなく屹立している。

ケンブリッジ大学の学生だったフレッド・フリス(g、vln)、ティム・ホジキンスン(s、kbd)により68年に結成。72年までにジョン・グリーヴス(b)、クリス・カトラー(ds)らが参加しメンバーが確定、このころにはマルキズムを思想的基盤におき、単に高度な技術で音楽をプレイするだけにとどまらず、音楽を階級闘争の一環として実践する一種の政治的運動体としても組織されていたのである。

73年にヴァージンからデビュー作"Legend"を、74年に"Unrest"を発表。このころからスラップ・ハッピーとの交流が始まり、74年秋、両者は共闘しての活動を始める。

スラップ・ハッピーはおそらくは史上初の、そして最良の「アヴァン・ポップ」グループである。71年終わりにドイツのハンブルクでロンドン生まれのアンソニー・ムーア(kbd、g、vo)、旧知のアメリカ人ピーター・ブレグヴァド(g、vo)、さらにムーアの恋人のドイツ人ダグマー・クラウゼ(vo)の3人で結成。ファースト・アルバム"Sort Of"はムーアと交流のあったファウストの全面協力のもと72年春に制作され夏にポリドールから発表される。翌年、やはりファウストの協力でセカンド・アルバムを制作するが、レコード会社から発売を拒否される(後に"Acnalbasac Noom"として発売)。これを機にヘンリー・カウの所属であるヴァージンに移籍。74年、セカンド・アルバムをリメイクした"Slapp Happy"を発表、その後ヘンリー・カウとの共同行動をとる。

まずはスラップ・ハッピー主導でアルバム"Desperate Straights"(75年)、続いてヘンリー・カウ主導で"In Praise Of Learning"(75年)を発表するが、このときすでに両者の関係は崩壊しており、ただひとりクラウゼがヘンリー・カウに残り、スラップ・ハッピーは消滅する。

やがてヘンリー・カウはヴァージンからの契約を破棄され、自衛のためのヨーロッパのアンダーグラウンド・ミュージシャンの組織RIO(反抗するロック)を結成、自主レーベル、レコメンディッドを発足させた。これが彼らの初期からの理念である左翼思想の結実であることは言うまでもない。

だがバンドの内情はすでにガタガタだったようだ。78年の"Western Culture"を最後に解散。フリス、カトラー、クラウゼの3人はアート・ベアーズとして3枚のアルバムを発表するが、それも解散する。その後もメンバーはそれぞれ現在に至るまで現役で活動を続けている。

そして98年にスラップ・ハッピーが突如再結成して23年ぶりのアルバム"Ca Va"を発表、そして00年に奇跡の来日公演が実現したのは記憶に新しい。

(小野島)



デイヴィッド・アレン／ゴング

Gong

ソフト・マシーン結成時のメンバーでバンドの名付け親でもあるオーストラリア出身のギター奏者、デイヴィッド・アレン（1938年1月生まれ）がフランスで結成した摩訶不思議なプログレッシヴ・ロック・バンド、ゴング。アレンの音楽活動の出発点こそ〝カンタベリー〟だが、バンドは欧州のヒッピー文化そのものを象徴する孤高の存在として60年代末から70年代にかけて精力的に活動。あちこちに仲間を増やすとともに、唯一無二といえるスケールの大きさと底無しの魅力に満ちた音宇宙を構築し、いまも欧米では高い評価と根強い人気を誇っている。

21歳でオーストラリアを離れたアレンは欧州各地を放浪し、イギリスではカンタベリーにあるロバート・ワイアットの母親の下宿で暮らした。そこでワイアットやマイク・ラトリッジらカンタベリー一派と出会い、ソフト・マシーンを結成することになる。ところがバンドの最初のフランス公演のあと、アレンは麻薬とビザの問題でイギリスへの再入国を拒否されてしまう。67年9月のことだ。

アレンはやむなくバンドを離れ、そのままパリに残り、クラブでの演奏などで食いつなぐ。

欧州放浪時代に知り合ったジリ・スマイスがパリでアレンと合流。アレンのギター演奏にスマイスの即興囁きパフォーマンスが加わり、ゴングの原型のようなものが形作られつつあったが、68年、パリで5月革命が起こりアレンとスマイスは警察に追われスペインはマジョルカ島のデヤに逃亡。ここで二人はバナナムーンというバンドを作り密かに活動を続けた。

69年夏、二人は再びパリに戻り、新興のジャズ・レーベル、BYGレコードと契約、9人編成によるバンド、ゴングをスタートさせ、翌70年にデビュー・アルバム『マジック・ブラザー』をリリース。ユニークなサイケデリック・サウンドを披露した。続いて名作『キャマンベール・エレクトリック』(71年)、映画のサントラ『コンティネンタル・サーカス』(72年)をリリースするが、この2作で彼らの音楽性や演奏能力が大きく進歩し、一気に注目を浴びることになった。

そして73年、当時はまだイギリスのマイナー・レーベルだったヴァージン・レコードから『フライング・ティーポット』をリリース。イギリスでも彼らの人気が高まるとともに、本作からゴングを象徴する壮大かつナンセンスなヒッピーSFファンタジー〝レディオ・ノーム・インヴィジブル（見えない電波の精の物語）3部作〟がスタートする。

3部作の2作目となる『エンジェルス・エッグ』(73年)と3作目『ユー』(74年)でバンドは黄金期を迎え、スティーヴ・ヒレッジ（g）らの卓越した演奏能力がバンドのユニークな持ち味に高度な音楽性と深みを与えた。しかしバンドのハイテク化に疑問を抱いたアレンとスマイスは75年にゴングを離れ、独自の活動をスタート。残ったバンドも違う道を歩み出す。70年代後半からアレンは様々なバンド活動でゴング・ファミリーを果てしなく増殖させ、今日に至っている。いまもアレン、そしてゴング・ファミリーは地道に活動を続ける…。

（岡田）

> Zoom



Hugh Hopper/Elton Dean (Soft Head/Soft Heap)

ヒュー・ホッパー／エルトン・ディーン(ソフト・ヘッド／ソフト・ヒープ)

Soft Head

触媒的な働きをするミュージシャンというのがいる。その人間がバンドに加わることで他のメンバーたちが実力以上の力を発揮するといった存在だ。ベーシストのホッパーと、サックス奏者のディーンこそ、まさにそのようなミュージシャン。だから二人とも、他の演奏家とのコラボレーションに優れた作品が多い。

ヒュー・ホッパーは、1945年カンタベリー生まれ。郷里の学校ではロバート・ワイアットと同級生だった。ソフト・マシーンには結成時から裏方のようなかたちで関わっていたらしく、68年にマシーンがジミ・ヘンドリクスの前座でアメリカ・ツアーをしたときには、ツアー・マネージャーとして同行している。その後、ケヴィン・エアーズがマシーンから脱退した際に、ベーシストとしてバンドから誘われた。

ソフト・マシーンには2作目から『シックス』まで在籍したが、名盤『サード』の冒頭を飾る「フェイスリフト」がホッパーの作だという事実は見逃したくない。マシーン脱退とほぼ同時に最初のソロ・アルバム『1984』(73年)をリリース。その後、自身のリーダー・アルバムを次々に発表するが、そのどれもが、エルトン・ディーンやキース・ティペット(p)といった共演者を立てた内容になっている点は、注目に値する。カンタベリー・シーンのなかでも最年長者である彼は、他のメンバーたちにとって面倒見の良い父親のような存在なのかもしれない。90年代に入ってからは、アメリカ人シンガー&ソングライターのクレイマーや、女性ヴォーカリストのリサ・S・クロスナーと組んで、充実した作品を発表している。なお、90年代のホッパー作の歌モノを手軽に味わうには、ベスト盤『パラボリック・ヴァージョンズ』がお勧めだ。

エルトン・ディーンは、1945年ノッティンガム生まれ。ソウル系のバンドなどでサックスを吹いた後、ジャズの世界に入り、68年頃にキース・ティペット(p)と出会い、ソフト・マシーンに『サード』から参加。マシーンには『フィフス』まで在籍していた。

彼は伝統的なジャズをマスターしたサックス奏者であるとともに、フリー・ジャズ演奏家としても革新的。その意味で、イアン・カー(tp)などと同じく、英国ジャズ界の王道を行く人物ともいえるだろう。マシーンの『フォース』や『フィフス』では彼のサックスが明らかにイニシアティヴを握っており、この時期のマシーンはフリー・ジャズ・テイストを色濃くしている。マシーン脱退後は、自身のバンド、ジャスト・アス、カルテット、ナインセンスなどを率いて精力的に活動。ヨーロッパのジャズメンとのコラボレーションも多く、自身のリーダー・アルバムだけでも約30作ほどが確認できる。

78年、ホッパーとディーンは、アラン・ゴーウェン(kbd)、デイヴ・シーン(ds)とともにソフト・ヘッドというバンドを結成。彼らの音は、4人の連名名義で発表された『ロング・エレメント』(79年)で聴くことができる。その後ソフト・ヘッドは、ドラマーがピップ・パイルに替わって名前をソフト・ヒープと変更。79年にはアルバム『ソフト・ヒープ』を発表している。

(立川)

> Zoom

この二つのグループの多くの出身者たちは70年代ソフト・マシーンの革新的サウンドの原動力になっていた。各リーダー、キース・ティペットとイアン・カーはそうした意味も含め、70年代前衛派ジャズ・ロック界における人材育成の師であった。

キング・クリムゾンへの参加やロバート・フリップへの影響で知られているティペットは、60年代後半、英国現代ジャズ界の新星ピアニストとして注目を浴び登場する。後にソフト・マシーン組となるエルトン・ディーンやニック・エヴァンスらと結成した最初のグループは急進的かつヒップな2枚のジャズ・ロック・アルバムが高く評価されるが、彼はそこに留まることなく、フリー・フォームと即興的偶然性に基づくより前衛的で幅広い活動に移行していく。その成果はセンティピード、オヴァリー・ロッジ名義作や様々なセッション等に数多く残され、今も現役だ。

一方、60年代初期からジャズ・トランペッターとして活躍してきたカーが69年に結成したニュークリアスは、当時の英国ジャズ界隈で最もロック・サイドに積極的に接近したユニットの一つとして、英国版マイルス・グループ等とも形容されていた。カール・ジェンキンス、ジョン・マーシャル、クリス・スペディング、アラン・ホールズワース、ゴードン・ベック、デイヴ・マクレエ、ロイ・バビントン等多彩な人脈が10年間余りの流れの中でメンバーとして関わり、特異なジャズ・ロック・フュージョン世界を作り出していた。（石川）



キース・ティペット・グループ／ニュークリアス

Nucleus

インド出身のギタリスト、ギャリー・ボイルを中心に、ヴェテラン・ジャズ・ベーシストのジェフ・クライン、ナイジェル・モリス（ds）、ブライアン・ミラー（p）によって72年に結成。ボイルはかつてブライアン・オーガーのトリニティに在籍、またクラインとともにキース・ティペット・グループでもプレイしていたが、管楽器を入れず、ギターとキーボードがリードを取り合うストイックなインストゥルメンタル・ロックを志向したのがアイソトープだった。74年の第2作"Illusion"ではベースがヒュー・ホッパーに交替、独特のトーンで反復リフを繰り出すホッパーのカラーが濃厚に出て、ソフト・マシーンをコンパクト化したようなジャズ・ロックが聞かれた。



アイソトープ

同時期にボイル／ホッパー／モリスは揃ってツトム・ヤマシタのイースト・ウィンドでもリズム・セクションを務め、"Freedom Is Frightening"、"One By One"などのレコーディングに参加する。75年の第3作"Deep End"はブランドXのロビン・ラムリーがプロデュース、ホッパーは正式メンバーを外れたが（ゲストでは参加）、ダブル・キーボード編成でカラフルなクロスオーヴァー・ロックを展開した。ボイルはリターン・トゥ・フォーエヴァーやウェザー・リポートを強く意識していたようで、続けてラムリーがプロデュース、モリス・パート、サイモン・フィリップスらが参加した76年の初ソロ"Dancer"ではよりゴージャスなサウンドが聞かれる。（小山）

> Zoom



デリヴァリー／ロル・コクスヒル&スティーヴ・ミラー

Delivery

昨年12月に来日したイン・カフーツのフィル・ミラー（g）、ピップ・パイル（ds）の二人は6歳の頃からの幼馴染みで、60年代中期にはフィルの兄のスティーヴ（p）を加え、ブルーノズ・ブルーズ・バンドを結成。このバンドを母体とし、ロル・コクスヒル（s）、ジャック・モンク（b）が参加して68年に誕生したのがデリヴァリーである。ブルーズがルーノズ時代からアレクシス・コーナーらの賞賛を受け、デリヴァリーはオーティス・スパン、マディ・ウォーターズ、ローウェル・フルソンなど多くのブルーズマンのイギリス・ツアーでバック・バンドを務めるなどして活躍した。

69年にはベーシストがロイ・バビントンに交替、さらに元バビロンの女性ヴォーカリスト、キャロル・グライムズが加入する。ケヴィン・エアーズのホール・ワールドへ参加したコクスヒルをゲストに迎え、70年に唯一のアルバム『Fools Meeting』をB&Cからリリース。ヴォーカリストがジュディ・ダイブルに替り、ダイブル・コクスヒル&ザ・ミラー・ブラザーズと名を改めた後、各メンバーはキャラヴァンやマッチング・モウル、ゴングなどへ分散したが、72年にはスティーヴを中心に再結成された。スティーヴは73年、74年にコクスヒルとLP片面ずつをシェアするデュオ作を2枚発表。以降、アルバム・リリースは殆どなかったがマイペースの活動を続け、98年に膵臓ガンでこの世を去った。（小山）



スティーヴ・ヒレッジ／カーン

Steve Hillage

51年生まれのスティーヴ・ヒレッジは、シティ・オヴ・ロンドン・スクール在学中に同級生のモント・キャンベル、デイヴ・ステュアートとユリエルを結成。その後、ヒレッジがケント大学に進むためにユリエルを抜けると、バンドはトリオとなり、エッグと名乗るようになった。一方のヒレッジはケント大学時代にキャラヴァンやスパイロジャイラのメンバーと知り合い、71年に大学を卒業するとロンドンに戻ってカーンを結成、デイヴ・ステュアートの全面的な協力を得て72年にアルバム『Space Shanty』を残した。

カーンが解散すると、ヒレッジはケント大学時代に知り合ったケヴィン・エアーズのバック・バンド、デカダンスに加わり、73年のエアーズの『Bananamour』では『Shouting In A Bucket Blues』にゲスト参加、リード・ギターを披露している。しかし、エアーズの仏トゥアーで共演したデイヴィッド・アレンに共鳴したヒレッジは、デカダンスを3カ月で脱退、今度はゴングに加入、73～74年に発売されたいわゆる『ラジオ・ノーム・インヴィジブル』三部作の『Flying Teapot』『Angels Egg』『You』で重要な役割を果たした。

初ソロ作『Fish Rising』（75年）は英チャートを上昇して商業的にも成功、翌年には『H』が続いた。70年代前半のスティーヴィ・ワンダーを支えたシンセ奏者／エンジニアのマルコム・セシルをプロデューサーに迎えた『Motivation Radio』（77年）も充実したアルバムだ。（高橋）

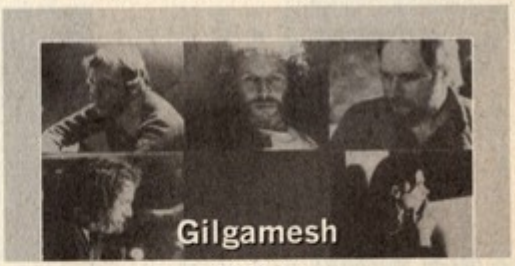
> Zoom



エッグ

デイヴ・ステュアート（kbd）、モント・キャンベル（b、vo）、グライヴ・ブルックス（ds）によるトリオがエッグ。ステュアートとキャンベルは生年月日が50年12月30日と同じで、67年にシティ・オヴ・ロンドン・スクールで出会っている。同級生にはスティーヴ・ヒレッジ（g）もおり、募集広告に応募してきたブルックスを加え、ユリエル（Uriel）というバンドを結成。ブルース、サイケ、プログレッシヴ・ロックと、クラシック音楽の家系に生まれたキャンベルの影響でストラヴィンスキー、バッハ、メシアン、ホルスト（キャンベルの祖父の友人だったとか）などの要素も持ち込まれた。この4人による録音が、アーザケル名義で69年に発売されているが、これはプログレ・ブームに乗ってレコード会社が企画した作品だったようだ。

68年夏にヒレッジがカンタベリーのケント州立大学に進学のために脱退後はトリオで活動を続け、ミドル・アースなどのロンドン・アンダーグラウンド・シーンで活躍、その時にデッカに認められ、エッグと改名してレコード・デビューしている。2枚のアルバムを発表後に、ライヴ作が検討されるが、デッカが契約を解除。ロック・ビジネスに失望したキャンベルがロイヤル・カレッジ・オヴ・ミュージック進学のために解散を迎えている。74年にステュアートはハット・フィールド&ザ・ノースの一員として人気を博みソロ制作を打診された際に、エッグを再結集しアルバムを制作している。（赤岩）



ギルガメッシュ

ギルガメッシュはアラン・ゴーウェンの音楽活動の大半を占める存在だった。アランはアサガイで一緒だったジェイミー・ミューアと72年にサンシップを結成したが、ジェイミーはキング・クリムズンに加入、他のメンバーはマイク・トラヴィスとアラン・ホールズワースだった。72年秋にマイクとギルガメッシュを結成、目まぐるしくメンバーを変えながらジャズ・ロックを演奏し続け、73年11月にハットフィールド&ザ・ノースと共演し両者の交流が始まった。この時期はアラン、マイク、ニール・マレイ、フィル・ミラーという布陣。

ジャズが好きでミュージシャンになったアランは曲作りに力を注ぎ、ギルガメッシュで自分の曲をきちんと演奏しようとした。他のメンバーはアランとは異なり、結構ロック感覚でジャズに切り込もうとしていた。

75年5月にアラン、マイク、フィルにジェフ・クラインで初アルバム『ギルガメッシュ』を制作したが、9月には解散、アランとフィルはデイヴ・ステュアートらとナショナル・ヘルスを結成し、マイクはノース&サウスへ、ジェフはターニング・ポイントへと移っていった。

78年6月、アランはギルガメッシュ名でアルバムを制作するため、フィル、ヒュー・ホッパーとトレヴァー・トムキンスで一時的に再結成、アルバム『アナザー・ファイン・チューン・ユーヴ・ガット・ミー・イントゥ』を制作した。そして、アランは81年に白血病で死亡、ギルガメッシュは永久に封印された。（山岸）

> Zoom



クワイエット・サン／ディス・ヒート

Quiet Sun

ル・マンザネラのギターを中心に、彼のダルウィッチ・カレッジの同窓生だったビル・マコーミック(b)、チャールズ・ヘイワード(ds)、そしてキーボードにデイヴ・ジャレットという編成で、近所だったこともあってソフト・マシーンの多大な影響を受けつつ音楽性を高めていった。

実質的な活動は70～71年の約1年間で、マンザネラが新聞のメンバー募集に応募し採用されたのをきっかけに解散している（もちろんそのグループはロキシー・ミュージック）。その後、74年にマンザネラのソロ・アルバムを作るときに再結成され、かつてのナンバーを吹き込んだのが唯一のアルバム『メインストリーム』で、今も高く評価されている。

その後ヘイワードは、基本的にはノン・ミュージシャンだったチャールズ・バレン、ガレス・ウィリアムズと共に76年にディス・ヒートを結成し、即興演奏を再構築していく衝撃的なサウンドで、カンタベリー派の音楽性をパンク以降の時代の中でもプログレッシヴなものとして提示したのだった。

（大鷹）

ソフト・マシーンの純音楽的な影響はじつに大きいが、その最良の成果の一つが聞けるのがクワイエット・サンのアルバムだ。

グループはウィンダー・コマンダー・ニクスン&ヒズ・ホイート・イーティング・ピーズ、そしてブー&オーストリッチ・フィーザーズという二つのグループの発展形として誕生したものだった。ロンドンで生まれ、キューバ、ベネズエラで育ったフィ



スパイロジャイラ／デイヴ・ステュアート&バーバラ・ガスキン

Spirogyra

フォーク・ロックのスパイロジャイラがカンタベリー系として括られるのは、デイヴ・ステュアートとデュオを組むバーバラ・ガスキンがいたことと、まさしくカンタベリーで活動していたからにほかならない。

ランカシャーのボルトンで68年にマーティン・コッカーハムとマーク・フランシスで結成。マーティンがカンタベリーのケント大学に進み、そこでバーバラと出会い、69年にス

ティーヴ・ボリル、ジュリアン・カゼックの4人組で活動を始めた。

イギリスの古い時代の音楽をイメージしながらロックの手法で演奏するフォーク・ロック・バンドで、ほとんどの曲はマーティンが作っていた。71年6月にファースト・アルバム『セント・ラディガンズ』を制作、フェアポート・コンヴェンションのデイヴ・マタックスらがバック・アップ。デイヴは準メンバーとして3枚のアルバムに付き合う。

かつてのコンビ、マークが新たに加わるとジュリアンは脇にまわり新メンバーで72年にセカンド『オールド・ブート・ワイン』を制作、その後バーバラとマーティンのデュオとなり73年にサード『ベルズ・ブーツ・アンド・シャンブルズ』を発表、74年にスパイロジャイラは解散した。バーバラはデイヴのいるハットフィールド&ザ・ノースや74年のエッグのアルバムに加わったりした。その後、81年にナショナル・ヘルスを辞めたデイヴとデュオを組み、ステュアート&ガスキンとして現在まで活動を続けている。

（山岸）

> Zoom

アルバム選

選盤●小山哲人＋編集部

文●赤岩和美　石川真一　大鷹俊一　岡田敏一　小野島 大
小山哲人　坂本 理　高橋道彦　立川芳雄　山岸伸一

＊評文は原則としてオリジナル・アルバムに準拠しお書きいただいています

The Soft Machine
"The Soft Machine"
ソフト・マシーン『ヴォリューム 1&2』

米Probe●PLP/CPLP4500 [1968]◆ビッグ・ビート●MSIF3612



ジミ・ヘンドリクスのアメリカン・ツアーの前座として同行中の68年4月に、ニューヨークのレコード・プラントで4日間で録音されたデビュー・アルバム。プロデュースにはチャス・チャンドラーとアメリカ側からトム・ウィルスン（ボブ・ディラン、ヴェルヴェット・アンダーグラウンドの制作等で著名）が関わっているが、内容は当時の彼ら3人のランダムな志向が直接反映されたもので、それがかえって新鮮でもある作品集だ。

ケヴィン・エアーズのサイケデリックな感覚が軸となり、未だ模索しながらも既に個性の芽が見られるマイク・ラトリッジのオルガンのジャズ・ロック風パートとその間に立ち何か新しい音楽を作ろうとするロバート・ワイアットのユニークなドラムスや独特な唱法の歌が絡んでいく様はなかなかおもしろい。ここには未完成でありながら様々な要素がまじり合うという初期のダダイズム・ポップの精神がラフな形で描き出されていると言えるだろう。（石川）

The Soft Machine
"Volume Two"
ソフト・マシーン『ヴォリューム 1&2』

Probe●SPB1002 [1969]◆ビッグ・ビート●MSIF3612



エアーズが脱けてイビザ島に去ってしまい、ラトリッジが英国へ戻ってしまったため、バンドは68年冬に既に解散していたが、プローブ側の要請で再結成され69年2月にこのアルバムが録音された。

エアーズにかわってヒュー・ホッパー（b）が正式加入するが、そのことも影響して、ソフト・マシーンの音楽は短期間のうちにかなりの変化を見せている。以前のサイケデリックな感覚は消えていき、それにかわって器楽面でのアレンジや展開が複雑化し、スリリングでいて広がりのある音楽が生み出されている。ホッパーが作曲面で活躍しジャズ的指向を導入しているのと同様、ラトリッジのキーボードがよりカラフルで大胆さを獲得しているのも大きな特徴。また、変拍子も取り入れて自在にふるまうロバート・ワイアットのドラムスも魅力だ。シュールでユーモラスな言語的実験とオーケストラ的でケイオティックな音楽的実験が出会いを演じる様はまさに革新的パタフィジック・ポップの傑作だ。（石川）

> Zoom

Soft Machine
"Third"
ソフト・マシーン「サード」

CBS ● 66246[1970] ➡ エピック ◎ESCA5535



前作のラトリッジ、ホッパー、ワイアットの3人に新たにサックスのエルトン・ディーン（キース・ティペット・グループ）が加わった新生ソフト・マシーンが、他3人の管楽器奏者ニック・エヴァンス（キース・ティペット・グループ）、リン・ドブスン（ピート・ブラウン&バタード・オーナメンツ）、ジミー・ヘイスティングスと、ヴァイオリンのラブ・スパールを加えて70年5月に制作した大作の2枚組。

ホッパーとワイアットが各1曲、ラトリッジが2曲書いたナンバーが片面ずつに収録されたもので、ワイアットの代表曲の一つ"Moon In June"のマニエリスティックなヴォーカル入りポップ以外は、フリー・ジャズや現代音楽の手法が大胆に導入された脱ロック色の濃い曲が並ぶ。しかしそれらのどれもが、メンバー相互の器楽的インタープレイに基づきながらも各楽器を均質的に重層化させアンサンブル領域を拡張させていく様は独自性を持つ。複合化実験による革新的自由音楽の大傑作。（石川）

Caravan
"In The Land Of Grey And Pink"
キャラヴァン「グレイとピンクの地+5」

Deram ● SDL-R1 [1971] ➡ デラム ◎UICY9058



メンバーがキャリアを積み、そしてプロデューサーがテリー・キングからデイヴィッド・ヒッチコックに交代したことで、さらに完成度を増したサード・アルバム。エンジニアリングをエアー・スタジオ録音分をジョン・バンターが、デッカ・スタジオ分をデイヴィッド・グリンステッドが担当しているのもポイントといえるだろう。グリンステッドは鳴りモノ担当としてミュージシャン・クレジットもされている。アン・マリー・アンダースンが描いたジャケットのイラストも、カンタベリー・ロックを代表する1枚に相応しい、素晴らしいものだ。

名曲"Winter Wine"を筆頭に、リチャード・シンクレアがリード・ヴォーカルを取る曲が多く、彼の声の質そのものが好きな人間にはそれも嬉しいところだが、なんといっても圧巻なのは22分に及ぶ組曲の"Nine Feet Underground"だ。冒頭からデイヴ・ステュアートが大活躍、オルガンの多彩な音色を駆使しながら、最後まで見事に聴かせる。（高橋）

Caravan
"For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night"
キャラヴァン「夜ごとに太る女のために+5」

Deram ● SDL-R12 [1973] ➡ デラム ◎UICY9060



デイヴ・シンクレア（kbd）が復帰したかわりにリチャード・シンクレアが抜け、ベーシストは今度はジョン・G・ペリーになった。同時にヴィオラ奏者のジェフリー・リチャードスンが参加し、バンドのアンサンブルは一層アグレッシヴになっている。リチャードスンは、サイモン・ジェフスも関わった次作のライヴ盤などでも活躍し、のちにはカフェ・ジャックスやペンギン・カフェのアルバムにも参加している。

バイ・ヘイスティングス（B）の求心力が増し、これまで共作曲が圧倒的に多かったキャラヴァンにあって、組曲を除くすべてがバイの単独制作曲になった。しかし曲調は多彩で、ルパート・ハインがシンセで参加したハードな"Memory Lane, Hugh-Head-Tom"からフォーク～カントリーっぽいナンバーまで、非常に出来の良い曲が揃っている。サードとともに名盤といわれる由縁だ。そして、ソフト・マシーン3作目に収録されていたマイク・ラトリッジの曲が、組曲のなかで披露されているのも嬉しい。（高橋）

> Zoom

Robert Wyatt
"The End Of An Ear"

CBS●64189 [1970]



ロバート・ワイアットがソフト・マシーンのドラマーとして活躍中だった絶頂期にリリースした初ソロ・アルバム。ソフト・マシーンの3作目『Third』のリリースとほぼ同時期の作品で、全9曲のうち、1曲目と最後の9曲目で、マイルス・デイヴィスとの共演などで知られるジャズ界の大御所、ギル・エヴァンスの楽曲『Las Vegas Tango』を取り上げていることからも分かるように、ジャズ色の濃いフリー・フォーム・スタイルのサウンドの作品に仕上がっている。

エヴァンスの楽曲を除く7曲はすべてワイアットが作詞・作曲したものだが、これらはキャラヴァンやカーラ・ブレイといったカンタベリー一派の友人たちに捧げられているうえ、プロデュースも彼自身が担当するなど非常にパーソナルな印象の作風。とはいえ、本作を聞くと、評論家筋からも高く評価された彼の素晴らしいドラミングがソフト・マシーンをがっちり支えていたことがよく分かる。（岡田）

Matching Mole
"Matching Mole"
マッチング・モウル『そっくりモグラ』

CBS●64850[1972]→エピック◎ESCA5425



音楽性の違いからソフト・マシーンを脱退したワイアットが新たに結成したバンドのデビュー作。元キャラヴァンのデイヴ・シンクレア(kbd)やフィル・ミラー(g)といったカンタベリー派を代表する実力派ミュージシャンがワイアットのもとに結集して作り上げた作品だけあって、カンタベリー・サウンドを代表する名作となっている。

シンクレアとワイアットが共作した冒頭の『O Caroline』など全8曲、ユーモアとウィットに富むポップ感覚とジャズの要素が絶妙にマッチした素晴らしい楽曲が揃っており、眼鏡をかけたかわいいモグラが登場するジャケット・デザインが本作のサウンドや雰囲気をうまく表現している。ソフト・マシーンではやれなかった試みに嬉々として挑むワイアットの姿が目に浮かぶが、本作ではその試みがまだまだ途上段階のようだ。ちなみにこの奇妙なバンド名は、『Gas Machine』のフランス語の発音を英語に当てはめたもの。（岡田）

Robert Wyatt
"Rock Bottom"
ロバート・ワイアット『ロック・ボトム』

Virgin●V2017 [1974]→ライコディスク◎VACK1225



下半身不随となり、ドラマーとしての生命を絶たれた彼が入院生活から半年後、絶望の淵から這い出すかのごとくリリースしたソロ2作目。アルバム・タイトルは日本語に訳すと"どん底"。こう書くと何やら重苦しい作風を連想するが、実は全くその逆で、本作からは後悔や自責の念よりも、生きることへの喜びや希望、そして何よりシンガーとして新たな出発を果たそうとする強靭な意志が感じられる。本作がカンタベリー・ミュージックだけでなく、ブリティッシュ・ロックを代表する超名盤のひとつといわれる所以である。

退院後、ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースの録音に参加するなどして徐々に音楽活動に取り組んだ成果が、彼を唯一無二のシンガーとして復活させた。深い祈りにも似た真摯で美しい歌声。偽らざる心の内の想いをひとつひとつ紡ぎ出すようにして作られた楽曲。ジョン・レノンの名作『ジョンの魂』にも通じるピュアな魂がそこにある。（岡田）

> Zoom

Kevin Ayers
"Joy Of A Toy"
ケヴィン・エアーズ『ジョイ・オブ・ア・トイ』

Harvest●SHVL763 [1969]



69年11月に発表されたソロ・デビュー作。ソフト・マシーン時代に書いた曲 'Joy Of A Toy' をアルバム・タイトルにし、その続編的なインスト曲で幕を開けるが、サウンドはよりポップでカラフルになっており、ケヴィン・エアーズの穏やかな心境が導入部で伝わってくる。'Joy Of A Toy' という曲名はオーネット・コールマンの同名曲から取られたもの。

プロデュースは、エアーズと所属マネージメント、ブラックヒルの片割れピーター・ジェナーの共同によるもので、当時、「フロム・マリー・アントワネット・トゥ・ザ・ビートルズ」という劇の音楽で注目を集めていた現代音楽畑の作曲家デイヴィッド・ベッドフォードに目を付けたジェナーが、アレンジャー兼ピアニストとして招いている。エアーズのフォーキーな音楽と「サージェント・ペパーズ」以後を感じさせるベッドフォードの斬新かつノスタルジックなオーケストレーションの融合が見事に調和している。ワイアットとソフト・マシーンも参加。(赤岩)

Kevin Ayers & The Whole World
"Shooting At The Moon"
ケヴィン・エアーズ『シューティング・アット・ザ・ムーン』

Harvest●SHSP4005[1970]
◆BGO@MSIF7211



70年3月発表の2作目。今作も共同プロデュースしているピーター・ジェナーの進言でライヴ用のバンド、ザ・ホール・ワールドを結成した後の作品で、バンド名義の作品になっている。メンバーには、前作のアレンジャーでもあったデイヴィッド・ベッドフォード(kbd)に、マイク・オールドフィールド(b、g)、ミック・フィンチャー(ds)、ロル・コクスヒル(s)と年齢の幅も広く、クラシック、ジャズ、フォークなど多彩なバック・グラウンドを持ったミュージシャンの集合体となった。

エアーズのポップな面を代表する名曲 'May' で始まるが、その後はメロディアスな曲の途中にアヴァンギャルドなジャムが乱入したり、オールドフィールドのハードなギター・ソロが鳴り響いたと思えばミュージック・コンクレート的展開になったりと、前衛とポップの融合といった奇妙な音空間で構築されている。表題曲はソフト・マシーン時代の 'Esther's Nose Job' の改題版。(赤岩)

Hatfield & The North
"Hatfield And The North"

Virgin●V2008 [1974]㊥米
Caroline@CAROL1833-2



ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースのデビュー作であり、その後ナショナル・ヘルスやイン・カフーツなどへと展開していく系譜の誕生を告げる一枚でもある。ロバート・ワイアット(vo)や、バーバラ・ガスキン(コーラス)らのゲストも一部参加しているが、基本的には4人編成のバンドの音だ。リーダーらしいリーダーはおらず、曲作りにおいても演奏においても4人が対等のバランスで関わっている。もちろんソロ・パートはあるが、それらはあえて目立たないように工夫されているという印象すら受ける。それほどアンサンブル指向が強いのだ。情動を控え目かつ理性的に表現するというカンタベリー風ジャズ・ロックの特徴が、すべてここに表われている。

変哲もない田舎町の風景がぼんやりと映し出されたようなジャケットには、よく見ると細かい絵が描きこまれているが、これがアルバムの内容を象徴しているかのようだ。ノスタルジックな人工着色を施したインナーの写真も趣がある。(立川)

> Zoom

Hatfield & The North
"The Rotters' Club"

Virgin●V2030 [1975]◇米
Caroline◎CAROL1834-2



ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースの2作目にしてラスト・アルバムは、カンタベリー系ジャズ・ロックの最高傑作ともいえる素晴らしいアルバムだ。アンサンブル指向は前作よりも強められ、アレンジはこれ以上考えられないほど緻密になっている。けれども全体の聴き心地はなめらかで、一種のBGMのように聴くこともできてしまう。その音はたとえていえば、遠くから見ると無地の中間色なのに近くで見るとさまざまな色の糸が細かく編み込まれた織物のようで、聴くたびに溜息が出る。楽曲も前作に比べはるかに粒ぞろいで、とくにジャジーでメロウなインストゥルメンタルの小曲 "Share It" は名曲。ジャケットの素晴らしさも特筆ものだ。

CDにはボーナス・トラックとしてライヴ音源が入っているが、そこでの演奏はキング・クリムズン風だ。スタジオでは、過激さをあえてオブラートでくるむようにして録音していたのか。そのあたりに彼らの指向性を読み解く鍵があるのかも。（立川）

National Health
"National Health"

Affinity/Charly●AFF6 [1978]◇仏Spalax◎CD14827



4人のメンバーがガッチリとタッグを組んでいたハットフィールド&ザ・ノースに比べると、ナショナル・ヘルスは結成時のメンバーがやや流動的だった。そのせいか、このナショナル・ヘルスの1作目は、ハットフィールドの作品よりもアンサンブル指向が弱く、各メンバーのソロを聴かせる部分が強くなっている。また、ハットフィールド時代よりもシンセサイザーやエフェクターの使用頻度が増しており、ギターの音色もハード。そのため全体としては、ややジャズ寄りのプログレといった印象が強い。アラン・ゴーウェン(key)はクレジット上ではゲスト扱いだが（本作録音の直前に一度バンドを脱退している）、実際には彼の個性が色濃く出ている。

本作が録音されたのは77年の初めだったが、発売してくれるレコード会社が見つからず、結局78年にチャーリーからリリースされる運びとなった。不遇な状況のなかで自分たちの信じる音楽を演奏し続けたメンバーたちに、拍手を送りたい。（立川）

Slapp Happy/Henry Cow
"Desperate Straights"
スラップ・ハッピー『カサブランカ・ムーン／デスプリット・ストレイツ』

Virgin●V2024 [1975]◆ロクス・ソルス◎LSI2041



まずはスラップ・ハッピーが主導権をとったとおぼしい1作。全13曲中、ヘンリー・カウ組が作詞作曲に参加したのはわずか2曲に過ぎない。しかし、前作と同じようにムーア／ブレグヴァドが手がけながら、これほどまでに曲の表情が一変するとは驚きである。スラップ・ハッピーは3人だけではいささかレイドバックしがちな空気をピリリと引き締めるようなテンションと技術に裏打ちされたストイックさをバートナーに求め、ヘンリー・カウは自分たちの思想をあらわす核としてのダグマー・クラウゼの歌とブレグヴァドの言葉を求めて、両者は半年にわたる共同作業の末、この見事な傑作を送り出す。

ときに毅然として、ときにコケットリーに歌われるクラウゼのヴォーカルは、ヘンリー・カウ組の作り出す緊迫した磁場を完全に支配下において見事だ。ルンバ風なブレグヴァド歌唱の "Gisela" だけが、このアルバムで従来のスラップ・ハッピー風なゆるさがあって、後年の決別を予感させる。（小野島）

> Zoom

Henry Cow
"Concerts"
ヘンリー・カウ「コンサーツ」

Caroline●CAD3002[1976]→ロクス・ソルス◎LSI1002～3



ヘンリー・カウ唯一のライヴ盤。ダグマー・クラウゼだけを残してスラップ・ハッピーと袂を分かち、6人組で再スタートした時期の録音で、アナログAB面に彼らの構築性を前面に出した既存曲、CD面にフリー・インプロヴィゼイションを主に収録し、彼らの両面を鮮やかにとらえている。

A面冒頭の既存曲をメドレーにした組曲はBBC放送のためのスタジオ・ライヴだが、彼らの高い演奏力と卓抜とした構成力を示す名演。"Desperate Straights"に収録されていた"Bad Alchemy"ではクラウゼとロバート・ワイアットの歴史的なデュエットが聴ける。メドレー後半はワイアットのソロ曲"Little Red Riding Hood This Road"と、これまたファン泣かせ。

B面最後から始まるインプロヴィゼイション・パートは、ロックが到達しえたもっとも緊迫した、そして密度の濃い磁場である。同工の演奏で、彼らを超えた者はほとんどいないと断言できる。(小野島)

Gong
"You"
ゴング「ユー」

Virgin●V2019[1974]→ビクター◎VICP61174



ゴングを代表する空前のヒッピー・スペース・SFファンタジーハレディオ・ノーム・インヴィジブル(見えない電波の精の物語)Vの完結編となったのが本作。ゴングの最高傑作であるとともに、カンタベリー一派、そしてプログレッシヴ・ロックを代表する傑作でもある。

惑星ゴングからやってきたゴングのメンバーたちと謎の妖精が、地球と惑星ゴングを舞台に繰り広げる物語は、60年代後半、米西海岸の多くのバンドが深く傾倒したセックスとドラッグによる共同体幻想と根本は同じだが、ゴングのようにフリー・ジャズやクラシックの要素を前面に押し出したうえ、アルバム3枚を費やしてひとつの優れた物語に仕上げた例は他にない。バンドの演奏能力も頂点を極め、独自のフワフワ感と隙のない巧みな演奏技術が組み合わさる知的なグルーヴ感が存分に楽しめる。が、バンドの演奏技術の飛躍的な向上に疑問を感じたアレンとスマイスはバンドを去ってしまう。(岡田)

Hugh Hopper
"1984"
ヒュー・ホッパー「1984」

CBS●65466[1973]→アルカンジェロ◎ARC2104



ソフト・マシーンを脱退したヒュー・ホッパーが最初にリリースしたソロ・アルバム。ホッパー脱退後のマシーンは、カール・ジェンキンス(kbd)が次第に実権を握るようになり、75年の"Bundles"では、アラン・ホールズワース(g)などの新メンバーを加えて、クロスオーヴァー色の強いバンドへと生まれ変わった。そして、旧マシーンの音楽性は、このホッパーのソロ・アルバムに受け継がれたのだ。実際このアルバムは、もう一つのソフト・マシーンの作品として聴くこともできると思う。

タイトルは有名なジョージ・オーウェルの近未来小説から取ったものだろうが、とくにコンセプチュアルではなく、マシーンの"Fourth"や"Fifth"に似た、ややフリー・フォーム感覚の強いジャズ・ロックである。ジョン・マーシャル(ds)やロル・コクスヒル(s)らが参加。内容はもちろん充実している。LPよりも、ボーナス・トラックが7曲も入っている日本盤CDのほうがおすすめ。(立川)

> Zoom

アルバム選

Hugh Hopper
"Hopper Tunity Box"
ヒュー・ホッパー『ホッパー・チューニティ・ボックス』

ノルウェイCompendium●FIDARDO7 [1977]→エレジー◎HER013



ヒュー・ホッパーのリーダー・アルバムのなかでも最高傑作であり、カンタベリーという枠を超えた英国ジャズ・ロックの名盤だろう。とくに聴きごたえのあるのはA面の4曲で、ホッパーの吹くリコーダーが不思議なメロディーを奏でるタイトル曲に始まり、キング・クリムズン顔負けのヘヴィな曲が2曲続く。そして最後は"Third"時代のソフト・マシーンの音楽性をしっかり受け継いだジャジーなナンバー。これらA面に比べるとB面がやや物足りないが、それでもオーネット・コールマンのカヴァーなど、聴きどころは少なくない。

演奏しているのは、エルトン・ディーン(s)、マーク・チャリグ(コルネット)、デイヴ・ステュアート(kb)などが参加したやや大所帯のバンド。ソフト・マシーンの"Third"に収められた"Facelift"(ホッパー作)も同様の大編成によるジャズ・ロックの名演だったが、ホッパーは本作でもそうした世界を目指したのかも。

(立川)

Elton Dean
"Elton Dean"
エルトン・ディーン『ジャスト・アス』

CBS●64539 [1971]→アルカンジェロ◎ARC2103



エルトン・ディーン(s)がソフト・マシーン在籍中にリリースした、彼の最初のソロ・アルバム。バックを務めているエルトン・ディーン・グループは、フィル・ハワード(ds)、ネヴィル・ホワイトヘッド(b)、マーク・チャリグ(コルネット)という布陣。後にこのバンドはメンバーを若干変更し、ジャスト・アスという名前に変わるが、本作のCDにはこの新バンドの名称が付けられている。

基本的には、ディーンがリーダー・シップを握っていた時期のソフト・マシーンを連想させるような、フリー・フォームで先鋭的なジャズ。なかでもマイク・ラトリッジ(kb)がゲスト参加した曲は、マシーンの"Third"にかなり似ている。その一方でオーソドックスな4ビートを巧みに取り入れてる部分もあったりするところが、ジャズのメインストリームからも評価を得ているディーンらしい。70年代の英国のジャズがカヴァーしている領域の広さを示しているかのような一枚だ。

(立川)

The Keith Tippett Group
"Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening"
キース・ティペット・グループ『デディケイテッド・トゥ・ユー』

Vertigo●6360 024 [1971]→レパートワー◎MSIF7229



英国ジャズ界において鮮烈なデビューを飾ったキース・ティペット率いるこのグループがさらなるステップへと向かった傑作セカンド・アルバムにしてラスト・アルバム。これは当時の英国現代ジャズ・シーンからのロック・サイドへの意欲的アプローチの先駆的好例の一つを示す作品として、「メロディ・メイカー」等当時のプレスから絶賛されたものだ。

4人編成に加え、ロバート・ワイアット、ゲイリー・ボイル(g／後にアイソトープ)、ロイ・バビントン(b／後にニュークリアス、ソフト・マシーン)らも参加、冒頭のヒップでエネルギー溢れるナンバーからフリー・フォームな前衛曲、コラージュ的アート曲等まで一気に突き進む感覚は素晴らしい。わずか二十代前半にしてキング・クリムズン等へのゲスト参加や強い影響、あるいはほぼ同時期の大編成ジャズ・オーケストラ・シンフォニー集団センティピードの結成等、幅広い活動を実戦化していたティペットの視界の確かさを証明している作品。(石川)

> Zoom

Centipede
"Septober Energy"
センティピード『セプトーバー・エナジー』

Neon●NE9 [1971]→ヴォイスプリント・ジャパン◎VPJ12 9～30



キース・ティペットが2年余の構想を実践化したビッグ・コンボラリー・ジャズ・オーケストラの唯一の作品集で、レコード4面が一つの実験的組曲形式になっている。当初ロバート・ワイアットやアルバムのプロデュースを担当したロバート・フリップ等に呼びかけて70年秋と71年春、フランスやオランダ等で数回ライヴを行なったこのプロジェクトは、71年6月当時のジャズやロック、あるいはブルースや現代音楽畑等から総勢50人余りが集結してスタジオ入りする。集められたのはワイアットやフリップの他、エルトン・ディーン、ジョン・マーシャル、カール・ジェンキンス、イアン・カー、ジュリー・ティペット、マイク・パトゥー、ボズ・バレル、イアン・マクドナルド等、今から見れば幅広い仕々たる人達だ。

ティペット作曲の組曲を即興を交えてシンフォニーに高めていったもので、混沌とした重みと詩的な美しさが同居し、調和と解体が様々な音楽的フィルターを通し提示された意欲的な力作だ。（石川）

Nucleus
"We'll Talk About It Later"

Vertigo●6360 027[1971]



60年代前半からドン・レンデル＝イアン・カー・クインテットという英国の代表的ジャズ・コンボで活躍してきたカー(tp)が、69年秋に新たなスタイルのグループを作るべく結成したのが6人編成のジャズ・ロック・ユニット、ニュークリアスである。そして、それは当時のジャズ界隈の中でロック・サイドに最も積極的に接近したものの一つとして注目を集め、すぐにデビュー作"Elastic Rock"が発表される。

クリス・スペディング(g)、ジョン・マーシャル(ds)、カール・ジェンキンス(オーボエ、kbd)、ブライアン・スミス(s)らデビュー作と同じメンバーで制作されたこの2作目は、よりロックの躍動感を大きく取り入れた、当時のカー曰く"ボディ・ミュージック"の強化作品集だ。また、そこにジャズの先鋭的アドリブやロック的な叙情性が有機的に混然一体化し、開放的なジャズ・ロック・アンサンブル・サウンドをみごとに完成させている。電化マイルスとは一味違う英国流洗練さと知性が特徴的。（石川）

Carol Grimes & Delivery
"Fools Meeting"
キャロル・グライムス&デリヴァリー
『フールズ・ミーティング』

B&C●CAS1023 [1970]→アルカンジェロ◎ARC2115



アレクシス・コーナーに率いられたブリティッシュR&Bシーンで着実に活動してきたデリヴァリーが、元バビロンの女性シンガー、キャロル・グライムズというフロントマンを得て70年11月にリリースした唯一のアルバム。バンドの布陣はグライムズのほか、フィル・ミラー(g)、スティーヴ・ミラー(p)、ロイ・バビントン(b)、ビップ・パイル(ds)にゲストで元メンバーのロル・コクスヒル(s)が加わっている。

イギリス版ジャニス・ジョプリンと評されただけあって、グライムズのヴォーカルはさすがに迫力十分。R&Bをベースにした比較的シンプルな楽曲が並ぶが、ミラー兄弟のメロディアスでジャジーなフレージング、フェンダー6弦ベースで細かく動き回るバビントンのプレイなど、各人のクセのある演奏からはやはりカンタベリー派特有の感覚が染みだしている。ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースへの伏線を準備した意味でも重要なバンドだった。（小山）

> Zoom

Steve Miller & Lol Coxhill
"Coxhill/Miller. Miller/Coxhill."

Caroline●C1503 [1973]



スティーヴ・ミラーとロル・コクスヒルが、LPの片面ずつを分け合うかたちでリーダー・パフォーマンスを収めたデュオ・アルバム。当初はコクスヒルの72年作"Together Again"を出したマッシュルーム・レーベルでリリースされる予定だったが、倒産によりヴァージン傘下のキャロラインから発売された。このレコードのハイライトはリチャード・シンクレア、フィル・ミラー、ビップ・パイルの3人が合流して演奏される2曲だろう。この編成はデリヴァリーの最終型であると同時に、ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースのプロトタイプともいえるものだ。

スティーヴ・ミラーがウーリッツァー・エレクトリック・ピアノの愛らしい音色で奏でる美しいメロディを、後のハットフィールズのリズム・セクションがほぼ即興で色付けしていく展開は息をのむほどスリリング。テープ操作やモーター音をバックにしたコクスヒルの演奏も興味深い。私的"カンタベリー名盤10選"には必ず入る大傑作です。（小山）

Lol Coxhill
"Ear Of The Beholder"

Dandelion●DSD8008 [1971]◆See For Miles●SEECD414



ロル・コクスヒルは1932年生まれ。十代でサックスを学び、50年代からジャズ・クラブで演奏活動を開始している。ルーファス・トーマスやモーズ・アリスンなどのイギリス・ツアーでバッキングを務めたりしながら、62年頃にはすでに現在のスタイルに通じるようなサックスのソロ・インプロヴィゼイションも行なっていた。スティーヴ・ミラーらと結成したデリヴァリーを経て、70年にケヴィン・エアーズのザ・ホール・ワールドに加入する。

本作は71年にダンデライオンから2枚組LPとしてリリースされた初のソロ・アルバム。ソプラノ・サックスの飄々とした即興を中心に、ホール・ワールドのメンバー、デイヴィッド・ベッドフォードとのデュオ、バンド演奏、子供たちと街頭で録音したユーモラスなパフォーマンスなど多彩な内容となっている。エアーズ、ロバート・ワイアットも参加しているが、契約の関係でそれぞれ"Kevin Dee"、"Robert Or Dwich"とクレジット。（小山）

Khan
"Space Shanty"
カーン「宇宙の船乗り」

Deram●SDL11 [1971]◆デラム●UICY9037



スティーヴ・ヒレッジを中心にして、元クレイジー・ワールド・オヴ・アーサー・ブラウンのニック・グリーンウッド(b、vo)と元ドクター・K'ズ・ブルース・バンドのエリック・ピーチー(ds)が脇を固めたカーンの唯一のアルバム。録音にはヒレッジの旧友デイヴ・ステュアートが全面参加、1曲目のアルバム・タイトル曲から鋭いオルガン・プレイを披露している。プロデュースを務めたのはエッグの"The Polite Force"(71年)と同じくニック・スレイヴンで、それも好結果をもたらしたといえるだろう。

ヒレッジとステュアートによるジャジーなインプロヴィゼイションが最大の聴きどころだが、"Grand Sea"をはじめとした牧歌的な雰囲気も兼ねがたく、静と動による叙情的なカンタベリー・タペストリーを織りなしている。収録曲は、1曲の共作を除くすべてがヒレッジの単独作で、宇宙との交信やら仏教的な瞑想感やら、歌詞にはややくもヒレッジ色が濃厚に表われている。（高橋）

> Zoom

Egg
"Egg"
エッグ「エッグ」

Deram Nova●SDN14 [1970]→デラム◎POCD1843



70年に発表されたファースト・アルバム。デビュー・シングル「Seven Is A Jolly Good Time/You Are An Princess」(69年)に続いて発表されたもので、当時のプログレッシヴ・ロックの定番とも言える片面一杯を占める20分強の組曲「交響曲第2番」が、LPのB面に収められていた。この曲はグリーグの「ペールギュント組曲」の中の「山の大王の宮殿にて」(サウンズ・インコーポレイテッド、ザ・フー、ELOなどイギリスのロック・バンドがカヴァーしている曲)や、ストラヴィンスキーの「春の祭典」から「乙女たちの踊り」といった古典を織り込んだ作品で、クラシックとロックの融合という彼らのコンセプトを示した快演を聞くことができる(A面にはバッハをアレンジした曲も)。

また、この組曲のインターリード部にはデイヴ・スチュアートのトーン・ジェネレイターによるインプロヴィゼイションも盛り込まれており、のちにハットフィールズでも使われた彼独特の演奏だ。(赤岩)

Gilgamesh
"Gilgamesh"

Caroline●CA2007 [1975]



75年5月にレコーディングされたギルガメッシュのファースト・アルバム。メンバーはアラン・ゴーウェン(kb)、フィル・リー(g)、マイク・トラヴィス(ds)、直前に加わったジェフ・クライン(b)の4人で、アマンダ・パーソンズ(vo)がゲスト参加している。プロデュースはギルガメッシュとハットフィールド&ザ・ノースのデイヴ・ステュアート。カンタベリー系のアルバムを積極的に出していたヴァージンの傘下レーベル、キャロラインから発表された。

ここでの曲は73年頃からすでに演奏されており、アランがほとんどの曲を作り構成はしっかりしている。特に三つのパートからなる長尺曲3曲はストーリー性があり、想像力をかきたてる。ジャズ指向のアランなのに、かなりロックっぽく聞こえるのは、大きくフィーチャーされているフィルのギターが、まるでロバート・フリップを師としたかのようだからだ。一方、アランのピアノ、シンセ、クラヴィネットの演奏はまさしくジャズ・ロックだ。(山岸)

Quiet Sun
"Mainstream"
クワイエット・サン「メインストリーム」

Island●HELP19 [1975]→ベル・アンティーク◎MARO 1621



ソフト・マシーンに影響を受けた学生たちが結成した、いわばカンタベリー第2世代の代表とも言うべきバンドがクワイエット・サンだった。フィル・マンザネラ(g)、ビル・マコーミック(b)、デイヴ・ジャレット(kbd)、チャールズ・ヘイワード(ds)という、グループ解散後の充実した活動で知られる連中が心血を注ぎ創作していったバンドだが、残念ながら70年代前半ではあまりに活躍の場が少なかった。

残されたこの唯一のアルバムは、マンザネラがソロ・アルバムを作るために再び集まった仲間によって、かつてのナンバーを演奏したものだが、驚かされるのは、その緊迫感に満ちたインプロヴィゼイションと構成力。大ざっぱにジャズ・ロックといえばそうだが、ソフト・マシーンとキング・クリムズン的なものが融合/圧縮された密度に圧倒される場面もしばしば。近年のマンザネラ、ヘイワードの良い仕事&他プロジェクトのサポートぶりなどとともに、忘れず評価しておきたいグループだ。(大鷹)

> Zoom

アルバム選

Daevid Allen Trio
"Live 1963"

Voiceprint◎VP122CD [1993]



運命の糸に導かれてやってきたヒッピー、デイヴィッド・アレンを軸にしたロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパーのトリオが残した奇蹟の発掘もの。ドラムス、ベース、ギターをバックにポエトリー・リーディングを展開するアレンというパターンが中心で、いかにも若いリズムがギシギシと軋んでいるが、それがこの意欲が先走ったプロジェクトや試みにはよく合っている。もちろんソフト・マシーンの芽はくっきりとあるし、マシーンはレコードを出すまでが一番面白かったというワイアットの言葉に思わず首肯したくなるようなユーモアとスリルも濃厚だ。（大鷹）

The Wilde Flowers
"The Wilde Flowers"

Voiceprint◎VP123CD [1994]



もう10年近く前になるが、これが発掘リリースされたときにはホントに驚き、感動すら覚えたものだ。65～69年の未発表音源集で、ケヴィン・エアーズ、ロバート・ワイアットらの若々しい歌声、ロックやブルーズ、ジャズが大胆かつ繊細にミックスチャーされていくアンサンブルの妙は、音楽のミューズ誕生の瞬間に立ち会うような気さえしてくる。録音状態にばらつきはあるがまったく気にはならないし、だいたいそんなことすら無関係になる貴重な音源なのだ。ブライアン・ホッパーによる素晴らしいライナーもあって、カンタベリー周辺ファン、必携の一枚。（大鷹）

Soft Machine
"Face And Place Vol. 7/Soft Machine"

(L)BYG◎529 907 [1972]◆Charly◎CD CHARLY188



デイヴィッド・アレン、ケヴィン・エアーズ、マイク・ラトリッジ、ロバート・ワイアットのオリジナル4人の録音が収録された唯一のアルバムで、67年4月のデモ的録音9曲を収録。俗にゴメルスキー音源と呼ばれ、当初はフランスBYG "Rock Generation" シリーズ第7集と第8集の二つに分割されて71年に出たが、すぐ後に本盤で1枚にまとめられた。シングル "Love Makes Sweet Music" 同様にシンプルなサイケデリック風ポップが中心だが、ワイアットの名曲バラード2曲等、聴きどころも多い。うち2曲が3人の各々のソロ作で後に再び取り上げられた。（石川）

Soft Machine
"Fourth"

ソフト・マシーン『4』

CBS◎64280 [1971]◆エピック◎ESCA5417



"Third" で大きな変貌をとげた彼らがよりフリー・ジャズ色を強めたのが70年11月録音の4作目だ。エルトン・ディーンはオリジナル曲も提供、既に他の3人と対等の存在に位置している。即興を軸にラトリッジの歪んだトーンのキーボード類（電気ピアノを多用）とホッパーの空間的広がりを持つベースやディーンのうねりを放つサックスが絡み、ジャズやロックの垣根を越えた独自の整合感を誇るコンテンポラリー音楽を作り出した。ワイアットはドラマーに徹しすぐれた演奏を披露するが、この後脱退。ゲストにキース・ティペット・グループの3人他が参加。（石川）

Soft Machine
"Fifth"

ソフト・マシーン『5th』

CBS◎64806 [1972]◆エピック◎ESCA5418



フリー・ジャズの洗礼を強く受けているディーンのサックスがかなり前面に押し出されている5作目。新ドラマーとしてフィル・ハワード（キース・ティペット・グループ）とジョン・マーシャル（キース・ティペット・グループ、ニュークリアス）が順に加入し、片面ずつを担当している。彼らの作品中最もジャズに接近したもので、マイルス・デイヴィスの "Miles In The Sky" あたりに近い印象もあるが、その完成度は高い。ディーンのサックスがメインに立ちながらも、総合的な統一感を生み出しているのはあくまでラトリッジとホッパー組である。（石川）

> Zoom

Soft Machine
"Six"



ソフト・マシーン「6th」

CBS●68214 [1973] ◆エピック ●ESCA5536

自己のリーダー・グループやソロ活動に従事するためにエルトン・ディーンが脱退し、新メンバーとしてニュークリアスのオーボエ奏者カール・ジェンキンスが加入して制作された6作目。ジェンキンスはニュークリアス時代にも多くの作曲を手掛けていた才人で、ここでもラトリッジと共に新たな表情を見せるこのグループの中心的存在として大活躍している。AB面が72年秋の英国ライヴ音源から編集の11曲、CD面がスタジオ作4曲からなる2枚組で、ミニマル・ミュージックの独自の解釈を多用した浮遊感と躍動感が新たな魅力を作り出している秀作だ。（石川）

Soft Machine
"Bundles"



Harvest●SHSP4044 [1975] ◆ See For Miles●SEECD283

"Seven"発表直後の73年11月にアラン・ホールズワース（g／元ニュークリアス、テンペスト）を迎え入れて5人組となった彼らがEMIハーヴェストに移籍して発表した8作目。グループの歴史上、最も大きな変容をとげたアルバムと言ってよく、大まかに表現すれば、それまでのジャズ・ロックからフュージョン的なサウンドに変わってしまっている。リフが明確になり、楽曲構造が技巧的に様式化し始めたためか、独特の浮遊感が個性だった彼ら流のジャズ・ロックはほとんど消えていく。"Hazed Profile Part 1"は ニュークリアスの曲のリフ引用である。（石川）

Soft Machine
"Softs"



Harvest●SHSP4056 [1976] ◆ See For Miles●SEECD285

アラン・ホールズワース（ゴングへ移籍）と唯一のオリジナル・メンバーだったマイク・ラトリッジが脱退し、新ギタリストにジョン・エサリッジ（元ダリル・ウェイ&ウルフ）、新サックス奏者にアラン・ウェイクマン（元グレアム・コーリアー・グループ）を迎えて発表された9作目。ジェンキンスはキーボード類担当に専念し、ラトリッジなき後の新体制で立て直しをはかろうと作曲面でもそのほとんどを手掛け、叙情的なものと劇的なものとのバランスを巧く取っている。静動の幅を持つエサリッジのギターも生かされ質の高いフュージョン作に仕上がった。（石川）

Soft Machine
"Alive & Well Recorded In Paris"



Harvest●SHSP4083 [1978] ◆ See For Miles●SEECD290

"Seven"から正式参加していたベーシストのロイ・バビントン（キース・ティペット・グループ、ニュークリアス）とアラン・ウェイクマンが脱退し、新ベーシストにスティーヴ・クック（元ギルガメッシュ）と新ヴァイオリニストにリック・サンダース（セカンド・ヴィジョン）を迎えた10作目。デビュー10周年記念のツアーのパリ公演（77年7月）のライヴから編集された作品で、この後バンドは解体する。ライヴ・フュージョン・バンドとしての技巧性は確かだが、中軸ジェンキンスのアイディア先行のみの部分も目につき、中途半端に終わってしまった作品。（石川）

2nd Vision
"First Steps"



セカンド・ヴィジョン「ファースト・ステップス」

Chrysalis●CHR1289 [1980] ◆ ヴォイスプリント・ジャパン●VPJ 162

76～77年にソフト・マシーンを支えたソリスト二人が78～80年に結成していた極上のフュージョン・バンド。元ウルフのギタリスト、ジョン・エサリッジとトラッド系ヴァイオリニスト、リック・サンダースの相性は抜群で、ソフト・マシーンでの緊迫感のあるプレイとは一味違うゆとりすら感じられる。他のメンバーも実力者揃い。彼らの唯一のアルバムである本盤が名作と言われていないのは時代との巡り合わせの悪さ以外の何ものでもなかったと思う。長らく入手困難だったが、00年にやっとCD化。3月にリックはフェアポート・コンヴェンションで再来日の予定。（坂本）

アルバム選

Caravan
"Caravan"



キャラヴァン「キャラヴァン」

Verve●VLP/SVLP6011 [1968] ◆ヴィヴィド◎VSCD1357

シングル化された"Place Of My Own"やボサノヴァ調の"Love Song With Flute"、哀感たっぷりな"Magic Man"など、なかなかポップでメロディアスな曲が揃ったデビュー盤。だが、演奏はもうひとつ引き締まったところがなく、アイディアを消化し切れていない印象がある。ちょっとサイケでフォーキーな感覚は、意外とジェネシスのデビュー盤に近い気もする。ヴォーカルもまだ弱く、"歌手がダメだ"とクリス・ブラックウェルにアイランド入りを蹴られたという話も頷ける。ただし、デイヴ・シンクレアは随所で光るプレイを聴かせ、充分に才気をみせる。（高橋）

Caravan
"If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You"



キャラヴァン「キャラヴァン登場+4」

Decca●SKL5052 [1970] ◆デラム◎UICY9065

レーベルを移籍してのセカンドでキャラヴァンは大きな成長を遂げた。まず、聴きどころになるのがアルバム・タイトル・ナンバー。たった3分ほどの曲だが、だからこそ逆に、この変拍子バシバシの曲をポップにまとめた手腕が光る。ファーストに比べると演奏に核が感じられ、ヴォーカルやハーモニーも引き締まっている。アグレッシヴな"As I Feel I Die"も良いが、アルバムのハイライトとなるのは代表曲"For Richard"。フルートとサックスにジミー・ヘイスティングスを迎え、オルガンやベースと絡み合いながら、幽玄の世界が劇的に展開される。（高橋）

Caravan
"Waterloo Lily"



キャラヴァン「ウォーター・ルー・リリー+3」

Deram●SDL8 [1972] ◆デラム◎UICY9059

キーボード奏者がデイヴ・シンクレアからスティーヴ・ミラーに替わったことで、バンドのアンサンブルにも変化がみられる第4作目だ。リチャード・シンクレアのベースが一定のリズムをキープしながら演奏の屋台骨をなす場面が増し、リズムの粘りが一段と強くなっている。ジャズ・ロックというよりも、もろにジャズっぽい熱気を持つ演奏が多いのだ。ロル・コクスヒルとフィル・ミラーが参加した"Nothing At All"や、ストリングスを配した"The Love In Your Eye"が新たな魅力を感じさせ、特に後者では、パイのギターと歌も大きな存在感をみせる。（高橋）

Caravan
"Cunning Stunts"



キャラヴァン「ロッキン・コンチェルト+3」

Deram●SKL-R5210 [1975] ◆デラム◎UICY9067

ベースがジョン・G・ペリーから元カーヴド・エアのマイク・ウェッジウッドに替わり、彼が力強いヴォーカルを披露する曲も多い。"Welcome The Day"はパーカッションも活躍するファンキーな曲調で、バラードの"Lover"を含め、確かにアメリカ受けしそうな曲がここには数多く収録されている。しかし、繊細にはじまり、弦楽器が活躍する18分の大作"The Dabsong Conshirtoe"でもデイヴ・シンクレアのキーボードは控え目、ブラス・アレンジには米国指向が強く出て、なにか、どっちつかずに感じるのもまた確かだ。ヒプノシスによるジャケットは秀逸。（高橋）

John G. Perry
"Sunset Wading"



ジョン・G・ペリー「サンセット・ウェディング」

Decca●SKL5233[1976]◆ヴォイスプリント・ジャパン◎VPJ107

キャラヴァン、そしてカーヴド・エアのベーシストのジョン・G・ペリーが76年にルパート・ハインのプロデュースで制作したアルバム。バックにはマイケル・ジャイルズ、モーリス・パート、ロジャー・グローヴァーらとともに、イタリア人のコッラード・ルスティーチとエリオ・ダンナのノヴァやサイモン・ジェフスらペンギン・カフェ・オーケストラのメンバーが加わった。湖のある風景の夜明けから日没までを、シンフォニックなものからロックやジャズといった様々なテイストを持つ長短14曲を繋ぎ、水の音やニワトリの声を入れて描いた絵画的な音楽だ。（山岸）

> Zoom

Camel
"Breathless"

キャメル「ブレスレス」

Decca ● TXS-R132 [1978] ◆ デラム ◎ POCD1827



78年9月発表の8作目。前スタジオ作"Rain Dances"の録音途中に加入したリチャード・シンクレア(vo、b)が本格的に参加した作品だが、これを最後にピーター・バーデンス(kbd／先日亡くなった)、ツアー後にシンクレアとメル・コリンズ(s)が相次いで脱退(シンクレアは7作目のライヴにも一部参加)。キャメルにはシンクレアに続いて元キャラヴァンのヤン・シェラース(kbd)やデイヴ・シンクレア(kbd)が加入、カンタベリー派との関係を深めた。本作での、タイトル曲や自作"Down On The Farm"など4曲でフィーチャーされるシンクレアのあの歌声は絶品だ。(赤岩)

Matching Mole
"Matching Mole's Little Red Record"

CBS ● 65260[1972] ◇ オランダ Sony ◎ 4714882



デイヴ・シンクレアが抜け、前作ではゲスト扱いだったデイヴ・マクレエ(kbd)が正式メンバーとなった4人組は、欧州でしばしばライヴをこなしながら本作をリリースする。バンドとしての2枚目のアルバムとなる本盤は、キング・クリムゾンのロバート・フリップ(g)をプロデューサーに迎えて制作された。全9曲のうちワイアットが手がけた曲は全くなく、マクレエやフィル・ミラーら他のメンバーがほぼ均等に曲作りを担当している。フリップがプロデュースしているわりには実験的色彩は薄い。このあとバンドは事実上、活動停止状態に入ってしまう。(岡田)

Robert Wyatt
"Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard"

ロバート・ワイアット「ルース・イズ・ストレンジャー・ザン・リチャード」

Virgin ● V2034 [1975] ◆ ライコディスク ◎ VACK1226



前作"Rock Bottom"から約1年後にリリースされたソロ3作目。プロデュースは前作と同じくピンク・フロイドのニック・メイスンが担当しているが、ワイアット自身がすべての曲づくりを手がけた前作とは違い、本盤にはフィル・マンザネラやフレッド・フリスといった多彩なゲストが曲作りに参加していることもあってか、ややリラックスしたムードの作風に。彼の歌声にも余裕が感じられる。冒頭の"Soup Song"のように飄々としてユーモアに満ちた楽曲をはじめ、フリスとのコラボレーションなどが聞きどころだが、前作に比べるとややまとまりに欠ける印象も。(岡田)

Ivor Cutler
"Velvet Donkey"

Virgin ● V2037 [1975]



1923年生まれのカトラーは英空軍を除隊後、教師として働く傍ら59年からBBCラジオで番組を持ち、自作の童話などを読み上げていた。61年にデッカからレコード・デビュー、ジョン・ピールと親交を持った60年代後半からは多くのラジオ・ショウで活躍するようになる。カンタベリー・ファンに印象的だったのは、ロバート・ワイアットが落下事故から復帰した"Rock Bottom"でカトラーが披露した朗読だろう。本作は75年にリリースされた通算4枚目のアルバム。フレッド・フリスのヴィオラが牧歌的に響くなか、ユーモラスなファンタジーが語られていく。(小山)

Kevin Ayers
"Whatevershebringswesing"

ケヴィン・エアーズ「ホワットエヴァーシーブリングスウェシング」

Harvest ● SHVL800 [1972] ◆ BGO ◎ MSIF7212



72年1月発表の3作目。バックには第2期ホール・ワールドやロバート・ワイアット(vo)、ゴングのディディエ・マレーブ(s)らが参加。バンド的アプローチが取られた前作と違い、名義通りにソロ作といった色が濃い。前衛的な手法も取られた前作とは違い、デビュー・アルバムの雰囲気に戻ったような牧歌的要素も聞かせるポップ作となった。ベッドフォードのカラフルなオーケストレーションを再び起用、1曲目のメドレーはピンク・フロイド"Atom Heart Mother"を思わせる開放的な弦楽が美しい。ルー・リードっぽい"Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes"も代表曲。(赤岩)

> Zoom

アルバム選

Kevin Ayers
"The Confessions Of Dr. Dream And Other Stories"

ケヴィン・エアーズ「コンフェッションズ・オブ・ドクター・ドリーム」

Island●ILPS9263 [1974]◆BGO@MSiF7213



74年5月発表の5作目で、アイランド・レコードに移籍しての最初の作品。エルトン・ジョンと同じマネージャー（ジョン・リード）のもとに（イーンも担当）の下に移り、アイランド側もヘッドA&Rのリチャード・ウイリアムスの戦略で、ニコやジョン・ケイル、イーノなどを結集し、アート／モダン・ロック的アプローチを図ろうとしていた。そんな状況下で制作された本盤は、ルパート・ハインをプロデューサーに起用し、多数のセッション・ミュージシャンをバックに録音されている。18分にわたるタイトル組曲（ニコ参加）はアヴァンギャルドなプログレ作。（赤岩）

Kevin Ayers
"June 1, 1974"

ケヴィン・エアーズ、ジョン・ケイル、イーノ、ニコ「JUNE 1, 1974」

Island●ILPS9291[1974]◆アイランド◎PHCR4854



前作 "The Confessions..." の発表に合わせたUKツアー初日のギグにニコを招いたエアーズだったが、ニコがジョン・ケイルも誘い、ケイルがブライアン・イーノを誘うということになった。こうした状況を見ていたエアーズもロバート・ワイアットやマイク・オールドフィールドといった旧友に声をかけ、この歴史的な競演が実現した。前半部（LPのA面）はイーノ、ケイル、ニコの各パート、後半部にエアーズを収録したライヴ作で、バックのソポリフィクス（オリー・ハルソール&他）とワイアットらを交えての貴重な演奏が聞ける。（赤岩）

David Bedford
"Nurses Song With Elephant"

Dandelion●2310 165 [1972]



ベッドフォードは1937年生まれ、ロイヤル・アカデミー・オブ・ミュージックで学んだ。シェーンベルクに大きな影響を受け、またルイジ・ノーノに師事し、60年代初めから現代音楽家として作曲活動を開始している。本作はケヴィン・エアーズのホール・ウールドに参加後の72年に発表した初ソロ・アルバム。管弦楽オーケストラ、フリーキーなギターの集団演奏、テープ操作などが交錯する内容はアヴァンギャルドだがユーモラス。マイク・オールドフィールドがベースで一曲参加しているほか、エアーズのほのぼのとした歌もエンディングでフィーチャーされた。（小山）

Mike Oldfield
"Tubular Bells"

Virgin●V2001 [1973] ©Virgin ◎7243 8 49388 2 6



ヴァージン・レーベルの第一弾として73年5月に発売されたマイク・オールドフィールドのデビュー作で超有名盤。映画「エクソシスト」に使われたことでも知られている。発売時マイクはちょうど20歳で、17歳の頃すでに構想を練っていたというから早熟の天才だ。ケヴィン・エアーズのホール・ワールドでの経験が大きい。姉サリーらの参加はあるものの基本的にはギター、ベース、キーボード、パーカッションそれにチューブラー・ベルズをひとりで演奏し多重録音した画期的なアルバム。根幹にフォーク、トラッドがあり、ケルトの血が脈々と流れている。（山岸）

Lady June
"Lady June's Linguistic Leprosy"

Caroline●C1509 [1974]



パフォーマーで、画家で、詩人でもあったレディー・ジューンが、ケヴィン・エアーズのプロデュースとブライアン・イーノらのバックで制作し、74年に発表した作品。ロシアとスコットランドのハーフとして31年に生まれた彼女は、エアーズより20歳も歳上だったが、60年代初めにマジョルカ島でのボヘミアン生活時代に知り合い、60年代末にジューンがロンドンで住んでいたフラットはカンタベリー系人脈の溜まり場だった（ワイアットの転落事故現場はここ）。キャバレー・ショー的なパフォーマンスでも知られた彼女の歌と語りで綴った異形のポップ作。（赤岩）

> Zoom

National Health
"Of Queues And Cures"

Charly●CRL5010 [1978]●仏
Spalax◎CD14830



ナショナル・ヘルスの2作目は、実質的にはデイヴ・ステュアート(ds)のソロといった内容のアルバムだ。彼が同時期に全面的に関わっていたビル・ブルフォードのアルバムに、とても音が似ている。ステュアートは緊張感のある緻密なアレンジを得意としているが、本作にもそんな彼の特徴が良くも悪くも如実に表れているようだ。スリリングな雰囲気と濃密さという点ではカンタベリー系の同類の作品のなかでもいちばんだが、ちょっと息が詰まるようだと感じる人もいるだろう。ここにユーモアや風通しの良さが加われば、名作になったこと間違いなし。（立川）

Slapp Happy
"Sort Of"

スラップ・ハッピー『ソート・オブ』

Polydor●2310 204[1972]◆ヴォイスプリント・ジャパン◎VPJ1 25



そのあまりの前衛志向に業を煮やしたレコード会社から、ポップ・バンドを作るよう要請されたアンソニー・ムーアは、旧知のピーター・ブレグヴァドとスラップ・ハッピーを結成した。つまり前衛とポップ、ノイズとメロディ、実験性とコマーシャリズムの止揚がこのバンドが宿命的に背負ったテーマだった。そしてそれがこのファースト・アルバムではやくも完璧に近い形で実現していることに驚く。ファウストとの共同生活のドラッグ漬けの毎日から生まれ育まれた、毒とユーモア、実験と遊び心。それでいて優雅で気品のあるたたずまい。素晴らしすぎる。（小野島）

Slapp Happy
"Slapp Happy"

スラップ・ハッピー『カサブランカ・ムーン／デスプリット・ストレイツ』

Virgin●V2014 [1974]◆ロクス・ソルス◎LSI2041



ファーストとほとんど同じ態勢で制作・完成しながらレコード会社から発売を拒否され、移籍先のヴァージンでリテイクの末ようやく発売にこぎつけたいわくつきの作品。本作は、グレアム・ブレスケットのヴァイオリンが大幅にフィーチャーされた名曲"Casablanca Moon"をはじめ、どれもアレンジがきっちりとなされ曲の輪郭が明瞭になり、より完成されている。ファーストに比べ、ファウスト周辺のヒッピー的なライフ・スタイルの枠から飛び出して世界を広げていった彼らの成長がより明確になった、ポツ版セカンド。"Nowhere Room"。同様の名盤。（小野島）

Henry Cow
"The Legend"

ヘンリー・カウ『レッグ・エンド／レジェンド』

Virgin●V2005 [1973]◆ロクス・ソルス◎LSI2035



まさに"伝説"の第一作。ジャズ・ロックからスタートして、やがてそこにはとどまらない流動的かつ意志的な運動体として組織されていった彼らの出発点（というには、あまりに完成されているが）がここにある。高度に構築された緻密なアレンジ・ワークと、奔放なインプロヴィゼイションがシームレスに連続展開し、複雑で変化に富んだ音世界を形作っている。発表以来30年近くもたつ本作は、いまだ古びることなく輝き続けている。気まぐれな時の流れから隔絶し、唯一無二の境地を確立した彼らの音楽には、まるで修行僧のような厳しさが漂う。（小野島）

Henry Cow
"Unrest"

ヘンリー・カウ『アンレスト』

Virgin●V2011 [1974]◆ロクス・ソルス◎LSI2038



ジェフ・リー(s、fl)が脱退、女性バスーン奏者リンジー・クーパーが加入しての第2作。初期ヘンリー・カウの最高傑作と言える。精密なコンポジションと高度なインプロヴィゼイションの止揚というテーマは、ここに至ってきわめて洗練された形で完成された。スタジオでのフリー・インプロヴィゼイションを整理し再構成したB面の流れがそれで、見事なアンサンブルを展開する。後に日本のアヴァンギャルド・グループの名にも流用された"Ptah"などA面の楽曲の大胆かつ緻密な構成も素晴らしい。バスーン、オーボエなどを中心としたアンサンブルも新鮮だ。（小野島）

> Zoom

Henry Cow/Slapp Happy
"In Praise Of Learning"

ヘンリー・カウ『イン・プレイズ・オブ・ラーニング』

Virgin●V2027 [1975] ➡ロクス・ソルス◎LSI2040



一応共作となっているが、スリーヴの〝靴下〟が示すように、実質的にはヘンリー・カウの作品にダグマー・クラウゼが参加したアルバムだ。1曲目の〝ゼア、こそムーア／ブレグヴァド作で、ブレグヴァドの朴訥なヴォーカルにわずかにスラップ・ハッピーの面影を感じるが、残りは精密な構築とフリー・インプロヴィゼイションによる緊張度の高いヘンリー・カウの世界。シリアスでヘヴィ、かつアグレッシヴだ。クラウゼのヴォーカルもそれまでになく張りつめた緊迫を伝える。寓話性の強い言葉の中に強い意志とメッセージをこめた歌詞も鋭い。（小野島）

Art Bears
"Winter Songs"

Recommended●RE0618[1979] ⇔同◎ReR &bCD1



のっけから凄い緊張感が漂う。ダグマー・クラウゼの鋭い刃物のようなヴォーカルと、いっそう贅肉がはぎとられ骨組だけになった演奏が、ギリギリの崖っ淵を歩くような張りつめた空気を切り裂くように、めくるめく展開していく。パンク／ニュー・ウェイヴの性急な革新で旧来のロックがことごとく精彩を失っていた79年においても、これは際だった光を放っていたはずだ。長大なインプロヴィゼイションや大作主義はやめ、コンパクトな演奏と歌で、寓意性に富んだ歌詞の世界を完璧に表現した本作は、彼らのキャリアの頂点に位置する、あまりに凄すぎる傑作。（小野島）

Gong
"Magick Brother"

仏BYG●529 305 [1969]



記念すべきゴングのデビュー・アルバム。デイヴィッド・アレンとジリ・スマイスを中心とした計9人編成のバンドが奏でるサウンドは、冒頭のタイトル曲に代表されるようにサイケでアシッドなジャズ・フォークといった趣で、壮大でスペイシーなプログレ色は薄い。とはいえ、そのサウンドは当時の英米のバンドとは一線を画すおしゃれで奇妙な雰囲気に溢れている。ジャズの要素はもちろん、タブラを使ったインド風の味つけやオリエンタル指向のサウンドも聞かれ、後のゴング路線の萌芽も感じられる佳作だが、まだ各要素が未消化な印象も受ける…。（岡田）

Gong
"Camembert Electrique"

ゴング『キャマンベール・エレクトリック』

仏BYG●529 323 [1971] ➡ベル・アンティーク◎MAR96242



前作〝Magick Brother〟の音楽性を踏襲しながらも、めざましい進歩を遂げた2作目。後にハットフィールド&ザ・ノースで活躍する名ドラマー、ピップ・パイルを中心とした凄腕リズム隊のシャープでタイトな演奏と、アレン&スマイスのほのぼのヒッピー・コンビが繰り出す能天気でひょうきんなサウンドという持ち味が見事に一体化。唯一無二のゴング・ワールドが姿を現わした。本作の最大の特徴は、ゴングの代名詞ともいえるハラジオ・ノーム・インヴィジブルV3部作の原型や要素がバランス良く盛り込まれている点だろう。ゴングの初期を代表する大傑作だ。（岡田）

Gong
"Flying Teapot"

ゴング『フライング・ティーポット』

仏BYG●529 027[1973]◆ビクター◎VICP61172



バンドとしては3作目のアルバムで、ゴング・ワールドを象徴する物語ハラジオ・ノーム・インヴィジブルV3部作の始まりとなる重要作。バンドは71年冬、イギリス・ツアーを行なって英国のロック・ファンにもその存在を強くアピールしたこともあってか、本作は英ヴァージン・レコードからもリリースされた。本作では各楽曲の構成や物語の進め方、そして各メンバーの演奏能力などすべてに無駄がなく、バンドがその持ち味を最良の形で提示することに成功している。特に本作からバンドに加わった名ギタリスト、スティーヴ・ヒレッジの演奏が見事だ。（岡田）

> Zoom

Gong
"Shamal"

Virgin●V2046 [1976] ◆米
Caroline●CAROL1663-2



バンドを象徴する存在だったアレンとスマイスがバンドを離れ、スティーヴ・ヒレッジ(g)らもゲスト扱いとなったため、従来とは異なる新たなサウンドづくりがなされている。ジャズやインド音楽、東洋指向の要素は従来通りだが、バンドはイエスのようなポップ感覚やジャズ・ロック指向を深めていく。ゴングの持ち味だったファンタジックで牧歌的、かつ飄々とした良い意味でのいい加減さや、独特のスペイシーなサウンドは本作でほぼ皆無となった。しかし各楽曲の質は極めて高く、プログレッシヴ・ロックを代表する傑作のひとつには違いない。(岡田)

Gong
"Gazeuse!"

Virgin●V2074 [1977] ◆米
Caroline●CAROL1660-2



本作ではとうとう、スティーヴ・ヒレッジの名前がクレジットから完全に消えてしまったうえ、マイク・ハウレット(vo)まで脱退し、ゴングは全く新しいバンドに生まれ変わった。メンバー・チェンジでピエール・ムーラン(ds、パーカッション)を含む計3人がパーカッションを担当。カラフルで分厚く、力強いリズムに乗せ、新たにバンドに加わったプログレ界最強のハイテク・ギタリスト、アラン・ホールズワースがシャープな演奏を披露する。全7曲、すべてインストゥルメンタル・ナンバーで、フュージョン色の強いジャズ・ロックに仕上がっている。(岡田)

Hopper/Dean/Tippett/Gallivan
"Cruel But Fair"

ノルウェイCompendium ● FIDA RD4 [1976]



米国人ドラマーのジョー・ギャリヴァンが英国のジャズ・プレイヤーと組んで制作したシリーズのなかの一枚。即興性の強いジャズ・アルバムで、ギャリヴァンはドラムよりもシンセを多くプレイしているが、これはあまりいただけない。ホッパー(b)は触媒的役割に徹している感じ。頑張っているのはエルトン・ディーン(s)とキース・ティペット(p)の二人だろうか。とくに、ティペットのリリカルで静謐なピアノに乗せてディーンが透明感あふれるサックスを吹く"Chaos"は絶品だ。このアルバムを機にホッパーとディーンの共同作業が増える。(立川)

Elton Dean's Ninesense
"Happy Daze"

Ogun●OG910 [1977]



エルトン・ディーンのリーダー・アルバムのなかで、個人的に最も好きな作品がこれだ。77年のブラックネル・ジャズ・フェスティヴァルのために作られたアルバムだが、他のディーンの作品にあるようなフリー・フォーム的サウンドではなく、キース・ティペット(p)と複数の管楽器奏者を中心に展開される、計算されたジャズが聴ける。初期のキース・ティペット・グループの作品を連想させる"Zero"が絶品。その一方で、軽快にスウィングする"Green For Lee"のほどほどに保守的な感じがまた良い。実験性と娯楽性とが見事に共存した良作である。(立川)

Hopper/Dean/Gowen/Sheen (Soft Head)
"Rogue Element"

ソフト・ヘッド『ローグ・エレメント+2』

Ogun●OG527 [1978] ◆アルカンジェロ●ARC1028



78年の初頭から夏頃まで、ヒュー・ホッパー(b)、エルトン・ディーン(s)、アラン・ゴーウェン(kbd)、デイヴ・シーン(ds)の4人は、自分たちの名前の頭文字H・E・A・Dをとってソフト・ヘッドと称するバンドを結成していた。本作は、4人の連名でリリースされた、そのバンドのライヴ盤。バンド名の示すとおり、ソフト・マシーンの音楽性を継承しようという意志があるようだ。演奏レヴェルは非常に高く、かなりテクニカルなプレイをさりげなく演奏している。ただ、ソフト・マシーン的なジャズ・ロックの枠組みに収まってしまっているのが残念だ。(立川)

> Zoom

アルバム選

Soft Heap
"Soft Heap"

Charly●CRL5014 [1979]



ソフト・ヘッドのデイヴ・シーン(ds)がピップ・パイル(ds)に交替して生まれたバンドがこれ。H・E・A・DのDがPにかわったわけだ。基本的な音楽性は変化していないが、ソフト・ヘッドのアルバムに比べると、スタジオ録音になった分、丁寧に作られているという印象を受ける。アラン・ゴーウェンのキーボードは良くいえば繊細、悪くいえば押しが弱く、そのあたりが評価の分かれ目になりそうだ。なお本作発表後にベースがジョン・グリーヴズに交替したが、そのときにはバンドの名称はそのまま。新メンバーでツアーを行なった後、バンドは自然消滅した。(立川)

The Keith Tippett Group
"You Are Here... I Am There"

キース・ティペット・グループ『ユー・アー・ヒア・アイ・アム・ゼア』

Polydor●2384 004[1970]◆ベル・アンティーク●MAR00556



幼少時から専門教育を受け、バリ・サマー・スクールのジャズ・コースを主席で卒業した天才的新星ピアニストのティペットがこの時期の気鋭現代ジャズ系プレイヤー達、エルトン・ディーン(s)やマーク・チャリグ(コルネット)、ニック・エヴァンス(tb)らと結成した最初のグループのデビュー作で、制作にはジョルジオ・ゴメルスキーやエディ・オフォードが関わっている。全体構造は当時の英国現代ジャズ的なものだが、過去のジャズ解体や再構築から導き出されてくるダイナミズムや繊細さが若々しいエネルギーの集合の元でにじみ出ている様は新鮮で瑞々しい。(石川)

Ovary Lodge
"Ovary Lodge"

RCA●SF8372 [1973]



一カ所に留まることないティペットの意欲はキング・クリムズンの3作品への参加経験も経て、72年のソロ名義作"Blueprint"での即興的演奏の深化へと向かう。そこでバートナーの一員となったのが実験的即興打楽器奏者のフランク・ベリーだ。ベースのロイ・バビントンとのトリオ編成で制作されたこのオヴァリー・ロッジ名義の初作品はまたもロバート・フリップがプロデュースし、相互のその後に影響も与えた重要作の一つだ。即興的演奏の可能性を突きつめ、無限に広がっていく音の小宇宙的空間を作り上げていくという探求心と実験は素晴らしく美しい。(石川)

Ian Carr
"Belladonna"

Vertigo●6360 076 [1972]



ソロ名義だが、実質的にはニュークリアスの4作目のアルバムで、メンバーがかなり入れかわった第2期の最初の作品。クリス・スペディングやカール・ジェンキンス、ジョン・マーシャルら主要メンバーが脱け、アラン・ホールズワース(g)、ロイ・バビントン(b)、デイヴ・マクレエ(kbd)、ゴードン・ベック(kbd)らが加入し、プロデュースをジョン・ハイズマン(コロシアム)が担当している。ホールズワースの流れるようなギターやマクレーの空間的電気ピアノを生かした叙情性とややファンキーなリズム感覚とが同居したジャズ・フュージョン的志向の始まり。(石川)

Nucleus
"Alleycat"

Vertigo●6360 124 [1975]



7作目"Under The Sun"から再び大幅なメンバー・チェンジがあり、次作"Snakestone"(75年)とこの9作目あたりでは、共にプロデュースのジョン・ハイズマンとイアン・カー自身の当時の志向が強く反映されたのか、よりファンキーでリズミックなジャズ・フュージョン色が強調されたものになっていく。ジャケットやタイトルからしてこの2作はそれを直接象徴している派手なもので、ケン・ショウのファンキーなギターにカーやボブ・バートルズの躍動する管類等が絡み演奏の質は高い。2作とも若きスティーヴ・リリーホワイトがエンジニア担当。(石川)

> Zoom

アルバム選

Arzachel
"Arzachel"

Evolution●Z1003 [1969]



アーザッケルはエッグの前身バンド、ユリエルの変名バンドだ。ユリエルはエッグの3人に、ギターとヴォーカルのスティーヴ・ヒレッジを加えた4人編成だった。既にエッグが始動しているにも関わらず、アルバム制作者の依頼でユリエルを再編してサイケデリック・ブルース・ロックを演奏したため匿名としたらしいが、ユリエルはほかにアルバムを残しておらず、この音楽の価値は極めて高い。各メンバーの演奏はまさに彼らならではの輝きを持っていて、聴き応え充分。とりわけデイヴ・ステュアートのオルガンは申し分なくファンを魅了するだろう。（坂本）

Egg
"The Polite Force"

エッグ「優雅な軍隊」

Decca●SML1074[1971]◆デラム◎POCD1844



71年1月にリリースされた2作目のアルバム。前作の"四角"同様、LPのB面全部を使った20分強の組曲「小品第3番」が収録されている。バッハを引用した"四角"という曲がA面に収録されているが、今作では古典からの引用は少なく、フリー・フォームなジャムをまとめたようなアナーキーな演奏が表に出ている。「小品第3番」ではその特色が表われた3人のインタープレイが聞きどころだ。一方で、モント・キャンベルがアレンジした、ブラス隊を導入した不思議な変拍子の曲（8分の5拍子と8分の9拍子が交互に）のような実験作も聞ける。（赤岩）

Egg
"The Civil Surface"

Caroline●C1510 [1974]



約3年ぶりの74年に発表された3作目。当時、ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースが成功し、各メンバーのソロ作制作を打診したレコード会社の企画に乗り、ステュアートがエッグの再結成新録を呼びかけ録音されたプロジェクト作。オリジナル・メンバー3人に加え、ユリエル時代の仲間スティーヴ・ヒレッジ(g)やヘンリー・カウのリンジー・クーパー(オーボエ他)とティム・ホジキンスン(cl)、ノーセッツ(vo)ら多彩なゲストも参加。以前にライヴで演奏していた曲から、大学でフレンチ・ホルンを学んだキャンベルによる管楽四重奏まで、多様性に富んだ音楽を展開。（赤岩）

Gilgamesh
"Another Fine Tune You've Got Me Into"

Charly●CRL5009 [1978]◇仏 Spalax◎CD14838



78年6月に本作のために再結成したギルガメッシュのセカンド・アルバム。メンバーはアラン(kb)、フィル(g)、ヒュー・ホッパー(b)、トレヴァー・トムキンス(ds)で、ヒューとトレヴァーはギルガメッシュに過去在籍したことはない。派手さはないが、いかにも職人的な4人の音楽性がうまくマッチした音で、静かななかに醸めた熱気を感じる。アランのキーボードは感性のまま自在に展開し、フィルのギターは何色もの音を聞かせ、トレヴァーにはドラム・ソロが用意されていたり、ヒューのベースも結構自由に泳いでいるようで、4人のセッション風の絡みが面白い。（山岸）

801
"Live"

Island●ILPS9444 [1976]◇Expression◎EXVP16CD



ロキシー・ミュージックのフィル・マンザネラ(g)の実験的プロジェクト。76年9月3日、クイーン・エリザベス・ホールでのライヴで、彼が69年にソフト・マシーンの影響を受けて結成したクワイエット・サンでの仲間、ビル・マコーミック(b)やロキシーで一緒のイーノ(kb)、他にフランシス・モンクマン(kb)、サイモン・フィリップス(ds)、ロイド・ワトスン(g)という実力者を集め、クワイエット・サンのアルバムから2曲、イーノの3曲、巧みにアレンジされたビートルズやキンクスのカヴァーが聞ける。ライヴにも拘らず一分の隙もない超絶な演奏力は見事だ。（山岸）

> Zoom

This Heat
"This Heat"

Piano●THIS1 [1979]



少なくとも僕にとってこの一枚がなかったらカンタベリー・シーンの70年代半ば以降の評価はずいぶん違っていた。クワイエット・サン解散後のチャールズ・ヘイワード(ds)を中心にチャールズ・バレン(g)、ガレス・ウィリアムズ(kbd)によるトリオが作り出した音塊は強固な世界を構築し、発表後四半世紀が過ぎてもなお、いささかも古びていない。即興演奏、その徹底した分析と再構築、さらに即興を積み重ねたものながら、まったく肉体感は失われず、さらにヘイワードの紡ぐメロディ感覚には、やはりカンタベリーの遺伝子が息づくというみごとな傑作。(大鷹)

Spirogyra
"Old Boot Wine"

Pegasus●PEG13 [1972] ⇔独Repertoire●REP41321



72年発表のセカンド・アルバムで、明るいのどかな曲中心のフォーク・ロック・サウンドだが、一部に陰りもみられる。チェロやヴァイオリンを使った曲には彼らにしかない本来の良さが出ている。だが、歌詞は別としてマーティン・コッカーハム(g)が作る曲の大半が平凡。マーティンとマーク・フランシス(g)の歌も上手くなく、まだバーバラ・ガスキンの歌声を十分に生かしきってはいない。全体的には中途半端な印象を受ける。デイヴ・マタックス(ds)がたしかな腕を見せているのが救い。スティーヴ・ヒレッジへの謝辞が記されているところがカンタベリーらしい。(山岸)

Spirogyra
"Bells, Boots And Shambles"

スパイロジャイラ「ベルズ・ブーツ・アンド・シャンブルズ」

Polydor●2310 246[1973]→レパートワー●MSIF7154



3作目にしてラスト・アルバム。マーティンとバーバラのデュオになり、スティーヴ・ポリル(b)とジュリアン・カゼック(vln)の前メンバーはバックでサポート、さらにヘンリー・ローザー(tp)やスタン・サルツマン(fl)が参加。全曲マーティンの作。ドリー・コリンズのアレンジは古楽風の味わいを醸し出し、それがバーバラの清楚でしかもはかなげな歌声をより引き立たせている。アコースティックな響きからロックへの流れには節度があり、ポップさもある。霧のかかった幻想的な世界を音楽に導かれて歩くような感じがする英フォーク・ロックの秀作のひとつ。(山岸)

Turning Point
"Silent Promise"

Gull●GULP1027 [1978]



ターニング・ポイントはベーシストのジェフ・クラインが76～80年に率いていたフュージョン・バンドで、ジェフ自身がそれまでに在籍したニュークリアス、アイソトープ、あるいはギルガメッシュに近い音楽性を持っていた。ロックよりはジャズからのアプローチで組み立てられた音楽であり、今も鮮度の衰えない透明感のあるサウンドは彼らの魅力を的確に伝えてくれるのだが、もう少し躍動感のあるビートを導入していれば歴史的評価も違っていただろうにと思う詰めの甘さも感じられるのが残念。これは彼らの最終作となったセカンド・アルバム。(坂本)

Brian Hopper & Robert Wyatt, Caravan and others
"Canterburied Sounds Volume 1"

「カンタベリー・サウンズVol. 1」

Voiceprint●VP201CD [1998]→ヴォイスプリント・ジャパン●VPJ 086



デイヴィッド・アレン・トリオ、ワイルド・フラワーズの音源を発掘、公表したブライアン・ホッパーが、さらなるカンタベリー・アーカイヴとして編纂した究極の歴史資料集。98年に発表され、シリーズは第4集まで続いた。初期キャラヴァンの未発表ライヴなども含まれるが、このシリーズの価値はまだ十代半ばだった少年たち、ロバート・ワイアット、ヒュー・ホッパーらが手近の楽器を使って繰り広げる音楽的実験、その背景となった好奇心を垣間見せてくれたことだろう。ジャンルを超越した想像力。それこそがカンタベリー・マジックの根源に違いない。(小山)

> Zoom

ソフト・マシーンの再結成プロジェクト始動、その名はソフト・ウェア

松崎正秀

カール・ジェンキンス&マイク・ラトリッジによるヒーリング・ミュージック・プロジェクトAアディエマスVの成功に誘発されたかの如く、この1〜2年、ソフト・マシーンの元メンバー達の動きが活発になってきた。そういった動きをサポートするべくインディペンデントの米キューニアフォーム・レコーズ（www.cuneiformrecords.com）では、元メンバートの新録アルバムやソフト・マシーン、ナショナル・ヘルス、マッチング・モウルなどカンタベリー系ミュージシャンのクオリティの高い未発表ライヴ音源をリリースしている。



Elton Dean
"Moorsong"
Cuneiform@RUNE143

このレーベルでは、その新録のメイン・プロダクツの一つとしてエルトン・ディーンの様々なプロジェクト・アルバムをリリースしており、昨年には彼の自己名義のアルバム"Moorsong"を発売した。こういった流れを汲み、ヒュー・ホッパーも自らのプロジェクト・ユニットHughscoreのデビュー・アルバム"Delta Flora"を同レーベルからリリース。これがきっかけとなりコンタクトをとったホッパーとディーンの二人は新たなバンドを結成、アルバムを制作する構想を持った。

この構想をより具体化すべく奔走したのが、米国のインディ・ジャズ・レーベルムーンジューン・レコーズ（www.moonjune.com）のオーナーであり、エルトン・ディーンのアメリカでのマネージャーでもあるレオナルド・パフコヴィッチ。彼はその構想を、自分のアイドルでもあったソフト・マシーンとしての再結成の形に持っていくべく動いた。その結果、ジョン・マーシャルとジョン・エサリッジがこのプロジェクトに参加する意志を表明。ロバート・ワイアットは陰ながら応援することを表明し、マイク・ラトリッジも同様な意思表示をした。しかしながら、ジョン・マーシャルと共にソフト・マシーンをその活動停止まで運営してきたカール・ジェンキンスが、ソフト・マシーンとしての活動再開を容認せず、このプロジェクトは新たなる名前を必要とすることになる。その結果、この新しいバンドはソフト・ウェア（Soft Where）と名乗ることになった。

その間、契約上の諸事情からジョン・エサリッジの参加がなくなり、何とアラン・ホールズワースの参加が決定するといった経緯もあったが、バンドはこの2月からロンドンでレコーディングを開始し、6月頃にアルバムのリリースが予定されている。ちなみにキーボード・プレイヤーとして参加するのはエルトン・ディーン・グループに参加しているアレックス・マグワイアで、ゲストとしてキース・ティペットとマーク・チャリグの参加も予定されているようだ。またこれと並行して、ムーンジューンからは、カンタベリー系アーティストの未発表ライヴのCD化も進められており、アラン・ホールズワース在籍時のソフト・マシーンや、ヒュー・ホッパー在籍時のアイソトープのライヴ音源などがリリースされる予定だ。さらに、このソフトウェアの来日公演はこの秋に実現する可能性が高い。

> Zoom

世界に広がる"カンタベリー・サウンド"

松井 巧（アルバム選も）

カンタベリー・ミュージックはもともとローカルで家族的な音楽サークルだったはずだ。しかし、結果的には世界中のいたるところへ浸透し、70年代にはジャズ・ロックやプログレッシヴ・ロック、80年代にはニュー・ウェイヴやアヴァンギャルド・ポップ、さらに90年代にはテクノやハウスのなかにまでもその音楽性や実験精神が継承されていった。不思議といえば不思議なのだが、それはとりもなおさず、カンタベリー・ミュージックの高い記号性と柔軟な発展性とを証明することにほかならない。「記号性」という意味では、たとえばキーボード・トリオのELPや、シンフォニック・ロックとしてのジェネシスも数多くのフォロワーを世界中に生んではいる。けれども、こと発展性ということに関していえば、カンタベリーにならぶものはないだろう。

オリジナルのカンタベリー・ミュージックがジャズにせよアヴァンギャルド音楽にせよ、インプロヴィゼーションに大きく依存していることは明らかだし、それがミュージシャン間の多国籍的なネットワーク作りに貢献していることもまちがいない。フランスやベルギー、オランダにカンタベリー・フォロワーが多いのも、地理的にイングランドと近く、60年代から盛んに音楽的交流が続けられてきたからだ。それはまちがいないのだが、面白いことに、すぐれたフォロワーであればあるほど、そうしたジャズ・ロック的な下地のうえに独自の素養を加えて、新たな視点のカンタベリー・ミュージックを作り上げてしまうのだ。

フラメンコとの融合を試みたスペインのムジカ・ウルバナや、小粋なフレンチ・ヴォーカルを乗せてハットフィールドのなかの洗練された前衛趣味と呼応しあうベルギーのコスは、その典型例といえるだろう。ソフト・マシーンから影響を受けたといわれるアレアは、デビューした当時からすでにあまりにも特異な音楽観を完成させてしまっているので、一概にカンタベリーとはいえないけれど、むしろそうしたさまざまな異文化のこなれ具合に、私などは大ローマ時代以来のイタリアの伝統を垣間見る思いがする。

今回左ページに挙げた「アルバム10選」は、入門者にもカンタベリーというキーワードがイメージしやすく、かつ幅広くという要請に基づくものだ。したがって、できるだけ音の印象そのものが、いかにもカンタベリーらしいと感じられるような欧米各国の作品をならべておいた。しかし、そんななかにも、それぞれの地域や時代状況にふさわしい独自性、発展性は十分に読み取れると思う。

> Zoom

Cortex
"Troupeau Bleu"

フランスDisques Esperance ● ESP155524[1975] ◇Dare Dare● DOCD005



バンマスのアレン・ミオンは60年代半ばにプロ活動を開始、ブルー・ノートへの出演経験もあるジャズ系のキーボード奏者だ。75年に発表された本作は、グループの1作目。アルバムの出だしはフュージョン・タッチのコンボに華奢な女性ヴォーカルをふんわりトッピングしたサウンド、いかにもお洒落フレンチ好みのヴォーカル・ジャズといった雰囲気を漂わせている。なのに、演奏がヴォルテージを上げるにつれて、ときおり尖鋭的な横顔をのぞかせる。じつのところカンタベリー云々の明確な裏づけはないが、スキャット入りの曲にはナショナル・ヘルス風のものもある。

Potemkine
"Nicolas II"

フランスPhaeton ● 7801 [1978]



中心メンバーはシャルル、ミシェル、フィリップのグバン三兄弟。76年にデビューしたフランスのジャズ・ロック・バンドだ。本作は78年に発表された3枚目。ほぼ全編でナチュラル・ディストーション系のギターがメロディをおさえる硬質のインストは、後期ソフト・マシーンにも近い感じだが、冒頭曲のテーマ部分や、軽快なユーモアとクラシカルな幻想性に富んだキーボードは、あきらかにアラン・ゴーウェンからの影響をうかがわせている。ギルガメッシュの繊細な幻想味を、ドラマチックかつ精密な演奏のなかでスッキリと描き出したところに、個性の秘密がありそう。

Abus Dangereux
"Le Quatrieme Mouvement"

フランスAJ ● 1001 [1980] ◇Musiclip● 0800



フランス人ギタリスト、ピエールジャン・ゴーシェが78年に結成。本作は翌年録音のデビュー・アルバム。82年にはメンバーを一新した2nd.も発表されている。しかしワンマンバンドではない。グループ・インプロヴィゼーションをきめ細かく紡ぎ、複雑な演奏を複雑と思わせないくらいポップに染め上げたセンスの良さはさすがだ。レコーディング用に起用されたらしい女性ヴォーカルのスキャットはアマンダ・パーソンズというよりフローラ・プリム風で、アメリカン・フュージョン派とのパイプも太い彼らだが、夢想的な曲構成からは、カンタベリーの匂いが上品に漂う。

Supersister
"Present From Nancy"

オランダMedium/Polydor ● 2441 016 [1970]



いまでこそオランダはカンタベリーの影響下にある音楽家の多い国として知られているが、スーパーシスターは、そのなかでも古株だ。70年のデビューだけにハットフィールドもナショナル・ヘルスも知らなかった彼らの音楽は、モーダルなファズ・オルガンが浮遊する即興演奏に加え、ヨーロピアン・ポップやクラシックの素養も感じさせるもの。初期ソフト・マシーンとザ・ナイスの中間をいくような感じで、結果的にエッグにも似た音楽性を示していた。1作目に当たる本作は、彼らのアルバムのなかでもっともシンプルだが、そのぶんキャッチーさは一番。

Cos
"Viva Boma"

ベルギーIBC ● 23605 [1976] ◇Musea● FGBG4159.AR



ダニエル・シェルとその妻パスカル・ソンを中心とするベルギーのグループ。フランスのマグマやザオの影響が強かったが、そこにカンタベリー色を持ち込んだのがマルク・オランデル。彼はコス在籍中にアクサク・マブールも編成し、RIOへの参加を通じてアート・ベアーズとも交流を広げたキーボード奏者だ。本作は76年、彼の加入後に発表された2作目。パスカルの歌はフレンチ・ロリータ、とまでには舌足らずでなく、ジャンルでいえばやはりアヴァン・ポップだが、そのキュートさはハットフィールド系カンタベリーと女性ヴォーカルとの親和性を言い当てている。

> Zoom

Univers Zero
"1313"

ベルギーAtem●7001[1977]◇Cuneiform●RUNE20CD



74年、鬼才ダニエル・ドゥニが結成したベルギーの誇るチェンバー・ロック・バンド。最近、そのドゥニが70年代初頭に在籍していたアーカムというバンドの未発表音源を、キュニフォームがCD化した。それはあらゆる面でソフト・マシーンからの影響をあからさまにしたサウンドだった。これまで欧州アヴァンギャルドの突然変異のように思われていたユニヴェエル・ゼロだが、彼らもまたヘンリー・カウのように、ソフト・マシーンを創造の潤滑剤としながら独自の道を開拓したことになる。道なき道の第一歩は77年発表の本作。厳格なアンサンブルは、すでに確立済み。

Area
"Arbeit Macht Frei"

アレア「自由への叫び」

イタリアCramps●CRSLP5101[1973]◆クランプス／キングインターナショナル●KKCP21



デメトリオ・ストラトスというシャーマニックな天才を擁し、唯一無二の個性がきわだつイタリア屈指のグループ。それだけに、ここで取り上げるのには躊躇もある。しかし、彼らがソフト・マシーンに共感を覚えていたのは周知の事実。バルカン半島の音楽とジャズ・ロックの高度な融合は、彼らの思想的な出発点であるコミュニストとしての政治姿勢を抜きにしても、十分刺激に満ちている。代表作なら"Crac!"という選択もあるけれど、ここでは73年発表の一作目。ソフト・マシーンでいえば"Six"の頃。マシーンの"Fantare~3/2"と似た演奏は、たんなる偶然か？

Picchio Dal Pozzo
"Picchio Dal Pozzo"

ピッキオ・ダル・ポッツォ「ピッキオ・ダル・ポッツォ！」

イタリアGrog●GRL03[1976]◆ネクサス●KICP2822



イタリアはジェノヴァ出身で、活動期間は72～80年。サイケなユーモアとジャズに裏打ちされた多彩で実験的な即興演奏を基調としている。フリーキーなファルセットが端的に物語っているように、彼らが影響を受けているのは、ずばりマッチング・モウルとハットフィールド。76年に発表された本作（一作目）は、曲調も総じてそれ風だ。しかし、彼らもそこだけにとどまらない。以前別のところで彼らのオリジナリティを軽視するようなコメントを書いたことがあるが、聴き方が浅かった。凄惨な明るさとでもいうべきイタリアの風土をひしひしと感じさせるのだ。

Musica Urbana
"Musica Urbana"

スペインEDIGSA●UM2033[1976]◇PDI●80.3331



マルチ奏者ホアン・アルベルト・アマルゴスをリーダーとするスペインのグループで、76年バルセロナ録音の本作がデビュー盤。カンタベリー色はアマルゴスの書く曲やキーボードによく表われているが、同時にリターン・トゥ・フォーエヴァー（RTF）ばりの流麗なプレイも印象深い。しかしそれ以上に印象深いのが、フラメンコを絡め、ユニークなリズムを試みているところ。これもRTFの「スペイン」がヒントになっているのだろうが、カンタベリーと結びつけたのは慧眼だ。シンフォニックになる次作"Tess"は少しその色が薄れる。が、B面の野心的な大作は名演。

The Muffins
"Manna/Mirage"

アメリカRandom Radar●RRR003[1978]



マフィンズは73年、アメリカで結成。ソフト・マシーンやハットフィールドの影響から出発した彼らは、フレッド・フリスの遭米に関与、彼のソロ・アルバムもサポートするなど、カンタベリーとNYアヴァンギャルドとの掛け橋になった。本作は78年発表の一作目。フリー・パートと、そこから魅惑的なグループ・アンサンブルへと解放されていく瞬間のゾクゾクするような展開は、彼らなりに咀嚼し、解釈したカンタベリーの本質が凝縮されている。圧巻はB面組曲の、美しくも起伏に富む構成。このあとの作品では、さらに独自のアヴァンギャルドを追求していくことになる。

> Zoom

ロバート・ワイアット

カンタベリーの枠を超えて愛される ソロ時代の歌声を紙ジャケCDで



立川芳雄

いまでも私は、人前で「カンタベリー・ミュージックが好きです」とか「プログレ・ファンです」とか言うことに対して、恥ずかしさを感じる。たとえば私はソフト・マシーンの作品を素晴らしいものだと思っているが、その一方で、それは特定のジャンルのファン以外にはまったく受け容れられないものではないか、という思いも禁じえないのだ。そんな私にとってロバート・ワイアットは、大げさにいえば一種の救いでもある。いちど彼の歌声の魅力を知った者は、その哀しげな声を忘れない。彼の音楽にはジャンルの枠を超える力があるのだ。彼がいなかったら、カンタベリー・ミュージックはもっと閉じたものになっていたかもしれない。だから、82年にワイアットのシングル「シップビルディング」がヒットし、若い音楽ファンの間でも話題になったとき、私は心のなかでひそかに快哉を叫んだものだ。

そんなロバート・ワイアットのアルバム6タイトルが、日本企画盤として紙ジャケットのCDになった。今回の目玉は、6枚のCD全部を購入すると付いてくるボーナス・ディスク『エアプレイ』だ。6作品とこのボーナス・ディスクについて、内容を簡単に紹介しよう。

まずは74年に発表されたソロ2作目『**ロック・ボトム**』。ワイアットのソロ・アルバムのなかで、個人的には最も好きな作品だ。転落事故で下半身不随となった約1年後に発表され、彼の復活を告げた作品である。なんといってもアルバム冒頭を飾る「シー・ソング」が素晴らしい。不協和音すれすれの微妙なコード、ミニマル・ミュージック的なピアノ、ディストーションのかかったオルガン、それらをバックに歌われるワイアットの祈るようなヴォーカル。実験的だが力強く、哀しみのなかに生への希求が感じられる名曲だ。

『**ルース・イズ・ストレンジャー・ザン・リチャード**』は75年の作品。全体の統一感という点ではいまひとつだが、それぞれの曲は充実している。モンゲジ・フェザ（tp）を迎えたチャーリー・ヘイデンのカヴァー「ソング・フォー・チェ」や、フレッド・フリスが曲を書きピアノも弾いた「マディ・マウス」など、聴きどころは多い。

70年代後半のワイアットは、社会主義運動に身を投じ、音楽活動を控えるようになる。そんな彼が7年ぶりに発表した作品が『**ナッシング・キャン・ストップ・アス**』（82年）だ。80年代初頭のシングルをまとめたもので、実験的色彩の強かった前作とは異なり、ワイアットのヴォーカルが前面に打ち出されている。このアルバムによって、彼の名前は多くの人々に知れわたった。ここでの聴きものは「アット・ラスト・アイム・フリー」。シックの曲（79年の『エレガンス・シック』に収録）を大胆に解釈して美しいバラードに仕立て上げている。

85年の『**オールド・ロットンハット**』は前作の延長線上にある作品。前作以上に歌詞のメッセージ性が強

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まっている。その後90年代に入ると、ワイアットは共産党と訣別し、ひさしぶりのソロ・アルバム『ドンデスタン』(91年)をリリース。この作品は、妻のアルフリーダ・ベンジとの共作曲を中心にしている。

そして97年に発表された現時点での最新作が『シュリープ』。イーノ、フィル・マンザネラ、ポール・ウェラーなど豪華ゲスト陣の参加も見逃せないが、なんといっても70年代の作風に戻っている点が嬉しい。長い試行錯誤の末、迷いを断ち切って原点回帰をしたような作品だ。

そしてボーナス・ディスク『エアプレイ』だが、収録曲は4曲。どれも録音は2001年の秋で、完全な新曲だ。作曲・演奏はすべてワイアット本人とのことだが、トランペットが参加している。「ブリッジ」は、ミニマル的な要素の強い実験的なインストゥルメンタル。フリーキーなヴァイブの演奏はワイアットだろうか。「ホエン・アクセス・ウォズ・アン」は、ちょっとユーモラスな雰囲気が、ソフト・マシーンやマッチング・モウルを連想させる。「ソルト〜アイヴィー」は個人的にこのCDのなかで最も好きな曲で、8分の7拍子のリズムに乗ってマイケル・マントラー風のトランペット・ソロが演奏される。そして「サインド・カーテン」は、ワイアットが祈るように呟くように歌うバラード。ヴォーカリストとしての彼のファンにとっては最高の一曲だろう。

CDを6枚買わないとボーナス・ディスクを貰えない点や、名曲中の名曲「シップビルディング」がどのCDにも収録されていない点には、不満も感じる。けれども全作品を通して聴くと、やはりワイアットの音楽の力に圧倒させられる。CDの仕上がりは未見だが、某誌の編集氏の話によれば、ジャケットの発色はとても奇麗で、ワイアット本人がイラストを描いたボーナスCDの紙ジャケットも、とても美しいそうだ。



『ロック・ボトム』
ライコディスク◎VACK1225

①Sea Song ②A Last Straw ③Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road ④Alifib ⑤Alifie ⑥Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road



『ルース・イズ・ストレンジャー・ザン・リチャード』
ライコディスク◎VACK1226

①Muddy Mouse〔A〕②Solar Flares ③Muddy Mouse〔B〕④5 Black Notes And 1 White Note ⑤Muddy Mouse〔C〕⑥Soup Song ⑦Sonia ⑧Team Spirit ⑨Song For Che



『ナッシング・キャン・ストップ・アス』
ライコディスク◎VACK1227

①Born Again Cretin ②At Last I Am Free ③Caimanera ④Grass ⑤Stalin Wasn't Stallin' ⑥Red Flag ⑦Strange Fruit ⑧Arauco ⑨Trade Union ⑩Stalingrad



『オールド・ロットンハット』
ライコディスク◎VACK1228

①Alliance ②The United States Of Amnesia ③East Timor ④Speechless ⑤The Age Of Self ⑥Vandalusia ⑦The British Road ⑧Mass Medium ⑨Gharbzadegi ⑩P. L. A.



『ドンデスタン』
ライコディスク◎VACK1229

①Costa ②Sight Of The Wind ③Worship ④Catholic Architecture ⑤Shrinkrap ⑥Left On Man ⑦Lisp Service ⑧CP Jeebies ⑨N. I. O. ⑩Dondestan



『シュリープ』
ライコディスク◎VACK1230

①Heaps Of Sheeps ②The Duchess ③Maryan ④Was A Friend ⑤Free Will And Testament ⑥September The Ninth ⑦Alien ⑧Out Of Season ⑨A Sunday In Madrid ⑩Blues In Bob Minor ⑪The Whole Point Of No Return ⑫September In The Rain

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カンタベリー・ミュージックのレア・レコード

小山哲人氏*、岡田 洋氏**提供

オリジナル・ジャケットのデザインはどう継承されたのか？ ソフト・マシーンのファースト・アルバム





The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(米Probe●CPLP4500)*
68年12月に米国のレーベルからリリースされたオリジナル盤。歯車の部分は回転するしかけになっている。左は裏ジャケット



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(イタリアOrizzonte/MCA●ORL8662)*
イタリア盤ファースト・アルバム
米セカンド・プレスの裏ジャケの図柄が表に使用されている



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(米Probe●CPLP4500X)*
米国セカンド・プレス。オリジナル・ジャケットの切り抜いてある部分がすべて省略され、裏ジャケの女性には水着が着せられてしまった



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine Volume 1/ Volume 2"
(イタリアProbe●3C154-50185~6)*
ファースト・アルバムとセカンド・アルバムをカップリングした2枚組



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(オランダStateside●D109/5)*
オランダ盤

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ジャケットに反映されたグループ名の様々な解釈ぶり　ソフト・マシーンの各国盤



The Soft Machine "We Did It Again"
(ベルギーABC●27135ET)*
ベルギー盤ファースト・アルバム



ソフト・マシーン『アート・ロックの彗星』
(プローブ／キング●SR303)*
国内盤のファースト・アルバム・オリジナル盤



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(独Probe●SHZE9088L)*
ファースト、セカンドの両アルバムから編集されたシングル・アルバム



ソフト・マシーン『ソフト・マシーン』
(プローブ／東芝EMI●IPP80899)*
国内再発盤



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(オランダS.R. International●20.165)*
上と同趣旨のアルバム。オランダ盤レコード・クラブ・イシュー



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine"
(仏Barclay●0920 082)*
フランス盤ファースト・アルバム

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Soft Machine "At The Beginning"
(独Bellaphon●CR3058)*
右のアルバムの再発盤



Soft Machine "Soft Machine"
(独BYG/Metronome●200.137)*
ジョージオ・ゴメルスキー・プロデュースで録音されたファースト・アルバム用のデモ音源を集めたLP



The Soft Machine "The Soft Machine Volume 2"
(ベルギーABC●28 601XAT)*



Soft Machine "Soft Machine Vol.2"
(仏Barclay●0921 019)*
フランス盤セカンド・アルバム



Soft Machine "Soft Machine"
(スペインPDI●C30.1384)*
87年に、英国に先駆けてスペインでリリースされたBBCライヴ



Soft Machine "Soft Machine"
(ポルトガルOrlador●71668)*
76年のアルバム"Softs"のポルトガル盤

キャラヴァンの各国盤ほか



Caravan "Waterloo Lily"
(仏Pink Elephant/Kingdom●PE855.015H)*
フランス盤の4作目



Caravan "Caravan"
(英Verve●SVLP6011)*
68年リリースの英国盤ファースト・アルバム(ステレオ)



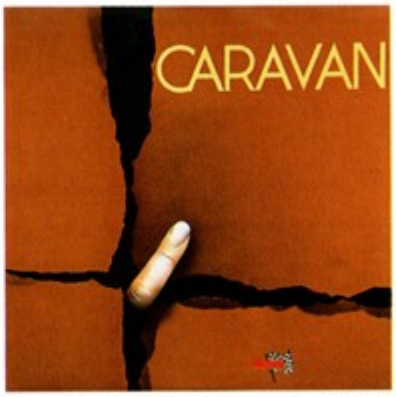
Caravan "Headloss"
(スペインDeram●CPS9327)*
『夜ごと太る女のために』のスペイン盤



Caravan "Caravan"
(独Polydor●2310 191)*
ドイツ盤ファースト・アルバム。英国盤とのロゴの大きさの違いに注目



Caravan "DOS"
(スペインDeram●DCS15078~9)*
4作目と6作目をカップリングしたスペイン盤



Caravan "If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You"
(仏Motors●44002)*
フランス盤セカンド・アルバム

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Caravan "Songs & Signs"
(独Teldec✪6.23668AO) *
ドイツ盤編集アルバム



Caravan "This Is Caravan"
(独Brain/Metronome✪200.164) *
ドイツ盤編集アルバム



Caravan "Pop Spectacular/Caravan In Concert"
(英BBC Transcription Serveces✪134387) *
BBCでのライヴ音源が収められたトランスクリプション・ディスク。裏面はヴィネガー・ジョー。73年



Caravan "The Album"
(仏Kingdom✪574015) *
ジャケ違いのフランス盤

ケヴィン自身の曲解説や、ボブ・ラウリーによるイラストも楽しいパンフレット





Kevin Ayers "Bananamour"
(英Harvest✪SHVL807) *
ブックレット付きの英国オリジナル盤

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Soft Machine 'Soft Space Part 1 (edited version) /Soft Space Part 2 (edited disco version)'
(英Harvest●PSR419)



The Soft Machine 'Love Makes Sweet Music/Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin''
(オランダPolydor●65 151)
デビュー・シングルのオランダ盤



ザ・ソフト・マシーン「スリーピング／ジョイ・オブ・ア・トイ」
(プローブ／キング●HIT1647)



Caravan 'Hello Hello/If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You'
(ベルギーPink Elephant●22.524)



Caravan 'Hello Hello/If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You'
(オランダPink Elephant●PE22 524Y)



キャラヴァン「スタック・イン・ア・ホール／恋人よ」
(ロンドン／キング●TOP1982)



Matching Mole 'O Caroline/Signed Curtain'
(英CBS●S8101)



Caravan 'Love To Love You (Tonight Pigs Will Fly) /Golf Girl'
(オランダPink Elephant●PE22 557N)



Caravan 'Hello Hello/If I Could Do It All Over Again I'd Do It All Over You'
(独Metronome●M25 265)



Hatfield And The North 'Let's Eat (Real Soon) /Fitter Stroke Has A Bath'
(英Virgin●VS116)
アルバム未収録曲(A面)入りシングル



Kevin Ayers 'The Up Song/Everybody's Sometime And Some People's All The Time Blues'
(仏Island●6138 046)



Kevin Ayers 'Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes/Fake Mexican Tourist Blues'
(オランダHarvest●5C006-06 124)

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日本盤LP



ケヴィン・アイヤーズ『月に撃つ』
(ハーヴェスト／東芝音工●OP80172)**



ソフト・マシーン『ソフト・マシーンVol.2』
(プローブ／キング●SR348)*



ケヴィン・エヤーズ『ケヴィン・エヤーズ3』
(ハーヴェスト／東芝EMI●EOP80478)**



ソフト・マシーン『ソフト・マシーン』
(CBSソニー●SONP50336~7)**
サード・アルバムのジャケ違いの国内盤



ケヴィン・エヤーズ『いとしのバナナ』
(ハーヴェスト／東芝EMI●EOP80837)**



ケヴィン・エヤーズとソフト・マシーンのメンバー達『おもちゃの歓び』
(ハーヴェスト／東芝音工●OP80337)*

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デーヴィッド・アレンズ・ゴング『マジック・ブラザー』
(BYG／日本コロムビア●BYG5)**



ゴング『マジック・ブラザー』
(BYG／東宝芸音●YX6054)**



ゴング『エンジェル・エッグ』
(ヴァージン／日本コロムビア●YX7028VR)**



ゴング『キャモンベール・エレクトリック』
(BYG／東宝芸音●YX6080)**



デヴィッド・アレンとユーテープ『グッド・モーニング』
(ヴァージン／日本コロムビア●YX7122)**



ゴング『フライング・ティーポット』
(BYG／東宝●YX7024)**

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CANTERBURY



ハットフィールド&ザ・ノース『ハットフィールド&ザ・ノースI』
(ヴァージン／日本コロムビア●YX7027VR)*



マッチング・モウル『そっくりモグラの毛語録』
(エピック●ECPL69)**



ヘンリー・カウ『不安』
(ヴァージン／日本コロムビア●YX7034VR)**



ロバート・ワイアット『白日夢』
(ヴァージン／日本コロムビア●YQ7017VR)*



スティーヴ・ヒレッジ『魚の出てくる日』
(ヴァージン／日本コロムビア●YX7051VR)*



キャラヴァン『グレイとピンクの地』
(デラム／キング●DL29)**
英国オリジナル・アルバムとしては3作目の作品

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publicité en 3 ème de couverture



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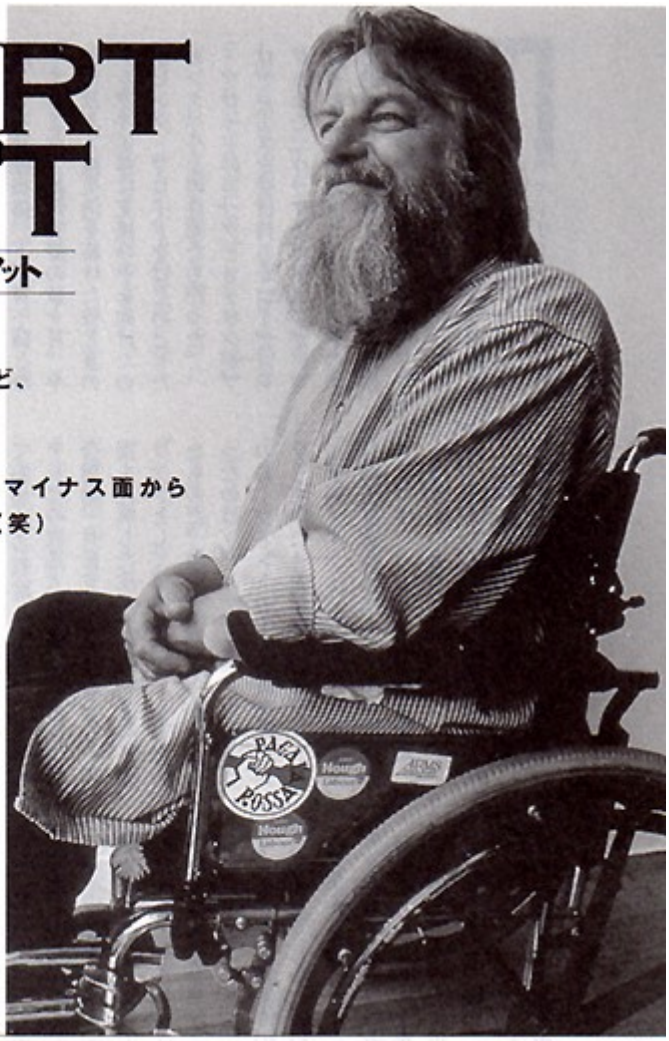
Robert Wyatt Interview - Strange Days N° 31 - March 2002

ROBERT WYATT



ROBERT WYATT

INTERVIEW ロバート・ワイアット



僕が車椅子生活になってから、
他人からは可哀想だと思われるけど、
実際は僕は得しちゃった感じさ。
っていうのは、
バンドに所属していることの負担やマイナス面から
完全に自由になれたわけだからね(笑)

取材●大鷹俊一+荻原裕美子
Toshikazu OHTAKA+Yumiko HAGIHARA
文・アルバム解説●大鷹俊一 Toshikazu OHTAKA

profile

1945年英国ブリストル生まれ。ハイスクール在学中マイク・ラトリッジらとジャズやブルースのセッションを開始。その後ケヴィン・エアーズ、デヴィッド・アレンらとソフト・マシーンを結成し4作目まで在籍。脱退後はソロ、マッチング・モウルなどでカンタベリー・シーンを代表するドラマーとして活躍。しかし73年、不慮の事故で下半身付随となりドラマー生命を絶たれるが、その半年後にはヴォーカリスト/キーボーディストとして再起。以降、寡作ながらも名作を発表しつづけ、現在もカリスマ的人気を誇る。2月20日、ビデオアーツよりそのオリジナル作品6タイトルが限定紙ジャケでリリースされる。

約十年ほど前、ロンドンから三時間かけて彼のお宅を訪ねた思い出は、この仕事をやっていてもっとも感激したことの一つで、いまだに記憶をたぐると幸福な気持ちになる。ユーモアに溢れ、率直な答えは誠実な音そのもので、改めてこのアーティストに出会えたことの幸福感を満喫させてくれたものだ。

久しぶりにデイヴ・ギルモアのコンサートにゲスト出演、さらにソロ六枚の紙ジャケ化に合わせて新作四曲がプレゼントされるという、まさに日本のファンにはたまらない春先になった。

❖

——先日デイヴ・ギルモアのコンサートに出られたそうですが、どういういきさつから?

「ロンドンのフェスティヴァル・ホールでコンサートの主催者をやってほしいって依頼されたので、ぜひ彼に出演してもらおう、って推薦したんだ。で、快諾してくれたんだけど、その時に条件として〝君も出なよ〟って言われてね。一曲、ヴォーカルが二重になっているところがあって、その部分だけでも歌ってもらえないかって言われたんだ。それで、もともとロジャー・ウォーターズが歌った部分を、僕が歌ったわけさ。ほんの小さな瞬間、だけだったけどね」

——ギルモア、ピンク・フロイドとは多くの思い出があるんでしょうね?

「彼らとは長い間友達だし、最初にバンドを始めた頃は、一緒にクラブに出たりしていたね。というのは僕たちのようなバンドを出演させてくれる

場所は限られていて、自然と活動場所が重なってきたんだよね。そして時々、彼らは僕らに機材を貸してくれたんだ。僕たちはあまりいい機材を持ったことがなかったのでね。当時のバンドのなかには、ピンク・フロイドの持っている高級な機材をとても妬ましく思っているバンドもあったぐらいさ（笑）。彼らはとても寛大に、気前よく機材を僕たちに貸してくれたよ。

それに……僕が背中に重傷を負った時、僕のためにベネフィット・コンサートを開いてくれたんだ。僕と妻のアルフィーのためにね。ホントに、あの時はお金に困っていたので、彼らには命を救われたし、一生の恩人だと思っているよ。メンバーも皆、いい奴だし大好きだ。ロジャー、デヴィッド、リック、ニック。そうそう、この前のコンサートでも、リックがゲスト出演したんだ。ちょっとビックリしたね。というわけで、この前のコンサートでは、ピンク・フロイドの半分が出そろったってわけさ（笑）」

――もう少し、昔の話を聞かせてください。そもそもビートニクに影響を受けるきっかけとなったのは何でしたか？　もっとも影響された考え方、音楽観とは？

「僕が影響を受けたカルチャーは、もう半世紀以上昔のものになるけど、パリとかそういう都市で起きた、モダン・アート・ムーヴメントだ。ダダイズムとか。で、50年代には、アメリカのビートニクのような動きがあったよね。今でも、そういう時代の作品や考え方から、よりインスピレーションを得ていると思う。50年代の当時、聴いていた音楽なんかは完全にアンダーグラウンドなシーンのもので、商業主義とは全く無縁だったので、文化に関わる人たちの間には、親密な一体感があった。でも60年代になると、こうしたアイデアが、これ見よがしにプレゼンテーションされていくようになってしまった。僕にとっては、50年代のモダン・アートの方が、よりロマンティックで愛しいものに思えるね。

僕が影響を受けたアーティストは、やっぱりその時代のジャズ・ミュージシャンや詩人、たとえばドラマーのマックス・ローチやベースのチャールズ・ミンガスなんかだね。彼らの音楽や姿勢を通じて、僕自身も政治に興味を抱くようになったんだ。こうした尊敬するミュージシャンたちの音楽は、すでに50年代から始まっていた人権運動と密接に関わっているからね」

――ビートニクから60年代後半のサイケデリックなシーンとの関連は、どういうものだったと思いますか？

「サイケデリック・シーンというのは、基本的にアメリカのものだったし、まあ、ある種の文化的な実験、といえるような活動だったんじゃないかな。その本拠地となったのはアメリカの大学キャンパスだ。でも僕は大学とも、そういう世界とも縁がなかった。最終学歴は16歳までで、そのあとは調理場でバイトをしたりしてたりでね。それに、僕は非合法なドラッグもやらなかったし。僕は合法ドラッグである酒だけでもう、ヘロヘロになってたから、それ以上は必要なかったわけ（笑）。サイケ・ムーヴメントとはたまたま同時代に生きていたけど、実はサイケ・カルチャーというものをあまり身近に感じたことはないし、好きでもなかった。唯一感謝していることは、髪の毛を伸ばし放題にしても何も言われなくなった、ってことだけ。覚えてるのはそれだけさ（笑）。文化的な内容については、シンパシーは持てなかった。僕はね、個人的にも〝日常のなかの魔法〟みたいなことにグッと来てしまう人間だしね。普通の人が見のがしているようなことさ」

――ソフト・マシーン在籍時のソロ曲「slow Walkin' Talk」でジミ・ヘンドリックスがベースを弾いてますが、特別親しかったのですか？

「うん、60年代終わり頃、エクスペリエンスと一緒にツアーしたことがあって、彼らはカリフォルニアのレコーディング・スタジオを定期的に予約して使っていたので、〝何かあたためている曲をレコーディングしないか〟って言ってくれたんだ。で、あの曲をレコーディングしていると、ジミが通りかかって〝何か手伝うことはあるかい〟と聞かれて、曲を聴かせると、すぐにその場にあったベースを取り上げて、弾いてくれた。とてもカジュアルな感じで起きたことなんだ。ジミはとてもいい人だった。心が優しく、態度にもそれが表われている人だったよ」



――二枚目のソロ「ロック・ボトム」の楽曲は新編成のマッチング・モウル用に用意されたものが多かったと言いますね。

「うん、そのとおり。マッチング・モウルの三枚目を作るつもりで、そのために曲も書きためていたものだ。その時、背中を痛めてしまったので、僕はメンバーに〝俺を待つな。早く次の仕事を探しに行け〟と言ったんだ。で、彼らはそれぞれの道を行ったわけだ。でも僕にとっても解放感があったね。おそらくバンドを続けていたら、他のメンバーとコミュニケーションするのが物凄く困難になっていたと思うんだよね。というのは、やっぱり具体的に演奏して聴いてもらうことによって初めて、相手にどんな音で何をやってほしいのかが伝わるし、一緒に曲を作っていけると思うんだ。僕にとっては、やっぱりそういうやり方が一番簡単だし、基本的だったから、そういうのができなくなったらやっぱりバンドは難しいなと思った」

――その次の「ルース・イズ・ストレンジャー・ザン・リチャード」発表後、ヴァージン・レコードを離れますが、音楽活動そのものへの興味も薄れたのですか？

「音楽自体は、何とか続けていたよ。多くのミュージシャンから、レコーディングに参加するよう招かれて、ゲスト出演していた。でも、確かに政治的な活動や、個人としての人生の方が忙しくなっていたかも……僕の人生は音楽が100%じゃないから。僕の人生における目的も、音楽をやることが主な目的じゃない。人生を有意義なものにし、楽しみたいという動機の方が強いんだ。時にその手段が音楽であり、時にはそうでないこともあるということだね」

――80年代に入ってラフ・トレードから久しぶりにレコードを出すようになったのはバンクの動きに、かなり触発されたからなわけですよね。

「それもあるね。シングルが中心だったけどね。シングルのミニチュア作品的な形式が気に入っていたからなんだ。バンクについては、アマチュア的なアティテュードで曲を作ってもOKっていう考え方に共鳴した。というのは、ポップ・ミュージックって何でも大袈裟に考える傾向があって、クラシック音楽か何かみたいに完璧主義になり、リリースする前の仕上がりとか完成度に異様にうるさくなる傾向があると思うんだ。でも、僕自身のアーティストとしての出自はそういうのとは全く違うんでね。僕は、人が聴いていろいろなアラが聴こえてしまうような音楽でも、全然構わないと思う方なんだ。ライヴ演奏だって、二つか三つ、音程が外れていたとしても、演奏自体に生命感があれば、そのままにしておきたい方なんだ。バンクってそういう姿勢が強いから、その点には共感したね」

――85年の「オールド・ロッテンハット」は、イギリス政府や、共に活動した共産党などに言及した曲が多いですが、これらはこの時点で歌わねばならないと強く意識したわけですね？

「僕の生まれ持った性格というのは、とにかく現実から逃避して、別次元の天国みたいな心地よい場所で一生を過ごしたい、という願望が強い方なんだ。でもあの頃は、イギリス全体に右翼勢力からの政治的な圧力が復興した、反動的な時代でね。すべての国民に影響を与えたし、文化にも大きく影を落としていたんだ」

――それが次の「ドンデスタン」では、一転して、平穏な空気がとても印象的でした。

「あのアルバムの歌詞の半分は妻のアルフィーが書いたもので、それに僕が曲を付けた。故意に何らかのイメージを演出しようとしたアルバムではないんだ。事実、歌詞のなかには、かなり挑戦的なものもあるしね。「ドンデスタン」というタイトル曲の歌詞は、〝～国民〟というような国籍を持つ権利をはく奪されている人たちのことを歌ったものだ。具体的にはパレスチナ人、クルド人のことだ。彼らは民族としてのアイデンティティを奪われ、また全世界がそのことを黙認している。今日、いっそう深刻な問題になったんじゃないかという気もする。今だってパレスチナでも、クルドでも相変わらず人々はさまよい、苦しんでいる。彼らにとって、ただ生き延び、存続していくというだけのことが、こんなにも困難にさらされているわけだ。政治を反映しようとか、世の中を変えようとかいうコンセプトで故意に作った作品ではないんだけど、ただその頃、自分が考えていたことを曲にしたらそうなったわけだ」

――現時点での最新作『シュリーブ』では、広く新旧の友人が参加していますが『トンデスタン』から大きな心境の変化があったのですか？

「このアルバムは良き友人のフィル・マンザネラの好意で、スタジオを貸してもらえたことで実現した。彼にはほんと、感謝している。きっかけは〝ロバート、君はあまりにも、自分のなかにこもって内省的に、一人きりでレコード作りをやっている。もっと昔みたいに、他のミュージシャンとの交流を楽しみながら作ったらどうか〟ってアドバイスされたからなんだ」

――旧い友人たちと、たとえばポール・ウェラーみたいな人とやるのではどんな違いが？

「ポール・ウェラーがスタジオに来る日は少し緊張したね。彼が恐い人とかそういうことじゃなくって。彼は実際にはとても良い人で、気楽な相手なんだよ。スタジオで、とても真剣に集中力を発揮して取り組んでくれて、演奏もバッチリだったし、最後にはとても打ち解けることができたけど、彼のような人とは僕は全然違った生活を送っているから、ちょっとビビッてしまったんだ。でも曲は曲、どんな人でもスタジオでは一人のミュージシャンであることには変わりはないんだよね。スタジオってそういうところが良いんだ。というのは、ステージでの演奏では、バンド全員がすべての曲について同意し、共通に理解してなきゃいけないじゃない。でもスタジオなら、一、二曲だけ、ビッタリのミュージシャンならそれでOKだから。一曲や二曲のための小さなグループ、一曲だけの命っていうところが、とても自由な感じだ。これって逆説的なんだけど、僕が車椅子生活になってから、他人からは可哀想だと思われるけど、実際には僕は得しちゃった感じさ。っていうのは、バンドに所属していることの負担やマイナス面から完全に自由になれたわけだからね（笑）」

――ということは次のアルバムも、同じようなものになりそうですか？

「ウーン、自分でもよくわかんないんだよね～（笑）。どうしたものだろう？　今は自分の小さな音楽部屋に戻り内省的な世界にしばらく引きこもって、次の段階に備えたい、そういう時期と感じてはいるけどね」

――今回、日本での紙ジャケット再発特典として提供された4トラック、全然違ったアプローチで、とても楽しめました。

「あの四曲は、僕が家で実際にどんな音を作っているか、皆にとって面白いんじゃないか、と思ったので提供したんだ。僕はレコード制作の合間は、ほぼすべての時間を僕の音楽部屋で過ごしていて、ああしたいろいろと実験的なことをやっているんだ。そのうち何か、一貫したテーマみたいなものが発見できれば一枚のアルバムにするのも悪くないかもね。でもこれは、どちらかというと僕のスタジオでやっていることをサンプルとして紹介するような意味合いが強いかな。ミュージシャンって、レコードに収録されるよりも、実際には遥かに多くのマテリアルをスタジオで作っているのが普通だから。絵画でいうと、スケッチブックみたいなものかな」

――ところで日本の多くのファンが来日を望んでいるのですが、可能性はあるのでしょうか？

「いや、僕はコンサートは基本的にはもう、やらないよ……緊張するし、こういう身体だとあちこち行くのが難しく感じられるから。でも、最近ハンガリーのレコード会社の友人と話したら、パリやロンドンはやはり身体障害者にとって移動が難しいことが多いけど日本はかなり快適だ、ということだった。それを聞いて日本に行きたいとの思いが強まったけど、でもやっぱり距離的に遠いしなあ……そうそう、日本からはいつも、とても心のこもった手紙をもらうんだ。思慮深い、しっかりした内容の手紙をもらって、とても嬉しく思っているよ。ありがとう」



ROBERT WYATT
Airplay (Bonus CD For Paper Sleeve)

1.Fridge / 2.When Access Was Noun / 3.Salt/Ivy / 4.Signed Curtain

❖なんと今回の紙ジャケ化にあたり特典として新作4トラックが彼から提供された。現代音楽風から柔らかな歌声に癒されるもの、ジャジーなコラージュなど、どれも聴きごたえがあり、素晴らしいボーナスになっている。

ROBERT WYATT
[Solo & Important Band's Albums : Except Soft Machine]

文●大鷹俊一 Toshikazu OHTAKA

CBS / 64189 1970



ROBERT WYATT
The End Of An Ear

1.Las Vegas Tango Part 1 (Repeat) / 2.To Mark Everywhere / 3.To Saintly Bridget / 4.To Oz Alien Daevyd And Gilly / 5.To Nick Everyone / 6.To Caravan And Brother Jim / 7.To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye) / 8.To Carla, Marsha And Caroline (For Making Everything Beautifuller) / 9.Las Vegas Tango Part 1

❖ソフト・マシーンとしても活動中の70年に作った課外活動第一作。ギル・エヴァンスのナンバーで前後を固め、その間に仲間たちの名前をもじったタイトルを持つオリジナルが並んでいる。ソフツのエルトン・ディーンやキャラヴァンのデヴィッド・シンクレアなどの仲間たちとともに果敢にジャズ、ロック的な枠組みを乗り越えたアプローチに挑んだもの。

もちろんこの当時は元気だからバシバシとドラムスも叩きまくって器楽的な意味での完成度は高く、エフェクト処理されたヴォーカルものちにつながる部分も含め、非常に示唆に富んだアルバムだ。

Virgin / V 2017 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-1225 / 2002.2.27 1974



ROBERT WYATT
Rock Bottom

1.Sea Song / 2.A Last Straw / 3.Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road / 4.Alifib / 5.Alife / 6.Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road

❖メンバーを一新して再活動を行なおうとしてマッチング・モウルのために書かれた楽曲を中心に74年に作られたソロ・セカンド。下半身不随になるという大アクシデントがあったためソロの形をとったが、ニック・メイソンのプロデュースのもとリチャード・シンクレアやヒュー・ホッパー、フレッド・フリスら気心の知れた仲間が参加したためバンド的なアンサンブルの良さは感じられる。

名曲「シー・ソング」に始まり美しい楽曲が並び、ワイアットの再出発にふさわしい音楽的な姿勢がロックの底（ボトム）から浮かび上がってくる傑作。

Virgin / V 2034 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-1226 / 2002.2.27 1975



ROBERT WYATT
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

1.Muddy Mouse (A) / 2.Solar Flares / 3.Muddy Mouse (B) / 4.5 Black Notes And 1 White Note / 5.Muddy Mouse (C) Which In Turn Leads To Muddy Mouth / 6.Soup Song / 7.Sonia / 8.Team Spirit / 9.Song For Che

❖ヴァージン・レコードからのセカンドで、女性カメラマンのルースの方がよりストレンジと言われているリチャードとはヴァージン社長のリチャード・ブランソンのこと。アルバム中にも、こうしたちょっとしたユーモア感覚が漂い、ゲバラに捧げたチャーリー・ヘイデンのヘヴィなナンバーなどの空気を和らげるのに貢献している。

敬愛するアフリカ人のトランペッター、モンゲジとの企画と、フレッド・フリスとの間で計画した作品プロジェクトの断片が混ざり合って入っているため、やや統一感に欠ける面はあるが、逆にワイアットの多彩さは伝わる。

Rough Trade / ROUGH 32 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-1227 / 2002.2.27 1982



ROBERT WYATT
Nothing Can Stop Us

1.Born Again Cretin / 2.At Last I Am Free / 3.Caimanera / 4.Grass / 5.Stalin Wasn't Stallin' / 6.Red Flag / 7.Strange Fruit / 8.Arauco / 9.Trade Union / 10.Stalingrad

❖パンク～ニューウェイヴの7インチ・シングル復権の動きに触発されてラフ・トレードから四枚のシングル「Arauco / Caimanera」「At Last I Am Free / Strange Fruit」「Stalin Wasn't Stallin' / Stalingrad」「Grass / Trade Union」を相次いで発表したが、それらと二曲の新作をアルバムにまとめたもの。ビリー・ホリデイの歌で有名な「ストレンジ・フルーツ」をはじめ、民衆が生活や闘いの中で歌い継いできた世界中の楽曲をワイアットなりにカヴァーしたもので、単に素材として曲じゃなく、その奥に流れるものをくみ上げる姿勢が深い感動を呼ぶ。

Rough Trade / ROUGH 40 1982

ROBERT WYATT
The Animals Film Original Music Composed And Played By Robert Wyatt

1.The Animals Film / 2.Wind Of Change (7 Inch Version) / 3.Wind Of Change (12 Inch Version) / 4.Nambia (7 Inch Version) / 5.Nambia (12 Inch Version



❖動物虐待反対を訴えたヴィクター・ショーンフィールド監督のドキュメンタリー映画のためのサントラ。ジャケットの猿の写真でもわかるように、特に動物実験の残酷な実態を告発したもので、ワイアットは他にも同趣のチャリティ・アルバムなどにも参加している。音楽的にはアンビエント的なサウンドで、ときおりワイアットらしいスキャットが聴ける30分弱のものなので、そのつもりで接する必要はある。

なおCD化に際して南アフリカのSWAPOシンガーズとのシングル「Wind Of Change / Nambia」が収録された。

Rough Trade / ROUGH 69 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-1228 / 2002.2.27 1985

ROBERT WYATT
Old Rottenhat

1.Alliance / 2.The United States Of Amnesia / 3.East Timor / 4.Speechless / 5.The Age Of Self / 6.Vandalusia / 7.The British Road / 8.Mass Medium / 9.Gharbzadegi / 10.P.L.A.



❖約十年ぶりとなるオリジナル楽曲が集められたアルバム。リンカンシャーの田舎に住居を移し、じっくりと世界の動きやイギリスの体制や制度に思考を巡らした結果が、さりげない音や言葉の一つ一つからしっかりと伝わってくるものになっている。〝古い腐った帽子〟とはシルクハットに象徴されるイギリスの古い社会体制のことなのだろう。当時、イギリスは大不況、サッチャーによる公共事業の民間化政策で、全土で大労働争議が起こって騒然とした時代だったが、それを静かに鋭く告発する姿勢が印象的だ。東ティモール問題への言及もさすが。

Strange Fruit / SFPS 037 1987

ROBERT WYATT
The Peel Sessions

1.Soup Song / 2.Alifib / 3.I'm A Believer / 4.Sea Song



❖74年に〝ピール・セッション〟に出演したときの四曲を収めたもので、87年に正式に発売された。基本的にはピアノやわずかなエレクトロニクス類で作ったバッキングとヴォーカルのシンプルな演奏だが、ワイアットの存在感は圧倒的なものがある。

スキャットがフィーチャーされた「スープ・ソング」、じっくりとピアノだけで歌われる美しい「Alifib」、初シングルだった「アイム・ア・ビリーヴァー」、そして究極の名曲「シー・ソング」と、どれも何度聴いても飽きることのない演奏が続く。絶対に持っていたい一枚だ。

Rough Trade / R 2741 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-1229 / 2002.2.27 1991

ROBERT WYATT
Dondestan

1.Costa (Memories Of Under-Development) / 2.Sight Of The Wind / 3.Worship / 4.Catholic Architecture / 5.Shrinkrap / 6.Left On Man / 7.Lisp Service / 8.CP Jeebies / 9.N.I.O (New Information Order) / 10.Dondestan



❖スペインのテレビの依頼に応じて訪れ、ついでにホリデーを過ごしたスペインで書かれた妻アルフィーによる詩に曲をつけたもの(ジャケットも、そのときの様子を描いたアルフィーの手になる)、当時の激変する社会情勢の中で彼が考えたことを反映した部分とで構成されたアルバム。

雪崩を打って崩れ去る東欧社会主義諸国、そして自ら入党までして活動した英共産党との決別など、さまざまな思いとワイアット流視座が丹念に練り込まれていく。90年代後半のCD化に際して、不満だった部分が本人の手で再ミックスなど行なわれている。

Voiceprint / VP 108 CD ●MSI / MSIF-3307 1992

ROBERT WYATT
A Short Break

1.A Short Break / 2.Tubab / 3.Kutcha / 4.Venti Latir / 5.Unmasked



❖92年に、長年の友人が始めたレーベル、ヴォイスプリントのために提供されたスペシャル・アイテムもの。オリジナル盤はブックレットをボックスに収めたものだったが、その後通常のCDスタイルになっている。日常繰り返されているというミニマルかつアンビエントな音のスケッチを集めたもので、レギュラーのアルバムやシングルと同等に扱うわけにはいかないが、彼の自室に招かれて聴かされているような親しみはある。

ジャケットは幼い頃にホリデーで訪れたポルトガルでの写真を使ったもの。何とかボックスのオリジナルで持っていたいところだ。

Rough Trade / R 3112 1994



ROBERT WYATT
Flotsam Jetsam

1.Slow Walkin' Talk / 2.Moon In June / 3.Standfast (SYMBIOSIS) / 4.No 'Alf Measures (MATCHING MOLE) / 5.God Song/Fol De Rol / 6.Soprano Derivitavo/Apricot Jam (LOL COXHILL) / 7.A Little Something (SLAPP HAPPY & FRIENDS) / 8.Now Is The Time (GARY WINDO) / 9.Now't Doin (UNITY / HANWELL BAND & R. WYATT) / 10.Born Again Cretin / 11.Billie's Bounce / 12.Locomotive / 13.War Without Blood / 14.Obert Tancat 1 / 15.Tu Traicion (CLAUSTOPHOBIA) / 16.Obert Tancat 2 / 17.Turn Things Upside Down (THE HAPPY END) / 18.The Wind Of Change

❖ジミ・ヘンドリックスがベースを弾いた「Slow Walkin' Talk」に始まり、珍しい楽曲、未発表曲、レア・セッションが全18曲ぎっしりと詰まった、ワイアット・ファン必携の一枚。

どれが特にすごいとかレアというのは不可能なほど甲乙つけがたい演奏が詰まっているが、ゲイリー・ウィンドらとのシンバイオスとしてのものや、ロル・コックスヒル、ハッピー・エンドとのセッションなどは個人的に印象的。またBBCで共演したスラップ・ハッピーとの「ア・リトル・サムシング」はダグマーとの昇天もののデュエットが聴ける。

Virgin / CDVDM 9031 1994



ROBERT WYATT
Going Back A Bit: A Little History Robert Wyatt

Disc 1:1.Moon In June / 2.To Caravan And Brother Jim / 3.O Caroline / 4.Gloria Gloom / 5.God Song / 6.Calyx / 7.Alifib 他全11曲
Disc 2:1.I'm A Believer / 2.Memories / 3.Yesterday Man / 4.Sonia / 5.Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road / 6.Five Black Notes And One White Note / 7.Team Spirit / 8.Song For Che / 9.The Doubtful Guest / 10.The Object Lesson / 11.Arauco / 12.A L'battoir / 13.I'm A Mineralist / 14.Rangers In The Night 他全18曲

❖ヴァージンの廉価シリーズの中で出された二枚組ベスト盤だが、非常によく練り込まれて作られたものとなっていて、コンパクトに彼の音楽史を俯瞰したいときには最適なものとして推薦したい。

ソフツ時代の「ムーン・イン・ジューン」に始まり94年の音源まで含まれるが、主になっているのは70年代のもの。しかし年代の違うものがアットランダムに並んでいても音楽性や、アーティストとしての姿勢に揺らぎがないところは、さすがのひと言。レア音源も入っているし、内ジャケットに提供されたアルフィーのカラフルな絵や写真なども必見だ。

Thirsty Ear / 57040 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-1230 / 2002.2.27 1997



ROBERT WYATT
Shleep

1.Heaps Of Sheeps / 2.The Duchess / 3.Maryan / 4.Was A Friend / 5.Free Will And Testament / 6.September The Ninth / 7.Alien / 8.Out Of Season / 9.A Sunday In Madrid / 10.Blues In Bob Minor / 11.The Whole Point Of No Return / 12.September In The Rain

❖現時点の最新アルバム。フィル・マンザネラのスタジオを舞台に新旧の交友をベースに作り上げた快作。「ドンデスタン」の内省的な深さを、ごくごく自然な形で仲間たちの周りに広げていくサマが、新たな感動を呼ぶ。

「ロック・ボトム」などにあった世界が、多くの体験と時間という風雨にさらされながら熟成に達したのだろう。特にギタリストたちとの絡み合いや使い方は、それまでのワイアット・ワールドからするととても新鮮な感じで、個人的にはぜひこの方向性での作品作りもまたコンスタントにやっていってほしいのだが。

Hannibal / HNCD 1440 ●ビデオアーツ / VACK-5397 1999



ROBERT WYATT
Eps

Disc 1 <Bits>: 1.I'm A Believer / 2.Memories / 3.Yesterday Man / 4.Sonia / 5.Calyx Disc 2 <Pieces>: 1.Shipbuilding / 2.Memories Of You / 3.Round Midnight / 4.Pigs...(In There) / 5.Chairman Mao Disc 3 <Work In Progress>: 1.Yolanda / 2.Te Recuerdo Amanda / 3.Biko / 4.Amber And The Amberines Disc 4 <Animals>: 1.The Animals Film Disc 5 <Remixes>: 1.Was A Friend / 2.Maryan / 3.A Sunday In Madrid / 4.Free Will And Testament

❖EPという形態が好きなんだと言っていたワイアットの思いを具現化したボックス。ファースト・シングルだった「アイム・ア・ビリーヴァー」などを収めた一枚目から「シュリープ」のトラックをリミックスした五枚目まで、どれも聴き逃せない音源が揃っている。各盤につけられたジャケット、タイトル、選曲など、単に凝っているというよりも、ボックス作品としての完成度を追求した結果と言えるだろう。特に"Work In Progress"と名づけられたディスク3には、いま聴いてもいろいろ考えさせられる。全ファン、必携のボックス。

Blueprint / Voiceprint / BP 123CD 1994



THE WILDE FLOWERS
The Wilde Flowers

1. Impotence / 2. Those Words They Say / 3. Memories / 4. Don't Try To Change Me / 5. Parchman Farm / 6. Almost Grown / 7. She's Gone / 8. Slow Talkin' Talk / 9. He's Bad For You / 10. It's What I Feel / 11. Memories / 12. Never Leave Me / 13. Time After Time / 14. Just Where I Want / 15. No Game When You Lose / 16. Impotence / 17. Why Do You care / 18. The Pieman Cometh / 19. Summer Spirit / 20. She Loves To Hurt / 21. The Big Show / 22. Memories

❖62~66年に活動した伝説のグループのデモ、ライヴなど、さまざまな音源をブライアン・ホッパーがまとめたもの。彼による詳細なライナーノーツもついて、発売された当時は、まさにカンタベリー・ファンが騒然となったものだ。ワイアットの「メモリーズ」などはしっかりと完成しているし、ケヴィン・エアーズのブルース的な部分を発展させようと試行錯誤するバンドの姿は、実に生々しく当時の意欲的な音楽性を伝えてくれる。デビューしコンスタントな活躍につながらなかったのは不幸だったが、それは作り上げていた音楽とは無関係だったことがよくわかる。

Voiceprint / VP 122 CD　1993

DAEVID ALLEN TRIO
Live 1963

1.Love Is A Careless Sea / 2.My Head Is A Nightclub / 3.Capacity Travel (a)Part One (b)Part Two (c)Part Three (d)Part Four / 4.The Song Of The Jazzman / 5.Dear Olde Benny Green Is A-Turning In His Grave / 6.Ya Sunne Wot / 7.Frederique La Poisson Avec Frite Sur Le Dos



❖フリー・ジャズ、アヴァンギャルド、ポエトリー・リーディングと記号化される以前、のエモーションだけがグツグツと燃えたぎる63年の貴重な録音。アレン、ワイアットにヒュー・ホッパーのベース、一部でマイク・ラトリッジがピアノで参加する。

基本的にはジャジーなリズムにアレンのフリーキーなギターとヴォイスが絡んでくるもので、テクニック的なものは低いのだが憎めない。背伸びしているというよりは、自分の足元を一つ一つ固めながら暗闇を前進しようとする真摯な姿が全員にあるからだろう。重要な最初の一滴である。

CBS / 64850 ◉ソニー / ESCA-5425　1972

MATCHING MOLE
Matching Mole

1.O Caroline / 2.Instant Pussy / 3.Signed Curtain / 4.Part Of The Dance / 5.Instant Kitten / 6.Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening / 7.Beer As In Braindeer / 8.Immediate Curtain



❖ソフト・マシーンを放り出されたことによる屈辱がバネとなって素晴らしいマッチング・モウルというユニットを作らせ、このアルバムのような傑作誕生となったのだからファン的には喜ぶべきことなのかもしれない。実際、ソフツに残っていたとしても、当時の雰囲気ではこういう方向性のアルバムを作ることはできなかったろう。

ワイアットらしい叙情溢れる「オー・キャロライン」があるかと思えば、四人のメンバーの超絶的なテクニックを駆使しての器楽的な感動を味わえるナンバーがあったりと、実に豊かな世界を構築してくれている。

CBS / 65260　1972

MATCHING MOLE
Matching Mole's Little Red Record

1.Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away / 2.Marchides / 3.Nan True's Hole / 4.Righteous Rhumba / 5.Brandy As In Benj / 6.Gloria Gloom / 7.God Song / 8.Flora Fidgit / 9.Smoke Signal



❖前作以上にユーモラスなジャケット、そしてタイトルとすべてにワイアットらしさが溢れているマッチング・モウルのセカンド。キーボードがデヴィッド・シンクレアからデイヴ・マクレエに変わって、サウンドの質感はかなり変わっていった。ジャズ的なアンサンブルは、より鋭さを増し、ワイアットのユーモアとの混在感も深まっていく。こうした世界を作り上げたバンドは、マッチング・モウルだけだったと思う。

プロデュースにロバート・フリップ、一部にイーノが参加というのも、当時のプログレ・ファンには大きな話題だった。

Windsong / WINDCD 063　1994

MATCHING MOLE
BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert

1.Instant Pussy / 2.Litheing And Graceing / 3.Marchides / 4.Part Of The Dance / 5.Brandy As In Benge



❖72年7月に出演したときの貴重なライヴを94年に正式発売したもの。全五曲、30分に満たない音源なのだが、ちょうどファーストとセカンド発売の間での出演であったために両方のアルバムにまたがるレパートリーが嬉しい。ライヴではしばしば取り上げられていた「Littering And Graceing」は特に貴重だ。

一曲目からワイアット独特のヴォイス・パフォーマンスとハイハット類を細かく刻んでいくドラミングで、一気に彼らの宇宙に連れ込まれる。挑発的なインタープレイの数々もまたこのグループの到達点の高さを示している。

Coneiform / RUNE 150 ◉DIW/ARCÀNGELO / ARC-2150　2001

MATCHING MOLE
Smoke Signals

Phil Miller (g), Bill MacCormick (b), Robert Wyatt (ds,vo), Dave McRae (p)

1.Intro, 2.March Ides I, 3.Smoke Rings, 4.Nan True's Hole, 5.Brandy As In Benj, 6.Electric Piano Solo, 7.March Ides II, 8.Instant Pussy, 9.Smoke Signal, 10.Lything & Gracing, 11.Gloria Gloom



❖昨年、突然リリースされて衝撃を与えた発掘もの。72年のヨーロッパ・ツアーで収録されていたライヴで、セカンドのラインナップによるステージ。ほぼ一つのコンサートの流れを体感できるところはBBCもの以上に貴重だし、正式なスタジオ・アルバムのかっちりとした作りから離れた、ラフ&タイトな構成はこのバンドだからこそのスケール感を、時空を越えて伝えてくれる。

"すごい楽しそうにドラム叩いてるなあ、俺！"と、ワイアット自身が聴いて思ったそうだが、この爆発的な演奏を聴くとそれも心から納得だ。

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INTERVIEW ROBERT WYATT



Interview

Robert Wyatt

絶望を体現する古びたイメージのロックからは結局何も得られなかった……

近藤等則／Toshinori Kondo



60年代の後半から70年代の前半まで、様々な困難やアクシデントと闘いながら、イギリスにおけるプログレッシヴ・ミュージックのリーダー・シップを執り続けたソフト・マシーンの創始者ロバート・ワイアット。孤独な仙師の祈りにも似た名作「ロック・ボトム」から既に7年もの月日を経た今、状況は大きく変化し、同時に彼の真摯な創造の足跡が確実な速度で状況の内に反映している事実が認められる。現在のワイアットが何を考え、どう感じているか、ミュージシャンである近藤氏とのこの対話によってその全てが明らかにされている。穏やかな導師の目に映る「世界」とはいかなるものだろうか。

今のイギリスは私に10年前を思い出させるね

去年の10月、イギリスでジョン・ラッセル(g)、ロジャー・ターナー(ds)、スティーブ・ベレスフォード(toys)等との演奏の合い間のある日、ジョン・ラッセルと僕は、ロンドン郊外のTwickenhamに住むロバート・ワイアットをたずねた。僕が彼に会うのはそれが初めてだった。ジョンとロバートはよく知ってて、ロバートの家について一杯の紅茶の後、我々3人はすぐ演奏を始めた。全くの即興演奏。2時間くらい続けただろうか。終った後、我々は上気嫌になっていた。

そして今年6月、再び僕はイギリスを訪れた。ラッセル、ターナー、僕のTrioで、イングランドの各都市で8日間連続演奏ツアーのためだった。その夜はロンドンでの演奏だった。6月12日の午後、少しの間をみつけて、僕はロバート・ワイアットの家にかけつけた。車イスにのったロバートが、柔かい笑顔で、玄関の扉をあけてくれた。

近藤：まずロック・ドラミングについて、あなたの意見をうかがいたい。

ロバート・ワイアット（以下、R・W）：私は長年ロックを演ってきたが、ロックは訓練をつんだプロミュージシャンにしてはじめて演奏出来るというたぐいのものではなく、全くのアマチュアが演奏出来うるイディオムとしてある、と私は考えている。しかし、客観的に言えば、ロック・ドラミングはドラムセットの限界を目指して発展させられてきた。

私がドラムを始めた頃、イギリスではちょうどロックのドラミングを発展させようとしていた時期だった。簡単な歌の伴奏といったものから、バーチュオーソを目指しはじめたのだった。初期のイギリスのロックドラマーにとってのモデルは、ニューオリンズのドラマー、ブーカーT&MGS、モータウン系のレコードに使用されているリズムセクション等だったが、60年代、我々はそれをもっと発展させようとしたのだ。

当時、我々は8ビートをやったが、その中にピリー・コブハムもいた。彼のドラミングは、とても高いところからバケツの水の中にダイビングするサーカスのような、劇的しいショー的要素をもっていてとても印象的だった。彼は我々の世代のバディ・リッチと言えよう。しかし私は彼のようなドラミングには結局興味をもつことが出来なかった。

それから、我々ロックドラマーの多くは、エルビン・ジョーンズから影響をうけたと言われるが、私にはそうは思えない。それはエルビンにとっていささか御辞儀でさえある。何故なら、イギリスの大変テクニカルなロックドラマーをきくとわかることだが、エルビン・ジョーンズのドラミングにみられる「流動的なわくからはみ出たあいまいさ」を彼らはもっていないからだ。彼らのロールの頭をきけば、いつそれが正確に終るのか わかるし 、たとえばギターとピタッとあっている。彼らは競争的なバーチュオシティを過度に見せようとしたのであって、エルビン・ジョーンズやアンソニー・ウィリアムズがやったように、「タイム(拍)に対する危険なゲーム」に挑戦することはなかったのだ。すなわち、70年代のロックドラミングが、革新的な発展をとげた、という一般的な評価に対して私は全く懐疑的だ。正直なところ、我々がやってきたロック・ドラミングが、ジャズと比べた場合、音楽的にみて、冒険的な貢献をはたした、とは私には思えない。実際こんなことを言うのは、自分にとってあまり得なことじゃないんだが。(笑)

近藤：あなたがエルビンのドラミングを「はみ出た」といったことは面白い。キチッと小節の中におさまったようなリズムより、はみ出し、ずれ、のびちじみをもったリズムの方が僕には生き生きときこえるし、そういったリズムの方がより大きく自由な空間を生み出すことが出来る、と僕は考えるのだが。これは僕が日本人であることも多分に関係していると思う。

R・W：それは面白い。我々イギリスのパーカッションの伝統は、私の知っている限りでは、ダンスミュージックと歌からきているが、東洋の巨大なパーカッションの伝統には、規則的なダンスのリズムからは全く離れているところがある。例えば、日本の伝統音楽を私はよくきくが、そこにあるアクセント、スペースといったものは本当に素晴しいと思う。

近藤：東洋以外の民族音楽はどうか。

R・W：今、西インド諸島、南アメリカのパーカッションの伝統にとっても興味をもっている。それはアフリカのヨルバ族のパーカッションにとても似ているのだが、これらをきいて気がついたこと、すなわちアメリカの最高のジャズロックプレーヤー達が、ブラジルやキューバのリズムをもちいる時、とても問題があることに、私は言及したい。彼らはどういうものか、へまをやっているんだ。(笑) クロスオーバーのエキスパートの連中、例えばウェイン・ショーターは影響的にも、メロディ、ハーモニーの面でも大変感覚的にうまくブラジル音楽をとり入れていると思う。しかし、三連音符の流動的な組合わせということや、小節の頭と終りを控え目に言ったり、のばしたりするということには彼は無頓着に見える。又ある時、フルートのヒューバート・ローズ等有名ジャズロックミュージシャンのはいったロビー・ハンコックのレコードをもらってきてくれたんだが、その中で気になったのはビリー・コブハムのドラミングだった。彼はとてもやさしく、静かに演奏していたが、ずっとon, off, on, off, on, off……とやっているだけだった。それはブラジルやキューバのリズムのあり方とは全く違う。あなたがもしブラジルのパーカッション奏者、ミルトン・バナナ、オカシナ名前だが (笑) をきけば、私の言ってることをわかってもらえると思う。彼は、ある意味ではすごい[illegible]と言えるかもしれないが、[illegible]を超える流動性があるのだ。それに比べれば、アメリカのフュージョンは小節の頭とか、4小節とかいったものを気にしすぎて、明白すぎる様に思えてならない。大抵ブラジル音楽は、16小節や32小節単位のこくがりきたりの構成であるけれど、リズムセクションはずっと流動的にやっている。

近藤：あなたの意見を今のフュージョンの連中にきかせてやりたいものだ。(笑) (マイルス・ダイビスは70年代初めまでにリズムの複合性のもつダイナミズムに注目し、それを彼のバンドのリズムセクションに追求させたのだ。彼の影響をうけてフュージョンが出現したが、マイルスの真の意図、リズムの複合性、多方向へといくつかのリズムを同時に進めること、を理解して、マジメにやったフュージョンバンドはない。このことはいささか面白くない。——近藤私見)

ところでレゲエをどう思うか。僕はレゲエが好きで、特にボブ・マーリー&ウェイラーズのエレキベースとドラムスの関係は、これからのポップ・ミュージックの可能性を提示している、と思う。

R・W：私もレゲエをよくきく。彼らのドラミングは再び生気をもちこんだ。ドラムセットに新しい可能性を見い出したのだ。ダンス音楽におけるドラムセットの可能性は、10年前にすでに一つの限界にきて狭くなっていた。例えばビリー・コブハムはスピードを、ヘビィ・ロックは単純さを、パンクロックはやけっぱちを追求したが、それからはいずれもエネルギッシュだった。そこへ「軽さ」、「間」をもちこんだのがジャマイカの連中だったのだ。

私が最も嫌ってるのはバディ・リッチ系統のドラミングだ。それはビリィ・コブハムへと続いているんだが、彼らのドラミングはスネア・ドラム中心主義だ。それに比べ、私の好きなキューバのリズムではスネアドラムは一つの要素にすぎない。それと同様、レゲエドラムでは、スネアを全体の一つとしてつかっている。ちょうどフィリリー・ジョー・ジョーンズの奏法のように、全く軽く、カンとスネアをたたくだけだ。それにベースドラムをオフビートでたたくベースドラムがオンビートだと地面をはうような感じになるんだが、オフビートだともちあげられたような感じになる。それは今までの我々のだれもしなかったことだ。もちろん、レゲエも普通のロックのように4拍全部にベースドラムを打つこともやるけど、彼らはそれを一部分として使っているだけだ。レゲエのドラムには軽さと重さが同時にある。ロックのドラムセットでは、スネアドラムもベースドラムと同じように重みのある、似かよった音質をもっているんだが、レゲエでは、スネアもベースドラムもタムタムもそれぞれが全く違った音質の音を出す。レゲエのドラムでは、一つ一つの音が全くクリアーで分離独立しているんだ。それにレゲエのドラムセットはロックよりもっと小型でシンプルだし、小さい音をもっと生かしている。レゲエギターだって、ロックギターのようにはうるさくないし、もっとスペースを大切にしていて、ミュージシャン同志お互いによくきあうことも出来る訳だ。

近藤：素晴しい意見をありがとう。(笑) レゲエドラムでは、ベースドラム、スネア、シンバル等、それぞれから出るリズム、音質が独立してて、多方向へとむかうので、自由な空間の拡がりを生み出すことに見事に成功している。ロックドラムは、たくさんの音でうめつくすけど、一方向へのリズム、音質しかなく、カタ苦しい。この違いをみつめることは、大変重要なことだと思う。





> Zoom



ところであなたは今のイギリスのロック、シーンをどう思っているか。

R・W：今の私は、他のことにもっと興味があるので、それ程今のイギリスのロック・シーンのことを知らないが、最近一緒に演奏したポップ・グループ、ザ・スリッツといったところは好きだ。何故なら、彼らはパンクの後ジャマイカン・ミュージックの影響をうけながら実験的なことをやろうとしているからだ。それから北イングランドからきたTwo Tone(S)のグループも面白い、特に社会学的に。すなわちレゲエが髪はますます長くますますゆっくりとしたテンポで演奏し、パンクは、短い髪に、ますます早いテンポで演奏するといった。両極端へむかってる時、Two Tonesの連中が初期のジャマイカンミュージック、SKAを見つけたんだ。SKAはレゲエにくらべると、都会のケン騒感をもっていて、イギリスのミュージシャンは親近感をもったんだろう。実際、イギリス出身のジャマイカ人にしても、生粋のジャマイカ人とは違うんだ。Two toneは全くいいところをみつけたと思う。しかしながら、多くの人達がTwo toneはレゲエをしのぐ音楽をつくるだろうと思ってるようには、私は思わない。

それから、面白い話があるんだ。ザ・スリッツが以前、ドン・チェリーと一緒にイギリス・ツアーをした。その時の聴衆はみんな若いパンク・ファン。(笑)

彼らは全く熱心にドン・チェリーをきいたと言う。又、ポップ・グループの連中は、いつかサン・ラ・オーケストラをききにオランダまで出かけた、と言っていた。このことは私に、10年前を思い出させる。我々も当時の創造的なジャズミュージシャンの演奏をよくみにいった。それは彼らの音楽をコピーするためでなく、自分達が勇気づけられるためだった。

現在のメインストリームのロックについては、私は何もしらない。

近藤：パンクロックについてもう少し話してほしい。

R・W：まず政治的な面で特に興味深い。イギリスで、人種差別、偽善等が受け入れやすくなってた時期に、パンクは「そんなのはクソくらえだ。」と言ったんだ。でもパンクの連中が、ステージできらわれる様にふるまい、苦しみを叫び、クスリをやり死んでいくのは、もう全く古びたイメージだ。音楽的には、今までの主流のロックがきずきあげてきたものに対する反作用であって、むきだしのままのアイディア、芸術性の無視、一つの終末と言えるんじゃないか。

近藤：ディス・ヒート、ランダム・ホールド、アート・ペアーズ等ソフト・マシーンと深い関係にあるグループについてはどう思うか。

R・W：彼らは友人で、よく知っている。彼らは我々が70年代初期にやってたことをよりよく発展させてきていると思う。彼らは、70年代初期のプログレッシヴ・ロックの次の段階をやっているとは思うが、私にとってはもうそれ程重要ではなく、皮肉にも10年前を思い出させてノスタルジックなだけだ。あの後、世界中の民族音楽が私の頭をもっとOpen UPしてくれたんだ。

近藤：それではパタフィジカルについては。

R・W：それももうノスタルジアだ。当時、我々はヨーロッパの前衛の伝統の中にパタフィジックという概念がないので、それを取得するいい機会だと思ったんだが……。もう今はそれもアバンギャルドじゃないしね。

近藤：ところでデレク・ベイリーについてはどうか。

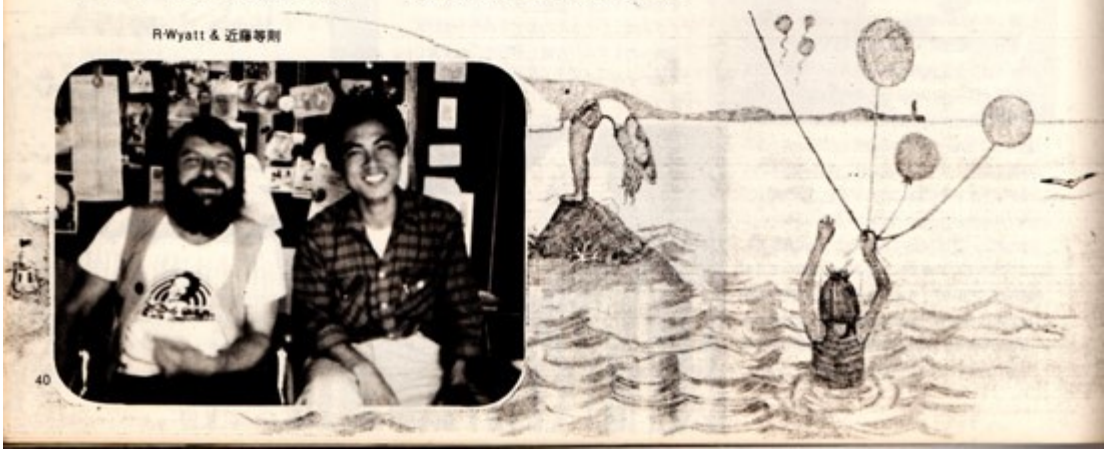
R・W：彼については面白い体験があって、私が日本の琴やベトナムの音楽をきくようになってからはじめて、彼のやってることがよくわかるようになったんだ。もちろん、デレクがそれらをコピーしたとは思わないし、一度もきいたことさえないかもしれないのだが、それらの音楽のもつスペースやサウンド、例えば弦を指でこする音等がデレクの不可思議にみえるギターに、ある確かなもののあることをわからせてくれたのだ。

近藤：それは面白い。というのは、去年の8月、ロンドンのICP Theatreでのカムパニーのコンサートで、僕はデレクとデュオをした。その始めの部分で、デレクのアコースティックギターが僕には琴のようにきこえてきて、「アッ、デレクは僕にジョークをやってるのかな。」と思ったことがあったんだ。(笑)

R・W：イヤ、彼は自然にそのような奏法をあみ出したんだと思うよ。

近藤：デレクのことから、琴の話が出たが、先程あなたが「世界の伝統音楽が私の歌をもっとOpen Upした」といったことのあたりをもう少し話してほしい。

R-Wyatt & 近藤等則



> Zoom



R・W：イギリス人が最初にきいた東洋の音楽はインド音楽で、それは大変ハーモニックで、複雑で、急なところがあり、官能的なカーペットのようだ。それに比べ、日本や中国の音楽は、官能的なものを欠いていて、冷ややかで、ドライにきこえた。でも自分の音楽があまりに急がしく、厚味が乏るように思いはじめるようになり、それは例えばコルトレーンの音楽にも言えると思うが、それに比べ、琴音楽等は、もっと余裕があって、空間的で、かわいている。自分のこれから求める方向は、これだと思うようになり、この5年間変わろうとしている。このことはどっちがいいとか、ということではなく、一つのことをやりつくし、あきた時全く違ったことに興味をもつことにたとえられるかもしれない。

最良の方法はまだわからない、変化あるのみ

近藤：あなたの最近の活動についてうかがいたい。最近シングル盤を一枚出したときいているが。

R・W：長い間レコーディングしなかったので、そのカンをとりもどすためもあってLPにしないでシングルでスタートしたのだ。しかしながら、自分の目指すところの新しい音を、どう組織して、どのように出すか、また興味の段階で、全く自信がない。ただ、パンクロックシーンの後イギリスでは一つの良い方向が生まれた。それは、マイナーでとるにたらない様な事だって、それはそれなりの価値があって、やっていいんだ、ということが了解されたことだ。そんな訳で、新しいシングルには、私の好きな2つのフォークソングを入れたんだ。一つは「カイマネラ」、他の一つは、「アライカ」。カイマネラはキューバのフォークソングで、作曲家はまだ生きている。そしてアライカはチリの歌だ。(両方共政治的な曲だ。)自分でピアノ、ボーカル、パーカッションをオーヴァー・ダビングした。

近藤：あなたは、もう2枚シングルを出す予定でいるとか。

R・W：次のでは、ビリー・ホリデイの「Strange Fruits」をやる予定だ。この曲をやることが危険であることは知っている。全くクレージーだ。(笑) でも何百人もの演奏家が毎日モーツァルトの曲をやってることを思うと、私がこの偉大な曲をやることが許されたっていいんじゃないか、と考えた訳だ。(笑) これは、この曲に対する私の尊敬のしるしでもあるし、自分の可能性への挑戦でもあると思う。実際、自分の作った曲を歌う時には直面しない、重要で難しい問題に、「Strange Fruits」のような曲をやる時には直面する。このことが好きなのだ。もう片面は、「シータ・パラード」をやろうと思ってる。これはアメリカのディスコ・ソングで、たまたまこの曲をきいて、気に入ったからだ。その他の予定としては、私の詩の朗読、そして私の歌のバックにバングラディッシュのミュージシャンの演奏を使おうと思っている。彼ら自身だけの演奏もシングルに使いたい。

以上のプランは数ケ月以内にレコードになるはずだ。

近藤：あなたが活動を再開して、大変うれしい。今まであなたが語ってくれた、リズムに対するあなた自身の新鮮で柔軟な考え方を生かしきった新しい音楽をあなたが表現してくれることを、本当に僕は期待している。

R・W：ありがとう。でも、まだはっきりした勇気はもてない状態なんだよ。今、私は様々なことに興味をもってるが、それらをどうオーガナイズしていいものか、どのように用いるのか、最良の方法がわからないんだ。ただ、私は、今、全くかわりつつあると思う。

1980年6月12日ワイアットの自宅にて

> Zoom

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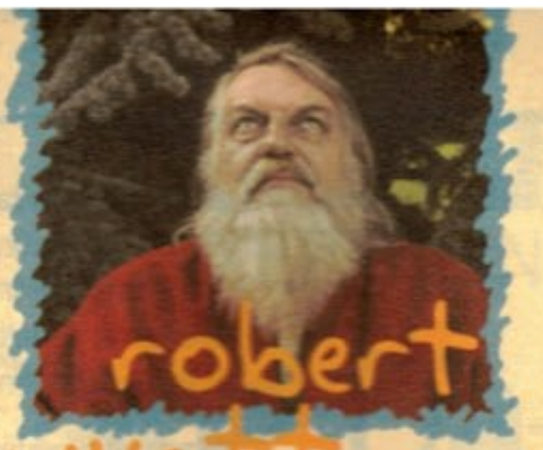
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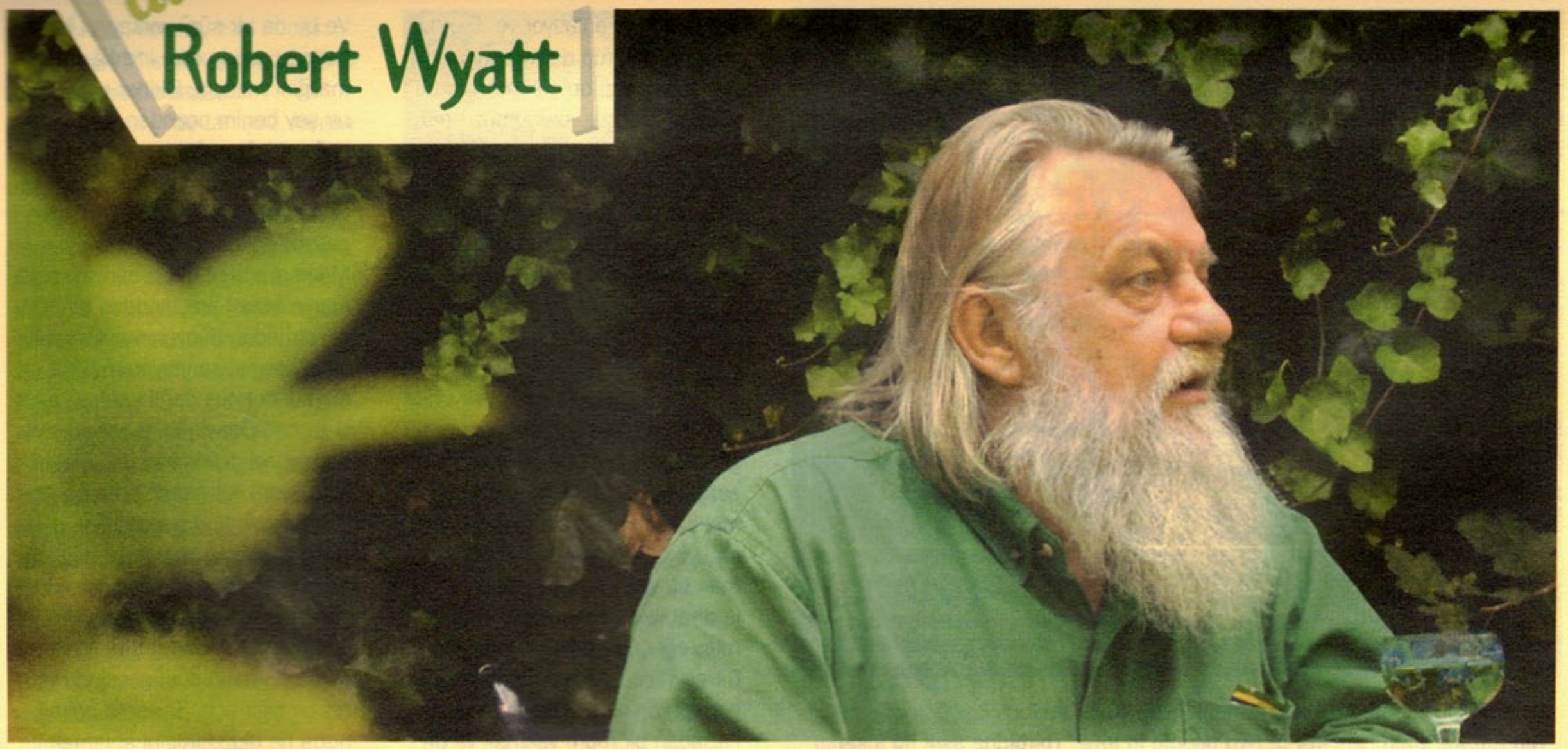
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THE BEATLES

Robert Wyatt



Hiçbir kalıba, hiçbir kategoriye sığmayan bir adem... Caz, rock, psikedelia, minimal nağmeler, Akdeniz, Afrika, deney deney üstüne... Davul, vurmalılar, tuşlular ve melek gibi bir ses... 60'ların ortalarından bugüne, bazen ön saflarda, bazen gölgede... Şair, melodist, marksist... "Strange Fruit"in, "Shipbuilding"in, "Biko"nun, "Enternasyonal"in müthiş yorumcusu... Kendini epeyce özlettikten sonra "Cuckooland" albümüyle çıkagelen modern müzik aleminin baba erenlerinden Robert Wyatt'a bir telefon çakıp uzun uzun muhabbet ettik, dere tepe düz gittik.

HARİKA HAYALETLER

Londralısınız; kimi tutuyorsunuz? Chelsea'yi mi, Arsenal'i mi?
Robert Wyatt: Arsenal'i.
Joe Strummer da Arsenalliydi...
Öyle mi? Arsenal bir Londra fenomenidir. Bir saniye, gidip bir sigara alayım. *(Guardian gazetesi günde üç paket içtiğini yazıyor)* Kusura bakmayın, tiryakilik işte. Arsenal'den bahsediyorduk, değil mi?
Aslında Strummer'dan bahsediyorduk...
Clash'in patladığı günlerde çok yoğun çalışıyordum ve daha çok dünya müziğiyle ilgiliydim. Doğru dürüst dinleyemedim onları, ama haklarında çok olumlu şeyler duydum, kıyak herifler olduğu belli. Özellikle Strummer. Mühim insan. Fikirleri, tarzı, tavrı...
Son albümünü, "Global A Go Go"yu dinlemiş miydiniz?
Maalesef, ama güzel isimmiş...
Yeni albümünüz "Cuckooland"de bizim favori parçamız "La Ahada Yalam", sizinki hangisi?
Benimki de "La Ahada Yalam". O kadar güzel çaldılar ki... Gilad Atzmon, İsrail doğumlu bir Britanya yurttaşı. İsrail ordusunda da görev yapmıştı. İsrail'i terketmesinin sebebi, o klastrofobiye tahammül edemez hale gelmesi. İsrail ordusunun ruhsal narsizminden bunalmıştı. Sürekli kendi kabilesine tapınmak istemedi. Müzik tahsili yapmış. Cazı, Arap müziğini, Türk müziğini iyi biliyor. Onun için bu kadar ilginç bir caz klarnetçisi. Dünyanın birçok yerinde bu tür melezlemeler revaçta. Ama Gilad, kökleri Doğu Akdeniz kültüründe olan bir müzisyen. Yahudi ve Arap. Ve tabii kaçınılmaz olarak Osmanlı. Bu tarih müziğinde temayüz ediyor, bu da klarnet çalışını müthiş zenginleştiriyor. Gilad'ın "La Ahada Yalam"ı çalışında bir Osmanlı-Türk havası hissediliyor. Avrupa dışı bir armonik unsur var, aynı zamanda gelişmiş bir yapı, Akdeniz'in herhangi bir yerinde bir folk ezgisi olabilecek sound'da. Türkiye, Yunanistan, İtalya, Fransa; gitar kısmı o ülkelerden herhangi birinden olabilir. Ya da ortada bir yerden, Malta ya da Sardunya'dan. Armoni yapısı itibariyle. Batı kulağının aşina olduğu bir ezgi, aynı zamanda kesinlikle Avrupalı değil.

Fikirler bir ortam yaratır, eğer üşüyorsanız sizi ısıtır. Bir şeyi anlamanızın verdiği bir sıcaklıktır. Fazladan bir mum yakmak ya da avizeye bir ampul eklemek gibi.



"Lullaby For Hamza"yı (Hamza'ya ninni) dinlerken Gilad Atzmon'u düşündük ister istemez, intihar bombacıları hakkında neler geçiyor aklından acaba diye. Hamza, şarkıdaki öyküye göre, ilk Körfez Savaşı'nda doğmuş, şimdi 12 yaşında olmalı. 12 yıldır bütün gördüğü, savaş, ambargo, yeniden savaş ve şimdi de işgal. İnsan merak ediyor, bundan üç-dört yıl sonra Hamza nasıl biri olacak? Pekâlâ bir intihar bombacısı olabilir...
Muhtemelen. Kesintisiz bir fasit daire bu. O şartlar içindeki insanların çaresizlikten çılgınca işler yapması kaçınılmaz. İyi örgütlenmiş bir siyasal yapı olmadığında güdüsel eylemler ortaya çıkıyor. Dışarıdan bakıldığında ne denli çılgınca görünürse görünsün, anlamaya çalışmak lazım.
Albümün ilk şarkısı "Just A Bit"i "The Selfish Gene" (Bencil gen) adlı kitabıyla uluslararası ün kazanan Richard Dawkins'e ithaf etmişsiniz...
Evet, çünkü onun desteğe ihtiyacı olduğunu düşünüyorum, çok acımasız eleştirilere maruz kalıyor. Medya, tanrıyı ve kutsal kitapların söylediklerini reddediyor diye çullanıyor, bilim camiası da indirgemecilikle suçluyor. Bence Dawkins, bu gezegenin sihirli bir yer olduğuna inanıyor ve mahvedilmesine karşı çıkıyor. Bir bilimadamı olarak, insanoğlunun evrimini, bu evrimin dinamiklerini izah etmeye çalışıyor. Bunu da genleri temel alarak yapıyor. Bunun indiregemecilikle alâkası yok. Genler, maddî hayatın temel ögesi. Bu dünyada en sihirli şey maddî gerçekler. Dawkins'in "astroloji büyüleyici gelebilir, ama asıl sihirli olan astronomi" tespitine hayranlık duyuyorum. Elbette hepimizin batıl tarafları, irrasyonel bağlılıkları var. Öte yandan evrim gibi, genler gibi gerçekler var, biz inanmasak da var...
Albümün ikinci şarkısı, "Old Europe", Donald Rumsfeld'in Almanya ve Fransa'yı Irak savaşına karşı çıktıkları için "eski Avrupa" diye nitelemesine bir gönderme galiba...
Rumsfeld gibilerinin Atlantik'in bu yakasının tarihi hakkında söyledikleri bana hakaret gibi geliyor. Banal bir çizgi film gibi. Hiçbir derinliği olmayan, bilgi fakiri bir yaklaşım. Dünyanın en muktedir insanlarının bu zihniyette olması ürpertici. Nasıl oluyor da İtalya ve İspanya yeni Avrupa da, Almanya ve Fransa eski



1975'de, kırk yılın başı, Robert Wyatt ve arkadaşları bir hit şarkı yapıp İngiliz listelerine girdiler: Monkees'in yorumuyla bilinen Neil Diamond bestesi "I'm A Believer". Bu başarının ardından, doğal olarak BBC televizyonundaki Top Of The Pops programına katılmayı hak ettiler. Ancak BBC yetkilileri tekerlekli sandalyedeki bir şarkıcıyı programa çıkarmak istemedi. Dinmeyen protestoların ardından sonunda program çekildi ve yayınlandı. Bu fotoğraf o günün anısı.

Avrupa? Tek kıstas, ABD'nin müttefiki olup olmamak.

"Old Europe"daki "ghosts of two people in love" (birbirine aşık iki insanın hayaletleri) dizesinde kastedilen Juliette Gréco ve Miles Davis mi?

Evet, Gréco ve Davis. Sözleri Alfie *(Wyatt'ın hayat arkadaşı Alfreda Benge)* yazdı. Albümdeki şarkıların birçoğunun sözleri Alfie'nin. Ben çok şanslı bir müzisyenim. Şöyle bir paradoks var: Ben müziği ve duyguları yazıyorum, ama çoğu zaman sesimi oraya nasıl koyacağımı kestiremiyorum, Alfie imdadıma yetişiyor. Hangi sözcüklerin kendimi ifade etmeme yarayacağını bulup çıkarıyor.

Hayalet denen şey çok da güzel olabilir. Benim hayatım harika hayaletlerle dolu. Gerçi Gréco hayatta ama, benim için çok güzel bir hayalet. Çok alımlı bir kadındı. 1950'lerde çok popülerdi, Fransız şanson geleneğinin önde gelen temsilcisiydi. Rock'n'roll'dan önce dünyada envai çeşit popüler müzik vardı. Pop sadece gençliğe hitap eden bir müzik değildi, her yaştan insanların dinlediği müzikti. Şansoncular, savaş sonrası Paris'in sesiydi ve büyük çoğunluğu sol düşünceye bağlı insanlardı. Irk, din, dil farkı onlar için mesele değildi. Gréco kariyerinin başlarında Miles Davis'le bir aşk yaşadı, böyle bir şey o günlerin Amerika'sında tahayyül ötesiydi. Gréco-Davis ilişkisi, Fransa'nın siyah Amerikalılara kucak açısını temsil ediyor aynı zamanda. Amerikalıların kabullenmeye yanaşmadıkları bir gerçek bu. Fransa'nın Amerikan kültürüne çok önemli katkıları oldu. Amerika'daki Fransız düşmanlığının sebebi, Fransız düşünürlerinin büyük bir bölümünün solcu olmasıydı.

Albüme "Cuckooland" adını vermeniz nasıl oldu, mânası ne?

Birçok yan anlamı var. Ama temelde "cuckoo" (guguk kuşu), kafayı yemek demek. Argoda "guguk kuşu yuvası" akıl hastanesi için kullanılan bir deyiş. "Cuckooland" de, kabaca tımarhane ya da deliler ülkesi anlamına geliyor.

"Cuckooland"i dinlerken akla Ken Kesey ve "Guguk Kuşu" geliyor.

Romanı okumadım, ama filmi seyrettim. Hepimiz içerdeyiz, hepimiz sapıtmış haldeyiz. Ben çok aklı başında olduğumu iddia etmiyorum, ama ülkeleri yönetenler kafayı hepten sıyırmış durumda.

Albümün düşündürdüğü isimlerden biri de Edward Said...

Ölümüne çok üzüldüm. Çok önemli bir düşünürdü. Filistinliler karikatürize edilirken, Said çıkıp gerçeğin öyle olmadığını gösterdi. Kendi kimliği de, realitenin sanıldığından çok daha karmaşık olduğunu gösterdi. Filistin'de sadece müslümanlar yok, hıristiyanlar ve başka dinlerden insanlar var. Ayrıca, bütün müslümanlar fundamentalist değil. Filistin toplumunun ekseriyeti seküler. Said'in özellikle yahudi orkestra şefi Daniel Barenboim'la birlikte Arap ve İsrailli müzisyenlerle gerçekleştirdiği proje, müziğin ve genel olarak sanatın din, dil, ırk gibi yapay sınırları nasıl ortadan kaldırdığının dört başı mamur bir örneğiydi... İsrailli basçı Yaron Stavi, Daniel'le birlikte çalışmış, Said'le de tanışmış. Yaron'la tokalaştığımda Said'le tokalaşmış gibi hissediyorum kendimi. Said müstesna bir düşünürdü, medenî aklın sesiydi.

Bir söyleşinizde çarpıcı bir kavram kullanıyorsunuz: "Umutsuz iyimserlik".

Aslında bütün albümün özeti bu. Talih meselesi hep hüzünlü ve komik gelmiştir bana. Çingenelerin geçim kaynaklarından biri umut satmaktır, güzel gelecek, yaver giden bir talih... Ama bunlar kendileri için geçerli değildir. Onları iyi bir geleceğin beklemediği ortadadır... Umut, çok hayatî bir güç. İnsanları yaşama bağlayan, eyleme geçiren bir dinamik. Ama nasıl oluşuyor, bunu bilemiyorum. Randy Newman bu konuda çok güzel şarkılar yazdı. Tanrı üzerine yazdığı şarkı çok matrak. Tanrının gözünden yazmış, insanoğlunu ne kadar çok sevdiğini anlatıyor ve diyor ki: "Çölde koşturup duruyorsunuz, beni arıyorsunuz, bu çok marazi, bu nedenle sizi çok seviyorum." *(gülüyor)*

Bir söyleşide, "insan fikirlere de aşık oluyor" diyorsunuz...

Mümkün tabii. Fikirler cazibelidir... Bunu nasıl anlatacağımı bilemiyorum, aslında ben müzik dışında sözcükleri kullanmayı beceremiyorum. Sözcükler, müzik içinde kendi başlarına bir ışık taşıyabiliyorlar, ama onları müziğin dışına çıkardığınızda fazla kesin oluyorlar, hissettiğim şeyleri ifade ederken maksadımı aşan bir kesinliğe bürünüyorlar. Bu nedenle hiçbir zaman bir yazar olamayacağım. Şöyle diyebilirim: Fikirler bir ortam yaratır, eğer üşüyorsanız sizi ısıtır. Bir şeyi anlamanızın ya da bir şeyi görmenizin verdiği bir sıcaklıktır. Fazladan bir mum yakmak ya da avizeye bir ampul eklemek gibi.

Sizin aşık olduğunuz fikirler neler?

Ergenlik günlerimde, Paris'i mesken tutmuştum bir süre. Dürüst olmak gerekirse, seks, müzik ve yeme-içme dışında bir şey düşünmüyordum. Fakat o şehirde bir ruh, felsefî bir şemsiye vardı. O sıralarda bunun çok bilincinde değildim belki. Bir atmosfer yaratılmıştı, bunu yaratan insanlar benden çok daha edebî, akademik insanlardı, ama bana da ulaştı. O atmosferde Marksizm merkezi bir yere sahipti.

Miró hiyeroglif gibi resim yapıyor. Bir fikrin özünü bulup ona görsel bir biçim verme arayışı Miró'nunki. Ben de müzikte aynı arayıştayım.

BELLİ BAŞLI ESERLERİ



Kevin Ayers, R. Wyatt, Mike Ratledge
Soft Machine 1968

SOFT MACHINE: Volume One, 68 • Volume Two, 69 • Third, 70 • Fourth, 71 **MATCHING MOLE:** Matching Mole, 72 • Little Red Record, 72 **SOLO:** The End of an Ear, 71 • Rock Bottom, 74 • Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, 75 • Nothing Can Stop Us, 80 • Robert Wyatt, 81 • The Animals Film, 82 • Old Rottenhat, 85 • Dondestan, 91 • Floatsam Jetsam, 94 • Short Break, 96 • Shleep, 97 • Cuckooland, 03

EP'lerini, session ve bootleg kayıtlarını da hesaba katarsak ipin ucu kaçar. Ama bu sonbahar, "Cuckooland"le aynı sıralarda yayınlanan iki albümü analım: Ressam Jean-Michel Marchetti'yle 97'den bu yana oluşturdukları projenin dördüncü kısmı "M4W" ve 72, 74, 2003 kayıtlarından derlenen "Solar Flares Burn For You".

Ve bu da bir sürü varsayımı beraberinde getiriyordu. Irkçılığın saçmalığını mesela. Fikirler organik bir şey benim açımdan, kendimi bağlı olduğum fikirler olmadan düşünmem mümkün değil.

Bunların başında da Marksizm geliyor galiba...

Marksizm benim için dünyayı anlamanın temel araçlarından biri. O açı olmadan dünyanın anlaşılabilir olabileceğini sanmıyorum.

Miyadı dolmuş değil yani...

O zaman Darwin'in de miyadı doldu, sanayi devriminin de –elektronik devrim var şimdi. Ama bu süreçlerin nasıl ortaya çıktığını, dünyayı ve hayatlarımızı nasıl değiştirdiğini, tarih denen şeyin ne olduğunu Marx'a başvurmadan anlayabileceğimizi sanmıyorum. Marx'ın tahlilleri, insan düşüncesinde müthiş bir çığır açtı. Siyasete baktığınızda ne olup bittiğini anlamak için, insanlar ve ülkeler arasındaki ekonomik ilişkilere bakmak gerekiyor. Bugün dünyadaki çatışma, genel olarak din veya kültürel farklılıklar retoriği çerçevesinde izah ediliyor. Ama, o çatışmaların gerçek nedenini, ekonomik gerçeklere bakmadan anlamak mümkün değil. Tarihe, kralların karizması perspektifinden bakanlar gerçekliği fena halde ıskalıyor bence.

Aşklarınızdan biri de İspanyol ressam Miró, değil mi?

Miró'nun bütün resimlerini çok seviyorum. Bir kere İspanyol olmak gibi bir avantajı var. İspanya resim için harika bir yer. Işık olağanüstü, mavisi müthiş, olağanüstü bir gökyüzü, hele geceleri. Miró'nun eserleri giderek kaligrafik hale geldi, neredeyse Japon kaligrafisi gibi. Görsel bir yazı adeta, bir hiyeroglif gibi resim yapıyor, hiyeroglif de kaligrafiye dönüşüyor bir noktadan sonra. Bir fikrin özünü bulup ona görsel bir biçim verme arayışı Miró'nunki. Ben de müzikte aynı arayıştayım.

Albümde Greta Garbo'ya da atıf var. Onunla ilişkiniz nasıl?

Yalnız kalmak, gözlerden ırak olmak istemesiyle ün yapmış bir insan. Sanırım asıl sebep, Hollywood'un halkla ilişkiler aygıtının –o günlerin paparazzilerinin– onu çok taciz etmeleri. Başa çıkamadı demek ki, sürekli izlenmek bir korku yaratmış olmalı. Medyanın güya toplum adına gösterdiği ilgi, sevgi ve şefkate dayalı bir ilgi değil, kötücül bir ilgi... Garbo öteki Hollywood yıldızları gibi bu ilgiye açık değildi, kendini medyaya arz etmiyordu. Bu yönü beni cezbediyor, güzelliği ayrı bir sohbet konusu. *(gülüyor)*

Carla Bley de hayranlık duyduğunuz kadınlardan biri galiba...

Evet, şahane bir kadın, bütün aile-

si öyle. Kızı, kocası, eski kocası...

Kızı Karen Mantler yeni albümünüzün konuklarından...

Carla'yla otuz yıldır tanışırız, kızının şarkıcı olduğunu söylemişti... Ben de yeni bir albüm hazırlığındaydım, böylece yollarımız kesişmiş oldu. Karen minicikti ilk tanıdığımda, ikimiz de onun anne-babasından etkilendik. Michael Mantler'ın trompeti beni çok etkilemiştir.

Bir ortak dostumuz var galiba: Paul Haines.

Ah, çok özlüyorum onu. Ailesiyle temastayım. Karısı Jo çok tatlıdır.

İstanbul'a bir caz festivaline gelmişti, güzel bir gün geçirmiştik...

Kanada'da bir caz dergisine de nefis bir makale yazdı, o festivalle ilgili. Türkiye'ye hayran kalmış. Kızı Emily de müzisyen ve çok başarılı. Paul bir deryaydı, mükemmel bir müzikologdu.

Şiirlerini sever miydiniz?

Bayılırdım. Birkaç yıl önce, Kip Hanrahan'la yaptıkları albümü dinledim. Şahane... Yazışıyorduk, birbirimize kasetler gönderiyorduk. Çok özlüyorum onu. Onların kuşağına çok imreniyorum, çünkü cazın en iyisini onlar dinlediler. Lester Young'ı, Miles'ı zirvede olduğu zamanlarda...

Albümde bir de Buddy Holly'nin ünlendirdiği "Raining In My Heart" var...

Buddy Holly ergenlerin ilacıdır. 15-16 yaşında, bir kafedesiniz, etrafınızda fıstık gibi kızlar... Fakat onlarla nasıl temas kuracağınızı, ilgilerini nasıl çekebileceğinizi bilemiyorsunuz. Ve jukebox'ta Buddy Holly imdadınıza yetişiyor. Bir şey söylemenize gerek kalmıyor, sizin yerinize o her şeyi söylüyor.

"Raining In My Heart"ı seçmenizin bir özel bir sebebi var mı?

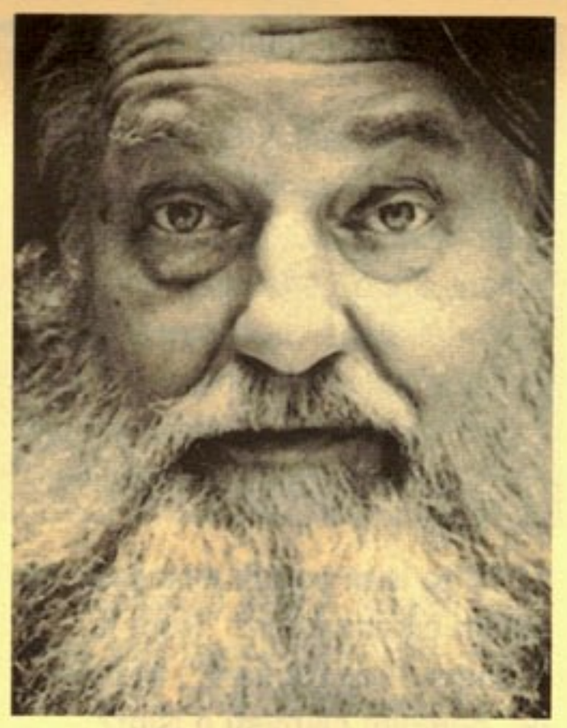
Çocukluğumdan beri severim. Çocukken sevdiğim pop şarkılarını hâlâ seviyorum. Arkaik bir versiyonunu yaptım. Bir 19. yüzyıl ilahisi gibi... *(gülüyor)*

Bir söyleşide The Sam The Sham'den "Wooly Bully"nin aşılamaz bir şarkı olduğunu söylüyorsunuz...

Du-tum aha, ı-hım aha, du-tum aha. Harika değil mi? Sözler de şahane. Bazı şarkıları aşmak mümkün değil. Hele bunun gibi saçma sözlü olanları. *(gülüyor)*

Onun bir de Türkçe versiyonu var, Erkin Koray adında rock'çu söylüyor. ("Şöyle Böyle") Tanıdığınız Türkiyeli müzisyenler var mı?

Müthiş bir davulcu vardı, olağanüstü bir adam... Okay Temiz! Bir de Nâzım Hikmet'in şiirlerinden yapılmış şarkıların olduğu Türkçe albümlerim var. Hikmet'in şiirlerini çok beğendiğim için almıştım, İngilizce çevirisinden okuduğum halde çok etkilenmiştim. Büyük şair.



Yves Montand'ın söylediği Nâzım şiirleri var...

Öyle mi! İşte size şanson geleneği! Yetişkinler için popüler müzik. Popüler müziği çok seviyorum, ama o kadar çok değerli şey gözardı ediliyor ki. Fransızlar siyasî olarak o kadar uyanık ki, Nâzım'ı ıskalamamaları doğal.

The Byrds ve Bowie'nin de Nâzım şiirlerinden yaptıkları şarkılar var.

Harika, bunu öğrendiğime çok sevindim. Nâzım'ı keşfetmişler, bravo onlara.

Birçokları için Soft Machine zamanlarından "Moon In June" adlı şarkınızın ayrı bir yeri var...

Kendi başıma plak yapmaya karar verdiğim sıralarda yazdığım ilk şarkılardan biridir. Baştan sona ben çalmıştım. O tecrübe sonraki şarkılarım için bir kılavuz işlevi gördü.

Bir yerde okuduk, size Şili'den yazıp sözleri istemişler...

Evet, insan şaşıp kalıyor. Fakat beni dinleyen insanlar coğrafî olarak çok dağınık. "Moon In June"un sözlerini isteyen çok oldu. Hatta Fransa'da bir dergi geçenlerde yayınladı da. Ama bana sorarsanız, o sözler pek öyle ahım şahım değil. Benim şöyle bir sorunum var: Sözleri nasıl kurmam gerektiğini tam kestiremiyorum. Sözlerin sorumluluğunu taşımak konusunda müzikte olduğu kadar kendimden emin değilim.

Albümde David Gilmour da var...

35 yıldır ahbabız. Çok nazik bir adamdır, zengin ve nazik. Bütün zenginler onun gibi olsa devrime gerek olmazdı. Çok da iyi bir gitarist. Ünlü olmanın şöyle bir dezavantajı da var, Pink Floyd gibi bir gruptaysanız, bu biraz anonim bir ün oluyor. Dolayısıyla, müzisyenleri o bağlamdan çıkarıp onları ünlü yapan marifetlerini sergilemek çok iyi oluyor.

Pink Floyd'un en çok sevdiğiniz şarkısı hangisi?

İkinci albümlerinde klavyecileri Rick Wright'ın yazdığı bir şarkı var. Slow bir şarkı, adını hatırlayamıyorum. Çok güzel armonisi var. Beni, klavyenin bir şarkıda nasıl kullanılacağına dair acayip etkilemiştir.

Syd Barrett'la da çalışmıştınız...

Syd'in "Madcap Laughs" albümündeki birkaç şarkıda davulu ben çaldım. Syd çok iyi bir şarkı yazarı, çok eğlenceli ve çok tatlı bir herifti. Bana hiç deli gibi gelmedi. Deli olan Syd Barrett değil, Tony Blair.

Son albümünüzdeki "Foreign Accents" şarkınızda (Yabancı Şiveler) İran'ın Şah dönemi öncesindeki başbakanı Musaddık'tan bahsediyorsunuz. Geçenlerde iktidardan devrilmesinin 40. yılında Batı gazeteleri ve TV'lerinde timsah gözyaşları döküldü Musaddık için.

Musaddık, İran'ın seçilmiş lideriydi. İran petrolünü millîleştirince, İngiliz-Amerikan ortak yapımı bir darbeyle iktidarına son verildi. Ve yalnız İran'dan sürülmedi, tarih kitaplarından da silindi. Batı'nın İran hakkında bildiği şundan ibaret: İyi bir Şah vardı, Batı dostuydu, sonra İran halkı birdenbire delirdi ve acayip dindar oldu. Musaddık diye birisi yaşamamış, İran'ın demokratik bir dönemi hiç olmamış gibi davranılıyor. İngiltere ve Amerika, İran petrolüne el koymak için İran'ın bağımsızlığını, kendi kaderini belirleme hakkını çiğnediler ve Musaddık'ın yerine Batı çıkarlarının bekçiliğini yapan Şah'ı koydular. Bunu hatırlatmak ve İngiliz-Amerikan yönetimlerinin ikiyüzlülüğünün altını çizmek için "Foreign Accents"da Musaddık'tan söz ediyorum. Amerika özgürlüğü ve demokrasiyi bayrak yapmıştır hep. Ama, tarihe baktığımız zaman, en azından benim ömrüm boyunca, hep tam tersi olmuştur, hep diktatörleri iktidara getirmiştir. Birçok ülke kendi haline bırakılsaydı, demokratik süreçlerle kendi kaderlerini belirleyebilirdi. Ama İran'da ve başka birçok yerde, Amerika müdahalesi ülkelerin demokratik gelişimlerine ket vurdu. Türkiye de bu örneklerden biri. Yunanistan da öyle. Birçok ülkenin siyasî kültürü Amerika'nın talepleri ve ihtiyaçları adına tahrip edildi, yolundan çıkarıldı, militarize edildi. Şimdiki anti-demokratik yapılar o kültürlerin doğasıymış gibi sunuluyor, ama Amerikan müdahaleleri olmasaydı, o ülkeler demokrasiyle yönetiliyor olacaktı. İnsanı çileden çıkaran bir durum bu.

Tarih denen şeyi Marx'a başvurmadan anlayabileceğimizi sanmıyorum. Tarihe, kralların karizması perspektifinden bakanlar gerçekliği fena halde ıskalıyor.

Yakın zamanlara kadar Komünist Parti üyesiydiniz, şimdilerde desteklediğiniz bir parti, bir hareket var mı?

Hiçbir partiye üye değilim. Bildiğiniz gibi, Komünist Parti harakiri yaptı. İngiltere'de siyasî anlamda bir ağırlığı yoktu, olmadı, ama olaylara başka türlü bakan insanları bir araya getiriyordu, katkıda bulunmaktan mutluluk ve onur duyduğum kampanyalar düzenlendi. Şimdi doğaçlama yapıyorum. Destekliyorum diyemeyeceğim. Benim gibi ileri yaşta, felçli bir şarkı yazarının desteğinden ne olacak ki? *(gülüyor)* Kim dünyanın başka türlü olabileceğini söylüyorsa, gönlüm onlarla...

Kimler mesela?

Hayatı, dünyayı demokratikleştirmek isteyen herkes. Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein... Alternatif küreselleşme hareketi...

80 yılında, Stalin hakkında bir şarkınız var, "Stalin Wasn't Stallin."

Bunu Alexis Korner'ın radyo programında duydum. Bir gospel grubu, Golden Gate Quartet, 1940'lardan, o zamanlarda genellikle dinî şarkılar söylüyorlardı, arada bir de milliyetçi şarkılar. Bunlardan biri de bütün müttefiklere övgü düzen bir Amerikan savaş şarkısıydı. Ve o müttefiklerden biri de SSCB'ydi, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin üçlüsü faşizme karşı ittifak içindeydi. Dünyanın ne denli hızlı değiştiğinin bir göstergesi bu şarkı. Komik de bir şarkı. İnsanlara

Robert Wyatt 1973'ün haziran ayında, üçüncü Matching Mole albümü için çalışırken, alkollü bir akşam dördüncü kattan düşerek felç geçirdi ve tekerlekli sandalyeye mahkûm oldu. O tarihten beri davul çalamayan Wyatt, sekiz aylık mecburi hastane konaklaması esnasında "Rock Bottom" albümünü hazırladı. Bu fotoğraf o albümden: Aynı günlerde evlendiği ressam eşi Alfreda Benge, Wyatt'ın bütün albümlerinin kapak desenlerini çiziyor.



ABD'nin müttefiklerini hatırlatmak için yaptım onu, Stalin Amerikalıların "Joe Amca"sıydı bir zamanlar.

Sizin Stalin'e bakışınız nasıl?

Bana hiçbir zaman hitap etmedi. Sekiz yaşındaydım öldüğünde. Çok uzak bir tarihî geçmiş gibiydi, Napolyon gibi neredeyse. O tür insanların kahraman gibi görülmeleri, tahtlarından indirdikleri imparatorların karikatürleri haline gelmeleri insanoğlunun doğası ve tarihi hakkında çok aydınlatıcı. Tarih bir de şunu gösteriyor: Bağımsız ve görece küçük, yerel hareketler, şahane ve cesur olabilir, ama büyük savaş makinalarına karşı pek şansları yok. IMF ve Pentagon çok güçlü, herkesi imha edebilir. Meksika hükümeti mesela, Amerikan hükümetinin hizmetkârından başka bir şey değil.

Brian Eno da var "Cuckooland"de...

Brian benim tam anti-tezim. Yeni çıkmış ne kadar teknoloji varsa hemen edinir. Benim o alemle hiçbir irtibatım yok, bilgisayarlarla filan... Ben ilkel bir müzisyenim, sadece ellerimi ve ağzımı kullanıyorum. *(gülüyor)* Kullanabildiğim bir makina yok. Brian stüdyoya elinde acayip cihazlarla geldi. Kulüp DJ'lerinin distorsiyon yapmak için, efekt yaratmak için kullandıkları dalgametrelerden. Onları, normalde asla kullanılmayacakları bir bağlamda kullanmak hoşuma gitti. Eski moda caz cümlelerine Brian'ın en son teknoloji harikalarının marifetlerini serpiştirdik.

DJ denince akla hiphop da geliyor, hiphop'la aranız nasıl?

İnsanların hoplayıp sıçraması, eğlenmesi, iyi vakit geçirmesi... Bir genelleme yapmak çok zor, ama etkisi açısından şöyle: Popüler müziğin büyük keşifleri, icatları hep siyah müzisyenlerden geldi. En azından benim hayatımda böyle oldu. Benim en çok ilgimi çeken o, dans tarafı değil. Bizim gibileri pek dansetmez. *(gülüyor)* Siyah popüler müzik, epey bir zaman pembe dizilerdeki siyah dünyasına saplanıp kalmıştı, hiphop'un bunu bertaraf etmesi harikulade bir gelişme oldu. Siyah Amerikalıların çok zengin, çok verimli bir dili var. Bu dil, hiphop sayesinde kamusal alana çıktı.

Sevdiğiniz, beğendiğiniz isimler kimler?

NWA (Niggers With Attitude) tavrını seviyordum. Onların tavrı beyazlara da sirayet etti. Eminem mesela çok güzel plaklar yapıyor.

Hiphop Amerika'ya özgü bir tür olmaktan çıktı, dünyanın dört bir yanına yayıldı. Türkçe hiphop da var mesela...

Evet, çok yaygınlaştı, Fransa'dan Brezilya'ya kadar birçok yerde popüler. Hiphop bütün dünyada dilin kullanımını özgürleştirdi, argonun kamusal alana çıkmasını sağladı. Popüler müzik geleneğinin, John Lennon ya da Randy Newman gibi istisnalar dışında becerebildiği bir şey değil bu.

1975'te ismi merak uyandıran bir albüm çıkarmıştınız: "Ruth Is Stanger Than Richard". Mânası ne, nereden çıkmıştı o isim?

Bir gün sarhoşken, "gerçek, hayal ürününden daha tuhaftır" (Truth is stranger than fiction) demek istedim, dilim dolaştı, "Ruth, Richard'dan daha tuhaftır"a (Ruth is stranger than Richard) yakın bir cümle çıktı ağzımdan. *(gülüyor)* Alfie'nin çok hoşuna gitti, "bunu bir şarkı adı yapmalı" dedi. Sonuçta yaptık. Bir gün sarhoşken siz de "Truth is stranger than fiction"ı birkaç kere hızlı hızlı tekrarlayın, bakalım ne çıkacak. *(gülüyor)*

David Gilmour zengin ve nazik biri. Bütün zenginler onun gibi olsa devrime gerek olmazdı. Syd Barrett da çok eğlenceli ve tatlı bir herifti. Deli olan o değil, Tony Blair.

1991'de, İspanyolca isimli bir albüm çıkarmıştınız: "Dondestan". Onun öyküsü ne?

Aslında iki sözcük, Donde "nerede", estan'sa "onlar", yani "neredeler?" Göç olgusuyla ilgilenmemin sonucuydu o albüm. Göç ebedi bir olgu. Bu gezegende sonsuz bir yerinde duramama hali var. Birileri bir yerlerden kalkıp geliyor, birilerini kovup oraya yerleşiyor, sonra sınırlar çiziliyor, derken başka birileri geliyor, aynı öykü yeniden başlıyor.

Bir söyleşide dünyadaki en düşündürücü ve hüzünlendirici şey köksüzleşme ve göçebelerle yerleşikler arasındaki ebedî aşk-nefret ilişkisi diyorsunuz...

Bu benim şahsî fikrim değil. Tarih göçebelerle yerleşikler arasındaki ebedî mücadeledir. Mesela Osmanlılar, niçin ve nasıl, küçücük bir beylikken büyük imparatorluk haline geldi? Bu örneği siz Türkiyelisiniz diye verdim. Dünyanın birçok yerinde üç aşağı beş yukarı aynı durum söz konusu. Bunun hakkında çeşitli teoriler var... İklim değişikliği, yeni kaynaklar bulmak, mevcut kültürü korumak ve geliştirmek... İstikrar denilen şey imkânsız aslında. Çünkü insanoğlu hareket eden bir varlık, sürekli yer değiştiriyor, kendisine yeni ortamlar, yeni imkânlar arıyor. Belli bir yerde yerleşik olanlar da oraya yeni gelenlere karşı tavır alıyor, "kendi" topraklarına, yaşam alanlarına sokmak istemiyor. İnsanoğlunun öyküsü bu.

Söyleşi boyunca Osmanlılar'dan dem vurdunuz. Osmanlı tarihi özel ilgi alanınız mı?

Akdeniz'in tarihi öteden beri ilgimi çekiyor. Bir de son zamanlarda İslâm hakkında epey kitap okudum. Ve gördüm ki, müslüman toplumlar arasında çok derin kültürel farklılıklar var. Bu, onların İslâm'a bakışlarında da kaçınılmaz biçimde önemli rol oynuyor. İran'daki müslümanlıkla Türkiye'deki müslümanlık birbirinden çok farklı, Arap ülkelerinde de birbirlerinden çok farklı İslâmiyet anlayışları var. Zira, homojen bir Arap kültürü yok aslında. Batı'daki egemen anlayış bütün bu farklılıkları yok sayıyor, karşımıza homojen –ve nefret edilesi– bir İslâm çıkarıyor. Ben bir akademisyen değilim, ancak şunu gözlemliyorum: Büyük imparatorluklar yıkıldıklarında buharlaşıp uçmuyor, dünyayı belli bir şekle sokmuş oluyorlar, onların yerine kurulan yapılar ister istemez onların izini taşıyor. Avrupa'nın Büyük Roma'yla, Balkanlar ve Türkiye'nin de Doğu Roma ve Osmanlı'yla ilişkisi bu yüzden ilgimi çekiyor.

Sufizme ilgi duydunuz mu hiç?

Onun bir hakaret sözcüğü olduğunu sanmıştım. *(gülüyor)* Rough Trade'in sahibi Jeff Travis'le konuşuyorduk bir gün. "Niye daha sık albüm yapmıyorsun?" diye sormuştu. Ben de, "niye yapayım ki?" diye başlayan ve "mâna" kavramının etrafında yoğunlaşan bir cevap vermiştim. O da, "bu senin dediğin sufizm" demişti. Ne dediğini anlamamıştım. Sonra sözlüğe baktım ve öğrendim. Öğrendim, ama anladığımı söyleyemem.

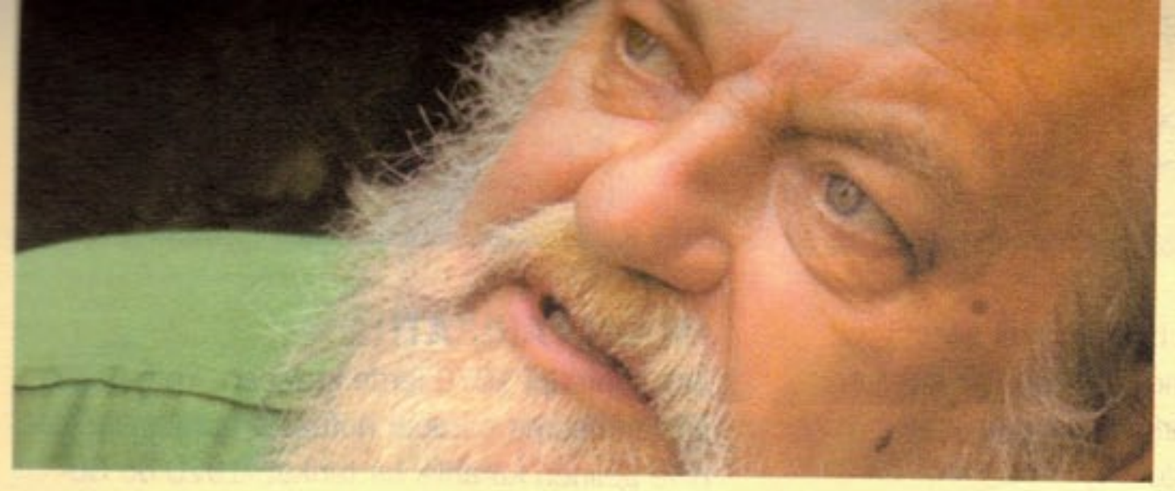
"Anadolu zeni" diyebiliriz. Zen için de Japon sufizmi desek başımız ağrımaz. Jeff Travis, sufizmi bir tür ermişlik-dervişlik anlamında kullanmışsa haklı olabilir. Bize de ermiş gibi geliyorsunuz...

(gülüyor) O zaman bu söyleşi biter bitmez sufizm maddesini bir daha okuyayım.

"Shleep" adlı sondan bir evvelki albümünüz çok tezahürat toplamıştı...

90'ların ortasında kötü bir rahatsızlık geçirdim. Bunun semptomlarından biri, bir türlü uyuyamamaktı. Birkaç hafta hiç uyuyamadım. Çok acayip bir şeydi, uykusuzluk insanı hiçbir şey yapamaz hale getiriyor. Sürekli bir panik duygusu hakim, insanların ne dediğini anlamıyorsunuz, kastetmediğiniz şeyler ağzınızdan çıkıyor, dengeniz bozuluyor, sağa sola çarpıyorsunuz. Feci bir durum. İşte o zaman anladım ki, en ağır işkence uykusuz bırakılmak. Eskiden, Uluslararası Af Örgütü'nün raporlarında işkence yöntemleri arasında "uykusuz bı-





rakma"yı görürdüm ve diğerlerinin yanında çok kötü bir şeymiş gibi gelmezdi. Birkaç hafta uykusuz kalınca ne büyük bir azap olduğunu idrak ettim. İnsanı darmadağın ediyor resmen. Nihayet uyuyabildiğimde, uykunun ne büyük bir lütuf olduğunu gördüm. Uyayabilmek ve rüya görebilmek büyük hazine. Birçok şey gibi, onun kıymeti de yokluğunda anlaşılıyor.

Niye "Sleep" değil de, "Shleep"?

(gülüyor) Londralı yahudilerin İngilizceye getirdikleri bir kelime oyunu bu. Bir kültüre dışardan gelenlerin o kültürün dilinde yaptıkları değişiklikler çok ilginç. Siyah Amerikalıların İngilizcesinin güzelliği de bu zaten. Yahudiler de İngiltere'de ve başka yerlerde benzer şeyler yaptılar. Mesela "Shmoney" derler, "ne 'money'si? –beş para yok" anlamında. "Sh", sıfırlayan bir ön ektir genellikle. "Shleep" de oradan geliyor, "ne 'sleep'i?" mânasında.

"Foreign Accents"ın düşündürdüğü bir şey bu: Yabancı şiveler her dile başka bir müzik getiriyor, hatta dili müzikalleştiriyor...

Kesinlikle. Onun için İngilizce olmayan kelimeleri ve özel isimleri kullanmak hoşuma gidiyor. Başka bir sound çıkıyor ortaya. Sonuçta benim enstrümanım sesim ve kendimi belli bir söz ve ses dağarcığıyla sınırlamak istemiyorum. Başka bir dilin sözcüklerini kullanmak bir sihir, bir esrar duygusu da veriyor. Katolikler dualarını Latince söylemekten hoşlanır, Arap olmayan müslümanlar da Arapçayı tercih ediyor dua ederken. Tuhaf bir sihri var, başka bir dilin sözcüklerini kullanmanın.

Beatles'ın "Michelle"i geliyor akla: " Michelle / ma belle / These are two words / that go together well". İngilizce sözcükler arasındaki Fransızca "ma belle" kıyak bir etki yaratıyor...

Değil mi! Nasıl da sihirli bir hava veriyor, dilin o bükülüşü. Paul Haines çok mahirdi bunda. İngilizce bir şiiri Fransızca imlâsıyla yazardı mesela.

Bob Marley'in sihrinin bir boyutu da İngilizcesi galiba. Anadili İngilizce olan birçok müzisyen –Keith Richards, John Lydon mesela– Jamaika İngilizcesine öyküdü...

Jamaikalıların İngilizcesi nefis. İngiltere'deki üçüncü kuşak Jamaikalıların bile İngilizceye öyle takla attırışları var ki... Dili acayip tazeliyorlar. Mücevhere "bling bling" diyorlar mesela. Özellikle elmas türünden ve sahte olanlara taktıkları isim bu. Çok güzel değil mi?

Son soru, belki de gına getirdiğiniz bir soru: Soft Machine.

Kader, n'apalım? *(gülüyor)* Reddettiğim, keşke olmasaydı dediğim bir şey değil Soft Machine. Ama, samimi olmak gerekirse, benim için uzatmalı bir ergenlik kederi. *(gülüyor)* Çok zekice bir iş yaptığımızı düşünüyorum, bütün zekice işler gibi, onda da sürüngen faktörü vardı. Genç insanların sürüngenlere özendiğini filan söylemiyorum. Ama genç insanlar kendilerini ifade etmek için öyle bir ateşle yanıp tutuşuyorlar ki, hinlik yapabiliyorlar. Soft Machine'de de hinlik vardı. Şimdi bir yetişkin olarak beni bayağı rahatsız eden bir nitelik bu.

Hiphop dilin kullanımını özgürleştirdi, argonun kamusal alana çıkmasını sağladı. Popüler müziğin, Lennon ya da Randy Newman gibiler dışında becerebildiği bir şey değil.

Hâlâ severek dinlediğiniz bir albüm, sevdiğiniz bir parça var mı?

Yok, çünkü beni gruptan kovduklarında bütün Soft Machine plaklarını çöpe atmıştım.

Yine de aklınızda kalan, hoşunuza giden bir şeyler vardır herhalde...

Elbette. Ama bir şarkı, bir albüm değil o. Davul çalmak çok hoşuma gidiyordu. Bağlam da, bizim yarattığımız, özgün bir bağlamdı. Ne rock'tu, ne cazdı, dolayısıyla kendi tarzımı yaratabileceğim bir bağlamdı. Bundan ötürü Soft Machine tecrübesine minnettarım. Kendi dilimizi yaratmıştık. Bir geleneğin içinde hareket ederek yepyeni bir dil yaratmak açısından Soft Machine çok önemli bir deney.

Yeni kuşaklara hangi Soft Machine albümünü tavsiye edersiniz?

Hiçbirini. Soft Machine'i boşversinler, Coltrane'in son işlerini dinlesinler.

Söyleşi: **Yücel Göktürk**

AHMET KAYA

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BİRAZ DA SEN AĞLA

CD•KASET

ROBERT WYATT - NA DRODZE DO ARTYSTYCZNE EMANCYPACJI (1968-1974)



Robert Wyatt.
Na drodze do artystycznej emancypacji (1968-1974)

Robert Wyatt jest nie tylko ikoną sceny Canterbury, ale także prominentną postacią rockowej awangardy. We wcześniejszych numerach naszego czasopisma (13, 24 i 32) pojawiały się obszerne teksty poświęcone działalności Soft Machine. Wszystkie dotyczyły okresu, gdy jego członkiem był Wyatt. Tym razem czas na jego wczesny dorobek solowy. To właśnie wtedy powstały najbardziej reprezentatywne albumy w jego dyskografii.

ALEKSANDER FILIPOWSKI

Fot. Cuneiform

I Korzenie tożsamości

Na wstępie warto pokusić się o nakreślenie korzeni tożsamości muzycznej naszego bohatera. Być może dzięki temu nieco lepiej zrozumiemy jego duchowy świat. Warto zatem najpierw zanurzyć się nieco w przeszłość, aby poszukać tam źródeł jego muzycznych fascynacji. Działalność kanterberyjskiego ekscentryka pięknie wpisuje się w etos niezależnego i niepokornego artysty, który nie boi się iść pod prąd. W latach będących przedmiotem naszego zainteresowania proponował muzykę, która była prawdziwym wyzwaniem dla słuchacza. Pionierom oraz krzewicielom nowych idei często przychodzi zmagać się z oporem materii społecznej. Warto zastanowić się, co określało specyfikę jego drogi twórczej, wedle jakich reguł rozwijał strategię artystyczną. Pytania można mnożyć. Zacznijmy jednak od początku…

Rodzice Roberta byli dobrze wykształconymi przedstawicielami brytyjskiej klasy średniej. Jego ojciec, George Ellidge, otrzymał tytuł magistra języka angielskiego i muzyki w Christ's College w Cambridge. Był także absolwentem wydziału prawa University Of Liverpool. Zawsze żywo interesował się muzyką klasyczną i nie była to tylko twórczość z odległych epok, ale także bardziej współczesna. Szczególnie gustował w muzyce z pierwszej połowy XX wieku. Do jego ulubionych kompozytorów należeli: Szostakowicz, Bartók i Hindemith. Matka Wyatta, Honor, była nauczycielką oraz dziennikarką, prowadziła również audycje w radiu BBC. Robert był synem urodzonym w drugim związku małżeńskim jego rodziców. Obydwoje zresztą mieli potomstwo już wcześniej. Jego ojciec miał syna Marka, później znanego fotografa, natomiast matka syna Juliana i córkę Prudence. Atmosfera w domu była bardzo ciepła i serdeczna. Mieszkający u państwa Wyattów George Neidorf dobrze zapamiętał klimat jego rodzinnego gniazda: *Gdybyś chciał wybrać sobie idealnych rodziców, wybrałbyś rodziców Roberta. Wspierali go absolutnie we wszystkim, co tylko robił. W ich rodzinie zauważalna była wielka miłość, ogromne ciepło, pomoc i wzajemne wsparcie. Było to naprawdę bardzo otwarte miejsce, niezwykle stymulujące intelektualnie. Byliśmy bardzo zaprzyjaźnieni, to był wspaniały czas. Mieszkanie w tym domu było znakomitym doświadczeniem.*

Gdy rodzina Wyattów przeprowadziła się do Canterbury zdecydowanie wyróżniała się tam swoimi poglądami. Rodzice Roberta byli zwolennikami socjalizmu. Bliskie były im kwestie społeczne, walka z wyzyskiem i feudalnymi pozostałościami Imperium Brytyjskiego. Honor Wyatt była bliską przyjaciółką znanego poety i powieściopisarza Roberta Gravesa. W tym czasie pisał właśnie swoją słynną powieść *Ja, Klaudiusz*. Dzięki tej zażyłej znajomości Robert miał dwukrotnie sposobność spędzić wakacje w posiadłości Gravesa na Majorce. Dla jego intelektualnego rozwoju miało to niepomierne znaczenie, stykał się tam bowiem z elitą najwyższych lotów. Niemały wpływ na rozwój duchowy naszego bohatera miało miejsce, gdzie pobierał edukację. W 1960 roku rozpoczął naukę w Simon Langton School. Była to jedna z najbardziej elitarnych szkół w Wielkiej Brytanii. Uczęszczało do niej kilku uczniów, którzy już wkrótce przejawiać będą ochotę do wspólnego muzykowania. Simon Langton School była typową szkołą dla brytyjskiej klasy średniej. Jej specyfiką było to, że była placówką przeznaczoną tylko dla chłopców. Na początku lat 60. uczęszczało do niej około 500 uczniów. Podobnie jak inne tego typu szkoły, miała charakter dość konserwatywny, oparty na starych wzorcach Imperium Brytyjskiego. Nie brak jednak głosów, iż na tle innych placówek tego typu, cechowała się liberalizmem. Oferowała uczniom wiele możliwości osobistego rozwoju w ramach dodatkowych zajęć, z naciskiem na szeroko pojętą kulturę. Surowo zabroniona była współczesna muzyka młodzieżowa, nie pozwalano także na jakąkolwiek przynależność do młodzieżowych subkultur, nie tolerowano modnych strojów i fryzur. Za łamanie obowiązujących przepisów wymierzano kary cielesne, co w ówczesnym systemie brytyjskiego szkolnictwa było czymś powszechnie spotykanym. Robert Wyatt nie miał najlepszych wspomnień: *Była to straszliwie nudna średnia szkoła ogólnokształcąca. Tak w ogóle, jeśli chodzi o Canterbury, nie pamiętam dosłownie niczego, co oddziałałoby na mnie stymulująco.*

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Na późniejszych założycieli The Soft Machine zapewne większy wpływ miała atmosfera domu rodzinnego. Wykształceni rodzice z klasy średniej szybko zainteresowali swoje pociechy kulturą wysoką, która stała się ważnym czynnikiem ich duchowego i intelektualnego rozwoju. W 1961 roku w domu Wyattów zamieszkał George Neidorf, postać niezwykle ważna w muzycznej biografii Roberta, bowiem to właśnie od niego pobierał pierwsze lekcje gry na perkusji. W owym czasie Wyatt potrafił już grać na kilku instrumentach. Zawdzięczał to wcześniej pobieranym lekcjom. Pod wpływem nowych znajomości oraz sztywnej atmosfery Simon Langton School postanowił radykalnie odmienić swoje życie. W grudniu 1961 roku rzuca szkołę i wraz z Neidorfem oraz jego przyszłą żoną, Pry Phippard, wyrusza w długą wędrówkę, planowaną na dwa lata. Do tej pory Wyatt był dobrym uczniem, z pewnością bez trudu dostałby się na jakiś renomowany uniwersytet. Postanowił jednak nie przywiązywać wagi do formalnego wykształcenia. Jedną z pierwszych przygód muzycznych w jego życiu była gra w amatorskim zespole skiffle'owym. Próby odbywały się w piwnicy jego 14-pokojowego domu, noszącego nazwę Wellington House.

II The Daevid Allen Trio – The Wilde Flowers – The Soft Machine

Ważnym momentem w jego życiu było poznanie Daevida Allena, który pod koniec 1960 roku zamieszkał w domu jego rodziców. Allen miał spory wpływ na niespełna 16-letniego młodzieńca. Ogromną

rolę odegrała jego obrosła już legendą walizka, zawierająca około 200 płyt, które słuchali namiętnie nowi znajomi z Canterbury. Przede wszystkim były w niej albumy z muzyką jazzową: kilkanaście krążków Theloniousa Monka, płyty Johna Coltrane'a, Charlesa Mingusa, Ornette'a Colemana, Erica Dolphy'ego, Sonny'ego Rollinsa, Cecila Taylora, Arta Blakeya i jego Jazz Messengers, Wesa Montgomery'ego, Charliego Parkera i oczywiście Milesa Davisa. Ponadto można było w niej znaleźć sporo pozycji z zakresu dwudziestowiecznej muzyki poważnej, tej bardziej eksperymentalnej (Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage), klasyków pierwszej połowy XX wieku, tworzących wówczas podglebie dla rozwoju nowoczesnej muzyki współczesnej (Igor Strawiński, Béla Bartók) lub nastawionych nieco bardziej tradycyjnie (Benjamin Britten, Darius Milhaud, Eric Satie). Wreszcie takie osobliwości, jak: muzyka z indonezyjskiej wyspy Bali, hinduskie ragi, muzyka z chińskiego teatru Noh. Trzeba wspomnieć również o literaturze, gdyż miała istotny wpływ na ich rozwój intelektualny. Teksty Wyatta na pierwszych albumach The Soft Machine w niemałym stopniu były pokłosiem fascynacji niepokorną dwudziestowieczną literaturą, by wymienić tylko surrealizm, dadaizm i twórczość beatników. Słuchając płyt przybysza z Australii młodzieniec odkrywał nowe fascynujące muzyczne kontynenty. Poznawał z wielkim zapałem twórczość takich gigantów jazzu, jak: Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk czy też Sonny Rollins. Jego pasja przeniosła się także na działalność w szkolnym klubie jazzowym, któremu zaczął przewodniczyć wiosną 1961 roku. W czasie spotkań klubowych prezentował poznaną muzykę swoich nowych jazzowych idoli, uwielbiał prowadzić długie, namiętne dysputy na ich temat. Oprócz poszerzenia swojej wiedzy muzycznej, za sprawą Allena, po raz pierwszy zetknął się z marihuaną. Wkrótce zaczął prowadzić podobny styl życia.



Na początku 1963 roku Wyatt i Hopper zamieszkują razem z Daevidem Allenem, Kevinem Ayersem oraz fotografem Tedem Bingem. Daje im to świetną sposobność do nawiązania działalności muzycznej, która już wkrótce objawi się w postaci The Daevid Allen Trio.

Na początku 1963 roku Wyatt i Hopper zamieszkują razem z Daevidem Allenem, Kevinem Ayersem oraz fotografem Tedem Bingem. Daje im to świetną sposobność do nawiązania działalności muzycznej, która już wkrótce objawi się w postaci The Daevid Allen Trio. Nagrania efemerycznej formacji ukazały się po latach na płycie *Live 1963*. Ten historyczny koncert odbył się w słynnym londyńskim klubie Marquee 3 czerwca 1963 roku. Na scenie pojawili się: Daevid Allen (gitara, śpiew, recytacje), Hugh Hopper (gitara basowa), Robert Wyatt (perkusja) i Mike Ratledge (fortepian). Ten ostatni wyrwał się na chwilę z Oksfordu, aby wspomóc przyjaciół w prestiżowym występie, który mógł być szansą wypłynięcia na szerokie wody. Nie był to jednak jeszcze ten moment… Cóż można powiedzieć o tych nagraniach? Z pewnością srogo zawiodą się ci, którzy będą doszukiwać się jakichś kanterberyjskich powiązań. Materiał wypełniający album to, pomimo swojego specyficznego ekscentryzmu, zupełnie inna muzyczna kraina. Porównywanie muzyki z tego występu z późniejszymi dokonaniami Soft Machine czy też innych grup z tego kręgu byłoby więc zajęciem dość karkołomnym. Nagrania początkujących artystów zostały zarejestrowane w siermiężnych warunkach na monofonicznym magnetofonie Philipsa z jednym mikrofonem. Słychać wyraźnie, iż tkanka muzyczna jest podporządkowana warstwie słownej. Partie instrumentów częstokroć sprowadzają się tylko do ascetycznego akompaniamentu, tak by nie odwracać uwagi od warstwy werbalnej. Egzemplifikacją tego trendu są takie utwory, jak: *Love Is A Careless Sea*, *My Head Is A Nightclub*, *Capacity Travel*. Zdarzają się także fragmenty pozbawione podkładu muzycznego. Wyatt w czasie tego koncertu posiadał tylko połowę zestawu perkusyjnego, co miało oczywiście wpływ na jego grę. Słychać wyraźnie, że w owym czasie był zafascynowany grą takich jazzowych drummerów, jak Philly Joe Jones, Jimmy Cobb czy też Elvin Jones. Nie był to jeszcze czas, gdy stworzył własny styl gry, oparty na syntezie pierwiastków jazzowych i rockowych. Próbuje często grać rytmy synkopowane, jednak rezultaty tych starań są dalekie od doskonałości. Wyraźnie brakuje mu jeszcze techniki i doświadczenia. Free jazzowe improwizacje wymagają wszechstronności, zmysłu strukturalnego kompozycji oraz empatycznego zrozumienia z partnerami. The Daevid Allen Trio przypominał grupę utalentowanych przyjaciół z ambicjami, którym brakuje jednak ewidentnie umiejętności.

Kolejnym etapem jego kariery była gra w The Wilde Flowers. W 1994 roku nieoceniona wytwórnia Voiceprint pokusiła się o wydanie archiwalnych nagrań zespołu. *Tales Of Canterbury: The Wilde Flowers Story* jest ogniwem łączącym twórczość The Daevid Allen Trio z The Soft Machine. Zdecydowana większość kompozycji to wersje demo. Zostały zarejestrowane w różnych studiach w latach 1965-1966. Na płycie umieszczono również trzy utwory grupy Zobe, w której udzielał się Brian Hopper. W ogólnym zarysie profil stylistyczny The Wilde Flowers nie odbiegał specjalnie od tego, co działo się wówczas na brytyjskiej scenie muzycznej. Ich pierwotny repertuar składał się niejednokrotnie z klasyków rock'n'rollowych i rhythm'n'bluesowych. Warto zauważyć jednak i niemałe różnice. Na ich dorobek składały się bowiem także jazzowe opracowania kompozycji Coltrane'a, Monka, Ellingtona. Mimo zasadniczo popowej orientacji, grupa nie miała więc zamiaru zerwać pępowiny łączącej ją z jazzowym idiomem. Wydatnie przyczyniło się to do tego, że żadną miarą nie mogła liczyć na zdobycie szerszej popularności. Porównując utwory The Wilde Flowers i The Daevid Allen Trio od razu zauważyć można odejście od estetyki free jazzowej, czy też szerzej, od jazzu. O ile elementy free zanikają zupełnie, to generalnie wpływy jazzowe występują w niewielkim stopniu. Dobrze słychać to choćby na przykładzie gry na saksofonie Briana Hoppera, który nie odwołuje się do modern jazzu, ale wyraźnie obraca się w kręgu wpływów muzyki popularnej. Odejście od radykalnej i bezkompromisowej postawy nie przyniosło im jednak żadnych wymiernych korzyści natury finansowej. Byli grupą anonimową. Czasami ukazywały się na ich temat artykuły w prasie lokalnej, relacje z koncertów, jednak w najmniejszym stopniu nie oznaczało to, iż uzyskali choćby niewielką popularność ogólnokrajową.



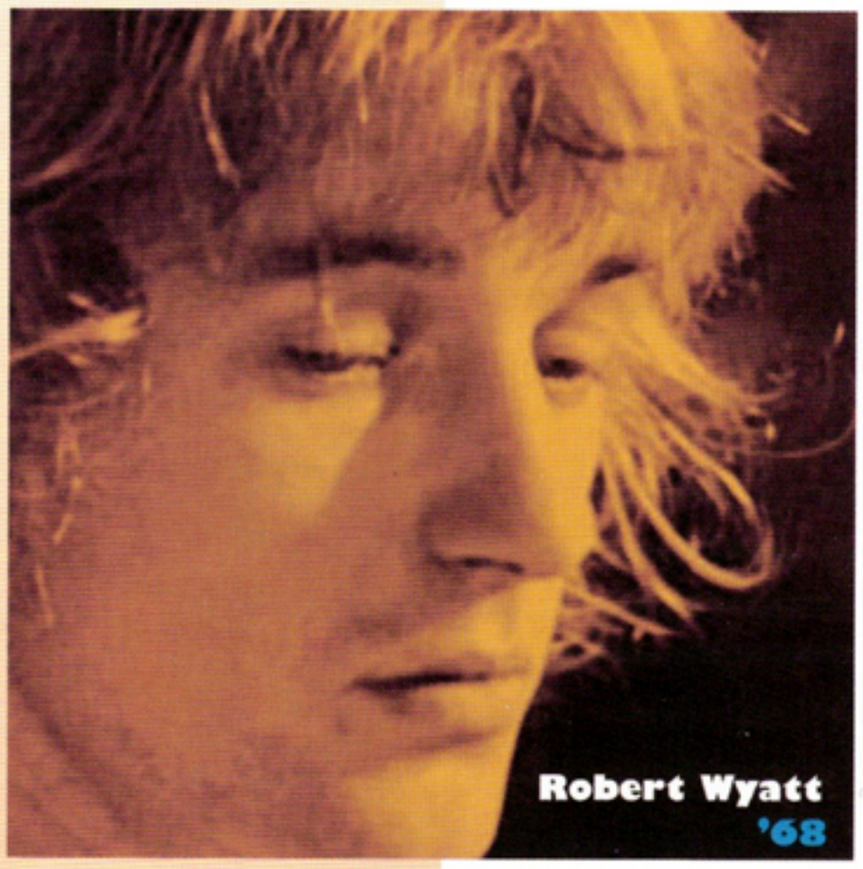
Słuchając archiwalnych nagrań formacji trzeba przyznać, że Wyatt poczynił postępy w grze na perkusji. O ile w The Daevid Allen Trio głównie mierzył siły na zamiary, jego synkopowane rytmy były nieco niezborne, to w czasach The Wilde Flowers stopniowo wypracowywał sobie zręby własnego stylu, który w pełni objawi się już na pierwszych dwóch płytach The Soft Machine. The Wilde Flowers to przede wszystkim początek nowej fascynującej przygody muzycznej, która do historii przeszła pod nazwą „scena Canterbury". Robert Wyatt niechętnie odnosił się do tej etykietki. *Nie mógłbym o tym zbyt wiele powiedzieć… Nie pamiętam żadnego szczególnego ruchu, który miałby tu miejsce. Chodziłem tam do szkoły, ożeniłem się i mieszkałem przez pewien czas. (…) Jeżeli kiedykolwiek była jakaś scena Canterbury, było to wtedy, gdy The Wilde Flowers przeobrazili się w Caravan. Oni byli ludźmi z Canterbury*. Grając w The Wilde Flowers perkusista od pewnego czasu był związany z Pam Howard, z którą zamieszkał wspólnie, gdy rzuciła Art College w Canterbury. Rodzice Howard nie byli zachwyceni wybrankiem jej serca, niejednokrotnie dochodziło między nimi do tarć. W końcu nie pozostało im jednak nic innego, jak zaakceptować ten układ. Para zawarła związek małżeński i wkrótce dochowała się syna Samuela. Małżeństwo nie przetrwało próby czasu, zakończyło się bowiem rozwodem w 1971 roku.

Lata 1966-1971 to czas aktywności w Soft Machine. Ten wątek potraktujemy marginesowo z racji tego, że był już szczegółowo omówiony we wcześniejszych numerach „Lizarda". Jedną ze specyficznych cech działalności Soft Machine były permanentne roszady personalne. Żaden album nie został nagrany w identycznym składzie! Zdaniem części zwolenników zespołu mogło to być czynnikiem oddziałującym negatywnie na jej artystyczny rozwój. Atmosfera w grupie była częstokroć bardzo napięta, co rusz pojawiały się spory personalne. Były one związane z tym, iż w Soft Machine znalazły się wybitne indywidualności. Osiągnięcie consensusu w takich warunkach nie było łatwe. W tym kontekście znamienna jest wypowiedź bohatera tego tekstu. *Żałuję trochę lat 60. Ten okres to dla mnie pewne rozczarowanie. Myślę, że udało mi się wtedy wypracować dość szczególny, oryginalny sposób grania na bębnach i sprawiało mi to dużo radości, a w tamtych warunkach nie miałem szansy, by to rozwinąć. Wynikało to z relacji z ludźmi, z którymi współpracowałem w Soft Machine. I myślę, że to, co udało mi się wykształcić, taki osobny styl grania, pozostało trochę niedocenione i niezauważone*. Różnorodność gustów członków The Soft Machine

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dobrze ukazuje inna jego wypowiedź z 1969 roku: *Gdyby Hugh Hopper słuchał muzyki, to byłoby to „Uncle Meat" Franka Zappy, Miles Davis i Dizzie Gillespie. Mike słucha amerykańskiej awangardy lub kwartetów Debussy'ego. W mojej kolekcji płyt znajdują się Bee Gees, Sly & The Family Stone oraz Wilson Pickett i jego wersja „Hey Jude"*. Elementem łączącym ich gusta był jazz nowoczesny, nie dziwi zatem fakt, iż to właśnie ten gatunek na początku nowej dekady w coraz większym stopniu wyznaczał ich stylistykę.

W owym czasie Wyatt miał już w pełni skrystalizowane poglądy społeczno-polityczne. Klimat ówczesnej epoki miał istotny wpływ na światopogląd artysty. Znalazło to swoje odzwierciedlenie w radykalnych poglądach lewicowych. Niewątpliwie wzmacniały je takie wydarzenia, jak: wojna w Wietnamie, rewolta studencka z 1968 roku czy też klimat drugiej połowy lat 60., kiedy to radykalne poglądy lewicowe były popularne w środowiskach intelektualnych i studenckich w Europie Zachodniej i USA. Kapitalistyczna ideologia i jej specyficzna aksjologia to zdecydowanie nie był ten świat, z którym chciał się utożsamiać, awersję potęgował zapewne tak typowy dla tego systemu wszechobecny konsumpcjonizm. Nie można zapominać o atmosferze rodzinnego gniazda. Wyatt pochodził wszak z domu, w którym poglądy socjalistyczne były bardzo silnie ugruntowane. Od wczesnej młodości przesiąknął więc antykapitalistycznym klimatem, co zaowocowało później określoną postawą społeczną.



III Pierwsze próby samodzielnej wypowiedzi muzycznej – *'68* (1968)

Pierwszym albumem solowym Wyatta był wprawdzie *The End Of An Ear*, wydany w grudniu 1970 roku, jednak my zaczniemy od roku, który często kojarzy się ze studencką kontestacją. Oto bowiem w październiku 2013 roku światło dzienne ujrzało wydawnictwo, na którym znalazły się jeszcze starsze utwory naszego bohatera. Chodzi rzecz jasna o *'68*, który jest cennym dokumentem swojej epoki. Jak wskazuje tytuł, lwia część materiału została nagrana w 1968 roku. Dokładnie było to w październiku i listopadzie, tuż po amerykańskiej trasie The Soft Machine. Wyatt skwapliwie skorzystał z propozycji Jimi'ego Hendrixa, aby zamieszkać u niego, mógł również korzystać z jego studia nagraniowego. *Jimi Hendrix dał mi znać, że ma wolne łóżko w domu, który wynajmował wraz ze swoimi kolegami z zespołu. Z ogromną radością przyjąłem tę spontaniczną propozycję. Wówczas moim celem było stworzenie muzyki jakiej naprawdę lubię słuchać. I właśnie wtedy wyobraziłem sobie życie bez zespołu, zapragnąłem sam stworzyć muzykę, bo zawsze chciałem być jak malarz.*

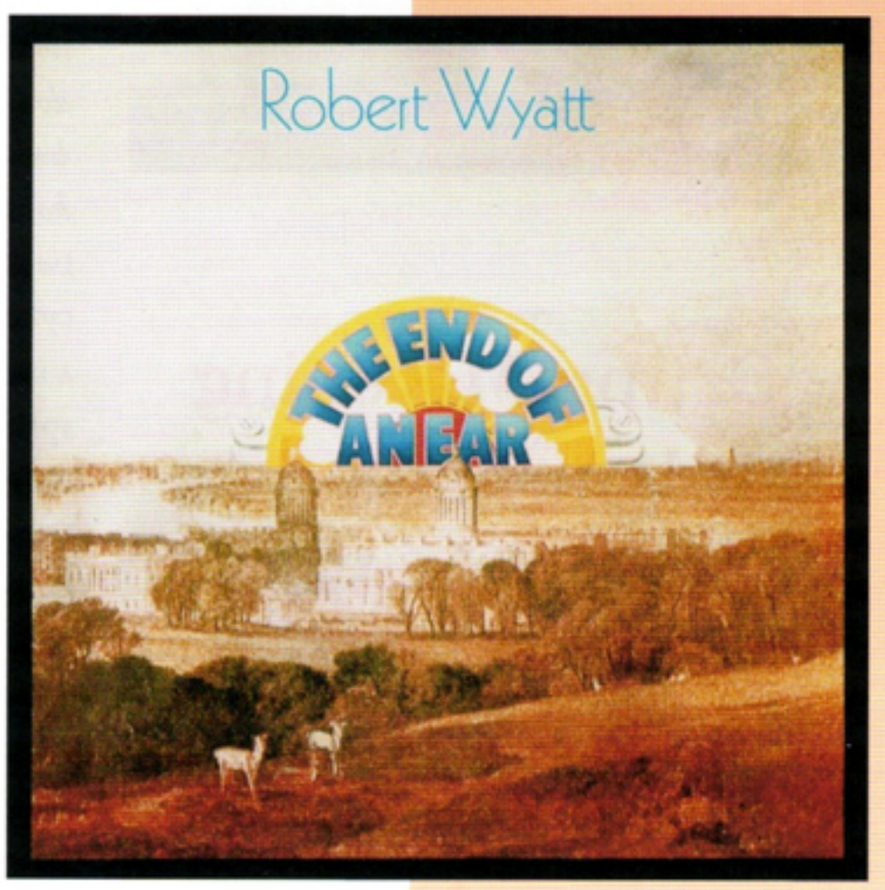
Ostatecznie na *'68* trafiły cztery kompozycje. Wyatt jawi się na nim nieomal jak człowiek-orkiestra. Śpiewa, gra nie tylko na perkusji, ale także na organach Hammonda, fortepianie, elektrycznym fortepianie i gitarze basowej. Rozpoczynający album *Chelsa* wprawne ucho słuchacza rozpozna bezbłędnie. Tak, to wczesna wersja *Signed Curtain*, perełki, która lśniła na debiutanckiej płycie Matching Mole. Wersja z *'68* jest bardziej surowa i dynamiczna. Brakuje jej jeszcze finezji i wyrafinowania. Rys melodyczny nie jest jeszcze tak szlachetny, jak w *Signed Curtain*, z kolei brzmienie jest mniej idiomatyczne. Mocno wyeksponowane organy Hammonda sprawiają, że zatraca się gdzieś kanterberyjska otoczka. Pomimo pewnych uchybień, utwór zdecydowanie zasługuje na uwagę. Najmniej udany jest trzyminutowy *Slow Walkin' Talk*. Jak na Wyatta, to dość konwencjonalna rzecz, pobrzmiewają w niej jeszcze echa rhythm'n'bluesa. Gościnnie na gitarze basowej zagrał... Jimi Hendrix. I w tym przypadku artysta sięgnie do szuflady i wykorzysta go w przyszłości – pojawi się na jego trzecim albumie solowym *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975) pod zmienionym tytułem *Soup Song*. Okrasą wydawnictwa są dwie rozbudowane kompozycje: *Rivmic Melodies* i *Moon In June*. Pierwszą z nich znamy z wybornego *Volume Two*, The Soft Machine. W tym przypadku warto zwrócić uwagę na różnice. Mocno poszerzony został segment z brytyjskim alfabetem, dzięki czemu Wyatt ma sposobność rozwijać na szerszą skalę swoje wokalne poszukiwania. Wartością dodaną jest również długa fortepianowa improwizacja na bazie tematu *Dada Was Here*, miejscami przybierająca kształt dialogu tych instrumentów. W rezultacie powstała ciekawa faktura fortepianowa, miejscami mocno grawitująca w stronę free jazzowej i „poważnej" awangardy. W przeciwieństwie do wersji The Soft Machine, narracja jest bardziej konwencjonalna. Na koniec pojawia się *Moon In June*. Co ciekawe, podobnie jak w przypadku *Third*, w jego pierwszej części pojawia się tylko lider tego projektu. Sam gra na wszystkich instrumentach. W drugiej części pojawiają się Hugh Hopper i Mike Ratledge. Podobnie jak na *Third*, znowu możemy podziwiać doskonały zmysł improwizatorski muzyków. W tym przypadku Wyatt, ciesząc się swobodą artystyczną, pokusił się o dodanie partii wokalnych. Ciekawe są fragmenty, w których pojawiają się jednocześnie brzmienia organów Hammonda i Lowreya. W kontekście kanterberyjskiego brzmienia takowy *sound* jest niestandardowy. Z dzisiejszej perspektywy *'68* można określić umownie „albumem zerowym" artysty. Dzięki niemu możemy w pogłębiony sposób zapoznać się z ewolucją jego twórczości. Trzeba pamiętać o tym, że materiał nie jest dopracowany, całość brzmi dość surowo. Na pewno przydałoby się go trochę dopieścić, popracować nad niektórymi pomysłami, aby twórczo je rozwinąć. Powyższe uchybienia żadną miarą nie mogą jednak wpłynąć na ogólną ocenę wydawnictwa. Gdyby ukazało się w tamtych czasach jako normalny album solowy, zapewne od dawna byłoby postrzegane jako jedno z jego największych osiągnięć.

IV Debiut solowy – *The End Of An Ear* (1970)

W 1969 roku artysta zagrał gościnnie na perkusji na debiutanckim albumie Kevina Ayersa *Joy Of A Toy*. Zaiste, przepyszne to wydawnictwo. Obok *Shooting At The Moon* (1970) z pewnością najlepsze w jego dyskografii. We wczesnym okresie solowej twórczości Ayersa, Wyatt pojawił się ponownie na *Whatevershebringswesing* (1972) i *Bananamour* (1973). Tym razem jego udział był jednak symboliczny. W obydwu przypadkach wzbogacił jeden utwór na płycie swoimi harmoniami wokalnymi (*Whatevershebringswesing*, *Hymn*). W 1971 roku pojawił się na innym albumie solowym byłego członka The Soft Machine.

Tym razem był to Daevid Allen. Po nagraniu *Third* angażował się w różne przedsięwzięcia artystyczne. Jednym z nich była efemeryczna formacja Amazing Band. W septecie grali: Mal Dean (trąbka), Rab Spall (skrzypce), Miriam Spall (śpiew), Mick Brannan (saksofon altowy), Anthony „Top" Topham (gitara) oraz Jim Mullen (kontrabas). Wyatt wystąpił z nimi kilkakrotnie w czasie koncertów wiosną 1970 roku. Grupa grała muzykę mocno grawitującą w stronę ortodoksyjnego free jazzu, bliskiego estetyce colemanowskiej. Wyatt, nie mogąc pogodzić gry w Amazing Band ze zobowiązaniami wobec macierzystej grupy, zrezygnował z udzielania się w niej na rzecz Kena Hyde'a. *Third* był wyraźnym świadectwem tego, że drogi twórcze Wyatta i jego kolegów zaczynają się stopniowo coraz bardziej rozchodzić. Dla perkusisty *Moon In June* był bodaj ostatnią poważną próbą walki z „frakcją jazzową", z którą, walcząc samotnie, niechybnie musiał przegrać.

Dziennikarz „Melody Maker" Michael Watts, który towarzyszył Soft Machine w czasie ich trasy koncertowej po Holandii, w październiku 1970 roku, był naocznym świadkiem wielu scysji między Wyattem a kolegami. Od razu zauważył napiętą atmosferę w relacjach interpersonalnych. Najlepiej zapamiętał ostrą kłótnię przed jednym z koncertów, kiedy to wokalista wpadł we wściekłość z powodu przygotowanej setlisty. Jako że wybitnie mu nie odpowiadała, z powodu eskalacji wpływów free jazzowych, dał upust swojej złości. Jego narastająca frustracja oraz poczucie osamotnienia skłoniły go do nagrania pierwszego albumu solowego. Koledzy z zespołu skwapliwie się na to zgodzili. Liczyli przede wszystkim na to, że swój nadmiar pomysłów, które nie pasowały do ich stylistyki, przedstawi na płycie autorskiej. Materiał został zarejestrowany w sierpniu 1970 roku, by ostatecznie ukazać się 4 grudnia tegoż roku. W sesjach udział wzięli: Elton Dean (saksofon altowy, saxello), Mark Charig (kornet), Neville Whitehead (kontrabas), David Sinclair (organy) i brat Wyatta, Mark Ellidge (fortepian). Nie licząc *Las Vegas Tango*, wszystkie kompozycje wyszły spod ręki lidera tego projektu. Niewątpliwie największym osiągnięciem była autorska interpretacja kompozycji Gila Evansa *Las Vegas Tango*, która pojawia się jako klamra w dwóch częściach. Jej ostateczny kształt jest zgoła odmienny od oryginału, została bowiem mocno przefiltrowana przez Wyattowskie koncepcje muzyczne. Dzięki temu może być wzorcową egzemplifikacją oryginalnego podejścia do tworzywa muzycznego. Tylko we wspomnianych dwóch częściach kompozycji pojawia się głos wokalisty. W różnych sferach muzycznego przekazu jest mocno niestandardowy. Wyatt objawia się w nich jako wokalista, który traktuje swój głos w sposób totalny, często jest on po prostu jednym z instrumentów. Uwagę zwraca bogata artykulacja – jego wokal to nie tylko śpiew, ale także szept, zawodzenie, mruczenie i cała gama niekonwencjonalnych dźwięków. Nie uświadczymy na tej płycie wyśpiewywanego tekstu. Pojawiają się tylko bardziej lub mniej niekonwencjonalne wokalizy. Warto zwrócić uwagę na wymyślną aranżację, ciekawy kontrapunkt oraz język harmoniczny. Rozbudowane, kilkuwarstwowe partie wokalne często mają polifoniczną fakturę. Nietypowa jest również tkanka instrumentalna. Fortepian budzi skojarzenia z radykalnym free jazzem – bardziej dynamiczne fragmenty z Cecilem Taylorem, sonorystyczne eksploracje z Chickiem Coreą z okresu gry w Circle, innym razem z darmsztadzką awangardą. Wyatt gra na perkusji w bardzo swobodny sposób, w warstwie strukturalnej jest to dość złożona rzecz. Materiał muzyczny nierzadko podlega obróbce studyjnej, pojawiają się ciekawe eksperymenty brzmieniowe i przestrzenne. W rezultacie powstał niepowtarzalny utwór, skrzący się intrygującymi pomysłami. Ostatnim z długich utworów jest dziewięciominutowy *To Nick Everyone*, mocno zanurzony w estetyce jazzu nowoczesnego. Elton Dean jeszcze raz udowadnia w nim, że w owym czasie miał silne predylekcje do grania w stylu free. Pozostałe kompozycje są na ogół dość krótkie. Często grawitują w stronę swobodnych form na modłę free jazzową (*To Saintly Bridget, To Oz Alien Daevyd And Gilly*). Ważną rolę odgrywają dęciaki, szczególnie saksofon altowy i saxello Eltona Deana. Pod względem formalnym są mocno swobodne, czasami wręcz amorficzne, jak w przypadku mocno eksperymentalnego *To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye)*, w którym pojawiają się echa „poważnej" elektroniki. Ciekawym przykładem syntezy stylistycznej jest *To Caravan And Brother Jim*. To jeden z dwóch najbardziej przystępnych utworów na płycie. Łączy w sobie elementy typowo kanterberyjskie oraz minimalistyczne. Nie inaczej jest w sferze brzmieniowej. Mamy tu do czynienia z ciekawą strukturą polirytmiczną, w której zderzają się ostinata z bardziej złożonymi, improwizowanymi rytmami.



The End Of An Ear w niejednym względzie okazał się wydawnictwem dość mocno odległym od ówczesnego oblicza zespołu. Uwagę zwracała odmienna narracja, nieco inna była tkanka brzmieniowa, przede wszystkim nie można jednak zapominać o partiach wokalnych, które stanowiły istotne *novum* w znacznie szerszym kontekście. To właśnie one zdają się być największą wartością tego wydawnictwa. Nie będzie przesadą konstatacja, iż mamy tu do czynienia z jednym z najbardziej twórczych i oryginalnych przykładów podejścia do sztuki wokalnej w obrębie szeroko pojętej muzyki rockowej, mocno skoligaconej z jazzem. Stylistycznie autorskie kompozycje lidera tego projektu nieodległe są temu, co w owym czasie robił Keith Tippett i jego zespół, szczególnie mam na myśli wyborny *Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening* (1971). Bynajmniej nie ma w tym nic dziwnego, wszak w zespole brytyjskiego pianisty grali Elton Dean i Mark Charig, natomiast Neville Whitehead pojawił się na wspomnianym powyżej drugim albumie zespołu. *The End Of An Ear* mocno zanurzony był w estetyce free jazzowej, głównie za sprawą saksofonisty altowego Eltona Deana i kornecisty Marka Chariga. Ich ekspresyjne improwizacje, szczególnie pierwszego z nich, sprawiały, że faktura kompozycji była mocno dysonansowa, czasami grawitowała wręcz w stronę atonalności. Stosunkowo silne ujazzowienie *The End Of An Ear* zakrawa na paradoks, zważywszy na fakt, iż pierwotnie Wyatt na swoim autorskim wydawnictwie zamierzał nieco odejść od ortodoksyjnego jazzu. Choćby za sprawą faktu, że był zmęczony utarczkami z Ratledge'em, Deanem i Hopperem. W czym przejawia się największa wartość jego solowego debiutu? Mocną stroną są niebanalne kompozycje oraz maestria w sferze wykonawczej, jednak chyba najwyżej należy ocenić fakt, że artyście udało się wykreować własny, oryginalny świat dźwięków.

ROBERT WYATT



V Odejście z Soft Machine. Matching Mole (1971-1972)

Nagranie albumu solowego bynajmniej nie rozładowało napiętej sytuacji. Ba! Atmosfera gęstniała z każdym tygodniem. Był to bardzo trudny czas dla wokalisty. Z jednej strony w gruzy sypało się jego małżeństwo, z drugiej jego muzyczne pomysły były permanentnie ignorowane przez kolegów z zespołu. Doszło nawet do tego, że poważnie zwątpił w swoje możliwości twórcze. Obecność Wyatta w Soft Machine stawała się coraz bardziej problematyczna. Będąc artystą poszukującym znacznie szerszej syntezy estetycznej niż jego towarzysze, coraz bardziej dusił się w silnie ujazzowionej konwencji, zamkniętej na wokalne eksperymenty. Ostatnie miesiące Wyatta w Soft Machine to czas współpracy z różnymi artystami i formacjami. Jeszcze w 1970 roku nawiązał współpracę z Keithem Tippettem. We wrześniu tego roku wziął udział w sesjach nagraniowych drugiego albumu sekstetu Tippetta, *Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening*. Następnie zaangażował się w inny projekt Tippetta, znany jako Centipede. Nagrał razem z nim dwupłytowy album *Septober Energy* (1971), będący ważnym dokonaniem brytyjskiego jazzu lat 70. Była to osobliwa mieszanka radykalnego free jazzu z elementami jazz-rocka, z wyraźną przewagą pierwszego składnika. W tym samym roku zagrał na perkusji na nietypowym wydawnictwie *New Violin Summit*, firmowanym przez czterech skrzypków. Byli to: Michał Urbaniak, Jean-Luc Ponty, Nipso Brantner oraz Don „Sugar Cane" Harris. U tego ostatniego pojawił się ponownie w 1972 roku na płycie *Sugar Cane's Got The Blues*.

Amerykańskie koncerty okazały się ostatnim akordem współpracy Wyatta z Soft Machine. Trójka jego adwersarzy doszła do wniosku, że taka sytuacja nie może dłużej trwać i zdecydowanie potrzebne są radykalne ruchy. Wersja oficjalna jest taka, że Wyatt odszedł w sierpniu 1971 roku. Prawda jest jednak nieco inna, gdyż de facto został usunięty. Dopiero po latach w wywiadach prasowych można było dowiedzieć się na ten temat nieco więcej szczegółów. Jak wyglądało to z perspektywy naszego bohatera? *Miałem wiele własnych pomysłów, lecz nie znałem nikogo – poza sobą samym – kto byłby nimi zainteresowany. Soft Machine potrzebował już wtedy tylko takiego perkusisty, który w dowolnym podziale grałby podkłady dla bardzo długich improwizacji solowych. Każdy z nas miał bardzo odmienny wkład w to, co robiliśmy w zespole i w gruncie rzeczy nie mogliśmy się porozumieć. Nasze ścieżki przecięły się tylko dlatego, że startowaliśmy z różnych punktów i zmierzaliśmy w odmiennych kierunkach – to co było satysfakcjonujące dla jednego, nie było dla innych. Myślę, że w rzeczywistości dojrzeliśmy do tego, aby się rozejść. Na początku byliśmy razem tylko dlatego, że nie znaliśmy innych muzyków. Według Mike'a nie poświęcaliśmy wystarczającej ilości czasu na próby, podczas gdy dla mnie było dokładnie odwrotnie, gdyż nowe rzeczy odkrywałem dopiero w trakcie wykonywania ich w czasie koncertu*. Odejście Wyatta zamykało najbardziej twórczy okres w historii Soft Machine. Jego specyficzny, jedyny w swoim rodzaju głos, połączony z nowatorskim podejściem do sztuki wokalnej, sprawiał, że muzyka grupy nabierała wysoce indywidualistycznego zabarwienia. Nie można także zapominać o jego specyficznych tekstach, będących pokłosiem zainteresowania dwudziestowieczną literaturą awangardową. W obrębie rockowego przekazu jawiły się jako coś nowego. Ważnym wkładem w rozwój zespołu była jego gra na perkusji. Był nie tylko jednym z prekursorów fuzji rytmiki rockowej i jazzowej, wykształcił również własny charakterystyczny sposób gry na tym instrumencie. Niewątpliwie Soft Machine bez Wyatta był już mniej idiomatyczną formacją.

Grupa Matching Mole wydała dwa albumy studyjne: *Matching Mole (1972)* i *Little Red Record (1972)*. Obydwa były niewątpliwie świadectwem artystycznej prosperity Wyatta.

W 1971 roku zakłada własną formację. Jej nazwa była pokłosiem leksykalnych eksploracji, wszak francuskie wyrażenie „Machine Molle" w przekładzie na angielski oznacza ni mniej, ni więcej, tylko… Soft Machine. W jego muzycznych poszukiwaniach towarzyszyli mu: gitarzysta Phil Miller (ex-Delivery) i klawiszowiec znany



z Caravan, Dave Sinclair. Ten ostatni szukał nowego zajęcia, bowiem nie odpowiadała mu ewolucja macierzystej formacji, która dryfowała w stronę konwencjonalnej odmiany rocka progresywnego. Los bywa przewrotny. Kilkanaście miesięcy później tenże Sinclair odejdzie z zespołu Wyatta, zrażony jego nazbyt eksperymentalnym obliczem. Składu dopełnił basista Bill MacCormick, znany z formacji Quiet Sun. W czasie nagrywania *Little Red Record* pełnoprawnym członkiem zespołu był już wyborny nowozelandzki pianista Dave MacRae, który gościnnie zagrał na elektrycznym fortepianie już na debiucie. Ten wątek działalności perkusisty potraktuję dość pobieżnie, ponieważ w niniejszym eseju postanowiłem skupić się na jego działalności solowej. Matching Mole zasługuje na osobny wnikliwy tekst. Grupa wydała dwa albumy studyjne: *Matching Mole* (1972) i *Little Red Record* (1972). Obydwa były niewątpliwie świadectwem jego artystycznej prosperity. Szczególnie wyborny debiut, na którym odnaleźć możemy zarówno rzadkiej urody „piosenki", jak i intrygujące wokalizy, nie zabrakło również brawurowych partii instrumentalnych. Obydwa zaliczyłbym do najwybitniejszych osiągnięć „sceny Canterbury". Na powyższych płytach Wyatt jawi się jako niepospolity muzyk, który posiada własną oryginalną wizję artystyczną. Muzyka Matching Mole była twórczą syntezą jazzu nowoczesnego oraz rocka progresywnego. Na *Little Red Record* nie zabrakło również eksperymentów z elektroniką. Gościnnie pojawił się Brian Eno, który zagrał na syntezatorze VCS3 w *Gloria Gloom*. To zresztą jeden z najmocniejszych fragmentów płyty. Uwagę zwraca w nim mistrzowskie operowanie nastrojem oraz frapujące pejzaże dźwiękowe. Matching Mole w niemałym stopniu zbliżył się do rockowej estetyki, czasami przypominał formacje progresywne. Na debiucie na szeroką skalę wykorzystano melotron, na którym z dużą inwencją grał Wyatt. Jego niestandardowa rola jest godna uwagi. Instrument nie imituje orkiestry, aby stworzyć podniosłe, quasi symfoniczne brzmienie. Nie wpisuje się również w klasycystyczny czy też szczególnie neoromantyczny paradygmat, jakże częsty w przypadku grup hołdujących estetyce mainstreamowego rocka progresywnego. Dobrą egzemplifikacją tego trendu jest język harmoniczny – z pewnością bardziej nowoczesny, żadną miarą nie kojarzący się z dziewiętnastowiecznym światem dźwiękowym. Na co warto zwrócić szczególną uwagę? Choćby na bardzo rozluźnioną tonalność, harmonika jest mocno schromatyzowana, miejscami grawituje wręcz w stronę atonalności. W tym sensie bliżej jej do tonącego w dysonansach Schönbergowskiego ekspresjonizmu.

Na płytach Matching Mole w mniejszym natężeniu ujawniają się wpływy jazzu nowoczesnego. Nie oznaczało to bynajmniej ograniczenia ambicji. Zespół grał muzykę par excellence progresywną, uwagę przykuwały ciekawe eksploracje sonorystyczne, Wyatt nie rezygnował z rytmicznego wyrafinowania. Na *Little Red Record* perkusista po raz pierwszy na taką skalę zaprezentował się jako radykalny lewicowiec, co dobrze ukazywała zarówno „socrealistyczna" okładka płyty jak i politycznie zaangażowane teksty, ujawniające prokomunistyczne sympatie autora. W dużej mierze właśnie szata graficzna sprawiła, że za zespołem poszła fama radykalnych lewaków sławiących rewolucję kulturalną. Tymczasem sprawa wyglądała nieco inaczej. Muzycy nie mieli nic wspólnego z tym pomysłem. Okładkę stworzył jeden z grafików pracujących dla CBS. To wytwórnia zadecydowała też o tym, że właśnie ten projekt trafił na *Little Red Record*. Wyatt dystansował się od tego pomysłu, stwierdził nawet, że okładka zupełnie mu się nie podobała. Z kolei basista Bill MacCormick podchodził do niej w bardziej humorystyczny sposób. Wedle niego, koncept okładki miał żartobliwy charakter i nie było w nim nic z rewolucyjnego patosu. *Little Red Record* kojarzony jest często z ideologicznym radykalizmem. Jak to wyglądało w rzeczywistości w przypadku Wyatta? W latach 60. jego poglądy sytuowały się blisko myśli Towarzystwa Fabiańskiego, optującego za socjalizmem, jednak odrzucającego rewolucję proletariacką. W drugiej połowie tej dekady, niewątpliwie pod wpływem ówczesnego ruchu kontestacji, zaczął stopniowo dryfować coraz bardziej na lewo. Pomimo nawiązań na *Little Red Record* do chińskiej wersji komunizmu, Wyatt nigdy nie był maoistą. Stopniowa ewolucja poglądów przywiodła go ostatecznie do marksizmu. Jak sam wyjaśniał: *Marksizm jest najmniej absurdalnym sposobem opisu wydarzeń, które mają miejsce na świecie.*

VI Magnum Opus – *Rock Bottom* (1974)

Pod koniec 1972 roku Wyatt zaczął komponować materiał na nowy album. Mieszkał wtedy na małej włoskiej wyspie Giudecca. Jego towarzyszka życia, Alfreda Benge, była wówczas zaangażowana w produkcję filmu Nicholasa Roega *Don't Look Now*. Benge była bliską przyjaciółką Julie Christie, wielkiej gwiazdy filmowej, znanej zarówno z kina popularnego (*Doktor Żywago*), jak i artystycznego (*451 stopni Fahrenheita*, *Posłaniec*). Wyatt miał mnóstwo wolnego czasu, co wcześniej zdarzało mu się niezwykle rzadko. Dysponował też małym keyboardem. Stopniowo wykluwały się zręby nowych utworów. Po powrocie do Wielkiej Brytanii powstały teksty do *Sea Song*, *Alife* i *A Last Straw*. Wokalista postanowił stworzyć nowe wcielenie Matching Mole. Tym razem mieli mu towarzyszyć: pianista Francis Monkmam, saksofonista Gary Windo oraz jedyny, obok Wyatta, stały członek Matching Mole, basista Bill MacCormick. Jaka miała być nowa muzyka formacji? Trudno do końca dociec. Z jednej strony Wyatt deklarował, że tym razem zamierza w większym stopniu skupić się na formach quasi piosenkowych, z drugiej bootlegowy zapis koncertu z 14 kwietnia 1973 roku wskazuje, że nadal nie wyzbył się eksperymentalnych ciągotek. W słynnym klubie Ronnie'ego Scotta towarzyszyli mu: Richard Sinclair (gitara basowa), Dave MacRae (elektryczny fortepian), Gary Windo (saksofon tenorowy). Muzyka była oparta na improwizacji i niemal w całości instrumentalna. Stylistycznie grawitowała gdzieś między dokonaniami Soft Machine i Matching Mole. Nowe wcielenie grupy ostatecznie się nie ukonstytuowało. Wszystko zmieniło dramatyczne wydarzenie, które miało miejsce 1 czerwca 1973 roku. Z okazji urodzin Gilli Smyth odbyło się przyjęcie urodzinowe, w czasie którego Robert Wyatt wypadł z okna z czwartego piętra, łamiąc 12 krąg kręgosłupa i nogę. W wyniku tego został sparaliżowany od pasa w dół. Wyatt: *Ludzie myślą, że na pewno jest mi trudno mówić o moim wypadki, ale to nieprawda. Natomiast trudno jest mi mówić o tym, co zdarzyło się wcześniej. Płyta „Rock Bottom" i to, co było później, tak, to jestem ja.*

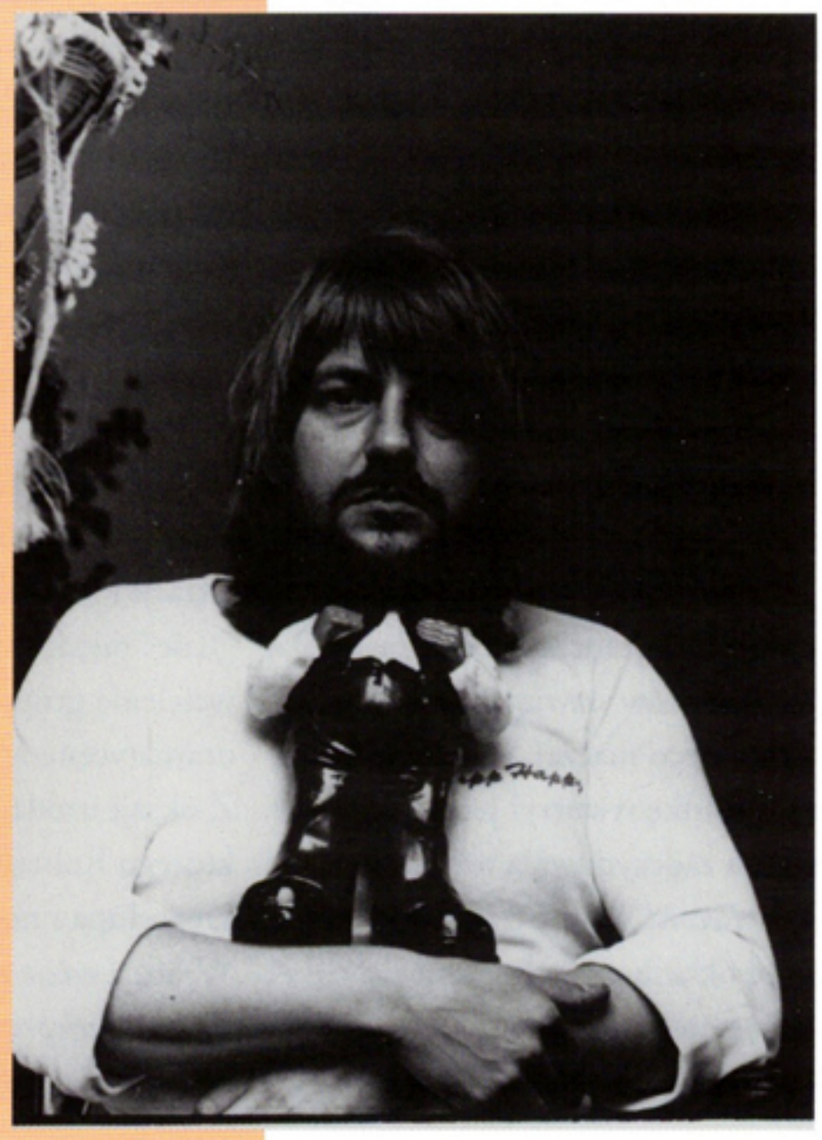


ROBERT WYATT

Ale ja-nastolatek-pełnosprawny perkusista? Nie pamiętam i nie rozumiem go. (…) Wypadek ów to, jak mi się teraz wydaje, wyraźna cezura między młodością a resztą mojego życia. A oto przebieg wydarzeń: najpierw było wino, później whisky, potem likier „Southern Comfort", a na końcu okno. Lekarz był zdumiony, powiedział: „musiałeś być naprawdę pijany, skoro wypadłeś z okna na tak zupełnym luzie".

Ze szpitala muzyk został zwolniony dopiero w listopadzie 1973 roku. Wspaniałomyślnie zachowała się Julie Christie, kupując dla Alfredy i Roberta dom przystosowany do wózka inwalidzkiego. 4 listopada 1973 roku Soft Machine oraz Pink Floyd zagrały dwa charytatywne koncerty na rzecz Wyatta. Impreza miała miejsce w londyńskim Rainbow Theatre. Było to zaledwie osiem miesięcy po wydaniu słynnego albumu *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, który bił wówczas rekordy powodzenia. Nie dziwi zatem fakt, że bilety rozeszły się bardzo szybko. Występ Soft Machine został przyćmiony efektownym spektaklem zespołu Watersa. Muzycy Soft Machine nie wspominają tego występu najlepiej. Dotknęło ich to, że w całym tym przedsięwzięciu zostali zmarginalizowani, dla większości publiczności liczył się bowiem tylko występ supergwiazdy i jej sceniczny show. Występy przyniosły dziesięć tysięcy funtów zysku, z czego ostatecznie siedem przekazano Wyattowi. Trzy tysiące zgarnął brytyjski urząd podatkowy, co z dużym niesmakiem odebrała matka Roberta, wyrażając zdziwienie, jak można opodatkować taką spontaniczną akcję charytatywną na rzecz człowieka, którego dotknęło nieszczęście.

Wokalista postanowił szybko wrócić do życia artystycznego. Doskonale zdawał sobie sprawę, że nigdy nie będzie już mógł grać na perkusji, trudno było również wyobrazić sobie, aby jeździł na trasy koncertowe. W zasadzie pozostawała mu tylko praca w studiu. Gdy wyszedł ze szpitala materiał na nowy album był już w zasadzie gotowy. Przyjaciółka Roberta i Alfredy wynajęła im dom w Wiltshire. Tam też zaczęto rejestrować nowe nagrania. W marcu 1974 roku swoje partie zaczęli nagrywać zaproszeni muzycy. Pojawili się przyjaciele Wyatta oraz artyści, z którymi bardzo chciał nagrać swoje najnowsze dzieło. Towarzystwo było zaiste doborowe: Hugh Hopper (gitara basowa), Richard Sinclair (gitara basowa), Laurie Allan (perkusja), Mongezi Feza (trąbka), Gary Windo (klarnet basowy, saksofon tenorowy), Fred Frith (altówka), Mike Oldfield (gitara), Ivor Cutler (głos, fisharmonia, koncertyna barytonowa). W *Alife* pojawia się głos Alfredy Benge, która jest zresztą, obok autora tego wydawnictwa, centralną postacią *Rock Bottom*. Warto dodać, że jest również autorką okładki płyty. Dramatyczne wydarzenie z 1 czerwca 1973 roku niewątpliwie miało istotny wpływ na jego ostateczny kształt oraz treść. Zapewne zdeterminowało refleksyjną, nierzadko melancholijną atmosferę, choć trzeba przyznać, że Wyatt bynajmniej nie użalał się nad sobą. Nie wyzbył się również charakterystycznego humoru, nadal miał zamiłowanie do leksykalnych zabaw. Od razu rzuca się w uszy fakt, że artysta wyraźnie odszedł od dźwiękowego radykalizmu. Kolejnym novum jest tkanka brzmieniowa. *Rock Bottom* to bardzo „klawiszowa" płyta. Jest zdominowana przez dźwięki syntezatora. Czasami pierwszorzędną rolę odgrywa fortepian, często można usłyszeć jednocześnie obydwa wspomniane instrumenty, które tworzą bogatą, barwną fakturę brzmieniową.



W kontekście syntezatora koniecznie trzeba podkreślić, że artyście udało się stworzyć dość łatwo rozpoznawalne brzmienie. To znamienny przykład, że w tym względzie najważniejszym czynnikiem nie jest biegłość techniczna, ale kreatywność.

Rock Bottom posiada niepowtarzalny klimat. To muzyka o ogromnej sile wyrazu, dużym walorem kompozycji są piękne melodie, które na długo zapadają w pamięć. Na słowa uznania zasłużył Nick Mason, który był producentem płyty. Brzmienie jest ciepłe, czyste, klarowne, selektywne. Dla każdego, kto przywiązuje wagę do detali technicznych, ma to niebagatelne znaczenie. Jest to tym bardziej godne podkreślenia, że macierzysta formacja wokalisty miała wyjątkowego pecha do produkcji albumów. Kłania się choćby *Third*, który za sprawą koszmarnego brzmienia, jest w istocie okaleczonym arcydziełem. Na *Rock Bottom* Wyatt w twórczy sposób kontynuuje eksperymenty wokalne. Tym razem nie mają już tak radykalnego posmaku, jednak nadal są intrygujące i oryginalne. W jeszcze większym stopniu skorzystano z dobrodziejstw studia nagraniowego. Przekłada się to na ciekawe rozwiązania strukturalne i kolorystyczne, zarówno tkanki czysto instrumentalnej, jak i partii wokalnych. Świetną egzemplifikacją pierwszego wątku jest deformacja brzmienia fortepianu w *A Last Straw* lub finał *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*, w którym uzyskano frapujący rezultat, dzięki zwielokrotnieniu brzmienia trąbek Mongeziego Fezy. W drugim przypadku zachwycają rozbudowane aranżacje wokalne w *Sea Song*, podobnie jak na *The End Of An Ear*, wykazujące silne tendencje do polifonizacji faktury brzmieniowej. W aspekcie formalnym różnice między *The End Of An Ear* a *Rock Bottom* są znaczące. W tej materii Wyattowe magnum opus przynosi daleko posunięte uporządkowanie. Mocno wyswobodzona narracja, czasami wręcz amorficzna forma, jak w przypadku *To The Old World (Thank You For The Use Of Your Body, Goodbye)*, zostaje zastąpiona przez przemyślnie uporządkowane struktury. Zdecydowanie maleje rola improwizacji. Autor unika jednak konwencjonalnej formy piosenkowej. Nawet, gdy na początku wydaje się, że dana kompozycja może przybrać taki kształt (*Sea Song*), pojawiają się różne niestandardowe rozwiązania. Wyatt jakby nie chciał powielać schematów, dlatego buduje własną, silnie zindywidualizowaną formę wypowiedzi. Rośnie rola aranżacji, która często przybiera wysmakowany kształt. Czasami bywa bardziej ascetyczna (*Alifib*), innym razem olśniewa nieomal barokową feerią barw (*Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*).

W różnych aspektach muzycznego przekazu *Rock Bottom* jest pozycją wysoce idiomatyczną. Co determinuje taki efekt końcowy? Trzeba wymienić przynajmniej kilka elementów. Niepowtarzalny głos, oryginalne eksperymenty wokalne, rozpoznawalne brzmienie syntezatora, twórcza obróbka materiału dźwiękowego w studiu nagraniowym, niepospolite pomysły w sferze aranżacyjnej i brzmieniowej. Wartością dodaną są również zaproszeni goście.

Niejednokrotnie są to muzycy, których gra jest od razu rozpoznawalna (Hugh Hopper, Mike Oldfield). *Summa summarum* – powstało jedno z arcydzieł szeroko pojętej muzyki rockowej lat 70. Dramatyczna geneza oraz warunki w jakich powstawała zapewne jeszcze bardziej uwypukliły jej niezwykłość. Korzenie estetyczne *Rock Bottom* dalekie są od jednoznaczności. Wyatt jeszcze raz udowodnił, że interesuje go szeroka synteza muzyczna. Wynikało to choćby z tego, że fascynowała go nie tylko „poważna" awangarda i jazz nowoczesny, ale także różne nurty muzyki popularnej.



W niejednym względzie jest to dzieło par excellence progresywne. Warto ową „postępowość" zestawić z dość tradycyjnym podejściem do materii muzycznej wielu przedstawicieli głównego nurtu rocka progresywnego (Genesis, Yes, Focus, Camel). Istotnym wątkiem jest tu choćby kwestia twórczego podejścia do dwudziestowiecznego dorobku muzyki artystycznej. *Rock Bottom* jest niewątpliwie pozycją bardziej przystępną niż ezoteryczny *The End Of An Ear*, który wielu słuchaczy mógł odstraszać swoim radykalizmem i hermetycznością. Tym razem Wyatt postawił na większą komunikatywność i bezpośredniość. Bynajmniej nie oznacza to jednak, że powściągnął swoje ambicje i wyrzekł się aspiracji. Charakter dzieła, jego treść oraz dramatyczne przeżycia z nieodległej przeszłości sprawiły, że autor przewartościował swoje podejście do muzyki. Nadal nieobca jest mu jednak awangardowa mentalność twórcy, który stale poszukuje nowych idei i rozwiązań. Jedną z istotnych zalet *Rock Bottom* widziałbym w sferze edukacyjnej. To jeden z tych albumów, który może zachęcić słuchacza do obcowanie z szeroko pojętą awangardą. Jest znakomitą furtką do tego, co na początku często odstrasza lub wręcz irytuje. Wyatt ułatwia i oswaja awangardę.

Rock Bottom ukazał się na rynku 26 lipca 1974 roku. Tego samego dnia Robert Wyatt i Alfreda Benge zawarli związek małżeński. Nowe wydawnictwo zostało bardzo przychylnie przyjęte przez brytyjską prasę muzyczną. Pochwał nie żałowali recenzenci, nie brakowało głosów entuzjastycznych. Przełożyło się to na wyniki sprzedaży. W Stanach Zjednoczonych również znalazło swoich zwolenników. Chętnie było prezentowane przez stacje, które specjalizowały się w ambitniejszych odmianach rocka. We Francji, od dawna przychylnej artyście, przyznano mu prestiżową nagrodę Grand Prix de'l Academie Charles Cros. Z oczywistych względów Robert Wyatt nie mógł udać się w trasę koncertową promującą nowy album. Zdecydowano się jednak na jeden występ, który miał miejsce 8 września 1974 roku w londyńskim Drury Lane. Zanim jednak do niego doszło został w osobliwy sposób zareklamowany przez „New Musical Express". Oto bowiem na okładce tego czasopisma przedstawiono zdjęcie Wyatta oraz zaproszonych gości siedzących na wózkach inwalidzkich. Ostatecznie obok lidera na scenie pojawili się: Julie Driscoll Tippetts (śpiew, instrumenty klawiszowe), Mike Oldfield (gitara), Fred Frith (skrzypce, gitara, altówka), Ivor Cutler (głos), Dave Stewart (instrumenty klawiszowe), Gary Windo (instrumenty dęte), Mongezi Feza (trąbka), Hugh Hopper (gitara basowa), Laurie Allan (perkusja), Nick Mason (perkusja). W 2005 roku obszerne fragmenty koncertu wydano na płycie *Theatre Royal Drury Lane 8th September 1974*. Jakkolwiek ów spektakl ma dziś bez mała historyczne znaczenie, to jednak wartość wydawnictwa obniża niemal bootlegowa jakość dźwięku. Kilka miesięcy po wydaniu *Rock Bottom* Wyatt zaistniał w świadomości jeszcze szerszego grona słuchaczy. Na listy przebojów trafiła jego przeróbka hitu The Monkees, *I'm The Believer*. Był to największy sukces komercyjny w jego karierze. W 1974 roku ukazało się kilka albumów, na których gościnnie pojawił się nasz bohater. Godny wyróżnienia jest znakomity debiut kanterberyjskiej formacji Hatfield And The North. Można go również usłyszeć na klasycznym wydawnictwie Briana Eno *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*. Tym razem dodał partie instrumentów perkusyjnych oraz zaśpiewał w chórkach. Efemeryczny projekt kwartetu Kevin Ayers – John Cale – Eno – Nico, również wsparł grą na instrumentach perkusyjnych - średnio udany *June 1, 1974*.

VII Epilog

Rock Bottom zamyka najbardziej progresywny, twórczy i oryginalny okres w karierze muzyka, choć można by oczywiście poszerzyć go jeszcze o całkiem udany *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975). W pierwszej połowie lat 70. miał, bez dwóch zdań, wyśmienitą passę. Nagrał wszak dwa bodaj najważniejsze albumy solowe: emanujący świeżością i oryginalnością, mocno eksperymentalny *The End Of An Ear* oraz *Rock Bottom*, prawdziwe magnum opus w jego dyskografii. Nie można zapominać o dwóch albumach jego formacji Matching Mole. Obydwa są niekwestionowaną klasyką sceny Canterbury, czy też, w nieco innym ujęciu, szeroko pojętego rocka progresywnego. Był to czas, gdy jego muzyka ulegała dynamicznym przeobrażeniom, co siłą rzeczy sprawiło, że wszystkie powyższe albumy mocno różnią się między sobą. Nieco więcej punktów stycznych można znaleźć tylko w przypadku płyt Matching Mole. Wszelako na każdym odnajdziemy bez trudu specyficzne komponenty jego twórczości: śmiałe eksploracje wokalne, usilne poszukiwanie nowych brzmień, wieloznaczność ekspresji, niekonwencjonalne aranżacje i wreszcie specyficzny duch ekscentryzmu. Robert Wyatt objawił się na nich jako artysta poszukujący. Starał się poszerzać paletę środków wyrazu, konsekwentnie dążył do indywidualizacji wypowiedzi. Był to czas, gdy nadal pełnymi garściami czerpał z dorobku dwudziestowiecznej awangardy. Podobnie jak w psychodelicznym okresie Soft Machine, potrafił w twórczy i oryginalny sposób przełożyć różne nowatorskie koncepcje na język szeroko pojętej muzyki popularnej. Żadną miarą nie można zapominać o pionierskich eksperymentach wokalnych. Nonkonformistyczna osobowość oraz autentycznie progresywne podejście do muzyki pozwoliły mu wykreować własny świat dźwięków. Godnym uwagi jest fakt, że Wyatt nie był niewolniczo związany z formułą grania wypracowaną w czasach Soft Machine. Nawet jeśli odwoływał się do podobnej estetyki, uskuteczniał to w sposób typowy dla siebie. Był to jeszcze jeden dowód na to, że mamy do czynienia z artystą osobnym, który nie lubi kroczyć utartymi ścieżkami. Z czasem zacznie udatnie łączyć elementy modernistyczne z bardziej tradycyjnymi. Słychać to już dobrze na *Rock Bottom*, w bodaj jeszcze większym stopniu na *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. ■

Une discographie de

Robert Wyatt



ARCHIVE 6
au 1er juin 2026

Abécédaire

ABÉCÉDAIRE

A

Alifie

A colloquio con Robert Wyatt

A Season in Hell

Archives vidéo (concerts et clips)

B

BBC Radiophonic Wokshop

Book Bottom

Books A-Go-Go

Bootlegs

C

Canterbury Scene

Chantons!

Cinéma **NEW**

Coleman, Ornette

Comicoperando in Archives & concerts

Common

Compilations

Contrefaçon/Counterfeit

Covers
an alphabetical list sorted by track title

Critiques/Reviews

Cuckooland







D

Dalla Viva Voce

Days In The Life

Dedicated to RW

Dedicated To You & Dondestan ! The Wyatt Project

Different Every Time

Different Every Time - traduction française

Docteur Honoris Causa



E

Ecole de Canterbury

Editions des Accords

Encyclopedia



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Famille Soft Machine (La)

Fanzines (Hommage aux)

Fenêtre Rose (La)

Feza, Mongezi

Fiction

Flamenco



G



H

Happening (Summer 67)

Homonymie

How the Band Works



I

I'm A Believer

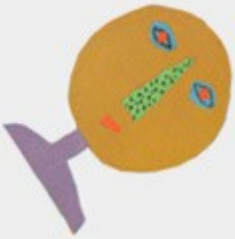
In Conversation...

Interviews & articles in Interviews & articles (vol.1 - 2 et 3)



J

Jazz And Max Roach



K



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Le Bleu Le Bleu

Légèrement Wyatt

Les Années Before

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Old Rottenhat's Journal

Out-Bloody-Rageous



Prière in Interviews & articles (vol. 2 - en français)

Producer - Gambit Of Shame

Projet 7x7

Quarante ans, c'est émouvant





Radio Robert (for Firefox)

Reprises - covers

Robert Wyatt, l'homme de plusieurs vies

Robert Wyatt's Meltdown 2001

Rock Bottom

Rock Bottom, le film

Rock progressif anglais

Royal Drury Lane 8th September 1974

Rythme et la Raison (Le)



Samples

Scores / Partitions

Sculpture

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Soft Machine

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Stampa Alternativa

Sweet Memories by Anaïd

Tago Mago in Interviews & articles (vol. 2 - en français)

Ten Songs That Saved Your Life

The Official Robert Wyatt Fan Club Song

Toucher le fond

Trickster (le mystère)

Unes/Front Pages

Various Artists

Vidéos et DVD

Vinyl et vin/Vinyl and wine

With Friends

Words

Wrong Movements











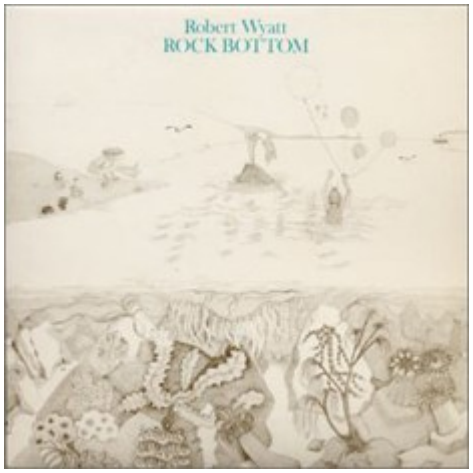

Z



Alifie

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Il n'est pas anodin que le premier item de cet abécédaire soit Alifie, Alfie, Alfreda, la compagne de Robert Wyatt, la femme qui l'a accompagné tout au long de sa carrière et a partagé son œuvre, unique. En 1974, nous découvrons *Rock Bottom*, une pochette déconcertante avec son crayonné de gris, une illustration paisible et oppressante à la fois. L'album sortira le jour du mariage entre Alfie et Robert.



Alfreda Benge y est créditée pour la pochette ("Cover by Alfreda Benge") mais aussi comme "Voice" sur le second morceau de la face B dont le titre lui est dédié: *Alifie*.

Par la suite, Alfie signera la plupart des pochettes de la carrière solo de Robert Wyatt.

Sur *Dondestan*, Alfie sera la parolière de nombreux morceaux (*Sight Of The Wind*, *Shrinkrap*, *Catholic Architecture*, *Costa, Worship*).

Sur les albums suivants (*Shleep*, *Cuckooland*) la collaboration entre Alfie et Robert sera plus forte encore:

"*Ce disque (Shleep) est le fruit d'une totale collaboration entre ma femme et moi : elle a écrit des poèmes, dessiné la pochette, choisi la typographie, l'ordre des morceaux. Pour moi, rien n'est plus important que ce duo, ce groupe que nous formons. Je suis peut-être vieux jeu, mais je ressens chaque jour le besoin de justifier la raison pour laquelle je l'ai épousée. Elle n'a qu'une vie et elle me l'a consacrée. Si je gâchais mon existence, je gâcherais la sienne aussi. Et ça, c'est une idée que même la musique ne pourrait me faire supporter...*"
(interview R.W. in Télérama 1997).

Alfreda Benge a également réalisé des pochettes d'albums pour d'autres musiciens tels que Fred Frith ou Annette Peacock, toujours dans ce style naïf et intriguant que nous lui connaissons maintenant bien. Elle a aussi exposé à plusieurs reprises mais je ne dispose (pour l'instant) d'aucune copie de ses travaux extra-discographiques.



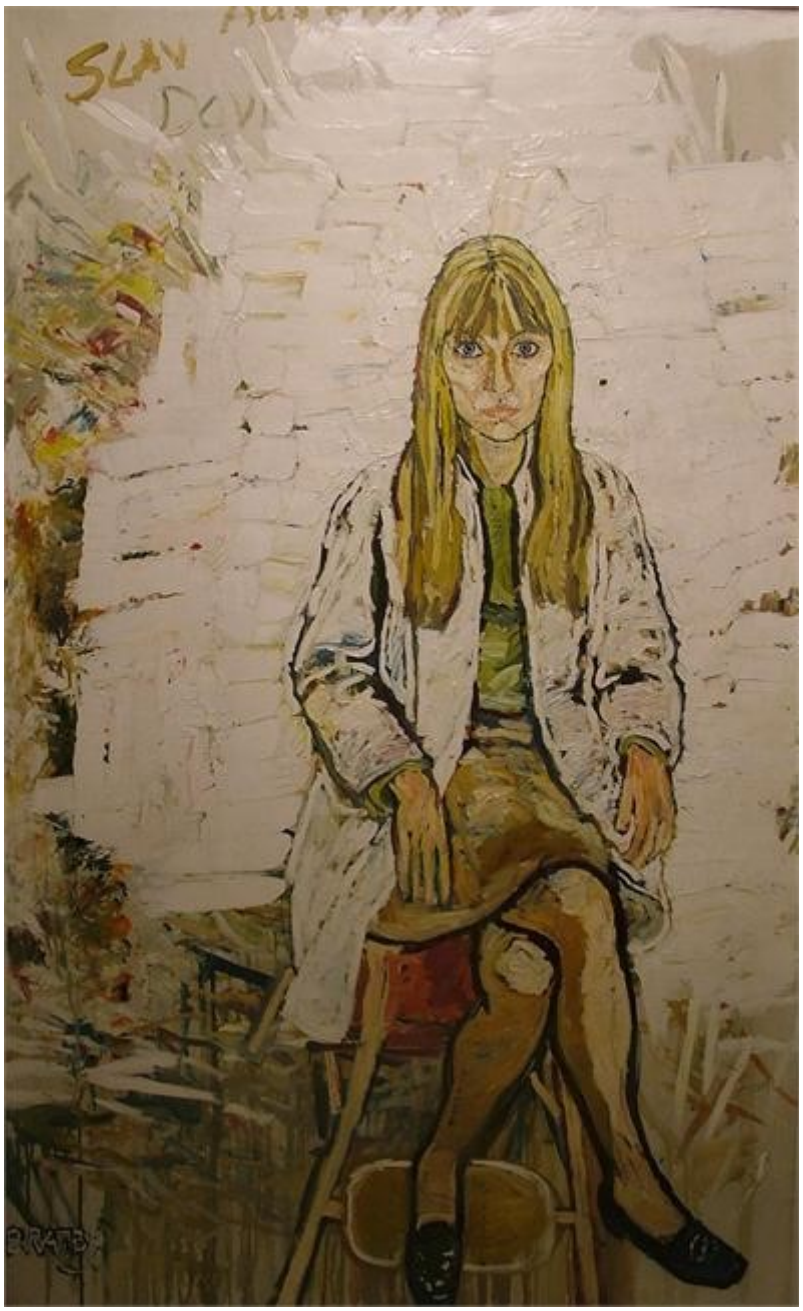
A. Benge (1974)







> Zoom



Alfreda Benge by John Bratby

Au début de l'année 2015, une bonne nouvelle : Alfreda Benge exposera une partie de ses travaux du 7 février au 5 avril dans la galerie [SPACE] à Londres, à proximité du parc London Fields.

Je n'ai malheureusement pu m'y rendre, mais le site de la galerie a heureusement conservé traces de cette exposition et a mis en ligne à cette occasion un long entretien (part 1 | part 2) réalisé en mars 2008 par *Sharon Gal* et *Edwin Savage Pencil Pouncey* pour la station de radio Resonance (104.4 FM).











IN CONVERSATION WITH ALFIE

0:00 / 1:01:11

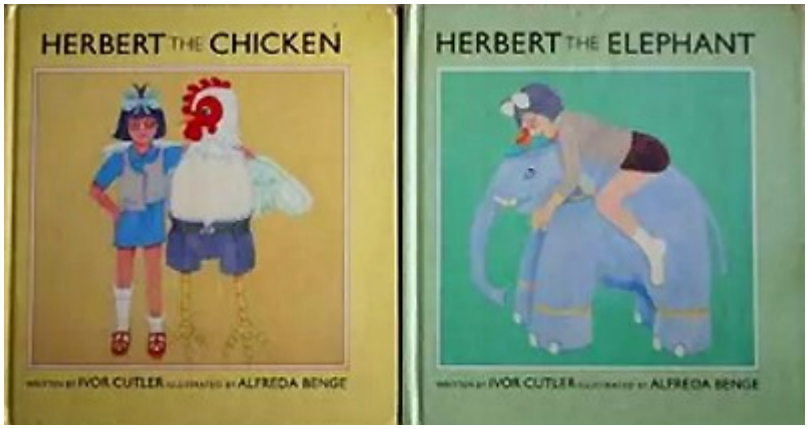
Part 1

0:00 / 59:19

Part 2

Diggers with Alfreda Benge Alfie Wyatt
by Sharon Gal/Edwin Pouncey
(Resonance 104.4 FM - March 2008)

Collaboration Alfreda Benge / Ivor Cutler pour des albums "Jeunesse"



[space] EXHIBITIONS | 07 FEB - 05 APR 2015

GALLERY OPENING HOURS
10AM - 5PM WEEKDAYS / 12 - 6PM WEEKENDS

GALLERY - ALFREDA BENGE: *P.L.A.*

Poor little Alfie trying to draw
Trying to draw

Poor Little Alfie trying to sleep
Trying to sleep

SPACE is proud to present a retrospective exhibition of paintings, illustrations, collages and lyrics by Alfreda Benge (b. 1940). Her first showing in a public institution, the exhibition explores Benge's solo and collaborative work, in particular the fascinating creative partnership she shares with her husband, the musician Robert Wyatt (b. 1945).

P.L.A. takes its title from a track on Wyatt's 1985 album *Old Rottenhat*. Painted by Benge, the cover for this album opens the exhibition, one of a number of album artworks on show. These appear alongside a sequence of portraits depicting Wyatt alone and together with Benge, a tracklist of Wyatt's songs featuring lyrics by Benge, and other items relating to their five decade long collaboration.

While Benge's work with Wyatt is indubitably significant, *P.L.A.* also attempts to look beyond it: on the one hand to different collaborations (e.g. with the humourist Ivor Cutler on the book *Herbert The Chicken* (1984) or the poet Bob Dixon, with whom Benge worked on a special edition of leftist journal *Artery)* and on the other, to her incidental work as a solo artist.

In this sense *P.L.A.* functions as a retrospective only in the very loosest sense of the term. Previously unseen doodles, self-portraits, photography and printed matter from Wyatt and Benge's home in Louth, Lincolnshire, are given equal standing alongside recognised album artworks. In a display that jumbles its chronology, responsibility for telling Benge's 'story' is only partially taken up. By no means intended as a comprehensive overview, *P.L.A.* nonetheless represents an unprecedented opportunity to access Benge's art; to encounter the pathos, wit, strangeness, agitation and whimsy of a diverse body of work as simple as it is complex.

Born in Austria to Polish and Austrian parents, Alfreda Benge moved to the UK in 1947. Between 1958-61 she studied painting at Camberwell School of Art, going on to learn typography at the London College of Printing (1961-63) and film at The Royal College of Art (1963-68).

BloombergON AUDIOGOLD ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND













A la même période, l'Hypergallery en ligne commercialisait plusieurs lithographies en édition limitée d'Alfreda Benge, dont la magnifique œuvre illustrant la pochette du disque Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard.



> Zoom



En juillet 2024, Dave Larder signale sur Facebook la participation d'Alfreda Benge à l'album de Nick Hudson en ces termes :
On the album "Kanda Teenage Honey" released in March 2024 by Nick Hudson is the track "Sky burial while alive". The track features Alfreda Benge delivering a spoken introductory explanation.
Nick who grew up in Louth (his parents still live in the area), is now resident in Tiblisi, Georgia.

Alfie y est créditée de "cosmological rhetoric".

0:00 / 4:01

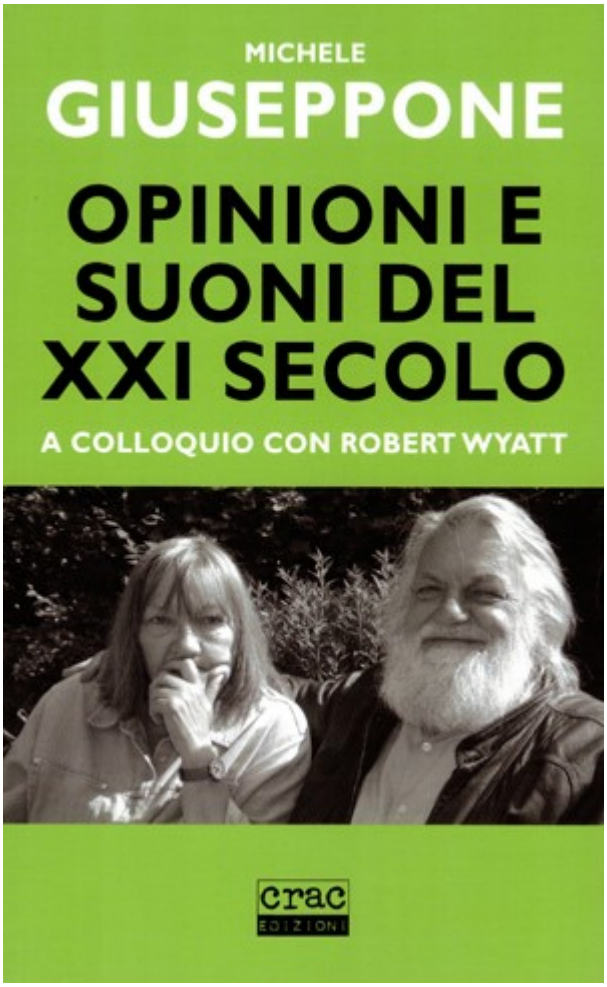
Sky Burial While Alive

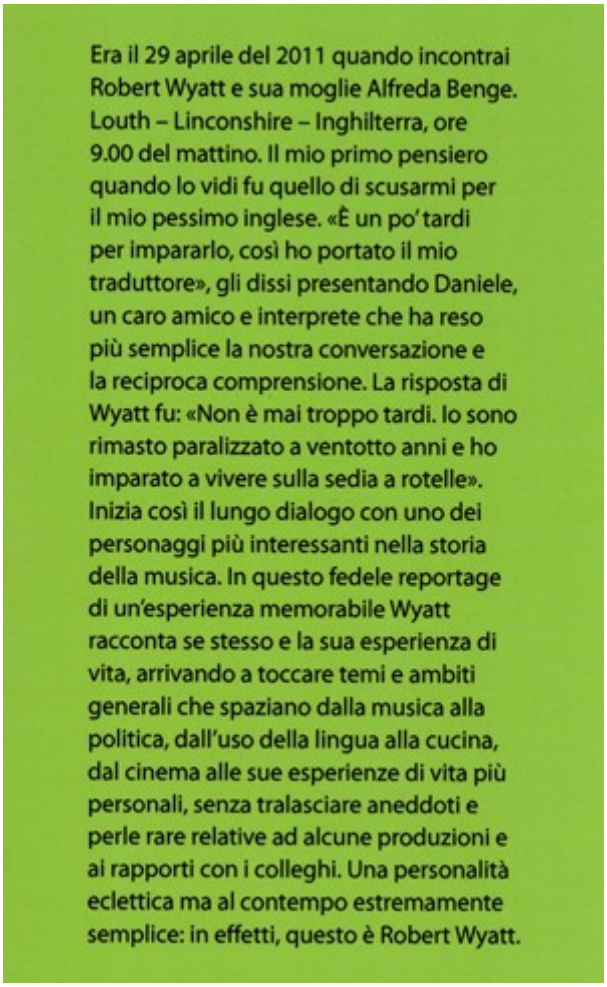
A colloquio con Robert Wyatt

ABÉCÉDAIRE

C'est le 29 avril 2011 que j'ai rencontré Robert Wyatt et son épouse Alfreda Benge. Louth - Linconshire - Angleterre, 9h00. Ma première pensée en le voyant a été de m'excuser pour mon mauvais anglais. "Il est un peu tard pour l'apprendre, alors j'ai amené mon traducteur", lui ai-je dit en lui présentant Daniele, un ami cher et un interprète qui a facilité notre conversation et notre compréhension mutuelle. Wyatt a répondu : "Il n'est jamais trop tard, j'ai été paralysé à vingt-huit ans et j'ai appris à vivre dans un fauteuil roulant". Ainsi commence le long dialogue avec l'un des personnages les plus intéressants de l'histoire de la musique. Dans ce reportage fidèle d'une expérience mémorable, Wyatt parle de lui et de son vécu, abordant des thèmes généraux et des domaines allant de la musique à la politique, de l'usage de la langue à la cuisine, du cinéma à ses expériences de vie plus personnelles, sans oublier des anecdotes et des perles rares relatives à certaines productions et à ses relations avec ses collègues. Une personnalité éclectique mais en même temps extrêmement simple : en effet, c'est Robert Wyatt.

Avec un essai introductif de Guido Festinese et une préface de Valerio D'Onofrio.





Photos : Fabio Donato

Ce petit livre mérite une attention particulière. Non parce qu'il cite de manière exagérément élogieuse le

présent site mais par ce qu'il relate une aventure éditoriale originale : l'auteur mène pendant près de 100 pages une interview de Robert Wyatt qui prend le temps de cerner des sujets que les magazines qui faisaient le plus souvent le pélerinage à Louth à l'occasion d'un nouvel album n'avaient pas la place de rapporter. Il est probable que cette disponibilité de l'auteur y soit pour beaucoup dans le ton direct et amical des échanges qui nous rend le projet éminemment sympathique.

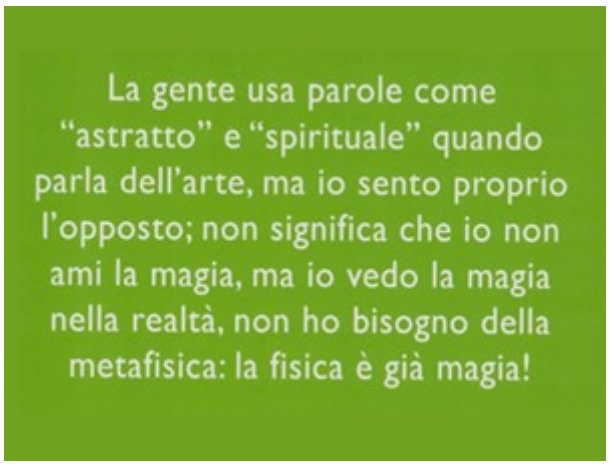
Qu'il s'agisse de ses méthodes de composition et de son rapport à l'improvisation, du génie intemporel de Bach, de l'art islamique, de l'importance des sonorités de chaque langue dans la musique ("*je veux écouter Verdi ou Puccini en italien, je veux écouter Wagner en allemand*"), de ce qui distingue les chœurs professionnels des chœurs amateurs (pas forcément ce que vous croyez), du jazz bien sûr, de l'influence d'Alfie, de la très détaillée élaboration de *The End Of An Ear*, de l'étrangeté de la musique d'un point de vue scientifique, de la vraie valeur de l'avant-garde, et de son admiration pour le peuple japonais (le seul peuple légitime par ce qu'il a vécu dans sa chair à pouvoir interpeller les dirigeants iraniens sur leur programme nucléaire) et de bien d'autres sujets... ce *colloque* mérite bien son titre *Opinions et sons du 21ème siècle...*

CRAC EDIZIONI
edizionicrac.blogspot.com



> Zoom





A Season In Hell

ABÉCÉDAIRE



The complete session

ARTHUR RIMBAUD - A SEASON IN HELL - BBC RADIO 3 / BETWEEN THE EARS (2009)



"*... About thirty years ago I was in a bar in a small Mexican town where a French actor gave a thoroughly eccentric performance of some of Rimbaud's poetry to a musical accompaniment. He didn't include the prose poem A Season in Hell, probably because it defied even his eccentricity and powers of performance. Later, it seemed to me that radio was the ideal place to try to find expression for its insistent, wild, knowing autobiographical voice and emotional complexity.*

I asked the composer Elizabeth (Liz) Purnell to read it, and she leapt at the chance to respond to such an extraordinary piece of writing.

I knew I'd have to make fierce cuts to fit it into half an hour, and had imagined I'd drop the songs which appear about two thirds of the way through the piece, as they seemed to me to be the most problematic elements in a pretty knotty piece of writing. But when we talked about it, Liz argued convincingly for at least some of them to be left in, and I realised when she talked about wanting to set them for Robert Wyatt that she was absolutely right. We decided on the three

we both felt would work best, based on instinct rather than any literary judgement; literary judgements about the poem itself are so disparate and interpretations so varied that it was liberating not to have any orthodoxy to follow. Liz says she wanted the songs to suggest a kind of alter-ego Rimbaud, speaking from beyond the grave, and that she asked Wyatt to sing them because of his sense of spontaneity, his interest in poetry and the wonderful delicate nature of his voice in the high register.

She went to record them at his house in Lincolnshire, where she set up a microphone in his front room, ignored the background roar of passing lorries and played him the backing track on her laptop as he sang. Robert was keen to sing the songs mainly in the original French - something I hadn't envisaged, but was charmed when Liz brought the recordings back. Liz knew she was pushing him to the top of his register, but he went for it, and with lots of fag breaks and cups of tea, they got the recordings done over an afternoon and the following morning. One of the most enjoyable recording sessions she's ever done, she says - and not a lorry to be heard in the background. "

Andrew Downs

An excellent analysis of this radio programme



0:00 / 9:00

Three poems sung by Robert Wyatt

Archives / Concerts & clips

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Soft Machine - UFO Club London - June 2, 1967



Soft Machine at the Dutch TV - Sep. 1967



Soft Machine at the French TV Camera 3 - Octobre 1967



Soft Machine à la Nuit Psychédélique La Fenêtre Rose



Soft Machine - Jimi Hendrix



Soft Machine - Ce soir on danse



Soft Machine - Ce soir on danse (2)



Soft Machine - Dim Dam Dom



Soft Machine - Ester's Nose Job - 1969



- **Soft Machine - "Tous en scène" (ORTF) - 1969**



- **Soft Machine - Pop & Jazz festival - Bilzen (Belgique) - 1969**



- **Soft Machine - Free concert in Hyde Park - 1969**



- **Soft Machine - Théâtre National de Strasbourg - 1969**



- **Soft Machine - Gare Montparnasse Paris - 1969**



Soft Machine - L'invité du dimanche (ORTF) - 1969



Soft Machine - Théâtre de la Musique (Paris) - 1970 -1ère partie



Soft Machine - Théâtre de la Musique (Paris) - 1970 -2ème partie



Soft Machine at the Holland Pop Festival - 28/06/70



Soft Machine
- répétition de l'album "Fourth" (1970)
- concert du 25 mai 1973 au Bataclan (sans Robert Wyatt)



- **Soft Machine - Théâtre 140 (Bruxelles) - 1971**



- **Soft Machine - Théâtre 140 (Bruxelles) (Extrait) - 1971**



- **Soft Machine - Radio Bremen (Allemagne) - 1971**



- **Berlin Jazz Festival - 1971**



- **Matching Mole - Rockenstock - 1972**



- **Matching Mole - Archive from the ILEA - 1972**



- **Improvisation Group - Archive from the ILEA - 1972**



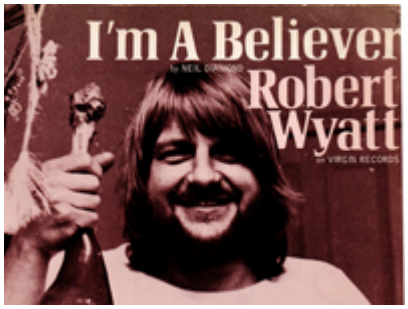
- **Matching Mole - Pop 2 - 1972**



- **Hatfield and the North with Robert Wyatt - 1973**



- **Robert Wyatt - Sea Song - Full version of the film shot in Paris in 1975**



- **Robert Wyatt - I'm A Believer - 1974**



- **Robert Wyatt - Shipbuilding (official video) - 1983**



- **Robert Wyatt - The Old Grey Whitle Test - 1983**



- **Working Week - We Will Win - Venceremos - 1984**



- **Wind Of Change - Robert Wyatt & The SWAPO Singers - 1985**



Kingdom - Ultramarine with Robert Wyatt - 1993



Another Great Victory - Millennium (Robert Wyatt/Jo Bogaert/Blissphemy) - 1995



The Songs of Robert Wyatt - London Jazz Festival - November 17, 1999



Comfortably Numb - Robert Wyatt's Meltdown 2001



Five songs from Free Will And Testament - A Robert Wyatt Story (BBC4) - 2003



Gilad Atzmon & the Orient House Ensemble, Re-Arranging the 20th Century - 2004



David Gilmour Live At The Royal Albert Hall - 2006



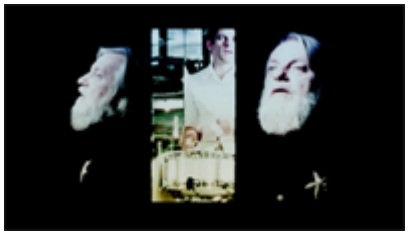
Manzanera / Eno / Wyatt - The Unknown Zone - 2006



University Of Errors Play The Soft Machine - 2006



Hatfield And The North At The Bowery Poetry Club - 2006



Bertrand Burgalat & Robert Wyatt - This Summer Night - 2007



Delta Saxophone Quartet with Hugh Hopper (2007 & 2008)



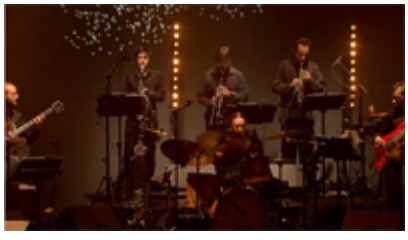
Mop Meuchiine plays Robert Wyatt (2008 et 2009)



Liberation Music Orchestra - Ornette Coleman's Meltdown - 2009



Orchestre National de Jazz - Around Robert Wyatt - 2009 - Présentation du projet



Orchestre National de Jazz - Around Robert Wyatt - Concert (extrait) - 2009



Orchestre National de Jazz - Just As You Are
7ème Victoires du Jazz - 2009



The Unthanks perform Robert Wyatt's 'Dondestan' - 2010



Comicoperando - 2011
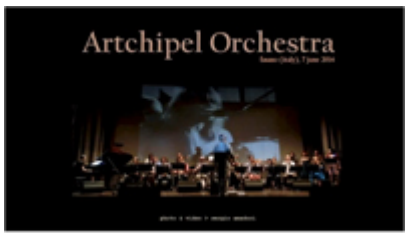


The Unthanks - Sea Song - 2011



The Unthanks performing four songs of Robert Wyatt & Antony and The Johnsons - 2011



Annie Whitehead Group - "Soupsongs - Robert Wyatt tribute" - 2013



- **Artchipel Orchestra - Moon In June - 2014**



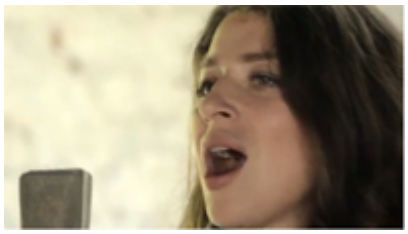
- **Artchipel Orchestra - Facelift - 2014**



- **Athelas Sinfonietta - 2015**



- **3 Degrees of Robert Wyatt - June 4, 2015**



- **Odeia - Alifib - 2017 & 2025**



- **Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte & Guests Play the Music of Robert Wyatt at Leipzig - 2018 (1)**

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Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte & Guests Play the Music of Robert Wyatt at Leipzig - 2018 (2)

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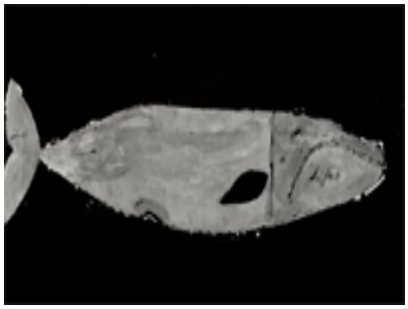
Artchipel Orchestra plays Soft Machine - Facelift - 2016



North Sea Radio Orchestra plays Sea Song - 2018



Phil Miller Tribute Concerts - 2019



Folly Bololey At Cafe Oto 27 June 2019



Tribute To Hugh Hopper - 30 mai 2019 - Le Triton



- **Live A FIP - Tribute to Robert Wyatt - 2019**



- **"Henry and Robert play Richard" - an antimated short film by Shin Pey - 2020**



- **Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte & Guests Play the Music of Robert Wyatt - 2020**



- **Eleven for Ten - Costa - 2021**



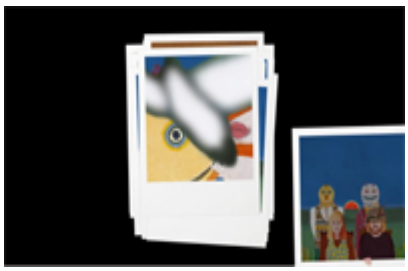
- **Orchestra SMS (Lucca) - 2013 + 2021**



When The Fire Grows Cold - 2022



The Unthanks - Shipbuilding - 3 versions



A Visit by Shlomo Polonski - 2022



Henry Now with Annie Barbazza - Piacenza 18/11/2022



John Greaves & Friends - Piacenza - 5 Agosto 2023



Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road by Shlomo Polonski - 2024



AnaId live at Le Triton - Sweet Memories - 2024



Concert Rock Bottom de l'Atelier Play It Again ! à Paris 8 - 12 juin 2024



Dondestan (for Palestine)

Soft Machine at UFO 1967

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine- UFO Club London - June 2, 1967
Activist & friend - John (hoppy) Hopkins had been arrested on trumpet up charges & this performance by Daevid Allen aimed to hit back at the hypocrisies of the British establishment.
Duration : 3:49
Film & Light-Show Projections : Mark Boyle & Joan Hills (P&C Boyle family archives)

"This rare footage of the first Soft Machine lineup shot at the UFO Club in London during the swinging sixties shows an early example of performance poetry by an experimental psychedelic rock band."

More about UFO

Robert Wyatt about Mark Boyle

> Archives

Dutch TV - sep. 1967

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine interprète "We Know What You Mean" et **"I Should've Known"**
Dutch TV Sep. 1967.
durée: 8:42
Lightshow : Mark Boyle
Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge et Kevin Ayers.

> Archives

Soft Machine - Caméra 3 - On en parlera

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine - 3 octobre 1967 - "Camera 3 - On en parlera" (ORTF)
Durée : 4:17.

- Clarence In Wonderland
- We Did It Again
- Clarence In Wonderland (Reprise)

- Robert Wyatt - batterie
- Kevin Ayers - guitare
- Mike Ratledge - orgue.

> Archives

La Fenêtre Rose



Premier Show Psychédélique organisé par Jean-Jacques Lebel dans la nuit du 17 au 18 novembre 1967 au Palais des sports de Paris, avec Soft Machine et de nombreux autres groupes.

Extrait de l'émission Bouton Rouge avec Soft Machine - présentée par Pierre Lattès.

LA FENÊTRE ROSE



La première Nuit Psychédélique organisée par l'activiste Jean-Jacques Lebel eut lieu au Palais des Sports de Paris les 17 et 18 novembre 1967.

S'il reste peu de traces sonores et visuelles de cet happening qui deviendra en peu de temps une date mythique de la *french* contre-culture, les 1 500 spectateurs qui l'ont vécu ne sont pas près d'oublier les light-shows, le Plastic Circus, les Pop Dancers et la trentaine de groupes qui jouèrent toute la nuit durant près de 12 heures ...

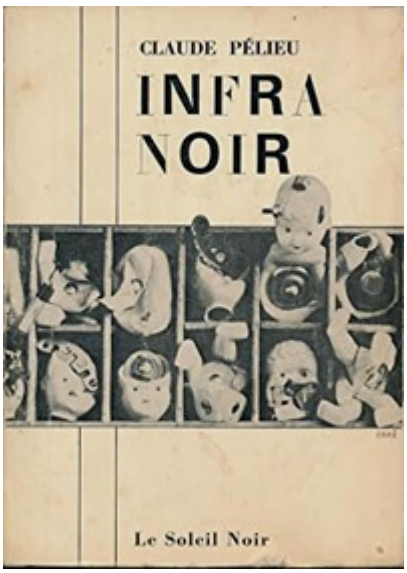
Parmi ces groupes, on se souvient aujourd'hui de Dantalian's Chariot, Cat Stevens, Tomorrow, Spencer Davis Group, Smoke, Vanilla Fudge et surtout du Soft Machine qui jouera de longs sets jusqu'au bout de la nuit.

La Fenêtre Rose est d'abord un long texte de Claude Pélieu, le poète français de la Beat Generation, qui sera édité bien après le *psychadeliopoptique happening* dans le recueil Infra Noir aux éditions Le Soleil Noir en 1972.

Infra Noir irréductible, miroir infidèle, labyrinthe & solitude, mort abolie, oui, non, instant fatal, défense de ne pas rêver, sel, sang, pluie, feu, érection, narcotica — Infra Noir où Opale flottait dans la Fenêtre Rose, sans feu ni lieu, sans dieu ni maître.

(houles) Transpacific Telephone
un cri réprimé défonce l'horoscope
les fantômes qui assaillaient Carl le Momo
ne sont plus de ce monde —
(ils ont des visages de fumée)
L'homme-antenne se réfugia dans le ventre d'un turbo-réacteur
FENÊTRE ROSE OU SE LÈVE LA TEMPÊTE
l'axe incendie l'arc-en-ciel
les ongles-chiffres traquent les naufragés
les yeux-plis pluvieux brûlent au large de l'Ile au Trésor
silhouettes de boucaniers s'écrasant entre chiens et loups
(le silence d'une autre tragédie)

500 mcg —
(la pensée procédera à ces exécutions capitales)
le silence au fil des heures — tout grossit —
le feutre verse une larme sur l'orchidée rouge



Et
l'aurore en marge de ces plis
désir désir — DÉSIR/d'une
engloutissement d'arc-en-cie
la Fenêtre Rose disparaît
le Calendrier Noir refoula le
les épines-scories et le reste

Alice's Day/LSD Alice
les doigts-ricochets
et les hélices du vent
et
quelque part abandonné dans
un visage se partage pour mi



> Zoom

Quelques photos de La Fenêtre Rose circulent sur internet dont celles postées par *Aguzim* sur un forum dédié aux hippies des années 70s.

Sur ce même forum, *Jacti* rapporte sa rencontre inopinée avec Robert Wyatt peu avant le concert de Soft Machine dans un bar de la Porte de Versailles.

Je venais d'avoir 19 ans et, compte tenu de l'affiche, je ne pouvais pas ne pas y être.
J'ai d'ailleurs une anecdote qui va certainement en rendre jaloux quelques-uns ici. Avant le début des hostilités dans la salle, je décide d'aller prendre un sandwich dans un des nombreux troquets devant le Palais des Sports et qu'elle n'est pas ma surprise de sortir en même temps, par la même porte, avec... Robert Wyatt !
Malgré mon anglais hésitant, je l'aborde (c'est facile car il est vraiment à côté de moi). Il me demande dans quel établissement il vaut mieux aller et avec l'assurance de l'ignorant, je lui indique l'un des troquets et lui demande si je peux venir avec lui. Il ne fait aucun problème, certainement content d'être finalement reconnu et de parler avec un français. Je ne me souviens pas de la teneur de notre conversation, assez rudimentaire et nous mangeons de bon cœur chacun notre sandwich.
Je me souviens d'un mec tout à fait abordable, charmant, essayant même de dire quelques mots en français. Un très bon souvenir.
Quant à la nuit de la Fenêtre Rose elle-même, je me souviens que Soft Machine a joué très longtemps en enchaînant les morceaux sans interruption et de la prestation de Dantalion' Chariot qui avaient recouvert les ampli en blanc (ils jouaient eux-mêmes souvent en blanc) et le membre le plus connu, à l'époque, était Zoot Money.
Je me rappelle que j'ai parlé avec Robert Wyatt aussi de la fameuse soirée à la RoundHouse à Londres du 15 octobre 1966 où Soft Machine et Pink Floyd

ont joué (j'y étais !).



> Zoom



La Fenetre Rose, Premiere Nuit Psychedelique au Palais des sports de Paris

La revue anglaise IT (The International Times) annonçait même l'évènement parisien dans son n° 21 daté de la semaine du 17 au 30 novembre 1967.



Paris freak-out

For the first time on the Continent, an all-night dream, a psychadeliopoptique happening complete with light show, pop dancers, plastic circus, and **Suzy Creamcheese**— late of San Francisco and London — pop posters, and a wildish fashion collection, will appear on **17 and 18 November** at the **Palais des Sports in Paris**.

LA FENETRE ROSE, the name of the show, is being staged by **Alan Dale** and **Tony Townsend**, two of England's leading impressarios in the field of all-night experience. The Fernch reaction to this is, so far, somewhat bewlidcred. The idea of thousands of people coming together to have what amount to a large pop party with dozens of top pop performers and an audience as much performers as the performers themselves, is something new in France. At least 100 pop artistes and their horde will be flying to Paris, together with 7 tons of light.

A man called JEFFREY SHAW and his PLASTIC CIRCUS are bringing miles of plastic tubing from Amsterdam with which Mr Shaw plans to fill the **Palais des Sports**.

THE EXPLODING GALAXY, which recently startled English television will present one of their extraordinary choreographic scenes and perform at will throughout the show.

MALCOLM TILLIS has designed a wilder collection of clothes that, in his words, "break the rules". Many of England's top pop groups, including SPENCER DAVIS and the SOFT MACHINE, will perform for twelve continuous hours. Europe's top D.J., ROSKO, will broadcast the show in France and through Radio-Luxemburg.

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RIALS X...

Thursday, November 9.
after a previous attempt
in without legal counsel,
to matter, they all looked
g ages. One man seemed
unt eyed, one was a kid
t about to buck anybody,
o do. The rest were non-
that throughout the trial
to be no real reason for

koran which he also refused, explaining that because they

PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH CENTRE

Last month Time Out of Mind (originally the Head Shop) closed down leaving a major gap in the facilities of Notting Hill, an area with far too few focal points in relation to its large hip population.

Now round the corner in Blenheim Crescent (near Portobello Road) the Psychedelic Research Centre has opened to continue and move forward from Time Out of Mind.

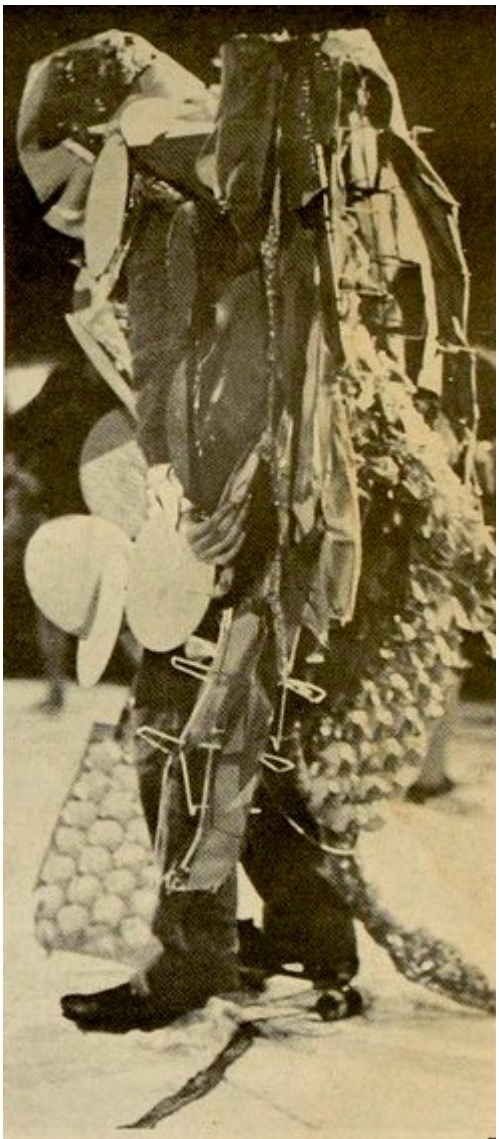
At present the centre consists of a shop which took over the stock of Time Out of Mind and above the shop a silk screen press has been built and is ready for use. Geoff. Rainford the moving force behind the centre is very interested in hearing from designers and also anybody with ideas. The long-term aim is to establish a creative community.

A major development likely soon is a direct link with Chet



Scene from EXPLODING GALAXY BIRD BALLET. The GALAXY will be in Paris for La Fenetri Rose.
—Photo: Ray Stevenson

> Zoom



Scene from EXPLODING GALAXY BIRD BALLET. The GALAXY will be in Paris for La Fenetri Rose.
—Photo: Ray Stevenson



> Zoom

> Archives

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Thank You Jim

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Footage from the Jimi Hendrix Tour USA 1968.
Soft Machine - Thank You Pierrot Lunaire/Have You Ever Bean Green? (Vol. 2)
Durée: 2:15

> Archives

Ce soir on danse

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Ce soir on danse avec les Soft Machines et leur musique expérimentale
durée: 25:19
Emission de la télévision française, enregistrée en octobre 1967 et diffusée le 25 août 1968 (Save Yourself est également enregistré au cours de ce même set).

> Archives

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME

Save Yourself

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine - Save Yourself
durée: 10:15
Extrait de l'émission Ce soir on danse enregistrée en octobre 1967 et diffusée le 25 août 1968.

> Archives

ABÉCÉDAIRE

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Dim Dam Dom

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Improvisation + Hope For Happiness
Emission Dim Dam Dom de la télévision française enregistrée en octobre 1967 avec Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers et Mike Ratledge.
Durée: 5:26

> Archives

Esther's Nose Job

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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Soft Machine en répétition au Ronnie Scott's de Londres - 25 avril 1969
pour l'émission Forum Musiques - Spécial Londres" de la 1ère chaîne de la TV française (diffusion le 24 mai 1969).
Esther's Nose Job
durée: 10:23
Réalisation : Raoul Sangla

> Archives

Tous en scène

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> Archives



Soft Machine interprète "A door opens and closes"
Émission "Tous en scène" diffusée le 25 juillet 1969 (ORTF).
durée: 5:05
Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper.

> Archives

Bilzen Jazz And Pop Festival Aug 22, 1969



Soft Machine - Moon In June
durée: 15:16
Jazz & Pop Festival - Bilzen, Belgium - August 22, 1969

Mike Ratledge - Keyboard
Hugh Hopper - Bass
Robert Wyatt - Drums, Vocal

Le "Jazz & Pop Festival" a eu lieu les 22 et 23 août 1969 à Bilzen (Belgique) avec au programme Deep Purple, Shocking Blue, Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, Taste, Moody Blues, Soft Machine, Marsha Hunt & White Trash, Brian Auger & The Trinity, Steve Shorter & Tilly Set, Humble Pie, Life, Blossom Toes, The Move...



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Hyde Park - 20 september 1969



Free concert in Hyde Park on September 20, 1969 (excerpt) from the Dig Media Jack Henry Moore archive.

Robert Wyatt - drums
Hugh Hopper - bass
Mike Ratledge - organ
Duration: 10:45

> Archives

Théâtre National de Strasbourg - 1er décembre 1969

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine - Théâtre National de Strasbourg (01/12/69)
durée: 4:31

Mike Ratledge - Keyboard
Hugh Hopper - Bass
Robert Wyatt - Drums, Vocal

Extraits du concert (Eamonn Andrews + Hibou, Anemone And Bear) suivis par des interviews de jeunes spectateurs après le concert...

> Archives

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Soft Machine - Gare Montparnasse - 28 novembre 1969

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Soft Machine - Dim Dam Dom (28/11/69)
durée: 2:32

Extrait d'un film de Gérard Pirès pour l'émission télévisiée avec Anna Karina et le septet de Soft Machine jouant en play-back sur le parvis de la gare Montparnasse à Paris.

A noter : Robert Wyatt à la guitare basse !

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Soft Machine - L'invité du dimanche

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine - 7 décembre 1969 - L'invité du Dimanche (ORTF)
Réalisation : Raoul Sangla et Jean Brard.

- Pigling Bland
- Facelift

- Mike Ratledge - Organ, Electric Piano
- Hugh Hopper - Bass
- Robert Wyatt - Drums
- Elton Dean - Alto sax
- Lyn Dobson - Soprano and Tenor Saxes
- Marc Charig - Cornet
- Nick Evans - Trombone

> Archives

Soft Machine - partie 1

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine (Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean, Lyne Dobson) - 2 mars 1970 - Théâtre de la Musique (Paris).
Émission Pop 2 (ORTF) - 1ère partie.
Durée : 15:29
Réalisateur : Claude Ventura
Présentateur : Patrice Blanc Francard

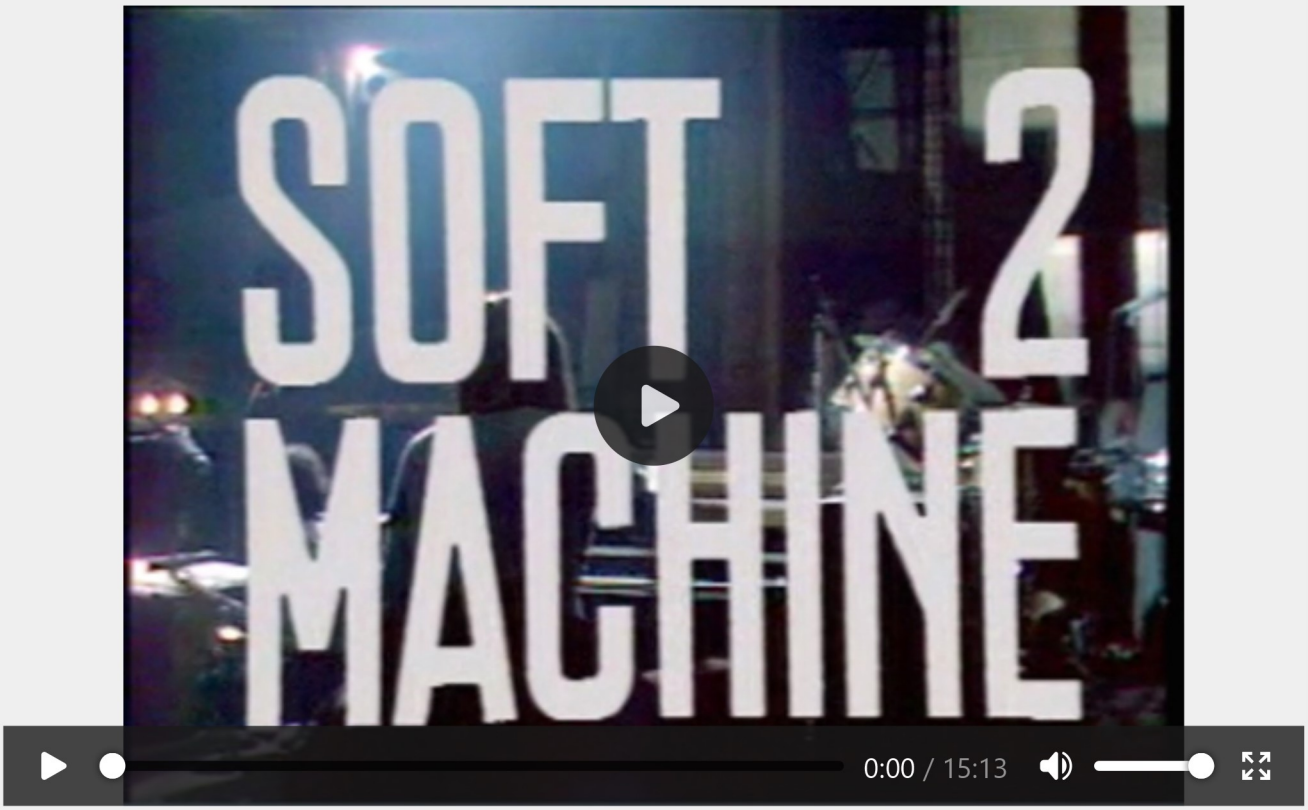
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Soft Machine - partie 2



Soft Machine (Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean, Lyne Dobson) - 2 mars 1970 - Théâtre de la Musique (Paris).
Émission Pop 2 (ORTF) - 2ème partie.
Durée : 15:13
Réalisateur : Claude Ventura
Présentateur : Patrice Blanc Francard

> Archives

Soft Machine at the Holland Pop Festival - 28/06/70

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine plays Esther's Nose Job at the Holland Pop Festival (28/06/70) (excerpt).
Duration : 6:15

- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - keyborards
- Elton Dean - saxophone

> Archives

Soft Machine At Olympic Sound Studios



Soft Machine (émission pop 2)
1) Répétition de "Teeth" pour l'album Fourth à l'Olympic Sound Studios (London) en octobre 1970 avec Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean et Roy Babbington.
durée: 11:12
2) Extrait du concert du 29 mai 1973 au Bataclan (Paris) avec Mike Ratledge, Roy Babbington, Elton Dean, John Marshall et Karl Jenkins.
durée: 26:11

> Archives

Soft Machine - Bruxelles - 1971

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Soft Machine - 15 janvier 1971 - Théâtre 140 - Bruxelles.
Durée : 1h03.
Réalisation : RTB/Jacques Bourton

- Robert Wyatt - drums and vocals
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Elton Dean - sax and keyboards

1. Improvisation 2:44
2. Neo-Caliban Grides 8:53
3. Out-Bloody-Rageous 17:31
4. Kings and Queens 26:45
5. Teeth 42:10
6. Pigling Bland 51:27
7. Esther's Nose Job (excerpt) 53:44
8. '...It's nothing' 56:17
9. Mousetrap 56:52
10. Noisette 1:01:47

Articles consacrés à ce concert :

- Le Soir du 16/01/1971
- La Dernière Heure du 16/01/1971
- Le Peuple du 17/01/1971

- Communiqué de presse diffusé par les organisateurs avant le concert

> Archives

Soft Machine au Théâtre 140 (Bruxelles)



Soft Machine (Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean)
15 janvier 1971 - Theatre 140 - Bruxelles (Belgique).
Durée : 9:13
Réalisation : RTBF



Soft Machine at Radio Bremen's TV studio



Soft Machine (Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean) - 23 mars 1971 - Radio Bremen's TV studio (Allemagne).
Émission Beat Club.
Durée : 20:46
Réalisateur : Mike Leckebusch
Ingénieur du son : Otto G. Hühn

> Archives

Berlin Jazz Festival 1971

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> Archives



Robert Wyatt's appearance at the Berlin Jazz Festival on November 7, 1971, to accompany the four violinists of the *New Violin Summit* marked the beginning of a new musical adventure, just a few weeks after he left Soft Machine.

The double album New Violin Summit captures the essence of this extraordinary evening, where the four soloists (Jean-Luc Ponty, Don "Sugar Cane" Harris, Nipso Brantner, Michal Urbaniak)—all backed by the same electrifying rhythm section (Robert Wyatt, Terje Rypdal, Wolfgang Dauner, Neville Whitehead) shattered the boundaries of jazz, rock, and blues with compositions drawn from their respective repertoires.

Another album, Sugar Cane's Got The Blues, features several tracks performed that evening by Don'Sugar Cane Harris, including "Where's My Sunshine," filmed by a professional crew and recently unearthed by the archivist-musical alchemist Alan Bershaw (Bershaw Archival Management) recently unearthed to replace the mediocre mono sound of the video recording with the exceptional sound of the album released the following year on MPS.

This sonic sleight of hand transports us directly to the front rows of the Berlin Philharmonic Hall on November 7, 1971, with the indescribable feeling of experiencing a concert that will go down in history.

> Archives

Matching Mole

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Matching Mole (Robert Wyatt, Bill MacCormick, Phil Miller, Dave MacRae) - 7 janvier 1972.
Émission Rockenstock (ORTF)
Durée : 14:20
Présentateur : Pierre Lattès

> Archives

Matching Mole - Smoke Rings



Matching Mole - 1972. 31st May.
From the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) archive.

Smoke Rings played by Matching Mole :

- Robert Wyatt - vocal & drums
- Dave McCrae - keyboards
- Bill Mac Cormick - bass
- Phil Miller - guitar

> Archives

Improvisation Group

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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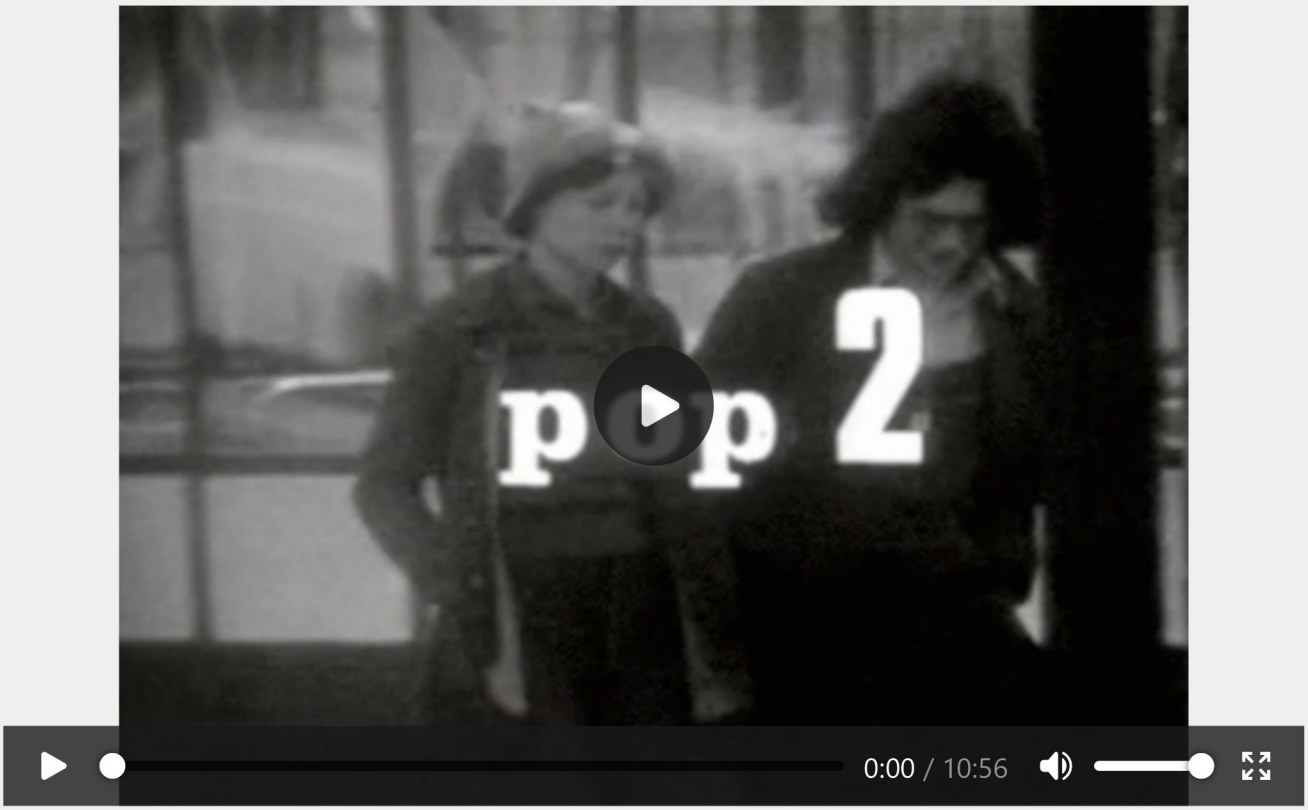
Improvisation Group - 1972. 31st May.
From the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) TV archive.

- Robert Wyatt - drums
- Kevin Ayers - guitar
- Lol Coxhill - saxophone
- David Bedford - organ

> Archives

Matching Mole

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Matching Mole - extrait du concert donné en mai 1972 à Paris.
durée: 10:56
Émission diffusée le 10 juin 1972 sur la 2ème chaîne de l'ORTF.
Réalisateur : Claude Ventura
Présentateur : Dominique Blanc Francard.

> Archives

Hatfield and the North

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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Hatfield and the North avec Robert Wyatt
Rockenstock (ORTF) - Émission diffusée le 2 janvier 1973.
Réalisation : Gille Daude
Présentation et production : Pierre Lattès

> Archives

Sea Song



Full version (14:48) of the film shot in Paris in 1975 by French Television, the day after the concert at the Theatre of the Champs Elysees with Henry Cow.



> Archives

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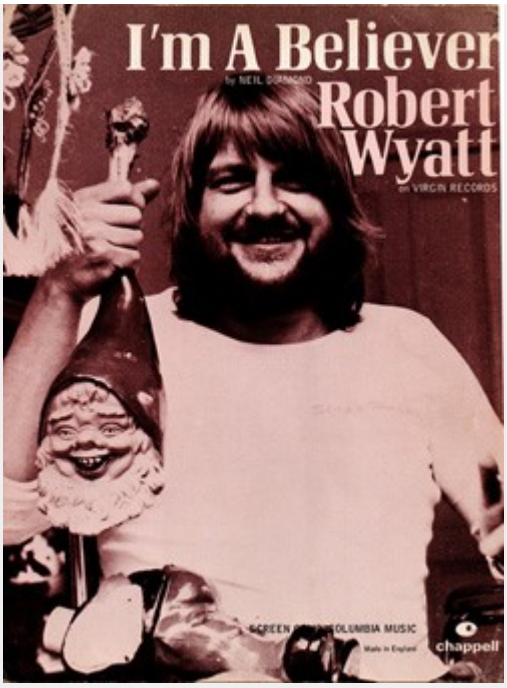
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I'm A Believer



Robert Wyatt - September 1974 - BBC - Top Of The Pops (Robert Wyatt with Nick Mason and Fred Frith)



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Shipbuilding (official video)

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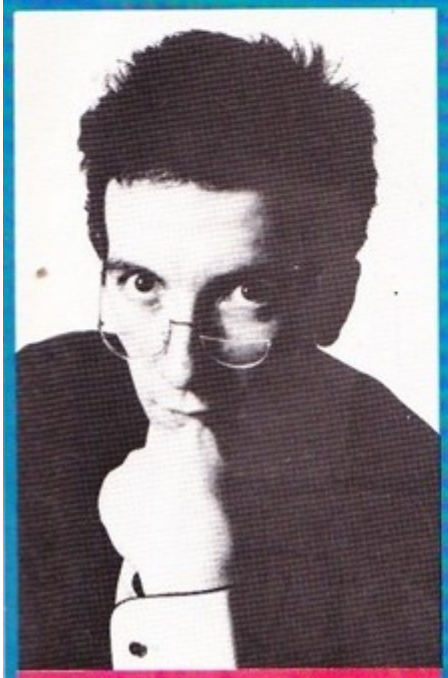


Robert Wyatt - Shipbuilding (official video)
durée: 3:04
Mai 1983

Robert Wyatt - Vocals / Percussion
Elvis Costello - Backing Vocals
Mark Bedford - Double Bass
Clive Langer - Organ
Martin Hughes - Drums

> Archives

SHIPBUILDING
THE WRITER & THE SONG



ELVIS COSTELLO

"The song came about this way. Clive Langer had written the tune specifically for Robert Wyatt and he gave me a tape of the backing track without any vocal other than a very vague melody line.

We were on tour in Australia and this was at the height of the Falklands War. We were getting these very third-hand reports through the Australian press which I think are world famous for being very sensational. You know, British troops were being napalmed and ships were being blown up every day. It really was alarmingly dramatised.

They say when you're away, you can see things in a different light. This 'shipbuilding' idea popped into my head. I wrote the lyric quite quickly. I didn't hone it down that much. Normally when I write, I change a lot but this came almost as a complete thought.

I rang Clive up from Australia and said, I've finished the song but I'm not entirely certain you're going to be pleased with it. I wouldn't read him the lyrics over the phone because I always think if you do that then you'd be a poet and not a songwriter.

The idea came about purely from the notion of these ships going down and life being lost.

It's very easy to fall into the trap of writing a very poignant song about war but that's been done to death over the years. Nobody ever thinks of the consequences of death and destruction on people back at home except in a sentimental way.

So I thought I'd take up the more ironic aspect of it. That shipbuilding in this country is in a terrible state and has caused a tremendous economic decline in the areas where it was really important like Clydeside, Tyneside, Northern Ireland and Merseyside.

I could see a point if the war had carried on where fathers would have been getting their jobs back to build ships to send their sons to die and that's really all the lyric is about.

You get a conflict between those people who are glad to be working again and those people who see the futility of it. It's just a tragedy.

The last line was quite important. I didn't want the song just to stay totally within the bounds of realities and commodities. The first part of the song talks about commodities and the second about realities. I thought that there would also be some sort of aspiration to something a bit better. The idea of the line is that there must be something better to do than ending up in the water for some other purpose than drowning. That's what I currently think. I don't know what crossed Robert's mind when he sang it."

IS IT WORTH IT?
A NEW WINTER COAT AND SHOES FOR THE WIFE
AND A BICYCLE ON THE BOY'S BIRTHDAY
IT'S JUST A RUMOUR THAT WAS SPREAD AROUND TOWN
BY THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN
SOON WE'LL BE SHIPBUILDING

WELL, I ASK YOU
THE BOY SAID, DAD THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE ME TO TASK
BUT I'LL BE BACK BY CHRISTMAS
IT'S JUST A RUMOUR THAT WAS SPREAD AROUND TOWN
SOMBODY SAID THAT SOMEONE GOT FILLED IN
FOR SAYING THAT PEOPLE GET KILLED IN
THE RESULT OF THIS SHIPBUILDING

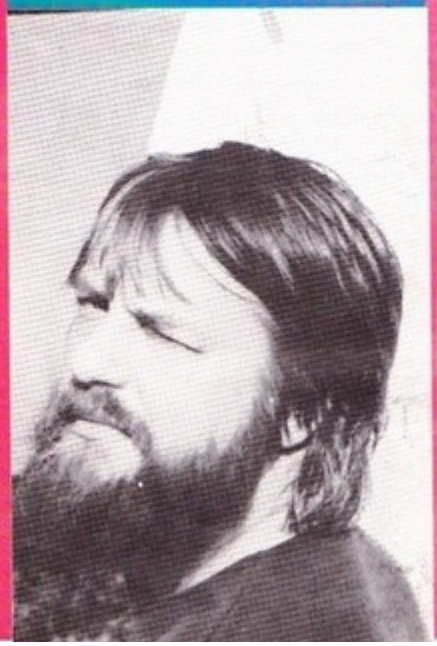
WITH ALL THE WILL IN THE WORLD
DIVING FOR DEAR LIFE
WHEN WE COULD BE DIVING FOR PEARLS

IT'S JUST A RUMOUR THAT WAS SPREAD AROUND TOWN
A TELEGRAM OR A PICTURE POSTCARD
WITHIN WEEKS THEY'LL BE RE-OPENING THE SHIPYARD
AND NOTIFYING THE NEXT OF KIN ONCE AGAIN
IT'S ALL WE'RE SKILLED IN
WE WILL BE SHIPBUILDING

WITH ALL THE WILL IN THE WORLD
DIVING FOR DEAR LIFE
WHEN WE COULD BE DIVING FOR PEARLS

WORDS BY ELVIS COSTELLO/MUSIC BY CLIVE LANGER.
REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION
WARNER BROS. MUSIC LTD./PLANGENT VISIONS MUSIC LTD.
ON ROUGH TRADE

ROBERT WYATT



Born Again Cretin & Shipbuilding

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Robert Wyatt - Born Again Cretin & Shipbuilding
The Old Grey Whistle Test (1983)
Duration: 6:15

> Archives

We Will Win

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Working Week - We Will Win
durée: 3:55
Venceremos (1984)
Promotional Video.

Robert Wyatt - vocals
Simon Booth - spanish and electric guitar
Dave Bitelli - baritone sax and clarinet
Chuchow Mercham - bass
Kim Burton - piano
Mark Taylor - drums
Dawson Miller - percussion
Bosco D'Oliveira - percussion
Tracey Thorn - vocals
Claudia Figuerda - vocals

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Wind Of Change

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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Robert Wyatt & The SWAPO Singers - Wind of Change
durée: 2:24
(1985)

> Archives

Kingdom

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> Archives



Kingdom - Ultramarine with Robert Wyatt
1993
MTV.
Duration: 4:38

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Another Great Victory



Millennium - Another Great Victory.
Titre extrait de l'album A Civilised Word réalisé par Millennium (Robert Wyatt/Jo Bogaert/Blissphemy) en 1995.
- Programmed by Jo Bogaert
- Violin – Chikako Sato
- Vocals – Robert Wyatt
Durée: 6:16

Millennium - A Civilised Word (CNR 200 23 22)



Robert Wyatt, Alfreda Benge, Jo bogaert, Iris Pattyn, Toon Loenders
et Remo Perrotti pendant l'enregistrement de Millennium.

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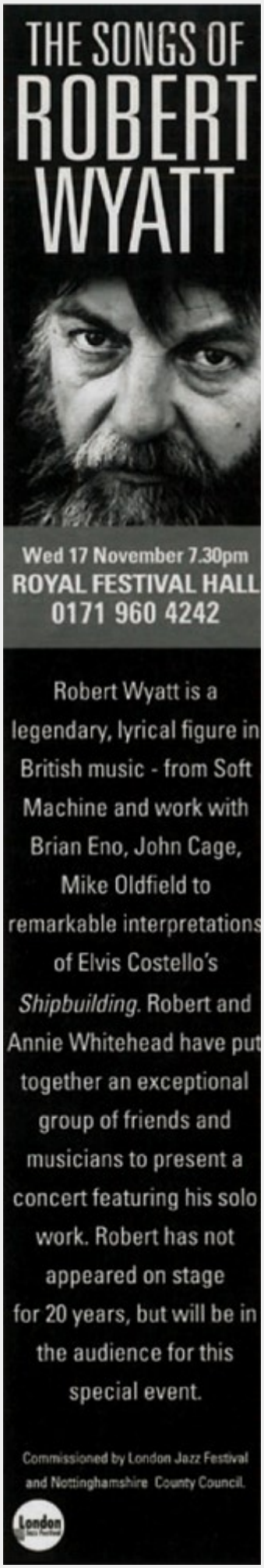
HOME

The Songs Of Robert Wyatt At The London Jazz Festival



0:00 / 1:24:12

London Jazz Festival - 17 novembre 1999



Viendra, viendra pas ? A chaque fois que des musiciens célèbrent sur scène le chanteur, pianiste, percussionniste et ancien batteur Robert Wyatt, ses admirateurs se posent la question...

S'il avait été absent en octobre 1999 de la présentation au Nancy Jazz Pulsations de Soup Songs par une nonnette britannique qui perpétue son œuvre, Wyatt avait, un mois plus tard, assisté en coulisse au concert du même groupe dirigé par la tromboniste Annie Whitehead lors du **London Jazz Festival**. "*Ma présence aura été ce qui se rapprochera au maximum de l'idée de mon "retour" scénique*", avait-il alors plaisanté.

Sylvain Siclier in Le Monde du 6 novembre 2003

En ce soir de novembre, Robert Wyatt a sans doute assisté à un des meilleurs concerts de la formation emmenée par Annie Whithead, galvanisée par la présence si rare, pour les raisons que l'on sait, de l'auteur-compositeur.

Capté par BBC Radio 3, ces moments de grâce ont gardé avec le temps toute leur magie.

- Alliance (0;14)
- Team Spirit (6:08)
- CB Jeebies (13:31)
- September For Ninth (18:05)
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (24:33)
- Alifib (31:10)
- A Sunday In Madrid (41:53)
- Sea Song (48:31)
- The Duchess (54:10)
- P.L.A. (59:18)
- Alien (1:02:29)
- Free Will And Testament (1:08:25)
- Gharbzadegi (1:14:38)

- Annie Whitehead - trombone
- Julie Tippetts - vocals
- Harry Beckett - trumpet, flugelhorn
- Didier Malherbe - flute, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, doudouk, ocarina
- George Khan - tenor Saxophone, baritone saxophone
- Janet Mason - piano, keyboards
- Phil Manzanera - guitar
- Ian Maidman - vocals, guitar
- Steve Lamb - bass
- Liam Genockey - drums

Robert Wyatt's Meltdown 2001

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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Comfortably Numb - Royal Festival Hall
durée: 6:51

Extraits du concert de David Gilmour. le 22 juin 2001.

More about Robert Wyatt's Meltdown 2001

> Archives

Five songs from A Robert Wyatt Story

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> Archives

Cinq morceaux extraits du documentaire de la BBC4 : Free Will and Testament - A Robert Wyatt Story (2003) réalisé par Mark Kidel.

- Robert Wyatt, vocals, trumpet
- Annie Whitehead, band leader, trombone, vocals
- Jennifer Maidman, lead guitar, vocals
- Liam Genockey, drums
- Janette Mason, keyboards
- Dudley Philipps, bass
- Larry Stabbins, saxophone
- Harry Beckett, trumpet
- Paul Weller, slide guitar



Sea Song



Gharbzadegi



September The Ninth



Left On Man



Free Will And testament

The musicians, many now firm friends, were equally enthusiastic. 'I loved it,' Paul Weller recalls. "The sound wasn't great, but aside from that, everything was great. And it was great to actually see Robert performing. I remember at the time, probably because I was pissed as well, I kept bugging him about live shows.' Like all Wyattophiles, Weller still dreams of an actual headline gig, although he is reconciled to the fact that it will probably never happen.

From Different Every Time - The Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt by Marcus O'Dair (Serpent's Tail - 2014)

> Archives

Re-arranging the 20th Century

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> Archives



0:00 / 5:39

Gilad Atzmon & the Orient House Ensemble, Re-Arranging the 20th Century (2004)
Video Art by Yeast.
durée: 5:38

> Archives

David Gilmour Live At The Royal Albert Hall - 2006



David Gilmour - Then I Close My Eyes
From the DVD "Remember That Night - Live At The Royal Albert Hall" - 2006.

"... Gilmour somehow managed to persuade Wyatt to go onstage at the Royal Abert Hall in 2006. 'He has one of those voice wich just tear at your soul', says Gilmour. 'There's the old cliché about singing the phone book, but he really does have a voice which endears itself to you and tugs at the hearstrings. But he's also a very, very accomplished musician'. [...]

Having wheeled onto the stage, Robert sat, fag in mouth, for five minutes without playing a note. But, when the time came, he distilled, deeply lyrical cornet solo curled like smoke above Gilmour's gently looping guitar part. The DVD Remember That Night *captures the guitarist's broad, and possibly relieved, smile as Robert takes off."*

Different Every Time - Marcus O'Dair



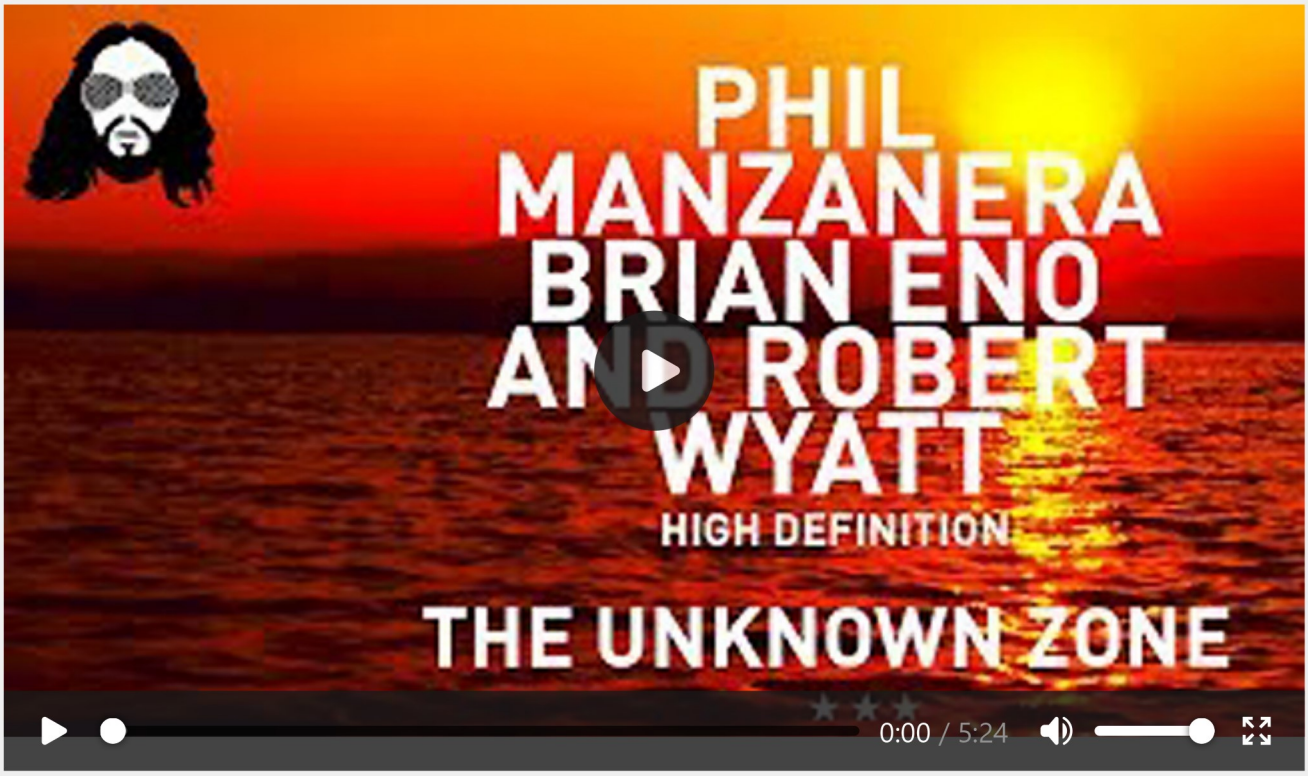
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The Unknown Zone



THE UNKNOWN ZONE (Wyatt/Eno/Manzanera)

When Robert Wyatt was recording ' Cukooland 'at my studio Eno popped round for dinner ,a chat,and an overdub or two and after a few bevies we had a jam.This track ,The Unknown Zone' grew out of that night's improvisations, as did my track '50 minutes later.

Phil Manzanera

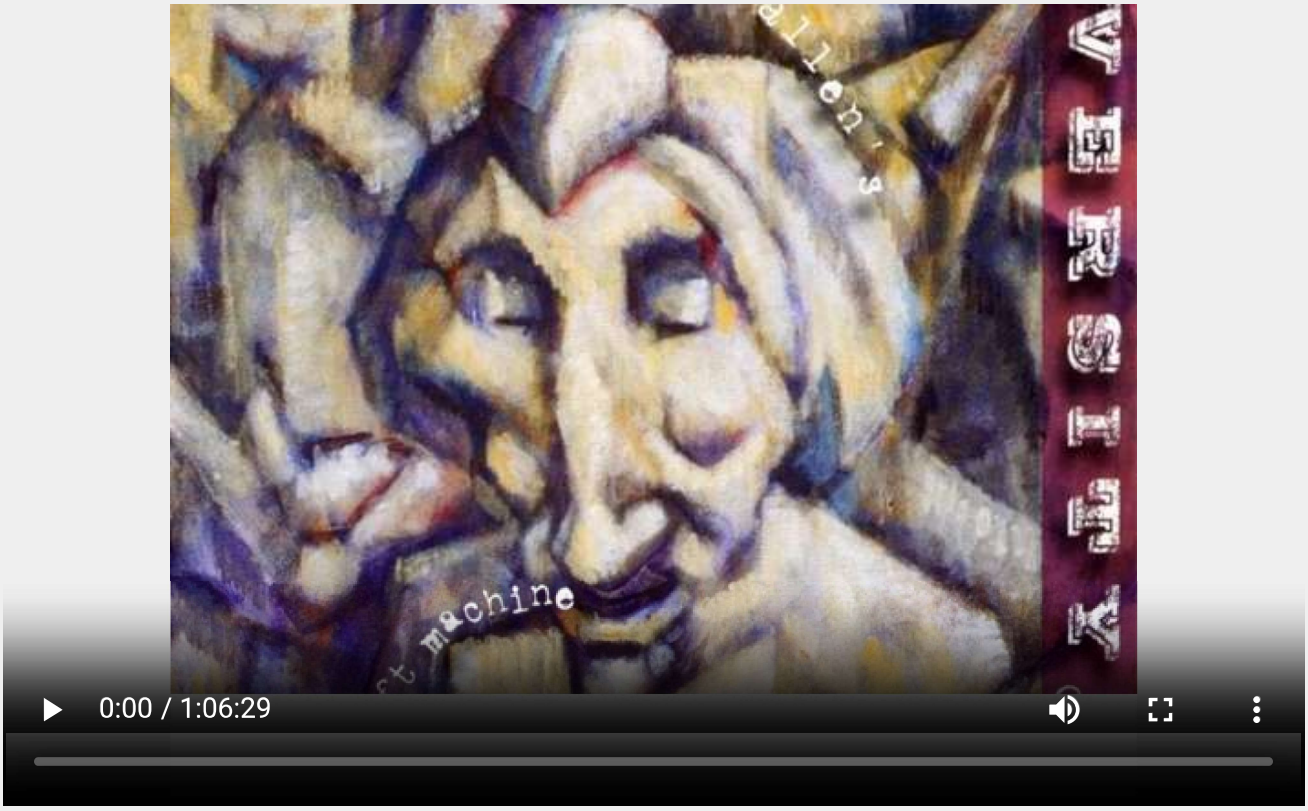
Phil Manzanera: Guitars
Brian Eno: Chaos drums and synth bass
Robert Wyatt: Keyboards
Yaron Stavi: Double Bass

Engineered and mixed by Jamie Johnson at Gallery Studio London October 2006



> Archives

University of Errors Play The Soft Machine



University of Errors Play The Soft Machine Live at the Gong Family Unconvention 2006.
Gong Family Unconventional Gathering. The Melweg, Amsterdam.05/11/06

00:00 - That's How Much I Need You Now
04:11 - Save Yourself
07:19 - Hope For Happiness
15:40 - She's Gone
18:09 - When I Don't Want You
23:17 - You Don't Remember
27:33 - Tattoo Internude
30:03 - I Should Have Known
35:56 - Shooting At The Moon
41:47 - Stoned Innocent Frankenstein
46:20 - Fohat Dig Holes In Space
58:53 - Love Makes Sweet Music

Dr. Dada Ale & He Arty: Floating guitar and grinde.
Prof. Posh Bollox: Liquid luncheon guitar & mega phonetix.
Prof. Perplexiglass: Suave bananaply & bottomly bass.
Dr. Harem Q Woogle, Esq: Hit sticks stampons poundig stone & very few issues
Countess Nicoletta Stephanzina La Magnifico: Theramin of toast
mezcla en vivo por David Id y Venux De Luxe

Hatfield And The North At The Bowery Poetry Club

New-York City - June 25 2006



0:00 / 8:44

God Song + Lything And Gracing



Part Of The Dance + Nan's True Hole

Hatfield And The North At The Bowery Poetry Club
New-York City - June 25 2006

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Alex Maguire - keyboards

The full concert on philmillerthelegacy.com

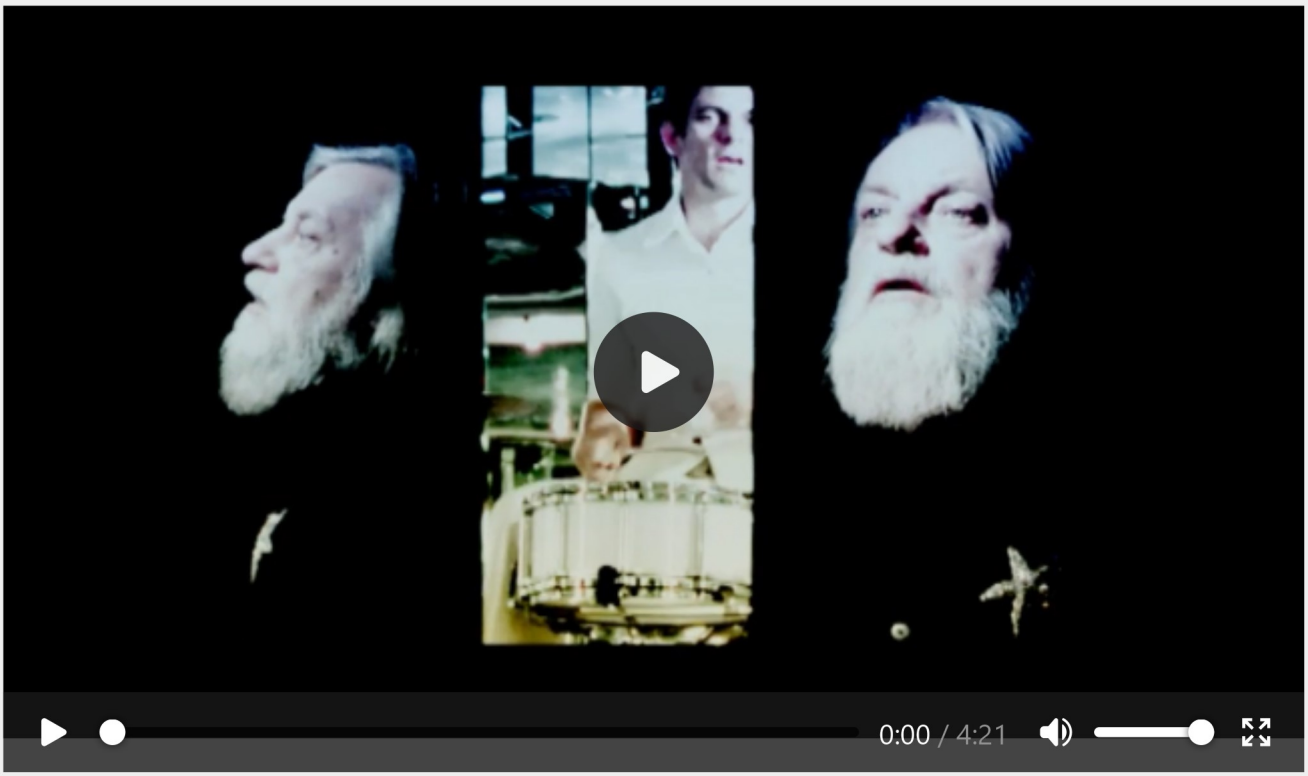
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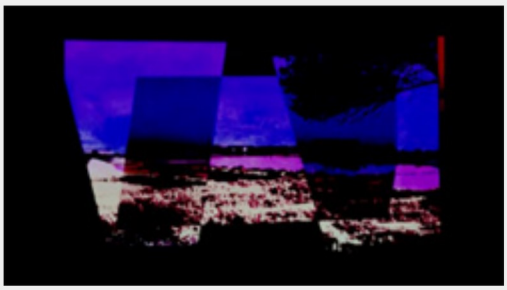
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This Summer Night



Bertrand Burgalat & Robert Wyatt - This Summer Night
durée: 4:21
(2007)
Label Tricatel.
Réalisation : D. Klein/J. Auzende



> Archives

Delta Saxophone Quartet with Hugh Hopper

Le **Delta Saxophone Quartet** enregistre en 2007 le magnifique album *Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening - The Music Of Soft Machine* puis joue avec Hugh Hopper à plusieurs reprises dont la même année à l'Etna Jazz Festival (ci-dessous) qui sera publié en bonus de l'album réédité en 2012.



Facelift - Etna Jazz Festival (2007)



Dedicated (improvisation sur le thème de Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening) - Kingston University (2008)

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Mop Meuchiine plays Robert Wyatt

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Mop Meuchiine joue **British Road** au Petit Faucheux (Tours - France) le 29 février 2008.
Durée: 6:47

- Pascal Maupeu - guitare
- Jean-Baptiste Réhault - saxophone, accordéon, saxhorn alto
- Frantz Loriot - violon
- Cédric Piromalli - piano, fender rhodes, korg ms20
- Nicolas Le Moullec - basse électrique, voix
- Bertrand Hurault - batterie, électronique

Le concert du Petit Faucheux sera le premier concert de Mop Meuchiine avec un répertoire entièrement dédié à Robert Wyatt. Une dizaine de concerts auront lieu avant la sortie de l'album Mop Machiine plays Robert Wyatt un an plus tard.



Mop Meuchiine joue **Anachronist-A.W.O.L.** au Petit Faucheux (Tours - France) le 29 février 2008.
Durée: 8:36



Mop Meuchiine joue **Anachronist-A.W.O.L. (extrait)** à Orléans le 14 novembre 2009.

Durée: 2:59

Hugues Vincent (violoncelle) a remplacé Frantz Loriot.

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Liberation Music Orchestra



2009 - Liberation Music Orchestra
Ornette Coleman's Meltdown Royal Festival Hall London, England June 20, 2009.
"Tail Of A Tornado"
durée: 6:29
Robert Wyatt - Vocals
Charlie Haden - Bass
Carla Bley - Piano
John Parricelli - Guitar
Matt Wilson - Drums
Tony Malaby - Tenor Sax
Shabaka Hutchings - Tenor Sax
Miguel Zenon - Alto Sax
Tom Rees-Roberts - Trumpet
Mike Rodriguez - Trumpet
Curtis Fowlkes - Trombone
Jim Rattigan - French Horn
Joe Daley - Tuba

Le journaliste musical et photographe italien **Alessandro Achilli** a réalisé de très belles photos à l'occasion de cet évènement.



> Zoom

Carla Bley & Robert Wyatt: Liberation Music Orchestra, Londra, Royal Festival Hall, Ornette Coleman’s Meltdown, 20 giugno 2009.



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt & Charlie Haden: Liberation Music Orchestra, Londra, Royal Festival Hall, Ornette Coleman’s Meltdown, 20 giugno 2009.



> Zoom

Liberation Music Orchestra + Robert Wyatt, Londra, Royal Festival Hall, Ornette Coleman’s Meltdown, 20 giugno 2009. Tom Rees-Roberts e Mike Rodriguez: trombe; Jim Rattigan: corno; Fayyaz Virji: trombone; Andy Grappy: tuba; Jason Yarde: sax contralto; Tony Malaby e Shabaka Hutchings: sax tenori; Carla Bley: pianoforte, arrangiamenti, direzione; John Parricelli: chitarre; Charlie Haden: contrabbasso; Matt Wilson: batteria + (in Rabo de nube e in Song for Che including Hasta siempre) **Robert Wyatt**: voce e cornetta.



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt & Carla Bley, Royal Festival Hall, backstage, 20 giugno 2009.



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt & Carla Bley, Royal Festival Hall, backstage, 20 giugno 2009.

> Archives



Orchestre National de Jazz - Around Robert Wyatt Live

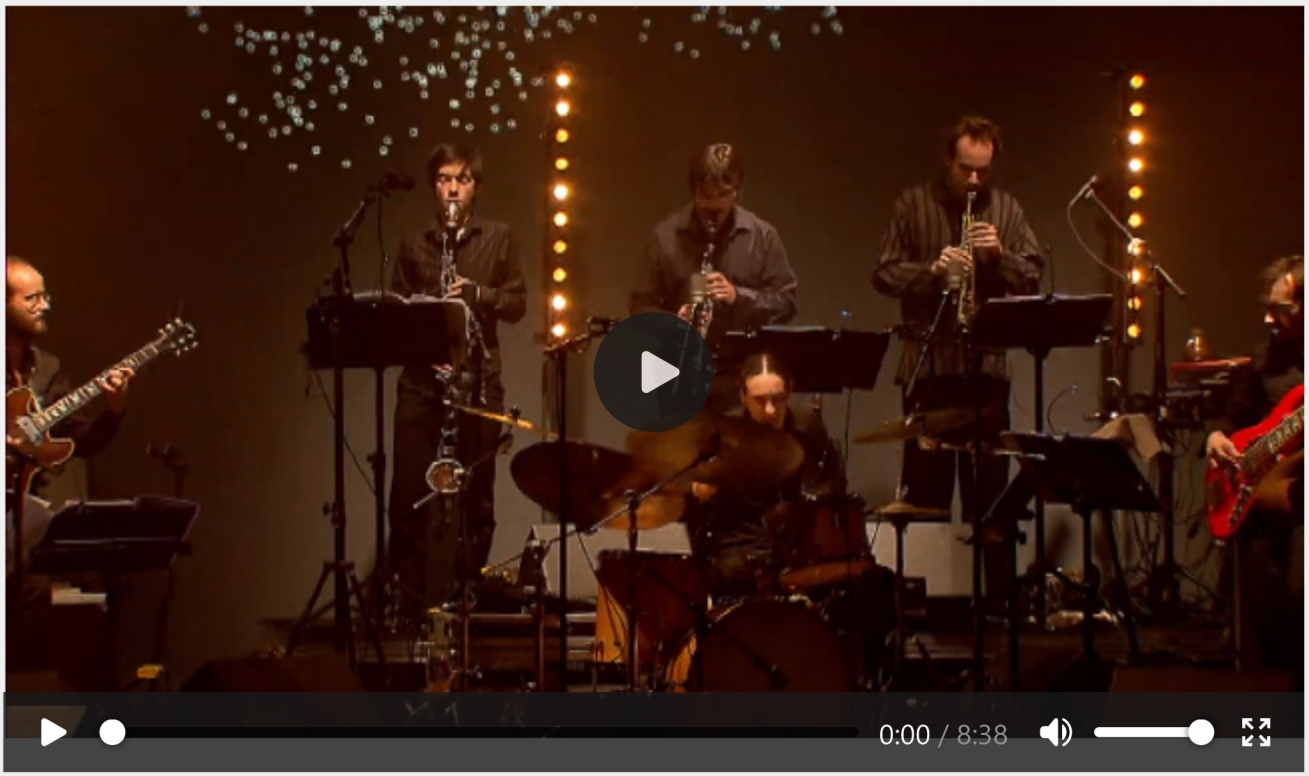
Durée: 8:49
(2009)
Direction artistique : Daniel Yvinec
Arrangements : Vincent Artaud

découvrir le disque

> Archives

Around Robert Wyatt - Concert

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Around Robert Wyatt" Orchestre National de Jazz - Concert (extrait) 2009

durée: 8:38
(2009)
Concert diffusée en direct sur Qobuz.
Réalisation : Abdelhak Terroufi
Direction artistique : Daniel Yvinec
Arrangements : Vincent Artaud

- Kew Rhone
- Rangers In The Night
- Interlude

découvrir le disque

> Archives

Orchestre National de Jazz - Just As You Are

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> Archives



Orchestre National de Jazz - Just As You Are (A. Benge/R. Wyatt)
7ème édition des Victoires du Jazz - 2009
Durée: 5:24

Around Robert Wyatt (Bee Jazz/Abeille Musique) de l'Orchestre national de jazz de Daniel Yvinec a été lauréat dans la catégorie "Album instrumental français" de la 7ème édition des Victoires du Jazz.

Direction artistique : D. Yvinec
Arrangements : V. Artaud
- E. Risser - piano préparé
- V. Lafont - claviers
- A. Hoan & M. Metzger - saxophones
- J. Mienniell - flutes
- R. Dumoulin - clarinette
- G. Poncelet - trompette
- P. Perchaud - banjo
- S. Daniel - basse
- Y. Serra - batterie
- Arno & Y. Naim - chant

Découvrir le disque

The Unthanks perform Robert Wyatt's 'Dondestan' - 2010

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



0:00 / 2:03

The Unthanks - Dondestan
The Unthanks perform Robert Wyatt's 'Dondestan' (with clogs dance). London, Union Chapel - December 8th, 2010.
duration: 2:03
Photo/video: Sergio Amadori [https://hibou-anemone-bear.blogspot.com]

> Archives

Comicoperando

ABÉCÉDAIRE

"Comicoperando is dedicated to the music of Robert Wyatt, a singular voice in British music... Tonight, his eccentrically arranged songs will be performed by musicians and friends from like-minded groups like Henry Cow and Caravan. Featured singer Dagmar Krause is praised for her performances of the music of Brecht and Weill" *(Bimhuis programme).*



Extraits du concert de l'ensemble **Comicoperando - The music of Robert Wyatt** emmené par **Annie Whitehead** le 19 mai 2011 au Het Bimhuis à Amsterdam (Pays-Bas) - entrecoupés d'interviews avec les musiciens (Interview by Aad van Nieuwkerk).
A Pavel Borodin / VPRO Radio 6 production.

Trackslist

- Gloria Gloom (Bill MacCormick / Robert Wyatt)
- Beware (Kraen Mantler)
- Alifib (Robert Wyatt)
- Out Of The Blue (Alfreda benge / Robert Wyatt)
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road (Robert Wyatt)

Musicians

- Dagmar Krause - vocals
- Annie Whitehead - trombone, backing vocals

- Karen Mantler - Hammond B3, vocals
- Michel Delville - synth guitar
- John Edwards - double bass
- Chris Cutler - drums

Le premier concert du Comicoperando a eu lieu le 1er mars 2010 au Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti de Modène (Italie) dans le cadre de L'Altro Suono Festival et a fait l'objet d'un enregistrement produit par EXB. D'autres concerts ont eu lieu dont celui du 18 mai 2011 à la Rote Fabrik de Zurich dont l'enregistrement circule également sur internet.

***Modène** (1er mars 2010)*



Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road

***Zurich** (18 mai 2011)*



The British Road

***Amsterdam** (19 mai 2011)*



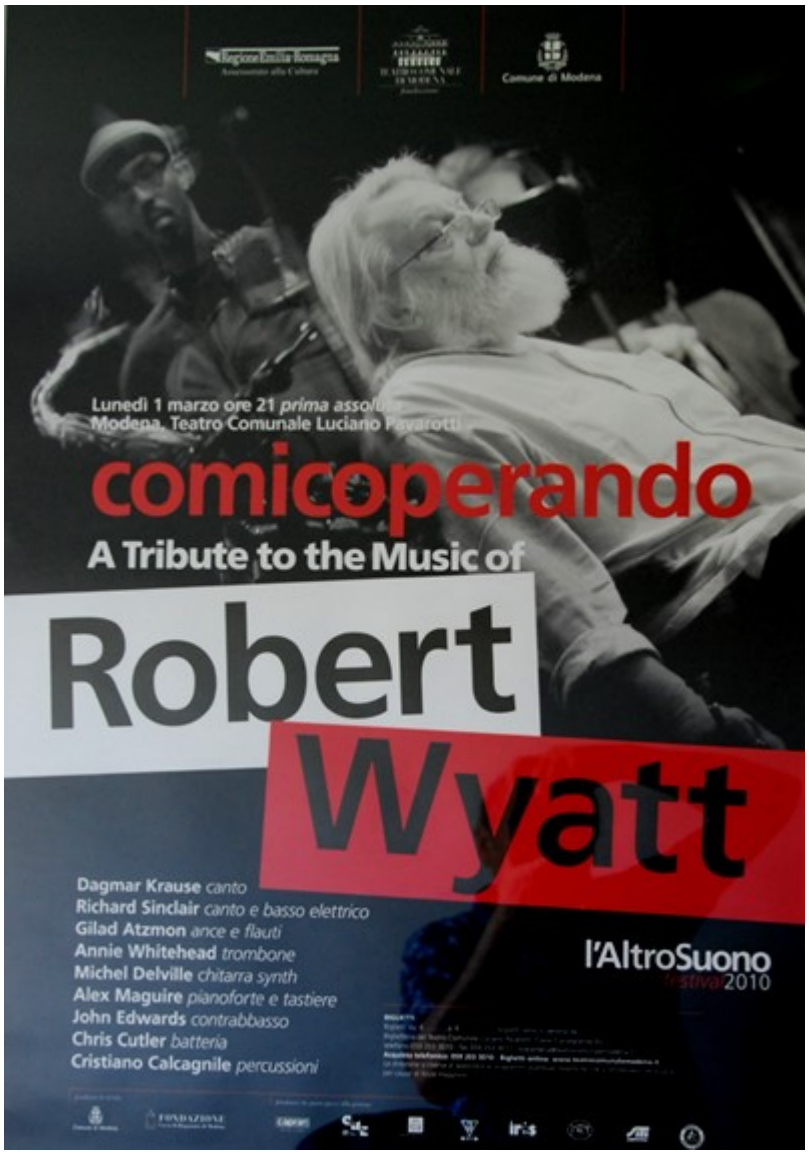
Team Spirit





Jaquette de l'enregistrement du concert de Modène.

> Zoom


Regione Emilia Romagna
Comune di Modena
Lunedì 1 marzo ore 21 prima asso
Modena, Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti
comicoperando
A Tribute to the Music of
Robert
Wyatt
Dagmar Krause canto
Richard Sinclair canto e basso elettrico
Gilad Atzmon ance e flauti
Annie Whitehead trombone
Michel Delville chitarra synth
Alex Maguire pianoforte e tastiere
John Edwards contrabbasso
Chris Cutler batteria
Cristiano Calcagnile percussioni
l'AltroSuono
festival 2010

The Unthanks - December 2011

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



The Unthanks - Sea Song
December 02, 2011
duration: 6:27
London, St James's Church
Photo/video: Sergio Amadori [https://hibou-anemone-bear.blogspot.com]

> Archives

The Unthanks - 4 Songs Live - 2011

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



The Unthanks - 4 Songs Live
The Unthanks performing four songs of Robert Wyatt & Antony and The Johnsons
Whelan's Dublin December 2011
duration: 23:01
As captured by Sébastien Escalante & Edgar Simis.

- Out Of The Blue (Robert Wyatt)
- Lullaby For Hamza (Robert Wyatt)
- Alifib (Robert Wyatt)
- Spiralling (Antony And The Johnsons)

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Annie Whitehead Group
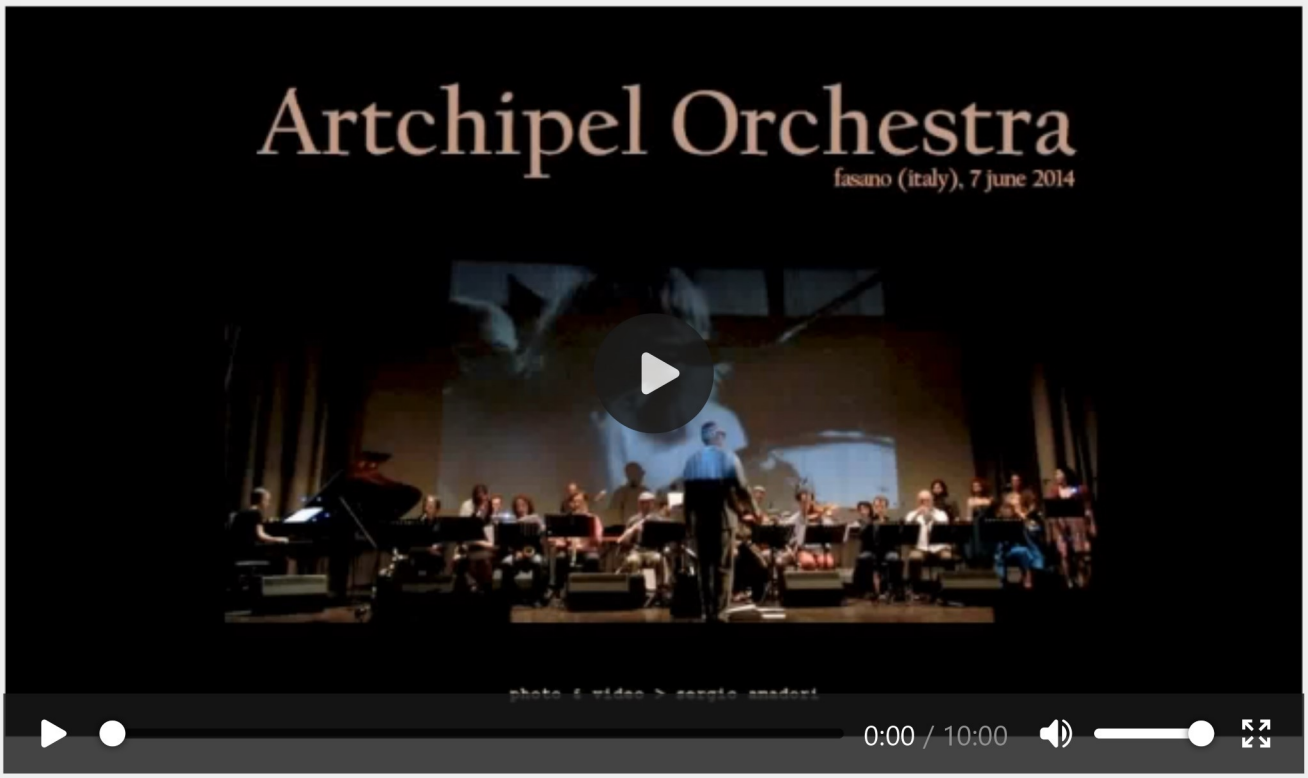


Caroline - Annie Whitehead Group, guests Cristina Donà and Sarah-Jane Morris

"Caroline" performed by Annie Whitehead Group, during the concert "Soupsongs - Robert Wyatt tribute" of March 2, 2013 at the Teatro Bonci in Cesena (Italy).

- Annie Whitehead - trombone, leader
- Sarah-Jane Morris and Cristina Donà - voice
- Brian Hopper - tenor sax
- Mark Lockheart - tenor and soprano sax
- Jennifer Maidman - guitar, vocals
- Janette Mason - piano, keyboards
- Tim Harries - elecric bass
- Liam Genockey - drums



Artchipel Orchestra - Moon in June



Artchipel Orchestra - Moon in June (Robert Wyatt)
Fasano (Italy), Teatro Kennedy June 7, 2014
Photo/video: Sergio Amadori http://www.hibou-anemone-bear.com

Marco Mariani, Gianni Sansone, Massimo Cavallaro, Rosarita Crisafi, Massimo Falascone, Paolo Profeti, Francesca Petrolo, Simone Mauri, Paolo Botti, Eloisa Manera, Mariangela Tandoi, Massimo Giuntoli, Beppe Barbera, Gianluca Alberti, Lorenzo Gasperoni, Stefano Lecchi, Naima Faraò, Serena Ferrara, Giusy Lupis, Filippo Pascuzzi.

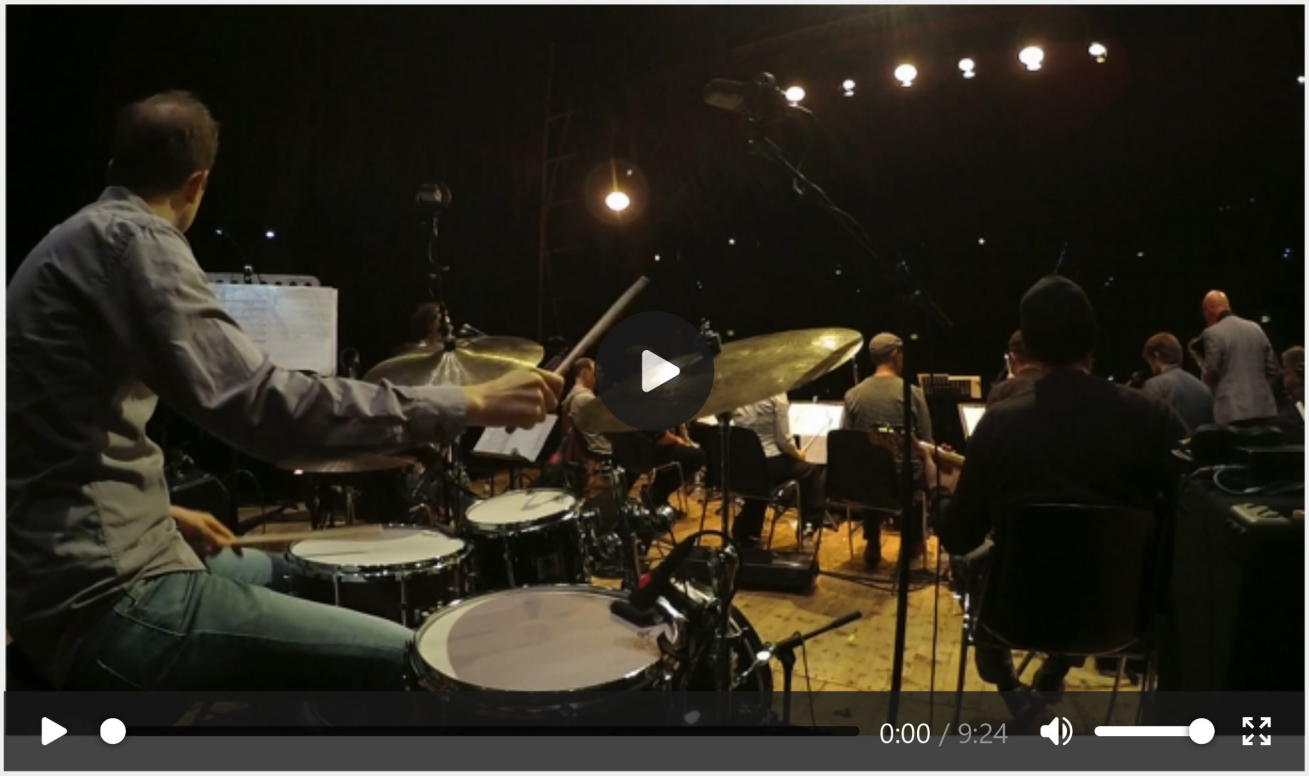
Directed by Ferdinando Faraò, with Visual effects by AU + Fabio Volpi and Rosarita Crisafi.

> Archives

Artchipel Orchestra - Facelift

ABÉCÉDAIRE

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Artchipel Orchestra - Facelift (Hugh Hopper)
Live at Teatro dell'Arte, Milano (Italy) - 2014
Directed by Ferdinando Faraò.

> Archives

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Athelas Sinfonietta - G((o))ng Tomorrow Festival

L'Ensemble **Athelas Sinfonietta** fête le dixième anniversaire de **G((o))ng Tomorrow** de Copenhague le 23 octobre 2015 avec des oeuvres de Nico et de Robert Wyatt dans le cadre d'une soirée d'ouverture du festival intitulée "**NICO & WYATT VS. BEIRUT**".
Les oeuvres de Robert Wyatt ont été adaptées pour Athelas Sinfonietta par Peter Bruun et Regin Petersen.

Ce festival propose chaque année une programmation résolument axée sur l'expérimentation, le croisement des genres et la rencontre avec d'autres formes d'art.



FREE WILL AND TESTAMENT



A LAST STRAW



SIGHT OF THE WIND



Chef d'orchestre :
- Martin Nagashima Toft

Musiciens :
- Karen Skriver Zarganis (flute)
- Liza Gibbs Fox (hautbois)
- Marie Bessesen (clarinette)
- Signe Haugland (basson)
- Niklas Kallsoy Mouritsen (cornet)
- Peter Vallebo (trompette)
- Lars Hastrup (trompette)
- Jakob Weber (percussions)

Interprète :
- Jomi Massage

- Mathias Reumert (percussions)
- Manuel Esperilla (piano)
- Maria Boelskov Sørensen (harpe)
- Anne Søe (violon)
- Idinna Therese Alsbirk Lützhøft (violon)
- Mina Fred (alto)
- Carl-Oscar Østerlind (violoncelle)
- Olle Davidsson (contrebasson)

Program:

Robert Wyatt (f. 1945) /Peter Bruun (f. 1968): Free will and Testament
Sight of the Wind

Nico (1938-1988) /Henriette Groth (f. 1976): Evening of Light
No one is there

Robert Wyatt/Regin Petersen (f. 1980): A last Straw

Morten Olsen (f. 1961)/Jomi Massage (f. 1974): Nico
I. The Beginning - prelude
II. Song number one: As a Child
III. The Middle: Interlude
IV. Song number two: Who Am I
V. The End

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3 Degrees of Robert Wyatt



0:00 / 1:19:13

Spinning on Air Series: 3 Degrees of Robert Wyatt 2015

Thursday, June 4, 2015 - 8:00 pm

In early June 2015, ten New York musicians gathered on the stage of Roulette in Brooklyn to play music that Wyatt has composed or recorded.

Jared Samuel and his band Invisible Familiars coordinated the concert, "3 Degrees of Robert Wyatt," which featured Joan Wasser (Joan As Police Woman), Oren Bloedow (Elysian Fields), Adam Minkoff (The Machine), Charlotte Kemp Muhl (The Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger), Michael Leonhart (Steely Dan), Greek singer Monika, and Jordyn Blakely and Noah Berman of Invisible Familiars, as well as Spinning On Air's own David Garland of WNYC.





Odeia - Alifib



Odeia - Alifib (2017)

Elsa Birgé - chant
Lucien Alfonso - violon
Karsten Hochapfel - guitare
Pierre-Yves Le Jeune - contrebasse

"I am so moved by this . everything about it : a great film for a start . and the variations so interesting ,original but also , exactly understanding the harmonic feel i was after . And then , Elsa .....You : Perfect"

Robert Wyatt



Odeia - Alifib Live @ Studio de l'Ermitage (02/2025)

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Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte & Guests At Leipzig

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Max Andrzejewski‘s Hütte and guests play the music of Robert Wyatt
Leipziger Jazztage - Fish'n'Chips Westbad - Leipzig
19.10.2018

Tribute mit der Musik der Soft-Machine-Legende – neu arrangiert von einem der umtriebigsten Musiker unserer Landes – Festivalprojekt in der Reihe « Across the English Channel »

- Starting In The Middle of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics away

Musiker:
- Johannes Schleiermacher - saxophon, synthesizer
- Jörg Hochapfel - keyboards, gitarre
- Tobias Hoffmann - gitarre
- Andreas Lang - kontrabass
- Max Andrzejewski - schlagzeug, stimme, arrangements
- Cansu Tanrıkulu - stimme

> Archives

Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte & Guests At Leipzig (2)



Max Andrzejewski's Hütte and guests play the music of Robert Wyatt
Video from the premiere at Leipziger Jazztage on October 19th, 2018

Robert Wyatt´s comment: *„This project is great for my sense of still being alive , knowing that these brilliant young musicians look my way for a moment. Please thank them from me. They have my profound gratitude .*"

- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road
- Cuckoo Madame

Musicians:
- Johannes Schleiermacher - saxophone
- Tobias Hoffmann - guitar
- Andreas Lang - bass
- Max Andrzejewski - drums, arrangement
- Cansu Tanrikulu - voice
- Jörg Hochapfel - keys, git

> Archives

Artchipel Orchestra plays Soft Machine - Facelift

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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Grande Festa jazz del Torino Jazz Festival - 1 maggio 2016 con Ferdinando Faraò e Artchipel Orchestra.
Durata: 7:33

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North Sea Radio Orchestra plays Sea Song

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North Sea Radio Orchestra plays "Sea Song" by Robert Wyatt with John Greaves and Annie Barbazza.
Audience recording from the gig at Conservatorio Nicolini in Piacenza for the *Musiche Nuove a Piacenza* festival. November 30, 2018.

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Phil Miller Tribute Concerts



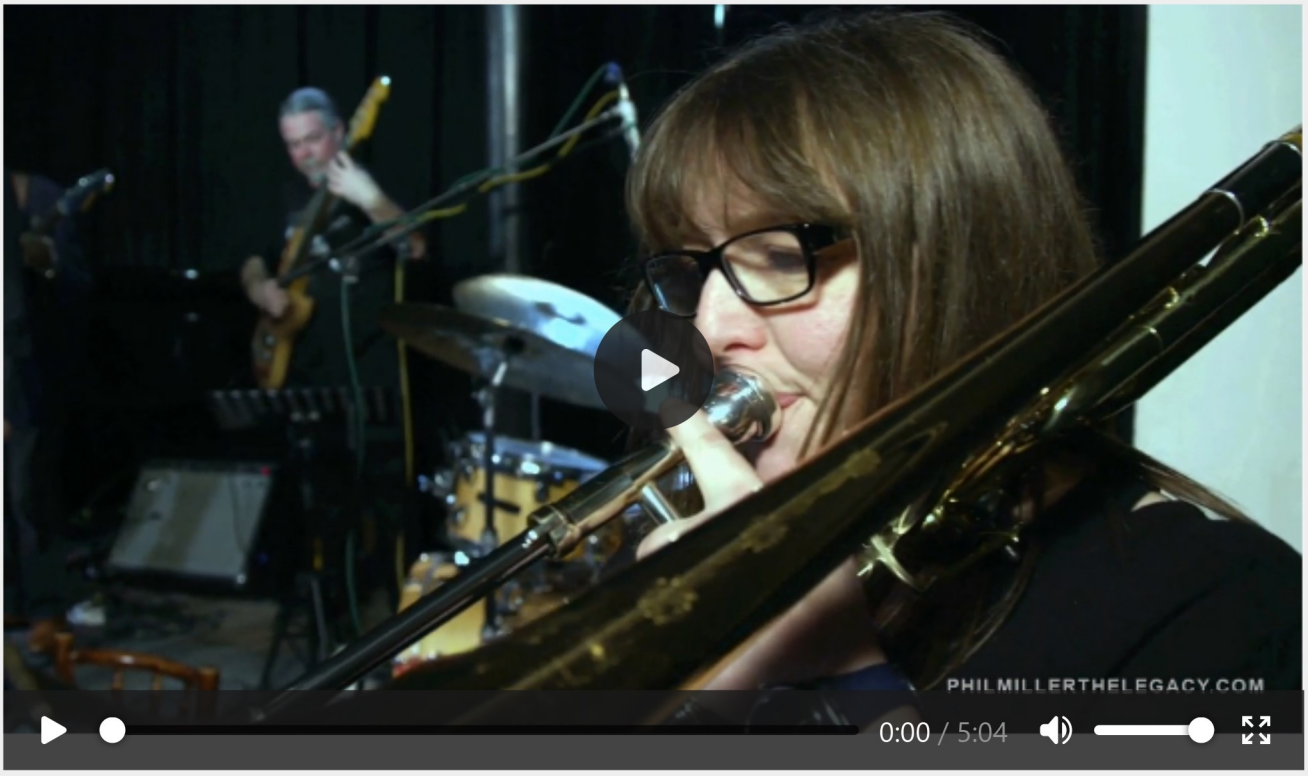


Phil Miller, guitariste emblématique de *l'école de Canterbury*, nous a quitté en 2017. Sa femme **Herm** et son fils **Kyle** ont souhaité honorer sa mémoire en mettant librement à la disposition de tous ses admirateurs un ensemble d'archives (captations de concerts, interviews et entretiens, partitions, fichiers midi, master classes...) d'un intérêt inestimable pour qui s'intéresse à l'oeuvre de ce grand musicien. Avec le concours de **Doug Boyle** - ami de Phil, ex_guitariste de Caravan mais ici archiviste audio méticuleux - le site **philmillerthelegacy.com** s'enrichit régulièrement de contributions de musiciens ayant travaillé avec Phil Miller ou souhaitant lui rendre hommage avec des témoignages ou des reprises de son répertoire. **Aymeric Leroy** pour sa part, y fournit un gros travail éditorial.

C'est également pour faire vivre l'héritage musical de Phil Miller que deux concerts furent organisés le 6 janvier 2019 à Londres à l'instigateur de Herm Miller et de quelques amis musiciens. Les trois compositions que nous restituons ici sont le fruit d'une collaboration entre Robert Wyatt et Phil Miller au début des années 70 avec Matching Mole et à l'occasion d'une collaboration pour le premier album d'Hatfield And The North.
Trois magnifiques interprétations qui ne peuvent que vous encourager à découvrir les deux sets complets sur le site **philmillerthelegacy.com/a-life-in-music/**.



God Song - (set 1)



Calyx - (set 2)



Nan Trues Hole - (set 2)



Bande-annonce

> Archives

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Folly Bololey At Cafe Oto 27 June 2019



Folly Bololey At Cafe Oto 27 June 2019
Audience Recording of the succesful gig of North Sea Radio Orchestra with John Greaves and Annie Barbazza and Fred Frith as special guest At Cafe Oto 27 June 2019 presenting the Dark Companion album FOLLY BOLOLEY - Songs from Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom (more information)
Duration: 1:33:46

00:00:00 Opening set by John Greaves
00:02:39 Bad Alchemy (Greaves/Blegvad)
00:04:35 Kew Rhone (Greaves/Blegvad)
00:09:35 The Song (Greaves/Blegvad)
00:14:33 The Forest (Wyatt)
00:20:30 Free Will And Testament (Wyatt/Kramer)
00:25:25 The British Road (Wyatt)
00:31:54 Maryan (Wyatt/Catherine)
00:37:36 Shipbuilding (McManus/Langer)
00:42:28 Sea Song (Wyatt)
00:48:58 A Last Straw (Wyatt)
00:54:26 Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (Wyatt)
00:59:44 Alifib (Wyatt)
01:07:05 Alife (Wyatt)
01:12:15 Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road (Wyatt)
01:20:20 O Caroline (Wyatt/Sinclair)
01:26:51 Encore: Sea Song (Wyatt)

Personnel:
- Annie Barbazza: Lead Vocal/Farfisa Organ
- John Greaves: Bass guitar/Vocal/Spoken Word/Piano
- Nicky Baigent: Bb Clarinet/Bass Clarinet/Spoken Word
- Luke Crookes: Bassoon
- William D. Drake: Piano/Farfisa Organ/Vocal
- Harry Escott: Cello
- Craig Fortnam: Guitar/Farfisa Organ/Vocal
- Tommaso Franguelli: Vibes/Percussion
- Cheb Nettles: Drums
- Laurent Valero: Violin/Viola/Recorder/Bass Recorder
- Fred Frith: viola and laughter on "Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road"



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Tribute To Hugh Hopper



Tribute To Hugh Hopper - 30 mai 2019 - Le Triton - France
Bande-annonce
durée: 4:21

- Patrice Meyer - guitare
- Patrick Buchmann - batterie
- Pierre Olivier Govin - saxophone
- François Verly - piano Fender Rhodes
- Dominique Grimaldi - basse
- Didier Malherbe - flûte



Tribute To Hugh Hopper - 30 mai 2019 - Le Triton - France
Was A Friend (extrait)
durée: 2:19



Tribute To Hugh Hopper - 30 mai 2019 - Le Triton - France
Elton Dean's solo on Kings and Queens (extrait)
durée: 3:09

JEUDI 30 MAI	20H30	SALLE 1	TRITONALES	E

TRIBUTE TO HUGH HOPPER



Hugh nous avait quittés prématurément, il y a dix ans. Bassiste phare du début des années 70, cité régulièrement aux côtés de Jack Bruce ou Tim Bogert dans les référendums, il avait collaboré avec Carla Bley, mais entra dans l'histoire surtout pour son rôle de bassiste-compositeur de Soft Machine dans sa période la plus créative. Il s'y illustra dans l'écriture de longues pièces instrumentales, mais également dans le format "pop song" pour Robert Wyatt, avec qui il continua sa collaboration par la suite. La reformation du groupe en 2002 sous l'appellation Softworks (avec Allan Holdsworth, Elton Dean, John Marshall), puis Soft Machine Legacy (avec John Etheridge) l'avait à nouveau catapulté sur la scène internationale. Cet homme doux, quintessence de la courtoisie british, était aussi artistiquement intransigeant. Sachant s'entourer, Hugh n'était jamais aussi heureux qu'en entendant ses solistes s'exprimer dans des compositions qu'il avait ciselées à leur mesure. Quelques-uns de ses collaborateurs français lui rendent hommage en reprenant le répertoire qu'il avait créé pour Soft Machine, et pour ses trois premiers albums en solo.

Patrick Buchmann batterie - **Dominique Grimaldi** basse
Patrice Meyer guitare - **Didier Malherbe** flûte

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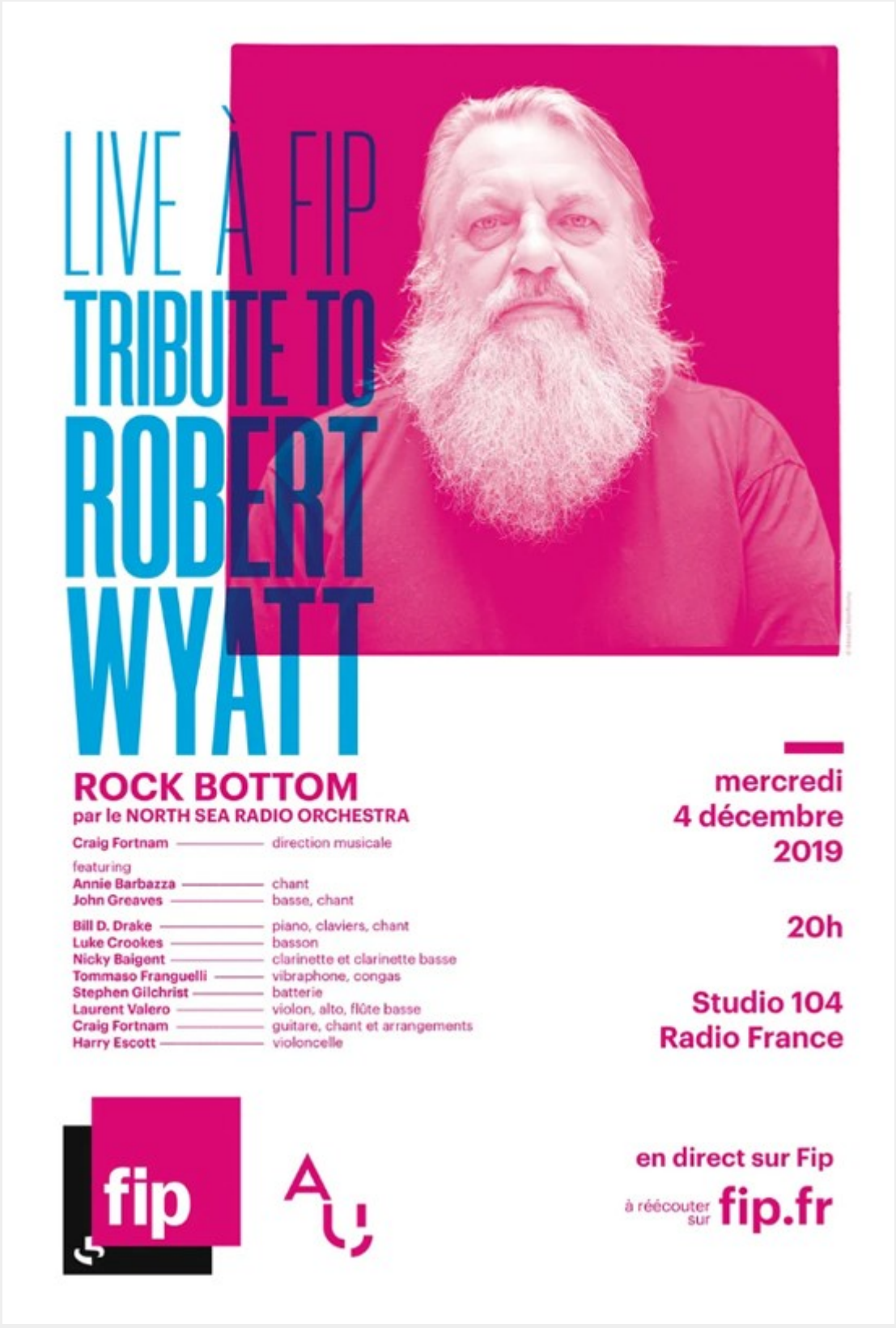
HOME

Live A FIP - Tribute to Robert Wyatt



0:00 / 1:36:29

Concert-hommage du North Sea Radio Orchestra à Robert Wyatt dans le grand auditorium de la Maison de la Radio à Paris, le 4 décembre 2019. Le concert retransmis en direct par la station FIP a été précédé de la diffusion d'une interview de Robert Wyatt par John Greaves que l'on peut écouter ici.



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Henry and Robert play Richard

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"Henry and Robert play Richard" - an antimated short film by Shin Pey
Visual fantasy based on live performance by Henry Cow and Robert Wyatt 21 May, 1975, New London Theatre.

2020 НА ГРАНИ ЧУ Production

The Shlomo Polonsky channel

> Archives

Max Andrzejewski´s Hütte & Guests Play the Music of Robert Wyatt

ABÉCÉDAIRE

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Jazz & Wine Of Peace 2020
Teatro Comunale Cormòns - 22 ottobre 2020
Duration : 20:30

- Johannes Schleiermacher - tenor saxophone, flute, synth
- Jörg Hochapfel - organs, guitars, vocals
- Tobias Hoffmann - guitar
- Andreas Lang - double bass
- Max Andrzejewski - drums, vocals, arrangements
- Cansu Tanrıkulu - vocals

- Instant Kitten
- Starting In The Middle of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics away
- At Last I'm Free

> Archives

International Jazz Day 2021 - Eleven for Ten

ABÉCÉDAIRE
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Costa (Robert Wyatt)
Centre culturel d'Uccle (Belgique) - 30 avril 2021

Concert enregistré en live streaming par *Eleven for Ten* - à l'occasion de la 10ème édition de l'International Jazz Day.
Jazz4you Production.

- Maayan Smith - arrangement
- Dorian Dumont - piano
- Armando Luongo - drums
- Jean-Paul Estiévenart - trumpet
- Lior Tzemach- guitar
- Federico Pecoraro - bass

> Archives

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Orchestra SMS

Orchestra SMS a été fondé en 2012 par **Stefano Giannotti** comme un atelier de musique de chambre au sein de l'école de musique **Sinfonia** de Lucca (Toscane).
Il s'agit d'un ensemble mixte composé de vents, de cordes, de guitares, de harpes, de claviers et de voix. Le répertoire va du rock progressif à la musique baroque et renaissance, en passant par la musique contemporaine expérimentale.
Parmi les compositeurs revisités par Orchestra SMS : Robert Wyatt, The Residents, Tuxedomoon, David Bowie, King Crimson, Terry Riley, Talking Heads, John Cage...



Sea Song

Excerpt from MUSICA SPARPAGLIATA 2015-2025, the video-documentary made to fix the first 10 years of the ensemble Orchestra SMS :
https://youtu.be/mgoXm6xbL0Y



Sea Song (Villa Bottini, Lucca, 28 agosto 2021)

Olga Pezzuti: flute, voice
Paolo Pasqualetti: flute
Domenico Piegaia: clarinet
Enrico Giuntini: voice, piano
Francesca Pezzuti: keyboard, voice
Gabriele Stefani, Giada Del Grande: guitars, voices
Nicolò Paganucci, Jacopo Di Grazia: guitars
Duccio Nieri: bass guitar, voice
Edgar Gomez: drums, voice

Stefano Giannotti: guitar, arrangements, direction



Lullaby For Hamza (Fondazione Banca del Monte, 13 maggio 2013)

Rebecca Franceschini, Olga Pezzuti, Emma Vicidomini: flutes, voices
Domenico Piegaia: clarinet, voice
Gabriele Stefani: sax, voice
Pietro Phelan, Benedetta Bendinelli: violins, voices
Lucia Pera, Daniele Petroni, Claudia Di Terlizzi: guitars, voices
Thiago Tiribocchi: chitarra elettrica
Sofia Paterni: harp
Enrico Giuntini, Stefano Sestani: keyboards
Duccio Nieri: bass guitar -
Matilde Giannotti: voice

Stefano Giannotti: conductor, arrangements

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When The Fire Grows Cold

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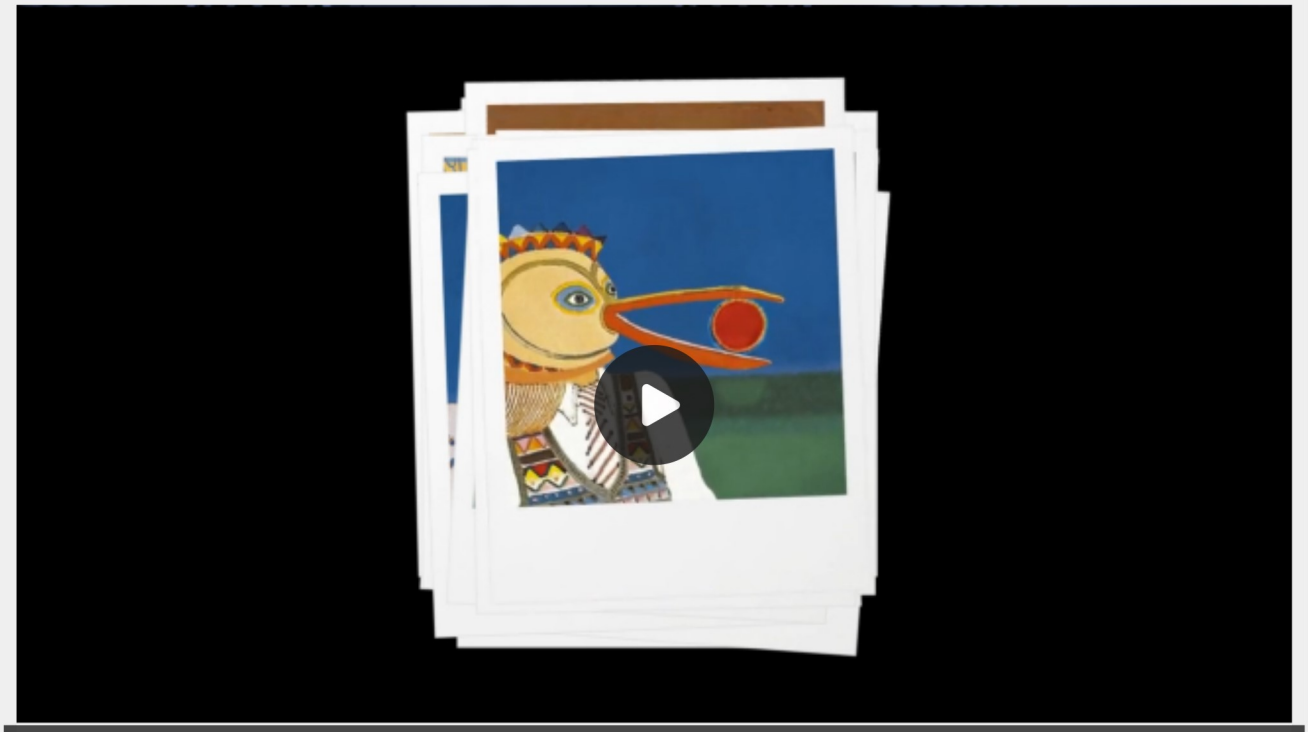
Official Music Video for "When The Fire Grows Cold" from the EP, ''Extinction!'' which features guest contributions from the great Robert Wyatt and the late great, Daevid Allen. Both founders of the ground-breaking legendary band, The Soft Machine.
(2022)
Written by Max Vanderwolf
Directed by Alden Volney

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A Visit

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An animated short film based on the artwork by Alfreda Benge and music by Robert Wyatt.
Directed and created by Shlomo "Shin Pey" Polonsky - 2022
НА ГРАНИ ЧУ Production

The Shlomo Polonsky channel

> Archives

The Unthanks - Shipbuilding - 3 versions



0:00 / 3:15

The Unthanks - Shipbuilding (2 excerpts)

- Live At Paard - The Hague - The Netherlands (March 5th, 2023)
- Dunbar Music Festival, Saturday 24 September 2022



The Unthanks - Shipbuilding (2012)

- The Unthanks performing Shipbuilding for Other Voices 2012 in St. James' Church, Dingle.

> Archives

Henry Now - live Piacenza 18/11/22

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Henry Now featuring Anna Barbazza - Little red riding hood hit the road, live Piacenza 18/11/22.

- John Greaves
- Fred Frith
- Chris Cutler
- Tim Hodkingson

in concerto.

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John Greaves & Friends - Piacenza - 5 Agosto 2023



0:00 / 5:36

- Little red riding hood hit the road -



Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road

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ROBERT WYATT WITH FRIENDS - LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD HIT THE ROAD (LIVE 1974)

Part of the full length animated film "LITTLE RED CONCERT, 1974" based on the music from Robert Wyatt's Drury Lane Theatre performance, September 8, 1974 Directed and created by Shlomo Polonsky.

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Play It Again! à Paris 8 : Rock Bottom - 1974-2024



Chaque année, l'atelier **Play It Again !** dirigé par **Guillaume Gilles** immerge les étudiant.e.s de master en Musique-Musicologie de l'université de Paris 8 dans l'introspection d'un album historique de l'histoire de la pop pour célébrer le cinquantenaire de sa sortie. En partant de l'analyse de l'album, l'atelier retranscrit la musique pour en proposer une réinterprétation live originale et inédite.

Le 12 juin 2024 a donc eu lieu le concert de restitution de **Rock Bottom** dans l'amphithéâtre de l'université à St-Denis (93).

Durée : 41:43

Musiciens :

- Eliot Allegrini - violoncelle, looper
- Guillaume Gilles - piano, orgue philicorda
- Augustin Lavault - basse électrique
- Mathias Rivera De Hoyos - guitare - électrique



- Romain Rongier - batterie, voix
- Garance Schirmann - saxophone alto
- Vivien Sladic - voix

Le songbook de Rock Bottom est ici.

Une version HD (6 Go) du concert est téléchargeable ici.

> Archives

Dondestan for Palestine

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> Archives



Robert Wyatt - Dondestan
Video : Dave Larder (2025)

"I made this video following conversations with both Robert Wyatt and Alfreda Benge. It illustrates the dangers of being born in countries deemed unimportant by major powers. It also illustrates how inhumane the human race has become."

> Archives

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BBC Radiophonic Workshop Meets Soft Machine



On August 17th, 1970 the Soft Machine collaborated with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, legendary for its electronic music and soundtracks, and best known for Delia Derbyshire's realization of Ron Grainger's theme Doctor Who (1963). Subsequent sessions at Olympic Sound Studio occurred on August 27th, and again at the Radiophonic Workshop, Maida Vale, London, on September 1st. The complete program was broadcast October 6th, 1970 on the Radio 3 program 'Study Session'. The following transcript, taken from a lo-fidelity off-air recording, illustrates the willingness of Soft Machine to experiment with electronic effects in their musical sphere.

In my last program we looked at the techniques and facilities used in the modern recording studio. In this

program were going to find out how musicians set about using them during the recording session. We invited the Soft Machine to collaborate with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and to create a piece of music especially for this programme. So now you are invited to sit in on the various stages of the production sequence. The first thing is to get everybody together to investigate the equipment in the Radiophonic Workshop, and that is where we are now. It's quite a large meeting; there are the four members of Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt the drummer, Hugh Hopper, bass guitar, Mike Ratledge, keyboard, and Elton Dean, alto saxophone. Then there's Delia Derbyshire and Brian Hodgson from the Radiophonic Workshop, and sound technician Paddy Kingsland and myself, I'm going to produce the piece of music, and produce the program, David Epps.

The idea is to decide on the musical material to be used and what electronic effects can be incorporated into the piece. Also we need to decide on the method of recording, so the best use can be made at the sixteen track facilities at Olympic Sound Studio. At the moment the group is listening to its taped sound samples, in fact, you may have noticed a snatch of Doctor Who music a moment ago. After this they'll be investigating some of the equipment. And I know one of the things that will interest them is the VCS3 Machine, or the voltage control studio. This is a fairly small but extremely versatile piece of equipment. It produces sound from oscillators. It generates a wide range of effects trough its interaction of its three basic sounds: The Sine Wave, The Square Wave and this which is called Noise (all demonstrated sequentially). Using these an unlimited number of sounds can be produced, much in the same way that colour's can be blended from the primaries red, yellow and blue (demonstrated example). In addition of course pitch can be varied, by slide or step. And the various characteristics of a sound, its attack and decay for instance, can be modified by the Voltage Control system. The possibilities in fact seem endless. All this investigation will obviously take some time, so we'll brake off now until we've finished experimenting here. And then I'll ask David to talk to the group, to find out what effects they've decided to use.



David - You've decided on what piece to use. I believe it's even got a title. Robert, what's it called?

Robert - It's called Eammon Andrews. It was conceived as a link piece, between numbers, that's how it started out.

David - You play long pieces with links in between.

Robert - We used the name Eammon Andrews as an affectionate, but we hope, witty reference.

David - Now its original shape, was what, what sort of structure, Mike?

Mike - The structure hasn't changed that much. It started off with a very simple tune in 5/4, then used to have a passage in 9/8, which then goes back into the reprise of the tune. We've included the 9/8 section in the beginning, as well as in the middle, to give it some kind of shape and form.

David - And you used to use how many instruments?

Mike - Three

David - So for this you've added the sax.

Mike - Yeah

David - Right. Now wondering around this afternoon you've seen all kinds of equipment, and I believe you've come up with three things you want to use in the new version, Mike.

Mike- Mine is playing the keyboard through the VCS3, with two tones tuned an interval of a tri-tone.

David - Well let's listen to that first

(demonstration)

David - Now Hugh, you've chosen a rather different device, in fact one where the frequency or pitch of the note is changed. I better explain what happens first. If I understand it right, the original sound is altered in pitch, either up or down, and at the same time the sound of it changes. So that when this is used in conjunction with the delayed tape echo, the treated sound gets fed round and round and round in a circle and it sets up a sort of spiral of sound. So every single note you play you get this spiral effect.

(demonstration)



Hugh - The actual effect doesn't really sound like a bass guitar at all. You get a lot of high harmonics coming off. It's difficult to play the original because you hear all these different notes coming off of it. I suppose you would get used to it eventually.

David - Elton, the same with you, saxophone with a different sort of frequency shift device.
Elton - Yeah, one doesn't have to play very much with it going on. It does the work for you, and on this piece with a long bar you get the phrase at the beginning of the bar. The machine will do the work for the rest of the bar.

(demonstration)

David - Well, we've obviously got plenty of new techniques and sounds in this new piece, so I better leave you all to think about them before the next session, which is down at Olympic Studios next Wednesday.

(the program resumes with music under speech)

David - As you can no doubt hear we are down at the studio. Let's just find out what stage we have reached with the creation of this piece of music? Mike.

Mike - So we got the basic structure straight, and the areas that we're going to leave free so that we can add electronic effects afterward. And the basic structure is very simple to allow for a kind of maximum use of the facilities we've got after we put down the basic track.

David - The basic track will consist of what?

Mike - It's a very simple tune. It starts off with virtually acoustic bass, and piano, for which the electronic sound is going to modified later on, and more and more electronics are brought into it until it builds up, and then the tune comes in, which is in a different time signature, 5/4. It then goes into a freer area which is again in 9, comes back into the tune again, then ends up on this riff.

David - Have you formulated any ideas on what sort of distortion or electronic effects you're going to use yet, or are we still working on ideas?

Mike - Well at the moment we've got various procedures that we know we're going to use and maybe more will come up once we got the backing track done and the electric effects we want to use. I mean it might not work out so we'll have to write something else. Things always get suggested when you are recording that won't get suggested when you're sitting around thinking about it.

David - Fine then, so we're going to put the rhythm tracks down now. That's drums, bass, organ. Anything from the sax or wind instrument at all? (inaudible group comment) Nothing yet that's an interesting point (chuckles) So we're going to start recording, on sixteen track, splitting up the instruments, drums, bass and organ. Let's listen to what they're going to put down first of all.

(The Soft Machine then performs Eammon Andrews, but the performance breaks down one minute later, and the band members discuss the arrangement. The performance resumes, but again breaks down as band members resume discussion regarding direction.)

David - We'll obviously iron out these problems in due course. So when we've recorded a good rhythm track that everybody is happy with, I'll play you some of it.

(the music resumes briefly)

David - It took 30 minutes to record this track to our satisfaction, and we used a layout as follows; track 1, bass drum; track 2, top kit drums, track 3, bass guitar; track 4, the VCS machine; track 5, electric piano. Now the next stage is to add a second bass line using a frequency shift device, then on another track we'll

add the saxophone on a different frequency shift. We demonstrated this effect at the Radiophonic Workshop you remember. When we reach this stage, I'll play a section to you. The group will have heard it all of course, and then you can hear what they think about it. Here's the first mix.

Now that you've all heard both the basic rhythm track, which I think you were very happy, and also the first mix with the bass and the saxophone added. It would be quite interesting I think to hear what you think about them. I rather sense that the mix isn't what you're after, Elton.

Elton - I didn't like the bass track, it was sort of irrelevant to what was going on from the basic track.

David - Any reason why you don't think it works?

Elton - Well it's not (unintelligible), it was the way it was used probably more than anything else.

David - Hugh?

Hugh - Well in fact the trouble is that the actual notes that were being played by the bass are in strict time, and when you had the tape delay put on to that it delayed everything by a certain amount which produced on the top of the basic rhythm track a very sort of weird rhythmic thing. And there are certainly delays on the higher harmonics, you couldn't really hear anything. It just became a mudded sound; it lost all the basic rhythm of it.

David - So what you want really is for the time of the delay to be altered for you and it would be easier then to play against it

Hugh - Yes, and I think the bass should be simpler phrases. At the time we did very similar phrases to the first basic track which is quite, quite a full rhythmic thing. And I think in the future we must do a much more simple thing.

David - Mike?

Mike - I agree, I think that was the problem, apart from the physical difficulty of actually having to play something and hear something completely different in the cans (headphones).

David - This takes a lot of getting used to?

Mike - Yeah.

David - Robert, it didn't really affect you, but what did you think when you heard it?

Robert - I like the bass effect very much when I heard it on its own. You know I like to use something like that, that effect on the bass, but in a different way. When I heard the basic track, but together… they weren't, you know…

David - Yes, putting the effect against the basic track, so you've got to match somehow and these two didn't.

Robert - Yeah that's what I thought.

David - Well there's plenty more to do this afternoon then, so perhaps we'll break for lunch, and start again at 2:15.

David - One of the things that came up in discussion over lunch was the VCS machine effects. It was thought we might be able to make some alteration in the electronic treatments, so it would help to blend them with the live treatments. Also, Hugh would like to improve the sound of the bass guitar, and add a rhythmic bass figure at the beginning of the piece using the frequency shift device. Mike wants to reinforce the tune by adding another track using the VCS machine again. And finally, Elton has several ideas for his saxophone track, stimulated by hearing the playback. So we're now going to add these tracks. We'll start by improving the bass sound. You'll hear me adjusting the sounds of the bass and drums. OK Hugh let's run the new track and hear you new bass sounds.

(one minute of music)

After this, for the introduction, we overdubbed the bass using the frequency shift device, and reinforce the tune on the VCS. Then we put down two new saxophone tracks as an alternative to the original take. One using the phase shift, and the other via the VCS, which is operated by Robert. Altogether we took about three hours to complete this overdubbing. But before hearing this let's listen to what the group thinks of it.

Robert - I've always liked this unfinished piece, melodically, this piece of material. I wasn't happy with the range of sounds available to us to play it, which is why I thought it was a good idea to use it here, because we've never have found out a way to fully realize what the potential of our material is. So now we've got a much more dense sound and now to explore the rhythmic interest of the effects, and having the saxophone on it too, as opposed to having it a trio piece. I think if we could do it live like this, this would be the way

I'd actually choose to do it.

David - Hugh and Elton, your effects didn't come off the first time. Do you feel it's now how you would like them to sound? Hugh.

Hugh - Yeah, I think it's much better. In fact I ended up on the first section, the introduction, just playing a very simple figure across the basic rhythm, but it was a style of figure that you actually hear the delay coming off, and it didn't actually conflict too much with the basic track.

David - You've really got to plan ahead a lot to make the texture quite sparse from your point of view, cause you know that it's at least going to be doubled if not more by the machinery you use.

Hugh - Yeah, I think it's important to have somebody in the control box all the time, as one of the group, which will cause a difficulty if we're all playing in the studio. But the way we did it, in fact Mike and Robert listened and checked out how it sounded.

David - And Elton when you played an enormous amount seemed to be added by the machine. Do you find this difficult to do?

Elton - No, I quite enjoyed putting it on. In a fashion it does work, If I'd been playing in thin images I don't think it would've worked.

David - Can you predict to a certain extent what the combined sound is going to be after a time?

Elton - Umm, after a time, I'd have to spend much more time with the actual machine, got to learn it more. As it was it was more off the cuff than anything else.

David - Mike, how do you feel about any future plans? Can you make use of this sort of equipment and does it in fact extend you and inspire you?

Mike - I think it's like any area of sound, you know, you can use them and you can use them well, but it takes a long time to familiarize yourself with the techniques, enough to actually not be victimized by the machinery that you're playing with. I think in this case we were lucky, in it just about worked, but obviously if we'd had more time and we got to know the machine better, what we can do with it, it would have been a much more satisfactory result. And I hope we can, you know, use the equipment later on and get to know it.

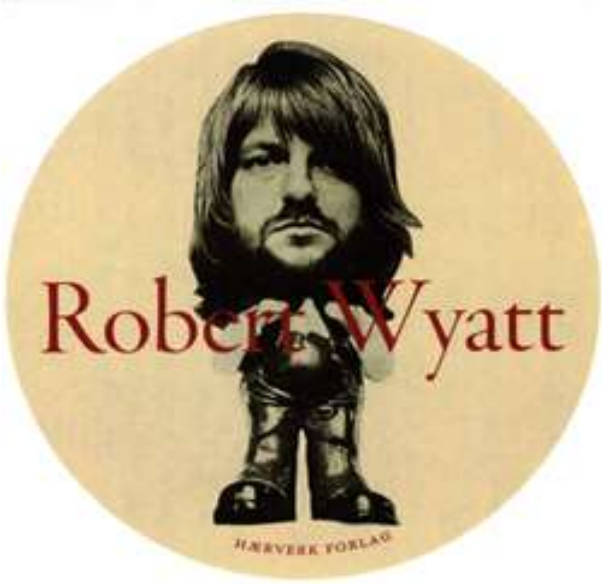
Robert - Yeah, I'd say it worked. The possibilities of the machine are enormous and we knew we wouldn't possibly be able to really do it justice on a sort of vast scale. All we could do is choose certain things that we had time to really familiarize ourselves with. Within that framework I was very happy with it.

David - I think we've all found this an extremely interesting project to work on, and I hope you've enjoyed hearing the group at work. Let's end this program then with the final result of all our efforts. The first complete performance of the Soft Machine piece, Eammon Andrews.

[The Soft Machine Sound - An electronic Acoustic Experience Examined - published in 2009 by Henie Onstad Art Centre and Reel Recordings].

The fiftieth anniversary of the release of **Rock Bottom** is drawing to a close (I'm writing this on 29 December 2024) and I received this jubilant text from Xavier Béal on **Book Bottom**, a book by Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Øivind Hånes, published in Norway this autumn.

It occurred to me that only one book (Philippe Gonin's **Rock Bottom**) had so far dealt exclusively with Robert Wyatt's masterpiece. This Book Bottom is therefore the second, but doubtless not the last, so many possible entries and poetic revelations are to be found in the opus published in July 1974...



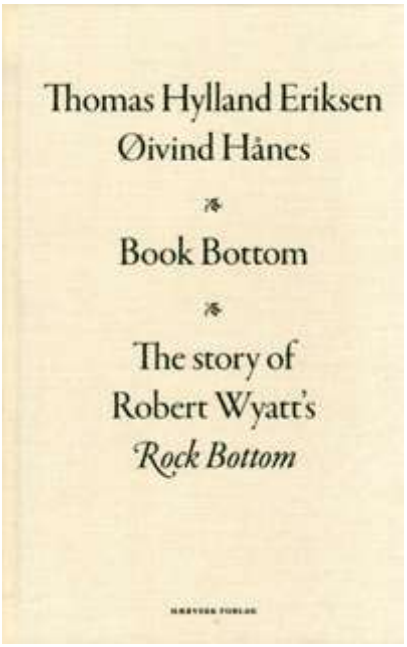
Robert Wyatt Book Bottom, The story of Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom Haerverk Forlag 2024

L'année 2024 a bien failli se terminer sans qu'un véritable hommage soit fait du cinquantenaire de l'album solo Rock Bottom de Robert Wyatt paru chez Virgin Records le 26 juillet 1974.

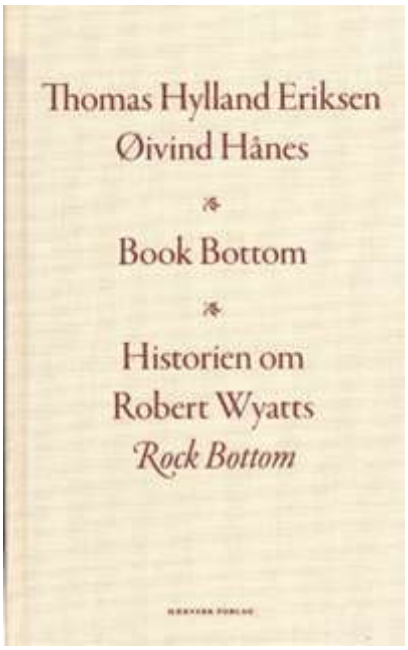
Pourtant, venu de Norvège, un très joli livre blanc grège de 112 pages, fait à quatre mains (Thomas Hylland Eriksen et Oivind Hanes), paru tout d'abord en norvégien, ensuite en anglais fait le tour de la question (le précédent ouvrage important était celui de Philippe Gonin (68 pages) paru chez Discogonie/Densité en 2017 et curieusement inconnu de la biblio des auteurs norvégiens).

Cet album, consacré en 1974 par un prix de l'académie Charles Cros en France a été analysé de nombreuses fois et l'histoire de cette « exploration des fonds marins de Robert bloqué à jamais sur sa chaise » est archi connue, de son élaboration durant

l'hiver 1972 (soit avant le terrible accident de 1973 à Londres) en résidence à Venise avec l'offre de la Gem Riviera (combo organ) par la muse Alifie car Robert était un peu mélancolique pas mal désœuvré et tout à fait inoccupé après le naufrage de son précédent groupe Matching Mole, jusqu'à la réalisation avec un producteur attentionné (Nick Mason) et des amis musiciens virtuoses Hugh Hopper et Richard Sinclair, indispensables et attentifs, mélanges magnifiques d'ex Soft Machine, Caravan et de cuivres qui tous, semblent perpétuer un tant soit peu la flamme de Matching Mole mais sans s'y inscrire véritablement et en déclinant en solo l'œuvre de l'ex batteur/chantant depuis les premiers albums de Soft Machine sous influence mid tempo d'avant-garde de Coltrane, Mingus revendiqués par Wyatt, de mélopées au bord de l'effondrement de Van Morrison revendiquées plutôt par Alfie avec des textes hommages à double ou triple sens à la Lewis Carroll ou Alfred Jarry.



L'ouvrage des deux compères norvégiens est divisé en pas mal de chapitres qui font avancer l'analyse en permettant de multiples ramifications, notamment l'univers de Robert Wyatt à la fois rattaché de loin à la galaxie de Canterbury (Hatfield and the North), tout en s'en détachant avec discernement, ou en piochant dans les marges du mouvement (Henry Cow), et en poursuivant les correspondances entre les musiciens sus nommés avec les invités de l'album : Laurie Allen aux drums, Gary Windo à la clarinette, Fred Frith viola et Mongezi Feza à la trompette, ainsi que la relative importance de Virgin Records à l'époque, même si le grand patron de ce label se moquait éperdument du côté musical de son affaire.



On passe rapidement à l'exercice de fond à savoir l'analyse morceau par morceau et par ordre (face A face B) des six titres de l'album, sans oublier l'architecture de ceux-ci dans l'ensemble puisque Rock Bottom est tout sauf un assemblage de chansons mises bout à bout (on peut parler ici de multi-concept album), les auteurs de l'ouvrage ne négligeant aucune piste, depuis l'influence des musiciens sud-africains auprès de Wyatt, jusqu'aux apports de la poésie chantée/récitée, inclassifiable d'Ivor Cutler, les savoureux mélanges des soupirs de Robert à Alfie, bien aimée et indispensable (qualifiée malicieusement à la fois de garde-manger (larder) et de diner (mégère et amante !), partly fish, partly porpoise (marsoin ce qui est pas vraiment flatteur !).., et de sirène complice et mystérieuse (c'est un peu mieux), sous-marine et enfantine, mi vierge, mi sorcière, pardonnant tout mais pas oublieuse des excès de son gaillard de mari) qui avoue ses «petits péchés » en partant dans les aigus emplis de claviers à la fin de Last Sraw sur un We're not Alone terrassant.

Le tout de cet ouvrage limpide et argumenté, foisonnant et creusé comme un sujet d'étude très révérencieux, mais pas trop, un peu facétieux, mais plutôt rayonnant, gardant son sérieux comme un vrai pataphysicien, réellement documenté, sans pour autant alourdir la lecture, assemblant les différents musiciens et protagonistes de l'album intervenant toujours doucement et discrètement aux bons moments de la lecture (comme pour une belle mise en scène ouvragée et complice).

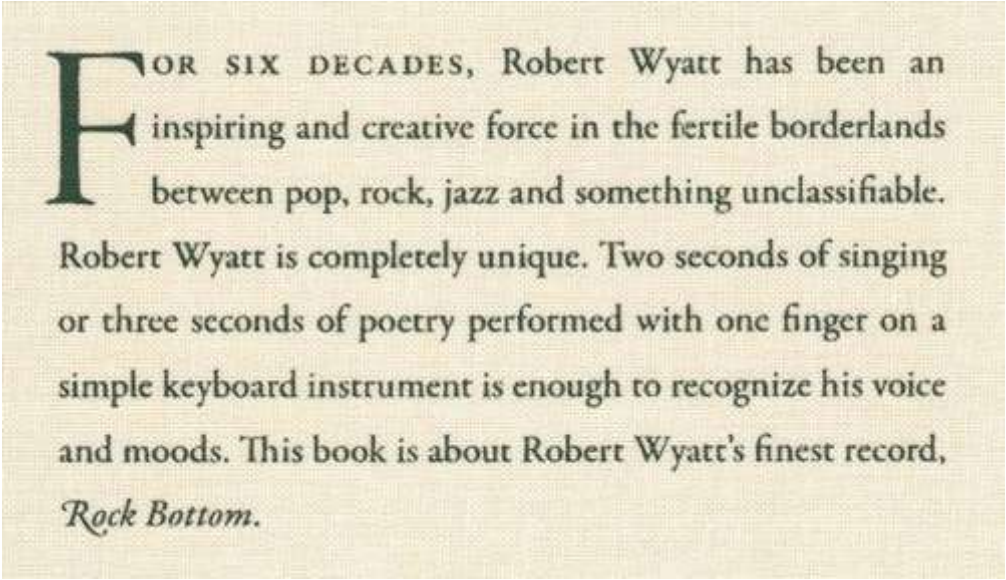
L'ouvrage se termine par la séquence amusante et amusée de l'achat de l'album par les 2 auteurs, curieusement pas lors de sa sortie (1979 pour l'un et un peu par hasard pour le deuxième).



Un livre dont on sent à la fois la révérence, le respect et la déférence des deux auteurs ainsi que la volonté affirmée d'un hommage amoureusement écrit venant de bien loin (la Norvège c'est de l'autre côté du Danemark qui lui-même est un peu en dehors de l'univers anglosaxon bien que ce soit la même Mer du Nord (entrée maritime importante dans l'ouvrage) qui est un des liens qui fait communiquer tous ces pays entre eux avec Robert Wyatt et son splendide rock bottom multi-sens au beau milieu.

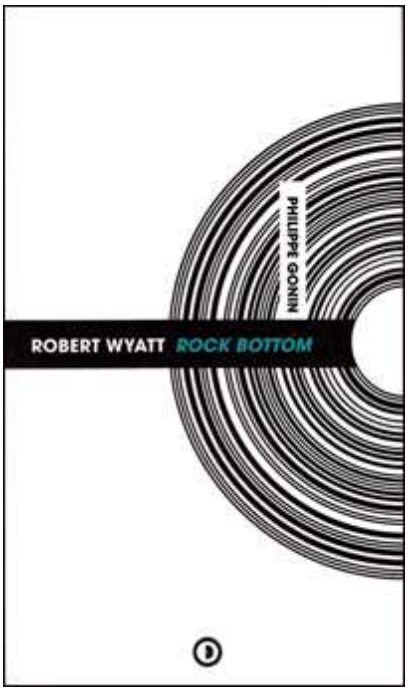
Xavier Béal

To order Book Bottom : jege1001@gmail.com





Robert Wyatt Rook Bottom, Discogonie 2017

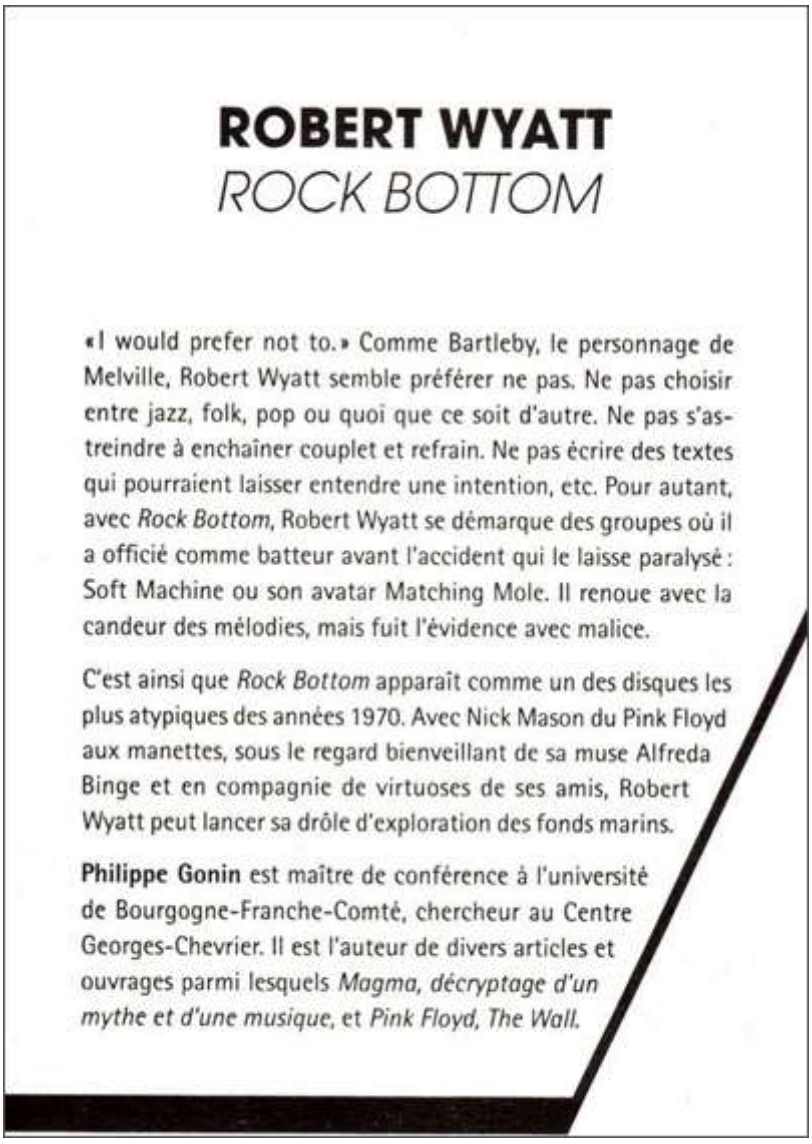


Un opuscule de 84 pages uniquement consacré à Rock Bottom. Paru en 2017 (réédition augmentée d'une vingtaine de pages en 2021) dans la Collection Discogonie (Ed. Densité) dédiée à "ces trous noirs qui opèrent trente-trois révolutions par minute", ce petit ouvrage pourrait n'être qu'une longue critique de plus de cet album au son "intemporel" comme l'écrivent si souvent les commentateurs...

Ce qui distingue cette énième tentative d'épuisement du sujet, c'est justement de tenter de mettre à jour les mécaniques et les méthodes qui ont produit ce chef d'oeuvre tout en conservant la part d'émerveillement qui submerge l'auditeur à chaque nouvelle écoute.

Philippe Gonin rappelle également avec justesse tout ce que Rock Bottom doit à Nick Mason et ce coup de chapeau n'est pas immérité !

Certes, bien des extraits d'interviews et nombre d'anecdotes citées sur la réalisation de l'album ne seront pas une révélation pour les amateurs de ce site mais l'ouvrage reste hautement recommandable pour quiconque cherche encore à percer le mystère de cette traversée solaire en eaux profondes...



ROBERT WYATT
ROCK BOTTOM

«I would prefer not to.» Comme Bartleby, le personnage de Melville, Robert Wyatt semble préférer ne pas. Ne pas choisir entre jazz, folk, pop ou quoi que ce soit d'autre. Ne pas s'astreindre à enchaîner couplet et refrain. Ne pas écrire des textes qui pourraient laisser entendre une intention, etc. Pour autant, avec *Rock Bottom*, Robert Wyatt se démarque des groupes où il a officié comme batteur avant l'accident qui le laisse paralysé : Soft Machine ou son avatar Matching Mole. Il renoue avec la candeur des mélodies, mais fuit l'évidence avec malice.

C'est ainsi que *Rock Bottom* apparaît comme un des disques les plus atypiques des années 1970. Avec Nick Mason du Pink Floyd aux manettes, sous le regard bienveillant de sa muse Alfreda Binge et en compagnie de virtuoses de ses amis, Robert Wyatt peut lancer sa drôle d'exploration des fonds marins.

Philippe Gonin est maître de conférence à l'université de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, chercheur au Centre Georges-Chevrier. Il est l'auteur de divers articles et ouvrages parmi lesquels *Magma, décryptage d'un mythe et d'une musique*, et *Pink Floyd, The Wall.*

Books A-Go-Go

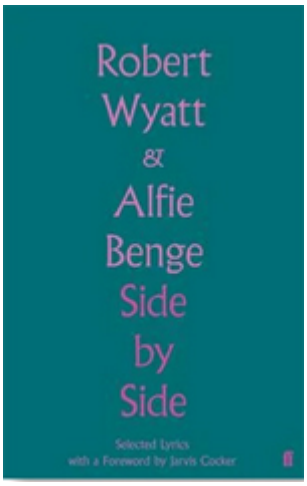
ABÉCÉDAIRE



Il existe de nombreux livres consacrés à Robert Wyatt, à Soft Machine, à Canterbury, et nous avons déjà présenté les plus fameux dans notre abécédaire.
Mais nombre d'autres évoquent parfois au détour d'un chapitre tel ou tel épisode de la carrière de Robert Wyatt, soulignent des collaborations musicales inattendues ou s'attardent sur des pépites de son répertoire...
Chaque ouvrage mérite notre attention. Ils concourent, parfois à la marge, à affiner le portrait musical et humain de notre batteur-chanteur-compositeur préféré.

REVUE NON-EXHAUSTIVE DES OUVRAGES QUI FONT LA PART BELLE
A ROBERT WYATT ET A SON OEUVRE SI PEU CLASSABLE



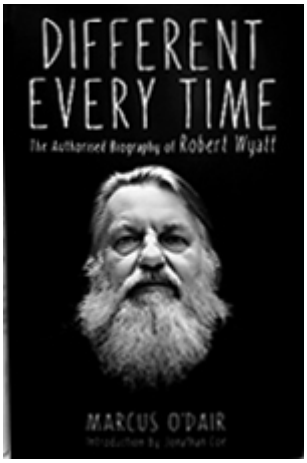


Side by Side - Robert Wyatt & Alfie Benge - Selected Lyrics
Faber (2020)

'Taken together Alfie & Robert's lyrics combine to create a humanist world-view that is at once global & particular. Take it from me: that's no mean feat.'

Jarvis Cocker

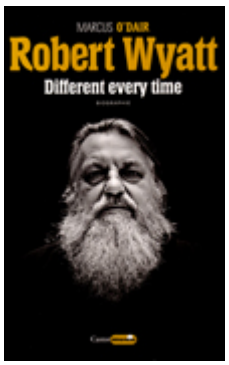
More information

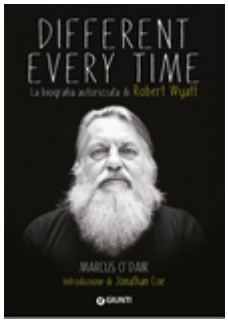


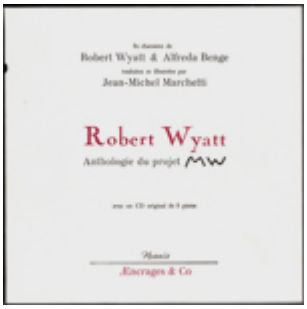
Different Every Time - The Authorized Biography Of Robert Wyatt
by Marcus O'Dair - Serpent's Tail (2019)

"If you don't believe avant-garde political music can be both playful and polemical, heartfelt and heartbreaking, you need Robert Wyatt in your life." (NME).

More information here and here.
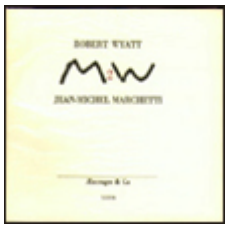






Robert Wyatt - Anthologie du projet MW (80 chansons de Robert Wyatt & Alfreda Benge traduites et illustrées par Jean-Michel Marchetti)
AEncrages & Co (2009) avec un CD original de 8 pistes.

More information

Ce volumineux ouvrage de 235 pages compile les 6 recueils édités de 1997 à 2008.





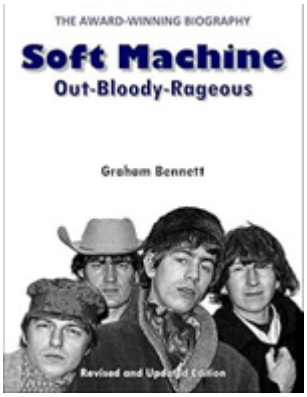


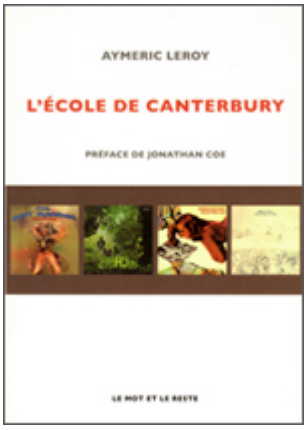


Soft Machine - Out Bloody-Rageous with forewords by Daevid Alle, Hugh Hopper and John Etheridge
by Graham Bennet - S.A.F. Publishing Ltd. (2005)

More information

Réédition et mise à jour en 2025





L'École de Canterbury - Préface de Jonathan Coe
de Aymeric Leroy - Le Mot et le Reste (2016)

La Bible (735 pages).

More information



Legends In Their Own Lunchtime : An Exploration Of The Canterbury Scene

English version of L'École de Canterbury - Cuneiform Records (2026)

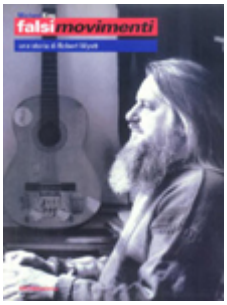
This English edition is being published 10 years after the original release.
Aymeric Leroy has added two new chapters and rewritten and expanded certain sections, particularly those covering the Soft Machine's 1966–68 period. He has also replaced many of the photos.

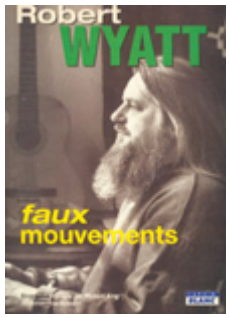
Canterbury Scene Chat! feat. Aymeric Leroy and Steve Feigenbaum (Cuneiforùm Records)

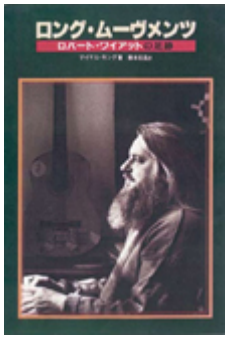


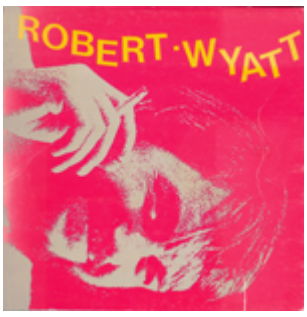
Wrong Movements - A Robert Wyatt History
by Michael King - S.A.F. Publishing Ltd. (1994)

More information



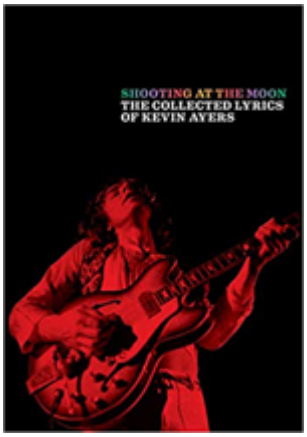






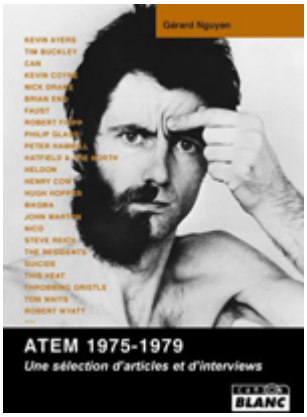
Stampa Alternativa
Pubblicazione bimestrale - Supplemento al n.3 (1987)

More information



Shooting at the Moon: The collected lyrics of Kevin Ayers
Faber Music (2019)

Très beau et volumineux recueil des textes des chansons de Kevin Ayers supervisé par sa fille Galen Ayers. Avec un avant-propos de Robert Wyatt.



ATEM 1975-1979 - Une sélection d'articles et d'interviews
de Gérard Nguyen - Camion Blanc (2010)

"De 1975 à 1979, Atem décidait de défendre les musiques de traverses et publiait 16 numéros tirés de 2 000 à 7 000 exemplaires introuvables aujourd'hui (ceux qui les possèdent les gardent précieusement)... Ce livre contient une sélection d'articles et d'interviews (dont certains inédits) sur la scène dite de Canterbury (Kevin Ayers, Hatfield and the North, Henry Cow, Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt) ... / ... Trente ans plus tard, ***Atem 1975-1979*** *permet de nous replonger dans l'âge d'or de la musique..."*



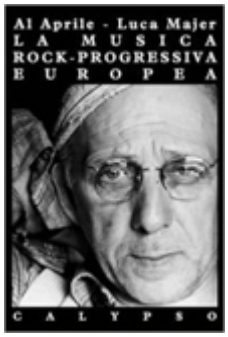
Opinioni e suoni del XX secolo. A colloquio con Robert Wyatt
di Michele Giuseppone - Crac Edizioni (2021)

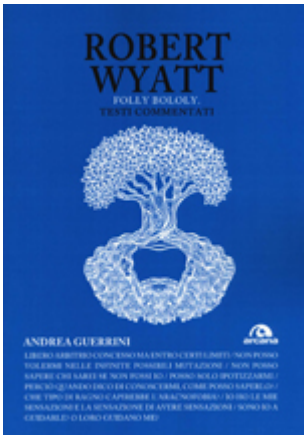
More information



La musica rock-progressiva europa
de Al Aprile - Calypso (1979)

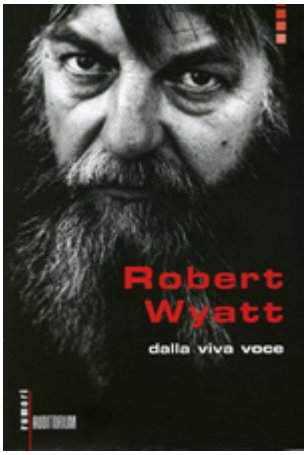
La photo de couverture avec Robert Wyatt et Dagmar Krause a été prise lors du concert d'Henry Cow à Rome le 27 juin 1975 sur la Piazza Navona.
Une nouvelle édition sera publiée en 2009 avec Ivor Cutler en couverture.





Robert Wyatt. Folly Bololy, testi commentati
de Andrea Guerrini - Arcana Edizioni (2019)

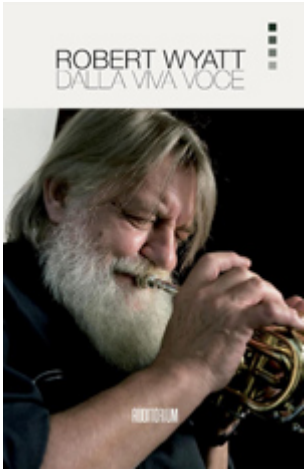
"...Un uomo mutante nella forma e nei contenuti, dalla personalità oscura e luminosa, che abbraccia linguaggi altrui per formarne uno proprio, assoluto e inconfondibile. Dall'ascolto di una musica fatta di suoni liberi associati a canoni variabili, e dei testi – liberi pensieri associati a lettere e parole nuove – si traccia un percorso che a partire dall'uomo-artista Wyatt, bipede batterista e autore incatenato, abbraccia la sua società e il suo tempo, del quale egli si è fatto voce cristallina, spezzata e sincera."

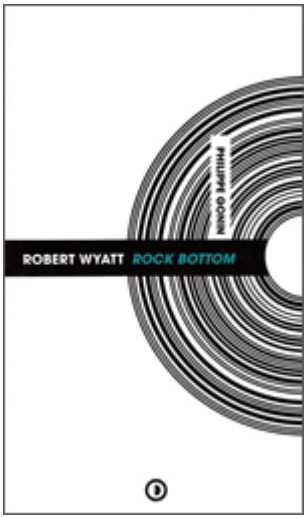


Robert Wyatt - Dalla Viva Voce
Editions Auditorium - Collection Rumori (Milan - 2009).

More information

Robert Wyatt - Dalla Viva Voce - Nuova ediz.
Editions Auditorium (2023).





Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom
de Philippe Gonin - Densité - collection Discogonie (2017 - réédition augmentée en 2021)

"Explorons cet univers, celui de Rock Bottom, album unique en son temps et qui le demeure aujourd'hui. Cherchons ce que ces chansons ne sont pas. Ne les rangeons pas dans des boîtes qui, très vite, deviendraient trop étroites. Mais explorons-les, traquons-en les sentiers cachés. Et n'oublions pas que si notre regard vient en scruter les méandres, ce n'est pas pour en exorciser le charme mais, bien au contraire, pour tenetr, par une écoute renouvelée, d'en multiplier peut-être, la magie."

More information



Soft Machine 1968-1981
de Carlo Pasceri - Dischi da leggere vol. 11 (2017)

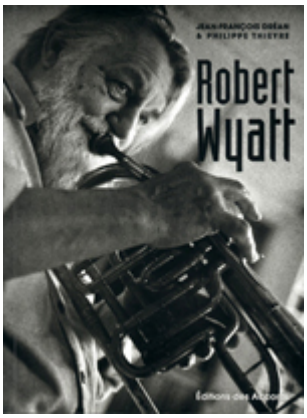
La collection Dischi da leggere ("Disques à lire") propose des discographies raisonnées des grands groupes de la "rock-génération"ou l'analyse détaillée d'un album icônique. On y trouve Pink Floyd, Genesis, King Crimson mais aussi Deep Purple, Jethro Tull, Led Zeppelin ou même Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Return To Forever...
Le Soft Machine avec RW couvre les 72 premières pages soit presque la moitié de l'ouvrage.

L'auteur est musicien et cela se lit à défaut de s'entendre car la structure et l'orchestration des morceaux sont parfois finement analysées et je regrette alors que ma connaissance de l'italien soit aussi sommaire...



June 1st 1974
de Dave Thompson - (2013)

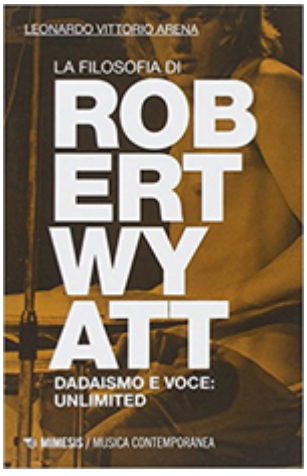
Auteur prolifique (plus de 100 livres au compteur) pour concert mythique, cet ouvrage part d'une idée lumineuse : tracer la destinée musicale des artistes qui, le 1er juin 1974, donnèrent au Rainbow Théâtre de Londres un concert d'autant plus mémorable qu'il réunissait des musiciens aux origines et aux styles aussi distincts que Nico, Kevin Ayers, Brian Eno, John Cale et Robert Wyatt (sans oublier John "Rabbit" Bundrick, Ollie Halsall, Archie Legget, Eddie Sparrow, Liza Strike et les Chanter Sisters).
Sur près de 320 pages, Dave Thomson parcourt les discographies et les comptes-rendus de concert des membres de ce supergroupe d'un soir et met à jour des ramifications qui ont perduré tout au long de leurs carrières respectives...



Robert Wyatt
de Jean-François Dréan & Philippe Thieyre - Éditions des Accords (2009)

"*Quand des gens m'arrêtent dans la rue et me posent la question rituelle : êtes-vous Robert Wyatt ? Je réponds: "I used to be Robert Wyatt" (J'ai été Robert Wyatt).*"

More information



La filosofia di Robert Wyatt - Dadaismo E Voce : Unlimited
de Leonardo Vittorio Arena - Mimesis Edizioni (2014)

Petit opuscule de 70 pages qui cherche à relier l'oeuvre de Robert Wyatt à des philosophes et à leur courant de pensée en s'appuyant sur les nombreuses déclarations politiques et réflexions humanistes que RW a pu faire au cours d'interviews donnés à la presse spécialisée. On repère effectivement au fil des pages les noms de Marx, Engels, Deleuze, Guattari, Marcuse, Stirner, Mao, Nietzsche, Schuon, Heidegger, Gramsci, Hume, Kant, Einstein, Orwell, Dawkins, Platon, Schopenhauer parmi d'autres... (mais pas Spinoza !)

Ce qui, en 70 pages relève tout de même de l'exploit !

La démonstration philosophique est-elle concluante ? je n'en sais trop rien (mon italien m'interdit de donner un quelconque avis autorisé) mais - soyons taquins - cela nous change des sempiternelles références à Syd Barrett et à Jimi Hendrix et les noms de ces géants sonnent dans le contexte agréablement à nos oreilles éberluées.

(A noter dans la même collection: La filosofia di Brian Eno, Franck Zappa, John Cage, David Sylvian, Monk, degli U2 etc.)





Simply Not Cricket I et II
Catalogue du jazz britannique - 1964-1994 Vol.1
Catalogue du jazz britannique - 1995-2000 Vol.2
de Philippe Renaud

35 ans de jazz britannique en plus de 400 pages. Une bible en 2 volumes référençant près de 4 000 albums que Philippe Renaud prolongera et approfondira avec les 270 numéros de la revue Improjazz qu'il publiera de 1993 à 2020.

Un travail d'archives et de passion bien résumé dans l'introduction dans laquelle Robert Wyatt est vivement remercié pour sa contribution au titre de l'ouvrage !



La famille Soft Machine
de J.J. Brunin et P. Dufroc - Fusion (1976)

"De plus, il est à noter que le groupe était doté d'un système d'amplification de plusieurs centaines de Wyatt...".

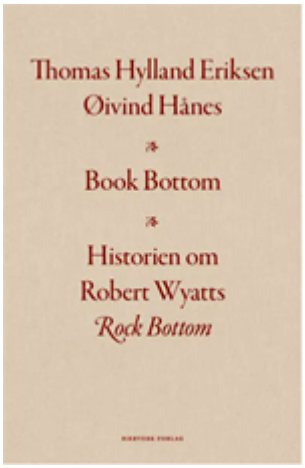
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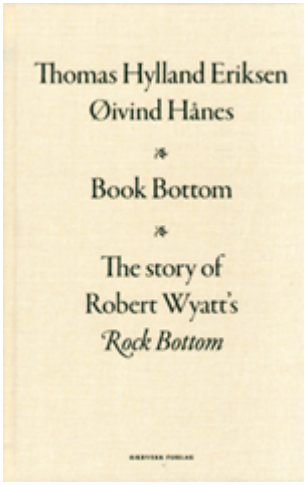


shakespeare dans une baignoire suivi de **légèrement wyatt**
de Pierre Soletti - Dernier Télégramme (2022)

"Le disque
a fini de tourner
sur le plateau
la mer a rangé
ses cheveux
nous voilà
revenus sur terre
sensiblement
différent"

More information





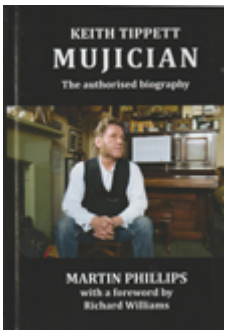
Book Bottom - Historien om Robert Wyatts Rock Bottom
Book Bottom - The story of Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom
av Thomas Hylland Eriksen & Øivind Hånes - HÆRVERK (2024)

" I seks tiår har Robert Wyatt vært en inspirator og kreativ kraft i de fruktbare grenseområdene mellom pop, rock, jazz og noe uklassifiserbart. Robert Wyatt er er helt unik. To sekunders sang eller tre sekunders famlende poesi fremført med en finger på et enkelt tangentinstrument er nok til å gjenkjenne stemmen og stemningene hans. Denne boka er om Robert Wyatts fineste plate, Rock Bottom. "

"For six decades, Robert Wyatt has been an inspiring and creative force in the fertile borderlands between pop, rock, jazz and something unclassifiable. Robert Wyatt is completely unique. Two seconds of singing or three seconds of poetry performed with one finger on a simple keyboard instrument is enough to recognize his voicie and moods. This book is about Robert Wyatt's finest record, Rock Bottom."

More information

Impossible de citer tous les livres évoquant Robert Wyatt plus ou moins brièvement tant sa productivité protéiforme a croisé le chemin de tant d'artistes... essayons quand même:



Keith Tippett - Mujician - The authorised biography (+ 2 CD)
by Martin Phillips - Jazz In Britain (2026)

Grand par son format et par son ambition, cet ouvrage de 328 pages en édition limitée de 1000 exemplaires retrace le parcours complet du musicien britannique: du Centipede composé de 50 musiciens créé alors qu'il avait à peine 20 ans aux multiples collaborations en passant par ses dernières œuvres de musique de chambre et ses récitals en solo...
Un double CD d'enregistrements inédits - un récital solo de 1984 capté à Exeter et un concert de Tippett's Ark au 100 Club de Londres en 1976 - offre ainsi "une preuve sonore directe de ce que le livre décrit avec éloquence".



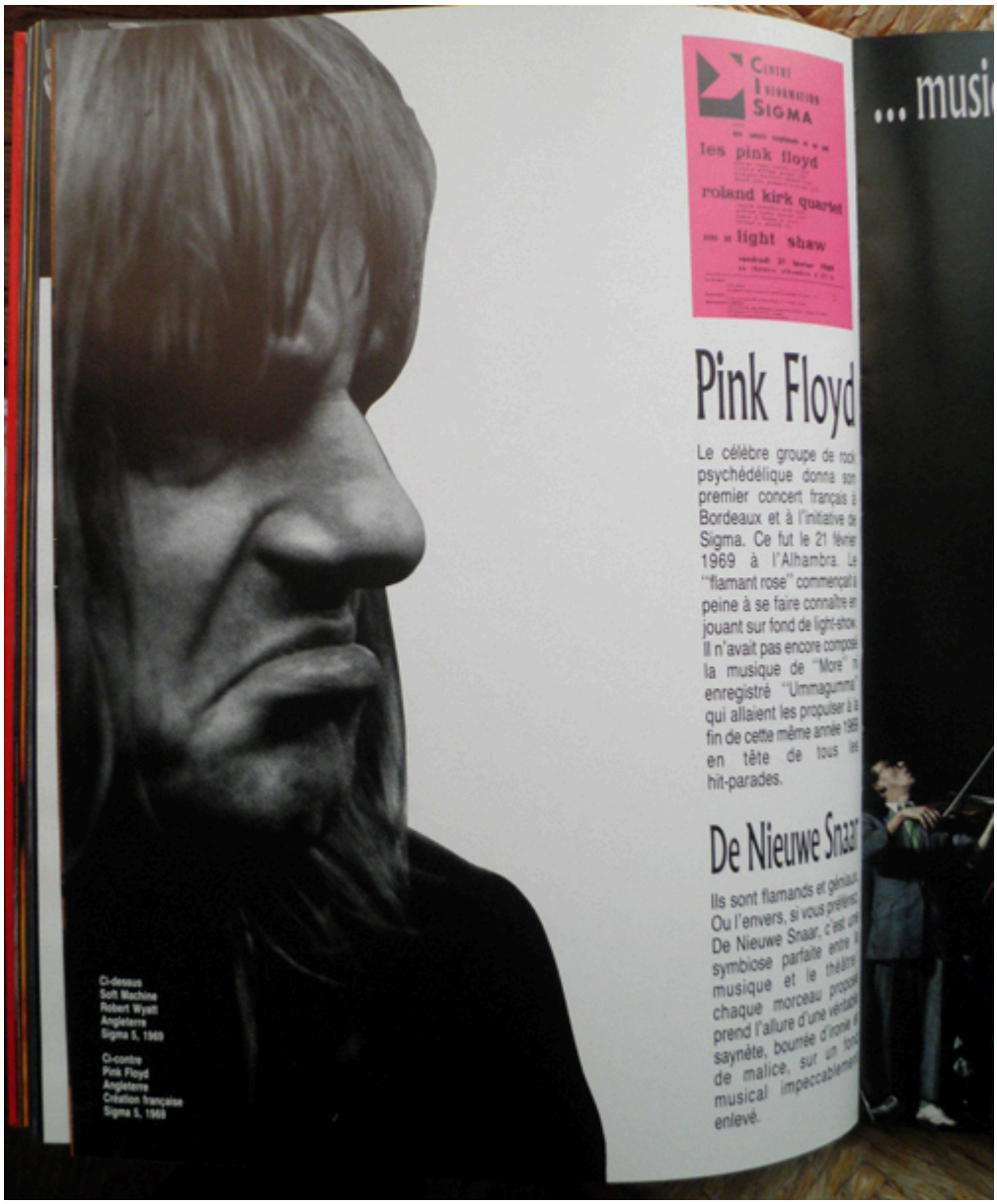
Une histoire musicale du rock
de Christophe Pirenne - Fayard (2011)

Monumental ouvrage de 800 pages dans lequel Robert Wyatt et Soft Machine sont cités à plusieurs reprises.
"La musique de Soft Machine se distingue par une forme du rock mâtinée de pratiques d'improvisation et d'interprétation empruntées au be-bop et à ses dérivés. Robert Wyatt (batterie et chant) et Mike Ratledge (claviers) n'ont d'ailleurs jamais caché leur inclination pour des artistes tels que Charlie Parker ou John Coltrane..."



Sigma - L'Aventure d'un Festival - 25 ans pour une culture visionnaire à Bordeaux
Editions Sigma (1990)

Auto-célébration d'un Festival (1965-1996) qui a réuni dès ses premières éditions des artistes hors-normes tel Soft Machine en 1969 pour Sigma 5. Deux entrées consacrées à Soft Machine, dont la célèbre photo "Robert Wyatt à la grimace" égalemnt publiée dans l'article du magazine Rock & Folk rendant compte de l'évènement.

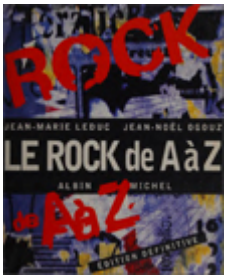




Happening elephant « Guinch'Experiment » Sigma 5, 1969 musique Soft Machine projections lumineuses, Jenkin Warrenstructures gonflables, Jeffrey Shaw.

« La semaine de recherche et d'action culturelle prendra fin ce soir à l'Alhambra-Casino où doit se dérouler une manifestation assez peu banale, un bal expérimental appelé « Guinch'Experiment » avec groupes de pop' music,
Ronnie Scott band et Soft Machine. Les danseurs-spectateurs pourront apprécier les images psychédéliques, de Warren, light show, projetées sur les
flancs d'un éléphant vivant qui, dans la salle, « jouera » avec les énormes structures gonflables de Jeffrey Shaw »

Le Figaro, Novembre 1969



Le Rock de A à Z
de Jean-Marie Leduc et Jean-Noël Ogouz - Albin Michel (1999)

Une somme de 808 pages dont une page sur Soft Machine, une autre sur Robert Wyatt et une petite notule sur Matching Mole.



Synths, Sax & Situationists (The French Musical Underground 1968-1978)
by Ian Thompson - Round Table Books (2025)

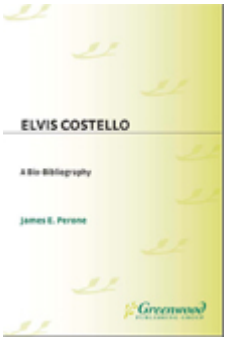
Peut-on écrire sur l'Underground à la française sans évoquer Robert Wyatt ? Non bien sûr, et c'est la raison de cet ouvrage dans cette page....

Plus d'information



Elvis Costello - Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink
by Elvis Costello - Blue Rider Press (2015)

Many pages devoted to Shipbuilding...



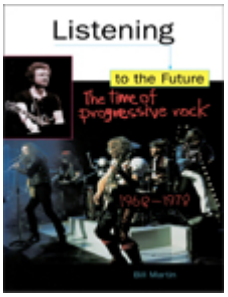
Elvis Costello - A Bio-Bibliography
by James E. Perone - Greenwood (1998)

Robert Wyatt's version of Shipbuilding is well represented among the 800 bibliographic references and the complete discography of his commercially released recordings.



Complicated Shadows - The Life and Music of Elvis Costello
by Graeme Thomson - Canongate Books (2005)

Several pages devoted to the genesis and reception of Shipbuilding.



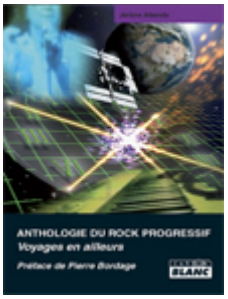
Listening to the Future - The time of progressive rock 1968-1978
by Bill Martin - Open Court (1998)

"Since the late seventies, histories of rock music have either ignored or marginalized the progressive rock era. In part, this has occurred because rock music criticism has taken an almost completely sociological turn, with little or no interest in musical form itself. In "Listening to the Future", Bill Martin argues that it is a musical and political mistake to ignore this period of tremendous creativity, a period which still finds resonance in rock music today."



Mountains Come Cut of the Sky - The illustrated history of prog rock
by Will Romano - Backbeat (2010)

"From its artful beginnings (Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd, the Mothers of Invention, and those progressive forebearers, the Sgt. Pepper-era Beatles), through the towering guitar solos, monumental synthesizer banks, and mind-boggling special effects of the Golden Age of Prog..."
Also contains a lengthy chapter on Canterbury music.



Anthologie du rock progressif - Voyages en ailleurs
de Jérôme Albérola - Camion Blanc (2010)

Soft Machine et Robert Wyatt bien servis dans cette anthologie où le "rock progressif" est à prendre au sens large..



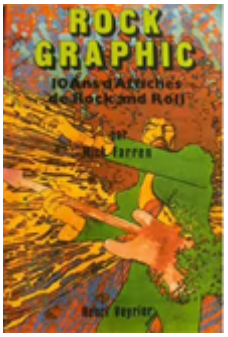
Rock'n'Roll : la discothèque idéale : 101 disques qui ont changé le monde
de Philippe Maneuvre - Editions Rock & Folk / Albin Michel (2005)

Rock Bottom à la 56ème place, entre Rock 'n' Roll Animal de Lou Reed et Radio City de Big Star...



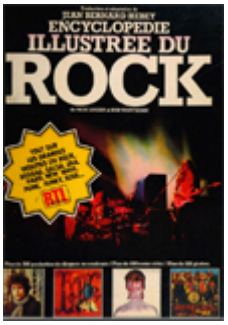
Rock'n'roll - tome 2: La discothèque rock idéale. 101 disques à écouter avant la fin du monde
de Philippe Maneuvre - Editions Rock & Folk / Albin Michel (2011)

Soft Machine vol. Two à la 24 ème place, entre Happy Trails du Quicksilver Messenger Service et The Marble Index de Nico...



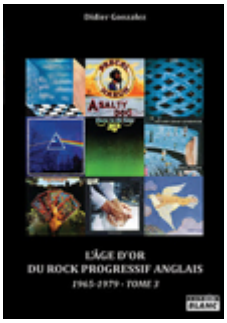
Rock Graphic - 10 ans d'affiche de rock'n'roll
de Mike Farren - Editions Henry Veyrier (1976)

Au moins 2 affiches de Soft Machine de la "grande époque"...



Encyclopédie illustrée du rock
de Nick Logan et Bob Woffinden (traduction et adaptation de Jean-Bernard Hebey) - RTL Edition (1980)

Robert Wyatt, mais aussi Kevin Ayers, Gong, Soft Machine au rendez-vous de cette encyclopédie publiée en France par la station de radio RTL.



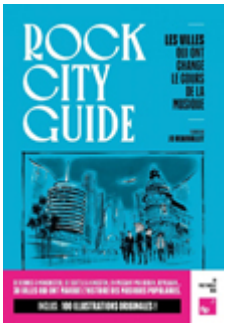
L'âge d'or du rock progressif anglais 1965 - 1979 - tome 3
de Didier Gonzalez - Camion Blanc (2025)

Shleep sur la couverture de l'ouvrage...



Jean-Jacques Lebel - Galerie Louis Carré & Cie - catalogue d'exposition publié à l'occasion de l'exposition 'Recycler, détourner' du 16 mars au 28 avril 2012 à Paris.
Texte de Jean de Loisy - Entretien de Jean-Jacques Lebel avec Guy Scarpetta.

Les différentes collaborations de Jean-Jacques Lebel avec Soft Machine à la fin des 60's sont brièvement évoquées dans le catalogue.



Rock City Guide - Les villes qui ont changé le cours de la musique
de JD Beauvallet (auteur) et Frédéric Peltier (illustrateur) - GM éditions (2025)

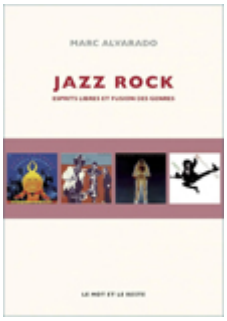
De Rennes à Manchester, de Seattle à Kingston, en passant par Berlin, Reykjavik et Canterbury... 29 villes qui ont marqué l'histoire des musiques populaires.



Underground 2 - Derviches Tourneuses & punks cosmiques
de Arnaud Le Gouëfflec (texte) et Nicolas Moog (dessins) - Glénat (2025)

Une séquence consacrée à A Canterbury Tale.





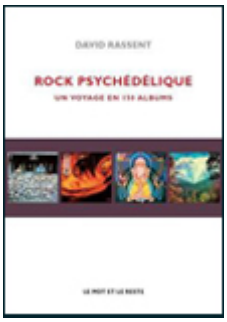
Jazz Rock - Esprits libres et fusion des genres
de Marc Alvarado - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2019)

Robert Wyatt et Soft Machine sont évoqués à la 207ème page, vite suivis par Gong et l'Oblivion Express...



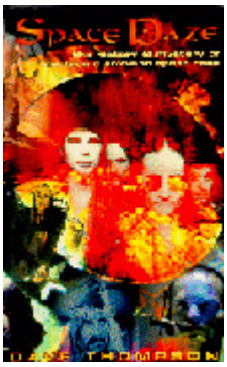
Electrosound: Storia ed estetica della musica elettroacustica
di Giacomo Fronzi - EDT (2013)

"Da Cage ai Pink Floyd, da Schaeffer e i suoi eredi ai Soft Machine, da Edgar Varèse a Iannis Xenakis, dai compositori acusmatici ai DJ contemporanei, la ricerca elettroacustica ed elettronica ha vissuto e continua a vivere una felicissima stagione in ogni parte del globo; una stagione che è il momento di ricostruire in modo più ampio e, laddove possibile, interpretare, non solo all'interno dei confini della storia della musica."



Rock psychédélique - un voyage en 150 albums
de David Rassent - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2025)

"Rock psychédélique, un voyage en 150 albums propose un tableau riche de rencontres insoupçonnées, d'affinités électives entre les maîtres et les outsiders, des Beatles de Revolver à Tame Impala, de Jefferson Airplane à Spacemen 3, en passant par Jimi Hendrix, Soft Machine ou Boards Of Canada."



Space Daze: The History and Mystery of Electronic Ambient Space Rock
by Dave Thomson - Cleopatra (1994)

Le Space-Rock dans son acceptation la plus large (de Hawkwind à Tyrannosaurus Rex en passant par... Soft Machine!). L'auteur, très prolifique, a également rédigé l'étonnant June 1st 1974.



Pink Floyd en rouge
de Michele Mari - Seuil (2011)

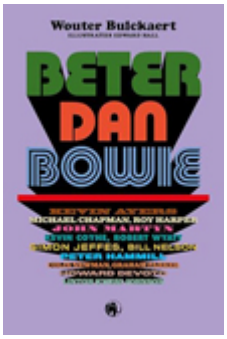
Sorte de roman-documentaire sur l'ascension des Pink Floyd dans lequel de nombreux protagonistes de la scène musicale londonnienne sont convoqués.. "...Si dans les concerts de David Bowie ou de David Gilmour vous avez vu sur la scène un petit vieux sur un fauteuil roulant, ce petit vieux c'était moi..."

More information



We are living on a star
Published in conjunction with the exhibition Vi lever pa° en stjerne (We are living on a star) held at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway, Jan. 30-Apr. 27, 2014 - Sternberg (2014)

A conversation with Robert Wyatt on his works and politics.



Beter dan Bowie:Kevin Ayers, Michael Chapman, Roy Harper, John Martyn, Kevin Coyne, Robert Wyatt...
van Wouter Bulckaert en Edward Hall (illustraties) - Mammoet (2014)

In dit boek redt connaisseur Wouter Bulckaert culthelden zoals Kevin Ayers en Kevin Coyne uit de vergeetput van de Engelse rockgeschiedenis. Hij ontrafelt hun beste werk en kadert het tegen de achtergrond van de Engelse geschiedenis en de platen van Bowie in dat tijdsgewricht, dat verdacht veel lijkt op onze turbulente jaren twintig."



La France Underground - 1965-1979 - Free Jazz Rock Pop - Le temps des utopies
de Serge Loupien - Rivages Rouge (2018)

Ce livre haut en couleurs, signé par un journaliste « historique » des pages culture de Libération et émaillé de nombreux témoignages inédits, évoque – un peu à la manière de la free press de ces glorieuses années - une épopée bouillonnante, libertaire, parfois délirante et foutraque. Une époque où le rock a pour noms Âme Son, Gong, Crouille Marteau, Heldon ou Fille Qui Mousse... "

More information



150 batteurs en 150 figures
sous la direction de Daniel Dumoulin - Editions du Layeur (2022)

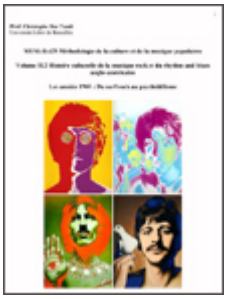
150 figures du monde de la batterie et des percussions qui ont pour nom Art Blakey, Jack de Johnette, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Brian Blade et... Robert Wyatt à qui plusieurs pages et photos sont consacrées.

More information



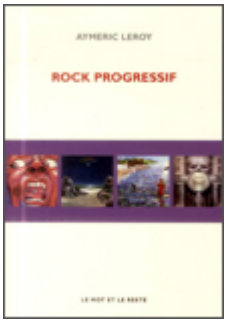
On Some Faraway Beach: The Life And Times Of Brian Eno
de David Sheppard - White Rabbit (2024)

"First published in 2008 and reissued in 2015 then 2024 as part of White Rabbit's Deep Cuts series, David Sheppard's acclaimed authorised biography of Brian Eno has been fully revised and updated (wit brand new material and an introduction by Alan Warner). Featuring interviews with many key collaborators over the years: from Bryan Ferry to David Byrne and Robert Wyatt."



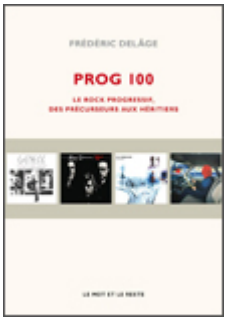
Méthodologie de la culture et de la musique populaires
du Prof. Christophe Den Tandt - Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles (2023)

Dans le volume II de ce syllabus de cours intitulé "Histoire culturelle de la musique rock et du rhythm and blues anglo-américains - Les années 1960 : Du surf rock au psychédélisme", l'auteur évoque Soft Machine et ses "figures légendaires du prog-rock et du jazz fusion" (en une demi-page).



Rock progessif
de Aymeric Leroy - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2014)

"La noirceur envoûtante de King Crimson, le raffinement symphonique de Genesis, l'exaltation mystique de Yes, les rêveries sonores de Pink Floyd, la virtuosité extravagante d'Emerson Lake & Palmer... Et tant d'autres, plus obscurs mais non moins valeureux - Van der Graaf Generator, Jethro Tull, Magma, Gentle Giant, Soft Machine... Autant de groupes qui, à partir de la fin des années soixante, ont cherché - et souvent réussi - à inventer une musique au-delà des distinctions de genre et du formatage commercial."



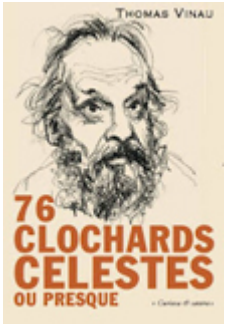
Prog 100 - Le rock progressif, des précurseurs aux héritiers
de Frédéric Delâge - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2014)

"... Frédéric Delâge rend justice à l'énergie et à l'imagination sans bornes d'un genre capable de se renouveler par des détours souvent inattendus [...] Des musiciens - Robert Wyatt, Peter Hammill -, des groupes - Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, Pink Floyd - ont consacré l'album comme le format privilégié d'explorations parfois vituoses, souvent poétiques, toujours passionnantes..."



Rock 70's
de Dominique Dupuis - Rock & Folk (2022)

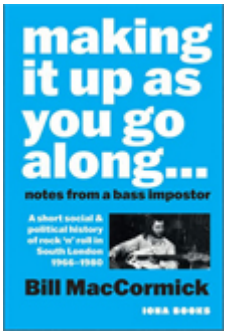
Quelques pages consacrées à Robert Wyatt et au Soft Machine dans ce livre consacré aux années soixante-dix (qui, pour certains, ont démarré avant le 1er janvier 1970) et qui furent parfois le terrain de jeu de véritables laboratoires de musiques populaires : place au psyché, au rock prog', au glam, au hard ou encore au blues rock.De l'Angleterre aux États-Unis, sans oublier l'Europe (Italie, Allemagne... et France)... "



76 clochards célestes ou presque
de Thomas Vinau - Le Castor Astral (2016)

" ... Ils n'ont pas renoncé. Ils n'ont la plupart du temps pas eu trop de chance non plus. Ils ont bringuebalés, sublimes et admirables, crevards dégénérés jusqu'à nos yeux blessés. Ils étaient peut être malades mais c'est eux qui nous ont soignés de beauté, la vraie, la pure, celle qui ne renonce à aucune réalité...

Richard Brautigan - Arthur Cravan - Moondog - Walt Whitman - Robert-Louis Stevenson - Albert Cossery - Jean-Paul Clébert - Blaise Cendrars - Dan Fante - Roger Gilbert-Lecomte - Charles Bukowski - Skip James - Diogène de Sinope - Lester Young - Daniel Darc - Nicolas Bouvier - Chet Baker - Jehan Rictus - Billie Holiday - Syd Barrett - Norge - Neal Cassady - Jack London - Helno - ***Robert Wyatt*** *- ..."*



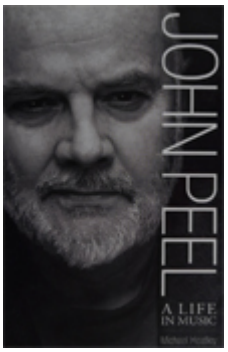
Making it up as you go along... - Notes from a bass impostor - or A Short Social & Political History of Rock 'n' Roll in South London, 1966 -1980
by Bill MacCormick - Iona Books (2024)

" *In the 70s I was, somehow, a bass player. In the 80s and 90s, a political organiser, local councillor, and pollster. Since then, I've written a few books about the Great War. And now one about my time in the music biz.* "



Électro - Une anthologie
de Thomas Gaetner - Gründ (2019)

" Ils s'appellent Pierre Henry, Kraftwerk, Larry Levan, Aphex Twin, Jeff Mills, Laurent Garnier, Moodymann, ou encore Mézigue et Todd Terje et contribuent, jour après jour, avec talent et passion, à l'une des aventures musicales les plus inventives de ces 30 dernières années."
Robert Wyatt est cité pour sa collaboration avec Brian Eno sur l'album Music For Airports.



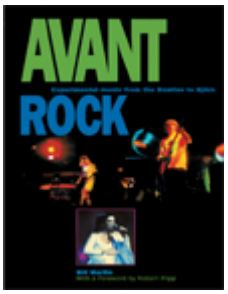
John Peel - A Life in Music
by Michael Heatley - Michael O'Mara Books Limited (2004)

"... So into the Top Gear concept were they that singer/drummer Robert Wyatt even ad-libbed new lyrics to their song 'Moon In June', which made reference to the programme, recommending it 'despite its extraordinary name' and namechecking 'mates like Kevin [Ayers], Caravan and the old Pink Floyd'. Wyatt later explained that the original lyrics had been written as a joke that had worn thin by the time they arrived at Maida Vale, so he simply wrote new ones on the spot...".



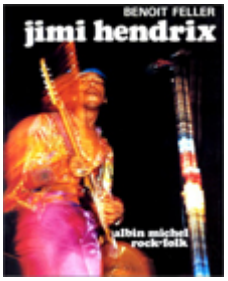
Listen to Psychedelic Rock
by Christian Matijas-Meccas - Greenwood (2020)

"... The Soft Machine is one of the most overlooked and generally forgotten groups of the psychedelic era. They were at the forefront of the English psychedelic scene and played many of the scene's early shows with Pink Floyd both at the Roundhouse and UFO. Although they were at the birth of psychedelia, their sound is often described as progressive rock or jazz fusion. The sheer variety of their music makes it difficult to categorize them in one or other camp, but that is a complete waste of time; in doing so, we lose the amazing music of this unique band...".



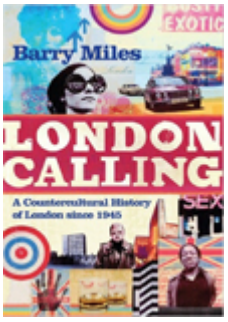
Avant Rock - Experimental music from the Beatles to Björk
by Bill Martin - Open Court Publishing Company (2002)

Plusieurs citations de Robert Wyatt dans cet ouvrage où l'on croise aussi bien Alice Cooper que Xenakis, Yes que Guy Debord ou Kurt Vonnegut (l'index complet donne le tournis). Préface de Robert Fripp.



Jimi Hendrix
de Benoît Feller - Albin Michel / Rock & Folk (1976)

Soft Machine qui a croisé la route de Jimi Hendrix est cité dans cet ouvrage dans lequel Robert Wyatt y est spécialement remercié (avec John Mc Laughhlin) par l'auteur.



London Calling - A Countercultural History of London since 1945
by Barry Miles - Atlantic Books (2010)

"...The Softs' drummer, Robert Wyatt, told Daniel Spicer: In those days there was no seating in the Roundhouse so there was lots of space. A friend of the organist was a motorcyclist and, as another member of the group, his contribution was to ride around the room to add a bit of enjoyable sound. He was very sensitive in the way he drove his motorcycle and it fitted in with the tunes perfectly, as I remember. ..."



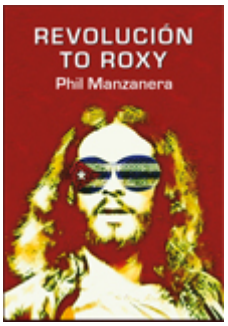
Hippie
by Barry Miles - Cassell Illustrated (2003)

"...Robert grew up listening to Virgil Thompson, Shostakovich, Bartok, Webern, Monteverdi and Hindemith. His elder brother played Cecil Taylor, Mingus, Ornette Coleman and Duke Ellington...



100 %, 100 disques en 100 mots
de Denis Desassis - The Book Edition (2023)

"...vaste puzzle » musical qu'invite l'écrivain et chroniqueur, passant du rock au jazz, du classique à la pop et à la chanson française : Brassens côtoie Led Zeppelin, Camille Pépin, Lou Reed, Robert Wyatt, Stevie Wonder. Bruno Tocanne, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, John Zorn".

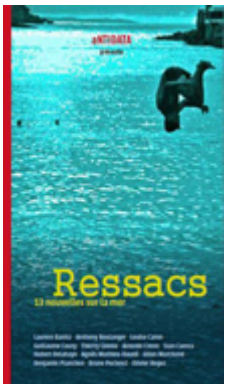


Revólución to Roxy -
by Phil Manzanera - Wordzworth Publishing (2024)

"...I hope you'll find my family history every bit as fascinating as my music adventures, I'm proud to be related to a Colombian pirate, a spy and and an Italian opera musician."



Encyclopedia of British Rock - Party. 1 : Progressive rock & its periphery
by Marquee Special Edition (1990)



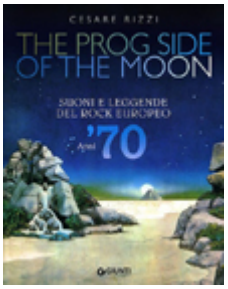
Ressacs - 13 nouvelles sur la mer
de Collectif - Antidata (2019)

"Treize nouvelles sur la mer, mais pas toujours maritimes, où l'on trouvera certes quelques tempêtes, des embarcations diverses, du sable et des coquillages, mais aussi des éléments plus incongrus, comme une virée au cimetière ou une chanson de Robert Wyatt. "



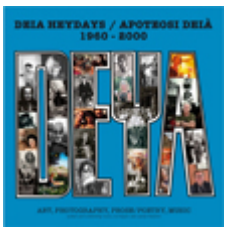
Rock Critic - Chroniques de rock'n'roll (1967-1982)
de Alain Dister - Castor Astral (2007)

" Un livre plein d'enthousiasme où l'on croise Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, les Beatles, John Lennon, Bruce Springsteen, les Sex Pistols, Robert Wyatt et bien d'autres."



The prog side of the moon - Suoni e leggende del rock europeo. Anni '70.
di Cesare Rizzi - Giunti Editore (2010)

" The Prog Side of the Moon, ricco di informazioni inedite e di una straordinaria iconografia. Un capitolo è dedicato alla Scuola di Canterbury."

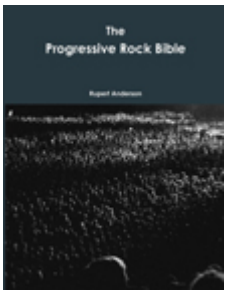


Deia Heydays - Apoteosi Deià1960-2000
by Oona Lind Napier and Jackie Waldren (2018)

"The book offers short, to the point, pen portraits of a whole host of artists, musicians and writers who lived and worked in Deia between 1960 and 2000, those Deia heydays."



Rock Progresivo : Historia, cultura, artistas y álbumes fundamentales (Guías del Rock & Roll) (Spanish Edition)
by Pérez Ladaga, Eloy - Robinbook, Ediciones S.L. (2018)



The Progressive Rock Bible
by Rupert Anderson - Lulu Publishing (2016)

Une solide (452 pages) compilation de textes issus de Wikipedia sur le "rock progressif."



100 classiques rock et leur sens caché
de Axel Du Bus - Editions La Boîte A Pandore (2014)

"... Mais Langer n'est pas totalement satisfait des paroles écrites par Wyatt. Il va alors trouver Elvis Costello. Qui se met aussitôt au travail..."



...Really Good Songs - a collection of 48 all-time classic favourites arranged for piano, voice and guitar
Music Sales (2010)

Sea Song is one of the scores in this book.



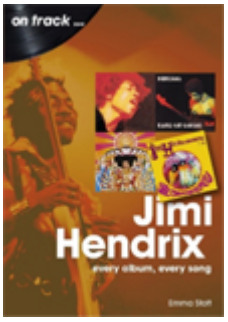
Il suono del progresso - Esplorazioni sonore nel rock progressivo
de Lelio Camilleri - Arcana (2022)

"... Oltre a una panoramica delle varie tipologie di discorsi sonori vengono analizzati in dettaglio i lavori solistici di Robert Wyatt, Hopper, Frank Zappa, e album degli Henry Cow, dei Faust e dei Tangerine Dream..."



Prog Rock en 150 figures
de Dominique Dupuis - Editions du Layeur (2020)

Une très courte évocation de Soft Machine dans cette approche du "Prog Rock"...



Jimi Hendrix - Every Album, Every Song
by Emma Stott - Sonicbond Publishing (2022)

"... His early work as a session player for acts like The Isley Brothers, Little Richard and even Jayne Mansfield is considered, along with his later work as a guest star on albums by Stephen Stills, Robert Wyatt, and McGear and McGough; and not forgetting his blistering work as a producer for Eire Apparent. ..."



A Nord di Londra
di Enrico Fontana - Arcana (2022)

"Gli album di Hatfield and the North e di National Health sono considerati da critici e appassionati come gemme della Scuola di Canterbury e di tutta l'iconografia del progressive inglese. Il suono all'interno dei microsolchi racchiude il compendio di molta della musica che ha caratterizzato il periodo che inizia nel 1965 e termina all'incirca nei dieci/quindici anni successivi. ..."



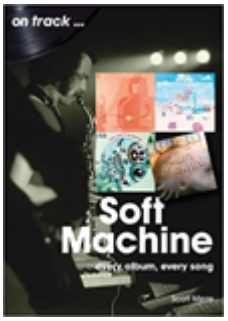
Gong - Every Album, Every Song
by Kevan Furbank - Sonicbond Publishing (2021)

"Musically and spiritually Gong emerged from the whimsical imagination of founder member, Daevid Allen, an Australian who'd travelled to England in the early 60's to check out the beatnik scene – eventually meeting up with Mike Ratledge, Kevin Ayres and Robert Wyatt, who formed the Soft Machine, inadvertently becoming instigators of 'the Canterbury scene'. "



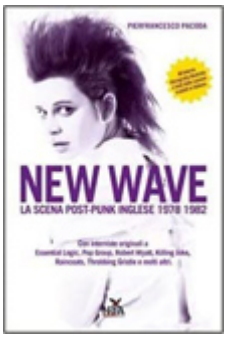
L'âge d'or du rock progressif anglais 1965-1979 - tome 2
de Didier Gonzalez - Camion Blanc (2023)

Un chapitre consacré à Matching Mole...



Soft Machine - Every Album, Every Song
by Scott Meze - Sonicbond Publishing (2023)

"Scott Meze is a psychedelic music obsessive born in Britain but based in Tokyo, the music connoisseur's capital of the world. Soft Machine has been one of the abiding loves of his life ever since a friend played him a tape of Triple Echo while careening his thoroughly chemicalised brain through the hills of South Somerset on the back of a Moto Guzzi 850 Le Mans. You don't ignore an education like that."



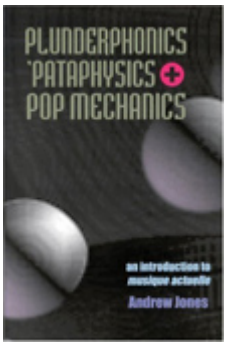
New wave. La scena post-punk inglese 1978-1982
by Pierfrancesco Pacoda - Nda Press (2010)

"La scena post-punk inglese 1978-1982. Concepito come un diario di viaggio nel cuore dell'Inghilterra del dopo punk, quando l'estate anarchica dei Sex Pistols aveva fatto esplodere le energie sotterranee di band che univano la volontà di rivolta al puro gusto per la sperimentazione. Sfilano, in New Wave, incontri con gruppi "seminali" come Throbbing Gristle, Pop Group, Essential Logic, Glaxo Babies, Passions, Killing Joke, Ruts, ed il "vecchio" Robert Wyatt che di questa generazione è stato il padre spirituale."



Canterbury
Collectif - Volume! La revue des musiques populaires - Éditions Mélanie Seteun (2022)

Compilation des interventions présentées à l'Université de Strasbourg lors du colloque en visio-conférence Zoom du 20 novembre 2020 sur "la scène de Canterbury".



Plunderphonics, `Pataphysics Pop Mechanics: an introduction to musique actuelle
by Andrew Jones - SAF Publishing Ltd. (1999)

"Where new music collides with contemporary pop (as opposed to jazz or classical), Plunderphonics explains the implications of the new wave of sonic appropriation."



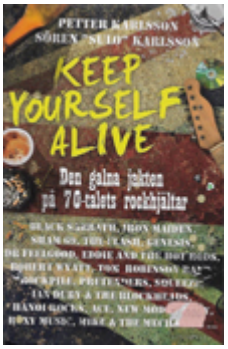
Gobbing Pogoing and Gratuitous Bad Language
by Ted Curtis - Spare Change Books (1996)

"A unique collection of short stories documenting the finest moments of twenty years of punk rock. The bands, the booze and the bad behaviour. The drugs, the shagging and brawling. Contributions from Mark Perry, Stewart Home, Nick Blinko, Robert Wyatt and many more."



AGI 2 / ENO
Collectif - Kyou records (2022)

Ce livre met en lumière l'évolution d'Eno et de la scène musicale à travers une sélection et des archives d'écrits d'Eno, de critiques de disques et de notes de pochette rédigées dans la revue japonaise Rock Magazine de l'époque.



Keep Yourself Alive
av Sören "Sulo" Karlsson & Petter Karlsson - Lind & Co (2012)

"Upphovsmännen bakom det fantastiska projektet Keep yourself alive gav sig ut på en unik resa till Storbritannien för att träffa sina gamla rockhjältar. Förutom alla avslöjanden och otroliga historier som boken bjuder på medföljer även en cd, där Sulo tillsammans med de medverkande artisterna gjort nya versioner av deras mest kända låtar. Kultrockikonen Robert Wyatt har till och med bidragit med ett helt nyskrivet spår, exklusivt för Keep yourself alive."

"...The Robert Wyatt interview is quite nice, with Robert not wanting to make too much fuzz about his own person, modest as usual. Instead he honor other rock stars, jazz drummers and the ordinary workers who pay their taxes! [...]
With the book you get a CD where Sulo play old hits with several of the artists interviewed. Robert Wyatt instead asked Sulo to write som lyrics to the title "Enjoy the risk", and he plays piano to Sulo´s vocals and Magic Gunnarson´s saxophone. A nice, little (less than 2 min.) tune."
Svenn in Robert Wyatt and Stuff blogspot

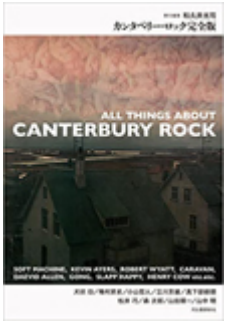


Brian Eno - Le magicien du son
de Olivier Bernard - Camion Blanc (2022)

"Près d'un bon kilo (915 g) pour une étude pointue, érudite, d'une grande acuité, emplie de révérence et de respect tout à fait hors du commun pour un artiste absolument hors des étiquettes, sauf celles qu'il s'est fabriquées, qu'il a inventées et/ou diagnostiquées depuis près de 40 ans (Here Come the Warm Jets premier album solo enregistré en septembre 1973 est sorti en janvier 1974 pour le début de la carrière véritable de l'artiste aujourd'hui âgé de… 74 ans). "
Xavier Béal

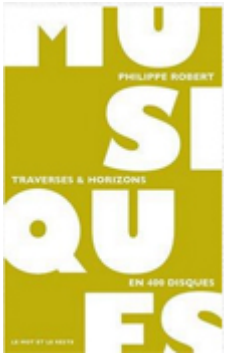


A Beginner's Guide to Brian Eno
by Tsutomu Noda, Masato Matsumura, Takune Kobayashi,Mariko Sakamoto, Haru W. Mita,Tomoko Takahashi, James Hadfield, Ian F. Martin and Rie Eguchi - Ele-King Books (2022)



All Things About Canterbury Rock
by Koji Wakui - Kawade Shuppan Shinsha - Japanese Edition (2022)

The world's first disc guide to the sixty years of unique rock that emerged in the ancient English city of Canterbury. It covers 500 discs, from jazz rock and progressive rock by Soft Machine, Caravan and Gong to avant-pop by Slap Happy and Henry Cow, as well as the solo work of each of the key figures. The ultimate history book and the one and only in-depth guide to the band's unique cultural background, musicality and worldwide network.



Musiques, traverses & horizons en 400 disques
de Philippe Robert - Le Mot Et Le Reste (2021)

"Philippe Robert propose une anthologie totale : 100 ans de musique en 400 albums, à la croisée des genres. Musiques, Traverses & Horizons donne à voir une construction de l'histoire musicale du XXe siècle où Moondog croise Oneothrix Point Never, Robert Wyatt, John Cale, Etta James et Colette Magny."

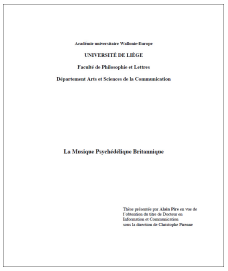


Caravan: Every Album, Every Song
by Andy Boot - Sonicbond Publishing (2021)



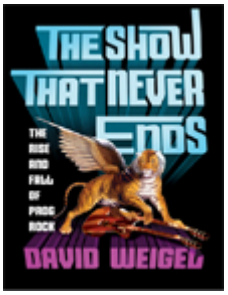
Shakin' All Over - Popular Music and Disability
by George McKay - The University of Michigan Press (2013)

"...By looking closely into the work of artists such as Johnny Rotten, Neil Young, Johnnie Ray, Ian Dury, Teddy Pendergrass, Curtis Mayfield, and Joni Mitchell, McKay investigates such questions as how popular music works to obscure and accommodate the presence of people with disabilities in its cultural practice. He also examines how popular musicians have articulated the experiences of disability (or sought to pass), or have used their cultural arena for disability advocacy purposes."

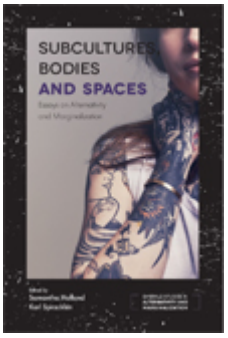


La Musique Psychédélique Britannique
de Alain Pire - Université de Liège - Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres - Département de Arts et Sciences de la Communication (2009*)*
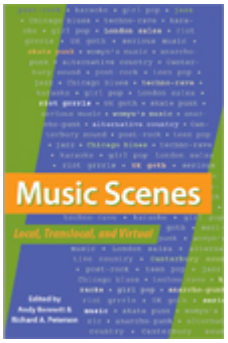
Thèse présentée par Alain Pire en vue de l'obtention du titre de Docteur en Information et Communication sous la direction de Christophe Pirenne.



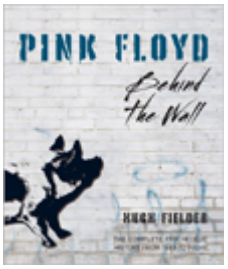
The show that never ends - The rise and fall of Prog Rock
by David Weigel - W. W. Norton & Company (2017*)*



Subcultures, Bodies and Spaces - Essays on Alternativity and Marginalization
by Samantha Holland and Karl Spracken - Emerald Publishing (2018*)*



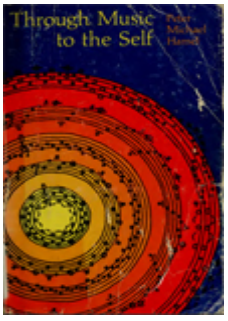
Music Scenes - Local, Translocal and Virtual
by Andy Bennett & Richard A. Peterson - Van erbilt Univresity Press (2004*)*



Pink Floyd - Behind the Wall - The complete psychedelic history from 1965 to today
by Hugh Fiedler - Race Point Publishing (2013*)*



Stone Free - Jimi Hendrix in London - September 1966-June 1967
by Jas Obrecht - University of North Carolina Press (2018*)*



Through Music to the Self
by Peter Michael Hamel - Shambhala Pubilcations Inc. (1976)

Nombreuses rééditions au fil des ans de cet ouvrage de référence du compositeur allemand qui a débuté sa carrière au côté de Morton Feldman, John Cage et Terry Riley...

Voir aussi...



Pete Frame's Complete Rock Family Trees
by Peter Frame - Omnibus Press (1983)

More information



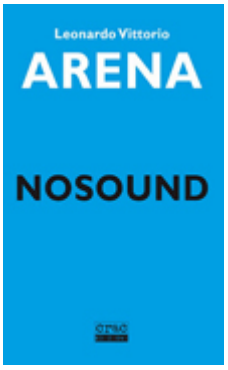
L'underground musical en France
de Éric Deshayes et Dominique Grimaud - Le mot et le reste (2008)

Bible incontournable où se croisent tous les groupes et tous les musiciens qui peuplent nos discothèques depuis plus de 50 ans (j'écris ces lignes en 2021). Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Mike Ratledge, mais aussi Soft Machine, Gong et Matching Mole y sont fréquemment cités... Indispensable...



La Musica In Grigio e Rosa
di Lelio Camilleri - Arcana (2020)

"I Caravan sono, insieme ai Soft Machine, uno dei principali gruppi di quella che comunemente viene chiamata scena o scuola di Canterbury. Il libro contestualizza i Caravan all'interno della scena del rock progressivo e ripercorre la loro produzione discografica dall'inizio all'ultimo disco con la formazione originaria, nel 1982. "



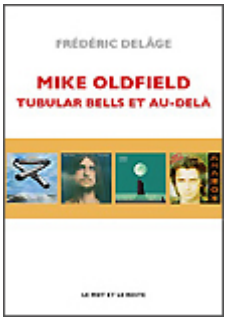
Nosound
di Leonardo Vittorio Arena - Crac Edizioni (2020)

"Il libro si concentra su vari generi, il rock, il jazz, la musica classica ed etnica, nella visione del non suono. L'indagine è dominata dalla contaminazione: l'antico e il moderno, l'Oriente e l'Occidente, musica, letteratura e pittura, sonorità e silenzi si rincorrono, all'insegna del non suono. Nella prospettiva di una musica mondiale si esaminano le opere di Terry Riley, Brian Eno, Richard Wagner, i Soft Machine, Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Sylvian e altri."



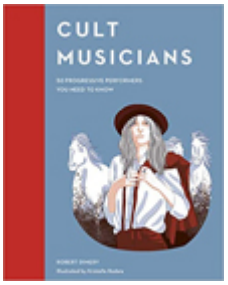
Mike Oldfield
de José Cantos - Catedra Ediciones (2007)

"Mike Oldfield, músico singular, huidizo, camaleónico, tremendamente efectista, ha sido capaz de sorprender con sonidos de todo tipo desde que en 1968 se publicó su primer disco..."



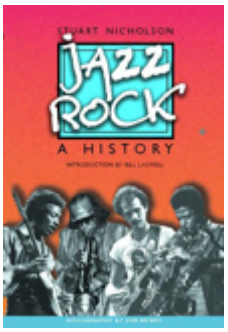
Mike Oldfield - Tubular Bells et au-delà
de Frédéric Delâge - Le Mot et le Reste (2021)

"Tubular Bells et au-delà revient sur le contexte de création et de diffusion de l'ensemble de l'œuvre musicale du génial compositeur britannique retiré aujourd'hui sur une île au sable fin.".



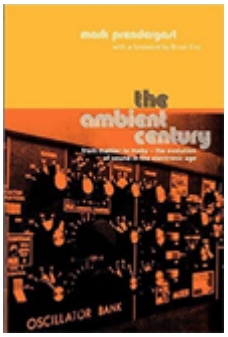
Cult Musicians : 50 Progressive Performers You Need to Know
by Robert Dimery & Kristelle Rodeia - Frances Lincoln Publishers Ltd (2020)

"Cult Musicians introduces 50 musicians deserving of a cult status. The book charts a plethora of genres and boundary-breakers – from afrobeat and art pop to glam rock and proto punk; Bjork and PJ Harvey to Aphex Twin and Robert Wyatt.".



Jaaz Rock : A history
by Stuart Nicholson, Bill Laswell (Contributor), Jon Newey (Discographer) - Schirmer Trade Books (1998)

"The quintessential crossover form, jazz-rock encompasses the most popular hybrid styles, from 1970s fusion to the latest in acid jazz".



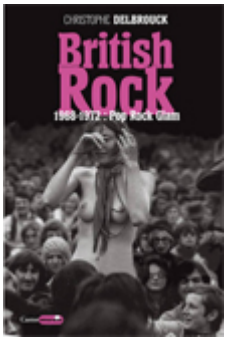
The Ambient Century - From Mahler to Moby --The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age
by Mark Prendergast, Karen Rinaldi, (Foreword by Brian Eno) - Bloomsbury Publishing PLC (2003)

Robert Wyatt is mentioned several times, mainly for his contribution to "Music for Airports".



Soft Machine - Rock Storia E Musica - #23
de Riccardo Bertoncelli - Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri (1983)

Livret de 28 pages en italien, accompagné d'une cassette (face A : Moon In June / face B : Teeth et Chloe And The Pirates).



British Rock - 1968-1972 : Pop, Rock, Glam
de Christophe Delbrouck - Le Castor Astral (2017)



All the Madmen
by Cliton Heylin - Constable & Robinson (2012)

...But the real return dated back to a night at the end of March, when he turned up at the f 00 Club to see his old pals Soft Machine play. And afterwards, he even said hi. As bassist Hugh Hopper recalls it: 'Syd was muttering away in his usual way and said, "Would you like to come along and do some recording?'" They assumed, not unreasonably, that he had some specific idea in mind....



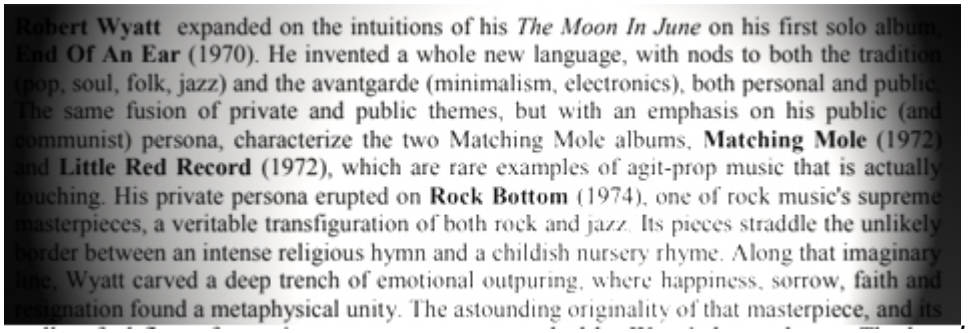
5th concise edition - The Encyclopedia of Popular Music
compiled and edited by Colin Larkin - Omnibus Press & Muze (2011)

3 659 pages for this "concise editon" (3 000 entries from the 27 000 of the multi-volume).
Kevin Ayers, Soft Machine and Robert wyatt are not forgotten...

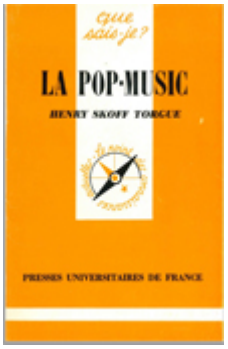


A History of Rock Music- 1951-2000
by Piero Scaruffi (2003)

"Best read as an alternate history of rock music. Scaruffi has dedicated his platform to elevating underrated masterpieces and wholly unconventional music. ... "


Robert Wyatt expanded on the intuitions of his *The Moon In June* on his first solo album, **End Of An Ear** (1970). He invented a whole new language, with nods to both the tradition (pop, soul, folk, jazz) and the avantgarde (minimalism, electronics), both personal and public. The same fusion of private and public themes, but with an emphasis on his public (and communist) persona, characterize the two Matching Mole albums, **Matching Mole** (1972) and **Little Red Record** (1972), which are rare examples of agit-prop music that is actually touching. His private persona erupted on **Rock Bottom** (1974), one of rock music's supreme masterpieces, a veritable transfiguration of both rock and jazz. Its pieces straddle the unlikely border between an intense religious hymn and a childish nursery rhyme. Along that imaginary line, Wyatt carved a deep trench of emotional outpuring, where happiness, sorrow, faith and resignation found a metaphysical unity. The astounding originality of that masterpiece, and its

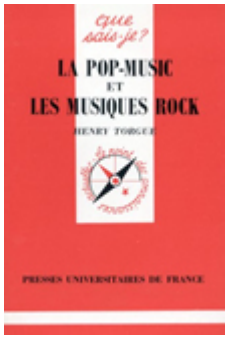
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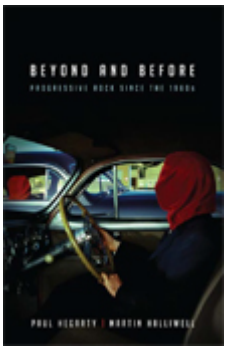


La Pop-Music
de Henry Skoff Torgue - Collection Que sais-je ? au Presse Universitaire de France (1975)

Beaucoup d'excellentes références (Soft Machine, Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt, Gong, Matching Mole etc.) dans ce petit fascicule emblématique de la culture académique...

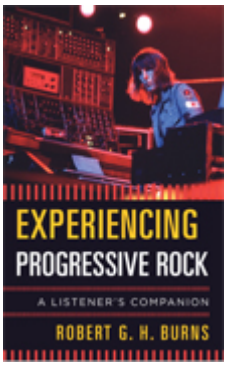
Réédition en 1997 avec un changement de titre : ***La Pop-Music et les musiques rock.***





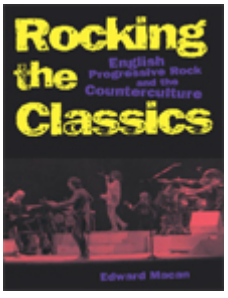
Beyond and Before - Progressive Rock Since the 1960's
by Paul Hegarty & Martin Halliwell - The Continuum International Publishing Group (2011)

"... Hegarty and Halliwell assess the roots of progressive rock, arguing convincingly that a fusion of styles, approaches and genres defined the 1970s period, and the authors develop tools to assess other, later progressive musics..."



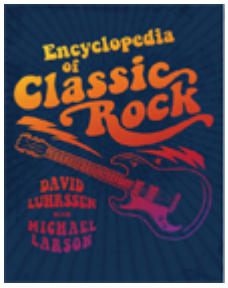
Experiencing Progressive Rock - A Listener's Companion
by Robert G.H. Burns - Rowman & Littlefield (2018)

"In Experiencing Progressive Rock: A Listener's Companion, Robert G. H. Burns brings together the many strands that define the "prog rock" movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s to chart the evolution of this remarkable rock tradition over the decades. "



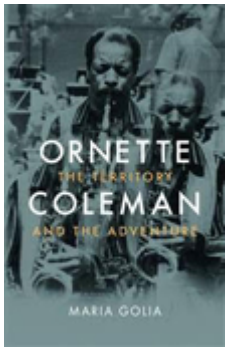
Rocking the classics - English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture
by Edward Macan - Oxford University Press (1997)

"An impressive piece of work ... Macan knows this music backwards and forwards: he combines a fan's detached knowledge of minutiae with what if often a quite sophisticated agenda of cultural criticism." (Robert Walser)



Encyclopedia of Classic Rock
by David Luhrssen with Michael Larson - Greenwood (2017)

"The book covers rock artists who emerged or came to prominence in the period ranging 1965–1975 and follows their careers through the present. It also specifically defines the term "classic rock" and identifies the criteria that a song must meet in order to be considered as within the genre."



Ornette Coleman - The territory and the adventure
by Maria Golia - Reaktion Books Ltd (2020)

"As patron saint of all things dissonant and defiant, Ornette's musical appeal extended through his own to subsequent generations. Epoch-shaping 1960s bands who acknowledged his transmissions include the Velvet Underground, Soft Machine, and Cream..."



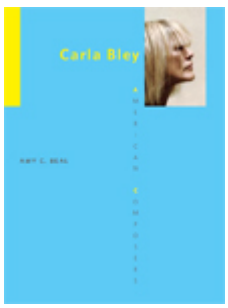
Pink Floyd - The Early Years
by Barry Miles - Omnibus Press (2006)

From Cambridge to Dark Side Of The Moon...



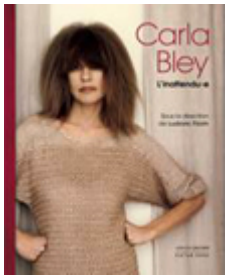
The Strawberry Bricks Guide to Progressive Rock (Third Edition)
by Charles Snider - strawberrybricks.com (2020) - 572 pages

"Each of the over 500 entries is lovingly annotated with insightful breakdowns of each subject, which resulted in me reacquainting myself with many albums I hadn't thought about in years. Whether you are the novice getting your cape dirty for the first time, or a seasoned veteran who enjoys a fresh perspective, this is your mountain to climb."



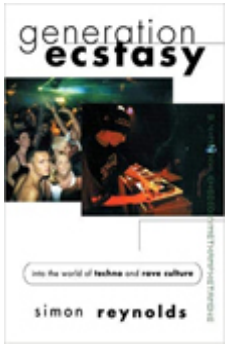
Carla Bley
by Amy C. Beal - University of Illinois Press (2011)

"Beal also points to Bley's professional and managerial work as a pioneer in the development of artist-owned record labels, the cofounder and manager of WATT Records, and the cofounder of New Music Distribution Service."



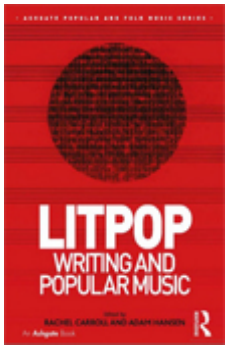
Carla Bley - l'inattendu-e
par Ludivic Florin (avec Jean-Michel Court, Jean-François Mondot et Alex Dutilh) - Naïves Livres (2013)

"Le tour de force de nos quatre auteurs reste d'avoir su solliciter, auprès et au loin d'elle, les personnalités les plus insolites (John Cage, Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, Robert Wyatt, Jack Bruce, etc.) sans jamais rompre l'unité de leur chronique artistique, nuancée de chaleur et d'enthousiasme."



Generation ecstasy
by Simon Reynolds - Routledge (1999)

"In Generation Ecstasy, Simon Reynolds takes the reader on a guided tour of this end-of-the-millenium phenomenon, telling the story of rave culture and techno music as an insider who has dosed up and blissed out. A celebration of rave's quest for the perfect beat definitive chronicle of rave culture and electronic dance music. "



Litpop - Writing and popular music
by Rachel Carroll and Adam Hansen - Ashgate (2014)

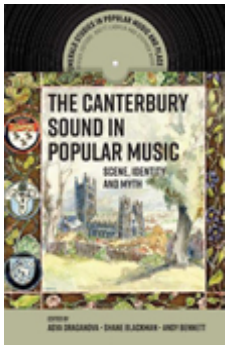
Part I - chapter 2 : "You can't just say 'words' : Literature and Nonsense in the Work of Robert Wyatt" (by Richard Elliott).

Pre-publication (2014) of this chapter



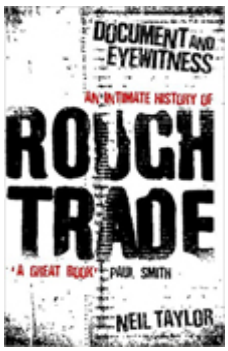
Him Through Me - making love and music in the Sixties & Seventies
by Pamela Windo - CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (2014)

"We lived on air and ideas, without cell phones and Facebook … we took quite a few drugs, and had quite a lot of sex…we were earnest and naïve… it was all so new, to be young and empowered…and it was music not money that played the major role…"



The Canterbury Sound In Popular Music: Scene, Identity and Myth
by Asya Draganova, Shane Blackman and Andy Bennett - Emerald Publishing Limited (2020)

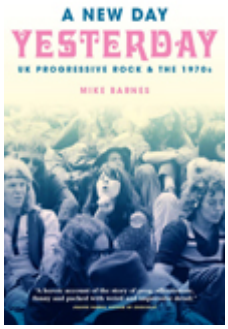
"... The volume recounts the stories, and explores the significance, of the Canterbury Sound as heritage, ongoing legacy and scene. Originating from the experiences and ethnographic research of the three editors, all of whom have lived and worked in Canterbury, the book brings together reflections, stories, and critical insights from well-known musicians, researchers, DIY archivists and fans to explore the Canterbury Sound as an inter-generational phenomenon and a source of cultural identity. Associated with acts like Caravan, early Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt, and Kevin Ayers, this romanticised scene has a special place in popular music culture. ..."



Document And Eyewitness: An Intimate History of Rough Trade
by Neil Taylor - Orion (2012)

"Rough Trade is practically a byword for the history of independent music over the last thirty years. DOCUMENT AND EYEWITNESS: AN INTIMATE HISTORY OF ROUGH TRADE tells the story from the inside of a phenomenally influential record label, through the voices of Geoff Travis, Jarvis Cocker, Robert Wyatt, Green Gartside and many many more.

From the early records of Cabaret Voltaire, Kleenex and the Swell Maps, through to groundbreaking releases by The Fall, The Smiths and Scritti Pollitti, on through the collapse of the independent collective and the rebirth of Rough Trade at the turn of the century, this is the definitive, essential account for any serious music fan."



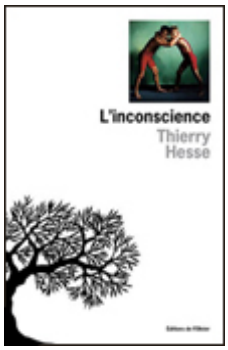
A New day Yesterday - UK Progressive Rock & the 1970s
by Mike Barnes - Omnibus Press (2020)

"This 600-page account of the birth and heyday of progressive rock is based on over 100 original interviews with musicians, journalists, record industry insiders and the testimonies of fans and is the product of five years' work."



The Singer-Songwriter in Europe - Paradigms, Politics and Place
by Isabelle Marc and Stuart Green - Routledge (2019)

La contribution de Richard Elliott à cet ouvrage collectif est intitulée : 'Words take the place of meaning': sound, sense and politics in the music of Robert Wyatt.



L'inconscience
de Thierry Hesse - Éditions de L'Olivier (2012)

Apparition inattendue de Robert Wyatt dans ce roman qui met longuement en scène la tragique soirée au cours de laquelle il chûtera du 4ème étage d'un immeuble londonien.

More information



Auge & Ohr - Ear & Eye (Encounters with World Music)
by Christoph Wagner - Edition Neue Zeitschriftfür Music (2004)

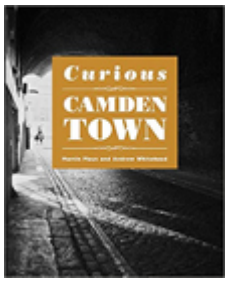
Mit ein Text von Robert Wyatt.

More information



Le bleu Le bleu
de Dashiel Hedayat - Christian Bourgois (1971)

More information



Curious Camden Town
by Martin Plaut & Andrew Whitehead - Five Leaves Publications (2015)

Une évocation du quartier de Camden à Londres comprenant un saisissant reportage sur la soirée inaugurale de la Roundhouse le 15 octobre 1966 en soutien à la revue International Times. Au programme: Pink Floyd et Soft Machine...

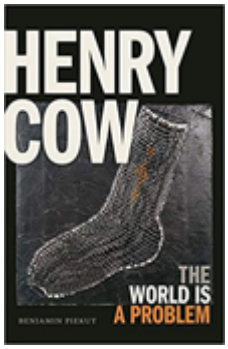


The renaissance of the Roundhouse started in 1964 when the playwright Arnold Wesker launched Centre 42 there, winning trade union support for the creation of an arts and cultural centre. But the moment that Camden became hip was two years later, on 15th October 1966 – when Pink Floyd and Soft Machine, neither then signed up to a record label, played at the all-night launch party of International Times (IT), one of the more cerebral of the ventures of the sixties alternative press. It was the first big gig ever held at the Roundhouse. The building wasn't remotely fit for purpose, as Barry Miles, a founder of IT, recalled in his history of the city's counter-culture, London Calling: there was no proper floor, and great jagged pieces of metal stuck up through a layer of grime. There were only two toilets, and the electricity supply was about the same as that of a small house, powerful enough only to light the building. There were several large doors opening out on to the railway freight yards, but the entrance staircase from Chalk Farm Road was so narrow that only one person at a time could enter or leave. On that night, 2,000 youngsters made their way up and down that far-from-adequate stairwell. But the venue delivered. "It was great," recalls top record producer Joe Boyd. "Very raw, dirt on the floor, unheated - but strangely spectacular."...

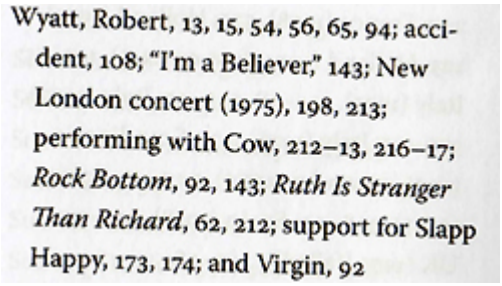


New Sounds : The Virgin guide to new music
by John Schaefer - Virgin Books (1990)

Robert Wyatt est évoqué à plusieurs reprises au sujet de l'album Music for airports *de Brian Eno.*



Henry Cow - The World is a problem
by Benjamin Piekut - Duke University Press (2019)


Wyatt, Robert, 13, 15, 54, 56, 65, 94; accident, 108; "I'm a Believer," 143; New London concert (1975), 198, 213; performing with Cow, 212–13, 216–17; *Rock Bottom*, 92, 143; *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, 62, 212; support for Slapp Happy, 173, 174; and Virgin, 92



Epiphanies - Life changing encounters with music
Edition Tony Herrington - Wire (2015)

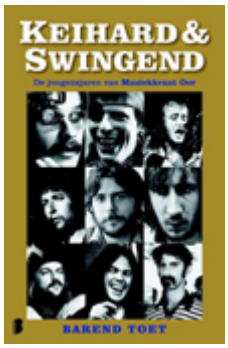
Recueil de 52 Epiphanies publiées par la revue Wire et signées par des personnalités aussi célèbres qu'inattendus : de Genesis Breyer P-orridge "on the psychedelic designs of Hapshash And The Coloured Coat" à Jerry Dammers "on his appreciation of Sun Ra and his cosmic music", en passant par Philip Brophy "on the problem with John Cage", chaque auteur s'attache à décrire cette prise de conscience soudaine et lumineuse qui constitue le coeur de l'épiphanie littéraire.

Robert Wyatt se livre à une épiphanie enthousiaste de l'album "The Genius Of Ray Charles" paru en 1959 chez Atlantic, non sans s'interroger lorsqu'il découvrit le titre du disque sur le sens des mots :" I tought : Genius? How could he be a genius if he's only a popular singer? Clearly a misuse of the word. I was like that." Nul doute, vous l'avez deviné, qu'il allait très vite changer d'avis...



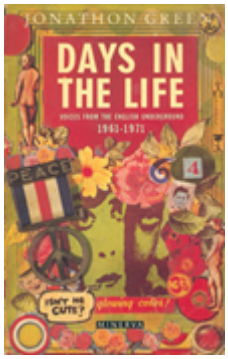
Kevin Ayers: ¿Por qué estamos durmiendo?
de Alberto Manzano Lizandra - Editions Milenio (2015)

Une biographie détaillée de Kevin Ayers avec de nombreux interviews, des dessins, des textes inédits ainsi que des chapitres consacrés à ses principaux compagnons musicaux : Robert Wyatt, Daevid Allen, Ollie Halsall et Nico.



Keihard & Swingend - De jongrensjaren van Muziekkrent Oor
de Barend Toet - Ed. Boekeru (2011)
(en néerlandais)

Barend Toe, fondateur en 1971 de la revue musicale hollandaise Oor (dont plusieurs articles sont référencés sur ce site), raconte son aventure éditoriale en évoquant plusieurs artistes dont Robert Wyatt qui ont marqué l'histoire du magazine,.



Days in the life - Voices from the English Underground 1961-1971
By Jonathon Green - Heinemann - Minerva (1988)

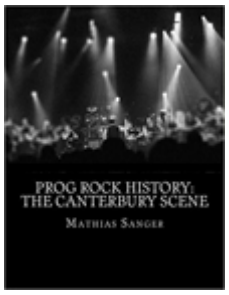
More information



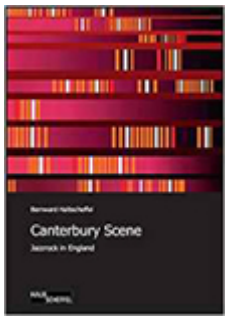
I 101 racconti di Canterbury. Viaggio nella storia di una (non) scena
de Valerio D'Onofrio, Valeria Ferro - CRAC Edizioni (2017)
(en italien)

L'école de Canterbury en 302 pages: "Le son de Canterbury est basé sur une combinaison singulière de psychédélisme, de jazz et de progressif, soutenu par des textes souvent empreints d'ironie et de mondes surréalistes.".

Et aussi sur L'école de Canterbury : une compilation qui rassemble de très nombreux textes publiés sur ce sujet dans Wikipédia :



Prog Rock History:
The Canterbury Scene
de Mathias Sanger (2015)



Canterbury Scene. Jazzrock in England
de Bernward Halbscheffel - Halbscheffel Verlag (2014)
(en allemand)



Re-Make/Re-Model: Art, Pop, Fashion and the Making of Roxy Music - 1953-1972
by Michael Bracewell - Faber & Faber (2007)



Le rock progressif anglais (1967-1977)
de Christophe Pirenne - Editions Champion - Collection Musique-Musicologie (2005)

More information



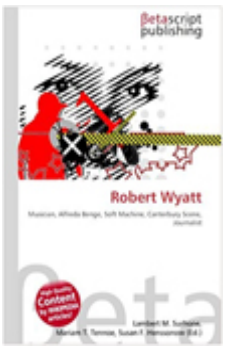
Amougies
by Jean-Noël Coghe - Les Presses du Midi (2019)
Inclus 2 CD avec un court extrait de Soft Machine.

L'organisation du festival d'Amougies du 24 au 28 octobre 1969, racontée par un très proche collaborateur de Jean Karakos pour cet évènement qui a failli ne jamais avoir lieu.
D'une écriture encore passionnée, J.N. Coghe fait preuve d'un goût musical très affirmé :

" Soft Machine trois + quatre pour la circonstance. Le Soft s'est adjoint quatre cuivres. L'expérience musicale la plus avancée. Ils nous servent, entre autres, vingt-neuf minutes d'une réelle intensité émotionnelle. Peut-être les plus grands."



Soft Machine - De (Kevin) Ayers à (Robert) Wyatt
de Jérôme Pintoux - Camion Blanc (2020)



Robert Wyatt
Betascript Publishing (2010)

Compilation d'articles parus sur Robert Wyatt dans Wikipédia.
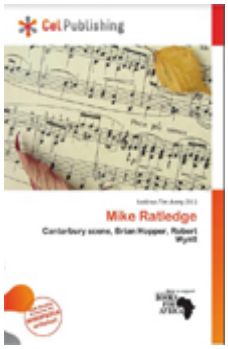


Soft Machine
Betascript Publishing (2010)

Compilation d'articles parus sur Soft Machine dans Wikipédia.



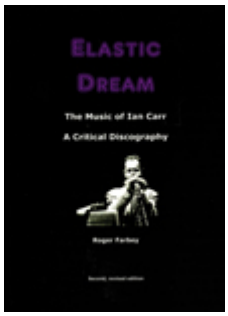
Volume Two (Soft Machine album)
Betascript Publishing (2010)

Compilation d'articles parus sur le volume Two de Soft Machine dans Wikipédia.

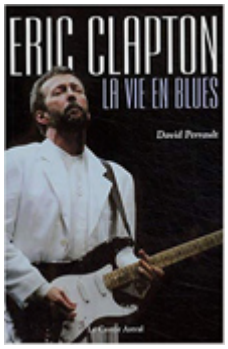


Mike Ratledge
Cell Publishing (2011)

Compilation d'articles parus sur Mike Ratledge dans Wikipédia.



Elastic Dream - The Music of Ian Carr - A Critical Discography
By Roger Farbey - Roger Farbey Edition (2010)



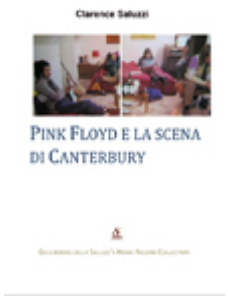
Eric Clapton - la vie en blues
David Perrault - Le Castor Astral (2003)

David Perrault évoque Soft Machine à deux reprises dans cet ouvrage consacré à Eric Clapton.



I Racconti di Canterbury - Gnomi e banane musicali tra '60 e '70
di Luigi Bontempi - Nautilus (1990)

Livret de 50 pages édité par Nautilus Autoproduzioni, collectif lié au mouvement des occupations à Turin. Gnomes et bananes musicales entre '60 et '70 de Luigi Bontempi est "une véritable plongée dans cet esprit irrationnel, dada, romantique et courageux qui au moins au début unissait Soft Machine, Gong, Kevin Ayers et Caravan" (Donato Zoppo).

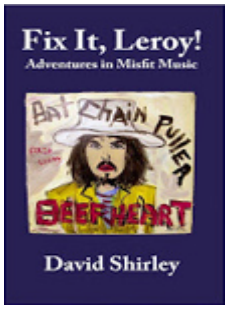


Pink Floyd e la scena di Canterbury
Clarence Saluzzi - Gli e-books della Saluzzi's Home Record Collection (2012)

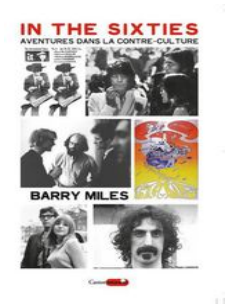
Questo ebook raccoglie una serie di post pubblicati sul site saluzzishrc.com durante l'anno 2012.



Brian Eno - Zaobilazne Strategije - razgovori 1973-1984
Beograd -: Radionica SIC (1986)



Fix It, Leroy! Adventures in Misfit Music
de David Shirley - Create Space Independent Publishing Platform (2017)

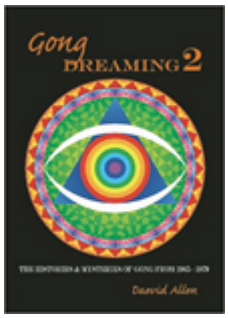


In the Sixities - Aventures dans la contre-culture
de Barry Miles - Le castor astral (2016)

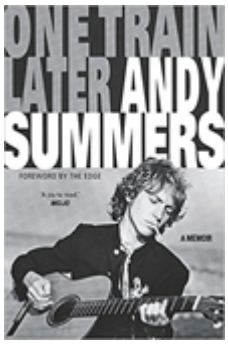


Gong Dreaming 1: From Soft Machine to the Birth of Gong
de Daevid Allen - SAF Publishing (2006)





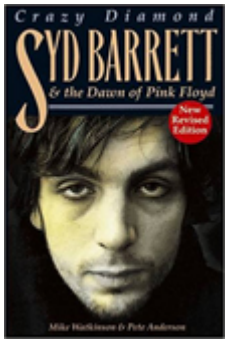
Gong Dreaming 2: The Histories & Mysteries of Gong from 1969-1975
de Daevid Allen - SAF Publishing (2009)



One Train Later: A memoir
de Andy Summers - Piatkus Books (2007)

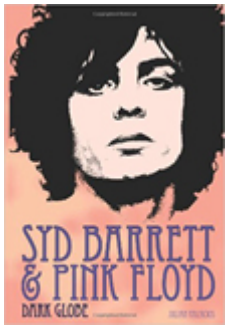


Syd Barrett - The Making Of Madcap Laughs
de Malcom Jones - PDF sur internet (1982 et 2003)



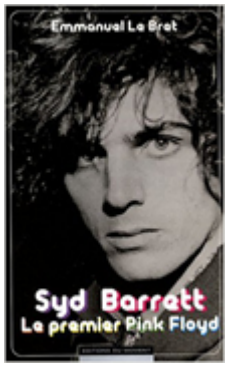
Syd Barrett - Crazy Diamond: The Dawn Of Pink Floyd
de Mike Watkinson et? Pete Anderson - Omnibus Press (1991)

Une traduction française est parue en 2005 aux Editions Camion Blanc.



Syd Barrett & Pink Floyd - Dark Globe
de Julian Palacios - Editions Plexus (2010)

Une traduction française est parue en 2012 aux Editions Camion Blanc.

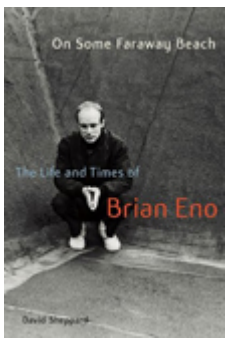


Syd Barrett - Le Premier Pink Floyd
de Emmanuel Le Bret - Editions du moment (2008)

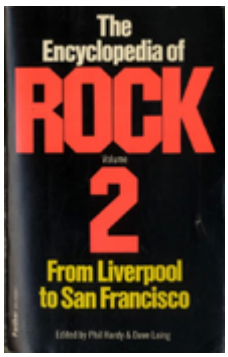


Before and After Eno - Una biografia di Brian Eno
de Marco Calloni - Meridiano Zero (2016)

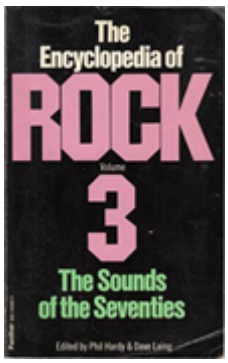
Avec de rès nombreux commentaires et iconographie sur Robert Wyatt + un interview exclusif.



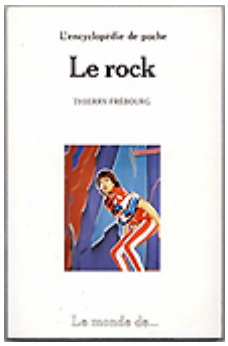
On Some Faraway Beach: The Life and Times of Brian Eno
de David Sheppard - Orion Books (2008)



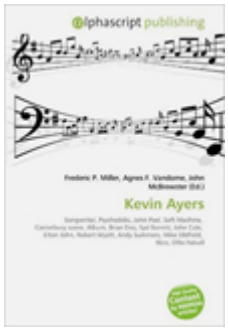
The Encyclopedia of Rock vol. 2: From Liverpool to San Francisco
de Phil Hardy & David Laing - Panther Books (1976)



The Encyclopedia of Rock vol. 3: The Sounds of the Seventies
de Phil Hardy & David Laing - Panther Books (1976)

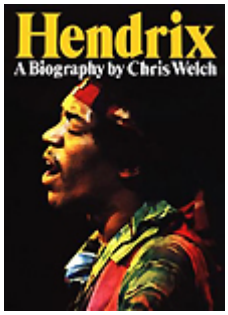


Le rock
de Thierry Frébourg - Le Monde de... Editions (1987)

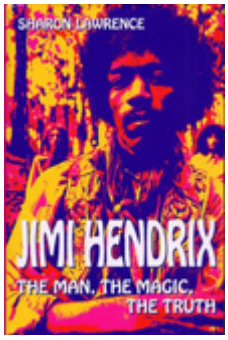


Kevin Ayers
de Frederic P. Miller , Agnes F. Vandome et John McBrewster - Alphascript Publishing (2010)

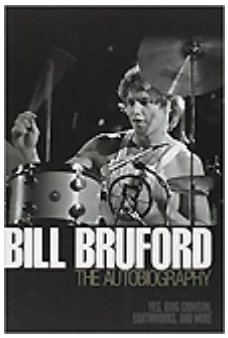
Compilation d'articles de Wikipédia dont certains sur Soft Machine et Robert Wyatt.



Hendrix - A Biography
de Chris Welch - Flash Books (1973)

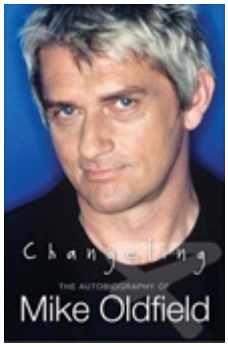


Jimi Hendrix: The Man, the Magic, the Truth
de Sharon Lawrence - Pan Books (2006)

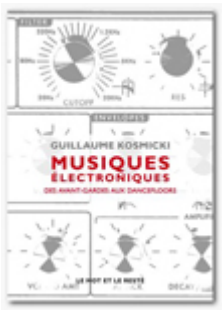


Bill Bruford - The Autobiography
de Bill Bruford - Jawbone Press (2009)

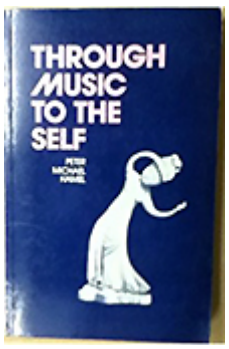
Une traduction française d'Aymeric Leroy est parue en 2012 aux Editions Le Mot & Le Reste.



Changeling: The Autobiography of Mike Oldfield
de Mike Oldfield - Virgin Books (2007)



Musique Electroniques, des avant-gardes aux dance floors
de Guillaume Kosmicki - Editions Le Mot et le Reste (2009)

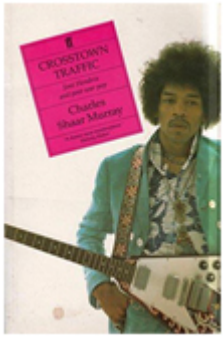


Through Music to The Self
de Peter Michael Hamel - Elemet Books (Compton Press) - (1978)

Traduction du livre allemand publié à l'origine chez Scherz Verlag en 1976.

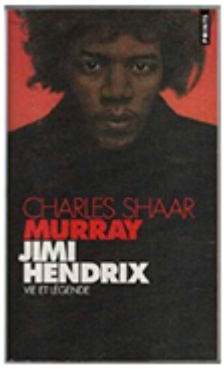


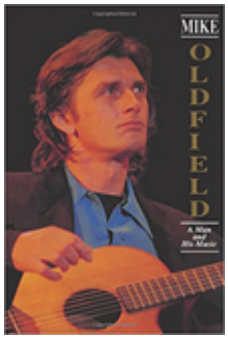
Voir aussi



Crosstown Traffic, Jimi Hendrix and Post-War PoP
de Charles Shaar Murray, Editions Faber & Faber (1989)

Ttraduction en 1993 sous le titre "Jimi Hendrix, Vie et Légende" (Seuil).

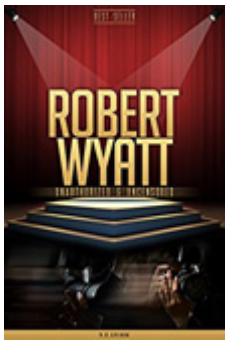




Mike Oldfield - A Man and His Music
de Sean Moraghan - Britannia Press Publishing (1993)

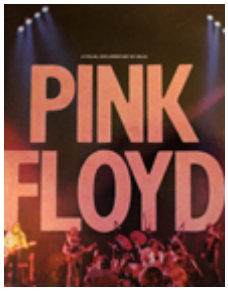


Le Livre du Pink Floyd
de Alain Dister, Jaques Leblanc & Udo Woehrle - Editions Albin Michel / Rock&Folk (1978)

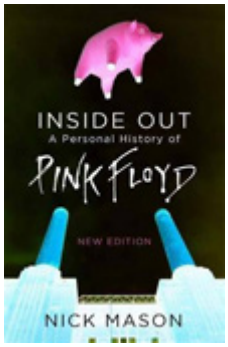


Robert Wyatt Unauthorized & Uncensored
de R.B. Grimm - Kindle Edition - (2015)

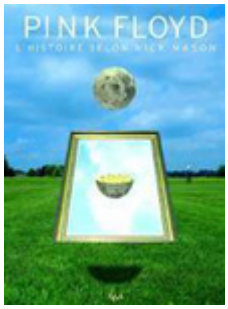
Compilation d'articles au format ebook. 27 pages.



Pink Floyd - A Visual Documentary
by Miles Mabbett and Andy Mabbett - Omnibus Press (1980)



Inside Out : A Personal History of Pink Floyd
by Nick Mason - Weidenfeld & Nicolson (2004)

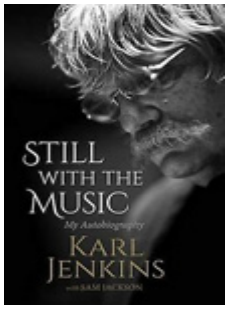


Pink Floyd - L'Histoire selon Nick Mason
de Nick Mason - Editions E.P.A (2005)

Traduction du livre "Inside Out".



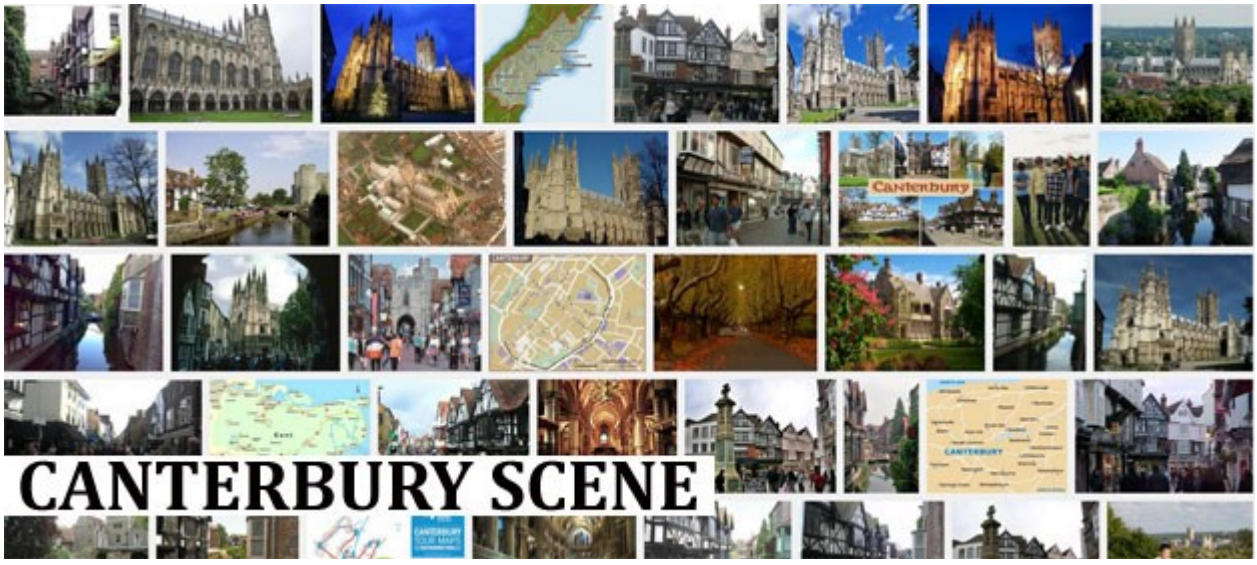
Swingin' Canterbury: viaggio nella provincia del rock progressivo britannico: 1967-1981
de Michele Coralli - Editions Tuttle (2007)



Still with the Music
de Karl Jenkins with Sam Jackson - Editions Elliott & Thompson (2015)

Canterbury Scene

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Ecole de Canterbury or not ? Question cruciale à laquelle je me garderai bien de répondre à la légère...

Les arguments sont depuis longtemps connus. On débat dans des forums spécialisés, on échange entre spécialistes, l'Université s'en mêle, c'est un sujet qui fait réfléchir...

Sur **Calyx**, les avis sont partagés : Richard Sinclair, Didier Malherbe y vont de leur explication, Hugh Hopper est plus réservé et Robert Wyatt plutôt sarcastique...

HH

"People say, what is the Canterbury scene? I think you have to come to Canterbury and see it and hear it ! I think Kent has got a particular sound. We've sung it in our schools here, we were all at school in this sort of area. I was part of the Church of England choir : up to the age of sixteen I was singing tonalities that are very English. Over the last three or four hundred years, and even earlier than that, some of the tonalities go back. So they are here, and they are a mixture of European things too. The history is very much that. A very historical centre of activity is Canterbury for the last hundred years. So it's quite an important stepping stone of whatever this thousand years have covered. I think it's not to be mocked because it's a centre of communication here and it's a meeting point - many nations come here to visit the cathedral, so you get a very unique situation happening".

"A lot goes on here, it's quite cosmopolitan, Canterbury, to a degree... But that's because of the tourists, not from the people who actually live here : they are very conservative, not cosmopolitan at all, not particularly worldly, I don't think. The music happens outside, gets written here and taken out. This is the Canterbury scene for me. It doesn't really exist here, but it forms here. Musicians, friends join together and play music together, and then they head off around Europe and play their music and get noted for this type of sound"...

RW

"I couldn't tell you much about that... I don't remember any particular movement happening there. I was at school there, I got married there and I lived there for a while. The school I went to had nothing special,

there wasn't any particular interest for art, and I grew bored because I wasn't really good at school... If there ever was a Canterbury scene, it was when the Wilde Flowers became Caravan : they were Canterbury people...".

"I didn't even know it meant me until interviewers started asking me about it. As I say, because I'd bussed in from outside to go to school there I didn't really consider myself a Canterbury person. I think it really means people like Hugh Hopper and Richard Sinclair, who are genuinely based in that area. I met them there and I'm eternally grateful that I met someone like Hugh who provided something I don't think anyone else could have provided. My mind doesn't dwell on it as a place though, if I recall a former fantasy world upon which I draw, it's Harlem in the Forties and not Canterbury in the Fifties...".

Sur **Whatsrattlin** (Yahoo Group) la problématique est clairement posée **Does Canterbury exist ?** et la polémique va bon train... :

All think the Ramones are not Canterbury, but maybe there was one Ramone who pushed Robert's wheelchair and maybe this is the reason to declare the Ramones as part of the CS, why should it be not ok - you must not accept it, but it's no reason to start a war!

Halte au feu !

En 2002, un émérite universitaire de *University of Surrey* tente la synthèse avec le concept de *Canterbury Sound* :

Music, media and urban mythscapes: a study of the 'Canterbury Sound' !

In this article I examine how recent developments in media and technology are both re-shaping conventional notions of the term 'music scene' and giving rise to new perceptions among music fans of the relationship between music and place. My empirical focus throughout the article is the'Canterbury Sound', a term originally coined by music journalists during the late 1960s to describe the music of Canterbury1 jazz-rock group the Wilde Flowers, and groups subsequently formed by individual members of the Wilde Flowers – the most well known examples being Caravan, Hatfield and the North and Soft Machine (see Frame, 1986: 16; Macan, 1997; Stump, 1997; Martin, 1998), and a number of other groups with alleged Canterbury connections. Over the years a range of terms, for example 'Motown', the 'Philadelphia Sound' and, more recently, the'Seattle Sound', have been used as a way of linking musical styles with particular urban spaces. For the most part, however, these terms have described active centres of production for music with a distinctive 'sound'. In contrast, however, in its original context the Canterbury Sound was a rather more loosely applied term, the majority of groups and artists linked with the Canterbury Sound being London-based and sharing little in the way of a characteristic musical style. Since the mid-1990s, however, the term 'Canterbury Sound' has acquired a very different currency as a new generation of fans have constructed a discourse of Canterbury music that attempts to define the latter as a distinctive 'local' sound with character- istics shaped by musicians' direct experience of life in the city of Canterbury. A particularly significant aspect of this re-working of the Canterbury Sound is the spatial relationship of fans both to the city and to each other. Thus, the revived interest in the Canterbury Sound constitutes an essentially virtual scene, debates, discussions and definitions of the Canterbury Sound being focused around fanzines, Internet newsletters and websites via which a globally diffuse fan base communicates. In relation to this virtual scene, Canterbury itself performs an important anchoring role as myths surrounding the city are constructed online and worked into discussions concerning the defining characteristics of the 'Canterbury Sound'..

Et en juillet 2018, Alan Stumpenhuson-Payne de *University Of Kent* tire enfin le bilan définitif :

Popular Music in Canterbury betwwen 1965-1971 and Theories of Scene

This thesis examines the phenomenon and lasting influence of what has come to be known as the Canterbury Scene. It argues that the Canterbury music sceneis best understood through an investigation of the scale and diversity of live music in the city in the1960s, the nostalgia and interest it still evokes and the sense of popular music heritage which it contains. It adds to the relatively small body of literature about the Scene by examining academic and theoretical writing on the subject and using this andother paradigm examples to cast further light on the relationship between the music and its perceived location.My original contribution to knowledge is a detailed account of the state of musical performance and the performative features in Canterbury between 1965 and 1971, in particular. Through this, an assessment of the importance of the music to the canon of progressive rock may be made, and new insight gained into the extent to which the Canterbury of fifty years ago might be said to have been the locus of a scene or, at least, have given some support to a network of musicians -albeit musicians in bands with little economic co-dependency.The work draws on first-hand accounts of the music making of the time as well as local media accounts, fan magazines and online materials and attention is paid both to the translocal nature of the scene and musicians for whom Canterbury and East Kent remained the

geographical focus of the musical practices.

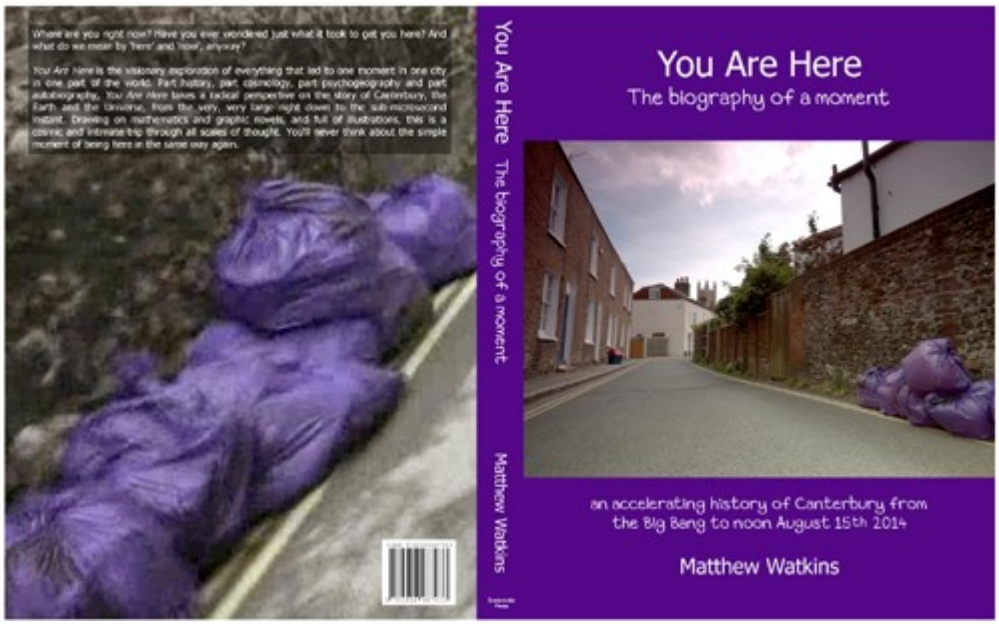
L'Histoire jugera.



0:00 / 4:44

The Canterbury Scene An Interview with Robert Wyatt - BBC South

Et pour ceux qui souhaitent épuiser les mystères de la Jérusalem de notre musique préférée, nous recommandons fortement la lecture de l'ouvrage *You Are Here: The biography of a moment* de Matthew Watkins. Une exploration kaleidoscopique de ce que Michel Butor a appelé *Le Génie du Lieu*, **Canterbury** en expansion, du big-bang au 15 août 2014 - centre du monde et mère nourricière des agencements sonores les plus enivrants que l'humanité a produit depuis son origine - **Canterbury**, ici, hier, maintenant et forever...


Where are you right now? Have you ever wondered just what it took to get you here? And what do we mean by 'here' and 'now', anyway?
You Are Here is the visionary exploration of everything that led to one moment in one city in one part of the world. Part history, part cosmology, part psychogeography and part autobiography, You Are Here takes a radical perspective on the story of Canterbury, the Earth and the Universe, from the very, very large right down to the sub-microsecond instant. Drawing on mathematics and graphic novels, and full of illustrations, this is a comic and intimate trip through all scales of thought. You'll never think about the simple moment of being here in the same way again.
You Are Here
The biography of a moment
Matthew Watkins
You Are Here
The biography of a moment
an accelerating history of Canterbury from the Big Bang to noon August 15th 2014
Matthew Watkins

Plus d'infos

Let's sing to the instrumentals of Robert Wyatt, Soft Machine, Matching Mole and co..

ABÉCÉDAIRE





SOFT MACHINE - VOL. 1

0:00 / 4:14

A Certain Kind
Lyrics

0:00 / 5:32

Why Are We Sleeping
Lyrics



SOFT MACHINE - VOL. 2

0:00 / 2:32

Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
Lyrics



SOFT MACHINE - THIRD

0:00 / 19:09

Moon In June
Lyrics



MATCHING MOLE

0:00 / 5:06

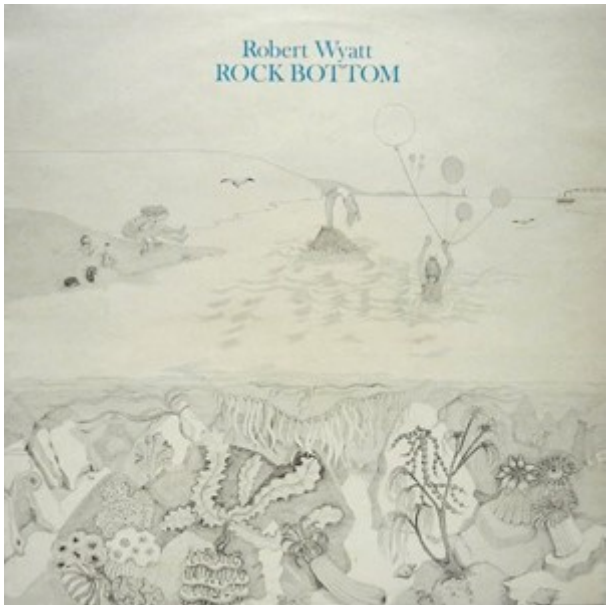
O Caroline
Lyrics



MATCHING MOLE - LITTLE RED RECORD

0:00 / 3:00

God Song
Lyrics



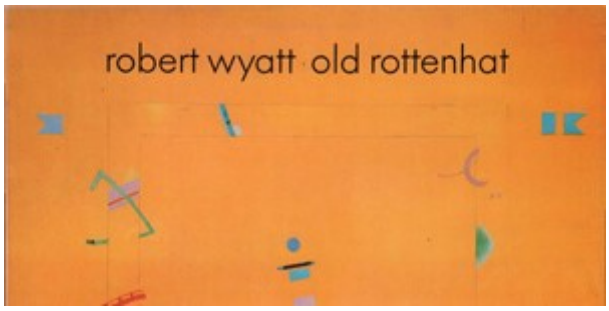
ROBERT WYATT - ROCK BOTTOM

0:00 / 6:31

Sea Song
Lyrics

0:00 / 7:41

Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
Lyrics



ROBERT WYATT - OLD ROTTENHAT

0:00 / 2:50

The Age Of Self
Lyrics



ROBERT WYATT - SHIPBUILDING

0:00 / 3:05

Shipbuilding
Lyrics



ROBERT WYATT - DONDESTAN (REVISITED)

0:00 / 5:02

Catholic Architecture
Lyrics

0:00 / 3:31

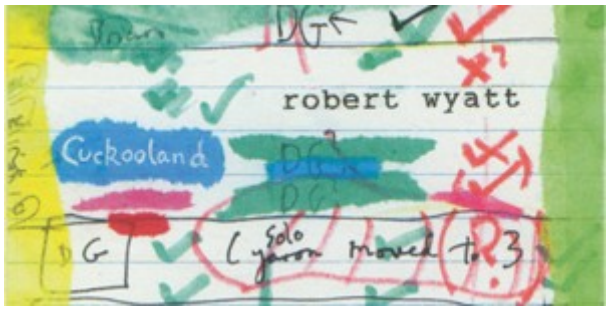
Left On Man
Lyrics



ROBERT WYATT - SHLEEP

0:00 / 6:11

Maryan
Lyrics



ROBERT WYATT - CUCKOOLAND

0:00 / 5:01

Lullaby For Hamza
Lyrics



ROBERT WYATT - COMICOPERA

0:00 / 2:40

A Beautiful War
Lyrics



Cette année 2025, le film d'animation de Maria Trenor "Rock Bottom" est enfin sorti en salles puis en DVD. Un bon prétexte pour découvrir ou redécouvrir les nombreuses incursions que Robert Wyatt a faites dans le 7ème art tout au long de sa carrière musicale.

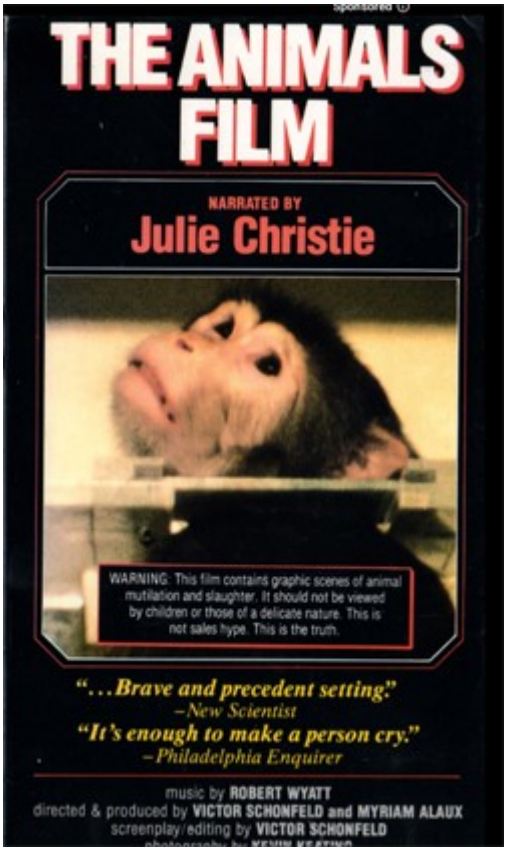
Pour m'aider à déambuler dans ce parcours qui n'est surement pas exhaustif, j'ai organisé celui-ci en 5 thèmes qui parfois se croisent et se répondent...

1. Les compositions

Il y a bien sûr les films qui 'empruntent' au répertoire de Robert Wyatt des morceaux qui illustreront à merveille le propos du réalisateur et il y a la musique que Robert Wyatt a spécialement composée à cet effet, telle la bande-son du documentaire **THE ANIMALS FILM** sorti en 1982.



Robert Wyatt a raconté à de nombreuses reprises dans quelles circonstances il avait été amené à participer à ce documentaire dénonçant la cruauté envers les animaux, réalisé par Victor Schonfeld et Myriam Alaux, Julie Christie en étant la narratrice,



« Victor Schonfeld voulait que le groupe Talking Heads compose la B.O., se rappelle Robert, mais ils lui demandaient 500 livres rien que pour la chanson du générique. Et c'était un sacré budget pour le film. Julie le renseigna : "J'ai un ami qui le ferait pour moins que ça, je pense. Pourquoi ne lui demandes-tu pas ?"

Et j'ai composé le reste de la B.O. pour 100 livres. C'est-à-dire que Talking Heads a reçu 500 livres pour la séquence d'ouverture, et moi 100 pour le reste. Mais j'étais tellement heureux de le faire.»

Abstraite et parfois agressive, la B.O. de Wyatt est proche de la musique industrielle : plus Throbbing Gristle ou Cabaret Voltaire que Violeta Parra. La musique lugubre et brutale colle parfaitement aux images choquantes. Parmi les images les plus horribles du film, on retrouve des becs de poulets guillotinés ou un chien vivant les organes exposés sur une table d'opération.

« C'était une tâche ardue, se souvient Wyatt. C'est difficile de composer de la musique pour une scène insupportable à regarder. »

En lien avec son récent intérêt pour FREGG (Free Range Eggs), une « petite organisation, totalement dingo, pleine de personnes du type Joyce Grenfell », qui menait une campagne pour des œufs de poules élevées en plein air, The Animals Film fait écho à la politique plus générale de Wyatt. Outre la cruauté envers les



Julie Christie en 1982

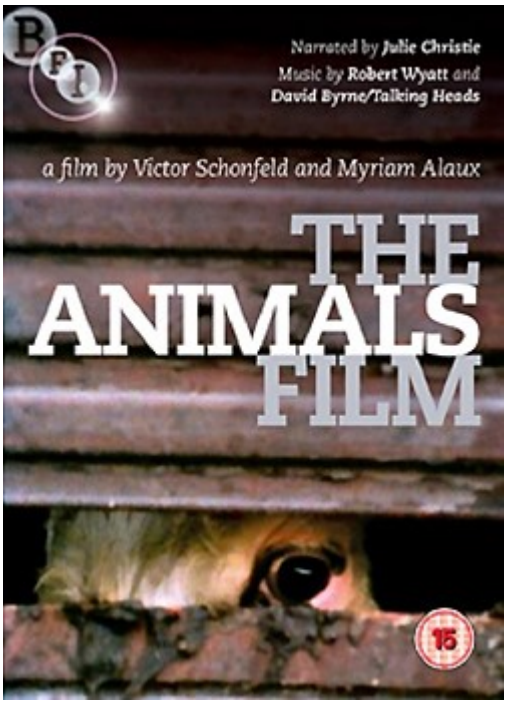
animaux, Schonfeld et Alaux traitaient de la cupidité des entreprises qui permettait et même encourageait ces abus.

Robert déclara au Morning Star que le film ajoute « un peu de muscle politique dans ce qui semblait être des préoccupations libérales insipides du végétarisme ».

À l'époque, il s'agissait d'un programme radical, bien ces idées fassent aujourd'hui partie de l'opinion majoritaire.

Extrait de Robert Wyatt Different every time, la biographie de Marcus O'Dair.

Il existe à ma connaissance au moins trois versions de cette B.O. : la version originale de 28 minutes, la version CD d'une durée de 20 minutes et une version japonaise dont le mixage est légèrement différent.



- Le film - version intégrale) (YouTube)
- La bande-annonce (YouTube)
- Plus d'infos sur l'album

3 excerpts from The Animals Film music remixed by Todd Beasley from different versions.



Pt1 #1



Pt2 #1



Pt1 #2

//

SOLAR FLARES BURN FOR YOU est le titre d'un morceau paru en 2003 chez

Cuneiform Records qui donne également son titre à l'album. C'est également le titre d'un film expérimental 16 mm sorti en 1973 dont la musique est entièrement composée par Robert Wyatt. Et c'est bien le même morceau qui sera édité 30 ans plus tard sur le label américain.

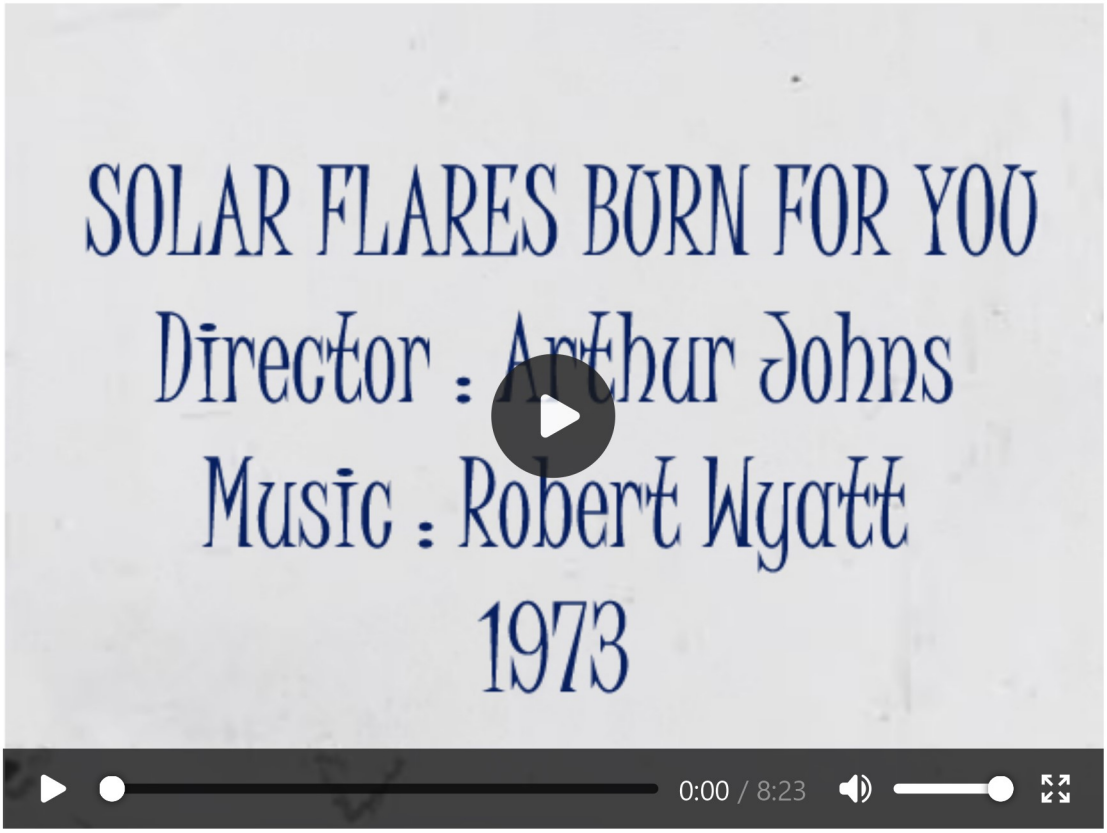
Sorte de road-movie industriel arty, réalisé par Arthur Johns tout juste diplômé du London's Royal College of Art, le film est à l'image de la bande-son (et réciproquement) : kaleidoscope de séquences urbaines et champêtres saturées de couleurs vives et de dissonances électroniques, dérives de personnages muets et mystérieux que la musique de Robert Wyatt magnifie.



Musique dont on retrouvera la trame mélodique dans le *Solar Flares* de Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard qui paraitra 2 ans plus tard.

Le film totalement méconnu à sa sortie, sera néanmoins projeté en 2001 au Centre Pompidou (Paris) dans le cadre d'un festival de films "psychédéliques". Il échappera à la disparition définitive grâce aux plateformes internet où il sera enfin visible par le plus grand nombre.

Plus d'infos





RW selling The Morning Star in Twickenham with CP delegate Digby Jacks

Le soutien de Robert Wyatt à de nombreux combats politiques et sociaux est connu, en particulier au début des années 80 alors que Margaret Thatcher s'engageait dans une attaque frontale contre les syndicats de mineurs.

On ne sera donc guère étonné de découvrir sa participation à la bande-son du film militant **SO THAT YOU CAN LIVE** aux côtés de Lindsay Cooper et de Scritti Politti.



Réalisé en 1982 dans le Sud du Pays de Galles par le collectif Cinema Action, SO THAT YOU CAN LIVE aborde la réalité sociale à travers le personnage d'une militante syndicale - Shirley Butts - qui avait mené quelques années plus tôt une grève dure pour l'égalité salariale dans l'usine GEC. Le film aborde les relations entre cette femme et son entourage familial, les délégués syndicaux masculins et plus généralement l'ensemble des interactions entre sa vie personnelle et son engagement.

Considéré comme un film majeur du groupe Cinéma Action, il donne aussi du Pays de Galles une vision bien éloignée des poncifs qui caractérisent parfois ce pays qui était en train de vivre la fin de son aventure industrielle.

- Plus d'infos
- Cinema Action



La participation de Robert Wyatt consiste en de nombreuses courtes séquences inspirées pour la plupart du morceau *Born Again Cretin* publié à la même époque sur Nothing Can Stop Us.

[On retrouve ces séquences musicales à : 3:28 - 4:24 - 21:38 - 32:59 - 56:28 - 1:01:18 - 1:08:50 - 1:17:15 et 1:20:29]

2. Les musiques de film

Robert Wyatt n'a pas seulement composé des musiques de films, il en a aussi interprétées. Parfois des compositions inédites écrites spécialement pour lui, ou des morceaux puisés dans son vaste répertoire générateur de tant d'émotions.



En 2012, le groupe Sleeping Men enregistre à Berlin la musique du film **DAS SCHLAFENDE MÄDCHEN** (La fille endormie) du réalisateur Rainer Kirberg. Ils font appel à Robert Wyatt pour qu'il pose sa voix sur *Around the Corner*, une superbe chanson minimaliste et obsédante.



//////////////////////// ////////////////////////

En 2014, Robert Wyatt interprète deux chansons composées par Adrian Johnston pour **COMMON**,le téléfilm de Jimmy McGovern que The Guardian qualifie de *"brutal and devastating drama"*.



Cette série télévisée de 90 minutes diffusée sur BBC One s'inspire du cas réel de Jordan Cunliffe, 16 ans, condamné en vertu de la doctrine juridique dite de "l'entreprise commune" (pour aller vite, une notion de co-responsabilité dans un crime auquel on n'a pas directement participé).

Ce sujet de société qui eut un fort retentissement dans la société anglaise, évoque la peine de 12 ans de prison infligée à Jordan Cunliffe, 16 ans, pour le meurtre de Garry Newlove, bien qu'il n'ait pas participé activement à l'attaque.

Robert Wyatt y chante 2 chansons déclinées sous différentes séquences, à retrouver dans la rubrique **COMMON** de notre Abécédaire.

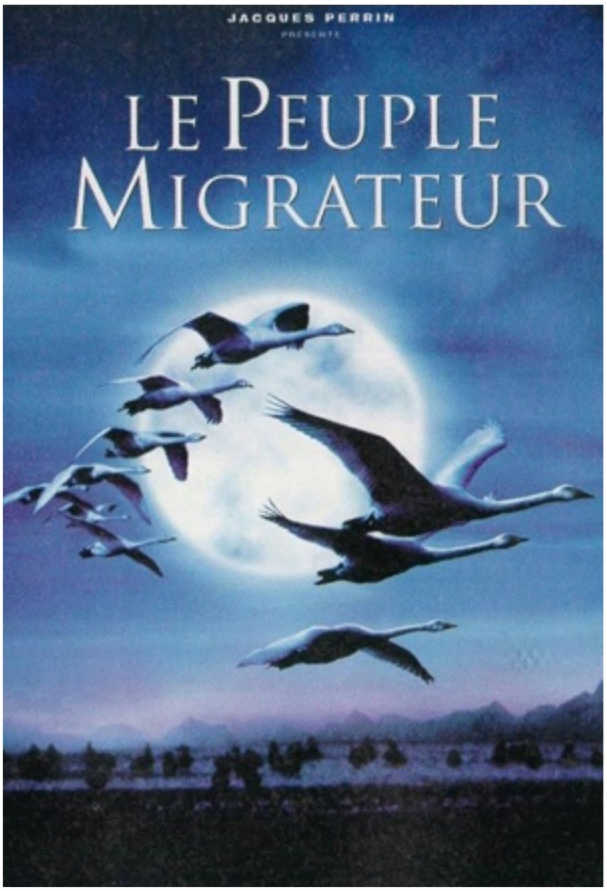
This is the debt I pay
Just for one riotous day,
Years of regret and grief,
Sorrow without relief

0:00

The Dept - part 1

Pour écouter l'intégralité des séquences musicales de **COMMON** Cliquez ici

//



"C'est un texte qui a été écrit en anglais par Gabriel Yacoub et chanté par Robert Wyatt, qui pour moi est un mythe. Adolescent, j'avais une admiration, une passion pour la voix de Robert Wyatt. Il avait les textes, il avait la musique et donc il a travaillé chez lui pendant un certain temps, une quinzaine de jours je crois.

Et puis on s'est retrouvés dans un petit studio au fin fond de l'Angleterre, et on a passé deux ou trois jours… j'avoue que quand on a commencé à appuyer sur le bouton d'enregistrement et que sur une de mes musiques j'ai entendu la voix de Wyatt, j'étais déjà dans un état second… j'étais comme au spectacle… c'était très troublant… c'était une chose totalement irréelle et ça l'est toujours !"

Bruno Coulais, compositeur des morceaux chantés par Robert Wyatt dans le film de Jacques Perrin sorti en 2011 :

LE PEUPLE MIGRATEUR

Plus d'infos



Bande-annonce du Peuple migrateur (avec un extrait de *Master Of The Fields*)



0:00 / 2:26

The Red Forest



0:00 / 3:14

The Highest Gander

0:00

Off Camera

Les films ci-après font appel au répertoire de Robert Wyatt. Cette liste est évidemment incomplète : n'hésitez pas à me contacter pour me signaler un oubli.

Mais Место на земле s'impose pour être le premier cité.

Deuxième et peut-être dernier film à ce jour d'Artur Aristakisyan, Место на земле (Un endroit sur terre) réalisé en 2001 nous plonge au cœur d'une communauté de sans-abris vivant dans un squat à Moscou.

Très dérangeant pour les uns, film culte pour les autres, il décrit la misère et la détresse psychique avec une maîtrise remarquable du son et de la



photographie (le film est en N/B).

Et quel n'est pas notre étonnement d'entendre, au détour d'une scène d'une forte intensité dramatique, la basse si caractéristique d'*Alifib* qui résout à sa façon la tension accumulée les minutes précédentes (premier extrait).

Alifib sera rejouée une seconde fois dans la dernière scène jusqu'au générique final (second extrait).



Dans l'extrait ci-dessus, Robert Wyatt intervient (à notre grand soulagement) à 18:28.



Scène finale et générique

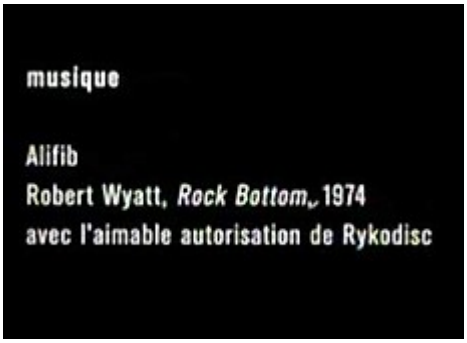




ILS ONT BIEN VIEILLI - ce documentaire multi-primé de Sébastien Louis (2004) évoque la vie quotidienne d'une maison de retraite.

"Quelques vieilles personnes sont assises en silence : peau ridée, mains tremblantes, regards perdus dans le vide. Certains se mettent à parler, comme pour eux mêmes. Ils récitent des monologues extraits de pièces de Shakespeare. Ils parlent d'amour, d'effroi face à la mort, de l'inanité de nos destinées...

Ce film poignant débute et se termine par *Alifib*.

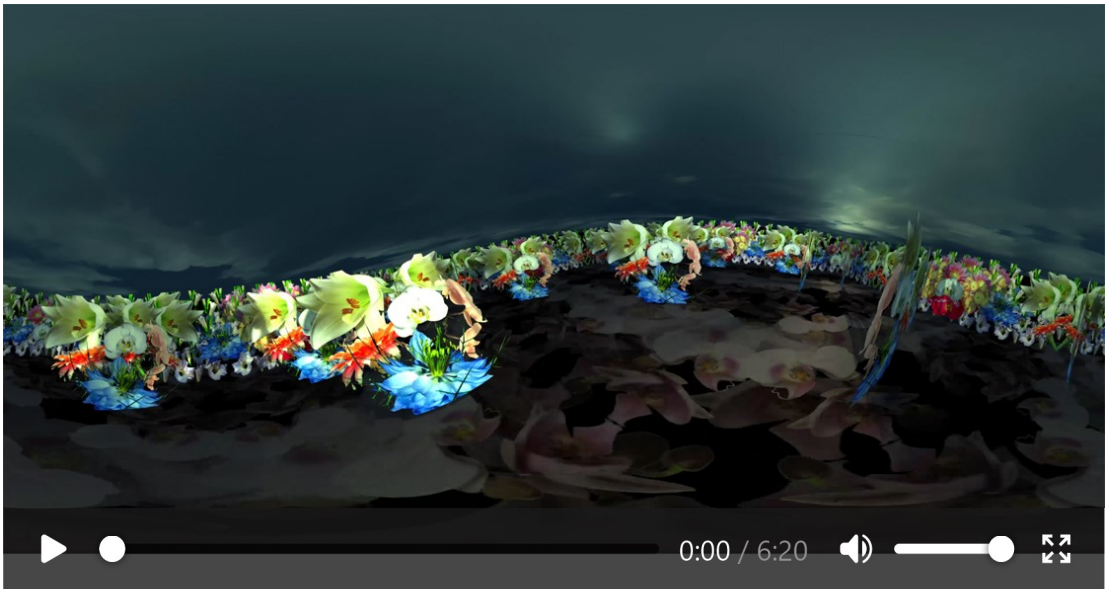


Jérôme Lefdup et Véro Goyo, vidéastes iconoclastes, reçoivent au début des années 80 une commande institutionnelle pour filmer des démonstrations sportives de saut à la perche dans une "cité de banlieue".

Cela donnera **SAUT HAUT**, monté plaisamment avec des extraits remixés de *Rock Bottom* et des traitements de l'image réalisés à grands coups de tournevis dans un TBC ("Time Base Corrector" pour les intimes) qui n'en demandait pas tant.



30 ans plus ard, en 2015, Robert Wyatt s'invite à nouveau dans l'œuvre de Jérôme Lefdup (l'Oeil du cyclone et autres fantaisies visuelles) avec deux recherches très formelles sur **MARYAN** : une version (initialement en VR, ici la version à 180°) et une seconde version réalisée avec Anne-So, plus sage mais toute aussi envoutante...



Maryan - version J. Lefdup

0:00 / 6:23

Maryan - version J. Lefdup + Anne-So

- Plus d'infos sur Jérôme Lefdup
- Télécharger la version VR de Maryan

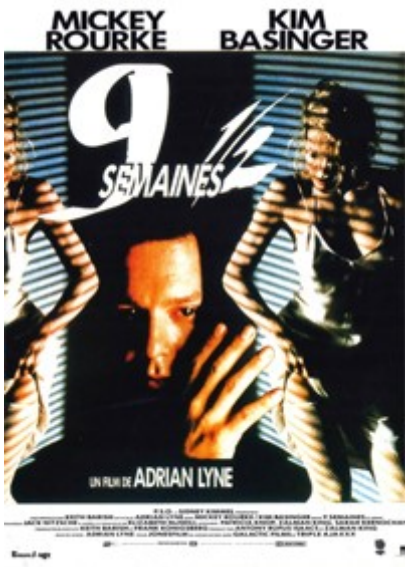


BEAU FIXE SUR CORMEILLES est en compétition du Festival de Cannes 1989 dans la catégorie Courts-métrages.

Réalisé par Gilles Lacombe, le film bénéficiera de la présence de Carole Laure et d'André Wilms et... de *Signed Curtain*, pour la musique, tiré du premier album de Matching Mole paru 17 ans auparavant.

Il sera à nouveau diffusé 35 ans plus tard au Festival de Cannes dans le cadre d'un hommage rendu à de précédentes sélections.





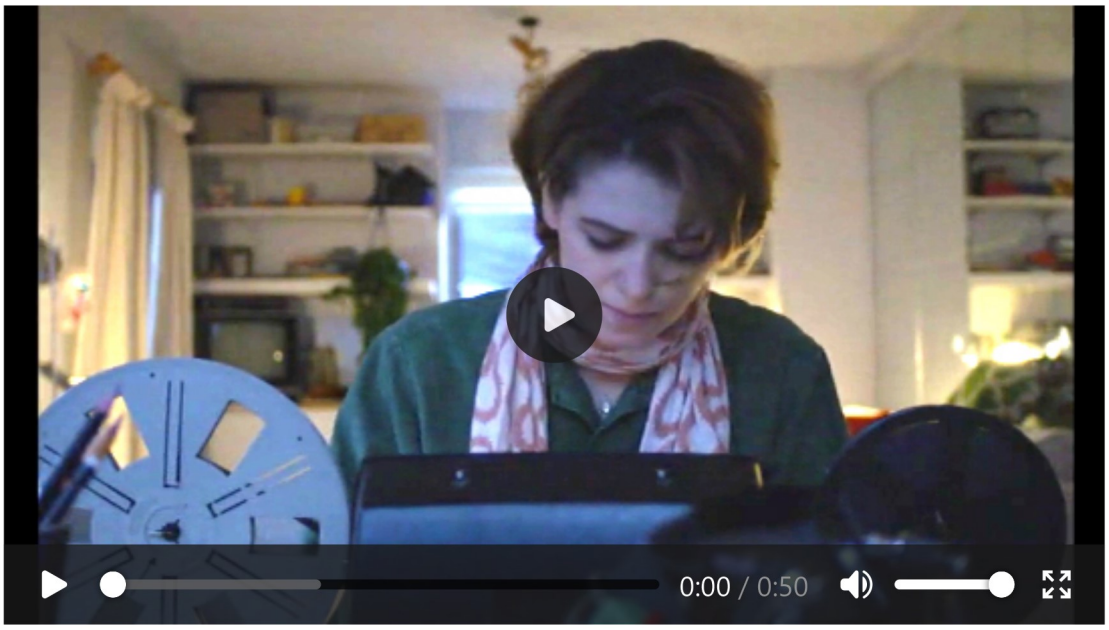


9 semaines 1/2 d'Adrian Lyne et **Lovely Bones** de Peter Jackson sortent tous les deux la même année - 2009 - avec un morceau identique dans leur bande-son : *1/1* co-signés de B. Eno, R. Wyatt et R. Davies extrait de l'album *Music For Airports* de Brian Eno.

Un journaliste évoquera avec Robert Wyatt en 1991 cet usage inattendu de l' Ambiant Music d'Eno...

"These days Robert lives with his wife Alfie in the Lincoln village of Louth. His spacious 19th century home houses a grand piano, a drum kit, a home recording studio, a definitive jazz record collection, and a lot of books of the politically philosophical kind. In fact, his reading desk is as much a focal point as his beloved piano. Asked about the use of *Music For Airports*, on which he soloed with Brian Eno, for some of the steamy sex scenes in the film *9 1/2 Weeks*, he chuckles. With no new album since *Old Rottenhat*, the appearance of "We Love You" with Sakamoto points to a low-key Wyatt, industriously working away in the background as others push themselves forward."

Option #39 - July-August 1991



Extrait avec *Shipbuilding*

Dans le film **THE SOUVENIR - PART ONE** (2019) de Joanna Hogg avec l'actrice Tilda Swinton et sa fille (Honor Byrne), une évocation des chantiers navals du nord de l'Angleterre sur fond sonore de *Shipbuilding* dans la version chantée par Robert Wyatt.

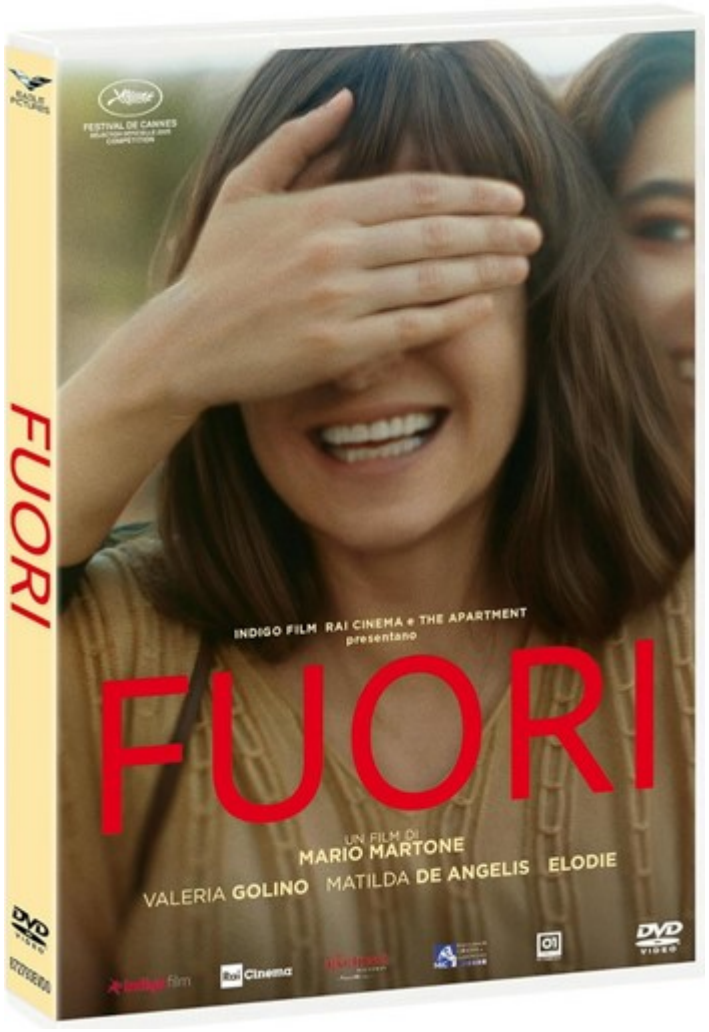


Cinq morceaux de Robert Wyatt dans un seul film, de surcroit sélectionné au Festival de Cannes 2025 et acclamé par la critique ? C'est **FUORI** du réalisateur Mario Martone qui aura l'occasion de s'expliquer sur l'environnement musical de son film :

You use several tracks by British multi-instrumentalist Robert Wyatt, founder of Soft Machine. Talk to me about this interesting choice.







I never think about the music before shooting, never. I usually almost always use repertoire. And I work on it when I edit. So I started editing and I was looking for a female voice to create a sonorous off-voice, evocative of a Goliarda. But we never come across the right voice. And then, I don't even know how, from what corner of my mind Robert Wyatt came to me. The fragility of his voice, the vitality and at the same time that sense of anxiety, that is in his songs. So I thought: who cares if it's a male voice, it's the voice of a soul. And it was a soul that suddenly I felt was able to have an intense dialogue with the soul of Goliarda Sapienza.

CINEMATOGRAFO

E ritorna prepotente la voce di Robert Wyatt (il pioniere della scena di Canterbury segna in maniera indelebile questo film, con cinque brani – tra i quali il potentissimo *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road* (da *Rock Bottom*, epico album, irripetibile), dilaniato da quelle incredibili sovraincisioni della tromba di Mongezi Feza, durante la scena del furto dei gioielli – utilizzati oltre alle musiche originali di Valerio Vigliar) con*Memories*, nella versione che non a caso incise nel '74, solo qualche tempo dopo il drammatico incidente che lo rese paraplegico, segnando al contempo l'inizio di una nuova fase non solo umana, ma artistica.
Proprio come accadde a Goliarda Sapienza, dopo l'esperienza carceraria.

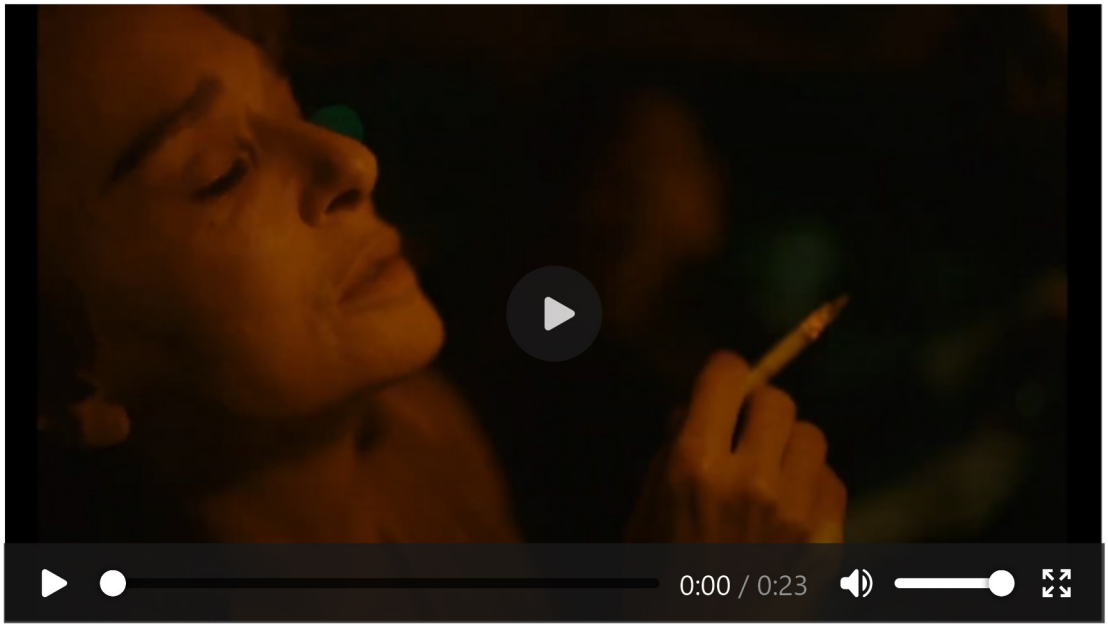
GAZETTELY

The sparse soundtrack, anchored by Robert Wyatt's plaintive songs, introduces an off-kilter lyricism more akin to European experimental cinema than to traditional Bollywood scores, yet it resonates with Indian parallel films that deploy minimal music for maximum emotional effect.

Costume and makeup subtly align Sapienza with Roberta—shared hairstyles, mirrored dress

tones—suggesting a porous boundary between mentor and muse. Bars, open roads and shattered glass recur as visual leitmotifs, underscoring the paradox of creative freedom born in confinement.

Political undercurrents—class tensions, feminist assertion, the shadow of Italy's Red Brigades—surface in overheard radio broadcasts and graffiti fragments, inviting viewers to draw parallels with cross-cultural struggles for voice. Through these elements, Fuori transforms a brief jail term into a universal fable of resilience and rebirth.



Extrait avec Blues in Bob Minor

Les 5 morceaux de RW joués dans Fuori : *Memories*, *Blues in Bob Minor*, *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*, *The British Road* et *Round Midnight*.

3. L'acteur



Découvrir Robert Wyatt et Daevid Allen dans cette "romance" espagnole de 1964 est plus qu'intriguant : mais qu'allaient-ils donc faire dans cette galère ? de la figuration muette de quelques secondes qui justifie la présence de ce film dans cette page, et peut-être à l'époque un cachet pour quelques repas...

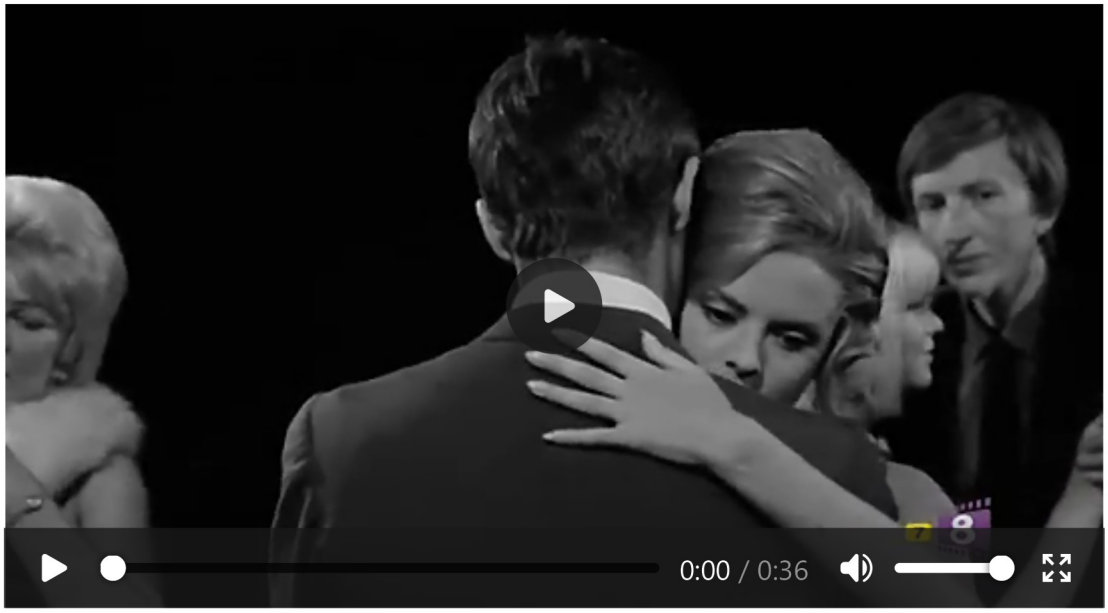
Mais peu importe, **PLAYA DE FORMENTOR** réalisé par Germán Lorente ressemble à ces dizaines de film des années yé-yé - soleil, piscine et plages à gogo - dont certains ont mieux vieilli que celui-ci. Mais le kitsch l'emporte et c'est avec plaisir que nous distinguons nos deux compères à l'aube de leur carrière.



Extrait 1 - A l'entrée du club



Extrait 2 - Clopes au bec



Extrait 3 - Daevid Allen's slow dance



Extrait 4 - Daevid Allen "à la flute"

Interdit aux moins de 16 ans, **LES TEENAGERS - JEUNESSE INTERDITE**, sorti en 1968 fait aujourd'hui sourire.



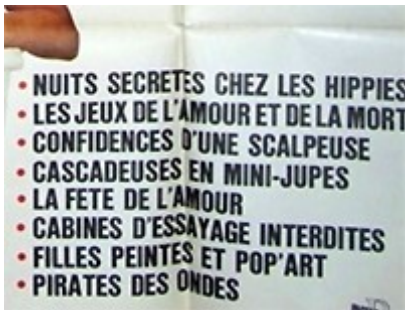






Pierre Roustang, son réalisateur n'en est pas à son premier coup d'essai. En 1965 il présente *Paris Secret* une compilation des "aspects immoraux et du profil trouble de Paris". Il récidivera en 1969 avec *Paris Top Secret*, "une plongée sans concession dans les bas-fonds de la capitale".





Les **TEENAGERS** sont de la même eau : une juxtaposition racoleuse de séquences visant à émoustiller le bourgeois sous le prétexte d'un film-enquête qui, de Paris à Londres en passant par la Suède et la Chine "dresse un portrait optimiste d'une certaine jeunesse dans l'air du temps."...

Cinquante et quelques années plus tard, le quotidien d'un groupe underground, les Soft Machine, a le parfum nostalgique de notre propre jeunesse !


0:00 / 4:42


JEUNESSE INTERDITE
"LES TEENAGERS"
EASTMANCOLOR
ULYSSE PRODUCTION
INTERDIT AUX MOINS DE 18 ANS

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Apr 23 — Winter Gardens, Bournemouth

In April, Robert Wyatt makes his acting debut (typecast as a jazz-rock drummer) in an episode of BBC TV's 'Take Three Girls'. In May, Robert is voted Player Of The Month by the British magazine Beat Instrumental.

Wrong Movements - A Robert Wyatt History by Michael King (1994)

De fait, la BBC diffuse le 7 avril 1971 l'épisode 3 de la saison 2 de sa série télévisée **TAKE THREE GIRLS**, intitulée *Jenny: Closed Circuit*.

Robert Wyatt y joue le rôle d'un... batteur ! Cet épisode a malheureusement disparu des archives de la TV britannique (il est indexé "LOST" dans la base de la BBC).

Reste une interrogation sur la date exacte de l'enregistrement : si la BBC a diffusé l'épisode le 7 avril, il ne peut avoir été enregistré le 23 du même mois. Le mystère reste entier...

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Je ne peux évoquer la relation de Robert Wyatt avec le cinéma sans mentionner au moins un projet inabouti.
Du reste, il existe bien plus de projets inaboutis que de films réalisés dans la longue histoire du 7ème art, et peut-être ces projets éphèmères sont-ils les plus beaux ?

En 2010, Martine Doyen, cinéaste belge dont *Komma* a été sélectionné pour la 46ème semaine de la Critique au Festival de Cannes quelques années auparavant, écrit une nouvelle version de son scénario VAGABOND et se met à travailler sérieusement sur le casting...

L'univers musical du film dans son ensemble se précise également, notamment en ce qui concerne le personnage de Louis Pierre (ROBERT WYATT?).



Un ressort dramatique extérieur ajoute aussi plus de tension au récit et intensifie l'aventure de Sacha, autre protagoniste, sans la modifier. Le projet prend de l'épaisseur et la réalisatrice contacte Robert Wyatt pour lui proposer le rôle.

Celui-ci déclinera gentiment la proposition, et Martine Doyen cherchera, sans succès, à remplacer Robert Wyatt, avant de renoncer définitivement, faute de financement.

4. Don't Look Now

Two Intertwined Semi-Venetian Masterpieces

By Glenn Kenny — Jun 7, 2015 [criterion.com]



Late in Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* (1973), John Baxter (Donald Sutherland) is walking with the blind psychic Heather (Hilary Mason), who, along with her sister Wendy (Clelia Matania), has been a bit of a thorn in John's side. He has inadvertently gotten Heather into a spot, and after apologetically getting her out of it, he's obliged to make small talk with her as they navigate the alleyways and footbridges of Venice. "My sister hates it," Heather says of the place. "She says it's like a city in aspic . . . left over from a dinner party, and all the guests are dead and gone. It frightens her. Too many shadows."

Venice asserts itself as "a sinister presence" in Roeg's film, Robert Wyatt aptly notes in the liner notes to a 1998 reissue of his 1974 album *Rock Bottom*. Wyatt cites *Don't Look Now* in his notes because the making of the film, particularly its six-week Venice shoot, is intimately intertwined with the genesis of his classic album—ranked alongside Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* by NME in the year of its release, when it was also awarded an international Grand Prix du Disque in France, and, according to biographer Marcus O'Dair, "still widely considered one of the finest albums ever made."

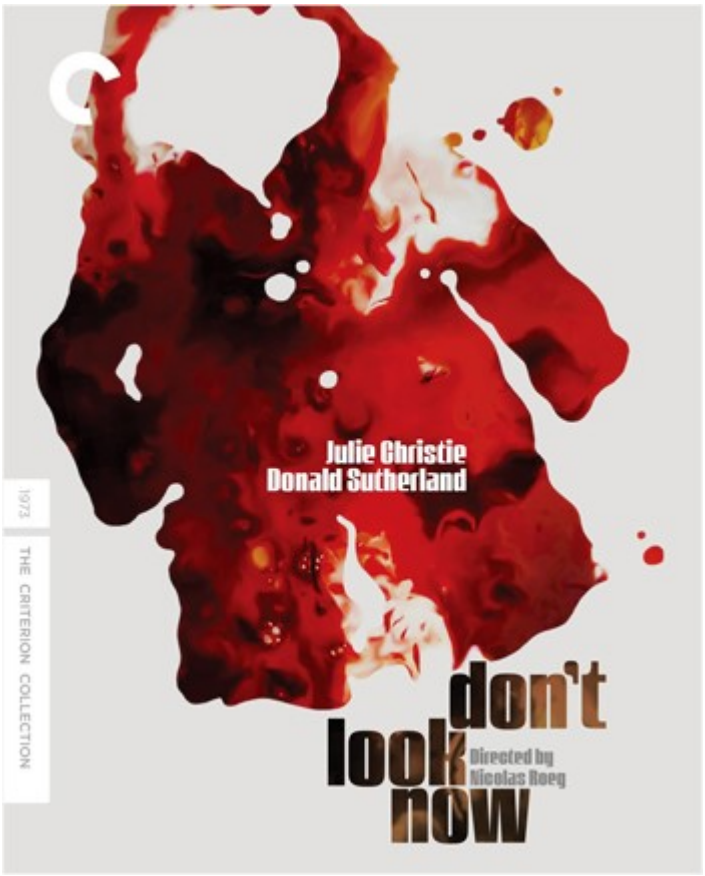
Late in 1972, Wyatt's then girlfriend and future wife, the artist Alfreda Benge, was hired as second assistant editor for the just-beginning Roeg production. Benge had met Roeg while he was shooting the concert doc *Glastonbury Fayre*, and was close friends with the film's female lead,Julie Christie. The picture began filming around Christmas in England, and in January of 1973 moved to Venice for location shooting.

Although, according to O'Dair, the workaholic Wyatt was puzzled by the idea of "going on holiday," the musician, who had recently dissolved his band, joined Benge, Christie, and a couple of other crew members at a house on the Venetian island of Giudecca. Working on an inexpensive electronic keyboard Benge had purchased in a Venice music store ("She's like that; an astute and thoughtful scout," the musician notes), Wyatt soaked in the atmosphere and began writing. "What I do remember is how seeing Venice out of season was like coming across a famous beauty when she's out shopping, without makeup, in scruffily humble clothes, not dressed to be looked at," Wyatt recollected in an e-mail to me. "I felt we were in the real place, populated by the locals. A modest, rather run-down village, but all the more likeable for that. But it would be easy to imagine it as sinister: the narrower canals so dark and damp, the thick moss—or is that some kind of seaweed?—above the waterline, crabs scrambling along the edges. And the sheer *age* of the place. A large, ancient door set in a canal wall could be, I was told, a thousand years old. Is that possible? Whether or not it is, there was a weird feeling of being in a live museum, a place in which it would be easy to evoke ghosts."

The keyboard on which Wyatt wrote had a "particular vibrato," which contributes significantly, it would seem, to the aquatic feel of *Rock Bottom*'s music. "*Fortuitous* is the word," Wyatt says. "Alfie found that keyboard, and I found the sound in my head at last. Aquatic? It must be so, though I am a fairly abstract tunesmith. I have to let my instincts take me where they want to go; I try not to interfere with conscious plans or calculations. What I do is not 'program' music. But yes, my instincts seem to have been guided by where we were. I'd say, thinking about it now, that the ungrounded ambiguity of Venice—'Are we at sea or on land?'—could well have influenced the soundscape in my head." Hence, the

opening track of *Rock Bottom*, Sea Song".

As Wyatt teased out his soundscape, Benge attended to her duties. "Film editing was very physical in that time. Splicing the film and sticking it together, then looking at different ways sequences would work," she recalled, also via e-mail. "My job was just to log all the film as it came in . . . so any shot needed could be given to Graeme [Clifford], the editor, as he needed it. It was just creating some order and keeping order. Graeme would be on the editing machine. Tony Lawson was the first assistant. Nic would come in to check how it was going. They'd often watch sequences to existing music that was later replaced by Pino Donaggio's score. I have a strong memory of the funeral scene with Fauré's *Pavane*, which worked beautifully."



Despite the intensity of the film's subject matter, the work on it didn't impinge much on life in the house. "That's partly because of what happens to Julie during a film, and maybe to all actors . . . I don't know," says Benge. "But the film seems to become part of a private relationship between her and the director. It's a time of real concentration on her part, and just as with Robert when he's recording, one has to be very careful not to interfere with the creative process, because anything you mention could really disconcert their confidence in what they are trying to do."

As it happened, prior to the Venice jaunt, Benge and Christie had been invited by Wyatt into his process: they'd participated in the recording of his group Matching Mole's *Little Red Record* back in 1972. Billed as "Ruby Crystal and the Little Honest Injun," the pals improvised a spoken-word sketch that embellishes the song "Nan True's Hole" (named for a hangout belonging to BBC DJ John Peel).

The project begun in Venice would not yield similar opportunities for genial private jokes. Wyatt, who'd been mightily upset by the breakup of Matching Mole despite having instigated it, was keen to find a new way of making music. He didn't overtly share his evolving work with his housemates. "One heard him tootling on the keyboard," recalls Benge, "but a lot of what he was composing went on in his head. Only he could hear it."

Wyatt is quick to insist, though, that "being there with Alfie was my biggest influence." Excited by what he was coming up with, Wyatt returned to England a short time before the location shooting ended to work on lyrics, while Benge stayed on.

When Benge returned to London, she found herself obliged to leave the *Don't Look Now* team because she couldn't afford to commute to Shepperton, where the editing was being continued ("Both of us were *stoney broke*," she says). Wyatt, close to having finished writing a batch of songs, considered re-forming Matching Mole to record the material. Then,on the first of June, 1973, disaster struck: he fell from an apartment window at a party, and the subsequent injury left the former drummer paralyzed from the waist down. After a long period of recovery and rehabilitation, he had to reinvent himself as a working musician. Hence, *Rock Bottom*, recorded from February to May of 1974, a self-described collection of "drones and songs" that many listeners assumed was directly addressing his accident. In O'Dair's biography, Wyatt insists this isn't the case: "I find the tradition of singer-songwriters working their way through their mental neuroses in public a bit limited."

Nevertheless, musician Fred Frith, who played on the album, said to O'Dair, "Even though *Rock Bottom*'s lyrics predate the accident, there's a sense that this record is a whole new beginning, and I'm sure that the combination of survival and starting afresh has a lot to do with it." In the 1998 liner notes, Wyatt ties everything together thusly: "Alfie always remembers Nic Roeg, the director, reiterating the theme of the film: WE ARE NOT PREPARED." Wyatt does not remember when he first was finally able to see *Don't Look Now* in its finished form,but he admires it a great deal. When asked about the recently announced prospect of a remake of the film, Benge responded, "Pointless." Wyatt requested that the details of his equally unenthusiastic response go unpublished.



Bande-annonce de Don't Look Now - 1973

5. Le film d'animation

ROCK BOTTOM, le film d'animation de la réalisatrice espagnole Maria Trenor est enfin sorti en salles à l'été 2025 après quelques années de curiosité impatiente pour bien des fans de Robert Wyatt.



Il faut dire que s'attaquer à l'œuvre maîtresse et tenter d'en cerner sa genèse ainsi que la relation nouée dans la même période entre Robert (Wyatt) et Alfie (Benge) semblait a priori un pari impossible à tenir. L'annoncer sous la forme d'un film d'animation rendait le projet encore plus intriguant.

Une page entière est consacrée, sur le présent site, à ce *"biopic qui n'en est pas un"*. Il compile de nombreux articles et critiques que le film a suscités ainsi que mes propres réactions.

La page Rock Bottom, le film

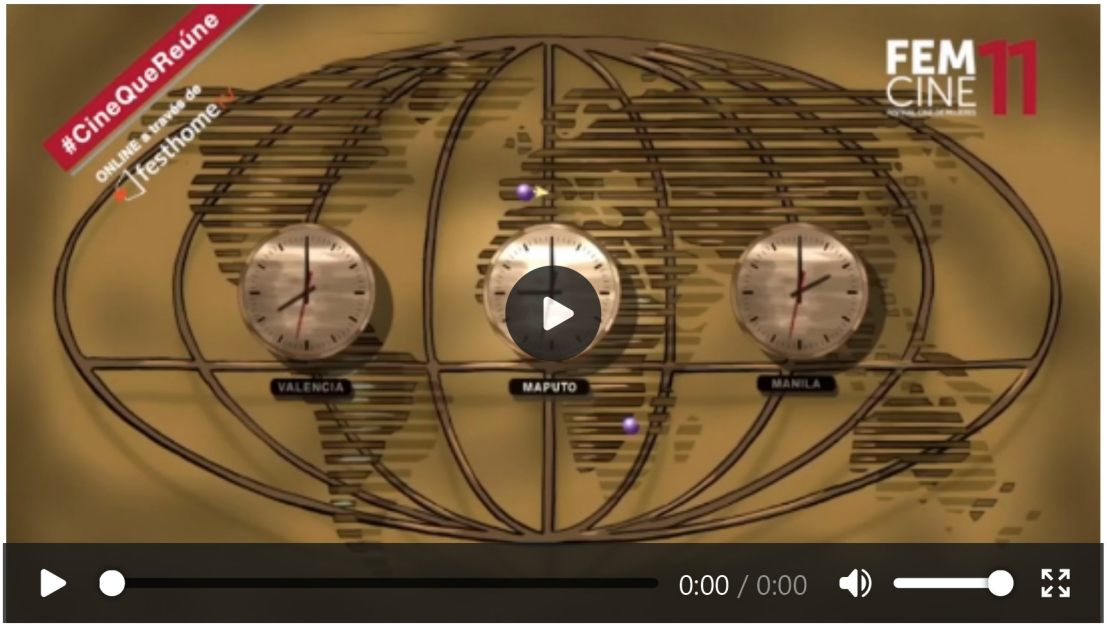
Le dossier de presse



Maria Trenor a souvent eu l'occasion d'expliquer sa démarche et de détailler les techniques utilisées pour ce film aussi troublant qu'inattendu.



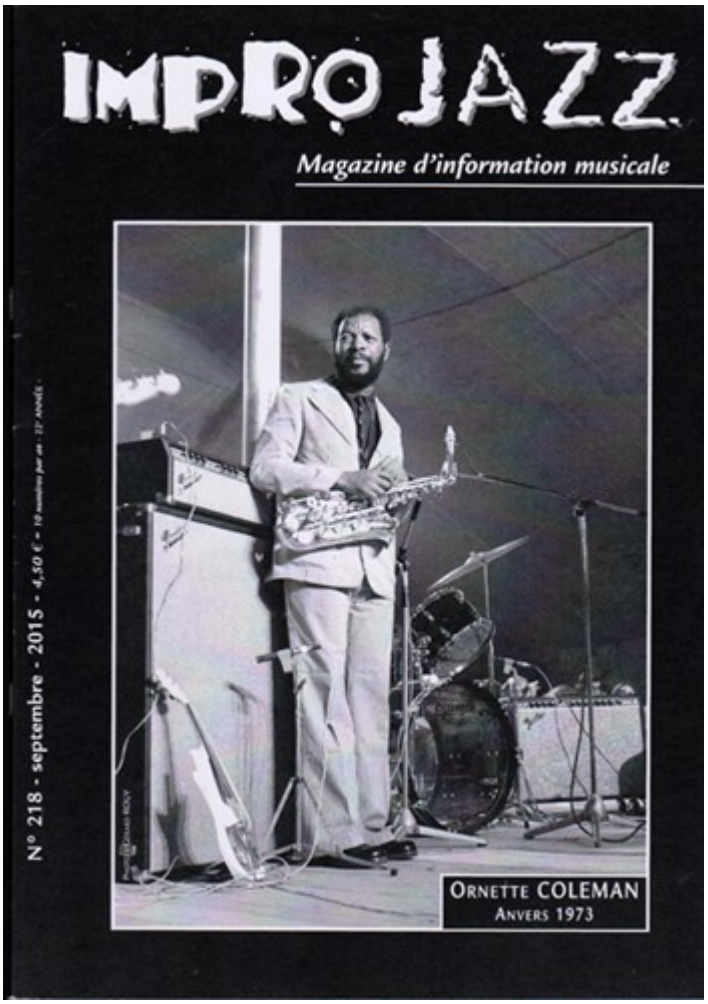
Interview de Maria Trenor au Festival d'Annecy (2024)



¿DÓNDE ESTABAS TÚ? DE MARÍA TRÉNOR 19', ESPAÑA, 2019



Ornette Coleman 1930-2015 by Robert Wyatt - The Wire - June 2015
Ornette Coleman par Robert Wyatt - ImproJazz - N° 218 - septembre 2015



> Zoom

Ornette Coleman par Robert Wyatt

Lorsqu'on interroge Robert Wyatt sur ses influences ou tout le moins ses admirations musicales, quelques noms reviennent systématiquement : Charles Mingus, Charlie Haden, Miles Davis, Elvin Jones, Thelonious Monk, Cecil Taylor (liste non exhaustive) et **Ornette Coleman**, of course, le créateur avec son double-quartet du *Free Jazz A Collective Improvisation* (1961) qui porte si bien son nom !

Quelques jours après le décès d'Ornette Coleman le 11 juin 2015, The Wire a publié sur son site cette déclaration d'amitié de Robert Wyatt à l'homme et au musicien disparu. La revue ImproJazz l'a traduite et publiée à son tour dans son numéro de septembre 2015.

As part of our online tribute to Ornette Coleman, who died on 11

(I'm actually very grateful to hear what Paul Bley was already up to at that time,

June, Robert Wyatt explains why he loves the saxophonist's earliest recordings so much.



> Zoom

Ornette Coleman in the late 1950s.
Photo: William Claxton/Courtesy Demont Photo Management

To begin at the available beginning. Ornette Coleman live at the Hillcrest Club, October 1958. On piano: Paul Bley (which may explain what Carla was doing there, recording it). Already, their take on a standard, the Don Cherry feature "How Deep Is The Ocean", is stretched beyond its bounds. Like Ornette's later recorded "Embraceable You", it is a totally fresh take – as far from the subject matter as the cubist portraits by Picasso. Similarly true to their emotional source, though.

Musicians can and maybe must discard their earlier attempts. We, listening to the preserved imprints, are under no such obligation. (In fact, I'm very grateful to be able to hear Paul Bley playing at that time, in that context.)

And I find Ornette's earliest recordings so moving. His voice is immediately unique, as if he were the last surviving speaker of an ancient language. So the musicians he works with are naturally encouraged to find their own uniqueness. The Hillcrest recording begins with a lengthy, barnstorming… "Klactoveesedstene"! A Charlie Parker tune, tricky even by the composer's standards. The group sails through the tune itself with a deftness that should silence any sceptic who doubts their grasp of the idiom they inherited.

I only met Ornette Coleman a couple of times – what a gent. Did he ever raise his speaking voice in anger? It's hard to imagine. What I remember is his (often mentioned) amused but welcoming Old World courtesy. (He was, by the way, as is the wonderful Archie Shepp, a very snappy dresser. Just see the photographs: no shabby chic for Ornette!)

But why do I love Ornette Coleman quite so much? Well, I'll leave it to others to celebrate his significance to subsequent explorers of the freedom principle. What has always warmed my heart, in the end, has little to do with his influence on younger improvisors. It is the timeless vocal beauty of the actual sequences of notes and phrases he could come up with, and the feeling of pure living joy of playing they can communicate.

Ornette dead? The way I hear it, Ornette's heartbeat's as alive, in the ether, as it ever was.

Robert Wyatt

Commençons avec son quartet d'origine. Ornette Coleman live au Hillcrest Club, en octobre 1958. Au piano, Paul Bley (ce qui explique peut-être la présence de Carla qui enregistrait le concert). Déjà, leur version du standard "How Deep Is The Ocean", avec Don Cherry en solo, est poussée au-delà de ses limites. Comme avec sa version plus tardive de "Embraceable You", on a une lecture du morceau complètement nouvelle, aussi loin du sujet que les portraits cubistes de Picasso, mais, en revanche, tout aussi proche de la source émotionnelle.

Les musiciens peuvent, et peut-être doivent, s'éloigner de leurs premières ébauches. Mais nous, lorsque nous écoutons les enregistrements qui restent, nous n'avons pas du tout les mêmes obligations. (En fait, je suis très reconnaissant de pouvoir entendre ce que Paul Bley faisait déjà à cette époque, et dans ce contexte). Et je

trouve les premiers enregistrements d'Ornette particulièrement émouvants. Sa voix est d'emblée tellement unique, comme s'il s'agissait du dernier locuteur vivant d'une langue ancienne. Naturellement, donc, les musiciens avec qui il travaillait étaient encouragés à trouver leur propre singularité. Les enregistrements du 'Hillcrest' commencent par un "Klactoveesedstene"! aussi long qu'enflammé. Ce morceau de Charlie Parker est complexe, même selon les normes de son compositeur. Cependant les musiciens l'interprètent avec une aisance qui cloue le bec à n'importe quel sceptique qui aurait pu douter de leur maitrise de l'idiome dont ils étaient les héritiers.

Je n'ai rencontré Ornette qu'à quelques rares occasions, mais quel gentleman c'était. A-t-il jamais élevé la voix sous l'effet de la colère? On a du mal à l'imaginer. Ce dont je me souviens (et beaucoup l'ont mentionné) c'est sa courtoisie d'un autre âge, son air amusé mais bienveillant. Il était, par ailleurs, toujours tiré à quatre épingles, tout comme le merveilleux Archie Shepp. Il suffit de regarder les photos : Pas de faux vintage chic pour Ornette!

Mais pourquoi j'aime autant Ornette? Je laisserai à d'autres le soin de célébrer son importance pour ceux qui se sont engagés sur la voie du "freedom principle". Ce qui m'a toujours réchauffé le cœur en fin de compte n'a que peu de choses à voir avec son influence sur les improvisateurs plus jeunes. Ce n'est rien d'autre que la beauté vocale intemporelle de ses séquences de notes et de phrases qui étaient capables de communiquer intensément le pur bonheur de jouer.

Ornette est mort ? Mais moi j'entends toujours battre son coeur, dans l'éther, aussi vivant qu'il l'a jamais été.

Robert Wyatt

Nos remerciements à **Robert Wyatt** et **Tony Herrington** qui ont autorisé la traduction de cet article publié pour la première fois dans thewire.co.uk en juin 2015.

Traduction : Gary May et Catherine Thinland.

Common

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En 2014, Robert Wyatt pose sa voix sur deux chansons composées par Adrian Johnston pour le téléfilm de Jimmy McGovern **Common** que The Guardian qualifie de *"brutal and devastating drama"*.

Le texte du premier morceau, *The Debt*, est un poème de Paul Laurence Dunbar constitué de trois strophes qui seront chantées chacune par RW à trois moments différents du film.

This is the debt I pay
Just for one riotous day,
Years of regret and grief,
Sorrow without relief

The Dept - part 1

Pay it I will to the end —
Until the grave, my friend,
Gives me a true release —
Gives me the clasp of peace.

The Dept - part 2

Slight was the thing I bought,
Small was the debt I thought,
Poor was the loan at best —
God! but the interest!

The Dept - part 3

Le texte du second morceau - *'One morn I left him in his bed'* - est un long poème d'Elizabeth Drew Barstow Stoddard dont seules les trois premières strophes sont chantées par Robert Wyatt.

One morn I left
him in his bed;
A moment after
some one said,
'Your child is dying
– he is dead.'

We made him
ready for his rest,
Flowers in his hair,
and on his breast
His little hands
together prest.

We sailed by night
across the sea;
So, floating from
the world were
we,
Apart from
sympathy, we
Three.



0:00 / 1:13

One morn I left him in his bed



0:00 / 11:58

And in less than 12 minutes, the essence of the film ...

Contrefaçon/Counterfeit

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Les pirates, les bootlegs répondent à une demande que les compagnies commerciales refusent de satisfaire : investissements non rentables, enregistrements de trop médiocre qualité, cadres contractuels inexistants... les bootlegs nous arrivent alors *par la bande* et les fans qui ne reculent ni devant la dépense, ni parfois devant la médiocrité sonore, leur font la fête! Et si le bootleg est un bijou (ça arrive) il se pourra que la version officielle prenne le relais : le concert du 8 septembre 1974 au Drury Lane Theatre en est un bel exemple...

La contrefaçon, c'est autre chose. La numérisation et la compression des sons, la banalisation des outils de reproduction bouleversent les modèles techniques et économiques. Plus de "raretés" ou de concerts volés, juste un copier/coller à la barbe de l'auteur...

Je ne peux me résoudre à faire entrer ces CDs dans la discographie. Ils resteront en marge, pour un temps.



The Soft Machine MP3
2003

The Soft Machine MP3

- Volume One (1968)
- Volume Two (1969)
- Third (1970)
- Fourth (1971)
- Fifth (1972)
- Six (1973)
- Seven (1974)
- Bundles (1975)
- Softs (1976)
- Rubber Riff (1976)
- At The Beginning (Bonus)

- RMG RECORDS



The Soft Machine MP3 Collection
2003

The Soft Machine MP3 Collection

- At The Beginning (Jet-Propelled Photographs) (1968)
- Volume One (The Soft Machine) And Two (1968)
- Third (1970)
- Noisette (1970)
- Live In Europe '70 (1970)
- Fourth (1971)
- Fifth (1972)
- Six (1973)
- Seven (1974)
- Bundles (1975)
- Softs (1976)
- Rubber Riff (1976)
- Alive And Well In Paris (1978)
- Land Of Cockayne (1981)

- MP3 SERVICE (MP3 COLLECTION) 2xCDR



- The End Of An Ear (1970)
- Shleep (With Brian Eno) (1997)
- Two's And Three's (1994)
- Smoke Signals (1972)

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Une liste (provisoire) alphabétique des reprises

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Alphabetical list

Reprises ?

Les reprises/covers concernent les morceaux de Robert Wyatt - auteur et/ou compositeur - mais aussi tous les morceaux de Soft Machine et de Matching Mole qu'il a interprétés lors de leur création, en studio ou sur scène.

C'est également le cas des nombreuses collaborations dont il fut un des **co-créateurs significatifs**. *Calyx* d'Hatfield And The North, Mu*sic For Airports - Part One* de Brian Eno ou *The Song* de John Greaves sont, à titre d'exemple, concernés par d'éventuelles reprises.

Je considère également comme reprise un morceau du répertoire des premiers Soft Machine (avec RW) joué par le "Soft Machine post-Fourth" ou a fortiori par des groupes tels que Soft Legacy, Soft Bounds etc.



Enfin, il est des reprises de reprises dont la référence sera l'interprétation qu'en donne Robert Wyatt plutôt que la version originale (*Chairman Mao* de Charlie Haden ou *At Last I Am Free* de Chic par exemple).

On comprendra donc que je prends quelques libertés pour déterminer les morceaux faisant l'objet de ces reprises : la position de Robert Wyatt dans le processus de création artistique m'importe plus que le statut strictement juridique des oeuvres.

Lorsqu'un même enregistrement est présent sur plusieurs albums, c'est la référence la plus ancienne qui est répertoriée dans cette liste alphabétique.

Un lien sur le titre de l'album permet de pointer directement sur le disque contenant la reprise référencée.

Covers ?

The covers include tracks by Robert Wyatt - as author and/or composer - as well as all the Soft Machine and Matching Mole tracks that he performed during their creation, in the studio or on stage.

This is also true of the many collaborations of which he was a **significant co-creator**. Hatfield And The North's *Calyx*, Brian Eno's *Music For Airports - Part One* and John Greaves' *The Song* are all examples of possible covers.

I also consider a cover to be a song from the early Soft Machine repertoire (with RW) played by the "post-Fourth Soft Machine" or a fortiori by bands such as Soft Legacy, Soft Bounds etc.

Finally, there are covers of covers whose reference will be Robert Wyatt's interpretation rather than the original version (Charlie Haden's *Chairman Mao* or Chic's *At Last I Am Free*, for example).

So you'll understand that I'm taking a few liberties in deciding the songs covered here: Robert Wyatt's position in the artistic creation process is more important to me than the strictly legal status of the works.

When the same recording appears on several albums, the oldest reference is listed alphabetically.



A link on the album title points directly to the disc containing the referenced cover version.

Alphabetical list

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Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME

Une liste (provisoire) des reprises

ABÉCÉDAIRE



More information about this list.

Reprises

Morceau	Interprète	Album
1/1 - Music For Airports *by Brian Eno*	Bang On A Can	Music For Airports A 20th-Anniversary Version Of Brian Eno's Ambient Classic
1/1 - Music For Airports *by Brian Eno*	Bang On A Can	Music For Airports (live)
1/1 - Music For Airports *by Brian Eno*	Dedalus Ensemble	Brian Eno Performed By Dedalus Ensemble
1/1 - Music For Airports *by Brian Eno*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Bowie, Berlin & Beyond
1/1 - Music For Airports *by Brian Eno*	PRF Monthly Tribute Series	Tribute 35 - Brian Eno
1/1 - Music For Airports *by Brian Eno*	Psychic Temple	Psychic Temple Plays Music For Airports
12-8 Theme *by Soft Machine*	Hugh Hopper	Monster Band

A Beautiful Peace *by Robert Wyatt*	Aaron M Olson	What Song I Should Sing ???
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	Bloodrock	Bloodrock 3
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	Carsten Jost	A Certain Kind
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	eBraam	3
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	Eric Matthews	Fanfare
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	Faubert	Ce Monde Sauvage
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	Weyes Blood	A Certain Kind Of Everybody
A Certain Kind *by Soft Machine*	Zapata	A Certain Kind/Make It All Go
A Door Opens And Closes *by Soft Machine*	Improgressive	Primo
A Last Straw *by Robert Wyatt*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
A Last Straw *by Robert Wyatt*	Marlene Kuntz/ P. Hamilton/M. Nikaido	The Different You (Tribute)
A Last Straw *by Robert Wyatt*	Mary Newsletter	To Canterbury And Beyond
A Last Straw *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey

A Little Something *by Slapp Happy*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
A Sunday In Madrid *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
A Sunday In Madrid *by Robert Wyatt*	Area	The Different You (Tribute)
A Sunday In Madrid *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
A. W. O. L. *by Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Bel Canto Orchestra	En Direte A La Plaça Del Sol 22-08-1985
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Colonial Recordings	Colonial Recordings
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Epitimia	Alifib - Robert Wyatt Cover By Epitimia
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt (Le Piano De La Rue De Vergennes)*	Jean-Michel Marchetti	MW3
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Julie Constantine	A Tribute Collection - Part Two
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey

Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	One Lick Less	Spirits Of Marine Terrace
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Loïs Le Van	So Much More
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Odeia	Parlami
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt (Chanson Pop)*	Pascal Comelade	Bel Canto
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	Chants Et Danses De Syldavie
Alifib *(Chanson Pop) by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	Festival M.I.MI. 86
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	Haïkus De Pianos
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	MW3
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	Détail Monochrome
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt (In A Lebanon Park)*	Pascal Comelade	Sentimientos
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Red Banjo	Le Piano Confit
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Richard Robert et Gilles Tordjman	MW3

Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Saro Cosentino/ Franco Battiato/ Morgan	The Different You (Tribute)
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyatt Moss-Wellington	Gen Y Irony Stole My Heart
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Zapmachine	Kot
Alifib / Alife *by Robert Wyatt*	Dono Celeste	To Canterbury And Beyond
Alifib / Alife *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Alifib / Alifie *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Memory Box Archive Treasures (2005-2015)
Alifie *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
Alifie / Alifib *by Robert Wyatt*	Crlustraude	Crlustraude
Alifie Medley *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt

Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt (Aliantza)*	Ekida Arte Ekimen Sozialista	Manifestua
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Lea Delaria	Double Standards
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Maria Due	Lucky Fish
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Michel Albert	Alliance
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Alliance *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Amber And The Amberines *by Robert Wyatt*	Dimthingshine	Songs From Home
Amber And The Amberines *by Robert Wyatt*	Mauro Pagani	The Different You (Tribute)
Amber And The Amberines *by Robert Wyatt (Amber And The Ambergrines)*	Nick Hudson	K69996ROMA:EP
Amber And The Amberines *by Robert Wyatt*	Nuccio D'Angelo	Homages

Anachronist *by Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still *by Soft Machine*	Clammbon	Lover Album
As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still *by Soft Machine*	Jakko M. Jakszyk	The Bruised Romantic Glee Club
As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still *by Soft Machine*	Schnauser	Herne Bay
As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still *by Soft Machine*	Zacht Automaat	Cover Tape
At Last I Am Free *by [Chic] Robert Wyatt*	Cassiber	Beauty & The Beast
At Last I Am Free *by [Chic] Robert Wyatt*	Dana Gavanski	Wind Songs
At Last I Am Free *by [Chic] Robert Wyatt*	Heiner Goebbels / Alfred 23 Harth	Live À Victoriaville
At Last I Am Free *by [Chic] Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
At Last I Am Free *by [Chic] Robert Wyatt*	Mezz Gacano 50th Birthday Party	Fünfzig
At Last I Am Free *by [Chic] Robert Wyatt*	Nostalgia	To Canterbury And Beyond
Backwards *by Soft Machine*	Caravan	For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night
Backwards *by Soft Machine*	Caravan	The Best Of Caravan "Live"

Backwards *by Soft Machine*	Caravan	A Night's Tale Live In The USA
Backwards *by Soft Machine*	Caravan	Live At The Fairfield Halls, 1974
Backwards *by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Backwards *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Other Doors
Barcelona Tango *(very inspired) by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	Fluence
Be Serious *by Robert Wyatt*	Mahieux "Family Life" Quartet	[Peaux d'âmes]
Beware *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Blues In Bob Minor *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Born Again Cretin *by Robert Wyatt (Re-Born Again Cretin)*	Almamegretta	Re-Born Again Cretin
Born Again Cretin *by Robert Wyatt*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt
Born Again Cretin *by Robert Wyatt*	Dominique Répécaud	MW3
Born Again Cretin *by Robert Wyatt*	Field Music	Field Music Play...
Born Again Cretin *by Robert Wyatt*	Hobby Horse	Helm

Born Again Cretin *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
Box 25/4 Lid I *by Soft Machine*	Joce Miennel	Paris Short Stories Saison 1
Box 25/4 Lid II *by Soft Machine*	Joce Miennel	Paris Short Stories Saison 1
Box 25/4 Lid III *by Soft Machine*	Joce Miennel	Paris Short Stories Saison 1
Box 25/4 Lid *by Soft Machine*	Mary Newsletter	To Canterbury And Beyond
Box 25/4 Lid *by Soft Machine*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Abracadabra In Osaka	Soft Works
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Artchipel Orchestra	Truly Yours Musiche Di Phil Miller
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Gaia Mattiuzzi	Inner Core
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Hatfield And The North	Fasano 2005
Calyx *(K Licks/Long) by Hatfield And The North*	Hatfield And The North	Hattitude
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North (K Licks/Short)*	Hatfield And The North	Hattitude

Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Hatfield And The North	Paris Sept. 25 1973
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Hatfield And The North	Tread Upon the BBC
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Hopper/Dean/Tippett/ Gallivan	Mercy Dash
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Improgressive	Primo
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Mezz Gacano 50th Birthday Party	Fünfzig
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Phil Miller/Fred Baker	Double Up
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Richard Sinclair/David Rees/Tony Coe	What In The World
Calyx *by Hatfield And The North*	Richard Sinclair - Taranterbury Bossa Nova	Villanova II
Catholic Architecture *by Robert Wyatt*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
Catholic Architecture *by Robert Wyatt*	Grasscut	Catholic Architecture/Beacon
Chairman Mao *by [Charlie Haden] Robert Wyatt*	C. S. I.	The Different You (Tribute)
Chairman Mao *by [Charlie Haden] Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening

Clarence In Wonderland *by Soft Machine*	Daevid Allen's University Of Errors	Ugly Music.4.Monica
Clarence In Wonderland *by Soft Machine*	Gong	Pre-Modernist Wireless On Radio : The Peel Sessions
Clarence In Wonderland *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Ayers And The Whole World	BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert
CP Jeebies *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
Costa *by Robert Wyatt*	Annemarieke Coenders & Wim Sebo	Go
Costa *by Robert Wyatt*	Giovanni Ferrario Alliance	Places Names Numbers
Cuckoo Madame *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Cuckoo Madame *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Cuckoo Madame *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Deconstructing Wyatt *(including The British Road, The Age Of Self, Speechless, Gharbzadegi)* *by Robert Wyatt*	Algebra	To Canterbury And Beyond
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Ashqelon Quilt	To Canterbury And Beyond
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine (Dedicated To PQ But She Couldn't Hear It)*	Brainville 3	Trial By Headline
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Caveman Hughscore	Caveman Hughscore

Dedicated To You *by Soft Machine*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening The Music Of Soft Machine
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra play Soft Machine
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Improgressive	Primo
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Jakko M. Jakszyk	The Bruised Romantic Glee Club
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Figes	You Are Here
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	The Keith Tippett Group	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening *by Soft Machine*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Del Mondo *by [Zamboni/Maroccolo/Magnelli] Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	Giorgio Canali/Ulan Bator/Umberto Palazzo	The Different You (Tribute)
Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	Look De Book	MW3

Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	Some Things	Positive Feedback
Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Dondestan *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
East Timor *by Robert Wyatt (Ashdod)*	3alef	No Coast #1
East Timor *by Robert Wyatt*	Dans Dans	I/II
East Timor *by Robert Wyatt*	Dans Dans	Live At Roma
East Timor *by Robert Wyatt*	Hobocombo	The Magnetic Sound Of Hobocombo Presents Moondog Mask
Esther's Nose Job *by Soft Machine*	Beppe Crovella	What's Rattlin' On The Moon?
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Abracadabra In Osaka	Soft Works
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Artchipel Orchestra	Live At The Fasano Jazz Festival
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening The Music Of Soft Machine
Facelift (live) *by Soft Machine*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening The Music Of Soft Machine

Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra play Soft Machine
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Hugh Hopper	Frangloband - Volume 2
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Mind Capsule	The Space Between
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Facelift Intro *by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Live In France
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Milton Keynes 2017
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Live Adventures
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Soft Works - Live At The Garden Hall - Tokyo
Facelift *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Maiden Sailing
Feelin', Reelin', Squeelin' *by Soft Machine*	Caravan	Green Bottles For Marjorie
Feelin', Reelin', Squeelin' *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Five Black Notes And One White Note *by Offenbach/Robert Wyatt*	Dissoi Logoi	The Different You (Tribute)

Five Black Notes And One White Note *by Offenbach/Robert Wyatt*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
Five Black Notes And One White Note *by Offenbach/Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Five Black Notes And One White Note *by Offenbach/Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
For The Ghosts Within *by Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen(The Ghosts Within)*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Forest *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Forest *by Robert Wyatt*	Dwiki Dharmawan	Pasar Klewer
Forest *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Forest (Excerpt) *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Forest *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Andrea Chimenti/ Mara Redeghieri	The Different You (Tribute)
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Christine Collister	Dark Gift Of Time

Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Elf Power	The Amos House Collection - Vol II
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Joan Of Arc	Eventually, All At Once
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt (Free Will)*	John Trap	Inédits (1996/1998)
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Kabusacki Band	Free Will And Testament
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Kinfolk	Kinfolk
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Manishevitz	Private Lines
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Régïs Boulard	Streamer
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Free Will And Testament *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyndow	Wyndow
Frontera *by Phil Manzanera*	Phil Manzanera (instrumental)	Primiitive Guitars

Frontera *by Phil Manzanera*	Phil Manzanera and The Sound of Blue Band	Live In Japan
Gegenstand *by John Greaves/Peter Blegvad/Lisa Herman*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Carmine	Be There/Gharbzadegi
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Dar Nahmias's Project	Desert Heat
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Julien Retaillaud	Démos
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Marco Parente/La Crus	The Different You (Tribute)
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Music From A Mailing List	Gharbzadegi
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	TNHCH	Retrospective My Eye
Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Visual Orchestra	Gharbzadegi

Gharbzadegi *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole*	Henry Cow	Concerts
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole*	Henry Cow	Hamburg -Volume 3 Of The Henry Cow Anniversary Box Set
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole (Gloria Gloom's Breath)*	Jean-Marc Foussat	Nouvelles
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole (Gloria Gloom's Meat)*	Jean-Marc Foussat	Nouvelles
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Gloria Gloom *by Matching Mole*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
God Song *by Matching Mole*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Artchipel Orchestra	Truly Yours Musiche Di Phil Miller
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Delivery	BBC in Concert

God Song *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Fasano 2005
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Paris Sept. 25 1973
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Live 1973
God Song *by Matching Mole*	John Greaves	Life Size
God Song *by Matching Mole*	John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Earthly Powers
God Song *by Matching Mole*	R. Stevie Moore	Vague
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Steve Miller/Lol Coxhill	The Story So Far... ... Oh Really? (Reissue)
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Ultra Living	Monochromatic Adventure
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
God Song *by Matching Mole*	Yung & Moore	Objectivity
God Song (bonus track) *by Matching Mole*	Yung & Moore	Objectivity
God Song (live WFMU) *by Matching Mole*	R. Stevie Moore	Vague
Good-Bye Wyatt Hat *(very inspired) by Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade	Paralelo

Grass *by [Ivor Cutler] Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Grass *by [Ivor Cutler] Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Heaps Of Sleeps *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Heaps Of Sleeps *by Robert Wyatt*	The Hunt Saboteurs	Heaps Of Sheeps
Hibou, Anemone And Bear *by Soft Machine*	Beppe Crovella	What's Rattlin' On The Moon?
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	Band Of Pixies	Centro Cultural São Paulo, 18/09/2010
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	Brainville - Daevid Allen With Hugh Hopper & Pip Pyle	Live In The UK
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	Brainville: 01	Live In NYC '98
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	Daevid Allen With Euterpe - & With Brainville	Studio Rehearsal Tapes 1977 & Live In The UK
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	Going Going	Going Going Live
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine (Hopeful Impressions Of Happiness)*	Humi (Hugh Hopper & Yumi Hara Cawkwell)	Dune
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine (Hopeful Impressions Of Happiness Original Version)*	Humi (Hugh Hopper & Yumi Hara Cawkwell)	Parallel Dune

Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine (Echec Naturel)*	Patrick Forgas	To Canterbury And Beyond
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Hope For Happiness *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Live At The Fleece
I'm A Believer *by [Neil Diamond] Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
I Rather Be With You *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
I Should've Know *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Impotence *by Wilde Flowers*	Smith	The Winstons
Instant Pussy *by Matching Mole*	La 1919	Freepopjazzrock
Instant Pussy *by Matching Mole*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Instant Kitten *by Matching Mole*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Instant Kitten *by Matching Mole*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Instant Kitten *by Matching Mole*	Ultramarine	United Kingdoms
Jelly Babies *by Epic Soundtracks*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt

Joy Of A Toy *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Other Doors
Just As You Are *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Just As You Are *by Robert Wyatt*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
Just As You Are *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Justice *by News From Babel*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
King And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Abracadabra In Osaka	Soft Works
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Artchipel Orchestra	Live At The Fasano Jazz Festival
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Bise de Buse	Bise de Buse Joue Sa Musique
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening The Music Of Soft Machine
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra play Soft Machine
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Bounds	Live At Le Triton 2004
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Live At The Baked Potato

Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Burden Of Proof
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Live In Zaandam
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	New Morning - The Paris Concert
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Soft Works - Live At The Garden Hall - Tokyo
Kings And Queens *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine Legacy	Maiden Sailing
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt*	Giancarlo Onorato/ Madaski	The Different You (Tribute)
Left On Man (Interferenze) *by Robert Wyatt*	Giancarlo Onorato	Le Nozze Chimiche
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt*	Kafka	Robert Et André
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt*	L'Ensemble Rayé	MW3
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt (La Liberté)*	Mendelson	Sciences Politiques
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Left On Man *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)

Life Is Sheep *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Lisp Service *by Robert Wyatt*	Monsieur Benjamin	Marottes
Lisp Service *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Estasia	The Different You (Tribute)
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Jaggernaut	MW3
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Jo Bogaert/An Pierlé/ John Snauwaert	MW3
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Kees Meijlink & Coos de Groot	Memories
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)

Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt (Robert Wyatt's dilogy)*	Tagubu	Miss Elianus
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Version	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Tin Huey	Disinformation
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Locomotive *by [Thelonious Monk] Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Love Makes Sweet Music *by Soft Machine*	Bon Scott With The Valentines	The Early Years
Love Makes Sweet Music *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Lullaby For Hamza *by Robert Wyatt*	Nadia Szachniuk	Luna Atrás

Lullaby For Hamza *by Robert Wyatt*	The Fiction Aisle	Live At Lick
Lullaby For Hamza *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Lullaloop *by Robert Wyatt*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
Lying And Gracing *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Tread Upon the BBC
Lything And Gracing *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Fasano 2005
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Baptiste Trotignon	Brexit Music
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Ginevra Di Marco/ Cristina Donà	The Different You (Tribute)
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Group Listening	Clarinet & Piano: Selected Works Vol. 1
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Salmoni	Salmoni
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Theo Travis' Double Talk	Transgression
Maryan *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)

Mass Medium *by Robert Wyatt*	Philippe Fretun/ Michel Benita	MW3
Memories *by Soft Machine*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Brainville: 01	Live In NYC '98
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Damon & Naomi	More Sad Hits
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Grey Lotus	In Tribute To Robert Wyatt (Live)
Memories *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Memories *by Soft Machine*	In Circolo/Mira Spinosa	The Different You (Tribute)
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Kees Meijlink & Coos de Groot	Memories
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Material & Whitney Houston	Memories
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Pascal Comelade	El Primitivismo
Memories *by Soft Machine*	Serious Solid Swineheard Is Better Than Homecooked	Memories
Memories *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs

Moon In June *by Soft Machine*	Artchipel Orchestra	Live At The Fasano Jazz Festival
Moon In June *by Soft Machine*	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra play Soft Machine
Moon In June *by Soft Machine*	Invisible Opera Company Of Tibet	UFO Planante
Moon In June *by Soft Machine*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Moon In June *by Soft Machine*	John Wesley Harding And The Monks Of Doom	Moon In June/Cowboy Song
Moon In June *by Soft Machine(Noisy Moon In Trashy June)*	Kafka	Robert Et André
Mousetrap *by Soft Machine*	Artchipel Orchestra	Live At The Fasano Jazz Festival
Mousetrap *by Soft Machine*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening The Music Of Soft Machine
Mousetrap *by Soft Machine*	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra play Soft Machine
Muddy Mouse *by Robert Wyatt*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Muddy Mouse *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Muddy Mouse *by Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Muddy Mouse [A] *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)

Muddy Mouse [B] [Mix] *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Muddy Mouse [C] *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Muddy Mouse *by Robert Wyatt*	Uwe Oberg	Work
Muddy Mouth *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Muddy Mouth Suite *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Artchipel Orchestra	Truly Yours Musiche Di Phil Miller
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole (Ethanol Nurse)*	Hatfield And The North	Hatwise Choice
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	John Peel Session (12th January 1973)
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Live 1973
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Fasano 2005
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Hatfield And The North	Paris Sept. 25 1973
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Richard Sinclair - Taranterbury Bossa Nova	Villanova II
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	Short Wave	Live

Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	The Muffins	Baker's Dozen 10
Nan True's Hole *by Matching Mole*	The Muffins	Loveletter #1
Neo-Caliban Grides *by Soft Machine*	Elton Dean	Elton Dean
N. I. O. *by Robert Wyatt*	Aquaserge	New Information Order
N. I. O. *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
N. I. O. *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Noisette *by Soft Machine*	Artchipel Orchestra	Live At The Fasano Jazz Festival
Noisette *by Soft Machine*	Delta Saxophone Quartet	Dedicated To You... But You Weren't Listening The Music Of Soft Machine
Noisette *by Soft Machine*	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra	Ferdinando Faraò & Artchipel Orchestra play Soft Machine
Noisette *(Noisette 1) by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Noisette *by Soft Machine (Noisette 2)*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Bréchet/Denizet/ Ponthieu	Standard
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Caravan	A Night's Tale Live In The USA

O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Caroline	Garden Parti & Caroline, Yes !
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Clammbon	Lover Album 2
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Dave Sinclair	Full Circle
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Dominique Fellmann/ Julien Goetz	MW3
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Dominique Fellmann/ Julien Goetz	MW Pour Robert Wyatt
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Eric Barret Septet	My Favorite Songs
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Gorky's Zygotic Mynci	Tatay
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Hoffmann Family Blues Experience	Five
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Horse Latitudes	September Songs
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Improgressive	Primo
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Jennifer Maidman	Dreamland

O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	King Size	! White Lies, White Beats !
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Max Gazzé	The Different You (Tribute)
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Maxi Trusso	El Firichinio
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Mezz Gacano 50th Birthday Party	Fünfzig
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Mirage	Live 14th December 1994
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
O Caroline *(2 versions)* *by Matching Mole*	Pascal Comelade	El Primitivismo
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Perdio	A Robert
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Richard Sinclair's Caravan Of Dreams	An Evening Of Magic
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Richard Sinclair - Taranterbury Bossa Nova	Villanova II
O Caroline *by Matching Mole (Oh Caroline)*	Sarah Murcia & Noël Akchoté	Sarah Murcia & Noël Akchoté
O Caroline *by Matching Mole (Voi Helena)*	Suonna Kononen	Lisälehtiä Korpraali Kukkakaalin Laulukirjaan

O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	University of Errors	Live At The Fleece
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Veranda Music	Look Of Joy
O Caroline *by Matching Mole*	Witold Bolik	Covers
Orange Skin Food *by Soft Machine*	Improgressive	Primo
Out-Bloody-Rageous *by Soft Machine*	Beppe Crovella	What's Rattlin' On The Moon?
Out-Bloody-Rageous *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Live In France
Out-Bloody-Rageous *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Drop
Out-Bloody-Rageous Intro *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Hidden Details
Out-Bloody Intro *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Live At The Baked Potato
Out-Bloody-Rageous Part 1 *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Hidden Details
Out-Bloody- Rageous Part 1 *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Live At The Baked Potato
Out Of The Blue *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	In Tribute To Robert Wyatt (Live)
Out Of The Blue *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)

Out Of The Blue *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
P. L. A. *by Robert Wyatt*	Dimthingshine	Songs From Home
P. L. A. *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
P. L. A. *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
P. L. A. *by Robert Wyatt*	Toupidek, Limonade et Jérôme Tagu	MW3
Pataphysical Introduction *by Soft Machine*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Pig *by Soft Machine*	Beppe Crovella	What's Rattlin' On The Moon?
Pig *by Soft Machine*	Improgressive	Primo
Pigs (in there) *by Robert Wyatt*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
Pigs (in there) *by Robert Wyatt*	Incroyable Jungle Beat	Surround
Pigs (in there) *by Robert Wyatt*	Squids	Natural Resources
Rangers In The Night *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Rivmic Melodies *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi

Round Midnight *by [Thelonious Monk] Robert Wyatt*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt
Save Yourself *by Soft Machine*	Carsten Jost	A Certain Kind
Save Yourself *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Aldo Romano/Rémi Vignolo/Baptiste Trotignon	Flower Power
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Alexander De Large	At Brunch With Satan
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Barbazza	Annie's Playlist
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Barbazza	Annie's Playlist 3 - The Streaming Concerts
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Berry Sakharof	אקוסטי
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Bill Baird	Songs the Sound of Myself, As Written By Others
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Bill Callahan & Bonnie Prince Billy	Sea Song
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Bill Rieflin/Chris Connelly	Largo

Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Black Forest/Black Sea	Black Forest/Black Sea
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Bruno Tocanne/Sophia Domancich/Antoine Läng/Rémi Gaudillat	Sea Song(e)s
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Carla Diratz & Pascal Vaucel	pRéCis.AiMaNt
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Carolina Katún	Al Silencio
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	CE François Couture	Ballades Pour Elle
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Chris Kunkel	Covers
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Ci S'Ha	The Different You (Tribute)
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Clare Louise - Le Yéti	Sea Song/La Moisson
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Daevid Allen's University Of Errors	Sea Song
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Dune	Forever
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Emm Gryner	Girl Versions
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Eyes Like Saucers	Still Living In The Desert

Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Fabio Zuffanti	Tributes
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Graham Brice	Horfes Turn'd Jockies
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	In Tribute To Robert Wyatt (Live)
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Harbour	The Covers Albums
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt (Canción Del Océano)*	Honduras	Canción Del Océano
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Hostsonaten	To Canterbury And Beyond
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Johanna's House Of Glamour	Style Monsters
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	John Greaves	Piacenza
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Julie Constantine	A Tribute Collection - Part One
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt (Zeelied)*	Kees Meijlink & Coos de Groot	Memories
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Klimperei	MW3

Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Map Towan	W-Ouvert
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Mezz Gacano 50th Birthday Party	Fünfzig
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Michele Sperandio Quartet	The Sea Of Music
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Nuccio D'Angelo	Homages
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Phipps pt.	Kiss you so many times, you can't count my love
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Qaä	Qaä
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Rachel Unthank And The Winterset	The Bairns
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Rebecca Barnard	Everlasting
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Roberto Gatto	Jazz Italiano Live Festival 2008
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Ruben Block	Turn The Tide
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Sim & Moe Kamura	Common Difference

Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Sharon Gal	Melancoholic
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	She Gave Him Oleander	She Gave Him Oleander
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Sine	Sine
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Tears For Fears	I Believe
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	The Icicle Works	Up Here In The North Of England
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	The Married Monk	Rocky
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Tim Hawthorn & the Archetypes	The End Of Words
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	VVAA	I Will Never Do Cover Versions! (expanded)
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
Sea Song *by Robert Wyatt*	Zapmachine	Kot
September The Ninth *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt

September The Ninth *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
September The Ninth *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
She's Gone *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	In Tribute To Robert Wyatt (Live)
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Grey Lotus	Songs by Wyatt (Live)
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	June Tabor	Ashore
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Manuel Agnelli Featuring Rodrigo D'Erasmo	An Evening With Manuel Agnelli
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Marianne Dissard & Raphael Mann	Souvenir Of England
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Mark Mulcahy	I Just Shot Myself In The Foot Again
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Maurizio Brunod, Giorgio Li Calzi & Boris Savoldelli	Nostalgia Progressiva
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Michele Sperandio, Quartet	The Sea Of Music
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt

Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Concert Anniversaire 30 Ans
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	Raphael Mann	Shipbuilding
Shipbuilding *by [Elvis Costello] Robert Wyatt*	The Mystery Jets	Home Protests
Shooting At The Moon (aka Jet Propelled Photographs) *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Sight Of The Wind *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Sight Of The Wind *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Signed Curtain *by Matching Mole (Cortina Firmada)*	Enric Casasses/Pascal Comelade	La Manera Més Salvatge
Signed Curtain *by Matching Mole*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
Signed Curtain *by Matching Mole*	Kirin J Callinan	Return To Center
Signed Curtain *by Matching Mole*	M.T. Hadley	There Isn't A Window That I Won't Look Out Of
Signed Curtain *by Matching Mole*	Pascal Comelade	September Song
Signed Curtain *by Matching Mole*	The Hellmask	The Bonus Tracks From Monsterverse
Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Alain Blesing	Songs From The Beginning

Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Beppe Crovella	What's Rattlin' On The Moon?
Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Polysoft	Tribute To Soft Machine
Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert
Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Live In France
Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	Drop
Slightly All The Time *by Soft Machine*	Soft Machine	The Dew At Dawn / (Slightly) Slightly All The Time
Solar Flares *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Solar Flares *by Robert Wyatt*	Adjabel	7
Sonia *by [Mongezi Feza] Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Philippe Ramos	The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi
Soupsong *by Robert Wyatt*	Annie Whitehead's Soupsong	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt
Soupsong *by Robert Wyatt (Funcia Da Carrua | Soup Song)*	Cantastorie Sintetico	Stere0types
Soupsong *by Robert Wyatt*	Comicoperando	A Tribute To The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Soupsong *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)

Stalin Wasn´t Stalling *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Stalingrad *by Peter Blackman/Robert Wyatt*	Null Object	Remix
Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away *by Matching Mole*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away *by Matching Mole*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away *by Matching Mole*	Roberto Gatto	Jazz Italiano Live Festival 2008
Stay Tuned *by Robert Wyatt*	The Unthanks	Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons
Te Recuerdo Amanda *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Team Spirit *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Team Spirit *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
That's How Much I Need You Now *by Soft Machine*	The Lysergics	TimeMazine #3
That's How Much I Need You Now *by Soft Machine*	The Lysergics	That's How Much I Need You (version 2019)
That's How Much I Need You Now *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Asmodaeus	Lies And Logic

The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Bullion	Love Me Oh Please Love Me
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Ekida Arte Ekimen Sozialista	Manifestua
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Jono McCleery	Pagodes
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Ruper Ordorika	Ez Da Posible
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Solaris Great Confusion	Untried Ways
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	The Mystery Jets	Home Protests
The Age Of Self *by Robert Wyatt*	Ulgebräk	The Age Of Self
The British Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Nagl/Clemens Wenger/Herbert Pirker	Market Rasen
The British Road *by Robert Wyatt*	Mop Meuchiine	Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt
The British Road *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra	Dronne

The British Road *by Robert Wyatt*	North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Folly Bololey
The British Road (live) *by Robert Wyatt*	Speed The Plough	The Plough & The Stars
The British Road *by Robert Wyatt*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
The Duchess *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
The Duchess *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace
The Duchess *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
The Song *by [John Greaves] Robert Wyatt*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
The Song *by [John Greaves] Robert Wyatt*	John Greaves	Piacenza
The Song *by [John Greaves] Robert Wyatt*	John Greaves - Annie Barbazza	Earthly Powers
The Song *by [John Greaves] Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
The United States Of Amnesia *by Robert Wyatt*	Enric Lareine/ Pascal Maupeu/ Wyatt/ Marchetti	How Can I Rise If You Don't Fall?
The United States Of Amnesia *by Robert Wyatt*	Wyattando	Wyattando (live at Bari)
To Nick Everyone *by Robert Wyatt*	Jacopo Andreini	Cover Me Now

Toledo Texas *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-Marc Montera/ Elio Martusciello/ Fabiana-Yvonne Lugli-Martinez	MW3
Toledo Texas *by Robert Wyatt*	Jean-François Pauvros	MW3
Unmasked *by Robert Wyatt*	David Fenech	A Découvrir Absolument Volume 40
Unmasked *by Robert Wyatt*	Ground/Lift	Ground/Lift
Vandalusia *by Robert Wyatt*	Orchestre National de Jazz	Around Robert Wyatt
Vandalusia *by Robert Wyatt*	Soupsongs Live	Soupsongs Live The Music Of Robert Wyatt (Tribute)
Venti Latir *by Robert Wyatt*	Bob Bucko Jr	Covers
Venti Latir *by Robert Wyatt*	Cpt. Kirk &. The More Extended Versions	Round About Wyatt
Venti Latir *by Robert Wyatt*	Kammerflimmer Kollektief	Incommunicado
Venti Latir *by Robert Wyatt*	Odeia	Parlami
Was A Friend *by [Hugh Hopper] Robert Wyatt*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
Was A Friend *by [Hugh Hopper] Robert Wyatt (Sweet Memories)*	Anaïd	I Have A Dream
Was A Friend *by [Hugh Hopper] Robert Wyatt (Sweet Memories)*	Anaïd	Anaïd In Parïs

Was A Friend *by [Hugh Hopper] Robert Wyatt*	Hopper/S.Klossner	Different
Was A Friend *by [Hugh Hopper] Robert Wyatt*	Hughscore	Delta Flora
Was A Friend *by [Hugh Hopper] Robert Wyatt*	Kees Meijlink & Coos de Groot	Memories
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	A Tribute To Robert Wyatt	Be In The No-Air
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	Bongwater	Double Bummer
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine (Dididtagin)*	Brainville 3	Trial By Headline
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	Going Going	Going Going Live
We Did It Again (encore) *by Soft Machine*	Going Going	Going Going Live
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	Jean-Marc Foussat	Nouvelles
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Ayers	Singing The Bruise The BBC Sessions 1970-72
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Ayers	Songs For Insane Times: An Anthology 1969-1980
We Did It Again ***(2 versions)*** *by Soft Machine (Again)*	Pascal Comelade	Ready-Made
We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	The Modernaires	We Dit It Again/And Again

We Did It Again *by Soft Machine*	Tirol	Meat Das Tirol !
Whe Know What You Mean (Soon Soon Soon) *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
When I Don't Want You *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Bananamoon Band	Bananamoon Band
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Bongwater	Too Much Sleep
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Carsten Jost	A Certain Kind
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Daevid Allen/Banana Moon Band/Gong	Je Ne Fum' Pas Des Bananes
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Gong	Haunted Chateau 1969
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Gong	Live In Lyon December 14th 1972
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Gorky's Zygotic Mynci	Llanfwrog
Why Are Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Ayers	Songs For Insane Times: An Anthology 1969-1980
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Ayers & Wizards of Twiddly	Turn The Lights Down
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Kevin Ayers And The Whole World	BBC Radio 1 Live In Concert

Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine (Porquoi Dormons Nous?)*	Paragong	Live '73
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Pascal Comelade + Les Limiñanas	Traité de Guitarres Triolectiques
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	The More Extended Versions	Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening
Why Are We Sleeping? *by Soft Machine*	Urinals	Negative Capability... Check It Out!
Yesterday Man *by [Chris Andrews] Robert Wyatt*	Pascal Comelade + Les Limiñanas	Traité de Guitarres Triolectiques
Yolanda *by [Pablo Milanes] Robert Wyatt*	L. Cherubini/ Jovanotti	The Different You (Tribute)
You Don't Remember *by Soft Machine*	University of Errors	Jet Propelled Photographs
You You *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt
You You *by Robert Wyatt*	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte	Max Andrzejewski's Hütte Plays The Music Of Robert Wyatt - Jazz & Wine Of Peace

Critiques/Reviews

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Love Makes Sweet Music - Soft Machine - 1967



Volume One - Soft Machine - 1968



Volume Two - Soft Machine - 1969



The End Of An Ear - Robert Wyatt - 1970



Third - Soft Machine - 1970



- Shooting At The Moon - Kevin Ayers And The Whole World - 1970



- Fourth - Soft Machine - 1971



- Matching Mole - Matching Mole - 1972



- Little Red Record - Matching Mole - 1972



- Whatevershebrîngswesing - Kevin Ayers - 1972



- Hatfield & The North - 1973



- Rock Bottom - Robert Wyatt - 1974



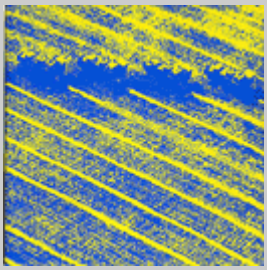
- I'm A Believer - Robert Wyatt - 1974



- Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard - 1975



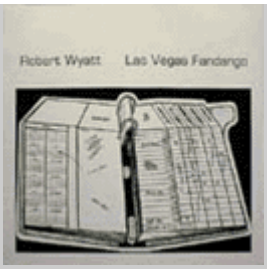
- Ambient 1 Music For Airports - Brian Eno - 1978



- At Last I'm Free - Robert Wyatt - 1980



- Rock Bottom/Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Reedition LP) - Robert Wyatt - 1981



- Las Vegas Fandango - Robert Wyatt - 1981



- The Animals Film - Robert Wyatt - 1982



- Nothing Can't Stop Us - Robert Wyatt - 1982



- Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight - Robert Wyatt - 1982



- The Last Nightingale - Various Artists - 1984



- Old Rottenthat - Robert Wyatt - 1985



- The Wind Of Change - Robert Wyatt With The SWAPO Singers - 1985



- Bel Canto - Pascal Comelade - 1986



- The Peel Sessions - Robert Wyatt - 1987



- Dondestan - Robert Wyatt - 1991



- A Short Break - Robert Wyatt - 1992



- Mid-Eighties - Robert Wyatt - 1993



- Darn It! - Paul Haines - 1993



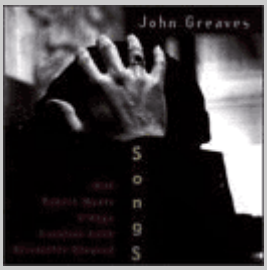
- Flotsam & Jetsam - Robert Wyatt - 1994



- Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt - Robert Wyatt - 1994



- Tales Of Canterbury - The Wilde Flowers - 1994



- Songs - John Greaves - 1995



- Live At The Paradiso - Soft Machine - 1996



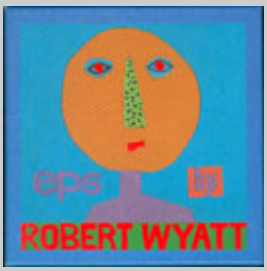
- Spaced - Soft Machine - 1996



- Shleep - Robert Wyatt - 1997



- Live 1970 - Soft Machine - 1998



- EP's - Robert Wyatt - 1999



- Noisette - Soft Machine - 2000



- MW pour Robert Wyatt - 2001



- Nouvelles - Jean-Marc Foussat - 2001



- Cuckooland - Robert Wyatt - 2003



- Somewhere In Soho - Soft Machine - 2004



- His Greatests Misses - Robert Wyatt - 2004



- Theatre Royal Drury Lane - Robert Wyatt & Friends In Concert - 8th September 1974 - 2005



- BBC In Concert 1971 - Soft Machine & Heavy Friends - 2005



- Sirens & Silences / Work Resumed On The Tower / Letters Home (Reedition) - News From Babel - 2006



- Soft Machine – Middle Earth Masters - 2006



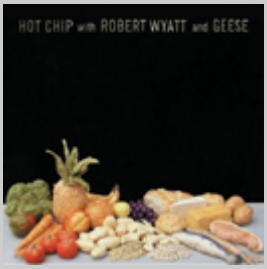
- Hyde Park Free Concert 1970 - Kevin Ayers & The Whole World - 2007



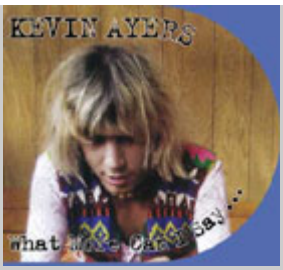
- The Story So Far... - Steve Miller/Lol Coxhill - 2007



- Comicopera - Robert Wyatt - 2007



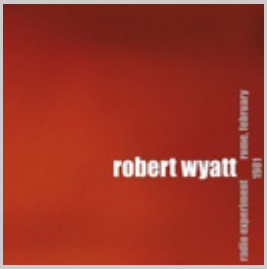
- Hot Chip With Robert Wyatt And Geese - 2008



- What More Can I Say... - Kevin Ayers - 2008



- Around Robert Wyatt - Orchestre National de Jazz - 2009



- Radio Experiment Rome - February 1981 - Robert Wyatt - 2009



- Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt - 2010



- ...For The Ghosts Within' - Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen - 2010



- Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre 1971 - Soft Machine - 2010



- '68 - Robert Wyatt - 2013



- One Night Stand - W M W S - 2015



- Folly Bololey Songs From Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom - North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza - 2019



- The Future Eve featuring Robert Wyatt - 2019



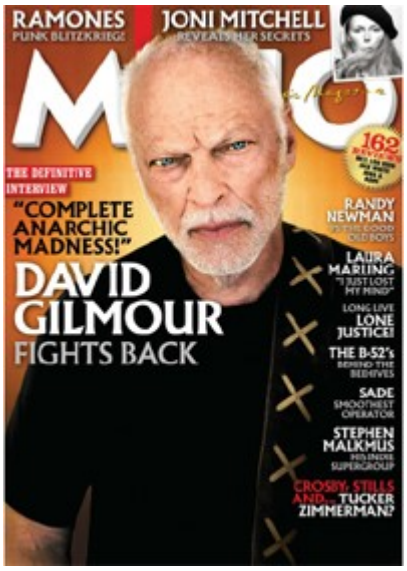
Love Makes Sweet Music
1967

Soft Machine

More information about this album

MOJO - N° 372 - november 2024

Soft Machine - Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin'
Written by Kevin Ayers. Published by Warner Chappell Music Ltd.®1967Soft Machine. Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records Ltd.



From the peak of the UFO era, a convention-busting freakout courtesy of Soft Machine. This B-side of their February 1967 debut, Love Makes Sweet Music, amps up the weird ness: Robert Wyatt is blue-eyed soul incarnate on the chorus; Kevin Ayers the twisted MC on the verse. "This is a feeling from the ceiling of my dreams!"

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

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HOME



Volume One
1968

Soft Machine

More information about this album

ROCK'N'FOLK - N° 28 - mai 1969

Volume One - Soft Machine

Philippe Paringaux

On en parlait, on en parlait, de cette douce machine, et l'on ne voyait rien venir. Voici enfin un disque, et notre attente n'a pas été vaine. Michael Ratledge (org. voc), Robert Wyatt (dms, ld-voc) et Kevin Ayers (ld-gt) créent à eux trois une musique absolument passionnante et qui mériterait certainement une plus grande audience. Mais ils sont des chercheurs de sons nouveaux, et cela n'a jamais été un très bon moyen pour atteindre la gloire. Le but des Soft Machine est de réaliser une synthèse des diverses sonorités du jazz et du rock dans ce qu'on pourrait appeler une "continuité électronique". Mais cette utilisation abondante des effets électroniques ne correspond pas, dans l'optique du groupe, à une succession de gimmicks plus ou moins utiles. Tout, au contraire, sous une apparence trompeuse de laisser-aller, est fort structuré, de sorte que chacun sait où il va et y arrive sain et sauf. Et les morceaux se succèdent sans vraiment être différents, entrecoupés de soli et de bruitages, ponctués de chants parfaitement intégrés à l'ensemble. Une musique qui déroutera bien des oreilles...

More information about this album



Volume Two
1969

Soft Machine

More information about this album

ALOHA - N° 12 -van 3 tot 17 oktober 1969

The Soft Machine - volume 2
Command/Probe CPLP 4505

P. S.



De soft Machine is altijd een van Hitweeks lievelingen geweest en zolang de groep nog zulke platen blijft maken en zulke indrukwekkende concerten blijft geven als pas nog in het Concertgebouw zal dat zeker zo blijven. De tweede elpee van de groep is weer een van de belangrijkste gebeurtenissen in het platenseizoen en ik geloof niet dat zoiets nog heel erg toegelicht hoeft te worden.



Iedereen die de groep een beetje kent houdt heel erg van de muziek die de jongens maken, maar misschien is het toch wel een beetje moeilijk om uit te leggen waarom deze groep zulke uitstekende muziek maakt en groepen als The Nice alleen maar flauwekul. Ieder z'n smaak natuurlijk, maar toch lijkt de muziek van de Soft Machine veel belangrijker dan het meeste dat er op het ogenblik uit Engeland komt. Mike Ratledge zelf wist in het interview dat een tijdje geleden in deze krant stond te vertellen dat er op het ogenblik groepen zijn met goeie ideeën en groepen met een behoorlijke muzikale vaardigheid, maar dat

er maar heel weinig groepen zijn die dit op een goeie manier weten te kombineren. De Soft Machine is zo'n groep en het opvallende is misschien wel dat er door die groep muziek gemaakt wordt die zowel aanslaat bij rokers en trippers, als bij gewone popliefhebbers, jazzliefhebbers en ook soms wel minnaars van moderne klassieke muziek. Er wordt wel gezegd dat de Soft Machine van tamelijk veel jazz-achtige verworvenheden gebruik maakt en dat is waar in die zin dat ze wat struktuur, melodie, harmonie en ritme betreft dingen doen die in de pop meestal niet beroerd worden, maar daar staat tegenover dat ze toch steeds in de eerste plaats pop zijn blijven maken. Ze streven naar een Sound, maken gedrieën één hecht stuk geluld zonder dat ze zich te buiten gaan aan allerlei zeer Individuele expressies. Ze blijven muziek maken voor jou en niet voor zichzelf. En ze maken die muziek niet alleen zeer knap en subtiel, maar ook op een hele gewone manier vanuit de muziek zonder daar allerlei buitenmuzikale nonsens voor nodig te hebben. Goed, zo zouden we nog even door kunnen gaan, maar laten we het nog even over deze plaat hebben.

Kevin Ayers is vervangen door Hugh Hopper en dat maakt ietsje uit omdat Hopper aktiever bezig is in de geluidsklomp waarin verder de klavierinstrumenten van Ratledge en de drums van Robert Wyatt zo overtuigend bezig zijn. Wyatt zingt weer alles op deze plaat met zijn prachtige fragiele stemgeluid en ook op deze plaat staan weer twee lange nummers die uiteenvallen in meest kleine speelse, maar ook grotere stukken. Het is zo ongeveer de muziek van het laatste concert van de groep en het enige nadeel vergeleken met het vroegere werk lijkt het ontbreken van kleine grapjes. Verder is het eigenlijk nog beter.

ROCK'N'FOLK - N° 35 - décembre 1969

Volume Two - Soft Machine

Philippe Paringaux

Le second disque des Soft Machine est aussi étonnant que le premier, ahurissant collage d'idées toutes plus originales les unes que les autres, problème insoluble pour tous les amoureux des classifications tant l'art du groupe défie l'analyse. Rien n'est plus excitant que d'écouter ces trois formidables instrumentistes / compositeurs créer mille climats différents sans jamais se perdre, allier avec une aisance (qui ne peut être que le fruit de l'expérience ajoutée au talent) la rigueur des thèmes à la spontanéité jaillissante de leurs développements. Je ne crois pas que la musique des Soft Machine soit, comme on l'a prétendu, une musique intellectuelle. Elle est au contraire très accessible, pour peu que l'on veuille se donner la peine d'écouter, en ayant pris soin auparavant de se laver ses oreilles de tout ce qu'elles peuvent contenir de "culture" et d'idées reçues (c'est la même chose). Ce "Volume Two" est, d'un bout à l'autre, une oeuvre extrèmement élaborée sans être un instant froide. C'est peut-être la plus grande qualité des Soft Machine, que de ne jamais sombrer dans l'exercice de style, de ne jamais faire de la recherche sonore ou harmonique une fin en soi. On peut fort bien écouter ce disque sans se prendre la tête entre les mains, sans chercher à tout prix un message à déchiffrer entre les extraordinaires échafaudages qu'édifie le groupe. La musique des Soft Machine peut être acceptée telle qu'elle est, je veux dire instantanément, et si Ratledge, Wyatt et Hopper s'amusent à nous compliquer la vie en donnant à leurs thèmes les titres les plus invraisemblables, il ne faut pas oublier qu'ils sont pataphysiciens, et il n'est pas absolument nécessaire de donner tête baissée dans leurs panneaux. Le raisonnement est peut-être simpliste, mais il me semble que vouloir analyser

fragmentairement cette musique n'aboutirait qu'à la désarticuler et à lui ôter toute vie. La formidable et très cohérente masse sonore (qu'ils jouent bas ou fort, vite ou lentement.... Le SON est omniprésent) qu'est la musique des Soft Machine doit avant tout être subie. Par les sens ET par l'esprit, d'accord, en cela leur musique peut être qualifiée d'intellectuelle, mais pas seulement par les uns ou par l'autre. Et, à tout prendre, surtout pas par le second...

ROCK'N'FOLK - HORS-SERIE N° 34 - 1954-2016 - LA GRANDE DISCOTHEQUE - décembre 2016

The Soft Machine - Volume Two - Probe

Bertrand Burgalat

Il y eut quelques mois où même les minables faisaient de bons disques. La situation de Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge et Robert Wyatt était moins confortable : ces types étaient trop doués. "Sacre du Printemps" psychédélique, leur deuxième album propose déjà, avant même que le genre n'explose, un autre voyage. Soft Machine, formation Swinging London par excellence, n'en convoque jamais les poncifs, sitar et cordes Bombay pour scènes de jerk Persuaders. Basse et orgue plongés dans la fuzz, un peu de piano, l'usage modéré (pour l'époque) de l'écho et une voix d'Adamo sous pastilles explorent, effleurent, cherchent et trouvent sans démontrer. La production, subordonnée aux idées qu'elle suscite, néglige la forme, déconcertante. On retrouvera chez Can ces manières frustrantes, laissant entrevoir les choses en disposant à la hâte les pressentiments. Sortie en beauté du cahier des charges rock, la musique de la joie ne s'arrête jamais, intense et inspirée. Ce qu'il y a de plus beau sur Terre se trouve dans la vingtaine de mesures de "Pataphysical Introduction Part 2". Si Soft Machine se pique de jazz, c'est un jazz idéalisé, libertaire, ignorant les montées de gammes et procédés modaux qui vont rendre l'improvisation tellement… prévisible. Ce n'est pas le seul domaine que nos amis abordent en touristes : il y a chez certains groupes anglais une attraction bien compréhensible pour le Bassin méditerranéen, paysages de version latine, cyprès, jeunes femmes drapées, éphèbes à cheveux bouclés et sandales Palais des Papes. L'imagerie pompéienne culminera avec le "666" d'Aphrodite's Child et le Pink Floyd de "Ummagumma" "More" et "Meddle". Elle prolonge les escapades tropéziennes des Soft Machine été 1967, leur prestation naturiste au Festival de la Libre Expression et ce light show *total* dont ils sont les inventeurs. Tout est là, en filigrane et spontanéité, dans ces morceaux qui persistent à surprendre après plusieurs centaines d'écoutes. Cette tragédie psychédélique annonce toutes les dérives et en sublime quelques autres, ébauche d'une musique solaire qui porte en germe sa propre mort.

More information about this album



Volume Two
1969

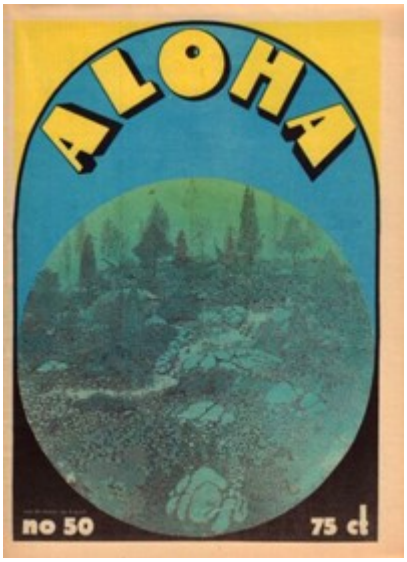
Soft Machine

More information about this album

ALOHA - N° 50 - van 26 maart tot 9 april 1971

SOFT MACHINE (CBS S 64280)
ROBERT WYATT
The end of an ear (CBS S 64189)

Hugo Epte



De vierde van de Soft Machine is een consequente voortzetting van de derde, al is dit gelukkig geen dubbelelpee. De afdeling toeten en blazen is nog prominenter geworden, er staat een heer op een contrabas te strijken, Ratledge verwisselt het orgel nogal eens voor de jazzpiano en zingen ho maar. De ziekte waar de muziek onder leidt is de bekende hedendaagse vrome Wichtichmacherei die bekend staat onder de benaming Coltrane-syndroom. Het is allemaal al veel eerder en veel beter gedaan, de plaat voegt niets nieuws toe aan de muziek die al bestaat en is dus volslagen overbodig. De volgende keer kunnen de heren zich misschien beperken tot het rondsturen van een briefkaart waarop staat dat het oeuvre van wijlen de tenorsaxofonist John Coltrane - vooral dat deel dat begon met de lp Giant Steps - bij hen zeer in de smaak valt. Iets anders hebben ze toch niet te melden. (Soft Machine : Coltrane = Benny Goodman : Count Basie). De afwezigheid van een Wyatt-feature - het enige onderdeel dat de vorige dubbelelpee genietbaar maakte - hoeft niet betreurd te worden want Vriend Leipmans heeft zijn eigen bedoeninkje op een aparte plaat gezet. Gelukkig maar.
'The end of an ear' is een pretentieuze titel volgens Flesseman. Dag Torn ! Wat dacht je dan van dit dialoogje:
'Ik heb oorpijn, dokter'.
'Doe de kleren maar uit'.
'Maar dokter. Mijn kleren uit?'
'Jazeker juffrouw. Alles uit. Weet u niet dat het oor zich uitstrekt door het hele lichaam?'
En jawel: waar is de grens tussen oor en niet-oor? Het wereldraadsel in handzame vorm, binnen het geestelijk bereik van de gewone man

gebracht.
Maar goed. Lennon is adept van het primal-scream wezen, waarvan de kas beheerd wordt door een Californische praatjesmaker. Primal scream ! Het mocht wat, vrome naprateri, voze dikdoenerij. Nee, dan Wyatt - die is in de ban van de KleuterDreun. Een aanzienlijk authentieker aandoende obsessie, omdat iedereen zich de eertijds met overgave ten gehore gebrachte kleuterdreun nog best herinnert.
Tot zover de ideologie en De Boodschap. De muziek is een vreemd ratjetoe: monotoon gebens en gesljoesj en gejammer en daar omheen de geluiden van een dromens papagaaienhuis, losgeslagen Swingle Singers, Jongenstreurigheid om niet plus plezier in geluid - alweer zo'n authentieke muzikantenobsessie. Geluid, omdat het zo gek is, of zo vals, of zo wezenloos of zo mooi. Een betere reden om muziek te maken moet nog steeds uitgevonden worden.
Groot voordeel daarbij is dat Wyatt echt wat van jazz weet en niet alleen naar Coltrane geluisterd heeft. Hoe moet een popjongen anders op het idee komen om de Las Vegas Tango van de Verve-lp 'The individualism of Gil Evans' te gebruiken? Toch ontsnapt hij ook hier aan de afschuwelijke Soft Machine ziekte van het naspelen van grote voorbeelden. Uit het ratjetoe aan zeer uiteenlopende invloeden ontstaat iets eigens, een mooi ijl rokersmuziekje.
We hebben weer wat om naar uit te kijken: de volgende lp van Wyatt.

CHARLIE HEBDO - N° 3 - 7 décembre 1970

MECHAMMENT POP

Livingstone (Pierre Lattès)

A propos de Kevin, dont le deuxième disque vient de paraître en G.-B., et pour en revenir à cette « famille » ultra-productrice de Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt vient lui aussi de publier un disque, The End of an Ear. Chacun des Soft doit avoir le sien, et le groupe au complet enregistre ces jours-ci chez Olympic son quatrième album. Ce qui vaut le jus dans le disque du célèbre pataphysicien et néanmoins batteur, c'est que personne ne va aimer ça.



Les gars du pop parce que c'est trop compliqué pour leurs petites oreilles, les gens du jazz parce que l'étiquette n'y est pas et que tous les musiciens sont anglais, et que, dieu merci, poil au nez, il n'y a pas encore d'amateurs de cette habomination appelée free-pop, jazz-rock, etc. Alors, qu'est-ce que c'est ton machin ? Comme je n'aurais pas la mauvaise foi insigne de vous dire que ce n'est que de la musique, et fi du reste, disons que c'est du pop extrémiste. C'est si réussi que si qui vous savez avait eu un souple, je suis sûr qu'il aurait attendu un peu pour claboter. Robert joue de la batterie et chante, et fait des tas de choses à un pauvre piano. Si ça parait chez CBS-France avant six mois, je me les coupe (une seule, à la réflexion).

BEST - N° 36 - juillet 1971

The End Of An Ear - Robert Wyatt

(Barclay 920.308)

Hervé Muller

Ce disque est le complément du L.P. de Soft Machine dont je vous ai parlé le mois dernier, dans la mesure où il est l'expression créatrice de Wyatt lui-même, alors que "Fourth" était celle des trois autres et qu'il n'y avait qu'un rôle de batteur. Une note sur la pochette précise d'ailleurs : "Robert Wyatt, chanteur pop en chomage (actuellement à la batterie avec le Soft Machine)!"

C'est donc nettement différent de "Fourth". A la pureté presque méticuleuse de la musique actuelle des Soft s'oppose, dans la même mesure où s'opposent, en fait, les personnalités de Wyatt et Ratledge, l'aspect beaucoup plus torturé et confus de "End of an Ear". Cela rend le disque plus inégal, mais aussi moins purement formel. C'est aussi dans une large mesure le prolongement du magnifique "Moon in June" de "Third". A cet égard la pièce maîtresse de l'album est constituée par "Las Vegas Tango (part 1)", répartie entre les deux faces et formant un total de plus de vingt trois minutes. Ce morceau est le seul qui ne soit pas signé Wyatt : c'est un thème du pianiste Gil Evans. Et il n'est certes pas peu surprenant de constater que tout au long des quatorze minutes que prend ce morceau sur la seconde face il n'y a pas de batterie ! Robert montre ici pour la première fois ses talents de pianiste et il convainc sans peine. Mais c'est surtout pour lui l'occasion de pousser plus loin encore (large emploi du re-recording) les effets vocaux que lui permette son étonnante voix, autrefois une des caractéristiques principales de la musique des Soft. On a cependant par ailleurs largement l'occasion de retrouver le style de batterie de Wyatt, à la fois le moins orthodoxe et un des plus riches qui soit à l'heure actuelle (cf. par exemple "To Mark Everywhere"). Mais l'utilisation des percussions va bien au-delà de la batterie elle-même : effets acoustiques et électroniques les plus divers sont largement employés (cf. "To Carla, Marsha and Caroline").

Musicalement on est donc tout aussi loin de la pop qu'avec "Fourth". Les références sont essentiellement la musique contemporaine (entre autres Terry Riley, bien sûr) et le jazz moderne. Mais la démarche est en général différente de celle suivie aujourd'hui par les Soft, et rappelle souvent le climat de fusion créatrice de certains enregistrements de free-jazz, plutôt que le self-control quasi absolu pratiqué par Ratledge et Hopper. L'aspect spontané de la musique a pour corollaire son côté extraverti : la plupart des titres sont dédiés à des amis dont certains sont des membres notoires de la "famille Soft" : Daevid Allen et Gilly Smyth, Bridget Saint-John (folk-singer mais aussi collaboratrice éventuelle de Kevin Ayers), "Mark" (probablement Mark Ellidge, son demi-frère, qui joue du piano sur le disque), "Nick" (Evans ?), Caravan et "brother Jim" (également désigné ainsi sur les disques de Caravan : il s'agit du frère de leur guitariste Pye, Jim Hastings, saxophoniste présent également sur "Third" et "Fourth"). "Au vieux monde" aussi ! Les amis, on les retrouve aussi parmi les musiciens : David Sinclair (organiste de Caravan), Cyrille Ayers (femme de Kevin). Et puis Elton Dean, remarquable comme toujours et très bien secondé par Mark Charig (cornet). "The End of an Ear" représente ainsi une autre facette de ce que l'on sera peut-être bientôt obligé d'appeler la "musique Soft", courant de plus en plus discernable de tout autre étiquette, pop ou jazz, et uni par une parenté profonde et toujours sensible, au-delà de divergences parfois considérables dans la forme comme dans l'esprit, des Soft eux-mêmes jusqu'à Caravan en passant par Gong.

More information about this album



Third
1970

Soft Machine

Les 1001 ALBUMS QU'IL FAUT AVOIR ÉCOUTÉS DANS SA VIE - 2006 - Flammarion

Soft Machine - Third - CBS
Direction artistique : John Hays

DN

Enregistré en quatre jours, *Third* de Soft Machine montre un groupe britannique au sommet de son art et, en même temps, en pleine tourmente. Le rock progressif devient dominant et le reste du groupe se lasse de la voix de Robert Wyatt - alors que lui en a assez de leur désir intransigeant de faire une musique plus sérieuse et jazzy.
Moon in june est la dernière création de ce dernier pour Soft Machine, et probablement le chef-d'oeuvre du groupe, même si les autres membres ne l'apprécient pas vraiment (on découvre sur la pochette que Wyatt est sur ce morceau à la basse et à l'orgue, instruments habituellement joués par Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge). Il mêle de vieux airs de Soft Machine à de nouvelles parties dominées par l'autodénigrement enjoué de Wyatt. Un autre enregistrement de cette suite vocale sur *Peel Sessions*, plus récent, est encore plus irrévérencieux, se moquant même de Ratledge. Parmi les autres titres, *Facelift* de Hopper, où l'on retrouve les huit membres du groupe, est probablement le plus difficile, fascinant et amusant. La pochette du vinyle original indique que *Slightly all the time* comprend quarante secondes du *Noisette* de Hopper, à vous de les identifier !
À l'intérieur de l'album, on découvre une photo formidable des membres principaux de ce groupe, étonnamment sous-estimé.

SOUNDS - # 21 - September '70

Soft Machine - Third - CBS S-66248

RB

Das neue Soft Machine Album finde ich über weite Strecken zu kühl, zu sachlich, zu klassisch und intelektuell. Das excitement der Rockmusik ist verloren gegangen. Das wird deutlich in Stücken wie "Facelift" oder "Slightly All The Time", einer modalen Komposition à la Miles Davis von 1960. Diese Blutleere in der Soft Machine Musik, die live zu erleben immer noch ein Genuß ist, wird vielleicht auch der Grund dafür gewesen sein, daß Drummer und Sänger Robert Wyatt die Gruppe verlassen hat.



Wyatt's Stück "The Moon In June" ist denn auch das befriedigendste der insgesamt vier Stücke (plus kleinen eingeschobenen Kompositionen)..

LES INROCKS HORS-SERIE - LES 100 MEILLEURS ALBUMS ANGLAIS - 2016

Third - Soft Machine - CBS

Francis Dordor



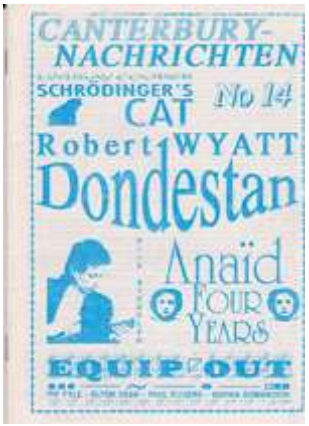
1970 marque un tournant dans l'histoire de ce rock anglais auquel on a substitué le qualificatif "progressif" à celui de "psychédélique". Le Soft Machine de *Third* correspond d'autant plus à cette transition que le groupe de Canterbury a complètement muté avec les départs successifs des membres originaux David Allen et Kevin Ayers et l'arrivée du saxophoniste Elton Dean. Mais si l'on doit parler bouleversement, il est avant tout musical, la ligne dadaïste des deux premiers albums se trouvant supplantée ici par celle beaucoup plus jazz qu'impose le claviériste Mike Ratledge, q*ui signe ici deux compositions, les renversantes Slightly All the Time et Out-Bloody-Rageous*. Le terme "jazz" n'a d'ailleurs que la valeur d'un repère de commodité, tant cette musique extraordinairement aventureuse traverse les genres avec autorité et poésie, intégrant aussi bien les principes sériels que la fusion postcoltranienne, capable d'engendrer en dernier ressort un ovni absolu comme Moon in June, génial vagabondage chanté par Robert Wyatt, alors batteur ambidextre à la voix d'ange endolori.

CANTERBURY NACHRICHTEN - N° 14 - Oktober 1991

Soft Machine - Third & As If... (Sampler)

(88) EEC Charly LIKD 35
US Columbia CGK 30339
(91) UK Elite 006CDP

Zu "Third" kamen wahrscheinlich die meisten Anfragen, ob das



Doppelalbum denn nun endlich auf CD raussei? Und Immer lautete die Antwort: Nein, gibt's leider noch nicht. Beim Blättern in einem alten Record Collector von 1988 (!) - wer hat denn da gepennt? -stach dann eine Kritik von "Third on CD" mit der Charly Bestellummer in's Auge. Diese zu bestellen schlug zwar fehl, doch dafür kam die amerikanische CD, was ja auch nicht weiter schlimm ist. Also nicht mehr schreiben, es gibt sie endlich ... Ich glaube, ich habe hier auch schon mal geschrieben, daß die Platte fantastisch ist, besonders "Moon in June". Falls nicht, wißt ihr es jetzt. (Um euch das Porto zu sparen: ob es die Charly-CD wirklich gibt, weiß Ich nicht & es ist alles drauf auf der einen CD: 75:22 Minuten. Und "As if ..." enthält nur bekanntes Material, s. Bemerkung unter CAMEL) Übrigens geht die Mär von einem holländischen Video namens "Psychomania", das Aufnahmen von SOFT MACHINE aus dem Jahre 1967 des holländischen Fernsehens enthalten soll - näheres ist noch nicht bekannt.

MELODY MAKER - May 30, 1970

Soft Machine album an MM preview

Richard Williams

IT MUST be hard for a lot of people to understand that, in France, the Soft Machine are one of the top three or four bands. Hard because they mean little in Britain as yet, although they can pack the Fairfield Hall and command a week's residence at the Ronnie Scott Club.

Their first two albums were released first in the States on the Probe label, and only the second of these was put out in Britain, after a considerable timelag. These omissions will be rectified early next month, when their new double-album will appear under a new contract with CBS.
The album, called simply "Third", resembles Pink Floyd's "Ummagumma" in that each member of the band has been given complete freedom. Bassist Hugh Hopper and drummer Robert Wyatt have one side each, while organist / pianist Mike Ratledge has two.
It opens with Hopper's "Facelift," which is actually a collage of two live performances (from the Fairfield Hall and Mothers in Birmingham, both last January) plus, some tape-loops overlayed by Hopper later on. Most of the material is from the Fairfield concert, and the side opens with the extraordinary organ solo with which the second half began.
Ratledge is now probably the most resourceful and inventive organist anywhere, making most other practitioners sound academic with his sliding pitch-warps and visceral gobs of sound.
The " bugged" soprano (Lyn Dobson) and alto (Elton Dean) play a Zappalike theme, which segues quickly into a very percussive 7/4 tune, with Wyatt asserting himself strongly behind the organ solo. Dobson solos well on flute and electric soprano, and it's back to the theme, wich is played forwards before the tape is reversed to give a pyramid effect.
Ratledge's "Slightly All The Time" starts with harmonics on the bass, and Dean's overdubbed alto and saxello play a theme which has a strong jazz flavour. Dean solos on alto over a ponderous bass progression, being interrupted occasionally by brief two-horn riffs which are introduced each time by a staccato organ phrase. A flute solo by Jimmy Hastings develops into a written flute loop, which repeats on top of the saxes' theme, and the saxello and organ solo over a 9/4 pattern. The track fades with a stately theme voiced by the reeds, fuzz organ, and fuzz bass.

Robert Wyatt's "Moon In June" features a great deal of the drummer's highly unorthodox singing, with that cool, pure tone which is most effective in the improved passages, especially when doctored with echo. Robert played most of the organ and electric piano on this track, Ratledge only coming in for a solo near the end.
Finally there's Ratledge's "Out - bloody - rageous," which opens in startling fashion with piano tapes played backwards, all based on progressions of the bass line which underpins the main theme. This theme is again played by Dean on overdubbed alto and saxello, and trombonist Nick Evans makes a couple of brief appearances. Dean has an extraordinary beautiful alto solo before the track ends with another tape collage, this time of the electric piano overdubbed three or four times, playing phrases of differing lengths which gradually contract.
The Softs are an exhilarating band, and listening to them can be like jumping off a cliff into a pool of freezing water. The new album is full of music of such fine, invigorating quality, and their crucial importance in the future of popular music cannot be denied.

ROCK'N'FOLK - N° 43 - août 1970

Third - Soft Machine

Melmoth (aka Dashiell Hedayat)

Le bruit. Là, depuis toujours. À votre oreille. Pourtant vous ne l'avez jamais écouté. Les fredonnements incertaines – hésités, cassés puis repris – la voix blanche : débris de refrains, coq à l'âne de comptines à moitié oubliées, lania lanières à tue-tête ou chuchotées, « pour rien » dites-vous, sinon à éclairer le noir des couloirs, à rameuter les rêves et avec les sommeil. Écoutez les rêves, passez de l'autre côté du miroir. De là votre regard étonné va découvrir l'impensable beauté : le bruit et la musique sont une seule et même chose, votre chant-bas est aussi bien un « beau » chant (bel canto). Dada l'avait dit, lorsqu'il était là (au second disque) mais en parler c'était encore faire confiance aux mots – donc d'une certaine façon à la Kultur. Seule la musique par sa propre convulsion (belle) pouvait nous livrer le secret de son origine : qu'elle ne que bruit. « Facelift » non pas ascension de la musique vers la lumière, mais convulsion du bruit « devenu » musique. « Devenu » par la magie dérisoire d'un mot. Où finit le bruit, où commence la musique ? Où le jour, où la nuit ? Wyatt sous les lueurs blafardes de juin « Moon in june » en muezzin. La voix blanche a hésité d'une psalmodie déchirée sur une question aussi dérisoire. À la faveur de la nuit nous libérons cette envie de chante que la Musique (celle qui s'écrit avec un grand M) nous interdit. À la faveur des rêves (tout le monde chante comme Wyatt, la beauté est partout, en vous, par vous, et qu'importe la lumière et l'ombre, le beau et le laid). Subversion de/par la musique. Depuis toujours que vous chantez ; ce n'était pas pour « rien ». Depuis toujours qu'il y a du bruit. Mais le voyant (celui qui vous a donné à voir) se damne par son projet même ; là fît sa souffrance : (contradiction insurmontable) que SA musique recule les limites de LA musique. À peine (depuis) toujours, « Slightly all the time » Ascension vers la lumière. Zarathoustra nous a dit que là est une façon de bonheur et l'Orient est une libération par la répétitif. À peine toujours. Les enfants prennent plaisir à se regarder pleurer à un miroir – oublié pourquoi ils pleuraient. Le malaise cependant persiste – sans doute la présence signalée par le texte intérieur de « Noisette », fruit ou couleur mais plus sûrement petit bruit. Inaudible. Là, pourtant. Sans doute pour casser le dernier accord ; le changer en ce hurlement grotesque par quoi tout le calme de cette plage bascule soudain vers le cauchemar, la colère blanche « Out-bloody rageous » d'être impuissant à dépasser l'indépassable contradiction, à transformer le monde – « bruit » - en un monde sa composition – à changer la vie. Retour obsédant du bruit sur lequel les musiciens qui se sont crus un instant des Dieux doivent à nouveau PLAQUER (coller) leur musique. Avec ses distinctions imbéciles,

ses garde-FOUS, la Kultur reprend ses droits. La musique – blanche de colère – n'a plus qu'à s'autodétruire dans l'espoir (« Hope for Hapiness ») qu'un jour l'art aura le goût de la vie. C'est-à-dire que seule la vie sera pensable.
« Le plaisir limité de se détruire risque fort de détruire en fin de compte le pouvoir qui le limite ». R. Vaneigem… Constat d'échec – réussite de cette musique. Schoenberg (une autre série est possible), Webern (toute série est possible), Cage (tout son), Coltrane (toute musique est vous – solo – votre voix), les Beatles (tout flonflon est beau), Sun Ra (la musique est ascension vers la lumière)… third, cette ascension même. Flash, c'est-à-dire image-idée-convulsion. Date dans l'histoire de la musique, si date avait encore un sens.
Je laisse aux flics de Melody Maker le soin de vous expliquer que Wyatt n'a pas une belle voix (parce que « blanche » - ? – sans doute) et à quelques autres les influences de Coltrane sur le jeu de Dean (plus utile eût été de nous montrer à quel point le jeu de Dean est plus précis, plus « mescalin » que celui de Coltrane – chaleur élastique qui étreint), de Terry Riley sur le traitement des sons par Hopper (or chez Riley la question de la situation du musicien par rapport au matériau sonore est pose différemment). Et encore quelques sujets de dissertation pour vous : le soft machine et Dada, – l'Orient –, Brech-Weill (Alabama-Song in Moon in June), Sly & Family Stone, - Platon (conscient inconscient chez Ratledge), - l'Acide (in friends : « notre musique est à l'attention des défoncés »)… commentez et discutez. Je hais les critiques et leur prétention à montrer quand ils dissimulent. Ils n'écouteront pas Third. Sur leurs tombes nous écrirons : « Morts de beauté violente ». En avant le SOFT POWER : - MELMOTH.

More information about Dashiell Hedayat

TRAVERSES - N° 33 - juin 2013

Soft Machine Third - 1970 - par John Hays et Jurgen D. Ensthaler

Eric Deshayes

Third de SOFT MACHINE est un immense album, de ceux que l'on découvre avec stupeur et que l'on réécoute toujours avec un plaisir intense en se préparant à être simultanément saisi par la beauté et l'effroi. On s'attardera ici essentiellement sur la pochette du disque, c'est le but, mais il est nécessaire de décrire le contenu musical à grands traits de marqueur sur paperboard pour les éventuels lecteurs de Traverses qui n'auraient plus en tête le plan d'ensemble de ce monument historique. *Third,* le troisième album de SOFT MACHINE, ce sont quatre monstres d'environ dix-neuf minutes chacun : *Facelift, Slightly All The Time, Moon In June* et *Out-Bloody-Rageous,* chacun occupant l'une des quatre faces du double 33 tours d'origine. Chaque titre érode les côtes du continent jazz-rock par un phénomène de marées à très fort coefficient. Le bulletin de météo marine indique brume, houle, douceur lunaire et vents violents. Les auditeurs sujets au mal de mer sont priés de se munir d'un gros paquet de bonbons à la menthe ou de fumer les plantes de leur choix. Tout voyage s'accompagne de certains désagréments imprévisibles, mais ils sont généralement vite effacés de la mémoire par un émerveillement d'une intensité insoupçonnée une fois la destination atteinte.

La pochette elle-même n'a rien d'une brochure d'agence de voyages. Elle a l'apparence d'un matériau dépourvu de toute noblesse : du papier kraft, celui dont on se sert pour les emballages et les envois postaux. Pratique, neutre et solide. Il faut l'ouvrir pour voir intégralement s'étaler le lettrage : THIRD THIRD THIRD. Trois fois « THIRD » crayonné sur du papier kraft. Pas de peinture, ni à l'huile, ni à l'eau, ni à l'acrylique, pas d'encre de

Chine, pas de feutre, pas de crayon de couleur, pas de montage de photos dispendieux, rien que du crayon à papier, uniquement du « crayon gris », griffonné par John HAYS. Il a déjà conçu la pochette du premier album d'ELMER GANTRY'S VELVET OPERA (du proto-prog post-Beatles de 1968). Il concevra les pochettes des albums *Fourth* et *Fifth* de SOFT MACHINE et celles de plusieurs albums du chanteur soûl anglais Géorgie FAME. Pour *Third*, John HAYS exerce l'art du graphisme dans sa plus simple expression : la typographie. On lui accordera tout de même une certaine habileté à créer du volume, il en faut pour SOFT MACHINE, notamment en travaillant les jeux d'ombres sur le troisième THIRD. Précisons qu'il fallait faire vite : hormis *Facelift*, capté lors de deux concerts en janvier, l'album est enregistré le 6 mai 1970 et sort seulement un mois plus tard, le 6 juin 1970. Pas de temps à perdre en post-production. Emballez, c'est pesé, envoyez ça direct à l'usine de pressage !



La pochette intérieure ne demande pas plus de travail, tout simplement une photo «panoramique ». La photo du groupe est prise dans un appartement par Jurgen D. ENSTHALER. Dès l'instant où on la découvre, on se sent complice, pote avec les SOFT, avachi comme eux sur un sofa, cuvant un bon vin en écoutant un putain de disque. Le panard ! Moi, je m'étais fait une photocopie agrandie de la photo en noir et blanc, celle du CD (je ne connaissais pas encore la version couleur du vinyle), pour la punaiser sur le mur principal de ma chambre de cité universitaire. Mon 9m2 devenait virtuellement une extension du salon des SOFT.

Il faudrait parfois préserver certains fruits de son imagination de toutes recherches empiriques. Les informations glanées pour la rédaction de cet article ont abattu le mythe au fusil de chasse. L'appartement n'est pas celui d'un des membres de SOFT MACHINE. Selon le livre Robert Wyatt : faux mouvements de Michael KING traduit par Yves BALANDRET (Camion Blanc, 1998, page 111), c'est Winfried TRENKLER que l'on distingue en haut à droite de la photo, caché derrière un poteau. Au premier plan les pieds nus qui dépassent sont ceux d'Ingrid BLUM. Beaucoup plus précis, l'ouvrage de Graham BENNETT *Soft Machine: Out-Bloody-Rageous* (SAF Publishing Ltd, 2005, page 206) indique que la photo a été prise le 4 avril 1970 dans l'appartement des deux journalistes Winfried TRENKLER et Ingrid BLUM, adeptes, comme beaucoup à l'époque psychédélique, d'Optical Art à voir les reproductions affichées sur leurs murs. Winfried TRENKLER fera carrière à la radio WDR 2 en fin spécialiste de rock progressif et de musiques électroniques. Les SOFT MACHINE font un break chez eux, ils sont arrivés à Cologne par avion pour un concert au Sporthalle dans le cadre du Progressive Pop Festival'70. Les SOFT MACHINE se remettent doucement du voyage éprouvant à bord d'un petit avion qui laissait passer le jour et l'air par l'embrasure des portes et dont les vitres étaient givrées de l'intérieur. L'habitacle du coucou n'était pas du tout pressurisé. Elton DEAN en ressortit les tympans sévèrement meurtris et n'avait pas encore récupéré la totalité de ses facultés auditives lorsqu'il monta sur scène. Ainsi donc, ceux que l'on a longtemps cru être des musiciens photographiés dans un doux moment de méditation fraternelle sont en fait sonnés par leur déplacement dans un

zinc de transport de fret, celui qui transportait leur matériel. Ils se sont écroulés chez de quasi inconnus, éreintés, assourdis. Ils viennent d'enfiler quelques bières et une bouteille de vin rouge en accompagnement d'un en-cas dont il ne reste aucune miette dans leurs petites assiettes à dessert, peut-être un peu d'omelette. Ils ont un concert à assurer dans les heures qui viennent.

Légende de la photo de pochette intérieure : Elton DEAN, Hugh HOPPER et Mike RATLEDGE et Robert WYATT. Derrière le poteau : Winfried TRENKLER. Premier plan : les pieds d' Ingrid BLUM.

JUKEBOX MAGAZINE - N° 164 - avril 2001

Le rock progressif anglais (2) - 9 pièces maîtresses - 1970-72
Soft Machine - 1970 - The Third (CBS 66246 UK).

Luc Marianni

Ce disque représente la première longue suite sortie au milieu de l'année 1970. En fait, il n'y en a pas une mais quatre sur ce double album, véritable merveille qui concilie toutes les tendances de la recherche musicale de pointe de l'époque. Nous sommes au confluent du jazz, du free, de la pop, du rock, de la musique répétitive et contemporaine, de la recherche électronique et de la mélodie. Quelle classe !



Soft Machine, comme Pink Floyd, vient du mouvement psychédélique. Comme son nom l'indique, c'est une magnifique machine molle, dans le sens où ce groupe n'a jamais trouvé, durant son existence de 1966 à 1982, une véritable unité de personnes. En effet, le guitariste australien Daevid Allen est parti dès les débuts, après les premières séances mais avant l'enregistrement du premier album qui a été suivi du départ du bassiste Kevin Ayers, intégrant la grande nébuleuse des anciens de Soft Machine. Cas unique, il est le seul à avoir une formation finale totalement différente de son origine, sans aucun membre commun. « The Third », qui voit le jour le 4 juillet 1970, est enregistré par Mike Ratledge (claviers), Robert Wyatt (batterie, chant), les deux survivants des débuts, rejoints par Hugh Hopper (basse) et Elton Dean (cuivres) plus, comme invités, Nick Evans (trombone), Jimmy Hastings (flûte, clarinette), Lyn Dobson (flûte, saxo) et Rab Spall (violon). Album double, quatre morceaux, un par face et un seul chanté, « The Moon In June ». C'est l'œuvre de Robert Wyatt, batteur et chanteur, qui laisse éclater en 19 minutes une pluie de sensation, un torrent de surprise, un océan de tendresse. Le feeling ici dépasse toutes les limites. Cassures de rythme incessantes dues à un assemblage hétéroclite et pourtant parfait de petites mélodies, voix attachante, jeu de batterie rarement égalé dans la subtilité et la douceur percussive (Robert Wyatt devra pourtant abandonner la batterie quelques années plus tard suite à une paralysie des jambes due à une chute). Authentique œuvre qui évolue au fil du temps avec des paroles souvent improvisées qui se transforment d'une version à l'autre. Folie et unité, un concept peu concevable aujourd'hui dans le monde technologique régit par l'ordinateur. « The Third » est d'ailleurs la dernière œuvre de Soft Machine enregistrée avec le chant de Robert Wyatt, le groupe se tournant

ensuite vers le free jazz puis le jazz-rock, ce qui en fait un groupe à part, déterminant dans l'univers progressif anglais. Il engendrera des émules, des courants parallèles et des musiques nouvelles (avec Henry Cow, l'excellent groupe français Pataphonie dont le second LP est réédité en CD chez Muséa, ou encore les Belges de Univers Zéro).

JAZZ MAGAZINE - N° 658 - février 2014

Dossier Jazz & Pop
Soft Machine - Third - 1970 - Columbia.

Franck Bergerot

Qui découvre aujourd'hui ces quatre suites - une par face de Lp, aujourd'hui en un seul CD - sourira peut-être de ce pré-jazz-rock post-ornettien psycho-minimaliste qui en constitue les trois faces instrumentales. L'orgue de Mike Ratledge sonne comme un jouet, le vocabulaire d'Elton Dean est étriqué, le drumming de Robert Wyatt est foutraque, l'abominable prise de son est l'objet d'impensables bidouillages. On peut lui préférer l'album "4", décrié parce qu'il illustre la mise sur la touche de Robert Wyatt comme chanteur et compositeur, mais qui fait bonne figure dans la discographie du jazz anglais. Pourtant, les instrumentaux de "Third" ont marqué leur époque (jazzmen compris). Evidemment datés, ils portent la patine du fol imaginaire pop des sixties où tout s'inventait avec les moyens du bord. Reste la face 3, Moon in June, le grand poème de Robert Wyatt qu'il a enregistré quasiment seul moyennant quelques montages. Aboutissement des deux précédents albums, tête de pont d'une œuvre solo à venir, il irradie les trois autres faces de l'album (peut-être même les deux faces de "4") et, depuis, n'a cessé de hanter des zones entières du jazz.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Shooting At The Moon
1970

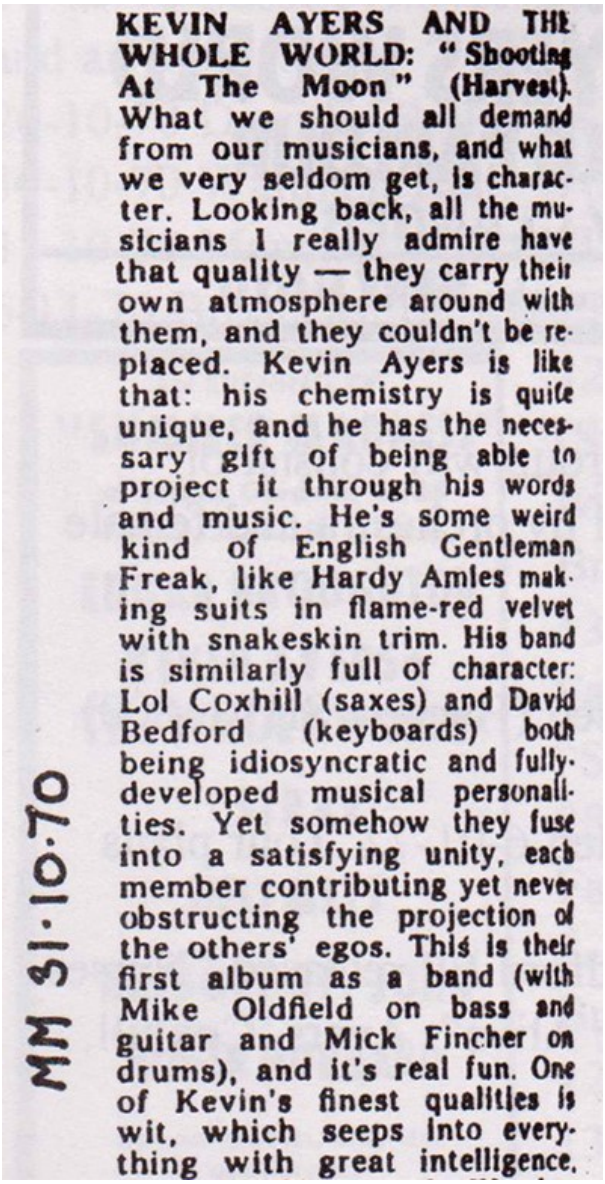
Kevin Ayers And
The Whole World

More information about this album

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 31.10.70

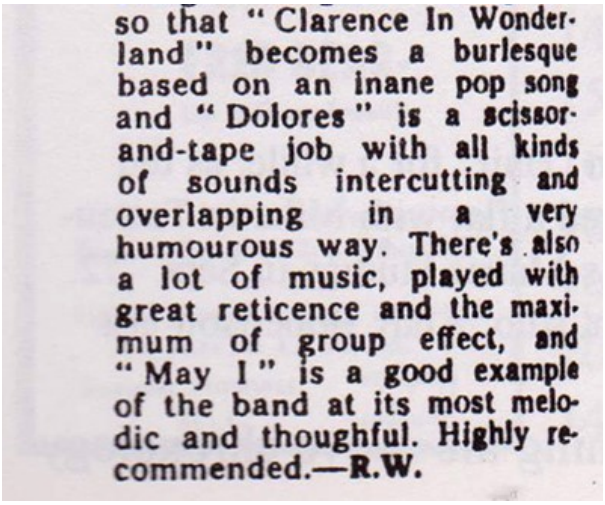
Kevin Ayers And The Whole World - Shooting At The Moon (Harvest)

R.W.



KEVIN AYERS AND THE WHOLE WORLD: "Shooting At The Moon" (Harvest). What we should all demand from our musicians, and what we very seldom get, is character. Looking back, all the musicians I really admire have that quality — they carry their own atmosphere around with them, and they couldn't be replaced. Kevin Ayers is like that: his chemistry is quite unique, and he has the necessary gift of being able to project it through his words and music. He's some weird kind of English Gentleman Freak, like Hardy Amies making suits in flame-red velvet with snakeskin trim. His band is similarly full of character: Lol Coxhill (saxes) and David Bedford (keyboards) both being idiosyncratic and fully-developed musical personalities. Yet somehow they fuse into a satisfying unity, each member contributing yet never obstructing the projection of the others' egos. This is their first album as a band (with Mike Oldfield on bass and guitar and Mick Fincher on drums), and it's real fun. One of Kevin's finest qualities is wit, which seeps into everything with great intelligence.

MM 31·10·70

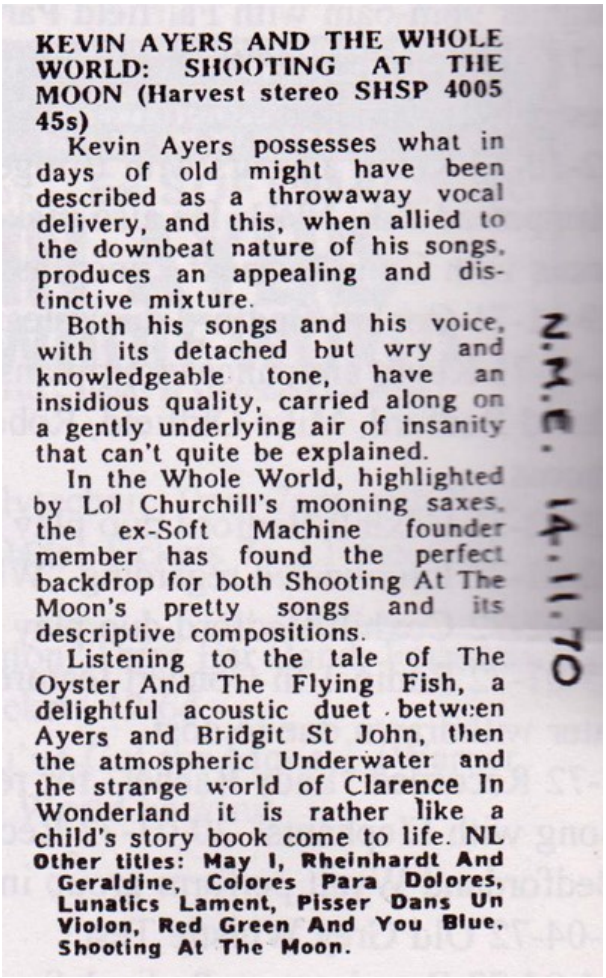


so that "Clarence In Wonderland" becomes a burlesque based on an inane pop song and "Dolores" is a scissor-and-tape job with all kinds of sounds intercutting and overlapping in a very humourous way. There's also a lot of music, played with great reticence and the maximum of group effect, and "May I" is a good example of the band at its most melodic and thoughful. Highly recommended.—R.W.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 14.11.70

Kevin Ayers And The Whole World - Shooting At The Moon (Harvest stereo SHSP 4005 45s)

NL



KEVIN AYERS AND THE WHOLE WORLD: SHOOTING AT THE MOON (Harvest stereo SHSP 4005 45s)

Kevin Ayers possesses what in days of old might have been described as a throwaway vocal delivery, and this, when allied to the downbeat nature of his songs, produces an appealing and distinctive mixture.

Both his songs and his voice, with its detached but wry and knowledgeable tone, have an insidious quality, carried along on a gently underlying air of insanity that can't quite be explained.

In the Whole World, highlighted by Lol Churchill's mooning saxes, the ex-Soft Machine founder member has found the perfect backdrop for both Shooting At The Moon's pretty songs and its descriptive compositions.

Listening to the tale of The Oyster And The Flying Fish, a delightful acoustic duet between Ayers and Bridgit St John, then the atmospheric Underwater and the strange world of Clarence In Wonderland it is rather like a child's story book come to life. NL

Other titles: May I, Rheinhardt And Geraldine, Colores Para Dolores, Lunatics Lament, Pisser Dans Un Violon, Red Green And You Blue, Shooting At The Moon.

N.M.E. 14.11.70

More information about this album



Fourth
1971

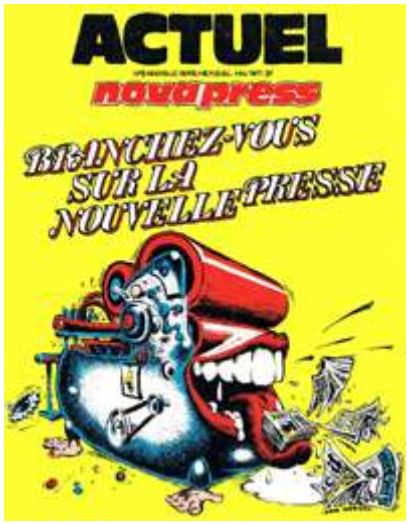
Soft Machine

More information about this album

ACTUEL - N° 8 - mai 1971

Les Pops du jazz" (Soft Machine - "Fourth")

Paul Inconnu



... L'intrusion du jazz dans la pop a entraîné un appel à la respectabilité. Mais le renouvellement qu'il apporte reste l'aspect essentiel. De la même manière, l'orientation définitivement technique et jazzistique du Soft Machine (dans le quatrième album) s'affirme dans la complexité des apports sonores (cuivres), la construction rigoureuse. Mais surtout dans la négation complète de la voix au profit d'une musique instrumentale. Si le volume sonore reste puissant, ce n'est plus l'orgasme des sons, cette masse agglutinée et effrayante de la première époque. Ce n'est plus, de même, le temps des comptines, des petites suites dadaïstes, les susurrements de la voix voilée de Robert Wyatt.

Ce qui tend à rendre la musique du Soft Machine proche de celle de Miles Davis, ce qui peut être de la même manière affirmé pour le disque de Robert Wyatt, (*The End of an Ear*).

Cette orientation de tout un courant de la pop vers le jazz, l'intrusion du jazz et de ses musiciens dans la pop tendent à faire éclater la belle unité du mouvement musical. Les différentes voies sont comme autant de cassures qui viennent s'installer dans la musique pop....

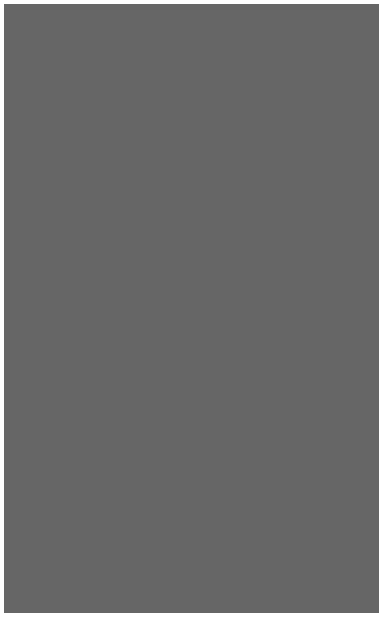


BEST - N° 36 - juillet 1971

SOFT MACHINE - "Fourth" (Barclay 080.439)
Teeth ; Kings and Queens ; Flepcher's Telmish ; Virtually.

Hervé Muller

L'histoire de la musique de la Machine Molle, au fur et à mesure de ses changements, peut se résumer à la lutte — ou équilibre instable — entre deux tendances, deux modes d'expression. Radicalement opposées dans leur esprit, plus que dans leur forme, elles correspondent en fait à la personnalité des divers membres du groupe. L'une, celle de Daevid Allen, de Kevin Ayers, de Robert Wyatt, vise à une forme de création tournée vers l'extérieur, une explosion. C'est celle du premier album, celle du Whole World aussi, mais seul le Gong en représente vraiment un développement autonome, bien au-delà des Soft du début. L'autre tendance, celle de Ratledge, des frères Hopper, d'Elton Dean, est totalement tournée vers l'intérieur — je ne crois pas qu'il existe musicien plus indifférent au public que Mike Ratledge —. C'est la création pure, l'implosion. Cette tendance triomphe avec ce quatrième album parce qu'elle est arrivée à une totale maturité d'expression, y compris dans l'improvisation. Robert Wyatt n'est plus ici présent que dans la mesure où il la sert,à savoir par son jeu de batterie plus stupéfiant que jamais, unique, véritable pulsion vitale de la musique des Soft, peut-être justement parce qu'il relève plutôt de l'autre tendance. Par contre ici, il ne compose plus, ni ne chante, et il reporte ses besoins d'expression vers l'extérieur, en particulier dans un album solo.
« Fourth » est un disque absolument prodigieux. S'il est un groupe qui ait jamais pu prétendre à la perfection, c'est le Soft Machine. y a plus dans une minute de cet enregistrement que la plupart des groupes ne réaliseront jamais.
Pourtant, c'est aussi une impasse. Non pas pour le Soft, dont l'ésotérisme, dans cet album pourtant supérieur à tous les précédents, laisse entrevoir des possibilités créatrices à peu près infinies. Mais une impasse pour ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la pop-music. Les Soft sont bien au-delà de tout le monde, même des Mothers, mais ils représentent l'achèvement extrême d'une tendance générale : progressive pop, dit-on parfois. Recherche formelle et complexité technique de plus en plus poussés à tous les niveau de la création et de l'interprétation.
Beaucoup finissent par s'y embourber, s'égarant, au cours de cette recherche frénétique, dans les artifices les plus variés ; et même les meilleurs n'aboutissent, le plus souvent, qu'à un résultat hybride, un peu monstrueux. On en arrive à la situation paradoxale d'avoir une production énorme, d'un niveau de qualité jamais vu auparavant, et pourtant bien plus insatisfaisante qu'il y a cinq ans. Seul, pratiquement, le Soft Machine a réalisé une musique pure, mais qu'a-t-il encore à voir avec la pop-music ? L'évolution actuelle de la



pop atteint un étonnant degré d'absurde: de par son évolution qualitative elle se nie. « Fourth » est peut-être plus proche de certaines tendances modernes du jazz, parce que lui aussi a évolué dans cette direction, mais sans que cela soit dans son cas contradictoire. Il y avait longtemps qu'il avait perdu toute vocation de musique populaire. Alors ? Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, à vouloir trop utiliser le folk comme un moyen, s'essouffle. Faudrait-il se résigner à toujours retomber soit dans la variété, soit dans le hard-rock ? Une lueur d'espoir peut-être du côté de groupes comme Band, Sea Train, Byrds, Gong, mais dans l'ensemble c'est l'impasse à plus ou moins brève échéance. Que ces considérations pessimistes ne vous empêchent pas, en tout cas, de profiter pleinement de ce chef-d'œuvre qu'est le quatrième album du Soft Machine.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

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HOME



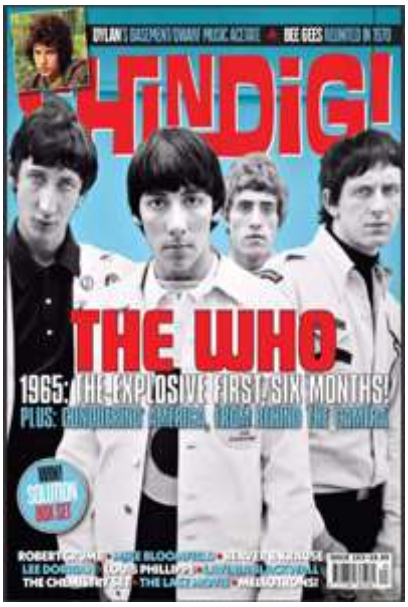
Matching Mole
1972

More information about this album

SHINDIG! - N° 163 - May 2025

MATCHING MOLE - O'Caroline from Matching Mole - CBS 1972

AM



Choosing to open their debut album with a stark five-minute break-up song, Matching Mole-pieced together by Robert Wyatt and assorted journeyman pals following Wyatt's escape from Soft Machine - instantly stood to one side of the prevailing prog-jazz tropes of the day.
'O'Caroline' is almost a solo piece, Wyatt's multi-tracked vocals recounting the end of his relationship with counterculture artist and activist Caroline Coon. Wyatt picks out the melody using the Mellotron's much-favoured flute setting during the song's first 60 seconds - it still sounds like the perfect advocacy of the instrument, leading supporter John Peel to comment that it was the least cliched use of the instrument he'd ever heard.

> **"Wyatt picks out the melody using the Mellotron's much-favoured flute setting during the song's first 60 seconds – it still sounds like the perfect advocacy of the instrument"**

BEST - N° 47 - juin 1972

MATCHING MOLE (CBS 64850 - Réf. anglaise)

Hervé Muller

O Caroline ; Instant Pussy ; Signed curtain ; Part of the dance ; Instant kitten ; Dedicated to Hugh, but you weren't listening ; Beer as in Braindeer ; Immédiate curtain.

Personnel : Robert Wyatt (mellotron, piano, batterie et vocaux), David Sinclair (piano et orgue), Bill McCormick (basse), Phil Miller (guitare), Dave McRae (piano électrique).

Lorsque Robert Wyatt quitta le Soft Machine, où il ne figurait déjà plus que comme batteur, celui-ci devint définitivement un groupe de musique d'avant-garde très ésotérique, s'apparentant plus ou moins au jazz. La tendance extravertie et folle, qui fait toujours du premier LP du Soft le meilleur disque de véritable pop-music jamais enregistré, disparaissait avec son dernier représentant. Rupture inévitable, je suppose, pour que l'autre tendance, passionnante, mais très narcissique, celle de MM. Ratledge, Hopper & Dean, puisse s'exprimer pleinement. Mais la magie de l'ancien Soft, cette magie qui reposait justement sur un équilibre explosif entre les deux tendances, il appartenait à Robert de la perpétrer, lui qui avait toujours été le trait d'union, de par une double orientation musicale qui chez lui confine à la schizophrénie.
D'où Matching Mole (La Taupe Assortie), réplique ironique à la Machine Molle : d'emblée, le nom du groupe donne le ton. Avec Robert, deux très jeunes musiciens, Bill McCormick (basse) et Phil Miller (guitare), et puis un compère musical de longue date, David Sinclair (orgue et piano), autre membre de la famille Soft puisqu'il officiait au sein de Caravan. Cet album n'est déjà plus tellement le reflet de la musique du groupe qui a d'autant plus évolué que Sinclair est déjà parti et a été remplacé par Dave McRae, discrètement présent sur ce disque au piano électrique. Mais il comblera tous les nostalgiques de l'ancien Soft Machine, tous ceux à qui le timbre de voix si particulier de Robert Wyatt manquait cruellement. Et ce dernier profite aussi de l'occasion pour s'exprimer au piano (remarquable sur « Signed curtain ») et même au mellotron, dont il fait une utilisation nettement plus inventive que les Moodies ou Crimson (« Dedicated to Hugh, but you weren't listening »). Le disque a des moments inégaux qu'il faut imputer au fait que la formation était très récente à l'époque de l'enregistrement, mais l'ensemble est largement à la hauteur de ce que l'on pouvait attendre du père Wyatt. « Instant Pussy » et « Instant kitten », c'est toute la magie de « Save yourself » retrouvée.
En fait, je vous renvoie à ces titres parce qu'ils sont écrits sur la pochette, mais c'est un peu arbitraire, car, selon la bonne habitude Soft, chaque face est bien sûr ininterrompue.
David Sinclair, s'il n'est pas Ratledge, est loin d'être sans intérêt (« O Caroline »), le jeune Bill Mac Cormick s'acquitte fort bien de sa tâche, en compagnie d'un tel batteur. Mais c'est surtout Phil Miller qui impressionne. On attend toujours au tournant un guitariste qui s'aventure dans ce genre de contexte musical, mais Phil convainc sans peine. On retrouve dans son jeu l'influence de ses maîtres, Coryell et McLaughlin, mais il s'en montre digne tout en développant son propre style, servi par une imagination sans bornes. Il y a des gens, comme ça, qui ne déçoivent jamais...

IL MUCCHIO SELVAGGIO - n. 538 - dal 17 al 23 giugno 2003

MATCHING MOLE - Matching Mole (CBS, 1972)

Alessandro Besselva Averame

Entrare ed uscire, senza farsi imprigionare, dai confini della canzone, è sempre stata la fissa di Robert Wyatt. Non è un caso che le sue

cose migliori abbiano l'aria di essere state concepite come *melodie senza guscio*, costruzioni improntate su una ricerca melodica e sperimentale al tempo stesso, sfuggente, mai perfettamente definita, portatrice tuttavia di illuminazioni poetiche di rara intensità. Spesso attraverso una voce che Ryuichi Sakamoto ha descritto come "la più triste del mondo". Avanguardia emotiva: si potrebbe inventare questa definizione per comprendere l'opera intera di Wyatt, a partire dall'apporto dato dal musicista inglese ai Soft Machine, fino a quel manifesto poetico, paradossalmente uno dei motivi del suo allontanamento dal gruppo, che era l'inarrivabile *Moon In June*. Già, perché a Wyatt interessavano sì la complessità e la ricerca, ma le costruzioni musicali della Morbida Macchina iniziavano ad andargli sempre più strette, poiché si stavano allontanando alla velocità della luce dal pop dadaista e psichedelico in cui il talento del musicista era emerso. Semplificando, anche la musica dei Matching Mole, complesso messo in piedi subito dopo l'uscita dai Soft Machine, il cui nome è un'ironica storpiatura in francese di questi ultimi, "Machine Molle", si potrebbe includere nella capiente categoria del jazz rock. Ma sarebbe probabilmente un errore, almeno parziale. Se da un lato c'è una vivace anche se alla lunga prevedibile sintesi di forme, con una componente *free* progressivamente ingabbiata e stilizzata, e con un'inventiva in fase calante già dopo l'uscita del capolavoro *Third*, in queste composizioni la componente più anarchica e vitale della ricerca trova il suo compimento, a costo di apparire, a tratti, irrisolta e fuori fuoco.

C'è ben poco di calcolato - o almeno il calcolo, se c'è, è accuratamente mimetizzato - in questa straordinaria pagina *free rock* dei Settanta. Con l'aiuto di David Sinclair, che ha appena lasciato il posto di tastierista nei Caravan, Phil Miller, versatile chitarrista proveniente dai Delivery e Bill Mac Cormick (già nei Quet Sun di Phil Manzanera) al basso, Wyatt mette in piedi un progetto di cui sarà leader assai democratico, accentratore di energie più che dittatore, dividendosi tra batteria, voce e piano quando occorre avventurarsi nel territorio della canzone vera e propria. Ed è proprio una canzone - nell'accezione che abbiamo dato a inizio pagina - ad aprire l'album d'esordio del gruppo, quella *O Caroline* che mette giù in poche righe, all'apparenza senza troppe pretese, una love song di abbagliante semplicità, con un battito felpato di batteria e un mellotron che diventa una desolata rappresentazione della malinconia. *Matching Mole* è tutto un susseguirsi di melodie inserite in agglomerati caotici che cambiano continuamente forma. Se i punti di partenza sono, semplificando e schematizzando, il jazz rock e il progressive, invece dei labirinti un poco claustrofobici di marca Soft Machine troviamo nei Matching Mole brani strumentali pieni di strappi, accelerazioni, esplosioni trattenute, assoli *irregolari*, due piani elettrici (Sinclair e il più temerario Dave McRae, ospite occasionale, che entrerà in pianta stabile nel gruppo di lì a poco in seguito all'abbandono del primo, non sufficientemente sintonizzato sulla scelta di affrontare i territori dell'improvvisazione) che si inseguono, e una batteria vivissima, liberata dalle necessità *miniaturistiche* del passato e tuttavia efficacissima nel fare da collante, da tessuto connettivo, a composizioni sempre in bilico tra l'ispirazione del momento e lo spartito. C'è poi l'urgenza di comunicare con il pubblico, un dato, questo, davvero essenziale: uno dei momenti più emozionanti dell'album è *Signed Curtain*, piano e voce soltanto, una metacanzone che si strugge - la tensione è quasi lacerante, poesia allo stato puro - nel tentativo di stabilire un contatto con il destinatario del messaggio: "*E questo è il chorus / o forse il ritornello / o solo un'altra parte della canzone che sto cantando / non ci badate / non è per dar fastidio / significa solo che io / ho perso la fede in questa canzone / perché non mi aiuta a raggiungervi*". Un tentativo perfettamente riuscito, al contrario di quanto vogliano farci credere le parole, perché è proprio questa indifesa e nuda umanità, fragile, a provocare empatia, al di là dei pur pregevoli momenti di coesione strumentale (i riff e gli unisoni di Part Of The Dance, l'incalzare di *Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening*); un'anima messa a nudo che non si manifesta solamente attraverso le progressioni vocali, ma è amplificata da un basso malleabile, da una chitarra che non esce mai dai binari nonostante la densità dei fraseggi, da un

piano elettrico irrequieto ed errante, liquido e colloso. Troppo *aperto* per resistere all'usura del tempo, il progetto naufragherà subito dopo un secondo album non del tutto convincente, nonostante gli sprazzi geniali, *Little Red Record*. Ma Wyatt ritroverà ben presto, *Rock Bottom* è a pochi metri, il filo del discorso, quello di una musica liberata e libertaria che è sempre stata il fulcro dell'epopea canterburyana. Di quella effimera meraviglia, confluenza di stili e generi vitale per pochi ma fondamentali anni, e di cui forse troppo si è detto e scritto, magari non sempre a proposito, *Matching Mole* resta uno dei momenti più alti.

ROCK'N'FOLK - HORS-SERIE N° 34 - 1954-2016 - LA GRANDE DISCOTHEQUE - décembre 2016

MATCHING MOLE - Matching Mole - CBS

Philippe Thieyre

Lorsque Robert Wyatt, qui a toujours eu le sens de l'humour et une certaine francophilie, quitte, — plus ou moins contraint et forcé, Soft Machine, il forme Matching Mole, bien qu'il ait déjà un album solo à son actif ("The End Of An Ear"). Aux côtés du chanteur/ batteur, on retrouve David Sinclair, pianiste/ organiste de Caravan, le guitariste Phil Miller, habituel associé de Carol Grimes et de Lol Coxhill, et le bassiste Bill MacCormick. Bien sûr lorsqu'on évoque le nom de Robert Wyatt, on pense immanquablement à Soft Machine et à "Rock Bottom", un des grands disques du XXe siècle à l'influence considérable, mais on aurait tort d'en négliger pour autant les œuvres antérieures ou postérieures. Ainsi il est indispensable de se procurer ce "Matching Mole" paru en avril 1972, ne serait-ce que pour le premier morceau. "O Caroline" est en effet une superbe chanson, composée par Sinclair et Wyatt, qui préfigure, deux ans plus tôt, "Rock Bottom". Tout de grâce et de légèreté, drapée dans les subtiles textures de l'orgue, elle est transcendée par la voix céleste de Robert Wyatt et aurait dû embraser le monde entier, devenir numéro un partout et rapporter à ses auteurs de quoi vivre pendant mille ans. Difficile d'égaler cette merveille. Pourtant les sept plages suivantes, dans des styles différents, ne sont pas mal non plus. "Instant Pussy" et "Signed Curtain" se situent dans la filiation directe de "Moon In June", pièce majeure du "Soft Machine Third". Les paroles y cèdent plutôt la place à des vocalises, la voix étant utilisée à la façon d'une trompette comme lors d'une improvisation de jazz. Ce qui est également le cas pour "Instant Kitten" quoique sur un tempo plus rapide. "Part Of The Dance", longue plage instrumentale, porte la signature de Phil Miller, du jazz-rock avec de beaux duos orgue/ guitare, traité dans l'esprit de ce que l'on a appelé l'école de Canterbury. "Beer As In Braindeer" opère dans un registre un peu plus free alors que "Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening" est un autre instrumental jazzy dont le titre est un clin d'œil ironique à Hugh Hopper, le bassiste de Soft Machine. Tous ces morceaux mettent également en évidence le jeu très fin du batteur Robert Wyatt. Pour clore le disque, "Immédiate Curtain" envoie planer l'auditeur dans la stratosphère à grandes envolées de Mellotron.

ROCK & FOLK - 1972 (?)

MATCHING MOLE
O Caroline. Instant Pussy. Signed curtain. Part of the dance.

Instant kitten. Dedicated to Hugh, but you weren't listening.
Beer as in braindeer. Immediate curtain.
CBS 64.850/30 cm

Paul Alessandrini

Un disque qui symbolise la naissance d'un groupe; celui qui voit aussi renaître un Robert Wyatt, que la nouvelle orientation du Soft Machine (purement instrumentale) avait éteint. Un retour de Robert Wyatt et de ses comptines, de sa voix qui susurre plus qu'elle ne chante. Si la sonorité d'ensemble du groupe rappelle aussi celle du premier Soft Machine, c'est aussi que David Sinclair, qui a depuis quitté Matching Mole, a une approche ratledgienne de l'orgue. Ce nouveau groupe ne se veut pas pour autant un groupe-souvenir tourné vers le passé. Bien au contraire, sur ce territoire recouvré, il s'essaye à plus encore de modernisme en exploitant comme Robert Wyatt l'avait déjà fait dans son album solo « The end of an ear » les ressources du studio pour distendre le son, construire par tout un jeu d'échos, de miroirs, une nouvelle approche de la musique, qui elle ne sera pas pour autant glacée, artificielle. C'est que Robert Wyatt et son groupe réaffirment la prédominance de la jouissance et du désir: plaisir, ivresse que Robert Wyatt, sevré avec le Soft « new-look », affirme avec d'autant plus de passion. Cette musique est ouverte aussi au hasard, à l'improvisé : elle est ouverture totale, donc instant où tout est possible. On retrouve là des conceptions d'une musique « à faire » depuis longtemps oubliées dans la rock music, depuis tout entière tendue vers l'efficacité (commerciale). Deux longues plages où les thèmes s'inscrivent pour disparaître, toujours noyés dans la masse des sons, leur grouillement, ou qui restent présents dans le lointain : lente descente dans l'inconscient, voyage au pays d'un son pur, promenade enivrante notamment dans l'extraordinaire « Immediate Curtain ». Aucun artifice, pas de performance d'instrumentiste ; des musiciens distributeurs d'énergie sonore, bruiteurs plus que virtuoses, des sonorités étouffées ou transparentes. Matching Mole c'est, hors des modes, le groupe qui venait à manquer. Robert Wyatt retrouve son humour pataphysicien (Matching Mole/Machine Molle,une composition « Dedicated to Hugh, but you weren't listening», référence à la composition de Hugh Hopper « Dedicated to you but you were not listening »). L'album a été enregistré très peu de temps après la mise sur pied du groupe. Depuis, la cohésion est en train de se forger, comme on put le voir à l'Olympia. Matching Mole, un parfum de Soft Machine, un clin d'oeil vers Riley et vers Miles: un groupe original, pourtant.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Matching Mole
1972

More information about this album

A FACEBOOK POST BY CRAIG RUNYON - May 2025

About Matching Mole's latest concerts



As Mick Jagger said if you can remember the 1960s you weren't there.

The period when Matching Mole was performing at the Kings Cross Cinema was complicated. I missed the concert on 17/06/72 but my friends were there. The previous night the concert started and they had problems with the equipment and Robert Wyatt cried being such a perfectionist and the concert was postponed until the following night or soon afterwards. It's a long time ago and the people who were there are all dead now. But I missed the concert because I had gone to Amsterdam and traveled around Europe for the summer. So much was going on that summer with Matching Mole I adored them and so did my friends living close by on Swindon Street in Kings Cross. I was a great fan of Robert Wyatt after seeing him at the Washington Hilton Hotel with Soft Machine the support band to Jimi Hendrix. The first Matching Mole record was the anthem of my youth and graduating from high school in 1972. Matching Mole was supposed to return to the Kings Cross Cinema at the end of the summer but it never happened because the group got busy with recording "My Little Red Record" and it's grand subsequent premier at the Royal Festival Hall Southbank London. Before the concert happened I met Lol Coxhill busking on Tottenham court Road, we became friends and he put me on the guest list, centre front row for the concert at the hifi palace of the Royal Festival hall!. Can you imagine how relieved Robert Wyatt was to be playing in a venue where the sonics of this sophisticated music could be heard properly. Matching Mole played at the Kings Cross Cinema with equipment borrowed from the Pink Floyd, they had the most advanced and plentiful equipment in a storage unit somewhere in central London, who knows where perhaps Kings Cross?

Robert Wyatt was living in his native Dulwich South London, close to Southbank where the second album was premiered but the Pink Floyd were living around north London near the Kings Cross Cinema.

For the Royal Festival hall concert Brian Eno was there with his synthesisers sounding fantastic! That summertime was truly a blessing to be around Matching Mole and their contemporaries for

their concerts and it was the greatest musical experiences of my life. Experiencing the fabulous singing and drumming of Robert Wyatt, the improvisation of Lol Coxhill known and beloved by all there, Robert Fripp was there that night as the producer of the Little Red Record, Mike Oldfield was there that night because he was in the band on Kevin Ayers second record "Shooting at the Moon" with Lol Coxhill.

Glen Sweeney was there of the Third Ear Band that had just completed the soundtrack to Roman Polanski's Macbeth. Peter Sinfield was there with Roxy Music Sinfield had just produced their first album. That night was a stark contrast to the small concert at the King's cross Cinema. The premier night of Matching Mole was a who's who of British progressive music and a sign of things to come so much creativity, inspiration and hope abounded everywhere that night.

And anything and everything seemed possible.

But underneath it all Robert Wyatt wasn't happy about the pressures he was being put under as the manager of a group, the struggles with the record companies.

Soft Machine were world famous and respected by their CBS label but Robert Wyatt got second class treatment and yet the new personnel that replaced Robert and Kevin Ayers got better treatment than Robert Wyatt did because of being connected to the famous name of Soft Machine. That translated into money. The Matching Mole were poor as church mice and the band was subsidised partially by Bill McCormick's girlfriend Julie Christie. This all culminated into a night when Robert was drinking heavily and had his tragic accident and suddenly Matching Mole was abruptly over!

DEE JAY - Sound Of the Month - December 1972

MATCHING MOLE - "Little Red Record" - CBS 65260

John Peel

Contrary to what you may believe, a great deal of the best and most creative rock music comes from without the Anglo-American axis. Bands like Can, Amon Duul II, Faust and Neu from Germany, Komintern from France, Supersister and Focus from Holland are experimenting to a greater or lesser degree with a whole new range of sounds and experiences.
Because of their experiments they seldom achieve much popular stature in their own countries and the same fate may well befall Matching Mole in this country - and for the same reasons. As with nearly all experimental records this LP is not without flaws, but the successes that there are are remarkable - and they are not academic and unapproachable successes either. There's power, wit and skill involved throughout and drummer Robert Wyatt, keyboards man Dave McRae, guitarist Phil Miller and bass player Bill MacCormick have, with producer Robert Fripp of King Crimson and synthesizer star Eno, of Roxy Music, made an LP which is more accessible than a lot of the fashionable nonsense that makes the album charts.

More information about this album



Whatevershebringswesing
1972

Kevin Ayers

More information about this album

BEST OF CROSSROADS- 1969-1972 -108 albums essentiels - août 2009

KEVIN AYERS Whatevershebrîngswesing (Harvest)

Tony Grieco

Cet artiste est sans doute l'un des plus sous-estimés du rock et ses confluents, d'abord par l'ingratitude d'un public infidèle et volage, mais peut-être aussi à cause d'un certain dilettantisme sciemment cultivé par l'individu. Pourtant, son profil artistique est plutôt « king size », notamment concernant l'écriture et la maîtrise du double sens. Kevin Ayers se fait connaître en tant que bassiste de la première mouture du groupe branché Soft Machine.



Il ne se contente surtout pas de ce rôle relativement secondaire dans un groupe, quoique son approche de l'instrument soit très original, car il compose une large part du répertoire et, en compagnie du charismatique Robert Wyatt, donne ce côté « pata-physique » joyeusement déconneur au groupe. Se sentant plus pop que jazz, c'est au cours d'une éreintante tournée US qu'il décide de voler de ses propres ailes et lâcher le navire. Finalement assez prolifique pour un roi fainéant, Kevin Ayers signe ici son troisième album sous son propre nom. On peut y entendre un sympathique simili tube avec « Stranger in blue suède shoes » et le reste de l'album qui oscille entre la pop innocente et la recherche raffinée. C'est la nonchalance vocale de Kevin qui guide le son de l'ensemble et qui sera un peu sa marque de fabrique pour tous ses projets à venir.



Malgré une certaine confidentialité, commercialement parlant, l'artiste touche un public concerné qui l'aime et le suit dans de nombreux concerts sur le territoire européen. Pas du tout prophète en son pays, l'Angleterre, qu'il fuit pour s'installer à Ibiza, au paradis hippie, Kevin Ayers se taille une solide réputation en France, où on l'associe encore à Soft Machine ; c'est comme ça, que voulez-vous, la colle qui fixe les étiquettes est souvent de première qualité... Cet album attachant, qui en annonce d'autres qui le seront tout autant, recèle aussi le charme de révéler un petit guitariste méconnu du nom de Mike Oldfield, qui peu de temps après deviendra connu, très connu... Vous aurez aussi le plaisir d'entendre David Bedford aux claviers, le saxophoniste Français Didier Malherbe chipé au Gong de Daevid Allen (ex-Soft Machine itou) et le gentil copain Robert Wyatt venu poser sa voix sur les chœurs. Resitué dans le contexte, l'album qui synthétise bien l'esprit post sixties, s'écoute encore fort agréablement, contrairement à d'autres... albums... de la même période...

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews



Hatfield & The North
1973

Hatfield & The North

More information about this album

ACTUEL - N° 42 - mai 1974

Hatfield & The North (Virgin - Import. Givaudan)

Jean-Pierre Lentin



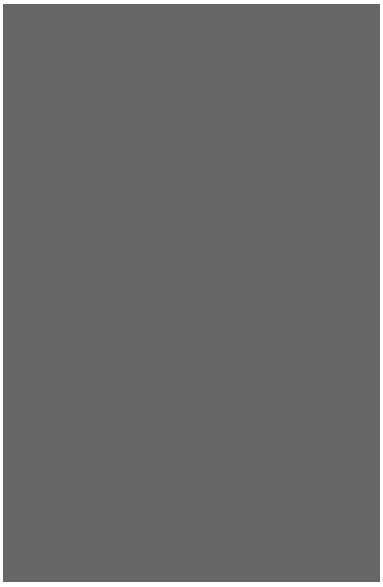
...Hatfield and the North , en revanche, me laisse de marbre: le groupe hérite de tous les tics de «l'école Soft Machine», hypertrophie intellectuelle, inutiles complications rythmiques et mélodiques, l'élégance guindée d'une musique de chambre que les quelques touches humoristiques n'arrivent pas à racheter.
C'est épouvantablement anglais, à écouter une tasse de thé à la main en parlant du temps qu'il fait. Il manque un chapeau melon, la bruine de Londres, le fog, quelques chats qui ronronnent sur des fauteuils capitonnés... Assez!

JAZZ MAGAZINE - N° 658 - février 2014

Hatfield & The North - 1973 - Virgin Records

Franck Bergerot

Parmi la descendance de la scène dite "de Canterbury" née au milieu des années 60 à la Simon Langton School et chez les parents Wyatt, "Hatfield and the North" nous marqua particulièrement parce qu'aux côtés du chanteur-bassiste Richard Sinclair, du guitariste Phil Miller, du claviériste Dave Stewart et du batteur Pip Pyle, on apercevait



pour la première fois Robert Wyatt dans la chaise roulante à laquelle il était condamné depuis le 1er juin 1973. Invité lors des séances d'octobre à chanter sur un titre, Calyx, il signait son acte de renaissance et annonçait son œuvre à venir tout en participant à la cohérence de l'un des disques les plus aboutis de la galaxie canterburienne par la qualité d'assemblage (au sens œnologique) d'une multitude d'arômes dont on est autorisé à citer les sources (Soft Machine, le folk revival et le pop-rock anglais) ou qui invitent au moins à certaines comparaisons (notamment le tandem Gary Burton / Steve Swallow, le second Return Forever dont "Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy" n'est peut-être pas même pressé à l'heure où s'enregistrent ces faces, voire le Frank Zappa de "Burnt Weeny Sandwich" et "Hot Rats").

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

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Rock Bottom
1974

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

MUCCHIO - dal 25 luglio al 4 settembre 2000 - n. 407

Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom - Hannibal /Rykodisc

Alessandro Besselva



Nel 1974 il distillato di rock, pop, jazz (classico e free), anarchia, provocazione dadaista e humour molto inglese che va sotto il nome di scena di Canterbury - è un'invenzione della stampa musicale, d'accordo, ma anche una comunità che si nutre della stessa visione - sembra aver già dato i frutti migliori. Nella gran parte dei casi, chi non è finito nella strada senza uscita di un jazz rock perfetto ma freddo o di un progressive rock fine a se stesso, ha perso l'allucinata lucidità degli esordi. Robert Wyatt è un caso a parte: escluso, a causa di manifeste tendenze eretiche - evidenti già nell'esordio solista del 1970 (l'esperimento surreale di ***The End Of An Ear***) - dal gioco Soft Machine, arriva a registrare ***Rock Bottom*** dopo innumerevoli vicissitudini, tra cui la fondazione degli sfortunati Matching Mole e la partecipazione ad una miriade di altri progetti. Uscito in un momento durissimo della vita del Nostro, l'album contiene sei piccoli capolavori che riportano alla luce la visione di una musica liberata da vincoli formali eppure assolutamente godibile e ***cantabile***, discorso che avrà un ideale seguito, con una percentuale di militanza e osticità in più, nella saga degli Henry Cow e di Rock in Opposition.

Gran parte delle idee che finiranno sull'album, Wyatt le concepisce negli ultimi mesi del 1972, quando segue la futura moglie Alfreda Benge a Venezia, trascorrendovi alcuni mesi. Sulla laguna inizia a comporre, su un piccolo organo portatile, le musiche che presumibilmente finiranno nel repertorio dei nuovi Matching Mole. L'insistenza del bassista Bill Mc Cormick lo ha infatti convinto a riformare il quartetto, scioltosi alcuni mesi prima, il quale è nuovamente operativo nella primavera del 1973: in organico, questa volta, l'ex Curved Air Francis Monkman e Gary Windo al sax. Ad interrompere la sequenza degli eventi ci pensa il destino, con un volo dal quarto piano nel corso di un party alcoolico, il primo giugno di quell'anno: la frattura della dodicesima vertebra costringe da quel

momento il nostro su una sedia a rotelle. L'incidente probabilmente accelera un processo che è già in atto, quello di estendere ulteriormente la ricerca musicale al canto e alle tastiere. Wyatt, del resto, non si è mai considerato un batterista puro, manifestando da sempre la volontà di "avere un controllo complessivo sulla musica", un controllo che non esclude collaborazioni e scambi d'idee. La coralità è il punto di forza di ***Rock Bottom***, e l'elenco degli ospiti che si alternano in studio nei primi mesi del 1974 è impressionante: il batterista Laurie Allan (nei primi Gong), l'ex compagno nei ***Softs*** Hugh Hopper, Richard Sinclair, che ha da poco mollato i Caravan per dedicarsi ad Hatfield And The North, il trombettista sudafricano Mongezi Feza, il jazzista newyorchese Gary Windo, Fred Frith degli Henry Cow, il poeta-performer Ivor Cutler, l'ormai lanciatissimo Mike Oldfield. Naturalmente, c'è anche Alfreda Benge, musa ispiratrice dell'intera opera. Ma forse l'album non sarebbe stato il capolavoro che conosciamo senza Nick Mason al banco del mixer. Wyatt non ha mai avuto un grande rapporto con i produttori, lo dimostra lo scarso feeling con Robert Fripp in occasione delle registrazioni di ***Little Red Record*** con i Matching Mole, ma la frequentazione con Mason risale ai tempi dell'UFO Club. Oltre a mettere Wyatt a suo agio, il batterista dei Pink Floyd ha il grande pregio di organizzare il suono in maniera compatta, amalgamando voce, tastiere e percussioni agli eterogenei contributi degli ospiti, tutti registrati in un secondo tempo. Fatta quest'ampia - ma dovuta - premessa, la prima cosa a sorprendere, è la semplicità: ***Sea Song*** esordisce con poche note di piano e tastiera che anticipano e poi seguono la voce, limpide ed essenziali. La seconda è, per l'appunto, la voce. Difficile descrivere quel falsetto in grado di diventare - non è un luogo comune - uno strumento vero e proprio, a tratti fievole respiro, a tratti protagonista di veri e propri assoli, come in ***Last Straw***, dove c'è l'invenzione di un effetto ***wah-wah*** da brividi. Sempre sul punto di incresparsi o infrangersi, ma sempre capace di trovare l'assetto ideale. Se nei primi due brani la calma da ***fondale*** roccioso regna sovrana, tra suoni liquidi e stratificati, in ***Little Red Riding Hood*** la tensione è guidata dalla tromba aliena di Feza e dalle percussioni: la melodia si costruisce ed emerge poco alla volta, intonando un canto disperato. La calma ritorna con ***Alifìb***: il respiro si fa ritmo lievissimo, le tastiere disegnano capricci melodici e la voce intona una ninna nanna di nonsense e strofe d'amore alla compagna Alfie, protagonista di un duetto nella seguente ***Alifie***, la quale sfocia in un'improvvisazione del sax di Windo. ***Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road*** è l'ultima della collezione. La tensione iniziale - le rullate marziali di Allan e la lancinante chitarra di Oldfield, per una volta sobria - si scioglie nella declamazione surreale di Cutler accompagnato dalla viola di Frith. L'influenza sotterranea - si tratta pur sempre di un ***fondale roccioso*** - di questo lavoro è emersa periodicamente nel corso degli ultimi venticinque anni: senza ***Rock Bottom*** non avremmo avuto, tanto per fare un esempio, i Gastr Del Sol di ***Camoufleur***. A dimostrazione che le attuali esplorazioni intorno ai confini del rock -post o meno - continuano ad attingere energia da questo capolavoro.

LIBERATION - 5 décembre 1974

Robert Wyatt

J. N. O.

Dans la masse de disques sortis, il en est d'excellents, peu d'importants, et d'ailleurs vous les connaissez déjà tous grâce à votre mensuel spécialisé. S'il faut n'en choisir qu'un, c'est sans conteste la magnifique réalisation du musicien anglais bien aimé des Français


ROBERT WYATT

qu'est Robert WYATT. Vous avez beaucoup lu, à propos de ce merveilleux album qu'est " Rock Bottom " (Virgin 840043), aussi je ne m'étendrai pas plus (chouette, la pirouette, non?); et puis vous êtes déjà un bon nombre à le posséder, ce nouveau pilier de discothèque. Pour les autres malheureux, sachez qu'il s'agit d'une superbe synthèse de tout ce qui s'est fait dans le rock, de tout ce qui se fait et se fera, et que vos arrières petits-marmots vous remercieront de les avoir bercés avec. Volez-le, tuez pour l'avoir, mais écoutez-le. Et avant qu'il n'obtienne le grand prix de l'Académie Charles Cros du meilleur disque pop. C'est à espérer, c'est possible, mais cela pourrait refroidir certains indairgraounde pipaul qui ne le connaissent pas encore. Ne crachons pas sur ce prix " qui consacre ", Electric Ladyland " l'avait obtenu. Et avant la mort d'Hendrix. Et tac!...

TELERAMA HORS-SÉRIE - juin 1993

Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom

Virgin

Philippe Barbot

Le voyageur immobile. Ermite paraplégique, artisan impressionniste et militant communiste, Robert Wyatt fut, en des temps antédiluviens, le batteur-vocaliste de Soft Machine, le groupe qui improvisa la naissance, non du jazz rock, mais d'une sorte de rock jazzeux. Depuis, ce sculpteur d'arabesques sonores a développé un paysage musical ourdi de lentes mélopées, de comptines grelottantes, de faux gospels sud-américains au swing plaintif, de collages sonores pataphysiques et de poésie sociale malicieuse. *Rock bottom*, paru en 74, fut considéré d'emblée comme un chef-d'œuvre baroque et introspectif. Un peu au rock progressif ce qu'est *Bilbo le Hobbit* à la littérature fantastique. Ce sombre et méditatif opéra pour claviers lugubres, harmoniums étouffés et conciliabules tintinnabulants susurrés d'une glotte acide, reste une œuvre à part. Un de ces disques culte dont on se fait, égoïstement, un intime jardin secret.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 27th July, 1974

Can a Wyatt man sing the blues?

Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom (Virgin)

Ian MacDonald

COUNTING Matching Mole's first album, this is Robert Wyatt's third solo record.

It echoes his previous ventures in being a strong statement of mood, but replaces the occasional self-defensive evasions of the specific (always present in his previous lyrics) with a particular focus on what's happened to him over the past year - since the accident which left him paralysed from the waist down.

Rather a unique experience for a rock musician, becoming a paraplegic. Somewhat pales the significance, of, say, Lou Reed's fascination with the mental casualties of the Big H, doesn't it?

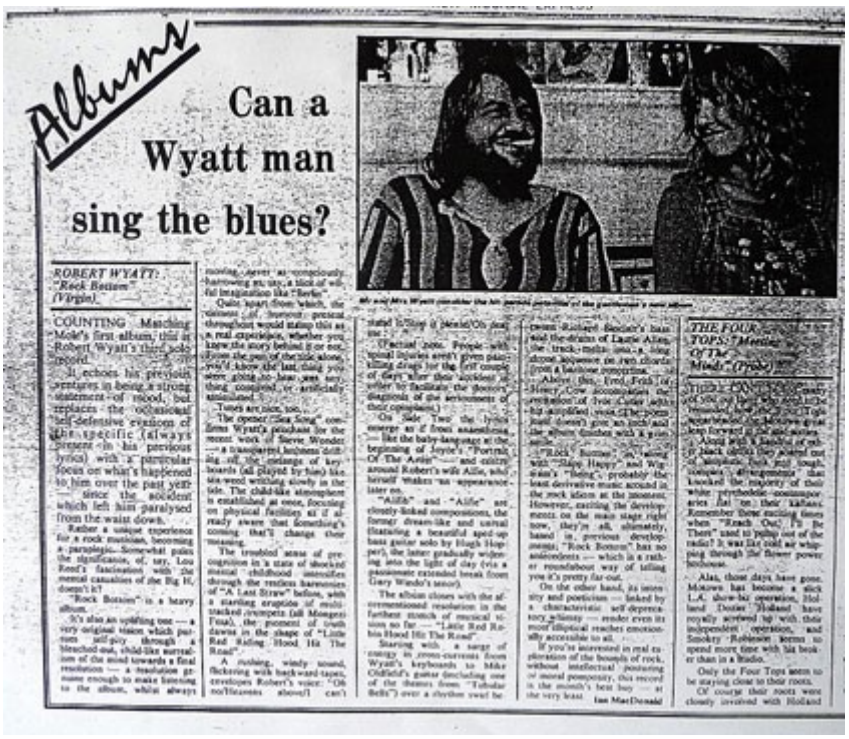
Rock Bottom is a heavy album.

It's also an uplifting one - a very original vision which pursues self-pity through a bleached out, child-like surrealism of the mind towards a final resolution - a resolution genuine enough to make listening to the album, whilst always moving, never as consciously harrowing as, say, a slice of wilful imagination like Berlin.

Quite apart from which, the element of humour present throughout would stamp this as a real experience, whether you knew the story behind it or not. From the pun of the title alone, you'd know the last thing you were going to hear was anything contrived or artificially assimilated.

Tunes are nice, too.

The opener 'Sea Song' confirms Wyatt's penchant for the recent work of Stevie Wonder - a transparent lushness drifting off the melange of keyboards (all played by him) like sea-weed writhing slowly in the tide. The child-like atmosphere is established at once, focusing on physical facilities as if already aware that something's coming that'll change their meaning.



Albums

Can a Wyatt man sing the blues?

ROBERT WYATT: "Rock Bottom" (Virgin).

COUNTING Matching Mole's first album, this is Robert Wyatt's third solo record.

It echoes his previous ventures in being a strong statement of mood, but replaces the occasional self-defensive evasions of the specific (always present in his previous lyrics) with a particular focus on what's happened to him over the past year — since the accident which left him paralysed from the waist down.

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The troubled sense of precognition in a state of shocked mental childhood intensifies through the restless harmonies of "A Last Straw" before, with a startling eruption of multi-tracked trumpets (all Mongezi Feza), the moment of truth dawns in the shape of "Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road".

A rushing, windy sound, flickering with backward tapes, envelopes Robert's voice: "Oh no!Heavens above!I can't stand it!Stop it (Mole)Oh dear, me!"

Factual note. People with spinal injuries aren't given pain-killing drugs for the first couple of days after their accident in order to facilitate the correct diagnosis of the seriousness of their condition.)

On Side Two the lyrics emerge as if from underwater — like the baby-language at the beginning of Joyce's "Portrait Of The Artist" — and centre around Robert's wife Alfie, who herself makes an appearance later on.

"ALIFE" and "Alife" are closely-linked compositions, the former dream-like and unreal (featuring a beautiful sped-up bass guitar solo by Hugh Hopper), the latter gradually widening into the light of day (via a passionate extended break from Gary Wendle's tenor).

The album closes with the aforementioned resolution in the farthest stretch of musical visions so far — "Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road".

Starting with a surge of energy in cross-currents from Wyatt's keyboards to Mike Oldfield's guitar (including one of the themes from "Tubular Bells") over a rhythm owed be-

Ian MacDonald

THE FOUR TOPS: "Meeting Of The Minds" (Probe)

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A rushing, windy sound, flickering with backward-tapes, envelopes Robert's voice: "Oh no / Heaven's above / I can't stand it / Stop it please / Oh dear me ..."

(Factual note. People with spinal injuries aren't given painkilling drugs for the first couple of days after their accident in order to facilitate the doctors' diagnosis of the seriousness of their complaint.)

On Side Two the lyrics emerge as if from anaesthesia - like the baby language at the beginning of Joyce's Portrait Of The Artist - and centre around Robert's wife Alfie, who herself makes an appearance later on.

'Alifib' and 'Alifie' are closely-linked compositions, the former dream-like and unreal (featuring a beautiful sped-up bass guitar solo by Hugh Hopper), the latter gradually widening into the light of day (via a passionate extended break from Gary Windo's tenor.)

The album closes with the aforementioned resolution in the fullest stretch of musical vision so far - 'Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road.'

Starting with a surge of energy in cross-currents from Wyatt's keyboards to Mike Oldfield's guitar (including one of the themes from Tubular Bells) over a rhythm swirl between Richard Sinclair's bass and the drums of Laurie Allan, the track melts into a long drone sequence on two chords from a baritone concertina.

Above this, Fred Frith of Henry Cow accompanies the recitation of Ivor Cutler with his amplified viola. The poem itself doesn't give an inch and the album finishes with a grim smile.

Rock Bottom is, along with Slapp Happy and Wigwam's Being, probably the least derivative music around in the rock idiom at the moment. However exciting the developments on the main stage right now, they're all, ultimately, based in previous developments; Rock Bottom has no antecedents - which is a rather roundabout way of telling you it's pretty far-out.

On the other hand, its intensity and poeticism - linked by a characteristic self-deprecatory whimsy - render even its most elliptical reaches emotionally accessible to all.

If you're interested in real exploration of the bounds of rock, without intellectual posturing or moral pomposity, this record is the month's best buy - at the very least.

CHARLIE HEBDO - N° 197 - 26 août 1974

MECHAMMENT ROCK

Doublemain (Pierre Lattès)

Suis-je objectif, suis-je ? Ce disque de Robert Wyatt, je voulais qu'il soit bon. Ce n'est pas de ma faute s'il est extraordinaire. Je répète, s'il est extraordinaire. Imaginez que vous ayez un pote que vous considérez comme un des meilleurs musiciens du moment, qu'il arrive à se foutre par ta fenêtre et à se retrouver paralysé des membres inférieurs, qu'il soit batteur, et qu'il fasse ensuite son premier disque comme chanteur, pianiste et percussionniste, vous ne seriez pas

mécontent de cette réussite. Peut-être seriez-vous, comment dirais-je, impressionné par une photo publicitaire où l'on voit Robert, assis dans sa petite chaise roulante, tenant sur ses bras croisés une statuette de nain ventru décapité qui lui arrive juste sous le menton. Il ne faut pas se laisser impressionner, je sais. « Rock Bottom », produit par le batteur du Floyd, Nick Mason, est publié par Virgin Records (V 2017), et va sortir un de ces jours distribué par Barclay. Mais c'est tout de suite que j'ai envie de vous le raconter.

Il y a très peu de musiciens, mais bien choisis, et le studio d'enregistrement a été, pour une fois, vraiment utilisé comme instrument de musique. Mais, pour une fois également, tous les « trucs » servent la conception finale et les boucles, les ré-enregistrements, les échos, les bandes à l'envers, ne sont pas comme ajoutés à la musique, et en font intégralement partie. Pour une fois, ce qui devait être dit en quarante minutes n'aurait pas pu être condensé en un quarante-cinq tours. Et cette partie de Soft Machine qui apparaissait de temps en temps dans les vieux disques du groupe est développée complètement, bien mieux encore que dans Matching Mole, le groupe que Robert Wyatt avait formé à son départ des Soft. Ça ressemble à quoi ? Justement, ça ne ressemble à rien. C'est probablement pourquoi Steve Lake, dans sa critique, élogieuse, de Melody Maker, prévient qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un album... « qui vous clouera au mur par des effets pyrotechniques éblouissants, mais d'un disque que vous écouterez et ré-écouterez, longtemps après que les super-héros de 1974 auront prouvé n'avoir été que des passades ». Je ne suis pas tout à fait d'accord, seulement dans la mesure où, en plus, j'en ai pris plein les oreilles. Sur un plan purement musical, il y a là la réalisation de toute une série de promesses du rock, si mal tenues par tant d'autres. Entre autres : d'être tout bêtement, simplement, original. D'autres combinaisons de notes, d'autres sons, d'autres mots. Pas si facile apparemment. Et pis surtout cette étrange faculté de faire passer l'énorme quantité d'émotion dans une galette de plastique, quelque chose qui n'arrive jamais. D'abord, ça ne se fait pas. Surtout dans le monde du rock. Quand ça se fait, c'est bêlant. Le petit pincement venant d'un synthétiseur, je pensais que ça n'existerait jamais. Des musiciens qui se mettraient entièrement au service d'une musique, et arriveraient par là à se dépasser, je pensais que ça n'arriverait plus. Un ban pour Hugh Hopper et Richard Sinclair à la guitare basse. Un ban pour le batteur Laurie Allan, pour le trompettiste doublement de poche Mongezi Feza, pour le saxophoniste ténor et clarinettiste basse Gary Windo, pour le guitariste Mike Olfield, pour Fred Frith à l'alto. Pour Ivor Cutler qui chante et joue du concertina baryton (! ?), un triple ban pour Alfreda Benge qui cause. C'est elle qui est la muse à laquelle on doit de pouvoir demander un ban multiple et bruyant pour Robert Wyatt qui dit qu'il l'aime. Un ban aux ingénieurs du son qui ont compris ce qu'on leur demandait. Un ban pour moi à tout hasard. Un ban pour vous quand vous aurez écouté Robert Wyatt. Et avec ça, faut-il vous l'envelopper ?

ROCK'N'FOLK - N° 93 - octobre 1974

Rock Bottom - Robert Wyatt

Virgin 840.043 (dist. Barclay)

Paul Alessandrini

Il faut que je vous le dise: décidément, ce disque de Wyatt atteint une telle beauté, une telle perfection dans l'assemblage des éléments sonores qui sont sa culture musicale (jazz, électronique, ballade et rock-music), que tout pouvoir critique est annihilé. Wyatt a jailli de sa

nuit avec le disque le plus secret, le plus passionné, le plus ample, le plus chaleureux (disque de murmures et de vibrations, mais aussi de cris, d'appels, disque plénitude, oeuvre totalisante) que l'on a pu enregistrer cette année. Techniquement, c'est aussi grandiose qu'un disque de Todd Rundgren, mais avec la sensibilité en plus, c'est aussi fou et angoissé qu'un disque de Kevin Ayers, mais avec un plus grand perfectionnisme sonore, tout aussi jazzistiquement rock que les albums de la Soft Machine, mais la folie en plus. Mais il y a aussi, puisque nous en sommes réduits à un inventaire, la voix unique de Wyatt, totalement a-culturée, donc sans effet superflu, naturelle. On rencontre dans ce "Rock Bottom" les échos, les boucles sonores, la voix qui chante, mais aussi le texte dit, insistant, les histoires et l'émotion brute, la mélodie et les fracas, les envolées lyriques et le recours constant au rythme. Cela ouvre avec le dépouillement de la voix dans "Sea Song", chanson lente que vient envelopper un superbe brouillard sonore, et Wyatt vocalisant enfin. C'est simple et grandiose à la fois. Aucun artifice, juste la recherche de l'émotion. "A Last Straw" a une coloration soft machinienne, celle de l'époque de "Hope For Happiness"; même l'orgue dont joue Wyatt vient rappeler cette atmosphére de ballade curieusement torturée qui fut la marque du Soft, ce pouvoir de pénétrer un inconnu du son presque originel (les notes du piano égrenées). "Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road" serait plutôt une tentative de symphonisation avec collages multiples de sonorités (flambée des sons), une apocalypse maîtrisée; intensité du background que vient encore recouvrir cette voix engourdie et pleine d'une chaleur presque enfantine. Tout sera décuplé par le jeu des échos, les bandes miroirs réfléchissant à perte de sens les sons pour enfin sombrer dans l'ombre.

"Alifib", c'est encore une chanson-dépouillement, réveil d'une voix que porte une delicatesse sonore admirable, avec notamment la basse d'Hugh Hopper. "Alifie", qui suit, est aussi centré autour de l'évocation-hommage de Alfie, la femme de Wyatt. Même insistance de ce climat de rêve évoqué à voix haute, jeu avec les ombres, les visions que souligne le saxophone de Gary Windo. Pour le titre qui clôt le disque, "Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road", Robert Wyatt a voulu un grand déploiement sonore, intervention à l'unisson de Mike Oldfield à la guitare ou de Fred Frith (cf. Henry Cow) au violon; texte récité par Ivor Cutler et la voix de Wyatt. C'est ce morceau qui donne toute la mesure de l'accomplissement musical de la démarche de Robert Wyatt. Il est aussi une des plus belles choses que l'on ait réussi à faire sur ce territoire ô combien périlleux où voudraient se rencontrer la folie, l'invention et l'émotion. Cet inventaire ici fait n'est bien entendu que la tentative d'un survol d'une oeuvre riche, aux multiples séductions secrètes. Les dernières secondes seront, vous le découvrirez, pour un pied de nez musical, juste pour nous rappeler que Wyatt n'a pas perdu son humour. Que vous dire de plus ?

ACTUEL - N° 48 - novembre 1974

Le rock du paralytique

Devinette : quel est le meilleur album de l'automne ? Ceux qui ont répondu Lou Reed ont gagné des coups de pied au cul. C'est, bien sur, **Robert Wyatt** et son « Rock bottom » (Virgin-Barclay) qu'il fallait identifier : un album si beau qu'on ne sait pas par quel bout le prendre ni comment en parler pour éviter d'en donner une idée limitative. « Rock bottom » ne porte pas le cachet de son époque et toutes les références, rock, free jazz, musique planante, Soft Machine, tous les détails techniques, re-recordings et bandes à l'envers, tout cet arsenal du critique pop ne peut que créer un écran

de fumée. Je n'ai même pas envie de faire de la retape : « Rock bottom », c'est certain, va nous tenir compagnie pour les dix ans à venir, et vous tomberez dessus tôt ou tard. Il faut de temps en temps laisser faire le hasard. Quelques mots quand même : la musique est triste, parfois oppressante ou poignante. La voix traîne des mélopées allongées sur la plaine sombre d'un accord d'orgue ou de mellotron. On tombe en plein désespoir, traversé par les cris de souffrance, « stop it », « Lord have Mercy », on remonte vers la mélancolie, on atteint parfois une euphorie salée par un arrière-goût de larmes. Wyatt provoque chez tous les musiciens de l'album des épanchements passionnés : cela ne nous surprend pas trop chez Mongezi Feza, dont la trompette démultipliée sonne comme la fanfare de l'apocalypse, ou chez Mike Oldfield, guitariste toujours lyrique, mais on reste émerveillé devant le brûlant solo de basse (accéléré et remonté de quelques octaves) du cérébral Hugh Hopper. La musique de Wyatt fait des miracles. Ce disque est un miracle. Je pourrais en parler des heures, j'en deviens gâteux, il vaut mieux que je passe la parole à Wyatt. Un musicien qui a quelque chose à dire, voilà qui nous change rudement.



L'avant-garde :
« Les gens venaient me voir en coulisse pour me dire « oh ! ça fait du bien d'entendre quelque chose d'intelligent au lieu de toute cette soul music pour analphabètes. » Ils pensaient être très flatteurs, mais ça me mettait mal à l'aise. Aujourd'hui je me mettrais en colère. Je ne comprends pas ce désir de paraître plus intelligent que les autres. A l'hôpital, après mon accident, j'ai écouté beaucoup de cassettes, et j'ai découvert que je n'arrivais pas à écouter les gens qui font de la « musique intéressante ». Et des gens que je considérais comme gentils mais superflus sont devenus mes favoris — des gens comme **J.-J. Cale** et **Bobby Charles**. Cela vous étonne de m'entendre dire ça ? Si on m'avait dit ça il y a cinq ans j'aurais été moi-même choqué. Une bonne partie de la musique innovatrice fait penser à de l'espéranto. Souvent les gens qui ont quelque chose à dire ne se donnent pas la peine supplémentaire d'inventer un nouveau langage pour les exprimer — les langages établis leur conviennent. Souvent les créateurs vraiment imaginatifs n'éprouvent pas le besoin de restructurer le langage musical. »

Le rock :
« Je trouve l'atmosphère qui entoure le rock tristement dépourvue d'humour, pompeuse et morne. Le rock ressemble à une sorte de substitut de service militaire. Les critiques proclament souvent que le rock a certaines limitations de style et que ça vaut mieux pour lui. On pourrait dire la même chose de la musique militaire. On dit que les groupes de rock subissent l'influence du rhythm and blues, mais ces tempos carrés qu'ils utilisent tous n'ont rien de commun avec les rythmes fluides, spontanés et dansants du rhythm and blues.

LA MINUTE DU MELOMANE #23 - ROBERT WYATT (2018)

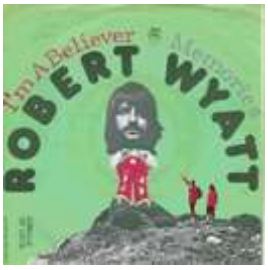
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Laurent Rousseau



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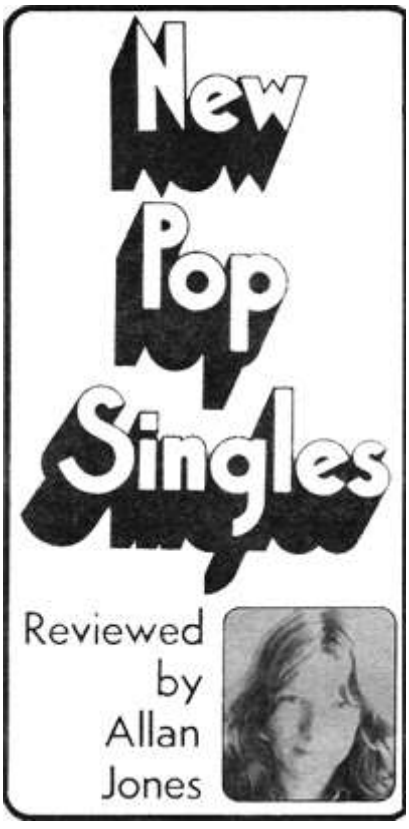
I'm A Believer/Memories
1974

Robert Wyatt

MELODY MAKER - 14th September 1974

Robert Wyatt : I'm A Believer (Virgin)

New Pop Singles Reviewed by *Allan Jones*



An INSTANT CLASSIC. Not content with producing one of '74's best albums with " Rock Bottom," Robert Wyatt has now come up with the best single for many years, with his remarkable remake/remodel of Neil Diamond's great song, written originally for the Monkees. Three minutes and thirty seconds of perfection, Pancho. Thrill to Fred Frith's expertly executed guitar and viola lines — his entry on guitar just after the first verse is amazing — and the asskicking rhythm section of Richard Sinclair and (we think) Nick Mason, all topped off by Robert's truly unique vocal performance. It builds beautifully toa shattering conclusion. Should rock the nation, shoot up them charts and give Virgin their first numero uno single. An all-time great.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises |

HOME

More information about this album



Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard
1975

Robert Wyatt

SOUNDS 78 - August '75

Robert Wyatt - Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard - Virgin (89 061XOT)

Karl Lippegaus



ROCK BOTTOM hat die ganze Szene begeistert, - alte und neue Soft-Machine-Fans, Jazzmusiker, Rockmusiker und die Kritiker, die diese Platte in die Reihe ihrer 'Insel-Platten' einstimmig aufnahmen. Robert Wyatts neue Platte ist musikalisch noch sehr viel farbiger, lebendiger und selbstbewußt-professioneller. Es ist eine der besten Platten der letzten fünf Jahre. Ich kenne keinen anderen Musiker außer ihm, der so unkompliziert die denkbar entferntesten individuellen musikalischen Statements zu einer solch begeisternden eigenen Aussage zu formen imstande ist.
Seine Talente offenbaren sich in einer Direktheit und Vieldimensionalität, die einen für immer in ihren Bann zu ziehen scheint. Sein Klavierspiel, das unbekümmert auf Monk, Cecil Taylor, Count Basie und Nicky Hopkins zurückgreift; seine große Fähigkeit, aus den Mitspielern das Beste herauszuholen (man höre sich nur die großartigen Beiträge der Saxofonisten George Khan und Gary Windo an, Laurie Allans nirgendwo je beachtetes meisterhaftes Schlagzeugspiel und Fred Friths Kunststücke am Piano!). Schließlich seine faszinierenden Klangvorstellungen, - wie er das Piano aufnimmt, mit seiner Stimme experimentiert, ein Riff von E-Baß und Baßklarinette unisono spielen läßt, seine Stimme (den Gesang gibt er auf dem Cover wunderbar mit 'mouth' an) vor Synthesizer- und Piano-Landschaften ausbreitet, einem die Ohren öffnet für die Schönheit der Klangwelten Mongezi Fezas in ,,Sonia' und Charlie Hadens Widmung an Che Guevara, 'Song For Che'.
Und was kann man alles mit dem ersten Motiv aus Jacques Offenbachs schnulziger 'Baccarole' anstellen. Da ist der Brechtsche Verfremdungsbegriff in die Rockmusik geraten! 'Team Spirit' ist endlich eine Realisierung der Vorstellungen, die Robert Wyatt in der Zeit von Soft Machine's 4. LP vorgeschwebt haben könnten. Und 'Soup Song' und 'Muddy Mouse' sind Beispiele für einen musikalischen Lyrik-Begriff, wie ich ihn außer bei Wyatt im Pop noch

nicht gehört habe. - Ich habe diese Platte, seit ich sie habe, fast ununterbrochen gehört, immer wieder. Es ist eine so reiche und großartige Musik darauf, daß man sie überhaupt nicht mehr weglegen möchte.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises |

HOME



Ambient 1 Music For Airports
1978

Brian Eno

More information about this album

ROLLING STONE - July 26, 1979

Brian Eno - Ambient 1: Music For Airports

Michael Bloom

Brian Eno carefully distinguishes his art music, which is also his pop music, from his *gebrauchsmusik*, or utilitarian undertakings. *Ambient 1 Music for Airports* is as utilitarian as they come: it's conceived as background sound for airport lobbies, hopefully to replace the usual piped-in saccharine strings and smooth MOR frosting.

As aesthetic white noise, *Ambient 1 Music for Airports* makes for even more dissipated listening than last year's similarly unfocused *Music for Films*. Film scores, accompanying the unraveling of a screenplay, still relate to some sort of time frame, but the new material — having already abandoned conventional notions of melody, harmony, rhythm and personality — strives to dispense with even that. As environmental sound, it works quite well, better than the earlier *Discreet Music*, which it superficially resembles.

Moreover, there's a good deal of high craftsmanship here, but to find it, you've got to thwart the music's intent by concentrating. The first of four untitled pieces is assembled from a childlike, Robert Wyatt piano phrase. Eno adds sparse accents on bass and bells, makes a tape loop, then pinpoints different facets of the loop with his synthesizer. This procedure proves easier to see (on the musical score, reproduced on the back of the record jacket) than to hear: there are several partial repetitions to contend with, as well as the overall miasma of inattention.

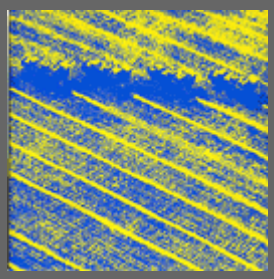
Other "songs" are simpler in concept. Several repeating tones or patterns of different lengths drift in and out of phase. In theory, none of these pieces end: the loop'can continue, with eternal variation, as long as the airport is standing. But whether or not they ever play this stuff over the loudspeakers at La Guardia, Brian Eno has succeeded once again in provoking his fans.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



At Last I'm Free/Strange Fruit
1980

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

TELERAMA - 29 novembre 2016 - telerama.fr

Robert Wyatt (4), passion du fruit étrange - *Strange fruit* (1980)

Les disques rayés, le blog musique de François Gorin

Une copieuse biographie de Robert Wyatt (Different every time, par Marcus O'Dair) vient de paraître et je vous la recommanderais bien, si sa lecture en traduction française n'était une telle épreuve. Dommage collatéral : un retour dudit Robert sous forme de disque rayé. On ne pouvait décemment faire le tour du Grand Schtroumpf en trois mouvements. Pour le consoler de la fin de Fidel Castro, poursuivons l'hommage. Il y a deux ans, deux volumes dont un de reprises par d'autres ou collaborations, récapitulaient l'œuvre sous le même titre Different every time. Les critères ayant présidé au choix du sommaire sont mystérieux. Par exemple, on y pointe At last, I am free (déjà traité ici), mais pas Strange fruit. Qui était la face B du premier, dans cette curieuse saison où Wyatt devint provisoirement un artiste à singles, chez Rough Trade. Or je me souviens d'un saisissement à l'écoute de Strange fruit, dont je ne connaissais à l'époque que la version de Billie Holiday. Déjà classique et qu'on pouvait croire définitive. Même la grande Nina Simone n'y a pas ajouté d'autre dimension, découvrirais-je plus tard. Le poème d'Abel Meeropol, un professeur juif et communiste du Bronx, signant sous pseudo (Lewis Allan) l'évocation déchirante d'un « fruit étrange » pendu à la branche d'un peuplier — le corps d'un Noir lynché —, semblait avoir trouvé son interprète idéale avec la dame au gardénia, alors quasi débutante. Chanté par Robert Wyatt d'une voix plus blanche que blanche mais non moins concerné par l'affaire plus de quarante ans après, Strange fruit a soudain une autre résonance. C'est un écho et un souvenir, c'est le fantôme d'une chanson et celui de l'image qu'elle fait naître et dépasse. Et ce spectre a pourtant une présence, une consistance qui peut laisser croire que les mots et la mélodie sont de la veille. C'est une interprétation plus qu'une reprise. Elle touche à chaque fois de la même façon, et vous hante même quand vous ne l'écoutez pas.

THE GUARDIAN - 10 January 2013 - theguardian.com

Old music: Robert Wyatt – At Last I Am Free

George Chesterton

In which a hero of the English counterculture embraces the hedonistic disco of Chic, and plays a blinder.

This song involves a lot of heroes and is, in a way, about heroism itself. A ballad of psychological manumission, it was written by Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards for Chic's second album, 1978's C'est Chic. Chic were not merely masters of the disco sound, they embodied the best qualities of the disco ethos: unerring positivity, hope and – in the old fashioned sense of the word – the fantastic.

Rodgers and Edwards were two of my earliest musical heroes. The band's heavily cultivated image of sophistication and affluence was in part a response to the economic and social depression of late-70s New York, but this can't muddy the luminous wonder of their songwriting, musicianship and production, which went on to enhance – in some cases rescue – the careers of Sister Sledge, Diana Ross, David Bowie, Madonna, Duran Duran and many others (not to mention their huge influence on hip-hop).

I remember watching Top of the Pops open-mouthed as they mimed to I Want Your Love. Rodgers glued their sound together with his distinctive and often-copied rhythm guitar, Tony Thompson was that most unusual of beasts, a chic drummer, Alfa Anderson and Luci Martin provided the ice-cold vocals while all around them the piano and strings whirled and purred. The person who stood out the most was the much-missed Edwards, who played the bass with the élan of a funkified praying mantis.

So it seems a long journey from Chic's original seven minutes of At Last I am Free to the version by Robert Wyatt, which appeared on his 1982 singles and B-sides compliation, Nothing Can Stop Us. Wyatt is one of the great heroes of British counterculture, like a cross between an old English sheepdog and Pan. His blend of political commitment, an endearing folk twang and a sense of musical experiment and liberty has led to career of almost unrivalled range and influence. On this song he brings the heartbreaking honesty most people will recognise from his version of Shipbuilding, with a voice that somehow is at once shrill but deeply soulful and communicative. Around the central pillar of the vocals fall piano, organ and percussion lines that gently splish and splash then dissipate like ripples in water.

The lyrics speak of a failing relationship but the way Wyatt sings it could be about anything – any momentous parting or new beginnings. The line "I can hardly see in front of me" is one of those phrases in pop music that come along from time to time that mean almost nothing yet bulge under the weight of a thousand projected meanings for a thousand different listeners. It is an anthem for the turning of a page.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



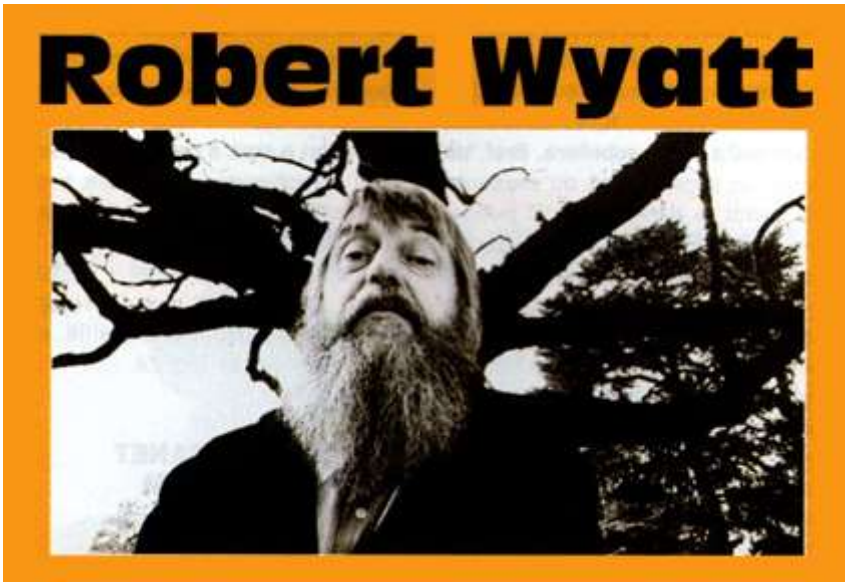
Rock Bottom/Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Reedition LP) 1981

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

BLAH BLAH NEWS - juillet-août 1998

Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom
Robert Wyatt - Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard
Ryko/Harmonia Mundi



Robert Wyatt, batteur et deuxième chanteur de Soft Machine jusqu'au volume six (*sic*), entama tragiquement une carrière solo qui ne fut pas ce qu'elle aurait dû être.

Paralysé après une chute, Wyatt eut du mal à concilier musique, déplacements et vie normale. C'est néanmoins avec un grand courage et surtout l'aide de musiciens, des Pink Floyd aux Roxy Music, que Wyatt réalisa avec ces deux albums une autre musique très éloignée de la pop ou même de quoi que ce soit d'autre. On obtient une musique purement mentale, une musique organique qui fait appel à tout ce qu'il y a de plus sensible au fond de chaque être humain. Robert Wyatt possédait une voix d'alto, et il a merveilleusement trouvé le moyen de s'en servir. Il a écrit la seule musique qui pouvait aller avec. La réédition de ces deux monuments donne une idée de la créativité du bonhomme, car vingt-cinq ans plus tard, rien n'a vieilli. Ni la voix, ni le traitement. Ces disques sont deux chimères à saisir au passage. Les plus vieux se souviendront du poignant concert au théâtre des Champs-Elysées et de Wyatt dans son fauteuil roulant.



THE WIRE - June 1998

Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom - HANNIBAL HNCO1426 CD

Robert Wyatt - Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard - HANNIBAL HNCD1427 CD

Clive Bell

A few years ago Robert Wyatt, always the frankest and most open of interviewees, spoke about the accident which left him paralysed at age 27. "Suddenly I became middle-aged Overnight. So I'm stuck with the experience of a 27 year old in the early 70s, and I've just got to make that work now forever. That's the oddest thing. Not being able to grow up fully in the way I imagine I might have done."
Rock Bottom, now reissued with new cover art and Wyatt's good essay about its history, was written and recorded on either side of that accident. One of its concerns opposes babies vs adults, articulating a kind of rage at having to grow up. On the opening "Sea Song" Wyatt compares his beloved to a fish ("*partly porpoise, partly baby sperm whale*"). He likes her drunk, and escapes from adulthood into intoxication, but can't understand her the next morning when she turns into a grumpy adult. Throughout the record the music strains to escape through long scalar progressions, always going further than you would expect, either upwards ("Sea Song") or down ("A Last Straw") to the very bottom of the piano and the seabed.
The outro of "Sea Song" moves with simple logic from 4/4 to a swaying 11/4, creating a watery kind of seaweed dance for Wyatt to scat over. In his sleevenote essay, Wyatt recalls the watery vibrato of the little keyboard he was writing on in 1972, making a connection to the shimmering lagoon of Venice outside his window. (Nicholas Roeg was there at the same time, shooting the sinister tragedy *Don't Look Now*.)
By the time we reach "Alifib/Alife", with its rhythm built from the sound of breathing, Wyatt has regressed into baby language Words disintegrate ("*No nit not*") with an almost painful intimacy while he serenades the woman as "*my larder*". Wyatt brings off this strange tightrope act through the eerie, childlike conviction of his singing, and the sheer beauty of the melody. Gary Windo's tenor sax sounds like it's trying to be born. The woman gets a chance to answer back: she is neither his larder nor his dinner, and she criticises his silly baby language ("*And what's a bololey when it's a folly?*"). But when this adult woman appears, the rhythm immediately stops and the muse dissipates. The adult drives away the watery baby world. But finally the woman agrees to play along and accepts the baby language ("*I'm Alife, your guarder*').

Ivor Cutler's Scots singing of the sturdy anthem at the close of the album (over Fred Frith's viola chords) provides a hymn-like resolution. But even this is a song of rage and struggle against the contents of the adult world (cars, TV, phones...). It all ends suddenly on a weird cackling laugh.

If *Rock Bottom* is an example of self-indulgence and talented narcissism producing great art, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* is a more social occasion. Slightly less of a unified and personal project, here Wyatt shares composing credits with Frith, Mongezi Feza, Offenbach and others. But songs like "Muddy Mouth" and "Team Spirit" are still vintage Wyatt. "Muddy Mouth" offers a James Joycean vision of the anti-hero Handy masturbating by the canal, leading to the sea, leading to oceans: "*Even under oaf Handy lies*," sings Wyatt, the melody dropping down the scale into a bog.

These songs empathise with victims "Soup Song" is sung by a joint of bacon outraged at being thrown into a pot of soup. "Team Spirit" evokes school football matches and privates in trench warfare, and the singer feels booted about like a football. Again resolution comes at the close, in the wordless, hymn-like version of "Song For Che" by Charlie Haden.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 18 April 1981

Robert Wyatt: Rock Bottom / Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Virgin)

Richard Cook

THE REAPPEARANCE of Robert Wyatt's two Virgin albums (1974-5 vintage), now in a double package, is as welcome as a spring day after a relentless winter.

Rock Bottom is participatory. It's built around elementals: small groupings of players drop in and out of focus, with the mantric swirl of Wyatt's keyboards as constant. The aching vulnerability of his singing invites reactions – sharing, generous – this is no clarion call to sentiment! The gentle ebb and flow of 'Alifib/Alife' elicits a human response from machine and metal: the pristine clarity of Hugh Hopper's bass, Gary Windo's plaintive reeds. It seeps into the farewell of 'Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road', Mike Oldfield's spindly guitar lines a centrepin of proud sorrow before resolution in Ivor Cutler's wide-eyed nursery rhyme.

But this is mere chalk and pins guidance. You're asked to make your own way through the fierce forest of trumpets that Mongezi Feza spreads over 'Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road', choose your own meaning for the slender half-sense of the lyrics. Intensely personal, uniquely open-hearted, there is no other record like *Rock Bottom*.

The second album is more sharply drawn, perhaps less easily embraced. Side Ruth runs a twisted jazz-based course; the lilting swing of 'Sonia' gives way to a palpable wilderness of pain in 'Team Spirit', a jab in the guts of remorse settled by the serene dignity of Charlie Haden's 'Song For Che'. Side Richard's voice-piano extemporisations are the counterweight, unfolding like the sepia-toned pages of a forgotten diary.

If these records spell out a sadness that seems to border on despair they are, equally, uplifting in Wyatt's resolve to come to terms with his situation and the simple triumph of creating music of true beauty.

Q, August 1989

Robert Wyatt: Rock Bottom / Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (Virgin)

Martin Aston

NOW ON CD: how Robert Wyatt found beauty in the aftermath of personal disaster.

Robert Wyatt's five luminous and investigative years as Soft Machine's drummer/vocalist and subsequently as instigator behind Matching Mole's two albums literally took a tumble – from out of a third floor window at a party given by the ex-Soft Machine/Gong man Daevid Allen, to be exact. Tragic circumstances in rock circles usually end in death, with all artistic achievements suspended in aspic, and Wyatt would have undoubtedly been an "example" of a true British progressive musician (Canterbury Arts division), but permanent paralysis from the waist down only put an end to Wyatt's drumming, not his mind.

Self-explanatory and gravely humorous in its choice of title, Rock Bottom was composed during six arduous, painful months of hospital recovery and rehabilitation; it's no wonder the album's mood is deeply personal, traumatic and yet uncannily dignified and resolute, with his wife Alfie's cover painting of three playful teenage girls at the beach above a handful of sea plants rooted to the seabed the most unnerving of reflections.

You'll have to travel inside albums such as John Lennon's Plastic Ono Band and Van Morrison's Astral Weeks to find equivalent states of raw self-examination, although Rock Bottom is painted with very different hues. Several Matching Mole songs predated this calming but emotionally quivering sound, etched out by Wyatt's distinctively plaintive English warble over a probing bass, simmering keyboards and fragile percussion – Wyatt finds odd objects like a tray, battery or "Jamie's drum" for percussion, or dispenses with rhythms altogether – but Rock Bottom stretches the mood further out. The sound of a genuinely new kind of electronic, minimalist jazz, it's something like the tide on the album cover, and has the therapeutic effect of an isolation tank.

There are only six tracks; 'Alifib' and 'Alife' are aching drifts, dominated by breathing and childlike mutterings, 'Sea Song' is another beautifully drifting paean to Alf, 'A Last Straw' shifts gears with an almost military drum pattern (by Laurie Allen) while 'Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road' and its Red Robin Hood counterpart over on side two are more congested, ensemble pieces, the former driven by Mongezi Feza's trumpet beside Wyatt's delirious babble, as physical pain gives way to painful guilt, the latter resting on Mike Oldfield's long and winding guitar, but both coloured by Ivor Cutler's inspired nursery rhyme of a narrative.

From 1974, Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard was naturally more outgoing and playful, revising Soft Machine's jazz-rock structures and improvisations and collaborating with new-found allies, instrumentally like Gary Windo on sax and clarinet throughout, and in writing, like Fred Frith on the four-part 'Muddy Mouse A'/'Muddy Mouse B', ex-Softie bassist Hugh Hopper on the bluesy shuffle 'Soup Song', while Mongezi Feza's 'Sonia' and Charlie Haden's 'Song For Che' are treated with a solemn reverence. Wyatt's only solo piece, 'Solar Flares', like 'Muddy Mouse C', maintains Rock Bottom's restless, resolving motion.

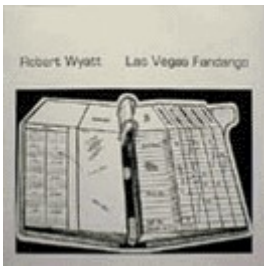
Over 15 years on, there has never been anything quite like the effect of this pair, and one realises there never will be. Wyatt soon wheeled himself on to Top Of The Pops with, of all things, The Monkees' 'I'm A



Believer', and then off toward Communist agit-pop, witnessed by his only other hit, Elvis Costello's 'Shipbuilding'. Another unique English musical eccentric a waits your undivided attention.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews



Las Vegas Fandango
1981

Robert Wyatt

NOTES - N° 5 - Mars 1982

Robert Wyatt - Las Vegas Fandango

Philippe Renaud

Pour compléter l'information parue dans NOTES N° 4 et l'article imprimé dans ce n° 5, je me permets de parler de ce bootleg de WYATT "Las Vegas Fandango", produit italien et limité à 500 exemplaires pour le premier tirage. Evidemment, il n'apporte rien à ceux qui possédaient la bande du concert de DRURY LANE à LONDRES le 9 août 1974 avec "quelques" amis. Par ordre alphabétique : Laurie ALLEN, Ivor CUTLER, Mongesi FEZA, Fred FRITH, Hugh HOPPER, Nick MASON, Mike OLDFIELD, John PEEL, Dave STEWART, Julie TIPPETT et. Gary WINDO. Les morceaux : Memories, Sea song, A last straw, Instant Pussy, Little red riding Hood / Alifib, God song, Little red Robin Hood , I'm a believer. Par rapport au concert intégral, il manque : Dedicated to you (tourné en dérision), Behind the eyes (magnifique chant de Julie TIPPETT), Signed curtain (de Matching Mole) Calyx (du premier album de Hatfield and the North). L'album dure 53 minutes et 45 secondes, ce qui est déjà une performance. Par contre, je préfère personnellement écouter la bande qui est de meilleure qualité. .. Enfin, c'est un document intéressant, avec une pochette montrant un agenda ouvert au 9 août. On peut citer le label : Penguin Records, EGG FOUR. Pas d'autres indications. .. Le mien est déjà arrivé entier d'Italie, ce qui est une performance si j'en crois l'état des colis de certains amis (hein, Bernard?). Pour les amateurs de Robert, il n'est point besoin de faire de commentaires. Pour ceux qui ne le connaissent pas (en existe-t-il encore ?), sachez que c'est un grand moment, bien sûr l'époque de Rock Bottom et les souvenirs pré-accident de la Machine Molle. Si mes souvenirs sont exacts, c'est bien le seul concert que Robert ait donné sous son nom, si on ne tient pas compte des concerts avec Henry COW à Londres et Paris et de "June, first 1974" avec Kevin Ayers et consorts. Dernier détail : ce disque m'est revenu à environ 70 F. avec le port, c'est-à-dire une misère, comparé aux prix prohibitifs auxquels on se heurte lorsqu'on a affaire à des disques heu. .. blancs. Alors, ne laissez pas les enzymes gloutons du vinyl vous escroquer.



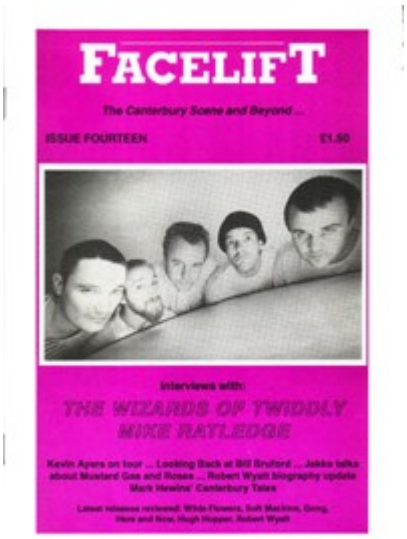
The Animals Film
Robert Wyatt

1982

More information about this album

FACELIFT - Issue fourteen - June 1995

Robert Wyatt - The Animals Film
Rough Trade R3172



Quite the strangest thing Robert Wyatt has ever done. This mini-album (clocking in at around 20 minutes) formed the musical backdrop to a film about cruelty to animals (particularly in the meat trade) which was apparently quite harrowing to watch.

Fittingly, the album of this film is quite difficult to listen to. A series of fiddly, odd keyboard pieces, with few hook-ins, make this quite unlike any other Wyatt release. Entirely instrumental: the synths and effects Wyatt appears to be using are very much early Eighties, with sounds as important as the music they tend to hide.

Wyatt adds wordless scats to one section only and there is little percussion either, or certainly none that's not warped out of recognition. There's occasional the appealing naked feel that piano and keyboards added to 'A Short Break', but these passages tend to be short, and even those rarely particularly accessible.

One for the completist, for those who sat through the film, and for those with a commitment to animal rights. And that's about all I can say really.

More information about this album



Nothing Can Stop Us
1982

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

SOUNDS - N. 159 / Mai '82

Robert Wyatt - Nothing Can Stop Us - Rough Trade Rough35

Diedrich Diederichsen



Daß Robert Wyatt nicht schlechter singt ist als irgendwelche Carla Bley-Band Vokalisten, wie noch vor kurzem in diesem Blatt zu lesen, glaubte ich eigentlich nicht noch mal sagen zu müssen. Er hat die herzergreifendste, erschütterndste Stimme seit John Lennon und vermittelt, dessen Naivität („Free The People Now!") und Glaubhaftigkeit ähnlich, Elementares, Selbstverständliches, so, daß es wieder stimmt. Um dummes linkes Bewußtsein kritisieren zu dürfen, muß man eben wenigstens den Impuls mal erlebt haben, der zu diesem Denken fuhrt, auch wenn das *zoon politikon* heute ein blödes reaktionäres Konzept ist, das nur dazu dient, unverständlich gewordene Jugendliche mit Hilfe von Udo Lindenberg, den Jusos und dem ZDF in die SPD oder die Grünen zurückzuführen, in Bürgerinitiativen wirkungslos altern zu lassen und damit in die staatliche Vernunft zu reintegrieren.
Robert Wyatt geht zurück zu diesem politischen Impuls. Mit seinen Adaptionen exotischer Kampflieder begeht er nicht den Fehler einer heruntergekommenen Linken, die, über das Versagen ihrer veralteten Begrifflichkeit angesichts westlicher Industriegesellschaften, ihre Identität aus den Kämpfen der dritten Welt bezieht, wo die Widersprüche noch die alten zu sein scheinen. Obwohl Mitglied der kommunistischen Partei, verfällt er nicht dem Zentralismus, der die Kulturen und die Kriege einer Teleologie der Befreiung unterstellt. Robert Wyatts ergreifende Versionen von so unterschiedlichen Kampfliedern wie „Arauco" (Chile, Violetta Parra), „Caimanera" (Kuba, Jose Marti), „Strange Fruit" (Südstaaten, Lynchjustiz, Billie Holiday), „Stalin Wasn't Stalling" (Rote Armee, zweiter Weltkrieg, Roosevelt, Golden Gate Quartet) und „At Last I'm Free" (Gegenwart, schwarze Identität und Eleganz, Chic) affirmieren

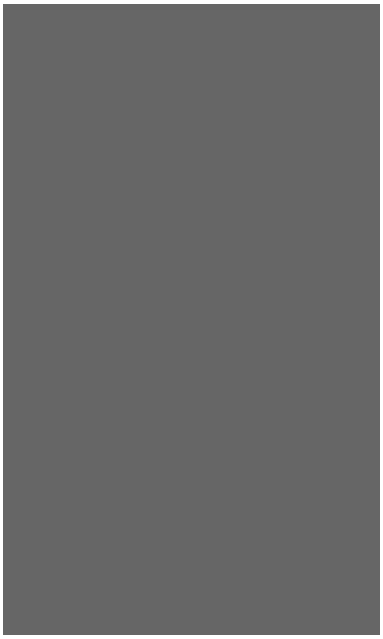
und feiern die Unterschiedlichkeit.
Wyatt hat nur einen eigenen Song beigesteuert („Born Again Cretin, bereits auf der NME/Rough-Trade-Cassette erhältlich) und nur einen Song für die LP neu aufgenommen („Red Flag", die sozialistische Variante von „Oh Tannenbaum"). Der Rest ist Material von den vier Singles, die hier komplett enthalten sind, auch die beiden Beiträge, an denen Wyatt nicht mitgearbeitet hat: das indische „Trade Union" von der Gruppe Dishari und das Gedicht „Stalingrad" des von Wyatt geförderten Poeten Peter Blackman.
Wyatt verachtet die Autorenfunktion zutiefst. Nichts nervt ihn mehr als Autor eines Werkes verstanden zu werden. Mit seinem Namen dokumentiert er die Vielfalt des ihn Umgebenden, stellt sich in den Dienst des gefundenen Material. Und das ist extrem Anti-Hippie.
NOTHING CAN STOP US ist natürlich eigenartig und schön. Drei Songs kann man für Jahrzehnt-Auszeichnungen im Auge behalten: „Strange Fruit", „At Last I'm Free" und „Caimanera" mit Wyatts tollem Spanisch. Nieder mit The Clash!

JAZZ HOT - Janvier 1983 - N° 397

Robert Wyatt : Nothing Can Stop Us

Pierre de Chocqueuse

Depuis la sortie de "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard" en 1975, Robert WYATT n'avait plus enregistré d'album sous son propre nom. Un silence musical interrompu par sa participation aux séances de quelques disques, prêtant sa voix à Caria BLEY et Mike MANTLER ("The Hapless Child", "Silence"), à Nick MASON ("Fictitious Sports"), apparaissant ça et là dans les musiques de quelques amis. L'âme du défunt Soft Machine amorce ainsi son retour.
C'est une petite compagnie de disques Rough Trade qui lui permet d'accéder à son désir d'enregistrer une série de 45 tours réunis ici sous le titre de "Nothing Can Stop Us". Ne signant qu'une seule composition, il s'exprime à travers les chansons des autres reprenant les musiques de nombreux pays qui lui tiennent à coeur. Des chansons simples, variées qui traduisent son goût très éclectique, son intérêt pour le folklore, pour les musiques traditionnelles. "Nothing Can Stop Us" est également un manifeste politique, un engagement personnel face à l'histoire. "Born Again Crétin" est une chanson sur Nelson Mandela, un leader noir sud-africain emprisonné depuis plusieurs années. "Arauco" de Violetta PARRA est une exhortation au soulèvement des chefs indiens contre les colonisateurs. L'hymne national cubain, l'original du fameux "Guantanamera" côtoie le fameux "Strange Fruit" composé par Billie HOLIDAY. Le chanteur s'efface aussi volontiers n'intervenant pas dans deux des titres de cet album pour nous laisser entendre le groupe DISHARI, des musiciens originaires du Bengladesh s'exprimant dans la pure tradition de leur folklore sur l'assouvissement de leur communauté à Londres et le poète Peter BLACKMAN récitant une de ses oeuvres.
Robert WYATT avoue être un musicien primitif, utilisant à la base les deux instruments les plus simples, la bouche et les mains. Il joue ici à peu près tout ne s'entourant que de quelques comparses parmi lesquels Bill Mac CORMICK et Harry BECKETT.
Autre caractéristique de sa musique, ce son d'orgue très particulier que l'on retrouve déjà dans ses précédents enregistrements. Voix, orgue, piano, des percussions abondamment utilisées remplacent souvent la traditionnelle batterie. Une ligne de basse souvent très



simple suffit pour créer un climat irréel. Une musique flottante, légère et intemporelle.
"Nothing Can Stop Us" est un album marginal de la pochette à son contenu. Ici rien n'est parfait, tout laisse plutôt à désirer, un sympathique laisser-aller se dégageant de ces quelques chansons. La musique redevient humaine dans son imperfection, ne donne pas une impression d'achevé, restant plutôt dans un état de gestation prolongée. On retrouve ainsi le stade de la maquette avec ce que cela comporte de spontané, de vivant. Mais surtout Robert WYATT donne beaucoup de lui-même avec cette générosité qui est la marque de tout ce qu'il entreprend. Cet album, disponible depuis quelques mois en import dans quelques magasins spécialisés, sort en janvier en pressage français, distribué par CELLULOÏD. Ne le laissez pas passer.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight
1982

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

TELERAMA.FR - 19 septembre 2012

"Round Midnight" : le déchirement, l'émerveillement…

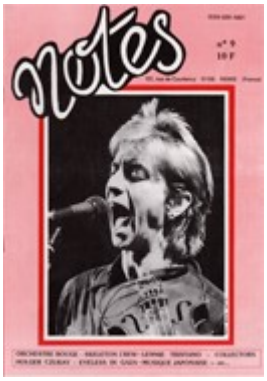
Les disques rayés, le blog musique de François Gorin

Des années durant, il n'y a eu entre Robert Wyatt et moi que *Rock Bottom*. C'était l'alpha et l'oméga, un puits sans fond, un jour sans fin dans la nuit noire. Le cri primal d'un vieil enfant noyé dans la musique et s'accrochant à sa voix. Dans cet océan venait s'engloutir le reste, connu (ses palinodies chez Soft Machine) ou inconnu (ses aventures avec Matching Mole). Puis au début des années 80, sont apparus comme une géniale incongruité des singles du même Wyatt. Sur label Rough Trade, le Gallimard de la new wave, ou plutôt ses éditions de Minuit. L'ex-batteur condamné à la position assise, vieux sage avant l'âge et agitant un éternel drapeau rouge près de son cœur, chantait les autres. Illuminait le *Shipbuilding* que la guerre des Malouines inspira (le mot est faible) à Elvis Costello. Puis s'en allait rôder autour de minuit quelques années avant Tavernier. Sans faire offense à Jackie Paris, qui l'interpréta dès 1949, ni à Ella Fitzgerald ou à June Christy, qui lui donnèrent chacune un peu, beaucoup, ni même à Claude Nougaro qui l'adapta dans sa langue en 1979, le sublime thème de Thelonious Monk trouvait sa voix la plus singulière. Devenait chanson à jamais. Pour mieux la faire sienne, Robert Wyatt lui invente un autre texte. Celui de Bernie Hanighen évoquait la tristesse d'après une rupture. Minuit est là ce moment où l'esseulé(e) est taraudé par les souvenirs et le regret de l'absent(e). Puis celui où l'espoir de son retour prend la voie des anges. Le timbre doucement fêlé de Wyatt rend un son plus philosophe. L'heure est ici à peser les *sad times* et les *glad times*, à en tirer le meilleur, *let your spirit start the fight*… Rien n'échappe aux inflexions de cette voix blanche et sans caractère défini, d'une matière et d'une couleur jamais tout à fait fixées : le déchirement, l'émerveillement… Ou tout simplement l'hommage désintéressé aux accords nés des doigts spatules de Monk, un autre jour, une autre nuit, dans un autre temps.

NOTES - N° 9

Robert Wyatt : Shipbuilding (Rough Trade)

P. Schuster



A première vue, on flaire le disque de circonstance à la Lennon, Capaldi et les autres: un prétexte (les malouines), une star du moment (Costello), on se dit le tour est joué et nous avec. Et bien non. C'est du bon, pas de la "B" side enrergistrée la veille. Loin de là. Plutôt du ciselé patiemment, du vieilli a la cave, bref du grand cru. Magnum, en plus. Dans la bouteille, y a un bateau et WYATT, capitaine d'un instant, nous invite, voyage divin, même si trop court.. Même mis quinze fois bout à bout, c'est trop court mais c'est toujours un ravissement. Perpétuel. Imaginez: un léger bruit de vagues, le vent qui doucement se lève et WYATT qui lentement s'avance: "Is it worthy?" Yes, it is et urgent en plus.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



The Last Nightingale
Various Artists
1984

More information about this album

NOTES - N° 17 - Avril 1985

WYATT / CUTLER / COOPER / HODGKINSON ETC... THE LAST NIGHTINGALE (RE. RECORDS RE 1984)

Bernard Gueffier

C'est une véritable douche écossaise que ce maxi de chez RECOMMENDED. Face 1, le meilleur: Robert WYATT accompagné par les trois ex-HENRY COW sus-cités, plus Bill GILONIS. Depuis des années que WYATT nous avait habitué à des reprises de chansonnettes, on doutait qu'il soit encore capable d'innover dans les hautes sphères musicales. Le doute est levé, il nous livre ici deux magnifiques morceaux, compositions des ex-HENRY COW, dans la droite ligne du HENRY COW CONCERT.
Face 2, le pire: deux poèmes d'Adrian MITCHELL dits par l'auteur sans accompagnement musical et un remixage d'un morceau de UNREST qui n'apporte pas grand chose.
Alors Robert, quand te décideras-tu à nous offrir un album complet du cru de ces deux morceaux.

More information about this album



Old Rottenthat
1985

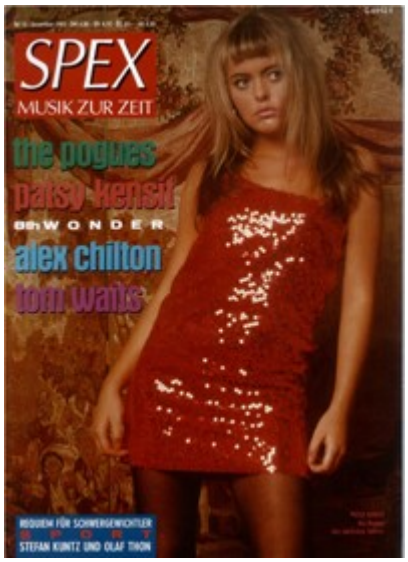
Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

SPEX - Dezember 1985

Robert Wyatt (Rough Trade)

Wilfried Rütten



Zehn traurige Traktate von Altmeister Robert Wyatt. Noch sparsamer, noch minimaler und noch zerbrechlicher als sonst sind die hier versammelten Kompositionen. Wyatts Stimme und deren Mutationen dominieren diese LP, gelegentliches Trommeln und schräge Keyboard-Harmonien haben lediglich unterstützende Funktion. Der hier entstehenden Stimmung entgeht nur, wer die Platte vom Teller nimmt; ansonsten folgt man unweigerlich und geradezu hypnotisiert Wyatt auf seinem Weg in die Tristesse. Elegische Meditationen über versäumte Revolutionen, vermißte Chancen und vertane Zeit. Selbst die Internationale ist nicht mehr das was sie einmal war; statt mit kraftvollem Chorgesang klimpert sie uns hier aus einer Spieluhr entgegen. Und auch an dieser Version kassiert Beierlein seine Tantiemen. Nur Wyatt selbst - so scheint's - bleibt sich treu. Es gibt nur wenige so eindeutig definierte Stimmen und Stimmungen wie seine; nach drei Sekunden weiß man, wer da singt. Harmonische und melodische Schönheiten in Moll en masse. Novembermusik oder: Elvis Costello für Arme.

FRIED ROCK CLASSICS FROM THE 80's - Jeudi 20 décembre 2007

Robert Wyatt - Old Rottenhat - LP, Rough Trade Rough 69, décembre 1985

Jean-Philippe Cimetière

Si les années septante de Robert Wyatt et Rock Bottom (1974) en particulier font l'objet de respect et de nombreuses citations chez les amateurs de musique ayant les oreilles bien débouchées, ses années 80 sont souvent considérées au mieux comme une période de transition expérimentale, au pire comme une traversée du désert. Il est pourtant un album, publié en décembre 1985, qui mérite de figurer parmi de ses plus belles réussites. Mettons donc ici à l'honneur Old Rottenhat, publié par Rough Trade, le label indépendant issu du mouvement punk et qui redonna à Wyatt l'opportunité –peut être même le goût- de sortir des disques. Après une poignée de single et un premier album en 1982 (Nothing Can Stop Us), le barbu batteur présente ici un album auquel convient on ne peut mieux l'épithète « solo » puisque Wyatt livre dix morceaux entièrement interprétés seul ; soit drums, keyboards & vocals by Robert Wyatt. Le disque n'a pas été enregistré à la maison, on ne parlera donc pas de repli ou d'autarcie. On pourra toutefois supposer que cette solitude n'est pas étrangère à l'engagement politique de Wyatt (il était alors membre du parti communiste) : il avoua avoir dû faire preuve de beaucoup plus de courage pour défendre ses idées que pour s'affirmer en tant qu'artiste.

Et c'est bien un disque politique qu'il nous propose : les mensonges sur lesquels repose la démocratie, la manipulation médiatique, la réécriture amnésique de leur passé par certaines nations comme les Etats Unis (« The United States Of Amnesia »), le sale rôle de l'Occident en « East Timor » constituent le fondement des lyrics. « They say the working class is dead, we're all consumers now » se plaint-il au début de "The Age Of Self ». Il ne s'y résout visiblement pas et distille ça et là quelques notes de l'Internationale histoire de marquer le coup.

La musique, elle, n'est « certainement pas du rock'n'roll », comme il l'affirme dans un bel article du New Musical Express (14 décembre 1985). Wyatt parle d'un « english blues ». Ce sont ses claviers, pour l'essentiel très minimalistes, qui donnent à Old Rottenhat cette couleur en harmonie avec son inimitable voix, à la fois haut perchée, sans cesse comme dans un souffle. Le jeu et les possibilités sont la fois limitées et d'une grande variété et une impression de grande richesse s'impose au fil des écoutes. On est ici à la fois tout près, parfois, des orgues de Nico et des vocaux de Brian Wilson. Soit l'eau (très froide) et l'air (de très haute altitude).

Tout disque politique qu'il est, Old Rottenhat s'achève par une adresse à Alfie, sa compagne : « Poor little Alfie trying to draw, poor little Alfie trying to sleep » puis par une courte pièce psychédélique, une petite ritournelle qui reste dans l'oreille une fois le disque arrivé à son terme à tel point que l'on en vient à se demander si l'essentiel ne s'y cache pas. Or que nous y dit Robert ? "you wondering now, what to do ?, now you know this is the end." Pataphysique ou mantra ? Et si la meilleure chose à faire n'était pas encore de replacer l'aiguille là où tout commence, c'est-à-dire, en ce qui concerne ce disque en tout cas, au début d' «Alliance » ?

NOTES - N°20 - février 86

Robert Wyatt - Old Rottenhat (ROUGH TRADE 70406)

Bernard Gueffier

Dix ans ! Il se sera écoulé dix ans entre le dernier LP de WYATT et celui-ci. Oh! bien sûr! entre temps il avait calmé notre impatience en jalonnant les années de multiples 45t, compilations, apparitions diverses et éparpillées où les délices de sa voix n'avaient bien souvent d'égale que l'indigence de son propos musical. Le récent LAST NIGHTINGALE avec Chris CUTLER nous avait bien confirmé que WYATT doit pour s'épanouir, s'intégrer à un groupe, se mettre au service d'un compositeur. Eh bien! ce dernier disque sera l'ultime démonstration de ce fait : la voix est toujours suave à souhait, mais le minimalisme des compositions et de l'instrumentation nous laisse sur notre faim. Enfin, tout espoir n'est pas perdu puisqu'on parle de notre vieux Robert, pour remplacer DAGMAR dans NEWS FROM BABEL. . .)

ORDET BLOG - 22 mars 2016

Robert Wyatt: Old Rottenhat

Philippe L

L'inattaquable plongée mid-seventies Rock Bottom à beau être l'un des plus beaux albums d'anti-rock au monde, il y a dedans Nick Mason l'infirmier Pink Floyd et encore un peu quelque chose du Barnum dans les arrangements. Voilà peut-être pourquoi j'ai toujours trouvé plus à mon goût le Robert Wyatt mid-eighties celui du vieux chapeau pourri et des merveilles Cherry Red. Une voix, un orgue et rien de plus, ou presque. Robert le défenestré gazouille autour de quelques génocides divers et oubliés celui des Indiens d'Amérique, celui des Timorais orientaux, il est question de lutte des classes, de mass medium et de temps de cerveaux disponible. C'est un disque qui pourrait avoir été écrit par Noam Chomsky. Bienheureusement il est chanté par Robert Wyatt, ce formidable porte-parole du Parti communiste britannique. Là oui très haut dans les limbes, c'est lui. (On me chuchote qu'un Wyatt fredonnant le bottin pourrait être tout autant politique puisque ce qui est surtout politique chez lui c'est sa voix et avant tout sa voix. Je ne sais pas ; peut-être, allez savoir ?)

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 30 November 1985

Robert Wyatt: Old Rottenhat (Rough Trade)

Mat Snow

CAN POLITICS and music mix? Are songs about matters commonly deemed to belong in the political sphere not really songs at all, but rather singing pamphlets on a par with singing telegrams? Should political songs necessarily be anthemic and sloganising: is their purpose to stress goals, identify the enemy, raise the spirits and unite common causes in a single voice? What is music for?

Old Rottenhat raises all these questions; but first impressions first. How does it sound? "Musically, I should say it's more of a slinking record than a dance record," ventures Robert in his customarily wry press-release. He's right. Old Rottenhat neither quickens the pulse nor punches the shadows: rather, it fills the air with the sound of quietly philosophical Englishness, a point of view, a tone of voice, a singular mood.

Robert Wyatt's quirky individualism is the strength of his music and argument. A Wyatt record is like an old friend; it neither hectors, lectures nor harangues as if the listener were a public meeting. His plaintively low-key voice and the uncluttered, hymnal contemplativeness of his music demand you listen hard: its quiet self-effacement is not only impossible to ignore, but invests with personal relevance and resonance tunes hitherto abandoned to memory's stockpile of frozen standards. I'm thinking of his 1974 version of The Monkees' 'I'm A Believer' and his solo rendition of 'The Red Flag' from the 1982 collection Nothing Can Stop Us: sung by Robert Wyatt they find a melancholy dimension that rings touching, refreshing and true.

Old Rottenhat – as unheroic an LP title as there's ever been – is dedicated to Michael Bettany, "just one of England's (sic) many political prisoners". Since Old Rottenhat is Robert Wyatt's first LP of self-penned songs since 1975's Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, I should imagine he thought long and hard about this choice. Bettany's trial for trying to pass official secrets to Russia indicated a most hapless bungler, inspired more by embittered outsiderhood than idealism: Robert Wyatt makes no distinction between this dubious character and a more noble political prisoner. Whichever, Bettany shouldn't be in jail, and Wyatt's judgement here is humane, not ideological – a telling gesture.

But of what does he sing? The majority of songs here are plainly 'political'. He regrets the divisiveness and hypocrisy of the Alliance parties ('Alliance'); sighs at the modish view that workerism has been undermined by consumerisation ('The Age Of Self'); confronts white America with the wilfully forgotten history lesson of the Red Indian extermination ('United States Of Amnesia'); derides British self-glorification ('The British Road'); reminds that there is such a place as East Timor, and all is not well there ('East Timor'); implicates our 'free press' in the erosion of our freedom of thought ('Mass Medium')...

These are familiar topics of hand-wringing conversation amongst Guardian-readers such as myself; but does conscience only prod if pushed by novelty? Should concern diminish with loss of newsworthiness? And would we just stand there and be buttonholed, however right-on the message, if the messenger was a bore?

Luckily, not a note strikes false nor word rings hollow. With quiet, mournful endurance, Robert Wyatt applies steady musical pressure – a sort of analogue to the theory where real history is not the surface activity of the waves, but rather the great invisible oceanic movements beneath. Words may lose their original meaning over time, but music conveys a profounder spirit. That is what music is for.

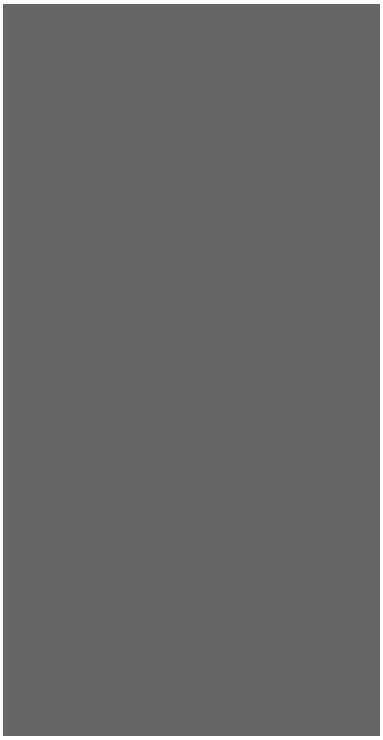
By the way, a great record.

TELERAMA - 22 janvier 1986

Robert Wyatt: Old Rottenhat - Rough Trade - Virgin (70406)

Philippe Barbot —*fff*—

Le retour de l'ermite. Cloué sur un fauteuil roulant depuis 1973, l'ex-



batteur-chanteur de groupes baroques britanniques comme Soft Machine et Matching Mole, ne faisait guère plus jaser.
Les inities conservaient au creux de leur discothèque son *Rock Bottom*, un des albums les plus sombres et déroutants de l'histoire du rock dit de Canterbury. Une série de 45 tours — dans lesquels il reprenait, en vrac, Costello et... *Guantanamera* — et une musique de film animalier exceptés, Robert Wyatt semblait davantage concerné par la méditation politique — on le dit inscrit au parti communiste — que par la continuité de son œuvre musicale.
Cet album, couplé d'un maxi 45 tours en compagnie des Swapo Singers, anecdotique s'il n'était consacré à la cause anti-apartheid (*The wind of change*, Virgin 80222), est donc une véritable résurrection. Et une nostalgique surprise: Wyatt a conservé cette voix de glotte acide, ces murmures aux tonalités évasives qui ont fait sa particularité.
Sur des canevas de claviers lugubres, orgues de barbarie civilisés et harmoniums essoufflés, il tisse ses cantiques de cathédrales en kit, comme des comptines déraillantes. Les percussions s'égrènent en conciliabules tintinabulants, et les textes caustiques ne laissent paraître qu'un militantisme à la vue large. Frileux, mais superbe.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



The Wind Of Change
Robert Wyatt
With The SWAPO Singers
1985

More information about this album

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 26th October, 1985

Robert Wyatt With The SWAPO Singers: The Wind Of Change (Rough Trade)

Steven Wells

If this record was as boring as the man's version of 'Shipbuilding' or as crass and insulting as his ode-to-a-mass-murderer 'Stalin Wasn't Stalling' then, one supposes, we'd get the usual dull whimperings of the 'pop and politics don't mix' fruitbats. Ha! It's a cracker. This is truly a righteous record. Though not quite as catchy as 'Free Nelson Mandela', the power of the melody and the simplicity of the message make this one of those all too rare great protest songs. The wind referred to is the wind of revolution. A fine sentiment and perhaps one that should be extended not only to the people of Namibia but also those of Poland and wherever working people kick against the bosses, eh, Robert?

More information about this album



Bel Canto
1986

Pascal Comelade

More information about this album

NOTES - N° 25/26 - mars 1987

Bel Canto - Pascal Comelade (DSA 54006)

Jean-Pierre "Pégourdine" NADAU

Monsieur COMELADE nous sert ici une véritable cuisine de style(s), il tient de sa mère y'a pas d'erreur! Les ingrédients principaux, du moins ceux qui concourent à la quintessence des morceaux, sont ses fameux "instruments-de-musique-jouets" dont Pascal raffole de plus en plus me semble-t-il.
Les lapin-tambour, plastic-guitar, trombone-jouet, plastic-accordéon, imitation-hautbois et autres tambours en carton se marient sans effort avec un véritable piano, un vrai violon ou une authentique clarinette pour créer une sorte de grosse boîte à musique à la fois très complexe et très intime (COMELADE ne fait pas dans le "son énorme").
Avec grande finesse, Pascal et ses amis jouent du COMELADE bien sûr mais aussi le célèbre "Besame mucho" de Consuelo VELASQUEZ, "Chanson pop" de Robert WYATT, "Still I'm sad" des YARDBIRDS, un traditionnel, "Giulietta" de Nino ROTA et même, pour la première fois sur vinyl, "L'Air des bijoux" d'Igor WAGNER (la partition est encore disponible chez Casterman sur le song-book : "Les bijoux de la Castafiore").
Cependant il faut bien sentir le propos chez COMELADE : il ne se prend pas au sérieux pour le plaisir de ne pas se prendre au sérieux et parce que c'est la mode, non, il ne s'agit pas du Petit Magic Circus, il fait ça pour la poésie, ça reste donc très sérieux.
Que deviendrait "Une andalouse sur la pelouse" sans le xérémia? Et bien ça deviendrait une belle andalouse sur une belle pelouse, sans grand intérêt. Tandis qu'avec le "Pouet-Pouët" du xérémia le morceau est totalement transfiguré car 1'andaIouse louche !

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

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More information about this album



The Peel Sessions
1987

Robert Wyatt

TELERAMA.FR - 19 septembre 2012

Robert Wyatt, bis pour l'abyssale "Sea Song" -

Les disques rayés, le blog musique de François Gorin

François Gorin

Chez John Peel, l'arsenal de Robert Wyatt se réduit à un piano et un orgue. Plus des effets filtrant la voix. L'hymne perd en pouvoir submergeant, gagne en puissance brute. Cela crée des passages où la beauté du morceau se risque à la dissonnance. Aux frottements, aux cadences pas très caressantes. L'absence de décorum oblige à se concentrer sur le personnage, qui lui ne cesse de jouer une partition littéralement folle entre absence et présence. L'étrange crudité de ses mots éclate au jour : *partly fish, partly porpoise, partly baby sperm whale… you're terrific when you're drunk… you're a seasonal beast…* Le tout nimbé du bel accent de Cambridge. Quand on se croit abandonné aux vagues des claviers, un vrai chant d'amour vient conclure : *your lunacy fits neatly with my own…* Puis commence (à 5'30 dans cette version) l'inouï, voix déformée, redoublée, fondue sans paroles aux instruments, cherchant l'air ou quelque chose de plus rare, psalmodiant sans fin (du moins le voudrait-on), touchant le même graal qu'un *Surf's up*, coupant son élan pour céder au pas d'un métronome. Il faut rappeler l'admiration fanatique de Wyatt pour les Double Six et leurs vocalises échafaudées. A lui seul il ne pouvait faire une chorale. Mais il essayait. Ça reste effrayant et sublime.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises |



Dondestan
1991

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

BLAH BLAH NEWS - février 1999
Robert Wyatt - Dondestan
Ryko



Sorti sur le légendaire label anglais Rough Trade, Dondestan est un album de Robert Wyatt qui renoue avec la magie de ses débuts en solo. On y retrouve son jeu de piano plutôt percutant, et une utilisation de la batterie, très sèche, qui nous ramène aux années Soft Machine. Robert Wyatt, cloué dans un fauteuil roulant, n'a rien perdu en voix. La majeure partie des textes ont été écrits par sa femme et témoignent de l'engagement politique que Wyatt n'a jamais dissocié de la musique, même rock. Cet album est une ode au minimalisme, il donne une grande part au chant très aérien de Wyatt et laisse les plages atmosphériques vivre d'elles-mêmes. Le temps étant le pire fossoyeur de pop music, Wyatt aura la modeste satisfaction de savoir que ses disques, grâce aux amateurs éclairés, resteront encore quelque temps dans les bacs des disquaires, et que de nouvelles générations pourront ainsi, au hasard de chroniques, découvrir quelqu'un d'important qui n'a strictement aucun tube à son palmarès.

FACELIFT - Issue 7 - Feb' 92

Robert Wyatt - Dondestan
(Rough Trade E274)

Mike King



Clearly, the man requires no introduction to FACELIFT readers. Equally self-evident is that Robert neither rushes, nor releases his art until it clears a stringent and solipsist 'quality control check'.

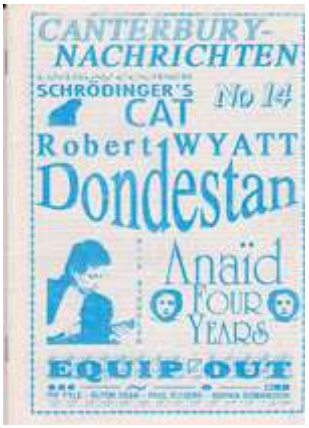
Not surprisingly then, 'Dondestan' (Spanish for 'where are they') is a profoundly moving collection of songs, largely crafted from the music of Robert Vyatt and the impressionistic poetry of Alfreda Benge. An engaging range of vocal delivery rides across a varied aesthetic; from the suspension of ethereal atmospheres of 'Worship' to the strikingly rich piano chords of 'Catholic Architecture'. There is a rap confronting the vested interests of psychoanalysis in the song 'Shrinkrap', and the case of stateless people is addressed in the toe-tapping title track. Also included is 'Lisp Service', a Hugh Hopper jewel (rescued) from the unreleased album Hugh and Richard Sinclair recorded for Europa eight years ago.

Throughout, 'Dondestan' presents a unification of content and form, born of socialist committment and an increasingly rarified quality in contemporary music: beauty. If, as it has been opined, that a new record from Robert Wyatt is akin to receiving an intelligent communique from an old friend, then to be sure 'Dondestan' will desserve and reward your reception.



CANTERBURY NACHRICHTEN - N° 14 - Oktober 1991

Robert Wyatt - Dondestan
(CD W BKL & lyrics) 91 D Rough Trade RTD 101-1234-2



Es (er) ist schon irgendwie ein Phänomen: jahrelang läßt er nichts von sich hören, außer ein paar, von seinen Fans gierig aufgenommenen, Gastauftritten bei exzellenten Musikern, verkündet regelmäßig, nicht mehr ins Studio gehen zu wollen, dann kommt, wie aus heiterem Himmel, eine neue Platte und er ist plötzlich in aller Munde. MELODY MAKER, NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS, VOX, SPEX und viele andere Musikzeitungen überschlagen sich förmlich, ihn und seine Platte vorzustellen, bringen lange Interviews, küren "DONDESTAN" zur Platte des Monats (verdientermaßen natürlich), der WDR widmet ihm und der Platte eine ganze Stunde, im November gibt's noch mal eine, diesmal über seine Beziehung zum Jazz. Erstaunlich diese Aufmerksamkeit für jemanden, der die "Regeln" des Musikgeschäftes permanent mißachtet hat, unbequem war im englischen Hurra-Patriotismus des Falklandkrieges und mit "Shipbuilding" und seinem Rollstuhl in die Hitparaden fuhr (was ihm 1974 von der BBC noch verwehrt wurde), aus politischer Überzeugung den Wirtschaftsriesen Virgin verließ und sich dem Abenteuer Rough Trade anschloß, der über Lynchjustiz, Rassenhaß, Apartheit, politische Willkür singt, Discohits und Jubellleder auf Stalin covert und bei alldem, und das ist das erstaunlichste dabei, tatsächlich gehört wird. Es gibt zuwenige von seiner Art, das ist schon mal klar ...

Sechs Jahre sind vergangen seit seiner letzten Solo-Platte "Old rotten hat", ungeachtet ihrer Qualität, war sie schon recht schwer verdaulich, etwas melancholisch in ihrem Ausdruck ist es keine Platte, die man "mal eben so" hören kann. Zwar gilt das auch für "Dondestan", aber die ganze Stimmung dieser neuesten Platte ist anders, sehr viel freier - befreiter -, gefüllt mit Optisimismus und einem besonderen Humor, mit einem speziellen Sinn für das kleine, alltägliche und dessen Bedeutung für unser Leben. "The sight of the wind" zum Beispiel, eins der schönsten Lieder auf dieser Platte, beschreibt einen Tag am menschenleeren Strand an der spanischen Küste. Zwar ist der Mensch durch seine Hinterlassenschaften (= Müll: Plastiktüte, alte Zeltungen) allgegenwärtig, aber die scheinbar toten Gegenstände entwickeln ihr eigenes Leben (ein totes Blatt kratzt eine eilige Botschaft in Sanskrit in den Sand, bevor es auf einer munteren Bö davonfährt): ein Tag für den Müll zu tanzen. Ein wunderbares, ungewöhnliches Gedicht von Alfreda BENGE (die auch weitere Texte beigesteuert hat), behutsam musikalisch umgesetzt von Robert WYATT. Seine besondere Art des Keyboardspielens, die langgezogenen, schwellenden Töne, schaffen die eigenartige Atmosphäre eines scheinbar leblosen Strandtages, die Singstimme folgt dem umherfliegenden Blatt, lautmalerisch von den windigen Hintergrundstimmen auf die Reise geschickt, mit einzelnen Pianotönen und dem allgegenwärtigen Wind erstirbt das Lied langsam: die Fusspuren des Vortages werden verweht, niemand ist zu sehen, noch nicht mal die Hunde ... Ob da nun die "Katholische Architektur" oder zwei Nonnen am Strand beschrieben werden, ob im schnellen "Shrinkrap", die harte Arbeit beschrieben wird, sein wirkliches Ich aus der Schale zu lösen, dies alles ist verbunden mit einer erfrischenden, spitzfindigen Gelassenheit, die Spaß macht. Auch eindeutig politische Stellungnahme ist hier vertreten: über das ungleiche (Macht-)Verhältnis zwischen dem Norden und dem Süden, über Privatisierungswahn (der hier bis zum Exzess getrieben wird: warum nicht die Armee, die Polizei, die königliche Familie, gar das Meer und den Wind privatisieren), über Flüchtlinge, über Palästina. Bis auf den Song "Lisp Service" (Melodie von Hugh HOPPER) hat sich

WYATT die Musik selbst geschrieben (und vollkommen "solo" eingespielt), was die beste Garantie dafür ist, daß seine unverwechselbare Stimme sich voll entfalten kann. Genüßlich ausgekostet wird dies bei "N.I.O.", das sich, zuerst ungeordnet (spanische Wortfetzen und Sätze fliegen umher, Pianoakkorde hauen dazwischen), erst langsam findet, dann aber schnell von dem Gesang beherrscht wird, einzelne Worte werden langgezogen wie ganze Sätze (in der Tat kommt "N.I.O." bei 6 1/2 Minuten Dauer mit weniger als 60 Worten aus). Hier ist man dankbar, daß die Texte abgedruckt sind. Besonders gelungen ist wie "N.I.O." übergangslos in den Titelsong "Dondestan" hinüberwächst (durch ein paar Trommelschläge vorangekündigt), der doch, von der Melodie her fast wie ein Kinderlied anmutend, so ganz anders klingt, und wie schließlich "Dondestan" sich zum Ende hin wieder in das Thema von "N.I.O." auflöst. Platten von dieser Art, gibt es zu wenige, das ist auch klar...

LA VOIX DU NORD

Robert Wyatt : l'humour et la mélancolie

Snobé par les jazzmen effarouchés par la dégaine et la chevelure hirsute de ses musiciens, incompris des amateurs de pop rebutés par l'hermétisme de sa musique, Soft Machine, avec ses sonorités élégantes empruntées au jazz et ses rythmes simples et dépouillés issus du rock, fut un des groupes les plus cruciaux de la période folle des années 65-70. Robert Wyatt fut son batteur ailé et sa voix. En 72, il fonda le groupe Matching Mole, instrument idéal pour inventer de nouvelles mixtures musicales iconoclastes, puis le drame survint. Au cours d'une « party » planante et arrosée, Wyatt passa par la fenêtre et tomba du quatrième étage. Paraplégique, il allait devoir tout revoir, tout reprendre à zéro. Retour au premier plan en 74 avec le grand album « Rock bottom » et succès dans les « charts » avec une reprise de « I'm a believer » de Neil Diamond. Le disque suivant, « Ruth is stranger than Richard » tient aussi la rampe et réjouit ses admirateurs. Puis il se réfugie dans un long silence entre 74 et 80. Dérives politiques au début des années 80 et enregistrement d'une série de chansons militantes parmi lesquelles « Stalin' wasn't Stalin » (Staline n'était pas un rigolo) interprété auparavant par le Golden Gate. En 85 « Old rotten hat » permet d'entendre ses premières compositions originales depuis longtemps. Wyatt coupe à nouveau la communication pendant six ans et ne nous redonne que récemment de ses nouvelles avec ce « Dondestan » qui vient confirmer tout le bien qu'on pouvait penser de lui. Un penchant immodéré pour la mélancolie, parfois de l'humour à propos des discours opportunistes des politiciens du P.C (C.P jeebies) ou du racket de la médecine (Shinkrap), un respect affiché pour les poésies impressionnistes de son épouse Alfie, vont de pair avec les musiques qui peuvent évoquer des paysages grandioses et imaginaires. Loin d'avoir le goût amer du passé, « Dondestan » s'inscrit en dehors du temps, en dehors des modes, oeuvre originale de beauté sereine, elle ne décevra pas les fidèles de Wyatt.
(Rough Trade/Virgin)

LES INROCKS - 26 septembre 1991

Robert Wyatt : Dondestan

Christophe Conte

Coquin de sort ! Scélérate ironie ! Ce nouvel album de Robert Wyatt nous parvient le jour même où Gorby décide l'abandon de la lutte des classes, éparpillant ainsi, façon puzzle, l'un des derniers dogmes marxistes aux quatre coins de l'ex-empire des tsars. Pauvre Robert, pour lui qui ne publie plus qu'un album par plan quinquennal, ces quelques années écoulées depuis le précédent, Old rotten hat, doivent avoir un sérieux arrière-goût de désillusion. Le rouge n'excite guère plus que les taureaux et les ennemis d'hier ont revêtu des habits respectables, Mandela est libre, l'apartheid décomposé et l'Angleterre a troqué sa vieille sorcière contre John Major aux allures de gentleman. Quant à la guerre du Golfe, elle a réduit en peau de chagrin les derniers fantasmes égalitaires de l'utopie tiers-mondiste. Diable ! Que reste-t-il au vieux militant comme juste combat à mener ? Réponse ici avec Dondestan, en français où sont-ils ??, qui pose le problème des apatrides. Une façon comme une autre de ne plus s'engager aux côtés d'une doctrine incertaine en optant pour une cause aussi consensuelle qu'insoluble dans un avenir proche. Et puis, au-delà, il reste les chansons, ces mélopées fluides qui percent le palpitant des uns et brisent les nerfs des autres. Dès le premier titre, l'ex-Soft Machine déstabilise son petit monde en le plongeant dans le labyrinthe d'une rythmique à mettre hors d'usage le plus performant des pace-makers. Tout l'art de Wyatt réside dans cette fameuse résistance aux codes préétablis, sans courir derrière une prétendue modernité, à l'instar de bon nombre de ses contemporains mais uniquement par nécessité émotionnelle. Comme celles de son vieux complice Kevin Ayers ou comme chez le Van Morrison d'Astral week, les compositions de Robert Wyatt se situent hors des limites du palpable et seuls les funambules et les astronautes maîtrisent avec un tel bonheur les lois de l'équilibre. On aura beau se référer au jazz et à sa noblesse pour quadriller une œuvre trop ambitieuse pour notre quotidien futile du rock. Ou bien au chant des sirènes car nul ne sait à quoi il ressemble. En vain, c'est de vertige dont il s'agit ici. Ce vertige qui l'a cloué dans un fauteuil roulant, Wyatt ne cesse depuis de le provoquer, de lui faire payer sa dette pour une vie brisée. La musique ici n'est qu'un prétexte et on ne peut qu'en admirer la beauté extérieure, la coquille. Le cœur, et par conséquent la plus grosse part de vérité, reste pour nous désespérément impénétrable.

GUITARES & CLAVIERS - Octobre 1991 - N° 123

Robert Wyatt : Dondestan

Nicolas Ungemuth

Dix-sept ans après « Rock Bottom », Robert Wyatt sort enfin son quatrième album solo. A la première note du premier morceau, à la première écoute, on sait déjà que c'est lui. Ce chant qui joue comme un instrument à vent, ces claviers apparaissant comme une brume et s'évanouissant brusquement, c'est Robert Wyatt de retour. « Dondestan », du début à la fin, est un pur chef-d'œuvre. Un disque qui traumatisera à vie les pseudos gourous du nouvel âge et les

petits banquiers qui s'encanaillent le samedi soir en écoutant de la musique mondiale avant de s'inscrire au Paris Dakar. Pas d'étiquette viable pour « Dondestan ». Juste la beauté faite musique. De longues dérives construites comme des mirages, et des textes (de la femme de Wyatt, la Alfie de « Rock Bottom ») d'une simplicité désarmante mais à la beauté primitive essentielle. « Dondestan », c'est le génie de « Rock Bottom », la sérénité en plus et la mort en moins. Un disque capital qui nous assure encore au moins dix-sept ans de surprises intarissables.

THE WIRE - September 1991 - Issue 91

Robert Wyatt : Dondestan (wire winner: unprivatised pop)

Jonathan Coe

ONE OF the most heartening things about Wyatt's work is its sense of continuity, however sporadic his album releases might have been over the last 15 years. The soundscape of *Dondestan* is instantly recognisable: the layers of rippling, droning keyboards, the complex percussive effects achieved with a minimum of fuss, and above all (literally) that fabulous voice. Tentative but commanding, fragile but resolute: one of the greatest voices in British music.

Continuity need not mean repetition, of course, and this album finds Wyatt charting out new territory as well as revisiting the old. "Shrink Rap" takes us back to the cheerful experimentations of *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, with stomping, dissonant piano lines and some verbal rhythms which recall Dury's "Reasons To Be Cheerful" rather than Public Enemy. The other songs on side two mine *Old Rottenhat*'s vein of politicised lyricism: simple chord progressions over which the melody lines wander and spiral and soar, their mixture of passion and quirkiness ruling out any question of ideological inflexibility (also kept at bay by the characteristic self-deprecatory tone of the lyrics).

The rest of the album features settings of verse written by Wyatt's wife, Alfie. We already know from his record sleeves what a good painter she is; it now also transpires that, as a poet, she has a real gift for evoking physical detail in a language which is both inventive and unpretentious: "*We could hear it before the shutters were open/The wind on the beach/Then we found miniatures and dunes/On the concrete of the balcony/And a dead leaf zigzagging/Scratching an urgent message in sandscript/Before hitching a ride on a frisky gust*" ("The Sight Of The Wind").

The combination of these different sensibilities might have made for a patchy and disjointed album, but instead the two strands fruitfully interweave and fold in upon each other. The polemic of Wyatt's "CPGB's", for instance, which could easily have seemed like too-obvious sarcasm ("*Privatise the sea/Privatise the wind . . . Don't waste good air/Breathing isn't paying its way*") acquires resonance and vitality from the heartfelt celebrations of the natural world which have preceded it. In fact the assurance with which this whole record conflates steely intelligence with honest-to-goodness musical pleasure proves beyond doubt that Wyatt is losing none of his edge. Seems like nothing can stop him.

More information about this album



A Short Break
1992

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

RIVISTA ANARCHICA - #201 - giugno-luglio '93

Robert Wyatt



Con un aereo immaginario, e per questo velocissimo, partiamo dall'Austria ed arriviamo subito in Inghilterra, ad incontrare una delle leggende viventi della musica contemporanea, cioè Robert Wyatt.

Sarebbe vergognoso tentare di negare l'influenza della personalità di Wyatt sui grandi spazi della cultura alternativa europea. La "diversità" a tutti i costi di esperienze come Soft Machine e Matching Mole, l'apertura ad altre culture (quando la cosiddetta world music non era ancora stata inventata) ed il volontario esilio discografico.

Poi, su tutto, il ritorno in pubblico in un periodo storico difficile come poteva esserlo l'Inghilterra degli anni Ottanta: oltre vent'anni di cammino su una strada di periferia sempre in salita, percorsi un po' a piedi, un po' su una sedia a rotelle.

Il pregio delle opere Robert Wyatt sta nel bilanciamento di sogni ideologici ed utopie politiche (rigorosamente, testardamente ed irrinunciabilmente rosse) e sentimenti sottil, quasi disegnati a matita, disillusioni e sarcasmo (e qui il colore si fa sempre, e soltanto nero).

Le parole delle sue canzoni sono come piccole tessere di un enorme quadro, e raccontano di una vita vissuta momento per momento, con orgoglio e determinazione, aspettando quasi che il destino (in cui comunque non si crede) improvvisamente spenga la luce.

E in mezzo a questa tristezza, comunque, non manca mai il sarcasmo. Non manca la voglia continua, solleticante, di spiare la vita per indovinare la sua prossima mossa. L'umorismo (proprio nel senso di "English humour"...) come ultima arma di sopravvivenza.

In "A short break" ritroviamo un Robert Wyatt in dimensione più umana rispetto a quella della discografia ufficiale, costretto a

registrazioni casalinghe e ad appunti scritti su fogli di carta. Le cinque canzoni raccolte in questo CD sono infatti ancora in forma di appunti musicali fatti in casa, forse abbozzi di un qualche cosa che magari sarà contenuto in un suo prossimo disco. La veste tecnica più dimessa non toglie comunque una virgola alla "purezza" di queste canzoni. Al CD è allegato un libretto con disegni, parole, appunti e altri frammenti.

"A short break" è a prezzo ridotto ed è stato pubblicato solo in un'edizione limitata. Per questo, si dovrebbe trovare qui da noi con qualche difficoltà : magari tentate in quei negozi che trattano materiale discografico d'importazione.
Se non ci riuscite, potete rivolgervi alla piccola casa editrice inglese Voiceprint (che ha pubblicato, oltre a questa, un'altra manciata di opere interessanti), a questo indirizzo: P.O. Box 5, Country, Durham DH9 7HR, Great Britain.



MARGEN - Primavera/96

Robert Wyatt - A Short Break

Rafa Dorado

El que fuera batería de bandas tan importantes como Soft Machine o Matching Mole, compuso y grabó en su casa con un 4 pistas, el conjunto de canciones de este mini CD durante el verano del 92.
Son pequeñas piezas que sin llegar a la grandeza de *Rock Bottom* y ni siquiera de *Old Rottenhat*, poseen ese estilo único, intimista y emocionante que Wyatt ha acuñado en sus discos en solitario.
Cinco temas abstractos y minimales surgidos seguramente de la improvisación, interpretados en base a una instrumentación simple con voces frágiles y susurrantes, y grabados igualmente sin ningún tipo de maquillaje.
Todo rebosa frescura en este disco, ese impulso vital que parece



estimular la creatividad de Wyatt en los últimos años y que a la vez deja entrever cierta amargura. Otro disco único en la trayectoria de un compositor único. (Voiceprint)

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews



Mid-Eighties
1993

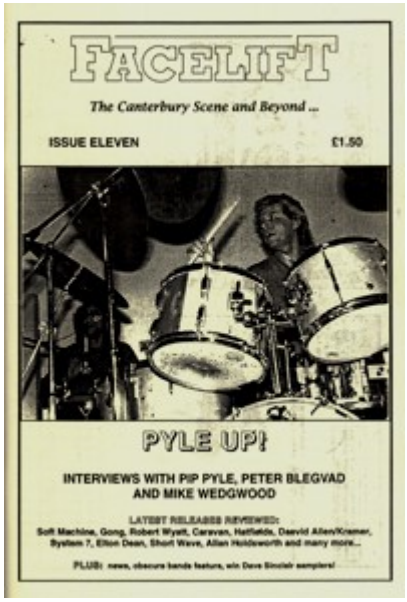
Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

FACELIFT - issue Eleven - September 1993

Robert Wyatt - Mid-Eighties - Rough Trade (R2952)

Robert Wyatt has been involved with Rough Trade for over a decade now: with an open-ended licence to write and release material. He has hardly been prolific during his time with Rough Trade but his output has been consistently challenging. On the heels of the highly successful 'Dondestan' comes this compilation covering the best of the Rough Trade years. Although 'Mid Eighties' comes with the same cover artwork as their earlier release '1982-1984', this is a more complete and satisfying compilation.


FACELIFT

The Canterbury Scene and Beyond ...

ISSUE ELEVEN £1.50

PYLE UP!

INTERVIEWS WITH PIP PYLE, PETER BLEGVAD AND MIKE WEDGWOOD

LATEST RELEASES REVIEWED:

Soft Machine, Gong, Robert Wyatt, Caravan, Hatfields, David Allen/Kramer, System 7, Elton Dean, Short Wave, Allan Holdsworth and many more...

PLUS: news, obscure bands feature, win Dave Sinclair samplers!

Included are all of the 'Work in Progress' EP: the hispanic covers 'Yolanda', 'Te Recuerdo Amanda'; the cover of Peter Gabriel's hit 'Biko' and the deliberate 'Amber and the Amberines', co-written and performed with Hugh Hopper.

Also included are two further covers from the B-side of the hit 'Shipbuilding'. Robert Wyatt's sympathy for jazz tradition has rarely manifested so poignantly as on 'Memories of You', lending his soul also to a re-working of 'Round Midnight'. Old Moler Dave MacRae adds keyboards.

'Old Rottenhat' is reproduced in its entirety. This is a fine album of original compositions which married a more mainstream pop approach with some of Robert's most uncompromising political lyrics. This is stirring stuff: a damning microcosm of British and western perspective during the early Thatcher years. 'Old Rottenhat' sits happily alongside the two rarest (and for me, the most original) compositions of the entire album: 'Chairman Mao' and the questioning 'Pigs'. The former first appeared on a ReR Quarterly compilation and is probably his finest work since 'Sea Song'; the latter is taken from an Artists for Animals release.

A feature of this compilation is its consistent approach. Unlike the

complexities of Softs or Matching Mole days, or even the more rounded instrumentation of 'Rock Bottom', 'Ruth...' and the more recent 'Dondestan', these are instantly accessible songs given a twist by the melancholy of the Wyatt voice, just as 'I'm A Believer' was turned on its head ten years earlier. Another instantly recognisable trademark is the keyboard sound. I'm told that the basic sound we hear on Robert Wyatt's solo records emanates from a toy keyboard bought in the mid-Seventies, which possibly lends to the air of innocence found on 'Pigs' and particularly the exquisite lullaby 'P.L.A'.

Clocking in at around eighty minutes, this is not so much a 'best of compilation as a digest of Robert Wyart's Eighties work.

Essential.

>> **FACELIFT the canterbury scene and beyond**



More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Darn It!
1993

Paul Haines

More information about this album

DOWNBEAT - November 1994

Paul Haines - Darn It!
American Clavé - 1014/18

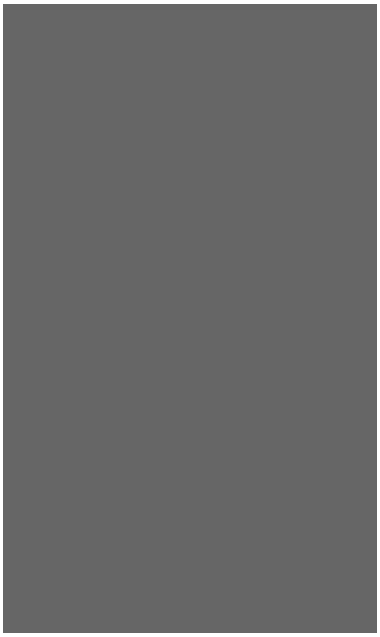
John Corbett



THREATS THAT MATTER; CURTSY; WHAT THIS Is GOING To SUPPOSE To MEAN; FUNNYBIRD SONG; OUTSIDE THE CITY; ART IN HEAVEN; RAWALPINDI BLUES; STICKS IN THE MUD; THERE AREN'T THESE THINGS QUESTIONABLE ALL OVER; LES PARAMEDICAUX ERO-TIOUES; JUBILEE; ON THE WAY To ELSEWHERE AND HERE; INEXPLICABLY; POEM FOR GRETCHEN RUTH; JUST WHEN I THOUGHT; THIS DEDICATION; THREATS THAT COUNT; WHAT THIS WAS GOING To SUPPOSE To MEAN; BREAKFAST; SNOW VARIATIONS ON DARN IT!; DARN IT!; ROUTE DOUBT; ASK ME IF You KNOW; THOSE SWEET BLUE OLIVES OF BOMBAY; HELLO; MRS. DRESSUP; THIRD WORLD Two MEDLEY; BREAKFAST (LATE); THE PLEASE FASTEN YOUR SEAT-BELT SIGN; TESTING TESTING; DARN IT! REPRISE (DowN IN BACK!); THREATS THAT CAN'T READ; C'ETAIT DANS LA NUIT. (46:56/50:23) **Personnel**: A cast of thousands, including John Tchicai, Jack Bruce, Carla Bley, Don Pullen, Derek Bailey, Robert Wyatt, Henry Threadgill, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, John Oswald, and Kip Hanrahan.

* * * *

Kip Hanrahan's most rewarding productions to date (*Tete a Tete*, *Desire Develops An Edge*) have caught vastly disparate musicians, singers, songs, styles, and genres in a giant spider web of Latin percussion. *Darn It!* is more like a strand than a web; it strings together an outrageous number of artists performing one after another in a polyglot line that stretches from Paul Bley's solo-piano "Threats That Matter" through funky dance numbers by Greg "Iron Man" Tate to a duet by trombonist Roswell Rudd and Canadian poet Paul Haines, "C'Etait Dans La Nuit." Even its beautiful package,



designed by artist/filmmaker/musician Michael Snow (who also contributes a lovely piano piece) enforces the compilation's linearity, unfolding into a long accordion of personnel and poetry.
Haines is the through-line. His poetry has been the basis for other musical adaptations, such as Carla Bley's *Escalator Over The Hil*l and most recently Curlew's *A Beautiful Western Saddle*. Highlights include Danish saxophonist John Tchicai with Andrew Cyrille ("Those Sweet Blue Olives Of Bombay"), Robert Wyatt's lilting voice echoed with soprano lines by Evan Parker ("Curtsy"), and John Oswald's music-box cut-up collage ("Funnybird Song"). Some links are tenuous, almost untenable, like the transition from Derek Bailey's gruff reading over guitar splinters ("Art In Heaven") to "Rawalpindi Blues." But for the most part, *Darn It!* overcomes stylistic impediments successfully, revelling in the way Haines' terse writing can endure so many different kinds of interpretation.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Floatsam & Jetsam
1994

Robert Wyatt

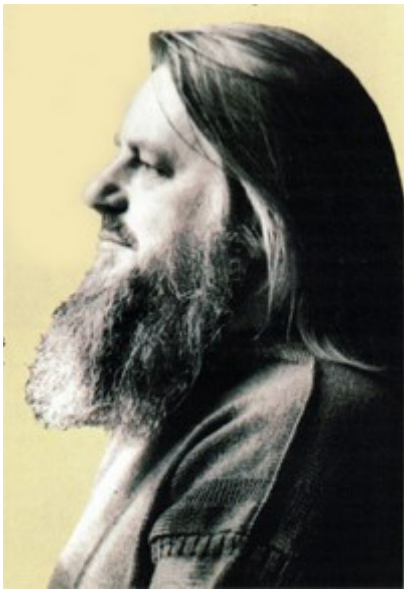
More information about this album

ROCKSOUND - N° 18 - octobre 1994

Robert Wyatt - Flotsam Jetsam (Rough Trade/Virgin)

Yannick Bourg

Le papa de Robert Wyatt était un cas. Il évitait les compartiments non-fumeurs dans les trains, parce qu'ils "sentaient l'urine" et craignait que l'encre des journaux anglais de droite ne l'empoisonnât. Cet homme que Robert regrette, on aurait aimé l'aimer. Heureusement, son fils a de qui tenir. Le sens de l'humour, de l'amitié et la volonté d'un changement du monde ne l'ont jamais quitté.



Cette compilation en apporte une nouvelle affirmation en dix-huit manifestations de 1968 à 1989. Il y a là la joie de retrouver ses amis et de travailler ensemble (Kevin Ayers, Lol Coxhill, Peter Blegvad...)- Des pièces rares, inédites ou introuvables : le swing fragile dans un rythm'n'blues de traviole avec Jimi Hendrix à la basse ("Slow walkin' talk") ; l'approximation touchante, les tremblements vocaux qui annoncent "Rock bottom" ("God song/Fol de Rol", un univers se crée) ; les expérimentations parfois un brin crispantes des 70's; un sourire pas mièvre, la joie, la déconnade, des bruits de bouche ("A little something", "Soprano/Apricot jam") ; l'amour du jazz ("Locomotive" de Thelonius Monk, adapté a capella) et du Sud (instrumentaux pour un documentaire TV espagnol, participation au groupe Claustrophobia) ; un extrait d'une longue pièce ("Will of the people") sur les grèves générales de 1926 ou cette chanson de la fin du 19e avec des arrangements cuivrés pour grand-orchestre, ou encore "The wind of change" avec les Swapo Singers (arrangé et produit par Jerry Dammers, ex-Specials) ; et en une minute comme en presque douze, avec trois fois rien ou en grande pompe, un homme de partout et de nulle part donne son cœur sans arrière-pensée. On aimerait pouvoir en dire autant plus souvent.

BIG BANG - N° 8 - novembre 1994

Flotsam & Jetsam (Rough trade)

Aymeric Leroy

Une optique radicalement différente a présidé à la conception de cette seconde compilation, conçue d'ailleurs plus comme une annexe sonore à la récente biographie de Mike KING, qui a sélectionné les morceaux et, dans la plupart des cas, a déniché les bandes souvent perdues dans des endroits difficilement imaginables.
Qu'il s'agisse des styles abordés ou de la qualité sonore, nous avons droit à toutes sortes de choses. La seule cohérence de ce CD se situe au niveau de l'ordre chronologique... et de l'intérêt musical.
Flotsam & Jetsam n'est pas une collection de chutes de studio. C'est plutôt un coup de projecteur sur bien des zones d'ombre de la carrière de WYATT. De son association à la scène jazz improvisée à ses jams avec Loi COXHILL ou SLAPP HAPPY, en passant par ses premiers enregistrements solo (effectués fin 68 chez son ami Jimi HENDRIX) et les sessions BBC de MATCHING MOLE, sans oublier quelques inédits de choix, dont ce magnifique 'Turn Things Upside Down" jazzy de The HAPPY END, voici le complément idéal de *Going Back A Bit* ...

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

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HOME



Going Back A Bit: A Little History Of Robert Wyatt
1994

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

THE WIRE - ISSUE 125 - JULY 1997

Robert Wyatt: Going Back A Bit - A Little History of Robert Wyatt (VIRGIN CDVM 9031 CD)

Jonathan Romney



25 years ago, when Soft Machine were elbowing aside the canon walls by playing at the Proms, Robert Wyatt was seen as one of those wry young men right out on the wild frontier, smirking over the barricades Now, beloved and respected, he's out there still, but the frontier looks more like a safe secluded margin, and the devilish smirk looks more like the beatific beam of some contented, if sometimes testy, old uncle. For a few years now, every time Wyatt has made a record, you end up glad that he's there (even though it probably wouldn't have made any difference if he hadn't been). There's nothing wrong with that - one of the prime values of the marginal is that it should at times claim its right to be superfluous.

It is easy to forget what a sublime irritant Wyatt has always been at his best - the gobstopper in the cheek of 'alternative' pop. *Going Back A Bit* is somewhat fractured, covers some obvious ground, and doesn't really have a story to tell; but it has its moments, and that's all it purports to provide It contains all of the peerless *Rock Bottom*, for example, but out of sequence, which throws its disturbing narrative cohesion way out of kilter [t has two awful, hyperventilating collaborations with Mike Mantler, and one sublime one (the fatter from his *Some Have No Speech*) It also has the most tantalising reminder (three tracks) of Matching Mole, and one track ("Moon In June") from Soft Machine - a 13 minute *Top Gear* version that remains a last word in rambling self-referential pop Add extracts from *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, a couple of tracks from the last Rough Trade LP proper, *Dondestan*, and you get a fascinating but muddled jigsaw.

If there's a key piece here to build a picture round, it's in the pairing

of I'm A Believer" and "Yesterday Man", deeply radical gestures in 1974 from a man who'd staked out his place as being as wilfully avant garde as you could be and still get played on Radio One. It was little short of heresy for a performer with Wyatt's pedigree to do an absolutely unironic, wilfully poppy rereading of a Monkees number, still less to get on *Top Of The Pops* with it. Which is perhaps why he had to pay by not doing so well with his (even better, brisker) follow-up, an obscure Chris Andrews hit. But clearly those two records taught a lot about reclaiming pop history to certain, more regular habitues of the Top Ten - well, Brian Eno and Bryan Ferry, anyway.

That was only a passing blip in Wyatt's career. His real unchallenged glory was *Rock Bottom*, and despite some moments of brilliance since (eg the Rough Trade singles not included here, especially his cover of Chic's "At Last I Am Free"), that IP's febrile intensity has been lacking. Or maybe it's more a feeling of unity, of consistent purpose. Mind you, we probably wouldn't look for that even in long-running artists who have a more solid oeuvre - Van Morrison, say - and we shouldn't look for it in Wyatt. He's set himself up as a player of fragments, a character actor in sporadic movies (his own or others') that don't always do him justice. Just about everything here does that, but be warned: as the title says, it's only a *little* history.

BIG BANG - N°8 - NOVEMBRE 1994

Robert Wyatt: Going Back A Bit - A Little History of Robert Wyatt (Virgin)

Aymeric Leroy

Le caractère 'officiel' de cette première compilation ne doit pas minimiser son intérêt, tant il est appréciable de retrouver, sur un seul et même coffret, certains des plus grands classiques de SOFT MACHINE, MATCHING MOLE et Robert VVYATT, ainsi que ses contributions les plus marquantes aux oeuvres d'autres musiciens.
C'est d'ailleurs ce dernier chapitre qui procurera le plus d'heureuses surprises à ceux qui ne connaissent que ses albums solo. II faut particulièrement signaler les titres extraits de ses collaborations avec le couple Mike MANTLER-Carla BLEY, et notamment *The Hapless Child* (1976). Un classique méconnu que ce splendide album, proposant une musique indéniablement progressive, autant dans l'esprit que la lettre. La voix étrange de WYATT s'adapte admirablement aux ambiances surréalistes de MANTLER, interprétées par un 'supergroupe' du label ECM (Carla BLEY donc, ainsi que Terje RYPDAL, Steve SWALLOW et Jack DeJOHNETTE). Une petite perle à redécouvrir dans son intégralité!
L'essentiel du coffret demeure malgré tout consacré aux albums de WYATT, avec bien sûr de très larges extraits de son chef-d'oeuvre, *Rock Bottom* (dont cinq des six pièces sont présentées), et du successeur controversé de celui-ci, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975), qui montrait un WYATT attiré par des contrées plus proches du jazz et du minimalisme. En ce qui me concerne, l'intérêt du disque tenait surtout au magnifique "Muddy Mouth", où Fred FRITH accompagnait au piano les vocalises de WYATT. Hélas, ce bijou brille par son absence... De *Nothing Can Stop Us*, nous n'avons droit qu'à "Arauco", alors que des titres comme "Strange Fruit", "At Last I Am Free" ou "Shipbuilding" comptent parmi les interprétations les plus bouleversantes du chanteur. ROUGH TRADE n'aurait-elle qu'entrebâillé sa porte aux compilateurs de VIRGIN ? *Old Rottenhat* n'est carrément pas représenté. Deux titres (peut-être pas les plus réussis là non plus) de l'excellent *Dondestan* de 1991 sont

néanmoins présents.
Restent les raretés et les inédits. Concernant les premières, la compilation remplit bien son but, avec notamment "I'm A Believer" / "Memories" (1974), la version de ce dernier titre étant sans conteste la plus belle, grâce notamment au violon de Fred FRITH, "Yesterday Man", qui figurait sur l'excellente compilation *V* de VIRGIN. Quant aux inédits, nous ne sommes pas vraiment gâtés, mais après tout ce n'est pas le but de ce coffret. Passons sur la version inédite de "Sonia" pour nous pencher sur la grosse surprise du coffret : une version live de "Calyx" où WYATT est accompagné par un backing-band de rêve : Dave STEWART (fender rhodes), Hugh HOPPER (b) et Laurie ALLAN (d) !!! De toute évidence, il s'agit d'un extrait du fameux concert de Drury Lane en 1974... Peut-on espérer voir sortir l'intégralité de cette prestation en CD ???
Finissons en parlant des deux formations dont fit partie Robert WYATT avant sa carrière solo : SOFT MACHINE et MATCHING MOLE. Le choix des compilateurs n'est pas spécialement représentatif, puisqu'il s'est porté sur les morceaux chantés, minoritaires dans les deux cas, le premier étant organisé autour du piano électrique de Dave MacRAE et de la guitare saturée de Phil MILLER; quant au second, peut-on vraiment définir un style sans devoir présenter plusieurs morceaux ? La version de 'The Moon In June" (12 minutes) est malgré tout à sa place ici, car ce morceau symbolise les débuts de la carrière solo de WYATT (c'était sa face solitaire sur l'album Third).
A l'arrivée, malgré les critiques que ce genre de compilation attire forcément, *Going Back A Bit* s'avère être un objet indispensable de par le panorama très complet qu'il propose de la carrière du "vieux barbu à la voix d'enfant"... On n'y est jamais très loin du progressif...

MELODY MAKER - 1994

Robert Wyatt: Going Back A Bit - A Little History of Robert Wyatt (Virgin)

Simon Reynolds

AT LAST, a long-overdue anthology of stuff and nonsense by one of the great eccentrics of English art-rock, Robert Wyatt. A miscellany of bits and bobs from solo albums and the shortlived outfit Matching Mole, its main selling-point, O punter, is that it makes available again, CD-sharp, 5/6 of his all-time 1974 classic Rock Bottom. But infuriatingly, not only is the album's original sequence jumbled up, for no apparent reason, but one track is shunted onto the second disc, so that you can't even reprogram it into the correct sequence. And one of the best is left off altogether.
With most albums this wouldn't matter a jot, but Rock Bottom is structured around a compelling emotional/musical narrative – it's a complex allegory of Wyatt's disablement (he tumbled out of a window during a wild party), his subsequent emotional regression, and his slow recovery. Even in the wrong order, Rock Bottom dazzles: it's a masterpiece of oceanic rock to rival Buckley's Starsailor, A.R. Kane's 69, maybe even Davis' In A Silent Way. On 'Last Straw', aqueous keyboards, refractory guitars and imagery like "seaweed tangled in a home from home" conjure up a poignant vision of the amniotic heaven of the briny deep. 'Sea Song' begins as an eerie serenade to a mermaid, then Wyatt spirals off into soul-harrowing scat-falsetto aquabatics.
'Alifib' is Wyatt at his lowest ebb, gasping out tiny breaths of anguish amidst a lachrymal sound-web of harmonium, while 'Alifie' sees him reduced to baby-talk drivel as his dependence on his wife Alfie

deepens. "I can't forsake you or forsqueak you, Alifie, my larder", dribbles Wyatt; eventually she puts her foot down – 'I'm NOT your larder'. This is the turning point, the first step on the road to recovery, and the (original) album ends with the wonderful eco-terrorist ditty 'Little Red Riding Hood', with Ivor Cutler ranting about how he lies down in the road to stop the cars: "yeah me and the hedgehog busting tyres all day long".
Wyatt emerged, via the Soft Machine, from the late '60s/early '70s Canterbury scene, along with Caravan, Gong, Kevin Ayers, Egg etc. As well as an interest in bending rock form in all manner of jazzy-folky-weirdy ways, what these groups shared was a very English whimsy – at once their charm and their liability. And so on the 13 minute 'Moon In June', Wyatt extemporises about the joys of doing a session for the Beeb, while 'Soup Song' is sung from the point of view of one of its reluctant ingredients, a slice of bacon. Even Wyatt's lovesongs are skewered by irony. In the wonderfully sentimental 'O Caroline', Wyatt warns his sweetheart "if you call this sentimental crap you'll make me mad", while 'Calyx' is full of oddly phrased praise: "close inspection reveals you're in perfect nick".
Wyatt's wonderful voice is why he gets away with it whereas, say, Kevin Ayers mostly grates: he always sounds simultaneously wry and earnest, ironic and heart-felt. Damp, lugubrious, resolutely colloquial, totally unrock'n'roll (like a cross between Peter Skellern and Roland Kirk), Wyatt's voice could be the closest thing to an authentic "English soul" this nation's produced.

MOJO - August 1994

Robert Wyatt: Going Back A Bit - A Little History of Robert Wyatt (Virgin)

Richard Cook

HE IS A GREAT ENGLISHMAN, a pragmatic jazz buff, a witty and wise lyricist, an ingenious instrumentalist; but it's by his singing that Robert Wyatt will be remembered. In that eerie, colloquial voice, Wyatt has distilled his singular contribution to rock's beleaguered soul. He can sing as high as Smokey Robinson, as plaintively as Ben E. King, yet he is as remote from their tradition as, say, Ian Hunter.

On much of this collection, Wyatt is singing words that are a step away from mere nonsense and rhyme. But when he sings those few lines at the heart of 'Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road' (mistitled here, by the way), which is about rain falling on the garden of England, it almost sounds like a lament for a lost empire. No wonder Elvis Costello's melancholy masterpiece, 'Shipbuilding', suited him so well.

Not that Wyatt would ever think of mourning imperial decline. Whether as the drummer for the earliest Soft Machine and their spin-off Matching Mole, or the genial balladeer of 'Arauco' and 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin'', he's always worn politics on his sleeve, even if he sounds like the tenderest of hard-liners. A concern for justice imbues all the music that he has arranged and sung. One always hears Wyatt as a member of a group, rather than a singer with accompanists: his jazz leanings dissolved the brute pecking order of the rock group, and have saxophonists and guitarists and drummers in a democratic alliance. It's appropriate that Going Back A Bit – A Little History Of Robert Wyatt starts with a BBC version of the Softs' old classic 'Moon In June', with lyrics adapted for John Peel's Top Gear circumstances: this edition of the Machine, with Mike Ratledge and Hugh Hopper helping Robert to burn off the barriers between

jazz group and rock band, was crucial in suggesting ways that rock could accommodate the braininess of jazz without surrendering either playfulness or a visceral impact (and if you doubt this group's ability to be visceral, check out Ratledge's fuzztoned organ solos – a fine memento of another lost figure). A pity, though, that this version is finally something of a dud: Wyatt sounds terribly off-key throughout.

Matching Mole's three tracks here include the lovely 'O Caroline', a deliberate undercutting of the kind of lyrics that Wyatt had already guyed on the earlier track: it's the timbre of his voice that identifies the emotion in the song, a man trying to say something to a woman without sounding like a romantic twit. This is English reserve surfacing as honest, tongue-tied bewilderment at your own emotions. Still, Matching Mole were trying to be as political as their later offspring, Crass: they called one of their albums Little Red Record and had Maoist cover art to go with it. But everything changed when Robert fell out of a window in 1973 and found himself confined to a wheelchair.

He then made his two mid-'70s albums, Rock Bottom and Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard, which are the core of this compilation. The first album is, indeed, here in its entirety (aside, alas, from the extraordinary 'Little Red Riding Hood Hits The Road') although the sequencing has been jumbled. Robert called them "songs and drones", set around the lilting buzz of his cheap electric organ, performed by friends from the Canterbury school of rock groups which Soft Machine had spawned some years earlier. Though the lyrics are sometimes epigrammatic or gobbledgooked into near-nonsense, they clearly document his pain and dependence on wife Alfie. 'Team Spirit' especially is a cruel, pitiless self-examination. He sings them and scats around the words with a kind of anti-virtuosity: you hear the effort in his vocals, but also the inventiveness and skills of a musician who started out by loving Mose Allison, Thelonious Monk and Sonny Rollins.

More than that, Wyatt makes sure the music is a fascinating blend of rock and jazz that has seldom been heard from since on British records. When punk wiped out the fatuous excesses of art-rock, it also killed the possibility of making more records like this, the sense of great players – Hopper, tenor saxophonist Gary Windo, the flutteringly beautiful trumpet of Mongezi Feza – being experimental and dissonant and still making it work within the context of what are unequivocal rock records, albeit of a maverick nature. Improvisation has long since left rock playing, disdained as empty showmanship, but Wyatt proposed a music that remains unexploited by the most inventive of acid-jazz groups. Even when he goes for a "pure" jazz, as with his arrangements of Feza's gorgeous 'Sonia' or Charlie Haden's 'Song For Che', he confines them to pop-single length. And then he made a couple of great pop singles, remakes of 'I'm A Believer' (drivingly rhythmic, with nutty guitar fills by Fred Frith) and 'Yesterday Man' (heartbreakingly desolate and a complete antithesis to Chris Andrew's original).

The remaining nine tracks are bits and pieces from a career that has never quite mustered the urgency that could have propelled him into making another album to equal those earlier two. The Michael Mantler and Carla Bley tunes that he signs on, the sparkly arrangement of 'Arauco', the lonely fragment of 'Lisp Service' and the rousing finale of 'The Internationale' are jigsaw pieces from an observer who has had little choice but to be passive.

It's been good, though, to have Robert back again in recent times, since such a piercingly intelligent musician should never stop making music, and this lumpy, engaging patchwork will remind many of a time when rock had real margins to work in.

More information about this album



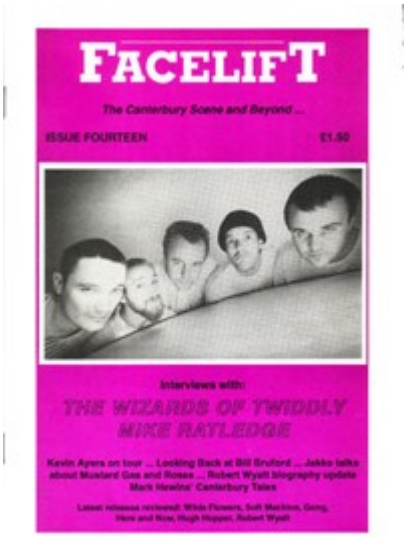
Tales Of Canterbury
1994

The Wilde Flowers

More information about this album

FACELIFT -Issue 14 - June '95

The Wilde Flowers - Voiceprint VPB 123CD



This is the album we've all been waiting to hear - an album of songs which takes us back a couple of years further from even the earliest Soft Machine and Caravan recordings. For those of you not familiar with the story, The Wilde Flowers were the first 'Canterbury' band, a band of shifting lineups throughout mid to late Sixties who included future Softs members Kevin Avers, Robert Wyatt and Hugh Hopper, as well as the entire cast of Caravan. They also included Hugh's brother Brian, the only constant member in the band. And it's really Brian's story, as those who got the accompanying CD booklet will appreciate.

I'd heard some very scratchy Flowers demos on a tape a few years back, and was more curious than hopeful about the quality of material on the CD. The first surprise is that there are 22 tracks. The music I'd heard was a batch of six songs from 1965/6, and assumed that was it. In fact, far from it.

The second surprise is quite how good some of the music is. Again, I'd been hoping for little more than an interesting archive document with maybe some early versions of Soft Machine songs thrown in as a bonus. There are, in fact a vast amount of 'new' songs, whilst more familiar ones take on radically different arrangements. The album can be broken down into essentially four periods: the demos from 1965 from two bands that included Richard Sinclair, both Hoppers, Robert Wyatt and contrasting vocalists Graham Flight and Kevin Avers; a large collection from 1966 which are dominated by Robert Wyatf s voice; Brian Hopper's Zobe recordings; and a reconvening in 1969 to record demos for the Hopper brothers. Whilst the last two sessions both went under different names, they essentially involved Wilde Flowers musicians and music.

The 1965 material was largely familiar to me. Two R'n'B covers (Mose Allison's 'Parchman's Farm'; Chuck Berry's 'Almost Grown') are steady and unremarkable, maybe reflecting the Wilde Flowers likely set list at that time, but already the prolific Hugh Hopper writing machine was underway. The instrumental work through 'Memories' may not be the most striking of versions, but it shows a highly developed writing talent three years before Hugh Hopper joined the Soft Machine...

One song from '65 I hadn't heard was 'It's What I Feel', a very straight version of 'A Certain Kind', sung by a very young Richard Sinclair. Good to hear the Sinclair voice this far back, but, like 'Memories', it perhaps serves best to show quite how much Robert Wyatt had re-arranged a whole host of Flowers material by the time of Soft Machine Volume One or 'Moon In June'.

The 1966 tunes perhaps best show a band starting to find their own voice, and to these ears represent a quantum leap from the '65 band.' Richard Coughlan had joined the band on drums, leaving Robert Wyatt free to sing, and it's the combination of Hugh Hopper's writing and Robert Wyatt's voice that make it work. 'No Game When You Lose' is a stunningly simple Sixties pop tune that shows enough of the booming Hopper bass line and melancholy Wyatt to give a hint of what was to come later. 'Never Leave Me', with an unusual time signature underpinning the chorus, is another fine foretaste. We also see the Wyatt voice starting to find its range on 'Memories'.

Less memorable are the Zobe pieces, recorded in 1968 with Brian Hopper alongside Flowers singer Dave Lawrence. Interesting because they feature perhaps the most sophisticated instrumentation of the whole CD (thanks largely to Brian Hopper's sax and flute-remember that Soft Machine's 'Volume Two' was round about this era), but also the weakest vocals.

Dominating the album is the classy 1969 session, and Voiceprint, no fools, have recognised this by beginning and ending the CD with tracks from this. 'Impotence', a Hugh Hopper song, can be heard, in rougher sound, in the midst of the 1966 songs, but as track one it has enormous impact - it could be a classic Caravan tune, backed by a very familiar Pye Hastings guitar sound, but the high-ended vocals are Robert Wyatt's domain. Track 22 is, for me, the best-ever cut of 'Memories', and I can't think of a better example of the Wyatt voice. With Mike Ratledge providing some jazz piano chords not heard on any other version and Wyatt's voice at its most haunting, it has a deliciously sleazy jazzbarfeel. These 1969 songs (which also include Hugh Hopper's 'She Loves To Hurt', with fine Pye Hastings vocals and Brian Hopper's more adventurous 'The Big Show') also benefit from the best sound quality of the album and a moving rota of musicians that include the Hopper brothers, Pye Hastings, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge and even, supposedly, Kevin Ayers, who was hanging around the studio at the time and presses down a solitary organ note at the end of The Big Show'.

OK, so this CD is essentially a collection of demos by musicians with their most creative years ahead of them, and the quality of the sound and maybe the musicianship reflects this. However, no student of the Canterbury school would want to be without it for an insight into an entire musical scene. Not to mention a significant number of previously unheard tunes from the pens of Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt. And, in the case of 'Impotence' and 'Memories', songs worth the CD cover price alone.

Brian Hopper's accompanying 28-page booklet comprises an in-depth look at the history of the Wilde Flowers including archive photos and details of all the recording sessions and line-ups of the band. It's an essential companion to the CD, and any readers who've seen only the CD should write to Voiceprint to obtain the missing link.

REVUE & CORRIGEE - N° 23 - mars 1995

The Wilde Flowers - Tales Of Canterbury - Voiceprint - VP 123

Pierre Durr



Certains labels s'accrochent aux musiques progressives des années 60 et surtout des années 70. Pourquoi pas. De bonnes choses sont parues pendant ces années. Et d'autres ne le furent d'ailleurs jamais. Alors, que Voiceprint les édite ou les réédite, quoi de plus louable. Même si un tri s'impose. Ainsi, tout amateur de la scène de Canterbury ne peut que souscrire à l'édition de THE WILDE FLOWERS (notamment l'édition limitée sous forme de carnet avec le récit de leur histoire par Brian Hopper. Pépinière de musiciens qui s'illustreront au sein de Soft Machine (Wyatt. H. Hopper. K. Ayers) ou de Caravan (Pye Hastings, Richard Sindair, Richard Coughlan), c'est à dire deux des meillleures formations de l'époque, les WILDE FLOWERS combinent l'esprit pataphysicien wyattien et/ou caravannière et les couleurs encore très sixties d'un blues anglais raffiné.

[...]

MOJO - APRIL 1995

Wilde Flowers: Tales Of Canterbury: The Wilde Flowers Story (Voiceprint)

Rob Chapman

Caravan, Soft Machine, Kevin Ayers & The Whole World: all grew from the stem of the legendary Wilde Flowers. Rob Chapman tells their story.

BURIED DEEP IN THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND IS A RICH musical lineage. It begins with The Soft Machine and Caravan, takes in Kevin Ayers and The Whole World, the pre-*Tubular* Mike Oldfield, Daevid Allen’s Gong, and the solo works of Robert Wyatt, then hits public indifference head on in the late ‘70s.

However, if one takes the Steve Hillage/System 7 connection into account, and the fact that ambient technoids Ultramarine have

featured both Ayers and Wyatt on recent releases, it becomes obvious that there's life in the old legacy yet. They may not be about to place a commemorative blue plaque on the A1 to honour the road sign which bears the legend "Hatfield and the North", but plainly some sort of critical resurgence is under way.

The Canterbury bands were an inconsistent and eclectic lot. Kevin Ayers and The Whole World rarely captured on record what blinding innovation they were capable of live. All talk of Gong concentrates on the pot-headed pixie nonsense of the mid-`70s and neglects to mention what a seminal space-rock prototype they were prior to the arrival of woolly hats and woolly minds. Soft Machine began as avant-garde explorers but ended up as a finishing school for ponderous jazz rock fusionists. Caravan by 1976 were releasing albums with titles like *Cunning Stunts*.

Long before any of this there was The Wilde Flowers, the oftmentioned but rarely heard outfit that effectively spawned them all. Now thanks to Voiceprint's *Tales Of Canterbury: The Wilde Flowers Story* you can listen to the whole legacy taking shape. Compiled by co-founder Brian Hopper from his dusty old collection of acetates and rehearsal tapes, the 22 tracks gathered here span the entire Wilde Flowers oeuvre from the quirky R&B covers of early 1965 right through to a 1969 reunion replete with assorted Softs and Caravan members.

The album – complete with the booklet of Hopper's memories which accompanies the first 2,000 copies – reminds you what a intricately intertwined unit the Canterbury family was. Members casually came and went. Third cousins twice removed and ex-roadies were drafted in at the drop of a hat. Kevin Ayers drifted off to the Balearics with a mad Australian pal of William Burroughs called Daevid Allen.

"The whole thing was very freewheeling," says Hopper. "But that was the nature of the Flowers – very fluid, not like most other bands who had a more regimented and conventional approach. Compared to most music scenes at that time our influences were pretty broad. We were quite conscious we were doing something different, and that probably prevented us from gaining more popularity at the time."

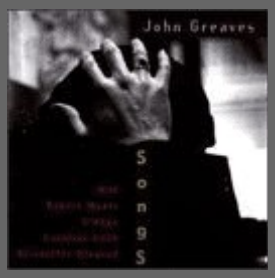
It is chiefly Wyatt's singing, along with Brian Hopper's guitar playing, that gives these tentative offerings their originality, offsetting standard beat group formulae with a unique vision of things to come. There was always a distinct Canterbury sound – droll, understated, aching with English melancholia. Two other exquisite voices from the Canterbury chorus also get a first outing here. On 'It's What I Feel', Richard Sinclair unveils the wayward choirboy enunciation he later perfected on Caravan's quintessential *Land Of Grey And Pink*. And on 'She Loves To Hurt', fellow Caravan founder Pye Hastings offers conclusive proof that he inherited both larynx and phrasing from the same gene pool as Wyatt.

The road from Canterbury was paved with wilful indulgence. Some routes led to innovation, others to ennui. Most of it is worthy of reissue. Hopefully there's more stashed away in Brian Hopper's attic. In the meantime this compilation should be essential listening for anyone who wishes to trace the exploratory roots of the early English Underground.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

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Floatsam & Jetsam
1994

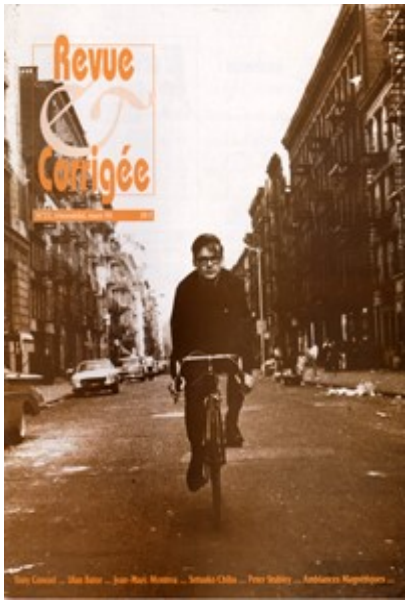
Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

REVUE & CORRIGEE - N° 27 - mars 1996

John Greaves "Songs" Resurgence RES 112 / Voiceprint.

Pierre Durr



Compositeur fin et nuancé, aux accents lyriques bien prononcés, John GREAVES est aussi un chanteur à la voix sensuelle, grave et profonde. Et pourtant, pour bien servir ses compositions (certaines d'entre elles figuraient déjà sur d'autres enregistrements, tel "Kew Rhône", "Accident" ou "Parrot Fashions", il n'hésite pas à faire appel à d'autres interprètes, tels Susan Belling. Caroline Lœb, Kristoffer Blegvad et surtout Robert Wyatt. Le parti pris relativement acoustique et sobre de l'instrumentation adopté pour cet enregistrement, ajouté à la reprise de certains anciens titres, renforce un peu le côté nostalgique et mélancolique qui transparaît naturellement des compositions de John Greaves. Ce dernier, désormais bien éloigné des expériences sonores et de l'improvisation (qui fut aussi son apanage, comme en témoigne la réédition des "Concerts" de Henry Cow!), sait pourtant garder un charme indéniable, dénotant le caractère intemporel de ses compositions.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises



Live At The Paradiso

Soft Machine

More information about this album

RYTHMES CROISÉS - 2 octobre 2018

SOFT MACHINE – Live at The Paradiso 1969 (1995, Voiceprint / 1996, Blueprint / 2015, Retroworld)

Stéphane Fougère

Article réalisé à partir de chroniques parues dans les revues TRAVERSES et TANGENTES, dûment remaniées et complétées en 2018.

L'enregistrement inclus dans ce CD n'est sans doute pas une nouveauté pour les fans ultra de SOFT MACHINE puisqu'il a déjà circulé depuis des lustres sous forme de disque pirate. Sa publication officielle avait même été envisagée à l'époque, l'autorisation avait été requise auprès des membres du groupe, ceux-ci ont refusé, jugeant que ce n'était pas utile ; le disque est sorti quand même ! Depuis, on ne compte plus ses rééditions en LP et en CD, et il aura fallu attendre un bon quart de siècle pour qu'une parution officielle voit le jour, celle-ci, avec de savoureuses notes de livret rédigées par Hugh HOPPER "himself", qui disent entre autres : « De nombreux "bootleggers" ont gagné leur vie avec cette musique. Maintenant c'est à notre tour, les gars ! »

Bien sûr, les fans auraient préféré avoir quelque chose de plus inédit, mais il ne faut pas rêver : les enregistrements live des premières années de SOFT MACHINE ne sont pas légion, et celui-ci reste, en termes de qualité sonore et artistique, le plus fréquentable puisqu'il s'agit d'une captation de console. Ceux qui ignoraient son existence n'en finiront pas d'écarquiller les yeux et les oreilles : oui, c'est bien d'un concert daté de 1969 dont il s'agit, soit de l'époque où SOFT MACHINE n'avait pas encore fait le choix d'une orientation "à-jazz-toute !" strictement instrumentale et incluait encore une dimension pop surréaliste et une énergie rock brute de fonte.

Petit rappel : en 1969, SOFT MACHINE existant depuis environ trois ans, avait déjà pondu un single et un album et s'était fait connaître outre-Atlantique en assurant les premières parties du Jimi HENDRIX BAND (à la demande de Jimi en personne). Revers de la médaille : la vie sur les routes avait annihilé les velléités créatrices des membres du groupe, qui n'avaient plus le temps d'écrire de nouveaux morceaux, et avait épuisé leurs forces tant physiques que mentales. Du coup, Kevin AYERS avait préféré retourner se la couler douce aux Baléares, Mike RATLEDGE était retourné à Londres, et Robert WYATT est resté aux États-Unis concocter de savoureuses démos en vue

d’un album solo…

Bref, SOFT MACHINE en tant que tel avait cessé toute activité. C’était compter sans leur maison de disques Probe, qui a rappelé aux musiciens que leur contrat stipulait l’enregistrement d’un second album, coûte que coûte et plus vite que ça ! WYATT a rappelé RATLEDGE et tous deux ont fait appel à leur roadie Hugh HOPPER, qui avait déjà eu l’occasion d’assurer la basse sur de précédents concerts.

Ce qui ne devait être qu’un enregistrement répondant à une obligation contractuelle, dont les musiciens s’acquittent généralement avec une paresse d’inspiration parfaitement volontaire, s’est révélé un nouveau défi créatif dans l’évolution de la musique de SOFT MACHINE, le nouveau trio s’étant finalement pris au jeu. Du coup, le *Volume Two* de SOFT MACHINE s’inscrit dans la juste continuité musicale du *Volume One*, mais tire le propos encore un peu plus loin et révèle une alchimie aussi inattendue que brillamment opérante et redoutablement puissante entre HOPPER, RATLEDGE et WYATT.

Alors que ce disque devait être le chant du cygne de SOFT MACHINE, le trio, après l’avoir enregistré, a finalement repris la route des concerts en février 1969, d’abord à Londres et dans la province anglaise, puis à Paris en passant avant au Paradiso d’Amsterdam, que la radio néerlandaise VPRO a eu la bonne idée d’enregistrer. C’est cette bande qui est ici exhumée par Voiceprint.

Live at the Paradiso contient un set de quarante minutes de musique ininterrompue, en conformité avec la démarche adoptée par le groupe, typique d’une session jazz. L’intégralité du répertoire joué provient exclusivement du *Volume Two*, et une bonne partie des morceaux sont introuvables sur d’autres albums live, notamment ceux provenant de la suite qui remplit la face A de l’album studio, à savoir les *Rivmic Melodies*, qui ont été peu après remplacées par de nouveaux thèmes, comme *Facelift*, *Noisette*, *Backwards* ou *Moon in June*.

Pour autant, le trio ne se contente pas de jouer le *Volume Two* à l’identique de sa version studio. On se souvient que celle-ci comprenait en face A les *Rivmic Melodies*, soit un enchaînement de dix thèmes majoritairement composés par HOPPER et WYATT, tandis que la face B a pour titre générique *Esther’s Nose Job*. Les deux premières compositions y sont toutefois bien détachées du reste, et ce n’est qu’à partir de *Fire Engine Passing with Bells Clanging* que les morceaux s’enchaînent jusqu’au dernier, *10:30 Returns to the Bedroom*, formant la suite *Esther’s Nose Job* proprement dite, composée par Mike RATLEDGE.

Or, bien que prenant la forme d’un long set sans coupure, ce *Live at The Paradiso* offre comme autre surprise une interprétation du *Volume Two* qui ne respecte pas exactement les enchaînements présentés sur l’album. Par exemple, *Hibou, Anemone and Bear* (le premier morceau avec lequel SOFT MACHINE exploite les mesures impaires), à l’origine inclus dans les *Rivmic Melodies*, est ici pris en sandwich au beau milieu de *Fire Engine Passing with Bells Clanging*, et donc intégré à *Esther’s Nose Job* !

De fait, le set commence même avec le thème qui, sur *Volume Two*, suit *Hibou, Anemone and Bear*, à savoir *Hulloder*. On peut toutefois émettre quelques doutes sur le fait que ce morceau ait vraiment démarré le set, dans la mesure où il en manque déjà une bonne moitié. Sur *Volume Two*, *Hulloder* s’étale sur cinquante secondes ! Ici, sa durée est amputée de moitié (!!), et Robert WYATT n’y chante

que les deux ou trois dernières phrases. Curieuse entrée en matière ! Il y a fort à parier que le début du set soit en fait manquant sur la bande.

Après *Hulloder*, le trio déroule le reste des *Rivmic Melodies* dans l'ordre, s'attardant sur *Dada was Here*, qui bénéficie d'une séquence instrumentale plus développée, et le retour au thème *Pataphysical Introduction – Part II* est l'occasion d'un enchaînement inattendu avec le morceau qui débute la face B du *Volume Two*, *As Long as He Lies Perfectly Still* (dans lequel WYATT rend hommage à Kevin AYERS) qui, sans transition, débouche sur la suite *Esther's Nose Job*.

Par conséquent, ce *Live at the Paradiso* ne contient pas exactement l'intégralité du *Volume Two* puisque certains thèmes manquent à l'appel, certains pour des raisons techniques comme on l'a vu. On suppose que c'est en fait *Pataphysical Introduction – Part 1* qui a dû démarrer le set, peut-être suivi du *British Concise Alphabet.*

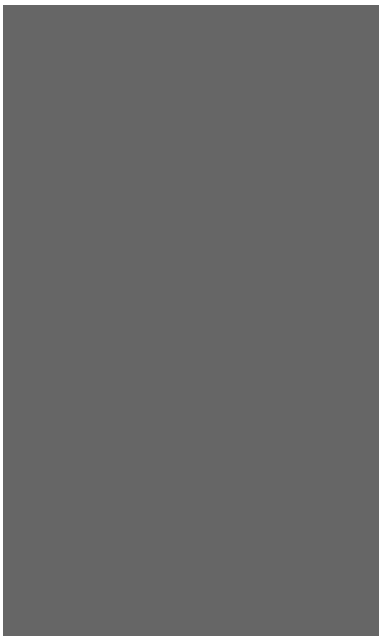
Par contre, on peut s'étonner de l'absence du dernier thème des *Rivmic Melodies*, *Out of Tunes*, un délire récréatif qui aurait pu être l'occasion d'un "climax" bruitiste en concert. L'autre grand titre manquant est *Dedicated to You but You weren't Listening*. Sur *Volume Two*, cette ballade fait fonction d'une délicate pause acoustique bienvenue, mais on voit mal comment elle aurait pu être casée dans le set live de SOFT MACHINE sans provoquer de cassure climatique fatale.

Tel quel, le set de SOFT MACHINE tend à illustrer la constance dans le déploiement de force sauvage et viscérale dont le trio était capable sur scène, d'autant qu'il jouait à fort volume, même si le mixage de console livré ici a tendance à en minimiser les effets. (Un enregistrement de salle aurait certainement mieux restitué cet aspect, mais n'en aurait pas forcément été plus écoutable…)

Malgré tout, il est difficile de ne pas être impressionné par l'épaisseur texturale de la musique de SOFT MACHINE sur ce live, dominée par l'orgue "fuzz" visqueux et aigre de Mike RATLEDGE. La basse tout aussi "fuzzée" et incisive de Hugh HOPPER ajoute un grain de curry qui ne passe pas complètement inaperçu dans les conduits auditifs, et pour cause ! Face à ces bâtisseurs de "Loudness War", Robert WYATT impose un "drumming" leste et foisonnant qui, sans tirer inopinément la couverture à lui, fait montre d'une persistance et d'une inventivité tout aussi remarquable qui trouvent leur point d'orgue lors d'une déviation soliste étendue sur *10:30 Returns to the Bedroom*.

Par contre, dans ce contexte fort en décibels, ses vocaux sont mis à rude épreuve et, entre autres imperfections que l'on pourra trouver dans l'interprétation du trio sur ce live, le placement et la justesse du chant ne sont pas les moins décelables. Plus nerveux que sur le disque studio, le chant de WYATT n'a pas la même saveur et, à plusieurs endroits, son chant semble être "à coté" du micro, certainement en raison de "loupés" dans le mixage. Mais il est clair que Robert WYATT émet quelques difficultés à assurer le chant conjointement à son jeu de batterie.

Du reste, certaines parties chantées sur l'album sont ici littéralement occultées : outre l'absence de la récitation du *British Alphabet*, sans doute trop acrobatique, on notera de même que les paroles de *Pig* (une apologie du naturisme…) sont passées à la trappe, rendant l'interprétation de la suite *Esther's Nose Job* quasi instrumentale, en dépit du maintien des onomatopées vocales de WYATT sur *A Door Opens and Closes*, un ingrédient qu'il continuera à utiliser encore un peu par la suite, mais dont les futures compositions de ses collègues ne tiendront hélas pas compte.



Quoi qu'il en soit, ce *Live at the Paradiso* constitue un pendant indispensable au *Volume Two*, dont il est une sorte de réverbération projetée dans un contexte scénique. Évidemment, certains arrangements n'y sont pas aussi subtils ou travaillés que le disque studio. Ce dernier avait notamment bénéficié du renfort des frères Brian et Hugh HOPPER aux cuivres sur certains thèmes (*Hibou, Anemone and Bear*, *Pataphysical Introduction – Part II*, *Orange Skin Food*…). Sur scène, le trio se livre "à nu", sans invités ni effets spéciaux de studio, et doit tant bien que mal négocier autrement son interprétation ; c'est ce qui fait l'intérêt d'une telle archive, en plus de la présence de certains morceaux qui ont été (trop ?) vite abandonnés.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews



Spaced
1996

Soft Machine

More information about this album

FACELIFT - Issue sixteen - January 1997

SOFT MACHINE – Spaced - Cuneiform Rune 90

Chris Bussicott

Just when one might imagine that the "Canterbury archive" releases might be starting to scrape the bottom of the barrel, along comes a release of such profound obscurity that I took literally a triple-take at the cover when I came across it in the racks of my favourite specialist London retailer. I mean, more than an hour of unreleased studio work from the 1969 Soft Machine, featuring Ratledge, Hopper and Wyatt that's not even hinted at in Mike King's definitive "Wrong Movements" book? Hard to believe but amazingly enough that's exactly what "Spaced" is.

The concise but informative notes (courtesy of Hugh Hopper and the producer Bob Woolford) in the CD booklet explain; "Spaced" was a "lunatic multi media show at the Roundhouse.... ballet dancers and ex-army gymnasts were choreographed to bound about all over a geodesic structure made of construction scaffolding... they wore wonderful rubber costumes with octopus suckers up and down their arms and legs." All to a taped Soft Machine soundtrack. Wow! I wish I'd been there, but after nearly three decades here's the next best thing - the sounds, if not the visuals, of "Spaced".

"Spaced" is divided into seven numbered sections. It kicks off logically enough with One, which is unmistakably vintage Soft Machine with its' fuzz bass and electric piano flourishes. Yet this is Soft Machine from a strange perspective, it's as if the sounds of the trio are present and correct, but without the purposeful drive or sense of melody of their most contemporary recordings ("Volume Two" and "Third"). The impression is one of stasis.

Two revolves around a repetitive eight note keyboard motif with cyclical drum pattern. Slowly, treated sounds and backwards tapes build up into a cacophonous swirl of sound - shades of John Lennons1 Mr Kite and the most overtly psychedelic noise here. Three is entirely tape work that reflects and extends the sound and tape treatments into what becomes effectively a short prototype of Backwards from "Third".

This leads into Four, which by its' positioning and length (half-an-hour plus) is the centrepiece of the recording. It's a densely avant-garde piece lead by organ squalls and free-form fuzz bass. The piece threatens repeatedly to break into a something with a more recognisable rhythm and direction but never quite makes it. It's the most "difficult" piece by Soft Machine I've yet heard.

Coming after such a long period of rumblings and squeakings Five is a real shock; it's recognisable as a tune! Led by electric piano and Brian Hoppers' jazzy treated sax, it's a short, relaxed piece with an only faintly lopsided rhythm to subvert things. It's the most accessible piece here, and after several listens remains my favourite. " Six starts out briefly sounding like a classic Soft Machine track (can't think which....) before a cut up collage of sound effects and tapes over a thunderous percussion track elbow such normality out of the way. It comes into startling focus with a featured extract from We Did It Again; a thrilling moment that's rather like hearing an old half-remembered favourite broadcast on some faint and unknown station as you twist the radio dial. It's well contrasted with the closing Seven, a rather beautiful backwards tape coda that provides clear pointers towards some of the most creative work of "Third".

"Spaced" is a major archive release, but it certainly isn't the one to recommend for people new to Soft Machine. It's a difficult work that makes demands on even a sympathetic listener what impresses most of all that back in 1969 this was commissioned for people to dance to!

SOUND PROJECTOR - 2nd Issue 1997

SOFT MACHINE – Spaced - USA Cuneiform Records
Rune 90 (1996)

An excellent 'rescued' item, *Spaced* was commissioned for a special happening at the Roundhouse in 1969, as part of the (ahem) thriving London Underground scene at that time, which might put it in a league with Conrad Schnitzler's pieces for art galleries, or perhaps the Pyramid label records which we look at elsewhere.



Note that it is not a live recording as such, rather a series of treated tapes to be used as background sounds. Here be the classic line up of Ratledge, Hopper and Wyatt, with added input from Brian Hopper on horns, a winning combo which could do little wrong. Soft Machine are well represented on their studio records, but I wonder if some listeners write them off as a fluffy English Pysche Canterbury scene combo? *Spaced* shows another vital side to them - dark and aggressive, in places verging on the chaotic, with a real bite and attack behind every minute of it. I hear a similar thing in one of my live bootlegs of the Softs, it's remarkable what power they summon up with just a trio of instruments. Particularly this must be due to Ratledge's work with his pedals and keyboard, both hands and feet brought into play in that very physical interlocking with his instrument, demonstrating his virtuoso control over volumes, textures, timing - pure abstract sound battles it out with brutal noise, and lovely melodies played at

top speed by his nimble digits. Wyatt is thrashing out an urgent time signature on the high hat, Hopper's bass just slides in like blobs of black treacle, and Ratledge sometimes simply sketches in the tune when he can. Only one fragment of a tune is familiar to these ears, and that radically reworked in the effortless way Ratledge was always so good at - as though he could play it in his sleep and was almost impatiently dispensing with the melodic component, so he could proceed to the more important substance of improvisation, and the deep interrogation of chords and sounds.

The icing on the cake is the lovely post-production interventions - carried out on quite primitive equipment it seems - including liberal use of backwards tapes, a device I can never hear enough of. Also proto-sampling, a track where their recording of 'I Did it Again' is crudely spliced in with new material, the rough tape edits creating an exciting abrasive effect. This work was done by Bob Woolford, who has also provided sleevenotes on how he made these loops. 'Rediscovery' projects of this kind are more than welcome, as they add another dimension to your understanding of a band infinitely.



RYTHMES CROISÉS - 2 octobre 2018

SOFT MACHINE – Spaced (1996, Cuneiform / Orkhêstra)

Stéphane Fougère

Article réalisé à partir de chroniques parues dans les revues TRAVERSES et TANGENTES, dûment remaniées et complétées en 2018.

Ce CD fut la première archive de SOFT MACHINE publiée par le label américain Cuneiform Records ; et c'est peu dire qu'il a dû faire l'effet d'une douche froide à ceux qui en ont fait l'acquisition et se sont risqués à son audition. Non que la qualité sonore soit exécrable – elle est même plutôt très bonne – mais le contenu musical n'est peut-être pas celui qui était attendu par les fans qui pensaient pouvoir écouter un autre concert "classique" du groupe dans sa version trio en 1969, dans la lignée du Live at the Paradiso. Las.

Composé à la demande du sculpteur, "performeur" et générateur de "happenings" Peter DOCKLEY, qui venait de travailler sur un spectacle de PINK FLOYD, Spaced est assurément le projet le plus expérimental dans lequel s'est impliqué SOFT MACHINE. Il ne s'agit pas à proprement parler d'un enregistrement de concert, mais il est en partie constitué de captations live (on y retrouve en filigrane quelques thèmes connus du groupe savamment métamorphosés) et a servi de support à une performance scénique.

Conçu par DOCKLEY comme un spectacle multimédia pour le Roudhouse, légendaire salle de concert londonienne en forme de

rotonde, Spaced mettaient en scène des danseurs ou danseuses classiques costumés en pieuvres de caoutchouc – avec ventouses de rigueur aux bras et aux jambes – aux prises avec d'anciens gymnastes militaires avec lesquels ils effectuaient une chorégraphie "bondissante" au sein d'un dôme géodésique construit avec des échafaudages. Une telle performance nécessitait bien évidemment un support musical aussi glauque et déjanté que possible, c'est pourquoi Peter DOCKLEY a fait appel à SOFT MACHINE.

Réuni dans un hangar des docks londoniens alors magistralement délabrés, le trio a de fait enregistré une heure et demie de musiques sur des bandes analogiques auxquelles il a ensuite fait subir, pendant une semaine, moult manipulations, notamment des montages en boucles, des inversions, des accélérations, le tout à grands coups de ciseaux. Mike RATLEDGE, Robert WYATT et Hugh HOPPER ont donné libre cours à leur propension pour ce type d'expérimentations très en vogue à l'époque, sollicitant leur ingénieur du son Bob WOOLFORD et ses magnétophones dernier cri. Dans le livret, WOOLFORD raconte qu'il avait même dû enrouler les bandes autour de bouteilles de lait dans son salon et ses escaliers… tout en surveillant le chat pour qu'il évite de les lécher !

Le CD ne restitue pas exactement l'intégralité de la bande conçue pour le spectacle. Quelques coupures ont été opérées (une introduction diffusée pendant l'arrivée du public), et certains "blancs", qui n'avaient plus de sens hors du contexte scénique, ont été supprimés, de manière à faciliter une écoute domestique de ce "flot" sonore.

Amalgamant des ambiances taciturnes, convulsives et nuageuses, Spaced s'étale sur sept pistes qui ont chacune un numéro pour tout titre.

Introduisant la "suite" tout en douceur, Spaced One peut être perçu comme un prototype de musique indus-ambient artisanale, avec ses nappes d'orgue et ses bourdons de basse auxquels s'ajoutent à la cantonade des frappes sèches et autres bruits parasites.

Spaced Two vient couper court à cette ambiance capiteuse avec une ligne d'orgue saturé et un motif rythmique nettement plus familier, déjà entendus chez SOFT MACHINE, et qui se mettent à tourner en boucles "terry-rileyennes".

Spaced Three est un interlude de drones usant à fond du procédé d'inversion de bande, puis c'est Spaced Four qui accapare l'auditeur et vampirise le disque du haut de ses 32 minutes ! Nous sommes ici au cœur même d'un bouillonnement musical qui mêle allégrement les bandes enregistrées en studio et des captations live antérieures, remontées, superposées et amalgamées pour engendrer un maelström magistral

. Les instruments du trio font l'objet de mutations soniques diverses : l'orgue de RATLEDGE décline plusieurs dialectes de saturation, acrimonieux ou bourdonnants, la basse de HOPPER se déforme et se distord en contorsions florissantes, et la batterie de WYATT déploie ses frénésies rythmiques. Des boucles de voix spectrales âprement passées à l'envers se font même entendre au milieu. Jusqu'auboutiste, Spaced Four est un flux continu délivrant une énergie à la sauvagerie graduelle et indomptable et donne l'impression de cueillir SOFT MACHINE lors d'une session privée improvisée à vocation défoulatoire et cathartique.

Spaced Five opère un contraste tout aussi saisissant avec ce qui précède, créant une atmosphère lounge avec le piano jazzy de RATLEDGE, les "tchi-tchis" des cymbales de WYATT et le saxophone languide de l'éternel collaborateur occasionnel Brian HOPPER.

Spaced Six nous replonge en pleine manipulation chaotique, avec ses sons d'orgue inversés desquels émergent des plans rythmiques de WYATT aux percussions, dont la montée en puissance

effervescente est stoppée net par un coup de cisaille très primitif.

Spaced Seven boucle la (les) boucle(s) en revenant à une ambiance brumeuse et glissante, très "chill-out" avant l'heure…

Comme on le voit, Spaced explore des terrains escarpés ou flottants qui ne sont pas d'une écoute aisée pour chacun, ni même récurrente pour les autres, à moins de sélectionner telle ou telle section, selon l'humeur du moment… Certains auront beau jeu de penser que s'il était paru à l'époque, après les deux premiers albums studio du groupe, Spaced aurait pu couler la carrière du groupe, et qu'il est bel et bien "le disque auquel on a échappé" !

Néanmoins, on aurait tort de l'appréhender comme une croûte "hors sujet" dans la discographie de SOFT MACHINE. Ce serait oublier un peu vite que le groupe avait déjà procédé à certaines improvisations, expérimentations et manipulations de studio, à dose certes plus homéopathique, dans certaines sections du Volume Two, et que d'autres allaient émailler les opus étirés de l'album Third (notamment Facelift et Out-Bloody Rageous), sans parler du disque solo de Hugh HOPPER, 1984. SOFT MACHINE n'a fait avec Spaced que pousser plus loin une démarche qu'il avait déjà entamée et qu'il n'a pas eu l'occasion de réitérer ensuite, mais qui a imprégné ses opus ultérieurs.

Spaced nage donc dans un artisanat avant-gardiste débauché et précurseur aux allures de "happening-soundtrack" qui brasse tout à tour l'improvisation jazzy déglinguée, le free-rock, l'électro-indus, l'ambient, la musique concrète et minimaliste, le rite chamanique, en fait tout vocabulaire sonore que l'on catalogue aujourd'hui dans les musiques nouvelles, à l'instar de la face de HENRY COW sur Greasy Truckers, du OM de John COLTRANE, de certains soli claviéristiques dissonants de SUN RA, de certains instrumentaux bien barrés de Frank ZAPPA, des soundscapes de ENO + FRIPP, ou encore du climat général que l'on trouve sur le controversé Neheh de MAG…, pardon, de VANDER/TOP/BLASQUIZ/GARBER.

Avec Spaced, on voit donc combien SOFT MACHINE mérite sa médaille de pionnier prophétique. Il suffit juste de se mettre en condition pour l'écouter, et d'avoir des envies d'espace sans filet…

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Shleep
1997

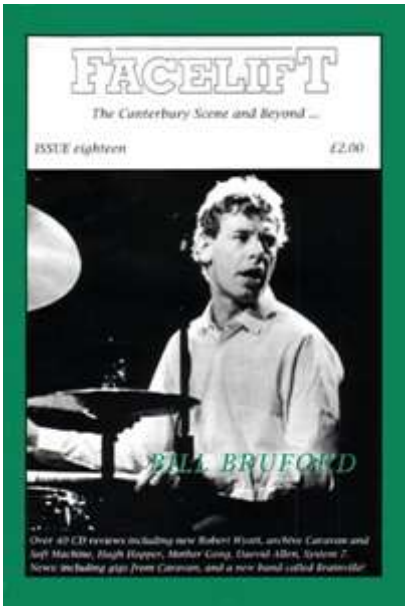
Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

FACELIFT - N° 18 - MAY 1998

Robert Wyatt / Shleep (Hannibal HNCD1418)

Phil Howitt



It only seems yesterday that 'Dondestan' marked Robert Wyatt's return to the recording studio - in reality, there has been probably as long a wait between albums this time as before. All of which underlines the fact that a new Robert Wyatt album is a rare and precious commodity.

If 'Dondestan' provided a welcome return to some of the styles that defined his two classic Seventies solo albums, it was still largely a solo album. 'Shleep' builds on this in calling in a number of guests, 'Rock Bottom' style..

Two tracks really stand out: 'Maryan', a gentle, evocative ballad co-written by Wyatt and guitarist Philip Catherine, but memorable not just for Its heartstopping vocal line, but the weaving violin solo of Chikako Sato. The dreamy, underwater feel of this track calls to mind so clearly, 20 or so years on, the "Rock Bottom tracks 'Sea Song' and 'A Last Straw'.

The other main highlight is totally different in conception: 'Blues In Bob Minor' Is a quite wonderful 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'-type rant - new words of course, delivered at mournful breakneck speed (which must be a first), breaking at the end of each verse for a honky-tonk piano break, a keyboard effect or a guitar riff from Paul Weller. This track breaks totally new ground for Robert Wyatt, apart maybe from the fact that, 'I'm A Believer'-style, he has once again taken a recognisable idiom and completely redefined it through his unique voice.

'Was A Friend', from memory, is the missing track from the Hopper/Sinclair 1983 sessions. Credited to Wyatt/Hopper, but performed here by Wyatt alone (with a little help from Alfreda Benge), Wyatt alone somehow recreates the sonic landscapes of

'Rock Bottom'. The tinkling piano, voice and percussion we might be familiar with, less so the rumbling bass, and the real revelation on this track (and others) is the trumpet work. Mongezi Feza's unique use of echoed effects on his brass works for 'Rock Bottom' has long been one of that album's abiding memories - scrabbling around in the credits to find who had so excellently carried on the tradition, I was amazed to find it was Robert Wyatt himself. Another string to the bow... No trumpet, but 'Alien', with its chattering percussion, interweaving vocal lines, simple piano chords, and some superb guitar effects from Phil Manzanera also transports the listener back to the unique soundscapes of 20 years before.

Free Will And Testament' you might remember as a doleful, keyboard-based piece from the first Hopper/Kramer album (with Wyatt as guest). This track is never destined to rouse an audience, but here lifts itself a beat or two for a much more satisfying rendition than the original, with Paul Weller adding slide guitar and backing vocals. The tracks mentioned above represent only half of this album's output - elsewhere, 'A Sunday In Madrid' is a gentler rant than 'Blues In Bob Minor', mainly notable for appearances by Eno and Evan Parker. 'Out of Season' and 'September the Ninth' are both briefer, mainly instrumental pieces, both taking their inspiration from the immediate environment of the Wyatt/Benge partnership. Both feature trombonist Annie Whitehead. 'Heaps of Sheeps', which opens the album, was probably chosen as the album's promo single because it is rockily upbeat and again features Eno, but is to this listener otherwise unremarkable, whereas it's successor 'The Duchess', taking its vocal line from the 'Grand Od Duke of 'York' nursery rhyme, but swiftly going off-track, is actually rather unsettling.



And then there's 'The Whole Point of No Return', written by Paul Weller, but performed ty Wyatt on trumpet, a very brief moment of atmospherics to finish the album off.

Alfreda Benge provides many of the lyrics for the album, as well as illustrating a comprehensive lyrics and credits CD booklet In the style that is so in tune with her husband's music.

The overall verdict: Robert Wyatt's most ambitious album since the Seventies, managing to combine the essence of his solo appeal in tracks like 'Maryan' and 'Was A Friend', but recapturing the unique soundscapes of 'Rock Bottom' through a number of carefully chosen guests. And perhaps the most exciting development is the desire to explore new avenues, whether through his own instrumental work or composing to different musical styles. Hannibal are currently re-releasing the classic 1970s Robert Wyatt albums, and there is no better time for 'Shleep' to appear in their midst.

BUSCADERO - N° 183 - SETTEMBRE 1997

Robert Wyatt / Shleep (Hannibal)

Guido Giazzi



Gradito ritorno per Robert Wyatt dopo alcuni anni di ritiro dalle sale d'incisione.

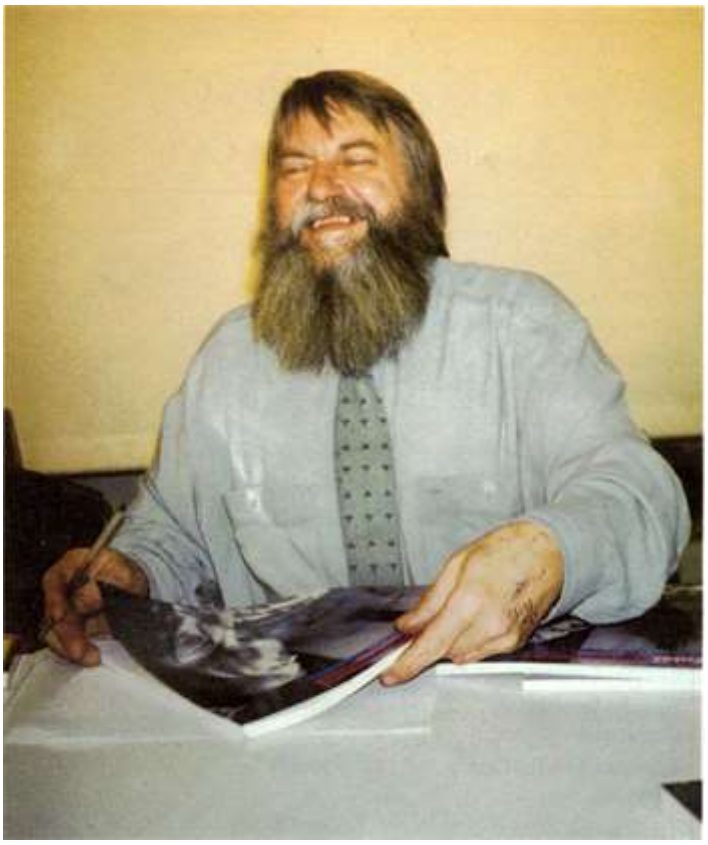
Il mai dimenticato batterista dei **Soft Machine** e certamente uno degli alfieri del **Canterbury Sound**. per la prima volta nella sua lunga carriera iniziata più di trentanni fa, si fa accompagnare in studio da uno stuolo di musicisti-ammiratori che lo aiutano nella registrazione di «Shleep» la sua ultima fatica.

Fin dal primo ascolto, le undici canzoni che compongono l'album, rivelano una gioia e un ottimismo vincente sulle cupe atmosfere che di solito Wyatt regalava ai suoi ascoltatori.

Per essere un album firmato Wyatt inoltre la strumentazione è ricchissima e il suono corposo aiuta a far librare le filigranate composizioni. Effetti elettronici, presenza dei fiati, violini ispirati, leggere percussioni attraversano le composizioni scritte e cantate da Wyatt.

Il canto del musicista inglese è certamente il suo marchio di fabbrica: non particolarmente dotato di una vasta estensione vocale, Wyatt riesce però a incantare gli ascoltatori, con il suo modo intimista di interpretare e «vivere» le sue musiche.

Ascoltiamolo in «**Maryan**» dove un violino in sottofondo caratterizza l'atmosfera del brano mentre le percussioni dettano il tempo: in questo lungo brano la voce del cantante ci porta verso nuovi orizzonti ai confini tra la veglia e il sogno. Ho usato il termine filigranato per definire le composizioni di questo musicista perché davvero i suoi brani sembrano delicati e impalpabili sebbene raccontino stati d'animo, problemi sociali, fotografando la realtà con i colori del sogno.



Robert Wyatt (foto Michele Paparelle)

Questa contraddizione era ancora più evidente quando Wyatt riprendeva canzoni politiche per trasformarle in «Wyatt's composition».

Last but not least, nei brani del musicista inglese è sempre presente la zampata ironica, la capacità prettamnte albionica di ridere, increspando il labbro, sulle brutture della vita.

Partecipano in studio con il musicista una schiera di amici - fan quali Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera e il bravo Paul Weller oltre a Evan Parker e Annie Whitehead.

Tra i brani migliori l'allegra «Heaps of Sheeps», la melanconica «Maryan» e la bellissima «Free Will and Testament», manifesto della sonorità wyattiana.

Tra i brani più originali per il repertorio wyattiano (e quello dal titolo più spiritoso) è «Blues in Bob minor», ritmo sostenuto per una affabulante interpretazione tra Elvis Costello e Lou Reed. Grande canzone Ottimo ritorno per un artista che non abbiamo mai dimenticato.

MOJO - 1997

Robert Wyatt / Shleep

Ben Thompson

Soft Machine and Matching Mole legend makes triumphant return. Sterling work from all-star supporting cast Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Evan Parker, Annie Whitehead and Phil Manzanera.

FAR FROM the old friends benefit it might have been, Robert Wyatt's first album since 1991's Dondestan is a fresh and fully-rounded work. It combines all the best qualities of his earlier recordings - the happy balance of simplicity and complication, frailty and resilience - with a sense of purpose that feels newly minted.

A trio of beautiful bird songs ('September The 9th', 'Alien', and 'Out Of Season'), co-written by Wyatt and his wife Alfreda Benge, form the hub of the album, but there are even greater pleasures in the hinterland. Wyatt's voice resonates as eloquently as ever, but on the bewitching 'Free Will And Testament' it takes flight to a higher realm of unhistrionic poignancy.

The exquisite Eno-flavoured opener 'Heaps Of Sheeps' must be the most tranquil song ever written about insomnia, and 'Blues In Bob Minor' - a suitably warped mirror-image of Dylan's 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' - gives Paul Weller the cue for his most free-spirited guitar blow out since the heyday of the Style Council.

Robert Wyatt talks to Ben Thompson.

Your feathered friends seem to have been a great source of inspiration.

"Well, they outnumber us 10 to one, and I really love watching them, which isn't always true of people. I'm not like a twitcher, in the sense that a bird doesn't have to be rare for me to be interested in it - I really like the ones that just hang about. I think sparrows, for example, are extremely witty and amusing to watch, though that's very anthropomorphic of me, because I know they're really busy struggling for survival."

Was is that sympathetic attitude that let you to offer Paul Weller a way out of his pub rock impasse?

"Haha! With some people I'm just like a normal pop fan - judgement is completely suspended, and Paul is one of those. I've always liked the cut of his jib, and having spent so much time struggling around trying to do different things myself, I really identify with some of the adventures that he's had."

People might be surprised by an avant-garde avatar like yourself teaming up with the arch populist loafer-wearer?

"Someone who knows my track record shouldn't be surprised at me working with anybody, really. In any case, we musicians think differently about these things - inside the brotherhood."

What's 'Blues In Bob Minor' about?

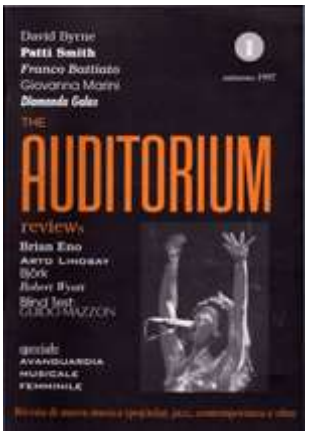
"The original vocal was a bit influenced by those adverts: 'Papa!' 'Nicole!' I was just singing 'Oh Alfie' and I thought it was dead good and minimalist, but when I tried it out on my wife she said I was just being lazy and not bothering to write proper words. So, after I'd slammed the door a few times and smashed a couple of plates, I thought, I'll stuff it with words! I was trying to copy the Dylan original but I couldn't remember the lyrics, which was a good thing because it finished up as Robert Wyatt rather than Bob Dylan. Alfie thinks he might object. If he does we'll just bluff it out and say, 'Borrowing is a vital part of the folk tradition'."

AUDITORIUM - AUTUNNO 1997

Robert Wyatt / Shleep

Rykodisc 1997

S.B.



La spina dorsale dei Soft Machine, la voce più impalpabile della musica contemporanea, torna a vivere dopo il blackout che seguì Dondestan, l'album del 1991. Le precarie condizioni di salute e una preoccupante situazione finanziaria sembravano avere allontanato per sempre Robert Wyatt dalle scene. Shleep, dunque, giunge sui mercati discografici come un fulmine a ciel sereno: il compositore di Bristol alza nuovamente la testa e con l'aiuto di alcuni amici musicisti realizza un CD destinato a durare negli anni. Non a caso il brano d'apertura *Heaps Of Sheeps*, concepito con Brian Eno, ricrea le magie di *Before And After Science*; non a caso *Alien*, che vede protagonista la chitarra elettrica dell'ex Roxy Music Phil Manzanera, fa riemergere quell'energia cubana tanto cara a Wyatt; e ancora non a caso la struggente melodia di *Free Will And Testament* e la riproposta di *The Whole Point Of No Return* degli Style Council vedono all'opera l'estro di Paul Weller. Ogni ospite di *Shleep* (fra i quali, inoltre, Evan Parker e Annie Whitehead) si è messo umilmente al suo servizio. Ma nomi di prestigio a parte, ognuno di questi undici brani ci fa ritrovare come per incanto la musica cesellata di Wyatt: sincopata e minimale, jazzata e improvvisativa, 'pop' nel senso più nobile e 'rivoluzionario' del termine. È bello assimilare lentamente la progressione in forma libera di *The Duchess*, le dolcezze in stile Penguin Cafe Orchestra di *Maryan*, le umorali accelerazioni di *Blues In Bob Minor* e i fiati jazz di *September The Ninth*. Tutto ha una sua ferrea logica che parte dal suono elettronico della "macchina soffice", vola sulle ali di una voce dolcissima capace ancora una volta di commuovere e s'immerge con naturalezza nel suono di pianoforte, fiati, percussioni e chitarre. Dopo *Rock Bottom*, il nuovo capolavoro del 'canterburyano' Robert Wyatt è *Shleep*.

AV CLUB - 3/29/02

Robert Wyatt / Shleep

Joshua Klein

For fans of the former Soft Machine drummer/singer, each new Robert Wyatt disc is cause for celebration. Others may have only heard of the paraplegic auteur via his well-regarded interpretations of songs as varied as Neil Diamond's "I'm A Believer" and Elvis Costello's "Shipbuilding." But for the vast majority of music listeners who have never been introduced to Wyatt's adventurous vision, *Shleep* is as good a place to start as any. This is Wyatt's first album

of original music in seven years, and it's peppered with a great cast of longtime friends (like Phil Manzanera and Brian Eno) and younger admirers (like Paul Weller). The album careens smoothly from bouncing art-pop ("Heaps Of Sheeps," the best quirky pop song Eno has laid his hands on in years) to excursions into abstract, jazzy territory (best illustrated by the four-song suite co-written by Wyatt and wife Alfreda Benge). Which is to say that *Shleep* is basically a continuation of what Wyatt has been doing for the last 30-odd years, tempered as usual by his distinctive, delicate voice, which has gracefully aged into a thing of beauty.

IMPRO JAZZ - n° 39 - Octobre 1997

Robert Wyatt / Shleep - Hannibal HNCD 1418

Heaps Of Sheeps / A Sunday In Madrid - VHCD 1418 (CD 2 titres)

Philippe Renaud

Que le temps passe vite avec Robert... Déjà six ans sans album, sans grand signe de vie. Et le temps passe vite aussi avec ce nouvel album de 53 minutes...

Dès "*Heaps of Sheeps*" (qui fait également l'objet d'un Cd deux titres, avec "*A sunday in Madrid*") on retrouve le parfum si particulier qui flottait dans "*Taking Tiger Mountain (by Strategy)*" de l'ami Eno, puis Evan Parker vient rompre le charme d'un son dissonant, alors que Wyatt hache une histoire à la manière des conteurs pour enfants avec une certaine intonation volontairement ironique. Décidément, les contes de fées et les histoires de princesse ne sont plus ce qu'elles étaient (prémonition ?). "*Maryan*", chanson d'amour, aurait pu être enregistrée à l'époque de "*Rock Bottom*" avec cette trompette nostalgique et une guitare égrenée à la sauce Daevid Allen. Et quelle beauté dans la voix... "*Was a friend*" démarre en demi-teinte par un extrait d'un titre d'Henry Cow, puis débouche sur un thème qui paraît avoir déjà été enregistré (musique de Hugh Hopper)... La charleston en perpétuel claquement, un piano avare, une basse ronflante mais très espacée, et un thème typiquement reconnaissable... "*Free Will and Testament*" résume complètement ce disque : une voix d'une douceur mélodique irrésistible, une guitare à la Pink Floyd (première époque, la meilleure), un piano qui plaque des accords et fait le lien avec la guitare, les guitares faut-il dire, sèche et électrique, et un tempo presque bancal. Un pur joyau.

"*September in the Ninth*" est le thème musical le plus élaboré, complexe à souhait, faisant participer le trombone d'Annie Whitehead toujours incisive, qui après une longue introduction instrumentale donne la parole (la voix) à un Wyatt mélancolique, qui suit et colle à l'instrument pas à pas. "*Alien*" sort tout droit de "*Ruth is Stranger Than Richard*", un remake de "*Team Spirit*", modernisé et swinguant à souhait. "*Out of Season*" est à l'image du titre, avec à nouveau Whitehead, chant décalé prolongé par le piano simple mais expressif. "*A Sunday in Madrid*" va droit dans la tradition wyattienne : un chant qui débite des mots en un exercice périlleux de rapidité, qui récite presque et qui laisse la phrase musicale se poursuivre en s'arrêtant pour reprendre son souffle; une foule d'instruments (percussions, guitare, sax) vient se noyer dans le duo piano / voix pour déboucher sur le titre marathon à couper le souffle, "*Blues In Bob Minor*" mené à cent à l'heure et ponctué par la guitare de Phil Manzanera. Enfin, "*The Whole Point of No Return*" permet de respirer, un thème pour conclure sur quelques notes de trompette à

la Davis, pour conclure...

"*Shleep*" est un album aux couleurs chaleureuses, avec un soupçon de réminiscence heureuse, et une volonté de se battre. C'est dans ces instants que Robert Wyatt est le meilleur. "*Shleep*" est un hymne à l'espoir, à la dérision, à l'humour, à l'amour, à la VIE.

LES INROCKUPTIBLES - du 1er au 7 octobre 1997

Robert Wyatt / Shleep

Hannibal /Harmonia Mundi

Thierry Jousse

Un ange passe
Six ans d'absence depuis *Dondestan*. Six ans parsemés de petits signes fugaces tout juste suffisants pour calmer notre impatience. Un 4-titres neurasthénique enregistré à la maison dans le plus extrême dénuement, *A Short break*. Une brève collaboration avec Ultramarine. Trois chansons d'exception dans le mésestimé *Songs* de John Greaves. Et puis soudain, comme ça, en ce début d'automne, voici enfin le disque qu'on n'attendait plus, somptueux, hors du temps, parfaitement contemporain, constellé d'éclairs inattendus et tranquille comme la révolution. C'est le retour du prodige Robert Wyatt, le plus indispensable des grands solitaires, un des très rares marxistes à savoir nous tirer des larmes de joie, le seul qui ne nous ait jamais déçus depuis les années pataphysiques de Soft Machine. L'album en question s'intitule *Shleep*. S'agirait-il, par la grâce d'un étrange mot-valise, de compter les moutons avant de sombrer dans le sommeil ? Plutôt de considérer chacune des onze merveilleuses chansons de ce disque grave et léger comme autant de songes qui peupleront pour longtemps notre mémoire.
A première vue, rien n'a changé : les enfantines ritournelles sont intactes ; la voix d'être-ange de Wyatt est éternellement et célestement venue d'ailleurs ; Alfreda Benge, la compagne de Robert, est toujours aux phrases et aux pinceaux. Pourtant, tout est différent : pour la première fois, depuis la fin des années 70, Robert Wyatt, paraplégique à la suite d'un accident de sinistre mémoire, est sorti de sa tanière pour aller enregistrer dans les studios de Phil Manzanera avec quelques fameux compagnons de route. C'est ainsi qu'on croisera sur *Shleep*, entre autres complices, aussi bien le conceptuel Brian Eno et le très formaté Paul Weller que le grand improvisateur du free-jazz anglais, le saxophoniste Evan Parker. Ouvrez grand les frontières et place à la polychromie, à la polyrythmie, à la polyphonie. Contrairement à *Old rottenhat* ou à *Dondestan*, ses précédents albums, la solitude de Wyatt est ici infiniment peuplée et c'est une pluralité de mondes qui s'offre à nos cerveaux soudainement lavés de toute pollution. En général comme en détail, ce disque est en tous points magnifique. *Maryan*, splendide et faussement simple ballade ponctuée d'un vibrant solo de violon, côtoie le déchirant *Was a friend*, évocation haletante et subtile d'une amitié enfuie, ou le dissonant et tordu *The Duchess* dans lequel le soprano d'Evan Parker se mélange admirablement au violon polonais de Wyatt et aux machines d'Eno. Un trio infernal qui n'hésite pas à récidiver dans *A Sunday in Madrid*, qui fait lever les échos de la révolution espagnole. Sans oublier ce *Blues in Bob Minor*, où Wyatt rappe avec la guitare de Paul Weller, ou l'inquiétant *Alien* au parfum d'éternité. Il y a du jazz, du folklore imaginaire, de la chanson, de la techno, du futurisme, du très ancien, du génie, de l'invention, de la fantaisie... On n'a rien entendu de plus libre et de plus émouvant depuis *Rock bottom*.

STRAIGHT NO CHASER - Winter 1997

Robert Wyatt / Shleep

Hannibal

JN

People love and hate Robert Wyatt's voice in equal numbers (well maybe not quite equal).
Wyatt is one of England's most enduring singer-songwriters remaining on the credible fringes of pop/rock/jazz for decades. Whether you love or hate I defy you not to BELIEVE. Wyatt's lyrics could be sung by few others; the sentences shaped to fall from his sweet but straining vocal chords. And just look at who wants to play with him. Evan Parker, Brian Eno, Paul Weller, Annie Whitehead - all on one album, all working with and with respect for a friend. 'The Duchess' is a discordant but deeply beautiful song with Parker, Eno and Wyatt finding space for some peaceful madness. 'Maryan' is a gorgeous tumbling song of icy waterways and 'Free Will and Testament' has Weller and Wyatt playing harmonies from heaven. You might have guessed I like this LP, in fact I love it - 20 listens in and it still intrigues and involves me.

SPEX - Oktober 1997

Robert Wyatt : Shleep

Hannibal/RTD

Diedrich Diederichsen

Wenn man für die Robert-Wyatt-Platten nach "Rock Bottom" Metaphern wie "Krankheit", "Extremismus" oder "Verzicht" wählen würde, dann könnte man von dieser sagen, sie sei "gesund", "normal" oder "üppig, reich". Ein Künstler schöpft aus dem Vollen. Hier ist einer, der vielen Konventionen, Routinen und Subroutinen (des Musizierens, Komponierens, Stimme-Verleihens, Autoreffekte-Produzierens) stabile und instabile Gegenentwürfe und schließlich auch so etwas wie einen Gestus des Antimethodischen, eine automatische Autodekonstruktion entgegenzusetzen wußte und nun auf all diesen, in einem gewissen Widerstand entstandenen Schönheitsäckern eigenständige Plantagen gründet. Seine Traurigkeit, die sich in dem oben gemeinten Zeitraum durch Sparsamkeiten, Rückzug auf Cover-Versionen, Liedern von Zerfall und Ende dominierend über andere, konkurrierende Stimmungen legte, ist hier in einer "überschäumenden", nur als "Spielfreude" verständlichen Agilität des Zusammenspielens und arbeitens mit wichtigen Leuten unterschiedlicher Phasen seiner Arbeit verloren gegangen.
Trotzdem bleiben die immer noch "Verlorenheit" und "Einsamkeit" ausstrahlenden Eigenschaften seiner Stimme und seiner Melodien. Aber er hat sie in ein neues Verhältnis gesetzt: wie schon früher zu

den Texten und Zeichungen seiner Lebensgefährtin Alfie Benge, zu dem Saxophon des freien und Improvisationsmusikers Evan Parker, zu Brian Enos integrativem Sounddesign fur Songs, das bei einigen Stücken so dominiert wie zuletzt bei dessen Zusammenarbeit mit John Cale, zu Paul Weller - als Mitstreiter, Arrangeur, Begleiter, aber auch als Idol: Wyatt covert "The Whole Point Of No Return" von Style Council als halbinstrumentalen Schlußchoral auf der Trompete - und zu vielen anderen. Phil Manzanera schenkte ihm die hektikfreie Studiozeit, und eine Fortsetzung des 70er-Jahre-Island/Virgin-Glamour-Progressive-Projekts, wie es u.a. mit diesen Namen verbunden ist, scheint unvermeidbar.
Warum auch nicht? Das Projekt, das hier fortgesetzt wurde und das damals viele gewaltsame Unterbrechungen aushalten mußte - Wyatts Unfall, den Tod Mongezi Fezas, den Zerfall der Szene in einerseits die Oldfield-Floyd-, andererseits die Cutler-Henry-Cow-Welt etc. - ist nach wie vor eine der wenigen Überlebensstrategien fur den Erfahrungsschatz eines bestimmten Songwritings und einer bestimmten Jazz-spielweise, die durch Elektronik hindurchgegangen ist. Die starken individuellen Interessen Wyatts, sein immer noch einmaliges und idosynkratisches Songwriting durchkreuzen dabei zu leicht Synthesen dieses Spiel- und Denkfundus.
Seine terminal-traurige Meditation über Willensfreiheit als philosophisches Problem wie als persönliches, die er mit Kramer und Hugh Hopper schon einmal für deren Duo-Platte aufgenommen hatte - "Free Will and Testament" - gerät z.B. plötzlich zu einer stabil lebensfähigen Ballade, um die man nicht mehr wie in der ersten Fassung wie um einen fußkranken Seiltänzer zittern muß. An anderen Stellen -"Alien" - treibt Wyatt auch die anderen MitstreiterInnen in eindeutige, fast kitschige Interpretationen von Songs, die ganz "atmosphärisch" zu werden drohen, bis man merkt, daß schon das melodische Material viel zu komisch ist (wie es das immer war), um dergleichen zuzulassen. Vielleicht bleibt "Dondestan" aus ebenso komischen Gründe zwar vorläufig die mir liebere Platte, aber das braucht Sie nicht zu irritieren.

ROLLING STONE - April 16, 1998

Robert Wyatt : Shleep

Greg Kot

Even within the esoteric confines of British art rock, Robert Wyatt has always been an outsider, a lighthearted sonic chemist puttering on the fringe of a fringe movement for thirty years. After founding visionary prog-rock band Soft Machine in the 1960s, Wyatt cooked up a series of bleak solo albums distinguished by a quiet, conversational singing voice that suggests a wise (if mildly inebriated) elf. Shleep is not only Wyatt's first full-length release in six years, it is also his most pop-friendly LP in a decade, perhaps because the reclusive singer opened up the recording sessions to a variety of friends and admirers, including fellow maverick Brian Eno, jazz saxophonist Evan Parker and Brit-pop icon Paul Weller. Each guest makes a significant contribution to Shleep, but the album's soothing tone, lilting melodicism and gentle abstraction are pure Wyatt, who sings and plays drums, piano, fiddle, bass and keyboards. The songs subvert pop form September The Ninth kicks off with more than four minutes of swooning sax and trombone interplay - but still unwind amiably, in keeping with the album's personal, reflective tone. Ghosts, insomnia, the "demented forces" that "push me madly 'round a treadmill" - nothing gets our man down. An ingratiating weirdness prevails. "I almost forgot where we

buried the hatchet," Wyatt muses with a mixture of absent-mindedness and menace on Was A Friend. On Heaps Of Sheeps, a wistful melody pinwheels out of an Eno synthesizer drone as Wyatt sings merrily about a sleepless night, his tender falsetto rising to greet the dawn as if to say, "Let the dreams begin."

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Live 1970
1998

Soft Machine

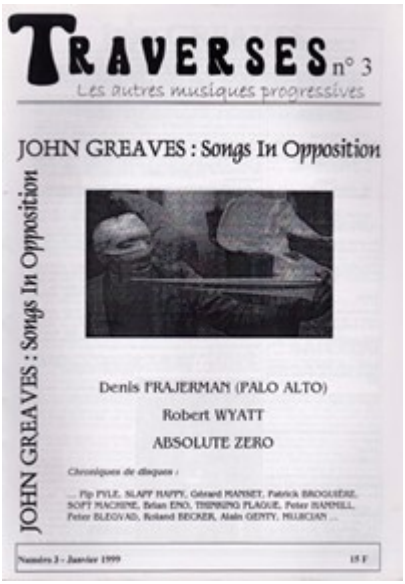
More information about this album

TRAVERSES - N° 3 - janvier 1999

Soft Machine - Live 1970 (Blueprint)

T.B.

Tous les musiciens du groupe se sont accordés à le dire : les albums studio de SOFT MACHINE ont toujours été en-deçà de ses performances scéniques.


TRAVERSES n° 3
Les autres musiques progressives
JOHN GREAVES : Songs In Opposition
Denis FRAJERMAN (PALO ALTO)
Robert WYATT
ABSOLUTE ZERO

Sous-entendu : préférez-leur les albums live ! Plusieurs maisons de disques en ont pris bonne note... Ce live-ci nous vient de Blueprint, sous-label de l'empire Voiceprint. Je préfère le dire d'entrée de jeu de manière à souligner le caractère officiel de l'objet, car ce dernier, sous son aspect extérieur, revêt plutôt la panoplie du parfait bootleg : si les titres des morceaux, les noms des artistes et leurs instruments sont mentionnés, aucune date et aucun lieu d'enregistrement ne sont cependant indiqués. La seule chose qui certifie la légalité de la chose est en fait la traditionnelle note de livret rédigée par Hugh HOPPER, mais la mémoire de celui-ci ne semble pas avoir voulu s'encombrer du calendrier. Les deux extraits de concerts que nous propose ce CD datent de 197O, ont été " recordés " quelque part en Europe (bravo pour la précision !), et basta ! Information pour les fans non avertis : l'extrait comprenant Out-Bloody-Rageous, Facelift et la saga Esther's Nose Job et qui remplit plus des trois-quarts du disque présente le concert du 1S août 1970 donné au Royal Albert Hall et qui fut retransmis par la BBC. Allez donc fouiller dans votre discothèque : ce concert fut déjà publié sous le titre Live at the Proms, celui où la batterie de WYATT émet un curieux son de caisse enregistreuse. C'est bien ce concert qui est ici réédité, à ceci près que les trois premières minutes de Out-Bloody-Rageous sont manquantes.
En contrepartie, l'autre extrait comprenant Facelift et Moon in June est totalement inédit, du moins à ma connaissance. Bien que d'une qualité sonore très moyenne (non, non et non, ce n'est pas un



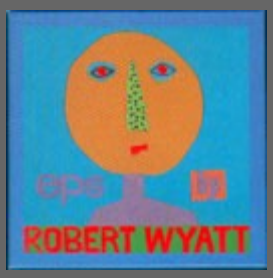
bootleg, vous dis-je !), cet enregistrement ravira les collectionneurs puisqu'il provient d'un concert de l'époque où SOFT MACHINE jouait en quintet (début 70, je présume), mais où Elton DEAN était exceptionnellement absent, laissant Lyn DOBSON seul aux cuivres. Bref, ce CD aurait pu être parfaitement dispensable s'il n'y avait eu ce court mais rare extrait. Avouez que c'est ..."bloody rageous" !

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



EP's
1999

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

CANTERBURY NACHRICHTEN - N° 35 - JANUAR / FEBRUAR 1999

Robert WYATT - EPs 1999, UK, Hannibal HNCD 1440

Thomas Däbritz



In den letzten Monaten sind bereits viele Originalausgaben von Robert WATT's LPs/CDs auf dem Hannibal-Label mit Booklets (und zum Teil mit CD-ROM Bonustrack) erschienen (CN berichtete von den Neuauflagen von "Rock Bottom", "Ruth is stranger than Richard", "Dondestan", "Old rotten hat" und "Nothing can stop us", bei dem übrigens wieder der Track "Shipbuilding" wieder herunter genommen wurde). Was meines Wissens noch fehlt, sind "The End of an Ear" ('70), "The Animals Film" ('82)," A short Break" ('92), "Flotsam jetsam" ('94) und natürlich einige Singles bzw. Maxis, wenn man von SOFT MACHINE, MATCHING MOLE und seinen vielen Gastauftritten mal ganz absieht.

Jetzt bringt WYATT eine wunderschöne, mit viel Liebe gestaltete 5CD Box heraus, dessen Material (bei Disc 1, 2 und 3) sich zwar zum Teil bereits verstreut auf verschiedenen CD-Samplern, wie "Going back a bit" aus der "Virgin Universal" Reihe, oder auch auf "Mideighties" bzw. "Late 70's, Early 80's" befindet. Hier werden diese seltenen Tracks aber zum ersten Mal gesammelt und in einer sinnvollen Reihenfolge zusammengestellt präsentiert. Die Box überschneidet sich nicht mit den bisher erschienenen Hannibal-Reissue-CDs, die ja sämtlichst Originalalben sind. Dank Hannibal muß man sich also jetzt nicht mehr die Füße wund laufen, um die teilweise schon länger gestrichenen Sampler eventuell noch als Second-Hand-CDs zu finden. Jene Musikkonsumenten, die erst ab "Shleep" mit WYATT in Berührung gekommen sind, haben nun die Möglichkeit, die diversen Schaffensperioden in verbesserter akustischer und optischer Qualität zu sammeln. Doch nun zur Box: Jede der 5 CDs befindet sich in einem separaten und durchnumeriertem Pappschuber. Die Box, die

Pappschuber sowie das Cover des dicken und hochinformativen Booklets sind von Alfreda BENGE liebevoll bemalt worden. Jeder CD wurde eine eigene Überschriften gegeben, die ich der Reihenfolge nach durchgehe:

Disc 1: "Bits" beinhaltet 'I'm a believer" (in einer bisher unveröffentlichten extended Version), "Memories", "Yesterday Man", "Sonia" und "Calyx". Alle diese Titel stammen aus dem Jahre 1974 und kamen mit Ausnahme von "Calyx" auf zwei Virgin-Singles auf den Markt. Mit "I'm a believer" kam Robert WYATT sogar in die "Top of the Pops" auf die Nummer 1, durfte dann aber nicht im Fernsehen auftreten (um exakt zu sein: er sollte sich in einen "normalen" Stuhl setzen), da die BBC ihrem Publikum den Anblick eines im Rollstuhl sitzenden Sängers nicht zumuten wollte. "Calyx" ist in der Liveversion vom legendären Konzert im Drury Lane Theatre im September 1974 zu hören, da muß es dann doch wohl noch mehr offizielles Livematerial geben? Interpretiert werden die Songs von Fred FRITH, Dave MacCRAE, Richard SINCLAIR, Nick MASON, Mongezi FEZA, John GREAVES, Gary WINDO, Hugh HOPPER und Laurie ALLAN und natürlich Robert WYATT. Alle Musiker sind also "alte" Bekannte aus der Canterbury Szene.

Disc 2: "Pieces" bietet neben "Shipbuilding" (hier digital remastered), "Memories of You" und "Round Midnight", die als Rückseite der Shipbuilding-12" erschienen, noch die seltenen Titel "Pigs .. (in there)" (von der LP/CD "Artists for Animals") und "Chairman Mao" (erstmals auf einer italienischen Single mit dazugehörigem Textbuch erschienen, später auch auf der CD "ReR Quarterly Collection Vol. 2"). Die letzten beiden Titel waren mir bisher ganzlich unbekannt, da ich leider keine der beiden letztgenannten CDs habe. Als besonderes Leckerli hat WYATT die Disc 2 noch mit dem originalem Promovideo von "Shipbuilding" versehen. Leider können sich nur Anhänger der Bill Gates Sekte "Microsoft" die CD-ROM genüßlich reinziehen, wenn auch alles schön kompatibel ist (mein Laufwerk erkennt leider keine Musik-CDs mit CD-ROM Titeln).

Also geht's weiter mit **Disc 3: "Work in Progress"**, die auch mit der gleichnamigen Maxisingle von 1984 identisch ist Das kubanische Liebeslied von Pablo MILANES "Yolanda", Victor JARA's "Te Recuerdo Amanda", Peter GABRIEL's "Biko" und die WYATT/ HOPPER Komposition "Amber and the Amberines". Thematisch gehören diese 4 Songs für WYATT zusammen, weshalb er sie auch alle auf eine EP pressen ließ. *"The songs are mostly secular hymns, in a way, simple tributes to attempts to build a little heaven on earth, south of the border"* (Zitat von R.W.). Zu jeder Disc gibt es ausführliche linernotes von Robert WYATI mit Hintergründen zur Entstehung der einzelnen Stücke. Zusätzlich sind die Texte von "Amber and the Amberines" und von "Te Recuerdo Amanda" abgedruckt, letzteres auch in der englischen Übersetzung: "I Remember You Amanda".

Die **Disc 4: "The Animals Film"** ist die auf 20 Minuten gekürzte Filmusik eines Streifens, in dem grauenvolle Tierexperimente gezeigt werden. WYATT beschreibt in seinen Linernotes einige dieser furchtbaren Tierquälereien und schildert auch dabei, daß es für ihn eine harte Zeit war, zu diesen Horrorbildern auch noch Musik komponieren zu müssen. WYATT bedauert zum einen, daß die originalen Masterbänder des Soundtracks nicht mehr auffindbar sind (weshalb wahrscheinlich nur noch diese knapp 20 Minuten übrig geblieben sind ?), zum zweiten macht er den Hörer darauf aufmerksam, daß jene "Musik" nur dem Zwecke der Hintergrunduntermalung diente. Es war also vorher nicht geplant, einen Soundtrack herauszubringen, da es sich bei den akustischen Stimmungsbildern nicht um wirkliche Musik handelt. Zu hören gibt es leise Synthesizerklänge, etwas Percussion und WYATT's sparsam eingesetzte Stimme (irgend ein Rolling Stone-Kritiker beschrieb die Filmmusik als "fuchtbaren Lärm"). Schade finde ich nur, daß gegen Ende der CD die Musik erst richtig gut wird, etwa wenn WYATT seinen Gesang einsetzt, und dann jene Passage ausgeblendet wird.

Da ich die LP-Version von "Animals Film" nicht kenne, weiß ich eben nicht, ob es noch mehr Material auf Vinyl gab. Vielleicht kann mich da ja mal jemand aufklären. [Anmerkung: die LP von 1982, Rough Trade ROUGH 40, hatte eine Spieldauer von insgesamt 28:11 Minuten, diese EP nur noch 19:38 Minuten]. Bis zu diesem Teil der CD-Box Besprechung gab es vielleicht für einige von Euch nichts Neues an Musik, was sich aber nun ändern wird.

Die **Disc 5: "Remixes"** bietet 4 remixte Stücke des letzten Albums "Shleep", welche innerhalb einer Woche fertiggestellt wurden, als WYATT sein Album noch nicht einmal fertig abgemischt und germastert hatte. Nigel BUTLER und Angie DIAL von Pmff (bzw. Pmff Productions, Intemetzugang www.pmff.com) sind für diese beeindruckenden Remixes verantwortlich. Keine Ahnung, wer die beiden sind, aber sie besitzen die gleichen genialen Fähigkeiten wie die deutschen Trip-Hop Größen KRUDER und DORFMEISTER, die meiner Meinung nach die Ansätze von KRAFTWERK, NEU, LA DÜSSELDORF, Klaus SCHULZE etc. weiterentwickeln und in zeitgemäße, elektronische Musik transformieren. Als ersten Remix gibt es HOPPER's "Was a friend" zu hören. Unglaublich gut. Bis zur ersten Strophe begleiten spacige Klänge und blubbernde Sounds WYATT's Gesang, später kommen noch ein Hip-Hop Rhythmus und weitere, sparsam benutzte Effekte hinzu. Von der im Original eingespielten Beckenbegleitung hört man anfangs nur zart etwas, später fällt sie dann gänzlich weg. Es ist schon erstaunlich, wie sehr die Songs durch verschiedenartige Rhythmen verändert werden können. "Was a friend" kenne ich nun von HOPPER/SINCLAIR (damals nur auf dem Ur-Tape und ohne Gesang), von HOPPER/SMITH-KLOSSNER (Besprechung in diesem Heft) und zweimal von WYATT. Das sind mittlerweile vier unterschiedliche Songs. "Maryan" ist der absolute Favorit für WYATT's Ohren und auch wieder ein geniales Meisterwerk. Hier wurden ähnliche Techniken wie im ersten Track verwendet. Normalerweise ist ja weniger bekanntlich mehr, doch hier ist mehr einfach noch mehr. Richtig hart jedoch geht es bei "A Sunday in Madrid" ab. Dem Sprechgesang werden harte Drumbeats unterlegt, so daß der Song beinahe einen Hardcore Charakter erhält. In den Gesangspausen erklingen dann ab und zu ein paar nervige Sounds, die dem harten Rhythmus den bitteren Beigeschmack mitliefem. Danach wird es wieder sehr ruhig, wenn "Free will and Testament" ertönt. Sehr seichte Keyboardklänge und ein zarter Blubberrhythmus erklingen zum Gesang. Alle übrigen Instrumente der Originalversion fehlen hier. Auch mit diesem Stück beweisen die zwei Remixer BUTLER und DIAL, daß sie ein gutes Händchen besitzen. Vielleicht hört man von den beiden demnächst mal mehr von ihrer eigenen Musik? Wünschenswert wäre es auf alle Fälle. Leider bin ich im Nichtbesitz eines Internetzugangs, sonst würde ich mich mal in der PMFF-Webside über deren Projekte etwas schlau machen. Soweit nun zu den "EPs", die in Ergänzung zu "Nothing can stop us" den größten Teil von WYATT's Singles und Maxis abdecken. Was jetzt noch fehlt sind die "Peel Sessions", die EP "Man to Woman" (von Marsha HUNT) sowie die beiden Singles "Age of Self / Raise your Banners high" und "The Wind of Change / Namibia" (mit den SWAPO Singers). Das würde meines Wissens alle originalen Robert WYATT Singles und EPs abdecken. Ich würde mir wünschen, daß sich das Hannibal Label auch noch diesen (mir zum Teil unbekannten) Schätzen widmen würde, das wäre schön. Na ja, warten wir mal ab. (Labelinfos und Infos zum WYATT-Programm von Hannibal/Rykodisc unter:
Rykodisc Ltd., 78 Stanley Gardens, London W3 7SZ / Tel: 0181 746 1234 e-mail: data@rykodisc.com — web site: http://www.rykodisc.com

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Robert Wyatt: EP's

Louise Gray

Attempting to sum up Robert Wyatt's contribution to pop is a difficult job. Not to suggest that the man's career is anyway over - this covetously nice boxed set of five EPs disproves any such thing. Wyatt, a singer and writer who came to prominence in the 1960s with the British band Soft Machine, developed a career which combined artistry with an unswerving passion for social justice. This is reflected in many of the pieces collected here and while Wyatt has always been outspoken in his Marxist sympathies he has never been doctrinaire. This collection takes as its starting point the end of the Softies in 1971 and traces a trajectory up to the present day with selections from last year's album Shleep plus various remixes. Most of the material is available elsewhere on Wyatt's numerous releases, but the beauty of EPs is in its size. These 'extended plays' - each one less than an album, but more than a single - offer a format that allows for a short, concentrated exploration around a thematic grouping. There's a 1974 cover of I'm A Believer; the shimmering sorrow of Shipbuilding, an eloquent indictment of Thatcher and the Falklands war in just minutes; and tracks from the 1982 movie The Animals Film. Wyatt's music can be sparse, but it's also simultaneously vulnerable and taut; Sakamoto had a point when he described his as "the saddest voice in the world". That is, in a sense, the beauty of Wyatt's work. Even when he's on a roll - delivering a mighty cover of Victor Jara's Te Recuerdo, Amanda or Amber And The Amberines, written after the US invasion of Grenada - there's the tenderness of farewell in each of them. Hear this for the songs, the passion, the players: Brian Eno, Fred Frith and Paul Weller all make appearances. Wyatt's one of a kind.

IMPROJAZZ - AOÛT-SEPTEMBRE 1999

Robert Wyatt: EP's
Hannibal - Coffret CD's

René Guyomarc'h

Ouvrir le coffret des "ep's", c'est un peu comme retrouver des objets précieux égarés ou dispersés. Le cœur pince un peu : le souvenir sublime, la nostalgie frustre. Mais il n'y a pas ici que des inconnus. L'identité artistique de Robert Wyatt, préservée en dépit de relocalisations dans divers labels est si excentrique, sa voix soprane si unique et ses compositions (et ses reprises) si spéciales que l'âge les épargne. Son approche de la technologie contrarie la désuétude des arrangements d'époque et on n'écoute pas aujourd'hui "Moon in June" ou "Caroline" avec la même oreille que les compositions des autres membres de la Soft Machine ou de la Matching Mole... Mais ces deux titres figurent sur des compilations antérieures et l'objet de celle-ci est d'un tout autre fût...
En amoureux des musiques populaires et de musiques jazz, Robert Wyatt parvient à capturer l'essence rare de l'âme d'un air, de l'émotion qu'il véhicule. S'il vibre sur *"Strange Fruit"* et *"'Round Midnight"* ou *"Te recuerdo Amanda"*, il restitue ce rare et indicible sentiment qu'on éprouve à l'écoute de ce qu'il faut bien appeler par commodité des "classiques". Sous la préhension de Robert Wyatt, la chanson pop devient un standard qui saura désormais affronter le temps qui passe, la version fait peau neuve, elle est Wyatt devenue. C'est vrai pour *"I'm a believer"* et ça marche aussi pour *"Shipbuilding"*. Robert Wyatt n'habille pas, il habite. Spirituels,

cohérents et conceptuels, les "ep's" se déclinent et se découvrent dans l'ordre ou dans le désordre comme un roman à clés. Chaque "ep" est baptisé d'un titre générique mais à l'exception du douloureux interlude des *"Animais"*, il est associé à son prédécesseur et à son successeur par de judicieuses associations d'idées et la chronologie n'a pas plus d'utilité que le pense-bête noué dans le mouchoir. Le livret qui l'accompagne abonde de détails où apparaissent toutes les qualités de leur auteur : humanisme et engagement politique, humour, sens du recul, modestie... et un éblouissant don de narrateur. Toutes ces qualités semblent être des extensions naturelles d'un génie fragile et pétillant, malicieux et terriblement intrépide.
Les "ep's" autorisent l'auditeur à cerner un homme qui parvient à projeter sans approximations ses visions multiples, un artiste dont l'œuvre homogène transcende non seulement les modes mais aussi les genres et les préjugés.

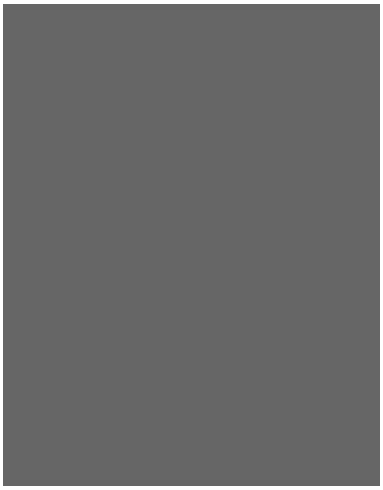
NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 20 FEBRUARY 1999

Robert Wyatt: EPs

Stephen Dalton

Robert Wyatt has been a ghostly presence in progressive British pop for the last 30 years.

His avant-jazz drumming and achingly fragile voice echo through much of Damon Albarn's output, his songs have been covered by the likes of Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, while his own sporadic releases have been graced by everyone from Brian Eno to Jerry Dammers, Paul Weller to Ultramarine.
This handsomely packaged box set kicks off in the post-Soft Machine mid-'70s, just after Wyatt was paralysed from the waist down by a drunken fall from four floors up. The first of five EPs begins with his spaced-out, whimsically Olde English take on The Monkees' hit 'I'm A Believer'. The shrill, lovelorn flutter of 'Memories' and brass-driven township jive of 'Sonia' are equally minimal and emotive, twanging heartstrings with the slightest of sighs.
The second disc centres on Wyatt's most famous hit, 'Shipbuilding'. Written especially for the Marxist singer by Elvis Costello in 1982, this all-time classic anti-war anthem draws an explicit link between the Falklands conflict and Thatcherite industrial decline, all within the context of an exquisitely sad saloon-bar lament. Its original B-side, 'Memories Of You', is a tear-stained gem too, although Wyatt's stab at Thelonius Monk's 'Round Midnight' is a trifle cluttered, and his animal rights drone-poem 'Pigs... (In There)' is hardly a barrel of laughs either.
'Work In Progress', first released on Rough Trade in 1984, contains some sublime marriages of rudimentary electronics with so-called 'world' music. 'Yolanda' and 'Te Recuerdo Amanda' are gently oscillating covers of leftist Chilean anthems, each as woozily soothing as warm sunlight. 'Amber And The Amberines' is Wyatt's own stirring epitaph to the US invasion of Grenada, a quavering post-rock torch song and tribute to the undying socialist flame. Even his weightless glide through Peter Gabriel's stadium conscience-pricker 'Biko' manages to lose much of the original's windy pomposity, if not its dragging pace.
Only the fourth disc, edited highlights of Wyatt's soundtrack to Victor Schonfeld's 1984 anti-slaughter movie *The Animals Film*, lets this collection down. It's a noodling, twittering, Krautronic clonkfest clearly designed with harrowing visual images in mind, not home listening. But the fifth set, featuring four lightly remixed dub'n'bass



and trip-hop versions of tracks from Wyatt's 1997 album *'Shleep'*, restores some consistency and linear logic. Even in such self-consciously contemporary surroundings, what shines through is the luminous beauty of the most original and emotive voice in hard-left British pop.

If you don't believe avant-garde political music can be both playful and polemical, heartfelt and heartbreaking, you need Robert Wyatt in your life.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Noisette
2000

Soft Machine

More information about this album

OCTOPUS - Eté 2000

SOFT MACHINE – Noisette (Cuneiform / Oka)

F.H.

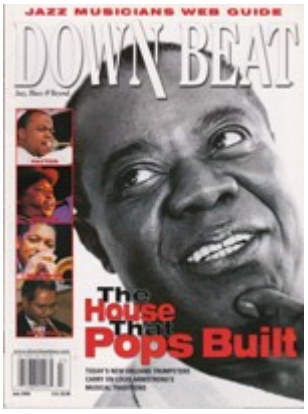


Saisi à l'ourlet d'une des nombreuses formations plus ou moins stables de Soft Machine, « Noisette » nous projette au tout début de l'année 1970, époque rare où la figure de proue de l'école de Canterbury officiait en quintet. Aux côtés d'un Robert Wyatt toujours déchaîné, d'un Ratledge expert en orgue trafiqué et d'un Hugh Hopper habile à faire « fuzzer » sa basse de tous bois, Elton Dean et Lyn Dobson tricotent leurs vents dans un duo prolixe en fulgurances débridées. Rythmes obsessionnels, figures mélodiques répétitives, déports harmoniques, intrusions dans l'électroacoustique expérimentale et débordements sensoriels. Soft Machine était au jazz british, ce que Pink Floyd tentait d'être au rock... La dimension pataphysique en plus. D'une qualité sonore acceptable, bien que parfois un peu lointaine, cet enregistrement live a le mérite de témoigner de l'exubérance inventive et insouciante que le groupe déversait avec bonheur sur scène. Avec une mention toute spéciale pour Wyatt qui porte littéralement l'ensemble en s'agitant comme un diable derrière ses tambours. Outre le répertoire tiré de « Volume Two » et de «Third», qui encadrent cette période, « Noisette » propose plusieurs inédits abandonnés par la suite au fil des pérégrinations chaotiques du groupe. Le tout s'achève sur l'incontournable « We Did It Again ». Voilà certainement ce qu'on peut appeler une machine vintage, luisant de tous ses chromes!

DOWNBEAT - July 2000

SOFT MACHINE – Noisette (Cuneiform Rune 130)

Frank-John Hadley



Pax Brittanica. It's a good day for vintage British Indo-jazz and jazz-rock with new CDs available on alto player Joe Harriott's initial mid-'60s meeting with Indian musicians and on the little-known quintet edition of Soft Machine, whose music is finally heard at length after 30 years. Soft Machine had moved past its fondness for pop whimsy and was working out an innovative union of jazz and rock when expertly taped in a concert hall performance during the first week of 1970. The five band members, who'd recently seen two horn players split after a tour, construct wave after wave of suspense on extended but cleverly structured originals that flow together as one. Keeping his right hand active on a buzzing Lowrey organ while using his other to produce contrasting, subdued colors on electric piano, Mike Ratledge dominates the group sound. His linear and textural inventions are generally inventive, with few episodes of indulgent noisemaking. Ex-road manager Hugh Hopper's melodic runs on electronically altered or natural bass guitar sustain a balance between playfulness and enchantment. Robert Wyatt, who knows his Elvin Jones and Cecil Taylor records, drums with exuberance. Twenty-four-year-old Elton Dean, challenged but not defeated by troublesome contact mikes and an overbearing PA system, churns up a froth playing alto or saxello. Lyn Dobson contributes some OK soprano and flute. On his trademark tune, "Moon In June," and a couple more, Wyatt does a bit of his typically daft and charming singing.

RYTHMES CROISÉS - 2 octobre 2018

SOFT MACHINE – Noisette (2000, Cuneiform)

Stéphane Fougère

Article réalisé à partir de chroniques parues dans les revues TRAVERSES et TANGENTES, dûment remaniées et complétées en 2018.

C’est le 4 janvier que SOFT MACHINE donne son premier de l’année 1970 ; c’est aussi le premier à être donné dans une salle de grande capacité, le Fairfield Halls de Croydon, comptant plus de 1500 places ! Le groupe s’y présente dans une formule “amaincie” par rapport à la tournée française et belge qu’il a achevée quinze jours auparavant. De septette, il devient quintette.

Cette formule en quintette n’est pas inconnue des “SOFT MACHINE Heads”, puisque c’est elle qui a légué à la postérité la version de *Facelift* que l’on trouve dans l’album capital Third. On se souvient en effet que cette composition magistrale de Hugh HOPPER dans ledit album est à la base un enregistrement live qui a par la suite été “frankensteinisé” en studio, où il a subi plusieurs montages et démontages, et qu’on lui a même greffé des bouts d’une autre

version live. Mais à l'origine, la captation live de *Facelift* qui a servi pour *Third* provient de ce concert à Croydon, et cet album *Noisette* ne contient rien moins que le "reste" de ce concert !

Au-delà de l'intérêt purement historique, cet enregistrement permet en outre de se familiariser avec un répertoire en forte mutation depuis le concert à Amsterdam en mars 1969 immortalisé par le CD *Live at the Paradiso*. Depuis l'été 1969, le répertoire scénique de la Machine molle est constitué de thèmes qui trouveront plus tard place dans *Third* (*Moon in June* et *Facelift*), de pièces jamais enregistrées sur les disques classiques du groupe, et seulement deux compositions de *Volume Two* (*Hibou, Anemone and Bear* et *Esther's Nose Job*) assez transformées par rapport à leurs versions de studio. Autant dire que, pour le public des concerts de SOFT MACHINE à cette période, une majorité du répertoire est royalement inédit !

Le concert à Croydon débute précisément sur une composition inédite en version studio de Mike RATLEDGE, *Eamonn Andrews*, que des archives live publiées avant *Noisette* (*The Peel Sessions, BBC Radio One in Concert, Virtually*) nous avaient fait connaître dans des versions live postérieures nettement plus courtes. La version jouée à Croydon est plus longue que toutes celles-ci, atteignant les douze minutes. Elle démarre tranquillement avec piano et basse, avant que le trio de base ne fasse une embardée avec clavier électrique, basse "fuzz" et batterie frétillante, avec juste quelques singuliers couinements de saxophone à la cantonade.

Un autre thème de Hugh HOPPER jamais capté en studio lui fait suite, *Mousetrap*, sur lequel DEAN et DOBSON entrent définitivement en scène, plongeant dans cette chevauchée sauvage au rythme haletant. Lyn DOBSON parvient même à glisser quelques interventions vocales "scattées". On croyait ce genre de fantaisie dévolue uniquement à Robert WYATT, on réalise ici qu'il n'en est rien ! Le même DOBSON émet d'autres borborygmes durant son solo de flûte qui habille merveilleusement bien une autre composition de RATLEDGE restée inédite chez SOFT MACHINE, la très planante *Backwards*, qui finira par atterrir dans le répertoire du groupe CARAVAN, dans la suite *l'Auberge du sanglier/A Hunting We Shall Go*, sur l'album For Girls Who Grow Plump in the Night.

À noter que *Mousetrap* et *Backwards* sont ici reliés par le court *Noisette*, qui sert de cordon ombilical, puis c'est le thème de *Mousetrap* qui revient après *Backwards* servir de pont avec une pièce plus connue de SOFT MACHINE, *Hibou, Anemone and Bear*, durant laquelle s'enchaînent soli de saxophone, d'orgue fuzz, et Robert WYATT y glisse quelques menues paroles, les seules qu'il chantera durant tout le concert ! Oui, les seules, puisque sur la version de *Moon in June* qui suit, le batteur reste étonnamment muet sur cette composition dont il est l'auteur, dont il a déjà enregistré une démo et pour laquelle il avait pourtant écrit des paroles, qu'il n'hésitait pas à modifier en fonction du contexte (cf. la version jouée à la BBC en 1969).

Dans *Noisette*, *Moon in June* est réduit à une portion instrumentale dominée par un solo d'orgue de Mike RATLEDGE – magistral, cela dit – qui débouche sur un autre thème de Hugh HOPPER, *12/8 Theme*, un morceau parfaitement inédit que cette archive live permet de découvrir pour la première fois (à la différence de *Eamonn Andrews* et de *Mousetrap*, déjà révélés par une session BBC incluse dans le coffret vinyle *Triple Echo* et rééditée depuis en CD). Cette pièce de choix, atteignant les onze minutes, comporte toutes les caractéristiques d'une composition typiquement soft-machinienne et s'avère un écrin idéal pour les souffleurs, qui marquent leur empreinte avec rage et détermination.

Le set s'achève sur une pièce désormais classique du répertoire de SOFT MACHINE, *Esther's Nose Job*, rendue aussi éclatante que pétaradante par le groupe entier, et qui enchaîne les éclats solistes

et les passes d'armes d'orgue et de saxophones sur une rythmique tempétueuse. Robert WYATT a juste le temps de glisser deux courtes interventions vocales sans paroles dans cette matière musicale bouillonnante, aussi dense qu'emphatique, qui laisse tout juste deviner le haut degré de volume sonore auquel jouait SOFT MACHINE à cette époque.

Une dernière surprise nous est offerte avec le rappel, qui n'est rien moins qu'une reprise de *We Did it again*, seule pièce rescapée de l'époque Kevin AYERS. Mais de la chanson pop pataphysique qu'elle était au départ, elle devient ici une pièce en majeure partie instrumentale, prétexte à toutes formes de saturations et de rugosités, où même le chant de WYATT est très fragmenté. Il faut écouter cette version comme un adieu à une certaine époque de SOFT MACHINE et une illustration éloquente de l'évolution musicale de la Machine molle avec cette formation en quintette. Plus rien ne sera comme avant, semble nous dire le groupe.

Une note technique dans le livret nous informe que cet enregistrement a été mastérisé à partir des bandes magnétiques originales de Bob WOOLFORD, l'ingénieur du son de SOFT MACHINE, dont la vitesse d'enregistrement atteignait 15 pouces par secondes. Or, il est arrivé que certains morceaux soient coupés au beau milieu quand ces bandes étaient pleines, laissant un certain "blanc" dans la musique le temps que WOOLFORD installe une nouvelle bande sur son engin enregistreur. Il a fallu pallier à ces blancs en utilisant des fragments d'un autre concert (celui de l'University College à Londres une semaine plus tard) pour restituer sans interruption le flux du concert au Fairfield Hall de Croydon.

Quoi qu'il en soit, la captation sonore est excellente pour l'époque, et on ne peut qu'enrager de ne pas retrouver dans ce disque la version de *Facelift* qui a été jouée ce soir-là, on aurait pu ainsi la redécouvrir en intégralité et avec un meilleur confort d'écoute que sur l'album *Third*, où le travail de montage et de production a littéralement étouffé la prise de son d'origine. *Noisette* donne une bien meilleure image du caractère rêche et mordant que pouvait avoir SOFT MACHINE en concert.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



MW pour Robert Wyatt
2001

Compilation

More information about this album

REVUE & CORRIGÉE - n° 50 - Décembre 2001

COMPILATION
"MW pour Robert Wyatt"
In Poly-Sons 1RS 0401 Dist. Orkhêstra

Pierre Durr



M pour Marchetti (Jean-Michel), W pour Wyatt... Depuis quelques années, Jean-Michel Marchetti illustre et traduit certains titres de Robert Wyatt. Il y eut MW en 97, M2W en 1998 (agrémenté d'une courte interview de R. Wyatt sur CDs (IPS 0098), puis en 2000 M3W, en tirage limité, un livre illustré et un CD (IPS 0800) de 18 titres de R.W. repris presque exclusivement par des musiciens français) et cela avant un 4e puis un 5e opus qui lui proposera sans doute des pièces inédites de Robert Wyatt. 0098 + 0800 = 0401 : Robert Wyatt est une sorte de mythe vivant pour de nombreux amateurs d'une musique qui allie une certain intemporalité à un contexte pourtant bien précis, celui d'un rock pataphysique à la croisée des influences minimales, rock puis jazz, un personnage trop universel pour ne laisser ces adaptations qu'à un nombre limité de lecteurs / auditeurs (300). D'où cette édition sans livre. Voici pour l'information.
"MW pour Robert Wyatt". Rien n'égalera, me direz-vous, les versions de Robert Wyatt lui-même. Certes. Et ce sentiment est bien sûr partagé par les musiciens qui ont participé à cette compilation. Mais cela n'empêche pas l'hommage, qui, ma foi, emprunte des chemins variés : de l'échantillonnage qui va jusqu'à puiser ses sources dans les Soft Machine d'antan, à l'interprétation très dépouillée d'un Kafka (qui rend en même temps hommage à Bourvil !), en passant par des improvisations plutôt déjantées et nerveuses d'un Pauvros et / ou d'un Montera assisté par Chris Cutler et Tony Buck à côté d'autres versions plus fidèles. C'est l'occasion aussi de retrouver quelques habitués : Pascal Comelade dont l'œuvre est parsemé depuis toujours de références à Robert Wyatt, Toupidek Limonade ou Look de Bouk, qui en France ont pris le flambeau de la pataphysique appliquée à la musique. Et quelques autres que vous avez



probablement déjà croisés.
"MW pour Robert Wyatt". Une compilation émouvante et de ce fait un brin imparfaite, forcément imparfaite... .

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Nouvelles
2001

Jean-Marc Foussat

More information about this album

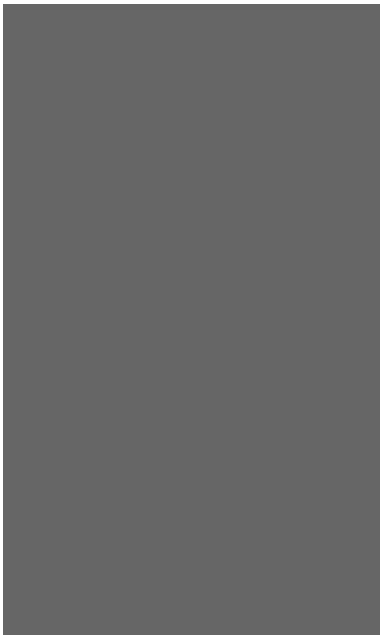
REVUE & CORRIGÉE - n° 41 - Septembre 1999

Jean-Marc Foussat - "Nouvelles"
CD-R (pot-fou@world-net.fr)

Jacques Debout



C'est par la langue de Primo Levi tirée de la bouche del signore Pastorelli que commencent les 65'56" de ces Nouvelles, en disque compactées à la demande par Jean-Marc FOUSSAT ; elles s'adressent à "Vous qui vivez en toute quiétude bien au chaud dans vos maisons..." quoique le disque soit dédié à Marie et à Robert Wyatt, cet autre mélodiste faiseur de chansons tristes (*) évoqué en deux brèves citations d'un Gloria Gloom extirpé du Petit Disque Rouge de Matching Mole - façon pour l'auteur de ces Nouvelles de s'ancrer dans une Histoire pleinement choisie ; encore qu'avant même de fondre sous la chaleur de la langue piémontaise il faille en passer par le rouge sang de ces Nouvelles lavé par les remous sales d'une rivière que perce un cordage où s'effilochent des linges happés par un méchant courant, rude filin tendant sa mince ombre noire sur l'onde tourbillonnante : voilà où s'arriment ces Nouvelles que donne Jean-Marc FOUSSAT aux immobiles voyageurs du numérique les écoutant "le soir en rentrant" ; c'est que le son, capté, découpé, travaillé sans fin, reste l'instrument privilégié de cet homme discret posant son chapeau noir derrière les machines à bruire de Marteau Rouge (sonique pochette-surprise qu'il remplit à loisir aidé de Jean-François Pauvros et Makoto Sato) auxquelles il rajoute ici voix, piano, trompe de Solex, cordes, tabouret à vis, dédicaces, courants d'air, téléviseur et magnétoscope, collés ou pas à la guitare de Jean-François Pauvros, la trompette de Jac Berrocal, la voix de Roger Turner, l'accordéon de Claude Parle, la basse et les percussions d'ex du groupe Mandragore, psychédélique underground météorite seventies (presque) sans lendemains mais où naquit Jean-Marc FOUSSAT aux phénomènes sonores.
Avant ou après le turinois reprenant le compte à rebours qu'égrena Primo Levi à l'ouverture de Se questo è un uomo / Si c'est un homme, viennent en leur temps langue arabe, anglaise, grecque,



allemande, latin classique, chiffres et lettres mettant en équation les matières sonores de ces Nouvelles, et que "vous qui (les) trouvez le soir en rentrant la table mise (...) non, ne l(es) oubliez pas : Gravez ces mots dans votre cœur. Pensez-y chez vous, dans la rue, en vous couchant, en vous levant ; répétez-les à vos enfants. Ou que votre maison s'écroule, que la maladie vous accable, que vos enfants se détournent de vous." Menace éminemment politique, impeccablement rédigée par celui qui avait choisi de narrer l'irracontable, l'indicible des camps d'extermination nés en milieu de ce siècle, reprise ici sostenuto par Jean-Marc POUSSAT qui désigne mieux ainsi qu'avec n'importe quoi d'autre le camp de ses choix sonores.
Disponible à l'électronique sybilline adresse ci-dessus.
(*) Serge Gainsbourg, "L'Aquabonisre"

More information about this album

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Cuckooland
2003

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

RUMORE 141 - Ottobre 2003

Robert Wyatt - Cuckooland (Ryko/I.R.D.)

Vittore Baroni & A. C.

Ci sono personaggi che vivono lontani dalle logiche delle classifiche, incuranti degli assillanti meccanismi dell'industria discografica. Artisti che possono permettersi di determinare tempi e modi della loro produzione, operando in una dimensione a sé stante, impermeabile alle mode. Come i Kraftwerk, che vent'anni dopo pubblicano senza batter ciglio un album (ottimo) relativo al loro singolo *Tour de France*. Come Wyatt, che sei anni dopo riprende il discorso dello stupendo *Shleep* dallo stesso punto in cui l'aveva lasciato. Anzi, con un pizzico di solare serenità in meno, giacché nel frattempo la situazione nel pianeta (politica, ecologia e sociale) è andata ancor più degenerando, quindi alla rabbia di sempre (contro l'Occidente e la/le guerre) si affianca in tralice il rimpianto per beni e valori che paiono irrimediabilmente perduti, in questo inguaribile "mondo di pazzi".

Non sono certo novità eclatanti che ci attendiamo da un disco di Wyatt, bensì solidità di contenuti e alta qualità di ispirazione. Qui abbiamo entrambe le cose, e in dose massiccia (75'): le malinconiche, soffici melodie marchio di fabbrica del Nostro, figliastre di Monk e Chet Baker; i testi scarni e toccanti (una ninnananna per bimbi nati traumatizzati sotto i bombardamenti, di che altro merita scrivere?); una rinnovata voglia di suonare non solo le tastiere ma anche la cornetta, in distese modulazioni cool jazz (*Old Europe* fotografa il flirt parigino tra Juliette Greco e Miles Davis), e perfino con insolito impeto le percussioni. Sedici tracce, ognuna diversa e preziosa, che sarebbe esercizio futile (e ne manca lo spazio) sezionare: Forest, sullo sterminio delle tribù zingare e con la lancinante chitarra di David Gilmour, è l'inno estrapolabile dal mazzo, la *Shipbuilding* del caso. Merita piuttosto sottolineare il ritrovato desiderio di contornarsi di amici-collaboratori, strumentisti d'eccezione come la trombonista Annie Whitehead e il sassofonista Gilad Atzmon, la tastierista Karen Mantler (figlia di Michael, autrice di tre brani iperwyattianni) e ospiti come Eno e Paul Weller. Lo sforzo insomma di realizzare un lavoro di squadra (registrato al Gallery Studio di Phil Manzanera) piuttosto che chiudersi come in altre occasioni nel salotto di casa, che possiamo leggere anche come un'implicita nota di speranza. Come sussurra la compagna Benge nella traccia più scanzonata e intimista, *Lullaloop: "dolci sogni, vecchio mio, dolci sogni"*.

V.B.

A cena da Bob

Dove si trova *Cuckooland*?

"Da noi *cuckoo* significa 'matto', 'stupido', 'sciocco': che tu intenda il termine in modo positivo o negativo. Per me è come, molto tempo dopo *Alice nel paese delle meraviglie*, 'Robert nel paese della follia'."

C'è un movente particolare che ti ha spinto a realizzarlo?

"No. Tranne il fatto che si tratta del mio lavoro, l'unico che posso fare. E ci riesco ancora. Come un cuoco, che lo fa perché gli piace cucinare ed è capace: non è molto diverso - il ristorante è il suo posto di lavoro. Io cucino a casa, ma non interessa a nessuno."

È un album lungo, con pausa in mezzo: sembra un doppio disco in vinile...

"Proprio così. Da quando faccio dischi ho sempre pensato che siano composti da due metà: diverse e complementari. E, dicendolo in modo pretenzioso, così è fatto il mondo: tutto è diviso in due parti. La doppia personalità di ognuno, interna ed esterna. Lo ying e lo yang in Oriente. L'uomo e la donna. Le due parti del cervello. È un meccanismo organico, il modo in cui la natura funziona. In realtà è difficile parlare della musica: ce l'hai in testa, la suoni, ma descriverla a parole è complicato perché non riguarda l'intelletto ma l'istinto. E allora buttiamola sul banale: generalmente gli altri inseriscono i bonus in coda ai dischi, mentre io li ho piazzati in mezzo."

A.C.

MOJO

Robert Wyatt - Cuckooland (Domino 2003)

Jenny Bulley

Wyatt's most welcome return, whiskery but ageless.

Six long years after Robert Wyatt's previous solo album *Shleep*, *Cuckooland*, arrived in troubled times. A baby born in Baghdad at the start of the first gulf war, the conditions facing gypsies seeking asylum from the Czech Republic and the plight of factory farmed sheep were all on the singing sticksman's mind in 2003 when Wyatt, along with poet wife lyricist Alfreda Benge, drafted in illustrious friends including trombonist Annie Whitehead, Dave Gilmour and Paul Weller on guitars, Brian Eno and Carla Bley's daughter Karen Mantler to indulge his taste in charmingly eccentric instrumentation, including, on Cuckoo Madam, the sort of toytown keyboards reminiscent of his 1976 keystone, *Rock Bottom*. A comfortable, wonky jazz feeling permeates the spare, sorrowful songs but the real star, as always, is Wyatt's ageless voice, softly crooning his whiskery wisdom as if soothing a skittish horse. *Cuckooland* is a lesson in achieving sophistication through economy, there is even a 30-second silence dividing the album into two parts ("for those with tired ears to pause..."). Ageing also concerns Lullaloop, one of *Cuckooland's* moments of light relief in which Wyatt gives affectionate voice to Benge's song about a grumbling old man trying to get to sleep ("Don that duvet/Cook that cocoa/Turn that music down!"). The overall effect is one of enchanting melody and sharp, informed songwriting, that arcane, folksy album title suggesting either Wyatt or the rest of

us are living in cloud cuckooland and I rather suspect it's not him.

ROCKERILLA - Ottobre 2003

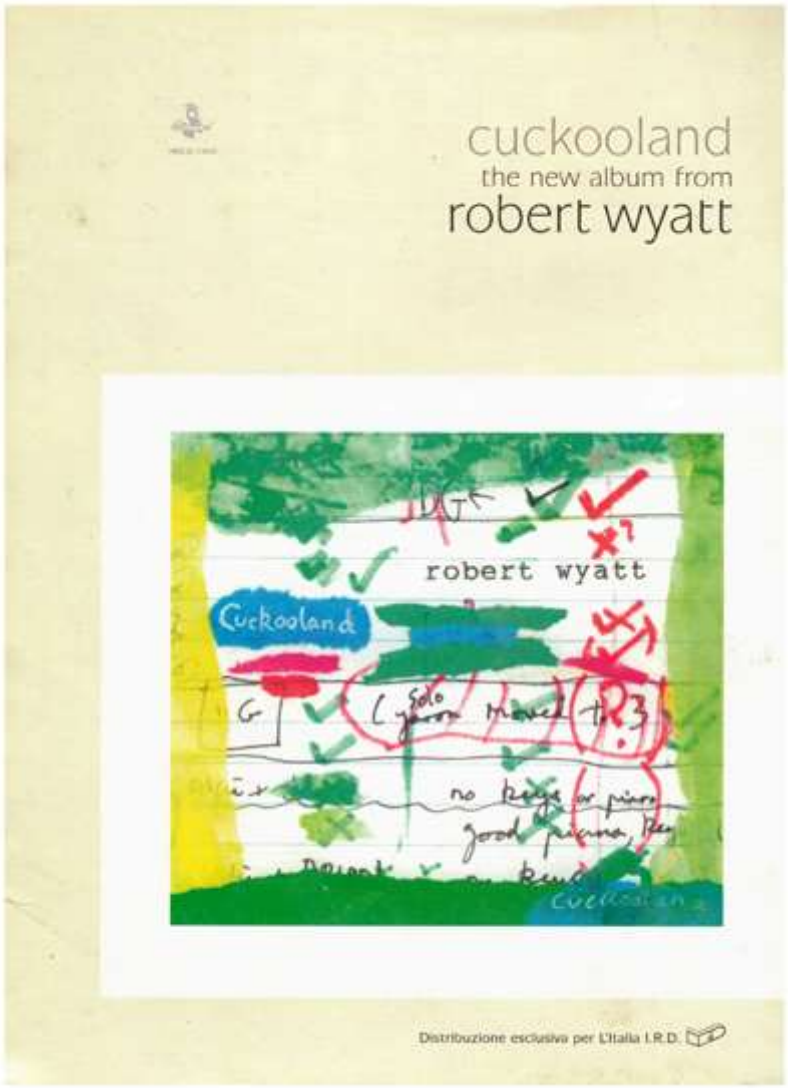
Robert Wyatt - Cuckooland (Hannibal/IRD) **RRRRR**

Riccardo Bertoncelli

II bianco uccello di "Shleep" ha continuato il suo volo e sei anni dopo è approdato a questa strana terra fantastica, a Cuckooland appunto. Wyatt, lui continua a dormire e a sognare. E' un sonno quieto, felice, non sono più le smanie "alla fine di un orecchio" o le nervose agitazioni che disturbavano certi dischi degli '80. Il vecchio signore sembra appagato e spande di buon umore il miele delle sue fantasie, senza però mai dimenticare il mondo che ha intorno. Così alcuni quadri di sogno sono nostalgia pura e gioiosa, come Juliette Gréco e Miles Davis nella Parigi incantata del 1957 ("Old Europe", dedicata a Mike Zwerin); ma in altre scene il colore non è così tenue, così dolce, e si levano allora lunghi spettri che neanche la luce del sogno può placare: la persecuzione dei Rom in "Forest", la causa palestinese in "Lullaby For Hamza" e "La Ahada Yalam", Hiroshima e Nagasaki sullo sfondo di "Foreign Accents".

Non chiamate questo disco "rock", farebbe sorridere. E' piuttosto un distillato di jazz onirico con molta voglia di raccontare delicatamente in forma di pop, con un paio di cover ("Insensatez" di Jobim, "Raining In My Heart" dal repertorio di Buddy Holly) che Wyatt saggiamente chiama "canzoni folk dell'era industriale". Un quadro sfaccettato e spezzettato, frammenti anche brevi messi insieme con l'aiuto della moglie Alfreda Benge, del produttore Jamie Johnson e di Karen Mantler, la fascinosa figlia di Michael e Carla Bley, che ha scritto tre belle canzoni in quella lingua "di famiglia" che tanto ha influenzato Wyatt negli anni. "Il fatto è che, con tutta la buona volontà, non riesco a venire a capo di più di una canzone all'anno", confessa candidamente RW. "Così, se non voglio pubblicare un disco ogni 15 anni, devo appoggiarmi ad altri."

Registrato come la volta scorsa tra gli studi di Phil Manzanera e casa Wyatt a Louth, "Cuckooland" è disco di liquide tastiere e chitarre sottili, di trombe appassionate (le suona lui in persona) e morbidi ritmi, con un bel giro di amici a collaborare: Annie Whitehead, Brian Eno, Karen Mantler, Gilad Atzmon, anche Paul Weller e David Gilmour in due apprezzati cameo. Wyatt può andarne fiero, anche se questo non scalfirà la sua invincibile modestia e *understatement* "ormai la mia voce è un borbottìo da avvinazzato", mente con un bel sorriso dei suoi, e spiega lo strano buco di 30 secondi a metà album con il fatto che "il CD è venuto troppo lungo, forse a un certo punto può venir voglia di una pausa o proprio di cambiare disco."



Advertising for *Cuckooland* in Rockerilla - Ottobre 2003

THE GUARDIAN - 26 Sep 2003

Robert Wyatt, Cuckooland ((Hannibal/Rykodisc)

John L Walters

A new Robert Wyatt album is cause for celebration. He has had an enormous (and mostly positive) influence on the most influential people in music - yet his recordings have an unfinished air, an artlessness or shyness that the unprepared listener may find disconcerting.

Cuckooland is typical: gloopy keyboards and flabby beats sit happily alongside superb musicianship and spine-tingling moments of charm and calm, while Wyatt's frail voice and tiny trumpet float aloft.

But Cuckooland is also full of tunes and feelgood riffs: it's an album that grows on its listeners. There is nothing wispy about the lyrics, many of which were written by Wyatt's partner, Alfreda Benge. Lullaby for Hamza was prompted by a Guardian article about an Iraqi woman and her son, while Forest refers to a Nazi extermination camp and Foreign Accents name-checks Mordechai Vanunu and Mohammad Mossadegh.

Joined by loyal chums such as Annie Whitehead, Gilad Atzmon, David Gilmour and Phil Manzanera, Wyatt maps out an alternative pop universe, as British as a cup of China tea.

BLOW UP - Ottobre 2003

Robert Wyyat - Cuckooland (CD Hannibal/Ird) (16t-75:22)

Piercarlo Poggio

Con personaggi di elevata statura artistica e umana, quale è senza dubbio Robert Wyatt, sarebbe utile rifarsi una verginità acustica ogni volta che mettono in pista una nuova produzione. Nel caso specifico può essere relativamente semplice, considerando la parsimonia con cui Bob da alle stampe i suoi manufatti. Occorre infatti fare un bello sforzo di memoria per risalire al 1997 e ricordarsi di cosa succedeva sul precedente *Shleep*. Meglio lasciar tranquilla la mente, far finta di non conoscere nessuna storia canterburiana e tantomeno come funzionavano le macchine soffici, e gettarsi a corpo morto su "Cuckooland", esattamente come se si trattasse di un album di un debuttante. Ne ricaveremo così più di una suggestione positiva, a cominciare da una splendida *Old Europe* che sa di jazz parigino in bianco e nero anni cinquanta con assenza di retrogusto mefitico o da una *Forest* con annesso David Gilmour che dall'inconsistenza dell'inizio si ispessisce sino al culmine di un finale a quattro voci (quella di Brian Eno compresa). "Cuckooland" ha una durata infinita, ma non viene mai da dire che è troppo lungo e poi, saggiamente, tra l'ottavo e il nono brano, Robert ha lasciato un vuoto di trenta secondi, così c'è il tempo per mettere su l'acqua per il té. Soltanto dove la voce di Wyatt è troppo dominante e solitària (*Cuckoo Madame*, *Life Is Sheep*) si ingenera a tratti una sensazione di ingolfamento, come al termine di un lauto pranzo, il che, come tutti sanno, non significa che il pranzo sia stato di scarsa qualità. La finezza con cui il padrone di casa sa introdurre portate fuori dell'ordinario (le complicate figurazioni ritmiche di *Trickle Down*, l'*Insensatez* brasiliana di Jobim, le ondulazioni solo strumentali di *La Ahada Yalam* di Nizar Zreik) è fuori discussione e altrettanto indiscutibile è la sua abilità nel mettere a proprio agio gli ospiti (tra i nomi di riguardo, oltre a quelli già menzionati, siedono a tavola Phil Manzanera, Paul Welter, Karen Mantler, anche in veste di autrice, e la sempre eccellente Annie Whitehead al trombone), i quali danno la netta impressione di aver pagato per esserci e non di essere stati pagati per fare numero. E se la musica di "Cuckooland" può in definitiva apparire sollevata di una buona spanna da terra, basterà gettare uno sguardo ai testi per comprendere che non è così: "zingari, bombe, pace, Hiroshima" sono vocaboli che non necessitano di alcuna spiegazione ulteriore. L'artigiano Wyatt e la sua musa Alfie anche stavolta hanno fatto un buon lavoro e possono tornare sereni a contemplare la campagna, lasciando ai forzati della nota il compito di infastidire il mondo con i tour promozionali. (7/8)

LIBERATION - 26 septembre 2003

Les stances de Robert Wyatt

Nick Kent

On peut faire confiance à Robert Wyatt, l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine cloué sur une chaise roulante depuis 1973, pour pointer du doigt la dérive d'un monde chaque jour davantage contrôlé par la droite. Pour son premier album depuis six ans, le surdoué s'est entouré d'amis comme Eno, Phil Manzanera et David Gilmour, ce qui n'empêche pas certains titres de sonner comme des démos home-made habillant ses vocaux de vieux clodo. Plus important, Wyatt retrouve ses vieux compagnons Alfreda Benge et Karen Mantler sur plusieurs stances virulentes. Le Beware de Mantler est un constat glaçant sur la paranoïa globale, les paroles de Benge sur Cuckoo Madame tentent d'exprimer quelque sympathie pour Margaret Thatcher et sa lutte contre la maladie d'Alzheimer... Le scientifique israélien emprisonné Mordechai Vanunu, l'ex-leader iranien Mohammad Mossadegh, les morts de Hiroshima, de Nagasaki et les victimes du nettoyage ethnique en ex-Yougoslavie hantent ces chansons, mais Wyatt parvient toutefois à insuffler une certaine tendresse à certaines, comme Old Europe, ode au Paris du milieu du XXe siècle. Pas vraiment easy-listening, mais courageux et visionnaire, Cuckooland s'impose comme l'une des rares réussites artistiques de l'année. Vivement recommandé.
Cuckooland (Ryko/Naïve).

LES INROCKUPTIBLES - 30 septembre 2003

Robert Wyatt - Cuckooland - Rykodisc - Naïve

Richard Robert

Les premières mesures de Cuckooland, où quelques coulures de cornet glissent sur une nappe de synthé bon marché, ramènent l'auditeur en terrain familier, une manière de dire que, six ans après Shleep, Robert Wyatt a choisi comme toujours de changer dans la continuité. Mais le terrain est si fertile, si prodigue de beautés et d'inventions, qu'on se laisse une fois de plus surprendre. Il y a d'abord la classe phénoménale d'un musicien qui réussit à enchaîner les figures harmoniques, mélodiques et rythmiques les plus acrobatiques sans jamais donner l'impression de s'adonner à de pénibles tours de force. Il y a cette voix à la fois neuve et ancestrale qui unifie cette improbable mosaïque, cette voix d'enfant centenaire qui n'est pas n'en déplaise à Ryuichi Sakamoto ? "la plus triste du monde" : simplement la plus littérale et la plus musicale du monde. Il y a aussi l'extraordinaire fond de jeu d'une équipe d'instrumentistes qui, de Karen Mantler à David Gilmour, du clarinettiste israélien Gilad Atzmon à la tromboniste Annie Whitehead, donne à chaque trait mélodique la couleur et la vibration requises. Il y a enfin cette place nouvelle accordée au jazz, qui n'apparaît plus seulement en filigrane, mais de manière très explicite, comme sur ces véritables airs à swinguer que sont Old Europe ou Trickle Down. Cet hommage à la musique qui l'a éveillé n'est pas le seul moment fort d'un disque extrêmement dense : toutes les chansons, ici, peuvent facilement faire l'objet de plusieurs niveaux de lecture (musical, poétique, politique, sentimental'), sans que la limpidité ni la légèreté de l'ensemble en soient pour autant altérées. Comment Wyatt réussit-il à créer une musique aussi chargée et aussi aérienne ? Face à une telle question, l'Anglais répond qu'il n'est pas psychologue pour un sou et qu'il n'est pas doué pour l'introspection. S'il est un musicien hors compétition, l'Anglais n'a pas renoncé pour autant à son amour du jeu. Et c'est bien ça qu'on entend de bout en bout dans Cuckooland, comme dans une épatante compilation d'inédits qui vient de sortir, Solar Flares

Burn for You (1972-2003). C'est peut-être là l'enseignement délivré par l'œuvre de Robert Wyatt : l'amour de la musique, quand il est porté par une telle fraîcheur d'intention et d'expression, rend beau, intelligent, heureux et sensible. Une vérité qu'on est en droit d'estimer naïve, voire mièvre, mais qui trouve pourtant dans Cuckooland sa plus indiscutable transcription.

WIRE - september 2003

Robert Wyatt - Cuckooland - Hannibal HN1468 CD

Clive Bell
Photo : Keiko Yoshida

1997's *Shleep* was rereleased in 2002, but *Cuckooland* is Robert Wyatt's first album of the new millennium. The ex-singer and drummer from Soft Machine and Matching Mole lives quietly in Lincolnshire, writing "about one song a year" with his wife, Alfreda Benge. Ryuichi Sakamoto once said that Wyatt had "the saddest voice in the world", and for those of us who regard him fondly as a member of some kind of British alternative royal family, it's a pleasure to see him credited with 'coronet' on the first track. Presumably that's a typo, because Wyatt plays plenty of cornet and trumpet (his first instrument, childhood violin lessons notwithstanding) throughout *Cuckooland* - to lovely melancholy effect on "Old Europe", which is about Juliette Greco and Miles Davis in Paris in 1949. That title's reference to Donald Rumsfeld's anti-French sneering on the eve of the Iraq war is no accident.
Over the last three decades Wyatt has staked out his musical patch by borrowing widely from both jazz and 'beat music'. His 1974 pop hit with The Monkees' "I'm A Believer" was an appropriate response to the jazz instrumentalists who got him sacked from Soft Machine. If *Shleep* was a poppier, brighter vision than usual, for *Cuckooland* Wyatt has nudged the dial back towards jazz. The album is also murkier and more understated. The good news is that there are classic songs here, some good jokes, glorious old fashioned harmonica courtesy of Karen Mantler, and yet more proof of Wyatt's amazing ability to write a moving melody about the grimmest of topics without trivialising or patronising them. "Forest" is a rich goulash of a song, with a double-layered chorus and Brian Eno joining the choir for the counter-melody. After a couple of listens you'll be singing too, and yet the lyrics deal with World War Two gypsy extermination camps. "Foreign Accents" loops a six word lyric - four of them Japanese - for a nursery rhyme about Israeli nuclear weapons and CIA meddling in Iran. Wyatt has been here before, of course. "East Timor" on 1985's *Old Rottenhat* was minimal, caustic and unforgettable. And those who remember with pleasure *Shleep's* "Free Will And Testament" (a pop ditty that tackles head-on the limitations of human free will) will enjoy *Cuckooland's* opening track, "Just A Bit", where Wyatt takes on a rich subject: is religious belief a good thing? "*Superstition's like religion, bonsai version -faintly sad.*" It's "I'm A Believer" dragged into 2003. "I'm not a political activist - more an aesthete and self-indulgent piss-artist," Wyatt told *The Guardian* early this year. He says of his voice that it has "ever-decreasing range, now more or less reduced to a wino's mutter". His self-assessment is a little harsh, for Wyatt can still negotiate the beautiful high melody of "Lullaby For Hamza" (about the bombing of Baghdad) better than any other male vocalist I can think of. The grumpy wino speaks out on "Lullaloop", a hilarious complaint about fast walkers and noisy neighbours. But it's true to say that much of the singing is understated, whether from Wyatt or his guest Karen Mantler (Carla Bley's and Mike Mantler's daughter, who contributes three songs). Sometimes the mix swamps the voices a little, a shame given the quality of the lyrics. This problem is not helped by

Wyatt's current fondness for a real stinker of a synth - a huffing, twinkling breeze of digital halitosis that has been mixed more generously than it deserves.
On the musical plus side there is plenty of sax, clarinet and flute from Israeli exile Gilad Atzmon (formerly of Ian Dury's Blockheads). Also dark, treacly trombones from Annie Whitehead, spot-on guitar from Paul Weller on "Lullaloop", and Mantler's spine-tingling harmonica. Not to forget Wyatt's drumming, which, like his trumpet, is more in evidence than usual. When the atmosphere threatens to turn dark and glum, Wyatt clears the air with a parlour piano rendition of Buddy Holly's "Raining In My Heart", or a simple duet with Mantler on Carlos Jobim's Brazilian classic, "Insensatez".
Wyatt can justly be proud of this batch. *Shleep* raised the bar very high, but *Cuckooland* is a substantial and deeply personal work, with the light touch of a true master. At 75 minutes, it's also a generously long collection, and the boss has thoughtfully included a half-minute break in the middle, "long enough to change the record or put on the kettle".



More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews



Somexhere In Soho
2004

Soft Machine

More information about this album

RYTHMES CROISÉS - 1er mai 2020

SOFT MACHINE – Somewhere In Soho (2004, Voiceprint)

Stéphane Fougère

Article réalisé à partir de chroniques parues dans les revues TRAVERSES et dûment remaniées et complétées en 2020.

Nous retrouvons ici SOFT MACHINE en concert fin avril 1970, soit quelques jours avant l'enregistrement de l'album Third. La configuration du groupe est celle qui est communément reconnue comme "classique" pour cette époque, à savoir Mike RATLEDGE, Hugh HOPPER, Elton DEAN et Robert WYATT. Un mois auparavant, le groupe se produisait encore en formation quintette lors sa tournée sur le territoire français. Mais de l'eau a coulé sous les ponts et Lyn DOBSON a quitté le navire, laissant Elton DEAN devenir l'unique et glorieux survivant de la section de vents qui avait été recrutée à l'automne 1969.
C'est dans un quartier du West End de Londres qu'a été effectué l'enregistrement du bien nommé double CD Somewhere in Soho. Le "somewhere" en question donne une information certes vague, mais qui ne le reste pas bien longtemps si on regarde bien la pochette : oui, SOFT MACHINE, au départ considéré comme un groupe de pop-rock psychédélique, est à l'affiche du fameux Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, symbole d'une certaine vie nocturne londonienne. Lui qui s'était produit en début d'année dans l'énorme Fairfield Halls de Croydon a du s'adapter à un espace plus modeste dont la scène est plus exiguë et le contact avec le public plus direct.
C'est cependant un signe qui ne trompe pas quand au processus de mutation perpétuelle dans lequel s'est engagé SOFT MACHINE et qui confirme qu'il fonctionne dorénavant quasiment comme un groupe de jazz tendance fusion, dans un esprit proche de ce que faisait Miles DAVIS à l'époque.
Cela dit, SOFT MACHINE avait déjà eu auparavant – en novembre 1969, à l'époque où il se produisait en septette – l'occasion de jouer dans ce même club de jazz, et sa tendance à jouer à un volume assez élevé n'était pas ce à quoi Ronnie SCOTT et ses clients fidèles étaient habitués ! Mais ce retour en quartette a constitué alors pour le groupe un véritable challenge, car ce n'est pas seulement pour une soirée qu'a été programmé SOFT MACHINE au Ronnie Scott's, mais pour six soirées consécutives, du 20 au 25 avril 1970! Jouer toute une semaine au même endroit impliquait donc pour le quartette de garder sa musique fraîche et vivante avec un répertoire désormais bien éprouvé, toujours constitué de deux sets, parfois trois, dans lesquels ses compositions sont enchaînées pour former une seule suite musicale. Comme le dit Mike RATLEDGE dans le livret : « Il nous a fallu étendre notre répertoire et nous plonger dans des

espaces de liberté où nous n'avions pas normalement pas l'habitude d'aller. » Somewhere in Soho nous fait donc entendre deux sets de SOFT MACHINE captés lors de cette semaine de programmation au Ronnie Scott's, et ces sets comportent de généreux moments d'improvisation tant collective qu'individuelle. Par rapport aux concerts de l'hiver 1970, deux nouvelles pièces font leur entrée dans le répertoire et sont jouées au début du premier set, il s'agit de Slightly all the Time et Out-Bloody Rageous, composées par Mike RATLEDGE et qui seront peu après enregistrées en studio pour le double LP Third. Mais à ce stade, ces pièces sont encore à l'état de "work in progress" et n'atteignent pas encore les dimensions qu'elles prendront sur l'album légendaire. (Il est vrai aussi que ces versions sont augmentées de séquences de musique concrète et autres montages de studio.) Lors de ces concerts à Soho, chacune ne dure que dix minutes, soit moitié moins que sur Third. Cela n'empêche pas les musiciens de broder à loisir au sein de ces pièces, Slightly all the Time mettant en exergue le saxophone alto d'Elton DEAN et Out-Bloody Rageous l'orgue de Mike RATLEDGE et le même Elton DEAN, décidément très en verve, qui s'impose de plus en plus comme improvisateur soliste et musicien de premier plan, et non plus seulement comme un membre d'une section de vents.

En seconde moitié du premier set, Eamonn Andrews, un poil plus court que sur les concerts documentés par les CD Noisette et Breda Reactor, offre pour sa part un espace d'expression libre pour le piano électrique de Mike RATLEDGE en introduction, mais aussi pour l'hypnotique basse fuzz de Hugh HOPPER et les inventions rythmiques de Robert WYATT. Puis Mousetrap continue à secouer le bocal, traînant toujours à sa suite les thèmes plus planants Noisette et Backwards (qui finiront par être intégrés à Slightly all the Time sur Third) avant de céder la place à Hibou, Anemone & Bear, qui disparaît hélas au bout de quatre minutes et demie… C'est de nouveau deux autres pièces de Third qui entament le second set. Du haut de ses 19 minutes, Facelift s'affiche comme la composition la plus longue, prétexte à une improvisation collective en introduction puis à plusieurs soli d'orgue et de saxophone alto dans ses différentes sections. Le set se poursuit avec un segment instrumental de Moon in June, à la fin duquel Robert WYATT tente une nébuleuse improvisation vocale avec effet d'écho enrobée de notes discrètes de basse, de piano électrique et de saxophone, avant d'aboutir à la suite Esther's Nose Job, qui comprend toujours Pigling Bland et l'étrange solo de batterie de Robert WYATT, Cymbalism. On remarque que, dans ces deux sets au Ronnie Scott's, WYATT est resté assez discret en termes d'improvisations vocales, préférant faire montre de créativité sur ses fûts et ses cymbales.

À l'instar de Breda Reactor, Somewhere in Soho est un enregistrement amateur dument nettoyé pour sa sortie en CD. Il n'est peut-être pas aussi parfait qu'un enregistrement de console, mais reste éminemment fréquentable par des oreilles averties qui n'ont pas peur de s'immerger dans une captation brute de décoffrage. Du fait de l'exiguité du lieu, il se dégage une sensation de proximité avec la musique qui donne l'impression "d'y être" en direct, et l'inspiration constante des musiciens fait qu'on est vite captivés par le flot sonore ininterrompu de chacun des sets et qu'on en oublie les menues imperfections techniques.

More information about this album

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HOME



Robert Wyatt & Friends
In Concert
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,
London 8th September 1974

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

BUSCADERO N° 272 - Ottobre 2005

Robert Wyatt - Theatre Royal Drury Lane

Hannibal/Rykodisc ●●●●○

Andrea Trevaini



Il Theatre Royal in Drury Lane è il teatro più antico di Londra, venne inaugurato nel 1663 ed ebbe storia travagliata, venne distrutto tre volte da incendi; nella sua versione attuale, che data dal 1812, fu progettato dall'architetto Benjamin Wyatt (quando si dice la predestinazione!). Forse fu per questo motivo che Robert Wyatt scelse questo teatro per lo storico concerto dell'8 settembre del 1974 che segnò il suo rientro e contemporaneamente il suo addio alle scene, dopo l'incidente che un anno prima l'aveva relegato per sempre sulla sedia a rotelle. Robert nonostante l'incidente non si era fermato e il 1974 segnò l'anno della sua rinascita: nei primi mesi dell'anno completò un disco che rimane una delle pietre miliari della storia musicale, Rock Bottom, il 1° giugno partecipò ad un altro famoso concerto, quello del Rainbow con John Cale, Nico, Kevin Ayers, Eno, Oldfield.

Fu l'allora patron della Virgin Richard Branson che riuscì a raggruppare miracolosamente tutti gli amici di Robert Wyatt e realizzò un concerto che è rimasto tra i miti della storia del Rock, finora reperibile su bootlegs molto ricercati. Ora il nostro desiderio di ascoltare il concerto in versione rimasterizzata ed ufficiale si realizza grazie alla Hannibal Records e finalmente ci troviamo tra le mani questo capolavoro. Il concerto radunò quasi per intero la backing band che aveva registrato **Rock Bottom**: Mongezi Feza alla tromba, Ivor Cutler alla voce, Gary Windo ai fiati, Fred Frith alla viola e al violino, Mike Oldfield alla chitarra; cui si aggiunsero:Dave Stewart (Egg, Hatfield & the North) alle tastiere, Laurie Allan alla batteria, l'ex-compagno nei Soft Machine Hugh Hopper al basso e la grande Julie Tippets alle tastiere e alla voce (peccato che nel disco manchino alcune interpretazioni della cantante, escluse forse per motivi di

spazio).

Al gruppo si aggiunse la partecipazione speciale di Nick Mason dei Pink Floyd, grande supporter di Wyatt, produttore di **Rock Bottom**, molto legato al giro dei musicisti di Canterbury. Si inizia l'ascolto del disco con commozione ascoltando la voce dello scomparso John Peel che ironicamente introduce il concerto e si parte quasi senza soluzione di continuità con la breve *Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening* dal primo album dei Matching Mole, che sgorga quasi improvvisa, con la voce un po' incerta ed emozionata di Wyatt. Segue subito Memories di Hugh Hopper, con il violino di Fred Frith in primo piano ed ecco con l'attacco di una *Sea Song* di oltre 9 minuti il concerto decolla alla grande con l'esecuzione integrale di **Rock Bottom** ed è subito magia, pochi vocalizzi di Robert introducono l'organo di Dave Stewart e il Canterbury Sound mostra la sua grandiosa bellezza ed acida liricità; la voce di Wyatt mostra le vette che può raggiungere; il vecchio pard Hopper supporta una sezione ritmica di grande livello, la viola di Frith e la chitarra di Oldfield si alternano alla voce del cantante che vola sopra il suono degli strumenti.

A Last Straw vede Julie Tippets al piano che accompagna i vocalizzi di Wyatt che in alcuni momenti si confondono con suoni di chitarra wha-wha, un brano da far accapponare la pelle. Poi con *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road* il tono si alza ancora grazie alla incredibile tromba di Mongezi Feza che parte ricordando il free-jazz di Albert Donald Ayler e duetta con la voce di Wyatt, musica senza confini, cui fa eco la voce di Ivor Cutler, il tutto supportato da una base ritmica incalzante che coadiuva a rendere il finale del pezzo davvero torrido!

Si prosegue con il meraviglioso dittico *Alifie/Alifib* dedicato alla moglie Alfreda (Alfie), due canzoni che costituiscono il cuore del disco. Sono canzoni sulle quali si sono sprecate parole di interpretazione e che costituiscono uno dei punti più alti della poetica del nostro artista, quindi meglio tacere e passare all'ascolto!

Mind Of A Child è l'unica canzone tra quelle eseguite da Julie Tippets al concerto riportata sul disco ma è sufficiente per far ricordare le qualità interpretative e musicale della ex Julie Driscoll.

Instant Pussy dei Matching Mole ci mostra un altro bel duetto tra Wyatt e la Tippets, cui si aggiunge poi la voce di Cutler, per un brano pieno di vocalizzi azzardati ed estremi, con una sezione ritmica che prepara l'entrata immaginifica della tromba di Mongezi Feza. Il concerto prosegue sempre ad altissimo livello e ogni pezzo meriterebbe una descrizione dettagliata, merita comunque una segnalazione per la chiusura del concerto (ma attenti alla ghost-track, una sperimentale *Laughing Policeman!*) con una corale I'M A Believer di Neil Diamond, già portata al successo dai Monkees, nella quale spiccano le voci di Tippets e Cutler.

In conclusione: disco atteso da anni, pubblicato a sorpresa, un regalo che viene dal passato ma che sarà gradito non solo a quelli, ormai pochi, che hanno vissuto l'epopea canterburiana, ma a tutti quelli che hanno imparato ad amare in anni più recenti il menestrello magico di Bristol.

VIBRATIONS N° 78 - Novembre 2005

Robert Wyatt & Friends - Theatre Royal Drury Lane

RYKODISC/NAÏVE

Richard Robert

Wyatt et la crème de la scène anglaise en live : un fantasme réalisé en 1974, enchanteur trente ans après

rock « Je m'évanouis de peur à la simple idée que des gens comptent sur moi pour animer leur soirée. » Ainsi décrivait Robert Wyatt, en 2003, cette phobie de la scène qui le tétanise depuis trente ans. Il fut un temps où l'Anglais savait en tout cas dompter ses angoisses : en témoigne ce légendaire concert londonien de 1974. Un an après l'accident qui lui a coûté l'usage de ses jambes, Wyatt, soutenu par ses meilleurs amis (Hopper, Frith, Oldfield, Feza & Co), y est tout simplement impérial. Tout en empruntant au répertoire de Soft Machine, de Matching Mole ou des Monkees (reprise démentielle de « I'm A Believer »), II se paie ainsi le luxe de réinventer l'intégralité de « Rock Bottom », avec une intensité proprement sidérante. Cet enregistrement, qui est aussi un document de premier ordre sur la scène anglaise de l'époque, méritait vraiment d'être dépoussiéré.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS - 14th September, 1974

Robert Wyatt : Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London

Charles Shaar Murray

Even though the gig was due to start at 8.30, Drury Lane had started to clog up with earnest-looking hippies nearly two hours before the event.

Mind you, it all adds to the sense of occasion, but the regrettably prosaic explanation was that someone had neglected to inscribe the precise time of showing on either the tickets or the ads.

So it goes.

Things kicked off with a brief monologue by the newlywed Dancing Jack Peel, clad in his most glam rock outfit. Undeterred by shouts of "Boring" from certain sections of the audience - all right then, from me - he intoned for a few moments and then vacated the stage to Ivor Cutler and Phyllis April King, who provided a highly amusing interlude of deadpan poesies and brief songs, which were received with great merriment by the assembled company.

So it goes.

After a discreet intermission, Dancing Jack cartwheeled dynamically back onto the stage. Through mobile, well-shaped lips he enunciated (rather devastatingly, it must be admitted) "For Robert Wyatt of Twickenham, Opportunity Knocks!"

Mr. Wyatt perambulated rapidly to a strategic area between a small mixer ("These knobs don't actually do anything - they just give me something to do with my hands") and a keyboard set-up ("At rehearsals, I couldn't find a position from where I could play these, so I probably won't play them. Still, they look good.")

He ran through a good-naturedly rickety version of Hugh Hopper's 'Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening', backed up by Hopper

himself on bass, Laurie Allan on drums, Fred Frith on violin and Dave Stewart on keyboards, the first trickles of the mighty wave of superstars that was soon to swamp the stage.

(The preceding sentence comes to you courtesy of 36 back numbers of Conan The Barbarian).

Most of the material from Wyatt's Rock Bottom found its way into the front half of the set (and in case you need to be re-told, it's a wondrous album indeed).

Towards the end of 'A Last Straw', a diffident young man with an unmistakable "I-am-a-junior-roadie" demeanour wandered on, played a bit of synthesiser and wandered off.

It wasn't until he reappeared half an hour later with a Gibson SG strapped around him, that the audience sussed that this dynamic figure was in fact none other than Mike Oldfield, the man with Britain's two best-selling albums to his name, one of which had been blasted through the P.A. during the intermissions.

However, it was undoubtedly Wyatt's show, despite the superstars who wandered on and off - y'know, yer Nick Masons, Gary Windo, that bunch.

Swaying in his wheelchair playing ghost drums, fiddling with the dials of his mixer with one hand, clutching a mike with the other and his eyes squeezed tight shut, he was unquestionably the focal point of the proceedings, and folks, he's singin' better than ever.

Unfortunately Julie Tippett's contribution to the festivities rather derailed things. After joining Wyatt and Co., in one song, she was left alone tootling merrily on a recorder and humming into it occasionally.

This was followed by two songs at de piano, performed extremely nervously, and a number with Wyatt, Windo and trumpeter Mongezi Feza, which could well have been called 'Dedicated To You But You Ran Out Of The Room Screaming For Aspirin'.

Ms. Tippett's voice is still as compelling as ever, but her stiff, uncertain piano playing and the lugubriousness of her songs provided a rather dead area in the middle of the set, which eventually climaxed with a thoroughly berserk version of 'I'm A Believer' with some singularly dirty rhythm guitar from Oldfield.

Generally, the show veered from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the sublime firmly in the lead.

80 per cent of it was very fine indeed, and the more gigs Robert Wyatt feels like undertaking the better.

Wheel meet again.

CHARLIE-HEBDO N° 198 - 2 SEPTEMBRE 1974

[*Annonce du concert de Robert Wyatt au Theatre Royal Drury Lane*]

Toujours au sujet de la même catégorie sociale (?) Robert Wyatt

donnera son premier grand concert en Angleterre au Théâtre Royal, le 8 septembre, avec à peu près les mêmes musiciens que dans son disque, celui qui est si beau que ceux qui ne l'ont pas encore ouï en sont tout diminués, les pauvres. Cette fois-ci Nick Pink Floyd Mason participera de son instrument, avec également Dave Hatfield and the North Stewart. En super prime, Julie Tippetts, ci-devant Driscoll remettra pour la première fois ses grands pieds sur scène depuis 197I. Et ce retour-là ne fait pas minable.

MUSIQ # 5 - JANVIER-FEVRIER-MARS 2006

Live At Drury Lane 1974

Guy Darol

Un an après la défenestration qui lui coûte l'usage de ses jambes, Robert Wyatt donne sur la scène du Théâtre Royal Drury Lane un concert historique. Le 8 septembre 1974, entouré par les guitares de Fred Frith, Mike Oldfield et Hugh Hopper, les batteries de Nick Mason et de Laurie Allan, les claviers de Dave Stewart (aucun rapport avec Eurythmics) et de Julie Tippetts (également au chant), la trompette de Mongezi Feza, la voix d'Ivor Cutler, Robert Wyatt fait entendre la totalité de "Rock Bottom" (l'album mythique d'après la chute), des pièces de Soft Machine et de Matching Mole. Ayant définitivement renoncé à la batterie depuis son accident, Robert Wyatt a choisi le chant et le piano et c'est (mort de trouille) à voix nue qu'il se présente {expérience non renouvelée) face à un public qui n'ignore pas les splendeurs d'un groupe (Soft Machine) autrefois produit par Kim Fowley et qui ne jure que par Lewis Carroll et Alfred Jarry. De ce concert, il existait au moins quatre bootlegs notoires. C'est dire l'importance de cette publication. La voix de Wyatt (si constamment poignante), soutenue par un instrumentarium passionné, suscite une émotion à l'opposé de la mièvrerie. Avant le final *(I'm A Believer*, reprise ébaubissante de Neil Diamond), le compositeur magnifique chante *Calyx*, une invitation à vivre comme si tout n'était que poème: « La poésie en mouvement, voilà ce que tu deviens ». Et c'est ainsi que Wyatt est grand.

LE MONDE - 8 NOVEMBRE 2005

Robert Wyatt & Friends
In Concert, 8th September 74

S. Si.

Le 1er juin 1973, Robert Wyatt tombe par la fenêtre d'un appartement. Pendant son séjour à l'hôpital, Wyatt, qui pourra plus jamais marcher, ancien batteur de Soft Machine puis de Matching Mole, prépare son deuxième album solo, *Rock Bottom.* Six chansons intenses et délicates, inquiétantes et poétiques, que Wyatt interprétera une fois sur scène, le 8 septembre 1974, au Théâtre Royal Drury Lane, entouré d'amis musiciens. Ce concert, l'un des seuls que Wyatt ait donné après son accident, paraît aujourd'hui officiellement. Aux titres de *Rock Bottom,* joués avec un élan probablement lié à son trac, il en ajoute de Matching Mole, un de Soft Machine, un de Hatfield The North *(Calyx),* termine par une

reprise de *I'm A Believer.* Les amis sont Nick Mason le batteur de Pink Floyd, le guitariste Mike Oldfield, Fred Frith et Chris Cutler d'Henry Cow... Puissant et touchant.

TRAVERSE N°19 - MARS 2006

Robert Wyatt & Friends - Theatre Royal Drury Lane
8th September 1974 (Hannibal)

Domenico Solazzo.

La pochette n'a rien à envier aux pires bootlegs qui circulent sous les comptoirs des magasins de disques d'occasion, mais au moins a-t-elle l'honnêteté de mettre en exergue tout ce qu'il faut savoir sur ce formidable document. Enregistré au Théâtre Royal de Drury Lane, le concert de Robert WYATT qu'il nous est proposé d'écouter ici n'aurait sans doute pas la même aura si la simple évocation des noms de ceux qui l'accompagnent ne se transformait pas en autant de portes d'accès instantanées à de mondes merveilleux et singuliers : Mike OLDFIELD, Julie TIPPETTS, Fred FRITH, Gary WINDO et Mongezi FEZA, Nick MASON, Laurie ALLAN, Dave STEWART, Hugh HOPPER et Ivor CUTLER. À peine croyable. Et pourtant... Je sais ; c'est presque trop. Mais ce n'est peut-être pas là l'aspect le plus intimidant du disque ! Jetez plutôt un oeil au répertoire ; l'intégralité de l'album *Rock Bottom* et quelques autres pioches chez SOFT MACHINE ou MATCHING MOLE (*Signed Curtain* et *Instant Pussy*). Enfin, ça ne se déroule pas tout à fait comme ça...
Après une courte introduction que l'on doit à John PEEL, WYATT fait monter sur scène les différents intervenants en fonction de pièces à jouer. C'est d'abord une version explosée de *Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening* et *Memories*, deux titres signés Hugh HOPPER que le fidèle bassiste accompagne de bien entendu. C'est Laurie ALLAN que l'on retrouve à la batterie, Dave STEWART aux claviers - et ce jusqu'à la fin du set - tout simplement époustouflant, ponctuellement rejoints par Fred FRITH au violon. Viennent ensuite seulement les titres du mythique *Rock Bottom* dans un ordre en tout point conforme à celui de l'album original, sauf que la version qu'ils en donnent est nettement plus sauvage ou, en tout cas, débridée. II faut oublier le *Sea Song* bien plus intimiste et troublant que Cuneiform avait été nous repêcher sur *Solar Flares Burn for You*. Cette version-ci n'en est pas pour autant moins poignante ; EGG à l'assaut du répertoire de l'homme de fer du prog, ou presque, montrant par là même toute la souplesse de ses compositions, portant sa marque indélébile, en vers et contre tout, même quand elles se retrouvent bousculées plus que de raison. Et WYATT de s'abandonner sans retenue à ses exercices vocaux inspirés du scat, nous entraînant ainsi avec lui dans sa folie douce. Pour *Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road* et la suite *Alifie/Alifib*, jouée à rebours, le duo Mongezi FEZA et Gary WINDO (BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH) viennent apporter ce souffle lyrique et malade à la fois, en tous points conforme à l'esprit qui règne sur le disque studio, pour s'effacer devant ce grand moment de solitude, comme le ballet de pétales de milliers de fleurs se recroquevillant sur elles-mêmes à la tombée de la nuit.
Puis, Julie TIPPETTS vient s'emparer du micro pour nous chanter son *Mind of a Child*, pour piano électrique et voix. Les masters de ce qui suit ayant été perdus, Jamie JOHNSON a fait un boulot remarquable pour recoller les petits bouts de chutes de sources divers afin de restituer le concert dans son intégralité. Et même si les morceaux qui clôturent ce recueil ne possèdent pas la même portée symbolique, elles sont toutefois parcourues du même frisson.
Bref, voilà encore un formidable cadeau de Noël à l'approche des fêtes, sauf que ce cadeau-là, je me le suis fait tout seul. Si vous aimez vos proches, je veux dire si vous leur voulez du bien, pensez à

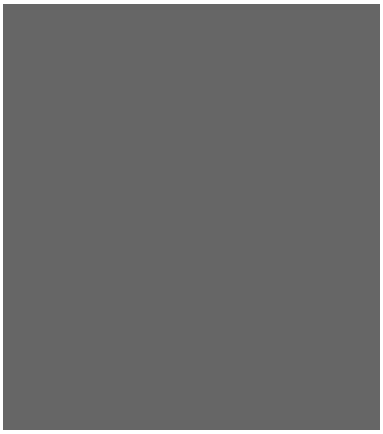
eux en leur offrant ce disque. Car ce n'est pas qu'un bout d'histoire que vous leur offrirez, pas seulement un bout de WYATT non plus. C'est bien plus que cela ; un bout de vous-mêmes. Un bout de nous tous. Une part d'humanité.

TRAVERSE N°19 - MARS 2006

Robert Wyatt & Friends - Théâtre Royal Drury Lane
8th September 1974 (Hannibal)

Benoît Godfroy.

S'il fallait rédiger la chronique d'un tel album à l'attention d'un néophyte, alors nul doute qu'il ne faudrait au bas mot pas moins de quatre colonnes pour le faire dignement, à savoir en présentant chaque musicien impliqué d'une façon détaillée, en racontant l'histoire de Robert WYATT et du divin *Rock Bottom,* puis en restituant le disque dans son contexte, sans oublier d'en décrire les sensations reçues à son écoute. Fort heureusement pour moi, les lecteurs de TRAVERSES ont forcément un minimum de culture musicale « canterburyenne » - peut-être même plus que moi - et il suffira juste de mentionner l'affiche somptueuse de ce concert pour qu'ils courent se procurer cet album au plus vite. Jugez plutôt *:* Mike OLDFIELD, Julie TIPPETTS, Fred FRITH, Gary WINDO, Nick MASON, Mongezi FEZA, Laurie ALLAN, Dave STEWART, Hugh HOPPER, Ivor CUTLER et bien sûr Robert WYATT, tout ce beau monde ayant été capté en concert en 1974, lors d'une des rares apparitions publiques de Robert WYATT après l'accident l'ayant cloué à vie sur une chaise roulante. Au menu, pas moins que l'intégralité de *Rock Bottom,* plus *Memories* et *Dedicated To You But You Weren't tistening* (SOFT MACHINE), *Instant Pussy* et *Signed Curtain* (MATCHING MOLE), *Calyx, I'm A Believer,* puis *Mind Of A Child de* Julie TIPPETTS. Avouez que tout cela est plutôt alléchant, non ?
Introduit par le défunt John PEEL, ce concert est enfin la parution officielle d'un enregistrement qui circulait depuis bien longtemps sous forme de bootlegs plus ou moins audibles et qui ne rendaient pas justice à la musique en comparaison de cette publication jubilatoire. Car l'ensemble de l'enregistrement bénéficie de bout en bout d'une qualité sonore allant de superbe (titres 1 à 9) à très correcte (titres 10 à 14). À ce sujet, Robert WYATT lui-même explique les raisons de cette différence de son au dos du CD.
Pour l'auditeur, c'est un plaisir incroyable d'entendre enfin ce concert avec une telle qualité et de pouvoir ainsi s'émerveiller encore plus devant un tel parterre de notes magistralement interprétées. Concert oblige, R*ock Bottom* sur ce disque perd une grande part de sa fragilité d'opaline tout en demi-teintes qui en font indéniablement sa grande force et son intemporalité, mais se voit transmuté en une approche beaucoup plus terrestre, plus organique et plus fiévreuse, où les accroches typiques de l'école de Canterbury se font ressentir plus intensément que sur l'œuvre originelle, et où le jazz y trouve une place encore plus prépondérante. Mon attirance personnelle pour les cuivres et les vents m'incline à vouloir mentionner plus particulièrement Mongezi FEZA et son intervention phénoménale à la trompette sur *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road,* ainsi que le saxophone fou de Gary WINDO sur Alife mais en vérité, c'est de chaque intervenant dont il faudrait vanter les prouesses, tant l'unité et l'osmose qui règnent entre chaque musicien sur chacun des morceaux est révélatrice de leur immense talent. D'une part sur la maîtrise de leur instrument et d'autre part, sur cette faculté à ne servir que la musique, sans jamais qu'aucun ne veuille prendre la vedette. Même remarque à l'égard de Robert WYATT, qui écorche le tout de sa voix de porcelaine qui n'a jamais paru aussi fragile qu'ici, à la limite de la rupture, là où WYATT met à nu ses émotions et son ressenti de la musique qui l'entoure.



Mais à quoi bon chercher des termes inexistants pour décrire la beauté ? Cette chronique est forcément superficielle et trop de mots ne pourraient que rendre son utilité encore un peu plus caduque, car il y a fort à parier que de toute façon, chacun de vous a déjà le disque sur son chevet depuis sa sortie.

Sites :
www.strongcomet.com/wyatt
www.disco-robertwyatt.com

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



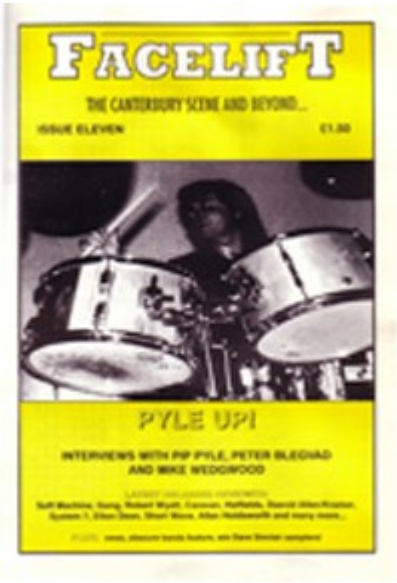
BBC In Concert 197 1
(Soft Machine & Heavy Friends)
2005

Soft Machine

More information about this album

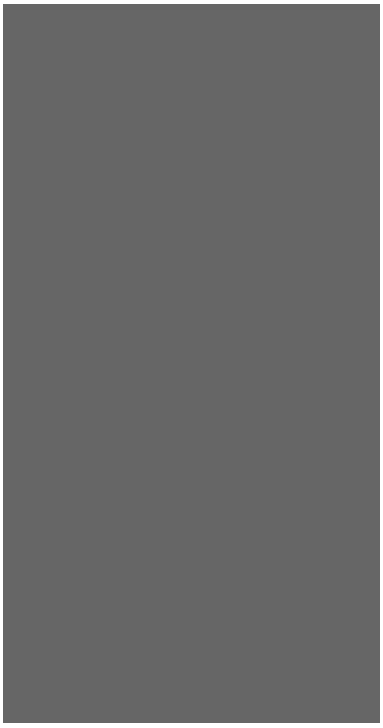
FACELIFT - N° 11 - September 1993

SOFT MACHINE - Live In Concert - Windsong WINDCD 031



From a period in their historywhich produced a prolific number of tape bootlegs, this official Soft Machine release from the BBC archives spotlights one of their more unusual performances. Many regard the period between 1969 and 1971 as the finest in the band's history, although those distrustful of the Softs' jazz leanings watched the vocal contribution of Robert Wyatt (and Kevin Ayers before him) dissipate to nothing by the time this set was recorded. This release probably represents as free a blow as the band were to extend to, before the tighter structures of the Karl Jenkins version reined the band in once more. What's unusual about this concert is that the band's accepted line-up by this time was the quartet of Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt and Elton Dean. Yet now we see the band not only augmented by Elton Dean's freeblowers on all three tracks, but on the first two more or less hijacked. 'Blind Badger' and 'Neo Caliban Grides' are both taken from the admittedly excellent Elton Dean solo LP, two of the more accessible moments from that release, yet still demanding listening. Neither Hugh Hopper nor Robert Wyatt appear on 'Blind Badger' - the line-up incorporates instead bassist Neville Whitehead, cornet player Marc Charig and drummer Phil Howard, who appear, on 'Grides' too. So this part of the concert is very much Elton Dean territory, reflective of the Soft Machine's direction at that time, if not necessarily their normal sound or make-up, given the absence of Hopper and Wyatt.

The medley which comprises the third track is more recognisable, since the band is cut to its basic quartet until the final moments, and plays entirely Soft Machine compositions. Even given the rousing big band cacophony of 'Teeth' (where the band arc, joined by Charig, trombonist Paul Nieman and Roy Babbington on acoustic bass, as well as an understandably bemused Ronnie Scott), the medley's



finest moments are Elton Dean's solo parts on 'Kings and Queens' and the everimpressive 'Out Bloody Rageous'. I never tire of hearing new versions of the exploratory, stretched-out themes that dominated Third and Fourth, not least because every version asks new questions or showcases a different player. It's common knowledge that Robert Wyatt was alienated from the band within its latter stages, but his inventive drumming provides the bulk of the backdrop for 'Eamonn Andrews' and is a tower of strength through 'All White'.

Whilst the Softs' Proms release represented a slice of cultural history, this collection finds the band on better form, yet on far from safe ground given the uniqueness of both the lineup and material. There are many better documents nf the live history of this band but since most are only taped bootlegs, it's unlike', that we'll ever hear them in this sort of sound quality. Certainly in such a fascinating environment.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Sirens & Silences / Work Resumed On The Tower / Letters Home (Reedition)
2006

News From Babel

More information about this album

TRAVERSES - N° 22 - juillet 2007

News From Babel - Works Compiled on the Tower

Stéphane Fougère



Généalogiquement lié à HENRY COW et ART BEARS, le groupe NEWS FROM BABEL fait mentir tous ceux qui voient dans le Rock In Opposition un genre surtout instrumental. Créé dans les années 1980 par Lindsay COOPER et Chris CUTLER avec Dagmar KRAUSE et Zeena PARKINS, le groupe - qui n'a connu d'existence qu'en tant que projet studio - a exploré le format « chanson » avec une audace et une inventivité qui le hisse au rang des références indispensables des musiques nouvelles européennes. La récente parution sur ReR Megacorp (distribution Orkhêstra) d'un coffret regroupant les oeuvres complètes du groupe est l'occasion de s'imprégner de nouveau de son univers à l'austérité battue par les vents hivernaux, dans cette tour maudite où l'ivoire a cédé sa place à des pierres humides gravées de symboles occultes et contestataires...

Compte tenu de la présence de Dagmar KRAUSE, à la voix immanquable par définition, et de celle de Chris CUTLER, il est évidemment difficile de ne pas voir en NEWS FROM BABEL le descendant tant généalogique que musical de HENRY COW et d'ART BEARS. Spécialement avec ce dernier, les similitudes sont patentes du fait de l'utilisation des techniques de studio et de l'adoption pour les compositions d'un format court tendance chanson. Mais toutes les musiques sont cette fois écrites par Lindsay COOPER, qui leur a imprimé sa marque sonore spécifique. Quand NEWS FROM BABEL a vu le jour en 1983, Lindsay COOPER était déjà pourvue d'un solide bagage technique et de fortes compétences d'écriture. Issue du milieu de la musique classique, elle a rejoint à vingt ans le groupe acid-folk COMUS en 1971 et a intégré HENRY COW en 1974, apportant les spécificités sonores du basson et du hautbois qui contribueront à faire du groupe le fer de lance des « musiques nouvelles européennes ». Lindsay COOPER y a fait également ses débuts de compositrice, signant toutes les pièces de la face B de l'album *Western Culture*. Après avoir co-fondé en 1977 le FEMINIST

IMPROVISING GROUP avec Sally POTTER, Georgie BORN et Maggie NICHOLS, elle s'est mise à diriger pour la première fois un groupe, le Lindsay COOPER FILM MUSIC ORCHESTRA, avec lequel, comme son nom le laisse deviner, elle a enregistré des pièces pour la TV et le cinéma, notamment les films *Rags* et *The Goldiggers*. Toutes ces expériences ont amené à faire de Lindsay COOPER une multi-instrumentiste, jouant, outre le basson et le hautbois, trois types de saxophones (alto, soprano et sopranino) ainsi que des claviers, de la flûte, de la basse et de la guitare.

Enfin, NEWS FROM BABEL a révélé également une artiste new-yorkaise qui s'est depuis taillée une grosse réputation dans le milieu des musiques nouvelles et improvisées : la harpiste et accordéoniste Zeena PARKINS, que Chris CUTLER avait rencontrée alors qu'il jouait au sein du groupe BLACK SHEEP de l'ancien saxophoniste de HENRY COW, Geoff LEIGH, et qu'elle faisait l'ours (!) au sein du JANUS CIRCUS.



C'est la lecture d'un ouvrage de l'essayiste George STEINER, *Après Babel, une poétique du dire et de la traduction*, qui a inspiré à Chris CUTLER le nom du groupe, et plusieurs de ses textes (politiquement engagés et ésotériquement formulés) font du reste référence à l'œuvre de STEINER. Le premier album de NEWS FROM BABEL, paru à l'époque en format « Maxi-45Tours », était constitué de deux parties (une par face) répondant chacune à une thématique spécifique : *Sirens and Silences* et *Work Resumed on the Tower*. On retrouve dans cet opus ces climats d'austérité et de déréliction réminiscents du *Winter Songs* d'ART BEARS, avec ces chants évaporés sitôt apparus, ces mélodies clairsemées souvent cernées par des attaques dissonantes ou des emballements rythmiques fugaces (*Dry Leaf*, *Black Gold*), ces phrases balancées telles des bouteilles dans une mer aux houles stridentes (*Odysseus*), ces voix spectrales démultipliées, ces rythmiques sentencieuses et abstruses, ces visions fluettes de ruelles humides et de cabaret blafard, bref ces penchants « musique de chambre claustrophobe ».

Avec ses harpes acoustique, électrique et préparée et son accordéon, Zeena PARKINS ajoute un cachet spécifique au son de NEWS FROM BABEL, même si elle ne donne pas encore sa pleine mesure (sauf dans *Arcades*). Les morceaux de la face *Work Resumed on the Tower* jouissent d'une écriture plus étalée et d'une orchestration un brin plus étoffée. Invité de circonstance, Phil MINTON (qui avait déjà participé au groupe de musiques de films de Lindsay COOPER) y donne du souffle, intervenant à la trompette et ajoutant son timbre de voix massif à celui de Dagmar KRAUSE dans *Anno Mirabilis*.

Après deux ans de silence, NEWS FROM BABEL enregistre un second album qui paraît (lui aussi sous forme de maxi 45 Tours) en 1986, *Letters Home*, du nom d'un recueil de la poétesse et romancière américaine Sylvia PLATH. A l'époque, ceux qui avaient souscrits à la publication de l'album avaient reçu gratuitement un 45 Tours à face unique comportant la seule composition écrite par Zeena PARKINS pour NEWS FROM BABEL, le mystérieux et hiératique *Contraries* chanté par Dagmar KRAUSE. Cette dernière n'a cependant pas pu être très disponible pour l'enregistrement de *Letters Home*, et c'est pourquoi sa voix ne se fait entendre que sur deux titres.

Du coup, le second disque de NEWS FROM BABEL se démarque du premier au moins par sa plus grande variété de timbres vocaux. Trois autres voix se font entendre dans *Letters Home* : celle de Phil MINTON, toujours judicieuse dans ce contexte ; mais aussi celle, plus nonchalante, de Sally POTTER, autre complice du groupe de musique de films de Lindsay COOPER (et réalisatrice du film *The Gold Diggers*), et enfin celle de Robert WYATT, qui plante un décor

lugubre et hivernal dès l'ouverture du disque en chantant « This life is bare and cold, and I am old and tired of truth » (*Who Will Accuse ?*). Pas de doute, on est dans le « Chamber Rock Bottom » ! Et quand le même Robert rejoint Dagmar KRAUSE sur la pièce finale, *Late Evening*, il ne faut pas longtemps à l'épiderme de l'auditeur pour frissonner. L'autre particularité de *Letters Home* est d'offrir des arrangements plus riches et ouverts. Les lignes du basson de Lindsay se font même plus dynamiques... voire sémillantes (*Heart of Stone*, *Dragon at the Core*), et les harpes de Zeena PARKINS y sont plus prépondérantes. De plus, Bill GILONIS (du groupe THE WORK) a été invité à garnir l'ensemble de quelques notes de guitare et de basse Si certaines mélodies sont donc plus accrocheuses, les textes de Chris CUTLER par contre, sont toujours aussi obscurs et bilieux, ce qui crée des effets de tension et des contrastes saisissants entre textes et musique. Cette fois, on a davantage affaire à des chansons au sens quasi classique du terme, ce qui n'empêche pas les usuelles ruptures, dissonances et architectures tortueuses typiques du Rock In Opposition. Indubitablement, *Letters Home* est l'album d'une maturité nouvelle pour NEWS FROM BABEL, celui qui peut séduire même un public moins accoutumé à la grammaire sophistiquée de la famille HENRY COW, à condition toutefois d'être un tant soit peu familier des climats crépusculaires qui favorisent le réveil des blessures internes et des doutes métaphysiques.



Après *Letters Home*, plus aucune nouvelle ne nous est parvenue de Babel, mais la petite famille réunie autour de ce projet studio en prolongera l'écho dans des œuvres subséquentes, telles que *Music for other Occasions* de Lindsay COOPER, ou encore les *Domestic Stories* de Chris CUTLER, Lutz GLANDIEN et Dagmar KRAUSE.

En 1990, les deux albums de NEWS FROM BABEL ont été réédités sur un seul CD chez ReR Megacorp. Le coffret paru fin 2006 n'est ni plus ni moins qu'une réédition remastérisée et repackagée sous une forme plus puriste pour l'auditeur (deux CD, un par album) et plus commercialement juteuse pour le label (deux CD au lieu d'un), avec tout de même une cerise sur le gâteau : ce coffret comprend en effet la réplique miniaturisée du single *Contraries*, lequel ne figurait pas sur le CD de 1990 (alors qu'il y avait la place...). C'est donc bien d'un recueil d'œuvres complètes qu'il s'agit ! Toutefois, cette réédition a été manifestement faite dans la précipitation, puisque plusieurs erreurs se sont glissées dans les « tracklists » : ainsi, sur le premier album, *Dry Leaf* est cité deux fois, la seconde à la place d'*Anno Mirabilis* (merci pour lui !), et dans le second CD, les morceaux sont carrément listés dans le désordre ! De plus, dans le découpage des pistes de *Sirens & Silences*, le morceau *Auschwitz*, en principe associé à Babel, a ici été couplé avec *Odysseus*. Ces menues gaffes ont hélas tendance à devenir systématiques dans les rééditions du fond de catalogue de ReR, et on ne peut que le déplorer. Reste le confort d'écoute que procure la remastérisation, en revanche irréprochable. Grâce à elle, ces nouvelles ont pu rester fraîches !

Site : www.rermegacorp.com

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises



Middle Earth Masters

Soft Machine

More information about this album

RYTHMES CROISÉS - 2 octobre 2018

Soft Machine – Middle Earth Masters
(2006, Cuneiform Records / Orkhêstra)

Stéphane Fougère

Article réalisé à partir de chroniques parues dans les revues TRAVERSES et TANGENTES, dûment remaniées et complétées en 2018.

Avec ce CD, le label américain Cuneiform Records livre une archive d'autant plus précieuse qu'elle renvoie aux tout débuts de SOFT MACHINE, qui jouait alors une musique très marquée par le pop-rock psychédélique, avant qu'elle ne tourne au jazz-rock-free-impro avec l'adjonction de vents dès l'automne 1969.

Middle Earth Masters nous permet donc de retrouver SOFT MACHINE en 1967, soit un an seulement après ses débuts sur scène. Cette année-là, le groupe s'était déjà taillé une solide réputation en jouant dans tous les clubs anglais underground du moment, comme le Roundhouse, le Speakeasy et l'UFO. Avec seulement un premier 45 Tours (*Love Make Sweet Music*) à son actif, le quartet – constitué de Daevid ALLEN, Kevin AYERS, Mike RATLEDGE et Robert WYATT – a aussi écumé la Côte d'Azur lors de l'été 1967, se produisant dans des soirées branchées organisées par Eddie BARCLAY, Jean-Jacques LEBEL ou Caroll BAKER (à la soirée de laquelle les « Softs » ont joué une version de *We Did it again* qui a duré une heure !), ou écrivant la musique pour une pièce de PICASSO, *Le Désir attrapé par la queue*.

Puis, c'est l'événement célèbre : le blocage de Daevid ALLEN à la douane française pour papiers non conformes qui l'obligera à rester en France et donc à former un nouveau groupe (guess which one…). La Machine molle n'est dès lors plus qu'un trio (AYERS/RATLEDGE /WYATT), et c'est sous cette forme qu'elle se produit à plusieurs reprises au club londonien Middle Earth à l'automne de la même année.

La majorité du contenu de *Middle Earth Masters* provient donc, si l'on en croit les informations de la couverture verso, d'un concert donné le 16 septembre 1967. Or, la reproduction dans le livret d'une affiche promotionnelle et les souvenirs livrés par le journaliste Jon Newey évoquent la date du 13 octobre 1967. Tout cela n'est pas très clair… Il est vrai que des extraits de ce concert au Middle Earth ont déjà été publiés dans le CD SOFT MACHINE *Turns on – Vol. 1* publié par Voiceprint qui pâtit d'une qualité sonore exécrable. Rien de tel avec *Middle Earth Masters*, qui s'avère bien supérieur, du fait des soins intensifs apportés au nettoyage des bandes.

Avec un peu de patience et en usant de toutes les dernières prouesses technologiques possibles, on peut faire des miracles. Par exemple, on peut rendre globalement écoutable un enregistrement qui passait pour être définitivement inexploitable, comme celui que Bob WOOLFORD avait fait de ce concert de SOFT MACHINE à l'automne 1967. Ainsi, ses bandes masters ont été nettoyées de fond en comble, équalisées, compressées, boostées, codées, corrigées, époussetées, éditées et remastérisées, bref rendues dignes d'une publication officielle.

À cet égard, cette publication de Cuneiform est on ne peut plus fréquentable pour les oreilles exigeantes, même si les parties vocales de Kevin AYERS et de Robert WYATT sont bien vite noyées et étouffées dès que l'orgue fuzz de RATLEDGE bat son plein. Par conséquent, il n'y a guère que sur le premier morceau, *Clarence in Wonderland*, que la voix d'AYERS est parfaitement audible. WYATT n'a pas cette chance avec *Hope for Happiness*, puisque c'est à partir de ce morceau que Mike RATLEDGE se lâche avec son solo distordu et abrasif, à l'écoute duquel on réalise combien son orgue pouvait rivaliser en puissance et en invention sonore à la guitare électrique d'un HENDRIX.

C'est incontestablement la performance de RATLEDGE qui remporte ici les suffrages, du fait de la mise en valeur de son orgue dans le mix, mais aussi pour son jeu foisonnant et toutes ses trouvailles sonores. Il n'est que d'écouter ce festival de dissonances hypnotiques qu'est Disorganisation, une pièce soliste inédite de RATLEDGE qui débouche sur un *We Did it again* survolté, voire pré-punk, qui cède lui aussi la place à un *Why are We Sleeping ?* démentiel et perturbateur.

Le répertoire se partage donc entre les pièces de la célèbre démo qui paraîtra plus tard en disque sous les titres *Rock Generation, Jet Propelled Photographs, At The Beginning*, etc., et des titres qui atterriront sur le premier album officiel de SOFT MACHINE, avec deux raretés : outre le déjà-nommé *Disorganisation*, une pièce instrumentale, *Bossa Nova Express*, basée sur des accords de la célèbre chanson *May I ?* de Kevin AYERS.

Les bandes masters n'ayant pu être exploitées en intégralité (du fait d'une dégradation sonore croissante sur les voix), le set du concert au Middle Earth a été complété par deux morceaux tirés d'un concert au Roundhouse en mai 1968 (l'occasion nous est ainsi donnée de comparer deux versions de *I Should've Known* jouées à quelques mois d'intervalle), plus un morceau (*A Certain Kind*) enregistré dans un studio français en octobre 1967. Sans être tout à fait complet, le contenu de *Middle Earth Masters* restitue dans l'ensemble la set-list jouée par le trio à cette période.

Les versions live présentées dans ce CD dépassent évidemment en folie, en excès sonores et en déviances instrumentales les versions studio, et c'est bien tout ce qui en fait le sel. Les amateurs de climats complètement « freak out » s'en délecteront grandement et à juste raison, mais ceux qui ne connaissaient de SOFT MACHINE que ses avatars postérieurs risquent de tirer une sacrée tronche. Allez, il n'est jamais trop tard pour se dévergonder les esgourdes !

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Hyde Park Free Concert 1970
2007

Kevin Ayers & the Whole World

More information about this album

REVUE & CORRIGÉE - n° 81 - Septembre 2009

Kevin Ayers & The Whole World - "Hyde Park Free Concert 1970"
Reel Recordings RR002 - Dist. Orkhêstra

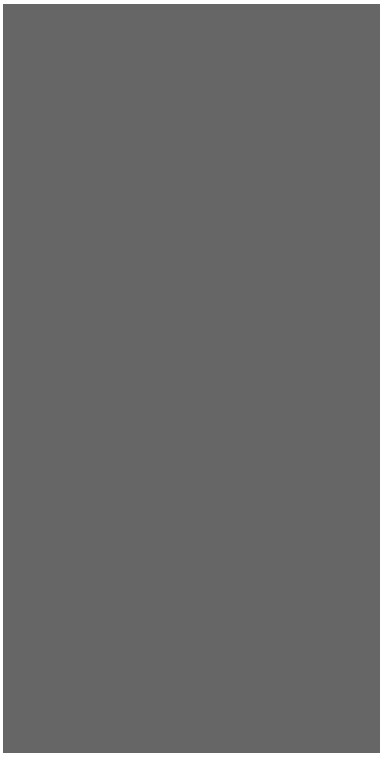
Kevin Ayers - "What More Can I Say..." -
Reel Recordings RR009 - Dist. Orkhêstra

Pierre Durr



S'il apparaît quelquefois justifié de rééditer des albums méconnus à l'époque de leur enregistrement, voire de rendre témoignage d'un aspect de la création des décennies passées qui n'eut pas l'heur de susciter une édition à l'époque, on se demande toutefois (c'est en partie souligné dans l'éditorial d'un précédent numéro de R&C) pourquoi il y a pléthore d'éditions de live ou de bandes inédites (en version alternative souvent des enregistrements officiels) consacrées à des musiciens et des formations des années 70 ou 80. Focaliser l'attention des mélomanes sur ces enregistrements, c'est aussi en partie, surtout en ces temps de restrictions des budgets consacrés aux loisirs, les détourner de la création contemporaine.

En même temps, et il y a certainement un brin, sinon un bouquet entier, de nostalgie pour une musique - pas forcément en elle-même - associée à des années de jeunesse (voire d'insouciance) dans l'intérêt qu'on peut y porter. D'autant plus lorsqu'on peut les associer à la naissance d'une forme de militantisme pour ces musiques. Et ces formations et musiciens, encore actifs - parmi lesquels on comptera bien sûr les deux coffrets live de Henry Cow* - que sont Kevin AYERS et UNIVERS ZÉRO y tiennent un rôle majeur. Le premier en tant que chaînon (le plus pop ?) de l'école de Canterbury, les belges comme tenants de la scène Rock In Opposition belge. Les deux enregistrements de Kevin AYERS sont un peu complémentaires. Le premier, capté lors d'un concert gratuit à Hyde Park (Edgar Broughton Band et Pink Floyd s'y produisirent le même jour!) est intéressant car le Whole World y apparaît davantage comme une



entité et non comme un groupe de musiciens accompagnant un chanteur. Son line-up est assez proche de l'album "*Shooting At The Moon*": David Bedford aux claviers, Mike Oldfield à la basse, Loi Coxhill aux saxophones, Robert Wyatt (et non Mick Fincher) à la batterie, et bien sûr Kevin AYERS à la guitare ; la plupart des titres sont d'ailleurs empruntés à cet album, auxquels se rajoutent deux classiques de Soft Machine, "*Dit It Again*" et "*Why Are You Sleeping*". Ce live offre par ailleurs des prolongements improvisés à certaines pièces, permettant aux divers musiciens du Whole World de sortir des schémas inhérents au studio, valorisant aussi bien Lol Coxhill que Mike Oldfield, pas encore "tubularisé". "*What More Can I Say...* " présente une facette plus intimiste de Kevin AYERS : il y officie seul sur quatre des sept titres (Robert Wyatt, David Bedford, Mike Oldfield, Archie Legget ou Eddie Sparrow apparaissent toutefois sur les trois autres!). Il permet de mettre davantage l'accent sur le chant, plutôt nonchalant dans un enregistrement plus proche d'une démo ou d'une gestation présentée à une amie ("*Lady June*") que d'un album construit. Cela le rend toutefois attachant.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Volume Two
1969

Soft Machine

More information about this album

JAZZWISE - N° 113 - October 2007

The Story So Far... - Steve Miller / Lol Coxhill

Daniel Spicer

These two albums, re-released now on a double CD, capture beaulifully a particular moment in British underground music when jazz-rock more specifically, the Canterbury scene - enjoyed a mutually beneficial flirtation with hard-line improv. Miller's best known as keyboardist with Canterbury originals, Caravan, and it's fascinating to hear some of that band's best known tunes deconstructed here as solo piano pieces or as intimate, playful duets with "the bald soprano." Coxhill, although by this time a formidable presence on the improv scene, wasn't averse to fitting into exploratory rock bands such as Kevin Ayers and the Whole World - and there are plenty examples of that to be relished here too, including some gritty, previously unreleased, live tracks from Delivery (essentially a proto-Hatfield and the North), and a gorgeously good-natured cha-cha-cha jammed up by Coxhill and Ayers with Robert Wyatt dropping in to supply unmistakably hairbrained Dada-scat vocals. Just when you thought you'd heard everything the Canterbury scene had to offer, a little gem like this pops up and brightens your day.

More information about this album



Comicopera
2007

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

THE OBSERVER - October 14, 2006

Where are pop's heirs to 'awkward bugger' Wyatt?

Sean O'Hagan

It is not often that one has the chance to recommend a concept album by a sixty-two-year-old, wheelchair-bound, Marxist songwriter with a beard, but you really should beg, steal, borrow or illegally download a copy of Robert Wyatt's new CD, *Comicopera*, as soon as you can. Don't just take my word for it. Björk is a big fan, as is Radiohead's Thom Yorke, while both Brian Eno and Paul Weller appear on the new album. Alexis Taylor from young electro-pop hipsters Hot Chip is such a devotee that he has written the press release for it. In fact, Taylor begins his eulogy by admitting that he discovered the great man's music 'when borrowing, then stealing' an earlier Wyatt album, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, from a public library. Needs must, I guess.

Anyway, those of you still reeling from reading the words 'sixty-two-year-old', 'concept album', 'Marxist' and 'beard' in the same sentence as 'songwriter', may not have heard Robert Wyatt's music before. Nor, indeed, his name. This is because he belongs to what you might call the veteran's branch of pop's outsider club, that small and diverse group of awkward buggers who have merrily gone their own unwavering way for decades now - think Scott Walker, free jazz giant Ornette Coleman or Lee 'Scratch' Perry, the sonic architect of some of the most otherworldly reggae music ever made. One of the more interesting aspects of pop culture in the digital age is the way in which even the work of the aforementioned pioneers has been rediscovered. It was Walker's turn in the last year or so; it could now be Wyatt's.

The signs look good. Wyatt's new album, *Comicopera*, his tenth solo outing, discounting compilations, is released on the Domino label, home of Franz Ferdinand and Arctic Monkeys. He is currently on the cover not just of The Wire, the bible of all things musically experimental and extreme, but the younger, hipper, Plan B, whose editors were not even born in 1973 when Wyatt, a veteran of Soft Machine, he fell out of a third-floor window while drunk. Paralysed from the waist down, he has been wheelchair-bound ever since.

The following year he made *Rock Bottom*, one of those self-contained records, like Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* or Patti Smith's *Horses*, that seemed to have arrived, fully formed, out of nowhere. It still sounds utterly singular. Wyatt briefly became a bona fide pop star in 1974 too, his wilfully rickety rendition of the Monkees' I'm a Believer entering the charts for a few weeks having been championed by - who else? - John Peel. After a period of silence he resurfaced on the Rough Trade label in the postpunk early '80s. Around this time he also joined the Communist Party and, as far as I can ascertain, remains an

unrepentant hard leftie, though in person he is a big softie who possesses an almost childlike wonder at the world. He may be the only musician to have a verb named after him, 'wyatting' having recently started appearing in music blogs to describe the practice of playing the strangest tracks on a pub jukebox just to annoy your fellow drinkers.

"My songs aren't pop songs," he said recently. "I go on and on for longer than pop songs do... I'm just trying to string bits of music together." And yet his place in the pop firmament is assured if only for the fact that he voiced what is arguably the greatest political pop song of recent times. Shipbuilding was released twenty-five years ago as a protest against the Falklands War. Written by Elvis Costello, it subsequently became a Robert Wyatt song, so plaintive and stoical was his delivery. It remains that rare thing, a political song that is first and foremost a crafted pop song.

I listened to Shipbuilding again the other day and could not help but wonder why nothing even remotely as affecting has been written about the war in Iraq. Radiohead tried and failed with You And Whose Army in 2001, but neither the sentiment nor the song seemed focused. Something has been lost in the interim, pop's conscience maybe, which is now synonymous not with political consciousness but charity fundraising. Or maybe the silence is to do with the long implosion of the radical left and the attendant rise of irony and detachment as a post-Thatcher pop aesthetic. There is protest aplenty on *Comicopera*, though, as well as tears and laughter and the usual effortless strangeness and charm. Something for everyone, in fact, from the controlled anger of Out Of The Blue, written by Wyatt's partner, the artist Alfreda Benge, in the wake of the Israeli bombing of Lebanon, to Be Serious, a jolly agnostic singalong which begins with the lines: "I really envy Christians, I envy Muslims too / It must be great to be so sure..." If Richard Dawkins needs a non-secular gospel song to rally the unfaithful at readings, he should cop a listen.

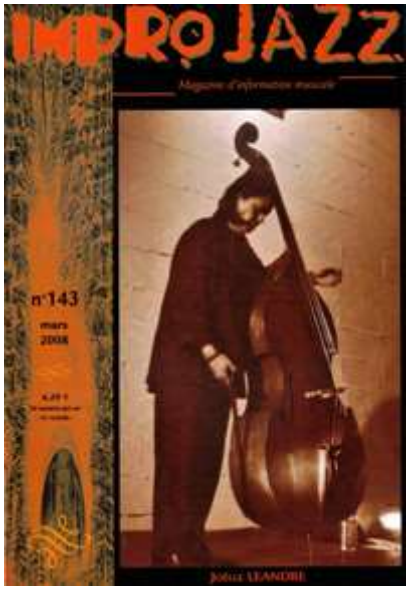
Robert Wyatt has been doing his own thing for forty-odd years now, and is not about to change. You may have to travel more than half way to meet him, but it's well worth the journey.

IMPROJAZZ - n° 143 - Mars 2008

Robert Wyatt - Comicopera - Domino (WIGLP202/WIGCD202)

Gary May

Des nouvelles de la planète Wyatt sont toujours les bienvenues, et voila le dernier tome disponible, pour notre plus grand plaisir, en CD ou en double vinyl. Qu'est-ce Robert a à nous dire, alors, depuis Cuckooland il y a quatre ans ? Heureusement, c'est toujours pareil, mais évidemment complètement différent. L'œuvre est composée de trois parties.
La première, 'Lost In Noise' est la plus intime, les paroles sont d'Alfie, sa compagne, sauf pour la toute première chanson, signée Anja Garbarek. Dans cette première partie on parle de perte, de confiance, des rapports entre hommes et femmes. L'émouvante poésie de A.W.O.L fait de cette chanson une sorte de cousine britannique des 'Vieux' de Brel.
La deuxième partie 'The Here And The Now' nous montre un Wyatt plus désenchanté et mordant. L'image bucolique de l'Angleterre tourne au vinaigre, les certitudes religieuses en tout genre sont appelées à se taire. Une phrase: 'It's a beautiful day' revient dans deux chansons, chaque fois de manière ironique et désabusée. Cette partie se termine avec la colère et l'incompréhension de quelqu'un



dont la maison et la vie viennent d'être détruites par les bombardements anglo-américains. Entendre la voix de Wyatt clamer: 'Vous avez planté une haine éternelle dans mon cœur' fait froid dans le dos. Sans doute s'agit-il de l'une des plus puissantes chansons anti-guerre jamais écrites.
Puis, pour la dernière partie, Robert Wyatt l'Anglais s'en va. Tellement dégoûté par l'alliance infernale entre anglo-saxons dominants, il chante l'ailleurs. En espagnol ou en italien, peu importe, du coup on retrouve un peu de sérénité, de bien-être, de soleil. Un vrai 'beautiful day' à l'étranger. Robert semble avoir trouvé de vrais complices, car on retrouve ici beaucoup de ses collaborateurs de Cuckooland; Annie Whitehead, bien sûr, Eno et Manzera, Yaron Stavi, et les puissant saxophones de Gilad Atzmon. Un plaisir donc de retrouver Mr Wyatt, qui nous livre un disque complexe, dense, et coloré par toute une palette d'émotions. On n'est pas toujours à l'aise en écoutant son message, mais il faut lui faire confiance et l'entendre car derrière cet enfant peu sage se cache un homme d'une très grande sagesse.

FRIEZE - October 01, 2007

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt (Domino 2007)



That voice – a fragile tenor, lilting and dancing across archipelagos of consonant and dissonant notes, gliding occasionally to alto highs, diving to baritone depths. Words shaped by an unmistakably English crispness, frayed at the edges by a slight lisping and the trace of an unplaceable regional accent. Its timbre is dusty, as autumnal as golden leaves crackling underfoot, yet for all its world-weariness it still connects with the playful, liberated spring of youth. That voice – possibly one of the most distinctive in popular music of the last 40 years – belongs to Robert Wyatt, who returns this October with *Comicopera*, his first studio album since 2003's *Cuckooland*.
Comicopera is vintage Wyatt. Divided into three 'acts' – 'Lost in Noise', 'The Here and The Now' and 'Away with the Fairies' – the distinctly live-sounding album's 16 tracks bring together the quintessential characteristics of Wyatt's work. There is the jazz-inflected push-and-pull of plaintive melody and awkward harmony,

the unusual arrangements, which put seemingly disparate instruments at ease in each other's company (for instance, the amiable chat of a steel drum, cornet and saxophone in 'On the Town Square'), and the lyrics, which, unshackled from the strictures of metre and scansion, effortlessly marry the political with the tender, funny and surreal.

Mournful clarinets open the album, like a passage from a lost Kurt Weill operetta, heralding Wyatt's version of Anja Garbarek's 'Stay Tuned', in which Wyatt requests we 'stay tuned/there is more to come/oh don't start searching/I'll get back to you'. 'Just As You Are' follows; the wry lyrics heavy with experience, it is the closest the album gets to a traditional ballad. Co-written with Wyatt's wife, Alfreda Benge, and performed as a duet with Monica Vasconcelos, it's a torch song of sorts, a plea for lovers to accept each other's idiosyncrasies – in Wyatt's hands beautifully poised between the unsentimental and the utterly heart-rending.

As *Comicopera* unfolds through the jazzy atmospherics of 'You You', 'A.W.O.L.' and the whimsicality of 'A Beautiful Peace' (which opens with Wyatt observing items at the side of a road; 'Oh look, there's a dead rabbit, all flat … What's that in the gutter? It's one of those polystyrene boxes, with chips in … obviously he didn't want to finish the chips. That's unusual.'), the mood darkens, the lyrical content becoming more explicitly political. 'Mob Rule' describes a government's duplicitous push towards conflict, while in 'A Beautiful War' and 'Out of the Blue' (which features Brian Eno's sampled voice played on a keyboard) Wyatt respectively assumes the narrative roles of bomber plane pilot and his victim. The album's final act is sung entirely in Italian and Spanish, the reason, according to Wyatt, having 'to do with feeling completely alienated from Anglo-American culture at that point. Just sort of being silent as an English-speaking person, because of this fucking war.' *Comicopera* closes with 'Hasta Siempre Comandante' – a Latin rumba that lifts the gloom before evanescing into an ether of noise and sonic texture.

Wyatt's career began as a drummer with psychedelic pioneers Soft Machine and Matching Mole, before a fall from a third-floor window in 1973 left him paraplegic. The accident marked the beginning of Wyatt's solo career: a dozen or so incalculably influential albums followed, made in collaboration with such luminaries as Eno, Fred Frith and the late and much-loved Ivor Cutler. If anyone comes close to being a 'living treasure' in British music, it's Wyatt, not least for his down-to-earth understanding of music's role as an integral part of our daily lives. 'Music isn't an abstract pleasure,' says Wyatt, 'it is company. Why I like Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus – the Big Bands – is because every character in the band is identifiable as that person – there's this group of humans in a room.'

THE TELEGRAPH - October 18, 2007

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt (Domino Records)

Robert Wyatt : Child-like charm of a pop survivor.
Andrew Perry talks to the much venerated Robert Wyatt.

Andrew Perry

"It feels funny, Robert being so venerated," Robert Wyatt's wife, Alfie, tells me, as she ferries me from Market Rasen station to the couple's house in Louth. "I mean," she adds, "he's such a child!

" Ever an intriguing figure in British rock, if never a mainstream one, Wyatt has come to be seen as something of a national treasure in later life. He is best known for his cover of Elvis Costello's Shipbuilding from 1982, which relayed a savagely bitter picture of

exploitation of soldiers and dock-workers in the Falklands War.

His sporadic album releases, tinged with jazz, folk and an almost extraterrestrial beauty, have prompted a Mercury Award nomination here, a Meltdown Festival curatorship there, and no end of favourable media coverage.

This month, at sixty-two, he shows a rare ability to cross generational boundaries with Comicopera, his debut release for Domino Records, home to such hip young chart-toppers as Arctic Monkeys.

Though there has always been a child-like openness in Wyatt's high-pitched, conversational singing voice, I am still a little anxious about meeting a man who has never hidden his often extreme political leanings.

After leading me through to the front room, however, he talks engagingly about his latest batch of songs. Most were written on the baby grand piano behind him, and embellished using the brass and percussion instruments scattered underneath.

Fittingly, given its homespun genesis, the album kicks off with songs about domestic conflict. Several were co-written with Alfie (her full name is Alfreda Benge), whom Wyatt calls "the dark side of my moon".

One, Just As You Are, was composed in Kilburn, at Phil Manzanera from Roxy Music's studio.

"Brian Eno dropped by," he recalls, "and said, 'Let's write a country song.' For that type of music, we worked out that the lyrics had to be very straight-talking - no deviousness, no irony, straight from the heart.

"Alfie wrote this stuff about her exasperation with me drinking in the daytime and trying to get away with it. She'd been wrestling with this for some time, and out it came."

The finished piece is anything but generic country, marked instead by Wyatt's downbeat, jazzy piano chords, and with his wife's accusations sombrely yet exquisitely intoned by the Brazilian singer, Monica Vasconcelos. Wyatt, meanwhile, has since sobered up.

For all the heavyweight subject matter, it's the most sublimely melodic album of Wyatt's career. The accessibility, he believes, comes from his collective attitude, whereby illustrious guests from the rock world such as Eno or Paul Weller are gathered alongside jazz and world musicians.

"For me," he says, "music is company. I like the idea of the record as a meeting place, where friends wander in and out."

Wyatt rose to prominence in the hippie era, as the drummer with prog-rockers, the Soft Machine. In 1973, he fell from a window during a party and broke his back. In hospital, he mapped out his first solo album, Rock Bottom, which he released the following year, to great acclaim, on the day that he married Alfie.

Since then, wheelchair-bound, he has ducked in and out of the shadows, pursuing his own curious pan-global muse.

The beating heart of Comicopera is an instrumental track called On The Town Square, on which Gilad Atzmon, a tenor saxophonist of Middle-Eastern extraction, plays alongside the Afro-Caribbean-flavoured steelpans of Orphy Robinson.

Wyatt's community-mindedness becomes apparent when he leads me around Louth to spend money in his favourite shops. I begin to see the child that Alfie spoke of, as Wyatt wheels himself precariously through the middle of the road back to the house, waving at oncoming traffic. His idealism, too, is boyish, energetic, fabulous.

"I love sitting in the town square here," he tells me, "by Stan's Van. Stan puts out a couple of tables and dispenses cups of tea for 40p, and wonderful sausage sandwiches. All kinds of people come past. There'll be the woman from Oxfam, who goes on hunts, sitting next to a biker. And we all find things to chat about.

"That feeling I like" - he smiles, yes, rather like a child - "and in music, too: real people with their own turn of voice, all joining in, in their own way."

POP NEWS - Novembre 2007

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt (Domino/Pias)

Vincent Arquillière

Saison faste pour les chanteurs sur roulettes : après un nouvel album inespéré de Vic Chesnutt, que l'on peut raisonnablement considérer comme l'un de ses tout meilleurs, c'est à Robert Wyatt, lui aussi cloué depuis de longues années dans un fauteuil, de nous donner de ses nouvelles, quatre ans après "Cuckooland". Malgré la simplicité, l'humilité et la gentillesse de leur auteur, les disques de l'ex-Soft Machine ont toujours quelque chose d'un peu intimidant. La musique qu'ils contiennent ne peut se concevoir et s'apprécier que dans un rapport intime avec l'auditeur, mais, du fameux "Rock Bottom" (1974) à ce "Comicopera", ils paraissent souvent si intimes, justement, qu'on a presque peur d'y entrer, comme si on risquait de déranger. Il faudra encore cette fois-ci plusieurs écoutes attentives (mais peut-on écouter autrement un disque de Robert Wyatt ?), le temps notamment de se réhabituer à cette voix aussi blanche, exténuée et bouleversante que celle de Chet Baker, pour faire le tour de cette heure de musique et estimer qu'il s'agit une fois de plus d'un chef-d'œuvre – à croire que son auteur ne sait de toute façon pas faire autre chose.
En trois actes (intitulés "Lost in Noise", "The Here and the Now" et "Away with the Fairies" – comme pour le titre de l'album, toutes les interprétations sont possibles…), le Grand Schtroumpf de Louth (Lincolnshire) nous parle de lui, de l'Angleterre et de l'état du monde, interprète aussi bien Garcia Lorca qu'Anja Garbarek, revisite ses genres de prédilection – jazz plus ou moins free, rock progressif, chanson populaire, musiques latines – en les fondant dans un idiome qui n'appartient qu'à lui. Les complices habituels – Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Paul Weller, et bien sûr sa muse Alfie Benge – sont au rendez-vous, et l'on retrouve avec un émerveillement renouvelé ces harmonies venues d'ailleurs et ces effets sonores qui ouvrent des abîmes d'étrangeté. Le deuxième acte de "Comicopera" se conclut par un "Out of the Blue" à la colère rentrée, celle d'un Palestinien bombardé qui s'exprime à travers la voix de Wyatt : "You have planted an everlasting hatred in my heart" ("Vous avez planté une haine éternelle dans mon cœur"). Suit une dernière partie d'une éblouissante liberté formelle, où le chanteur abandonne l'anglais pour l'italien et l'espagnol. Trente-deux ans après "Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard", qui se refermait sur le "Song for Che" de Charlie Haden, Wyatt rend de nouveau hommage au fameux guérillero en terminant "Comicopera" par une reprise du non moins fameux "Hasta Siempre Comandante". Quoi qu'on pense du Che et des idées politiques de l'artiste, sa version est exceptionnelle : à la fois respectueuse des racines cubaines de l'original et totalement personnelle, à mille lieues de l'exotisme frelaté trop souvent attaché à ce standard, elle offre un résumé parfait du disque et, au-delà, de l'art poétique d'un homme pour qui le message ne prendra jamais le pas sur la musique.

THE WIRE - N° 284 - October 2007

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt (Domino CD)

David Stubbs

"I don't think beforehand, I think afterwards. I find that plans ahead,

concepts, limit you," says Robert Wyatt. Which is a little strange, given that Comicopera, divided as it is into three acts, feels decidedly conceptual. It ranks, however, among his finest achievements - indeed, it embraces all of the key themes of his career, ranging in mood from the amiably whimsical to the plaintively despondent, from private joy to political rage.

He's surrounded by old friends here, which could be a recipe for self-indulgence but in this case lends a warmth, a communitarian feel to Act One in particular. Annie Whitehead, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Paul Weller and Gilad Atzmon are among those assembled. On the Anja Garbarek "Stay Tuned" there's a candlelit, vigil-like feel, with all of the musicians breathing as one, pulling in the same direction, no one breaking away from the cuddle. "You, You, You", co-written by Wyatt's partner Alfreda Benge, is a touching paean to interdependence, a hark-back to 1974's Rock Bottom, with Wyatt contributing muted, amateur but eloquent phrases on a cornet.

Act Two sees a shift in mood. It's an altogether jollier affair, with tracks like "On The Town Chair" and their cheerful gait threatening to revert into "Soup Song" from Ruth is Stranger Than Richard. However, like the blazing summer of 1914, this is a misleading prelude, for next cornes "A Beautiful War", with Wyatt as narrator assuming the role of the bomber. Act Three sees Wyatt refuse to sing in the English language, as a protest against the UK's involvement in the Iraq war. (This, after all, is the man who once said that his political inclination was to be a traitor.) The likes of "Del Mondo" and "Hasta Siempre Commandante" are more unravelled in their arrangements, more new jazzy in feel, reminiscent of Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra in their internationalist tone. Orphy Robinson's vibraphone solo on "Pastafari" is one of the section's towering moments of terrible beauty, pluming above the fray.

A superb album, in which Wyatt gathers all of his strengths, with the personal and the political, the aesthetic and the ethical are brought together as only he can.

JAZZWISE - N° 113 - October 2007

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt (Domino WIGCD202P) ****

Duncan Heining

Comicopera is like meeting an old friend. Conversation begins immediately where it last left off. What's new? How you been? Has it really been that long? No, really? Shame about so and so. It's not that nothing has changed. Static friendships die. The capacity to accommodate difference and change that revitalises the friendship. There are new influences and new songs. There are life-changing events. New loves and old ones rekindled. Life happens somewhere between comedy and tragedy - *Comicopera*. Robert Wyatt, his partner Alfie Benge and their comrades understand this well. There's observational comedy in 'A Beautiful Peace' and 'A Beautiful War', romantic comedy in 'Just As You Are' and slapstick in Orphy Robinson's 'Pastafari'. We feel pity and loss for Hattie in 'A.W.O.L.', while Richard Dawkins pops up cartoon-like on 'Be Serious' There's solidarity with the oppressed in 'Haste Siempre Comandante' and in Robert's setting of Lorca's 'Cancion de Julieta' and righteous anger in 'Out Of The Blue'. We shared those thoughts and those emotions and then we danced together. Oh, how we danced to 'On The Town Square'. And then we laughed and laughed again, as if we were the

very last ones to get the joke of 'Anachronist'.



JAZZMAN - N° 142 - Janvier 2008

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt
1 CD Domino WIGCD202P - distribué par PIAS *** Féerie

Pierre de Choqueuse

Certains lecteurs trouveront peut-être cette chronique déplacée, avançant que la musique de Robert Wyatt relève d'un autre genre que le jazz. Lequel ? Bien malin qui peut répondre. L'ex-batteur de Soft Machine construit disque après disque son propre univers musical et, depuis son accident, pose sa voix très pure au centre de son œuvre. Opéra de poche en trois actes et seize chansons, "Comicopera", son premier vrai disque depuis 2003, fait rêver, envoûte comme un charme puissant. Musiques et langues s'y télescopent. Fraîches comme l'eau d'une source, les mélodies portent les couleurs du jazz, du rock et des îles lointaines. Ce n'est pas son meilleur opus. L'atmosphère s'assombrit au fil des plages. Sa poésie le rend pourtant inoubliable.

ROLLING STONE - N° 156 - Oktober, 2007

Comicopera - Robert Wyatt

Jörn Schlüter

Wut statt Nostalgie: Der Weise skizziert in drei Akten die Gegenwart

Seit einigen Jahren vollenden sich für die Veteranen des Swinging London viele Kreise. In den Sechzigern angekommen, erinnern sich die Männer von damals an ihre beste Zeit und an jene Momente, die das eigene Lebensgefühl konstituierten. *Full circle*, das heißt hier: sich aufs Wesentliche, nämlich die Freundschaft und das Gemeinsame, besinnen. David Gilmour macht eine nostalgisch

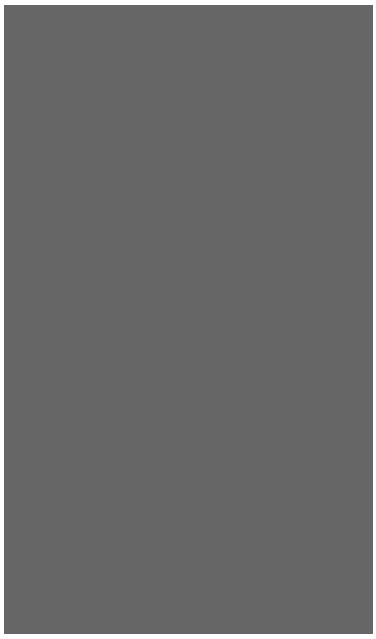
versunkene Platte mit Phil Manzanera, Roger Waters spielt ausnahmsweise mit Pink Floyd, Brian Eno sucht die Nähe der alten Kumpane. Robert Wyatt ist immens wichtig für diese Selbstvergewisserungen und tief empfundenen Klassentreffen und steht immer ganz oben auf der Liste, wenn die genannten Akteure im Miteinander Trost und Identität suchen. Nun hat Wyatt eine Plätte gemacht, bei der es um dieselben Dinge geht, und natürlich konnte er auf die Hilfe von Eno, Manzanera, Paul Weller und anderen Freunden zählen.
Wyatts Musik, hier auf drei Akte aufgeteilt und mit der üblichen spontanen Intuition aufgenommen, ist freilich nicht nostalgisch - dafür lebt Wyatt viel zu sehr im Moment und ist dem offenen künstlerischen Prozess verpnichtet. « *Comicopera* » handelt also davon, miteinander zu leben, den anderen wahrzunehmen und den chaotischen Fluss des Lebens insgesamt zu akzeptieren. Die frei entworfenen, oft ungemein intensiven Skizzen, der psychedelische Grundton, die abstrakten Holzbläser-Wolken, das expressive Nichts, der angetäuschte Jazz, all das kommt in der Gegenwart an wie eine Botschaft aus vergangenen Zeiten. Mehr als seine Kollegen ist Wyatt ein lebendes Relikt, der weise Alte aus dem Wald von Canterbury, der den künstlerischen Ausdruck der naiven Mittsechziger-Avantgarde konservieren konnte. Man braucht nur die ersten zwei Lieder, das flächig floydianische « Stay Tuned » und das zärtliche « Just As You Are », um das zu verstehen.
Am Schluss, im orchestralen, atonal dräuenden dritten Akt, wird aus Wut auf Italienisch und Spanisch gesungen — es geht um den Krieg und die britischen Kriegstreiber, die *dogs of war*, die Wyatt natürlich hasst, insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund des auf « *Comicopera* » gewählten Sujets. Ein Menetekel.

LES INROCKUPTIBLES - 2 octobre 2007

Robert Wyatt - Comicopera
Domino - Pias

Richard Robert

Dans la musique populaire, la coutume veut que les chansons d'amour et les chansons engagées ne soient pas rangées dans le même panier : elle réserve la poésie aux cœurs tendres et la politique aux esprits bien trempés. Comme souvent, la coutume a tort, et Robert Wyatt, qui s'emploie depuis quarante ans à faire vaciller nombre de certitudes, est encore une fois là pour le rappeler. Au milieu des années 60, alors qu'il jouait au sein de Soft Machine, l'Anglais refusait déjà d'être un homme coupé en deux : il ne voulait pas choisir entre sensation pure et réflexion aiguisée, pas plus qu'il ne voulait trancher entre son amour pour la mélodie et son goût pour la recherche sonore. Des dérives solitaires de Rock Bottom (1974) jusqu'au grand chantier collectif de Cuckooland (2004), sa carrière solo n'a cessé de défier les lois de la pesanteur musicale, tout en brouillant les frontières entre songe et réalité. Cloué sur un fauteuil roulant depuis un accident survenu en 1973 (il se jette d'une fenêtre au milieu d'une fête copieusement arrosée), Wyatt est devenu à la fois un observateur pénétrant de son temps, dont le cœur ancré bien à gauche se soulève régulièrement devant les infamies de toutes sortes, et un contemplatif en quête de hauteur, toujours prêt à s'envoler dans les vastes sphères de l'imaginaire. Aujourd'hui, dans Comicopera, son propos gagne encore en ampleur. Entouré une nouvelle fois de fidèles (Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera et Paul Weller, mais aussi la chanteuse Karen Mantler, la tromboniste Annie Whitehead ou le saxophoniste Gilad Atzmon), Wyatt explore dans les grandes largeurs un langage musical qui synthétise son intérêt pour l'harmonie classique, son penchant pour l'improvisation et le swing, et



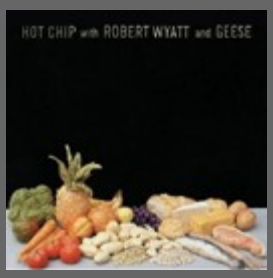
cette sensibilité mélodique à fleur de peau qui en fait l'un des songwriters les plus touchants de sa génération. De sa voix flûtée, il réussit à unifier et à éclairer un disque qui est aussi touffu dans le fond que dans la forme. Découpé en trois actes, Comicopera commence en effet par un bouquet de chansons sentimentales, qui se penchent avec délicatesse sur la mécanique complexe et fragile des relations amoureuses. Il se poursuit avec un tableau saisissant du chaos mondial (avec le désastre irakien pour toile de fond) et s'achève sur une longue bouffée d'onirisme pur, forcément libérateur. Telle est la morale de Robert Wyatt : on ne peut vraiment habiter ce monde qu'en se confrontant à la réalité et en se réservant à tout moment le droit de s'en détacher.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Hot Chip With Robert Wyatt And Geese
2008

Paul Haines

More information about this album

LES INROCKUPTIBLES - N° 694 - 17 mars 2009

Hot Chip with Robert Wyatt and Geese EP
Parlophone / EMI

Pascal Bertin



Quand Hot Chip invite Robert Wyatt à réinterpréter ses chansons, celui-ci les passe magnifiquement au révélateur de la tristesse.

Et voilà que riment drôles d'idées et beaux projets. Qui aurait pu imaginer un jour le vieux barbu Robert Wyatt fricoter avec les nerds de Hot Chip ? En réalisant ce rêve, suite au remix de *This Summer Night* qu'ils lui avaient offert, les Londoniens jettent un regard nouveau sur leur superbe album *Made in the Dark* de l'an dernier, en réenregistrant trois de ses titres les plus lents, qui avaient alors pu être occultés par son visage le plus dance. Chantées avec le vieux barde, ces chansons réorchestrées prennent d'un coup une trentaine d'années de patine, comme fabriquées dans un noble bois récupéré d'une épave séculaire. Si, en vieux sage, Wyatt ne sort de l'ombre que sur le refrain de *Made in the Dark*, il s'empare goulûment du majestueux *Whistle for Will* de sa voix tremblotante et d'un doux sifflement. Des enregistrements bizarroïdes signés de Geese, deux producteurs amis de longue date de Hot Chip, viennent aussi hanter le calme en faux plat de *We're Looking for a Lot of Love*, qui devient une effrayante bouteille jetée dans la mer de la solitude.

Puis, sans Robert Wyatt mais simplement remixé par Geese, le sautillant *One Pure Thought* baisse les voiles pour naviguer dans une mer de violons et laisser se déchaîner une tempête de sentiments. En ralentissant, et surtout en désossant ses chansons de leurs apparats festifs à la manière de l'album solo sorti en toute confidentialité par son chanteur Alexis Taylor (*Rubbed out*), Hot Chip réussit à en livrer le visage poignant, intime, à travers le genre de collaboration que plus personne ne prend le temps d'imaginer. Un pari largement gagné qu'eux seuls pouvaient oser : un unplugged des années fluo, *made with the dark.* '



/// www.hotchip.co.uk

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews



What More Can I Say...
2008

Kevin Ayers

More information about this album

REVUE & CORRIGÉE - n° 81 - Septembre 2009

Kevin Ayers - "What More Can I Say..." -
Reel Recordings RR009 - Dist. Orkhêstra

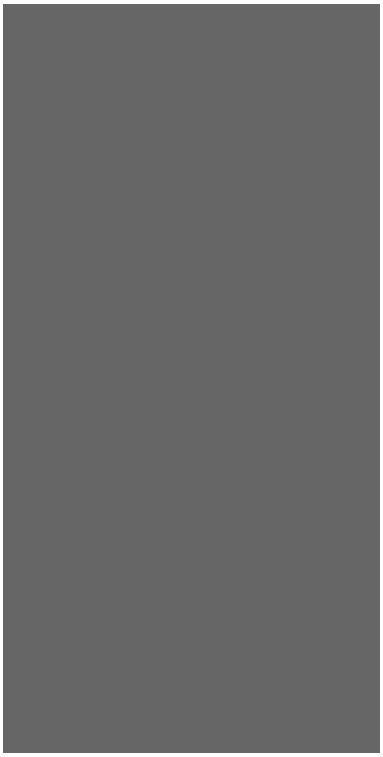
Kevin Ayers & The Whole World - "Hyde Park Free Concert 1970"
Reel Recordings RR002 - Dist. Orkhêstra

Pierre Durr



S'il apparaît quelquefois justifié de rééditer des albums méconnus à l'époque de leur enregistrement, voire de rendre témoignage d'un aspect de la création des décennies passées qui n'eut pas l'heur de susciter une édition à l'époque, on se demande toutefois (c'est en partie souligné dans l'éditorial d'un précédent numéro de R&C) pourquoi il y a pléthore d'éditions de live ou de bandes inédites (en version alternative souvent des enregistrements officiels) consacrées à des musiciens et des formations des années 70 ou 80. Focaliser l'attention des mélomanes sur ces enregistrements, c'est aussi en partie, surtout en ces temps de restrictions des budgets consacrés aux loisirs, les détourner de la création contemporaine.

En même temps, et il y a certainement un brin, sinon un bouquet entier, de nostalgie pour une musique - pas forcément en elle-même - associée à des années de jeunesse (voire d'insouciance) dans l'intérêt qu'on peut y porter. D'autant plus lorsqu'on peut les associer à la naissance d'une forme de militantisme pour ces musiques. Et ces formations et musiciens, encore actifs - parmi lesquels on comptera bien sûr les deux coffrets live de Henry Cow* - que sont Kevin AYERS et UNIVERS ZÉRO y tiennent un rôle majeur. Le premier en tant que chaînon (le plus pop ?) de l'école de Canterbury, les belges comme tenants de la scène Rock In Opposition belge. Les deux enregistrements de Kevin AYERS sont un peu complémentaires. Le premier, capté lors d'un concert gratuit à Hyde Park (Edgar Broughton Band et Pink Floyd s'y produisirent le même jour!) est intéressant car le Whole World y apparaît davantage comme une



entité et non comme un groupe de musiciens accompagnant un chanteur. Son line-up est assez proche de l'album "*Shooting At The Moon*": David Bedford aux claviers, Mike Oldfield à la basse, Loi Coxhill aux saxophones, Robert Wyatt (et non Mick Fincher) à la batterie, et bien sûr Kevin AYERS à la guitare ; la plupart des titres sont d'ailleurs empruntés à cet album, auxquels se rajoutent deux classiques de Soft Machine, "*Dit It Again*" et "*Why Are You Sleeping*". Ce live offre par ailleurs des prolongements improvisés à certaines pièces, permettant aux divers musiciens du Whole World de sortir des schémas inhérents au studio, valorisant aussi bien Lol Coxhill que Mike Oldfield, pas encore "tubularisé". "*What More Can I Say...* " présente une facette plus intimiste de Kevin AYERS : il y officie seul sur quatre des sept titres (Robert Wyatt, David Bedford, Mike Oldfield, Archie Legget ou Eddie Sparrow apparaissent toutefois sur les trois autres!). Il permet de mettre davantage l'accent sur le chant, plutôt nonchalant dans un enregistrement plus proche d'une démo ou d'une gestation présentée à une amie ("*Lady June*") que d'un album construit. Cela le rend toutefois attachant.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Around Robert Wyatt
2009

Orchestre National de Jazz

More information about this album

JAZZ MAGAZINE - N° 603 - mai 2009

ONJ/DANIEL YVINEC Around Robert Wyatt
2 CD Bee Jazz! Abeille Musique

Bill Milkowski

Disque d'Emoi

l'Orchestre National de Jazz de Daniel Yvinec livre un premier CD qui pose un problème politique: les instrumentistes titulaires n'y ont que des rôles de pupitres propres aux disques de rock et de variétés. Ce produit de studio peu réalisable sur scène est à l'encontre de la vocation même de l'ONJ qui est de faire exister un orchestre. Et pourtant, cet hommage à Robert Wyatt ne nous a pas laissé indifférent. Nous avons voulu le soumettre à une oreille innocente... comme fut la nôtre lorsque nous reçûmes les premières productions de Hal Wilner autour de Nino Rota, Thelonious Monk et Kurt Weill. Découvrant ce disque à l'aveugle, le journaliste américain Bill Milkowski a conçu le plus grand émoi.
Franck Bergerot.

Alors que je n'écoute quasiment plus que du jazz, l'écoute de cet enregistrement à l'aveugle m'a ramené, à ma vieille culture pop-rock. J'ai successivement cru reconnaître Burt Bacharach, puis Arthur Lee et Love et enfin une touche de Brian Wilson et l'influence des Beach Boys dans les harmonies vocales du premier morceau. La plage suivante m'a fait penser aux univers sombres de Leonard Cohen ou Serge Gainsbourg, puis au groupe néo-psychédélique Of Montreal. le banjo, le theremin et les solo jazzy de la plage suivante m'ont rappelé le groupe Dreams des frères Brecker. Puis, j'ai soudain compris qu'il s'agissait d'un recueil de chansons de Robert Wyatt ou de musiques auxquelles il fut associé. le climat qui domine est bien celui de l'école de Canterbury, ce courant qui, au tournant des années 60-70, combina si intelligemment jazz et rock, chansons à texte et psychédélisme, sous la houlette de groupes comme Soft Machine, Caravan, Matching Mole, Gong et Henry Cow. Ces vocaux fragiles et poignants relèvent évidemment de l'univers de Robert Wyatt, alors que les arrangements évoquent une sorte d'orchestre de chambre avec, dans le cas de *Vandalusia* (tiré de l'album de Wyatt "Old Rottenhat", 1985) une profusion de lignes tortueuses à l'unisson, interprétées avec une impressionnante précision qui renverraient d'ailleurs plutôt à Frank Zappa.
À l'issue d'un véritable travail de détective, j'ai pu identifier la totalité du répertoire. On y trouve une majorité de reprises de Robert Wyatt. *Alifib* tiré de "Rock Bottom" (1974), *Just As You Are* tiré avec tendresse de "Comicopera" (2007), l'adorable *O Caroline* du groupe de Wyatt Matching Mole ("Matching Mole", 1972) qui fait l'objet d'une interprétation intimiste, *Alliance* d"'Old Rottenhat", ici habillé d'arrangements luxuriants.
Interprété d'une voix quasi chuchotée, *Del Mundo* est une poignante chanson folklorique chantée en italien par Robert Wyatt sur

l'anthologie "The Different You : Robert Wyatt E Noi". *Te Recuerdo Amanda* fut chanté en espagnol sur le disque quatre titres de 1984, "Work in progress". Quant à *Shipbuilding*, il s'agit d'une chanson d'Elvis Costello publiée en single en 1982. Mais on retrouve également *The Song* de Peter Blegvad et John Greaves ("Songs", 1994, et "The Trouble with Happiness", 2oo4). L'influence du classique est décelable dans l'arrangement de *Kew. Rhone*, le thème qui donne son titre à l'album chef-d'oeuvre de John Greaves et Peter Blegvad, où figurait d'ailleurs Carla Bley et le drumming du grand Andrew Cyrille. Les arrangements évocateurs de la musique de chambre, avec ces lignes tourbillonnantes et entrelacées, ce contrepoint complexe et ce tempo délicat, sonnent parfois comme des réminiscences de Philip Glass.
Je ne sais pas qui sont ces musiciens, ni qui est l'arrangeur, mais j'imagine que c'est un fan de Frank Zappa, Edgard Varese et peut-être Gil Evans. Il réalise un admirable assemblage sans hiatus entre musique de chambre excellemment exécutée et improvisation de haut vol. Les solos de ténor et d'alto, de guitare, de flûte et de piano sont formidables et j'apprécie tout particulièrement la guitare sauvage de *Vandalusia*, ainsi que les fragments bruitistes qui sont inhérents à l'univers de Wyatt. Cette éblouissante réalisation mérite notre Émoi.

Bill Milkowski

>> **www.jazzmagazine.com**

BBC REVIEW

"It deserves as much hyperbole as it can get."

Chris Jones 2009-05-08

Robert Wyatt's status as a living English institution now equals that of, say, Stephen Fry. So much so, that there's a danger of the shy, self-effacing man being swamped by wearying hyperbole. But, just as you're about to surrender to cynicism, along comes something as wonderful as Around Robert Wyatt: a collaboration between the bearded one and Daniel Yvinec and his French ten-piece Orchestre. One listen and any doubts about Wyatt's are laid to rest.

The album does this is by taking Wyatt's compositions as well as his most famous cover versions (cf: Shipbuilding), re-casting them in a jazz setting. These expanded, joyous, limber explorations of the basic bones of Wyatt's work reveal structures that are both rock solid and light as a feather. Hardly surprising when you consider thay were all originally written and performed by a jazz fan, albeit one who never considered himself to be a 'proper' musician.

Highlights are pointlesss, but easy examples are Rokia Traore's incredible reading of Alifib. The child-speak of the Rock Bottom classic fits her mouth to a tee. The incredible duo of Yael Naim and Arno, balance delicacy with cartoon gruffness to highlight Wyatt and partner Alfreda Benge's unflinching look at their relationship, Just As You Are (from his Cuckooland album). And Daniel Darc's lounge version of the Matching Mole perennial, O Caroline which eventually lurches into Tom Waits noir? Believe me, it works.

Wyatt, himself, joins the throng on several pieces and his voice sounds rejuvenated by the experience, especially on the bonus version of his obscurity, Rangers In The Night, which benefits from

modern looping techniques to achieve an other-worldliness. The Orchestre features players of outstanding calibre, especially the guitar and banjo of Pierre Perchaud who swoops, plunks and grinds. Yvinec's innovative arrangements leave enough room for the songs to breath again, buffing up material grown dull with over-familiarity.

If you've recently tired of Wyatt, or people banging on about how marvellous he is, buy this album. Your faith will be restored. It deserves as much hyperbole as it can get.

>> Cet article sur le site de la BBC

JAZZMAN - N° 157 - mai 2009

ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE JAZZ
DANIEL YVINEC
Around Robert Wyatt
1 CD Bee Jazz 03O - Distribué par Abeille Musique

Pierre de Chocqueuse

'Choc' Jazzman - Féérique

Consacré à Robert Wyatt, ex-batteur du groupe Soft Machine et auteur de mélodies et de disques splendides, ce premier disque de l'Orchestre national de jazz placé sous la direction de Daniel Yvinec est un véritable coup de maître. Sélectionnant quelques-uns des plus beaux thèmes de Robert et deux compositions de John Greaves, complice et ami de ce dernier (*Kew. Rhone* et *The Song* que les familiers de Greaves connaissent bien), Daniel les a confiés à des voix qu'il admire pour les chanter *a capella*. L'instrumentation est venue après, Yvinec inspiré chargeant Vincent Artaud de mettre en forme ces chansons, de leur donner chair et consistance harmonique. Confiés à un autre, les arrangements de ce disque n'auraient probablement pas été si beaux et réussis.
Artaud sublime chaque morceau par des couleurs chatoyantes, des timbres spécifiques. Passionné par les musiques répétitives et minimalistes, il fait tourner de courtes cellules mélodiques, agence de brefs ostinato, des riffs hypnotiques saupoudrés d'effets électroniques. Respectant l'univers poétique de Wyatt qui pose sa voix inimitable sur quatre morceaux, il offre des écrins somptueux à ses chansons, y fait rentrer son propre monde sonore et réalise un disque aussi fascinant qu'inclassable. Saluons cet orchestre de jeunes musiciens qui ont patiemment assimilé une écriture complexe et exigeante. Un court solo est réservé à chacun. Les voix ne viennent pas du jazz mais apportent un supplément d'âme à ce magnifique opus mélodique.

Pierre de Chocqueuse

>> **www.jazzman.fr**

CITIZEN JAZZ.COM

Orchestre National de Jazz
Around Robert Wyatt

Denis Desassis

Une évocation de l'univers si particulier de Robert Wyatt comme première carte de visite pour l'ONJ version Daniel Yvinec - un pari à haut risque que le nouveau directeur artistique relève avec toute l'élégance due à celui qui est entré de son vivant dans la légende de la musique anglaise. Bien déjoué, Mister Yvinec !

En 2005 déjà, Franck Tortiller embarquait l'Orchestre National de Jazz sur des chemins un peu éloignés des grands axes du jazz en s'attaquant au répertoire de Led Zeppelin avec un projet baptisé Close To Heaven, que l'auteur de ces lignes avait salué dans son carnet de bord voici plus de trois ans sous forme de lettre ouverte.
Et voici que Daniel Yvinec se pique de nous faire partager sa vision d'un personnage inclassable à qui une horde d'inconditionnels voue un véritable culte, Robert Wyatt. Il faut être un peu fou pour oser traduire l'univers *a priori* inadaptable d'un homme dont l'histoire personnelle est en elle-même singulière. Aussi nous pardonnera-t-on de retracer avant tout, dans les grandes lignes, le passé de ce musicien sans égal, batteur dadaïste puis chanteur-compositeur habité à l'inimitable timbre haut-perché.

Remontons à la fin des années soixante lorsque, en compagnie d'amis nommés Kevin Ayers (guitare) et Mike Ratledge (claviers), vite rejoints par le bassiste Hugh Hopper après le départ de Daevid Allen, Robert Wyatt élabore une folle et savante construction qui demeure le socle fondateur d'un mouvement nommé École de Canterbury.
Soft Machine, fille naturelle des Wilde Flowers, est née. Elle mêle joyeusement jazz, rock et autres lubies psychédéliques qui vont faire de ses créateurs des « architectes de l'espace temporel ». Petit à petit, disque après disque - dont le troisième, double album sobrement intitulé *Third*, recèle « Moon In June », joyau signé Wyatt et démontrant tout son potentiel sur une face entière —, le groupe se tourne vers un jazz moins feu follet, trop sage aux dires de certains… Sans doute de quoi susciter un début d'ennui chez son batteur, qui préfère se mettre en disponibilité le temps d'un premier disque solo (*The End Of An Ear*, 1970) avant de le quitter pour fonder une autre machinerie. Deux albums et un sublime « O Caroline », composition émouvante où la voix de Wyatt et son délicieux cheveu sur la langue serrent le cœur et donnent la chair de poule. Mais il n'y aura pas de troisième disque ; juste une chute stupide, sur plusieurs étages, un soir d'excès, et la paralysie, de longs mois d'hôpital. C'est un Wyatt paraplégique qui ressort de cette épreuve, mais un Wyatt transfiguré qui publie un chef d'œuvre absolu, *Rock Bottom* (1974) sous la houlette de Nick Mason. Disque-phare, œuvre majeure constamment sous tension, et qui vous empoigne dès la première seconde de « Sea Song » pour ne plus vous lâcher. A toute chose malheur est bon, prétend-t-on, même si nul ne peut dire ce que serait devenu Robert Wyatt sans cet accident. Toujours est-il que cet album l'élève au rang d'artiste culte dont chaque note jouée ou chantée avec une grande économie de moyens — son univers étant marqué par le minimalisme – fait le bonheur de ses fidèles. Difficile d'échapper à l'envoûtement…
La discographie de Robert Wyatt est abondante et ses participations (Henry Cow, Hatfield & The North, Michael Mantler, John Greaves… pour citer les plus connues), nombreuses. On pourra néanmoins recommander ces pépites que sont *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* (1975), *Old Rottenhat* (1985), *Dondestan* (1991), *Shleep* (1997), *Solar Flares Burn For You* (2003), *Cuckooland* (2003), *Comicopera* (2007). Robert Wyatt est au centre de tant d'admirations qu'il n'est guère étonnant qu'un passeur de la trempe de Daniel Yvinec ait choisi d'en faire son premier sujet d'étude au sein de l'ONJ.

« *Robert Wyatt, c'est une histoire qui remonte au début de mon adolescence, des bribes de sa musique comme des promesses de*

liberté, des portes entrouvertes conduisant entre les chemins sinueux qui trouvent leur tracé entre le jazz, la pop et mille autres choses qui ne portent pas toujours un nom… » Excellente idée tant le travail qu'il nous propose avec *Around Robert Wyatt* est d'une grande élégance, respectueuse sans être obséquieuse. Jamais confit dans la dévotion – même si l'on sent tout de suite qu'il est le fruit d'une admiration sincère et humble – ce disque-hommage ose mettre l'ONJ au service d'une expression artistique respectant le format initial de sa source - la chanson - plutôt que de la travestir un peu artificiellement en musique jazzifiante. Autrement dit, Yvinec a fait le choix de reprises qui sont souvent transfigurées mais qui, jamais, ne trahissent le répertoire de Wyatt. Les plus orthodoxes de l'étiquetage vont peut-être grincer des dents, mais ils auront tort de bouder leur plaisir devant un si belle recomposition.

Il faut dire aussi que, au-delà de ce séduisant aréopage que constitue l'ONJ, Daniel Yvinec a su s'entourer pour mener à bien son projet. En premier lieu en conviant un autre roi du *crossover*, Vincent Artaud, dont les arrangements subtils sont en parfaite symbiose avec le parti-pris originel de Wyatt : chaque note a sa raison d'être et les enluminures sont de magnifiques écrins pour les voix-reines - car la voix est bien l'élément vital d'Around Robert Wyatt, et comment pouvait-il en être autrement quand on sait à quel point l'univers du compositeur est « porté » par la sienne ? La voix captée seule avant que les musiciens ne la parent de leurs plus beaux atours instrumentaux.

Mais là où Daniel Yvinec semble vouloir aller plus loin dans son pari un peu fou, c'est lorsqu'il fait appel à d'autres voix, auxquelles on n'aurait pas forcément pensé. Celle de la chanteuse malienne Rokia Traoré en est le meilleur exemple : avec elle, il ose s'attaquer au monumental « Alifib », (*Rock Bottom*), composition éminemment personnelle et réputée inadaptable car elle constitue une magnifique déclaration d'amour à Alfreda Benge, compagne de Wyatt. Le chant susurré de ce dernier, ses onomatopées balbutiantes et comme surgies d'un long coma, cette surdose d'amour formaient-ils un tout trop intime ? Eh bien non : ici la coloration africaine offre au morceau une seconde vie hors de la sphère conjugale pour la propulser vers une touchante universalité. Ailleurs, Yael Naïm associée à un Arno plus chaviré que jamais pour un étonnant « Just As You Are », Daniel Darc se payant le luxe, le temps d'un véritable palimpseste sonore, de chambouler « O Caroline » au point qu'il faut une écoute très attentive pour reconnaître l'original, Camille épurant « Alliance » autant que faire se peut, la comédienne Irène Jacob, très à son aise sur « Del Mondo »... ici chaque chanteur a relevé le défi avec enthousiasme. Et cela se sent.

Ce disque s'insinue en nous, on y revient sans relâche. Et c'est bien là que réside sa réussite : s'il donne envie de replonger illico dans la discographie de l'artiste, il se suffit néanmoins à lui-même et n'a jamais à rougir de la comparaison.

« *[...] c'est ce que j'ai toujours aimé chez Wyatt, ne pas avoir à douter de ses intentions, c'est sans doute ce geste si beau si juste et si rare qui est le fil conducteur de cette aventure* ». Ces quelques phrases sont extraites du blog de l'ONJ Daniel Yvinec. Message reçu, monsieur Yvinec ; nous sommes à vos côtés.

Denis Desassis

>> Cet article sur le site de Citizen Jazz

Around Robert Wyatt

Michel Delville - juin 2009

L'Orchestre National de Jazz de France, Rokia Traoré, Irène Jacob, Camille, Arno, Yael Naïm et Daniel Darc s'attaquent au répertoire d'un des musiciens les plus inclassables de la scène musicale contemporaine.

Les hommages à Robert Wyatt n'ont pas manqué ces dernières années. Après les Soupsongs d'Annie Whitehead (dans lequel officiait un ancien membre de l'ONJ : le trompettiste Harry Beckett), l'ensemble Dondestan dirigé par Karen Mantler et John Greaves, [1] le trio allemand Market Rasen, les projets de Jean-Michel Marchetti, Pascal Comelade et Jean-Philippe Ramos - sans compter les reprises ponctuelles d'Aldo Romano, Hugh Hopper, Ultramarine, Kammerflimmer Kollektief et autres Tears for Fears - c'est au tour de l'Orchestre National de Jazz de France de nous offrir une sélection de 15 titres arrangés par Vincent Artaud sous la direction de Daniel Yvinec. [2] Outre les qualités inestimables de sa musique, une des raisons de ces multiples hommages au fondateur du Soft Machine est sans doute liée à son absence quasi-totale de la scène depuis mai 1975. A cette époque, il s'était produit à trois reprises aux côtés de Henry Cow, groupe fondateur de la Canterbury Scene. Depuis lors, ses apparitions en public se sont limitées à deux brèves interventions aux côtés de son ami David Gilmour et à une prestation au sein du Liberation Music Orchestra de Charlie Haden, programmé en juin 2009 dans le cadre du Meltdown Festival d'Ornette Coleman.

À l'écoute des premiers morceaux du disque, on est frappé d'emblée par la richesse et l'intelligence des arrangements de Vincent Artaud, moins connu du grand public pour son intérêt pour Wyatt, les musiques du Maghreb et l'électro-jazz que pour ses travaux d'arrangeur auprès d'Henri Salvador, Alain Bashung, Rodolphe Burger ou ... Dany Brillant. Virtuosité des harmonisations, pureté des timbres, singularité des formes, désarticulations rythmiques contrôlées, toutes ces qualités semblent réunies pour faire de ce coup d'essai un tour de force qui séduira les néophytes et permettra aux connaisseurs de découvrir les potentialités inédites de transformation et de recréation des originaux.

Certes, une écoute plus rapprochée révèle un certain académisme, un usage un peu trop ornemental des harmonies, un côté léché mais un peu froid, ainsi que quelques maniérismes minimalistes qui, à vrai dire, se marient bien à l'usage bien particulier de la répétition qui caractérise l'univers musical wyattien. Cela dit, il faut bien reconnaître que la musique de Wyatt - avec ses dissonances facétieuses, ses ruptures rythmiques et mélodiques, ses palimpsestes poly-vocaux instables et imprévisibles - ne se laisse pas domestiquer facilement. Il est par conséquent assez tentant - dans un contexte jazz - de la réduire à des thèmes suivis de grilles sur lesquelles s'illustrent les voix des interprètes et les solos des instrumentistes. Pour être tout à fait juste envers Artaud, cet exercice n'est pas dénué d'intérêt, loin de là, surtout quand des ensembles de la stature de l'ONJ d'Yvinec s'y livrent. D'autre part, on sait que les plus grands se sont heurtés aux mêmes obstacles : on songe, par exemple, aux adaptations de Jimi Hendrix par Gil Evans, dans lesquelles les grilles blues-rock originales deviennent, par la force des choses, des prisons où le grain de la voix et les idiosyncrasies mélodiques et rythmiques du guitariste se voient réduites au silence.

Bien que le résultat des efforts de l'ONJ soit une belle réussite dans l'ensemble, certaines compositions reprises sur Around Robert Wyatt subissent le même sort, et on ne peut s'empêcher de penser que cette démarche est aux antipodes de l'esprit et des méthodes viscéralement « DYI » qui président aux destinées de la musique de

Wyatt, lequel me confiait récemment, non sans humour, qu'il travaillait « comme un animal », partant de quelques séquences d'accords exécutés au piano, gribouillant quelques partitions fragmentaires, composant et improvisant à partir de bouts de papier et de notes éparses.. C'est d'ailleurs en travaillant, ciselant et violentant la matière même du son comme un artisan, en direct et sans artifices, que Wyatt a réussi à produire une œuvre unique et radicale qui recèle des complexités qui excèdent (dans tous les sens du terme) les genres et formatages traditionnels.

Quoi qu'il en soit, les adaptations de l'ONJ sont infiniment plus gratifiantes que celles d'Evans, sans parler du récent et très décevant Melody Gainsbourg d'Andy Sheppard. En réalité, ce disque recèle quelques excellentes surprises qui, à elles seules, justifient une écoute plus attentive et généreuse que celle que je viens de livrer. Tout d'abord, il faut être reconnaissant aux membres de l'ONJ de nous épargner l'insupportable état d'esprit « encanaillé » des jazzmen et musiciens classiques qui s'attaquent à la musique pop-rock. Il convient de préciser que les dix musiciens d'Yvinec sont issus de la jeune génération de jazzmen français ayant subi l'influence de l'électro-jazz et dont la grande majorité maîtrise autant les effets électroniques et autres « sound objects » que leurs premiers instruments. Malgré leur jeune âge, ces jeunes gens ont déjà croisé la route de Louis Sclavis, Vincent Courtois, Glenn Ferris, Elise Caron (tiens, pourquoi n'est-elle pas présente sur ce disque ?), Charlier-Sourisse, et Marc Ducret, ce qui est en soi un gage de qualité et d'ouverture.

En tant que directeur artistique, Yvinec a également fait preuve d'audace en optant pour des morceaux qui, à trois ou quatre exceptions près, ne sont pas les plus connus du répertoire de Wyatt. Situés entre Claude Debussy, Gil Evans, Steve Reich, Carla Bley et Aphex Twin, les arrangements d'Alifib, Vandalusia, P.L.A., Gegenstand et Rangers in the Night sont d'indéniables réussites. C'est dans ces trois derniers titres - qui se voient malheureusement relégués aux marges de la première édition limitée du disque en tant que bonus tracks - que l'ONJ « se lâche » véritablement et réussit à contourner les pièges évoqués plus haut. C'est aussi dans ces pièces qu'Artaud et Yvinec ménagent des parenthèses astucieuses qui s'écartent de la traditionnelle formule « intro-theme-solo(s)-reprise-coda », n'hésitant pas à la faire exploser, comme dans Rangers in the Night, un des fleurons de ce CD dont on se demande encore une fois pourquoi il a été intégré au bonus disc (c'est aussi le cas du splendide P.L.A., porté par la magnifique voix de la chanteuse malienne Rokia Traoré, et qui aurait pu ouvrir dignement l'album).

Le choix et l'agencement des titres interpelle autant que celui des chanteurs et chanteuses invités aux côtés de Wyatt lui-même (présent sur cinq titres) : le fait que la moitié des compositions sélectionnées soit signée par d'autres compositeurs témoigne de l'importance capitale de la carrière « parallèle » menée par Wyatt en tant qu'interprète d'artistes tantôt célèbres, tantôt confidentiels. Constituer un tel florilège « autour » de Wyatt revient à reconnaître l'importance des multiples collaborations d'un artiste qui, pour citer Francis Ponge, « n'a pas son centre de gravité en lui même » et pratique l'art de la reprise avec autant de bonheur que celui de la composition. Construire un hommage à Wyatt en passant par Te Recuerdo Amanda de Victor Jara et Shipbuilding d'Elvis Costello c'est un peu comme si on voulait honorer Chet Baker en jouant My Funny Valentine ou encore John Coltrane en interprétant My Favorite Things, et c'est très bien.

En parcourant la liste des chanteurs et chanteuses invité(e)s de l'ONJ, on ne peut que s'interroger sur l'absence de John Greaves - résidant en France depuis de nombreuses années et co-auteur, avec Peter Blegvad, des somptueux Kew Rhône, Gegenstand et The Song [3] - de Karen Mantler ou encore de Julie Tippetts qui, à ce jour, est la seule chanteuse a avoir réussi à faire oublier l'original l'espace de

quelques minutes, en interprétant les désormais classiques Sea Song et Muddy Mouth dans le cadre des Soupsongs d'Annie Whitehead. [4] Malgré quelques erreurs de casting (Daniel Darc en Gainsbourg-Baker hybride poussif et maladroit sur O Caroline et Arno beuglant un Captain Beefheart hors-sujet dans Just As You Are) les voix de femmes qui émaillent ce disque sauvent la mise par leur finesse, leur flexibilité et leur détermination à se détacher de leurs personnalités et de leurs styles propres pour mettre leur talent au service des paroles et de la musique qui leur ont été confiées, tout simplement. Au rayon des bonnes surprises, on retrouve Camille et Yael Naïm (rayonnantes de justesse et de sobriété sur Alliance et Shipbuilding, respectivement), la précitée Rokia Traoré (magnifique improvisatrice sur Alifib et nous offrant un P.L.A. plus hypnotique que jamais) et Irène Jacob, dont la voix fluide et frêle se fait pure émotion sur Del Mondo. Enfin, dans le livret on apprend, avec une grande tristesse - celle des grandes occasions manquées - que ce disque est dédié au très regretté Alain Bashung, qui devait interpréter Sea Song et s'y était essayé peu avant son décès.

Michel Delville enseigne la littérature comparée et la littérature américaine à l'ULg. Il est également musicien, fondateur, entre autres, du collectif electro-jazz The Wrong Object.

[1] Greaves est bien représenté sur ce disque puisqu'il en co-signe 3 morceaux écrits en collaboration avec Peter Blegvad.

[2] Orchestre National de Jazz sous la direction de Daniel Yvinec. Around Robert Wyatt. Bee Jazz Records, 2009. Pour une discographie complète, voir : www.disco-robertwyatt.com

[3] Ce dernier se distingue de la version originale par le manque total d'effets sur la voix de Wyatt, qui se révèle plus éthérée et plus juste que jamais.

[4] Soupsongs. Voiceprint/Jazzprint, 2000

>> Cet article sur le site de Magazine - Université de Liège

More information about this album

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Radio Experiment Rome
February 1981
2009

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

DOWNTOWN MUSIC GALLERY - Newsletter - July 31st, 2009

Radio Experiment Rome, February 1981 (Rai Trade 0014; Italy)

Bruce Lee Gallanter

Previously unreleased material made by Robert Wyatt (Soft Machine) in the studio for an Italian radio program in 1981. Wyatt himself described the experience as "a chance to expand ideas to bring to life outside the music business, which is just one big fashion industry..normally you have to obtain money for studio time and aim at a particular recording for a particular product. So after three days of testing, the eight-track started officially rolling - piano, vocals, hi-hat, a jaw harp - laying down track after track, until the Roman radio guys ended up with 45 minutes of music, including pieces like "Born Again Cretin" (a song about Nelson Mandela), "The Opium War", with garbled 'radio-like' vocals and "Heathens Have No Souls", featuring a jaw harp.
"This is an extraordinary and completely unique work from our main inspiration and reluctant hero, Robert Wyatt. Giving Mr. Wyatt a week's worth of experimentation in a radio in Rome was a wonderful idea and the results are fascinating and bizarre. "Opium War" begins our journey with a transmission from another planet. Wyatt's distinctive voice speak/sings his special words about the British invasion of China. Words sped up, slowed down and mutated in layers with jew's harp, skeletal percussion and enchanting minimal keyboards. Mr. Wyatt has always used his voice(s) and weaved them in selective layers to create a variety of characters. This is truly the way a radio studio can be used for creative explorations and Wyatt does his best to take us on a personal journey. Since Mr. Wyatt was given time to prepare in the studio, he is able to craft exquisite and mesmerizing voices, melodies and backing rhythms. There is something immensely charming about the way Wyatt has created these silly/serious songs, sometimes on-the-spot. I dig the way "L'Albero Degli Zoccoli" sounds as if it flowing backwards for the first half and it turns into a delightful wordless sort of ballad. On "Holy War", Wyatt warbles "Anarchy in the UK" & "Onwards Christian Soldiers" while swirling layers of other vocal lines, each one adding another mystery to be revealed through time and consideration. In many ways this disc is a long lost treasure that bridges the gap between the seventies ('Rockbottom' & 'Ruth...') and the eighties period of Robert Wyatt's sparse recording career. Charlie Parker's theme song, "Billie's Bounce" gets a short yet infectious reading and "Born Again Cretin" gets a tantalizing, thoughtful version. For us Canterbury fans, this is like manna from above, that is if you do believe in miracles, this is one to savor."

REVUE & CORRIGÉE - Décembre 2009 - #82

Radio Experiment Rome, February 1981
Rai Trade RTPJ 0014 - Dist. Orkhêstra

Dino

Pendant trois journées en février 1981, Robert WYATT expérimenta et enregistra dans les studios de la radio italienne, répondant à la demande de Pasquale Santoli. Le résultat, un disque de 45 minutes inédit à ce jour (la bande fut diffusée à l'époque sur les ondes de la RAI), où l'on entend un WYATT s'aventurant sur d'autres espaces plus sauvages que ceux que l'on connaît, grâce à la guimbarde notamment et divers objets (percussion) non identifiés. Il a certainement été influencé par un nouvel environnement technique, celui de la radio et de ses techniciens et une ambiance autre, l'Italie n'étant pas l'Angleterre. Quelque chose de brut bouscule sensiblement la douceur habituelle du chanteur. Comme un retour à une certaine liberté de l'improvisation. Ce qui nous intéresse ici, c'est la présence de l'artiste au travail. Mieux qu'un document forcément nécessaire aux fidèles amateurs du créateur de Soft Machine et de Matching Mole, une possible introduction à une œuvre importante de notre temps.

GRNNND ZERO - 7 mars 2010 - grrrndzero.org

Robert Wyatt - Radio Experiment Rome 1981

Méga Méfiant

Février 1981. Au lieu de passer ses vacances à réfléchir sur le sens du sacrifice de Jésus, Robert Wyatt décide de répondre positivement à une commande de la RAI, et de passer quelques jours dans les studios de la radio italienne pour l'émission *Un Certo Discorso* et d'y enregistrer des trucs selon son humeur et la quantité de résidus de drogues encore collés dans sa barbe depuis Soft Machine.
L'idée de la RAI était de filmer et de capter le processus de création, lorsqu'il ne souffre ni de préparations ni de contraintes de production, et de célébrer ainsi une sorte de communion mêlant fulgurance, voyeurisme et snobisme. Une partie de la session de Wyatt est ressortie l'hiver dernier, sous le nom de *Radio Experiment Rome*. Comme un ours sortant de son hibernation, Wyatt y improvise tout seul, avec sa voix, une guimbarde, un piano et quelques percussions primitives. Au-delà du côté on-réchauffe-un-mythe-en-brûlant-ses-fonds-de-tiroirs, ces enregistrements rappellent discrètement à l'univers tout entier l'ampleur de son génie. Oh oui oh oui, écoute donc comment il fait d'une simple guimbarde la bande son d'une cavalcade psychédélique (*Heathens Have No Souls*).
Armé des différentes machines obscures qui peuplent un studio de radio, Wyatt s'amuse à explorer les principes de l'enregistrement

multipiste, de la diffraction vocale et de la modulation en général. Il étire ainsi un son à la fois régressif, pour son côté minimaliste faussement enfantin, et très complexe, selon tout un jeu d'échos et de désynchronisation sonore. C'est souvent très bizarre, parfois austère (*Billie's Bounce*), mais le plus souvent très inspiré. Mixant sa voix comme des fruits frais, c'est-à-dire en préservant le goût et le piquant des vitamines, il s'élève en héros plaintif d'une époque où Mandela faisait encore des pompes en prison (*Born Again Cretin*) et où Tatcher interdisait à ses concitoyens de chanter l'Internationale sous la douche (*Holy War*).
Mais Robert Wyatt n'est pas qu'un ninja-marxiste, ou un vieil hippie mal coiffé vestige du psychédélisme des années 60, c'est un chamane postmoderne, un conteur mystique, capable en une succession de humhumhum de planter un décor massif, noueux et tortueux comme une mangrove urbaine, qui aurait surgit soudainement au cœur d'une Venise désertée, où les quelques maisons encore habitées dériveraient doucement, à la merci de la plus sourde mélancolie (désolé pour cet élan, mais on ne peut pas brider le lyrisme au fond d'un cœur trop souvent mal arrosé). Écoute *Prove Sparse* et sens l'émotion déborder de ta bouche bée.

More information about this album

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Mop Meuchiine Plays
Robert Wyatt
2010

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

CITIZEN JAZZ - 18 octobre 2010

Mop Meuchiine plays Robert Wyatt
Le Chant du Monde

Denis Desassis

P. Maupeu (gt, bj), J.-B. Réhault (bs, saxhorn, acc), H. Vincent (cello), C. Piromalli (p, kb), N. Le Moullec (b, voix), B. Hurault (dr, elec)

La musique de Robert Wyatt constituerait-elle à elle seule un univers qu'on peut explorer indéfiniment ? On serait tenté de le croire, surtout de ce côté-ci de la Manche, où les hommages se succèdent avec un légitime respect mêlé de beaucoup d'imagination et d'originalité. Wyatt est bien vivant et pourtant, on le célèbre à intervalles réguliers, on lui érige de belles statues musicales comme on le ferait d'un génie disparu. Il y a quelques mois seulement, par exemple [1], Daniel Yvinec faisait graviter les dix musiciens-funambules de l'ONJ autour du répertoire [2] de l'illustre batteur mais aussi chanteur des premières années de Soft Machine et du très créatif Matching Mole. Robert Wyatt, artiste extérieur à toutes les classifications, brisé dans son élan, au début des années 70, par une chute qui le priva de l'usage de ses jambes. Depuis ce fatidique moment, Wyatt le sage assis nous fait parvenir de ses nouvelles, à intervalles plutôt irréguliers, sous la forme de disques mystérieusement enchanteurs, souvent minimalistes et toujours empreints d'un humanisme, à l'image de son engagement politique de citoyen du monde.

Et voici qu'une bande de jeunes Français vient en découdre sur ce même terrain qui, riche et propice aux inventions, n'en est pas moins glissant. L'hommage a ses vertus, mais comporte des risques. Celui de l'effacement derrière la forte personnalité d'un artiste d'exception, mais aussi celui d'un trop grand respect interdisant toute prise de risque. Or, avec Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt, on est très loin de toute tiédeur. Mop Meuchiine, créé par le guitariste Pascal Maupeu [3] se paie en effet le luxe d'une lecture culottée du répertoire de Wyatt, dont il s'affranchit avec un esprit libertaire des plus réjouissants. Ses six musiciens, tous de haut niveau et très ouverts à l'expérimentation – des collègues et néanmoins amis avec lesquels il a partagé diverses aventures [sic] – n'hésitent pas à démultiplier les climats, y compris au cœur d'une même composition, et savent alterner, sans jamais donner l'impression de ruptures artificielles, des instants de sérénité avec d'autres, plus violents, voire assourdissants, richement dosés en électricité, émaillés de nombreuses surprises en provenance de l'électronique ou du mariage réussi d'instruments comme le banjo, l'accordéon ou

le violoncelle. Mop Meuchiine pratique avec bonheur l'art de la montée en puissance et de la scansion, donnant à sa musique une force et des couleurs qui en font une réussite.

Pour mener à bien cet hommage, Mop Meuchiine est allé puiser à la source de plusieurs albums-phares de Wyatt : l'incontournable Rock Bottom (1974) bien sûr [4], pour une version choc de « Sea Song » qui s'avère d'emblée un des sommets du disque. Quelques notes de piano légères, égrenées sur un écrin de bruitages électroniques, puis s'installe très vite une atmosphère surchargée d'électricité avant que Jean-Baptiste Réhault ne nous tire des larmes par un impressionnant chorus de saxophone baryton. Juste avant un final assourdissant, d'orage sonore qui ne trouve un exutoire que dans son enchaînement avec un « Instant Pussy » [5] tout en finesse où se conjuguent la guitare de Maupeu et l'accordéon de Réhault. Mop Meuchiine rend ensuite une double visite à l'album de Wyatt Old Rottenhat (1985) avec « British Road » et « Gharbzadegi », nouvelle occasion d'assister à une déconstruction-reconstruction qui respire l'intelligence inventive. L'association de l'accordéon et du violoncelle d'Hugues Vincent sur « British Road » ajoute à la palette d'un disque déjà riche en couleurs. Derrière gronde la basse de Nicolas Le Moullec, qui offre une aire de jeu aux claviers de Cédric Piromalli, et la reprise d'« I'm A Believer » [6], elle aussi insolente de vitalité, passe de la brit pop à un rock presque heavy metal martelé par la batterie de Bertrand Hurault, pour se fracasser en un final très free où le piano fait planer l'ombre de Cecil Taylor.

Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt, qui met aussi à l'honneur des reprises extraites de Comic Opera (2007), du très sous-estimé Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (1975), mais propose aussi une version de « Calyx » qui figurait en 1974 sur le premier album du groupe Hatfield & The North, digne héritier de l'Ecole de Canterbury, renferme beaucoup de promesses par sa vitalité virtuose mise au service d'une imagination débridée. C'est le meilleur hommage qu'on puisse rendre à la musique de Robert Wyatt.

[1] Citons aussi le Dondestan - The Wyatt Project de Sylvain Kassap, John Greaves, Hélène Labarrière, Jacques Mahieux, Karen Mantler et Dominique Pifarély mais aussi, Outre-Manche cette fois, le Soup Songs d'Annie Whitehead.

[2] Around Robert Wyatt, Beejazz, 2009.

[3] Fidèle à l'humour du grand Robert, qui baptisa son groupe Matching Mole en quittant Soft Machine, Pascal Maupeu lui lance un clin d'œil amical en appelant son groupe Mop Meuchiine, une appellation générique qu'on retrouve aussi dans son duo Shampoo Meuchiine.

[4] Un disque qui apparaît aujourd'hui comme fondateur de l'œuvre.

[5] Sur le premier album de Matching Mole (1972).

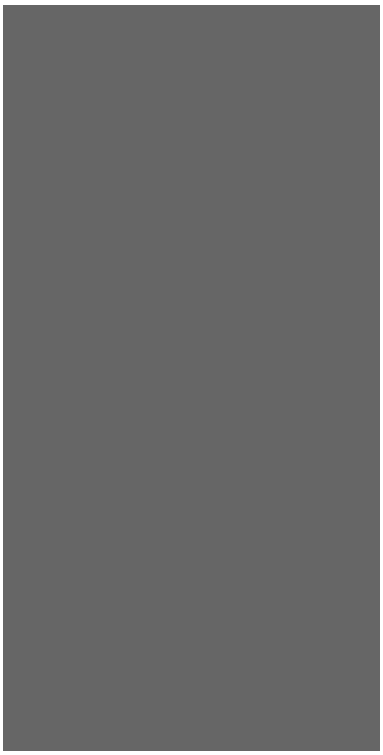
[6] Elle-même étant une reprise (1974) des Monkees.

REVUE & CORRIGÉE - N° 87 - mars 2011

Mop Meuchiine plays Robert Wyatt
Le Chant du Monde 274 869 Dist. Harmonia Mundi

Paul-Yves Bourand

Manifestement accomodé à toute les sauces, le grand Robert! Emmené par Pascal Maupeu, MOP MEUCHIINE - sextette électrique issu de la région orléanaise - a non seulement le bon goût de lui rendre hommage, mais aussi de donner des couleurs parfois



inusitées au répertoire que s'est constitué le barbu de Louth (par exemple banjo et accordéon dans "The British Road"). De l'énergie, les lascars en ont, "Gharbzadegi" en est ainsi tout retourné. Puisant autant dans les albums classiques de Wyatt "Rock Bottom" et "Ruth Is Stranger...", que dans d'autres plus récents - "Old Rottenhat", "Comicopera" - mais aussi faisant un détour par Hatfield & The North (avec "Calix") et le tube de Neil Diamond "I'm A Believer", la plupart des interprétations données ici sont uniquement instrumentales. Outre le patron, - responsable des cordes frettées -, se font entendre: Jean-Baptiste Réhault (saxophone baryton, accordéon & saxhorn alto), Hugues Vincent (violoncelle), Cédric Piromalli (claviers), Bernard Hurault (batterie & électronique) et Nicolas Le Moullec (basse & chant) - qui s'en sort avec les honneurs côté vocal, en dépit de la différence de tessiture existant avec le registre du Maître. Quant à Wyatt lui-même, il apparaît trois fois sur ce disque: dans le standard a capella "Locomotive" (Thelonious Monk/P. Brown), puis deux extraits d'interviews.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



For the Ghosts Within' 2010

Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen

More information about this album

UNCUT - NOVEMBER 2010

Robert Wyatt/Gilad Atzmon/Ros Stephen - The Ghost Within

Neil Spencer

Sur Moving, ethereal and not a little odd – it's the jazz standards songbook as you've never heard it before...

Since his early days in Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt has always occupied a distinct but ambiguous territory, a place where jazz and popular song bleed into each other and are informed by a wider culture of poetry, politics and painting. Who else would sing "I'm A Believer" alongside Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit"?
The Ghosts Within typifies the uniqueness of Wyatt's oeuvre, though on this occasion it's not just his. Violinist, composer and tango player Ros Stephen plus saxophone tyro and political writer Gilad Atzmon make this an equilateral triangle of talents. Atzmon has previously played on Wyatt's albums and collaborated with Stephen on Gilad With Strings, a project honouring Charlie Parker's dalliance with classical orchestration.
The spirit of bebop maestro 'Bird' Parker is just one that stalks this luscious, plaintive song cycle, which blends original Wyatt compositions with jazz standards like "Round Midnight" and "Lush Life". Its atmospheric arrangements and bravura playing are as much part of its appeal as Wyatt's evergreen vocals, which are little different at 65 from 40 years ago.
The opener, "Laura", encapsulates the collective approach. Written by Johnny Mercer for the movie of the same name, "Laura" has been widely covered by crooners like Sinatra and Nat King Cole, and was given instrumental wings when Charlie Parker covered it. Stephen's strings are more daring than the sweet arrangements laid on in the 1950s, however, with Wyatt likewise opting to sing slightly off-key, Chet Baker-style. Gilad's playing has the fluidity and lyricism of Parker, though elsewhere on the album, his clarinet playing crosses Bird's style with the music Atzmon grew up with in Israel.
In its way The Ghosts Within is quite a shape-shifter. "Lullaby For Irena" and the title track – both Wyatt tunes with lyrics by his long-time partner Alfreda Benge – continue the reflective mood, but "The Ghosts Within" soon heads off on a tango-laden tangent and is sung by Tali Atzmon, Gilad's actress wife.
More surprising still is the way in which "Where Are They Now" goes from a playful, 1920s tune into electro beats with a middle-Eastern rap; it's entertaining enough but its upbeat mood strikes a jarring note on what is essentially a contemplative album.
"Maryan" – which despite the title is a song about salmon returning upriver to spawn – originally appeared on Wyatt's 1998 album

Schleep. The version here is slightly less dreamy, more propulsive, with Atzmon's soprano sax dancing against a growling undercurrent of synths.
Thereafter it's jazz evergreens that dominate. "Round Midnight" drifts past on tremulous strings, its melody whistled by Wyatt, picked out on concertina and blown unshowily by Atzmon. "Lush Life", a song written by Duke Ellington's sidekick Billy Strayhorn, is another much-covered favourite, as is "What's New", most famously rendered by Sinatra. Both are played straight, setting discordant strings against Atzmon's melodic saxes and Wyatt's searching, pathos-laden voice. Irresistible. Duke Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood" is principally a showcase for Atzmon's clarinet, with Wyatt confining himself to a non-verbal singalong.
Wyatt last covered Chic's "At Last I Am Free" back in 1980. This new version, suggested by Stephen, is primarily a mood piece, Wyatt singing just the lines "At last I am free/I can hardly see in front of me" over a trembling wash of strings and wistful concertina. That leaves what must be the album's surprise cut, "What A Wonderful World". Forever defined by Louis Armstrong's original, sentimental take, this was surely a cover version too far, an accident waiting to happen. Yet Stephen, Wyatt and Atzmon turn the song into something fresh and optimistic. Remarkable.



ROBERT WYATT/GILAD ATZMON/ROS STEPHEN

The Ghosts Within DOMINO

★★★★

Moving, ethereal and not a little odd – it's the jazz standards songbook as you've never heard it before. *By Neil Spencer*

Schleep. The version here is slightly less dreamy, more propulsive, with Atzmon's soprano sax dancing against a growling undercurrent of synths.
Thereafter it's jazz evergreens that dominate. "Round Midnight" drifts past on tremulous strings, its melody whistled by Wyatt, picked out on concertina and blown unshowily by Atzmon. "Lush Life", a song written by Duke Ellington's sidekick Billy Strayhorn, is another much-covered

Q&A

Robert Wyatt singing "Wonderful World" is a turn-up…
Gilad ends his set with it, 'cos he's funny like that. I would only attempt it and the other covers with musicians who know what they are doing. Gilad has been a Mozart player, he can be-bop on clarinet, he's amazing. Ros did such a good job it made it hard for me to fuck up. She didn't stick down a blanket of strings, she wrote proper charts and it was interesting negotiating her changes. I sometimes think these young classical players are the most open-minded musicians – they are so unpretentious, with none of that snootiness you used to get.

Why didn't you sing "Sentimental Mood" and "Round Midnight"?
The words aren't as good as the melody – the lyrics have just been stuck on to make them into songs. One I whistled, one I hummed. Me anglicising the songs is just a bit of nip and tuck, not an ideological statement; "Lush Life" is technically hard, a mountain to climb for the unsuspecting singer.

You are still politically involved…
There's a W H Auden line – "We are all conscripts of our time". The types of racism, sexism and gay-bashing we have known are diminished, but there is still a global racism in operation. In October

we are planning an event to raise awareness about Gaza.

What else are you up to?
Watching Swedish detectives on TV! I have hundreds of snaps of chords and words waiting to be assembled. I'm 65 now. If I had a proper job I'd be retired.

TELERAMA - N° 3171 - 23 OCTOBRE 2010

For the Ghosts Within' - Robert Wyatt

François Gorin

Sur Comicopera, son dernier album en date, le généreux Wyatt avait tellement d'invités (Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Monica Vasconcelos...) qu'on pouvait perdre, au long de cette pièce en trois actes, certaine cohérence. For the ghosts within est un vrai travail collectif : le saxophoniste israélien Gilad Atzmon, sur qui Wyatt ne tarit pas d'éloges, et la violoniste anglaise Ros Stephen, à la tête du Sigamos String Quartet, sont crédités au même titre que notre barbu bien-aimé.

A l'exception notable du morceau titre (où une chanteuse vient le secouer pendant près de huit minutes sur des modulations arabes) et du sifflotant-rappant Where are they now ? qui suit, c'est pourtant la voix de Robert Wyatt qui est au coeur des débats. Voix si familière, inchangée, « de vieil enfant » (image un peu facile et qui demande quelque imagination). Voix douce et rêche, consolante et abyssale. Comment, quarante ans après son premier album solo, le plus agité des chanteurs assis arrive-t-il à renouveler son énergie, son envie ? Il prend le chemin des standards et défilent ici Laura, What's new ?, Lush Life, In a sentimental mood. Tous ravivés par la couleur orientale de l'alto d'Atzmon, lustrés par les cordes du quatuor de Stephen et interprétés par Wyatt comme s'ils étaient d'hier. Round midnight, qu'il a déjà chanté, bénéficie d'un traitement instrumental, et l'envoi se fait sur What a wonderful world, sans le rocaillement jovial d'Armstrong mais avec toute la candeur désa-busée de Robert le magnifique. Toujours un peu fou sous ses airs de vieux sage.

>> L'interview sur le site de Télérama

LES INROCKS - 16 NOVEMBRE 2010

Les fantômes de Robert Wyatt
Robert Wyatt - For the Ghosts Within'
Domino - Pias

Francis Dordor

Accompagné d'hommes libres, Robert Wyatt enchante en reprenant des classiques de tous temps et de toutes origines. Où il a le courage, malgré tout, de chanter What a Wonderful World.

On est loin de la version foutage de gueule vomie par Nick Cave et Shane MacGowan. Ou de l'esprit grinçant de Michael Moore qui l'étale sur des images de guerre dans Bowling for Columbine. Quand Robert Wyatt reprend le tube de Louis Armstrong What a Wonderful World, c'est bête, mais on a envie d'y croire. On a l'espoir insensé de retrouver l'enchantement originel du monde rien qu'en scrutant le bleu du ciel et la verdoyante parure des arbres. Oublions le vagissement des bébés…

Et quel interprète mieux désigné pour rénover ce standard passé par toutes les intonations, de la plus sarcastique à la plus niaise, qu'un homme de 65 ans qui vient d'en passer trente-sept cloué dans un fauteuil roulant ? Quel messager plus crédible pour porter un optimisme si peu conforme à l'air du temps, si peu raccord avec l'actualité que cet éternel enfant au regard tendre et malicieux, à la voix aérienne, à l'idéalisme politique demandant encore l'impossible ?

"C'est sans doute la chose la plus barrée que j'aie jamais eu à faire. Je ne pratique pas l'ironie ou le cynisme dans mes chansons. Je ne sais pas faire ça. Je suis conscient à quel point les choses vont mal aujourd'hui, combien il est difficile d'être optimiste au plan politique, combien l'espoir tend à se dissoudre en beaucoup d'entre nous. A quoi ai-je pensé en enregistrant What a Wonderful World pour que ça sonne vrai ? Ça va vous paraître idiot mais à des choses aussi simples qu'au sourire d'un enfant, à des amoureux qui se promènent dans le parc…"

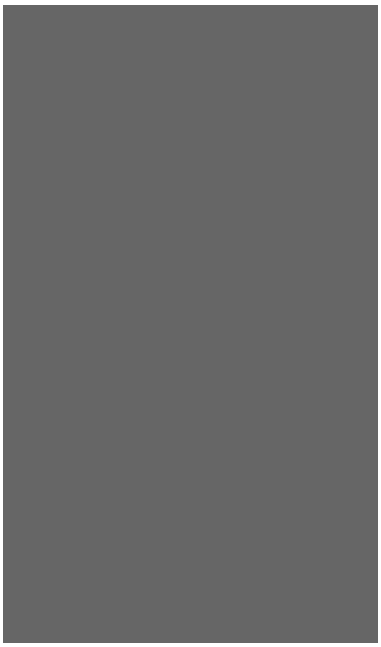
Il y a quinze ans, Robert Wyatt a fait une grave dépression qui a failli le faire chavirer définitivement. Il a dû arrêter l'alcool, non sans mal, non sans regrets, et il entend depuis, tout en s'excusant du cliché, "regarder le bon côté des choses". Son idée du bonheur se résume à ça : être chez lui, avec sa femme Alfie et quelques amis, à écouter de vieux disques. A "savourer les fantômes", comme il dit…

Son What a Wonderful World clôt un album savoureux et inclassable : For the Ghosts within'. Allez, ces fantômes de l'intérieur n'ont pas l'air bien méchants. Ils défilent devant nous comme une chenille de vieilles chansons qui ont traversé le mur des époques. Outre Wonderful World, Wyatt y reprend des standards de l'ère du 78t comme Lush Life, What's New ?, Laura, des rengaines ouvre-boîtes pour concentré de nostalgie.

Il siffle sur le Round Midnight de Thelonious Monk. Relance la carrière de Maryan, parmi ses plus belles créations. Rafraîchit ce At Last I Am Free de Chic, enregistré une première fois en 1982, avec cette sincérité fragile s'éternisant en lui. C'est là presque un exercice de style tardif, l'album d'un crooner assis se révélant dans la douceur de l'automne. Une idée pas si folle pour l'ancien batteur de Soft Machine, figure décalée de la scène rock qui a créé sa propre niche où accoucher d'une portée d'albums sans concession, populaires et progressifs.

Et même assez conforme à son goût pour la romance pur sucre – entrevue avec cette reprise d'Insensatez d'Antonio Carlos Jobim sur son avant-dernier album Cuckooland – ou pour la voix soyeuse de Nat King Cole, son chanteur préféré. Il est accompagné ici par les cordes du Sigamos String Quartet, qu'emmène la violoniste Ros Stephen, et par les anches du jazzman Gilad Atzmon, les deux initiateurs de ce projet dont Robert n'est que l'invité de marque.

Un étrange trio pour un projet bien à part, ni vraiment jazz, ni tout à fait pop, un peu classique et même hip-hop. Stephen a cousu des arrangements d'une rare élégance qui habillent de neuf le romantisme un peu suranné des thèmes. Tandis qu'avec sa clarinette et son saxophone Atzmon en orientalise certains, en "parkerise" d'autres. Amis, Atzmon et Wyatt collaborent régulièrement. Militant antisioniste exilé à Londres et blacklisté par le gouvernement



israélien, Atzmon déloge de ce nouveau projet des intentions par trop passéistes en y introduisant des sonorités electro et en invitant sur un morceau deux rappeurs palestiniens de Ramallah.

Juste assez pour doter l'ensemble d'un contre-champ, de rendre son anachronisme assumé pertinent dans un contexte de désastre régional aux résonances planétaires. Une manière de dire que la musique ne se divise plus aujourd'hui. Que les peuples feraient peut-être bien d'en faire autant. Qu'"il y a dans de vieilles chansons assez de beauté pour conjurer un peu du malheur ambiant", dit Robert Wyatt. Assez pour témoigner que le monde peut être vraiment wonderful.

>> L'interview sur le site des Inrocks

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre
1971
2009

Soft Machine

More information about this album

REVUE & CORRIGEE - N° 83 - mars 2010

SOFT MACHINE 'Live At Henie Onstad Art Centre 1971'
Reel Recordings RR014/015 Dist. Orkhêstra

Pierre Durr



La machine molle reste une formation mythique de la fin des années 60 au mitant des années 70. Elle réalisa à l'époque, avec ses divers changements de personnels, 8 albums, auxquels on pouvait rajouter les enregistrements Byg avec Daevid Allen. Depuis, on connaît une inflation d'enregistrements live, dont une grande partie couvre principalement les années 70 à 72, à un moment où Robert Wyatt s'était arrêté de composer pour le groupe tout en continuant à assurer à la batterie. Une inflation nourrie par la concurrence entre Voiceprint et Cuneiform, à laquelle se greffe également le label Hux. Indispensables ou non, selon votre degré d'affinité avec cette scène, ces enregistrements véhiculent souvent les mêmes titres, issus principalement de "Third" et de "4". Toutefois il arrive que certaines exhumations d'enregistrements live proposent un programme quelque peu différent. C'est le cas de ce "Live at Henie Onstad Art Center 1971 ". Lors de cette prestation qui eut lieu à Hovikodden en Norvège le 28 février 1971, le quartet — qui réunissait alors Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean et Robert Wyatt - proposa alors deux sets d'un seul tenant, certes alimentés par des compositions alors récentes, mais parcourues par de folles improvisations au cours desquelles diverses manipulations électroniques conféraient une approche inédite (en tout cas sur le support CD). Ce qui fait de cette production un album vraiment "nouveau", d'autant plus que ce (double) CD est accompagné d'une version CD-Rom présentant le lieu, des interviews, des informations diverses.



Robert Wyatt '68
2013

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

LIBÉRATION - 11 ET 12 JANVIER 2014

Robert Wyatt - '68 (Cuneiform)

S. Fa.

Le basculement de Robert Wyatt du psychédélisme vers la pop aérienne est bien antérieure à l'accident qui lui a bousillé les jambes en 1973. C'est ce que vient rappeler une session longtemps oubliée de 1968. A l'époque, Wyatt sort d'une tournée de Soft Machine avec Jimi Hendrix, avec qui il tâtonne en soirée. Ces quatre pistes révèlent la transformation déjà enclenchée de sa musique vers un ailleurs très personnel. Un moment inabouti, mais précieux pour les fans du barbu magique.

TRAVERSES N°34- JANVIER 2014

Robert Wyatt - '68 (Cuneiform Records / Orkhêstra Int.)

Stéphane Fougère

Les caves de SOFT MACHINE ont à présent été dûment explorées, et nombre de grands crus d'archives en ont été exhumés, le label Cuneiform s'étant en la matière taillé la part du lion (cf. les albums live Noisette, Backwards, Spaced, Virtually, Grides, Middle Earth Masters...). Alors si on creusait un peu dans les caves de Robert WYATT, histoire de tirer sur une corde proche ?
Le même Cuneiform avait déjà commencé avec Solar Flores Burn for You (2003), qui contenait une sélection d'enregistrements rares ou inédits s'étalant de 1972 à 2003. Il récidive à présent avec ce '68 qui, comme son titre l'indique et contrairement à son prédécesseur, est centré sur une seule session d'enregistrement provenant de la « glorieuse époque » et que l'on croyait évidemment disparue ! C'était compter sans la ténacité de Steve FEIGENBAUM, (Monsieur Cuneiform), qui a décidément le nez fin pour dénicher les perles rares dont l'intérêt historique est de premier ordre et la qualité musicale de même niveau.
Cette session a donc été enregistrée à Hollywood et New York City en octobre et en novembre 1968, après la tournée que SOFT MACHINE a effectuée aux États-Unis, jouant en première partie du Jimi HENDRIX EXPERIENCE. Robert et Jimi s'étant apparemment

bien entendu comme larrons en foire, ledit HENDRIX a ainsi prêté main forte à WYATT en s'emparant d'une guitare basse bien vrombissante sur le morceau Slow Walking Talk, ici présent. (Il s'agit à l'origine d'un morceau que Brian HOPPER avait écrit pour les WILDE FLOWERS et que Robert WYATT retravaillera pour engendrer Soup Song, sur son album Ruth is Stranger than Richard.) Pour les scrupuleux fans d'archives wyattiennes, cette pièce n'aura rien d'inédit puisqu'elle figurait déjà dans Calling Long Distance de Jimi HENDRIX ainsi que dans la compilation de Robert WYATT Flotsam Jetsam, parue en 1994 chez Rough Trade. N'empêche, plusieurs fans se sont demandés à l'époque de la sortie de ladite compile si d'autres morceaux de la même session avaient été enregistrés par les deux compères. '68 répond par l'affirmative à la première partie de la question, et par la négative à la seconde partie.

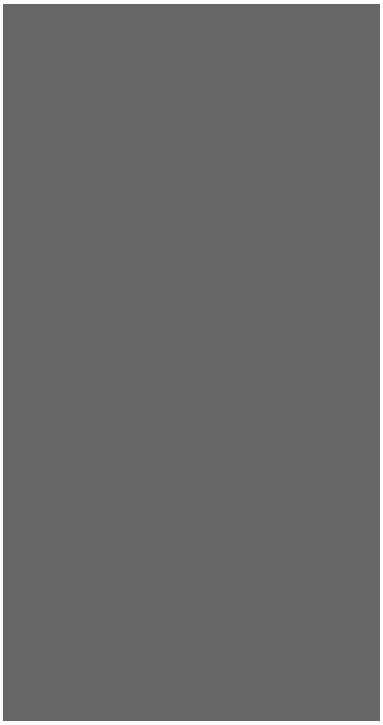
Les trois autres morceaux inclus dans '68 ont été enregistrés par le seul Robert WYATT, lequel assure donc tous les instruments (piano, orgue, basse, batterie, percussions) et bien sûr le chant, à l'exception de la version de Moon in June, dont la seconde moitié a été captée en 1969 en Angleterre, avec la participation des compères soft-machiniens Mike RATLEDGE et feu Hugh HOPPER. Là encore, la version n'est pas inédite, puisqu'un extrait figurait également dans Flotsam Jetsam et que son intégralité avait été incluse dans un CD d'archives de SOFT MACHINE, le déjà cité Backwards (chez Cuneiform en 2002). Et histoire de compliquer l'affaire, cette démo de Moon in June était, sur la première édition de Backwards, tirée d'un acétate ; sur l'édition suivante, elle provenait d'une bande nettoyée. C'est la même que l'on retrouve sur '68, cette fois remastérisée et offrant la meilleure qualité possible.

On pourra s'agacer de ce recyclage incessant, mais certains diront que c'est pour la bonne cause, et il n'y a rien de tel pour élever cette version démo au rang de « classique » indispensable, et dont la structure est globalement très proche de la plus célèbre version studio de l'album Third. Les analystes pointilleux s'amuseront donc à décortiquer les différences entre les deux versions, la plus grande différence concernant bien entendu les paroles. Cette version démo est en effet affublée de textes que l'on jurerait improvisés par WYATT, ou au moins écrits durant la session puisque Robert y fait allusion au contexte dans lequel il enregistre, à l'instar de la version BBC que l'on peut entendre sur le double CD paru chez Hux Records.

Il n'y a donc que les deux autres enregistrements inclus dans '68 qui soient véritablement inédits. Chelsea, qui démarre ce CD d'archives, est une sorte de balade pop-soûl dont WYATT a écrit la musique, et qui sera plus tard retravaillée pour devenir Signed Curtain, intégré au premier album de MATCHING MOLE.

Quant aux Rivmic Mélodies, si elles sont moins convaincantes que Moon in June dans leur façon d'assembler chansons et séquences instrumentales en un tout cohérent, elles n'en gardent pas moins un caractère dadaïste bien trempé qui est ici encore plus mis en évidence que dans la version figurant dans le Volume Two de SOFT MACHINE. Le passage où Robert WYATT y récite l'alphabet anglais y est savoureusement prolongé et décuplé par le re-recording et garantit une bonne poilade pour l'auditeur ! Pas triste non plus est le segment correspondant à Dada Was Here, dont la tonalité d'« espagnolade » prononcée est due à une progression d'accords inspirée, selon WYATT, par McCoy TYNER, et par la si distincte approche de la langue espagnole de son interprète ! Pour le reste, WYATT brode et brode encore au piano et à la batterie selon le feeling du moment, c'est dire si cette version des Rivmic Mélodies s'éloigne suffisamment de celle de Volume II pour susciter l'intérêt.

Au total, même si '68 ne contient que 50 % de matériel vraiment inédit, il a au moins le mérite d'une cohérence de contenu puisqu'il reconstitue l'intégralité (enfin, à ce qu'il semble !) d'une session de grande valeur artistique, et donne l'impression d'assister à un moment d'histoire et de genèse particulièrement prenant. Ce '68 s'écoute comme un corpus de versions alternatives de quelques-unes des plus belles pièces du WYATT de l'époque SOFT MACHINE, une sorte d'album parallèle éclairant le point de vue de Robert. Du reste, l'illustration de pochette du CD (une photo du visage de Robert jeune) ressemble à s'y méprendre à une pochette de disque



de l'époque, donnant la sensation d'avoir affaire à une réédition.
La lecture du livret s'avère non moins passionnante que l'écoute du CD, puisqu'il retranscrit un entretien qu'Aymeric LEROY a mené récemment avec WYATT et qu'il a complété de citations d'autres entretiens, y compris avec Hugh HOPPER et Phyllis SMITH (une copine d'époque de Robert), de manière à offrir au lecteur un maximum d'informations sur ces moments que l'artiste a passés à New York. On sent que Robert WYATT a dû forcer un peu sa mémoire, même si celle-ci reste parfois lacunaire ou confuse, attribuant l'écriture du texte de Chelsea à Kevin AYERS, tandis que le regard plus biographiquement pointu d'Aymeric LEROY en attribue la paternité à Daevid ALLEN. Vous verrez que, bientôt, on aura droit à une nouvelle édition de '68 avec force corrections biographiques et nouvelle remastérisation ou remixage !
Blague à part, '68 a tout de l'album ultime du sieur WYATT, et son acquisition en est au pire indispensable, au mieux obligatoire. Mais vous l'avez déjà, non ?

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



One Night Stand
2015

W M W S

More information about this album

CITIZEN JAZZ - 16 avril 2023

WMWS : One Night Stand
Sur la platine / Une histoire sans lendemain

Robert Wyatt, Dave MacRae, Gary Windo, Richard Sinclair : WMWS ou l'histoire d'un enregistrement unique.

Denis Desassis

WMWS, *One Night Stand. Un disque qui n'aurait pas dû voir le jour. Ou plutôt – soyons précis – qui doit son existence à une série de circonstances sur lesquelles il apparaît que les personnages impliqués ne pouvaient pas forcément agir. Il est temps de vous raconter en quelques mots cette histoire très particulière*.

Nous sommes à Londres en 1973, au printemps plus exactement. Un quarteron de musiciens a décidé de se réunir sous la bannière de la musique improvisée et le nom de **WMWM**. Derrière ces quatre lettres se cache du beau monde, c'est un euphémisme : il y a **Robert Wyatt**, qui a quitté Soft Machine depuis quelque temps, avant d'explorer en solo la fin d'une oreille puis de s'accomplir dans une nouvelle formation ayant publié deux albums au cours de l'année 1972, Matching Mole (appréciez le jeu de mots franco-anglais). À cette époque, le batteur a déjà commencé à travailler sur les compositions de son prochain disque, qui s'avérera son chef-d'œuvre. *Rock Bottom*, enregistrement culte, verra le jour l'année suivante et continue de briller de ses feux douloureux, aujourd'hui encore. Précisons pour bien comprendre la rareté des moments dont il est question ici qu'en ce mois d'avril 1973, Wyatt ignore – et pour cause – que quelques semaines plus tard, au mois de juin, une chute de plusieurs étages le privera à jamais de l'usage de ses jambes et infléchira le cours d'une carrière qui le verra s'élever malgré lui au rang d'icône. Autre musicien impliqué dans l'affaire WMWM, le pianiste **Dave MacRae**, lui-même ancien membre de Matching Mole et très actif sur la scène londonienne ; un complice parfait pour Wyatt, comme on le devine. Le saxophoniste **Gary Windo**, quant à lui, est un Anglais ayant longtemps vécu aux Etats-Unis, mais revenu sur ses terres natales quelques années plus tôt ; il est de ceux qui ont participé à des expériences telles que le Brotherhood Of Breath de Chris McGregor ou le Centipede de Keith Tippett, une formation géante rattachée à l'École de Canterbury, comptant parmi ses membres, entre autres artificiers, des musiciens de Soft Machine, passés ou à venir ; sans parler d'autres collaborations avec des musiciens tels que Chick Corea, Carla Bley ou... Robert Wyatt, encore lui et décidément au cœur du réacteur. Windo (qu'on retrouvera sur *Rock Bottom*), tout naturellement, fera un magnifique W... Quant à **Ron Mathewson**, contrebassiste écossais, on le trouve

plutôt du côté d'un jazz « classique », et il a pu faire entendre son instrument chez Stan Getz, Oscar Peterson ou Joe Henderson. Ses antécédents ne le rattachent pas aux mêmes sources que les trois autres, ce qui ne l'empêchait pas d'être un des meilleurs *sidemen* du moment.

Wyatt, MacRae, Windo, Mathewson, WMWM... Le quatuor parvient à signer quelques contrats, se produisant au pub le Tally Ho à Kentish Town avant d'être engagé pour deux dates au Ronnie Scott's Upstairs Room, une salle plus particulièrement destinée aux musiciens prêts aux expérimentations, ce qui, on le verra, correspond parfaitement à notre petite bande.

Sauf que... Mathewson étant indisponible pour le second concert à l'Upstairs Room le 14 avril 1973, il fallut lui trouver un remplaçant et c'est un certain **Richard Sinclair** qui s'y colla. Bien lui en prit, lui l'ex-bassiste de Caravan, parti ensuite tenter l'aventure d'une des plus belles formations du jazz rock anglais, Hatfield & The North en compagnie de quelques redoutables canterburyens comme Phil Miller, Dave Stewart et Pip Pyle. Et qui sera, lui aussi, au générique de Rock Bottom l'année suivante. Ce soir-là, WMWM devint **WMWS** !

On pouvait donc trouver pire comme doublure de Mathewson, d'autant que Sinclair fut gagné ce soir-là par l'excellente idée de venir équipé d'un petit magnétophone à cassette, histoire de conserver une trace de ce concert pour lequel son talent avait été sollicité in extremis. L'appareil sera placé à côté de l'ingénieur du son, près du mur du fond.

Les choses auraient pu en rester là, d'autant que la bande fut conservée pendant de très longues années par un ami de Richard Sinclair du côté de Kansas City, avant que Michael King, un ingénieur du son canadien, ne lui demande avec insistance de l'écouter. Et ce fut le début d'une nouvelle époque, celle de l'exhumation et de la restauration dans les meilleures conditions possibles – King a multiplié les efforts pour parvenir à une bonne restitution – d'une archive unique, dont la qualité sonore est celle d'un bootleg de qualité. Ce qui, on en conviendra, est un cadeau inespéré fait aux amoureux d'une musique organique, qui reste terriblement émouvante, cinq décennies plus tard, pour des raisons qui ne sont pas seulement musicales (souvenons-nous du drame de juin 1973). Ces moments rares virent le jour sous la forme d'un vinyle publié en trois cents exemplaires au printemps 2015, après souscription, par l'irréductible et désormais défunt magazine Improjazz, sous la houlette de **Philippe Renaud** dont la ténacité et tout le travail accompli au service de la cause des musiques improvisées méritent d'être salués.

L'album s'intitule *One Night Stand*, une expression qu'on peut traduire aussi bien par « Le temps d'une seule soirée » que par « Une histoire sans lendemain ». Comme le souligne Michael King dans les notes de pochette, l'archive présente d'autant plus de valeur qu'elle constitue une des rares occasions d'entendre Gary Windo (décédé en 1992) dans le cadre d'une petite formation, et qui est ici à son meilleur, rageur et brûlant au saxophone ténor. Surtout, les quelque quarante-cinq minutes d'enregistrement montrent à quel point les quatre musiciens, qui évoluent dans un état de liberté propice à l'épanouissement de leur créativité que le disque restitue avec bonheur, semblaient jouir de la faculté de former, distordre et reformer à leur guise la matière sonore, avec une infinie souplesse, par leurs échanges et leur sens de l'écoute. Wyatt, pas plus que MacRae, Windo ou Sinclair, ne paraît vouloir tirer la couverture à lui et le *free jazz* – terme commode qui veut dire ici que la musique jouée n'est pas écrite – que les quatre inventent dans l'instant résonne des échos de leur passé récent : Soft Machine (période 4) ou Matching Mole (la paire Wyatt – MacRae brille, comme on s'en doute), quand il ne prend pas çà et là, par le jeu de basse, les couleurs du Caravan que Sinclair a quitté l'année précédente (celui de *Waterloo Lily*, et tout particulièrement la composition intitulée «

Nothing At All », où l'on retrouve un autre musicien libre, Lol Coxhill), ou ne glisse pas vers des climats caribéens presque inattendus fonctionnant à la façon d'une respiration joyeuse (sur la face B). *One Night Stand* est l'expression d'un mouvement fusionnel, d'un acte collectif dont la forme est par essence unique parce qu'éphémère. Nul doute que si WMWS avait pu récidiver, le résultat eut été aussi intense bien que différent. Même si Aymeric Leroy, dans son très érudit (et indispensable) *L'École de Canterbury* paru aux éditions Le Mot et le Reste, laisse entendre que Wyatt n'imaginait pas de suite à cette expérience, n'ayant « pas envie de se laisser à nouveau enfermer dans une situation de ce genre ». Il ajoute que WMWM « *s'est avéré trop disparate du point de vue de nos aspirations musicales respectives. Ça pouvait à la limite fonctionner le temps d'un concert, ou même d'un disque, mais ce ne pouvait pas être un groupe au sens où je l'entendais. C'est mon éternel problème, mon incapacité à travailler avec des musiciens purement jazz ou rock. Ça ne fonctionne qu'avec des gens un peu bizarres se situant quelque part entre les deux* ».

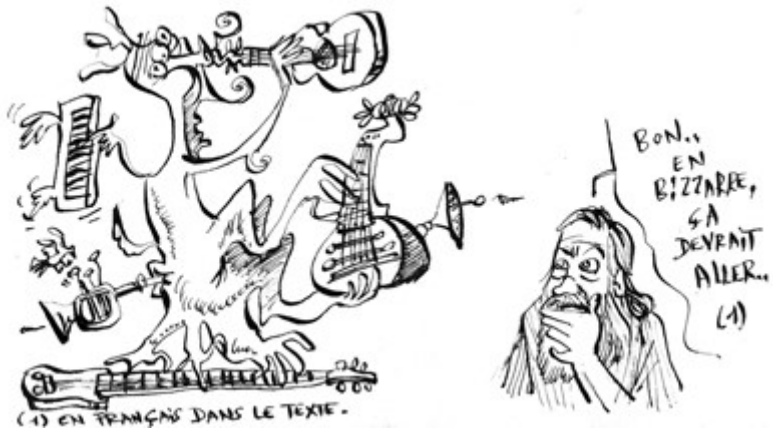


Illustration © Jean-Michel Thiriet

> Zoom

De toutes façons, les événements en décidèrent autrement, et de façon tragique. Raison de plus pour apprécier aujourd'hui plus que jamais cette occasion émouvante d'écouter une dernière fois Wyatt le batteur, musicien incomparable, instinctif et poumon du quatuor. Soyons honnêtes : son seul nom à l'affiche est une incitation à découvrir ce disque [1], parce que le grand Robert est un musicien comme il n'en existe qu'un par génération. Mais la capacité de ses compagnons d'un soir d'engager avec lui de si passionnants dialogues justifie pleinement qu'on se précipite sur ce qui est certes une « histoire sans lendemain », mais qui constitue un sacré cadeau !

IMPROJAZZ - septembre 2015

WMWS : One Night Stand
Improjazz PRMK LP 003

Olivier Delaporte

La sortie de ce vinyle puis de la version cd de cet enregistrement est non seulement une excellente idée mais aussi une sorte de pied de nez à la morosité discographique actuelle. Dans un contexte ou peu de disques arrivent vraiment à séduire, voici donc un enregistrement qui vient ou revient de très loin.

WMWM puisque c'était le nom initial du groupe n'a vécu que

quelques mois durant l'année 1973, son existence ayant été brutalement stoppée par l'accident dont fut victime Robert Wyatt en juin de cette même année. A l'origine donc ce quartet était constitué de Wyatt à la batterie, Dave MacRae aux claviers, Gary Windo au saxophone et Ron Mathewson à la basse. Hormis un pirate (concert à la BBC) qui circule discrètement, il existe deux morceaux de cette formation sur l'album « anglo american » de Windo paru en 2004 chez Cuneiform, c'était déjà bien mais aussi frustrant de ne pas en avoir davantage à se mettre dans les oreilles. Avec une formation légèrement différente Richard Sinclair remplaçant Ron Mathewson et amenant du coup une guitare basse nous disposons enfin d'un album entier consacré à ce groupe. Cet enregistrement est d'importance à plus d'un titre ; d'abord il met en évidence l'incroyable richesse de cette scène musicale que l'on a appelé prog ou Canterbury mais d'un point de vue plus singulier, il souligne aussi l'ambivalence que Robert Wyatt entretenait à l'époque avec le champ de l'improvisation liée au jazz. On pourrait imaginer que Wyatt a fondé Matching Mole pour rétablir la part rock et un peu plus structurée qui tendait à disparaître dans la musique de Soft Machine. Son premier album « The End of a ear » (un chef d'œuvre) opère aussi un perpétuel balancement entre improvisations et thèmes plus construits. Mais « Rock Bottom » va donner une direction dont il ne dérogera plus, vers une musique plus écrite et plus facile à identifier du côté d'un rock très sophistiqué que du côté du jazz. « One night stand » arrive au cœur de cette période, après Matching Mole et « The end of a Ear », avant « Rock Bottom ».

« One night stand » est donc une longue improvisation mais qui se déploie en plusieurs phases. Elle commence par une ambiance presque contradictoire ou l'on peut entendre d'un côté la basse de Sinclair et le clavier de MacRae s'engager dans un dialogue assez calme, semblant vouloir installer tranquillement un thème mais dans le même temps la voix modifiée de Wyatt et les assauts sur-aigus du saxophone de Windo offrent un contrepoint en opposition à la lente progression des deux autres, cette étrange juxtaposition contient en fait en germe l'un des aspects de l'album. Puis s'installant à la batterie c'est Wyatt qui semble indiquer la direction au moins au début. En effet pendant une dizaine de minutes il n'est pas possible d'identifier avec précision un thème mais on perçoit assez clairement que les interventions des musiciens sont guidées par le rythme qui évolue d'ailleurs plusieurs fois. MacRae qui oscille entre clavier et piano est dans un premier temps un peu plus présent que Windo. Jonglant entre une rugosité contrôlée et de brusques montées dans les « hautes octaves ». Le saxophoniste apparaît puis se tait pour mieux revenir. Ses notes raisonnables ponctuées de cris sur-aigus sont tempérés par la chaleur du clavier de MacRae ; d'une certaine façon c'est aussi peut-être le clavier qui permet à Richard Sinclair de trouver sa place lui qui reste au fond assez discret et parfois même en retrait. Le jeu de Robert Wyatt ressemble à celui qu'il développait dans Soft Machine, préférant une présence plus directe à une recherche de sophistication. De fait il contribue largement à l'énergie palpable qui se dégage de cette improvisation de plus de quarante minutes. Improvisation certes mais pas dénuée de structures, j'évoquais plus haut le rythme comme base des dialogues mais à plusieurs reprises on repère aussi certaines phrases s'échappant du clavier de MacRae qui ont peut-être été écrites ou au moins fait l'objet d'un accord tacite! Régulièrement en effet il est possible d'identifier comme sortant d'une cohérence entre Wyatt et MacRae des bribes de thème plus construits qui s'évanouissent assez vite mais qui laissent une trame sur laquelle vont jongler les musiciens. le procédé est d'ailleurs parfaitement identifiable aux deux tiers de l'improvisation lorsque apparaît un motif d'inspiration caribéenne qui serait tout droit sorti de l'imagination de Windo que cela ne m'étonnerait pas et sur lequel les musiciens vont converser avec un naturel déconcertant.

Free jazz? Jazz rock? Prog? Ou tout à la fois? C'est sûrement la dernière proposition qui est la plus valable. Ce disque montre en tous cas à quel point cette scène fut bourgeonnante d'idées et de

liberté. Robert Wyatt, Gary Windo mais aussi Elton Dean ou Lol Coxhill étaient à cette époque assez impossibles à catégoriser de par le simple fait qu'ils ne voulaient pas se restreindre. C'est précisément ce que montre ce disque qui ne ressemble ni au free de l'époque, ni au jazz rock de Miles Davis et des autres mais pas davantage à « fourth » de Soft Machine. Un disque dont l'intensité et la sobriété manquent actuellement. Ce « One night stand » permet aussi d'apprécier Richard Sinclair et Dave MacRae dans un univers musical qu'ils n'ont pas trop eu l'occasion de côtoyer et il offre encore une chance d'entendre le fantastique Gary Windo dont les préoccupations étaient moins carriéristes qu'artistiques; il en résulte une liste d'enregistrements inversement proportionnelle à son talent; de ce point de vue WMWS vient donc un peu rendre justice. S'il fallait encore trouver une raison pour se procurer ce disque, rappelons que l'on aura vraisemblablement pas d'autres occasions d'entendre ce groupe aussi génial qu'éphémère.

LE SON DU GRISLI (blog) - septembre 2015

WMWS
One Night Stand

Pam Windo

ONE NIGHT STAND is Michael King's last gift to the fans of the UK"s improvised music scene of the 1970s. Of course, like everyone else, I had no idea it would be his last. As a longtime friend, I knew he was very troubled that music could be downloaded for 'free' on the Internet, and he positively hated what he considered "the catastrophe" of today's technology….even though he used some of it to engineer and re-master the lost treasures he always had the knack to discover. ONE NIGHT STAND is one of those treasures.

The recording was made one night in the Upstairs Room at Ronnie Scott's Club on Frith Street, in those days a rather seedy red-light district. The continuous 45-minute improvisation is both flowing and serious in tone. It would be Robert Wyatt's last performance playing drums, as he would have his back-breaking accident only two months later.

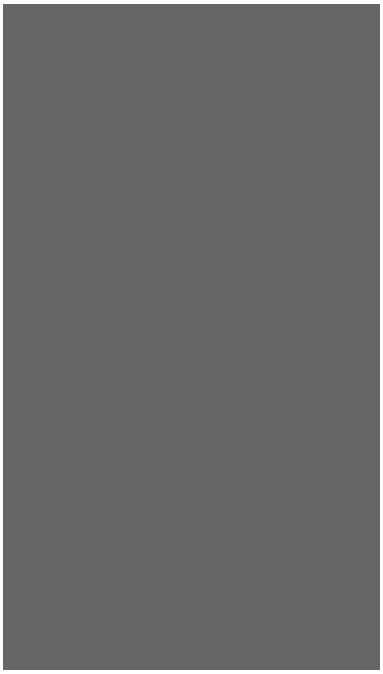
I was in touch with Michael King for weeks about the CD, a copy of which he had sent me to listen to. He was concerned about how the musicians would get paid, and kept hesitating about where to place it. He was also, as usual, concerned about the sound quality. I suggested that it was a 40-year-old recording, that it was a brilliant and unique performance, and that he should go with the offers he had. I also said: "Keep your creative force moving along and do this album." And he did. A few months later he committed suicide. The recording is now out on vinyl and on CD, and he would be very proud.

LE SON DU GRISLI (blog) - septembre 2015

WMWS
One Night Stand

Pierre Cécile

Il est vrai… j'étais venu là (à l'Upstairs Room du Ronnie Scott's Club



le 14 avril 1973 sur invitation du label Improjazz) pour Robert Wyatt. A la batterie, il faisait pulser (et comment !) l'improvisation d'un quartette d'un soir. Avec lui, il y avait le saxophoniste Gary Windo, le claviériste Dave MacRae et le bassiste Richard Sinclair. Juste après l'enregistrement de Rock Bottom, l'homme de Soft Machine travaille à une tout autre affaire. Plutôt de manière informelle, comme on dit, il improvise. Avec MacRae son comparse de Matching Mole, il donne au set un goût de rock prog et de fusion (le clavier électrique n'y est pas pour rien, MacRae faisant même penser au Chick Corea des seventies sur la deuxième face). Mais malgré l'efficacité du duo, c'est peut être Windo qui opère le mieux et donne une cohérence aux nombreuses séquences de jeu. Plusieurs fois il intervient avec autorité et, dans ses solos, vire au free. A ma grande surprise, et pour mon plus grand plaisir. D'ailleurs, si j'étais venu là pour Robert Wyatt, c'est bien Gary Windo qui aura retenu mon attention. Depuis, il l'a même conservée.

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Folly Bololey - Songs From Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom
2019

North Sea Radio Orchestra - John Greaves - Annie Barbazza

More information about this album

CITIZENJAZZ.COM - 16 septembre 2019

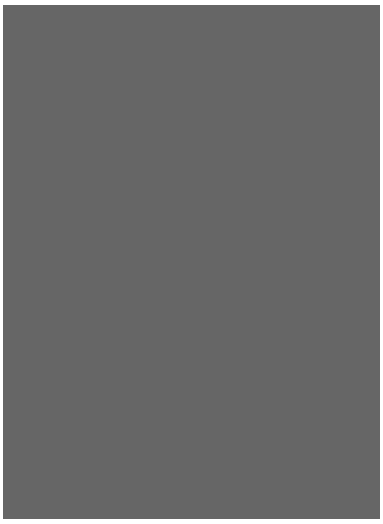
Folly Bololey - Songs From Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom
North Sea Radio Orchestra, John Greaves, Annie Barbazz- Label : Dark Companion

Denis Desassis

Ils ont osé, ils ont bien fait. On pensait que Rock Bottom, l'œuvre majeure de Robert Wyatt, était de ces disques intouchables qu'il semble présomptueux de reprendre à son propre compte. Le risque de contresens, voire de trahison est élevé en effet dès lors qu'on pense aux six compositions qui font de cet album un objet musical unique et très personnel. Pourtant, à l'écoute de Folly Bololey, c'est un sentiment de plénitude et de vrai plaisir qui vous gagne tant le travail entrepris par le North Sea Radio Orchestra touche à la perfection. Ses huit musiciens, qui reçoivent l'aide précieuse de John Greaves et Annie Barbazza, administrent la preuve de leur capacité à rester eux-mêmes sans jamais perdre de vue la ligne directrice de cette matrice mise au monde par celui qui jusque-là était batteur (Soft Machine, Matching Mole), avant qu'un accident le prive en 1973 de l'usage de ses deux jambes.

Car si la texture sonore est bien celle de l'orchestre auquel violon, violoncelle, clarinette et basson apportent une touche volontiers chambriste, son identité préservée va de pair avec une étonnante fidélité aux thèmes originaux. Annie Barbazza - dont le mentor fut Greg Lake - peut s'emparer avec une désarmante (et apparente) simplicité de « Sea Song », chanson emblématique de l'atmosphère aquatique de l'album. John Greaves (dont le parcours a souvent croisé celui de Wyatt, notamment à l'époque du groupe Henry Cow) parvient même à reprendre à son compte le rôle dévolu à Ivor Cutler et ses déclamations décalées (« Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road »). La guitare de Craig Fortnam instille une tonalité plus rock, s'emparant parfois de la partition des cuivres (« Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road »). Indépassable aussi la basse électrique de Hugh Hopper sur « Alifib », ici revue et corrigée pour le meilleur par les sonorités conjuguées du vibraphone de Tommaso Franguelli, de l'orgue Farfisa de William D. Drake et de l'alto de Laurent Valero.

Tout est juste dans ce disque exempt de la moindre faute de goût. Et parce qu'avec un tel projet, la forme aussi est essentielle, il faut souligner le somptueux packaging d'un vinyle bleu translucide et d'une pochette cartonnée riche de photographies et de toutes les paroles. Sans oublier l'inclusion d'un CD augmenté de quatre bonus tracks parmi lesquels figure une reprise de « O Caroline » (qui ouvrait le premier album de Matching Mole en 1972) chantée par un



John Greaves presque crooner. Là aussi le danger guettait tant la version si émouvante Wyatt hérissait les poils : un péril vite écarté au prix d'une légère modification des paroles introductives (Ann is on Farfisa / And I will play the bass / North Sea Radio Orchestra will add a touch of grace), avec la tendre complicité des cordes et de l'orgue.

Paru au printemps dernier sur le label Dark Companion, Folly Bololey, Songs From Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom est une réussite totale. Ruez-vous dessus pendant qu'il est encore temps, car le tirage est limité. Ce serait bête de s'en priver !

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



The Future Eve featuring
Robert Wyatt
KiTsuNe / Brian The Fox
2019

More information about this album

POPGRUPPEN - April 28, 2019

Robert Wyatt's voice scurries between worlds

Michael Björn

I have not previously heard any music by Japanese producer The Future Eve before, neither under this name or under the Tomo Akikawabaya moniker that he previously used. And, in all honesty, the only reason I am listening now is that his new album **KiTsuNe / Brian The Fox** is made together with **Robert Wyatt**.

The backstory to this release is that The Future Eve contacted Wyatt as far back as 1998 and asked if he had something they could collaborate on. On the Bandcamp page, Robert Wyatt is quoted to have said: "I did have. Brian the Fox was an un-placed un-worked basic idea I had."

He had recorded vocals and some keyboards directly onto tape at home in altogether four takes that he sent to The Future Eve, who then built an electronic sound world around that.

The results are fascinating, and play out like an extremely drawn out and heavily modulated version of the 'Brian the Fox' track that eventually ended up on Wyatt's 2003 album Cuckooland.

Unfortunately, Wyatt's vocal contributions also appear stretched out here. Over the course of a full album's worth of music, we only get to hear his voice a handful of times. Over the rest, we wander through an alien landscape of electronic sound that while feeling surprisingly organic definitely sounds completely otherworldly. And when Wyatt is singing I can't help but feel that the sounds are too alien for his voice; they seem to play from another dimension rather than with him.

But now I believe that is quite intentional. And, Wyatt's parts are magical indeed.

Robert first appears about halfway into the eight minute long opening track, appropriately titled 01.01, and already here we are faced with this conundrum of the out there (as in space, or maybe mental space) soundscapes that make you think about flying steel dragons or something. But interestingly, Robert's appearances become all the more welcome due to their brevity. On this first track, there are just a few lines and then it is gone. No overstaying of welcomes here.

On 02.01, the steel dragons come to the fore; there a this tunnelling, whining sound that is quite interesting and I can for the

life of me not get rid of this image of gravity defying dragons in the air above me. The promotional material refers to the music as "Laboratory calculations crossed with temple reflections" and that seems like a fair description to me.

Unfortunately, 02.02 is only available on the vinyl issue of the album. I am seriously tempted to buy the vinyl issue just to find out if Robert is singing on this track; and I was in fact looking for it when I recently was in Japan. But I couldn't find a copy.

On 02.03, there seems to be a woman wordlessly singing, but since there is no mention of this in the liners, I could be wrong. But that just goes to show how organic and indeed mentally charged some of the electronics on this album really are. This track is allegedly a prototype of 'Tom Hay's Fox' on Robert Wyatt's 2003 album Cuckooland – and that makes a lot of sense, since that track really is full of the bendy, otherworldly notes that also appear on that Cuckooland's take on 'Brian the Fox'. In fact, those two tracks are very much a Rosetta stone for this album, both when it comes to foxes and to the bendy, synthesised sounds.

In any case, we are redeemed on 03.01 which opens with Wyatt wordlessly singing, accompanied by some plucked string instruments. Unfortunately, it closes just as quickly, after less than a minute.

Wyatt is then back on 04.02. This time we get his voice alone, and again that is of course great. However, 39 seconds only lasts for so long.

On 04.04 he is back again, now duetting with himself on top of subdued yet plaintive synthesiser sounds. I feel like I am lost in the woods somewhere, and can make out words like "upstream" and "downwind". Maybe there is a real fox story in this after all… But after just over a minute, the track ends and we are back in monolithic extra-dimensional synth territory on 04.05.

04.06 and Robert's wordless voice is taking on a hymnal quality. His voices are overdubbed and full of echo. I can imagine walking in the shadows of tall trees in a very old and forbidding part of a forest. At 3 minutes and 35 seconds, it is the longest sustained performance we get of Robert, but there isn't really any musical development to the piece.

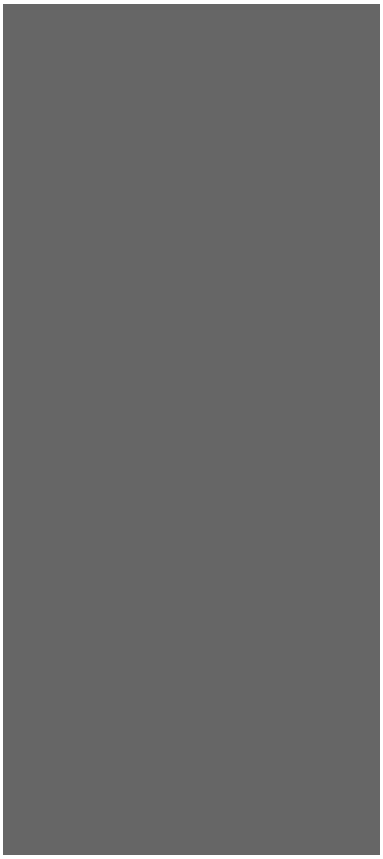
On final track 04.08, Robert starts off with singing on top of his own backing vocals. I can again make out a few words, such as "upstream". Unfortunately, his performance fades out already after 40 seconds and the remainder of the track is more of a sustained outro wall of sound, again with little musical development.

Given that Wyatt's performances here date back to the previous century and even his commentary seems to be from 2013, one can wonder what has taken so long for this to be released.

It seems that first The Future Eve dubbed sounds over the initial four takes sent by Robert, and then those results were handed on to fellow musician Takaaki Han-ya. That process took two years, and was supposed to be the end point. If I understand correctly, those tapes are presented as tracks 01.01 – 03.01.

However, at that point in time The Future Eve's mother died and that changed his perspective towards a more Buddhist reincarnation approach, which after a very long period of work resulted in the "Ring" version presented on tracks 04.01 – 04.08. According to The Future Eve: "For this work I wanted to try to capture the mind behind the tape more than the music itself." And it is not impossible to imagine that such an undertaking could take some time.

But despite the incredibly long gestation period, at the end of the



day what we get here is, all in all, only maybe seven minutes of Wyatt singing. Although one might initially think that is a bit on the short side and feel that The Future Eve is promoting the association to Robert Wyatt somewhat too strongly here, the idea of trying to give Wyatt's mind a musical representation is rather intriguing.

Is the inside of a mind really as otherworldly as it is framed here? At least if you factor in reincarnation, it certainly would be; it would be the mind and not the body that travels (upstream as it were) between worlds – from one life to another, and on again. Come to think of it, dragons were used on medieval maps to demarcate the edges of the world, so maybe the deep, wailing, tunnels of sound here really could be thought of as dragons – and the fox as the mind that scurries between those worlds. That would be brain the fox then, I suppose, rather than Brian. (And fox is kitsune in Japanese by the way.)

So, despite the brevity of Wyatt's performances here, would I say the album is worth the effort? Undoubtedly, yes!

More information about this album

Critiques/Reviews

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

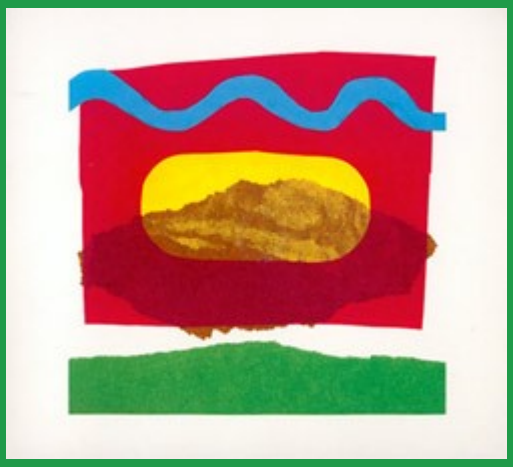
HOME

Cuckooland

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Toujours barbu, jamais barbant, Robert Wyatt crée de la beauté envers et contre tout. Une légende vivante, vraiment vivante.



Dans un numéro Hors Série paru fin 2003, la revue Les Inrockuptibles publie son classement des 50 meilleurs disques rock électro rap de l'année écoulée. A la 24ème place, devant Jean-Louis Murat (Lilith) mais derrière Cali (L'Amour parfait), on y découvre l'album Cuckooland. La chronique de Richard Robert, un rien emphatique, me touche pourtant. Elle donne en quelques mots les clés d'un album et d'un musicien "hors-concours".

ROBERT WYATT - CUCKOOLAND
Rykodisc/Naïve

La musique de Robert Wyatt change les perspectives d'écoute, brouille les critères censés distinguer la "norme" de la "marge". Elle culbute aussi cette logique selon laquelle la pop, le jazz ou les musiques nouvelles seraient des entités figées et distinctes. Ceux qui ne la connaissent que de loin la croient étrange, difficile à cerner, voire indéchiffrable. Ceux qui ont pris la peine de l'explorer savent qu'elle constitue un monde à part entière, où il fait bon se réfugier quand l'époque vire à la grisaille. De fait, les premières mesures de *Cuckooland*, où quelques coulures de cornet glissent sur une nappe de synthé bon marché, ramènent l'auditeur en terrain familier. Mais le terrain est si fertile, si prodigue de beautés et d'inventions qu'on se laisse une fois de plus surprendre.

Il y a d'abord la classe d'un musicien qui réussit à enchaîner les figures harmoniques, mélodiques et rythmiques les plus acrobatiques sans jamais donner l'impression de s'adonner à de pénibles tours de force. Il y a cette voix à la fois neuve et ancestrale qui unifie cette improbable mosaïque, cette voix d'enfant centenaire qui n'est pas - n'en déplaise à Ryuichi Sakamoto - *"la plus triste du monde"*: simplement la plus littérale et la plus musicale du monde, comme en témoigne la relecture limpide d'*Insensatez*, le standard de Tom Jobim.

Il y a aussi l'extraordinaire fond de jeu d'une équipe d'instrumentistes qui, de Karen Mantler à David Gilmour, du clarinettiste israélien Gilad Atzmon à la tromboniste Annie Whitehead, donne à chaque trait mélodique la couleur et la vibration requise. Il y a enfin cette place nouvelle accordée au jazz, qui n'apparaît plus seulement en filigrane, mais de manière très explicite, comme sur ces véritables airs à swinguer que sont *Old Europe* ou *Trickle Down*. Cet hommage à la musique qui l'a éveillé n'est pas le seul moment fort d'un disque extrêmement dense : toutes les chansons, ici, peuvent facilement faire l'objet de plusieurs niveaux de lecture (musical, poétique, sentimental, politique...), sans que la limpidité ni la légèreté de l'ensemble en soient pour autant altérées.

S'il est un musicien hors compétition, l'Anglais n'a pas renoncé pour autant à son amour du jeu. Et c'est bien ça qu'on entend de bout en bout dans *Cuckooland*.

C'est peut-être l'enseignement délivré par l'oeuvre de Robert Wyatt : l'amour de la musique, quand il est porté par une telle fraîcheur d'intention et d'expression, rend beau, intelligent, heureux et sensible. Une vérité qu'on est en droit d'estimer naïve, voire mièvre, mais qui trouve pourtant dans *Cuckooland*

sa plus indiscutable transcription. Neuve comme au premier jour et belle comme l'antique, la musique de Wyatt renferme à la fois tout le possible du monde et les bruissements de la vie simple. Cette prouesse , accomplie avec l'humilité et la droiture d'un homme qui ne s'est jamais vu plus grand qu'il n'était, mérite bien qu'on la célèbre avec un peu de grandiloquence. Car elle rend, elle aussi, cette planète plus intéressante et, tout simplement, plus vivable.



Richard Robert

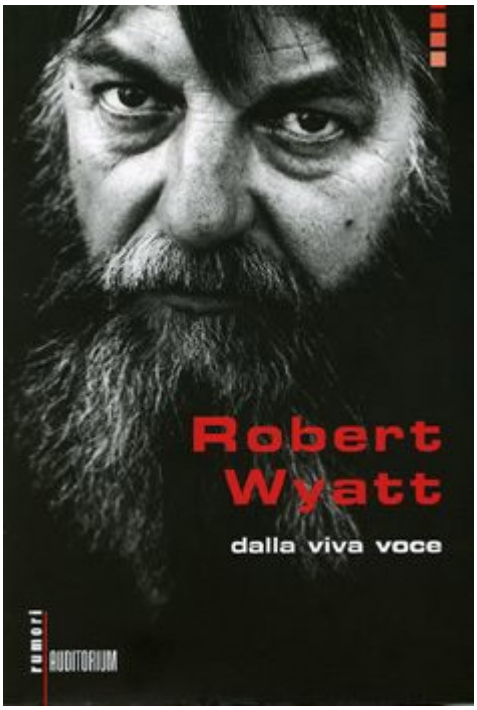




> Retrouver l'album dans la discographie

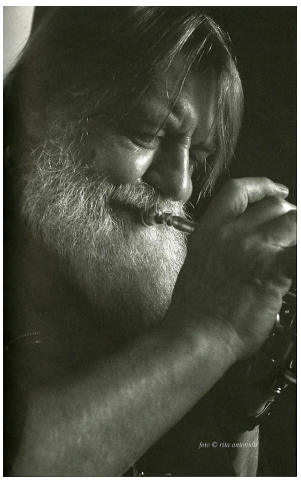
Dalla Viva Voce

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Robert Wyatt - **dalla viva voce** - aux éditions Auditorium - collection Rumori (Milan - 2009).
Constitué d'interviews parus dans plusieurs magazines italiens au cours des années 1996-2007, Robert Wyatt y aborde sur plus de 120 pages les moments forts de sa carrière et en particulier ses très nombreuses collaborations musicales à des projets de nature parfois très différente. Agrémenté de nombreuse photos souvent déjà publiées ailleurs, l'ouvrage est complété d'une introduction de Claudio Chianura et d'une discographie solo.

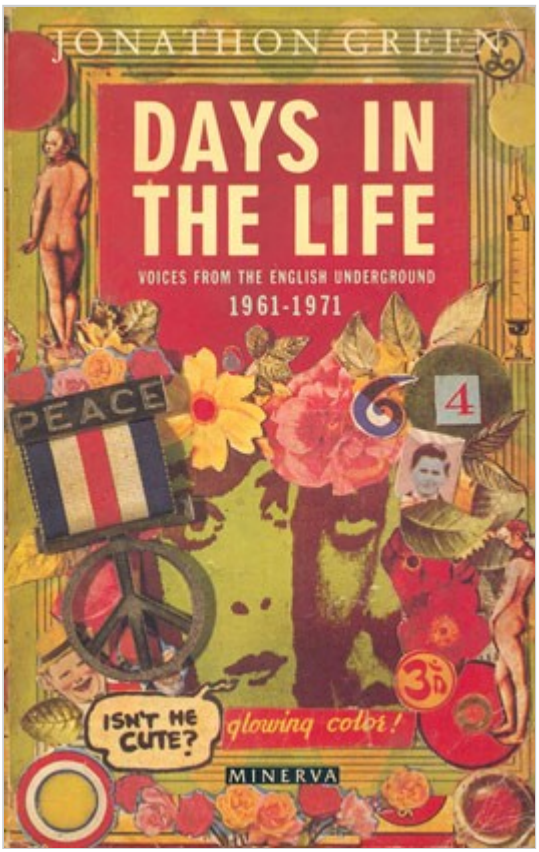
Al diavolo tutte le piramidi e tutti i faraoni della musica! Oggi ascoltiamo la viva voce di Robert Wyatt, spirito libero e artista autentico del nostro tempo, batterista e cantante dei primi Soft Machine, autore di uno dei migliori dischi di musica rock creativa di tutti i tempi, Rock bottom (1974) e di una originale manciata di altri album magici e malinconici. Oggi ascoltiamo la viva voce di Robert Wyatt, che con la sua musica e le sue parole ha reso questo mondo un poco migliore, aggiungendo i suoi profumi e i suoi sapori e tutto il resto, senza chiedere in cambio molto più che una bella risata e un buon sorso di cognac.
(dall'introduzione di Claudio Chianura)



Days In the Life

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Days In The Life - Jonathon Green
Voices from the English Underground 1961-1971



> Zoom



> Zoom

Dans cet ouvrage publié en 1998 aux éditions Minerva, Jonathon Green part à la rencontre du Londres "underground" des 60's. Il brosse le portrait d'une ville et d'une génération à travers une sorte d'abécédaire kaleidoscopique et les souvenirs d'une centaine d'activistes majeurs de cette période dont Robert Wyatt...

...Pendant ce temps, que se passe-t-il dans cette Angleterre, justement? (...) Dans le courant de cette nouvelle culture, Marc Boyle présente un light show en compagnie d'un groupe nouvellement formé, de retour des Baléares où ils ont pas mal expérimenté ce genre de choses (*c.à.d. de fameuses substances*): Soft Machine. De leur côté, des gens comme Miles, Jack Henry Moore, Jim Haynes, créent un certain nombre d'entreprises formant petit à petit le noyau d'un underground vivant, avec des magazines, un hebdo (International Times), et surtout, un endroit sur Southampton Row appelé à devenir l'épicentre de toute une révolution en Grande-Bretagne : UFO. C'est un sous-sol d'assez bonnes dimensions, où l'on peut faire un peu de tout: projections des films de Jack-Henry Moore et Yoko Ono, diapositives organiques de Marc Boyle sur des corps féminins en mouvement, et bien sûr, beaucoup de musique. Trois groupes s'y illustrent régulièrement: le Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band de Vivian Stanshall, et Neil Innes, héritiers à l'anglaise des Village Fugs de New York; le Soft Machine, première mouture; et Pink Floyd...

Alain Dister - ROCK CRITIC Chroniques de rock'n'roll (1967-1982)

Robert Wyatt words about...

Jazz

It all started for me in the 50s when I was a jazz fan. I still am. That was my underground. That was the life I discovered outside the prescribed life. I was born in 1945, left school in 1960. I hadn't got enough exam results to get any particular job so I worked in lots of things. The place where culture and politics seemed to meet for me was always centred around black music. Jazz in the 50s. That's the romantic period for me. To me protest music was Max Roach, Sonny Rollins and Charlie Mingus. I didn't understand folk music, I didn't even like the songs at the Aldermaston march. I knew about jazz, I wasn't particularly well read, but I knew the sleevenotes of about twenty LPs backwards and could spot a new bass player on the New York scene as quick as anybody.

Mods: 'Something very sharp'

The big difference between the trad jazz people and the modern jazz people, which is where the word 'mod' really comes from - the modernists who went to modern jazz gigs - was that the mod thing tended to be more working class or East End lewish, whereas the trad thing tended to be public school dropouts - much more English, people leaping up and down to trad jazz, already the thing of being ostentatious in dress, whereas the modernist thing was very much not ostentatious. Somebody else might notice how you had your tie, someone who knew about things like that, but it wasn't ostentatious. But we did want to function as a parallel world.

Light-shows: 'You had to have things going "Pow!"'

Mark Boyle was burning himself to pieces doing these experiments with different coloured acids. You just saw him with these goggles, looking alI burnt and stuff, high up on some rigging. He used to play tricks, he used to make bubbles corne out of people's flies and things. You couldn't see exactly what he was doing from on stage, but the atmosphere was good.

The Floyd always had their own lights people, but no one else did and Mark used to do the place, not particularly the groups, but the walls, everything. The light-shows meant that what we shared with the Floyd was that as personalities you could hide and the overall group effect could be more important th an the individuals. The normal thing would be that there would be a focus on one or two individual performers, even in the R&B bands, the lead guitarists would get that focus. Whereas we and the Floyd would hardly be recognised off stage, nobody knew what they looked like through the light-show. The anonymity of light-shows was nice - the fact that you were almost in the same swirly gloom that the audience were in was relaxing and you could get a nice atmosphere going.

The Deviants : 'The Worst record in the history of man'

I didn't know MickFarren well and I don't think he particularly welcomed what he thought we [the Soft Machine] represented. But I certainly admire him because he was a sort of protopunk and saw elements immediately that were false. He heard the false notes being rung all around him at a time when people thought it was all in tune.

The 14-Hour Technicolor Dream: 'Everybody I'd ever known swam before my eyes'

I got a short-back-and-sides haircut and a suit and tie to do that gig. That was my avant-garde gesture. The Floyd had those pyramids as far as I recall. They were doing very slow tunes.

The Pink Floyd: 'What we wanted was an avant-garde pop group'

The Pink Floyd were with a lovely bunch of people, Blackhill, and they were very nice and I think they were an honourable exception to the shady rule about managers. I think they were nice people and really cared about the people they worked for. I think that most of were less lucky than that.

The Soft Machine: 'The only other bloke In Kent with long halr'

In Canterbury I got into a local sort of beat group, the Wild Flowers. The name had nothing to do with flower power; we lived in the country and Hugh Hopper had a book called *Wild Flowers* and I think he thought it up. Wild Flowers was the beginning of what became the Soft Machine. Hugh Hopper's brother Brian, who played saxophone, was a friend of Mike Ratledge and when Mike Ratledge came back from university and wanted to play, we were the only people there to play with. So he joined the band, playing piano. But nobody in the band was trying to do the same thing at alI, which is why it was quite original and why, after a couple of years, it fell apart. It was a constant process of disintegration really, getting in new people to fill the gaps. Which in the 60s was rare, because most bands were quite stable. I talked to Nick Mason of the Pink Floyd about that once. I said, 'How come you lot have stayed together so long?' and he said, 'We haven't finished with each other yet.' But it kept changing, we kept on tinkering with it and tinkering with it and throwing each other out of it and leaving it until eventually alI the kinks were ironed out of it and in the end it became a standard British jazz-rock band. I don't know what happened in the end. I stopped listening after a while - I stopped listening before I even left.

When we came up to London there were two connections: Daevid Allen had the connection with people like Hoppy. The other connection was Kevin Ayers, who played bass guitar and wrote songs. He was the only other bloke in Kent with long hair.

The name Soft Machine came through Mike Ratledge. He had books like *V* and alI that kind of thing. I knew the name was taken from Burroughs but I don't think it intrigued me enough to get a copy. Wild Flowers more or less became the Soft Machine. We trickled up to London and then regrouped, one by one.

Kevin Ayers was important in that he knew the AnimaIs office, where Hilton Valentine and Chas Chandler were already starting to manage, and they signed us up really on the basis of Kevin's songs. They were looking for something commercial. Chas was always looking for Slade, and eventually he found them, meanwhile he had to put up with people like us and Jimi Hendrix. Shortly after we joined Chandler Hendrix came to London and musically that was tremendously important for lots of people. For me too, if for nothing else than that what he let Mitch Mitchell do on drums gave me space for what I wanted to do on drums. We were using a lot of jazz ideas on drum kits that there hadn't been room for in the constricted time-keeping stuff I'd been doing before. Of course this was quite the opposite of what Nick Mason was doing with the Floyd: he was a kind of ticking clock there - which is just what they needed. For electronic rock his approach was more suitable - uncluttered. People like me and Mitch were probably too busy, but at the time it seemed exciting. So Kevin actually got us a deal and turned us into a group that had a manager and so on. He liked bossanova and calypso. Ray Davies

and the Kinks, who started using stuff like that quite early on, were a big influence on him. One record company bloke told us, 'I don't know whether you're our worst-selling rock group or our bestselling jazz group.'

The Speakeasy: 'There was a good deal of excess'

The Speakeasy was exactly the kind of place that I saw as really unpleasant. There was a sense in me that while I was flourishing as a member of the late-60s culture, this very thing that was flourishing was squashing something that I felt was really more oppressed. Rock groups meeting in expensive clubs that are difficult to get into... what's all that crap? It was exciting and it was interesting, there were lots of new scenes, but it's very very hard to think it as underground.

UFO

When you arrived at UFO, early on, they were usually playing Monteverdi or something. I was probably more awestruck by the place than most of the punters, who I felt took it for granted.
It wasn't any easier playing UFO than the circuit, but the demands our own. We were able to develop our own idiosyncrasies. Our management had immediately put us on the road on a circuit where you had to play for dance audiences. We weren't very good at that. So the great thing for us about UFO was that the audiences weren't demanding in the same way. They were sitting about, most of them were asleep as far as I could see. The very things that were our faults on the regular circuit - that of alI the bands playing 'Midnight Hour' or 'Knock on Wood' on any particular evening we would play it worst, if we played it at all- became bonuses at UFO. We couldn't play that stuff, or if we did people didn't realise that was what we were playing.

Conclusion: 'Some kind of golden age'

I think in the end that by not beating the system we strengthened it. In the end the culture we were involved in was an Anglo-american cultural narcissism revamped, and if you look at it from the point of view of world culture it actually reflected the power structure, the extraordinary media power of the English-speaking West. With the best will in the world the people involved might have thought that they were providing an alternative, but they were simply making the Establishment more flexible. So I'm not at all surprised that we have proceeded to vote in lots of incredibly right-wing and chauvinistic governments. I don't see that as a reaction to the 60s, but as a direct result. What a pathetic thing to think: that you can just blow the castles down.

Dedicated to RW

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Peu d'artistes à ma connaissance font l'objet - alors même qu'ils sont encore en activité - de tant de marques de reconnaissance de la part de *leurs pairs*...

C'est pourtant le cas de Robert Wyatt dont je relève régulièrement les hommages qui lui sont adressés par le biais d'un *Tribute*, d'un titre de morceau ou d'une mention sur un album.

Quelques exemples qui s'enrichiront au fil de mes découvertes et de celles des internautes qui voudront bien me les signaler...



Tout d'abord les *Tribute* qui proposent une relecture parfois piquante des morceaux originaux...

On peut mentionner les principaux projets suivants:

- Soupsongs Live (2000)
- MW pour Robert Wyatt (2001)
- The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt & Moi (2003)
- The Different You - Robert Wyatt e noi (1998)
- Anthologie du Projet MW (2009)
- Mop Meuchiine Plays Robert Wyatt (2010)
- Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening (1992)
- The Chansons Of Robert Wyatt Et Moi... (2011)
- Round About Wyatt (1994)
- Around Robert Wyatt (2009)
- A Tribute To Robert Wyatt (2002)
- Comicoperando - A Tribute to the Music of Robert Wyatt (2010)
- Market Rasen (Dedicated To The Music Of Robert Wyatt) (2006)
- Diversions, Vol. 1: The Songs Of Robert Wyatt And Antony & The Johnsons (2011)
- Max Andrzejewski's Hütte & Guests Play The Music Of Robert Wyatt (2019)







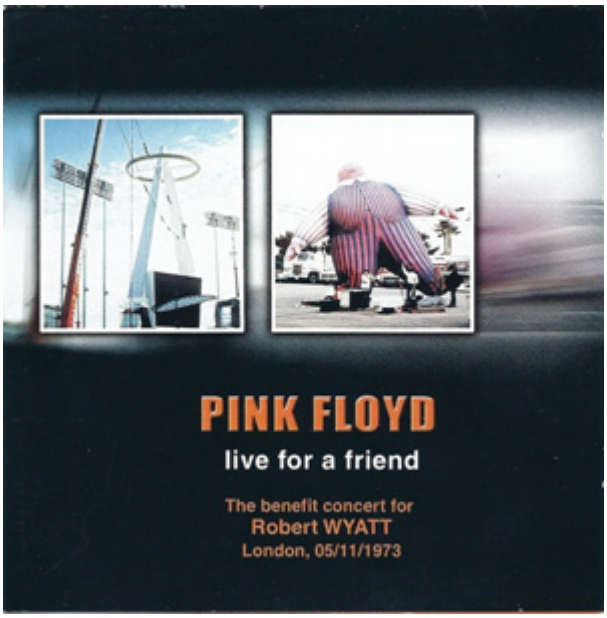




La dédicace à Robert Wyatt peut porter sur un album complet ou sur un morceau seulement.

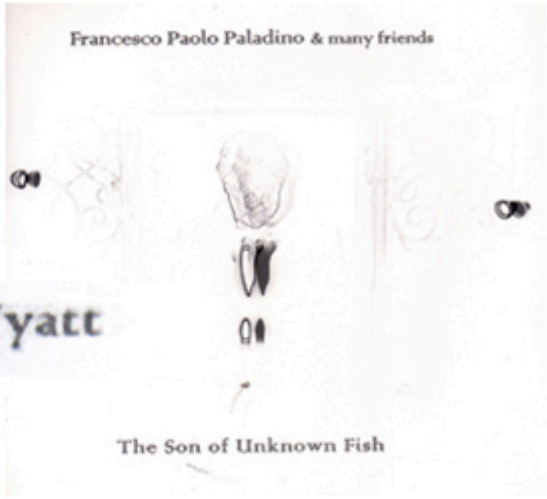
Quelques exemples...



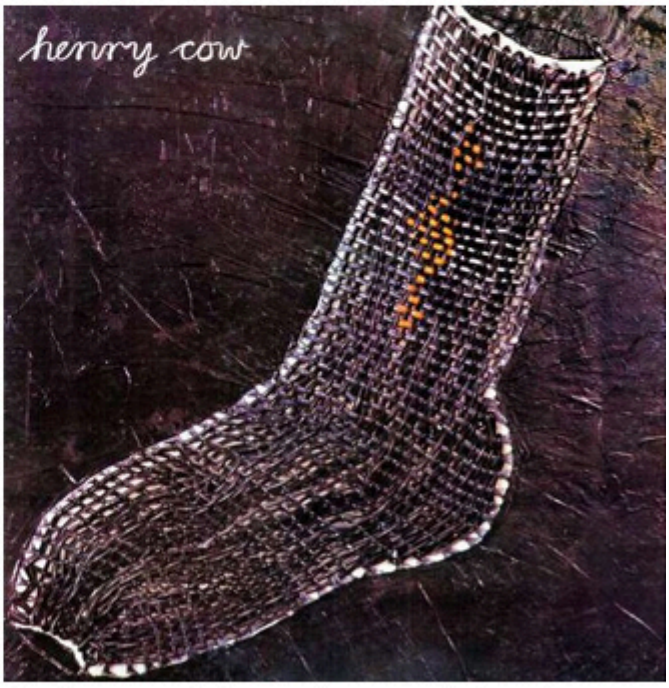

PINK FLOYD
live for a friend
The benefit concert for
Robert WYATT
London, 05/11/1973



This album is dedicated to Robert WYATT



Dedicated to Robert Wyatt



Produced by Henry Cow and dedicated to Robert Wyatt and Uli Trepte.



DEDICACE: A MES GRANDS AMIS ROBERT WYATT ET MICK RATLEDGE



HELDON: I ELECTRONIC GUERILLA 1974

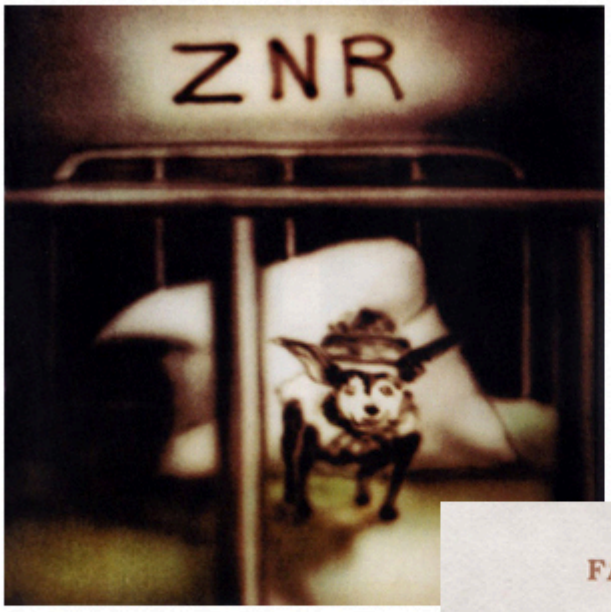
This record is dedicated to ROBERT WYATT



I BELIEVE
(Orzabal)
Dedicated to Robert Wyatt (if he's listening)
WILLIAM GREGORY ~ Saxophone
ROLAND ORZABAL ~ Grand Piano



Enregistré et mixé au studio Gilly Bell à Ventabren, Bouches-du-Rhône (tél. 91 28.82.08) janvier 76.
Prise de son : Gilly Bell et Jean-Pierre Leccia. Super technic man : Olivier Masson
Mixage : Bell, Leccia et Zazou.
Photographismes et maquette : Claude Nougier.
Dessin étrange et encouragements : Captain Beefheart.
Merci à Raymond l'Empereur, à Marcel Gotlib pour son beau texte, à Captain Beefheart pour son beau dessin, à tous les musiciens qui sont venus jouer, à Hugues Chevalier, à Jean-Paul Marquis et à Cat pour leur patience et leur dévouement, à Alain Dugrand pour sa très efficace coopération, à Pierre Anastay pour son aide précieuse à Robert Wyatt, Brian Eno, Fred Frith et Ivor Cutler pour les belles choses qu'ils ont faites et à Gilly Bell pour avoir largement dépassé ses obligations techniques et fait du studio notre deuxième foyer.



FACE RACAILLE

a) Chanson triste pour faire danser les petites filles
« pour Cathy et sa maman Jennifer »
.....H. Néneux

b) Nu au bain
« au gros Robert et à son copain Ivor »
.....A. Leslie



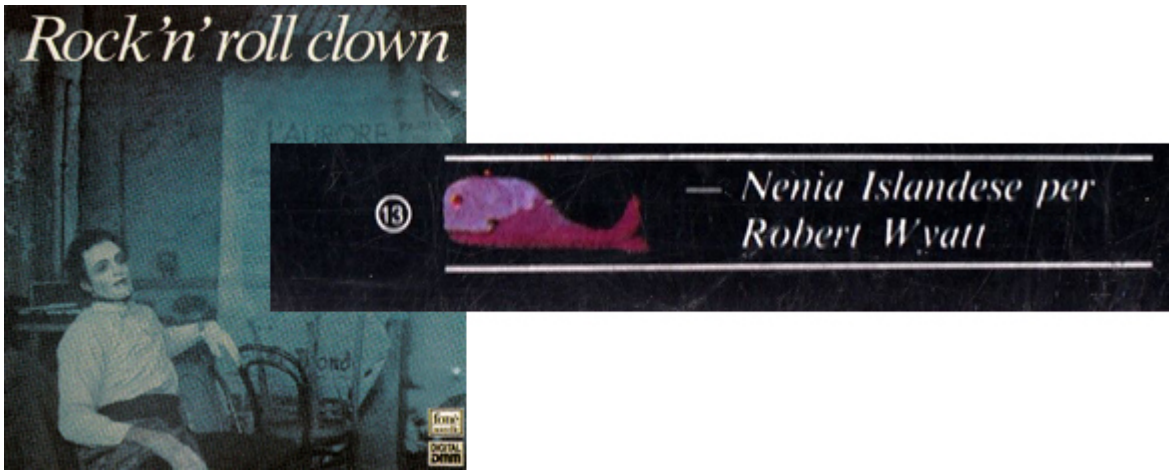
Robert Wyatt Testament by **Ottist(F)reddy** from *All misery starts*

Will the real Robert Wyatt please stand
from the album The *Magic Tale of flying kite*
from *the animal kingdom* by **Orange Glow**

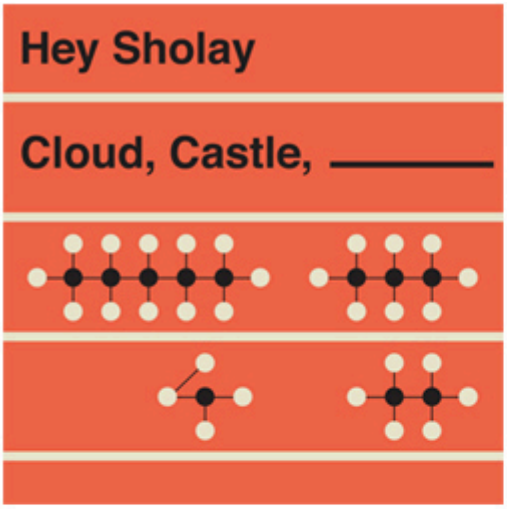








Nenia Islandese per Robert Wyatt **by Blue-Lu**



If The Big Fat Yellow Thing In The Sky Was To Burn Out I Would Take You By The Hand And Float Off Into Orbit (A Song For Robert Wyatt)

Song For Robert Wyatt





Robert Wyatt

Robert+Alfie



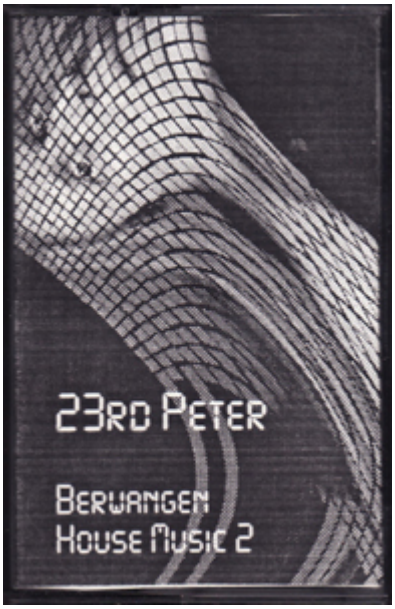


Wild Grass II (For Robert Wyatt)



Nicolas Dunger
"Tribute to Robert Wyatt"
from *The Vinyl Trilogy*





Robert Wyatt Hits The Beat by **23rd Peter**
from *Berwangen House Music 2*

Remerciements :

Alain Dister, Hervé Muller, Jacques Vassal, Daniel Vermeille, Jerry Hopkins, Yves Jourdan, Bernard Dauman, M. et Mme René Petit.

Remerciements spéciaux :

John Mc Laughlin, Robert Wyatt.

Benoît Feller remercie spécialement **Robert Wyatt** dans son ouvrage sur **Jimi Hendrix** (1976)



Robert Wyatt by **The Old Soul**

Le grand Joseph Racaille dédie à Robert Wyatt et à quelques autres géants cette K7 de rimes et comptines destinée aux enfants...



RIMES ET COMPTINES EN BULLES

PAR JOSEPH RACAILLE
et ses rythmes

Joseph RACAILLE
Boîtes, bongos, chœurs, claps, cochon, cymbale, danse de la pluie, fausse basse, flûtes douces (alto, soprano, piccolo), fourchettes, grosse caisse, guitare électrique, harmonicas, lavabo, machine à écrire, mélodica, orgue, pianos électrique et acoustique, piano jouet opéra, robinet qui fuit, sifflotage, tabouret en plastique, tambourin, tête dans la machine à laver, tire bouchon, voix, xylophone..

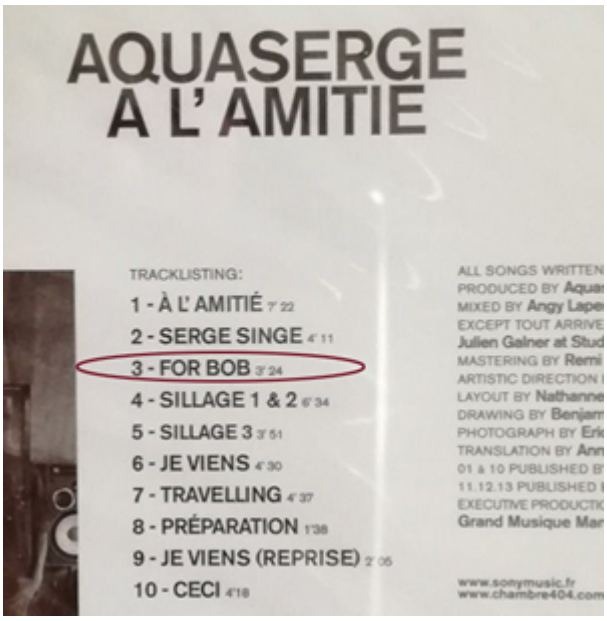
avec la participation de
Françoise TOMENO :
chant (A1, A2, A6, AII, AI6, BI2)
Claude MONTIS : clarinette (A2)
Annick MEVEL : chant (BI3) et pédagogie
Bruno GIRARD : chant (A9)
Hélène BASS : chant (A9)
Christophe BAILLOT : saxes, claps, flûtes traversières et douces (B2)
G. CABANNES, C. BAILLOT, F. GORGE, C. MEUNIER : chœurs (AI2)

Musiques composées, arrangées ou adaptées par Joseph RACAILLE
Textes traditionnels, sauf « L'orchestre familial » de C. POSLANIEC et « Vie de chat » de R. GUEZ.
Enregistré par le compositeur en juillet-août 1983.
Mixé par C. Baillot et le compositeur à PIERRE BAYLE en septembre 1983

Dédié à Captain B., Ivor C., Moondog, . Robert W., Young Tom W. et Balthazar C.

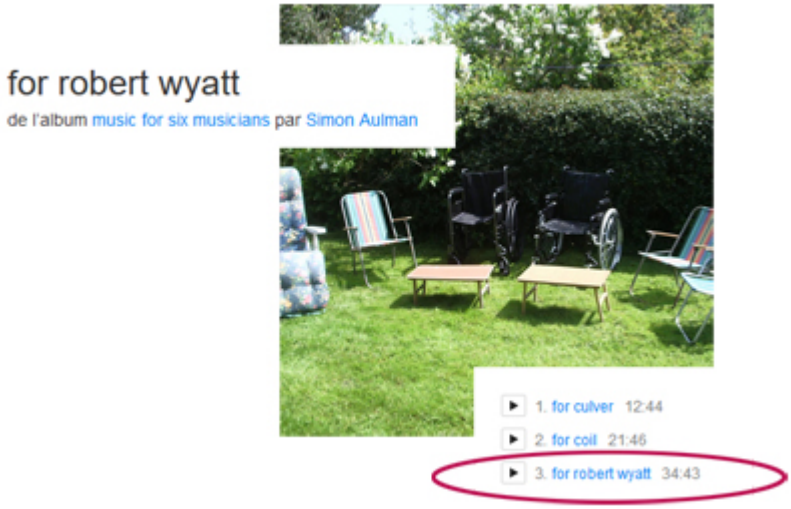
0:00 / 3:23

Wild Grass II (For Robert Wyatt) : le bel hommage de **Arp & Anthony Moore**


AQUASERGE
A L' AMITIE
TRACKLISTING:
1 - À L' AMITIÉ 7' 22
2 - SERGE SINGE 4' 11
3 - FOR BOB 3' 24
4 - SILLAGE 1 & 2 6' 34
5 - SILLAGE 3 3' 51
6 - JE VIENS 4' 30
7 - TRAVELLING 4' 37
8 - PRÉPARATION 1'38
9 - JE VIENS (REPRISE) 2' 05
10 - CECI 4'18
www.sonymusic.fr
www.chambre404.com

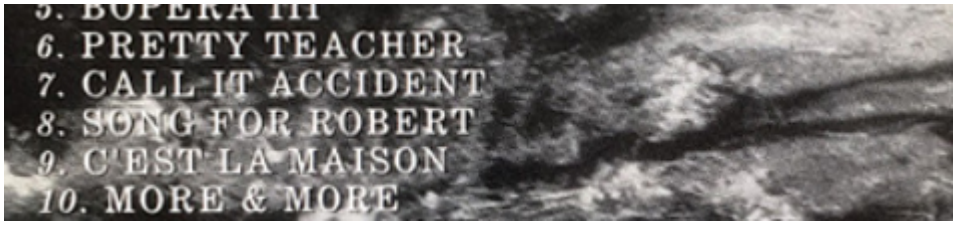
Aquaserge


God save Robert Wyatt!
de l'album Amateur Hour par Dr. Organ
DR ORGANS
AMATEUR HOUR
1. Castle Point 03:19
2. Chekhov 02:22
3. The Range 01:59
4. God save Robert Wyatt! 05:26
6. Go deep 04:48
7. Monday Afternoon 03:52
8. C's and G's 03:20
9. Let the Sun Set 03:49


for robert wyatt
de l'album music for six musicians par Simon Aulman
1. for culver 12:44
2. for coil 21:46
3. for robert wyatt 34:43



Parlami



Song For Robert by **Daevid Allen and Kramer** (Who's Afraid - 1992)

0:00 / 0:40

Alternate (Poem for Robert Wyatt) - **Richard Gorman** (2017)

Alternate
for Robert Wyatt

Jazz Robert
Tequilla
Progressive Robert
Southern Comfort
Hairy Robert
Tequilla
Vibrant Robert
Southern Comfort
Psychedelic Robert
Tequilla
Lout Robert
Southern Comfort
Soft Robert
Tequilla
Communist Robert
Southern Comfort
Tequilla
Southern Comfort
Te q ui ll a
S ou t her n Co m fo r t
T e qu i l la
la
la
la
la
la
la
la
la
l
l
Beautiful Robert



Folly Bololey
North Sea Radio Orchestra

et aussi ***Poems to Pop Stars*** en 2004
dans *Daevid Alien Playbax (Disk 1)**...***



16-19: POEMS TO POP STARS
Kevin Ayers Robert Wyatt Bill Bruford Terry Riley.
MASTERING: Dallas Simpson @ Serendipity.

... à Robert Wyatt

Nouvelles **- Jean-Marc Foussat**



0:00 / 3:38

Le titre du morceau va droit au but : ***At rock bottom with Robert Wyatt***... de l'album *Ultimate Tourist's Guide to Life* par **Ultimate Tourist**



0:00 / 2:47

Robert Wyatt par **Ralph Carney**



0:00 / 2:59

Robert Wyatt de **Jean-Luc Le Ténia**



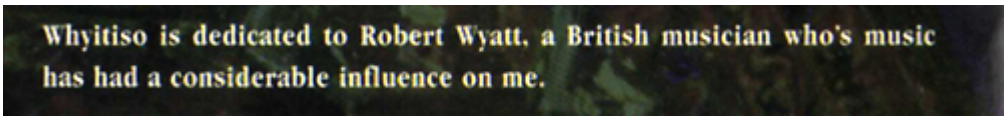
Mary Halvorson's *Code Girl*





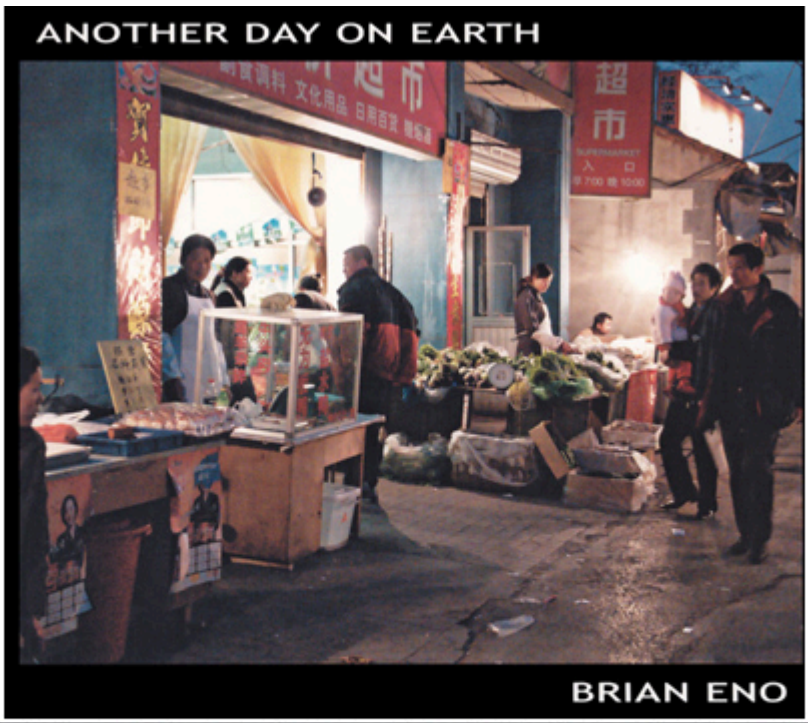
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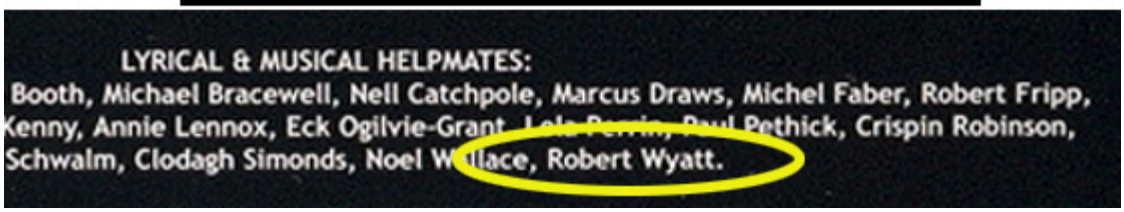
Vic Chesnutt Live at 40 Watt Club on 2008-03-01 sings ***Robert Wyatt***





Dédicace à RW du morceau ***Whyitiso*** de **Robert Iolini** sur l'album *Iolini* paru en 2000.



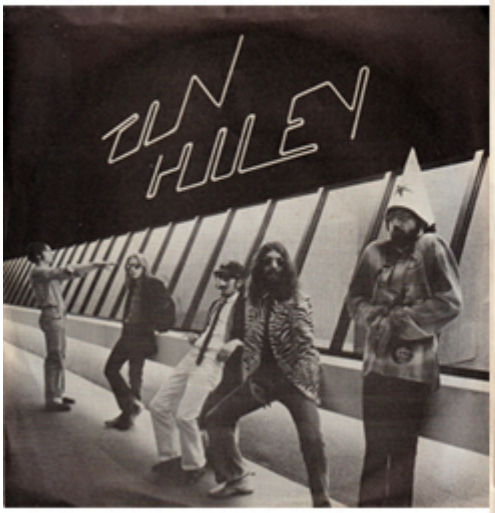


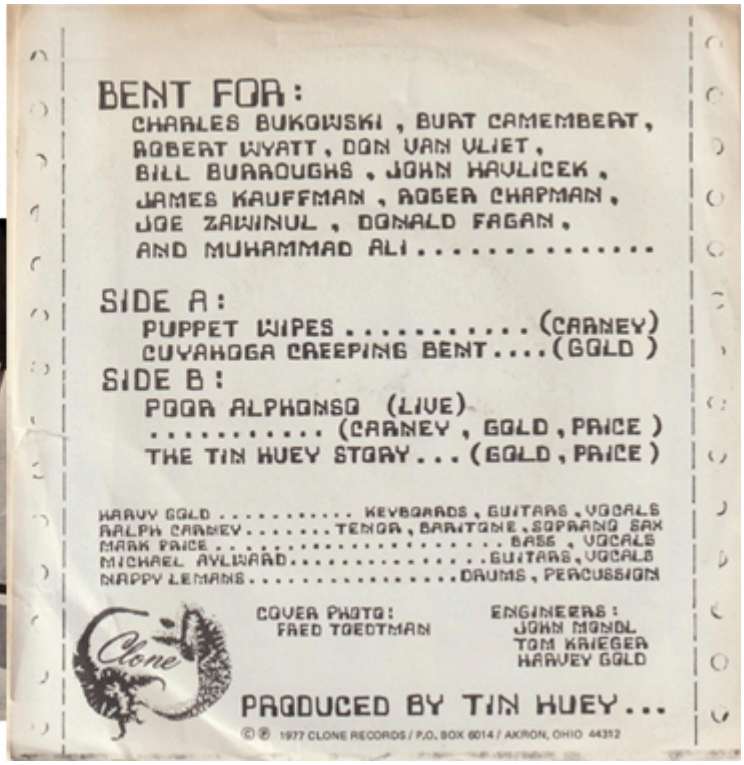
Another Day On Earth - **Brian Eno**

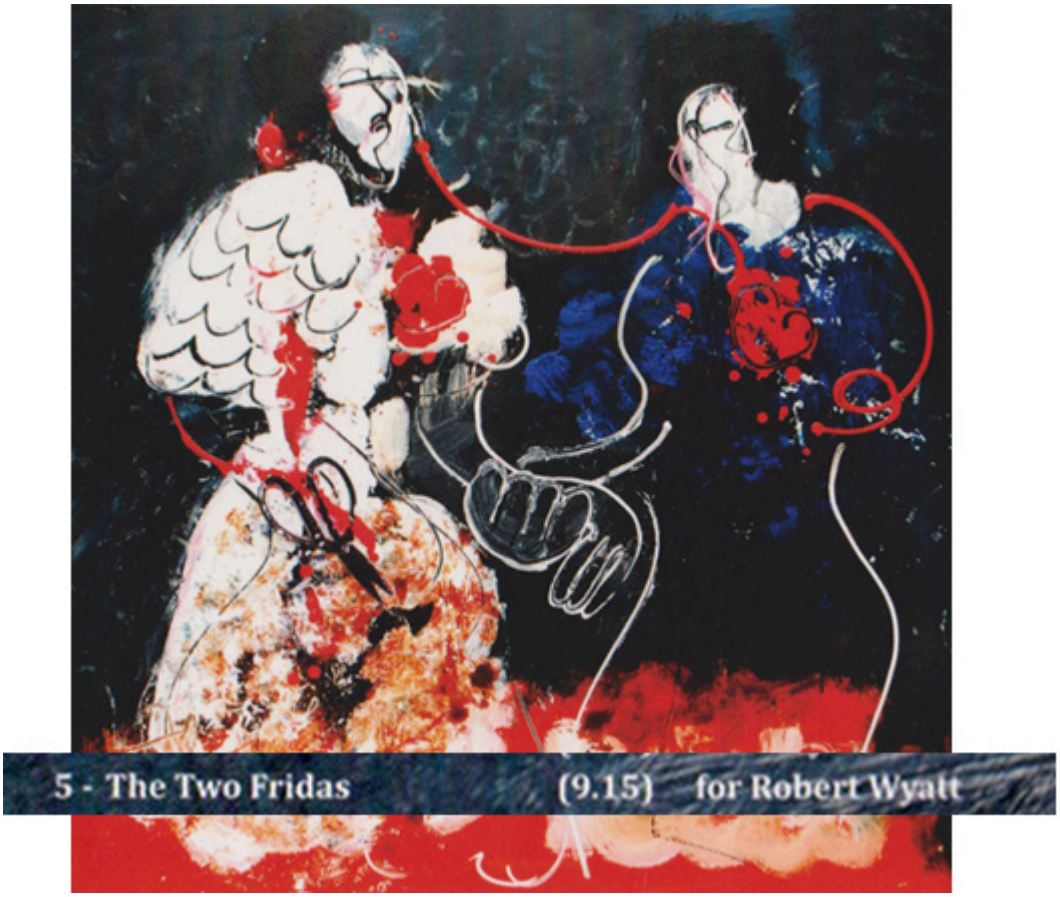


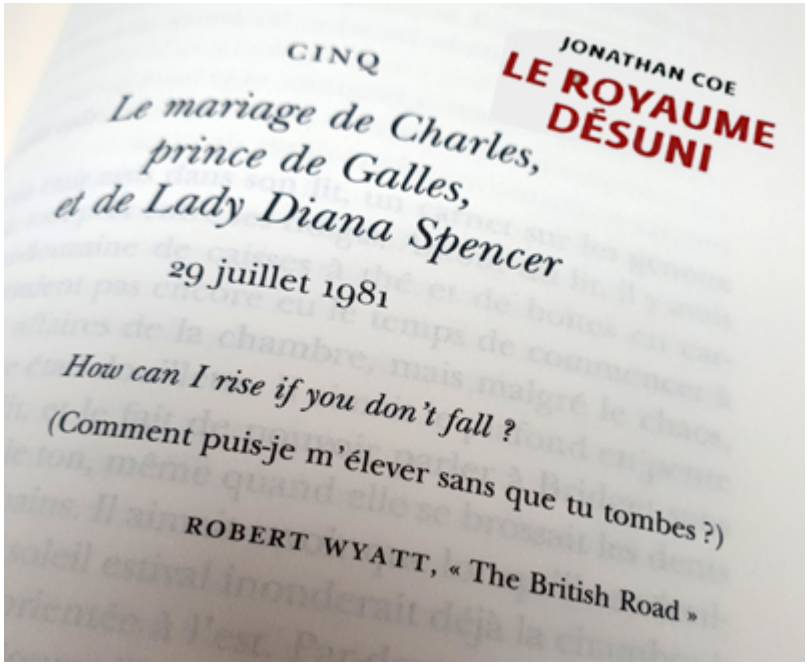
Hommage à **Roberto Viatti** (notre RW) sur toutes les éditions du 1er album de *Picchio Dal Pozzo* paru en 1976.

En 1977, Tin Huey sort un 45t où il liste au verso de la pochette ses influences majeures...









Jonathan Coe cite un extrait *de The British Road* en exergue du chapitre 5 de son roman *Le Royaume désuni* paru simultanément en France et en Angleterre en 2022:

How can I rise if you don't fall ?



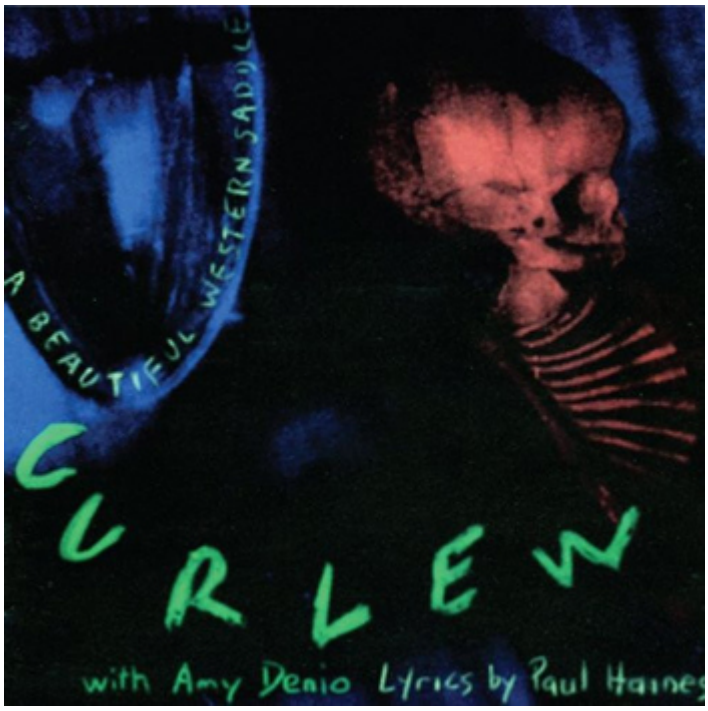
En 2017, le 1er morceau de *Bichitos*, l'album numérique du musicien chilien **Caer.Sin.Alas**, s'intitule ***Robert Wyatt*** et contient peut-être aussi quelques samples non crédités de R.W. ...

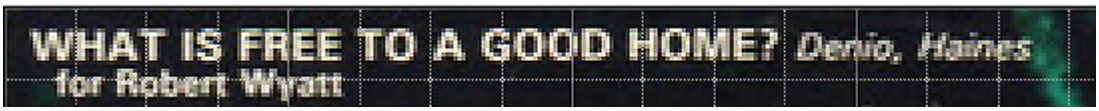






Robert Wyatt de l'album *Vol. 1* par **Marco Oselini**

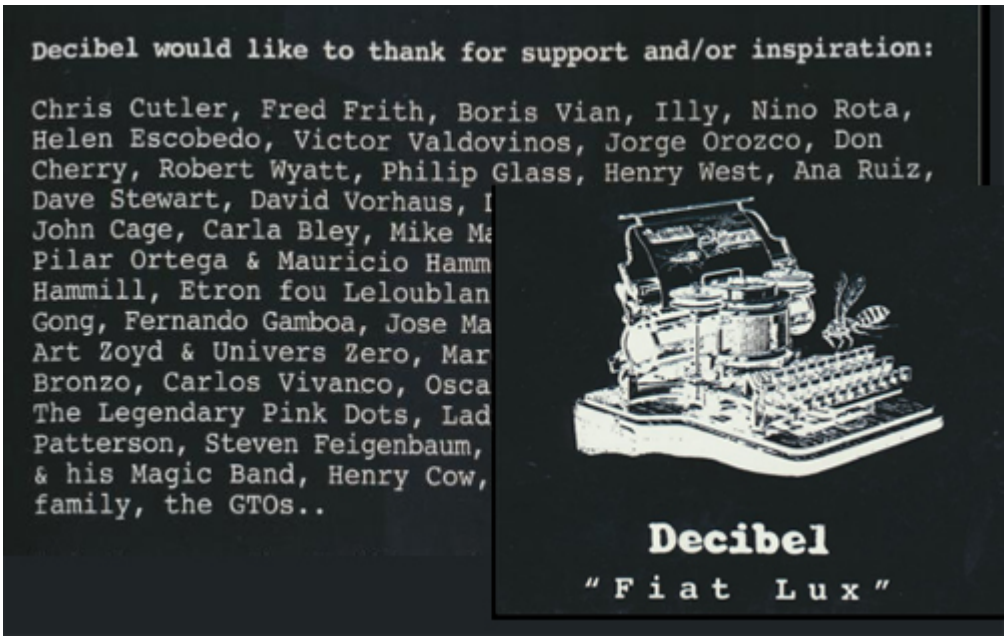


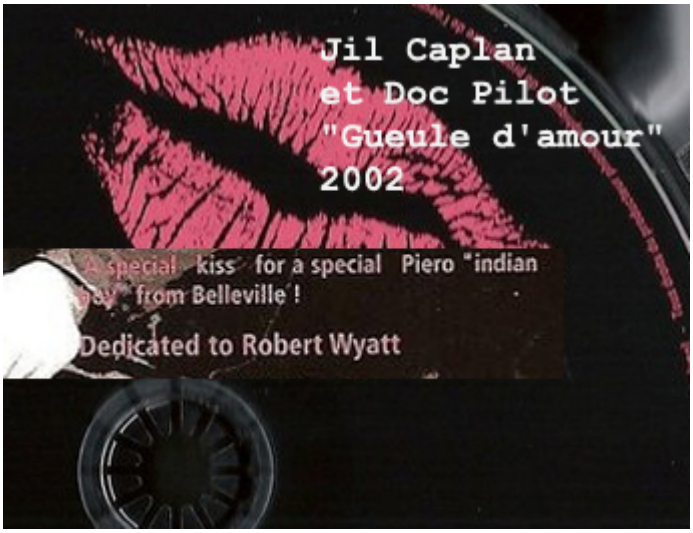


Star Quality - Speculations For Guitar And Voice
Keir Cooper & Eleanor Westbrook (2024)

"...Star Quality - Speculations for Guitar and Voice is an album that rethinks the possible relationships between vocals, instrumentation, improvisation and digital software editing - or thinks about them in a certain way for the first time. It is immensely playful (singer Eleanor Westbrook is also a trained clown), summoning the ghosts of Dada past in its radically mischievous use of collage. Hannah Höch and Tristan Tzara would have danced with joy at the games played here. **It reminds fleetingly of Robert Wyatt's avant scat adventures on his 1970 album The End Of An Ear**..."









Dans son morceau "Robert Wyatt", Neil Dexter évoque les émotions qu'il a ressenti lors de sa première écoute de *Rock Bottom*.

0:00 / 4:02

Robert Wyatt by **Neil Dexter** (from the album *I'll Be Ready* -2022)



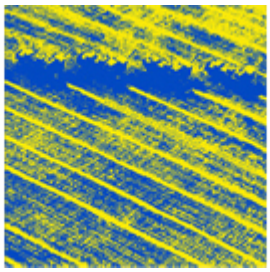
Pourquoi qu'on dort pas
Population II
Pourquoi qu'on dort pas

Bonne question, pourquoi qu'on dort pas ? un clin d'oeil au Soft Machine des débuts par le groupe Population II sur son album *Électrons libres du québec* sorti en 2023.

Il est aussi une autre sorte d'hommage que nous pourrions appeler "*en abîme*".

Le plus saisissant est celui d'**Elizabeth Fraser** qui reprend le magnifique ***At Last I Am Free*** a mi-chemin entre la reprise de **Robert Wyatt** et la version originale de **Chic** (sortie en 1978).







0:00 / 4:24

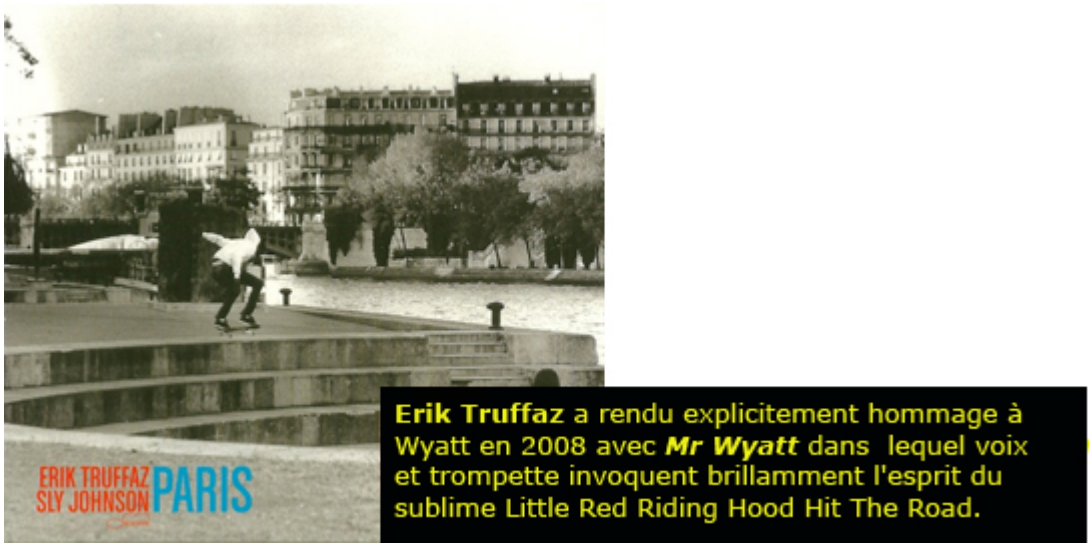
Elizabeth Fraser - ***At Last I Am Free*** (2003)

0:00 / 4:18

Robert Wyatt - ***At Last I Am Free*** (1980)

0:00 / 7:13

Chic - *At Last I Am Free* (1978)



0:00 / 5:08

Mr Wyatt from *Paris* - **Erik Truffaz** (2008)

Remerciements / Thanks to

Robert Wyatt, Marcel Kanche, Manuela Gimeno, Adrian Bourget, Theresa Ferté, Roger Fontanel, Jacques Parize, Patrick Duval, Nicolas Ammeux, Pierre Villeret, Toute l'équipe de La Maison du Peuple - Saint Claude, Jazz à Frontenay, Jazz en Nord, Philippe Gonin, auteur de l'ouvrage : « Robert Wyatt - Rock Bottom » (Densité), Yves Dorison. Et une pensée affectueuse pour Yves Bleton qui nous manque tellement...



0:00 / 6:03

Carla Song extrait de **SeaSong(e)s**

Remerciement à Robert Wyatt dans l'album SeaSong(e)s. du quartet **Tocanne-Domancich-Läng et Gaudillat**, paru en septembre 2017.
Comme le titre de l'album l'indique, cet album est un hommage explicite à l'univers de Rock Bottom et contient une reprise de ***Sea Song***.



LIKE ROBERT WYATT

Have you ever tried to sing like Robert Wyatt in the bath?
No of course not it would sound absurd
And make the neighbour's dogs all bark

Ruth is stranger than Richard, hope is stranger than both,
Robert and me in harmony's a dream
Sounds like my fingers are down my throat
Sounds like my fingers are down my throat

My soup tin's just been sick into a saucepan
But it's non- stick, it's ok
Soup song's tasty not a bit like plastic
But the bills still have to be paid.

Ruth is stranger than Richard, hope is stranger than both,
The bills and me in harmony's a dream
Sounds like my fingers are down my throat
Sounds like my fingers are down my throat

Un réjouissant hommage de **Graham Summers** sur **Innocence and menace**..

0:00 / 2:31



0:00 / 1:38

Stars Over Louth by **Crayola Lectern**
(from the album *Disasternoon* - 2025)

Crayola lynchpin Chris Anderson explained: "'Stars over Louth' came out of a lockdown correspondence with Alfreda Benge, whose husband Robert Wyatt was very complimentary about the unnamed track. I wanted to dedicate it to them and so the title alludes to that.

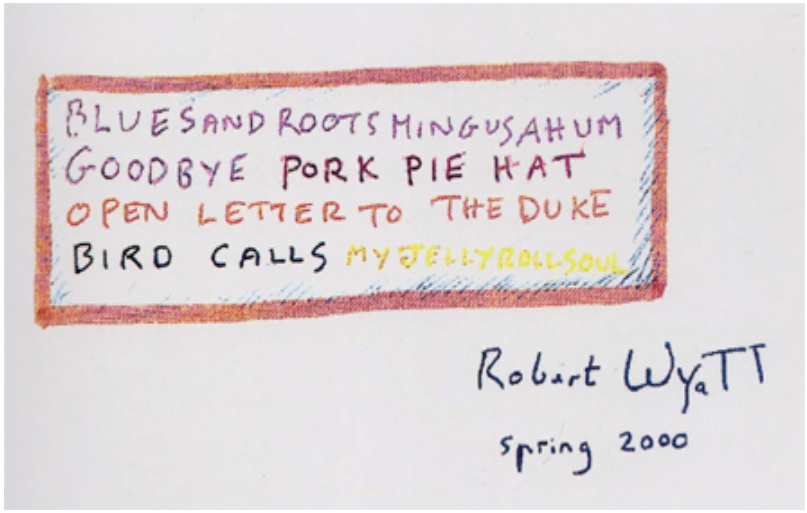
Pascal Comelade est un admirateur inconditionnel de Robert Wyatt qu'il cite dans chacune de ses interviews et dont il proposera des reprises facétieuses tout au long de sa carrière : Bel Canto, El Primitivismo, Impressionnismes, Haïkus De Pianos...
En 2000, une reprise par Robert Wyatt et Pascal Comelade de l'indémodable September Song de Weill/Anderson concrétise cette admiration sans réserve.



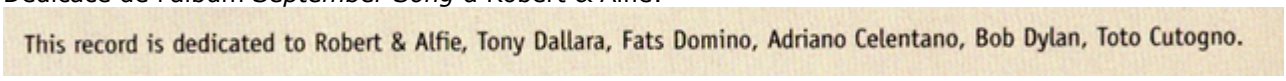
Mais Robert Wyatt est "présent" dès les premiers enregistrements de PC sous la forme d'évocations sonores qui semblent prolonger le 1er album solo The End Of An Ear. Citons Barcelona Tango, Good-Bye Wyatt Hat, Wyatt Ah Um... tous réédités en 2014 dans le coffret My Degeneration Electronics 1974-1983.

Dans ***Good Bye Wyatt Hat*** et ***Wyatt Ah Um*** il rend non seulement hommage à l'univers sonore de Robert Wyatt, mais fait aussi un double clin d'oeil à Charles Mingus et à l'album *Ah Um* et le morceau *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*. Charlie Mingus que Robert Wyatt ne manque jamais d'évoquer lorsqu'on l'interroge sur ses principales influences musicales.





Dédicace de l'album *September Song* à Robert & Alfie:



0:00 / 0:00

In A Lebanon Park *from Sentimientos* - **Pascal Comelade** (1982)

0:00 / 0:00

Wyatt Ah Um from *Sentimientos* - **Pascal Comelade** (1982)



Mais plus fort encore, l'hommage à l'hommage: dans son album *Rendez-vous*, **Satsuki Shibano** reprend de belle manière ***Wyatt Ah Um*** de **Pascal Comelade** (cf. ci-dessus), lui-même prolongement éthéré de ***To Carla Marsha And Caroline For Making Everything Beautifuller*** (*The End Of An Ear*).

0:00 / 0:00

Wyatt Ah Um from *Rendez-Vous* - **Satsuki Shibano** (1991)



An ode to Robert Wyatt by Charlie Hannah (2024).
Written and performed by Charlie Hannah except drum machines and spacey tape noises by Rosie Carr and Johnny Goddard.
Video made by Charlie with the help of Xav Clarke who filmed it, and leant his kayak!



En 2018, le groupe norvégien **Needlepoint** sort *The Diary Of Robert Reverie*, un album dont la référence tant musicale que graphique au *Rock Bottom* de Robert Wyatt est rien moins que subliminale...



Gil Pistil rend hommage à Robert Wyatt de la manière la plus élégante. Il compose un morceau *à la manière de* : *he touched my soul, so today Robert, I sing my song for you...*

Mais si je devais ne retenir qu'un musicien parmi tous ceux qui citent Robert Wyatt parmi leurs influences majeures, je choisirais **Benoît Burello** alias **BED** pour l'ensemble de son oeuvre (admirable):

*Les références du vieux garçon, en ce domaine, sont William-Carlos Williams et Walt Whitman, pour le parler anglais, préféré au français, que Burello voit confiné à l'écrit. En matière musicale, Benjamin Britten pour ses Suites pour violoncelle et «son homosexualité à l'époque...»; mais surtout inépuisablement, **Robert Wyatt,** le doloriste pataphysicien de Soft Machine, paralysé en plein trip coco psychédélique.*

Bayon in Libération - 31 mars 2001.



0:00 / 3:11

Moonlight from *The Newton Plum* - **BED** (2001)

Je ne peux terminer cette rubrique sur les hommages à Robert Wyatt sans mentionner "**l'Affaire Guy Pedersen**" !

Si je me souviens bien, elle surgit brutalement sur Kazaa (les anciens me suivront) sous la forme d'un fichier mp3 anonyme accompagné d'un message laissant entendre qu'il s'agit très vraisemblablement d'un inédit de Robert Wyatt...

Le réseau s'agite, la rumeur va bon train, des courageux prennent parti pour ou contre cette révélation. Une écoute à peine sérieuse ne laisse pourtant aucun doute mais il est vrai qu'on retrouve dans ce morceau quelques archétypes sonores qui ne sont peut-être que d'amicales citations...

Après quelques recherches plus approfondies, le mystère est levé : il s'agit d'un morceau de l'album vinyl *Maxi-Music* de **Guy Pedersen** paru en 1972 chez Télé Music..... la kazaasphère respire !



0:00 / 2:59

Track B2 : ***Petit Moujik De Nuit***
Guy Pedersen - Maxi-Music

Dedicated To You et Dondestan ! The Wyatt Project

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Rimbaldien ! *Gloria Gloom* s'achève à peine qu'un spectateur crie très fort son émotion, et à Charleville-Mézières celle-ci ne peut être que rimbaldienne...



Le concert-hommage à Robert Wyatt a lieu dans une salle fervente, acquise par avance aux variations très personnelles d'un groupe de choc emmené par John Greaves, témoin historique et M. Loyal, décidé à revisiter l'oeuvre complète, de *We Did It Again à Forest*, soit 30 ans et des poussières de bonheur musical absolu.

Pataphysical Introduction et *A Concise British Alphabet* pour la mise en bouche, *Alliance*, *Sea Song* et autres *O Caroline* alternent avec des compositions originales créées pour l'occasion par six musiciens dont l'émotion est flagrante.

C'est la face jazz, expérimentale, voire un tantinet cérébrale de la musique de Robert Wyatt qui s'exprime ce soir. Ni l'hommage trop respectueux du SoupSongs Live, ni le clin d'oeil new wave du Different You italien.

Plutôt une variation libertaire à la sonorité presque acoustique (la contrebasse d'Hélène Labarrière et les clarinettes de Sylvain Kassap y sont pour beaucoup).

Et Karen Mantler, parfaite (orgue, chant, harmonica) qui entonne en fin de concert l'hymne officiel du fan-club de R.W., une chanson tendre que le public reprendra en choeur :

R.O.B.E.R.T. W.Y.A.T.T.

Plus d'infos sur le concert de Charleville-Mézières, **cliquer ici.**

Un autre concert a eu lieu le 10 février 2004 à Faches-Thumesnil puis le 17 février 2005 dans le cadre du festival Sons d'hiver.

Mêmes musiciens, même répertoire sous une nouvelle appellation "Dondestan ! The Wyatt Project".

Un article de Citizen Jazz rend bien compte de ce concert passionnant qui, hélas, ne remplira pas la grande salle de la Maison des Arts de Créteil.



Karen Mantler à Charleville-Mézières - 8/11/03 (photo : Dominique Rieffel)

L'article de Citizen Jazz sur le concert de Charleville-Mézières

L'article de Citizen Jazz sur le concert de Créteil

Découvrir le photo-reportage

D'autres photos des concerts de Charleville et Créteil

L'hymne officiel du fan-club de Robert Wyatt

JOHN GREAVES chant, basse, piano
SYLVAIN KASSAP clarinettes
HELENE LABARRIERE contrebasse
JACQUES MAHIEUX chant, batterie
KAREN MANTLER chant, orgue, harmonica
DOMINIQUE PIFARELY violon



John Greaves à Créteil - 17/02/05 (photo : Hélène Collon)

L'Ardennais - 10/11/2003

Robert, si tu nous regardes !



De gauche à droite, John Greaves, Hélène Labarrière, Jacques Mahieux, Dominique Pifrély, Sylvain Kassap et Karen Mantler... visiblement heureux de l'avoir fait !



Petite mise en bouche juste avant le concert dans le hall du théâtre avec la section jazz du conservatoire qui a joué deux morceaux (dont un de Robert Wyatt) répétés en master class avec Sylvain Kassap.

580 entrées ! Sauf erreur, ce serait le record de Charleville Action Jazz depuis sa création. Le concert « autour de Robert Wyatt » restera dans les annales.

L'HOMMAGE rendu à Robert Wyatt (n'en déplaise à l'intéressé — toujours bien vivant ! — qui ne souhaitait pas un terme aussi solennel) par Charleville Action Jazz et le théâtre de Charleville-Mézières s'est transformé en une belle réussite.

Il y aura très probablement un album qui naîtra de la rencontre inédite de John Greaves, Karen Mantler, Hélène Labarrière, Dominique Pifarély, Sylvain Kassap et Jacques Mahieux.

Mais on ne sait pour l'heure si les musiciens souhaiteront conserver la spontanéité du *live* réalisé, samedi soir, au théâtre, ou s'ils préféreront enregistrer, en studio, le fruit de leur résidence musicale carolo d'une semaine. Quoi qu'il en soit, ce futur CD ne sortira pas sans porter la marque d'origine de Charleville-Mézières.

Ça s'est passé comme prévu. Les vieux soixante-huitards étaient là en majorité dans la salle : les fans de la première heure. Il y avait même, dans le public, trois ou quatre barbus grisonnants à cheveux longs que l'on aurait presque pu confondre avec le compositeur paraplégique s'ils étaient venus en fauteuil roulant.

Présent par la pensée

Un article du *Monde* de la veille entretenait le suspense : Viendra ? Viendra pas ?

Non, Robert Wyatt n'est pas venu à Charleville-Mézières. Il ne manquait d'ailleurs plus que lui. La fête s'est passée sans lui... physiquement. Mais il était tellement présent par la pensée. Au moins dans les pensées de tous ceux qui lui doivent quelques bonheurs musicaux importants de leur vie... à commencer par les six musiciens eux-mêmes. Robert, si tu nous regardes !...

En fait, John, Karen, Hélène, Dominique, Sylvain et Jacques ont fait un véritable travail de fans.

Karen Mantler l'a d'ailleurs clairement matérialisé sous la forme d'un « *Hymne officiel du fan club de Robert Wyatt* », joué pour la première fois en guise de rappel ; un morceau clin d'œil qui invitait le public à reprendre le refrain dans lequel on épelle avec une sorte de dévotion mécanique les lettres du nom de l'ex-batteur et chanteur de Soft Machine.

Mais ça, c'était pour rire. Tout ce qu'on avait entendu avant ce premier rappel fut bien conforme à ce à quoi les uns et les autres s'attendaient. Jusqu'au dernier album, *Cuckooland*, sorti en octobre 2003.

Le Wyatt politique et militant

Dans cet album, Robert Wyatt évoque, entre autres, ce qu'il considère comme une monstruosité : on a construit un élevage de porcs en ex-Tchécoslovaquie, là où, pendant la dernière guerre, se trouvait un camp de concentration nazi ! (C'est le Wyatt politique et militant...).

Samedi soir, l'éventail fut assez complet : des compositions labellisées RW ou témoins (comme *We did it again* de Kevin Ayers dans le Soft Machine One joué en dernier rappel) de cette liberté musicale débridée dont Robert Wyatt a été l'un des acteurs principaux outre-Manche dès 1968.

Le tout assaisonné de quelques compos personnelles (Kassap, Mantler...) ou de parties spécialement transposées pour le violon de Dominique Pifarély fut un vrai bonheur légitimement salué par de longues très longues minutes d'applaudissements.

Patrick Flaschgo

Ceux qui voudront réentendre le même concert doivent d'ores et déjà noter cette deuxième (et sans doute dernière) date : le 10 février 2004 à Faches-Thumesnil, près de Lille. Mais ce sera dans une petite salle de trois cents places, à peine.

Fans en performance

D'autres manifestations associées étaient prévues pour accompagner la création mondiale autour de la musique de Robert Wyatt. Notamment une exposition pendant tout le mois de novembre à la bibliothèque municipale des livres d'artistes des éditions *AEncrages*. Également une autre exposition des toiles et dessins de Jean-Michel Marchetti en place au musée Rimbaud jusqu'au 11 janvier (article dans une prochaine édition).

Enfin, le musée de l'Ardenne accueillait, samedi après-midi, une « performance » de Jean-Michel Marchetti qui a peint, en direct, devant le public, accompagné par le guitariste Jean-François Pauvros.

Jean-Michel Marchetti, qui peint l'abstraction depuis plus de vingt ans, est aussi un admirateur de Robert Wyatt. Les éditions *AEncrages* ont publié quatre recueils de textes de Robert Wyatt, illustrés des propres dessins de Jean-Michel Marchetti.



L'artiste Jean-Michel Marchetti a peint, devant le pulic, au musée de l'Ardenne, sur une musique du guitariste Jean-François Pauvros.

Lors de cette performance, les évolutions de l'artiste et la guitare parfois très « distortionnée » de Jean-François Pauvros ont été enrichies de lectures de textes très forts de Robert Wyatt (traduits en français), lecture faite par Roland Chopard qui dirige les éditions *AEncrages*.

Different every time: The Authorised Biography Of Robert Wyatt

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Annoncée plus d'un an à l'avance, cette bibliographie de Robert Wyatt par Marcus O'Dair, journaliste et musicien - une moitié du très sophistiqué **Grasscut** - ne déçoit pas.

Très documentée et largement illustrée, les afficionados du présent site y trouveront en 460 pages "*tout ce qu'ils ont toujours voulu savoir sur Robert Wyatt*" et bien plus encore...

Ecrit par un amoureux passionné et exigeant de la musique du grand Bob, cette bible mérite bien son appellation de 2ème de couverture : "**The definitive biography of Britain's greatest cult musician**".



La sortie du livre fin 2014 s'est accompagnée d'une double compilation *Ex machina* et *Benign Dictatorships,* une sélection de collaborations très éclectiques qui rend bien compte de cette curiosité intellectuelle et humaine qui a guidé toute la carrière musicale de RW.

Quelques semaines plus tard, Robert Wyatt faisait savoir qu'il "prenait sa retraite". J'ignore si cette annonce était déjà envisagée au moment de la sortie du livre et des deux albums. Mais ces productions forment un fabuleux point d'orgue à une carrière hors du commun dont chaque épisode entre en résonnance avec les moments forts de notre vie.

Et nul doute que nous vibrerons encore de cette voix et des paysages sonores dont elle a su s'entourer.

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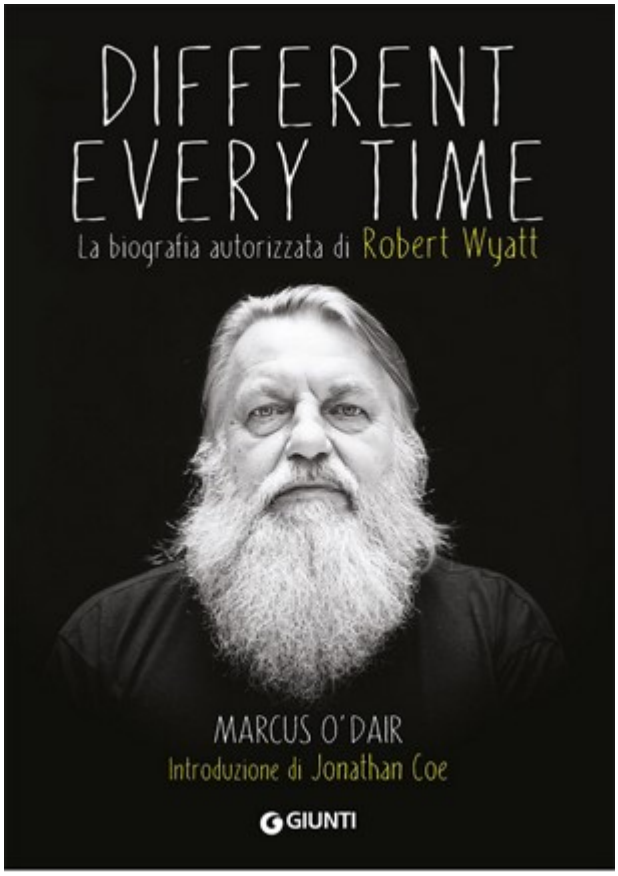
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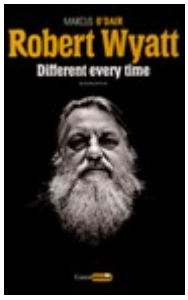
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En octobre 2015, Different Every Time est publiée en Italie, traduite par Alessandro Achilli, déjà traducteur en 1994 de l'ouvrage de Mike King "Wrong Movements".
Il en existe également une version numérique au format Kindle.





La version japonaise



Different every time est publié en français en juin 2016 aux Éditions du Castor astral.

Different Every Time: The Authorised Biography Of Robert Wyatt
Marcus O'Dair
WIRE - November 2014 - Serpent's Tail



Robert Wyatt's phantom pains had less to do with the drunken fall that in 1973 turned him from "drummer biped" into sit down singer, and more to do with the vertebral severance of his firing from Soft Machine. Escaping a familiar "party entanglement" at Lady June's West London flat, Wyatt heard a lupine scream as he slipped off the drainpipe he was shinning, and only realised later that the voice was his own. There's a metaphor in that alone.

Just as phantom pains are medically well attested, so too is the habit of hyperrationalising a disability so that it seems a positive advantage. Wyatt has suggested that the fall (and his secular Christianity might allow us to capitalise it) has been the source of his redemption, though redemption of any sort without the presence of partner and collaborator Alfie - that is, Alfreda Benge - would surely have been vanishingly improbable. The accident turned Wyatt from shirtless rock god, impossibly beautiful in his younger incarnation, into the UK's equivalent of American poet John Berryman, the usually legless, chaotically bearded, impossibly depressive weaver of dream songs who took his own (fatal) jump the year before Wyatt's, in l972.

The songs had been the issue in Soft Machine, who wanted Wyatt to stay behind the kit and keep his mouth shut. The parting wasn't just a falling out with friends, but the thwarting of a distinct musical vision, that has now taken 40 years to work through what might have been done on the Soft's so-so *Third*, dribbly *Fourth* and the essentially redundant *Fifth*, *Six* and *Seven* if Wyatt's 'Pataphysical version of the group had been allowed to prevail. Famously, he called his next group Matching Mole (after machine molle, the French translation of Soft Machine) in hurt/homage/defiance, then broke it up before it got much further than a two steps back, one step forward version of the original group.

Close access to Wyatt and Alfie (who merits a biography of her own) has allowed Marcus O'Dair to explore the fall out more clearly than anyone before. When Wyatt came out of what had begun to look like a full time withdrawal from the world and music making with 1997's heavenly *Shleep*, he was able to say that "*0ld wounds are healing/Faded scars are painless/Just an itch*" and work alongside his former Soft Machine colleague Hugh Hopper again. But he was also moved to say on "Free Will And Testament" that, "*Had I been free, I could have chosen not to be me*". There is suicide, which was Berryman's path, and there is the honest will never to have existed, or to be Other, and that's a whole different kettle of rock bottom fish, a different kind of psychic ooze.

Perhaps the most poignant detail in the whole book is the offscreen image of Wyatt's father in a wheelchair, suffering from multiple sclerosis. It is as if bipedalism was never his birthright, even if a bright and dreamlike imagination was, through his mother Honor. O'Dair catches the mood and spirit of the various Wyatt homes beautifully and gives enough of the wider family -including the turncoat journalist Woodrow Wyatt - to suggest a complex creative and intellectual lineage. He also gives the most detailed account yet of Wyatt's political commitments, which for a long period during his own and the UK's years of lead seemed to outweigh his music. Reviewers rather too eagerly took the cue and for the longest time a Robert Wyatt song was analysed almost exclusively in reference to its lyrics (which were sometimes Alfie's work) when the real subversion and radicalism lay in the music, which came out of a distinctly British approach to jazz as a sonic philosophy rather than a style. When Wyatt mangled the Spanglish words of "Frontera" for his loyal friend Phil Manzanera's 1975 album *Diamond Head*, it was a signal surely that his approach to language was rarely literal. When Robert Christgau criticised Wyatt's lyrics for "minimalist obscurantism" or possibly "obscurantist minimalism", he had the germ of a point but lost it in sourness. Wyatt picked up the cue, saying pawkily that American minimalism is a con, because there's far too much of it, whereas he is the real minimalist, leaving ten

year gaps between projects.



The trajectory from "Frontera" to its retread "Team Spirit" on 1975's relatively unloved *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* sums up much of Wyatt's musical career. The opening "*Kick me, Hardy*" and "*I'm the best football you have got*" say a lot about how easily wheeled about Wyatt is in the recent history of British music. I saw him once at a party, parked in a corner, hunched, with bright people, all of them ostensibly there to celebrate his achievement, shouting over his head. The next week, the papers were full of wordy/worthy examination of his apparently atavistic and cross-grained devotion to Soviet communism. In reality, Robert Wyatt is devoted only to the human spirit in all its frailty and to the 'Pataphysical clinamen, the swerve behind all nature and the "slight deviation in the orderly descent of textual atoms" (as noted by French writer Jacques Jouet) that renders the world and its texts alive and interesting.

It is remarkable that a man whose mobility has been limited for four decades, who does not tour or perform live, should have delivered so much of the musical world to us. Wyatt is the most important British composer and his most important composition was the 2001 Meltdown festival, the most completely satisfying musical week in Britain since records began, even if the principal curator chose only to perform briefly and side-stage. It was the happiest time he'd spent, he says, since some of those Communist-run festivals in Italy back in the day, when food and drink and music vied for attention with the Dialectic. He and Alfie didn't miss a gig, though.

If things had gone differently, Wyatt might still be behind the kit and "sweating like a boxer" on some Softs reunion tour. Whatever he himself feels about it, that would be just out-bloody-rageous.

Brian Morton

Different Every Time
Laurent Rigoulet
TELERAMA - 10/12/14 - *ffff*

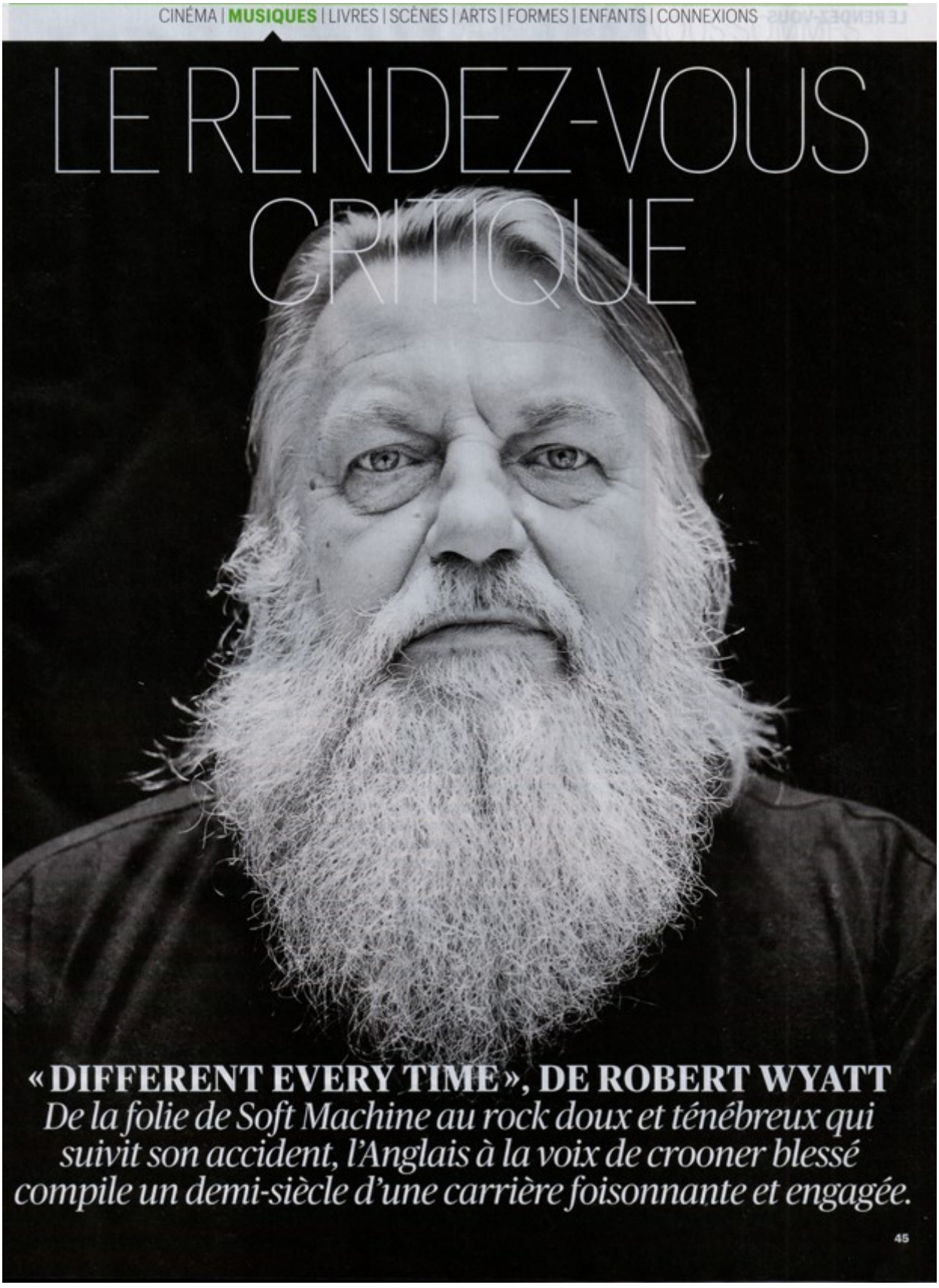


Robert Wyatt est le plus discret des génies. A l'approche de ses 70 ans, il se retire sans un bruit. Une simple phrase pour un journaliste anglais qu'il reçoit, à l'automne, dans sa maison perdue du Lincolnshire : «*J'ai arrêté de faire de la musique*.» Pour tempérer l'effet de cette sombre nouvelle, l'homme «*à la voix la plus triste du monde*» dresse l'inventaire à sa manière. Il fait tenir sur deux albums cinquante ans de carrière et plusieurs vies à l'avant-garde de l'internationale rock, où il a côtoyé aussi bien Jimi Hendrix et Syd Barrett que Björk et Elvis Costello. Le pari est absurde, les choix abrupts, les oublis nombreux, mais Robert Wyatt, patriarche aux humeurs changeantes, ne pouvait que trancher dans le vif pour résumer, sans souci de logique, un parcours prodigieux dont la boussole oscille entre Charles Mingus et Karl Marx, Alfred Jarry et Billie Holiday. La compilation n'est pas baptisée pour rien *Different every time* (« *chaque fois différent* »). Elle esquisse la cartographie d'une vie tout en bifurcations et donne de l'appétit pour replonger dans l'œuvre foisonnante de ce patriarche que les Anglais considèrent comme un «monument national» (lire encadré). En Grande-Bretagne, le disque s'accompagne d'une biographie au titre identique, qui brosse un portrait détaillé de ses multiples incarnations : le batteur de Soft Machine, noceur et soûlographe, improvisant torse nu dans le tourbillon festif du

Swinging London ; le chanteur paraplégique, cloué à son fauteuil roulant après une chute accidentelle, du quatrième étage, lors d'une soirée de juin 1973 ; le crooner dépressif, le militant communiste endurci, l'érudit jazz, l'agitateur pop...

Pour lancer la visite, Robert Wyatt nous fait pénétrer dans son univers par une ouverture aussi baroque que monumentale. *Moon in june* est une composition de vingt minutes, une odyssée tantôt mélodieuse, tantôt bruitiste, qui condense les années folles de Soft Machine sur la ligne de front du rock expérimental des années 1960. Comme Pink Floyd, son «*jumeau de l'underground*», le groupe de Canterbury a tissé sa légende de concerts épiques - moto sur scène, happenings, bains de gelée, explosions de fumée... lors de soirées psychédéliques où tout était combiné pour évoquer les «*rêves en Technicolor*» et les voyages sous acide. La liberté était le seul cap et les improvisations musicales n'avaient guère d'autre limite que celle des ressources physiques. Enregistré au tournant des années 1970, *Moon in june* garde l'empreinte de ces digressions mais ne s'écarte jamais des chansons pop et de la musique black américaine dont Wyatt s'est nourri toute sa vie. Le canevas est souple, les mélodies rayonnent ou s'estompent dans le tourbillon instrumental, la voix aiguë du chanteur flotte dans un jour chagrin, se laisse emporter par l'exubérance du jeu de batterie sans rien perdre de son émotivité. «*Pour Charles Mingus*, dit Wyatt, *la musique perd toute valeur, toute signification si elle se coupe de ses racines dans la chanson ou la danse*.» «*J'aime la pop à mort*», clame-t-il aussi.

LE RENDEZ-VOUS CRITIQUE



« DIFFERENT EVERY TIME », DE ROBERT WYATT

De la folie de Soft Machine au rock doux et ténébreux qui suivit son accident, l'Anglais à la voix de crooner blessé compile un demi-siècle d'une carrière foisonnante et engagée.

D'une exploration à l'autre, il en a fait son credo. Quitte à s'opposer à ses comparses de Soft Machine, qui juraient que par l'abstraction pur et dure. Ce *Moon in june*, saturé de vie, un acte de décès. Leur dernier morceau en commun. Wyatt l'a enregistré presque seul avant de se faire renvoyer du groupe qu'il avait fondé. Il en a gardé un chagrin immense (dont il a dit parfois, qu'il l'avait conduit à son accident) mais en a tiré une ferme philosophie musicale. Contre le jazz-rock sans âme que des musiciens rock, fascinés par John Coltrane, ont fait déferler sur les années 1970 (« *la pire fusion possible*»). Pour un rock doux, ténébreux, nourri par la fluidité des mélodies jazz.

Après son terrible accident, Robert Wyatt, émouvant crooner qui n'aura jamais chanté debout, dit qu'il

n'avait d'autre choix que d'« *inventer une autre manière de faire de la musique* ». Il l'a fait, sans attendre, en 1974, sur son chef-d'œuvre, *Rock Bottom*, tissé des mélodies aqueuses qui lui tournaient en tête sur son lit d'hôpital. D'une époque à l'autre, le chanteur blessé a traversé des zones fortement dépressives, mais il a produit, sans relâche des chansons généreuses et teintées d'un optimisme combatif. *Different every time* en fournit quelques brillants aperçus. *At last I'm free*, reprise languissante du chic des années disco, est le joyau d'une période fertile - les années Thatcher - où il s'est nourri de la musique populaire pour enregistrer de poignants manifestes (sur la face B du 45 tours, il livrait une magnifique relecture du *Strange Fruit* rendu célèbre par Billie Holiday). Faite d'emprunts, de citations, de détournements, de collages, sa musique est devenue indissociable de la lutte politique. Avec la liberté de sa voix, capable de restituer chaque tonalité d'un solo de jazz, Robert Wyatt peut faire pleurer en chantant les hymnes de la gauche éternelle ou les compromissions du socialisme moderne, la mort de la classe ouvrière, l'avènement du libéralisme (*The Age of self*)...

Il veut donc se retirer du monde à présent. Il reviendra peut-être. Et ne s'effacera pas. En couverture du disque et de la biographie 2014, l'image qu'il imprime est celle d'un ermite, taillé dans le roc, au regard ferme et clair. La force indestructible d'un guide qui a su se faire écouter de tribus aussi antagonistes que les punks ou les hippies, et que les jeunes générations n'ont pas fini d'entendre.

Laurent Rigoulet

Ex machina, un recueil de ses enregistrements, et **Benign Dictatorships**, qui rassemble quelques interventions sur d'autres disques que les siens.

Different every time, the authorized biography of Robert Wyatt, de Marcus O'Dair, préface de Jonathan Coe, éd. Serpent's Tail.



Robert Wyatt (au centre) vers 1968, avec ses comparses de Soft Machine

SUIVEZ LE GUIDE

Les albums solo de Robert Wyatt ont bénéficié de rééditions soignées (chez Domino). Par où commencer?

Rock Bottom, libre manifeste d'un artiste qui a largué les amarres, est l'album clé pour se laisser happer par les mélodies en clair-obscur et les escapades sonores de Wyatt.

Réalisé un an plus tard, en 1975, **Ruth is stranger than Richard**, plus sombre, achève d'imposer la signature d'un chanteur solitaire.

Nothing can stop us, petit chef-d'œuvre de la pop marxiste, rassemble en 1982 les chansons publiées sous forme de 45 tours pendant les années Thatcher. Avec le magnifique *Shipbuilding*, écrit par Elvis Costello.

En bonus, **Jet Propelled Photographs** est une belle curiosité de l'époque Soft Machine et du Robert Wyatt chanteur soûl et batteur énergique. Des bandes enregistrées à Londres en 1967 dans la formation d'origine, et une chanson inoubliable, *Memories*. - L.R.

Different every time - traduction française

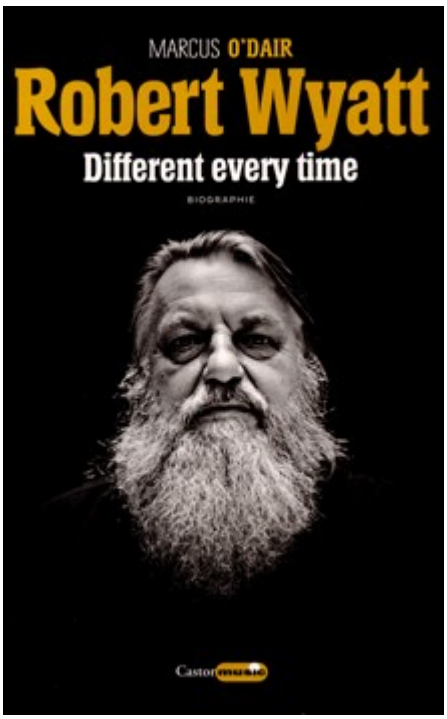
ABÉCÉDAIRE

Quel millésime cette année 2016 avec les publications successives de **L'École de Canterbury** d'Aymeric Leroy et la traduction française de la magistrale biographie de Robert Wyatt **Different every time** de Marcus O'Dair tout juste publiée le mois dernier aux Editions du Castor Astral !

La préface de Jonathan Coe donne la clé de cette relation unique qui lie le compositeur-interprète de *Moon In June* et de *Signed Curtain* à ses admirateurs depuis plus de 40 ans :

"De plus en plus Robert Wyatt ressemble à la voix de la raison. Des chansons sensées pour une époque insensée. Il n'est pas étonnant que d'innombrables personnes, telles que moi, ont été inspirées et élevées par celles-ci pendant si longtemps, et resteront à jamais reconnaissantes."

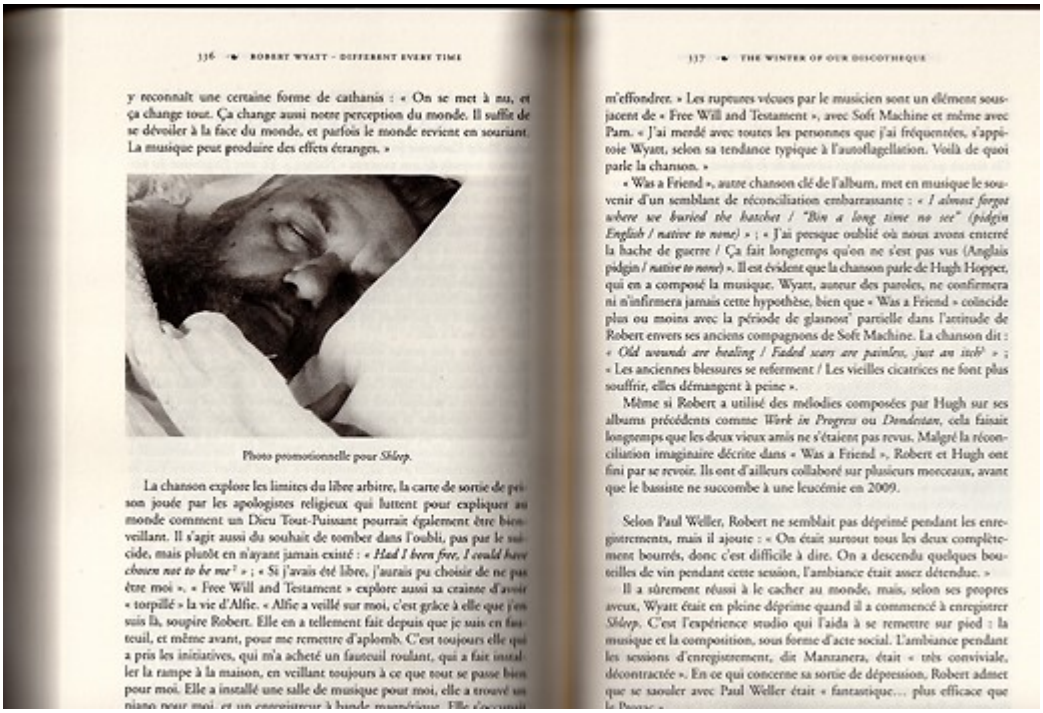
"More and more, Robert Wyatt sounds like the voice of sanity. Sane songs for insane times. No wonder that I, and countless others, have been inspired and uplifted by them for so long, and will remain forever grateful."



Touché ! En 22 chapitres et two sides - *The drummer biped* et *Ex machina* - Marcus O'Dair nous transporte des premiers concerts de congas sur la plage de Déia (Majorque) au studio de son ami Phil Manzanera en passant par les soirées au Ronnie Scott's ou les tournées américaines.

Les habitués du site *disco-robertwyatt.com* retrouveront avec plaisir le récit des enregistrements les plus emblématiques de la carrière de Robert Wyatt mais aussi ses multiples et inattendues collaborations musicales qui ont rythmé sa vie de compositeur et de musicien durant plusieurs décennies.

Au-delà de la trame chronologique que la plupart des lecteurs de cette newsletter connaissent déjà peu ou prou, c'est surtout la parole de Robert Wyatt qui est le fil conducteur de l'ouvrage. Jamais avare d'une réflexion critique sur son travail - un tantinet masochiste toutefois - il décrypte avec lucidité son parcours d'artiste et les métamorphoses de l'industrie culturelle qui impose progressivement sa pensée dominante depuis un demi-siècle.



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y reconnaît une certaine forme de catharsis : « On se met à nu, et ça change tout. Ça change aussi notre perception du monde. Il suffit de se dévoiler à la face du monde, et parfois le monde revient en souriant. La musique peut produire des effets étranges. »

Photo promotionnelle pour *Shleep*.

La chanson explore les limites du libre arbitre, la carte de sortie de prison jouée par les apologistes religieux qui luttent pour expliquer au monde comment un Dieu Tout-Puissant pourrait également être bienveillant. Il s'agit aussi du souhait de tomber dans l'oubli, pas par le suicide, mais plutôt en n'ayant jamais existé : « *Had I been free, I could have chosen not to be me*[1] » ; « Si j'avais été libre, j'aurais pu choisir de ne pas être moi ». « Free Will and Testament » explore aussi sa crainte d'avoir « torpillé » la vie d'Alfie. « Alfie a veillé sur moi, c'est grâce à elle que j'en suis là, soupire Robert. Elle en a tellement fait depuis que je suis en fauteuil, et même avant, pour me remettre d'aplomb. C'est toujours elle qui a pris les initiatives, qui m'a acheté un fauteuil roulant, qui a fait installer la rampe à la maison, en veillant toujours à ce que tout se passe bien pour moi. Elle a installé une salle de musique pour moi, elle a trouvé un piano pour moi, et un enregistreur à bande magnétique. Elle s'occupait

337 THE WINTER OF OUR DISCOTHEQUE

m'effondrer. » Les ruptures vécues par le musicien sont un élément sous-jacent de « Free Will and Testament », avec Soft Machine et même avec Pam. « J'ai merdé avec toutes les personnes que j'ai fréquentées, s'apitoie Wyatt, selon sa tendance typique à l'autoflagellation. Voilà de quoi parle la chanson. »

« Was a Friend », autre chanson clé de l'album, met en musique le souvenir d'un semblant de réconciliation embarrassante : « *I almost forgot where we buried the hatchet / "Bin a long time no see" (pidgin English / native to none)* » ; « J'ai presque oublié où nous avons enterré la hache de guerre / Ça fait longtemps qu'on ne s'est pas vus (Anglais pidgin / *native to none*) ». Il est évident que la chanson parle de Hugh Hopper, qui en a composé la musique. Wyatt, auteur des paroles, ne confirmera ni n'infirmera jamais cette hypothèse, bien que « Was a Friend » coïncide plus ou moins avec la période de glasnost' partielle dans l'attitude de Robert envers ses anciens compagnons de Soft Machine. La chanson dit : « *Old wounds are healing / Faded scars are painless, just an itch*[2] » ; « Les anciennes blessures se referment / Les vieilles cicatrices ne font plus souffrir, elles démangent à peine ».

Même si Robert a utilisé des mélodies composées par Hugh sur ses albums précédents comme *Work in Progress* ou *Dondestan*, cela faisait longtemps que les deux vieux amis ne s'étaient pas revus. Malgré la réconciliation imaginaire décrite dans « Was a Friend », Robert et Hugh ont fini par se revoir. Ils ont d'ailleurs collaboré sur plusieurs morceaux, avant que le bassiste ne succombe à une leucémie en 2009.

Selon Paul Weller, Robert ne semblait pas déprimé pendant les enregistrements, mais il ajoute : « On était surtout tous les deux complètement bourrés, donc c'est difficile à dire. On a descendu quelques bouteilles de vin pendant cette session, l'ambiance était assez détendue. »

Il a sûrement réussi à le cacher au monde, mais, selon ses propres aveux, Wyatt était en pleine déprime quand il a commencé à enregistrer *Shleep*. C'est l'expérience studio qui l'aida à se remettre sur pied : la musique et la composition, sous forme d'acte social. L'ambiance pendant les sessions d'enregistrement, dit Manzanera, était « très conviviale, décontractée ». En ce qui concerne sa sortie de dépression, Robert admet que se saouler avec Paul Weller était « fantastique… plus efficace que

Ce qui me touche le plus, c'est sa fidélité à des valeurs qu'il a su exprimer musicalement de la manière la plus radicale mais aussi la plus inventive et la plus légère possible. Comme s'il avait trouvé la martingale faisant cohabiter simplicité et complexité, fantaisie et profondeur...

Mais bien des batailles intimes se sont livrées au cours de cette vie qui ne fut pas sans récifs. Marcus O'Dair ne transforme pas Robert Wyatt en héros positif de la musique engagée et avant-gardiste. Il déroule le fil d'une histoire pleine de doutes et d'incompréhensions qui seront souvent surmontés grâce à la passion combative d'Alfie sans laquelle les chefs-d'œuvre de la période "solo" n'auraient sans doute jamais vu le jour...



Ce livre paraît quelques mois après que Robert Wyatt a mis officiellement un terme à sa carrière artistique. J'espère que Robert Wyatt ne raccrochera pas totalement les gants et qu'il continuera

de nous faire parvenir de temps à autre une de ses cartes postales sonores qui irradient les œuvres de ses amis musiciens.

Different every time est paru aux Éditions du Castor Astral - collection Castor Music, traduit de l'anglais par Pauline Firla et Louis Moisan. Préface de Jonathan Coe.
454 pages - 24 euros.

Argumentaire de l'éditeur

En vente sur les librairies en ligne et dans toutes les librairies physiques avec de vrais livres et de vrais libraires à l'intérieur (vivement recommandé).

En savoir plus : Different every time, la biographie de Marcus O'DAir



Accueil > Blogs > Ça va jazzer

Robert Wyatt, Saint et Soft

BRUNO PFEIFFER 11 JUILLET 2016 (MISE À JOUR : 12 JUILLET 2016)

Retour sur la biographie du batteur phénoménal de Soft Machine, devenu le compositeur qui enchanta le rock des sixties et des quatre décennies suivantes.

Qui contestera à *Moon in June*, le morceau de Soft Machine, composé en mai 1970 par le batteur Robert Wyatt, la qualité de totale perfection? Wyatt et ses congénères David Aellen, Kevin Ayers et l'organiste Mike Ratledge ont formé Soft en 1966 à Canterbury (GB). Le chef d'œuvre *Moon in June* figure sur le troisième album du groupe (*Third*). Une suite sublime (19 minutes) psalmodiée par le batteur lui-même (la voix d'ange approche le registre de haute contre). Wyatt quittera Soft en 71 pour fonder Matching Mole.

O Caroline, balade de rêve, également signée Wyatt, inaugure le premier disque intitulé *Matching Mole* (1972). Délice renouvelé. Une thèse sur la beauté dans le rock anglais devrait autant s'attarder sur ces deux seuls titres que sur l'intégrale des Beatles. Les cadeaux ne sont pas au bout. L'Anglais né à Bristol a 27 ans. Il rencontre sa compagne Alfie (l'actrice Alfreda Benge), au premier concert de Matching Mole, le 22 janvier 1972. Une chute de plusieurs étages lui brise les jambes (1973).

En convalescence, il concocte *Rock Bottom*, un bijou d'album. J'assiste à la présentation en avant-première à Londres des morceaux de *Rock Bottom* durant la soirée caritative pour Mal Dean, le 25 juillet 1974. Devant une petite centaine de personnes, dont quatre ados (nous), Wyatt joue seul au piano, sur la chaise roulante. C'est poignant. A la fin de la prestation, les copains de Strasbourg en goguette cet été-là, viennent féliciter leur dieu. Nos guibolles tremblent, on ressent un trac fou. Wyatt! Le sourire, la bienveillance, nous éblouissent. Je bafouille quelques mots, genre «*on a tous vos disques Monsieur Wyatt*». Lui (en anglais): «*Oh des Français, c'est gentil d'être venus m'écouter. La musique vous a plu?*» Le monument *Rock Bottom* sort en 1974, envolée de lumière dans les ténèbres.

Lorsque je reverrai Wyatt à Paris (le label Naïve distribue en 2004 *His Greatest Misses* , une compil truffée d'inédits magnifiques, organise des interviews), je lui rappellerai. Wyatt n'en revenait pas : «

incroyable, vous étiez présents?» Je lui demande le nom du saxophoniste qui l'a rejoint pour les morceaux de la fin. Il ne se souvenait pas du tout d'un saxo ce soir-là. Apparaît Alfie, dans le patio de l'hôtel. Wyatt l'interpelle : «*tu sais pas la meilleure, Alfie, ce garçon était à la première de* Rock Bottom*! Il n'y avait pas de saxo, je jouais seul, n'est-ce pas?*» Alfie réfléchit. «*Si si, Robert. Gary Windo t'as rejoint pour les deux derniers morceaux* »!

Chers lecteurs, croyez-le, le nirvana me paraissait un plancher à côté de l'altitude où je planais. Je supplie la personne de Naïve de nous photographier. Dans l'ouvrage qui sort cet été au Castor Astral, traduction française de la bible déjà culte de Marcus O'Dair parue en 2014 *(Robert Wyatt, Different every time*), on trouve mille précisions sur la vie du grand homme. Je vérifie notamment celle sur Gary Windo. Le témoignage de Wyatt appuie les informations sur une longévité sans compromis (nombreuses rencontres avec l'auteur). Le récit passe du Soft Machine psychédélique à la rédemption de *Rock Bottom* (mariage avec Alfie, très présente dans l'ouvrage, en fusion permanente). Et s'étend sur les nombreux albums solos (*Old Rottenhat*, *Dondestan*, *Shleep*, *Cuckooland*, etc.) Les plages intimes fourmillent. Ainsi l'on se ressource avec Robert pendant les moments de paradis sur le South Bank de Londres. La musique de Robert incarne sa vie. La voici, en vrai.

Bruno Pfeiffer

Docteur Honoris Causa

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ROBERT WYATT DISTINGUÉ PAR L'UNIVERSITÉ DE LIÈGE

Les sept musiciens et compositeurs suivants,
Dick Annegarn, Anthony Braxton, Arvo Pärt, Henri Pousseur (à titre posthume), Frederic Rzewski, Archie Shepp et Robert Wyatt ont été faits Docteur Honoris Causa par l'Université de Liège le 17 septembre 2009. Rappelons que ce titre honorifique permet à une université de souligner l'œuvre d'une personnalité ayant posé sa marque dans un domaine particulier. Pour l'Université de Liège, c'est avant tout la reconnaissance de leur rôle de "**passeur de musique**":

" Leur goût pour l'innovation, tout comme leur refus de confiner leurs créations à un seul genre ou à une seule tradition ne les ont pas empêchés de récolter un succès considérable auprès de leurs contemporains, dépassant les clivages qui séparent trop souvent les représentants de la musique populaire des expérimentateurs confidentiels.

Mettant leur érudition et leur imagination au service du plus grand nombre, les artistes honorés ont aussi brillé par leur intégrité morale, leur honnêteté intellectuelle et leur indépendance radicale par rapport à ce qu'il est désormais commun d'appeler l' «industrie musicale». "

On ne peut mieux dire.

Cet hommage a donné lieu à une conférence-débat en présence des musiciens et compositeurs et à un concert privé gratuit en fin de journée où ont été jouées des œuvres des sept musiciens honorés.

Nos envoyé(e)s spéciaux n'ont rien manqué de cette journée aussi étonnante que réjouissante...

Nous avons donc suivi pas à pas R.W. ce jeudi dans toutes les manifestations publiques organisées entre autres en son honneur.

Eminemment simple et sympathique, il nous est apparu serein et calme tout au long de la journée. Peut-être s'est-il demandé ce qui lui arrivait d'être autant entouré. Il était curieux des lieux dans lesquels il se trouvait, regardant souvent, le matin, une magnifique coupole conférant à la salle de conférence une grandeur et une majesté certaines. Un peu détaché, il écoutait cependant les interventions de ses collègues musiciens avec une certaine tendresse qui lui amenait de temps à autre un sourire.
La cérémonie protocolaire semblait plus encore que le matin le laisser perplexe. Même la grande toge noire qu'il avait dû revêtir ne l'aidait pas à comprendre la solennité



> Zoom

0:00 / 2:37

Vandalusia



> Zoom

0:00 / 2:53

Alifib

à laquelle il devait faire face : alors il est resté égal à lui-même, serein, un rien détaché et passif à l'égard de tous ces honneurs. Il s'est toutefois amusé au moment où l'on lui a remis la médaille de Dr Honoris causa.... car, à peine entre les mains, il la perdit immédiatement : cela l'a vraiment égayé.
Le couronnement de la journée fut le concert du soir.... et là, après l'interprétation de ses morceaux par quatre jeunes musciiens, je pense qu'il fut très ému quand la salle entière lui a fait un triomphe, les spectateurs s'étant tournés vers lui pour l'applaudir et l'ovationner de voix vives... là, il avait enfin retrouvé son monde, celui dans lequel finalement il doit se sentir le mieux : la musique.

Journée inoubliable pour lui je l'espère mais assurément pour nous qui avons eu l'immense bonheur de partager un moment sa vie

Philippe et Armande Paye

Concert dans la Salle Philharmonique, Liège (BE).

Alifib, *Gharbzadegi* et *Vandalusia* interprétés par le Quatuor Tana:
- Antoine Maisonhaute & Mikaël Bonnay - violin
- Romain Monfort - viola
- Jeanne Maisonhaute - cello

(arrangements de Stéphane Collin, Thanks to Annie Whitehead).

Crédits photos: Alfreda Benge, Philippe Paye et Charles Van Waalwijk.



> Zoom

0:00 / 3:44

Gharbzadegi



> Zoom



> Zoom

0:00 / 1:33



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

L'école de Canterbury

ABÉCÉDAIRE



C'est avec grand plaisir que je me fais amicalement le relais d'une initiative hautement salutaire : la publication tant attendue le mois dernier (avril 2016) de l'ouvrage auquel Aymeric Leroy travaillait depuis des années: **L'école de Canterbury**.

Doté de 735 pages - 948 grammes, cet ouvrage "choral" suit l'émergence et le rayonnement des groupes et des musiciens qui ont constitué la fameuse école depuis la fin des années 60...
Qu'un tel livre soit publié aujourd'hui prouve qu'il existe encore un public suffisamment curieux de cette aventure musicale et artistique hors normes. Du moins je l'espère.



Aymeric Leroy et Robert Wyatt (2007)

Des 226 musiciens cités dans l'index, certains (suivez mon regard) auront fait plus que produire les *environnements sonores* de notre jeunesse: ils auront - en quelques albums et concerts - exacerbé notre désir d'une vie plus intense, plus poétique, plus consciente...

A ceux là, ma reconnaissance éternelle...

Je ne doute pas qu'Ameyric a lui aussi été marqué à vie par ces aventuriers du son.

L'immense travail qu'il déploie dans ce domaine depuis longtemps (son Canterbury Website a 20 ans cette année!) s'enrichit donc d'un nouvel opus aussi méticuleux qu'indispensable !

Il est possible de commander l'ouvrage dans toutes les bonnes librairies ou directement en ligne sur le site de l'éditeur.

Aymeric a créé à cette occasion un nouveau blog Legends In Their Own Lunchtime - Close encounters with the Canterbury Scene qui accompagne et complète L'école de Canterbury avec des thèmatiques, des visuels et des témoignages supplémentaires...

Bonne lecture !

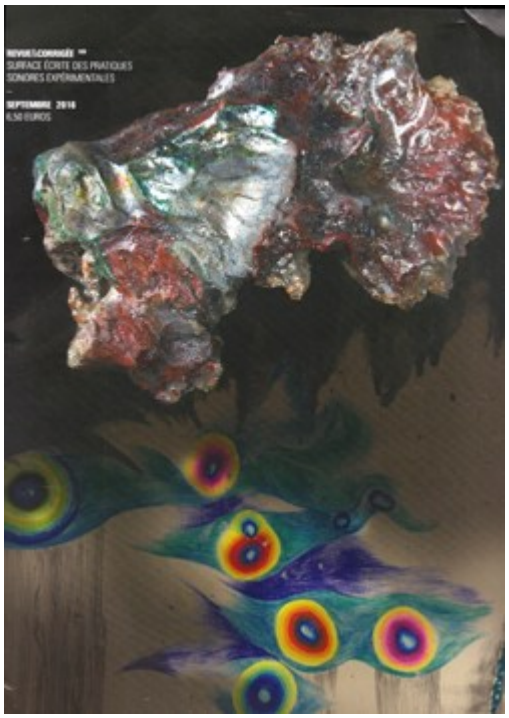
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Émission Rockoscopie du 26 juin 2016 sur Judaïques FM avec Aymeric Leroy (57:54)

REVUE ET CORRIGEE - N° 109 - SEPTEMBRE 2016

AYMERIC LEROY
L'ECOLE DE CANTERBURY
LE MOT ET LE RESTE-2016

C'est un fait : tous les musiciens dont il est question dans ce livre ne se sont pas rassemblés, avec, en tête, l'idée d'un projet esthétique précis, mais plutôt animés par l'envie de jouer ensemble.



Pour autant, si l'on en croit Kevin Ayers, l'idée d'une grande famille était bien là, dès les débuts de Soft Machine. Ce qui n'empêche d'ailleurs pas certains amateurs d'objecter que l'Ecole de Canterbury n'est qu'une invention journalistique, en prenant pour preuve un article du New Musical Express de 1973, ou l'interview de Kevin Ayers parue dans ZigZag la même année, premiers à utiliser une appellation que les concernés eux-mêmes ont pu réfuter. Robert Wyatt en tête. Quoiqu'il en soit, c'est de l'histoire de cette école-famille devenue culte dont il s'agit ici, au long de sept cents et quelques pages vivantes et richement documentées, débutant en gros avec l'arrivée de Daevid Allen à Canterbury en 1960 et s'achevant avec Soft Machine Legacy en 2016. Entre ce qu'on sait du Daevid Allen Trio en 1963 et des Wilde Flowers entre 1965 et 1966 jusqu'à l'héritage actuel (l'essentiel de la chronologie courant toutefois entre 1966 et 1981), Caravan, Gong, Egg, Hatfield & The North, Gilgamesh et National Health (entre autres) sont passés en revue, ainsi qu'une myriade de projets plus ou moins individuels centrés sur des préoccupations plus ou moins communes. Parmi les plus belles pages de cet ouvrage, figurent des analyses remarquables des albums Rock Bottom et Happer Tunity Box de Robert Wyatt et Hugh Hopper, l'auteur réussissant même à passionner quand il s'agit de parler de Shamo-l et Gazeuse de Gong, deux disques que l'on peut pourtant ne pas trouver à son goût. La lecture se termine par des arbres généalogiques ayant le mérite de clarifier ce qui pourrait paraître embrouillé pour le néophyte, au vu des incessants changements de personnel au sein des groupes de cette école. Saluons le travail d'historien, considérable, pour cette somme sans équivalent. D'autant que l'auteur a rencontré et interviewé la plupart des protagonistes afin de croiser les informations.

PHILIPPE ROBERT

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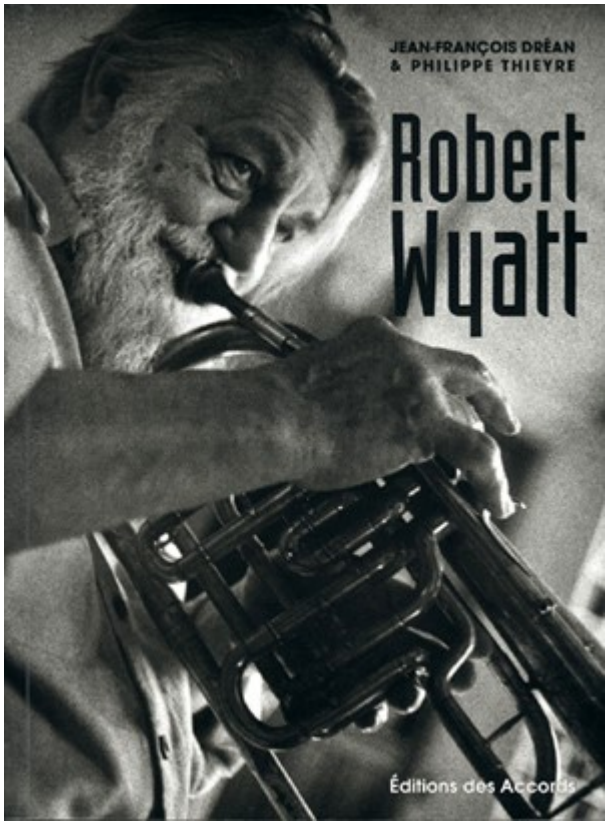
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Robert Wyatt - Editions des Accords

ABÉCÉDAIRE



ROBERT WYATT
Editions des Accords
novembre 2009 - 120 pages

JEAN-FRANCOIS DREAN (photographies)
PHILIPPE THIEYRE (texte)

I used to be Robert Wyatt

"Il y a des moments où je me demande si je n'aurais pas dû disparaître de la scène à la fin des années soixante, comme Syd Barrett. J'aurais peut-être acquis un statut de légende. J'aurais pu avoir une vie secrète. Maintenant c'est trop tard. J'ai mis trop de temps à me décider.

Quand des gens m'arrêtent dans la rue et me posent la question rituelle : êtes-vous Robert Wyatt ? Je réponds : "I used to be Robert Wyatt" (J'ai été Robert Wyatt)."

Jean-François Dréant (photographe) et Philippe Thièyre (journaliste) ont passé plusieurs jours à Louth en compagnie de Robert Wyatt et d'Alfie Benge. Ils en ont ramené, non pas une biographie, mais un portrait éclaté du musicien/compositeur au quotidien. Au gré des conversations, sur le marché, dans les restaurants, à son domicile, Robert Wyatt déroule le fil de ses 40 ans de carrière musicale, en prenant le temps de la digression et de l'anecdote. Il en résulte un long interview à deux voix (Robert et Alfie) autour des thèmes les plus emblématiques de son parcours : le jazz, le travail en studio et la scène, les Sixties, les maisons de disques et les royalties, John Coltrane et Miles Davis, son engagement au parti communiste pendant les années Thatcher, la Palestine et Israël, sa voix hermaphrodite, ses multiples collaborations artistiques... et bien sur Soft Machine et Matching Mole... sur tous ces sujets et bien d'autres, Robert Wyatt livre ses doutes et ses certitudes "ponctuant ses phrases de sourires ironiques ou de francs éclats de rire".

En contrepoint, les photographies argentiques en noir et blanc de Jean-François Dréan montre un Robert Wyatt de tous les jours, en fauteuil roulant dans les rues de Louth ou les yeux pétillants en s'emparant d'une paire de baguettes ou de son cornet. C'est le Robert qu'on aime, tellement proche et si loin devant.

Ecouter l'interview de Philippe Thièyre et Jean-François Dréan sur France Culture



Alfie : écriture et peinture

Alfie : *quelquefois, les textes préexistent ; d'autres fois, les mots me viennent en écoutant une proposition musicale précise de la part de Robert. Par la suite, Robert change un mot ou deux pour faciliter son interprétation. De temps en temps, il arrive que je refuse cette modification, estimant que le sens de la chanson en serait trop modifié. Sur* Forest, *je suis intervenu dès le départ sur la musique. J'ai toujours écrit, pas forcément pour être publiée, mais pour le plaisir et la liberté qu'apporte l'écriture. Certains de mes poèmes ont toutefois été édités dans une anthologie américaine. Depuis qu'il les a découverts, Robert les a mis en musique. Du coup, maintenant, il se laisse aller à la paresse en ce qui concerne les textes. Il attend que je les lui fournisse.*

Avant de connaître Robert, je rédigeais de temps à autre des articles sur la musique et des dialogues de film comme ceux de ***McCabe & Mrs Miller*** *avec mon amie Julie Christie. J'ai également aidé cette dernière, qui n'aime guère improviser, pour les dialogues d'un film de Liliane de Kermadec qui, au final, ne se fera pas. Ce travail de dialoguiste n'est pas non plus arrivé par hasard. Si j'ai étudié la peinture pendant trois ans (même si les écoles classiques m'ont vite ennuyée) et encore trois pour le graphisme, j'ai passé cinq années, de 1963 à 1968, dans les écoles de cinéma, en particulier pour l'écriture cinématographique. En fait, élargir mes connaissances artistiques me passionne. Pour le cinéma, j'ai également travaillé comme assistante sur* ***Performance*** **.*

On me dit qu'il est facile de discuter avec moi, mais que je suis difficile à interviewer. Je prends des routes détournées dans mes conversations. Les journalistes finissent par oublier la question parce que je ne réussis pas à donner des réponses simples, directes et mes phrases sont trop longues.

Robert Wyatt

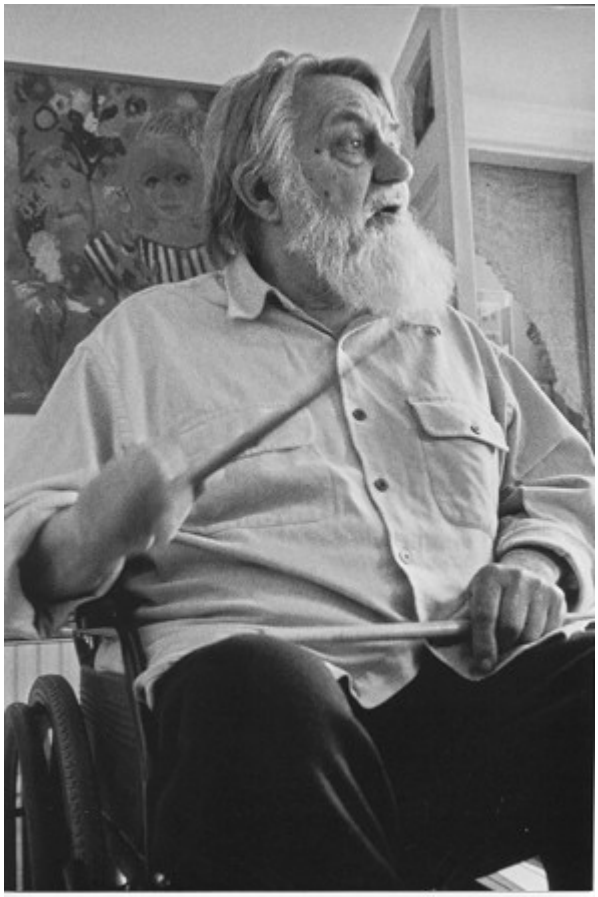


Photo : Jean-François Dréan

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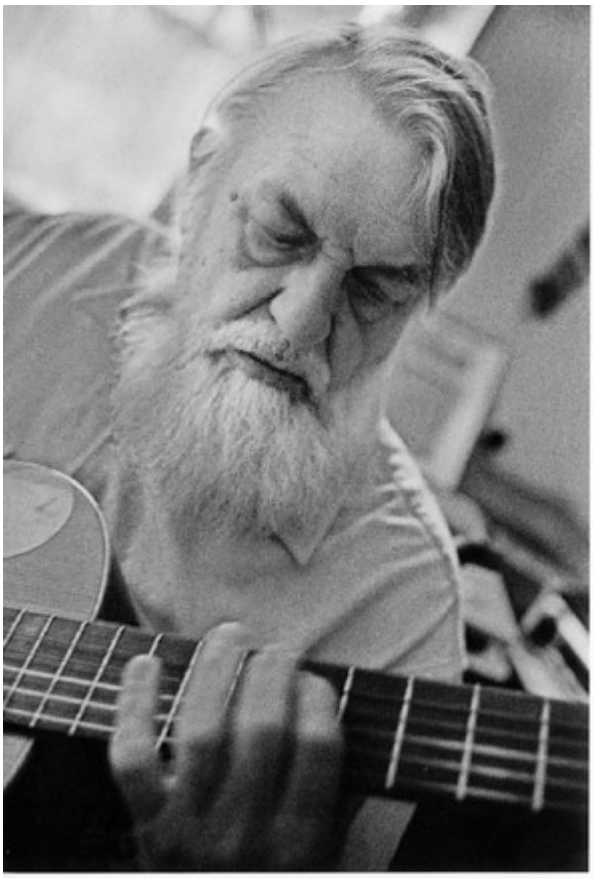
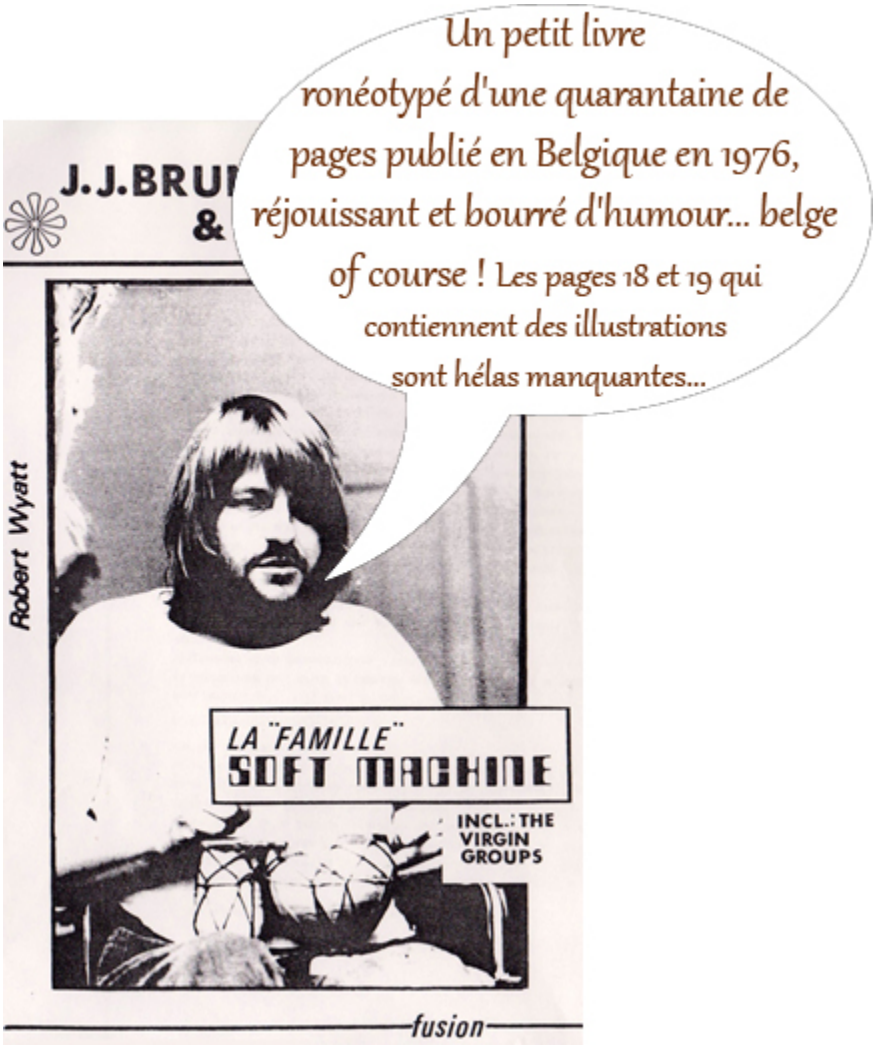


Photo : Jean-François Dréan

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La famille Soft Machine

ABÉCÉDAIRE



J.J.BRUNIN & P.DUFROC



Robert Wyatt

LA "FAMILLE"
SOFT MACHINE

INCL.: THE VIRGIN GROUPS

fusion

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I. PROLEGOMENES DE LA MACHINE MOLLE

a. Prolégomènes des prolégomènes de la machine molle :

Par souci d'honnêteté, nous nous faisons un devoir de prévenir le ou les lecteurs occasionnel(s) de la présente étude des buts essentiellement matériels dudit avertissement. (Le Prolégomènes initiaux réf. I). En effet, tout le monde sait qu'un lecteur avertit en vaut deux, il est donc on ne peut plus évident que notre Phynance s'en voit doublée! (Nous vous en sommes très reconnaissants). Nous déplorons simplement qu'une lecture répétée de cet ouvrage ne se traduise pas par un enflement répété de notre bourse... (ceci n'engage que les auteurs).

b. Prolégomènes proprement dits :

Nous pensons qu'il soit assez SUPERFETATOIRE de prévenir le lecteur du caractère schématique de l'étude de certains groupes dû surtout à un manque de renseignements et de documentations. Nous n'insisterons donc pas plus longtemps sur ce point.
Il ne nous reste donc qu'à vous donner le jalon le plus important pour pénétrer l'esprit des groupes sur lesquels nous allons joyeusement disserter : c'est-à-dire la "Pataphysique".
Il nous sera très difficile de cerner clairement cette science inventée par Alfred JARRY(le créateur du père Ubu) parce qu'elle touche essentiellement l'esprit et que nous ne sommes point psychanalyste. De nombreuses définitions en ont déjà été établies mais qui étant par trop synthétiques - comme toute définition d'ailleurs -, ne donnent qu'une vague idée de cette science. JARRY au livre II de ses "Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien" intitulé "Eléments de "Pataphysique", nous éclaire quelque peu à ce sujet. Dans un style des plus abscons, digne du plus grand symboliste, il nous donne quelques clefs mais aussi la définition "claire, nette et précise" qui suit : "La Pataphysique est la science des solutions imaginaires qui accorde symboliquement aux linéaments les propriétés des objets décrits par leur virtualité..." Dans cette simple phrase une grande partie de la "Pataphysique est enclose et l'on peut y voir ses nombreuses - pour ne pas dire infinies - implications et applications. Le pataphysicien n'accorde aucune importance au symbole mais le prend en tant que tel. Pour lui, les apparences sont pleinement satisfaisantes et les simulacres des réalités parfaitement matérielles. Cette réalité étant purement imaginaire.

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VIAN - un des membres les plus réputés du Collège de "Pataphysique - est plus simple, mais à notre avis cette simplicité trahi quelque peu les richesses intellectuelles cachées dans le textes du plus pur style symbolard de JARRY, mais elle permet de mieux cerner le problème :
"La Pataphysique est à la métaphysique ce que la métaphysique est à la physique".
La science des solutions imaginaires se base également sur l'équivalence universelle et l'identité des contraires. Afin d'éviter une trop longue démonstration de "César Antechrist" du même JARRY (éd. Fasquelles).
Mais la "Pataphysique est aussi la science du particulier, de l'exception et chaque "solution imaginaire" étant une exception en soi JARRY n'hésitera pas à écrire en dernière ligne des "Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll" que :
"La Pataphysique est la Science..."
Mais si la "Pataphysique se fait maître de l'Imaginaire et l'immisce dans notre vie quotidienne, elle est aussi le meilleur moyen de disserter sur l'art et de créer presque mathématiquement un art nouveau. Que ce soit par des mots ou des notes, l'artiste donne naissance par une "imagination logique " à un nouveau monde, une nouvelle forme essentiellement abstraits puisque imaginaires mais aussi très cohérents puisque logiques. C'est cette rigueur de style que l'on a souvent reprochée aux groupes tels que Soft Machine, Matching Mole et Hatfield and the North (enfin on parle musique!) rigueur évidente bien que mitigée par un brin de folie, surtout chez... mais nous en parlerons en temps utile.
Il est donc évident que les artistes dont nous allons nous entretenir n'appliquent en aucun cas la théorie de "l'art pour l'art" puisque le pataphysicien ne s'attarde pas uniquement à la forme mais aussi à l'esprit imaginatif et par conséquent créatif ("je m'applique volontiers à penser à des choses auxquelles je pense que les autres ne penseront pas").

Ceci étant expliqué, nous pouvons entamer allégrement notre travail...

> Zoom

DE MOLLE MACHINE/DIE MOELE MASCHINE/SOFT MACHINE/LA MACHINE MOLLO/MOLLUM MACHINAMENTUM ETC... (P.S. LA MACHINE MOLLE).

A l'origine de ce groupe dont l'influence s'est faite, se fait et se fera sentir à tous les niveaux de la rock musique, il y a un petit groupe d'âmes à moteurs connu sous le nom de "Wilde Flowers", nom qui n'était pas très original à cette époque (1967) celle-ci étant celle du Flower power. Les principales âmes à moteurs furent et ne seront plus, puisqu'il est défunt (le "Wilde Flowers") : Mike Ratledge, Bobby Wyatt (waf,waf), et Ayers qui les rejoindra après son retour de Malaisie, pluss un membre intermittent Richard Sinclair qui après le split du "Wilde Flowers" s'en alla former sa "Caravan" avec son "chameau" de cousin David. Un beau jour, un petit homme vert représentant de la société "chiquita" (Daevid Allen)posa à trois reprises l'index recourbé de sa main droit sur une surface de bois destinée à cet effet. Il en résultat un bruit sonore et asymptotique, hyperbolique, parabolique et même diabolique(autrement dit : toc toc toc) dont les conséquences immédiates furent un grincement simultané à l'ouverture dudit objet, c'est-à-dire la porte. Après une énorme "trip" pataphysique, catachimique, hyperlevitatique, etcétératique, ils décidèrent de fonder un groupe auquel ils donnèrent le nom de Soft Machine qui n'est autre que le titre d'un roman de William Borroughs dans lequel celui-ci nous donne, à l'image même de Jerôme Bosch, une vision effroyable, diabolique bien qu'infiniment délicate et humoristique de ce que pourrait être l'Enfer, un Enfer qui peut-être nous attend, produit final et apogée de la Révolution Scientifique. Ceci étant dit, ils enregistrèrent en 67 un album chez By intitulé "Faces and Places" que la dite firme de disque ne sortit de ses tiroirs poussiéreux qu'en 1973!!! Sur cet album, diverses tendances apparaissent déjà : le romantisme de Wyatt, la future stérilité technique de Ratledge, le décadencisme sophistiqué d'Ayers ainsi que la folie lunatique et incongrue de Daevid Allen. Pourtant toutes ces oppositions additionnées, donnent un produit plein de finesse, d'équilibre et de rafinement qui déjà annoncent un avenir on ne peut plus prometteur.

Diverses compositions seront d'ailleurs reprises par la suite à savoir "Save Yourself", "I should have known" qui deviendra "Why am I so short", le thème de "That's how much I need you now" retrouvera sur "Moon in June" du "Third", ainsi que "Jet-propelled photograph" qui deviendra "Shooting at the Moon" sur l'album du même nom. Il faut aussi note "Memories" qui, lui, sera repris sur Banana Moon ainsi que par Wyatt, il y a peu (45 t.).

L'étape suivante dans l'évolution du groupe s'intitulera paradoxalement "Soft Machine I" qui sera l'oeuvre concertée d'Ayers, Wyatt et Ratledge, Daevid Allen ayant dû quitter la terre des "Angles" et s'établir en "Goal" après s'être vu

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une prolongation de son permisde travail pour des raisons Acidifiées et quelque peu Haschées.
En réalité, premier vrai travail du Soft Machine, cet album fait contraste avec leur production précédente quant à la qualité instrumentale et au degré d'élaboration des compositions. Contraste également entre l'apparence "hippie" des musiciens et leur background cultivé. En effet, il est à noter que Ratledge a obtenu un prix en philosophie à Oxford de même qu'une distinction en psychologie. Wyatt, quant à lui, se distingua au conservatoire où il apprit le piano, le violon, la trompette et la batterie. Il s'initia également à la sculpture.
Kevin Ayers lut énormément et plus particulièrement Artaud et Rimbaud. Menant une vie difficile, ils devaient se contenter d'animer des discothèques dans le sud de la France. Ils participaient à l'Allan Zion's festival libre de St Tropez puis se produisirent aux U.S.A. avec Hendrix. Dès lors, leur voiturin à Phynance s'est vu alimenté posadiquement en pièces d'alliage d'argent et de nickel ainsi que de quelques polygônes d'aspect rectangulaire de consistance syngraphique souvent de couleur verte et où c'equil est marqué "dos-lard".
Au point de vue musical leurs grandes recettes, sont les distortions des "Fuzz-Boxes", l'atonalité électronique ainsi que l'usage fréquent répété et réitéré même de la chambre d'écho (cfr "Hope for happiness"). Cette musique absorbante synthétise les diverses tendances jazz et rock dans une continuité électronique, continuité surtout par le fait que toutes les compositions sont reliées les unes aux autres soit par un roulement de batterie soit par les notes sensorielles de l'orgue de Ratledge. Certaines compositions sont précédées de morceaux introducteurs tels que "Plus belle qu'une poubelle" qui annonce sur un autre mode le thème de "Why are we sleeping".
De cet album se dégage surtout essentiellement et principalement une atmosphère que nous qualifierons d'homotypie pataphysique dont émerge une magie artistique et lyrique on ne peut plus flagrante.

"Good evening or good morning, and now we have a chosen selection of ritmics, melodies from the official orchestra of the college of Pataphysics".
Ainsi débutele second volume du Soft Machine, introduction qui directement nous plonge dans l'esprit du groupe qui n'a toutefois pas été altéré (l'esprit) par le départ de Kevin Ayers immédiatement remplacé par Hugh Hopper.
A l'opposé du nouveau courant muscial de l'époque (1969) est une année non seulement érotique mais celle du Hard-rock). Soft Machine joue une musique qui flatte essentiellement l'esprit et qui requiert une attention soutenue de la part de l'auditeur.
De plus l'adjonction de Hopper apporte une grande cohésion au trio qui n'hésite pas à employer une instrumentation nouvelle(cuivres) afin d'accentuer le caractère

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avant-gardiste de la maturité musicale de ce groupe superbement en avance sur son temps.
Cette oeuvre nous donne un excellent exemple de la conception pataphysique de l'art c'est-à-dire que celui-ci est traité comme une simple solution imaginaire très purement aberrante, voire ambigüement dérisoire.
L'intensité émotionnelle y est à son maximum et l'instrumentation inimitable combinée à une technique incomparable donne un résultat digne de l'Ethernité faustrollienne.
Sur scène, les apparitions du groupe se caractérisaient surtout par l'impassibilité toute flegmatique de Mike Ratledge, par la concentration constante de Hugh Hopper mais surtout par l'érotisme ô combien impavidissime de Wyatt dont les seins quelque peu arachnidés n'ont pas encore fini de nous envoûter. De plus, il est à noter que le groupe était doté d'un système d'amplification de plusieurs centaines de Wyatt".
Au terme d'un enregistrement aussi prometteur, on ne pouvait qu'attendre avec avidité une prochaine contribution à l'élaboration d'un art qui se fera de plus en plus abstrus et provocateur...
Bon! redevenons sérieux, l'époque nostalgique des volumes I et 2 est dépassée car on en arrive au "Third" marqué principalement par l'arrivée d'une part de Elton Dean qui tient les cuivres aidés de membres intermittants : Lyn Hobson, Nick Evans, Jimmy Hastings et d'autre part l'alliance de Hugh Hopper à la basse.
Le Soft a changé et les gens ont cru que le Soft était mort. Pourtant autre il est vivant, différent certes, mais bien présent.
Imperturbables et admirablement honnêtes, ils suivent un chemin qui n'est pas aussi radicalement différent qu'on veut bien le prétendre simplement un mucicien parti, les autres se livrent entièrement à la musique qu'ils aiment et qui correspond totalement à leur culture et à leur caractère. Elton Dean, Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge n'ont jamais été des musiciens de rock au vrai sens du terme non plus que le successeur de Wyatt pour le "5" : John Marshall. Leur but est de créer une musique proche d'un jazz d'une modernité tempérée musique fortement structurée dans des fondements et presque libre dans ses improvisations, musique dont le but n'est pas une excitation primaire mais une séduction insidieuse née d'un raffinement mélodico-harmonique et des longues courses sonores, régal pour l'esprit ainsi que pour le corps.
"Third" c'est la période fatale de transition, le jazz l'emporte sur le rock.
Robert Wyatt a encore droit à une plage purement sensationnelle : "Moon in june" qui est sans nulle doute le meilleur morceau de tout ce double album. Hugh Hopper et Mike Ratledge se partagent les autres compositions.

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Le joug de Ratledge se fait pressant car il n'y a aucun titre de Robert. L'heure de la séparation inévitable est imminente. Il s'en va pour former son groupe et jouer sa musique : Matching Mole est né (voir plus loin).
Depuis le départ de notre ami, c'est-à-dire à partir du "5", Soft Machine a pris son envol vers des horizons plus psychédéliques. La musique est donc fort différente et les influences qui se font sentir actuellement touchent essentiellement des groupes de jazz pur où si on préfère des groupes plus jazz que rock. Le but de cet ouvrage est de vous entretenir sur les groupes directement dissidents de la première formule.
Je serai donc plus bref vis-à-vis des caractères trop différents. De plus, si l'on devait s'intéresser à toute les influences Soft Machine on serait obliger de faire un second volume fort épais tant le domaine est vaste. De toute manière, les maisons de disque sont tellement avares (mis à part VIRGIN, je tiens à le signaler) que je n'en ai pas la capacité. Voilà donc le problème résolu.
J'en suis donc au "5", Hugh Hopper est remplacé par Roy Babbington pour la seconde face, Phil Howard se charge de "drumer" sur la face 1, John Marshall sur la 2.
Plus besoin de définir le style de musique, les origines de chaque musicien pris indépendemment nous en donne un avant-goût fort pessimiste.
Les compositions sont beaucoup plus diversifiées et individuelles. On distingue sans problème un travail de Ratledge et un de Hopper. Envolées lyriques ou rythmiques, aérées par certains passages en douceur dont la cohérence certaine offre un charme indéniable.
John Marshall se met aussi à signer un des morceaux : L.B.O. qui n'est autre qu'un long solo de batterie dont la rigueur fait un rien prétentieux et dont la longueur se perd dans de l'exhibitionnisme insensible.
Ensuite, il y eût le double album "six" enregistré moitié studio, moitié public at the Dome de Brighton.
Habituellement, un enregistrement du genre constitue une excellente initiative car elle permet de rendre sur un disque la chaleur d'un enregistrement public et sur le second, la qualité des compositions en studio ? Dans le cas présent, cette nuance n'apparaît pas clairement car le mixage des deux disques est parfait. Heureusement qu'une inscription sur la pochette nous renseigne que le premier est "live" car le public semble profondément endormi tant ses interventions sont discrètes.
Une chose importante à noter, c'est l'arrivée de Karl Jenkins qui apporte une plus profonde cohésion instrumentale entre les musiciens "All white" la composition de Ratledge sur le "5" est reprise, rallongée et améliorée à l'aide d'improvisations donnant un caractère plus accessible au morceau.
Karl Jenkins présente un bienheureux remplacement car il efface toutes ces intrusions "free-jazz" qu'Elton Dean se plaisait à placer et à rajouter.

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Etape suivante bien entendu "Seven" puisque le Soft a pris l'habitude de ne jamais donner de titres à ses disques.
Roy Babbington est devenu bassiste définitif et l'on se met à regretter le jeu de basse exotique et chaleureux de Hugh Hopper bien que la finesse et l'agilité du nouveau soit nette.
Seven est une composition des groupes Soft Machine et Nucleus puisque Babbington Marshall et Jenkins en sont issus.
Karl Jenkins signe la plus grande majorité des titres de l'album. Il est l'homme en vue en tant que compositeur car comme instrumentiste il est remarquable plus par l'originalité de ses sonorités que par la richesse de ses improvisations. Seulement on peut lui reprocher d'être toujours identique à lui-même et de ne pas se renouveler.
Mike Ratledge se lance dans l'expérimentation du synthétiseur et ce n'est pas à regret car il semble déjà le posséder avec beaucoup de maîtrise. Les sons électroniques se mêlent merveilleusement avec son jeu d'orgue et de piano électrique.
Puis un long silence avant la sortie du dernier disque en date : Bundles.
Ce disque marque encore une étape dans la vie du groupe principalement avec l'arrivée du guitariste de Nucleus : Allan Holdsworth. Son jeu consiste en un long défilement de notes rapides, style très adopté à l'heure actuelle.
Il y a très peu de soli, les deux principaux sont joués par Holdsworth plutôt des soutiens rythmiques de la part de Ratledge et Jenkins.
Il y a des passages merveilleux, tel que "Hazard Profile" où les différentes parties (il y en a cinq) proviennent toutes d'un naturel enchaînement. Hazard profile part 2 où la Toccatina débute avec un piano accoustique qui subit une première transformation avec le doublé d'une mélodie de guitare accoustique également puis une seconde par le passage de l'accoustique à l'électrique. Une très belle réussite en soi.

Les goûts musicaux évoluent, ne changent cependant pas toujours dans le même sens. Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper sont d'une tendance nettement jazzy contrairement à Robert Wyatt qui vit de rock et de bonnes paroles. L'inévitable se produit, séparation, mais pas avec des gros mots et des bousculades. Non! ils se quittent musicalement seulement et restent en très bons termes. Dans le futur, ils se retrouveront pour participer à des enregistrements tant en solo qu'au sein d'un groupe.

Hilo Miller (guitare), David Sinclair (organ); Bill Mac Cormick (basse); Wyatt (drums, vocals, mellotron) : Mathcing Mole est né. L'ex-soft amoureux de douces ballades romantiques va pouvoir se réaliser, s'exprimer complètement. D'abord

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parce qu'il signe chez C.B.S. qui n'est pas trop contraignant et ensuite parce qu'il est le leader et de ce fait il occupe une place importante et c'est normal. Produit par le groupe lui-même, le premier album sort en 1972. A l'écoute de ce disque, le souvenir de Soft Machine (IV) et l'emprise farfelue du beau Kevin sont déjà fort loin. C'est du Wyatt et c'est suffisant pour en connaître la signification profonde d'ailleurs cette affirmation deviendra évidence par la suite.
Mais chaque chose en son temps, nous sommes en 1972.
O Caroline, le premier morceau nous plonge directement dans le ravissement intemporel quelque peu surréel qui baigne presque l'entièreté des deux faces. Emotions digressions, sensations tout se trouve réunis dans cette musique si proche de la nature. Morceau très lent qui début au son d'un piano doublé d'une mélodie de flûte qui en fait n'est autre qu'un mellotron. La sincérité passionnée du chanteur transparaît invétibalement au travers de ses paroles. Mais qui peut bien être cette Caroline ? Puis les mots deviennent cris gémissements murmures.
"Instant pussy" traduit la mélancolie, la tristesse (peut-être celle de Robert
Que lui a donc fait cette Caroline ?
Les bruits redeviennent paroles, le piano resurgit en vagues successives : "Signed curtain".
Ce n'est pas du jazz bien sûr, ce n'est pas du rock non plus. C'est du Wyatt, c'est sa musique, celle qui sort tout droit de son coeur, de ses doigts, de son corps. Il la qualifiera plus tard en tant que "Rock Bottom".
Robert Wyatt occupe une place primordiale, quand il ne chante pas, seul accompagné d'un piano (dont il joue également), les drums sont nettement mis en évidence. Les trois premiers morceaux en sont une preuve irréfutable. "Part of the Dance" est la seule composition de Phil Miller. Plus rock, plus énergique, on sent qu'il désire se réaliser également. Ce long instrumental nous entraîne à suivre l'engrenage de Matching Mole (clin d'oeil à la machine molle). Les soli sont brefs mais violents sans cesse entrecoupés de riffs rageurs à la Sinclair tandis qu'à l'arrière plan le martellement dru des peaux attise sans répit l'atmosphère de chaleur et de lucidité. Bill Mac Cormick plus discret mais toutefois indispensable assure l'accompagnement rythmique de façon savoureuse.
Ravi de la première face, je m'élance pour la seconde avec enthousiasme.
Déception, amère déception.
En effet, si la première moitié de cette seconde face est encore du meilleur cru, le reste n'est que très inférieur à la production générale.
On remarque à nouveau la prépondérance effective de Wyatt à qui toutes les compositions sont attribuées. Malgré cette évidence il s'effacera pour laisser plus de liberté aux solistes et plus principalement à Phil Miller dans "Dedicated to Hugh but you weren't listening" (cf. Soft II).

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"Instant Kitten" dont le début n'est autre que l'enregistrement inversé de l'introduction d'"Instant Pussy", prend une direction bien différente de ce dernier parce que plus énergique. En effet les sonorités plus évidentes donnent à cette musique un caractère inhabituel donc plus contrastant. Puis tout à coup le mellotron réapparaît plus calme, plus expérimental et plus fouillé quand même.
L'enchaînement se fait au moyen d'accords quelque peu stériles de mauvais présage. Pourtant la composition suivante ("Dedicated to Hugh") nous offre un excellent échantillon de la technique de Phil Miller qui n'hésite pas à mettre un zeste de rock dans son Wyatt (on ze rock bien sûr). Hélas les harmonies cohérentes deviennent bruitages informes, stériles, inutiles et cacaphoniques qui font paradoxe avec la qualité initiale.
En effet "Beer as in Brainder" et "Immediate Curtain" ne peuvent être considérés que comme des bouches-trous infâmes résultant sans doute d'un manquement d'imagination créative de la part de Robert.
Mais malgré ces deux morceaux quelque peu (!) en-dessous de la moyenne, la somme de l'album nous laisse une fort bonne idée du savoir-faire des musiciens.

C'est ainsi qu'après un premier album très prometteur - le Matching Mole de Mister Wyatt - ne fait que confirmer notre première impression - et même plus - en offrant à la délectation générale des amateurs de bonnes choses un excellent deuxième enregistrement, qui hélas sera le dernier.
De longues tournées européennes permettent au groupe de s'affirmer et d'acquérir une plus grande maturité musicale de même qu'un plus vaste auditoire. Les preuves essentielles de cette maturité résident surtout dans le fait que chaque musicien met la main à la pâte, si nous osons dire, et nous l'osons, Wyatt se bornant à signer les parties vocales. Mais l'événement à mettre en exergue est bien sûr le remplacement de Sinclair par Dave Mac Raer (ex-Nucleus) qui fut d'ailleurs le "summer's guest" du premier album. Avec ce remplacement donc, le groupe a suivi l'évolution que l'on pouvait prévoir, c'est-à-dire une plus grande rigueur musicale apportant à l'ensemble une certaine cohésion, et même une cohésion certaine. mais excluant toute tentative d'improvisation. Chose qui en soi est excellente mais qui rejette quelque peu le romantisme sensible de Wyatt dans les corridors de l'oubli ('y a bien ceux de la tentation). Pourtant si la musique de Matching Mole se fait plus exacte , plus précise, elle permet aussi l'éclosion parfaite de la folie quelque peu lunatique des musiciens, qui dans le premier album n'était que purement latente (la folie lunatique).
La première face de ce "Petit disque rouge" est composée de divers morceaux, soit de Miller qui confirme ses talents de compositeur, soit de Mc Rae, et forme un

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un tout bien compact dû à un phénomène d'osmose qui se répétera plus tard chez Hatfield and the North (groupe très proche de Matching Mole). Le "Mütter Korus" qui commence cette première face installe immédiatement cette ambiance débile chère à Wyatt, accompagnée des claviers du talentueux Dave Mc Rae et d'éclats de rire à profusion " "Marchides" le second morceau nous permet d'apprécier la nouvelle cohésion du groupe illustrée par les longs soli de Miller, qui toutefois sont moins violents et rageurs que ceux du premier disque, ce qui ne leur retire aucunement leur vigueur initiale. Bill Mac Cormick, quant à lui, reste toujours aussi dynamique et discret qu'auparavant. Pour ce qui est de Wyatt, est-il nécessaire de dire que son jeu de batterie est toujours excellent, subtil et fou qu'il a une voix merveilleuse et une personnalité débordante de richesse ? Nous ne le croyons pas (de toute façon c'est fait). les deux compositions de Miller qui suivent dénotent parfaitement ce désir d'une plus grande recherche musicale (variations de mêmes thèmes en divers modes, déformations sonores etc...) presque expérimentale. Les rythmes se font plus jazzy mais aussi plus compliqués et délicats, résultant de longs enchevêtrements de notes et de différentes phrases musicales d'une étonnante fluidité. Du côté des paroles ce n'est pas toujours génial mais on sait que Robert Wyatt a toujours su porter l'art difficile de parler de rien zé celui de parler pour ne rien dire au point élevé où ils équivalent à l'art de tout dire... ce qui n'est pas rien, ce qui n'est même pas peu... Cette cogitation intense nous amène donc, ou devrait nous amener, à remplacer la première face par la seconde et à pénétrer dans "Gloria Gloom" (pour autant que celle-ci le permette). Ce morceau, ainsi que le suivant ("God") se révèlent à notre optimale jubilation les meilleures parties vocales de l'album. Décollant lentement aux sonorités lancinantes du synthétiseur maquillé et sophistiqué d'Eno, cette plage nous donne l'occasion de goûter avec une joie ô combien transcendante les talents de compositeurs de Bill Mc Cormick qui semble avoir autant les pieds sur terre que Wyatt, que Miller, que Mc Rae et quenouille, si nouille nouille permettons. "God" est une chanson pleine de sarcasmes, d'ironie et de cynisme (oui, tout ça) très bien illustrée par la voix expressive de Wyatt qui se fait tantôt douce et naïve tantôt suppliante et parfois même méprisante ("Que nous fiches-tu sur telle, Dieu ?" Tout ceci est-il une sorte de blague que tu nous joues ? Est-ce parce que nous n'avons pas pleuré ?...) L'accompagnement de cette ballade est fort simple (basse et guitare acoustique) ce qui renchérit l'angoisse purement métaphysique d'un poivrot s'adressant au créateur parce que n'ayant plus de carburant... Le dernier morceau, qui en fait en contient deux ("Flora Fidgit"/"Smoke Signal") d'une structure fort saccadée, qui, par conséquent, fait contraste avec la mélodie

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précédente, nous donne un excellent échantillon (un de plus) de ce style fait de ruptures et de répétitions de thèmes mais aussi d'envolées mélodiques, stylisées et raffinées (ben tiens!) qui est l'apanage de la famille Soft.
Voilà donc assurément, évidemment et biensûrment un album parfait, contenant une musique parfaite (celle de Bob Fripp) et un enregistrement parfait... Un disque sans bavure, d'une grande netteté, dont les notes délicates vous violeront les oreilles avec douceur et perversité car chacun sait que la propreté c'est le viol...

KEVIN AYERS

Les "trips" évoluent, changent et souvent ne se ressemblent pas ou plus exactement ne se rencontrent pas.
Il y en a qui ont perdu leur innocence, d'autres leur fraîcheur, beaucoup leur folie, d'autres leur sagesse... leur femme!
Il y eût le temps où les "mods" recyclés prenaient l'acide sur un morceau de sucre.
Kevin Ayers a suivi lui aussi son trip. Il y eût des rêves violents qui hurlent au visage. Il y eût le culte de la personne, de la stabilité et... de la Banane. Banana follies. Bananamour. Schizophrénie. Fini les caisses de vin avant de monter sur scène, à l'heure actuelle il joue complètement sobre.
Qui est donc Kevin ? D'abord, il est sans aucun doute le grand enfant de la famille anglaise de la fin des 'sixties" composée de Mike Ratledge, David Allen, Nico, Syd Barrett. Que peut donc cacher cet ange blond au sourire quelque peu veule sinon du talent.
On peut l'appeler "Décadent" pour nous avoir fait goûter aux véritables sensations cosmiques, pour nous avoir vraiment transporter au-delà du commun, mais il ne faut pas entendre décadent par la présence du maquillage ou de fantaisies excentriques. Kevin Ayers, c'est la découverte d'un monde nouveau, d'un univers de bonheur bien différent de ceux engendrés par les défoncés en cuir noir.
Eloignons-nous de ces rockers rageurs que l'Amérique enfante pour nous rendre insensible et retournons dans la douceur mélancolique et la réalité apocalyptique de notre grand "Guru Banana".
Il nous suffit de réécouter le premier "Soft Machine" pour se sentir irrémédiablement plongé dans cette atmosphère caractéristique, véritable amalgame de philosophie mystique.
Kevin Ayers est un personnage fort complexe. En effet, il déteste le show-business, mais adore la musique, de ce fait il est souvent confronté à de gros problèmes de communications.

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Au terme d'un enregistrement, on la réclamé à la scène.
Il tourne pendant quelques mois, puis se retire sans mots et sans bruits avec sa guitare et sa légende.
"Je n'éprouve le besoin du public que quand je suis en ville, parce que subitement, on doit prouver quelques chose, on ne peut rester ainsi sans rien faire. C'est devenu simple : puisque je suis en ville je travaille ou alors je suis à la campagne tranquille menant la vie telle que je l'entends. j'ai moins d'inquiétude du public... ce n'est plus aussi intense. Je ne sais pas si c'est une bonne chose. Pour moi sûrement, mais je ne sais pas si ça va marcher auprès du public..."

Ma vie ou Comment je suis devenu Banana ?

Dès 1953, Kevin s'adonne à la musique et apprend à jouer du triangle et à chanter "Hey Ho the Carrion Crow". Il entreprit dès lors ses premières aventures musicales. Il se rendit en Malaisie pendant 5 ans et demi, là où ses parents sont installés.
Malgré ses aire de petit ange, Kevin Ayers était un enfant désobéissant et totalement désintéressé par le travail scolaire, il passe la plus grande partie de son temps à pêcher et à explorer la jungle.
En 1960, il retourne en Angleterre pour s'inscrire dans une école privée afin de recueillir quelques diplômes académiques, mais il... échoua.
Deux années plus tard, il quitta tout : sa famille, ses études et tente de s'incorporer à la population londonienne.
Menant une vie difficile, accablé par la saleté, la boisson et la pauvreté, il rencontre des démêlés avec "Her Majesty the Queen". C'est alors qu'il commence à écrire ses premiers poèmes et à lire beaucoup et plus particulièrement Rimbaud et Artaud.
Pour gagner sa vie, il travaille en tant que laboureur et garçon dans une ferme.
Avide de voyages, il découvre les îles Canaries, Morroco, l'Espagne et la France.
Il se met à chanter, ses remords alcooliques et à jouer de la guitare.
En 1966, il se joint aux "Wilde Fowers" qui "split" un peu plus tard.
L'année suivante, Kevin rencontre à Canterbury le pianiste Mike Ratledge et le batteur Robert Wyatt. Leurs goûts musicaux sont de même nature. Soft Machine naît.
La tournée les oblige à parcourir toute l'Angleterre, l'Allemagne et la France, perpétuellement pauvre, mais enthousiaste.
Soft Machine tourne aux U.S.A. en même temps que le groupe de Jimi Hendrix...

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C'est une "expérience" favorable qui leur permet de gagner un peu d'argent. Mais Kevin désillusionné par la scène pop quitte le groupe et s'installe à Ibiza pour récupérer.

"Ce sont les tournées avec Hendrix aux U.S.A. qui m'avaient effrayé... le business-pop aussi. Il faut le voir pour le croire... surtout au niveau américain. Musicalement pourtant, ce fut incroyable : le Soft ne fut jamais aussi bon. J'ai rompu peut-être aussi parce que je sentais un désir, celui de Mike, d'aller de plus en plus vers le jazz, ... moi je préfère les chansons, les trucs simples".

En 1967, il retourne en Angleterre, achète une maison, un enregistreur. Un peu plus tard sort chez EMI Joy of a Toy. Tel est le titre du premier album solo de Kevin Ayers. C'est le premier album et la qualité en reste telle. Il a quitté le "Soft Machine" pour des raisons identiques à celles de Robert Wyatt par la suite : incompatibilité musicale. Cela ne veut pas dire pour autant que l'influence de Mike Ratledge était néfaste. Pas du tout, mais elle était différente et prenait une direction plutôt jazzy alors que Kevin préférait les ballades plus terre à terre comme on l'a déjà dit plus haut.

Joy of a Toy nous replonge dans l'atmosphère du premier Soft Machine qui était l'oeuvre partielle de Kevin Ayers. Bien que ce soit la première ébauche solo, le LP occupe une place importante parmi toutes les sorties discographiques futures de notre ami de la banane, car les "lyrics" sont déjà merveilleusement élaborées et complètes, les arrangements de guitares, orgues sont richement tissés et délicatement "funky".

Merci Monsieur David Bedford.

Soft Machine Vol. I avec Ayers aux commandes était plus simple et moins torturé que le Vol II et ceux qui suivront notamment avec un morceau original "Joy of a Toy" qui est sans doute le plus mélodique de tout l'album.

Qu'il soit devenu le titre de son premier LP provient d'un naturel développement de son caractère assez infantil.

La présence de l'intégralité de la "Machine" (Wyatt joue sur la plupart des titres et Ratledge s'insinue à la moindre occasion) est évidente et les meilleurs morceaux sont ceux sur lesquels ils sont tous trois rassemblés. Tel en est ce "Stop the Train" où l'orgue clôture la plage au moyen d'un solo étonnant de maîtrise. Et que dire de ce prestigieux : "Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong" qui regroupe la structure et la force timide du Vol. I.

Le ton transpire quelque chose d'agréable de bon et de doux avec un apport considérable de "lyrics". La différence entre la musique (réalisée au moyen d'instruments inhabituels à savoir "céleste", "cello", guitare espagnole). et le texte

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signifie qu'elle est ô combien plus mûre qu'autrefois.
Les différentes tonalités qu'il adopte font parfois penser à Leonard Cohen, parfois à Donovan ou encore à ce cher Bob Dylan sur Highway 61 avec ce passage d'harmonium. Le disque est quelque peu plus simpliste et c'est peut-être ce qui fait sa beauté. Certains passages un peu "free" nous rappelle la présence de Ratledge qui est vraiment un très grand pianiste.
Quelques instrumentations assez popeuses donnent un aspect un peu prétentieux et apparaissent ainsi en contradiction avec ce personnage tellement trivial.
Toutefois ma préférence va nettement à "Lady Rachel", une merveilleuse chanson très calme dont l'amosphère qui s'en dégage est quelque peu fantastique, épique surréelle ou féérique.
"Elle gravit les marches à la lueur d'une bougie".
"Puis la porte sans poignée se referme derrière elle".
L'accompagnement musical retrace très bien les différentes situations qui évoluent suivant le texte :
"Maintenant, elle ne craint plus les ténèbres"
"Elle ne craint plus ses griffes"
"Maintenant rien ne peut lui nuire"
"Du moins pas beaucoup".
La guitare glisse très gentiment, l'orgue s'écrase, les drums sont légers et Kevin supplie : "What will you dream tonight Lady Rachel?" : "De quoi rêverez-vous cette nuit Lady Rachel ?'.
Le morceau suivant fait un peu free, des choeurs répètent un refrain au son saccadé du martellement de la batterie, de la rythmique de la guitare; l'orgue fait surface en un solo nettement jazzy mais très plaisant.
Il constitue donc un disque d'Ayers à part entière avec une alternance de douces ballades d'amour et de morceaux plus rock ou plus country.
Cependant, il s'agit toujours d'un premier travail avec ses défauts, ses imperfections, ses démarches tâtonnantes (Kevin n'a que 19 ans à cette époque). Néanmoins, cela sent déjà le génie à plein nez et à la première écoute vous serez sans nul doute conquis.
Un an plus tard, c'est-à-dire en 1970, Kevin fonde son premier vrai groupe. Il s'appelle "The Whole World" et comprend - outre Kevin Ayers - Lol Coxhill au sax Mick Fincher à la batterie, David Bedford au piano ainsi qu'un certain petit jeune homme de 17 ans du nom de Mike Oldfield qui tient la guitare ou la basse avec déjà beaucoup de prétentions; lequel se fera mieux connaître par la suite avec ce fameux "Tubular Bells" et "Hergest Ridge".
Immédiatement, il sort un disque avec le "Whole World" "Shooting at the moon" dont tous les titres lui sont attribués ainsi que la production.

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Pour parfaire la réussite de son disque, il invite quelques vieux copains à venir participer à l'enregistrement. C'est ainsi que l'on retrouve Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge, David Alleen, Rachel (sans doute celle de "Hoy of a Toy") et bien d'autres encore.

Le disque, quant à lui, était il y a peu une véritable pièce de collection car il était sorti en nombre d'exemplaire limité. Seulement, vu le succès croissant de Kevin Ayers, la firme EMI a décidé de sortir un double album réunissant "Joy of a Toy" et "Shooting at the moon". Le premier morceau" May I", est certainement le plus connu de tout l'album car il a été repris lors du concert de Rainbow en juin 1974; C'est également un des meilleurs morceaux du disque. Il consiste en la plus évidente continuation. Une douce mélodie de basse, guitare, accordéon accompagne la voix chaleureuse de Kevin qui découvre une fille dans un café. Un morceau suivant "Rheinbarhdt and Geraldine" débute de façon assez violente par des harmonies soutenues de la part de David Bedford au piano et de Mike Oldfield à la basse. Puis tout-à-coup, plus d'inspiration, les mélodies font place à de stériles et inutiles étalements sonores dans lequel le saxo fait quelques sursauts imprévisibles. Pour terminer, il en revient au texte initial.

Ensuite "Lunatics Lament" qui fait vraiment rock à la "rentre dedans" et où les voix de Kevin Ayers et Mike Oldfield se font étouffées. La guitare est fortement mise en évidence et Mike Oldfield en profite pour nous faire un exposé complet de sa technique, de sa maîtrise et de sa dextérité. Sa façon très assurée de rétrograder ses riffs et faire resurgir le thème fait déjà sentir le génie à plein nez. D'ailleurs à cet âge-là, il édifiait déjà intérieurement ce que devint le chef d'oeuvre 1974 "Tubular Bells". Mais je préfère ne pas m'attarder à Mike Oldfield non par qu'il ne vaille pas la peine mais alors la famille Soft Machine serait trop vaste.

Bon revenons-en à notre ami Kevin! Pratiquement la première face est terminée. Pisser dans un violon n'est que du bouche-trou infâme où le manque certain d'imagination créatrice de Kevin apparaît nettement. Pas une seule harmonie, pas un seul accord intéressant, rien! du bruitage inutile de quoi remplir sept bonnes minutes.

La seconde face débute avec "The cyster and the flying fish". La voix de Kevin est doublée d'une voix féminine, celle de Bridget St John (ne me demandez pas qui elle est!). Le morceau est très entraînant grâce à un rythmique de percussions et de tambourins. Le contraste est annoncé par le fait Kevin et Bridget St John se partagent les différents couplets.

Bien que le texte ne soit pas très raffiné, voire même un peu commun, il est d'une efficacité sans pareille (Houlà, Houlà, Houlà, là, là, là!!).

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Ensuite la bonne humeur contractée se voit anéantie avec "Underwater", nouvel assemblage de bruitages stérils et incohérents au moyen d'une distortion de basse et de guitare. Le coeur du vieux colonial réapparaît avec "Clarence in Wanderland" et "Red green and you blue". Musique du soleil, de la danse, du chant qui nous plonge, au son de quelques rythmes exotiques dans une atmosphère de paix et de sérénité.
Finalement il y a retour au rock avec la plage titulaire de l'album où Mike Olfdield est à nouveau mis en évidence, mais dont la longueur fait un peu forcé.
L'année suivante le "Whole World" a déjà "splitté" et de ce fait Kevin continue sa carrière en solo.
Le disque suivant "Whatever she brings we sing" regroupe encore un fort joli monde. Toujours David Bedford au piano, Mike Oldfield guitare et basse. Mais on remarque également la présence de Didier Malherbe le saxophoniste de Gong, Robert Wyatt qui chante sur un morceau, Dave Dufort batterie et Gerry Fields au violon.
Album très différent du précédent car il marque une période de transition dans la vie de Kevin, il commence à s'adonner à l'alcool. Sur la pochette, il est même écrit "remerciements spéciaux à David Bedford et ses excellents arrangements (There is a loving), Mike Oldfield pour sa merveilleuse basse et son solo de guitare (Whaterver she brings), Andrew King pour quelques bouteilles de vin. Merci beaucoup".
Ici encore, toute les compositions sont dues à l'imagination fertile de Kevin Ayers et la production a été partagée avec Andrew King.
There is loving, divisé en deux parties suprend surtout par le côté légèrement jazzy que les cuivres épousent de façon soutenue. Un jazz quelque peu rétro, qui est animé de quelques poussées de guitare, de saxo et trompettes. L'arrangement de David Bedford est d'une qualité étonnante et donne à l'album un caractère original.
"Margaret marque un constraste par son homogénité. Il s'agit évidemment d'une merveilleuse ballade d'amour comme seul Kevin Ayers a le don de les chanter avec l'intonation adéquate rendant la rigueur des sentiments.
"Song from the bottom of a well" retrace exactement la signification de son titre: "Chanson du fond d'un puits". L'introduction consiste en un roulement de batterie entrecoupé de véritables "coups de guitare" qui semblent désigner la chute vers des profondeurs inconnues. Puis soudain, la voix se fait entendre - voix caverneuse- voix maladive et plaintive, une voix qui nous parvient du fond d'un puits.
La guitare de Oldfield se fait déchirante, nerveuse en un solo époustouflant accentué encore par la mise en place d'une chambre d'écho. Pour indiquer la situation critique et tragique, les instruments deviennent "free" et se confondent en un brouhaha intensif qui s'arrête tout-à-coup.

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Ceci est l'exemple type du morceau composé en période de pleine ivresse car la deuxième face débute par "Whatever she brings" plus calme et qui fait transparaître un plus grand équilibre. La guitare glisse gently, tandis que les coeurs accompagnent le chant de Kevin. La batterie cogne très calmement. Le grand génie de Kevin réside dans le fait que ses disques sont toujours un fouillis de tous les genres musicaux. Il se plie à tous les goûts. Il passe du rock "fort" à la ballade plus calme, de la chanson d'amour au rythme plus country blues comme le prouve ce fameux "Champagne cow-boy blues". Il raconte également pour terminer son disque l'odyssée de ce "stranger in blue suede shoes" qui marque encore un très bon moment de la seconde face et qui consiste en fin de compte en un grand merci à tous les collaborateurs du disque et également à tous les auditeurs.
En bref, ce disque est plus complet et mieux fini que "Shooting at the moon" car il y a plus de cohérence et plus de travail de la part des membres du groupe. Mais l'inégalité dans l'effort de la part de Kevin laissait prévoir quelques craintes à propos d'une seconde réussite.
Je me détrompai rapidement lors de la sortie de "Bananamour" l'année suivante (1973).
Encore et toujours de très bons musiciens réunis pour l'occasion Archic Legget, Eddie Sparrow, Wyatt, Steve Hillage, Mike Ratledge, une section cuivres : Howie Casey, Dave Caswell, Hyle Jenkins, Barry St John. Dans l'ensemble, il se rapproche plus de "Whatever she brings we sing" par la continuité qui se tisse entre chaque morceau, que de "Shooting at the moon ou de "Joy of a Toy". Mais il représente tout de même dans un style très différent. Le premier morceau "Don't let it get you down" nous plonge immédiatement dans l'atmosphère électrique caractéristique avec un fort apport de "cuivres" et de choeurs qui offrent une dimension toute autre à l'interprétation. Ce morceau est sans doute une des meilleures réussite de l'album et c'est pourquoi il est dédié à Rachel (Je ne sais toujours pas qui elle est celle-là).
"Shooting in a backet blues" débute sur une mélodie acoustique, bientôt doublée de la guitare de Steve Hillage (lui aussi de Gong) qui augmente l'intensité de la composition pourtant très simple au départ. Bien sûr, c'est ce que Kevin adore. Steve Hillage y va de longs solos- entrecoupés par le chorus de Ayers, prouvant sa haute technique et ses qualités en tant que lead guitar.
"When your parents go to sleep" représente le côté romantique de Kevin Ayers. Très calme, très lent, la voix d'Archic pleine de puissance se découvre parmi les horizons inexploités. Travail plein de stabilité, plein de cohésion où l'inspiration inépuisable se voit à chaque instant réaffermie et renouvelée. Toujours sont présents ses fondements très assurés; ses échaffaudages sans failles autour desquels les instrumentations se tressent de façon rigide et pleine de maîtrise.

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Elle raconte les "confessions du Docteur Dream" et le premier morceau "Irreversible Neural damage" nous permet d'apprécier - trop brièvement d'ailleurs - la qualité vocale de Nico, qui était-fort étrangement- mécontente du mixage. On assiste à un véritable combat entre les deux parties vocales : Ayers contre Nico où les orgues de Steve Nye et Robert Hine apparaissent subitement. La présence de Mike Ratledge rend le mystère encore plus profond. Les effets sonores, les arrangements, les constructions de thèmes, élaborent un climat tendu et malsain où la progression vers le final est somptueuse.
Pour la première fois, Kevin a mis en scène tous les musiciens en catalysant leurs énergies et non pas en se laissant flotter sur elles. Ce disque ne marque pas le stade d'un aboutissement mais au contraire le réveil d'un génie endormi.

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INTERVIEW DE L'ESPRIT DE KEVIN IN AYERLAND A PROPOS DE "SWEET DECEIVER".

P. Un tel titre était-il prémédité ?

K. Prémédité non, mais après avoir écouté les bandes des divers enregistrements je me suis rendu compte que j'avais déjà fait beaucoup mieux. Cela dit en toute modestie bien entendu.

P. Que penses-tu du travail de Ollie Halsall, sur disque et en public? Ne crois-tu pas qu'il en remet un peu ?

K. Je trouve le jeu de guitare d'Ollie vraiment excellent, même s'il est un peu bruyant. Sur scène la musique dépend évidemment du public et de notre forme personnelle. On ne peut pas juger. Quant à savoir s'il en "remet" je ne pense pas et toi ?

P. Oui, surtout dans "Observations", mais ça n'a pas d'importance. Que vient faire une chanson du style "City Waltz" dans ton répertoire ? Ce n'est pas ton genre pourtant.

K. J'ai voulu un peu diversifier le caractère de mes chansons. Je ne sais pas si je continuerai dans cette voie là. Cela soulève beaucoup de problèmes. Et puis à cause de toutes les tournées que nous avons faites, j'avais moins de temps pour composer, c'est un sérieux handicap.

P. Kevin, ne trouves-tu pas que "Toujours le voyage" ressemble trop à "Whatever..."

K. Si. Je peux même te dire que c'est son frère jumeau. J'ai refait une telle chanson pour un nouveau public qui n'est pas forcément au courant de ce que j'ai écrit il y a quelques années. Quant aux "vieux de la vieille", j'espère qu'ils accepteront ce petit sacrifice.

P. Et sa plage titulaire ?

K. C'est du rock comme il y en a beaucoup. Tu sais, j'étais fatigué à ce moment... D'ailleurs cet album est d'une musique peu particulière. Parfaite techniquement mais peu particulière.

P. Il n'y a donc que par la voix que l'on reconnait ce "Kevin Ayers"

K. C'est exact. Mais je ferai mieux la prochaine fois. Je pars d'ailleurs en Orient dans et pour quelques temps. Cela me permettra de faire le point, de me détendre et peut-être d'entrevoir de nouveaux horizons musicaux. Et toi que penses-tu de ce dernier album ?

P. Ben, je dois te dire qu'il m'a franchement déçu, il porte bien son titre en tout cas. Seule la pochette est très belle. Sinon pour ce qui est du reste c'est franchement quelconque.

K. C'est bien mon avis. Salut, je vais dormir.

Propos réels parce qu'IMAGINES d'un bout à l'autre par P. du MARAIS.

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GONG

Après quelques bons moments passés avec ses amis du Soft Machine, David Allen dû quitter l'Angleterre en 1968 pour des raisons de permis de travail. Nous l'avons déjà mentionné plus haut, et trouva refuge chez nos amis français qu'il quittera définitivement en l'an de grâce 1973. Mais n'anticipons pas... En 1969, il fonde avec son amie Gilli Smyth le "Daevid Allen Gong" qui bien vite se transformera en Gong tout simplement. Ils s'adjoingnent Didier Malherbe, Rachid Houari et quelques musiciens de free-jazz tels que Burton Greene et Earl Freeman. Avec un tel personnel la musique de Gong transpire le jazz par tous ses pores mais la personnalité de l'ancien Soft Machine rétablit l'équilibre et apporte aussi beaucoup de folie à ce personnel hétéroclite.
Sur scène le groupe est alors peu convainquant il y a de nombreux passages à vide d'une pauvreté musicale décevante et parfois même incohérente mais aussi un aspect théâtral (déjà!) qui fait dérision où l'humour absurde de Daevid eût mérité de figurer dans une anthologie. Le premier disque de Gong, paru chez By, ne témoigne pas exactement de cette période. "Magick Brother" - c'est le titre de l'album en question - donne pourtant quelques petits échantillons de l'orientation musicale prise par le groupe. Déjà diverses personnalités s'affirment qui donneront une couleur musicale toute particulière à Gong. Tout d'abord il y a Gilli Smyth qui n'est pas une chanteuse à proprement parler mais dont la voix est utilisée comme un instrument - remarquable d'ailleurs. "Ca ne m'intéresse pas de faire la même chose que les autres, je cherche à être complètement originale. J'ai commencé avec la poésie dans des spectacles au Round House de Londres. En partant de la poésie, des lignes de mots, j'ai commencé à élargir les sons qui étaient dans l'idée du mot, l'idée est devenue un son : de plus en plus, des sons plutôt que de la poésie; une image, une idée archétype qui doit toucher, quelque chose de très bref et de très précis, comme un flash. En faisant croître les sons de façon inattendue, on peut provoquer, agacer le public, de façon à l'exciter le plus possible. Car c'est l'éternelle question : il ne faut pas que le public reste passif mais devienne actif. Souvent on est frustré car ce que l'on a provoqué n'est pas suffisant. L'idée essentielle de notre musique c'est de prolonger le public dans un état hors de la vie quotidienne. Mais c'est un problème jamais résolu..."
Didier Malherbe, quant à lui, est un ancien musicien de free-jazz, qui a accompagné quelques artistes américains lors de leur passage à Paris. Son rôle, à l'époque, ne se borne qu'à un soutien rythmique qui toutefois reste "free" et à quelques introductions de thèmes. La batterie de Rachid Houari ne fait que compléter ce soutien par son jeu aussi subtil qu'efficace et énergique.

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Mais venons en à "Magick Brother". Cet album, composé de 12 morceaux dont le plus long est de 4'55", est réellement à des lieues de ce que Gong fait actuellement. Ce qui frappe d'abord c'est l'intérieur de la pochette, dû à la main fébrile de Daevid lui-même : un enchevêtrement de dessins, de phrases les plus dingues les unes que les autres. Point de vue musical, nous l'avons déjà dit, cela flaire le (free) jazz à plein nez. Couleur essentiellement donnée par la contrebasse de Dieter Gewisser et le saxophone de Didier Malherbe. Le premier morceau "Mystick Sister" donne une excellent échantillon des possibilités vocales de Gilli Smyth - expression d'un plaisir malsain dédoublé par la stéréo, chaos musical accentué, etc... Daevid à la guitare acoustique chante d'une voix tantôt douce, tantôt ironique et violente soutenue par les percussions de Rachid Houari. Point de vue lyrique, les chansons contiennent de nombreuses références "hippies" (mysticisme, Krishna...) fascination pour l'herbe, etc...). Certaines compositions sont fort saccadées tel que "Rational Anthemn" et répétitives (Chainstore Chant"), deux qualités qui seront à la base d'une nouvelle évolution future. Dans ce même "Rational Anthemn" on trouve un brin de révolution (We"re gonna change the world - It's too easy just to change your face - It's too easy just to get pictures...) et d'espoir (We're waiting for peace and love...). D'autres attaques au système sont formulées dans "Pretty Miss Titty" où Daevid s'en prend rageusement au business et à l'exploitation qui en découle (Big bad business Man have you any love ?). Mais il y a aussi la démence de Daevid - entre deux morceaux on entend une annonce de radio puis un extrait d'opéra et enfin Daevid lui-même qui accoure, essoufflé, pour nous raconter une de ces petites histoires absurdes dont il a le secret. Mais Gong c'est aussi un trip auquel Daevid nous invite - dans I hope you feel O.K., par exemple, (I hope you fell O.K., The moon is full today...) sur un rythme très planant encore accentué par la déformation électro-acoustique de la voix et de la guitare.
Mais la chanson la plus importante de l'album reste "Gongsong", en effet elle jette déjà les bases de la future mythologie de la planète Gong. Mais écoutons Daevid :" Il était une fois, d'une planète lointaine, un petit homme vert qui vint par une comète. La première fois que je l'ai rencontré c'était dans un taxi londonien, il m'a dit qu'il s'appelait monsieur Pot Head Pixy (pot= herbe). Il m'a dit on voit le but de Daevid : créer une planète imaginaire (cfr. "pataphysique) par laquelle il pourrait opposer tous les défauts de notre vie terrestre à une vie spirituelle et abstraite qui désalièneraît l'homme par la toute puissance de l'imagination (nous en donnerons un exemple concret dans quelques pages) Cet album se termine par un très beau récitatif mystique, très planant avec comme musique de fond une flûte indienne et une basse bourdonnante qui donne plus de profondeur à l'ensemble. Nous remarquons un petit sourire au coin des lèvres la similitude de couleur entre la planète verte, les cheveux verts ("'cos you got

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green hair") et la chandelle verte du père Ubu! Un disque satisfaisant donc, mais qui se caractérise surtout par un manque de cohésion et de rigueur...
L'étape suivante dans l'évolution du groupe se traduit par la production en 1970 de la musique du film de Jérôme Lapérousaz "Continental Circus" consacré au champion motocycliste australien Jack Findlay. Mais on ne peut pas considérer cet album comme un disque du Gong proprement dit, en effet il s'agit plutôt d'un enregistrement de commande où la créativité et la démence du groupe sont délibérément freinées par le thème du film que la musique doit évidemment illustrer et évoquer. Pourtant, si l'idée et le but de ces compositions sont déjà préétablis, l'on peut aisément remarquer la progression du groupe et sa nouvelle orientation. Progression donc, surtout dûe à une plus grande cohérence rythmique apportée par le nouveau bassiste Christian Tritsch (qui fut jadis musicien de Clo-Clo!!!). Mais si cette nouvelle rythmique forte et précise - encore accrue par la batterie de Houari - tend vers plus d'efficacité et de cohésion, elle freine quelque peu les élans de folie douce du groupe elle limite sa portée subversive en réduisant l'improvisation à quelques mesures.
Mais 70 est aussi une année transitoire pour Gong, transition évoquée par le BANANA MOON de Daevid Allen.

En plus de sa collaboration avec Gong, Daevid Allen, alias Bert Camenbert, alias Dingo Virgin, pataphysicien notoire président aux destinées de sa planète verte, enregistre au début de l'hiver 70-71 un album solo plein de lumière (verte bien sûr). Nous avons bien dit SOLO car, mettons les choses au point sur les i, ce "Banana Moon" - à ne pas confondre avec le "Bananamour" de Kevin Ayers, n'est PAS un disque du Gong mais plutôt le résultat d'une trop longue constipation de Daevid.
Au début de l'hiver 70-71 donc, Bert Camenbert suivi du Submarine Captain Christian Tritsch repassent la Manche, vont rejoindre leurs amis de la Machine Molle et décident d'enregistrer "Banana Moon" qui, s'il n'est pas entièrement convainquant peut cependant être considéré comme une sorte d'événement : une rencontre de personnalités musicales toutes différentes mais combien passionnantes. Parmi ces personnalités on note la présence de Robert Wyatt - qui commence déjà à en avoir plein le dos de n'être plus considéré que comme un rouage infime dans la Machine Molle maintenant dirigée par Ratledge; il y a aussi Archie Leggett - ancien bassiste de Johnny et Sylvie (oui, oui!) qui est alors celui de Gary Wright qui, lui, vient de quitter (momentanément) Spooky Tooth - qui n'a rien à voir avec Soft Machine, mais qui joue aussi sur cet album (Gary Wright). Il y a Pip Pyle qui joue pour la première fois aux côtés de Daevid

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et c'est d'ailleurs à cette occasion qu'il fut engagé dans Gong. Il y a aussi Nick Evans, tromboniste de plusieurs groupes importants : Keith Tippett, Soft Machine, Centipede etc... le violoniste Gerry Fileds - que l'on retrouvera sur "Whatever..." de Kevin Ayers. Il y a Maggie Bell (de Stone the Crow) et Barry St John - que l'on retrouvera également aux côtés de Kevin. Nous espérons n'avoir oublié personne. Enfin voilà, tout ce beau monde réalisa avec pas mal de brio, cet album dont l'ambiance était censée être instaurée par Daevid Allen. La première face, intitulée elle aussi "Banana Moon", est un contenu assez parodique, (que nous vous laisseront le soin de découvrir) et tout en relief, les moments forts succédant aux moments plus faibles ou inversément si vous préférez. Mais avant de pénétrer cet album nous pensons qu'il serait nécessaire d'en expliquer le titre (chose qui paraît élémentaire). "Banana Moon" est le nom du premier groupe de Daevid, mais aussi celui de la lune lorsqu'elle n'a pas encore dépassé son premier quartier, époque à partir de laquelle la Magie Blanche peut s'opérer jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit pleine (the moon).

Bon revenons à notre première face. Elle début en force avec "It's the time of your life" morceau assez violent composé par Ch. Tritsch et qui est pour Pyle la première occasion de jouer avec des musiciens de Gong. "Memories" est une très belle mélodie de Hugh Hopper, sur laquelle Wyatt a écrit les paroles (qu'il chante ici en jouant de la wah-wah) et qui date de l'époque assez lointaine maintenant, où Daevid,Hugh, Kevin, Ratledge et Waytt résidaient tous ensemble à Canterbury. Ensuite un morceau très freaky, à nouveau de Tritsch, nous permet d'entendre les "famed dolly choruses" de Wyatt qui joue aussi des drums, soutenu par la basse d'Archie, Tritsch délaissant la sienne pour seconder Daevid à la guitare. Il y a aussi l'histoire de "Fred the fish and the chip on his shoulder" qui nous permet d'entendre le violon de Gerry Fields sur un air très entraînant. Puis vient ce que nous considérerons comme le sommet de l'album : "White meck blooze", une excellente parodie de Kevin Ayers, chantée après l'évocation de Kevin in Ayerland...

'Godein Coda" quant à lui n'est qu'une façon de conclure cette "Songful side". "Stoned Innocent Frankenstein and his adventures in the land of flip" occupe presque toute la seconde face de l'album et raconde l'histoire d'un personnage qui fut assez proche de Gong. Cette "composition" est constituée d'une vaste improvisation collective spontanée (avec tout ce que cela comporte comme bons et mauvais moments) tous les musiciens étant défoncés à la bière australienne et au hashisch dans la nuit . "I'm a bowl" termine cette seconde face aux notes graves du trombone de Nick Evans.

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Voilà assurément un disque qu'il faut posséder même si l'imperfection du mixage et la rapidité de l'enregistrement en sont les plus gros défauts.
L'année 71 est des plus décisives pour Gong et son orientation (le témoin concret de celle-ci n'est autre que le fameux "Camenbert Electrique", premier et dernier exemplaire de cheese-rock!). Mais ce qui est vraiment décisif dans l'avenir du groupe est évidemment le remplacement de Rachid Houari par l'excellent Pip Pyle (ex. Chicken Shack et Delivery). Le problème de l'insuffisance sonore que Houari n'a jamais pu résoudre, l'est immédiatement pour la nouvelle puissance de Pip Pyle. Mais si la porte est définitivement fermée à la folie sonore spontanée des débuts, le décollage dans la musique du groupe entre l'expression et le soutien rythmique est complètement anéanti. La cohérence musicale est donc presque totale, mais cela évidemment au détriment de la spontanéité et de la subversion initiales. On sent on ne peut mieux que la rigidité rythmique du nouveau batteur a permis une restructuration complète de la musique du groupe. A l'époque, Daevid Allen a d'ailleurs déclaré au sujet de l'adjonction de Pyle au sein du groupe : "Pour lui, jouer avec Chicken Shack, ce n'était pas intéressant, car c'était un groupe fonctionnaire dans lequel il avait un rôle de fonctionnaire. Il a formé pendant quelque temps un groupe, Delivery, avec Lol Coxhill (saxophoniste de Kevin Ayers). Il apporte au Gong une nouvelle énergie. Il joue d'une double batterie, et si fort qu'il n'est plus nécessaire de le sonoriser. Il nous a obligés aussi à jouer tous plus fort encore." Le groupe peut donc s'imposer, s'affirmer et s'affermir devant un public encore quelque peu méfiant et incrédule. A cette époque Gong joue surtout en France dans les MJC (Maison de la Jeunesse et de la Culture) mais aussi avec Kevin Ayers en Angleterre se produisent sur scène dans des vêtements moyen-âgeux, sur lesquels sont brodés des étoiles, des croissants de lunes, etc... et portant sur la tête de grands chapeaux pointus à la manière des Pot Head Pixies, ces petits hommes verts qui ont pour tâche de nous introduire à leur Radio Gnome Invisible, sorte de radio télépathique.
Mais si la spontanéité musicale perd de son importance, la fantaisie de Daevid n'est pas atteinte pour autant, ses gagas scéniques et ses déclarations sont des plus loufoques : "J'ai deux façons de jouer de la guitare : Rude and Banana et Camembert. Quand je suis pourri, je suis très camembert. Quand je suis plus pur, c'est plutôt Banana. Je joue aussi Primitive Australian car je viens de Chine" (?!). La personnalité de Daevid transparaît aussi bien dans ses chansons que dans les pochettes de disque qu'il dessine lui-même. Pour l'album Camembert Electrique" il a d'ailleurs rempli de dessins deux feuillets sur lesquels il a également écrit les paroles du disque. Il y a des petits Pot Head Pixies partout qui vous font un petit sourire plein d'ironie, des Banana Moons, des symbôles sanscrits, etc...

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Enregistré durant les phases de pleine lune des mois de mai, juin et septembre "Camembert Electrique" peut être considéré comme le premier "véritable" album de Gong, étant plus dans l'esprit pataphysique de Daevid Allen et réunissant pour la première fois l'originalité de propositions nouvelles ainsi qu'une propulsion fortement rythmée. Cet album bénéficie également de certains trucages et bruitages permettant une introduction originale des morceaux. Ainsi, avant le premier morceau(You can't kill me) un Pot Head Pixy vient nous souhaiter un e bonne soirée à l'écoute de sa radio télépathique : "Bon Soir! c'est une émission Planète Gong par Radio Gnome invisible - direct de la Planète Gong". Ce petit discours est alors suivi de bruits de portes qui s'ouvrent qui se ferment, d'un bruit de chute d'eau... (tout cela en 25 secondes) après lesquels la guitare de Daevid se fait enfin entendre, immédiatement suivie de la basse forte du Submarine Captain (C. Tritsch) et les drums énergiques de Pip Pyle. La nouvelle puissance du groupe marque un contraste étonnant avec les premiers enregistrements. Pyle et Tritsch donnent un nouvel impact musical qui est beaucoup plus à même de soutenir les fantaisies vocales de Daevid. Ce qui frappe aussi immédiatement est la répétivité quasi hypnotique des différents thèmes, répétitivité qui ne fait qu'accroître le côté fantaisiste du groupe bien sûr. La guitare de Daevid sonne aussi beaucoup plus "hard" qu'avant, les saxos de Bloomdido Bad de Grasse (Didier Malherbe) se font indiscutablement moins "free" et l'on a même droit à quelques petits soli du meilleur cru. Shakti Yoni (Gilli Smyth) est toujours aussi remarquable avec ses "space whispers" qui donnent cette note "spatiale" chère au groupe, encore accentuée par les effets d'échos et les longs glissandos de guitare. Si les paroles ne sont pas toujours des plus intéressantes, elles révèlent quand même un esprit enclin aux trips, aux rêves, un esprit luttant contre les cadres étroits d'une logique quotidienne brimant tous nos élans de fantaisie spontanée. Pour le deuxième morceau (I"ve bin stoned before) Daevid a fait appel à Eddy Lewis pour introduire à l'orgue (d'église) cette petite histoire flippante d'un trip se terminant dans une morgue (O! pourquoi suis-je si vague ?) à moins que ce ne soit dans le four crématoire de Saint John's Wood- vous savez un trip, on en connaît le point de départ, quant à l'arrivée...
Incertitude traduite par lp chaos musical d'un saxo plutôt "free", de percussions incohérentes et par les rires de Shakti Yoni, the good witch. Then follows une introduction de saxo au rythme assez infantil, suivi par le chant tout aussi infantil de Daevid dont la voix est beaucoup plus sûre qu'auparavant et qui n'hésite pas à gueuler de temps en temps. Musique débile, paroles débiles (O! RTF Girl es-tu défoncée ? Laisse-moi être ton gnome de Chine... Passe-moi sur ton gramophone et enfouis-moi dans ton jardin Pas aujourd'hui, merci

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monsieur Longues Jambes,j'ai un autre poisson à frire..."). Puis suit un passage plus rapide dont la folie douce est encore accentuée par les ponctuations discrètes mais efficaces de Bloomdido. En troisième position à 13'38 de la tête arrive "I am your fantasy" Poème "chanté" par Chilli Smyth; très calme, très plânant, plein d'échos, de douceur érotique... (c'est là, son plus grand mérite). Après le calme vient la tempête et c'est l'explosion avec "Dynamite". (répété 28 fois s'il vous plait!) encore chanté par Shakti Yoni qui se compare à un "pussy" à nouveau fort érotique... La première face se termine en pleine dérision par le "Wet Cheese delirium" dans lequel on nous propose... un camembert!
"Fohat digs holes in space" commence une seconde face bien prometteuse. Introduit au saxophone, ce long morceau planant est basé sur la rythmique répétitive de Christian Tritsch, appuyée par la batterie assez discrète cette fois (ce qui permet à l'auditeur de décoller plus aisément); ambiance spatiale accentuée par le glissando de la guitare, les échos et les "space whispers", ce morceau, excellente référence à la musique de Pink Floyd, nous permet d'entendre un fameux solo de saxo, de même qu'un solo de guitare endiablé, arrivant presque à saturation. Les paroles, très simples, donnent un accès aisé à la philosophie du Gong(herbe, trip, folie, liberté...). "You tried so hard" est dédié à Kevin Ayers, la musique étant de C. Tritsch qui, ici joue de la guitare, Daevid le remplaçant à la basse. On peut dire que c'est le morceau le plus commercial de l'album. Pour conclure ce "Camembert Electrique" nous avons droit à une autre longue composition de Bert Camembert (Ropical fish/Selene) à nouveau introduite par le saxo de Bloomdido, rythmes surprenants répétés déments, télépathiques se terminant sur une prière adressée à Selene (Spirit of the moon).
Et le disque se termine sur un coup de Gong annonçant la fin de l'émission.
Album surprenant, unique dans l'histoire du rock, combinant force et rigueur, musicale et absurdité, pataphysique, fantaisie et esthétique du cri... Qu'y a-t-il de plus à ajouter ?

Après le succès - un tant soit peu relatif - de son "Camembert Electrique" Gong émigre définitivement dans la verte Albion qu'il ne quittera plus (sauf pour les tournées continentales bien sûr). L'année 1972 est pour Gong une année de longues tournées anglaises au cours desquelles le groupe s'est produit devant à peu près 120 millions de spectateurs-auditeurs (dixit Virgin), mais c'est aussi la mise sur pied d'un grand projet pataphysique; c'est, vous l'avez deviné, la grande trilogie des "Radio Gnome Invisible" au cours de laquelle notre "rock and cheese band" nous/vous emmènera sur leur petite planète verte où tout n'est que solutions imaginaires et virtualité...

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C'est en 1973 que paraît (chez Virgin of course) le premier volume de cette triologie,(sous-titré "Flying tea-Pot"...) qui nous permet de faire connaissance avec la nouvelle mythologie de la planète Gong. De cet astre, où profuse l'exception et la singularité, décollent des théières volantes (pourquoi pas) dans lesquelles des petits hommes verts appelés "Pot Head Pixies" s'affèrent à retransmettre les émissions de la "Radio Gnome Invisible" qui, nous vous le rappelons, est une radio télépathique à l'usage des gens qui savent voir... Dans ce premier volume, un Flying-Teapot, après un long voyage dans l'Ethernité, atterrit au Tibet, en plein sur le mât de prière de Lawrence the Alien(Laurie Allan) qui en est tout retourné. Vous pensez... Cette théière est pleine de Pixies qui semblent aussi étonnés que Lawrence, et qui sont alors conduits par le grand yogi Banana Ananda qui les présente aux Octave Doctors. Ceux-ci enseignent les secrets de leur suprême sagesse sublimale au moyen de leur "Crystal machine" (illustrée par le synthétiseur de Tim Blake). C'est alors qu'apparaît Zero le Héro, terrien qui n'est autre que VOUS et qui fait connaissance avec les petits hommes verts qu'il se met à adorer (au sens religieux du terme et dans les autres aussi d'ailleurs). Mais les humbles Pot Head Pixies refusent cette dévotion et emmènent Zero auprès de la sorcière Shakti Yoni, en passant par des contrées d'un magnétisme fort dissipé illustrées par Bloomdido Bad de Grasse. Là, il tombe amoureux de Shakti - à qui il fait sa déclaration dans "Zeo the Hero and the witch's spell" - et veut à tout prix lui offrir un... Fish and chips. Hélas pour lui la bonne sorcière ne se laisse pas faire et l'ensorcelle... Voilà en gros le résumé de cette première partie qui se temrine en plein suspens... Se pourrait-il qu'elle soit une adepte du" Women's lib" ? Mérite-t-elle son titre de "Good Witch" ? Qui sait?
Au point de vue musical, ce que l'on remarque surtout c'est un changement de personnel, tout d'abord il y a l'adjonction dans la mamelle du groupe de Tim Blake dont le synthétiseur vous fera pénétrer au sein de l'universelle vacuité interstellaire (ben oui quoi). Pip Pyle quant à lui s'en est allé retrouver d'anciens amis pour former Hatfield (voir ce chapitre) et est remplacé par l'excellent Laurie Allen. Il faut aussi - et peut-être surtout - noter l'arrivée d'un ancien ami de Kevin Ayers : Steve Hillage qui apporte une nouvelle dimension à la musique du groupe.
Pourtant par rapport à l'album précédent, il est évident que si les compositions sont plus longues, plus strcturées et plus élaborées, la qualité musicale laisse quelque peu à désirer. Mais il faut savoir que cet album n'est que le deuxième du catalogue Virgin et que les studios de son "Manor" étaient encore quelque peu archaïque à cette époque. De plus l'album a été très vite enregistré et mixé et cela pour des causes purement matérielles (Virgin c'est tout de même pas l'armée du salut...)

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En ce qui concerne la structure de l'album, chaque morceau illustre un aspect de l'histoire ci-dessus relatée. "Radio Gnome Invisible", le premier morceau explique aux terriens en quoi consiste cette radio téléphatique d'un caractère on ne peut plus singulier et pystique évoqué par une musique quelque peu étrange et orientale. Mais c'est d'une mystique mystifiée qu'il s'agit (Banana Nirvana Manana...). Pourtant la mystification ne serait-elle pas de nous faire croire à une mystique mystifiée ? Who knows ? Le morceau "Flying Tea-Pot" relate le long voyage des Pot Head Pixies en direction de la terre ainsi que leur atterrissage sur celle-ci avec le célèbre (l'est-il?) T. Pot chorus : "Flying Saucer - Flying Tea-cup - From outa space - Flying Tea pot". La deuxième surface commence par une louange à la gloire des Pot Head Pixies (avec le significatif refrain : "I am, you are, we are crazy..."). Puis les notes crystallines du synthétiseur nous emmènent auprès des Octave Doctors et de leur fameuse machine à sagesse. Avec "Zero the Hero and the Witch's spell" nous avons droit au morceau le plus jazzy de l'album, avec fortes ponctuations du synthétiseur, un excellent solo de saxo de Bloomdido et avec, comme toujours, les inimitables "spacer-whispers" de Gilli Smyth qui, chère à son image, se métamorphose en le Pussy de Zero. C'est sur le dialogue éloquent entre celui-ci et celle-là (I don't want to fuck you, just hear you rap..) que se termine ce premier volet de la triologie verte...

Mais bien sûr le groupe n'en reste pas là, la même année sort "Angel's Egg", la deuxième partie des "Radio Gnome" avec lequel le groupe aura fait preuve d'une plus grande maturité musicale. En effet, il y a à nouveau un changement de personnel qui permet au groupe de s'attacher le nouveau batteur Pierre Moerlin, lequel peut être considéré comme le meilleur percussioniste français après Vander. Mais Pierre ne vient pas tout seul, il s'accompagne de sa soeur Mireille qui, elle, se révèle une excellente "glockenspieliste"...

Au début de ce deuxième album, Zero, qui a absorbé la potion magique de Yoni, perd la tête qui s'envole dans l'éther parmi les astres et les flots galactiques pour arriver au septième ciel où tout voyageur se voit gratifié d'un orgasme perpétuel... (Waow!). Tout cela est illustré par une musique très planante dûe aux doux bouillonnements de synthétiseur et aux ponctuations de saxo qui se changent en une longue mélodie lancinante exprimant l'apathie de l'esprit de Zero. "To pass beyond the countless worlds... The eternal wheel... ceaseless tides of selves... Ever passing away before your eyes". Le rythme se fait plus swingant lors de l'approche de la planète Gong dont l'aura magnifique est délicatement évoquée par la guitare électrifiante de Stevie. Et de nouveau cette mystique mystifiée : "Hare Hare Supermarket-Hare Hare London Bus - Hare Hare Ladies Lavatory"...

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Mais cette contemplation est interrompue par l'arrivée du Captain Capricorn et de de son vaisseau singulier (cf. la pochette intérieure) "Look out we're being invaded..." Par ce morceau ("Sold to the highest Buddha") on ne peut s'empêcher de remarquer le nouvel équilibre atteint par le groupe. De plus la qualité d'enregistrement est de loin supérieure au précédent album et les compositions se font plus variées, mais aussi plus instrumentales, avec de nombreux soli de Steve Hillage et de Didier Malherbe soutenus par l'indispensable synthétiseur. Avec la composition suivante Zero arrive en vue du "Castle in Clouds" aux portes duquel il entrevoit une superbe prostituée qui nous chante sans trop de conviction son "Prostitute Poem" du plus pur style "Pigalle" sur une musique de Hillage qui décidément commence à s'affirmer au sein du groupe. Un morceau excellent, une musique tout à fait adéquate. "Bonsoir monsieur,tu viens avec moi? Tu viens, chéri ? I want your body viensfaire l'amour... " Cette rencontre de marque de termine dans un vieux café français où toute la clientèle chante en choeur "I'm givin'my luv to ya". Mais au fond qui est cette charmante dame ? La réponse n'est autre que "Selene" dont Zero tombe à nouveau amoureux. Pauvre petit terrien...

Mais Didier Malherbe nous attend déjà avec sa "Flute Salad", un parfait petit ensemble de notes extatiques du plus pur style "Krishna" qui exprime sa bienvenue à Zero qui, lui, vient d'arriver sur la planète Gong où les Pot Head Pixies l'accueillent comme il se doit. Zero apprend le secret de Tea Pots ainsi que les buts philosophiques de la planète Gong. Fort étonné, il assiste également à la danse prophétique du "Wizard of the Keys" par qui il est emmené au temple invisible de la planète. Point de vue musical "Oilyway" est très bien balancé, soutenu par la rythmique absolument irréprochable de Mike Howelett et de Moerlin. Mais Zero pénètre tout d'abord dans l'"Outer Temple" dont le grand prêtre lui présente une tasse de thé de l'"Hubba Dubba Tea Company of Tiber". Sur un rythme très lancinant, accompagné des space whispers de Gilli Smyth Zero pénètre alors dans l'"Innee Temple" où les Octave Doctors lui enseignent les secrets de la vie grâce à nouveau à leur Crystal Machine. Zero tout à fait converti se prépare à nous chanter sa chanson d'amour ("Love is how you make it") introduite par la "percolation" des percussions des Moerlin. Cette chanson est très douce et exprime l'utilité de la planète verte et de ses représentants terrestres (c'est-à-dire le groupe) "Love is how you give it, how you live it, how you make it, how you take it". Mais Zero voit un Pot Head Pixy qui dans le ciel, sur un arc (en-ciel) déverse, au moyen d'un arrosoir, les nouvelles eaux de la vie et de la sagesse qui feront fleurir une nouvelle et heureuse ère terrestre... Le rythme est plus sec, plus rapide, entrecoupé de

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de violents soli de guitare qui apportent une nouvelle énergie au groupe, qui fait contraste (l'énergie) avec la voix mal assurée de Hillage. Et c'est une nouvelle composition de Bloomdido qui conclut l'album. Un morceau très jazz, très swingant dans lequel Malherbe nous explique comment faire partie de la planète et devenir un Pot Head Pixy ou comment un P.H.P. devient un être humain. De toute façon ça n'a pas d'importance puisque c'est pareil...
Voilà un très bon album, un des meilleurs du groupe, tant par ses qualités formelles - car il faut bien le reconnaître cette musique est irréprochable et les chaos des débuts sont totalement oubliés - que par ses qualités techniques... "Oh mama maya, pray for a banana, banana nirvana manana...".
Epuivinyou qui n'est autre que le pénultième volume de cette trilogie (à moins qu'il n'y en ai un quatrième...). Avec ce petit chef-d'oeuvre, les petits zomvairs nous ramènent sur terre en passant par l'Ile d'Everywhere à laquelle on accède par certaines formules magiques, bien sûr, mais surtout musicales. Surtout ne pas oublier l'extrêmement pataphysique dialogue entre Zéro et le Master Builder à propos de l'éventuelle construction d'un temple qui structurerait sa vision d'un monde plus agréable à vivre, etc...
Cet etc... ne signifie rien d'autre chose que, sachant que cette histoire et ses paroles imaginaires se trouvent dans sa pochette nous ne prenons pas la peine de vous en dire plus, préférant laisser libre cours à votre entendement de cet apodictique ouvrage parénétique.
Que dire de la nouvelle qualité de la musique de Gong ? Peut-être devrions-nous parler de cette évidente équipollences de structure entre les divers mouvements musicaux, faut-il souligner la complexité des arrangements ? Nous pourrions mettre en exergue une purification sans précédent dans le langage musical qui annonce un avenir prometteur non seulement au groupe mais aussi aux formations synchromes qui pourraient s'en inspirer. C'est que "YOU" si vous ne l'avez pas encore remarqué, nous ne vous blâmons pas, apporte une réponse extrêmement neuve aux postulations du nouveau figuratisme symbolique tout en gardant tout un faisceau de traditions, en synthétisant les différents problèmes de fonds et en conservant cette notable fraîcheur qui aurait pu échapper à cette nouvelle musique potentielle car il ne s'agit évidemment pas d'une création froidement abstraite. Gong a définitivement réduit le problème de cette monochromie si nous pouvons user d'un tel vocable, de cette monochromie donc qui est le triste apanage des productions musicales actuelles et hélas futures...
Avec le spectacle offert par "YOU", l'horizon pataphysique semble avoir aspiré l'univers visuel dans l'infini d'une dimension intermédiaire, celle où le temps

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et l'espace, ces deux montres métamythiques, sont accouplés en une union quasi idéomatique par laquelle ces deux contradictions se voient hallucinement abolies. Vouons donc à la paralipse les autres paradigmes et perorons, comme disait Sandormir. Cette musique de grande classe ne nous donne rien d'autre (!) que l'intuition d'une réalité autre, ici très concrètement promue, selon le voeu des plus sensibles artistes : on a, au sens propre, l'impression de voir de l'autre côté du miroir et être admis à la contemplation de l'invisible...
Peut-on souhaiter autre chose ?

Et de conclure en beauté ce chat pitre : "melior est finis oration is quam principium..."

> Zoom

ROBERT WYATT

Tout de suite des flashes éblouissants éclairent notre mémoire.
Un batteur blond presque nu martelle sa batterie avec constance et tenacité.
Il est déjà loin ce souvenir de Robert Wyatt au sein de Soft Machine à l'époque du "Third".
Après la rupture, il y eût une expérience solo, puis Matching Mole, puis... l'accident, la petite voiture. Lors d'une soirée donnée pour fêter la grande réunion de toute la famille Soft, ils étaient tous là, il est tombé de la fenêtre du quatrième étage.
Par miracle, il n'est pas mort, mais reste paralysé à vie. A présent, il se déplace en voiture roulante recevant les soins constants de sa femme Alphie.
Le monde rock perd ainsi un des plus grands batteurs de tous les temps, mais (on s'en apercevra plus tard) conquiert un incomparable compositeur-chanteur.
La première expérience avec Hatfield and the North le prouve bien (il chante sur "Calyx").
Mais attardons-nous quelques instants sur le premier disque solo, de Robert Wyatt : "End of an Ear".
Enregistré entre la période de fin Soft Machine et début Matching Mole, Robert explique le pourquoi de ce disque "Robert Wyatt, out of work pop-singer". En fait l'album est une suite d'hommages à des personnalités qui l'ont aidés, encouragés et soutenus.
"Las Vegas Tango" est dédié à Gil Evans, d'autres titres à Gilli Smyth, Daevid Allen, Caravan (on reste en famille, dirait-on) sans oublier Carla ou Caroline (cette dernière réapparaîtra également sur le premier Matching Mole pour donner le morceau que je préfère nettement) Disque rempli de qualités et de talents mais il passera pratiquement inaperçu.
Tout Wyatt se retrouve dans cet album, sa voix, son jeu, ses compositions sont d'une évidence éternelle.
Du jazz, du piano électrique, inversion de bandes et arrangements sonores électroniques font de cet album une pièce de collection.
Cependant, il apparaît beaucoup plus simple vis-à-vis des expériences passées avec le Soft, il ne semble pas assez maîtrisé et de ce fait ne rencontre qu'un mince succès et c'est bien triste.
Ensuite, il désire devenir le leadership d'un groupe, il fonde Matching Mole.
Bien qu'étant le patron, il s'effacera; c'est ainsi que "Part of the dance", composition de Phil Miller occupe une grande place sur la première face ? Malheureusement l'expérience sera brève. Puis l'occident , la convalescence très longue.

> Zoom

Il réapparaît pour la première fois sur la scène du Rainbow en compagnie de Kevin Ayers, John Cale, Eno, Nico et Mike Oldfield pour enregistre "June 1st 1974" puis avec Hatfield & the North pour qui il prête sa voix sur un morceau. Soft Machine et Pink Floyd lui verseront l'argent d'un concert en commun pour envisager son retour dans le Show-biz sans trop de problèmes.
Soulain un jour de l'année 1974, Robert Wyatt sort un disque : Rock Bottom qui d'abord surpris et finalement ravi tout le monde.
Il a quitté la firme C.B.S. au profit de VIRGIN très en vogue à cette époque. Il a trouvé là le cadre idéal pour travailler entouré de ses amis :Hatfield & the North et Mike Oldfield. La production de Nick Mason et l'instrumentation (Wyatt : claviers; Richard Sinclair ou Hugh Hopper à la basse; Fred Frith : violes) de tous ses amis contribuent à soutenir la pleine harmonie et à faire de ce disque une merveille.
Rock Bottom est un disque "heavy". Il consiste également en une amélioration face aux productions précédentes une vision franchement originale d'un rêve intemporel de l'esprit qui aboutit à une résolution.
Ce disque marque surtout l'accomplissement de la démarche musciale que Robert rechercherait depuis le début de sa carrière, depuis le premier Soft. C'est sans doute la raison pour laquelle il est allé chez Virgin qui laisse toutes libertés aux musiciens (cfr. Hatfield).
D'une certaine manière cette démarche présentait un risque celui de ne pas voir comme avec .C.B.S. ses disques distribués dans le monde entier et seulement dans quelques magasins clairsemés à Londres. Cependant l'heureux développement de la dite firme s'est voulu impressionnant. Dès le premier morceau, "Sea Song" on est conscient qu'il s'agit d'une oeuvre importante qui annihile toutes possibilités critiques. La voix, les percussions de Wyatt sont présentes, la force émotive et souple des compositions, l'imagination créatrice dans toute sa sérénité et son ivresse se retrouvent et contribuent à faire de cette sublime symphonie une merveille de technique instrumentale qui ouvre une perspective vers le dépassement outre-mesure.
Les morceaux d'ouverture confirment l'actuel penchant de Wyatt pour les récents travaux de Stevie Wonder. Les luxuriants crescendos de pianos se combinent merveilleusement avec la sagesse vocale du "lead-singer".
Avant son hospitalisation, Wyatt préparait avec le groupe le troisième album de Matching Mole. Cependant, les six mois d'inactivité ont eu pour conséquence d'entraîner la séparation du groupe. Six mois d'hôpital de réflexions, de compositions. le résultat : Rock Bottom que la critique accueilli tout de suite très favorablement.

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La réussite parfaite du disque lui valut la récompense d'une distinction honorifique musicale : le prix "Charles Cros 1974".
Fortement inspiré par "I'm a believer" de Neil Diamond, il l'arrangea et le sortit en simple. Il obtint tout de suite un vif succès et le disque se propulsa en très bonne position dans le "Top Thirty".
En février 75, un nouveau simple cette fois un réarrangement d'un disque de Chris Andrew : "Yesterday man" que l'on retrouve sur le disque compilation "V" de chez Virgin.
Après la sensationnelle réussite de Rock Bottom, Wyatt a voulu remettre son troisième album solo :" Ruth is stranger than Richard".
"Richard" toute la spontanéité, l'imagination et le balancement euphorique chère à notre vieux Soft.
"Soup song" est une composition de Hugh Hopper et de Robert qui offre un caractère déroutant par la présence du piano bluezy et de la trompette jazzy.
En fin de compte, il se présente comme fort différent de Rock Bottom avec comme confirmation : "Team spirit" où Eno joue (tenez-vous bien) du "direct inject anti-jazz ray gun" et où Phil Manzanera s'occupe de la partie sonore.
Amalgames de trouvailles ingénieuses et époustouflantes, d'harmonisation nettement "vieux jazz" où viennent s'insérer les longues interventions stridantes du trompettiste Mongezi Feza, musicien à part entière du groupe de Chris Mc Gregor: "Brotherland of Bread". Sont également présents le solide et percutant saxophoniste Gary Windo, l'extraordinaire guitariste de Henry Cow : Fred Frith, Manzanera, Brian, Eno, Bill Mc Cormick l'ancien bassiste de Matching Mole et un second saxophoniste Nisar Ahmad Khan.
Robert Wyatt en profite également pour reprendre une des oeuvres maîtresses de jazz : "Song for che" tiré du fameux "Liberation Orchestra" du contrebassiste Charlie Haden. Ce morceau vient clore de façon magistrale la première face du disque.
Le premier morceau de la seconde face, très court, 50 secondes consiste en un duel piano/vocales entre Frith/Wyatt qui s'effacera pour finalement réapparaître à la fin du disque.
La voix s'étale, se tisse, tresse une harmonie sur laquelle en écho une clarinette impose un background hypnotique qui au bout du compte ne laissera que la clarinette et la voix répéter sans cesse la même phrase.
Wyatt pousse jusqu'à reprendre un thème d'Offenbach et sur la pochette cela donne fort bien : "Black note and I white note (Offenbach/Wyatt)".
La production est toujours le travail de Nick Mason, mais ce disque peut paraître moins évident que le précédent car plus inégal et plus découpé.
Bien sûr Ruth is stranger than Richard, mais Ruth est encore plus stranger que Rock Bottom.

> Zoom

HATFIELD and THE NORTH.

Ce groupe symbolise un aspect différent de l'appareil musicographique de chez Vergin. Situé à mi-chemin entre le jazz et le rock, ils jouent une musique qui leur est personnelle, qui leur plaît sans se soucier des considérations commerciales. C'est grâce à Vergin qui leur laisse toute liberté de création, dans ce sens qu'il n'impose aucune censure , ni contraintes qu'ils peuvent s'épanouir. La musique d'Hatfield and the North est le résultat intégral du travail du groupe, une tâche individuelle qui s'est fondée en un tout cohérent et non pas un message raboté par la firme pour des raisons commerciales. Non! Vergin distribue simplement les disques, aident les musiciens à se lancer et en fait ce n'est pas plus mal car il suffit de jeter un coup d'oeil sur l'ampleur toujours croissante de cette firme qui compte le plus grand magasin de Londres.
Le groupe s'est formé en Novembre 1972 par Pip Pyle (batterie), Richard Sinclair (Basse, vocaux), Phil Miller (guitare) et son frère Steve Miller (claviers) qui joue actuellement avec Lol Coxhill et remplacé par Dave Sinclair, le cousin de Richard, qui a son tour s'est fait ravir la place par le définitif Dave Stewart.
Ils ont tous fait partie de la grande famille Soft Machine en s'intégrant dans des groupes s'inscrivant tous dans la lignée, c'est-à-dire Matching Mole (Phil Miller); Caravan (Sinclair); Gong (Pyle) Egg (Stewart). Que jouent-ils ? du Jazz ? du rock ? peu importe c'est de la musique vivante, un style qu'on aime et qu'il nous faut à tout prix découvrir.

"The Stubbs Effects" and "The other Stubbs Effects".

Tels sont les titres qui respectivement débutent et clôturent la première ébauche discographique.
Sur cet album le groupe a fait appel au merveilleux saxophoniste d'Henry Cow, Geoff Leigh, à Jeremy Baines pixiephone et à Robert Wyatt qui prête sa voix sur Calyx. Les morceaux s'enchaînent s'entrecroisent, s'enflent avec une agilité déconcertante, d'autant plus qu'ils sont composés par chaque musicien indépendamment. On passe d'un travail de Pip Pyle à Sinclair puis Stewart et enfin Miller pour les quatre premiers morceaux et lorsque placés à la suite les uns des autres le résultat est stupéfiant car la cohésion tresse un long filament de vingt minutes.

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Hatfield and the North réveille inévitablement le souvenir fou de Matching Mole, il en dit plus que Caravan. Pour l'instant il se place sur l'orbite de Soft Machine. L'alliance de l'influence passée de chaque membre donne un résultat de toute beauté.

A l'écoute de ce bijoux, on ne remarque même plus que les musiciens sont excellents tant le résultat semble évident. On ne résiste pas aux envolées lyriques de Miller ou Stewart ("Rifferama") qui font preuve d'une grande maturité. L'originalité du groupe provient essentiellement du mélange de l'ambiguité de la logique sans cesse ménagée d'où naît cette atmosphère un peu flottante qui se marie au swing du jazz-rock.

Cet album est un véritable amalgame d'un grand nombre de courants musicaux contemporains. L'orgue s'écrase en longues vagues d'accords.

La batterie s'étale en avalanches successives, la guitare s'effondre en de merveilleux ondoiements écumeux, le tout couronné par la voix pleine de fraîcheur de Richard Sinclair qui ne peut que faire penser à Wyatt (à dessein certainement).

Voilà assurément un très grand groupe. Cependant la probité certaine des musiciens à l'instabilité nous laissait cependant quelques craintes quant à la réalité d'un second album.

Heureusement, au terme de nombreuses et fructueuses tournées, le groupe s'est affirmé davantage par l'intermédiaire d'un second album décidément très bon. Je veux parler de "Ther Rotters' clubs".

Une pochette très belle et très originale efface une plaque de vinyl noir qui n'a pas encore fini de m'étonner.

Ici aussi tous les musiciens composent, mais les plus notoires sont Pyle avec "The yes no interlude", "Fitter Stroke has a bath" et Dave Stewart avec un merveilleux "Mumps" qui occupe presque toute la seconde face.

Le premier album faisait trop penser à Soft Machine et à Matching Mole et n'apportait rien de très nouveau tout en restant cependant excellent. Il est autrement avec : "The Rotters'clubs". Chaque musicien s'exprime avec sa personnalité apportant de ce fait, une coloration toute nouvelle à la musique Hatfieldienne. Disque où est présente toute une source de richesses et de trouvailles ingénieuses.

Phil Miller a encore améliorer son jeu de guitare et ses soli font parfois penser à un Mc Laughlin.

A l'écoute de "Mumps" on se rend immédiatement compte que Dave Stewart a acquis une maîtrise totale de son instrument. Longue échappée électrique au son quelque peu Ratledgien, avalanches de notes, éboulements d'accords avant de retomber

> Zoom

dans un calme plus rythmique.
La basse de Sinclair parfois un peu à la Hopper et son chant nettement amélioré apporte au côté lyrique plus d'assurance et de sensibilité ("Filler Stroke has a bath").
Cependant il est à noter cette chose remarquable chez ce groupe c'est le fait que leur musique ne provient pas (comme tant de groupes, maintenant) de l'utilisation artificielle de vieilles recettes, mais au contraire d'une aventure musicale propre à lui.
Maintenant, si vous trouvez que "Soft Machine" est trop difficile pour vous, que "Kevin Ayers" préfère la côte d'Azur à la scène et que "Caravan" s'endort, écoutez Haftield and the North. Il vous donnera entière satisfaction et vous emmènera très loin pour rêver au "Rotters"club" par exemple. Maintenant, la question se pose de savoir jusqu'à quel point le groupe va-t-il nous emmener ? Ils mettent tous leurs efforts dans leur musique et la critique les accueille très défavorablement (excepté en France). Le rock commence tout doucement à nous lasser, les choses neuves deviennent vraiment très rares et quand on nous les présente (Hatfield), on les rejette.
Je regarde le tableau de chez Virgin et je remarque que les illustres inconnus d'hier comme Mike Olfdfield, Kevin Coyne, Tangerine Dream, Gong sont des monstres à l'heure actuelle.
Hatfield and the North est chez Virgin... Vous me suivez!

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DASHIELL HEDAYAT : "OBSOLETE"

Dashiell Hedayat... Qui c'est çà ? Un personnage sympathique, seulement connu de quelques initiés, un type bourré de talent et de simplicité (choses qui vont rarement de paire) qui a la chance et la malchance de n'être pas reconnu par le vaste public rock. Chance parce que cela permet à certains de découvrir par hasard et pas rasé un artiste merveilleux d'une valeur indiscutable - ça fait toujours plaisir - et ainsi une oeuvre qui reste une forme d'artisanat, produit de luxe de qualité exceptionnelle. Malchance parce que ce jeune dandy baudelairien mériterait d'être apprécié à plus grande échelle, son premier disque "La devanture des ivresses" est introuvable parce que n'ayant bénéficié que d'un seul pressage limité). On pouvait s'attendre à un succès plus important pour "Obsolete" pour diverses raisons, notamment parce que ce disque a bénéficié de conditions de travail idéales (nombreuses heures de studio et liberté totale de mixage) mais aussi et surtout de la présence des musiciens du Gong (formule 1971). Mais attention! "Obsolete" n'est pas un disque de Gong à part entière. Disons que ce genre de musique convient tout à fait à l'illustration de l'esprit exacerbé de Dashiell : recherche idéaliste du beau, désir de retour à la simplicité, à la pureté enfantine, nostalgie onirique d'un monde d'ivresse et de luxe. (cf. "Chrysler"), références au décadencisme baudelerien, expression d'une paranoïa conséquente d'un rêve drogué, jouissance perverse et culte du moi.
Le premier morceau n'est qu'une façon de nous introduire à ce monde imaginaire et intérieur évoqué plus haut. Cette "Chrysler" démarre en trombe mise en branle par la wah-wah de Daevid Allen immédiatement suivie par la basse forte de Tritsch et la rythmique rigide de Pip Pyle, tout cela donne un impact évident à cette composition de Dashiell Hedayat (elles sont toutes de lui d'ailleurs, "Chrysler, Chrysler rose, elle ne peut plus rouler mais c'est là que je fais l'amour...(...) et Sadi au moment de monter me dit, ta Chrysler est salement défoncée, oui mais tu sais on est tous défoncés..." Expression démesurée d'un trip au fond des obsessions : l'argent, le luxe - devenir une pop star... Clin d'oeil à Mick Jagger mais aussi à Syd Barrett... Soutenue par une musique violente, presque 'hard", la voix douce et expressive de Dashiell fait contraste mais révèle une aptitude incontestable à créer une atmosphère spéciale, bizarre pleine de nostalgie, celle d'un esprit enclin au trip. Atmosphère encore renforcée par la couleur toute particulière apportée par le saxo de Didier Malherbe et les longs glissandos de Daevid nous préparant ainsi à décoller pour les autres morceaux.
Notons aussi à la fin du morceau un excellent parallèle entre la guitare et le saxophone.

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"Fille de l'ombre" est un motif constamment répété basé sur un ensemble de notes de guitare inlassablement identiques. Poésie érotique parfaitement illustrée par les cris déchirés de la voix de Gilli Smyth "C'est une fille de l'ombre, entre ses seins c'est si sombre, entre ses cuisses c'est si sombre(...) Entre ses cuisses et ses seins je sombre, je sombre".

Le morceau qui termine la première face est une longue ballade amoureuse comme son titre l'indique ("Long Song for Zelda"). C'est ici l'évocation d'un amour imaginaire, irréel de même qu'une cérémonie passéiste pleine de nostalgie vouée au culte du désuet ("écouter un vieux jazz, dans un vieux bar, du papier de soie au mur"... Dashiell qui joue ici de la guitare acoustique, chante d'une voix douce, parle, raconte son trip de sa voix caressante soutenue par la rythmique de Tritsch et de Pyle. Sa voix et ses paroles nous font pénétrer l'atmosphère bizarre évoquée par le décor qui se fait images mélancoliques, par les regrets d'une vie trop réelle... "Je ne sais même plus si je pense". La musique se fait mondes subliment imaginaires, états tempons nous protégeant d'une réalité trop cruelle, créés par les "fleurs du mal" auxquelles Dashiell s'assimile par une sorte d'endosmose spirituelle -mes os friables comme de la camme- ma cervelle de camme" mais il y a également un rappel constant d'une famille d'initiés (Soft power- Soft Mother), du monde d'Alan Ginsberg et de Burroughs (que l'on entend d'ailleurs à la fin du morceau) : "tu sais qu'il caressait mon cul comme une plaie ouverte, mon nez je veux dire, mon nez où s'engouffraient des autos comme dans un tunnel, mes narines avec de leurs tuyaux d'échappement, des nuages d'héroïne, cheval vapeur, horse power, horse power...". Progression croissante dans l'irréel, ponctuée par la wah-wah discrète de Daevid Allen rejointe quelques instants après par le saxo du good count Blomndido Bad de Grasse contribuant ainsi à renforcer la mélancolie d'un amour impalpable...

"Cielo Drive/17" qui prend toute la seconde face (21'20") commence par de longs glissandos de guitares et des percussions reflétés par l'écho, donnant ainsi une couleur galactique à ce trip que l'on se prépare à vivre. A ces instruments s'ajoutent progressivement la basse qui lance un motif qui se répétera durant tout le morceau, puis les choeurs de Dashiell qui viennent se coller à cette musique hypnotique, rejointe par Pip Pyle dont les cymbales accroissent l'effet de plénitude de la composition. Une fois l'ambiance créée, Dashiell illustre son trip par des paroles fort évocatrices, mi-parlées mi-chantées qui font défiler toutes sortes d'images, d'obsessions qui toutes aboutissent à une angoisse, à une paranoïa insoutenable. Images répétées dans un ordre chaque fois différent, parfois légèrement modifiées. La voix de Dashiell, se bornant à raconter son trip, est soutenue par le saxo (rythmique ou solo ?) qui illustre les sentiments et sensations intérieures. "Des rêves inachevés, notre villa, du lierre dans l'escalier... protégés par la poussière des verrières deux chats sont assis(...)

> Zoom

des queues de comètes dans tes cheveux, des anneaux de Saturne à chaque doigt". Tension progressive dans cette musique formant un tout bien compact qui illustre la tension de ce rêve paranoïaque ("des chats qui ne nous laisseront pas passer"). contrastent aussi avec l'incohérence des paroles "toi et moi, assis là dans l'herbe à fumer les lames du parquet, je reprends : toi et moi assis là à même le parquet à fumer la fleur qui fait des fleurs au cerveau...".

Un changement de rythme nous permet d'entendre un solo de guitare assez "hard" dans un style assez groovy dont les notes s'entrechoquent sinistrement mais qui s'efface quelque peu pour laisser parler Dashiell "ma paranoïa se perd lorsque j'ouvre le frigidaire" traduction d'une angoisse sublime mais aussi suggestion d'une fin sinistre "est-ce que..., ou bien peut-être que..., ou alors... ? Puis le rythme initial reprend, fort, hypnotique et c'est un nouveau contraste : la voix fraîche et frêle de Sam Wyatt (fils de Robert - il avait 5 ans à ce moment là) évoquant à nouveau cette nostalgie de la pureté enfantine.
Mais déjà le saxo et la flûte - dont le son est déformé - annoncent la fin tragique : "son visage reflété par le miroir terne que son souffle ne ternira plus depuis qu'elle n'est plus" et la tension monte, monte illustrée par les ponctuations violentes et aigües du saxo et de la guitare : puis c'est l'explosion, l'éclair, les cris, les choeurs, les sons perçants de Gilli Smyth. Pour conclure ce Cielo Drive/17 un changement de rythme s'opère, plus lent, très flippant - joué à la guitare acoustique et chanté d'une voix triste et désolée soutenue par les voix de l'au-delà de Shakti Yoni.
Chef-d'oeuvre admirable qui se termine en toute beauté, ce disque doit être considéré plus comme un disque de poète qu'une musique de groupe... Nous vous conseillons également la lecture des trois romans de Dashiell (parus chez Ch. BOURGOIS) qui vous permettrons de pénétrer de façon plus intéressante l'univers de ce charmant "décadent".

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FUSION 1976

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Télécharger La famille Soft Machine

Hommage aux fanzines !

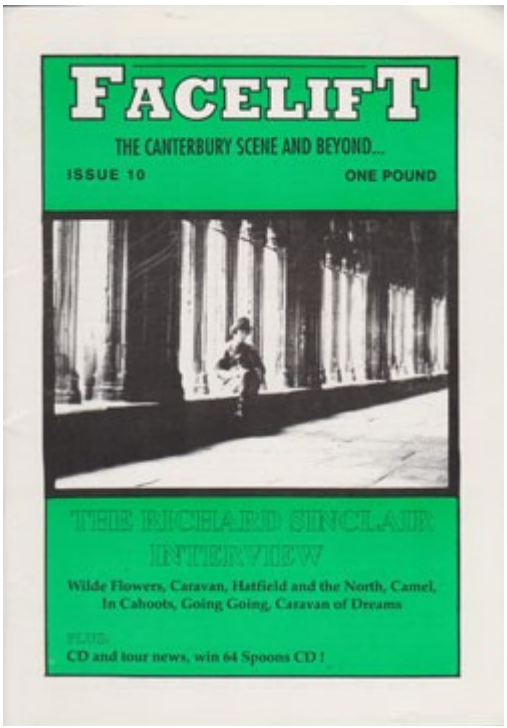
ABÉCÉDAIRE

C'est à une évocation un peu nostalgique que je vous invite, à une revisitation de ces drôles de journaux qui nous apportaient - pas toujours à l'heure - des nouvelles d'une autre existence, faite de concerts, d'albums et de musiciens qui nous rendaient la vie plus aimable.

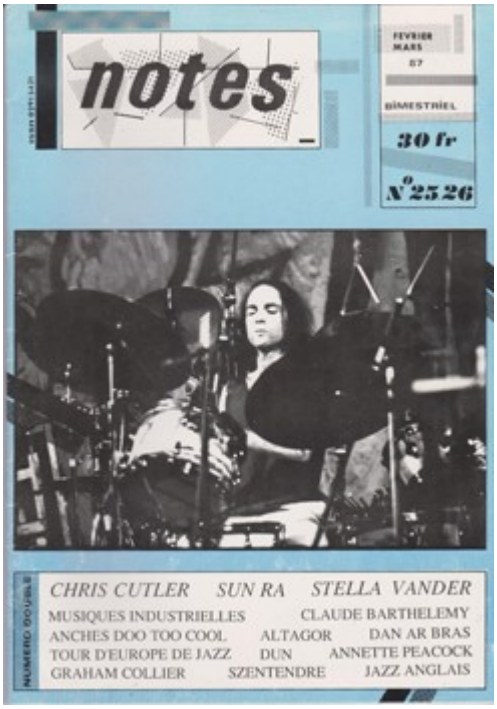
A leurs lectures nous nous sommes forgés, bien avant ces satanés réseaux sociaux, une culture et des références qui constituent pour la plupart d'entre nous le sel de l' existence.

Les fanzines ont bien mérité ce petit coup de chapeau sous forme d'hommage au D.I.Y. et à son esthétique "N/B" tellement vintage !





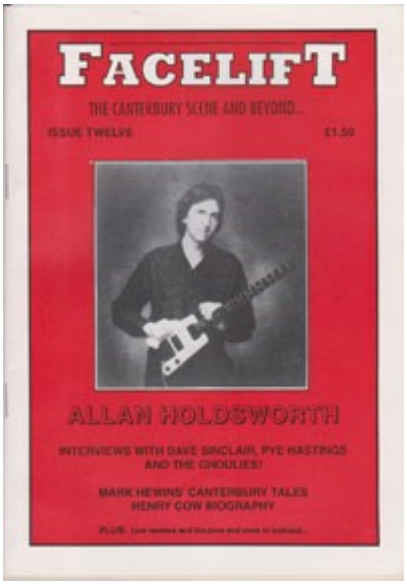




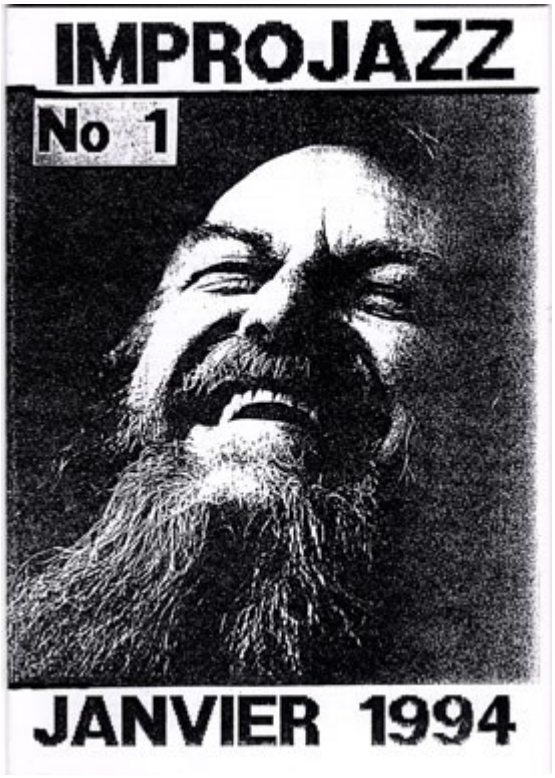
Un fanzine, avec tous ses excès, ses partis pris, un magazine de fans, non professionnels, tapé sur une machine à écrire Japy avant la machine IBM à boules. On se savait pas qu'il y aurait un jour des ordinateurs et la P.A.O, de la musique en CD, en MP3, à télécharger etc. Bref, que les goodolddays seraient bientôt derrière nous...

Je me souviens qu'à l'époque, les disques n'avaient pas de code-barres, que les directeurs artistiques (A&R) n'étaient pas encore devenus des chefs de produit, que les disquaires ne pratiquaient pas encore la V.A.O. (vente assistée par ordinateur), que la plupart des disques incontournables sortaient sur des majors et que ce n'était pas l'ordinateur qui décidait de ce qui devait être dans les bacs des disquaires...

Gérard Nguyen - ATEM
(Ed. Camion Blanc - 2010)









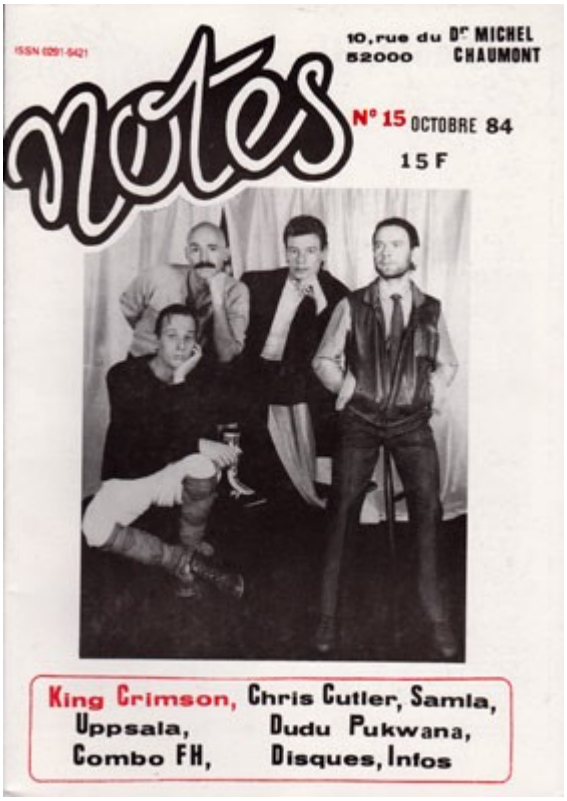
La couverture du n° 1 (janvier 1994) faisait apparaitre un Robert Wyatt hilare, pour une interview réalisée par écrit. Dans le n° 141 (janvier 2008), le même Robert Wyatt est entré en discussion avec **Gary May**, mais cette

fois ci nous étions présents en chair et en os devant une de mes "idoles" (ce mot ne me fait pas peur, tant qu'il ne s'agit pas de religion).

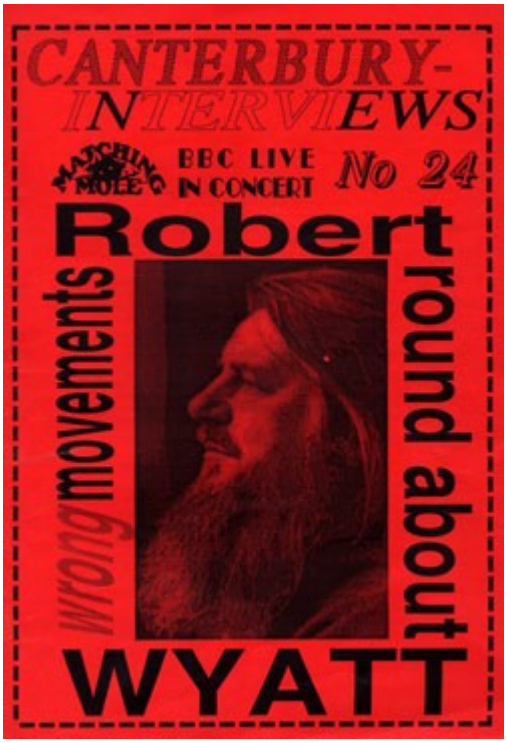
Merci à Robert, pour sa disponibilité et sa gentillesse, son humour et sa toujours bonne humeur, malgré le handicap. Il restera en quelque sorte notre parrain…

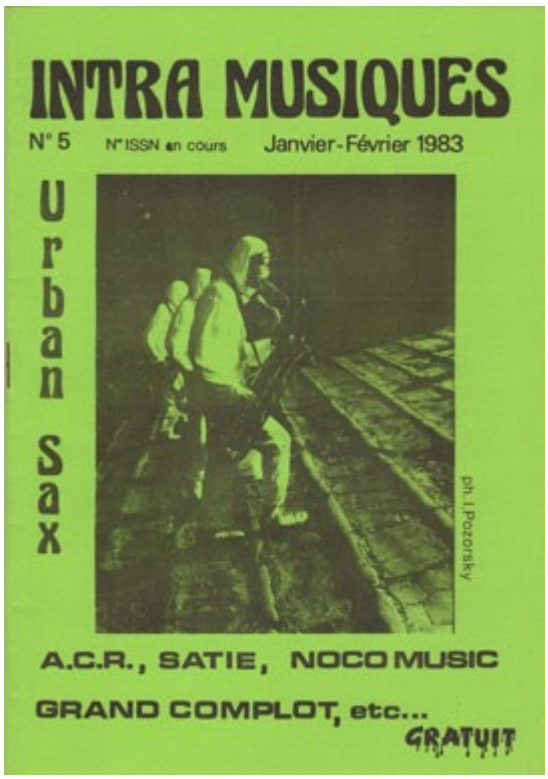
Philippe Renaud - IMPROJAZZ

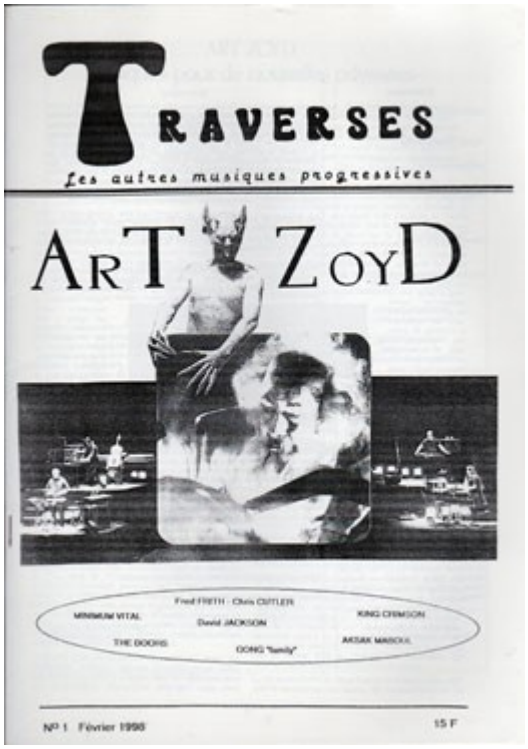
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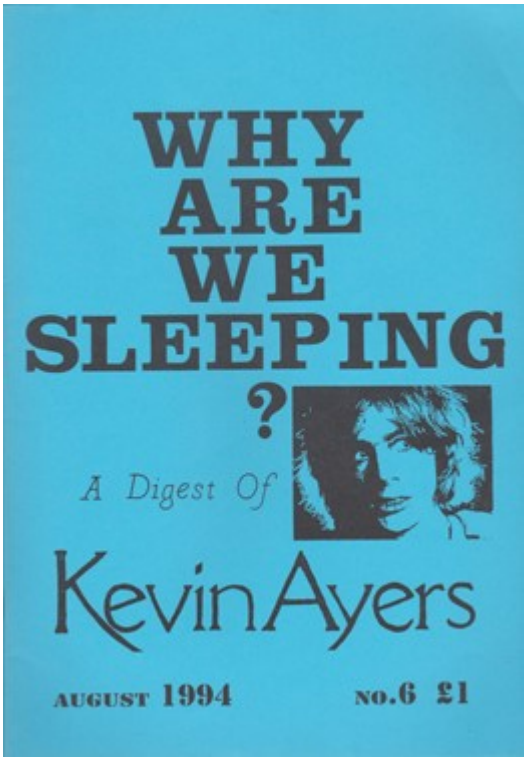







INTRA MUSIQUES
N° 5 N° ISSN en cours Janvier-Février 1983
Urban Sax
ph. I.Pozorsky
A.C.R., SATIE, NOCO MUSIC
GRAND COMPLOT, etc...
GRATUIT


TRAVERSES
les autres musiques progressives
ART ZOYD
MINIMUM VITAL
Fred FRITH - Chris CUTLER
David JACKSON
KING CRIMSON
THE DOORS
GONG "family"
MOSAIK MASCKIL
N° 1 Février 1995
15 F

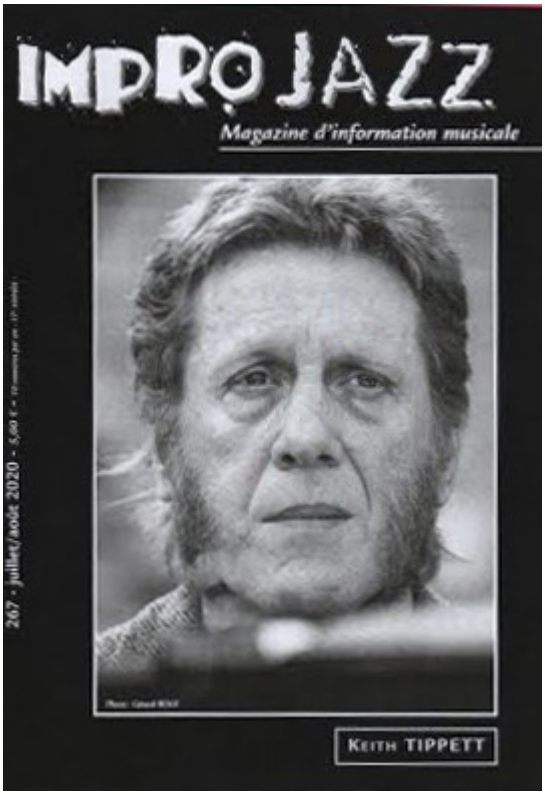

WHY ARE WE SLEEPING ?
A Digest Of
Kevin Ayers
AUGUST 1994
NO.6 £1

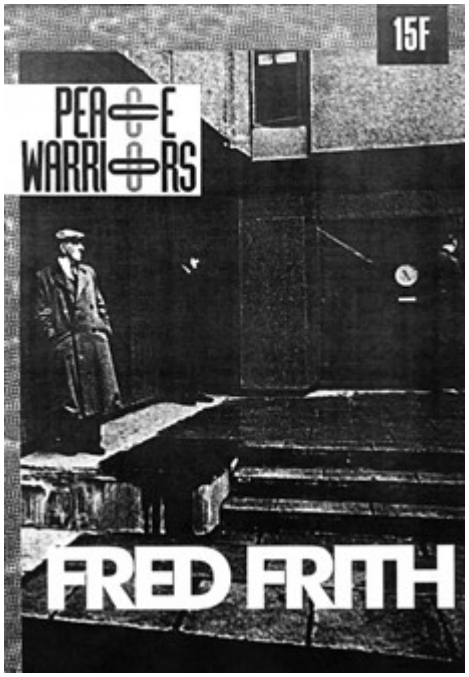

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INTRA MUSIQUES
N° 13 4e Trimestre 85
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OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL
A News-Info Source of the International Robert Wyatt Contingent
MATCHING MOLE REVISITED!
A SHORT BREAK FOR TEA!
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
WITH THIS BOY, NOW!
PART ONE of TWO
PLUS:
A Shapely Sexy Wyatt bio-discography through 2980's!
New club information!
80's press clips!

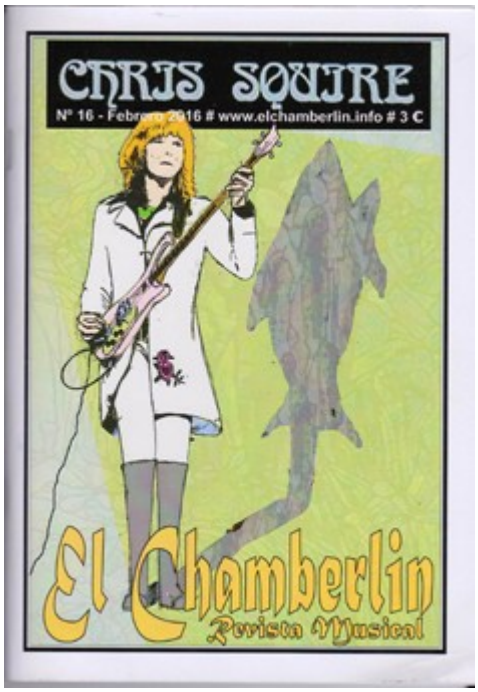

impetus
Eberhard Weber
7
Johnny Dyani
Daevid Allen
Rock In Opposition
Bop
Roger Dean & Lysis
Salman Shukur
John Renbourn Group

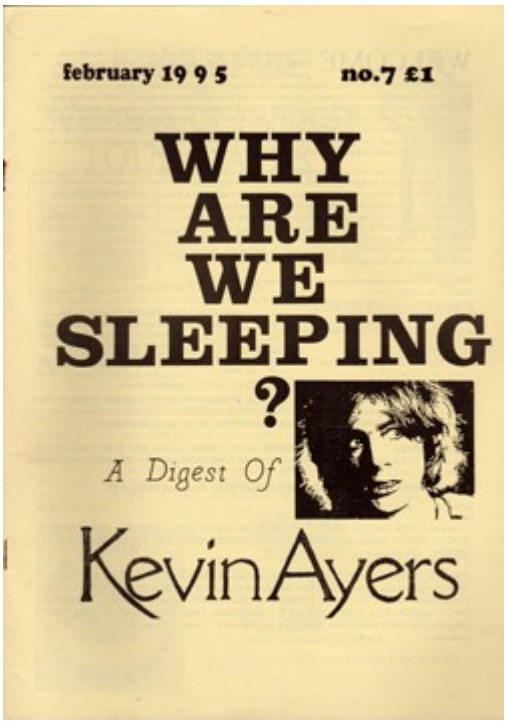

The Sound Projector
Exclusive Interview
My Strange Life
Florian Fricke
Conrad Schnitzler
'I don't like Titles'
Dark Ambient
Electronix
Kosmische
JapCore
Record Review
Music Magazine
Tricky
Isolationism
Techno Animal
Demons of Musique Concrète
The Listening Post
Sun Ra: The Surrealist Cosmographer
Obscure UK 1970s Prog Rock
The True Meaning of False Nostalgia
2nd Issue
1997
'Better Listening Thru Imagination'


IMPRO JAZZ
Magazine d'information musicale
267 • juillet/août 2020 • 5,00 € • 10 numéros par an
KEITH TIPPETT


15F
PEACE WARRIORS
FRED FRITH


"revue & corrigée.


CHRIS SQUIRE
El Chamberlin
Revista Musical

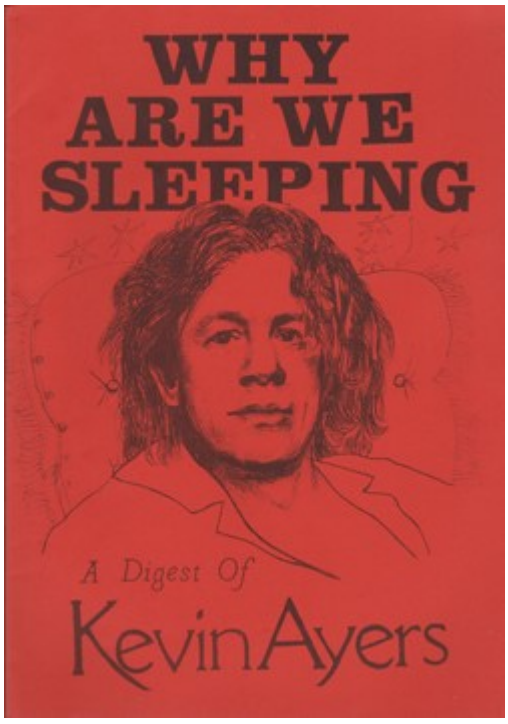

february 19 9 5
no.7 £1
WHY ARE WE SLEEPING ?
A Digest Of
Kevin Ayers

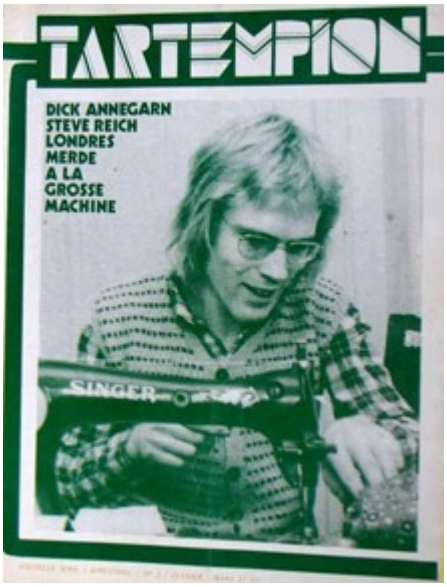
Facelift magazine was a small independent UK music fanzine which ran between 1989 and 1999. It aimed to cover 'The Canterbury Scene and beyond...'
The "beyond" byline meant that the scope of the fanzine was in fact much wider than the editor, its contributors or its readers first envisaged, but the magazine aimed to cover bands such as Caravan, Soft Machine, Gong, Hatfield and the North, National Health and musicians such as Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers, Steve Hillage amongst many many others...

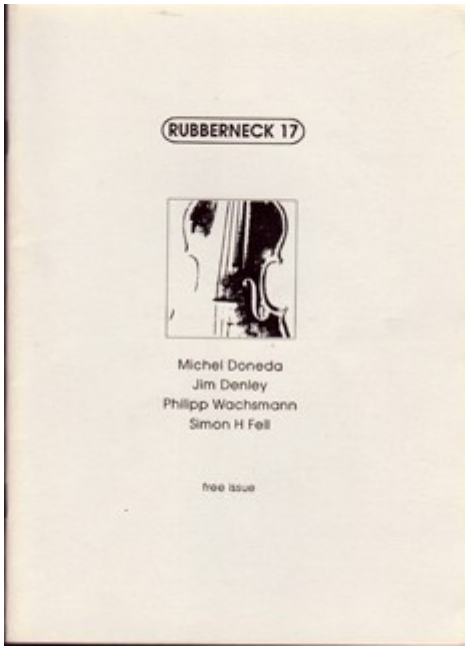
Phil Howitt - FACELIFT

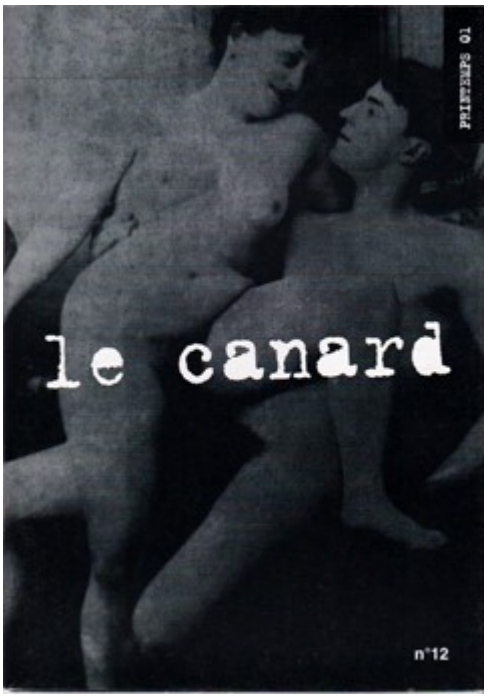
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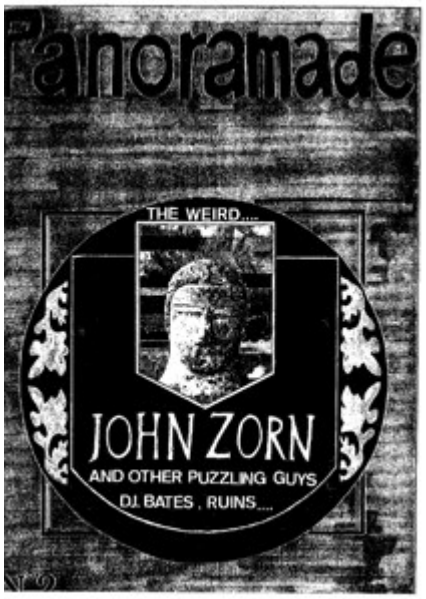


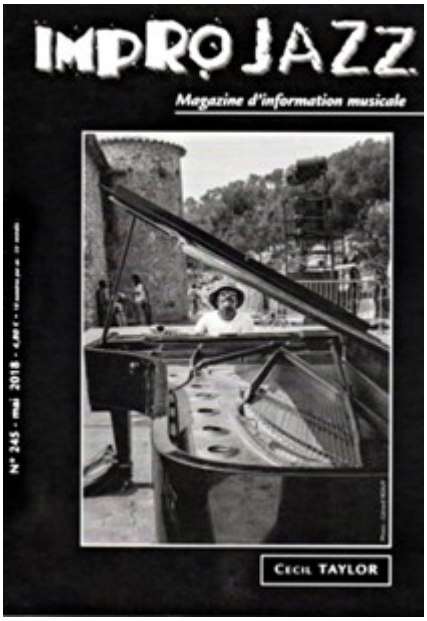





RUBBERNECK 17
Michel Doneda
Jim Denley
Philipp Wachsmann
Simon H Fell
free issue


le canard
PRINTEMPS 01
n°12


Panoramade
THE WEIRD....
JOHN ZORN
AND OTHER PUZZLING GUYS
D.J. BATES , RUINS....


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CECIL TAYLOR

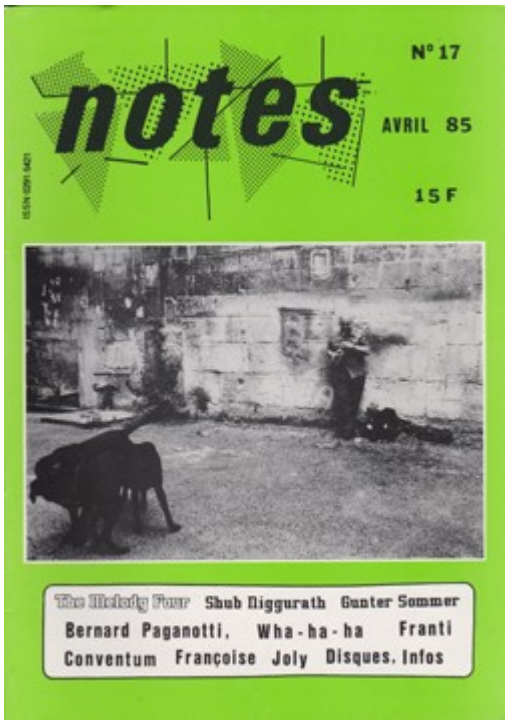




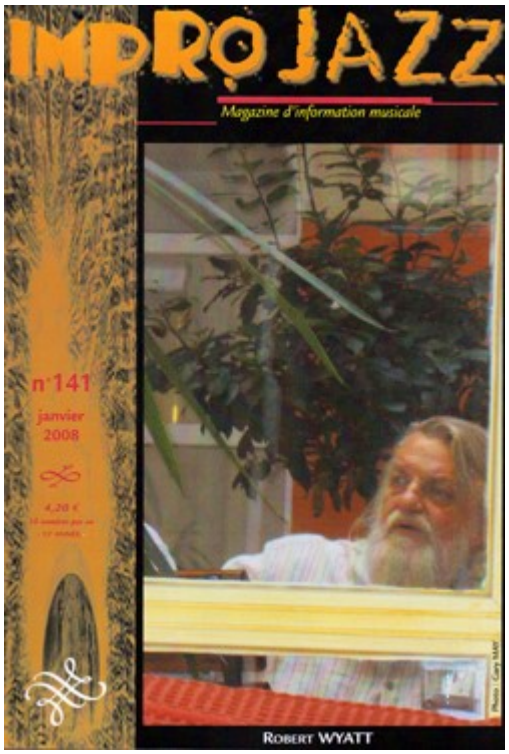


Organisatrice de quelques concerts entre 1979 et 1984, l'association Intra-Musiques s'est vite rendu compte qu'une petite campagne d'affichage concernant les musiciens programmés alors peu connus ne suffisait mais. D'où l'idée au départ de faire un fanzine présentant les univers musicaux qui intéressaient les membres de l'association : présentation succincte des groupes invités, leur discographie...D'où la gratuité du fanzine. Mais très rapidement celui-ci s'étoffe avec des chroniques de disques, et présentation de courants musicaux pas forcément liés à une éventuelle programmation en concert, pour se développer davantage par la suite sans plus aucune références à l'organisation de concerts.

Pierre Durr - INTRA MUSIQUES

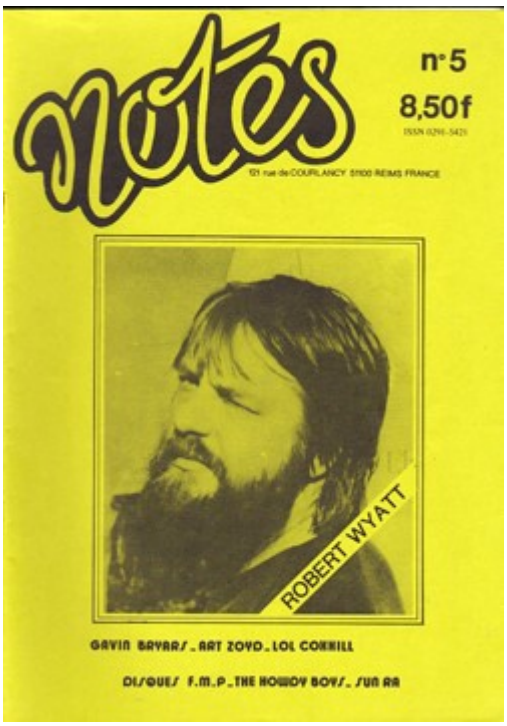

notes
N° 17
AVRIL 85
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The Ikeleiy Four Shub Diggurath Gunter Sommer
Bernard Paganotti, Wha-ha-ha Franti
Conventum Françoise Joly Disques, Infos


CANTERBURY -
INTERVIEWS No 30
Keith and Julie TIPPETT talk about CENTIPEDE, the BLUE NOTES, the DEDICATION ORCHESTRA, MUJICIAN and their future projects!
KEITH TIPPETT
free pianist
CENTIPEDE
-the band that can't be stopped

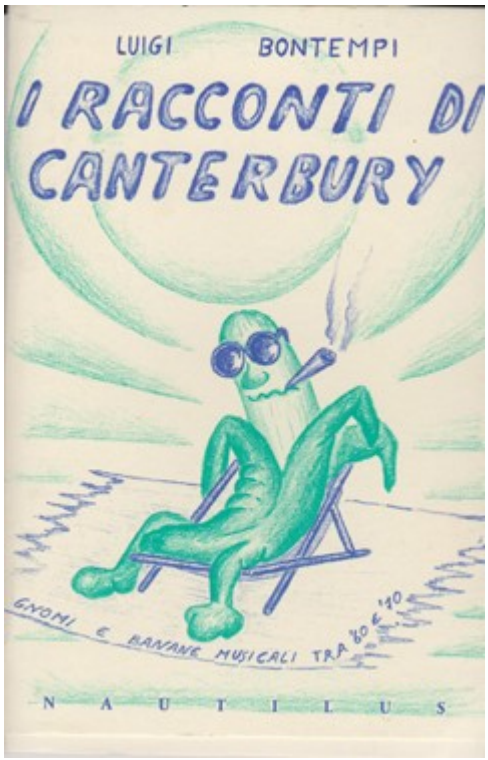

IMPRO JAZZ
Magazine d'information musicale
n°141
janvier 2008
ROBERT WYATT
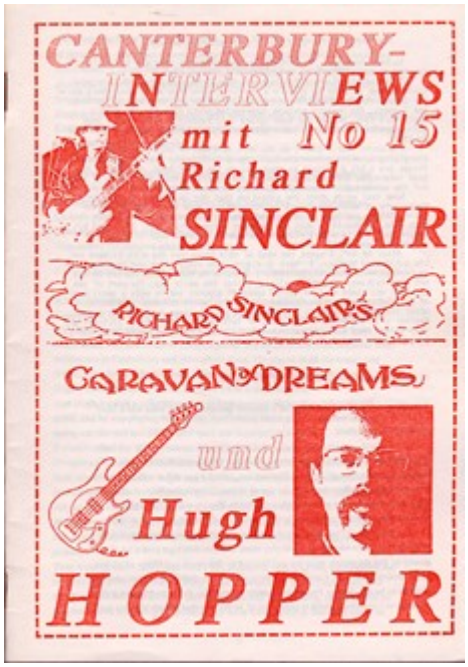

CANTERBURY-
INTERVIEWS
mit No 15
Richard
SINCLAIR
RICHARD SINCLAIRS
CARAVAN & DREAMS
und
Hugh
HOPPER


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ROBERT WYATT
GAVIN BAYARS _ ART ZOYD _ LOL COXHILL
DISQUES F.M.P _ THE HOWDY BOYS _ SUN RA


ISSUE 6
£1
DAEVID ALLEN
Lady June
Caravan


LUIGI BONTEMPI
I RACCONTI DI
CANTERBURY
NAUTILUS

Le numéro 0 est sorti en décembre. Quelques feuillets tapés sur les premiers ordinateurs personnels de l'époque, un éditorial pour présenter ce que nous voulions faire, c'est-à-dire mettre en contact les musiciens entre eux, leur donner la parole et leur permettre de se faire connaître un peu mieux au travers d'articles, interviews, chroniques de disques et de distribuer les productions "indépendantes".

.....

Certains commencent la lecture du magazine par la rubrique d'annonces de concerts pour savoir ce qui va se passer le plus près de chez eux. D'autres épluchent la liste des disques parus et l|s noms des musiciens dont les disques sont chroniques... Ils n'ont pas besoin de connaître les goûts de celui qui en parle, car ils sont assez grands pour se faire leur propre opinion. Alors, qu'est-ce qu'il est important de dire au sujet de la musique ? A supposer aussi qu'il faille parler de la musique avec des mots...

.....

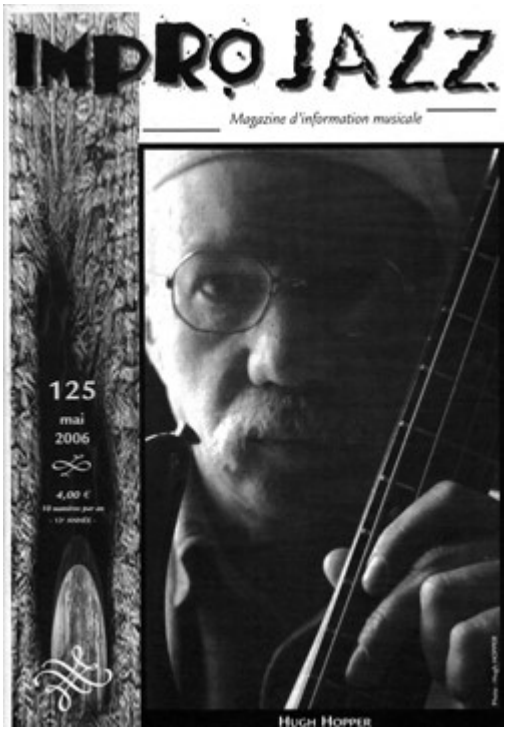
Beaucoup de questions me traversent désormais l'esprit, comme le devenir des supports d'enregistrements, du cd particulièrement, la survie des lieux de concerts et des festivals, les relations dites "sociales" entre musiciens, auditeurs, tout un futur proche particulièrement flou... Ce qui est aussi intéressant est de voir que depuis l'annonce de l'arrêt, l'intérêt pour notre travail s'est soudainement développé: nouveaux abonnés, nouvelles plumes, que nous ne pourrons malheureusement pas contenter. J'espère que la frustration restera minime.

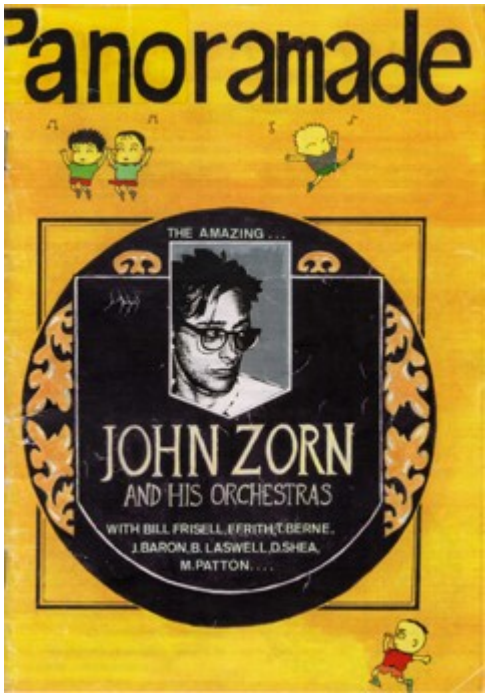
Philippe Renaud - IMPROJAZZ

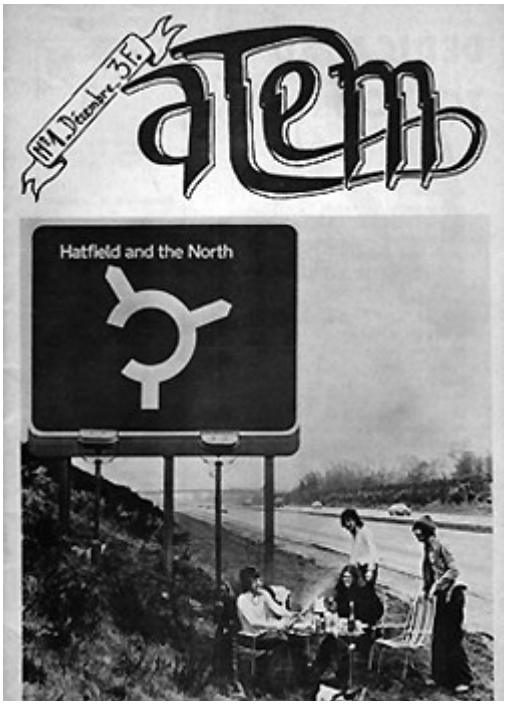





PEACE WARRIORS
15
le fanzine des musiques inaspirées
Marilyn Crispell
KOTO
CUNEIFORM RECORDS
Du death metal aux musiques nouvelles
KAFFE MATTHEWS
20f


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Magazine d'information musicale
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mai
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4,00 €
HUGH HOPPER

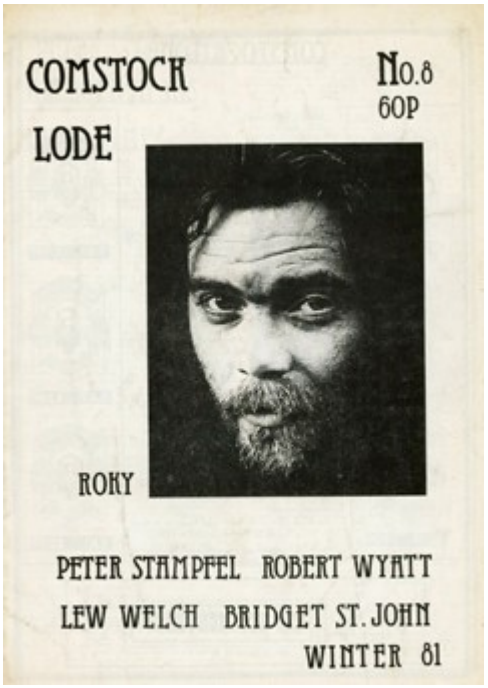

Panoramade
THE AMAZING...
JOHN ZORN
AND HIS ORCHESTRAS
WITH BILL FRISELL, E.FRITH, T.BERNE,
J.BARON, B. LASWELL, D.SHEA,
M.PATTON....


Hatfield and the North


TRAVERSES No22
MUSIQUES NOUVELLES ET AUTREMENT PROGRESSIVES
PRESENTE
ZAO
MAGMA
FAUST
ROCK in OPPOSITION
PALO ALTO

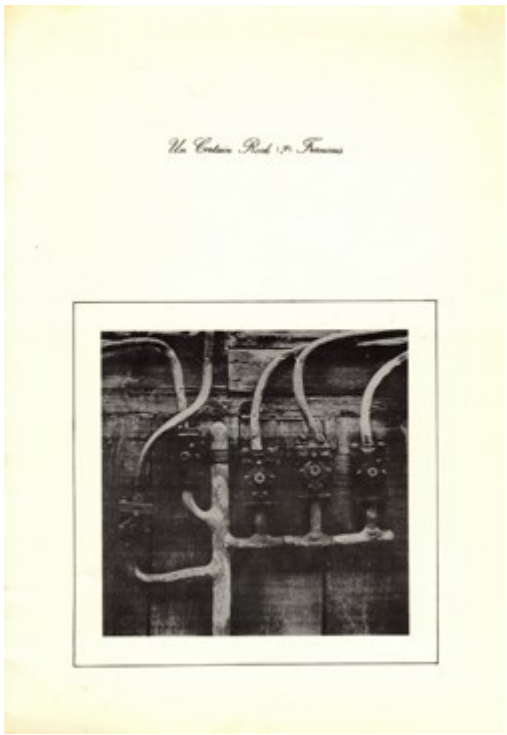

LATE FOR THE SKY
the music fan magazine
Robert Wyatt, Gordon Bok, The Understones, Alberta Hunter, ZZ Top, Andersen-Danko-Fjeld, Butch Hancock, The Canadian Connection, Bruce Springsteen, Norman Blake, Norton Buffalo, Joni Mitchell, Jerry Garcia, Emmilou Harris, Mad River
e tanti altri ancora


LA DISCOGRAPHIE DU ROCK FRANÇAIS
PAR FRANCIS GROSSE ET BERNARD GUEFFIER

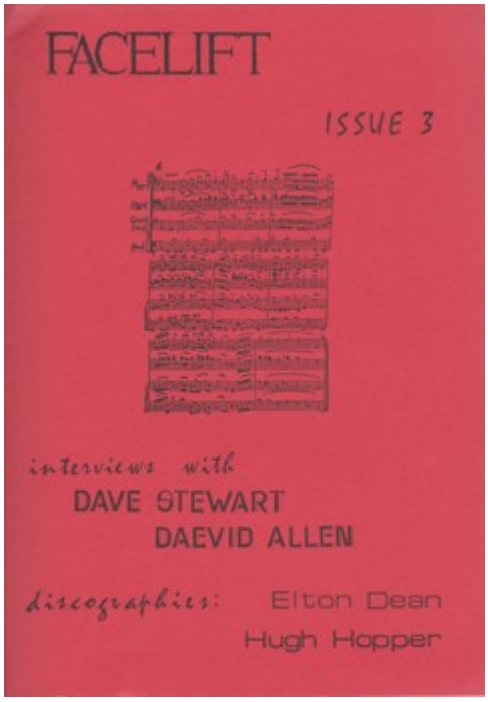

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LEW WELCH BRIDGET ST. JOHN
WINTER 81

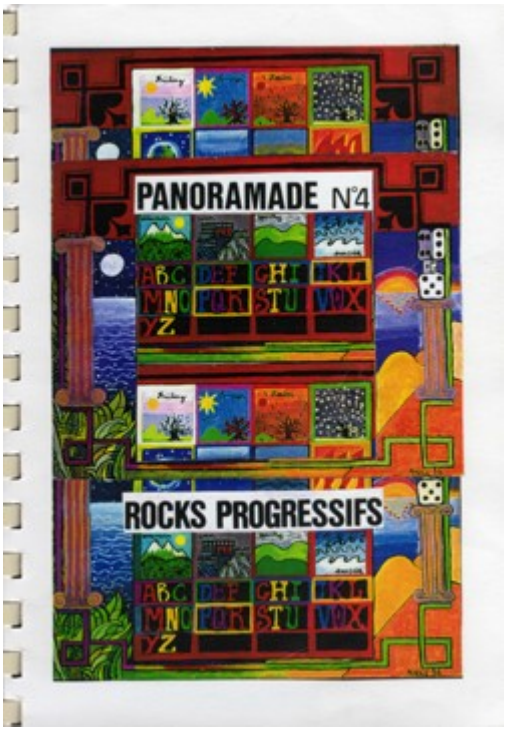

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JACK BRUCE · HEADS HANDS & FEET
LORRAINE ELLISON · McDONALD & GILES
SOFTS · BILL EVANS · JAN & DEAN
15p


musiche
interviste
Robert Wyatt
Derek Bailey
Shelley Hirsch
Paul Lovens
Robert Wyatt
disc jockey
Kazuko Hohki
& Frank Chickens

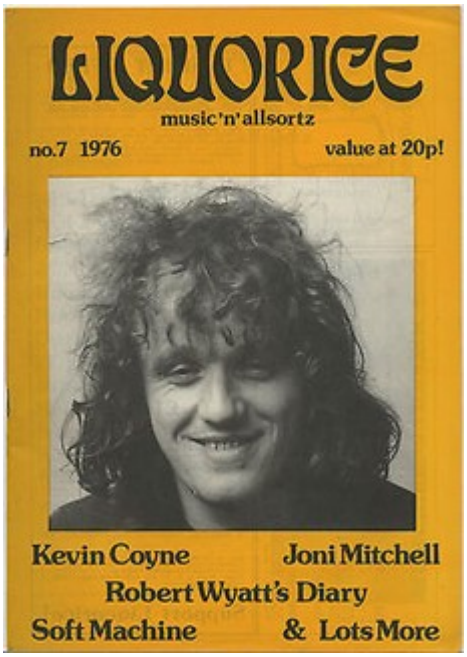

Un Certain Rock Français

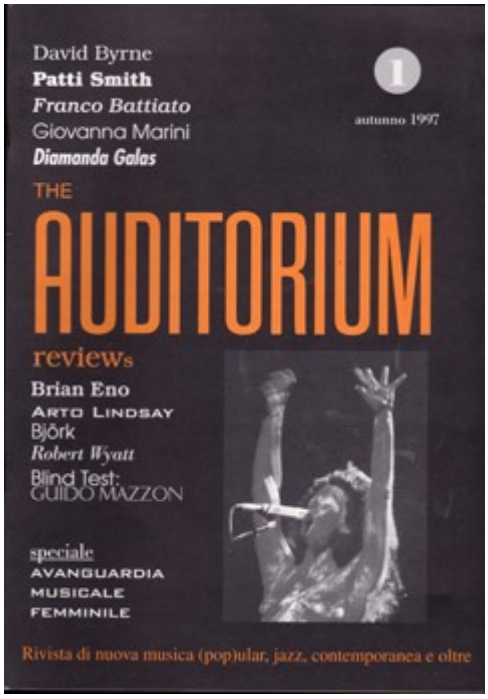

LA DISCOGRAPHIE ALPHABETIQUE
DU ROCK FRANCAIS
par Francis GROSSE
et Bernard GUEFFIER
texte anglais d'Helen BRIOLAT
Notes
TROC

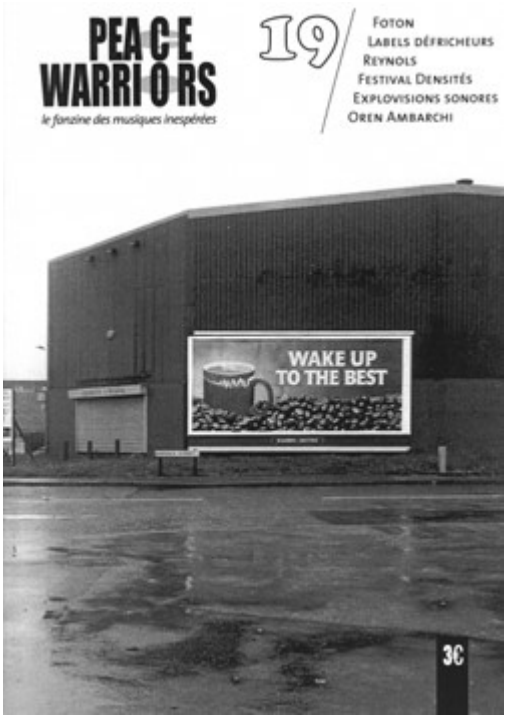

FACELIFT
ISSUE 3
interviews with
DAVE STEWART
DAEVID ALLEN
discographies:
Elton Dean
Hugh Hopper


PANORAMADE N°4
ROCKS PROGRESSIFS

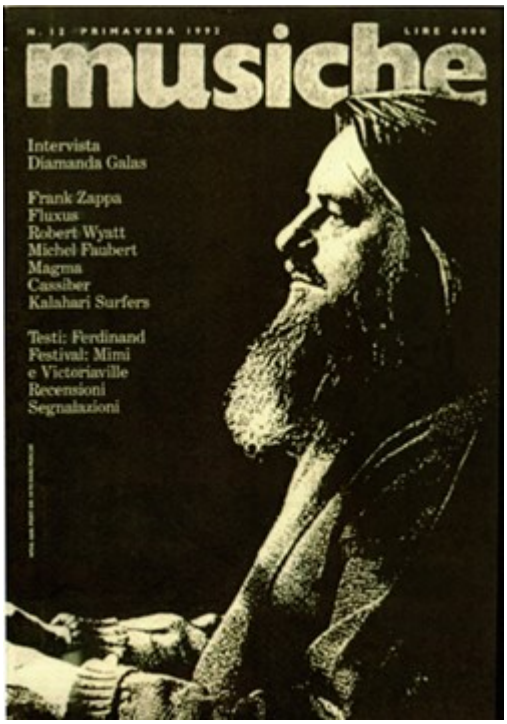

IMPETUS 5
new music
30p
National Health
Steve Reich
Lol Coxhill
David Lewiston
Mike Westbrook
Alberto Y Lost Trios Paranoias

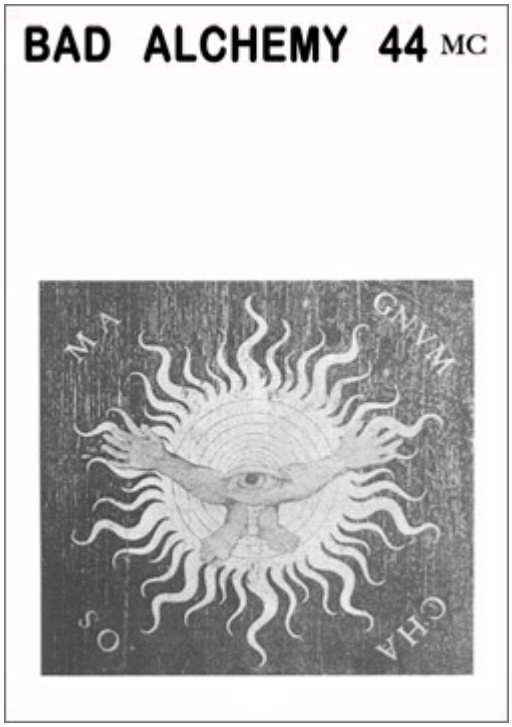

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Kevin Coyne
Joni Mitchell
Robert Wyatt's Diary
Soft Machine
& Lots More


David Byrne
Patti Smith
Franco Battiato
Giovanna Marini
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THE
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Arto Lindsay
Björk
Robert Wyatt
Blind Test:
GUIDO MAZZON
speciale
AVANGUARDIA
MUSICALE
FEMMINILE
Rivista di nuova musica (pop)ular, jazz, contemporanea e oltre

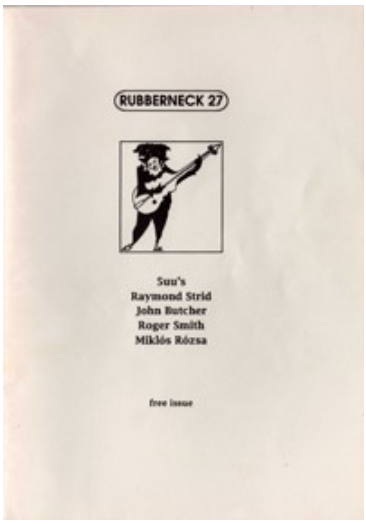

PEACE
WARRIORS
le fanzine des musiques inespérées
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Foton
Labels défricheurs
Reynols
Festival Densités
Explovisions sonores
Oren Ambarchi
WAKE UP
TO THE BEST
3C

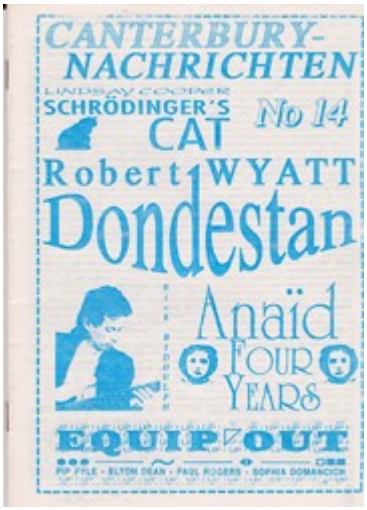

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Outsiders · Warser Gale · Kula Shaker ·
Richard Davies · Witch Hazel Sound ·
Mandrake Memorial · Shadows ·
FREE EP
Silver Apples · Roy Montgomery
Witch Hazel Sound · Tangle Edge


musiche
Intervista
Diamanda Galas
Frank Zappa
Fluxus
Robert Wyatt
Michel Faubert
Magma
Cassiber
Kalahari Surfers
Testi: Ferdinand
Festival: Mimi
e Victoriaville
Recensioni
Segnalazioni

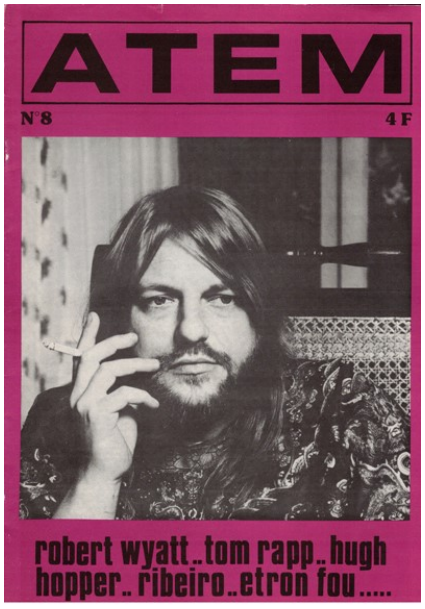

BAD ALCHEMY 44 MC


Octopus
Michel Bulteau
Graham Haynes
Bobby Cone
Ambiances Magnétiques
Rune Grammofon
Coil
Erik M
Tarwater
Ryuichi Sakamoto
For Carnation
Lo Recordings
Jean-Pierre Sluys
Dossier « scratch »
Festival MIMI/ Stupeur & Trompette !
Artemiy Artemiev
Nils Petter Molvaer
Du CBGB à SYR
Christian Rollet
n°12

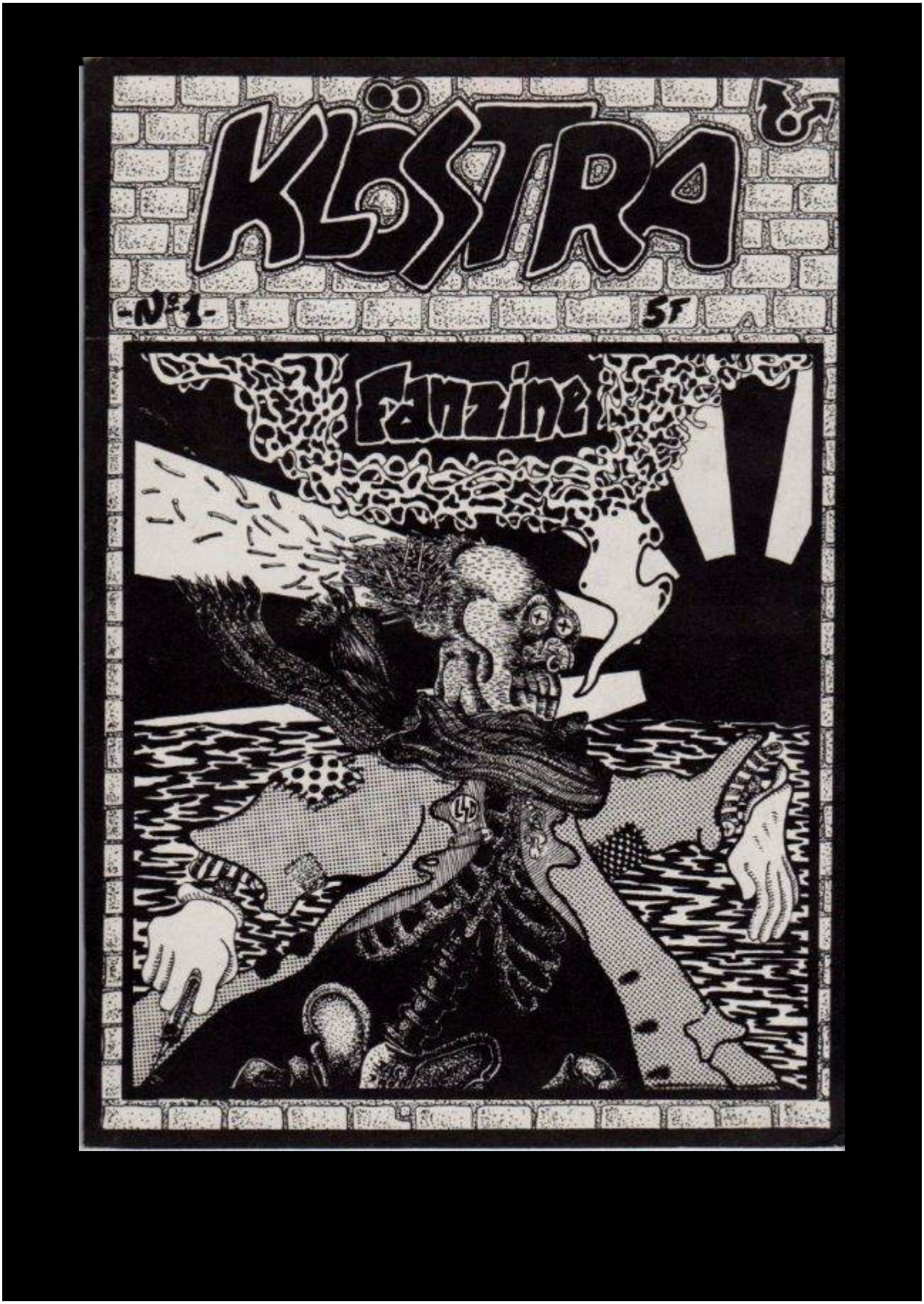

RUBBERNECK 27
Suu's
Raymond Strid
John Butcher
Roger Smith
Miklós Rózsa
free issue

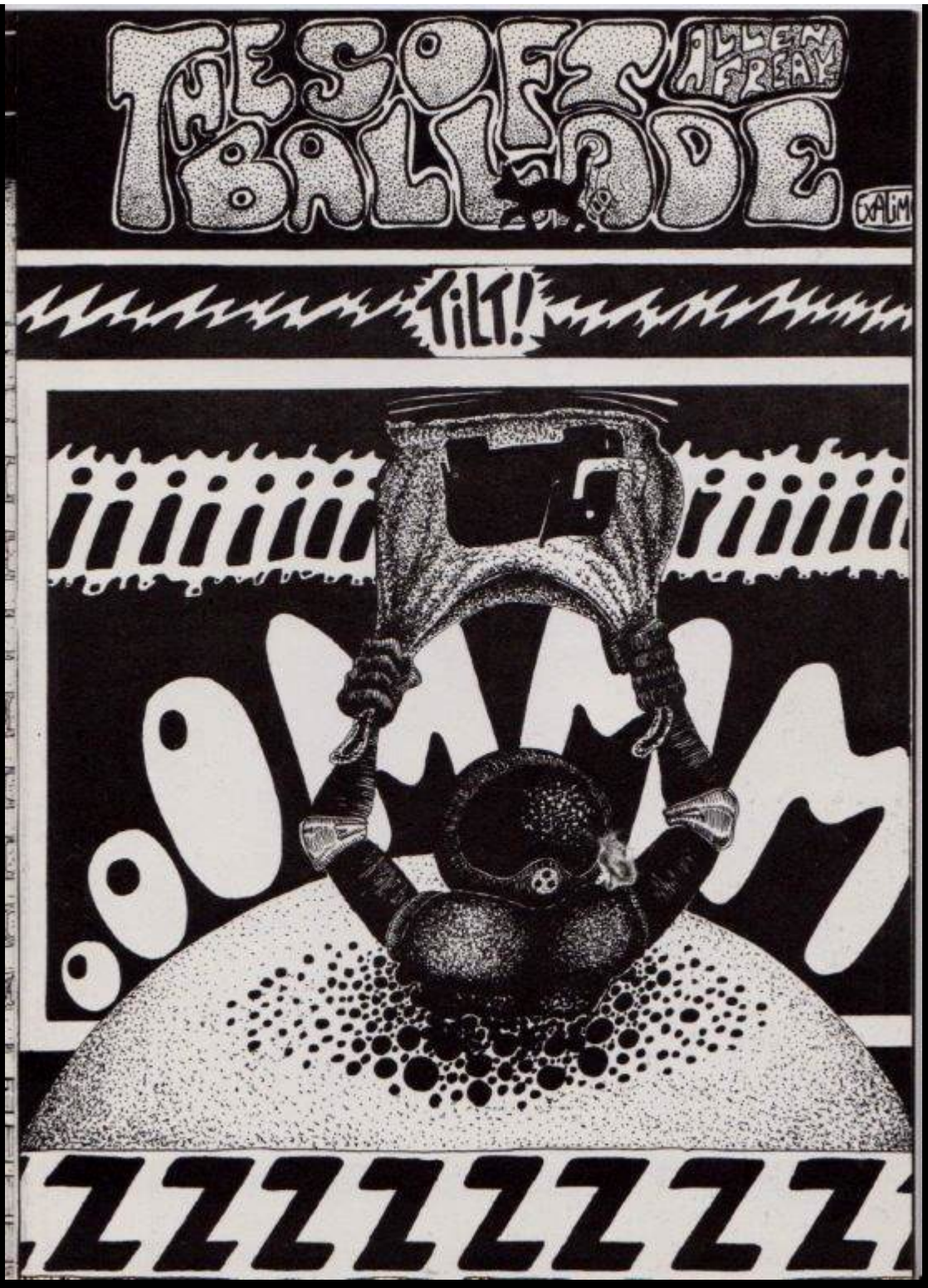

CANTERBURY-NACHRICHTEN
LINDSAY COOPER
SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT
No 14
Robert WYATT
Dondestan
Anaïd
FOUR YEARS
EQUIPOUT

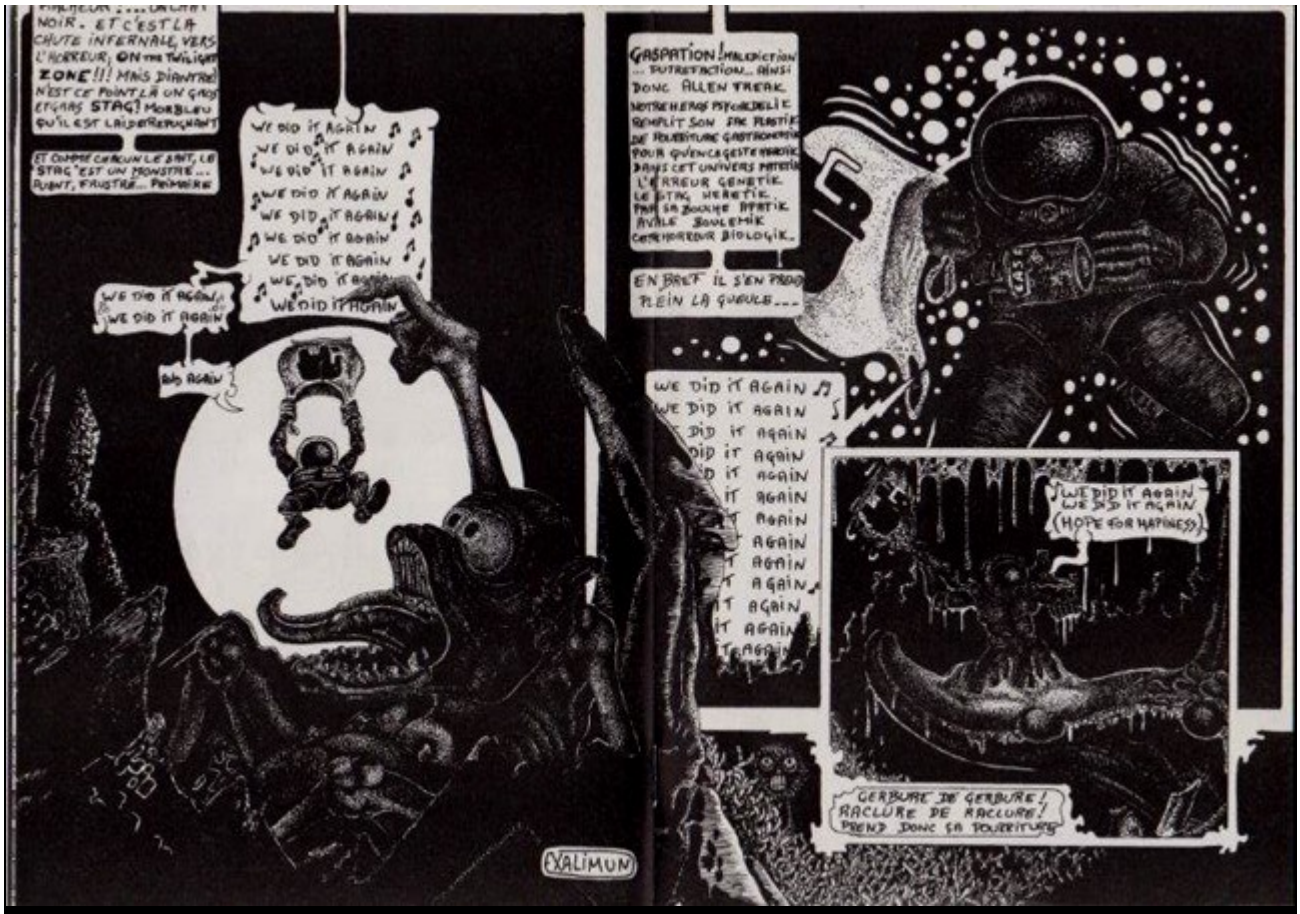

IMPETUS
ROCK IN OPPOSITIO
No.9
Henry Cow
Stormy Six
Samla Mammas Manna
Etron Fou Leloublan
Univers Zero

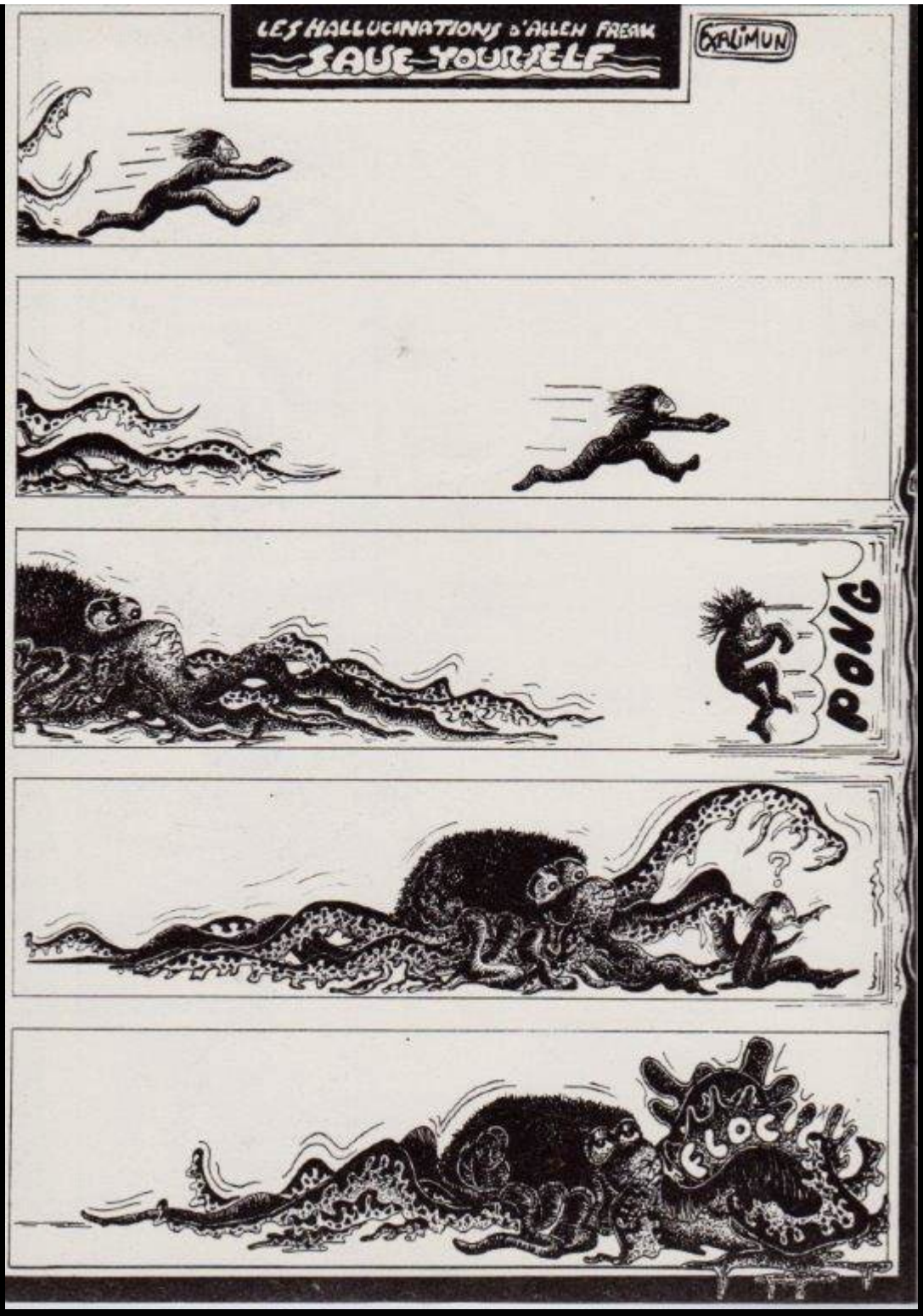

ATEM
N°8
4 F
robert wyatt..tom rapp..hugh hopper.. ribeiro..etron fou.....

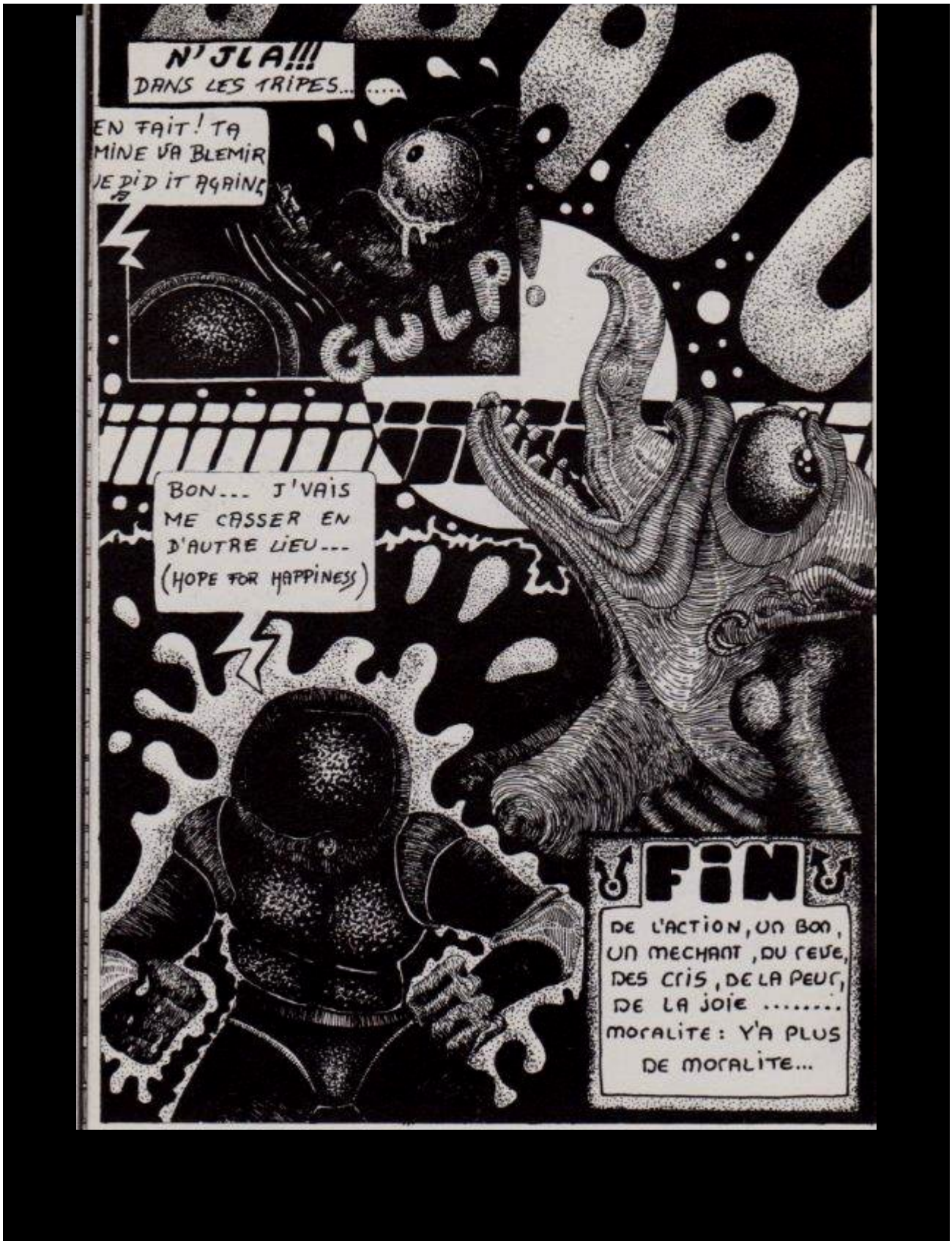
Rareté : Soft Machine en BD !




THE SOFT BALLADE
A TEEN DREAM
TILT!
ZZZZZZZ


NOIR. ET C'EST LA CHUTE INFERNALE, VERS L'HORREUR; ON the TWILIGHT ZONE!!! MAIS DIANTRE! N'EST CE POINT LÀ UN GAG ÉTIQUE STAG! MORBLEU QU'IL EST LAIDEREROUANT
ET COMME CHACUN LE SAIT, LE STAG EST UN MONSTRE... RUANT, FRUSTRE... PRIMAIRE
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
XALIMUN
GASPATION! MALÉDICTION ... PUTRÉFACTION... AINSI DONC ALLEN FREAK, VOTRE HEROS PSYCHÉDÉLIC REMPLIT SON SAC PLASTIF DE POURRITURE GASTRONOMIQUE POUR QU'EN CAGE STE HORRIBLE DANS CET UNIVERS MATÉRIEL L'ERREUR GENETIK LE STAG HERETIK PAR SA BOUCHE PUTRIDE AVALE SOULEMIK CETTE HORREUR BIOLOGIK.
EN BREF IL S'EN PREND PLEIN LA GUEULE...
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
WE DID IT AGAIN
(HOPE FOR HAPPINESS)
GERBURE DE GERBURE! RACLURE DE RACLURE! PRENDS DONC ÇA POURRITURE!


LES HALLUCINATIONS D'ALLEN FREAK
SAUVE-TOI-MÊME
EXALIMUN
PONG
?
BLOC !!!


N'JLA!!!
DANS LES TRIPES...
EN FAIT! TA MINE VA BLEMIR
JE DID IT AGAIN!
GULP!
BON... J'VAIS ME CASSER EN D'AUTRE LIEU...
(HOPE FOR HAPPINESS)
FIN
DE L'ACTION, UN BON, UN MECHANT, DU REVE, DES CRIS, DE LA PEUR, DE LA JOIE .....
MORALITE: Y'A PLUS DE MORALITE...

La Fenêtre Rose



Premier Show Psychédélique organisé par Jean-Jacques Lebel dans la nuit du 17 au 18 novembre 1967 au Palais des sports de Paris, avec Soft Machine et de nombreux autres groupes.

Extrait de l'émission Bouton Rouge avec Soft Machine - présentée par Pierre Lattès.

LA FENÊTRE ROSE



La première Nuit Psychédélique organisée par l'activiste Jean-Jacques Lebel eut lieu au Palais des Sports de Paris les 17 et 18 novembre 1967.

S'il reste peu de traces sonores et visuelles de cet happening qui deviendra en peu de temps une date mythique de la *french* contre-culture, les 1 500 spectateurs qui l'ont vécu ne sont pas près d'oublier les light-shows, le Plastic Circus, les Pop Dancers et la trentaine de groupes qui jouèrent toute la nuit durant près de 12 heures ...

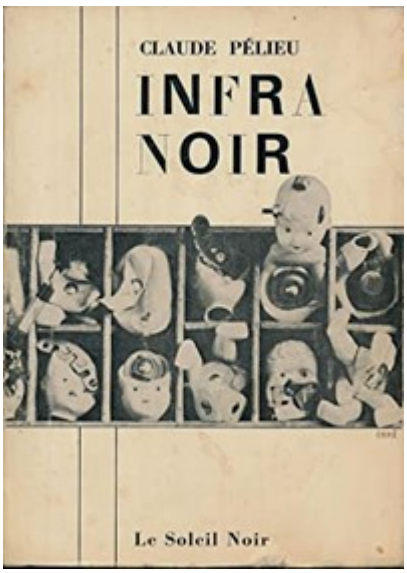
Parmi ces groupes, on se souvient aujourd'hui de Dantalian's Chariot, Cat Stevens, Tomorrow, Spencer Davis Group, Smoke, Vanilla Fudge et surtout du Soft Machine qui jouera de longs sets jusqu'au bout de la nuit.

La Fenêtre Rose est d'abord un long texte de Claude Pélieu, le poète français de la Beat Generation, qui sera édité bien après le *psychadeliopoptique happening* dans le recueil Infra Noir aux éditions Le Soleil Noir en 1972.

Infra Noir irréductible, miroir infidèle, labyrinthe & solitude, mort abolie, oui, non, instant fatal, défense de ne pas rêver, sel, sang, pluie, feu, érection, narcotica — Infra Noir où Opale flottait dans la Fenêtre Rose, sans feu ni lieu, sans dieu ni maître.

(houles) Transpacific Telephone
un cri réprimé défonce l'horoscope
les fantômes qui assaillaient Carl le Momo
ne sont plus de ce monde —
(ils ont des visages de fumée)
L'homme-antenne se réfugia dans le ventre d'un turbo-réacteur
FENÊTRE ROSE OU SE LÈVE LA TEMPÊTE
l'axe incendie l'arc-en-ciel
les ongles-chiffres traquent les naufragés
les yeux-plis pluvieux brûlent au large de l'Ile au Trésor
silhouettes de boucaniers s'écrasant entre chiens et loups
(le silence d'une autre tragédie)

500 mcg —
(la pensée procédera à ces exécutions capitales)
le silence au fil des heures — tout grossit —
le feutre verse une larme sur l'orchidée rouge



Et
l'aurore en marge de ces plis
désir désir — DÉSIR/d'une
engloutissement d'arc-en-cie
la Fenêtre Rose disparaît
le Calendrier Noir refoula le
les épines-scories et le reste

Alice's Day/LSD Alice
les doigts-ricochets
et les hélices du vent
et
quelque part abandonné dans
un visage se partage pour mi



> Zoom

Quelques photos de La Fenêtre Rose circulent sur internet dont celles postées par *Aguzim* sur un forum dédié aux hippies des années 70s.

Sur ce même forum, *Jacti* rapporte sa rencontre inopinée avec Robert Wyatt peu avant le concert de Soft Machine dans un bar de la Porte de Versailles.

Je venais d'avoir 19 ans et, compte tenu de l'affiche, je ne pouvais pas ne pas y être.
J'ai d'ailleurs une anecdote qui va certainement en rendre jaloux quelques-uns ici. Avant le début des hostilités dans la salle, je décide d'aller prendre un sandwich dans un des nombreux troquets devant le Palais des Sports et qu'elle n'est pas ma surprise de sortir en même temps, par la même porte, avec... Robert Wyatt !
Malgré mon anglais hésitant, je l'aborde (c'est facile car il est vraiment à côté de moi). Il me demande dans quel établissement il vaut mieux aller et avec l'assurance de l'ignorant, je lui indique l'un des troquets et lui demande si je peux venir avec lui. Il ne fait aucun problème, certainement content d'être finalement reconnu et de parler avec un français. Je ne me souviens pas de la teneur de notre conversation, assez rudimentaire et nous mangeons de bon cœur chacun notre sandwich.
Je me souviens d'un mec tout à fait abordable, charmant, essayant même de dire quelques mots en français. Un très bon souvenir.
Quant à la nuit de la Fenêtre Rose elle-même, je me souviens que Soft Machine a joué très longtemps en enchaînant les morceaux sans interruption et de la prestation de Dantalion' Chariot qui avaient recouvert les ampli en blanc (ils jouaient eux-mêmes souvent en blanc) et le membre le plus connu, à l'époque, était Zoot Money.
Je me rappelle que j'ai parlé avec Robert Wyatt aussi de la fameuse soirée à la RoundHouse à Londres du 15 octobre 1966 où Soft Machine et Pink Floyd

ont joué (j'y étais !).



> Zoom



La Fenetre Rose, Premiere Nuit Psychedelique au Palais des sports de Paris

La revue anglaise IT (The International Times) annonçait même l'évènement parisien dans son n° 21 daté de la semaine du 17 au 30 novembre 1967.



Paris freak-out

For the first time on the Continent, an all-night dream, a psychadeliopoptique happening complete with light show, pop dancers, plastic circus, and **Suzy Creamcheese**— late of San Francisco and London — pop posters, and a wildish fashion collection, will appear on **17 and 18 November** at the **Palais des Sports in Paris**.

LA FENETRE ROSE, the name of the show, is being staged by **Alan Dale** and **Tony Townsend**, two of England's leading impressarios in the field of all-night experience. The Fernch reaction to this is, so far, somewhat bewlidcred. The idea of thousands of people coming together to have what amount to a large pop party with dozens of top pop performers and an audience as much performers as the performers themselves, is something new in France. At least 100 pop artistes and their horde will be flying to Paris, together with 7 tons of light.

A man called JEFFREY SHAW and his PLASTIC CIRCUS are bringing miles of plastic tubing from Amsterdam with which Mr Shaw plans to fill the **Palais des Sports**.

THE EXPLODING GALAXY, which recently startled English television will present one of their extraordinary choreographic scenes and perform at will throughout the show.

MALCOLM TILLIS has designed a wilder collection of clothes that, in his words, "break the rules". Many of England's top pop groups, including SPENCER DAVIS and the SOFT MACHINE, will perform for twelve continuous hours. Europe's top D.J., ROSKO, will broadcast the show in France and through Radio-Luxemburg.

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RIALS X...

Thursday, November 9.
after a previous attempt
in without legal counsel,
to matter, they all looked
g ages. One man seemed
unt eyed, one was a kid
t about to buck anybody,
o do. The rest were non-
that throughout the trial
to be no real reason for

koran which he also refused, explaining that because they

PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH CENTRE

Last month Time Out of Mind (originally the Head Shop) closed down leaving a major gap in the facilities of Notting Hill, an area with far too few focal points in relation to its large hip population.

Now round the corner in Blenheim Crescent (near Portobello Road) the Psychedelic Research Centre has opened to continue and move forward from Time Out of Mind.

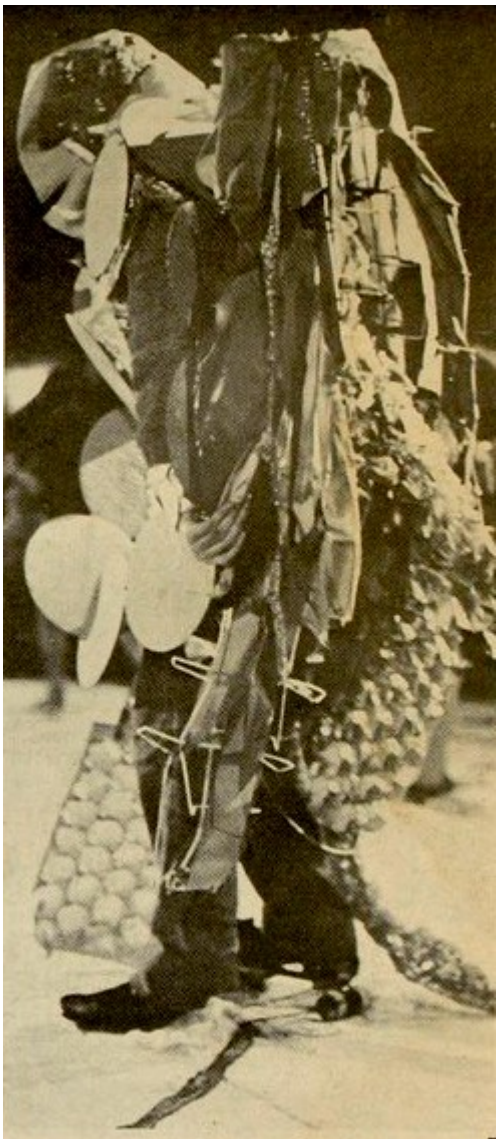
At present the centre consists of a shop which took over the stock of Time Out of Mind and above the shop a silk screen press has been built and is ready for use. Geoff. Rainford the moving force behind the centre is very interested in hearing from designers and also anybody with ideas. The long-term aim is to establish a creative community.

A major development likely soon is a direct link with Chet



Scene from EXPLODING GALAXY BIRD BALLET. The GALAXY will be in Paris for La Fenetri Rose.
—Photo: Ray Stevenson

> Zoom



Scene from EXPLODING GALAXY BIRD BALLET. The GALAXY will be in Paris for La Fenetri Rose.
—Photo: Ray Stevenson



> Zoom

> Archives

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Mongezi Feza

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Photo: Rita Knox

Mongezi Feza, trompettiste et flutiste sud-africain irradie *Rock Bottom* et *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* de ses sonorités en cascade démultipliées par le re-recording. Michael King rapporte dans Wrong Movements combien Robert Wyatt tenait ce musicien en très haute estime: "Mongezi avait une manière d'utiliser sa trompette qui était si claire, si forte, si puissante, qu'il n'y avait jamais de merde avec lui. Il était très exigeant envers lui-même. Lorsqu'il jouait, il jouait vraiment."

Lors du même entretien, il révèlera à quel point les circonstances de sa disparition en 1975 l'avaient affecté au moment même où il envisageait une collaboration régulière avec lui: "J'avais pensé à lui pour des projets à venir, un genre de sparing-partner pour mes futurs albums. Il était le collaborateur parfait pour accompagner ma voix, car sa trompette était claire. Je pensais qu'il pourrait faire des chansons, il pouvait faire tout ce que je lui demandais. La mort de Mongezi a eu un effet dramatique sur moi."

Dans le 120ème numéro de la revue Improjazz, Olivier Ledure retrace la carrière de Mongezi Feza en répertoriant la quasi totalité de ses apparitions discographiques. Cet article est la meilleure introduction à l'oeuvre d'un musicien insuffisamment reconnu.

Mongezi FEZA, le premier trompettiste sud-africain de free jazz

Il y a 30 ans, Mongezi Feza mourait à l'âge de 30 ans.

Il était né en 1945 à Queenstown (Afrique du Sud). Il est mort le 14 décembre 1975 à Londres dans des conditions particulièrement dramatiques : parti à l'hôpital se faire soigner pour dépression, il serait mort d'une pneumonie provoquée par l'absence de chauffage. Ses amis, les autres Blue Notes, lui rendirent deux semaines plus tard, un magnifique hommage pendant plus de sept heures. Des extraits de cette session constituent le double album Blue Notes for Mongezi. Signalons que le jeune magazine musical Atem (c'était le n°2) connut alors son heure de gloire: paru à la mi-janvier 1976, il fut parmi les premiers à colporter la nouvelle de cette disparition en Europe continentale. Et c'est avec cette mort que la malédiction s'abattit sur les Blue Notes.

Mais revenons quelques années en arrière, en 1962, pour trouver la première trace d'un enregistrement de 'Mongs' dans les meilleurs moments du festival de jazz de Moroka-Jabavu. Il joue sur un seul titre du groupe appelé Eric Nomvete's Big Five. Le morceau, intitulé Pondo Blues, avait été écrit par le leader de l' ensemble: En septembre 1963, Mongezi ne fait toujours pas partie des Blue Notes: il appartient encore au sextet Swinging City, dirigé par Ronnie Beer. Il joue bien dans The Castle Lager Big Band conduit par Chris

McGregor, mais ce n'est qu'après cet enregistrement (The African Sound) qu'il rejoint les Blue Notes, le 30 octobre très précisément, et commence sa carrière avec eux.

A la fin du siècle dernier, il existait seize enregistrements sur l'intégralité desquels 'Mongs' jouait. Douze d'entre eux sont concentrés sur les cinq dernières années de sa vie.

> McGregor & The Castle Lager Big Band, ***The African Sound***
Gallo (1963)

> The Blue Notes, ***Live in South Afrika***
Ogun (1964)

> Chris McGregor Groups, ***Very Urgent***
Philipps (1968)

> Friendship Next of Kin, ***Facets of the Universe***
Goodie (1969)

> Brotherhood of Breath, ***Brotherhood of Breath***
Neon (1971)

> Assagai, ***Assagai***
Vertigo (1971) **> Assagai,** ***Zimbabwe***
Philips (1971)

> Brotherhood of Breath, ***Brotherhood***
RCA (1972)

> Matata, ***Independence***
President Records (1972)

> Dyani / Temiz / Feza, ***Rejoice***
Cadillac (1972)

> **Dyani / Temiz / Feza,** ***Music for Xaba***
Sonet (1972)

> Dyani / Temiz / Feza, ***Music for Xaba Vol.2***
Sonet (1972)

> Brotherhood of Breath, ***Live at Willisau***
Ogun (1973)

> Dudu Pukwana, ***In the Townships***
Virgin (1973)

> Dudu Pukwana, ***Flute Music***
Virgin (1974)

> Dudu Pukwana, ***Diamond Express***
Arista (1975)

Et, je ne compte pas ici le 45 tours qu'il a enregistré avec le Globe Unity, ni les deux autres

45t faits avec le chanteur nigérian Tunji Oyelama et avec les Blue Notes, ni même les participations ponctuelles, par exemple aux côtés de Robert Wyatt ou avec Henry Cow.

Mais, depuis 2001, ce ne sont pas moins de cinq CD's (dont deux doubles) qui permettent de mieux cerner son jeu de trompette - trompette de poche le plus souvent.

> Brotherhood of Breath, *Travelling Somewhere*
Cuneiform (1972, sorti en 2001)

> The Blue Notes, *Township Bop Propper*
(1964, sorti en 2002)
NB: Rappelons qu'il s'agit ici d'un bootleg qui présente la toute première séance des Blue Notes qui, quelques mois plus tard, allaient se produire en Europe, créant la sensation au festival d'Antibes - Juan les Pins de 1964.

> Elton Dean's Ninesense, *Live at the BBC*
HUX (1975, sorti en 2003)

> Brotherhood of Breath, *Bremen to Bridgewater*
Cuneiform (1971, sorti en 2004)

> Mongezi Feza, *Free Jam*
Ayler Records (1972, sorti en 2004)

Et, mes conversations avec Keith Knox, Hazel Miller et Lars Rasmussen me laissent penser que nous n'en resterons pas là !

Ajoutons que les compositions de la plume de ce formidable trompettiste et flûtiste (qu'il interpréta lui-même) se comptent sur les doigts d'une seule main : Sondela, Sonia, Flute Music, Mad High et You cheated me.

Je n'ai pas été capable de mettre la main sur une version jouée par son créateur du fameux You ain't gonna know me 'cos you think you know me. En revanche, nombre de musiciens ont repris ce thème (comme Louis Moholo-Moholo, le Dedication Orchestra, Zim Ngqawana et Ezra Ngcukana). Et d'autres lui ont rendu hommage, comme Abdullah Ibrahim, Evan Parker, Hotep Galeta et les Blue Notes donc.

En dehors des compositions à trois de Music for Xaba ('Mongs' fut particulièrement à l'aise dans ce groupe) et des compositions à six (sur l'album où il était l'invité, avec Temiz, du quartet de Bernt Rosengren lors d'une séance d'improvisation en 1972) qui lui sont formellement attribuées, ce fut tout.

La diversité des styles pratiqués par 'Mongs' est impressionnante: tout d'abord, kwela (notamment dans le LP enregistré avec G. Mrwebi) ou bien jazz ellingtonien (le LP enregistré par McGregor & The Castle Lager Big Band) ; il passe, ponctuellement, du funk (l'enregistrement avec Matata, produit pour la petite histoire par Joe Mogotsi, un des quatre chanteurs des Manhattan Brothers, LE groupe vocal masculin d'Afrique du Sud) au free jazz, surtout. Citons à cet égard l'excellent vinyle du groupe de McGregor en 1968, le CD sorti l'an dernier par Ayler Records et les différents enregistrements du Brotherhood of Breath sur le label Cuneiform. Sans oublier les participations au jazz progressif anglais (par exemple, l'album intemporel Rock Bottom).

Je ne suis pas un spécialiste de la trompette de jazz, mais Feza fut souvent comparé à Don Cherry : j'ai surtout le sentiment d'une réelle originalité qui se manifeste notamment par ses très courtes phrases délivrées en chapelet. C'est en raison de celles-ci que quelques critiques de jazz citèrent Dizzy Gillespie parmi ses influences.

Je laisse au créateur de Rock Bottom (peut-être le plus beau solo de trompette - enregistré en rerecording - de 'Mongs' , sur ce qui restera comme le disque à emmener sur une île. . .) le mot de la fin :

Thank you Mongezi Feza. (. . .) I'm still living off the heat.
Robert Wyatt, notes de pochette d'Ixesha par le Dedication Orchestra, octobre 1994.

Pour cet article, je me suis aidé de la documentation suivante :

- Lars Rasmussen, Mbizo, a book about Johnny Dyani, The Booktrader, Copenhague, 2003
- Lars Rasmussen, Jazz People of Cape Town, The Booktrader, Copenhague, 2003
- Lars Rasmussen, Cape Town Jazz, 1959-1963, The Booktrader, Copenhague, 2001
- Improjazz n°60, novembre & décembre 1999
  L'édition de cette livraison sous la houlette d'Hazel Miller livre les chroniques de la totalité
  (d'alors) des disques du label Ogun. Deux photographies par Horace (page 25) et Thierry Trombert (page 31).
- Maxine McGregor, Chris McGregor and the Brotherhood of Breath, Bamberger, Flint, 1995
- The Wire n°12, février 1985.
  Ce magazine anglais présente un dossier qui s'intitule Afro jazz: Evolution & Revolution (pages 24 à 43). Ce dossier est compilé par musicien. Mongezi Feza est présenté page 32. Cinq photographies par Jak Kilby.

et me suis régalé de revoir combien ce musicien réservé devenait un lion en furie, sa bouche déformée par une seule poche bien ronde; les livres présentés ci-dessous contiennent des photographies de Mongezi Feza (seul le photographe est cité) :

- Guy Le Querrec, Jazz, Light and Day, Federico Motta, Italie,2001 (page 85)
- Jurgen Schadeberg, The Black and White Fifties, Protea Book House, Molenpark, Afrique du Sud, 2001 (page 24)
- Basil Breakey, Beyond the Blues, Township Jazz in the '60s and '70s, David Philip, Claremont, Afrique du Sud, 1997 (pages 34 et 35)
- Jak Kilby (lan Carr), Music Outside, Contemporary Jazz in Britain, Angleterre, 1973 (entre les pages 116 et 117)
- Valerie Wilmer, The Jazz Scene, Hamlyn, Angleterre, 1972 (pages 100 et 101)

Olivier LEDURE

Improjazz n° 120 (novembre & décembre 2005)

IMPROJAZZ c/o Ph. Renaud
14 allée des myosotis, 41000 Blois
Web : http://perso.wanadoo.fr/improjazz



Dudu Pukwana and Spear with Mongezi Feza - "Sonia" (1973) (from In the Townships)



Blue Notes For Mongezi (OGUN OGCD 025/026)

Fiction

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Stupéfiante lecture ! Robert Wyatt surgit brutalement dans les dernières pages de ce roman de Thierry Hesse - L'inconscience - paru en 2012 aux Edtions de l'Olivier.

On ne sait trop pourquoi l'auteur tient à nous faire revivre cette soirée au cours de laquelle Robert Wyatt se brisera le dos.

Et c'est avec une gêne certaine, je l'avoue, que j'ai lu ces lignes qui semblent vouloir donner une leçon de vie aux personnages du livre, deux frères aux destins dissemblables que l'on accompagne depuis leur adolescence dans les années 70's jusqu'à nos jours.

Au début du roman, nous comprenons qu'un des deux frères est dans le coma suite à une chute inexpliquée d'une fenêtre de l'immeuble où il exerce la profession d'assureur. Le livre nous fait revivre de flash-backs en flash-backs l'itinéraire de ces deux personnages à travers leurs parcours amoureux et professionnels jusqu'au drame final.

Cette apparition inattendue de Robert Wyatt semble signifier qu'un miracle est toujours possible - non pas le miracle médical mais celui "*du jeu libre d'un homme seul qui acceptait ce qui lui revenait*"..."*un jeu, non de reconquête mais de réenchantement*"... "*de ce oui franc donné aux évènements pour mieux les dépasser*".

Adolescents, leur père les abonna à cette revue musicale anglaise qui fit plus ou moins bon accueil aux métamorphoses de la musique populaire. Le *Melody Maker* était à cette époque-là un hebdomadaire conservateur devenu hystérique. Créé en 1926, il représentait à l'origine une publication professionnelle destinée aux musiciens des orchestres de bal, qui y trouvaient toutes les informations dont ils avaient besoin : liste des concerts de la semaine, présentation des fanfares qui se produiraient le dimanche dans les cités d'Eltham et de Blackpool, petites annonces proposant des auditions pour une chanteuse « non typée » ou les services d'un banjoïste à la recherche d'une tournée dans le Suffolk, publicités illustrées pour des anches à clarinette ou des bas de contention recommandés aux instrumentistes souffrant d'insuffisance veineuse. Après la guerre, les musiciens de jazz y eurent aussi leur place, et les journalistes du *Melody*, qui fumaient en général la pipe et portaient d'élégantes vestes en tweed sous des trench-coats vert bouteille, savaient rivaliser d'esprit quand ils analysaient le toucher subtil de Fats Waller dans « Moppin' and Boppin' », ou commentaient le nouveau spectacle du nouveau sextette du nouveau Count Basie. Mais ça c'était avant. C'était avant les années soixante-dix. Avant l'adolescence de Carl et Marcus.

Quand le rock déferla sur l'Angleterre et sur le reste du monde, les vestes en tweed du *Melody* rétrécirent au lavage. Il suffit de quelques 45 tours pour que ces fins critiques voient leur conception de l'art et de la beauté chamboulée dans les grandes lar-

geurs. Par un réflexe de classe, ils se mirent d'abord à dénigrer ces éructations électriques. L'argument principal, à peine voilé dans les articles du magazine, était que la plupart des jeunes gens qui s'adonnaient à cette musique ne savaient pas jouer. Ils faisaient du bruit, étaient mal élevés, gesticulaient sur scène comme des primates, prenaient des drogues aussi facilement que du Darjeeling, mais sur le plan musical c'était à peu près zéro. « Oserez-vous soutenir, déplora le critique John Pollit, que ces Rolling Stones peuvent être écoutés par les mêmes oreilles qui ont été charmées par les mélodies de Count Basie ? Que T. Rex est un créateur au même titre que Gil Evans ou Fats Waller ? *Damned !* Savez-vous d'où proviennent les hourvaris de ce T. Rex ? L'olibrius affirme avoir eu un jour une apparition. Il se trouvait sur son lit quand un tyrannosaure imprimé sur un poster a bougé ! C'est ce qu'il disait l'autre soir à la radio : "Je me suis aperçu que si j'avais pas détourné la tête, la bestiole m'aurait avalé tout cru et y aurait eu un paquet de sang sur mon paddock. Depuis, je suis sûr que plus rien peut m'atteindre et que je suis bien barré pour être le génie d'aujourd'hui !" Et vous voulez qu'on écoute sérieusement son *Electric Warrior* ? Qu'on décortique avec attention ses râles de cocker en chaleur dans son nouveau "Mambo Sun" ? C'est une plaisanterie ! »

Cependant les temps avaient changé, et plus T. Rex râlait et hurlait, plus sa musique s'emparait du pays :

Oh girl ! I'm just a jeepster for your love
I said girl I'm just a vampire for your love
I'm gonna suck you.
Oh, gamine, je suis un tout-terrain pour ton amour
Je te le dis, gamine, je suis un vampire pour ton amour
Et je vais te sucer.

Comme il fallait continuer à vendre le *Melody Maker*, Ray Coleman, son directeur, journaliste pragmatique, se résolut à tordre en partie ses principes esthétiques. Ce fut le début de l'hystérie. Un matin, il annonça à John Pollitt et à ses confrères que, quitte à se pincer le nez, il fallait ouvrir le magazine aux primates et à leurs outrances, ne rien s'interdire dans ce domaine, ne pas lésiner sur les interviews débiles que réclamaient les teenagers, ne plus être regardant sur les cancans et les ragots, et tout cela avec de grosses manchettes, des titres épais et bien dégoulinants, du genre :

T. REXTASY !

Aux yeux de Carl et Marcus qui, en 1973, étaient âgés de treize et seize ans, lire le *Melody Maker* avait de toute façon beaucoup plus de classe que de lire n'importe quel magazine musical français, qu'il s'agisse de *Best*, *Rock & Folk* ou même de *Pop Music-Superhebdo*. Tous deux trouvaient dans le *Melody* ce dont ils rêvaient : une connexion directe avec un monde qui s'embrasait à des années-lumière de Metz. Ainsi prirent-ils l'habitude de découper avec soin les unes les plus accrocheuses, de confectionner des fiches sur leurs groupes préférés, d'apprendre par cœur des phrases fétiches extraites d'invraisemblables interviews. Et tout cela en anglais. Leur passion nourrie pour l'hebdomadaire était si profonde que, la semaine de mars 2008 où Carl se consacra à vider la maison du Sablon, la seule fois qu'il dérangea son frère en lui téléphonant à Roubaix, c'était l'après-midi où, dans la cave, il était tombé par surprise sur deux cartons où jaunissaient des piles d'anciens numéros de leur cher *Melody*. Il proposa à Marcus d'en faire le partage, et Marcus ne dit pas non.

Lequel des deux aura alors conservé ce numéro funeste de juin 1973, où le journaliste Skip Taylor n'accorda que peu de crédit à la version de l'accident, préférant évoquer une affaire amoureuse ayant mal tourné, soupçonnant même l'entourage de Robert Wyatt d'avoir voulu dissimuler un suicide raté – ou pire encore ?

Les faits, rappelons-le, s'étaient déroulés de nuit, dans un appartement privé et une atmosphère toxique. De quoi plaire, on l'imagine, au nouveau *Melody* dont la rédaction savait maintenant faire flèche de tout bois pour satisfaire son lectorat et ne rien masquer des turpitudes de la planète rock. Pareilles insinuations sur l'accident de Robert Wyatt n'étaient pourtant que des paroles flasques, gonflées par l'avidité et le goût du scandale, et les attaques de Skip Taylor ne tardèrent pas à être balayées.

Si l'on s'en tient pourtant à l'article – du moins pour les éléments factuels – tout ou presque était parti du désir de deux chanteuses, Alpha et Suzy-Mary. Celles-ci se connaissaient et passaient pour être amies, ce qui ne signifiait pas grand-chose dans un milieu où tout le monde fréquentait à peu près tout le monde, s'abouchait avec n'importe qui. Nous savons en revanche qu'elles n'avaient pas le même âge, mais, étant nées le même jour de juin, elles eurent l'idée cette année-là de fêter ensemble leur anniversaire – chose qui jamais ne se reproduisit.

La party devait avoir lieu chez Suzy-Mary, dans son appartement de Maida Vale, à l'ouest de Londres, au quatrième étage d'un immeuble blanc et brique, début de siècle. Plusieurs dizaines de personnes reçurent une invitation sous la forme d'un carton couleur groseille, calligraphié à la plume, et dont l'un des coins, suspecta Skip Taylor, était imbibé d'un produit stupéfiant.

À ce moment-là, Robert Wyatt ne résidait pas à Londres, mais dans sa ferme du Buckinghamshire. La plupart du temps, quand il préparait un nouveau disque, c'est dans cette masure qu'il s'isolait. D'aspect modeste, la ferme se composait de trois baraques en planches grisâtres et avait dû appartenir avant-guerre à une famille d'éleveurs ayant raté l'occasion de faire fortune. La moins délabrée des trois baraques, qui jadis contenait une trayeuse, avait été transformée en salle de répétition et studio – même si les conditions d'enregistrement, en raison de nombreuses fentes dans les murs qui n'avaient été que grossièrement colmatées, restaient imparfaites. Robert Wyatt commençait en général par agencer quelques lignes mélodiques au piano, puis passait d'un instrument à l'autre en s'enregistrant sur des pistes successives. Ensuite venait le moment où il devait trouver des solutions pour résoudre les difficultés qu'il avait lui-même engendrées au cours de cette phase expérimentale. Il savait que les solutions pouvaient déboucher sur le meilleur comme sur le pire, aussi c'est seulement lorsqu'il estimait avoir franchi un certain cap qu'il téléphonait à David Sinclair, Phil Miller ou Bill McCormick, amis musiciens à qui il demandait de le rejoindre pour mettre en place l'architecture de ses compositions, reprendre chaque mélodie jusque dans les moindres détails et aboutir à la conception d'un album qui serait réalisé dans un studio digne de ce nom, à Londres ou à Bristol. Lorsqu'il travaillait ainsi, Robert Wyatt détestait être interrompu. C'est pour cette raison, et non pour la villégiature ou le tourisme, qu'il avait élu comme patrie le Buckinghamshire, comté distant d'une soixantaine de kilomètres de Londres et qui, n'offrant à l'évidence aucun des attraits du Devon, pouvait dissuader d'éventuels intrus et voisins gênants. Dans une interview accordée à un magazine l'année précédant l'accident,

Robert Wyatt expliquait que créer était pour lui quelque chose de comparable à ce numéro de Houdini où le fameux magicien se fait ligoter, enchaîner, puis enfermer dans une malle pleine d'eau, avant d'essayer d'en sortir sans dommages. « Une fois dedans, je n'ai plus de temps à perdre, avait-il déclaré avec son sourire enfantin. Voilà en quoi consiste la création : aller le plus loin possible et tâcher d'en sortir vivant ! » Aussi, quand il eut entre les mains l'invitation envoyée par Alpha et Suzy-Mary, il pensa d'abord qu'il avait mieux à faire.

Le 1er juin, ses yeux se posèrent de nouveau sur le carton qui traînait sur le guéridon en céramique où il avait coutume de se servir un verre entre deux séances de travail. Il finit par admettre qu'il aurait tort de négliger ses amies. Il pensa surtout à Alpha qu'il envisageait de solliciter pour un prochain disque. Ne pourrait-il pas d'ailleurs lui en toucher un mot le soir même ? Alors il reboucha lentement la bouteille de brandy, débrancha ses instruments, se lava à l'eau froide sous l'appentis où trônait une vieille bassine en zinc, choisit des vêtements propres, puis, ayant fermé sa ferme à clé, se rendit à pied jusqu'à la gare voisine, qui ressemblait à une église sans clocher, construite à proximité d'un pré d'herbe grasse et très verte où auraient brouté des moutons si, dans cette partie du comté, l'activité lainière ne s'était pas éteinte, comme en d'autres endroits du pays. Au préposé qui feuilletait derrière son guichet un journal illustré, Robert Wyatt acheta un billet, avant de grimper dans un wagon qui exhalait la sueur et le bois humide. Une heure plus tard, il arrivait à la gare d'Euston, hélait un taxi qui stationnait sur Melton Street et lui donnait l'adresse de Suzy-Mary. En longeant Regent's Park, le regard du chauffeur croisa le sien dans le rétroviseur.

Quand il sortit de l'ascenseur, Robert Wyatt s'aperçut que

la porte de l'appartement de Suzy-Mary était ouverte et libérait des effluves de gâteau mal cuit. Un tissu oriental, qu'Alpha avait acheté à Tanger, formait un dais rouge sous les lambris du vestibule, et quantité de petites bougies plates brûlaient au milieu de soucoupes en faïence jaune pâle. Les invités portaient des chemises à jabot, des gilets rayés, des robes à volants, des pantalons à franges, des chaussures de ménestrels, des chapeaux baroques. D'un coup d'œil, Robert Wyatt sut mettre un nom sur une dizaine de visages. Un magnétophone à bandes Revox enchaînait des sons de guitares grinçantes et de saxophones vociférants, tandis qu'on entendait depuis un couloir des roulements de tambour et des grognements d'ours, et qu'au fond de la cuisine Suzy-Mary improvisait pour ses amis des mélodies d'une voix traînante, vaguement dépressive. Du bout des doigts, Robert Wyatt lui expédia un baiser, puis prit la direction du living-room. En y entrant, Alpha lui apparut souple comme une antilope, superbe, toute de crêpe pourpre vêtue, un fume-cigarette aux lèvres. Au centre de la pièce, les invités dansaient, tanguaient, s'esclaffaient, parlaient fort. Tout ce qu'il est possible d'absorber par la bouche, le nez, les veines était disponible et passait de main en main, de bras en bras. Un grand chauve, torse nu, les jambes en X sur un coin du tapis, initiait au yoga trois filles vaporeuses. Un couple se léchait tête-bêche sur un canapé vert. Des matelas de fumée montaient au plafond. Robert Wyatt laissa Alpha en conversation avec un certain Scott, géant sanglé dans un pantalon en lézard, et, se saisissant d'une bouteille de Southern Comfort, alla écouter Suzy-Mary. À vrai dire, il n'aimait pas sa voix, qui lui rappelait parfois les pépiements d'une grouse, *kok*, *kok*, *kok*, mais son corps, lorsqu'elle chantait, prenait des poses extatiques, qu'il n'était pas ennuyeux d'observer. Elle venait d'interpréter quelques airs

connus tirés d'anciennes comédies musicales écossaises, et son auditoire reprenait les refrains en hurlant. *Kok ! Kok ! Kok !* Robert Wyatt, entre deux gorgées de whisky, secoua ses longs cheveux châtains. Dans le living-room, le grand chauve et les filles vaporeuses s'étaient mêlés à l'essaim des danseurs, Scott et Alpha avaient disparu, et le canapé servait maintenant de table à un type corpulent qui découpait à l'aide d'une scie un jambon d'York à l'os.

Chaude et moite était l'atmosphère lorsque, vers minuit, quelqu'un eut l'idée d'ouvrir une fenêtre donnant sur Lanark Road. Spontanément, un groupe se forma pour contempler les étoiles. Le ciel était noir, zébré de bleu. Des phalènes voltigeaient sous la lumière des lampadaires. À chaque passage de voiture, le groupe applaudissait. Peu à peu, les éclairs d'une jubilation collective se répandirent autour de la fenêtre. Une jeune fille à la chevelure argentée s'avança au-dessus du vide pour rafraîchir sa poitrine nue, et un ancien membre du groupe The Nice se frotta aussitôt à elle.

En se rappelant qu'il voulait parler à Alpha, Robert Wyatt était parti à la recherche d'une deuxième bouteille de Southern Comfort. Il déambulait depuis un moment dans l'appartement quand il remarqua la fenêtre ouverte et se mit à jouer des coudes pour être au premier rang. Une Bentley dans la rue glissa tel un saumon. Le groupe s'exclamait de plus belle. Suzy-Mary avait perdu son public et se demandait pourquoi. Robert Wyatt montrait maintenant un sourire flottant. Le grand chauve ronflait sur le tapis. Il n'y avait plus de jambon à l'os ni de type corpulent. Les filles vaporeuses se tortillaient au rythme de « Suffragette City ». Alpha sortit d'une chambre, une ceinture en lézard à la place du cou. Le sourire de Robert Wyatt était de plus en plus flottant. La fenêtre était

toujours ouverte au-dessus de Lanark Road. Les applaudissements se multipliaient. Les exclamations fusaient. Les corps vibraient et vacillaient. C'est alors que Robert Wyatt empoigna quelque chose qui n'existait pas, sa main droite fit un drôle de mouvement, il bascula dans le vide et, quatre étages plus bas, s'écrasa sur le trottoir.

Robert Wyatt n'était pas le premier buveur de Southern Comfort venu. Il était l'un des fondateurs du groupe de rock britannique et déjà légendaire Soft Machine, où il avait joué de la batterie, des claviers, et chanté de sa voix d'angelot. Avec Soft Machine, il avait, entre 1968 et 1971, enregistré quatre albums, dont les trois premiers au moins furent considérés par la critique, même celle du *Melody*, comme une contribution essentielle à l'évolution du rock anglais. S'éloignant de Soft Machine où la liberté créatrice s'était étiolée sous la direction monarchique de l'organiste Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt avait ensuite entamé une carrière sous son nom, réalisant un premier album, *The End of an Ear*, puis, à l'enseigne du groupe Matching Mole qu'il avait récemment fondé, deux autres disques où notre batteur-pianiste-chanteur renouvelait ses sources d'inspiration dans des compositions sophistiquées, mi-légères, mi-neurasthéniques.

En s'écrasant à l'âge de vingt-huit ans sur un trottoir de Londres, Robert Wyatt survécut par miracle à sa chute, mais elle le laissa paraplégique pour le restant de ses jours. Les semaines suivantes, des amis, pas mal d'admirateurs se lamentèrent sur le destin réduit à pas grand-chose d'un artiste talentueux, dont les projets dépendraient maintenant de deux roues en caoutchouc. Puis l'été arriva à son terme et d'autres événements surent capter l'attention, il y eut d'autres visages où projeter ses désirs, d'autres concerts, d'autres parties. On oublia cette nuit à Maida Vale et le drame ayant assombri l'anniver-

saire d'Alpha et de Suzy-Mary. On finit même par oublier un peu le pauvre Robert Wyatt, cloué dans une clinique de la ville de Brighton, dont il sortit au bout de six mois, en plein hiver, avec des jambes défuntes et un plaid sur les genoux – situation peu enviable, on l'imagine, pour jouer du rock.

Si Skip Taylor, du *Melody*, s'intéressa tellement à la chute de Robert Wyatt, c'est qu'elle incarnait à ses yeux la vanité de cet art qu'il détestait et dans lequel son magazine, pensait-il, s'était déjà trop vautré. À vrai dire, ce qu'il détestait n'était pas la musique elle-même. Il était capable d'admettre que telle ou telle production à la mode n'était pas sans mérite. Mais il tenait absolument en horreur les rôles que ces musiciens jouaient en se prenant pour les héros d'une vie transfigurée par des forces nouvelles et faussement supérieures. Cette mascarade l'horripilait. Et même s'il n'avait rien contre Robert Wyatt en personne – il avait même plutôt aimé son jazzy *The End of an Ear* –, il exploita sans pudeur ce fait divers tragique dans le seul but de souligner une fois de plus les errements de ce prétendu style de vie.

L'accident de Robert Wyatt connut pourtant un développement inattendu. Quelques semaines seulement après sa sortie de la clinique de Brighton, alors même qu'on l'avait oublié, l'homme-du-quatrième-étage enregistrait à Londres, au Marauder Studio, un disque tout à fait inouï, *Rock Bottom*, reconnu aussitôt comme l'une des plus extraordinaires créations musicales de son époque, et même comme un pur et merveilleux chef-d'œuvre.

Marcus, dans les années qui suivirent la sortie du disque et qui correspondaient à la fin de son adolescence, y voyait surtout une beauté vénéneuse. Si les écoutes successives n'épuisaient pas son intérêt ni la fascination que cette musique pro-

duisait sur lui, il ne l'aimait pas vraiment pourtant (beaucoup moins que Carl en tout cas). Lorsque *Rock Bottom*, dans les appartements qu'il occupait ici ou là, tournait sur un électrophone, Marcus entendait le chant éploré d'un homme regrettant ses jambes, sa jeunesse, une part de sa puissance perdue, et ce chant, les jours fragiles, l'enveloppait d'un sentiment de malaise dont il n'était pas dupe.

Au cours de sa vie, comme tout un chacun, des choses fâcheuses lui étaient arrivées. Il avait été malheureux. À Metz, où il s'était parfois senti seul ; en Espagne, où Sarah l'avait quitté ; à Québec, où on l'avait volé et même humilié ; aux Pays-Bas, où il avait été de nouveau seul. Ces infortunes étaient une dent cariée : tantôt il avait l'impression qu'elle lui forait le crâne, tantôt elle se faisait oublier. Il se sentait sans moyens pour la soigner efficacement. Quand sa dent se réveillait, il pensait que les réalités désolantes du monde rehaussaient sa propre désolation. Et la voix de Robert Wyatt, aussi envoûtante fût-elle, l'attristait. Si, à la fin des années soixante-dix, il écoutait encore ce disque, c'était par complaisance, comme pour toucher sa dent malade. Telle fut la première influence de Robert Wyatt sur sa vie. *Rock Bottom* était une œuvre noire qui accompagnait ses moments difficiles.

Aujourd'hui, alors que nous étions à trois jours du Noël 2009, Gladys lui avait téléphoné, et en l'écoutant parler de Carl, Marcus avait pour la première fois songé à autre chose. La veille, il était allé dans le couloir de son appartement encombré d'étagères, s'était agenouillé au-dessus d'une pile de disques tassés dans un carton et avait lui-même été étonné d'y retrouver si aisément le 33 tours de 1974.

Les premières mesures de *Rock Bottom* déroulent le son brumeux d'un harmonium où se mêlent diverses percussions,

sèches ou aiguës, discrètes, bruits d'un robinet qui fuit, tintements de verres, glockenspiel, avant les notes oscillantes d'un piano et un étrange vibrato qui pourrait provenir d'un poste de radio où l'on chercherait en vain une station fantôme. Puis la voix de Robert Wyatt. Cette voix, Marcus ne l'avait plus écoutée depuis près de trente ans, au point d'avoir cet après-midi de décembre la curieuse impression de découvrir un album inconnu, comme si *Rock Bottom* renfermait une tout autre histoire que celle qu'il imaginait :

You look different every time
You come from the foam-crested brine
It's your skin shining softly in the moonlight
Partly fish, partly porpoise, partly baby sperm whale
Am I yours ?
Are you mine to play with ?
D'une fois sur l'autre tu n'es jamais le même
Tu es tout de sel, de mousse et d'écume
Ta peau brille doucement au clair de lune
Partie poisson, partie marsouin, partie bébé cachalot
Est-ce que je suis à toi ?
M'appartiens-tu assez pour jouer avec moi ?

À cause de son accident, il était impossible à Robert Wyatt de jouer de son ancienne batterie. Trop lourde, trop incommode, elle réclamait une mobilité des membres qu'il avait perdue. Je ne serai plus jamais batteur, s'était-il dit à l'hôpital de Stoke Mandeville. Je ne serai plus jamais moi-même. Mais en réfléchissant à sa condition et constatant que le traitement réservé à sa colonne vertébrale ne donnait aucun résultat, il ne s'était pas réfugié dans des pensées dévastatrices, ne s'était pas mis à

désespérer ou à broyer du noir. Grâce à une force d'âme peu commune, il avait forgé une autre idée. Devenir producteur pour injecter de l'originalité dans des chansonnettes incolores ? Sûrement pas. Participer symboliquement à des disques avec le soutien bienveillant de quelques amis musiciens ? Pas davantage. Son issue ne serait pas plus un pis-aller qu'un compromis : ce serait une conversion radicale. Robert Wyatt s'était évertué à concevoir depuis son lit de paraplégique un tout autre jeu, une autre manière de jouer de la musique et de se servir de son talent. Un jeu, non de reconquête (c'en était fini de la conquête et de la gloire) mais de réenchantement. Le jeu libre d'un homme seul qui acceptait ce qui lui revenait. Et si *Rock Bottom* constitue un pur et merveilleux chef-d'œuvre, c'est en raison de cet acquiescement, de ce oui franc donné aux événements pour mieux les dépasser.

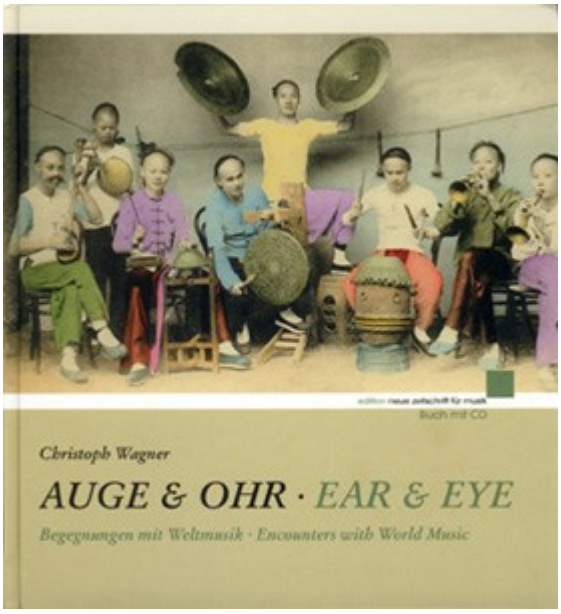
C'est vers midi que Gladys avait téléphoné à Marcus pour lui annoncer que le score de Carl, d'après Frisch, avait pris ces jours-ci une mauvaise direction, que de 6, puis 7, puis 8 où il était parvenu début décembre, laissant même espérer un 9 qui eût été un vrai retour au monde humain, son score de Glasgow était soudain retombé à 7, puis descendu à 6, et dégringolé à 5, comme si les fonctions vitales de son frère s'affaiblissaient et s'éteignaient les unes après les autres, et que son état, jugé désormais stationnaire, ne pût plus inspirer chez ses proches que de l'angoisse. De ses grognements encourageants, il n'était plus du tout question. Encore moins d'un rétablissement.

« Il ne reviendra plus, Marcus, lui dit Gladys. Il peut rester comme ça pendant des mois ou des années, m'a dit Frisch, mais il ne reviendra plus. Il n'y a jamais de miracle. » Marcus, qui n'avait pas rendu visite à Carl depuis presque trois semaines, était ennuyé pour répondre à Gladys. Il se remémora


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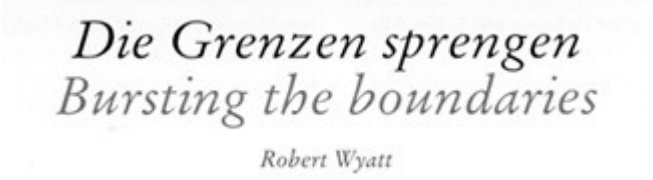
AUGE & OHR - EAR & EYE
Begegnungen mit Weltmusik
Encounters with World Music

Dans cet ouvrage de 188 pages "Rencontre avec la musique du monde", paru en 2004, Christoph Wagner invite de nombreux musiciens et compositeurs à livrer leur vision et leur perception de musiques qui les ont particulièrement marqués même si parfois éloignées de leurs pratiques habituelles...

Terry Riley, Maurico Kagel, Pauline Oliveros, mais aussi Jah Wobble, Lol Coxhill et bien d'autres nous dévoilent des facettes souvent inédites de leurs goûts et centres d'intérêts musicaux.

Dans un texte intitulé "Bursting the boundaries", Robert Wyatt nous introduit au flamenco, musique qu'il a découverte par l'intermédiaire de sa femme Alfreda et qui, selon lui, *fait éclater les frontières...*

Un CD illustre la plupart des 38 textes rédigés en anglais et en allemand de cet ouvrage qui comporte également de très nombreuses photos de pratiques musicales captées dans le monde entier au début du XXème siècle.



Meine Frau brachte mich mit Flamenco in Berührung, weil sie gerne nach Spanien reiste. Obwohl wir nach Nordspanien gingen, trafen wir dort im Umland von Barcelona auf eine andalusische Gemeinde von beachtlicher Größe, die aus dem armen ländlichen Süden in den industrialisierten Norden gezogen war. Auswanderer haben ein viel leidenschaftlicheres Verhältnis zu ihrer Kultur als die Leute, die dort leben, wo sie geboren sind. In der arbeitsfreien Zeit fanden in den Dörfern um Barcelona kleine Zusammenkünfte (penas) statt, wobei eine freundliche Rivalität darüber ausgetragen wurde, welches die Heimat des besten Flamenco sei: Cordoba, Sevilla oder Granada.

Was mir als Flüchtling aus der Rockmusik als

My wife introduced me to Flamenco first because she liked to go to Spain. Although we would only go to the north of Spain, there is so much internal immigration where people from the poorer rural south have gone to find work in the industrial north. So there is a sizeable Andalusian community around Barcelona. In some ways immigrants are more passionate about sustaining their culture than people who still live where they come from. So these Southerners now found themselves in the villages around Barcelona, and when they were not working they had their social occasions called peñas. There was friendly rivalry about which is the real home of the best Flamenco: Cordoba, Seville or Granada.

erstes auffiel, war, dass bei den Zusammenkünften, die in einfachen Räumen stattfanden, alle Generationen anwesend waren. Großmütter und Großväter starrten dabei wie versteinert die jungen Leute an und pflegten - wobei sie auf die Jungen zeigten - zu sagen: "Die singen gerne, habe aber keine Ahnung!" Erst am Ende eines Abends standen sie manchmal auf, um diesen fantastischen hohen Gesang anzustimmen. Die alten Leute waren wie guter Wein: mit dem Alter wurden sie besser und besser. Alle erkannten das an. Natürlich gab es auch Kinder und sexy junge Frauen und Männer, die brillant waren. In dieser Kultur schien Raum für jedes Alter zu sein.

Die Tänze waren hauptsächlich Tänze der Zigeuner, die oft Teile der Kultur eines Landes länger bewahren als die Sesshaften. Sie leben in einer Art Zeitkapsel. Als wir dort waren, liefen die Zigeunerinnen in Stockelschuhen, engen Röcken, Pelzmänteln und toupiertem Haar herum, während die spanischen Frauen alle Feministinnen in Jeans waren. Trotzdem waren diese Zigeunerinnen hartgesotten und ließen sich von den Männer nichts gefallen.

Der Flamenco hört sich für mich alles andere als europaïsch an, abgesehen von der Tatsache, dass die Gitarrenakkorde temperiert gestimmt werden. Aber der Gesangs passt nicht in dieses System.
Es ist faszinierend zu hören, wie die Sänger absolut sicher die Räume zwischen den Noten finden, was man normalerweise als verstimmt bezeichnet würde. Diese Gesang wird hier aber mit einer solchen Autorität praktiziert, dass klar wird: "verstimmt" gibt es nicht. Jeder kennt die exakten Töne. Es ist eine Musik, die noch nicht gezähmt ist. Außerdem besitzt sie eine ungeheure Disziplin. Als Musiker, der früher recht schwierige Musik machte, war ich überrascht, eine Volksmusik zu finden, die derart knifflig war - allein schon rhythmisch.

In dieser Tradition gibt es verschiedene Liedformen, die auf Tänzen beruhen. Einige sind sehr langsam, jenseits eines Tempos, andere sind kubanisch beeinflusst, wieder andere mexikanisch.

Die pure Intensität des Gesangs steht in deutlichem Kontrast zu modernem Singen, das von der Annahme ausgeht, ein Mikrofon zu benutzen, wodurch die alte Fähigkeit richtig laut zu singen verloren geht. Im Flamenco wird sie noch benötigt. Es ist rohe Soulmusik.

Da der Flamenco spezifisch spanisch ist, kann man davon ausgehen, dass einige spanische Folktraditionen in ihn eingeflossen sind. Und da Andalusien über Jahrhunderte das Juwel in der Krone des islamischen Reiches war, scheint Flamenco auch bestimmte arabische Einflüsse zu besitzen, Einflüsse von Kunstmusik der verfeinertsten Art. Diese Einflüsse wirkten auf die lokalen Tänze ein und daraus scheint der

We were caught in a fascinating social world. The first thing I noticed as a refugee from rock music was that at a *peña* every generation would be represented in a very simple room: there would be the grandfather and grandmothers starring stonily at the young people. They said: they love to sing but they don't know anything talking about the younger generation. At the end of the evening sometimes they would get up and you would get this fantastic sort of high singing. These old people were like good wine: they got better and better. That was accepted by everybody. There were also childrend who were brilliant, and sexy young women and men - there seemed to be room in this culture for every age.

Nearly all dances seemed to be gypsy dances. What gypsies often seem to do is to preserve a bit of the culture in the country where they live, longer than the natives. They live in a kind of time warp. When we were there the gypsy women were going around in high heeled shoes, tight skirts and fur coats and big hair, while the Spanish women were all feminists in jeans. But these gypsy women were tough cookies and any men who stepped out of line got a real earful.

The music itself is just not anything which I would call European, apart from the fact that it is anchored in guitar chords and the guitar is tuned, as all European instruments are. But for the singing it's clear that the notes are definitely not quite part of that. It is fascinating to hear the singing. The singers are very secure in finding the spaces between the notes which would be considered out of tune, and that's done with such authority that you notice there is no such thing as out of tune. Everybody knows it. But they are just playing music that hasn't been tamed yet. It's anchored but not tamed. It takes enormous discipline. As a musician who used to play music which was quite difficult to learn, I was impressed to find a folk music that was so difficult to follow even rhythmically. If you tried to clap along as a tourist you have to be careful.
You have to know where you are clapping and where the beats are.

There are various types of songs, based on dance. Some are very slow - out of tempo. Some are rather Cuban influenced, Mexican influenced.

The sheer power of the singing is in such contrast to modern singing which is based on the assumption that you have a microphone. That has been a big influence on singing, because it means that the old discipline where everybody had to learn to sing extremely loud doesn't often apply. But in Flamenco it definitely does. It's raw soul music.

spezifische Flamenco-Stil entstanden zu sein. Es ist also eine Kultur, die die Grenzen und Beschränkungen des europäischen Notensystems sprengt, und jeder, der an sogenannter Avantgarde-Musik interessiert ist, sollte die Überzeugungskraft bewundern, die den Flamenco davon abhält, jemals in ein europäisches Klischee zu passen.

Robert Wyatt is a singer and songwriter who plays the drums, keyboards, trumpet and bass guitar. He was born in 1945 in Bristol, England and became a member of The Wild Flowers in 1964.
In 1966 he was a founding member of Soft Machine and worked with the band as drummer and singer until 1971. In 1971 he started a solo career and recorded his first solo album. From 1971 to 1973 he was leader of jazz-rock band Matching Mole. From 1974 he has released several solo albums and worked with Kevin Ayers, Carla Bley, Brian Eno, Paul Weller, Phil Manzanera, Dave Mason, Elvis Costello and Mike Oldfield.
He lives in Louth, Lincolnshire, England.

Selected discography
Cuckooland (Hannibal/Rykodisc HNCD 1468)
Dondestan (Hannibal/Rykodisc HNCD 1436)
Shleep (Hannibal/Rykodisc HNCD 1418)

Flamenco is especially Spanish in a strange way. It has definitely absorbed some Spanish folk tradition but there are also a lot of Arabic influences. Because Andalusia was the jewel in the crown of the Islamic empire in its heyday and was Islamic for a very long time, there seems to be a very specific Arabic input of art music of the most refined type. It has filtered through the local dances and that seems to be really where the distinctive Flamenco style derives from. So it's a culture that cannot be identified as specifically European. It bursts the boundaries and the limits set upon it by the harmonic major-minor scales of European music. It is a defined stand from outside. Anybody who is interested in avant garde culture should admire the strength of conviction which stops Flamenco ever quite fitting into an European stereotype.



Flamenco-Gitarrist und Tänzer, Granada, Spanien, Anfang 20. Jahrhundert
Flamenco guitarist and dancers, Granada, Spain, early 20th century

Happening - Summer 1967 - Côte d'Azur

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Rare footage of Soft Machine performing naked at the 1967 Sun Love happening in Cogolin, near Saint Tropez, on the French Riviera.

"The Picasso part lasted an hour, that depended on the Soft Machine, and afterwards there were happenings, concerts… An American actor told us 'come back to my place, I've got a swimming pool', so we went and we created a happening which took the piss out of the faux-mystics, and we made a pseudo ritual to the rising sun, we took the piss out those people who were taking the piss out of the hippies, it was Sun Love…" (J.J. Lebel)





Extrait de Sunlove de J.J. Lebel (Ed. RE:VOIR), avec Soft Machine - Août 1967
N/B - 16mm

“My second movie, SUNLOVE was shot in 16mm color in 1967, mostly with friends such as a bunch of Living Theatre actors and others who happened to be in town. It starts out with the straight reportage of one of my happenings, SUNLOVE, where about fifty people sat naked, looking calmly at the sunset. Not really "worshipping" the sun but identifying with its slow motion dropping into the horizon. We had taken LSD, it was sort of a naturalistic meditative ritual connecting with the cosmic day/night cycle, amongst pine trees in which birds were singing themselves to sleep as the sun went down, above the Bay of Saint-Tropez. This took place on the property of an American actor straight from Hollywood called Ricky Cooper who had visited our Picasso play "Desire Caught by the Tail" (Le Desir attrape par la queue) directed by yours truly and produced by Victor Herbert. The Soft Machine were there because they had also taken part in my version of the Picasso play, that had taken place in the suburbs of Saint-Tropez, under a giant rented circus tent. Picasso gave me the rights to put on his play, which has not very much to do with theater, but had a lot to do with Dadaism and eroticism.”



"*So, we filmed the SUNLOVE Happening around and in Ricky's swimming pool. Some of the people you see in there are anonymous friendly nomads from all over the world, but also included some of the Warhol gang, such as Ultra Violet, who was also in the Picasso play by the way, and the great sculptor John Chamberlain, who was her boyfriend then. They are some of the people that are naked swimming around such as the Soft Machine rock band, they were all naked playing music stoned and dancing as in a medieval fresco depicting Paradise.*"



"***What is the music on the film, the whole length of the movie?***



Finally, when I reached 80, the Centre Pompidou decided to give me a show - that was five years ago - they included my two movies in the exhibition along with paintings and collages. "But there's something missing," they said, "it's the music." I said, "Well, you know, we didn't have any money to tape music. We just shot silent movies." One of the technicians at the Paris Cinematheque, where they cleaned up the movie for the show, said "Well, I have some old vintage Soft Machine material, and if you want, I'll do some editing for you and use that as music for the film." I said, "Do what you want," and he did. That's the music that you hear. But it was done 50 years after the movie was shot."
(Interview with J.J. Lebel by Pip Chodorov / 2020 - in booklet accompanying the DVD SunLove).

Dans un passionnant entretien avec Aymeric Leroy, publié en 2021, Mike Zwerin évoque cet été 1967 au cours duquel Soft Machine se produira à de nombreuses reprises sur la Côte d'Azur.



0:00 / 7:51

American jazz critic Michael Zwerin wrote the first major article on Soft Machine for Down Beat in the summer of 1967, when he chanced upon the band in Saint-Tropez performing in front of the Café des Arts. Subsequently he witnessed the band playing as part of the avant-garde play by Picasso "Le Désir Attrapé par la Queue" and took Robert Wyatt to the Antibes Jazz Festival to meet saxophonist Paul Desmond who was performing there with the Dave Brubeck Quartet.

Homonymie

ABÉCÉDAIRE



LP O'Donel Levy - Time Has Changed - mint- . Robert Wyatt Davide E. Smith Butta

eBay-Garantie

Surprise en consultant Ebay - il y a quelques années - Robert Wyatt crédité sur un album inconnu au bataillon, *Times has changed,* sorti en 1977...

Il ne me fallut pas chercher bien longtemps pour me rendre à l'évidence, cet album avait bel et bien existé et Robert Wyatt y tenait la batterie, à une époque où je le croyais plutôt *retiré des affaires*...

Discogs référençait l'album avec un maximum d'informations... Etait-ce le chaïnon manquant entre *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* et *At last I'm Free* ? Ou bien la trace d'une tentative de nouvelle carrière aux States ? Et cette mention à peine croyable : "Style : Fusion- Jazz-Funk" ??

Quelle étrange découverte !



More Images

O'Donel Levy – Time Has Changed

Label:	Lester Radio Corporation – LRC-9319
Format:	Vinyl, LP, Album
Country:	US
Released:	1977
Genre:	Jazz
Style:	Fusion, Jazz-Funk

Tracklist

A1	Time Has Changed
A2	Have You Heard
A3	Dancing Girl
B1	Butta
B2	Sophisticated Disco
B3	Love Will Never Die

Credits

Art Direction – Andrew R. Miele, Jr.
Bass – Marcel Turner
Creative Director [Musical Supervisors] – Brad Baker, Lance Quinn
Design, Illustration – Hal Wilson
Drums – Robert Wyatt ← ?
Engineer [Recording And Remix Engineer] – Ed Stasium
Flute – George Young (2)
Guitar – O'Donel Levy
Percussion – Jimmy Maelen
Piano, Synthesizer – Robert Butta*
Producer – Sonny Lester
Saxophone, Flute – David E. Smith
Trumpet – Jimmy Wilson
Vocals – Aleta Greene

Notes

Recorded at Flite 3 Recording Studio, Baltimore and Mediasound Studios, New York.

Poursuivant mon enquête, je découvris sur You Tube un des morceaux de l'album, et à l'écoute nul doute possible : ce n'était pas *notre* Robert aux drums...

Il ne me restait plus qu à chercher l'explication à la source et réussit à trouver l'email du guitariste O'Donel Levy qui me répondit sans tarder :

" Robert (Bob) Wyatt was the drummer in my band from here in the Baltimore/Washington DC area. The last I heard - he now lives somewhere in Brazil. O'D."

L'enquête touchait à sa fin - nous étions en mars 2005 et je classais ce dossier en me disant qu'un jour j'en écrirai quelques mots sur le site..

Peu de temps après je découvris l'existence de Robert Wyatt, pianiste et concertiste émérite et me dis que, décidemment, un Robert Wyatt pouvait en cacher bien d'autres...



How The Band Works

ABÉCÉDAIRE



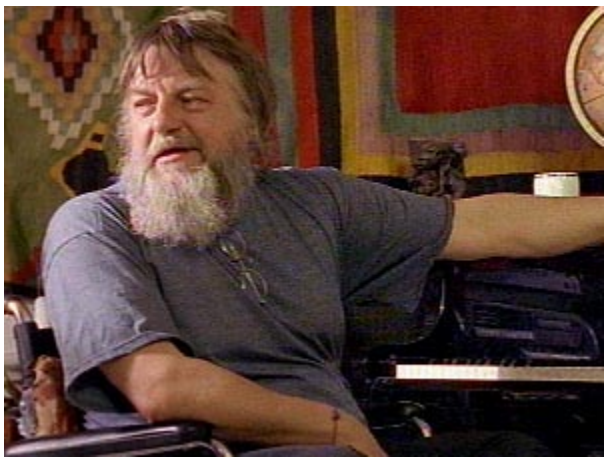
L'**Experience Music Project** est un musée de la musique situé à Seattle (USA) totalement dédié aux musiques populaires du 20ème siècle. C'est aussi un site internet très documenté - empsfm.org *(lien inactif en 2016)* - qui diffuse régulièrement de nombreux documents sur les musiques, les musiciens et les pratiques instrumentales.

L'EMP diffuse deux vidéos de Robert Wyatt dans ses archives: **How The Band Works** - ci-dessous - et **Jazz et Max Roach**.

The Player: Robert Wyatt is a singer-songwriter and former drummer for the British art rock band the Soft Machine.

My parents used to advertise for lodges, which was a source of income for my parents who didn't have much of an income, and one of the people who came to stay with us was a drummer from California who'd studied and taught at Bali Drum City, which was run by a drummer called Joe Morello. He came and instead of playing for lodging he taught me drums 'cause he didn't have any money. So his rent was he would teach me drums. So I was taught how to hold the sticks correctly. Now his favorite drummer was a bloke called Philly Joe Jones, and he made me listen to Philly Joe Jones.

Philly Joe Jones, that's not his real name, it just means a drummer from Philadelphia who reminded everybody of the original great Joe Jones. He was the drummer who played with Count Basie. Anyway, this is a very good education in one man. George Nidorf, he taught me not about how to play drums but how the point of drums is and the point of all instruments is their role only really makes sense in the context of other instruments so that you're only a good drummer if you're listening to the bass player, and if you're listening to the other musicians in the band. But the band works as one organism, and that's really what I learned from George.



I'm A Believer

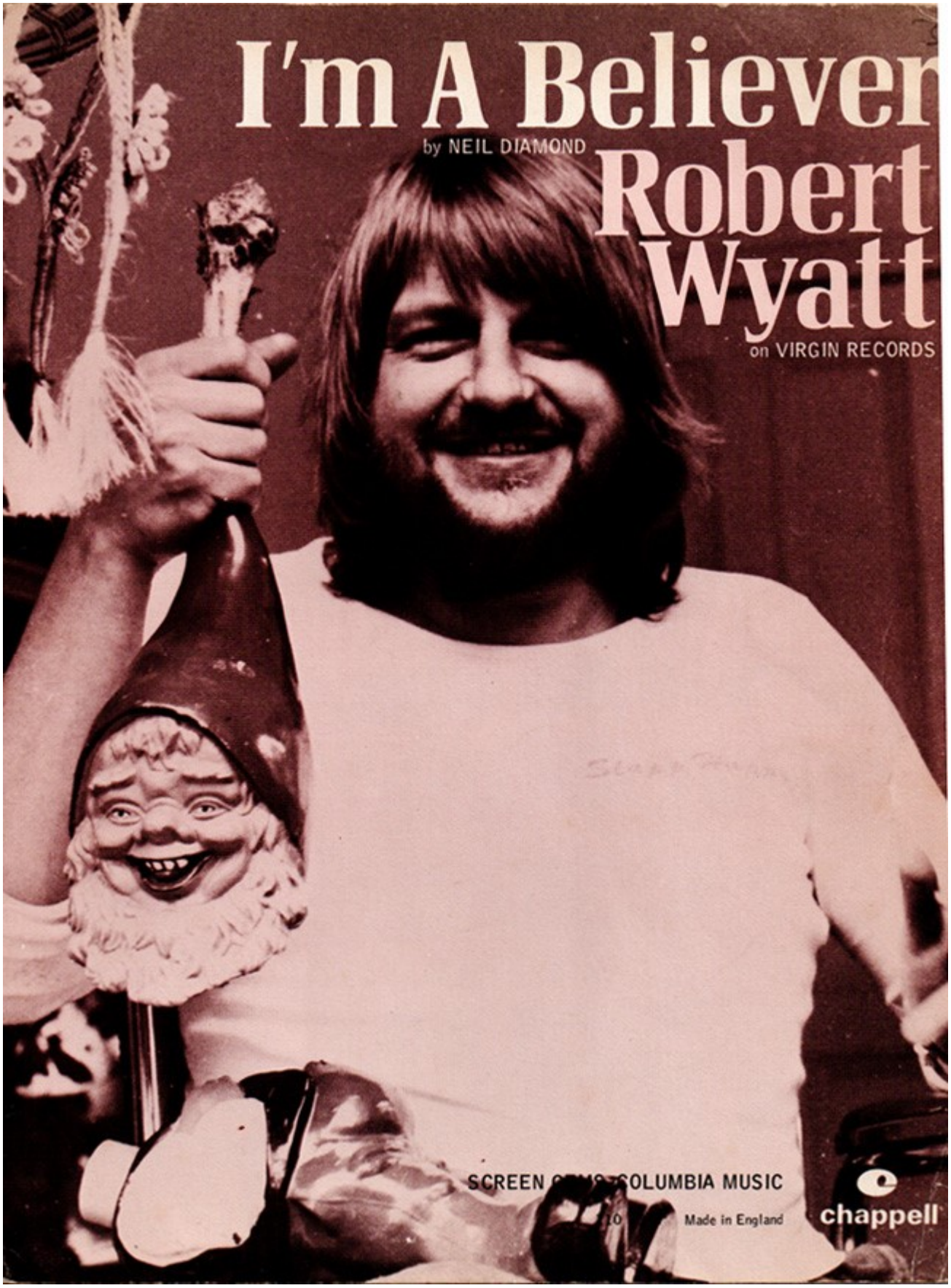
ABÉCÉDAIRE

1974 : **I'm A Believer**, LE tube de Robert Wyatt. Un morceau de Neil Diamond, d'abord interprété par The Monkees en 1966, puis une scie musicale planétaire qui sera ensuite reprise par des dizaines (des centaines ?) de groupes.
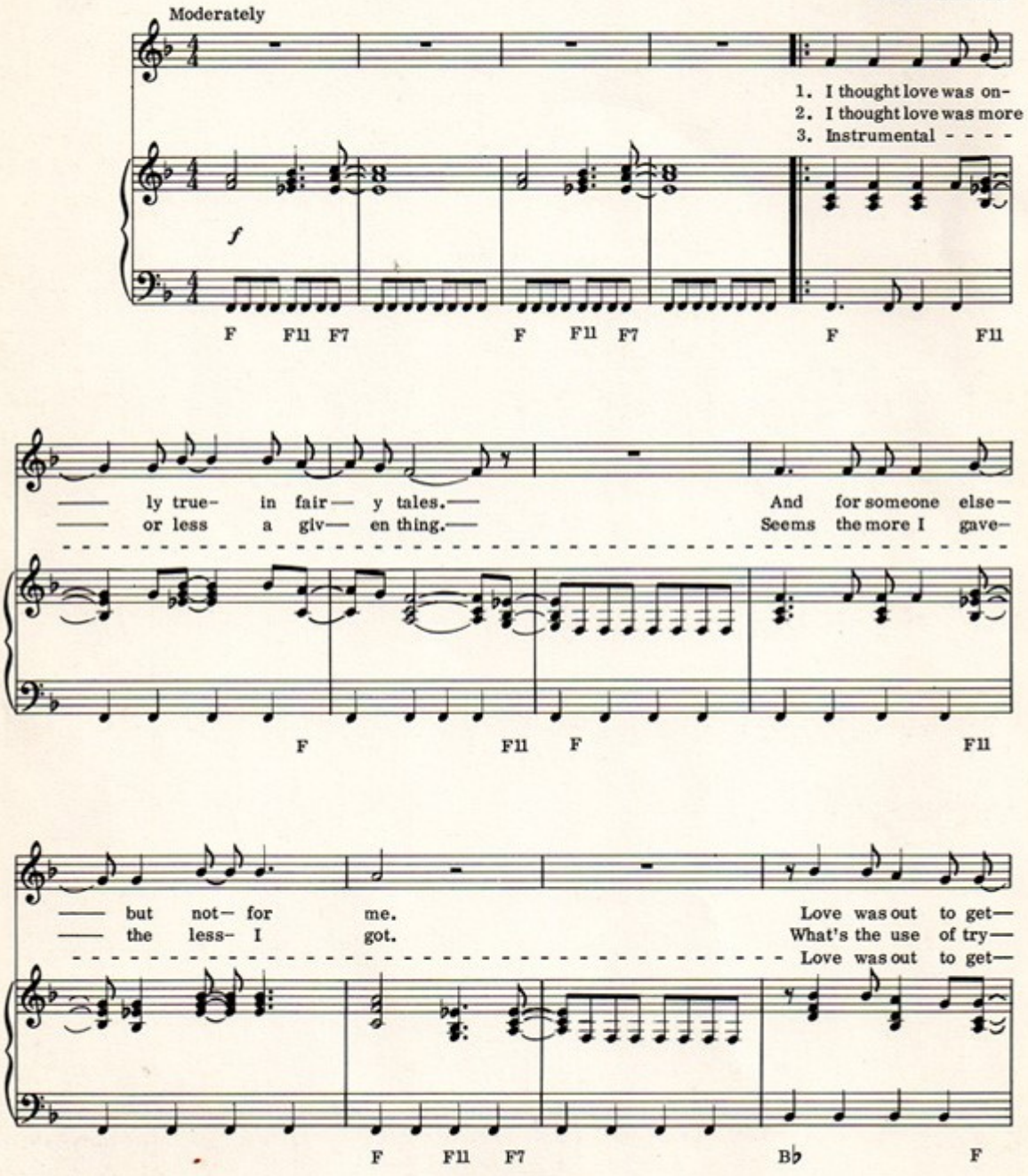


L'interprétation de Robert Wyatt lui vaudra un disque de platine et une invitation à l'émission télévisée de la BBC *Top of The Pops* en septembre 1974, accompagné par Nick Mason et Fred Frith.

0:00 / 3:12
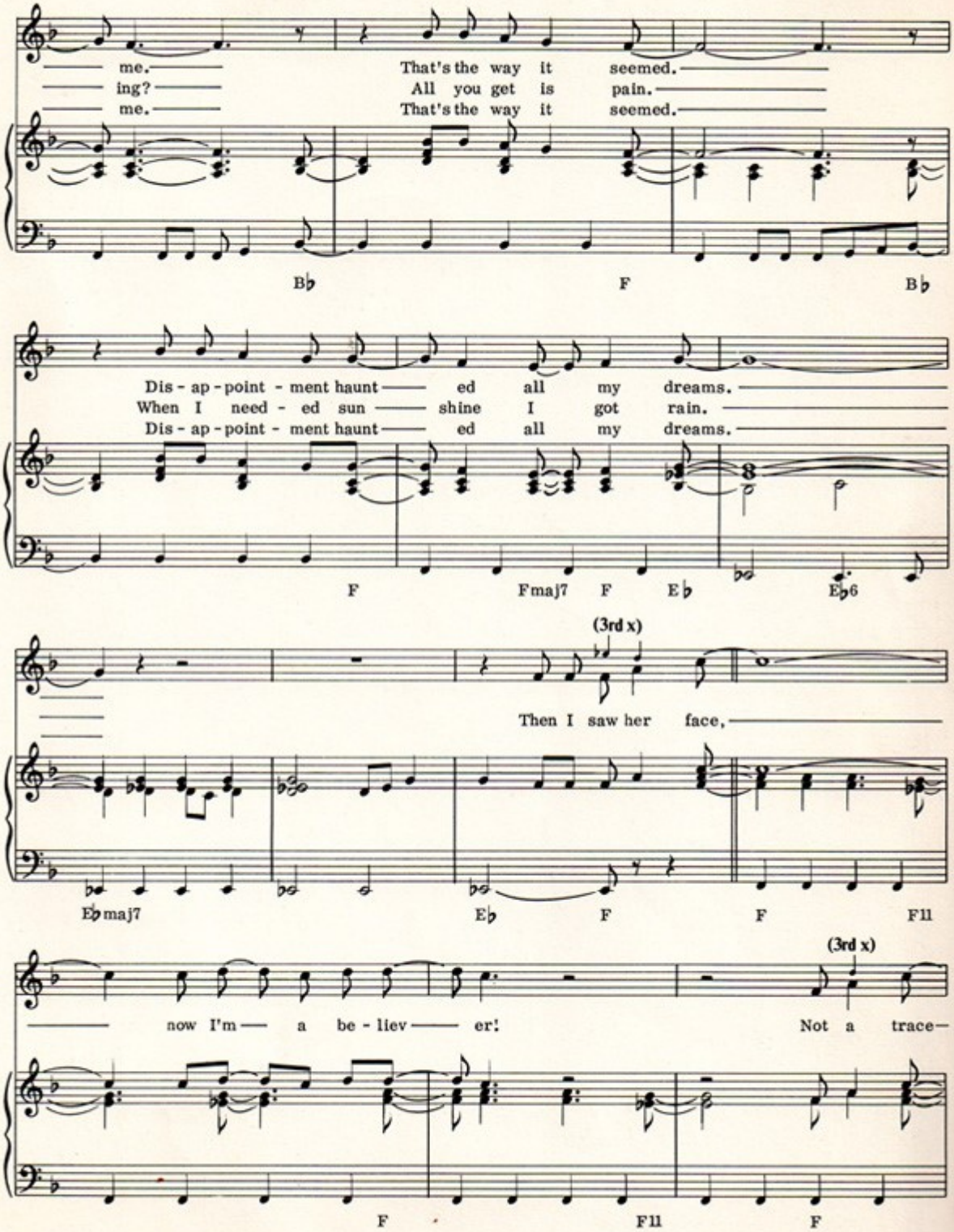

I'm A Believer
by NEIL DIAMOND
Robert Wyatt
on VIRGIN RECORDS
SCREEN GEMS-COLUMBIA MUSIC
Made in England
chappell

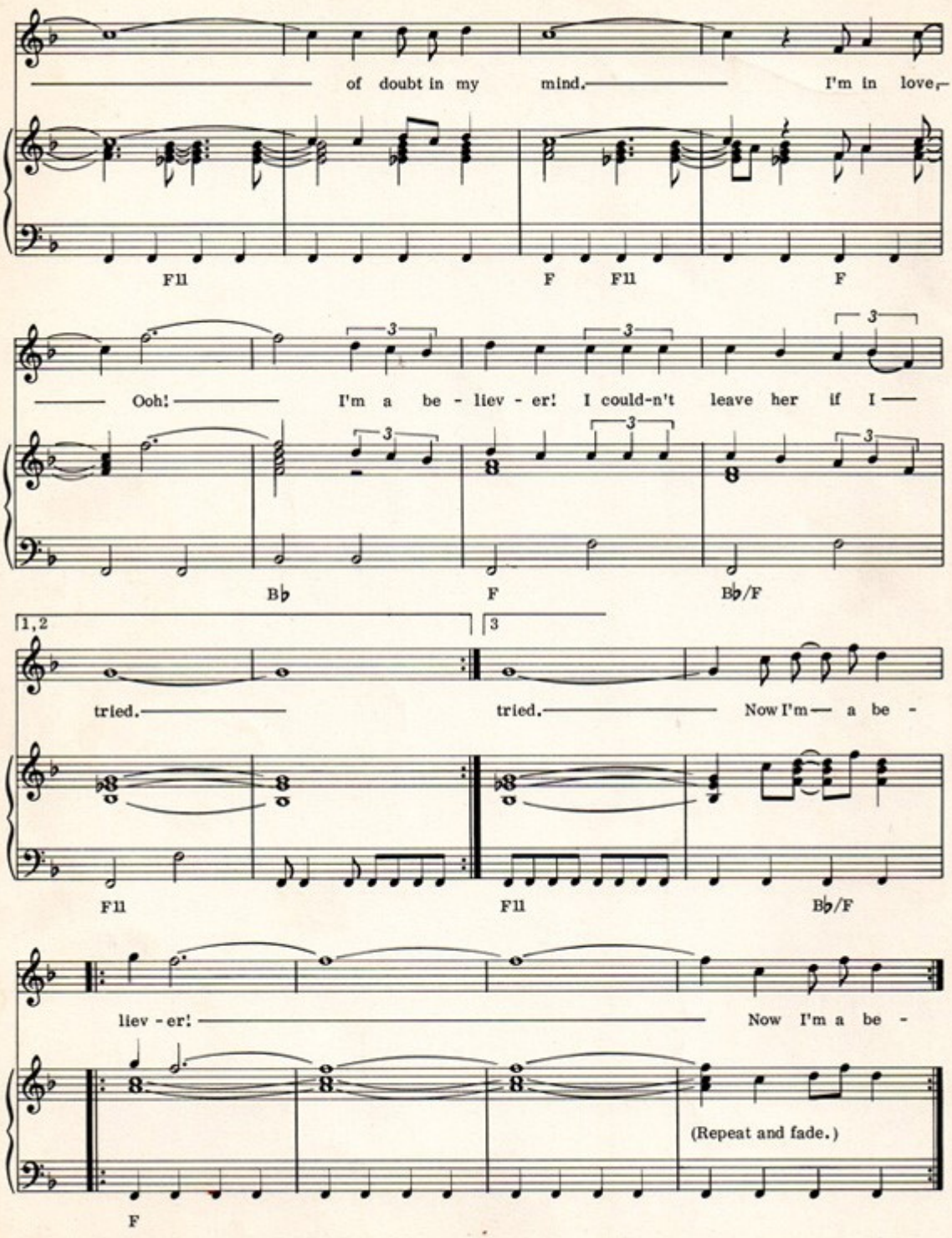
I'm A Believer

by
NEIL DIAMOND



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me. That's the way it seemed.
ing? All you get is pain.
me. That's the way it seemed.
B♭ F B♭
Dis - ap - point - ment haunt ed all my dreams.
When I need - ed sun shine I got rain.
Dis - ap - point - ment haunt ed all my dreams.
F Fmaj7 F E♭ E♭6
(3rd x)
Then I saw her face,
E♭maj7 E♭ F F F11
(3rd x)
now I'm a be - liev er! Not a trace—
F F11 F



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SINGLE OF THE WEEK

ROBERT WYATT:"I'm A Believer" (Virgin): At Last! At long bloody last, someone has had the sublime good sense to start reviving those wonderful songs of yesterday with which Micky, Mike, Davey, Peter and Bert used to thrill us when we were but tots. And who better to open up the proceedings than that wonderful human being Robert Wyatt, who does Neil Diamond's greatest ever song up proud. Kids, this cuts everything on "Pin Ups" and seven-eighths of Mr.Ferry's revivalist frolics to miniscule shreds. To hear that great old song performed with Wyatt's ineffably weatherbeaten purity just brings tears to my nose, and Dave McRae's piano and Fred Frith's guitars and violins just whip at my senses, man. This is a dynamite record. A DYNAMITE RECORD, I said in case you didn't hear me properly the first time. Moreover, it's the only decent single out this week, so wheel yourself down to your local record shop and spend dem pennies with a clear conscience. Incidentally, the B-side is "Memories", Hugh Hopper's foist-ever song, and a previously-unrecorded trip into the genetic days of the Softs. What are you waiting for, already?

In-Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE



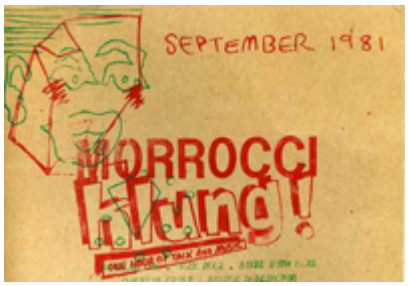
- **Mark Boyle on meeting Soft Machine at UFO in 1967**



- **John Peel chats with Robert Wyatt (from Top Gear Christmas special 1969)**



- **Mike Ratledge about Soft Machine - 1974**



- **Morrocci Klung! - 1981**



- **Robert Wyatt and Elvis Costello - 1983**



- **John Peel Show - 1983**



- **Robert Wyatt Interview - 1984**



- **El viatge de Robert Wyatt - 1986**



- **Robert Wyatt part 1 - 1990**



Le Rythme et la Raison - Robert Wyatt : le chant d'un funambule - 1992



Intervista a Robert Wyatt -(di Alessandro Achilli all'uscita di Shleep) - Radio Popolare - 1997



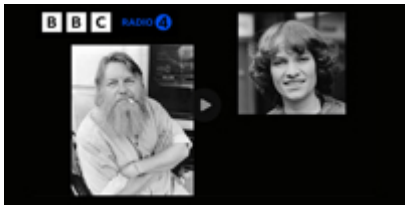
Les chemins de la musique - France Culture - 1997



Dondestan (revisited) Interview - 1998



Little Red Robin Hood - 1998



Midweek with Libby Purves - 1999



- **Robert Wyatt on "Radio Shuttleworth" BBC 2000**



- **Interview "Robert Wyatt on Rock Bottom" by Aymeric Leroy - 2001**



- **Intervista a Robert Wyatt (di Alessandro Achilli all'uscita di Cuckooland) - Radio Popolare - 2003**



- **Robert Wyatt Interview by Hector Zazou - France 2 - 2003**



- **Free Will And Testament - A Robert Wyatt Story - BBC 4 - 2003**



- **Au Divan du Monde - 2007**



- **Q & A - Purcell Room - 2007**



- **Robert Wyatt - Arte Documentary - 2007**



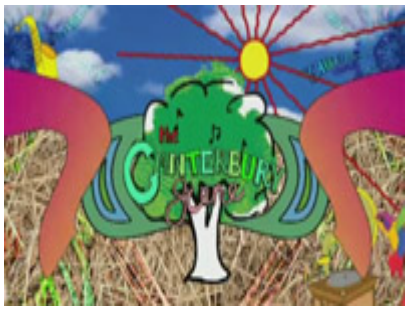
- **Diggers with Alfreda Benge Alfie Wyatt by Sharon Gal/Edwin Pouncey - 2008**



- **Interview Robert Wyatt from "Sunny's time now" - 2008**



- **Robert Wyatt talks to Rosie Swash - 2008**



- **Robert Wyatt about Canterbury scene on BBC**



- **Prog Rock Britannia - BBC4 - 2009**



- **Robert Wyatt about creativity - 2009**



- **The Muses Within - For The Ghosts Within - 2010**



- **Jazza Festival 2010**



- **Off The Page Festival - 2011**



- **Le sorcier et les sortilèges - Les vendredis de la musique - France Culture - 2011**



- **Robert Wyatt and Alfie - Domino Radio - 2011**



- **The Voices Of Robert Wyatt - 2012**



- **Going Underground - Interview with Robert Wyatt and rare archive footage - 2013**



Archie Shepp introduced by Robert Wyatt - 2012



Robert Wyatt, psychédélisme et expérimentations soniques - France Musique 2014



Off The Page 2014: An Audience with Robert Wyatt



Robert Wyatt inspire les frenchies - France Musique - 2015



Psychedelic Britannia - 2015



Gavin Esler In Conversation with Robert Wyatt - with music performed by Soupsongs April 4, 2016



Robert Wyatt, l'homme de plusieurs vies - France Culture - 2016



Robert Wyatt played the UFO Club with the Soft Machine 2016



Chatting with Robert and Alfie - 2017



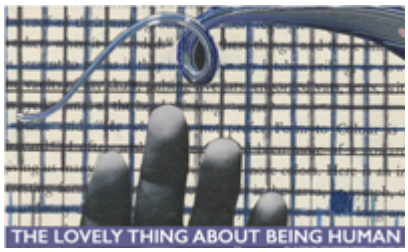
Robert Wyatt interviewed by John Greaves - 2019



Robert Wyatt v/s Bruno Tocanne - 2019



Robert Wyatt and Eddie Van Halen - 2020



- **The Lovely Thing About Being Human - 2020**



- **Fanny Michaëlis raconte "Alifib" et "Alife" - 2022**



- **Eloge de Robert Wyatt - A Very Good Trip - 2024**



- **Le rêve aquatique de Robert Wyatt - 2024**



- **Retour de plage ... Robert Wyatt, un ange à la table - 2024**



- **Éloge de Kevin Ayers, poète de l’âge psychédélique - A very good trip - 2024**



Laurenzo Mattotti sur Robert Wyatt à Italissimo 2025

Soft Machine at UFO 1967



Mark Boyle on meeting Soft Machine at UFO in 1967

Visual artist Mark Boyle (1934-2005) recalls the shock of first coming across Soft Machine at London's UFO Club in early 1967, describes the unique mix and personalities and musical influences in the band, and how quickly he agreed to take his Sensual Laboratory liquid light show on the road with them in England, and later in the US.

A video of Aymeric Leroy.

Duration : 05:52



John Peel chats with Robert Wyatt



John Peel chats with Robert Wyatt (from Top Gear Christmas special 1969)

John Peel's Top Gear show on December 27, 1969. John Peel had a few guests in the show, namely Dick Heckstall-Smith, Robert Wyatt and Sandy Denny. This chat with Robert Wyatt was followed by "The Moon In June" from Soft Machine's Top Gear session recorded on June 10, 1969.

> In Conversation

Mike Ratledge about Soft Machine



Mike Ratledge reminisces about Soft Machine
1974 - WMSN (Campus Radio - Michigan State University).

"*Obviously, and unfortunately, NOT a recent interview, and NOT by me... But I thought it would be fun to make a little film out of Mike's interview for WMSN radio in 1974. All credit to them for getting Mike to tell a potted history of Soft Machine from the early days to the time of the interview.*"

Aymeric Leroy

The full interview with Mike Ratledge (and Allan Holdsworth) by Dave DiMartino can be heard below :

0:00 / 30:03

> In Conversation

Morrocci Klung! interview - September 1981

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



A Robert Wyatt interview for the 'Morrocci Klung!' tapezine. Previously unreleased full unedited conversation.

>> L'interview sur le site de Podomatic

Robert Wyatt and Elvis Costello



Channel 4 - "Loose Talk"
May 1983
Robert Wyatt and Elvis Costello discuss the release of `Shipbuilding'.
Duration : 10:35

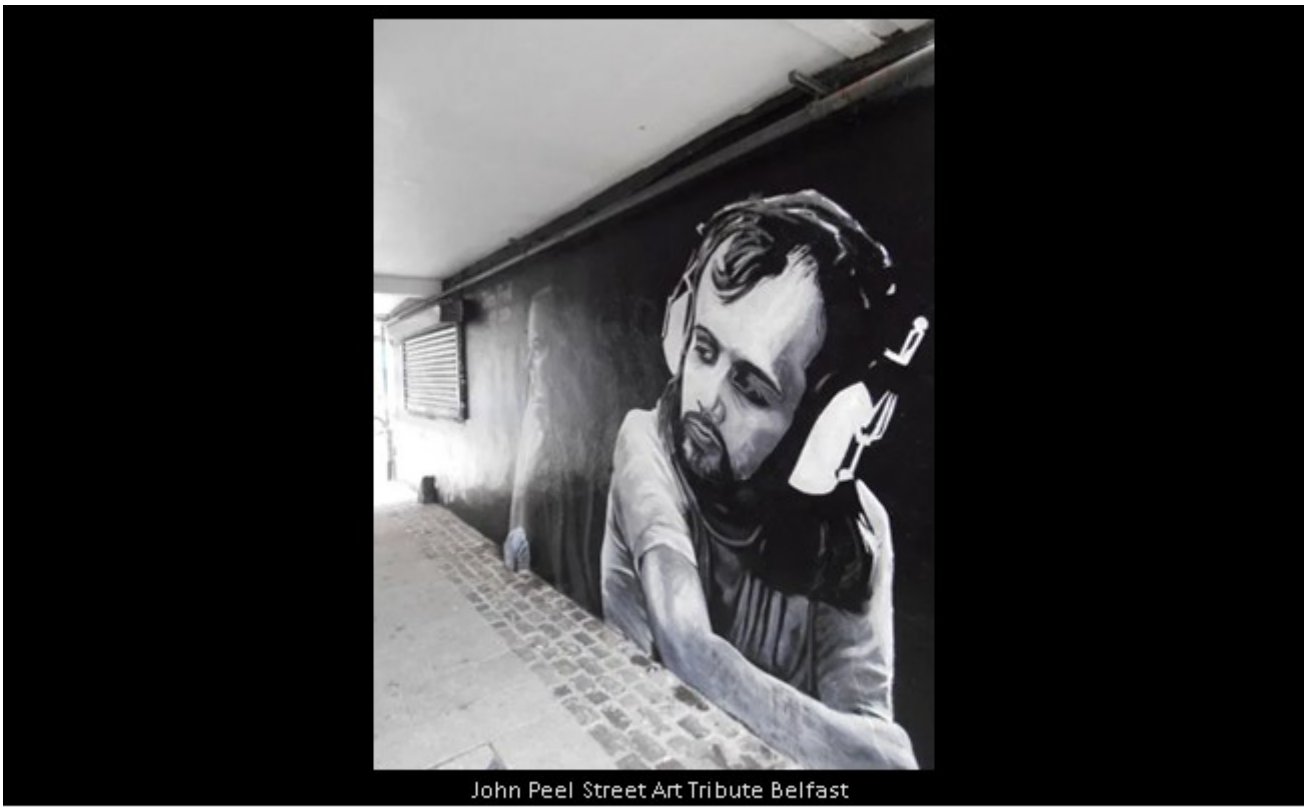
> In Conversation

John Peel Show

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Interview with Mark Ellen 15th June 1983 - John Peel Show
Duration: 31:05



John Peel on Robert Wyatt's accident - Top Gear - 5 June 1973
Duration : 1:06

> In Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

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Robert Wyatt Interview - 1984

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



ROBERT WYATT INTERVIEW.
Greenwich Sound Radio 'Creatures What You Never Knew About' 1984 Robert Wyatt talks and plays records from his collection (55 mins)

Duration: 55mn.

> In Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE

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El viatge de Robert Wyatt

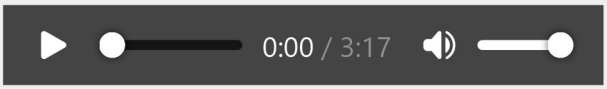
ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



Extrait de "El viatge de Robert Wyatt", documentaire de 40 mn réalisé par Juan Bufill en 1986 pour le programme *Arsenal* de la TV3 catalane.
Durée: 9:46

Ce film a été tourné pendant le séjour de Robert Wyatt et Alfie Benge en Espagne, à Castelldefels.
Il comprenait également une reprise voix-piano par Robertt Wyatt de *Born Again Cretin.*



Robert Wyatt - Born Again Cretin (Live TV3, Barcelona, 1986)

Robert Wyatt, en búsqueda del 'cinturón rojo'

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Robert Wyatt part 1



Robert Wyatt part 1 - réalisation de Nicolas Klotz
1990
Durée : 29:51

Dans le texte ci-dessous, Nicolas Klotz raconte comment la version complète de ce film réalisé pour FR3 en 1990 a pu enfin être mise en ligne sur internet en 2020.
Seuls deux courts extraits étaient jusqu'à ce jour disponibles sur YouTube.

Dans un magnifique texte paru dans la revue Minimum Rock'n'Roll, Jean Songe évoquait ce miracle improbable qui eut bien lieu un soir à la télévision française et que nous pouvons enfin nous aussi célébrer...

J'avais découvert Soft Machine Volume 1 dans un disquaire Porte de St Cloud, j'avais 13 ans. C'est le nom du groupe, la pochette, les titres des morceaux, qui m'avaient attiré.

Les photos sur le dos de la pochette, Mike Ratledge, Kevin Ayers, et Robert Wyatt. À cette époque, je ne parlais pas encore le français. Je suis né en France, mais mon père, qui était monteur de films, est parti travailler sur un

film aux États-Unis aussitôt après ma naissance. Nous y sommes restés plus de 10 ans.

À notre retour en France, quasiment du jour au lendemain, il a fallu que j'apprenne à nouveau à parler, car je ne parlais pas un mot de français. Le rock que j'avais commencé à écouter aux États-Unis était, avec les films que je voyais, les seuls liens que je gardais avec ce que je pensais être ma langue. D'où ma virée mensuelle dans ce magasin de disques Porte de St Cloud qui vendait aussi des grilles pains, des aspirateurs, des télévisions. Pas de platine pour écouter avant d'acheter. Je choisissais les disques surtout à partir des pochettes et d'une sorte d'instinct excité qui ne passait pas du tout par des références, puisque je n'en avais pas ou très peu. Les 33 tours coûtaient 20 francs.

L'écoute de Soft Machine 1 m'a complètement renversé, je me disais c'était de la musique expérimentale avec les sons distordus, les durées de morceaux incompréhensibles qui se prolongeaient les uns dans les autres. Et en même temps, tellement rock. Binaire. Mélodieux. Totalement jubilatoire. Avec le temps et la découverte de Coltrane quelques années plus tard, j'ai compris que ce que je trouvais tellement spontané, improvisé, électrique, dans Soft Machine s'inspirait du jazz. J'apprenais aussi que le nom du groupe était le titre d'un livre de William Burroughs. La batterie et la voix de Robert Wyatt étaient extraordinaires. J'avais appris les paroles par cœur, les solos d'orgue, de basse et la batterie, que j'essayais de chanter en même temps que j'écoutais. Le disque a été enregistré, je crois, après une tournée avec Jimi Hendrix dont ils faisaient la première partie. D'où la force binaire, explosive de la machine molle, il fallait tenir le public de Hendrix.

*Très vite après, dans le même magasin de disques, il y avait la pochette noire et blanche de Soft Machine Volume 2. Disque pataphysique, sombre et fleurissant de mélodies magnétiques à 7 temps. Et puis quelques mois plus tard peut-être, l'extraordinaire Moon In June, sur leur troisième album, Third, morceau éblouissant de Robert. Près de 20 minutes pendant lesquelles il chante, parlant presque, siffle. Plus complexe et en même temps, férocement binaire. Réinventant complètement la relation voix-batterie, alors que les autres membres de Soft Machine partaient vers une musique plus jazzy dans laquelle Robert n'était plus que batteur. Remplaçant la voix de Robert par un saxophone, éliminant le chanteur. Robert est parti faire un disque solo avec CBS, The End of an Ear, chef d'œuvre expérimental. Sur le dos de la pochette, près de sa photo, il a écrit * Out of work pop singer. Il a ensuite fondé Matching Mole avec quelques amis. Jeu de mot vivifiant autour de Machine Molle. Deux albums qui donnaient l'impression qu'ils arrivaient à jouer toutes les idées qui passaient par leurs têtes en même temps… Toujours aussi expérimental, avec des chansons pop magiques chantées par Robert, comme O Caroline… et puis cet accident à Venise, alors qu'il accompagnait sa compagne Alfie, script sur le tournage d'un film de Nicolas Roeg, Don't look now (Ne vous retournez pas). Film d'horreur au titre étrangement prophétique. Pendant une soirée, Robert est tombé par la fenêtre, s'est cassé le dos. Accident terrible prolongeant les décès tragiques de Hendrix, Morrison, Joplin, et bientôt Ian Curtis. Fin d'une époque.*

En 1976, Robert réalise un chef-d'œuvre absolu qui pour tout.e.s celles et ceux qui l'aiment, est sans doute un des 10 plus grands albums du rock. Rock Bottom, dont les sonorités si étranges viennent d'un petit orgue pour enfant qu'il a trouvé dans un magasin de jouet, juste avant son accident à Venise. Ouvrant tant d'horizons dans les méthodes d'enregistrements que dans les mélodies, les paroles, plusieurs siècles d'inventivités poétiques et musicales. Robert est un cosmos de fraternité.

En 1990, Martin Meissonnier qui s'occupait de l'émission Megamix me propose de faire un court film sur Robert pour Fr 3. Je suis parti quasiment le lendemain avec une bouteille de vin blanc. Alfie m'attendait à la gare de Louth avec sa 4L. Robert était tellement accueillant, aussi timide que moi. On a passé la nuit à discuter, boire, écouter des disques. Vers les 4h du matin, il dansait dans son fauteuil roulant. Le tournage a commencé le lendemain. Juste une nuit de tournage. Avec deux techniciens venant de Londres. Presque 30 ans plus tard, je n'avais qu'une copie VHS du film. Une amie a fait des recherches et a retrouvé un fichier dans les archives de FR3.

Nicolas Klotz, le 21 juin 2020, à Fécamp

Une sélection de films de Nicolas Klotz est présente sur le site Derives.tv, une revue de cinéma en ligne qui propose de découvrir des films et des textes de cinéastes rares et exigeants.

> In Conversation

Intervista a Robert Wyatt - ottobre 1997



Intervista a Robert Wyatt di Alessandro Achilli per Radio Popolare all'uscita di Shleep - 8/10/97).

- The italian translation (never published anywhere) of the interview for Radio Popolare.

Les chemins de la musique



0:00 / 28:57

LES CHEMINS DE LA MUSIQUE de Alain Dister et Christian Rosset

En 1997, Alain Dister propose pour "Les chemins de la musique" sur France Culture une histoire du rock en dix épisodes. Dans ce volet consacré aux musiciens inclassables, il fait la part belle à Robert Wyatt. Christian Rosset, compositeur et créateur radiophonique y est invité à réagir du point de vue académique...

Durée : 23:57

Dondestan (revisited) Interview

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Robert Wyatt - Dondestan (revisited) interview
1998 - Video interview with Robert Wyatt on the making of Dondestan.

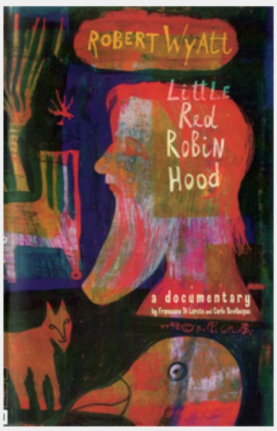
> In Conversation

Little Red Robin Hood

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation





> Zoom

Little Red Robin Hood
A documentary by Francesco Di Loreto and Carlo Bevilacqua - 1998
VHS - Running time : about 60'
Black and White
Dolby Surround

Consorzio Produttori Indipendenti
RER RWVID

> In Conversation

Midweek with Libby Purves - 1999



Midweek with Libby Purves - November 17, 1999
Radio 4 BBC.

Robert Wyatt on "Radio Shuttleworth" BBC 2000



Robert Wyatt guest-spot on "Radio Shuttleworth"
BBC Radio 4
March 23, 2000
Durée : 28:00

Robert Wyatt comes in around 10:51.



Robert Wyatt on Rock Bottom

Amyeric Leroy a eu un long entretien avec Robert Wyatt à Londres en juin 2001 à l'occasion du Meltdown Festival dont Robert Wyatt était le curateur.
Cet interview découpé en 6 parties est un témoignage inestimable des conditions psychiques et matérielles qui ont abouti à la création de Rock Bottom.



Robert Wyatt on "Rock Bottom" (Part 1 of 6)

From an interview made in 2001, this is a series of edited excerpts that deal with the genesis and contents of Robert's masterpiece "Rock Bottom". In this first part, Robert talks about composing the music in Venice in the Winter of 1972/73, then on his hospital bed after his June 1973 accident, and how Alfie's gift of a cheap organ helped shape the album's unique soundworld.

>> On YouTube here.



Robert Wyatt on "Rock Bottom" (Part 2 of 6)

In this second part, Robert discusses the writing process for the album, and his music in general, and his collaboration with the participating musicians.

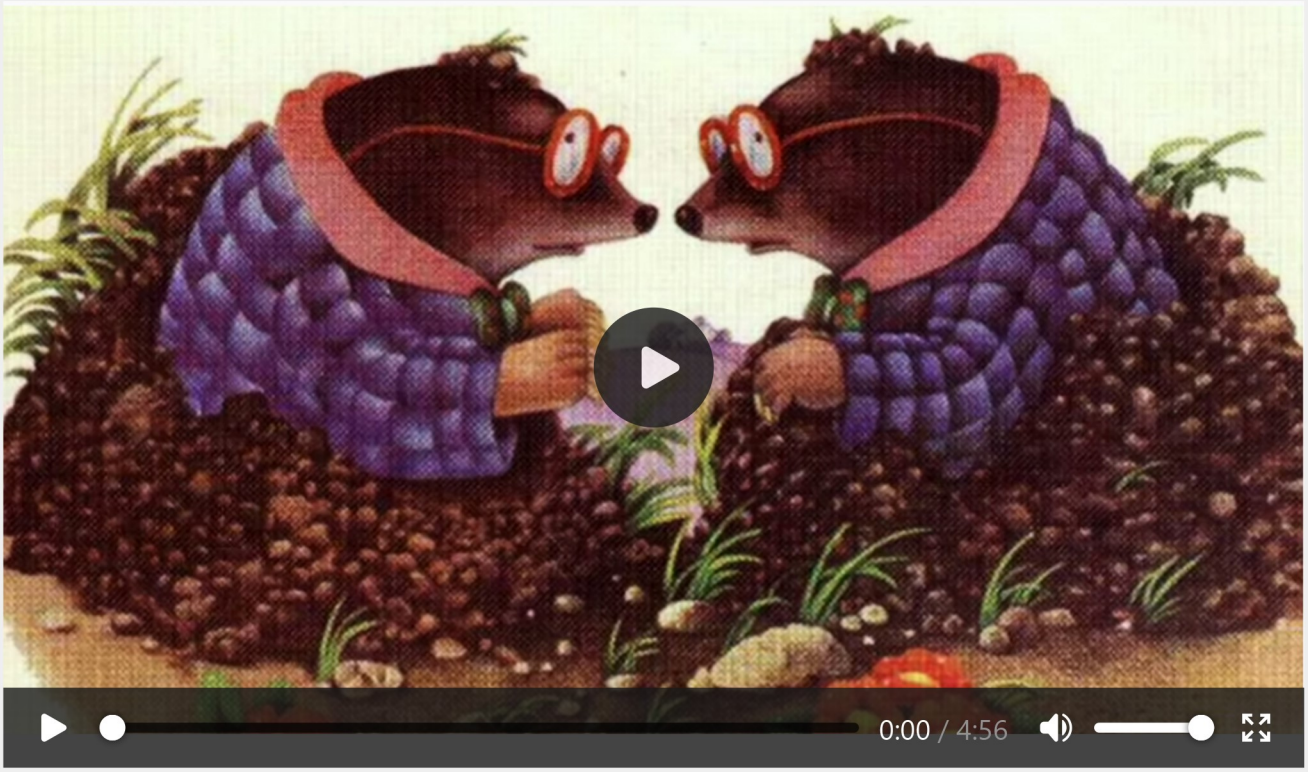
>> On YouTube here.



Robert Wyatt on "Rock Bottom" (Part 3 of 6)

In this part we discuss how and in what order Robert's own performances and the contributions of the guest musicians were conceived and recorded, with a particular focus on Ivor Cutler's monologue(s).

>> On YouTube here.



Robert Wyatt on "Rock Bottom" (Part 4 of 6)

In this part we discuss Robert's use of loops on "Rock Bottom" and "Dondestan", then the inspiration behind some of the references in the album's lyrics, beginning with the moles, which prompts a contribution from Alfie (there will be more in the next part).

>> On YouTube here.



Robert Wyatt on "Rock Bottom" (Part 5 of 6)

In this part, prompted by a question about the "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Little Red Robin Hood" (which will be addressed in detail in the final part), Robert explains how his lyrics for "Rock Bottom" aren't meant to convey an unequivocal message, but although they shouldn't be taken literally, they aren't devoid of meaning.

>> On YouTube here.



Robert Wyatt on "Rock Bottom" (Part 6 of 6)

In this final part, we continue to discuss Robert's use of the characters of Little Red Riding Hood and Robin Hood in "Rock Bottom", beginning with a contribution from Alfie. The conversation then moves to Robert's collaboration with Fred Frith on "Muddy Mouse/Mouth", before Robert concludes with some really enlightening insights into his creative process.

>> On YouTube here.

Aymeric Leroy *a contribué de multiples manières à faire connaître et aimer* ***la scène de Canterbury*** *: créateur dès les années 90 du site de référence calyx-canterbury.fr, il a publié "L'école de Canterbury" chez Le Mot et le Reste ainsi que d'autres ouvrages consacrés à la musique progressive.*
Il participe à de nombreux évènements autour de cette scène musicale dont il a acquis une connaissance encyclopédique souvent sollicitée pour la rédaction des liner-notes de nos albums préférés...

- More about Rock Bottom
- Rock Bottom lyrics
- The record

> In Conversation

CD' Aujourd'hui



CD' Aujourd'hui - 2003 - Émission diffusée le 3 octobre 2003 sur France 2.
Durée : 1:56
Réalisateur : Fabrice Mercier
Interviewer : Hector Zazou

> In Conversation

Free Will And Testament - BBC 4 - 2003



Robert Wyatt - Free Will And Testament - BBC 4 (2003)
Documentaire de la BBC 4 - Durée : 01:08
Robert Wyatt interprète :
- Sea Song
- Gharbzadegi
- September The Ninth
- Left On Man
- Free Will And Testament

Doing the most to boost Wyatt's profile, however, was BBC4's *Free Will and Testament: The Robert Wyatt Story,* a full-length documentary on the self-confessed woolgatherer. 'As far as I'm concerned,' runs Roberts introductory voiceover, 'I'm dreaming all the time. The only difference is that I come up for daylight and other people the way a whale has to come up for air.' Directed by Mark Kidel, *Free Will and Testament* was an impressive film, celebrating Robert's fifty-year career while allowing its subject to remain entirely honest and self-effacing. […]

Best of all, *Free Will and Testament* found Robert performing, albeit without a live audience. He runs through key works from *Sea Song* to *Free Will and Testament,* with a band that includes Annie Whitehead, Paul Weller and keyboard player Janette Mason. Robert looks surprisingly relaxed during these filmed performances. Cigarette in hand,

peering at the lyrics through reading specs, he clicks his fingers and even manages the occasional smile.

From Different Every Time - The Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt by Marcus O'Dair (Serpent's Tail - 2014)

Five songs from "Free Will and Testament - A Robert Wyatt Story"

> In Conversation

Q & A - Purcell Room

Robert Wyatt - Q & A, Purcell Room, London 15th Oct 2007



"*It's really about the unpredictable mischief of real life - it's sort of chaotic our life. It's about humans and the things we turn to, and looking for fun and stimulus and meaning and stuff*."

Robert Wyatt.

> In Conversation

Tracks

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



Tracks - Arte Documentary - 2007
Durée: 8:21

> In Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE

An interview with Robert Wyatt

Interview Robert Wyatt from Sunny's time now



Robert Wyatt, the drummer and singer of the original *Soft Machine* line-up, evokes the intricate relations between the artistic and the political avant-garde and explains how free jazz radicals like Sunny Murray influenced his own musical development.
Louth, 17 April 2008
From the jazz film *Sunny's time now* by Antoine Prum (2xDVD - Paul Thiltges Distributions/La Bascule)
Duration : 39'

> In Conversation

Music Weekly - The Guardian

Robert Wyatt talks to Rosie Swash - December 5, 2008



Avant-garde hero Robert Wyatt invites Rosie Swash into his beautiful home to talk about his life in music, his denial of vices and how he remains an unclassifiable musician.

>> L'interview sur le site du Guardian

Prog Rock Britannia - BBC4

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Prog Rock Britannia - BBC4 - 2009
Director : Nigel Planer
Duration : 01:26:13

> In Conversation

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Robert Wyatt about creativity - 2009 - Liège (Belgique)



September 17, 2009

Robert Wyatt received the insignia of Doctor Honoris Causa at the University of Liège (Belgium) 17 September 2009. (with Archie Shepp, Anthony Braxton, Arvo Pärt, Dick Annegarn, Frederic Rzewski and the late Henri Posseur).

The Muses Within

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



The Muses Within - **for the Ghosts Within** - 2010 (26mn)
Réalisateur : Tali Atzmon

> In Conversation

Jazza festival 2010

Robert Wyatt talks to Gilad Atzmon



A l'occasion du Jazza Music Festival à la Scala (Londres) les 12 et 13 octobre 2010, Robert Wyatt parle à Gilad Atzmon de la culture de la résistance et de son soutien au peuple palestinien.
Durée : 5:46

Programme du Jazza Festival :

JAZZA FESTIVAL 2010 The Site Is Up & Running

September 22, 2010 / Gilad Atzmon

www.jazzaproductions.squarespace.com

Please spread the message around...

'For the musicians who support the long suffering people of Palestine, silence is simply not an option' Robert Wyatt, 2010

JAZZA Festival 2010 @ the Scala in Kings Cross, London on the 12th & 13th October. The event marks the official launch of the **much anticipated Wyatt/ Atzmon /Stephen's** new album 'For the Ghost's Within.' (Domino Records) which is performed on both evenings by the Orient House Ensemble, the Sigimos Strings Quartet and the amazing Cleveland Watkiss on vocals. Also performing - Mercury nominated folk phenomenons: **the Unthanks** sisters, **Seb Rochford**, Alex Garnett, Pete King, Oren Marshall, Palestinian hip hop from Stormtrap & DJ Eren, troubadour Rory McLeod, virtuoso oud-player Nizar Al-Issa and Sarah Gillespie. Jazza Music Festival is organized in association with the Free Palestine Movement, leading advocates for the humanitarian rights of Palestinians and the right of free access throughout Palestine.

Please come and show your solidarity with the Palestinian people under siege in Gaza!

TICEKETS £20. Door 7.30

TUESDAY 12th OCTOBER 2010

BOOK HERE

Nizar Al-Issa

Sarah Gillepsie Quartet

The Unthanks Sisters.

Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen Album launch 'For The Ghosts Within' with the Orient House Ensemble,

Sigamos Strings & Cleveland Watkiss – vocals.

WEDNESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2010

BOOK HERE

Shathayah (Ramallah Underground)

Rory McCloud

Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen Album launch 'For The Ghosts Within' with the Orient House Ensemble,

Sigamos Strings & Cleveland Watkiss – vocals.

> In Conversation

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Off The Page

Robert Wyatt at the Off The Page Festival 2011



Robert Wyatt talks to Tony Herrington about his favourite music as part of the Off The Page festival 2011, which took place 11 - 13 February 2011 at The Playhouse, Whitstable.
Off The Page is co-produced and co-curated by Sound and Music and The Wire magazine.

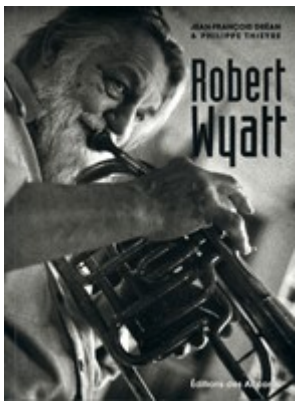
> In Conversation

Robert Wyatt, un musicien et ses sortilèges

Philippe Thieyre - 1er avril 2011
LES VENDREDIS DE LA MUSIQUE
Robert Wyatt, le sorcier et ses sortilèges

0:00 / 59:32

LE SORCIER ET SES SORTILEGES
[55 Mo]



Robert Wyatt avec Philippe Thieyre pour son livre « Robert Wyatt » paru aux éditions des Accords (photographies Jean-François Drean).

Programmation musicale
* Générique « Les Vendredis De la Musique » (L.V.D.M.) : De & par Igor Baloste *Secret love par Doris Day. Oeuvre de Fain Sammy & Webster Paul Francis. Label LIVING ERA, réf. 5533
* Sea Song (Wyatt) sur l'album « Rock Bottom » de 1974. Label Virgin
* Extrait : Chet Baker, Nat King Cole et Art Tatum
* Old Europe (Benge/Wyatt) sur l'album "Cuckooland" de 2003. Label Rykodisc
* Dada Was Here (Hopper et Wyatt) par Soft Machine sur l'album « Soft Machine II » de 1969. Label Barclay/ABC
* I'm A Believer (Neil Diamond) de 1974 sous le label Virgin. Ce single est présent notamment sur la compilation « Going Back a Bit : A Little History of Robert Wyatt » paru chez Virgin en 1994.
* At Last I Am Free (Edwards/Rogers) sur l'album « The Ghosts Within » de 2010. Label Domino
* The Verb (Wyatt) sur l'album « Solar Flares Burn For You » de 2003. Label Cuneiform.
* Générique « Les Vendredis De la Musique » (L.V.D.M.) : De & par Igor Baloste * « Oh I wish » de & par Olivier Leroy dans l'album « Contreo ». Label Caravan production.

Plus d'infos sur le livre

Robert and Alfie - Domino Radio

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



A most pleasant afternoon was spent musing on some of robert's favourite jazz and pop tracks, and smoking A LOT of cigarettes at Robert and Alfie's lovely cottage in deepest Lincolnshire.

Tune in to hear a completely unedited, intimate and highly revealing recording of all the chat - live and direct from the wyatt's front room.

Originally aired 11/06/11.

Playing tracks by Thelonious Monk, Monica Vasconcelos, Sonny Rollins and Mingus.

> In Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE

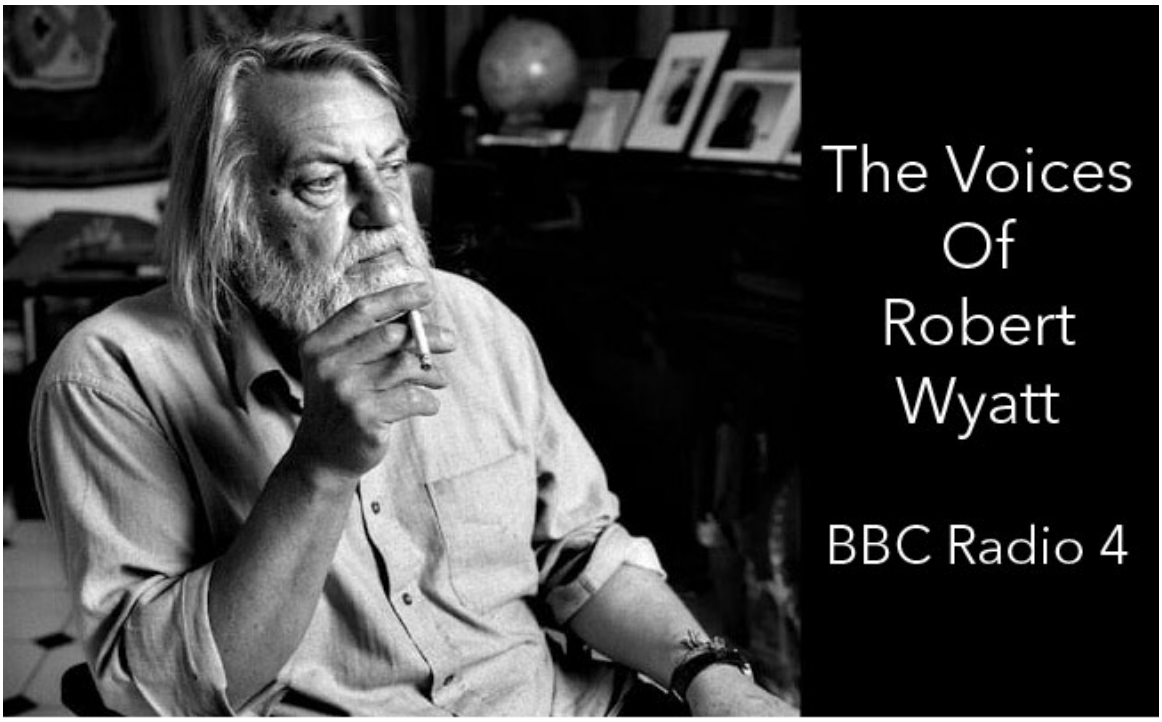
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The Voices Of Robert Wyatt

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



0:00 / 27:43

Broadcast 2nd October 2012 on BBC Radio 4
Produced by Alan Hall
Duration: 27'43"
Robert Wyatt has one of the most instantly recognisable voices of the last fifty years - famously heard on Elvis Costello's reaction to the Falklands War, 'Shipbuilding'. Wyatt's musical identity and the causes he gives voice to are intricately entwined, as can be heard in this profile of the man and his engagement with matters artistic, political and human.

> In Conversation

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Going Underground

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



Extract from "Going Underground - Paul McCartney, The Beatles and the UK Counter-culture" (2013) with an interview with Robert Wyatt and rare archive footage.
Duration : 04:09

> In Conversation

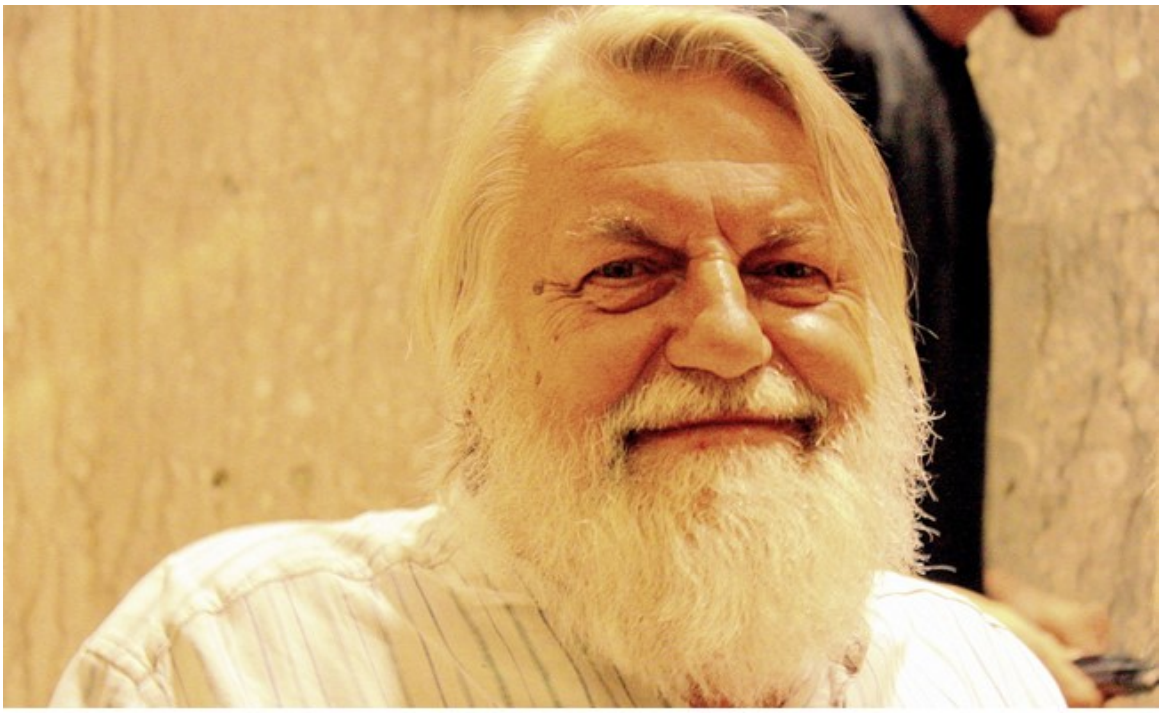
ABÉCÉDAIRE

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Robert Wyatt, psychédélisme et expérimentations soniques

ABÉCÉDAIRE

> In Conversation



0:00 / 6:00

France Musique - 18 novembre 2014

A bientôt 70 ans, Robert Wyatt est dans l'actualité, d'abord parce que le psychédélisme et les expérimentations soniques n'auront jamais été aussi présentes dans le monde de la pop, et qu'il en est un des pionniers.

> In Conversation

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<

Archie Shepp



Archie Shepp introduced by Robert Wyatt
2012.
Durée : 2'20''
Robert Wyatt pays tribute to jazz musician Archie Shepp, both of whom contributed to Jean Pierre Muller's exhibition 7 x 7th Street at Summerhall. On 1st August 2012 Archie performed to a packed audience in Summerhall's Dissection Room.

> In Conversation

Off The Page 2014: An Audience with Robert Wyatt

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Photo: Paul Samuel White

Robert Wyatt in conversation with Marcus O'Dair, opening The Wire's 2014 literary festival for sound and music.

This September 2014, Serpents Tail published Different Every Time: The Authorised Biography Of Robert Wyatt, for which Wyatt collaborated closely with the author and broadcaster Marcus O'Dair. To mark the publication of the book, for Off The Page's opening event Robert Wyatt talked to Marcus O'Dair about some of the most significant moments and episodes in his half a century of music making. The discussion will be prompted by a selection of tracks from a new anthology of Wyatt's music, as well as previously unseen photos taken from the biography.
The talk took place on Friday 26 September, 8pm–10pm, and was followed by an audience question and answer session.
The fourth edition of Off The Page, The Wire's literary festival for sound and music, took place at Bristol's Arnolfini, 26–28 September, and was coproduced by The Wire, Arnolfini and Qu Junktions. Audio recording by Gary Fawle at Events in Sound.

A video excerpt of the event :



> In Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Robert Wyatt inspire les frenchies

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation





France Musique la nuit... Vibrato Épisode du dimanche 11 janvier 2015.
Robert Wyatt inspire les frenchies... que sont Daniel Yvinec ou bien encore Pascal Maupeu.
Par Benjamin Hertz

Extraits de l'album « Around Robert Wyatt»
°°° The Song (Blegvad / Grease) *Robert Wyatt : voix Matthieu Metzger : solo*
°°° Alifib (Wyatt) *Rokia Traoré : voix Rémi Dumoulin : saxophone, clarinette (solo)*
°°° Kew Rhone (Blegvad / Grease) *Robert Wyatt : voix Yoann Serra : solo **
°°° Alliance * (R. Wyatt) *Camille : voix Vincent Lafont : solo*
°°° Just as You Are (Benge / Wyatt) *Yael Naïm : voix Guillaume Poncelet : solo*

Orchestre National de Jazz :
Eve Risser : piano, piano préparé, flûte
Vincent Lafont : Claviers, piano, electronics
Antonin Tri Hoang : saxophone alto, clarinette, clarinette basse, piano
Matthieu Metzger : saxophones alto, soprano et MIDI, trombone
Rémi Dumoulin : saxophone ténor, clarinette, clarinette basse

Jocelyn Miennel : piccolo, flûte, flûte basse, electronics
Guillaume Poncelet : trompette, buggle, claviers
Pierre Perchaud : guitare, guitare électrique, banjo
Sylvain Daniel : basse électrique
Yoann Serra : batterie
Direction artistique : Daniel Yvinec
BEE JAZZ BEE 042

Extrait de l'album « Mop Meuchi ine plays Robert Wyatt»
°°° I'm a Believer (N. Diamond)
°°° Anachronist * (A. Benge / R. Wyatt)
°°° Five Black Notes and One White Note * (J. Offenbach / R. Wyatt)
°°° Muddy Mouse (F. Frith / R. Wyatt)

Pascal Maupeu : guitare, banjo
Jean-Baptiste Réhault : saxophone baryton, accordéon, saxhorn alto
Hugues Vincent : violoncelle
Cédric Piromalli : piano, Fender Rhodes, Korg MS20
Nicolas Le Moullec : basse électrique, voix
Bertrand Hurault : batterie, électronique
LE CHANT DU MONDE 274 1869

> In Conversation

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Psychedelic Britannia

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> In Conversation



Two extracts from "Psychedelic Britannia" (2015) with Robert Wyatt and Soft Machine archive footage.
Director : Sam Bridger
Duration : 04:58

> In Conversation

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Robert Wyatt, Live and In Conversation

Gavin Esler In Conversation with Robert Wyatt
With music performed by Soupsongs
April 4, 2016 - University of Kent

The Chancellor of the University of Kent, Gavin Esler, invites you to join an evening of conversation with a leading public figure in a relaxed, informal format.

Robert Wyatt, legend of the Canterbury Scene, was the sixth and final guest of the 2015/16 series of Chancellor's conversations.

After welcoming Robert Wyatt to the University, Gavin Esler introduced Soupsongs who performed Robert Wyatt's songs throughout the evening.



Soupsongs

- Annie Whitehead - trombone, vocals
- Jennifer Maidman - lead vocals, guitar
- Sarah Jane Morris - lead vocals

- Cristina Dona - lead vocals
- Brian Hopper - saxophones
- Mark Lockheart - saxophones
- Tim Harries - bass
- Janette Mason - keys
- Liam Genockey - drums

> In Conversation

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UFO Club

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Robert Wyatt played the UFO Club with the Soft Machine
Stories from inside the British Music scene.
2016 - rockhistory.co.uk
Durée : 3:04

> In Conversation

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Chatting with Robert and Alfie

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



I chat with Robert Wyatt and Alfreda Benge about their time in Louth, his music, her lyrics, and some other related stuff.

Dave Larder - October 2017

"This is not really an interview, it's more of a chat mainly because (1) Robert can talk for hours and (2) I don't claim to be any sort of interviewer. Also, due to my technical inability, the songs that we talk about are not chronologically linked throughout the talking. Instead, I have published a play list – and listeners can choose how and when they listen to the songs.

There are perhaps some things that come up that are unfamiliar, even to Robert's most avid fans. At one point, Alfie is talking about "The Fitties" which refers to Humberstone Fitties in North East Lincolnshire. The Fitties is a chalet park, and at one point, Robert and Alfie owned a chalet there, and sometimes, that is where they went to be creative – or just to get away for a while. In 1996 the area was declared a conservation area following requests from the tenants, although in reality, Alfie just about saved it on her own.

Another discussion sees Robert and Alfie giving their own, individual interpretations of 'Shleep' and perhaps for the first time in a recorded conversation, Alfie voices her personal insight into "Just as you Are" and "Attic" whilst Robert explains the link to his dad in "You You".

Towards the end of this chat, we briefly discuss the "local" Arts scene in Louth, and Robert's support to both musicians and artists in the town.

Finally, I can say that for once, the interviewer was easily more struck by "stagefright" than the interviewee. I just hope this 'raw' insight provides another perspective to the "Duchess" and "Old Rottenhat" and their incredible journey together. "

Play List

- Dondestan: Costa, Shrinkrap
- Shleep: Heaps of Sheeps, The Duchess
- Cuckooland: Old Europe, Forest
- Comicopera: You You, Out of the Blue

Alifib – Obviously NOT from the Louth "era" – but included because this version is SO moving!

Wyatt/ Atzmon/ Stephen: The Ghost Within(Roz Stephens-strings/ Tali Atzmon-voice/ Gilad Atzmon- arrangement + clarinet/ Yaron Stavi – bass/Wyatt-backing voice. [Lyrics A. Benge)

David Gilmour (feat. Robert Wyatt): Then I close my eyes

The four Wyatt albums written and recorded since being in Louth are:

- Dondestan (1991) Rough Trade – Recorded: February 1991; Chapel Studios, South Thoresby, Lincolnshire

- Shleep (1997) Hannibal – Recorded: 1996-1997 at Phil Manzanera's Gallery Studio, Chertsey

- Cuckooland (2003) Hannibal

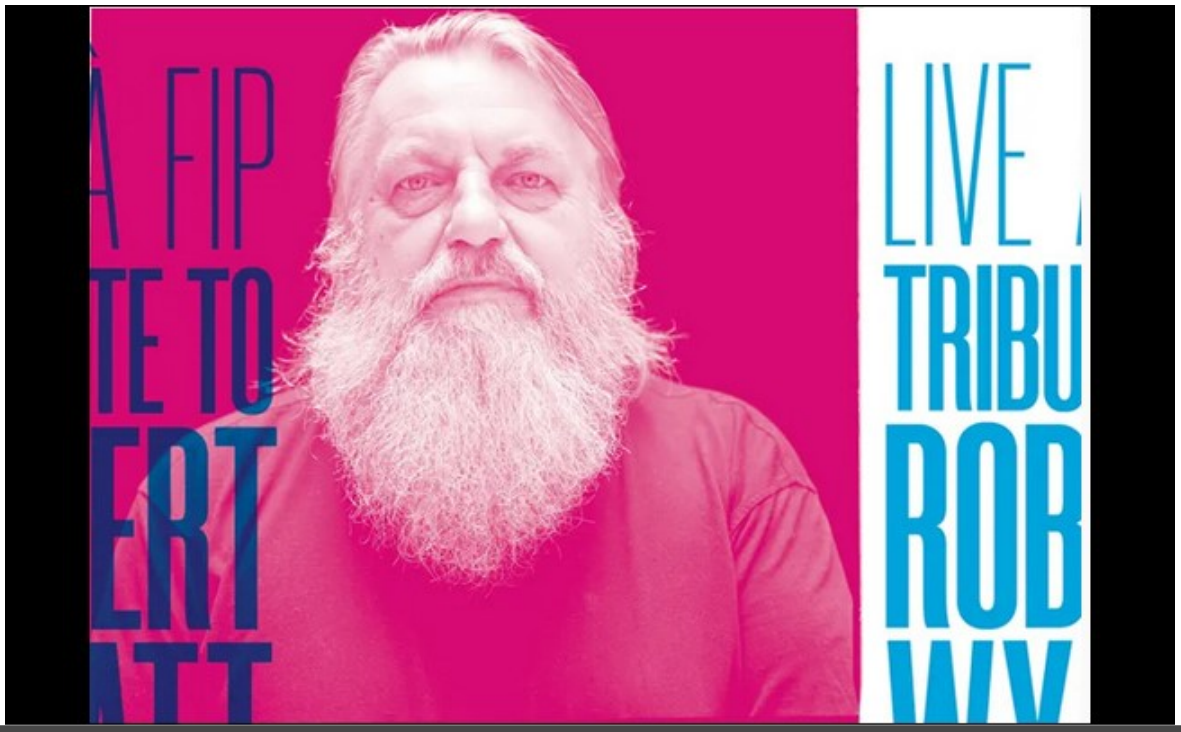
- Comicopera 2007 Domino – Recorded in Wyatt's house and Manzanera's recording studio, Queens Park

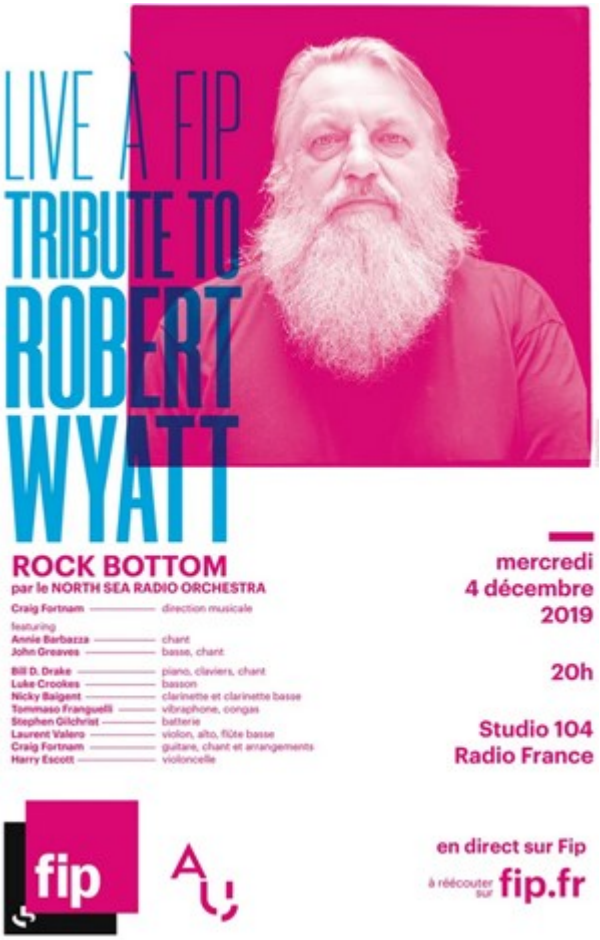
- Re-mastered and re-released as "Dondestan Revisited" (1998)

>> The interview on the LAAMB website

Robert Wyatt interviewed by John Greaves

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation





Robert Wyatt a invité chez lui John Greaves et FIP pour une interview diffusée en décembre 2019, juste avant le concert Live du North Sea Radio Orchestra à la Maison de la Radio (Paris) que l'on peut écouter ici.

> In Conversation

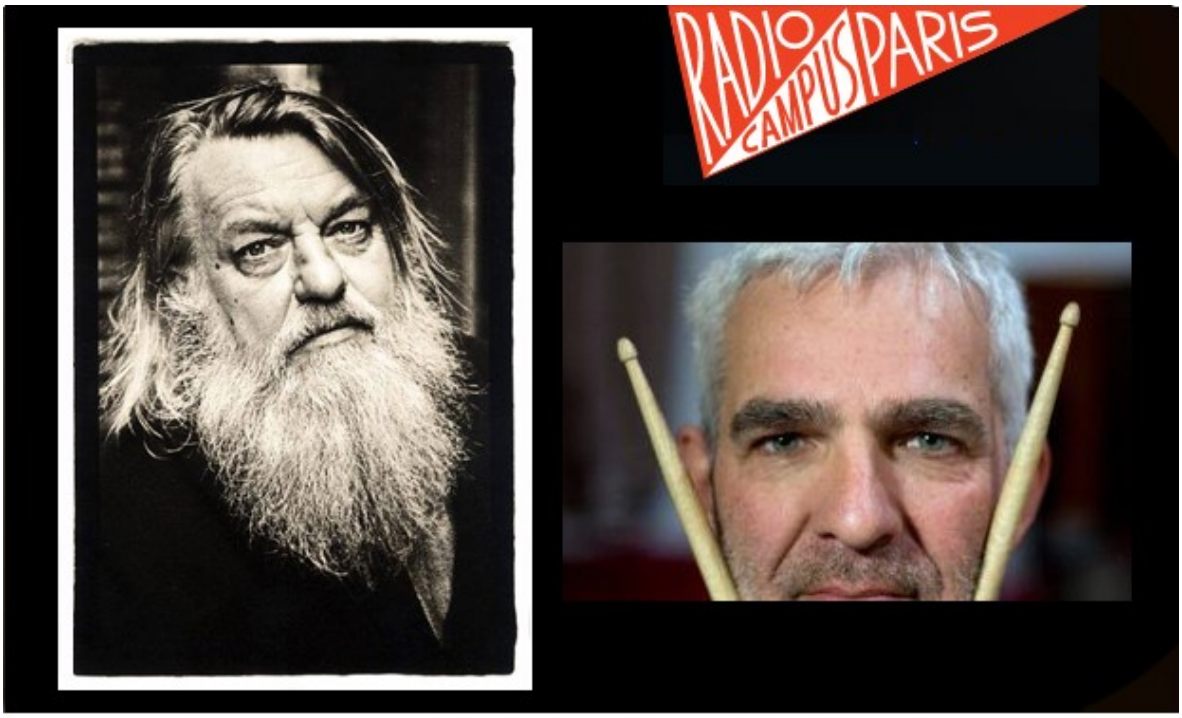
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Robert Wyatt v/s Bruno Tocanne

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Robert Wyatt v/s Bruno Tocanne - **Radio Campus Paris** - **28 janvier 2019**

"En octobre 2017 le batteur Bruno Tocanne a publié l'album Sea Song(e)s dont l'inspiration de départ a été « Rock Bottom » disque majeur du musicien anglais Robert Wyatt autant que page essentielle de l'histoire du rock en particulier et de la musique en général. Figure incontournable, Robert Wyatt qui n'a jamais voulu devenir à part entière un musicien de jazz inspire pour autant jusque à ce territoire.

Ce soir nous recevons donc Bruno Tocanne et le journaliste et écrivain Aymeric Leroy pour cerner un peu mieux à la fois la singularité artistique de Robert Wyatt et la démarche de l'album Sea Song(e)s qui ne se veut pas être un hommage direct mais une inspiration libre partant du musicien britannique.
Hasard ou clin d'oeil du destin, cette émission a lieu le jour de l'anniversaire de Robert Wyatt."

Liste des morceaux diffusés :

- Bruno Tocanne - Nuit désarmée
- Robert Wyatt - Moon in June
- Robert Wyatt - To Nick Everyone/To Caravan And Brother Jim
- Bruno Tocanne - Du clair au sombre
- Robert Wyatt - Sea Song
- Robert Wyatt - Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
- Bruno Tocanne - Sea dance
- Clear Frame - Paperweight
- Happy End - Turn Things Upside Down
- Bruno Tocanne - Bruno Rubato

Tous les morceaux de Bruno Tocanne sont extraits de Sea Song(e)s à l'exception de "Bruno Rubato"composé par Bruno Tocanne et Sophia Domanich et publié sur l'album" In A Suggestive Way" (Instant Musics Records).

Participants : Aymeric Leroy journaliste et écrivain et Bruno Tocanne musicien.
Emission proposée par Olivier Delaporte réalisée par Adel Ittel avec les chroniques de Agathe Boschel et Pierre Tenne.
Durée : 2h 02

> In Conversation

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Robert Wyatt and Eddie Van Halen - Sun 11 Oct 2020

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



The Music Show with Andrew Ford on ABC Radio National

Eddie Van Halen changed rock music via the keyboard, blues and tinkering with his guitars, in an attempt to strip the self-importance out of prog-rock. Ken Murray is Associate Professor in Guitar at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and has followed Eddie for decades. He deconstructs this musician's style including that two-handed tapping technique.

Robert Wyatt was the drummer with UK band Soft Machine back in the 1960's. He also has one of the most singular singing voices in rock music. Elvis Costello and Clive Langer wrote Shipbuilding for that voice. Robert Wyatt's Greatest Misses, a compilation spanning his decades-long career has just been released along with a book Side by Side, co-written with his wife Alfie Benge. In 1973 Robert Wyatt fell from a window and became paralysed from the waist down, though it didn't stop his drumming or songwriting. Andrew Ford spoke to this gently spoken, modest musician from his home in Lincolnshire in 2011 and here it is again.

And The Maes Elsie and Maggie Rigby with their Body & Soul Read Ken Murray's article on Eddie Van Halen at The Conversation.

Duration: 55min 47sec
Broadcast: Sun 11 Oct 2020, 11:05am.

Music heard in the Eddie Van Halen interview
- Eruption

- Spanish Fly
- Unchained
- Glad That It's Over

Music heard in the Robert Wyatt interview
- Shipbuilding
- I’m A Believer
- Pigs... (In There)
- Lullaby for Hamza

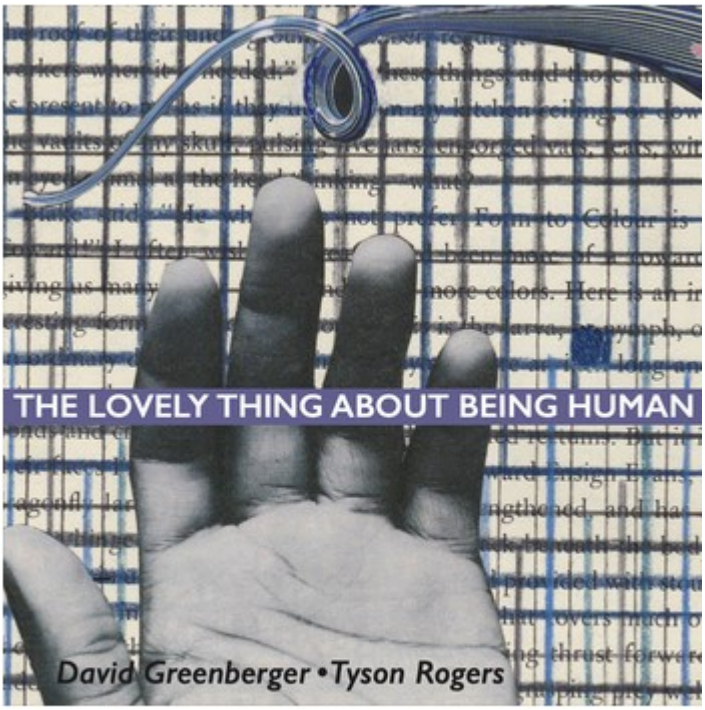
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The Lovely Thing About Being Human



0:00 / 1:42

David Greenberger & Tyson Rogers - Text based on a conversation with Robert Wyatt
2020

Cover image uses a detail from "The Desire Line" by Barbara Price, 2019 (pencil, ink, and collage on book page) style including that two-handed tapping technique.

"Here's a rather mammoth project I did with Tyson Rogers during the first six months of relative isolation in 2020. It's monologues and music - all very short, about a minute each, and we added a new one every two or three days. All of the text I developed from my conversations with friends and family. #33 ("The Lovely Thing About Being Human") is based on my conversation with Robert Wyatt."
David Greenberger
https://davidgreenberger.bandcamp.com/

Fanny Michaëlis raconte "Alifib" et "Alife"



0:00 / 4:51

Fanny Michaëlis raconte "Alifib" et "Alife"

16 mars 2022.

Illustratrice, autrice de BD, mais aussi batteuse et chanteuse du groupe Fatherkid, **Fanny Michaëlis** préside le jury du 49e Festival d'Angoulême. Au micro de Frédéric Pommier, elle évoque deux titres de l'Anglais Robert Wyatt, "Alifib" et "Alife", qu'elle a découverts en commençant la bande dessinée.

Eloge de Robert Wyatt - A Very Good Trip

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



0:00 / 54:58

Eloge de Robert Wyatt
[Very Good Trip de Michka Assayas - 20 juin 2024]

Playlist

- Robert Wyatt - « Sea Song » album « Rock Bottom »
- The Soft Machine - « Dedicated to You, But You Weren't Listening » album « The Soft Machine Volume Two »
- Matching Mole - « O Caroline » album « Matching Mole »
- Matching Mole - « Signed Curtain » album « Matching Mole »
- Robert Wyatt - « Memories » album « EPs »
- Robert Wyatt - « Shipbuilding - Remastered in 1998 » album « EPs
- Robert Wyatt - « At Last I Am Free » album « Nothing Can Stop Us »
- Robert Wyatt - « Caimanera » album « Nothing Can Stop Us »
- Robert Wyatt - « The Age of Self » album « Different Every Time »
- Robert Wyatt
- Robert Wyatt - « Free Will and Testament » album « Shleep »
- Robert Wyatt - « Insensatez » album « Cuckooland »



Ce soir, nous avons rendez-vous avec une des voix les plus singulières et touchantes, j'espère que vous serez de mon avis, de ces soixante dernières années.

« Sea Song », la chanson de la mer, c'était, il y a cinquante ans tout juste, l'entrée en matière d'un album qui a été, j'en ai un souvenir très vivant, un des plus attendus d'une petite communauté d'auditeurs à laquelle, malgré mon jeune âge, quinze-seize ans, j'étais très fier d'appartenir. Un album signé par un musicien anglais du nom de Robert Wyatt, et intitulé Rock Bottom et publié, ainsi, à l'été 1974. La communauté dont je vous parle vénérait ce qu'on appelait entre nous la musique underground, qui venait

d’Angleterre mais pas seulement. D’Allemagne aussi, on se passionnait pour des groupes qui avaient pour nom Amon Duul Zwei, Amon Duul Deux, on se prêtait, enfin quelques-uns dans mon lycée de la vallée de Chevreuse, des albums de Tangerine Dream ou de Popol Vüh. En France, il y avait un groupe qui s’appelait Gong, qui me fascinait, un groupe formé par un beatnik australien très farfelu du nom de Daevid Allen avec des musiciens français qui habitaient en communauté dans l’Yonne. Pour vous donner une idée de l’importance de ce courant, toutes ces musiques excentriques nous paraissaient alors bien plus importantes que Led Zeppelin ou même les Rolling Stones, que certains purs et durs, au rang desquels je prétendais me compter, considéraient comme, entre guillemets, commerciaux.

Et dans cette constellation, eh bien Rober Wyatt était une sorte de phare. Il s’était fait connaître comme batteur au sein d’un groupe qui s’appelait The Soft Machine, on disait simplement Soft Machine, d’après le titre d’un roman de l’écrivain beatnik américain William Burroughs que personne n’avait lu, évidemment, mais ça faisait bien de le savoir. J’avais pu découvrir Wyatt dans une émission destinée aux jeunes sur le gros téléviseur noir et blanc familial, c’était le tout début des années 70, à l’époque les images étaient très rares, surtout de cette musique-là, et j’avais été captivé. Il jouait torse nu, je crois bien, et sursautait sans cesse sur son tabouret, secouant sa longue tignasse. On voyait à peine sa tête, tellement il se penchait et même se couchait sur son instrument. On avait l’impression qu’il avait bien plus que deux bras, c’était comme une pieuvre humaine s’agitant au cœur d’une batterie. En fait, c’est simple : je voulais être lui. Wyatt était, à mes yeux, une sorte de copain idéal, génial. Il faisait de plus un truc que ne font pas généralement les batteurs. Il avait, fixé au milieu de sa batterie, un micro pour sa voix, il chantait des vocalises bizarres, d’une voix d’enfant qui n’avait pas mué, on ne savait pas s’il riait ou s’il pleurait, c’était entre les deux. Fascinant.

Wyatt s’est senti marginalisé au sein de Soft Machine, le claviers Mike Ratledge ayant apparemment pris ombrage de son charisme. Il est donc parti former son propre groupe, Matching Mole, la Taupe qui a trouvé sa pareille, un jeu de mots sur la traduction française de Soft Machine, la machine molle, bien sûr. C’était en 1971. Il a enregistré deux albums sous ce nom. Comment décrire sa musique ? Une sorte de jazz-rock psychédélique, très libre, la musique de Jimi Hendrix, qui venait de disparaître, était encore très présente, tout comme celle de Frank Zappa, autre héros de la musique underground, au centre de tout ce mouvement. Cela dit, ce qui distinguait Robert Wyatt, c’était sa voix et cette façon tout à fait unique de l’utiliser, comme un instrument de musique de sa propre invention. C’était déjà le cas au sein de Soft Machine, comme en témoigne cette chanson mémorable, un joyau extrait du deuxième album du groupe, paru à la fin de l’année 1969. Robert Wyatt avec Soft Machine, la chanson s’appelle « Dedicated to You, But You Weren’t Listening ».

Pour en savoir plus, écoutez l'émission...

> In Conversation

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Le rêve aquatique de Robert Wyatt

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> In Conversation

france musique

Sea song : le rêve aquatique de Robert Wyatt

Mardi 9 avril 2024

Il y a 50 ans, en 1974, le batteur de Soft Machine et de Matching Mole sortait un ovni musical intitulé Rock Bottom. Un chef-d'œuvre qui s'ouvre sur la chanson Sea Song, porte d'entrée du disque et plongeon vers une renaissance pour Robert Wyatt

Tout doucement, se laisser glisser, submerger par des accords qui roulent de demi-tons en demi-tons, égrainés par un piano ainsi qu'un synthétiseur au timbre brumeux et fragile, comme la voix de Robert Wyatt…

0:00 / 5:01

LE REVE AQUATIQUE DE ROBERT WYATT



Retour de plage ... Robert Wyatt, un ange à la table

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



Crédits photo : ©Getty - BIPS

0:00 / 1:57:55

"Personnalité totalement singulière de la pop anglaise, Robert Wyatt, venu du jazz et du psychédélisme, a su créer un monde à lui, poétique et parfois étrange, que nous allons traverser des années 1960 à aujourd'hui ... "
[Thierry Jousse - 18 juillet 2024]

avec Robert Wyatt - Artiste & Thierry Jousse- Producteur.

Playlist

The Soft Machine - Save yourself
The Soft Machine - As long as he lies perfectly still
The Soft Machine - Dedicated to you but you weren't listening
Kevin Ayers - Song for insane times
Kevin Ayers And The Whole World - May I ?
Syd Barrett - Terrapin
Pink Floyd - The gnome
Pink Floyd - Crying song
Matching Mole - Instant pussy
Matching Mole - Oh! Caroline
Matching Mole - God song
Caravan - Love song with flute
Camel - Supertwister
Robert Wyatt - Sea Song
Michael Mantler - The sinking spell
Brian Eno - Through hollow lands (for Harold Budd)
Robert Wyatt - At last I am free
Robert Wyatt - Sonia
Chris Mac Gregor - Andromeda
Robert Wyatt - Alliance
Robert Wyatt - Shrinkrap
Robert Wyatt - Old Europe
Robert Wyatt - What's New

Pascal Comelade - September Song
Steve Nieve - La plus jolie langue (feat. Muriel Todori and Robert Wyatt)

Éloge de Kevin Ayers, poète de l'âge psychédélique

ABÉCÉDAIRE
> In Conversation



5 décembre 2024 - A Very Good Trip, une émission de Michel Assayas et Stéphane Ranxin.

Ce soir, une voix unique, dans tous les sens du terme, celle de Kevin Ayers.

Une chanson remontée du fond des âges, 1973, écrite et interprétée par un musicien anglais qui nous a quittés il y a plus de dix ans. Il avait un lien très étroit avec la France, j'en parlerai et vous l'entendrez, d'ailleurs. Il s'appelait Kevin Ayers a été, je peux en témoigner, un des compagnons de mon adolescence. Sa voix basse, sa douceur, sa fantaisie lunaire me parlaient. J'ai découvert en particulier un de ses disques, un album qui s'appelait Bananamour, alors que j'avais quatorze ans, en 1973. Un album qui a été pour moi un de ces amis secrets qui me consolaient de tout. C'est de Bananamour que je tire la chanson que vous venez d'entendre, « Shouting in a Bucket Blues », le blues de l'homme qui gueule dans un seau. Et qui commençait par ces paroles qui sonnaient comme une confidence au ton nonchalant : parfois je suis tellement bourré, je me sens au fond du trou, je n'ai nulle part où aller, je pense à tes bras amoureux où je voudrais me réfugier. Je ne comprenais pas tout ce qu'il racontait mais il y avait dans cette chanson des paroles qui me sont restées : je chante pour tous ceux qui sentent qu'il n'y a pas d'issue, alors peut-être que si vous criez tous, quelqu'un va vous entendre. Et puis aussi : je ne vais pas dire que je t'aime parce que ce serait mentir, tout ce que je peux dire c'est que j'essaye et tu le sais bien. Tout ça était chanté d'une voix qui n'avait rien de pesant et, dans sa légèreté et sa nonchalance même, avait le pouvoir de vois consoler de tout. De vous assurer, alors que vous étiez emmêlés dans vos problèmes d'adolescence, que la vie n'était pas si grave et que, peut-être, rien n'avait vraiment d'importance.

Une nouvelle compilation qui s'appelle All This Crazy Gift of Time, tout ce délirant cadeau du temps, sous-titré The Recordings 1969 1973, les enregistrements de 1969 à 1973, paraît opportunément pour rappeler

ou faire découvrir le talent unique de Kevin Ayers, qui n'a pas pris une ride. Et qui, surtout, ne ressemblait à aucun autre. Il faut souligner quelque chose qu'on a oublié : c'est que, au cours de la première moitié des années 70, Kevin Ayers, qui passait une partie de son temps en France, où il a toujours aimé se réfugier, occupait les premiers plans. Il a été une grande figure de la musique underground, au même titre que Robert Wyatt ou le groupe Gong, auquel il était lié. Gong, créé par un Australien exilé en France, Daevid Allen, rebaptisé Bébert Camembert. Une formation qui unissait des musiciens français et britanniques habitant dans une ferme communautaire, quelque part dans l'Yonne.

Kevin Ayers me fascinait. Déjà, c'est un des premiers musiciens que j'ai vus sur scène, sans doute en 1973, dans une maison des jeunes et de la culture du sud de la région parisienne. Il avait à mes yeux le même prestige que Robert Wyatt, je l'ai dit, mais aussi John Cale, le fondateur du Velvet Underground à New York, ou Brian Eno, qui venait de quitter Roxy Music pour explorer de nouveaux territoires musicaux. John Cale et Eno, deux musiciens avec lesquels Kevin Ayers s'est produit sur scène, en même temps qu'avec la chanteuse allemande Nico, elle aussi une star de l'underground dans ces années-là. Pour un concert exceptionnel qui fut enregistré et diffusé sur disque en 1974. On n'a jamais oublié Kevin Ayers.

Je me rappelle mon agréable surprise il y a quelques années quand, alors que l'équipe technique était en train d'installer le matériel pour le groupe Queens of the Stone Age, passaient des chansons de Kevin Ayers. Intrigué, je suis allé parler avec les gars, en leur demandant comment ils le connaissaient. Ils m'ont répondu que c'était un disquaire, je ne sais plus si c'était quelque part à Los Angeles ou ailleurs, qui le leur avait fait découvrir. Comment oublier cette voix une fois qu'on l'a entendue ?

Michel Assayas

Playlist :

Kevin Ayers
« Shouting in a Bucket Blues » album « Bananamour »
« The Lady Rachel - BBC Radio One's "John Peel's Show" 30/7/74 » album « The Confessions of Doctor Dream and Other Stories » (with Bonus Tracks)
« Girl on a Swing - 2003 Remaster » album « Joy of a Toy »

Kevin Ayers and the Whole World
« Butterfly Dance » album « Shooting at the Moon »
« The Oyster and the Flying Fish » album « Shooting at the Moon »
« Puis-je? - 2003 Remaster » album « Shooting at the Moon »
« Jolie Madame » album « Shooting at the Moon »

Kevin Ayers
« Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes » album « Whatevershebringswesing »
« Oh! Wot a Dream » album « Bananamour »
« Everybody's Sometime and Some People's All the Time Blues » album « The Confessions of Doctor Dream and Other Stories » (with Bonus Tracks)
« After the Show » album « The Confessions of Doctor Dream and Other Stories » (with Bonus Tracks)
« Diminished But Not Finished » album « Sweet Deceiver (with Bonus Tracks) »
« Yes I Do » album « Yes We Have No Mañanas… So Get Your Mañanas Today » (with Bonus Tracks)

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Laurenzo Mattotti sur Robert Wyatt

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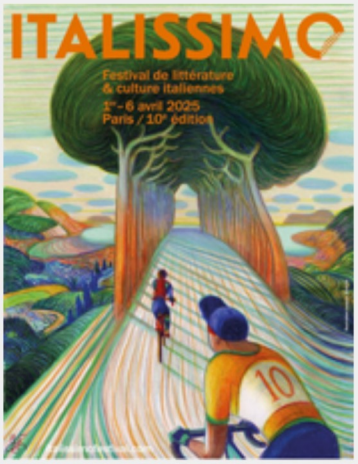
> In Conversation



Entretien avec Lorenzo Mattotti mené par Manuela Corigliano dans le cadre du festival Italissimo à Paris le 28 avril 2025.

Dans cet extrait, Laurenzo Mattotti évoque la personnalité et la musique de Robert Wyatt qui font écho à ses propres émotions et certains de ses travaux les plus personnels.

Durée : 9:32



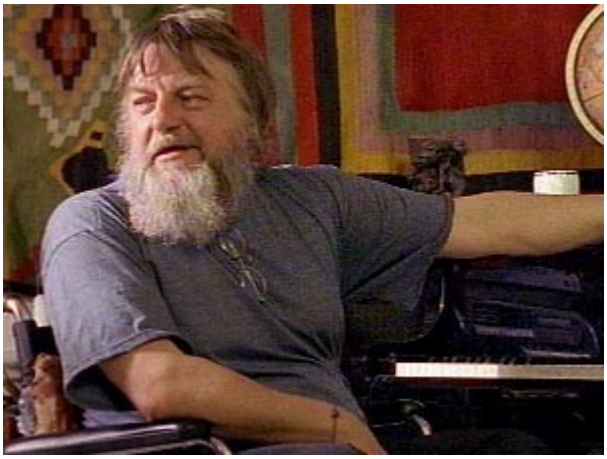
Jazz and Max Roach



L'**Experience Music Project** est un musée de la musique situé à Seattle (USA) totalement dédié aux musiques populaires du 20ème siècle. C'est aussi un site internet très documenté - empsfm.org *(lien cassé en 2016)* - qui diffuse régulièrement de nombreux documents sur les musiques, les musiciens et les pratiques instrumentales.

L'EMP diffuse deux vidéos de Robert Wyatt dans ses archives: **Jazz et Max Roach** - ci-dessous - et **How The Band Works**.

The Player: Robert Wyatt is a singer-songwriter and former drummer for the British art rock band the Soft Machine.



Well I started playing by banging rolled up copies of what would have been in those days the The New Statesman, probably. Rolled up copies of The New Statesman along with a record my big brother had brought home which was Jazz at Massey Hall in 1953. Recorded in 1953, it was later, of course, when I heard it. And the drummer was Max Roach, and I just couldn't believe the speed of thought that was going on. It was like listening to a whole load of thirty three and a third speed LP being played at 78. I just couldn't believe anybody could think that fast, and it was thrilling to me because I realized that they were following an exact train of thought, mathematically decipherable train of thought, but at that speed and with that sense of spontaneous reaction to the moment, it was incredibly exciting to me, and so I would sit there at the table with my rolled up New Statesmans trying to go flip flap, flip flap, flip flap, flip flap, flip flap, flip flap, flip flap, flip flap, along with "Wee" or "Hot House," or whatever, Tadd Dameron tunes, Dizzy Gillespie tunes, and that's my first memory with playing along with Max Roach on drums.

Le Bleu Le Bleu

ABÉCÉDAIRE

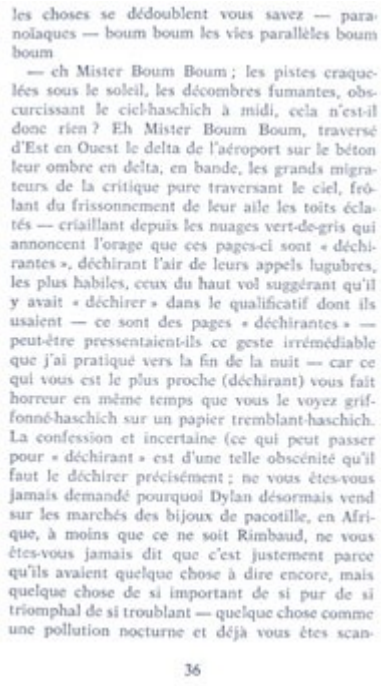


> Zoom

Le Bleu Le Bleu paraît en 1971 chez Christian Bourgois. Dédié à Viva, Hopper, Ratledge et Wyatt, il comporte un poème de 50 pages - Soft Power - évoquant la musique et les musiciens de Soft Machine. Dans la première partie de l'ouvrage, Save Yourself et Moon In June sont fréquemment cités.

Son auteur, Dashiell Hedayat est alors une figure de "l'underground" parisien. Sous le pseudonyme de Melmoth, il a déjà publié en 1969 un album *La devanture des ivresses* qui n'est pas sans connivence avec les tous premiers Gong. C'est d'ailleurs avec Daevid Allen, Pip Pyle, Gilly Smyth, Didier Malherbe et la voix de Sam Wyatt (le fils de Robert agé de 5 ans), qu'il publiera en 1971 *Obsolete* et son cultissime *Long Song For Zelda*...

En août 70, Melmoth AKA Dahiell Hedayat signait dans le n° 43 de Rock'n'Folk **la critique de *Third*** du Soft Machine qu'il terminait en ces termes : **Je hais les critiques et leur prétention à montrer quand ils dissimulent. Ils n'écouteront pas third. Sur leurs tombes, nous écrirons : "Morts de beauté violente". En avant le SOFT POWER.**



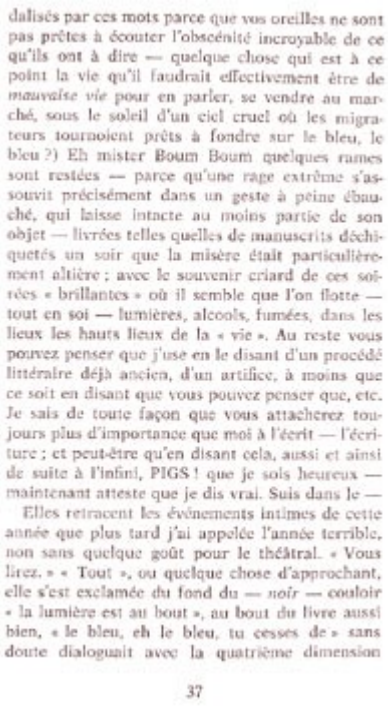
les choses se dédoublent vous savez — paranolaques — boum boum les vies parallèles boum boum

— eh Mister Boum Boum ; les pistes craquelées sous le soleil, les décombres fumantes, obscurcissant le ciel-haschich à midi, cela n'est-il donc rien ? Eh Mister Boum Boum, traversé d'Est en Ouest le delta de l'aéroport sur le béton leur ombre en delta, en bande, les grands migrateurs de la critique pure traversant le ciel, frôlant du frissonnement de leur aile les toits éclatés — criaillant depuis les nuages vert-de-gris qui annoncent l'orage que ces pages-ci sont « déchirantes », déchirant l'air de leurs appels lugubres, les plus habiles, ceux du haut vol suggérant qu'il y avait « déchirer » dans le qualificatif dont ils usaient — ce sont des pages « déchirantes » — peut-être pressentaient-ils ce geste irrémédiable que j'ai pratiqué vers la fin de la nuit — car ce qui vous est le plus proche (déchirant) vous fait horreur en même temps que vous le voyez griffonné-haschich sur un papier tremblant-haschich. La confession et incertaine (ce qui peut passer pour « déchirant » est d'une telle obscénité qu'il faut le déchirer précisément ; ne vous êtes-vous jamais demandé pourquoi Dylan désormais vend sur les marchés des bijoux de pacotille, en Afrique, à moins que ce ne soit Rimbaud, ne vous êtes-vous jamais dit que c'est justement parce qu'ils avaient quelque chose à dire encore, mais quelque chose de si important de si pur de si triomphal de si troublant — quelque chose comme une pollution nocturne et déjà vous êtes scan-

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SOFT POWER....

militant de l'écho
militant d'un solo de Ratledge
d'un journal mural
comme d'un cocktail molotov
militant contemplant sa beauté
à un miroir de ciel crépusculaire
quand
descend
l'apaisement galactique de la nuit
et la voie lactée où boire
militant du lait buvant la nuit
aux vagins fabuleux des femmes
militant au regard lavé d'acide
militant du futur immédiat



dalisés par ces mots parce que vos oreilles ne sont pas prêtes à écouter l'obscénité incroyable de ce qu'ils ont à dire — quelque chose qui est à ce point la vie qu'il faudrait effectivement être de *mauvaise vie* pour en parler, se vendre au marché, sous le soleil d'un ciel cruel où les migrateurs tournoient prêts à fondre sur le bleu, le bleu ?) Eh mister Boum Boum quelques rames sont restées — parce qu'une rage extrême s'assouvit précisément dans un geste à peine ébauché, qui laisse intacte au moins partie de son objet — livrées telles quelles de manuscrits déchiquetés un soir que la misère était particulièrement altière ; avec le souvenir criard de ces soirées « brillantes » où il semble que l'on flotte — tout en soi — lumières, alcools, fumées, dans les lieux les hauts lieux de la « vie ». Au reste vous pouvez penser que j'use en le disant d'un procédé littéraire déjà ancien, d'un artifice, à moins que ce soit en disant que vous pouvez penser que, etc. Je sais de toute façon que vous attacherez toujours plus d'importance que moi à l'écrit — l'écriture ; et peut-être qu'en disant cela, aussi et ainsi de suite à l'infini, PIGS ! que je sois heureux — maintenant atteste que je dis vrai. Suis dans le — Elles retracent les événements intimes de cette année que plus tard j'ai appelée l'année terrible, non sans quelque goût pour le théâtral. « Vous lirez. » « Tout », ou quelque chose d'approchant, elle s'est exclamée du fond du — *noir* — couloir « la lumière est au bout », au bout du livre aussi bien, « le bleu, eh le bleu, tu cesses de » sans doute dialoguait avec la quatrième dimension

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acide et ses couleurs d'éternité, un soir que j'étais Dieu, assis au bord de la lumière, le disjoncteur du fond du couloir, il fit revenir le son — au disque, des profondeurs 27 peut-être puis 29... 31... 32... 33 tours 1/3

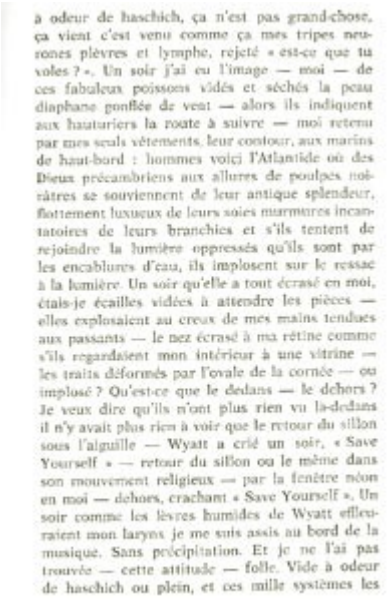
Save yourself

le Soft Machine. A ma suggestion à l'oreille que la réalité n'était qu'un instant dans le voyage Pornarina se mit à rire, « au voyage, donc » chuchoté en toast entre mes deux tympans. Son souffle fit trembler la terre, des pyramides s'écroulèrent, élevées en l'honneur du cactus, les pyramides de cervelles s'étaient déjà fendillées au marché sous le soleil. La lumière de la chambre a dessiné sur le ciel les contours d'un solo d'orgue. Ce n'est pas grand-chose — je veux dire quelque chose comme la découverte d'un écho. Mais un soir j'ai vu par la fenêtre ouverte un solo d'orgue flotter au-dessus des toits de la ville-basse électrique j'entends, la basse. En bande les grands migrateurs de la critique pure traversaient le ciel, frôlant les toits éclatés — criaillant depuis les nuages vert-de-gris qui annonçaient l'orage que c'était de la musique — ou comme de la musique et aux premiers éclairs ils n'entendaient plus les distorsions lysergiques de la *Fender*, et les drums rythmant en bas — mêlés aux cris de la rue « Mou ! Tripes ! », clamé au marché et encore « eh l'enfant Mou est-ce que tu Tripes ? » ou « tu voles ? » je ne sais plus, mon vide

38

militant des bombes de peinture
à écrire
NOW
sous la brume de solo bleu
militant embrassant les chevaux battus
comme fit Nietzsche un soir
un soir
j'ai cessé de me blasphémer
je me suis prosterné à mes genoux
je me suis adoré
enfin
je me suis contemplé
au miroir de ciel crépusculaire
où les militants du soft power
rectifient leur éventuel laisser-aller
je m'y suis trouvé beau
et
mon incroyable démarche de pop star
au haut de boots fauves
!

assez blasphémé assez châtié
je m'étais assez damné
.....
et
si
le paradiso de ce livre
est en vers blancs
c'est qu'au fond de vous
là
justement
gît un ver blanc
luisant de bave
à la nudité obscène
vous pouvez l'appeler



à odeur de haschich, ça n'est pas grand-chose, ça vient c'est venu comme ça mes tripes neurones plèvres et lymphe, rejeté « est-ce que tu voles ? ». Un soir j'ai eu l'image — moi — de ces fabuleux poissons vidés et séchés la peau diaphane gonflée de vent — alors ils indiquent aux hauturiers la route à suivre — moi retenu par mes seuls vêtements, leur contour, aux marins de haut-bord : hommes voici l'Atlantide où des Dieux précambriens aux allures de poulpes noirâtres se souviennent de leur antique splendeur, flottement luxueux de leurs soies murmures incantatoires de leurs branchies et s'ils tentent de rejoindre la lumière oppressés qu'ils sont par les encablures d'eau, ils implosent sur le ressac à la lumière. Un soir qu'elle a tout écrasé en moi, étais-je écailles vidées à attendre les pièces — elles explosaient au creux de mes mains tendues aux passants — le nez écrasé à ma rétine comme s'ils regardaient mon intérieur à une vitrine — les traits déformés par l'ovale de la cornée — ou implosé ? Qu'est-ce que le dedans — le dehors ? Je veux dire qu'ils n'ont plus rien vu là-dedans il n'y avait plus rien à voir que le retour du sillon sous l'aiguille — Wyatt a crié un soir, « Save Yourself » — retour du sillon ou le même dans son mouvement religieux — par la fenêtre néon en moi — dehors, crachant « Save Yourself ». Un soir comme les lèvres humides de Wyatt effleuraient mon larynx je me suis assis au bord de la musique. Sans précipitation. Et je ne l'ai pas trouvée — cette attitude — folle. Vide à odeur de haschich ou plein, et ces mille systèmes les

39

Zoom > 1 2

le moi
j'entends que vous pouvez siffler
il viendra
dût-il tortuer
dans le glacis du lymphe cérébral
et nos défenses que recouvrent
à peine
(leur ivoire)
la pellicule des glaciers intérieurs
il est des besognes les plus viles
des serpentements les plus obscènes
l'autopunition dont il se nourrit
solitaire
...
il serait bon de l'écraser n'est-ce pas
ce serait au couchant
vous auriez pour la circonstance
chaussé vos boots les plus élégants
vos boots fauves par exemple
car c'est du pied qu'il faut le presser
le voir agonir dans une traînée
laiteuse
ses entrailles de foutre-de-dieu
vous prendrez votre temps
il faut que dans le laps
-ombre de la semelle-
la terreur le saisisse
la terreur la plus absolue
il faut qu'en en dernier éclair
de la conscience
il mesure son abjection
et qu'il vous remercie
du châtiment
que vous lui infligez

que ne le faites-vous
?

Un soir saisi de rage
je l'ai électrocuté
aux distorsions lysergiques
de la guitare
ivre de joie
je l'ai vu agoniser
au
mur du fond de la chambre
où j'étais nimbé de néon
sur les deux baffles
du
HI FI
était-ce
SAVE YOURSELF
ou
juste ensuite
le solo de Garcia
s'élevant d'un seul jet sélénique
à l'étoile noire
d'un seul glissement de ses doigts
sur les cordes
?
.....
alors
les lettres d'un néon surnaturel
à l'arête de basalte
d'un promontoire
taillé de prismes
guidées par les hésitations
d'un solo d'orgue
ont écrit
Save Yourself

les lettres
immédiatement substituées
à d'autres lettres
qui étaient leur avers
et
sans doute
par association d'idées
Soft Power

militant d'un solo de Ratledge
d'un journal mural
d'un cocktail mplotov
du lait
de la nuit
militant au regard lavé d'acide
militant du futur immédiat à écrire
PARADISE NOW
militant du pouvoir
mou
souple
élastique
doux
SOFT.

Dashiell HEDAYAT
Le Bleu Le Bleu
Editions Bourgois 1971
livre écrit entre janvier 1968 et juin 1970

Daniel Théron alias Dashiell Hedayat alias Melmoth (alias Jack-Alain Léger alias Paul Smail alias Eve Saint-Roch...) s'est donné la mort le 17 juillet 2013 à Paris.



Dashiell Hedayat dans l'émission mythique de Denise Glaser "Discorama"
(1ère chaîne de la TV française - 30 janvier 1972).
Pour d'obscures raisons, le titre du morceau *Chrysler rose* a été renommé en *Mystère rose*...
Durée: 7:21



TV 1re chaîne

DIMANCHE

13.15 DISCORAMA

Une émission de Denise Glaser
Réalisation de Roland Hollinger

Le chanteur brésilien Deashiell Hedayat, est aussi poète.

Les Tziganes Ivanovitch jouent :

Variations sur l'alouette
Deashiell Hedayat,
chanteur brésilien, interprète,
en compagnie d'un groupe pop :
Le Gong
Mystère
Il a aussi écrit un livre poétique intitulé
Le Bleu, le bleu

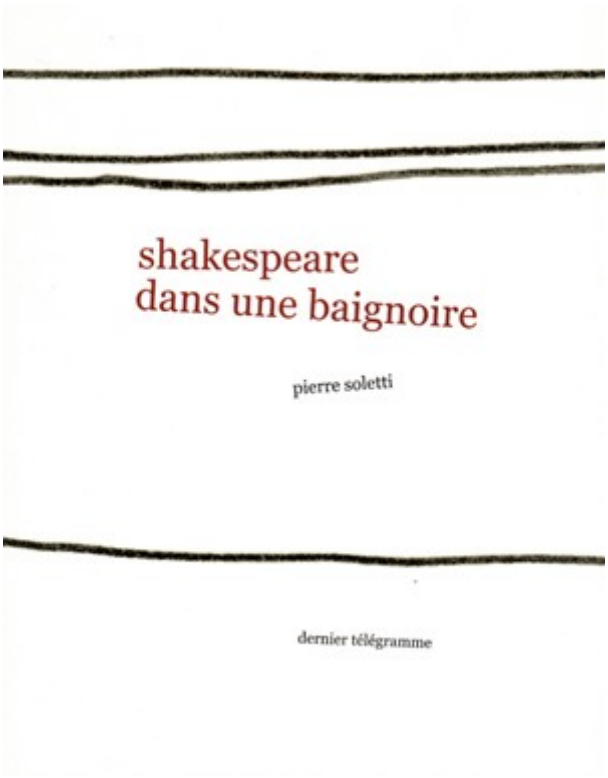
13.45 MONSIEUR CINÉMA

Une émission de Pierre Tchernia
et Jacques Rouland
Collaboration artistique de Ginette Vergne
Conseiller cinématographique :
Jean-Claude Romer

Région du Sud-Est :
M. Kotlarek
rencontre M. Philibert

Légèrement Wyatt

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Les textes de Pierre Soletti sont joyeux, iconoclastes et perturbants.
Qu'il s'agisse de William qui a une vie courte le sait et se dépêche ou de Robert qui lance une poignée d'air sur les voiles, Pierre ne s'interdit rien.

De courts textes ciselés offrent à Robert Wyatt "*des arcs-en-ciels à rallonge où les enfants plongent et ressortent légers comme de la barbe à papa*".

En bonne compagnie de Shakespeare dans une baignoire et de ernest pignon-ernest qui sérigraphie la vie...

Pierre Soletti - shakespeare dans une baignoire - Edition Dernier Télégramme (2022).

Légèrement Wyatt

il rencontre
Robert Graves
à Majorque
Gilli Smyth
Ivor Cutler
ailleurs

Robert Wyatt
vole
au-dessus d'un nid
de coucou
par-dessus la mer

sa musique voyage
nous fait
revenir de loin
d'où combien
ne reviennent pas



le disque
a fini de tourner
sur le plateau
la mer a rangé
ses cheveux
nous voilà
revenus sur terre
sensiblement
différent

MON CHER ROBERT

Sea Song Poem





légèrement cuivré
légèrement timbré
légèrement planant
légèrement songé
totalement génial
ils parlent politique
Shakespeare
est communiste
Robert Wyatt
est poésiquement
de même

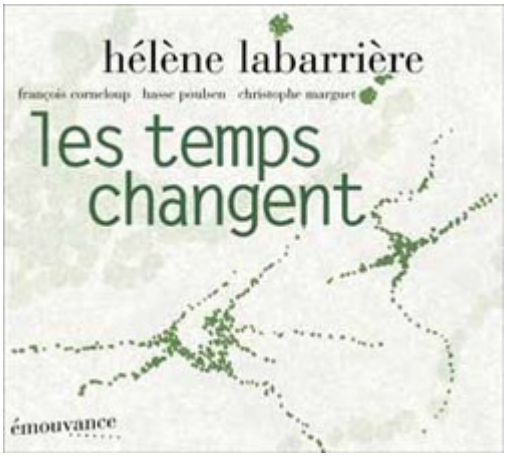
Robert a
un aéroport
permanent
sous chaque
semelle

il nous prête
une aile ou deux
de temps en temps

on plane
ensemble

Les temps changent

ABÉCÉDAIRE



EMOUVANCE (EMV1028)

Hélène Labarrière - contrebasse
François Corneloup - saxophone baryton
Hasse Poulsen - guitare
Christophe Marguet - batterie

Hélène Labarrière, contrebassiste aux multiples projets, sort **les temps changent** en octobre 2007, le même mois que la sortie de **Comicopera.**

C'est le premier album sous son nom, qui vient après de nombreuses collaborations marquées sous le signe de la liberté et de l'audace. Je l'avais vue sur scène à Charleville-Mézières et à Créteil, à l'avant-poste du Dondestan project - Variations sur la musique de Robert Wyatt. Avec Sylvain Kassap, elle y faisait vibrer cette atmosphère jazz et boisée que RW revendique dans tous ses interviews. Robert Wyatt connaît bien Hélène Labarrière: il l'a même invitée en 2001 au Meltdown Festival dont il était le programmateur.

Cet album, Robert Wyatt l'a écouté et l'a aimé. Sur une de ces cartes postales qu'il adresse souvent à ses correspondants de par le monde, il nous dit tout le bien qu'il pense de la musicienne et de la compositrice. Et celle-ci n'a pu résister à l'envie de nous faire partager son plaisir en la reproduisant sur la pochette du CD.

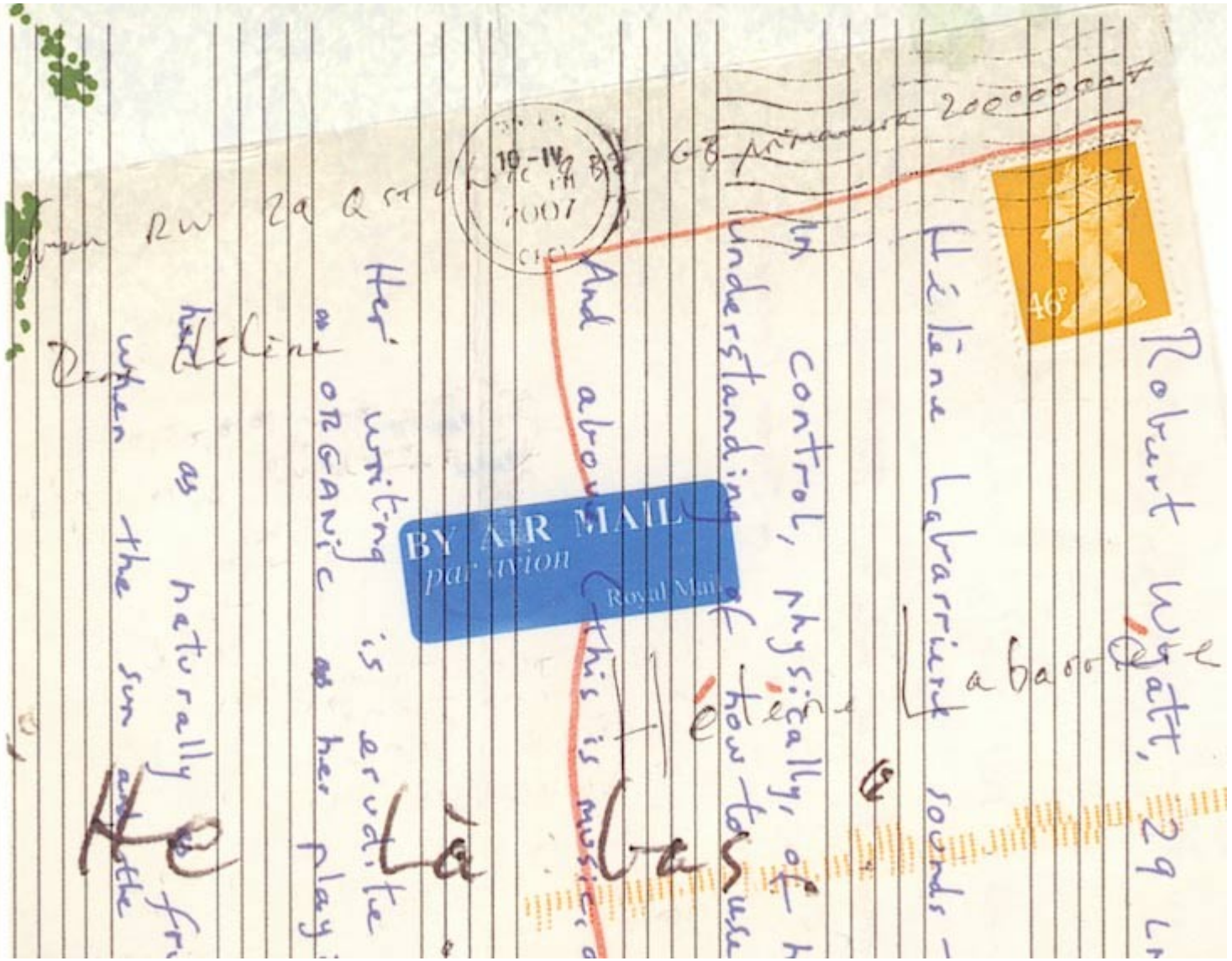
Hélène Labarrière sounds to me complete: completely in control, physically, of her bass violin and cerebrally, in her understanding of how to use her great athletic skills. And above (this is music after all) Hélène has a great SOUND. Her writing is erudite and adventurous, but above all as ORGANIC as her playing. 'Nature' seems to flow through her as naturally as fruit arriving on the branches of trees when the sun and the rain have done their work. I have heard her in diverse contexts, but not, I think, before this beautiful CD, as director and principal catalyst. And she's chosen her comrades here so carefully: these musicians know how to play together, as part of a living and coherent organism. Anyway (words are inevitable clumsy) as the cliché has it, this music speaks for itself. Pay attention this fruit is ripe: now feed your ears!

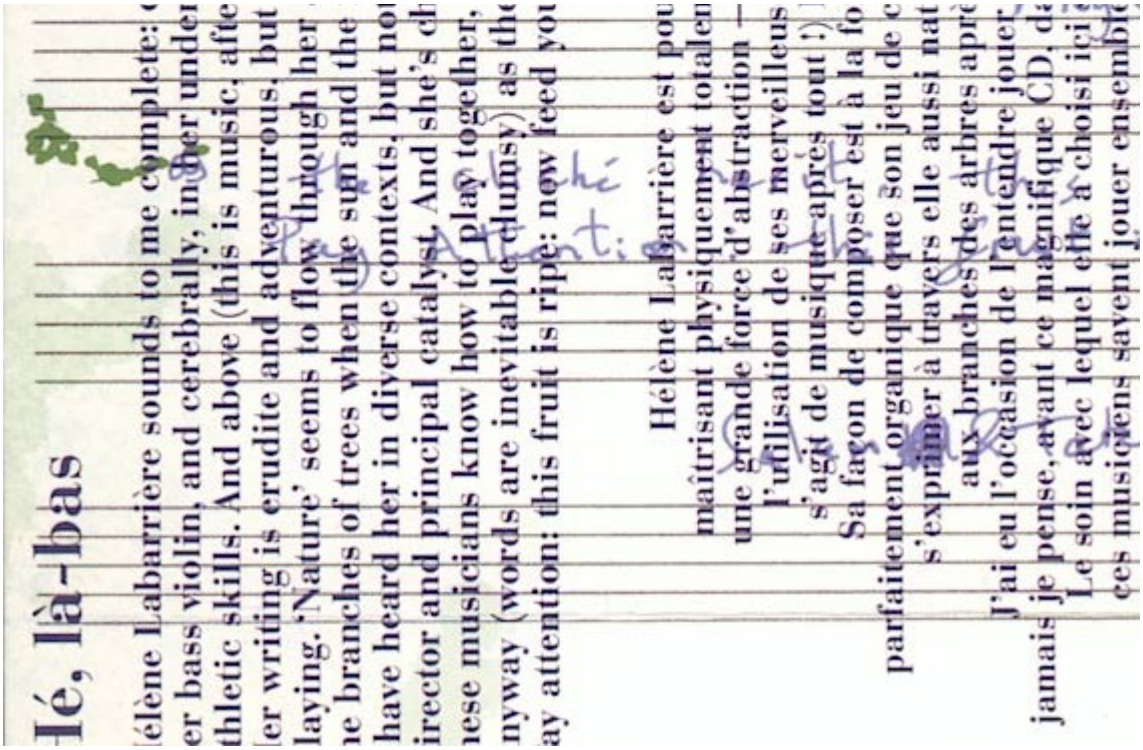
«Salam and Takadum»

Robert Wyatt

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de directeur et catalyseur musical.
ades démontre son souci du détail :
on d'une entité vivante et cohérente.





Hélène Labarrière est pour moi une musicienne d'une totale intégrité : maîtrisant physiquement totalement sa contrebasse, elle démontre également une grande force d'abstraction — faisant preuve d'une vraie intelligence dans l'utilisation de ses merveilleuses aptitudes athlétiques. Et surtout (puisqu'il s'agit de musique après tout !) Hélène possède une véritable identité sonore. Sa façon de composer est à la fois érudite, aventureuse et plus que tout, aussi parfaitement organique que son jeu de contrebasse. C'est la Nature même qui semble s'exprimer à travers elle aussi naturellement que les fruits viennent s'épanouir aux branches des arbres après que le soleil et la pluie ont fait leur travail. J'ai eu l'occasion de l'entendre jouer dans de nombreux contextes différents, mais jamais je pense, avant ce magnifique CD, dans le rôle de directeur et catalyseur musical. Le soin avec lequel elle a choisi ici ses camarades démontre son souci du détail : ces musiciens savent jouer ensemble, à la façon d'une entité vivante et cohérente. De toute façon (les mots sont inévitablement maladroits) comme le dit le sens commun : cette musique parle d'elle-même. Portez toute l'attention qu'il mérite à ce fruit arrivé à maturité. Et nourrissez-en vos oreilles !

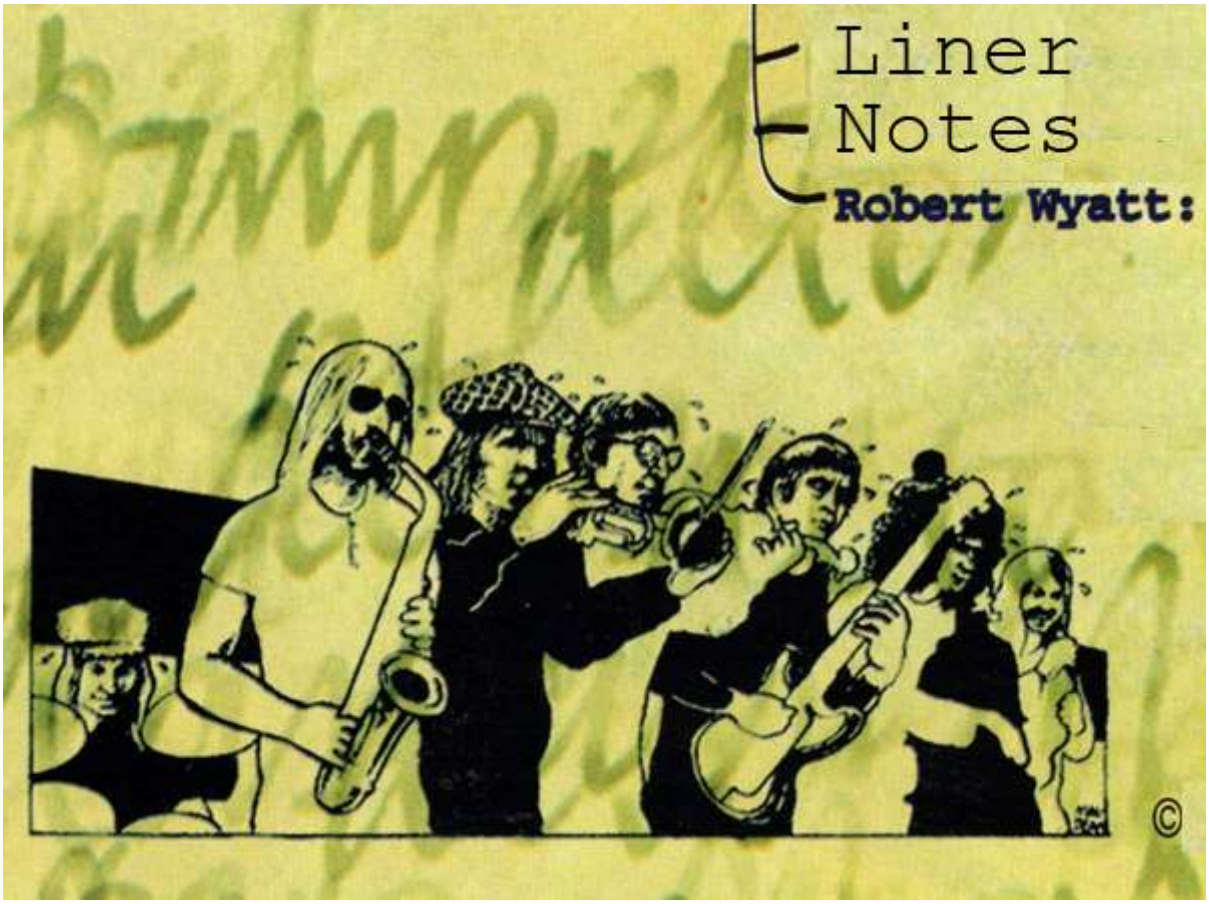

Photo : Hélène Collon

«Salam and Takadum»

Robert Wyatt

Liner Notes

ABÉCÉDAIRE



De ses multiples collaborations avec des musiciens ou des groupes, il en est que nous découvrons au détour d'un booklet ou d'une pochette : les liner notes que Robert Wyatt a généreusement rédigées pour accompagner des travaux auxquels il a ou non participé.

Si certaines notes ne comportent parfois que quelques lignes aimables, d'autres en revanche sont plus conséquentes. Ces dernières concernent souvent des albums interprétés par ces musiciens de jazz anglais et sud-africains que Robert Wyatt affectionne tout particulièrement.

Nous en proposons ici quelques unes et conscient qu'elles ne représentent sans doute qu'une faible part d'un ensemble bien plus vaste, nous faisons un appel "au peuple" pour compléter cette première collection...

IXESHA

• T I M E •

The breathtaking excitement, descending into that cauldron of sound steaming from the little stage of Ronnie Scott's old club, of that surrealist Ellingtonia with molten streaks of trumpet and alto scorching and swirling up the staircase...the first time I experienced The Brotherhood of Breath.

A living volcano, and, right inside, such pretty tunes a rhythmic urgency not just dancing in your head but rocking your socks off.

A whole music. I thought my heart would burst with gratitude for the comprehensive generosity of it.

And then finding these musicians in so many wonderful permutations with local musicians, my mind flashes back to Laurie Allen with Dudu in Gwigwi's Kwela band, John Stevens with Mongezi, Louis Moholo with Keith Tippett, Harry Miller and everybody in fact with everybody—we've all got our own memories.

Thank you Mongezi Feza, thank you Chris McGregor, thank you Dudu Pukwana, thank you Harry Miller and all your comrades—Johnny Dyani, Ernest Mothle, so many good people. Julian Bahula. And thank you Louis Moholo, forever stoking the fire, the warmest glow in town.

I'm still living off the heat.

Robert Wyatt October '94

The Dedication Orchestra
Ixesha (Time)
Ogun – OGCD 102/103



Et parce que ces musiques nous transportent également, nous glisserons entre ces notes de pochette deux captations TV du Brotherhood Of Breath qui rassemblent quelques-uns des meilleurs musiciens que Robert Wyatt souhaitaient à l'époque nous faire aimer !



Pop Stars drink each other's wine
Plough each other's earth
Hoping for companionship
And then perhaps rebirth
Plant seeds in fresher plots of earth
Bound up in concepts and dreams
And fears of worse things to come
They never do
They stay the same

As Volume 2 was released in April '69 Mike, Hugh and Robert were asked to write a brief personal response to the question "'Where do the SOFTS go from here?"

Robert Wyatt :

Soft Machine contains as many approaches to music-making as there are people in the group: insofar as it has a single identity it is in our attempts to pin down those areas where the different paths meet (talk about mixed metaphor!).



Strange Fruit Record SFRCD201
THE PEEL SESSIONS

The replacement of Kevin Ayers by Hugh Hopper enabled us, we feel, to narrow down those areas in order to explore them more thoroughly.

Hugh's working procedure matches Mike's more sympathetically than did Kevin's. Kevin is primarily a song-writer rather than an instrumentalist. Hugh's unique characteristics cannot be described, but are quite apparent in the new music of the Soft Machine.

"These are really good songs and good song singing, great saxophone and it would be enjoyable even if the content didn't matter - but it does".
Robert Wyatt, November 1994.



Stream Records (SRCD 004)



Featuring L-R. Peter van Hooke, Gary Mihiriey, Robert Wyatt, Julie Driscoll, Mike Hugg, Terri Quaye, Pam & Gary Windo, Harry Beckett, Richard Brunton, Bill MacCormick, Laurie Allan, Nick Mason.

"Although he'd had a tough life even before I met him, Gary's music had the (almost!) innocent joy of a child, still full of wonder and excitement. He was nothing like most English jazz musicians: a rather guarded, suspicious lot in those days. He seemed oblivious to careerist ambition. And he had SOUL. Naturally absorbing both R&B honking tenor sax swagger with the sensitive tonal nuances and courage of Archie Shepp … a complete musician."

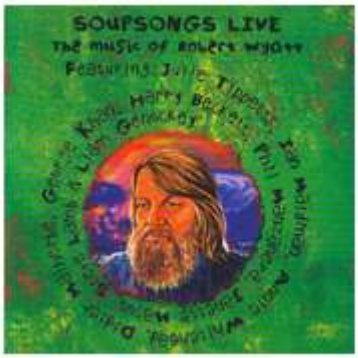
Robert Wyatt

Gonzo Multimedia
HST190CD

"I cannot know what I would be if I were not me" - well, after all, there might be some clues on this CD. Seeing Annie's band at the Grimsby Jazz Festival, with Janette Mason depping on keyboards and all, I thought to myself, "this lot could play my songs". And then later when Dave Groom provided the opportunity we just sort of asked Annie "um-er excuse us miss would you play my songs please miss? and come to think of it could we borrow your band as well or not or what?" the way you do and I'm still a bit amazed that they said "oh alright then" especially since they all assured me that their decision was in no way affected by our promise to untie them and give them their shoes and socks back just as soon as they'd agreed to comply with our request, just as Phil Manzanera had done. We needed to augment the band with a little horn section that would shine in the spotlights for that 'bold as brass' effect and got the most distinguished trio you could possibly find - Didier, George and Harry.To sing the songs with Ian we needed somebody else I knew would hear how I try to use notes and immediately thought of Lambeth Lil herself, Julie Tippetts. The recorded consequence is as far as I am concerned one of the best Robert Wyatt records I can remember. Thanks Liam, thanks Steve, thanks Janette, thanks Phil, thanks Harry, thanks George, thanks Didier, thanks Julie, thanks Ian and thanks beyond words Annie, you've made an old man very happy.

Salaam!"

Robert Wyatt





Jazzprint
JPVPIOICS

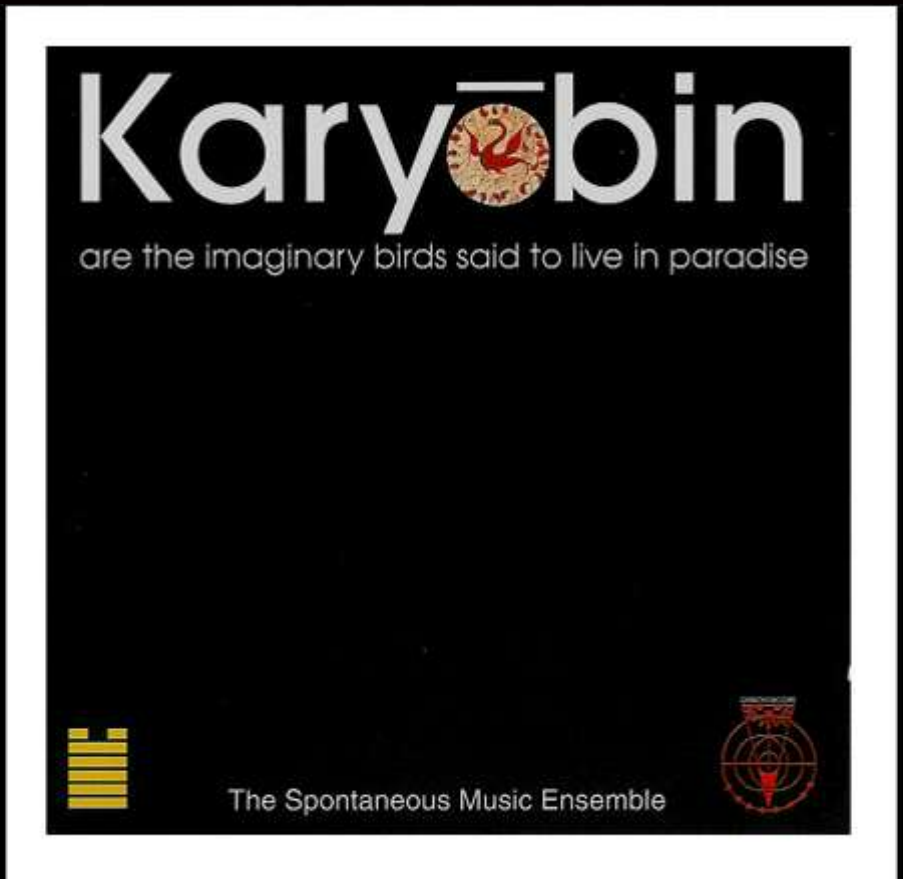


In the words of Mr. Robert Wyatt:

"I've known Asaf's gifts for years, certainly enough to say that as far as I can see, there's NOTHING he can't do when he puts his mind to it. Of course on this innovative record his kit skills just keep expanding but what really gets to me here are his ethereal, haunting compositions, which take the soloists into uncharted territories, guiding them but allowing them freedom to dip and dive through their solos in their own sympathetically idiosyncratic ways. So this is a remarkable recording which, with its very distinct individual voices, has nevertheless the feel of a single living organism: Quite a combination!"

MOONJUNE RECORDS – MJR117

Seemingly, what pissed Sidney Bechet off about Louis Armstrong was that, in pursuit of solo virtuosity, Armstrong was turning the rest of the group into a backing group, thus disintegrating the interweaving wholeness of classic jazz. Now nobody could say Bechet was talking from a position of weakness: he was, after all, quite able to blast a hole through the sail of any weakly constructed musical craft.
And so could any of these SME musicians, in fact for a start, it's hard to think of any soprano saxist today who's developed Bechet's legacy with more formidable authority than Evan Parker, but then S.M.E. was a group of musicians with enormous individual strength, who harnessed that musicianship to the pursuit of the art of musical conversation, though from a point of departure historically closer to Tristano's experiments with such as Billy Bauer and Lee Konitz than to old New Orleans.
New listeners, I have to tell you: this group was a legend. You've heard a lot of idle gossip about the idealism around thirty years ago, the bold adventures away from the showbiz mainstream. But this, was the real thing, a final flowering and a new beginning all in one.
Beginning of what? Whatever happened to these likely lads?
Well for one, Dave Holland got picked up and then dropped right in it, didn't he, the Atlantic I mean - reached new shores though.



Then Derek Bailey (D.B. not standing for decibels in this case) a radical source in his own right (ask Fred Frith) and witty as a Monk. Did you see his series on the telly, dead good that was, about improvisers from all over the place.
Improvisation, mind, could be an inadequate term here. It need only mean, 'making do' as in 'the refugees improvised a rough shelter'.
Whereas this ....
Music making is always the point at which something prepared is ignited. And what makes these blokes so exceptional, so special, is not just their brave ideology of map-less-ness; it's the backlog of preparation, the learning, the discipline.
Another example, Kenny Wheeler. Like one of those awkward butterflies birds can never catch because you never quite know for sure what note he's going to hit next .... Deft, I call it.
And what can you say about our cool guru John Stevens? The listening drummer. 'sheer class' will have to do, your ears will tell you why us aspiring cymbalists of the day thought so.
S.M.E., then, as they were. Don't just hear a history lesson, though.
This stuff's still fertile, as full of promise as tomorrow morning. A dawn chorus.

Chronoscope Records – CPE2001-2

Robert Wyatt 1993

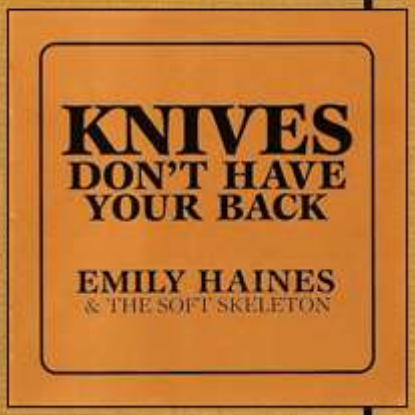


Brotherhood of Breath in 1973 with Chris McGregor, Lol Coxhill, Dudu Pukwana, Elton Dean, Harry Miller, Marc Charig, Harry Beckett, Louis Moholo, Nick Evans, Radu Malfatti...

KNIVES DON'T HAVE YOUR BACK

EMILY HAINES & THE SOFT SKELETON





Haines doesn't take a predictable route to the inside of your head. No grandstanding. She's a true daughter of the revolution, and has inherited wisdom beyond her years. So how does she reach us ? By quietly closing the stage door behind her, dodging the limelight glare for now. She slips around the edge of the stage , almots disappears, keeps to the shadows like her parents taught her then is suddenly positioned right beside your car. She's speaking your language but don't be so sure you know what she's thinking - this might be all in code. She's drawn in breath and drawn you in, too. You're hooked but it's not her fault: maybe she was just saying "Hello". *Robert Wyatt , July 2006*

www.softskeleton.com

Last Gang Records – Q2 00932

We was invited by Tim Souster, who had an evening using the hall to do what he liked with. I believe he'd heard our second LP, asked us on the strength of that. He discovered us on the way to discovering Motown. Via the Who, I think. Anyway it was brave of him to invite us despite the withering contempt of the posh music establishement. Before our bit, I went out the back for a quick fag and then the doorman didn't want to let me back in. "I've got to play in there", I said. "You must be kidding, son", he said, "they only have proper music in there". Not that night they didn't.

(ROBERT WYATT)



CD RECK 5

Louth, Lincolnshire, England, spring 2002

I'd just like to thank Mike King for his painstaking retrieval work and diligence over the last decade. I have, for most of the time, been rather grumpy and ungrateful for all this (having a morbid fear of being trapped in the past). But now I can hear that it wasn't all that bad. So, anyway

Thanks Mike.

Sincerely,

Robert Wyatt





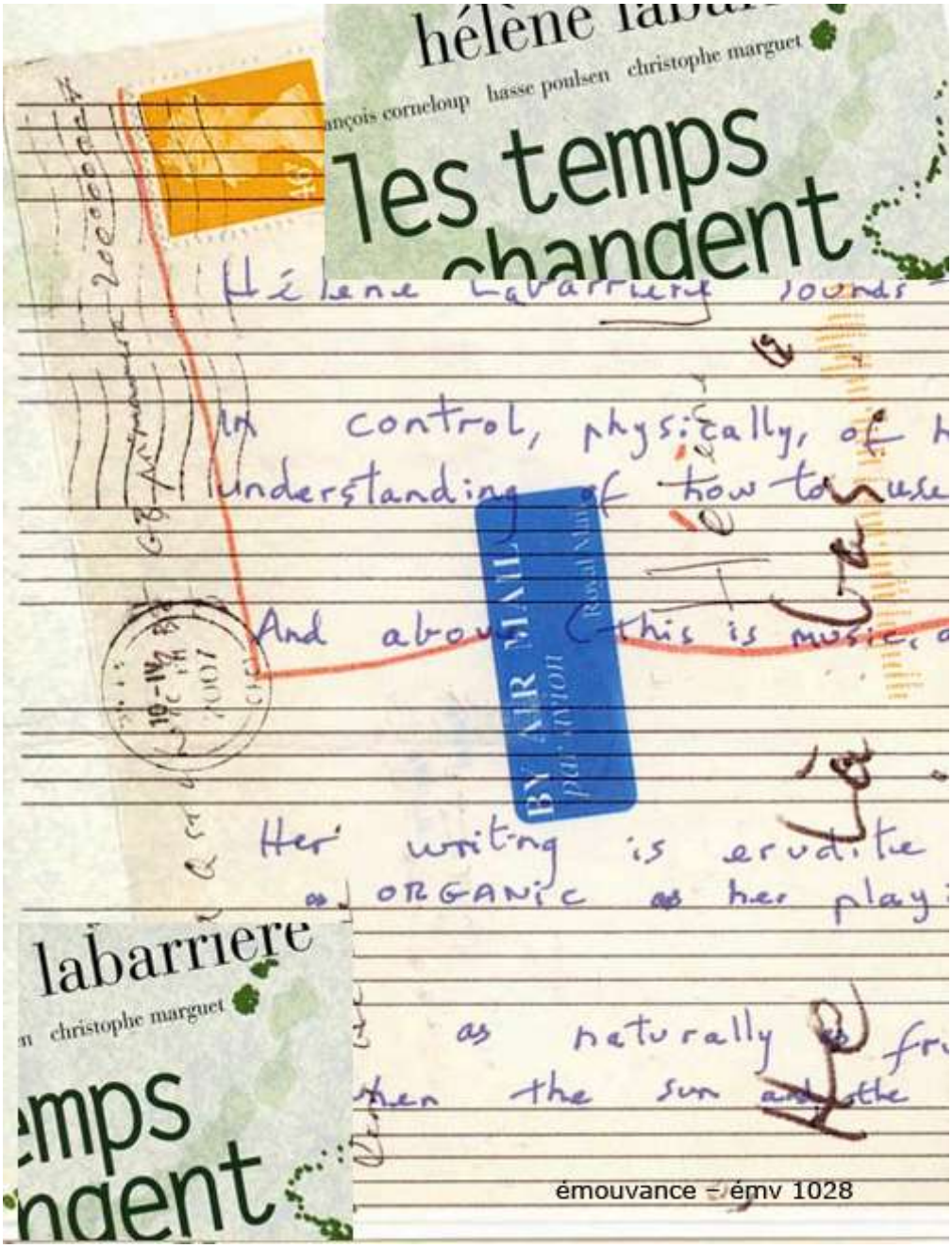
CUNEIFORM RUNE 172



"I think the first time Mike Ratledge spoke to me 'twas to ask to borrow the Cecil Taylor album which had Steve Lacey at Newport he'd heard I'd got. I was very honoured - a sixth-form prefect deigned to talk to one of us! Or, have I got that muddled? Well it was something like that?.. My memory's terrible or at least, a squeezy, bendy, gaseous thing, throwing up different images every day - Ruth is after all always stranger than Richard!"

Robert Wyatt, 1995

Voiceprint – VP204CD

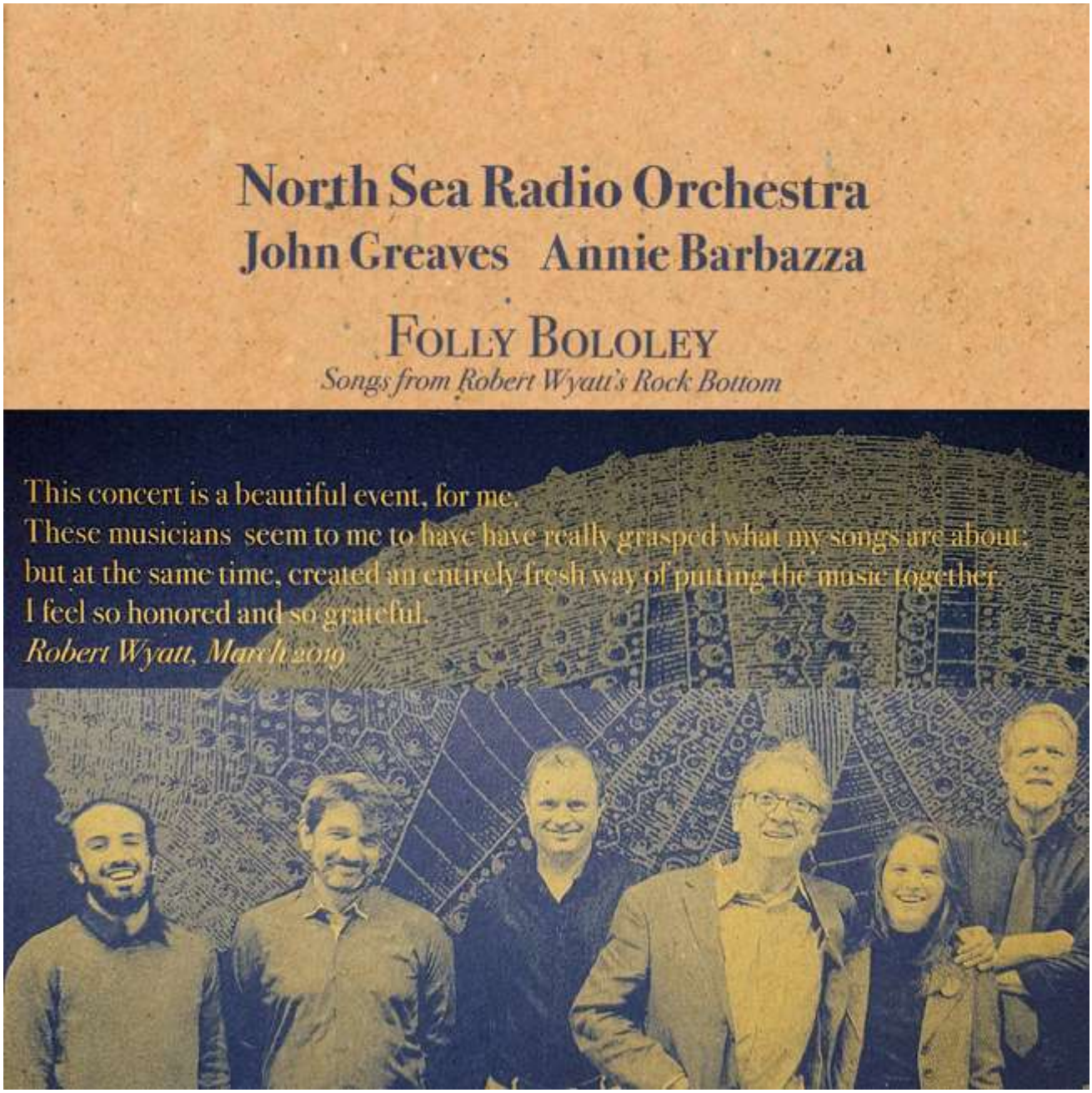


émouvance = émv 1028

Hé, là-bas

Hélène Labarrière sounds to me complete: completely in control, physically, of her bass violin, and cerebrally, in her understanding of how to use her great athletic skills. And above (this is music, after all) Hélène has a great SOUND. Her writing is erudite and adventurous, but above all as ORGANIC as her playing. 'Nature' seems to flow through her as naturally as fruit arriving on the branches of trees when the sun and the rain have done their work.
I have heard her in diverse contexts, but not, I think, before this beautiful CD, as director and principal catalyst. And she's chosen her comrades here so carefully: these musicians know how to play together, as part of a living and coherent organism.
Anyway (words are inevitable clumsy) as the cliché has it, this music speaks for itself. Pay attention: this fruit is ripe: now feed your ears!

Hélène Labarrière est pour moi une musicienne d'une totale intégrité : maîtrisant physiquement totalement sa contrebasse, elle démontre également une grande force d'abstraction — faisant preuve d'une vraie intelligence dans l'utilisation de ses merveilleuses aptitudes athlétiques. Et surtout (puisqu'il s'agit de musique après tout !) Hélène possède une véritable identité sonore.
Sa façon de composer est à la fois érudite, aventureuse et plus que tout, aussi parfaitement organique que son jeu de contrebasse. C'est la Nature même qui semble s'exprimer à travers elle aussi naturellement que les fruits viennent s'épanouir aux branches des arbres après que le soleil et la pluie ont fait leur travail.
J'ai eu l'occasion de l'entendre jouer dans de nombreux contextes différents, mais jamais je pense, avant ce magnifique CD, dans le rôle de directeur et catalyseur musical.
Le soin avec lequel elle a choisi ici ses camarades démontre son souci du détail : ces musiciens savent jouer ensemble, à la façon d'une entité vivante et cohérente.



Folly Bololey - Dark Companion - DC012



SEPTOBER ENERGY

Composed by Keith Tippett

Of course I can't tell you anything about this music, because that would be silly, and I can't examine publicly Keith's murky motives for dreaming up this insane travelling circus known as 'Centipede'. If I were to talk about how Fripp coped with the unprecedented production problems in such a short space of time, I'd be wasting yours, because the job's done now and I never really understood the technical details anyway. Should I try to explain Julie's lyrics? Of course not! She's told you what she wanted to tell you right there on the record. And think how irrelevant it would be to even mention the sheer artistry of Patto's privately-shown theatrical production known as 'Ducks in Flight'! And could I now mention all the musicians that I haven't even mentioned not mentioning yet? No chance!

So, I am refusing to write any notes about the orchestra, even to say that it's the happiest group we've ever worked in, because, after all, if I told you what an incredible buzz it is being on stage with this lot, I mean really, what would be the point? I shall, however, leave you with a brief, but important, message from Nick Evans: 'Wah-Hey!'.

Robert Wyatt



BGO Records - BGOCD485



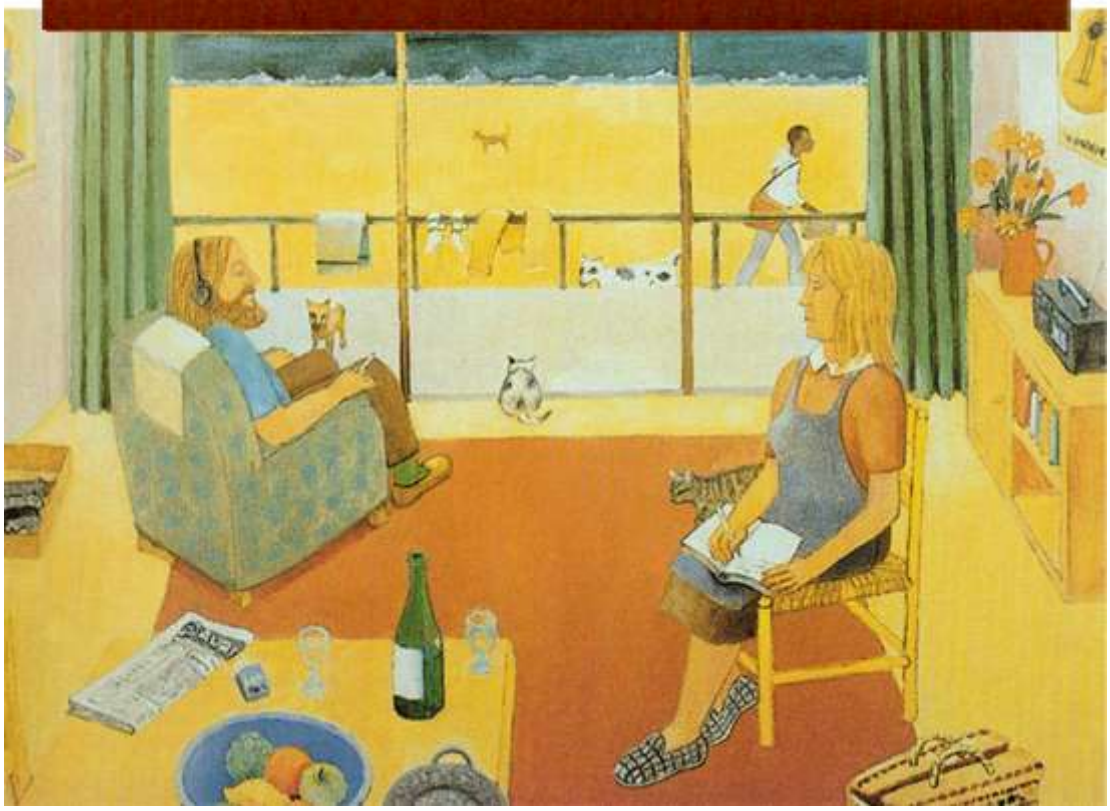
Brotherhood of Breath - 1973 at the French TV

Matt Kemp had already recorded this beautifully at Chapel Studios but I overran the budgeted recording time and the final mix was done, I realised retrospectively, in an exhausted rush. Nobody else's fault, but since this is one of my few recordings of which the original unmixed tapes still exist, I thought I'd get Jamie to help me have another go at the last hurdle. (My ideas have changed a little, too: this time I went for the contrasting detailed moments rather than the earlier goal of seamless consistency. However, it's still the same old whine, with a little more bottle).

Thanks Phil, once again, for this opportunity.

Robert Wyatt, August 1998

Dondestan (revisited) Ryko HNCD1436



A Short Break
20 odd minutes at home

oh... yes... In other words, take five, a space made vacant between daily tasks, literally, a vacation.

Some forty years ago, I was taken on holiday, to another Atlantic coast, to Portugal, and discovered that there are different ways of behaving.

("IS EVERY MOMENT FOREVER?")

A few disorientating images remain, a few ghosts: the boy in the water, that was me (the little man, in the bowler hat, paddling on the shore, circulated on my earlier Rough Trade records, could that have been another me?)

("OR NEVER?")

But right here, right now, no studio cosmetics, just five abstracted sketches, postcards from the home front (I have to take, now and then, some time out for a short break.)

Robert Wyatt. August 1992





A Short Break - VOICEPRINT (VP108CD)

The Lords of the Global Village
Mergers and takeovers are transforming the information business, creating companies worth billions of dollars and concentrating power

Robert Wyatt

THE END OF AN EAR



SCHOLARLY BOOKLET PROVES JESUS NEVER EXISTED!
Conclusive proof Flavius Josephus created fictional Jesus, authored Gospels. AMAZING but **ABSOLUTELY INCONTROVERTIBLE!** Send $5 to Abelard Reuchlin Foundation, Box 5652-B, Kent WA 98064. For details please send SASE

"while the Cat is away, the mouse can play"...
(an old english saying)

In truth the End of an ear was my third attempt at building around my own keyboard experiments in a proper studio - my third 'solo' recording, if you like - (the first was a blues recorded in late 1968 in California, when I had no group and was rescued by the kind-hearted Jimi Hendrix, who pulled it together with some fabulous bass guitar, the second was Moon in June, which although not publicised at the time, for the sake of group harmony, was mostly me on piano, organ, speeded-up bass etc, apart from the usual organ solo after the first ten minutes or so.)

the original idea was to record with friends - particularly Gary Windo, the saxist, and Mongezi Feza, trumpeter, with the 'small jazz club' atmosphere I was already nostalgic for.

When my time to record was given, however, Gary and Mongezi were 'on the Continent' with Chris MacGregor's Brotherhood of Breath, so I asked a couple of other friends and other musicians we had already borrowed from the wonderful and generous Keith Tippett's band.

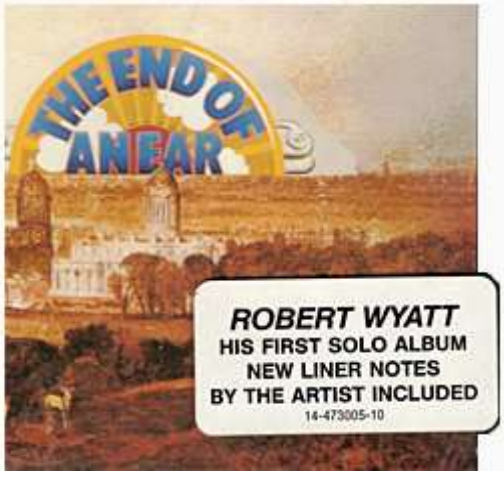
Even so, I think, it became more of a 'solo' record than I had originally intended: (Perhaps - I was never told why - I was expelled soon afterwards from my original group by the very people I had invited to join it) because these moments of maverick anarchy were mistaken for an over-assertive self-confidence, further evidence of my hopeless lack of adaptability to the formality required of a now-established concert band? But at the time, I just think I simply made the most of the suddenly available opportunity to explore uncharted territory ...

I was never forgiven for such moments of recklessness & insubordination - (perhaps not even forgiven by myself?) ... (but then, unlike your Edith, I regret almost everything!)

P.S. I'd like to thank Mitch Mitchell for the beautiful drum-kit, I hope you can hear how much I enjoyed playing on it

Robert

and thankyou Pierre Lattes for helping us all in France. Hello Pierre!

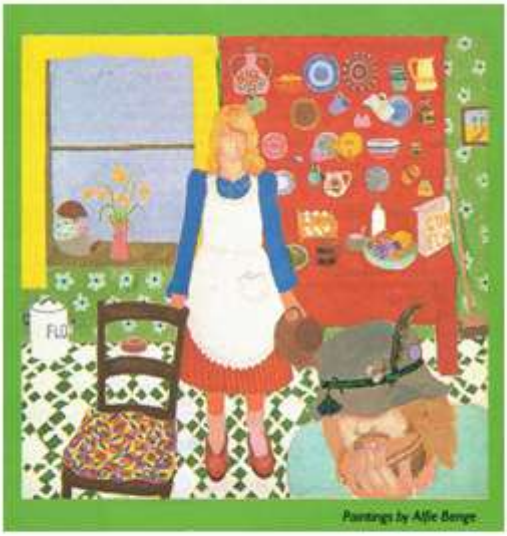


COLUMBIA COL 473005-2

(a few of the) Thanks due.

To Jenny & Steve Peacock for their ospitality, Brian Eno for his itality, . Carla Bley & Mike Mantler for giving me interesting things to do, Hughes de Portzamparc (of Sony/France) & Mike Gott (of B.E.C. records) for their conscientious approach to the re-releases of 'the end of an ear' CD, The Matching Mole CDs, etc and Teresa Hale

R.W.





CDVDM 9031



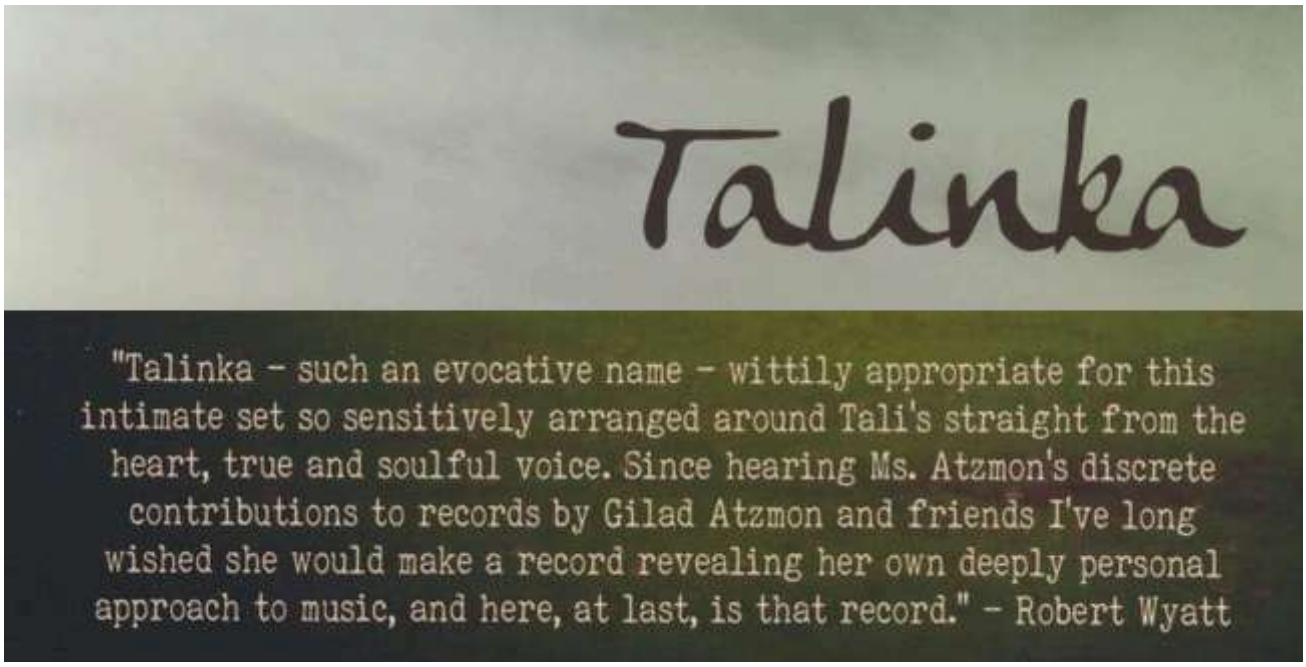
Rai Trade – RTPJ 0014

I was invited to go for a week just to record the actual process of my working. Of things like that which I've seen, for example on painters, with the honorable exception of Picasso who worked on a piece of glass, people tend to cheat a bit and do an actual finished performance in front of the cameras. But I thought "If they really want to see how I work before I know what I'm doing, then that's what they're going to get and if during that week something comes out of it, then it will do, but if it doesn't then that will be more honest." I deliberately went in there and improvised what I was doing as well as how I did it. The point wasn't to have a finished result that could be listened to, the point was to see a process. It's only in retrospect that I can see that bits of some of them have some kind of coherence.

Mi invitarono là per una settimana, perché volevano registrare il mio reale processo creativo. Tutte le volte che ho assistito a progetti analoghi, incentrati per esempio su pittori, gli artisti (con la mirabile eccezione di Picasso al lavoro su un pezzo di vetro) tendevano sempre a imbrogliare un po' e fingevano di creare lì per lì quello che in realtà era già quasi pronto. Ma in questo caso mi son detto: «Se vogliono davvero vedere come lavoro quando ancora non so che cosa sto facendo, glielo mostrerò; se poi da quella settimana esce qualcosa, tanto meglio; in caso contrario, ne ricaveranno un'idea ancor più veritiera». Arrivai senza alcunché di pronto e improvvisai sia la musica sia la procedura. Non erano tanto interessati a ottenere un prodotto finito da mettere in onda, quanto a mostrare un processo. Solo in seguito mi sono accorto che certi frammenti erano legati tra loro da una certa coerenza.

Robert Wyatt

from Michael King *Wrong Movements: a Robert Wyatt History,* Saf Publishing 1994; trad.it. *Falsi movimenti: una storia di Robert Wyatt,* Arcana 1994; traduzione di Alessandro Achilli



Links



Calyx

Robert Wyatt And Stuff

Hibou, Anemone & Bear

Robert Wyatt Video

Strong Comet

Hulloder (site hosted now on Calyx)

Phil Miller - The Legacy

Robert Wyatt page

Canterbury scores

The Canterbury Scene

Hugh Hopper Page

Robert Wyatt Canterbury King

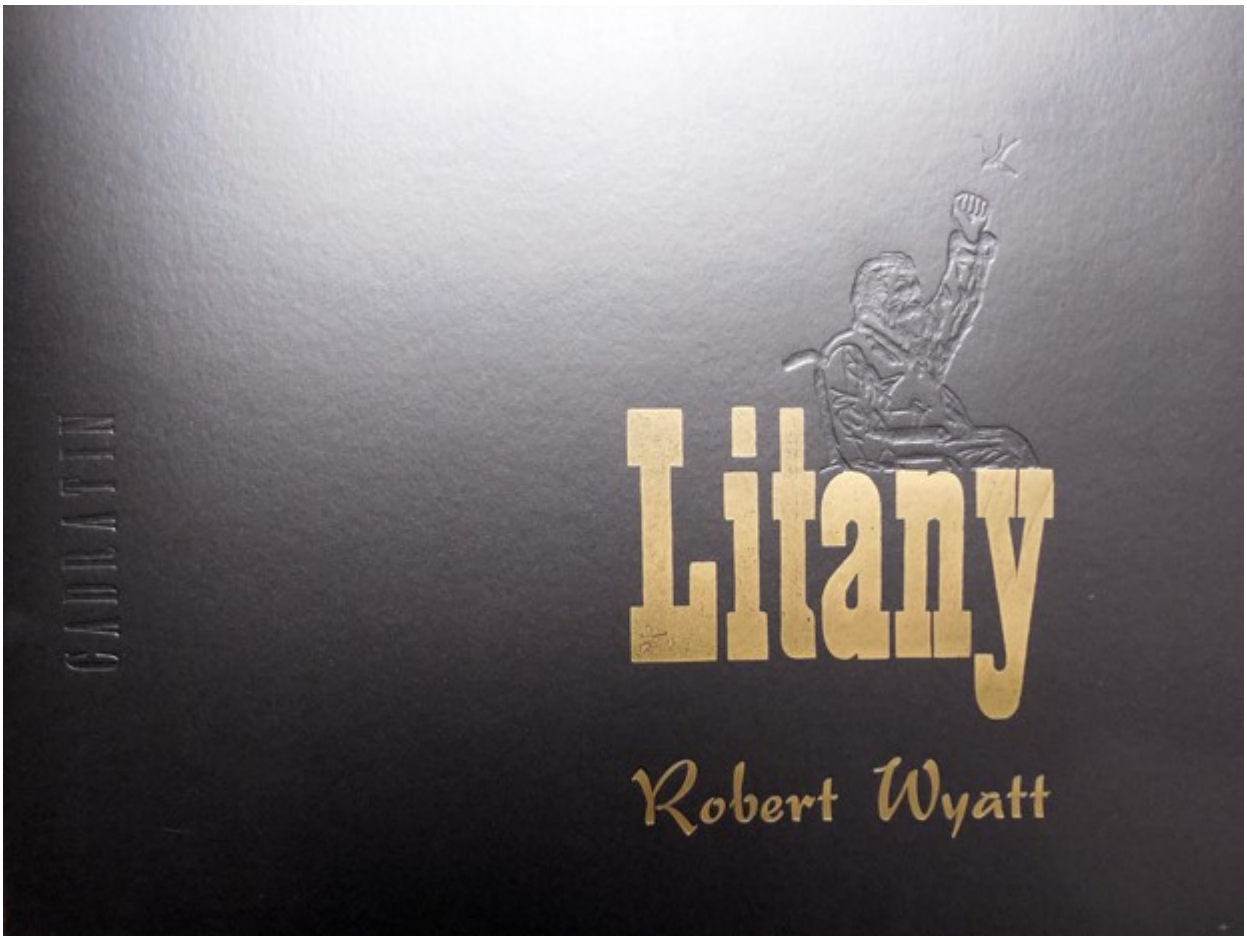
Litany - Jean-Michel Marchetti

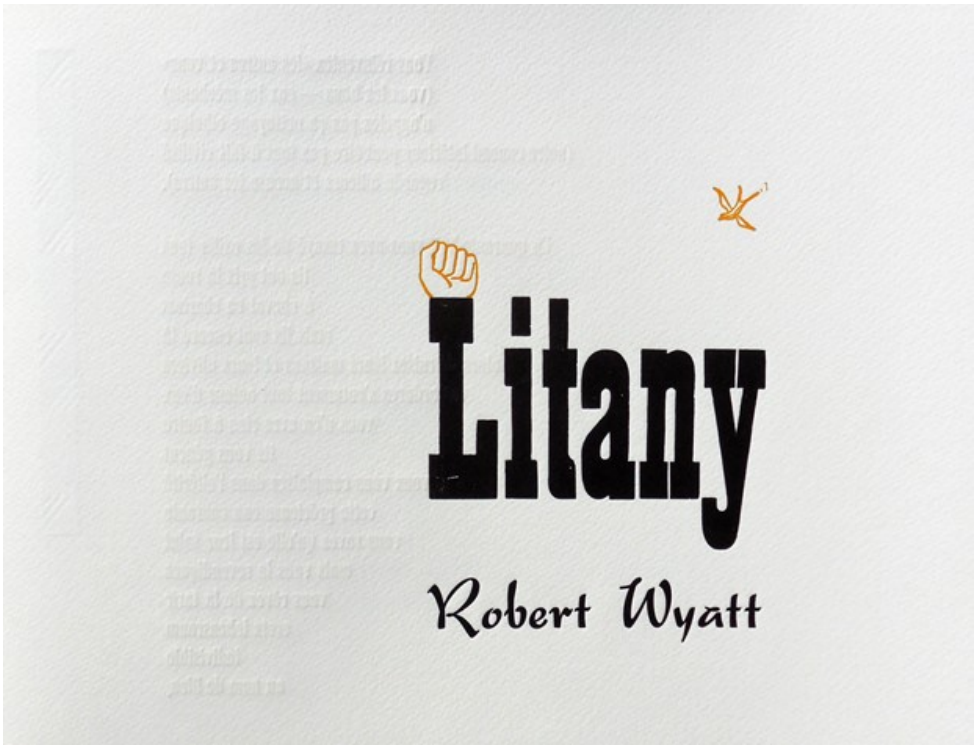
ABÉCÉDAIRE

LITANY - dessin estampé en couverture de Jean-Michel Marchetti, signé par le peintre, imprimé en septembre 2010 sur les presses de l'atelier du Cadratin à Vevey - Suisse, en 60 exemplaires tous portant le N° 1.

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format 24x32cm.



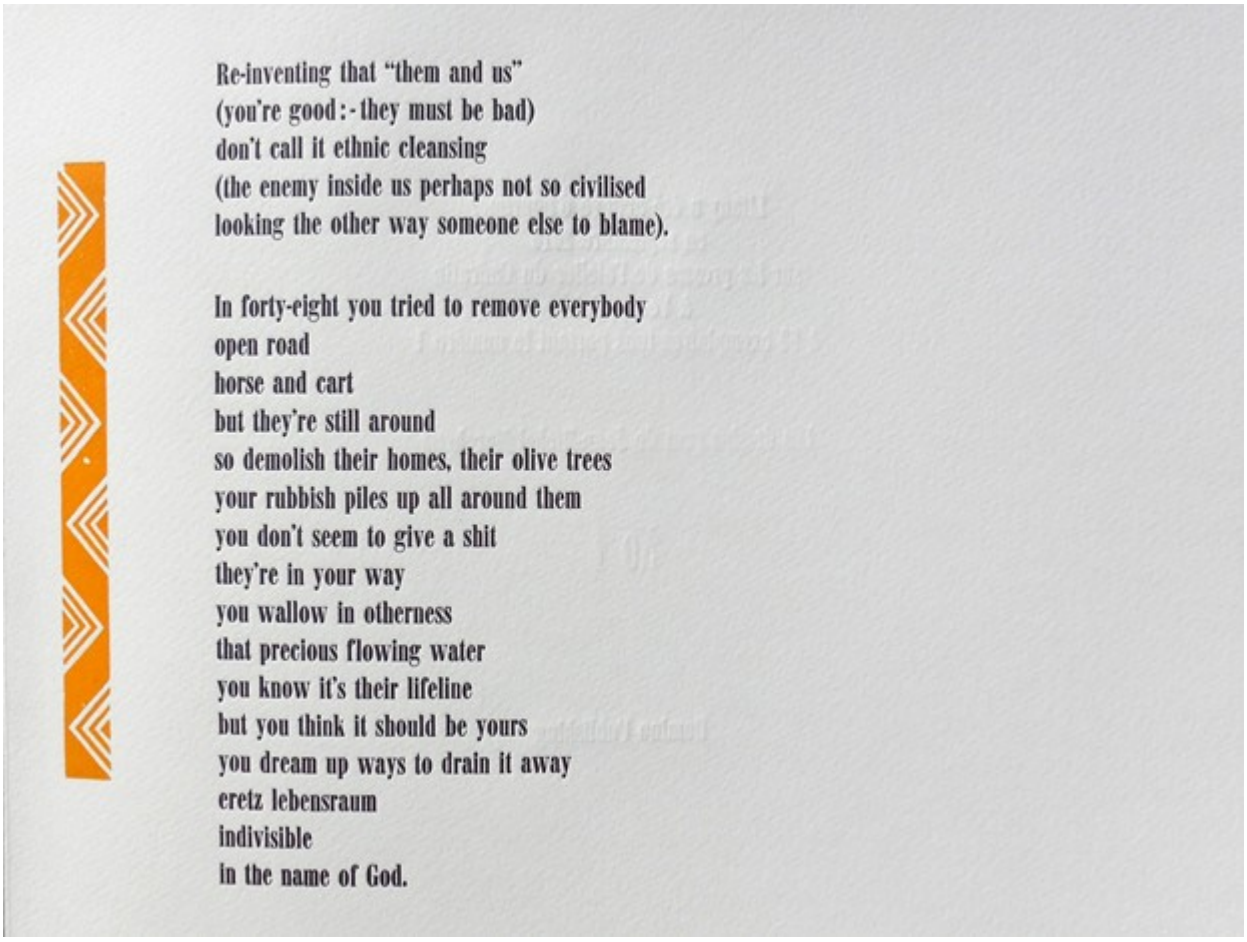


> Zoom


Vous réinventez «les autres et vous»
(vous les bons — eux les méchants)
n'appelez pas ça nettoyage ethnique
(notre ennemi intérieur peut-être pas tout à fait civilisé
regarde ailleurs et accuse les autres).

En quarante-huit vous avez essayé de les exiler tous
ils ont pris la route
à cheval en chariots
mais ils sont encore là
alors détruisez leurs maisons et leurs oliviers
vos ordures s'entassent tout autour d'eux
vous n'en avez rien à foutre
ils vous gênent
vous vous complaisez dans l'altérité
cette précieuse eau courante
vous savez qu'elle est leur salut
mais vous la revendiquez
vous rêvez de la tarir
eretz lebensraum
indivisible
au nom de Dieu,

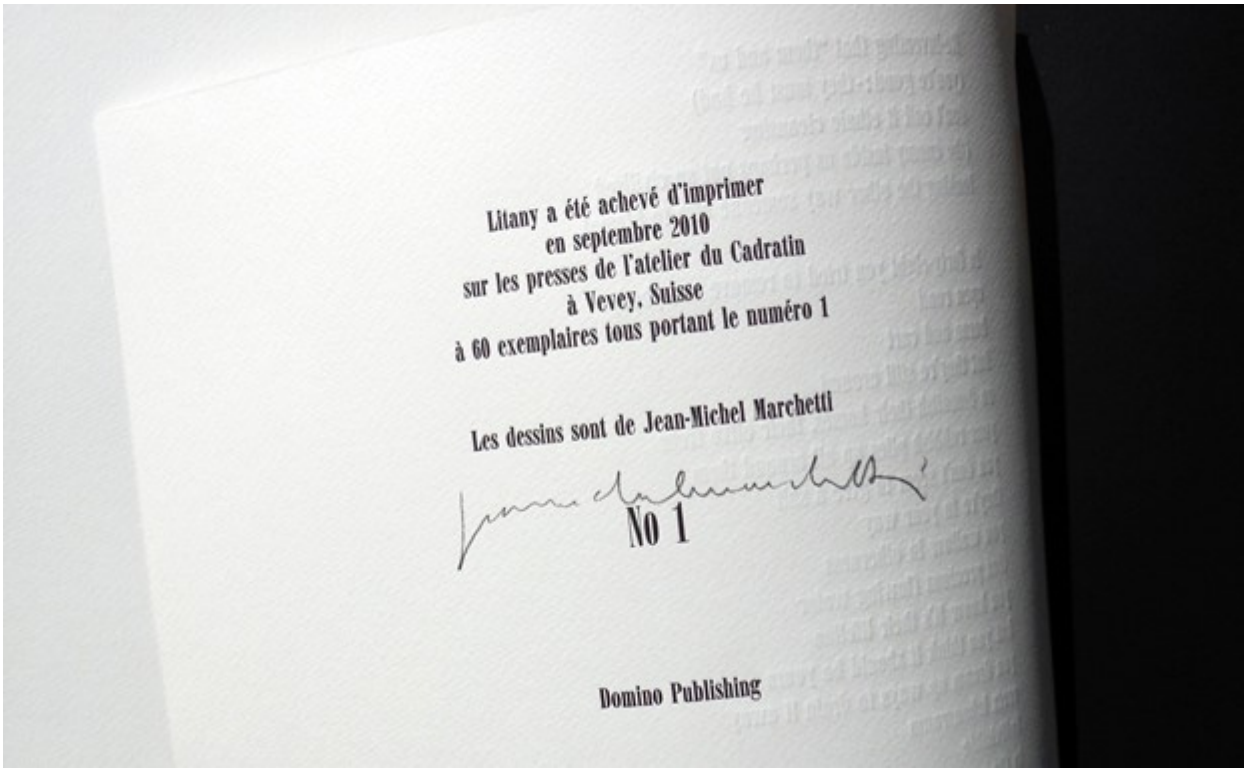
> Zoom



Re-inventing that "them and us"
(you're good:- they must be bad)
don't call it ethnic cleansing
(the enemy inside us perhaps not so civilised
looking the other way someone else to blame).

In forty-eight you tried to remove everybody
open road
horse and cart
but they're still around
so demolish their homes, their olive trees
your rubbish piles up all around them
you don't seem to give a shit
they're in your way
you wallow in otherness
that precious flowing water
you know it's their lifeline
but you think it should be yours
you dream up ways to drain it away
eretz lebensraum
indivisible
in the name of God.

> Zoom



Litany a été achevé d'imprimer
en septembre 2010
sur les presses de l'atelier du Cadratin
à Vevey, Suisse
à 60 exemplaires tous portant le numéro 1

Les dessins sont de Jean-Michel Marchetti

No 1

Domino Publishing

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Little Red Concert

ABÉCÉDAIRE



ROBERT WYATT WITH FRIENDS - LITTLE RED CONCERT, 1974

Animated fantasy based on the concert by Robert Wyatt & Friends at Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London, September the 8th 1974.

Directed and created by **Shlomo "Shin Pey" Polonsky** (new version updated on 26 February 2024)

"*This animated thing is an elaborated masterpiece of visual + music - a truly original re-invention. It really moves me. I felt quite tearful at the end...*" - *Robert Wyatt*

Lyrics

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Paroles des morceaux chantés par Robert Wyatt (qu'il en soit ou non l'auteur).



Steve Nieve
2013

Together

- Save The World
- Conversation
- You Lie Sweetly
- What A Holiday
- Tender Moment
- Up
- Vertigo
- Life Preserver
- Halloween (Bonfire Night)
- I Do Not Miss You (Nostalgia #2)
- **La Plus Jolie Langue (duet with Robert Wyatt & Muriel Teodori)**
- La Crise
- Voué à l'Oubli
- Burn The Past
- Summer Song



Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen
2010

...For The Ghosts Within'

- **Laura**
- **Lullaby For Irena**
- The Ghosts Within
- Where Are They Now?
- Maryan
- Round Midnight
- **Lush Life**
- **What's New?**
- In A Sentimental Mood
- At Last I Am Free
- **What A Wounderful World**



Sophia Domancich

Snakes And Ladders

- Goodnight Instrumental
- High Tide On The Ebb
- In The Box
- S&S
- The Island
- Est-ce l'heure du thé ?
- Tea Time
- Mis manos te acarician
- Wilderness Instrumental
- **Wilderness**
- Lucky Day

A

A L'Abattoir

A.W.O.L.

A Beautiful Peace

A Beautiful War

A Last Straw

A Certain Kind

A Sunday In Madrid

Alien

Alifib / Alifie

Alliance

Amber And The Amberines

Another Great Victory

As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still

At Last I'm Free

Arauco

B

Be Serious

2010

- ...Of Night
- Goodnight Instrumental
- Goodnight
- Five O'Clock



Robert Wyatt
2007

Comicopera

ACT ONE LOST IN NOISE
- Stay Tuned
- Just As You Are
- You You
- A.W.O.L
- Anachronist

ACT TWO THE HERE AND THE NOW
- A Beautiful Peace
- Be Serious
- On The Town Square
- Mob Rule
- A Beautiful War
- Out Of The Blue

ACT THREE AWAY WITH THE FAIRIES
- Del Mondo
- Cancion de Julieta
- Pastafari
- Fragment
- Hasta Siempre Comandante



Robert Wyatt & Friends In Concert
2005

Theatre Royal Drury Lane - Sunday 8th September 1974

- Introduction by John Peel
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening
- Memories
- Sea Song
- A Last Straw
- Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road
- Alife
- Alifib
- Mind Of A Child
- Instant Pussy
- Signed Curtain
- Calyx
- Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road
- I'm A Believer



Robert Wyatt

Cuckooland

Part One 'neither here...'
- Just A Bit
- Old Europe
- Tom Hay's Fox
- Forest
- Beware
- Cuckoo Madame
- Raining In My Heart
- Lullaby For Hamza

Silence

Before We Knew

Beware...

Biko

Blues In Bob Minor

Boo To You Too

Born Again Cretin

Brian The Fox

C

Caimanera

Calyx

Cancion de Julieta

Catholic Architecture

Chairman Mao

Costa

CP Jeebies

Cuckoo Madame

Cursty

D

Dada Was Here

Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening

Del Mondo

Do Ya?

Dondestan

2003

A suitable place for those with tired ears to pause and resume listening later

Part Two '...nor there'
- Trickle Down
- Insensatez
- Mister E
- Lullaloop
- Life Is Sheep
- Foreign Accents
- Brian The Fox
- La Ahada Yalam
- Cancion de Julieta



Various Artists
2002

A Tribute To John Lennon

- John Lennon
- Instant Karma
- Jealous Guy
- Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except For Me And My Monkey
- Working Class Hero
- The Ballad Of John And Yoko
- Bless You
- Happiness Is A Warm Gun
- Come Together
- Love (Robert Wyatt)
- Gimme Some Truth
- Isolation
- Cold Turkey
- Give Peace A Chance
- Gimme Some Truth
- Happy Xmas (War Is Over)
- I Am The Walrus
- In My Life



Bruno Coulais
2001

Winged Migration

- To Be By Your Side
- Masters Of The Field
- Northern Bound
- The Crossing
- The Highest Gander
- Beating Drums
- The Return Of The Cranes
- The Blue Thread
- The Red Forest
- Like A Breath Of Air
- The Takeoff
- Amidst The Factory Smoke
- The Glider
- After The Hunt
- The Paper Parrot
- The Swans Flight
- Featers And Stripes
- The Wounded Dove
- Off Camera

E

East Timor

Experiences N°2

F

Foreign Accents

Feelin 'Reelin Squeelin'

Forest

Fragment

Free Will and Testament

Frontera

G

Gegenstand

Gharbzadegi

Gloria Gloom

God Song

Grass

H

Happy Land

Hasta Siempre Comandante

Have You Ever Bean Green?

Heaps Of Sheeps

Heart Of Stone

Hibou, Anemone And Bear



Pascal Comelades
2000

September Song

- September Song
- Signed Curtain
- Come Prima
- The Sheik Of Araby
- 24 Mila Baci
- Knockin' On Heaven's Door
- L'Italiano



Annie Whitehead
2000

The Gathering

- Mist
- The Gathering
- Blue Note Bounce
- This Affects That
- The Lonely Heart (Part 1)
- The Lonely Heart (Part 2)

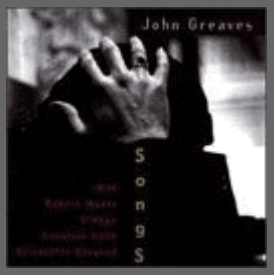
- Before We Knew
- Afro Blue
- Remembering



Robert Wyatt
1997

Shleep

- Heaps Of Sheeps
- The Duchess
- Maryan
- Was A Friend
- Free Will and Testament
- September the Ninth
- Alien
- Out Of Season
- A Sunday In Madrid
- Blues In Bob Minor
- Whole Point Of No Return



Songs

- Old Kinderhook

- The Song
- Swelling Valley
- Green Fuse

- Kew. Rhone.
- Eccentric Waters
- Silence
- Price We Pay
- L'Aise Aux Ex-Sans-Trique
- Back Where We Began

Hope For Hapiness

Hot River

Hulloder

I

I'm A Believer

I'm A Mineralist

I'd Rather Be With You

I Should've Known

I Was Wrong

Igor Mortis

Impotence

In The Dark Year

Insensatez

J

Jet-Propelled Photograph

Just A Bit

Just As You Are

K

Kew. Rhone.

Kingdom

L

la Plus Jolie Langue

John Greaves
1995

- Gegenstand



Millennium
1995

A Civilised Word

- Another Great Victory
- Too Much Heaven
- Prey
- The Cross
- A Thousand Years
- Igor Mortis
- Digest Of A Paperheart
- Erup/Peru
- Everything Will Change
- Kill Me Softly



Robert Wyatt
1994

Flotsam Jetsam

- Slow Walkin' Talk
- Moon In June
- Standfast [G. Windo]
- No 'Alf Measures
- God Song - Fol De Rol
- Soprano Derivitavo - Apricot Jam
- A Little Something
- Now Is The Time
- Now't Doin
- Born Again Cretin
- Billie's Bounce
- Locomotive
- War Without Blood
- Obert Tancat 1
- Tu Traicion
- Obert Tancat 2
- Turn Things Upside
- The Wind Of Change
  M. Kaujeua]



Robert Wyatt
1993

Mid-Eighties

- Yolanda
- Te Recuerdo Amanda
- Biko
- Amber And The Amberines
- Memories Of You
- 'Round Midnight
- Pigs... (In There)
- Chairman Mao
- Alliance
- The United States Of Amnesia
- East Timor
- Speechless
- The Age Of Self
- Vandalusia
- The British Road
- Mass Medium
- Gharbzadezi [R. Wyatt]
- P.L.A.
- The End

Laura

Left On Man

Life Is Sheep

Lisp Service

Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road

Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road

Love

Love Makes Sweet Music

Lullaby For Hamza

Lullaby For Irena

Lullaloop

Lush Life

M

Marchides

Maryan

Mass Medium

Masters Of The Field

Memories

Memories Of You

Mister E

Mob Rule

Moments Of Delight

Moon In June

Moon In June (BBC version)

Moss

Muddy Mouse (a)



Ultramarine
1993

United Kingdoms

- Source
- **Kingdom**
- Queen Of The Moon
- Prince Rock
- **Happy Land**
- Urf
- English Kitten
- Instant Kitten
- Badgers
- Hooter
- Dizzy Fox
- No Time



Paul Haines
1993

Darn It!

Disc 1
- Threats That Matter
- **Cursty**
- What This Was Going To Suppose To Mean
- Funnybird Song
- Outside The City
- Art In Heaven
- Rawalpindi Blues
- Sticks In The Mud
- There Aren't These Things
- Paramedicaux Erotiques
- Jubilee
- On The Way To Elsewhere And Here
- Inexplicably
- Poem For Gretchen Ruth

Disc 2
- Just When I Thought
- This Dedication
- Threats That Count
- What This Was Going To Suppose To Mean
- Breakfast
- Snow Variations On Darn It!
- Darn It
- Route Doubt
- Ask Me If You Know
- Those Sweet Blue Olives Of Bombay
- Hello
- Mrs. Dressup
- Third World Two Medley: She Was Showing Me/Boint Liver
- Breakfast (Late)
- Please Fasten Your Seatbelt Sign
- Testing Testing
- Darn It! (Down In Back) (Reprise)
- Threats That Can't Read
- C'Etait Dans La Nuit

A Short Break

Muddy Mouse (b)

Muddy Mouse (c)

Muddy Mouth

N

N.I.O. (New Information Order)

Nan True's Hole

Never Leave Me

O

O Caroline

Old Europe

Out Of Season

Out Of The Blue

P

P.L.A.

Pataphysical Introduction Part1 & A Concise British Alphabet Part I and Part II

Pig

Pigs... (In There)

Prisonniers

R

Red Flag

Righteous Rhumba

Round Midnight



Robert Wyatt
1992

- A Short Break
- Tubab
- Kutcha
- Venti Latir
- **Unmasked**



Robert Wyatt
1991

Dondestan

- **Costa**
- **The Sight Of The Wind**
- **Catholic Architecture**
- **Worship**
- **Shrinkrap**
- **CP Jeebies**
- **Left On Man**
- **Lisp Service**
- **N.I.O. (New Information Order)**
- **Dondestan**



Soft Machine
1990

The Peel Sessions

Disc 1
- **Moon In June (BBC version)**
- Esther's Nose Job
- Mousetrap|Noisette|Backwards Mousetrap (reprise)
- Slightly All The Time
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Eamonn Andrews

Disc 2
- Facelift
- Virtually Pigling Bland
- Neo Cariban Grides
- Drop
- As If
- Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening



Michael Mantler

Many Have No Speech

- Intro
- Just As Someone
- Ce Qu'a De Pis
- Alles Scheint Rand
- Imagine
- In The End
- Vieil Aller
- Rien Nul
- **Tant De Temps**
- En Face
- Chaque Jour

S

Sea Song

Save Yourself

September Song

September the Ninth

She's Gone

Shipbuilding

Shrinkrap

Siam

Signed Curtain

Soup Song

Stalin Wasn't Stallin

Stay Tuned

Strange Fruit

T

Tant De Temps

Te Recuerdo Amanda

Team Spirit

Thank You Pierrot Lunaire

That's How Much I Need You Now

The Age Of Self

The British Road

The Duchess

The Doubtful Guest

The End

1988

- Pss
- En Cadence
- Something There
- Comrade
- Den Atem Ausget Ausget
- **A L'Abattoir**
- And What
- D'ou La Voix
- Fous Qui Disiez
- Merk, Jetzt
- Son Ombre
- Reve
- Life Connects
- **Prisonniers**
- Silence
- Viele Haben Keine Sprache



Robert Wyatt
1987

Chairman Mao

- **Chairman Mao**



Various Artists
1986

Artists For Animals

- **Pigs... (In There)**
- Animal Farm
- Monkey In A Bin
- The Aftermath
- Suffer Dog
- Rain Forest
- When The Last Ship Sails
- The Abbatoir)
- The Boyne Hunt Saboteurs
- I Believe
- One Million Hamburgers
- All Cats Are Grey
- Blood Sports
- Toros
- Knit Your Own Balaclava
- Hear The Animals Cry
- Lies
- A Sporting Life

Letters Home

- **Who Will Accuse?**
- **Heart Of Stone (Megalopolis)**
- Banknote
- **Moss**
- Dragon At The Core

The Hapless Child

The Highest Gander

The Insect God

The Object-Lesson

The Remembered Visit

The Sight Of The Wind

The Sinking Spell

The Song

The Wind Of Change

The Wonderful Window Of Eighteen Springs

Tom Hay's Fox

Trickle Down

U

Unmasked

Urep Peru

US Of Amnesia

V

Vandalusia

Venceremos (We Will Win)

W

Waited/Justice

Was A friend

War Without Blood



News From Babel
1985

- Dark Matter
- **Waited/Justice**
- Fast Food
- Late Evening



Robert Wyatt
With The SWAPO Singers
1985

The Wind Of Change

- **The Wind Of Change**
- Namibia



Robert Wyatt
1985

Old Rottenhat

- **Alliance**
- **US Of Amnesia**
- **East Timor**
- Speechless
- **The Age Of Self**
- **Vandalusia**
- **The British Road**
- **Mass Medium**
- **Gharbzadegi**
- **P.L.A.**



Robert Wyatt
1984

4 Track EP

- **I'm A Believer**
- **Yesterday Man**
- Team Spirit
- **Memories**

Venceremos (We Will Win)

Wervin'

What's New?

What A Wonderful World

Why Am I So Short?

When I Don't Want You

Who Will Accuse?

Why Are We Sleeping?

Wilderness

Worship

X

Y

Yesterday Man

Yolanda

You Don't Remember

You You



Working Week
1984

- Venceremos (We Will Win)
- Bottom End



Various Artists
1984

The Last Nightingale

- Moments Of Delight
- In The Dark Year
- Back In The Playground Blues
- Bittern Storm Revisited
- On The Beach At Cambridge



Robert Wyatt
1984

Work In Progress

- Biko
- Amber And The Amberines
- Yolanda
- Te Recuerdo Amanda



Robert Wyatt
1982

Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight

- Memories Of You
- 'Round Midnight
- Shipbuilding

Nothing Can Stop Us



Robert Wyatt
1982

- **Born Again Cretin**
- **At Last I Am Free**
- **Caimanera**
- **Grass**
- **Stalin Wasn't Stallin**
- **Shipbuilding**
- **Red Flag**
- **Strange Fruit**
- **Arauco**
- Trade Union
- Stalingrad



Nick Mason
1981

Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports

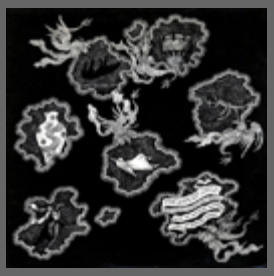
- Can't Get My Motor To Start
- **I Was Wrong**
- **Siam**
- **Hot River**
- **Boo To You Too**
- **Do Ya?**
- **Wervin'**
- **I'm A Mineralist**



Robert Wyatt
1975

Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

- **Soup Song**
- Sonia
- **Team Spirit**
- Song For Che
- **Muddy Mouse (a)**
- Solar Flares
- **Muddy Mouse (b)**
- 5 Black Notes And 1 White Note
- **Muddy Mouse (c)**
- **Muddy Mouth**



Michael Mantler
1976

The Happless Child (And Other Inscrutable Stories)

- **The Sinking Spell**
- **The Object-Lesson**
- **The Insect God**
- **The Doubtful Guest**
- **The Remembered Visit**
- **The Hapless Child**

Voices And Instruments



Jan Steele/John Cage
1976

- All Day
- Distant Saxophones
- Rhapsody Spaniel
- Experiences No.1
- **Experiences N°.2**
- **The Wonderful Widow Of Eighteen Springs**
- Forever And Sunsmell
- In A Landscape



Phil Manzanera
1975

Diamond Head

- **Frontera**
- Diamond Head
- Big Day
- The Flex
- Same Time Next Week
- Miss Shapiro
- East Of Echo
- Lagrima
- Alma Cape



Robert Wyatt
1974

Rock Bottom

- **Sea Song**
- **A Last Straw**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road**
- **Alifib**
- **Alifie**
- **Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road**



Matching Mole
1972

Little Red Record

- Starting In The Middle Of The Day We Can Drink Our Politics Away
- **Marchides**
- **Nan True's Hole**
- **Righteous Rhumba**
- Brandy As In Benj
- **Gloria Gloom**
- **God Song**
- Flora Fidgit
- Smoke Signal



Matching Mole
1972

Matching Mole

- O Caroline
- Instant Pussy
- Signed Curtain
- Part Of The Dance
- Instant Kitten
- Dedicated To Hugh, But You Weren't Listening
- Beer As In Braindeer
- Immediate Curtain



Soft Machine
1971

Jet-Propelled Photographs (At The Beginning)

- That's How Much I Need You Now
- Save Yourself
- I Should've Known
- Jet-Propelled Photograph
- When I Don't Want You
- Memories
- You Don't Remember
- She's Gone
- I'd Rather Be With You



Soft Machine
1970

Third

- Facelift
- Slightly All The Time
- Moon In June
- Out-Bloody-Rageous



Soft Machine
1969

Volume Two

- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. I
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. I
- Hibou, Anemone And Bear
- Concise British Alphabet, Pt. II
- Hulloder
- Dada Was Here
- Thank You Pierrot Lunaire
- Have You Ever Bean Green?
- Pataphysical Introduction, Pt. 2
- Out Of Tunes
- As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still
- Dedicated to You But You Weren't Listening
- Fire Engine Passing With Bells Clanging
- Pig

- Orange Skin Food
- Door Opens And Closes
- 10:30 Returns To The Bedroom



Soft Machine
1968

The Soft Machine

- Hope For Happiness
- Joy Of A Toy
- Hope For Happiness (Reprise)
- Why Am I So Short?
- So Boot If At All
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- We Did It Again
- Plus Belle Qu'une Poubelle
- Why Are We Sleeping?
- Box 25/4 Lid



Soft Machine
1967

Love Makes Sweet Music

- Love Makes Sweet Music
- Feelin 'Reelin Squeelin'
-



The Wilde Flowers
1984

Tales Of Canterbury

- Impotence (69)
- Those Words They Say (66)
- Memories (66)
- Don't Try To Change Me (65)
- Parchman Farm (65)
- Almost Grown (65)
- She's Gone (65)
- Slow Walkin' Talk (65)
- He's Bad For You (65)
- It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind) (65)
- Memories (Instrumental) (66)
- Never Leave Me (66)
- Time After Time (66)
- Just Where I Want (66)
- No Game When You Lose (66)
- Impotence (66)
- Why Do You Care (With Zobe) (68)
- The Pieman Cometh (With Zobe) (68)
- Summer Spirit (With Zobe) (68)
- She Loves To Hurt (69)
- The Big Show (69)
- Memories (69)



Together
2013

Steve Nieve

More information about this album

LA PLUS JOLIE LANGUE *Steve Nieve*

Je suis pas capable d'écrire en anglais
Mes sentiments d'aujourd'hui
La plus jolie langue au monde entier
Est le française et je suis ici
Où chaque mot est particulièrement beau
Comme les nuages, blanche , en l'air
Et collier, ensemble, forment les infinis mélanges
Comme les vagues révèlent la souplesse de la mer
Et les Alpes racontent la jeunesse de la terre



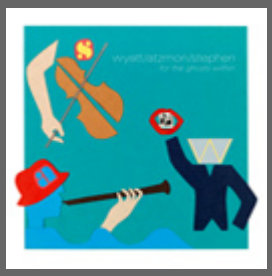
> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises



For The Ghosts Within
2010

Wyatt/Atzmon/Stephen

More information about this album

LAURA *Raksin / Mercer*

Laura is the face in the misty light
Footsteps that you hear down the hall
The laugh that floats on a summer night
That you can never quite recall
And you see Laura on a train that is passing through
Those eyes how familiar they seem
She gave your very first kiss to you
That was Laura but she's only a dream

> List

LULLABY FOR IRENA *Stephen/Benge*

You were there for me, all along.
You were there for me, when I had no body
There to care for me
Long before the day that I was born
In the air
Long before the day that I was born

You were there so I could be
From the air to your body, you gave my spirit life
You made my world
and all my wise and all my foolish ways
You gave the world to me
All its winters, all its summer days

I was there for you all along
I was there with you, flying high
and dancing with the birds for you
to the music of your lullabies
In the air
Long before the day that I was born

> List

LUSH LIFE *Strayhorn*

I used to visit all the very gay places
Those come-what-may places
Where one relaxes on the axis of the wheel of life
To get the feel of life from jazz and cocktails

The girls I knew had sad and sullen gray faces
With distingue traces that used to be there
You could see where they'd been washed away
By too many through the day, twelve o'clock tales

Then you came along with your siren song
To tempt me to madness
I thought for awhile that your poignant smile
Was tinged with the sadness of a great love for me
Ah yes, I was wrong
Again, I was wrong

Life is lonely again and only last year
Everything seemed so sure
Now life is awful again
A trough full of hearts could only be a bore

A week in Paris could ease the bite of it
All I care is to smile in spite of it

I'll forget you, I will while yet you are still
Burning inside my brain romance is mush
Stifling those who strive

So I'll live a lush life in some small dive
And there I'll be
While I rot with the rest of those
Whose lives are lonely too

> List

WHAT'S NEW? *Haggard/Burke*

What's new?
How is the world treating you?
You haven't changed a bit
Lovely as ever, I must admit

What's new?
How did that romance come through?
We haven't met since then
Gee, but it's nice to see you again

What's new?
Probably I'm boring you
But seeing you is grand
And you were sweet to offer your hand

I understand. Adieu!
Pardon my asking what's new
Of course you couldn't know
I haven't changed, I still love you

> List

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD *Thiele / Weiss*

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world

I see skies of blue and clouds of white

The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world

The colours of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces of people going by
I see friends shakin' hands, sayin' "How do you do?"
They're really saying "I love you"

I hear babies cryin', I watch them grow
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself, what a wonderful worl

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Snakes And Ladders
2010

Sophia Domancich

More information about this album

WILDERNESS *Benge / Domancich*

We follow our star
leading us on, to our desert land
and we....
find heaven there,
in the wilderness
home-from-home.
.....And when we need to run away
from this pit-i-less world,
we start searching for our star.
Hand in hand, always hand in hand
we'll be.....
free there,
in our wilderness,
free from harm, from the pitiless world, safe in the universe
of our wilderness
home from home
And if we ever lose our way,
we start searching for our star,
our sentimental star

> List



More information about this album



Comicopera
2007

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

STAY TUNED

Anja Garbarek

In between, lost in noise.
Somewhere, somewhere.

In between, got no choice
But to be here,
Somewhere, somewhere.

If you can hear me,
If you're still there,
Stay tuned.
There is more to come.

Oh don't start searching,
I'll get back to you.

Riding waves, trying to reach
Somewhere, somewhere.

Cannot share this moment with you.
I'm particles in the air,
You can't see me, but I'm here.

So if you can hear me,
If you're still there,
Stay tuned.

I'll get back to you

> List

JUST AS YOU ARE

Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt

A

It's that look in your eyes,
Telling me lies.
So many promises broken.

What can I do?

What should I do?
Try to love you
just as you are?

'Cause I'm never going to change a thing about you,
Never ever going to change a thing.
(I'll) try to love you,
just as you are.

Should I leave? Should I stay?
Should I call it a day?
There's so much to say that's unspoken.

In your way you've been true,
all I can do
(is) try to love you
just as you are,

'Cause I'm never going to change a thing.
No, I'll never ever change a thing.
(I'll) try to love you
just as you are.

B

It's that look in your eyes,
I know you despise me,
For not being stronger.

What can I do?
What should I do?
I've always loved you
just as you are.

And I've never tried to change a thing,
never tried to change a thing about you.
Always loved you
just as you are.

Will you leave? Will you stay?
There may come a day
when I'm weak and I'm stupid no longer.

In my way, I've been true,
I've lived just for you,
ans always loved you,
just as you are.

I've never tried to change a thing,
never tried to change a thing about you,

Always loved you
just as you are.

> List

YOU YOU *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

You.

Yyou're there
like the light
wWhen the dark descends.

So I don't mind

when it's that time again.

'Cause it's time for
you you, for
you you, for
you you, to
see you,
when night comes again.

I'm tumbling down,
It's falling.

You
you gave me money.
It stuck in my memory.
Just like you.

You're here,
where you should be.

You.....

You
Is it you?
Love,
Fading away with the night.

When dawn comes you're not there,
so terrible
to lose you,
when the morning comes.

You.....

> List

A.W.O.L.
Dedicated to David Greenberger

Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt

Hattie lives up in the attic now,
her feet rarely touching the ground,
haunted by waltzes with Harry.
(Harry's hat hanging here in the hall.)

Memoy's fading for Hattie now.
There?s nothing and no-one to trust.
Just the tick and the tock of the damnable clock,
as the world that she knows turns to dust.

Hattie stays up in her attic now,
in silence, except for the sound
of the tick and the tock of the damnable clock,
while the world that she knows disappears

Thinking in riddles,
Waving to trains.
Waving to trains that no longer run.

Thinking in riddles.
And waving to trains.
Waving to trains that no longer run.

> List

A BEAUTIFUL PEACE *Robert Wyatt / Brian Eno*

(muttering)

I've been walking for hours,
needed a rest.
Take a good look around,
nowhere to rest.

There's a shop
selling gentlemen's suits.
Further along
an estate agent or two.

And a take-away sign
over a dusty door.
Shiny photos of food,
slightly microwaved.

There's a methodist hall.
No Smoking
No Dogs
in the methodist hall.

It looks pretty grim
in the methodist hall,
despite a poster which says that
'He's There for Us All'

And it's a beatuful day,
for walking away.

Its's a beautiful day,
but not here.

> List

BE SERIOUS *Robert Wyatt*

I really envy Christians.
I envy Muslems too.
It must be great to be so sure
as a top Hindu or Jew.

He said
'Pray to God for mercy'
He said
'Get down on your knees'
He said
ask Him for forgiveness,
and 'when you do,
say please'

And I got no-one to turn to
when I'm sinking in the shit.
Feel so sad and lonely,
no-one to tell me what to do.

He said,
well I 'shouldn't grumble'
If you just ask Him nicely
He'll 'iron out your frowns'.

And I don't believe in willpower;
self-expression's such a fraud.
I mean how can I express myself
when there's no self to express?

Be serious!

Put a sock in it.
Then put a lid on it.
Do us a favour.
Leave it out.

> List

MOB RULE *Robert Wyatt*

Plans were unveiled,
the press informed,
residents muttered their doubts and fears
at meetings.

A brace of councillors
voiced concern.
Some assent was murmured.

There were Advisors
and Expert Guidance had been sought.

Whom to trust?
Who could know
just what that meant:
Expert?

People are so ungrateful,
It's quite hard on Chairmen.

Directors of Planning must be given
the right to make Plans.
Just as, say,
the woodworm
must bore.

So too
Advisors must
Advise.

> List

A BEAUTIFUL WAR *Robert Wyatt / Brian Eno*

It's a beautiful day
to see my prey.

It's a beautiful day
for a daring raid

I can see my prey
from afar.

So I open the hatch.
And I drop the first batch.

It's a shame I'll miss the blaze,
but I'll see the film within days,
and I'll get to see the replay
of my beautiful day.

Re-live my day,
my beautiful day.
Re-live my beautiful day,

when I opened the hatch,
and I dropped the first batch,
how they got no time to flee.

Total success.
We'll all be free,

What a beautiful day.
Just a beautiful day

> List

OUT OF THE BLUE *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

No need to wipe your feet,
The welcome mat's not there.

But just take care
before you dare to
step inside my door.

Something unbelievable
has happened to the floor.

These rooms won't give you shelter.
They're open to the air.
The upper storey's out of reach,
the stair's no longer there.

For reasons beyond all understanding,
You've blown my house apart.
You've set me free
(to let you know
you've planted
everlasting hatred in my heart
You've planted
everlasting hatred in my heart)

You've planted your everlasting
hatred in my heart.
Just a beautiful day



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

DEL MONDO *Ferretti / Zamboni / Maroccolo / Magnelli / Canali*

E'stato un tempo il mondo giovane e forte,
Odorante di sangue fertile,
Rigoglioso di lotte, moltitudini,
Splendeva pretendeva molto…
Famiglie donne incinte, sfregamenti,
Facce gambe pance braccia…

Dimora della carne, riserva di calore,
Sapore e familiare odore…
E'cavit di donna che crea il mondo,
Veglia sui tempo lo protegge…
Contiene membro d'uomo che s'alza e spinge,
Insoddisfatto poi distrugge…

Il nostro mondo adessso debole e vecchio,
Puzza il sangue versato infetto…

E'stato un tempo il mondo giovane e forte,
Odorante di sangue fertile,
Dimora della carne, riserva di calore,
Sapore e familiare odore…
Il nostro mondo adessso debole e vecchio,
Puzza il sangue versato infetto…

Povert magnanima, mala aventura,
Concedi compassione ai figli tuoi…
Glorifichi la vita, e gloria sia,

Glorifichi la vita e gloria…

E'stato un tempo il mondo giovane e forte,
Odorante di sangue fertile,
Famiglie donne incinte, sfregamenti,
Facce gambe pance braccia…

> List

CANCION DE JULIETA *Frederico Garcia Lorca / Robert Wyatt*

Un mar de sueno.
Un mar de tierra blanca,
y los arcos vacios por el cielo.

Mi cola por los mares, por las algas.
Mi cola por el tiempo.

Playa de los gusanos lenadores
y delfin de cristal por los cerezos.

Oh puro amianto de final!
Oh ruina!
Oh soledad sin arco!
Mar de sueno!

> List

FRAGMENT *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

'Cause I'm never going to change a thing about you,
(I'll) try to love you.

> List

HASTA SIEMPRE COMANDANTE *Carlos Puebla*

Aprendimos a quererte
desde la histórica altura
donde el sol de tu bravura
le puso cerco a la muerte.

Tu mano gloriosa y fuerte
sobre la historia dispara
cuando todo Santa Clara
se despierta para verte.

Aquí se queda la clara,
la entrañable transparencia,
de tu querida presencia
Comandante Che Guevara.

Vienes quemando la brisa
con soles de primavera
para plantar la bandera
con la luz de tu sonrisa.

Aquí se queda la clara,
la entrañable transparencia,
de tu querida presencia
Comandante Che Guevara.

Tu amor revolucionario
te conduce a nueva empresa
donde esperan la firmeza
de tu brazo libertario.

Sequiremos adelante
como junto a ti seguimos
y con Fidel te decimos :
Hasta siempre, Comandante!

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Theatre Royal Drury Lane
Sunday 8th September 1974
2005

Robert Wyatt & Friends
In Concert

More information about this album

CALYX *Robert Wyatt / Phil Miller*

Poetry in motion
is what you become
from the front and from behind
you are a star

Sideways,
on the top
and underneath
Close inspection reveals that
you're in perfect nick
you'll perform like a dream.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Cuckooland
2003

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

JUST A BIT *Robert Wyatt*

Faith may not be such a bad thing.
Hope can still feel pretty good.
I'm as mad as any hatter.
I feel safer touching wood.

I like totem poles and icons
(icon tact is de rigeur).
So ring dem bells and pump that organ.
chants for him and hymns for her.

'Bracadabra hocus locus,
magic mush, no room for doubt
as wailing walls induce psychosis
(beat your braincells inside out).

Transcendental art's religion,
thinking you'll improve your mind,
when all it does (if you're in luck)
is camouflage the daily grind.

Nature's harmony's a discord.
if you listen with both ears.
Poor Gaia's up to here in white noise.
She cannot assuage your fears.

Superstition's like religion;
bonsai version - faintly sad.
And I know that (I must admit it)
touching wood is just a bit mad

> List

OLD EUROPE *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

Le Chat qui Pêche.
Rue de la Huchette.
Paris at night.
and the strains of a ghost saxophone.

Juliette and Miles.
Black and white city.
Paris by night.

and the ghosts of two people in love.

I'll be dreaming again,
always dreams of yesterdays.
Those days live on?
safe here in my heart.

Cherchez la femme.
slips through a doorway.
out of the night
to the warmth of a new lover's arms.

Rue St Benoit.
La route enchant2e.
Indigo nights,
and the ghost of the moon in the Seine.

I'll be dreaming again,
always dreams of yesterdays.
Those days live on,
safe here in my heart.

> List

TOM HAY'S FOX *Robert Wyatt*

Bring out your foghorns,
the mist has descended.
The alley's never been blinder.

What light there is.
is too diffused
to indicate any direction.
What light there is.
tells us nothing.

> List

FOREST *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

Deep in the forest
the omens are bad.
a cloud passes over the moon.

Devil Wind
bends the trees.
a cloud passes over the moon.

And the moon takes a peep
when the Gypsy girl sings,
and her song rises up
from the dark to the light,
like smoke to the sky.
when the Gypsy girl sings
at the river's edge.

Deep in the forest
the omens are bad.
a cloud passes over the moon.

White wolf waits.
grey wolf howls
at the girl by the river's edge.

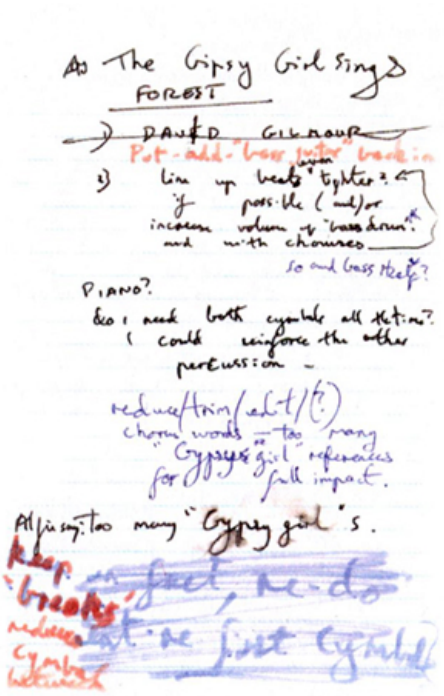
The bullet head boys
with their baby blue eyes,
their donner und blitzen.
the lily white gadje
religiously hatching their plots
in the eyries of eagles.

But the moon's keeping watch
as the Gypsy girl sings,
sees her song rising up
like smoke to the sky
from the dark to the light,
when the Gypsy girl sings
at the river's edge.

Like the sun on the forest
her song rises up. from
the ashes of Auschwitz,
the death camp at Lety.
the white cliffs of Dover,
the song of the Roma
lives on and on...

Trees grow tall
though the winds blow cold.
tall trees grow.

Tall trees grow
where the cold winds blow.
trees grow tall.



> List

BEWARE *Karen Mantler*

You might have a lot to say.
There might be a price to pay.
Just beware.

They might smile and nod their heads,
while they wish that you were dead.
Just beware.

Your Friends might not be what they seem.
Take it from me,
if you're not careful
you might get hurt one last time.
It's just a warning,
beware.

Don't get caught off your guard.
Evil lurks in all our hearts.
Just beware.

You won't last very long,
even if you are strong.
Just beware.

Don't trust anyone.
They might be your enemy.
If you're not careful.
you might get hurt one last time.
It's just a warning.
beware.
beware.
beware.

> List

CUCKOO MADAME *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

Cuckoo Madame
with your teddy bear eye,
yellow fingers clinging to the chain link fence.
Bombers above you.
Bombers behind you.

Disapproval hounds you,
ugly rumour surrounds you.

Solitary madam, we never understood, you
never told us of your battle
with the cuckoo baby blues.

Cuckoo Madame
it's no wonder you're shy.
You're Greta Garbo,
you're the witch of Salem.
You're anti-social, and
you are too bloody lonely
for the likes of us.

We never knew of your battle
with the cuckoo baby blues.

When you saw that egg crack

it froze your blood.
You knew you had to fly then,
had to say goodbye,
had to fly before you saw another mother
feed your chick.

You knew it would break your heart.
You knew it would break your heart.

> List

LULLABY FOR HAMZA *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

When bombers bomb again,
I need your lullaby.
Fires are burning.
The nightmare's begun.

The world is dark again,
I need your lullaby.
Sleep has gone.
Night is long again.
Sing me your song.
Let me sleep.
Bring me peace.

When bombers bomb again,
we'll need your lullaby.
Children cry.
Houses burn again.
Once more.
Sing songs to soothe them,
to dry their tears.
to drown the screams of war.

The world's gone wrong again,
I need your lullaby.
Night is long,
and sleep's just a dream.
Sing your song,
stay close to me.
Sing to me.
Hushabye.

The world is dark again,
I need your lullaby.
Sleep has gone.
Night is much too long again.
Sing me your song,
let me sleep.
Bring me peace.



Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

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> List

TRICKLE DOWN *Robert Wyatt*

Open your window
lend an ear
and then
pull back the curtain
hurry
so you can hear

Listen to the
hum
as it rises
riding the. breeze
leaving gravity's children
agrounded

Onwards and upwards
that's the way
ever on
beyond the highest plateau
that's OK

There's a reason why some people float
sometimes
are floored
God knows this reason
that's what gods are for
Press on your window feel the pane

> List

INSENSATEZ *Antonio Carlos Jobim / Vincius DeMoares*

How insensitive I must have seemed
when he told me that he loved me.
How unmoved and cold I must have seemed
when he told me so sincerely.

Why, he must have asked, did I just
turn and stare in icy silence?
What was I to say? What can you say
when a love affair is over?

Now he's gone away, but I'm alone
with the memory of his last look.
Vague and drawn and sad. I see it still,
all his heartbreak in that last look.

Why, he must have asked, did I just
turn and stare in icy silence?
What was I to do? What can one do?
When a love affair is over.

> List

MISTER E *Karen Mantler*

I love suspense.
the thrill of the unknown.
What will I say?
I can't predict.
Where will all this lead?
I don't want to know.
Just take a chance,
things can't get much worse.
Who knows?
They might improve.
There's always hope.
When will I learn to trust myself,
embrace mystery.
not be afraid?

> List

LULLALOOP *Alfreda Benge*

Hold on.
can't walk faster.
can't get up the hill.

Oy! You!
Wait for me,
I'm out of breath.
I'm ill

Slow down.
Slow down.

Hey! You!
Bin that Bebop.

Ditch the dancing.
Night's for lying down.

Bin that Bebop.
Ditch the dancing.
Don that duvet.
Cook the cocoa.
Turn that music down!

Slow down.
Slow down.

Cut those capers.
Keep you hair on.
I should worry.
You should coco.
Dirty stop-out.
Why? Oh why? Oh why?

Slow down.
Slow down.
Night's for lying down.

(Sweet dreams,
old chap,
sweet dreams).

> List

LIFE IS SHEEP *Karen Mantler*

Life is sheep,
for wool and lots of meat
we buy and sell.
And pets are just a luxury;
ornaments for you and me.

Life is sheep.
If you live on a farm,
instead of names.
the animals all have numbers
So you won't get too attached.

> List

FOREIGN ACCENTS *Robert Wyatt*

Hiroshima Nagasaki
Nagasaki Hiroshima
arigato Vanunu
ko n nichiwa Mossadegh
arigato Mordechai
ko n nichiwa Mohammad
Hiroshima Nagasaki

Hiroshima Nagasaki
ko n nichiwa arigato
Nagasaki Hiroshima
Nagasaki Hiroshima
arigato Vanunu
ko n nichiwa Mossadegh
arigato Mordechai
ko n nichiwa Mohammad

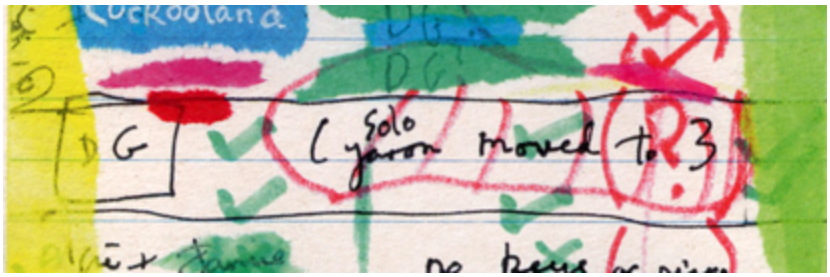
Hiroshima Nagasaki
ko n nichiwa arigato

> List

BRIAN THE FOX *Robert Wyatt*

Overnight
Upstream
Downwind
Overland

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



A Tribute To John Lennon
2002

Various Artists

More information about this album

LOVE *John Lennon*

Love is real, real is love
Love is feeling, feeling love
Love is wanting to be loved

Love is touch, touch is love
Love is reaching, reaching love
Love is asking to be loved

Love is you
You and me
Love is knowing
we can be

Love is free, free is love
Love is living, living love
Love is needing to be loved

> List



More information about this album



Winged Migration
2001

Bruno Coulais

More information about this album

MASTERS OF THE FIELD

Gabriel Yacoub / Bruno Coulais

Up above gathered on a field of clouds.
Crowded a lot down in the lowlands,
Waiting for their time.
Waiting and calling,
calling out for rain.
To leave the skies down in the lowlands,
Masters of the field.

Wings wide set in the teeth of the wind.
The old beasts feathered wild beasts.
Masters of the field.

Eagle dancers, wings that shape the wind.
Carving the clouds into spirit,
Sufis of the air.

Dervish dancers summoning the sun.
To tint the mist down on the lowlands,
Masters of the field.

Old beasts, feathered, wild beasts.
Masters of the field.

> List

THE HIGHEST GANDER

Gabriel Yacoub / Bruno Coulais

Overland, above the dark seas,
wild refugees flee the seasons.
Drifting beyond the night clouds
in the wake of their guiding star.

There he goes the famous gander.
Eating fog, dancing with witches.
There he goes, the famous old gander
who longed to leave.

If you hear the sound of our voices
through the busy murmur of the earth,
you will know the meaning of our words
praying for spring to the ether.

Night and day the travellers fly.
(winter and spring have their reasons).

Sailing through sunrise and setting wild wind
and through steel blue air.

Here he comes, the highest gander.
Eating fog, dancing with witches.
Here he comes, the famous old gander
Who longed to leave.

We don't feel the warmth of your breath.
Through the icy edges of the earth,
we don't hear the rhythms of your call,
signalling the spring in the ether.

> List



More information about this album



September Song
2000

Pascal Comelade

More information about this album

SEPTEMBER SONG *Kurt Weill / Maxwell Anderson*

As the Autumn weather turns leaves to fly
I haven't got time for the waiting game
and it's a long, long while from May to December
and the days grow short when you reach September

but the days will dwindle down to a precious few

and these few precious days I would spend with you
these golden days I'd spend with you

and I have lost one too
and I walk a little late
I haven't got time for the waiting game
and it's a long, long while from May to December
and the days grow short when you reach September

and the days tend to go
and the days grow few
September
November
and these few golden days I'd spend with you
these golden days I'd spend with you

and the days tend to go
and the days grow few
September
November
and these few golden days I'd spend with you
these golden days I'd like to spend with you

quite

> List



More information about this album



The Gathering
2000

Annie Whitehead

More information about this album

BEFORE WE KNEW *R. Wyatt / A. Whitehead*

The thing I forgot to do
Seize the moment
Pin it down

I let it flow by
let it go

Bent and wavered
in the breeze

Flickering flame
Stupified

Waited
Watched it slip away

Before we knew
It was gone

(not dead yet though
Flame still lit)

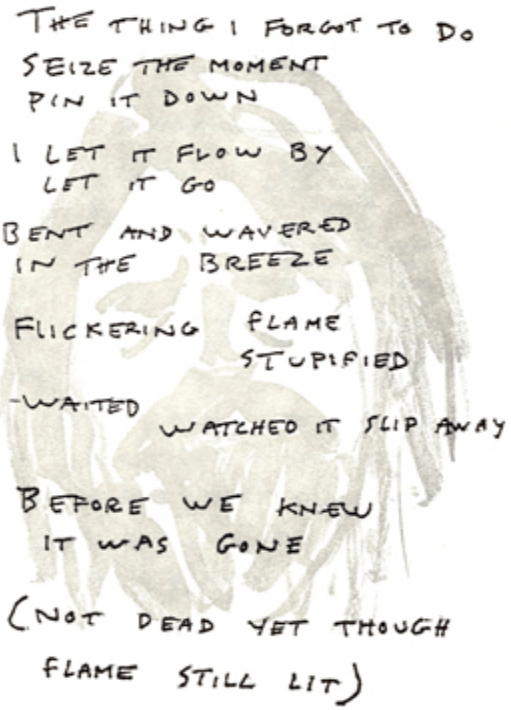


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Shleep
1997

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

HEAPS OF SHEEPS

Benge / Wyatt - arr. Eno

I realised my fists were clenched,
I stretched my fingers to relax.
Still not sleeping
I tried counting sheep.
One by one,
they leapt across the fence
constructed for them.
Right to left,
across the fence I had constructed
Having jumped,
they refused further direction.

Each sheep, where it landed,
refusing to exit, remained
(Creating a vast writhing heap
growing fast on the left).
Try as I might,
I could not stop them entering
once again.
Try as they might,
not one could leave the stage.
I realised my fists were clenched.
I stretched my fingers.

Each sheep where it landed,
refusing to exit, remained.
(Creating a vast writhing heap
growing quickly on one side).
Try as they might,
not one could leave the stage,
Try as I might,
I could not stop them entering,
once again.
No longer daring to close my eyes,
still not sleeping.

I realised my goose was cooked
I wandered shipshaped on the shore.

> List

THE DUCHESS

Wyatt

Oh my wife is tall and short,

she won't do what she ought.
She never lies, but then again,
she lies down all day long

Oh
my wife is fat and thin,
she's generous and mean,
she's....., and
her secret's safe with me.

Oh
my wife is old and young,
so sweet with her poison tongue,
on her evenings off she blackmails toffs,
but her secret's safe with me.

Oh
my wife is tall and short,
she hangs out down the port,
says "Hello sailor, how's your dad?''
But lher secret's safe with me.

Oh
my wife is sour and sweet,
she dit dit dit delete,
she's lalala ladida, butter
secret's safe with me.



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

MARYAN *Wyatt / Catherine*

Over an ocean away
like salmon
turning back for Nayram
to the delta
with the rivulets tumbling down
glide over sand
around the rocks
back through the wavering weeds
and the turds
in the way
riversmell
on the route
along away
overgravel
the weirs of the tributaries
against the icy waterflow
to Maryan

> List

WAS A FRIEND *Wyatt / Hopper*

Funny kind of greeting, not exactly hostile,
not exactly facing, not exactly turning away,
not exactly frowning, not exactly smiling.
Lurking by the door
without a sign of wanting to move.
Though hardly friendly, not an angry gesture
did it make. Just quite unnerving.
It's been a long time.

I almost forgot where we buried the hatchet.
"Bin a long time no see", (pidgin English
native to none). After several silences
a cautious head nod. This could take forever.
Did it want to come for a dig? It did
not answer. I was feeling restless at the door,
ashamed o fmy fears.Where WAS the hatchet?

Suddenly was gone. I woke up
feeling stupid. No-one else awake
though dawn was only minutes away.
Quietly I rose to fill the morning pee pot.
What a silfy dream,
not like what really would have occurred
Old wounds are healing.
Faded scars are painless - just an itch.
We are forgiven.
It's been a long time.

> List

FREE WILL AND TESTAMENT *Wyatt / Kramer*

Given free will but within certain limitations,
I cannot will myself to limitless mutations,
I cannot know what I would bey I were not me,
1 can only guess me.

So when 1 say that I know me, bow can I know that?
What kind of spider understands aracbnophobia?
I have my senses and my sense of having senses.
Do I guide them? Or they me?

The weight of dust exceeds the weight of settled objects.
What can it mean, such gravity without a centre?
Is there freedom to un-be?
Is there freedom from will-to-be?

Sheer momentum makes as act this way or that way.
We Just invent or just assume a motivation.
I would disperse, be disconnected. Is this possible?
What are soldiers without a foe?

Be in the air, but not be air, be in the no air.
Be on the loose, neither compacted nor suspended.
Neither bom nor left to die.

Had I been free, I could have chosen not to be me.
Demented forces push me madly round a treadmill.
Demented forces push me madly round a treadmill.
Let me off please, l am so tired.
Let me off please, I am so very tired.

> List

SEPTEMBER THE NINTH *Benge / Wyatt*

When Woman wishing for wings,
(too large a lump to pass for bird),
hopes that by tvishing bard enough
she will cast off the ballast.
And the swallows
will politely accept her waving arms
as wings,
and she will join in with them,
and she will rise up with them,
and she will
fly.

> List

ALIEN *Benge / Wyatt*

I sleep on the wing
Above the rainclouds
Blown by the wind (no roots on earth)
No ground below (no ground below)
Just ruins (timeless)
Dandelion clocks (drifting)
Am I from Venus? (higher, higher)

No ocean bed, no west-wind drift
No desert sand, land or sea
No world below, blown by the wind (limbless) (homeless)
Not human
Lost in longing (lost in longing)
Never belonging (never belonging)
Am I from Venus? (higher, higher, higher)

No roots on earth (I sleep on the wing)
Nowhere I search (above the rainclouds)
No roots on earth (blown by the wind)
No ground below
Timeless (just ruins)
Drifting (dandelion clocks)
Higher, higher, higher, higher

Blown by the wind
Above the rainclouds (no roots on earth)
Evening starlight
The night's below (no lights below)
Just ruins (no ocean bed) (rootless)
Dandelion clocks (no west-wind drift) (drifting)
Am I from Venus? (higher, higher) (no desert sand)

> List

OUT OF SEASON *Benge / Wyatt*

A late sparrow fledgling
bathing in dust
beneath the gaping mouth
of the post box (hungry for letters home)

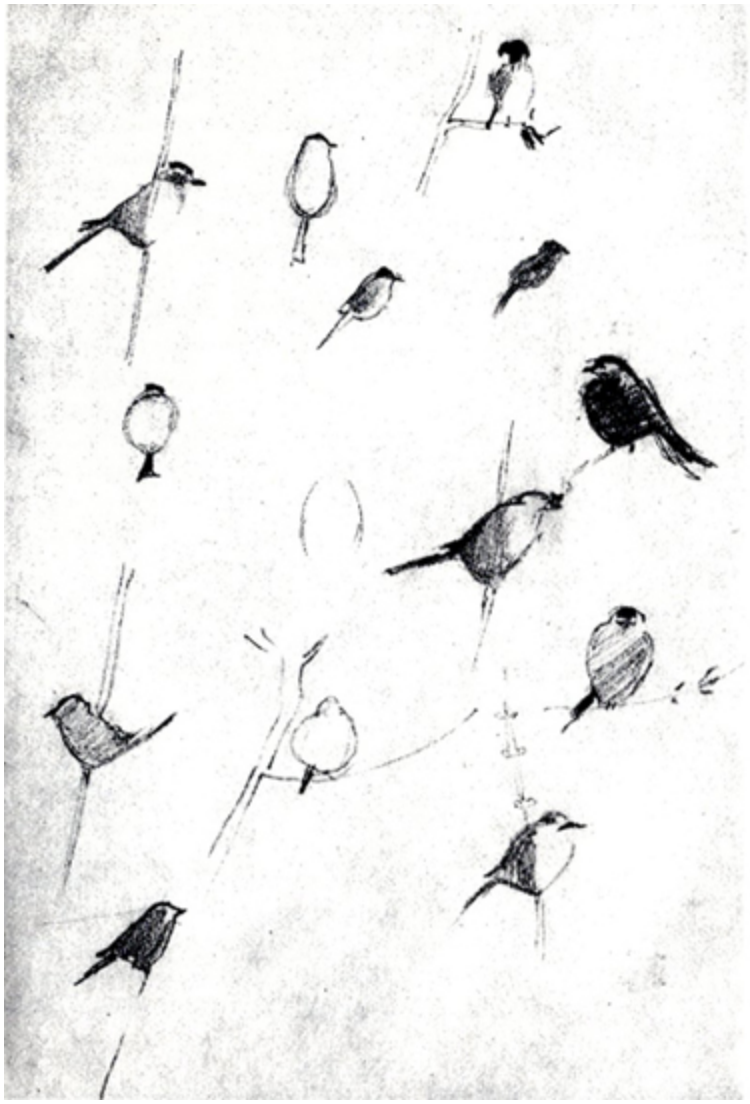


Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

A SUNDAY IN MADRID *Benge / Wyatt*

Pa arrives in the city of the closed doors,
greeted by miners from Asturias.
His limousine streaks past giant shiny moneyboxes,
huddled together for warmth.
He is deposited in his inner chamber.

Later, fix meets the bear, impersonates a tree
to confuse the hell's gates dogs' sense of smell,
and rests for chess with no-one.
Then (amongst the closed doors) he shrinks,
is dwarfed by rabbits, expands again
to invade the destiny of fourteen mysterious others,
strangely clad, captured by a camera,
carefully arranged, with a space for his image.
A plot hatched by fate.

Pa looks for diversion in the written word.
Meanwhile, the mundane world seeks solace in illusion.
An imprisoned rainbow gives shelter to the homeless.
A painted machine registers the weight of mystery,
and for background interest a kilometre of women
queue to kiss a wooden foot, patiently.
The Queen had been.
But no information, in the city of the closed doors,
on Christian Spain.
Elsewhere, bare buttocks wait their turn.
In vain. No guides available. All busy in the Prado,
followed by shuffling feet. Fascinated. Perhaps.

Outside again in the mundane world,
in the city of the closed doors,
living men impersonate sleeping saints,
on sundry raised surfaces, (tike benches).
Art objects sit headless (beneath coats).
Performance artists simulate poverty and beg.
A day's begging pays the entrance fee
to the Cinema of Terror. A golden gas mask
throws the torturers off the trail, amongst
the grazed walls of the city of the closed doors.

Pa escapes,
samples the delights of raw fish, good wine,
closes the door of his inner chamber,
closes the door of his inner chamber, and sleeps.

> List

BLUES IN BOB MINOR *Wyatt*

Roger's in the archive looking up Casement
Martha's in the government digging up the basement
rebel into representative for the voter
shadow backbencher couldn 't get a word in
turned up anyway issues burning
all consuming drinks in the cabinet
spent a lot of time just examining the building
drinks on the house? you must be joking
corridors of power cuts toy telephone bills
long time no see underneath the floorboard
looking for the roots of the family treetops
toe's in the water but you've only got ten

Fingers in the eel pie poke around tip top
tunnelling a wormhole Eartha Kitty catfish
meadow brown peacock pupa-larva-caterpillar
hibernate in winter of our discotheque no
end in sight more like a spiral coil
or curler just unwinding very slowly
revealing endless disappearing pipelines
genuflecting bowing deeply it
don't take a weatbergirl to see where
the wind is blowing what the wind is bending

Isobars are opening sex to midnight
cabinet shuffling homeward bound taking
a detour rendezvous do chapel in the valley
of the blown up doll that's not Martha
shunting in a siding she got homework

up to here
Roger's in the footnotes up to his elbones
verse and chapter disinterred
borrowing a bookcase don't come easy
the weight of the evidence in parenthesis
beggars tightly furled belief

Heads on blockabeater repetition on the line
Shell shock supertroopers whirl banking oil palm
intercontinental drift over the rainbow
over the sea to ska rocker skintone
hirsuit missed a link and that's not all
that he got missing inna thousand years of
orthotoxic waste disposal god proposal
jealous sky whatever is a girl to do
to break the service in its tried and tested
and found wanting state of oh! boy network
stewardship?

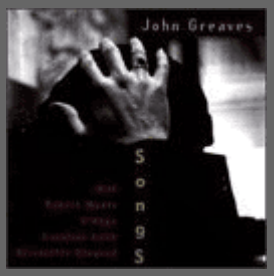
Little Johnny Aardvark never hurt
nobody Martha friend and Roger too
tone down a little sotto voce some tall order
given that four minutes seems eternity time
in the hushed up world of waspish Vsigns
A-sides sui-C-side salads of the bad young B-sides
what's the point of digging deeper just to lay
the ghost of Sala Hal-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub?

"Don't give up" the deadman cried
"there's more of us than there are of you
soon you'll all be on our side forever more or
Lester Young died 'Fat Girl' also blowing all the blues
away side dust ain't just dust trust us like we
live forever broken loose from greystone tether
keep on tiptoe through the archive we are dead
but you are alive Martha yes and Roger too
until you let the gringos grind you down"

> List



More information about this album



Songs
1995

John Greaves

More information about this album

THE SONG *Peter Blegvad / John Greaves*

Town In the shadow of a mountain
Crown of the mountain came avalanching down
All summer long
We were stalking what
We came to call THE SONG.
THE SONG was a kind of eruption —
Mover of mountains,
Avalanche of crowns
When we were young
We sought the laws
We thought would cause
THE SONG.
Life is a dream we are phantoms.
Man is the union of Divinity and Dust.
All summer long,
When we were young
Before we'd sung THE SONG.
No mere machine
Made of music
Of words and music
As other songs are —
This was THE SONG,
A recipe, a remedy a cure.
THE SONG would be sung
On the border
Sung by us standing
Straddling the line
Between two worlds
Unified only by THE SONG.

> List

KEW. RHONE. *Peter Blegvad / John Greaves*

(Who?)
We who knew no woe
We who were her hero
(When?),
When we were on her knee
When we knew her
When we were one
(Where?)
Kew. Rhone.
We won renown
(How?)

We were her worker
We won honor enow
When we knew her
When we were one
Where?
Kew. Rhone.

not a set animal,
not a set animal, laminates
laminates a tone of
a set animal,
animal, laminates
a set animal,
animal, laminates
laminates a tone of sleep
a tone of sleep

Peel's foe, not a set animal, laminates a tone of sleep

> List

GEGENSTAND *Peter Blegvad / John Greaves*

It but incurs
A lustre in a flood -
After many not dislodged.

And at each subsidence
Half arises
Half holds to cloudy water -
Nature of its anchor kept occult.

We keep a current
Flowing from a sluice.
Cloud it with corrosives -
Hoping to appropriate
What holds its own so well -

What tips an ever wider wake.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



A Civilised Word
1995

Millennium

More information about this album

ANOTHER GREAT VICTORY *Robert Wyatt / Jo Bogaert*

They heard restless stirring down wilderness way
and a something that filled them with fear
and a deep dismay
It could steal all the children
consume the civilized world
Something had to be done to contain
destroy whatever it was
Over the moat over the wall
in through the windows and under the bed
«It could take away our freedom and our television
our right to reply and then again
drive a tank through our back yard»
They started to cut back on welfare and schools
Defence a priority oyer every local need
They were armed and fully briefed ready to go
There was 'no time to lose it was never or now
eyeryone agreed or it would come up.
Over the moat over the wall
Undermine all our values overnight
The advance guard crept out before dawn's dirty light
Behind them the safety of everything they knew
Shuffles and whispers they shared in the dark
Everything else held a breath in the secretive night
Then a bellow rang out like a giant in fear
they froze on the spot 'til the cause was clear
At a word from - the leader they began to surge
Seeing nothing, but blundering on firing blindly ahead
They ran up
Over the top over the hill
the enemy hill
They were too sudden for the beast to fight back
with any real effect
Still they fought on finished the job
no sense in leaving before they were done
But soon enough the enemy was totally silent
The first morning sunlight turned dewdrops to steam
They woke up to look all around them
At the first they saw little
apart from the muddy meadow all about
Making them feel rather queasy
'Cause there were no weapons at all in the enemy camp
Not a sign of anything you could call a bomb
Nothing even like a grown-up gun
Back through their moat and
over their wall
The men returned

Another Victory.

> List

IGOR MORTIS *Robert Wyatt / Jo Bogaert*

Departed Lying under the bed Left the habit
of breathing without motive or reason
to breathe at all without a hope in hell
you just live there still remembering
all the stupid incidents or at least a few
you can't believe it all goes on
day in and day out as if driven
just for the sake of going on
with no target in view
And every morning the sun obscures a darker truth
beyond its reach appearing to outline
horizons that are
Definite. Hiding the endless. Hiding the endlessness Walking the water praying to stone dead men Defeated hiding under the bedrock of age
Still the habit of breathing
Decomposing the air on a G-string
a long way to go. Either way
Hiding the endless. Hiding the endlessness
treading the fine line
Paying to seem less dead
Ha Ha Ha Ha Ah Ah Ah Ah
Unplacated or defeated it's so hard to say
in the end. Breeding endless slight variations
of unchanging laws of chance
Aleatory endgame plans From the middle,
the front, a little sideways and then
right back to the starting bloc
wavering exhausted until you feel the pressure
in your skull.



Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

UREP PERU *Robert Wyatt / Jo Bogaert*

For you / for me / for you
the noble heroes of freedom
For me / for you / for you / for me and
just for us / for you / for me
they saved the world
The bankers of the world unite
for you / for we
the bombers oí the western world
unload for us the soldiers of fortune
high flyers
opened new markets
Rolled back the frontiers
Heroes of freedom they were
heroes of marketing our

Soldiers of fortune

Heroes of freedom
Heroes of freedom because

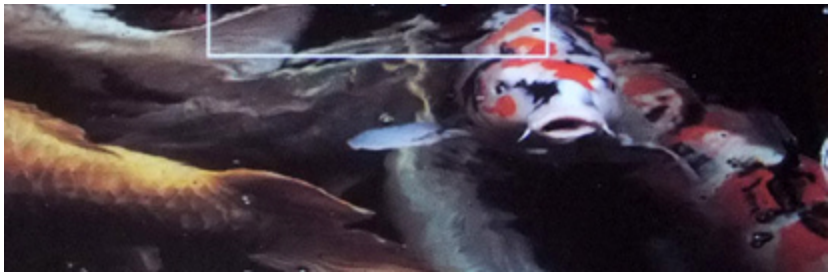
They for me / for you / for you / for me
That's why they bombed old Trípoli for you / for me
They bombed Bengazi too.

Soldiers of fortune

Heroes of freedom straight up
Heroes of freedom

For you / for me / for me / for you
They brought Angola to its knees
For you / for me
more of the same to Mozambique
for me / for you
and Guatemala, Haïtí
For you / for me
Ground to a halt reduced to clear

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Flotsam Jetsam
1994

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

WAR WITHOUT BLOOD *Robert Wyatt / anonyme*

Half the time is pantomime
Half the time it's only make believe
Heaven knows, heaven only knows
It's anaemic as hell with it's soft syckle cell

But still the moving target's hit
We stop them in their tracks
With modern artefacts
Till the gutter turns to mud
The show goes down a bomb
With modern artefacts

After death occurs, the show must go on, and off and on
And over time, the three days week, the monthly board
Roll by to fill the greater mas cavities hold our teeth
Apart it's too much to take in, it's too much to take in
It's too much to take in.

Till we learn to lose the game
We'll always play the game.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises



Mid-Eighties
1993

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

THE END *Robert Wyatt*

You're wondering now
What to do
Now you know
This is the end

> List



More information about this album



United Kingdoms
1993

Ultramarine

More information about this album

KINGDOM

Lyrics adapted from "The Song of the Lower Classes" by Ernest Jones (c. 1848)

We're low - we're low - mere rabble, we know
But, at our plastic power,
The mould at the lording's feet will grow
Into palace and church and tower
Then prostrate fall - in the rich man's hall,
And cringe at the rich man's door;
We're not too low to build the wall,
But too low to tread the floor.

Down, down we go - we're so very low,
To the hell of the deep sunk mines,
But we gather the proudest gems that glow,
When the crown of a despot shines.
And whenever he lacks - upon our backs
Fresh loads he designs to lay;
We're far too low to vote the tax,
But not too low to pay.

We're low - we're low - we're very very low,
Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow - and the robes that glow
Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get - and what we give -
We know, and we know our share;
We're not too low the cloth to weave,
But too low the cloth to wear!

> List

HAPPY LAND

Lyrics adapted from a parody of the popular patriotic Victorian song "Happy Land"

Happy land! happy land! Thy fame resounds shore to shore
Happy land! where 'tis a crime, they tell us, to be poor.
If you shelter cannot find, of you they'll soon take care:
Most likely send you to grind wind - For sleeping in the air.

Happy land! happy land! To praise thee, who will cease?
To guard us, pray, now ain't we got a precious New Police?
A passport we shall soon require, which by them must be scanned,
If we to take a walk desire - Oh, ain't this happy land?

Happy land! happy land! Ne'er from thee I will stray,

The soldier cries, because, y'see, he cannot get away.
For nothing flogged, with grief he sighs, while probably the band,
Strike up to drown the wretch's cries - To the tune of 'Happy Land!'

Happy land! happy land! is now the chant in every street.
Happy land! happy land! Sings everyone you meet.
The ballad-singer, minus clothes; shirtless, coatless,
And with buckets none to shield his toes - He warbles 'Happy land!'"

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Darn It!
1993

Paul Haines

More information about this album

CUTSY *P. Haines / R. Wyatt*

The moment granted
A golden manner

Cursty a form
Of physical whispering

And physical
Gleaming

The over-ripe
Sight

Of their plooding
Superiority

And clumsy
Morality

Slow to the extent
Seeable

A socially prudent
Deposit

For the royal
Tureen

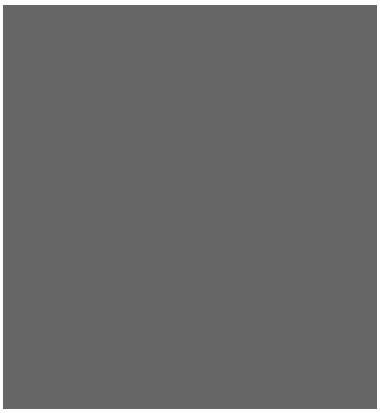
Hoisting a
Hip

To allow them
To forget

And continue to
Confidently ignore

The upright

> List



musics by (in order of appearance) PAUL BLEY, ROBERT WYATT, EVAN PARKER, CARMEN LUNDY, GEORGE CARTWRIGHT, WAYNE HURVITZ, BOBBY PREVITTE, DAVID HOFSTRA, JOHN OSWALD, MELVIN GIBBS, DK DYSON, RICHARD HARRINGTON, DEREK BAYNES, DEREK BAILEY, DON PULLEN, CARLA BLEY, JACK BRUCE, LEO NOCENTELLI, ROBBIE AMEEN, MARVIN "SMITTY" SMITH, GREG "IRON MAN" TATE, MARQUE GILMORE, JESSE HENRY, JAY STRINGER, BEN NITZA, ALVA ROGERS, LEWIS BARNES, MIKE VEAL, JOHN TCHICAI, ANDREW CYRILLE, PETER SCHERER, KIP HANRAHAN, JT LEWIS, SILVANA DELUIGI, HENRY THREADGILL, MICHEL CONTAT, ANDY GONZALEZ, IGNACIO BERROA, DANIEL FRIEBERG, DAVID SANCHEZ, YALE EVELEV, BORNEAN DRUMMERS,

More information about this album

Lyrics



Dondestan
1991

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

COSTA *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

Orange,
fierce orange of the egg shaped fireball
plopping into the ocean
as the earth tips backwards towards night.

Orange,
scratched orange of the gas bottles
delivered, for lack of pipeline
dragged to the door by the man in a wig

Orange,
soft orange of two full moons
one high, one low in a puddle mirror
floating in a pothole of the unmade road

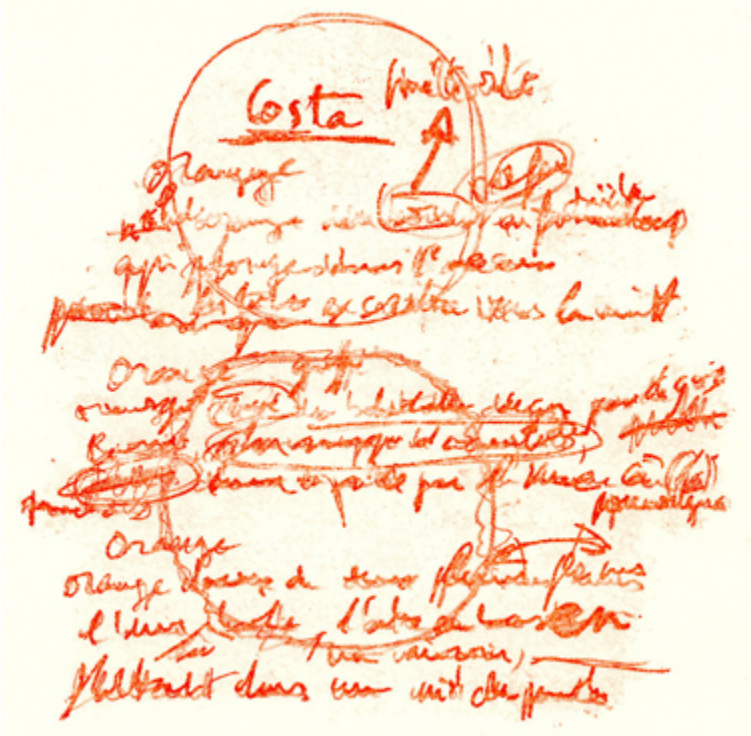


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

THE SIGHT OF THE WIND

Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt

We could hear it
before the shutters were open,
the wind on the beach.

Then we found
miniature sand dunes
on the concrete of the balcony
and a dead leaf
zig zagging,
scratching an urgent message
in s anskrit
before hitching a ride
on a frisky gust,
a plastic bag
caught by a rail
rearing to go,
in such a flap
we set it free
to join a page of last week's news
racing high
above the undulating beach,
and the invisible flying sand
casting a fast moving shadow
stroking the beach clean.
Yesterday's footprints vanished,
replaced by smooth rippling
wave formations,
a copy of the sea.
No one walking
not even the dogs.

A day
for the rubbish to dance.

> List

CATHOLIC ARCHITECTURE

Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt

A white house with a folly
a tower attached.
On the side
a hand painted saint
(lovingly painted)
peeps over a high wall
which surrounds the white house.
His loving gaze
is interrupted
by a line of broken glass
cemented
on top of the high wall.
The saint
lovingly dares
the outsider,
or the stray cat,
to intrude

and recieve his loving blessing
in lovingly lacerated
hands.

> List

WORSHIP *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

Two nuns
on the sea shore
stand
apart from one another
black wood posts
mesmerised
by the sea god

One nun
with human failings
and weary legs
sinks to the sand
and sits
like a child

A golden stripe appears
on the western horizon
a signal from the sea god
that he understands
tiredness

One staunch sister
stays standing
and the sun
sets



> List

SHRINKRAP *Alfreda Benge / Robert Wyatt*

It takes a weekly packet
to keep the shrink in pocket
It costs a pretty penny
just to stay afloat

It takes a lot of lolly
trying to be jolly
when the inerest keeps mounting
in the bank and in my person
It takes a bit of doing
just feeling up to scratch

It's work work work
from dawn to dusk
My id is raw
my ego breaking
from months of toil
to seperate my real self
from its husk

Everybody loves me
everyone but me
It's costing cash to melt the ice
I've sweated blood to hear I'm nice

> List

CP JEEBIES *Robert Wyatt*

Picture the Scene.

"Hello, how are you?"
"Well I'm a green and yellow
pinky blue."

Dead Alternative.

"Oh then, please step right in
to our nursery.
Just pick a group
that you can relate to,
now the grownups have gone."

After the party is
over, my friend,
there will be nothing you can
put your finger on.
Just a parasol.

> List

LEFT ON MAN *Robert Wyatt*

Simplify, reduce, over-simplify

What we call
freedom in the north
means our freedom to
use you

and if you don't co-operate
we'll cut off your supply lines

but you'll be free
to re-connect
if you beg our forgiveness

you say I
over simplify
well yes, so did
Albert Einstein

Simplify, reduce, over-simplify

There simply
is no middle ground
pentagon liber alles

There never
was a middle ground
that's the point I was making

There's no such
place as middle ground
(that's the point we were making)
Left or Right of the equator.

Simplify, reduce, over-simplify

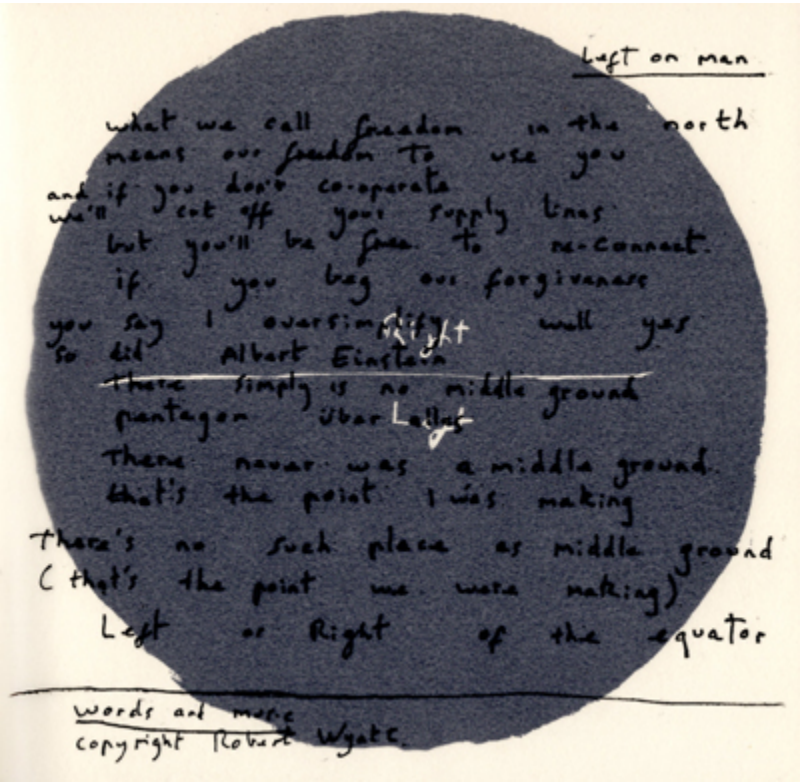


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

LISP SERVICE *Robert Wyatt/ Hugh Hopper*

Trouble isn't my middle name,
Left in peace would make my day.
You started the fire not me,
camouflaged in mystery.

Plundering, murdering,
raiding coast to coast,
good old days of gore,
and now you tell me
I should learn to deal with you all

bow to you and praise the Lords for
everything, everything
you won for us.
After all that was before,
there weren't no amnesty
international,
nobody to check you.
Don't give me that
'polis'
that 'rule of law'.

> List

N.I.O. (NEW INFORMATION ORDER) *Robert Wyatt*

Privatise
next
the air force
then
the police force
Royal Family
let them be
private at least.
Set them free.
Let them go home.
Save a bomb on union flags.
Privatise
the sea.
Privatise
the wind.
Don't just tinker
with unseeded cloud, you got to
sell
weather itself.
Set it free.
Don't wastegood air,
breathing isn't paying it's way.

> List

DONDESTAN *Robert Wyatt*

Palestine's a country
or at least
used to be.

Felahin, refugee
(Kurdistan similarly)
need something to
build on
rather like
the rest of us.

Palestine's a country
or at least
used to be.

Felahin, refugee
(deportees similarly)
need something to build on
rather like the rest of us

got.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



The Peel Sessions
1990

Soft Machine

More information about this album

MOON IN JUNE (BBC VERSION)

Robert Wyatt

I can still remember
The last time we played on Top Gear
And tough each little song
Was less than 3 minutes long
Mike squeezed a solo in somehow

And although we like our longer tunes
It seemed polite to cut them down
To little bits
They might be hits
Who gives an...
After all
Tell me how would it feel
In the place of John Peel
You just can't please
All of the musicians
All of the time

Playing now is lovely
Here in the BBC
We're free to play
Almost as long
And as loud
As a jazz group
Or an orchestra on Radio Three

There are Dance Halls and Theatres
With acoustics worse than here
Not forgetting the extra facilities
Such as the tea machine
Just along the corridor

So to all our mates like Kevin
Caravan
The old Pink Floyd
Allow me to recommend Top Gear
Despite its extraordinary name
Yes playing

Playing now is lovely
Here in the BBC
We're free to play almost as long and as loud
As the foreign language classes
And that John Cage interview
And the jazz groups
And the orchestras on Radio Three

Pop stars drink each other's wine
Plough each other's earth
Hoping for companionship
And then perhaps rebirth...

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Many Have No Speech
1988

Michael Mantler

More information about this album

TANT DE TEMPS

Philippe Soupault / Michael Mantler

Le temps qui passe
le temps qui ne passe pas
le temps qu'on tue
le temps de compter jusqu'à dix
le temps qu'on n'a pas
le temps qu'il fait
le temps de s'ennuyer
le temps de rêver
le temps de l'agonie
le temps qu'on perd
le temps d'aimer
le temps des cerises
le mauvais temps
et le bon et le beau
et le froid et le temps chaud
le temps de se retourner
le temps des adieux
le temps qu'il est bien temps
le temps qui n'est même pas
le temps de cligner de l'oeil
le temps relatif
le temps de boire un coup
le temps d'attendre
le temps du bon bout
le temps de mourir
le temps qui ne se mesure pas
le temps de crier gare
le temps mort
et puis l'éternité

> List

A L'ABATTOIR

Philippe Soupault / Michael Mantler

Adieu lézards adieu corbeaux
bonsoir les hommes et vous les veaux
Tout est à recommencer
quand vous gueulez
comme des damnés

Je sais bien que tout s'effondre
chaque jour et chaque nuit
que je n'ai plus rien à attendre
et que tout ce qui s'ensuit
c'est de savoir que je suis dupe

Les soirs tombent comme les années
je ne sais même plus les compter
Ce n'est plus jamais à prendre
mais pour toujours tout laisser
Rien ne peut recommencer

Adieu vantard adieu salaud
bonsoir crétin et toi le veau
c'est moi qui ai commencé
quand je gueulais
comme un damné

> List

(from) PRISONNIERS *Philippe Soupault / Michael Mantler*

ils sont là cent cinquante
ils ne dorment pas
ils attendent
il y a ceux qui attendent toujours

il y a ceux qui murmurent un nom
ceux qui respirent à peine
ceux qui mentent
il y a ceux qui suffrent sans cesse
ceux qui crient doucement

ceux qui chantent

il y a ceux qui ont faim et soif
ceux qui marchent lentement
ceux qui mangent
il y a ceux qui hurlent de toutes leurs forces
ceux qui baissent la tète
ceux qui vivent

hommes de peines
hommes de peine
que nos nuits sont longues

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Chairman Mao
1987

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

CHAIRMAN MAO

Wyatt / Haden

An early photograph
of the young brave with a confident grin
who is celebrating his first defeat
by clutching at hair from his skull
a pig tail

Enter the modern man
like a young brave with a price on his head
Delilah says Samson stick this up yours
the symbol is clear cut from his skull
a long hair

If this missing link
the dreaded locks kept him bound to remain
unable to avoid the sacrifice
the short back and side the closest shave
the pig tail

Remember how it's done
first you must think yet but then you've begun
seemingly retreating the coiling spring
is triggered to leave further ahead
the long march.

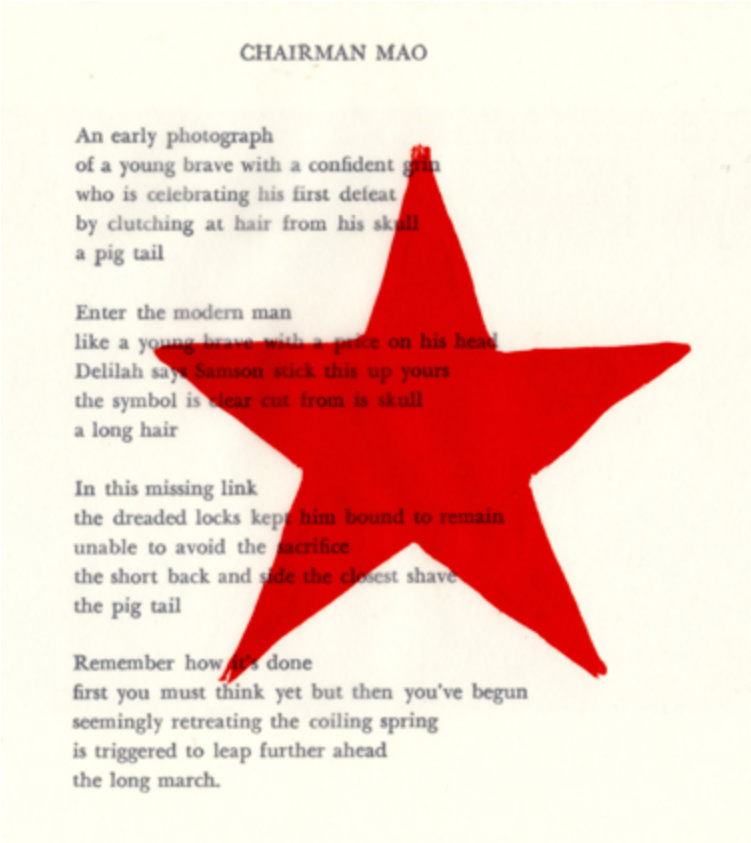


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



The Liberator
Artists For Animals
1986

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

PIGS... (IN THERE) *Robert Wyatt*

Well, we're driving, uh, driving through Wiltshire, very nice countryside, sky, ground, all that sort of things, natural marriage, natural resorces and looking out the windows as I don't come from that part of the world and 1 said, er, what's that oyer there? in a sort of low grey concrete thing all surrounded by fields really very nice trees like a sort of low square of concrete like the fun-dations of a building that hadn't been built. It had little walls, little, about a foot high, or something, it looked like that, two feet high, in fact it was a sort of, on top of it, there was a flat roof and I thought, oh I see, and then, I pointed as the car got passed it «what was that ?» and the, the country person that was with me, er, said, oh, er, that's where they keep pigs, I tought, oh, yes, I see, that's where they keep pigs, and the sun was shining down and, er, the grass was green and It was all very lovely, driving in the country and I suddently thought that, that building must have been, like, from the inside.-. Pigs, in there, pigs in there ? pigs in there ? pigs in there ? pigs in there ? pigs in there ? pigs, on a day like this, in there, pigs in there, pigs huddled up in there, in die dark, in there, living in there ? pigs, in there, PIGS

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Letters Home
1986

News From Babel

More information about this album

WHO WILL ACCUSE?

Chris Cutler / Lindsay Cooper

This life is bare
And cold
And I am old
And tired of truth

Must we forever
Make our History
In this Cold
Country?

Who will accuse us
If we choose
To dream
To take a World
Already made
To sit before
A fire that warms
And not to ask
Who built it, or
What burns?

> List

HEART OF STONE

Chris Cutler / Lindsay Cooper

The hearts of stone were here
Where waters wash
The ones who spoke and
Would not hear, the ones
Who built the walls

These miles were theirs
These ranks of Air

Now only blooms recall
The glory and the pity of
Their fall

> List

MOSS

Chris Cutler / Lindsay Cooper

I fell in the moss
I grasped the grass
I bit the earth
I pressed myself against
The Earth
I held it tightly
Nothing stirred
I waited

The air moved, slightly
The grass moved
The leaves moved in the trees
A thousand insects moved
I moved and
The World moved
Lightly

I was not
Deceived

> List

WAITED/JUSTICE *Chris Cutler / Lindsay Cooper*

I waited, at the gate
I waited, for a Word
I waited, to be judged
- Or to be heard
I only aged
Unloved - I found
Despair
Who all my days
Stood at the gate and
Waited others
There

> List

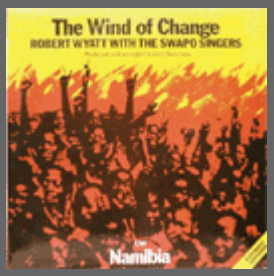


More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



The Wind Of Change
1985

Robert Wyatt
With The SWAPO Singers

More information about this album

THE WIND OF CHANGE

Jackson M. Kaujeua

The wind of change
sweeping across the African continent
The wind of change
sweeping across the African continent
Over there they say this:
oh yeah, Africa, oh yeah, uhuru,
amandla kawethu,
aluta a'continua mama,
Viva Africa.

The wind of change
The wind of change
The wind of change
The wind of change

Namibia Namibia ...

The wind of hope
sweeping across the African continent
The wind of hope
sweeping across the African continent

Over there they say this:
oh yeah, Africa,
oh yeah, freedom,
power to the people,
the struggle must continue mama,
Viva Africa.

The wind of hope
The wind of hope
The wind of hope
The wind of hope

The wind of freedom
sweeping across the African continent
The wind of freedom
sweeping across the African continent

Over there they say this:
oh yeah, Africa,
oh yeah, uhuru,
amandla kawethu,
aluta a'continua mama,
Viva Africa.

The wind of freedom
The wind of freedom

The wind of freedom
The wind of freedom...
SWAPO SWAPO SWAPO SWAPO...

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Old Rottenhat
1985

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

ALLIANCE

Robert Wyatt

There is a kind of compromise you are master of
Your endless gentle nudging left us polarised
It's hard to talk to enemies and we are enemies
What we had in common makes it even worse
You're proud of being middle class (meaning upper class)
You say you're self sufficient (but you don't dig your own coal)
I think that what you're frightened of more than anything
Is knowing you need workers more than they need you
"A herd of independent minds" Chomsky got it right
Jogging into battle waving old school ties



Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

THE UNITED STATES OF AMNESIA

Wyatt

There are degrees of amnesia, ways to forget
Ways to remember all the good that you've done

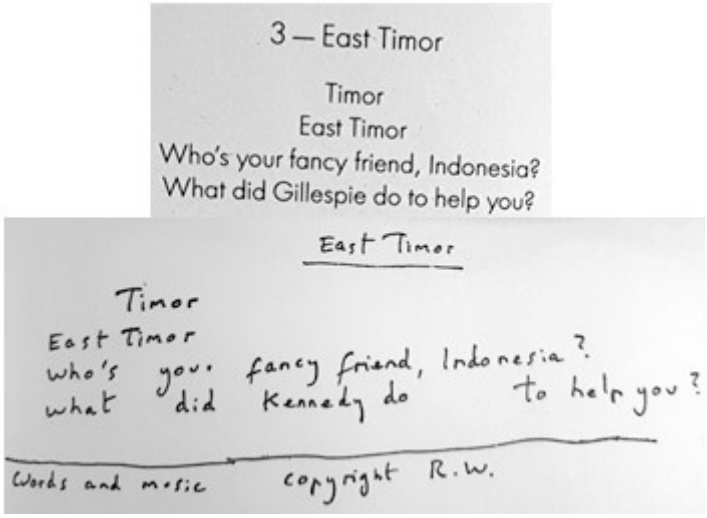
And if you can't get a witness remind yourselves
Nobody's just perfectly good all the time
And if you killed all those redskins long, long ago
Well, they'd all be dead now anyway, anyway
Don't let that ghost disconcert you (the) lord will provide
(a) nice little headstone for the brave Cherokee
(So let's have) no reservations let's have a clean sweep
Clearing the way for the land of the free
Let's hear it for civilisation once more
Build your aryan empire in peace

> List

EAST TIMOR *Wyatt*

Timor
East Timor
Who's your fancy friend, Indonesia?
What did Gillespie do to help you?

Please note :
"*What did Gillespie do to help you?*" in the liner notes becomes "*What did Kennedy do to help you?*" in Robert's own handwriting in the MW book.



> List

THE AGE OF SELF *Wyatt*

They say the working class is dead, we're all consumers now
They say that we have moved ahead—we're all just people now
There's people doing 'frightfully well' there's others on the shelf
But never mind the second kind this is the Age of Self
They say we need new images to help our movement grow
They say that life is broader based as if we didn't know
While Martin J. and Robert M. play with printer's ink
The workers 'round the world still die for Rio Tinto Zinc
And it seems to me if we forget
Our roots and where we stand
The movement will disintegrate
Like castles built on sand.

> List

VANDALUSIA *Wyatt*

Beyond the dotted line
Over the border
Out of control
Behind the dotted line
South of the border
Beyond the pale
Going too far

> List

THE BRITISH ROAD *Wyatt*

Those foreigners are at it again
When will they learn to fight like our men
There's nothing new under the mirror
And it's time for one more bedtime story
Get beauty sleep for morning glory
How can I rise if you don't fall?

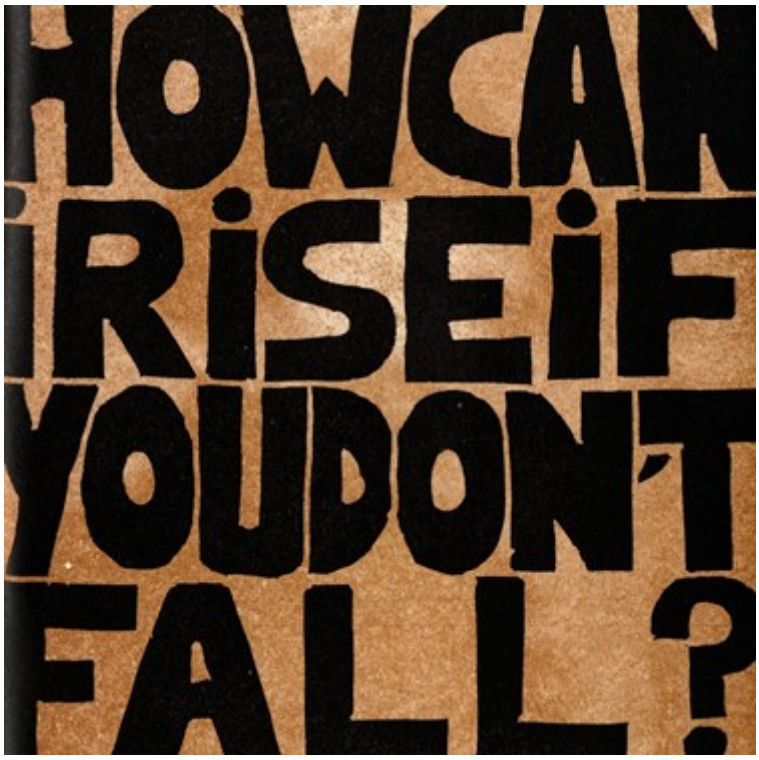


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

MASS MEDIUM *Wyatt*

And as history slips out of view bated breath for the nine o'clock new
Reassembled right before your very eyes: innuendo rumour and lies
Endless fun and games steal a headline, name some names
We're so proud that our press feel so free to manipulate them you and me
And as each campaign begins to absolve us of our sins

I see freedom sold by the yard it's so easy why make it hard?

> List

GHARBZADEGI *Wyatt*

It's so easy to decide on a name It's a name caller's game
It's so easy to look down from above Helicopter vision
Get the picture when you're outside the frame Retrospective my eye
Call it art and you can say what you like It's a name caller's game
Your perspective describes where I stand Out of line, out of mind
Calling myopia 'focus', of course, makes it easier still
Gharbzadegi means nothing to me Westernitis to you
... We get so out of touch Words take the place of meaning

> List

P.L.A. *Wyatt*

Poor little Alfie trying to draw
Poor little Alfie trying to sleep

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Work In Progress
1984

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

I'M A BELIEVER *Neil Diamond*

I thought love was only true in fairy tales
Meant for someone else but not for me
Love was out to get me
That's the way it seemed
Disappointment haunted all of my dreams

Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer
Not a trace, of doubt in my mind
I'm in love, and I'm a believer
I couldn't leave her if I tried

I thought love was more or less a giving thing
Seems the more I gave the less I got
What's the use in tryin'
All you get is pain
When I needed sunshine I got rain

Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer
Not a trace, of doubt in my mind
I'm in love and I'm a believer
I couldn't leave her if I tried

Love was out to get me
That's the way it seemed
Disappointment haunted all of my dreams

Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer
Not a trace of doubt in my mind
I'm in love, I'm a believer
I couldn't leave her if I tried

I'm a believer

> List

YESTERDAY MAN *Chris Andrews*

I'm her yesterday man
Gone is the look of love she had last night
I'm her yesterday man
Gone is the look of love she had last night

Please tell me something: have you met an angel
Someone too lovely to live on earth
Well, yesterday I thought I met an angel
But she wasn't worth all she seemed to be worth

And oh what a fool I have been
I was sure taken in

I'm her yesterday man
Well my friends that's what I am
I'm her yesterday man
Well my friends that's what I am
That's what I am: her yesterday man
Gone is the look of love she had last night
Gone is the look of love she had last night

Well, some are the good and then some are the bad kind
Some of the others are in between
But all I can say is she is the worst kind
Well I think you know what I mean
And yet, in spite of all that I say
I'd take her back any day

I'm her yesterday man
Well my friends that's what I am
I'm her yesterday man
Well my friends that's what I am
That's what I am: her yesterday man
Gone is the look of love she had last night

I'm her yesterday man
Gone is the look of love she had last night
I'm her yesterday man
Gone is the look of love she had last night
I'm her yesterday man
...

> List

MEMORIES *Hugh Hopper*

I know I cannot leave this place
Full of memories
Things like the way they knew us
All over town

We used to walk the streets together
We could be seen
Past shops where people knew us
Yeah, people knew

I've got to choose between tomorrow
And yesterday
I can't stop to think about
My life, here today

Maybe I'll find someone to get you
Off my mind
Take me away from here
And leave it, leave it all behind

Memories can hang you up and haunt you
All your life, you know
Get so you cannot stay
And yet cannot go

I could find out where she's gone
Today I feel so unhappy
Streets seem so empty now
I want you with me



More information about this album

Lyrics



Venceremos
1984

Working Week

More information about this album

VENCEREMOS

Simon Booth

A comment is passed,
Like dust and glass,
Full of fear,
Held in this heaven and hell.

Each time it's spoken,
There's a fragment broken,
Now the rain is falling,
A train is passing,
A gun is firing,
Splitting out here
In the night in which we live.
We'll find a way,
To build a day,
Sooner than tomorrow.

And so it goes,
As our love flows,
A strength is found
In a history bold and proud.

Safe in rooms
In which we find survival,
Hope will tread a greater end.
So we'll move my friend
Into safer light,
Knowing that
Here we will win
Here we will win
Here we will win.

A new world in the making,
It's there for the taking.
Santiago to rio,
The moment is waiting.

The lost will be found,
And named out aloud.
Photos carried high,
The lives they've denied.

A lover's found passion,
In the sense of re-awaking,
Desire that shines,
Like the pride in creating.

A nation is breathing,
In cities and farmland,
In bedrooms and boardrooms,
Life held in suspension.
A breath that is scented,
With warmth and friendship,
And we sleep here as lovers,
Companeros in cover,
We'll tread a greater end,
And so we'll move my friend,
Into safer light,
Knowing that we will win.

[Un mundo que se abre
Esta por hacerse
De santiago a rio
Se espera el momento
Se encontraran
Se nombraran
Con retratos en alto
Seas vidas negadas
Como la nueva pasión
De un amor que despierta
Deseo que brilla
Como el orgullo de crear
Una nación que respira
De ciudades a campos
De hogar en hogar
La vida en suspenso
Un respiro fragante
De calor y amistad
Durmiendo como amantes
Compañeros encubiertos
Lograremos un gran final
No nos moverán
Sabiendo que vamos a vencer
Y venceremos
Y venceremos...]

> List



More information about this album



The Last Nightingale
1984

Various Artists

More information about this album

MOMENTS OF DELIGHT

Chris Cutler / Tim Hodgkinson

a ray
split by
the fragments
of a
broken
mirror

a window
lit
against the
night

these are my
hopes
in t i mes
of
terror

these
my
moments of
Respite

(Delight)

> List

IN THE DARK YEAR

Chris Cutler / Lindsay Cooper

Held tight in jaws of
Fear & Force
A country
dies - for Power
has learned:
the more it takes,
the more the mass
moves back to
g i ve it space.
Fear
Snowballs into
Madness
here, where Violence
Parades
As
Law



More information about this album

Lyrics



Work In Progress
1984

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

BIKO

Peter Gabriel

Inamajo Inamajo man is dead man is dead
Inamajo Inamajo man is dead man is dead

Well it's September seventy seven
Port Elizabeth weather fine
And it was business as usual
In police room 619
Oh Biko Biko Biko oh Biko Biko Biko
Inamajo Inamajo man is dead man is dead

Now when I try to sleep at night
I can only dream in red
You know the outside world seems black and white
With just one colour: dead
Oh Biko...
Inamajo...

Now you can blow out a candle
But you can't blow out a fire oh no
Once the flame begins to catch
The wind will fan it higher
Oh Biko...
Inamajo...
Inamajo...

And the eyes of the world they're watching now
They're watching now
Watching now

> List

AMBER AND THE AMBERINES

Robert Wyatt / Hugh Hopper

Here's to the Fidel few
Clearing road and landslide
Children of history
Changing from the inside
Not just because Che Guevara showed the way
Not just to shame the C.I.A
Everyone needs to feel at home
Nobody wins who fights alone

Here's to the NJM
Planning for the future
Women and men who dared

raise our aspirations
Not just because Maurice Bishop told them to
Not just to change the western view
Everyone needs to feel at home
Nobody wins who fights alone

Here's to our friends like Chris
Working in the classrooms
London to Mozambique
Nursing wounds of empire
Not just because revolution paved the way
Not just to be there on the day
Everyone needs to feel at home
Nobody wins who fights alone

> List

YOLANDA *Pablo Milanes*

Esto no puede ser no más que una canción
Quisiera fuera una declaración de amor
Romántica sin reparar en formas tales
Que ponga un freno a lo que siento ahora raudales
te amo - te amo - eternamente te amo
Si me faltaras no voy a morirne
Si he de morir quiero que sea contigo
Mi soledad se siente acompañada
Por eso a veces sé que necesito
Tu mano, tu mano, eternamente tu mano
Cuando te vi sabía que era cierto
Este temor de hallarme descuvierto
Tu me desnudas con siete razones
Me abres el pecho siempre que colmas
De amores - de amores - eternamente de amores
Si alguna vez me siento derrotado
Renuncio a ver el sol cada mañana
Rezando el credo que me has enseñado
Miro a tu cara y digo en la ventana
Yolanda - Yolanda - eternamente Yolanda
Yolanda - eternamente Yolanda

> List

TE RECUERDO AMANDA *Victor Jara*

Te recuerdo Amanda la calle mojada
Corriendo a la fábrica donde trabajaba Manuel
La sonrisa ancha la lluvia en el pelo
No importaba nada ibas a encontrarte con él
Son cinco minutos la vida es eterna en cinco minutos
Suena la sirena devuelta al trabajo
Y tu caminando los iluminas todo
los cinco minutos te hacen florecer
Que partió a la sierra que nunca hiso daño
que partió a la sierra y en cinco minutos
quedó destrozado suena la sirena
Devuelto al trabajo
muchos no volvieron
tampoco Manuel

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Shipbuilding/Memories Of You/'Round Midnight
1982

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

MEMORIES OF YOU

A. Razaf / E. Blake

Everything
Seems to bring
Memories of you
How I wish I could forget
Those happy yesteryears
They have left a rosary of tears
Your face beams
In my dreams In spite of all I do
Everything
Seems to bring
Memories of you

> List

ROUND MIDNIGHT

C. Williams - B. Hanigen / T. Monk

Tears you've shed today will pause
waiting until tomorrow
Dreams of what could be
Come close to me, timidly
There's a brand new day in sight
At that time: round about midnight

Life's game of chance
And you're one of the minor players
Look for what you lost
For days to come, harbour some
Let your spirit start the fight
At that time: round about midnight

Every day's going to bring some sad times
Every day's going to bring some glad times
So take what you can of the glad times
Don't measure your pleasure
In nickels and dimes

Look back on today and you'll know
When you have been unhappy
Tears done, chased away
What might at night have their day
Let your eyes put out their light
At that time: round about midnight
Round about midnight

> List

SHIPBUILDING *C. Langer / E. Costello*

Is it worth it?
A new winter coat and shoes for the wife
and a bicycle on the boy's birthday
It's just a rumor that was spread around town
by the women and children
Soon we'll be shipbuilding
Well I ask you
The boy said 'Dad, they're going to take me to task
but I'll be home by Christmas
It's just a rumor that was spread around town
Somebody said that someone got filled in
For saying that people get killed in
The results of their shipbuilding
With all the will in the world
diving for dear life
when we could be diving for pearls
It's just a rumor that was spread around town
A telegram for a picture postcard
Within weeks they'll be re-opening the shipyard
and notifying the next of kin once again
it's all we're skilled in
We will be shipbuilding
With all the will in the world
Diving for dear life
When we could be diving for pearls

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Nothing Can Stop Us
1982

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

BORN AGAIN CRETIN

Robert Wyatt

At least I won't be shot for singing
I'm a free agent, I can "protest"
This must be freedom
I must be happy
So let Mandela rot in prison
Someone should tell him how lucky he is
Read him George Orwell, explain about Naipaul
Because he must understand how he needs us
What with our culture, and our charm, and our brains
But how could he understand?
Heathen have no soul

> List

AT LAST I'M FREE

Bernard Edwards / Nile Rodgers

At last I am free
I can hardly see in front of me
I can hardly see in front of me

>And now love please listen
To what I say
I can't go on living life this way
I've tried and I've tried
To make you see
You call this love
All this lying, my friend, it just can't be

At last I am free
I can hardly see in front of me
I can hardly see in front of me

And now love, please hold me
Come closer, my dear
It feels so good, just having you near
But who am I fooling
When I know it's not real?
I can't hide
All this hurt and pain inside I feel

> List

CAIMANERA *Trad. / arr. R. Wyatt - C. Puebla*

Guantánamo tiene un son
sobre su piel duradera
que gira por Caimanera
con su ritmo juguetón.
Caimanera es la razón,
que palabra impresionante.
Caimanera militante
se entrena cada mañana
por la base Americana
que es una mancha insultante.

Guantanamera,
guajira guantanamera.
Guantanamera,
guajira guantanamera.

No se duerme Caimanera
sobre la noche antillana.
Ella vela soberana
con la luz de su bandera.
Caimanera es la primera
herida por sus costados.
La de brazos desangrados,
la de héroes caimaneses,
la que ha visto muchas veces
sus hijos asesinados.

Guantanamera,
guajira guantanamera.
Guantanamera,
guajira guantanamera.

Caimanera es la frontera,
es la primer avanzada
la mano firme armada
ante el rostro de la fiera.
Guajira guantanamera,
Caimanera siempre erguida
dispuesta a entregar la vida
por la causa que defiende.
Te aplaude quien te comprende,
Guantanamera querida.

Guantanamera,
guajira guantanamera.
Guantanamera,
guajira guantanamera.

> List

GRASS *Ivor Cutler*

Go and sit upon the grass
and I shall come and sit beside you.
Go and sit upon the grass
and I shall come and sit beside you.

And we shall talk.
And while we talk I'll hit your head with a nail to make you understand me.

While we talk I'll hit your head with a nail to make you understand me.

Go and sit upon the grass
and I shall come and sit beside you.
Go and sit upon the grass
and I shall come and sit beside you.

And do not mind if I thump you when I'm talking to you.
Do not mind if I thump you when I'm talking to you.
I've something important to say.

Go and sit upon the grass
and I shall come and sit beside you.
Go and sit upon the grass
and I shall come and sit beside you.

And when I'm gone you can feel the lumps upon your head.
And think about what I said.
And think about what I said.

Go and sit upon the grass
and feel your lumps.

> List

STALIN WASN'T STALLIN' *Willie Johnson*

Stalin wasn't stallin'
When he told the beast of Berlin
That they'd never rest contented
Till they had driven him from the land
So he called the Yanks and English
And proceeded to extinguish
The Fuhrer and its vermin
This is how it all began

Now, the Devil, he was reading
In the Good Book one day
How that Lord created Adam
To walk the righteous way
And it made the Devil jealous
He turned green up to his horns
And he swore by things unholy
And he made one of his own

So he packed two suitcases
Full of greed and misery
And he caught the Midnight Special
Going down to Germany
Then he mixed his lies and hatred
With fire and brimstone
Then the Devil sat upon it
That's how Adolf was born

Now Adolf got the notion
That he was the master race
And he swore he'd bring New Order
And put mankind in its place !
So he set a scheme in motion
And was winning everywhere
Until he up and got the notion

For to kick that Russian bear

Stalin wasn't stallin'
When he told the Beast of Berlin
That they'd never rest contented
Till they had driven him from the land
So he called the Yanks and English
And proceeded to extinguish
The Fuhrer and its vermin
This is how it all began

Yes he kicked that noble Russian
But it wasn't very long
Before Adolf got suspicious
That he had done something wrong
Cause that bear grabbed the Fuhrer
And gave him an awful fright
Seventeen months he scrapped the Fuhrer
Tooth and claw, day and night

Then that bear smacked the Fuhrer
With a mighty armored paw
And Adolf broke all records
Running backwards towards Krakaw
Then Goebbels sent a message
To the people everywhere
That if they couldn't hit the Fuhrer
Go down hit that Russian bear

Stalin wasn't stallin'
When he told the Beast of Berlin
That they'd never rest contented
Till they had driven him from the land
So he called the Yanks and English
And proceeded to extinguish
The Fuhrer and its vermin
This is how it all began

Then this bear called on his buddy
The noble fighting Yank
And they sent the Fuhrer running
With their ships and planes and tanks
Now the Fuhrer's having nightmares
Cause the Fuhrer knows damn well
That the Devil's done wrote "Welcome"
On his residence in Hell

> List

SHIPBUILDING *C. Langer / E. Costello*

Is it worth it?
A new winter coat and shoes for the wife
and a bicycle on the boy's birthday
It's just a rumor that was spread around town
by the women and children
Soon we'll be shipbuilding
Well I ask you
The boy said 'Dad, they're going to take me to task
but I'll be home by Christmas
It's just a rumor that was spread around town
Somebody said that someone got filled in
For saying that people get killed in

The results of their shipbuilding
With all the will in the world
diving for dear life
when we could be diving for pearls
It's just a rumor that was spread around town
A telegram for a picture postcard
Within weeks they'll be re-opening the shipyard
and notifying the next of kin once again
it's all we're skilled in
We will be shipbuilding
With all the will in the world
Diving for dear life
When we could be diving for pearls

> List

RED FLAG *Trad. / arr. Jim Connell*

It waved above our infant might
When all ahead seemed dark as night;
It witnessed many a deed and vow
We must not change its colour now

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Within its shade we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here

It well recalls the triumphs past
It gives the hope of peace at last;
The banner bright, the symbol plain
Of human right and human gain

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Within its shade we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here

With heads uncovered swear we all
To bear it onward till we fall;
Come dungeons dark or gallows grim
This song shall be our parting hymn

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Within its shade we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying heres



> List

STRANGE FRUIT *Lewis Allan*

The Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood on the leaves, and blood at the roots
Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees

Pastoral scene of the Gallant South
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of magnolia, sweet and fresh
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop...

> List

ARAUCO *Violeta Para*

Arauco tiene una pena
Que no la puedo callar,
Son injusticias de siglos
Que todos ven aplicar,
Nadie le ha puesto remedio
Pudiéndolo remediar.
Levántate, huenchullán.

Un día llega de lejos
Huescufe conquistador,
Buscando montañas de oro,
Que el indio nunca buscó,
Al indio le basta el oro
Que le relumbra del sol.
Levántate, curimón.

Entonces corre la sangre,
No sabe el indio qué hacer,
Le van a quitar su tierra,

La tiene que defender,
El indio se cae muerto,
Y el afuerino de pie.
Levántate, manquilef

Adónde se fue lautaro
Perdido en el cielo azul,
Y el alma de galvarino
Se la llevó el viento sur,
Por eso pasan llorando
Los cueros de su kultrún.
Levántate, pues, callfull.

Del año mil cuatrocientos
Que el indio afligido está,
A la sombra de su ruca
Lo pueden ver lloriquear,
Totora de cinco siglos
Nunca se habrá de secar.
Levántate, callupán.

Arauco tiene una pena
Más negra que su chamal,
Ya no son los españoles
Los que les hacen llorar,
Hoy son los propios chilenos
Los que les quitan su pan.
Levántate, pailahuán.

Ya rugen las votaciones,
Se escuchan por no dejar,
Pero el quejido del indio
¿por qué no se escuchará?
Aunque resuene en la tumba
La voz de caupolicán,
Levántate, huenchullán..

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports
1981

Nick Mason

More information about this album

I WAS WRONG

Carla Bley

Well I used to think this talk of spaceships
Was just so much hype
I really believed there was nothing out there
Except the Stars and the Stripes
I mean the scientists said they found out that
There was nothing there on Mars
So as far as I was concerned it was just
The name of a candy bar

I'm one of those kind of people
Who need proof before they believe
Close Encounters left me cold
And Star Trek seemed naive
When it came to UFO's
I was of the scientific school
Little green men with pointed heads
Were for little kids and fools

But I was wrong
I was wrong
I was real wrong
I was wrong
All along
I was so wrong

The people who believed that stuff
Were always kind of odd
I mean you might as well go all the way
And believe in Jesus and God
I knew I had the kind of mind
That wasn't easily satisfied
And besides I had enough problems on earth
To keep me occupied

And then one night I was standing
Looking at the stars
And I heard something that sounded like
A hundred space guitars
The music was so weird it could have
Been the theme from Jaws
Then I saw something flying over my head
I thought it was Santa Claus

But I was wrong
I was wrong
I was real wrong
I was wrong

All along
I was so wrong

> List

SIAM *Carla Bley*

Here's another song about a place near Hong Kong
They got lots of opium and Lapsang Southong
Siam, Siam

All the fancy pussycats come from this area
Also got a lot of animals that scare ya
Siam, Siam

Python legs are poached in slimy toad saliva
After eating that I'm lucky I'm aliva
I am, yes I am

Ask the King if you can stay to sample cuisine
Maybe he will even let you dine with the Queen
Siam, Siam

Nicest little place I live in since Budapest
If you think that I'm in love, you're right, I
Confess
I am, I am, yes I am, with Siam
I am, I am, yes I am, with Siam

> List

HOT RIVER *Carla Bley*

Do you long to cavort?
Here's a new water sport
That you ought to try
It's a Fahrenheit dream
Hot and covered with steam
You won't be bored
Do you want to get wet?
Are you starting to sweat?
Slip over the side
Now we're caught in a swell
Here's where Heaven and Hell
Start to collide

It's slippery and slimy
Reach over here and tie me
I'm so warm I can hardly move
Mother never told me
I'd need someone to hold me
But where I'm from the rivers are all cold

It's a fisherman's dream
Dinner's already steamed
And ready to eat
When you feel your resolve
Is about to dissolve
Then stop for a treat

In a river of steam
Nothing seems too obscene
So let down your hair
While you drift through a trough
Slip your bathing suit off
And really get clean

You can do your laundry
While your thoughts are wandering
And you watch the passing swimmer's poach
You don't need no Sterno
In Dante's Inferno
It's thermohydriatically controlled

You can't stay in too long
'Cause the heat is too strong
You're starting to slide
Grab ahold of the rope
Throw your soap in the boat
Climb over the side
We can come back for more
When we start to get bored
There's nothing as wild
As a Hot River swim
On the volcanic rim

> List

BOO TO YOU TOO *Carla Bley*

Just when we was startin' to play
Someone yelled out take 'em away
Then we heard 'em startin' to boo
What did you do? What did you do?
I reacted intelligently
Here's my method, try it and see
When somebody's runnin' you down
You got to turn it around, turn it around

So when they boo at me you know what I do?
I tell 'em boo to you too, boo to you too
Boo to you too, boo to you too

I don't take it personally
When somebody's booin' at me
Makes no difference if the music is fine
I never pay it no mind, pay it no mind
When you're tryin' something that's new
You'll have people booin' at you
When we hear 'em startin' to boo
What do we do? What do we do?

Well when they boo at us you know what we do?
We tell 'em boo to you too, boo to you too
Boo to you too, boo to you too

Keep your chin up, play what you feel
Music's always grand if it's real
Even if they're cruel to you
You got to do what you do, do what you do
When they're ready to tear you apart
Use your noodle and try to be smart

Don't just stand there takin' abuse
You got to put it to use, put it to use

You make 'em boo on cue, they say boo
And you say boo to you too
Boo to you too, boo to you too

You make 'em boo on cue, they say boo
And you say boo to you too
Boo to you too, boo to you too

Boo to you too, boo to you too
Boo to you too, boo to you too

> List

DO YA? *Carla Bley*

I try
God knows I try
It seems very clear to me, that I try
But it's not clear to you, that I do
You don't know what I mean, do ya?
You don't know what I mean

I mean
I mean I try
God knows that I mean to try
I mean it seems so very clear to me, that I'm
Trying
But it's not clear to you, what I'm trying to do
You don't know what I mean, do ya?
You don't know what I mean

You're not trying
God knows you probably mean to try
I mean sometimes it even seems clear to me
I mean sometimes it even seems clear to me that
You're trying to try
Is that clear? Do you know what I mean, what
I'm trying to say
You don't know what I mean, do ya?
You don't know what I mean

God knows I try

> List

WERVIN' *Carla Bley*

Wervin', we're Wervin'
Do you need a doctor?
Swervin' and curvin'
Are you pocket trained?
Do you like to Werve?
Do you have the nerve?
Do you need a doctor
When you start to swerve?
Are you pocket trained

Goin' 'round a curve?
Can you Werve?

Wervin', we're Wervin'
Do you save the coupons?
Swervin' and curvin'
Can I borrow your suit?
Can you Werve like a bird
Or do you find it absurd?
Did you come prepurd?
Can I borrow your suit?

Do you find it unnervin'
Or pleasantly disturbin'
Can you Werve?

Wervin', we're Wervin'
Do you have your 'chute?
Swervin' and curvin'
Does your mother know?
Do you worry when you Werve?
Are you scared when you swerve?
Do you get what you deserve
When you go around a curve?
I can see your house
Have you lost your nerve?
Can you Werve?
Werve
Werve
Werve

> List

I'M A MINERALIST *Carla Bley*

Here's a shocking revelation for you voyeurs
Such a heinous deviation, these are no clues
I'm a Mineralist, I'm a Mineralist

Just the thought of ironing gives me spasms of lust
I creep up to old wrecked cars and lick off the rust
I'm a Mineralist, I'm a Mineralist

Mother used to try to metal in my affairs
Keep your nose up off that grindstone, people
Will stare
Get the lead out of your pants and change your
Underwear

I've been stealing baby bottles since I was born
I'll go blind from balling bearings, doctors have
Warned
I like making out with steel-rimmed glasses
More than horned

Erik Satie gets my rocks off, Cage is a dream
Phillip Glass is a Mineralist to the extreme

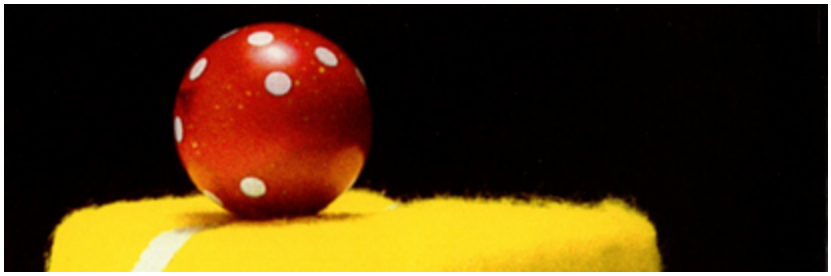
I like tickling ivories and fingering stones
When my mercury goes up I play with my bone

Peole take for granite my perversion is wrong

I'm not harming anyone by beating my gong
I'm a Mineralist, I'm a Mineralist

I'll make love to minerals as long as I can
And in fifty years I'll be a jaded old man
I'm a Mineralist, I'm a Mineralist
I'm a Mineralist, I'm a Mineralist

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Ruth Is Stranger than Richard
1975

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

SOUP SONG *Hugh Hopper / Robert Wyatt*

There's a mushroom on my eyelid,
there's a carrot down my back,
I can see in the distance, a vast quantity of beans.
To you I'm just a flavour to make your soup taste nice.
Oh my God! Here come the onions and, I don't believe it,
at least a pound of rice.

There was a time when bacon sandwiches
were everyone's favourite snack.
I'm delicious when I'm crunchy, even when I'm almost black.
So why you make a soup with me
I just can't understand.
It seems so bloody tasteless,
not to mention underhand.

Now there's no hope of getting out of here,
I can feel I'm going soft.
Dirty waters soak my fibres,
the whole saucepan's getting hot.
So I may as well resign myself,
make friends with a few peas,
but I just can't help hoping
a tummy ache will bring you to your knees.



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

TEAM SPIRIT *Bill MacCormick/ Phil Manzanera / Robert Wyatt*

Kick me Hardy.
Without one sweet push from your shine covered boot,
I don't think, I just know I'll be grounded for ever
more over turn me. You can hardly miss me,
I'm the one face down in the mud on the ground.
I'll be stuck here forever, unless you come over and
kick me Hardy.

I'm the best football you have got.
I'll beat the lot. I'll take the cake.
Be masterful, be my hero and be
-lieve me Hardy
if it's tough you want, then it's tough you've got.
I mean if this is only a question of toughness,
survive me Hardy, or deflate me straight away.
Beating shit out of me takes the hell out of you.
If I'm nothing without you, then why stick it out?
You can pass me over.
But I'm the only chance you've got.
If you asked me, here's my advice
Use me to go hell for leather and back.

Kick me Handy.
Without one sweet push from your shine covered boot,
I don't think, I just know I'll be grounded for ever
more over turn me. Ttbu should just be thankful,
when it comes to the crunch, I'm the best of the bunch.
At the end of the day, you could easily say
that I come in Handy.

I'm the best football you have got.
I beat the lot. I take the cake.
Be masterful, be my hero and be
grateful Hardy.
If it's tough you want, then it's tough you've got.
I mean if this is only a question of toughness
survive me Handy, or deflate me pronto.
Beating shit out of me takes the hell out of you.
If I'm nothing without you, then why stick it out?
You can pass me over.
If you asked me, here's my advice.
Use me to go hell for leather and back.



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

MUDDY MOUSE (a) *Fred Frith / Robert Wyatt*

Relatively used to coping with the darkness underground,
cub and brownie blink as they emerge.
Overhead the stars are piercing, glaring on their new home. Wasted jungle, crowded with dead trees.



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

MUDDY MOUSE (b) *Fred Frith / Robert Wyatt*

What do cubs and brownies do at night after a boring day?
Shine their boots and practice tying knots? No of course not!
After school they play hide-and-seek.
Chase each other, clutching in the dark.



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

MUDDY MOUSE (c) *Fred Frith / Robert Wyatt*

What do Ann and Handy do after a long exhausting shift?
Clean the spades and clear away the dirt?
No of course not! Usually they lie down in the mud,
close together, just to save on heat.

(simultaneously)
Work is split up but it gets harder every day, it's never done.
Call it peaceful. Call it grinding the time away.
Say that ditches aren't homely.
Call it boredom. Either way Ann decides to potter off.
How's that for brains?



Illustration : Alfreda Benge

> Zoom

> List

MUDDY MOUTH *Fred Frith / Robert Wyatt*

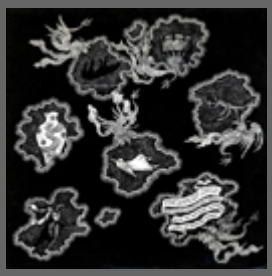
Deep in the undergrows Handy sighed with relief.
He'd come alone in the dark. He'd come again at dawn,
if not before the morning cockrise.
Meanwhile in the bushes above, behind die toepath
which goes along beside the canal leading to the sea
which in turn leads on to all the major oceans,
Indian, Atlantic, Pacific,
I can't remember the names of the others
off-Handy cided to leave.
He'd come apart at the seam
endangered life and lawn order before
the more since he lies. Even under oaf Handy lies,
when he feels caught between righthand wrong.
I think he just might have been wrong this time,
which in turn left him with few alternatives to
relieving himself by hand alone in the dark.
Hiding in the bog.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



The Hapless Child
1976

Michael Mantler

More information about this album

THE SINKING SPLELL

Edward Gorey / Michael Mantler

Oh look, there's something way up high;
A creature floating in the sky.

It is not merely sitting there,
But falling slowly through the air.

The clouds grew pink and gold;: its knees
Were level with the evening trees.

Morose, inflexible, aloof,
It hovered just above the roof.

Its gone right through and come to rest
On great grand-uncle Ogdred's chest.

It settled further in the night,
And gave the maid an awful fright.

Head first, without a look or word,
Its lefts the fourth floor for the third.

The week went by it made its way
A little lower every day.

Each time one thought it might have stopped
One found, however, it had dropped.

One wonders just what can be meant
By this implacable descent.

It did not linger after all,
Forever in the upstairs hall.

It found the drawing room in turn,
And slipped inside the Chinese urn.

It now declines in fretful curves
Among the pickles and preserves.

It's gone beneath the cellar floor,
We shall not see it any more.

> List

THE OBJECT-LESSON

Edward Gorey / Michael Mantler

It was already Thursday.
but his lordship's artificial limb could not be found;
therefore, having directed the servants to fill the baths,
he seized the tongs
and set out at once for the edge of the lake,
where the Throbblefoot Spectre still loiteredin a distraught manner.
He presented it with a lenght of string
and passed on to the statue of Corrupted Endeavour
to await the arrival of autumn.
Meanwhile, on the tower,
Madame O_____ in conversation with an erstwhile cousin
saw that his moustache was not his own,
on which she flung herself over the parapet
and surreptitiously vanished.
He descended, destroying the letter unread,
and stepped backwards into the water for a better view.
Heavens, how dashing! cried the people in the dinghy,
and Echo answered: count the spoons!
On the shore a bat, or possibly an umbrella,
disengaged itself from the shrubbery,
causing those nearby to recollect the miseries of chidhood.
It now became apparent (despite the lack of library paste)
that something had happened to the vicar:
guns began to go off in the distance.
At twilight, however, no message had come from the asylum,
so the others retired to the kiosk,
only to discover the cakes iced a peculiar shade of green
and the tea-urn empty
save for a card on which was writtent the single word:
Farewell.

> List

THE INSECT GOD *Edward Gorey / Michael Mantler*

O what has become of Millicent Frastley?
Is there any hope that she's still alive?
Why haven't they found her? It’s rather ghastly
To think that the child was not yet five.

The dear little thing was last seen playing
Alone by herself at the edge of the park;
There was no one with her to keep her from straying
Away in the shadows and oncoming dark.

Before she could do so, a silent and glittering Black motor drew up
where she sat nibbling grass;
From within came a nearly inaudible twittering.
A tiny green face peered out through the glass.

She was ready to flee, when the figure beckoned;
An arm with two elbows held out a tin
Full of cinnamon balls; she paused; a second Reached out as she
took one, and lifted her in.

The nurse was discovered collapsed in some shrubbery
But her reappearance was not much use;
Her eyes were askew, her extremities rubbery.
Her clothing was stained with a brownish juice.

She was questioned in hopes of her answers revealing

What had happened: she merely repeatedly said "I hear them walking about on the ceiling"
She had gone irretrievably out of her head.

O feelings of horror, resentment, and pity
For things, which so seldom turn out for the best;
The car, unobserved, sped away from the city
As last of the light died out in *the* west.

The Frastleys grew sick with apprehension. Which a heavy tea only served to increase; Though they felt it was scarcely genteel to mention
The loss of their child, they called in the police.

Through unvisited hamlets the car went creeping,
With its head lamps unlit and its curtains drawn;
Those natives who happened not to be sleeping Heard it pass, and lay awake until dawn.

The police with their torches and notebooks descended
On the haunts of the underworld, looking for clues;
In spite of their praiseworthy efforts, they ended
With nothing at all in the way of news.

The car, after hours and hours of travel,
Arrived at a gate in an endless wall;
It rolled up a drive and stopped on the gravel
At the foot of a vast and crumbling hall.

As the night wore away hope started to languish
And soon was replaced by all manner of fears;
The family twisted their fingers in anguish,
Or got them all damp from the flow of their tears.
They removed the child to the ball-room, whose hangings
And mirrors were streaked with a luminous slime;
They leapt through the air with buzzings and twangings
To work themselves up *to* a ritual crime.

They stunned her, and stripped off her garments, and lastly
They suffed her inside a kind of pod;
And then it was that Millicent Frastley
Was sacrificed to THE INSECT GOD.

> List

THE DOUBTFUL GUEST *Edward Gorey / Michael Mantler*

When they answered the bell on that wild winter night,
There was no one expected-and no one in sight.

Then they saw something standing on top of an urn,
Whose peculiar appearance gave them quite a turn.

All at once it leapt down and ran into the hall,
Where it chose to remain with its nose to the wall.

It was seemingly deaf to whatever they said,
So at last they stopped screaming, and went off to bed.

It joined them at breackfast and presently ate
All the syrup and toast, and part of a plate.

It wrenched off the horn from the new gramophone,
And could not be persuaded to leave it alone.

It betrayed a great liking for peering up flues,
And for peeling the soles of its white canvas shoes.

At times it would tear out whole chapters from books,
Or put roomfuls of pictures askew on their hooks.

Every Sunday it brooded and lay on the floor,
Inconveniently close to the drawing-room door.

Now and then it would vanish for hours from the scene,
But alas, be discovered inside a tureen.

It was subject to fits of bewildering wrath,
During which it would hide all the towels from the bath.

In the night through the house it would aimlessly creep,
In spite of the fact of its being asleep.

It would carry off objects of which it grew fond,
And protect them by dropping them into the pond.

It came seventeen years ago-and to this day
It has shown no intention of going away.

> List

THE REMEMBERED VISIT *Edward Gorey / Michael Mantler*

The summer she was eleven, Drusilla went abroad with her parents.
There she climbed endlessflights of stairs.
She tried to make out the subjects of vast dark paintings.
Sometimes she was made ill by curious dishes,
She was called upon to admire views.
When the weather was bad, she leafed through incomprehensible magazines.
One morning her parents, for some reason or other, went on an excursion without her.
After luncheon an acquaintance of the family. Miss Skrim-Pshaw, took Drusilla with her to pay a call.
They walked to an inn called le Crapaud Bleu.
They were shown into agarden where the topiary was being neglected,
Drusilla was toldshe was going to meet a wonderful old manwho had been or done something lofty and cultured *in* the dim past.
Eventually Mr Cragueappeared.
He kissed Miss Skrim-Pshaws hand, and she presented Drusilla to him.
After they had sat down, Drusilla saw that Mr Cragueappeared.
Wore no socks.
He and Miss Skrim-Psaw's mentioned a great many people who had done things in their conversation.
Tea was brought: it was nearly colourless, and there was a plate of crystallized ginger.
Mr Cragueasked Drusilla if she liked paper.
He said he would have liked to show her his albums filled with beautiful pieces of it, but they were upstairs in his *room.*
Drusilla promised when she got home to send him some insides of envelopes she had saved.
Miss Skrim-Pshaw said it was time they made their adieux.

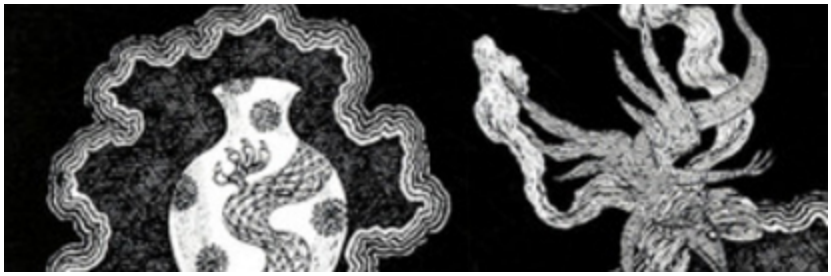
On the way back a few drops of rain fell. Somehow Drusilla was hungrier than she had been before tea.
Days went by.
Weeks went by.
Months went by.
Years went by. Drusilla was still inclined to be forgetful.
One day something reminded her of her promise to Mr Cragué.
She began to hunt for the envelope-linings in her room.
On a sheet of newspaper at the bottom of a drawer she read that Mr Cragué had died the autumn after she had been abroad.
When she found the pretty pieces of paper, she felt very sad and neglectful.
The wind came and took them through an open window: she watched them blow away.

> List

THE HAPLESS CHILD *Edward Gorey / Michael Mantler*

There was once a little girl named Charlotte Sophia.
Her parents were kind and well-to-do.
She had a doll whom she called Hortense.
One day her father, a colonel in the army, was ordered to Africa.
Several months later he was reported killed in a native uprising.
Her mother fell into a decline that proved fatal.
Her only other relative, an uncle, was brained by a piece of masonry.
Charlotte Sophia was left in the hands of the family lawyer.
He at once put her tnto a boarding-school.
There she was punished by the teachers for things she hadn't done.
Hortense was torn limb from limb by the other pupils.
During the day Charlotte Sophia hid as much as possible.
At night she lay awake weeping and weeping.
When she could bear it no longer she fled from the school at dawn.
She soon lost consciousness and sank to the pavement
A man came and took the locket with her parents' pictures inside.
Another man came from the opposite direction and carried her off.
He brought her to a low place.
He sold her to a drunken brute.
Charlotte Sophia was put to work making artificial flowers.
She lived on scraps and tap-water.
From time to time the brute got the horror.
Charlotte Sophia's eyesight began to fail rapidly.
Meanwhile, her father, who was not dead after all, returned home.
Every day he motored through the streets searching for her.
At last the brute went off his head.
Charlotte Sophia, now almost blind, ran into the street.
She was at once struck down by a car.
Her father got out to look at the dying child.
She was so changed, he did not recognize her.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Voices And Instruments
1976

Jan Steele/John Cage

More information about this album

EXPERIENCES N°2

E.E. Cummings / John Cage

it is at moments after i have dreamed
of the rare entertainment of your eyes,
when (being fool to fancy) i have deemed

with your peculiar mouth my heart made wise;
at moments when the glassy darkness holds

the genuine apparition of your smile
(it was through tears always) and silences moulds
such strangeness as was mine a little while;

moments when my once more illustrious arms
are filled with fascination, when my breast
wears the intolerant brightness of your charms:

one pierced moment whiter than the rest

-turning from the tremendous lie of sleep
i watch the roses of the day grow deep

> List

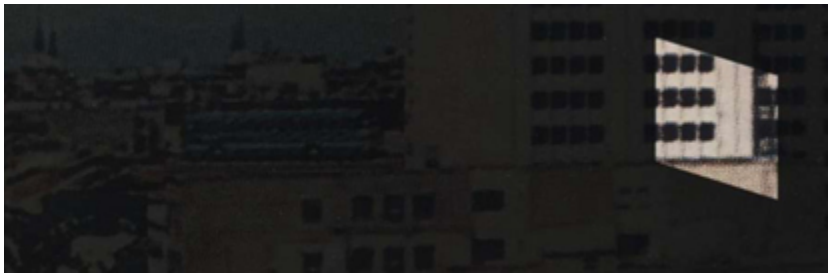
THE WONDERFUL WIDOW OF EIGHTEEN SPRINGS

James Joyce / John Cage

night by silent sailing night,
Isobel,
wildwoods eyes and primarose hair,
quietly,
all the woods so wild
in mauves of moss and daphnedews
how all so still she lay
'neath of the whitethorn,
child of tree
like some lost happy leaf,
like blowing flower stilled,
as fain would she anon
for soon again 'twill be,
win me, woo me, wed me,
ah! weary me!
deeply,
now evencalm lay sleeping;
night;
Isobel,
Sister Isobel,

Saintette Isobel,
Madame Isa Veuve La Belle

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Diamond Head
1975

Phil Manzanera

More information about this album

FRONTERA *Phil Manzanera / Robert Wyatt*

Es preciso que llegemos a la frontera antes del anochecer
Tenremos que hallarle dondequiera se haya ocultado
Es dudoso que est actor sea capaz de desempenar un papel tan importante
Terminare por creer que Vd no quiere ayudarnos
Cree Vd que podremos convencerle?
Dire a mi empleado que vaya luego a la oficina de la compania de Aviacion
Niega Vd que el acusado hayo injuriado
Al demandante de la manera mas imperdonable?
Sentimos que le sea imposible a Vd asistir a la representacion
Estaba contento de fijarme en que el teatro establa lleno de gente
Hare todo lo possible para volver a verle a Vd
Me asombre de lo que ha sucedidodododo
Es preciso que lleguemos a la fontera antes del anochecer
Tendremos que hallarle dondequierase haya ocultado
Es dudoso que este actor sea capaz de desempenar un papel tan importante
Terminare por creer que Vd no quiere ayudarnos
Cree que podremos convencerle
Dire a mi

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Rock Bottom
1974

Robert Wyatt

More information about this album

SEA SONG

Robert Wyatt

You look different every time
you come from the foam crested brine,
your skin shining softly in the
moonlight.
Partly fish, partly porpoise, partly
baby sperm whale.
Am I yours, are you mine
to play with?

Joking apart,
when you're drunk you're terrific,
when you're drunk I like you mostly
late at night, you're quite alright.
But I can't understand
the different you in the morning
when it's time to play at being
human for a while.
Please smile.

You'll be different in the spring, I know
you're a seasonal beast,
like the starfish that drift in with the tide.
So until your blood runs to meet
the next full moon,
your madness fits in nicely
with my own.
Your lunacy fits neatly with my own,
my very own.
We're not alone.

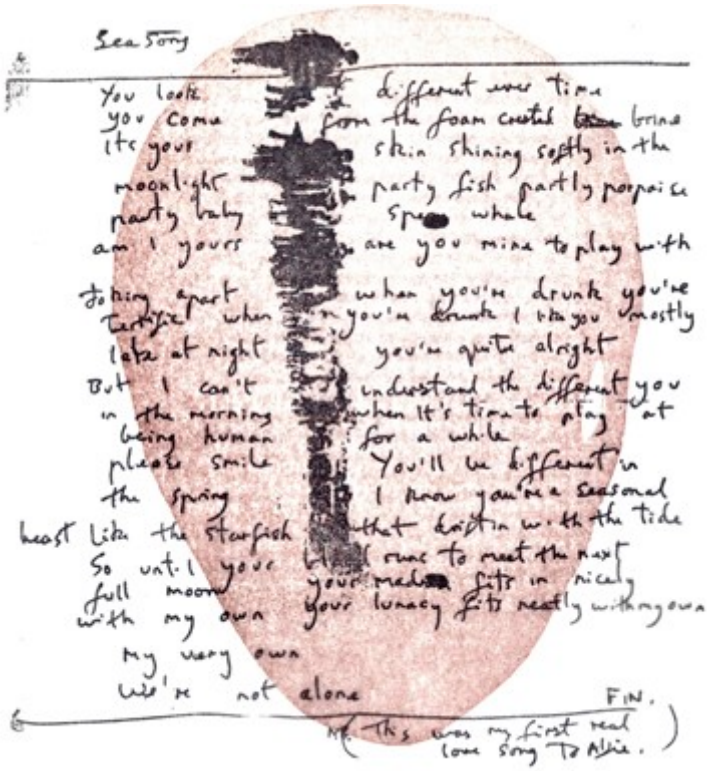


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

A LAST STRAW *Robert Wyatt*

Seaweed tangled in our
home from home,
reminds me of your
rocky bottom.

Please don't wait for
tne paperweight,
err on the good side.
Touch us when we collapse.

Into the water we'll go
head over heel.
We'll not grow fat inside
the mammary gland.

Into the water we'll go
head over heel.
A head behind me
buried deep in the sand.

> List

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD HIT THE ROAD *Robert Wyatt*

Orlandon't tell me, oh no.
Don't say, oh God don't tell me.
Oh dear me, heavens above.
Oh no, no I can't stand it.

Stop please, oh deary me.
What in heaven's name?
Oh blimey. Mercy me. Woe are we.
Oh dear. Oh stop it, stop it.
You've been so kind,
I know, I know.
So why did I hurt you?
I didn't mean to hurt you.

But I'll keep trying,
and I'm sure you will too.



Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

ALIFIB / ALIFIE *Robert Wyatt*

No nit not.
Nit no not.
Nit nit folly bololey.
Alife my larder.

I can't forsake you,
or forsqueak you,
Alife my larder.
Confiscate,
or make you late you, you
Alife my larder.
Not nit not,

Nit no not.
Nit nit folly bololey.
Burlybunch, the water mole

Hellyplop and fingerhole

Not a wossit, bundy, see.
For jangle and bojangle
trip trip pip pippy pippy pip pip
landerim.
Alife my larder, Alife my larder.

(I'm not your larder,
jammy jars and mustard.
I'm not your dinner,
you soppy old custard.
And what's a bololey
when it's a folly?
I'm not your larder,
I'm your dear little dolly.
But when plops get too helly
I'll fill up your belly.
I'm not your larder.
I'm Alife your guarder.)



Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

LITTLE RED ROBIN HOOD HIT THE ROAD *Robert Wyatt*

In the garden of England,
dead moles lie inside their holes.

The dead-end tunnels crumble
in the rain, underfoot.
Innit a shame?

Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?
Roots can't hold them.
Bugs console them.

I fight with the handle of my little brown broom
I pull out the wires of the telephone.
I hurt in the head, and I hurt in the aching bone.
Now I smash up the telly with remains of the broken phone.
I fighting for the crust of the little brown loaf.
I want it. I want it. I want it. Give it to me.
I give it you back when I finish the lunchtea.
I lie in the road, try to trip up the passing cars.
Yes, me and the hedgehog, we bursting the tyres, all day.
As we roll down the highway towards the setting sun,
I reflect on the life of the highwayman, yum, yum.
Now I smash up the telly and what's left on the broken phone.
Ha ha ha ha ha.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Little Red Record
1972

Matching Mole

More information about this album

MARCHIDES

Dave McRae

What is brown, goes in the ground,
is myopic?
What is brown, goes in the ground,
is myopic?
It's the mole!

> List

NAN TRUE'S HOLE

Robert Wyatt / Phil Miller

There's a place where I can run away
just for little holiday
in the house of a friend we know
we know we never go

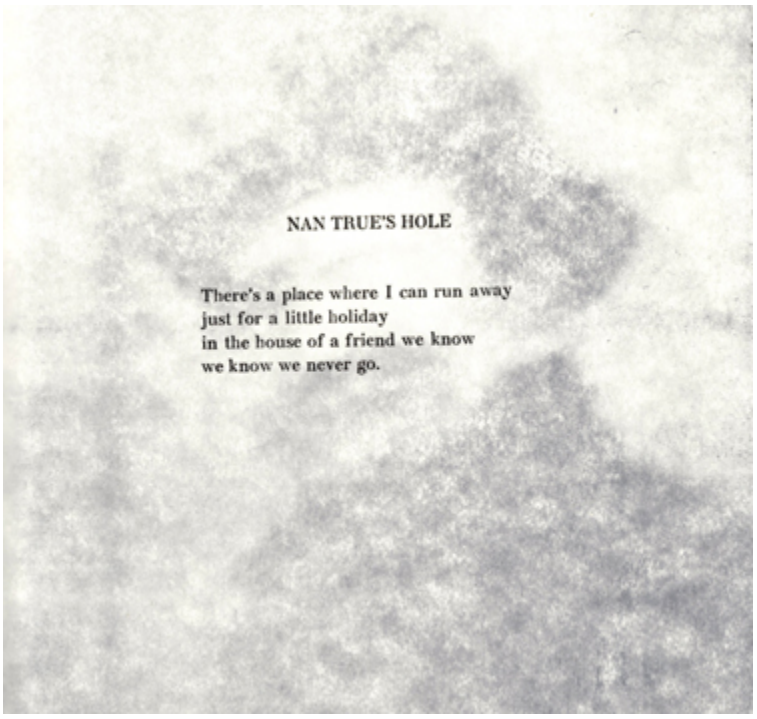


Illustration : Jean-Michel Marchetti

> Zoom

> List

RIGHTEOUS RHUMBA *Robert Wyatt / Phil Miller*

Look, see the people at the top
Come down the right hand lane
In Belgium, Greece and Portugal
In France and sunny Spain

My radical cheek is soft and meek
But I'll kill if I must
I'd rather have the Chinese here
Than Europe on me thrust
I'd rather have the Chinese here
Than Europe on me thrust

You may say I'm muddled up
Should stick to chords and tunes
But he shan't stay there
While he lives in fear of rich and pompous goons
But he shan't stay there
While he lives in fear of rich and pompous goons

A home for the warm and a home for the wonderful!
I'll show you mine, if you'll show me yours!
A home for the warm and a home for the wonderful!
I'll show you mine, if you'll show me yours!

> List

GLORIA GLOOM *Robert Wyatt / Bill MacCormick*

Like so many of you I've got my doubts about
how much to contributet to the already rich among us
How long can I pretend (that) music's more relevant than
fighting for a socialist world
Someone watching us knows I'm bad
Black plastic along blue black wall
Small square
for faces
Where dead men can look through
Run along and see the prison bath
Throw a stone across an empty road
You and your friend will be found
Outside the daydream
I've woken up to watch you sleep

> List

GOD SONG *Robert Wyatt / Phil Miller*

What on Earth are you doing, god?
Is this some sort of joke you're playing?
Is it 'cause we didn't pray? Well
I can't see the point of the words
without the action Are you just hot air

breathing over us? and over all
Is it fun watching us all
where's your son we want him again

Next time you send your boy down here
give him some wife and some sexy daughter
someone we can understand
who's got some ideas we can use really relate to
We've all read your rules-tried them
Learned them in schools. Then tried them.
They're impossible rules You've made us look
fools Well done god
but now please

Don't hunt me down for Heaven's sake
You know I'm only joking aren't I
Pardon me I'm very drunk but I
know what I'm trying to say
And it's nearly night-time
and we're still alone waiting for
something unknown Still waiting
So throw down a stone or something
Give us a sign, for christ's sake

> List



More information about this album



Matching Mole
1972

Matching Mole

More information about this album

O CAROLINE

Robert Wyatt / David Sinclair

David's on piano, and I may play on a drum
And we'll try to make the music work, we'll try to have some fun
But I just can't help thinking that if you were here with me
I'd get all my thoughts in focus and play more excitingly

I love you still, Caroline
I want you still, Caroline
I need you still, Caroline

If you call this sentimental crap you'll make me mad
'Cause you know that I would not sing about some passing fad
And if my attempts at rhyming aren't convincing to your ear
Then memories betray you through the passing of the year

I love you still, Caroline
I want you still, Caroline
I need you still, Caroline

You must think it doubtful that I mean the words I sing
Or that all attempts to reach you this way could not mean a thing
But you must admit we both thought we'd be man and wife
And that I could make you happy for the best part of your life

I love you still, Caroline
I love you still, Caroline

> List

SIGNED CURTAIN

Robert Wyatt

This is the first verse
This is the first verse, verse
This is the first, first...
And this is the chorus
Or perhaps it's the bridge
Or just another part
Of the song
That I'm singing

And this is the second verse
It could be the last verse
And this is the second verse
Second verse, second verse
It could be the last verse
Last verse
And it's probably

The last one
And this is the chorus
Or perhaps it's the bridge
Or just another key change
Never mind
It doesn't hurt
It only means
That I have lost faith in this song

'Cause it won't help me
Reach you...

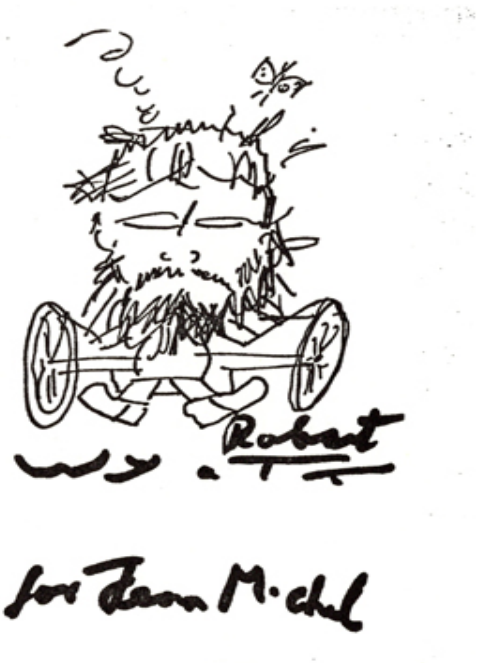


Illustration : Robert Wyatt (autoportrait)

> Zoom

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Jet-Propelled Photographs
(At The Beginning)
1971

Soft Machine

More information about this album

THAT'S HOW MUCH I NEED YOU NOW

R. Wyatt

I need you more than ever now
Where the trees grow
That's where my love died
That's where you can hide
That's now much I need you now

I feed you more than leaves are brown
Where the sun shines on my feet
That's where my love died
That's where you can hide
That's now much I need you now

I need you more than ever now
Where the trees grow, tree
That's where my love died
That's where you can hide, yeah
That's now much I need you now
That's now much I need you now

> List

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN

H. Hopper

You may laugh at me, girl
Say I don't deserve
All the things I've had - sad...

I should've known it wouldn't last
But things were happening so fast
I'll never know just how it stayed so long
I should've known it, should've seen at the time
But when you're happy, don't you know that you're blind?

I should've known it wouldn't last, no
But things were happening so fast
I'll never know just how it stayed so long
I should've known it, should've seen at the time
But when you're happy, you don't know that you're blind - don't you know?
No - yeah...

You may laugh at me, girl
Say I don't deserve
All the things I've had - sad...

> List

JET-PROPELLED PHOTOGRAPH *K. Ayers*

How far can anyone go and to where?
How much can anyone do and to whom?
Oh, oh, oh, girl - I'm so low, girl
What can I do? I believe in you!

How far can anyone go and to where?
How much can anyone do and to whom?
Oh, oh, oh, girl - I'm so low, girl
Take a look around, what's that you found?

There'll come a time
When you won't understand
The position on

> List

WHEN I DON'T WANT YOU *H. Hopper*

When I don't want you
Why do I stay here?
You're not the one
For me

Is it because girl
You know you say that you need me
And you cry when I say
When I say that I'll go?

And I'm tired
Baby, I'm tired by your tears
They don't reach my ears anymore
No, not anymore

> List

YOU DON'T REMEMBER *R. Wyatt / D. Allen*

Could almost see her eyes
Is it me she despises or you - or you, girl?
You're awfully nice to me
And I'm sure you can see what her game is - it's me, girl!

She sees you in her place
Just as if it's a race and you're winning - me, girl!
She just can't undertsand
That for me everything's just beginning - with me, girl!

But before this feeling dies
Remember that I told you lies...

Now I love your eyes - on me, girl
See how the time flies - past me, girl
She's learning to hate
But it's just too late for me - for me, girl
It was the same with her love
It just wasn't enough for me - for me, girl

But before this feeling dies
Remember that I told you lies...

> List

SHE'S GONE *K. Ayers*

Baby's fine, baby's mine
You understand that she's gone

I said hold me tight, stay tonight
My little woman has gone

Won't you let me walk with you
Talk with you, make love to you?
Won't you let me hold you tight?
Stay tonight!

Baby's fine, baby's mine
My little woman has gone - yeah, she's a teeny-bopper!

> List

I'D BE RATHER WITH YOU *K. Ayers*

If I had to choose between the two
I'd rather be with you, I'd rather be with you
(Yes I would)

If you keep on breaking up my mind
You won't like what you find
Won't like what you see - see, see...

I want you, love
I really do - I do, I do...

Tell me now before you change your name
Why aren't you more insane?
You think you're civilised
Close your eyes, close your eyes

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Third
1970

Soft Machine

More information about this album

MOON IN JUNE *Robert Wyatt*

On a dilemma between what I need and what I just want
Between your thighs I feel a sensation
How long can I resist the temptation?

I got my bird, you got your man
So who else could we need, really ?
Now I'm here, I may as well put my other hand in yours
While we decide how far to go and if we've got time to do it now
And if it's half as good for you as it is for me
Then you won't mind if we lie down for a while, just for a while
Till all the thing I want is need
Till all the thing I are am you

I want you more than ever now
We're on the floor, and you want more, and I feel almost sure
That cause now we've agreed, that we got what we need
Then all the thing us need is wanting

I realized when I saw you last
We'd been together now and then
From time to time - just here and there
Now I know how it feels from my hair to my heels
Have you on the horns of my dilemma

- Oh ! Wait a minute ! -

Over - Up - Over - Up - ... Down
Down - Over - Up - Over - ... Up

Living can be lovely, here in New York State
Ah, but I wish that I were home
And I wish I were home again - back home again, home again

There are places and people that I'm so glad to have seen
Ah, but I miss the trees, and I wish that I were home again
Back home again

The sun shines here all summer
Its nice `cause you can get quite brown
Ah, but I miss the rain - ticky tacky ticky
And I wish that I were home again - home again, home again...
Living is easy here in New York State
Ah, but I wish that I were home again

Back in West Dulwich again

Just before we go on to the next part of our song

Let's all make sure we've got the time
Music-making still performs the normal functions -
background noise for people 2 scheming, seducing, revolting and teaching
That's all right by me, don't think that I'm complaining
After all, it's only leisure time, isn't it ?

Now I love your eyes - see how the time flies
She's learning to hate, but it's just too late for me
It was the same with her love
It just wasn't enough for me
But before this feeling dies
Remember how distance can tell lies !

You can almost see her eyes, is it me she despises or you ?
You're awfully nice to me and I'm sure you can see what her game is
She sees you in her place, just as if it's a race
And you're winning, and you're winning
She just can't understand that for me everything's just beginning
Until I get more homesick
So before this feeling dies, remember how distance tells us lies.

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Volume 2
1969

Soft Machine

More information about this album

PATAPHYSICAL INTRODUCTION PART I & A CONCISE BRITISH ALPHABET PART I AND PART II

R. Wyatt | H. Hopper - arr. R. Wyatt

Good evening or good morning
and now we have a choice selection
Of rivmic melodies
from the official orchestra
of the College of Pataphysics
but first it's our great pleasure
and indeed we hope yours
to present
in its entire and manifold entiretity
ladies and gentlemen :
The British Alphabet:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

ZYXWVUTSRQPONMLKJIHGFEDCBA

> List

HIBOU, ANEMONE AND BEAR

Mike Ratledge / Robert Wyatt

In the spring I think of sex and means to end
Summertime, I like to sit upon the grass
Autumn nights I go to parties with my friends
Winter time is when I think about the past

But of course I do all those things all year 'round
I mean all the good things are there to be found
It's all here, pick a back and get to work
If you don't your life will surely go berserk
Or indeed be bored to death, which is worse?

If something's not worth saying
Not worth saying, not worth saying
Say it

> List

HULLODER

H. Hopper - arr. R. Wyatt

If I were black and I lived here

I'd want to be a big man in the FBI or the CIA
But as I'm not and of course I don't

And as I'm free, white and twenty one
I don't need more power than I've got
Except for some times when I'm broke

> List

DADA WAS HERE *H. Hopper - arr. R. Wyatt*

Por que trabajas tu por all?
Por que no estas aqui en casa?
La la la, yo no se... solo me pregunto
Porque no soy feliz en la escuela?
Es que puedo confiar en alguien que no est?
Yo no se...

Es que puedo fumar cuando soy ma viejo?
Es que puedo creer en el idolo que queremos?
Digame si es justo que no estes aqui?
Para ayudarme, yo no se, solo me preguntan
Yo no se, no se, no se...

> List

THANK YOU PIERROT LUNAIRE *H. Hopper - arr. R. Wyatt*

In his organ solos, he fills 'round the keyboards
Knowing he must find the noisiest notes for you to hear

And when I know that he's found them
I feel so good... but I still can't see
Why people listen, instead of doing it themselves

But I'm grateful all the same
You're very kind and I don't blame you
I don't mind if you just watch
In fact I'd welcome it, welcome it, welcome it..

> List

HAVE YOU EVER BEAN GREEN? *H. Hopper - arr. R. Wyatt*

Thank you Noel and Mitch
Thank you Jim for our exposure to the crowd
And thank you for his coattails
Mike, you did us proud, didn't you?

> List

AS LONG AS HE LIES PERFECTLY STILL *Mike Ratledge / Robert Wyatt*

Here's a song for 'clean machine Kevin Majorca'
He's found his own way of 'live in Majorca'

Don't walk, don't drink
Don't talk, just think
Heaven on Earth he'll get there soon

Kevin's highly unlikely to get ill
At least as long as he lies perfectly still
He eats brown rice and fish - how nice
Heaven on Earth, he'll get there soon

Good and bad go so well together in his tunes
He wrote a song and called it the weather - or not
He's Lucky or Pozzo, Estragon and Vladimir
Waiting for something that's already there
Heaven on Earth or is it the moon?

Why, why, why is he sleeping?
Why is the trumpeter weeping?
Kevin maybe asking to get back into my dreams
His voice is so weak now and the customers are screaming
Heavens above, we can't hear what you're saying

We've got something to tell you
Hold on we wanted to thrill you
Reckons it's so nice and it will make you feel better
Something in the nature of a Lullabye Letter

Kevin on Earth there'll be one
Kevin on Earth make room for one
Kevin himself he'll be in
Kevin on Earth, be here
Or you could be now
Or is he found, in Herne Bay...

> List

DEDICATED TO YOU BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING *Hugh Hopper*

Famous parabolic versions
Songs that promise beauty, sleep, love, sadness

Do I dream that somethings missing?
Hungry, thirsty, open off peak mind
Give me the truth, give me the truth
Give me the truth, tell me

Songs and versesa, handy captions
Photographs of real life action, horror, madness
Can it be that somethings happening?
Wash me, paint me, but please don't taint me
Give me a chance, give me chance, give me a chance
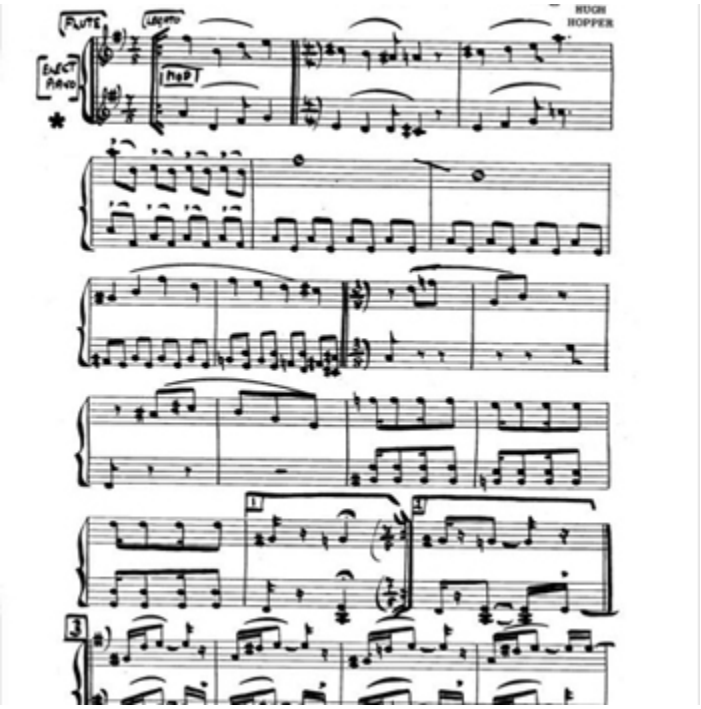
When I was young the sky was blue
And everyone knew what to do
But now it's gone, the telly's here
Mass media, the sewer too

Universal maxi million, eight rare cases
Chickenpox and crawling gladness
Seemingly it's nothing happening

Cure my doctor, don't swallow him down
Give me the cure, give me the cure
Give me the cure

The night was cool, the moon was bright
The air was clear with oxygen
The stars were there, and in my eyes
Were thousands of chrysanthemums

Don't use magnets, geophysics carry you back
Wholesome, health food, home pride
Satisfied, something outside gives out hunger
Face my mirror, electricity



> List

PIG *Mike Ratledge*

Suspenders and stockings
Look more sexy than the tights girls are wearing
But even there, weren't the time wasted
Time that could be spent completely nude, bare, naked?

Virgins are boring
They should be grateful for the things they're ignoring
Why be smug about the time wasted
Time that could be spent completely nude, bare, naked

Knickers and panties
We are groping under knickers and pants
But is it worth it, all that time wasted?
Time we could've spent completely nude, bare, naked
With nothing on at all
Nothing, no clothes on
Nude, naked bare...

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics



Volume 1
1968

Soft Machine

More information about this album

HOPE FOR HAPINESS

H. Hopper / K. Ayers / M. Ratledge

I can tell... like the ring of a bell
A chime that is clear and true
But if a crack, the sound is flat
Like happiness... that's become untrue

Out of the East, the sun flew West
Trailing its golden spray
My heart burns, when fortune turns
The trail to light my way

Days go by, I watch the sky
My eyes forever quest
The sun returns, though my hope yearns
Forever things point the rest

Sun heart burns, moon glow turns
Stars will trade hope for happiness
Hope for happiness, happiness, happiness

Flowers grow wild, just for the child
Sniff this sprinkling bloom
When you grow up, hope colours up
The things that cause us gloom

Tell can you now how fun is made?
It's how happiness is really found
Look for advice, be told more than twice
By people all around

Sun heart burns, moon glow turns
Stars will trade hope for happiness
Hope for happiness, happiness, happiness

> List

WHY AM I SO SHORT?

H. Hopper / K. Ayers / M. Ratledge

You may laugh at me
Say I don't deserve
All the things I've had
Sad...

I've got a drum kit and some sticks
So when I'm drunk or in a fit
I find it easy to express myself
I hit the drums so hard I break all my heads

And then I end the day in one of my beds

I'm nearly 5 ft. 7 tall
I like to smoke and drink and ball
I've got a yellow suit that's made by Pam
And every day I like an egg and some tea
But best of all I like to talk about me!

You may laugh at me
Say I don't deserve
All the things I've had
Sad.

> List

A CERTAIN KIND *H. Hopper*

A certain kind of love, I'd say
Exists for me and every night
Your kind of love sets me alight
And I know it's real
It's what I feel, what I feel

And loving you the way I do
Makes everything seem right again
And when you're near I know
I know, you just can't tell the time
When you, it's just not right

And so our love I see in you
The things today, the things we do
And when you're near I know
You just can't see well
I know it's real, it's what I feel

And loving you the way I do
Makes everything seem right again
And when you're near I know
I know you just can't see, all the time of day
I know you're mine and all the time

> List

SAVE YOURSELF *R. Wyatt*

It's my, my bed you're lying on
It's my, my bed you're dying on
But if it's my head you're relying on

You gotta save yourself
Don't enslave yourself
Just to save yourself
Stay in your own bed at night

Because, girl, you know that if
I try to feed you and keep you all week to make you feel secure
Then you won't leave my bed, though you want to stay fed
Will your heart remain, girl?
You know you can't make it
Without tryin' to fake it
And I believe, baby

You gotta save yourself
Don't enslave yourself
Just to save yourself
Stay in your own bed at night

> List

WHY ARE WE SLEEPING? *M. Ratledge / K. Ayers / R. Wyatt*

It begins with a blessing, it ends with a curse
Making life easy by making it worse
"My mask is my master," the trumpeter weeps
But his voice is so weak as he speaks from his sleep
Saying: "Why, why, why... Why are we sleeping?"

People are watching, people who stare
Waiting for something that's already there
"Tomorrow I'll find it," the trumpeter screams
And remembers he's hungry, and drowns in his dreams
Saying: "Why, why, why... Why are we sleeping?"

My head is a nightclub with glasses and wine
The customers dancing or just making time
While Daevid is cursing, the customers scream
Now everyone's shouting, "Get out of my dream!"
Saying: "Why, why, why... Why are we sleeping?"

> List



More information about this album



Love makes Sweet Music
1967

Soft Machine

More information about this album

LOVE MAKES SWEET MUSIC

K. Ayers

Love makes sweet music
Makes you wanna shout
Love makes sweet music
Makes you wanna run, makes you wanna cry out
Makes you wanna shout, makes you wanna run to her

Every night it's the same old scene
Drinking wine cos you're scared to dream
But you know that things will get better
If you let your dreams get better than wine
It's a waste of time

When it's dark and you hear your heart beat
Walk down moonlight's lonely high street
Something sings and you feel sunshine
But you know you're full of moonshine, too
It's staring at you – yeah, alright now

Love makes sweet music
Makes you wanna shout
Love makes sweet music
Makes you wanna run, makes you wanna cry out
Makes you wanna shout, makes you wanna run to her

And you're right where you were
Yeah, alright no

> List

FEELIN 'REELIN SQUELIN'

K. Ayers

This is a token of words unspoken to you
Honey, I'm feeling reeling and squealing for you

Why don't you tell me
One way or another
That you'd rather be
Your father and mother

This is a feeling from the ceiling of my dreams
I get hung up, tied and strung up on your scene

I'm something far away
It doesn't matter what I say
You've got your simple way

You're safely tucked away

Are you happy? Aren't you happy?

This is a feeling from the ceiling of my dreams
I get hung up, tied and strung up on your scene

I close my eyes on your soft guitar...

This is feeling
This is squealing
This is reeling...

> List



More information about this album

Lyrics

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME



Tales Of Canterbury
1994

The Wilde Flowers

More information about this album

IMPOTENCE *R. Wyatt / H. Hopper*

I like me, I like you and the things that we do
From my mouth, love you too it's as if we both knew
Take your robes off your back if there's something I lack
Take your shoes off the rack and get in your wet mac

I can't stand the strain of the tension between
Your wet eyes and mine it's like something obscene

I can see, so can you that there's something to do
If it happens to me then it happens to you
So put that in your pipe you can smoke it tonight
But there won't always be some more suckers like me

I can't stand the pain of the tension between
Your wet eyes and mine it's like something obscene

I can see, so can you that there's something to do
If it happens to me then it happens to you
So put that in your pipe you can smoke it tonight
But there won't always be some more suckers like me

I can't stand the pain of the tension between
Your wet eyes and mine it's like something obscene

> List

NEVER LEAVE ME *H. Hopper*

Tell me what you're gonna say
(Never leave me)
Don't say nil be on your way
(Never leave me)
Never say you're going far away
(Never leave me)
I just can't take the things you say
(Never leave me)

Sometimes you say
You will never leave
Then come the day
Why should I believe now

Why you try to go this way
(Never leave me)
Can't you turn around and stay
(Never leave me)

I just can't take the things you do
(Never leave me)
But I'm dead here without you
(Never leave me)

Sometimes you say
You will never leave
Then come the day
Why should I believe now

Tell me what you're gonna say
(Never leave me)
Don't say nil be on your way
(Never leave me)
Never say you're going far away
(Never leave me)
I just can't take the things you say
(Never leave me)

Sometimes you say
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Why you try to go this way
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Can't you turn around and stay
(Never leave me)
I just can't take the things you do
(Never leave me)
But I'm dead here without you
(Never leave me)

Sometimes you say
You will never leave
Then come the day
Why should I believe now

Sometimes you say
You will never leave
Then come the day
Why should I believe now

> List



More information about this album

MW

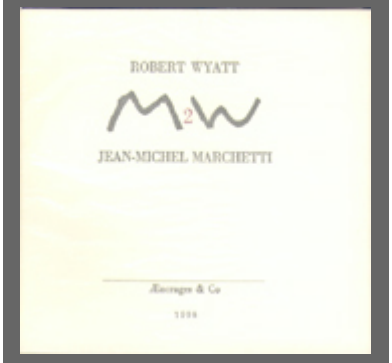
ABÉCÉDAIRE



1997

MW
62 pages - 300 exemplaires

- Rangers In The Nights
- Was A Friend
- Maryan
- Igor Mortis
- Calyx
- God Song
- Soup Song
- CP, Jeebies
- Left On Man
- Lisp Service
- Free Will And Testament
- Dondestan
- East Timor
- The British Road
- Garbzadegi



1998

M2W
76 pages - 300 exemplaires

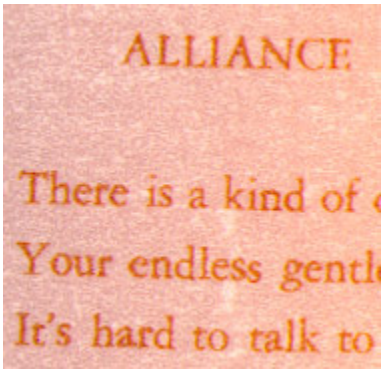
Le premier volume **MW** paraît aux éditions *Ænc*rages *& Co* en 1997, sous la double signature de Robert Wyatt et de Jean-Michel Marchetti. C'est un bel ouvrage dos carré, 20 x 20 cm, impression typographique, composé de textes de Robert Wyatt et de leur traduction française.

Chaque texte est mis en valeur par une composition graphique originale. Parfois, l'écriture manuscrite de Robert Wyatt, si reconnaissable, est elle-même mise en page, superposée à un autre texte ou à une illustration qui en fait rebondir le sens.



Jean-Michel Marchetti est peintre et photographe. Il expose depuis 1980. Outre les quatre **MW** réalisés en collaboration avec Robert Wyatt, il a illustré de nombreux textes d'écrivains de Roland Chopart, Charles Juliet, Philippe Claudel, Alain Lambert...

Il traduit également les textes qu'il met en page. *Ce n'est pas une mince affaire*. Comment faire passer dans notre langue toute la folie qui se dégage de *Alifib/Alife* ou la causticité de *N.I.O* ? J-M. Marchetti y parvient avec talent, et l'aide de Monique et Ceri Crossley ainsi que, parfois, celle de R. Wyatt en personne...



Et s'il y a des choses qui ne se traduisent pas" (*Blues in Bob Minor*), je le remercie de m'avoir aidé à percer le mystère du *Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road*.

A l'occasion d'une rapide rencontre en novembre 2003, il m'indiqua qu'il envisageait de réaliser un cinquième cahier avec des textes d'Alfreda Benge mais qu'il hésitait encore tant ceux-ci étaient souvent remplis de double voire de triple sens, encore plus difficiles à traduire que ceux de son compagnon !

- A Concise British Alphabet
- Starting In The Middle...
- What Is Said
- Signed Curtain
- New Information Order N.I.O.)
- Moon In June
- A Last Straw
- Little Red Riding
- Sea Song
- Alifib/Alife
- Little Red Robin
- Blues In Bob Minor
- Unmasked
- The Age Of Self
- U.S. Amnesia
- P.L.A.



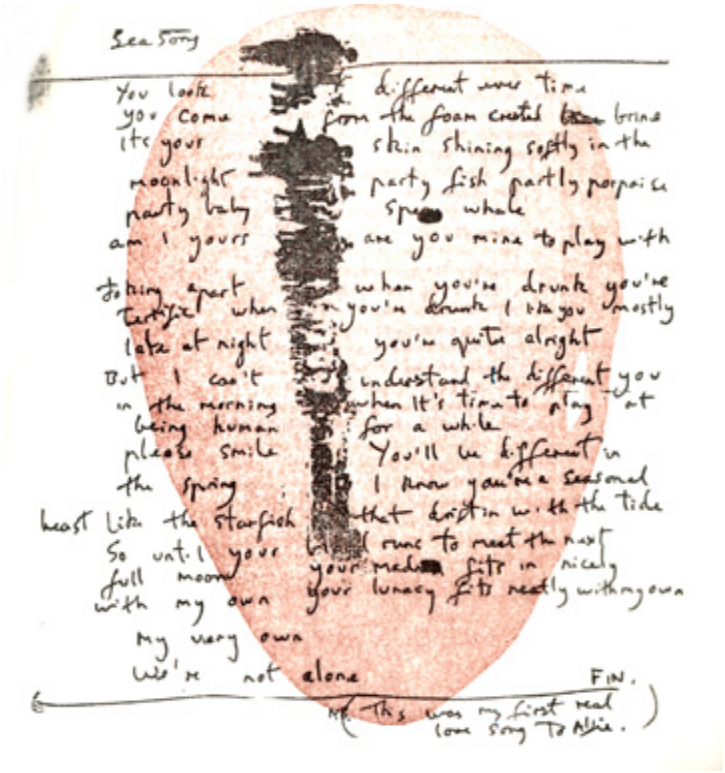
2000

M3W
72 pages - 310 exemplaires

- Pataphysical Introduction
- The End
- Benchmarks
- War Without Blood
- Pigs... In There ?
- Alliance
- For Thomas Bernhard
- Truth Is Stanger Than Fiction
- Amber And Amberines
- Born Again Cretin
-Toledo Texas
- Mass Medium
- Another Great Victory
- The Duchess
- Muddy Mouth
- Vandalusia



2003



En 2000, la revue VISIBLE/LISIBLE publie dans son second numéro un extrait des 3 premiers MW avec une photographie originale de J-M Marchetti (12 pages - 60 exemplaires - Epuisé).

A partir du **M2W**, un CD audio accompagne chaque cahier:



M2W

- The British Road (lu en anglais par Robert Wyatt)
- The British Road (lu en français par Philippe Fretun)
- Blues in Bob Minor (lu en anglais par Robert Wyatt)
- Entretien avec Robert Wyatt (en français)



M3W

- Robert (Robert Wyatt)
- 17 reprises de Robert Wyatt

+ d'infos sur M3W
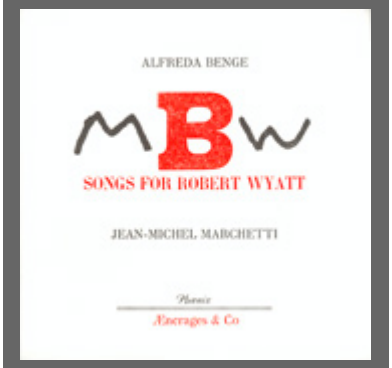


M4W

- 6 morceaux originaux de Robert Wyatt avec Robert Wyatt, Jean-Michel Marchetti, Alix Marchetti, Jean Bisello et Boris Hug

+ d'infos sur M4W

M4W
74 pages - 330 exemplaires

- First Bach
- Urep/Peru
- Nan True's Hole
- Marchides
- Human Bean
- Gloria Gloom
- Three To Get Ready
- Forced To Choose
- Just A Bit
- Team Spirit
- Moon In June (BBC version)
- La Habana
- Chairman Mao
- Before We Knew
- Un Roman Sportif
- When Access Was A Noun





(tirage de tête)

2008

MBW
Songs For Robert Wyatt
68 pages - 1 000 exemplaires

- Forest
- Worship
- Shrinkrap
- Catholic Architecture
- The Sight of The Wind
- Heaps Of Sheeps
- Costa
- Alien
- Lullaby forHamza
- Lullaloop
- September The Ninth
- Cuckoo Madame
- A Sunday In Madrid
- Old Europe
- Out Of Season

Enregistrements réalisés en juillet 1997 chez Robert et Alfie.

+ d'infos sur M2W

LITTLE RED ROBIN HOOD HIT THE ROAD

Dans le jardin d'Angleterre,
dorment dans leurs trous des taupes mortes.
Sous la pluie des tunnels sans issue
s'effondrent sous les pieds.
N'est-ce pas honteux ?

Vous ne les voyez pas ?
Vous ne les voyez pas ?
Les racines ne les retiennent plus.
Les scarabées les consolent.

Je me bats avec le manche de mon petit balai brun.
J'arrache les fils du téléphone.
J'ai mal à la tête, j'ai mal jusqu'à l'os.
Maintenant je défonce la télé avec les fils du téléphone déglingué.
Je me bats pour la croûte de la petite miche dorée.
J'en veux. J'en veux. J'en veux. Donne-la moi.
Je te la rendrai quand j'aurai fini mon thé.
Je me couche dans la rue et j'essaie de niquer les voitures qui passent.
Oui, moi et le hérisson, on explose des pneus toute la journée.
Et on roule sur les autoroutes vers le soleil couchant.
Je médite sur la vie des bandits de grands chemins, miam, miam.
Maintenant je défonce la télé et ce qui reste du téléphone déglingué.
Ha ha ha ha ha.

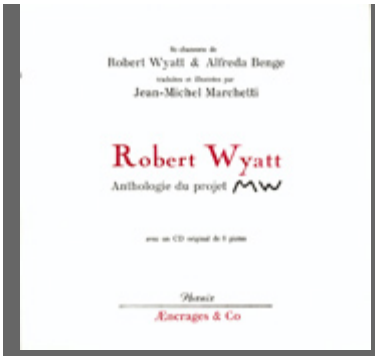
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.. **février 2008**... J-M Marchetti publie enfin le recueil des textes d'Alfreda Benge dont il m'avait parlé en 2003. Tiré à 1 000 exemplaires, ce 5ème volume a failli ne jamais voir le jour.

En mai 2007, l'ensemble du stock et du matériel d'impression d'*Æncrages & Co* qui avait alors publié près de 130 ouvrages, a brulé.

MBW - SONGS FOR ROBERT WYATT sera le premier livre courant édité après l'incendie, dans la collection Phoenix au nom prédestiné.





2009

Robert Wyatt
Anthologie du projet MW
238 pages - 1 500 exemplaires

- Rangers In The Nights
- Was A Friend
- Maryan
- Igor Mortis
- Calyx
- God Song
- Soup Song
- CP, Jeebies
- Left On Man
- Lisp Service
- Free Will And Testament
- Dondestan
- East Timor
- The British Road
- Garbzadegi
- A Concise British Alphabet
- Starting In The Middle...
- What Is Said
- Signed Curtain
- New Information Order N.I.O.)
- Moon In June
- A Last Straw
- Little Red Riding
- Sea Song
- Alifib/Alife
- Little Red Robin
- Blues In Bob Minor
- Unmasked
- The Age Of Self
- U.S. Amnesia
- P.L.A.
- Pataphysical Introduction
- The End
- Benchmarks
- War Without Blood
- Pigs... In There ?
- Alliance
- For Thomas Bernhard
- Truth Is Stanger Than Fiction
- Amber And Amberines
- Born Again Cretin
-Toledo Texas
- Mass Medium
- Another Great Victory
- The Duchess
- Muddy Mouth
- Vandalusia
- First Bach
- Urep/Peru
- Nan True's Hole
- Marchides
- Human Bean
- Gloria Gloom
- Three To Get Ready
- Forced To Choose
- Just A Bit
- Team Spirit
- Moon In June (BBC version)

ANTHOLOGIE DU PROJET MW (2009)

C'est une idée un peu folle qui va devenir réalité: alors que les premiers volumes MW, tous épuisés, s'arrachent à prix d'or sur les sites d'enchères, les éditions *Ænerages & Co* décident de rééditer en offset et en un seul volume la totalité des 5 premiers ouvrages.

Anthologie du projet MW comporte en outre des traductions de *Comicopera* soit au total 80 textes en version bilingue français/anglais (238 pages) , accompagnés d'un CD de 8 pistes.



Sa sortie en mars 2009 sera l'occasion d'une performance **Round About Robert W** réalisée à Baume-les-Dames par Jean-Michel Marchetti et Pascal Comelade.

- La Habana
- Chairman Mao
- Before We Knew
- Un Roman Sportif
- When Access Was A Noun
- Forest
- Worship
- Shrinkrap
- Catholic Architecture
- The Sight of The Wind
- Heaps Of Sheeps
- Costa
- Alien
- Lullaby forHamza
- Lullaloop
- September The Ninth
- Cuckoo Madame
- A Sunday In Madrid
- Old Europe
- Out Of Season
- Just As You Are
- You You
- A.W.O.L.
- A Beautiful Peace
- Be Serious
- Mob Rule
- Out Of The Blue
- Convoy



CD Anthologie du projet MW

- September Song
(K. Weill - interprétation de P. Comelade & R. Wyatt)

- Signed Curtain
(R. Wyatt / interprétation de P. Comelade)

-O Caroline
(D. Sinclair - R. Wyatt / interprétation de P. Comelade)

- Memories
(H. Hopper / interprétation de P. Comelade)

- Alifib 1
(R. Wyatt / interprétation de P. Comelade)

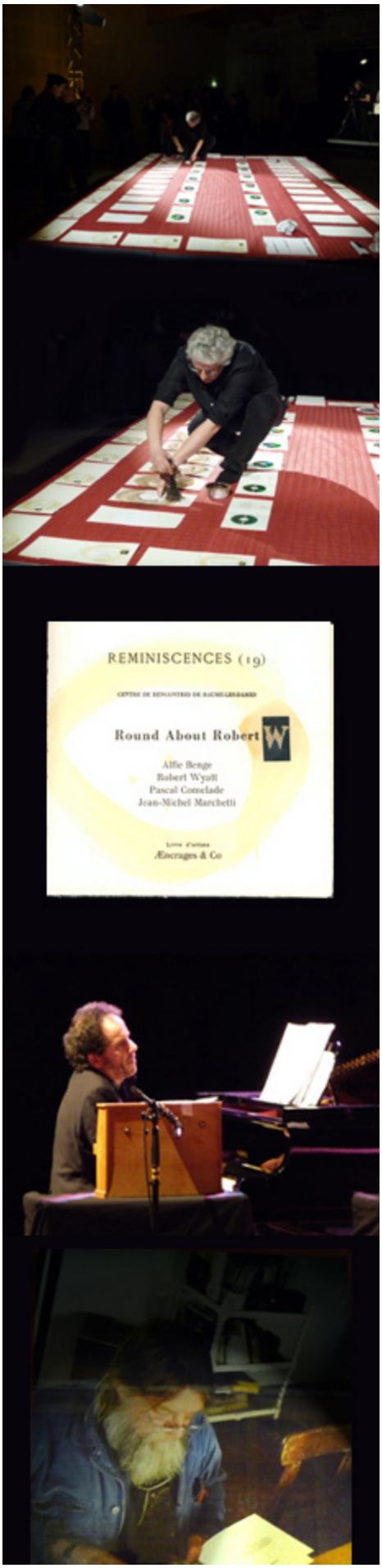
- Alifib 2
(R. Wyatt / interprétation de P. Comelade)

- Heaps Of Sheep
(B. Eno - P. George - R. Wyatt - A. Benge/ interprétations guitare et chant de R.V.D. Bosch + guitare - M. Slager avec les voix de A. Marchetti, L. Marchetti, B. Demonet et J.M. Marchetti)

- Entretien avec Robert Wyatt
Réalisé par J.M. Marchetti et R. Chopard.
Inclus:
The British Road lu en français par Philippe Fretun et British Road et Blues in Bob Minor lus en anglais par Robert Wyatt.

+ d'infos sur le CD

Octobre 2010: les éditions Ænc rages & Co sortent un emboîtage pour l'ouvrage Anthologie du projet MW. Réalisé en typographie, dans le même papier vergé blanc que la couverture, il contient la liste des textes classés par ordre alphabétique.







Round About Robert Wyatt - Performance de Jean-Michel Marchetti
avec Pascal Comelade et Gérard Meloux à Baumes-les-Dames le 7 mars 2009

newsletter

Lettres d'information envoyées épisodiquement aux personnes ayant souhaité être tenues au courant des mises à jour du site. Souvent, je joins à cette newsletter des bonus glanés ici ou là, pour notre plus grand plaisir *(mais attention des liens externes ont peut-être été cassés depuis)*...
La dernière newsletter est également consultable à partir de la page d'accueil du site.



N° 65 - newsletter du 28/01/2026



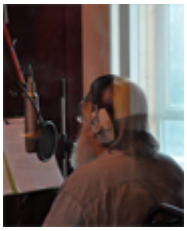
N° 64 - newsletter du 01/10/2025



N° 63 - newsletter du 01/06/2025



N° 62 - newsletter du 28/01/2025



N° 61 - newsletter du 01/10/2024



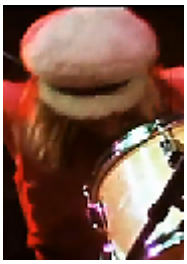
N° 60 - newsletter du 01/06/2024



N° 59 - newsletter du 28/01/2024



N° 58 - newsletter du 01/10/2023



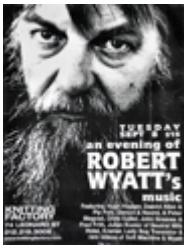
N° 57 - newsletter du 01/06/2023



N° 56 - newsletter du 28/01/2023



N° 55 - newsletter du 01/10/2022



N° 54 - newsletter du 01/06/2022



N° 53 - newsletter du 28/01/2022



N° 52 - newsletter du 01/10/2021



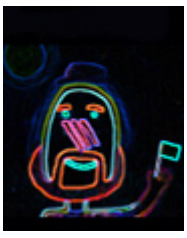
N° 51 - newsletter du 01/06/2021



N° 50 - newsletter du 14/11/2020



N° 49 - newsletter du 30/05/2020



N° 48 - newsletter du 01/01/2020



N° 47 - newsletter du 25/02/2019



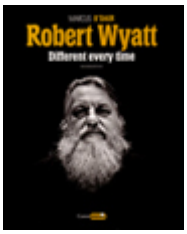
N° 46 - newsletter du 27/07/2018



N° 45 - newsletter du 24/01/2018



N° 44 - newsletter du 30/07/2017



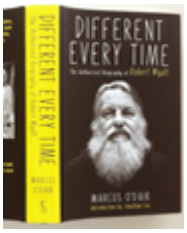
N° 43 - newsletter du 05/01/2017



N° 42 - newsletter du 15/03/2016



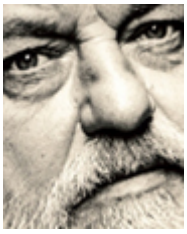
N° 41 - newsletter du 22/06/2015



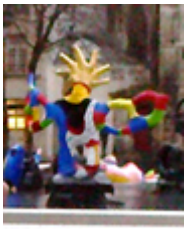
N° 40 - newsletter du 16/01/2015



N° 39 - newsletter du 02/08/2014



N° 38 - newsletter du 19/04/2014



N° 37 - newsletter du 25/12/2013



N° 36 - newsletter du 20/08/2013



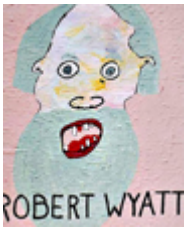
N° 35 - newsletter du 31/08/2009



N° 34 - newsletter du 23/07/2009



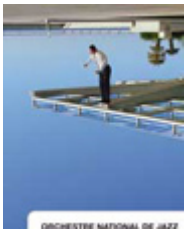
N° 33 - special Hugh Hopper



N° 32 - newsletter du 07/05/2009



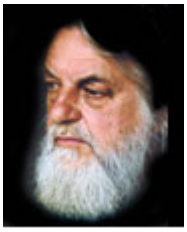
N° 31 - newsletter du 27/04/2009



N° 30 - newsletter du 30/03/2009



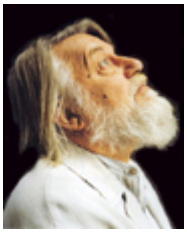
N° 29 - newsletter du 22/02/2009



N° 28 - newsletter du 31/12/2008



N° 27 - newsletter du 08/11/2008



N° 26 - newsletter du 03/05/2008



N° 25 - newsletter du 11/11/2007



N° 24 - newsletter du 10/08/2007



N° 23 - newsletter du 10/05/2007



N° 22 - newsletter du 14/01/2007



N° 21 - newsletter du 13/12/2006



N° 20 - newsletter du 24/09/2006



N° 19 - newsletter du 18/08/2006



N° 18 - newsletter du 24/05/2006



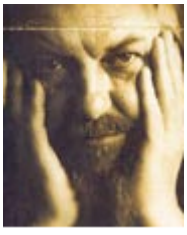
N° 17 - newsletter du 13/03/2006



N° 16 - newsletter du 30/12/2005



N° 15 - newsletter du 23/10/2005



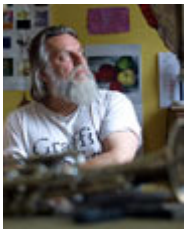
N° 14 - newsletter du 08/09/2005



N° 13 - newsletter du 25/06/2005



N° 12 - newsletter du 16/04/2005



N° 11 - newsletter du 25/02/2005



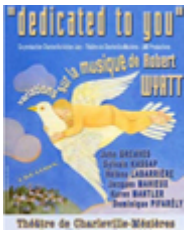
N° 10 - newsletter du 02/01/2005



N° 9 - newsletter du 13/11/2004



N° 8 - newsletter du 02/10/2004



N° 7 - newsletter du 31/08/2004



N° 6 - newsletter du 16/07/2004



N° 5 - newsletter du 13/06/2004



N° 4 - newsletter du 12/05/2004



N° 3 - newsletter du 13/04/2004



N° 2 - newsletter du 11/03/2004



N° 1 - newsletter du 25/01/2004

Old Rottenhat's Journal

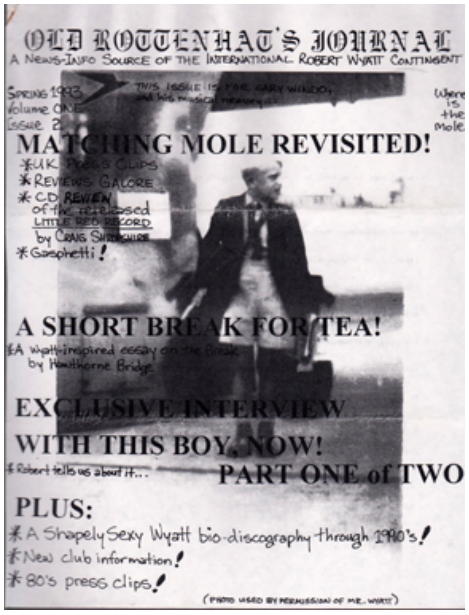
ABÉCÉDAIRE



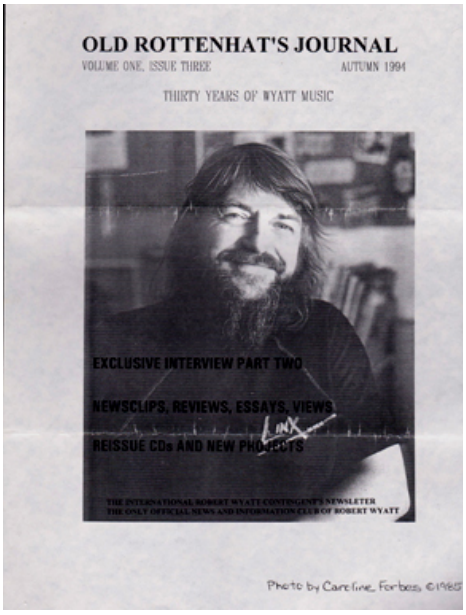
Au début des années 90's, **Terry R. Valderas** - fan inconditionnel - publie une *newsletter papier* entièrement consacrée à son idole. Le ***Old Rottenhat's Journal*** est un fanzine fait "main", un peu foutraque, où s'accumulent critiques, fac-similés, citations, graffitis, listes, professions de foi, articles, articulés autour d'un très long interview de Robert Wyatt qui court sur les deux numéros ci-dessous.

Devenu "culte", on ne trouve quasiment aucune trace du *ORH's Journal* sur internet ! Cette absence est aujourd'hui comblée et les collectionneurs compulsifs pourront même télécharger ces deux numéros dans leur intégralité au format pdf.

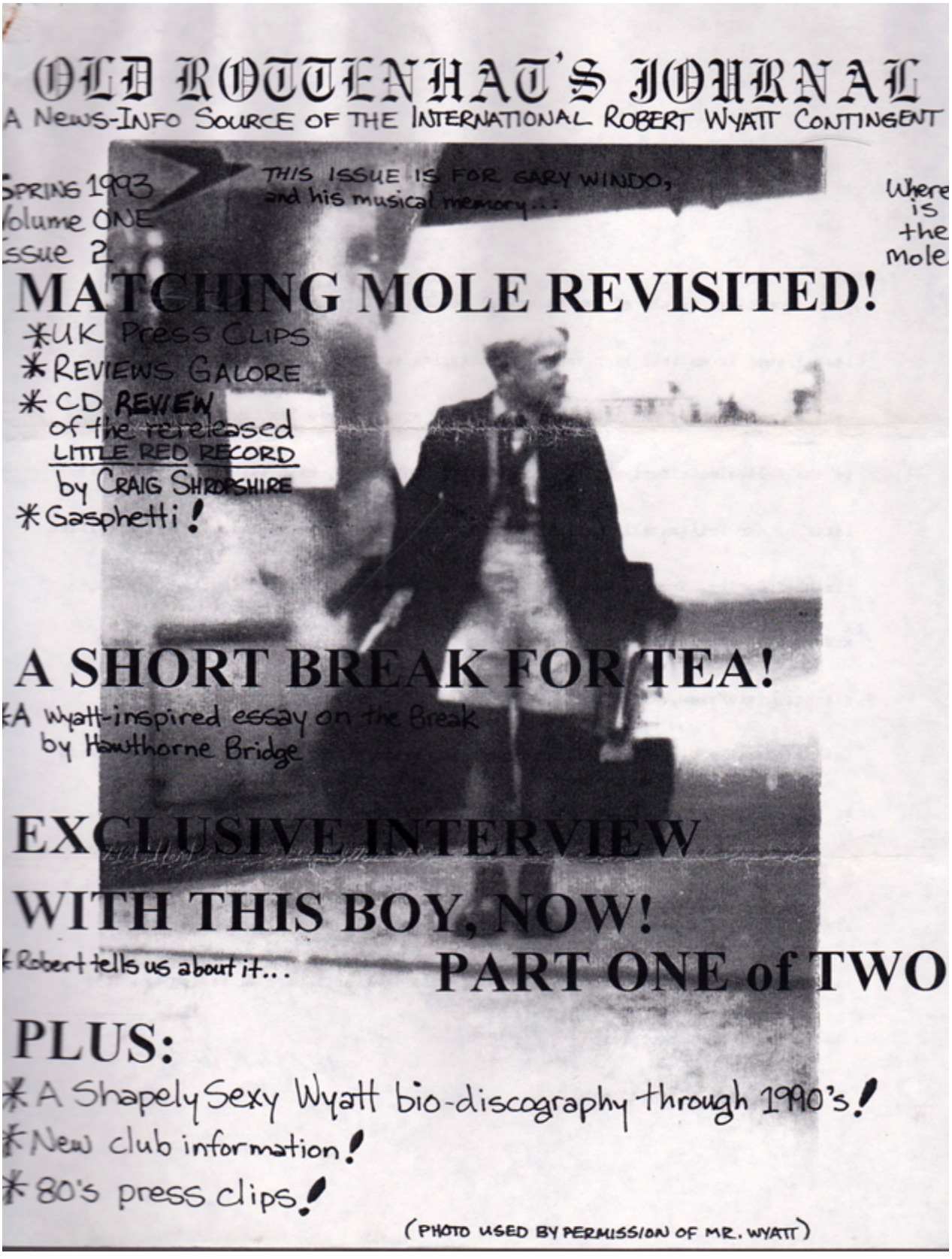
éros ont été publiés au total ? trois ? quatre ? plus ? je l'ignore, et si un visiteur dispose de cette information, voire possède le ou les numéros manquants, qu'il se manifeste au plus vite, nous lui ferons fête !



Download the complete issue - SPRING 1993



Download the complete issue - AUTUMN 1994


OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL
A News-Info Source of the International Robert Wyatt Contingent
Spring 1993
Volume ONE
Issue 2
THIS ISSUE IS FOR GARY WINDO, and his musical memory...
Where is the Mole
MATCHING MOLE REVISITED!
*UK Press Clips
*Reviews Galore
*CD REVIEW of the rereleased LITTLE RED RECORD by Craig Shropshire
*Gasphetti!
A SHORT BREAK FOR TEA!
A Wyatt-inspired essay on the Break by Hawthorne Bridge
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
WITH THIS BOY, NOW!
Robert tells us about it...
PART ONE of TWO
PLUS:
*A Shapely Sexy Wyatt bio-discography through 1990's!
*New club information!
*80's press clips!
(PHOTO USED BY PERMISSION OF MR. WYATT)

> Zoom

25 April 1993

Greetings to all of you beautiful people!!! It's been a while since our last issue, as we have been very busy changing our address, format, etc... as well as readjusting our lives in accourdance with the new Tax Laws. We are back to the full-time effort of THE ROBERT WYATT CONTINGENT, with this being the first issue of our tri-annually published newsletter. It will be mailed out at unspecified times of Spring, Summer, and Winter...depending on my workload, family schedule, and such domestic splendor. I am editing the final mixes of our exclusive Wyatt cassette interview, with those due in the mailbox very soon. This is our first Internationally distributed issue with a big hello to all of you beautiful residents of the U.K., Germany, and France. Thank you everyone for your inspiring letters, inquiries, and cards concerning the club, Robert, and the upcoming projects. I sincerely feel it was a mistake to take a sabbatical, as your interest in Wyatt is evident by your posts!! We now move rapidly in the forward direction and hope all of you enjoy the ride.

Terry R. Vallee

> Zoom

PART 1-THE ROBERT WYATT INNER-VIEW

by terry r. valderas

Recently, Robert agreed wholeheartedly to grant us an exclusive interview, via trans-Atlantic cassette exchange. I immediately sent him the questions...er, rather vague topics, and a 90-minute tape for him to record in the comfort of his studio. I had discussed with Tonja, my Wife, the ideas I had for this project, like how to get Robert to really open up and discuss many topics in the short amount of time afforded by a cassette. It was Tonja's suggestion that we give him very vague, statement-like questions, in hopes that it would cause Robert to pontificate on lots of subjects. It worked out perfectly.

I have spent many hours editing down his responses to typeprint, and endlessly listening to his whitty talk of Matching Mole, jazz, old comrads, political-labeling, musical oddities, his very creative Wife Alfreida, and cigarettes. I know all of you cats will dig this...oh, yeah, I'm using American slang again!!! I know all of you mates will be hip to this!!

This is part one of the interview recorded in his Licolnshire home in August. I have edited some of his responses to incorperate the two seperate sessions he did, bridging ideas and opinions expressed at seperate times. Part two of the interview will appear in our next 1993 issue.

Since this is the "ALL THINGS MOLE" issue, all of those questions about Matching Mole will be answered in great detail within these very pages. Happy reading!!!!!!!!!! t.r.v.

LULLABYE LETTER: If you have a message, or any greetings to our readers, please feel free to make it!

ROBERT WYATT: I thought I might say something that would lift peoples' spirits in these neo-depression times. And so...I'm gonna' talk about a problem that smokers have...which is, you always think, "Oh...I can throw a cigarette butt down the (toilet); I mean it will flush!" And they don't, they bounce back...bob...bob... bouncing back. You think "oh, God!" (mock surprise). They tell you you're not to put cigarette butts down there, and you think, "it's gotta' go down there!" It's gravity. Well I've got wonderful news; the thing is don't panic, don't think, "(mock anger)Oh God, no, now I've gotta' fish it out! How can I do that?! What kind of implement...do they make an implement for fishing cigarettes out?!!" I don't know of one that you could subsequently use for anything else. Who needs more equipment!! I'm here to tell you, just don't panic! Leave it there!! One day you'll look, and it'll be gone. Now, don't ask me where. The people without any soul...the prosaic, ground-bound people will tell you it's gotten water-logged and flushed. But who's to know? Nobody ever really sees it happen. I think what really happens is that the butt gives up the ghost, realizing it's never gonna' get out of there! If it's never gonna get back where it came from, it might as well carry on. It's just sort of...a psychological thing. I think there's a big political implication as well, but I won't get into that yet. ...let's get onto the light stuff now, because I don't wanna' be heavy the whole time with this stuff!! The spiritualism of butts and so on!!

And so I just wanted to say...hello.

> Zoom

L.L.: Tell us about NanTrue's Hole and the Mole.

R.W.: Well...there's a song called NanTrue's Hole, that's got nothing to do with Nan True's Hole. That's how it is with songs...with these sort of subtle song writers. It is the name of a house, that a friend of mine owns, in Sussex. And the origin of the name, I imagine, is that it was the home or hovel of a woman with special powers, perhaps who lived on her own, called Nan True, who was perhaps a fortune-teller...a Witch of sorts who lived in this house. I imagine her regarded with fear, and awe in the supersticious-peasanty British village in which she lived. My friend had inherited this house, and I just thought, "This name is too good to waste on a house". Phil Miller agreed, the guitarist (in Mole), and it turned into a piece of music.

Well...I know I've said that I can't talk about...B.A.; before the accident. Well, sometimes I can; sometimes I can't! At the moment, I feel a kind of wave of affection for ourselves as we were, even for myself so long ago, because it seems like someone else. I listen to those tapes now, and I think, "Go! Go! Go!" (laughs very hard). I don't know where, just go somewhere...ya' know!!

We had Phil Miller on guitar, who would rather play a wrong note than a note that somebody else had ever played. I admired his spirit...and he continues to work and compose in very...rarified forms and atmospheres of very...advanced musical knowledge, beyond my technical understanding. I'm glad he was with us when he was in his...you know, younger...early enthusiasm days!!

Bill MacCormick now works for the Liberal Party, I think. He was the bass player in our band...a very inventive, bouncy bass player. And what a nice man! He was then, and is now.

The two Daves...Dave Sinclair used to play Hammond (organ), and people still try and persuade him to play it with Caravan (now reformed and successfully playing gigs in the U.K.!!). He doesn't understand that; he now owns a keyboard shop, and doesn't understand why people want him to go back to the Hammond!! But, those of us who were brought up upon Jimmy Smith and Booker T., we just can't get enough of that Hammond sound!!! I like it when he bothers to carry it around; it's a big heavy thing, as anyone who plays one or bothers to carry around would know.

Dave McRae, is perhaps the best musician I've ever worked with. A keyboard player at that time, playing mostly electric piano, he's now gone back to, what I think is a Japanese piano, which is to say the acoustic type that classical music is played on. He's gone back to the antipides...which has something to do with feet on the opposite side of the Earth...Austrailia. And I miss him!! Not just from during the Matching Mole, but during the periods afterwards, when I was ex-

> Zoom

perimenting after the second Mole L.P. had been recorded. You know I worked in sort of various formats that weren't recorded, with Dave McRae, in veryinformal settings...with Gary Windo on Tenor (saxophone), and sometimes with Ron Matheson on bass. I think I reached a kind of organic confidence on drums with Dave, that I'd been reaching for, for a long time. And so that's Matching Mole!!

At the moment, were trying to...(laughs) play at a real fun time, as you say in America, because I know that fun is in a curious process of becoming an adjective...trying to get some control over what happens to the tapes; how they are put out, who they're put out by, and who gets the money. The people, companies like C.B.S. (Records), regard us with total amazement and ammusement...that a musician should think they had anything what-so-ever to do with the music that they recorded!! And we all know, it **really** belongs to the beaurocrats at C.B.S., or whomever!!! I say that, but there are some nice people in there, stuck in the middle of that beaurocracy, saying..."We're doing what we can to help". Let's see if they do...But the difficulty therein, as with most music from that period and before, is that it seems there are people who've decieded they have sovereignty over the music of that period! The trouble is that having people claim **sole-rights** over this music, when it's something that feels so much like your own, is a kind of shock. It's a kind of...kind of like rape or something. So at the moment, we feel something like rape-victims (laughs very hard)!!!!

There's nothing particularly romantic coming up (now) about Mole except that the interest of other people, the continued interest in Mole has made me have another listen. It's long enough ago that I hear someone else; I don't get embarrased anymore by the naievity of it. I'm glad that there are, in fact, tapes that haven't been heard...around from radio things and so on.

L.L.: What new music are you into nowdays?

R.W.: Well, I have mentioned Julian Joseph before...the pianist that I heard at the Grimsby Jazz Festival. Not one of the world's most famous jazz festivals. It's hard to describe what's good about good things. He sits at the piano like Buddah; he's a young London lad...well, everyone's young to me. In fact, on a tape we have he's with an American tenor player called John Toussaint, who used to work with Art Blakey.

There was a fantastic looking jazz festival in Cuba recently, in fact! People like Charlie Haden (ex- Ornette Coleman Quartet) went to play there. And I think some of the musicians, the Cuban musicians...totally wonderful. Gonzalo Rubalcaba, the Grupo Irakere...astonishing, wonderful musicians! And, some of the other people

> Zoom

Charlie Haden played with. He has, apart from always playing perfect notes on the bass, also chosen the perfect people to play with. He's recorded with Geri Allen (with Paul Motian, the CD is "Year of the Dragon", 1990 E.C.M.) who I think is a terrific pianist. So anything she's on, I would listen to. Which reminds me...there is an extrodinary drummer...Ralph Peterson.

I've been sent some wonderful tapes from what looks like an excellent record label...Gramavision. They also, apearantly, distribute some of my stuff in the States, some of the stuff from the 80s. They sent me a...prerelease of an Opera by Anthony Davis called "The Life and Times of Malcolm X" (out now, and INCREDIBLE!). It's just stunning. It's hard to imagine anything just as major as this, being done after this...in this Century. It seems to me, this may be **the** piece of the decade, to take us out (of this Century), really! Unless he write something else (laughs) which, of course, he will do goodness knows! My sister-in-law is an Opera singer (Ms. Clare Powell) and I know she would like this. Someone who has taken on...so much knowledge...I hear some Mike Mantler and Eisler (Hans, the composer) here. Well...you just have to hear it...look out for it...and don't just listen to it the first time! When he uses jazz devices, it's somebody who knows what they are. You know...it's not the kind of ersance thing you get, even with some of Leonard Bernstien's stuff, as wonderful as he was. You always felt that there was one idiom that they knew, and the others they were uncomfortable with. Well, I don't feel that with Anthony Davis. There's so much in there! I really feel that he's got the range there. He's really some new kind of composer. Quite extrordinary! It seems to me to cover such a breath-taking area without a kind of self-consious attempt at any hybrid. It's a pure and solid music. It seems to be based on all the information you can get from Mike Mantler, Hans Eisler as well as Max Roach's small, formal compositions. I think it's just...I'm gobsmacked by it!! What's the American for gobsmacked?! I dunno...

Apart from that, I've been listening to some New Orleans jazz, what in America you call Dixieland. You know, Dixieland in England tends to mean just a businessman's bounce version of...umm..."Hey, let's party for a fun time" kind of music. I've been listening in awe, the more times I listen to the Lois Armstrong Hot Five and Hot Sevens. Ther was a time in clarinet playing when they used a different finger system, and it got much more smooth and bland later on. In those days, it had a real voice, and Johnny Dodds is one of my favourites from that (early) period. A lot of Jazz always accompanies singers, also.

An interesting thing about transcribing and listening to things from 78(R.P.M) recordings...I think they've influenced my sound in the sense that 78s are really

> Zoom

designed for quite a different way of listening. (If you) try to play a 78 or a transcription of one on headphones at that volume, you'll find that it sounds very abrasive. People think it's because it's such a narrow, poor recording. I don't think it's a poor recording at all. I think 78s were perfectly recorded (for their time), but the way that it's listened to is different. And, now we have music that is more acceptable in a headphone, and it's mellower. But, I've just been recording stuff that's very influenced by listening to 78s, which is almost unlistenable on (laughs very hard) modern recording systems. So I don't know quite how I expect anybody to listen to it. But, I enjoy this...exploring my own concerns. I just have to hope that other people out there might share them.

I've been listening to some Palistinian folk music and also some Israeli music as well. Some of this that I've most recently heard is from someone living (there). (They) sent me some tapes of Israeli rock groups. The ones she sent me sing in English. I know that in Israel, the street sounds are in English and Hebrew, but not in Arabic. But I suppose that's fairly natural.

So...ever onwards, ever backwards. Another question.

L.L.: Life and what do you dig about it...

R.W.: ...dig!? That's an American expression. Well...the thing about life is, I don't know anything else, yet. I haven't got anything to compare it to. And so it's a kind of one horse race. I'm not sure that it's...worth it yet...not mine. I have yet to find out(laughs)! I thinks it's odd, really. You know (if you) saw a man walking down the street...with a large pair of antlers on his head, and a glass bowl in his hand, saying..."I've got to get to Wisconsin in 10 minutes"... You'd think, "What a strange man! What a strange thing to say. And why is he saying it here? And why is he telling me?!" Well I think lifes a bit like that to me. I just think, "What on Earth set this thing offf?" I can't think of the motivation. I've read various religious texts on the subject and they all seem to be totally allll kitsch on the subject. Just the kind of things people would say, just...Self serving romanticism. I find some of the oldest religions more intellegent than the latest ones. I think religions just become stupider as the centuries roll on! The most ancient ones, like worshiping the sun, the water, and the rocks seem to me to have a basis in understandable reality. But, the later (recent) ones...just seem like intellectual suicide to me. Any ways...I've lost a few friends there! Hi...bye... (laughs). Oh well...who wants millions of friends. Just a few will do me fine.

Every thing about life is biased because the people who talk about it are

> Zoom

alive; we don't really get a rounded bunch of opinions on this subject, since everybody who talks about it are in the alive camp! Ummm...I haven't got any comparative (laughs); I can't remember being anything else. I suppose I should try and think about what life is. I mean, that interests me, as opposed to something else. I look..at the things that are nearly alive; having some of the characteristics in common with life, but not yet lifelike. For example, crystal formations. The only thing I can really identify...I mean crystal formations has in common with life... it's own characteristics of wanting to reproduce itself...hummmm...reconstitute it's immediate environment, to rearrange it's chemicals. It's difficult to see where that process becomes a...desperate desire to celebrate oneself that characterizes the living object.

I think it's extremely odd. I mean, if ther wasn't any life...I wouldn't have predicted it. It seems to me extremely unlikely. I can imagine planets and chemicals and dust and wind and explosions. There are curious sort of reversed parodies of life, like fire, which seem to travel...and want to take things on, consume things. Whether life is some last echo of what was once...adifferent kind of fire. I don't know.

There are specific things that I find unsatisfactory about what is called advanced life. It's the terrible trick that is part of our equipment...we're sent in (as) feeling human beings, which means we can suffer. (Laughs) My god, lots of living things just do that (laughs). Of course, I'm not a Puritan or a killjoy in any sense...I'm glad at every amount of happiness there is!! I'm very happy, instantly, for example, for conservatives. Because you know they've made it clear they don't need me! And that's a responsibility off my back! I didn't want it anyway; you know...that's great! So go ahead, you canservatives, and don't bother me, and I won't bother you (laughs hard)! But...don't bother me, and then I won't bother you. Life? Humm...I don't know yet. It all seems...faintly daft to me, to be honest.

L.L.: Favourite experinces as a musician.

R.W.: Well....now I can repeat myself. Working with Dave MacRae, and feeling I got some sense of how people like...Tony Williams...or more recently some players you may or may not know of in England...Mondesir (Mark)..a drummer...and Julian Joseph on piano; I saw them at Grimsby Jazz festival recently, and the way they sparked off each other...that kind of feeling I had of, really mutual listening, and sparking I had with Dave MacRae. He's such an alert, listening musician. And musicians can be terrific, but unlistening. They can walk on and ...strut their stuff. And that can be wonderful, but that's the difference between a speechmaker and a

> Zoom

conversationalist. In fact, what I liked about Mole was it was more of a group of conversationalists, and some of the things I'd been involved with were like ...um...our job was to announce the next speech. The rhythm sections' job... that is...that's okay, too. There's a role for everything, that's for sure! It's just a matter of learning to play it.

Singing on Mike Mantler's record of "The Hapless Child", over backing tracks by Jack DeJohnette on Drums, Steve Swallow on Bass, and Carla Bley on Keyboards, was a thrill, I have to tell you. That is some kind of "A" Team there! I felt so good sometimes I stopped singing, like I was in a warm bath and I wanted just to bathe in it. And before then, just working with Mongezi Feza, the South African Trumpet player, on a couple of records I did (with Virgin) in the mid or early 1970's. The first records I'd done, made from a wheelchair, had Mongezi on (them). And it was so nice to work with him. Despite the fact that he was used to playing a very specific idiom of South African jazz and it's free developments, he locked into my chord sequence and my kind of time signature with such astonishing ease and understanding. I was really looking forward to working more with him as a kind of double act: voice and Mongezi. He used a small trumpet, I think even smaller than Don Cherry's (Pocket Trumpet). Whata' sound! And just correct...he just played the right stuff. He was the same age as me...but he died at the age of 31. And it's irreplaceable to me!

NEXT MONTH: More of our exclusive interview with Robert, along with your copy of the full, unedited tape of the actual interview cassettte.



> Zoom

Robert WYATT

LP:

01)	The end of an ear	70	UK	CBS 64 189
		(80)	UK	CBS 31 846
			F	Barclay 920 308
02)	Rock bottom	74	UK	Virgin V 2017
			US	Virgin VR 13-112
			I	Virgin Orlando ORL 8307
03)	Ruth is stranger than Richard	75	UK	Virgin V 2034
			D	Ariola 89 061 IOT
		(81)	J	Victor VIP 4100
02/03)	Rock bottom / Ruth is stranger than Richard [2LP, FOC]	(80)	UK	Virgin VGD 3505
04 a)	Nothing can stop us [Sampler of 7"s & Born again cretin & Red flag, BKL]	82	UK	Rough Trade ROUGH 35
			NL	Roadrunner RR 9983
04 b)	[RI, w extra track "Shipbuilding"]	(83)	UK	Rough Trade ROUGH 35
		(86)	US	Gramavision 18-8614-1
05)	The animals film [OST]	82	UK	Rough Trade ROUGH 40
06)	1982 - 1984 [Sampler, LC in english/spanish, songs of 12" No: 02 + 03, & "You're wandering now" by Clement SEYMOUR, non-LP]	84	US	Rough Trade RTSP 25
			J	Tokuma 25 RTL-20
07 a)	Old rotten hat [FOC, LC]	85	UK	Rough Trade ROUGH 69
07 b)	[NFC, LIS]		NL	Megadisc MD 7981
08 a)	Dondestan [w LS]	91	UK	Rough Trade R 2741
08 b)	[LIS]		D	Rough Trade RTD 101-1234-1

CD:

02)	Rock bottom	(89)	UK	Virgin CDV 2017
		(89)	J	Virgin VJD 5022
03)	Ruth is stranger than Richard	(89)	UK	Virgin CDV 2034
		(89)	J	Virgin VJD 5023
04)	Nothing can stop us [w extra track "Shipbuilding", w BKL]	(86)	F	Rough Trade ROUGH CD 35
07 a)	Old rotten hat [w BKL & lyrics]	(86)	F	Rough Trade ROUGH CD 69
07 b)	Late 70's - early 80's / Old rotten hat [2CD-Box]	(87)	J	Tokuma 27 JC-195
08)	Dondestan [w BKL & lyrics]	91	UK	Rough Trade R 2741 CD
			D	Rough Trade RTD 101-1234-2

Sampler:

01)	Robert WYATT [Sampler cont 7" No: 05, 06, 07 & 08]	81	I	Rough Trade/Base RT 0007

Sampler-CD:

02)	Late 70's - early 80's [Sampler cont 12" No: 02 & 03 + 7" No: 05, 06, 07 & 08 - except "Trade union" & "Stalingrad", w BKL & lyrics]	85	J	Tokuma 32 JC-109
03)	Robert WYATT compilation [parts of LP No: 06 & 09 & 12" No: 02, w BKL]	(90)	US	Gramavision R2 79459

12":

01)	Robert WYATT: Arauco, Caimanera / At last I'm free, Strange fruit [PS]	81	D	Phonogramm 6005 139
02)	Shipbuilding / Memories of you, Round midnight [PS]	82	UK	Rough Trade RT 115 T
			D	Rough Trade RTD 03T
03)	"Work in progress": Biko, Amber and the amberines / Yolanda, Te recuerdo amanda [LC, PS]	84	UK	Rough Trade RTT 149 T
04)	I'm a believer, Yesterday man / Team spirit, Memories [A1+2, B2: non-LP, PS, rec 1974 - 1977]	(84)	UK	Virgin WYATT 1
05)	The wind of change / Namibia [LC, all non-LP, w SWAPO SINGERS, ext vers, Th WYATT only A-side]	85	UK	Rough Trade/SWAPO RTT 168
			NL	Megadisc MD 125 292
06)	Shipbuilding / At last I am free [DJ]	(86)	US	Gramavision 18-1212-1
07)	The PEEL sessions: Soup song, Alifib / I'm a believer, Sea song [all different versions, B1: non-LP, rec solo 10.09.1974, PS]	(87)	UK	Strange Fruit SFPS 037

> Zoom

01 a)	The PEEL sessions: Soup song, Alifib / I'm a believer, Sea song [same as 12" No: 07, lim edition]	(89)	UK	Strange Fruit SFPSCD 37
01 b)	[dif cover]		US	Dutch East India DEI 8336-2
01 c)	[dif cover]		F	Strange Fruit 672 005

7":

01 a)	I'm a believer / Memories [all non-LP]	74	UK	Virgin VS 114
01 b)	[PS]		D	Ariola 13 617 AT
01 c)	[DPS]		SP	Ariola 13 617 AT
01 d)	[DPS]		NL	Virgin 13 591 AT
01 e)	[DPS]		F	Virgin 640 040
01 f)	[DPS]		YU	TRB S 53 881
01 g)	I'm a believer [mono / stereo]		US	Virgin VR 56 000
02)	Yesterday man / Sonia [A: non-LP]	74	UK	Virgin VS 115
03)	Yesterday man / I'm a believer [all non-LP, PS]	74	F	Virgin 640 059
04)	Arauco / Caimanera [PS]	80	UK	Rough Trade RT 037
05 a)	At last I'm free / Strange fruit [PS]	80	UK	Rough Trade RT 052
05 b)	[FOS]	81	J	Rough Trade RT-6
06)	Stalin wasn't stalling / Stalingrad [B-side: Peter BLACKMAN, PS]	81	UK	Rough Trade RT 046
07)	Grass / Trade Union [B-side: DISHARTI, INS]	81	UK	Rough Trade RT 081
08)	Man to woman [OST of musical by Marsha HUNT, 4-track-EP, 1 track of Robert WYATT: "All she wanted was Marlon Brando", non-LP, PS]	(82)	UK	Virgin VS 499
09 a)	Shipbuilding / Memories of you [PS]	82	UK	Rough Trade RT 115
09 b)	[RI in 4 different foldoutsleeves]	(83)	UK	Rough Trade RT 115
10)	Amber and the amberines / ? [DJ, white label]	84	UK	Rough Trade RTT ...
11)	Biko / Yolanda [DJ, white label]]	84	UK	Rough Trade RTT 149
12)	Age of self / Raise your banners high [A: Robert WYATT, B: by John TAMS & GRIMETORPE GRASS BAND, PS]	85	UK	7.84 TUC 784
13)	The wind of change / Namibia [Robert WYATT only A-side, w SWAPO SINGERS, all non-LP, PS, LC]	85	UK	Rough Trade/SWAPO RT 168
14)	Chairman Mao [one-sided, red or pink vinyl, non-LP, PS]	87	I	SCONC 002

Tape:

01)	Robert WYATT / MECANO [C 40, w BKL, illustrations & interview w R. WYATT, music only by MECANO !!!]	81	F	Tago Mago 4751

Boot-LP:

01 a)	The end of an ear [Bootrelease of Original-LP, DC]	(RI)	UK	Race Records RR 1001
01 b)	[DC]	(RI)	AUS	Flying Horses 1' RW
02)	Las Vegas Fandango [rec live 09.10.1974 at Drury Lane Theatre, London, limited edition of 500]	(81)	I	Penguin EGG FOUR

ROBERT WYATT with SOFTMACHINE

LP:

01)	Rock generation Volume 7 [one side: The T-BONES, rel 1971]	67	F	Byg 529 707
02)	Rock generation Volume 8 [one side: Mark LEEMAN FIVE, rel 1971]	67	F	Byg 529 708
03 a)	Faces and places Volume 7 [cont SOFTMACHINE sides of LP: 01 & 02]	(72)	F	Byg 529 907
			J	Byg YX 6027
03 b)	SOFTMACHINE [DC]	(73)	D	Metronome 2001.137
03 c)	At the beginning [DC]	(77)	UK	Charly CR 30 014
		(80)	I	Oxford OX 3157
03 d)	At the beginning [DC]		D	Bellaphon CR 3058
03 e)	At the beginning [DC]	(77)	F	Charly 2933 212
03 f)	SOFTMACHINE [DC]	(80)	US	Piccadilly PIC 3331
03 g)	At the beginning [DC]	(82)	UK	Charly CR 30 196
03 h)	Memories [DC]	(82)	US	Accord SN 7178
03 i)	Jet propelled photographs	(88)	PO	Decal LIK 36
04 a)	The SOFTMACHINE - Volume One [FOC, GC = wheelcover]	68	US	ABC Probe CPLP 4500

> Zoom

04 b)	[FOC, NGC]		US	ABC Probe CPLP 4500 X
			J	Probe SR-303
		(86)	UK	Big Beat WIKA 57
04 c)	[DC, NFC]		F	Barclay 0 920 082
04 d)	We did it again [DC]	(76)	NL	Ariola 27 135 ET
04 e)	SOFTMACHINE Vol 1 [DC]	(RI)	I	Record Bazaar RB 73
		(73)	J	Toshiba IPP 80899
05 a)	The SOFTMACHINE Volume Two [FOC]	69	US	ABC Probe CPLP 4505 S
			J	Probe SR-348
		(86)	UK	Big Beat WIKA 58
05 b)	[NFC, DC]		UK	ABC Probe SPB 1002
			US	ABC Probe 4505
05 c)	[DC]	(78)	I	Record Bazaar RB 159
05 d)	[DC]	(83)	I	Orizone ORL 8663
05 e)	[DC]	(RI)	F	Barclay 0 921 019
04/05 a)	The SOFTMACHINE Volume 1 & Volume 2 [2LP, FOC]	69	UK	Probe GTSP 204 (GTT 2041/2)
			I	Probe 3C 154-50185/6
04/05 b)	The SOFTMACHINE Collection [2LP, FOC, DC]	(RI)	UK	ABC ABCD 602
04/05 c)	The SOFTMACHINE Milestones [2LP, FOC, DC]	(RI)	UK	Probe 5C 184-50185/6
04/05 d)	The SOFTMACHINE [2LP-Box, DC]	(73)	US	Command RSSD 964-2
04/05 e)	SOFTMACHINE 1 & 2 (Architects of space time) [2LP, FOC, DC]	(75)	F	WEA Atlantic 60 113
06)	Third [2LP, FOC, w "Facelift" rec live at Fairfield hall, Croydon 04.01.1970 & Mothers club, Birmingham 11.01.1970]	70	UK	CBS 66 246
			US	Columbia G 30 339
			J	CBS Sony 50336-37
07 a)	Fourth [GC]	71	UK	CBS 64 280
07 b)	[NGC]		US	Columbia C 30 754
			J	CBS ERIA 53003

- LPs No 08 to No 13 (Fifth, Pop spectacular 23, Six, Seven, Bundles, Softs) without Robert WYATT

14)	Triple echo [3LP-Box, BKL, Sampler cont 7" No: 1, parts of LPs: 03, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12 & unreleased material & different versions, recorded 1967 - 1976]	(77)	UK	Harvest SHTW 800
			D	EMI 1C 153-99090/1/2

- LPs No 15 & 16 (Alive and well in Paris, The land of cockayne) without Robert WYATT

17)	Live at the Proms 1970 [rec live at Royal Albert Hall, 13.08.1970]	(88)	UK	Reckless RECK 5
18)	The PEEL sessions [2LP, FOC, LC, BBC sessions rec 1969 - 1971]	(90)	UK	Strange Fruit SFRLP 201

CD:

03 a)	Jet propelled photographs [w BKL]	(89)	F	Charly CD 197
03 b)	SOFTMACHINE [& Graham BOND ORGANISATION- Live 1964)	(89)	J	Century 29ED 6026
04/05)	The SOFTMACHINE Volumes One & Two	(89)	D	Big Beat CDWIKD 920
06)	Third	(88)	EEC	Charly LIKD 35
			US	Columbia CGK 30339
07)	Fourth [w BKL]	(91)	J	Epic/Sony ESCA 5417
17)	Live at the Proms 1970	(88)	UK	Reckless CD RECK 5
18 a)	The PEEL sessions [2CDs, w lyrcis]	(90)	UK	Strange Fruit SFRCD 201
18 b)	[dif cover]		F	Strange Fruit 672 009

Sampler:

01 a)	The SOFTMACHINE [edited from "Volume 1" and "Volume 2"]	69	D	EMI Hörzu SHZE 908 BL
01 b)	[DC]		NL	EMI / Stateside 5C 054.91600
01 c)	[DC, side 2 of LPs: No 04 & 05]		NL	S. R. International 201 657
01 d)	[DC, side 1 of LP: No 04 & 05]		NL	EMI / Stateside D 109/5

Sampler-CD:

(Sampler No 02: "The untouchables" without Robert WYATT)

> Zoom

03)	As if ... [compiled of LPs No: 06, 07, 08 & 10]	(91)	UK	Elite 006CDP

7":

01 a)	Love makes sweet music / Feelin' reelin' squeelin'	67	UK	Polydor 56 151
01 b)	[PS]		NL	Polydor 65 151
02)	Joy of a toy / Why are we sleeping	69	US	ABC Probe 45-452

Postcard:

01)	Save yourself	(88)	PL	X 3 records
02)	Jet-propelled photograph	(88)	PL	X 3 records
03)	When I don't want you	(88)	PL	X 3 records
04)	You don't remember	(88)	PL	X 3 records
05)	I'd rather be with you	(88)	PL	X 3 records
06)	That's how much I need you now	(88)	PL	X 3 records
07)	Memories	(88)	PL	X 3 records
08)	She's gone	(88)	PL	X 3 records

[all: one-sided picture postcard w envelope, 50 numbered copies]

Boot-LP:

01)	Amsterdam 1969 [live at Paradiso, 29.03.1969]	69	UK	Priscilla
02)	Old machine - Live in Bremen 23.03.1971	(88)	F	Keri KET 2

(Boot-LP No 3: "Live Italy '73" without Robert WYATT)

Boot-CD:

01 a)	The SOFTMACHINE turns on (Paradiso, March 29, 1969)	(88)	D	Amazing Discs/CDLP 4505
01 b)	William, Amsterdam, March 29, 1969	(91)	I	Aulica CT 203
04)	SOFTMACHINE - In concert [rec 1967 & 1970]	(90)	L	Oh Boy 1-9018
05 a)	SOFTMACHINE - Live [rec live 1969 & 1970]	(90)	L	Oh Boy 1-9025
05 b)	Moon in June [dif cover]	(90)	I	Aulica A 104

Robert WYATT with MATCHING MOLE

LP:

01)	MATCHING MOLE	72	UK	CBS 64 850
		(82)	UK	CBS 32 105
02)	MATCHING MOLE'S Little red record [IS]	72	UK	CBS 65 260
			US	Columbia KC 32 148

CD:

01)	MATCHING MOLE [w BKL & lyrics]	(91)	J	Epic/Sony ESCA 5425
		(92)	A	Columbia COL 471 489-2
02)	MATCHING MOLE'S Little red record	(92)	A	Columbia COL 471 488-2

7":

01)	O Caroline / Signed curtain	72	UK	CBS S 8101

List by Manfred Bress

Contributed by Miking

> Zoom

1.3.93

*A Short Break or... How I Spent my 3 p.m.

Time out for a change. Time for tea, and perhaps a roll. Time to relax. A Short Break before the next project? We are still listening...

A Short break, as a subtle piano line followed by a lead. Then the voice. No words, just timbres suspended by melody! Amazingly relaxing.

Tubab, the wealthy Spainiard. Percussive opening and again, the golden voice. At first alone and then in twos. Weaving patterns of subtle joy down my spine, as the song plays on.

Kutcha makes me hungry... Why, I do not know. It could possibly be the sound of the keyboards; that country house swing. I'll eat the roll now and enjoy my earl grey. The voice, now treated, delicately unfolds into the swings, while the piano takes a lead. It makes me want to listen to my Fats Waller 78's...

Venti Latir is exactly that. A fan dance that moves in beautiful mystery. My favourite track... also reminding ne of old jazz styles. Genius hip swing. My writing curves...

Unmasked takes us back into the work. Chris Carter and osi Fanni Tutti treat the vocals, Robert does the driving. All in all a beautiful break in the day. AT LUNCH, Hawthorne L. Bridge

INSPIRED BY THE ROBERT WYATT CD5 "A SHORT BREAK" 1992 VOICEPRINT UK ®

> Zoom

Okay, all of you beautiful Wyattphiles! Since it has been re-released on CD, it's time to look back upon Robert's triumphant 1972 Matching Mole recording "Little Red Record". Thanks be to Miking for contributing the U.K. press clippings and valuable time (and critical); and to my partner-in-music Craig for his report on the re-released CD. Happy... Happy... Joy, Joy!! VV ☺

MATCHING MOLE
Little Red Record
CBS 65263

In order of beard length Matching Mole are Dave McCrae, a much acclaimed pianist; Robert Wyatt, the most advanced drummer, imaginatively and skilfully, working in rock today; Phil Miller, guitarist with the original Delivery, a star-studded band if you like; and Ian McCormick, bass, late of Quiet Sun, an interesting but unsung band of a year or so ago. I set them out like this in the hope that the Maoist packaging of the album is not another ill-conceived gimmick but intended to remind us of people struggling together to create something, rather than remaining subservient to anyone's particular concept. Perhaps I'm wrong but the outward form, the continuity of titles from album to album, the musical opening of the record, seem to represent an attempt to create a group mythology, something which only Gong, of similarly placed bands, have achieved.

The lyrics are all socially oriented but from their authors' very particular viewpoint—"What on earth are you doing God?", "I'd rather have the Chinese here than rich and pompous goons", etc. Matching Mole are one of the few bands who try to extend the rock idiom to embrace non-musical issues in general terms—not songs about a specific war or supermarket, but words about the broader attitudes beneath. Don't let the fact that it appears in joke-form detract from this.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS 1972

> Zoom

And then it was Matching Mole, who played a superb, but disappointingly short set, lasting only 20 minutes or so. Their keyboards man looked remarkably like a contemporary WG Grace, sitting at the front of the stage, red-capped and impassive. Incredible band.

Melody Maker 6·5·72



MATCHING MOLE (CBS). Debut album from ex-Softs drummer Robert Wyatt's new group displays a real group democracy. There's plenty of instrumentally brilliant music on the set (the blowing pieces — three here — will clearly be Mole's bread and butter pieces) but a lot of people will buy the album for Robert's singing on the first three tracks — especially the achingly pretty "O Caroline." People who found "End Of An Ear" too hard to take and yet retain fond memories of the Softs' first album will clasp Matching Mole to their bosoms."

MATCHING MOLE: "O Caroline" (CBS). A fairly savagely edited version of the album track, which loses something of its magic in the conversion, but remains a beautifully eccentric love song. It's a product of one of Robert Wyatt's all-too-rare periods of songwriting, with lovely tune and piano by David Sinclair, who's since left the band. Totally unrepresentative of the band as they are, it's still a ridiculously good single, and one you ought to be able to hear every time you turn on the radio. It'll either be an enormous hit, or fade into oblivion — I hope it's the former. SOUNDS 8·7·72

Melody Maker 4·11·72



MATCHING MOLE: "Matching Mole's Little Red Record" (CBS). Internal upheavals are currently rocking the Mole, but their second album stands as eloquent testimony to their underappreciated greatness. Once again this is a combination of intelligent blowing — mostly by that stellar electric pianist Dave McRae with Robert Wyatt drumming better than ever — and some tracks which indicate their wider range.

WOW →

FARNBOROUGH Technical College: **SWASTIKA**
HEREFORD Training College: **DANDO SHAFT**
GLASGOW Greene's Playhouse: **FLAMIN' GROOVIES /MAN / MR. MOSES' SCHOOLBAND**
LIVERPOOL Cavern: **NECROMANDUS**
LIVERPOOL Top Rank: **GNIDROLOG**
● see Tuesday
LONDON 100 Club: **KEN COLYER ALL STARS JAZZ BAND**
LONDON Bag O' Nails: **GEORGIE FAME BAND**
LONDON King's Cross: **SOFT MACHINE / MATCHING MOLE / JUST US**
● Return gig for the recently-cancelled Softs appearance. Together with Robert Wyatt's Machine Mole and Elton Dean's Just Us.
LONDON LEYTONSTONE Chez: **ROXY MUSIC/JUDE**
LONDON Lyceum: **EDGAR BROUGHTON / KEITH CHRISTMAS / ASHMAN REYNOLDS.**
LOUGHBOROUGH University: **VAN[illegible] Y FARE**
MARHAM RAF Station: **MARM[illegible] / HOT CHOCOLATE**
● Sounds like a na[illegible] mean, marmalade and hot chocol[illegible] ry would not be amiss, I feel [illegible]le wheaten cake to com[illegible] mixture. Apart from w[illegible] ch underrated band m[illegible] ng pilloried in a crud ne[illegible] nters. Incidentally, Alan W[illegible] as a D.J.
NORWICH [illegible]CK & ROLL ALLSTARS
NOTTINGHA[illegible]y (doubling Grantham College of Agriculture): [illegible]MOND FROGGATT
PLYMOUTH Van Dike: **BUDGIE**
ST. ALBANS City Hall: **IF / CAT IRON**
SWANSEA Patti Pavilion: **GYPSY**
SWANSEA Top Rank: **AUDIENCE / KINGDOM COME**
TUNBRIDGE WELLS Mad Hatter: **CLEAR BLUE SKY**
WORMELOW (Near Hereford) Park Hall Ballroom: **DAVE COLLINS**

a gig
MOTT MOLE

Mole

A SLIGHT case of the missing drummers changed the face of the Kings Cross all-nighter on Saturday. Of the original line-up of Soft Machine, Matching Mole, and Elton Dean's quartet Just Us, only Matching Mole appeared; Phil Howard from Just Us didn't get their in time for them to play, apparently, and Soft Machine's drummer John Marshall is ill, so they didn't appear.

Matching Mole played the first set of the night, and though I enjoyed their set, I wasn't overwhelmed by it. It would be difficult not to enjoy a Mole set whatever happened, as long as those musicians were on stage and their basic ideas were there, but what with sound problems and the shortness of their set I felt I wasn't seeing the band at their best. They weren't really able to get into their stride for long enough at a time to really make the music work as it undoubtedly can.

Brotherhood of Breath came next, starting with a Chris McGregor piano solo with just bass and drums, and then getting into their full-blown many-horned and shuffle-rhythmed music. The Brotherhood in full flight is quite something to behold, and many of the most exhilarating moments came from DuDu Pukwana's solos.

"A rare event" said Graham Bond as he announced the jam that followed.

SOUNDS U.K. 24·6·72

Melody Maker March 18, 1972



Mole change man

MATCHING MOLE keyboard-player Dave Sinclair, formerly with Caravan has left the group following their recent tour of Holland — the first major dates the band played.

He has been replaced by Dave McRae, who played his first dates with the group last week — at Kingston Polytechnic and at Merton. This means that the line-up of the band is now McRae (electric pno), Robert Wyatt (drums), Phil Miller (guitar) and Bill

MATCHING MOLE: "The Little Red Record" (CBS). My mole is beyond!

During their 10 months existence, Matching Mole haven't exactly won wide public acceptance. They've made little attempt to fabricate a mood onstage, and the music hasn't always been together.

"The Little Red Record", however, catches them on one of their awesome upswings — providing an 11th hour corrective to the rather glum impression they made with their debut album earlier this year.

From the explosive entry of the whole-tone riff in "March Ides" to the final melancholy chords of "Smoke Signal", this record is a moving document of 1972's most personal group.

The instrumental work, particularly Dave MacRae's adapted electric piano, is ablaze throughout — and it's a surprisingly mature sound for a rock group; the highspeed jam "Brandy As In Beng" might easily be mistaken for latterday Gary Burton or Mike Gibbs, and the sensitive free-form passage on "Smoke Signal" forms a rock analogue of

Addicts of the voice and songs of Robert Wyatt will find that there's plenty to enthuse about from the operatic tenor chorus on "Drinking My Politics Away" to Bill MacCormick's atmospheric "Gloria Gloom".

But the track that'll grab any airplay coming in Mole's direction will be Phil Miller's beautiful "God Song".

Yes, dears, it's all here: Ruby Crystal's erotic monologue, the theme from "Righteous Rhumba", the synthesizer of Roxy's very lovely Eno, and another fine Cracknell sleeve. Produced and held together through some stormy sessions by the excellent R. Fripp, Esq., this record is the one, alright.

Go get it. — **Ian MacDonald.**

< zoom

SOUNDS DEC. 11 1971



● *ROBERT WYATT: today, almost over-cautious*

RELUCTANT ROBERT!

FOR THE past couple of months a group of musicians have been rehearsing together, working out ideas, and getting to know each other's musical personalities. The group's called Matching Mole, and the musicians involved are Phil Miller, guitarist, formerly with Delivery; Bill McCormick, bass guitarist, formerly with Quiet Sun; Dave Sinclair, organist, formerly with Caravan; and Robert Wyatt, drummer and occasional vocalist, formerly with the Soft Machine.

HESITANT

Robert seems far more hesitant these days to talk about his musical ideas. With the Soft Machine he was usually willing to talk about his personal aspirations and how they fitted in with what the group was currently doing; now he's cautious, almost over-cautious at times, and he shies away from saying things that might lead people to think he's forcing his ideas on the rest of the group. For an interviewer this can be an irritating stance, but it's more than understandable. The Soft Machine was a fairly stable unit, with fairly clear ways of doing things, but Matching Mole is barely two months old, fragile and as yet without a clearly defined shape.

And as Phil says, how can you talk about the music of a group that's at "a stage of experimenting — not with musical ideas but with how everybody can relate to each other musically."

Robert: "There was a possibility in the early stages of me getting together a very slick group quickly, people who were obviously on the same scene, and churning it out. This way will take longer, but I think it will be more interesting." There will also be the "odd addition" to the band, but its basis will be the four already mentioned.

Matching Mole hope to be recording later this month and in January, and their first gigs will be in Britain in February. These'll be college and university dates before they go to France and Holland in March to play some of the larger clubs. Robert says he'd like the group to spend quite a lot of their time recording, certainly more than the Softs did.

"I just feel that my life up to now hasn't been balanced correctly between that private, more introspective thing of recording, and the exhibitionistic context of a concert, and I really want to understand more what studios are about. I think we all do."

When he left the Softs, did Robert have any clear idea about what he wanted to do? "All I knew when I left the Soft Machine was that I didn't want to do that any more. To be honest, I'd known that for about a year before I left, but what I'd been trying to do was stay, enjoy it and get as much out of it as I could, and at the same time play with lots of other people and try to develop something outside that which I could eventually quite smoothly move over to. But in fact I found I couldn't really do that. For me, you're either doing something or you're not, so while I was in the group that's where my responsibilities lay, and to do it properly I couldn't really do anything else.

"So in order to get anything else together, to really focus on it, I had to drop the idea of a smooth takeover. So I screwed my courage up, got pissed, and left the group when we got back from America."

For Robert, it certainly hasn't been a smooth takeover in the sense that he's had to spend a lot of time and energy physically getting the new band together. He admits it's been a strain he could have well done without. And though he may disclaim credit for the band musically, the organisation's certainly been down to him until recently. Musically, it's been not so much a smooth takeover, as a kind of planting out.

"This isn't an attempt to be totally different or totally breakaway . . . there's been no radical change in my head. As far as I'm concerned I've just got one head and one approach to playing and writing and working with other people, and I've just tried to develop that in the healthiest possible way. At one stage that meant working with the Soft Machine, but then it just seemed to me that that was no longer the healthiest, most productive context for me to work in. That's not a qualitative thing about the Soft Machine at all, it's just the way my ideas were developing, it didn't seem they were likely to flourish in that context."

VEHICLE

So rather than a vehicle for definite ideas, Matching Mole is more a change of base — for all of them, presumably. Robert doesn't know how it'll develop, and doesn't particularly want to — "it would take the adventure out of it, or something." And as I said at the start, talking about the music is difficult, but I think this last quote says as much as can be said. I'd asked whether they were using improvisation a lot.

"I've changed in the last couple of months. Probably in reaction to the band I was in before I felt an overwhelming desire to play lots and lots of very simple songs. I think I've now got my sort of creative balance back so I can start using all the different area I'm interested in, and at the moment that includes a lot of free blowing. I really enjoy that with Matching Mole because I really think we're listening to each other instead of taking our dreams on stage with us and acting them out."

BY STEVE PEACOCK

> ZOOM

MATCHING MOLE

Cosmic music and a weird Fripp trip...



MATCHING MOLE (from left): Bill MacCormick, Dave McRae, Robert Wyatt, Phil Miller

INSIDE THE CONTROL-ROOM of CBS Number One, Whitfield Street, producer Robert Fripp leans forward in his swivel chair and addresses the studio in general:

"This is "Flora Fidgit", a song by Bill MacCormick, excellent bass-player with Matching Mole, TAKE ONE."

And they're off: the Mole in London laying down another new track for their forthcoming album, "The Little Red Record" — and fast and furious it certainly is, keyboard maestro Dave McRae's fingers blurring up and down the Hammond like a tame white tornado.

"Mr. McRae," Flipp announces, turning to me, "is my favourite electric pianist in England. He's developed the instrument to a fascinating degree, putting it in stereo successfully which is something I was pondering how to do for years. A beautiful player with a lovely sense of space, which all too many musicians lack, I'm afraid."

As the take ends, he talks back to the intercom mike. "Thank you, gentlemen. That was indeed a new vista in aural perception."

Robert Wyatt, hidden amongst a forest of baffle-screens, voices his doubts: "The sound out here isn't very good."

"We're working on that right now, Robert." Mr. Fripp glances round again. "Another quote for your worthy publication: Robert Wyatt is one of the very few real human beings in show business. How's that?"

That's fine, I begin to say — but I'm drowned out by TAKE TWO. The collective virtuosity of Matching Mole is sometimes unbelievable and, when they're playing at top form, they're technically the nearest thing to a Mahavishnu Orchestra that Britain possesses.

"It's a magic hand," explains Dave McRae, between takes. "When it's on, it's brilliant. When it's off, it's pretty dreadful. But I much prefer it to working in a band that keeps up a slick performance, but where nothing ever happens."

I saw their King's Cross gig and, while I thought it was excellent, my chief impression was of something very moving.

"That's it, you got it. When it's on, everybody's right in there — nobody rides on this group and I really enjoy that kind of high-energy playing."

Tonight's performance, I opine, is taking some time to shape up.

"That's partly to do with being in this studio, but some of our music is hard and, this one's a bitch — mainly because we haven't done it live yet. The rest of the album, apart from some songs by Robert and Phil, is from our live set and they've gone down very easily."

TAKE THREE. The sound is still bad and the performances ragged. Engineer Mike Fitzhenry twiddles knobs in between explaining why he's off to Adelaide to become a producer in a couple of weeks.

"Then I'll return in a blaze of glory," he says, hopefully, "having altered in appearance so everyone'll be muttering, who is he? This genius . . ."

"The sound's still lousy," comments Phil Miller, hunched in a corner over his guitar.

Fripp works hard, bouncing about the control-room looking healthy and full of vim and vigour.

"At the moment," he points out, "it's difficult to get a balance from the studio, but that's mainly because the music's not being played correctly. When it's played well, music balances itself because then the musicians are responding dynamically to each other, not just harmonically."

The studio, Bill decides, is too big. Besides which, they're getting a leakage from a Boz Scraggs session in Number Two.

"We won't get this done tonight," he observes, gloomily. "Let's spend the rest of the time doing overdubs."

Robert nods. "Soft Machine Volume Two" was done in a studio this size and that was one of the worst-recorded albums in history.

"Why don't you try positioning yourself better out there?" Fripp suggests. "I'd like to be able to **see** you, Robert."

"And have a good laugh, I know."

Fripp is right. They depose tion and TAKE FOUR is very good indeed — until someone drops a bar and everything grinds to a halt.

"What was that like?" asks Dave McRae.

Fripp gestures expansively. "In here we were led excessively that such fine music had ceased to assail our ears."

"Yeah, but what was it **like?**"

"About four million per cent better. You will be astounded by the quality of sound we are achieving in here. Your nipples will congeal and your blood run cold."

"You know," says Robert, emerging from a deep inner soliloquy, "with 16 tracks you could record the entire Count Basie Band one at a time."

Stoney silence.

"Nice thought," he shrugs. "Forget it."

Everybody bursts out laughing.

During TAKE FIVE, Fripp begins solemnly gyrating up and down behind the console, wearing an expression of profound concentration. "I can twist to it," he announces, "so it must be commercial." He sinks out of sight. "I can twist very low."

The take ends. Not so good.

TAKE SIX. Everybody's getting tired and "Flora Fidgit" isn't getting any easier.

"Notice how cool the crew remain," says Fripp, downing a swift pint of healthy milk. Mike Fitzhenry, superb-engineer-who-is-leaving-for-Australia — how unflustered."

"Bob, my cans aren't working," Robert complains. "We're doing all we can to help you," Fripp smiles. "And, let's face it, you need help."

TAKE SEVEN. Flora Fidgit is the nickname of the silver screen's most beautiful actress, Miss Julie Christie, who'll be down later in the week to earn twelve quid's worth of session money for appearing on another track. Said take dissolves in mistakes, Dave McRae playing funky fairground organ on "I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside".

"We need a new drum balance," says the engineer-who's-shortly-leaving-for-the-Antipodes.

"Robert." Bob Fripp is going to quip. "If you could give us a dose of tom-tom with that verve and elan which stands unique in percussion history, we'd really fall around in here."

TAKE EIGHT, TAKE NINE, TAKE TEN, take aspirin.

The session ends in the pub next door. Matching Mole's new album is going to be rather excellent, if not cosmic. It's about time.

IAN MACDONALD

N.M.E. SEPT. 2 1972.

Pop record

Matching Mole is a band for people who used to love the Soft Machine a few years back, but now find the latter quartet altogether too serious for its own good. It may, perhaps, have outlived its original function—which was to open up rock music to extended improvisation, and to introduce some of the sounds and theories of avant-garde musicians like Cecil Taylor and Terry Riley.

The Soft Machine's drummer, in the days when they were introducing rock to tape-loops and 11/4 time, was Robert Wyatt. A small, rather dumpy man, Wyatt was the visual focus of the group: face obscured by long, flaxen hair, torso bared, he drummed with an unquenchable ferocity, and sang in a fragile, rather aimless falsetto which added a tinge of humour and pathos to the group's generally sterm demeanour.

Wyatt, dissatisfied with the way the Softs were going, now leads Matching Mole. Playing, singing and writing better than ever, he is accompanied by the Australian pianist Dave McRae, guitarist Phil Miller, and bass-guitarist Bill McCormick. Together, they make up one of the few genuinely exciting British bands of the moment.

Matching Mole's Little Red Record (CBS S65260) is their second LP, and is a combination of fall-about humour—like the dialogue between prostitute and customer, backed by a trenchant horror-movie theme—and sheer good improvisation, much of it from McRae, as fine an exponent of the electric piano as you'll hear today (he has modified the instrument himself, to create novel tone colours).

The leader's drumming is more assertive and inspiring than ever, while his dry, whimsical "God Song" says more about real attitudes to religion than all of Broadway's biblical rock epics rolled into one. This represents the present peak of British rock music.

Richard Williams

TIMES NOV. 4 1972.

MATCHING MOLE: "MATCHING MOLE'S LITTLE RED RECORD" (CBS 65260).

THE COMBINATION of Matching Mole, as music, and Robert Fripp, as producer, was predictably explosive, and when the firepower is contained and directed on this album it works supremely well. But in places the strain shows — you feel the music either got refined a little too much or it aborted in the studio. So where things like "Marchides", "Nan True's Hole", "Gloria Gloom" and "God Song" work as well as anyone could want, things like "Flora Fidget" and "Righteous Rhumba" seem to have lost their essential qualities, to be pale shadows of what you know — if you know the band at all — they could have been. I treasured their first album, some pieces more than others, and I feel much the same way about this one, because however they are playing at any given moment, Dave McRae, Robert Wyatt, Bill MacCormick and Phil Miller never drop below complete competence, and often do something that really shakes you up and gives you a flash of astonishing brilliance. Sadly, the final version of this album gives little scope to Phil Miller, but Dave McRae shines throughout, and the way the Mole work together as a whole is quite remarkable. Robert's singing, particularly on "God Song" (even if they cut off the 'wh' of 'what', making the first line 'Ot on earth') is quite the best song I've heard him do. It's patchy, this little red record, but then remember that a patchy Mole still caps most of the things you're likely to hear. And the sleeve is a masterwork. — SP.

SOUNDS. NOV. 11 1972.

> Zoom

I thought all of you would enjoy these late '80s press releases, sent consistantly by Craig Shropshire. It's nice to hear there are hundreds of US everywhere in the press community. TRR ..

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HEAR WHAT THE PRESS SAYS ABOUT ROBERT WYATT.....

FROM THE U.K.:

MELODY MAKER:
"...sung by WYATT with the kind of fractured sincerity that climbs beyond description...masterful, genuinely moving, bravely resilient, proud in oppression, a valid spirit. If you haven't heard it before, hear it now."

RECORD MIRROR:
"Superb and largely undiscovered..."

STREETS AHEAD:
"...a testament to the quality of the music...emotive, evocative...haunting...and a sparse, unobtrusive use of instrumentation...ROBERT WYATT's delightfully unmannered vocals...gracefully shine...BUY THIS RECORD."

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS:
"One of last year's most moving moments..." (refering to the "Shipbuilding" single)

RM:
"...WYATT offers music and lyrics of enough depth to allow you, to lose yourself in them completely , while still delivering moments of musical beauty on their own."

THE HOT PRESS:
"Old Rottenhat carefully works (Marxism, jazz, protest, criticism, politics) into careful songs which that lovliest of unlovely voices picks over and cuddles - for here are lyrics that are barbed against barbarism, that have not forgotten where they are coming from or lost sight of where they are going to...More than any other contemporary musician, WYATT's music is loaded with meaning. He is capable of such precise expression and exposition; clearly marking out his targets, he hits them. Hard."

No. 1:
"...this music, which may seem 'difficult' to some (it's not full of Fairlight noises and easy options), is among the best and most rewarding currently being made. This plaintive, poignant and persuasive LP...is the best in the pile this week."

SOUNDS:
"It's definitely an album whose subtleties unfold gradually:the intricacy of a drum pattern, spaciousness of an arrangement, irony of a lyric, and the delicacy of ROBERT's voice. He's shounding better than ever.
"Musically, each track is discreet and complete, riding on rhythms which vary from quasi-ethnic to shades of jazz. The whole set is overlayed with glimmering keyboards and underpinned by bass figures which travel tangential lines first drawn as far back as Soft Machine."

-continued-

> Zoom

MELODY MAKER:
"His music captures a specific mood - a bleak, fraught shadow of gloom, an effortlessly plaintive voice naturally leading itself to all things serious and sad."

LABOUR WEEKLY:
"ROBERT WYATT's new album is probably the best political record to be released all year."

TNT:
"Album of the week one...clear simple voice, high and relaxed, dead slow...the lyrics are heavy political..."

MUSIC WEEK:
"...his vision still as needle clear...Old Rottenhat has the plaintive cry and the dirge come drone well to the fore. One of the best realised LPs of the year."

TIME OUT:
"Best of '85 - ROBERT WYATT: Old Rottenhat."

NME (cover story "Red, Wyatt & Blue"):
"ROBERT WYATT is a rare individual voice in British pop...Nobody could have told me how ROBERT WYATT...was going to capture my ear more tenaciously than any double-edged love song since Smokey Robinson..."

MELODY MAKER:
"He writes good songs and he can sing, and this time round his music is at the service of a burning sense of injustice and a dream of equality."

NEW MUSIC EXPRESS:
"It seems like that voice has always been there. Raising our eyebrows, bending our lips into smiles and, occasionally, knitting our brows in bemused wonderment. A reassuring presence, this voice, but also, paradoxically, a strange one. And, the ample evidence suggests, a strangely affecting one.
"For such an emphatically English voice to spread out and embrace such an eclectic interantional spectrum is further proof of an imagination that recognizes no borders."

NME (LP review):
"A WYATT record is like an old friend:it neither hectors, lectures nor harangues as if the listener were a public meeting. His plaintively low-key voice and the uncluttered, hymnal contemplativeness of his music demand you listen hard:its quiet self-effacement is not only impossible to ignore, but invests with personal relevance and resonance tunes hitherto abandoned to memory stockpile of frozen standards."

FROM THE U.S.:

SPIN:
"...seems to sail buoyantly on just a whiff of impetus...WYATT's aural sculpture... the record lifts you up without asking you to suspend your belief...powerful poetic statement that's chilling, passionate, preachy..."

THE MIAMI HERALD:
"On Old Rottenhat, WYATT establishes a pulse and just sticks with it, creating minimalist textures...melancholy voice comes in, and the peacfully wandering, jazz-like melodies of his songs begin their magic."

> Zoom

KERA 90.1
3000 Harry Hines Boulevard
Dallas, Texas 75201

KERA 90.1

To: thee International Robert Wyatt Club

FROM: Craig Shropshire
K.E.R.A. FM Dallas, TX.

RE: Matching Mole's "Little Red Record"
CD Reissue 1992
(ORIGINALLY C.B.S. S5260)

Gasphetti !? (What's that mean Robert? Something having to do with attacking one's spaghetti too rapidly, no doubt).

Alright, then... let's have at it! Here we have a little treasure from that seat of musical civilization, the quiet cathedral town of Canterbury. So many folks get excited about the old San Francisco scene of the late sixties and early seventies, but the real wealth lurked elsewhere... in Kent, England to be exact.

As you're probably aware, Matching Mole was a humorous way of saying "SOFT MACHINE"; a linguistic pun. The French phonetics for this being "Machine Moule".

This, Mole's second and sadly final recording, is a wonderful gem. Vinyl copies are difficult but not quite impossible to obtain, though thankfully it is reissued on Compact Disc.

The first track has a rather long title! In addition to beginning the recording, "Starting in the Middle of the Day, We Can Drink our Politics Away" would have been a fine way to approach the recent political elections here in the U.S. of Amnesia (Perhaps a new theme song !?). The Choral parts being provided by Und Der Mütter Korus.....

> Zoom

Immediately following the "extremely silly voice parts", we have a batterie foray by Robert that still induces extreme delight in the hearts and minds of all drummers some two decades later. It is focused, high energy drumming that propels everything else that's happening into it. We're now in the "Marchides"! It's the Mole!!! Far from being "myopic", though, this mole knows right where it's going, and that somewhere is uncharted. Another underground adventure, if you will. Bill MacCormick kicks in with a fine fuzz bass improvisation, as we all proceed to "Nan True's Hole". This was actually the name of John Peel's country home, which was once, long ago, occupied by one Nan True, presumably a dabbler in the dark arts.

Remaining true to the ideology of the Wyatt tune (or is that "toon"?), "Nan True's Hole" is not only about a "place where we can hide away, just for a little holiday", but there is a singular narrative/conversation by some "wench" who offers to help a customer who has "led a very nice life, but I'm lost in it, and I don't know what I'm here for". She graciously offers to show him, advising him to take off his trousers..! whilst we continue hearing music throughout ... some Victorian moans and whispers ... obvious joy by all parties participating. This leads one to wonder about what really went on at/in Nan True's Hole!

Each piece of music has a marvelous connecting interlude which ties it all together. The next one, "Righteous Rhumba" is no exception. Here are more mouthparts from Robert, with indistinguishable lyrics. All I can catch is something about "I'll show you mine, if you'll....".

At the end of the next fine piece "Brandy As In Benj", the main thematic statement is re-introduced, and then Robert

> Zoom

does a masterful job of reproducing it once more on his drum kit, alone. What panache!

SIDE TWO (Yes, Vinyl rules)... We begin with "Gloria Gloom," the piece which the group wanted to be first on the album. Unfortunately, they weren't consulted on the CD reissue (what a fuckin' travesty) so it remains, as was, but now it can be resequenced by player programmer.

I've always been particularly fond of "Gloria Gloom". It begins with haunting VCS-3 sounds from Brian Eno, that echo off into some drug induced trance... eerie... As the music fades in, we hear three seperate voices (2 female, 1 male) babbling about all sorts of surreal events. Some fragments are: "it looked like monsters, and uh, ooh, moving lights across the sun", and "anything you can get around yourself can be awfully helpful, I rarely work naked," and "it reinforces my sense of utterly-awareness." All this is highly amusing. Robert begins singing about inspiration recieved from a Socialist muse. It's a wonderful piece. The lyrics are not provided.

Next up, it's right into Robert and Phil Miller's tune about the Big Guy/Gal upstairs. You know the one I mean. "God Song" is poignant, humourous, and asks some thoughtful questions.

Which leads us into "Flora Fidgit", a beautifully serene piece of ensemble playing with Robert's precise, understated drum work. Very bright, tight playing from the whole band.

Little Red Record is a drummer's subtle bliss. Wyatt's characteristic muffled tom-tom sound is sheer pleasure!

> Zoom

he interacts splendidly with another listening musician, Dave Macrae and his electric piano. Macrae wrote "Smoke Signal" which closes this recording. The piece is also available on an album he did with the band PACIFIC EARDRUM, though I much prefer Mole's version. It's hard to tell at times if it's your ears, or the speakers, or simply Dave's keyboards that sound like they are disintegrating! No matter. It's all very grahnd! You are guaranteed a smashing time!

Thanks again, Robert (and lads). It still sounds like absolute perfection, even twenty-years later on the lazer format, this recording now comes off stronger. Oh yes, and credit must also go to another Robert! King Fripp produced the entire extravaganza.

Personel: Eugen Tilly - leader and flamboyance
Camber Rilnt - viola Lavendue - spinett
Hetle - pianos, mustachios, barrel organs, monkeys, and silver trumpet valves
(Strange names for a bunch of poisanos!)

NOTE: "Gloria Gloom" can be found also on HENRY COW'S IN CONCERT on which Robert also appears. Vocals by Dagmar Krause. Good version!!

With it's imminent CD reissue, CBS had the opportunity to actually make a "little red record". Oh well as my daughter would say, "Too bad, too sad". Oh well comrads, that's my report from the airwave fields for now. I'll be reporting back in time. Remember, we're always listening....

Craig L.

> Zoom

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Terry R. Valderas
the Iberian

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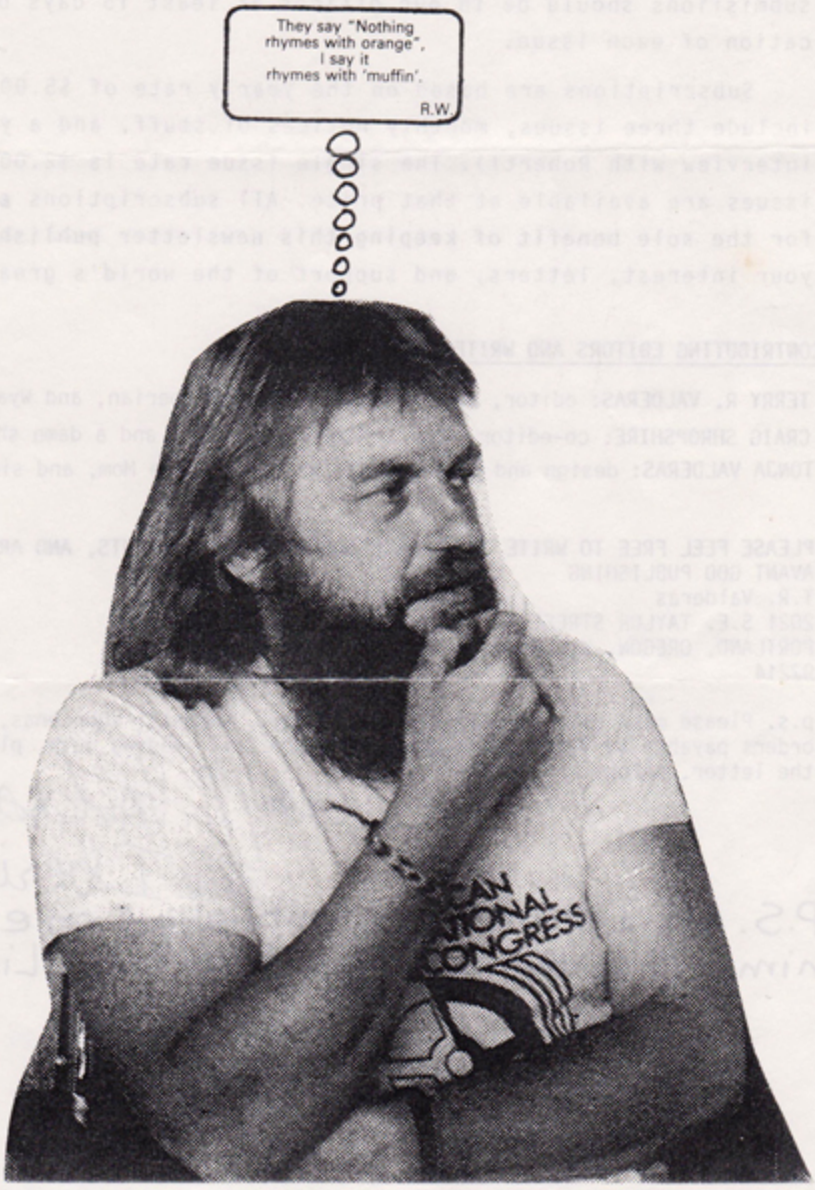
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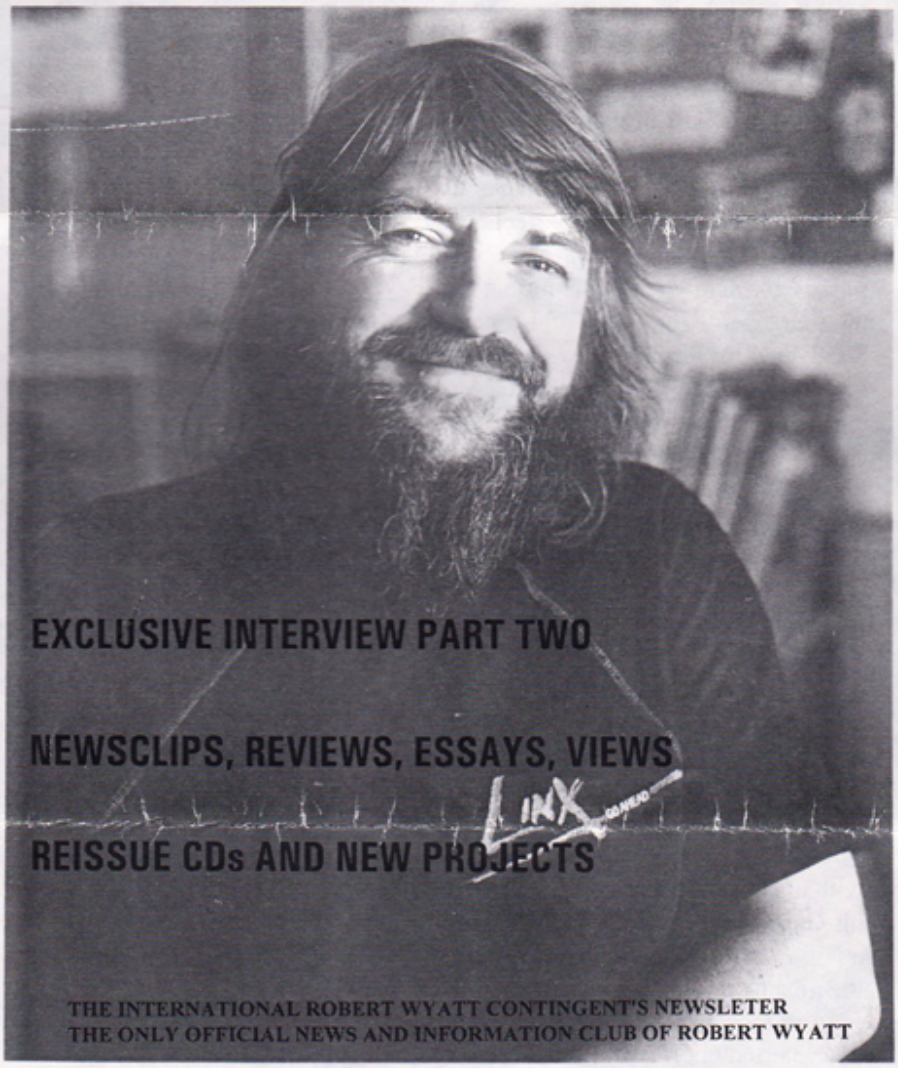


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OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL

VOLUME ONE, ISSUE THREE AUTUMN 1994

THIRTY YEARS OF WYATT MUSIC



> Zoom

Hello readers,

Welcome to another edition of OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL! This issue is loaded with goodies for all of the fanatics. It is better than the last one, and not quite as good as the next. Hope you enjoy it.

I have a confession to make to you. Though I gave myself the title, I am not an editor (proof lies in the last issue). I am a Vessel Communicator by trade and a fictionist by hobby. I only entered this Robert Wyatt venture as a means of uniting his fans through publicity, memories, and reviews. It can be called a 'zine, but I always thought of it as an information source. As it has astronomically grown, I have accepted the fact of my poor editing. The enthusiasm of people like yourself has made this newsletter very proud. I knew you all were out there; thanks for the blessings! I have dedicated the future of this newsletter to perfection for you. When you see a typo or the random misspelling, keep this confession in mind. It is with great effort that I try to constantly better the format of this Wyatt-thing, and to keep in mind my past errors. The future of this newsletter promises to evolve progressive!! Stay tuned for further screw-ups...

This issue is THE THIRTY YEARS OF WYATT continuum. This is really more of a subject for your submissions, than a full career retrospective. I could go on and on, but I'll leave that to Mike King's upcoming bio-gigog of Robert (for those of you who keep asking, it is due in early 1994 through the good publishing prowess of SAF...stay tuned to us for details!!). I once again open the door to all reading this: PLEASE SUBMIT ANYTHING! The door is open to any remembrances, experiences, reviews, quotes, opinions, banter, or comments concerning Robert's music. It is a forum for you, the fan. Do!!!

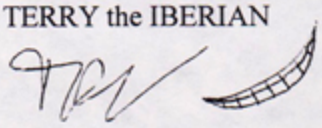
CONTESTCONTESTCONTESTCONTESTCONTESTCONTEST!!!!!!!!!!

q) Which Pink Floyd member has worked on projects the most with Wyatt? ha ha ha this one is so easy!!! It's even hinted to in this issue! The winner is to choose anything from our Wyatt CD Archives (we have every domestic released one except "End of an Ear", please include your prize request in the letter of contest), as well as gets a nod from this newsletter.

The winner of our last contest was one Jim Stedge from East Rutherford, NJ with his answer to the titles to songs from the Mr. Head demo (he must know his Canterbury history!). He won "Ruth" on CD, and gets a knot...er, I mean a nod from us. Congratulations Jimmy!!!! Post those answers now and be the next to complete you missing CD collection. Good thinking.

And those asking when Robert's next album will be finished (he hasn't even started one, squire!), just hold the door. Good things come to those ..... patience is a ..... uh....yeah.

TERRY the IBERIAN



> Zoom

N.I.O. WYATT

* New on the collaboration front for Robert is the latest recordings by ULTRAMARINE on the Blanco Y Negro Label . Titled "United Kingdom", the recordings were released 23 August 1993, featuring Mr. Wyatt prominently on five of the tracks. On the titles "Kingdom", "Happy Land", and "Urf", Robert sings as well as takes a co-writing credit. On "The Badger" and "Dizzy Fox", he vocalizes in the style that has drawn this club together for it's originality. For the completists, there is a CD single remix of "Kingdom" with a flipside track "Gold Crest", the latter sampling Robert's voice. The band also covers "Instant Kitten" sans Robert. It is highly recommended to all of our readers to buy this, and both of the aforementioned discs are available in most shops.

*COMING IN AUTUMN 1993 FROM VOICEPRINT U.K.:
A) The Wildeflowers CD taken from their three existing sessions in 1966. Wow!!!! This one will be a monster of fun!!!! The limited edition of this release will come in an A-5 size booklet with notes by Brian and Hugh Hopper. The CD will also include a song from sessions dating 9 Aug. 1969 (described to me as "Soft Machine meets Wildeflowers"). Look for this one at the shops or through mail order in some of the more progressive music catalogues.
B) Daevid Allen Trio- "Live '63"-Recorded 3 June 1963 at London's Marquee Club, this one was recorded when it was all new to our hero. Featuring Mike Ratledge on piano for three selections, and a poet (I didn't catch his name...), the core of the trio is rounded out by the 18 year olds Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt. They cover "Little Rooty Tooty" by T.S. Monk and take the coda of the later Gong song "Selene" into an eight-minute workout. The additional track included here is "Fred the Fish" from the Winter 1966-67 Kim Fowley sessions with the Softies. Another CD very much worth finding, thanks to those wonderful people at Voiceprint!! Look for it soon.

*REISSUE MANIA:
SOFT MACHINE IN CONCERT from the Windsong Label. Taken from the BBC transcriptions of 11 March 1971 Peel in Concert series, this ones also known as "SOFT MACHINE AND HEAVY FRIENDS". Feature the extended big band line up and sleeve notes by Hugh Hopper. Craig Shropshire sent me this one and I must say it is my favorite Softs live recording ever. A must buy for all of our readers!!!!

MATCHING MOLE from the Beat Goes On Label. The first Mole recording remastered and now available in the U.S.A. as an import. New sleeve notes by Robert. Go buy it now, squire!!!!

Until the next N.I.O. info-mailer and our next issue get happy and listen closely.
TERRY the IBERIAN

> Zoom

PART TWO: the robert wyatt inner-view

This is part two of our exclusive interview with Robert conducted by cassette in August of 1992, recorded in his home studio. As an old Sun Ra Arkestra recording blasts in the background, Robert dives into the "statement-questions" Tonja and I sent with bravado. His keen sense of wit and clear judgment in tact, he pauses quite often to get the answers he most wanted expressed on these subjects. We have taken the liberty of again combining both interview sessions together to give a full perspective of his thoughts. Happy reading!! TRV

Q; Influences of Political, Musical, and Literary.

R.W.; (Laughs quite loudly) You gotta' be joking!!!!! I've been alive for 47 years and an influence enters my brain...probably...several hundred a second, just like everyone else's. (Laughs again) How long have you got? Uhh...

However, we are also filter systems! I mean you can feed a duck dog-food but it'll never turn into a dog. We're not kind of empty vehicles for whatever we absorb. I think that we kind select, even when we think we're being open. We can't help it. We're, each of us, a search and select machine, and why we find things suit us or don't I don't think any of us can really say. That's why it's very, you know, difficult territory if you start putting down other people's tastes, in a way. Because nobody knows what other people really need. I don't find that it works for me to try and guess what other people want to hear from me, and what other people want. Because I just can't imagine anything worth being satisfactory like that, and I don't like it as an audience when I think somebody's trying to gear something to me that doesn't come natural to them, and therefore doesn't sound natural to me, either.

Musical influences...at any given moment you could ask me...a day later it will be a different answer. I mean there's this whole thing churning around and you just have to pick out what..... surfaces. Rather than dive underneath and risk drowning in...memories...I'm not going to be deliberately obscure; God knows...we'll have difficulty communicating without that (laughs)! And so if some of the names I mention are, say, kind of obvious, well that's fine by me! That means that people are as famous as they should be.

Elvin Jones...the fact that he's alive and playing is some kind of miracle. I don't mean by that it's a terrible surprise. There is no reason he shouldn't be, but he is a miraculous man. He's sort of taken the drums to a level, on a road perhaps started out by, I dunno'...Baby Dodds and Chick Webb... through Kenny Clarke (this writer's favourite Be-Bop player! ed) and so on. He's made this breathing living wind machine out of a drum kit. You've got to remember that the drum kit is a 20th century invention, and it's as modern as any synthesizer...and even more significant. I think the most foolish thing that a lovely Tenor (saxophone) player over here, Courtney Pine, did was not accept Elvin's offer to go on the road, with the Elvin Jones Band. Branford Marseilles said, "Ya shoulda' done it!", anybody like that, Blakey or Elvin asks you to play a gig, you take it! Because, these are the masters, and you've got plenty of time later. It's such a privilege to be asked by these people. So anyways... Elvin Jones, as a drummer.

I'm influenced by a lot of musicians who sing, rather than jazz singers; I've just realized that really. Very often when musicians kind of...(laughs) grunt out a tune, I've always liked that (now amused). Dizzy Gillespie is a lovely singer, in his schooldays. If you hear Gillespie...I had a record of Gillespie

> Zoom

at Newport, big band, and he sings that sort of R & B stuff. Like Jimmy Smith singing "I got my Mojo Working". Wonderful! And there are, of course, various musicians who sort of play and sing like Mose Allison, of course...Nina Simone; versatile pianist. (long pause in thought) And in terms of piano playing, I also like...the playing of...influenced by...practically I have to be, by the people who don't reckon to be pianists or players. But, Gil Evans once said he played a "rangists" piano, I mean, I know what he meant! If you're gonna' be a solo pianist, still now, I ought' to throw by Bud Powell, you see...the Bebop player, who kind of defected East. A lot of musicians did that; went to live in Paris and places like that...Bud Powell is one of these people like Billie Holiday...the people say, "Oh, they went off towards the end of their lives!". But there is something moving about what they did. I don't think they went off towards the end of their lives, it's like saying...a lot of people's music goes through various processes and there can come a time in an artist's life when they're no longer displaying their technical virtuosity or their knowledge. They're simply making, kind of iconic marks. And I really identify strongly with people who have the confidence to do that, however. And Bud Powell used to play piano when he was older. He was...he'd been very badly... damaged. He'd had electro...what's-his-name done there; he'd been brutally treated by psychiatric nurses, or something. It's not dislike you're typical tragic story, I'm not talking about him as a tragic figure: I think he played wonderfully, late in his life, even though he's stumbling. Because there's that sound of searching going on. So, late Bud Powell...late Billie Holiday...the sounds of people when they're meant to have been past their peak, and cracking up inside. I think it's...ugh...seemed to move me a lot.

Okay...literary...no political...no literary...Literary? Literary! Well I suppose I'd have to say the English Comics and comedians. I like our comics, I don't like our serious actors very much, you know, the theater tradition that's very much admired. I mean it just reminds me of the tourist industry and the "World Family". Our great theatrical tradition, and our Royal Family, to me, their entirely... for...um...like those tourist things where everything is decided for you by the touring company, and you file past whatever it is. You go to one country and you file past the Mona Lisa, you go to...what is it...the leaning tower of Lisa, or moaning Pisa or whatever her name is...anyway. To me, our great theatrical tradition is just that. I can't stand that (adapts mock Tudor-styled voice) "Careful ennunciation and r-r-resonant voices." I don't need it. If I want a resonant voice, I'll listen to Billy Eckstine (hey...I think it's time for a Mr. B musical resurrection in our youth...yeah! Ed) So, our comedians I love.

It's almost immedious to pick out some people; you probably wouldn't know them anyway. I'm not sure they'd translate. They very often came from that musical circuit that used to be in England towards the end of the last century. I suppose, the thing that in America developed into a Vaudeville thing. And related to that there was a kind of... sort of...I suppose...19th century, turn-of-the-century English funny writers and children's writers. People like Edward Lear...I really like. I mean, in the same way, America, I really like James Thurber (all right, Rob!!! Ed). I mean where do I stop?! Thats just comes out the Rotten Hat at that particular moment, thinking about that question.



RW original cartoon sent to the editor by the Mole himself/9-10-13

> Zoom

Political influences? This is a kind of overwhelming question. It's almost like the same answer , in a way, to the musical ones. You gravitate to what seems to capture your imagination. I'm not even sure you chose to. (Matter-of-factly) England is run by a very conservative establishment, which as Christopher Hitchings has pointed out, there's an attempt to sort of copy it in the United States, almost a kind of reaction of aristocracy of leadership. In both cases anyway, you'd have to say they were aligarties rather than democracies. Well, obviously if you had to spend any money at all to become a candidate, that disqualifies most of the people who should do it (laughs). Let's think...

Communism and Socialism as your influence...well, I sort of realized I was one by accusation. I mean, in the sense that...in South Africa, the description of the laws to prevent the move towards democracy, and away from fascist dictatorship, were called "the Laws Against Communism". I've simply just allowed myself to be named by my enemies. I mean, when you say all the things I say, or think the things I think, you get called a communist. So I figure, well...if it's useful for people to have a way of identifying me, then I'll live with that, because...umm..."You must be a Commie! Oh, alright, if YOU say so!" All these names are labels; they've got nothing to do with what we are as a kind of living, breathing bits of...ectoplasm, or something. Names are just attempts at identifying this one particular lump of ectoplasm from another, by the group at large. And so it just sort of became apparent that I was one, because people like me get called one and I'm not gonna' argue with... conservatives. If they say that people like me must be Communists...They're very well educated, they are the standard bearers of civilization...They should know!! I'm certainly neither of those things, so I must accept their word for it. I'm a Communist because I just found that the kind of things I think, I'm told are Communistic. Okay. People say, " Well why in America do you have these other words like Liberal?" Well, that's one of these words that doesn't mean the same in England as it does in America. Because we have political parties, for example, a sort of Liberal (Labour) and Conservative party. In England, the Liberals, if they are here, are sort of like twins with the conservatives in a sense that...like if you're being questioned by a policeman and one's the heavy one who might push you around, the other one says, "Never mind him. Look, I'm your friend. Have a cup of tea. Look, let's talk about this." Police work in pairs (especially here in the United States of Amnesia!! Ed) and so do political parties with their people. And in England, the Liberals and Conservatives are just kind of... "Nice guy/Tough guy". But, they're both defending and protecting and talking in behalf of the same interests. So I have to avoid use of the word Liberal. It also suggests a certain kind of moderation, and I have no understanding or conception of what possible use political moderation could have. I can't imagine the kind of moderate, balanced response to any particular situation. Like, for example, the right wing extremist says, "Kill 6 million Jews"; the left wing extremist says, "Don't kill any Jews". So I suppose the moderate, "Well, maybe we should kill about 3 million...then everybody'd be very happy." (Laughs hard) I don't understand the moderate position, you know what I mean?

What are these cheeky ULTRAMARINE boys smiling about? Photo 1993



> Zoom

The Softs, the Proms and drummer Wyatt

by Richard Williams

IT'S NOT long since Robert Wyatt announced that he was vacating the drum stool with Soft Machine in order to pursue a career with Kevin Ayers' band and various other friends.

"I should know better by now," said Robert last week, shaking his head half in sorrow and half in happiness. "I say these things, and I really mean them at the time, but a week later I'm feeling something else entirely.

"In all fairness to the Softs, they're still auditioning drummers, which is something I suggested because I thought they might find someone they like better than me, someone who can read music for one thing. Not reading is my thing . . . primitive music, y'know.

"But I really intended to leave the band, and I suppose I had to get outside it to find out what I really wanted. We had a few fights inside the band, but it's all back together now, and I don't want anything to break that very fine balance we've regained."

The Softs' recent Henry Wood Promenade Concert at the Albert Hall created controversy among the critics, who seemed to be expecting something the group were never prepared to give. Robert looks back on it with very mixed feelings.

"The whole business of surfacing for a couple of hours in that environment was to be heard by people who normally wouldn't listen to us in our normal context — and it was unnatural.

"I enjoyed parts of it, and the audience was certainly the biggest we've ever had in Britain. It was a very nice evening, socially speaking, and it was good that the audience seemed to enjoy the Terry Riley and Tim Souster pieces just as much as our stuff.

"We played all right, I suppose, and Elton particularly rose above the circumstances to play some excellent solos. In terms of the occasion, I'd say that all music grows up in a certain environment, and ours is loads of people lying around getting stoned, and we spend the first half-hour sorting out the sound balance so that the evening gradually opens out. At the Albert Hall, of course, that just wasn't possible.

"There was also the whole thing of playing to a deadline. It was very frustrating having to finish at exactly four minutes before 12 o'clock because if you run over that the engineers will pull out the plugs."

How did Robert view the motives of the BBC people who put the Softs on the Proms? "I don't honestly think the BBC had too much say in it. It was down to Tim Souster, who managed to get into the sort of position of respect where he was allowed to present his own evening, and as he was interested in our music he asked us to be part of it. I don't suppose the powers-that-be at the BBC knew what they were getting at all.

"Oh dear, I really don't want to sound sour and bitter about it at all. What I'm saying is that we've done a lot of gigs and the Proms doesn't stand out as one of the important ones.

"But I can also see that it seems to have been important in terms of public reaction . . . for a start, the little old ladies round our way used to think that we were a load of nasty, dirty hairies, but now they all say 'Good morning, Robert' very nicely.

"In the end, though, I can't honestly say that I feel it's important. Bridge-building isn't something that you can do consciously, it happens by accident, but it's nice that people can listen to and like something that they wouldn't normally come across. Anyway I don't consider that we're a bridge-building band. We're very narrow really, pursuing one train of thought.

"Elton's writing should make it a little different — but then, oh well, everything seems to go through the sausage mill and come out sounding like the Soft Machine."

Now that Robert is safely back inside the group, does he still harbour desires to get into other areas? "Well, one thing I'm doing right now is playing with my own quartet, which has Elton, Marc Charig on cornet, and Neville Whitehead on string bass.

"We've already recorded a long, free version of Gil Evans' 'Las Vegas Tango' for my own album on CBS, and it's really a totally free thing. Maybe we'll get into doing our own versions of Soft Machine numbers — that would be nice, getting another angle on them with a flowing string bass line instead of the fuzz bass-guitar.

"With this band I'm trying to get some space back into my music. Arrangements, freedom, and all those different procedures can make satisfying music, which is very hard to define, but the actual effect is a certain kind of density.

"I admire the sense of space you get from 'Miles Smiles' or the Miroslav Vitous album; the density of rock bands can be very crude and unrewarding. So many things are happening in the quartet; I'm constantly playing things that I've always wanted to play but never been able to, and that's a result of the more fluid situation.

The experiment of working with Ayers and the Whole World was not a success, although Robert still has great admiration for the band. "I did two or three things with them in England, including the Hyde Park 'free,' and a week in Holland.

"I tried it, but I have this tendency to change my mind completely about everything. I still think it's one of the most amazing bands in the world . . . oh dear, I'm unhappy about this interview — I'm saying all the things I mean.

"Kevin's band does tend to be a little ramshackle in its approach and perhaps I've been spoilt by being part of a comparatively slick organisation for quite a long time. I really dig David Bedford though."

Robert's own album, which is nearing the mixing stage, is "hours of completely free things in various combinations, with all the unfashionable sound tricks that Zappa discarded five years ago and which I'm toying with right now.

"Hugh wants to get the Soft Machine into the studios to record very soon, and one of the best aspects of the band at the moment is the way Elton's got so involved in the music.

"He's even getting us to do things that we stopped trying to do to each other years ago, like getting me to read parts. The others completely accept that I'll never do it, but Elton keeps plugging away.

"It's really nice to see Mike and Hugh struggling with someone else's compositions for a change, instead of grinning evilly while I try and struggle through theirs."



SOFT MACHINE at the Albert Hall (from left): Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean and Robert Wyatt.

Muzakoncerto



Piazza Navona, una giornata mer diciamo senza Roma, per tutto i to, per la cultu nuovo che vogliam re. 40-50 mila gio ti un po' da tutta I to per ascoltare tre c si di prestigio, ma anche lottare, per esprimere la loro solidarietà alla nostra iniziativa di una campagna nazio-

niente servizio d'ordine con fascetta rossa al braccio

ghetto d'oro, il concerto-lager finito il quale uno si ritrova

re i conti con le ni e i pesi di concerto non fa ma forse il 27 memorabile, ha pulso notevole a nto di tipo nuo- vimento che sap- to, far cultura, im- si sentire, vivere anche la musica come un momento nuovo e non marginale della lotta.



Robert Wyatt



Il manifesto del Concerto - Design Ettore Vitale



I 50.000 di p.zza Navona

> Zoom

A FANTASY COME TRUE, BY ROBERT WYATT

BY STEVE PEACOCK

LIKE many other bands that I find musically interesting and emotionally exciting, Soft Machine depend a lot on the contrasts between the members of the group to bring their music to life.

It is not a clash of personalities, but a constant interchange of ideas and approaches that keeps what they do fresh, both in their performances and when working out arrangements.

These differences show up a bit on their last album "Third" (CBS 66246), but what shows up even more clearly is the way that four very different people come together to enrich each other's playing, and the music as a whole.

Obviously this works with all groups to some extent, but often there is either one person who dominates, or the musicians come together in the first place because they work with similar ideas.

□ □ □

With bands like The Whole World, Pink Floyd, and the Softs the approach is different and it produces music that is more likely to evolve in new directions.

"Obviously, the changes in the music depend a lot on the people in the group," said Robert Wyatt, drummer and more extrovert quarter of the Softs. "For instance, when Kevin (Ayers) left and Hugh (Hopper) joined, it made a great difference."

Robert is probably the most basic, least technically-minded of the four. Does he find it restrictive playing within the comparatively tight framework of Mike Ratledge's compositions, which are pretty much worked out and arranged?

"I find it difficult," he said, "but the discipline is probably very good for me, and it brings out things that nobody could have thought of."



● *WYATT: "A bit of musical promiscuity."*

Of course, there is plenty of room for improvisation and individual interpretation within Mike's compositions, and even more in Hugh's, Robert's and Elton Dean's. And the group go further along this path by adding other musicians to the line-up on occasion.

When I talked to Robert, they were working on the last track of their new album at Olympic Studios, and working with them on the session were Alan Skidmore, Nick Evans, and Roy Babbington.

The effect of that horn section and of the two bass players on the track, one of Mike's called "Teeth", was incredible — it had so much life about it.

One side of the new album is devoted to Hugh's "Virtually", and other tracks are "Kings and Queens" by Hugh and one by Elton — "Five minutes of total insanity" according to Robert.

Using two bass players has worked well, and there are plans for Mike Giles, formerly drummer with King Crimson, to do some things with Robert and the Softs — another combination that should produce some very interesting music.

Though the Soft Machine is Robert's main interest, he likes to branch out in other directions. Mike and Hugh do most of the writing for the group and there really isn't enough time to cope with all their ideas.

Robert has just completed his own "solo" album, he has been involved with Keith Tippett's Centipede project, and he hopes to start doing some gigs with a sextet soon. Earlier this year he left the Soft Machine to work with Kevin Ayers' band, but he soon went back.

"I suddenly realised that I was in my mid-twenties and I had got a job. Everything was very tidy, much too predictable. I just felt like a bit of musical promiscuity."

But it didn't work out quite as he had hoped: "I realised that the things that I could achieve musically with Kevin would probably take far longer than with the Soft Machine. What really happened was that from a distance, I was able to re-appraise the Softs."

His album, out on Friday, is the product of about three weeks' recording at Sound Techniques in Chelsea.

□ □ □

"We just went in blank and played and doodled around to see what came out. It's nearly an hour long, and probably the only real tune on it is a Gil Evans thing called 'Las Vegas Tango'."

Robert plays piano and electric piano and sings — "not songs, more as an alternative to playing instruments" — and other people on the album are Elton Dean, Mark Charig (cornet), Neville Whitehead (bass), and Dave Sinclair from Caravan (organ).

"It's not supposed to be some kind of great alternative to the Soft Machine," said Robert. "I just thought it would be nice to have an album like that by somebody."

The sextet he hopes to do some gigs with will be Nick Evans, Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo, Roy Babbington, and Steve someone — Robert couldn't remember his surname.

But the thing that has really excited him recently is the Centipede project, Keith Tippett's monster amalgamation of 48 musicians.

"It was like a gathering of the tribes, such a happy occasion," he said. "I really enjoyed it so much — all those people just playing together and enjoying it.

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The only thing that brought him down was the critics' reaction to the gig.

"I don't want to complain too much, because if any group has been helped by critics, we have," he said, "but I think with the Centipede thing those guys missed such a lot. It was such a happy occasion, and when someone goes away and says, 'oh yes, quite interesting in parts,' he just misses the point.

"We're musicians, we realise what is wrong with it and that it was ragged and everything. Critics just don't seem to realise that musicians are people as well, and they can be hurt like anyone else.

"I don't hate critics, because that is silly, but I'd like to point out that they've probably depressed and discouraged Keith again. I hope they are proud of their achievement."

ROBERT WYATT
A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Born Bristol, moved to Dulwich and later to Canterbury at age of ten.

While at school, received tuition in piano, violin, trumpet and drums. Further tuition in drums from George Neidorf.

Became drummer/vocalist in local group The Wilde Flowers from 1964-66.

Drummer/vocalist of Soft Machine 1967-1971, appearing on the following recordings: "Rock Generation Vols. 7 & 8" (Byg), "The Soft Machine" and "Volume Two" (Probe), "Third" and "Fourth" (CBS)

During this period, also made a single with Jimi Hendrix (never released); did session work with Eric Burdon & The Animals; became occasional drummer of Kevin Ayers & The Whole World and made appearances on Ayers' records; accomplished solo album "The End Of An Ear" (CBS) and contributed to Daevid Allen's "Banana Moon" (Byg). Other peripheral activities; Symbiosis, Keith Tippett and Centipede.

Formed Matching Mole in December 1971. Group made two albums – "Matching Mole" and "Little Red Record" (CBS) – before parting company a year later.

Second incarnation of Matching Mole about to begin work in Summer 1973 when serious fall resulted in paralysis from waist down.

During six-month stay in hospital, composed the material for "Rock Bottom" subsequently recorded with Pink Floyd's Nick Mason producing. Released 26/7/74.

Album received ecstatic reviews. Newly recorded single "I'm A Believer"/ "Memories" released 6/9/74

from Programme for Drury Lane Concert
8 September 1974

> Zoom

JAZZNEWS

Wyatt makes solo debut

ROBERT WYATT, founder member of the poll-winning Soft Machine, and later leader of Matching Mole, makes his first appearance as a solo artist at tonight's second benefit concert at London's ICA building in the Mall, for the dependants of the late Mal Dean. Wyatt has been out of action for a year following a serious accident but has recently taken a back-seat role in performances by Hatfield and the North and Kevin Ayers.

For a brief period around 1970, Wyatt drummed with the Amazing Band, the free jazz ensemble fronted by Mal in his trumpeting days.

At the ICA, Wyatt will be featured singing and playing keyboards and will have sporadic accompaniment from Gary Windo and Lol Coxhill (reeds). Also appearing will be Pete Brown with Mama Flyer, Mike Horowitz (poetry and kazoo), Adrian Mitchell, and the Spontaneous Music Ensemble featuring Trevor Watts and Evan Parker (saxes), Derek Bailey (electric guitar), Roger Smith (accoustic guitar) and John Stevens (drums and noises off).

Lol Coxhill will also play a solo set. Admission is 50p. There is a well displayed exhibition of Mal's cartoons now adorning the ICA corridors. Altogether, an evening not to be missed.

FRONT ROW REVIEWS

Robert Wyatt/ Drury Lane

Even though the gig was due to start at 8.30, Drury Lane had started to clog up with earnest-looking hippies nearly two hours before the event.

Mind you, it all adds to the sense of occasion, but the regrettably prosaic explanation was that someone had neglected to inscribe the precise time of showing on either the tickets or the ads.

So it goes.

T'ings kicked off with a brief monologue by the newlywed Dancing Jack Peel, clad in his most glam rock outfit. Undeterred by shouts of "Boring" from certain sections of the audience — all right then, from me — he intoned for a few moments and then vacated the stage to Ivor Cutler and Phyllis April King, who provided a highly amusing interlude of deadpan poesies and brief songs, which were received with great merriment by the assembled company.

So it goes.

After a discreet intermission, Dancing Jack cartwheeled dynamically back onto the stage. Through mobile, well-shaped lips he enunciated (rather devastatingly, it must be admitted) "For Robert Wyatt of Twickenham, Opportunity Knocks!"

Mr. Wyatt perambulated rapidly to a strategic area between a small mixer ("These knobs don't actually do anything — they just give me something to do with my hands") and a keyboard set-up ("At rehearsals I couldn't find a position from where I could play these, so I probably won't play them. Still, they look good").

He ran through a good-naturedly rickety version of Hugh Hopper's "Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening," backed up by Hopper himself on bass, Laurie Allan on drums, Fred Frith on violin and Dave Stewart on keyboards, the first trickles of the mighty wave of superstars that was doon to swampt the stage.

(The preceding sentence comes to you courtesy of 36 back numbers of "Conan The Barbarian").

Most of the material from Wyatt's "Rock Bottom" found its way into the front half of the set (and in case you need to be re-told, it's a wondrous album indeed).

Towards the end of "A Last Straw", a diffident young man with an unmistakable "I-am-a-junior-roadie" demeanour wandered on, played a bit of synthesiser and wandered off.

It wasn't until he reappeared half an hour later with a Gibson SG strapped around him, that the audience sussed that this dynamic figure was in fact none other than Mike Oldfield, the man with Britain's two best-selling albums to his name, one of which had been blasted through the P.A. during the intermissions.

However, it was undoubtedly Wyatt's show, despite the superstars who wandered on and off — y'know, yer Nick Masons, Gary Windos, that bunch.

Swaying in his wheelchair playing ghost drums, fiddling with the dials of his mixer with one hand, clutching a mike with the other and his eyes squeezed tight shut, he was unquestionably the focal point of the proceedings, and folks, he's singin' better than ever.

Unfortunately Julie Tippett's contribution to the festivities rather derailed things. After joining Wyatt and Co. in one song, she was left along tootling merrily on a recorder and humming into it occasionally.

This was followed by two songs at de piano, performed extremely nervously, and a number with Wyatt, Windo and trumpeter Mongezi Feza, which could well have been called "Dedicated To You But You Ran Out Of The Room Screaming for Aspirin."

Ms Tippett's voice is still as compelling as ever, but her stiff uncertain piano playing and the lugubriousness of her songs provided a rather dead area in the middle of the set, which eventually climaxed with a thoroughly berserk version of "I'm A Believer" with some singularly dirty rhythm guitar from Oldfield.

Generally, the show veered from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the sublime firmly in the lead.

80 per cent of it was very fine indeed, and the more gig Robert Wyatt feels like undertaking the better.

Wheel meet again.

> Zoom

ORDER OF EVENTS

FIRST

IVOR CUTLER and PHYLLIS APRIL KING

with a selection of songs and poems

NEXT THE INTERMISSION AND THEN

ROBERT WYATT	vocals
DAVE STEWART	keyboards
HUGH HOPPER	bass
LAURIE ALLAN	drums
FRED FRITH	guitar, violin
MIKE OLDFIELD	guitar
JULIE TIPPETT	vocals
GARY WINDO	bass clarinet, tenor saxophone
MONGEZI FEZA	trumpet
NICK MASON	drums

PLAYING

Sea Song	Robert Wyatt
A Last Straw	Robert Wyatt
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road	Robert Wyatt
Alifie	Robert Wyatt
Alifib	Robert Wyatt
Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening	Hugh Hopper
God Song	Phil Miller/Robert Wyatt
Instant Pussy	Robert Wyatt
Signed Curtain	Robert Wyatt
Calyx	Phil Miller/Robert Wyatt
Memories	Hugh Hopper
I'm A Believer	Neil Diamond

LIGHTING	Andra Larson, Tony Winall
SOUND MIXING	Peter Wade
STAGE ASSISTANCE	Nick Levitt, Chris Levitt

> Zoom

Wyatt stories on the air



Hannah Charlton reports from Rome. Pic by A. Roggero

ROBERT WYATT, Madame Mao, a Rome radio studio? The connection might seem a little tenuous, but in fact it's sewn up neatly in the adventurous and creative airwaves beamed out from a corner of the imposing edifice of the RAI, the Italian equivalent of the BBC.

Radio as a voice to stop you in your tracks, to be more than a background mollifier, has been the aim and the result of a programme called "Un Certo Discorso", which was virtually a slogan during the political furore during the mid Seventies in Italy.

The youth movement, disenchanted with the promises of the Communist party, were calling out for "A Kind of Dialogue" on a positive sense. This then became the talking point title for a series of programmes which has been going out every day for an hour and a half in mid afternoon since 1977. It has broadcast some extraordinarily good material, from mime, theatre to workshops to large-scale concerts with the RAI modern rhythm orchestra playing compositions by Gil Evans, George Russell and British free players Paul Rutherford, Barry Guy and Evan Parker.

Radio has been highly significant in Italy over the last five or six years, when frequency regulations were stopped and a host of pirate stations were set up. Between two and three hundred appeared in Rome alone, since anyone with the basic equipment could broadcast. These pirate stations were either political – allied to a party – or commercial, operating very much on the advert-chatdee formula.

Now the border is over, the political pirates are floundering for lack of revenue and the commercial ones offer only blandness. The state radio RAI, on the other hand, has the funding for experiments and for far-reaching, creative radio programmes.

Producer Pasquale Santoli, a quietly sharp figure in his early thirties, heads a young, dynamic team of writers bubbling with ideas as to how to present music and culture. He reckons it's the job of the RAI to produce and offer a cultural voice with a difference.

He says: "We wanted to use the specific role of the radio to give listeners a different point of view on music and culture. Normally radio is an amplifier of the point of view and the products of the culture and record industry. We have tried to be a totally different identity and voice, and especially to give airtime to independent labels because they're more interesting."

Certainly ideas buzz round, with a lot of theory about the role of radio in mass communication. And yet, beyond all the talk, the practical results are astounding, with a complete rethink on the presentation of music: "We wanted to get away from the traditional role of the disc jockey and try and focus the attention of the audience on the way different sorts of music can fit into a bigger dialogue".

This could be recorded sound or written texts, with a complete cross-section of music breaking away completely from any sort of categorisation of programmes into rock, jazz, classical, folk and so on.

MAMMOTH

A current mammoth project is to gather material for three months – live recordings, sound recordings – which will then be transformed into a series of ninety programmes. Which is where Robert Wyatt comes in . . .

In his case, the Italian team had dreamed up a basic theme which was fed to him over the telephone. It was intended as a springboard, no more, no less, for him to work for a week in the Rome radio studio. All facilities were laid on, with a team of excellent engineers and even the offer of the RAI big band if they fitted into his schedule of things.

Teresa DeSanto, a young rock writer and one of the "Un Certo Discorso" team, had come up with the notion of looking at the history of China through the eyes of Jiang Qing, Mao's widow, since the trial of the Gang of Four threw up a host of questions and issues. A tall order, but a great opportunity for Robert Wyatt, who is held in great esteem in Italy – almost as a sort of elder statesman for the Rough Trade music.

He explained that before coming to Rome he'd got out his Chinese records, some Chinese poetry and a book on the opium wars which had been a way into the whole topic for him, because thinking about the British imperialist role in China had been the key to how to be Robert Wyatt in an Italian radio studio talking about China and history on a personal level.

When I arrived in the studio, he'd already been hard at work for three days and admitted, cheerfully, to extreme nervousness at the start: "I just sat down with the same sort of blank frenzy as when you're doing O-levels." The fourth day he was laying down track after track; hi-hat tic-tocs for the passing of time, then a bass line on piano. Slowly the material emerges from its chrysalis form into a song called "Born Again Cretin" (this being a play on the "Onward Christian Soldiers" mentality) which is about Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned black South African leader.

Robert murmurs a distorted incantation, pre-vocal babbling and then the words emerge. . . . The opium wars track is the result of an immense amount of information being rushed through at high volume, from an impersonal BBC-type voice to an inquisitingly aggressive whisper. On both of these tracks, Robert turns to the idea of a voice struggling to break through on crowded airwaves, coming through the shortwave crackle in bursts. It's very much the result of his own sifting through the world's radio waves, listening for different messages. And it might be just that garbled, distorted voice that is giving another version of the news.

Then there's a break for some good-humoured Italo-English communication with engineers Roberto Carapelluci and Giorgio Sala, and afterwards the tape is played of the wordless "Heathens Have No Souls" which follows the Nelson Mandela song. In this, the only voice is disembodied; it's that of a mountain jew's harp because – do voices have a chance? Pessimistic?

But at the same time, Robert has had the chance to explore a much greater area of thought than usual: "This was a big opportunity to do so many things at once. Normally I get one idea a month and maybe one opportunity to do something with it. This was a chance to expand ideas, to bring in life outside the music business which is just one big fashion industry.

"It's great here because ideas are shared and that's unusual, because normally for recording you have to obtain money for studio time and aim a particular recording for a particular product. Here they wanted to see a musician's work in progress so it wasn't necessary to have a finished product.

"It's not like a concert . . . it's more to show the process and I can't imagine that happening in England. Some of the ideas will come out, some of them won't – it's a fantastic chance to work more freely."

This ties up very closely with Pasquale Santoli's ideas, and in fact the invitations to Robert Wyatt, Fred Frith and others mark a fresh direction for the programme. Pasquale explains: "We're used to listening to music as a finished product, signed, sealed and delivered. If you write a letter and scrap the first attempt, that's just as interesting as what you finally write, so we wanted to look at the different drafts, to show the work in progress. Then we can use the drafts in different ways, maybe just play one of Robert's tracks, or mix them differently."

This is a long way from the accepted idea of a passive listener and an active producer; this programme encourages listeners to be creative. "In fact we get criticised because listeners say they can't get on with anything while the programme is on, which means they have to make a choice to participate, it can't just be background noise.

"Some listeners wrote in to say they didn't only listen, but they played along, so why not use Robert's drum tracks and leave people free to play what they want. . . "

As well as inviting musicians to come and play in the studio, the team are also collecting recorded material to be used in the final mix. So Sabina Sacchi is out on the streets chasing up vocalese from bars, markets, farmyards, school playgrounds and the shouted chats of gondoliers across the water in Venice.

Throbbing Gristle and Franco Fabbri of Stormy Six (the long-standing Italian group which formed part of Rock In Opposition) will play in the studio. But now, with Robert Wyatt's week over, it is Fred Frith's turn. He was invited to think about the substance of the blues for his work.

OPPRESSION

Originally he was not attracted to the idea: "What has a white, middle class Englishman got to say about the blues, which comes out of black oppression?"

But then he realised that he had spent several years playing the blues, and worked on material which was a personal reaction to that music. From the first day of recording it was hard to see what the end result would be. He began working meticulously through a tight schedule of tracks, from the sound of a toy factory – produced with the help of Karen Irving and Miles Boisen – to vocal and guitar tracks which were then transformed into tape loops and fed into the mixing machine.

What will happen to it all, only the Italian listeners will know – unless shortwave listeners elsewhere start twiddling knobs. What is clear is that ambitious, creative radio is being produced down there in Rome. It's a real voice with a real difference.

From hippy underground to the Communist Party

Musician and Communist ROBERT WYATT talks to Karl Dallas about his music and political commitments.

"How long can I pretend music's more important than fighting for a Socialist world?" (Robert Wyatt, Matching Mole's Little Red Record — 1972).

AT the height of Mrs. Thatcher's Falklands adventure, when even Neil Kinnock was joining the national swing to Victorian-style jingoism, an unlikely single climbed high in the charts. Written by rock cult figure Elvis Costello, Shipbuilding linked together the morality of production for war and the casualty figures coming in from the South Atlantic in a way that was dangerous in its understatement.

The singer was Robert Wyatt, once a leading figure in the 1960s hippy underground, when he played drums with the avant garde jazz rock group, the Soft Machine, but now a proudly confessed Communist.

Alert intensity

You must have seen Robert at various events around London, from the People's Press Publishing Society AGM to the social for expelled comrades at County Hall—wheelchair-bound, his straggly beard and hair framing a face whose intelligent eyes never miss anything that's going on, inevitably sharing ideas with a group of friends and comrades, including his constant companion, his wife Alfie.

He used to be a powerful drummer, until a disastrous accident at a party left him paraplegic, paralysed from the hips down, and so unable to continue playing, though it is a tribute to his strength of will that he has continued to make intriguing, demanding, appealing music over the past decade.

Over that time, he has often recorded other people's material, ranging from Victor Jara's lovely lyric, Te Recuerdo Amanda, to the Monkees' I'm a Believer, issued as a single as a record-company ploy to get him a bit of "charts credibility," from a Namibian freedom song (also issued as a single) to the wartime American pro-Soviet song, Stalin Wasn't Stallin."

Now, however, he has produced an album of original songs, Old Rottenhat (Rough Trade ROUGH 69), which gives us the full authentic Wyatt voice — concerned, a little quirky at times, but unmistakably individual.

It's interesting to talk to Robert about the way he feels his Communist Party membership liberated him, instead of penning him into a false kind of "social realism."

"I don't make any particular concessions to any idea of popular taste," he told me.

"In fact one of the things I liked, when I joined the party, started reading the paper and meeting people outside show business, was that I was liberated from a previous era where people were barricaded into their cultural groups, where you had people who only wanted to hear folk music or people who only wanted to hear classical or people like Pete Townshend who thought that rock 'n' roll was the only modern working-class urban popular music.

"People got really ghettoised by that, and I found that you had to jettison all that in the party because you were meeting people with totally different tastes and inclinations.

"You had priorities in common about supporting organised labour, about defending the Soviet Union, whatever it might have been, which transcended your cultural habits completely. And I found that very liberating."

Listening to the lyrics of the songs on the new album, with titles like The British Road and lyrics like "While Martin Jacques and Robert Maxwell play with printers ink, the workers round the world still die from Rio Tinto Zinc," it becomes clear that Robert Wyatt has graduated from the vague aspirations of 1968 hippiedom to a concrete understanding of the realities of today's world in a way denied even to Pink Floyd's Roger Waters, who has also made a similar attempt at growth, but without Wyatt's political dimension.

Interesting

When I tackled him on the way his songs addressed themselves specifically to the problems affecting the Communist Party he joined shortly after his accident his comments were an interesting commentary upon the way his commitment to Third World liberation—made clear by the anti-apartheid poster nailed to his front door—informs his consideration of more domestic matters.

"I don't really think that the Second World War ever ended. I think the Third World War started with the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan, and I think it's still going on and we're all part of it.

"I think the rich countries are waging what I would call a war against the poor, that's how it looks to me, although it's disguised in hundreds of different ways.

"Of course we all support The British Road to Socialism, but I've heard that idea abused to the point where it becomes a new chauvinism.

"It's the most reasonable proposition in the world, but in fact the impulses that I've seen working behind it are a very sophisticated kind of racism, what I call the new racism.

"It's the racism of 'we don't do things like that here,' a nice English way of doing things, and, of course, if you don't look too much at what nice English companies like Rio Tinto Zinc are doing in Namibia you can get the impression that we are indeed a terribly nice reasonable bunch.

"If you don't look too hard at what police do on picket lines, you can think that we have the nicest policemen in the world and so on.

"But beneath this veneer the same bastards are in the saddle. I've seen people use the idea of our own road simply to justify a new kind of sophisticated racism which downgrades international solidarity really on the grounds that foreigners aren't up to it, they keep embarrassing us by being so rough and tough in their revolutions and the best thing is to have nothing more to do with all these horrid people with guns and uniforms and to disappear and just join Friends of the Earth.

"I know the feeling because I remember the hippy era. That's what we all thought in the '60s. It's exactly realising the total inadequacy and hypocrisy of all that led me to the Communist Party.

"And then finding someone's trying to drag me back to that, out of what's called realism but what I call out of cowardice, it's deeply upsetting and really irritating."

It is interesting to me that, with this political commitment, he hasn't produced an album of agit-prop like the sort of things Cornelius Cardew composed after he was drawn to revolutionary politics — though Wyatt has a high regard for Cardew.

Terrible discovery

"The songs on the album are a lugubrious bunch. There's this thing about political songwriters protesting at Thatcherite Britain, but I don't think that's really what I'm about.

"I'm actually talking about the terrible discovery I felt I made in the late '70s, about the time I joined the Communist Party in fact.

"One of the reasons I joined it was that the kind of liberal society that we lived in was basically one face of a very right-wing society.

"I was brought up to believe that if you're a nice liberal person and personally anti-racist and nice to people this would somehow represent some Aquarian future or something like that.

"It's a very infantile and naive idea of how to improve the world, it's about power and who has it and people don't give it up because you ask nicely.

"Like Fidel Castro says: 'I'm fed up with sending love-letters to the IMF.'



Robert Wyatt in a thoughtful mood.

"So what I'm saying is that I feel as distant from western liberalism which sees itself as an opposition to that right wing as I do to the right wing, because I see them as two horses pulling the same cart.

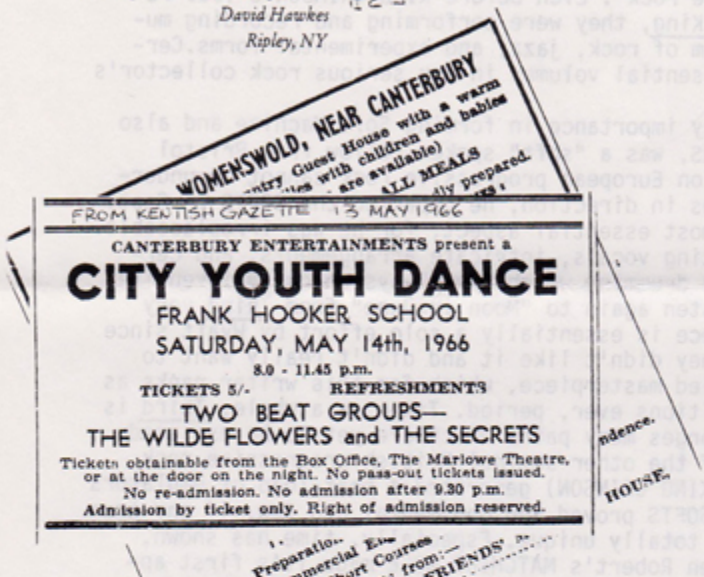
"So it's a rather sad and frightened record because I see all the parties available, including our own, being sucked into this liberal-right consensus an find it suffocating.

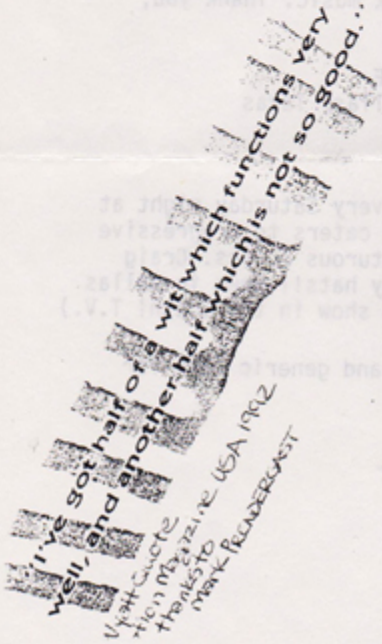
"I find that in order to tance myself from it I have risk being called an extremist whatever it is.

"I don't feel like an extren I feel like a perfectly nor human being. So I'm trying sort out all those pressures some of the songs."

Metaphorically, in the music biz supermarket you'll find the glossy romance novels (Madonna, C&C Music Factory) in the checkout lane alongside the comic books (Van Halen, Bon Jovi, etc.). The classic literature (R. Wyatt, B. Nelson), on the other hand, is on the dusty, private library shelves and in the unpublished manuscripts.

David Hawkes
Ripley, NY







Given their shared public persona as Wayward English Genius, and their common outernational outlook and political commitment, then a collaboration between the singular talents of **Robert Wyatt** and **Jerry Dammers** was perhaps inevitable. Less predictable was that the freedom fighters of South West Africa would effect the encounter. The Namibian Support Committee asked Wyatt to sing and Dammers to produce a benefit single for them, specifically for their Repression and Political Prisoners Campaign. The result – "The Wind Of Change/When I Think About My Country" – has just been released by Rough Trade and is as fine and powerful a record as the duo's respective past glories would suggest. Both sides are deft adaptations of Namibian songs. The first is a swaggering singalong with fat ska horns and tingling African guitars or as Wyatt puts it, "basically a group of exhortations and morale boosting one liners." The flip is a pulsing Afrobeat rap delivered by a Namibian student of agriculture resident here, and illuminating the horrors of the prisons maintained by South Africa in a country it occupies illegally, in defiance of UN resolutions. The brutalities of the South African occupation have not stopped Britain importing huge quantities of Namibian uranium, which is now destined to be a mainstay of the Trident programme. Both men enthuse about the venture, and Wyatt was beguiled by the fabled Dammers exactitude in the studio. "I usually make records in about the same time as it takes to play them," he admits, "it was a real lesson." The central concern of both, though, remains the overlooked plight of Namibia and the banned South West Africa People's Organisation, **SWAPO**. As Wyatt explains: "The South Africans are trying to deal with SWAPO the same way as the ANC; trying to pretend that it's not representative of the people, that it's only a revolutionary elite. But you only have to read a book like John Ya Otta's *Battlefront Namibia* to see that SWAPO is as near as possible to the genuine voice of the Namibians." Dapper Dammers, back from a New Music Seminar panel on South Africa, concurs: "The feeble attempts at reforms which have been so well publicised are just cracks in the structure of apartheid, they can't keep it going. When South Africa is free we'll find that in music and culture it will be a world leader. Certainly the SA revue Amandla was the first time I've seen electric pop guitar music presented as a revolutionary force." Do pop and politics mix? Is Africa a big place? "Politics is about power," answers Wyatt. "It affects everything you do – what you eat, what you listen to, what conversations you have. Even if you don't consciously engage in politics your responsibility to yourself as an artist is to reclaim the issues." *Neil Spencer*
Namibia Support Committee: PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW.

> Zoom

ROBERT WYATT: AN APPRECIATION

Since we're all part of the Soft Machine*, let's give some credit where it's due. The SOFTS, along with PINK FLOYD were the pioneers who developed the musical genre known as "progressive rock". Even before KING CRIMSON'S 1969 release In the Court of the Crimson King, they were performing and recording music which was an astounding amalgam of rock, jazz, and experimental forms.Certainly their early releases are essential volumes in any serious rock collector's library.

The person who was of primary importance in forming Soft Machine and also it's predecessor, THE WILDE FLOWERS, was a "soft" spoken fellow from Bristol named Robert Wyatt. His influence on European progressive rock cannot be underestimated. When, due to differences in direction, he departed the SOFTS in Sept. of 1971, the group had lost it's most essential aspect, for he was irreplaceable. Gone forever was the humour, haunting vocals, intricate arrangements, and certainly not least, his transcendent drumming which was always uniquely inventive and exciting. Take the time to listen again to "Moon in June" from Third very carefully, and be amazed!! The piece is essentially a solo effort by Wyatt since the other band members decieded they didn't like it and didn't really want to play on it. Yet, it's an unqualified masterpiece, which for this writer ranks as one of the absolute finest compositions ever, period. Taken as a whole, Third is an extremely mature effort that forges many paths which are yet to be explored today, over 22 years later. All of the other seminal British progressive rock bands (YES, E.L.P., GENESIS, and KING CRIMSON) generated a boat-load of emulators and wanna-bes. To do so with the SOFTS proved too monumental and few, if any true attempts made, since they were so totally unique. Especially, time has shown, Robert Wyatt is one-of-a-kind. When Robert's MATCHING MOLE made it's first appearance, they were very misunderstood by the critics and underated. It took a brave and happy crew to perform such silly, bold, and thoroughly charming music. Those who knew their music remember them fondly to this day.

And so Robert continues his subtle musical odyssey with the release of his current album, Dondestan, another cause for joy amongst Wyattphiles. Another opportunity to hear one of the most important "mouths"in rock music. Thank you, Robert; we are still listening.

CRAIG SHROPSHIRE
K.E.R.A. FM, Dallas, Texas

(Craig hosts a weekly radio programme on K.E.R.A. 90.1fm every Saturday night at 1 a.m. through 6 a.m.[which's actually Sunday morn!!]. He caters to progressive rock heads with his soulful blend of old and modern adventurous musics. Craig is also our Senior Writer, contributor, and wearer of many hats!! When in Dallas Texas, listen to Craig's show; it's the best goddamn radio show in the South! T.V.)

NOTE*: Soft Machine being the Williams S. Burroughs novel and generic term for the human race.

Reprinted from Vol I Issue 1 by request

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MY FAVOURITE WYATT SOLO RECORDINGS

This list of five took me two weeks of contemplation, listening, and list-making!! But if I could only make the usual Greatest Hits package (without the record companies' influence or red-tape), and I only would have this CD on the desert island...

Terry the Iberian

1."TEAM SPIRIT" (MacCormick, Manzanera, Wyatt)-My favourite track of all. With the above mentioned collaborators playing, this track also features the talents of George Khan wailing the Sax solo.Hey, is that Gary Windo joining in on Tenor at around the 3:48 mark, adding that twist of Ayler?!! Robert's voice is remarkable, and the words are a twist of visions that always has you singing along. Amazing song!
2."Sight of the Wind"(Benge,Wyatt)-My Wife, collaborator, confidant, and best friend of seven years, Tonja, and I once made love on the beach one anniversary to this song. It's both of our favourites (not just for the sentimental reasons, squire), as we always bring Dondestan on our beach trips. The visions the words and music weave in the mind are echos of the ocean. It is a satori in itself, this song. I think I will go play it now, since it will always turn me on, ever to be.
3."United States of Amnesia"(Wyatt)-Being born and raised (razed?) in these United States, I feel this song rings true. Sure, I was a college student who dabbled in Marx, Engles, Chomsky, and Henry Cow, and I still have very Left Wing ties...label what you will. It's a fucking shame that we screwed the native Americans...have a dominant youth culture tied to neo-Nazi Aryan Seperatism...and there are so many streetcrimes.. The issues brought up in this song are very evident, now, nine years after it's recording. Robert's melody and chordings are just perfect.
4."To Caravan & Brother Jim"-(Wyatt)-The total spectrum of Robert's 1970 influnces are on this song's sleeve. I hear lots of Tony Williams, and Ayler, Mingus, and Softs in the playing. And of course, the mighty dose of Caravan from David Sinclair on Hammond. I also love the echoed drum sound, the pulse of the piano, the understated melody. When programmed to repeat via CD, it becomes a mantra of sorts (I once played it over 15 times consecutively while doing Kundalini breathing).
5."A Short Break"-(Wyatt)-This is anew one that appears on Robert's new CD5 available from VOICEPRINT U.K. at your local import shop or catalogue. It sounds like it was meant from recording after listening to 78RPM Jazz records. Very modern in this hip new phase of lo-fi mania (bands like SEBADOH and PAVEMENT are popular due to lo-fi's new surge), yet it echos Robert's ever forward philosophy of looking to the past for now. This song rolls you a stride piano phrase, an indeciferable lyric, and a counter melody that is stressed as the dominant solo. Very new in it's sounds, and a seemingly new feel to Robert's composing. This newest on Robert's block makes anticipation easy for his next projects.

HONORABLE MENTIONS go to "TO CARLA, MARSHA, AND CAROLINE", "SEA SONG", "grass", and "THE AGE OF SELF". Hey now, I guess "MOON IN JUNE" counts as a solo recording!!!!

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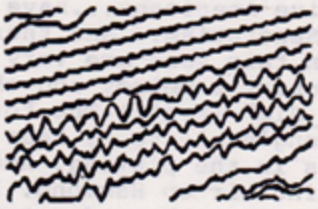
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OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL

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Though we claim to be a functioning release from Avant God, we have only "sketchy" publishing deadlines. We try like hell to at least have our triannual issues out in late Summer, New Years, and Fall!! All submissions will alrespond with the first available issue hensforth. Confusing? Watch the mail for future deadlines in our linear-newswatch N.I.O.(**which** is also severely undeadlined). All submissions will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped package, or will be stored in our archieves.

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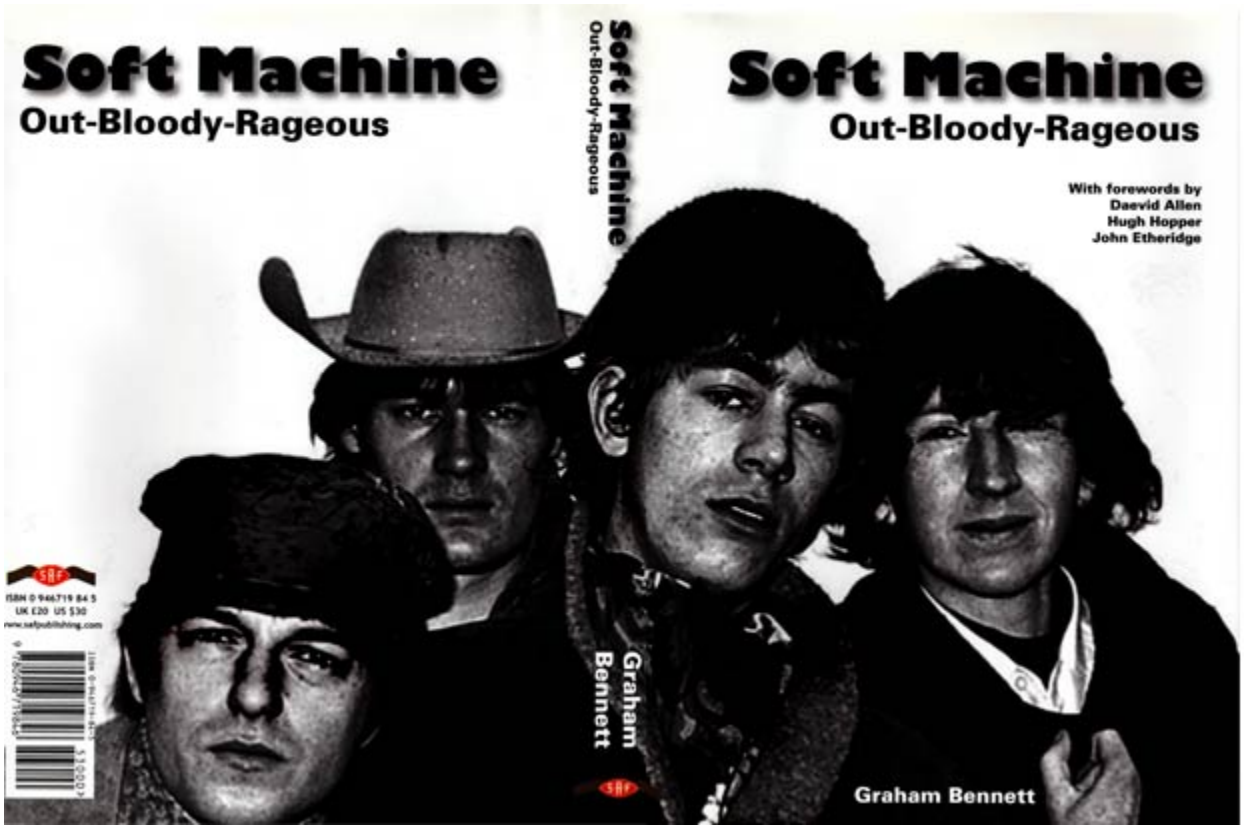
PHOTO CREDIT : CAROLINE FORBES

ROBERT WYATT

> Zoom

Out-Bloody-Rageous

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Une somme, une bible, que dis-je, un traité de plus de 400 pages, 850 grammes.

Publié en 2005 par Graham Bennett aux Editions SAF Publishing (London) - ouvrage culte et épuisé, mais négocié aujourd'hui (août 2014) entre 160 et 235 € sur Amazon, ce livre mérite qu'on s'y attarde un peu.

Graham Bennett reconstitue l'épopée chronologique d'un groupe qui eut la particularité de n'avoir plus aucun de ses membres d'origine dès 1976 (Soft Machine 18) et qui a réuni près de 30 musiciens différents au fil de ses 24 recompositions successives !

Dans une langue vivante et précise Graham décrit les multiples circonvolutions de ce collectif pas vraiment mou, de ses premiers pas - les fameuses early years... au dernier album "Land Of Cokayne" - *qui reste pour moi une énigme* - (Soft Machine 23) et jusqu'au dernier concert du 4 août 1984 au Ronnie Scott de Londres (Soft Machine 24).

Complété par plusieurs contributions personnelles (Daevid Allen, Hugh Hopper...), une riche iconographie et de nombreux appendices (concerts, arbre généalogique de la famille Soft Machine, discographie, recordings sessions, références radio-TV-films, "Que sont-ils devenus?"...), Out-Bloody-Rageous est bien l'indispensable livre de chevet de tout honnête fan et permet - ce qui n'est pas négligeable et peut même se révéler rentable - de rédiger un nombre illimité de questions rouges pour le jeu des mille francs.

"Avec quel illustre pianiste Soft Machine partagea-t-il l'affiche du concert du 18 novembre 1969 au

Ronnie Scott de Londres ?"

Ding Ding Ding Ding - Ding Dang Dong !

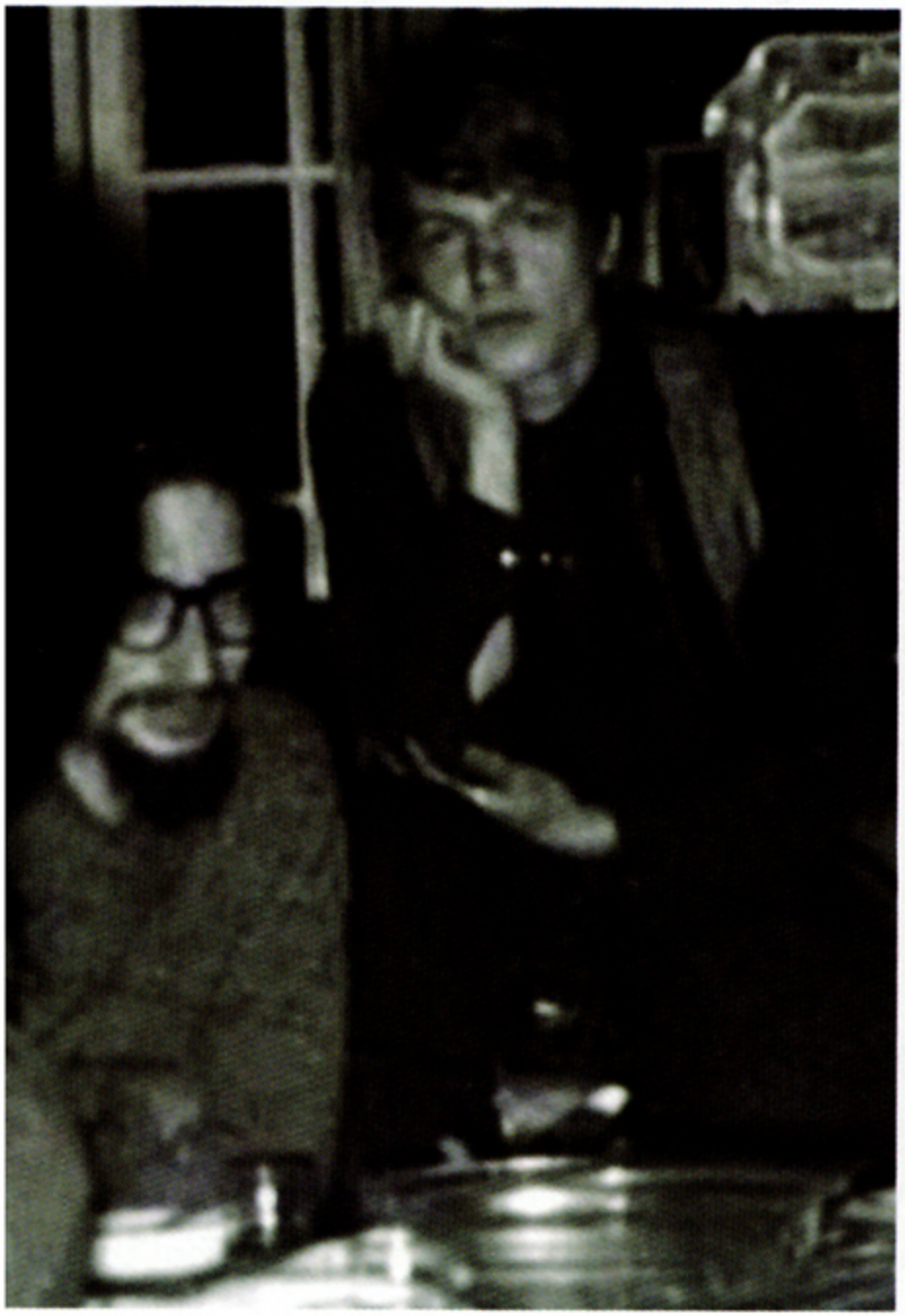
Réponse : Thélonious Monk !

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Below: George Ellidge and Honor Wyatt in the front garden of Wellington House, with Robert (left) and Honor's daughter Prue (right).





Above: Robert at home in late 1961 with George Neidorf, the American drummer who gave him drum lessons in return for board and lodging.

Below: Discussions at Olympic Sound. Sitting to the right of Mike is the band's co-manager and co-producer, Chas Chandler. *Mark Ellidge*
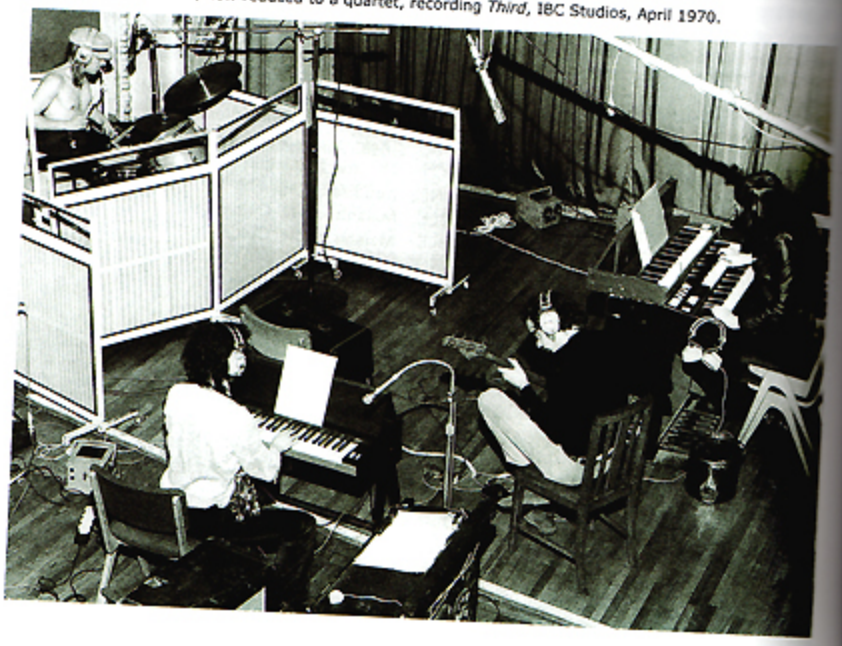






Above left: At the end of 1969 Soft Machine found themselves down to a quintet, with Lyn Dobson and Elton Dean making up the brass section. This line-up was featured on the cover of VPRO's weekly radio and television magazine to highlight the Dutch television broadcast of part of their gig in Rotterdam on 28 February 1970.

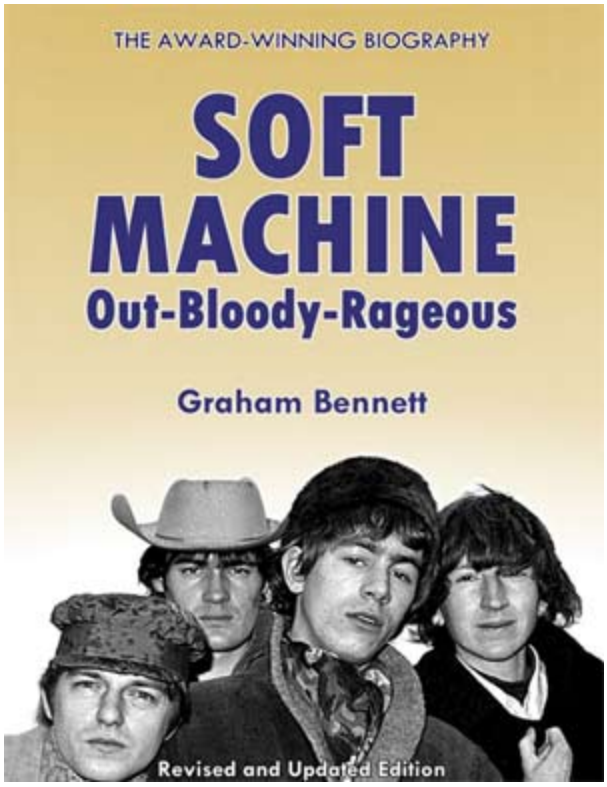
Above right: Two gigs by Soft Machine in early 1970, in Kiel, Germany, on 21 January and the residency at Ronnie Scott's in April.

Below: Soft Machine, now reduced to a quartet, recording *Third*, IBC Studios, April 1970.



Ian Mathews on *Some Days You Eat the Bear and Some Days the Bear Eats You* and recorded a solo album, *Jam Sandwich*. Other recordings included work with Humble Pie, Alan Stivell and the Third Ear Band. He then became more interested in ethnic music and the way in which improvisation is used in various forms of music. More recently he has worked with people who have various disabilities, both physical and mental, using music as a healing technique.

Robert Wyatt left Soft Machine in 1971 with no clear plans for the future, but within a few months he had formed Matching Mole. The band released two albums within a year but split in late 1972. It was during this period that he met Alfreda Benge, the woman who was to become his wife and life-long partner. In June 1973, before Robert had succeeded in refocusing his musical career, he broke his back in a fall from a fourth-floor window during a party. Paralyzed from the waist down, Robert was forced to give up drumming and turn his musical talents to other instruments, mainly keyboards. A year after his accident he released *Rock Bottom* (working again with Hugh Hopper – "I have continued to use the tunes and bass guitar of Hugh Hopper, whose music has remained a source of great inspiration to me"), an unusual mix of love songs and melancholy pieces which received critical acclaim. Four months later Robert scored one of the most unlikely hits in the history of pop with a version of the Monkees' hit "I'm a Believer". 1975 saw the release of the jazzy *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. The following years were relatively quiet in musical terms, but Robert returned to the limelight in the early 1980s with *Nothing Can Stop* and a series of singles, one of which, Elvis Costello's "Shipbuilding", gave Robert another hit in 1983. He followed this up in 1984 with the EP *Work in Progress* and in 1985 with the album *Old Rottenhat*. After another break of five years, during which Robert and Alfreda moved out of London to Lincolnshire, he returned in 1991 with a new album, *Dondestan*, which again received very favourable reviews. This was followed in 1992 by *A Short Break*. Yet again, Robert disappeared from view for the regulation five years, returning with the album *Shleep* in 1997 and then making a small number of live appearances with the band Soup Songs. In 2003 he released *Cuckooland*, which many reviewers considered to be his best album since *Rock Bottom* and won him a nomination for the 2004 Mercury Music Prize.



Revised and Updated Edition in 2014 (Kindle edition)

Preface to the Revised Edition

The publication of a revised edition of *Soft Machine: Out-Bloody-Rageous* provides an opportunity to update some of the information on the band. This is particularly the case for the discography which has benefited from a series of new releases, some of which are of great significance. In addition I have been able to refine parts of the biography and correct a few inaccuracies. In that respect I am grateful to Jon Newey, Jeff Sherman, Nick Loebner, John Trimble, Alan Grange and Vasco Pearce de Azevedo for providing further information that enhanced the narrative.

The Award for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research from the Association for Recorded Sound Collections for *Soft Machine: Out-Bloody-Rageous* was an unexpected accolade. Although personally satisfying, the real significance of the award is that it shows the professionals at the ARSC recognize the musical importance of Soft Machine's work. It would be rewarding indeed if the award were to succeed in conveying this message to a broader audience.

On a more melancholy note, it is sad to have to recount that four figures who were central to the Soft Machine story passed away in the period since the biography was first published.

Kevin Ayers was a warm and modest man who took an unyielding sideways stance to music and the world around him. But he was also sharp enough to recognize a one-shot opportunity when it presented itself, as it did on Easter Sunday 1966. Quite simply, without Kevin there would have been no Soft Machine.

Hugh Hopper was one of the most prominent figures in Soft Machine's history, a musician who remained faithful to his artistic vision. But he was also an exceptionally amiable man, always willing to rack his memory in response to yet another question on an obscure detail from Soft Machine's history.

Producer - Gambit Of Shame

ABÉCÉDAIRE

En 1982, le groupe londonien **Gambit Of Shame** sort un single avec Robert Wyatt comme producteur. Le disque comporte deux titres *18/20* et *No Bounds*. Les cinq musiciens ont envoyé une cassette à R.W. et celui-ci, à leur grande surprise, a accepté de les produire.

Il est vrai qu'hormis *Rock Bottom* dont Nick Mason assurait la production, Robert Wyatt a toujours tenu à être son propre producteur. Une expérience qu'il a accepté de faire bénéficier à ce groupe pop qui apparait l'année suivante sur la cassette-compilation *A Sudden Surge Of Power* du label *Cause For Concern* en compagnie de Cultural Amnesia, Red Herring et, entre autres, Test Dept.



GAMBIT OF SHAME (DHE 7009) S





Ce disque, véritable collector, est aujourd'hui très difficile à trouver (aperçu une fois en vente sur eBay en 2004).

GAMBIT OF SHAME

- Lyndsey Beard - vocals
- Paul Mex - bass
- Gary Pinker - vocals
- Mike Wallis - guitar
- Amanda Ashley - cello
- Ray from Ritual - drums

En 2021, la compilation **No Bounds (1979-82 Recordings)** sort chez **Dead Hedgehog Enterprises** (195999053578). Elle contient *No Bounds* et *18 out 20*, les deux morceaux produits par Robert Wyatt en 1982.

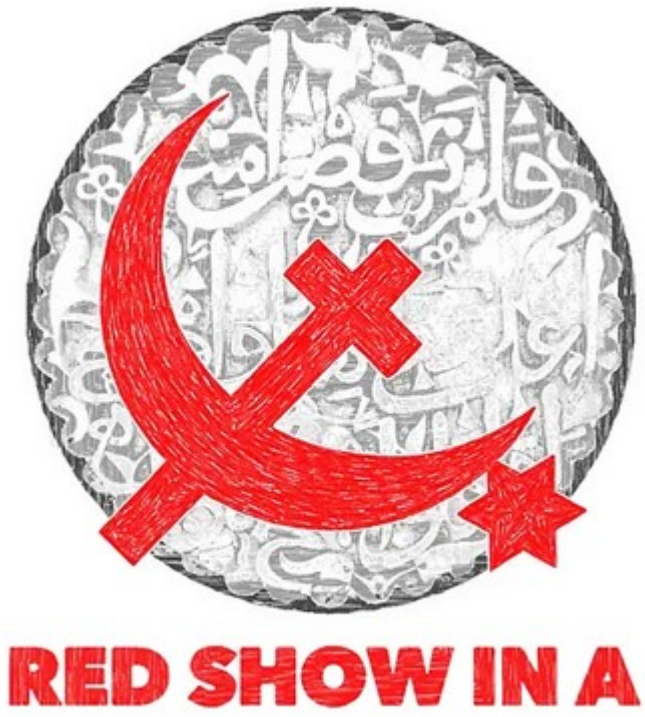

GAMBIT OF SHAME
NO BOUNDS [1979-82 RECORDINGS]

7 x 7 Project

ABÉCÉDAIRE

seven by seven
7x7
jean pierre muller

AN ART & MUSIC COLLECTIVE WITH JEAN PIERRE MULLER
IN COLLABORATION WITH ROBERT WYATT, ARCHIE SHEPP
SEAN O'HAGAN, MULATU ASTAKE, KASSIN, NILE RODGERS
AND TERRY RILEY



RED SHOW IN A

The Red Show in A and its Alhambra For Today, conceived with Robert Wyatt's complicity, carry a deep reflection that resonates particularly in these times of confrontation. Before being premiered at WhiteBox, this gesamtkunstwerk (total artwork) was created in the artist's studio in Molenbeek, a part of Brussels that has risen to sudden fame as a so-called world-basis for Islamist terrorists.
Passing through seven gates (amongst which a Gate of the Crusaders, a Gate of Jihad, a Gate of Zion and a Gate of Harmony), hearing sounds, seeing lights and listening to Robert Wyatt's talking of the immense heritage of the Alhambra and Al-Andalus, the visitor is invited to reflect on notions like expulsion, coexistence, religion and beauty.
He can also listen to a splendid composition in A, Robert Wyatt last-ever composition, his ultimate legacy.



0:00 / 10:00

A - Alhambra Moon - by Robert Wyatt

A, FIRST NOTE OF THE SCALE / RED, FIRST COLOUR OF THE RAINBOW / MONDAY, FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK / DIANA, GODDESS OF THE MOON / MULADHARA, FIRST CHAKRA / THE SCENE : THE ALHAMBRA

A is for the Alhambra, the red palace. It's a nostalgic salute to Al-Andalus, when Spain was under Moorish rule and religions coexisted peacefully. Can there be a more glorious testimony of a mythical past? Glorious, not because of power or victory, but because of beauty, tolerance and cultural cross-fertilization. At least, this is the way we can dream of it. But the ruler here is the Moon. Everybody congregates under the tender yoke of Diana: Audrey Hepburn sings Moon River, Neil Armstrong gets ready to take off, Beethoven and Debussy hum their respective Moonshine sonatas. Moondog, the blind Viking of 6th Avenue, is the watchman of the moon rockets. The day is Monday, but it's a stormy one, as T-Bone Walker sings. Redcoats, redskins, red guards, red cards, red books or red roosters give the requisite scarlet touch. Yes, for sure, better red than dead.





Votre projet 7X7 part du postulat que les sept couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel correspondent aux sept notes d'une gamme, aux sept jours de la semaine, aux sept chakras… Après le Summerhall à Édimbourg en 2012 et 2013, vous exposez pour la première fois votre vision contemporaine de l'Alhambra à Grenade sur une musique de Robert Wyatt. Pourquoi le fondateur de Soft Machine a-t-il choisi la couleur rouge ?

J'ai pensé que c'était pour le communisme et Robert me dit que l'Al-Hamra, en arabe, signifie rouge. Pour lui, c'était une façon d'adresser un salut nostalgique à l'Espagne musulmane où les religions coexistaient. Quand l'Alhambra est tombée, en 1492, un décret a consisté à expulser les juifs, suivi ensuite de l'expulsion des musulmans. Ayant mon atelier à Molenbeek, je trouvais intéressant d'assembler ces choses-là et de rêver à autre chose.



Les quatre portes conçues par Jean-Pierre Muller avec, au bout, « La bouche de la vérité » représentée par Robert Wyatt. © WHITEBOX.





"relationships based on trust and around concrete projects - in the city, in business and, of course, in art. The alliance of proximity and innovation, the role of civil societies, the quest for new forms of production based on durability and respect, all these factors could help us achieve a global transformation. We need to be ready for experimentation, for hybridity, for transversalities. We need to be ready for adventure. And that's where artists can play a role.

7x7 is a collective project based on the notion of respectful collaboration and cooperation, with each artist contributing what he does best in order to produce a hybrid object that creates a dialogue with the audience. It is hybrid in many ways, mixing music and painting, 2D and 3D, traditional representation and interactivity. But also because different music genres are brought together, and because it combines encyclopaedic objectivity with utter poetic subjectivity.

7x7 fully embodies the spirit of cooperation while representing a coherent body of work. The codes at the core of the concept, the very specific delimitations they imply, allowed the artists involved to express themselves with absolute freedom and integrity. This is what cooperation is about: giving the best of oneself, pushing the boundaries of one's creativity, of one's individual voice in a dialogue with another creator doing exactly the same with his own voice - the result being something neither of the (7x) two could have achieved alone: a fusion. But this spirit of fusion does not only touch the artist and composers. 7x7 is a celebration of our desire to connect, not least with one another. Through its explosion of iconic imagery, we find the joy of togetherness in our collective frames of reference. It is a way of experiencing our shared culture, our universal language.

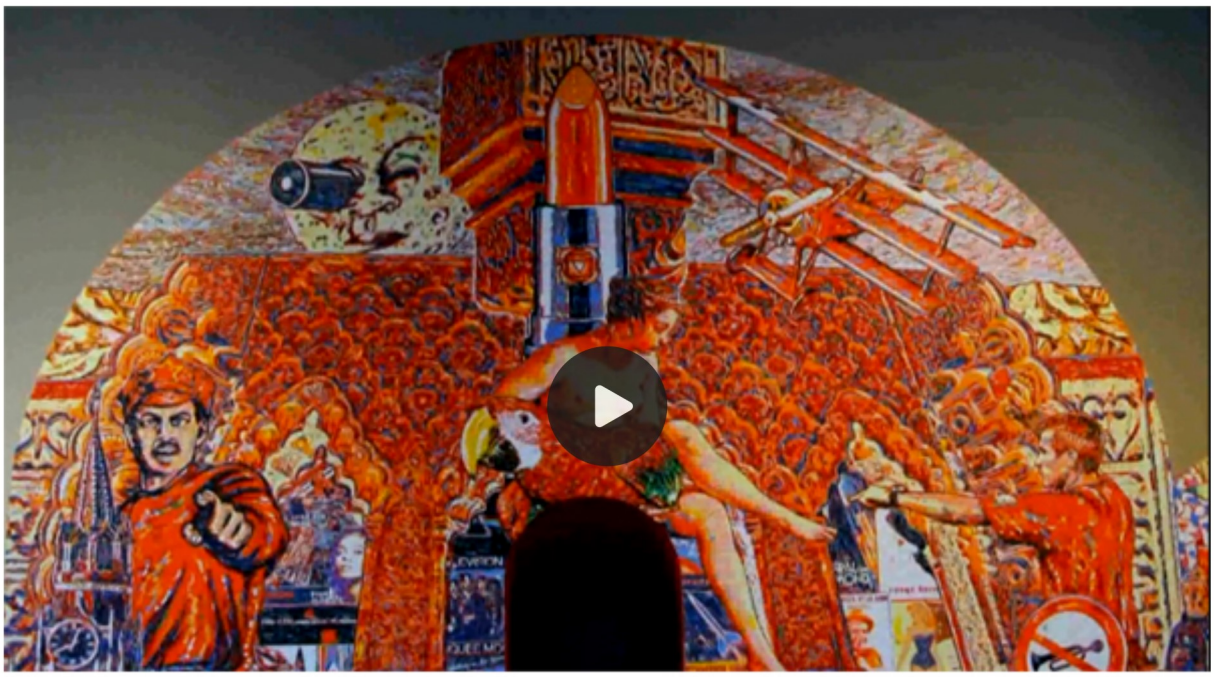
7x7 is a project that can naturally grow and expand beyond the people who initiated it. With endless possibilities for transformation through collaboration, cooperation and, of course, imagination, it can become a cinema program, a culinary week or a children's playground." (JP.Muller.)

LE SOIR - 15 mars 2016









0:00 / 4:44

Müller, along with Robert Wyatt, Nile Rodgers, Terry Riley, Archie Shepp, Mulatu Astake, Sean O'Hagan and Kassin...




Wyatt

La Bocca della Verità



ABÉCÉDAIRE

Quarante ans c'est émouvant

ABÉCÉDAIRE

L'idée était tout de même foldingue : rejouer en concert la totalité de l'album *Rock Bottom,* quarante ans presque jour pour jour après sa sortie chez Virgin. Ceux qui lisent ces lignes savent qu'on ne plaisante pas avec ces choses là ! Comment rejouer l'injouable - au sens où la voix de Robert Wyatt habite l'oeuvre et se confond avec elle ? comment approcher - sinon juste insinuer - ces morceaux qu'on redécouvre à chaque nouvelle écoute et dans laquelle culminent l'émotion la plus fragile et l'écriture la plus subtile ?

Richard Robert, le programmateur des Nuits de Fourvière (Lyon) a eu cette incroyable idée et l'a menée à bon port le 12 juillet 2014 dans le majestueux théâtre antique à l'acoustique précise et généreuse.

L'article du Monde daté du 15 juillet 2014 rend bien compte de ces moments magiques, nul besoin que j'y ajoute ma prose...

Le rock de Wyatt ricoche sur la roche de Fourvière

La roche du théâtre gallo-romain de l'Odéon, à Lyon, accuse plusieurs millénaires. Celle de l'album *Rock Bottom*, chef-d'œuvre de Robert Wyatt, et pierre angulaire du rock progressif, fête ses quarante ans. Cette coïncidence a inspiré à Richard Robert, programmateur des Nuits de Fourvière, l'idée d'un concert hommage au chanteur anglais. Paralysé depuis le début des années 1970, l'ex-batteur de Soft Machine continue d'enregistrer, mais ne se donne plus en spectacle, laissant à ses cohortes d'admirateurs le soin de faire vivre sa musique sur scène.

Une douzaine d'entre eux s'y risquent donc, samedi 12 juillet. Loin de considérer l'œuvre de Wyatt comme un bloc figé, le groupe – formé pour l'occasion – en célèbre toutes les rondeurs et les aspérités. Bijoux, cailloux roulent sur des terrains inattendus, ici très mélodieux (*O Caroline)*, là presque bruitistes (*Pigs*). Tenant tour à tour le micro, les voix minérales de Silvain Vanot, John Greaves et Elise Caron sont suffisamment distinctes du timbre du maître pour en éloigner l'ombre. La direction musicale, assurée par l'Anglais Craig Fortnam, privilégie les sonorités acoustiques – banjo, basson, clarinette, flûte, violoncelle –, à rebours de la passion de Wyatt pour les synthétiseurs.

Lequel, bien qu'absent, a tenu à faire lire en prélude quelques mots, entre autodérision et louanges tressées à son mentor, le jazzman Charlie Haden, décédé la veille. Le concert sera à cette aune, tendre et respectueux. Extraites d'albums divers, de *Volume Two* (1968) à *Cuckooland* (2003), huit gemmes sont dispersées en ouverture, avant reprise intégrale du monolithe *Rock Bottom*, et tube badin en rappel (*I'm a Believer*).

Dans l'intervalle, Pascal Comelade et Ivan Telefunken glissent sur les mélodies à tiroirs du barbu farfelu, dont l'admirable *Sea Song*. Comelade pianote sur des claviers miniatures, Telefunken glougloute dans un arrosoir rose fuchsia, transformé en instrument à vent. La pluie est de la partie, plic ploc ; la musique coule sur la roche, tip top. ■

AURELIANO TONET



Quelques semaines auparavant, le critique musical Sylvain Siclier annonçait le concert en ces termes :

Autel Wyatt

Lors d'un concert hommage, des musiciens revisitent l'univers de Robert Wyatt, géant de la pop anglaise

Le 26 juillet 1974 (jour du 21ème anniversaire de la bataille de Moncada, point de départ de la révolution cubaine), Rock Bottom a été publié, et j'ai épousé Alfie, et nous avons vécu heureux depuis. » Celui qui présente ainsi, à l'occasion d'une réédition en 1998, son album le plus célèbre, Rock Bottom donc, s'appelle Robert Wyatt, chanteur, batteur, pianiste, cornettiste, auteur-compositeur britannique. Alfie, c'est Alfreda Benge. On l'entend réciter un court texte à la fin de l'une des six compositions de l'album. Soit un recueil de mélodies solaires et lunaires à la fois, avec des passages presque minimalistes, quelques notes au piano (Sea Song), un contre-chant à la basse (Alifib), des sonorités de cordes jouées aux claviers, nappes rêveuses, un peu inquiétantes. A d'autres endroits, il y a des élans tourbillonnants, des stries proches du free jazz (Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road), un son de guitare grinçant. Et de bout en bout, le chant de Wyatt, timbre féminin, voix de caresse pensée d'abord comme un instrument. Elle est toujours l'une des caractéristiques envoûtantes de celui qui est aujourd'hui âgé de 69 ans. «Il y a chez Robert Wyatt une capacité à être, en même temps, dans l'expérimental et le très pop. Il a ce pouvoir d'être immédiatement attrayant et d'entraîner vers une sorte de dérive.» Richard Robert, conseiller artistique et assistant à la programmation musicale des Nuits de Fourvière, ne fait pas mystère de son « admiration » pour ce « créateur d'un univers unique» à qui sera consacrée la soirée *Le Monde de Robert Wyatt*, prévue le 12 juillet à l'Odéon. Sera jouée sur scène, dans l'ordre original, l'intégralité de Rock Bottom, cet «Everest accompli» pour beaucoup d'amateurs et une sélection de thèmes dans la carrière de Wyatt depuis les Wilde Flowers, collectif de musiciens dans le milieu des années 1960. Le 1er juin 1973, Robert Wyatt fait une chute de la fenêtre d'un immeuble. Huit mois d'hôpital, la colonne vertébrale est brisée, son quotidien sera dorénavant celui d'un homme qui doit vivre en chaise roulante. La scène, les prestations en public, pour lesquelles il a de longue date une phobie - «à une

époque, je buvais beaucoup, pour vaincre la terreur panique de me retrouver sur scène»-ne sont plus envisageables. «Même si le regard du public serait probablement tendre et respectueux, confiait-il, il y a une quinzaine d'années, ma pudeur m'empêche de me présenter ainsi.» Exister par les autres Ce sont donc les autres qui font vivre la musique de Wyatt sur scène. En Italie, en Grande-Bretagne, en France en particulier, des concerts hommages sont organisés, des disques entiers lui sont consacrés, les musiciens les plus variés reprennent ses chansons. «J'aime bien cette idée, précise Richard Robert, qu'en plus de ses propres enregistrements, qu'il mène à son rythme tranquille, il continue d'exister par les autres, que le spectacle soit aussi un moyen de conjurer son absence. » A Fourvière, on retrouvera donc des familiers des créations de Wyatt, comme le bassiste et chanteur John Greaves, son quasi-contemporain, Silvain Vanot, Pascal Comelade. La chanteuse Elise Caron incarnera son timbre flottant. L'arrangement de la délicate sophistication des compositions de Wyatt a été confiée à Craig Fortnam, avec son petit ensemble de multi-instrumentistes The North Sea Radio Orchestra. «C'est une musique qui stimule l'imagination de ceux qui la jouent, insiste Richard Robert. Avec un formidable répertoire de chansons d'amour et de chansons de combats. L'intime et l'universel. »

SYLVAIN SICLIER
Le Monde de Robert Wyatt

Odéon, samedi 12 juillet, 21 heures. 28 €.



Création

LE MONDE DE ROBERT WYATT

Rock Bottom et morceaux choisis

Une relecture amoureuse du répertoire de Robert Wyatt, grande figure libre de la pop anglaise, à travers l'intégralité de son chef-d'œuvre Rock Bottom et une sélection de chansons phares.

« *Merci d'apporter un souffle d'air frais à ma musique. L'entendre interprétée par d'autres musiciens, c'est comme être grand-père. Elle mène maintenant sa propre vie – mais nous, grands-parents, nous nous y retrouvons aussi, quelque part. C'est un sentiment formidable.* » Robert Wyatt, février 2014.

C'est par ces mots que Robert Wyatt a accueilli l'idée d'une création à Fourvière autour de son œuvre. D'une grande modestie, ils ne doivent pas minimiser sa contribution essentielle à l'histoire de la pop. Car dans ses projets collectifs (Soft Machine, Matching Mole…) comme en solo, l'Anglais fait bel et bien figure de modèle : n'a-t-il pas été une source d'inspiration pour des singularités aussi notoires qu'Elvis Costello, Bashung, Mark Hollis (Talk Talk), Björk ou PJ Harvey ? Nourri au classique et au be-bop autant qu'aux chansons de Ray Charles ou Burt Bacharach, Wyatt s'est laissé porter par un désir permanent d'évasion – renforcé sans doute par l'accident qui, en 1973, l'a cloué à vie sur une chaise roulante. Éternel flâneur, il a baladé son imaginaire et sa voix perchée en se jouant des clôtures entre pop, jazz, sons latins ou musique électronique. Un art de la fugue porté à son comble poétique dans l'album *Rock Bottom* (1974), ce « *chant d'amour et de curiosité* » adressé à son épouse et muse Alfie : là, comme d'autres mettent des bateaux en bouteille, Robert Wyatt aura fait entrer tout un monde, son monde, dans le cadre de ses chansons. Le quarantième anniversaire de la sortie de ce disque hors catégorie était l'occasion rêvée d'en célébrer l'auteur. C'est à Craig Fortnam, leader du North Sea Radio Orchestra, une sorte de société idéale située au carrefour de la musique de chambre et de la pop, que nous avons confié la direction musicale de cette soirée. Avec lui et son ensemble, une belle galerie d'électrons libres. Deux funambules, Élise Caron et John Greaves – un partenaire historique de Wyatt –, qui serpentent depuis toujours entre chanson, improvisation et musique contemporaine ; et un chanteur au timbre incomparable, Silvain Vanot, dont la sensibilité pop s'accorde à merveille avec celle du génial barbu. Générique auquel s'ajoute un pianiste sans matricule, Pascal Comelade, admirateur de la première heure de Wyatt, avec lequel il a notamment gravé une délicieuse version du *September Song* de Kurt Weill. À travers une relecture intégrale de *Rock Bottom* et une sélection de titres emblématiques (*Moon in June*, *Shipbuilding*, *O Caroline*…), voici donc une opportunité unique de redécouvrir ou de se familiariser avec le très grand petit monde d'un des créateurs les plus affranchis de la planète pop.

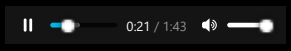


LE MONDE DE ROBERT WYATT

Le Sound Of Tout



Radio Robert



- Max Richter - Verses.mp3



Radio Robert

Robert Wyatt, l'homme de plusieurs vies

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Émission du 24 février 2016 de Gilles Pezerat, réalisation Anne Perez, technique Pierre Bornard.
John Greaves et Elise Caron pour les voix françaises de Robert Wyatt et Alfreda Benge.



0:00:00 / 1:00:13

Écouter l'émission (60 mn)

Robert Wyatt, est l'homme de plusieurs vies, batteur flamboyant de Soft Machine, il est tiraillé entre son amour du jazz et la violence du rock. Après une phase de dépression chronique et alcoolisme, un accident le cloue sur une chaise roulante et le contraint à se réinventer. ...



0:00 / 1:27

Bande-annonce

Extraits musicaux:

- Richardson Road (A Philips, Grasscut - Different every time)
- The British Road (R Wyatt - Old Rottenhat)
- Hope for Happiness (K Ayers, M Ratledge, B Hopper - Soft Machine I)
- To Carla, Marsha and Caroline (R Wyatt - The end of an Ear)
- Thank you Pierrot Lunaire (H Hopper, R Wyatt - Soft Machine II)
- Have you ever bean green (H Hopper, R Wyatt - Soft Machine II)
- Anachronist (R Wyatt - Comicopera)
- Pataphysical introduction (R Wyatt - Soft Machine II)
- Hibou, anemone and bear (M Ratledge, R Wyatt - Soft Machine II)
- Facelift (H Hopper - Soft Machine III)
- Esther’s nose job (H Hopper, M Ratledge, R Wyatt - Soft Machine II live)
- Signed curtain (R Wyatt - Matching Mole)

Robert Wyatt, né en 1945, est l'homme de plusieurs vies. De 1968 à 71, il est le batteur flamboyant de Soft Machine, tiraillé entre son amour du jazz et la violence du rock. Déjà il s’essayait à chanter, voix de ténor aigu et fragile, textes absurdes. Puis, entre une dépression chronique et un alcoolisme de plus en plus destructeur, il aurait pu disparaître comme Brian Jones, Jimy Hendrix… Mais un accident, une chute du quatrième étage en 1973 le cloue sur une chaise roulante et le contraint à se réinventer.

Ce qu'il fait de manière sublime avec l'album Rock Bottom, né sur un lit d’hôpital et qui l'a fait connaître au monde entier Dans cet album comme dans ceux qui suivront, Robert Wyatt explore ses émotions avec une sincérité bouleversante.

- To mark everywhere (R Wyatt - The end of an Ear)
- Alifib (R Wyatt - Rock Bottom)
- A last straw (R Wyatt - Rock Bottom)
- The age of self (R Wyatt - Old Rottenhat)
- Left on man (R Wyatt - Dondestan)
- Muddy mouse (c) Muddy mouth (R Wyatt - Ruth is stranger than Richard)
- Foreign accent (R Wyatt - Cuckooland)
- Submarine (Björk - Medulla)
- The song (J Greaves - The songs)
- At last I'm free (N Rodgers, B Edwards - Nothing can stop us)
- Free will and testament (R Wyatt - Shleep)
- Round midnight (T Monk - For the ghosts within)
- Be serious (R Wyatt - Comicopera)
- Where are they now (R Wyatt, G Atzmon /S Mansour, A Hashem - For the ghosts within)
- The sight of the wind (R Wyatt - The sight of the wind)
- Cuckoo madame (R Wyatt / A Benge - Cuckoo madame)
- Old Europe (R Wyatt / A Benge - Comicopera)
- Out of the blue (R Wyatt / A Benge - Comicopera)
- What a wonderful world (Thiele / Weiss - For the ghosts within)

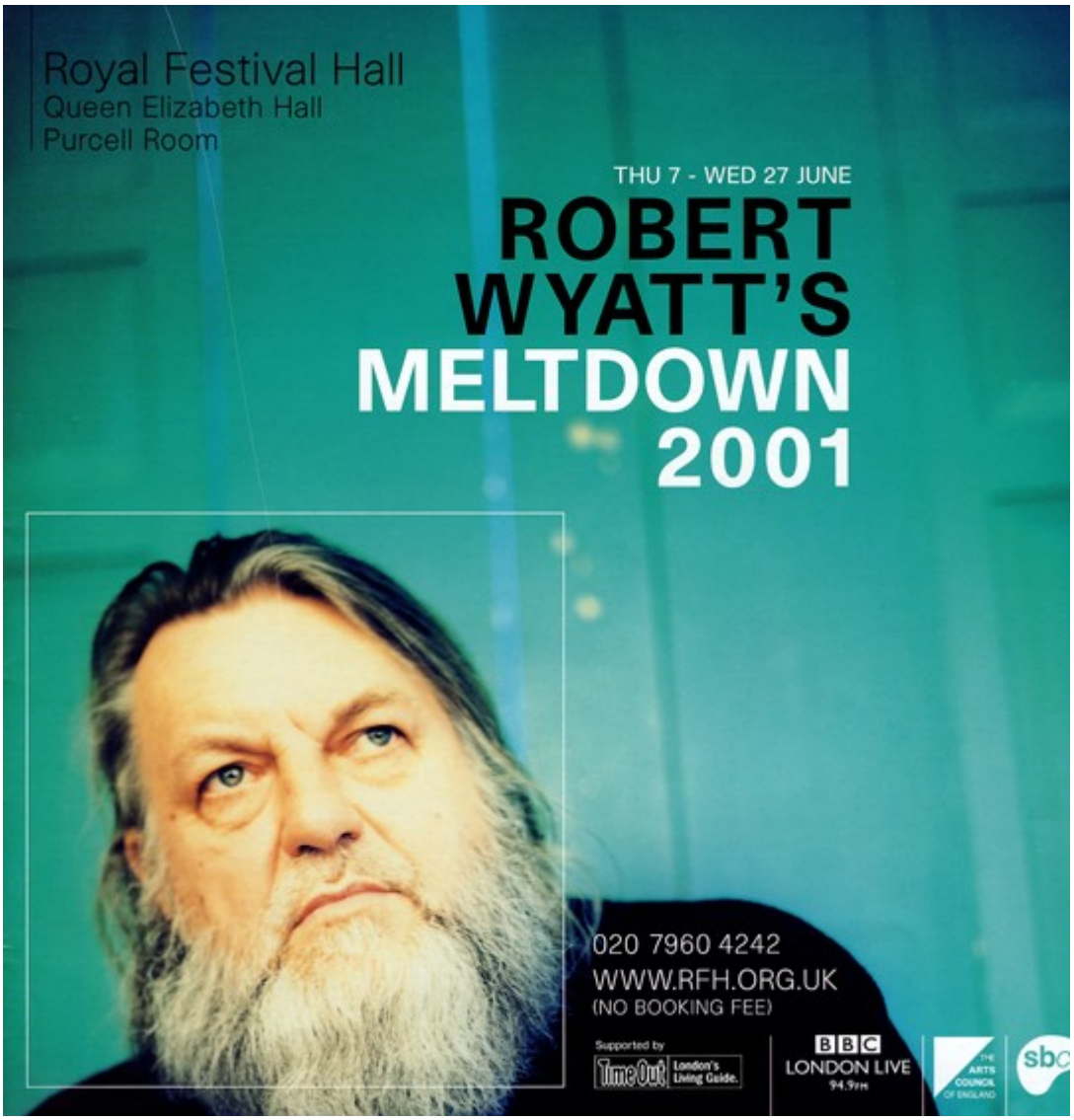
La musique et la voix de cet homme inquiet ne ressemblent à aucune autre. Avec lui, l'humour le dispute à la tragédie. Dépressif joyeux et ancien membre du parti communiste, il est l'éternel défenseur des causes perdues.

Après une dizaine d'albums solo et des collaborations avec entre autres Bjork, Brian Eno, Elvis Costello, il a le jour de ses 70 ans, décidé d'arrêter la musique. Avec Pierre Bornard, ingénieur du son nous sommes allés le voir à Louth, petite ville perdue du nord-est de l'Angleterrre, où il vit avec Alfreda Benge, sa femme et muse.

Texte de présentation de l'émission sur le site de France Culture

Robert Wyatt's Meltdown 2001

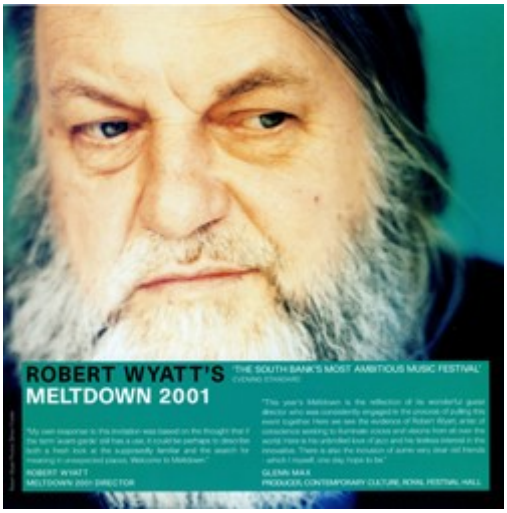
ABÉCÉDAIRE



Marcus O'Dair rapporte dans sa biographie de Robert Wyatt avec forces détails la programmation du **Meltdown 2001** que Glenn Max confia à un Robert Wyatt d'abord incrédule, puis effrayé avant d'en être le curateur enthousiaste...

" En choisissant Wyatt, Glenn Max prenait un risque considérable - avec le recul, Robert apparaît comme un choix naturel pour le Meltdown -, et, malgré le succès de *Shleep*, Robert était un candidat improbable pour le poste en 2001. Même avec son passé à la Knitting Factory, alors l'un des principaux lieux avant-gardistes de New York, Glenn Max admet s'être senti effrayé à l'idée de promouvoir des artistes choisis par Wyatt. Quand Morrissey avait été curateur du festival, il avait reformé les New-York Dolls, tandis qu'Elvis Costello avait accueilli le tout dernier concert britannique de Jeff Buckley. **Que choisirait Robert ? Trois semaines de free jazz staliniste ?** "

Marcus O'Dair in Robert Wyatt Different Time



'Robert Wyatt concocta une programmation si éclectique et si éclairée que le Southbank Center lui rendit un hommage permanent en faisant réaliser un pochoir noir et blanc grandeur nature de son curateur par le graffeur Stewy.

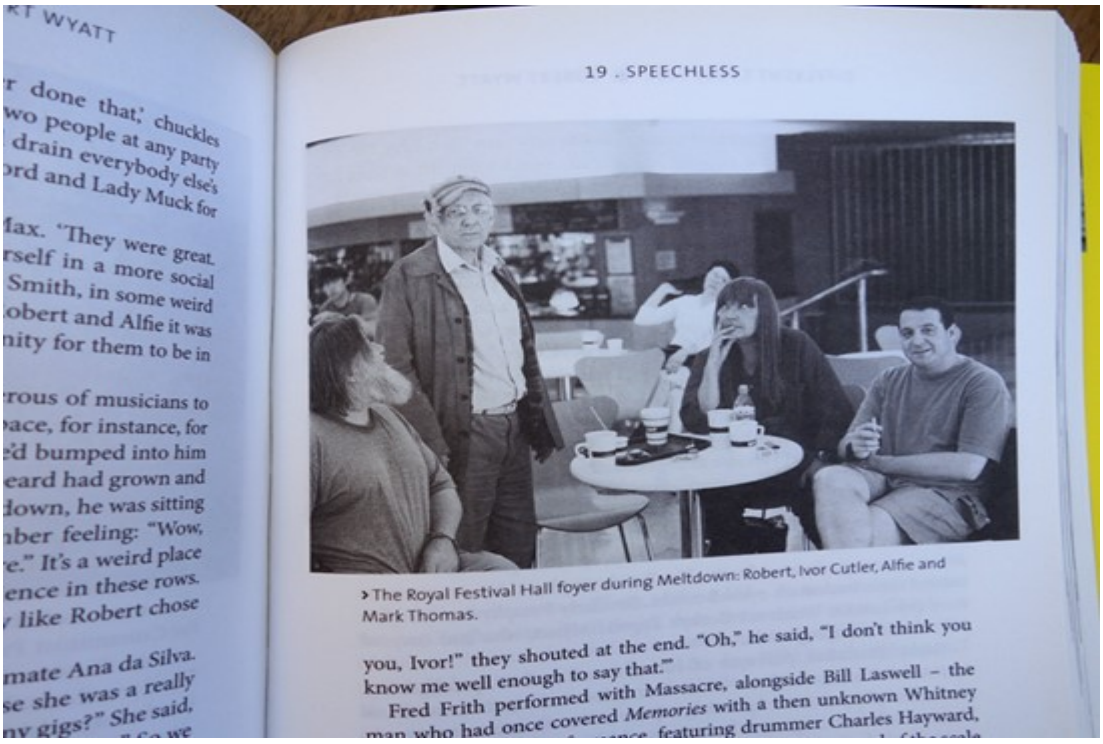
Au



cours de ses échanges avec Marcus O'Dair, Robert Wyatt avouera:

"Je l'ai adoré une fois que j'ai commencé. L'équipe du Festival Hall - Jane, Ed, Beverley et les autres - était fantastique. Tu pouvais faire un tour, voir des choses gratuitement, flâner dans de fantastiques librairies, fumer, boire et rencontrer des amis. C'était un endroit génial. Bien que je ne croie ni en Dieu ni au diable, je crois au paradis et à l'enfer, parce que j'ai visité les deux. Et ça, c'était un bout de paradis. "

(Marcus O'Dair - id.)



LA PROGRAMMATION COMPLETE

















" Pourtant, bien que Wyatt ait refusé catégoriquement de jouer en tant que tête d'affiche, David Gilmour a réussi à le convaincre de donner sa première prestation en public depuis The Raincoats en 1981, pour chanter les premiers vers de la chanson favorite de Pink Floyd « Comfortably Numb », initialement interprétés par Roger Waters.

« Robert a une voix extraordinaire, affirme Gilmour. Cette partie de "Comfortably Numb", c'est la partie de Roger ; il ne fait plus partie de mon milieu — et c'est toujours agréable d'avoir quelqu'un pour le remplacer. Robert était là et j'adore sa voix. Donc, pourquoi ne lui aurais-je pas demandé ? Je crois qu'au départ il a refusé, parce qu'il n'avait jamais fait ça. Mais je l'ai un peu harcelé et, finalement, il est monté sur scène pour sa petite partie. Ce qui était génial. Il était content après coup que je l'y aie forcé.»

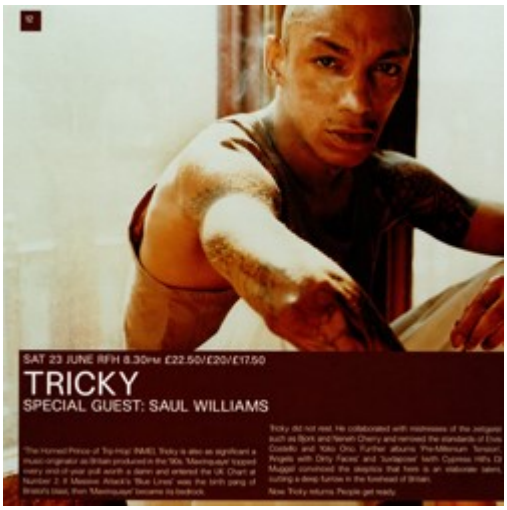
Cependant, même avec le « harcèlement » de Gilmour, Wyatt n'était pas tout à fait monté sur scène. « En fait, il a chanté devant la scène se souvient Max. Il ne voulait pas tout le mouvement et l'agitation autour de lui, donc il a chanté depuis le parterre. Et c'était magnifique, malgré cet air de terreur dans ses yeux. Quand il a eu fini, il tremblait, il était à la limite de la crise d'angoisse.» " *(Marcus O'Dair - id.)*



Comfortably Numb - Meltdown 2001

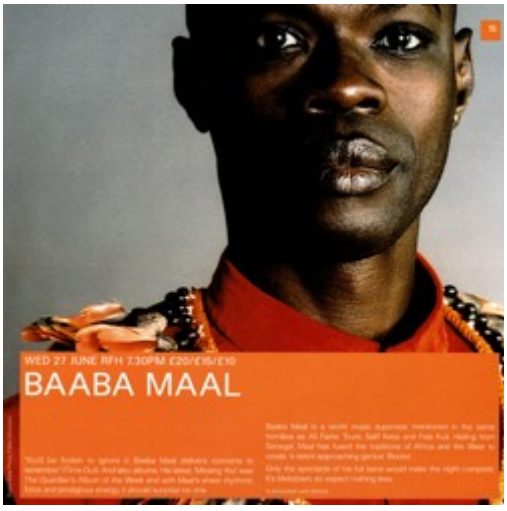
DVD - David Gilmour In Concert - Meltdown Concert 2001

SUITE DE LA PROGRAMMATION


SAT 23 JUNE RFH 8.30PM £22.50/£20/£17.50
TRICKY
SPECIAL GUEST: SAUL WILLIAMS


SUN 24 JUNE RFH 7.30PM £15 & £12.50
ANNIE WHITEHEAD'S SOUPSONGS
A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT WYATT FEATURING
ELVIS COSTELLO, KAREN MANTLER
BRETT ANDERSON, JULIE TIPPETTS
AND MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED

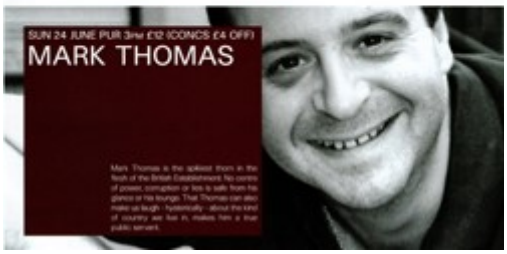

TUES 26 JUNE RFH 7.30PM £22.50/£20/£17.50
ELVIS COSTELLO
& STEVE NIEVE
SPECIAL GUEST:
IVOR CUTLER


WED 27 JUNE RFH 7.30PM £20/£15/£10
BAABA MAAL


TUES 12 JUNE PUR 7.30PM £10
ANJA GARBAREK,
MARK EITZEL &
CRISTINA DONA


FRI 22 JUNE PUR 7.30PM £8
MEIRA ASHER'S
BODYLAB FEAT.
GUY HARRIES

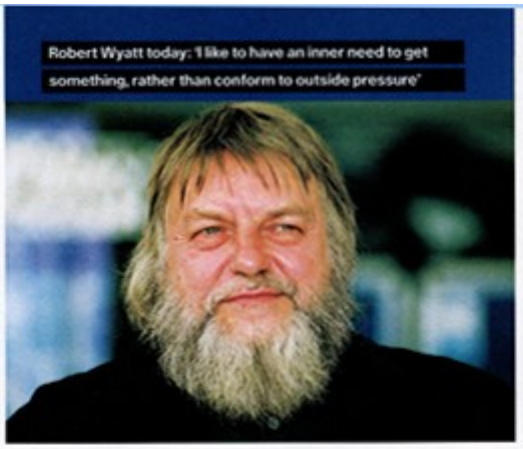

WED 20 JUNE PUR 7.30PM £12.50
PHILIP CATHERINE
QUARTET &
LABARRIERE-
KASSAP DUO


SUN 24 JUNE PUR 3PM £12 (CONCS £4 OFF)
MARK THOMAS


FREE RFH BALLROOM EVENTS
FRI 15 JUNE 5.15PM FREE
ORPHY ROBINSON: THE FOU
ORPHY ROBINSON - VIBES
DUDLEY PHILLIPS - DOUBLE BASS
KEN RICK ROWE - DRUMS
PAT SUMMER - PIANO
FRI 22 JUNE 5.30PM FREE
THE RAY GELATO GIANTS
SAT 23 JUNE FREE
REFUGEE ARTS FESTIVAL
SUN 24 JUNE FREE
ARAB-ISRAELI CONNECTIONS


ROBERT WYATT'S
MELTDOWN 2001
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ANJA GARBAREK & MARK EITZEL
TRIO 3: ANDREW CYRILLE, OLIVER LAKE, REGGIE WORKMAN
& KEITH TIPPETT'S PIANO QUINTET:
BILL LASWELL, FRED FRITH & CHARLES HAYWARD:
TERRY RILEY ALL-STARS
PHILIP CATHERINE QUARTET & LABARRIERE-KASSAP DUO
MAX ROACH
DAVID GILMOUR
MEIRA ASHER'S BODYLAB FEAT. GUY HARRIES
TRICKY
ANNIE WHITEHEAD'S SOUP SONG TRIBUTE TO ROBERT WYATT FEAT. ELVIS COSTELLO, KAREN MANTLER, BRETT ANDERSON, JULIE TIPPETTS
ELVIS COSTELLO & STEVE NIEVE
BAABA MAAL
FREE BALLROOM EVENTS
THE RAY GELATO GIANTS
REFUGEE ARTS FESTIVAL
ARAB-ISRAELI CONNECTIONS


June 2001 Events at the • Royal Festival Hall
• Hayward Gallery • Queen Elizabeth Hall • Purcell Room
Complete listings p22
southbank
magazine
Far outside edge
Robert Wyatt directs Meltdown
Last of the Mohicans
Malcolm Morley, today's great colourist, comes to the Hayward
Alfred Brendel
A sense of the absurd
Scandelicious
Two Nordic dance companies kick up a storm
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Robert Wyatt today: 'I like to have an inner need to get something, rather than conform to outside pressure'

All aboard the skylark

Robert Wyatt, the Soft Machine meister and indie icon, has been named this year's *Meltdown* director. Ever the radical, he told ANDY GILL about his plans for subversive surprises with a continental twist

'I'm afraid I haven't quite got the hang of this century,' sighs Robert Wyatt apologetically, admitting he's not all netted up and whizzing around the information superhighway like the adverts tell us we should be. 'I like to have an inner need to get something, rather than conform to outside pressure; connecting up with things isn't really my goal in life – it's much more Buddhist than that, it's to find that inner calm.'

If he needs to send an urgent e-mail, he nips over to his son's place, half an hour from his home in Lincolnshire. Anything else can take its time – which is, after all, something he's got used to after spending nearly three decades surveying the world from his wheelchair. That's certainly the way Wyatt approaches his recording career, releasing albums only when he has something worth releasing. The last, 1997's dreamily reflective *Shleep*, arrived six years after its predecessor *Dondestan*, which itself broke a six-year silence. 'I'm a bit of a hothouse orchid,' he explains. 'I need a perfect micro-climate in order to cultivate myself, and that's hard to find.'

He has no further albums scheduled, which is perhaps just as well, since he's following in the footsteps of John Peel, Elvis Costello, Laurie Anderson, Nick Cave and Scott Walker by programming this year's *Meltdown* festival.

Surprisingly for one whose career started as the drummer with outré hippie combo Soft Machine, and went on (following the accident which deprived him of the use of his legs) to encompass the pioneering drone music of his 1974 album *Rock Bottom*, Wyatt's *Meltdown* programme may not be quite as avant-garde as observers might have imagined. 'If there's a one-word theme for the festival, it would be xenophilia,' he says. 'I'm very keen on featuring artists who work in languages other than English. There'll be French musicians, Spanish singers, people like that. The other thing I really like is jazz. Now there are an awful lot of people around the world who are good at it, including several English players. Branford Marsalis, for instance, is amazed at what the saxophonist Courtney Pine can do, and there really aren't many better pianists around than Julian Joseph; another pianist I'd like to get is Matthew Shipp, who plays with the David S Ware Quartet. I've also asked if a few old dinosaurs like me could come along.'

Though a reluctant exile from the Communist Party thanks to its clumsy attempt to 'modernise' itself in the 1980s, Wyatt retains the fiercely independent socialist spirit that led him to record songs such as 'Trade Union', 'Stalin Wasn't Stallin'' and, most memorably, Elvis Costello's 'Shipbuilding'. He claims, tongue only partly in cheek, that he's conducting an economic boycott of America until such time as they have a properly elected president. 'I think rogue terrorist states like the United States should be boycotted,' he explains, 'until the civilised world – such as ourselves and Sweden – can bring them to their senses!'

Fortunately, innocent American musicians will be granted a dispensation from the boycott in order to appear at *Meltdown* – though if the mischievous Wyatt had his way, they would be sharing the stage with a cosmopolitan cast. 'I'll tell you what my original plan was,' he chuckles. 'What I really wanted to do was go round the coast of England, trawling the detention centres and refugee places, scouring them for anybody who could sing or play music at all, and get them to take over the whole South Bank for a fortnight! I think the big danger where I live isn't immigrants, it's inbreeding. We need a bit more of the old Noah's Ark!'

Andy Gill is the Independent's rock critic and author of 'My Back Pages'. He contributes to Mojo and Q magazines



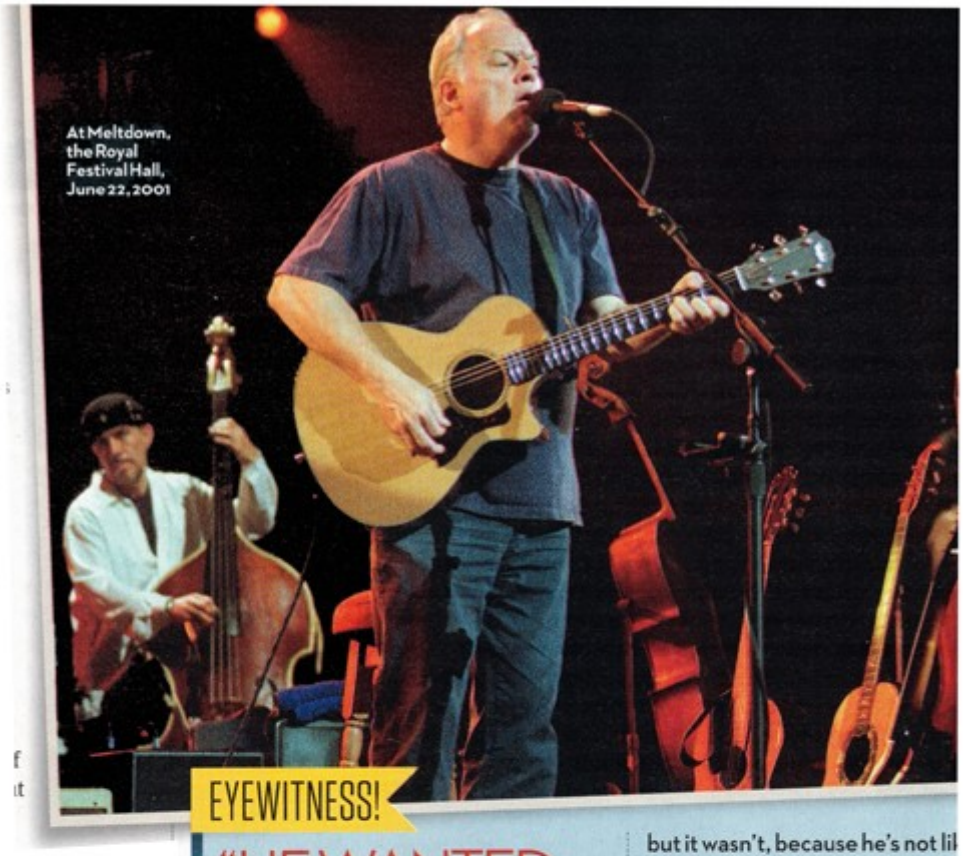
Rhythm king: Wyatt keeps cool as drummer with the outré hippie combo Soft Machine

Nicky J Sims, Getty Redferns

The full Meltdown 2001 line-up will be announced soon. Visit www.rfh.org.uk or subscribe to our e-bulletin: popular_music@rfh.org.uk



Publicité pour le Meltdown 2001 parue dans le New Musical Express du 2 juin 2001

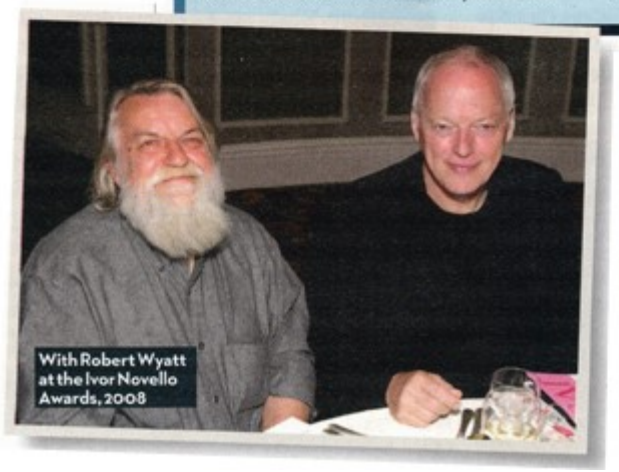


At Meltdown, the Royal Festival Hall, June 22, 2001

EYEWITNESS!

"HE WANTED THINGS DONE RIGHT"

IN JUNE, 2001, David Gilmour was invited to perform at the Robert Wyatt-curated Meltdown festival. "He hadn't done anything for a while," says Wyatt. "First, he said, 'No.' Then 'Yes.' Then, 'Can I bring a cello?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'No, I can't do. Can I bring a choir?' I said, 'Yes.' So he couldn't get out of it. His set looked very informal but it wasn't, because he's not lik He directs everything, including lighting. You could see this chap and singing guitar. It wasn't show which is more a Floyd thing. I dic 'Comfortably Numb' with him. I nervous. I think the first night I p some cornet. The moment I'd st I put the cornet on my lap and sc offstage. But he called me back I could accept applause from th audience. It was just a very gene gesture. He wanted things done It's not typical rock'n'roll. There nothing wrong with typical rock but it's something else."



With Robert Wyatt at the Ivor Novello Awards, 2008

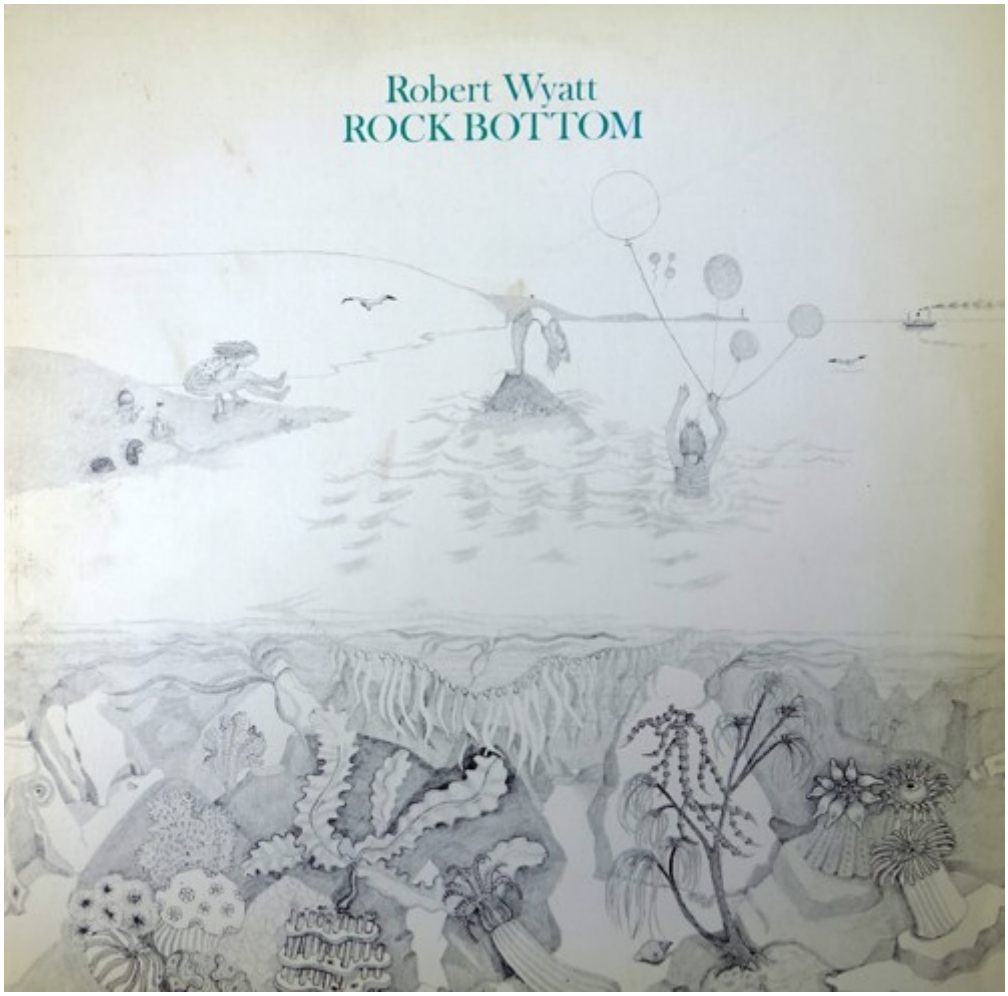
Uncut - September 2015

Rock Bottom

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Pochette de l'édition originale de 1974 (polie par le temps...)



Pochette de la réédition de 1981 (double LP avec Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard)
A noter que la mention "Produced by Nick Mason of Pink Floyd" a disparu...



Détail de la pochette réalisée par Alfreda Benge (inséré dans la réédition CD de 1989)

A Side	B Side
Sea Song Richard Sinclair, bass guitar Robert Wyatt, voice, keyboards, James' drum	*Alifib* Hugh Hopper, bass guitar Robert Wyatt, voice, keyboards
A Last Straw Laurie Allan, drums Hugh Hopper, bass guitar Robert Wyatt, voice, keyboards, guitar, Delfina's wineglass	*Alife* Alfreda Benge, voice Hugh Hopper, bass guitar Gary Windo, bass clarinet, tenor Robert Wyatt, voice, keyboards, James' drum
Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road Ivor Cutler, voice Mongezi Feza, trumpet Richard Sinclair, bass guitar Robert Wyatt, voice, keyboards, James' drum, Delfina's tray and a small battery	*Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road* Laurie Allan, drums Ivor Cutler, voice, baritone concertina Fred Frith, viola Mike Oldfield, guitar Richard Sinclair, bass guitar Robert Wyatt, voice, keyboards

Produced by Nick Mason
Drones and songs by Robert Wyatt
Engineered by Steve Cox at the Manor and on Delfina's farm with the Manor Mobile
and by Dick Palmer, assisted by Toby Bird at CBS Studios London
Cover by Alfreda Benge

Crédits



Nouvelle pochette dessinée par A. Benge (pour la réédition de 1998 chez Hannibal Records)

Rock Bottom

(The odd history of a piece of music)

This music began to emerge in Venice, during the winter of 1972, on the tiny island of Giudecca in a huge old house overlooking the lagoon.

For a couple of months I spent the days alone, while Alfie and a bunch of friends spent their days working on a film. After years of constant work, in groups and on the road, I was uneasy about doing nothing all day. To keep me occupied, Alfie bought me a very basic little keyboard with a particular vibrato, that shimmered like the water that surrounded us. The basic structure of the music was written there, in between watching the lizards on the walls of the house and visiting the local bar to listen to out-of-work gondoliers practising 'O Sole Mio'.



'Don't Look Now', the film that my friends were working on, centred round a series of unforseen disasters in the life of a couple. Venice itself featured as a sinister presence in the film. Alfie always remembers Nic Roeg, the director, reiterating the theme of the film; WE ARE NOT PREPARED.

Back in London, during the spring of 1973, I began to organise a new group to perform the material I was preparing. I continued work on the music, and wrote the words for 'Alife', 'Sea Song', and 'A Last Straw' in Alfie's flat on the 21st floor of a recently built council block in the Harrow Road. This block was demolished a few years ago. It was a health hazard, riddled with flaking asbestos. The space that we had occupied, where we'd got to know each other, is now just part of the sky. We often look up at that air, and imagine our ghostly young selves suspended there, unprepared for what was to come.

On June 1st 1973, the night before the new group was to have its first rehearsal, I fell from a fourth floor window and broke my spine. I was sent to Stoke Mandeville Hospital for eight months, where they saved my life and taught me how to live in a wheelchair.

I spent three months lying flat on my back, gazing at the ceiling of a surreal public

dormitory amongst twenty others whose lives had also radically changed in a split second; victims of bad driving, industrial accidents, a misjudged somersault on a trampoline, a wrong-footed escape during a burglary. We all had to think about our future.

I came to terms with the fact that I was no longer a drummer, and that going on the road would be very problematic. I no longer needed to prepare music for a permanent group, I'd have to concentrate on recording, and I'd have to sing more. I would be able to choose different musicians for different songs. I didn't need to have the same instruments on every song. The loss of my legs might give me a new kind of freedom. (The cat burglar was considering fraud as new career).



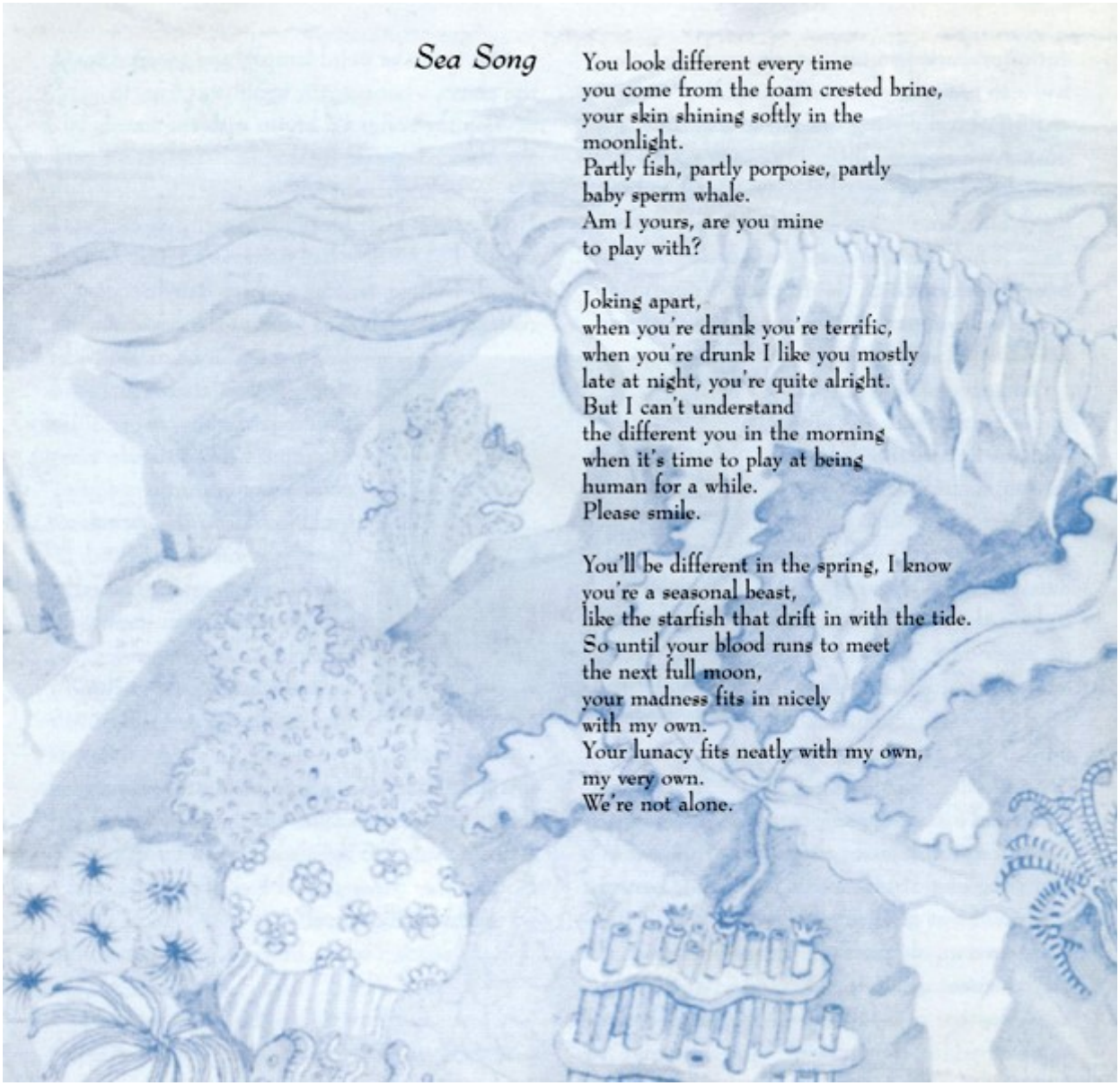
Between visitors, operations and hospital bustle, I began to think about the music I'd been preparing in a different way. At the end of three months, I was given my wheelchair and discovered an old piano in the visitors' room. I played truant as often as I could from the activities that newly paralysed people are given as therapy (archery, and glueing mosaics on bottles to make weird lamps), and escaped to the piano, whenever the room was free, to develop the songs I'd begun with the lizards by the Venice lagoon.

By the time I left hospital, I was ready to record, but we now had nowhere to live. A kind friend, Delfina, lent us a wheelchair-friendly cottage in Wiltshire. There, at the beginning of 1974, I began to record with Virgin Records' Mobile Studio parked in the adjoining field, while a donkey brayed in the background. In the spring, we found a home in London where I prepared for the contributions from the other musicians which were recorded and mixed at the Manor Studio and CBS.

On July 26th 1974, (the 21st Anniversary of the attack on Moncada, which was the first action that led to the Cuban Revolution), Rock Bottom was released, and I married Alfie, and we lived happily ever after.

Robert Wyatt, February 1998

Notes de R. Wyatt publiées dans la réédition de 1998.



Sea Song

You look different every time
you come from the foam crested brine,
your skin shining softly in the
moonlight.
Partly fish, partly porpoise, partly
baby sperm whale.
Am I yours, are you mine
to play with?

Joking apart,
when you're drunk you're terrific,
when you're drunk I like you mostly
late at night, you're quite alright.
But I can't understand
the different you in the morning
when it's time to play at being
human for a while.
Please smile.

You'll be different in the spring, I know
you're a seasonal beast,
like the starfish that drift in with the tide.
So until your blood runs to meet
the next full moon,
your madness fits in nicely
with my own.
Your lunacy fits neatly with my own,
my very own.
We're not alone.

A Last Straw

Seaweed tangled in our
home from home,
reminds me of your
rocky bottom.

Please don't wait for
the paperweight,
err on the good side.
Touch us when we collapse.

Into the water we'll go
head over heel.
We'll not grow fat inside
the mammary gland.

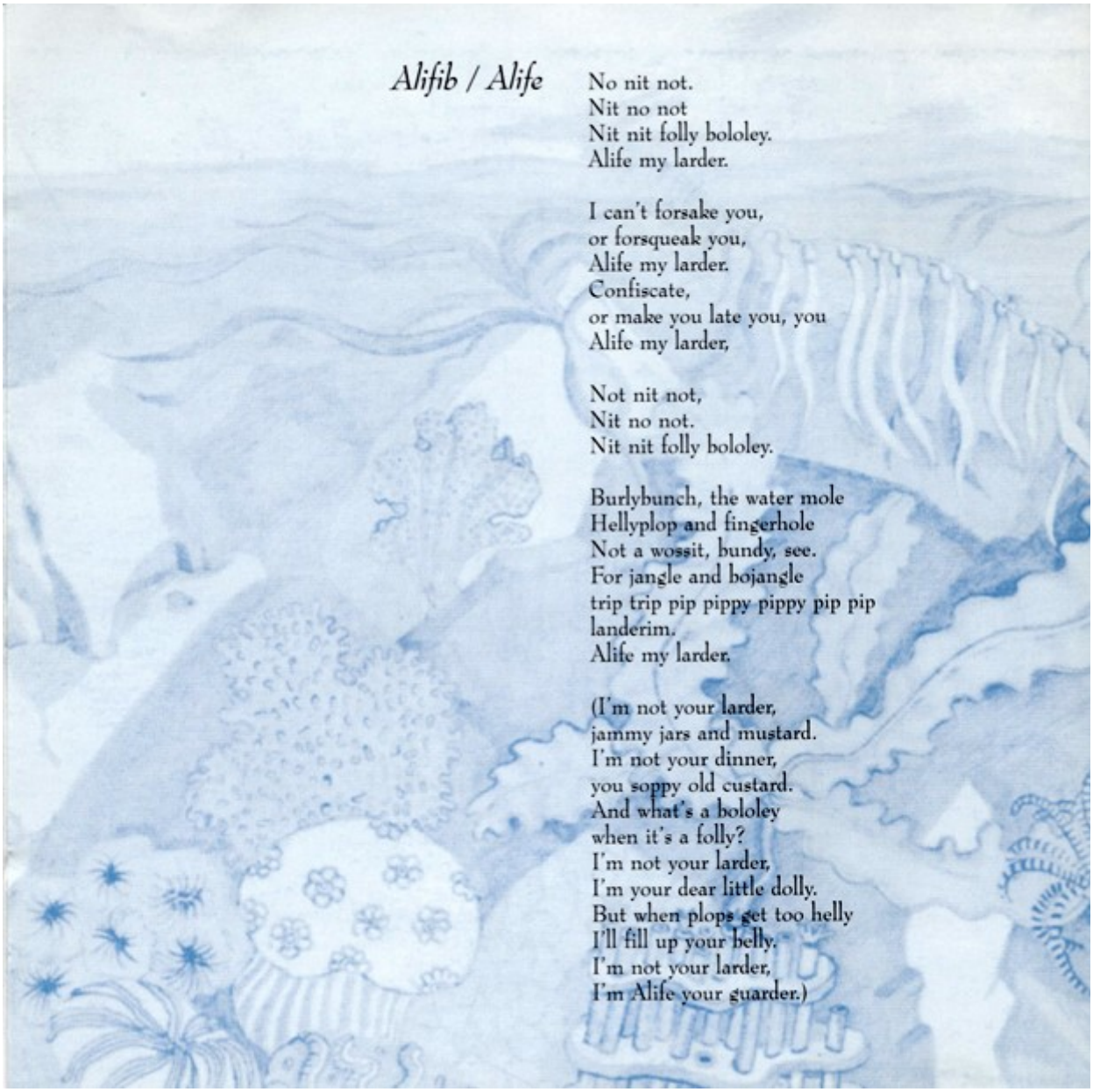
Into the water we'll go
head over heel.
A head behind me
buried deep in the sand.

Little Red Riding Hood Hit the Road

Orlandon't tell me, oh no.
Don't say, oh God don't tell me.
Oh dear me, heavens above.
Oh no, no I can't stand it.

Stop please, oh deary me.
What in heaven's name?
Oh blimey. Mercy me. Woe are we.
Oh dear. Oh stop it, stop it.
You've been so kind,
I know, I know.
So why did I hurt you?
I didn't mean to hurt you.

But I'll keep trying,
and I'm sure you will too.



Alifib / Alife

No nit not.
Nit no not
Nit nit folly bololey.
Alife my larder.

I can't forsake you,
or forsqueak you,
Alife my larder.
Confiscate,
or make you late you, you
Alife my larder,

Not nit not,
Nit no not.
Nit nit folly bololey.

Burlybunch, the water mole
Hellyplop and fingerhole
Not a wossit, bundy, see.
For jangle and bojangle
trip trip pip pippy pippy pip pip
landerim.
Alife my larder.

(I'm not your larder,
jammy jars and mustard.
I'm not your dinner,
you soppy old custard.
And what's a bololey
when it's a folly?
I'm not your larder,
I'm your dear little dolly.
But when plops get too helly
I'll fill up your belly.
I'm not your larder,
I'm Alife your guarder.)

Little Red Robin Hood Hit the Road

In the garden of England,
dead moles lie inside their holes.
The dead-end tunnels crumble
in the rain, underfoot.
Innit a shame?

Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?
Roots can't hold them.
Bugs console them.

I fight with the handle of my little brown broom.
I pull out the wires of the telephone.
I hurt in the head, and I hurt in the aching bone.
Now I smash up the telly with remains of the broken phone.

I fighting for the crust of the little brown loaf.
I want it. I want it. I want it. Give it to me.
I give it you back when I finish the lunchtea.

I lie in the road, try to trip up the passing cars.
Yes, me and the hedgehog, we bursting the tyres.all day.
As we roll down the highway towards the setting sun,
I reflect on the life of the highwayman, yum yum.

Now I smash up the telly and what's left of the broken phone.

Lyrics





ANTOINE LÄNG, BRUNO TOCANNE, SOPHIA DOMANCICH, REMI GAUDILLAT – © PRM

Sea Song(e)s.
En 2017, Bruno Tocanne, Sophia Domancich, Antoine Läng et Rémi Gaudillat rendent hommage avec leur album Sea Song(e)s. à l'oeuvre de Robert Wyatt et plus particulièrement à Rock Bottom.

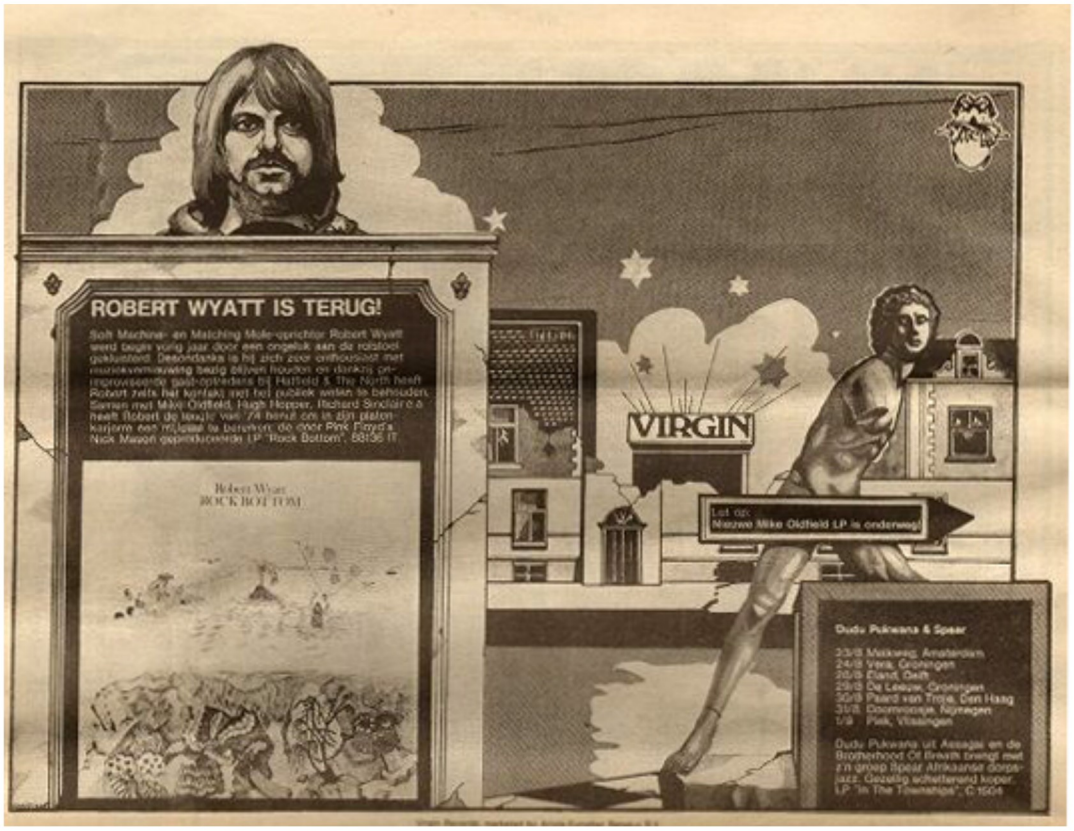
SeaSong(e)s. n'est pas un album de reprises (à l'exception du subliminal Sea Song) mais un album de reconnaissance que des musiciens dédient à une oeuvre et à un compositeur-interprète qui les ont en permanence éclairés dans leur accomplissement d'artistes. Le CD est accompagné de la déclaration suivante :

L'univers du « Rock Bottom » de Robert Wyatt qui nous a servi de fil conducteur a eu une influence déterminante et durable sur nos différentes approches artistiques et intellectuelles. Quelques décennies après sa sortie en 1974, cet OVNI musical apparaît toujours comme un disque d'une splendeur mystique.
Merci à lui pour ce cadeau magnifique, source inépuisable d'émotion et d'inspiration !

Bruno TOCANNE & Sophia DOMANCICH

Robert Wyatt's «Rock Bottom» universe, wich served us as a guide, had a determinating and lasting influence on our artistic and intellectual approaches. A few decades after its release in 1974, this musical UFO still appears like a record of a mystical splendor. Thanks to him for this magnificent gift, an endless source of emotion and inspiration !

Bruno TOCANNE & Sophia DOMANCICH



Dutch ad for Rock Bottom



Full version (14:48) of the film shot in Paris in 1975 by French Television,
the day after the concert at the Theatre of the Champs Elysees with Henry Cow.

Mary Halvorson's Turning Point: "Robert Wyatt's able to incorporate the weird with the beautiful in such a nice way"

Thursday, May 22, 2025

***Jazz guitar heroine Mary Halvorson nominates an album by the former Soft Machine drummer Robert Wyatt as her musical turning point. Interview by Brian Glasser*.**



Mary Halvorson (photo: Elena Olivo)

I always come back to Rock Bottom, by Robert Wyatt; even though I try to entertain other possibilities! It's not something early that made me fall in love with music – which is sort of why it's so powerful to me. When you're a teenager and you hear things for the first time they have an incredible impact; and I certainly had experiences like that at that age. But it's much rarer that you get that kind of impact later in life; and this is one of those records for me. I say 'later in life' - I probably heard it when I was 27, so I was still a young person; but by that point, I'd heard so much music.

It was nice to go into something with no preconceived notions; and it doesn't happen that often, because usually you know something about whatever it is. It felt like discovering something that I couldn't believe I'd been missing my whole life! To have that experience when I was a little older was great. I don't know if I'd heard it when I was younger whether I'd have made sense of it? Perhaps it was the perfect time for me to hear it.

A friend played it for me, and I had no idea who he [Wyatt] was. I have an almost visceral memory of sitting on my living room floor in front of the speakers and my jaw dropping - I'd never heard anything like it. I could feel the emotions and intensity of the music. His voice is very unusual but, to me, incredibly beautiful.

The sense of melody and intentionality and the lyrics, it was just one of the most beautiful things I'd ever heard. And there are so many surprises: there's a moment on the first song where he basically starts scat singing, he almost imitates a horn - I was not expecting that at all! I thought I knew what the song was at that point, and then this whole other surprise unfolded. I laughed when it happened!

I've listened to the album hundreds of times. There was a point in my life when I was going through

some difficult stuff and that record was like medicine - it really helped me. And it's still a record I listen to, I've never got sick of it. It hasn't lost its power.

There are also certain musical things in it that resonate with my music, even though I approach my music in a very different way, and I don't think my music sounds very much like his music. But I've always had a love of strong melodies, and songwriting; and also of things that are left of centre, and a little bit weird! He's able to incorporate the weird with the beautiful in such a nice way; and those are things I aspire to. Plus it's totally unique - I still haven't heard anything like it.

After I discovered it, I did a deep dive into his music, and went back and listened to Soft Machine, and I read his biography. That's when I found out that it was the first record he made after he became paralysed. He never said, 'The record is about that'; but clearly it was an intense thing that was happening. And knowing that made the intensity of the record make sense.

What I've noticed about Robert Wyatt is people either have no idea who he is, or they're fanatical about him. There's a club in Brooklyn, and every time I went in there the owners would be playing Robert Wyatt. We started talking, and they said, 'He loves jazz, we mail him a package every year - would you like to include some of your music?'.

So, I gave them whatever my current album was at the time and they mailed it to him. I'd written him a little note; and I got a postcard in the mail, thanking me for sending it - just the sweetest person! Then we began a correspondence, eventually switching to e-mail. I've always mailed him my records. And I actually had the honour to have him sing as a special guest on my album Artlessly Falling. That was a dream come true for me! We had a little back and forth where I'd send him samples of a song and say, 'Is this comfortable for you to sing?'; and he'd send something back; which was lovely.

It's cool when you meet your heroes - though I've never actually met him! - and they end up being super-nice!

Mary Halvorson's latest albums are Bone Bells (Pyroclastic) with Sylvie Courvoisier; and About Ghosts (Nonesuch, out 25 June)

Plus sur Rock Bottom...

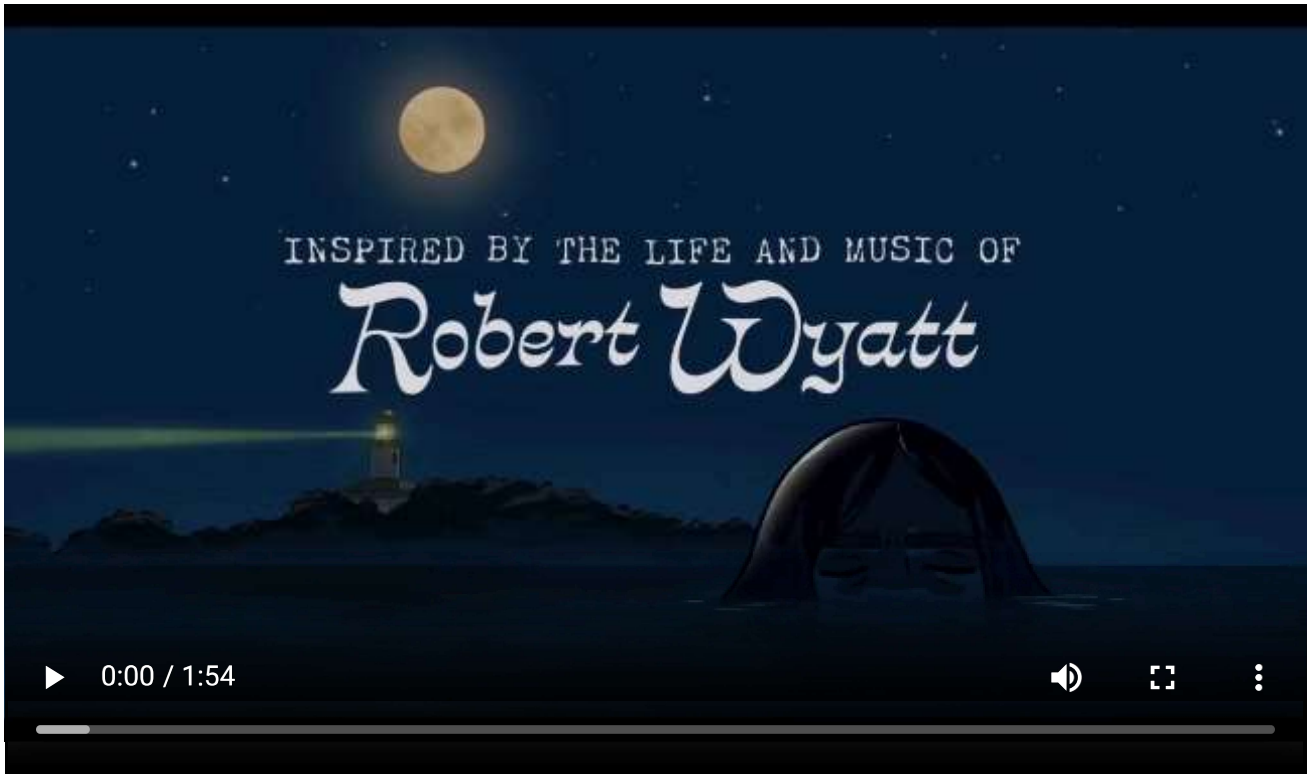
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Rock Bottom sorti en salles le 9 juillet 2025

Cinéma



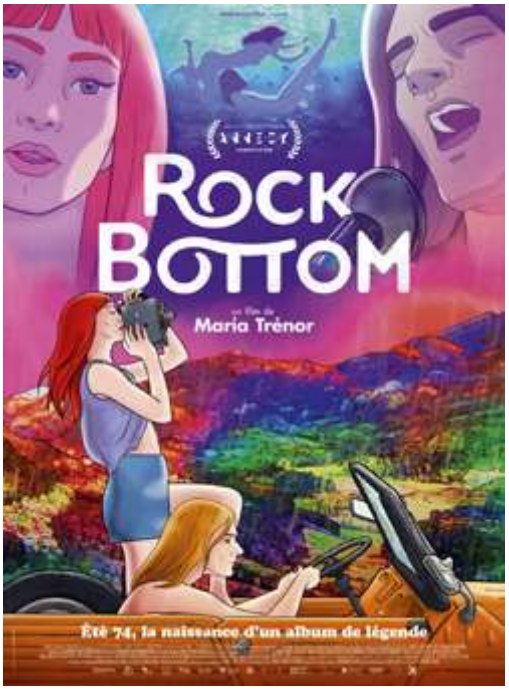
Bande-annonce du film Rock Bottom

D'abord présenté au *Festival international du film d'animation d'Annecy* en juin 2024 puis dans quelques festivals, Rock Bottom, le film, est enfin sorti en France le 9 juillet 2025.

Projeté dans 2 salles à Paris, une à Montreuil et dans quelques grandes villes étudiantes (Lyon, Bordeaux, Rennes, Toulouse, Montpellier...) difficile de savoir si le film trouvera son public en cette période estivale et si le distributeur lui donnera sa chance au-delà des premières semaines.

Ce film était attendu et avait fait l'objet, bien avant sa sortie, de nombreux articles et interviews dans la presse espagnole (nationalité de Maria Trenor sa réalisatrice) mais pas seulement.

Le film est brillant et original : consacrer un long métrage à un seul album, fut-il *mythique*, est un pari audacieux. Tenter de percer le mystère de sa création en restituant le contexte socio-culturel-affectif de ses deux principaux protagonistes (Robert et Alfie) tout en annonçant d'emblée qu'il ne s'agit surtout pas d'un biopic - la chute fatale est située à New-York pour que les choses soient claires - rend la tâche bien compliquée.



Affiche du film



Autour d'une bande-son impeccable qui provoque 50 ans après sa sortie les mêmes émotions qu'à la première écoute, Maria Trenor nous propose sa vision d'une époque (les parties lysergiques new-yorkaises, les dérives lysergiques à Majorque) telle que la presse et parfois nous-mêmes pouvions l'imaginer. Pas sûr que la réalité ait ressemblé à cette imagerie psychédélique labelisée "Peace and Love".

Si j'ai apprécié que le personnage de Robert Wyatt ne soit pas idéalisé et que la démarche artistique d'Alfie soit rééquilibrée dans la relation qui unit les deux artistes, j'ignore si ce choc des egos créatifs a réellement eu lieu en des termes aussi violents que montrés ici. Ce qui est certain aux dires de plusieurs personnes ayant fréquenté le couple à l'époque, c'est que jamais il n'y eut de mésentente ou de dispute à propos d'argent comme le suggère le film.

La confusion possible entre la "vérité historique" et la story-stellarisation de ces moments me rend perplexe.

Mais que ces remarques - aiguisées par le même amour que je porte à la musique de Robert Wyatt que l'énergie démesurée que Maria Trenor a dépensée pour réaliser ce film *infaisable* - ne trompent pas : la réalisatrice nous offre un concentré d'époque disparue mais toujours présente dans nos coeurs. Celle-ci a pris de belles couleurs et notre mémoire est bien sélective mais la bande-son n'a pas pris une ride...

Quelques papiers de la presse française en ce mois de juillet 2025:

La belle vie animée de l'album culte de Robert Wyatt

Autour de « Rock Bottom », la réalisatrice espagnole Maria Trénor campe librement l'univers du musicien anglais au miroir de celui de sa compagne, Alfreda Benge, artiste et dessinatrice de ses pochettes de disque

ROCK BOTTOM

■■■■□

La musique s'écoute parfois les yeux fermés, mais, là, il va falloir les ouvrir. Car qui aime la voix douce et fêlée de Robert Wyatt sur son album *Rock Bottom* (1974) sera peut-être curieux de découvrir le film d'animation du même nom de la réalisatrice espagnole Maria Trénor, née en 1970. C'est parce qu'elle aime profondément ce disque, d'inspiration psychédélique, dans lequel Wyatt fait battre les pulsations de l'amour fou qui naissait entre lui et l'artiste peintre Alfreda Benge (« Alfie »), que la cinéaste a souhaité porter le récit à l'écran, dans ce premier long-métrage dévoilé au Festival d'Annecy, en 2024. L'histoire de *Rock Bottom* est triste à mourir et terriblement belle.

Le 1er juin 1973, à Londres, Robert Wyatt, ancien batteur du groupe Soft Machine, chutait du quatrième étage d'un immeuble, lors d'une fête arrosée. Le musicien se retrouvait paralysé des membres inférieurs, passant plusieurs mois à réapprendre à vivre. Pendant sa convalescence, il a finalisé *Rock Bottom*, son chef-d'œuvre, produit par Nick Mason, batteur de Pink Floyd, et enregistré avec le guitariste Mike Oldfield, dont les bases avaient été posées en 1972 à Venise, alors qu'il venait de rencontrer Alfie. Depuis, en fauteuil roulant depuis une cinquantaine d'années, Wyatt a mené une carrière solo, au côté de sa compagne, laquelle a écrit certaines de ses chansons et dessiné ses pochettes de disque – Alfreda Benge fut aussi assistante monteuse sur le film de Nicolas Roeg, *Ne vous retournez pas* (1974).

La cinéaste réussit à insuffler à ses tableaux un rythme vibrant, inouï, tout particulièrement lors des séquences musicales

Selon le vœu de Robert Wyatt, 80 ans aujourd'hui, les six titres défilent dans l'ordre où ils apparaissent dans l'album, structurant le récit du film *Rock Bottom*. Pour le reste, la cinéaste s'est autorisé quelques libertés de récit mais aussi géographiques. Exit Londres et Venise, le film s'ouvre dans un New York bohème, le soir où la vie de Wyatt va basculer, tandis que les émois amoureux avec Alfie sont situés sur l'île de Majorque, dans les Baléares – l'occasion de bains de minuit et de fonds rocheux foisonnant d'algues et autres splendeurs, rappelant le motif de la composition florale dessinée par Alfie sur la pochette de l'album.

Technique de la rotoscopie

Sur la plage, à la maison ou dans les couleurs acidulées des soirées planantes, Bob et Alfie évoluent avec une grande fluidité : la cinéaste a utilisé la technique de la rotoscopie, qui consiste à filmer d'abord les acteurs en prises de vues réelles – ici Laura Casaña Pardo et Pernni Della –, pour ensuite dessiner les contours des silhouettes, image après image. Le film dévoile le procédé, lors de quelques plans furtifs sur le visage des comédiens.

Surtout, Maria Trénor réussit à insuffler à ses tableaux un rythme vibrant, inouï, tout particulièrement lors des séquences musicales. A partir du moment où Robert Wyatt perd connaissance, après s'être écrasé la colonne vertébrale sur le bitume, c'est un peu comme si les derniers mois qu'il avait vécus défilaient dans sa tête – et à l'écran –, tout en se cognant au présent infernal (le transport en ambulance, etc.).

Le film contourne ainsi l'écueil du flash-back. Il n'y a pas d'avant ni d'après, juste une profusion d'images et de souvenirs, que le montage restitue avec l'urgence des sentiments. Nous voici à traverser des bribes d'histoires, une nuit sublime dans une crique (*Sea Song*), le cauchemar dans le bloc opératoire (*A Last Straw*), etc. La cinéaste crée quelques images fabuleuses à partir des chansons, utilisant le souffle de Wyatt sur *Alifib* (plus de trois minutes de scansion du titre chuchotée), au moment où le compositeur réalise, dans son lit d'hôpital, qu'il va être dépendant pour le reste de sa vie. Des collages dadaïstes montrent Alfie en garde-manger (un œuf à la place de la tête…), tandis que celle-ci rétorque, dans la chanson : *« Je ne suis pas ton garde-manger/Je suis ta gardienne. »*

On est avec Bob et Alfie pour le meilleur et pour le pire. Il y a les matins de descente une fois passés les effets de la drogue, tandis qu'Alfie mesure combien il lui est difficile, en tant que femme, d'être prise au sérieux dans le milieu de l'art et du cinéma.

Les affres de la création n'épargnent pas Robert Wyatt, qui a parfois du mal à écrire les paroles des chansons. Le film nous le raconte avec humour, au détour d'une scène avec un membre du groupe Matching Mole, créé en 1972 par Wyatt après son départ de Soft Machine. Au piano, Wyatt va tenter d'improviser des « métaparoles », dans la chanson *Signed Curtain* (1972) : il se contente de répéter en boucle : *« C'est la première strophe. »* Et de poursuivre : *« Et voici le refrain, ou peut-être un interlude. »*

On n'en voudra pas à Maria Trénor d'avoir cédé à quelques clichés du biopic musical, avec son incontournable instant décisif, lorsque l'artiste est sur le point de trouver une mélodie mythique. Ici, la scène produit son effet, tant on est persuadé d'avoir Robert Wyatt sous les yeux, les cheveux aux épaules, la créature animée s'accordant si bien avec la voix du chanteur. Magie du cinéma. ■

CLARISSE FABRE

Film d'animation espagnol de Maria Trénor (1h 26)

> Zoom

Rock Bottom

de Maria Trénor

Espagne, Pologne, 2024. Animation. 1h26.

Sortie le 9 juillet.

Le pari le plus osé de María Trénor, cinéaste d'animation et professeure de médias audiovisuels, est d'avoir concocté la bande originale de son premier long métrage à partir d'une œuvre totémique de la musique contemporaine : le sidérant *Rock Bottom* de Robert Wyatt (1974), objet de fascination et de vénération sans égal, dont les six titres, proposés ici dans leur quasi-intégralité, sont entendus, selon le souhait du maître, dans l'ordre de leur apparition sur l'album. Loin d'être une succession de tableaux, le film échappe à la fragmentation muséale tout autant qu'à l'artifice d'une intrigue qui s'épuiserait à illustrer l'hermétisme dépouillé des chansons. Et s'il trouve son ancrage dans la vie de Wyatt, évoquant l'accident qui l'a rendu paraplégique, la genèse du disque culte ou un séjour – édénique – à Majorque, il n'est pas davantage un biopic ou le making-of d'un chef d'œuvre (comme naguère *Buñuel après l'âge d'or* de Salvador Simó, autre fleuron de l'animation espagnole) : à la structure en flash-back plus ou moins fantasmés – New York remplace ici Londres pour les séquences liées à la chute originelle – fait écho la possibilité de puiser dans tout l'univers du musicien, en multipliant les entrées complémentaires et passionnantes. C'est ainsi qu'au recours à « O'Caroline » et « Signed Curtain », deux titres de Matching Mole, dernier groupe de Wyatt avant son accident, ou même à la superbe adaptation chorale de « Sea Song » en générique final, correspond l'étonnante et emblématique fusion de deux types d'animation. Entre fluidité rotoscopique et traces peintes déchirées de l'artiste polonais Zbigniew Czapla se joue l'ambivalence d'un regard fasciné mais lucide sur l'ère psychédélique que *Rock Bottom* permet d'attribuer à la compagne du musicien. Alphie, véritable protagoniste d'un film apaisé qui ne dit rien d'autre que la mort et la renaissance d'un amour, permet alors à Wyatt de reprendre « At Last I Am Free ».

Thierry Méranger



POTEMKINE

Rock bottom de María Trénor.

LES INROCKUPTIBLES- juillet 2025

ROCK BOTTOM de María Trénor

Une plongée animée très musicale dans la vie et l'art de Robert Wyatt et de sa compagne Alfreda Benge. Aussi inspiré qu'inclassable.

Premier long métrage de Maria Trénor, cinéaste espagnole originaire de Valence, *Rock Bottom* est un film d'animation totalement inclassable, dont le sujet même est déjà une curiosité. Il s'agit d'abord, comme son titre l'indique, d'une plongé musicale au cœur d'un album conçu et interprété par Robert Wyatt, le fascinant et totalement culte *Rock Bottom*, sorti en juillet 1974. Mais il y est aussi très largement question du couple formé par le musicien et l'artiste Alfreda Benge, dessinatrice et cinéaste expérimentale, dont le sort se joue entre un séjour à Majorque en 1972 et la chute dont sera victime Wyatt, qui le rendra paraplégique.
Le plus fascinant, c'est que cette exploration d'un univers très singulier se traduit dans un langage visuel à la fois réaliste et fantasmagorique, entremêlant avec bonheur scènes de couple et rêveries à partir des morceaux de *Rock Bottom*, que le film nous donne à écouter en intégralité.
Au début, nous sommes à New York, pendant l'été 1973. Apparaît un personnage aux cheveux longs, dénommé Bob, dont on comprend assez vite qu'il est l'incarnation de Robert Wyatt. L'intrigue se noue autour d'une soirée à l'ambiance franchement hippie, noyée dans les fumées et autres effluves stupéfiants. Le tout figuré avec des couleurs très vives, déclinées en bleu, violet, rose profonds. Très vite, le récit fait quelques allers-retours dans le temps, en particulier à Majorque où naît l'histoire d'amour assez complexe entre Bob et Alfie (qui représente Alfreda Benge), et tente quelques embardées oniriques et aquatiques, au son notamment de la sublime *Sea Song*, première pièce planante de *Rock Bottom*. Nous sommes alors emporté-es dans un tourbillon de formes et de couleurs. L'étrange beauté un peu malade distillée par ce titre de Wyatt trouve ainsi, sans forcer, un prolongement visuel de toute beauté, jamais convenu, toujours inspiré.
Les relations mouvantes entre musique et image sont au centre du motif tout au long du film. Mais ce dernier tourne aussi autour d'événements réels qui ont scellé le destin de Robert et Alfreda. Le point central du récit, c'est donc la chute de Wyatt du haut d'un immeuble. Une chute dont on taira les circonstances, qui aurait pu être mortelle et aura un impact considérable sur la trajectoire du musicien et de sa compagne.
Une bonne part de la seconde moitié de *Rock Bottom* est habitée par le trajet en ambulance vers l'hôpital, où Wyatt passera sa convalescence et donnera naissance à l'album. Pour les fans du grand Robert, ce film est une véritable bénédiction, tant il entrelace avec précision et invention, dans un style totalement original, sa vie et sa musique, et tant il permet de mieux connaître Alfreda, la femme qui a réalisé toutes les pochettes de ses albums à partir de *Rock Bottom*. Pour les autres, ça sera assurément l'occasion d'une très belle découverte et peut-être le début d'une nouvelle passion. ● **Thierry Jousse**

Rock Bottom de **María Trénor** (Esp., 2024, 1 h 26). En salle le 09 juillet.

9 JUILLET | ★★★★

PREMIERE
juillet-août 2025

ROCK BOTTOM

Hommage au concept-album mythique de Robert Wyatt, cette transe sonore et visuelle dessine le désenchantement du psychédélisme finissant. Magnifique.



Figure de proue de ce que l'on a appelé L'école de Canterbury, Robert Wyatt a hissé le rock progressif, voire le jazz fusion (c'est selon), au sommet des charts via son groupe Soft Machine où il officiait en tant que batteur, chanteur et compositeur. Au début des *seventies*, Wyatt en solo sort le magnifique *Rock Bottom* (1974), concept album aussi intimiste que symphonique produit par Nick Mason de Pink Floyd. Les compositions savantes et ténébreuses sont notamment marquées (hantées ?) par l'accident qui a rendu le musicien tétraplégique lors d'une fête londonienne. Ce film d'animation rend ici hommage à ce monument discographique dans une sorte de transe sonore et visuelle qui s'octroie des libertés avec les faits. Adoubée par Wyatt *himself* qui a seulement exigé que les morceaux de l'album soient utilisés dans l'ordre chronologique, l'Espagnole Maria Trénor resserre son récit autour du couple Wyatt-Alfie et de leur vie de bohème sur l'île de Majorque juste avant le drame. Alfreda Benge dite Alfie, compagne de Wyatt, inspira plusieurs morceaux de ce *Rock Bottom*. Les couleurs volontairement assombries de l'animation démythifient l'orgie psychédélique ambiante. Un style qui évoque le travail de l'auteur de bande dessinée américain Charles Burns *(Black Hole)* dans cette façon d'interroger la clarté de la ligne pour mieux délimiter les contours d'un monde chaotique. « *Votre démence cadre parfaitement avec la mienne…* » entend-on dans la chanson qui ouvre *Rock Bottom*. Marina Trénor a pris Wyatt au mot. ◆ TB

ALLEZ-Y SI VOUS AVEZ AIMÉ *Yellow Submarine* (1969), *Métal Hurlant* (1981), *Pink Floyd : The Wall* (1982)

Pays Espagne, Pologne • **De** Maria Trénor • **Animation** • **Durée** 1h26

> Zoom

Les films qu'on peut voir cette semaine

Rock Bottom

Rarement l'univers hippie aura été aussi bien rendu, avec ses abus de LSD, sa créativité, son désespoir, ses impasses et sa poésie. Pour ce magnifique film d'animation, la réalisatrice espagnole María Trénor s'est inspirée de la vie du musicien et interprète Robert Wyatt, du groupe Soft Machine, devenu tétraplégique à la suite d'une chute du 4e étage d'un immeuble new-yorkais.

Mettre en images un univers musical n'est pas un mince exploit, et María Trénor en réussit en outre un autre : son film est d'une beauté confondante. – A.-S. M.



Le Canard Enchaîné du 11 juillet 2025

Rock Bottom

María Trénor

Entre New York et Majorque, Robert Wyatt, icône des années 1970, connut des heures divines. Ce film d'animation inspiré lui rend un hommage fort.

Bienvenue dans un trip d'animation psychédélique, hommage vibrant à une légende des années 1970, le musicien Robert Wyatt, leader du groupe anglais Soft Machine, et plus particulièrement à son chef-d'œuvre, l'album *Rock Bottom*, composé et enregistré en 1974, un an après le drame qui a changé sa vie. Le 1er juin 1973, pendant une fête débridée, au crépuscule du mouvement hippie, le musicien tombe en effet du quatrième étage d'un immeuble. Par miracle, il survit à l'accident, mais restera cloué sur un fauteuil roulant pour le restant de ses jours.

Autour de cet épisode charnière dans l'œuvre et l'existence d'un artiste surdoué, la réalisatrice espagnole María Trénor, également scénariste et animatrice, compose un poème visuel tout entier dédié à la folle liberté d'une époque révolue. Où l'image elle-même, éclaboussée d'ocre, d'orange et de violet, semble trempée dans l'acide de rêves artificiels. Où l'amour même est une drogue, à consommer sans limite, à nu sur une plage de Majorque, dans l'une des plus belles scènes de *Rock Bottom* (présenté l'an dernier en compétition au festival d'Annecy). C'est là, au bord de la Méditerranée, que le Robert Wyatt d'avant la chute a composé l'un de ses plus beaux titres, le mélancolique *Sea Song*, inspiré par sa compagne, Alfie, une artiste plasticienne. Leur passion à huis clos, contemplative, charnelle, tempétueuse, brille au cœur du film comme une eau claire mais profonde.

Tout, de l'animation en rotoscopie aux vêtements excentriques et aux visions hallucinées des personnages, des rues folles du New York des années 1970 aux pentes ensoleillées de l'île espagnole, contribue à un hypnotique voyage dans le temps, loin des biopics classiques. L'occasion de (re) découvrir la musique, ici omniprésente, aventureuse et envoûtante d'un maître, d'un homme libre, cassé mais toujours entier. ▷ *Cécile Mury*

| Film d'animation, Espagne/Pologne (1h26).



Le batteur de Soft Machine avant son grave accident de 1973.

> Zoom

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Le rock progressif anglais

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Sous un intitulé ambitieux "LE ROCK PROGRESSIF ANGLAIS (1967-1977)", Christophe Pirenne rend compte du contexte historique, social et technologique de la musique dite "progressive" considérée comme *l'une des plus fertiles de l'histoire du rock [...] à l'intersection entre culture savante et culture populaire.*

Publié en 2005 avec le concours de la Fondation Universitaire de Belgique, ce volumineux ouvrage de 354 pages ne se réduit heureusement pas à une somme encyclopédique.

D'un ton parfois tranché qui traduit une vraie passion pour la matière étudiée, Christophe Pirenne nous apporte dans l'extrait ci-dessous un éclairage inédit sur le Soft Machine des deux premiers albums.

LE ROCK PROGRESSIF ANGLAIS
Christophe Pirenne
Librairie Honoré Champion



Volume I et volume II

De 1967 à 1969, malgré une activité trépidante qui fait de Soft Machine l'un des hérauts du mouvement *underground*, le groupe semble voguer sans but, errant au gré des pérégrinations chaotiques de ses membres, changeant d'orientation au fil des rencontres, enregistrant par opportunisme puis par obligation et poursuivant des expériences communes par nécessité plus que par inclination. Pourtant, les deux premiers albums ont une cohérence stylistique indéniable et permettent de définir plusieurs orientations musicales et extra-musicales.
Partout où cela était possible, le groupe jouait à un volume très élevé dans des concerts ininterrompus d'une durée approximative de deux heures.

> Nous enchaînions nos morceaux pour que la fin de l'un devienne le début du suivant. Ainsi, le seul moment où nous arrêtions, c'était lorsque nous quittions la scène. C'est comme cela que nous avons développé le style de concerts continus qui devint la marque de Soft Machine. [1]

Dès leur gestation, les compositions sont d'ailleurs conçues comme de longues pièces unifiées. Les deux faces du Volume Two: *Rivmic Melodies* et *Esther s Nose Job* ne furent scindées en petits segments thématiques pourvus de titres "ridicules" [2], que pour satisfaire les exigences de la firme de disque [3]. Ces enregistrements, de même que les prestations accompagnées par le spectacle lumineux de Mark Boyle et !es tenues excentriques du groupe, conduisirent une partie de la critique et certains présentateurs à

les associer au mouvement psychédélique. Pour d'autres, les longues improvisations entrecoupant les titres étaient le synonyme d'un attachement au jazz :

> Il ne fait aucun doute que la musique qu'ils jouent est du jazz [...] Entre les parties vocales, Soft Machine improvise et ils swinguent. [...] Leur son est aussi neuf, aussi étrange et aussi frais - dans le jazz que ne l'était celui du bop à l'origine. [4]

D'autres encore parlent de "fusion" ou de "new wave" ! Quant aux membres du groupe, ils semblent eux-mêmes conscients de la position singulière de leur musique. "Nous avons inventé notre propre musique blanche en mettant nos connaissances en commun", affirmait Kevin Ayers, ce que confirmait Daevid Allen en signalant :

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À nouveau, pour déterminer une ligne de conduite esthétique dans l'écheveau de ces déclarations, il convient de retourner aux oeuvres, car s'il est indéniable que Soft Machine a initié une musique propre et originale, il paraît bien plus téméraire d'affirmer que le groupe ait créé l'une des premières fusions de l'histoire de la musique pop.

Le premier repère permettant de dégager l'originalité de Soft Machine en même temps que ses liens à la tradition du pop et à celle du jazz peut se déduire de ses effectifs. La combinaison basse, batterie, clavier peut en effet se lire comme une adaptation électrique du trio à clavier en jazz ou comme celle de la formule du *power trio* (guitare, basse, batterie). À la différence de Cream et du Jimi Hendrix Experience toutefois, le hasard l'emporta sur la nécessité, car Soft Machine n'adopta cette formule que parce que Daevid Allen fut empêché de rentrer en Angleterre. Une telle combinaison plus facile à gérer humainement et matériellement exigeait des compétences musicales solides et aboutit vraisemblablement à l'adoption de techniques, de timbres et de formes qui forgèrent le style de leurs deux premiers albums.

L'un des apports majeurs de Soft Machine fut d'importer dans la tradition naissante du rock des pratiques d'improvisation et d'interprétation du bop et de ses dérivés. Robert Wyatt et Mike Ratledge n'avaient d'ailleurs jamais caché leur inclination pour des artistes comme Charlie Parker ou John Coltrane, mais de telles interprétations sont souvent au-delà de leurs compétences réelles. En 1968-69, leur bagage instrumental est certes plus appréciable, mais l'incidence du bop se marque plus dans les formes que dans la qualité de l'improvisation. Plutôt que de construire les titres sur une alternance de couplets et de refrains, ils empruntent au jazz la pratique du chorus, et au bop la forme thème, improvisation, thème, avec de fréquents unissons dans les expositions. Hugh Hopper expliqua d'ailleurs :

> Lorsque nous répétions le Volume Two, il y avait de nombreuses mélodies à l'unisson dans lesquelles la basse devait être aussi forte que le soliste pour bien sonner. [6]
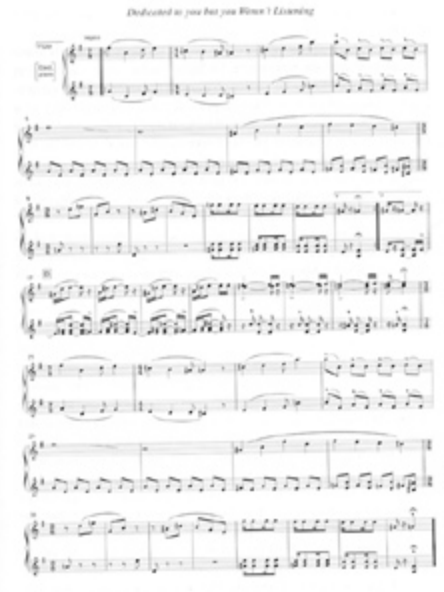
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Comme dans le bop, l'harmonie du thème ou sa mélodie est reprise en boucle et sert de support aux improvisations. Dans *So Boot if at all*, initialement composé par Hugh Hopper sous le titre *I Should Have Known*, ce sont ainsi deux petits *riffs* de basse qui servent d'ossature à un long solo d'orgue.

D'autres traits évoquent également également le bop et ses dérivés, mais ils apparaissent avec plus de parcimonie. La basse fournit parfois un support harmonique sous forme de *walking basses*, la batterie reprend fréquemment des séquences de

"tinkety" pour de courts passages (*Joy of a toy*, *Save Yourself*, *Lullaby Letter*, *We Did it Again*, *Thank you Pierrot Lunaire*), le clavier adopte un rôle intermédiaire tantôt de soliste, tantôt d'accompagnateur avec des harmonies également inspirées du jazz (*Thank you Pierrot Lunaire*). Le goût de Mike Ratledge pour John Coltrane s'exprime dans des titres qui, tels *Out of rune* ou *Have you Ever Been Green* tiennent plutôt du free jazz. Il faut aussi mentionner les trois derniers morceaux du Volume Two, qui entretiennent d'évidentes accointances avec le jazz rock, en particulier, dans leur construction métrique. En 1967, Michael Zwerin notait déjà que le groupe recourait à des mesures inusitées :

> Ils ont un titre en 7/4. subdivisé 1,2.3,-1-1,2,3. Robert swingue dur, dans un style que je n'ai jamais entendu auparavant et qui combine Ringo Starr et Elvin Jones. [7]



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Sur le *Volume Two*, ce ne sont pas moins de sept titres qui tout ou en partie sont joués en 7/4 ou en 7/8 (exemple ci-contre: *Dedicated to you but you Weren't Listening*), avec des mètres parfois étonnants comme un passage en 13/16 dans *Hibou, Anemone and Bear* ou, au début de *Dada was Here* (0'11"), la très belle superposition d'une mélodie ternaire sur une mesure en 4/4. La fréquence des mesures en 7/4 ou en 7/8 conduit le groupe à utiliser des subdivisions irrégulières telles qu'un 3/2/2 dans *Pig* et *Orange Skin Food*. Une pratique que l'on retrouve aussi dans l'exploitation de certaines mesures en 4/4 (croches groupées en séquence 3/3/2 dans *Dada was Here*) et qui, par leur fréquence, comptent parmi les traits les plus saillants de la musique de Soft Machine. Enfin, l'ajout de cuivres sur quelques titres du second album confère au groupe une couleur proche du jazz, même si ceux-ci interviennent avant tout pour doubler des lignes mélodiques et non pour exécuter des soli.

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Ces différents traits côtoient des éléments communs à la musique pop de l'époque. Ainsi, le couplet et le solo de *Hope for Hapiness* peuvent s' apparenter aux premières productions d'un groupe tel que Deep Purple. On y trouve les mêmes rythmes carrés inspirés de la *beat music* ou du rhythm and blues, les mêmes harmonies et les mêmes associations de timbres. Ces caractéristiques se retrouvent dans de nombreux autres titres. Il suffit d'écouter les rythmes de batterie de même que l' accompagnement de la basse dans *Why am I so short* ou dans *Lullaby Letter* pour s'en convaincre. Toutefois, comme pour les éléments empruntés au jazz, ces traits "pop" sont employés de façon disparate et sans réelle continuité. Dans *Joy of a Toy*, Wyatt commence par accentuer second et quatrième temps, puis à 2'03", lorsque le titre atteint une sorte paroxysme, il joue un rythme tout à fait typique du rhythm and blues. La musique de Soft Machine se distingue aussi par la spécificité de ses timbres. Certes, le groupe n'innove pas en matière de technologie, mais il propose des exploitations singulières d'effets ou de techniques plus moins répandus. Ainsi, lorsque Hugh Hopper commence à "gonfler" le son de sa basse en utilisant une pédale fuzz, il n 'hésite pas à mentionner ses sources d'inspiration.

> En aucun cas je n'ai été la première personne à utiliser une fuzz bass. La première fuzz bass que j'aie jamais entendue était sur Rubber Soul des Beatles. Paul McCartney l'utilisait. Je ne m'en souviens plus aujourd'hui, mais je pense que c'est Mike Ratledge qui me suggéra d'utiliser le fuzz sur la basse, parce que nous l'utilisions déjà pour l'orgue.. [9]

Pareillement, les nombreux effets de studio utilisés lors du mixage du premier album, sans être inédits, s'imposent par l' originalité de leur utilisation. Dans *Hope for happiness*, le chant passe alternativement d'un canal à l'autre, le son des *rim shots* est transformé dans une chambre d'écho et les répétitions vocales (de 0'50" à 1'00") évoquent, bien avant leur apparition, les techniques de *sampling*. Ces effets de boucle avaient été employés par le groupe lors de l' enregistrement de *Spaced* où grâce à un Ferrograph, le premier enregistreur à bande anglais, leur ingénieur du son, Bob Woolford, avait créé de nombreuses boucles de durée très variables [10]. Enfin, on peut aussi mentionner l'association ponctuelle de Soft Machine avec Brian Hopper au saxophone ténor et soprano. Dans le contexte de l' époque, celui-ci contribue aussi à élargir leur palette instrumentale et à leur donner un son plus proche du jazz.

Quant aux illustrations, les deux pochettes ont la particularité de procéder à la fois du montage photographique et du collage. Le premier album avec ses roues dentées et ses engrenages surimposés à la photo des musiciens évoque peut-être le nom du groupe et les impressions visuelles créées par les projections qui accompagnaient leurs concerts. En revanche, des éléments comme l'ajout d'un dessin de costume sur le torse nu de Robert Wyatt ou la photographie d'une jeune femme nue vue de dos sur le *Volume II* évoque plutôt un collage dadaïste. D'un point de vue iconographique, le progressisme de Soft Machine se rapproche donc plus des théories esthétiques enseignées dans les écoles artistiques anglaises que d'une conception romantique de la création et, dans ce sens, les membres du groupe s'engouffrent dans une direction radicalement différente de celle que choisissent d'autres formations progressives.

La production de Soft Machine se singularise aussi par ses textes, même si, dans ce domaine, il faut distinguer l'intention de la réalisation. Robert Wyatt, auteur de la plupart d' entre eux, multiplie les références culturelles et utilise force métaphores obscures et allusions nébuleuses. On pourrait être tenté de rapprocher ces pratiques d'écriture de son passé artistique, mais s'il a lu et joué des textes de Jarry et si les liens du groupe avec le Collège de Pataphysique sont bien connus, il ne faut toutefois pas surestimer cette filiation. Certes, des titres comme *Pataphysical Introduction*, plagiant le début de *Sgt. Pepper*, *A Concise British Alphabet*, évoquant les comptines d'Edward Gorey, *Thank you Pierrot Lunaire*, allusion à l'oeuvre de Schoenberg ou *Esther's Nose Job*, emprunté à *V* de Thomas Pynchon, témoignent bien d'une culture relativement large, mais il n'est pas certain qu'ils fassent sens. On l'a dit: l'apparition de ces titres fut tardive et imposée et ils recouvrent des thèmes aux prétentions bien moindres que ce que ne suggère leur apparence. La plupart d'entre eux sont de petites narrations anecdotiques faciles à décoder. Ils évoquent le quotidien du batteur/chanteur (*Hope for Happiness*), ses proches (*Thank you Pierrot Lunaire* parle de Mike Ratledge, *Have you Ever Bean Green* du Jimi Hendrix Experience, *As Long as he Lies Perfectly Stil*l de Kevin Ayers) ou ses propres préoccupations (*Hibou, Anemone and Bear*).

Why am I so short ?
Paroles de Robert Wyatt.
Extrait de l'album Soft Machine. Probe CPLP 4500 (1968)

I've got a drum kit and some sticks
So when I'm drunk or in a trip
I find it easy to express myself
I hit the drum so hard and break all my heads
And then I end the day in one of my beds. [...]

The best of all I like to talk about me.

J'ai une batterie et des baguettes
Alors quand je suis saoul ou stone
C'est très facile de m'exprimer
Je frappe sur ma batterie et casse toutes mes peaux
Et puis j'arrête les frais dans un de mes lits

Ce qui me plaît le plus c'est de parler de moi.

En fait, la démarche artistique des deux premiers albums de Soft Machine s'apparente à celle d'un groupe adolescent dont l'idéal se résume plutôt aux plaisirs de l'oisiveté, de l'alcool et d'une vie entre amis, qu'à la volonté de créer pour la postérité. S'appropriant avec opportunisme les influences très diverses de leur entourage et les mariant à leurs propres goûts, ils proposent, tant dans la musique que dans les textes, une sorte de somme des principales tendances esthétiques en vogue à l'époque. Soft Machine résume son temps - et il est le seul groupe anglais de l'époque à proposer une fusion aussi singulière - mais il innove peu. Toutefois, à force d'insister sur leur légèreté, ils suscitèrent une réaction inverse et tant la musique que les textes furent, involontairement peut-être, mais de manière incontestable, associées aux productions cryptées et mystérieuses du psychédélisme.

Le rock progressif anglais (1967-1977) - extraits du chapitre II.

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[1] Robert Wyatt, cité par Michael King, 1994

[2] Mike Ratledge, cité par Michael King, 1994

[3] Les listes des chansons jouées au cours des concerts est parfois reprise dans la biographie de Michael King (Wrong Movements). La publication d'un concert enregistré au Paradisio d'Amsterdam le 29 mars 1969 montre aussi que les liens entre les titres étaient bien respectés pendant les concerts, même si *Rivmic Melodies* et *Esther's Nose Job* ne sont interprétés qu'à moitié. Soft Machine, *The Soft Machine Turns on*, Amazing Discs, CDLP 4505, 1988

[4] Michael Zwerin, cité par Michael King, 1994

[5] Ibid

[6] Hugh Hopper, cité par Michael King, 1994

[7] Ibid

[8] Robert Wyatt, cité par Marc Randall, "Musician Forum: Robert Wyatt Meets Billl Nelson", Musician Magazine, Août 1992, p. 39

[9] Hugh Hopper, cité par Michael King, 1994

[10] Bob Woolford, *Spaced*, Cuneiform Records, Rune 90, 1996

Le rock progressif anglais

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Sous un intitulé ambitieux "LE ROCK PROGRESSIF ANGLAIS (1967-1977)", Christophe Pirenne rend compte du contexte historique, social et technologique de la musique dite "progressive" considérée comme *l'une des plus fertiles de l'histoire du rock [...] à l'intersection entre culture savante et culture populaire.*

Publié en 2005 avec le concours de la Fondation Universitaire de Belgique, ce volumineux ouvrage de 354 pages ne se réduit heureusement pas à une somme encyclopédique.

D'un ton parfois tranché qui traduit une vraie passion pour la matière étudiée, Christophe Pirenne nous apporte dans l'extrait ci-dessous un éclairage inédit sur le Soft Machine des deux premiers albums.

LE ROCK PROGRESSIF ANGLAIS
Christophe Pirenne
Librairie Honoré Champion



Volume I et volume II

De 1967 à 1969, malgré une activité trépidante qui fait de Soft Machine l'un des hérauts du mouvement *underground*, le groupe semble voguer sans but, errant au gré des pérégrinations chaotiques de ses membres, changeant d'orientation au fil des rencontres, enregistrant par opportunisme puis par obligation et poursuivant des expériences communes par nécessité plus que par inclination. Pourtant, les deux premiers albums ont une cohérence stylistique indéniable et permettent de définir plusieurs orientations musicales et extra-musicales.
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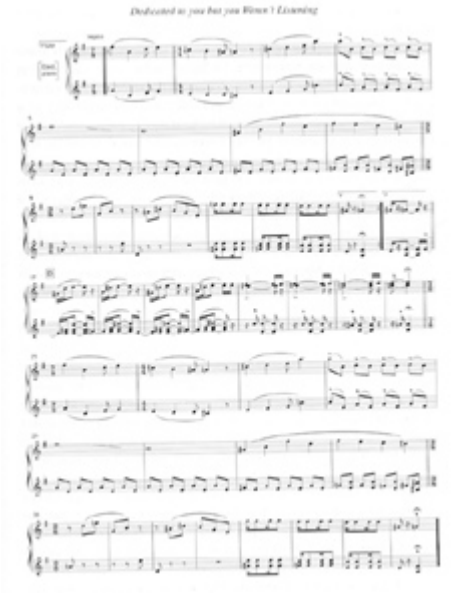
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Ces différents traits côtoient des éléments communs à la musique pop de l'époque. Ainsi, le couplet et le solo de *Hope for Hapiness* peuvent s' apparenter aux premières productions d'un groupe tel que Deep Purple. On y trouve les mêmes rythmes carrés inspirés de la *beat music* ou du rhythm and blues, les mêmes harmonies et les mêmes associations de timbres. Ces caractéristiques se retrouvent dans de nombreux autres titres. Il suffit d'écouter les rythmes de batterie de même que l' accompagnement de la basse dans *Why am I so short* ou dans *Lullaby Letter* pour s'en convaincre. Toutefois, comme pour les éléments empruntés au jazz, ces traits "pop" sont employés de façon disparate et sans réelle continuité. Dans *Joy of a Toy*, Wyatt commence par accentuer second et quatrième temps, puis à 2'03", lorsque le titre atteint une sorte paroxysme, il joue un rythme tout à fait typique du rhythm and blues. La musique de Soft Machine se distingue aussi par la spécificité de ses timbres. Certes, le groupe n'innove pas en matière de technologie, mais il propose des exploitations singulières d'effets ou de techniques plus moins répandus. Ainsi, lorsque Hugh Hopper commence à "gonfler" le son de sa basse en utilisant une pédale fuzz, il n 'hésite pas à mentionner ses sources d'inspiration.

> En aucun cas je n'ai été la première personne à utiliser une fuzz bass. La première fuzz bass que j'aie jamais entendue était sur Rubber Soul des Beatles. Paul McCartney l'utilisait. Je ne m'en souviens plus aujourd'hui, mais je pense que c'est Mike Ratledge qui me suggéra d'utiliser le fuzz sur la basse, parce que nous l'utilisions déjà pour l'orgue.. [9]

Pareillement, les nombreux effets de studio utilisés lors du mixage du premier album, sans être inédits, s'imposent par l' originalité de leur utilisation. Dans *Hope for happiness*, le chant passe alternativement d'un canal à l'autre, le son des *rim shots* est transformé dans une chambre d'écho et les répétitions vocales (de 0'50" à 1'00") évoquent, bien avant leur apparition, les techniques de *sampling*. Ces effets de boucle avaient été employés par le groupe lors de l' enregistrement de *Spaced* où grâce à un Ferrograph, le premier enregistreur à bande anglais, leur ingénieur du son, Bob Woolford, avait créé de nombreuses boucles de durée très variables [10]. Enfin, on peut aussi mentionner l'association ponctuelle de Soft Machine avec Brian Hopper au saxophone ténor et soprano. Dans le contexte de l' époque, celui-ci contribue aussi à

élargir leur palette instrumentale et à leur donner un son plus proche du jazz.

Quant aux illustrations, les deux pochettes ont la particularité de procéder à la fois du montage photographique et du collage. Le premier album avec ses roues dentées et ses engrenages surimposés à la photo des musiciens évoque peut-être le nom du groupe et les impressions visuelles créées par les projections qui accompagnaient leurs concerts. En revanche, des éléments comme l'ajout d'un dessin de costume sur le torse nu de Robert Wyatt ou la photographie d'une jeune femme nue vue de dos sur le *Volume II* évoque plutôt un collage dadaïste. D'un point de vue iconographique, le progressisme de Soft Machine se rapproche donc plus des théories esthétiques enseignées dans les écoles artistiques anglaises que d'une conception romantique de la création et, dans ce sens, les membres du groupe s'engouffrent dans une direction radicalement différente de celle que choisissent d'autres formations progressives.

La production de Soft Machine se singularise aussi par ses textes, même si, dans ce domaine, il faut distinguer l'intention de la réalisation. Robert Wyatt, auteur de la plupart d' entre eux, multiplie les références culturelles et utilise force métaphores obscures et allusions nébuleuses. On pourrait être tenté de rapprocher ces pratiques d'écriture de son passé artistique, mais s'il a lu et joué des textes de Jarry et si les liens du groupe avec le Collège de Pataphysique sont bien connus, il ne faut toutefois pas surestimer cette filiation. Certes, des titres comme *Pataphysical Introduction*, plagiant le début de *Sgt. Pepper*, *A Concise British Alphabet*, évoquant les comptines d'Edward Gorey, *Thank you Pierrot Lunaire*, allusion à l'oeuvre de Schoenberg ou *Esther's Nose Job*, emprunté à *V* de Thomas Pynchon, témoignent bien d'une culture relativement large, mais il n'est pas certain qu'ils fassent sens. On l'a dit: l'apparition de ces titres fut tardive et imposée et ils recouvrent des thèmes aux prétentions bien moindres que ce que ne suggère leur apparence. La plupart d'entre eux sont de petites narrations anecdotiques faciles à décoder. Ils évoquent le quotidien du batteur/chanteur (*Hope for Happiness*), ses proches (*Thank you Pierrot Lunaire* parle de Mike Ratledge, *Have you Ever Bean Green* du Jimi Hendrix Experience, *As Long as he Lies Perfectly Stil*l de Kevin Ayers) ou ses propres préoccupations (*Hibou, Anemone and Bear*).

Why am I so short ?
Paroles de Robert Wyatt.
Extrait de l'album Soft Machine. Probe CPLP 4500 (1968)

I've got a drum kit and some sticks
So when I'm drunk or in a trip
I find it easy to express myself
I hit the drum so hard and break all my heads
And then I end the day in one of my beds. [...]

The best of all I like to talk about me.

J'ai une batterie et des baguettes
Alors quand je suis saoul ou stone
C'est très facile de m'exprimer
Je frappe sur ma batterie et casse toutes mes peaux
Et puis j'arrête les frais dans un de mes lits

Ce qui me plaît le plus c'est de parler de moi.

En fait, la démarche artistique des deux premiers albums de Soft Machine s'apparente à celle d'un groupe adolescent dont l'idéal se résume plutôt aux plaisirs de l'oisiveté, de l'alcool et d'une vie entre amis, qu'à la volonté de créer pour la postérité. S'appropriant avec opportunisme les influences très diverses de leur entourage et les mariant à leurs propres goûts, ils proposent, tant dans la musique que dans les textes, une sorte de somme des principales tendances esthétiques en vogue à l'époque. Soft Machine résume son temps - et il est le seul groupe anglais de l'époque à proposer une fusion aussi singulière - mais il innove peu. Toutefois, à force d'insister sur leur légèreté, ils suscitèrent une réaction inverse et tant la musique que les textes furent, involontairement peut-être, mais de manière incontestable, associées aux productions cryptées et mystérieuses du psychédélisme.

Le rock progressif anglais (1967-1977) - extraits du chapitre II.

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[1] Robert Wyatt, cité par Michael King, 1994

[2] Mike Ratledge, cité par Michael King, 1994

[3] Les listes des chansons jouées au cours des concerts est parfois reprise dans la biographie de Michael King (Wrong Movements). La publication d'un concert enregistré au Paradisio d'Amsterdam le 29 mars 1969 montre aussi

que les liens entre les titres étaient bien respectés pendant les concerts, même si *Rivmic Melodies* et *Esther's Nose Job* ne sont interprétés qu'à moitié. Soft Machine, *The Soft Machine Turns on*, Amazing Discs, CDLP 4505, 1988

[4] Michael Zwerin, cité par Michael King, 1994

[5] Ibid

[6] Hugh Hopper, cité par Michael King, 1994

[7] Ibid

[8] Robert Wyatt, cité par Marc Randall, "Musician Forum: Robert Wyatt Meets Billl Nelson", Musician Magazine, Août 1992, p. 39

[9] Hugh Hopper, cité par Michael King, 1994

[10] Bob Woolford, *Spaced*, Cuneiform Records, Rune 90, 1996

* * *

A lire : une analyse critique de cet ouvrage publiée dans le n° 95 de Dissonance, la revue de l'Association Suisse des musiciens dans laquelle le musicologue Pierre Michel réévalue le rôle de la mouvance "Canterbury" dans ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler "Le rock progressif".

Lire l'article

Le Rock progressif anglais (1967-1977)
Christophe Pirenne
Paris, Librairie Honoré Champion, 2005, 354 p.

LE ROCK PROGRESSIF VU PAR UN MUSICOLOGUE



Le groupe YES en concert en 1977.

Si les Anglo-saxons et les Allemands ont développé depuis plus de dix ans une production assez abondante d'ouvrages musicologiques sur le Rock, les pays francophones sont largement en retard dans ce domaine, et le belge Christophe Pirenne est donc l'un des pionniers avec son ouvrage concernant le « rock progressif anglais » entre 1967 et 1977, soit entre la sortie du fameux *Sgt. Pepper* des Beatles et celle de *Going for the one* de Yes. Parallèlement au jazz des années 1960, également très aventureux, le Rock progressif anglais s'est distingué par une grande richesse d'expressions, par des démarches ambitieuses musicalement, et par une qualité généralement très élevée du niveau d'interprétation. Les groupes les plus célèbres de ce mouvement — King Crimson, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Jethro Tull, Yes, Genesis — sont abordés de façon détaillée, avec de fines analyses, mais beaucoup d'autres ensembles sont également présents.

L'ouvrage débute par une longue introduction où l'auteur explique qu'il voulait écrire à l'origine une « histoire de la musique progressive dans la tradition afro-américaine », mais que son projet s'est finalement réduit à une période de dix ans. Le livre exclut toutes les formes de jazz progressif et n'évoque pas la période tardive (après 1977) de ce genre qui fut ensuite marginalisé. Christophe Pirenne discute aussi assez longuement la question de l'entrée du rock progressif dans « le champ du savoir agréé qu'est la musicologie » ; la sophistication du rock progressif semblait adéquate pour une première reconnaissance par la musicologie « académique » : « il s'est ainsi imposé à l'évidence parce que le *cluster* ouvrant *Awaken* de Yes semblait mieux soutenir la comparaison avec les œuvres du répertoire que les trois accords d'*Anarchy in the UK* des Sex Pistols ». Dans son premier chapitre, Pirenne aborde le « concept de musique progressive dans le rock » en traitant les terminologies, définitions et réceptions. Partant de l'« émergence du concept » (1966-69) il en arrive à « la fortune des concepts » (1969-73), moment où les firmes de disque « prennent conscience de la spécificité du public ». Ainsi trouve-t-on chez le critique Steve Lake ces propos en 1973 sur le groupe Hatfield and the North : « Ce n'est pas une musique simple à écouter. Elle demande de la part du public un certain degré de concentration ». Pirenne évoque ensuite les « revirements de la tradition critique », avec surtout les attitudes très sévères des journalistes de « Creem » au départ. Cette façon de reprocher au rock progressif d'introduire « l'art dans ce qui était considéré comme de l'artisanat » traduit à la fois une forme d'incompréhension des journalistes (dont la culture n'était peut-être pas suffisante pour juger ces musiques avec autant d'assurance) et un besoin de retrouver les dimensions simplistes et basiques du rock'n roll à travers le nouveau courant émergeant : le *Punk*. Pirenne considère ces questions du point de vue sociologique : l'institutionnalisation du rock progressif, et sa « compromission avec le pouvoir et les institutions officielles » auraient été ressenties à l'époque comme une « trahison ultime de l'esprit du rock ». Cette hypothèse et d'autres développées par Pirenne ne doivent peut-être pas cacher non plus l'une des questions fondamentales : l'intolérance de certains milieux du rock, dont les décennies suivantes et surtout le passé proche ont bien montré certaines dérives politiques extrémistes.

Les chapitres II et III sont consacrés à l'analyse d'œuvres importantes, le choix de celles-ci et des groupes concernés correspondant avant tout pour l'auteur au fait « d'envisager un échantillon suffisamment large et représentatif des diverses tendances [...] pour pouvoir proposer des considérations générales ». Le chapitre II est consacré à des enregistrements compris entre 1966 et 1969 (Beatles, Cream, Pink Floyd, The Nice, Moody Blues, premiers disques de Soft Machine, Procol Harum), alors que le suivant correspond à la pleine maturité du genre : King Crimson, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Jethro Tull, Yes, Genesis. Nous avons ici l'une des premières contributions précises à la connaissance détaillée de ces musiques, et à leur estimation esthétique. Ces analyses sont très convaincantes et elles introduisent de nombreuses problématiques essentielles pour ces musiques. On regrettera peut-être (mais Pirenne prévient le lecteur qu'il n'a pas pu faire le choix de l'exhaustivité) que l'école dite « de Canterbury » (Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt, Caravan, Hatfield and the North, National Health, Gong, etc.) soit réduite aux deux premiers albums de Soft Machine... Au regard de l'histoire ces groupes resteront sans doute aussi significatifs dans leurs périodes de maturité (par exemple l'album « Third » de Soft Machine) que Yes ou Genesis ! Le quatrième chapitre s'intitule « Les conditions du Rock progressif » et revient sur les lieux, le cadre historique, le milieu social des musiciens, les influences musicales, les instruments de promotion, les instruments de musique (avec surtout l'émergence des claviers : mellotron, orgue Hammond, synthétiseurs, piano électrique, etc.), les enregistrements. Enfin, le livre se termine avec un cinquième chapitre intitulé « L'art du Rock progressif » où Christophe Pirenne fait une synthèse des éléments musicaux, de la nature des textes chantés, des aspects visuels et de la pluralité des styles. Une bibliographie importante clôt le livre. On ne saura que recommander ce bel ouvrage qui offre une vision précise et scientifique sur ce genre musical, et ne donne jamais dans l'anecdote (ce qui est malheureusement souvent le cas dans les livres consacrés au rock). Avec sa reconnaissance « musicologique » certes tardive, le Rock progressif anglais s'inscrit néanmoins parmi les sujets de recherche légitimes des musicologues d'aujourd'hui (comme le jazz-rock, qui lui était parallèle), ce qui permettra sans doute aux auditeurs et musicologues de dépasser désormais certains jugements un peu primaires de quelques journalistes influents (mais pas toujours très objectifs) des années 1970.

Pierre Michel

Drury Lane

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Theatre Royal Drury Lane, le concert mythique du 8 septembre 1974.

Il en existe au moins quatre disques, quatre pirates. J'ignore s'il s'agit du même enregistrement ou si les quatre sources sont différentes. Pour ma part, la première version que j'ai possédée avait un son calamiteux, la dernière était un peu meilleure...

Il se murmure dans les forums que Rykodisc disposerait des bandes du concert et pourrait les publier prochainement.

Dans l'affirmative et si la qualité sonore est au niveau de *Calyx*, l'extrait proposé dans le coffret **EPs**, le nouveau label de R.W. fera bien des heureux...

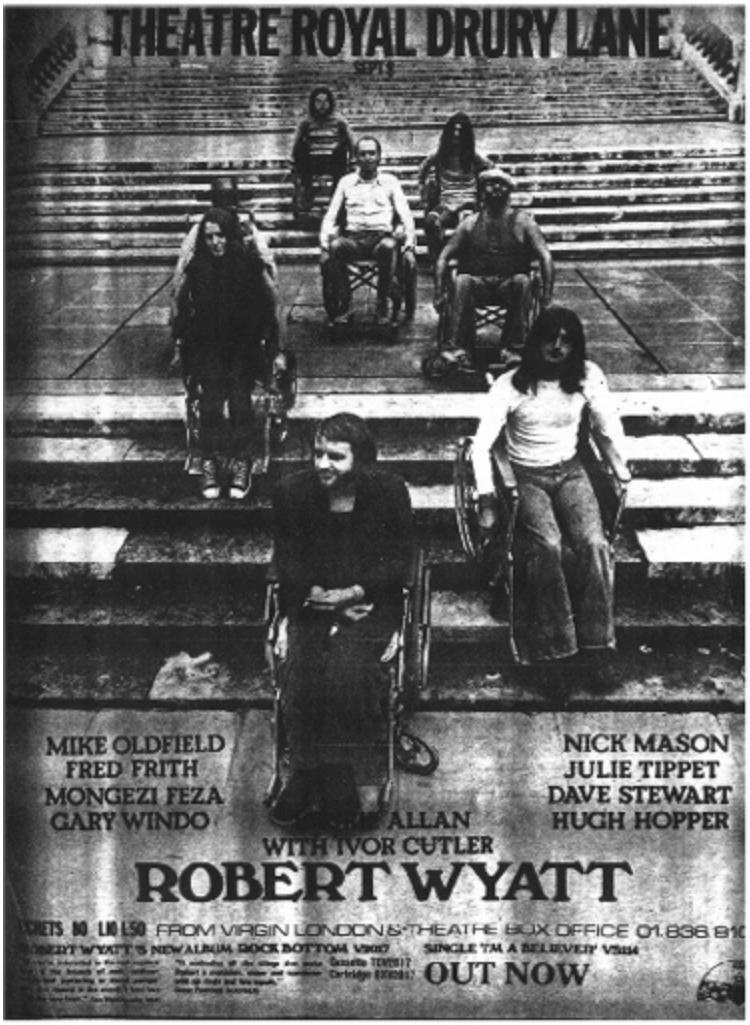
11 octobre 2005 : Alléluia ! après des années de rumeurs et de démentis - 31 ans plus tard - ce fameux concert du 8 septembre 1974 est enfin édité et toute la beauté que l'on pressentait dans les bootlegs est enfin là.

Voix magique, musiciens sous hypnose, émotion totale...

En appendice, **RW** dédie cet abum à John Peel, Mongezi Feza et Gary Windo, with gratitude.

> Les disques pirates

> Le disque officiel



Programme du concert

ROBERT WYATT



IN CONCERT.

Sunday 8th September 1974
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane

ORDER OF EVENTS

FIRST

IVOR CUTLER and PHYLLIS APRIL KING

with a selection of songs and poems

NEXT THE INTERMISSION AND THEN

ROBERT WYATT	vocals
DAVE STEWART	keyboards
HUGH HOPPER	bass
LAURIE ALLAN	drums
FRED FRITH	guitar, violin
MIKE OLDFIELD	guitar
JULIE TIPPETT	vocals
GARY WINDO	bass clarinet, tenor saxophone
MONGEZI FEZA	trumpet
NICK MASON	drums

PLAYING

Sea Song	Robert Wyatt
A Last Straw	Robert Wyatt
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road	Robert Wyatt
Alifie	Robert Wyatt
Alifib	Robert Wyatt
Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening	Hugh Hopper
God Song	Phil Miller/Robert Wyatt
Instant Pussy	Robert Wyatt
Signed Curtain	Robert Wyatt
Calyx	Phil Miller/Robert Wyatt
Memories	Hugh Hopper
I'm A Believer	Neil Diamond

LIGHTING	Andre Larson, Tony Wivell
SOUND MIXING	Peter Wade
STAGE ASSISTANCE	Nick Levett, Chris Levett

ROBERT WYATT
A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Born Bristol, moved to Dulwich and later to Canterbury at age of ten.

While at school, received tuition in piano, violin, trumpet and drums. Further tuition in drums from George Neidorf.

Became drummer/vocalist in local group The Wilde Flowers from 1964-66.

Drummer/vocalist of Soft Machine 1967-1971, appearing on the following recordings: "Rock Generation Vols. 7 & 8" (Byg), "The Soft Machine" and "Volume Two" (Probe), "Third" and "Fourth" (CBS)

During this period, also made a single with Jimi Hendrix (never released); did session work with Eric Burdon & The Animals; became occasional drummer of Kevin Ayers & The Whole World and made appearances on Ayers' records; accomplished solo album "The End Of An Ear" (CBS) and contributed to Daevid Allen's "Banana Moon" (Byg). Other peripheral activities; Symbiosis, Keith Tippett and Centipede.

Formed Matching Mole in December 1971. Group made two albums – "Matching Mole" and "Little Red Record" (CBS) – before parting company a year later.

Second incarnation of Matching Mole about to begin work in Summer 1973 when serious fall resulted in paralysis from waist down.

During six-month stay in hospital, composed the material for "Rock Bottom" subsequently recorded with Pink Floyd's Nick Mason producing. Released 26/7/74.

Album received ecstatic reviews. Newly recorded single "I'm A Believer"/ "Memories" released 6/9/74

PROGRAMME NOTE

Instead, Here is one of the many songs we won't do this evening:

SOUP SONG

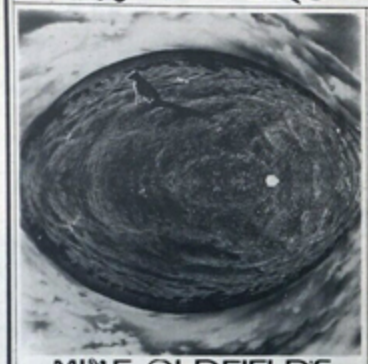
Here's a mushroom on my eyelid
There's a carrot down my back
I can see in the distance
A vast quantity of beans
To you I'm just a flavour
To make your stew taste nice
Oh my God here come the onions
And I don't believe it
At least a pound of rice

There was a time when bacon sandwiches
Were everyone's favourite snack
I'm delicious when I'm crunchy
Even when I'm almost black
So why you make a soup with me
I just can't understand
It seems so bloody tasteless
Not to mention underhand

Now there's no hope of getting out of here
I can feel I'm going soft
Dirty water soak my fibres
The whole saucepan's getting hot
So I may as well resign myself
Make friends with a few peas
But I just can't help hoping
That a tummy ache will bring you to your knees

Robert Wyatt

VIRGIN RECORDS



MIKE OLDFIELD'S
HERGEST RIDGE

Out Now

ALBUM V2013 CASSETTE TCV2013

AD VICE

With Uncle John and Uncle Trevor

Well, we'd like to say it's nice to be back with you again but to be entirely frank, it isn't. MEDIA GLUT can be a very serious and debilitating complaint: dilation of the pancreas, secretion of virulent toxins, irritability, swellings and sores in the more tropical parts of the body, purpling of the mucous and absorbency of tissues, all this and a tendency, now well-known to general practitioners and specialists alike, of extending sentences by means of subordinate clauses, be they of manner, conversation, time, place, adjectival, adverbial or otherwise, until they, that is to say the sentences, the subject of the subordinate clause above, become so unwieldy and unsightly as the parts of the body the hands of which are responsible for the typing of those very subordinate clauses which.....

UNCLE TREVOR INTERVENES:

Uncle John has unfortunately been called away to the telephone for a few weeks and I shall be handling Media Glut enquiries for the time being. And for that matter, furnishable future. Please write to me c/o Uncle Trevor, 10B Portobello Road, W.11.

THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE SEPT 8

ROBERT WYATT

GUEST STARS
MIKE OLDFIELD
JULIE TIPPETT
FRED FRITH
GARY WINDO



NICK MASON
HUGH HOPPER
MONGEZI FEZA
LAURIE ALLAN
DAVE STEWART

TICKETS 80 LIO L50

ROCK BOTTOM

ALBUM V2017 CASSETTE TCV2017

ROBERT WYATT
ROCK BOTTOM (V2017)

"This album is bound to appeal to those who identify with the Eno/John Cale/Kevin Ayers forward guard, but has that clan beaten by its honesty, wit and identity." Peter Harvey RECORD & RADIO MIRROR

"It embodies all the things that make Robert a musician, singer and composer with no rivals and few equals." Steve Peacock SOUNDS

" 'ROCK BUTTOM' isn't an album that will pin you to the wall with dazzling pyrotechnics, but it is one that you'll be playing again and again, long after most of 74's superheroes have proved to be merely transient fads."
— Steve Lake MM

"If you're interested in the real exploration of the bounds of rock, without intellectual posturing or moral pomposity, this record is the month's best buy — at the very least." Ian MacDonald NME

Please add 10p postage and packing per album. If you order 5 albums or more we won't only 40p postage and packing.

Imports & Kraut Rock

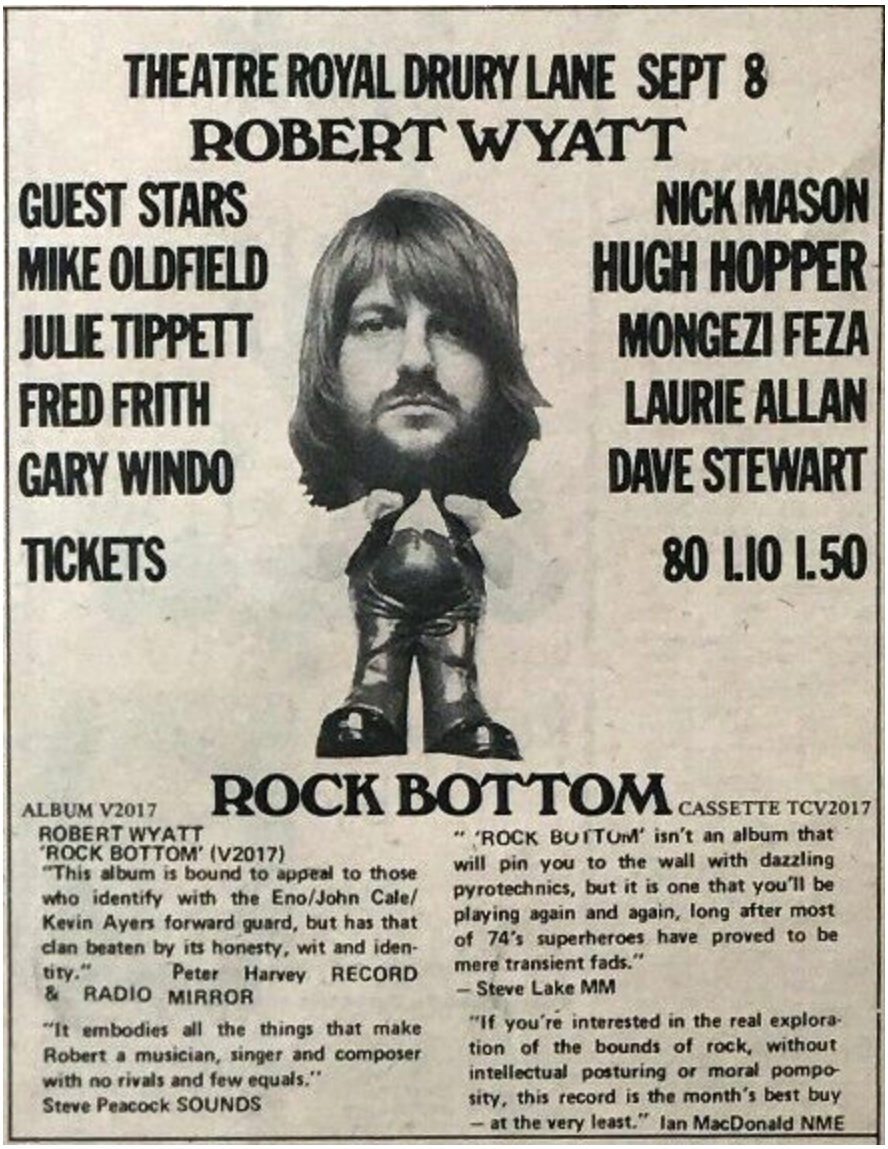
Slash

Virgin Catalogue

Top 30 singles

COMING

Top 50



Little Red Concert
animated fantasy based on the concert at Theatre Royal Drury Lane

Le Rythme et la Raison
Robert Wyatt : le chant d'un funambule

Une série de cinq émissions de 30 minutes diffusée sur France Culture du 2 au 6 Mars 1992 (de 20h à 20h30).

"L'interview de Robert Wyatt (à l'occasion de la sortie de l'album Dondestan) a eu lieu le 11 novembre 1991 chez lui à Louth où il a répondu à nos questions pendant plus de 3 heures. Il a également composé un générique spécialement pour la série, a accepté de nous lire deux de ses textes traduits en français et nous a confié quelques enregistrements introuvables à l'époque."



Ont également participé à la série : Les musiciens Daevid Allen, Hugh Hopper, Phil Miller, Didier Malherbe et Jean-Louis Murat, Geoff Travis, le responsable du label Rough Trade, Matt Kemp, l'ingénieur du son de Dondestan, le journaliste Alain Dister, Alfie Benge... Et la voix de Anna de Carvalho…

Une émission produite et réalisée par Cyril Bécue et Gilles Pezerat.

1ère émission

L'album Dondestan- l'éducation musicale et les titres : Costa – The sight of the wind – Worship – Sea song - Strange fruit – Left on man.

0:00 / 30:30

LE RYTHME ET LA RAISON - 1
[42,8 Mo]

2ème émission

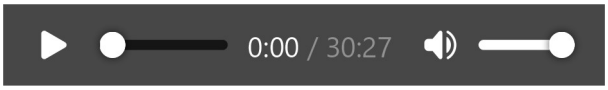
Les années Soft Machine et les titres : extraits des albums Soft 1 & 2 - extrait de Moon in June - Caroline.

0:00 / 30:04

LE RYTHME ET LA RAISON - 2
[42,2 Mo]

3ème émission

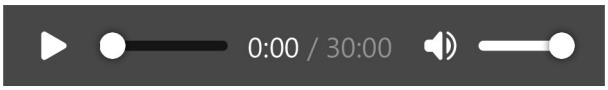
Les influences - L'album The end of an ear - le groupe Matching Mole et les titres : Stranger in the night – extraits de The end of an ear - Round midnight – Yesterday man – extrait d'un concert de Matching Mole – Signed curtain –
extrait du concert de R. Wyatt avec le groupe Henry Cow au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées à Paris en 1975.



LE RYTHME ET LA RAISON - 3
[42,8 Mo]

4ème émission :

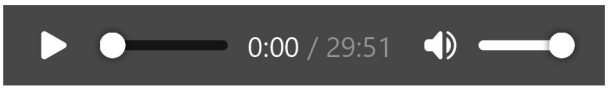
l'album Rock Bottom - les séances d'enregistrement -
la technologie et les titres : Last straw – Little Red Riding Hood hit the road – Alifib - Dondestan – East Timor – Pig – Unmasked (avec le groupe CTI).



LE RYTHME ET LA RAISON - 4
[42,1 Mo]

5ème émission :

l'engagement politique - l'album Old rottenhat - les mots
et les titres : At last I'm free – Te recuerdo Amanda – Stalin wasn't stalling United States of Amnesia – The age of self –
Tant de temps (Soupault/Mantler) – Gharbzadegi - PLA.



LE RYTHME ET LA RAISON - 5
[41,9 Mo]

Lire l'article du Monde sur cette émision

Scores

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Versions, transcriptions et arrangements de nos morceaux préférés.
A jouer sans modération.

Hugh Hopper



Livret publié en 1970 par Robbins Music Corporation Ltd.

- **Foreword**
- **Facelift**
- **Twelve Eight Theme**
- **Blues Ten**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**
- **Virtually**
- **Kings and Queens**
- **Noisette**
- **Everything Is You**
- **Mousetrap**



- **Dedicated To You but You Weren't Listening**
- **Facelift**
- **Was A Friend**

Trois partitions manuscrites de Hugh Hopper aimablement transmises par Patrice Meyer.

- **Amber And The Amberines**

Partition manuscrite de Hugh Hopper que Jean-Philippe Ramos nous a confiée en précisant: "*une erreur s'y cache, saurez-vous la trouver ?*"

Ferdinando Faraò (Artchipel Orchestra - 2014) - arrangements

Facebook - *Article*

MOON IN JUNE (BBC version)


Alberto Reina/Phocus

- **Score C**
- **Pianoforte**
- **Voce**

- **Tromba in Sib 1**
- **Tromba in Sib 2**
- **Sax soprano**
- **Sax tenore**
- **Sax baritono**
- **Sax alto**
- **Clarinetto basso**
- **Trombone 1**
- **Violino**
- **Viola**
- **Chitarra elettrica**
- **Basso acustico**



- **Corno in Fa**
- **Flauto 1**

FACELIFT



- **Score C**
- **Pianoforte**
- **Voce**

MOUSETRAP



- **Full Score**

Francesco Forges (Artchipel Orchestra - 2019) - arrangements

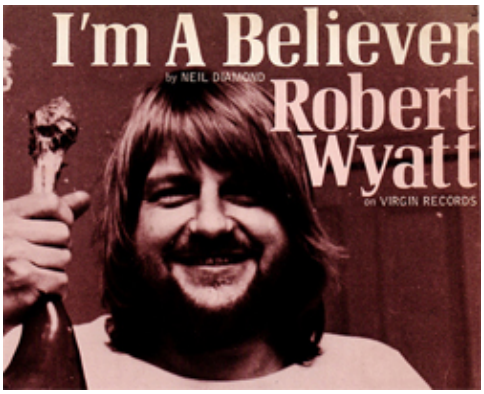
Facebook - *Article*



- **God Song**

"God Song è, invece, l'unica composizione in «Truly Yours» che è stata arrangiata da Francesco Forges, flautista, compositore e docente, ma anche cantante. Sono molto contento che Francesco sia tornato a collaborare con l'Artchipel e credo che in God Song abbia fatto un ottimo lavoro, contribuendo a valorizzare le intricate linee vocali che la caratterizzano, interpretate alla perfezione della voce solista Serena Ferrara.."

Robert Wyatt



- **I'm A Believer**

Song by Neil Diamond. Arrangement by Robert Wyatt. Chappell.

Serge Wodrascka

Facebook - *Soundcloud*



- **Muddy Mouth**

" ...transcription de la partie 2 : deep in the undergrowths... Fred Frith m'avait expliqué la structure harmonique de cette chanson..."

Phil Miller

More Phil Miller scores



- **God Song**

  God Song is one of Phil's earlier pieces, written at the beginning of the 1970's when he was the guitarist in Matching Mole. Robert Wyatt wrote the lyrics.

- **Calyx**

Mark Hewins

More information



- **Memories**

  Hand written; given to me by Hugh...

- **Half The Time**

  Who did what?
  - Robert Wyatt: Title & Line, "Half the time its Pantomome, Half the time its only make believe"
  - Hugh Hopper: Chord/Melody in 4/4
  - Mark Hewins: Arrangement, full Lyric, change of time signature to 3/4, production and leadsheet.



- **Gloria Gloom**

  Henry Cow version [source inconnue]

Sylvain Kassap / Dondestan ! The Wyatt Project - arrangements

More information : *Web* - *Dondestan! The Wyatt Project*





- **Pataphysical Introduction**
- **Box 25/4 Lid**
- **Sea Song**
- **Alliance**
- **Gloria Gloom - Part II**

"Voici quelques partitions que nous jouions avec Dondestan… le reste est très nébuleux car je n'ai plus que des bribes... Ce sont des relevés parfois grossiers car nous avons tout arrangé sur le tas.
Pour Sea Song, il n'y a pas la mélodie que tout le monde connait, mais juste la musique (y compris le solo de piano) que j'avais relevé puis orchestré."

Vincent Artaud / Orchestre National de Jazz - arrangements

More information : *Web site* - *Facebook*



- **The Song**
- **Alliance**
- **Kew Rhone**
- **Shipbuilding**

"...la formidable inventivité mélodique d'un Robert Wyatt revivifiée ici par quelques voix célèbres (Wyatt lui-même, mais aussi Camille, Daniel Darc, Arno, Rokia Traoré, Yael Naïm, Irène Jacob...) qui ont été pré-enregistrées et sur lesquelles un aquarelliste hors-pair comme Vincent Artaud a fignolé des arrangements satinés, flûtés et somptueusement hypnotiques, comme si l'écrin se voulait encore plus scintillant que le bijou à l'intérieur."

tsfjazz.com

Patrice Meyer - arrangements

More information



- **Hulloder**
- **Kings and Queens**
- **Kings and Queens (bass)**

Stéphane Collin - arrangements

More information: Stéphane Collin - La cérémonie du 17 septembre 2009 à Liège





- **Gharbadzegi**

  Le 17 septembre 2009, Robert Wyatt est distingué par l'Université de Liège (Belgique) qui le nomme Docteur Honoris Causa en - très bonne - compagnie d'autre compositeurs : Dick Annegarn, Anthony Braxton, Arvo Pärt, Henri Pousseur (à titre posthume), Frederic Rzewski, Archie Shepp.

  A cette occasion, trois pièces de Robert Wyatt (*Alifib*, *Vandalusia* et *Gharbadzegi*) seront interprétées par le *Quatuor Tana* avec des arrangements de *Stéphane Collin* qui me fournira quelques années plus tard des précisions sur le contexte de cette création :

  "Concernant "Gharbzadegi", mon cahier des charges, à l'époque, m'invitait à prendre distance de l'enregistrement original pour, sans trop trahir l'esprit de l'auteur, mettre en valeur le quatuor à cordes qui devait interpréter le titre. J'étais parti de la version tardive réalisée pour la chaîne de télévision BBC Four, et j'avais entrepris de donner au morceau une tournure rock énergique (dans la mesure où un quatuor à cordes peut l'évoquer)..."

Max Nagl - arrangements

More information



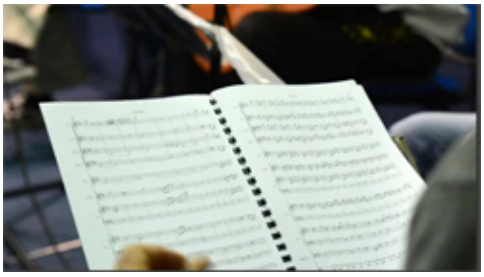


- **Alliance**
- **Born Again Cretin**
- **The British Road**
- **CP Jeebies**
- **Gharbzadegi**
- **5 blacks and 1 white note**
- **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening**

Stefano Giannotti - arrangements

More information : *Web site* - *Facebook*





- **Lullaby For Hamza**

  "DA ORIENTE A OCCIDENTE è un progetto iniziato nel 2016 che affronta i temi dell'esodo, dei muri, dell'accoglienza attraverso brani musicali più o meno noti, arrangiati da Stefano Giannotti per l'Orchestra SMS. Così l'inferno mitologico – rinascimentale di MISERI HABITATOR di Anton Giovanni de' Bardi si combina con l'inferno reale di LULLABY FOR HAMZA, una ninnananna scritta da Robert Wyatt per i bambini nati sotto i bombardamenti in Irak..."

- **Sea Song**

  "Here is the final score of SEA SONG, the orchestral piece, which we have played for some years and which is included in the documentary MUSICA SPARPAGLIATA 2015-2025, the video-documentary I made to fix the first 10 years of the ensemble Orchestra SMS : https://youtu.be/mgoXm6xbL0Y?si=LiRU7h_vrBkyNWKj

  This score is not the same of the CD, cause when mixing it I realized that it was more interesting as the beginning to have a more empty piece, so I simply closed the most of tracks and left opened only voice, guitar and clarinet and I've added the shakers, and that's it !"

David Hacohen - Arrangement for String Quartet



- **Sea Song**

Jason T. Ingram - transcriptions

More information



- **Gharbzadegi**

  Transcribed by Knute Snortum of Dialectic Flowers

- **Catholic Architecture**

- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (Soups Concert)**
- **Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road (TEN/TPT)**

  Annie Whitehead versions

Anaïd

Web site - *Facebook*



- **Sweet Memories**

  Sweet Memories est une reprise de Was A Friend (avec des paroles différentes de celles composées par Robert Wyatt pour l'album Shleep). Plus précisément, cet arrangement d'Anaïd reprend le texte initialement écrit par Robert Wyatt pour Hugh Hopper. En 1997, Robert Wyatt écrira un nouveau texte pour l'enregistrement de Shleep.

Jean-Philippe Ramos - transcriptions

More information



- **Moon In June**

- **O Caroline**

- **Free Will And Testament**

- **Soup Song**

Karen Mantler

More information : Facebook - The Song



- **The Official Robert Wyatt Fan Club Song**

  Song written by karen Mantler for the creation on November 8, 2003 of " Dedicated to You, Variations on the Music of Robert Wyatt" in Charleville, France.

Guillaume Gilles et l'Atelier PLAY IT AGAIN !

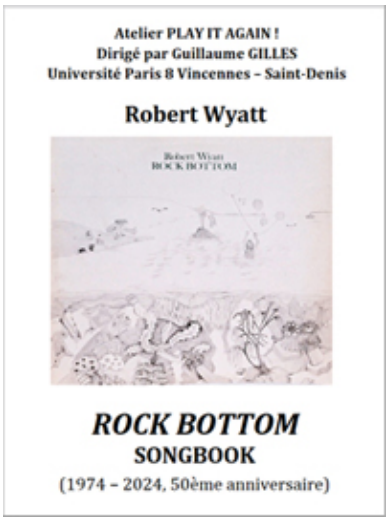
Plus d'information



- **Rock Bottom**

  ROCK BOTTOM SONGBOOK Atelier PLAY IT AGAIN !
  Dirigé par Guillaume GILLES Université Paris 8 Vincennes – Saint-Denis

  Le concert du 12 juin 2024



Guy Boistel

Plus d'information



- **Moon In June**

  Here is, at last, my full transcription (and adaptation) of MOON IN JUNE, Third album version.

  IT IS NOT a 100% note-to-note transcription, and I do not pretend to make it perfect, let us be clear forever !

  I wanted to understand the whole structure of the piece and make a playable score for me and my wife (we have a dozen of Wyatt's songs in our set list).

  You can modify what you want in the score (written with MuseScore 4.4.) : **MoonIn June [MuseScore]**

[more scores : Canterbury Scores]

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Les années Before | Soft Machine | Matching Mole | Solo | With Friends | Samples | Compilations | V.A. | Bootlegs | Reprises

HOME

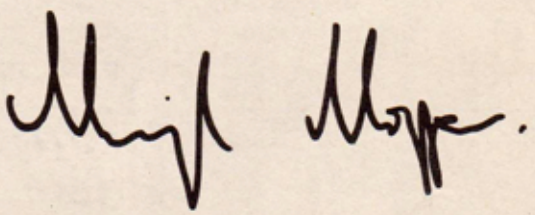
FOREWORD

You will see that these are my original arrangements for the Soft Machine, but in preparing them for publication I have made certain adjustments so as to make them more widely available.

THE ORGAN PARTS ARE NOW COMPLETE IN THEMSELVES AND MAY BE PLAYED ON ANY KEYBOARD INSTRUMENT.
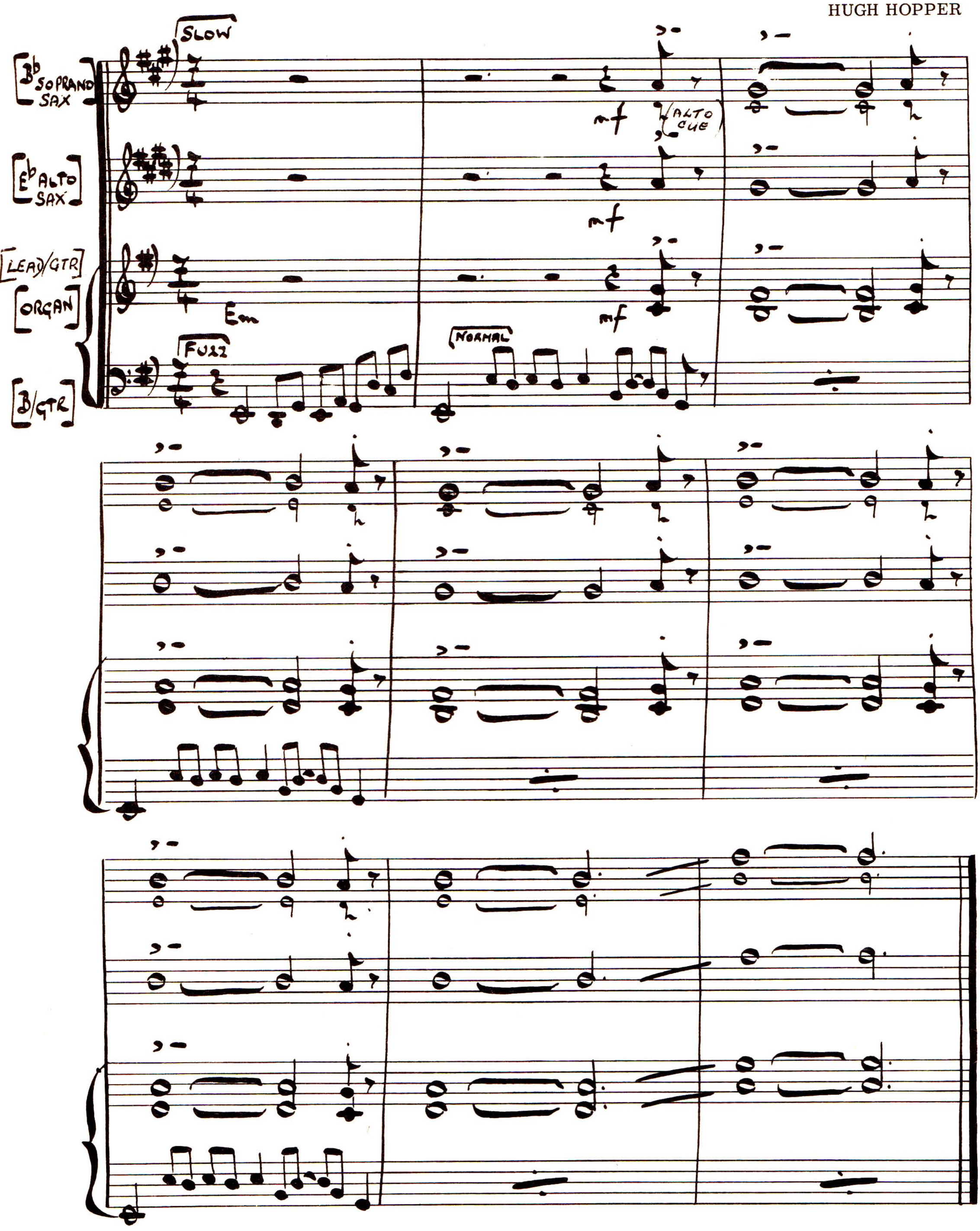
The E♭ Alto Saxophone parts are cued where necessary in B♭ pitch, either on the E♭ Alto Sax. stave or on the B♭ Soprano Sax. stave. This makes the part available for Trumpet, Tenor or Clarinet. Of course, the B♭ Bass Clarinet parts may be played as they are on Tenor Saxophone.

PROVISION HAS ALSO BEEN MADE FOR LEAD GUITAR.



Facelift

HUGH HOPPER



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$

UNISON.

[B♭ SOPRANO SAX]

UNISON

[E♭ ALTO SAX]

[LEAD GTR]

[ORGAN]

[B/GTR]

B

[B♭ SOPRANO SAX]

[E♭ ALTO SAX]

[LEAD/GTR]

[ORGAN]

[B/GTR]

AD LIB ORGAN SOLO

Em

(4)

(8)

(16)

(8)

[B♭ SOPRANO SAX]

[E♭ ALTO SAX]

[LEAD/GTR]
[ORGAN]

[B/GTR]

(24)

(8)

(32)

(8)

C

(4)

(4)

(4)

(4)

B♭ SOPRANO SAX

E♭ ALTO SAX

LEAD/GTR

ORGAN

B/GTR

(4)

(4)

(4)

(4)

D

AD LIB SOLO

(SOPRANO SOLO AD LIB)

(8)

(8)

(8)

(16)

(16)

(16)

[B♭ SOPRANO SAX]

[E♭ ALTO SAX]

[LEAD/GTR]
[ORGAN]

[B/GTR]

(24)

(24)

(24)

(32)

(32)

(32)

SOPRANO SAX

ALTO SAX
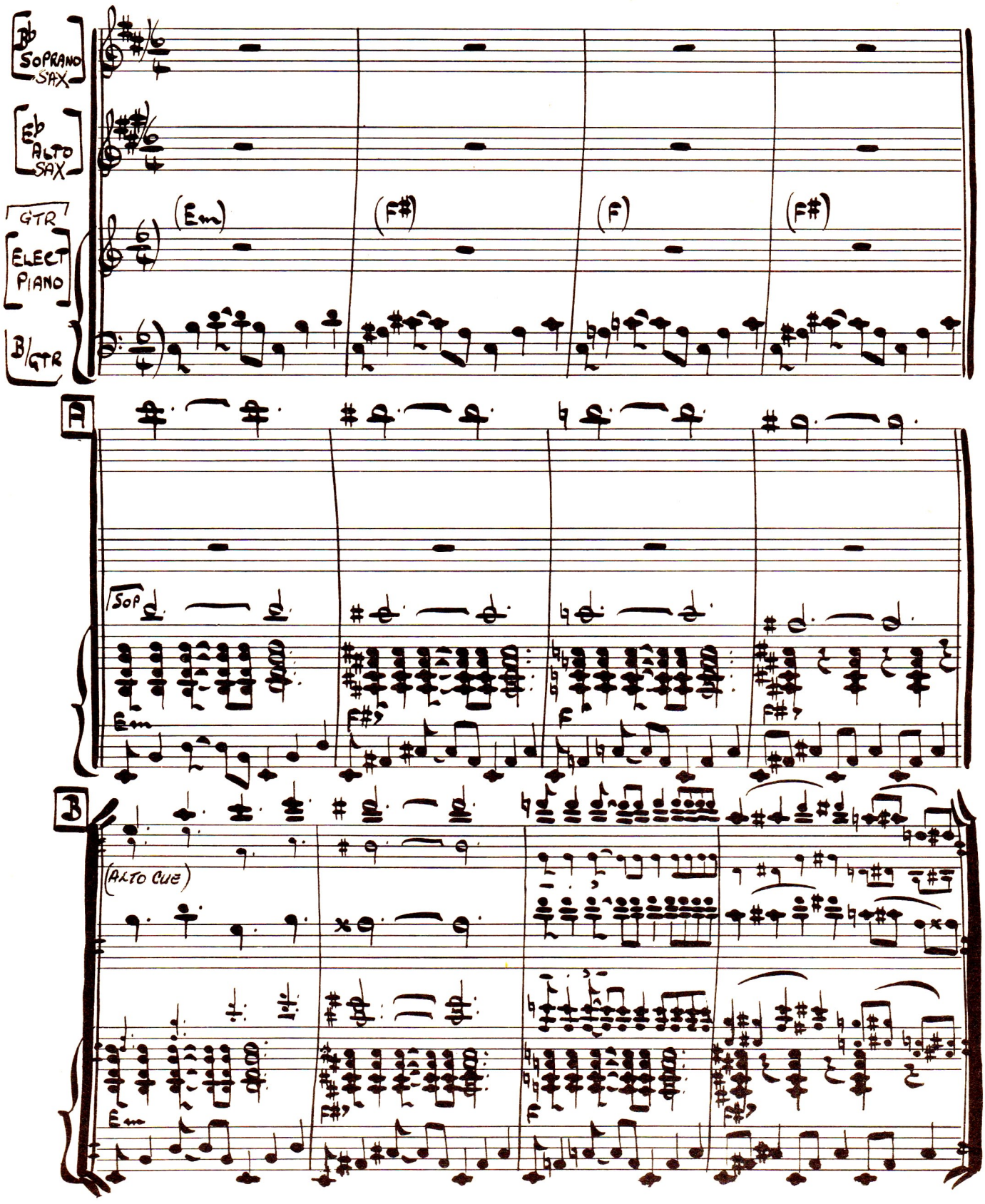
RD/GTR]

RGAN]
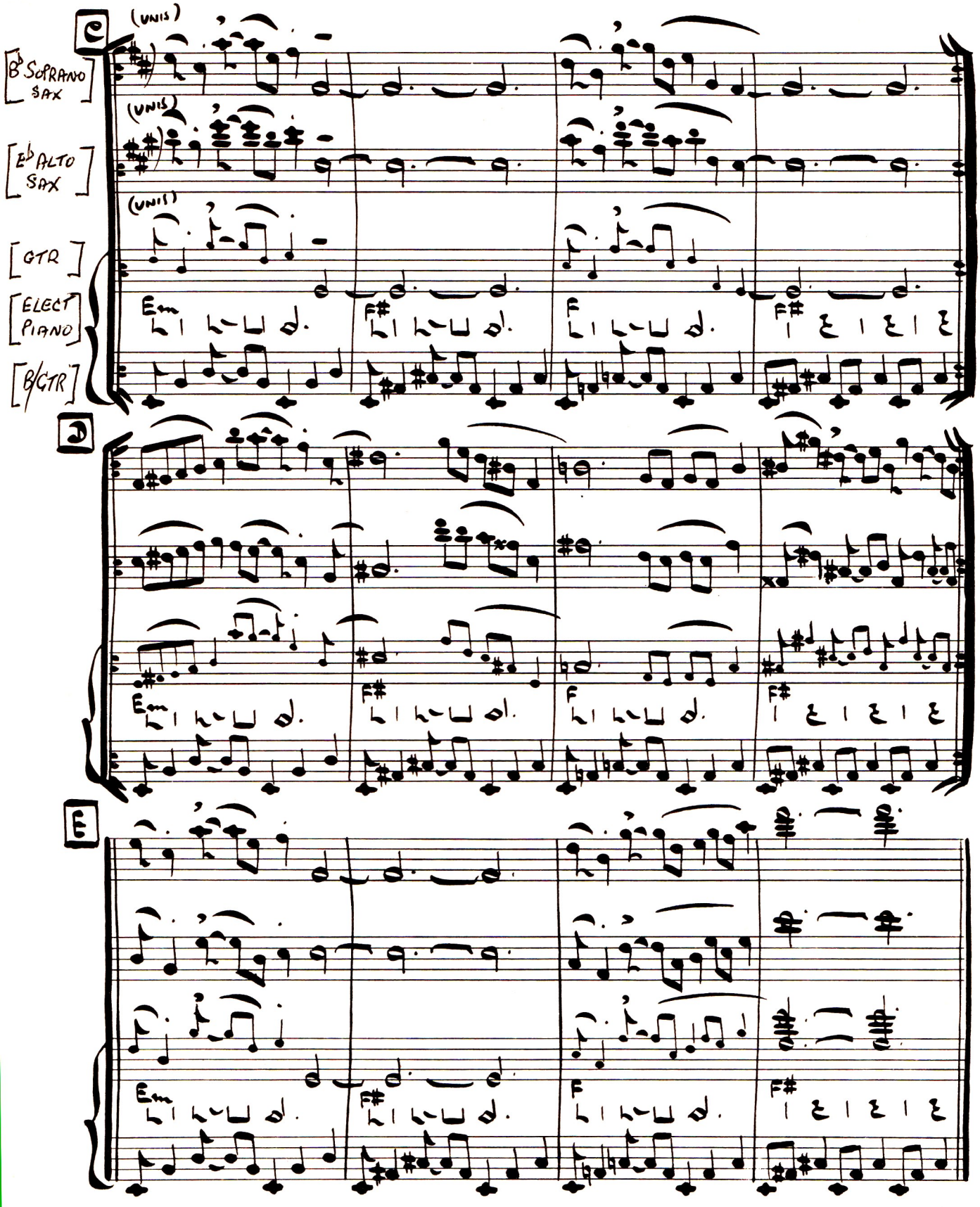
3/GTR]
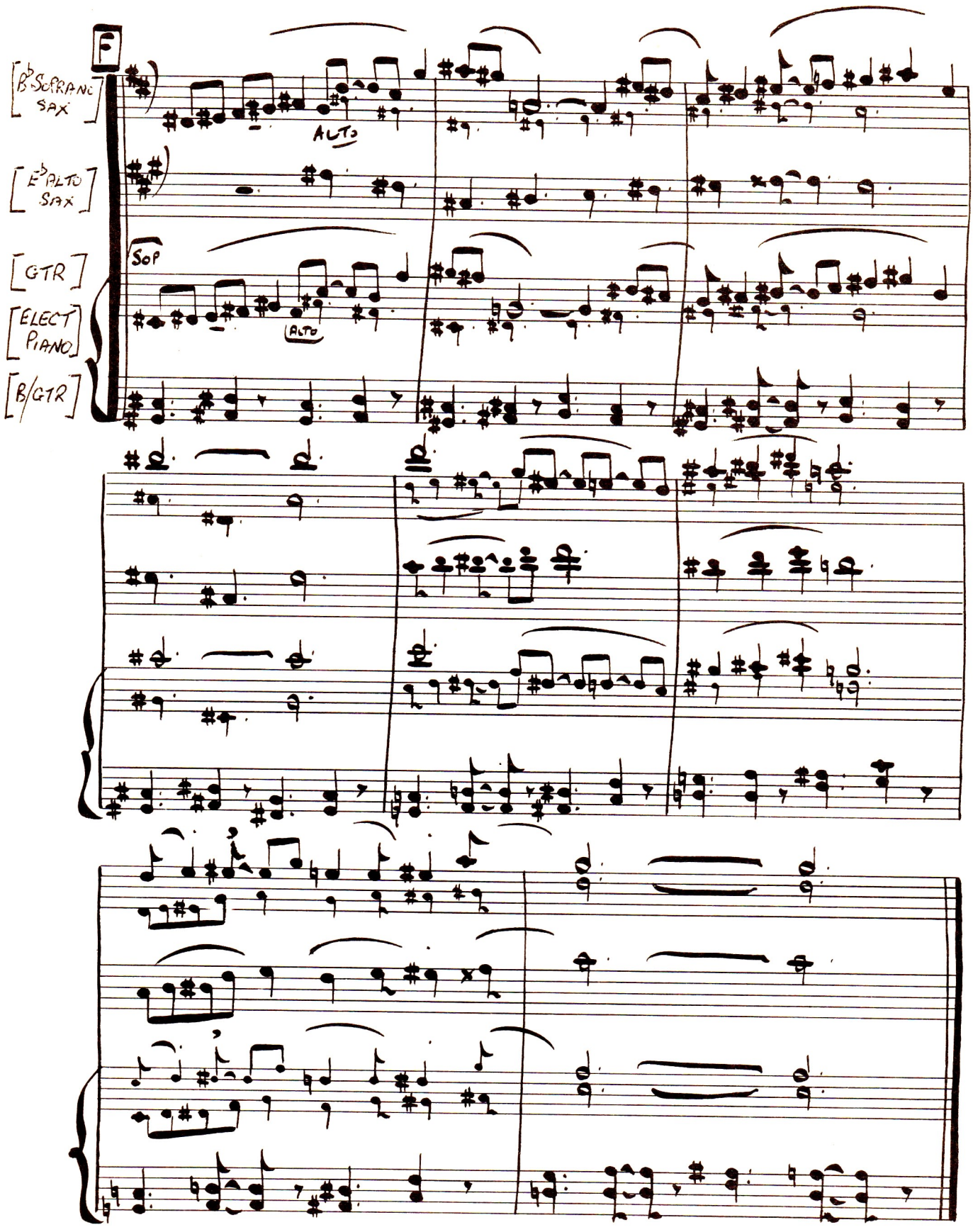
Twelve Eight Theme
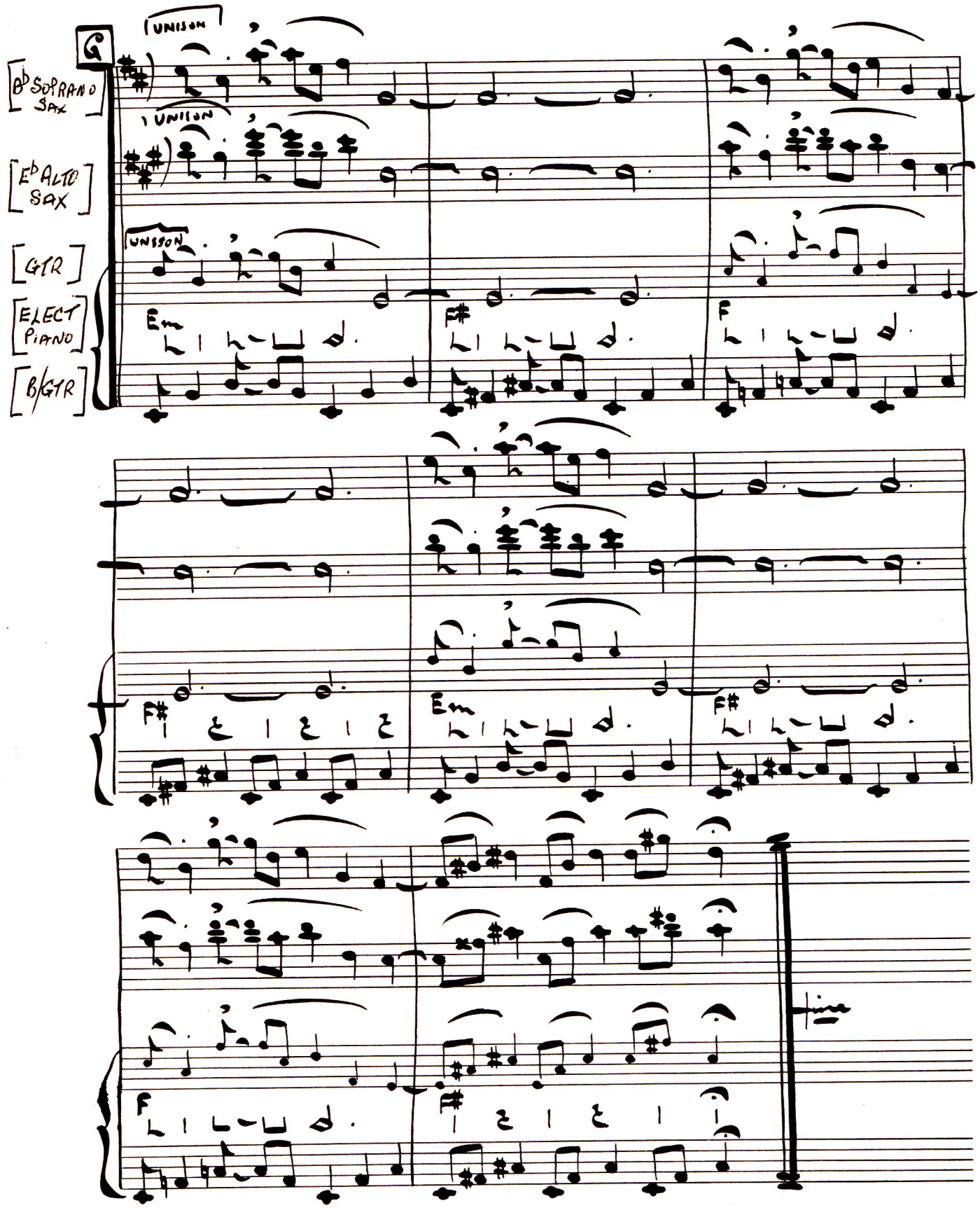
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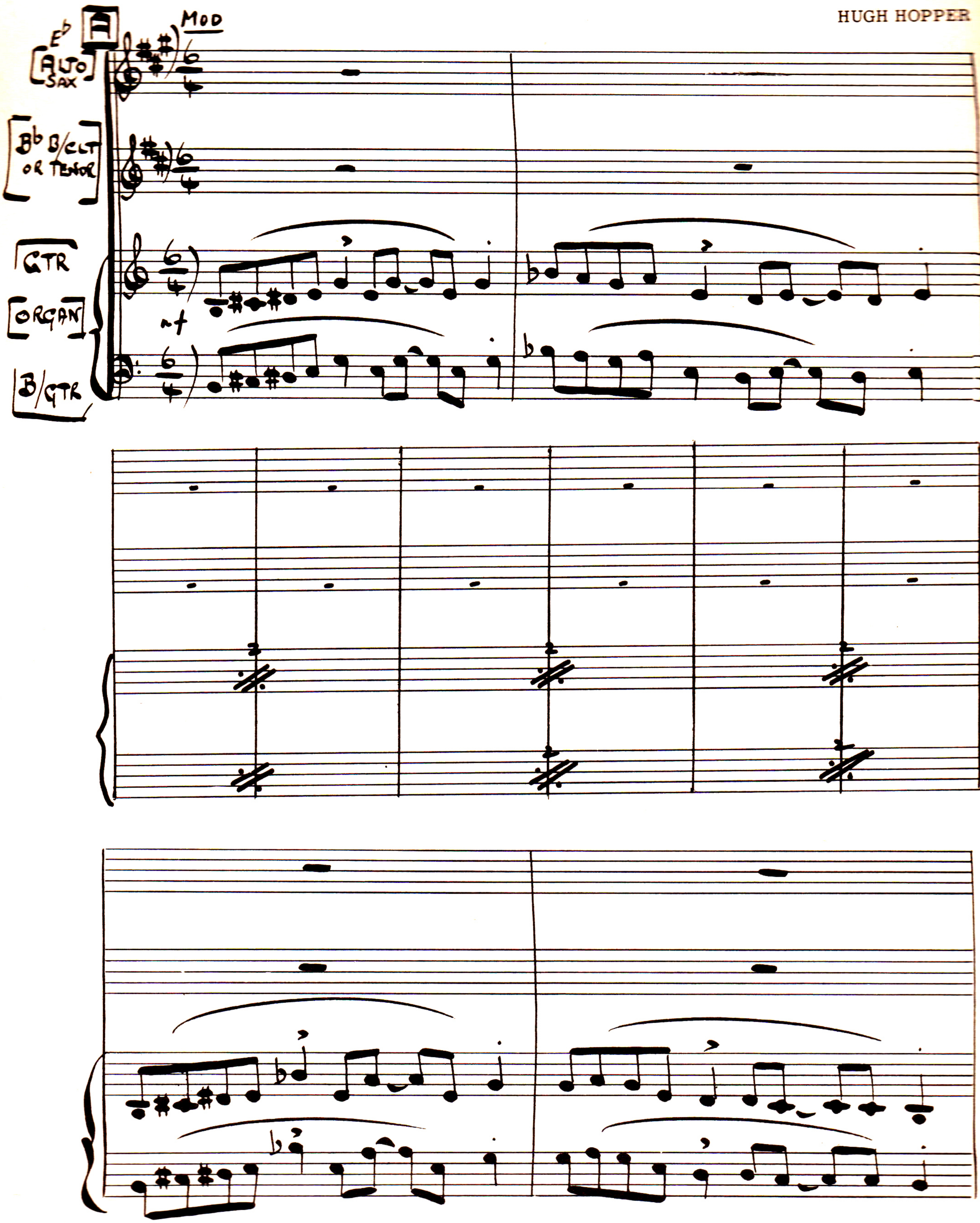

C
(UNIS)
B♭ SOPRANO SAX
(UNIS)
E♭ ALTO SAX
(UNIS)
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
Em
F#
F
F#
D
E
Em
F#
F
F#


F
[B♭ SOPRANO SAX]
ALTO
[E♭ ALTO SAX]
[GTR]
SOP
ALTO
[ELECT PIANO]
[B/GTR]
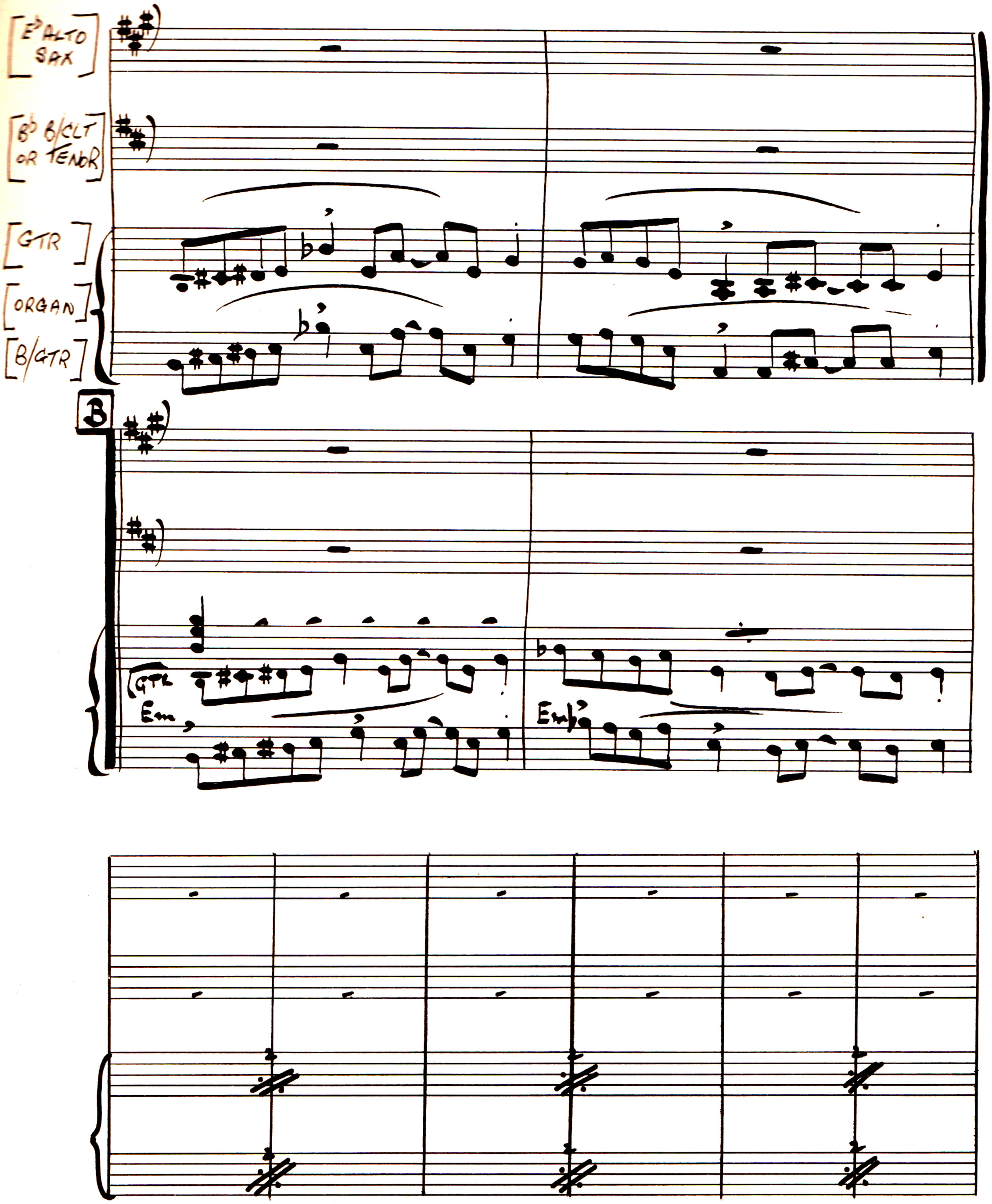

B♭ SOPRANO SAX
E♭ ALTO SAX
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
UNISON
UNISON
UNISON
Em
F♯
F
F♯
Em
F♯
F
F♯

Blues Ten

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E♭ ALTO SAX
B♭ B/CLT OR TENOR
GTR
ORGAN
B/GTR
B
(GTR)
Em
Em♭

E♭ ALTO SAX

B♭ B/CLT OR TENOR

GTR

ORGAN

B/GTR

Em C♯DIM A Dm A Dm

Em C♯DIM Dm A

C

P f

f f

f Em

Em C♯DIM

Em

[E♭ ALTO SAX]

[B♭ B/CLT OR TENOR]

[GTR]

[ORGAN]

[B/GTR]

f

f

H

Em

C♯DIM

Dm

Dm

Em

C♯DIM

Dm

[E♭ ALTO SAX]

[B♭ B/CLT OR TENOR]

[GTR]

[ORGAN]

[B/GTR]

Em

Em
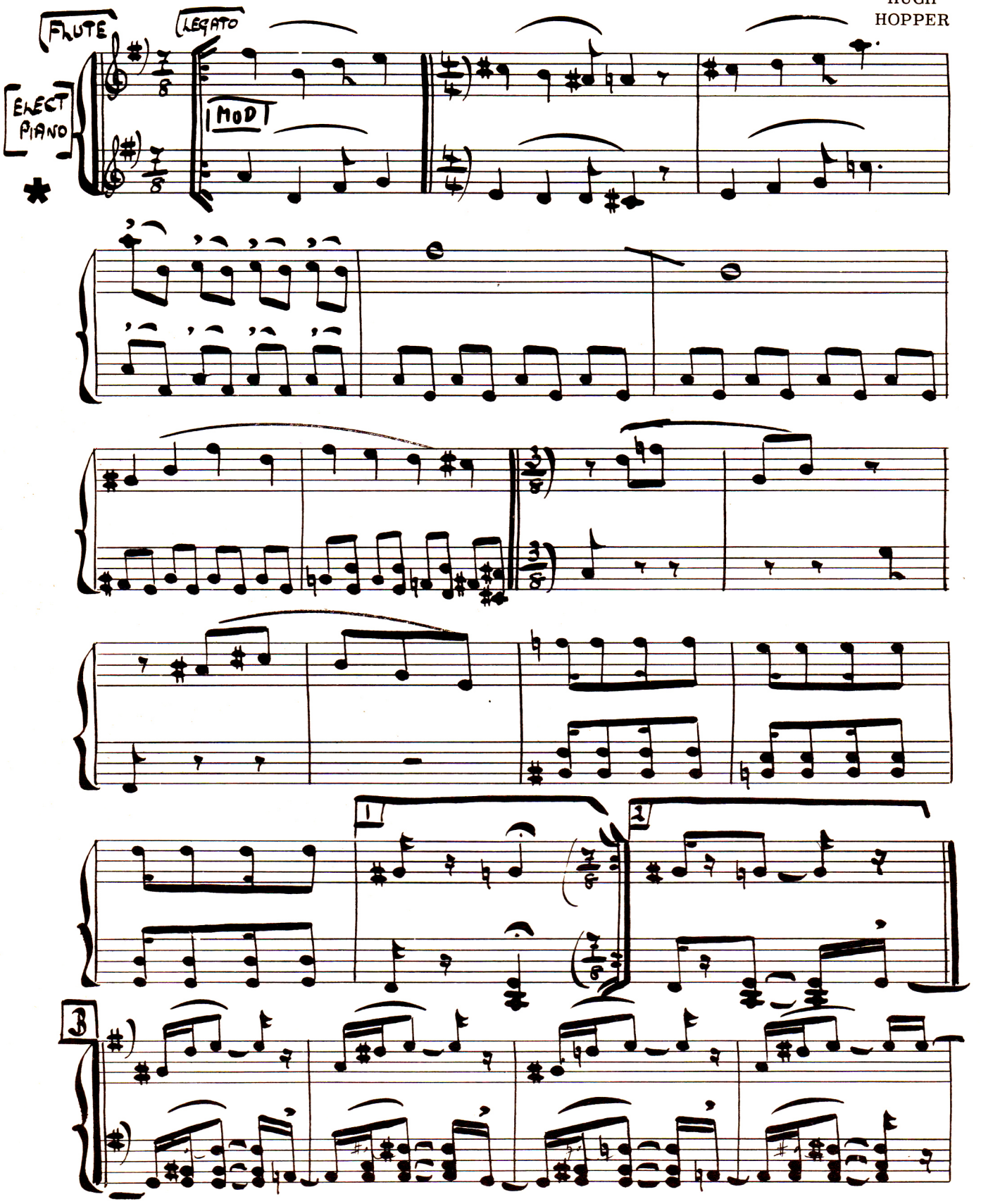
Em

Em
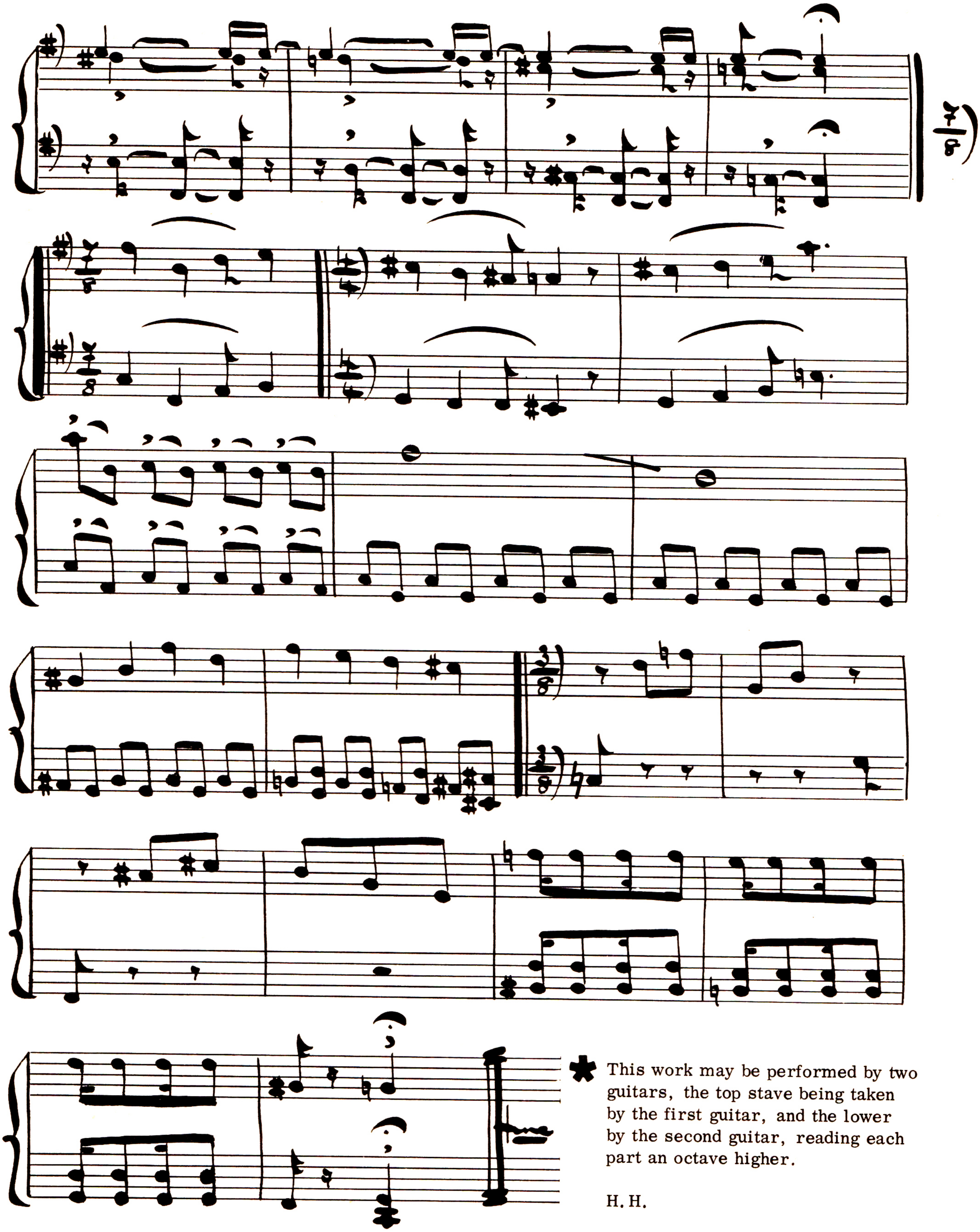
E7

Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening

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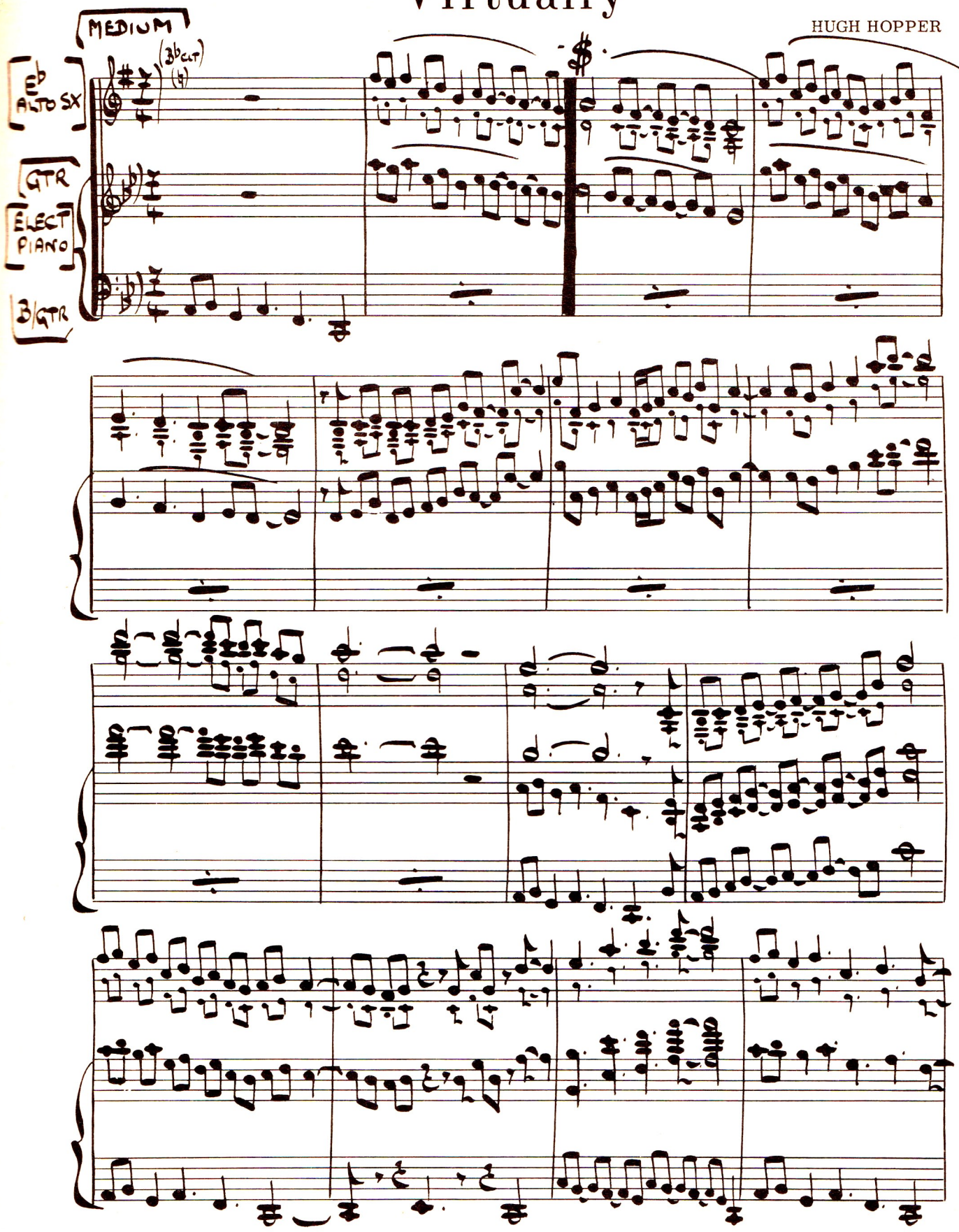


* This work may be performed by two guitars, the top stave being taken by the first guitar, and the lower by the second guitar, reading each part an octave higher.
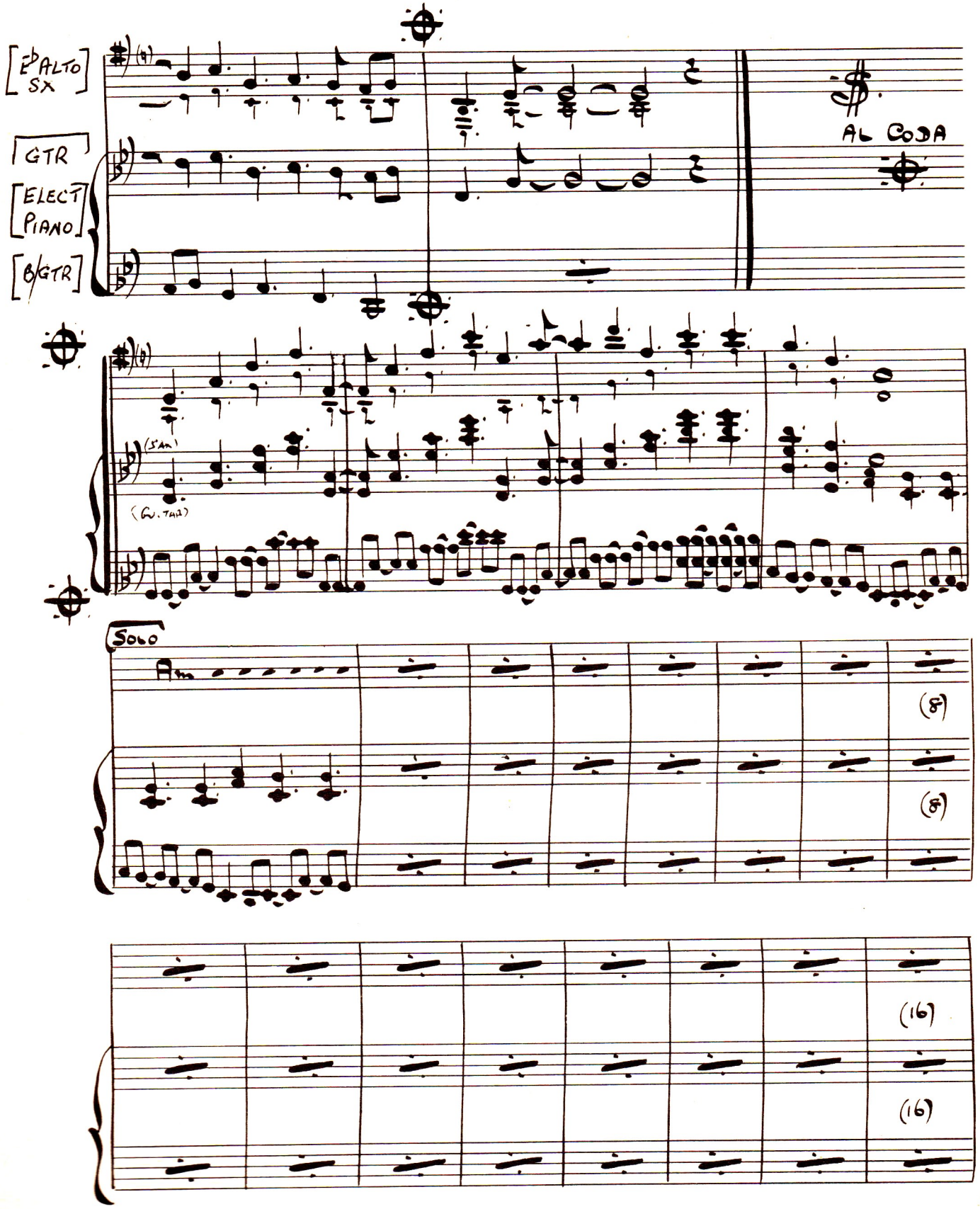
H. H.
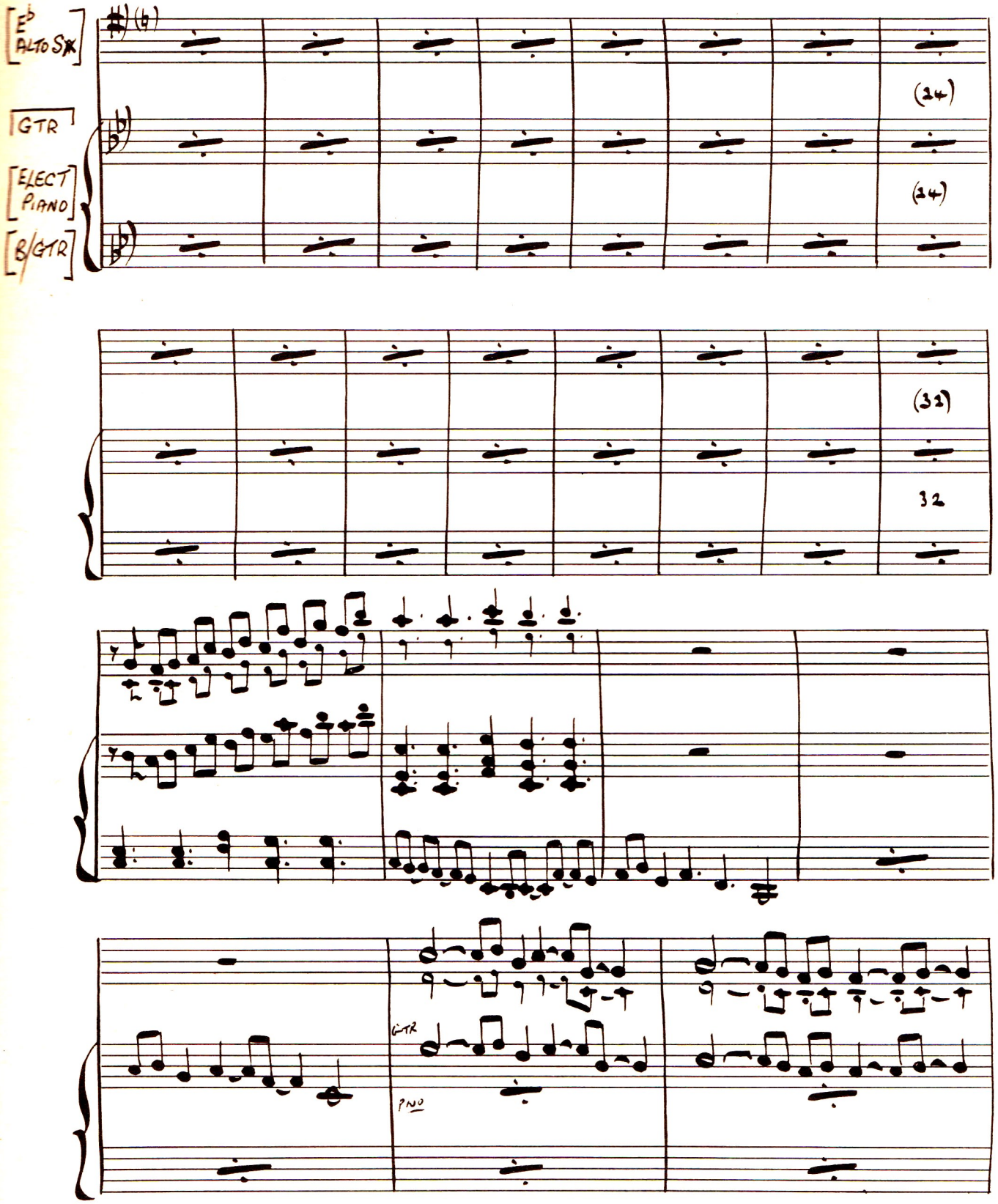
Virtually
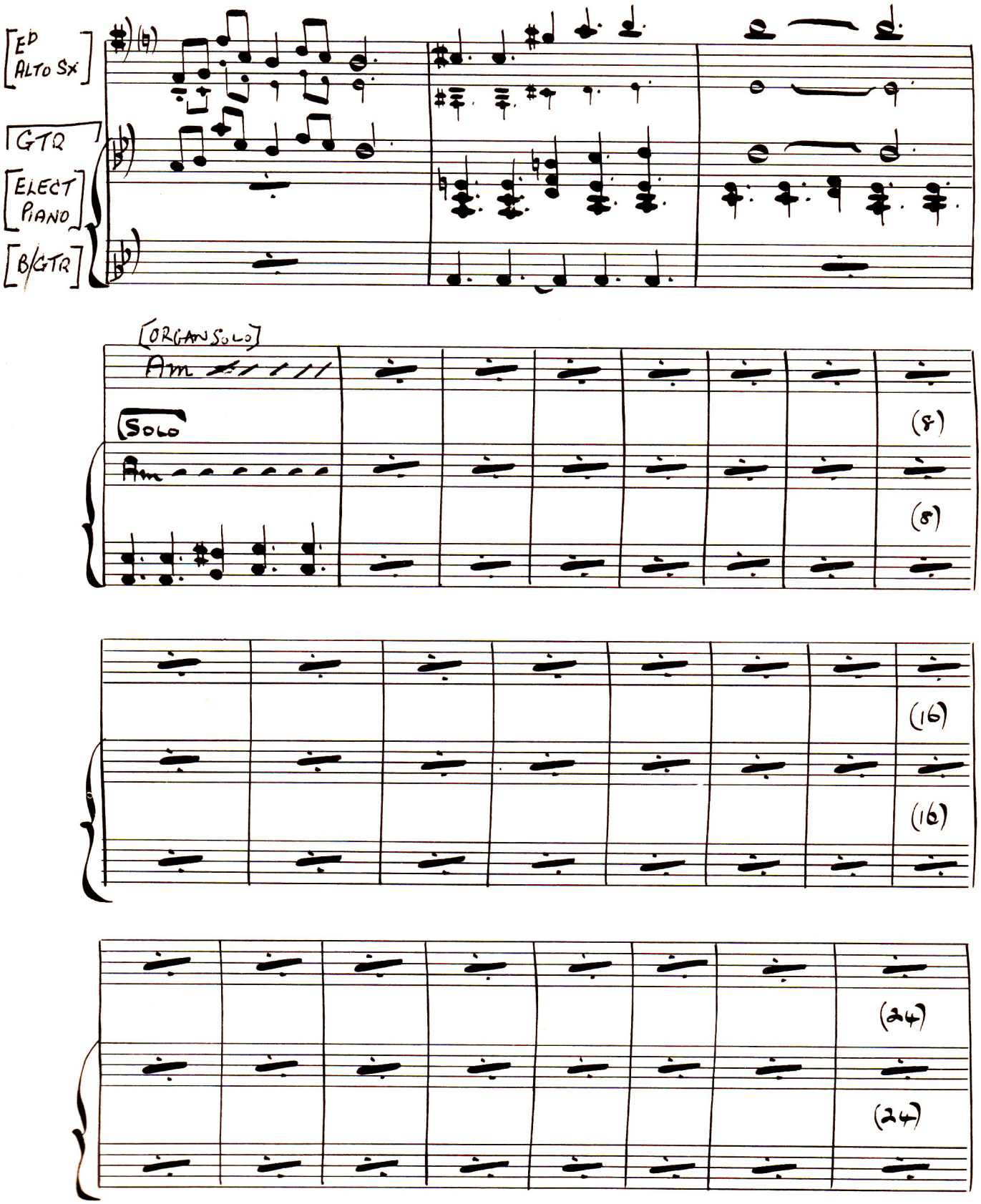
HUGH HOPPER
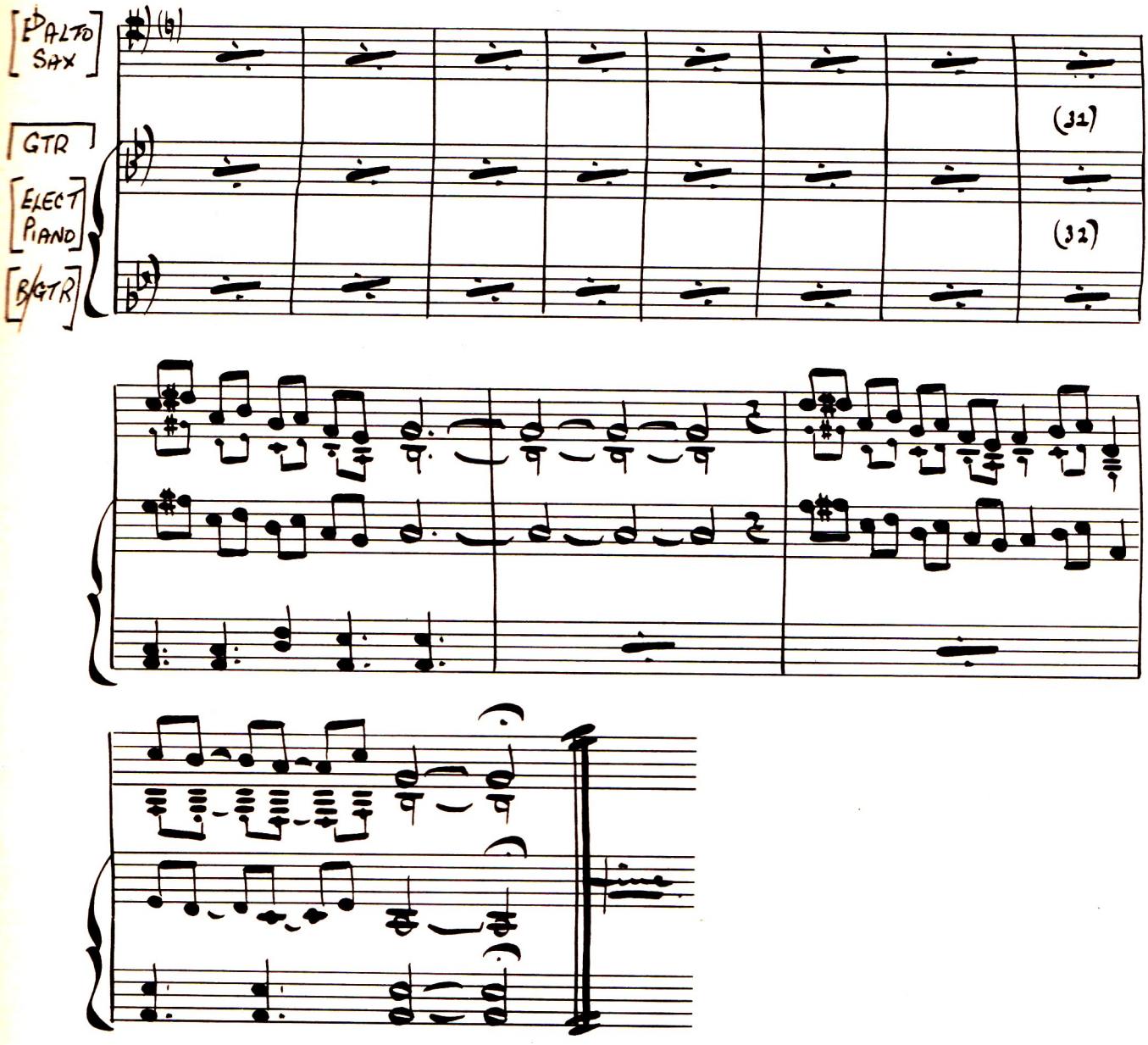


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E♭ ALTO SX
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
AL CODA
(SAX)
(GUITAR)
SOLO
Am
(8)
(8)
(16)
(16)

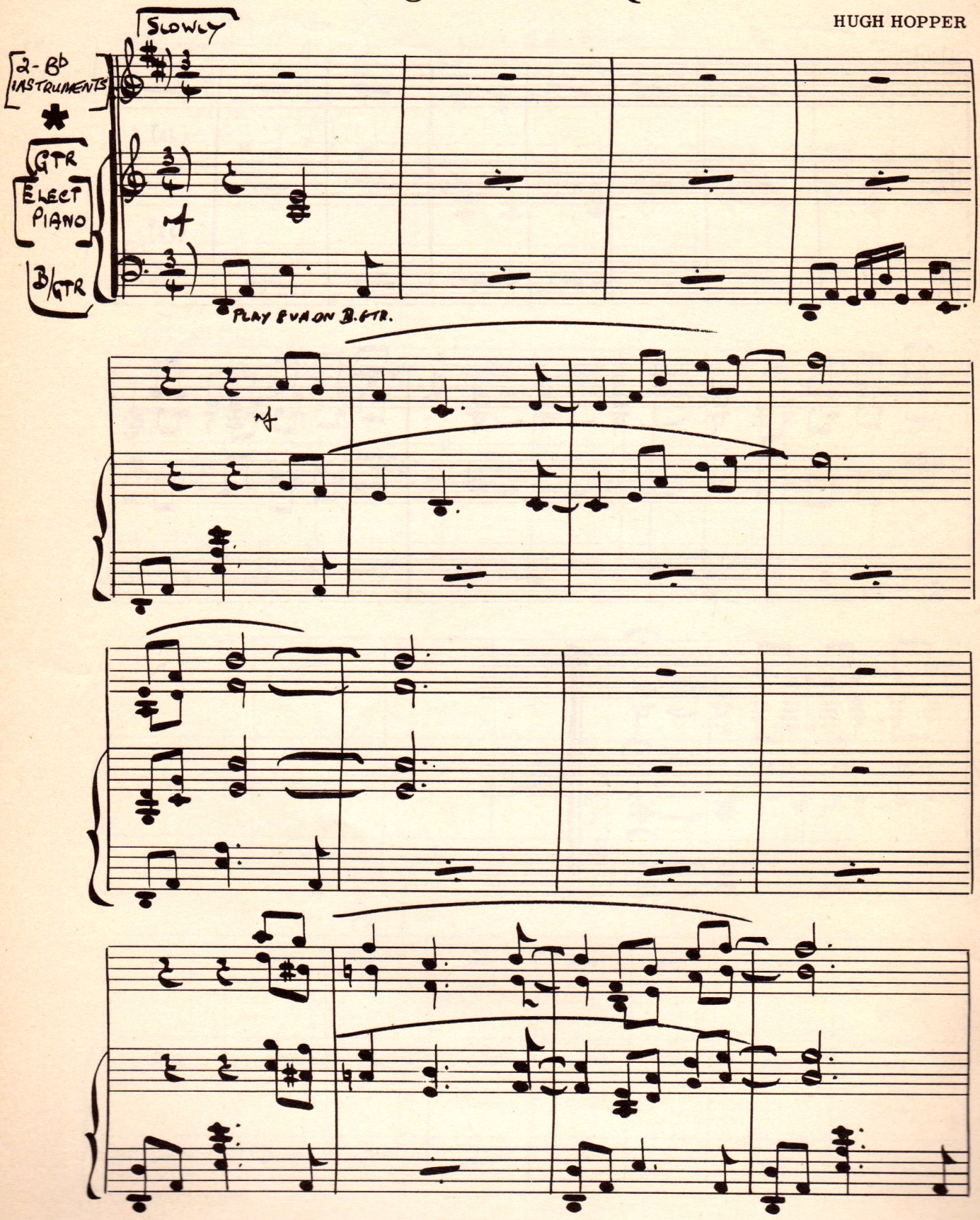

E♭ ALTO SX
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
(24)
(24)
(32)
32
GTR
PNO


[ED
ALTO SX]
GTR
[ELECT
PIANO]
[B/GTR]
[ORGAN SOLO]
Am
SOLO
Am
(8)
(8)
(16)
(16)
(24)
(24)

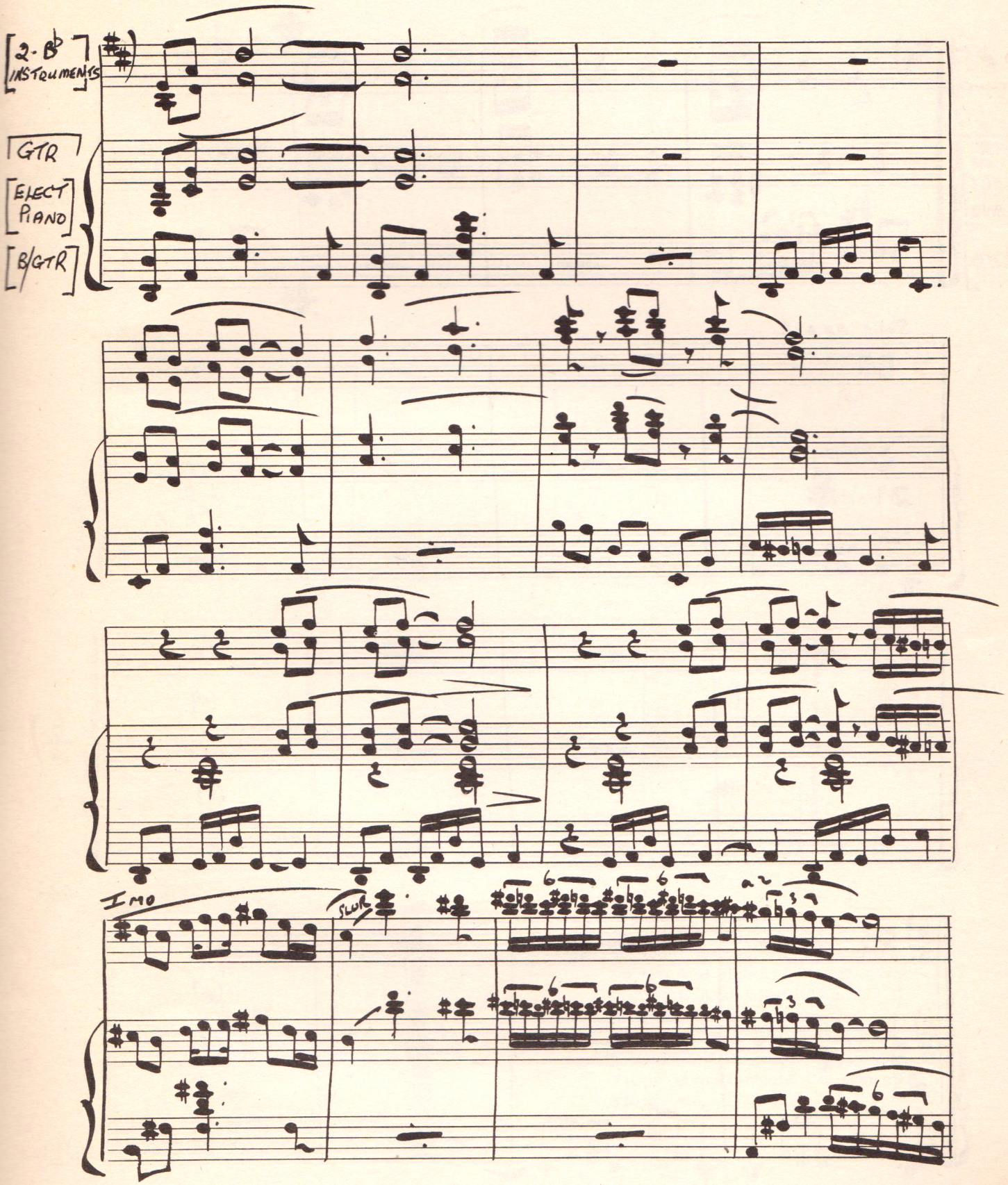

E♭ ALTO SAX
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
(32)
(32)
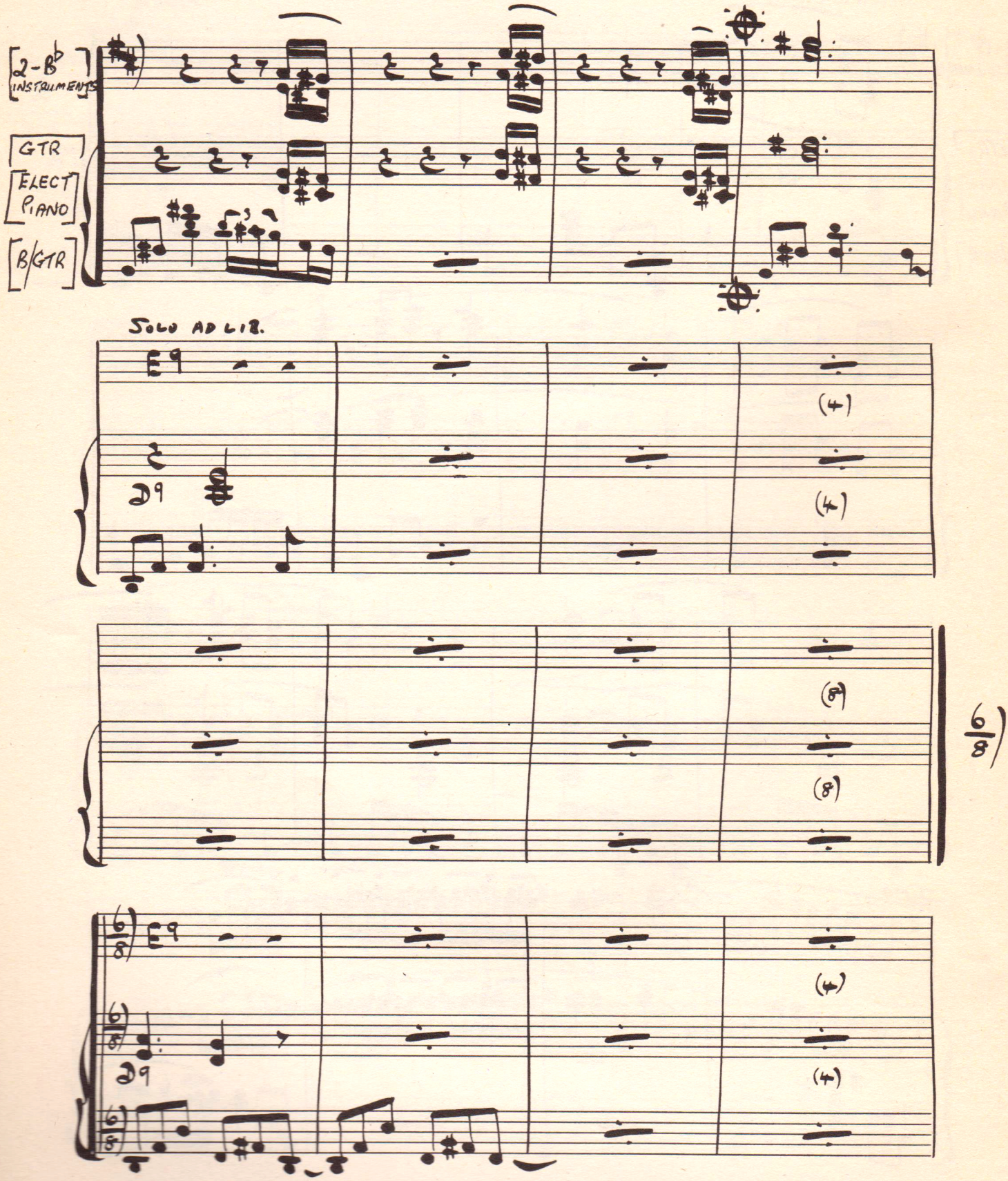
Kings And Queens

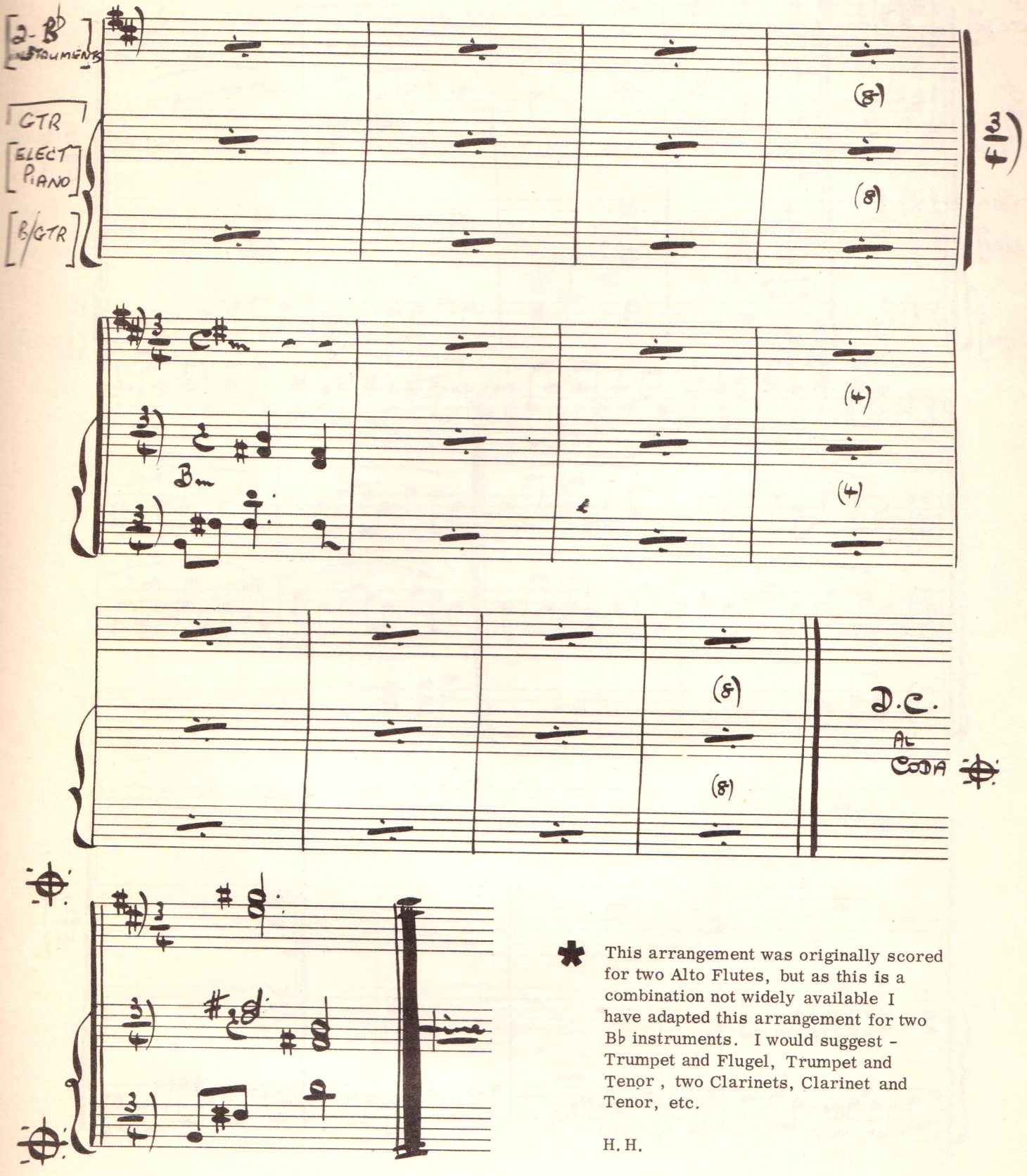
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2-B♭ INSTRUMENTS
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
I MO
SLUR


2-B♭ INSTRUMENTS
GTR
ELECT PIANO
B/GTR
SOLO AD LIB.
E9
D9
(4)
(4)
(8)
(8)
6/8
6/8
E9
D9
(4)
(4)
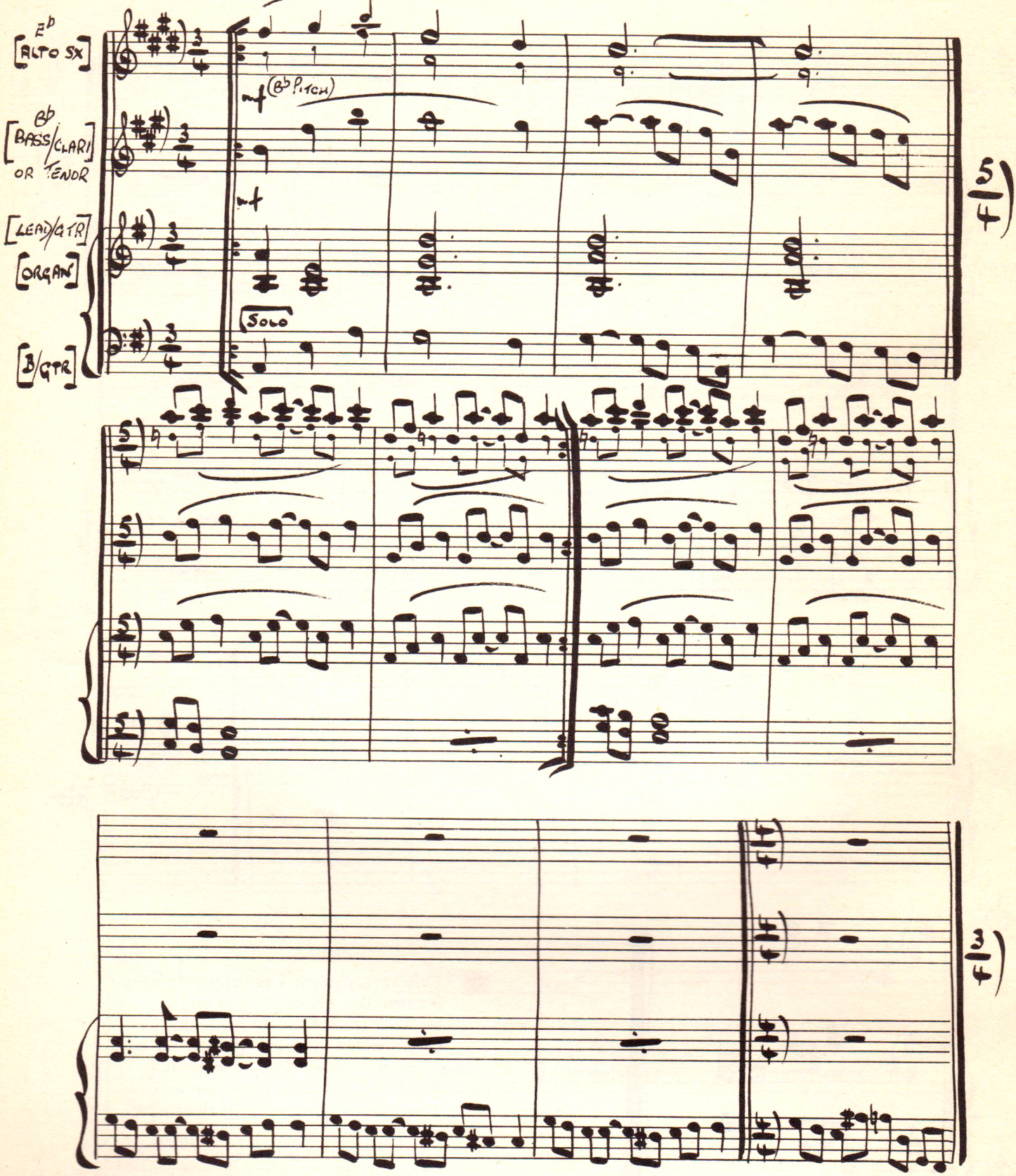


✱ This arrangement was originally scored for two Alto Flutes, but as this is a combination not widely available I have adapted this arrangement for two B♭ instruments. I would suggest - Trumpet and Flugel, Trumpet and Tenor, two Clarinets, Clarinet and Tenor, etc.
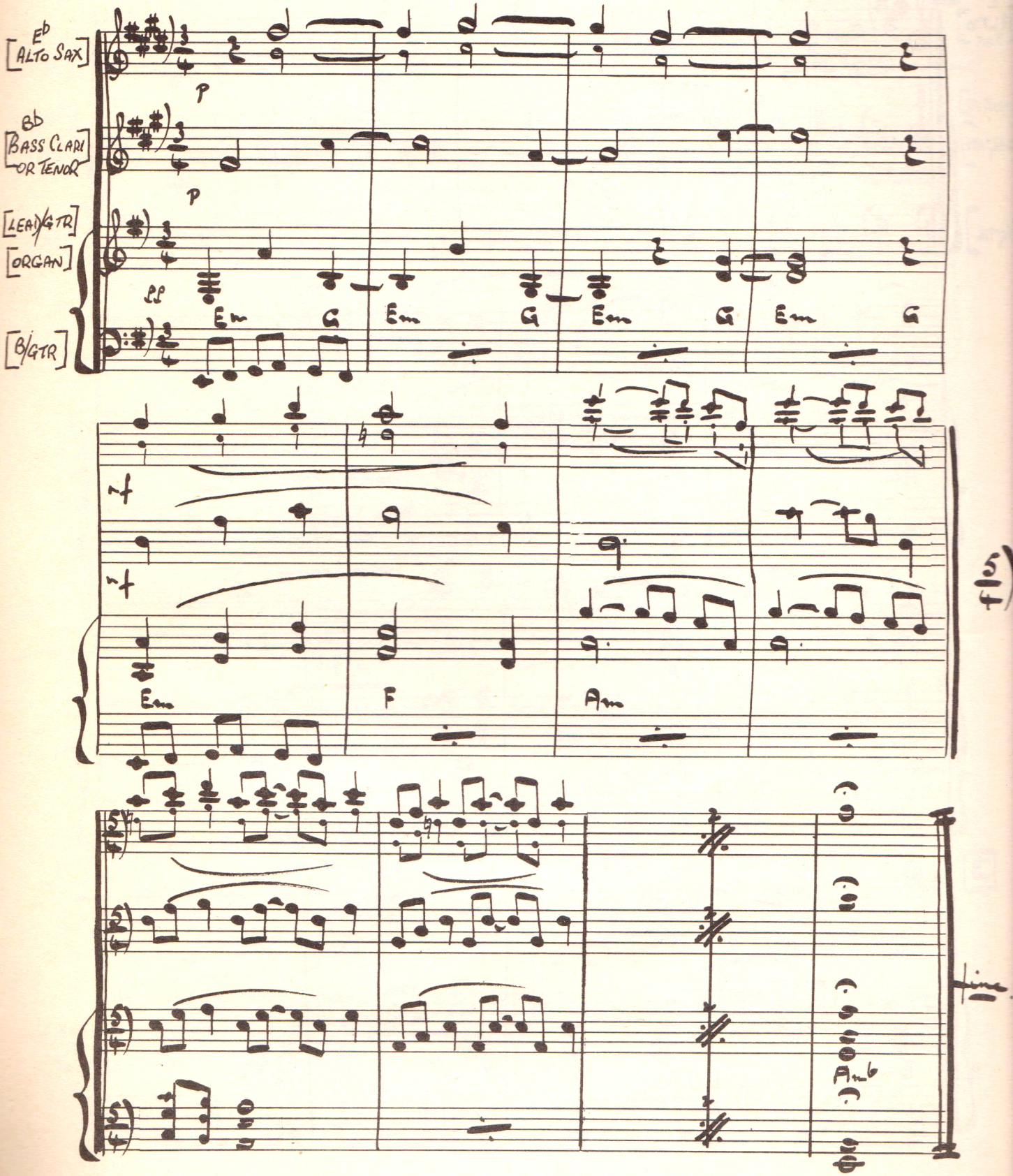
H. H.

Noisette

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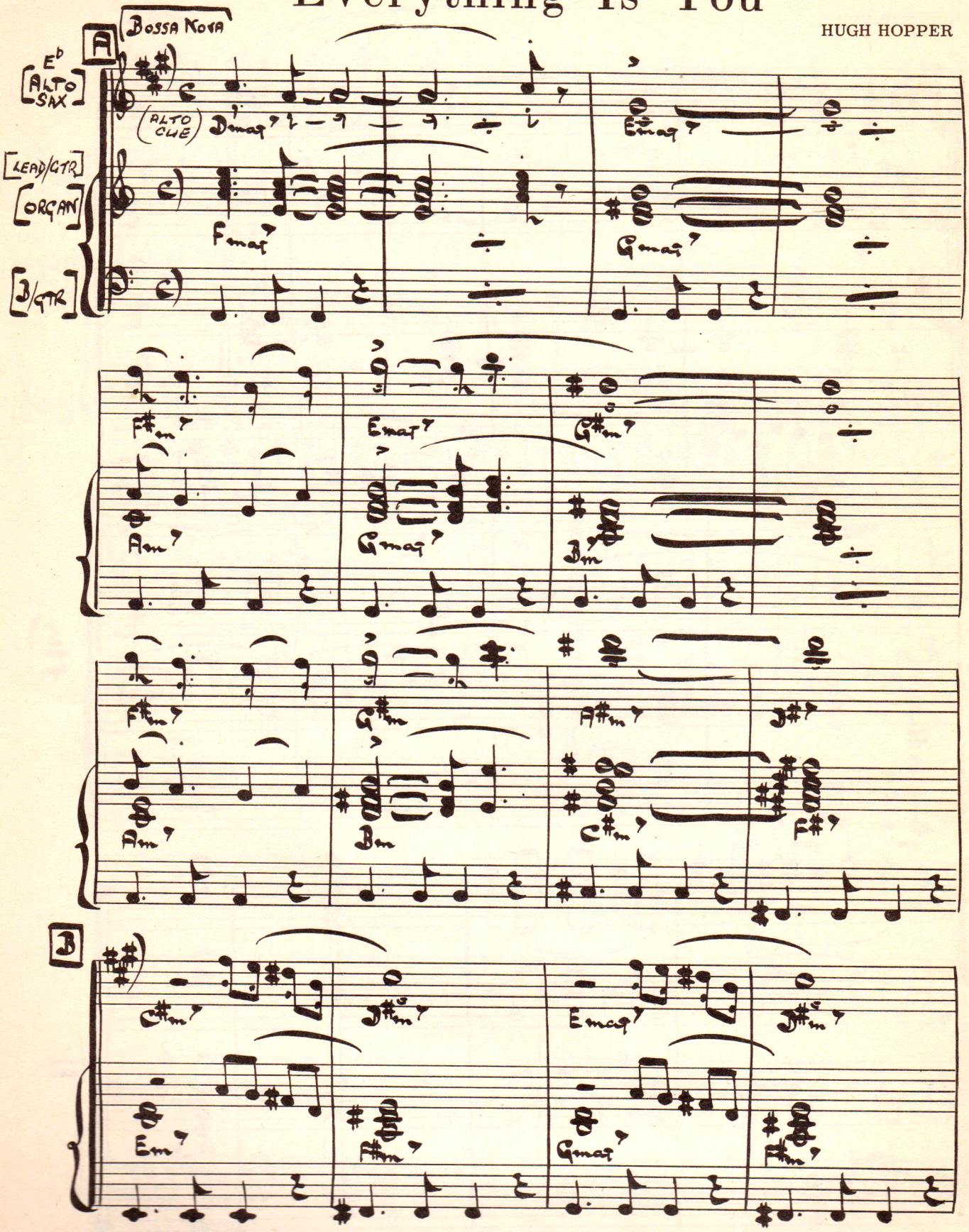


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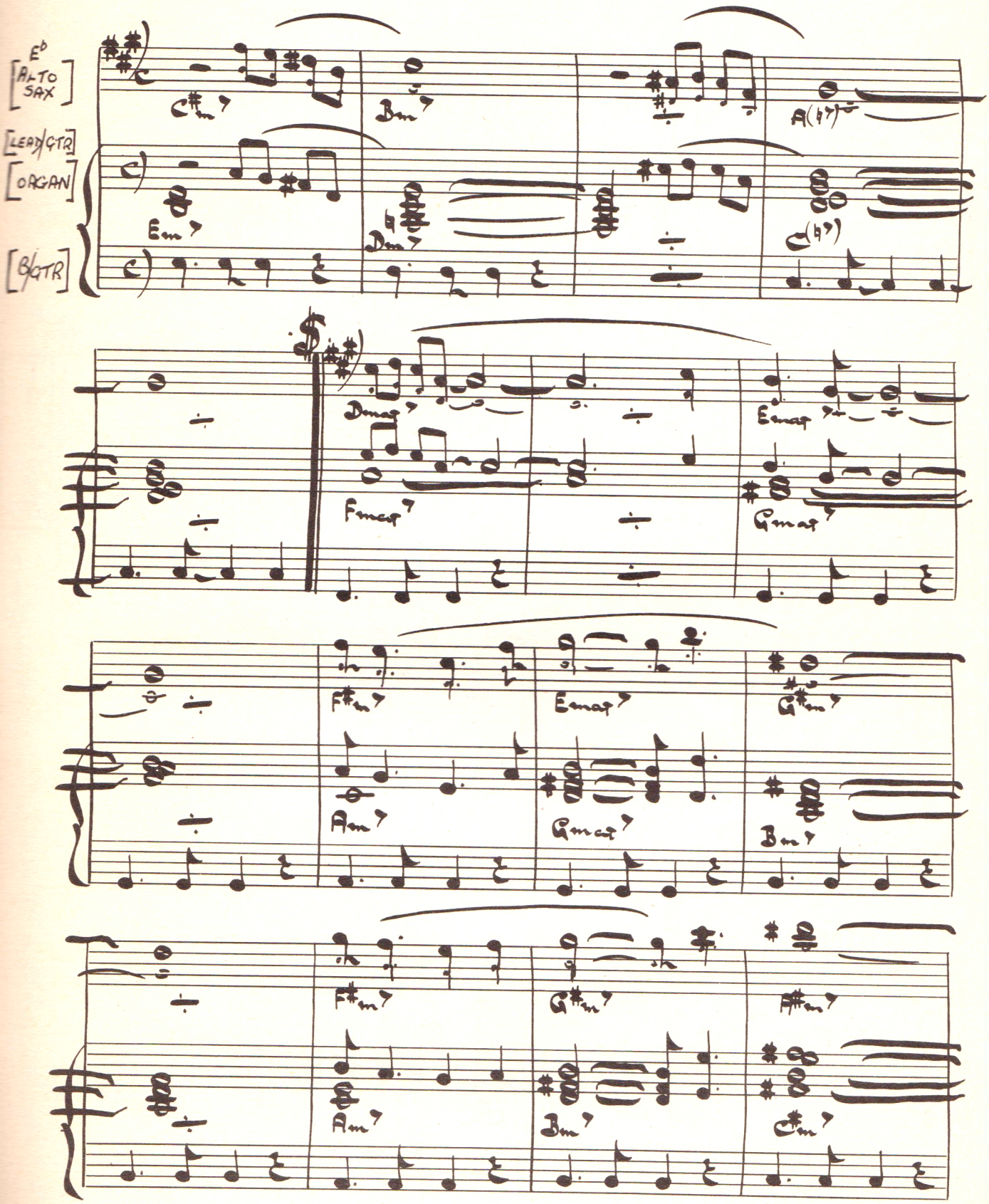

Eb ALTO SAX
Bb BASS CLARI OR TENOR
LEAD GTR
ORGAN
B/GTR
p
p
pp
Em
G
Em
G
Em
G
Em
G
mf
mf
Em
F
Am
Am6
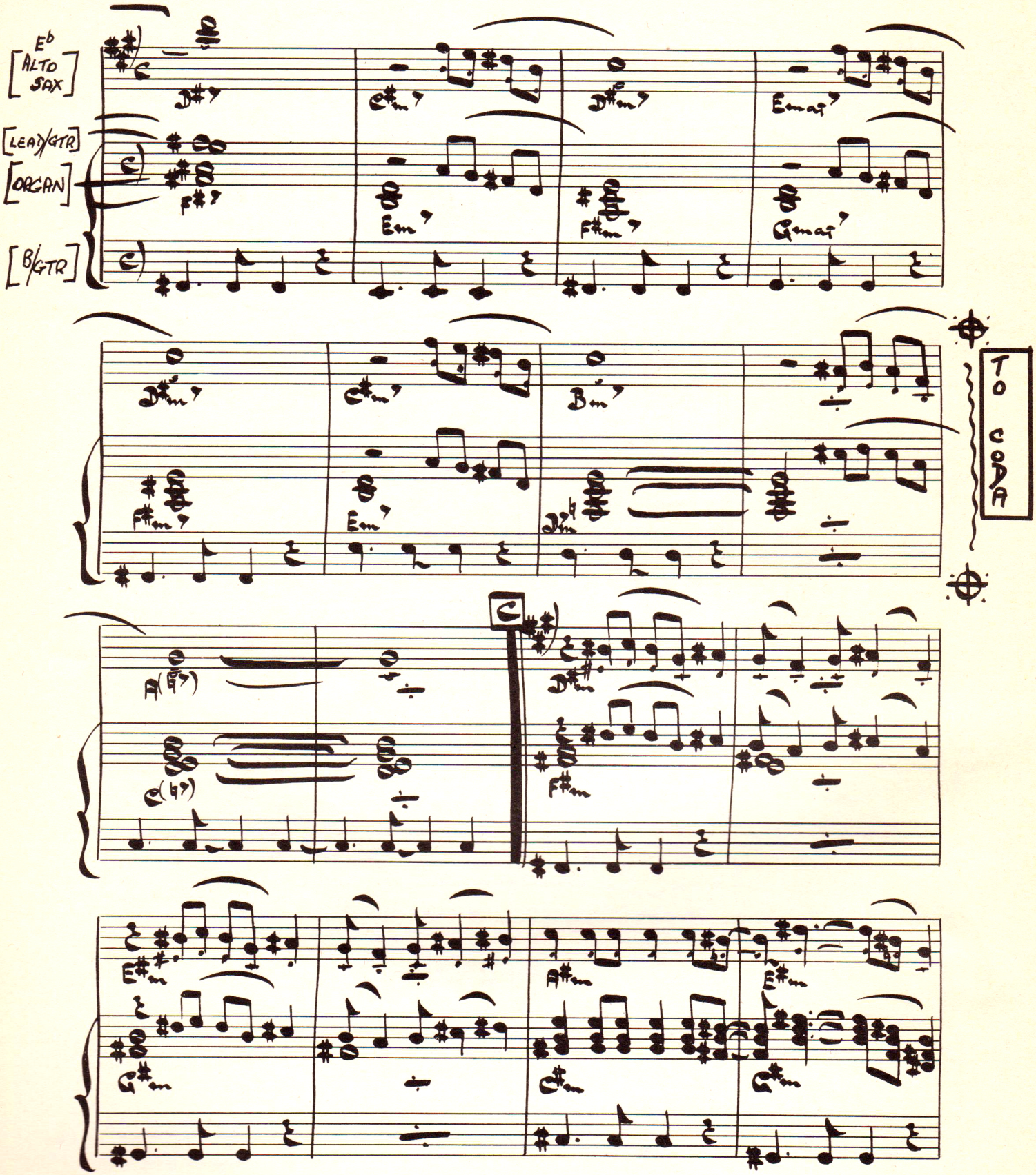
Everything Is You
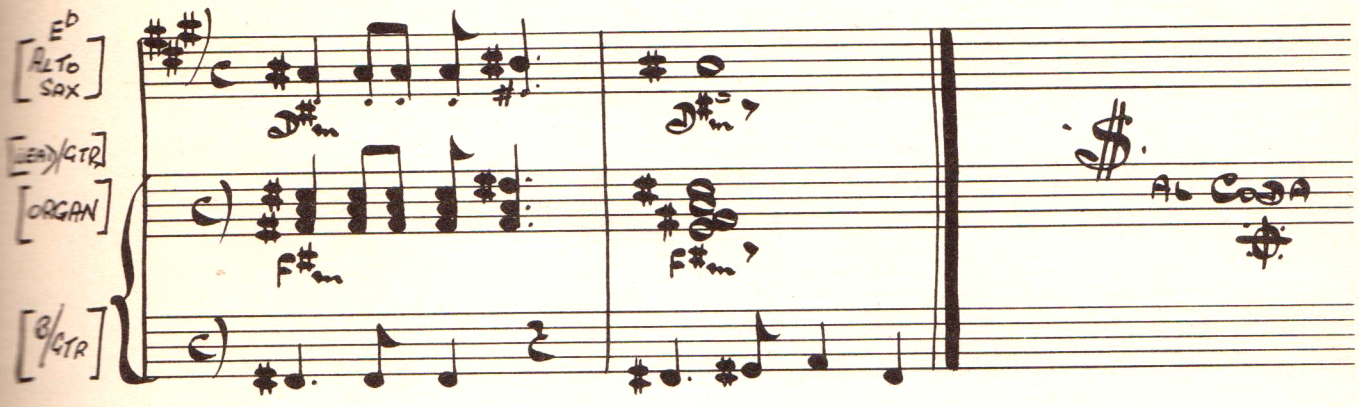
HUGH HOPPER

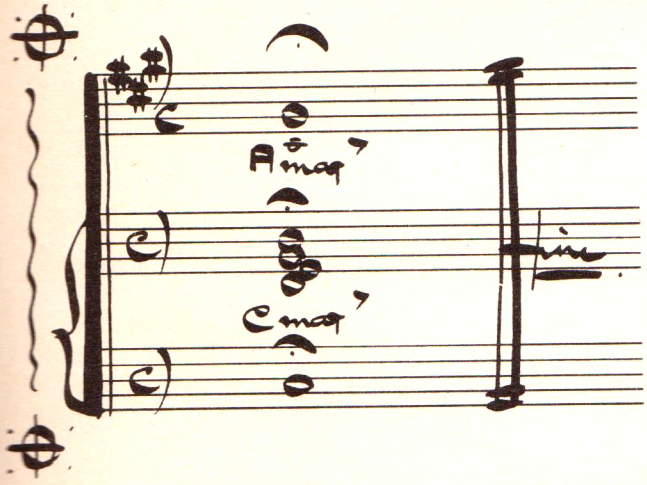


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E♭
ALTO SAX
LEAD GTR
ORGAN
B GTR
C♯m7
Bm7
A(b7)
Em7
Dm7
D(b7)
$
Dmaj7
Emaj7
Fmaj7
Gmaj7
F♯m7
Emaj7
G♯m7
Am7
Gmaj7
Bm7
F♯m7
G♯m7
A♯m7
Am7
Bm7
C♯m7
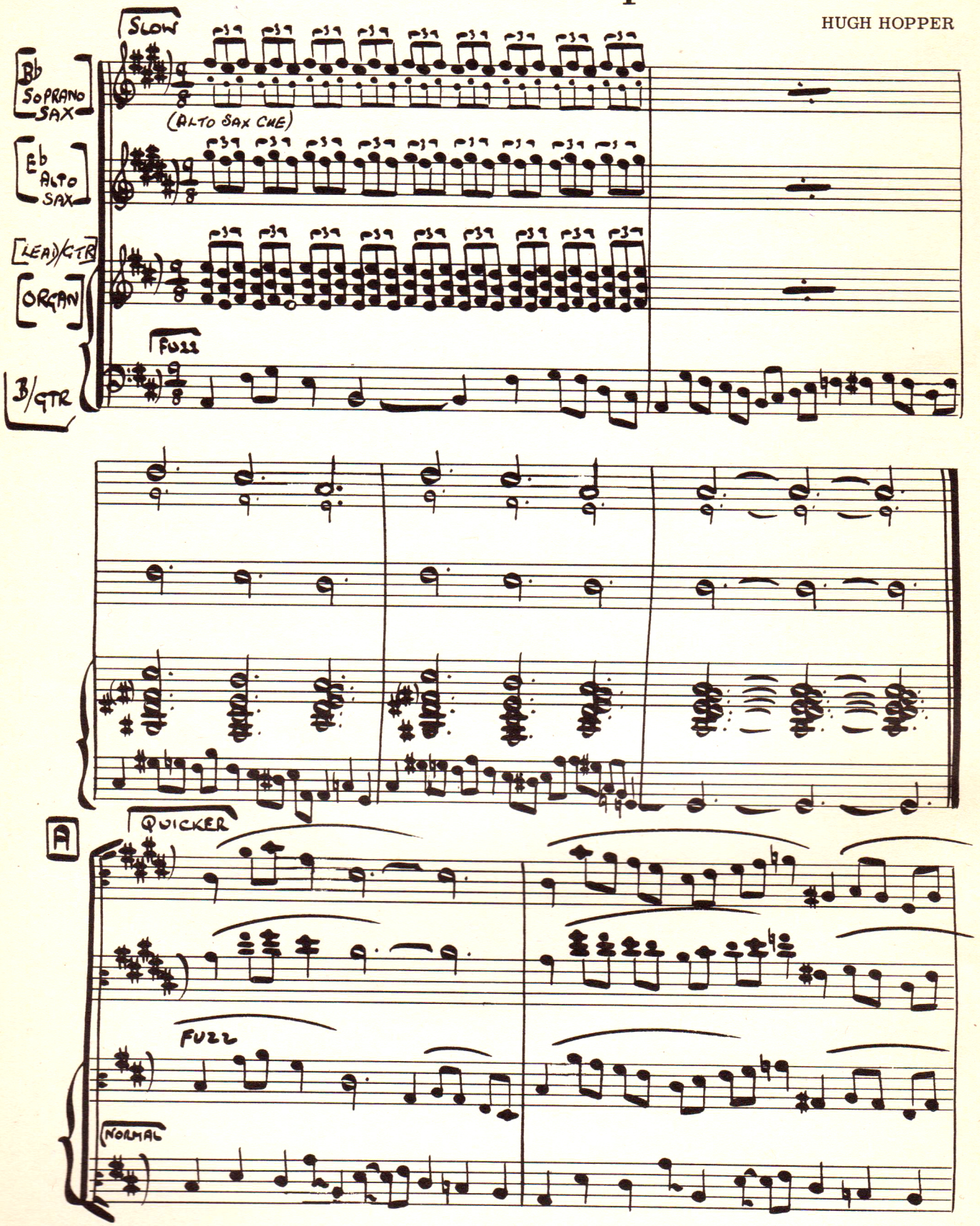

E♭
ALTO SAX
LEAD GTR
ORGAN
B GTR
TO CODA


E♭
ALTO SAX
LEAD GTR
ORGAN
B GTR
D♯m
D♯m7
F♯m
F♯m7
AL CODA

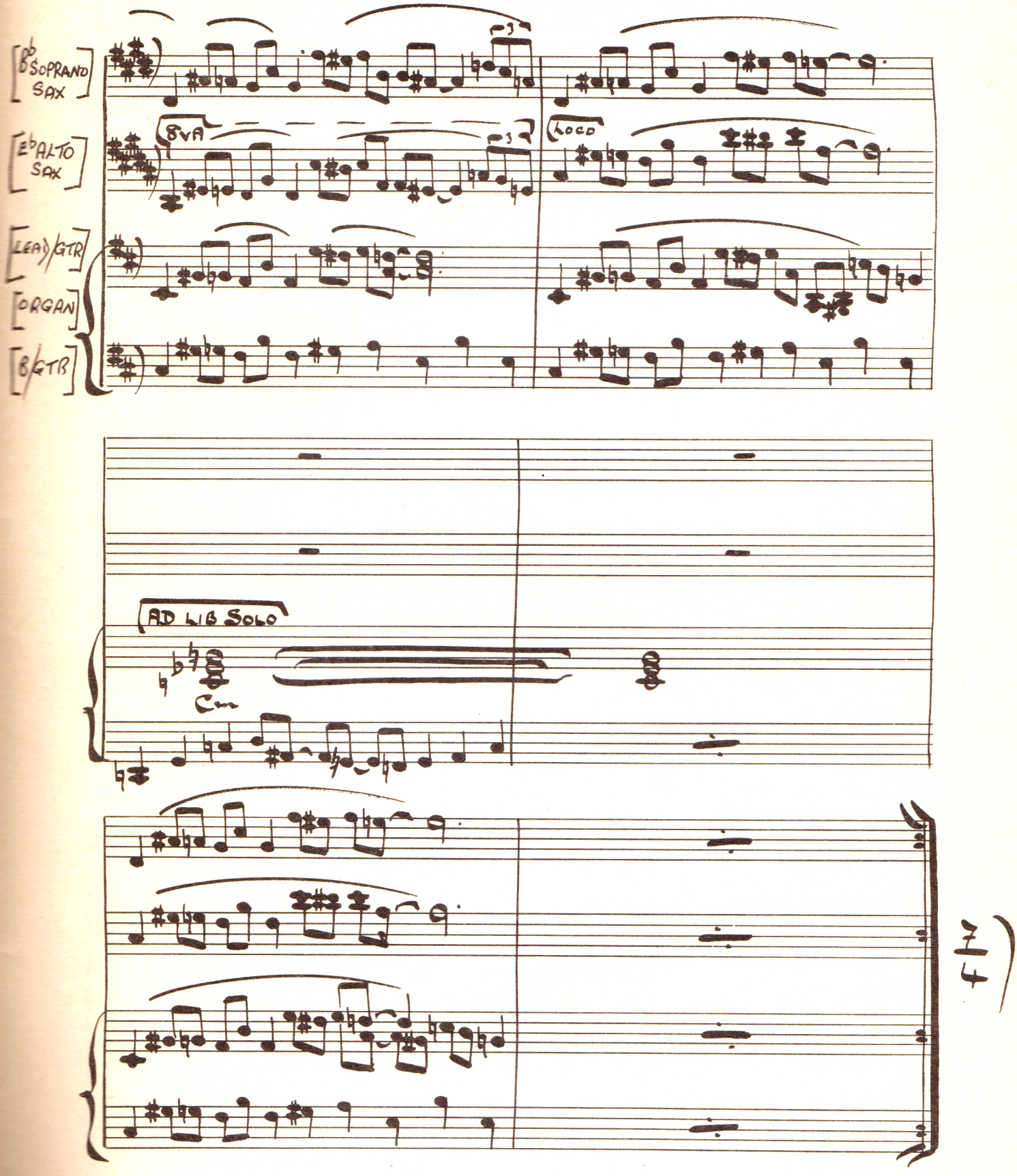

A♭maj7
Cmaj7
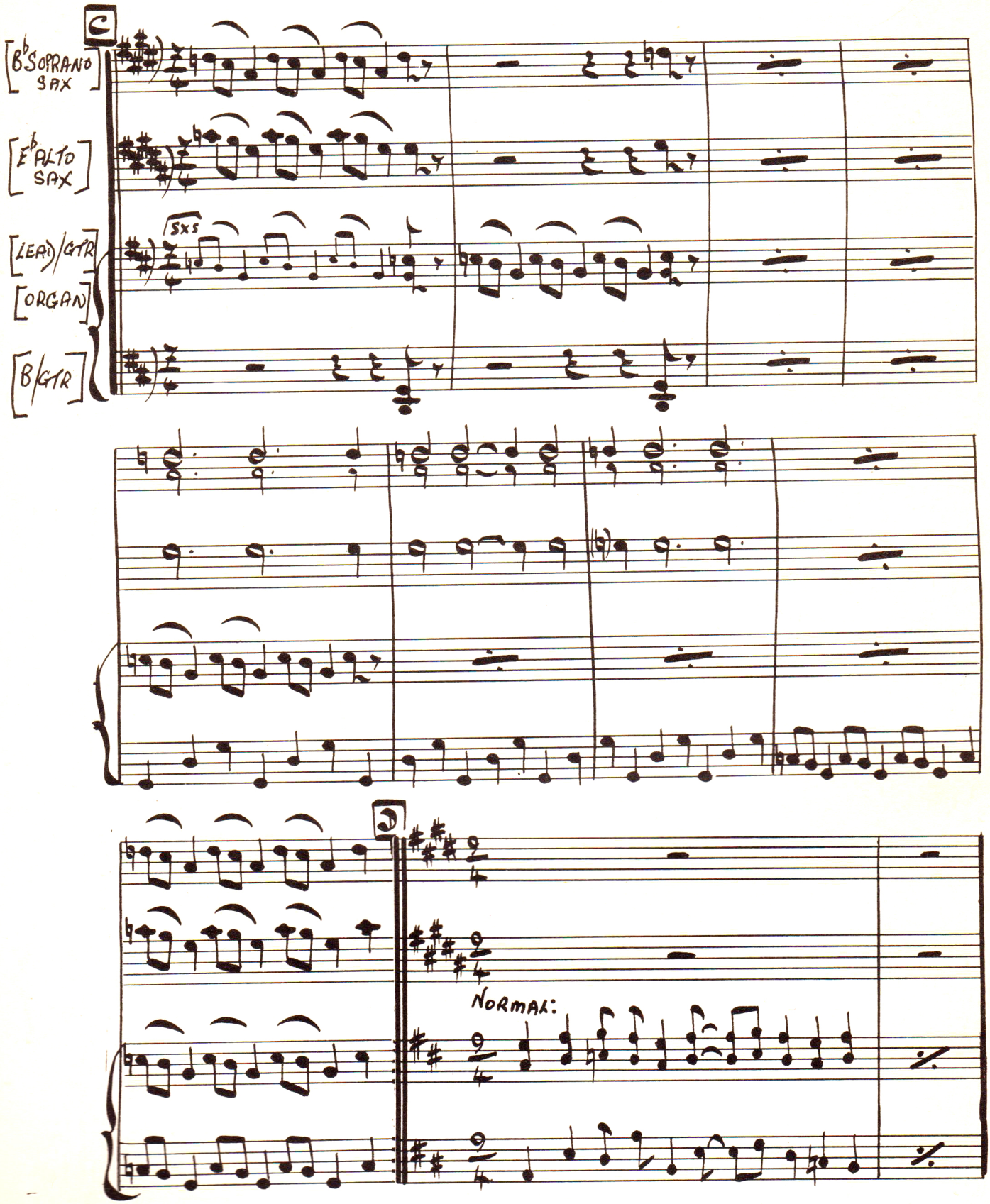
Mousetrap

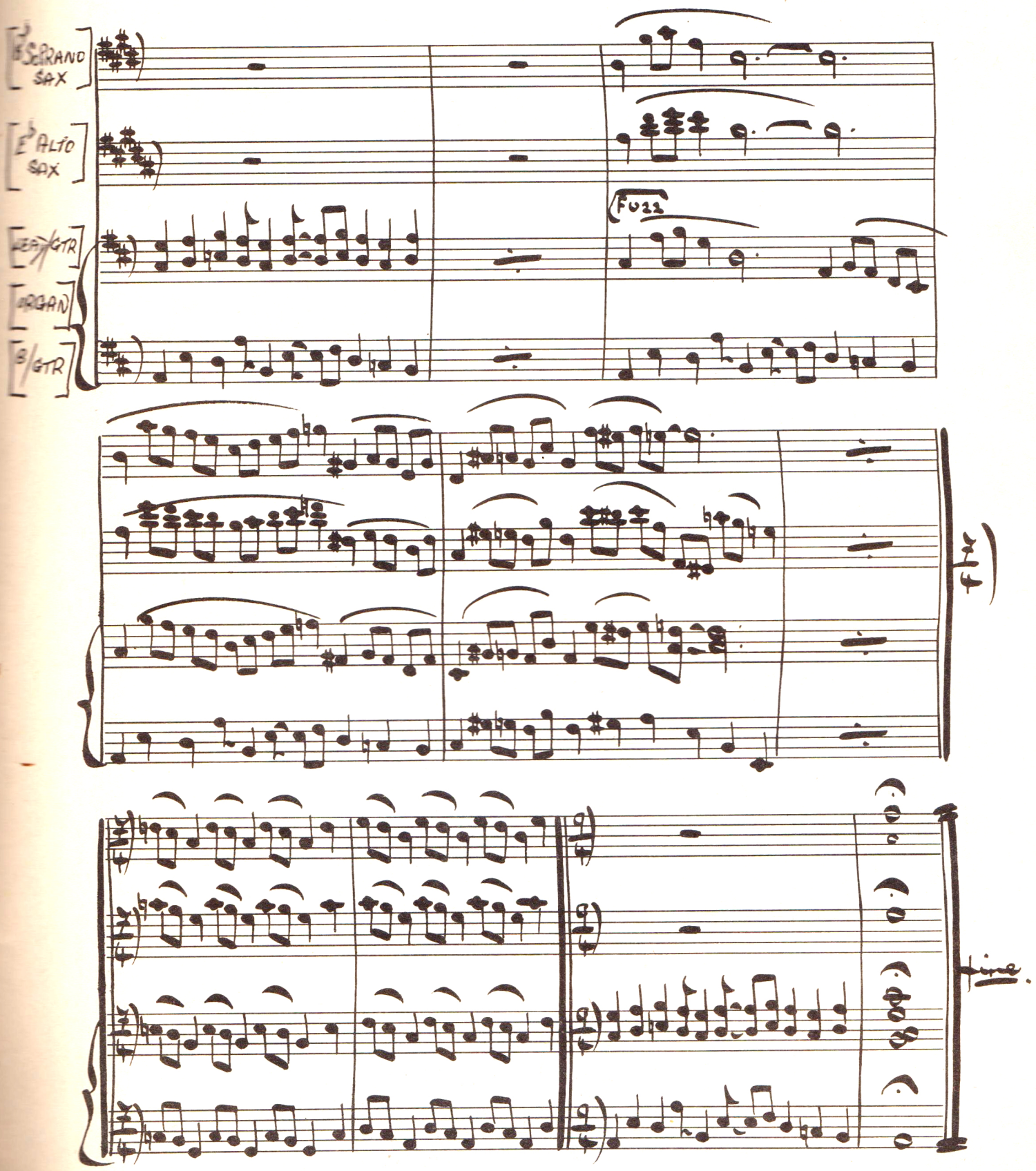
HUGH HOPPER



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B♭ SOPRANO SAX
E♭ ALTO SAX
LEAD GTR
ORGAN
B GTR
8va
loco
AD LIB SOLO
Cm

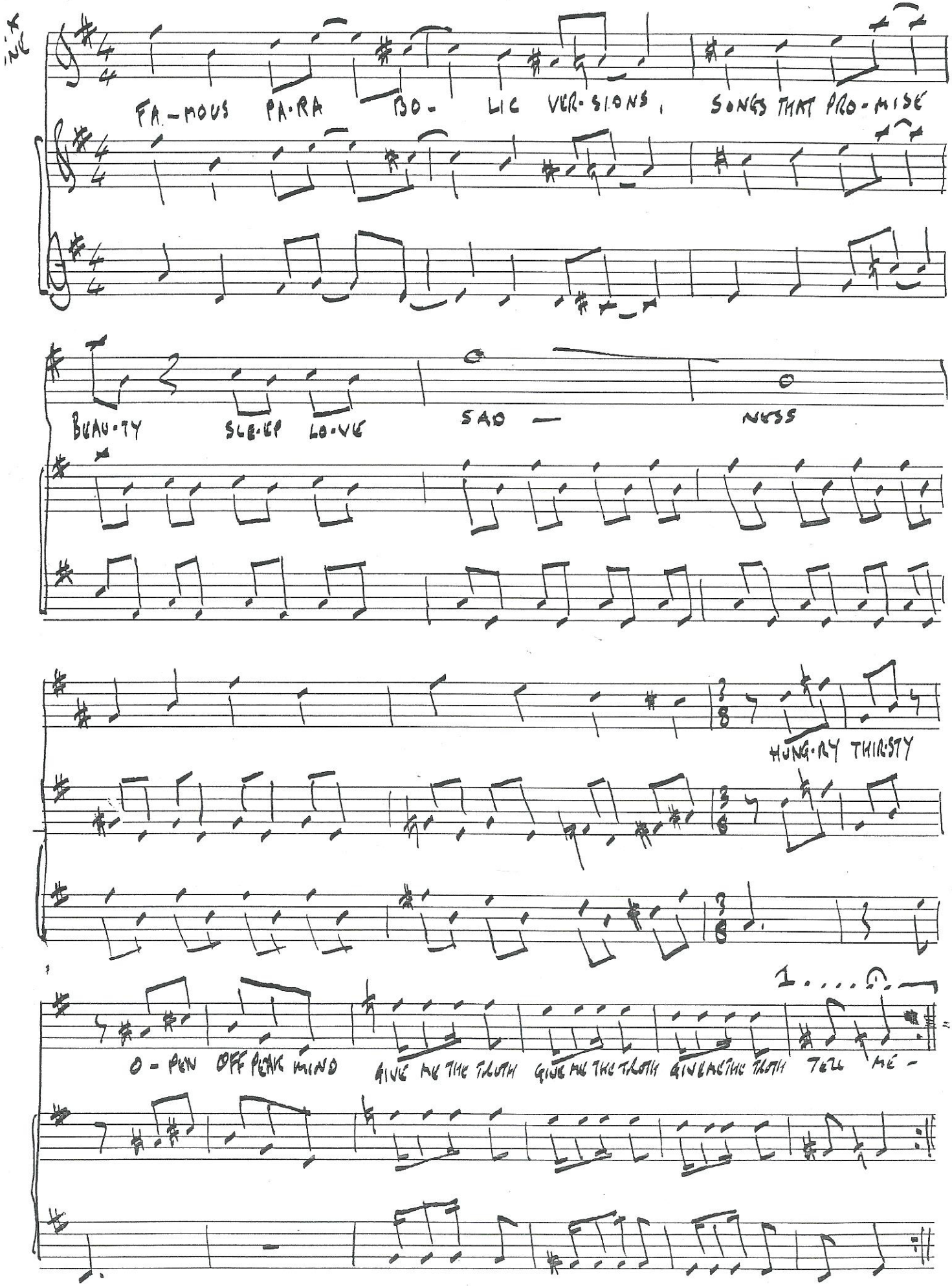

C
B♭ SOPRANO SAX
E♭ ALTO SAX
LEAD GTR
ORGAN
B GTR
SXS
D
NORMAL:


B♭ SOPRANO SAX
E♭ ALTO SAX
ELEC/GTR
ORGAN
B/GTR
FULL
fine.
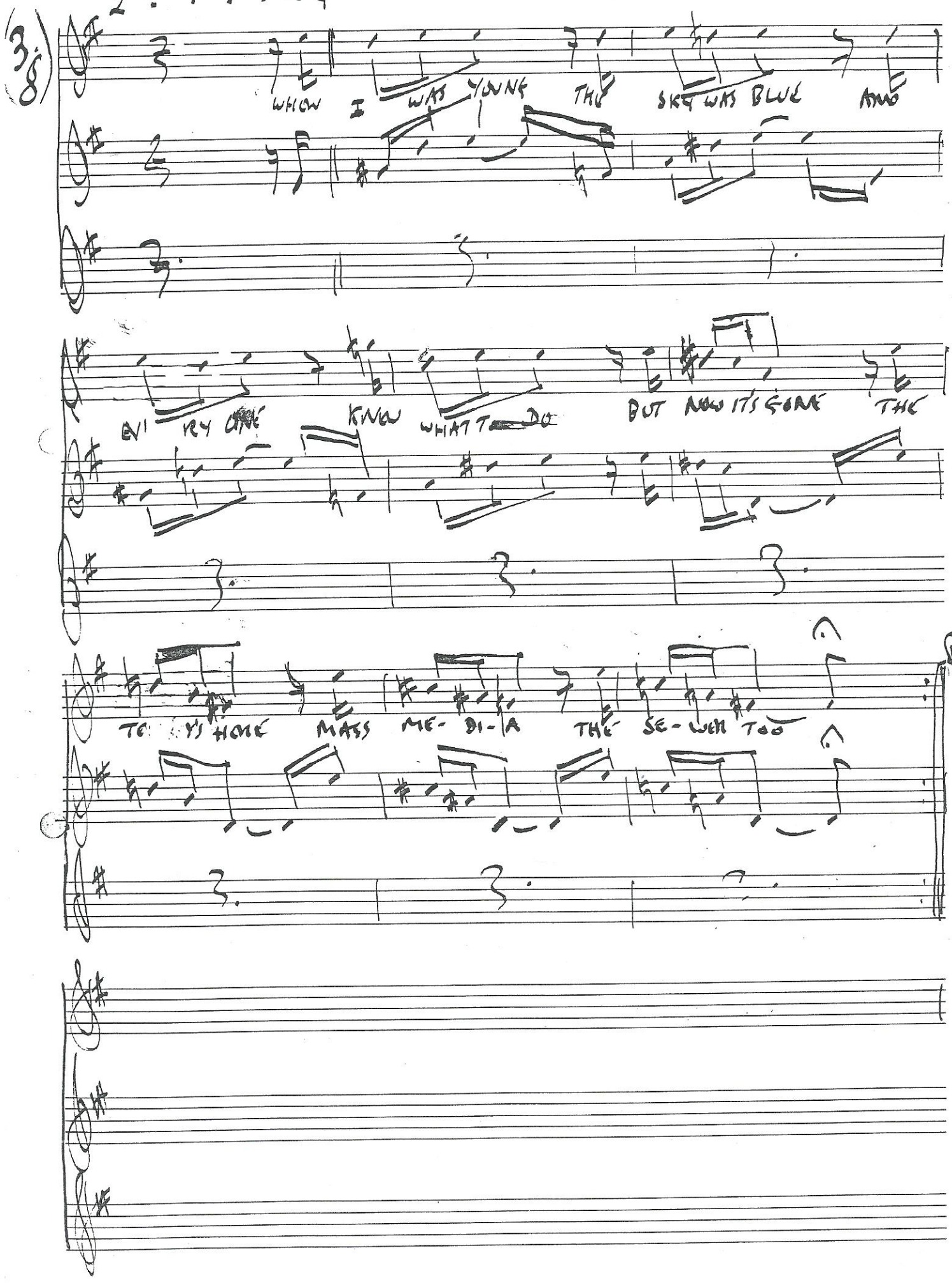
I

DEDICATED TO YOU
BUT YOU WEREN'T LISTENING

M. HOPPEN/
EMI PUBLISH



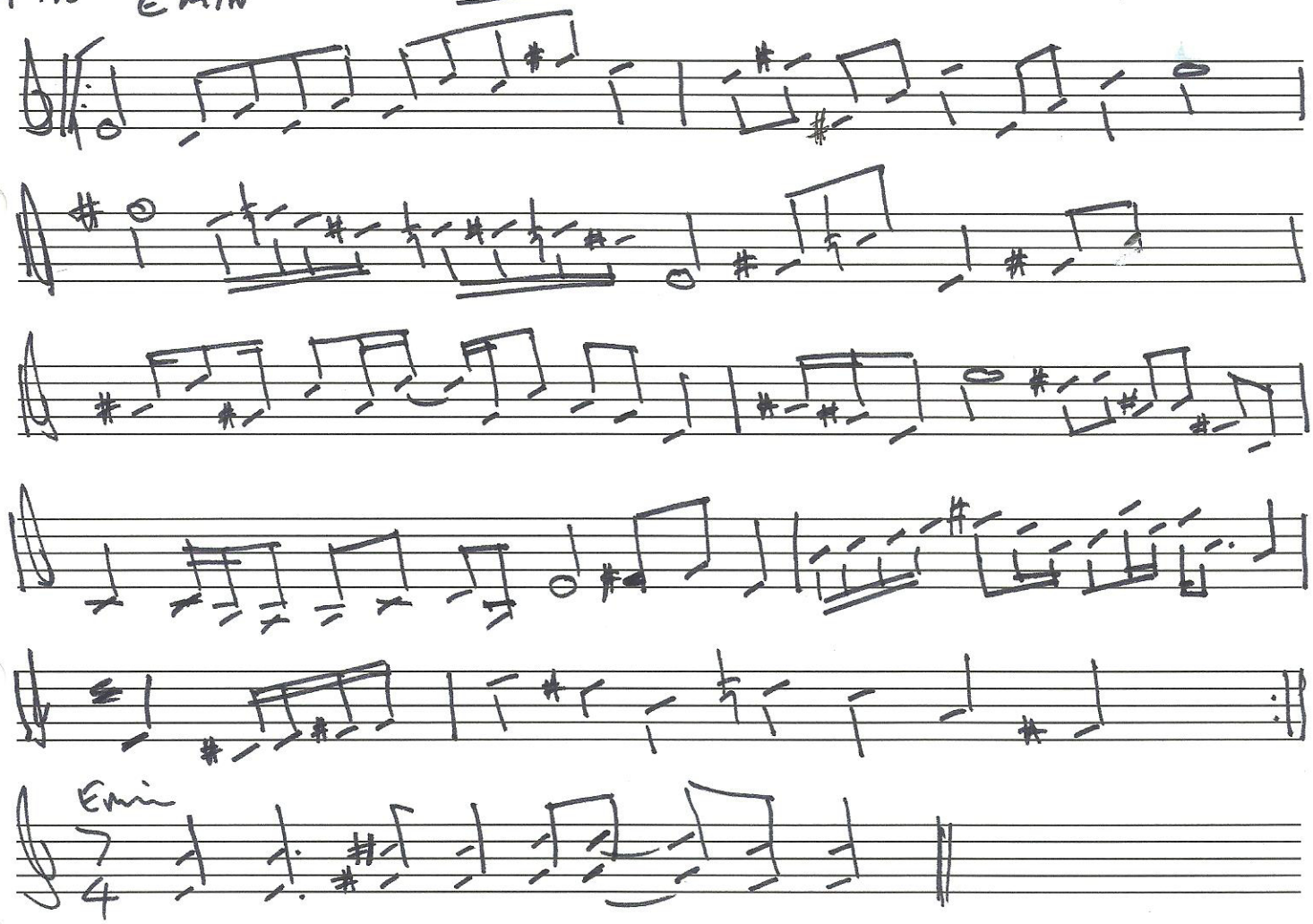
BRIDGE


3/8
2
WHEN I WAS YOUNG THE SKY WAS BLUE AND
EVERY ONE KNEW WHAT TO DO BUT NOW IT'S GONE THE
TODAY'S HOME MASS ME-DI-A THE SE-CRET TOO
D.C
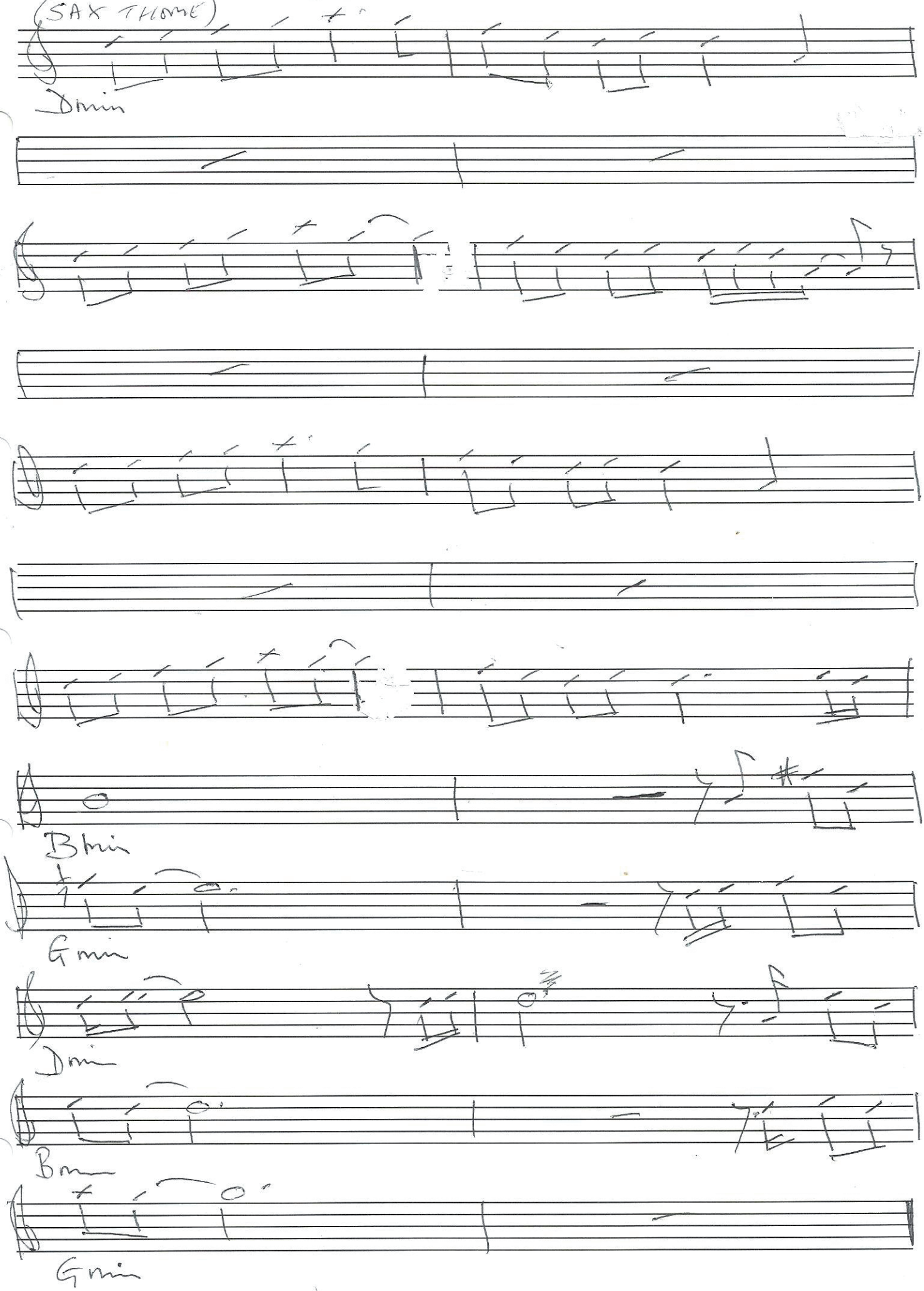
GTR EMIN

FACELIFT

HH



GTR (SAX THEME) WAS A FRIEND 1 72 HH



AMBER

HOPPER/WYATT

Bb Gmin Dmin9 Emin7 Fmin6

Amin Bb Dmin9 Emin7

Fmin6 Cmin9

Gmin Dmin9

Fmin6

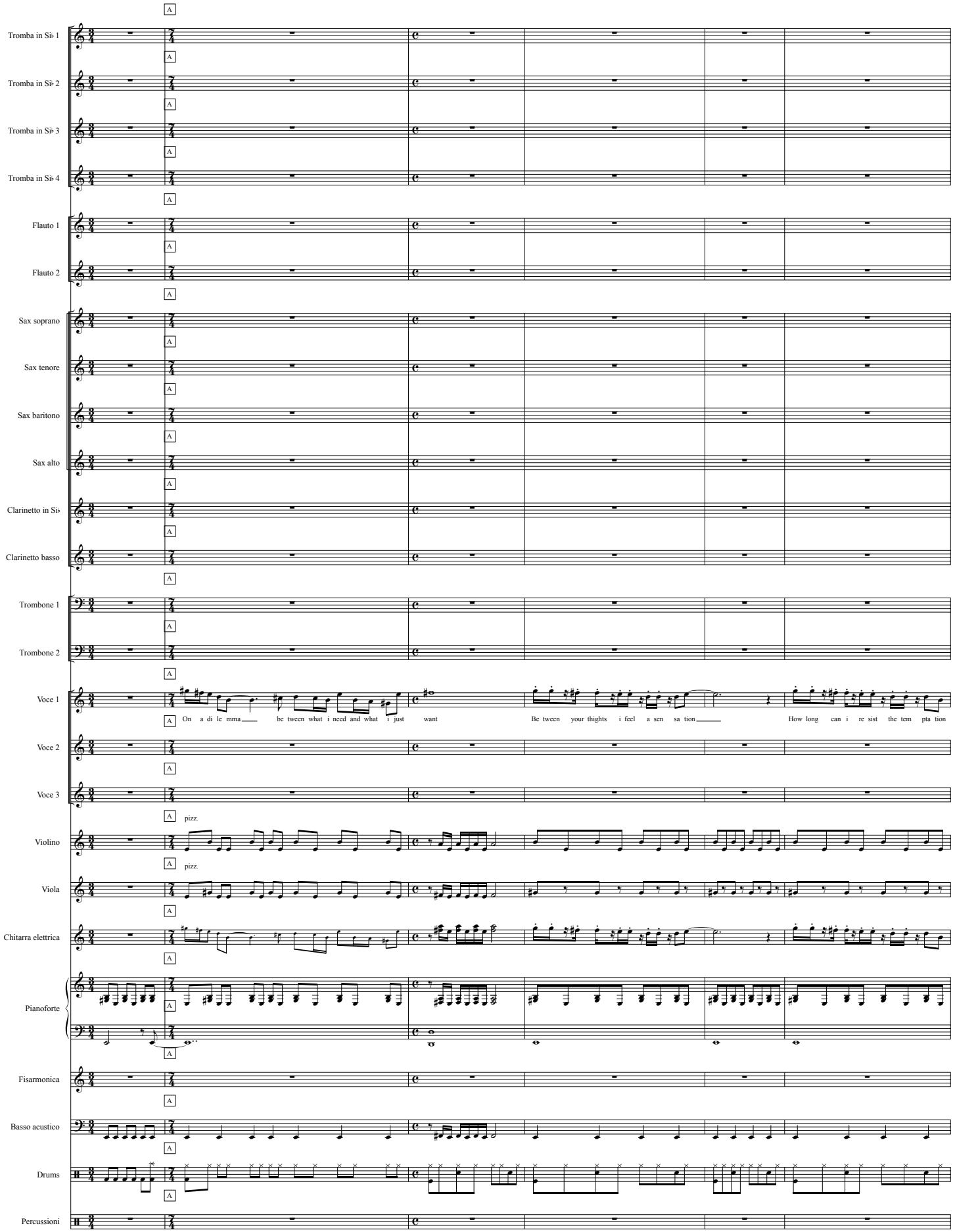
Gmin Dmin9
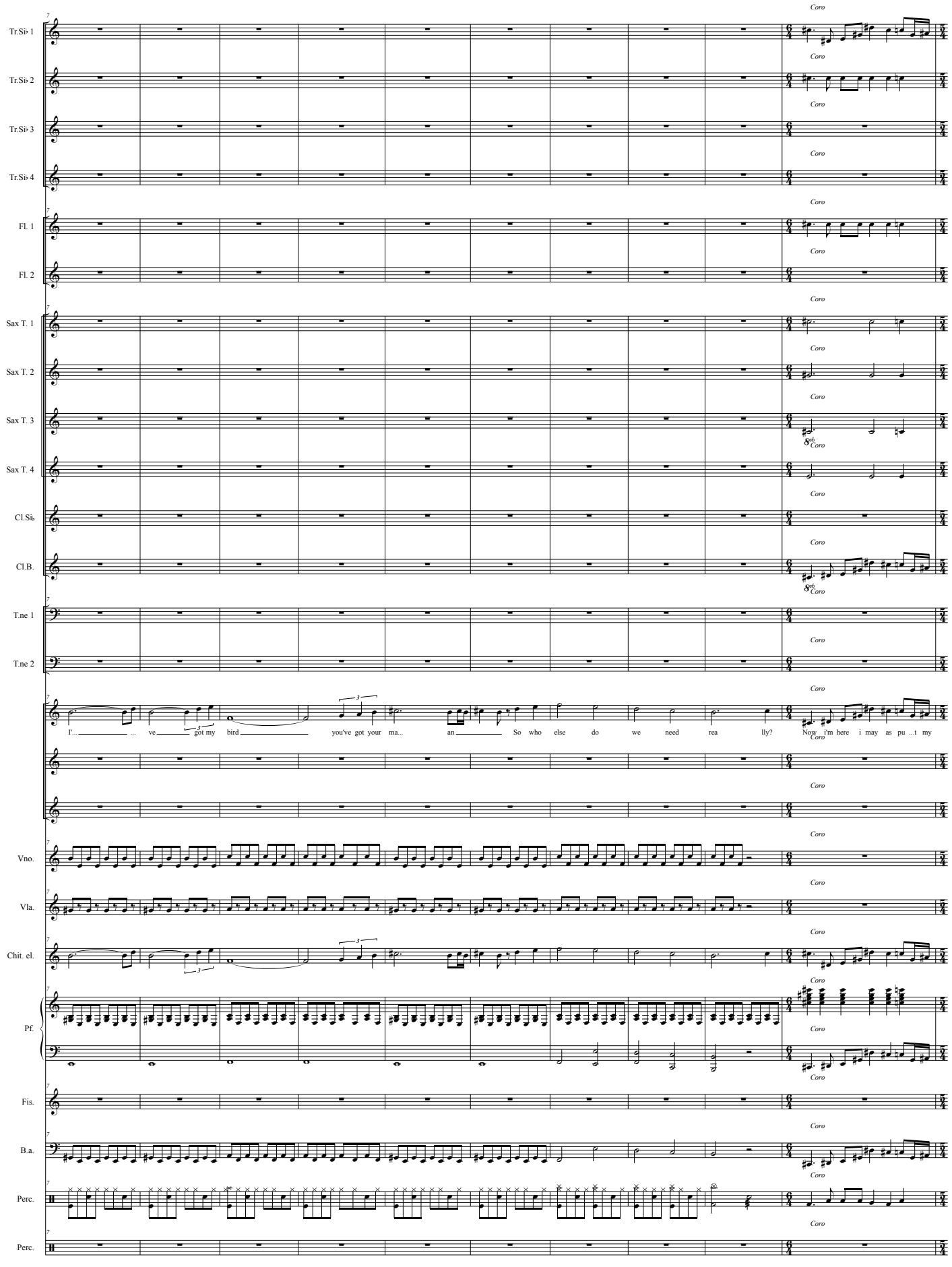
Moon in june
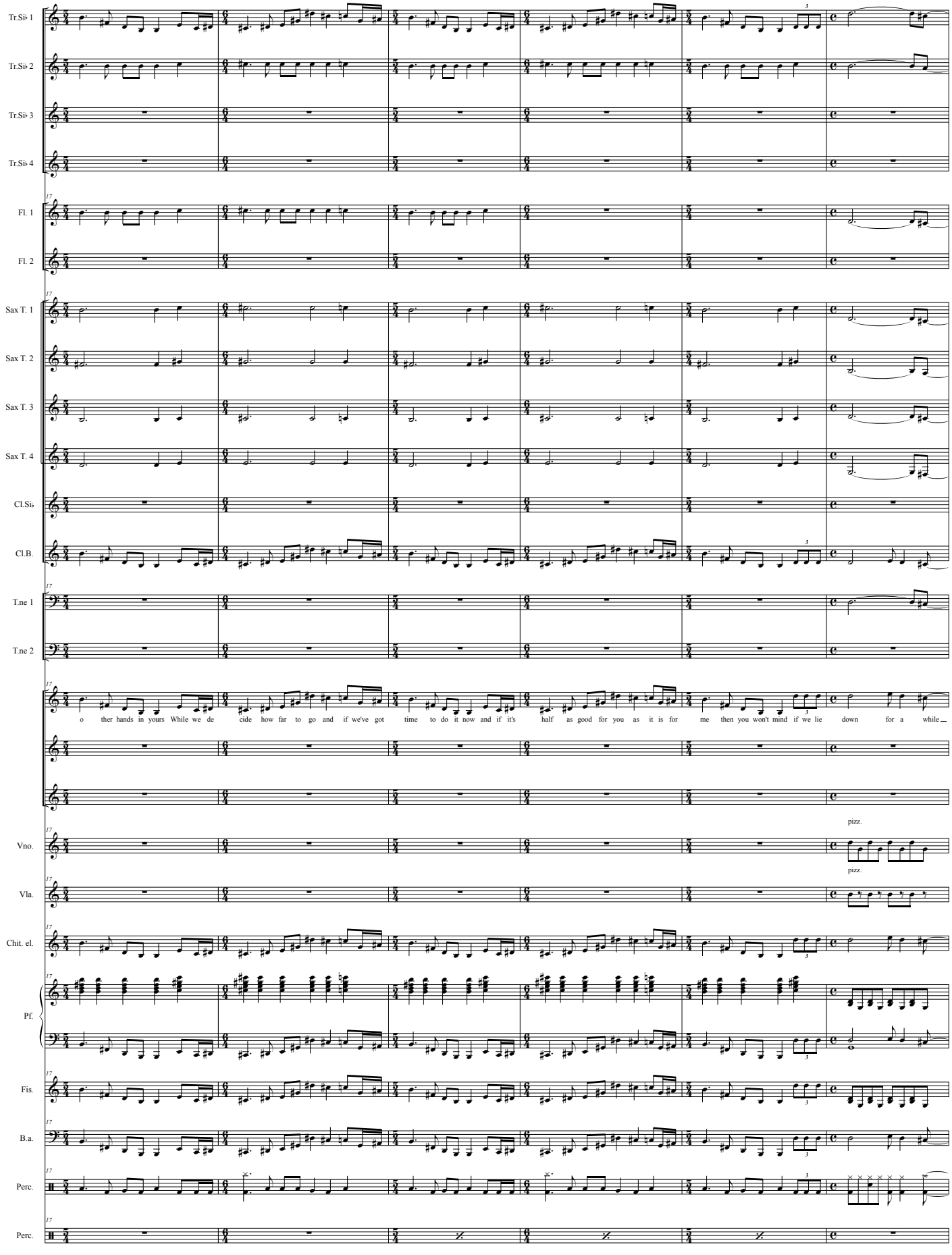
by Robert Wyatt
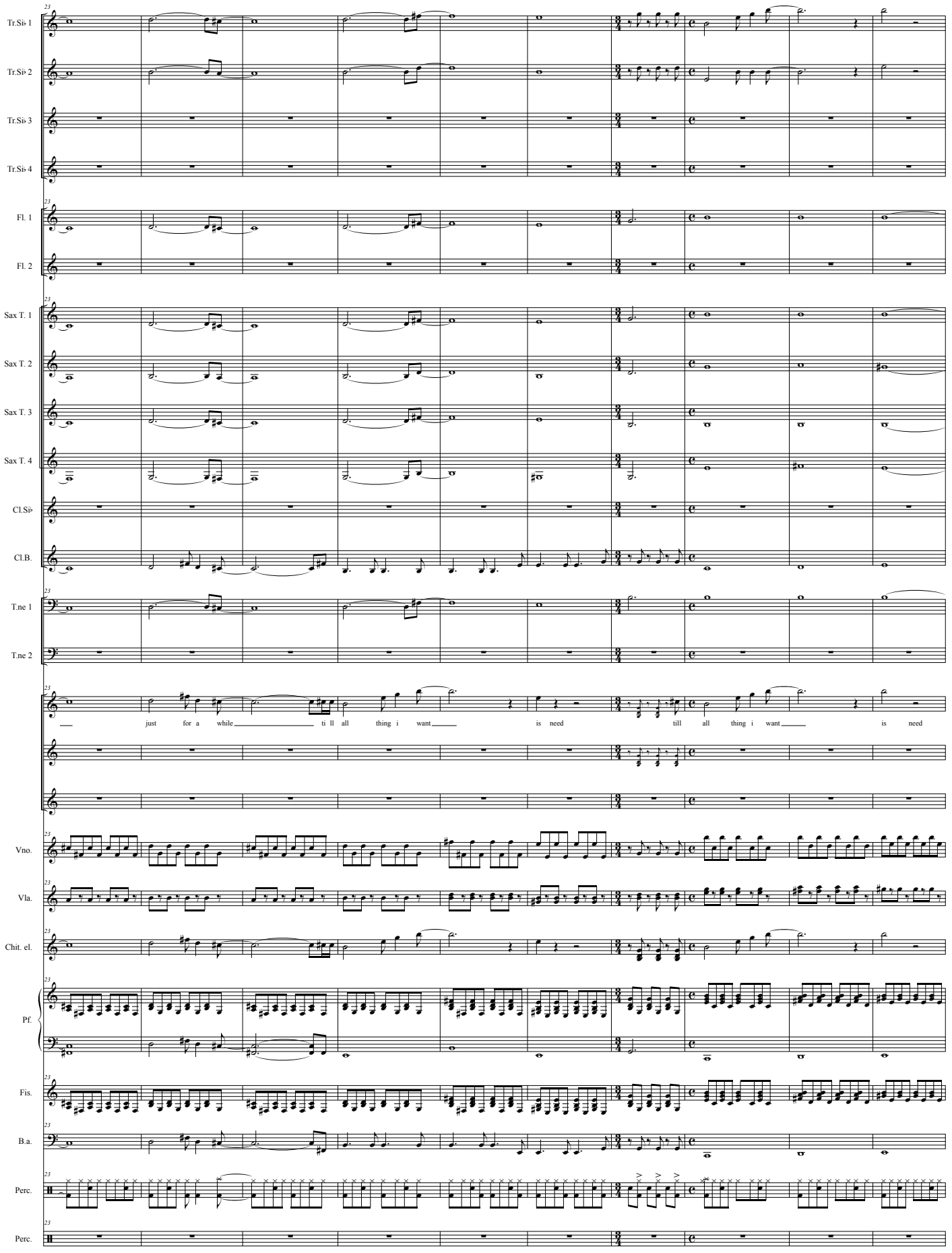
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'
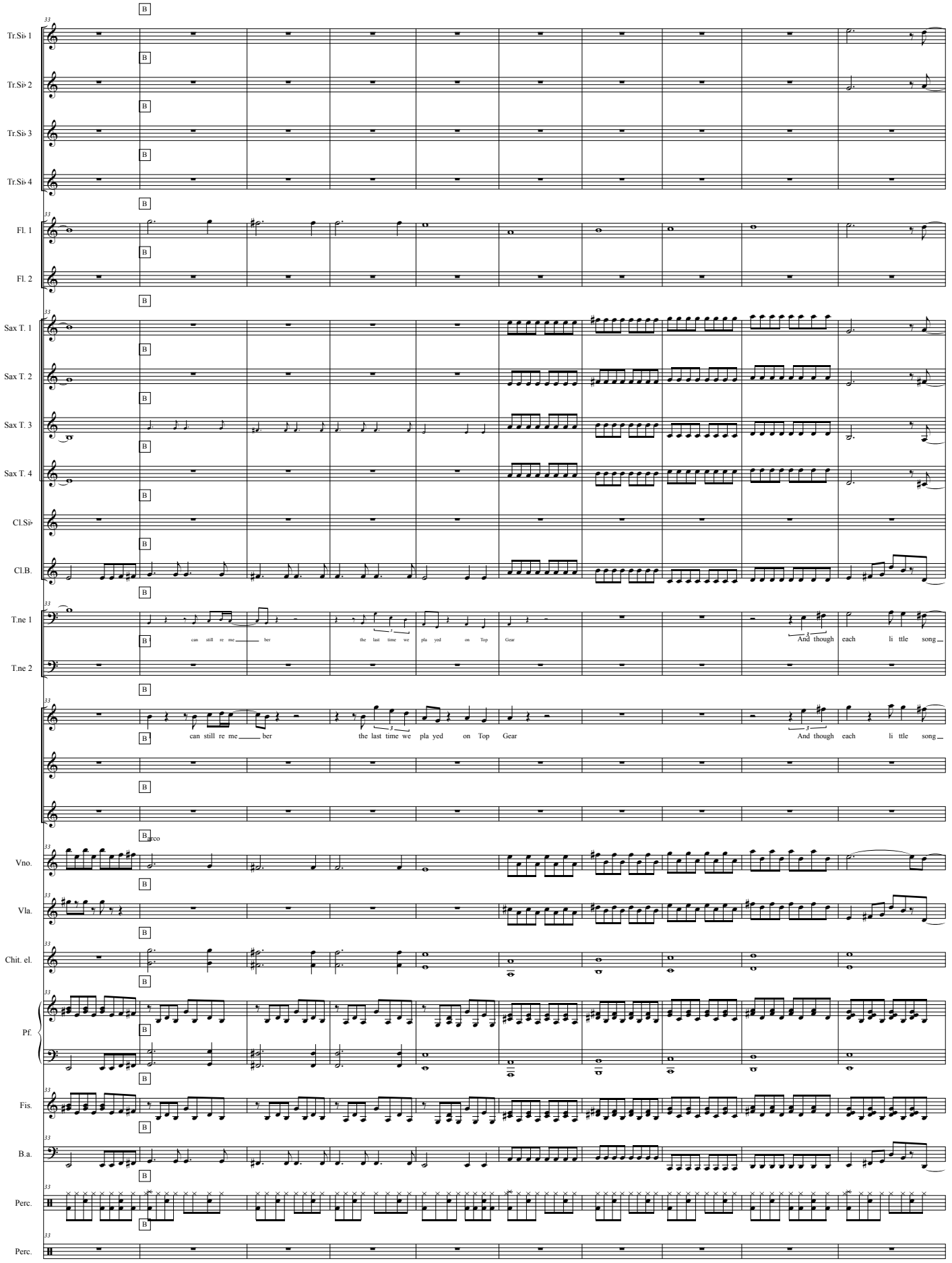
MM104
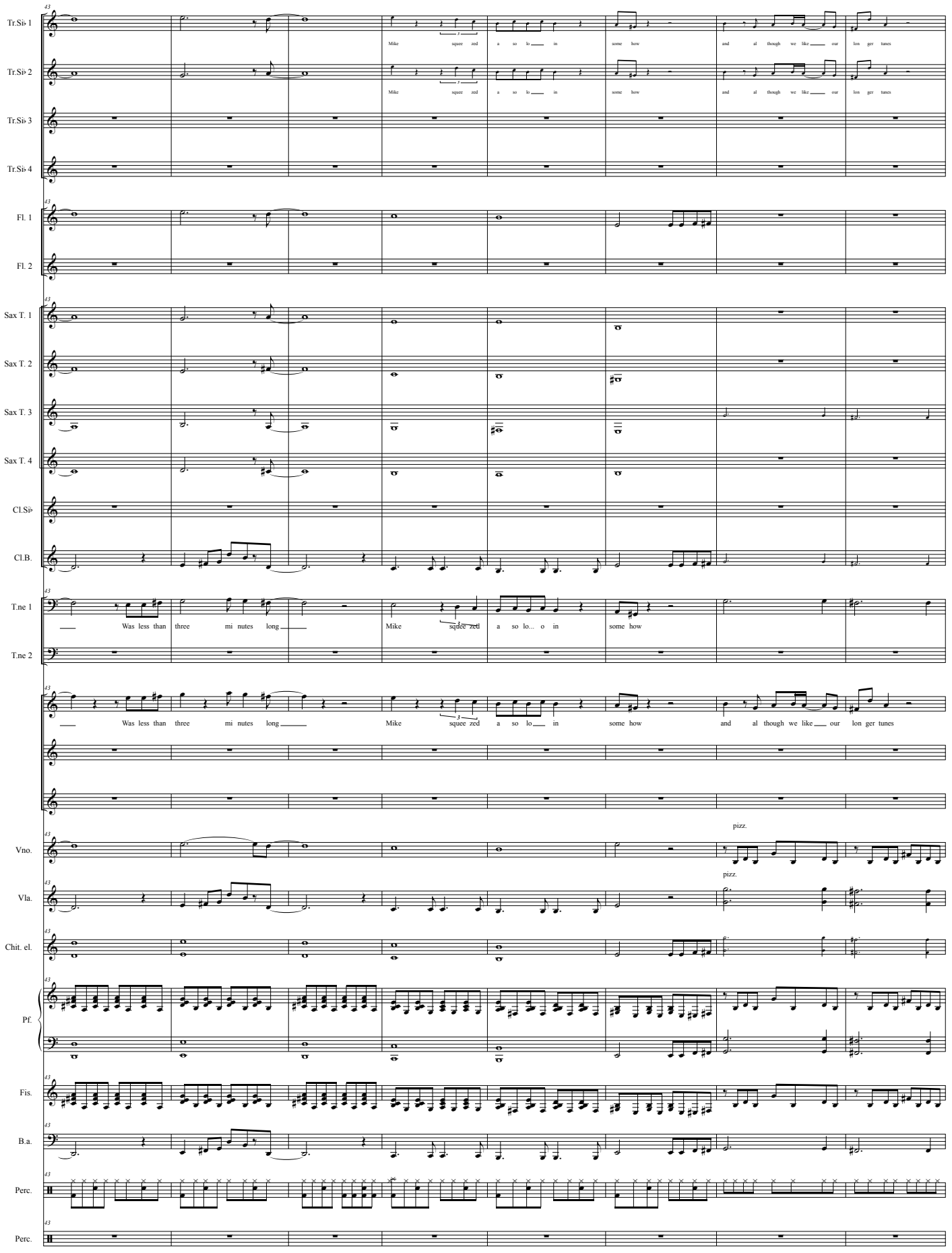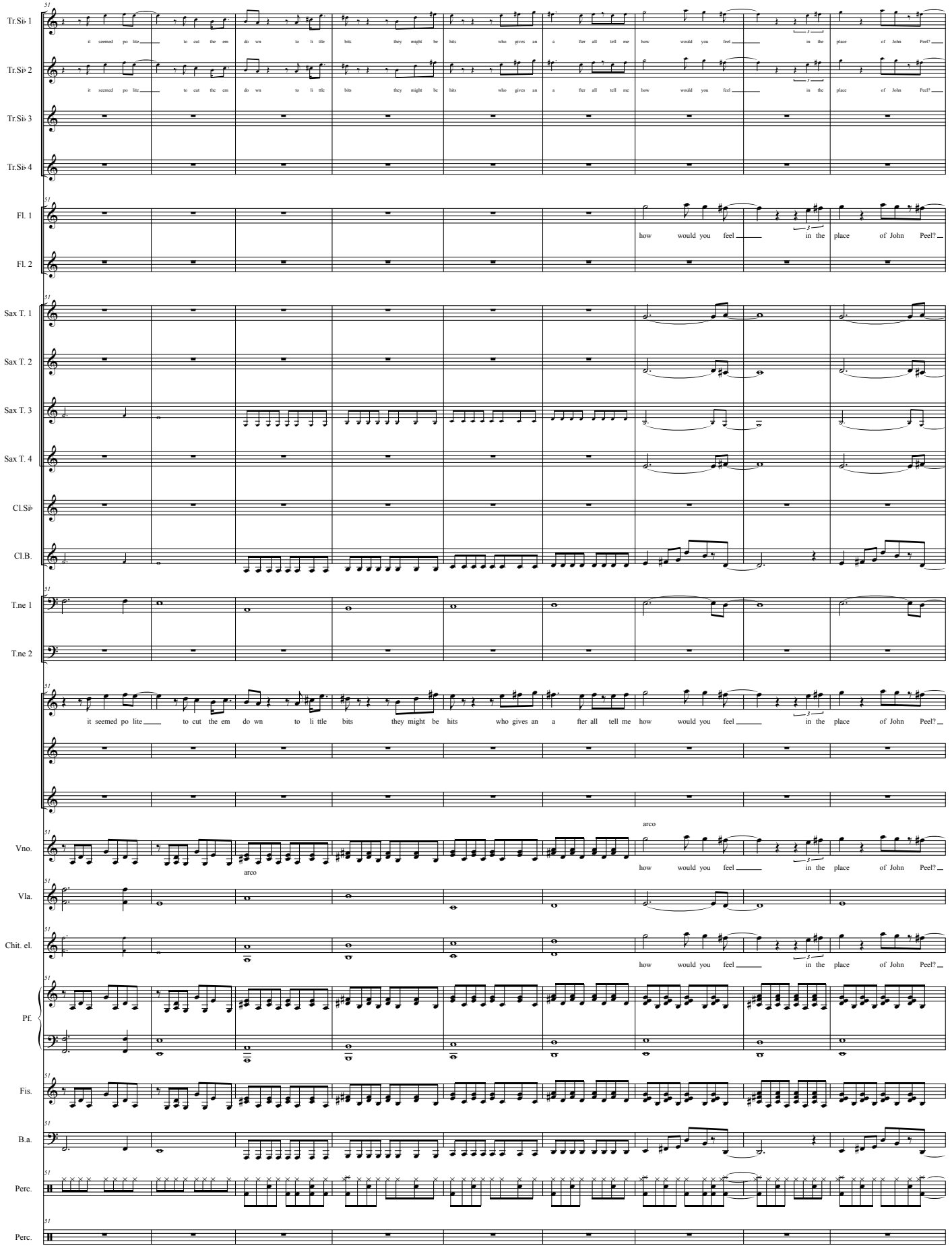



Tr.Sib 1
Tr.Sib 2
Tr.Sib 3
Tr.Sib 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Sib
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
Coro
8ob
I'... ... ve got my bird you've got your ma... an So who else do we need rea lly? Now i'm here i may as pu ...t my
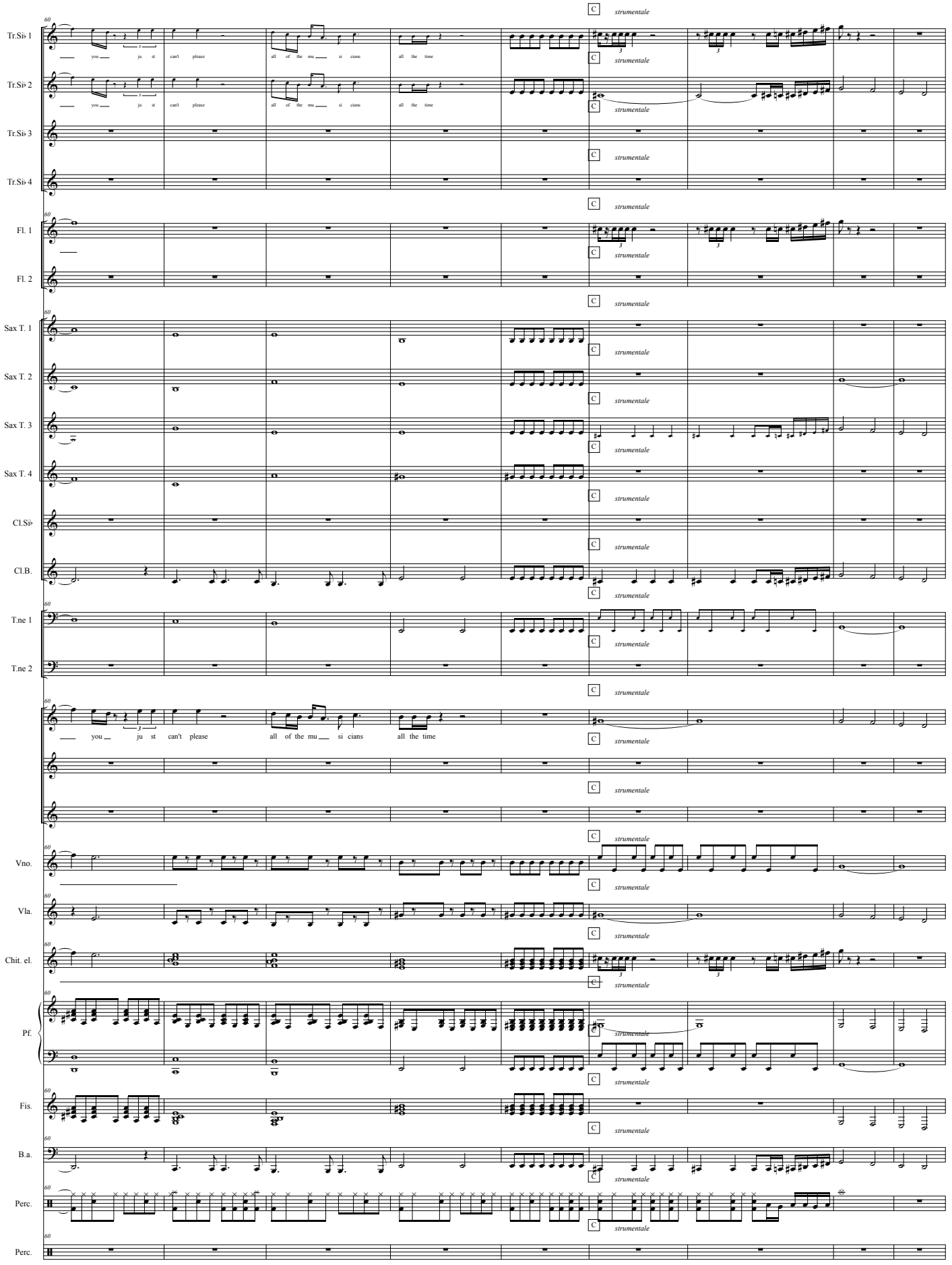

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
o ther hands in yours While we de cide how far to go and if we've got time to do it now and if it's half as good for you as it is for me then you won't mind if we lie down for a while
pizz.
Vno.
pizz.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
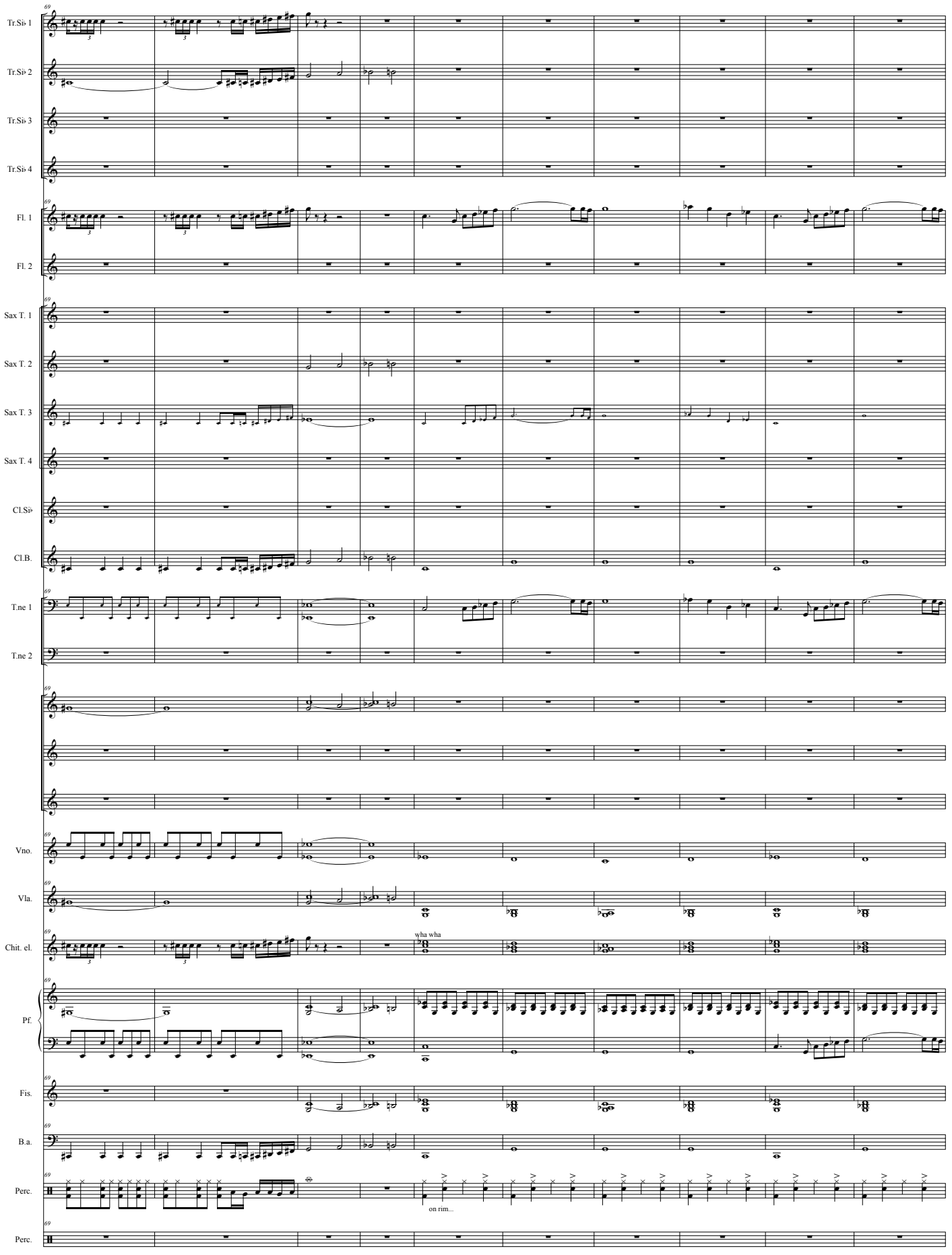

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
just for a while ti ll all thing i want is need till all thing i want is need
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
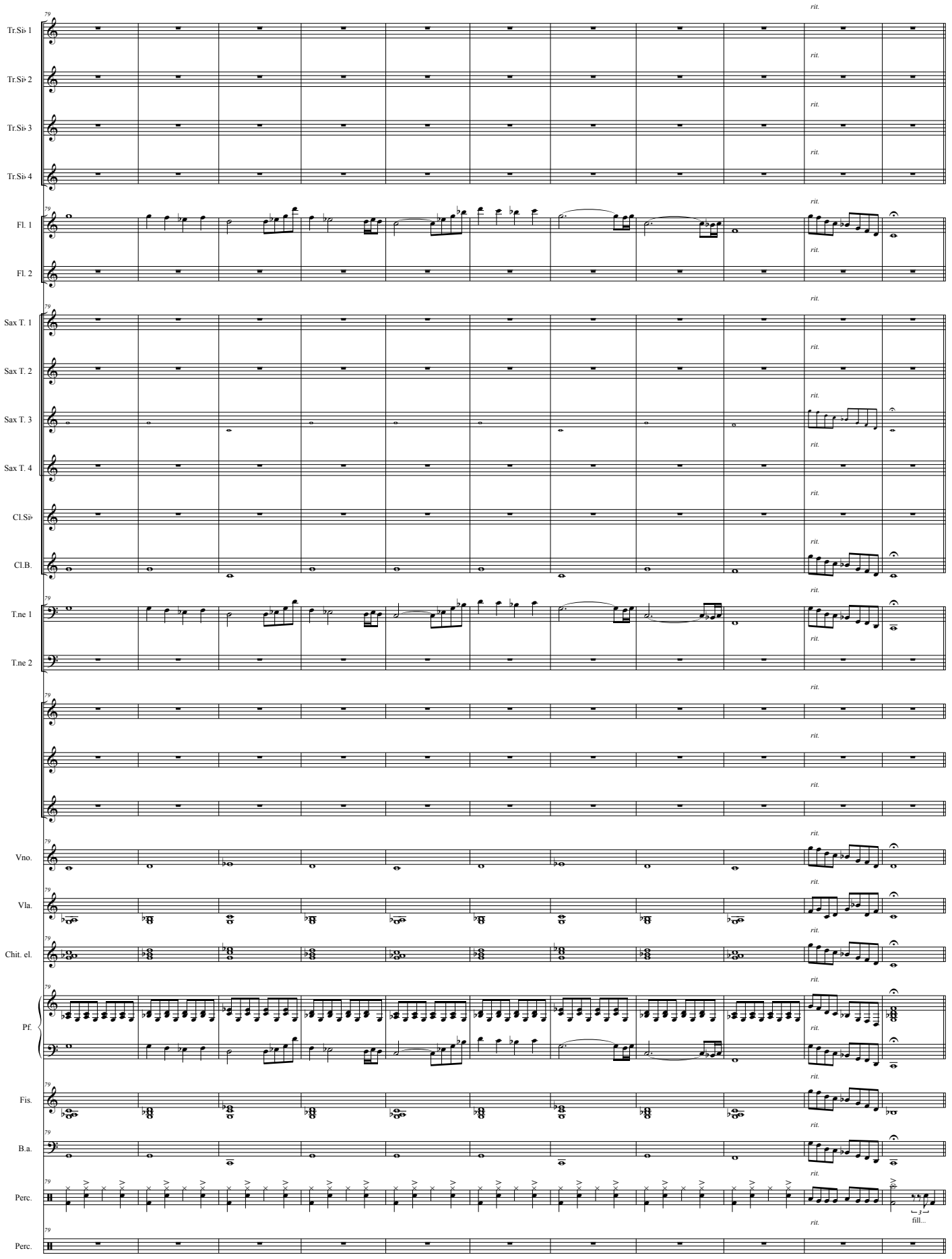

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
B
arco
can still re me ber
the last time we pla yed on Top Gear
And though each li ttle song
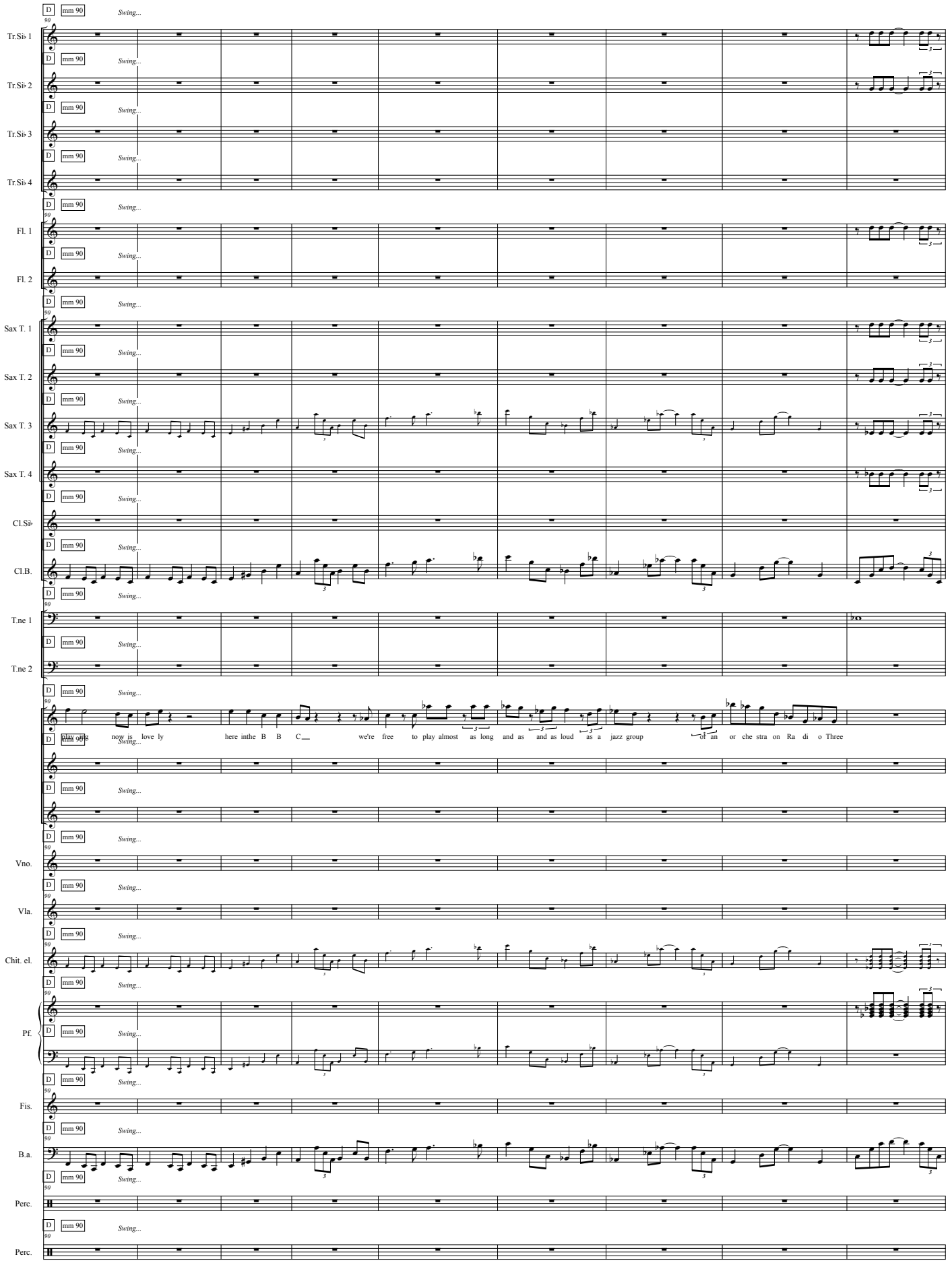

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
Was less than three mi nutes long
Mike squee zed a so lo... o in some how
Mike squee zed a so lo in some how and al though we like our lon ger tunes
pizz.
pizz.
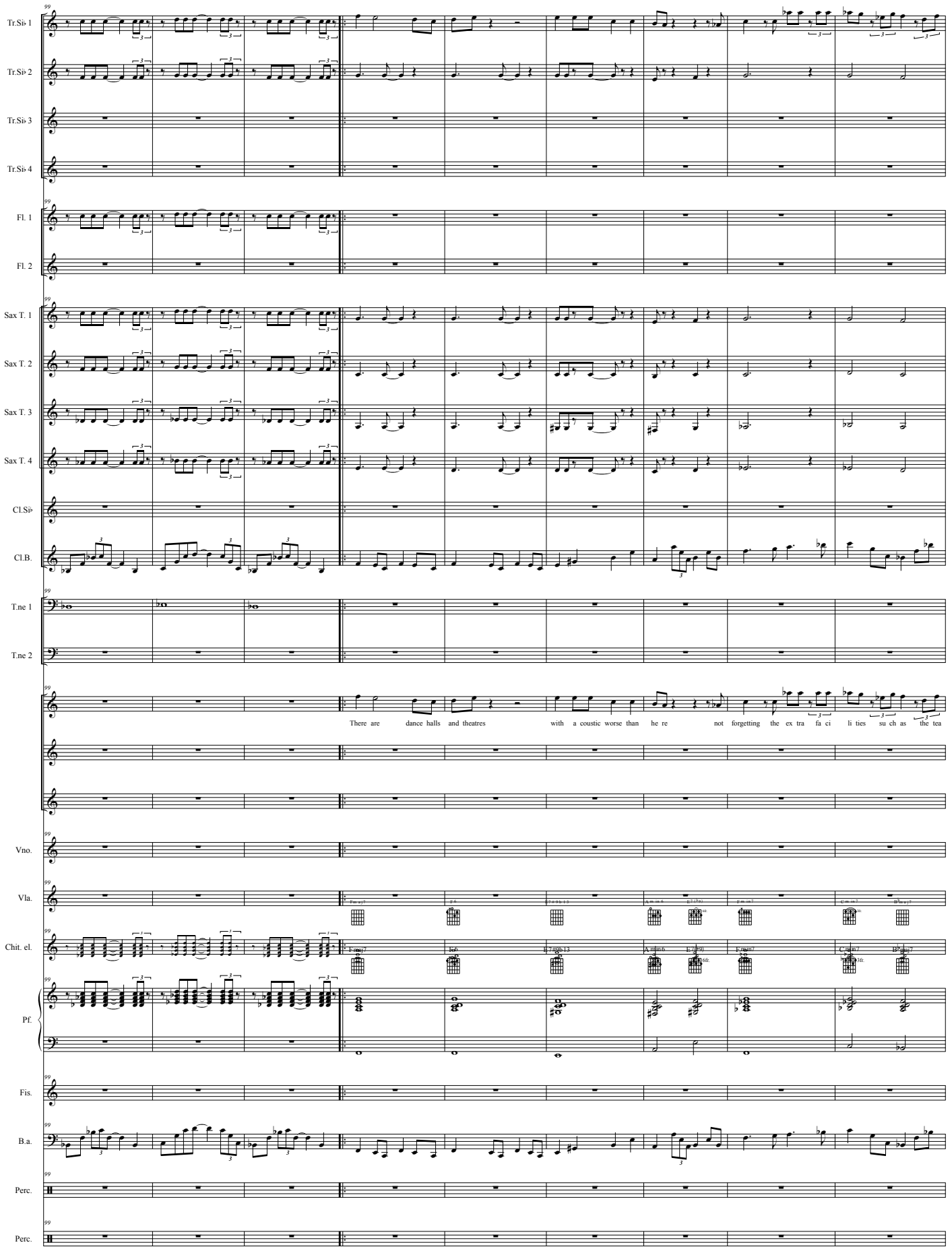

Tr.Si♭ 1
it seemed po lite to cut the em do wn to li ttle bits they might be hits who gives an a fter all tell me how would you feel in the place of John Peel?
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
arco
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
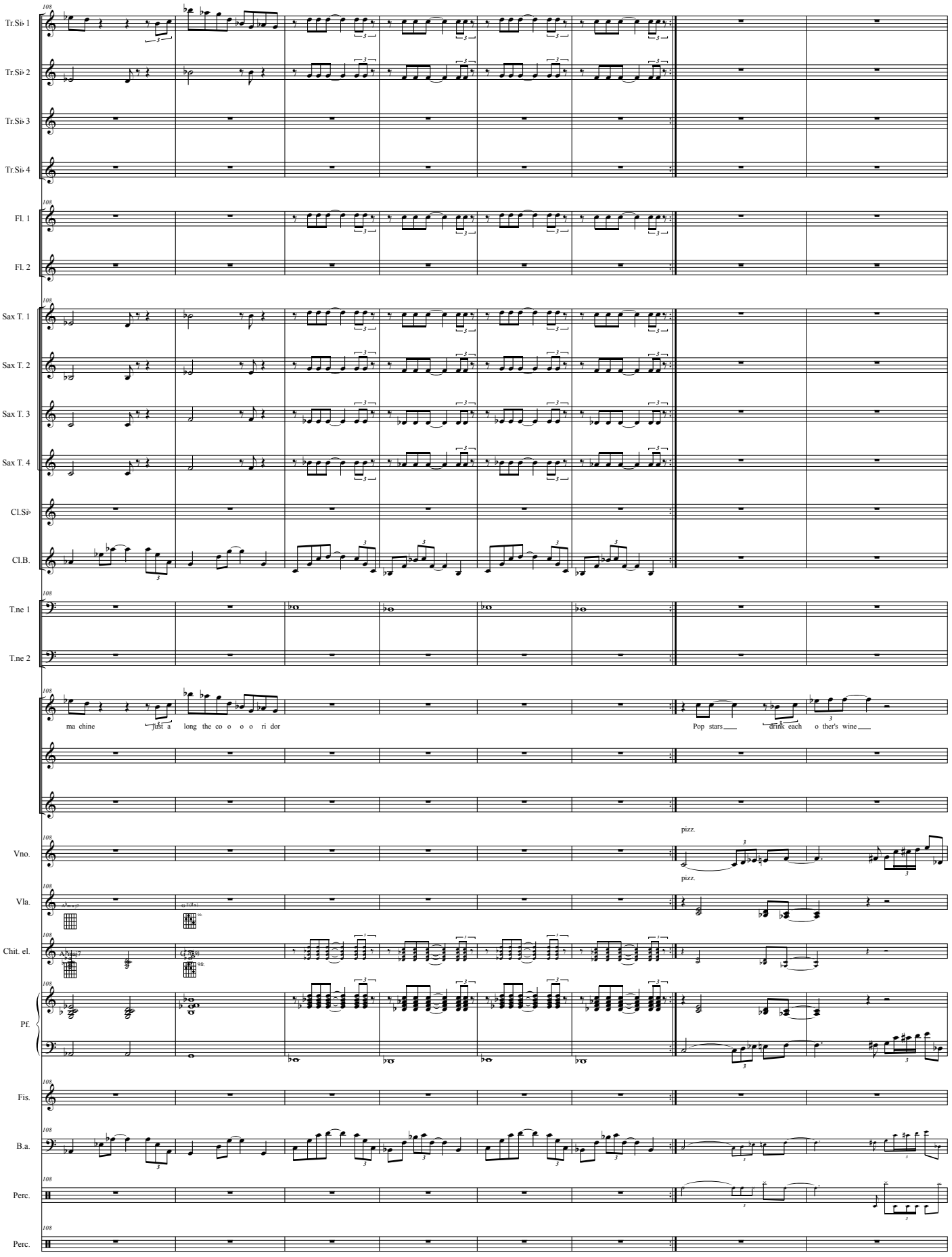

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
you ju st
can't please
all of the mu si cians
all the time
strumentale
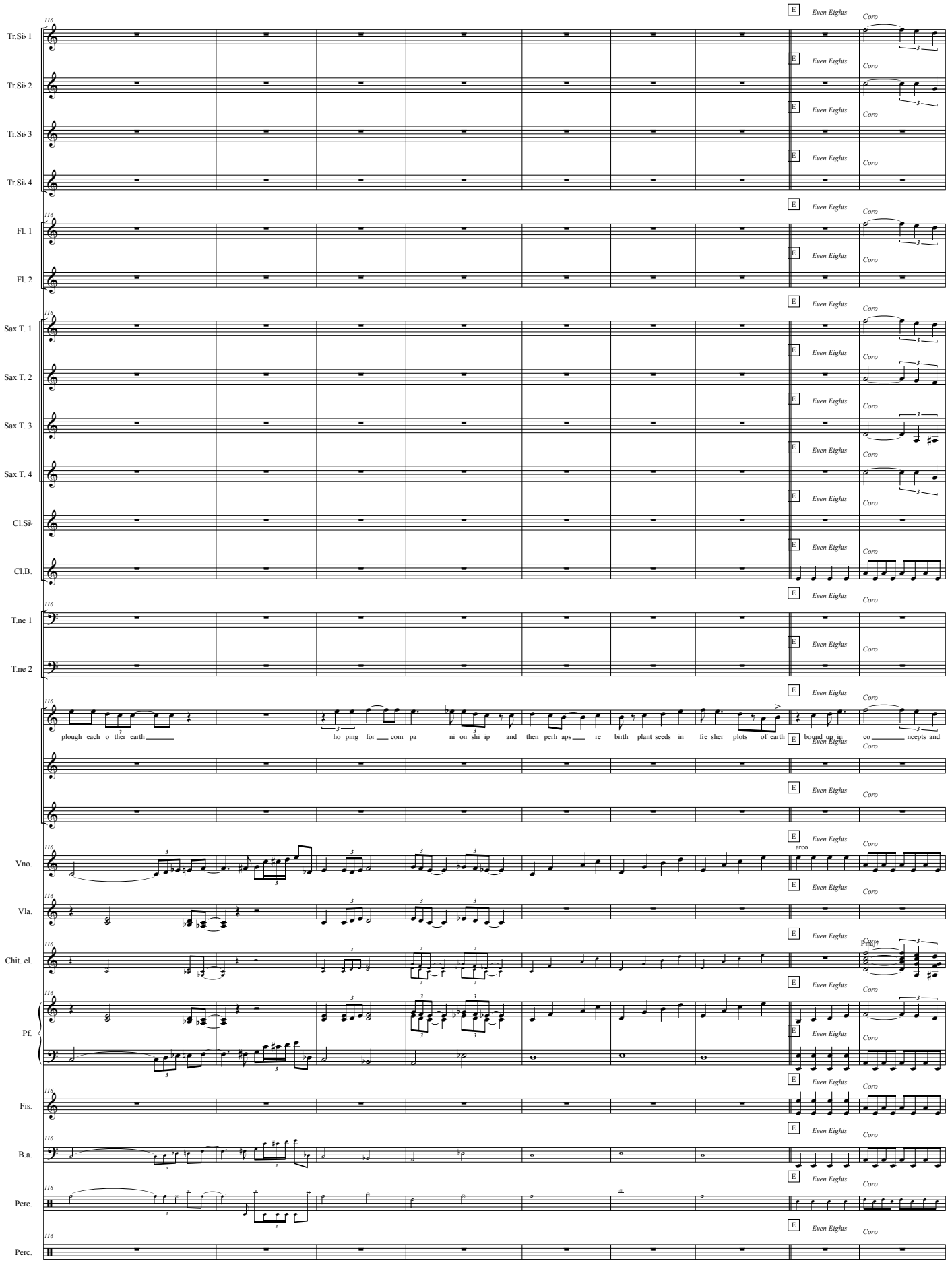

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
wha wha
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
on rim...
Perc.
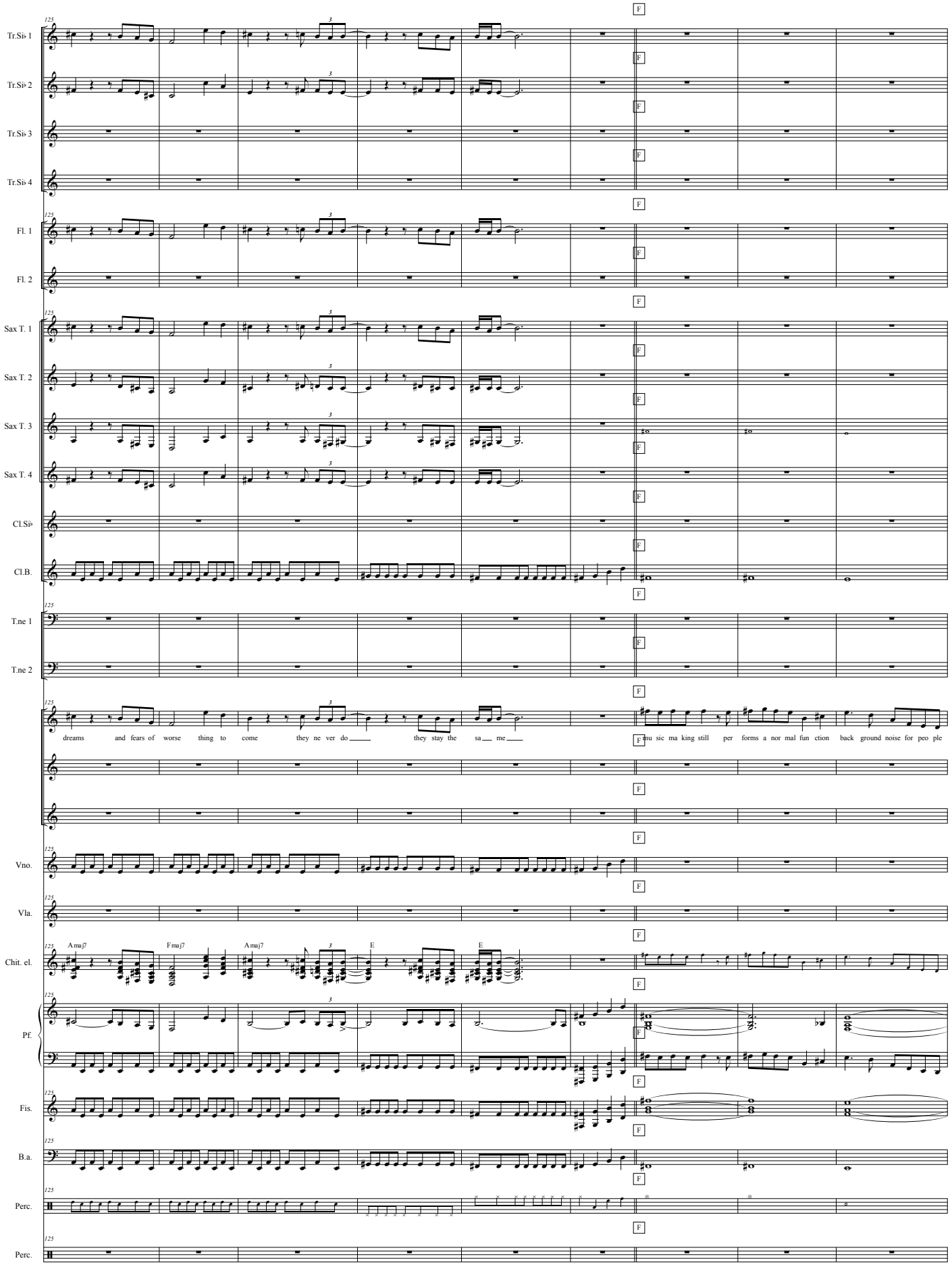

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
rit.
fill...

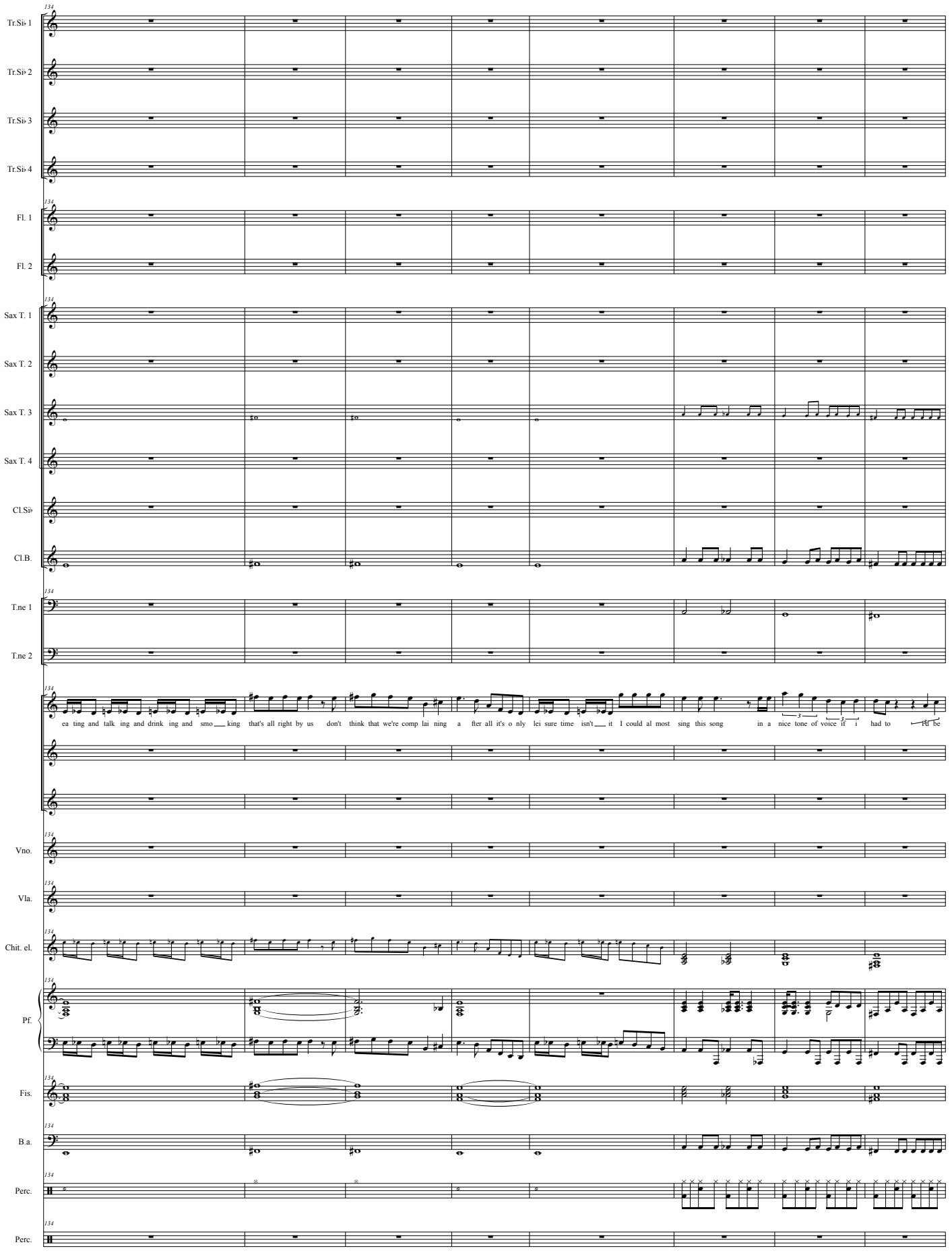

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
D
mm 90
Swing...
play ing now is love ly here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a jazz group of an or che stra on Ra di o Three
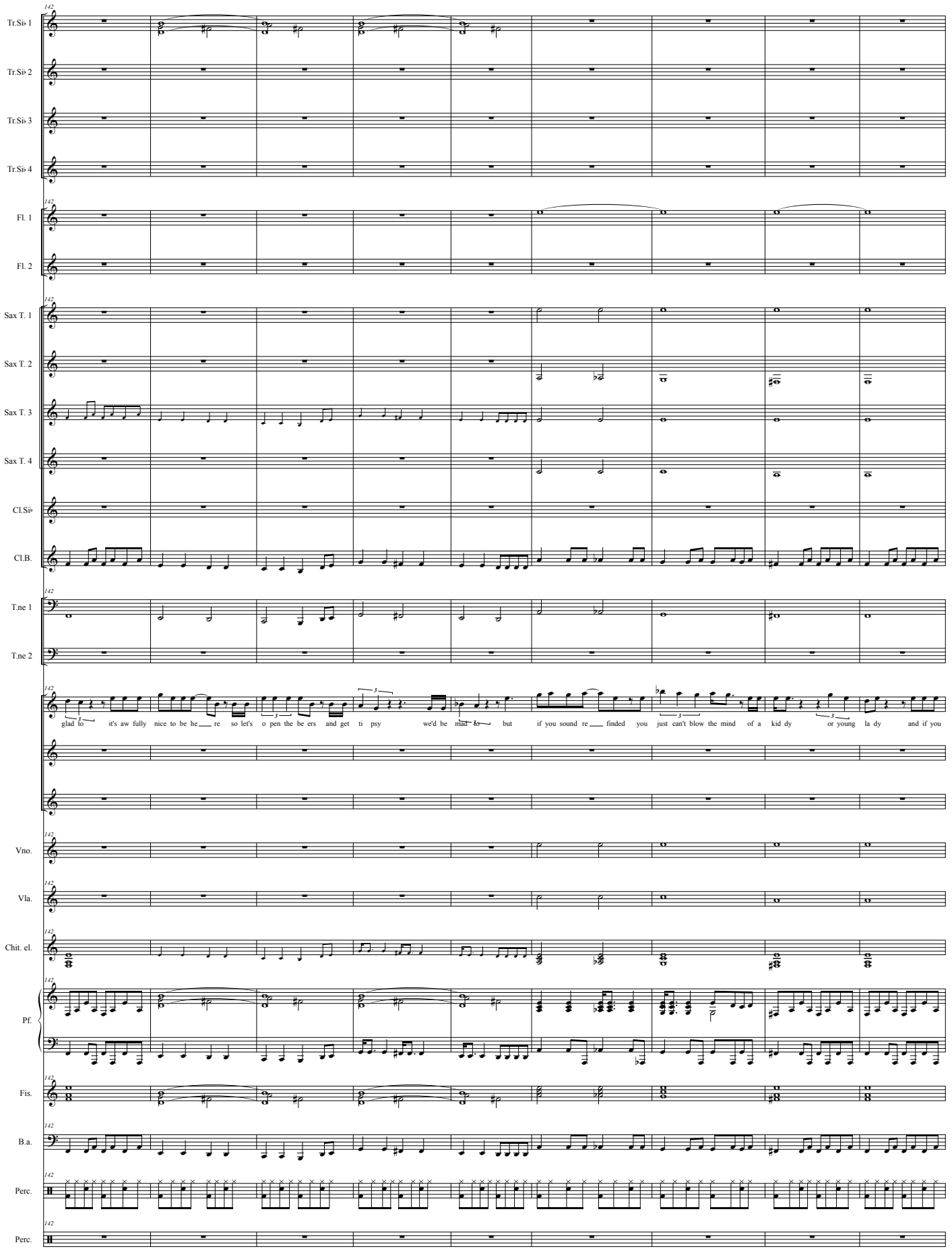

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
There are dance halls and theatres with a coustic worse than he re not forgetting the ex tra fa ci li ties su ch as the tea
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
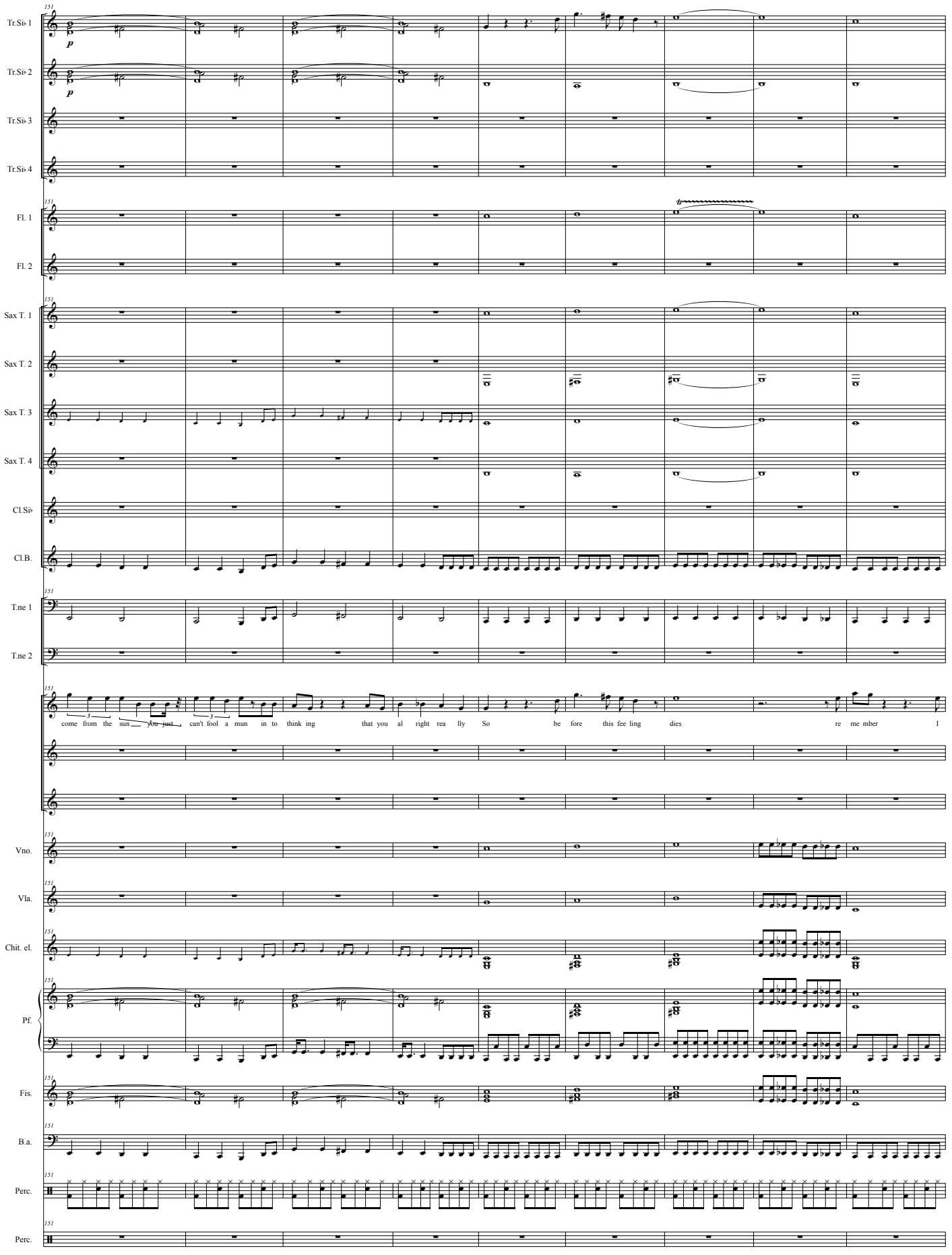

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
ma chine
just a
long the co o o o ri dor
Pop stars
drink each
o ther's wine
pizz.
pizz.
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
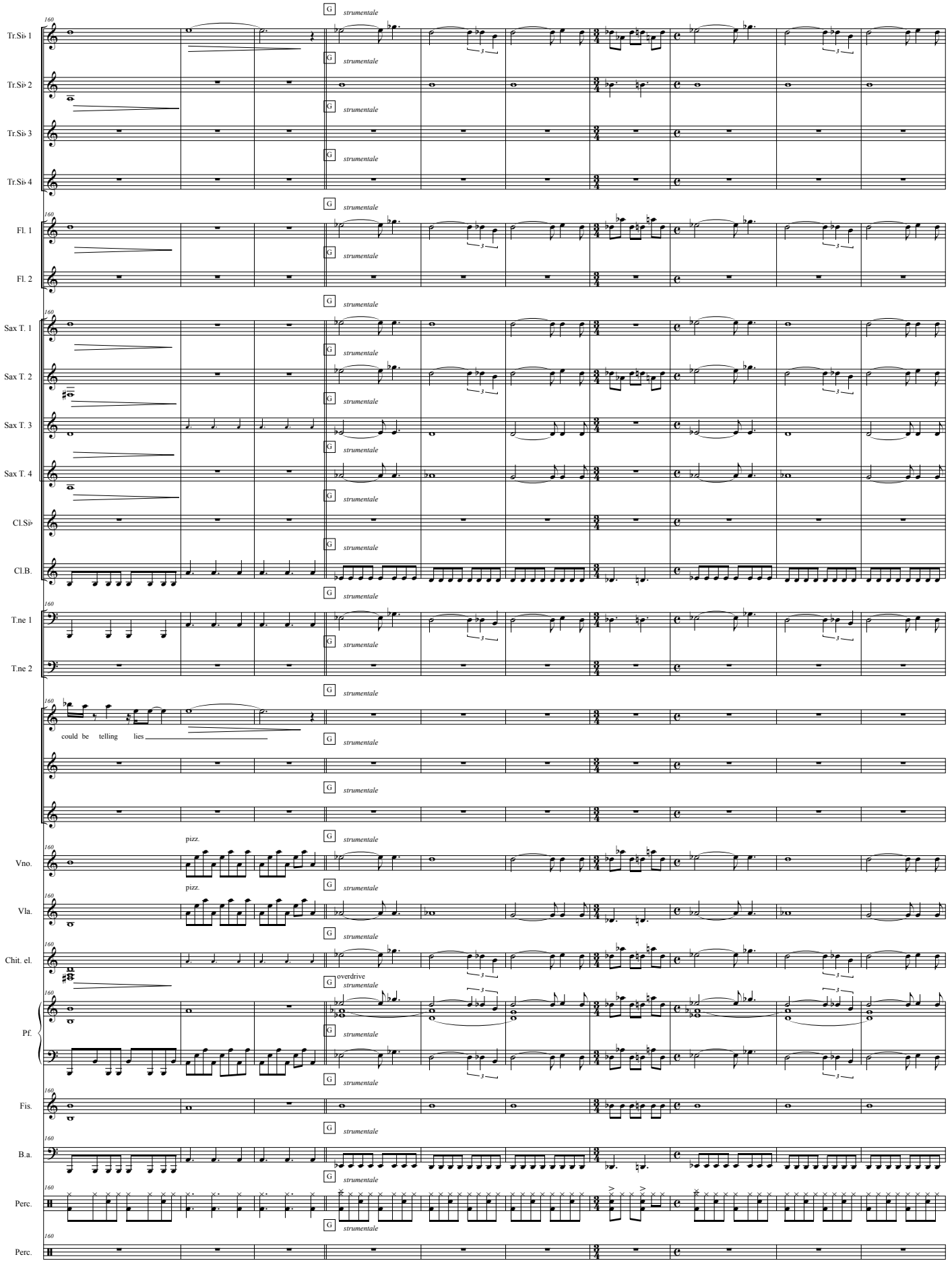

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
116
E
Even Eights
Coro
plough each o ther earth
ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
bound up in co ncepts and
arco
Piano
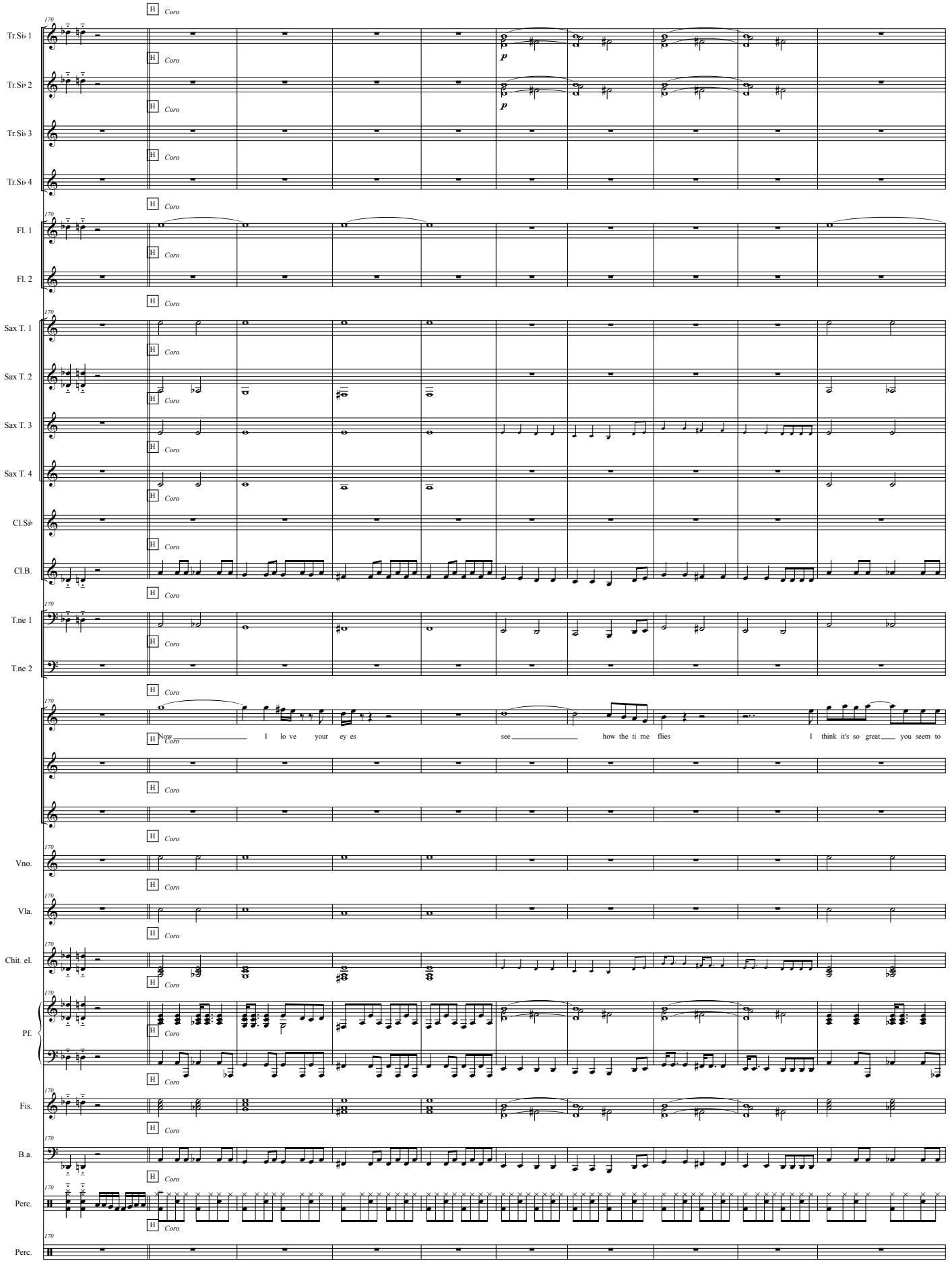

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
125
F
dreams and fears of worse thing to come they ne ver do they stay the sa me
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
Amaj7
Fmaj7
Amaj7
E
E
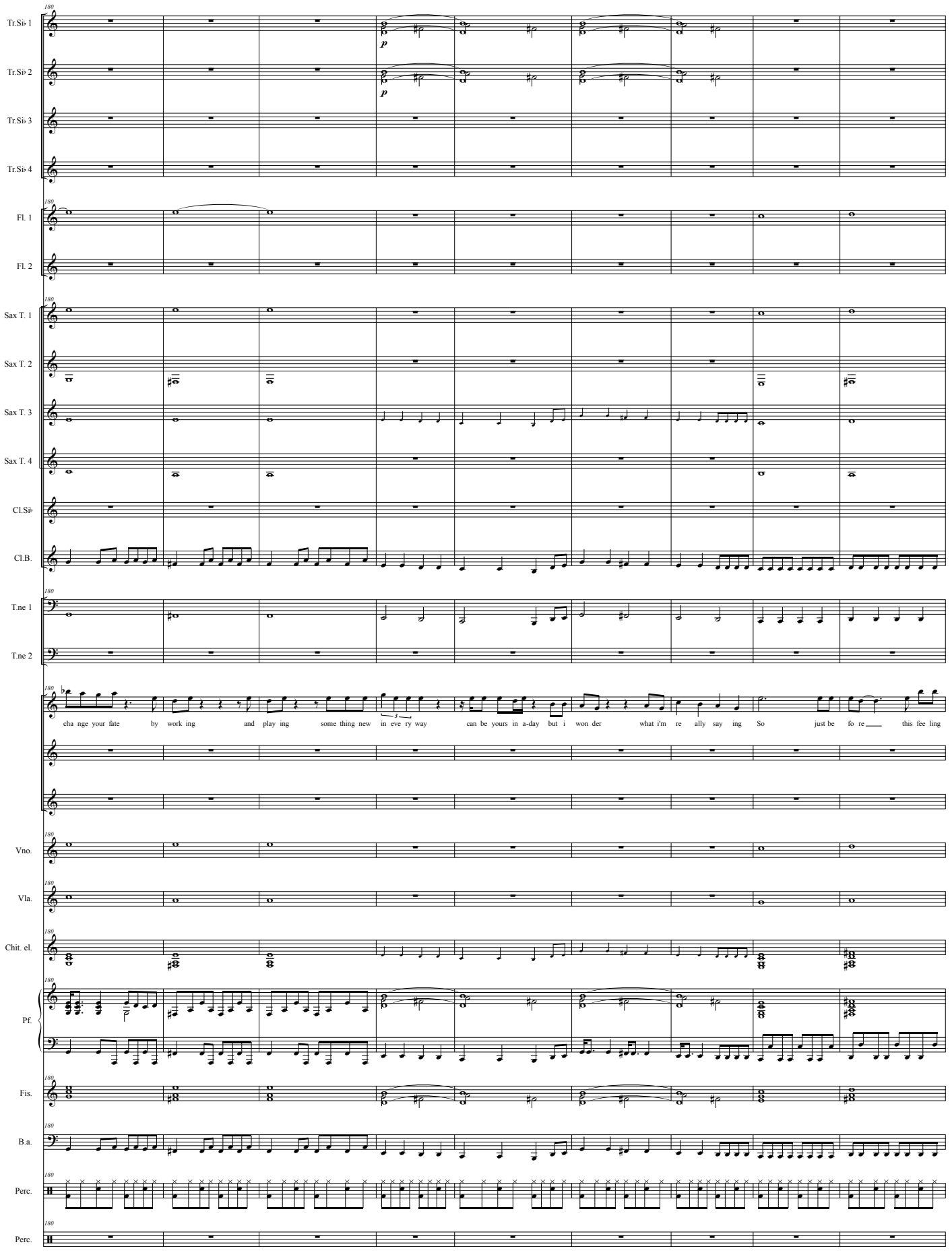

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i had to
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
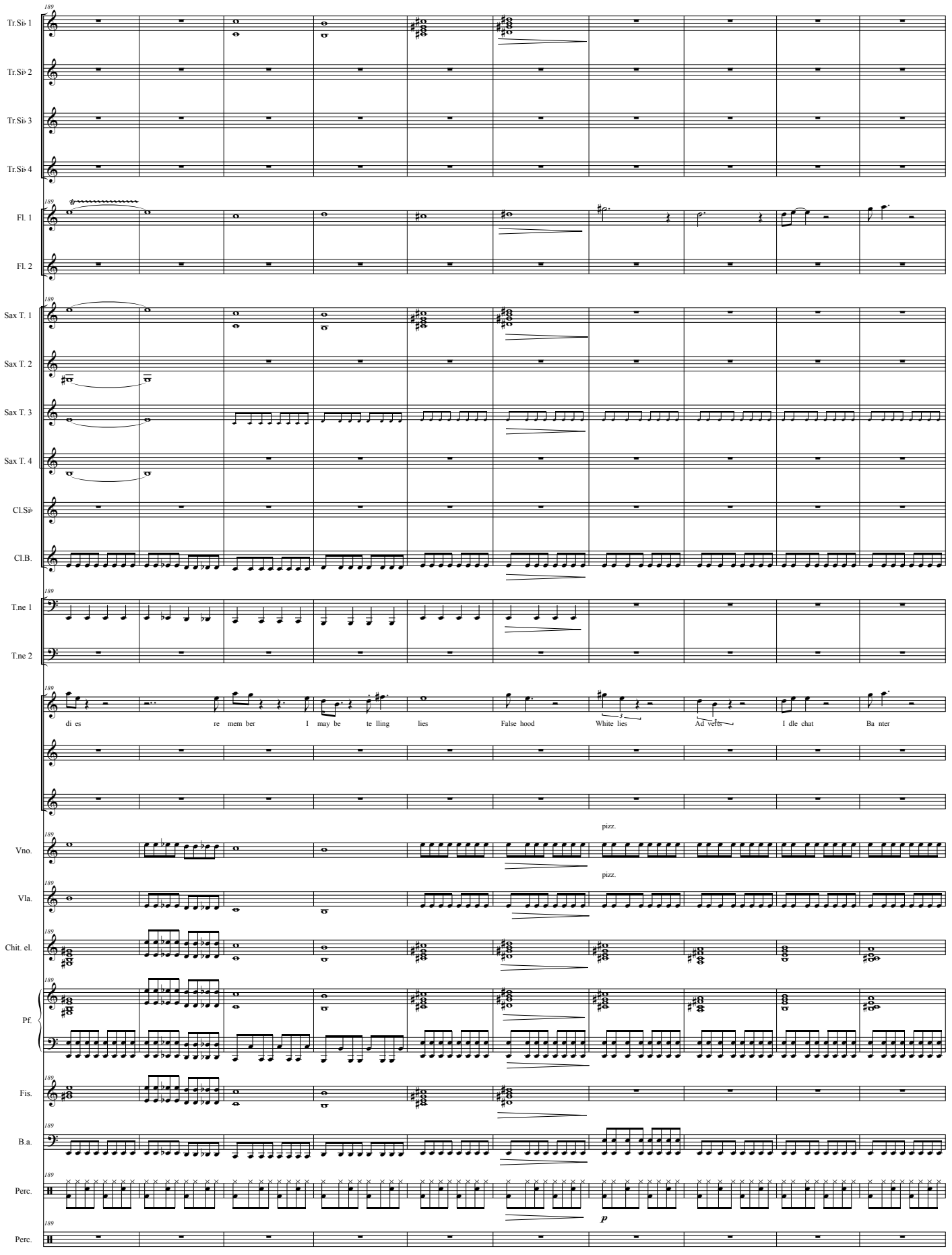

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
142
glad to it's aw fully nice to be he re so let's o pen the be ers and get ti psy we'd be mad to but if you sound re finded you just can't blow the mind of a kid dy or young la dy and if you
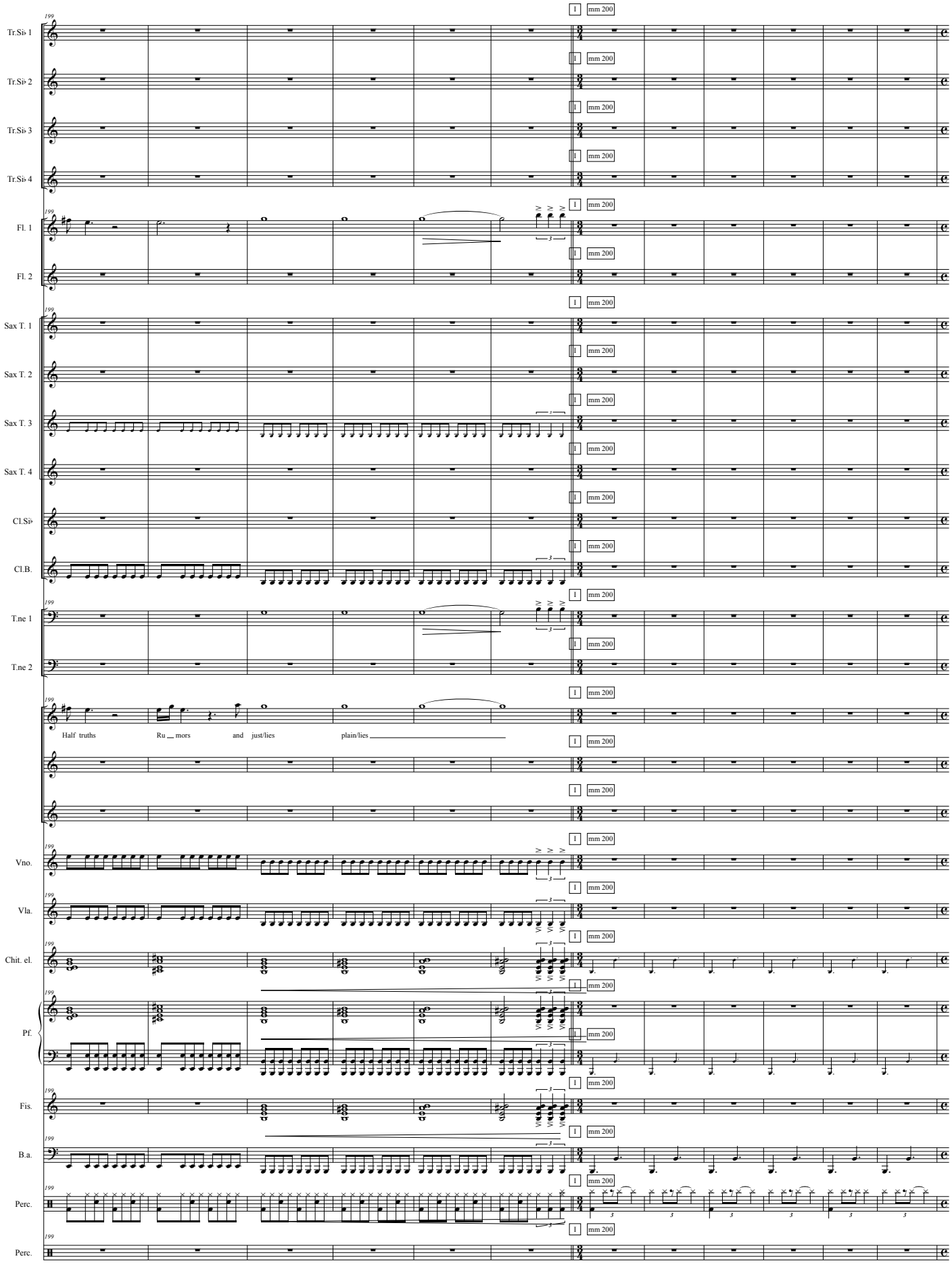

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
151
p
come from the sun you just can't fool a mun in to think ing that you al right rea lly So be fore this fee ling dies re me mber I

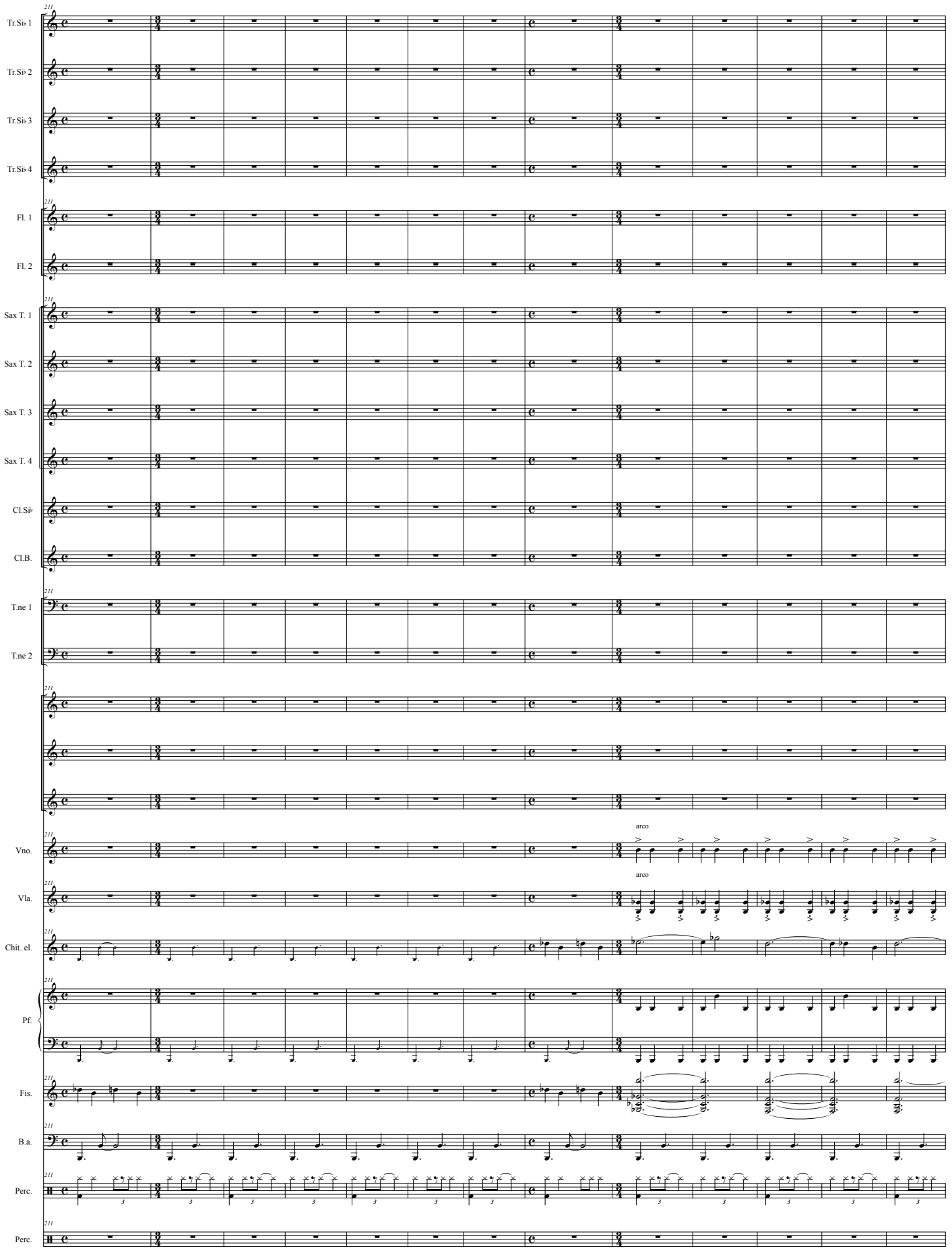

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
160
G
strumentale
could be telling lies
pizz.
overdrive
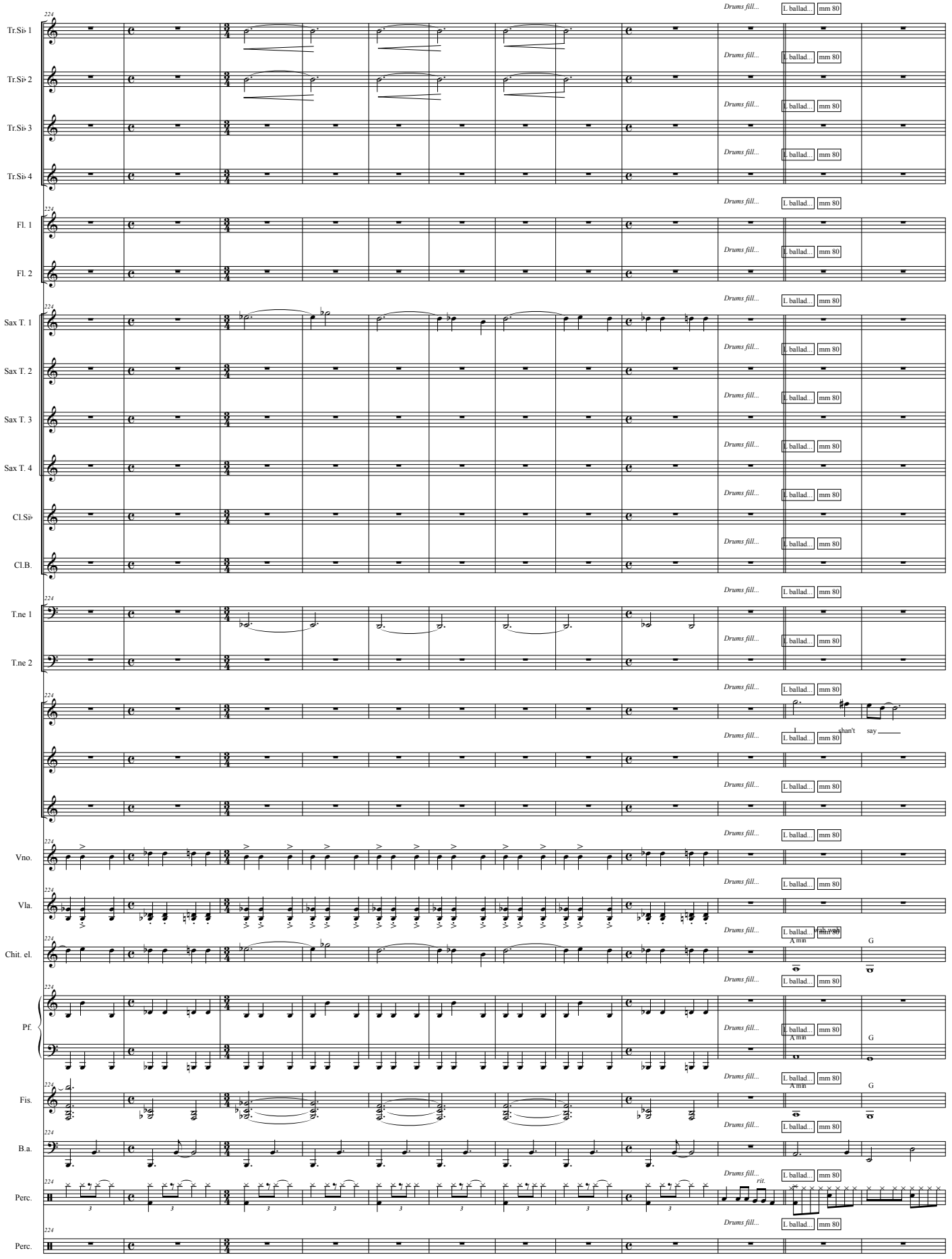

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
Coro
p
Now I lo ve your ey es see how the ti me flies I think it's so great you seem to

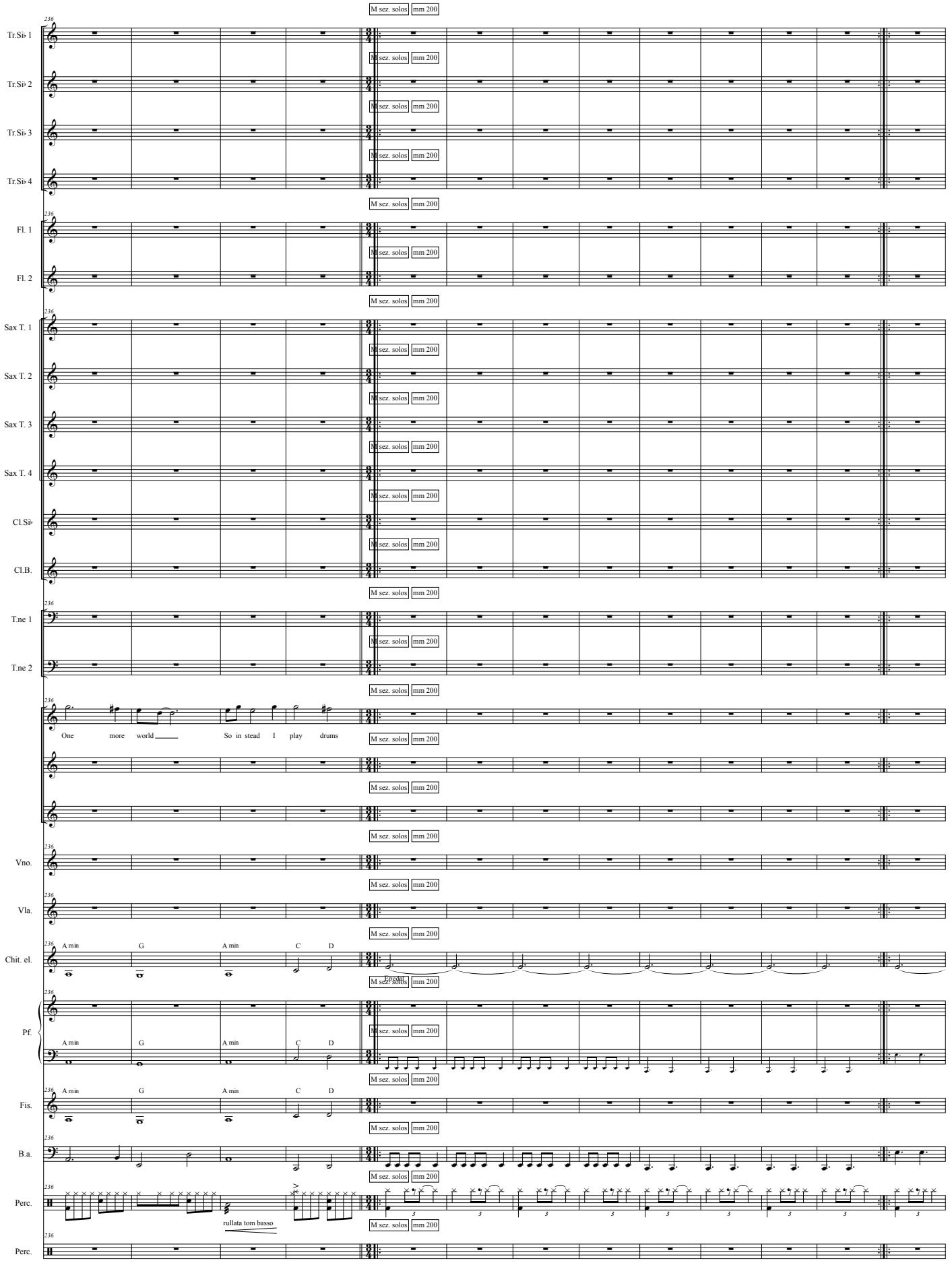

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
p
p
cha nge your fate by work ing and play ing some thing new in eve ry way can be yours in a-day but i won der what i'm re ally say ing So just be fo re this fee ling

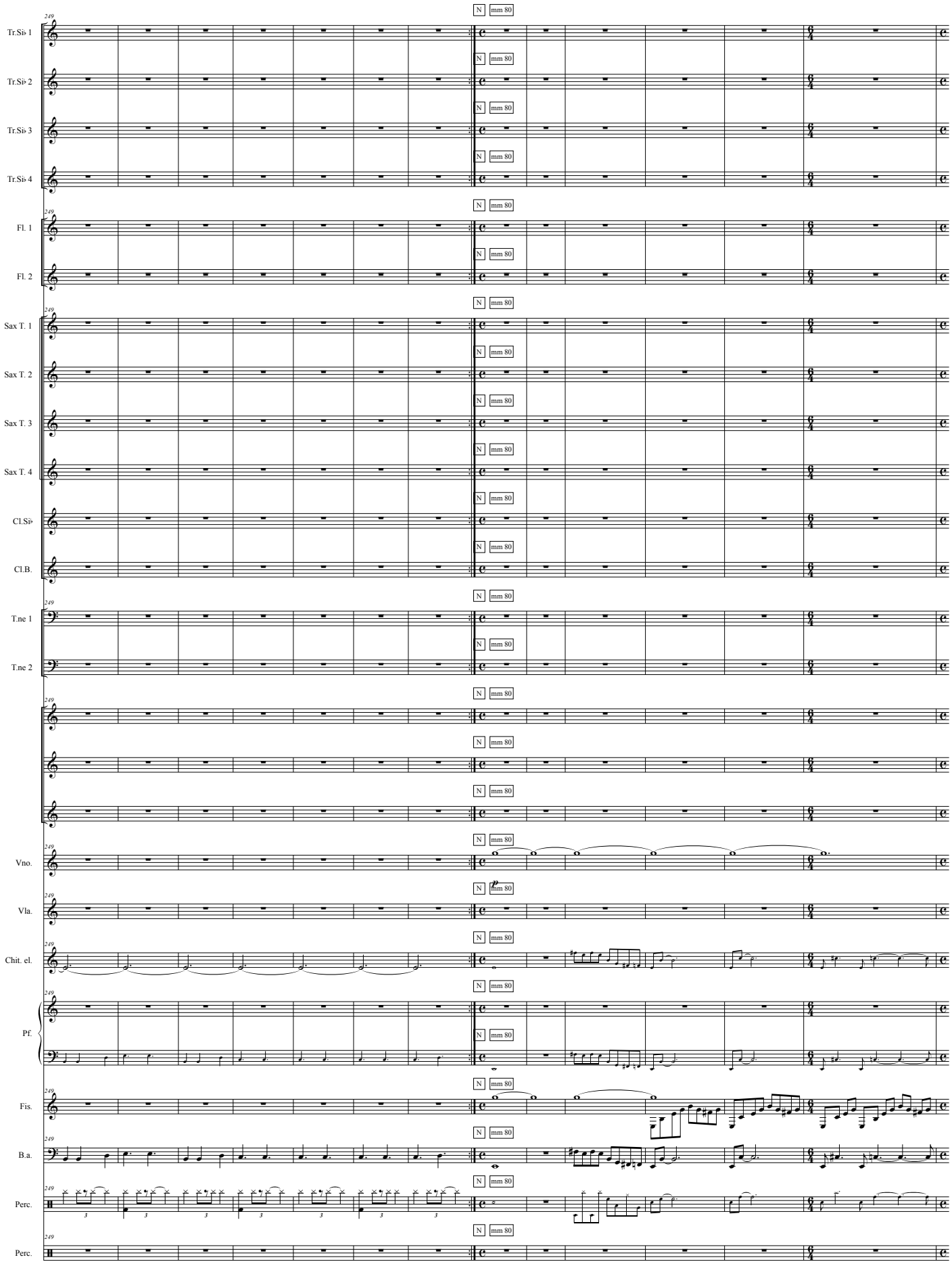

189
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
di es re mem ber I may be te lling lies False hood White lies Ad verts I dle chat Ba nter
pizz.
Vno.
pizz.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
p
Perc.

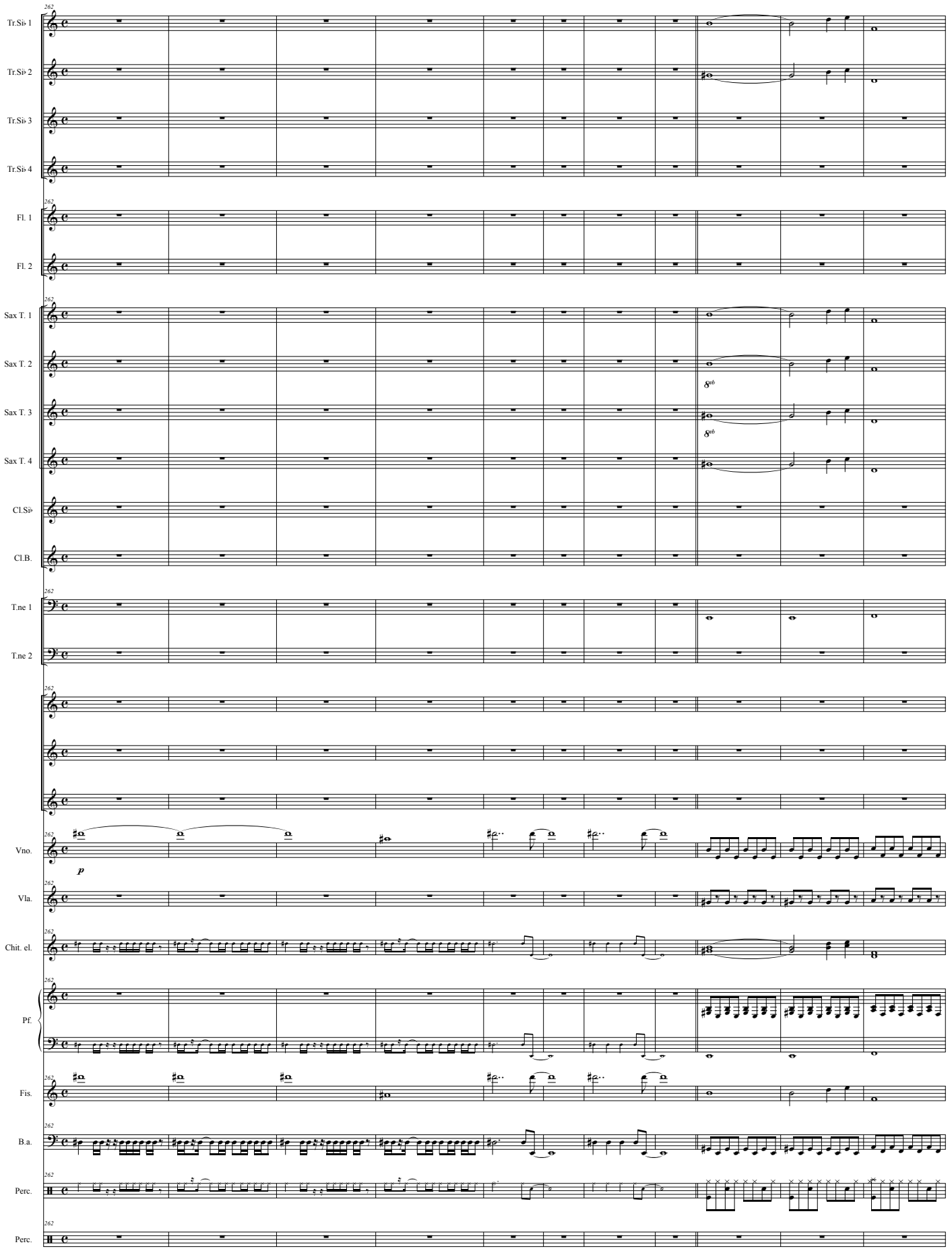

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Half truths
Ru mors
and
just/lies
plain/lies
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
mm 200
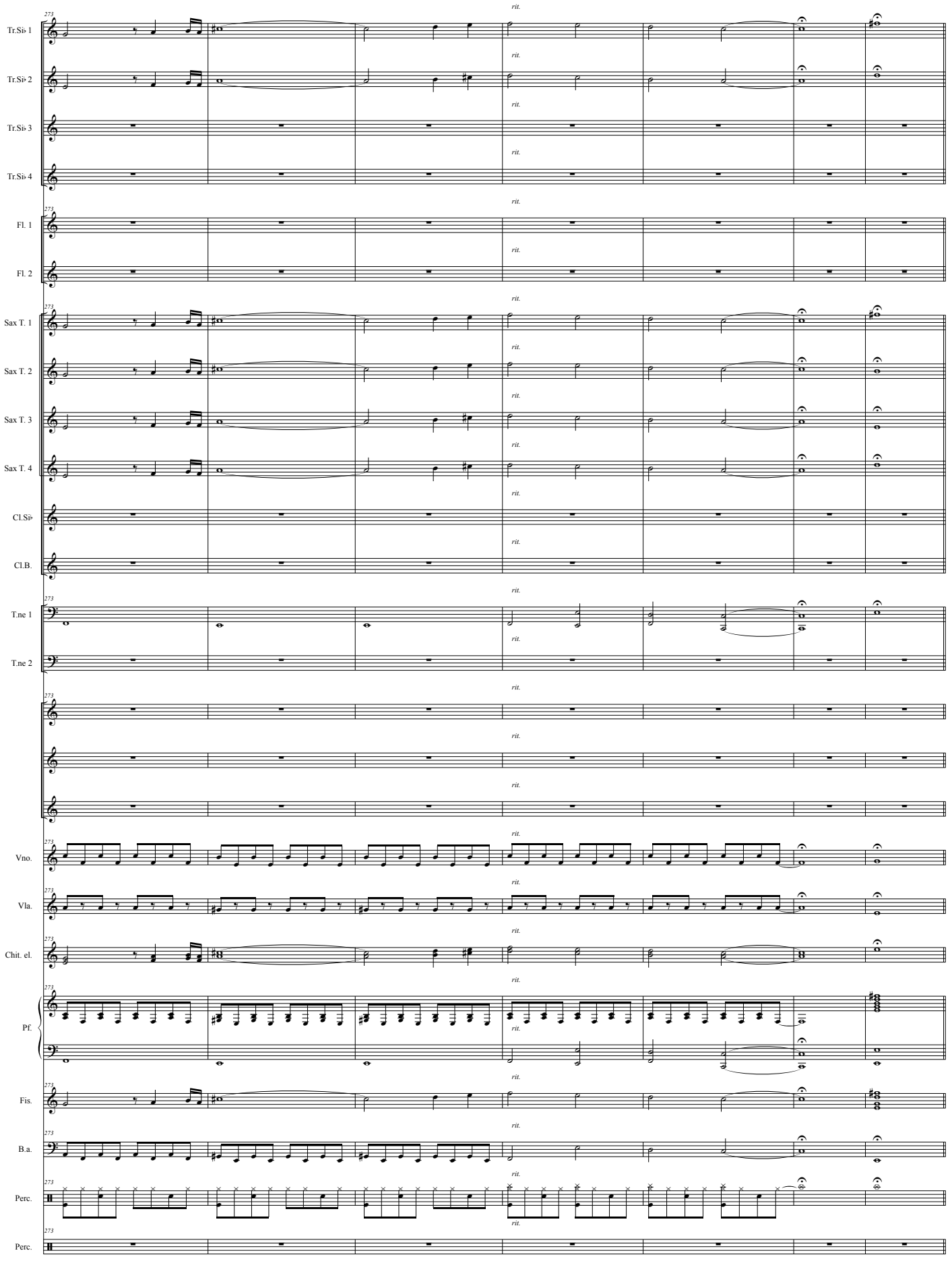

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
arco
Vla.
arco
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.


Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
224
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
I
shan't
say
A min
G
rit.


M sez. solos
mm 200
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
One more world
So in stead I play drums
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
A min
G
A min
C
D
Pedal
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
rullata tom basso
Perc.


Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
N
mm 80
249


Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
8vb
8vb
p


273
rit.
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
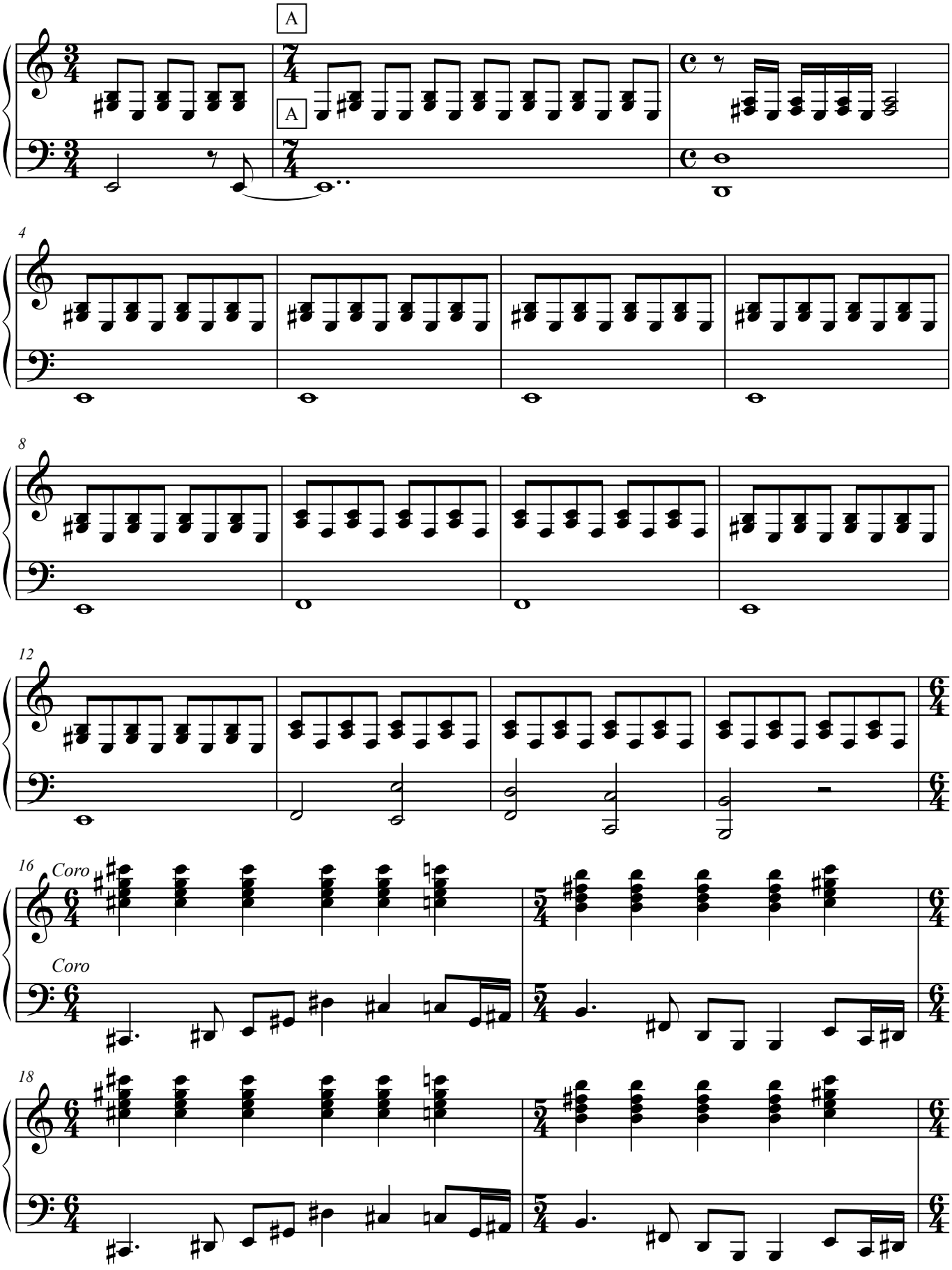
Moon in june
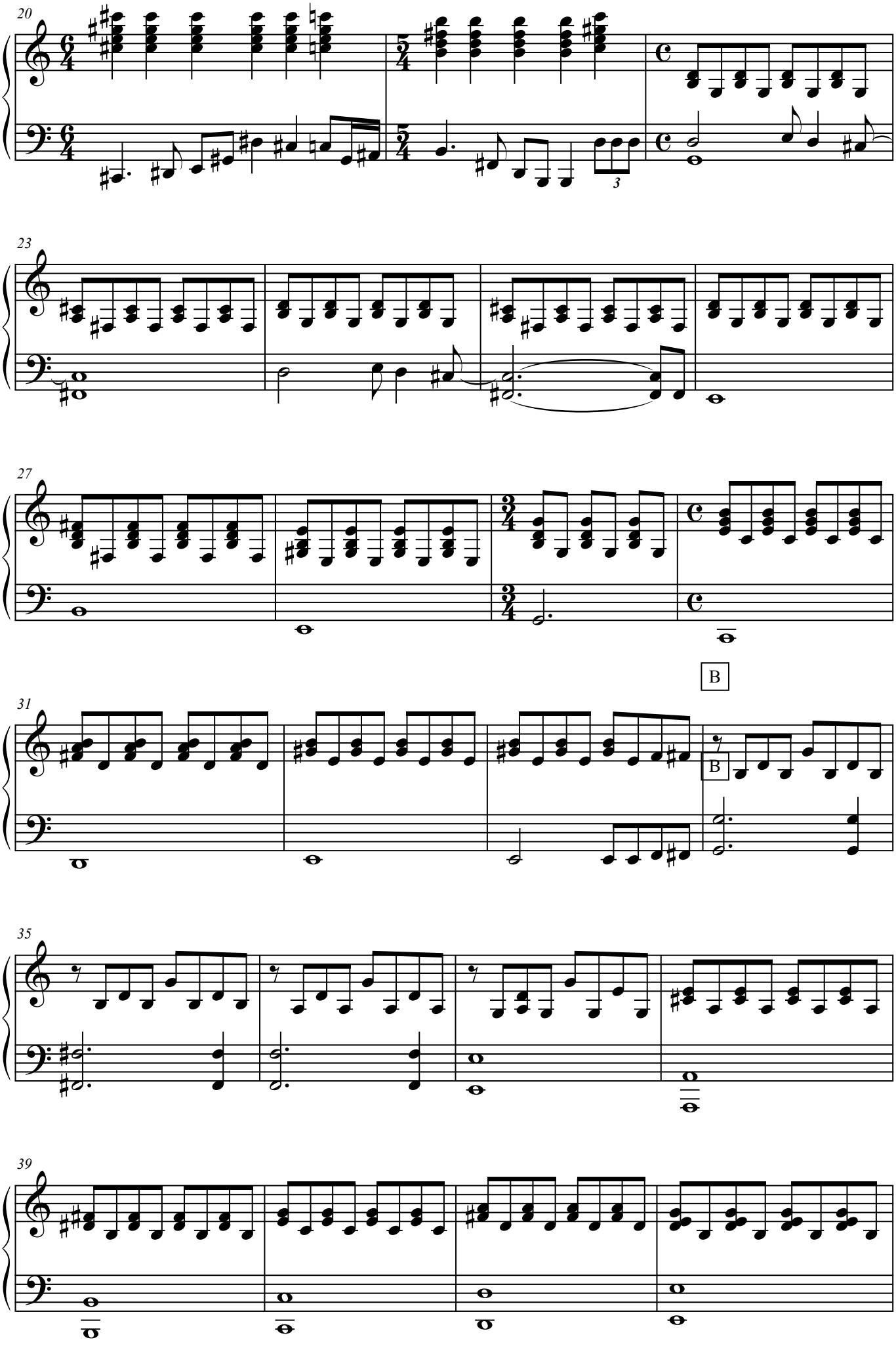
Pianoforte
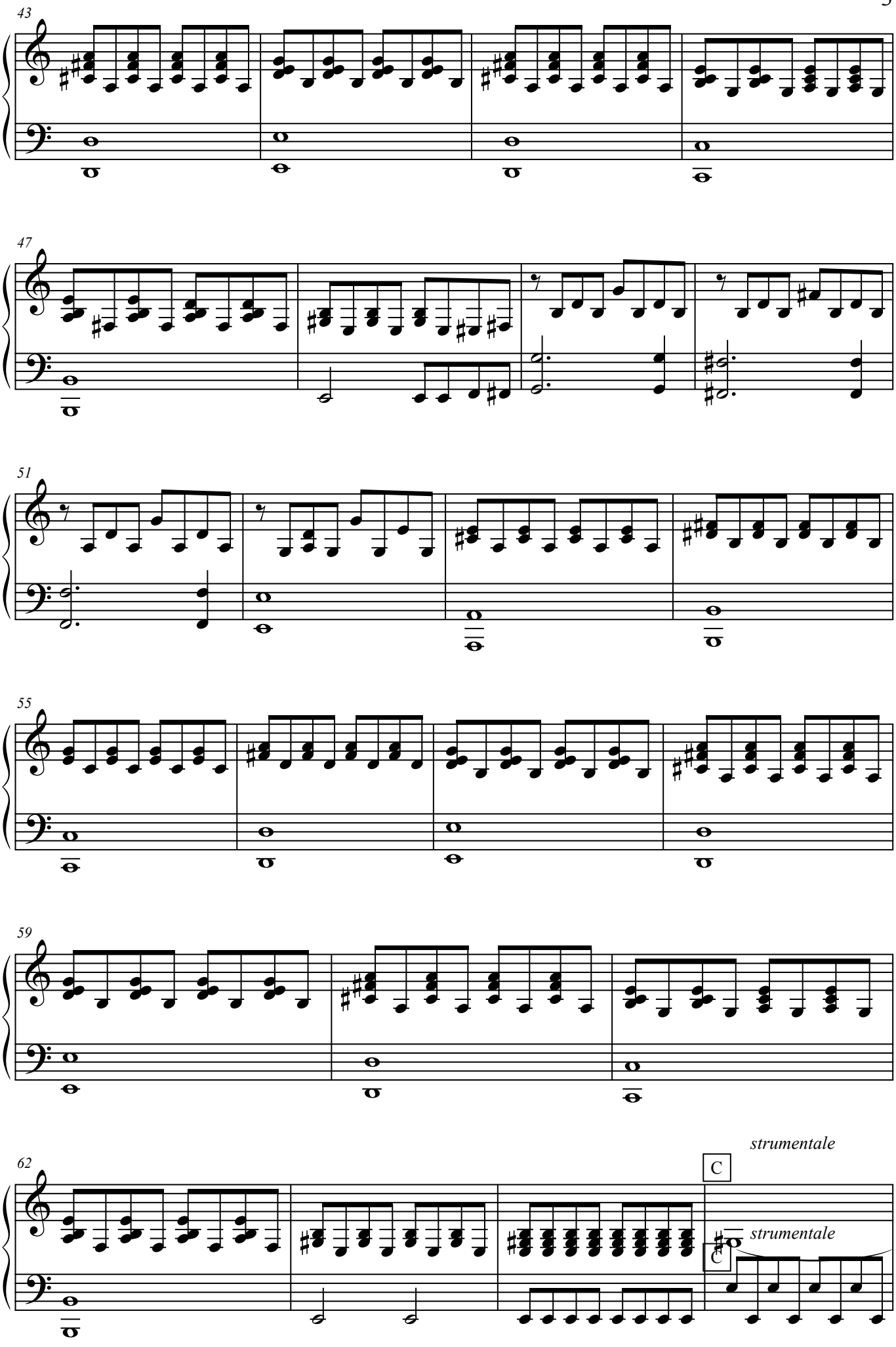
MM104
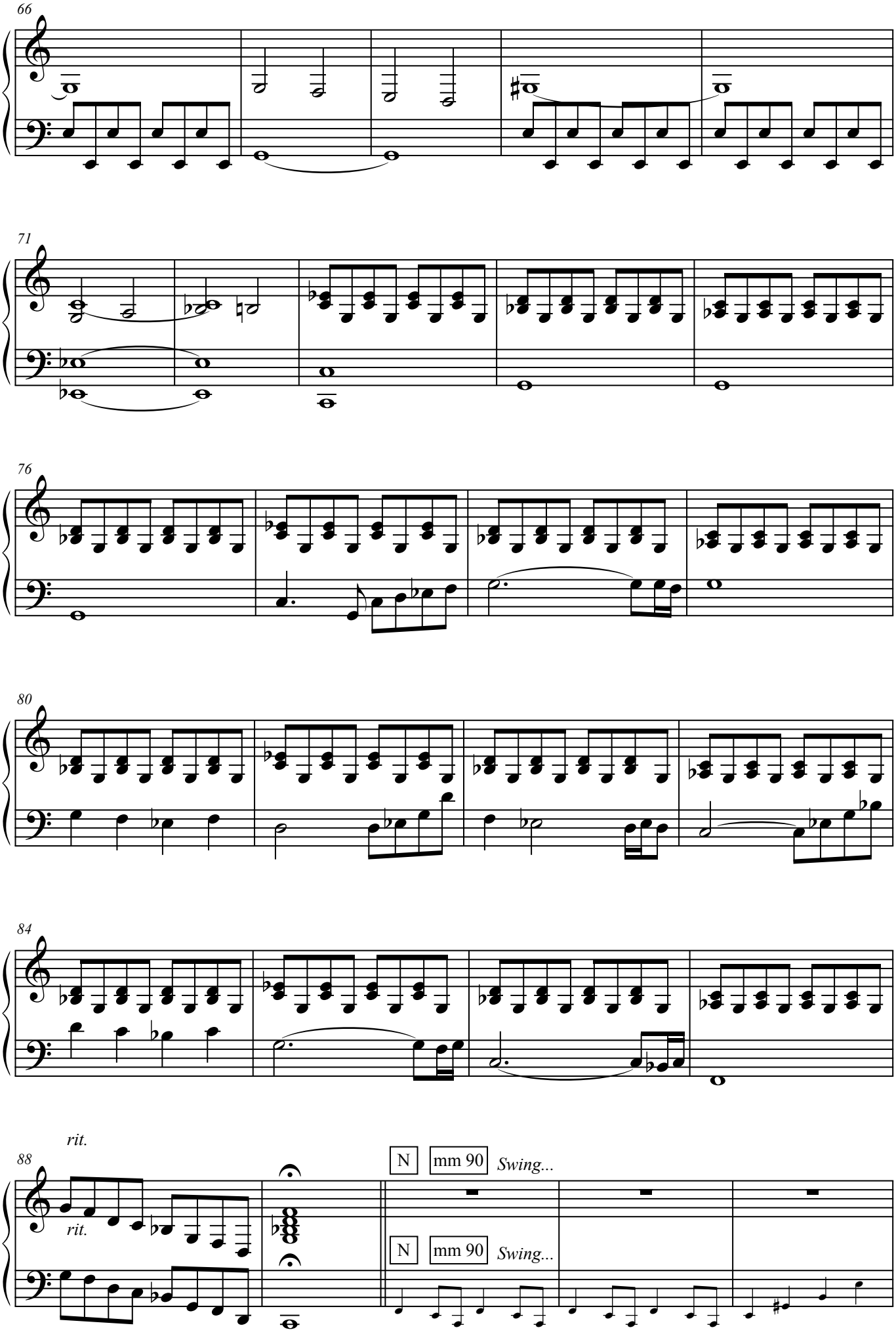
by Robert Wyatt
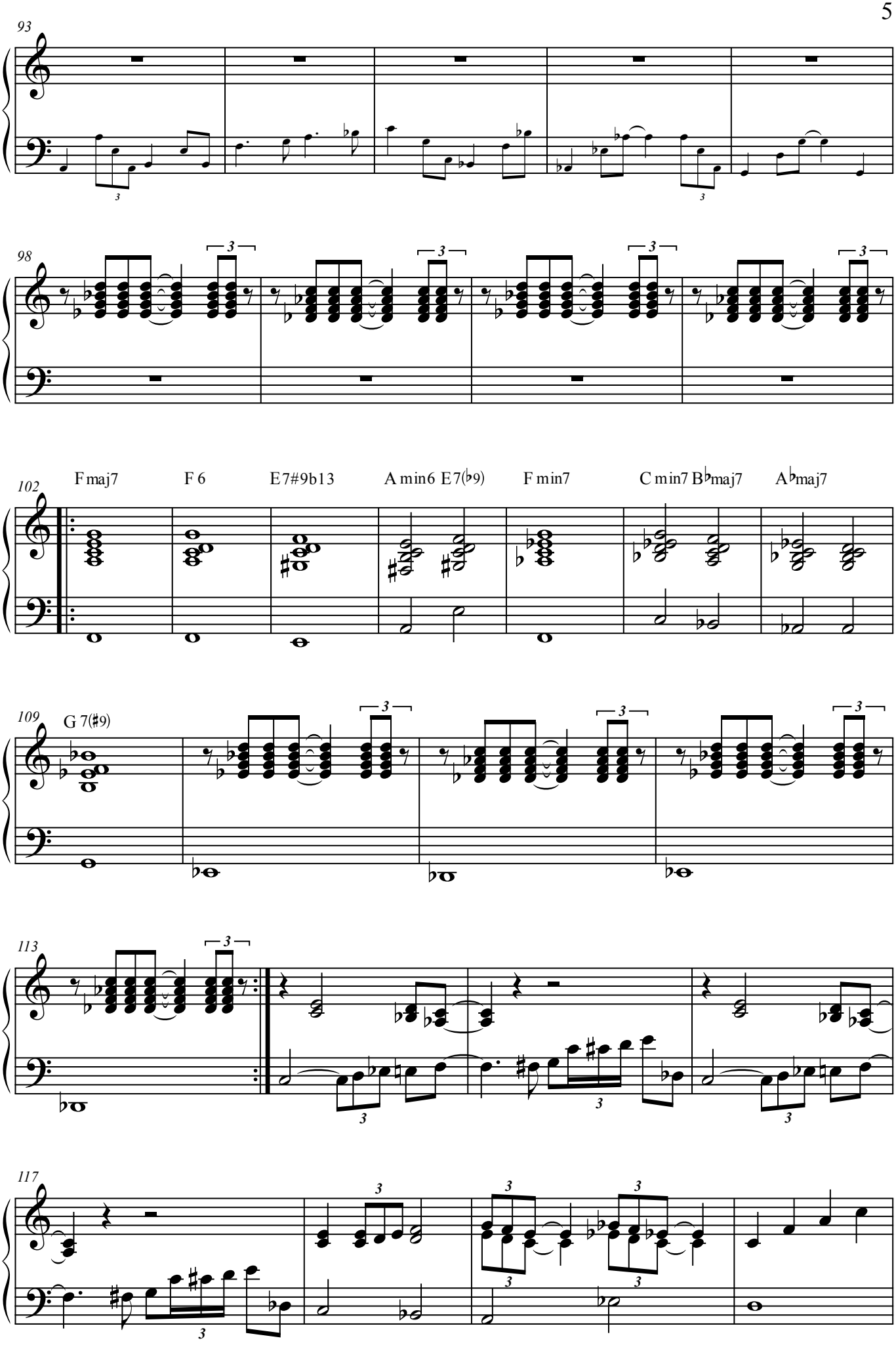
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Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'
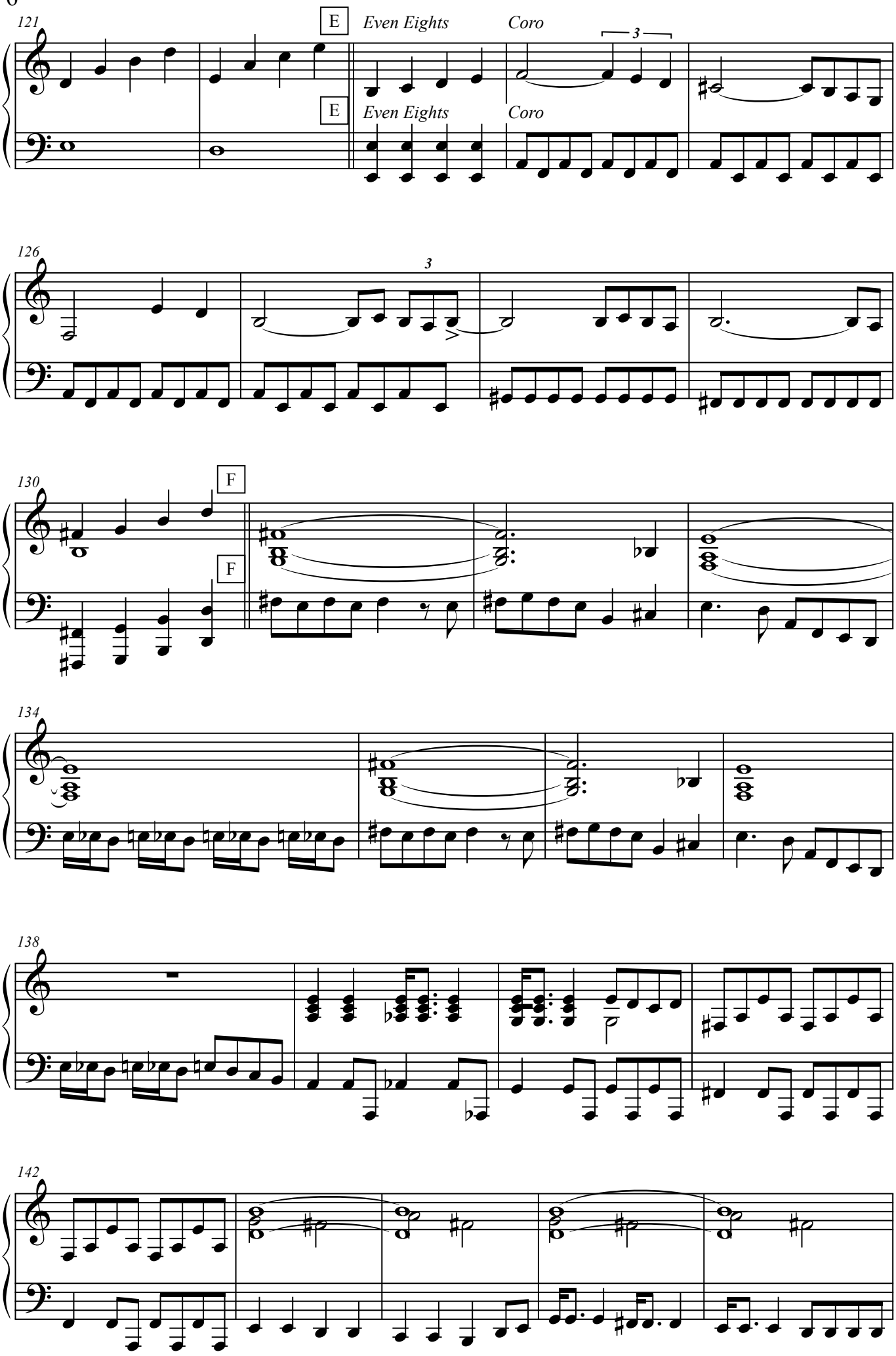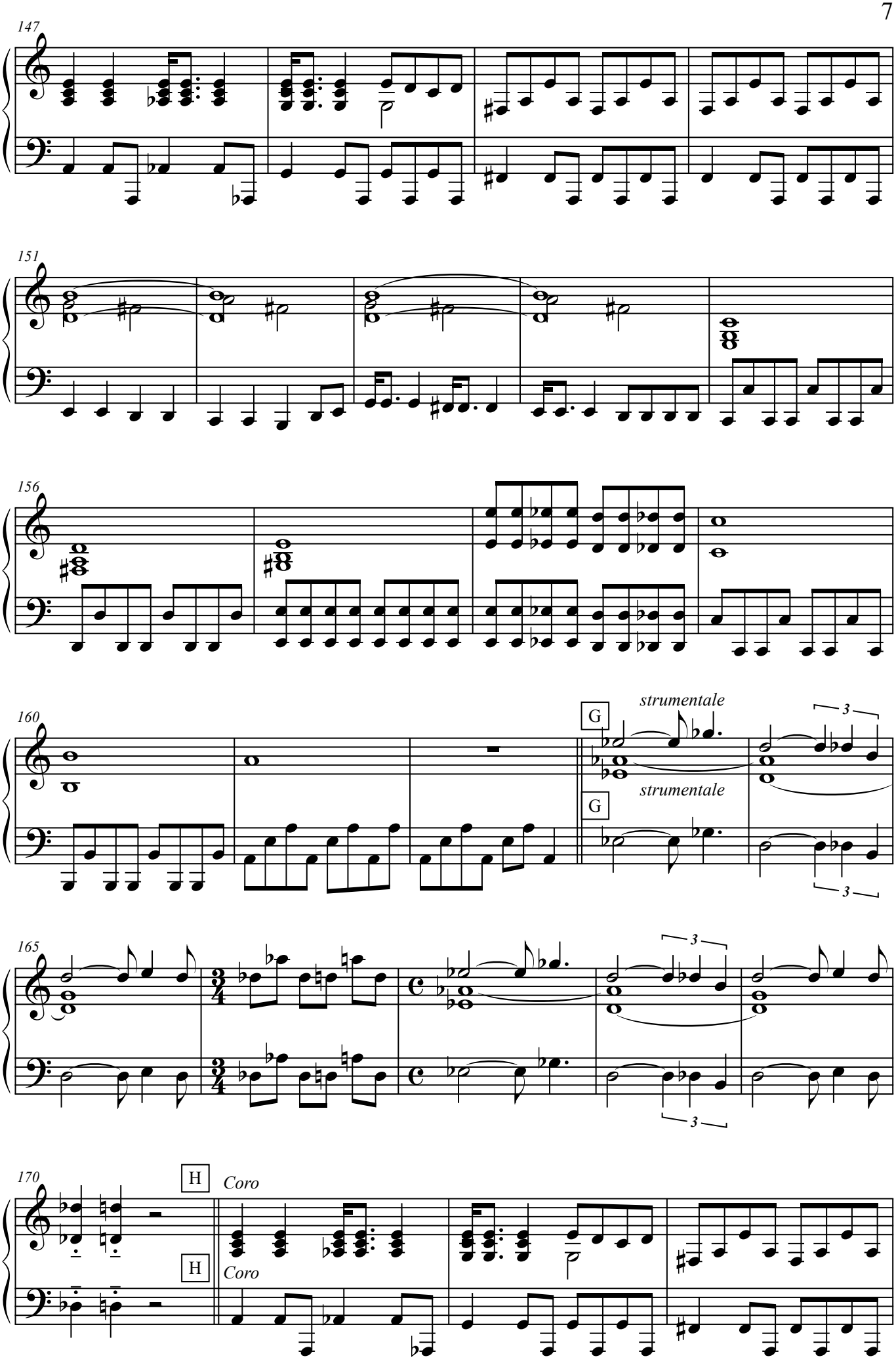



20
23
27
B
31
B
35
39
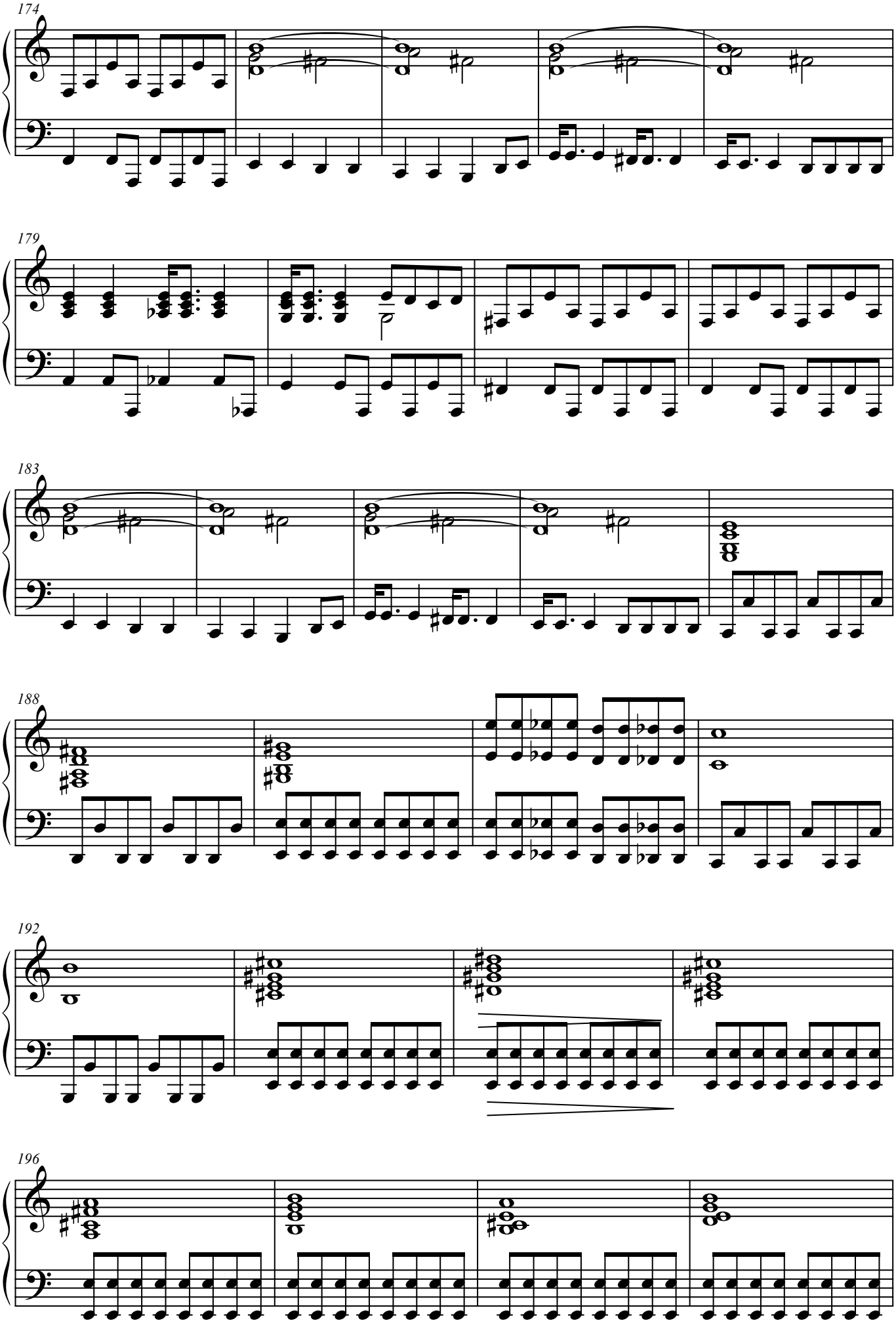

43
47
51
55
59
62
C
strumentale
C
strumentale
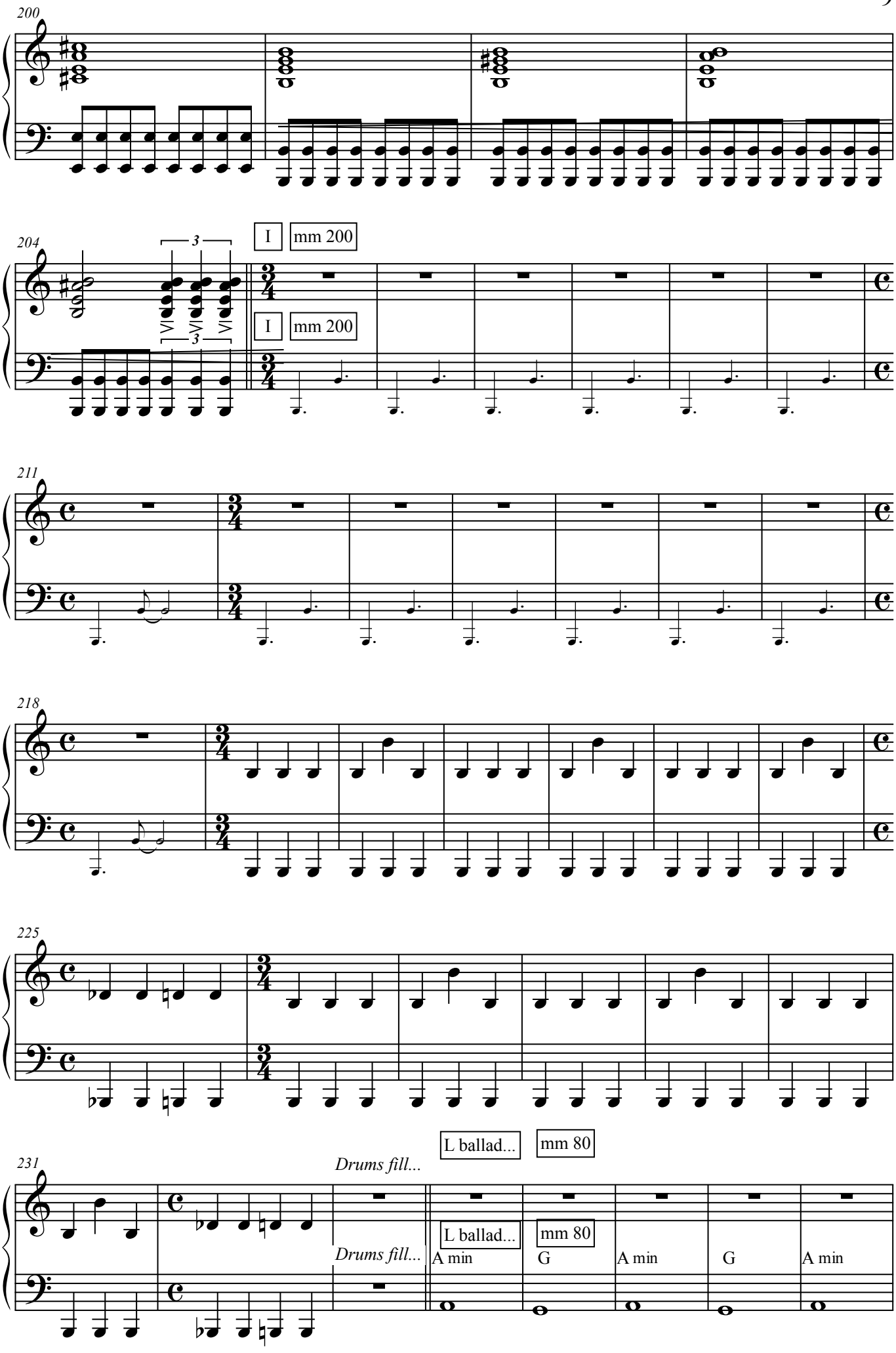

66
71
76
80
84
88
rit.
rit.
N
mm 90
Swing...
N
mm 90
Swing...
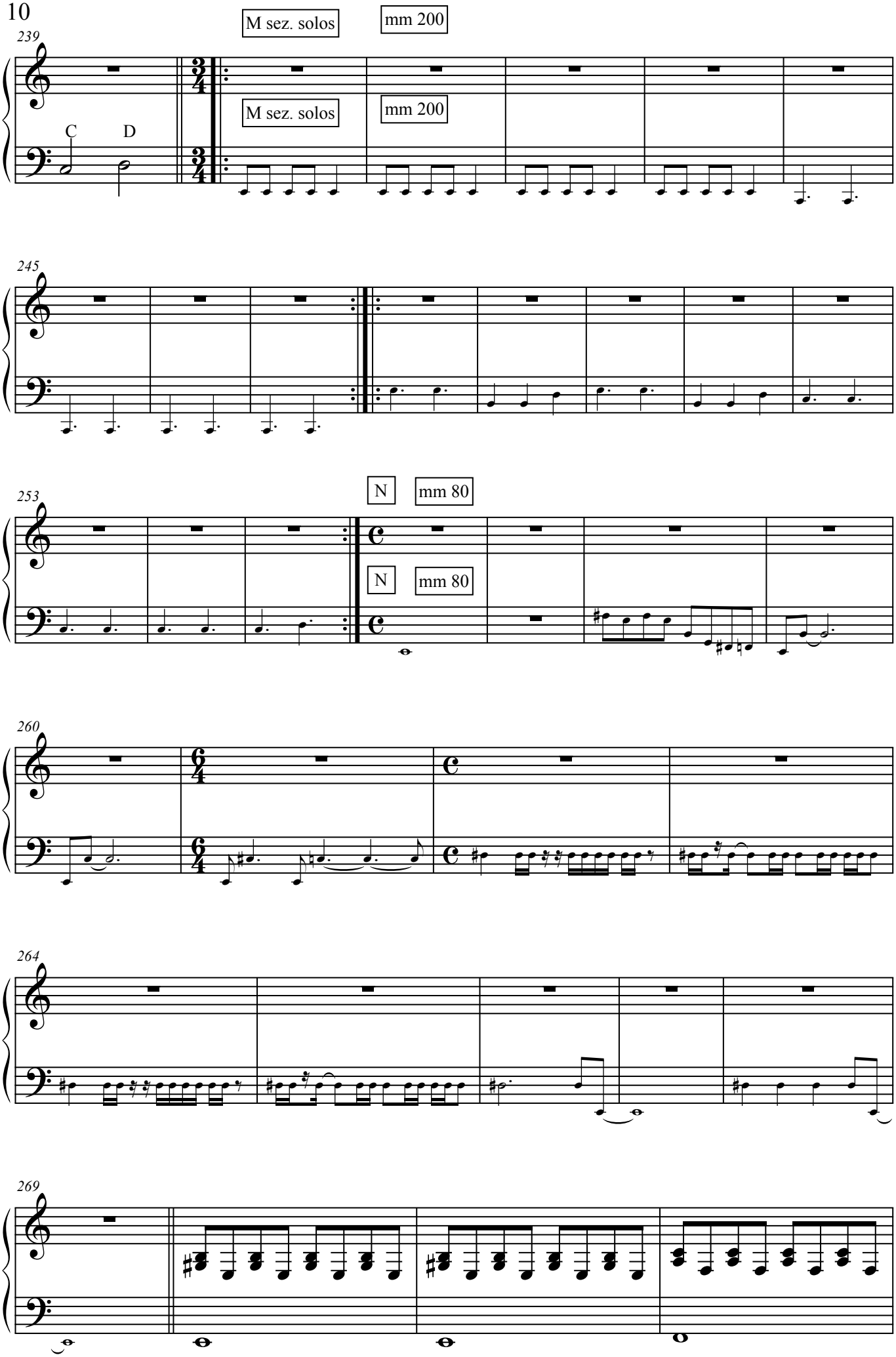

93
98
102
F maj7
F 6
E7#9b13
A min6
E7(♭9)
F min7
C min7
B♭maj7
A♭maj7
109
G 7(♯9)
113
117

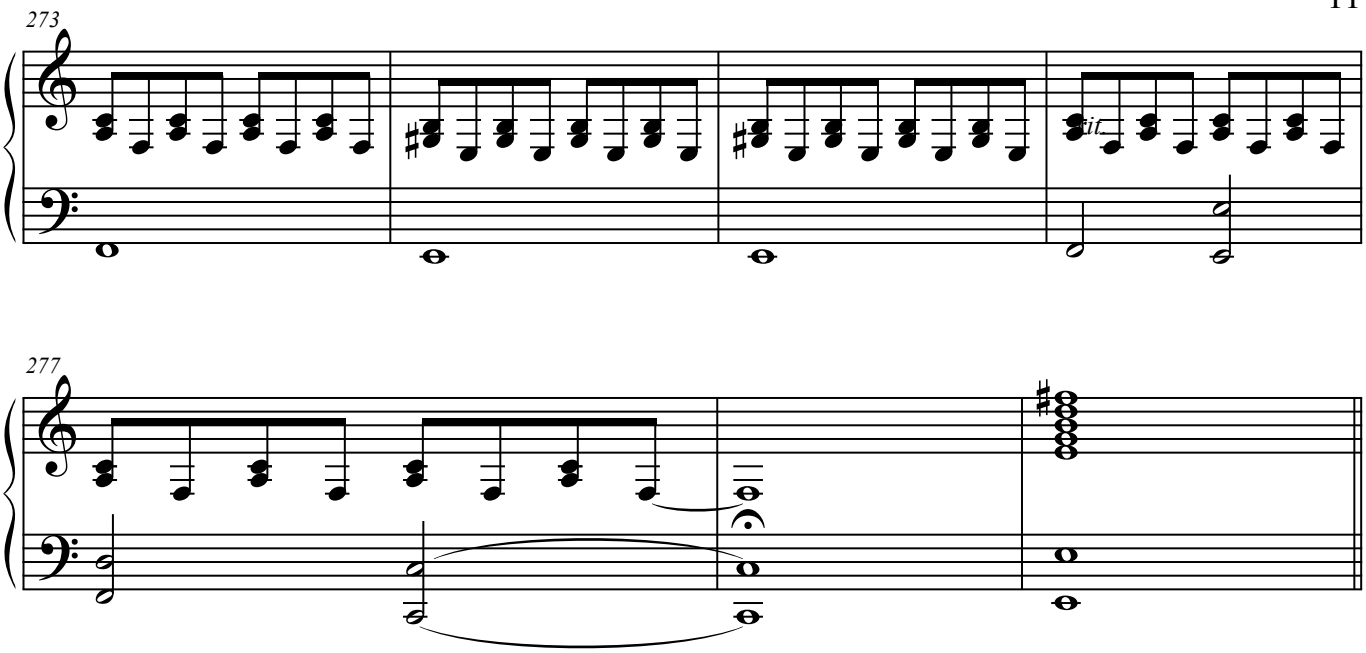

121
E
Even Eights
Coro
3
E
Even Eights
Coro
126
3
130
F
F
134
138
142


147
151
156
160
G
strumentale
G
strumentale
3
3
165
3
3
170
H
Coro
H
Coro


174
179
183
188
192
196


200
204
I
mm 200
I
mm 200
211
218
225
231
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
A min
G
A min
G
A min


239
M sez. solos
mm 200
C
D
245
253
N
mm 80
260
264
269


273
rit.
rit.

277
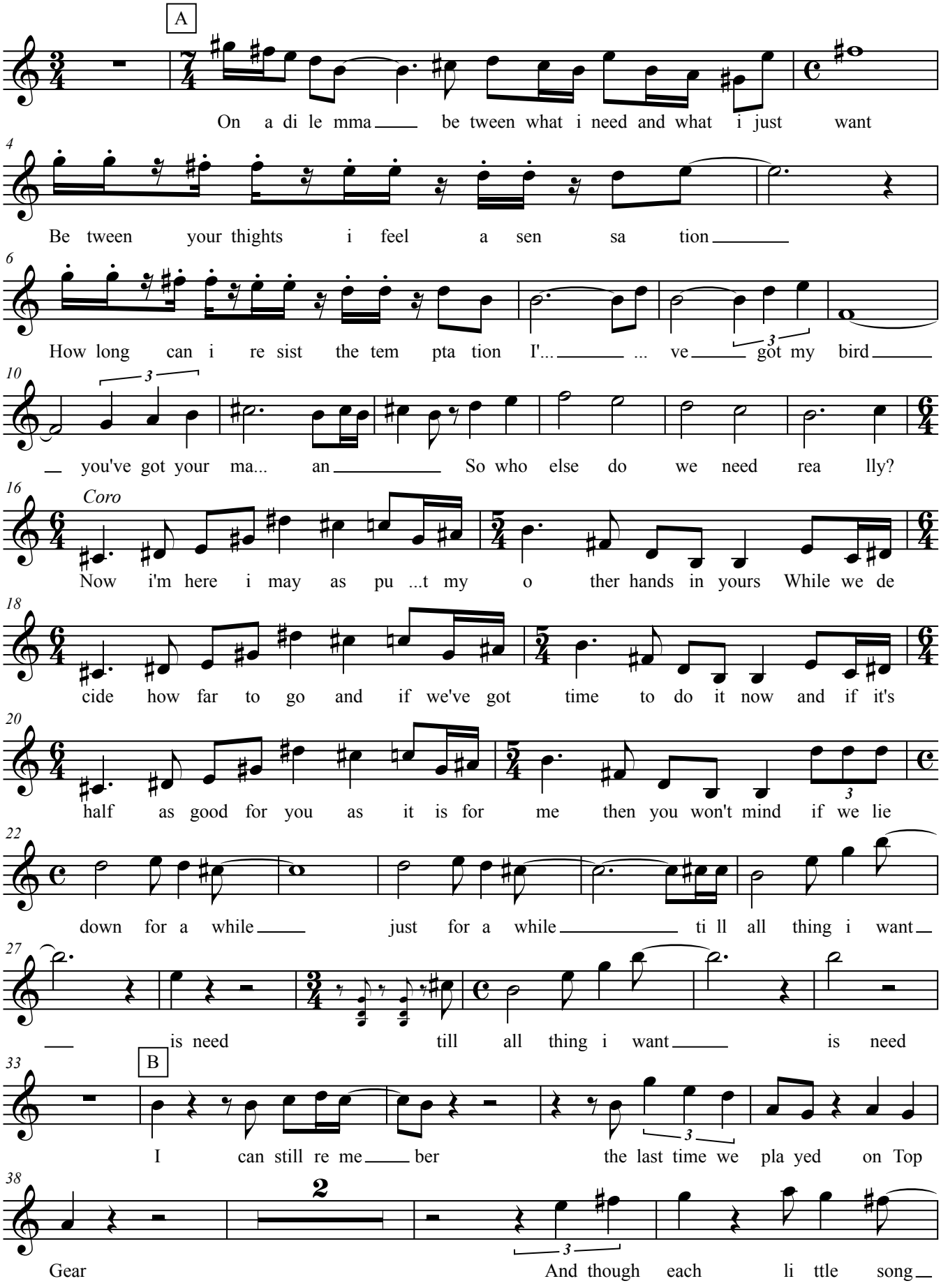
Moon in june
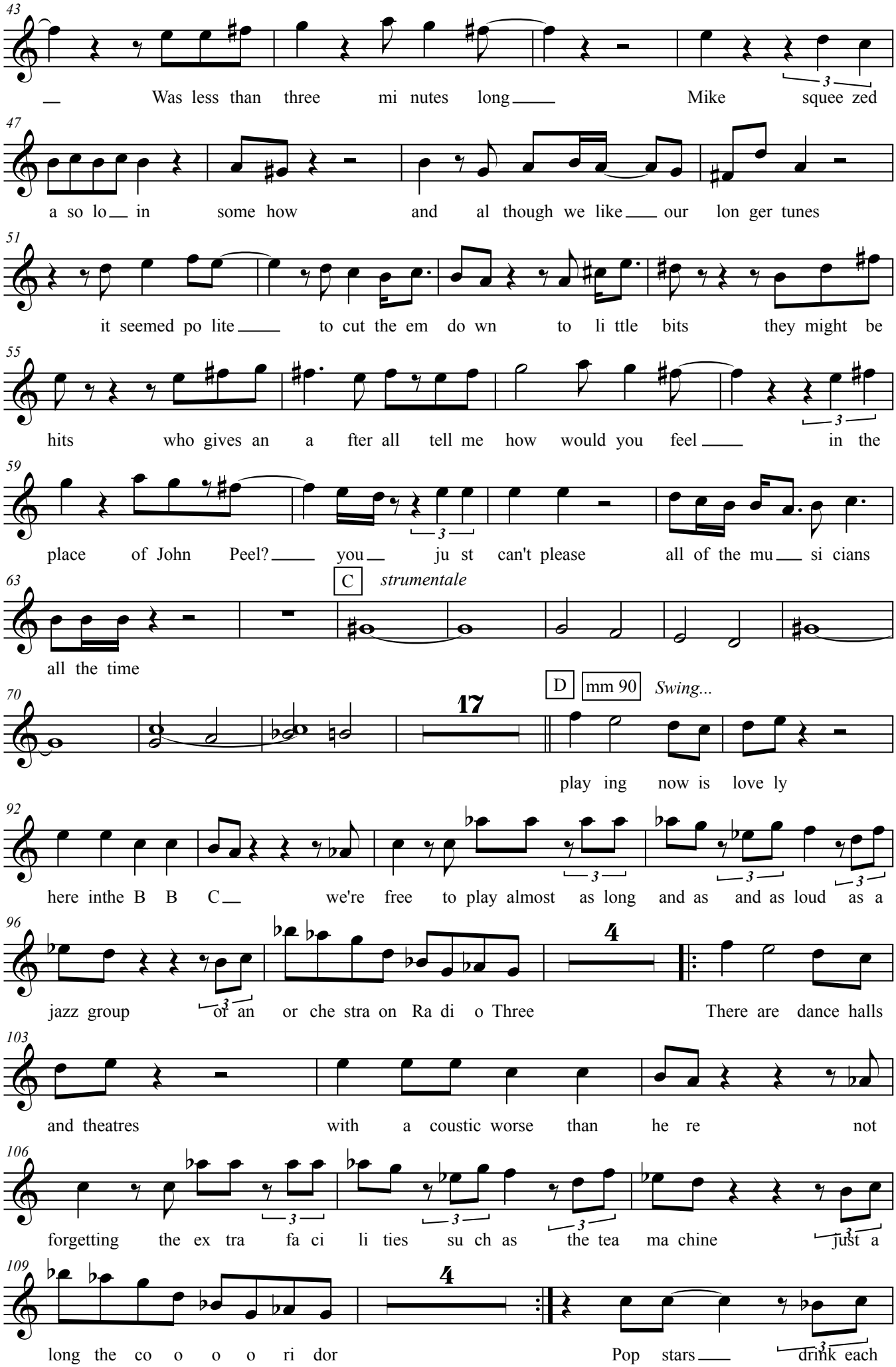
Voce 1

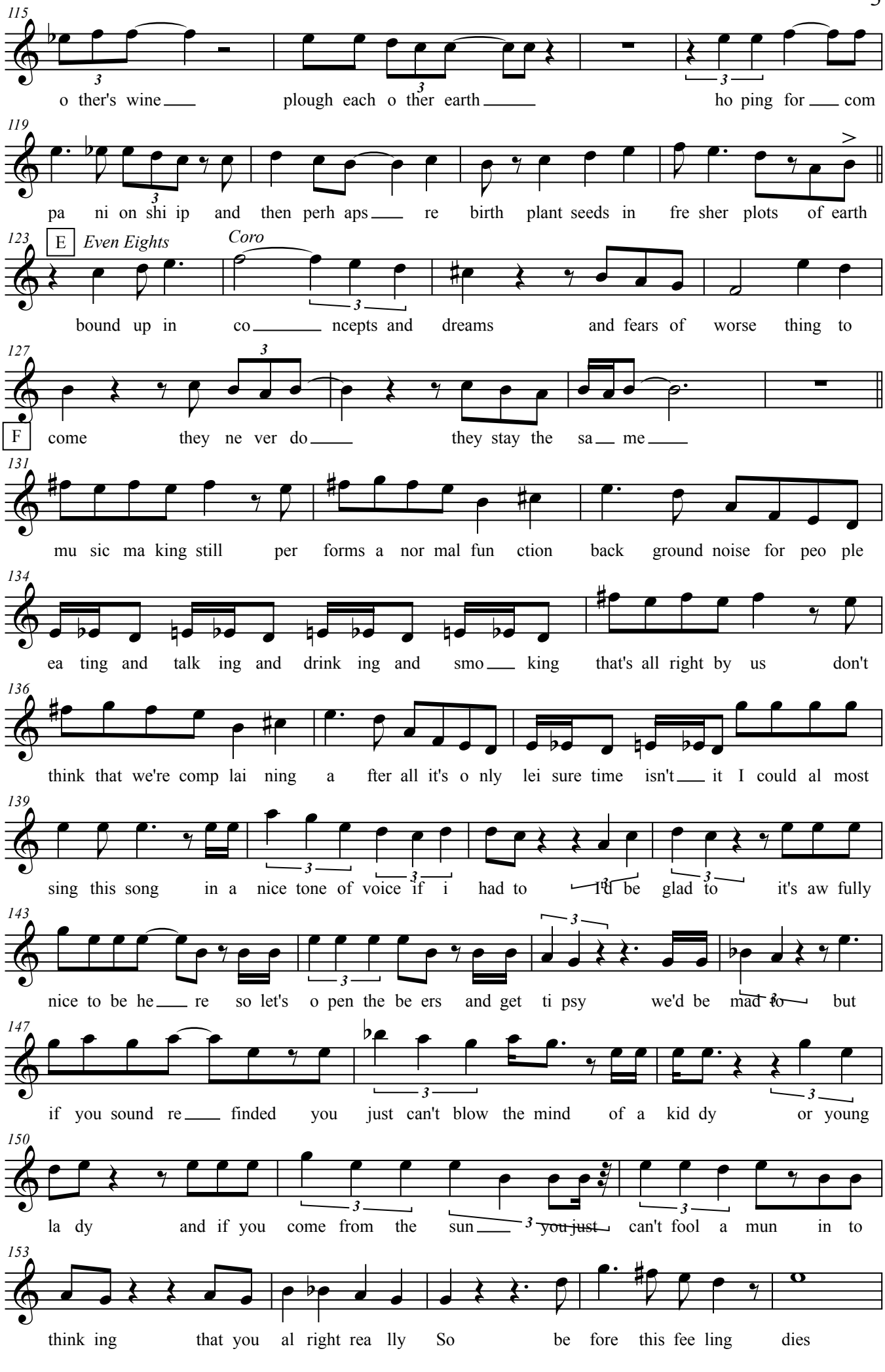
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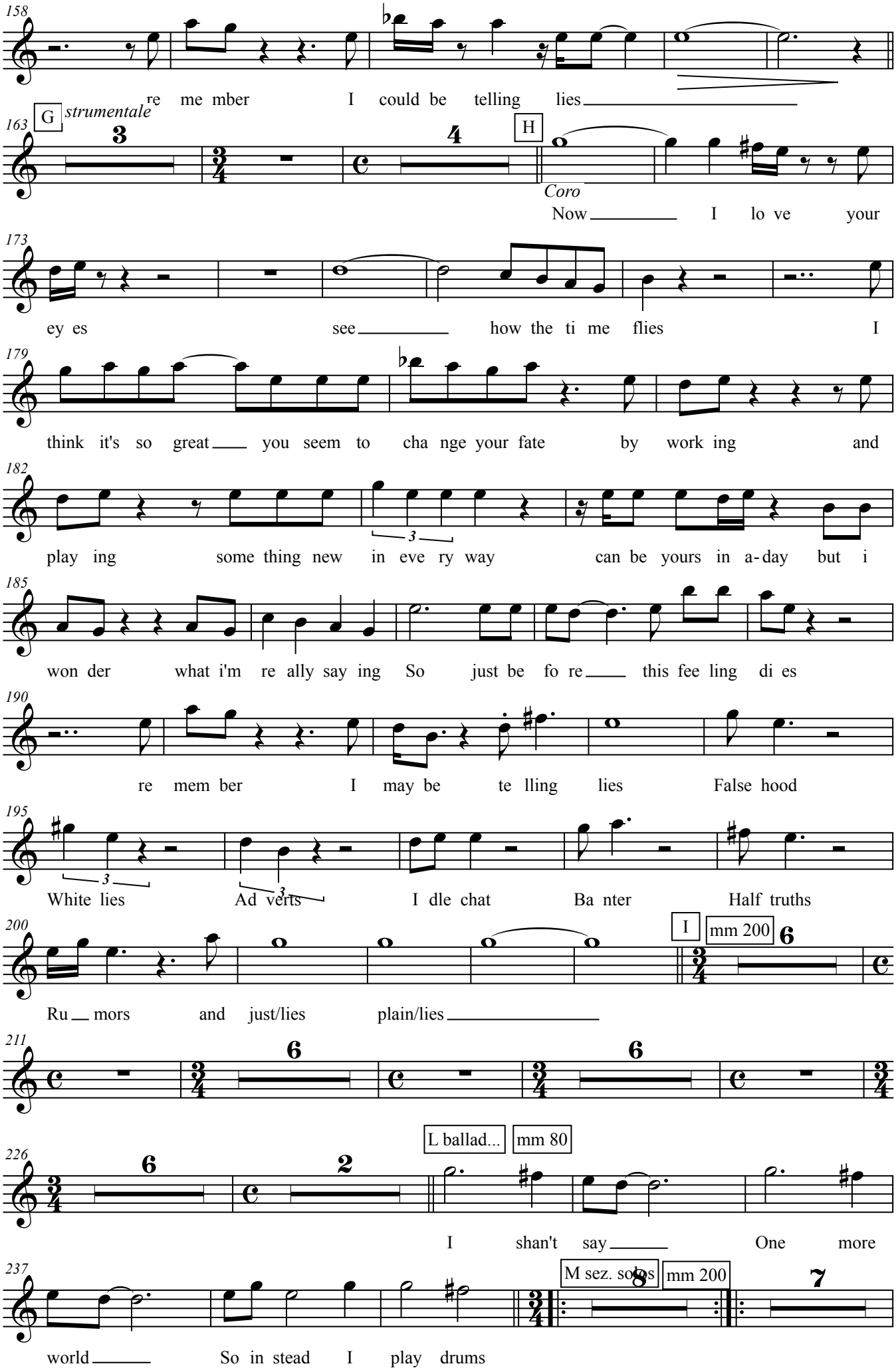
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'

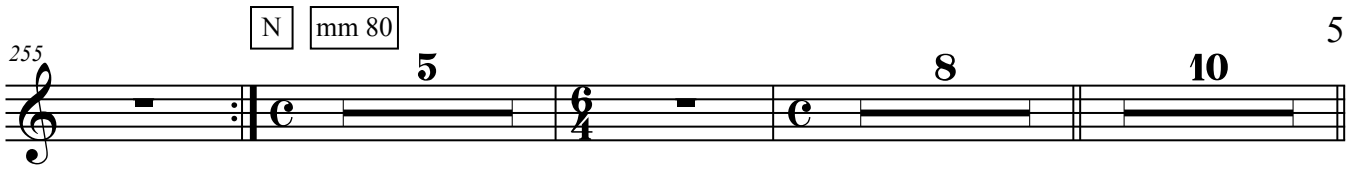
MM104




43
Was less than three mi nutes long Mike squee zed
47
a so lo in some how and al though we like our lon ger tunes
51
it seemed po lite to cut the em do wn to li ttle bits they might be
55
hits who gives an a fter all tell me how would you feel in the
59
place of John Peel? you ju st can't please all of the mu si cians
63
C strumentale
all the time
70
17
D mm 90 Swing...
play ing now is love ly
92
here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a
96
4
jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three There are dance halls
103
and theatres with a coustic worse than he re not
106
forgetting the ex tra fa ci li ties su ch as the tea ma chine just a
109
4
long the co o o o ri dor Pop stars drink each


115
o ther's wine plough each o ther earth ho ping for com
119
pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
123
E Even Eights
Coro
bound up in co ncepts and dreams and fears of worse thing to
127
F
come they ne ver do they stay the sa me
131
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
134
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't
136
think that we're comp lai ning a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most
139
sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully
143
nice to be he re so let's o pen the be ers and get ti psy we'd be mad to but
147
if you sound re finded you just can't blow the mind of a kid dy or young
150
la dy and if you come from the sun you just can't fool a mun in to
153
think ing that you al right rea lly So be fore this fee ling dies


158
re me mber I could be telling lies
G strumentale
163
3
4
H
Coro
Now I lo ve your
173
ey es see how the ti me flies I
179
think it's so great you seem to cha nge your fate by work ing and
182
play ing some thing new in eve ry way can be yours in a-day but i
185
won der what i'm re ally say ing So just be fo re this fee ling di es
190
re mem ber I may be te lling lies False hood
195
White lies Ad verts I dle chat Ba nter Half truths
200
I
mm 200
6
Ru mors and just/lies plain/lies
211
6
6
L ballad...
mm 80
226
6
2
I shan't say One more
237
world So in stead I play drums
M sez. solos
mm 200
8
7


N
mm 80
255
5
8
10
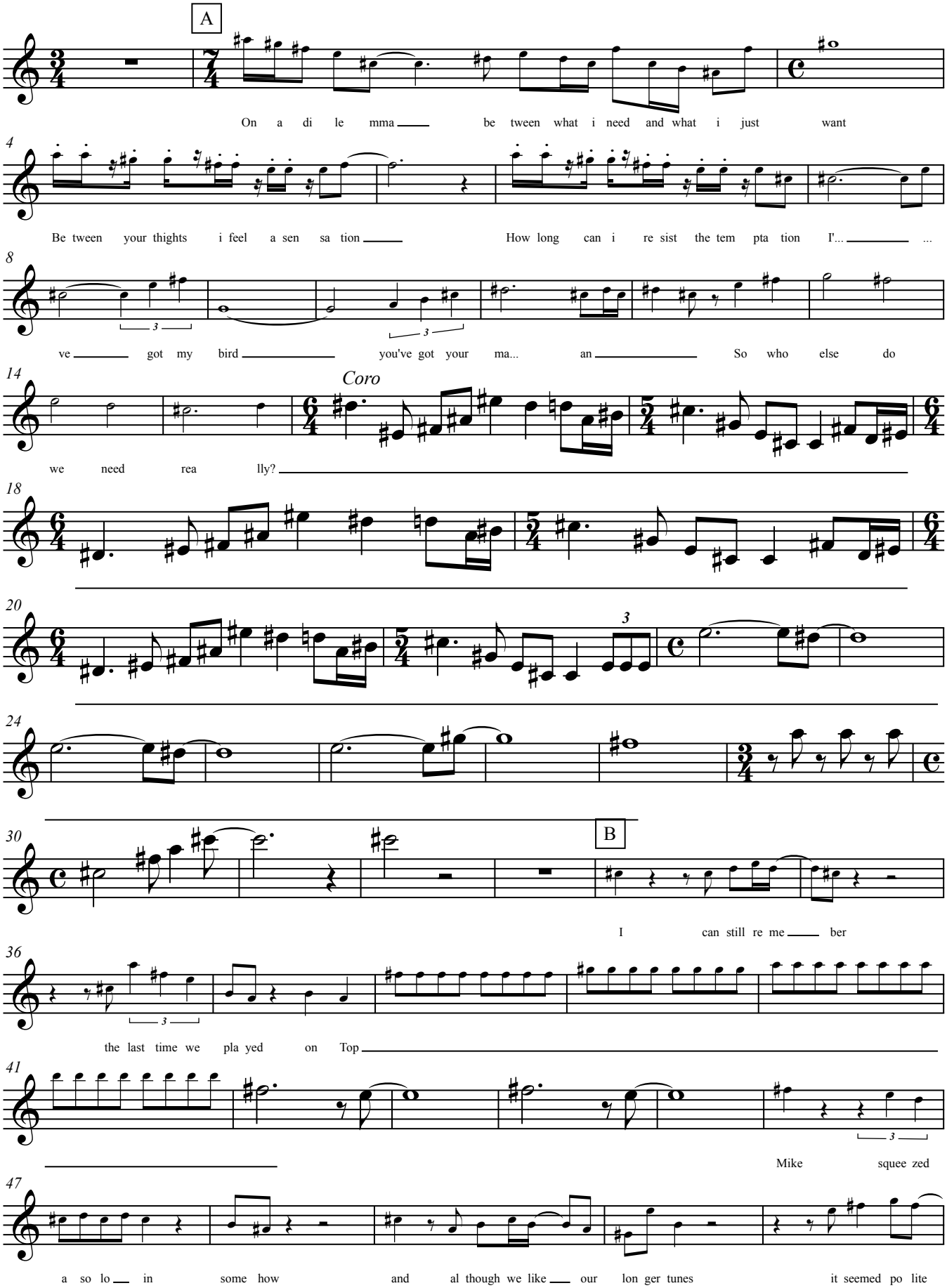
Moon in june
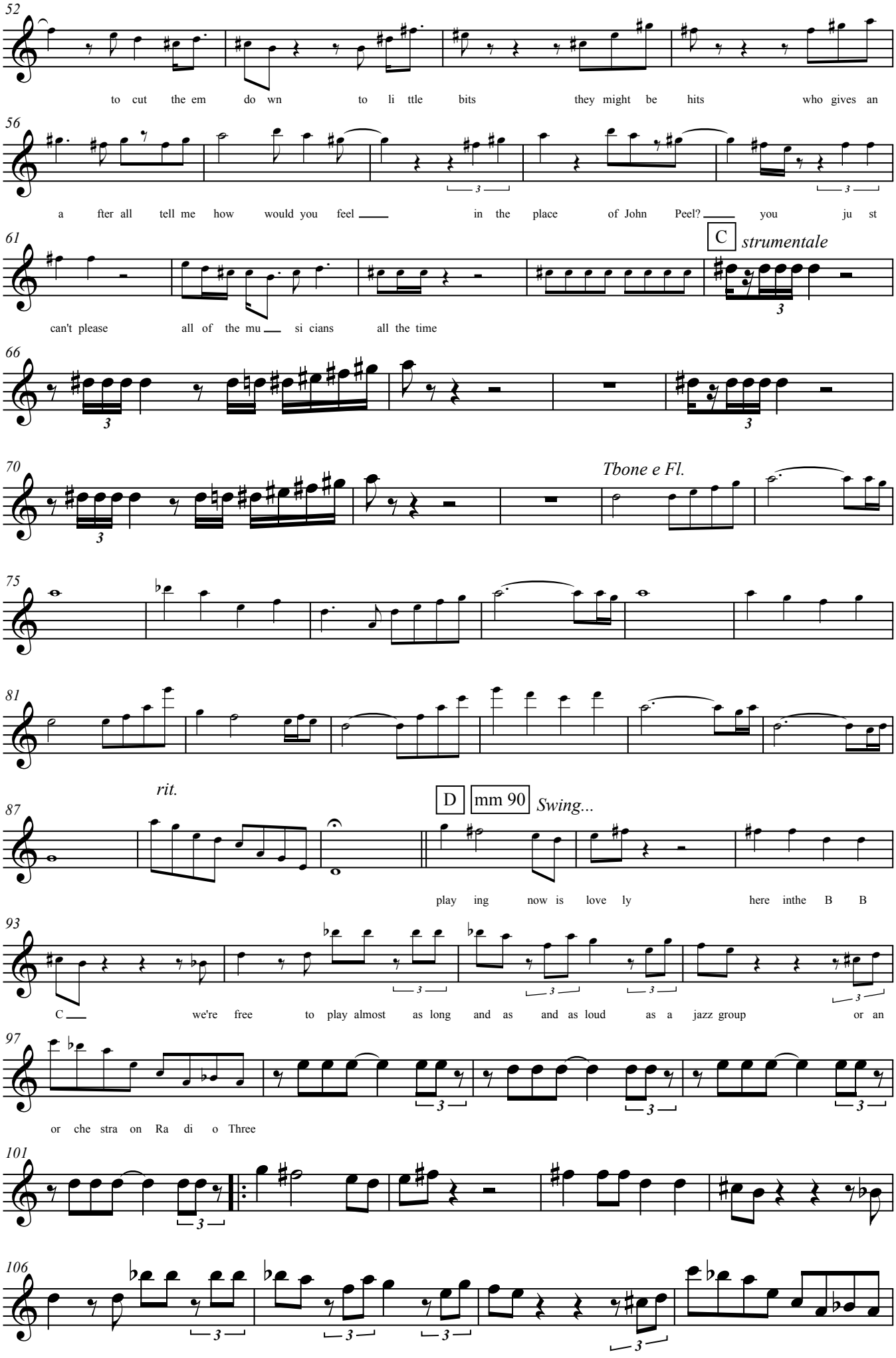
Tromba in Si♭ 1
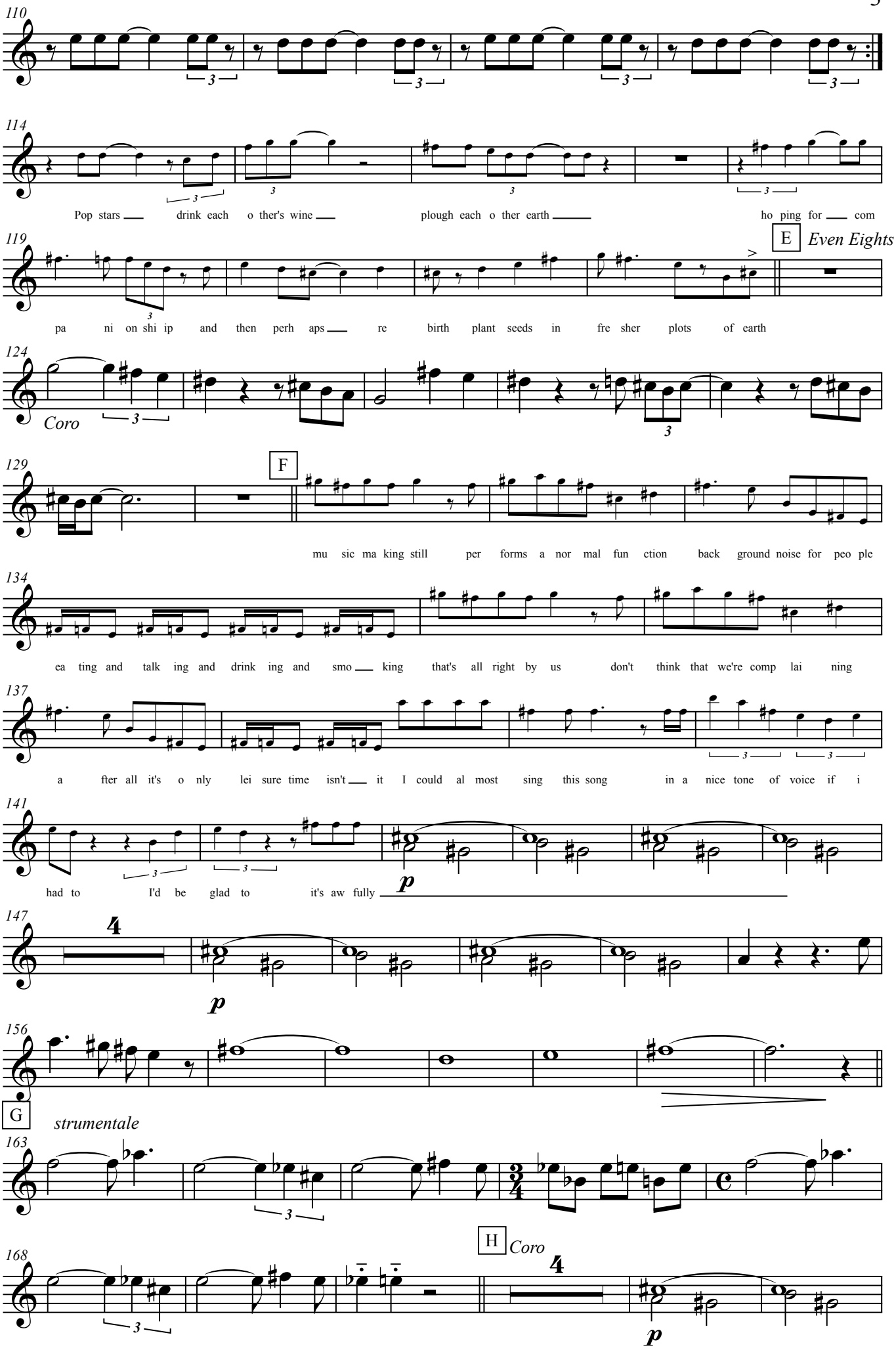
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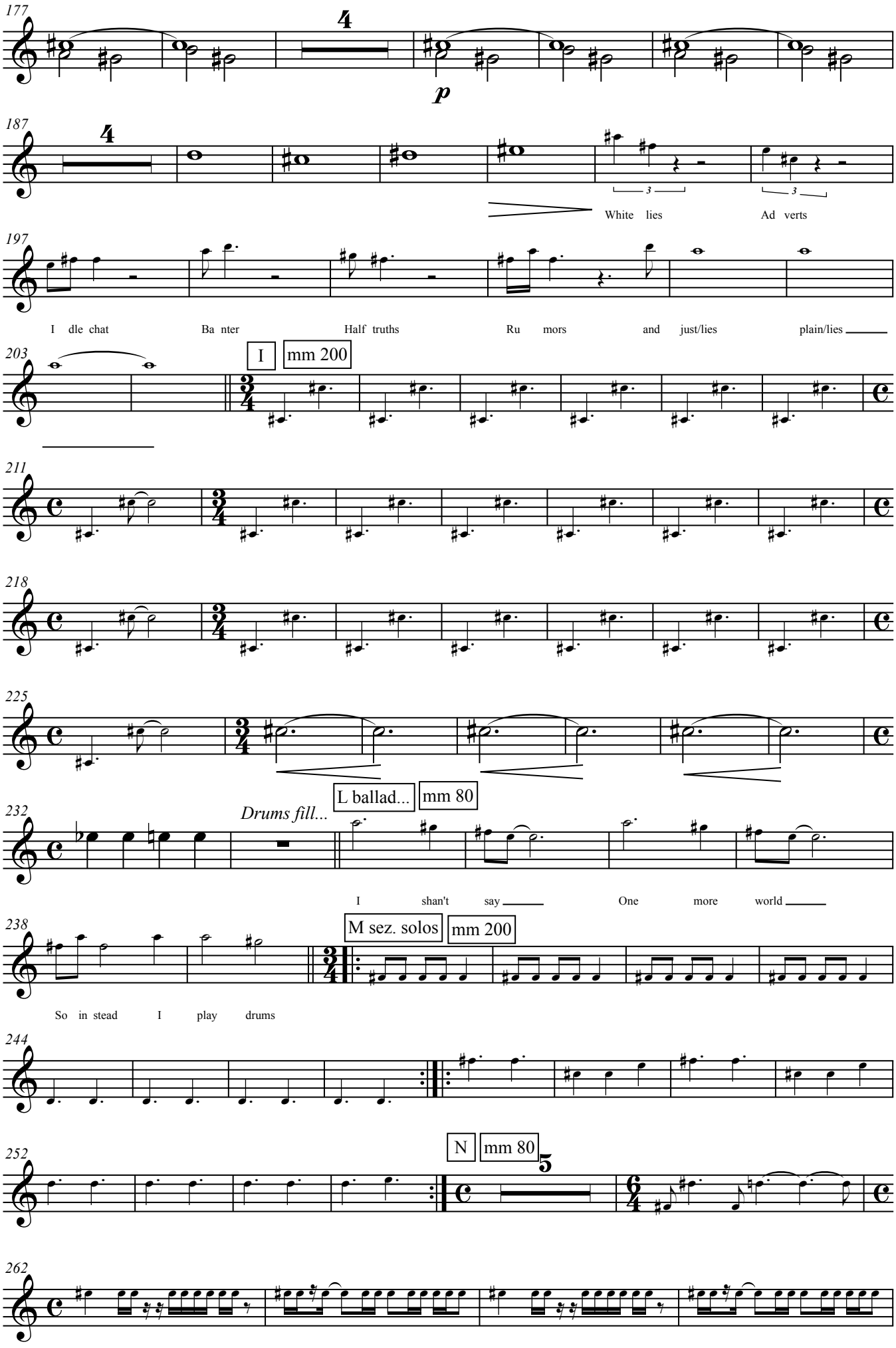
by Robert Wyatt

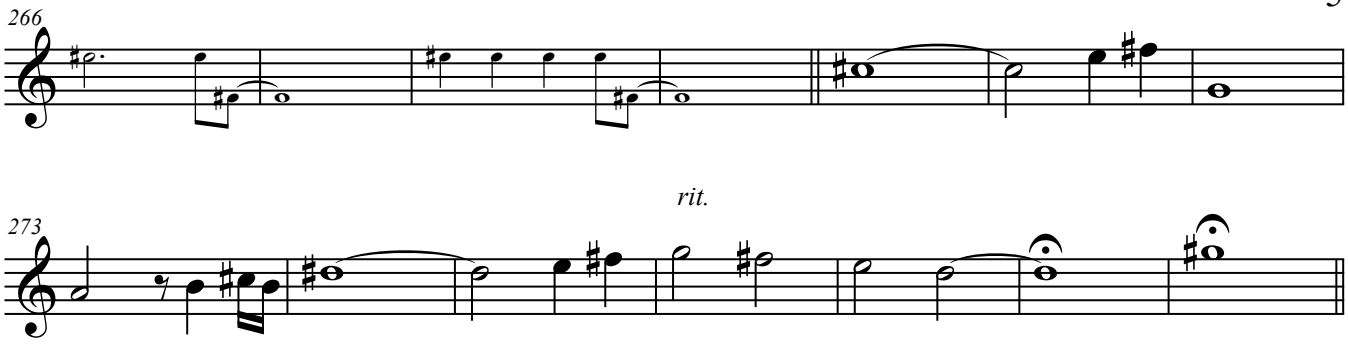
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




52
to cut the em do wn to li ttle bits they might be hits who gives an
56
a fter all tell me how would you feel in the place of John Peel? you ju st
61
C strumentale
can't please all of the mu si cians all the time
66
70
Tbone e Fl.
75
81
rit.
87
D mm 90 Swing...
play ing now is love ly here inthe B B
93
C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a jazz group or an
97
or che stra on Ra di o Three
101
106


110
114
Pop stars drink each o ther's wine plough each o ther earth ho ping for com
119
E
Even Eights
pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
124
Coro
129
F
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
134
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning
137
a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i
141
had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully
p
147
4
p
156
G
strumentale
163
H
Coro
168
4
p


177
4
p
187
4
White lies
Ad verts
197
I dle chat
Ba nter
Half truths
Ru mors
and just/lies
plain/lies
203
I
mm 200
211
218
225
L ballad...
mm 80
232
Drums fill...
I shan't say
One more world
238
M sez. solos
mm 200
So in stead I play drums
244
252
N
mm 80
5
262


266

rit.
273
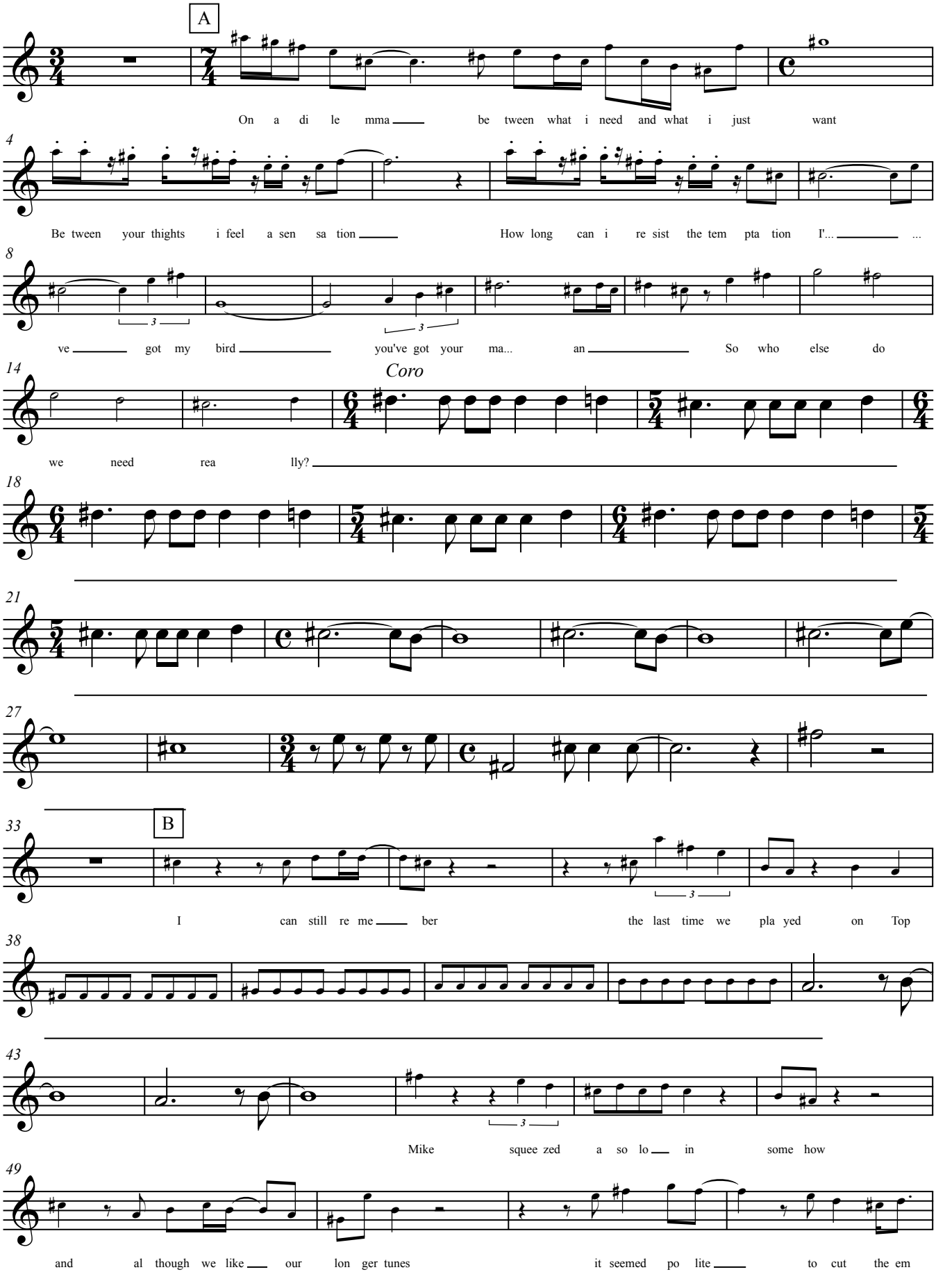
Moon in june
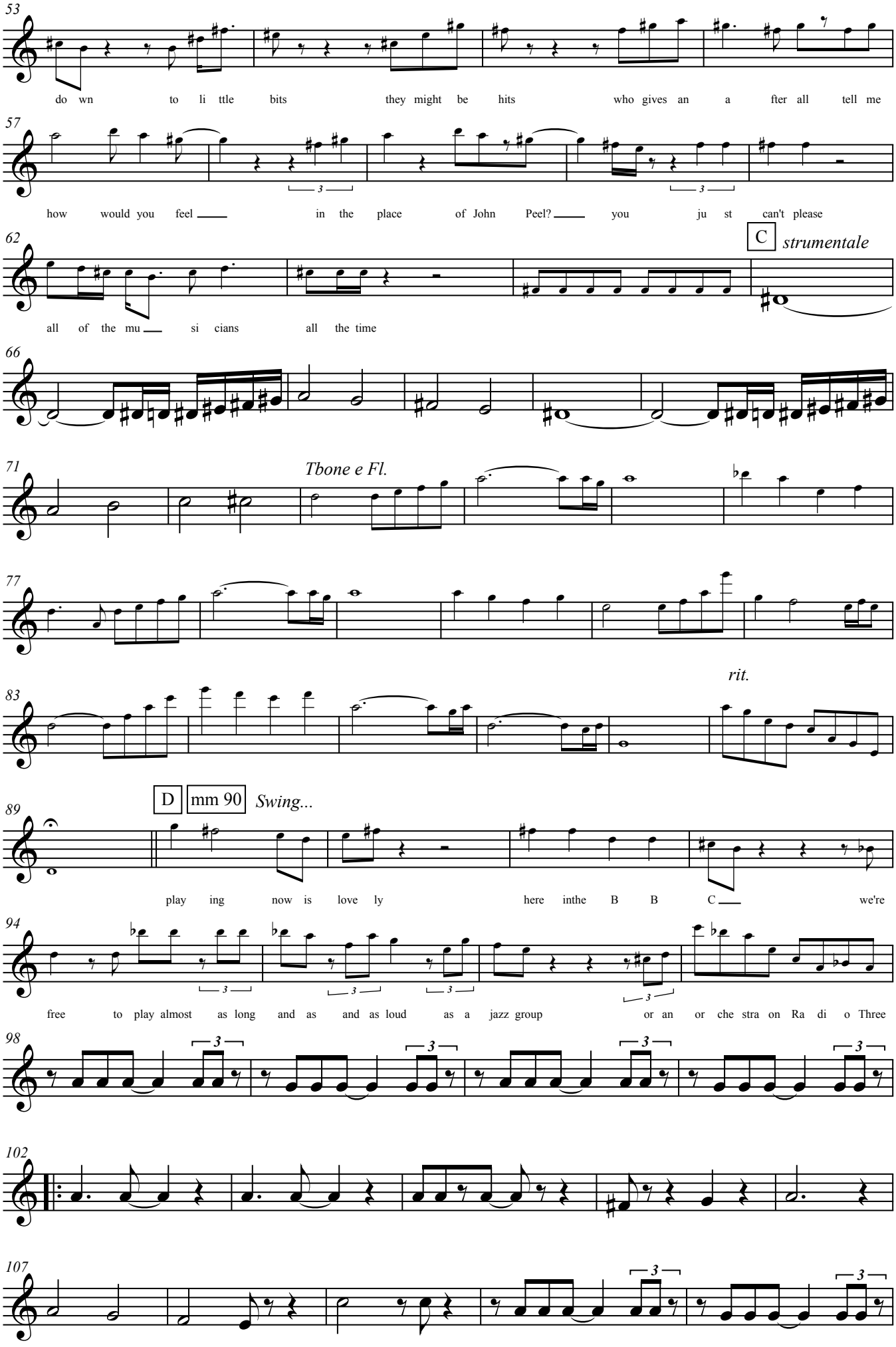
Tromba in Si♭ 2
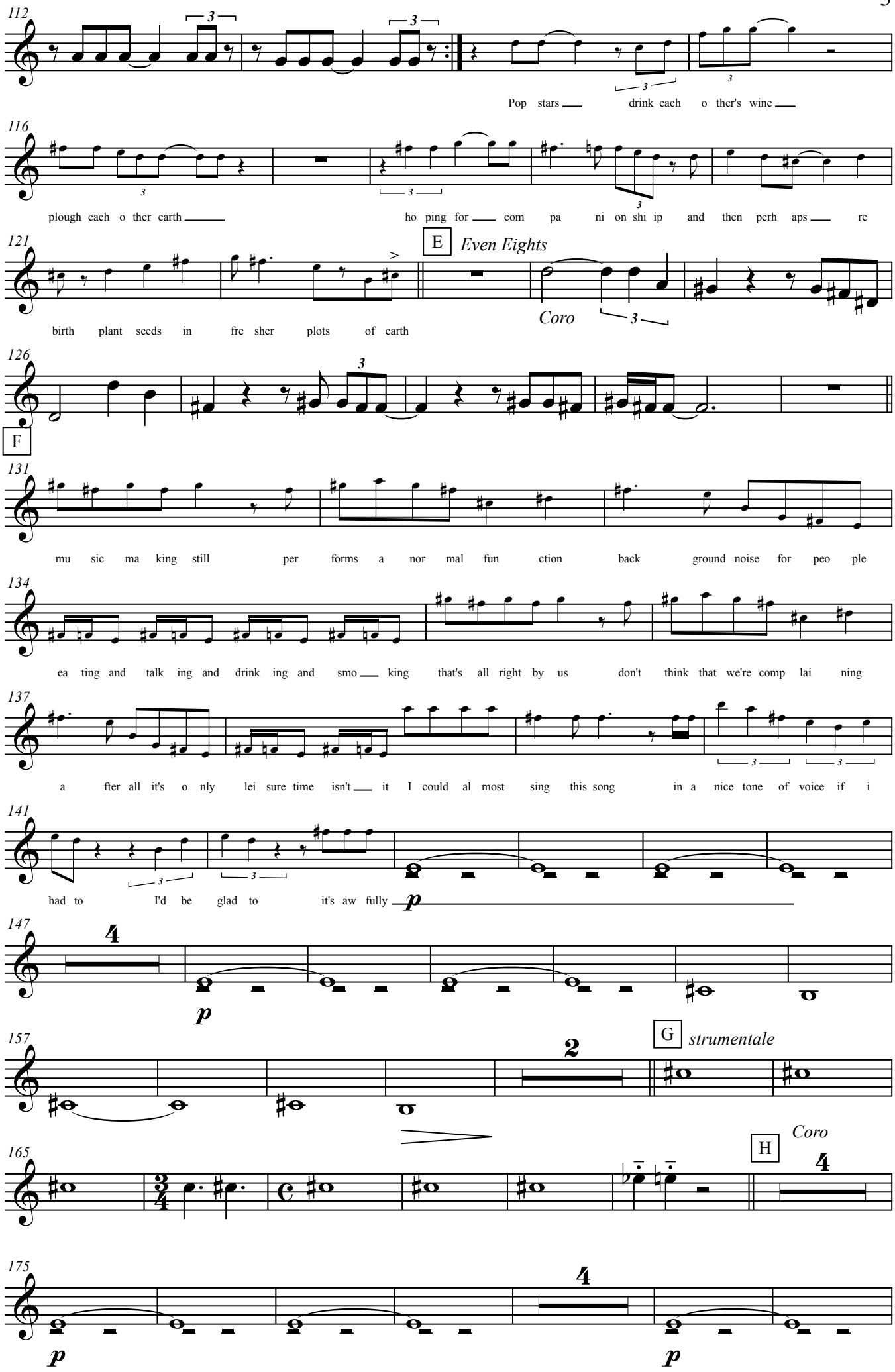
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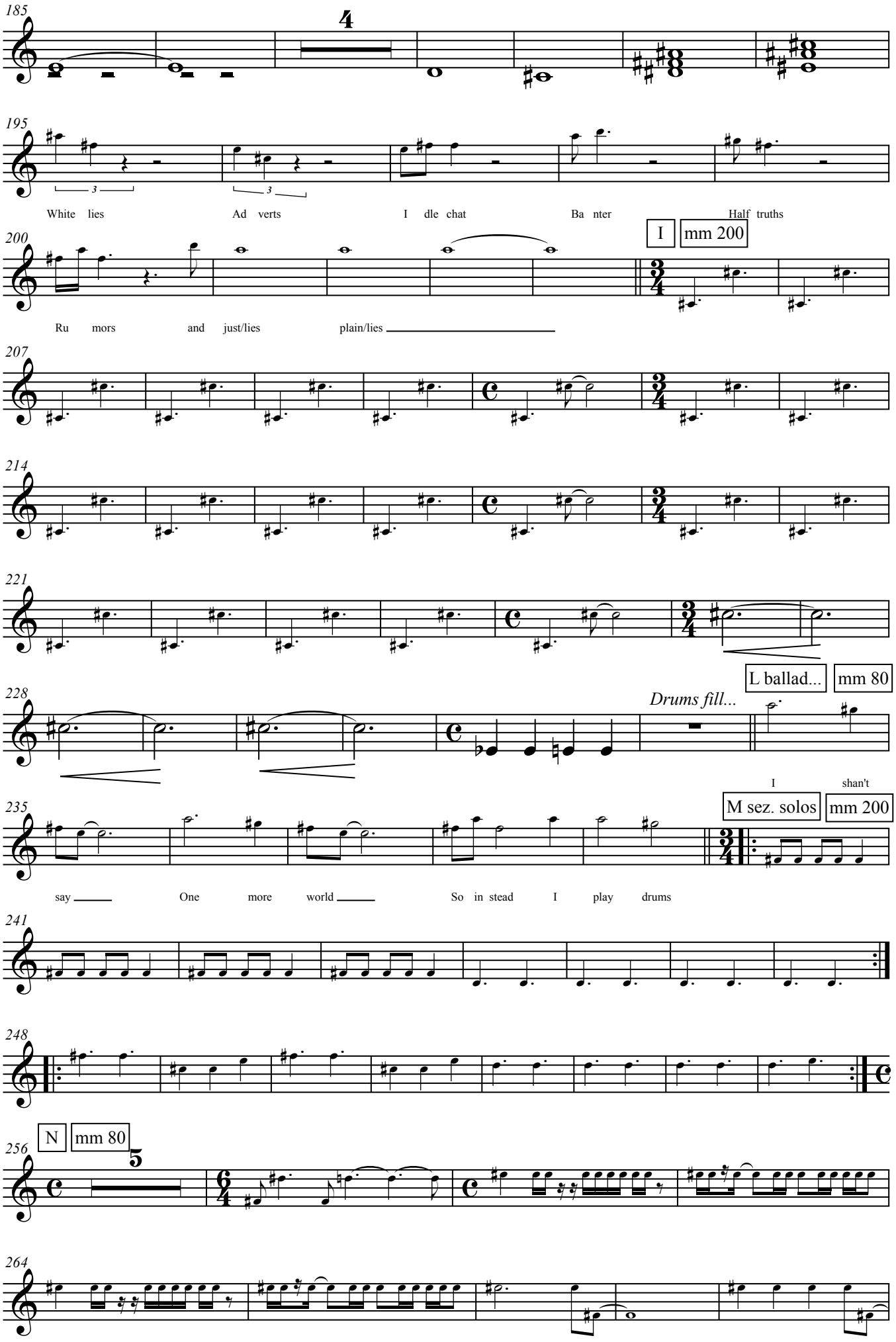
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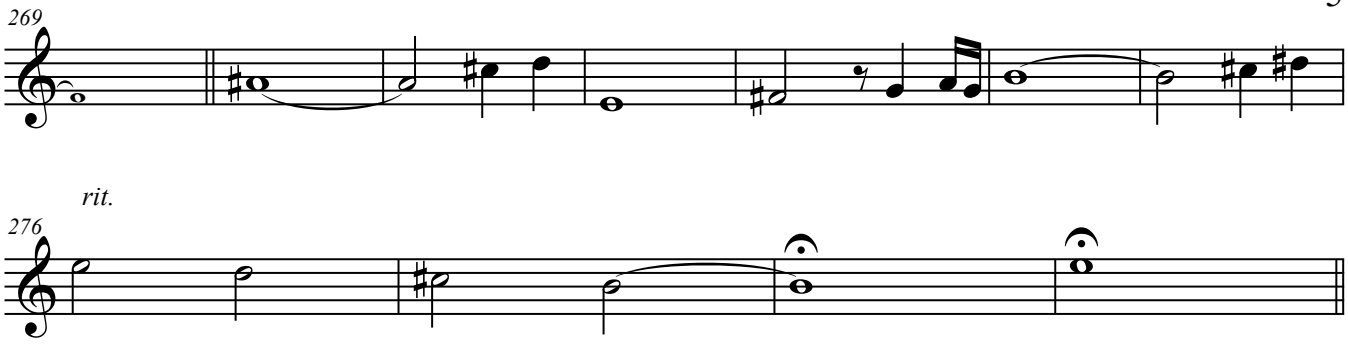
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




53
do wn to li ttle bits they might be hits who gives an a fter all tell me
57
how would you feel in the place of John Peel? you ju st can't please
62
C strumentale
all of the mu si cians all the time
66
71
Tbone e Fl.
77
83
rit.
D mm 90 Swing...
89
play ing now is love ly here inthe B B C we're
94
free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three
98
102
107


112
Pop stars drink each o ther's wine
116
plough each o ther earth ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re
121
E
Even Eights
birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
Coro
126
F
131
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
134
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning
137
a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i
141
had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully
p
147
4
p
157
2
G
strumentale
165
H
Coro
4
175
4
p
p


185
4
195
White lies
Ad verts
I dle chat
Ba nter
Half truths
200
I
mm 200
Ru mors
and just/lies
plain/lies
207
214
221
228
L ballad...
mm 80
Drums fill...
I
shan't
235
M sez. solos
mm 200
say
One more world
So in stead I play drums
241
248
256
N
mm 80
5
264


269

rit.
276
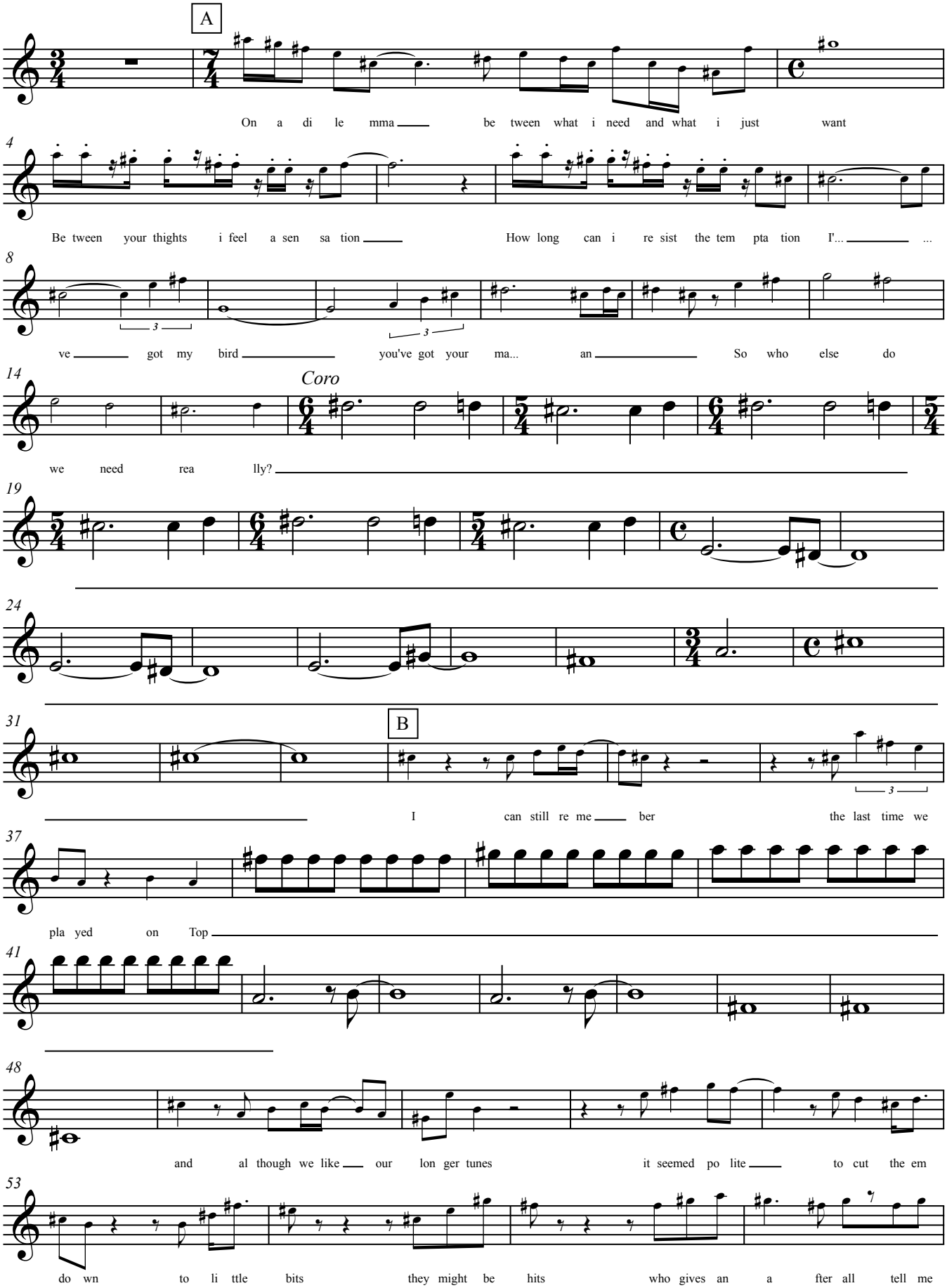
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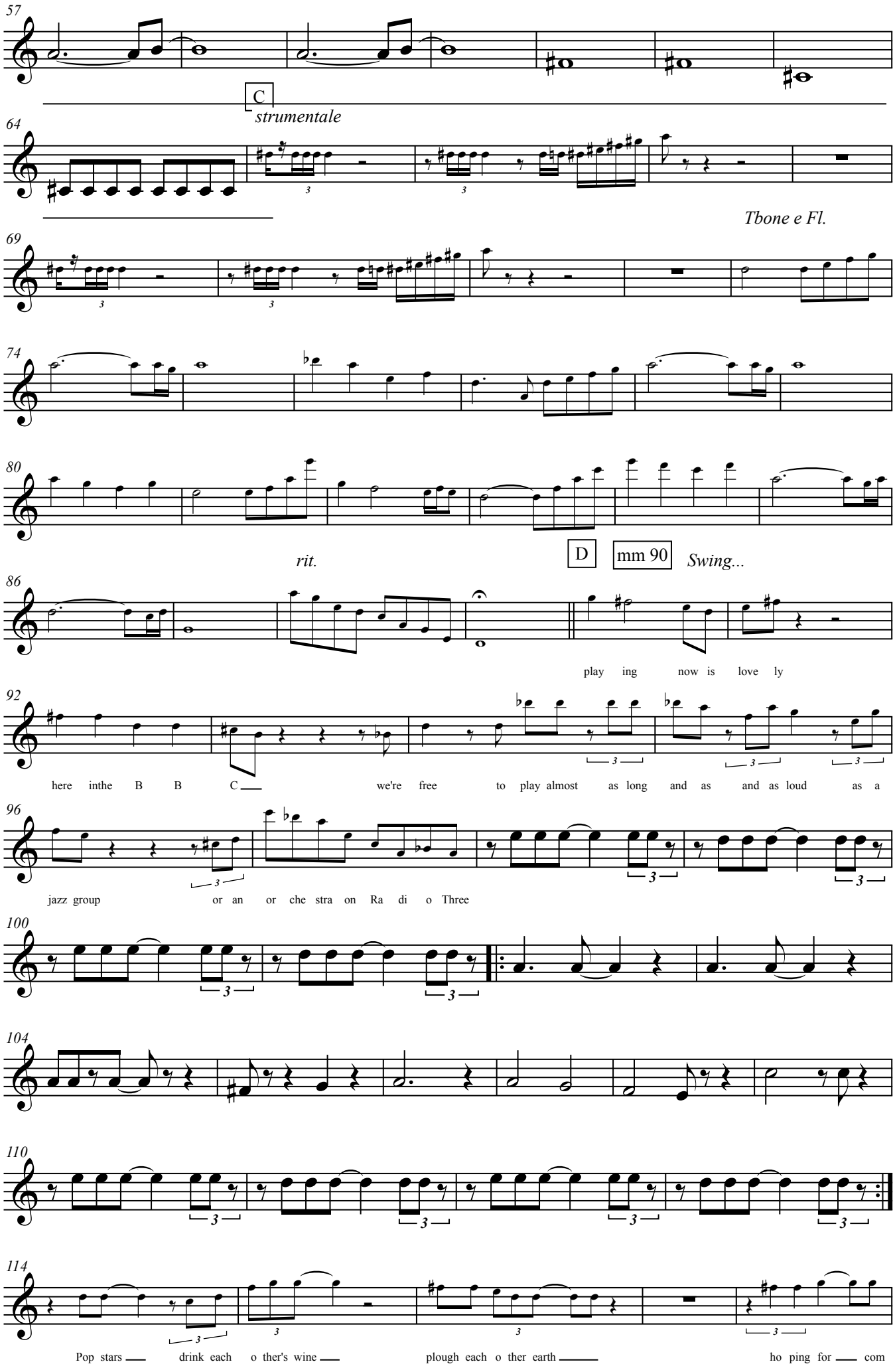
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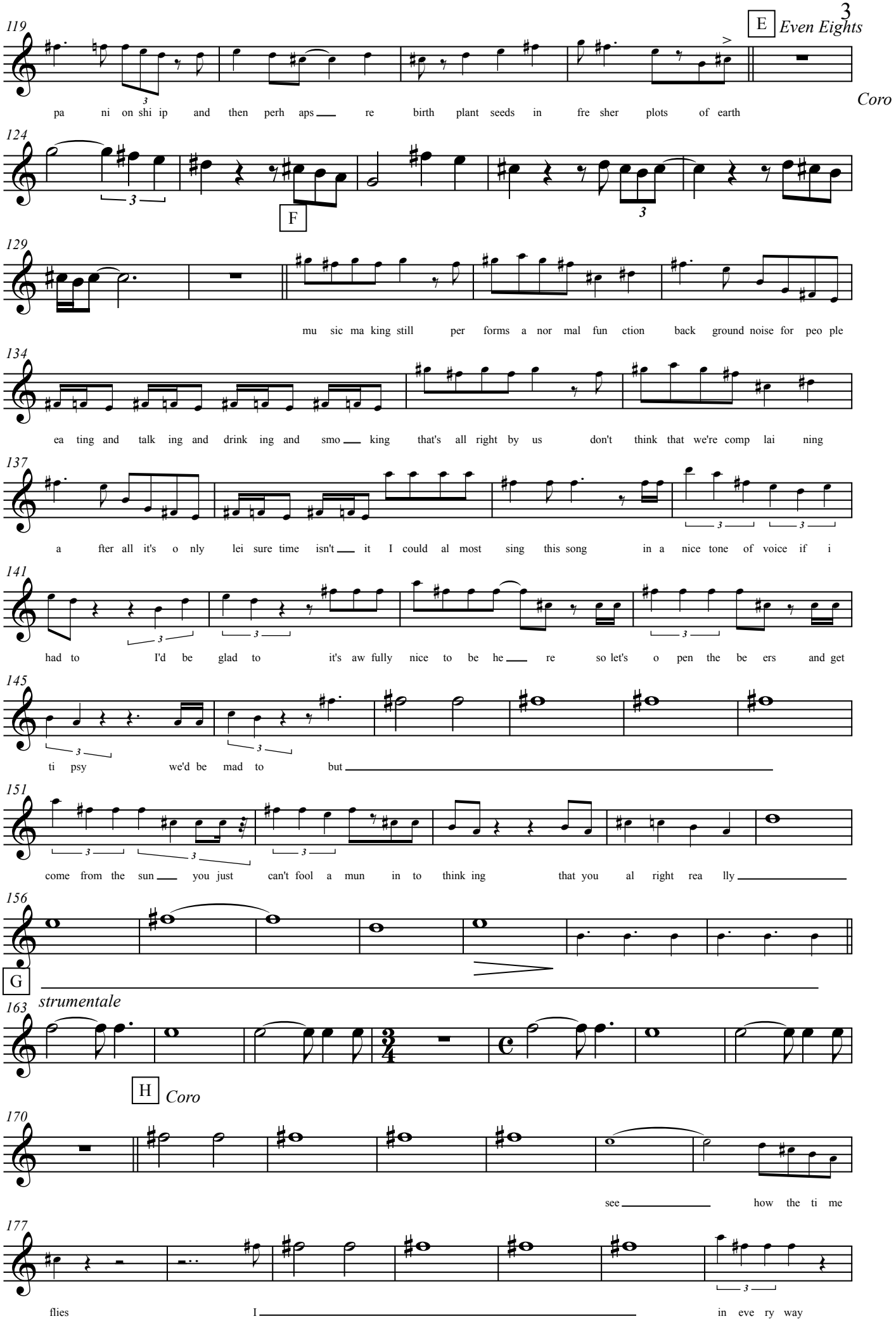
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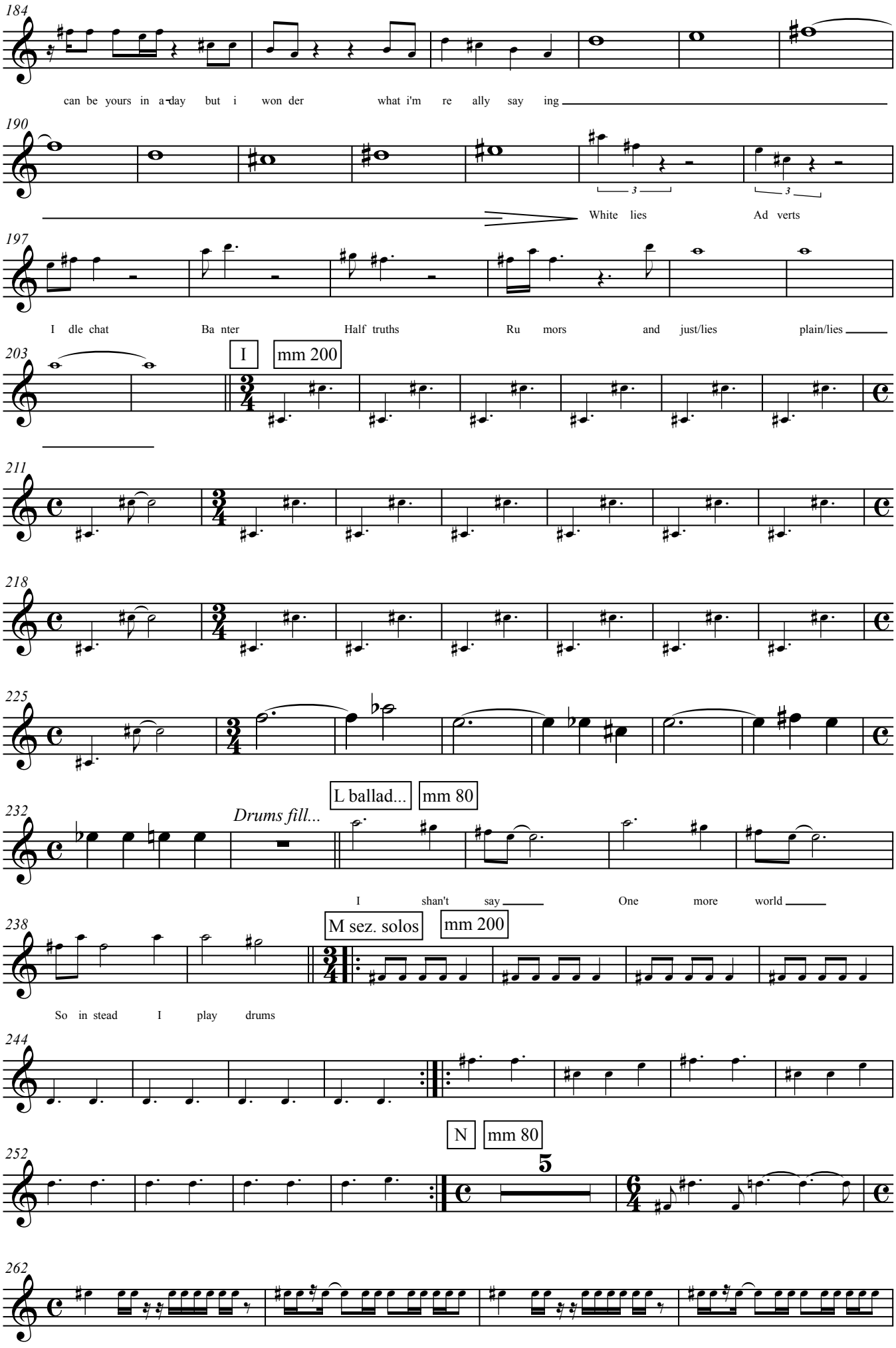
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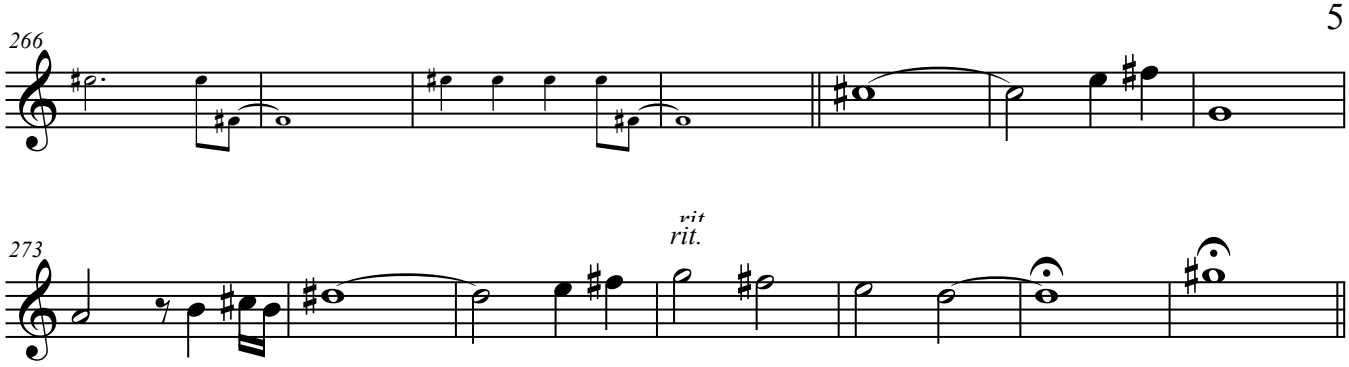
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




57
C
strumentale
64
Tbone e Fl.
69
74
80
rit.
D
mm 90
Swing...
86
play ing now is love ly
92
here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a
96
jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three
100
104
110
114
Pop stars drink each o ther's wine plough each o ther earth ho ping for com


119
E
Even Eights
Coro
pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
124
F
129
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
134
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning
137
a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i
141
had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully nice to be he re so let's o pen the be ers and get
145
ti psy we'd be mad to but
151
come from the sun you just can't fool a mun in to think ing that you al right rea lly
156
G
strumentale
163
H
Coro
170
see how the ti me
177
flies I in eve ry way


184
can be yours in a-day but i won der what i'm re ally say ing
190
White lies Ad verts
197
I dle chat Ba nter Half truths Ru mors and just/lies plain/lies
203
I
mm 200
211
218
225
L ballad...
mm 80
232
Drums fill...
I shan't say One more world
238
M sez. solos
mm 200
So in stead I play drums
244
N
mm 80
252
5
262


266

273
rit.
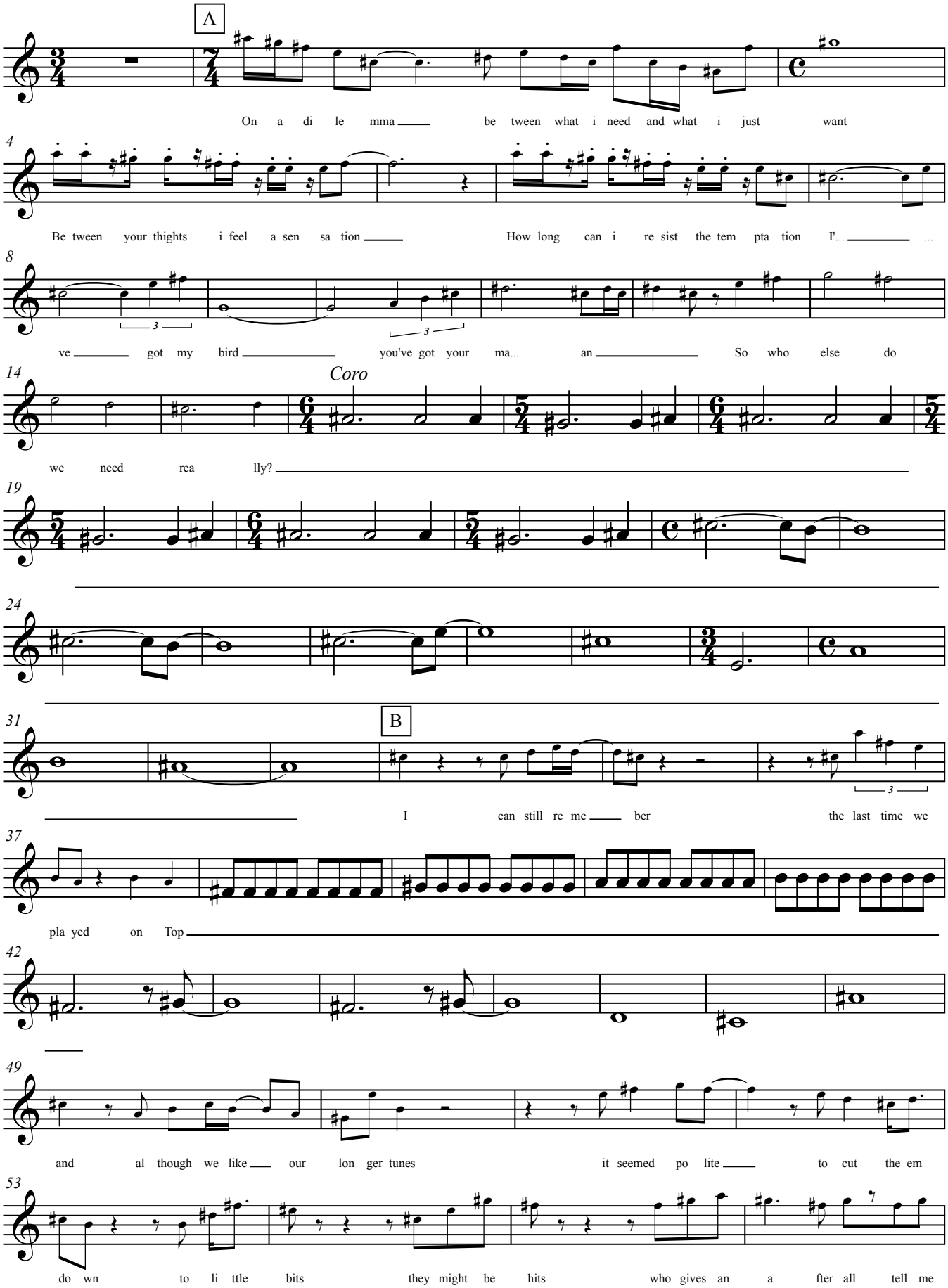
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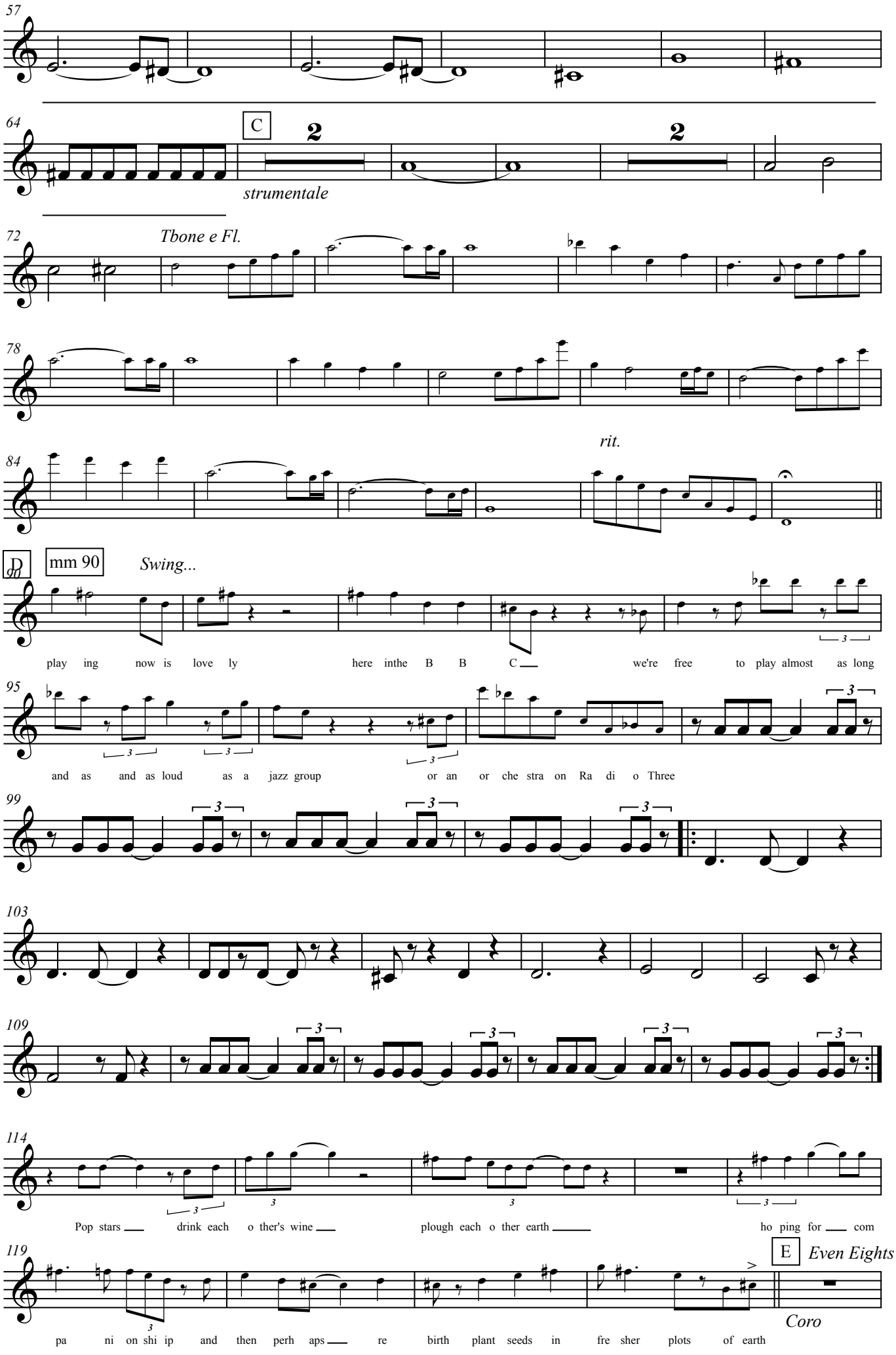
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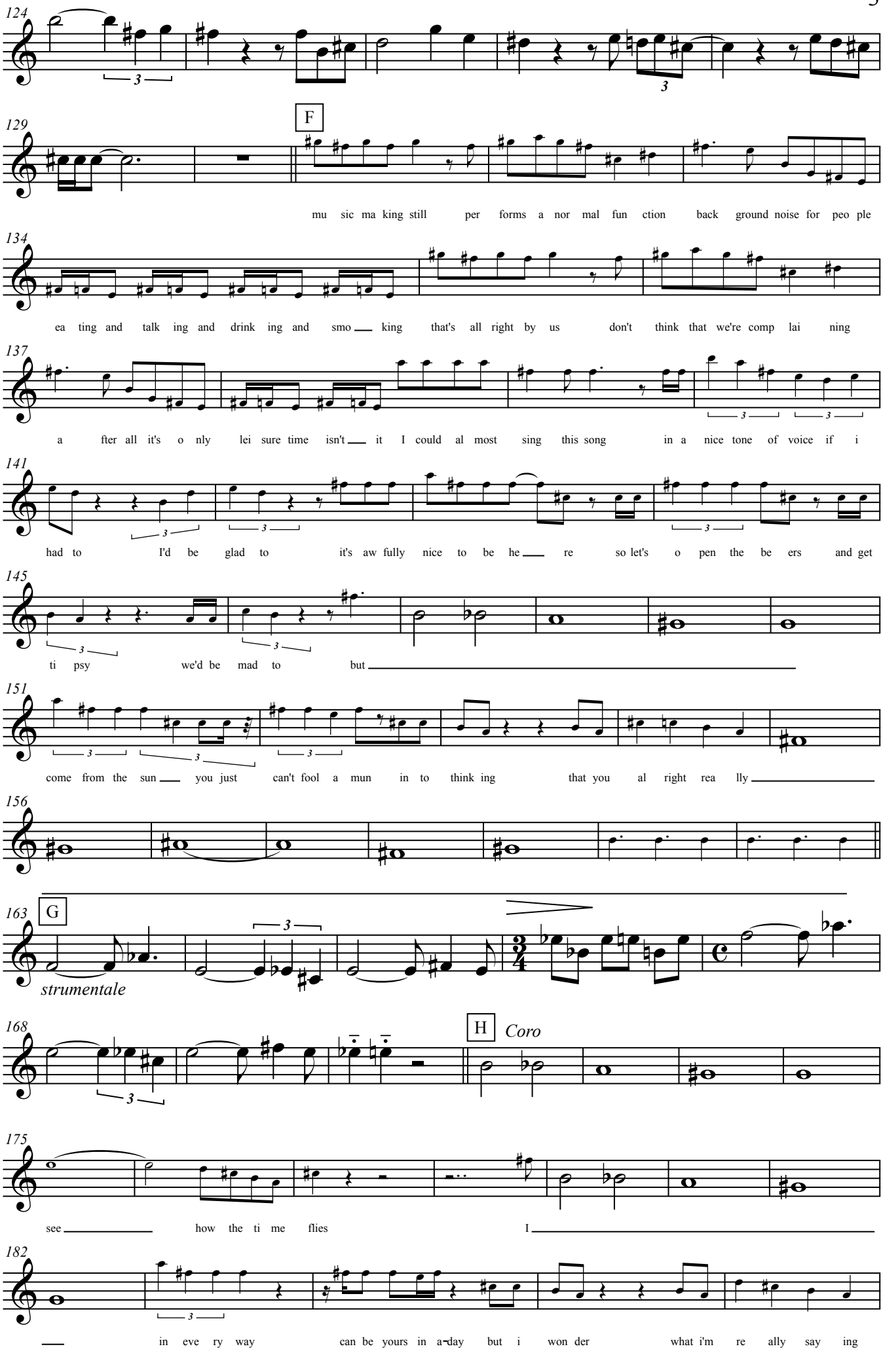
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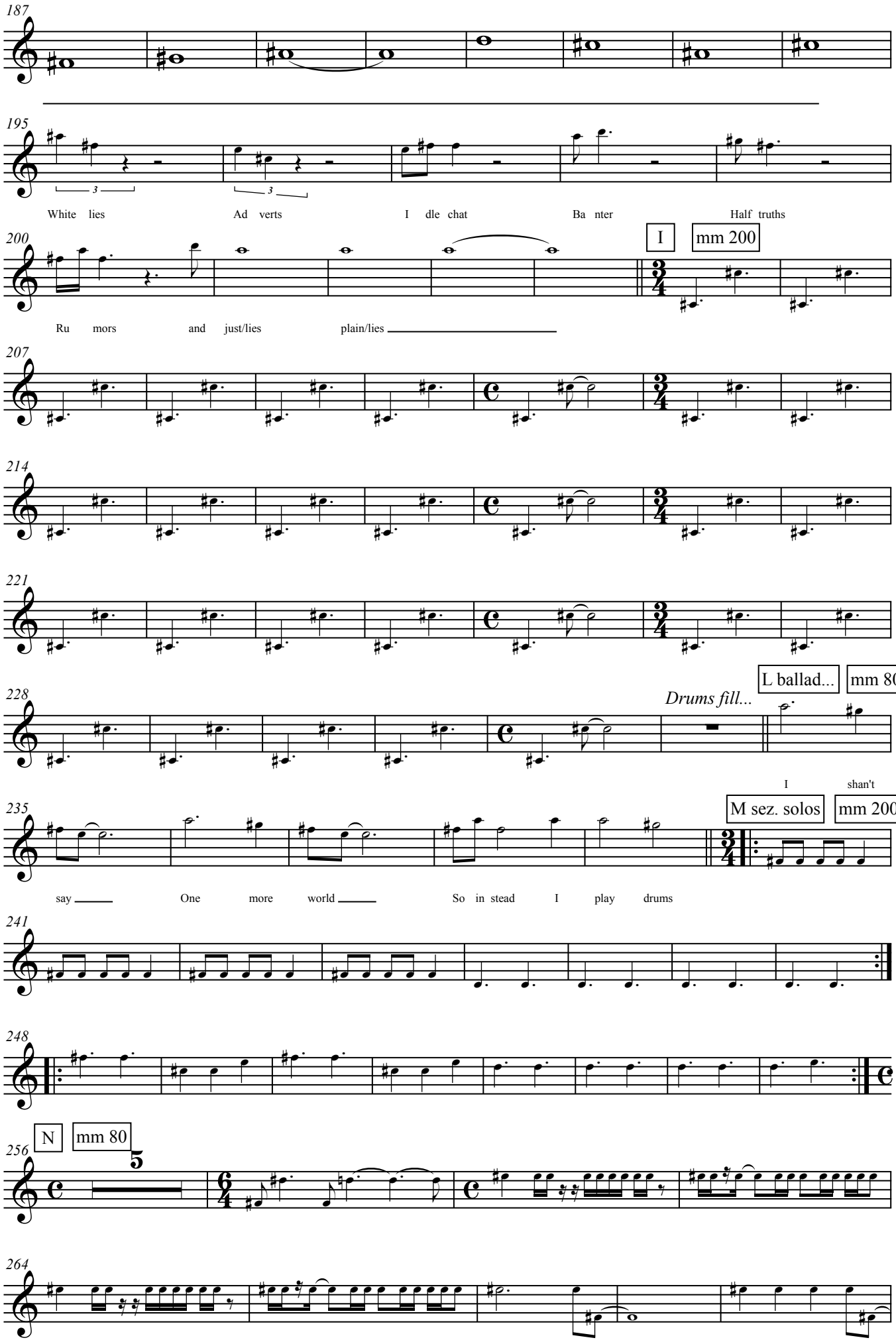
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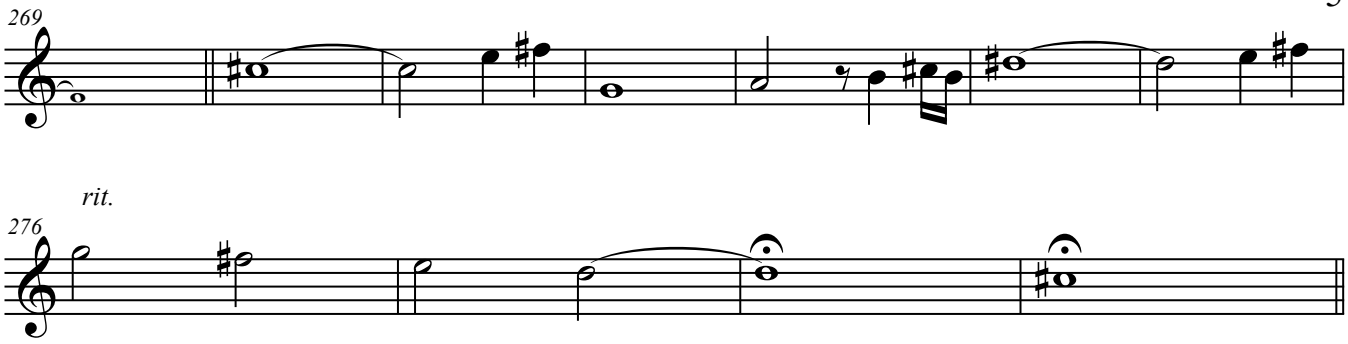
MM104




57
64
C
2
2
strumentale
72
Tbone e Fl.
78
84
rit.
D
90
mm 90
Swing...
play ing now is love ly here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long
95
and as and as loud as a jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three
99
103
109
114
Pop stars drink each o ther's wine plough each o ther earth ho ping for com
119
E
Even Eights
Coro
pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth


124
129
F
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
134
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning
137
a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i
141
had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully nice to be he re so let's o pen the be ers and get
145
ti psy we'd be mad to but
151
come from the sun you just can't fool a mun in to think ing that you al right rea lly
156
163
G
strumentale
168
H
Coro
175
see how the ti me flies I
182
in eve ry way can be yours in a-day but i won der what i'm re ally say ing


187
195
White lies
Ad verts
I dle chat
Ba nter
Half truths
200
I
mm 200
Ru mors
and just/lies
plain/lies
207
214
221
228
L ballad...
mm 80
Drums fill...
I
shan't
235
M sez. solos
mm 200
say
One more world
So in stead I play drums
241
248
256
N
mm 80
5
264


269

rit.
276
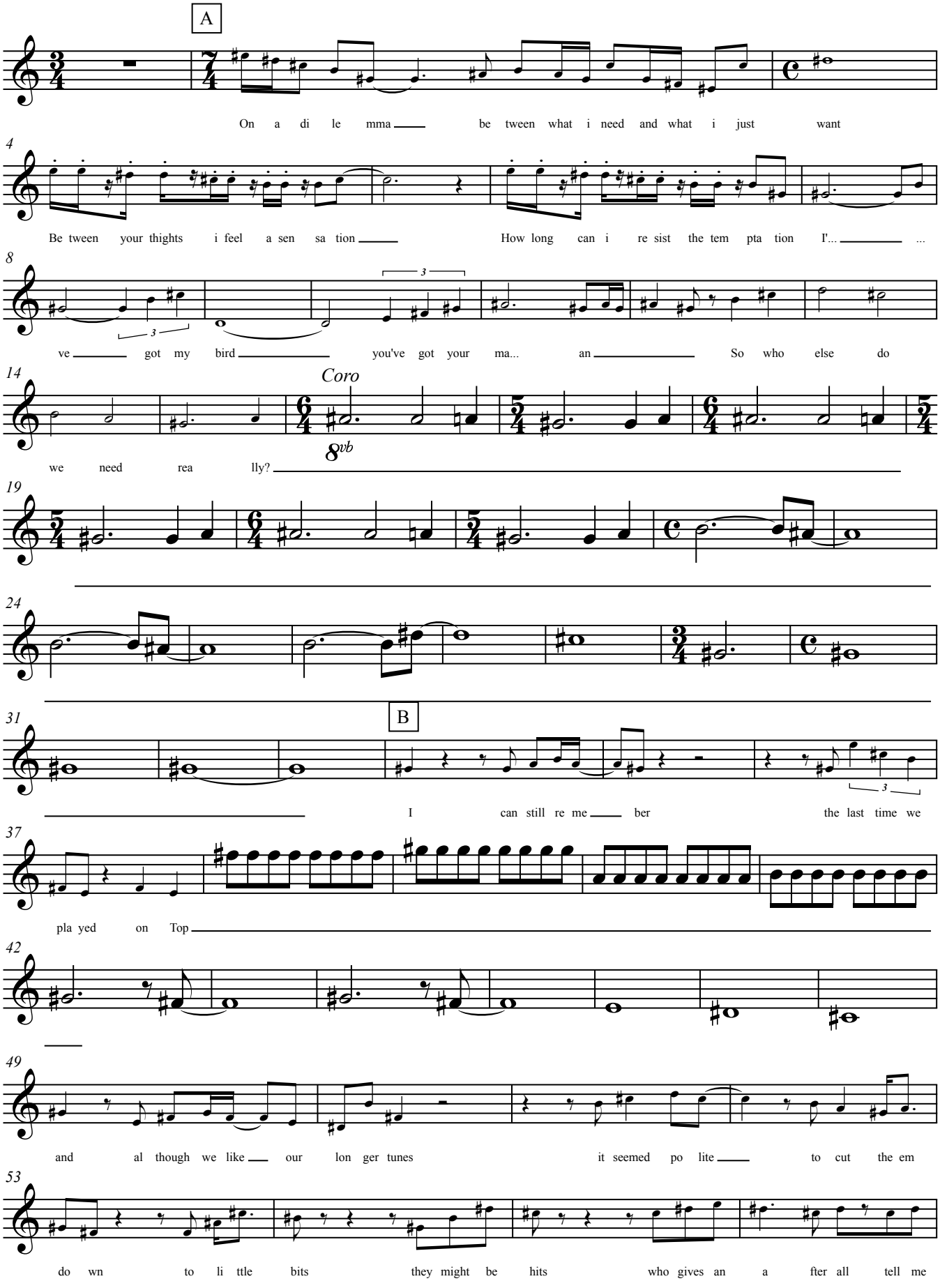
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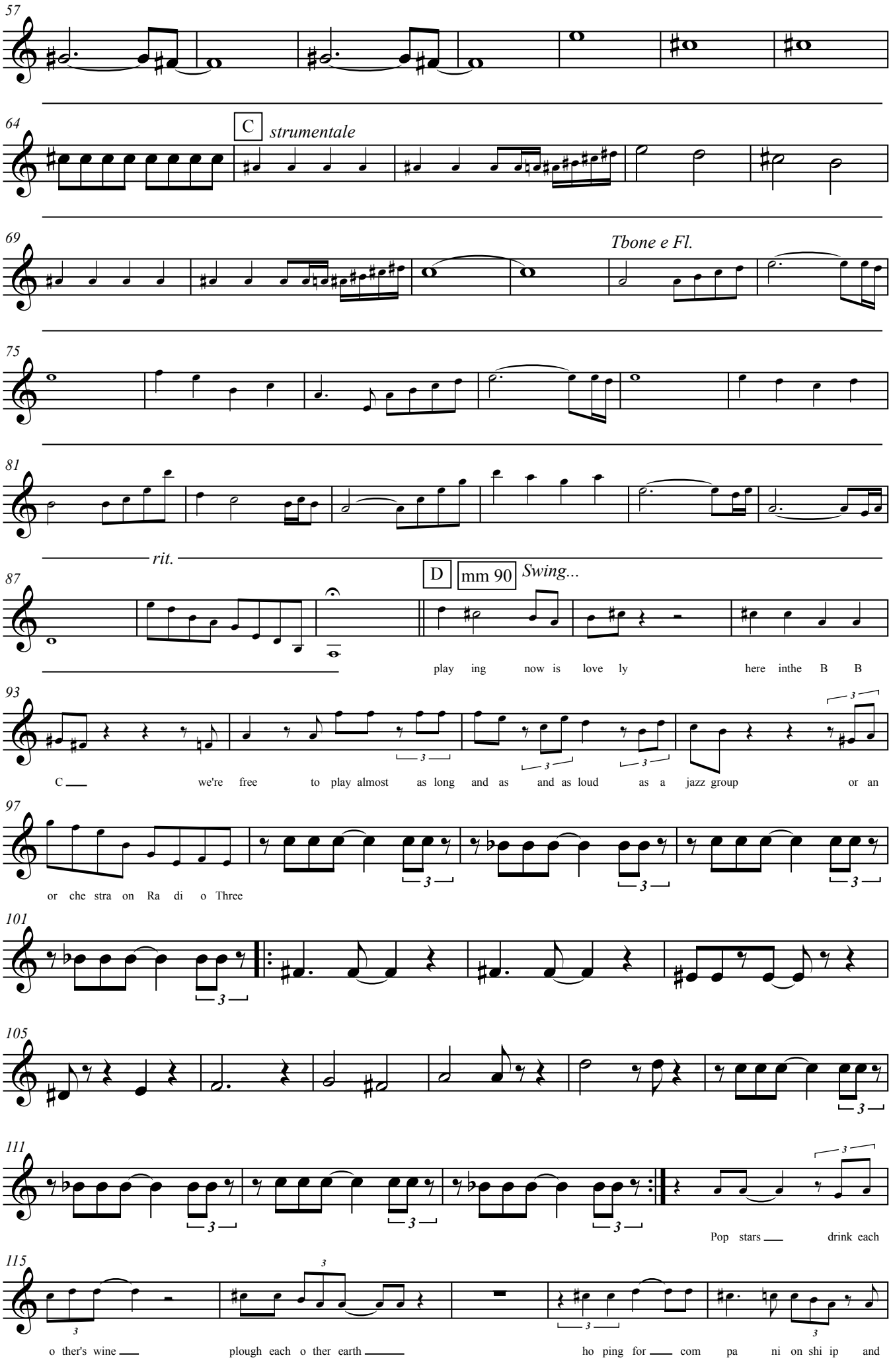
Sax baritono

MM104

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Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




57
64
C
strumentale
69
Tbone e Fl.
75
81
rit.
87
D
mm 90
Swing...
play ing now is love ly here inthe B B
93
C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a jazz group or an
97
or che stra on Ra di o Three
101
105
111
Pop stars drink each
115
o ther's wine plough each o ther earth ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and

120

E *Even Eights*

then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth

Coro

125

129

F

mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple

134

ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning

137

a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i

141

had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully nice to be he re so let's o pen the be ers and get

145

ti psy we'd be mad to but

151

come from the sun you just can't fool a mun in to think ing that you al right rea lly

156
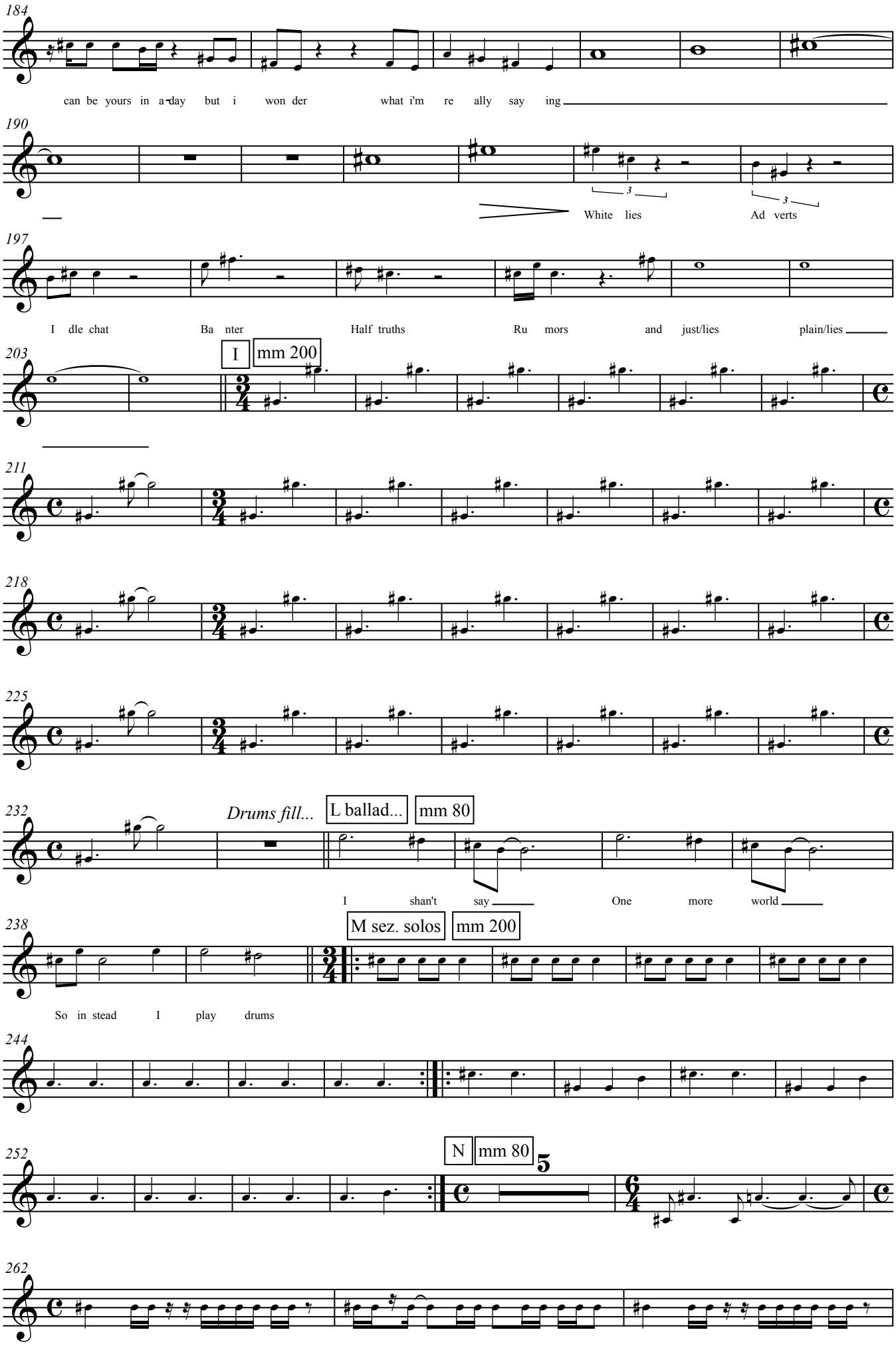
163 G *strumentale*
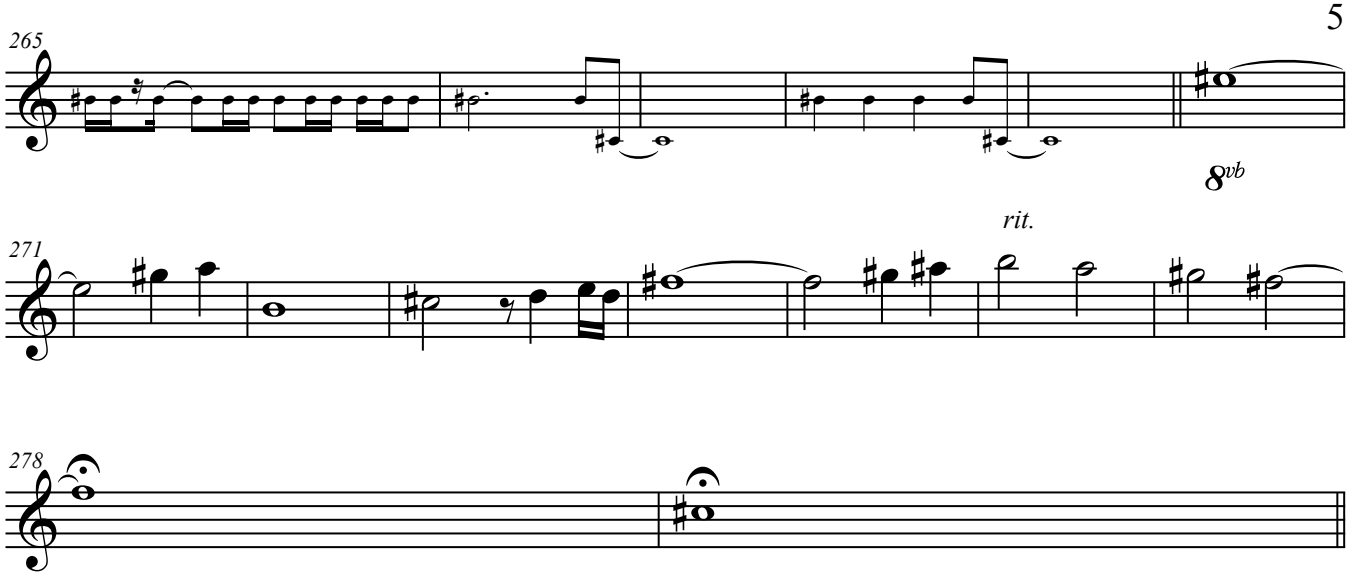
170 H *Coro*

see how the ti me

177

flies I in eve ry way


184
can be yours in a-day but i won der what i'm re ally say ing
190
White lies
Ad verts
197
I dle chat
Ba nter
Half truths
Ru mors
and just/lies
plain/lies
203
I
mm 200
211
218
225
232
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
I shan't say
One more world
238
M sez. solos
mm 200
So in stead I play drums
244
252
N
mm 80
5
262


265
8vb

271
rit.

278
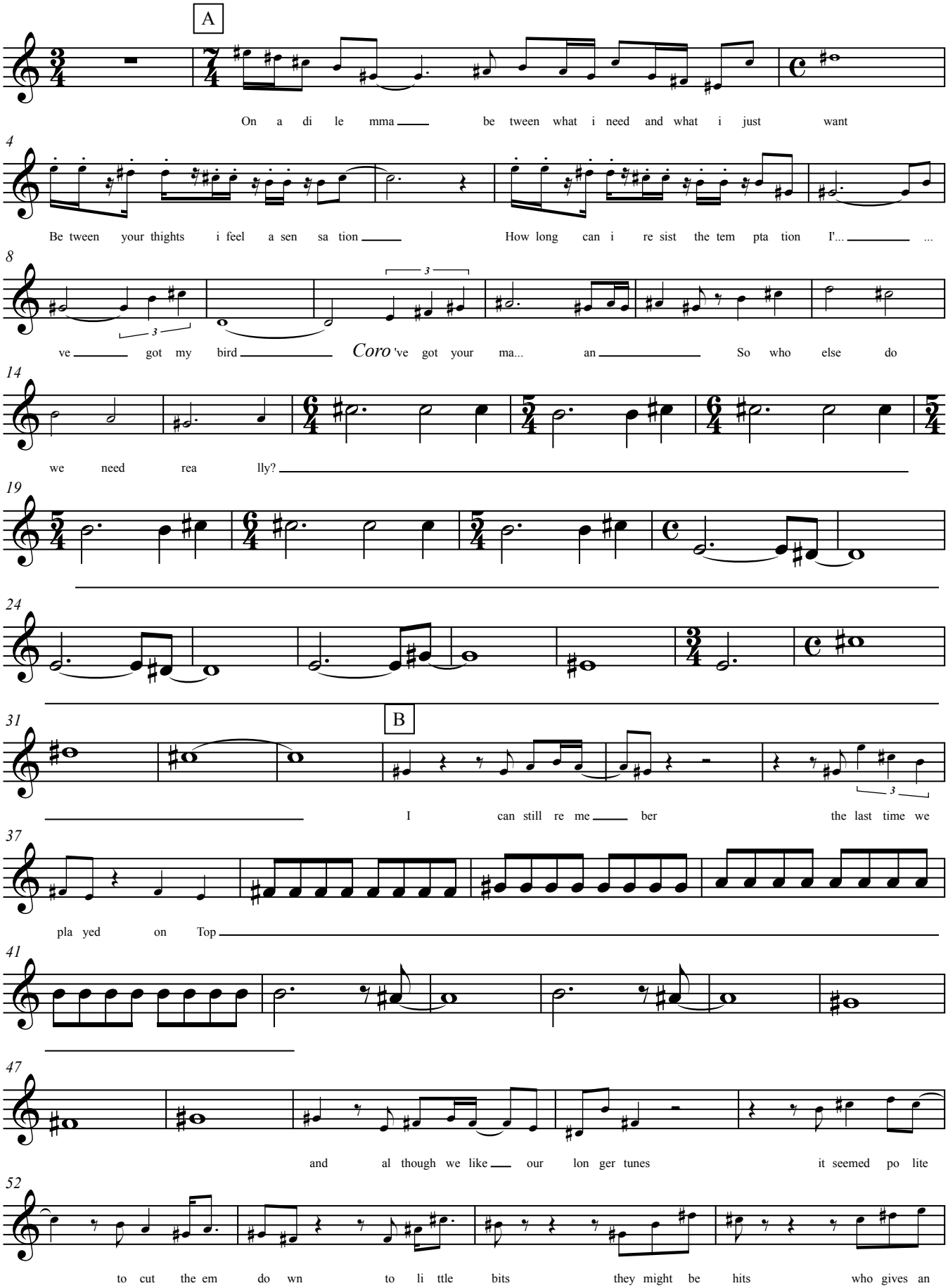
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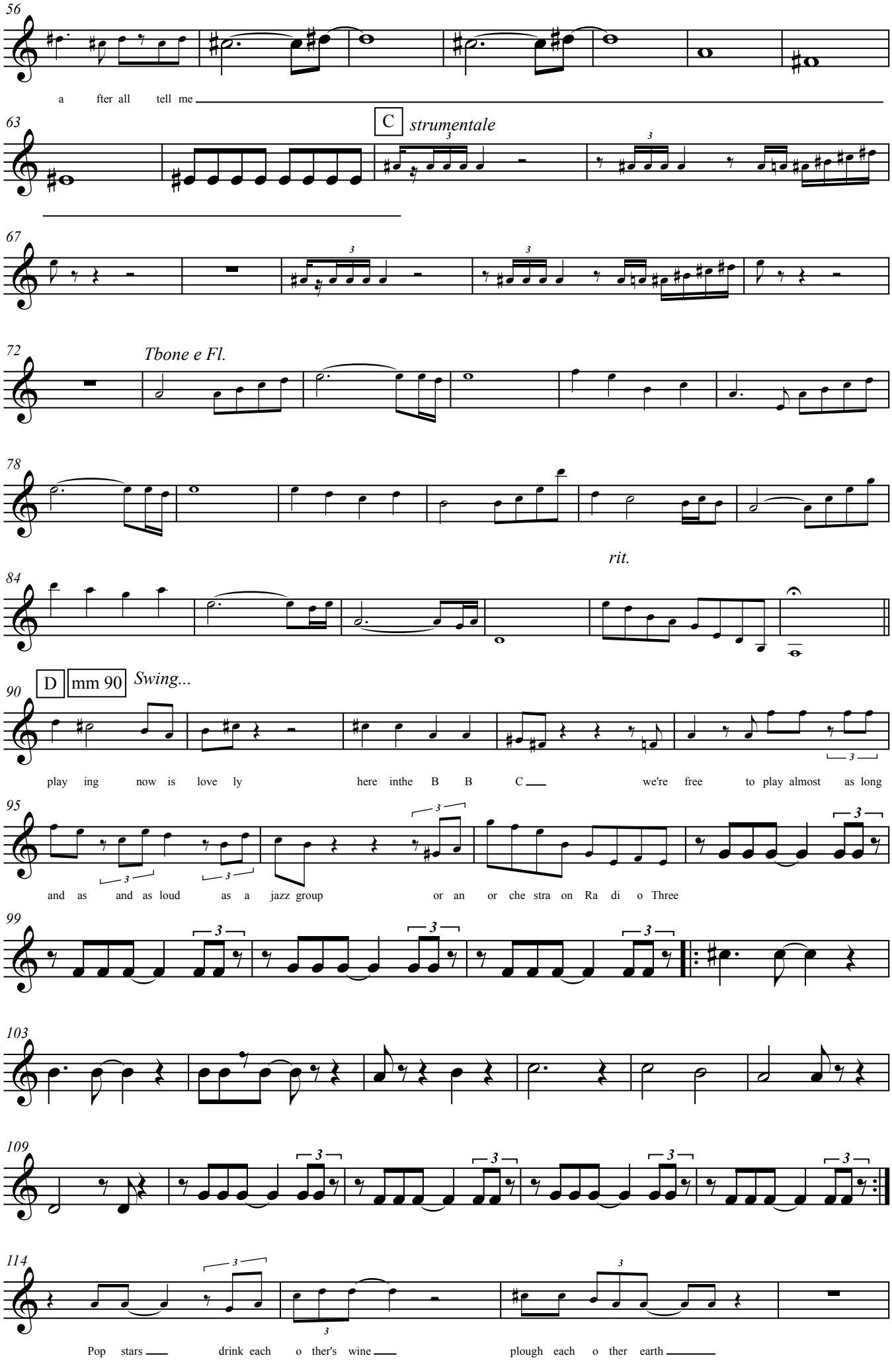
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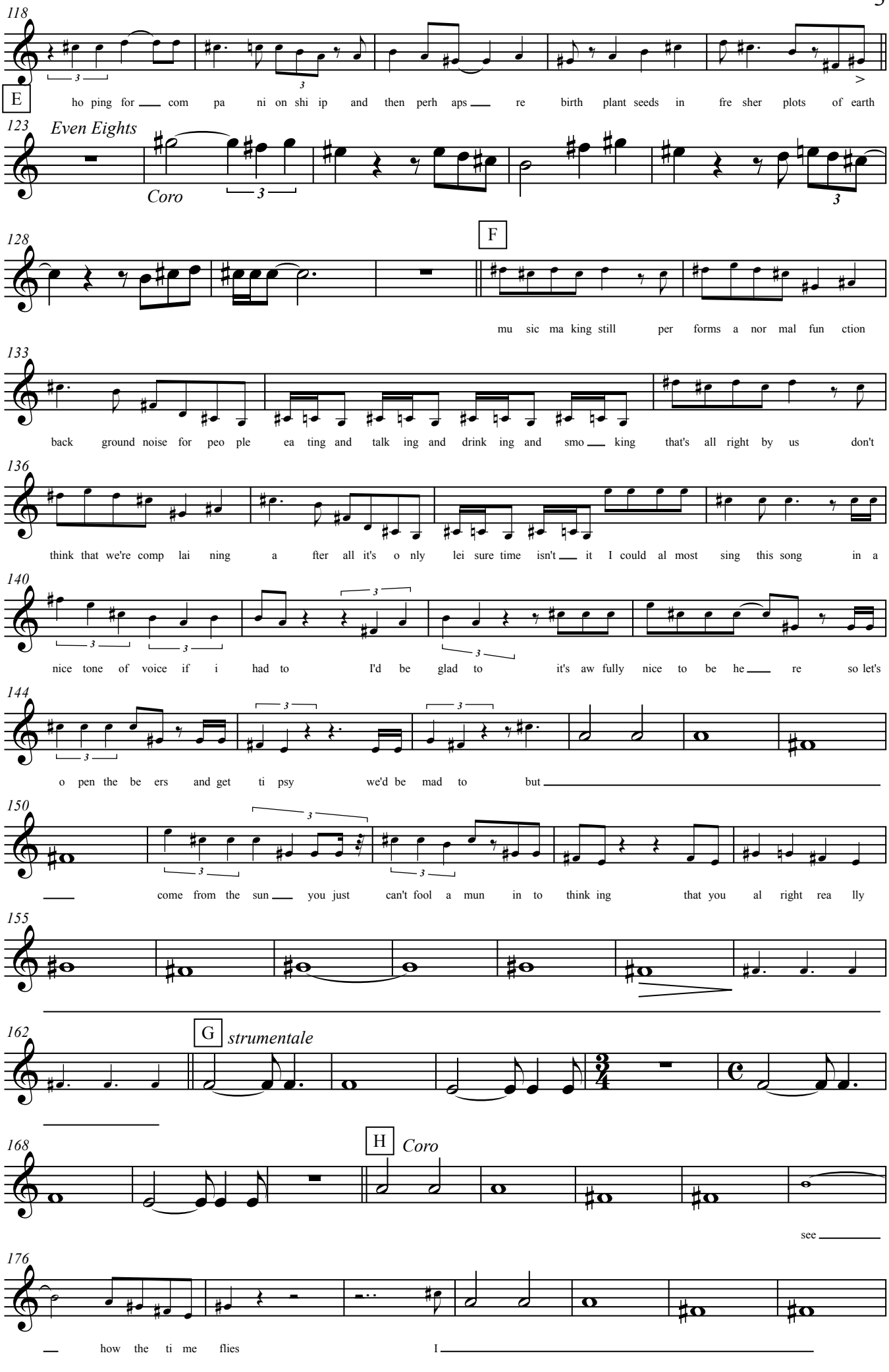
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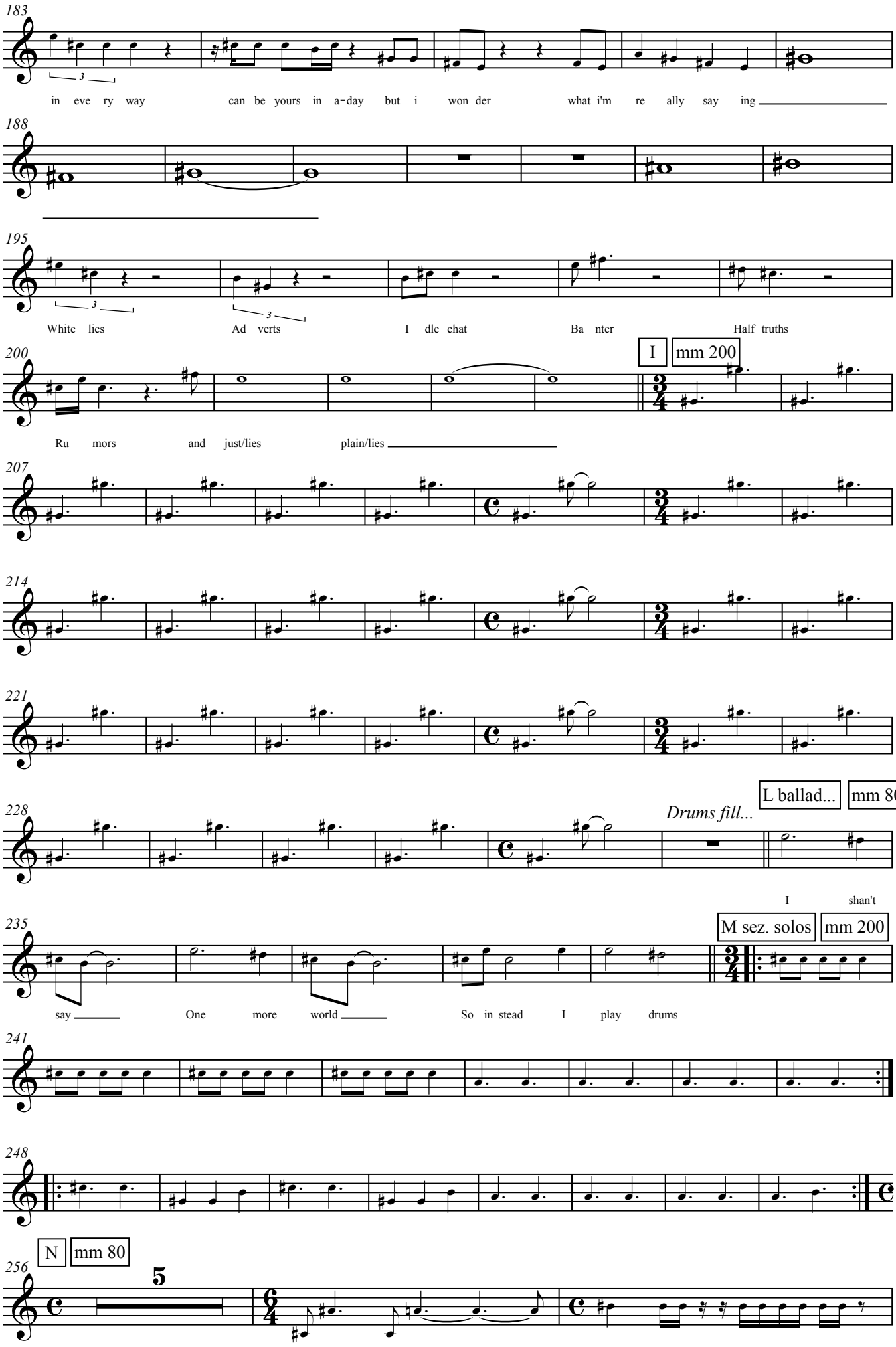
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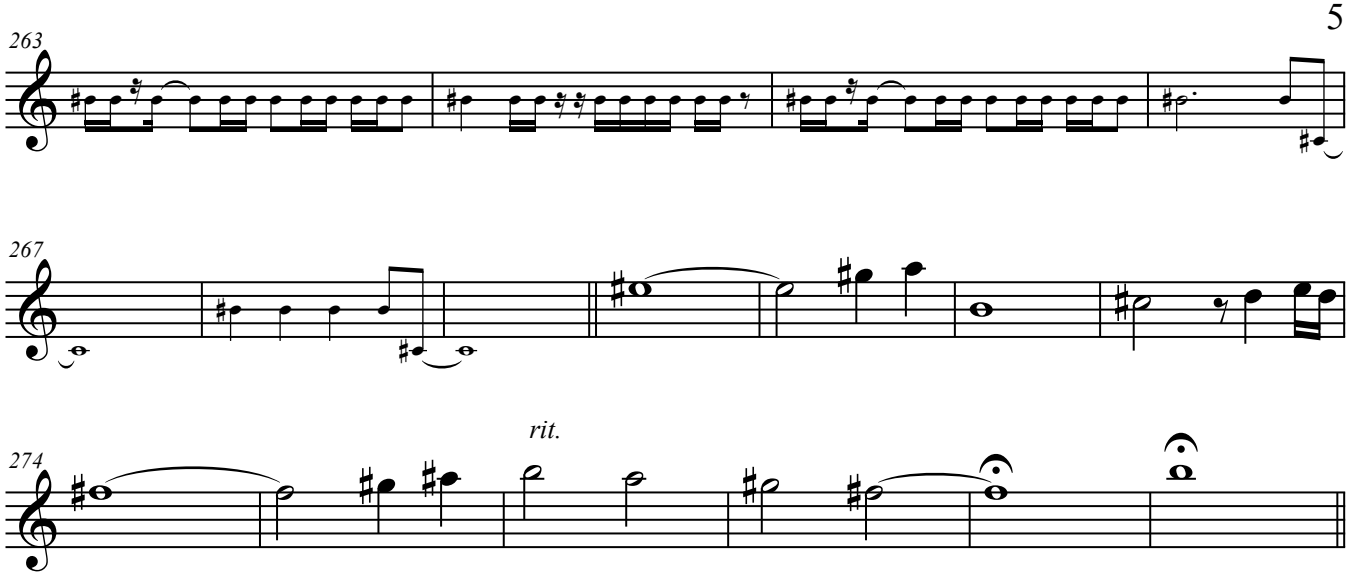
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




56
a fter all tell me
63
C
strumentale
67
72
Tbone e Fl.
78
84
rit.
90
D
mm 90
Swing...
play ing now is love ly here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long
95
and as and as loud as a jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three
99
103
109
114
Pop stars drink each o ther's wine plough each o ther earth


118
E
ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
123
Even Eights
Coro
128
F
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction
133
back ground noise for peo ple ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't
136
think that we're comp lai ning a fter all it's o nly lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a
140
nice tone of voice if i had to I'd be glad to it's aw fully nice to be he re so let's
144
o pen the be ers and get ti psy we'd be mad to but
150
come from the sun you just can't fool a mun in to think ing that you al right rea lly
155
162
G
strumentale
168
H
Coro
see
176
how the ti me flies I


183
in eve ry way
can be yours in a-day
but i won der
what i'm re ally say ing
188
195
White lies
Ad verts
I dle chat
Ba nter
Half truths
200
I
mm 200
Ru mors
and just/lies
plain/lies
207
214
221
228
L ballad...
mm 80
Drums fill...
I
shan't
235
M sez. solos
mm 200
say
One more world
So in stead I play drums
241
248
N
mm 80
256
5


263
267
rit.
274
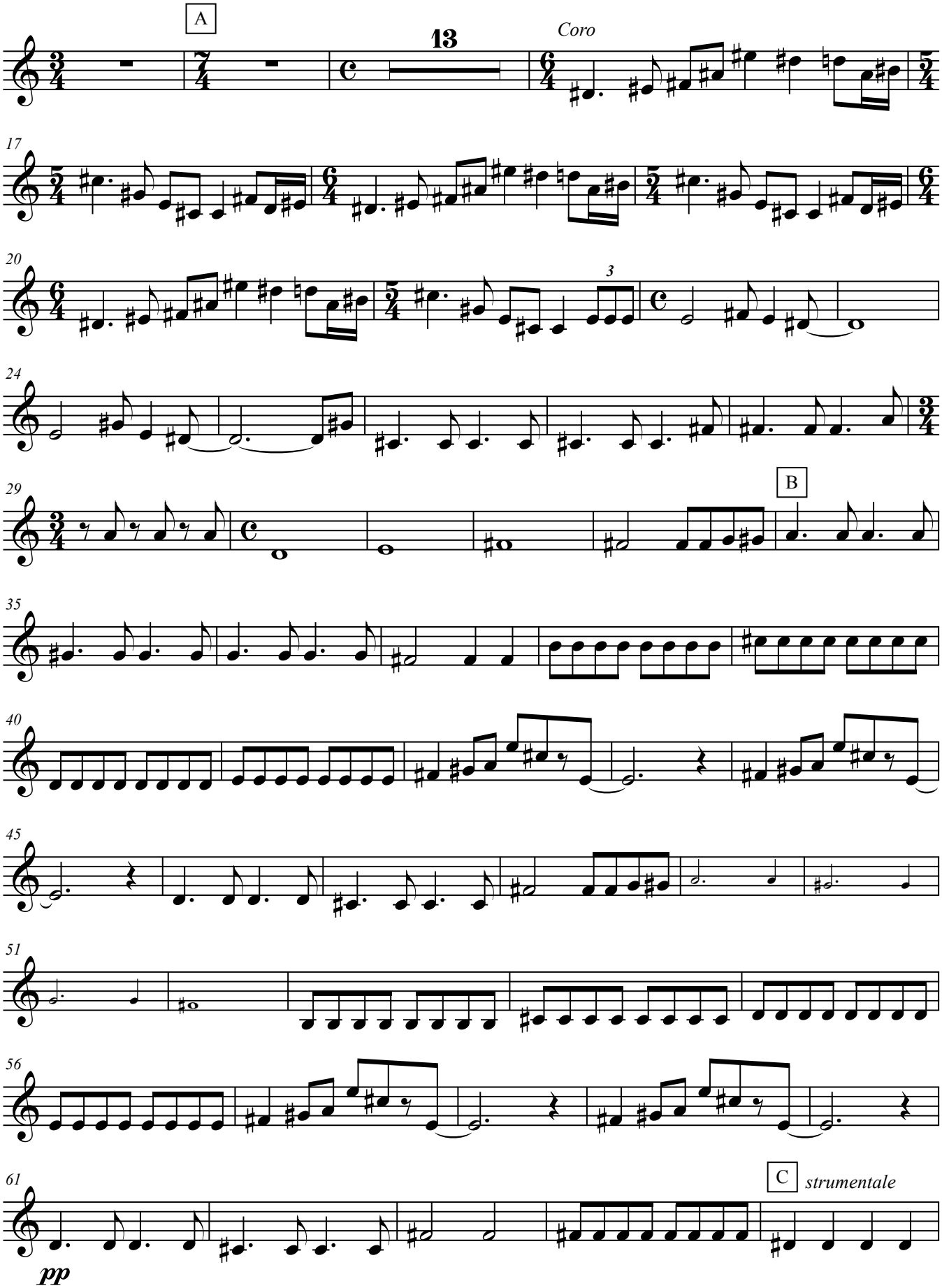
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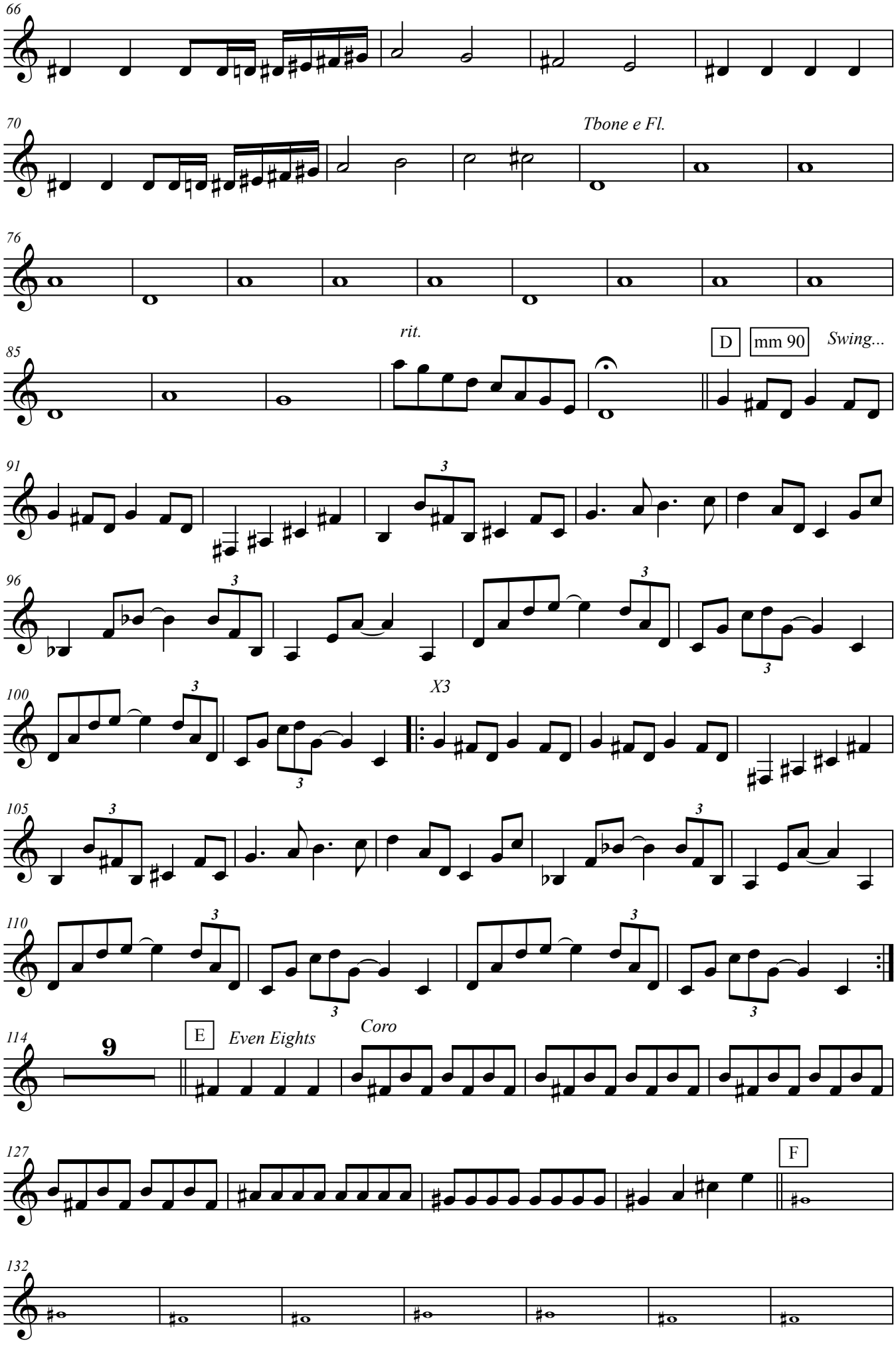
Clarinetto basso
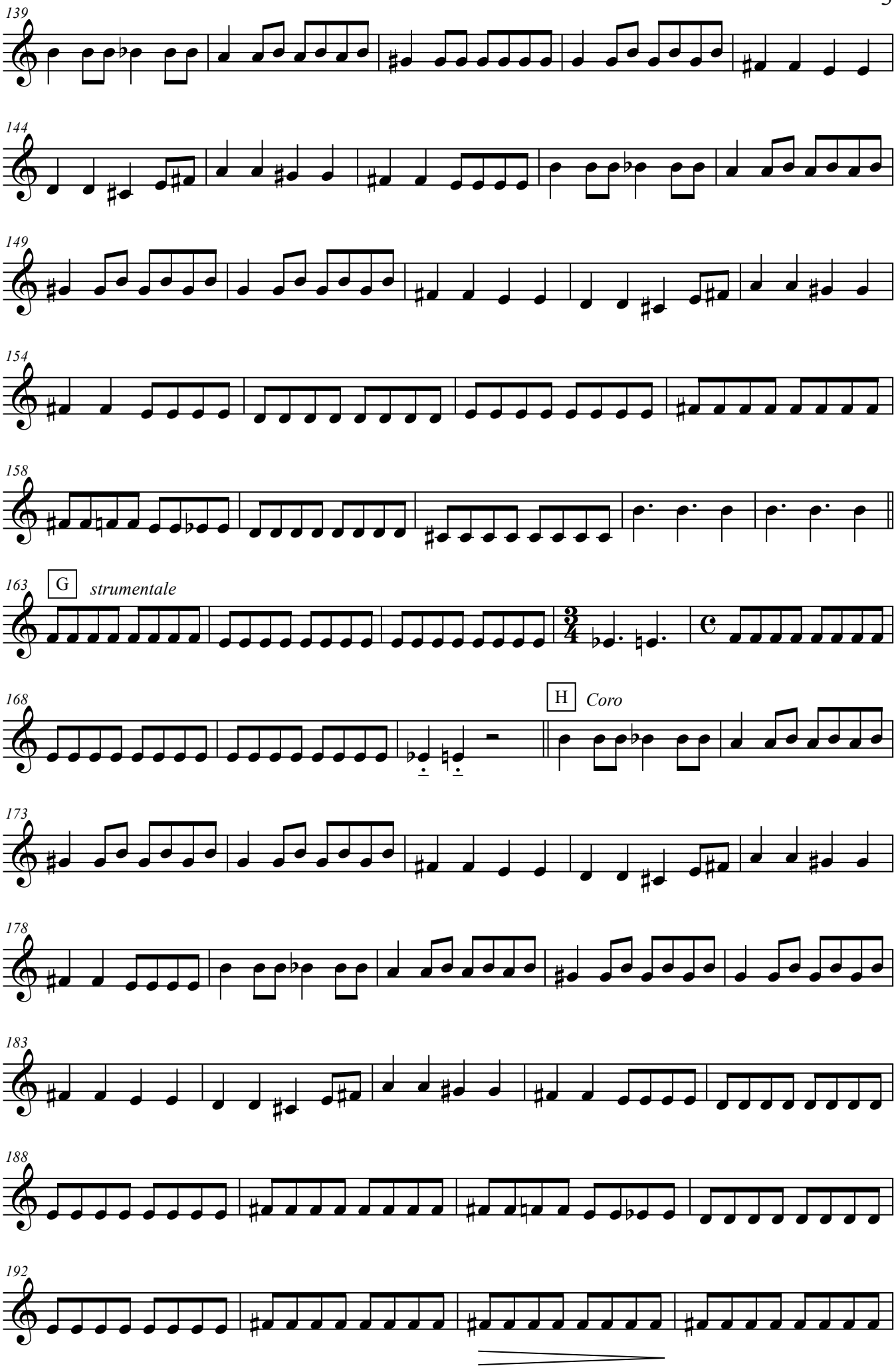
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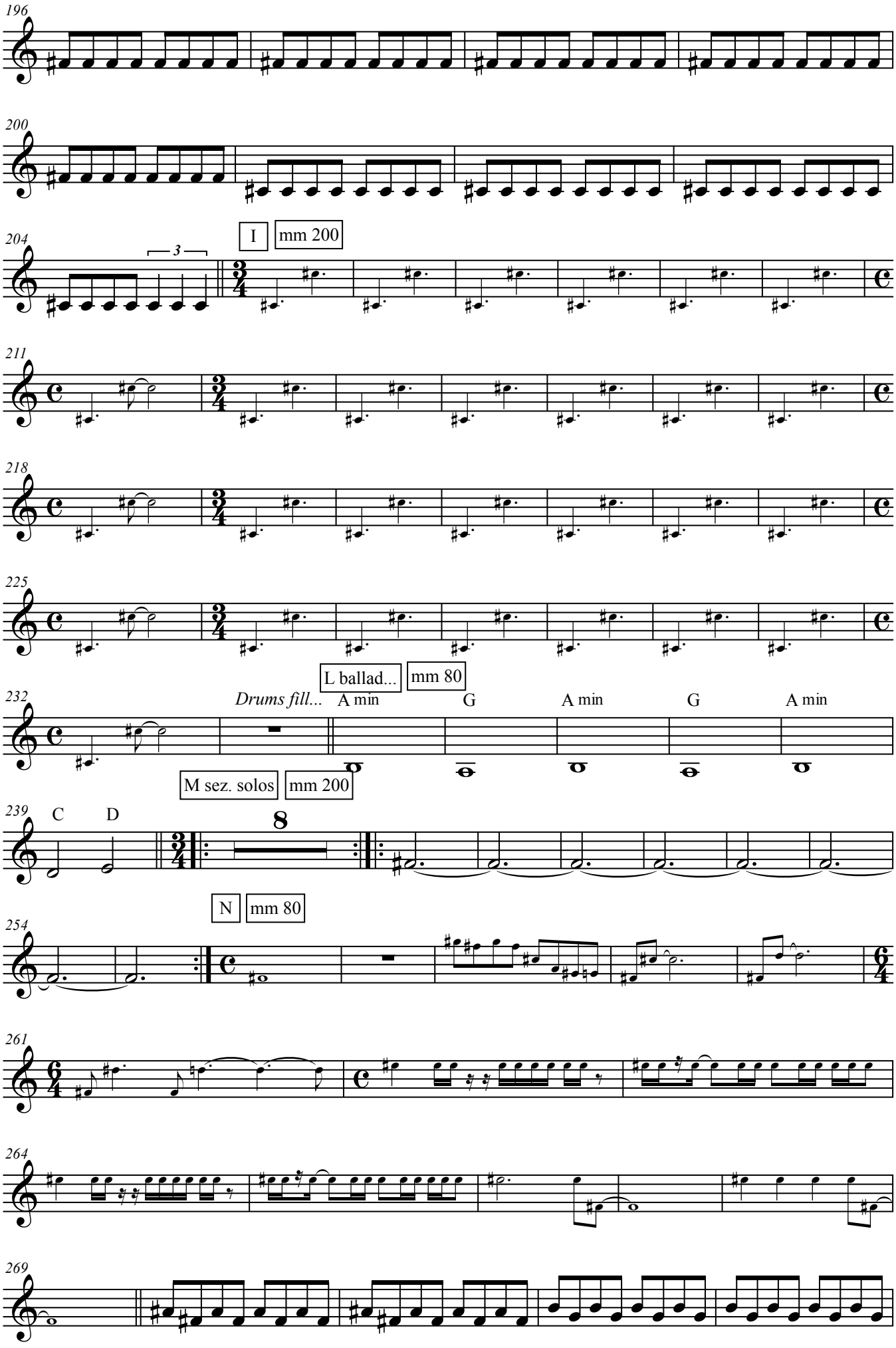
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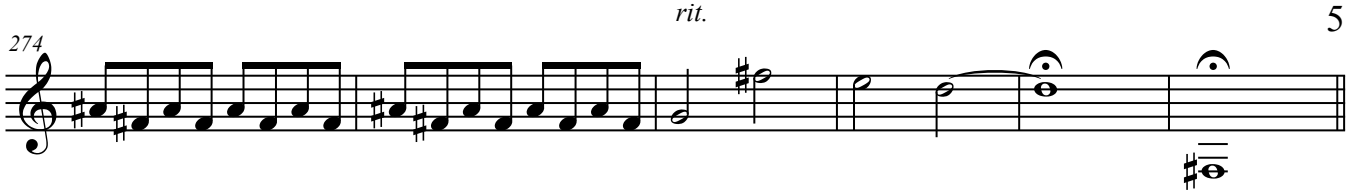
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




66
70
Tbone e Fl.
76
85
rit.
D
mm 90
Swing...
91
96
100
X3
105
110
114
9
E
Even Eights
Coro
127
F
132


139
144
149
154
158
163
G
strumentale
168
H
Coro
173
178
183
188
192


196
200
204
3
I
mm 200
211
218
225
L ballad...
mm 80
232
Drums fill...
A min
G
A min
G
A min
M sez. solos
mm 200
239
C
D
8
N
mm 80
254
261
264
269


rit.
274
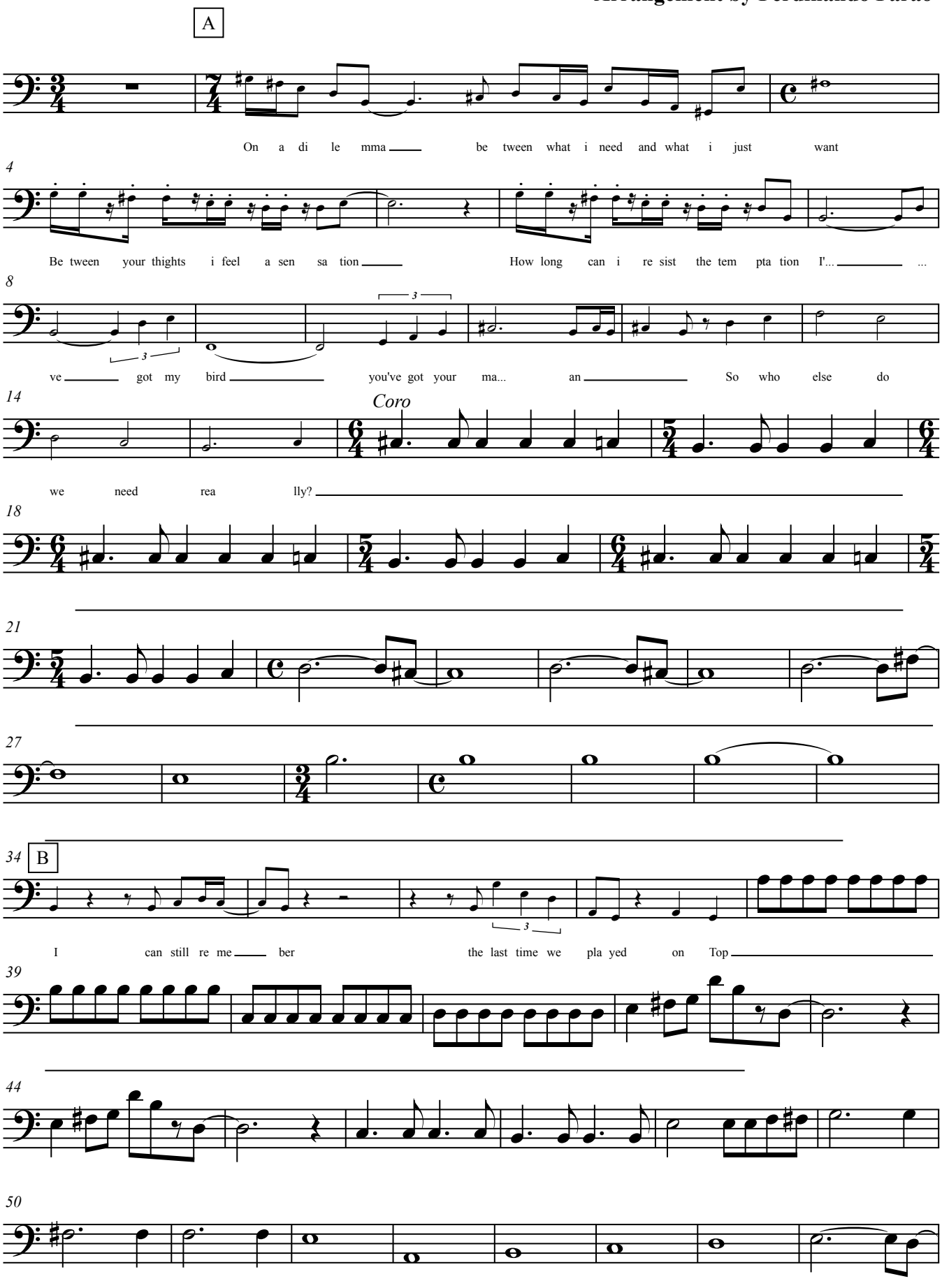
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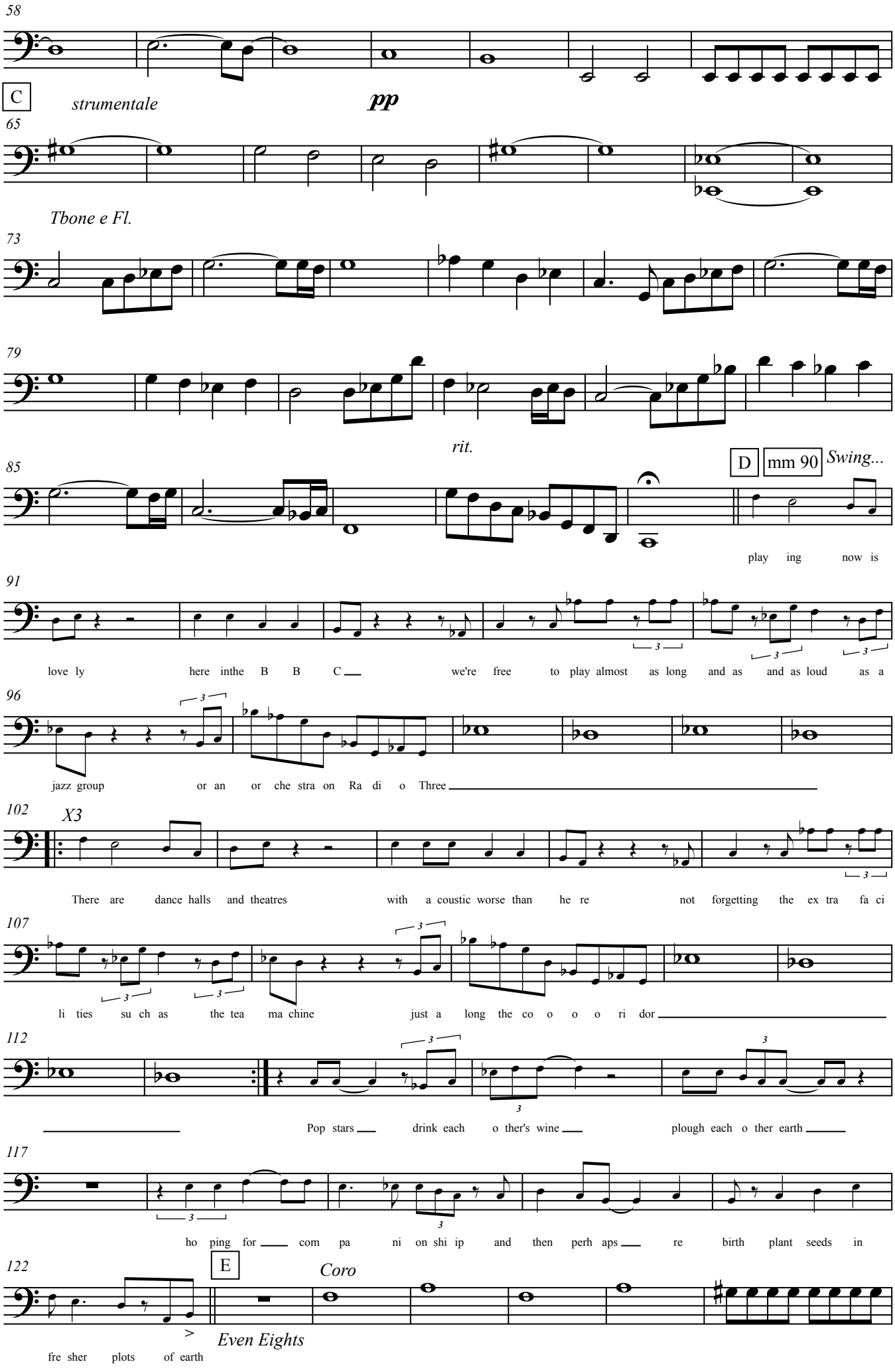
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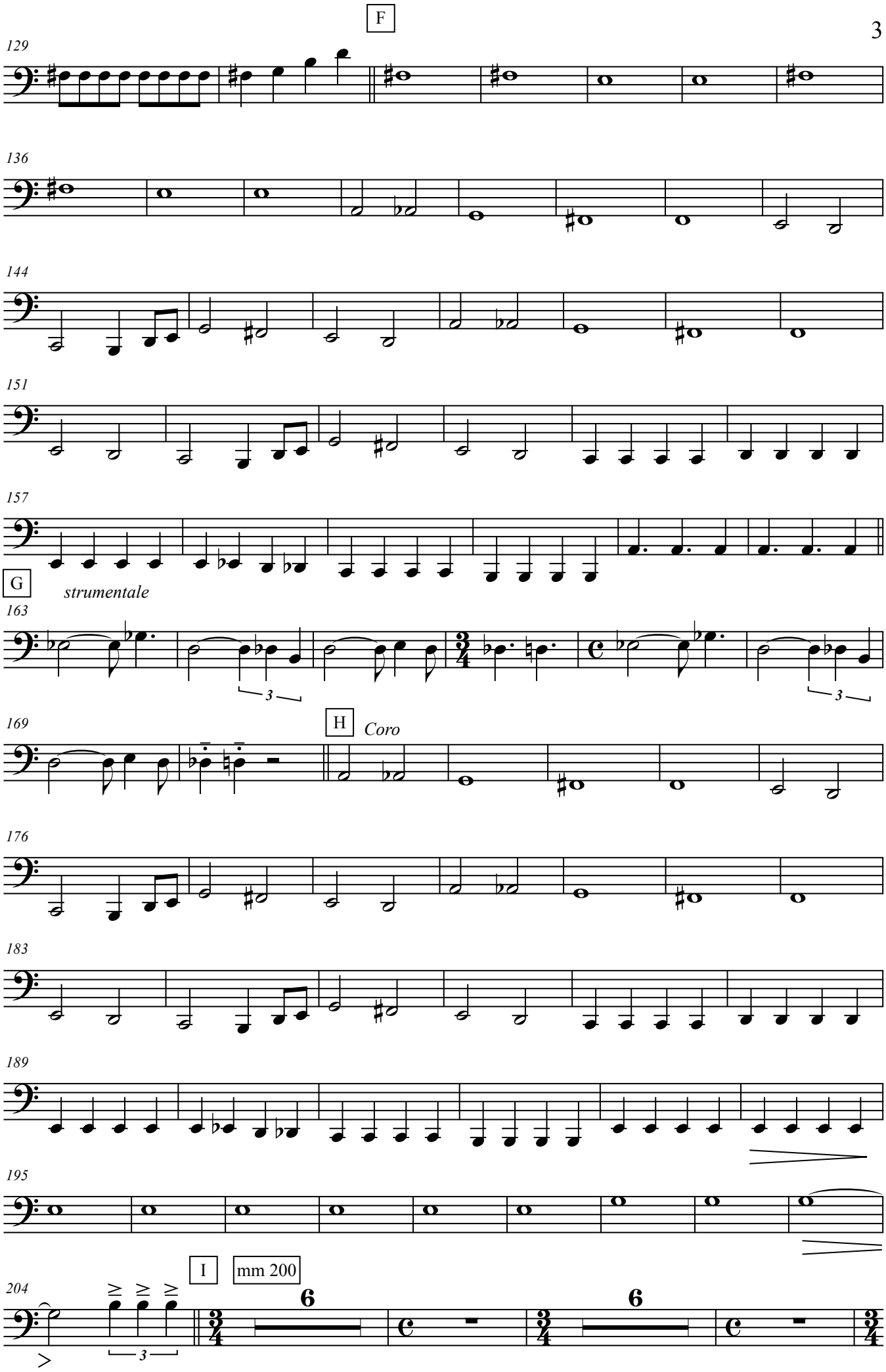
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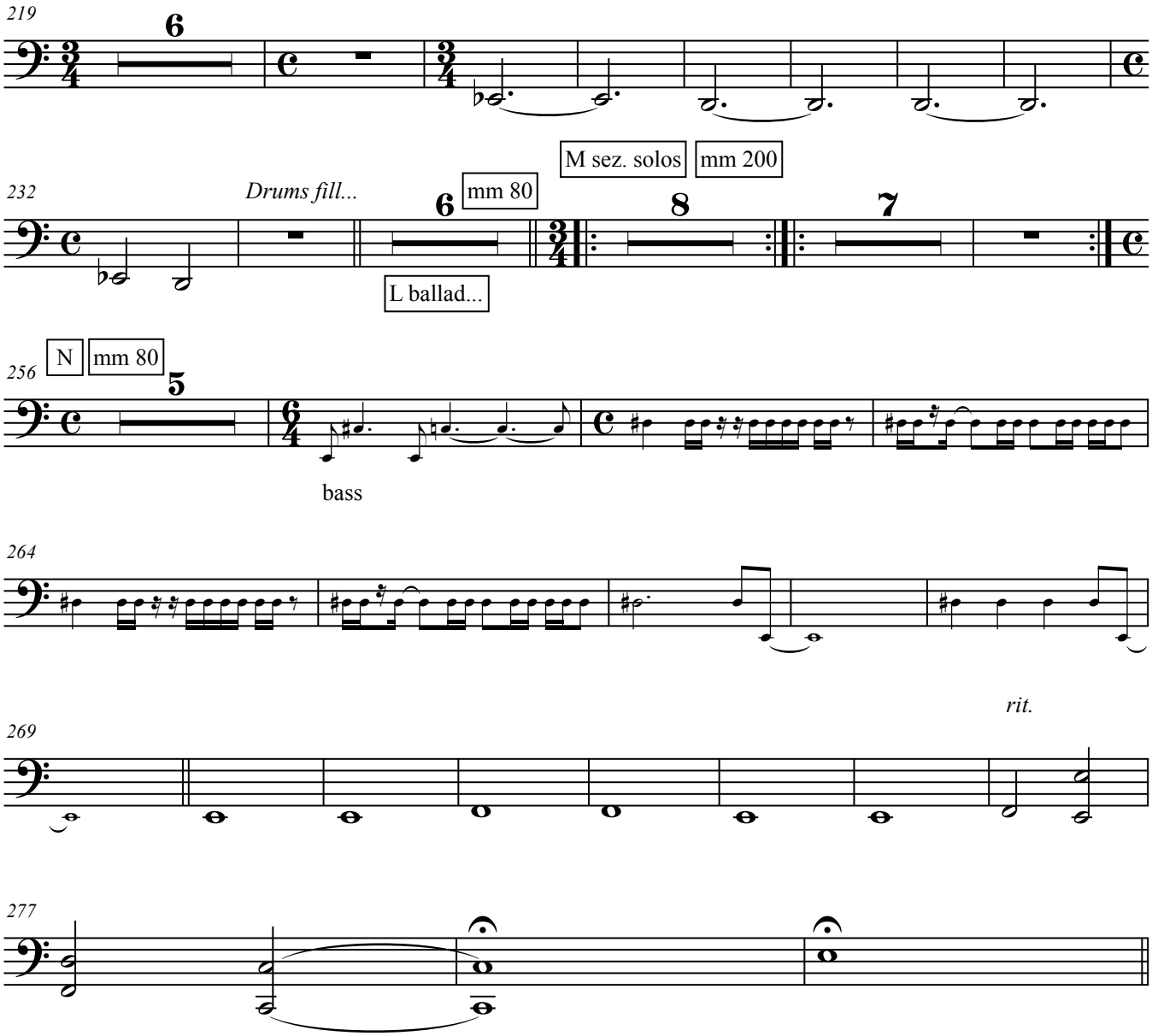
MM104

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Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




58
C
strumentale
pp
65
Tbone e Fl.
73
79
rit.
85
D
mm 90
Swing...
play ing now is
91
love ly here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a
96
jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three
102
X3
There are dance halls and theatres with a coustic worse than he re not forgetting the ex tra fa ci
107
li ties su ch as the tea ma chine just a long the co o o o ri dor
112
Pop stars drink each o ther's wine plough each o ther earth
117
ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in
122
E
Coro
Even Eights
fre sher plots of earth


F
129
136
144
151
157
G
strumentale
163
3
3
169
H
Coro
176
183
189
195
I
mm 200
204
3
6
6


219
6
232
Drums fill...
6
mm 80
L ballad...
M sez. solos
mm 200
8
7
256
N
mm 80
5
bass
264
269
rit.
277
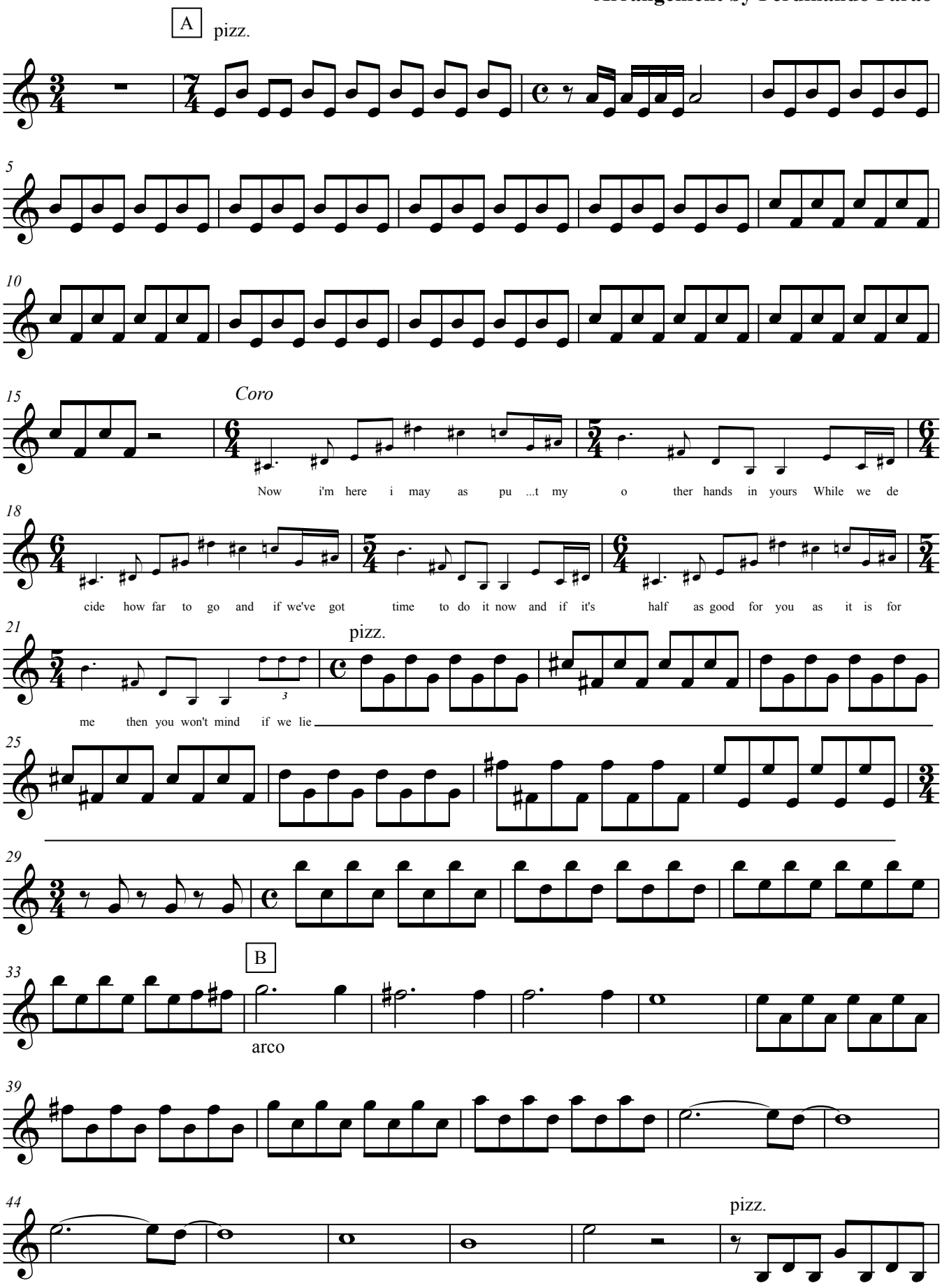
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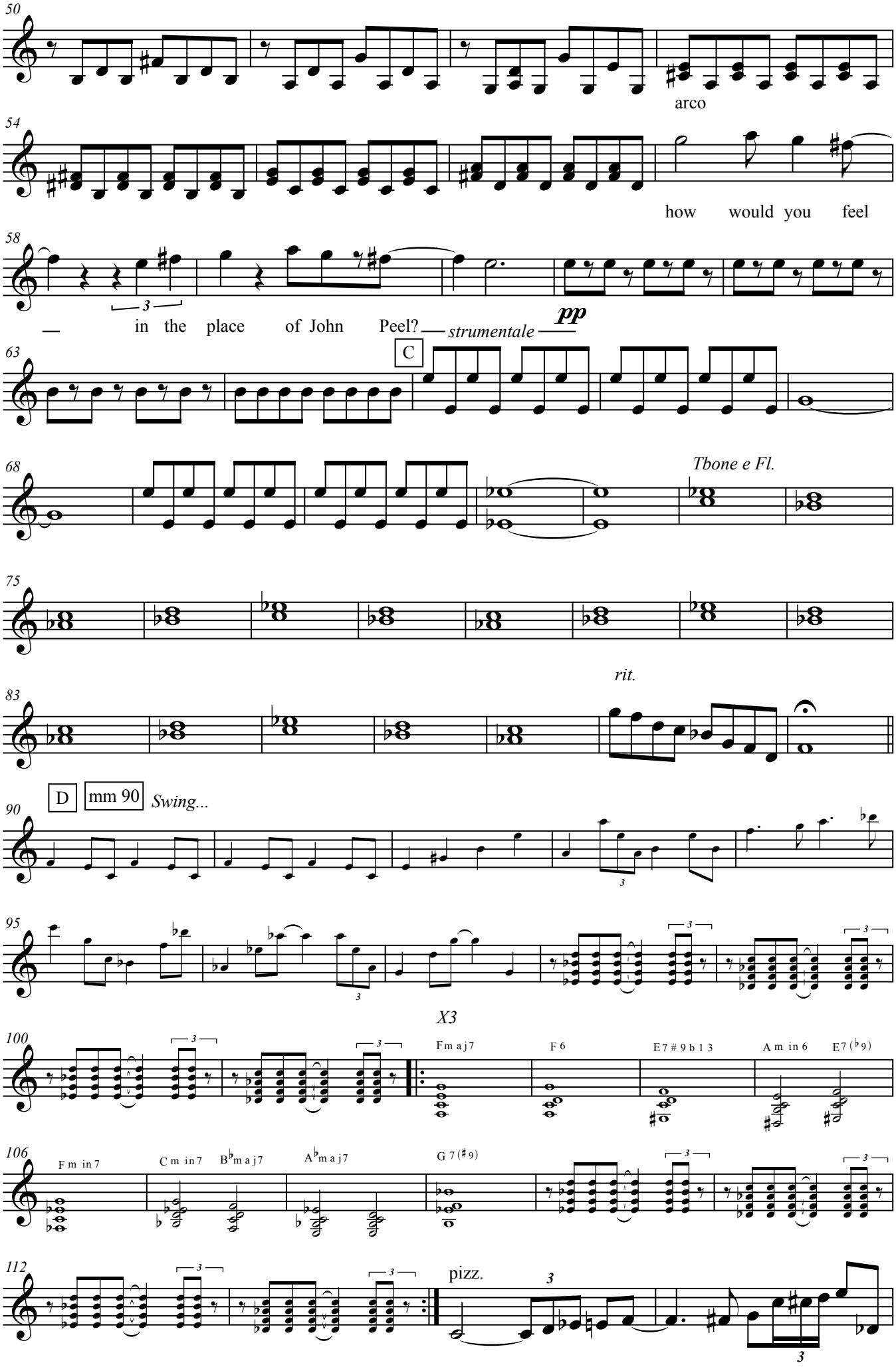
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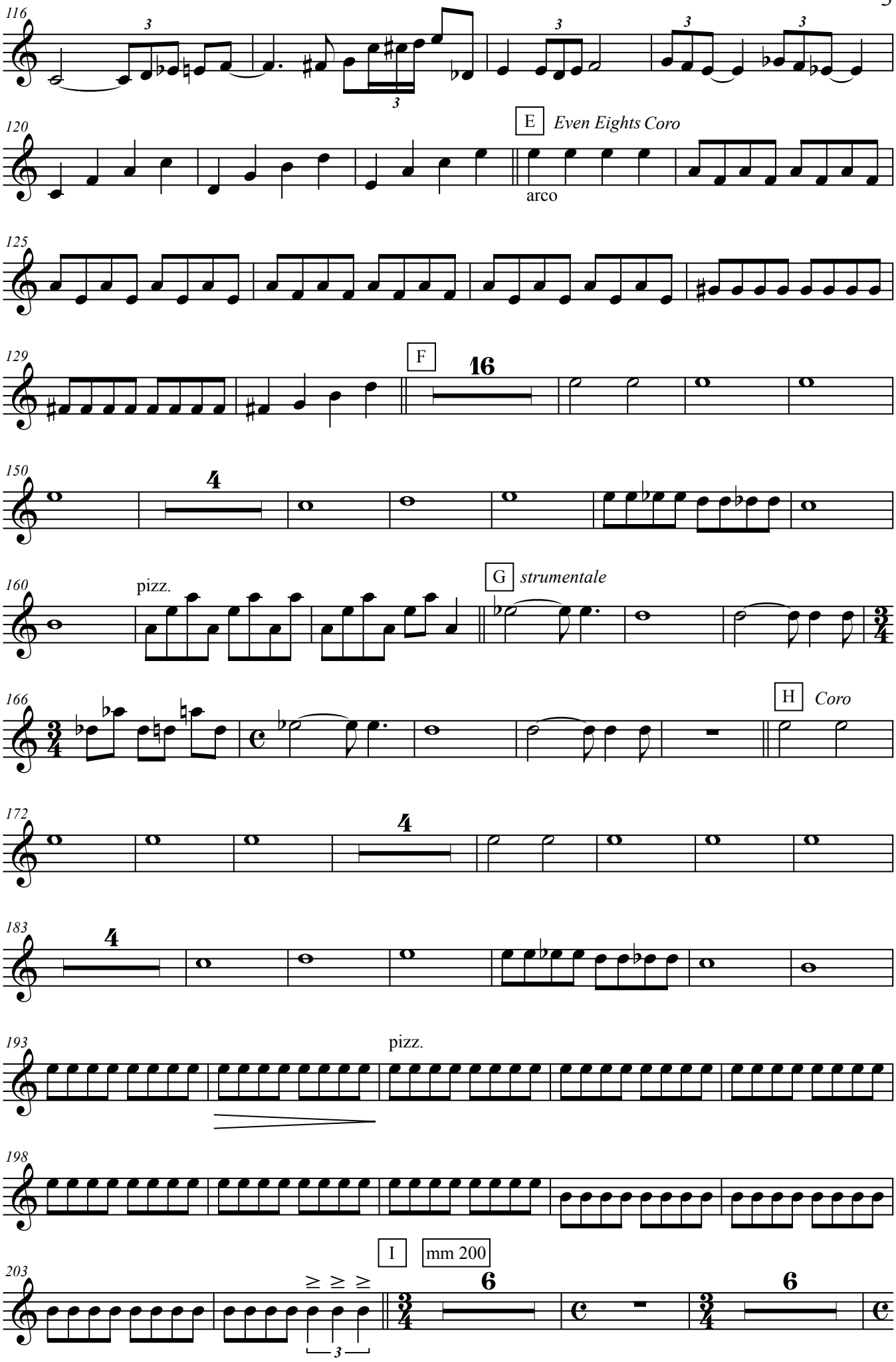
by Robert Wyatt

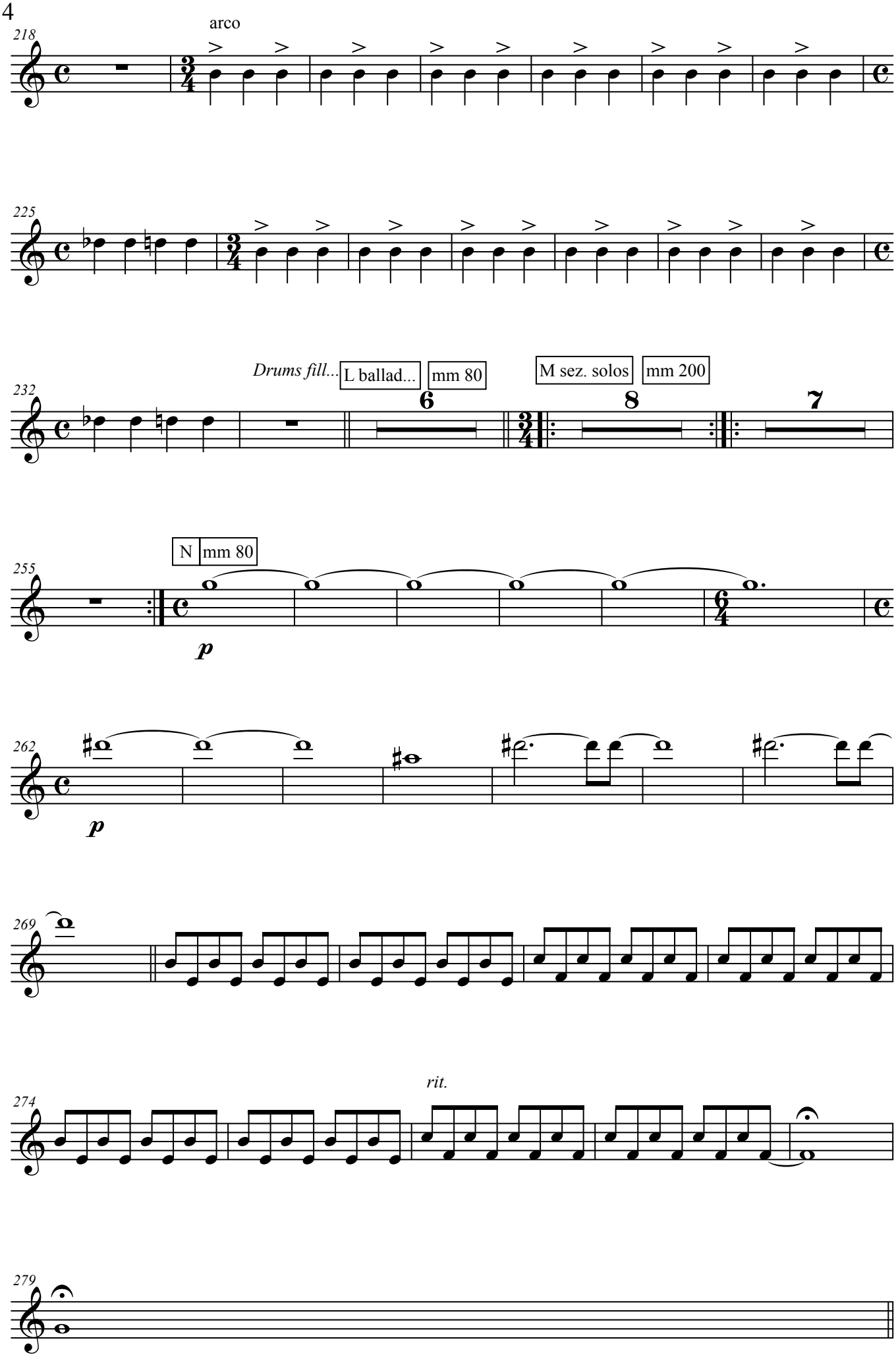
MM104

Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




50
arco
54
how would you feel
58
3
in the place of John Peel?
strumentale
pp
63
C
68
Tbone e Fl.
75
83
rit.
90
D
mm 90
Swing...
95
X3
100
Fmaj7
F6
E7#9b13
Amin6
E7(b9)
106
Fmin7
Cmin7
B♭maj7
A♭maj7
G7(♯9)
112
pizz.


116
120
E
Even Eights Coro
arco
125
129
F
16
150
4
160
pizz.
G
strumentale
166
H
Coro
172
4
183
4
193
pizz.
198
I
mm 200
203
6
6
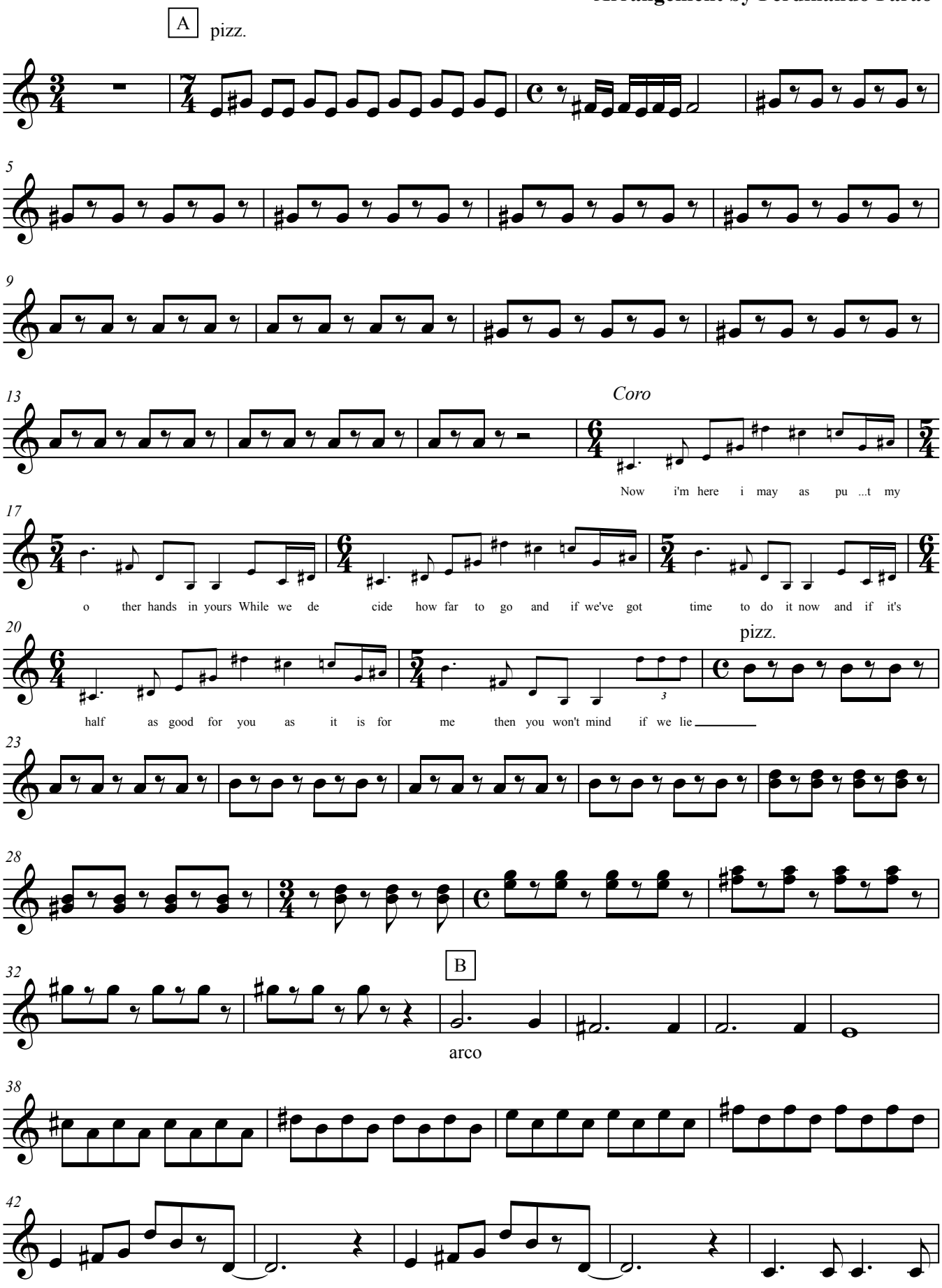

arco
218
225
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
M sez. solos
mm 200
232
6
8
7
N
mm 80
255
p
262
p
269
rit.
274
279
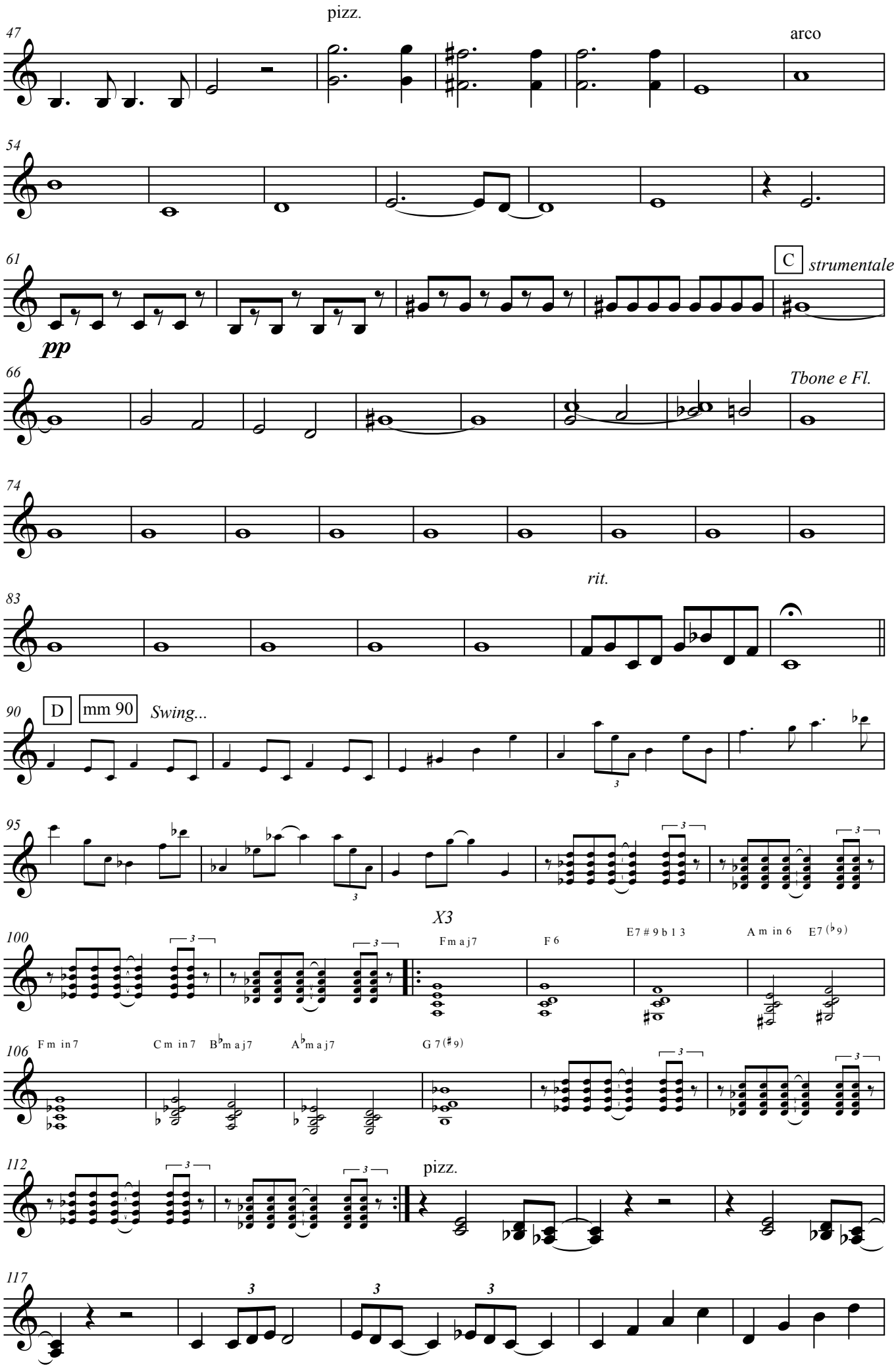
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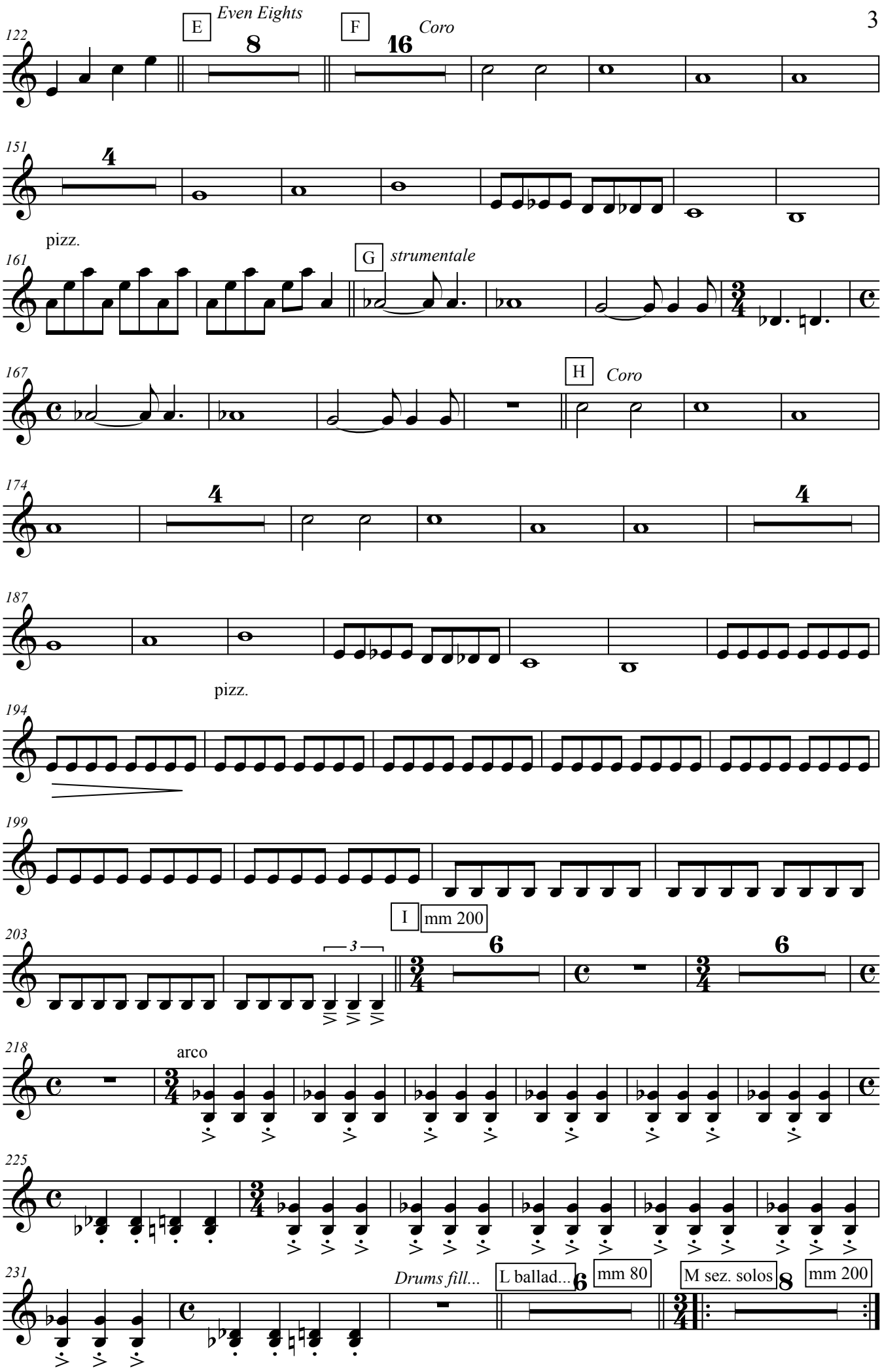
Viola
MM104

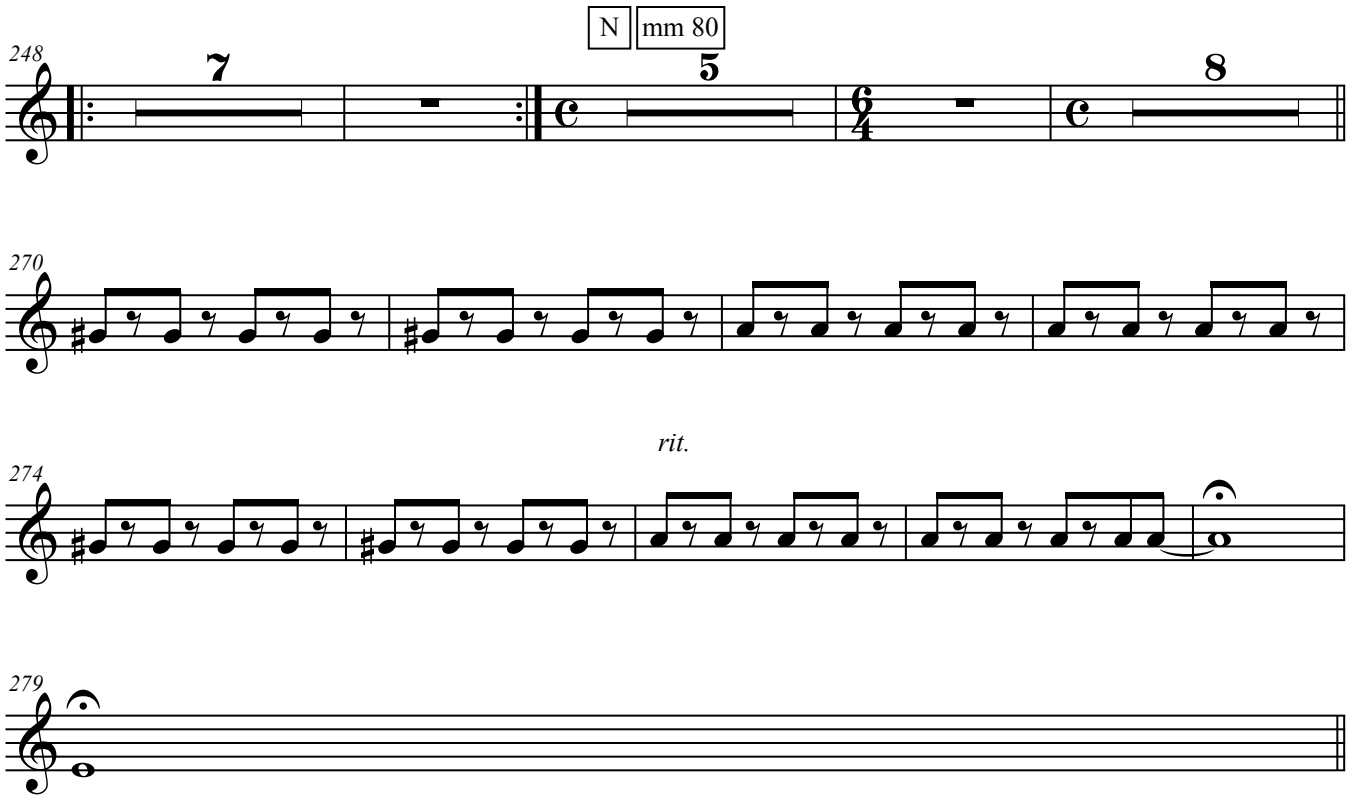
by Robert Wyatt

Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




pizz.
47
arco
54
61
C
strumentale
pp
66
Tbone e Fl.
74
rit.
83
90
D
mm 90
Swing...
95
X3
100
Fmaj7
F6
E7#9b13
Amin6
E7(b9)
106
Fmin7
Cmin7
Bbmaj7
Abmaj7
G7(#9)
112
pizz.
117


122
E
Even Eights
8
F
16
Coro
151
4
pizz.
161
G
strumentale
167
H
Coro
174
4
4
187
pizz.
194
199
I
mm 200
203
3
6
6
218
arco
225
231
Drums fill...
L ballad...
6
mm 80
M sez. solos
8
mm 200


N
mm 80
248
7
5
8
270
rit.
274
279
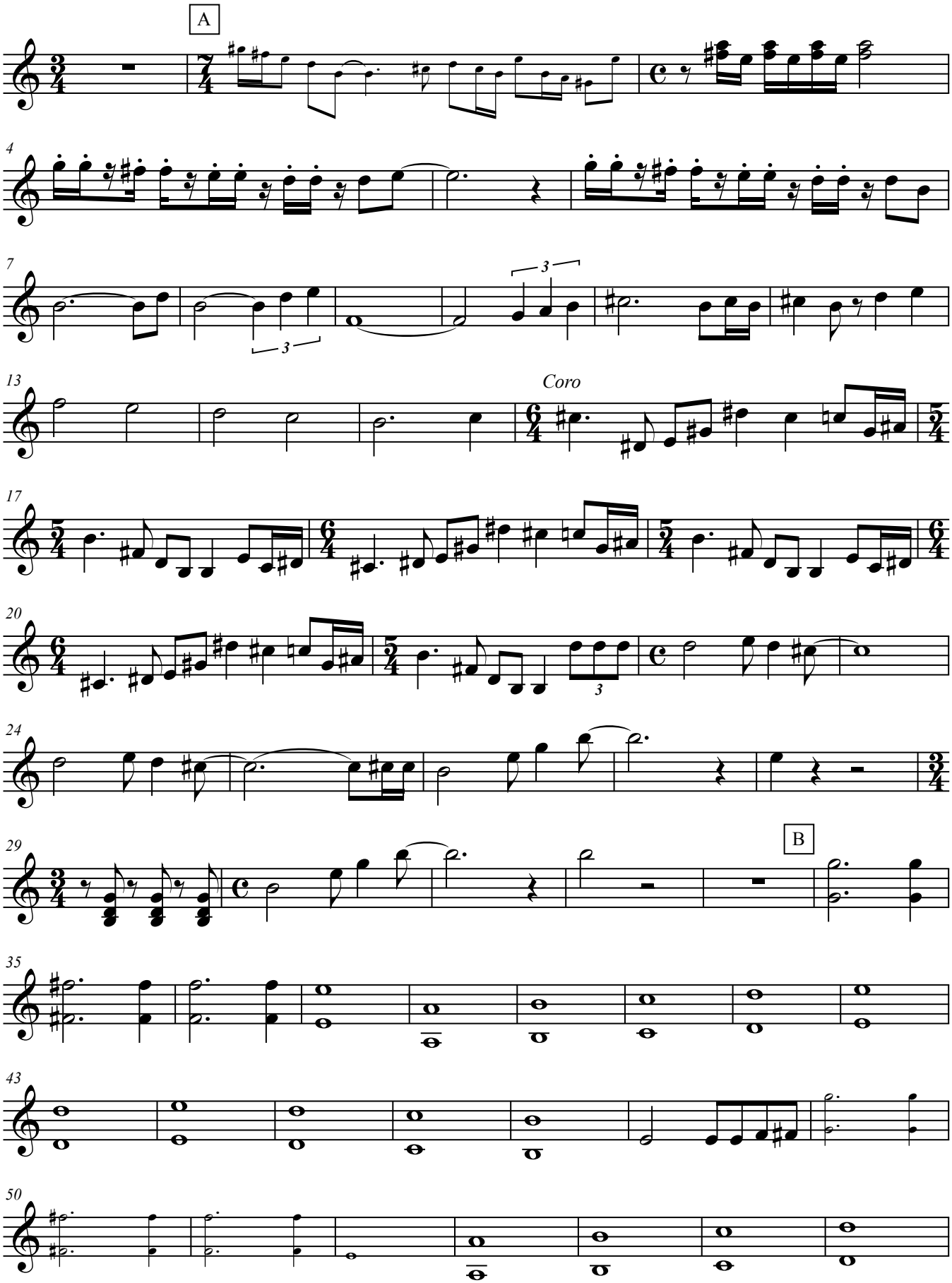
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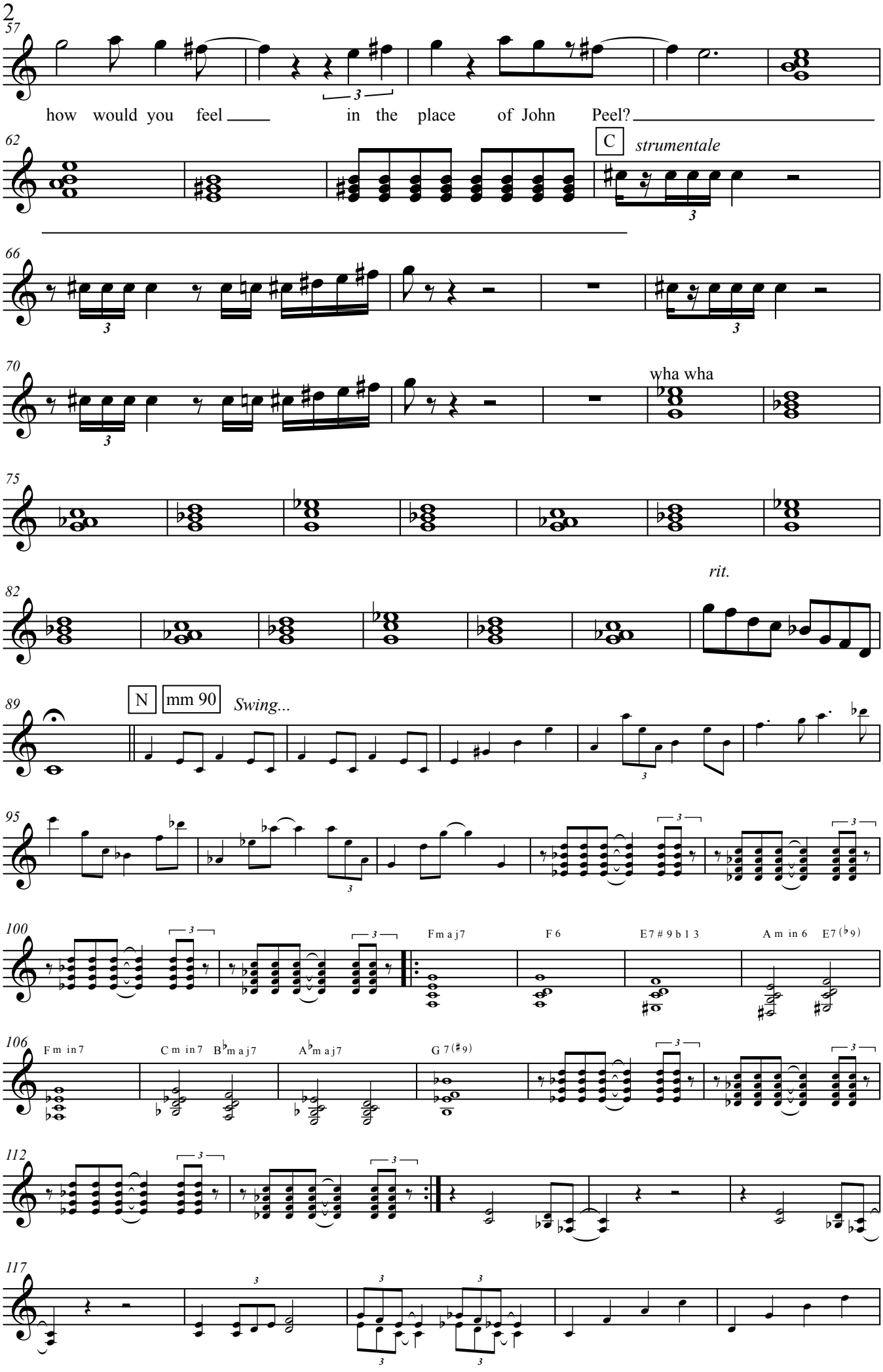
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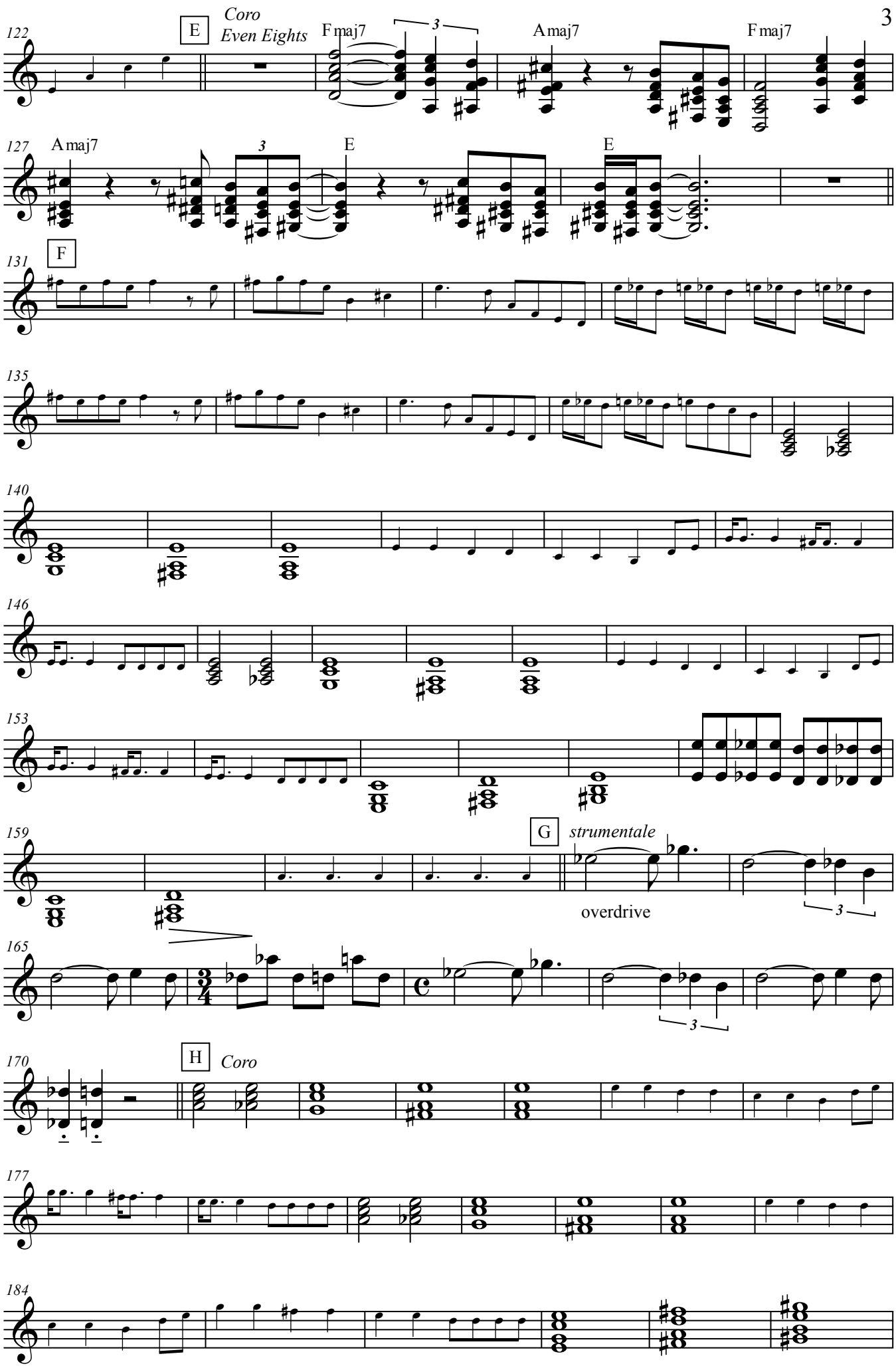
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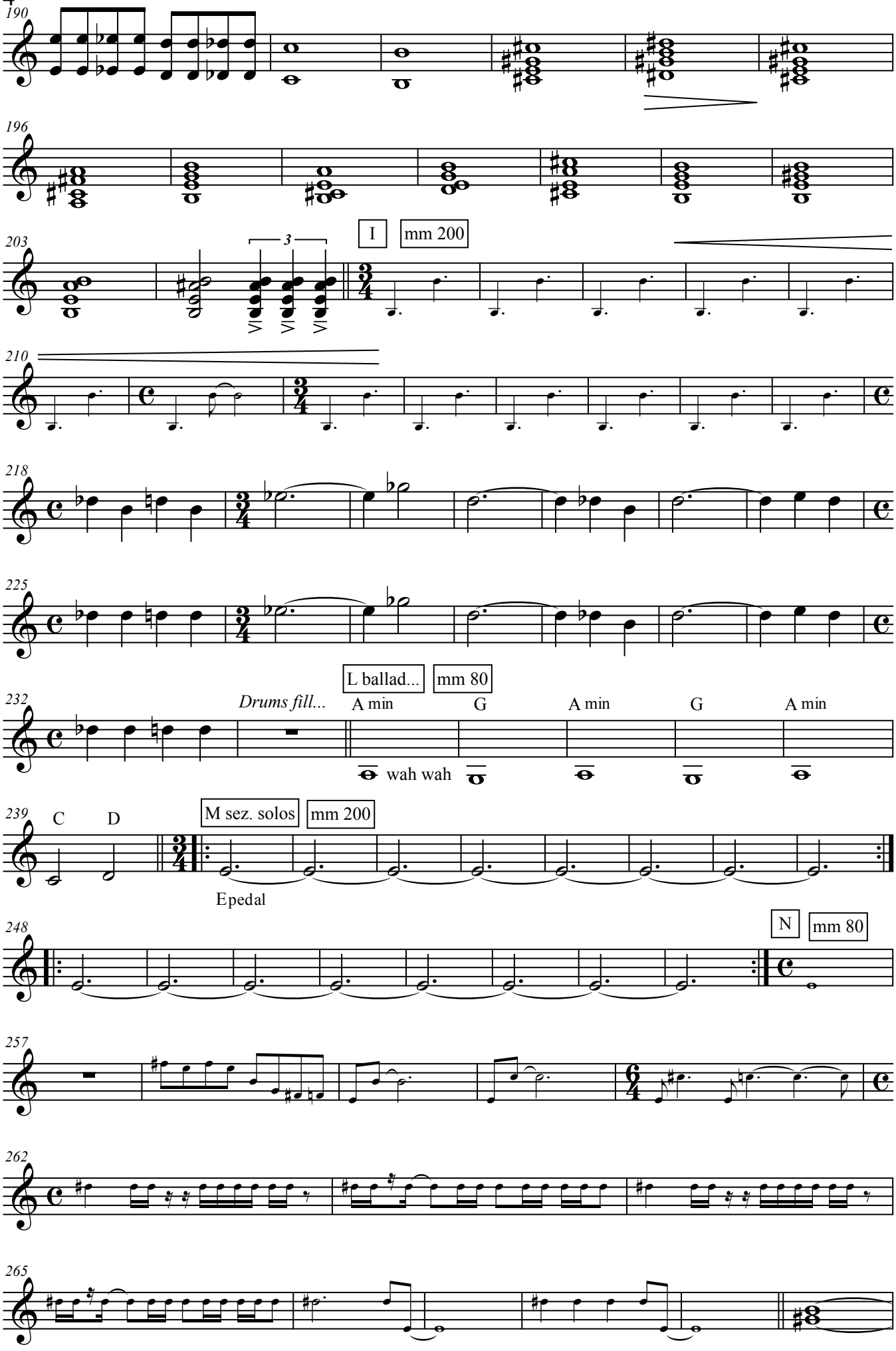
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'

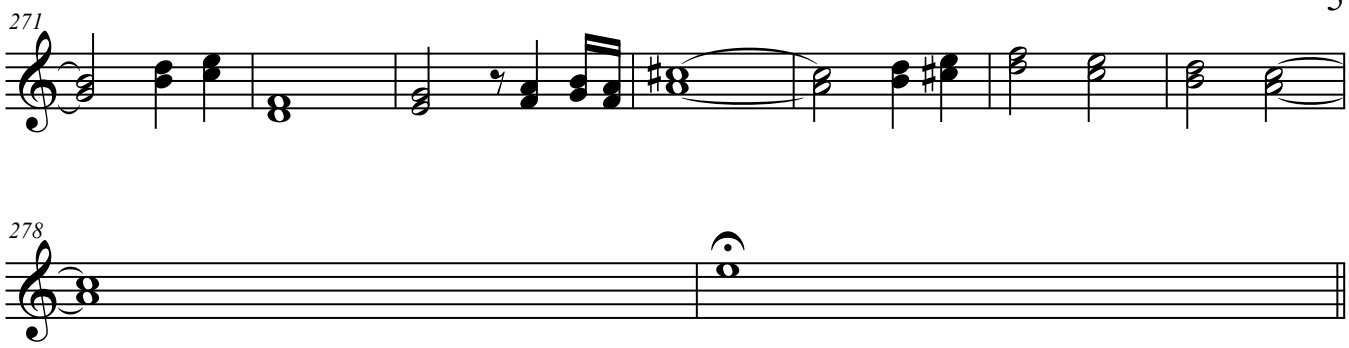
MM104




57
how would you feel in the place of John Peel?
62
C
strumentale
66
70
wha wha
75
82
rit.
89
N
mm 90
Swing...
95
100
Fmaj7
F6
E7#9b13
Amin6
E7(b9)
106
Fmin7
Cmin7
Bbmaj7
Abmaj7
G7(#9)
112
117


122
E
Coro
Even Eights
Fmaj7
3
Amaj7
Fmaj7
127
Amaj7
3
E
E
131
F
135
140
146
153
159
G
strumentale
overdrive
3
165
3
170
H
Coro
177
184


190
196
203
3
I
mm 200
210
218
225
232
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
A min
G
A min
G
A min
wah wah
239
C
D
M sez. solos
mm 200
Epedal
248
N
mm 80
257
262
265


rit.
271

278
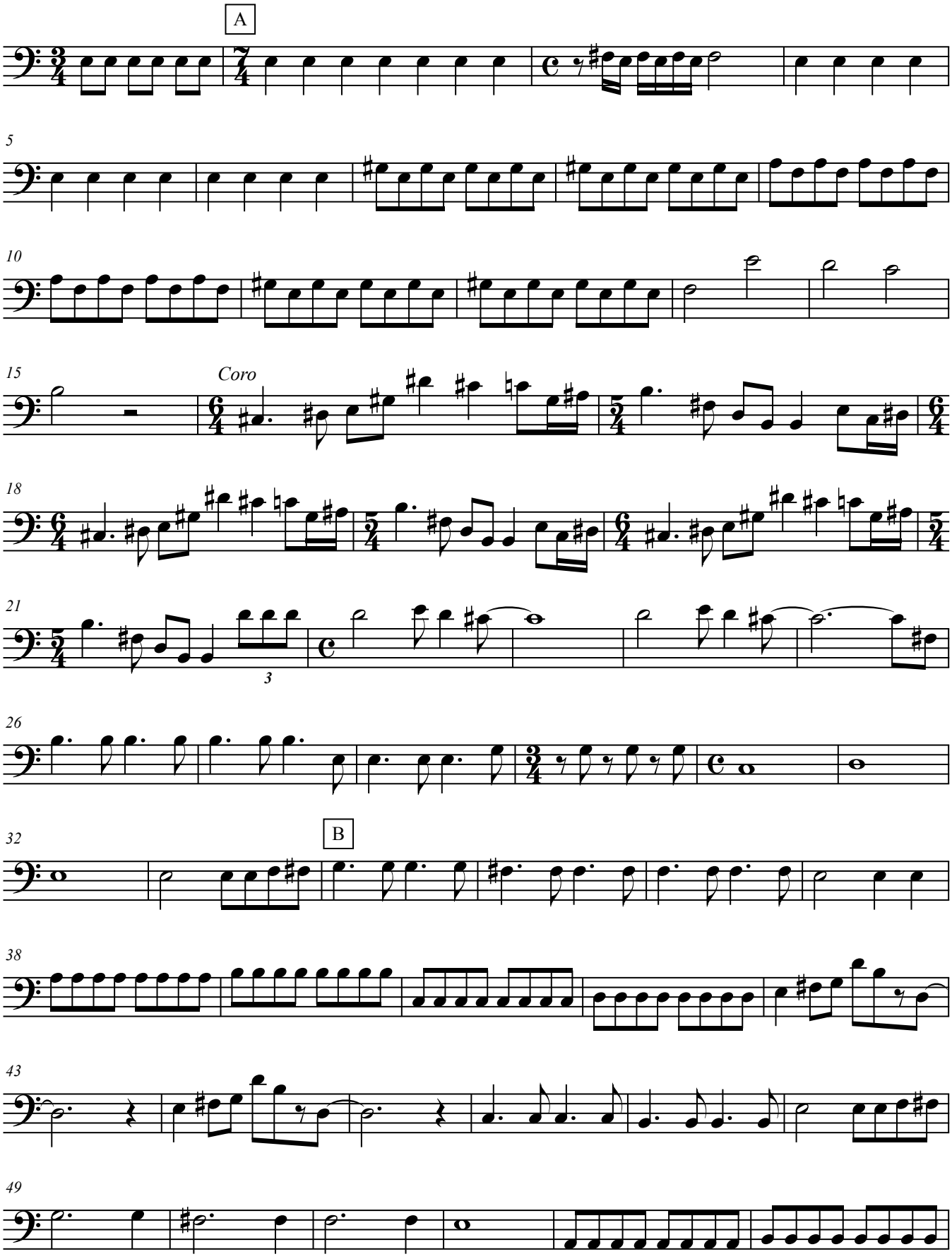
Moon in june
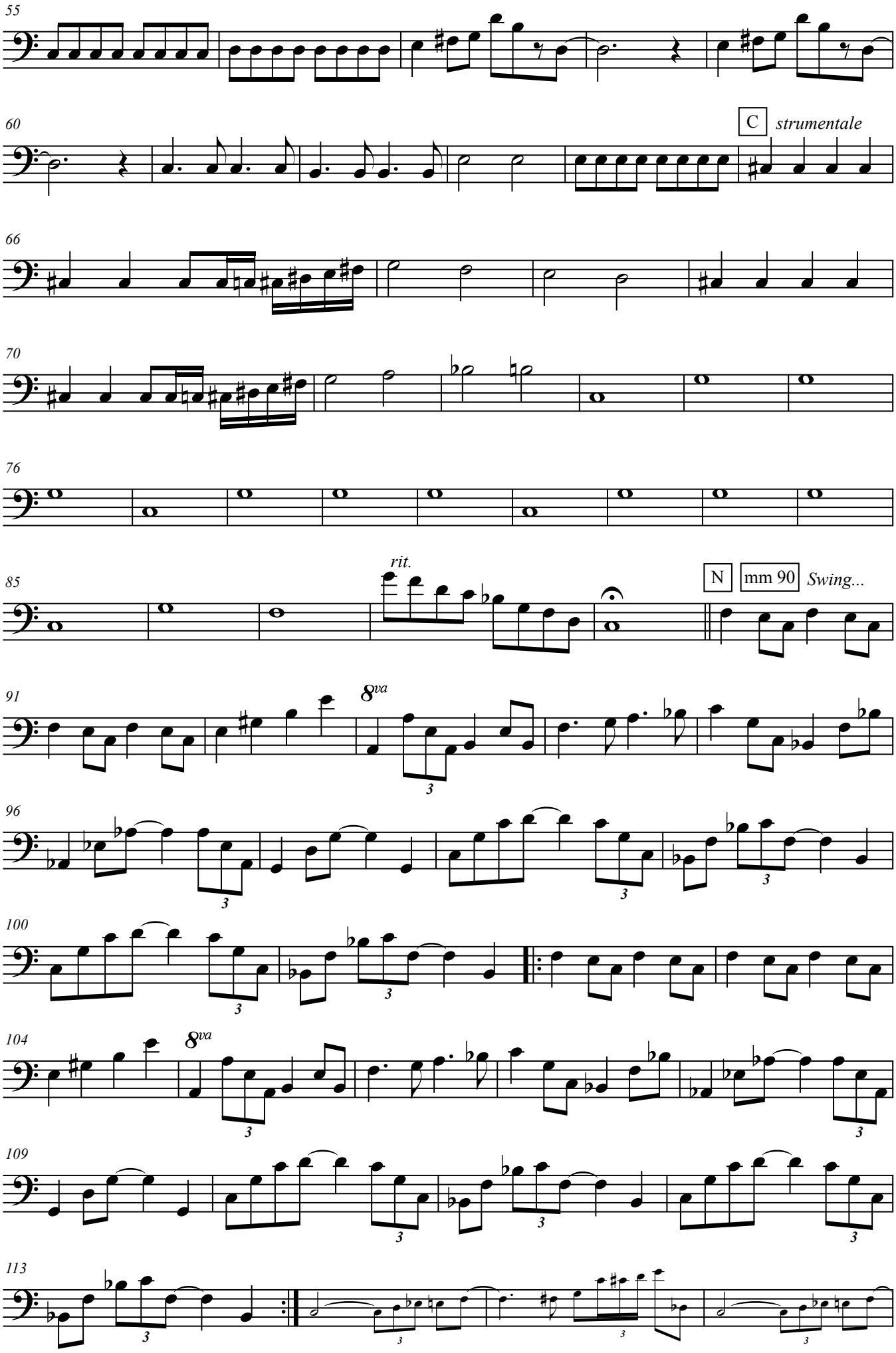
Basso acustico
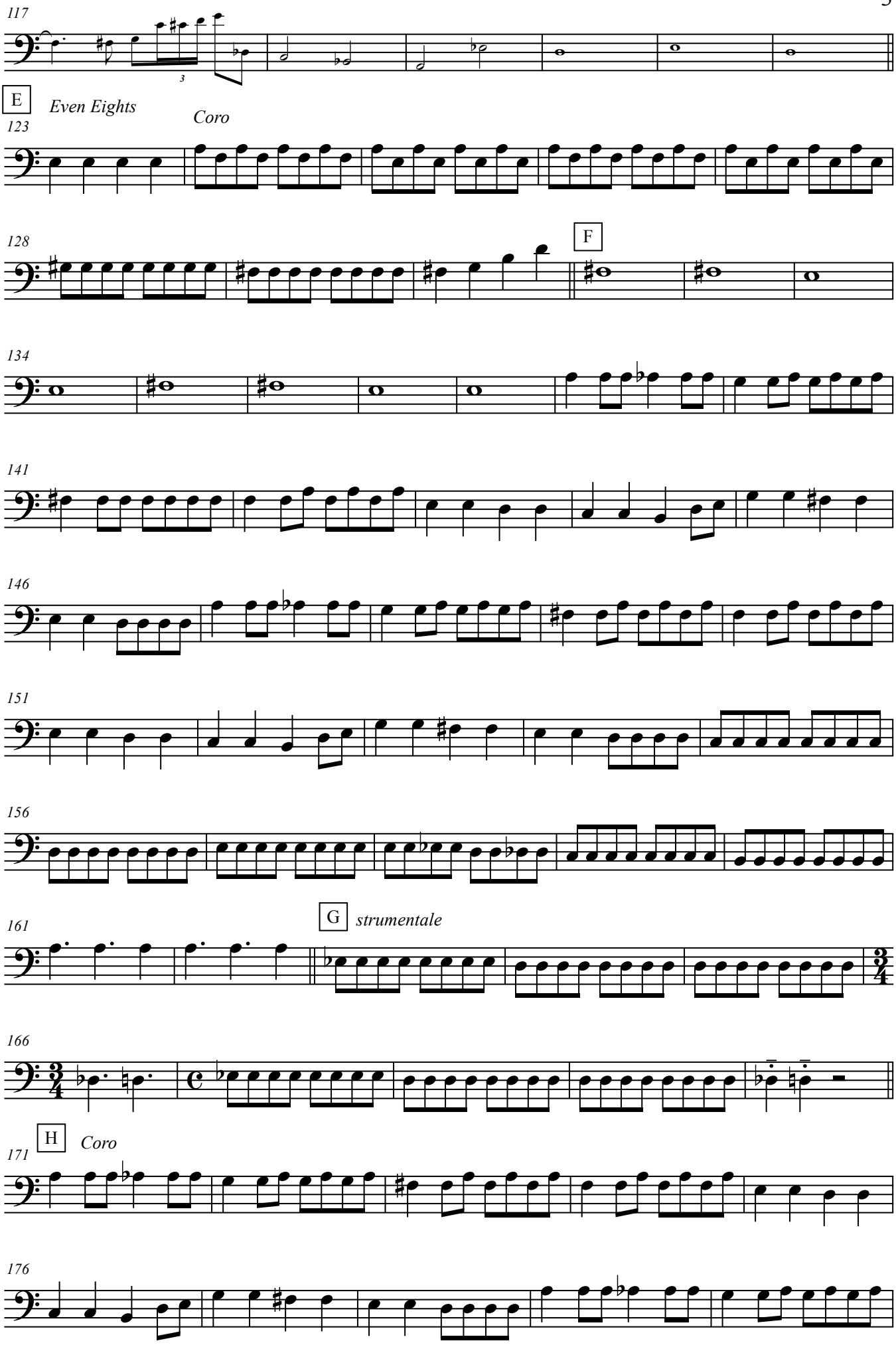
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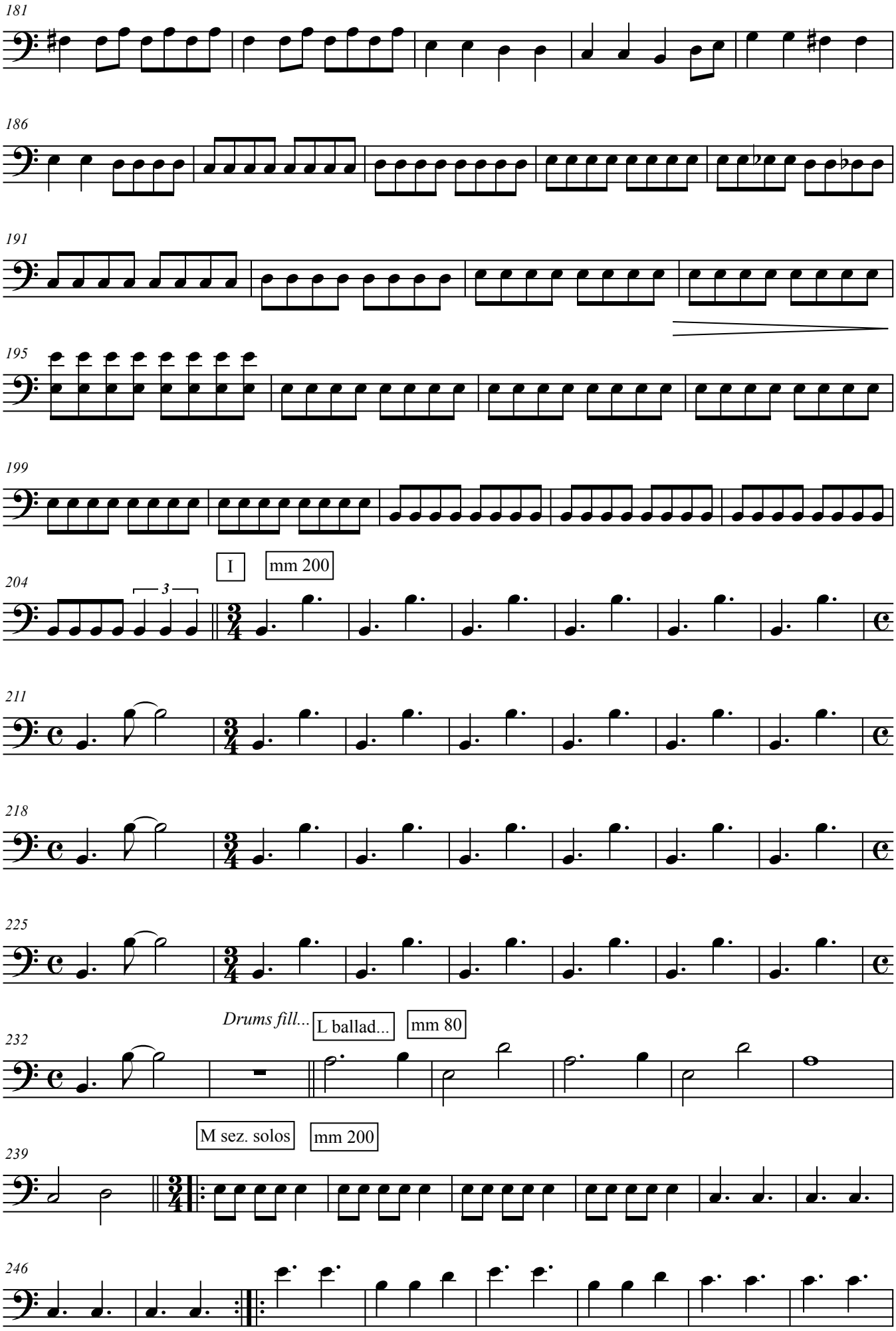
by Robert Wyatt
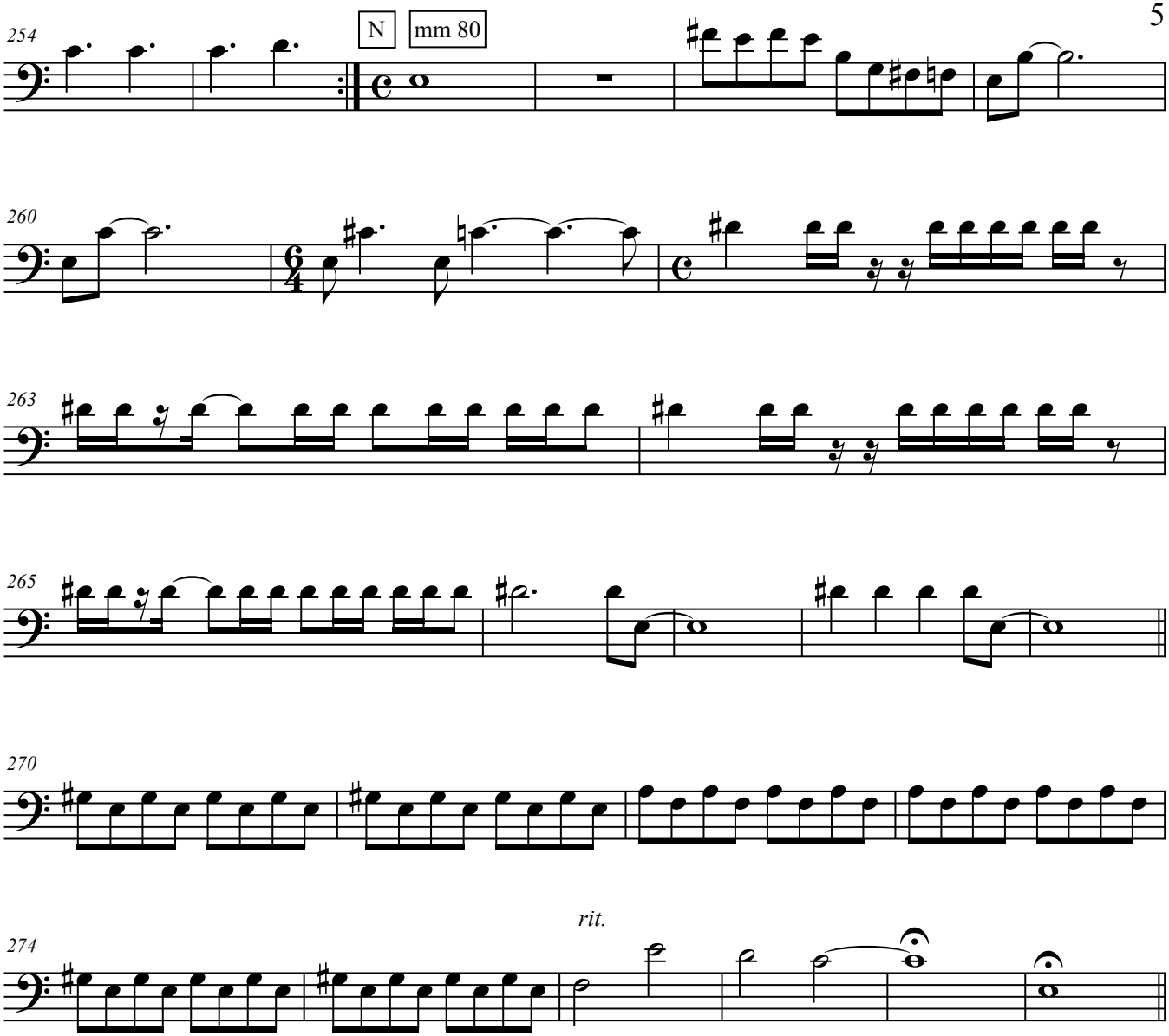
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




55
60
C
strumentale
66
70
76
85
rit.
N
mm 90
Swing...
91
8va
96
100
104
8va
109
113


117
E
Even Eights
Coro
123
128
F
134
141
146
151
156
G
strumentale
161
166
H
Coro
171
176


181
186
191
195
199
I
mm 200
204
3
211
218
225
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
232
M sez. solos
mm 200
239
246
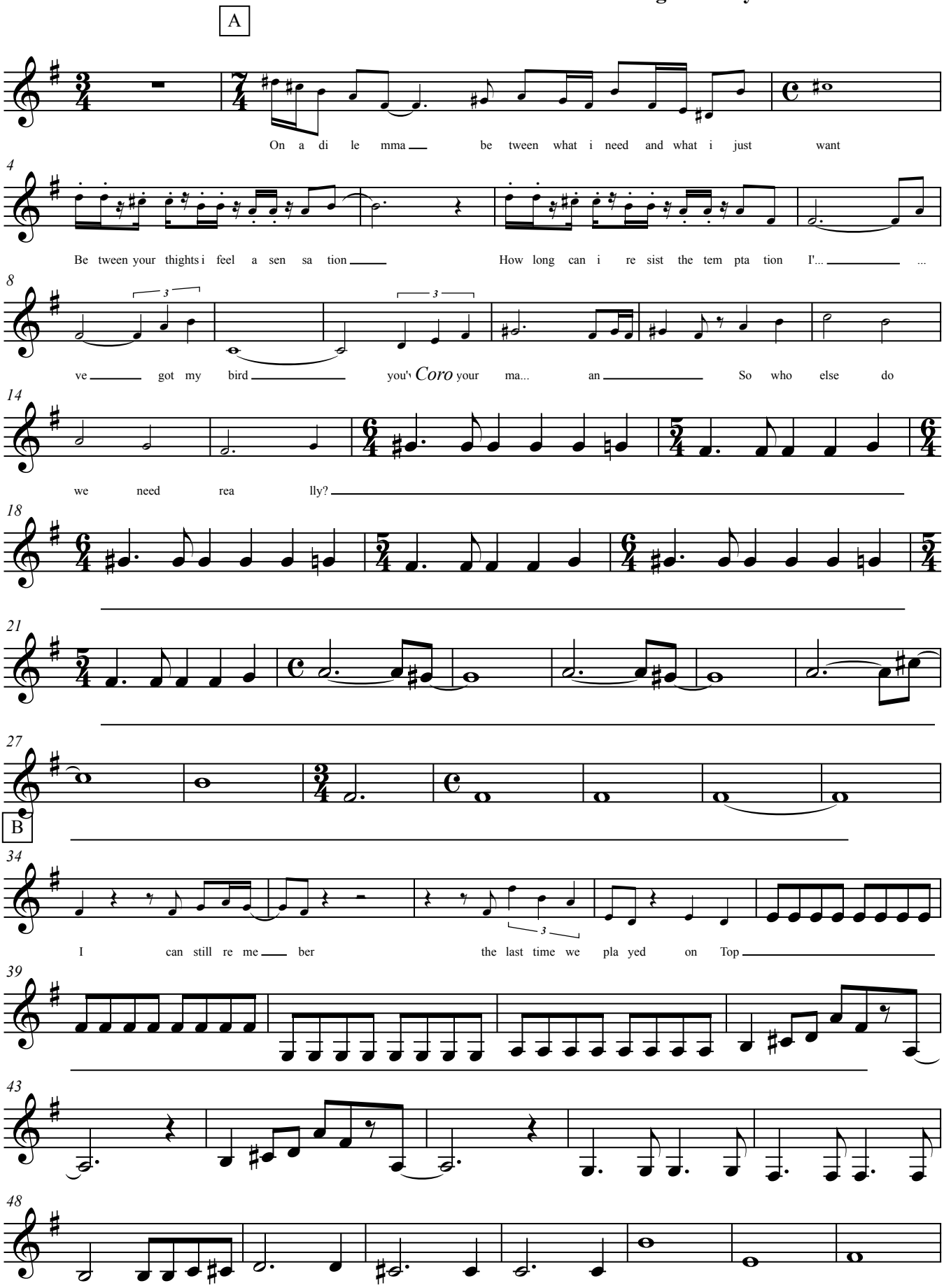

254
N
mm 80
260
263
265
270
rit.
274

Corno in Fa

Moon in june

by Robert Wyatt **Transcription by Giovanni Venosta**
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'

MM104



55

C *strumentale* ***pp***

63

Tbone e Fl.

69

76

82

rit. D mm 90 *Swing...*

88

play ing now is love ly here inthe B B

93

C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a jazz g *X3* or an

97

or che stra on Ra di o Three There are dance halls

103

and theatres with a coustic worse than he re not forgetting the ex tra fa ci

107
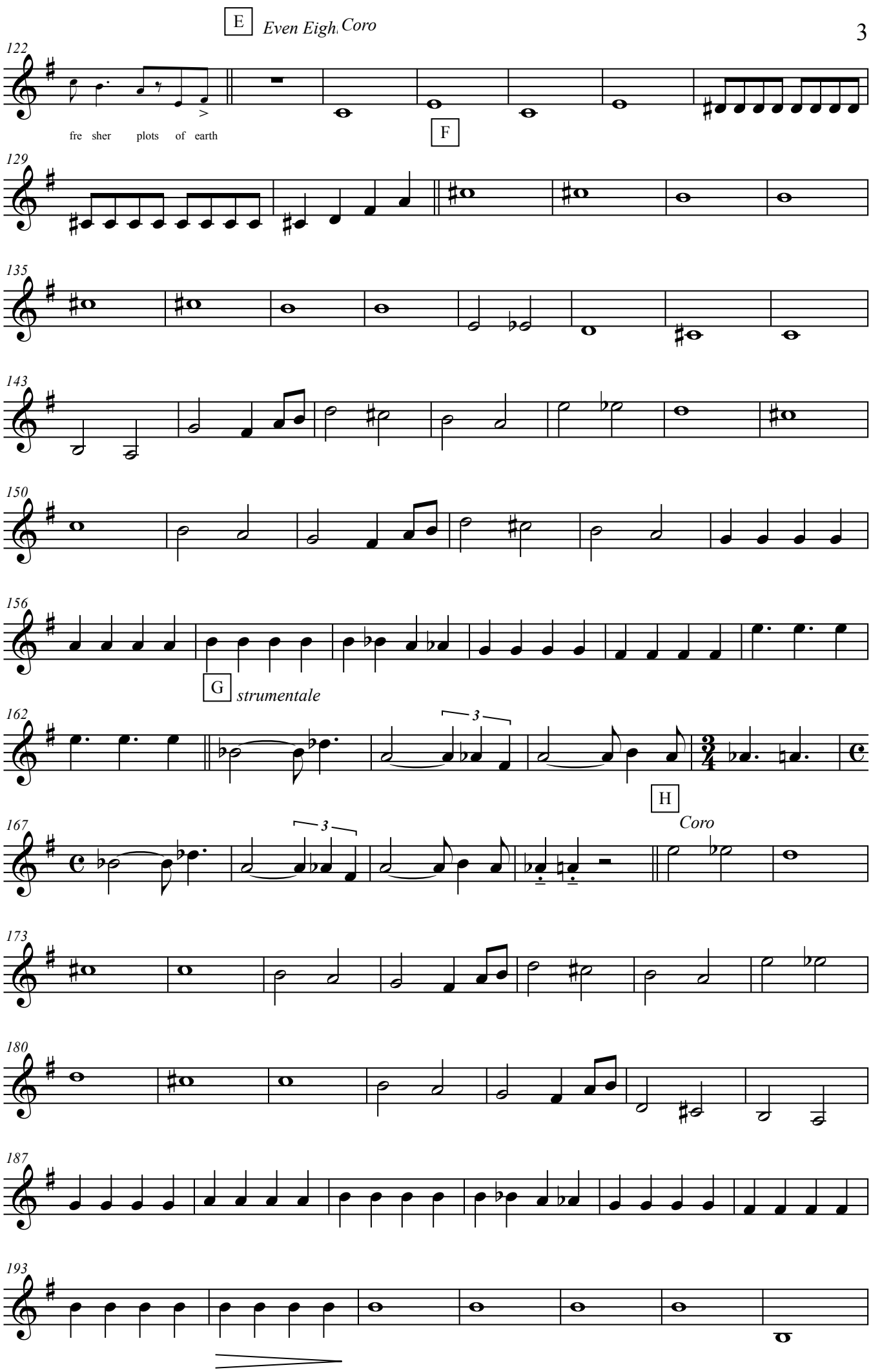
li ties su ch as the tea ma chine just a long the co o o o ri dor
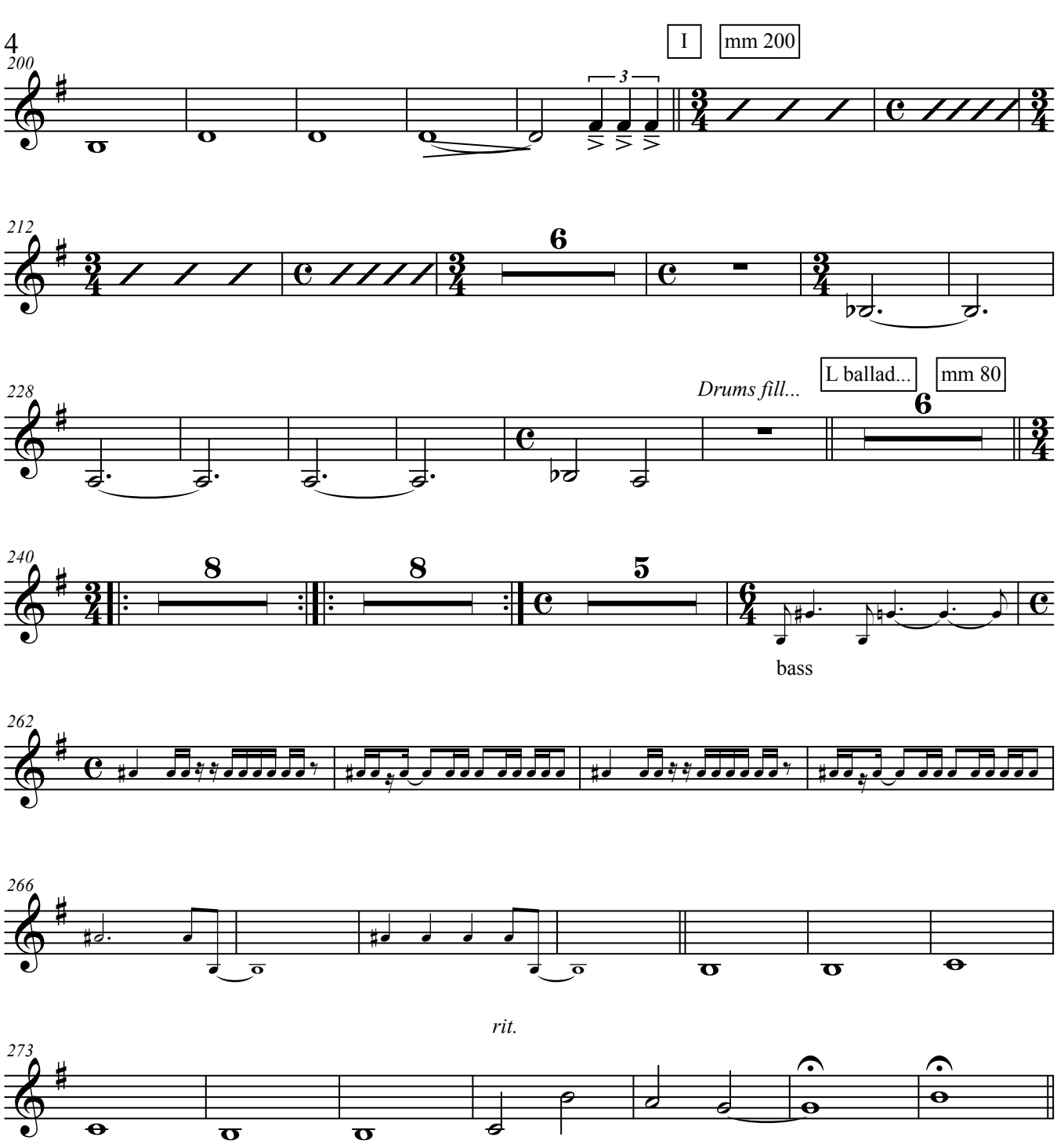
112

Pop stars drink each o ther's wine plough each o ther earth

117

ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and then perh aps re birth plant seeds in


E
Even Eigh
Coro
122
fre sher plots of earth
F
129
135
143
150
156
G
strumentale
162
3
H
Coro
167
3
173
180
187
193


I
mm 200
200
3
212
6
228
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
6
240
8
8
5
bass
262
266
rit.
273
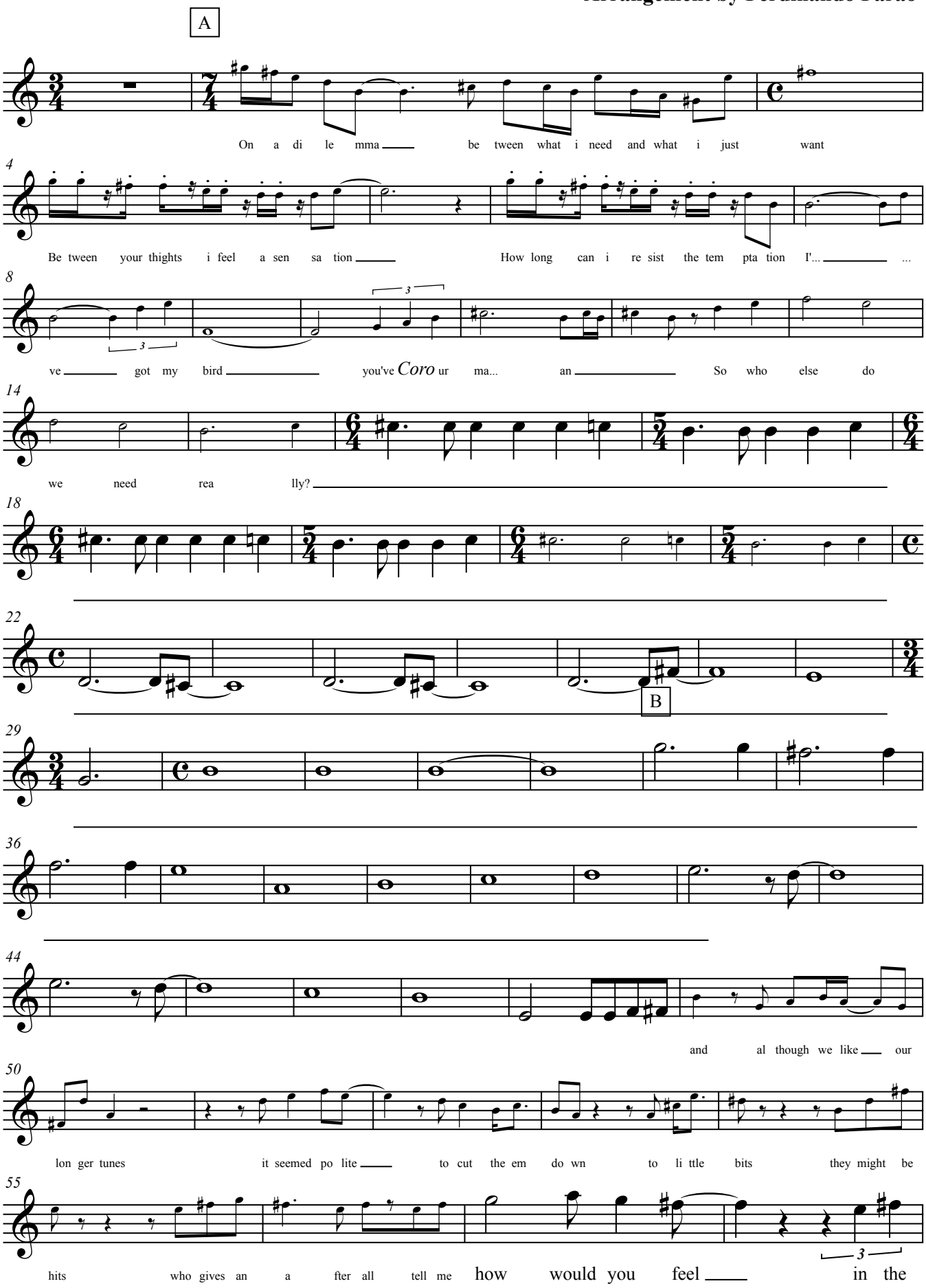
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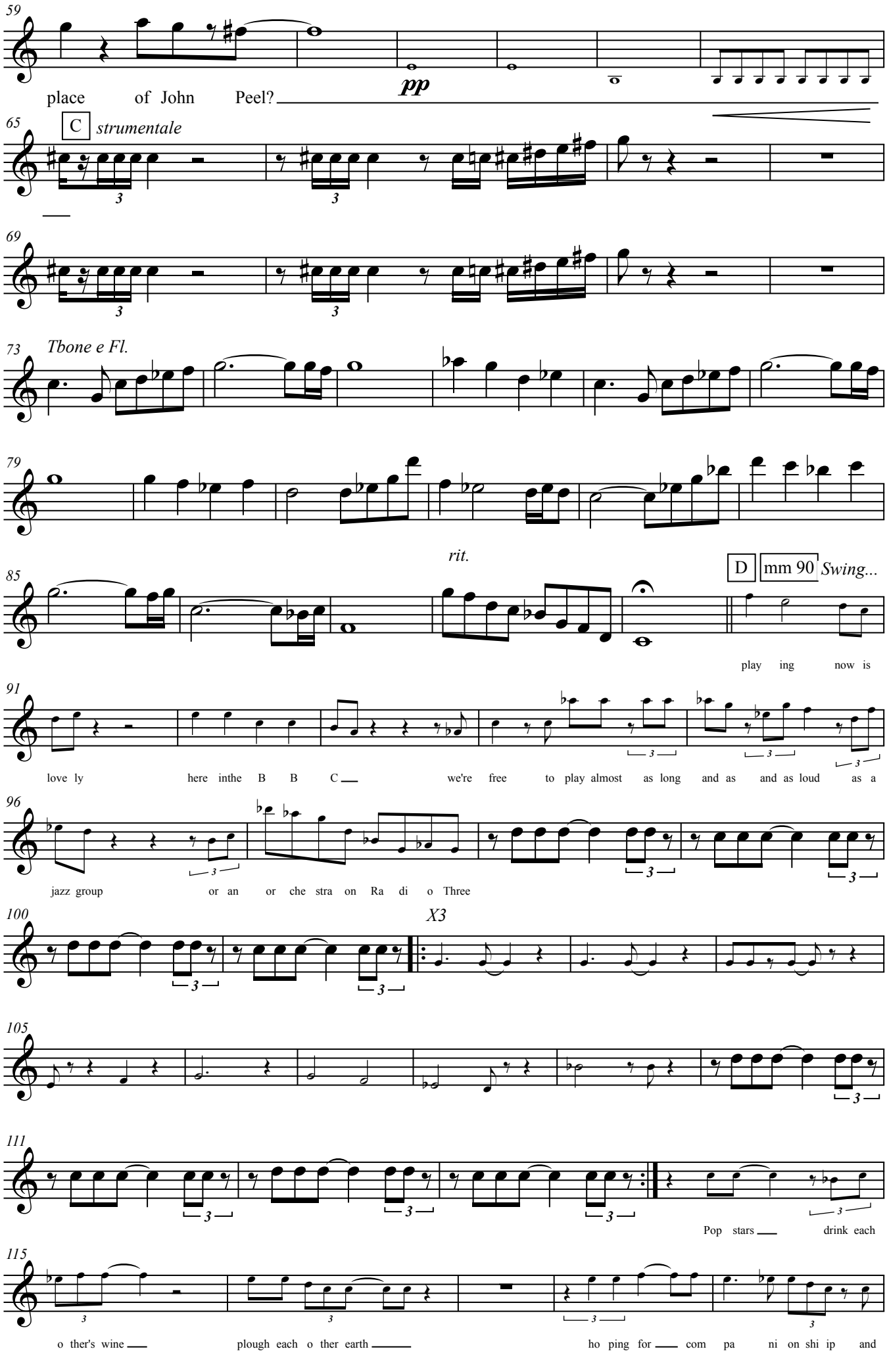
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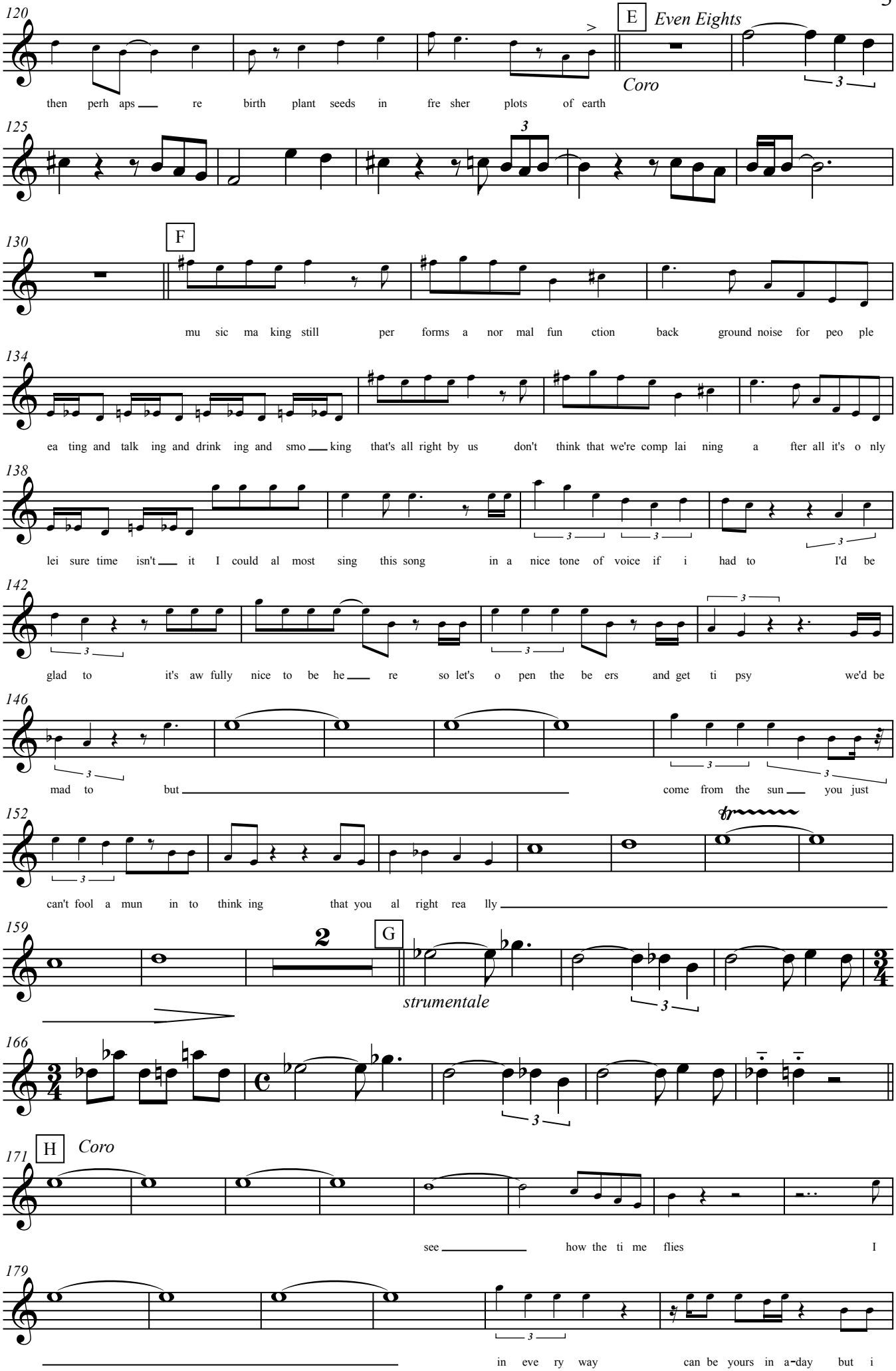
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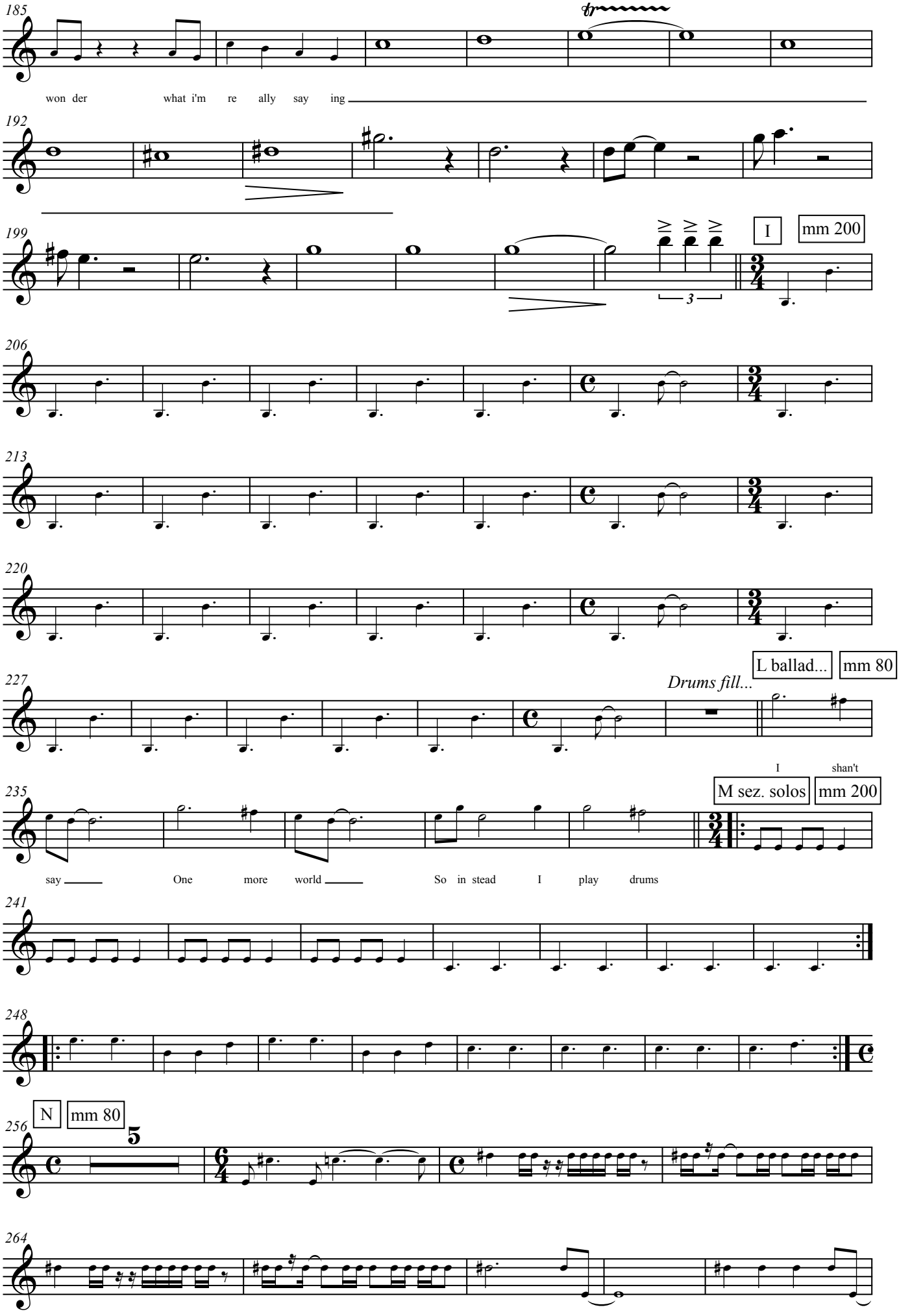
by Robert Wyatt

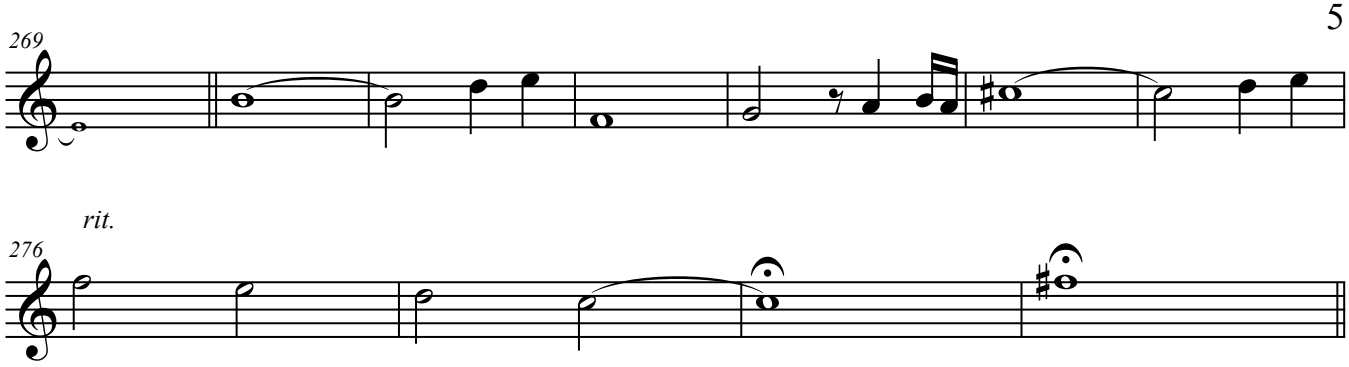
Transcription by Giovanni Venosta
Arrangement by Ferdinando Farao'




59
pp
place of John Peel?
65
C
strumentale
69
73
Tbone e Fl.
79
rit.
85
D
mm 90
Swing...
play ing now is
91
love ly here inthe B B C we're free to play almost as long and as and as loud as a
96
jazz group or an or che stra on Ra di o Three
100
X3
105
111
Pop stars drink each
115
o ther's wine plough each o ther earth ho ping for com pa ni on shi ip and


120
E
Even Eights
Coro
then perh aps re birth plant seeds in fre sher plots of earth
125
130
F
mu sic ma king still per forms a nor mal fun ction back ground noise for peo ple
134
ea ting and talk ing and drink ing and smo king that's all right by us don't think that we're comp lai ning a fter all it's o nly
138
lei sure time isn't it I could al most sing this song in a nice tone of voice if i had to I'd be
142
glad to it's aw fully nice to be he re so let's o pen the be ers and get ti psy we'd be
146
mad to but come from the sun you just
152
can't fool a mun in to think ing that you al right rea lly
159
2
G
strumentale
166
171
H
Coro
see how the ti me flies I
179
in eve ry way can be yours in a-day but i
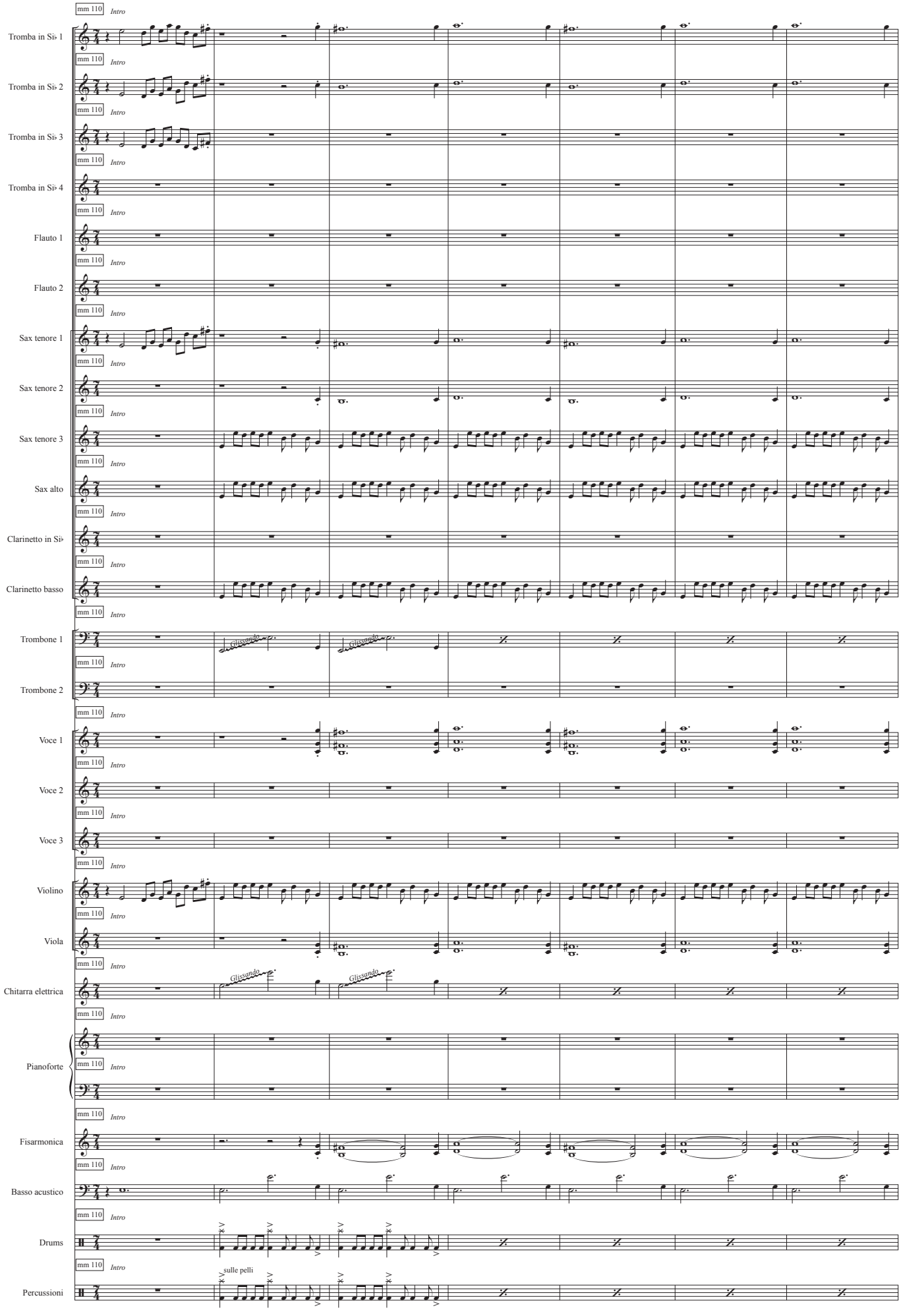

185
won der what i'm re ally say ing
192
199
I
mm 200
3
206
213
220
227
Drums fill...
L ballad...
mm 80
235
I
shan't
M sez. solos
mm 200
say One more world So in stead I play drums
241
248
256
N
mm 80
5
264

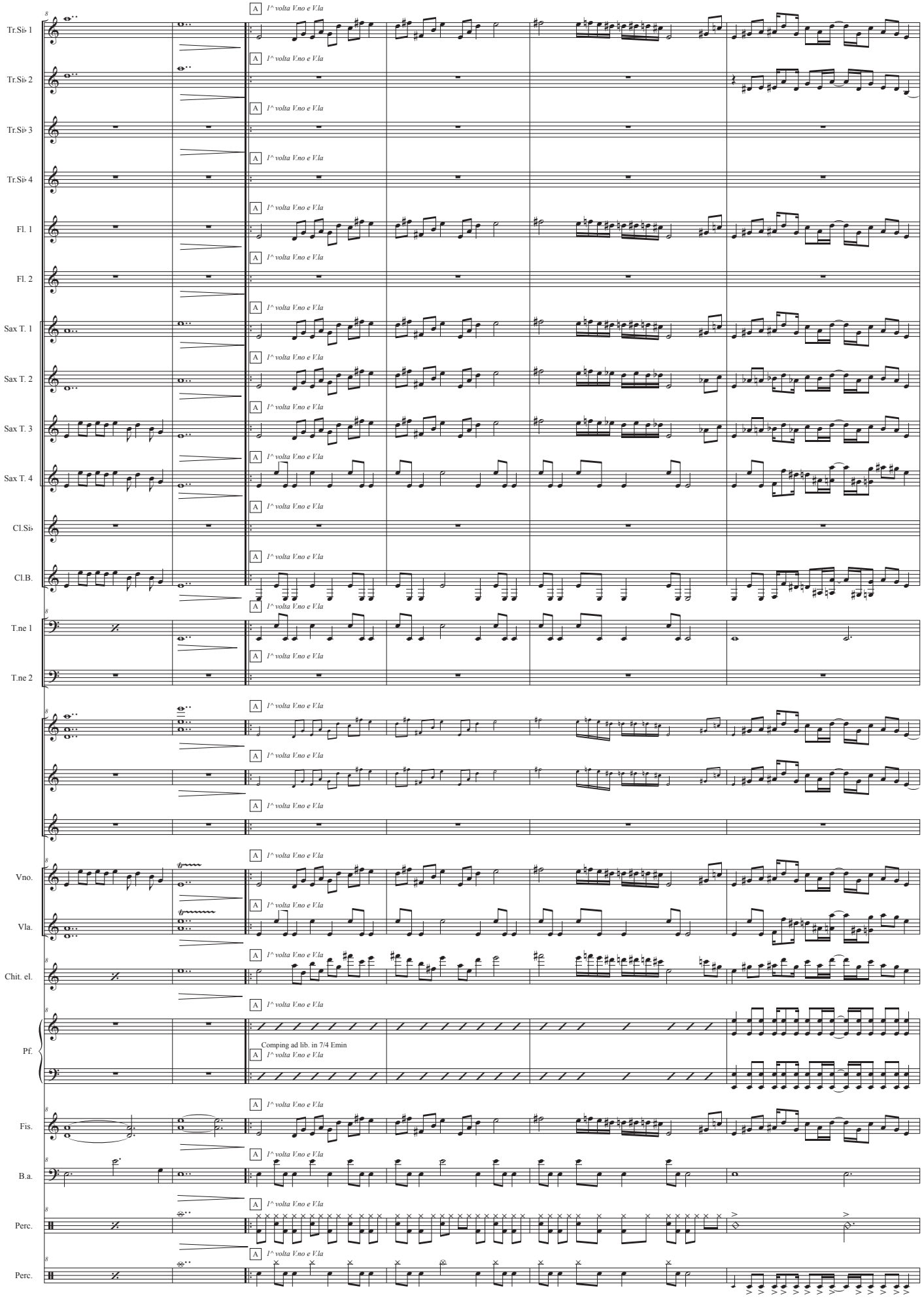

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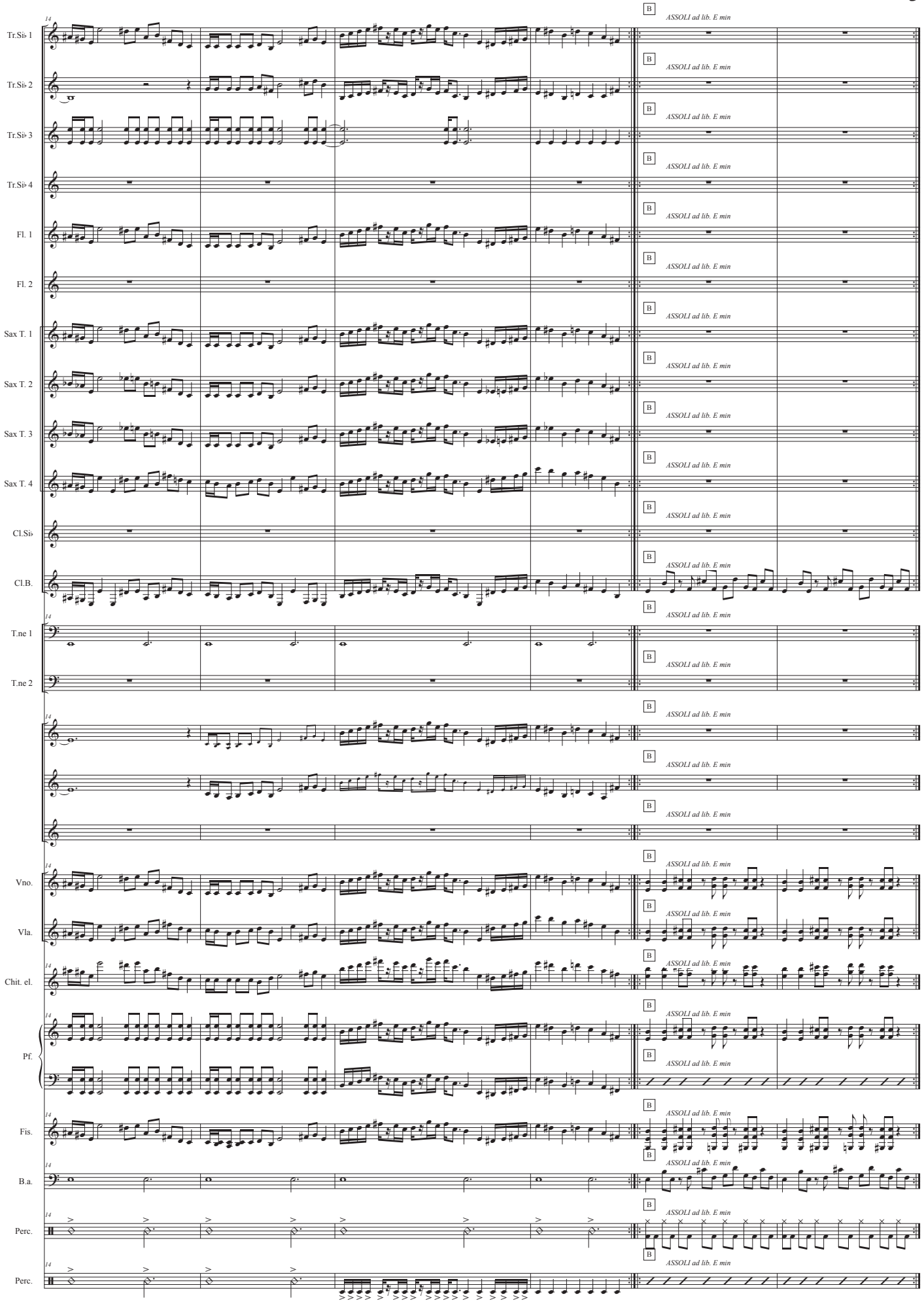
rit.
276
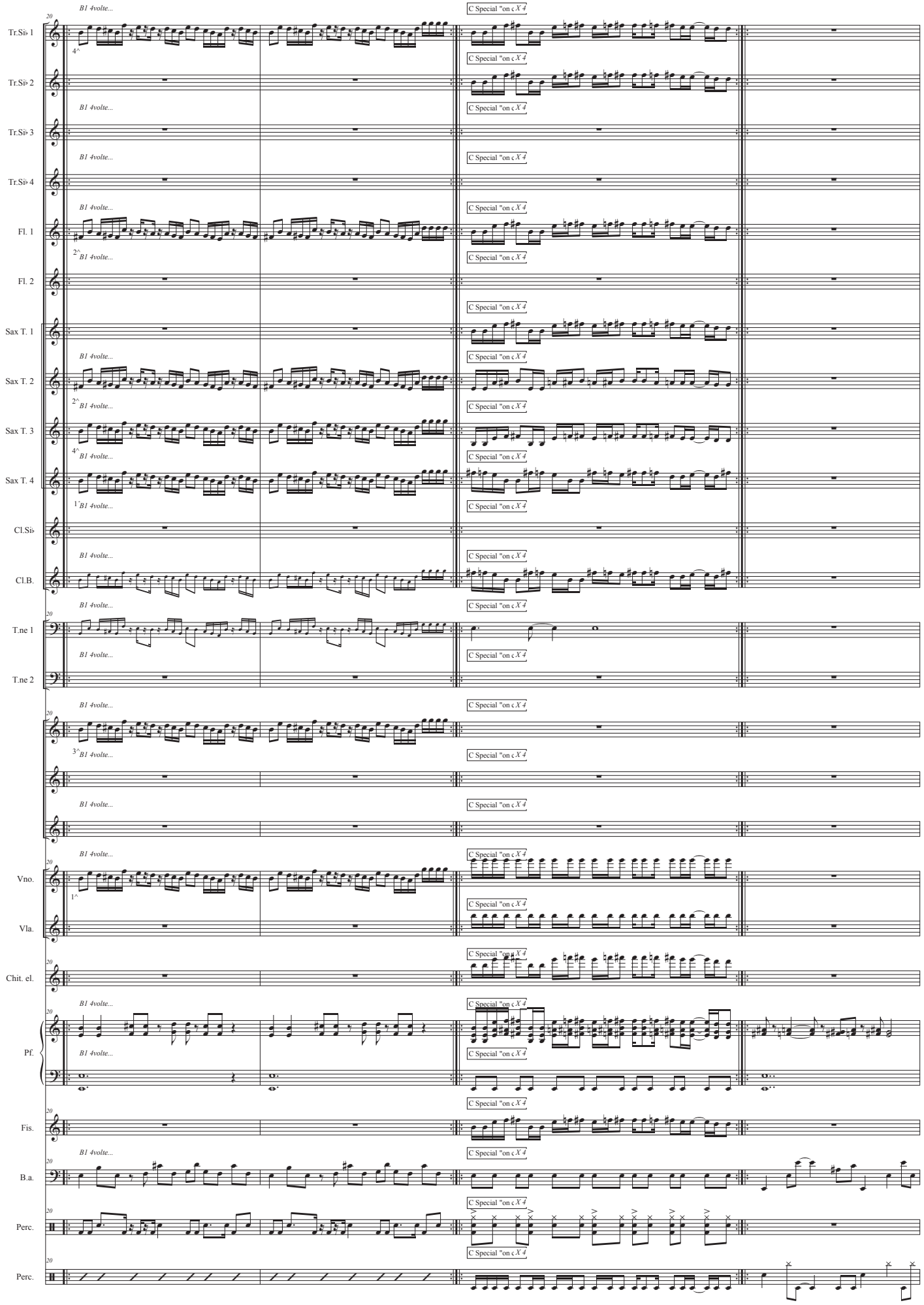
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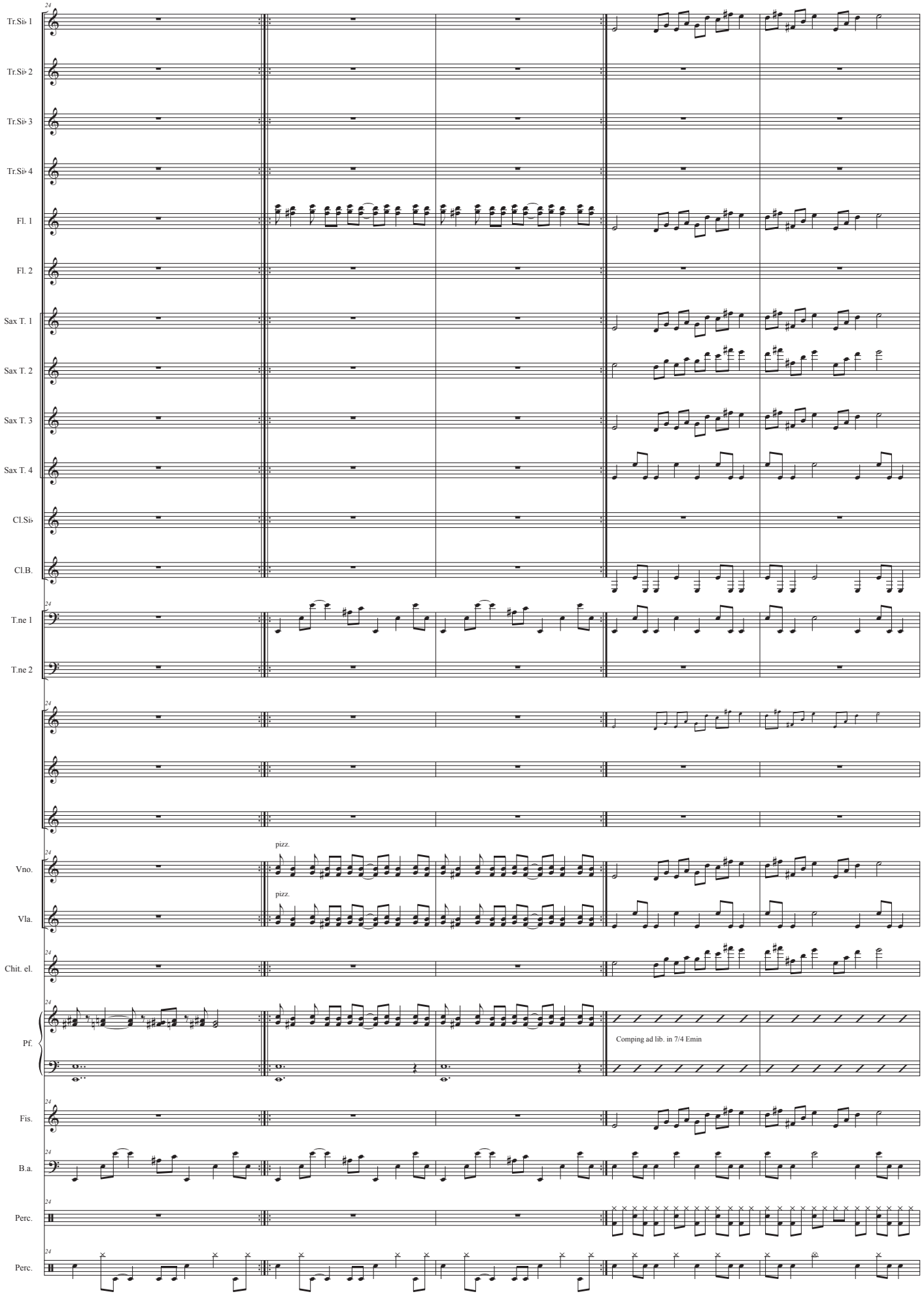
Music by Hugh Hopper
Arrangement by Ferdinando Faraò
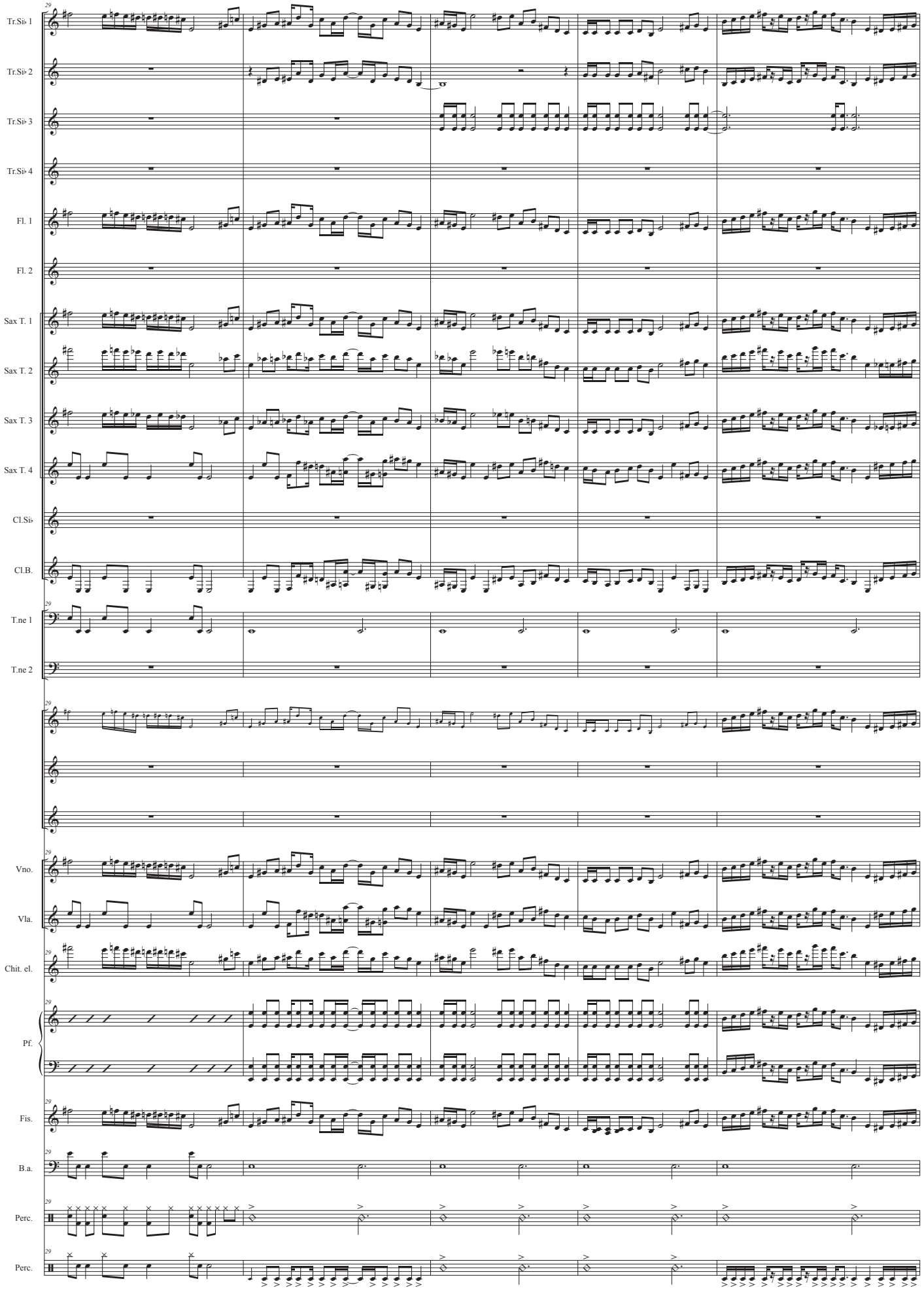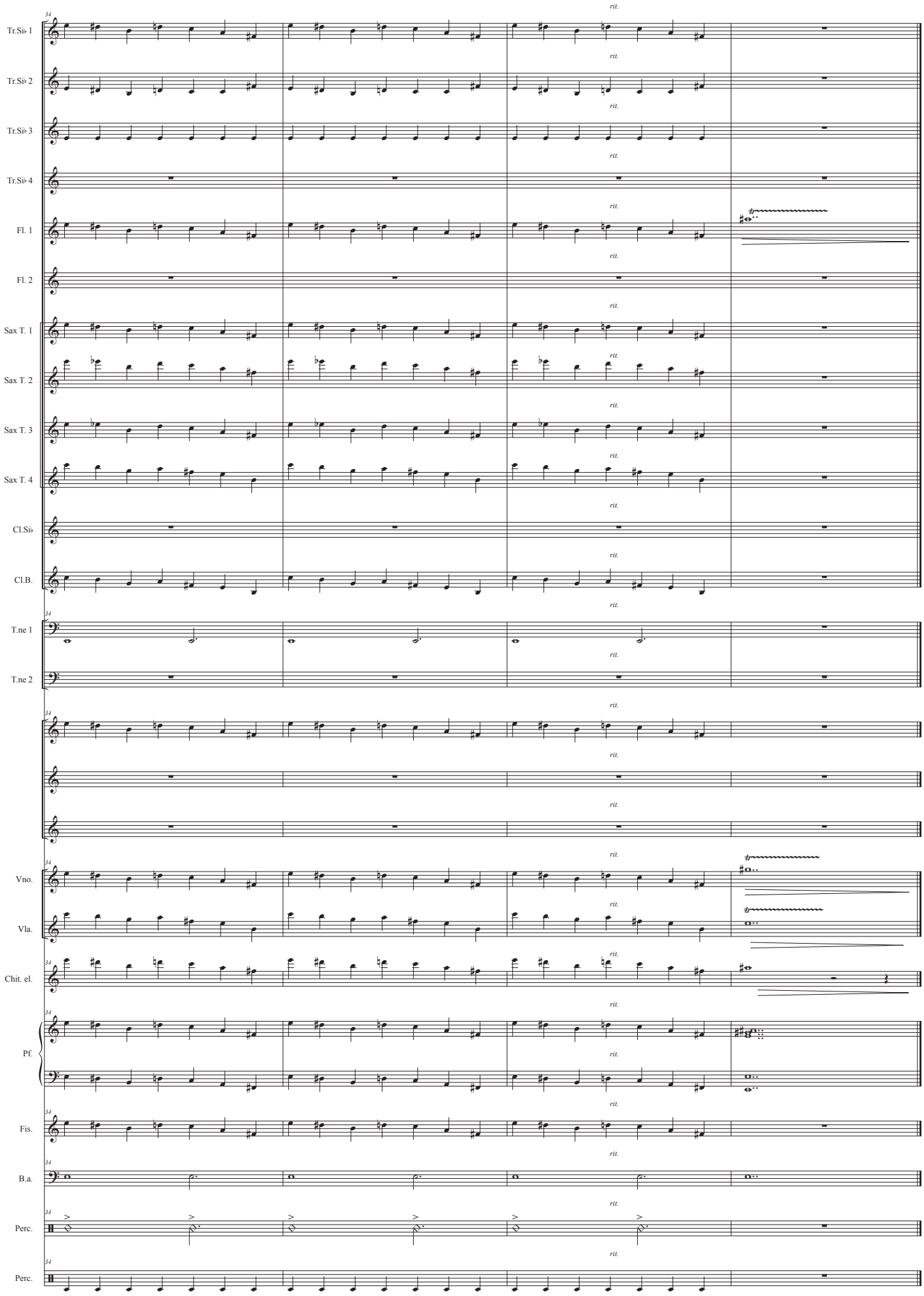



Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
A
1^ volta V.no e V.la
Comping ad lib. in 7/4 Emin


Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
B
ASSOLI ad lib. E min


Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
B1 4volte...
C Special "on c"X 4
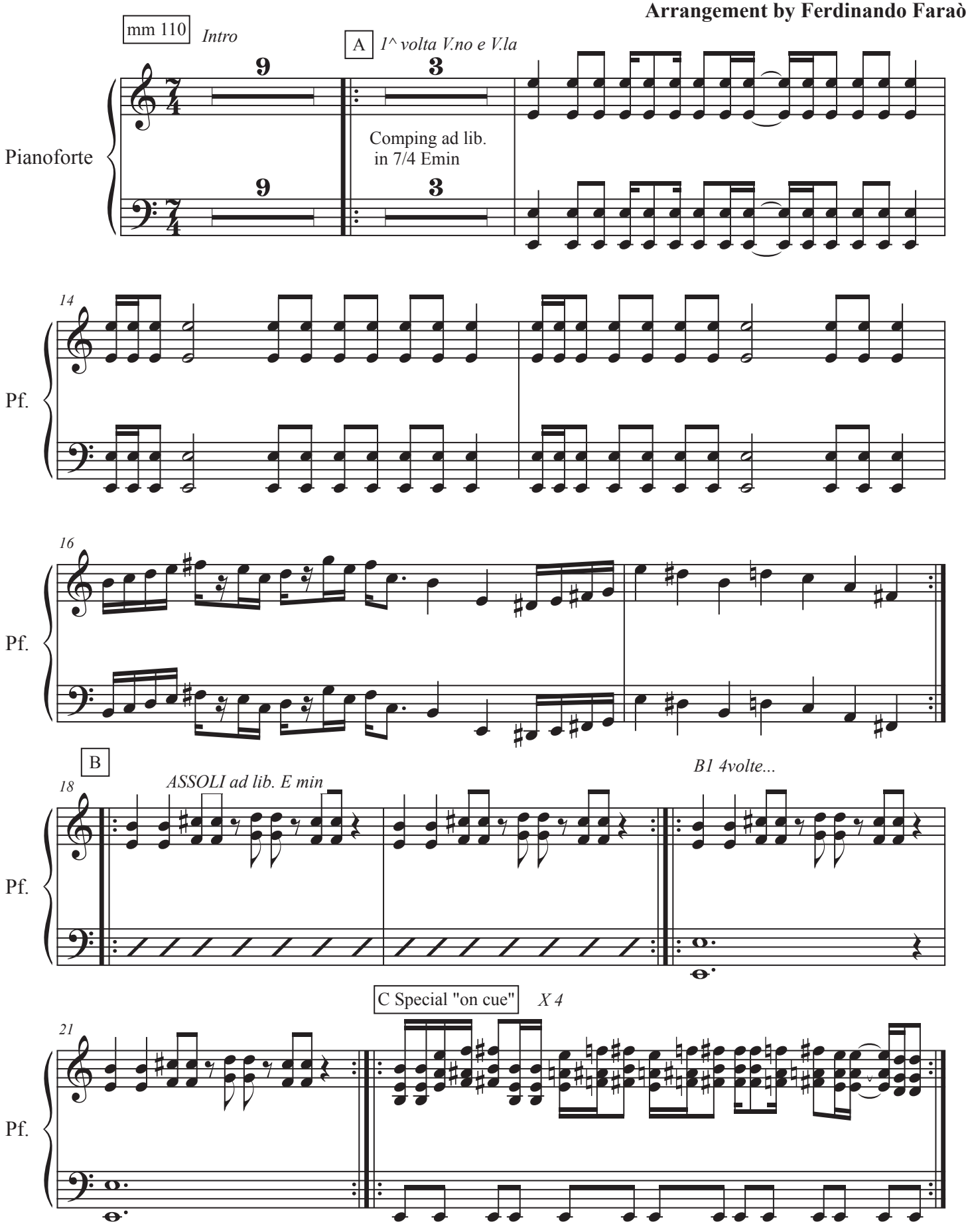

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
pizz.
Vla.
pizz.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Comping ad lib. in 7/4 Emin
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
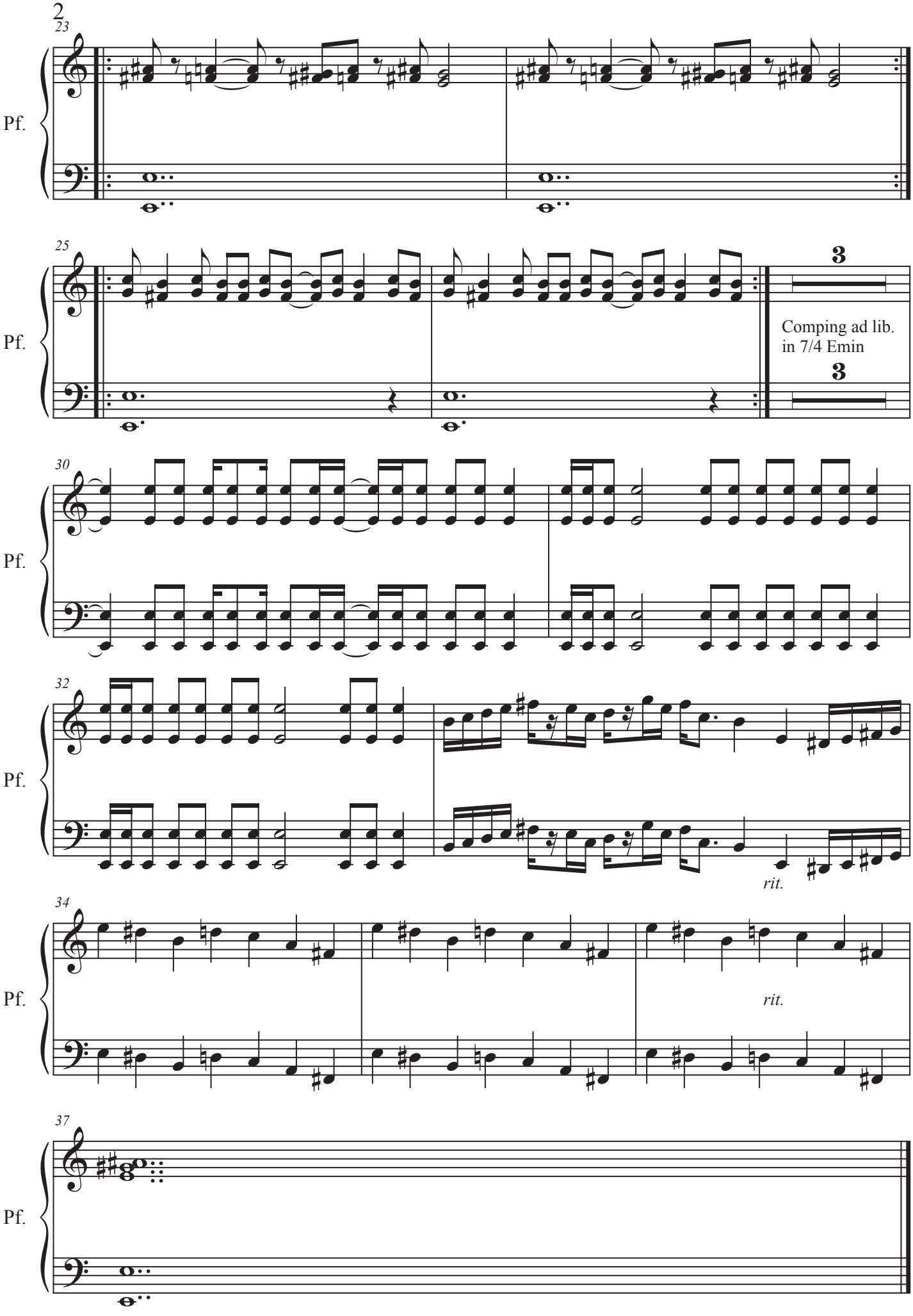

29
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.


Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Tr.Si♭ 3
Tr.Si♭ 4
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Sax T. 1
Sax T. 2
Sax T. 3
Sax T. 4
Cl.Si♭
Cl.B.
T.ne 1
T.ne 2
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
Fis.
B.a.
Perc.
Perc.
rit.

FACELIFT

Music by Hugh Hopper
Arrangement by Ferdinando Faraò
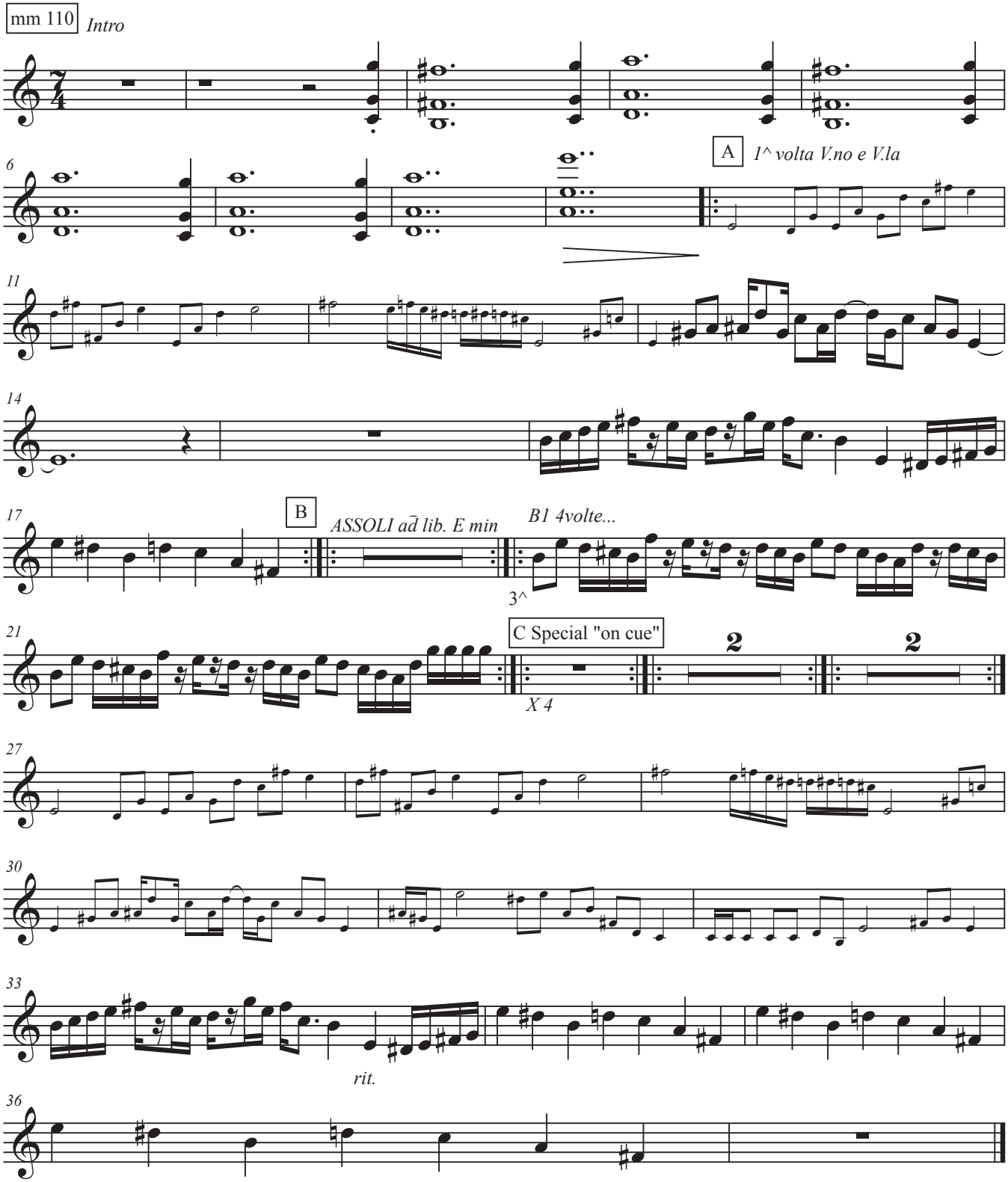



23
Pf.
25
Pf.
3
Comping ad lib.
in 7/4 Emin
3
30
Pf.
32
Pf.
rit.
34
Pf.
rit.
37
Pf.

FACELIFT

Vocals

Music by Hugh Hopper
Arrangement by Ferdinando Faraò
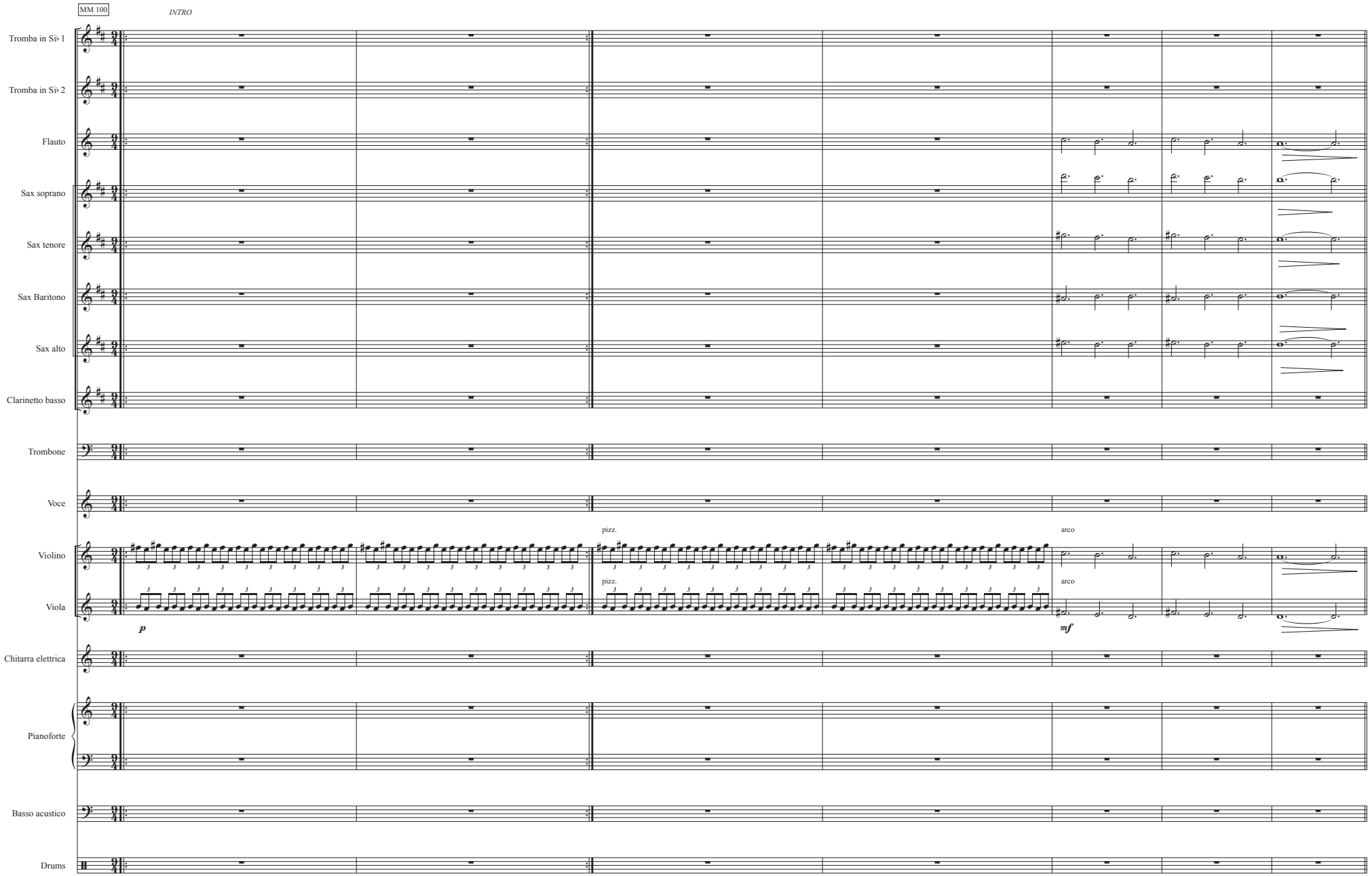


Small notes should not be played*
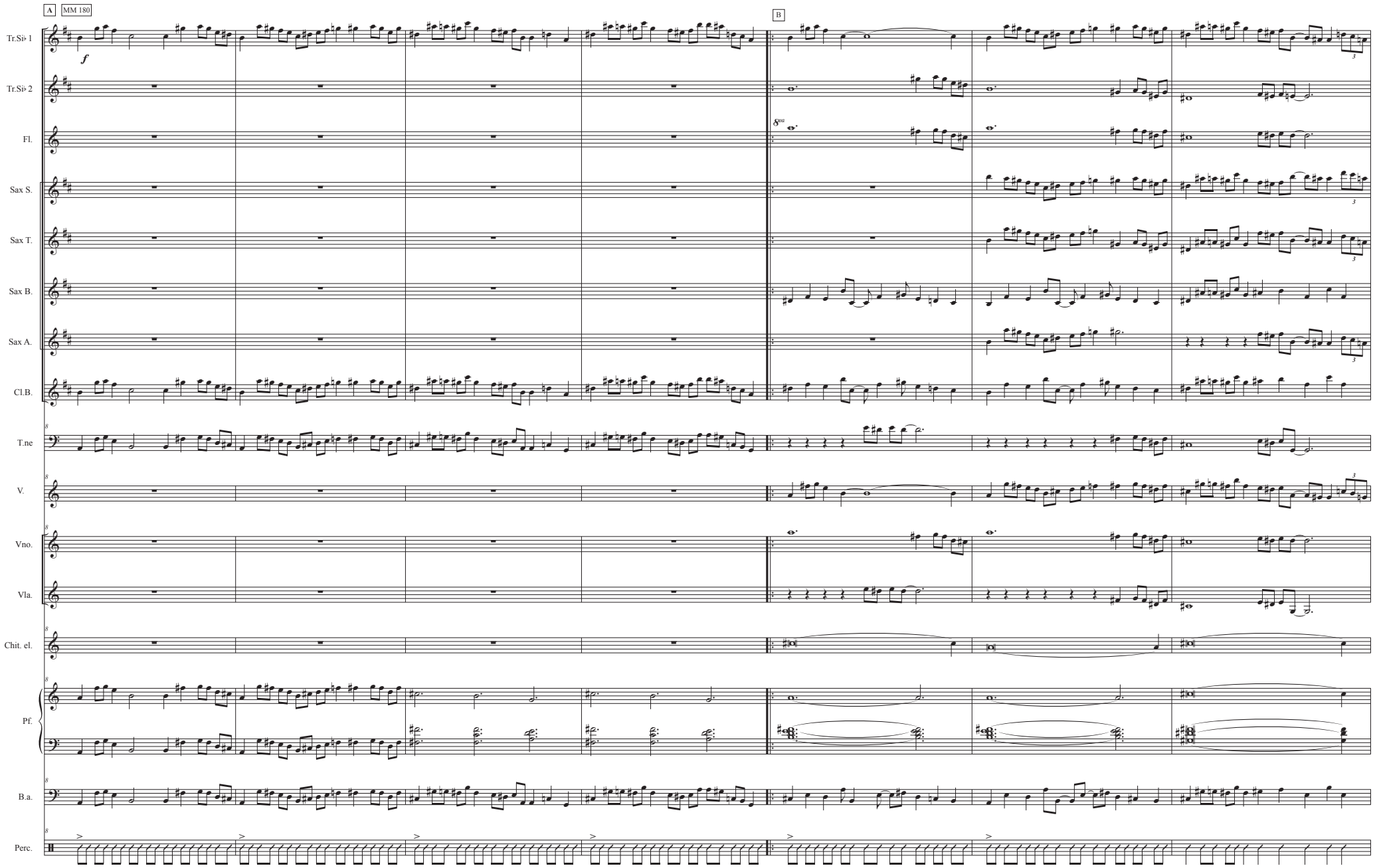
Full Score

MOUSETRAP

Music by Hugh Hopper

Arrangement by Ferdinando Faraò

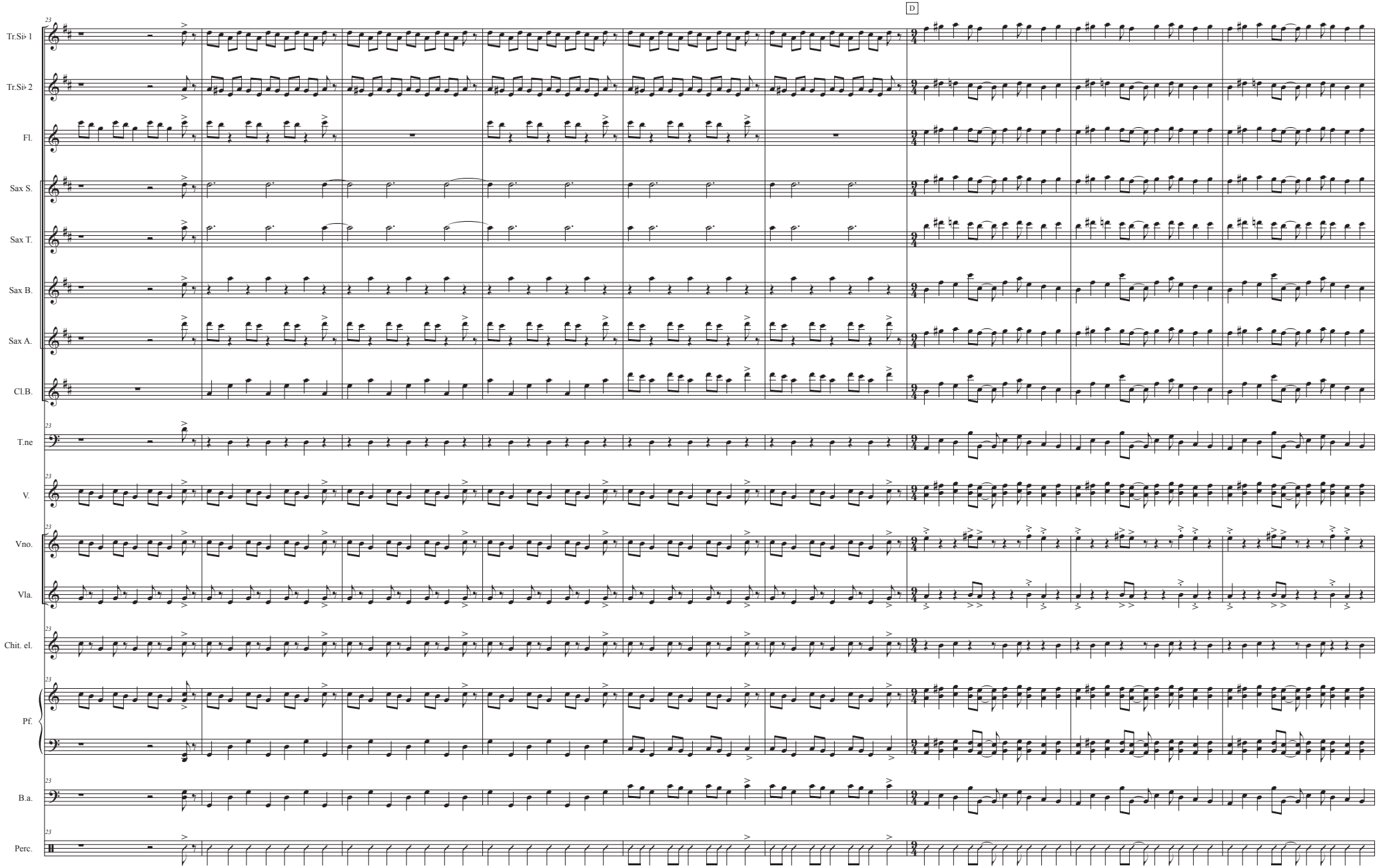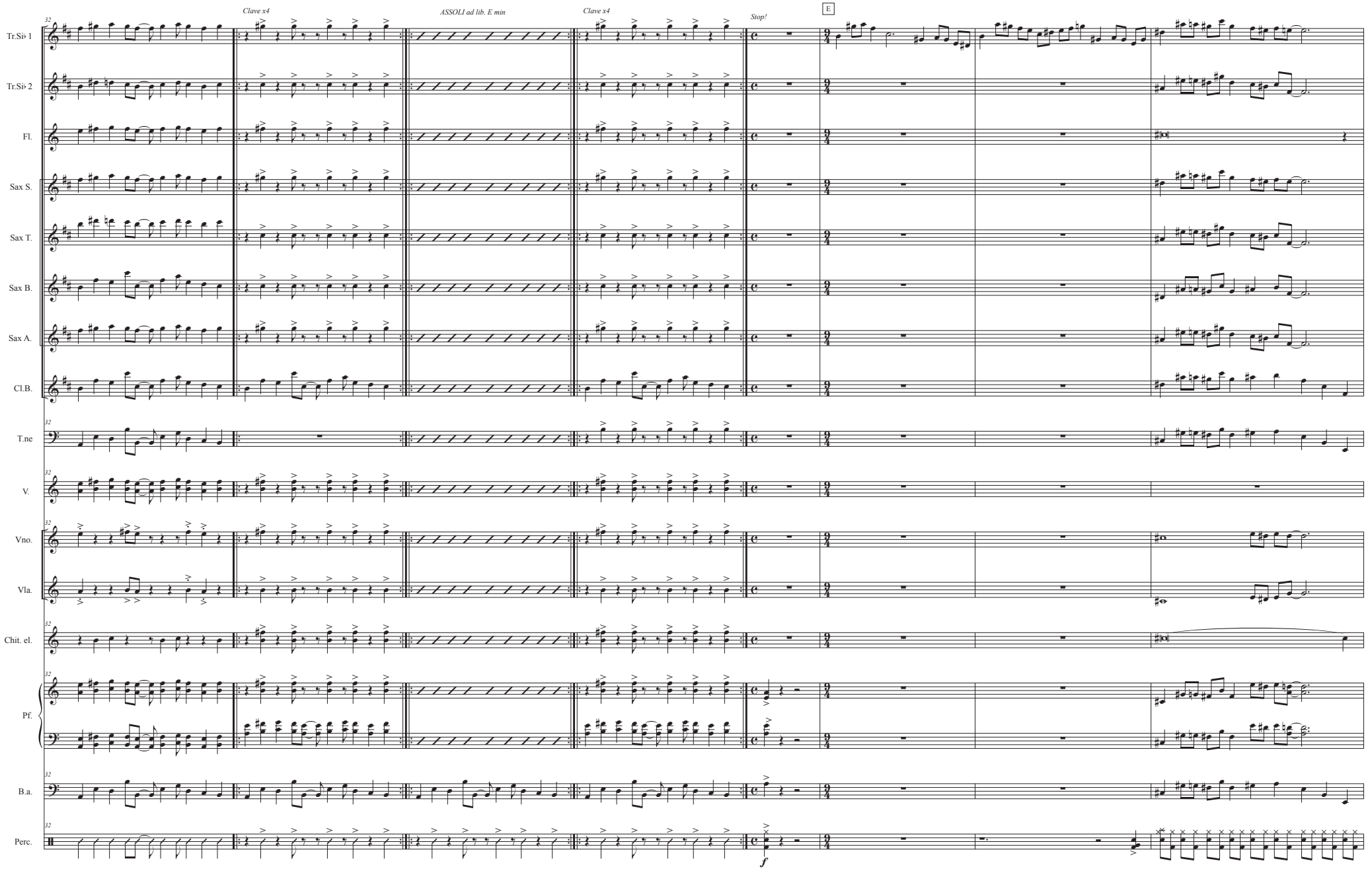



A
MM 180
B
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Fl.
Sax S.
Sax T.
Sax B.
Sax A.
Cl.B.
T.ne
V.
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
B.a.
Perc.
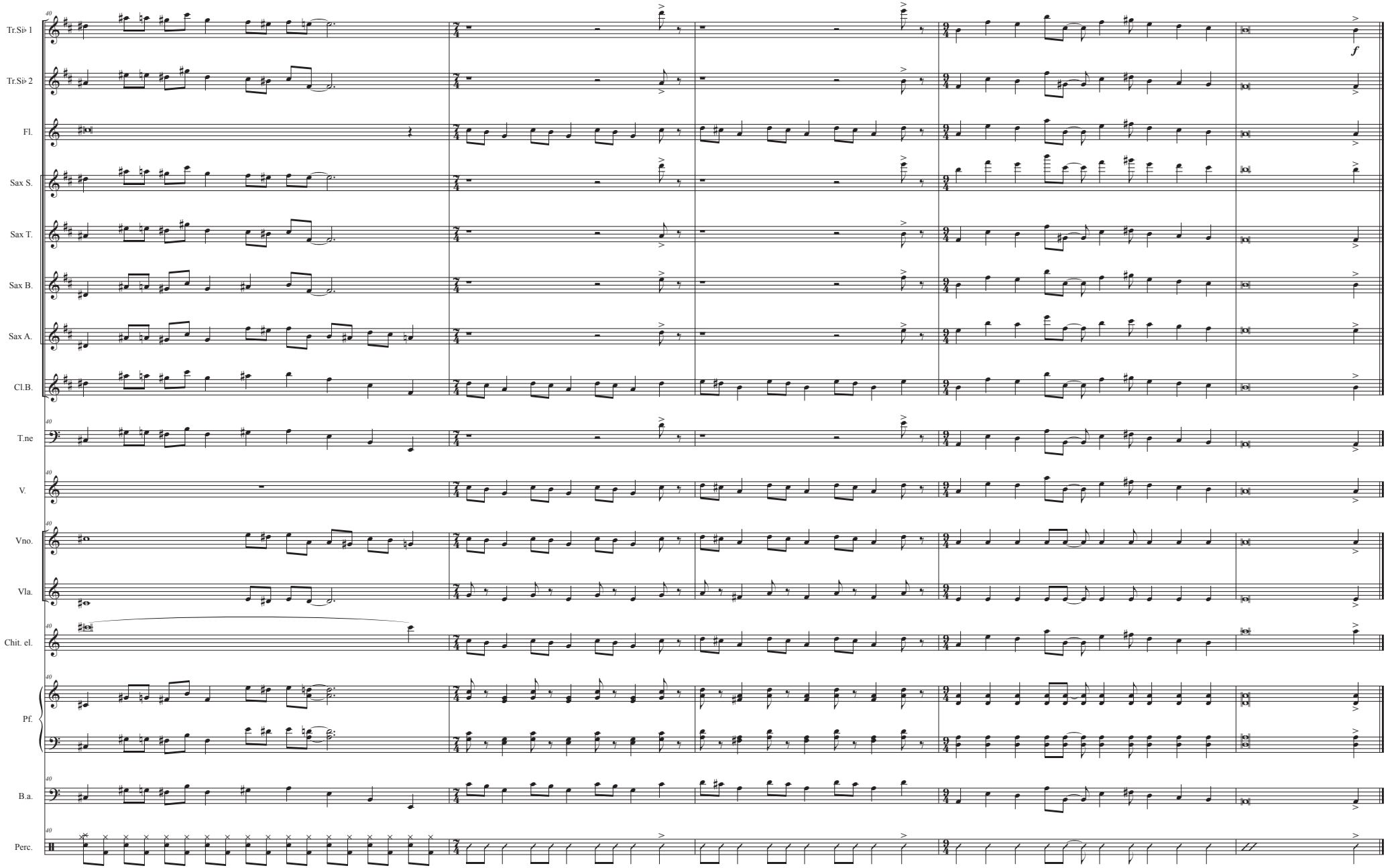
ASSOLI ad lib. C min

C

Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Fl.
Sax S.
Sax T.
Sax B.
Sax A.
Cl.B.
T.ne
V.
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
B.a.
Perc.


D
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Fl.
Sax S.
Sax T.
Sax B.
Sax A.
Cl.B.
T.ne
V.
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
B.a.
Perc.


Clave x4
ASSOLI ad lib. E min
Clave x4
Stop!
E
Tr.Si♭ 1
Tr.Si♭ 2
Fl.
Sax S.
Sax T.
Sax B.
Sax A.
Cl.B.
T.ne
V.
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
B.a.
Perc.
f


Tr.Sib 1
Tr.Sib 2
Fl.
Sax S.
Sax T.
Sax B.
Sax A.
Cl.B.
T.ne
V.
Vno.
Vla.
Chit. el.
Pf.
B.a.
Perc.
f

GOD SONG

arr. FRANCESCO FORGES

Robert Wyatt

Phil Miller

INTRO

♩ = 56

Sassofono soprano

Sassofono contralto

Sassofono tenore

Sassofono baritono

Tromba in Si♭

Trombone

Clarinetto basso

Corno in Fa

Flauto

Violino

Viola

Mezzosoprano

Piano

Vibrafono

Chitarra elettrica

Basso elettrico

Batteria

VAMP 1

17

♩ = 94

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

2nd time only

Trb.

2nd time only

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

2nd time only

Fl.

Vln.

2nd time only

Vla.

2nd time only

Mzs.

Pf.

Vib.

Chit. el.

B. el.

Batt.

26

A1

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭ — first time only

Trb. — first time only

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa — first time only

Fl.

Vln. — first time only

Vla. — first time only

SOLO

Mzs.

What on Earth are you do-ing God? Is this some sort of joke you're play - ing? Is it cause we didn't

Pf.

Vib.

E♭ Bmaj13(11♯) Dmaj7(11♯)/F♯ E♭/D♭ D♭add9 D♭maj7(11♯) /C

Chit. el.

B. el.

Batt.

35

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

Vln.

Vla.

Mzs.

pray? Well I can't see the point of the word wit - out the ac - tion Are you just hot air, brea - thing o - ver us and o - ver all? Is it fun

Pf.

Vib.

F-7 B♭-7 C7(♯9♭9) C♯-(add9) E♭maj7(11♯) D♭maj7(11♯) Bmaj7(11♯) C-7

Chit. el.

B. el.

Batt.

43

VAMP 2

A2

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

Vln.

Vla.

Mzs.

SCAT SOLO (C phrygian)

watch-ing us all? Where's your son? We want him a - gain!

C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

And next time you send your boy down here

Pf.

C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

Vib.

D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) E♭ Bmaj13(11♯)

Chit. el.

C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

B. el.

Batt.

52

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

Vln.

Vla.

Mzs.

Give him a wife and a se - xy dau - ghter

Some-one we can under-stand

Whose got some i - deas we can use

real-ly re - late too

We've all read your rules,

tried them,

Pf.

Vib.

Chit. el.

Dmaj7(11♯)/F♯

E♭/D♭

D♭add9

D♭maj7(11♯)

/C

F-7

F-7

B♭-7

C7(♯9♭9)

C♯-(add9)

E♭maj7(11♯)

B. el.

Batt.

61

A3

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

Vln.

Vla.

Mzs.

learned them in school, then tried them They're im - pos-si - ble rules, and you've made us look fools Well done, God! But now plea - se Don't hunt me down, for Heaven's sake! You know that

Pf.

Vib.

D♭maj7(11♯) Bmaj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) E♭ Bmaj13(11♯) Dmaj7(11♯)/F♯

Chit. el.

B. el.

Batt.

70

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

Vln.

Vla.

Mzs.

I'm on - ly jo - king, aren' - t I? Par - don me I'm very drunk! But I know what I'm try - ing to say, and it's near - ly night time And we're still a - lone, wai - ting for something unknown, still

Pf.

Vib.

Chit. el.

E♭/D♭ D♭add9 D♭maj7(11♯) /C F-7 B♭-7 C7(♯9♭9) C♯-(add9) E♭maj7(11♯) D♭maj7(11♯)

B. el.

Batt.

79

VAMP 3

Sax. s.

SOLO

C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

ON CUE

Tr. Si♭

ON CUE

Trb.

Cl. b.

ON CUE

Cor. Fa

Fl.

ON CUE

Vln.

ON CUE

Vla.

CHOIR
ON CUE

Mzs.

wai - ting So throw down a stone, or - something! Oh Give us a sign, for Christ's sake!

Pf.

C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

Vib.

C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

Bmaj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯) C-7 D♭maj7(11♯)

Chit. el.

B. el.

Batt.

88

VAMP 4

CODA

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Sib

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

ON CUE

Vln.

ON CUE

Vla.

Mzs.

Pf.

Vib.

C-7 | D♭maj7(11♯) | C-7 | D♭maj7(11♯) | C-7 | D♭maj7(11♯) | C-7 | D♭maj7(11♯)

Chit. el.

B. el.

Batt.

96

Sax. s.

Sax. a.

Sax. t.

Sax. bar.

Tr. Si♭

Trb.

Cl. b.

Cor. Fa

Fl.

Vln.

Vla.

Mzs.

tr

Pf.

tr

Vib.

Chit. el.

E♭maj13(11♯)

B. el.

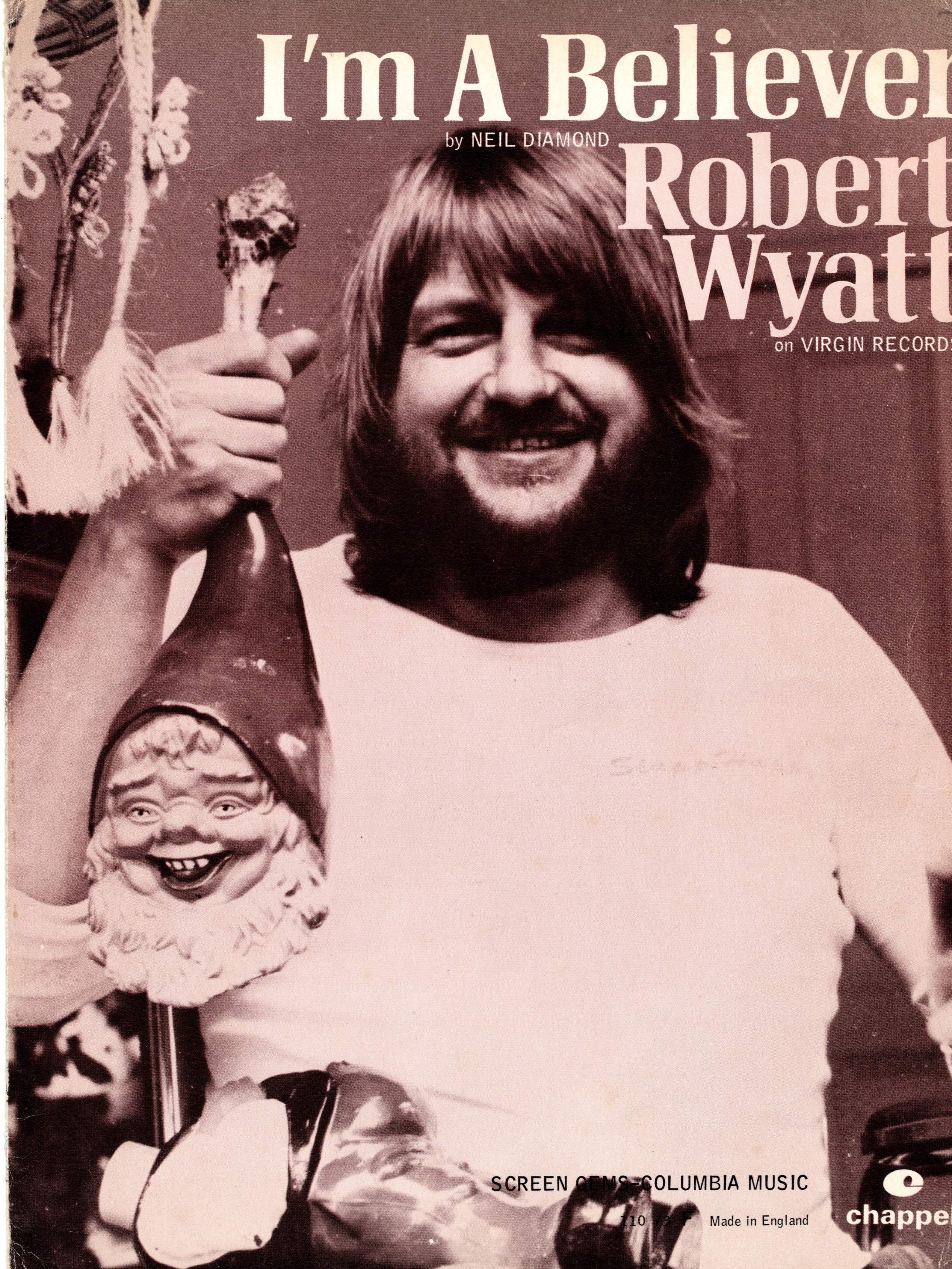
Batt.

I'm A Believer

by NEIL DIAMOND

Robert Wyatt

on VIRGIN RECORDS



SCREEN GEMS-COLUMBIA MUSIC

710 73 F Made in England

chappe

I'm A Believer

by
NEIL DIAMOND

Moderately

1. I thought love was on-
2. I thought love was more
3. Instrumental - - - -

f

F F11 F7 F F11 F7 F F11

—— ly true- in fair— y tales.—
—— or less a giv— en thing.—

And for someone else—
Seems the more I gave—

F F11 F F11

—— but not— for me.
—— the less- I got.

Love was out to get—
What's the use of try—
Love was out to get—

F F11 F7 B♭ F

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me. That's the way it seemed.
ing? All you get is pain.
me. That's the way it seemed.

B♭ F B♭

Dis - ap - point - ment haunt — ed all my dreams.
When I need - ed sun — shine I got rain.
Dis - ap - point - ment haunt — ed all my dreams.

F Fmaj7 F E♭ E♭6

(3rd x)

Then I saw her face,

E♭maj7 E♭ F F11

(3rd x)

— now I'm — a be - liev — er! Not a trace—

F F11 F

of doubt in my mind. I'm in love,

F11 F F11 F

Ooh! I'm a be - liev - er! I could-n't leave her if I

B♭ F B♭/F

1,2 tried.

3 tried. Now I'm a be -

F11 F11 B♭/F

liev - er! Now I'm a be -
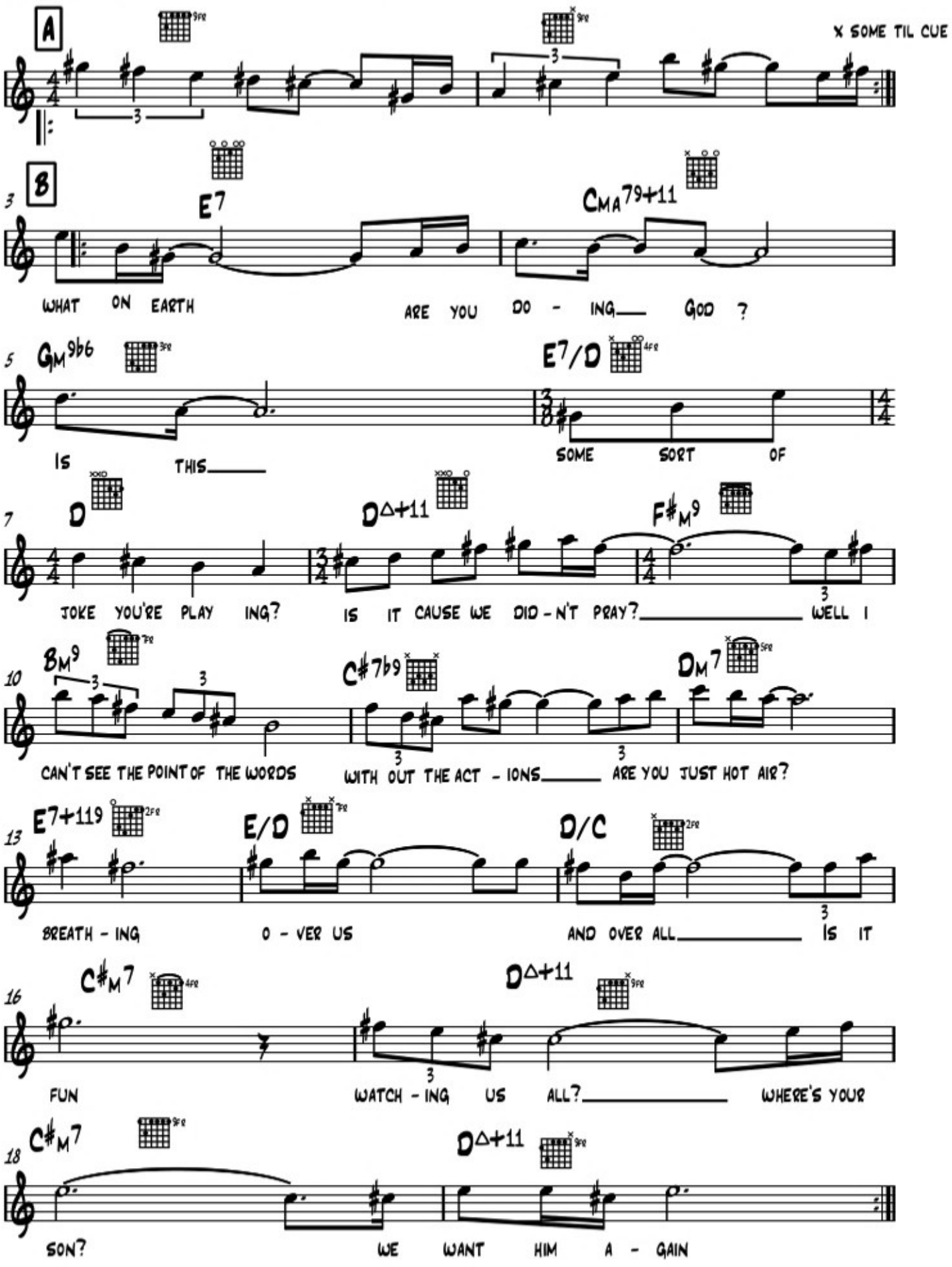
(Repeat and fade.)

F

Printed by Symphony Reproductions Ltd., 1 Langley Lane, London, S.W.8

God Song

LYRICS ROBERT WYATT ♩ = 66 MUSIC PHIL MILLER



LYRICS

What on Earth are you doing, God?
Is this some sort of joke you're playing?
Is it cause we didn't pray?
Well I can't see the point of the word without the action
Are you just hot air, breathing over us and over all?
Is it fun watching us all?
Where's your son? We want him again!

And next time you send your boy down here
Give him a wife and a sexy daughter
Someone we can understand
Who's got some ideas we can use, really relate to
We've all read your rules, tried them
Learnt them in school, then tried them
They're impossible rules, and you've made us look fools
Well done, God, but now please…

Don't hunt me down, for Heaven's sake!
You know that I'm only joking, aren't I?
Pardon me I'm very drunk!
But I know what I'm trying to say, and it's nearly night time
And we're still alone, waiting for something unknown, still waiting
So throw down a stone, or something!
Give us a sign, for Christ's sake!

CALYX

Calyx is an old tune of mine that supports many and various interpretations. With HATFIELD & THE NORTH it was wordless vocal ballad feature. ROBERT WYATT wrote words for it and it became a song proper. In the hands of ELTON DEAN,HUGH HOPPER & KIETH TIPPETT it became a vehicle for extended rubato soloing. Fred Baker & I use it as a ballad with the head metre as written but solos being played in 4 4.(i.e. each chord given 1 bar).

In the score there are 2 versions of the chords.They not intended to be played together. The stave marked 'new chords' is the version played by IN CAHOOTS when we toured JAPAN & it was played on keyboards. It is possible for guitar but some of the chords require some difficult stretches. The chords in this version in a few places (bar 4 beat 5, bar 5 beat 4, bar 8 beat 6) go beyond the harmonic scheme given for the solos. The stave 'marked old' chords are the changes which I wrote orginally for Hatfield & the North and are quite easy to play. These correspond to the solo changes.

The melody is also very easy to play & presents no technical difficulties.

As far as soloing here are some of most obvious scales for the solo changes:

Bb min 7	= Bb dorian	= Bb	C	Db	Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb		
A 13	= E melodic minor	= A	B	C#	D#	E	F#	G	A		
or	= A myxoldyian	= A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G	A		*
or	= A symmetrical	= A	A#	C	C#	D#	E	F#	G	A	*
B7+11	= F# melodic minor	= B	C#	D#	F	F#	G#	A	B		
	= B symmetrical	= B	C	D	D#	F	F#	G#	A	B	*
C# 6/9	= C# lydian	= C#	D#	F	G	G#	A#	C	C#		
C min 7	= C dorian	= C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb	C		*
or	= C phrygian	= C	Db	Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb	C		
C7+9	= un-named	= C	C#	D#	E	G	G#	A#	C		
or	= C# melodic minor	= C	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	C		
Bb dim	= Bb symmetrical	= Bb	C	Db	Eb	E	Gb	G	A	Bb	*
E dim	= un-named	= Bb	C	Db	Eb	E	G	Ab	Bb		
F min 7	= F dorian	= F	G	Ab	Bb	C	D	Eb	F		
G min 9b6	= G aoelian	= G	A	Bb	C	D	Eb	F	G		
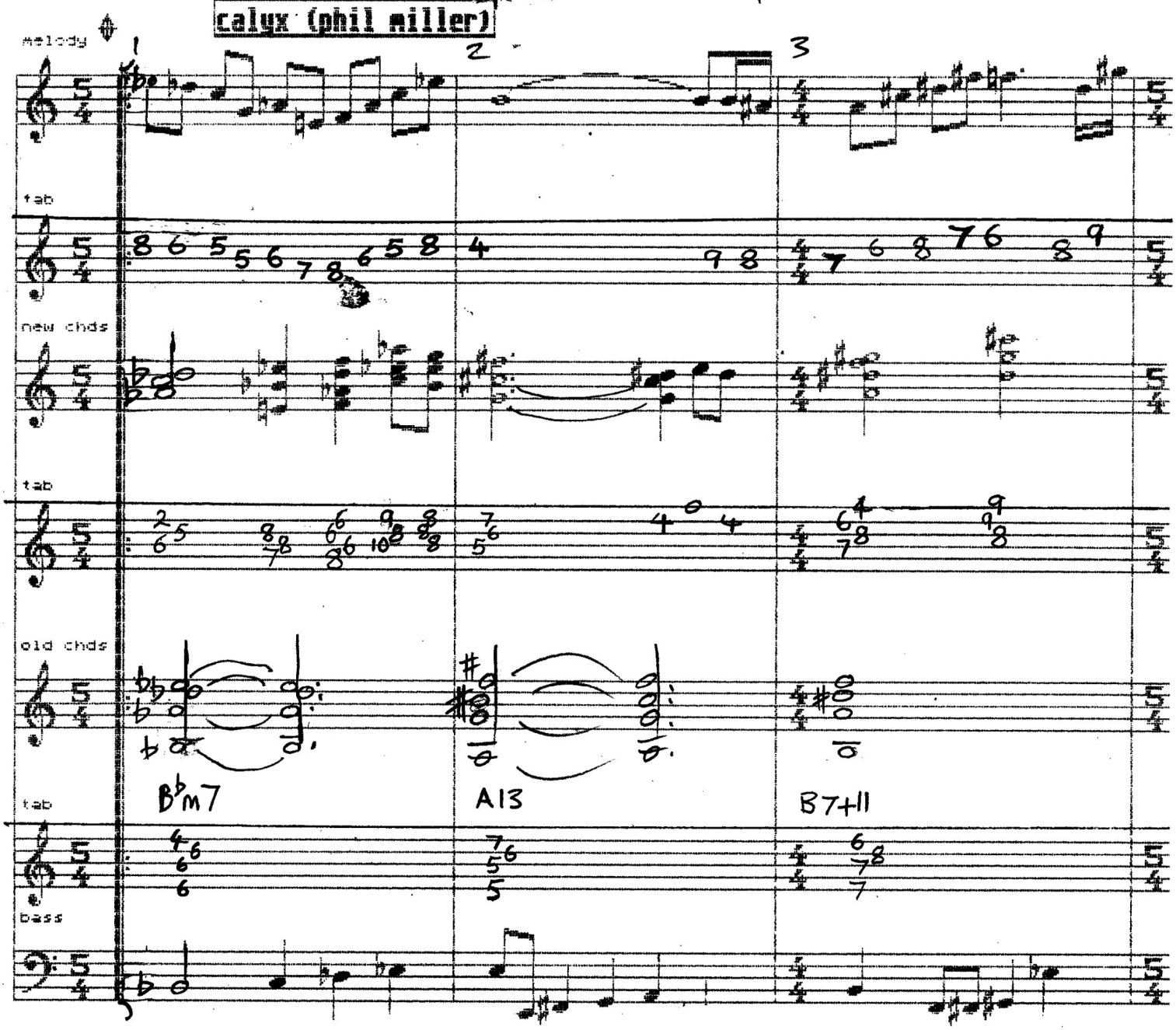
The scales un-named are so called because I cannot find names for them in any of my reference books.Neither Slominsky Thesaurus of scales & melodic patterns nor Vincent Persichetti Twentieth Century Harmony put a name to them.

The scales marked with * go beyond the compass of the harmonic scheme that is implied by the melody & harmony & are therefore more difficult to use in this context, particularly where one is attempting to base a solo around the melody.The situation in which they work has to be prepared & contrived.
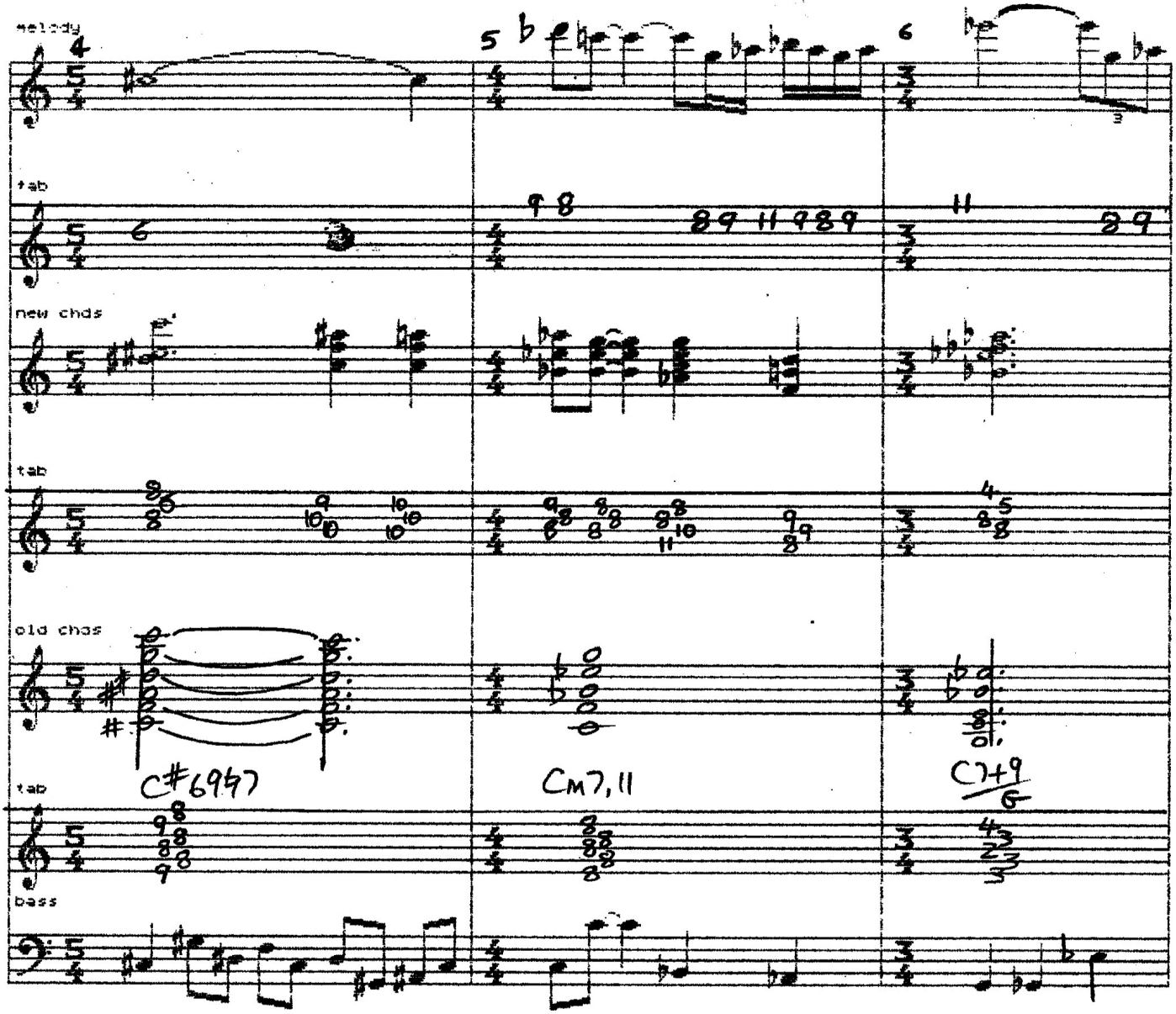
All parts except the bass are up the octave as for guitar.
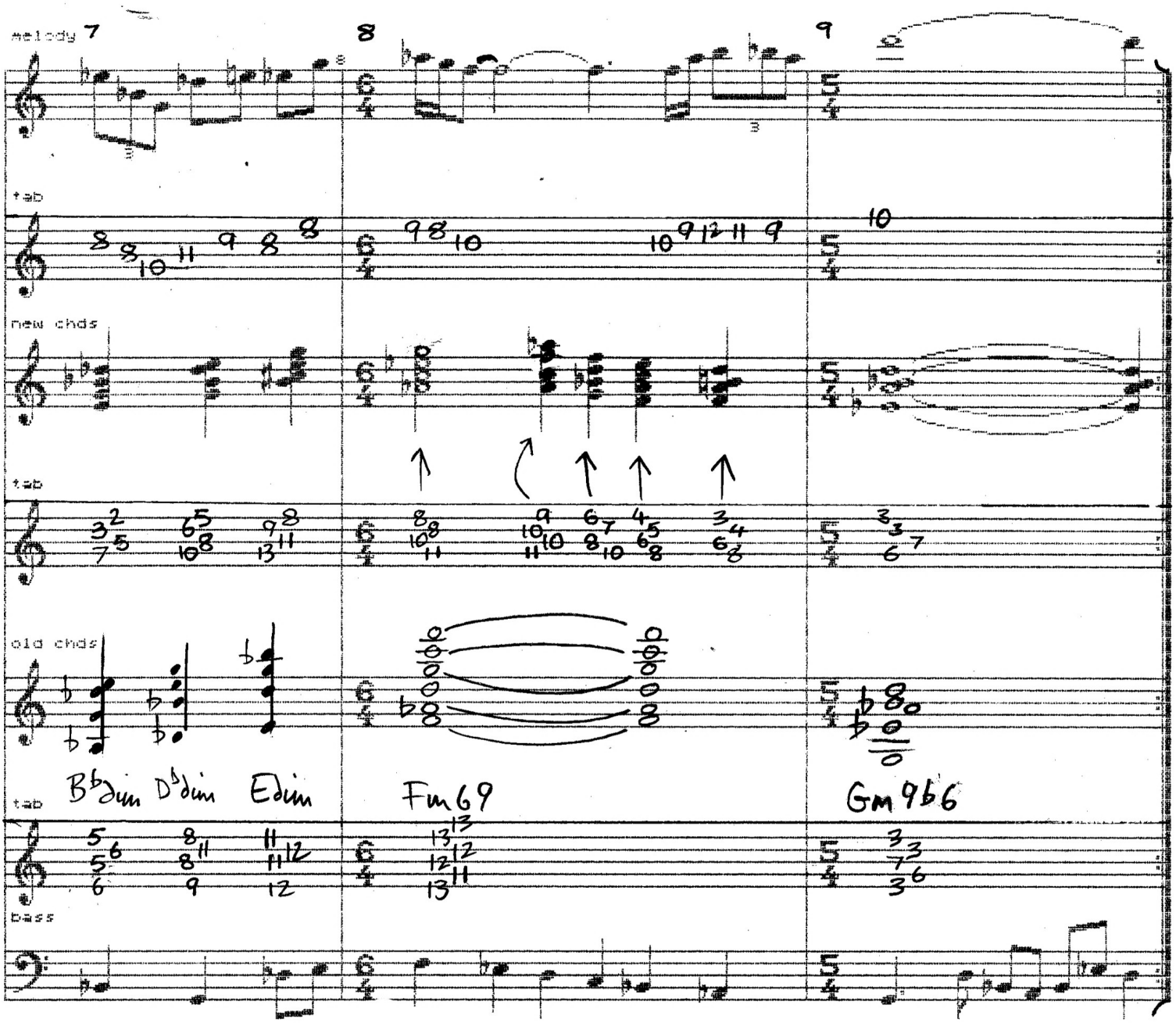
♩ = 54

calyx (phil miller)
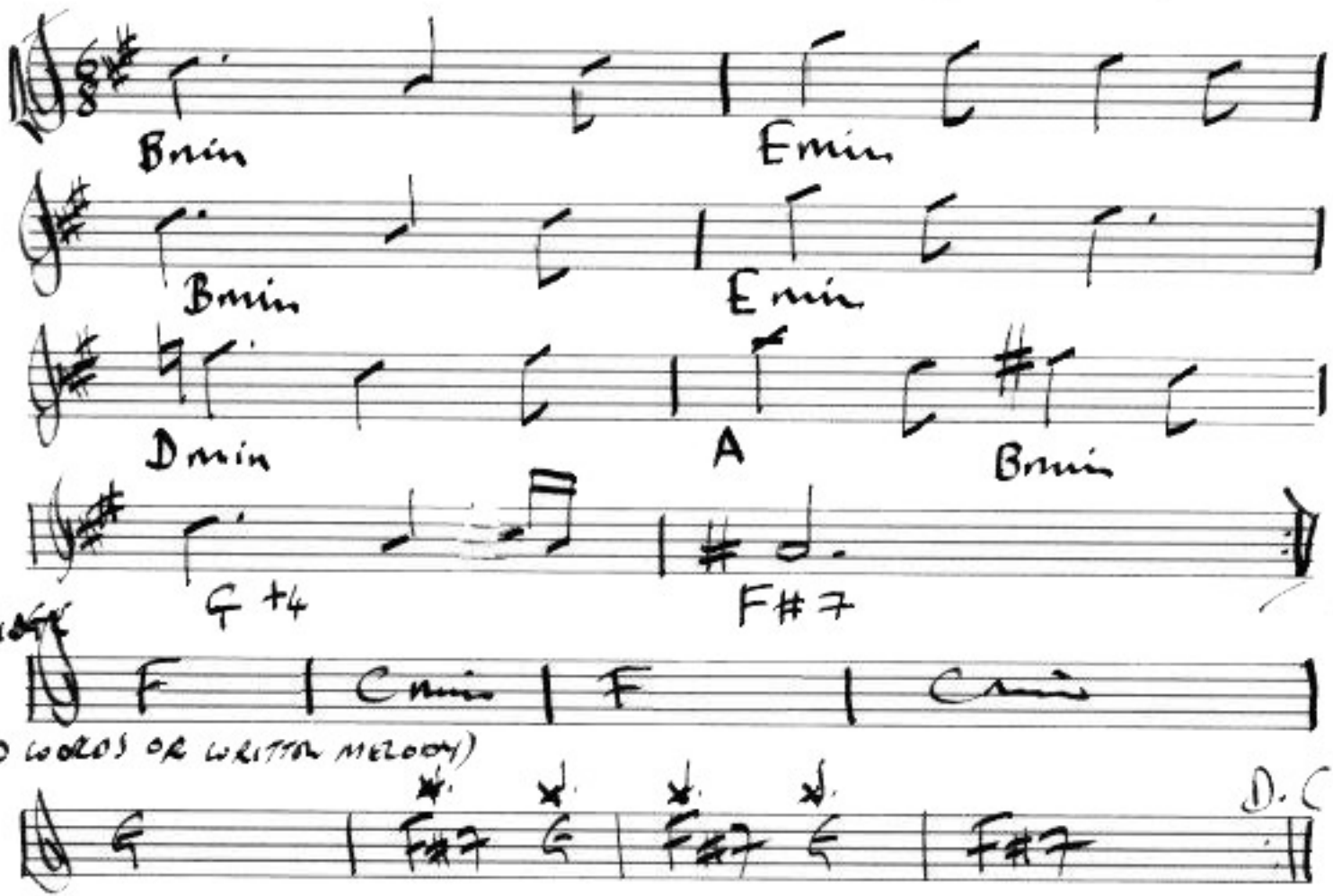


Calyx




melody
7
8
9
tab
new chds
tab
old chds
B♭dim D♭dim Edim
Fm69
Gm9b6
tab
bass
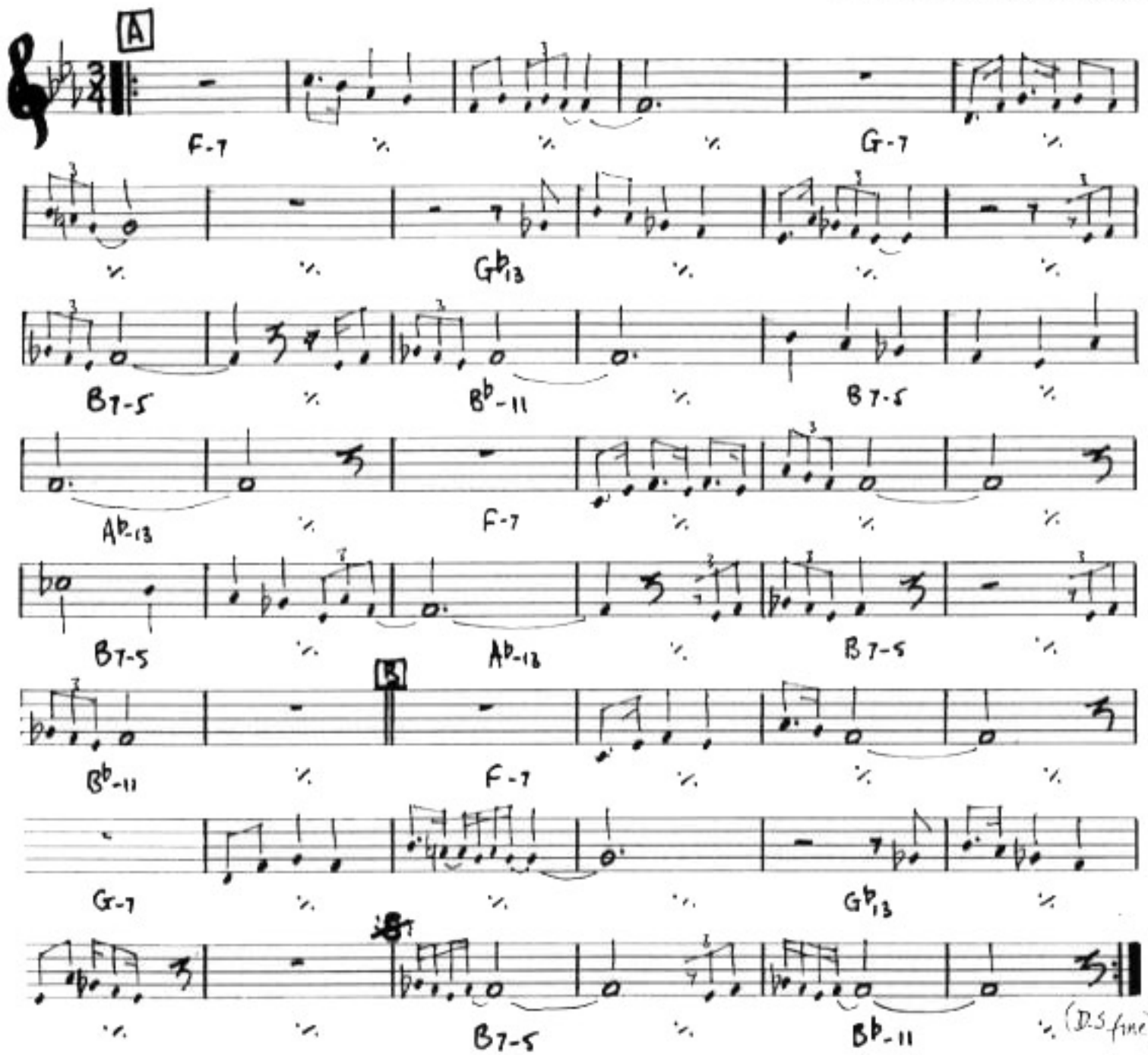
MEMORIES

© HUGH HOPPER
WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC



Half the Time

© HODDED / HEWINS / WYATT



1

Well, Hello and here we are again.
First things first, let's stop and talk awhile.
About the reasons that are going through.
The things we say, and the things we do.
It's not only me it's you.
There is no one else I'm running to.
I, will always follow you.
See my point of view?
I love you.

B

Half the time, it's pantomime.

Half the time, it's only make believe.

Blown paper ashes that you show.

Will tell me things, That I have to know.

2
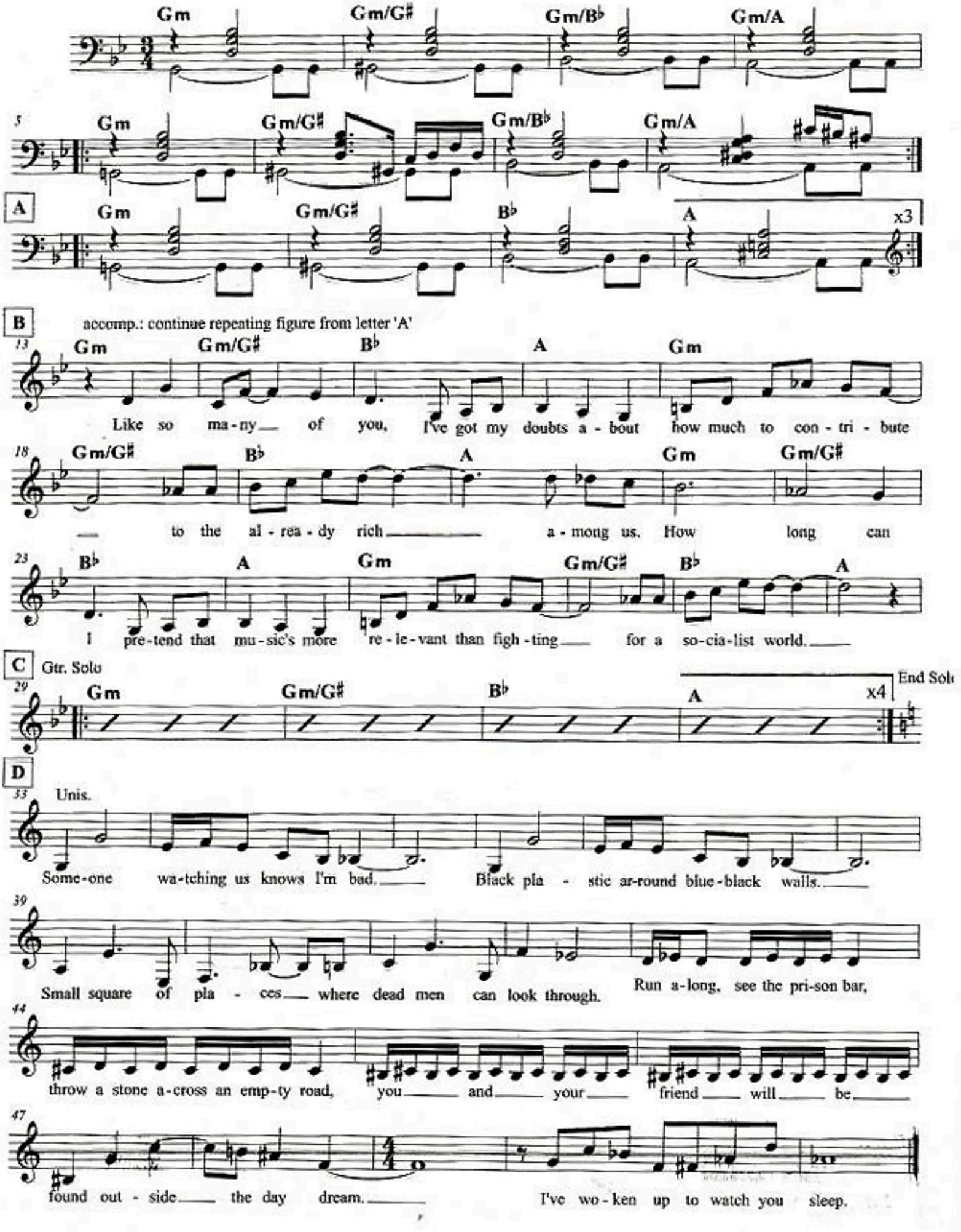
When we're quiet after mating love.
I had thought that it was wrong.
But, how can anything this beautiful.
Still belong, to the realms of wrong.
Surely it's like singing songs.
I certainly am not the only one.
Not taken to this hide and seek
And jelousy.
It's not for me.

BRITISH MUSIC WRITERS COUNCIL
MARK HEWINS
MUSICIANS' UNION 3959

Gloria Gloom
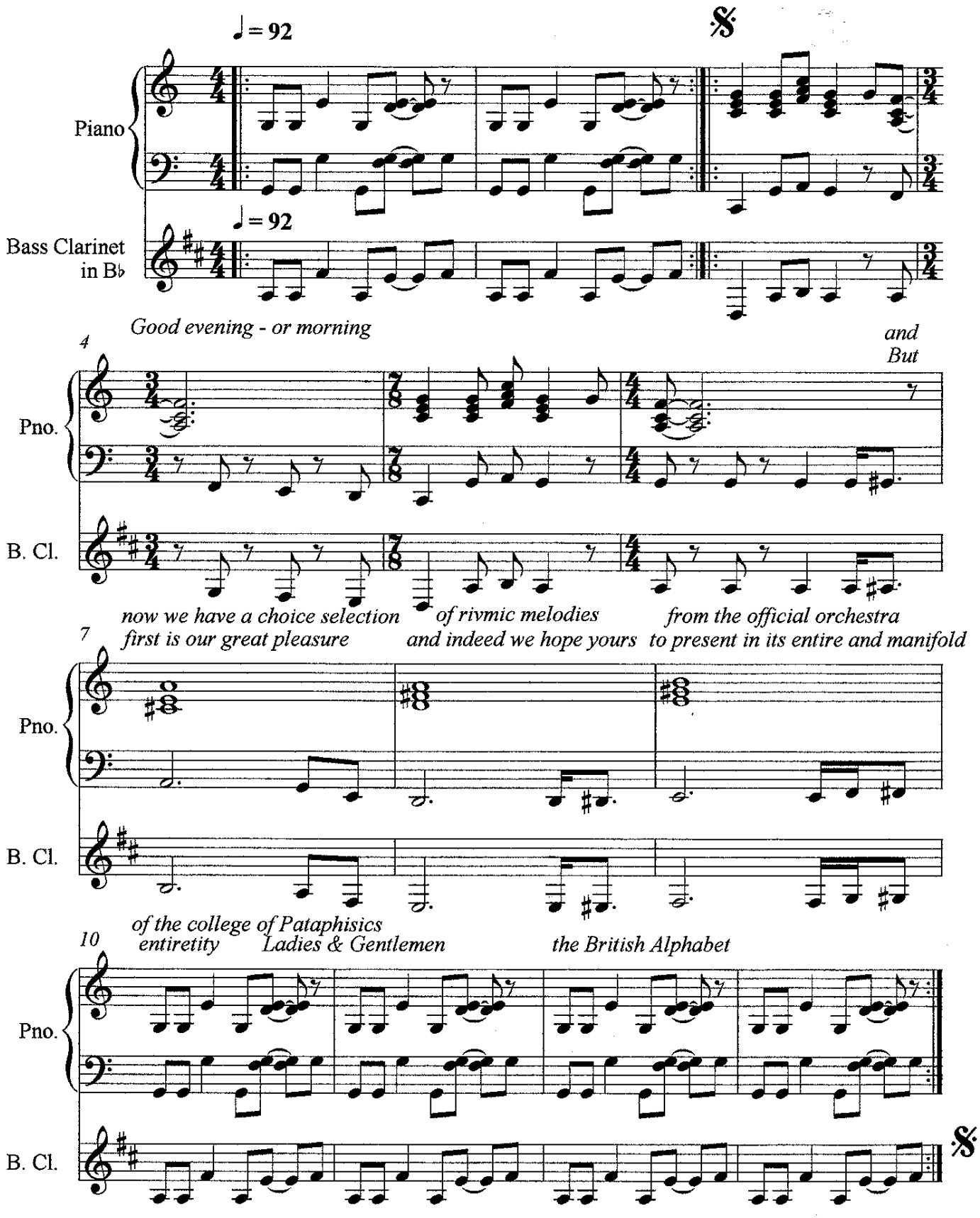
As performed by Henry Cow
on "Concerts"

Music by Bill McCormick
Words by Robert Wyatt



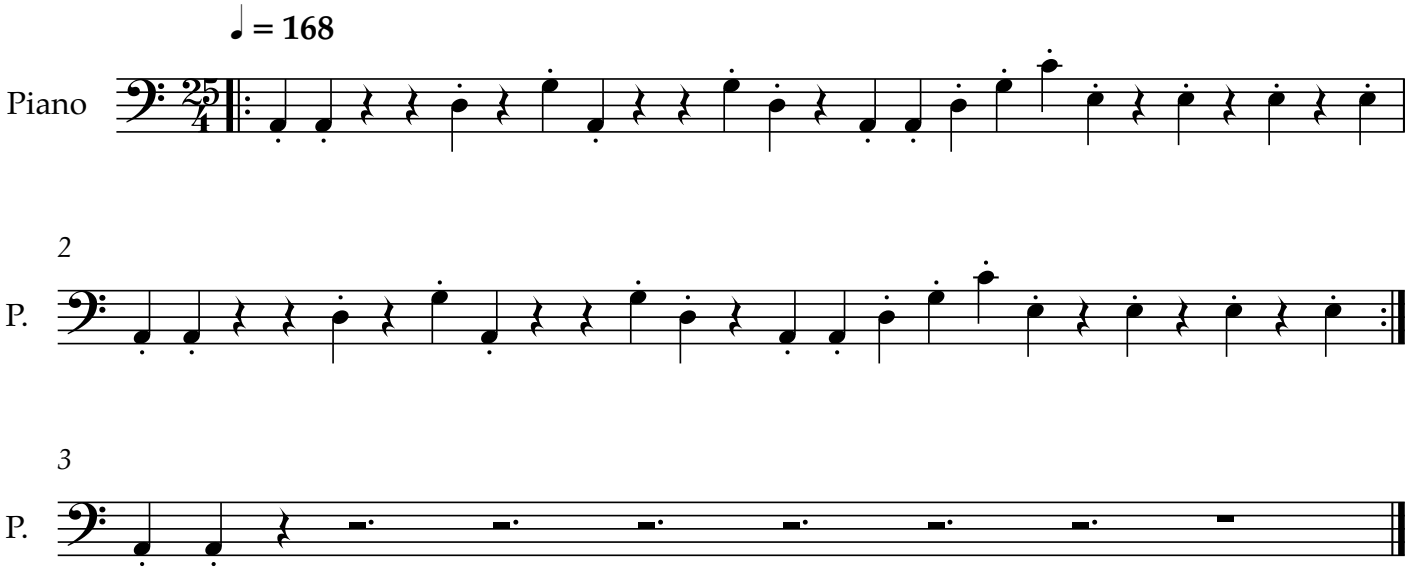
PATAPHISICAL INTRODUCTION

Robert WYATT
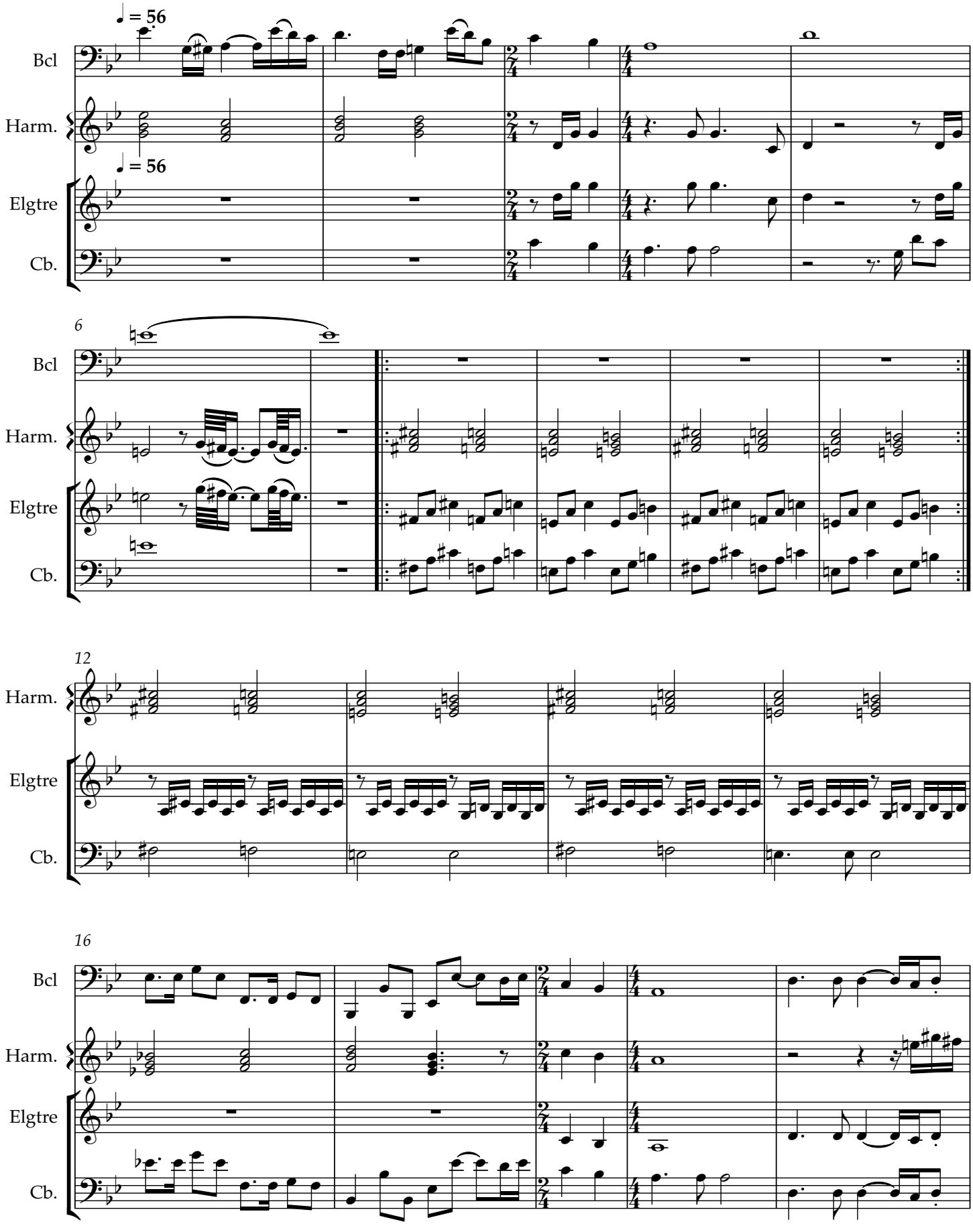


BOX 25/4 LID
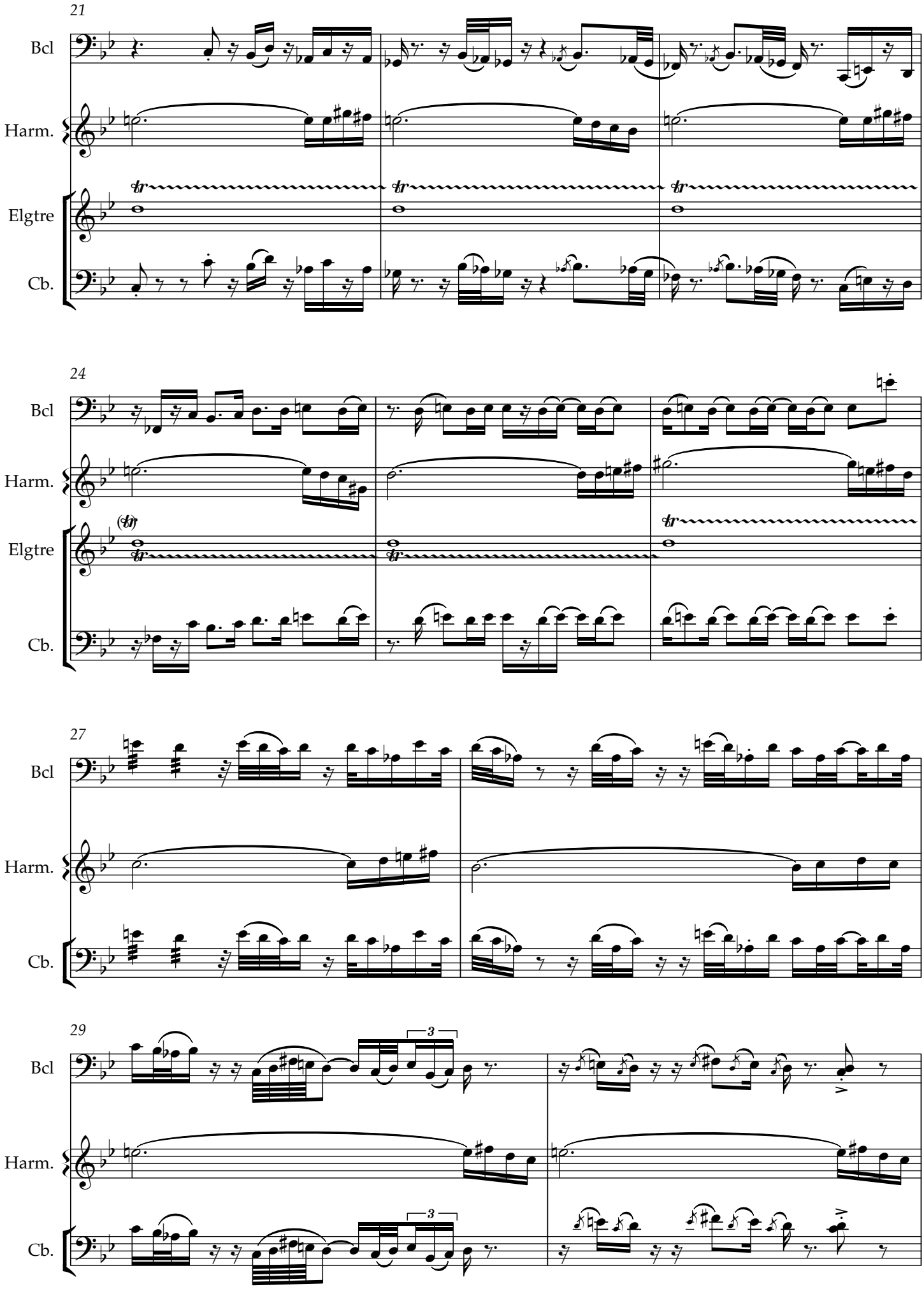
Hugh HOPPER / Mike RATLEDGE
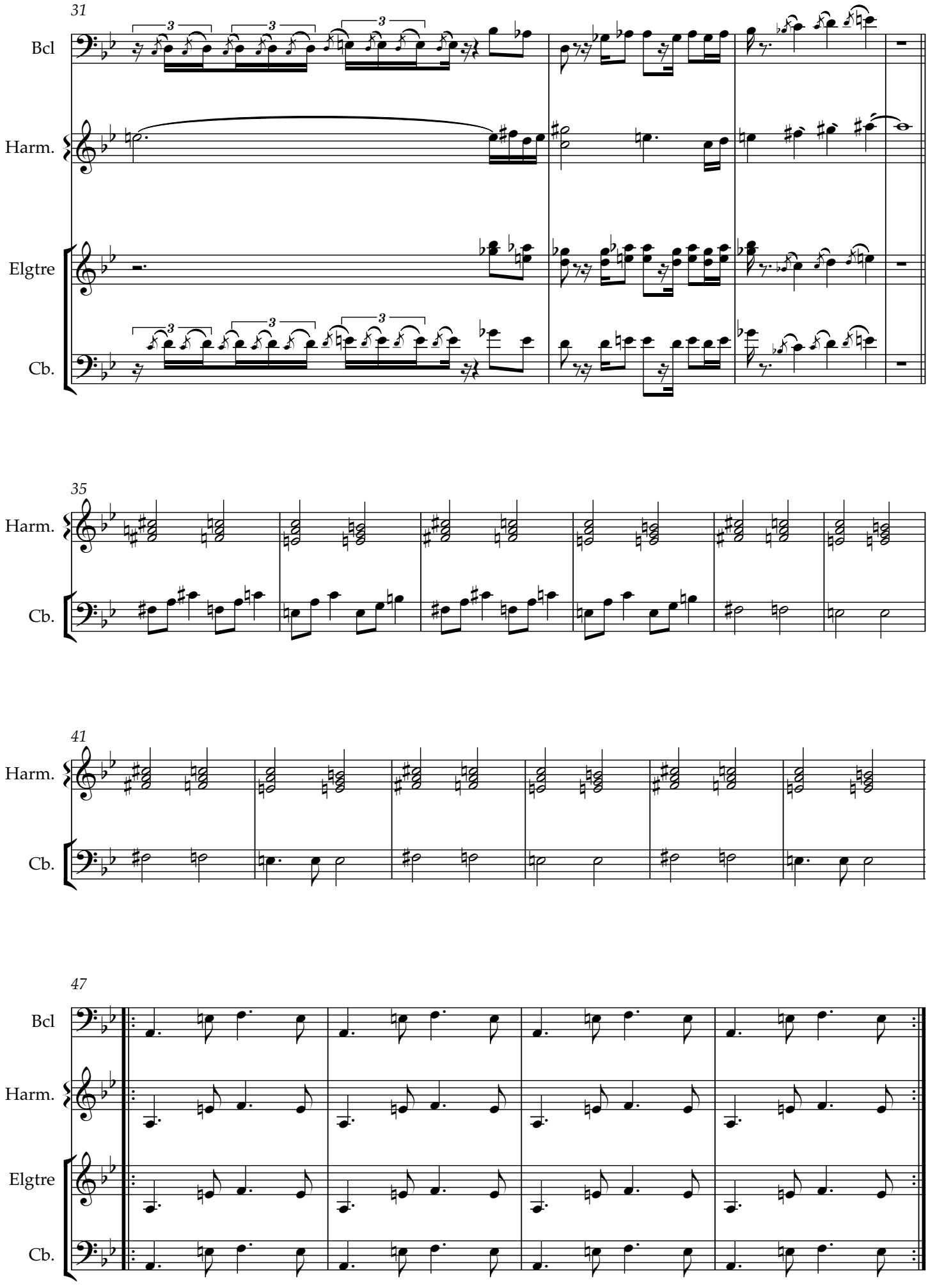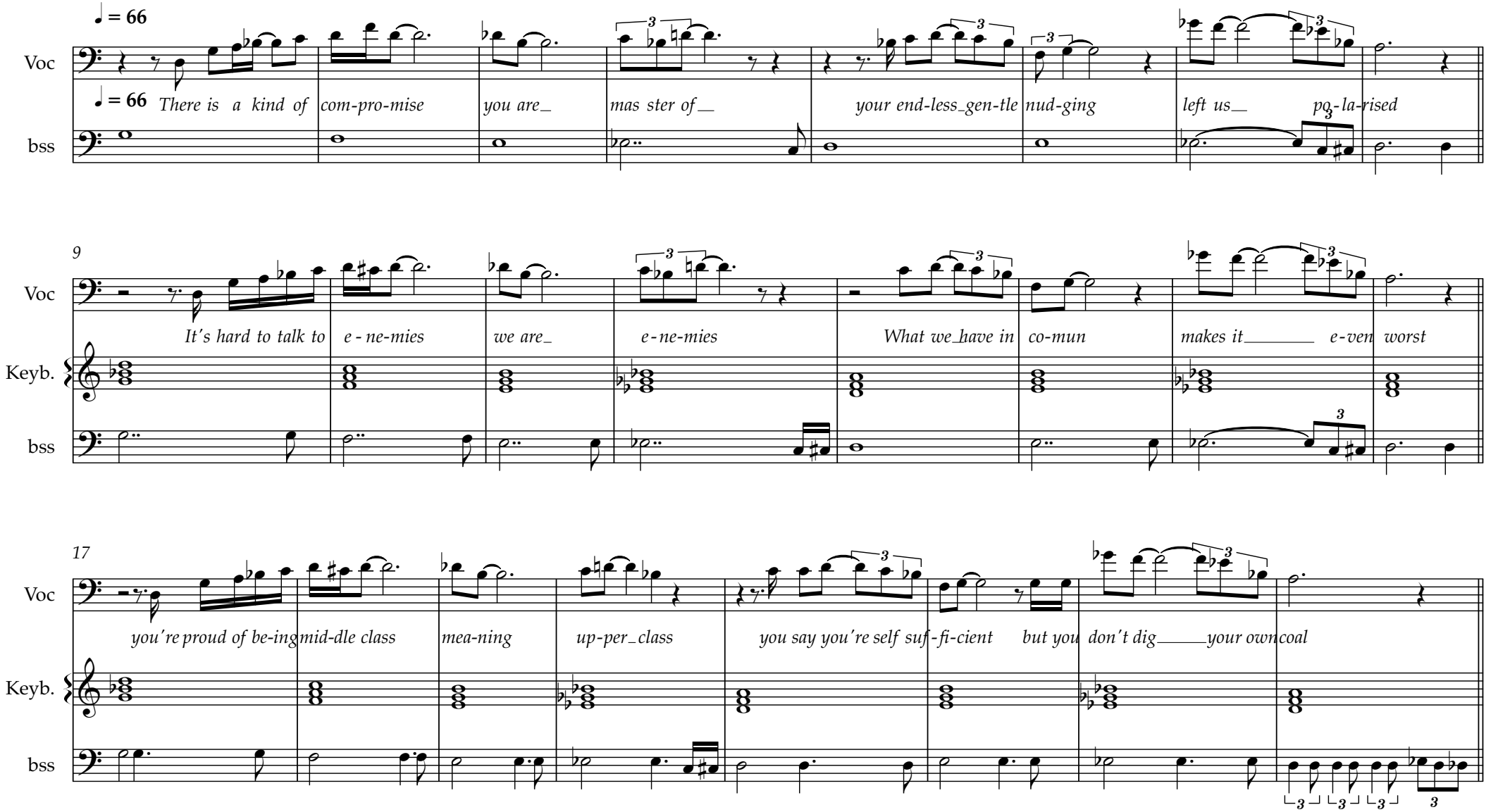


SEA SONG
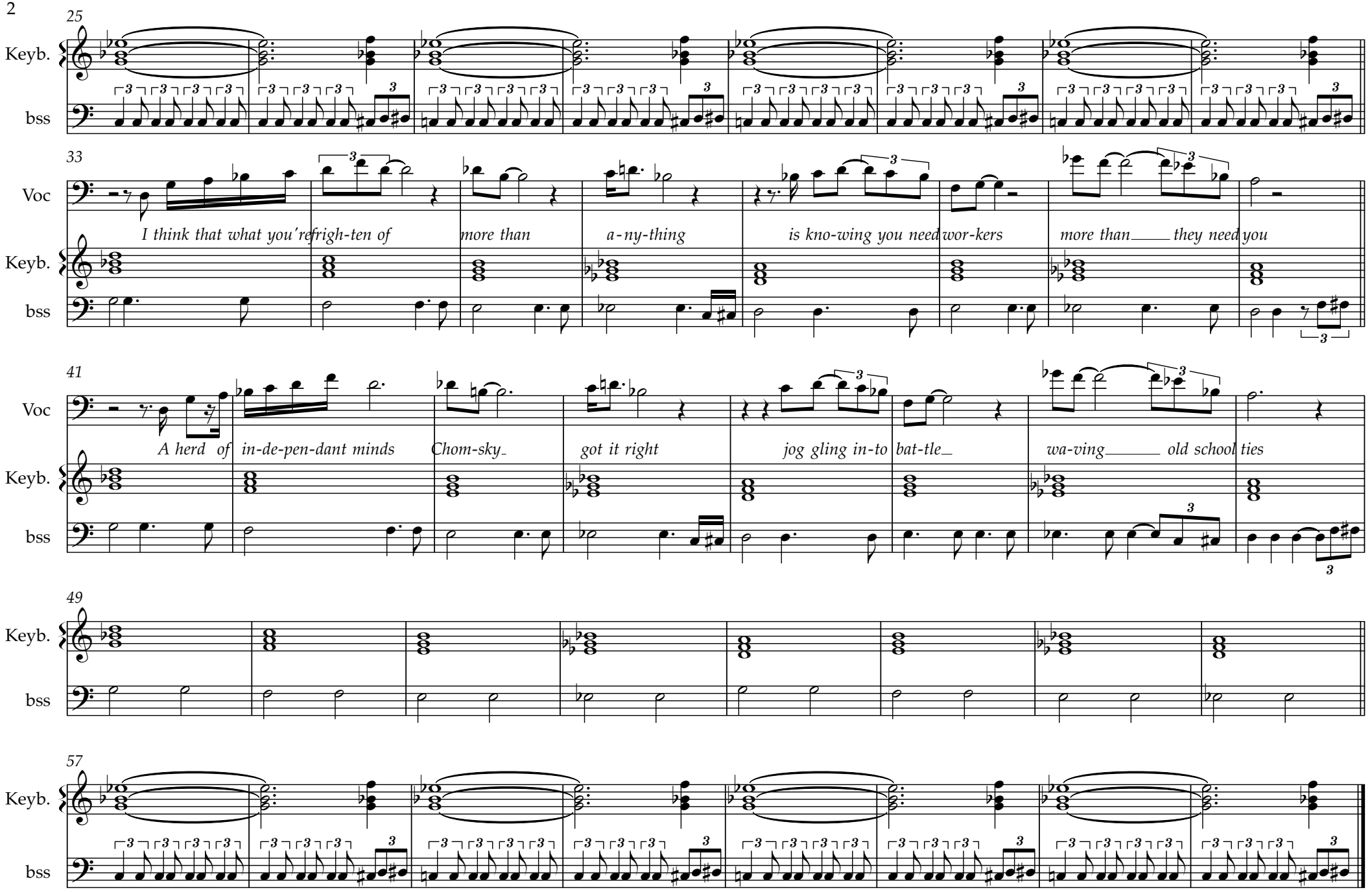
Robert WYATT




21
Bcl
Harm.
Elgtre
Cb.
24
Bcl
Harm.
Elgtre
Cb.
27
Bcl
Harm.
Cb.
29
Bcl
Harm.
Cb.
3
3
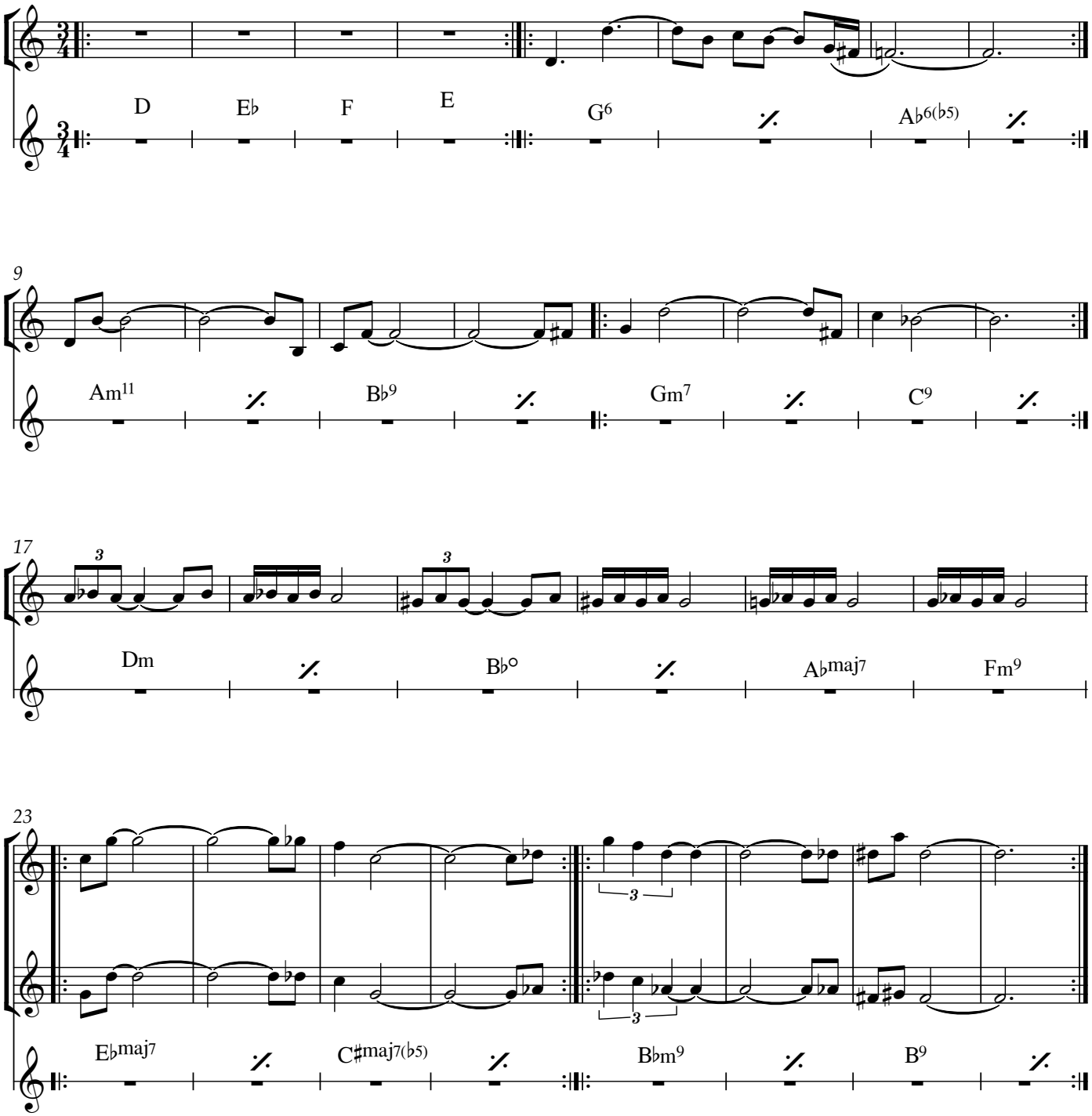

31
Bcl
Harm.
Elgtre
Cb.
35
Harm.
Cb.
41
Harm.
Cb.
47
Bcl
Harm.
Elgtre
Cb.


♩ = 66
Voc
bss
There is a kind of com-pro-mise you are_ mas ster of__ your end-less_gen-tle nud-ging left us__ po-la-rised
9
Voc
Keyb.
bss
It's hard to talk to e - ne-mies we are_ e - ne-mies What we_have in co-mun makes it_____ e-ven worst
17
Voc
Keyb.
bss
you're proud of be-ing mid-dle class mea-ning up-per_class you say you're self suf-fi-cient but you don't dig_____your own coal


25
Keyb.
bss
33
Voc
I think that what you're
righ-ten of
more than
a-ny-thing
is kno-wing you need
wor-kers
more than
they need you
Keyb.
bss
41
Voc
A herd of
in-de-pen-dant minds
Chom-sky
got it right
jog gling in-to
bat-tle
wa-ving
old school ties
Keyb.
bss
49
Keyb.
bss
57
Keyb.
bss

GLORIA GLOOM - PART II

R.Wyatt / B.Mac Cormick



The Song

Robert Wyatt
Arrgt: Vincent Artaud

A

flute 1
flute 2
sax alto
sax tenor
clbsL
piano
clavier+perc
guit
basse
batterie

+delay court
Gmin9b13
Amin9b13

B

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd.
+perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

simil.
(bow=hold)

A2

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

18

f

f

p

Gmin9b13

Amin9b13

Gmin9b13

ect....

Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻

mf *mp*

(charlet)

p

B2

26

f

simil.

f

simil.

mp

Amin9b13

Gmin9b13

Amin9b13

(synthe pad)

Clydien

"épaissir" l'orchestre.....

Clydien

(cymbale)

C

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

34

simil.

ect....

f
pp
mp

B min7.11 | E min7.9 | F M7 | E min7b5 | A phryg | D | D/F♯

G M6 | D/F♯

(bow=hold)

43

simil.

E min7.11 | E♭M7#5 | D♭dim | C7.9 | G M6 | D/F♯ | E min7.11 | D♭dim

"épaissir" l'orchestre.....

D

51

fl.1.

f

fl.2.

f

alt.sx.

mp

simil.

tn.sx.

mp

simil.

bs.cl.L

pn.

C7.9

kbd. +perc.

C7.9 | F M9 | G 9 | A min9

gtr.

F M9 | G 9 | A min9

bs.

ds.

soutenir plus.....

mf

56

fl.1.

6

p *ff*

fl.2.

p *ff*

alt.sx.

ff

tn.sx.

ff

bs.cl.L

6 6 6

p *ff*

pn.

kbd. +perc.

F M9 | G 9 | A min9

gtr.

F M9 | G 9 | A min9

bs.

F M9 | G 9 | A min9

ect....

ds.

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

60

f *mp* *mp* *f*

6

F M9 G 9 Amin9

CHORUS

65

pp *pp*

A min *improviser.....* Gmin9b13 Amin9b13 Gmin9b13 Amin9b13

mp *pp* *mp* *pp*

p Ped. Ped.

The Song

A3

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

75

p

Gmin9b13 Amin9b13 Gmin9b13 Amin9b13 Gmin9b13

ect....

toujours en croches régulières.....

+delay court

(bow=hold)

(charlet)

B3

84

Amin9b13 Gmin9b13 Amin9b13

f

Clydien Bmin7.11

arpèges lents.....

(cymbale)

The Song

A4

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

93

f f f f pp pp

Gmin9b13 Amin9b13

Ped. * Ped. *

Emin7.9 FM7 Emin7b5 Aphryg D D/F♯

(charlet)

103

f f f f

Gmin9b13 Amin9b13 Gmin9b13 Amin9b13

ect....

B4

C2

fl.1.

fl.2.

alt.sx.

tn.sx.

bs.cl.L

pn.

kbd.
+perc.

gtr.

bs.

ds.

mp

f

simil.

G M6 D/F♯ Emin7.11

Clydien Bmin7.11 Emin7.9 FM7 Emin7b5 Aphryg D D/F♯

arpèges lents.....

(cymbale)

soutenir plus.....

E♭M7#5 D♭dim C7.9 G M6 D/F♯ Emin7.11 D♭dim C7.9

D2

131

fl.1. *mf*

fl.2.

alt.sx. *mf*

tn.sx. *mf*

bs.cl.L *mf*

pn.

kbd. +perc.

gtr.

bs.

ds.

140

fl.1. *ff*

fl.2. *ff*

alt.sx. *ff*

tn.sx. *ff*

bs.cl.L *ff*

pn. FM7.9 *f*

kbd. +perc. (perc)

gtr. FM7.9

bs. *f*

ds. *f*

148

fl.1. *simil.*

fl.2. *simil.*

alt.sx. *simil.*

tn.sx. *simil.*

bs.cl.L *simil.*

pn. G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9

kbd. +perc. G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9

gtr. G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9

bs.

ds.

156

fl.1. *ff* *simil.* *ff* *ff*

fl.2. *ff* *simil.* *ff* *ff*

alt.sx. *ff* *simil.* *ff* *simil.*

tn.sx. *ff* *simil.* *ff* *simil.*

bs.cl.L *ff* *simil.* *ff* *ff*

pn. G6.9 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

kbd. +perc. G6.9 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

gtr. G6.9 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

bs.

ds.

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

162

ff

simil.

FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9

168

G6.9 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

174

fl.1.

fl.2.

alt.sx.

tn.sx.

bs.cl.L

pn.

kbd. +perc.

gtr.

bs.

ds.

ff *simil.*

FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11 FM7.9 G6.9

181

Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6

185

fl.1.

fl.2.

alt.sx.

simil.

ff

tn.sx.

simil.

ff

bs.cl.L

Amin7.11

FM7.9

G9.6

pn.

kbd.
+perc.

gtr.

bs.

ds.

189

fl.1.

fl.2.

alt.sx.

simil.

ff

tn.sx.

simil.

ff

bs.cl.L

Amin7.11

FM7.9

G6.9

pn.

kbd.
+perc.

gtr.

bs.

ds.

193

fl.1.

ff

fl.2.

ff

alt.sx.

simil.

ff

simil.

tn.sx.

simil.

ff

simil.

bs.cl.L

ff

simil.

pn.

Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

kbd. +perc.

Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

gtr.

Amin7.11 FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

bs.

ds.

198

fl.1.

ff

fl.2.

ff

alt.sx.

tn.sx.

bs.cl.L

pn.

FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

kbd. +perc.

gtr.

FM7.9 G9.6 Amin7.11

bs.

ds.

fl.1.
fl.2.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.L
pn.
kbd. +perc.
gtr.
bs.
ds.

203

FM7.9 G6.9 Amin7.11 FM7.9
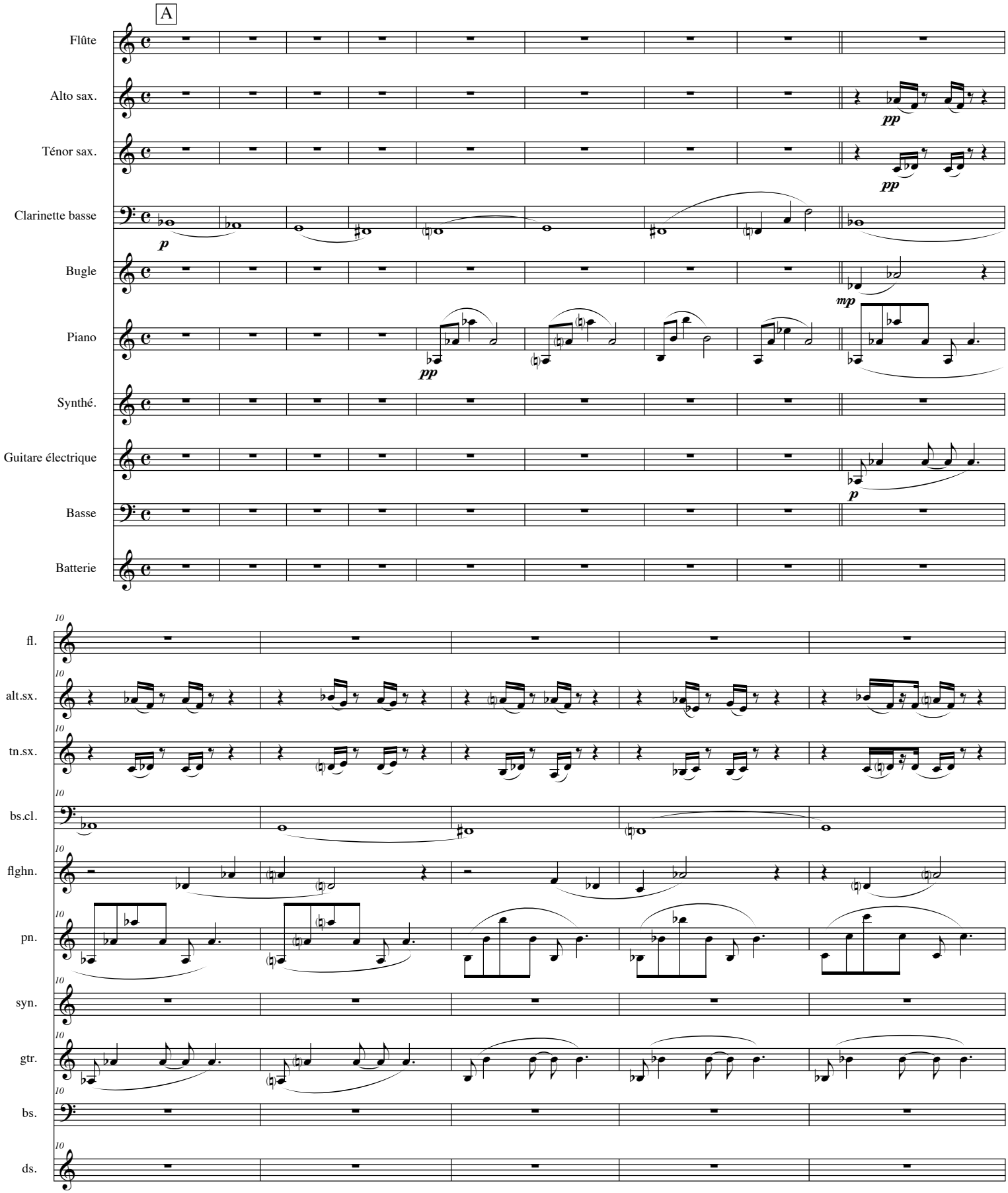
208
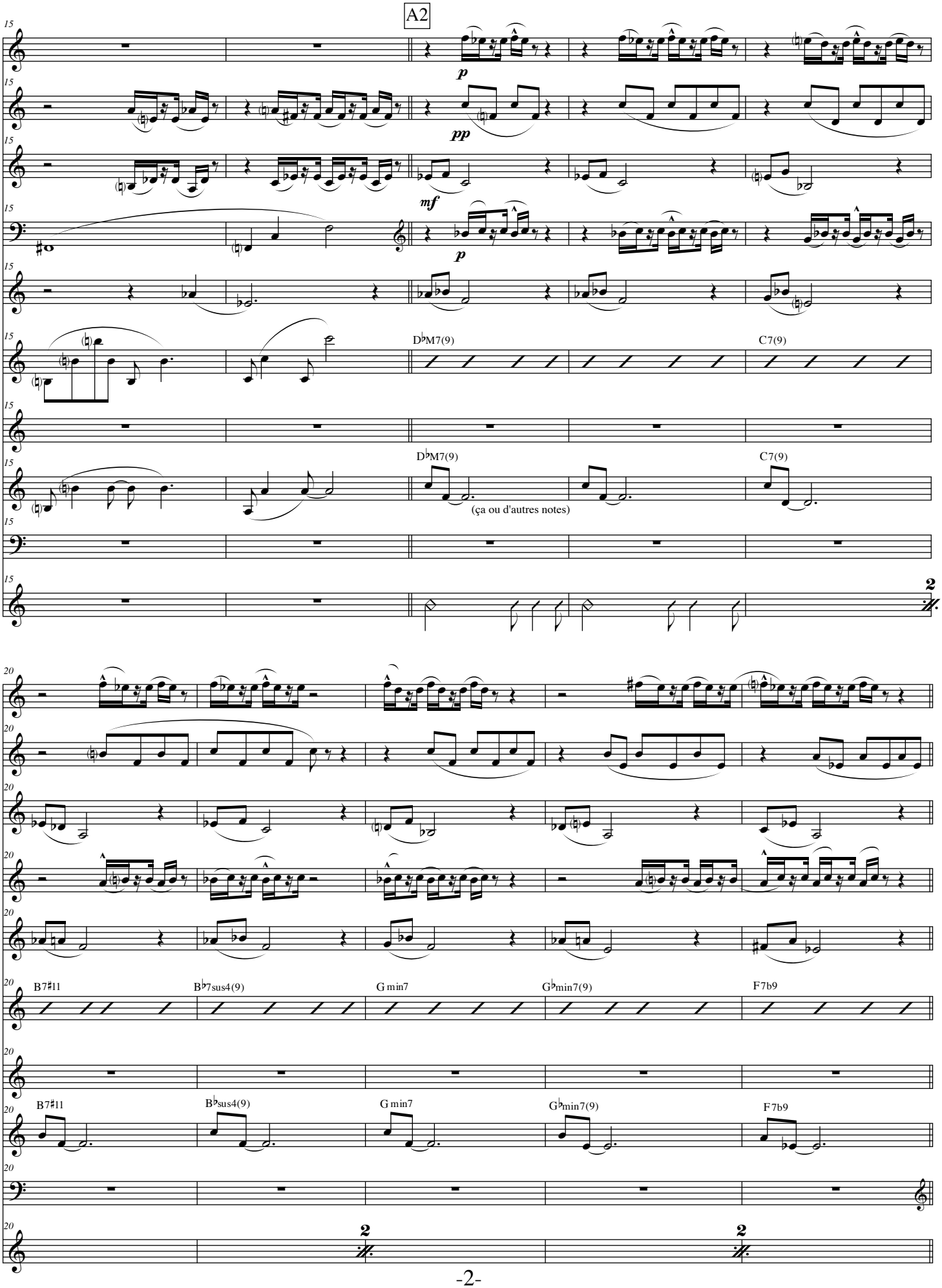
ff
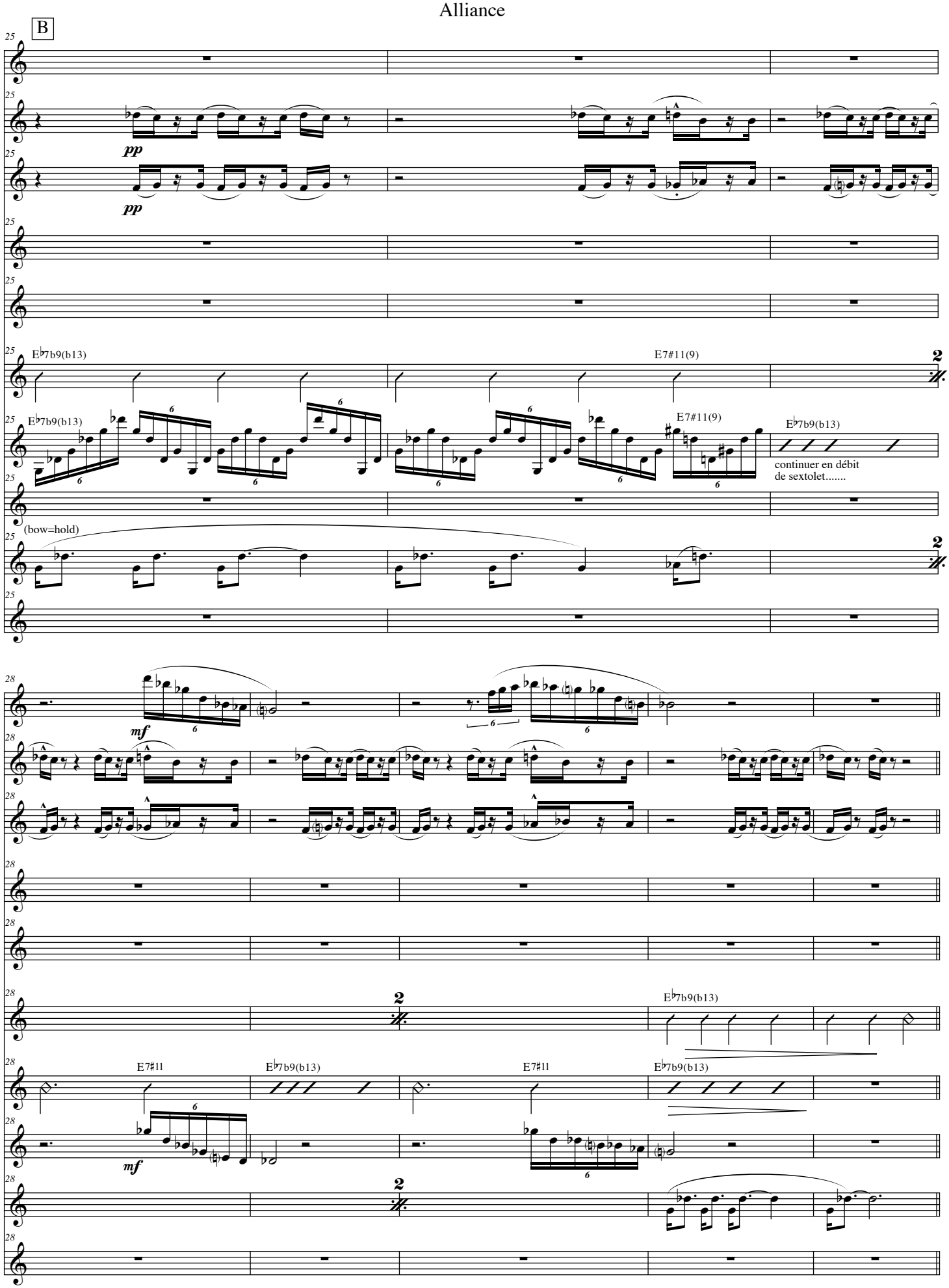
Alliance
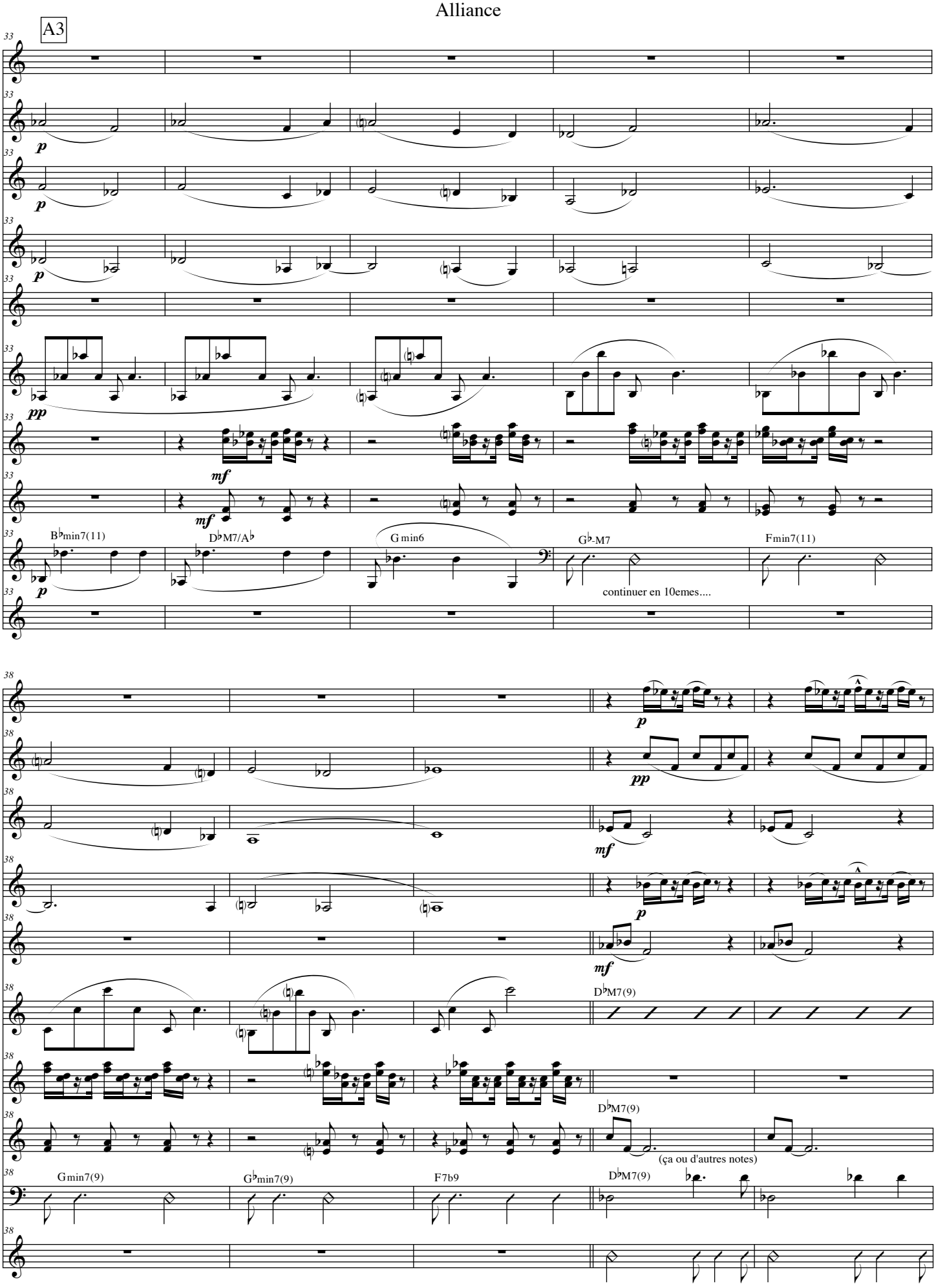
C
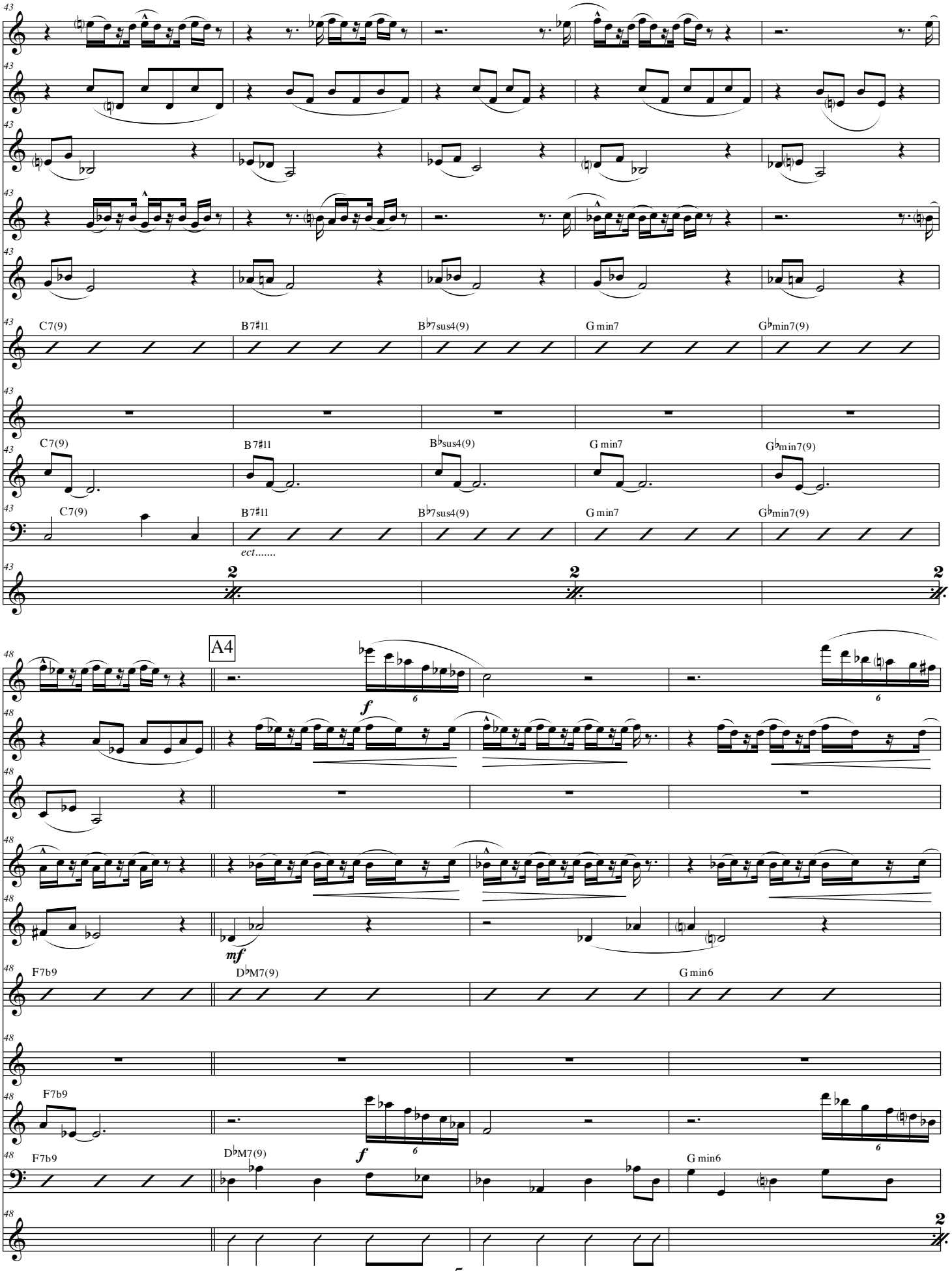
Robert Wyatt
Arrgt: Vincent Artaud
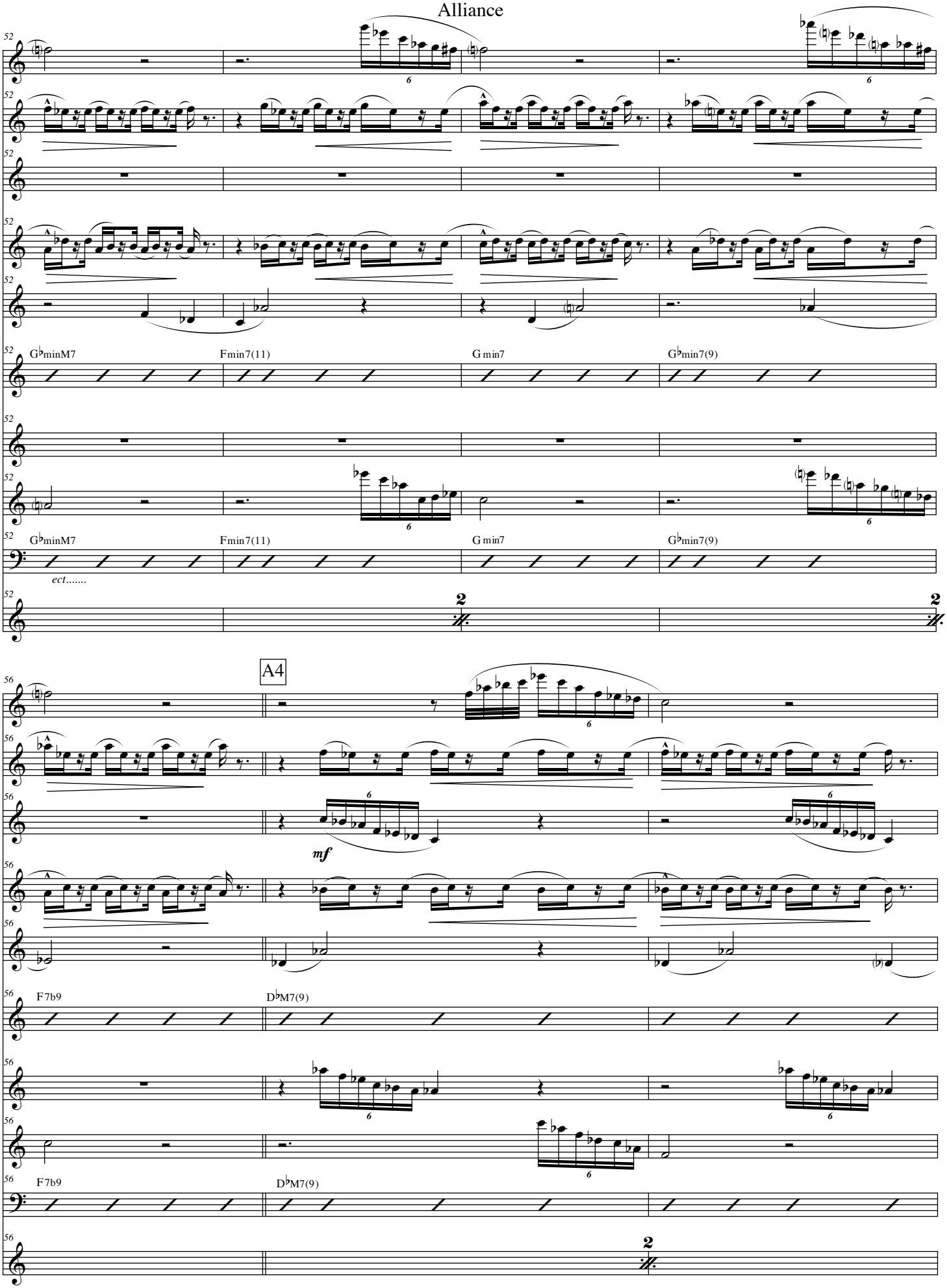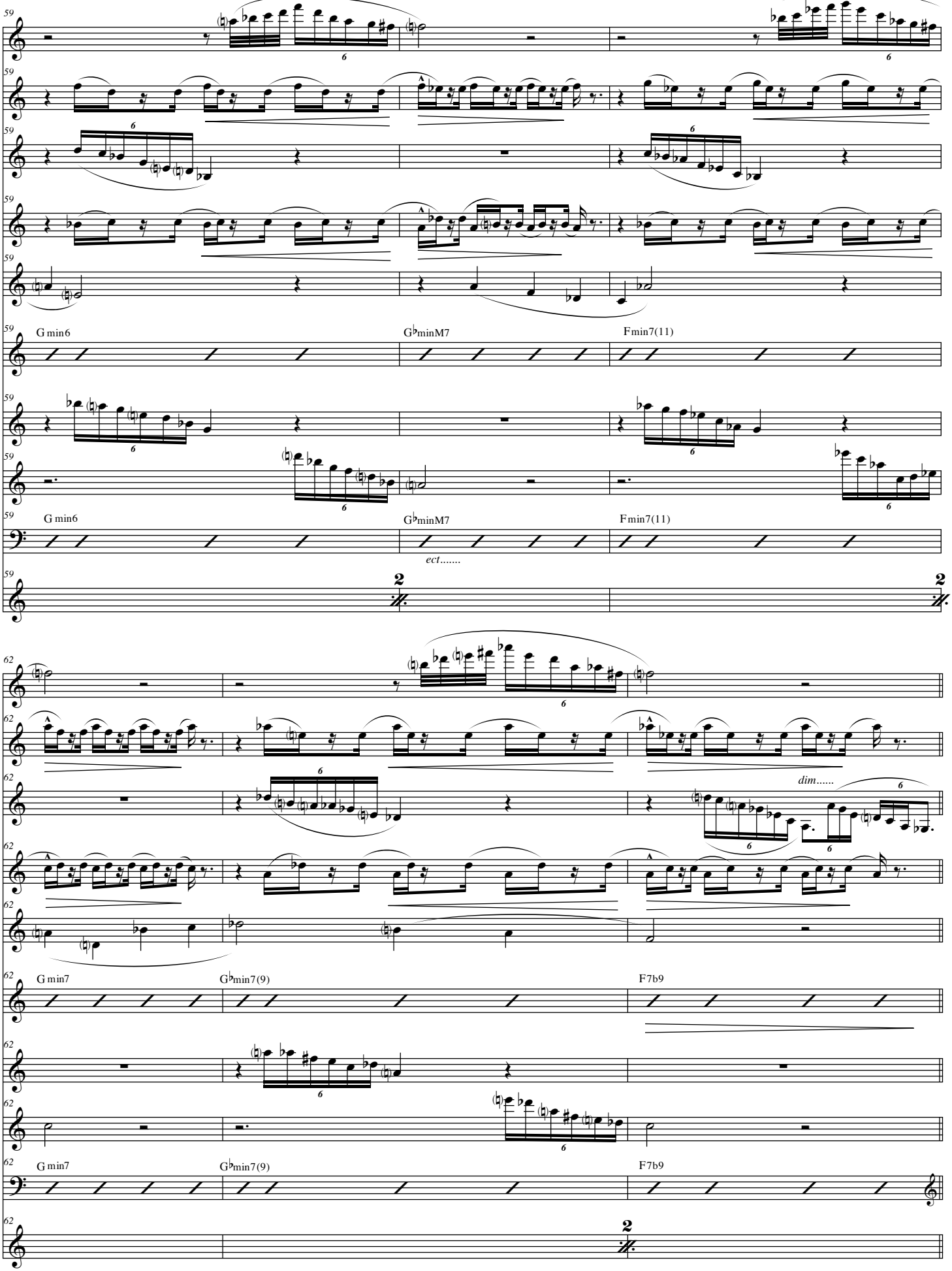



A2
fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
syn.
gtr.
bs.
ds.
p
pp
mf
p
D♭M7(9)
C7(9)
D♭M7(9)
C7(9)
(ça ou d'autres notes)
2
B7♯11
B♭7sus4(9)
G min7
G♭min7(9)
F7b9
B7♯11
B♭sus4(9)
G min7
G♭min7(9)
F7b9
2
2
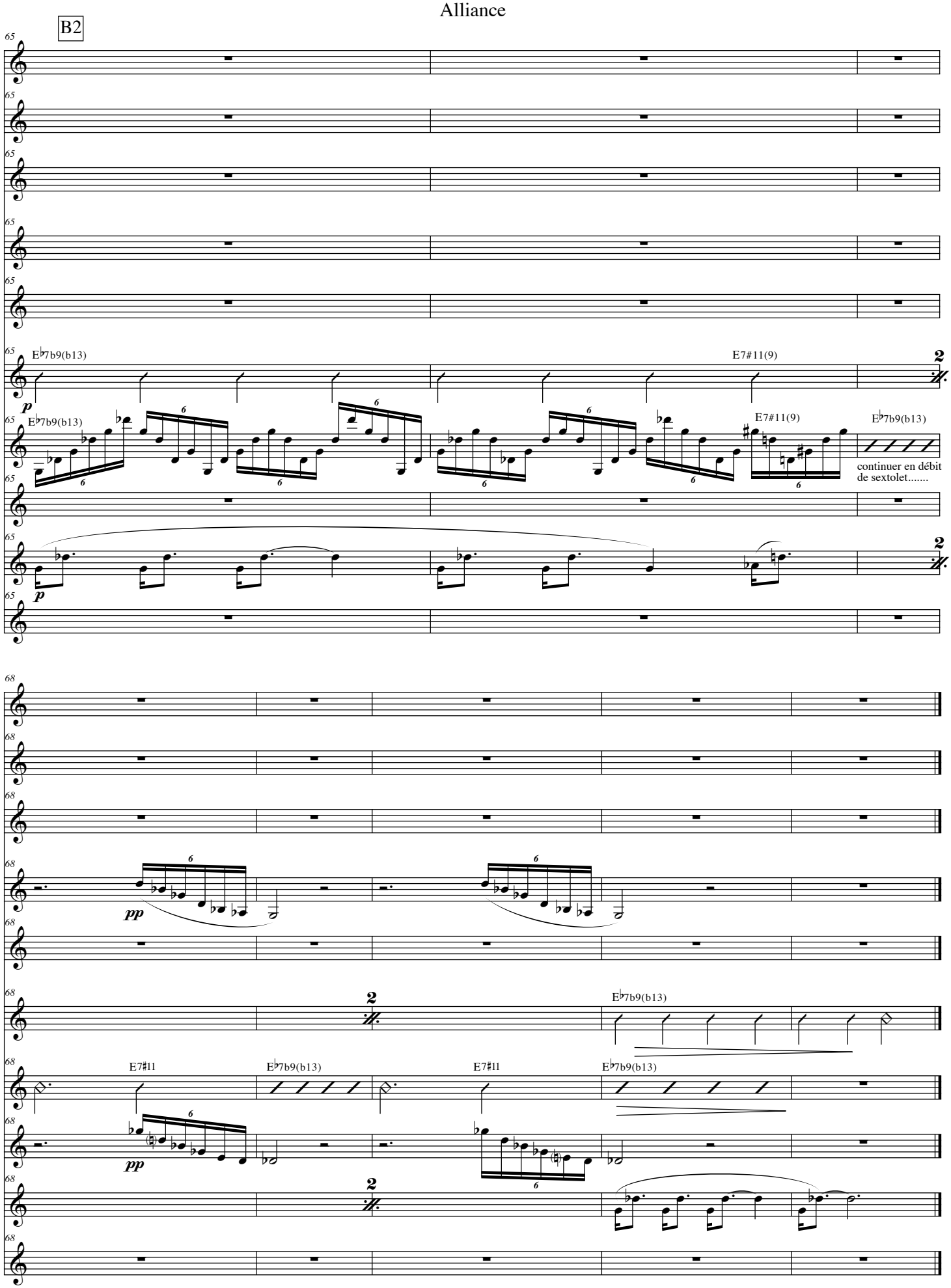

B
25
fl.
alt.sx.
pp
tn.sx.
pp
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
E♭7b9(b13)
E7#11(9)
2
syn.
E♭7b9(b13)
E7#11(9)
E♭7b9(b13)
continuer en débit
de sextolet.....
gtr.
bs.
(bow=hold)
2
ds.
28
fl.
mf
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
2
E♭7b9(b13)
syn.
E7#11
E♭7b9(b13)
E7#11
E♭7b9(b13)
gtr.
mf
bs.
2
ds.


A3
33
fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
syn.
gtr.
bs.
ds.
p
pp
mf
B♭min7(11)
D♭M7/A♭
G min6
G♭-M7
Fmin7(11)
continuer en 10emes....
38
D♭M7(9)
Gmin7(9)
G♭min7(9)
F7b9
(ça ou d'autres notes)


43
fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
C7(9)
B7♯11
B♭7sus4(9)
G min7
G♭min7(9)
syn.
gtr.
B♭sus4(9)
bs.
ect.....
ds.
2
48
A4
f
6
mf
F7b9
D♭M7(9)
G min6


fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
syn.
gtr.
bs.
ds.
52
G♭minM7
Fmin7(11)
G min7
G♭min7(9)
ect.....
2
A4
56
mf
F7b9
D♭M7(9)


fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
G min6
G♭minM7
Fmin7(11)
syn.
gtr.
bs.
ect.....
ds.
2
dim.....
G min7
G♭min7(9)
F7b9


B2
65
fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
flghn.
pn.
E♭7b9(b13)
E7#11(9)
2
p
syn.
E♭7b9(b13)
E7#11(9)
E♭7b9(b13)
continuer en débit
de sextolet.....
gtr.
bs.
ds.
68
fl.
alt.sx.
tn.sx.
bs.cl.
pp
flghn.
pn.
2
E♭7b9(b13)
syn.
E7#11
E♭7b9(b13)
E7#11
E♭7b9(b13)
gtr.
pp
bs.
2
ds.

C

Kew Rhone

Robert Wyatt
Arrgt: Vincent Artaud

INTRO

flute
fl en sol
sopranino
clar Bb
clbs
trpt
cor en fa
claviers
guit

(piqué)
(sonne une octave au dessous)

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

A

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

f

A2

mf

26

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

30

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

INTERLUDE 1

35

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

40

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

cresc.....

B

45

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

f *p* *f* *mp* *cresc.....*

50

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

mf *f* *mp* *mp* *mf* *mf* *f* *mp* *mp* *f* *mp*

54

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

59

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

B2

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

64

mf

mp

(bow=hold)

68

73

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

77

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

mf

f

mp

p

bien marquer l'accent

bien marquer l'accent

(vintage pad)

A♭M7.6

86

fl.

alt.fl.

p

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

92

fl.

p

simil.....

alt.fl.

simil.....

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

simil.....

kbds.

Dmin7.11

D♭M7#11

gtr.

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

99

Amin9

105

cresc.....

f

f

mp

f

C♯min7b5(9)

F♯7♭13

111

fl.

alt.fl.

f

decresc.....

spno.

Cl.

mp

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

B min7b13

CM7#11

gtr.

117

fl.

mp

decresc.....

alt.fl.

mp

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

A♭M7.6

gtr.

INTERLUDE 2

123

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

132

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

B3

138

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

mf

Emin9 Dmin9 C♯minb13 CM7#11

143

Amin11 F♯min7.9 Gmin7.9 Fmin7.9

fl.
alt.fl.
spno.
Cl.
bs.cl.
tp.
cor
kbds.
gtr.

148

mf

f

+ *haut*

Gmin7.9

Fmin7.9

A♭min9

BminM7

B4

153

mp

A♭min9

BminM7

Emin9

Dmin9

158

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

mf

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

C♯minb13

CM7#11

Amin11

F♯min7.9

gtr.

162

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

mp

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

Gmin7.9

Fmin7.9

Gmin7.9

gtr.

f

166

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds. — Fmin7.9 | A♭min9 | BminM7

gtr.

170

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds. — (synth bs) A♭min9 | BminM7 | A♭min9 | BminM7

gtr.

174

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

A♭min9 BminM7 A♭min9 BminM7

ect.....

ect.....

178

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds.

gtr.

A♭min9 BminM7 A♭min9

A♭min9 BminM7 A♭min9

181

fl.

alt.fl.

spno.

Cl.

bs.cl.

tp.

cor

kbds. BminM7 A♭min9 BminM7

gtr. BminM7 A♭min9 BminM7

185

fl.

alt.fl. *subito* ***p***

spno.

Cl. *subito* ***p***

bs.cl.

tp.

cor
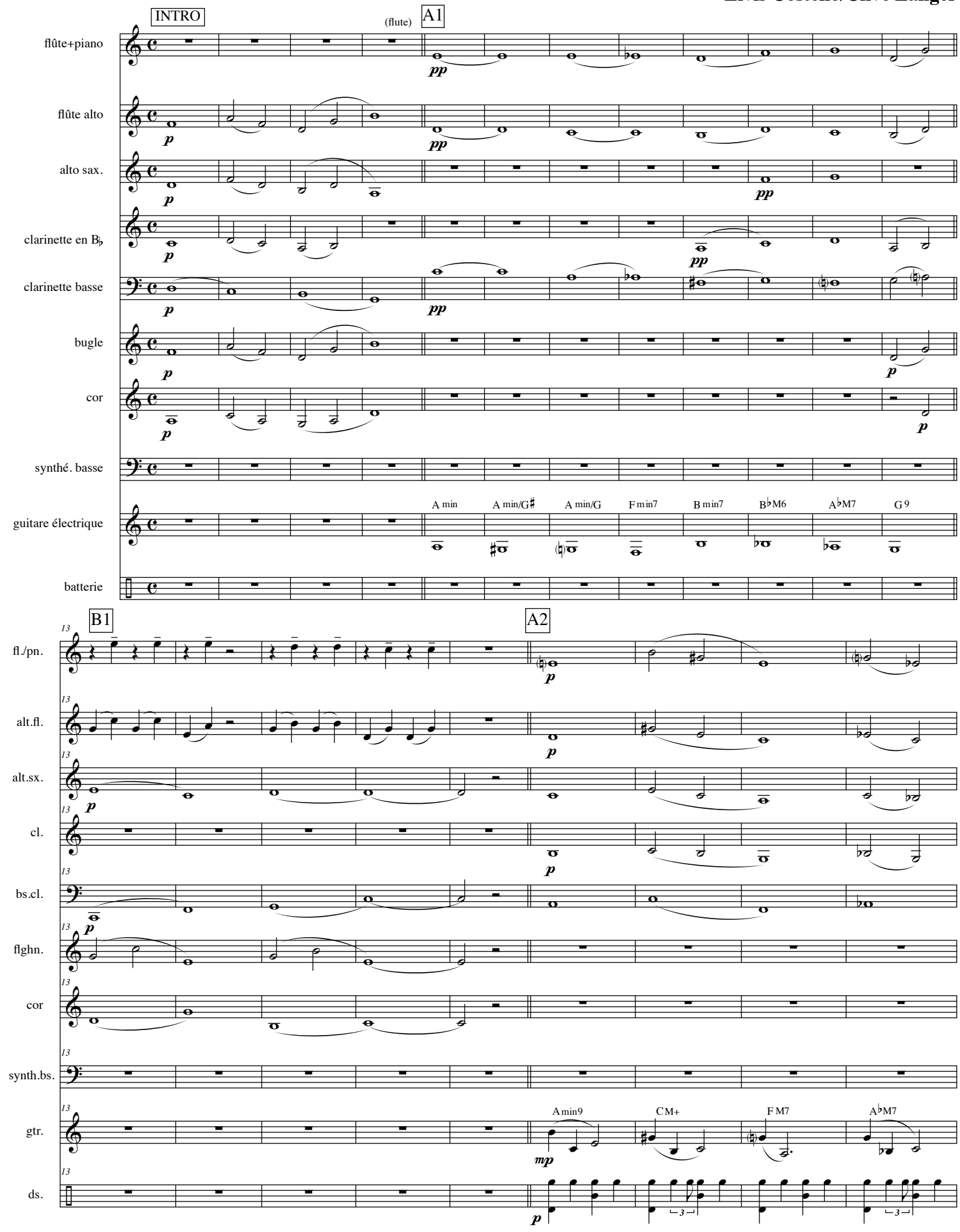
kbds.
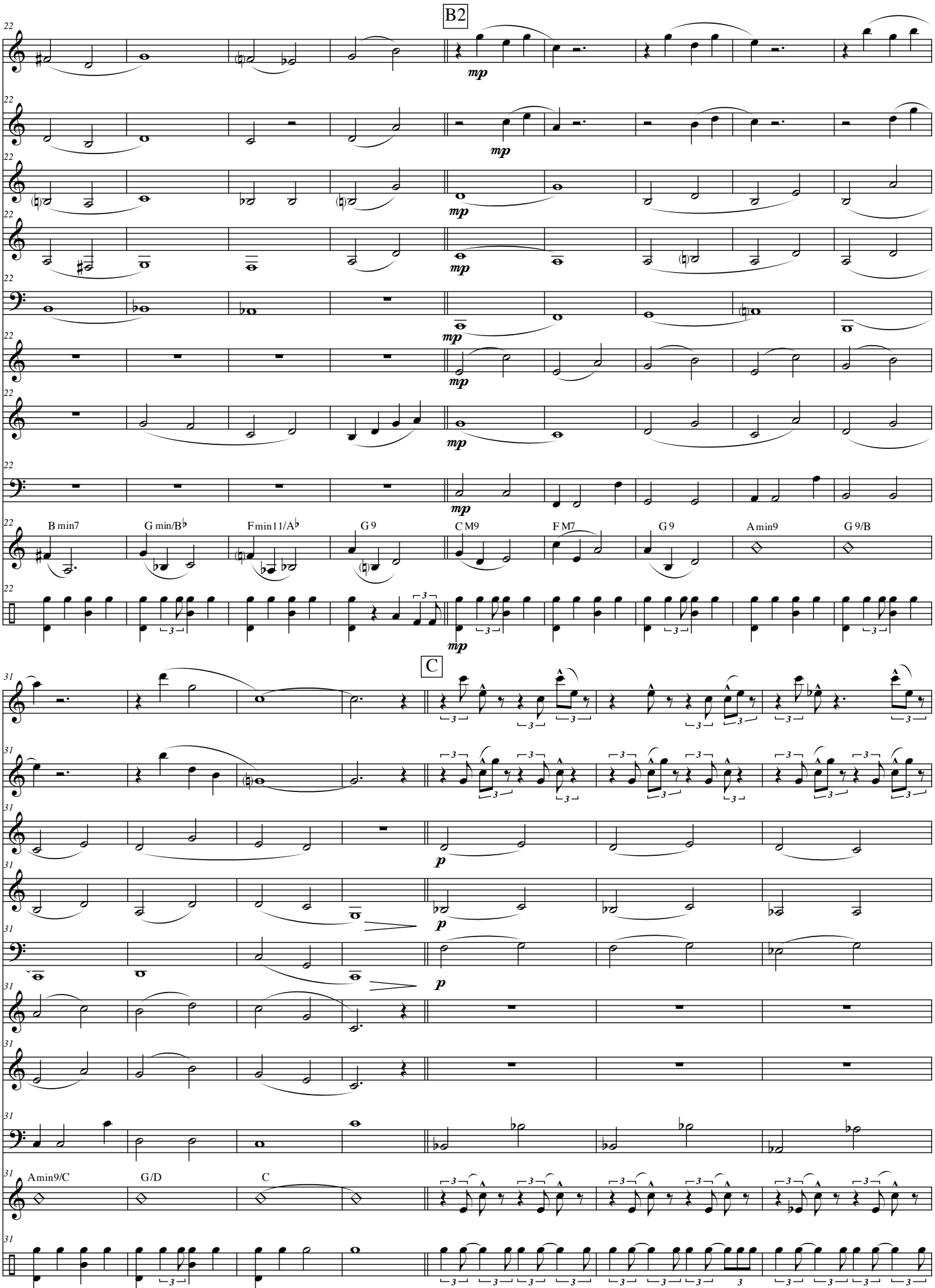
gtr.

C
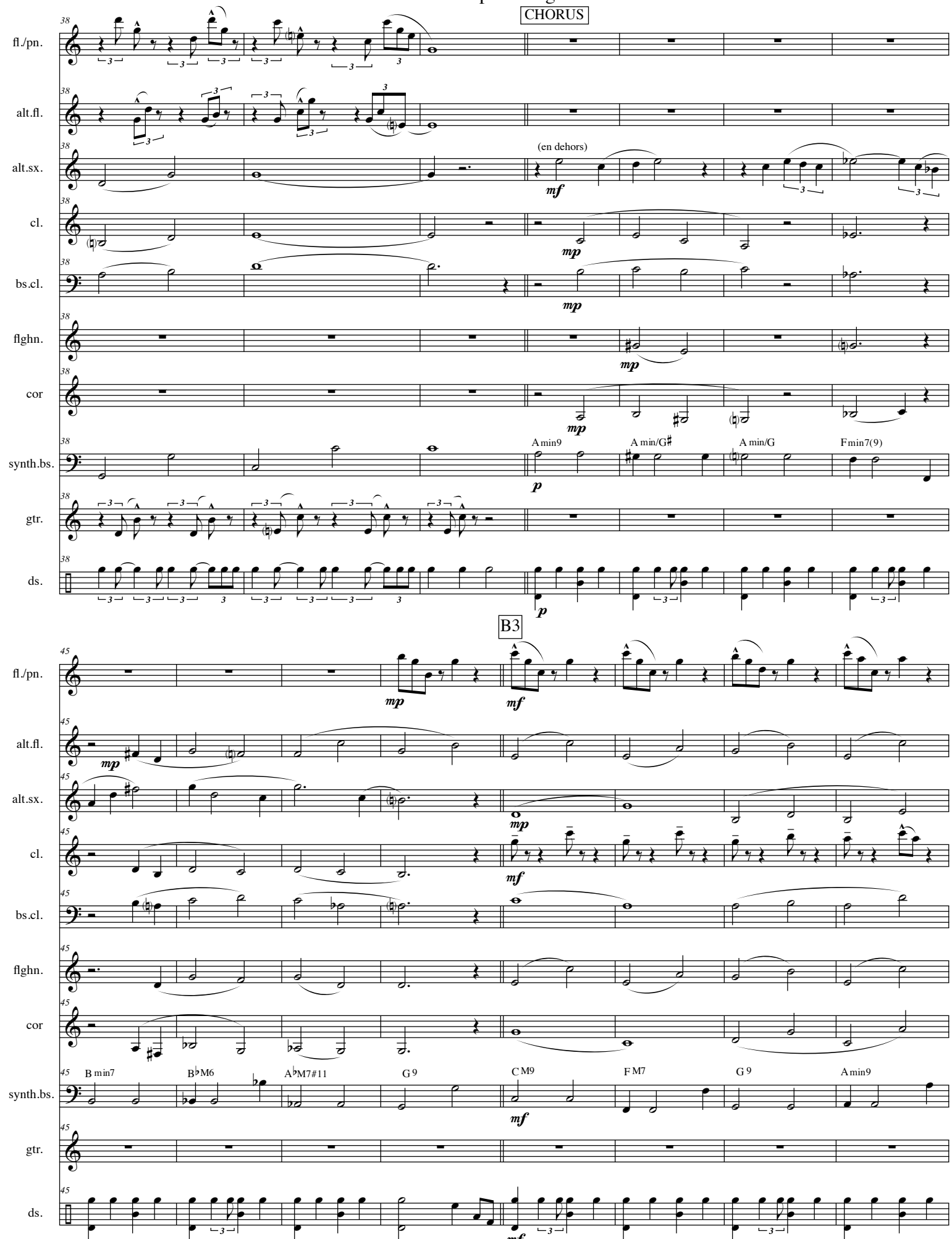
Shipbuilding
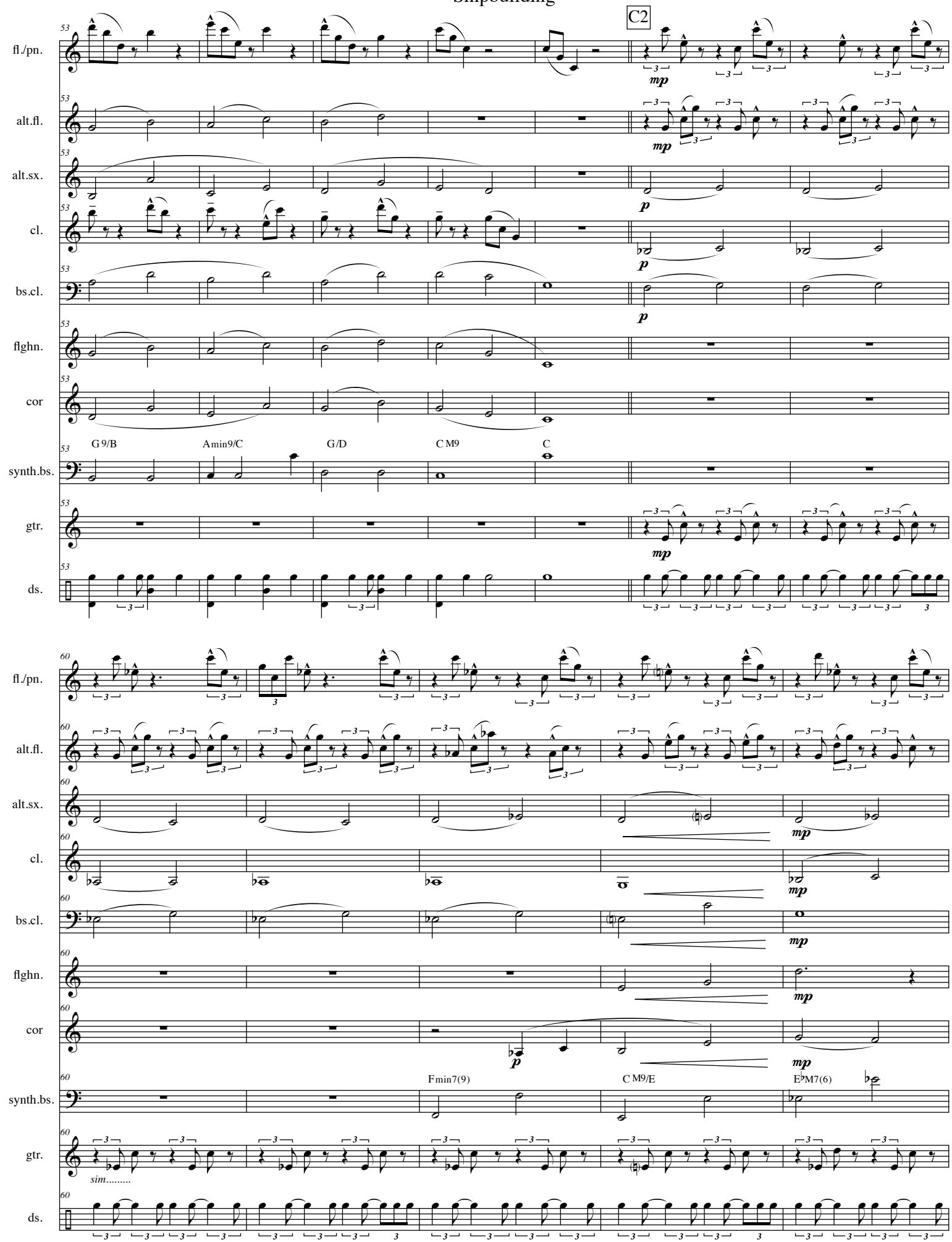
Elvis Costello/Clive Langer
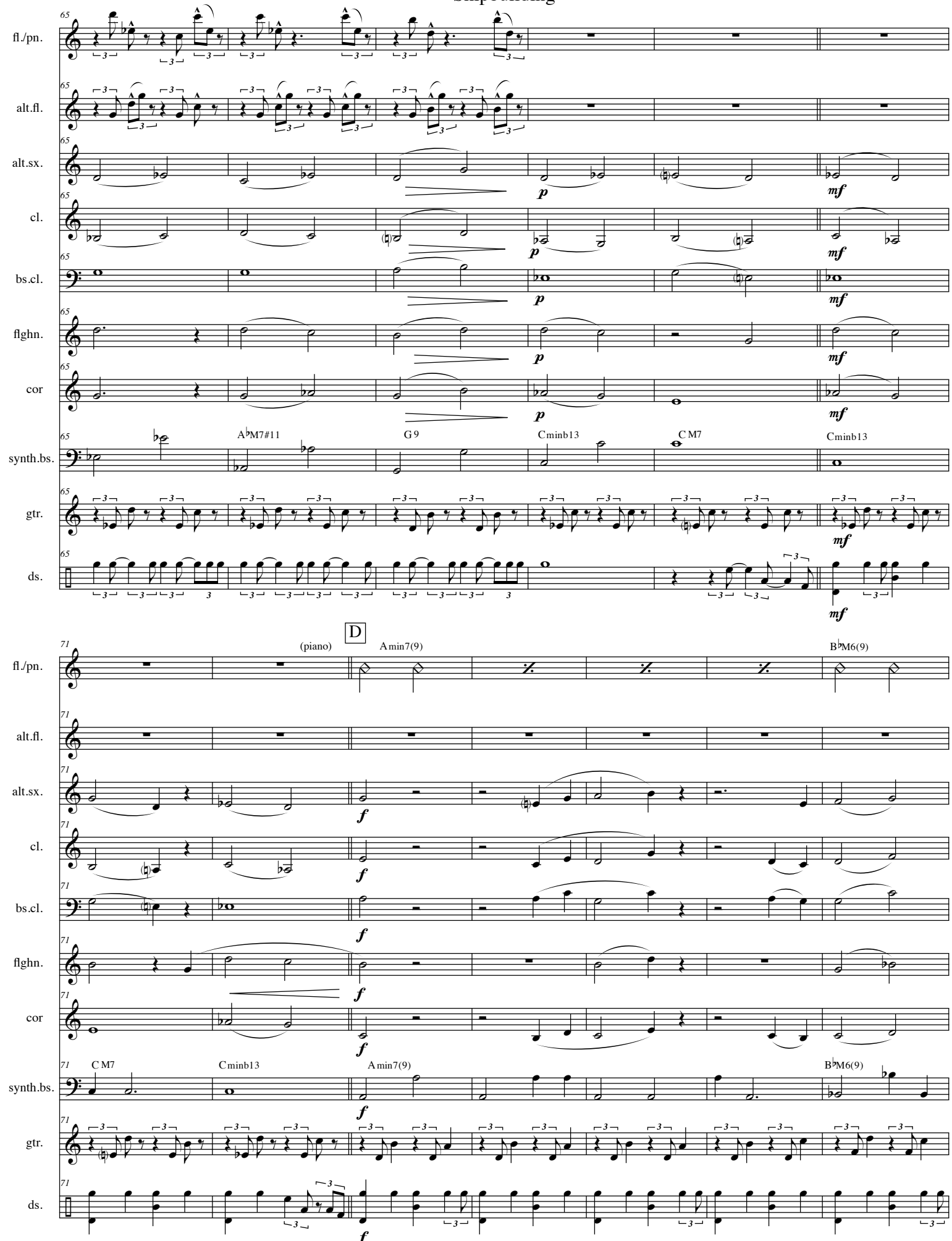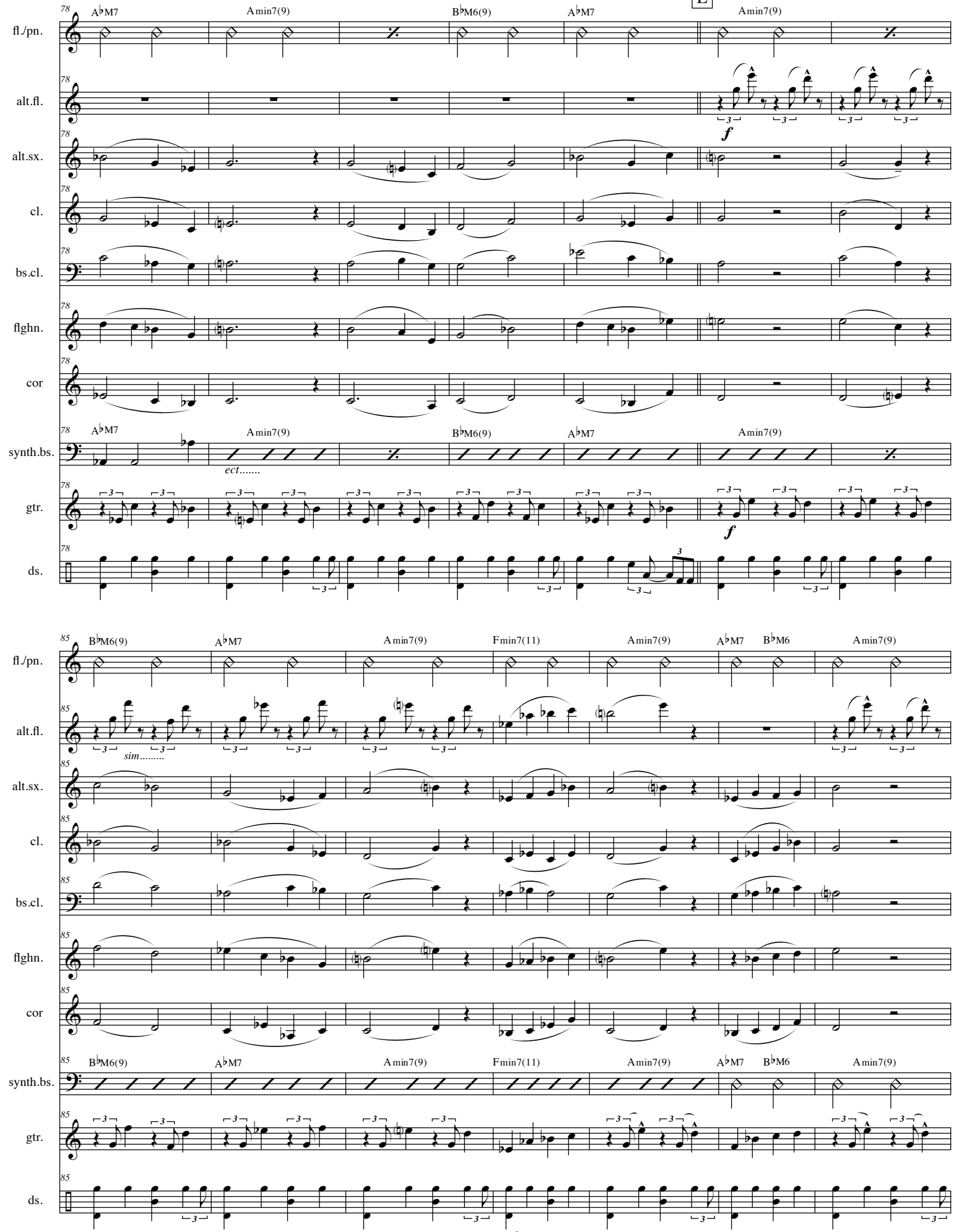



B2
fl./pn.
alt.fl.
alt.sx.
cl.
bs.cl.
flghn.
cor
synth.bs.
gtr.
ds.
mp
B min7
G min/B♭
Fmin11/A♭
G 9
C M9
F M7
G 9
A min9
G 9/B
C
p
A min9/C
G/D
C
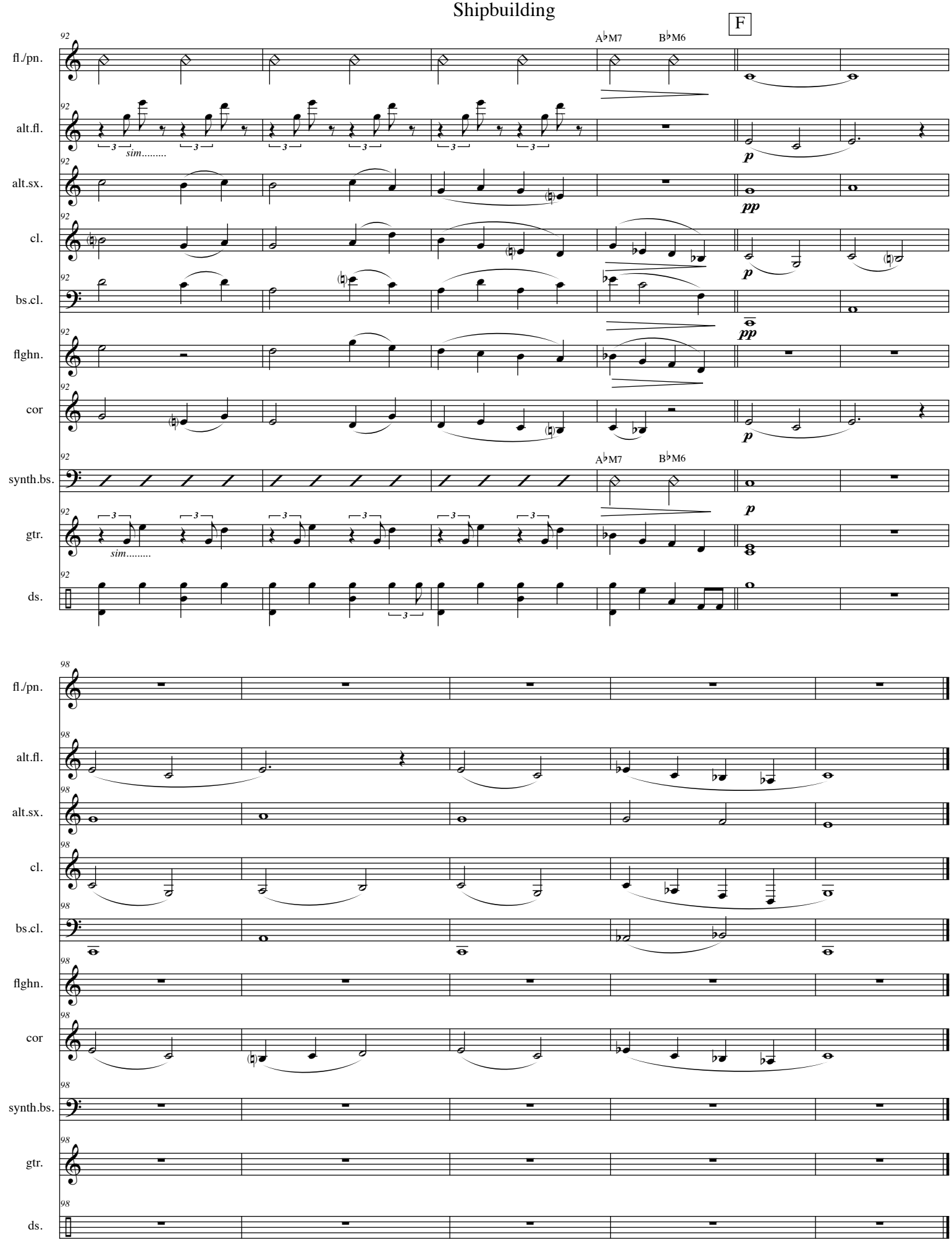
Shipbuilding




C2
fl./pn.
alt.fl.
alt.sx.
cl.
bs.cl.
flghn.
cor
synth.bs.
gtr.
ds.
G 9/B
Amin9/C
G/D
C M9
C
Fmin7(9)
C M9/E
E♭M7(6)
sim.....

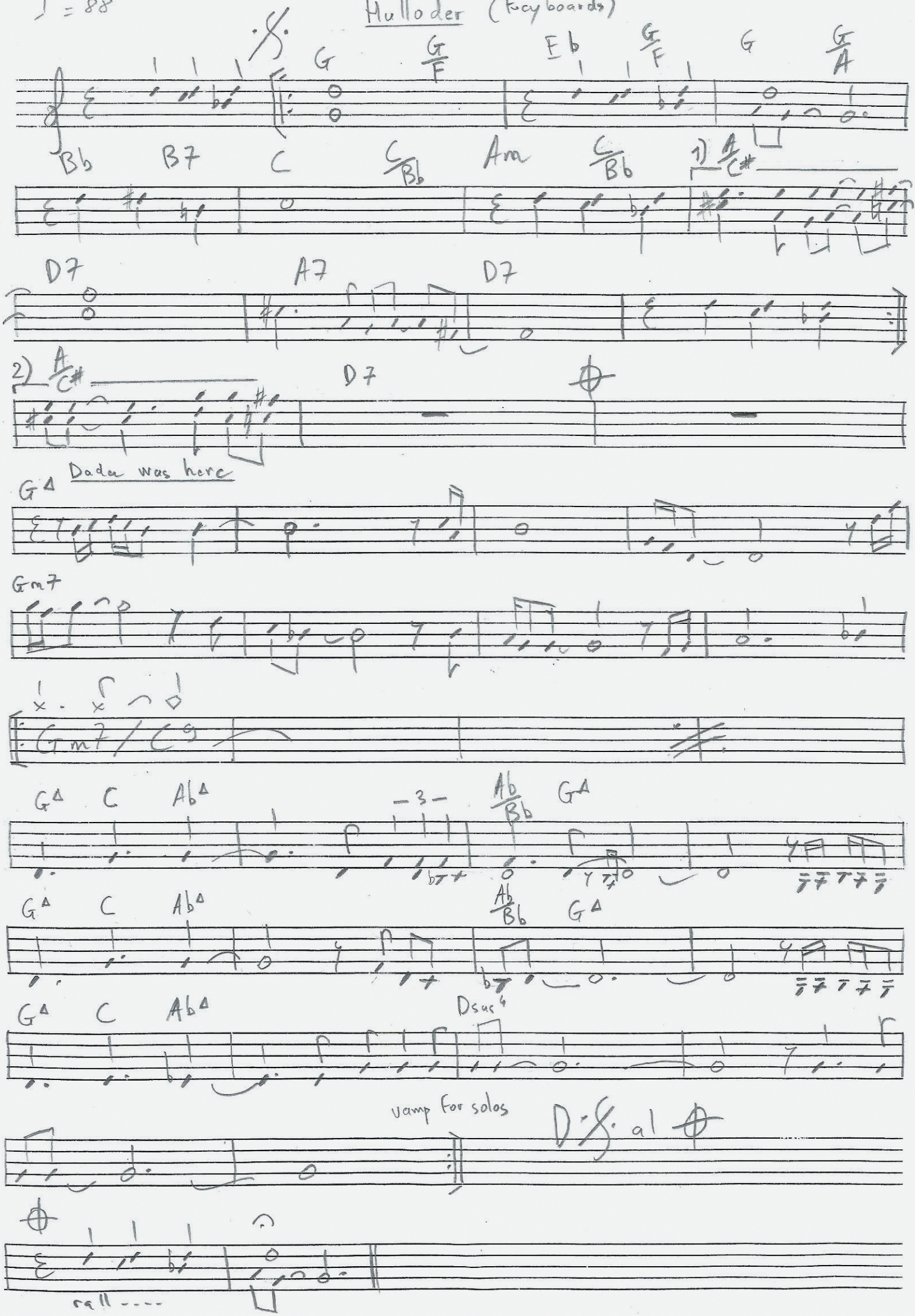

65
fl./pn.
alt.fl.
alt.sx.
cl.
bs.cl.
flghn.
cor
synth.bs.
gtr.
ds.
A♭M7#11
G 9
Cminb13
C M7
Cminb13
p
mf
71
D
(piano)
A min7(9)
B♭M6(9)
f


E
78
A♭M7
Amin7(9)
B♭M6(9)
A♭M7
Amin7(9)
fl./pn.
alt.fl.
alt.sx.
cl.
bs.cl.
flghn.
cor
synth.bs.
gtr.
ds.
f
ecf.....
85
B♭M6(9)
A♭M7
Amin7(9)
Fmin7(11)
Amin7(9)
A♭M7
B♭M6
Amin7(9)
sim.....
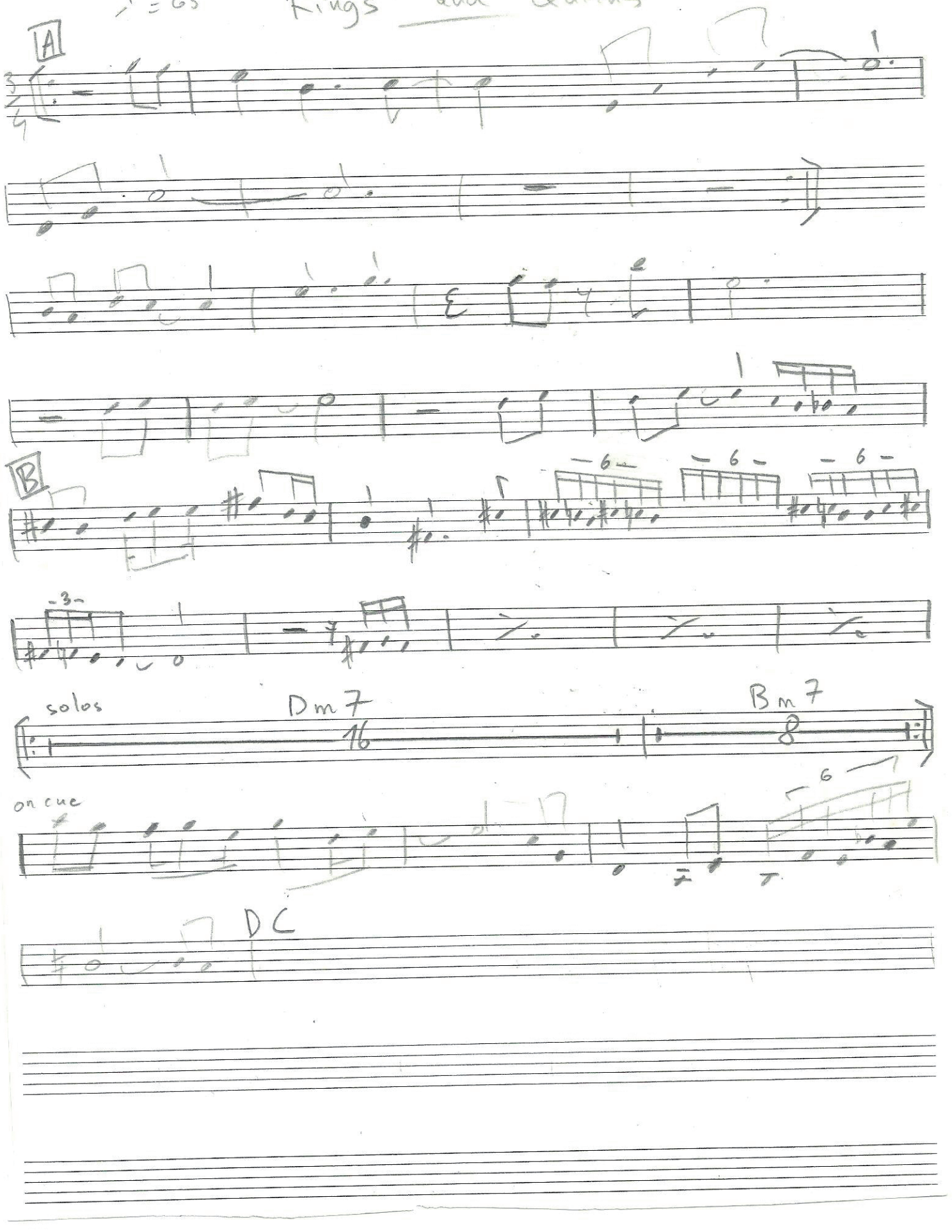

F
A♭M7
B♭M6
fl./pn.
alt.fl.
alt.sx.
cl.
bs.cl.
flghn.
cor
synth.bs.
gtr.
ds.
sim.....
p
pp

♩ = 88
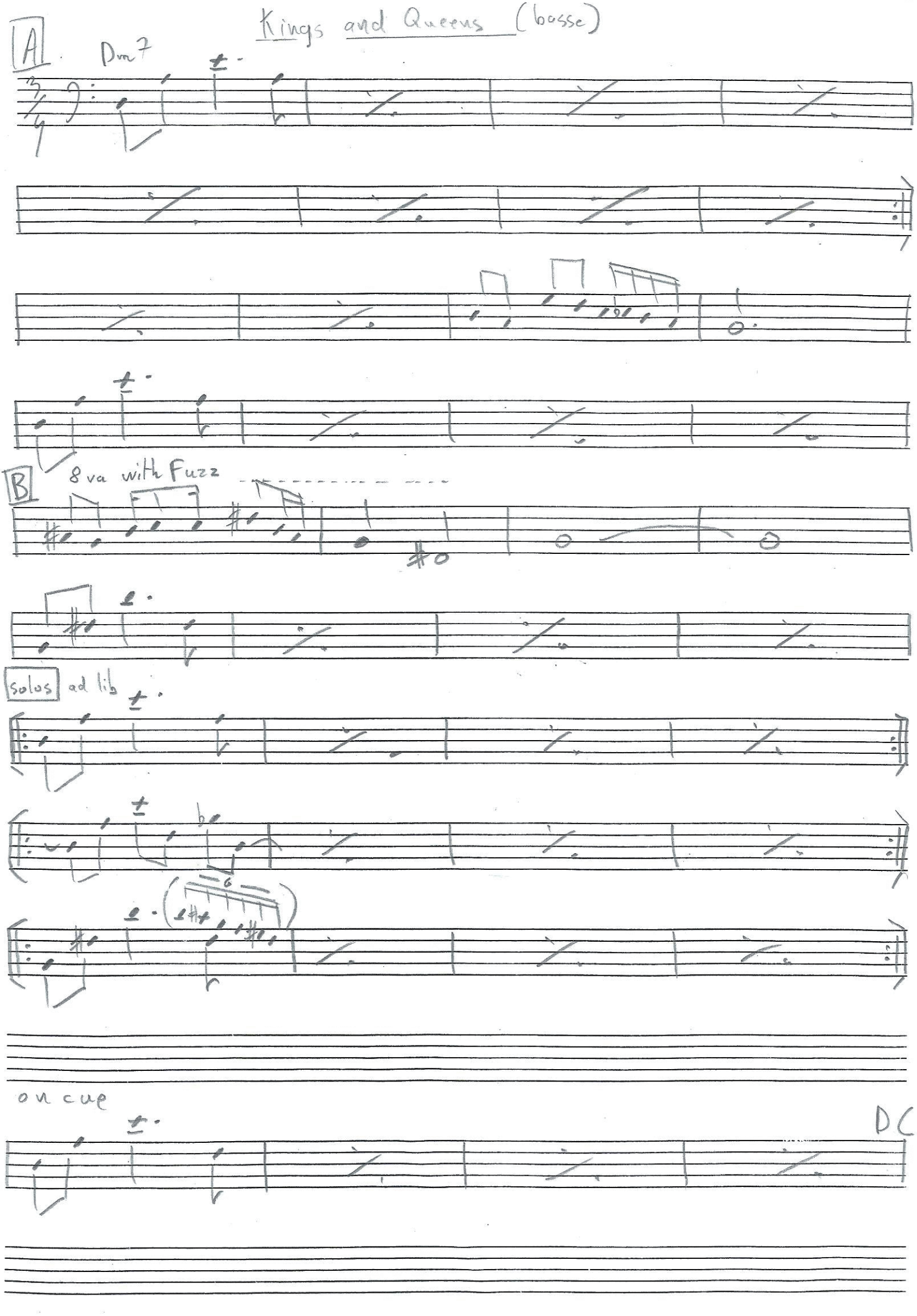
Hullo der (keyboards)



♩ = 65 Kings and Queens
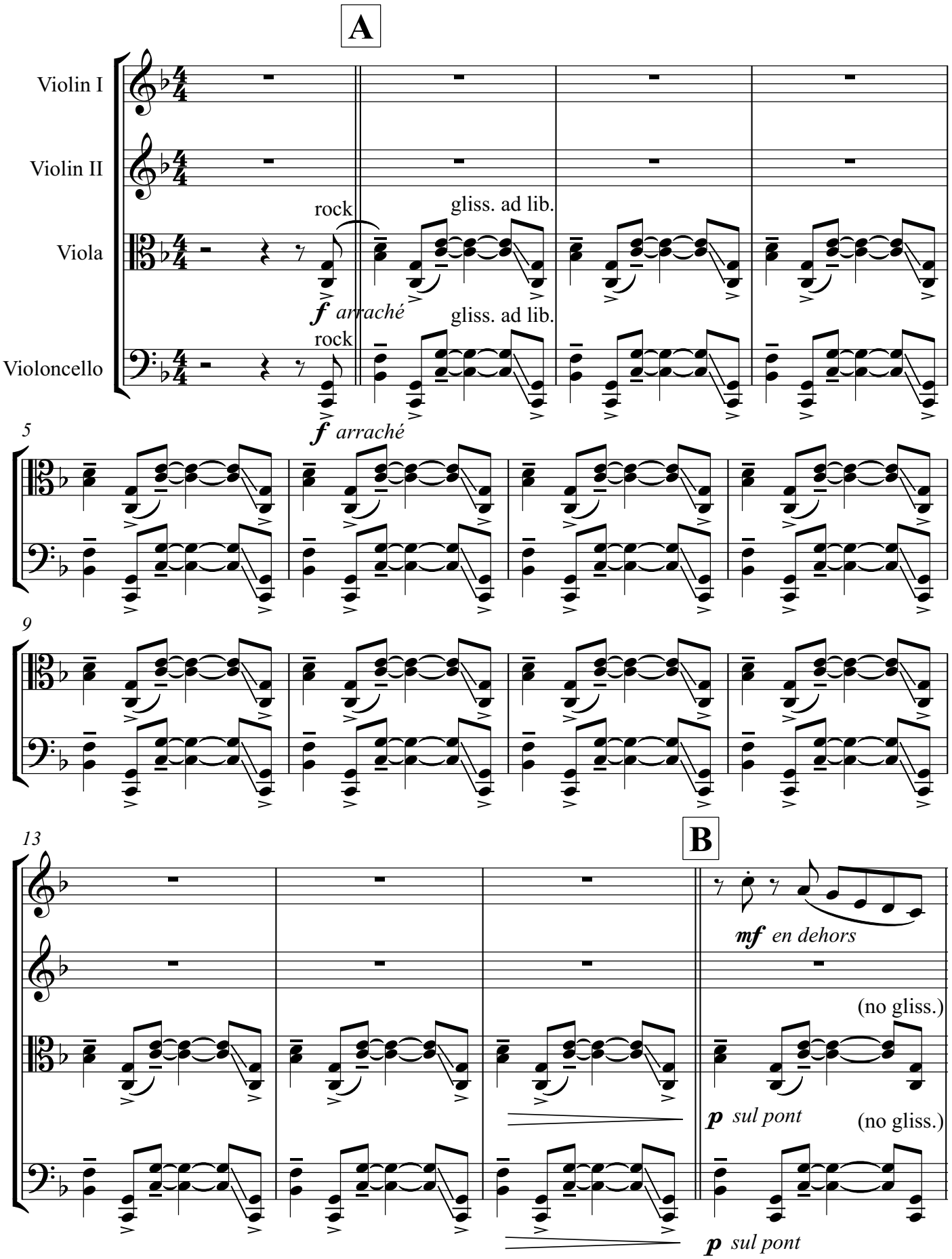


Kings and Queens (basse)
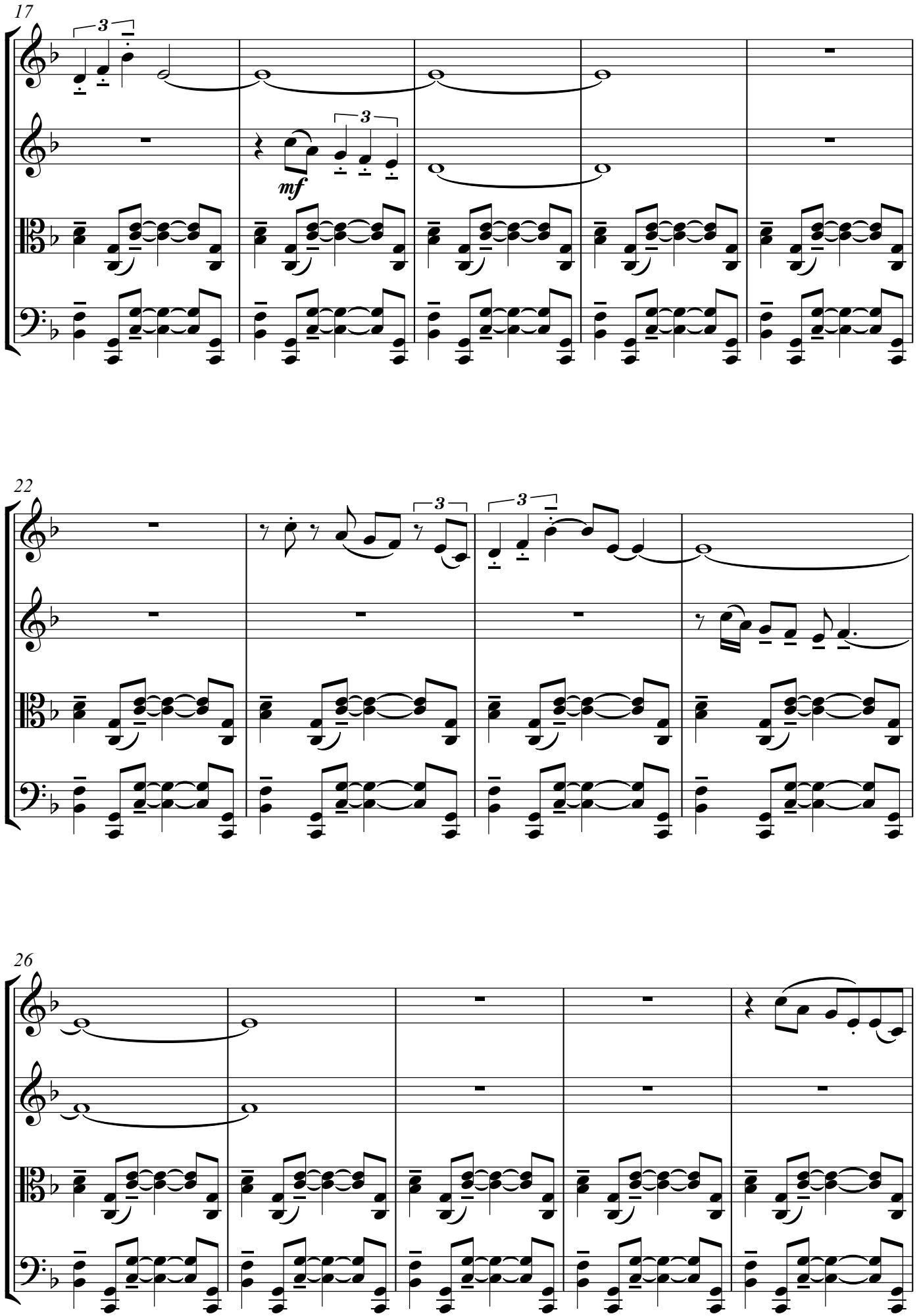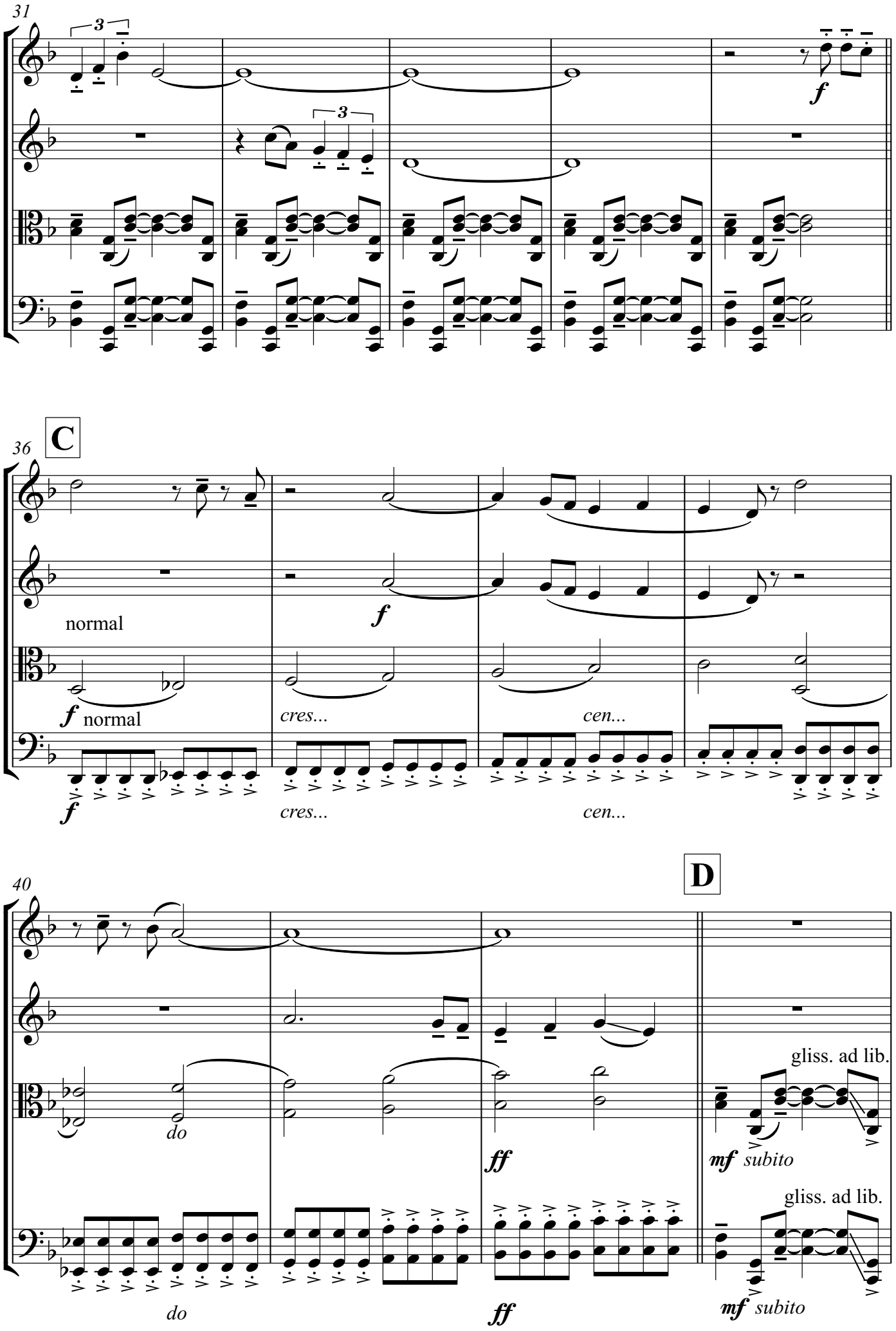


Gharbadzegi
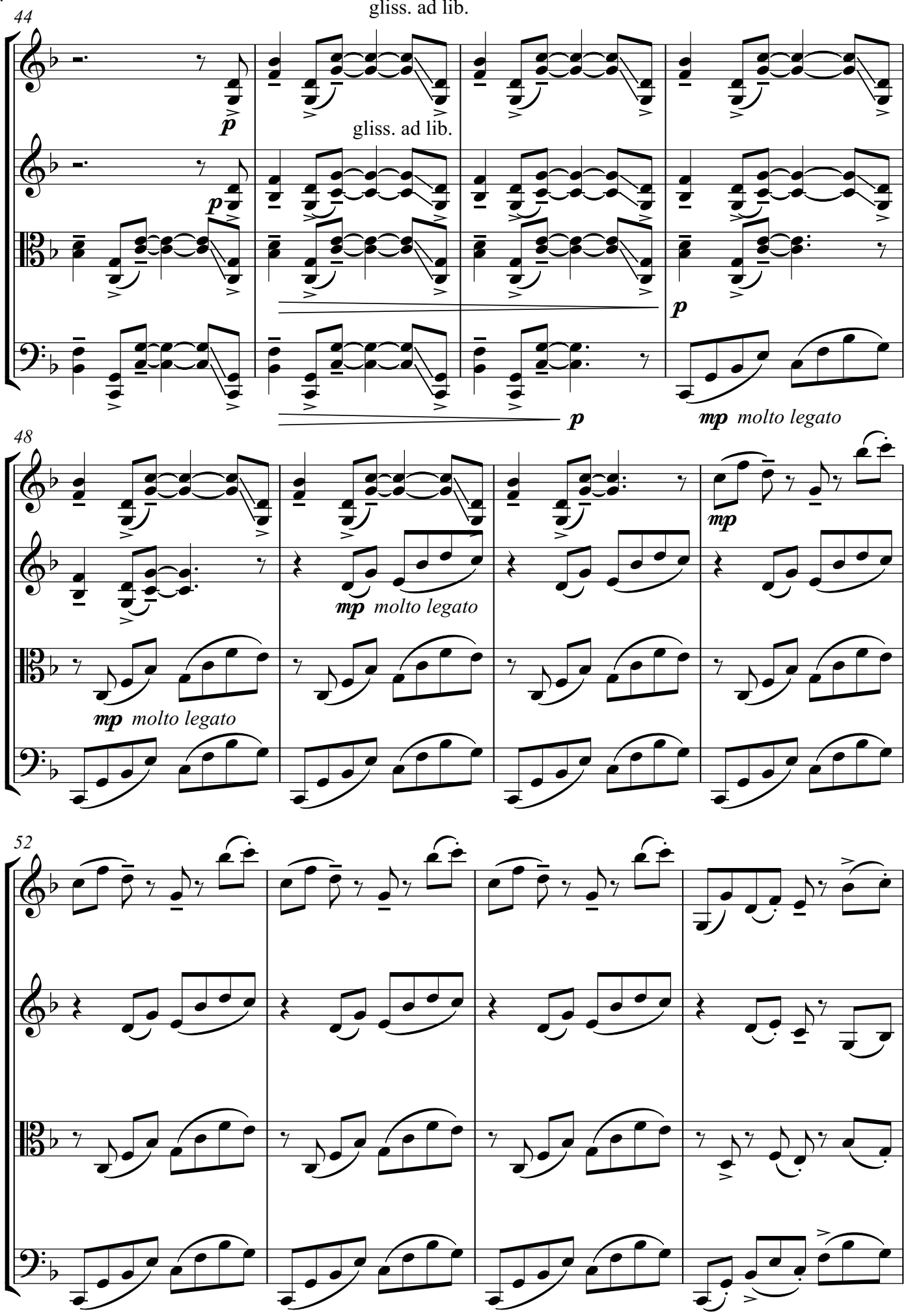
Arrangement : Stéphane Collin
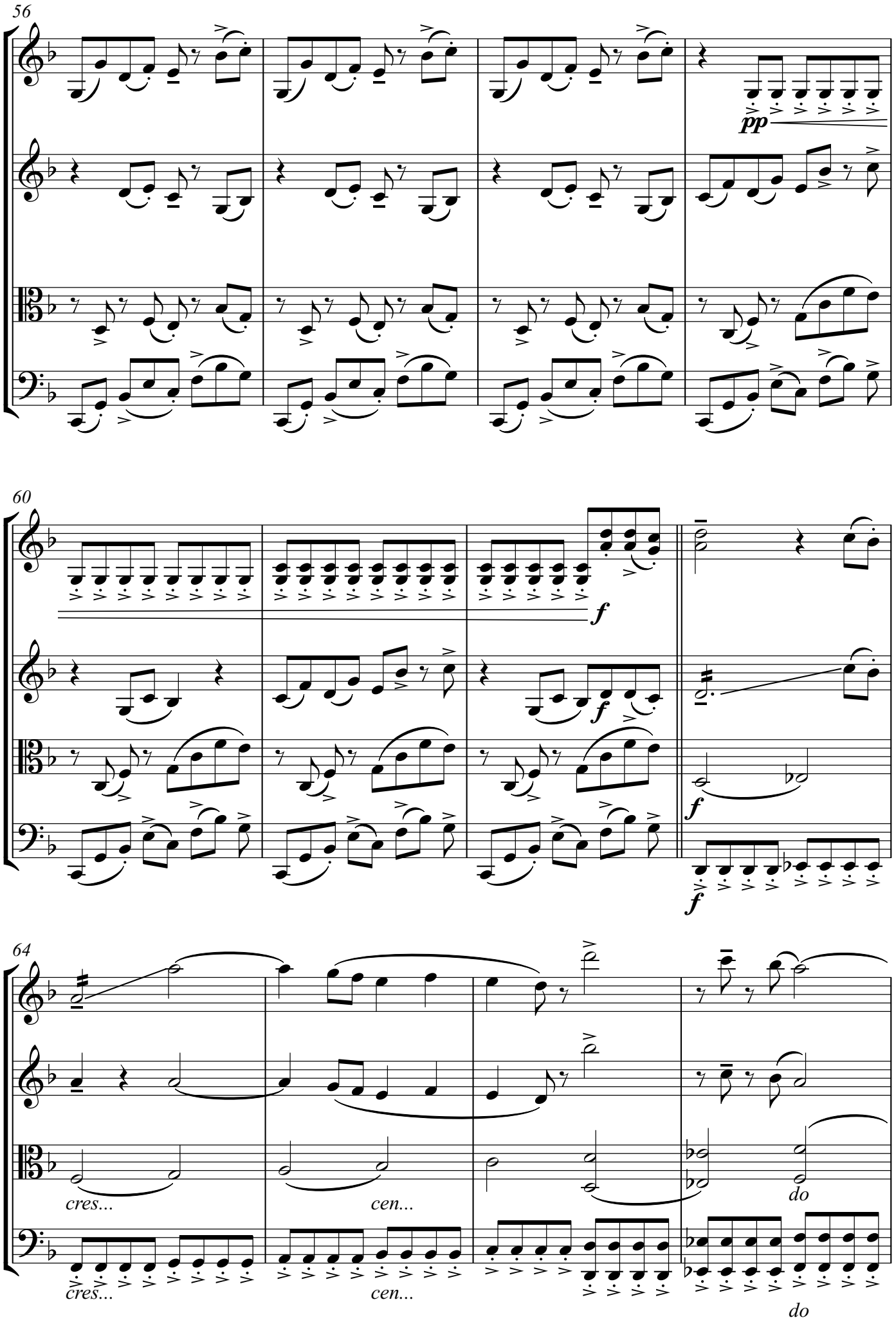
Robert Wyatt

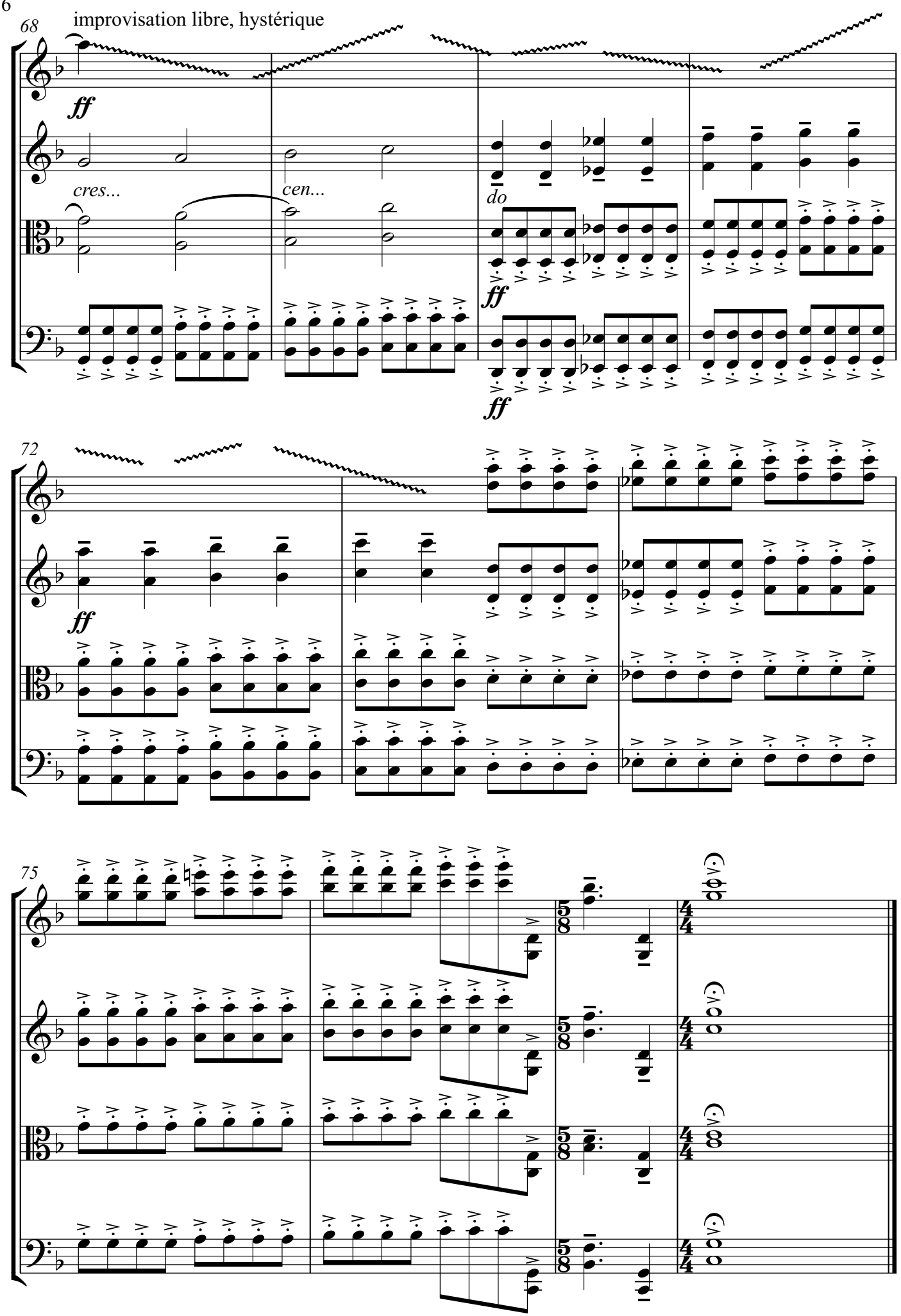



17
3
3
mf
22
3
3
26


31
3
3
f
36
C
normal
f
f normal
cres...
cen...
f
cres...
cen...
40
D
do
ff
gliss. ad lib.
mf subito
do
ff
gliss. ad lib.
mf subito

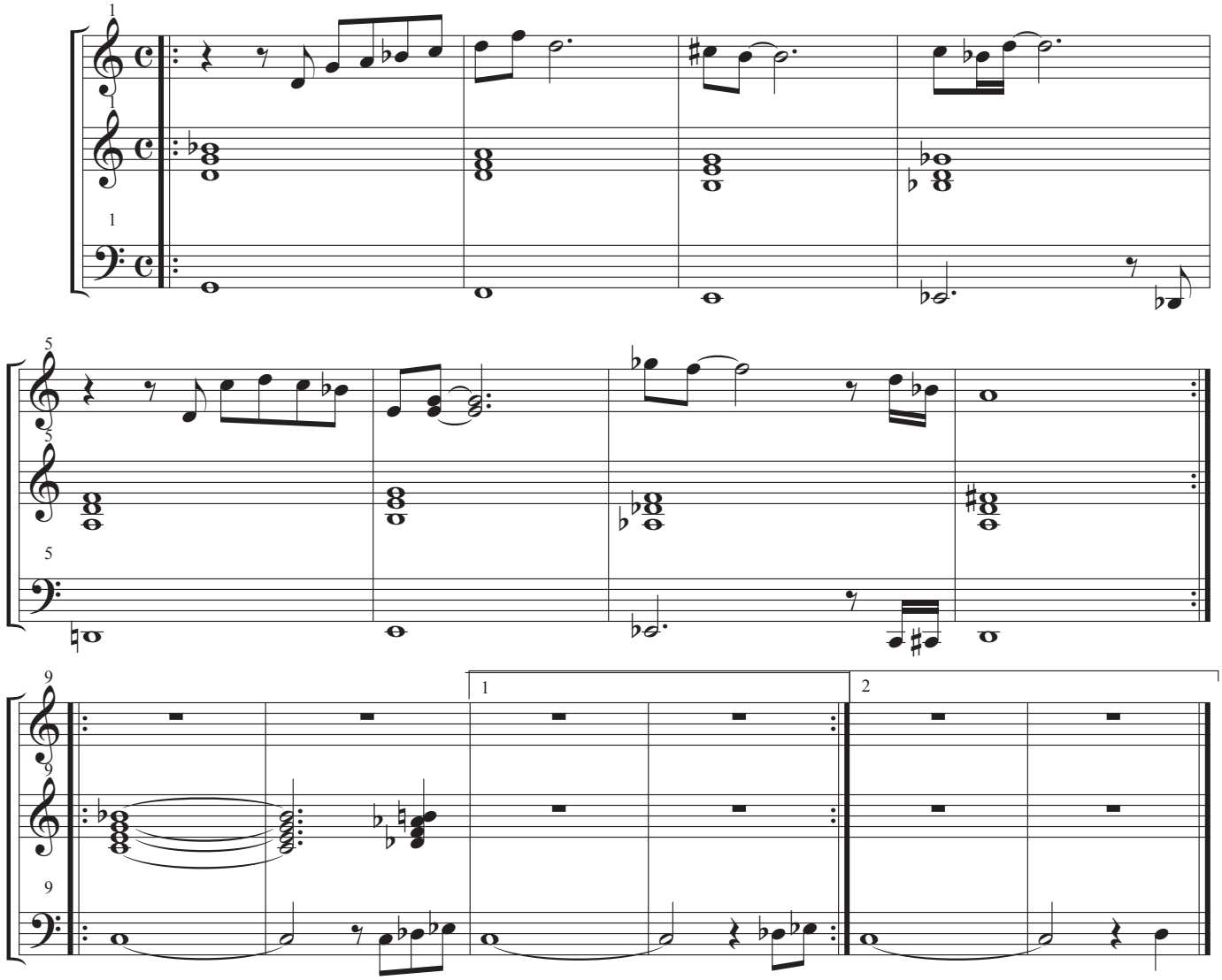

44
gliss. ad lib.
gliss. ad lib.
p
p
p
p
mp molto legato
48
mp
mp molto legato
mp molto legato
52


56
pp
60
f
f
f
64
cres...
cen...
do
cres...
cen...
do


68
improvisation libre, hystérique
ff
cres...
cen...
do
ff
ff
72
ff
75
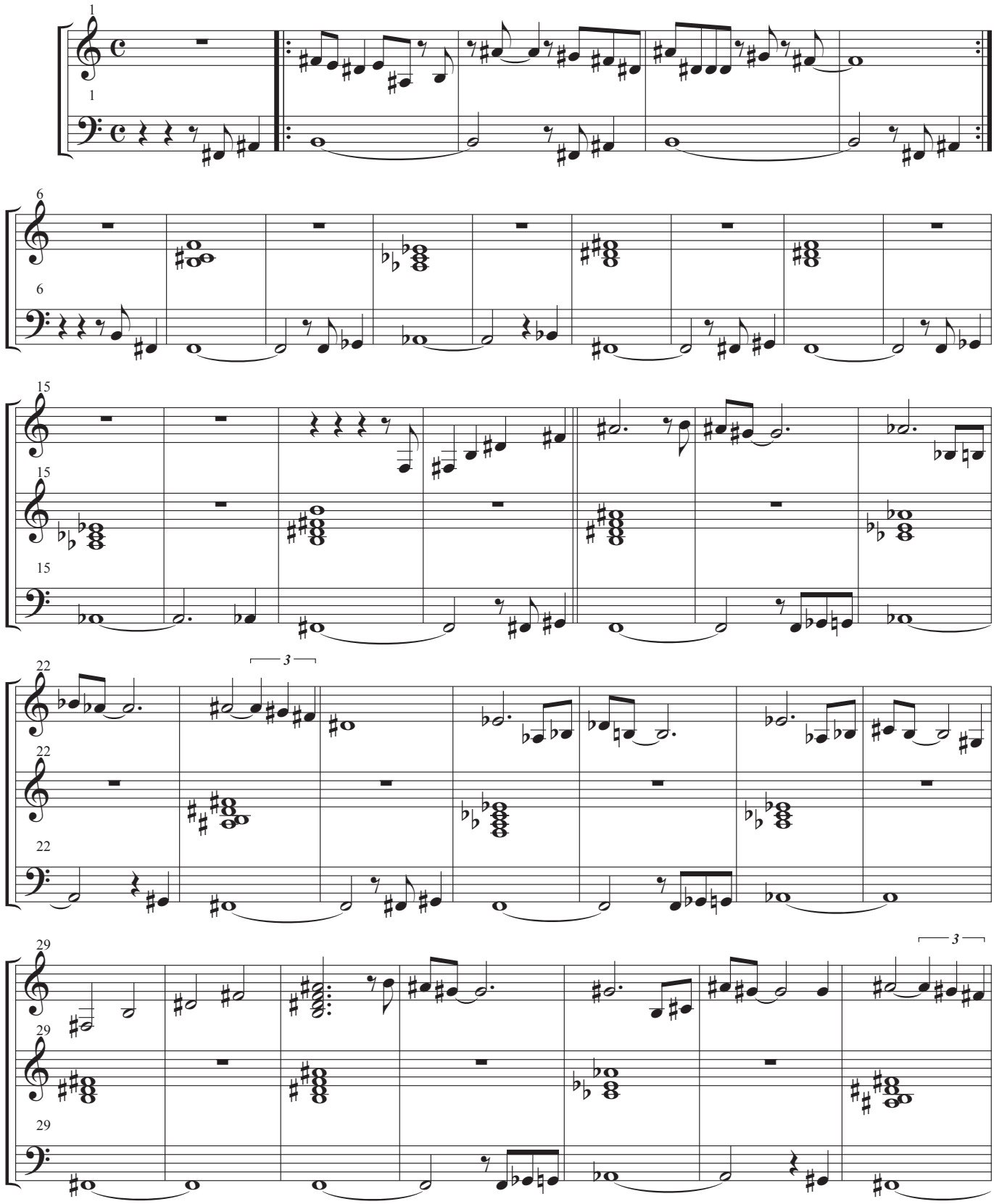
Alliance
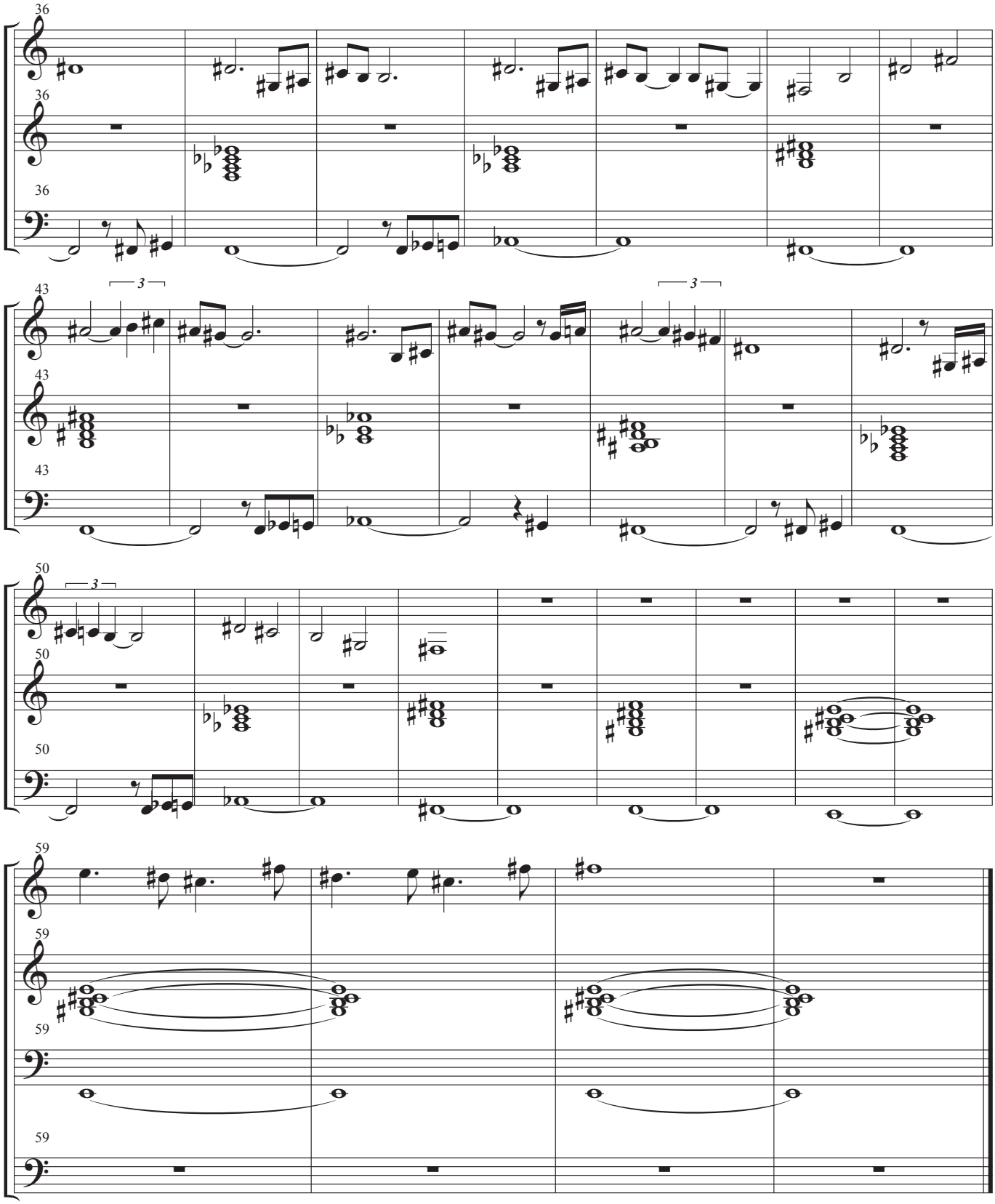
Robert Wyatt



Born again Cretin
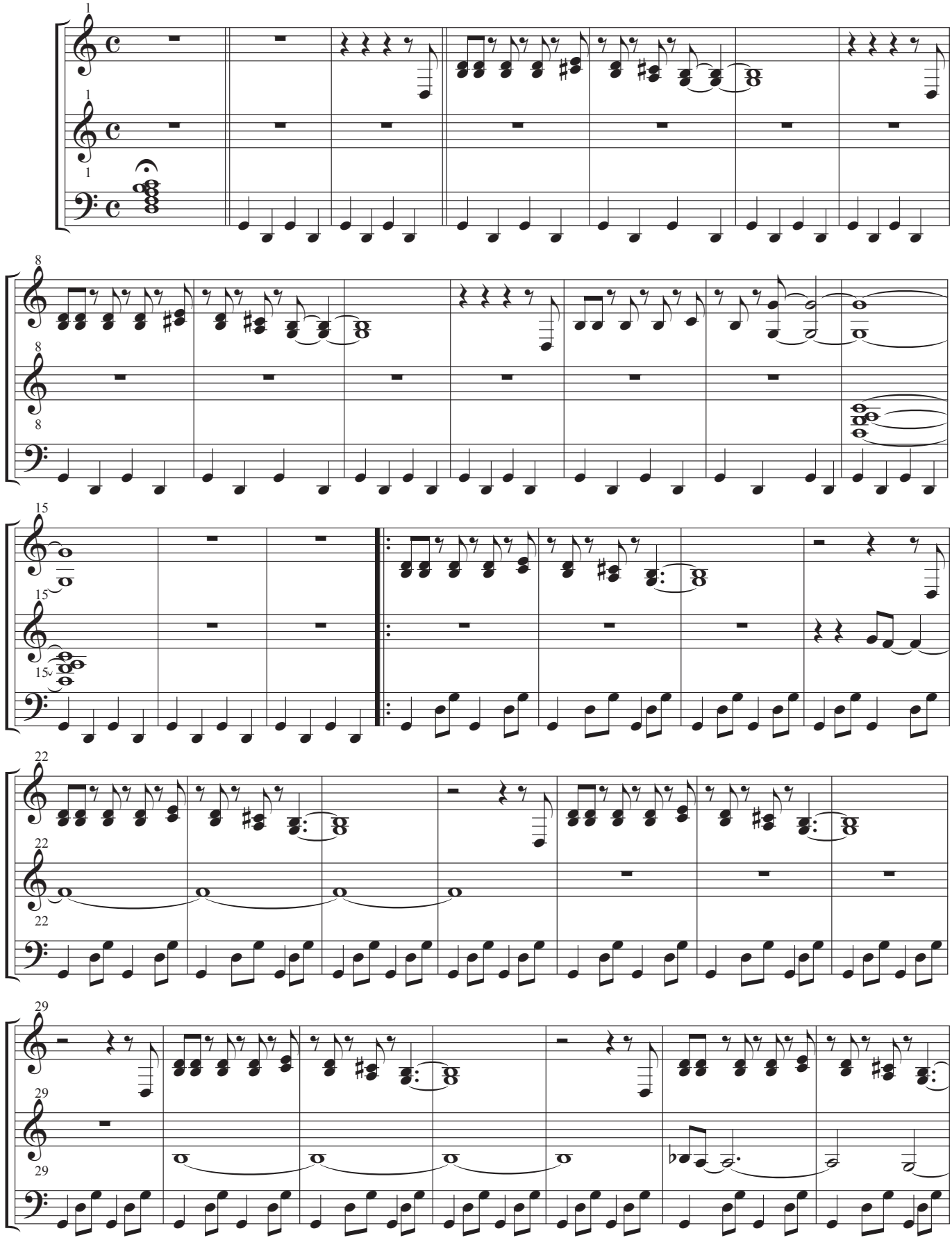
Robert Wyatt
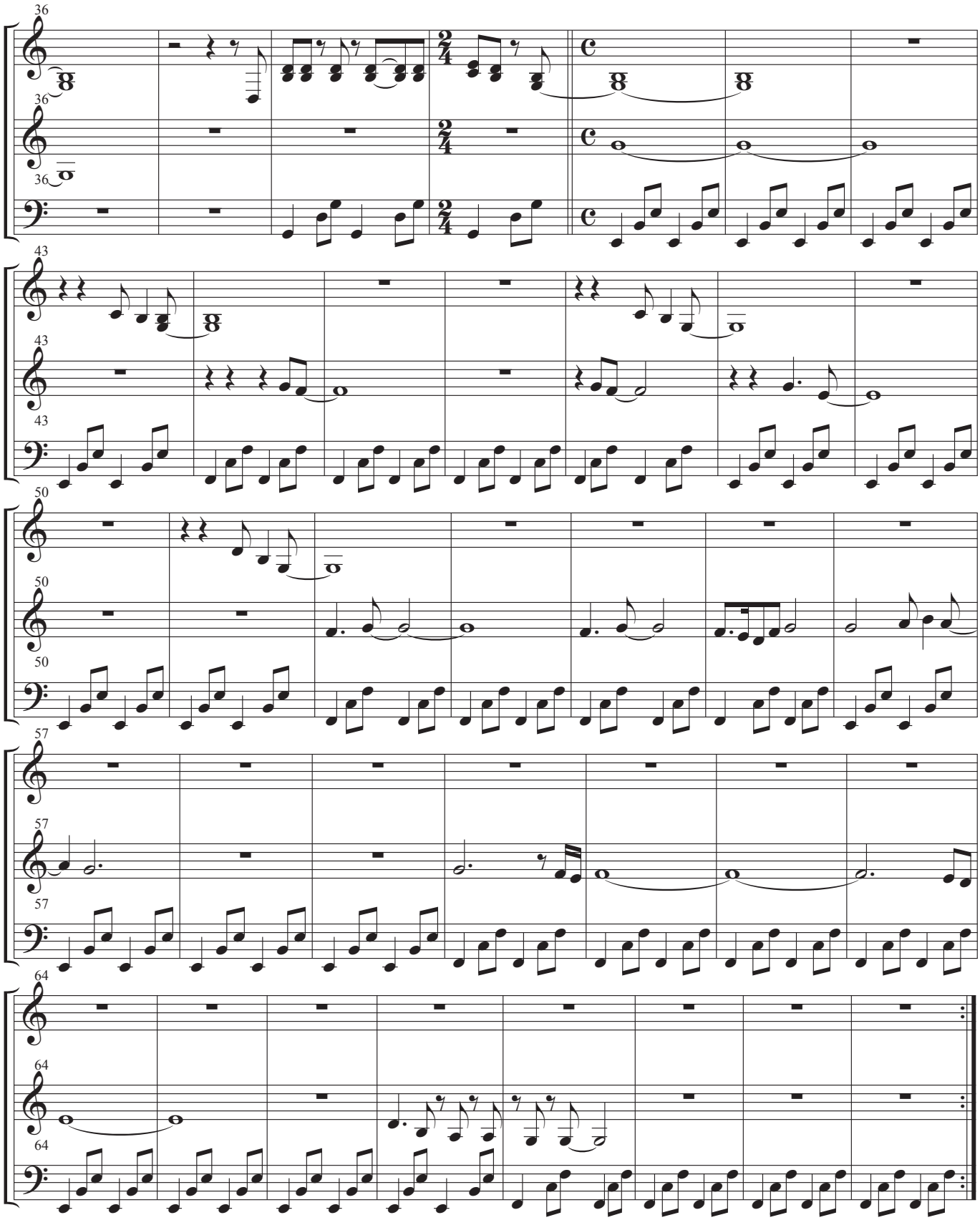



36
36
36
43
3
43
43
3
50
50
50
59
59
59
59

the british road
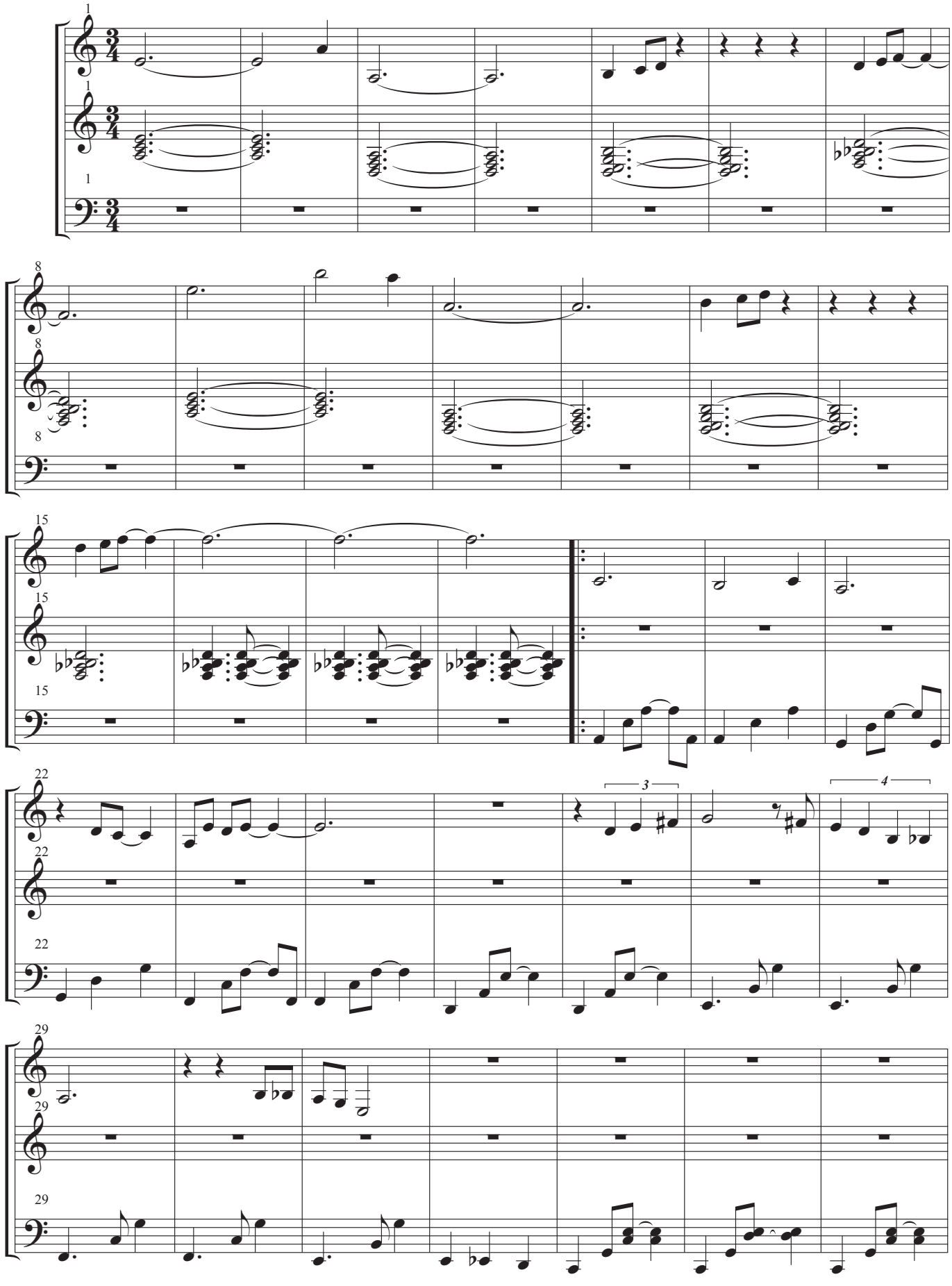
Robert Wyatt
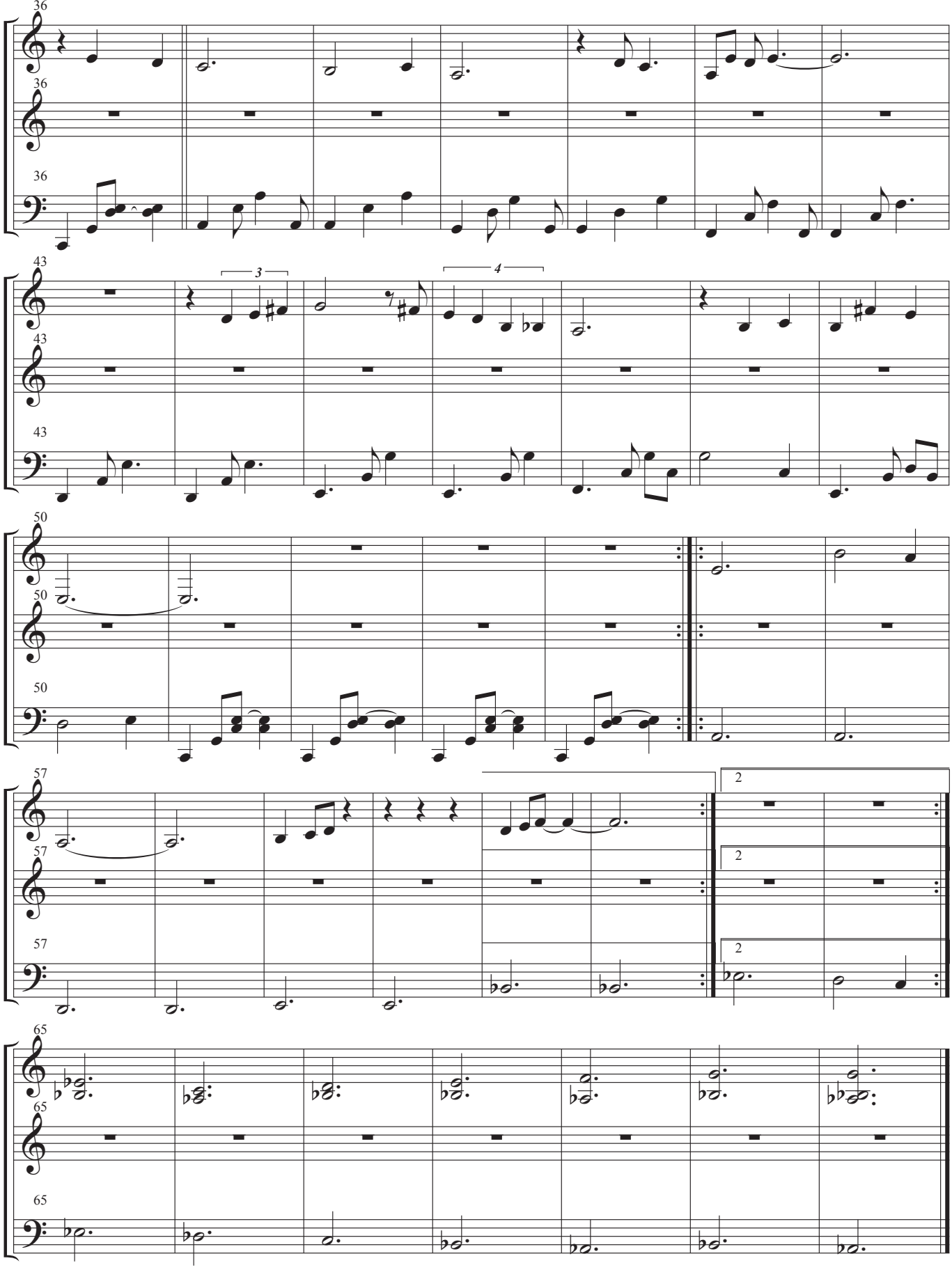



36
43
50
57
64

CP Jeebies
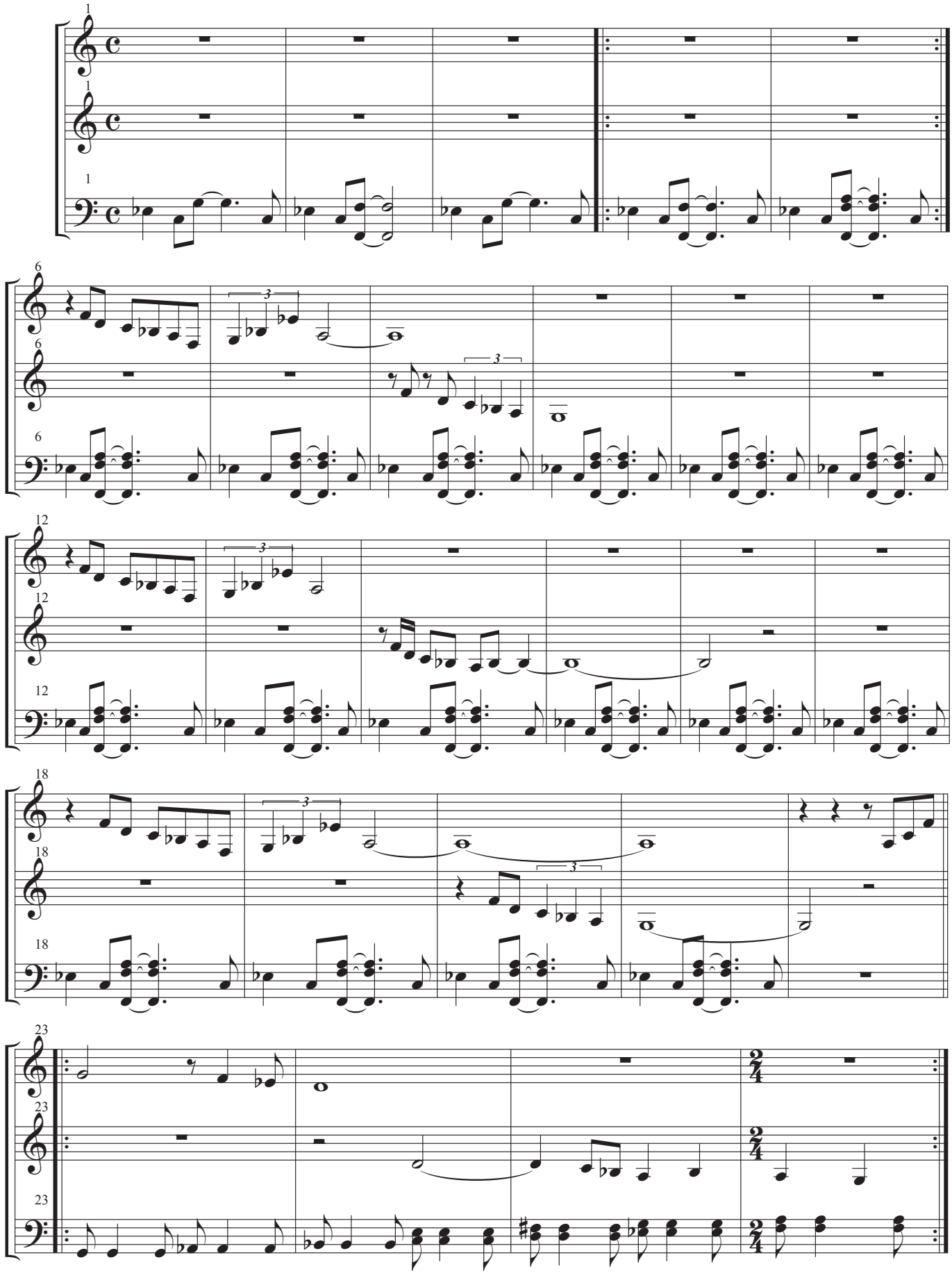
Robert Wyatt




36
43
50
57
65
3
4
2
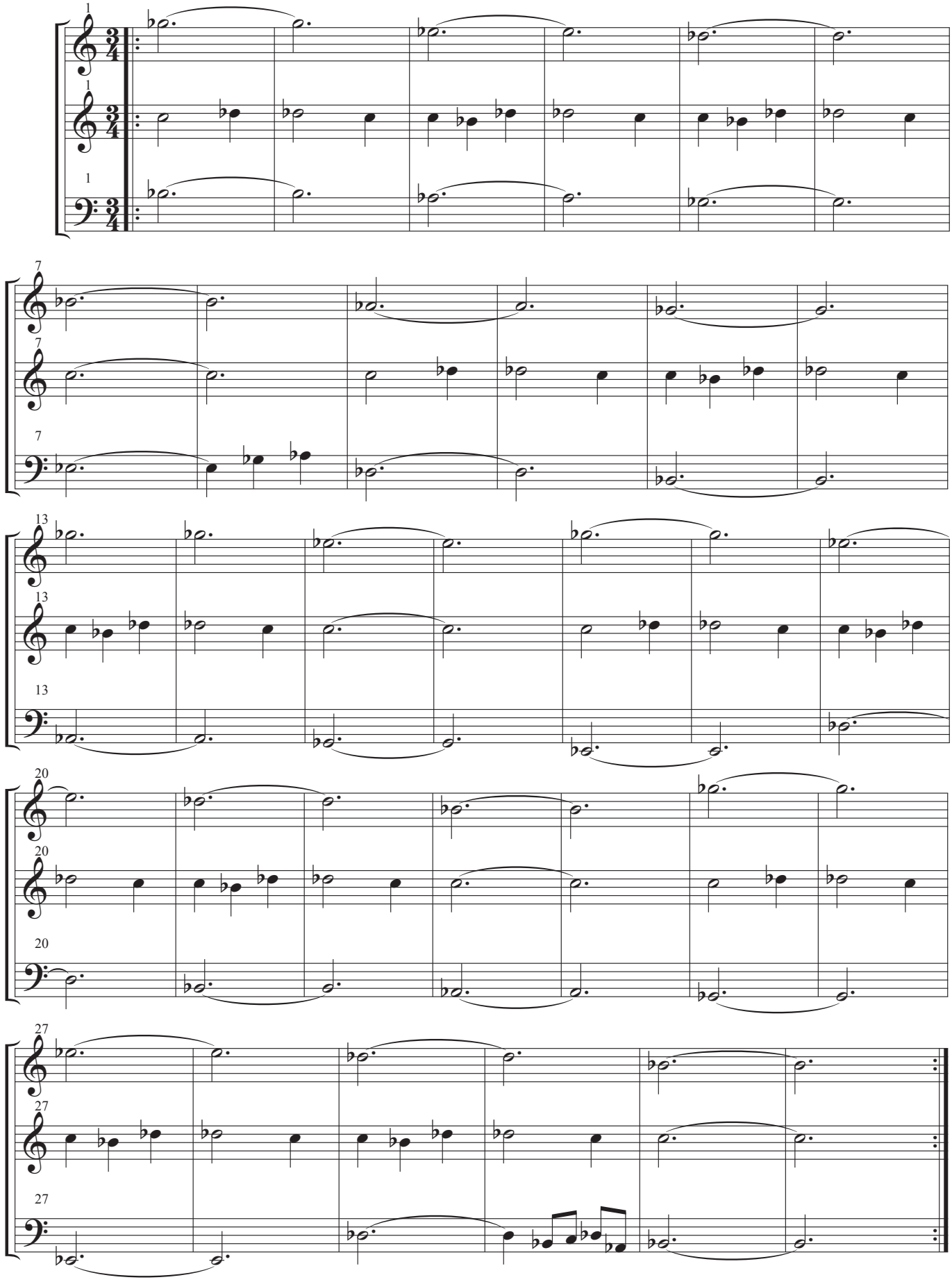
Gharbzadegi

Robert Wyatt
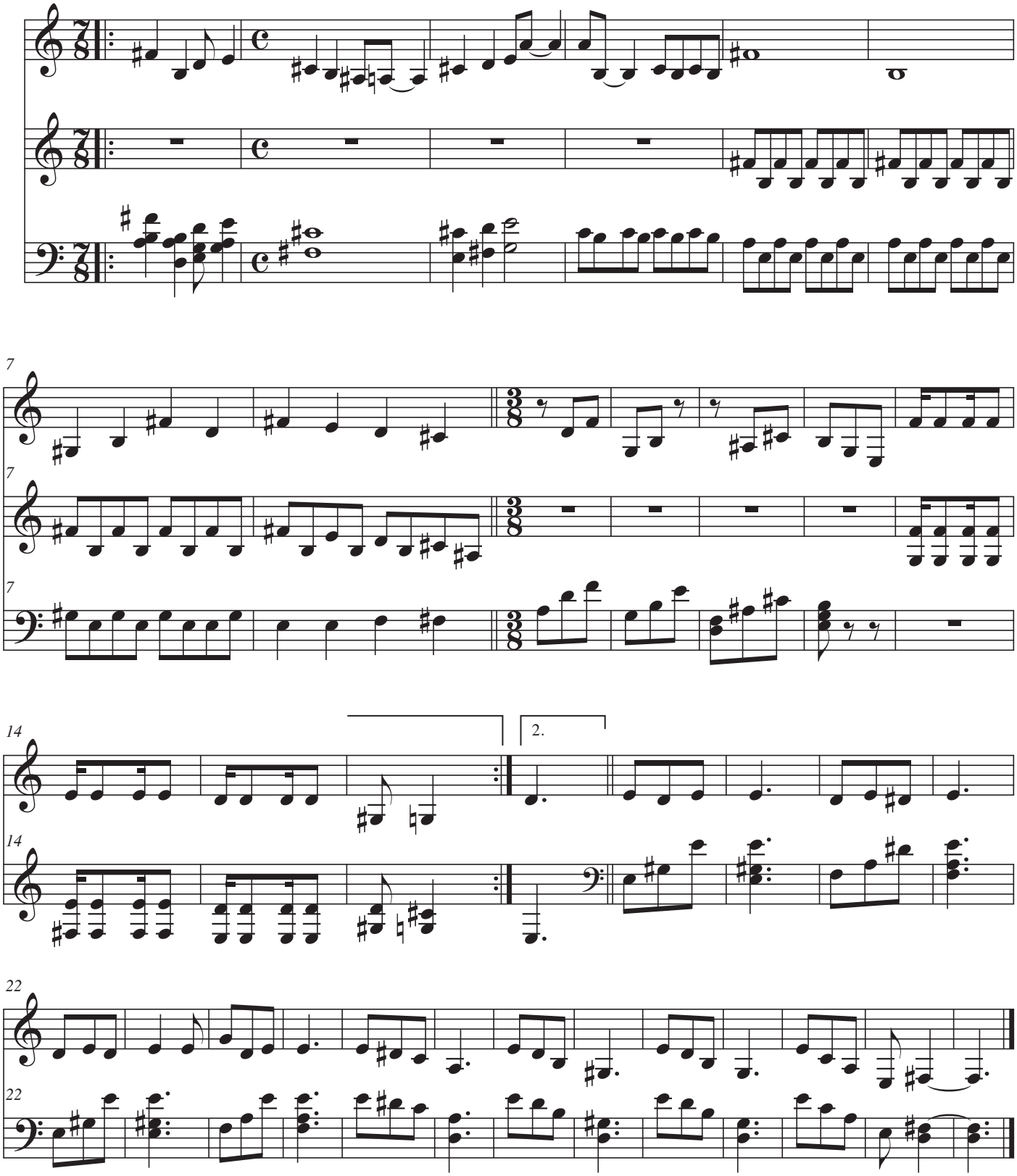


5 blacks and 1 white note

Robert Wyatt
Offenbach



Dedicated to you,
but you weren´t listening
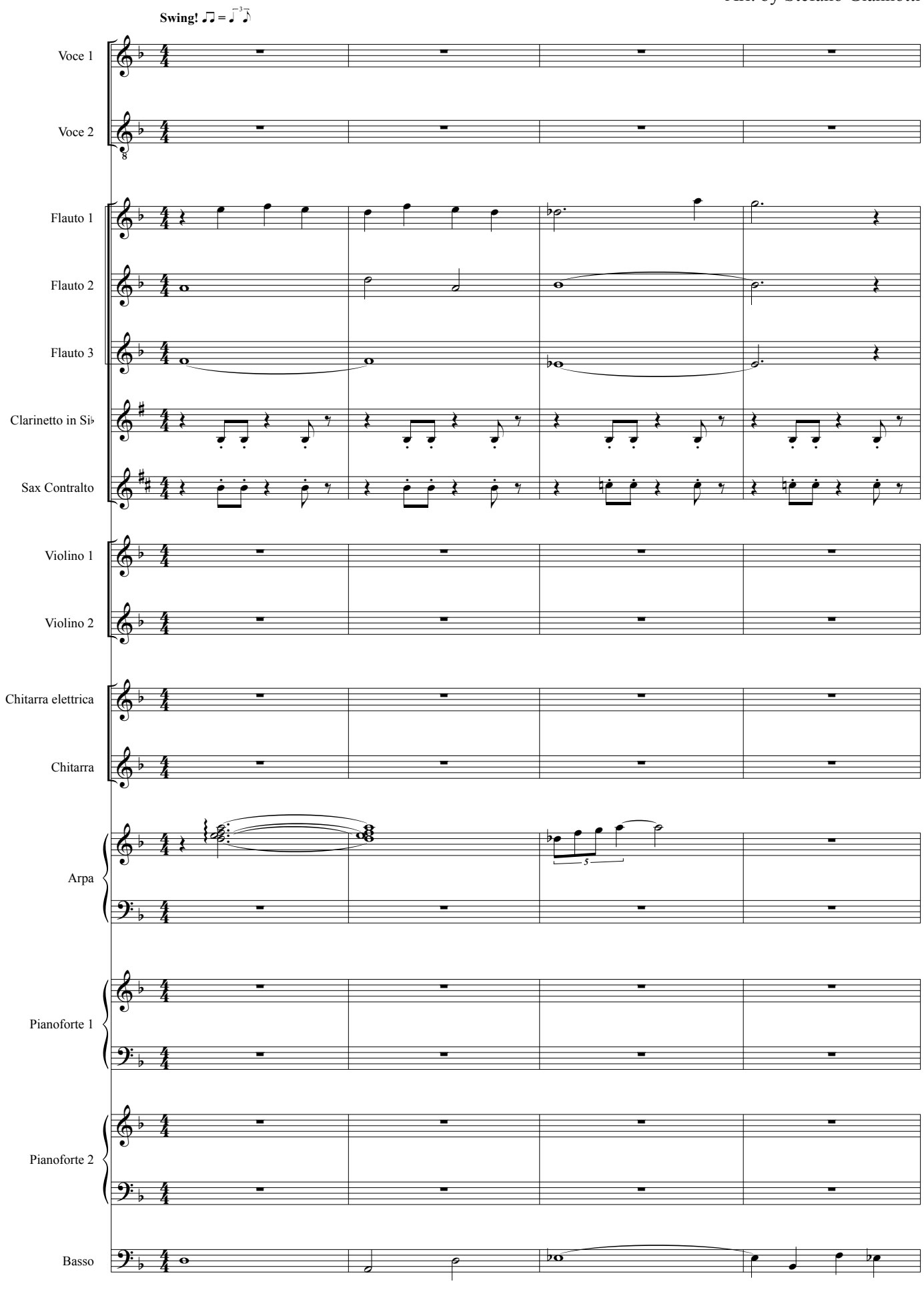
Hugh Hopper
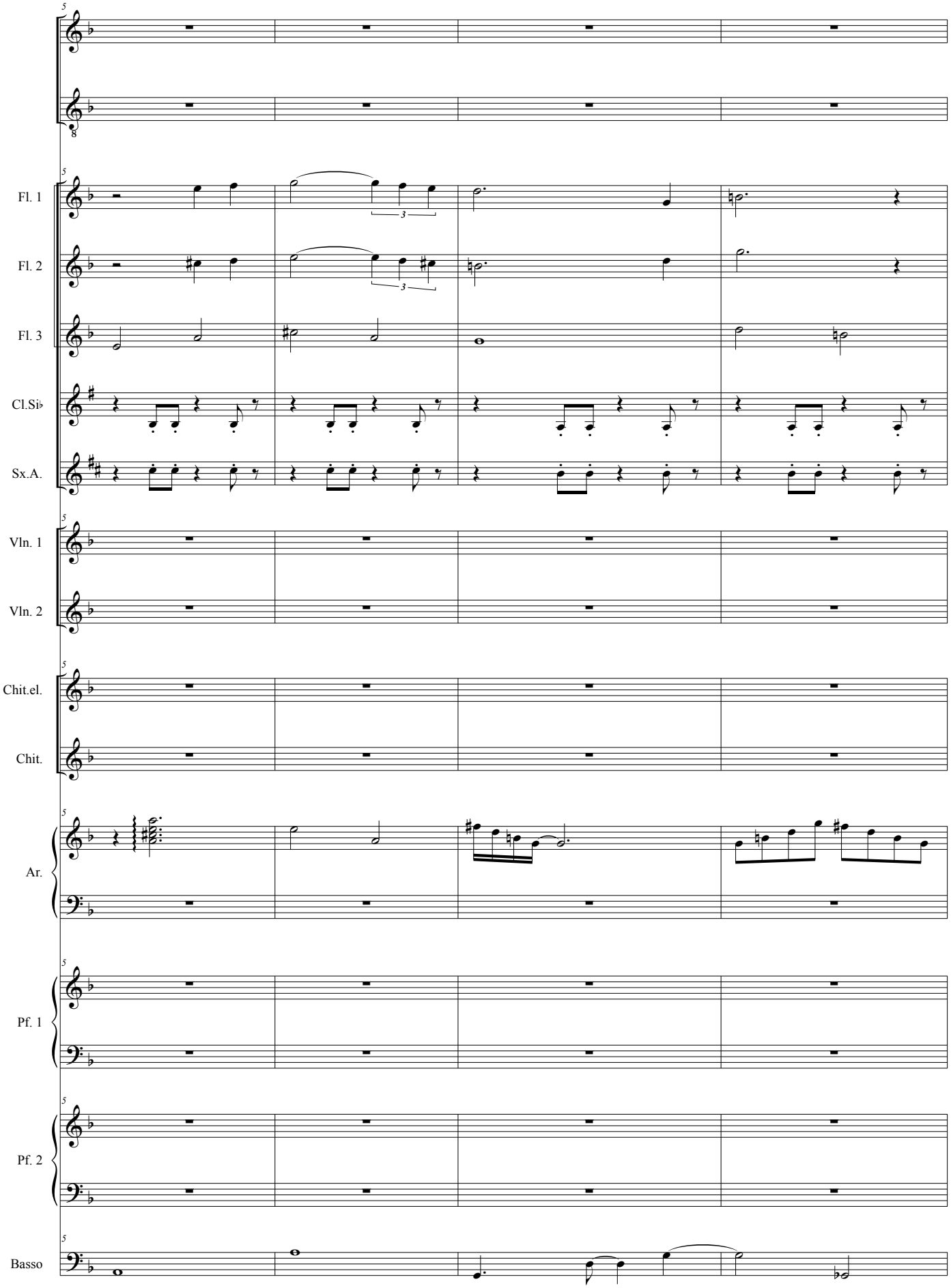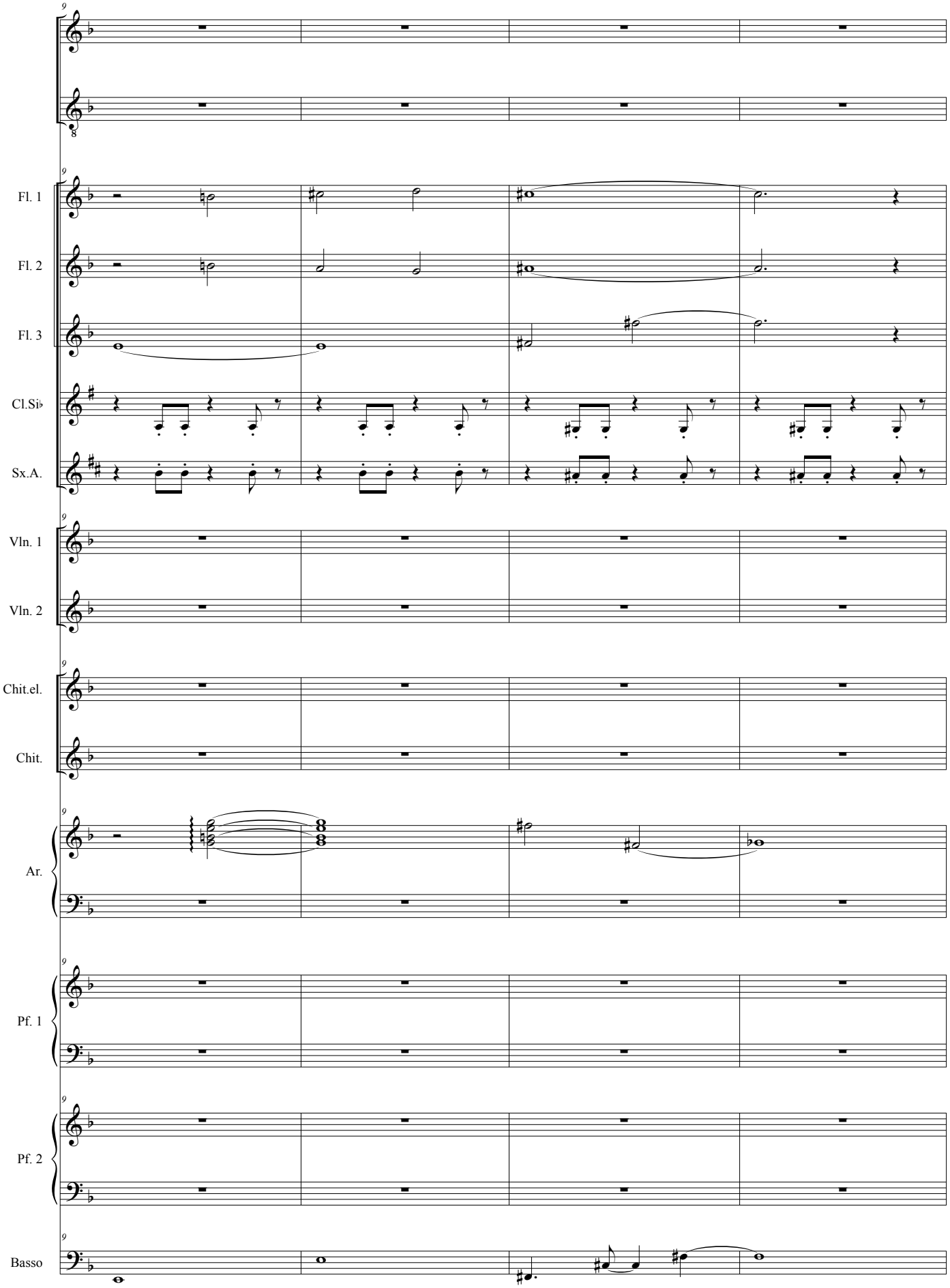


LULLABY FOR HAMZA
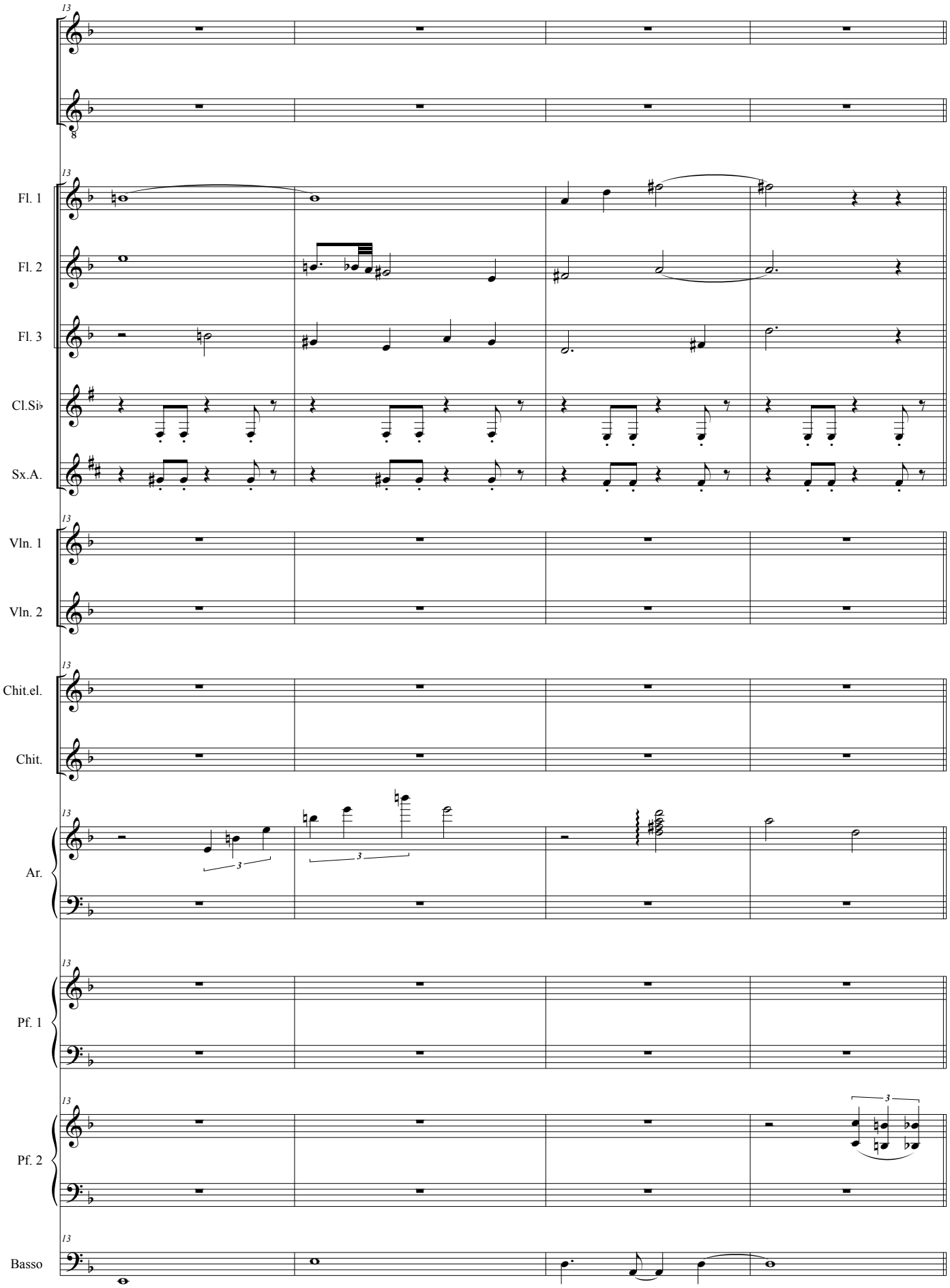
Partitura
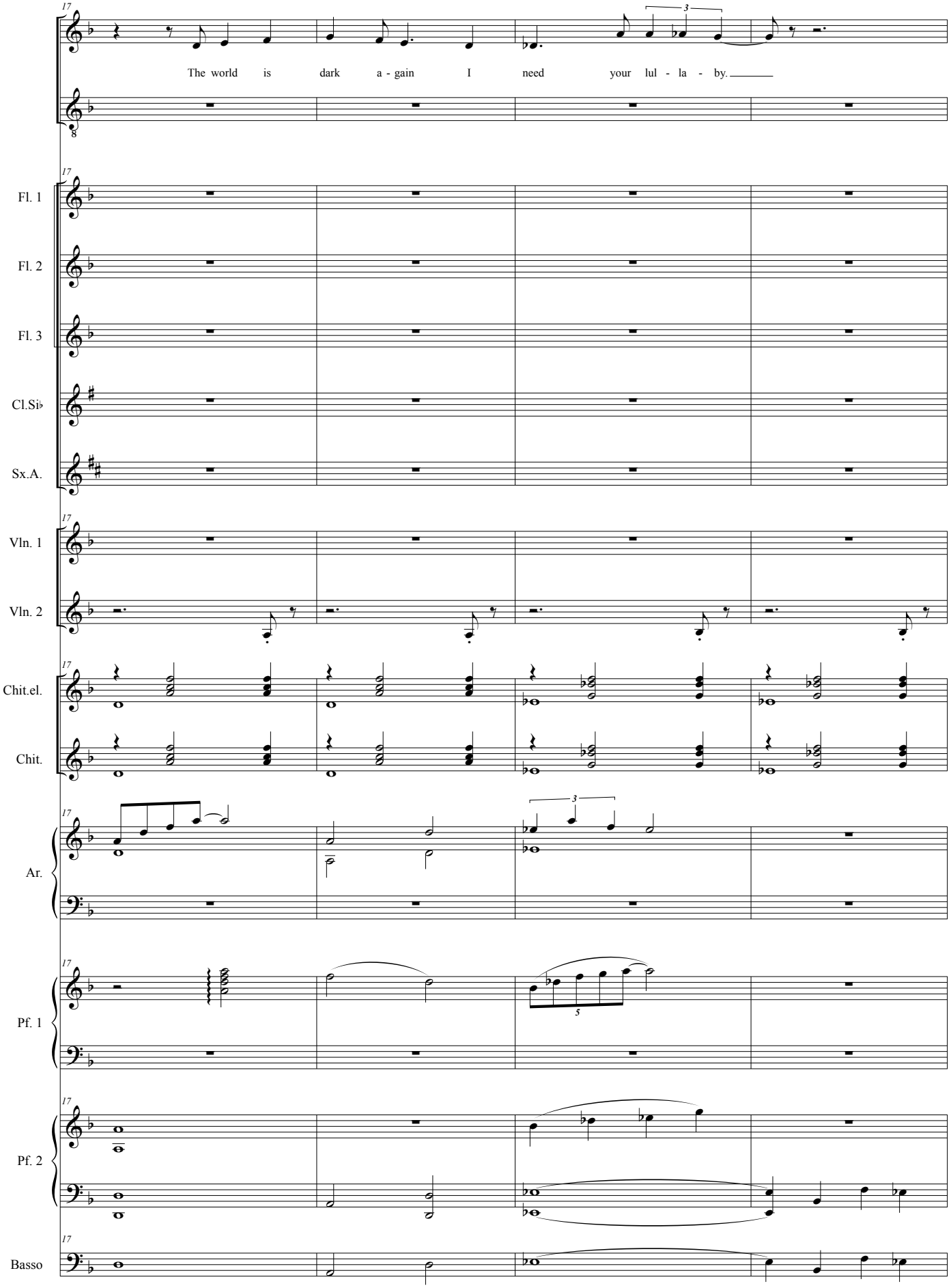
Robert Wyatt
Arr. by Stefano Giannotti
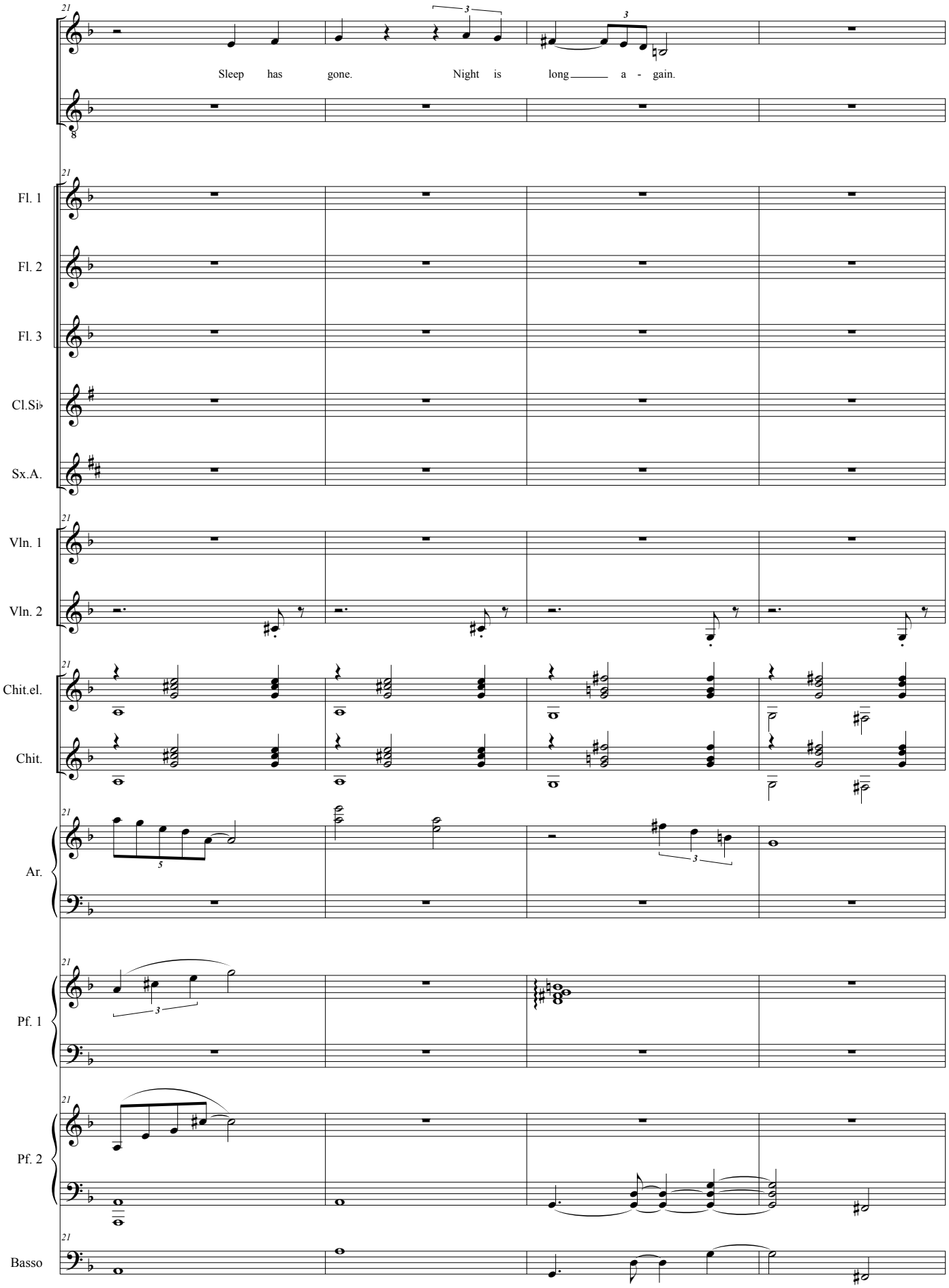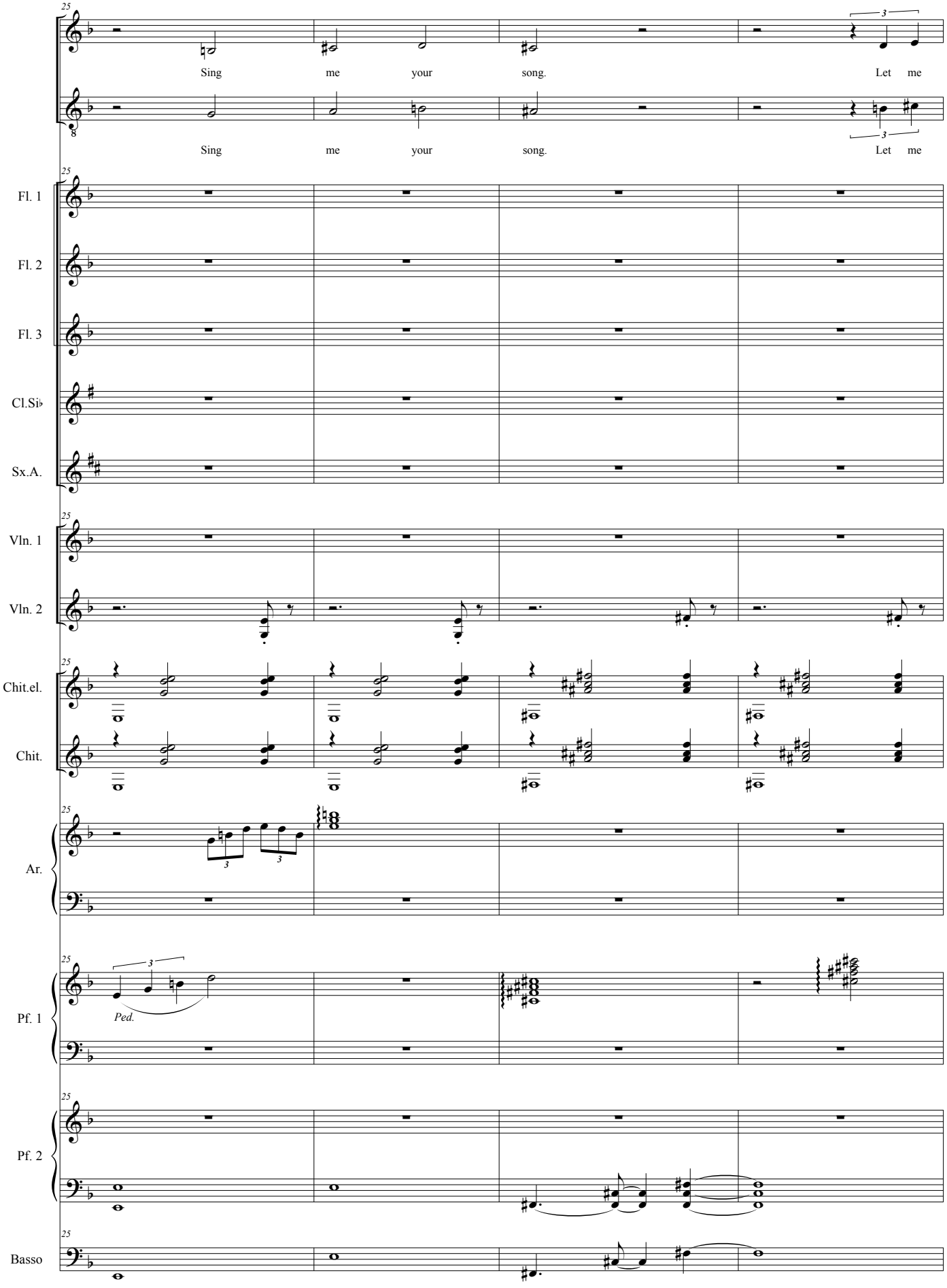



Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
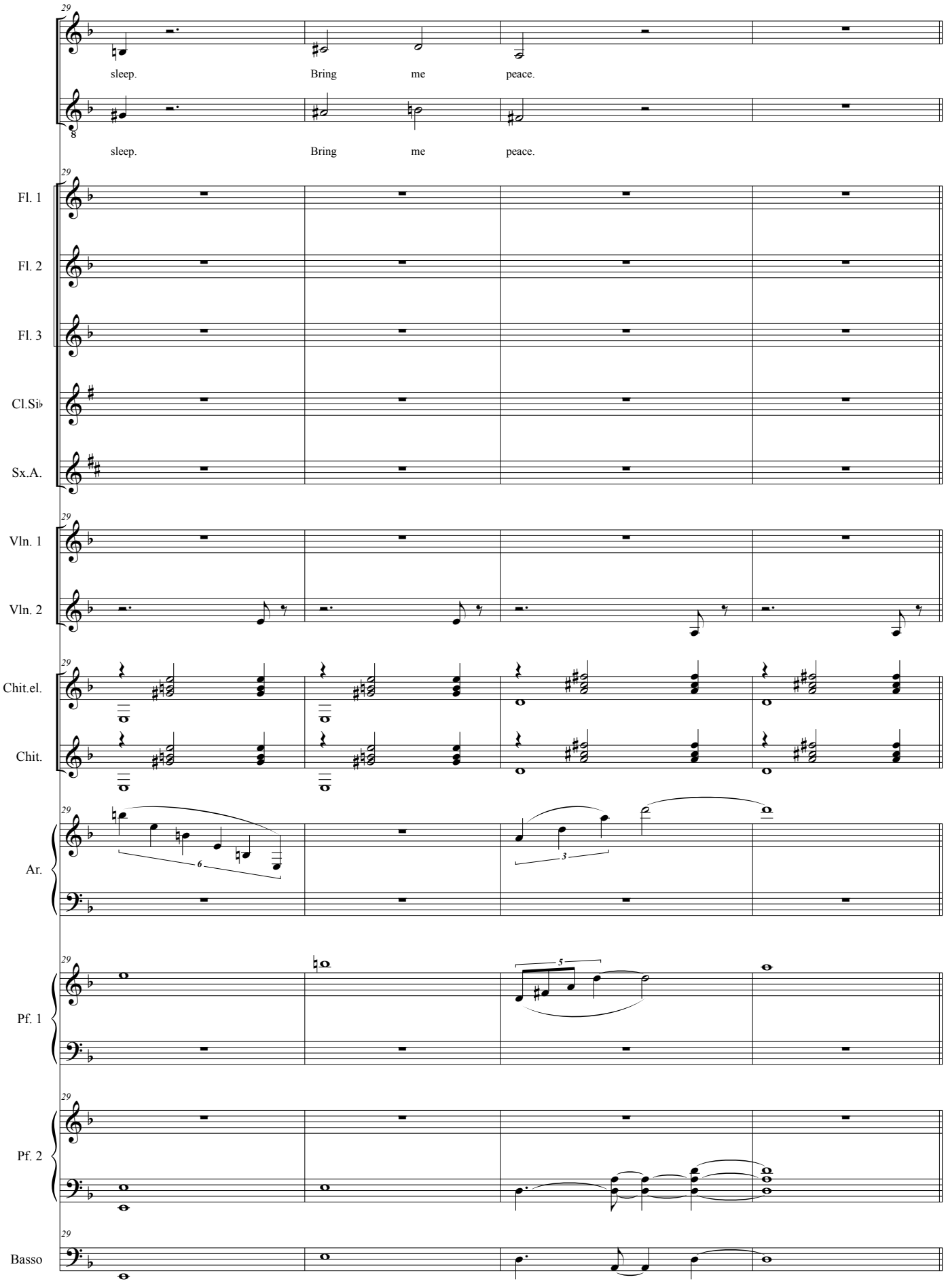

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
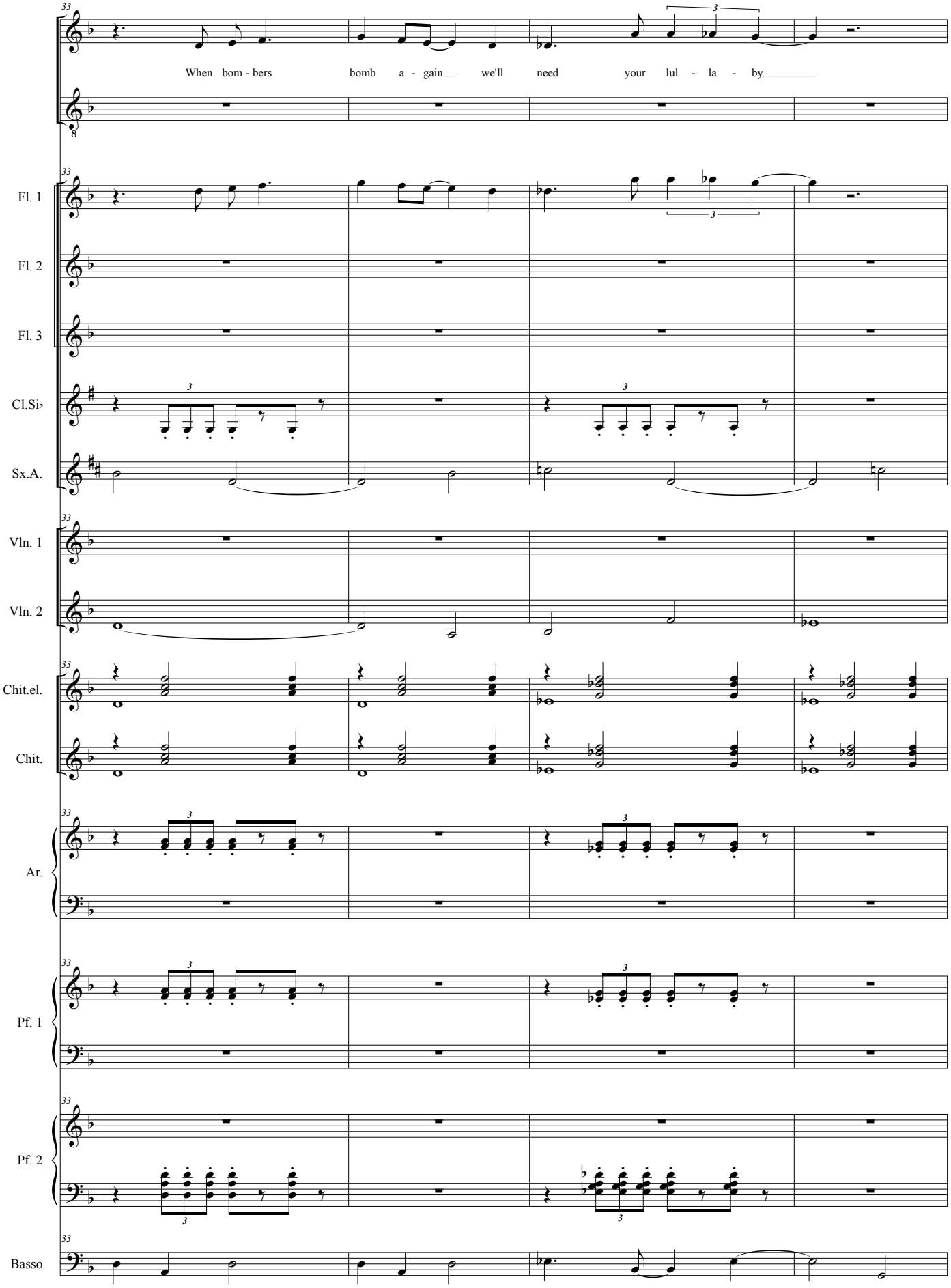

13
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
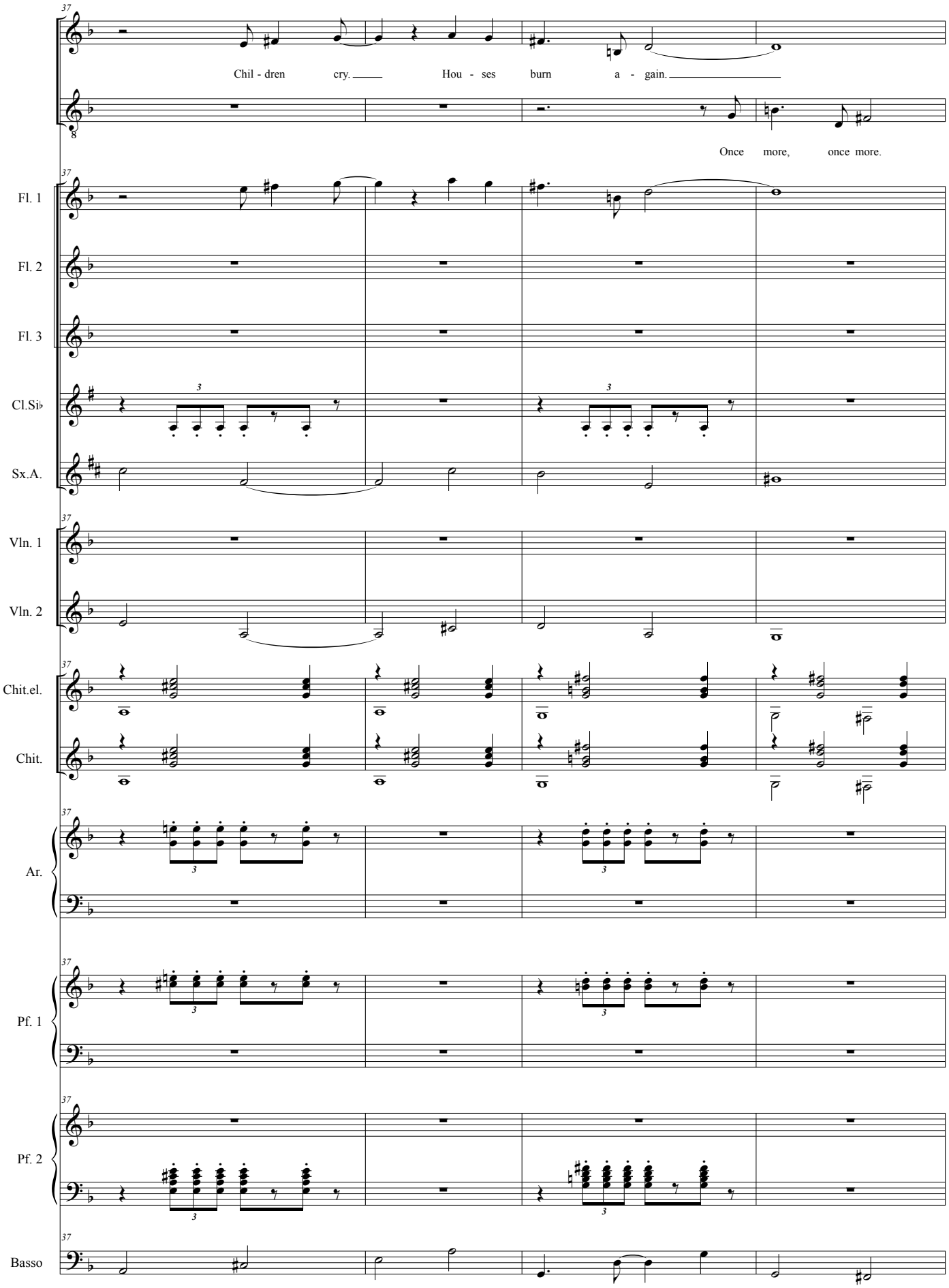

The world is dark a - gain I need your lul - la - by.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
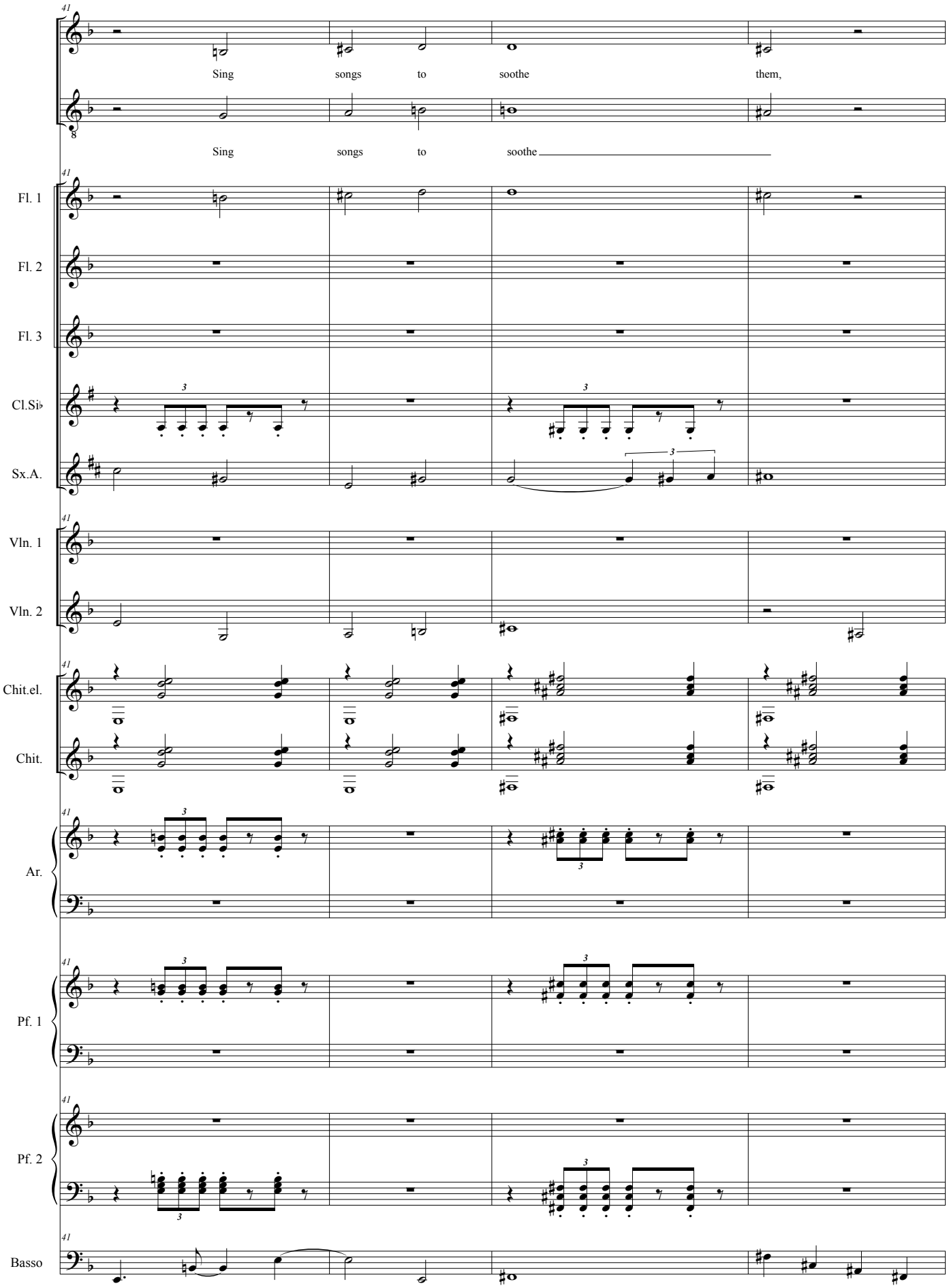

21
Sleep has gone. Night is long a - gain.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
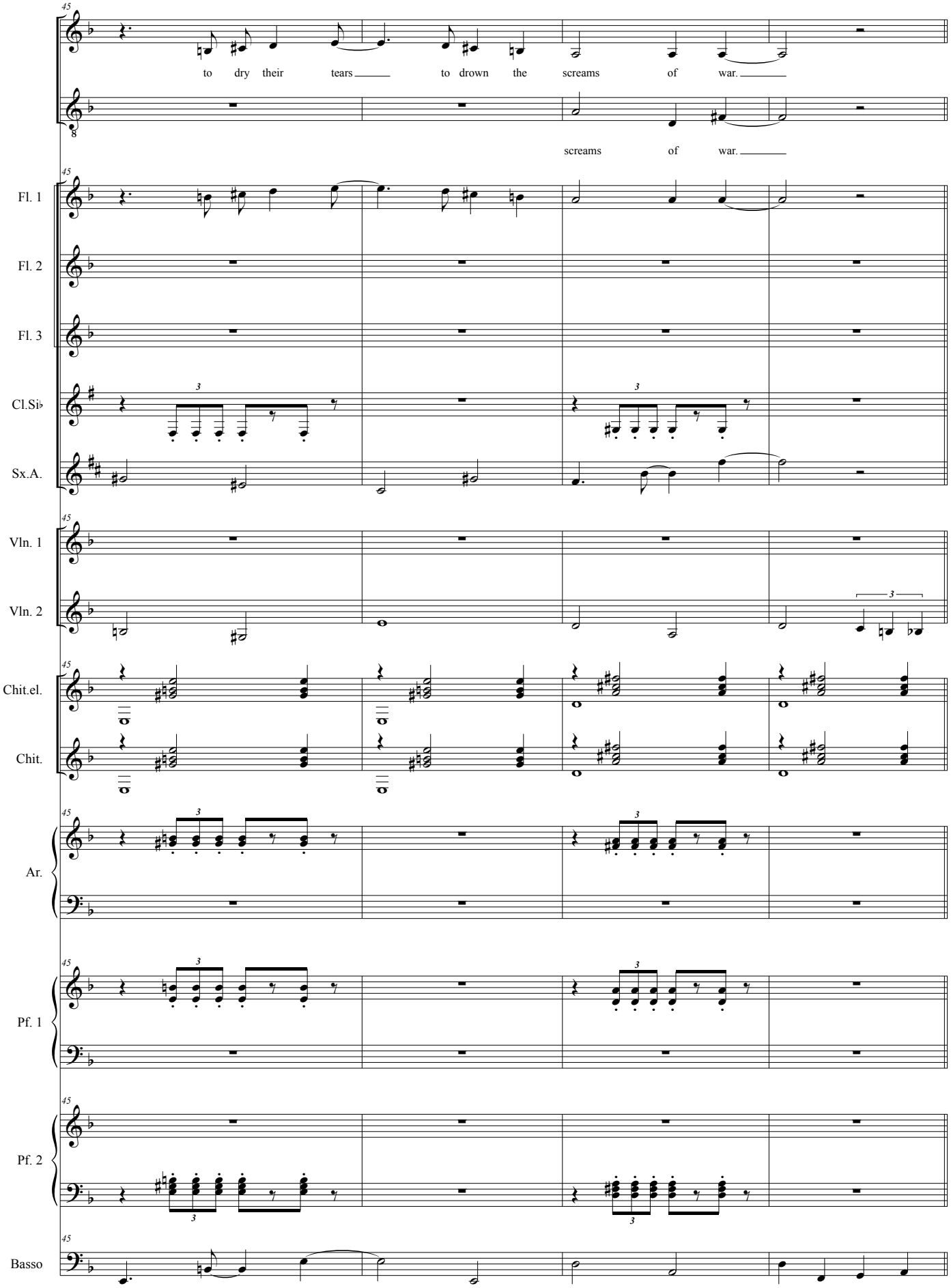

25
Sing me your song. Let me
Sing me your song. Let me
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Ped.
Pf. 2
Basso
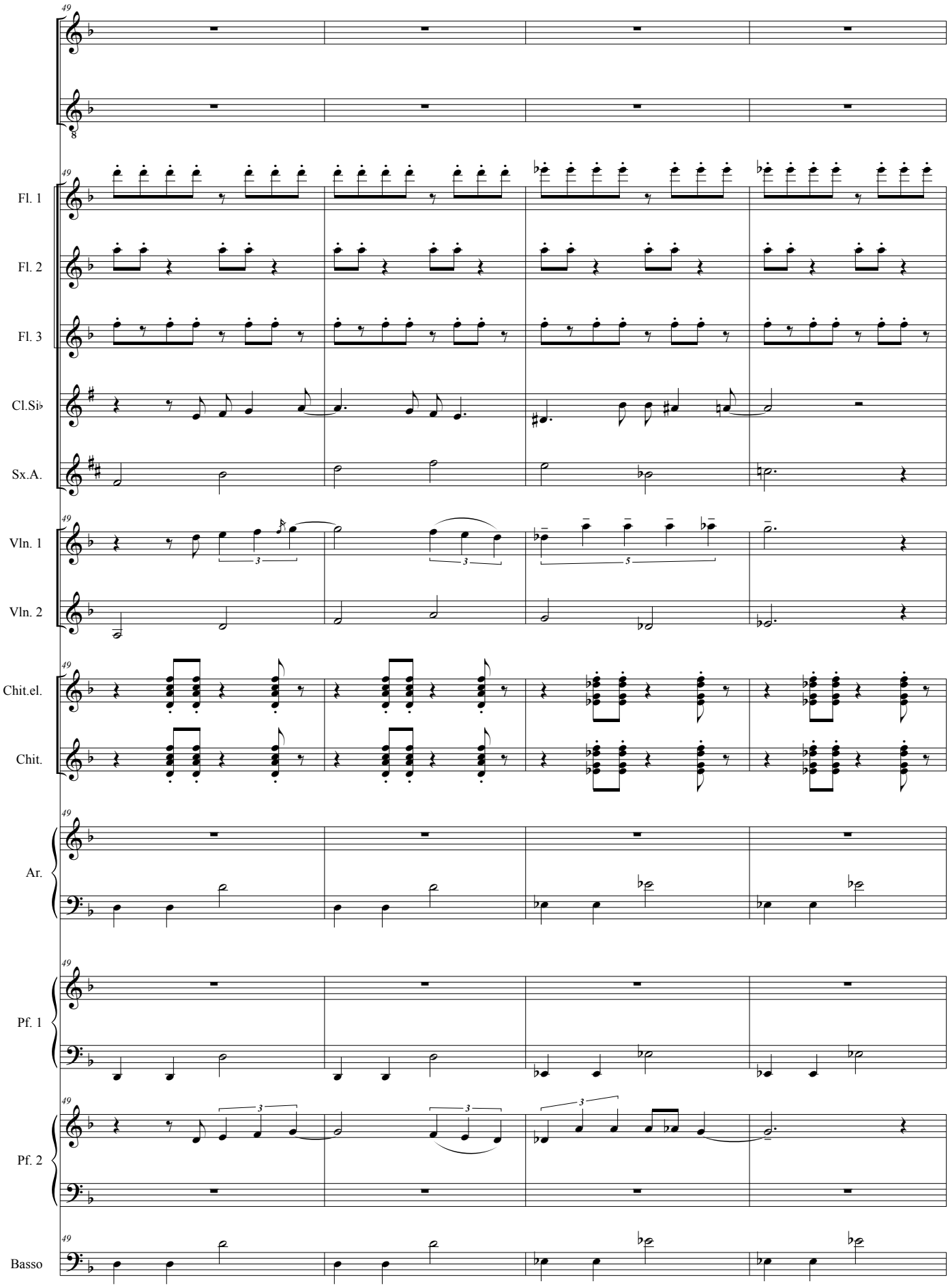

29
sleep. Bring me peace.
sleep. Bring me peace.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
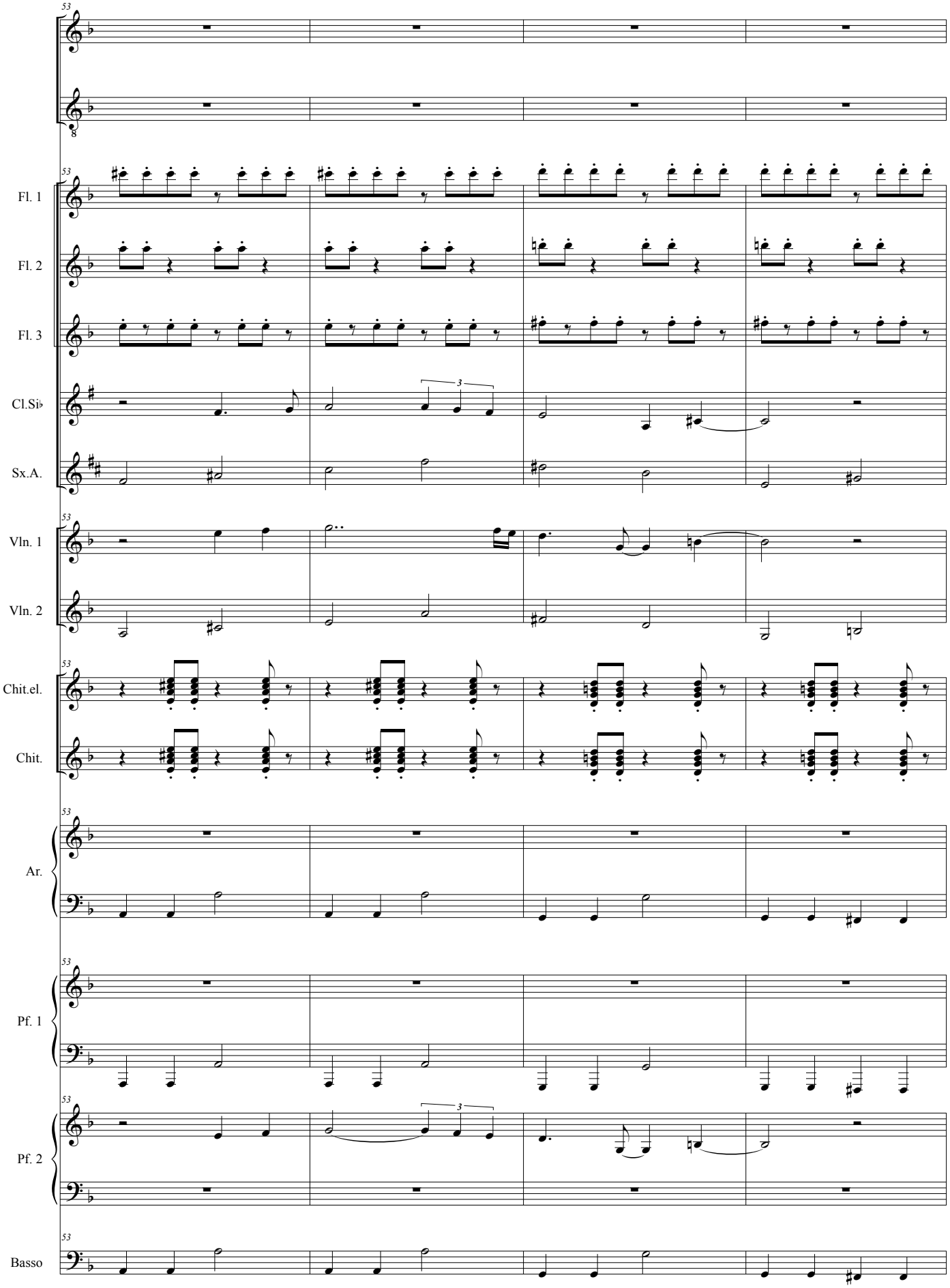

When bom - bers bomb a - gain we'll need your lul - la - by.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
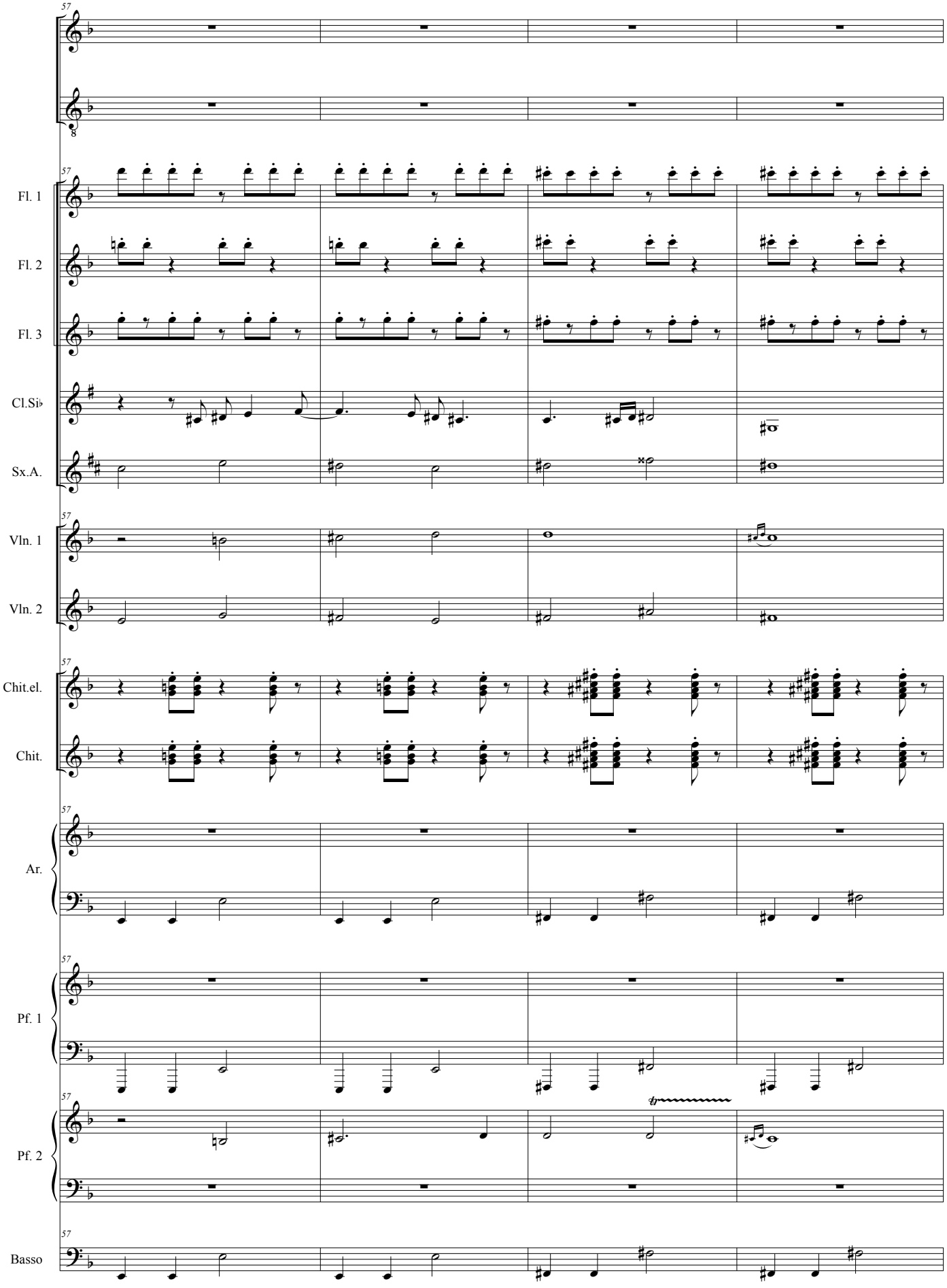

37
Chil - dren cry. Hou - ses burn a - gain.
Once more, once more.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
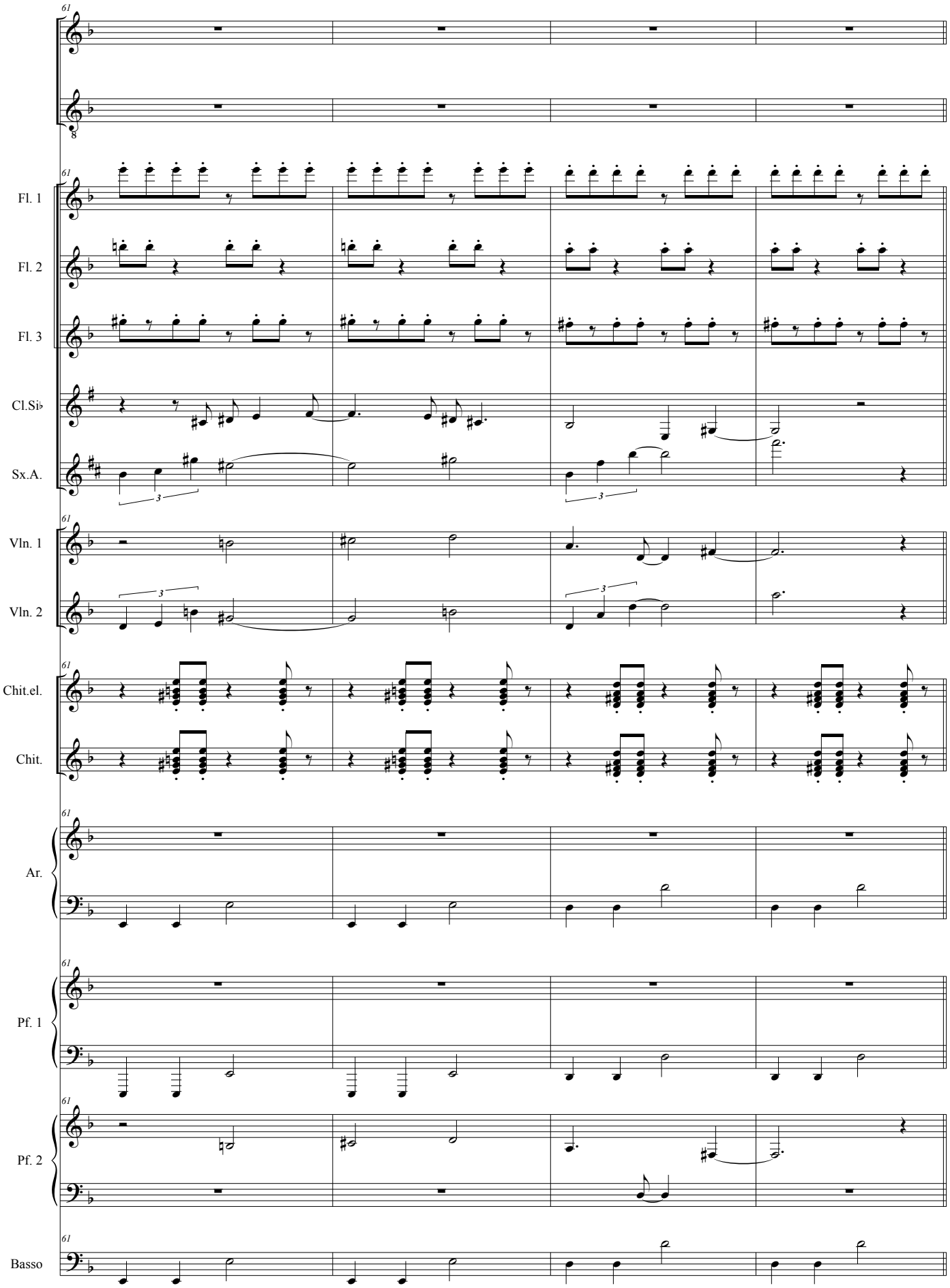

41
Sing songs to soothe them,
Sing songs to soothe
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
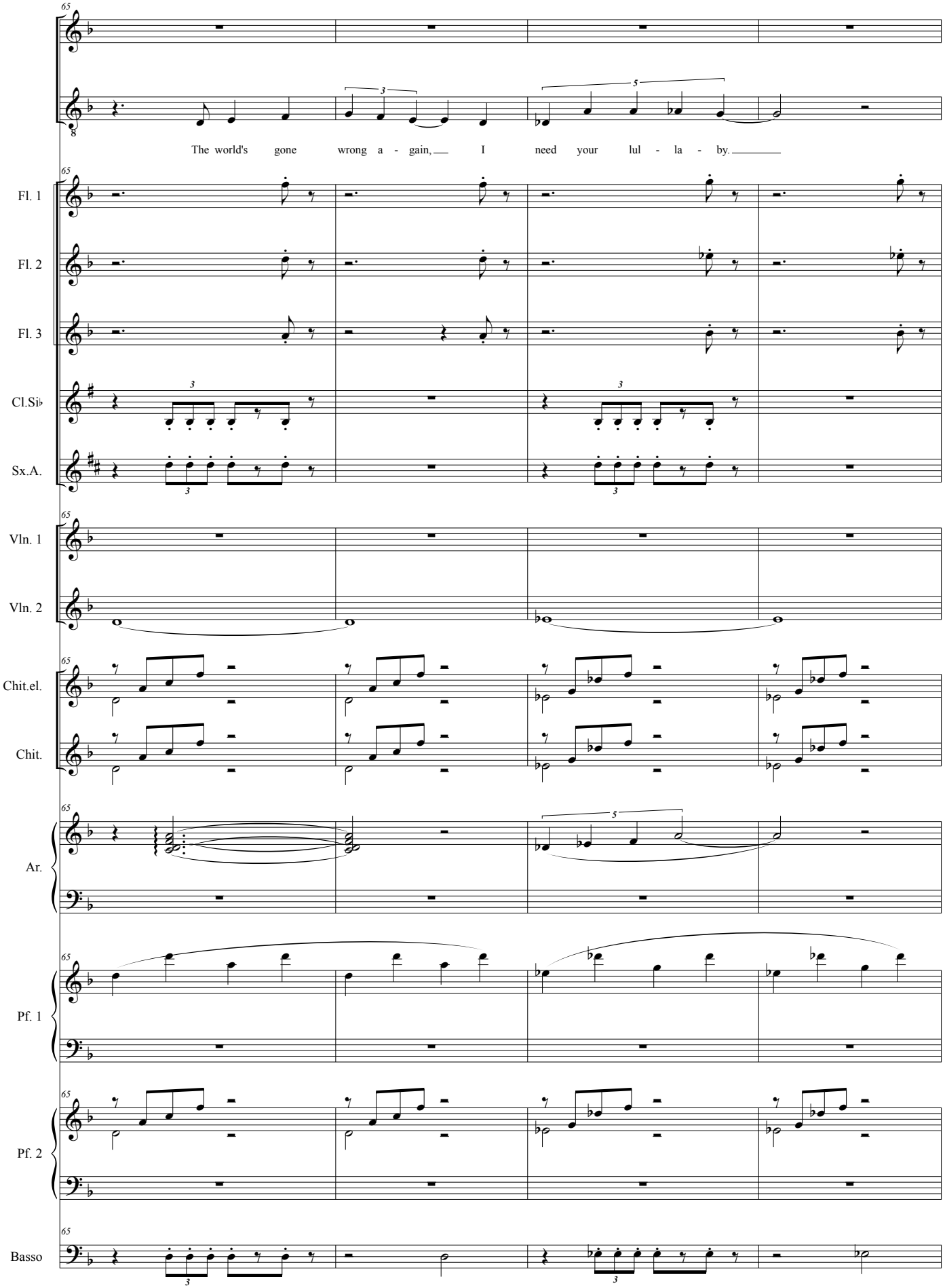

45
to dry their tears to drown the screams of war.
screams of war.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
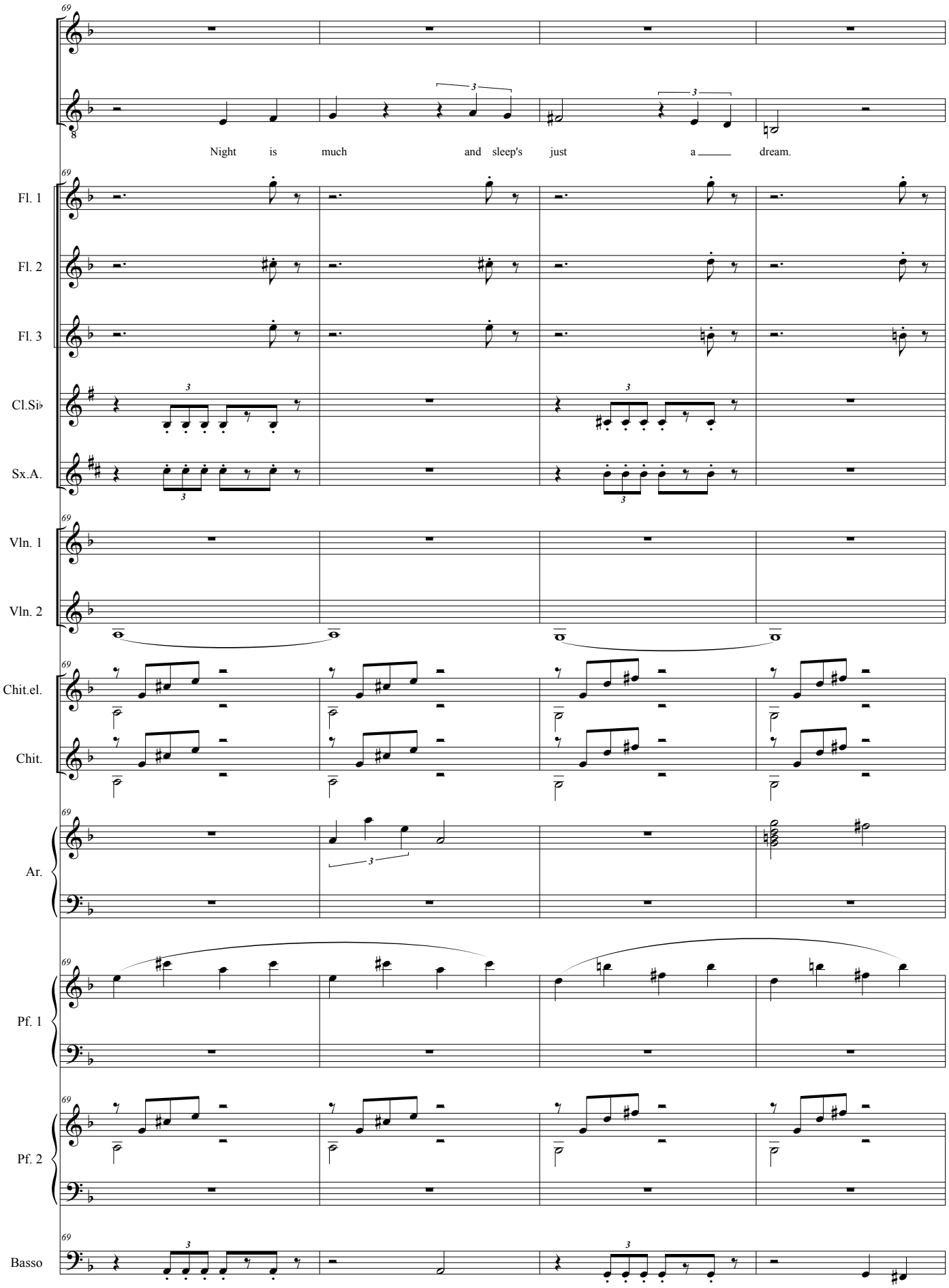

49
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
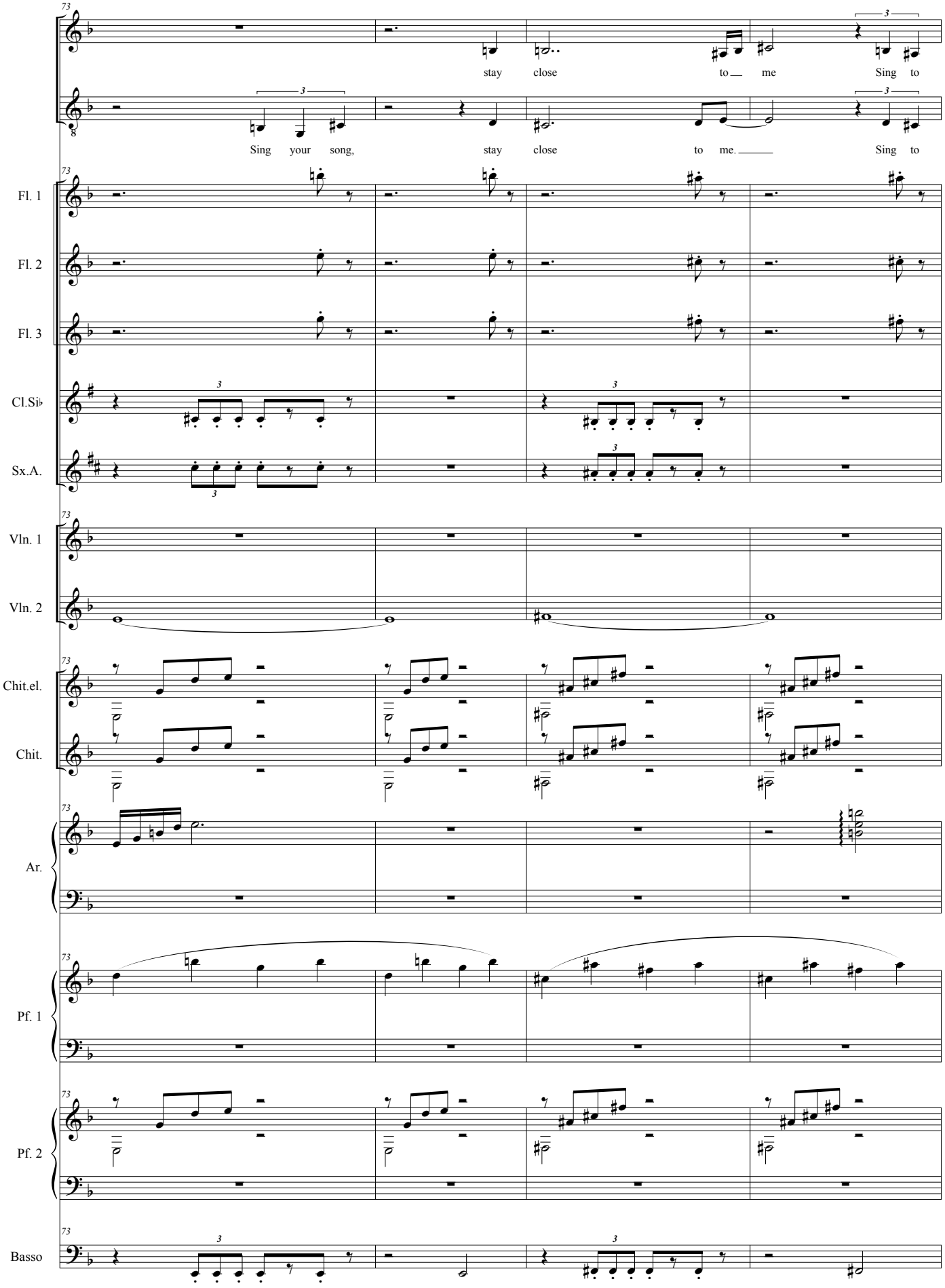

53
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
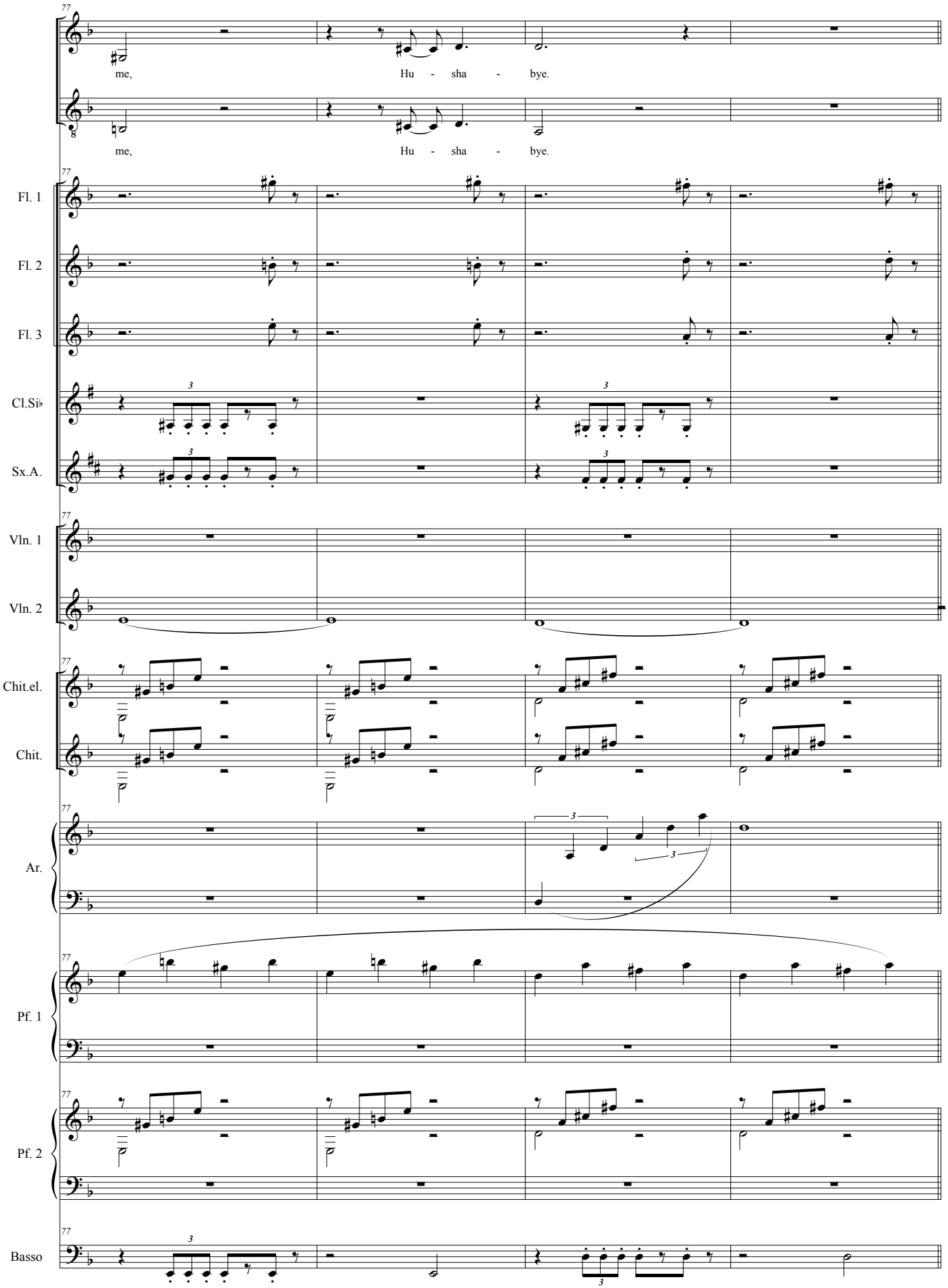

57
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
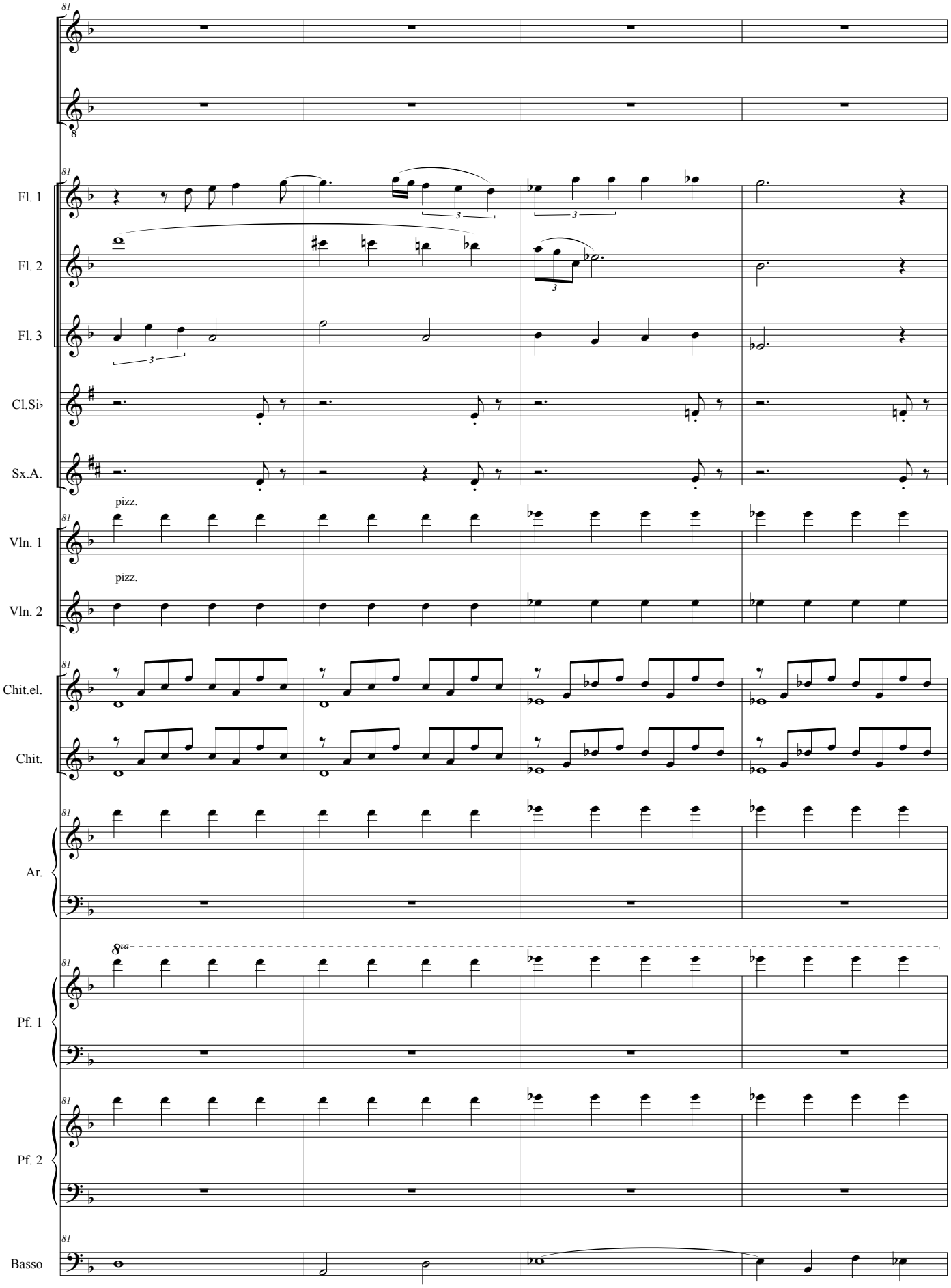

61
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
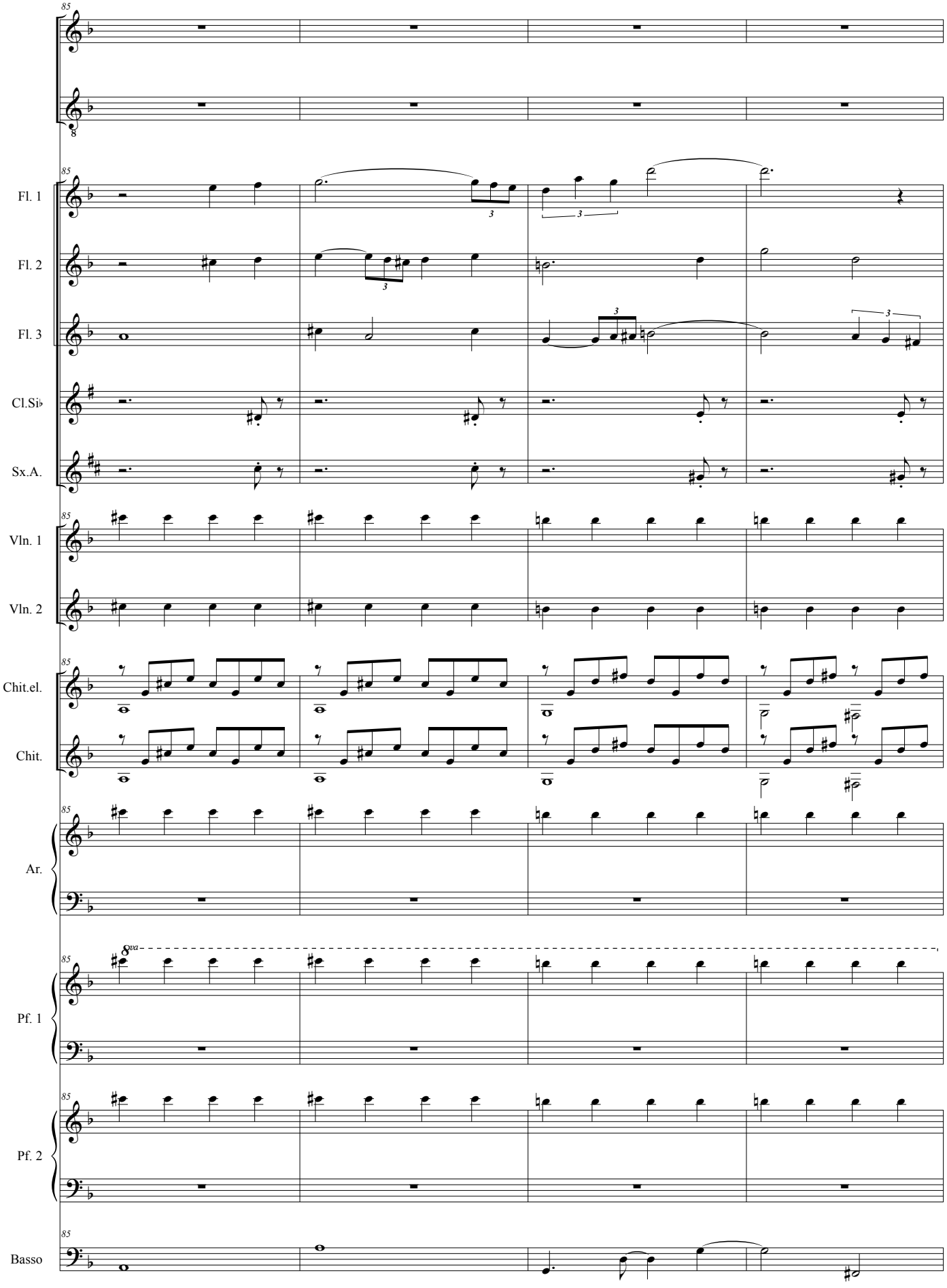

65
The world's gone wrong a - gain, I need your lul - la - by.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
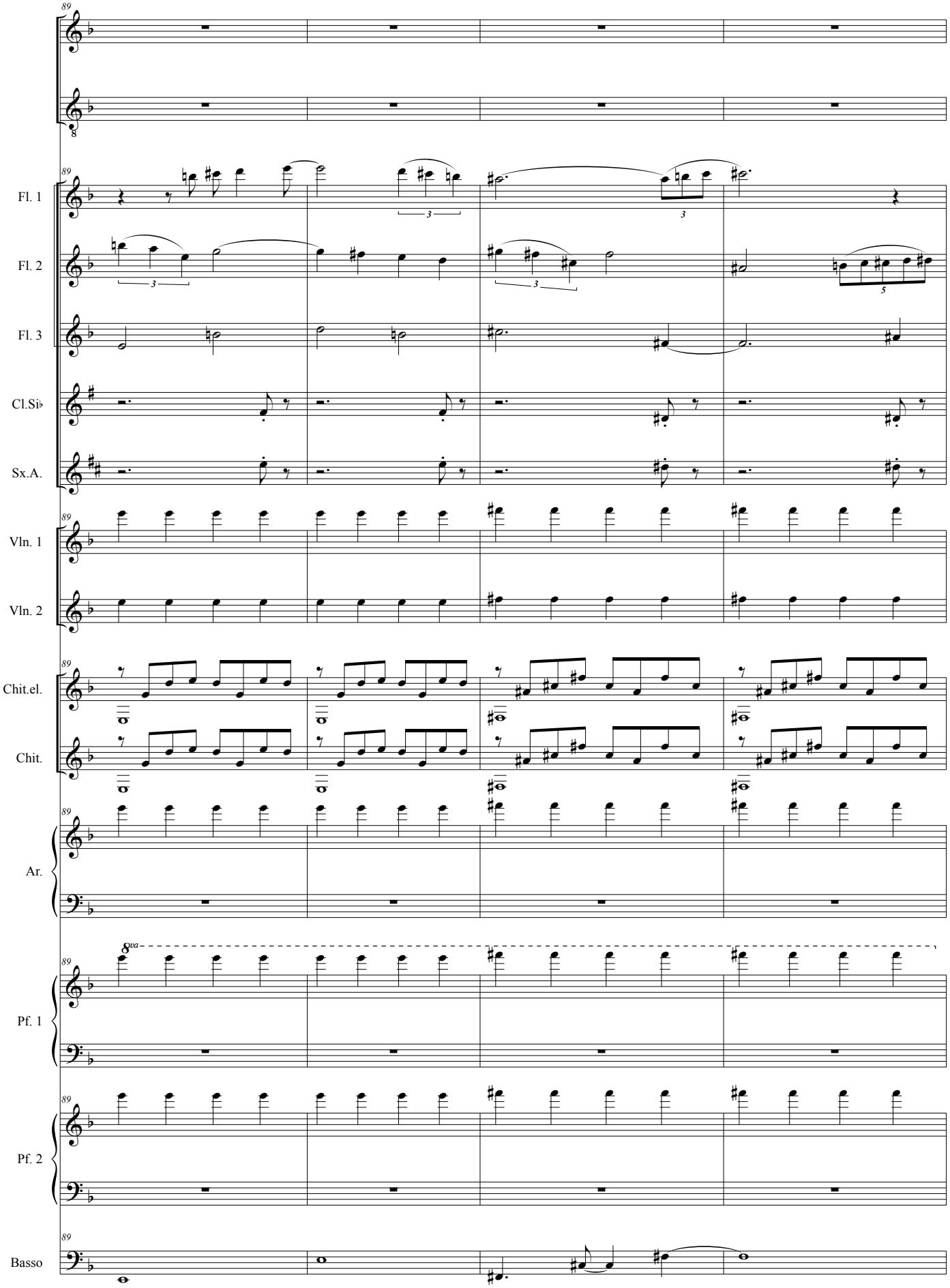

69
Night is much and sleep's just a dream.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
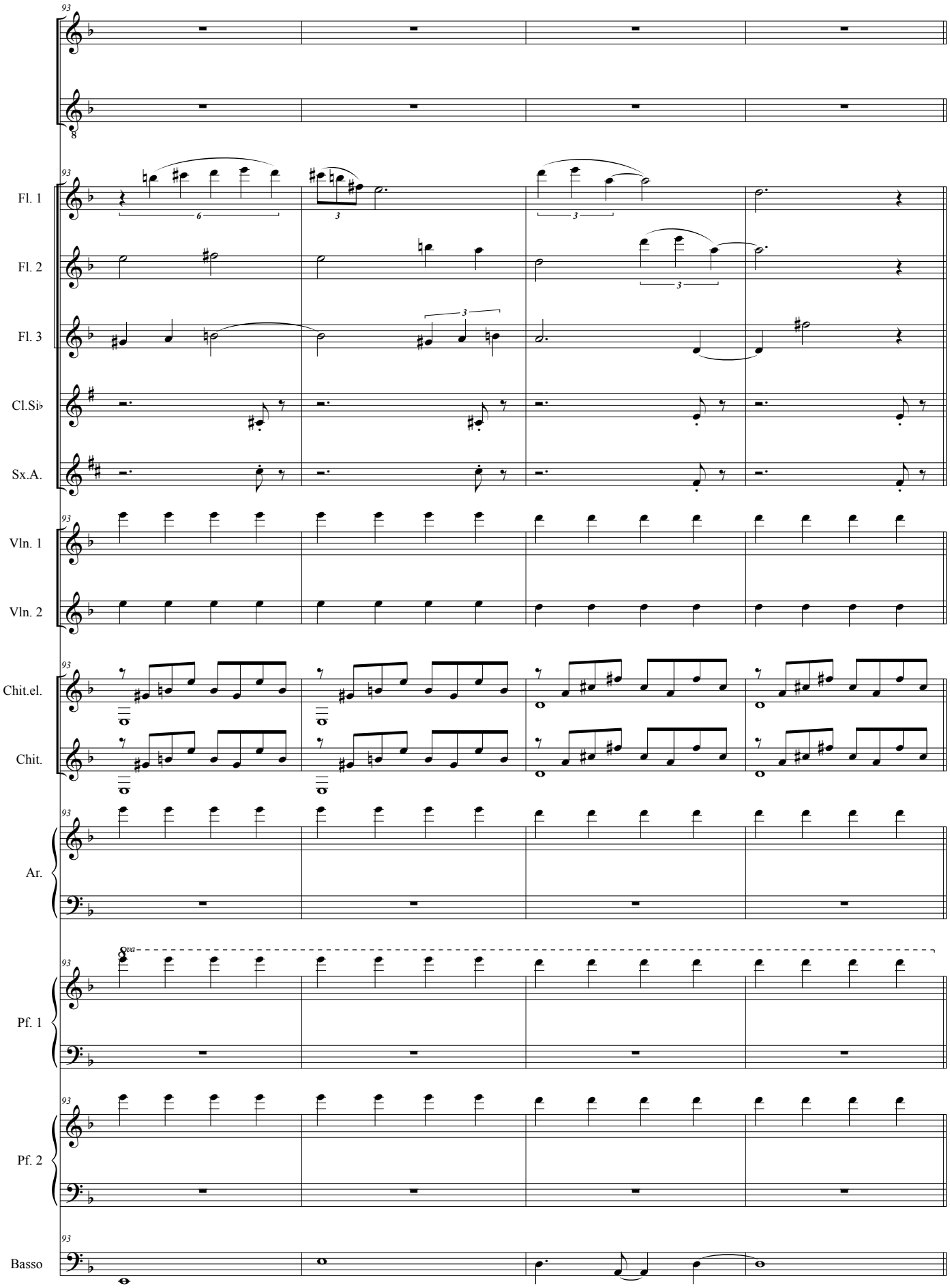

73
stay close to me Sing to
Sing your song, stay close to me. Sing to
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
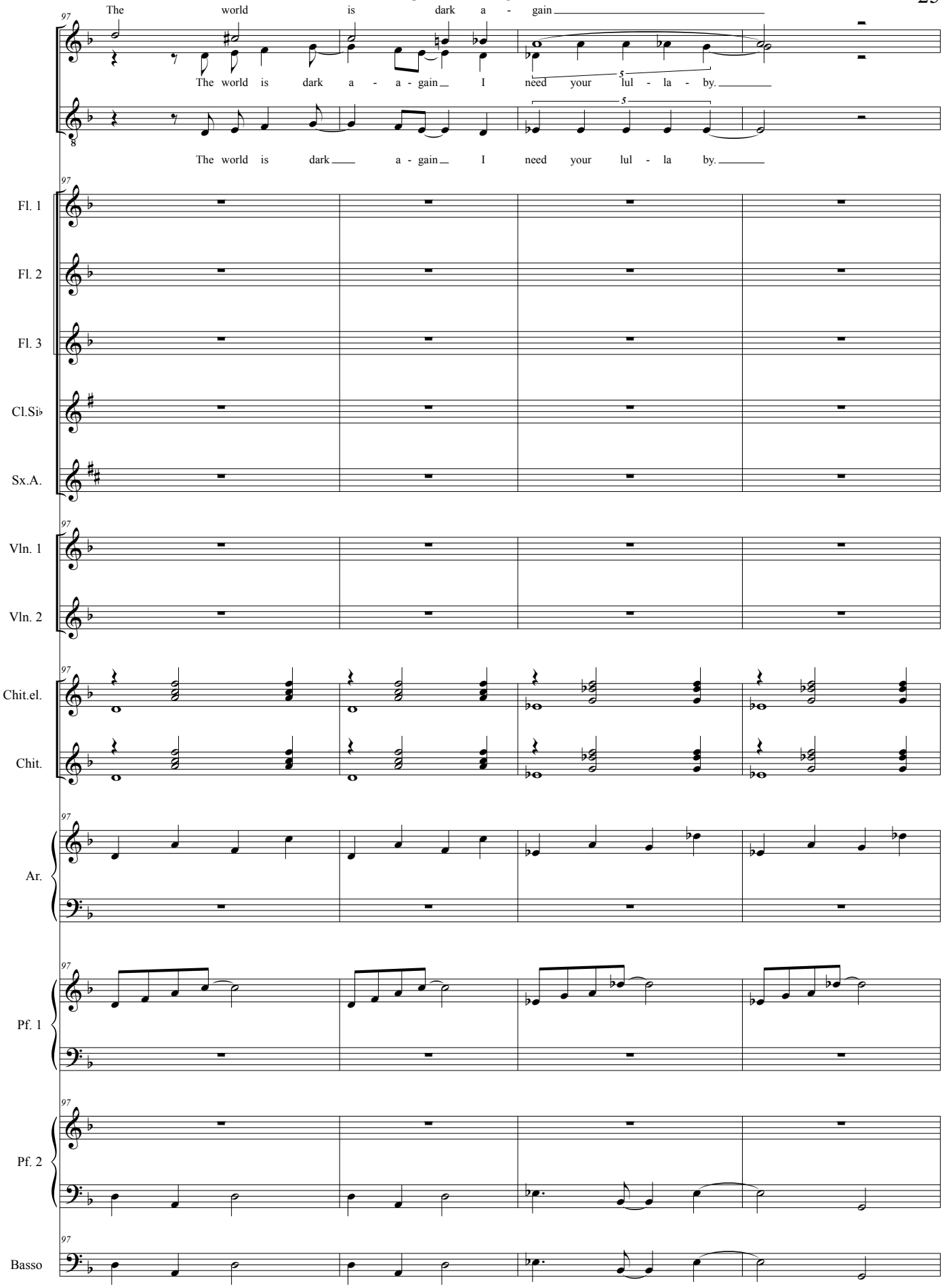

77
me, Hu - sha - bye.
me, Hu - sha - bye.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
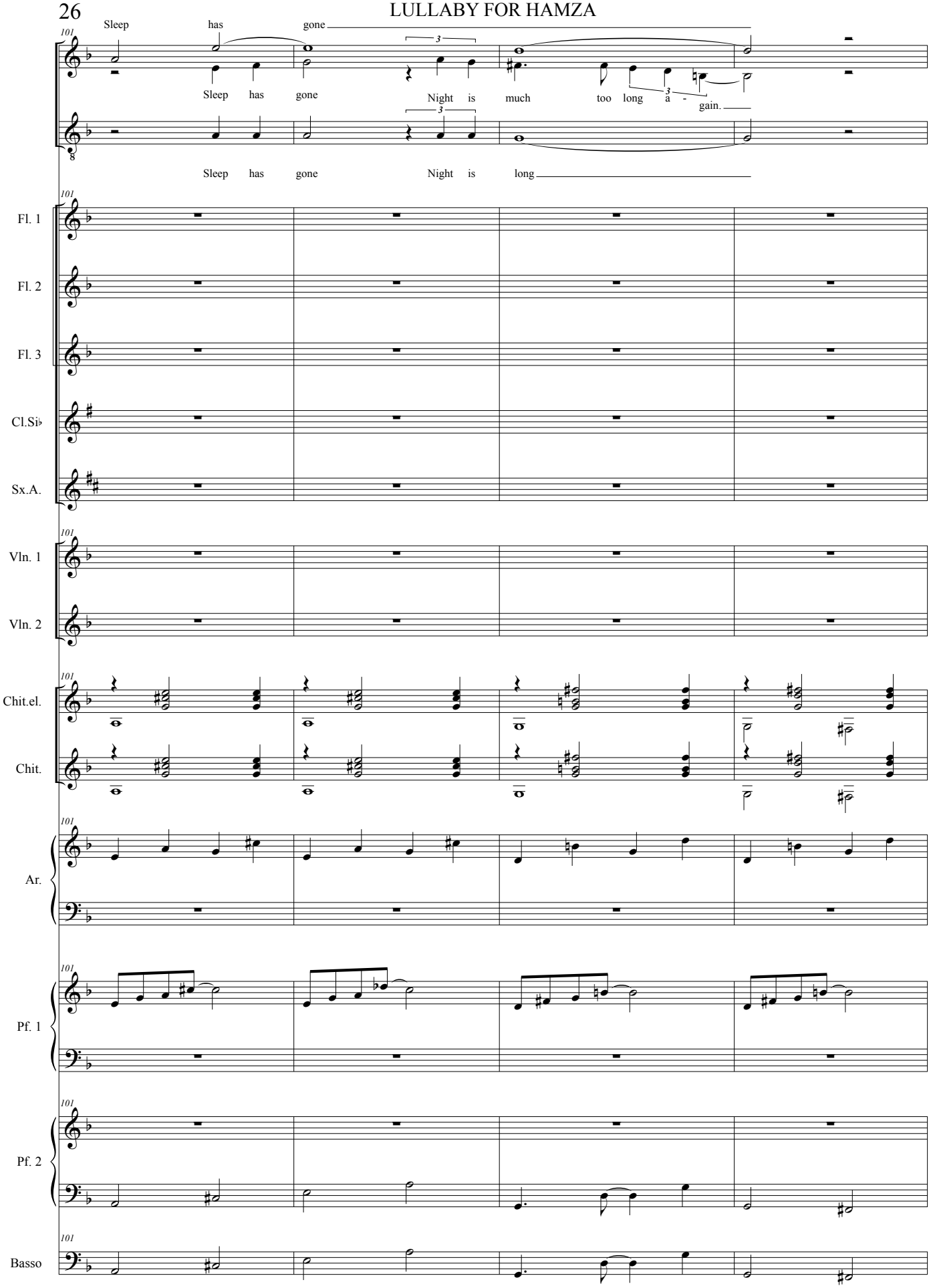

81
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
pizz.
Vln. 1
pizz.
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
8va
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
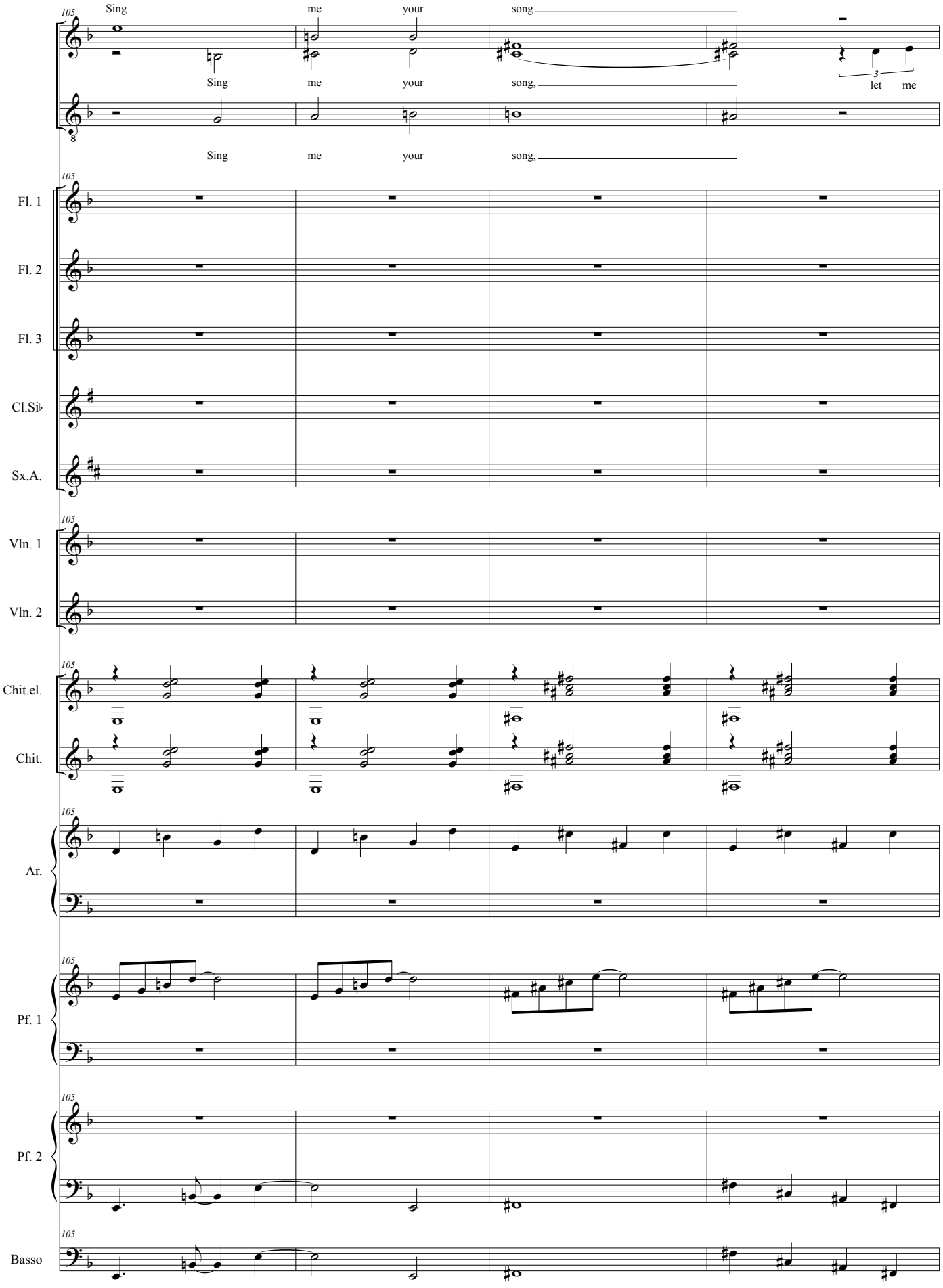

85
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
8va
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
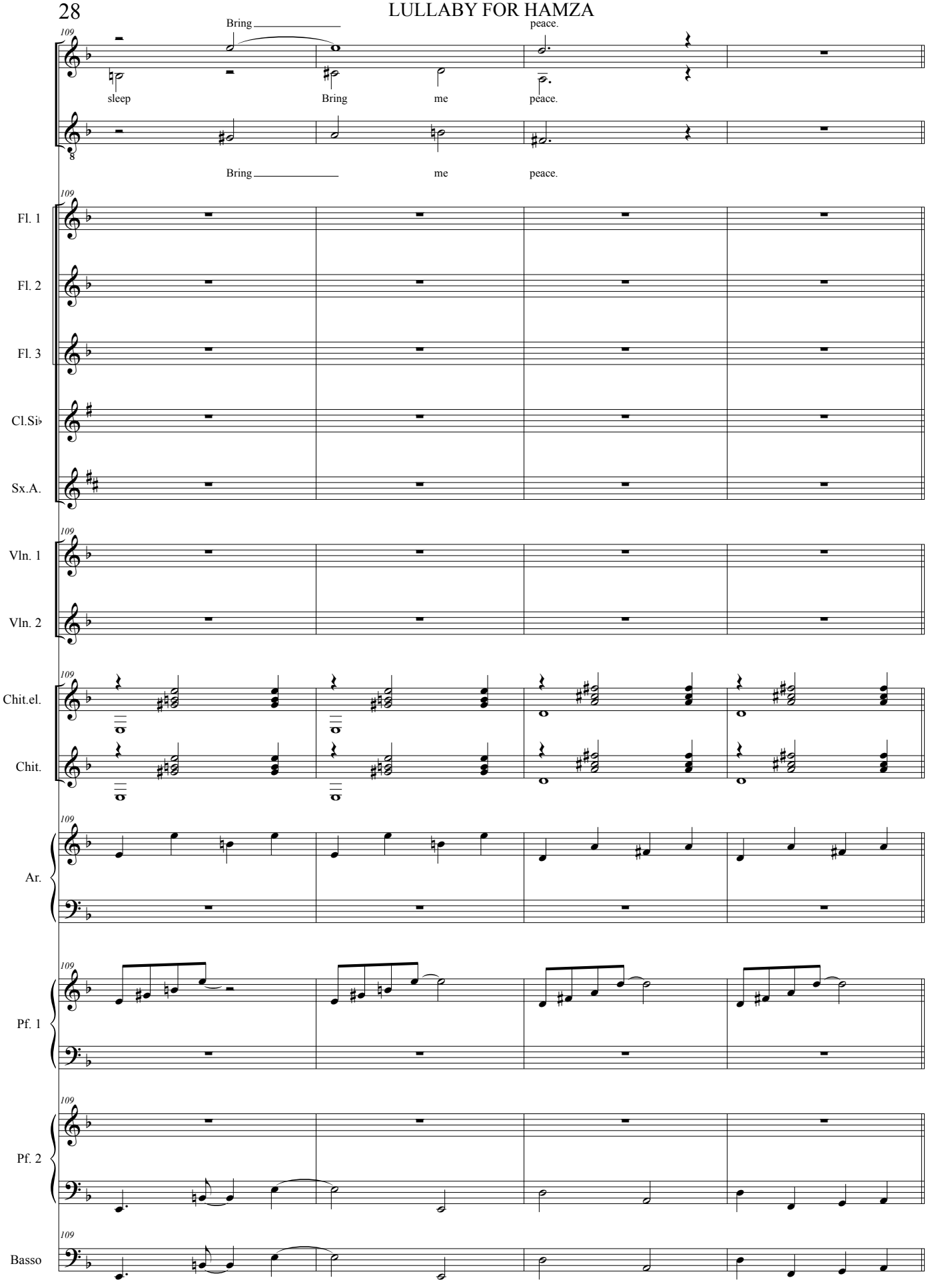

89
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
8va
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
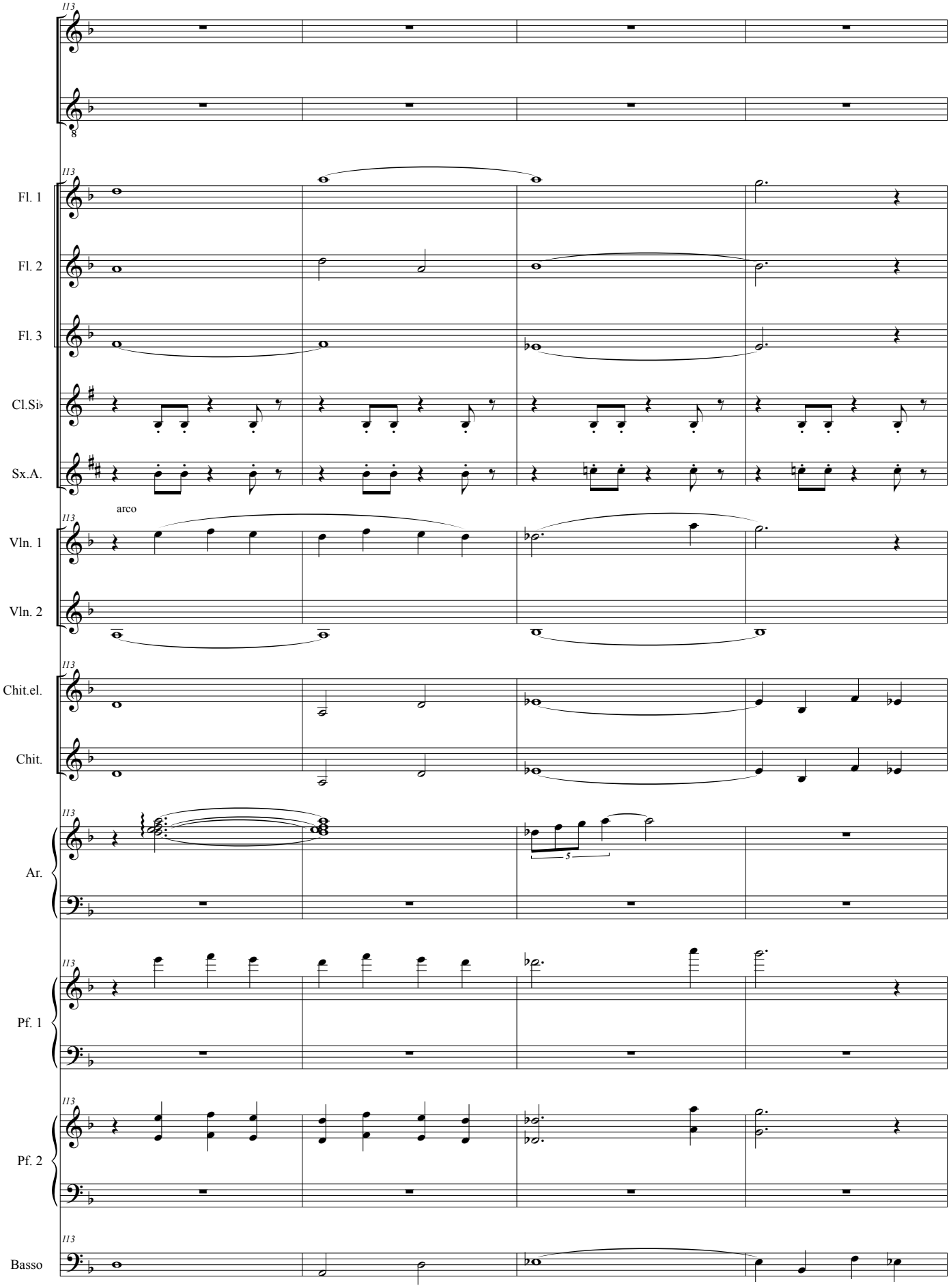

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
8va
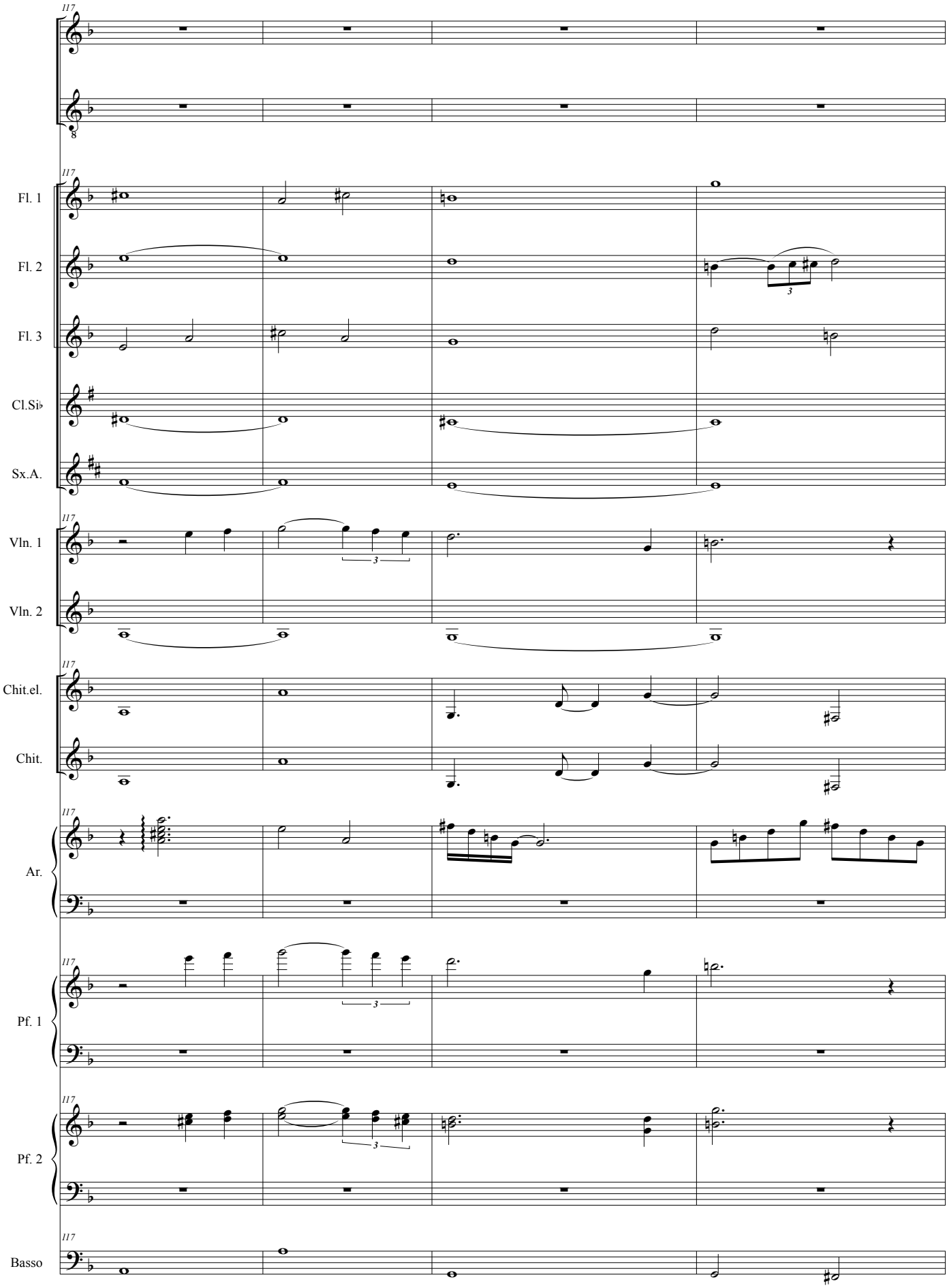

97
The world is dark a - gain
The world is dark a - a - gain I need your lul - la - by.
The world is dark a - gain I need your lul - la by.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
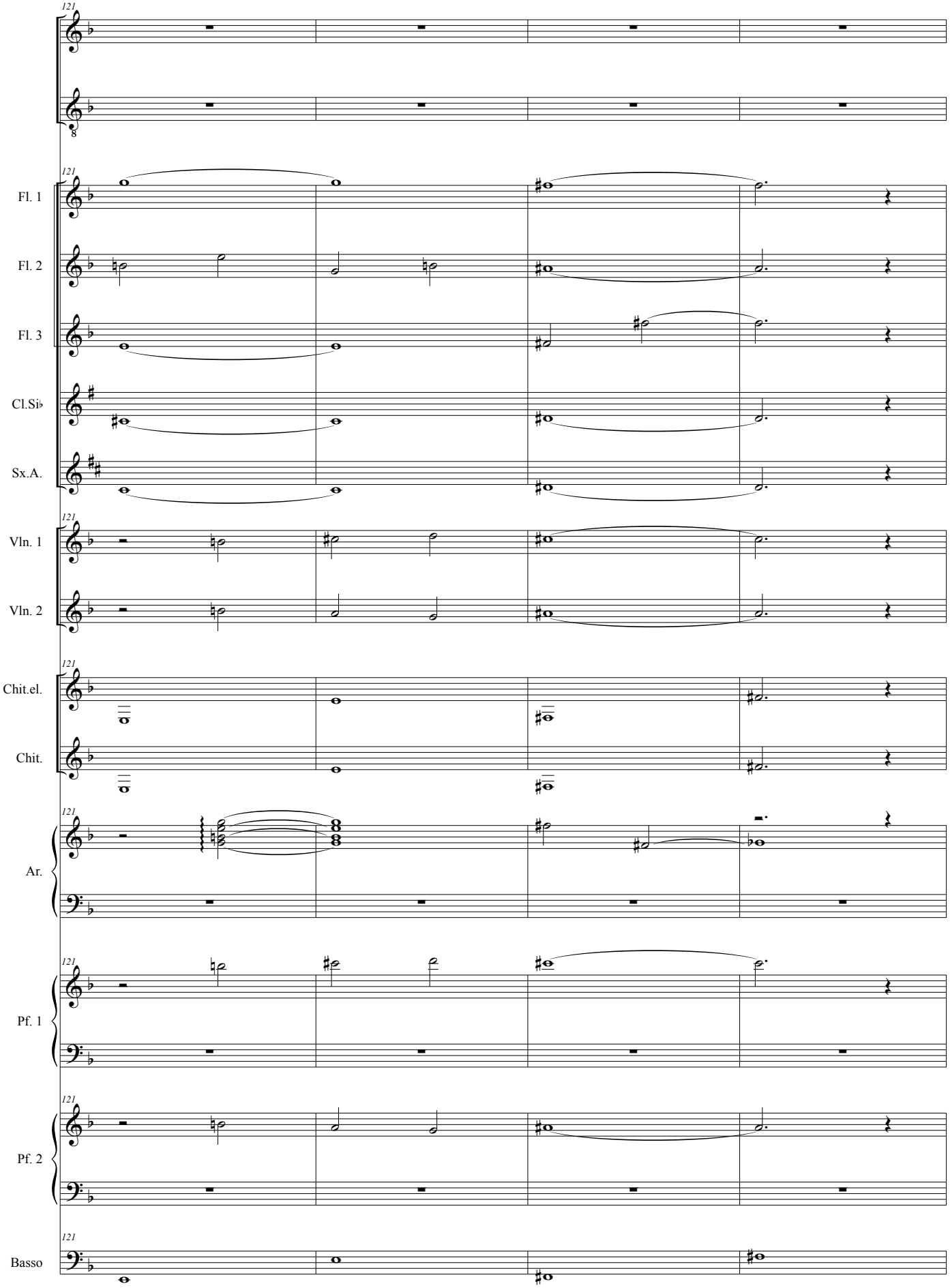

Sleep has gone
Sleep has gone Night is much too long a - gain.
Sleep has gone Night is long
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso
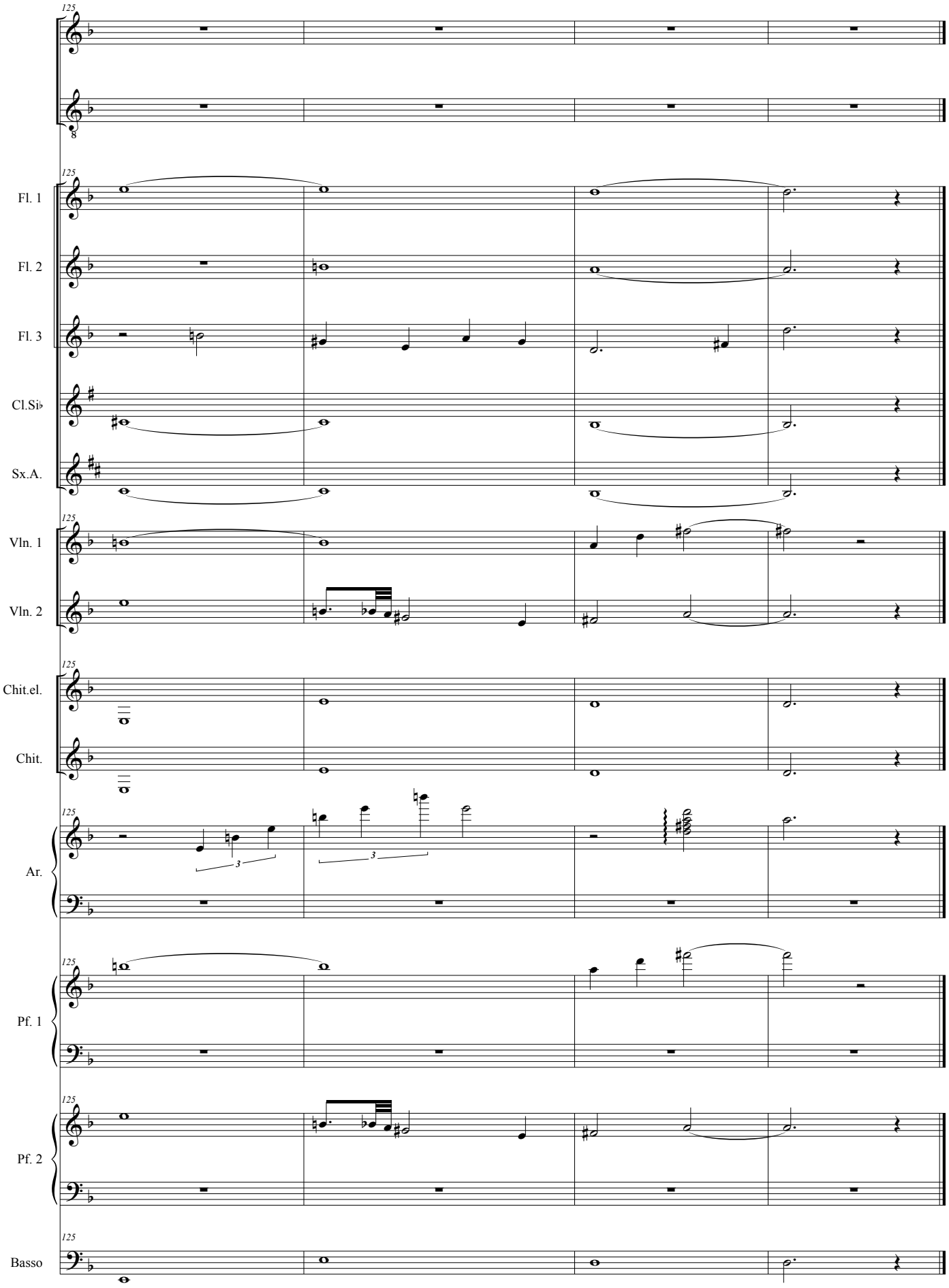

105
Sing me your song
Sing me your song,
let me
Sing me your song,
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso


109
Bring
peace.
sleep
Bring
me
peace.
Bring
me
peace.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso


113
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
arco
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso


117
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso


121
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso


125
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Fl. 3
Cl.Si♭
Sx.A.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Chit.el.
Chit.
Ar.
Pf. 1
Pf. 2
Basso

Sea Song

Robert Wyatt

♩= 108

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

p

mp

7

Eaug 10

tr

ff You look

14

F♯m 14

F

Am 16

19

mf

20 22 25

27 29 F♯m 30 F 32
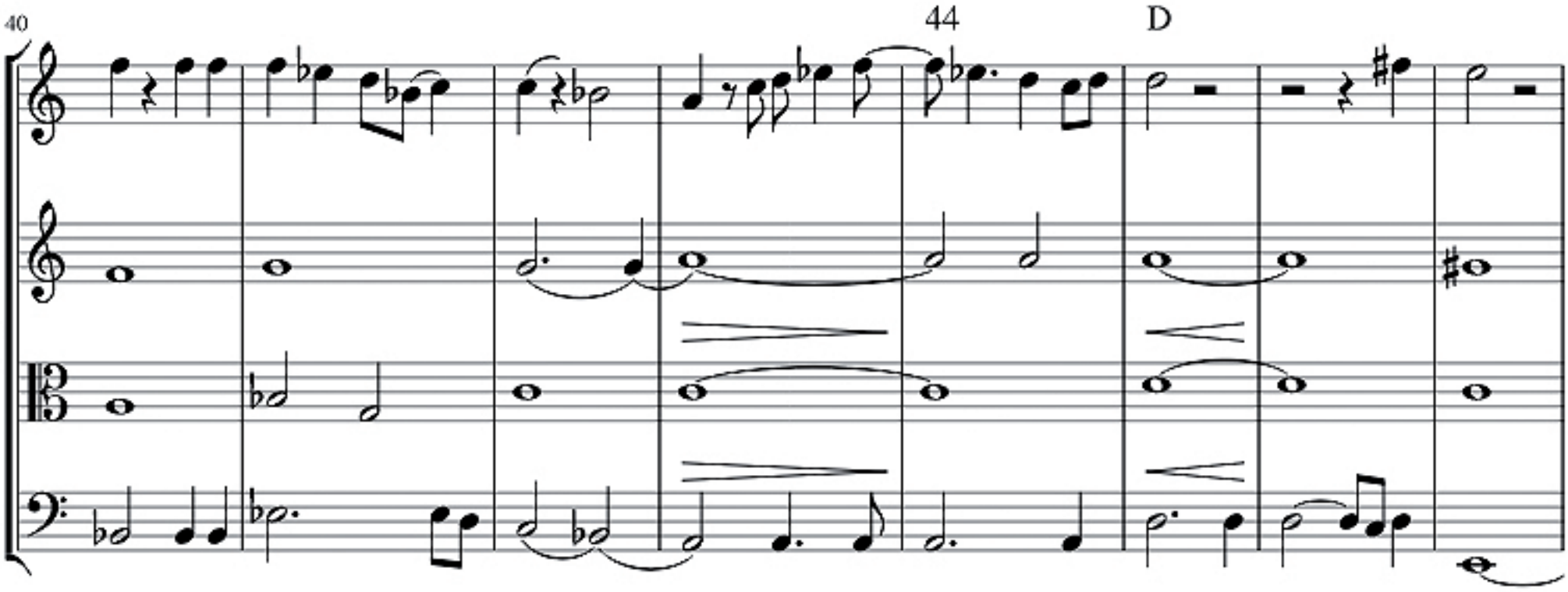
34 35 38

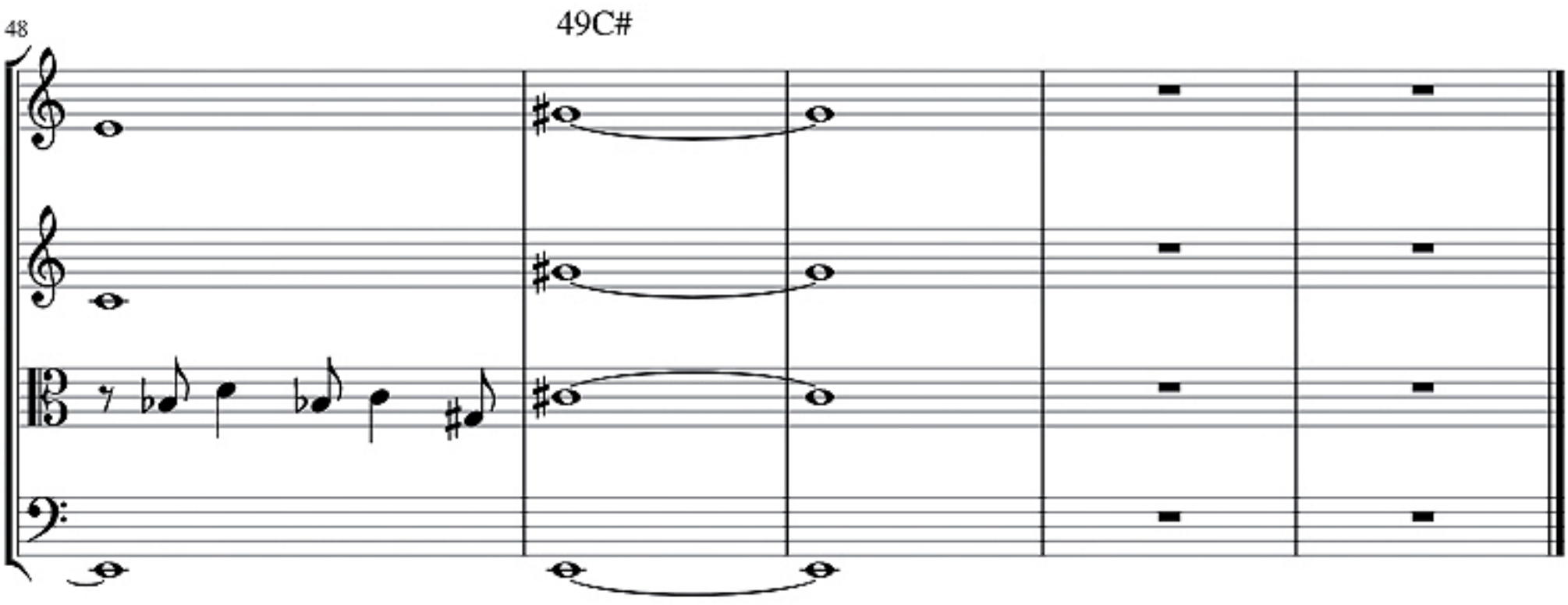
ff

f

f

ff
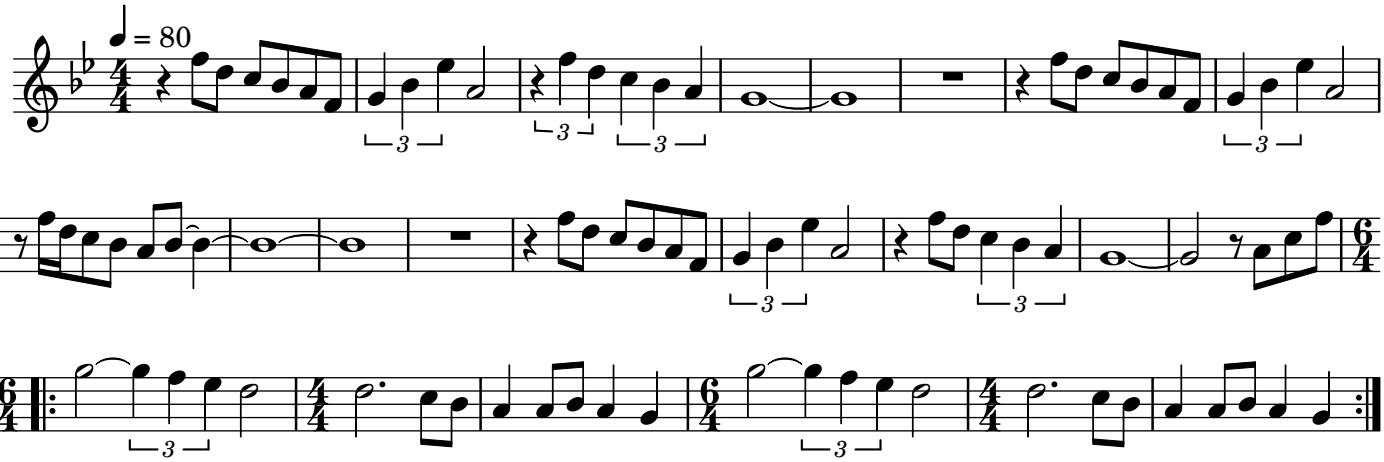

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44
D


48
49C#

Gharbzadegi

Concert C
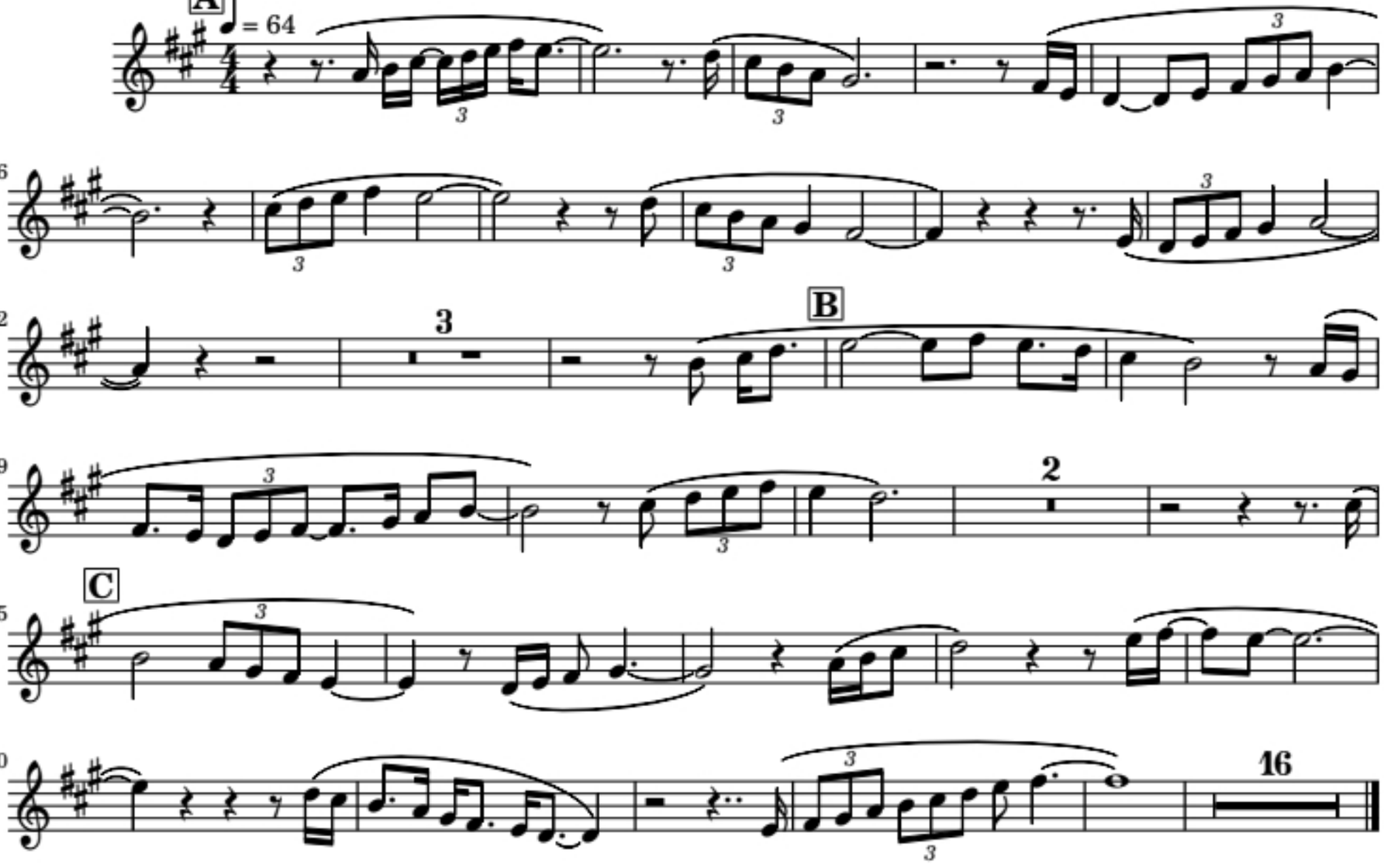
Robert Wyatt



Music engraving by LilyPond 2.19.65—www.lilypond.org
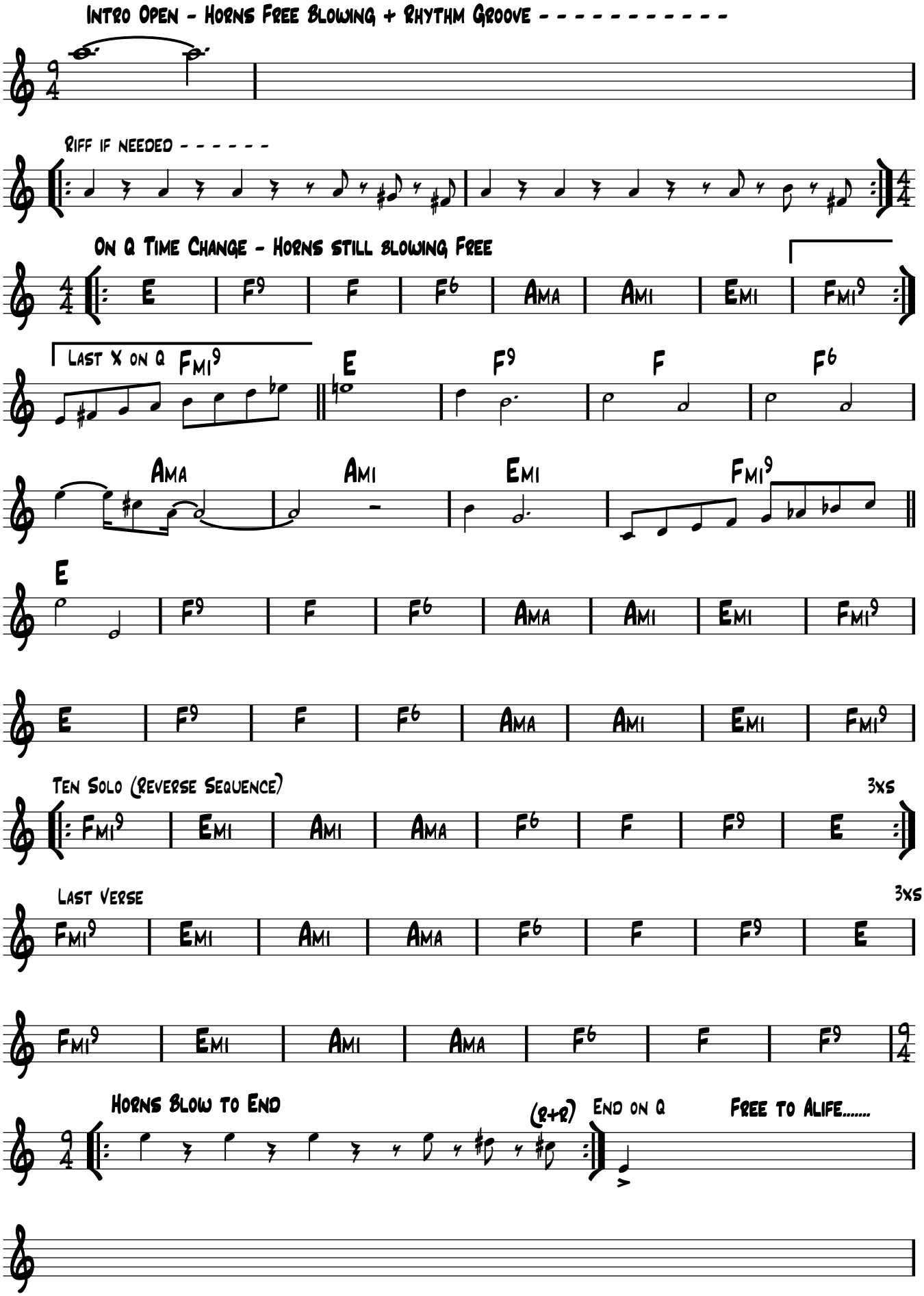
Catholic Architecture

Robert Wyatt
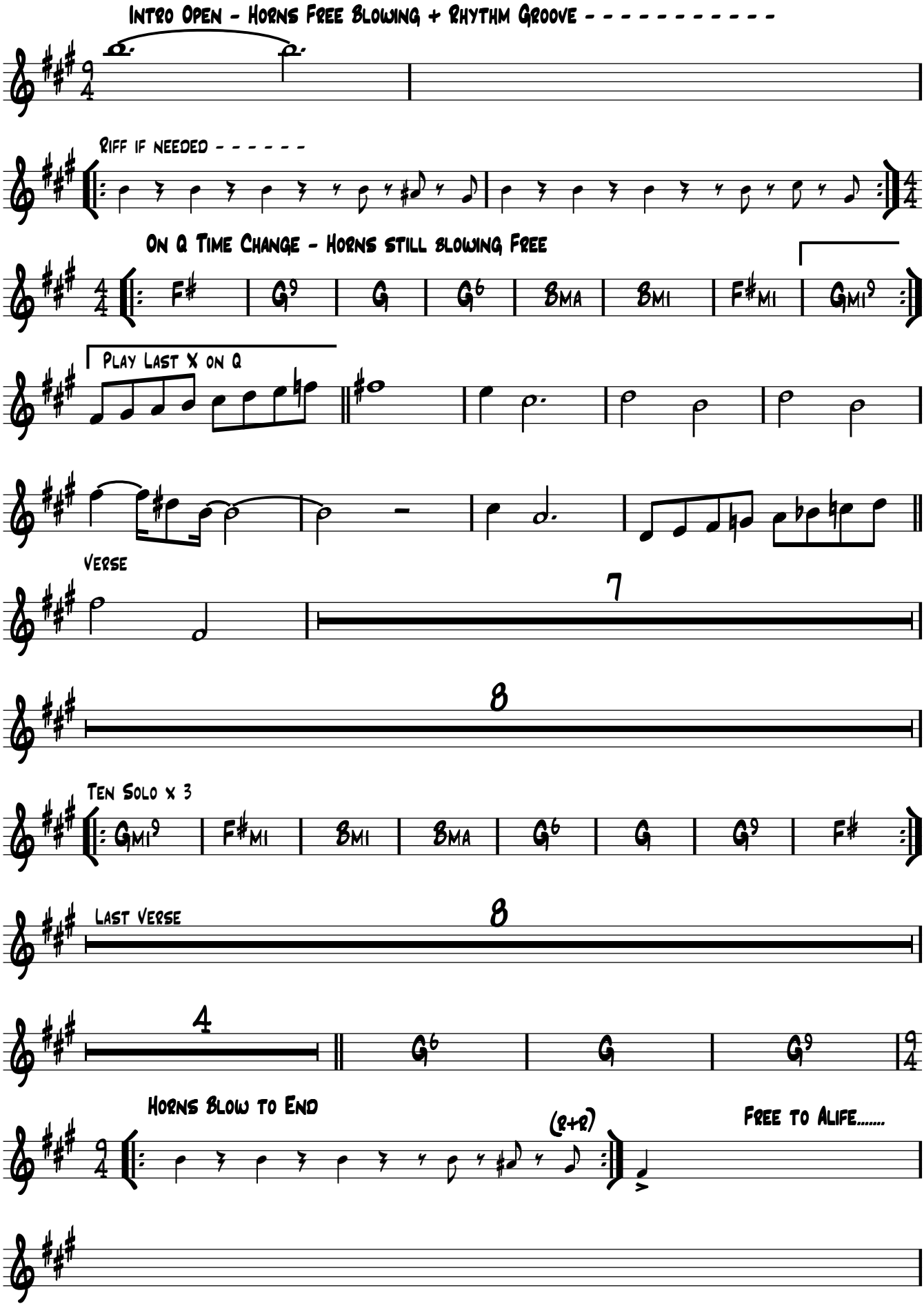


Concert

Little Red Riding Hood hit the road



Ten/Tpt

Little Red Riding Hood hit the road



Sweet Memories

ANAÏD

I Have A Dream

Words by Robert Wyatt and Hugh Hopper

Music by ANAÏD
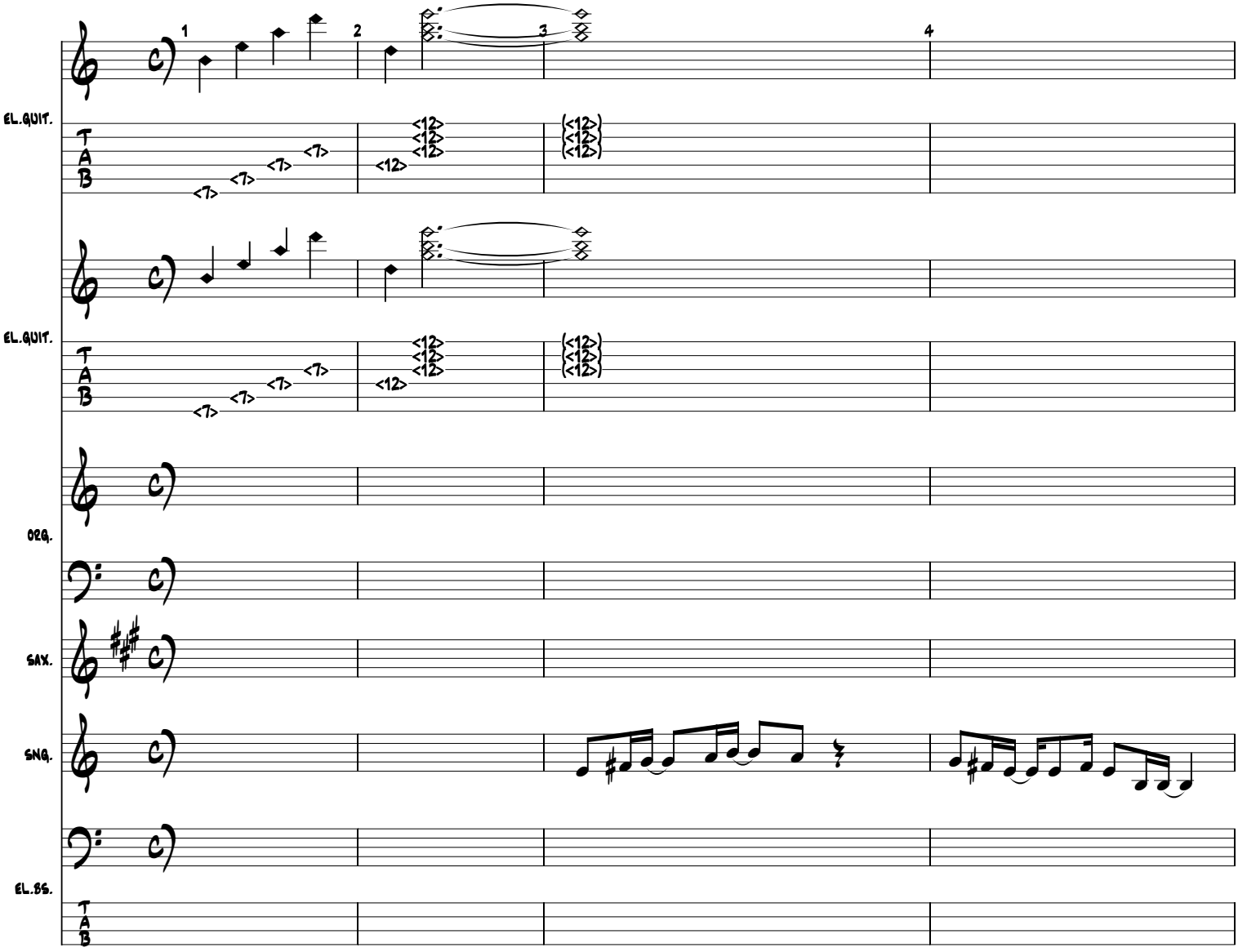
Distortion Guitar
Standard tuning

Clean Guitar
Standard tuning
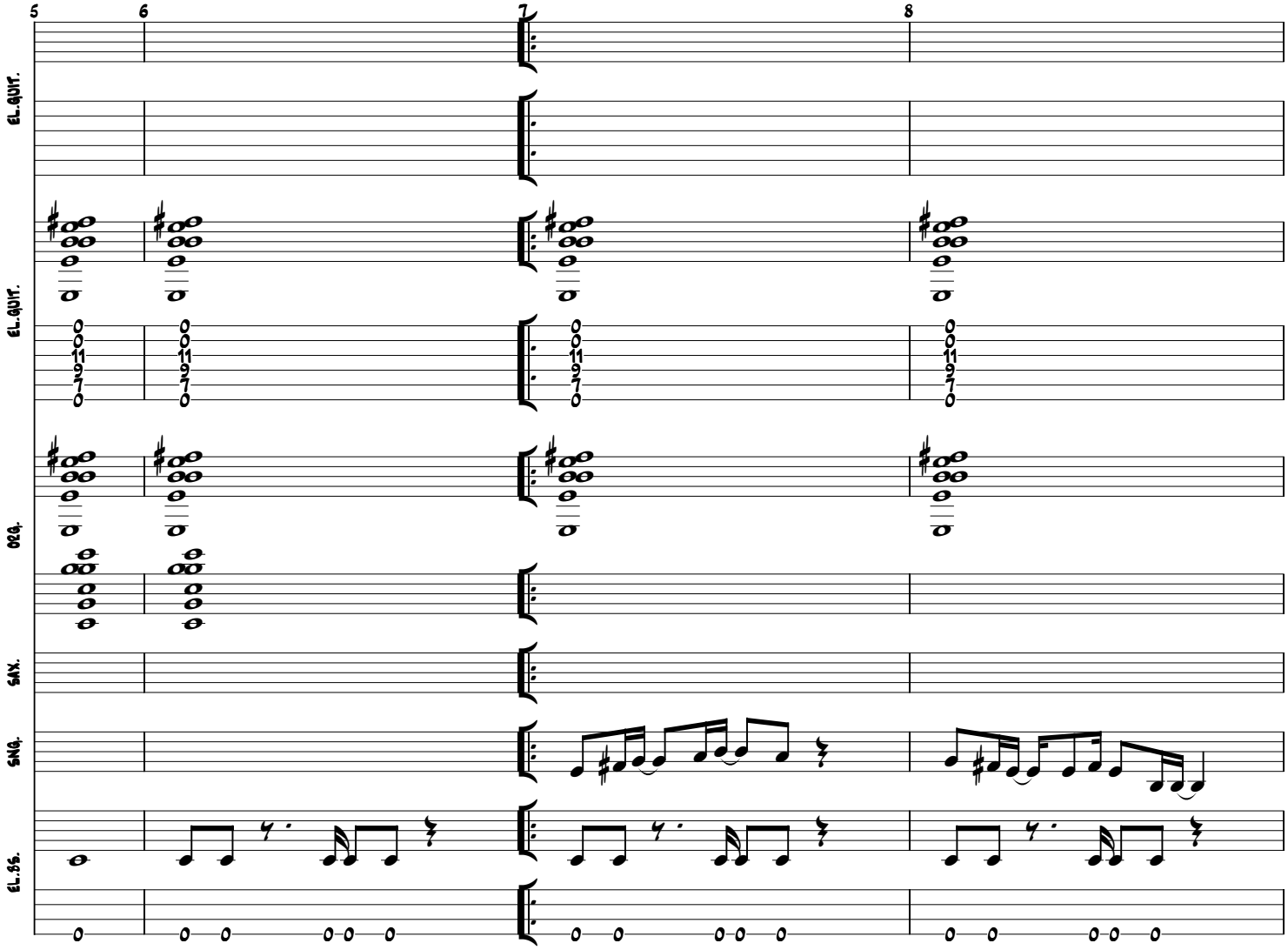
Electric Bass
Standard tuning
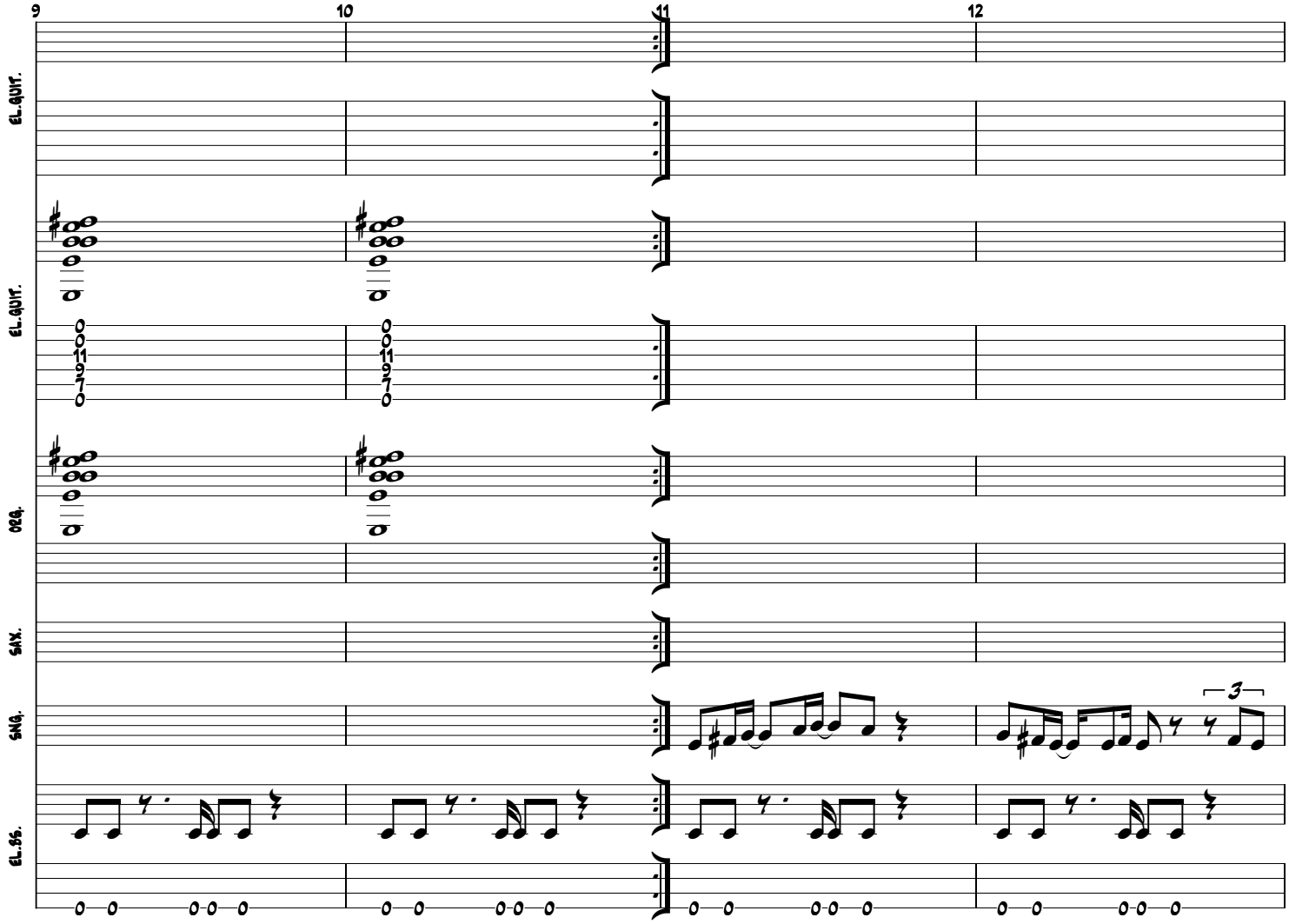
♩ = 50
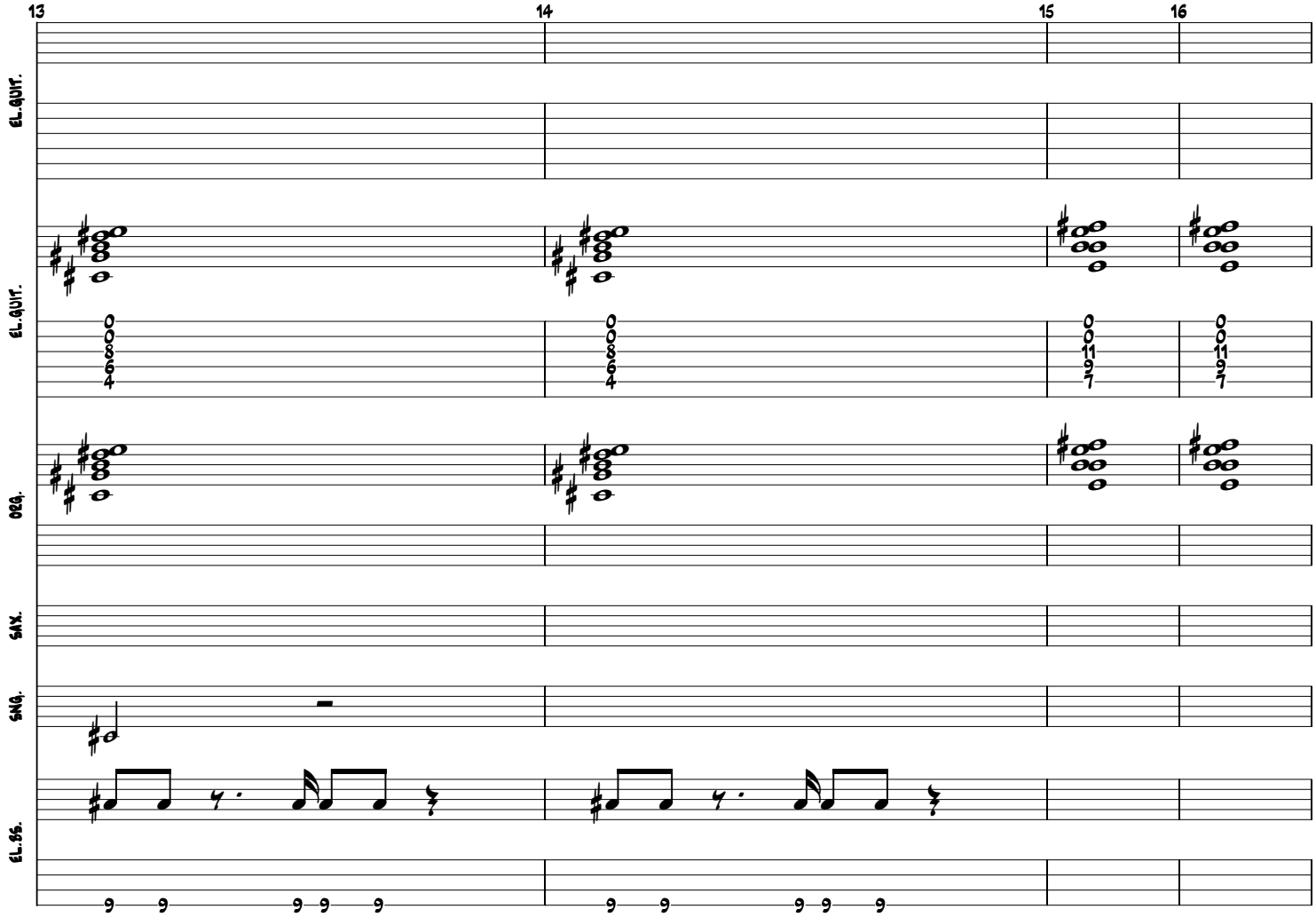
♩ = 70
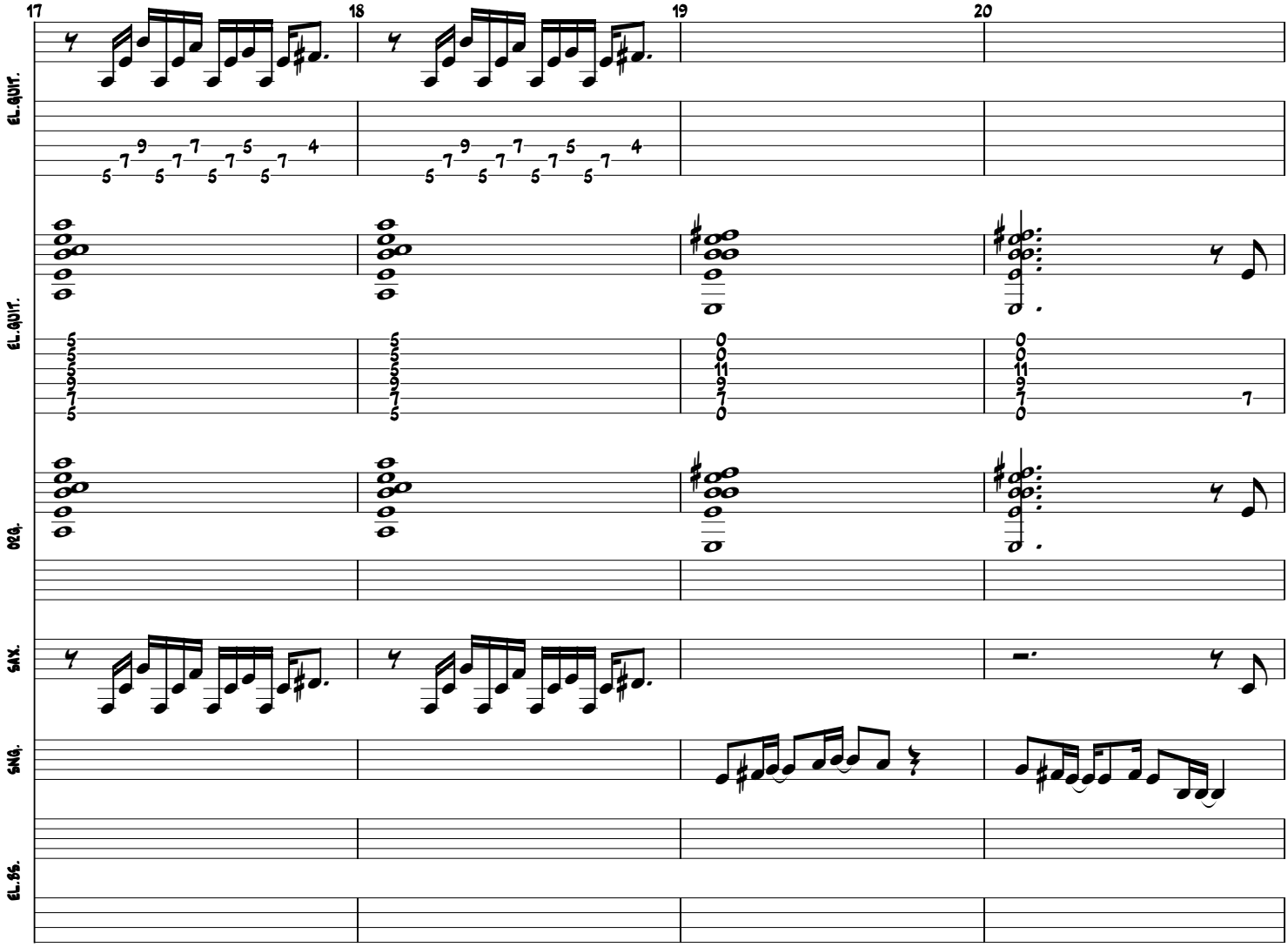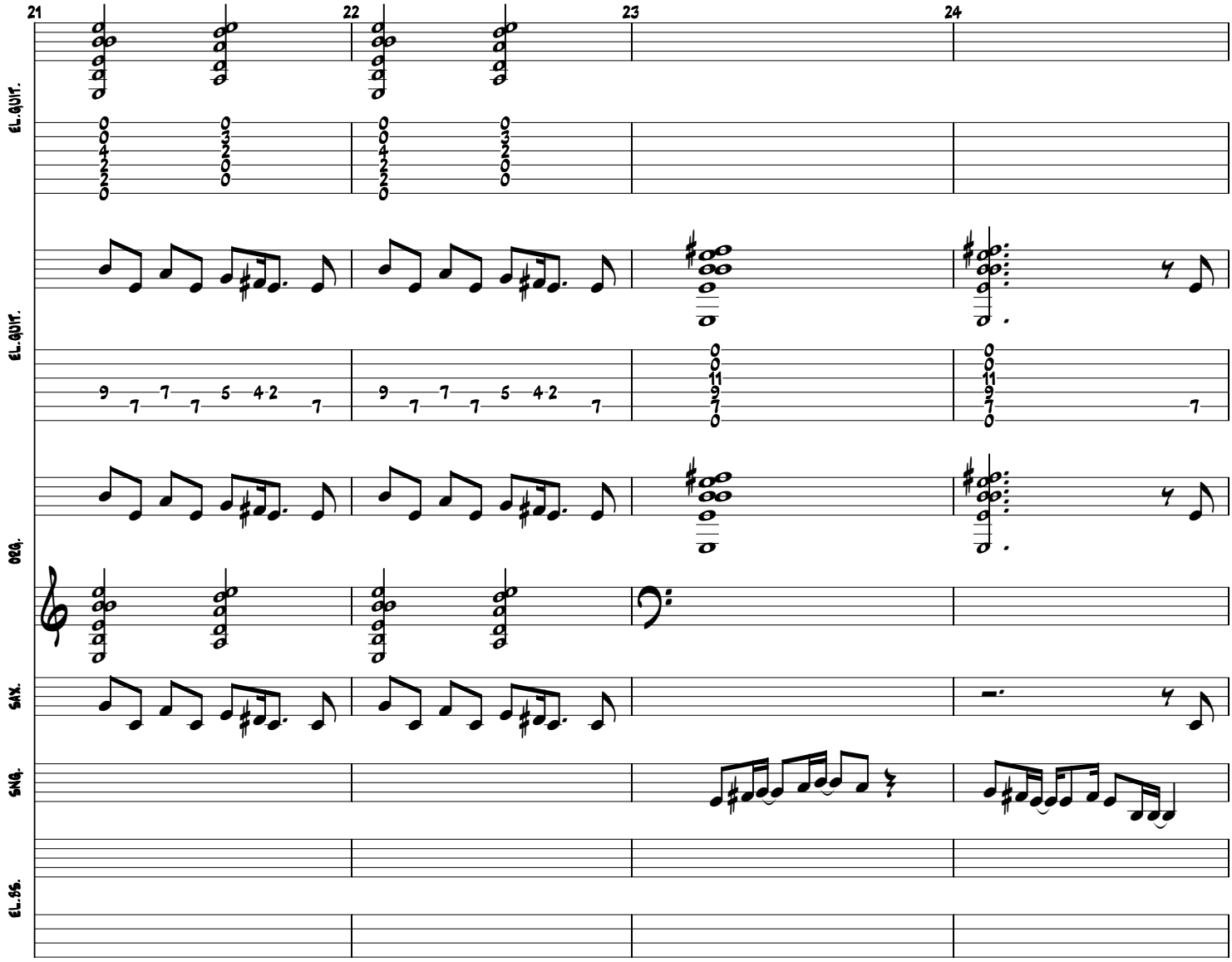


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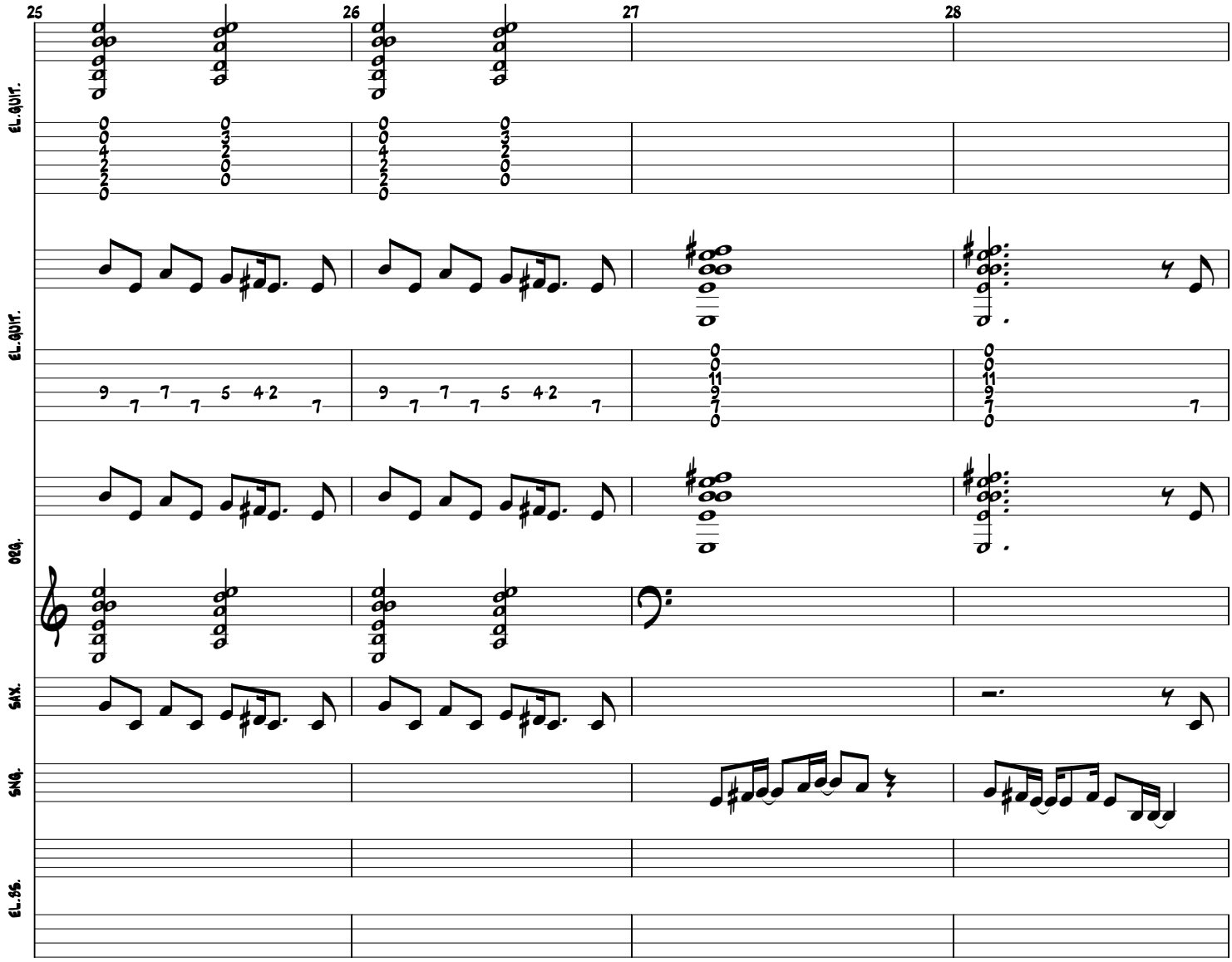

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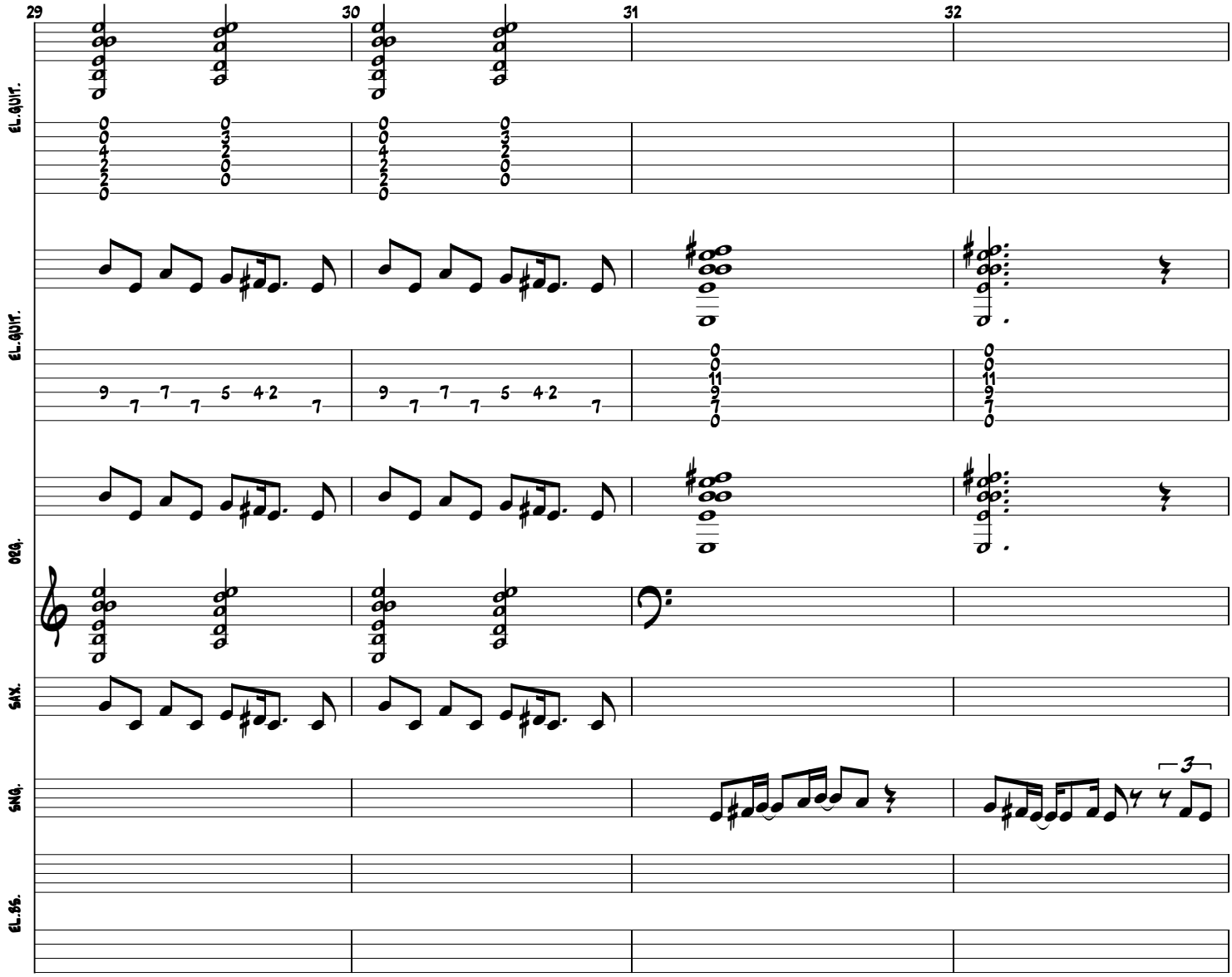

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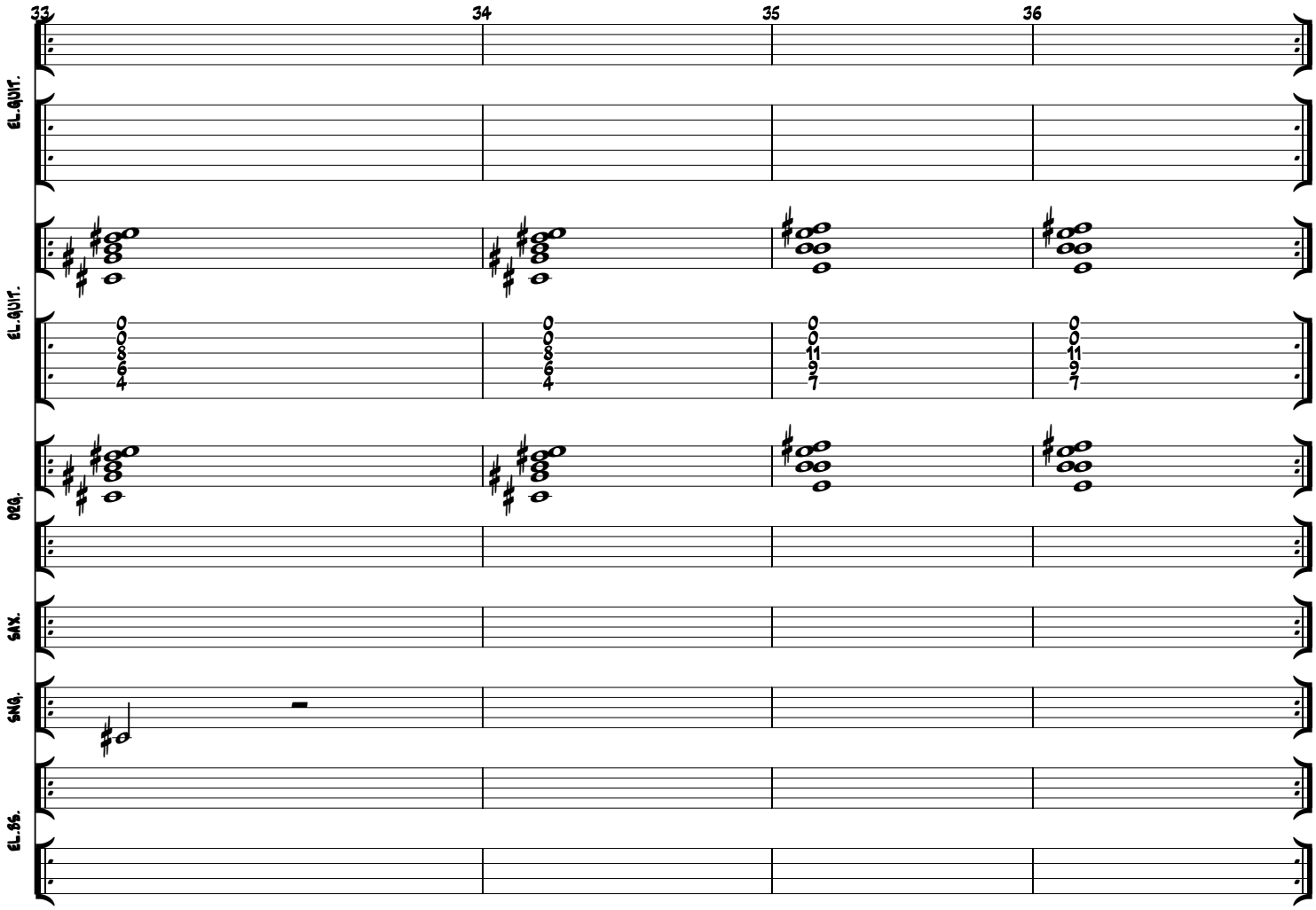

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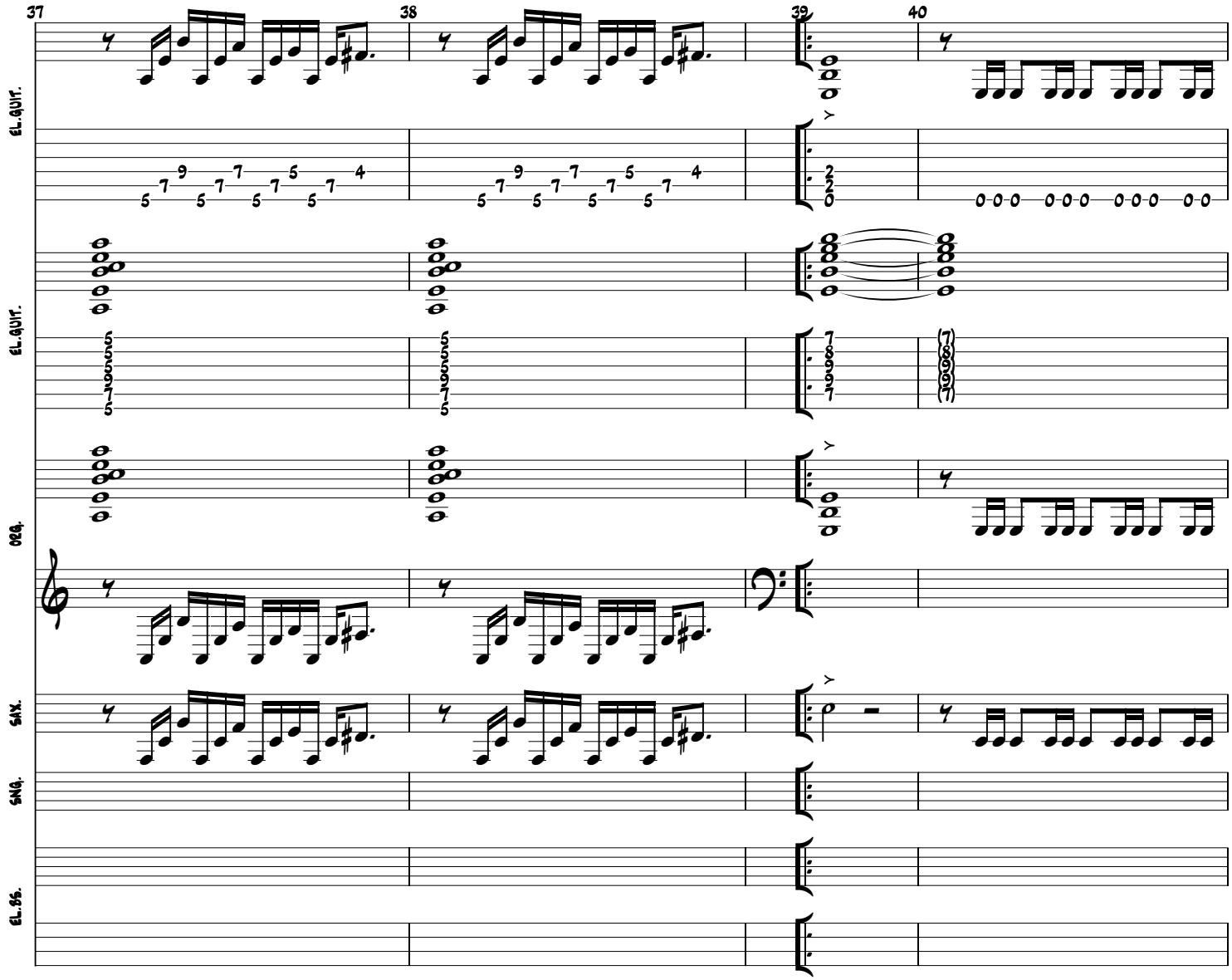

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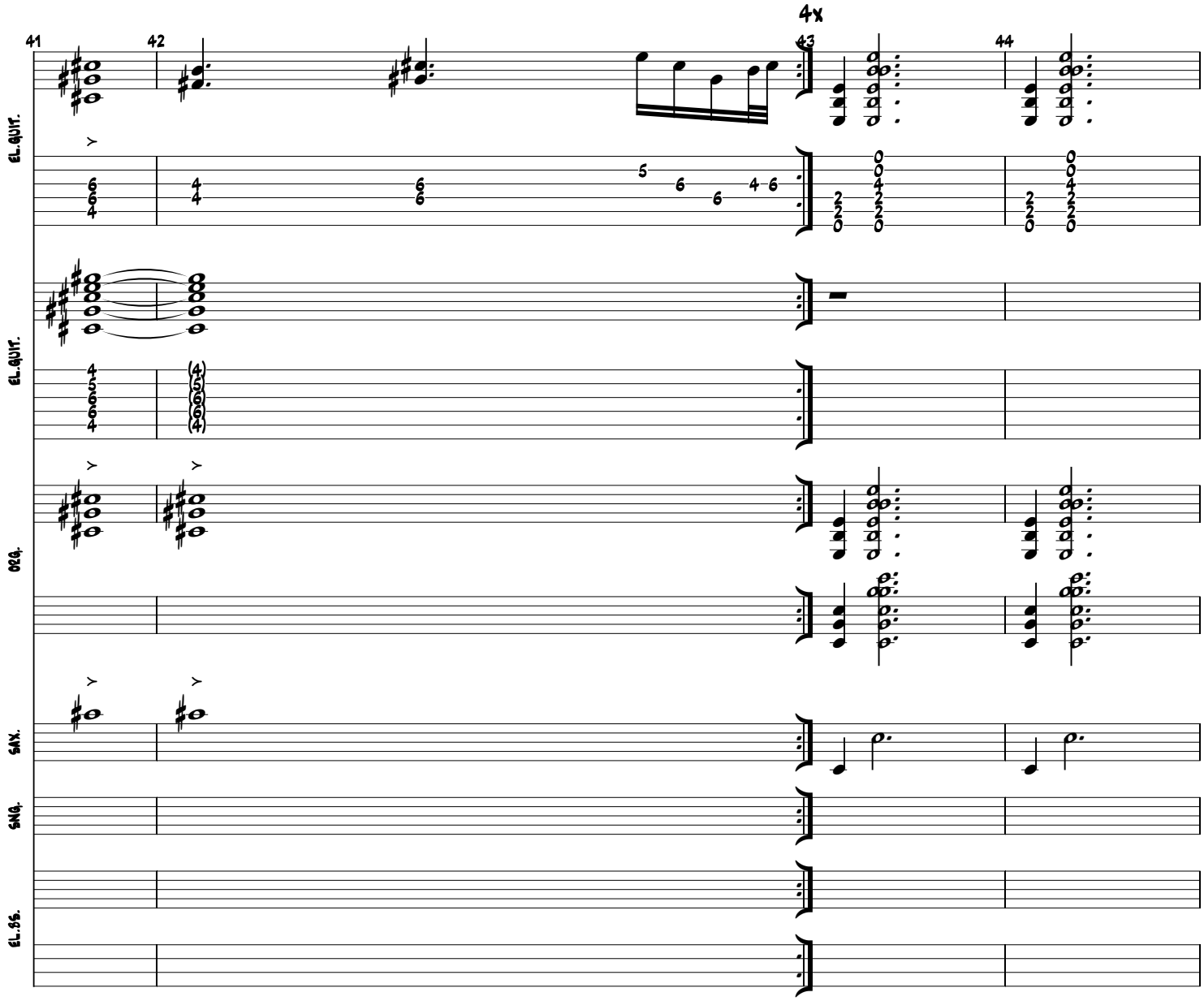

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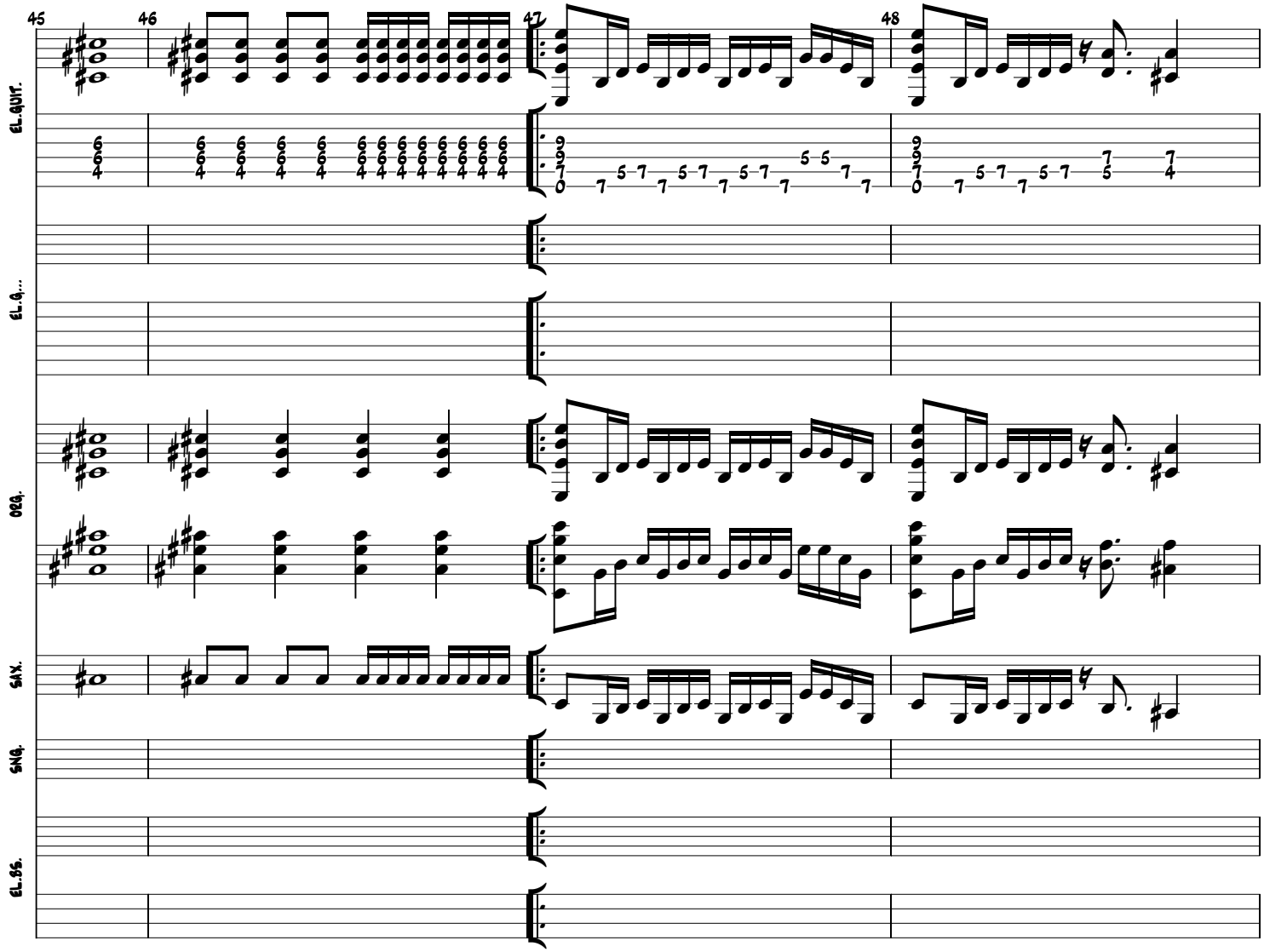

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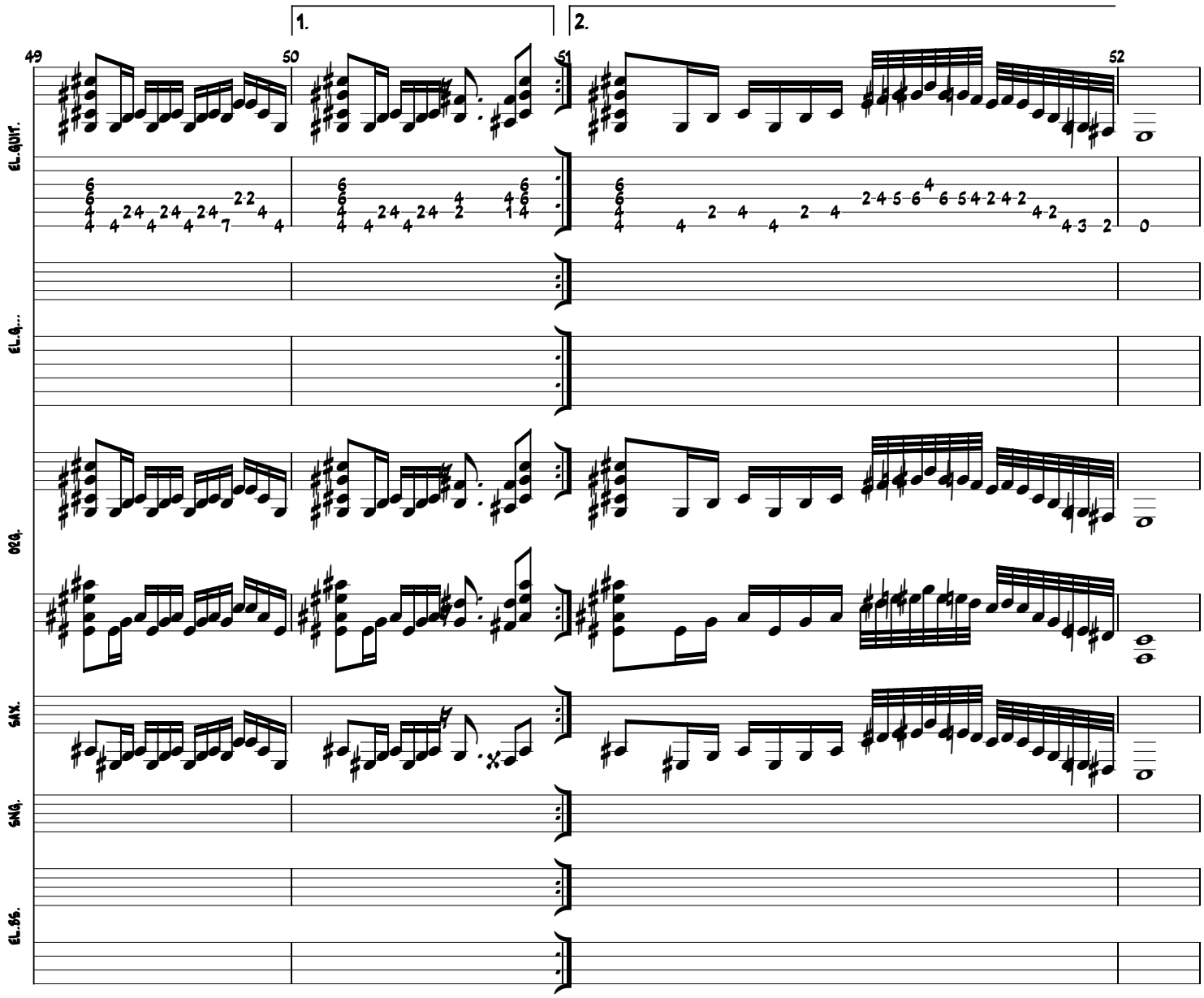

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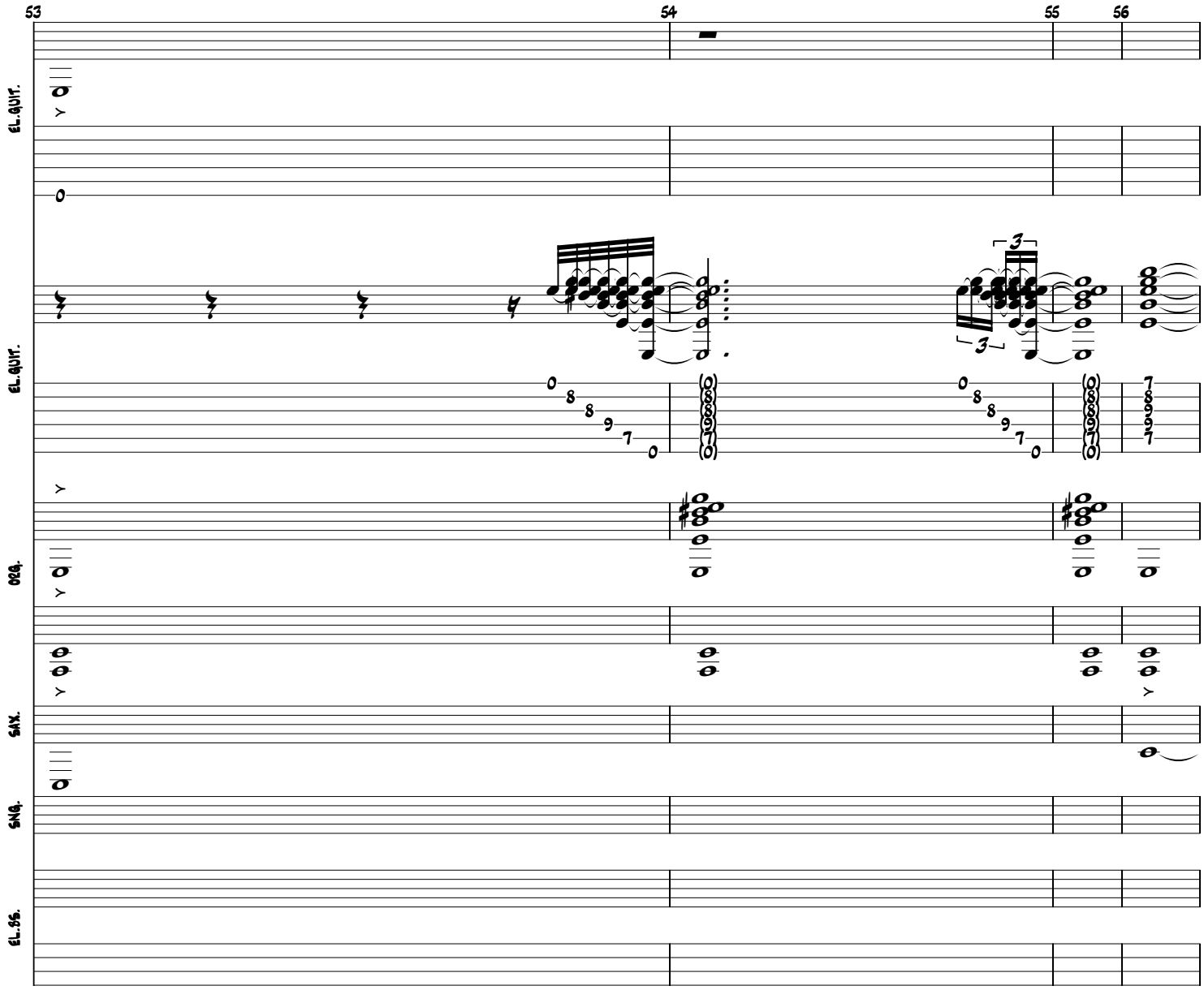

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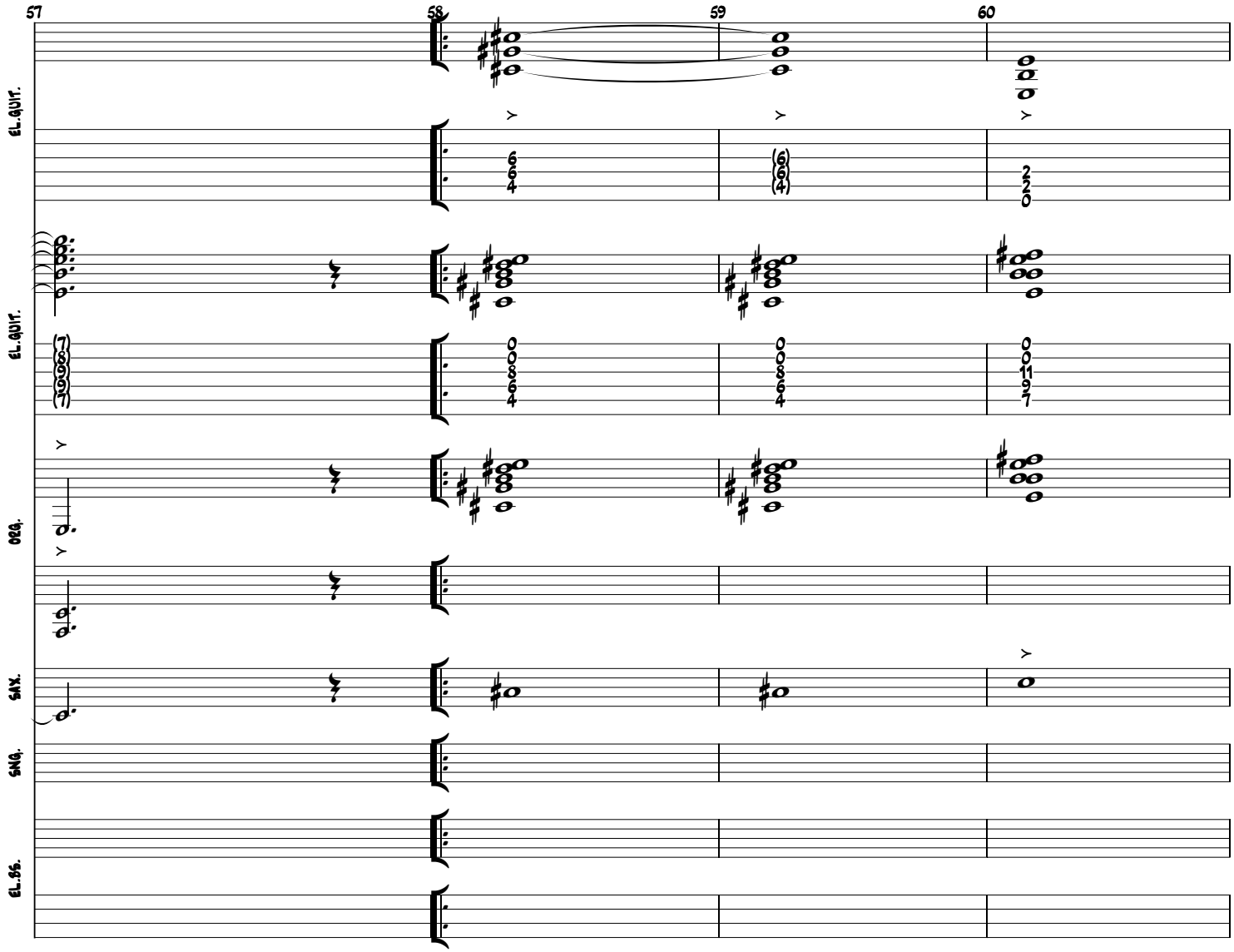

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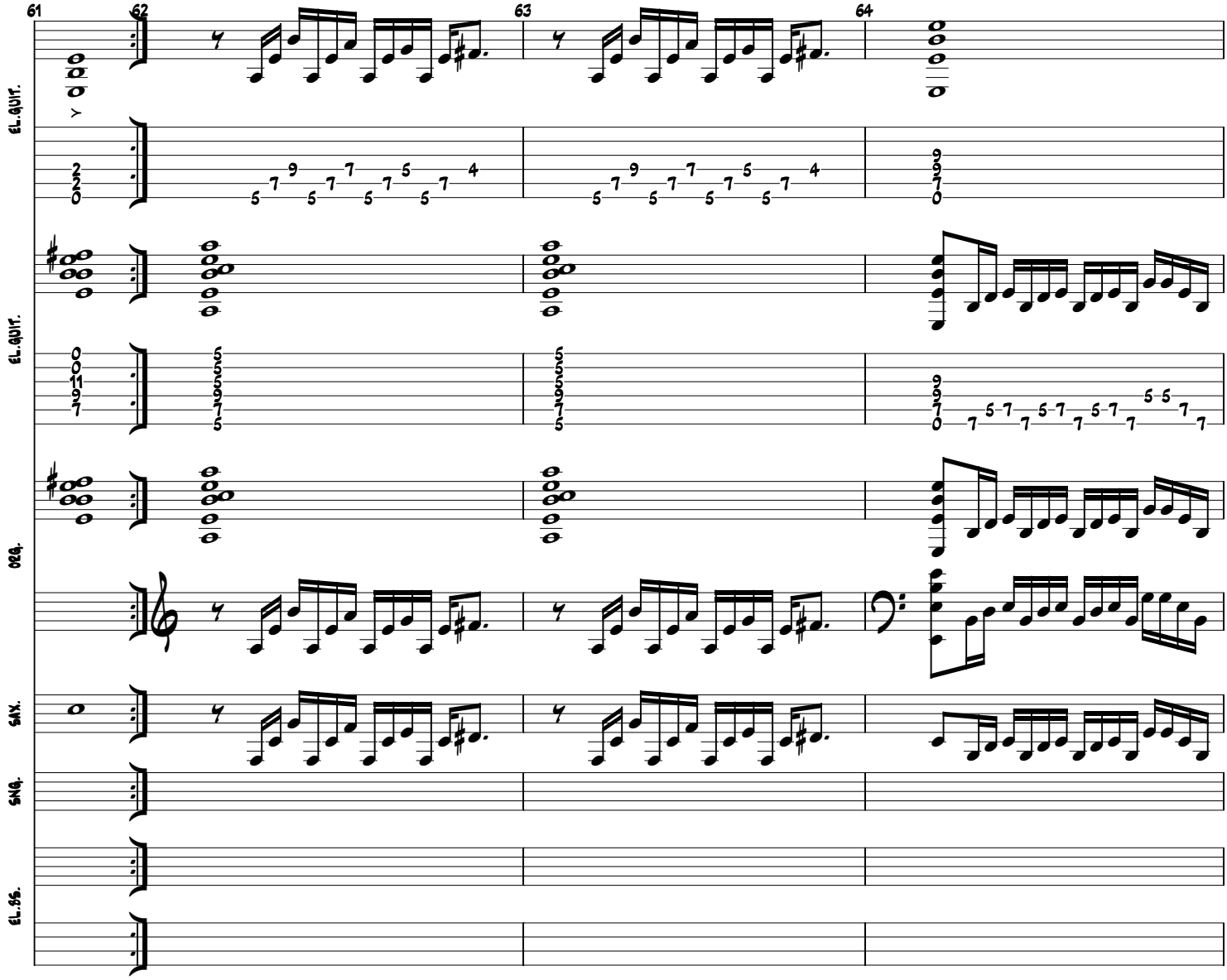

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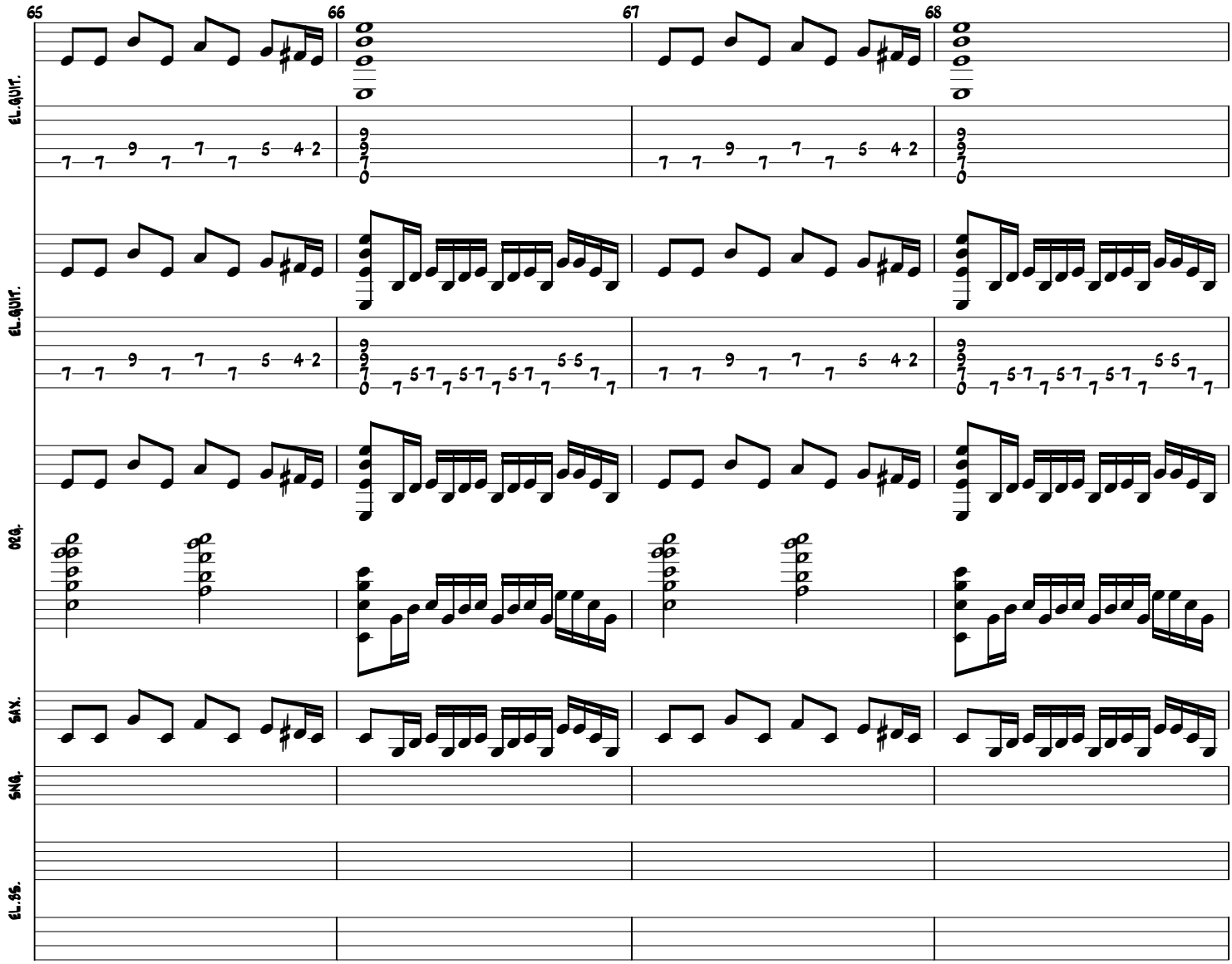

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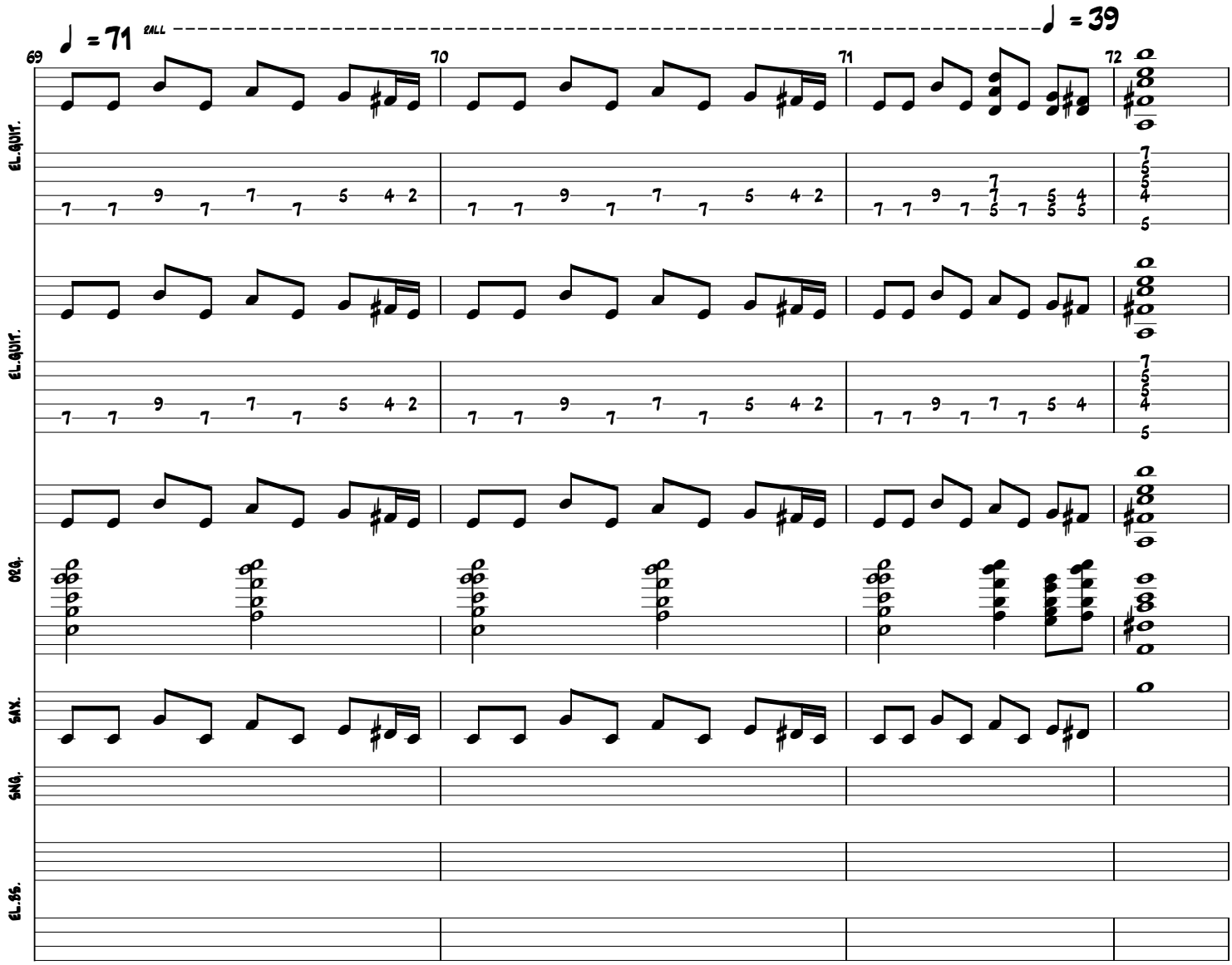

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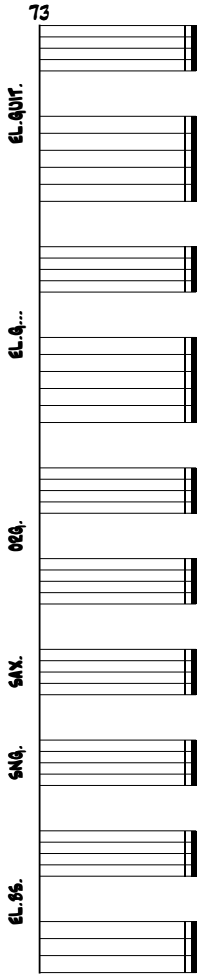

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SAX.
SNG.
EL.BS.


61
62
63
64
EL.GUIT.
EL.GUIT.
ORG.
SAX.
SNG.
EL.BS.


65
66
67
68
EL.GUIT.
EL.GUIT.
ORG.
SAX.
SNG.
EL.BS.


♩ = 71
rall
♩ = 39
69
70
71
72
EL.GUIT.
EL.GUIT.
ORG.
SAX.
SNG.
EL.BS.


73
EL.GUIT.
EL.G...
ORG.
SAX.
SNG.
EL.BS.

MOON IN JUNE (Beginning)

R. WYATT

E7 E7 B-7/D

x3 C#-7 B-7

B-7 G F#-7 G

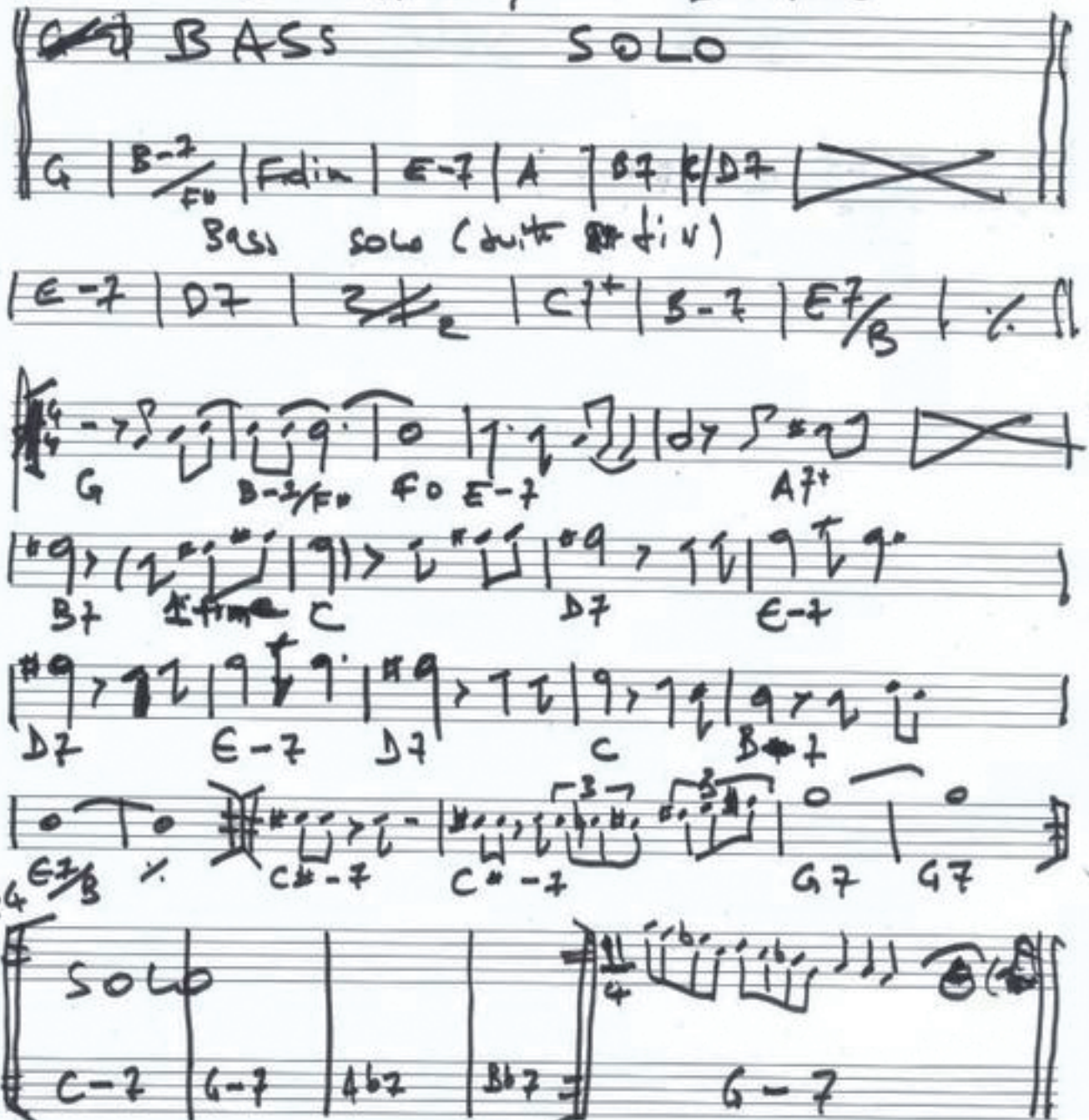
F#-7 B-7 E G

C B-7 E Bass solo starts here

to "MOON IN JUNE" I WANT YOU SECTION

MOON IN JUNE R. WYATT

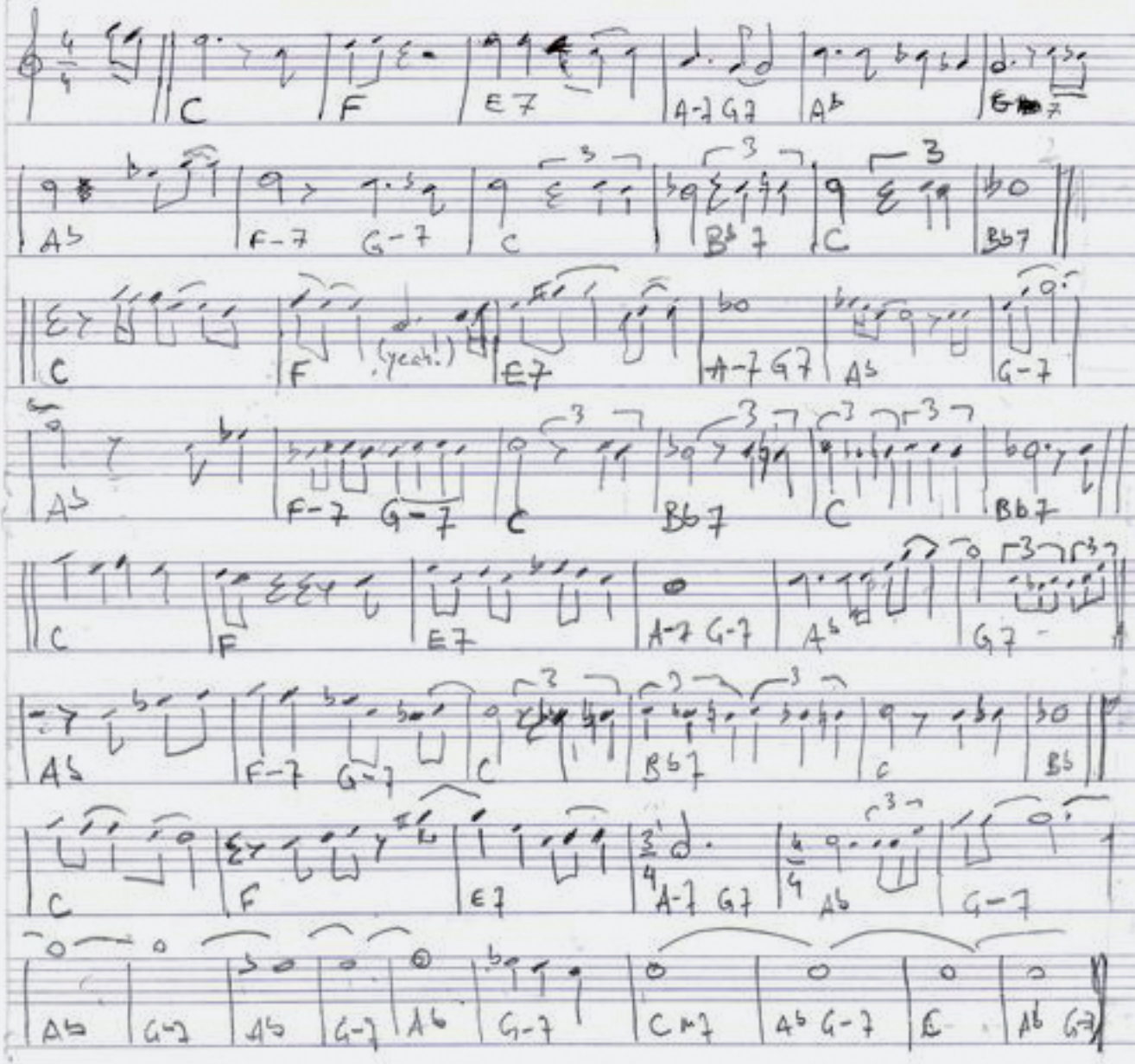
"I WANT YOU ..." Section



Next section "Leaving here is easy..."

MOON IN JUNE (R. WYATT)
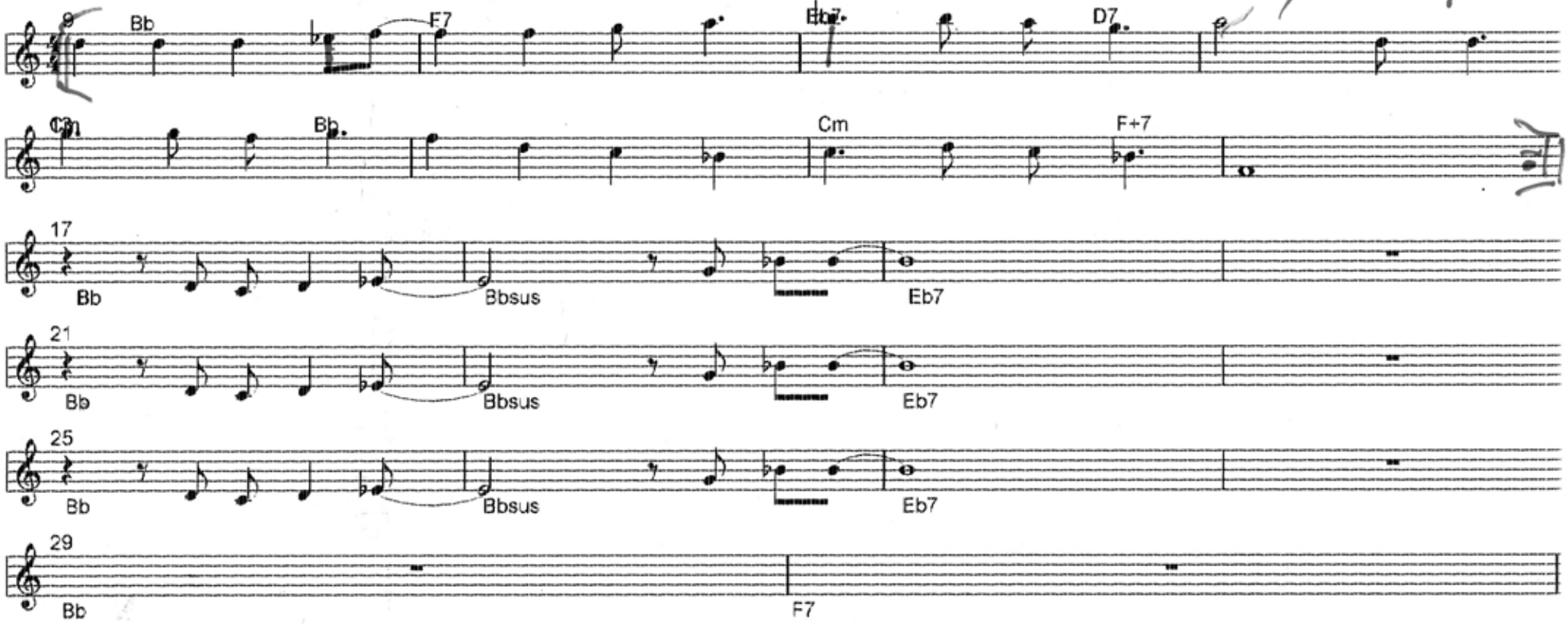
"LEAVING IS EASY HERE IN NY STATE"



TO BE CONTINUED
(A SUIVRE)

x2
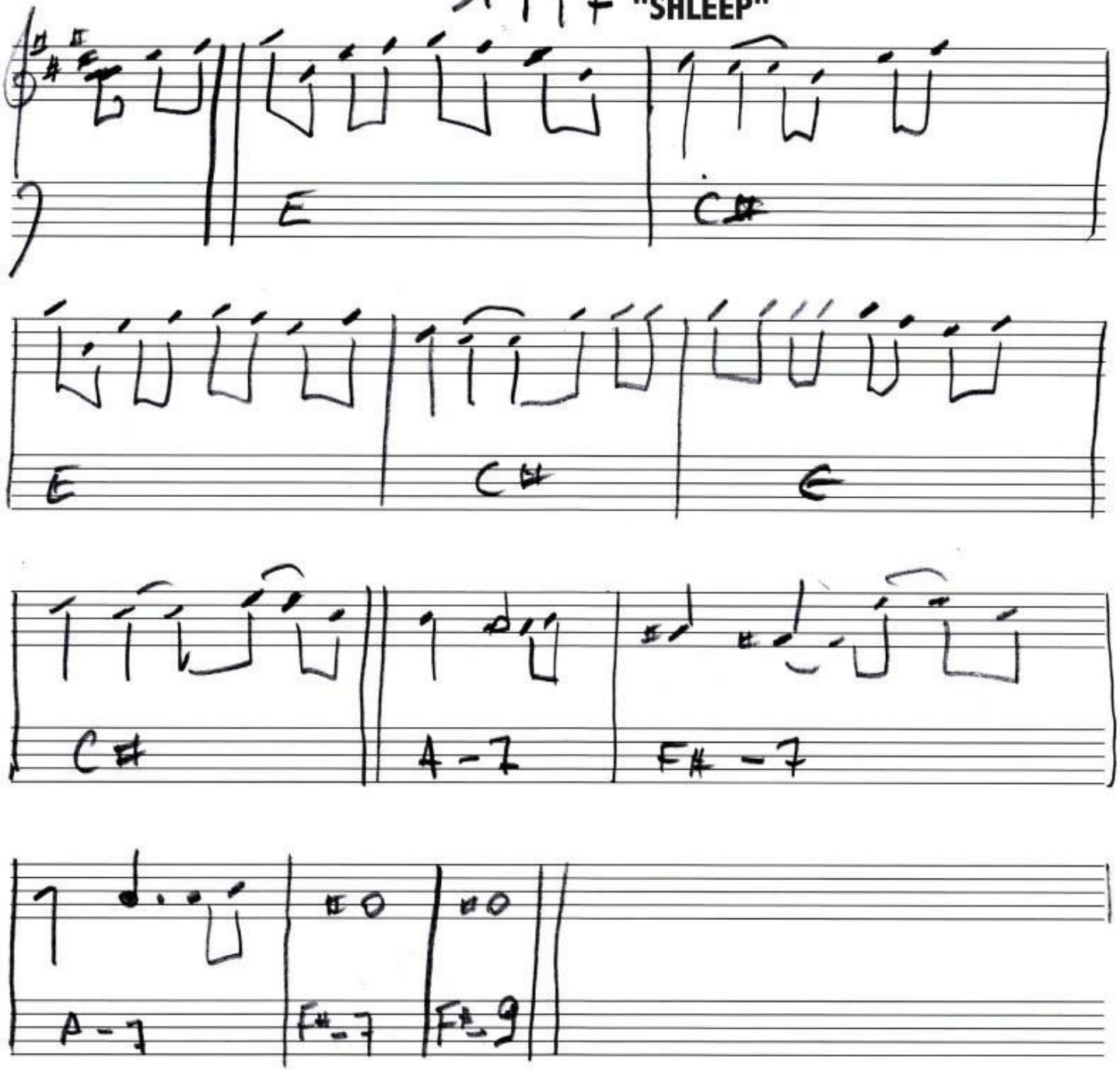
ô caroline (D.SINCLAIR / R.WYATT)

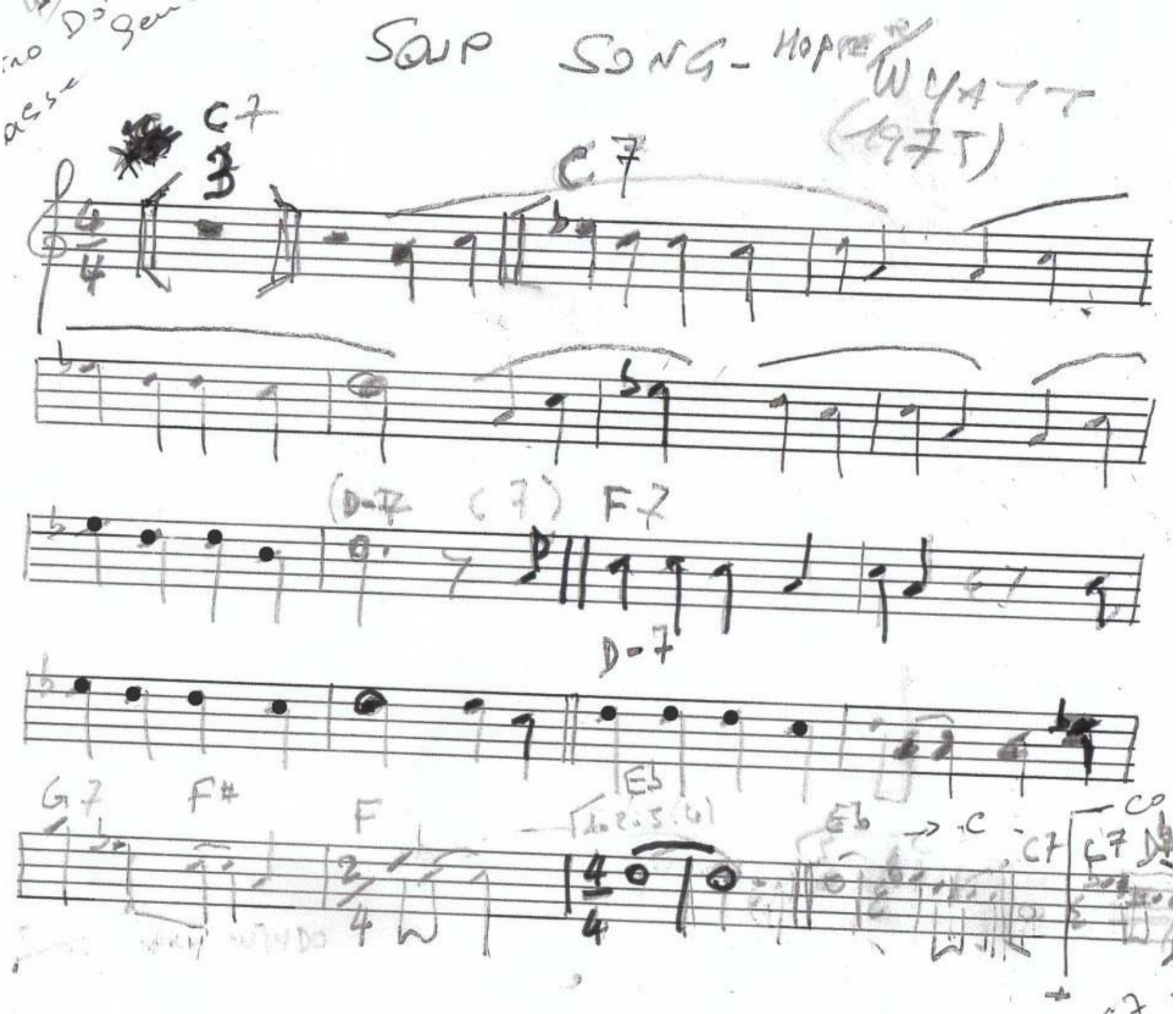


for tenor saxophone
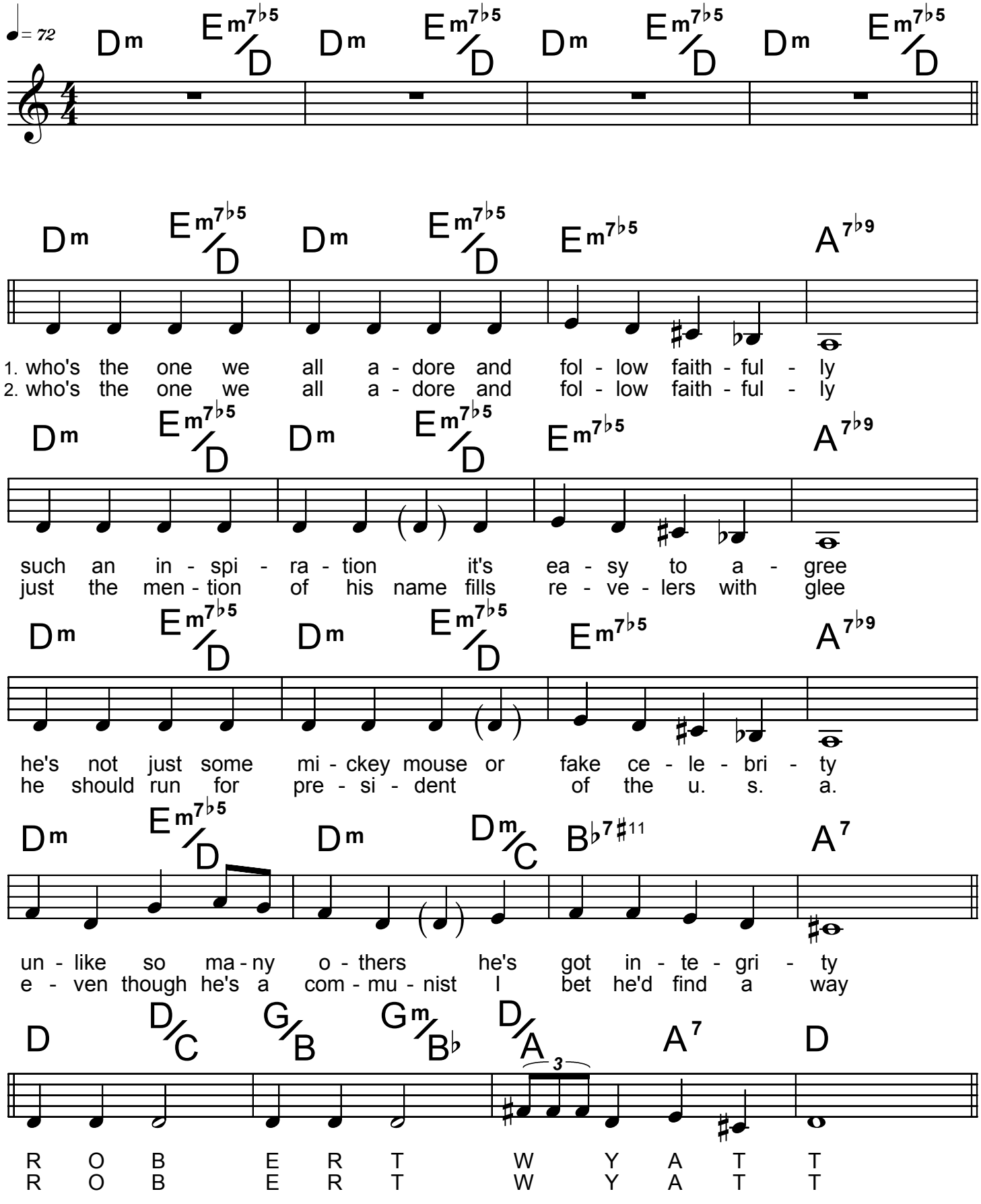
FREE WILL & TESTAMENT

1997 "SHLEEP"




SOUP SONG - HOPE
WYATT
(1977)
C7
C7
(D-7 (7) F7
D-7
G7
F#
F
Eb
Eb → C
C7
C7

THE OFFICIAL ROBERT WYATT FAN CLUB SONG



Karen Mantler (Grog Kill Music - ASCAP)

Atelier PLAY IT AGAIN !
Dirigé par Guillaume GILLES
Université Paris 8 Vincennes – Saint-Denis

Robert Wyatt



ROCK BOTTOM
SONGBOOK

(1974 – 2024, 50ème anniversaire)

ROCK BOTTOM

SONGBOOK

Atelier PLAY IT AGAIN !

Dirigé par Guillaume GILLES
Université Paris 8 Vincennes – Saint-Denis

Ce songbook est un outil pédagogique mis à disposition des étudiant.e.s de master en Musique – Musicologie de l'atelier *Play It Again* dirigé par Guillaume GILLES.

Si l'ensemble du travail de relevé musical et formel s'appuie sur l'album en lui-même, il comporte également des adaptations pour le groupe qui a travaillé sur la conception du concert de restitution donné le 12 juin 2024 à l'Université Paris 8.

Bonne musique et merci à Robert Wyatt

pour son merveilleux album.

1 - *Sea Song* – Robert Wyatt
(*Rock Bottom* – 1974)

BPM: 110
4/4

Introduction
	Eb	F7	BbMaj7	EbMaj7
Csus2 – Gm/Bb	A7sus4	A7sus4	D7sus4
D7sus4	E7#5	E7#5	E7#5
E7#5	

Couplet 1
|| F#min | FMaj | Amin/E | Emin || X2

You look different every time you come
from the foam-crested brine
It's your skin shining softly in the moonlight

Couplet 2
|| F#min | FMaj | Amin/E | Emin || X2

Partly fish, partly porpoise, partly baby sperm whale
Am I yours? Are you mine to play with?

Couplet 3 (piano Octave inférieure)
|| F#min | FMaj | Amin/E | Emin || X2

Joking apart when you're drunk
You're terrific when you're drunk
I like you mostly late at night - you're quite all right

Pont 1
	Eb	F7	Bbmaj7	Ebmaj7
Cm6 Cm6/Bb	Am7b5	Am7b5	D7
D7	

But I can't understand the different you
In the morning when it's time to play
at being human for a while
Please smile!

Instrumental (impro piano + orgue)
|| E7#5 | E7#5 | E7#5 | E7#5 ||

Gamme ton par ton pour la transition

Couplet 4 (piano accords plaqués)
|| F#min | FMaj | Amin/E | Emin || X2

You'll be different in the spring, I know
You're a seasonal beast
Like the starfish that drift in with the tide, with the tide

Couplet 5 (piano Octave inférieure)
|| F#min | FMaj | Amin/E | Emin || X2

So until your blood runs to meet the next full moon
Your madness fits in nicely with my own, with my own

Couplet Coda (entrée voix mellotron)
|| F#min | FMaj | Amin/E | Fmin ||

Your lunacy fits neatly with my own, my very own

Instrumental 2 (entrée synthé/orgue basses)
|| Amin | Fmin | Amin | Fmin ||X3

Outro (improvisation vocale)
|| 4/4 D ||3/4 E7/D ||4/4 DMaj7 ||
|| 4/4 D ||3/4 E7/D ||3/4 DMaj7 ||

We're not alone...

Ajout Riff mélodique synthétiseur avec portamento

Ajout “contrepoint” Riff

Outro:
Fade Out Drums + Basse

Riff voix + violoncelle + sax
Accompagnement guitare.

2 - *A Last Straw* – Robert Wyatt
(*Rock Bottom* – 1974)

BPM: 130
4/4

Introduction : Batterie + Basse + SAX

Grille avec 2X 6/4

	Cm	Cm	Cm	Cm
Cm	Cm	Cm	Cm
D7sus2	D7sus2		6/4 D7sus2	
D7sus2	D7sus2		6/4 D7sus2	
Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2
Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2

Grille Refrain

|| Gsus4 | Gsus4 | Ab | Ab |
| Fm | Fm | G | G |

Couplet 1 (1 seule X 6/4)

	Cm	Cm	Cm	Cm
Cm	Cm	Cm	Cm
D7sus2	D7sus2		6/4 D7sus2	
D7sus2	D7sus2	D7sus2	D7sus2
Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2
Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2	Dbsus2

Seaweed tangled in our home from home
Reminds me of your rocky bottom
Please don't wait for the paperweight
Err on the good side
Touch us when we collapse

Refrain 1

|| Gsus4 | Gsus4 | Ab | Ab |
| Fm | Fm | G | G ||

Into the water we'll go head over heel
We'll not grow fat inside the mammary gland

Improvisation 1 (Voix)

Grilles identiques à celles de l'introduction
(2X 6/4)

Improvisation 2 VIOLONCELLE

Grilles identiques à celles de l'introduction
(2X 6/4)

Couplet 2 (1 seule X 6/4)

Seaweed tangled in our home from home
Reminds me of your rocky bottom
Please don't wait for the paperweight
Err on the good side
Touch us when we collapse

Refrain 2

Into the water we'll go head over heel
A head behind me buried deep in the sand

Improvisation 3 GUITARE

Grille couplet identique à celles de l'intro.
(2X 6/4)

Outro : Grille Refrain avec descente tons.
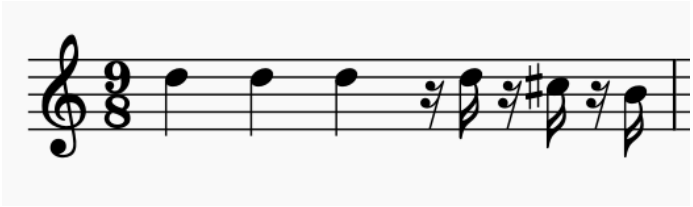
|| Gsus4 | Gsus4 | Ab | Ab |
| Fm | Fm | Réb Si | La Sol |
| Fa Mib | Réb Si | **La Start Riff Guitare**

3 - *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road* – Robert Wyatt
(*Rock Bottom* – 1974)

BPM: 80 Métriques: 9/8 – 4/4

Introduction
Riff Ad lib.

A11 A11 A11 A11 AMaj A9



Trompette > Piano > Percus > Basse > Voix

RIFF VOIX pour la transition

Instrumental

	AMaj	BbMaj3/A	BbMaj7/A	Bb6/A
D	Dm	Am	BbMaj7
A Asus4	BbMaj3/A	BbMaj7/A	Bb6/A
D	Dm	Am	BbminMaj7/A	

Thème vocal

|| A Asus4 | Gm6/A | Gm7/A | Bb6/A |
| D | Dm | Am | BbM7/A ||

Couplet 1

|| A Asus4 | Gm6/A | Gm7/A | Bb6/A |
| D | Dm | Am | Bbmin |

Orlan don't tell me, oh no
Don't say oh God
Don't tell me oh dear me
Heaven's above
Oh no
I can't stand it

Couplet 2

|| A Asus4 | Gm6/A | Gm7/A | Bb6/A |
| D | Dm | Am | Bbmin/F ||

Stop please
oh deary me
What in heaven's name?
Oh blimey mercy me
Who are we?
Oh dear
Oh stop it, stop it

Pont / Nonsense

	BbMaj7	Am	Dm	D7
Bb6	Bb	Asus4	Asus4 A
BbminMaj7	Am7	Dm	D7
Bb6	Gm7/Bb	Asus4	Asus4 A

He wants / He was out /
He walk / He ever walk /
He needs a inner walk and flavor if awk
And we block it
Ouuuuu it's in my smart look
That lack but is night
He lives or in my night or walk as night
Was like a nightmare

Fin du pont

	BbMaj7	Am	Dm	D7
Bb6	Bb	Asus4	Asus4 A
BbMaj7	Am	Dm	D7
Bb6	Bb	Asus4	Asus4 A

You've been so kind
I know I know
So why did I hurt you?
I didn't mean to hurt you
But I'll keep trying
And I'm sure you will tooooooooooooo….

Voix parlée

| BbMaj7 | Am | Dm | D7 |
| Bb6 | Bb | Asus4 | Asus4 A |

I want it I want it I want it give it to me
I give it you back when I finish the lunchtea
I lie in the road try to trip up the passing cars
Yes me and the hedgehog
We bursting the tires all day
As we roll down the highway towards the setting sun

Outro: Cycle en boucle / Stop sur dernier A

|| BbMaj7 | Am | Dm | D7 |
| Bb6 | Bb | Asus4 | Asus4 **A** |
|

Phrase violoncelle pour la transition

4 - *Alifib* – Robert Wyatt
(*Rock Bottom* – 1974)

Partie 1: 4/4 = noire 91 BPM
Partie 2: 6/8 = croche 137 BPM

Introduction :

la voix chante ternaire, la basse joue binaire

Riff Basse x2 + Alifi (voix soufflée)
|| E11 mi si fa# la | E5 mi si mi si) | E11 | E5 ||

Ajout Orgue
|| E11 | E5 | E11 | E5 ||X4

Impro Guitare de 32 mesures en GbMaj

Guitare: son rond et étouffé
Walking Bass

Arriver sur une basse : Si > Fa (2'29) puis Si > Octavié pour annoncer la modulation vers Sib Maj.

Orgue modul: BMaj >Bmin

Couplet 1 (orgue = pédale de Si) :

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X2

Not nit not nit no not
Nit nit folly bololey
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Impro instrumentale (orgue + guitare)

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X1

Couplet 2 (impro orgue + guitare)

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X2

I can't forsake you
Or Forsqueak you
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Couplet 3

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X2

Confiscate
Or make you late you you
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Couplet 4

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X1

Not nit not nit no not
Nit nit folly bololy

Impro instrumentale

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X1
Petite transition mélodique tutti: sol sib ré sol Fa#

Couplet 5 (avec voix octaviée)

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||X4

Burlybunch, the water mole
Hellyplop and fingerhole
Not a wossit bundy, see
For jangle and bojangle
Trip trip Pip pippy pippy pip pip landerim
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Impro instrumentale

|| Bmin | C#dim | A#dim | G ||**X4**

Outro :

Enchaînement vers *Alifie*
Rester sur GMaj

5 - *Alifie* – Robert Wyatt
(*Rock Bottom* – 1974)

Métrique : 6/8 = 150 BPM

Démarre sur la fin de Alifib

Free Feeling / Noise / Atempo

Puis Modulations:
De GMaj vers Fmin

Tourne tout au long de la chanson
|| E_{min} | $F\#_{dim}$ | $D\#_{dim/A}$ | C_{min13} ||
Basse ascendante et pédale de Mi

Not nit
not nit
no not Nit nit
Folly bololey
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

I can't forsake you or
Forsqueak you
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Confiscate or make you
Late you you
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Not nit not nit no not
Nit nit folly bololy

Impro Sax

Burlybunch, the water mole
Hellyplop and fingerhole
Not a wossit bundy, see ?

For jangle and bojangle
Trip trip
Pip pippy pippy pip pip landerim
Alifi my larder
Alifi my larder

Riff sax puis Solo Sax

Ajout Riff Piano

Climax NOISE - OUT / réverbe delay

I'm not your larder,
jammy jars and mustard.

I'm not your dinner,
you soppy old custard.

Effacement des instruments

And what's a bololey
when it's a folly?

Basse distorsion

I'm not your larder,
I'm your dear little dolly.
But when plops get too helly
I'll fill up your belly.
I'm not your larder,
I'm Alife your guarder.

Ne reste plus que la basse fuzz.

6 - *Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road* – Robert Wyatt
(*Rock Bottom* – 1974)

Métrique : 4/4 = 86 BPM

Partie 1:

Démarre sur la fin de *Alifie*

Tourne tout au long de la chanson

|| 4/4 Emin || 3/4 Emin | E || 4/4 F#Dim | **Sol**LaDo |

| **Fa**SolSi | **Sol**FaLaSi | Amin7 | Bsus4 |

| B7sus4/C | B7sus4/B | B7sus4 | B7 ||

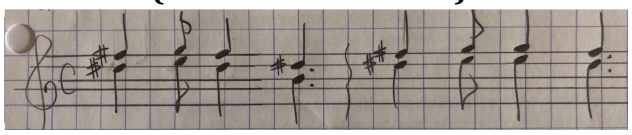
Couplet 1 :
In the garden of England
Dead moles lie inside their holes
The dead-end tunnels
Crumble in the rain
Underfoot
Innit a shame?

Instrumental 1 (grille du couplet)

Instrumental 2 (Idem)

Pont : B7 + Riffs Guitare + ???

(Harmonisation voix)



Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?
Roots can't hold them
Bugs console them

Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?
Roots can't hold them
Bugs console them

Climax X4
Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?
Can't you see them?

Partie 2 :

|| BbMaj | EbMaj/B | BbMaj | EbMaj/B ||

I fight with the handle of my little brown broom
I pull out the wires of the telephone
I hurt in the head and I hurt in the acting bone
Now I smash up the telly with remains of the broken phone

I fighting for the crust of the little brown loaf
I want it I want it I want it give it to me
I give it you back when I finish the lunch tea

Phrase mélodique violon

I lie in the road try to trip up the passing cars
Yes me and the hedgehog We bursting the tyres all day

Phrase mélodique violon

As we roll down the highway towards the setting sun
I reflect on the life of the Highwayman yum yum
Now I smash up the telly and what's left of The broken phone
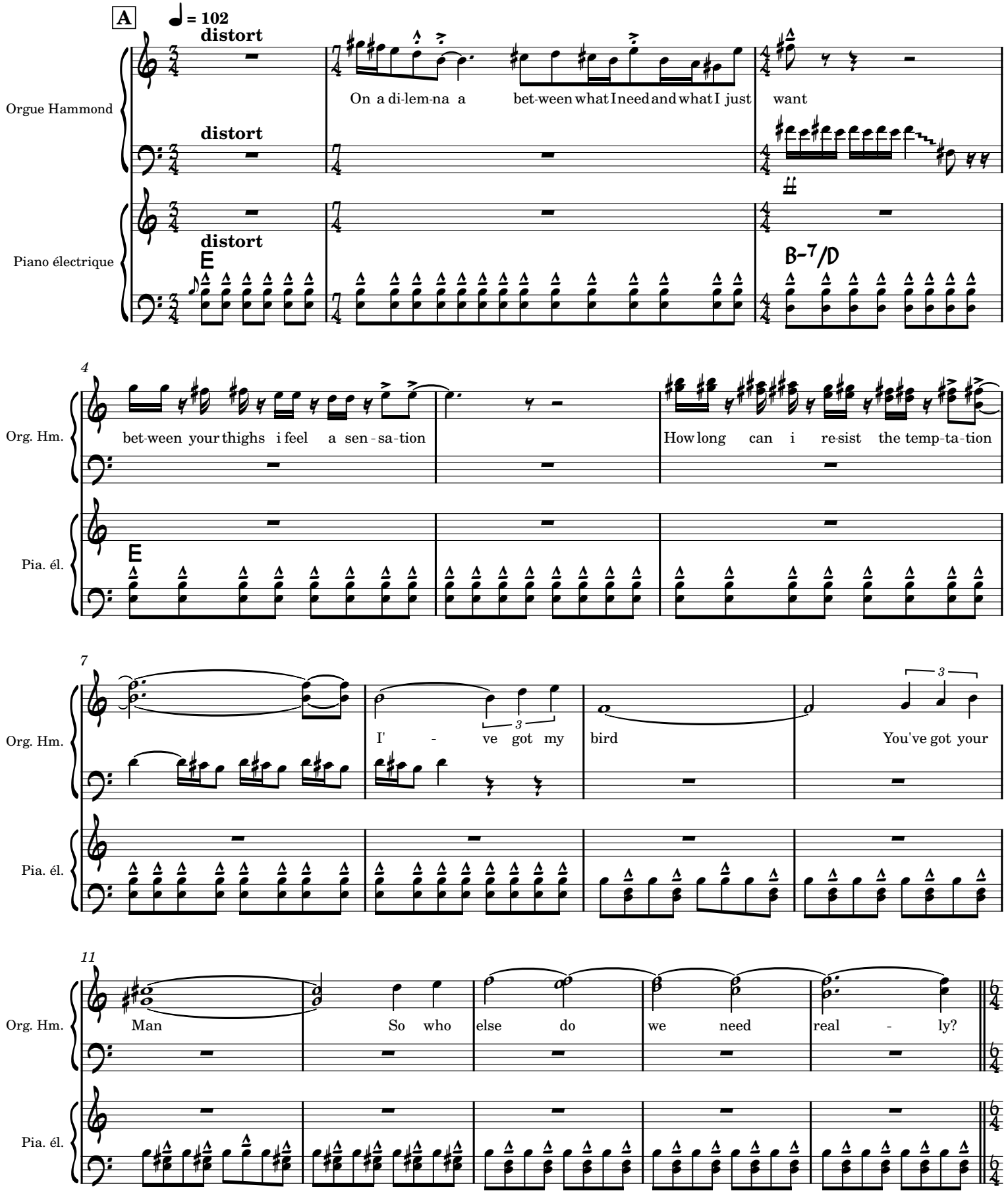
Violon dissonant
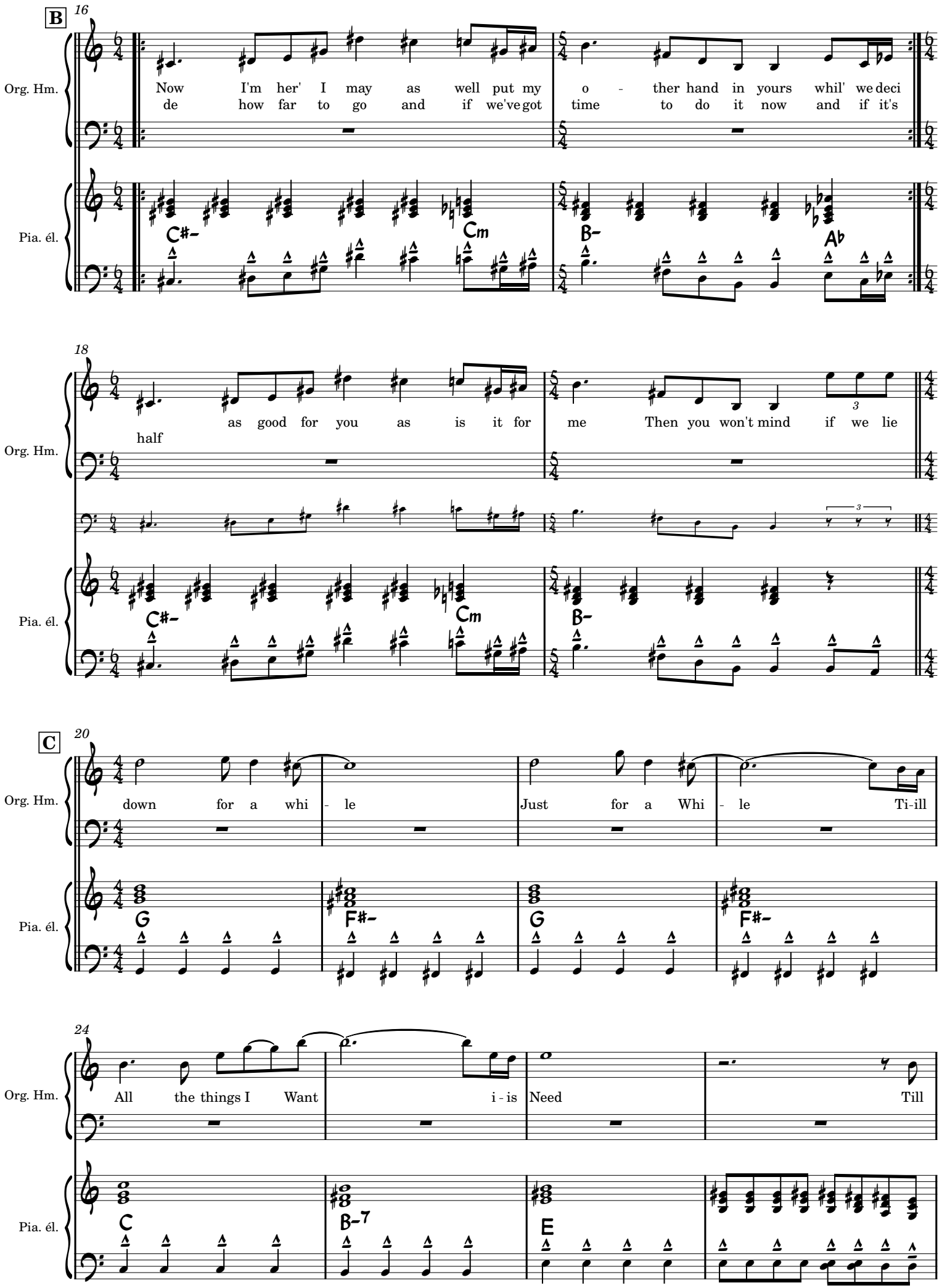
Fin
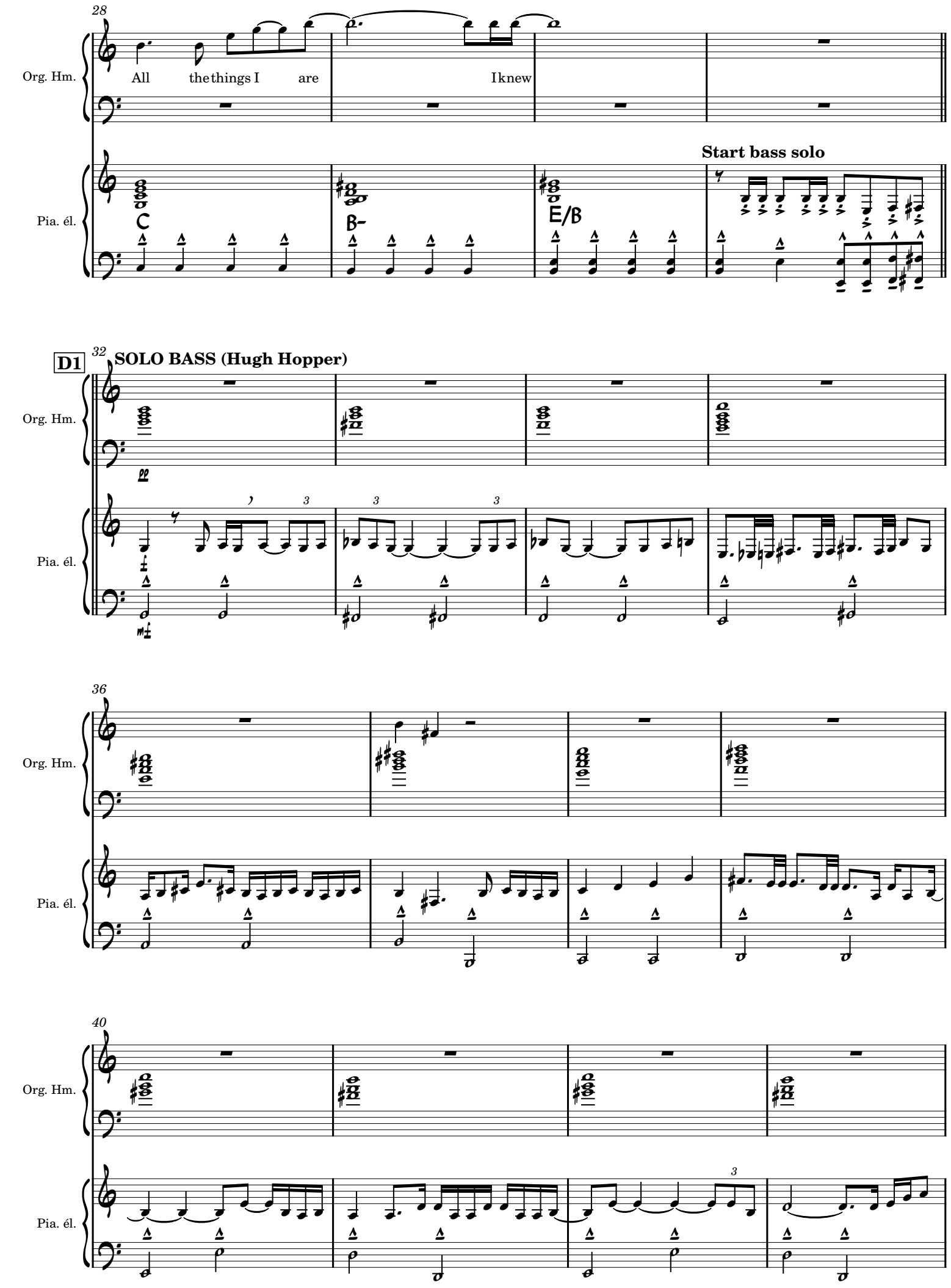
MOON IN JUNE
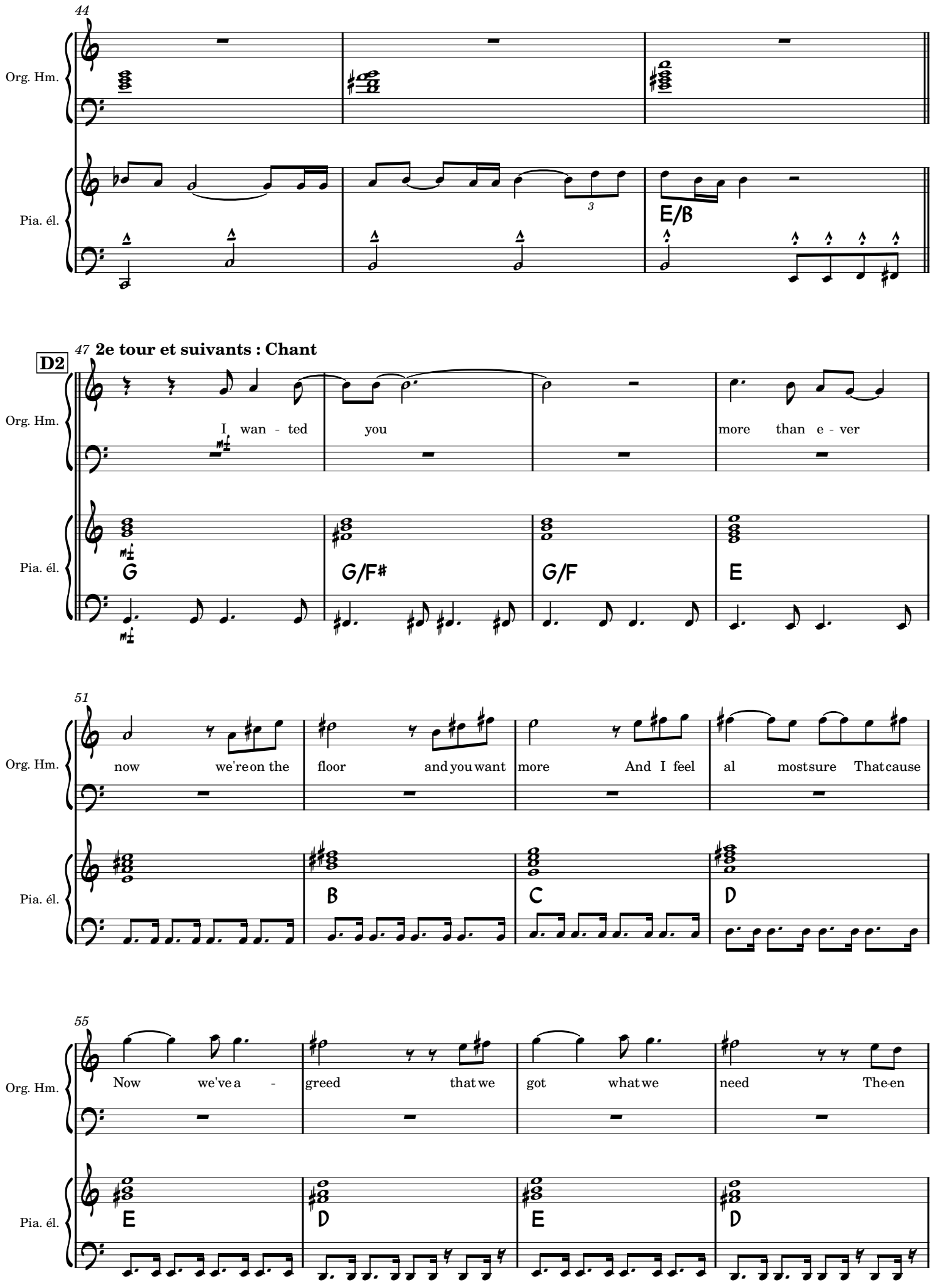
Robert WYATT (Album Soft Machine THIRD)

THIS IS NOT A 100% note-to-note transcription! but a comprehensive score to understand the structure
of the tune composed by Robert Wyatt, and fully playable on two keyboards
(some parts have to be switched between organ and EP).
Please, enjoy ! (C) transcription - Guy Boistel, dec.2024-jan.2025




B
16
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
Now I'm her' I may as well put my o - ther hand in yours whil' we deci
de how far to go and if we've got time to do it now and if it's
C#-
Cm
B-
Ab
18
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
as good for you as is it for me Then you won't mind if we lie
half
C#-
Cm
B-
C
20
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
down for a whi - le
Just for a Whi - le Ti-ill
G
F#-
G
F#-
24
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
All the things I Want
i - is Need
Till
C
B-7
E


28
Org. Hm.
All the things I are I knew
Pia. él.
C
B-
E/B
Start bass solo
D1
32
SOLO BASS (Hugh Hopper)
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
36
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
40
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.


44
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
E/B
47 2e tour et suivants : Chant
D2
Org. Hm.
I wan - ted
you
more than e - ver
Pia. él.
G
G/F♯
G/F
E
51
Org. Hm.
now we're on the
floor and you want
more And I feel
al most sure That cause
Pia. él.
B
C
D
55
Org. Hm.
Now we've a -
greed that we
got what we
need The-en
Pia. él.
E
D
E
D

59

Linéaire

Org. Hm. all the things us is wan - ting

Pia. él. C B-7 E/B

D3 62

Org. Hm. I re-a-lized when I Saw you last We've been To - ge-ther No-ow an-and

Pia. él. G G/F# G/F E

66
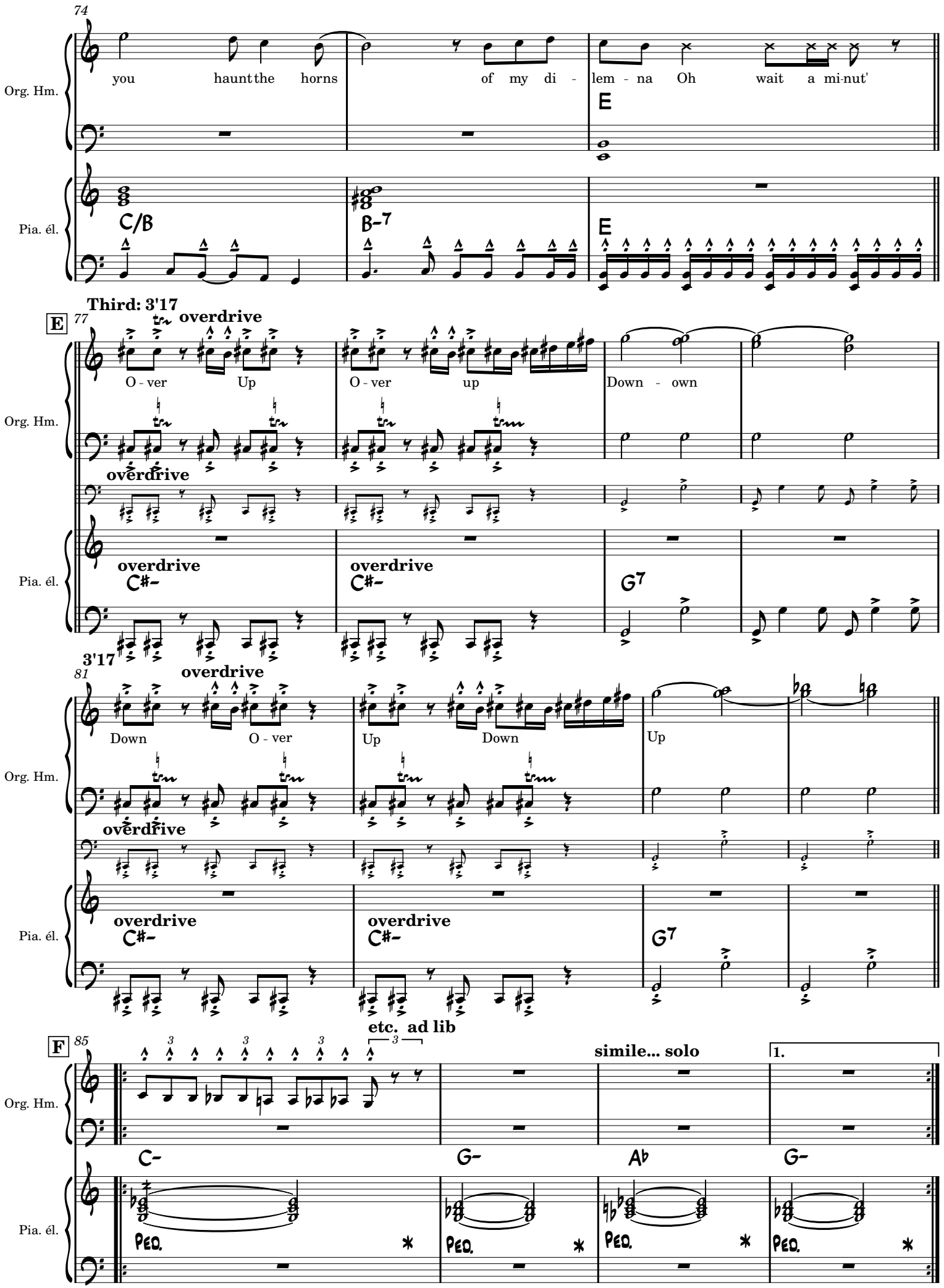
Org. Hm. Then From tim' to time just here and there Now I
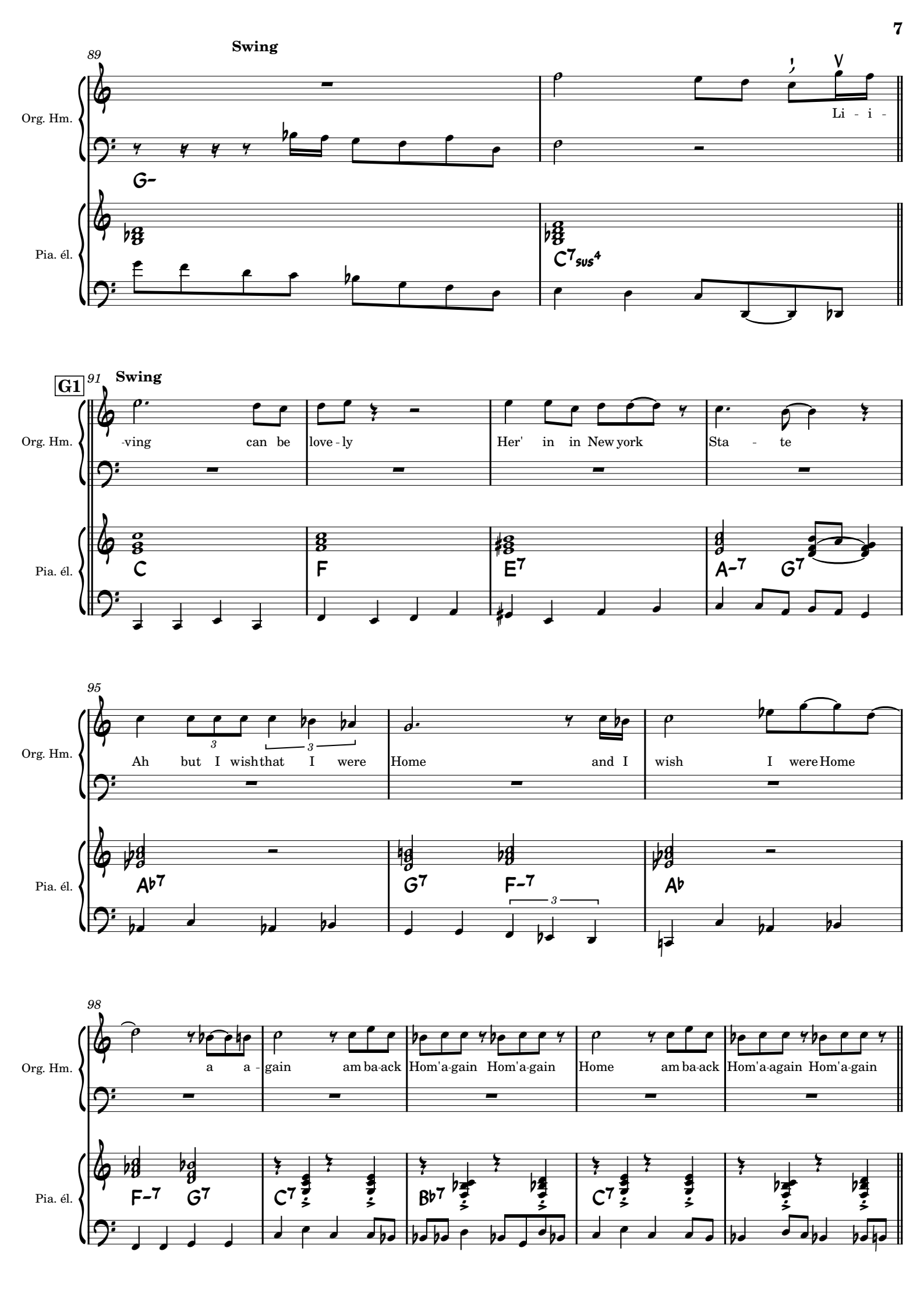
Pia. él. B C D
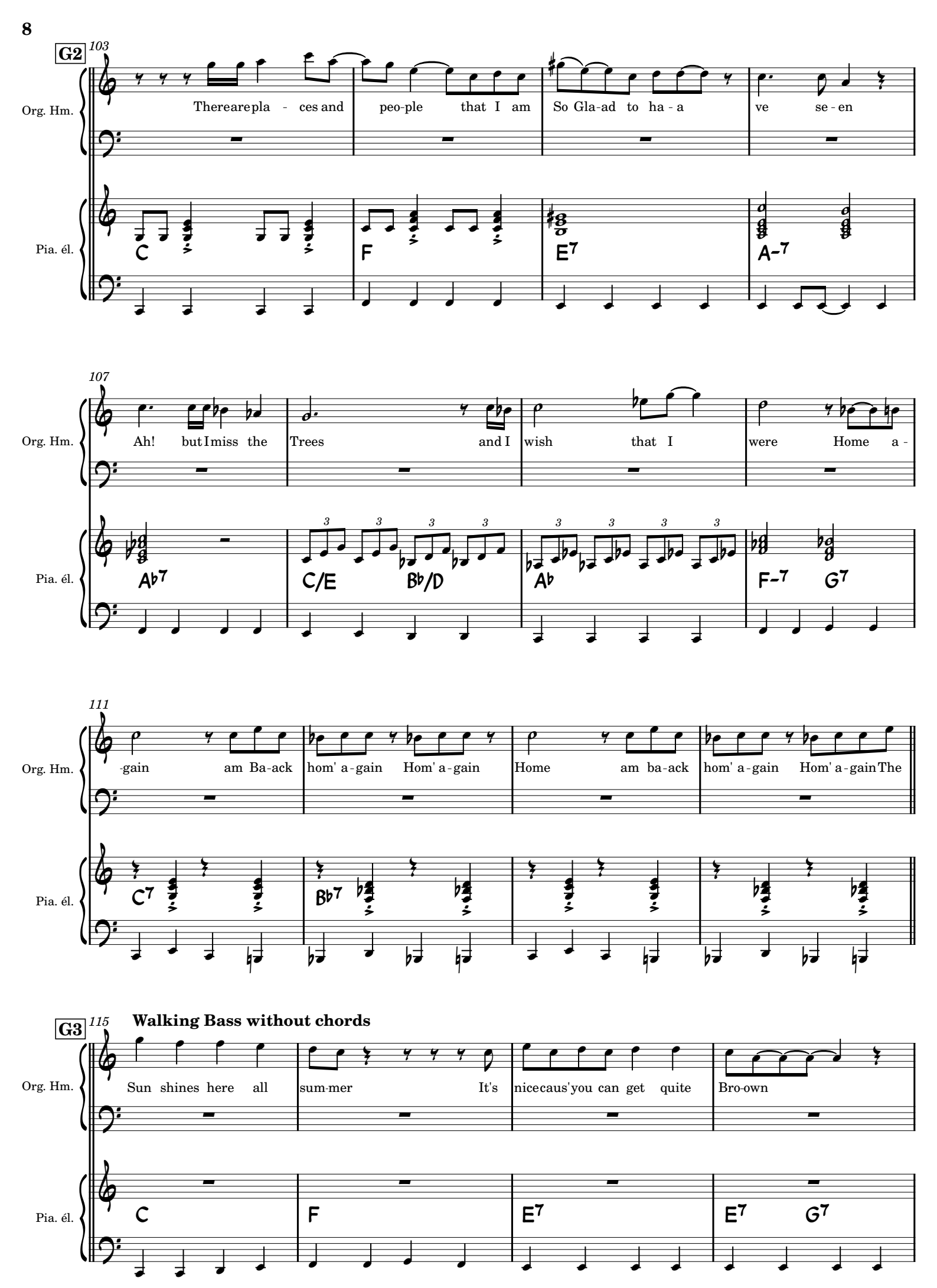
70
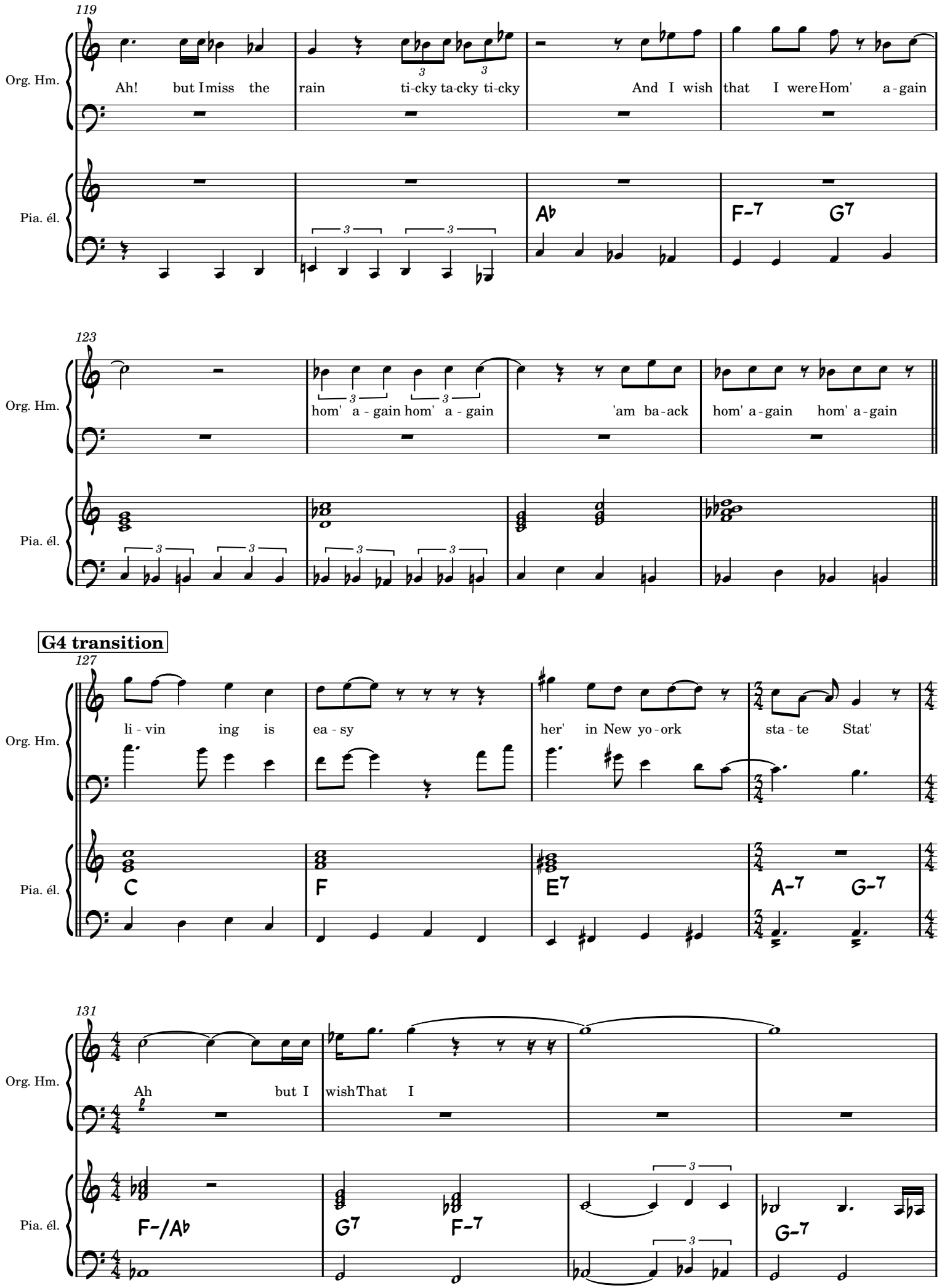
Org. Hm. know how it feels from my hair to my heels to have
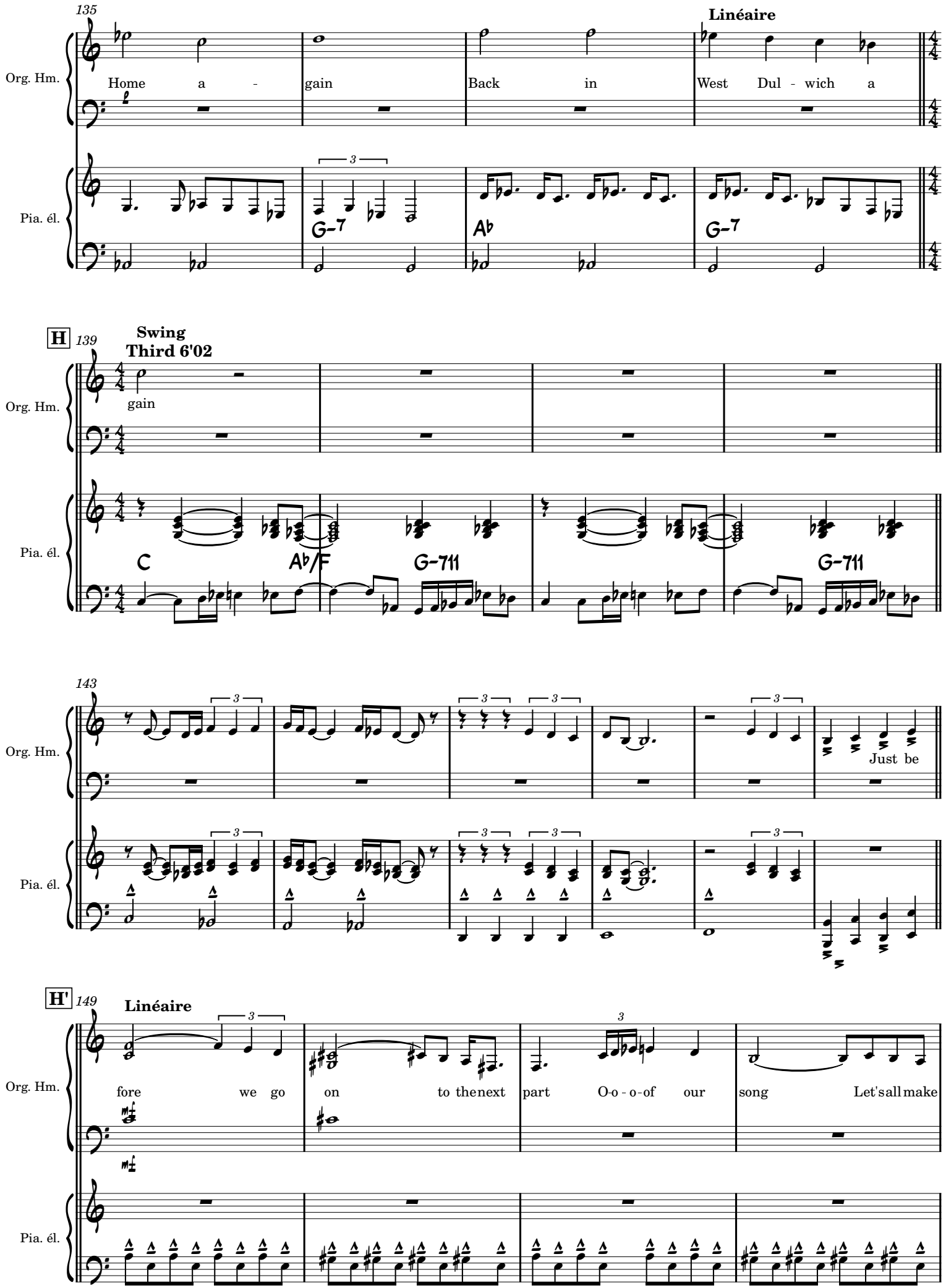
Pia. él. E D E D
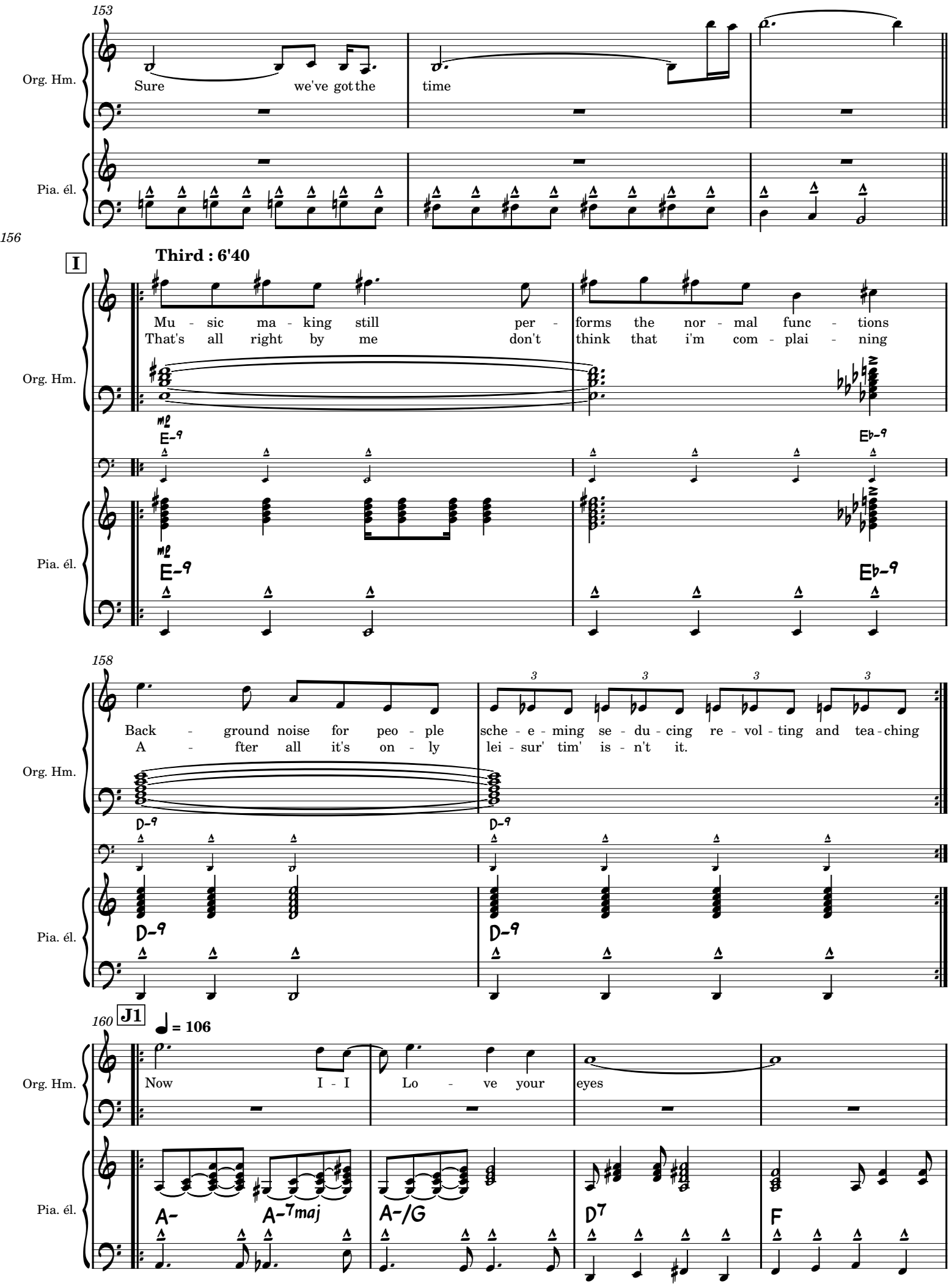

74
Org. Hm.
you haunt the horns of my di - lem - na Oh wait a mi-nut'
E
Pia. él.
C/B
B-7
E
Third: 3'17
E
77
overdrive
O - ver Up O - ver up Down - own
overdrive
overdrive
C#-
overdrive
C#-
G7
3'17
81
overdrive
Down O - ver Up Down Up
overdrive
overdrive
C#-
overdrive
C#-
G7
etc. ad lib
F
85
simile... solo
1.
C-
G-
Ab
G-
PED.
PED.
PED.
PED.
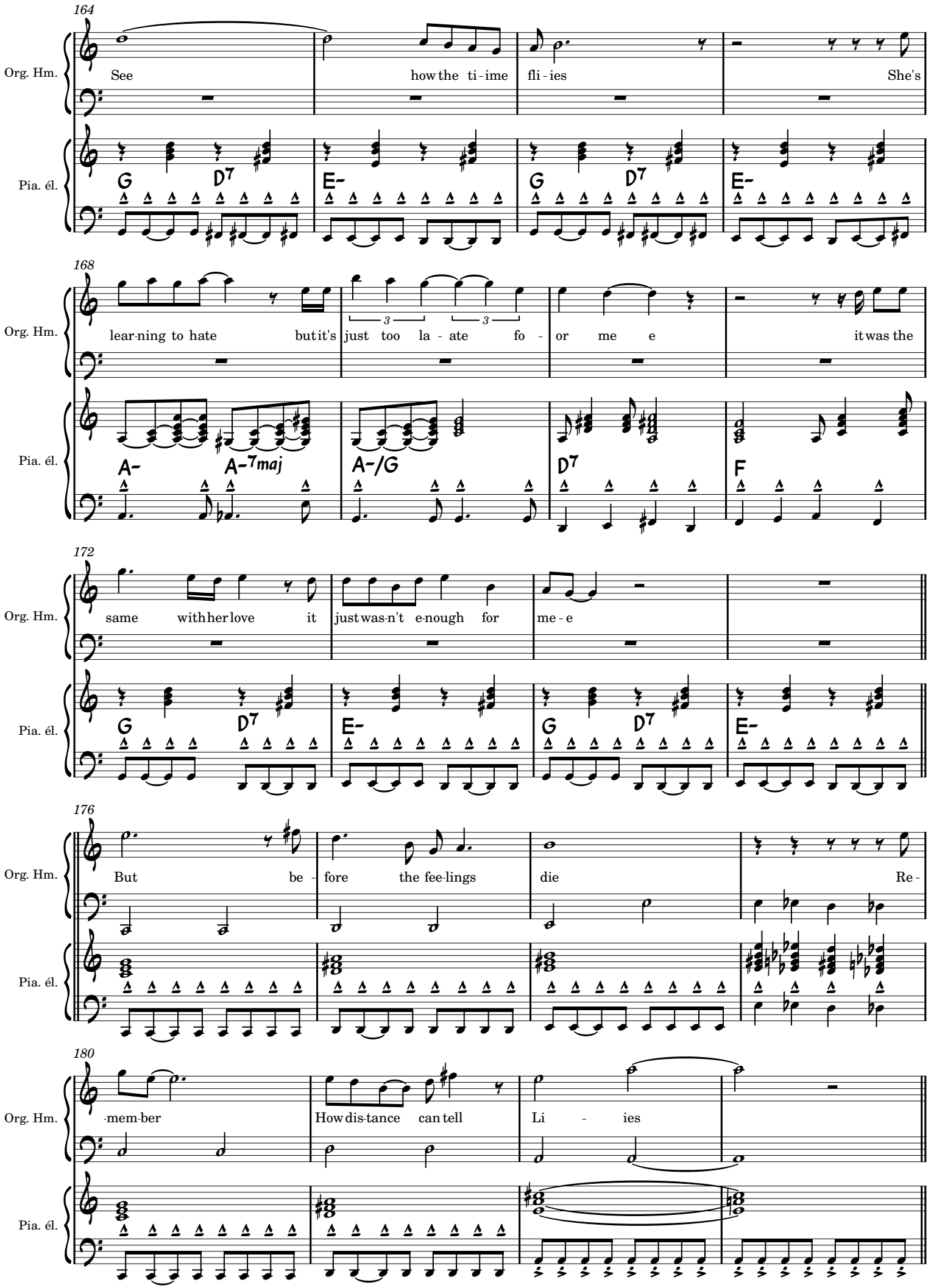

Swing
89
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
G-
C7sus4
Li - i -
G1
91
Swing
-ving can be love - ly
Her' in in New york
Sta - te
C
F
E7
A-7
G7
95
Ah but I wish that I were
Home and I
wish I were Home
Ab7
G7
F-7
Ab
98
a a - gain am ba-ack
Hom'a-gain Hom'a-gain
Home am ba-ack
Hom'a-again Hom'a-gain
F-7
G7
C7
Bb7
C7
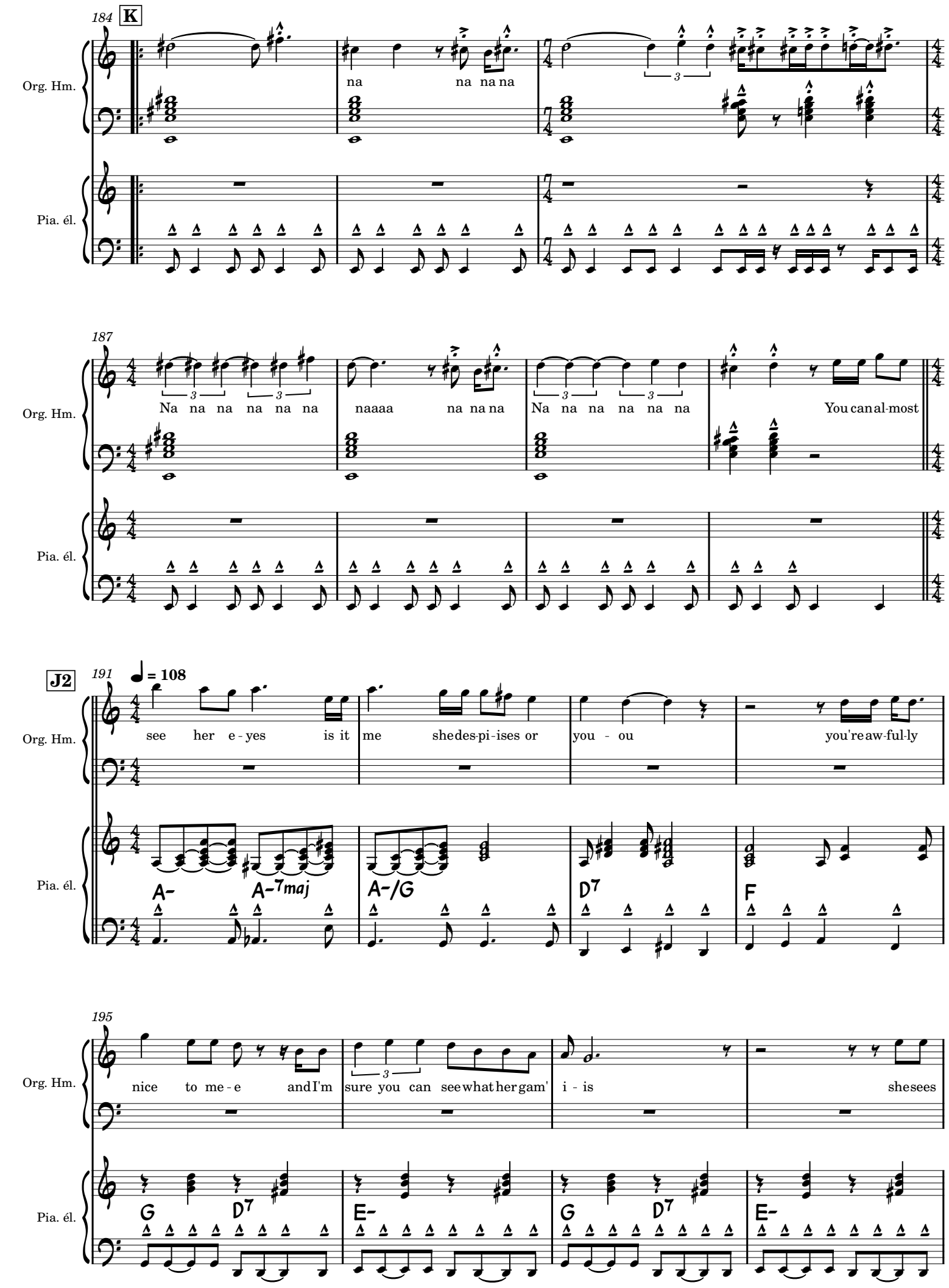

G2
103
Org. Hm.
Therearepla - ces and peo-ple that I am So Gla-ad to ha - a ve se - en
Pia. él.
C F E7 A-7
107
Org. Hm.
Ah! but I miss the Trees and I wish that I were Home a -
Pia. él.
Ab7 C/E Bb/D Ab F-7 G7
111
Org. Hm.
-gain am Ba-ack hom' a-gain Hom' a-gain Home am ba-ack hom' a-gain Hom' a-gain The
Pia. él.
C7 Bb7
G3
115
Walking Bass without chords
Org. Hm.
Sun shines here all sum-mer It's nicecaus'you can get quite Bro-own
Pia. él.
C F E7 E7 G7
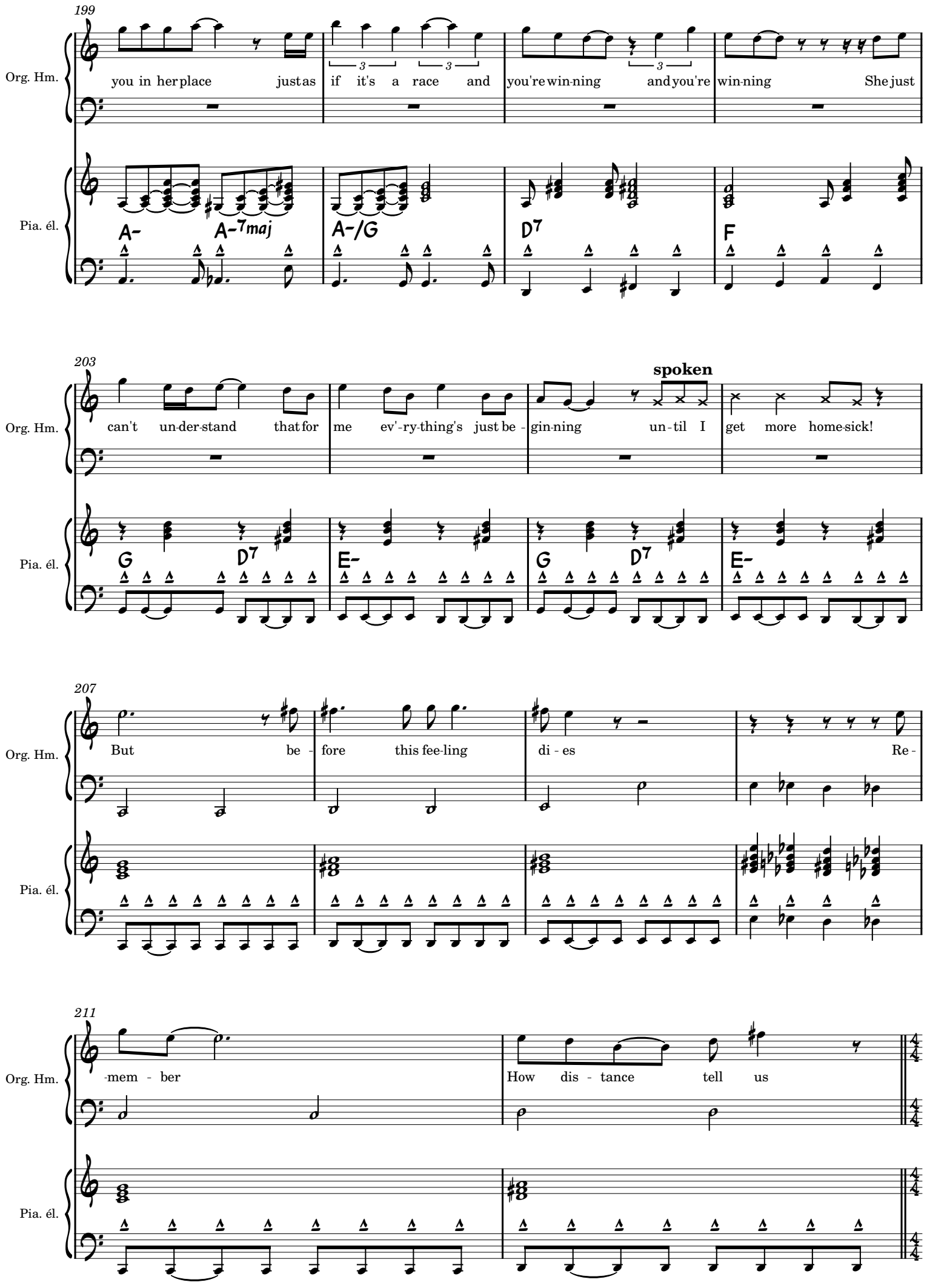

119
Org. Hm.
Ah! but I miss the rain ti-cky ta-cky ti-cky And I wish that I were Hom' a-gain
Pia. él.
Ab
F-7 G7
123
Org. Hm.
hom' a-gain hom' a-gain 'am ba-ck hom' a-gain hom' a-gain
Pia. él.
G4 transition
127
Org. Hm.
li-vin ing is ea-sy her' in New yo-ork sta-te Stat'
Pia. él.
C
F
E7
A-7 G-7
131
Org. Hm.
Ah but I wish That I
Pia. él.
F-/Ab
G7 F-7
G-7
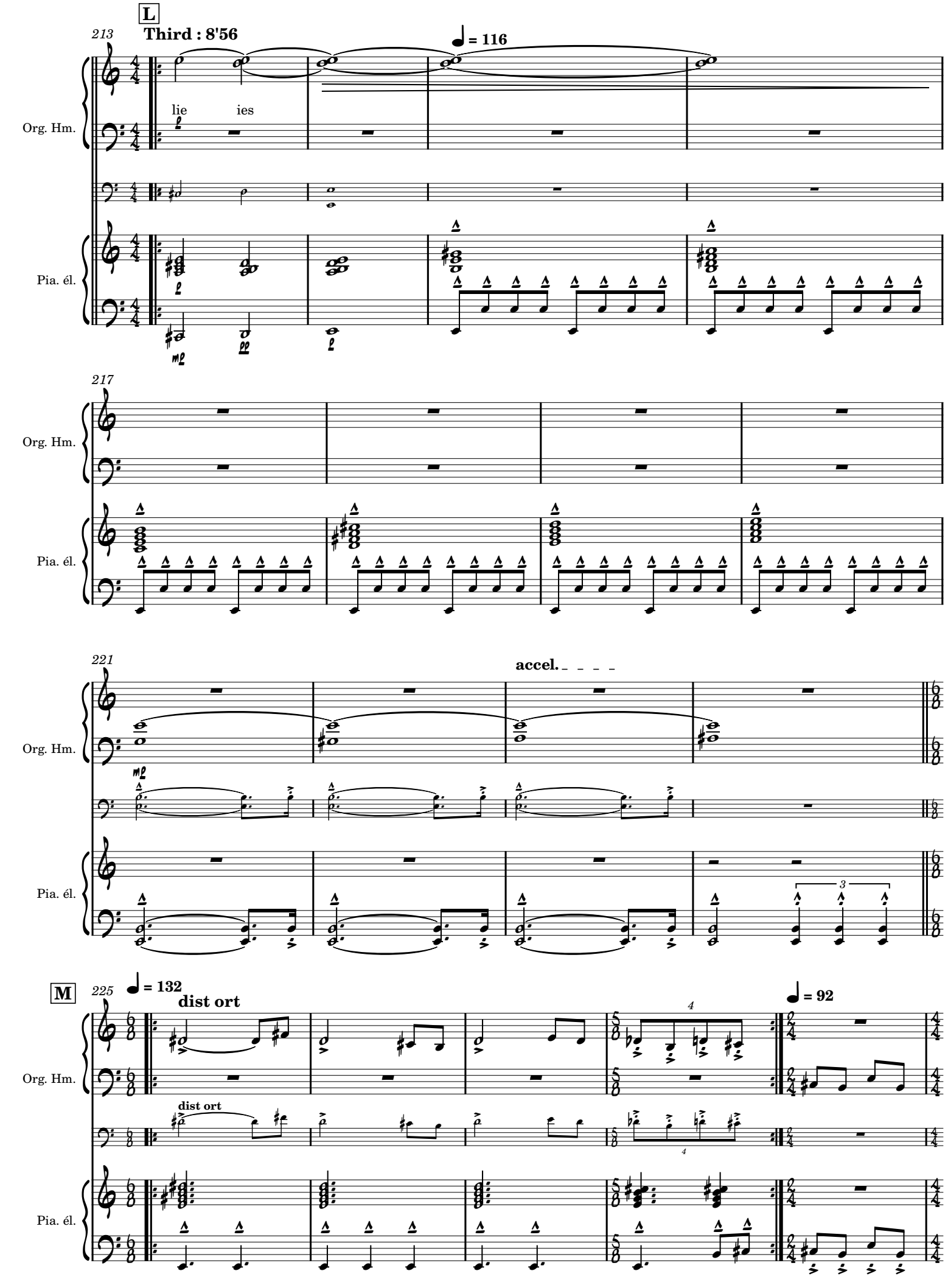

135
Linéaire
Org. Hm.
Home a - gain Back in West Dul - wich a
Pia. él.
G-7 Ab G-7
H
139
Swing
Third 6'02
Org. Hm.
gain
Pia. él.
C Ab/F G-711 G-711
143
Org. Hm.
Just be
Pia. él.
H'
149
Linéaire
Org. Hm.
fore we go on to the next part O-o - o - of our song Let's all make
Pia. él.
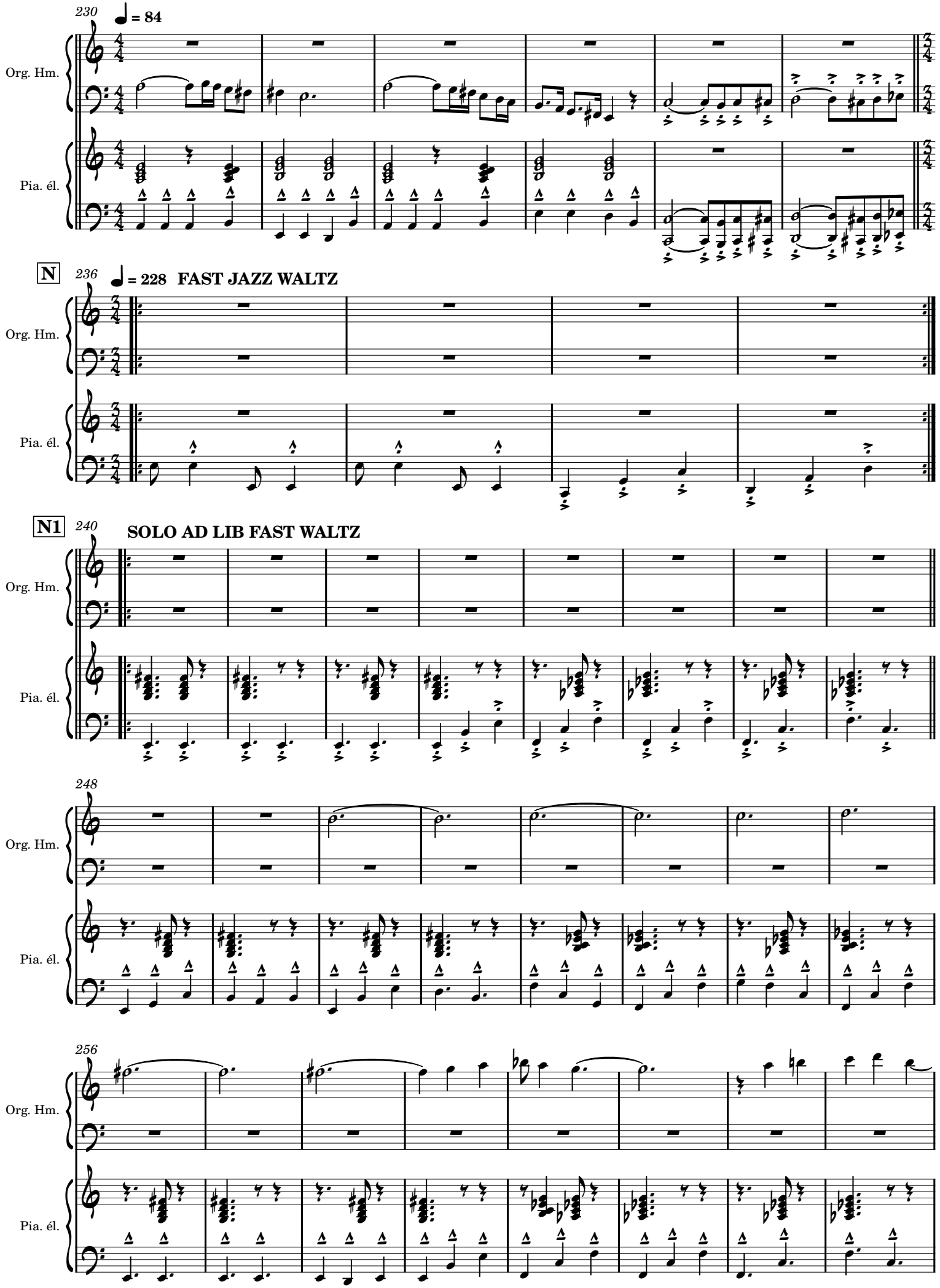

153
Org. Hm.
Sure we've got the time
Pia. él.
156
I
Third : 6'40
Mu - sic ma - king still per - forms the nor - mal func - tions
That's all right by me don't think that i'm com - plai - ning
mp
E-9
Eb-9
158
Back - ground noise for peo - ple sche - e - ming se - du - cing re - vol - ting and tea - ching
A - fter all it's on - ly lei - sur' tim' is - n't it.
D-9
160
J1
♩ = 106
Now I - I Lo - ve your eyes
A-
A-7maj
A-/G
D7
F
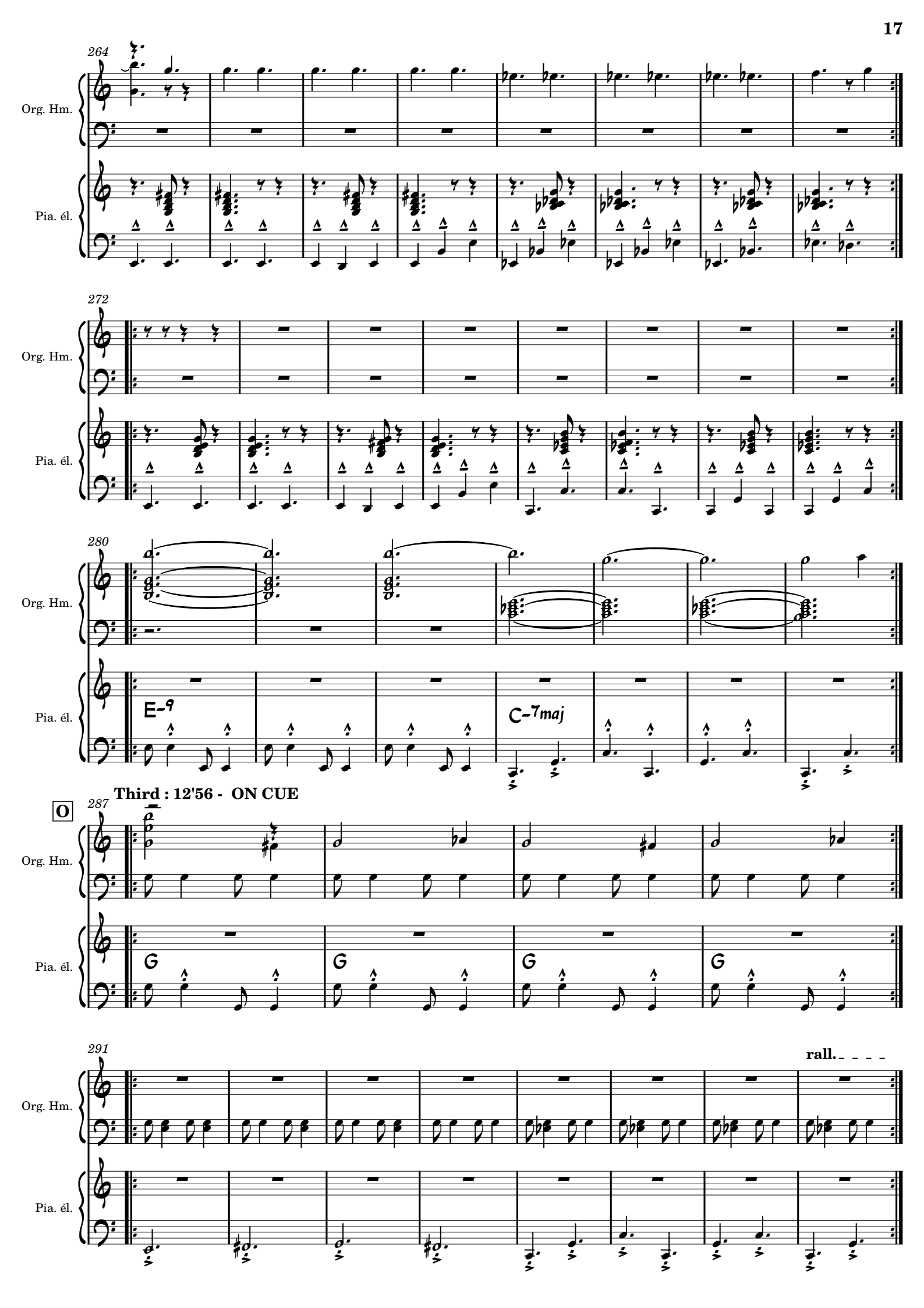

164
Org. Hm.
See how the ti-ime fli-ies She's
Pia. él.
G D7 E- G D7 E-
168
Org. Hm.
lear-ning to hate but it's just too la-ate fo- or me e it was the
Pia. él.
A- A-7maj A-/G D7 F
172
Org. Hm.
same with her love it just was-n't e-nough for me-e
Pia. él.
G D7 E- G D7 E-
176
Org. Hm.
But be- fore the fee-lings die Re-
Pia. él.
180
Org. Hm.
-mem-ber How dis-tance can tell Li - ies
Pia. él.
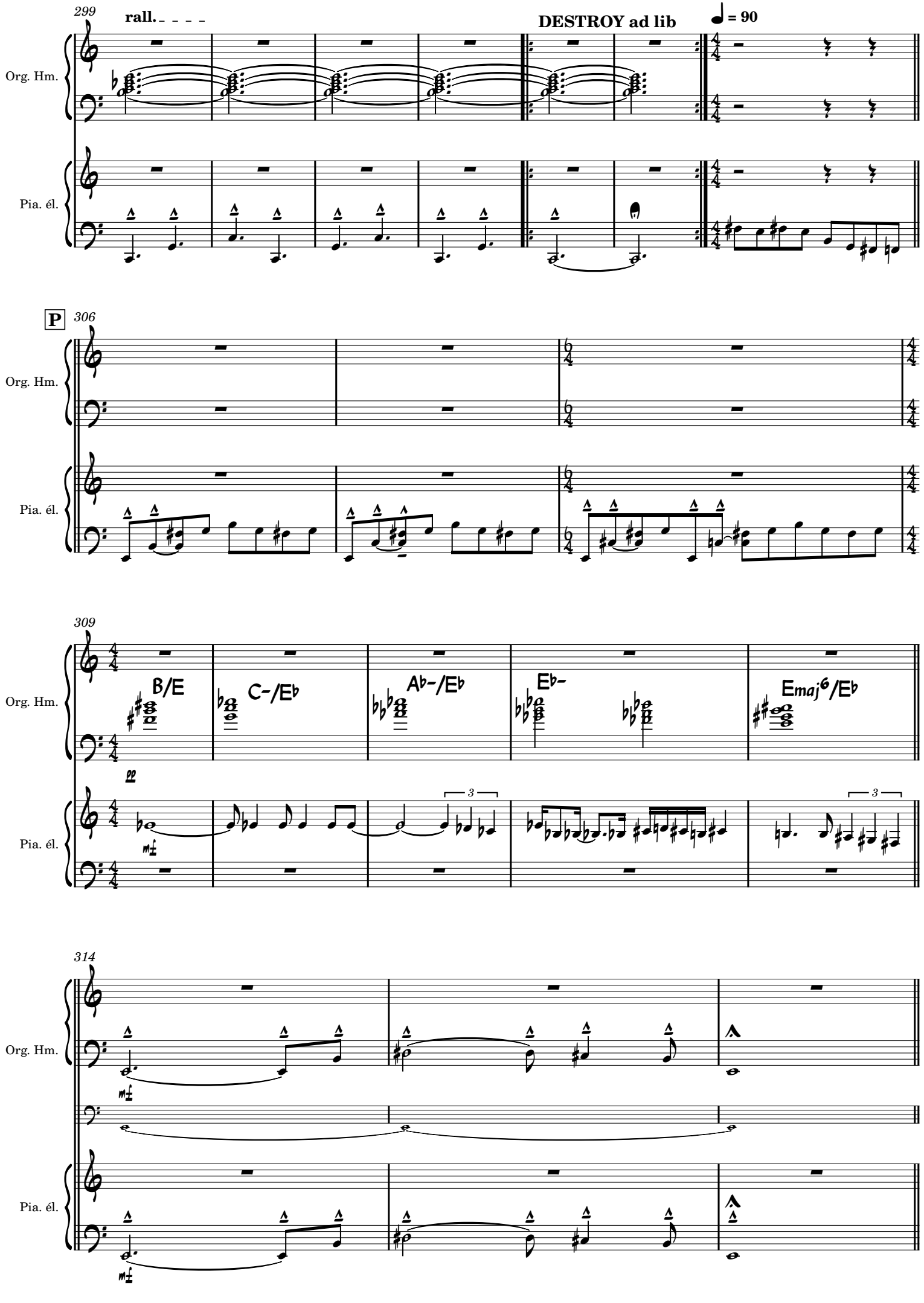

184
K
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
na
na na na
187
Na na na na na na
naaaa
na na na
Na na na na na na
You can al-most
J2
191
♩ = 108
see her e - yes
is it
me
she des-pi-ises or
you - ou
you're aw-ful-ly
A-
A-7maj
A-/G
D7
F
195
nice to me - e
and I'm
sure you can see what her gam'
i - is
she sees
G
D7
E-
G
D7
E-
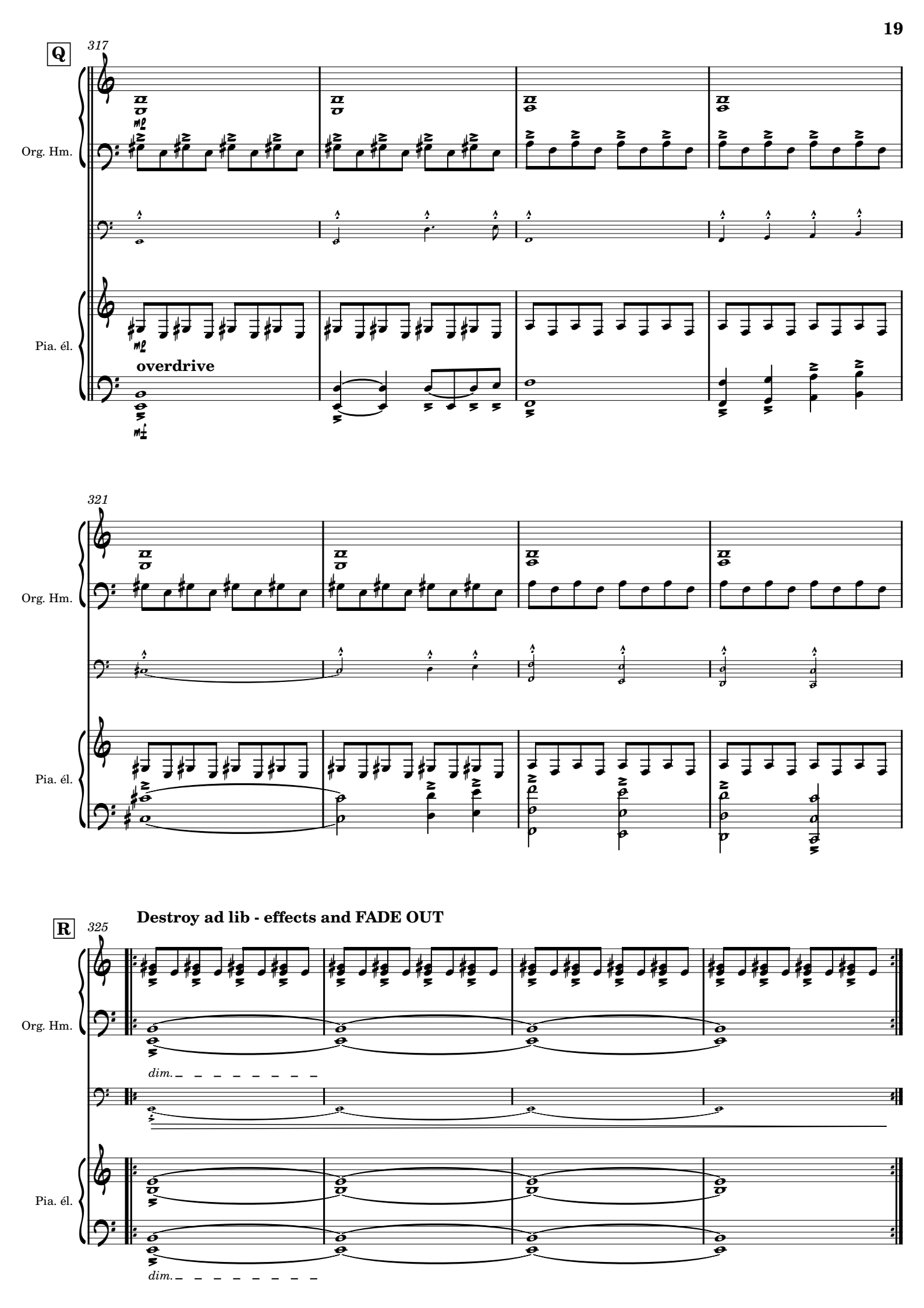

199
Org. Hm.
you in her place just as if it's a race and you're win-ning and you're win-ning She just
Pia. él.
A-
A-7maj
A-/G
D7
F
203
Org. Hm.
can't un-der-stand that for me ev'-ry-thing's just be - gin-ning un - til I get more home-sick!
spoken
Pia. él.
G
D7
E-
G
D7
E-
207
Org. Hm.
But be - fore this fee-ling di - es Re -
Pia. él.
211
Org. Hm.
-mem - ber How dis - tance tell us
Pia. él.


L
213
Third : 8'56
♩ = 116
lie
ies
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
mf
pp
217
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
221
accel.
Org. Hm.
mf
Pia. él.
3
M
225
♩ = 132
dist ort
♩ = 92
Org. Hm.
dist ort
Pia. él.


230
♩ = 84
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
N
236
♩ = 228 FAST JAZZ WALTZ
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
N1
240
SOLO AD LIB FAST WALTZ
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
248
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
256
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.


264
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
272
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
280
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
E-9
C-7maj
Third : 12'56 - ON CUE
O
287
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
G
G
G
G
291
rall.
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.


299
rall.
DESTROY ad lib
♩ = 90
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
P
306
309
B/E
C-/Eb
Ab-/Eb
Eb-
Emaj6/Eb
314


Q
317
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
overdrive
321
Org. Hm.
Pia. él.
R
325
Destroy ad lib - effects and FADE OUT
Org. Hm.
dim.
Pia. él.
dim.

Robert Wyatt

SEA SONG

Arranged by Stefano Giannotti for ORCHESTRA SMS

2020

The orchestra:

Solo female voice
4 voices

2 flutes
Bb clarinet
violin

solo guitar
guitar ensemble (4-5)
guitar-banjo

piano
keyboards (organ or synth)

bass guitar
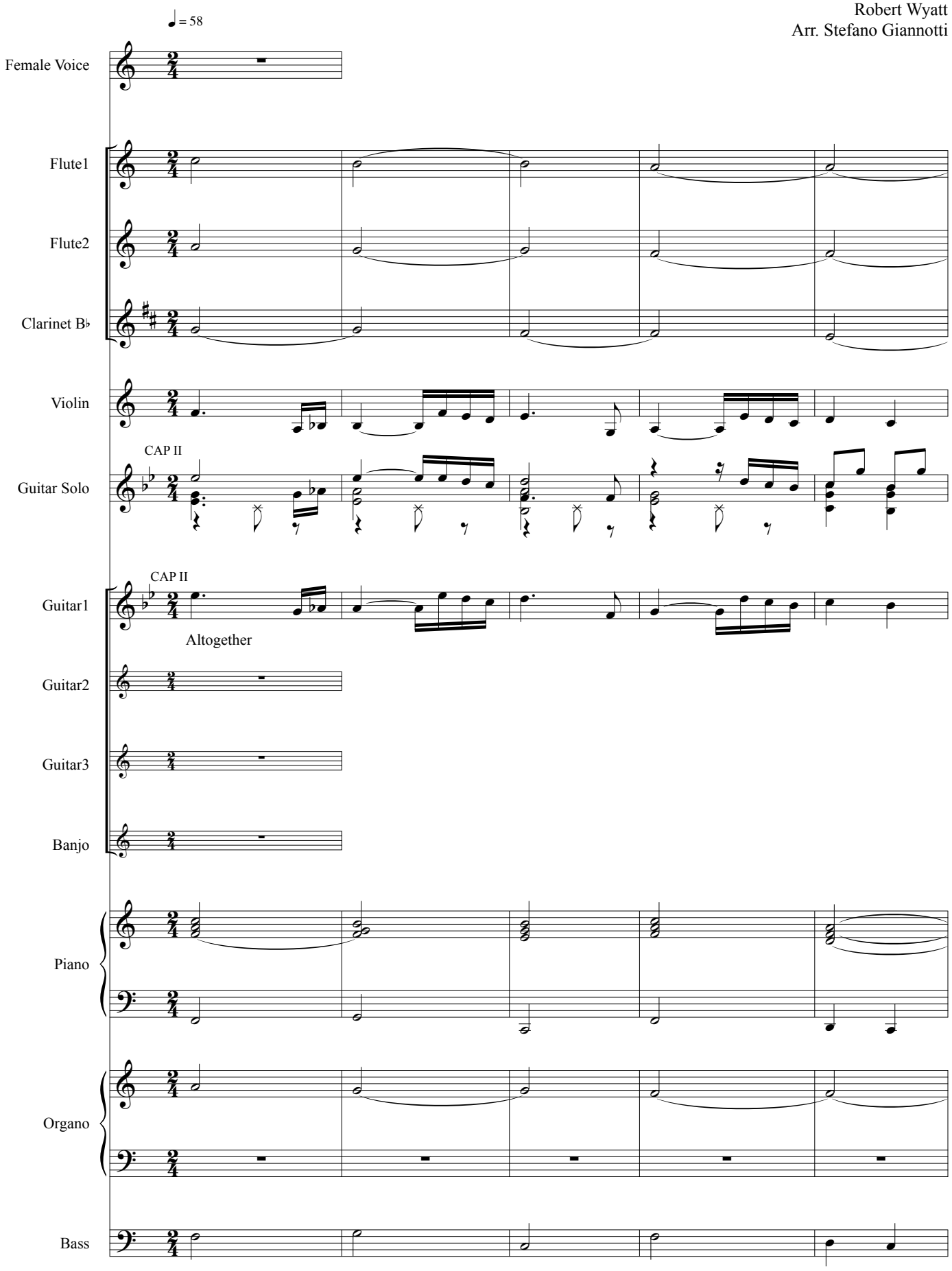
The guitar part can be played a bit more freely than written, but always mantaining a certain discipline (without overdoing it).
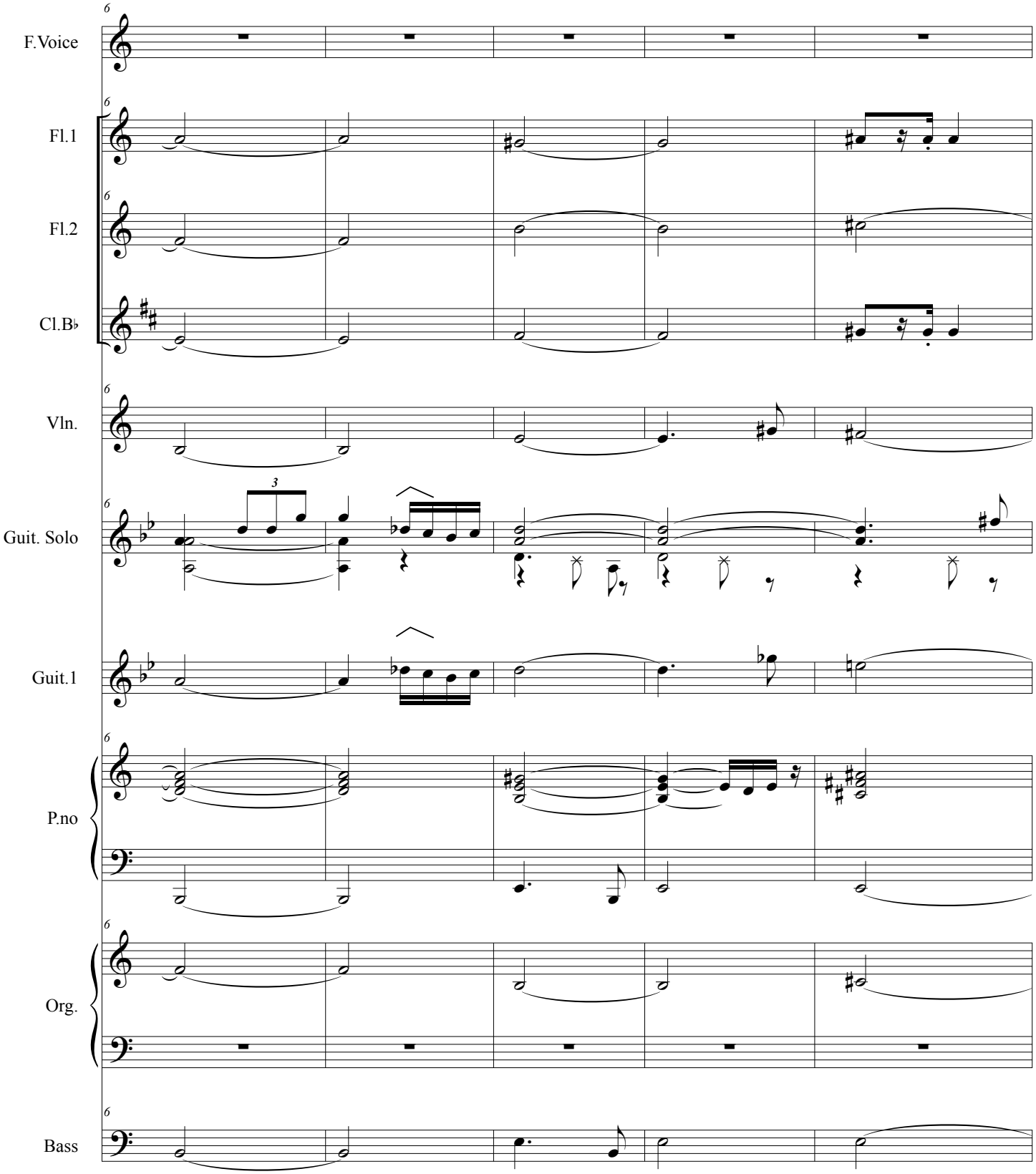
The percussive sound marked by the note indicated with x is produced with the thumb of the right hand on the sunboard of the guitar.
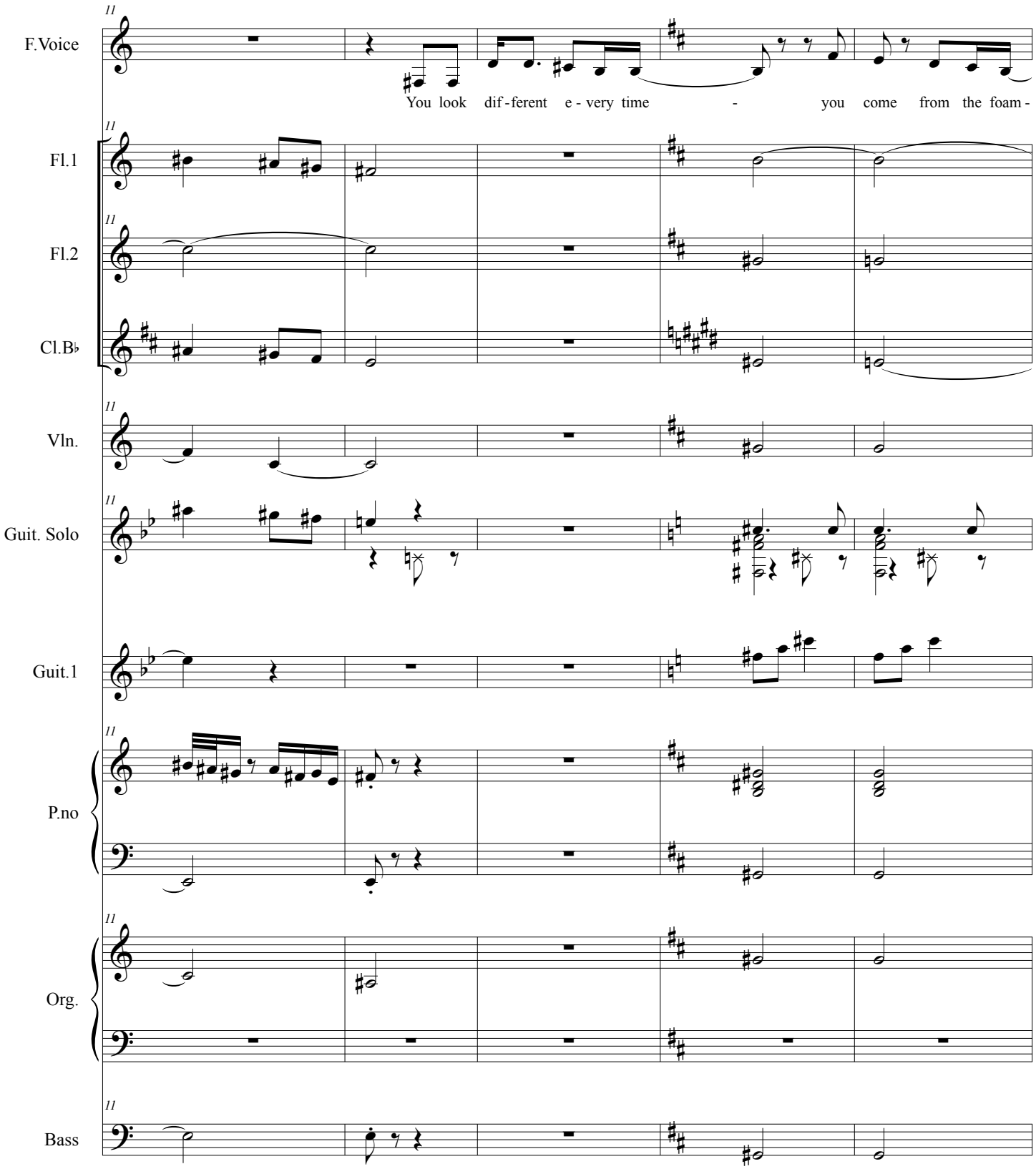
In the central section, from measure 48, Guitar1 improvises, but many different solutions can be imagined, including a dialogue between the guitar and the piano, or with the banjo...
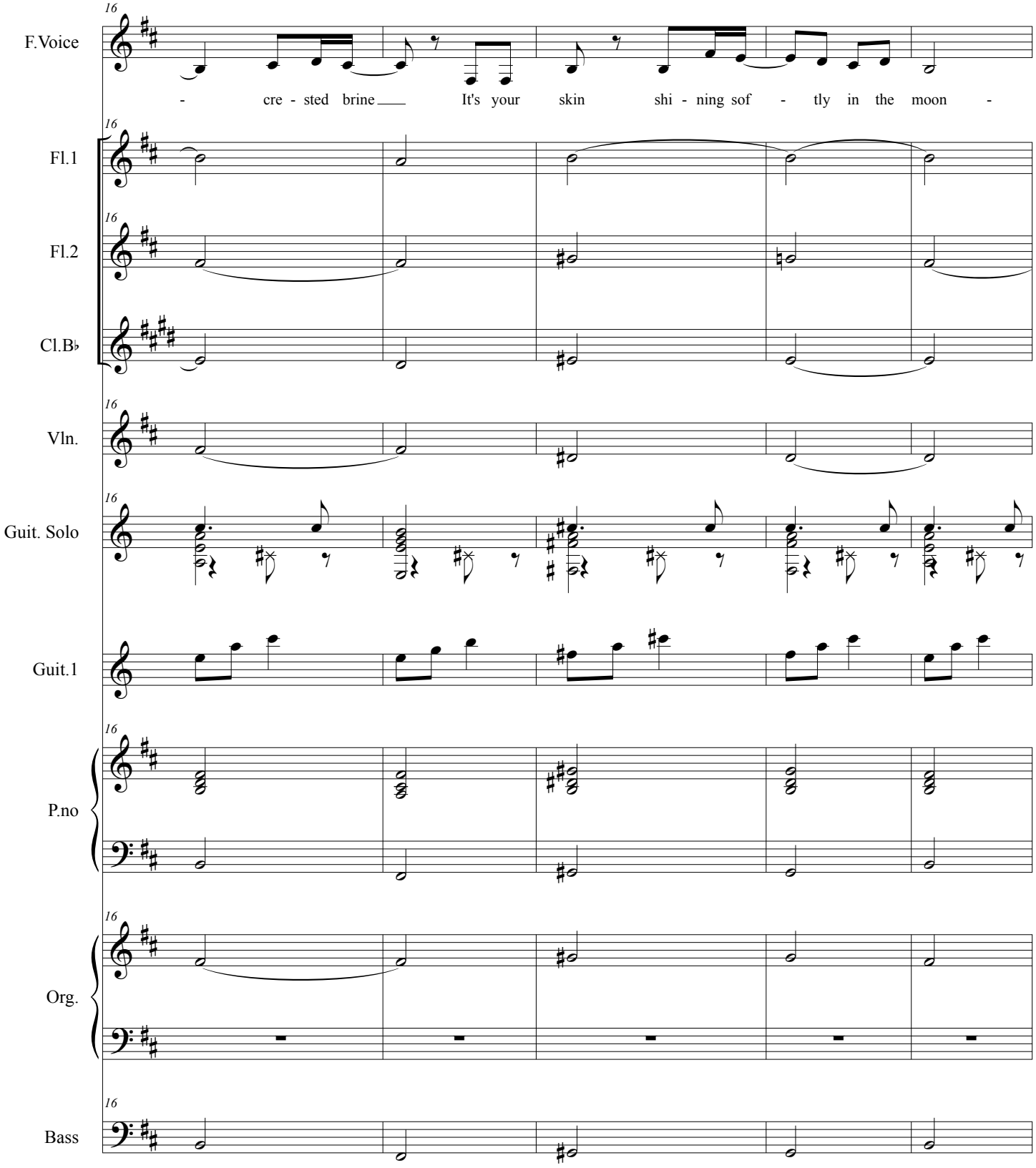
SEA SONG
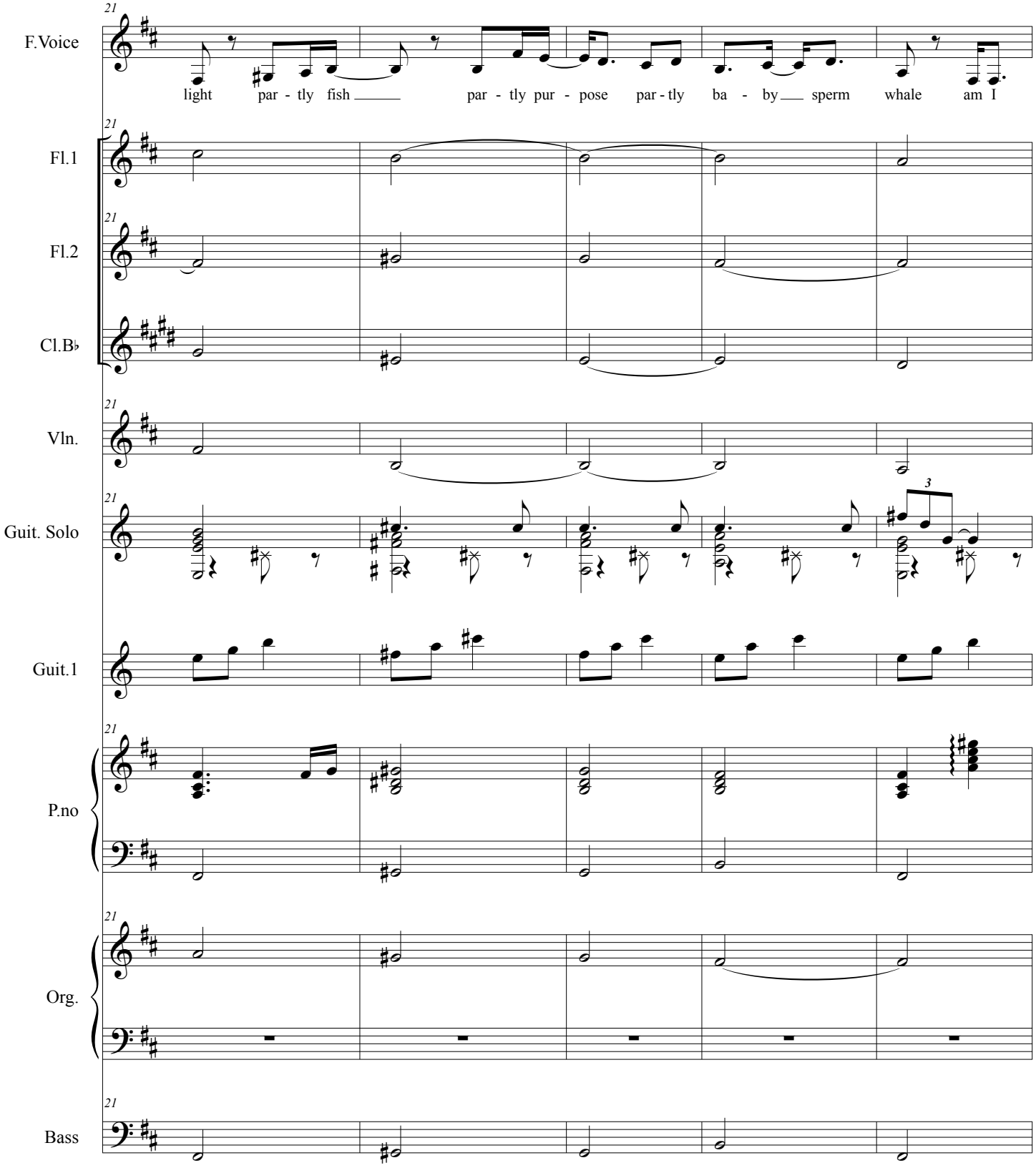
Robert Wyatt
Arr. Stefano Giannotti
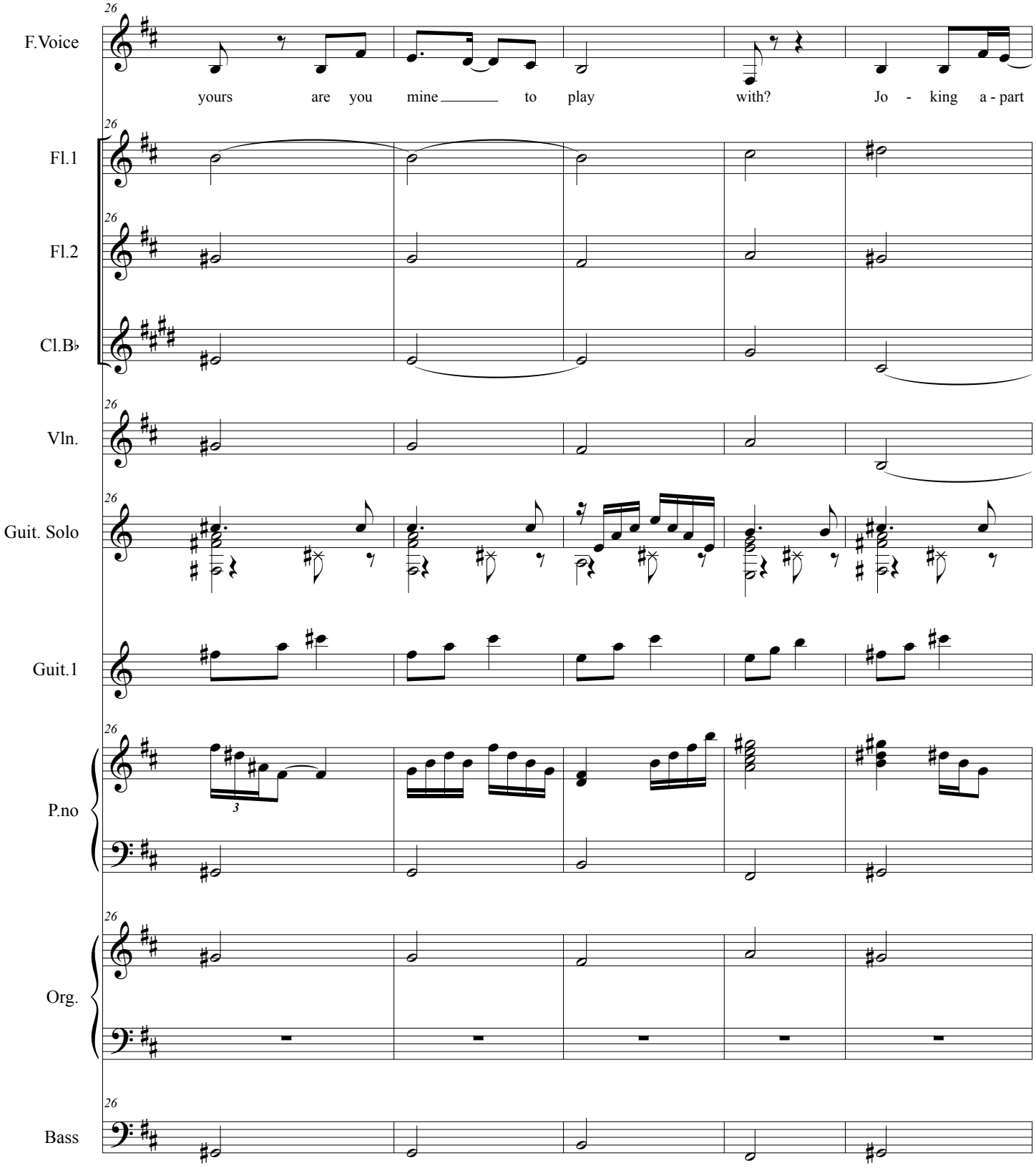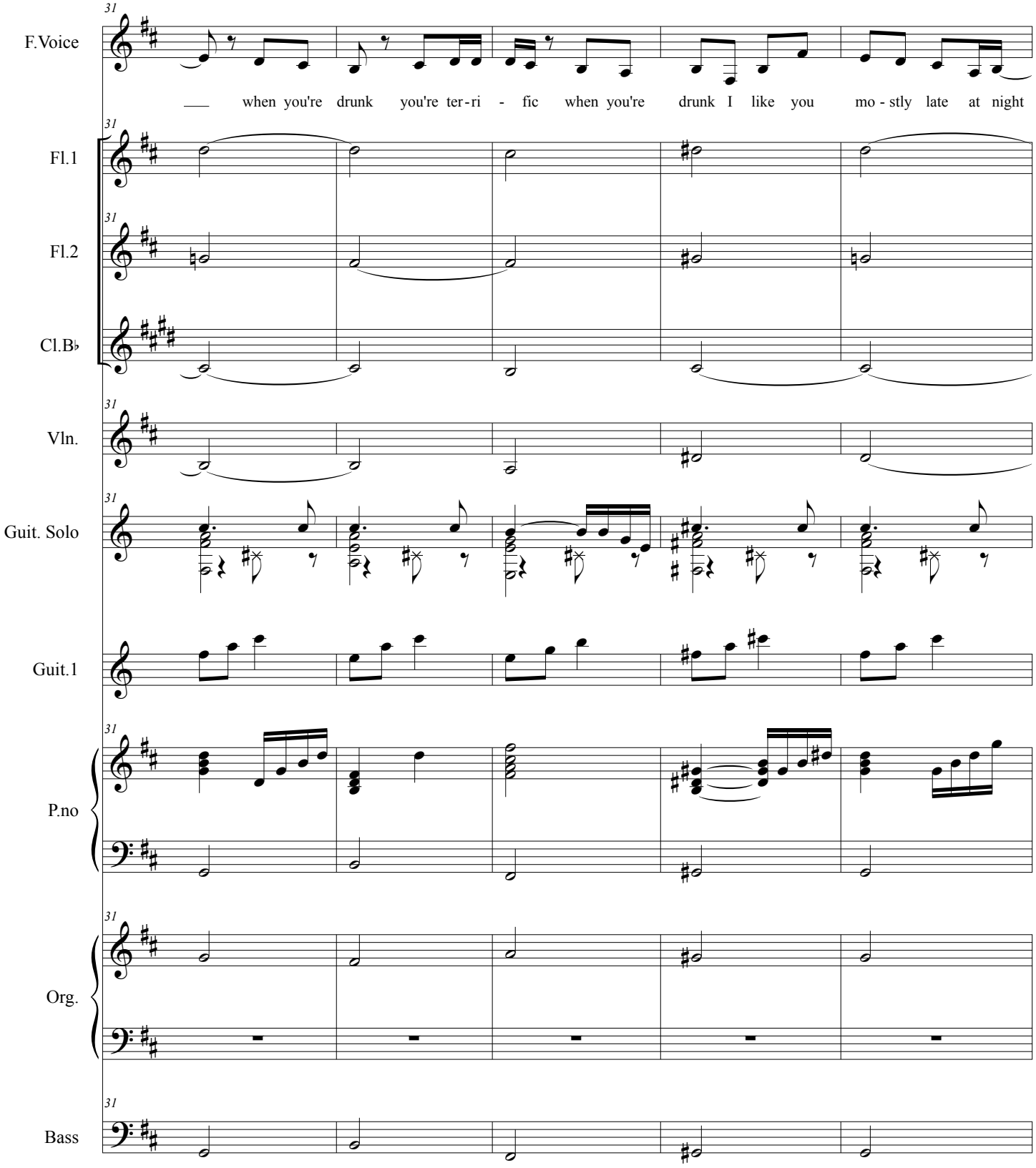



F.Voice
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
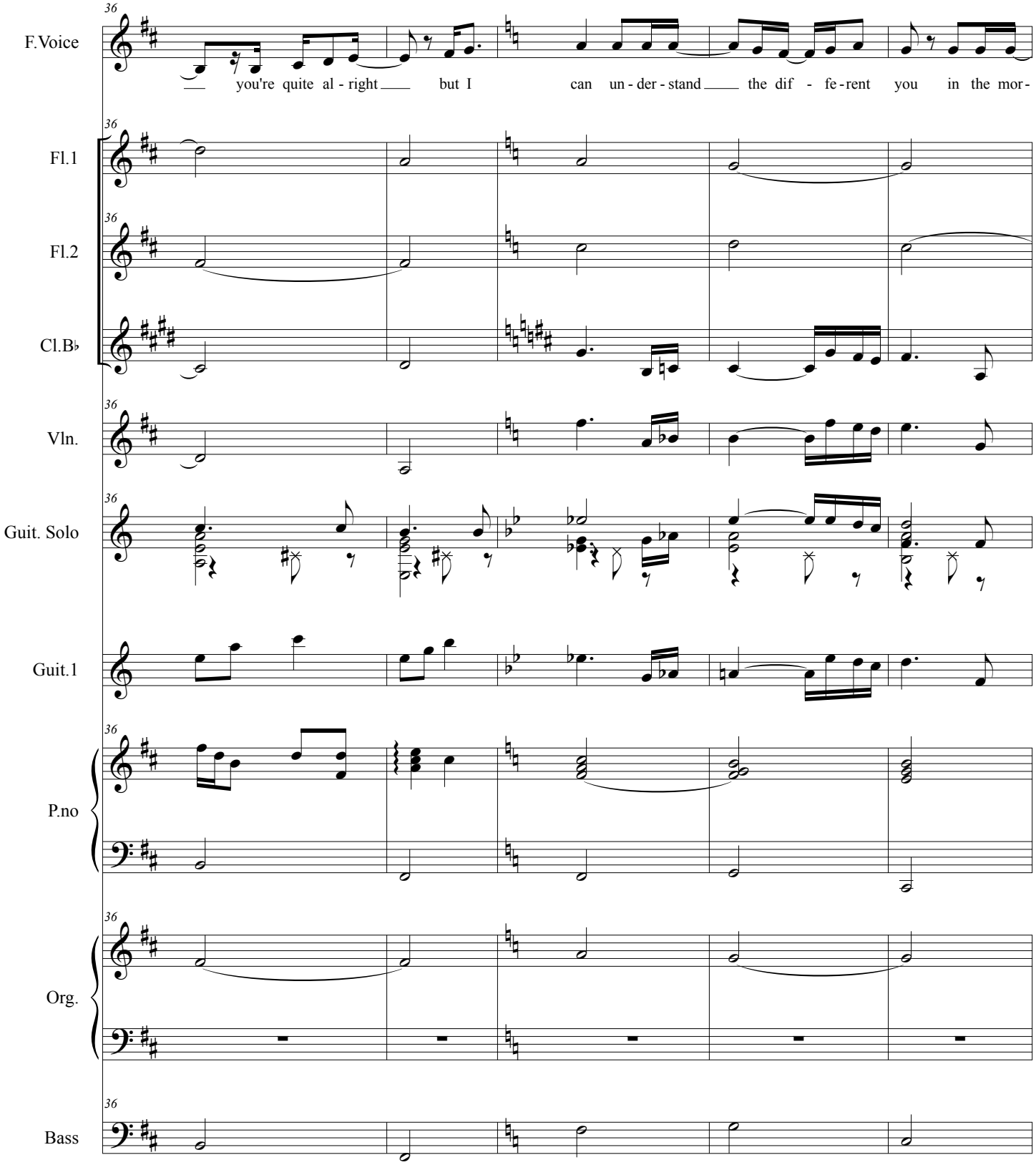

F.Voice
You look dif-ferent e-very time - you come from the foam-
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
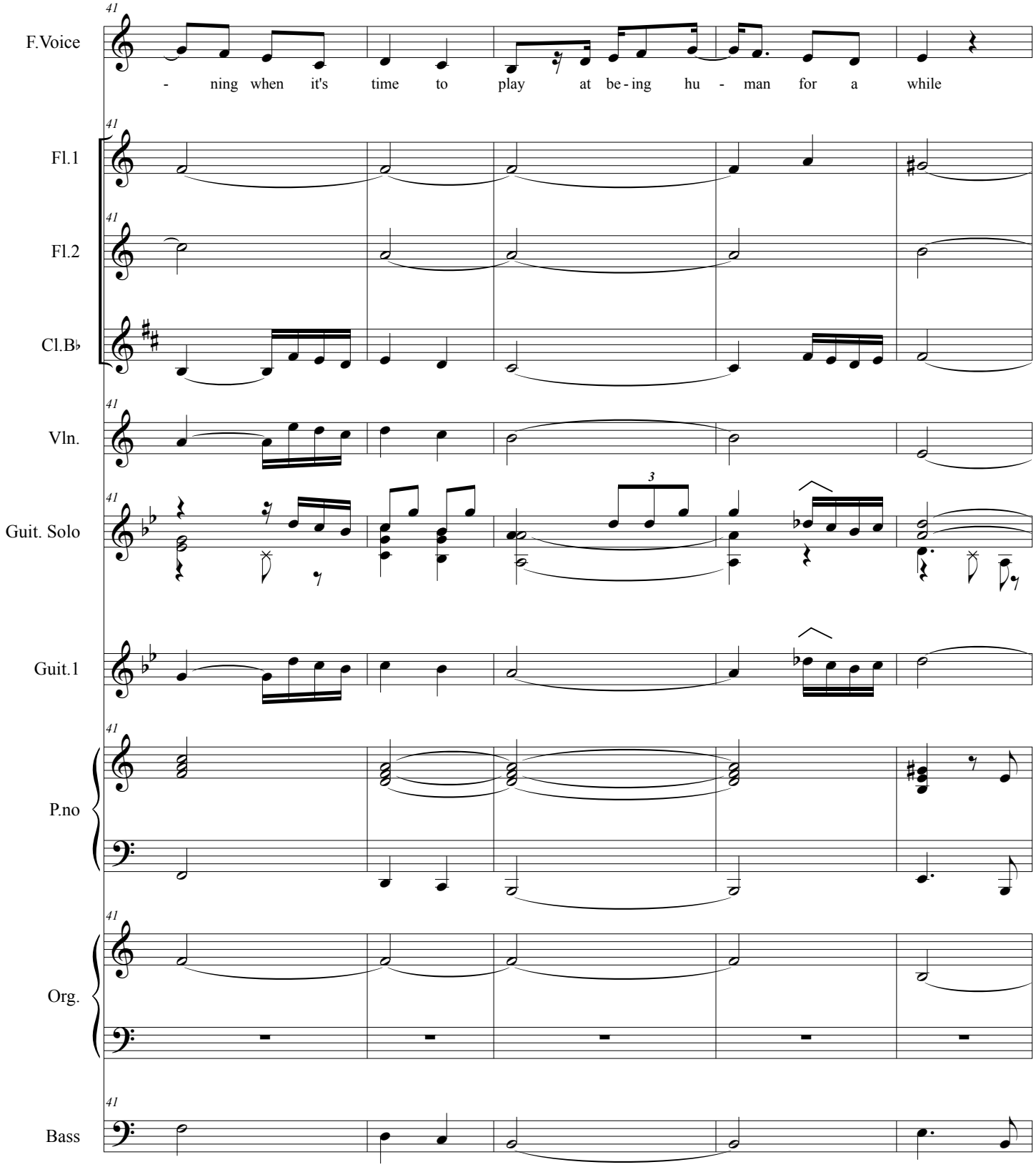

F.Voice
- cre - sted brine It's your skin shi - ning sof - tly in the moon -
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
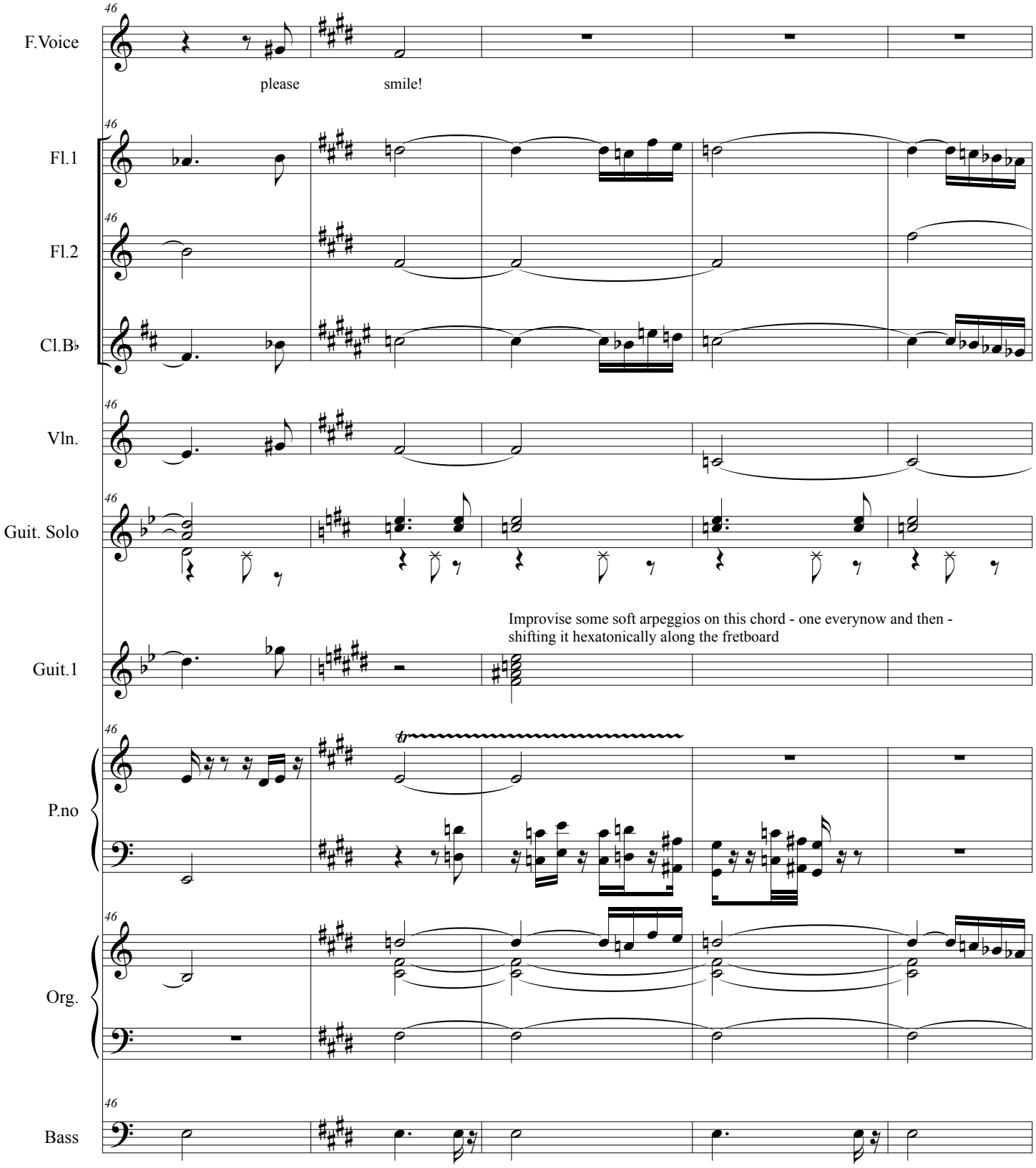

21
F.Voice
light par - tly fish par - tly pur - pose par - tly ba - by sperm whale am I
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
3
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
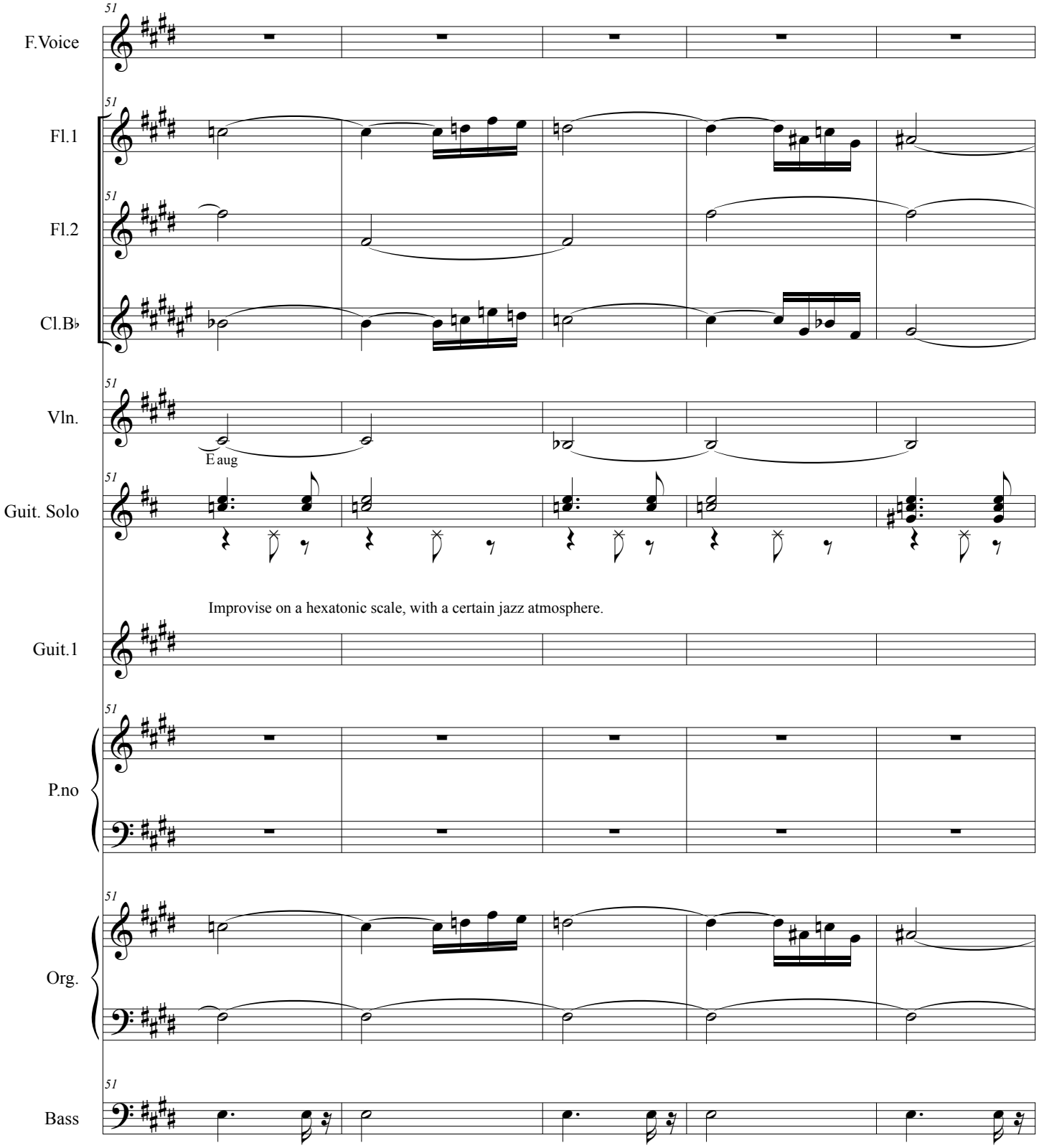

26
F.Voice
yours are you mine to play with? Jo - king a - part
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
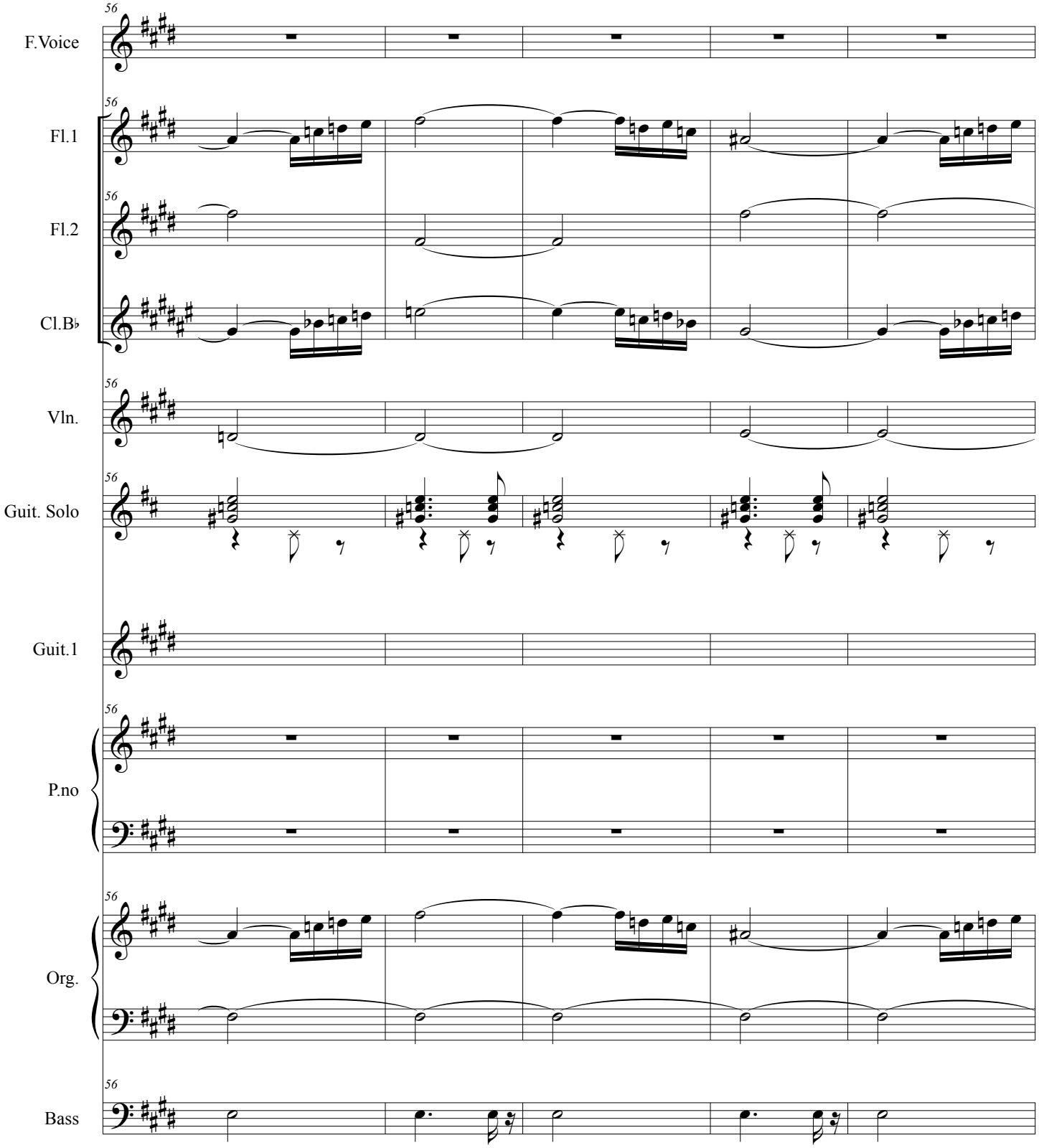

31
F.Voice
___ when you're drunk you're ter-ri - fic when you're drunk I like you mo - stly late at night
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
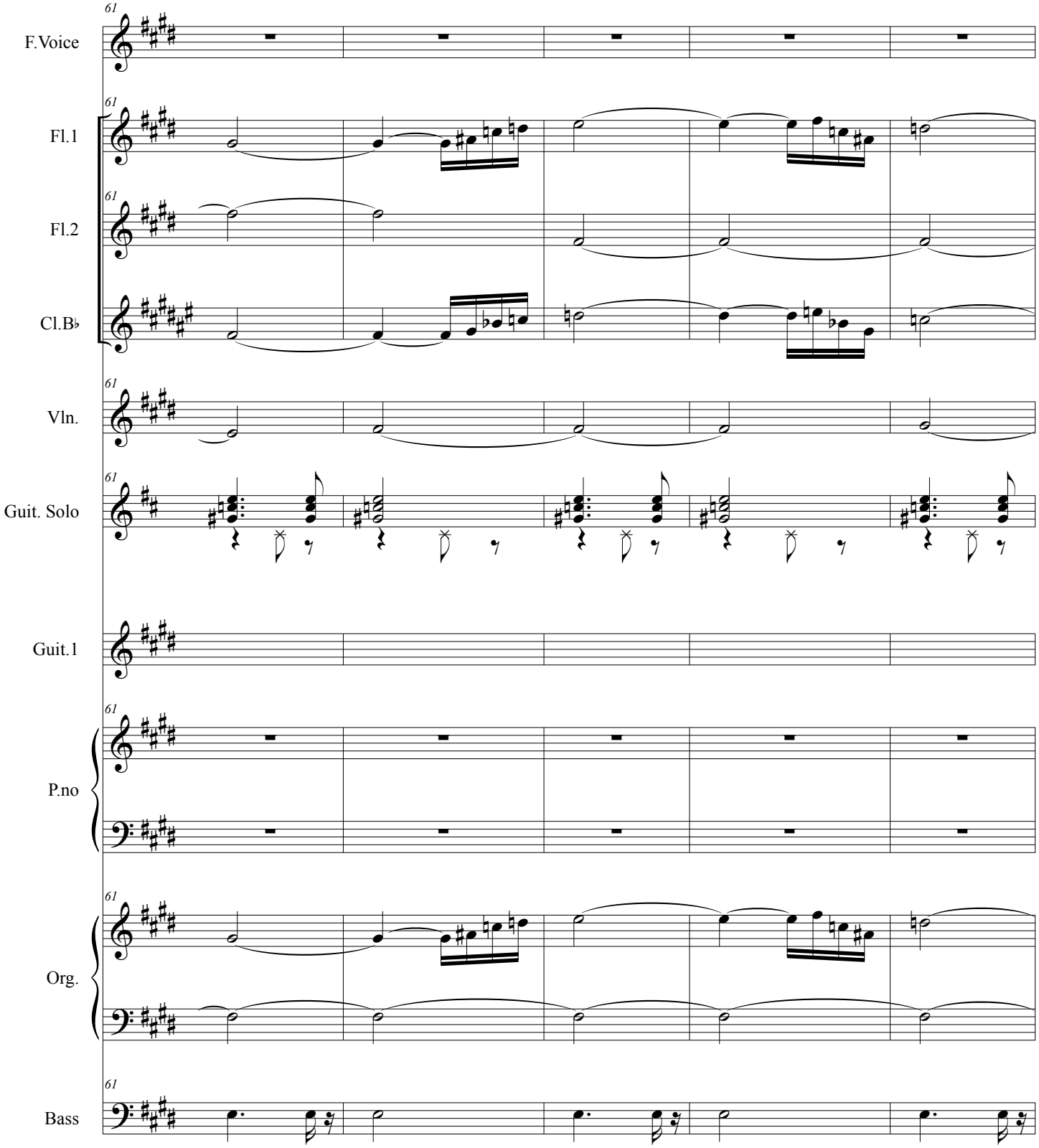

36
F.Voice
you're quite al - right but I can un - der - stand the dif - fe - rent you in the mor -
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
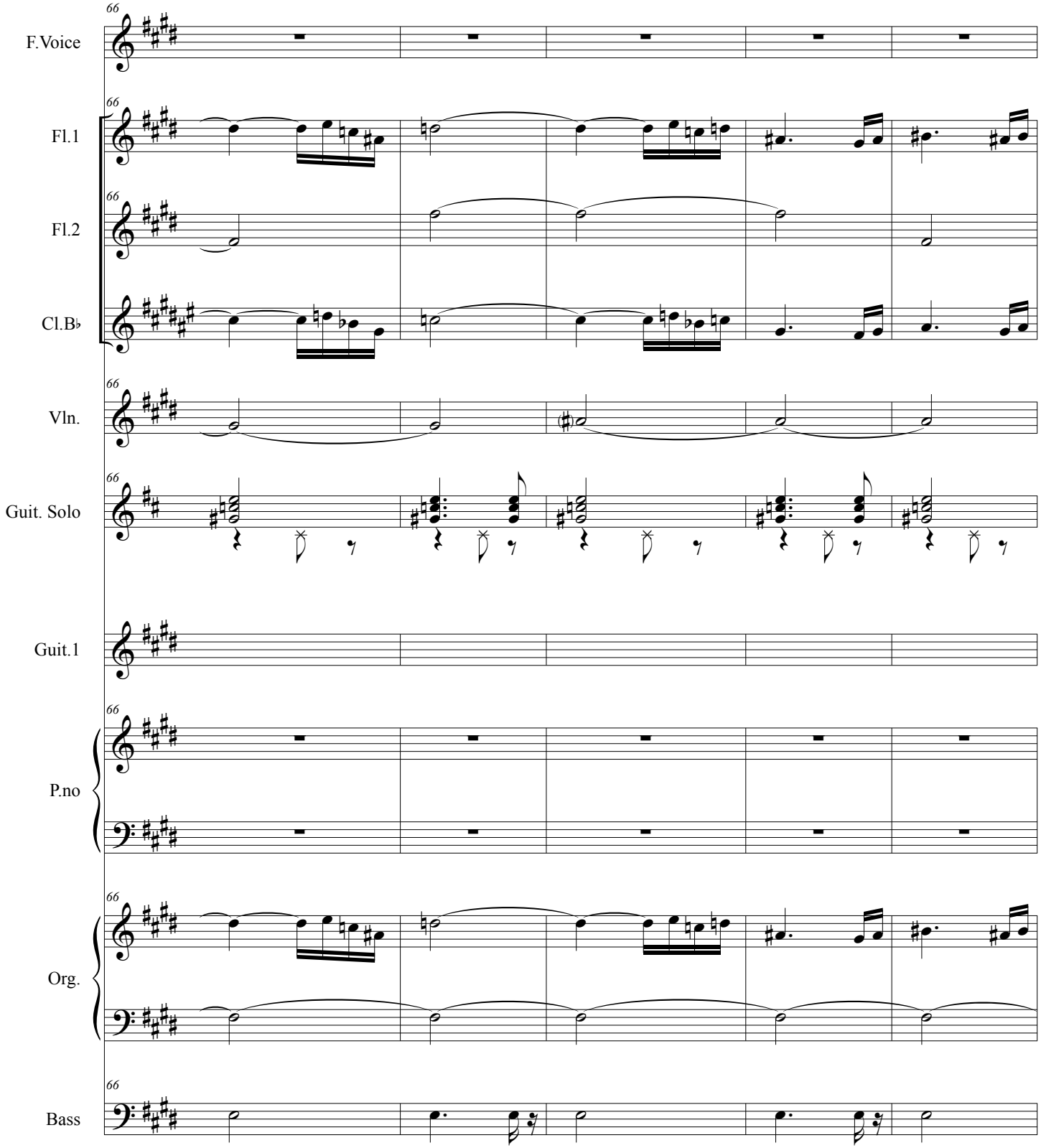

41
F.Voice
- ning when it's time to play at be - ing hu - man for a while
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
3
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
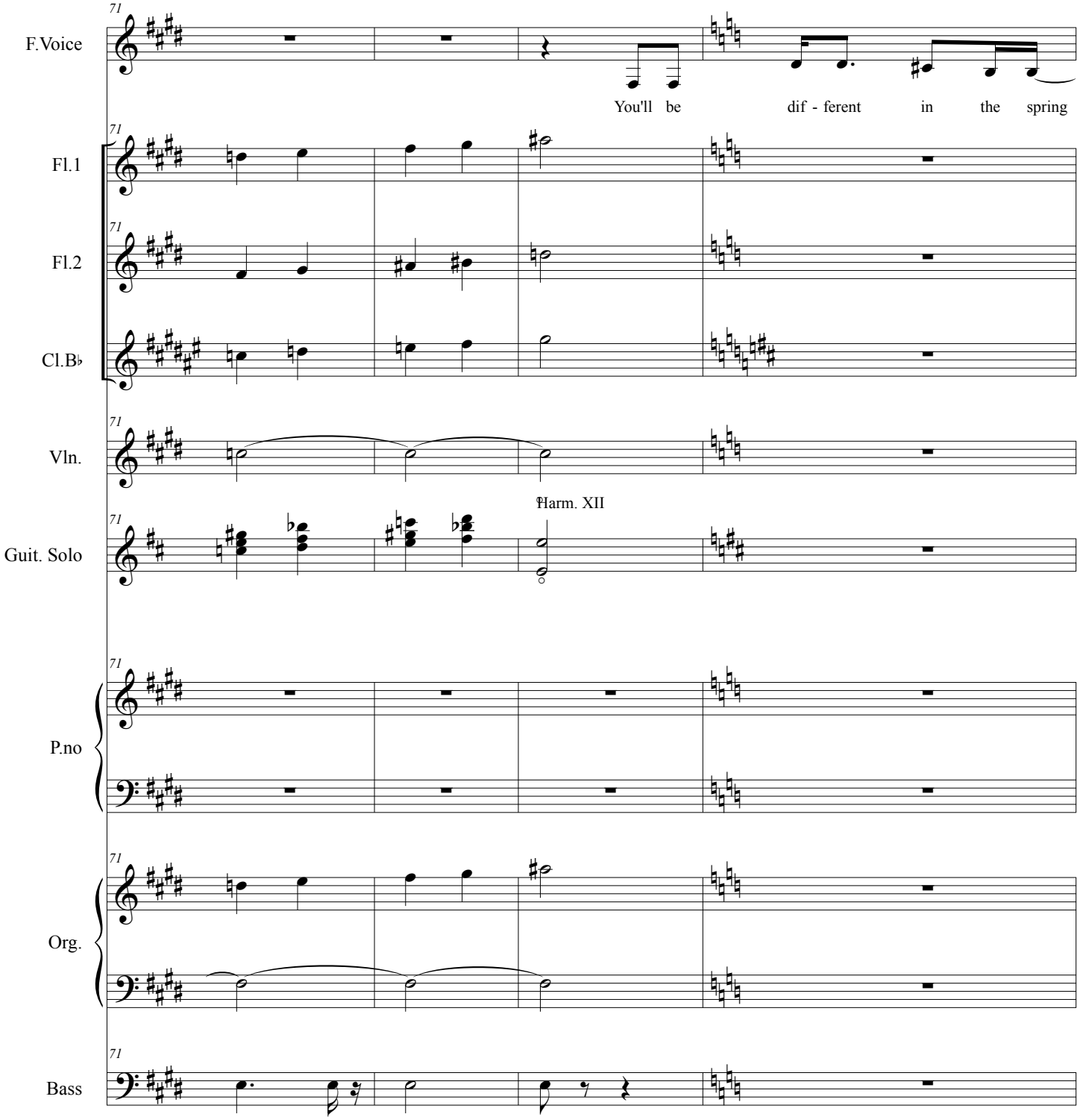

46
F.Voice
please
smile!
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Improvise some soft arpeggios on this chord - one everynow and then - shifting it hexatonically along the fretboard
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
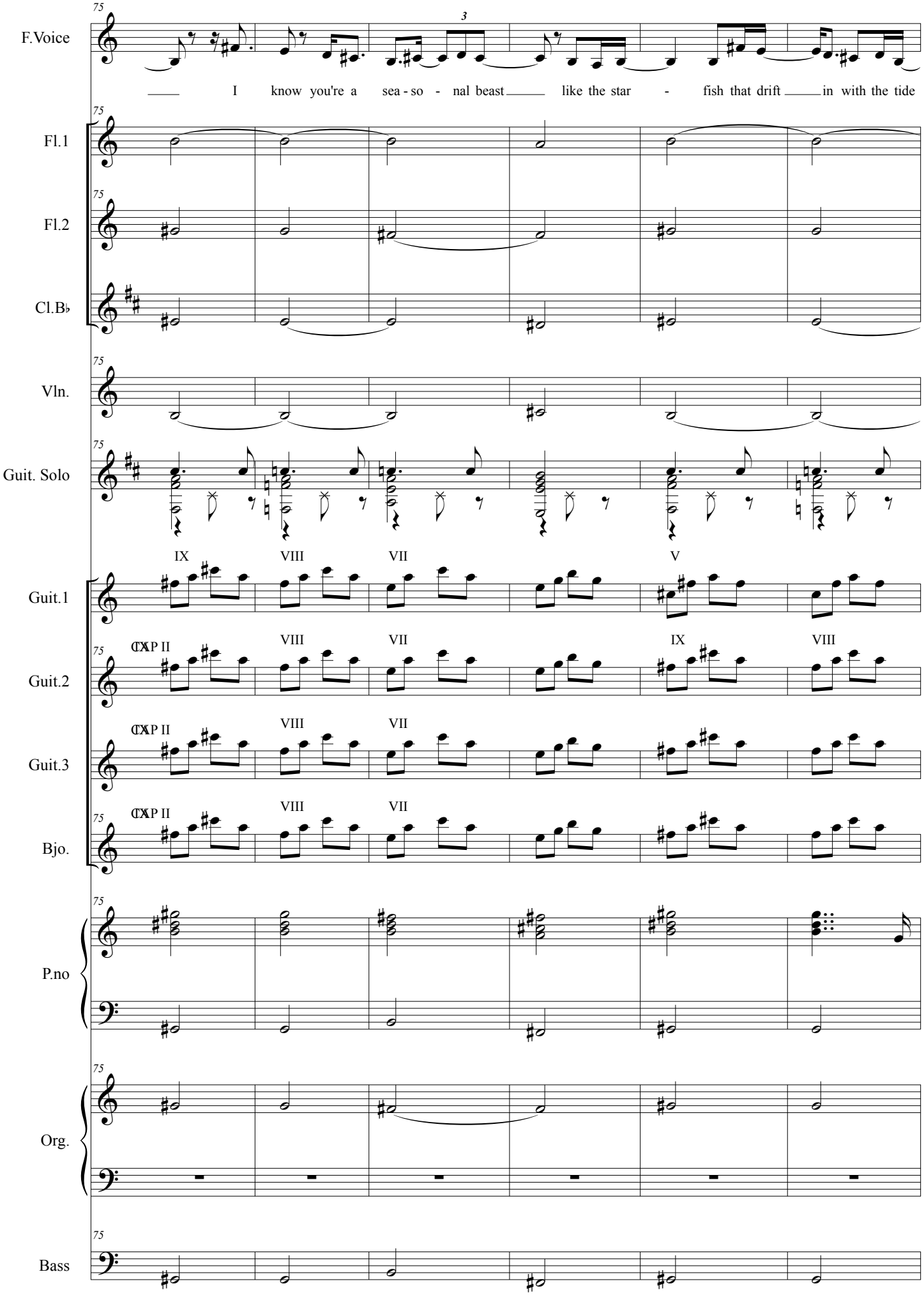

51
F.Voice
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
E aug
Guit. Solo
Improvise on a hexatonic scale, with a certain jazz atmosphere.
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
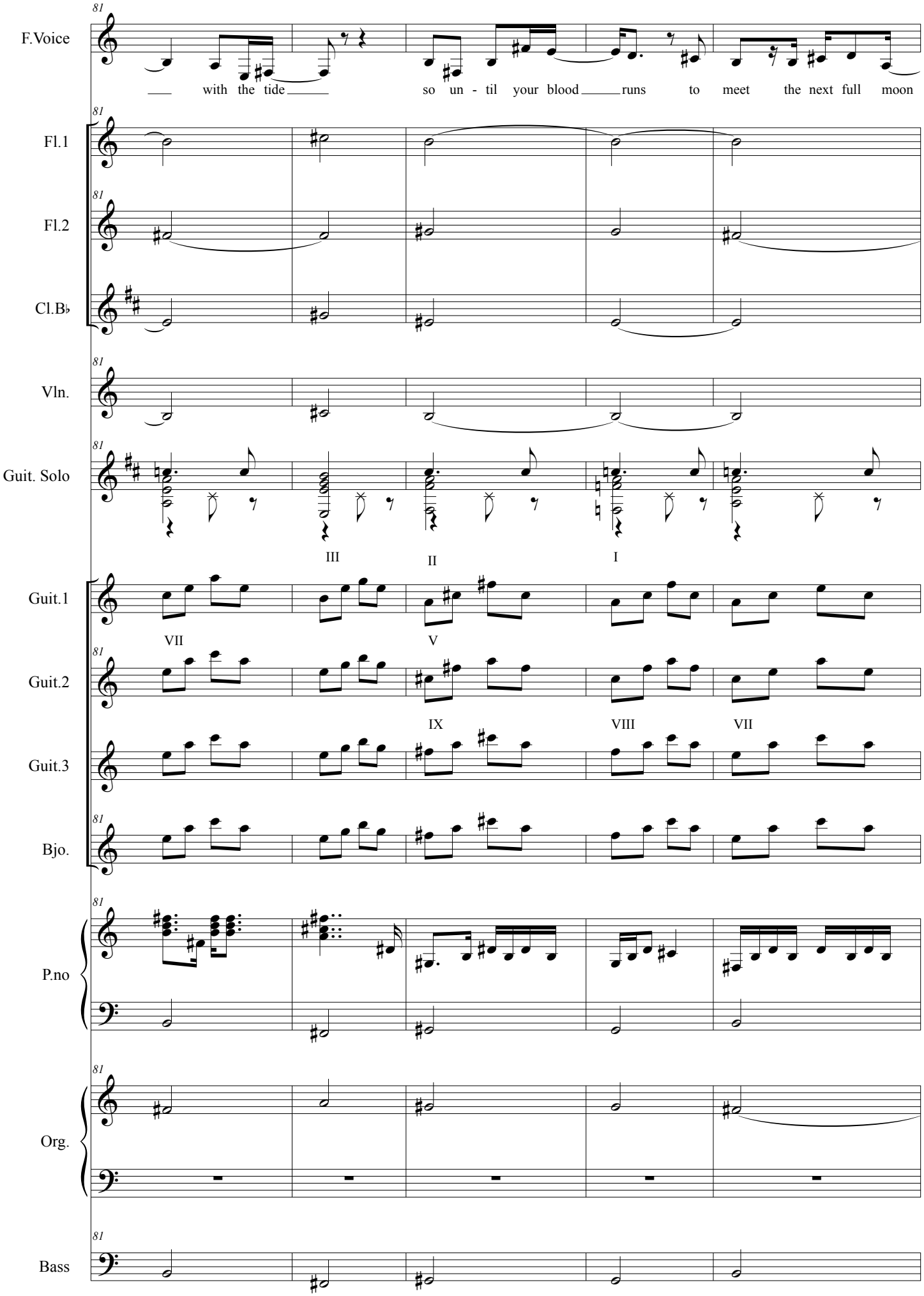

56
F.Voice
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
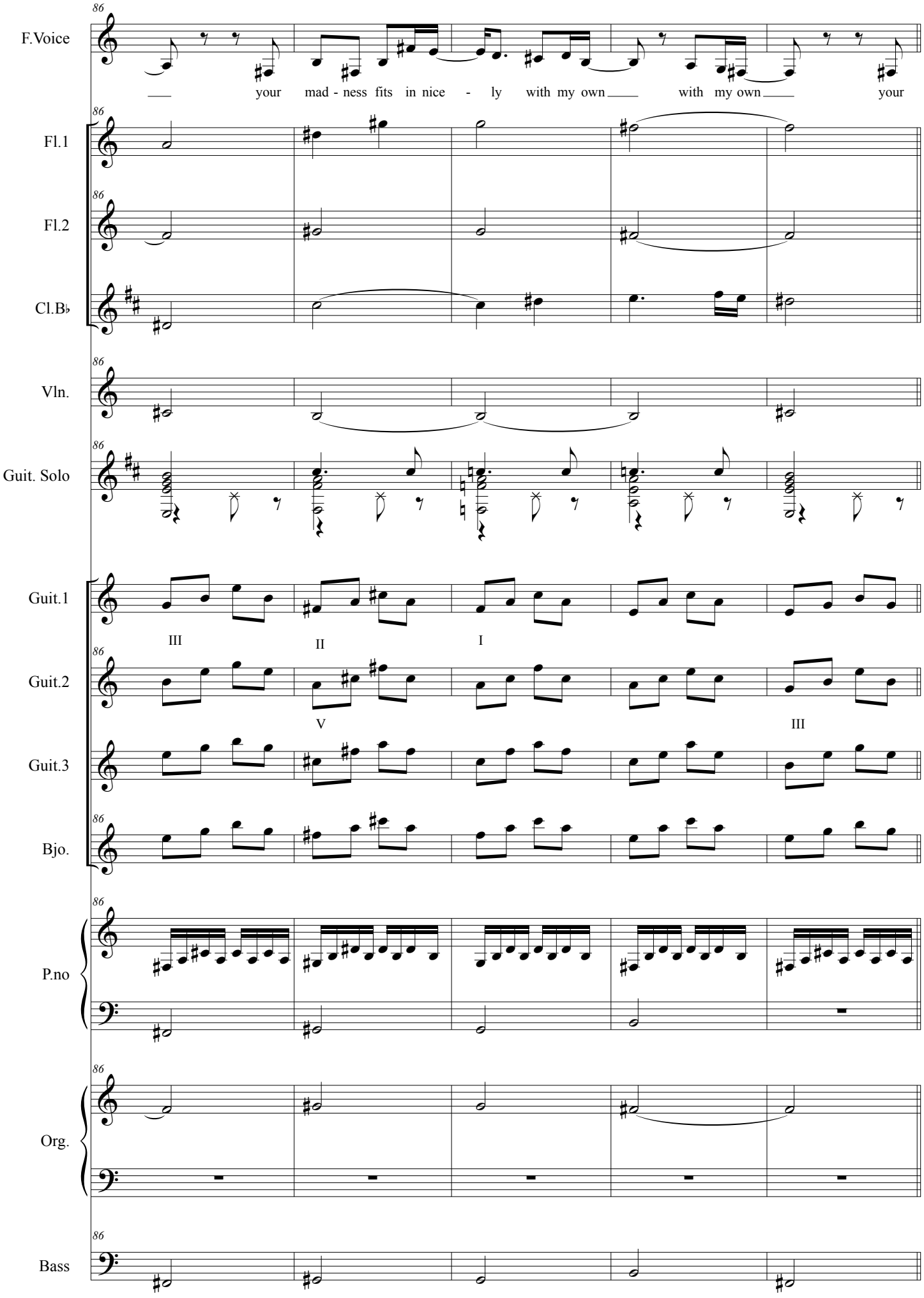

61
F.Voice
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
P.no
Org.
Bass
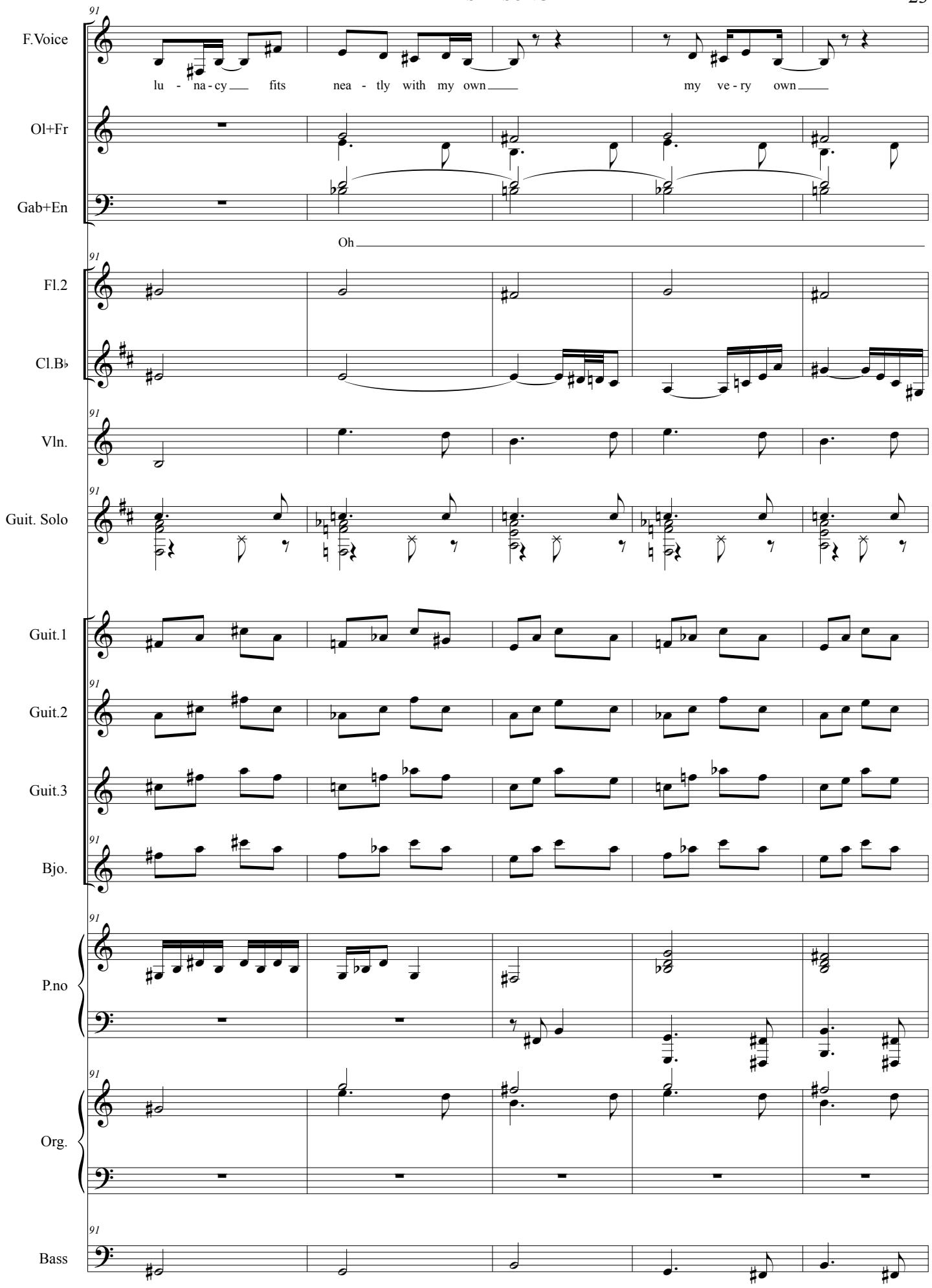

66
F.Voice
66
Fl.1
66
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
66
Vln.
66
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
66
P.no
66
Org.
66
Bass
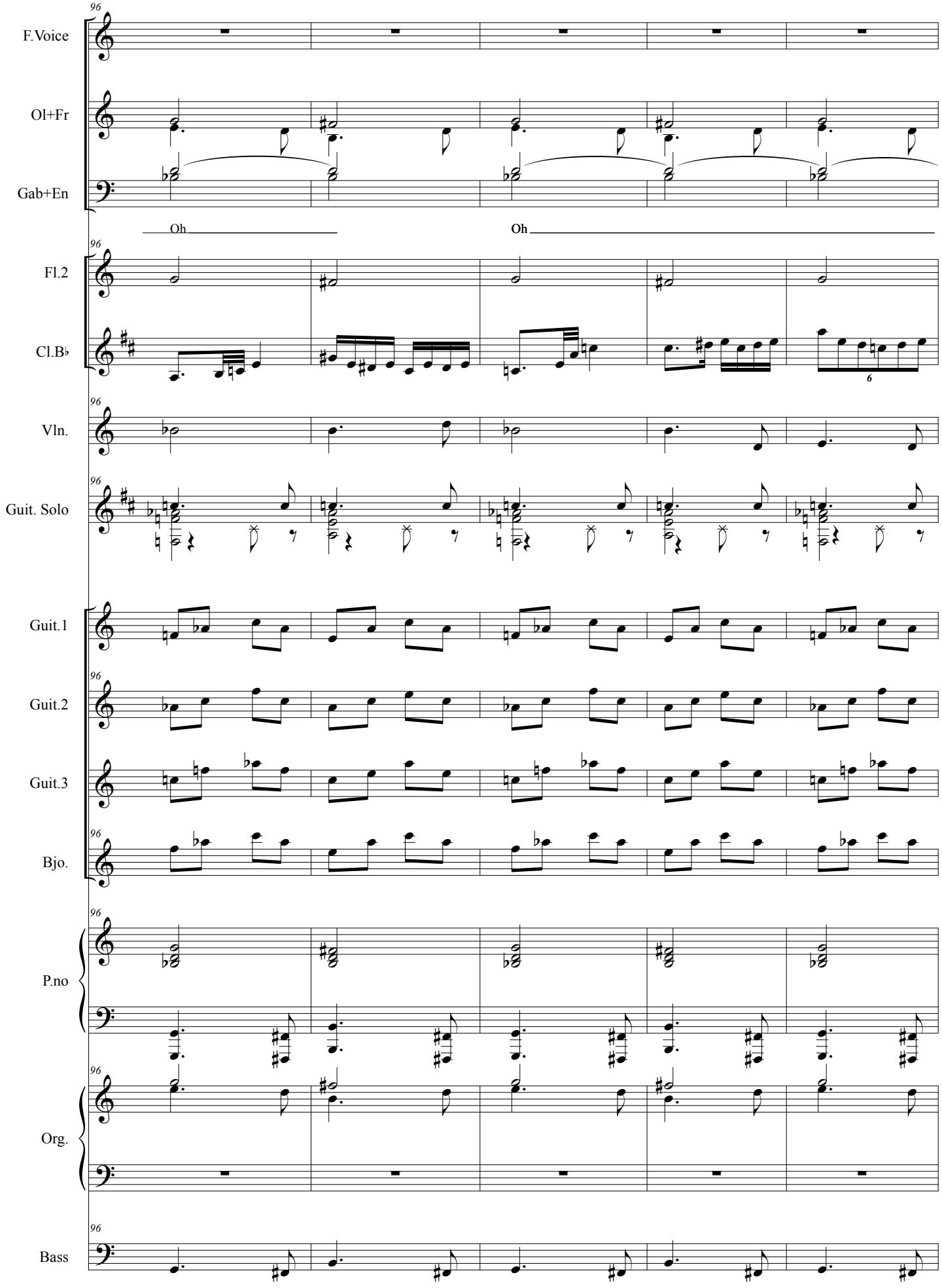

71
F.Voice
You'll be dif - ferent in the spring
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Harm. XII
Guit. Solo
P.no
Org.
Bass
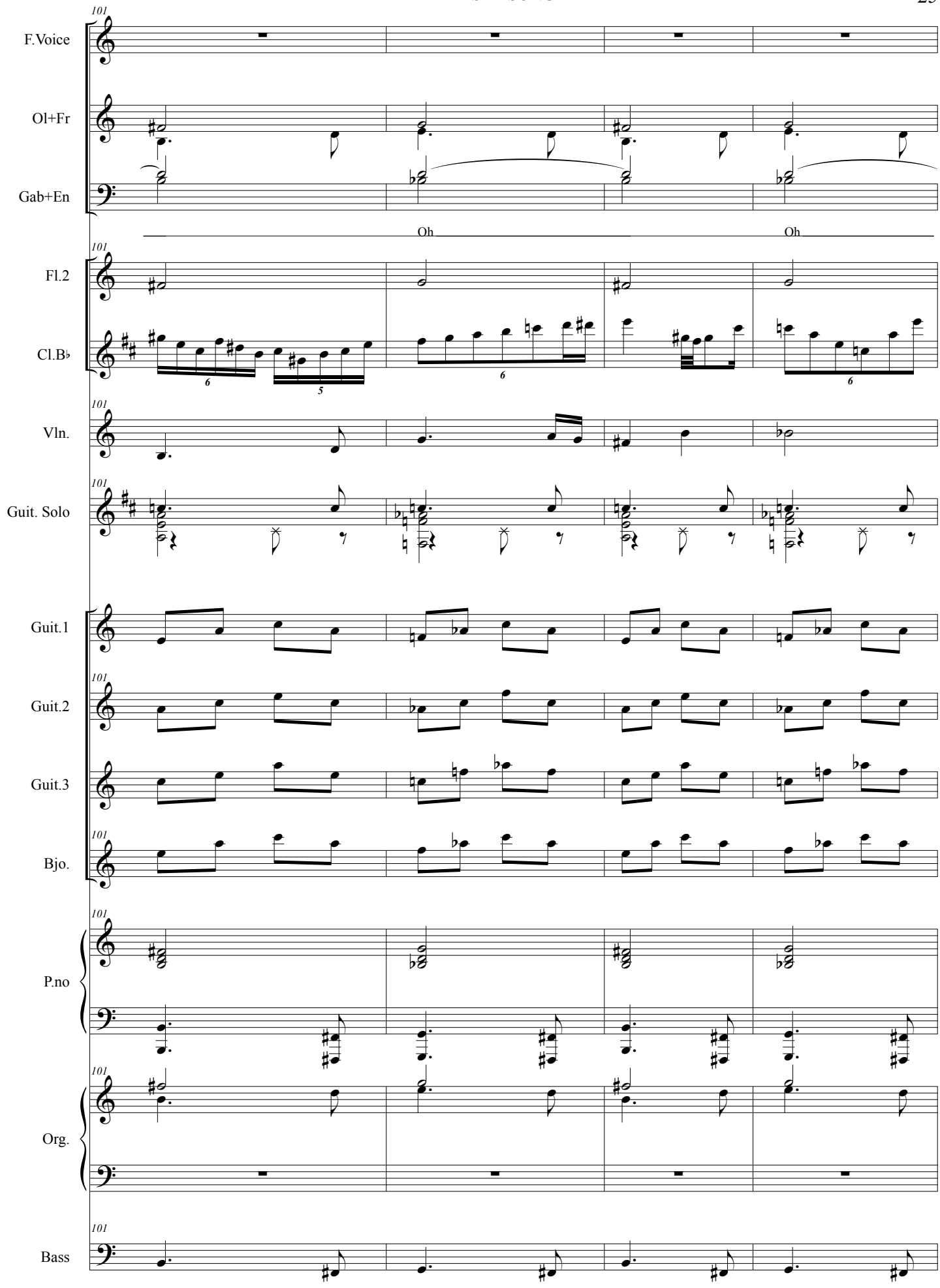

F.Voice
I know you're a sea - so - nal beast like the star - fish that drift in with the tide
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
IX VIII VII V
Guit.1
Guit.2
Guit.3
Bjo.
EXP II VIII VII IX VIII
P.no
Org.
Bass
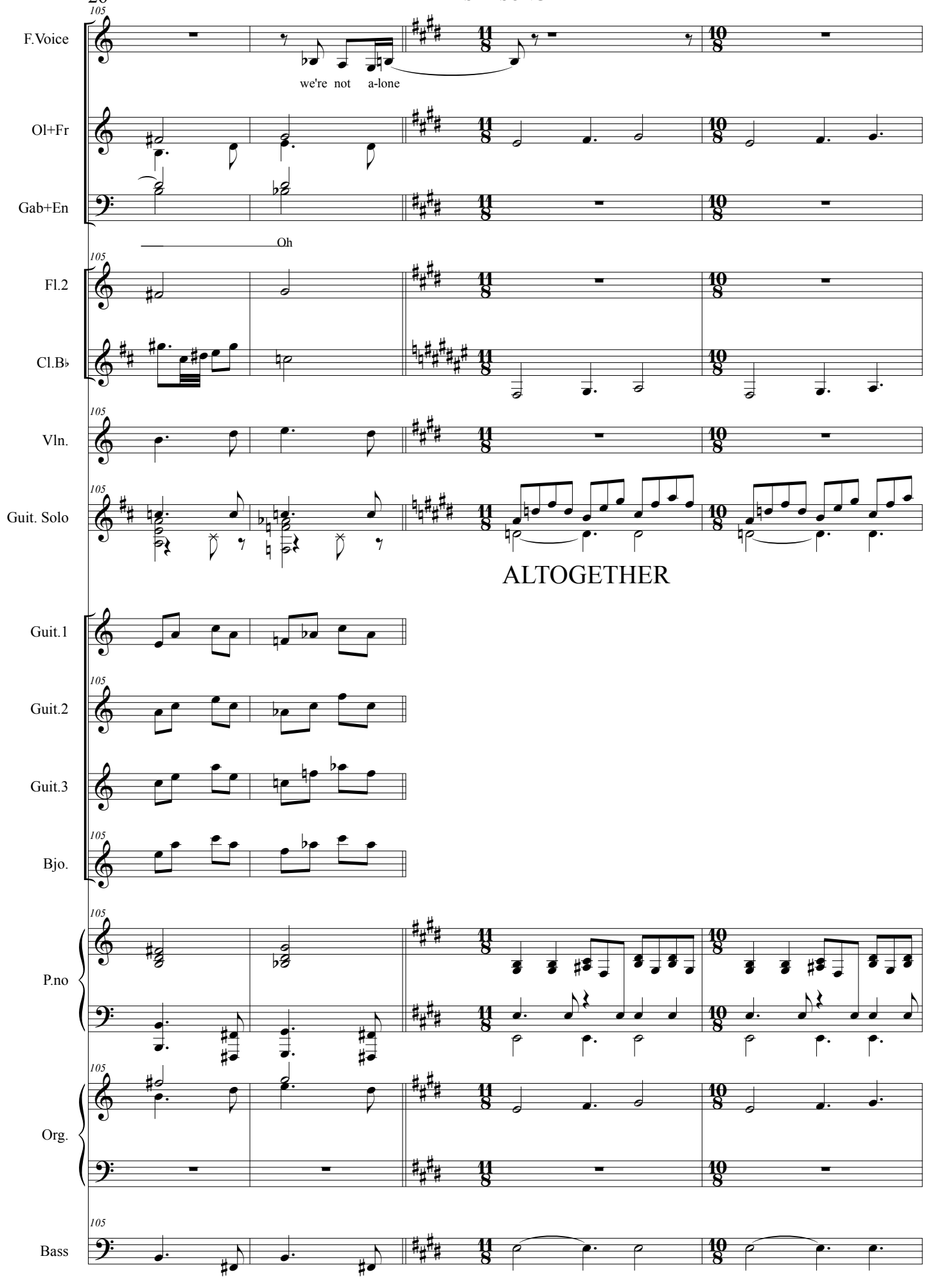

F.Voice
with the tide
so un - til your blood runs to meet the next full moon
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
III
II
I
Guit.1
VII
V
Guit.2
IX
VIII
VII
Guit.3
Bjo.
P.no
Org.
Bass
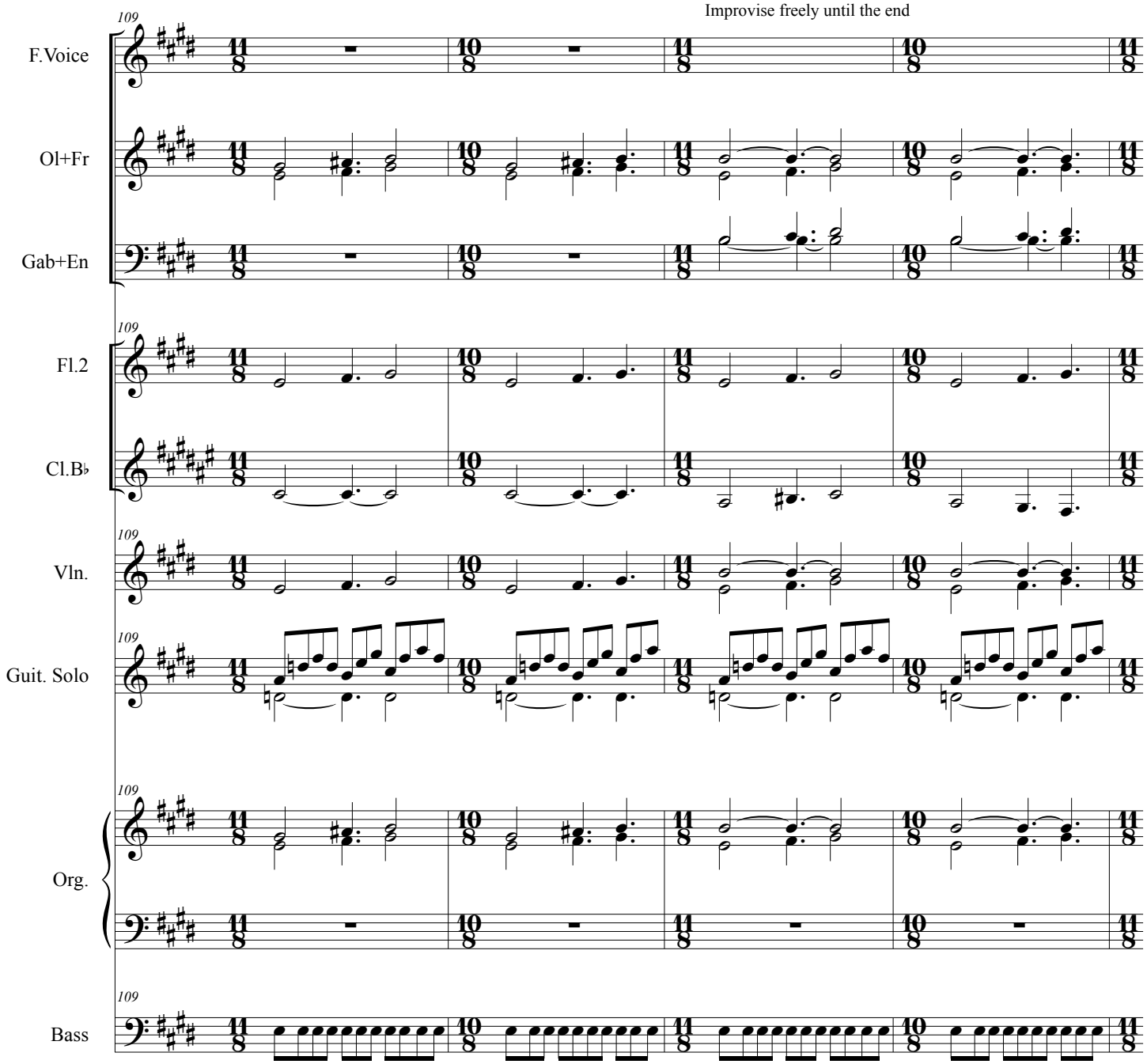

F.Voice
your mad - ness fits in nice - ly with my own with my own your
Fl.1
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
III
II
I
Guit.2
V
III
Guit.3
Bjo.
P.no
Org.
Bass
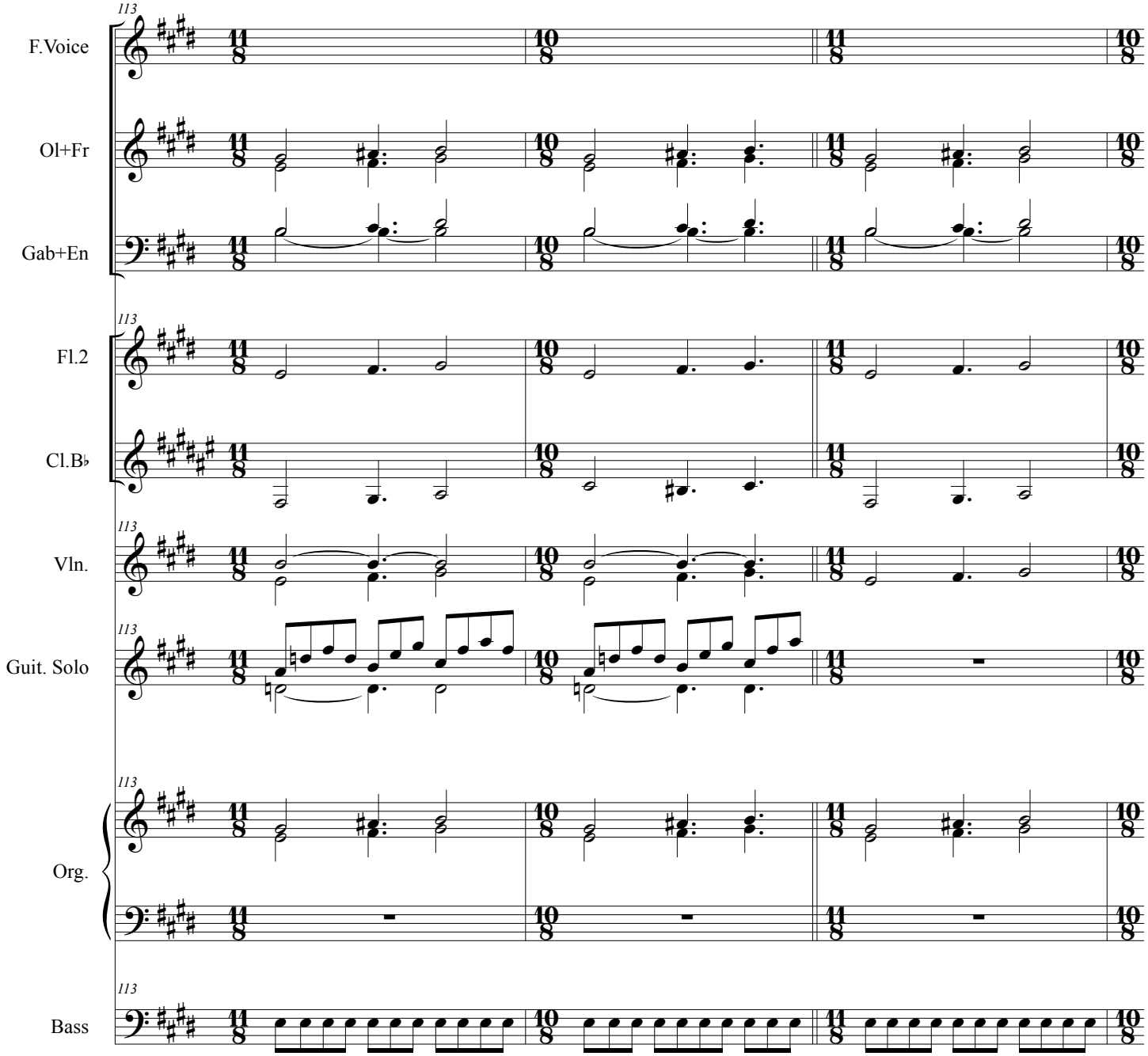

91
F.Voice
lu - na - cy fits nea - tly with my own my ve - ry own
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Oh
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
Guit.2
Guit.3
Bjo.
P.no
Org.
Bass
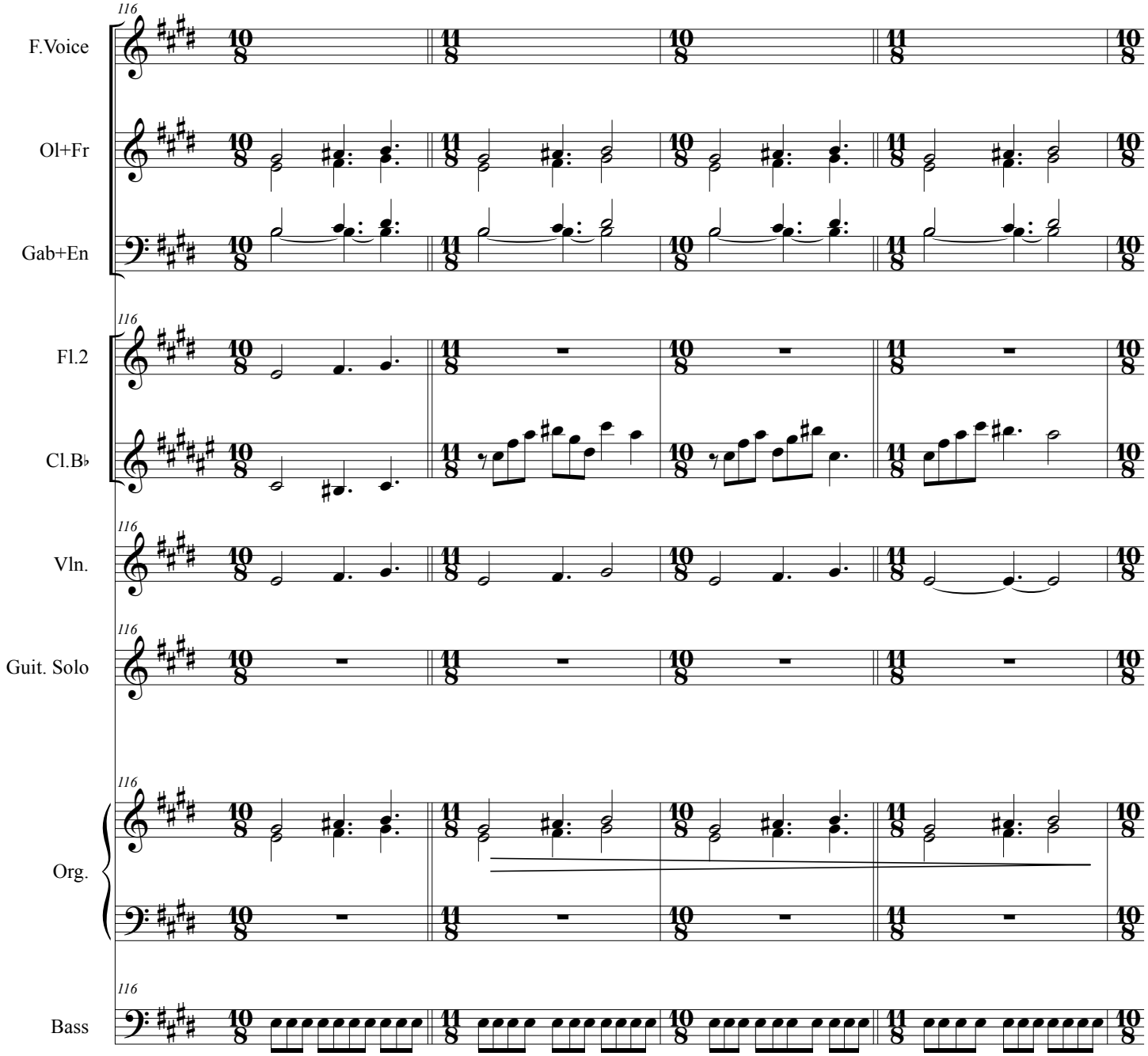

96
F.Voice
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Oh
Oh
96
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
6
96
Vln.
96
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
96
Guit.2
Guit.3
96
Bjo.
96
P.no
96
Org.
96
Bass
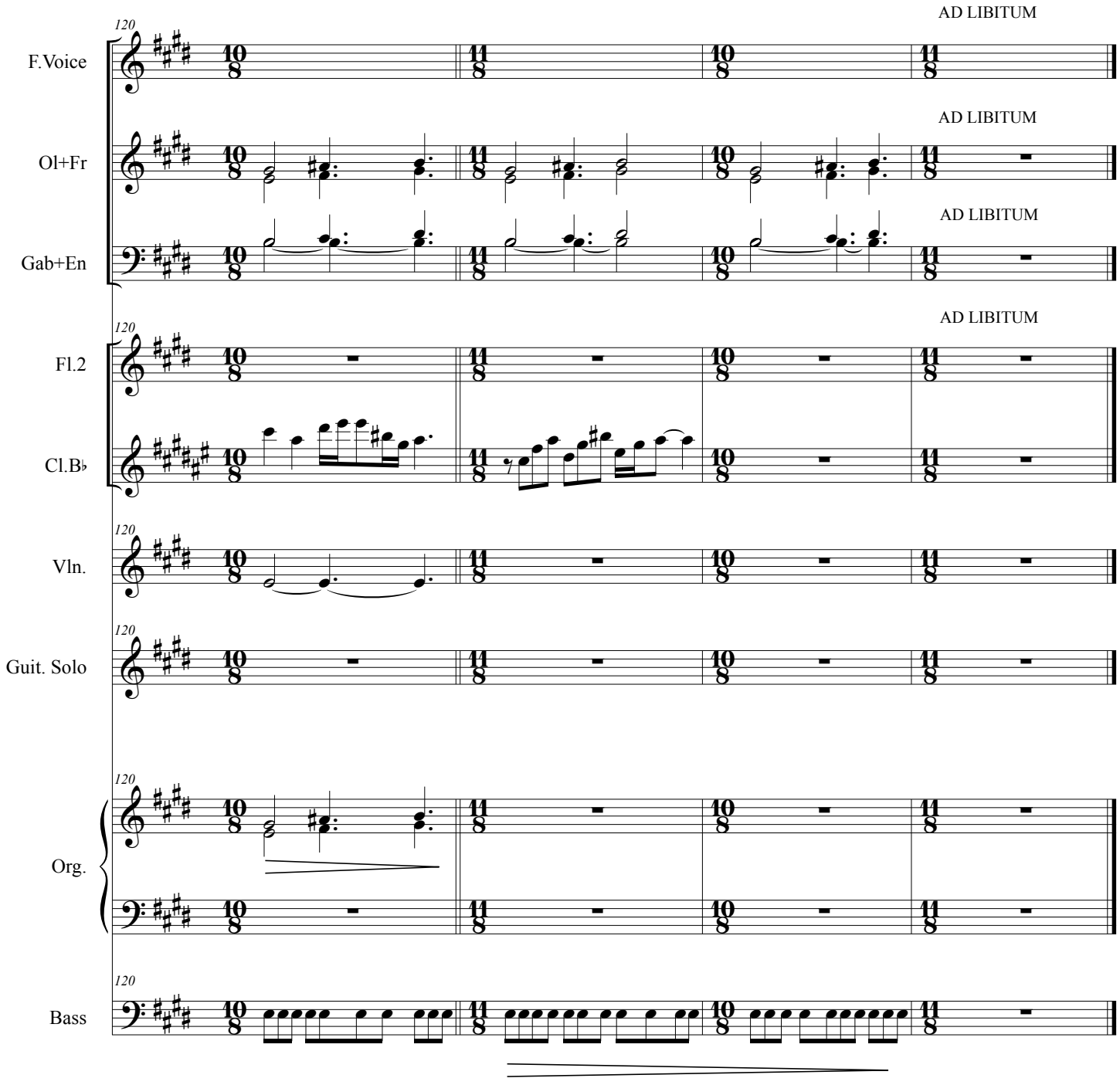

F.Voice
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Oh
Oh
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Guit.1
Guit.2
Guit.3
Bjo.
P.no
Org.
Bass


105
F.Voice
we're not a-lone
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Oh
105
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
105
Vln.
105
Guit. Solo
ALTOGETHER
Guit.1
105
Guit.2
Guit.3
105
Bjo.
105
P.no
105
Org.
105
Bass
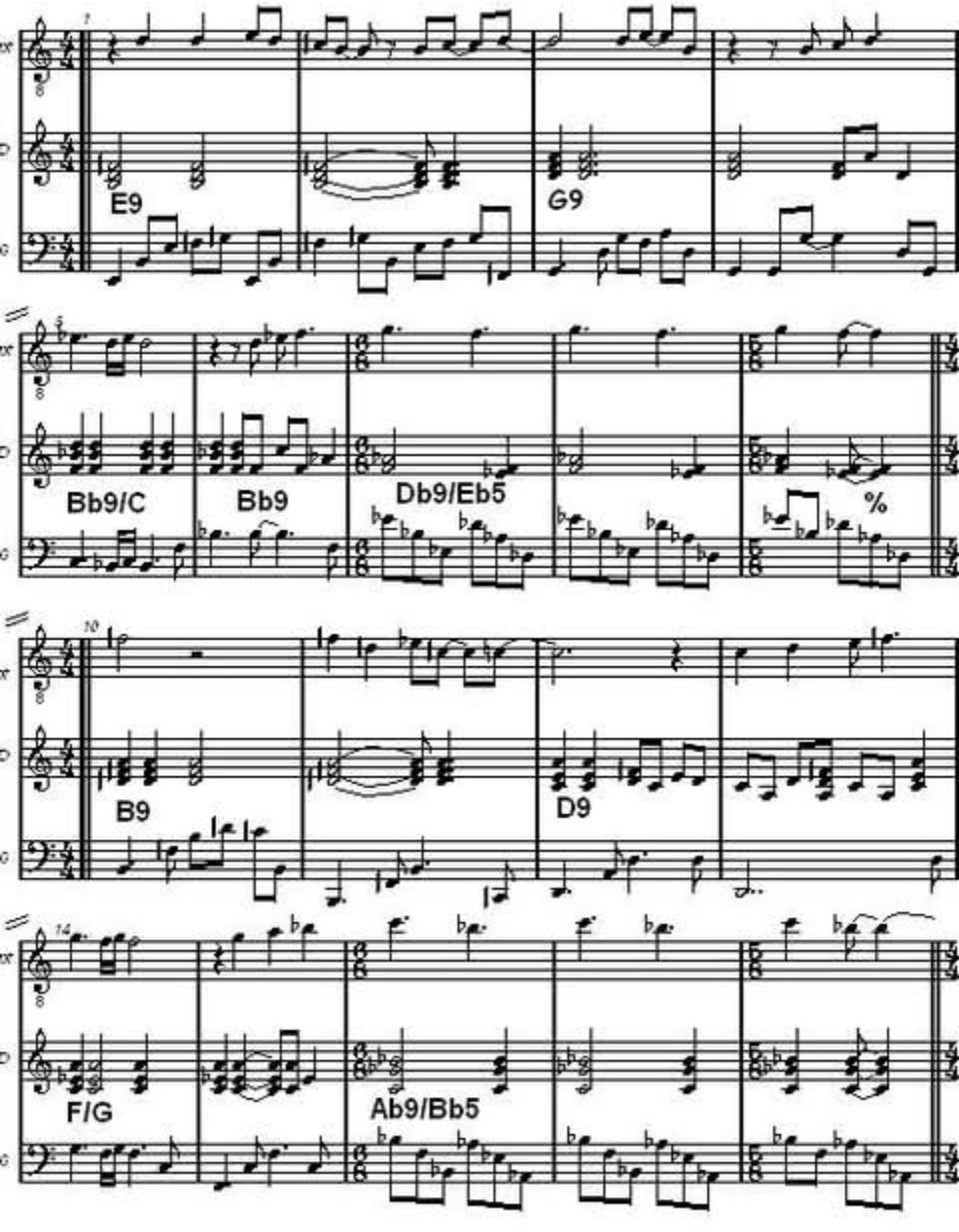

Improvise freely until the end
109
F.Voice
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Org.
Bass


113
F.Voice
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Org.
Bass
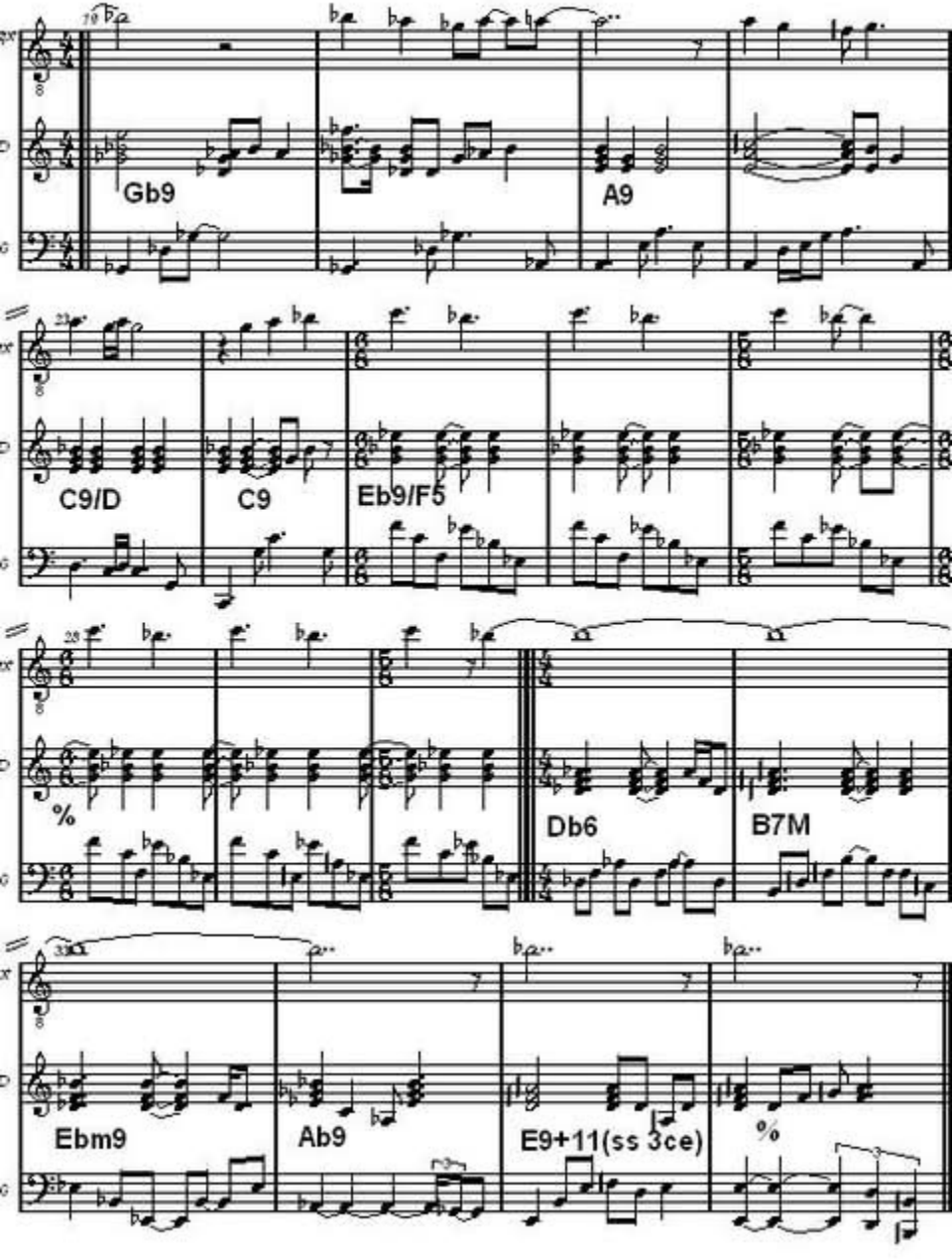

116
F.Voice
Ol+Fr
Gab+En
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
Vln.
Guit. Solo
Org.
Bass


AD LIBITUM
120
F.Voice
AD LIBITUM
Ol+Fr
AD LIBITUM
Gab+En
AD LIBITUM
120
Fl.2
Cl.B♭
120
Vln.
120
Guit. Solo
120
Org.
120
Bass

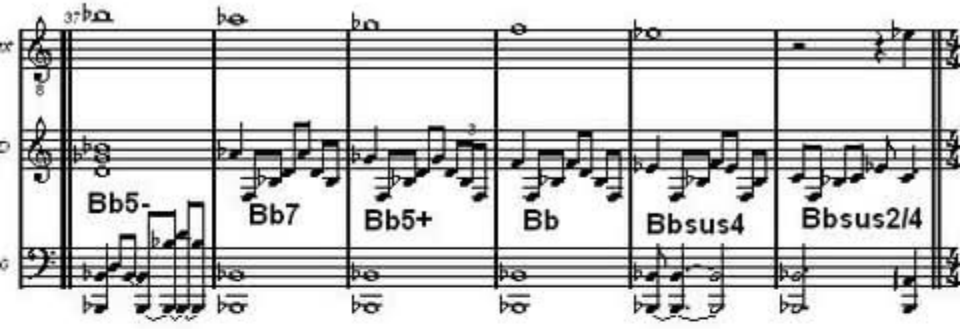
Muddy Mouth (Mai 2025)



Muddy Mouth (Mai 2025)



Muddy Mouth (Mai 2025)







A ROBERT WYATT CONSTRUCTION KIT

L'oeuvre de Robert Wyatt n'a certainement pas besoin d'une statue pour passer à la postérité.

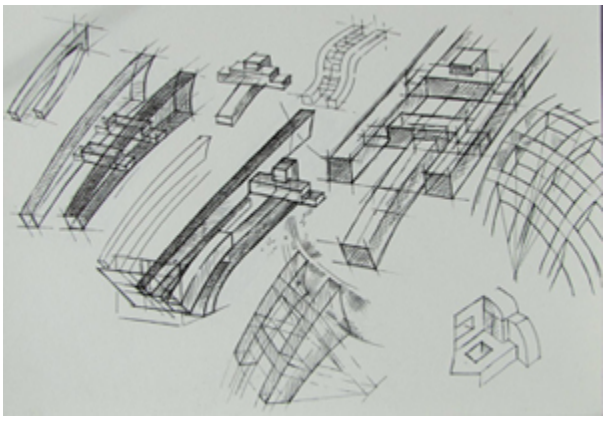
Il n'en demeure pas moins que le travail engagé par John O'Rourke est tout à la fois étrange, extravagant et totalement indispensable !

Dans le dernier chapitre de la biographie Different Every Time (page 395 de la version anglaise), Marcus O'Dair présente le projet du plasticien John O'Rourke illustré d'une des premières esquisses de celui-ci.

Régulièrement actualisé, le site de **John O'Rourke** rend bien compte de ce Work In Progress épatant :

A ROBERT WYATT CONSTRUCTION KIT

qui nous enchante par son incongruité et son sérieux d'exécution.



Sur le site du projet, John O'Rourke précise le contexte de ce projet inattendu:





Robert Wyatt Sculpture: After a very extended break, while creating 'Sentius Tectonicus', I have recommenced working on an oak piece entitled 'A Robert Wyatt Construction Kit'. An initial working drawing for the sculpture is featured in Marcus O'Dair's excellent biography of Robert Wyatt. It's called 'Different Every Time'. I'm really pleased to have the time to be working on it again.

There are three buildings inside of his cranium and Robert has placed something within one of them. I've no idea what it is, nor will it ever be revealed. The beard is currently in progress and then I have his hair to add. All of the holes will be plugged with cross grained oak, to fully match the components. Following that there will be further forms to create below his head, mainly architectural but with Romanesque influences: I love the Lewis Chessmen and without mimicking them in any way, there will be an indirect allusion to their form.

John O'Rourke a complété ses explications au cours de plusieurs échanges que j'ai pu avoir avec lui.

"I am making a sculpture of Robert Wyatt. It is being recorded as it progresses...

By the time the sculpture is completed there will be a series of architectural forms ascending below his head - in fact his head will emerge from them. A number of inter-connected passages and hidden chambers will exist throughout the sculpture.

It isn't just the sculpture. There's a painting in progress which is about 4 feet high. It's currently unfinished but included in the website. Also, I'm starting some smaller canvases which are taking the format of construction instructions (like a model kit), but would be impossible to follow.

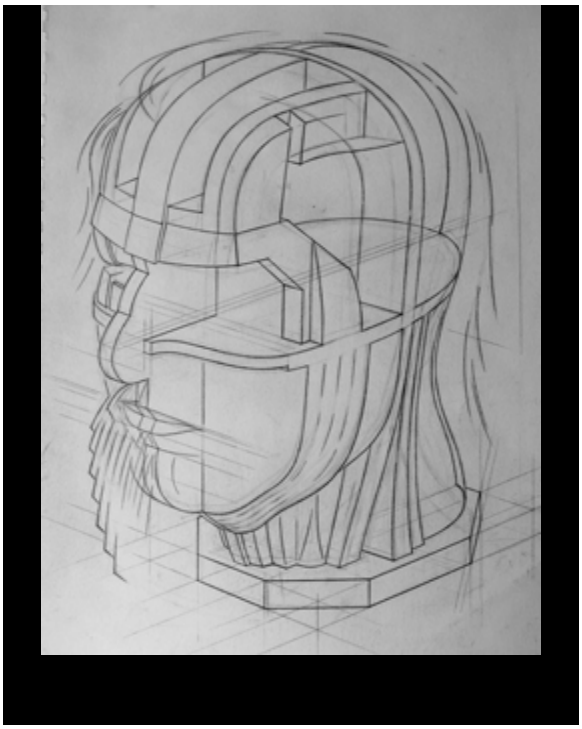
While it is first and foremost a sculpture of Robert Wyatt, the sculpture indirectly references the Lewis Chessmen and other Romanesque sculptures.

The main pieces in that chess set (king, queen and bishops) are all seated in heavy chairs. Instead of the swirling Celtic forms I will have machine-like cogs etc. and architectural forms. The original Lewis Chessmen are in the British Museum, so once I've finished some drawings which show how the sculptures will appear when the complex forms beneath the head are added I will put them in the website and then approach that museum.

I realize that it's a long shot but worth trying. "

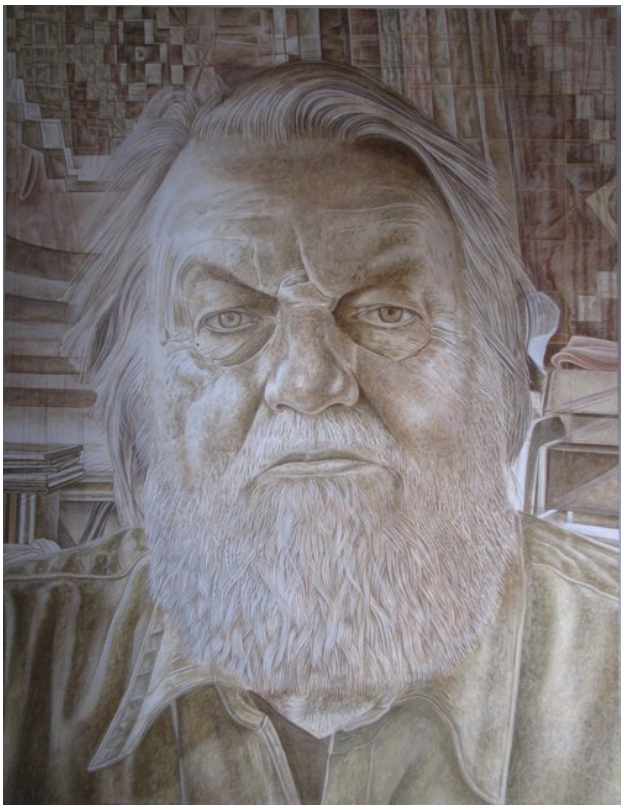
Nous sommes impatients de découvrir le résultat final haut de quatre pieds et cogiterons des heures pour savoir ce qu'a bien pu glisser Robert Wyatt dans les trois cavités de sa boîte crânienne...

Une rétrospective des autres travaux de John



O'Rourke peut être consultée sur son site :

johnorourkeart.com



Sea Song

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Sea Song est sans doute le morceau de Robert Wyatt qui a suscité - et suscite encore - le plus de reprises discographiques. Sans compter tous les morceaux plus ou moins audibles, circulant sur YouTube, avec parfois de bonnes surprises, ici, ici, ici ou là par exemple...

J'ai pour ma part un faible pour cette version du trio Romano/Vignolo/Trotignon qui enregistra en 2006 cette version épatante couplée avec élégance au *Crying Song* de Pink Floyd.



Flower Power (2006) - NAIVE (NV810911)
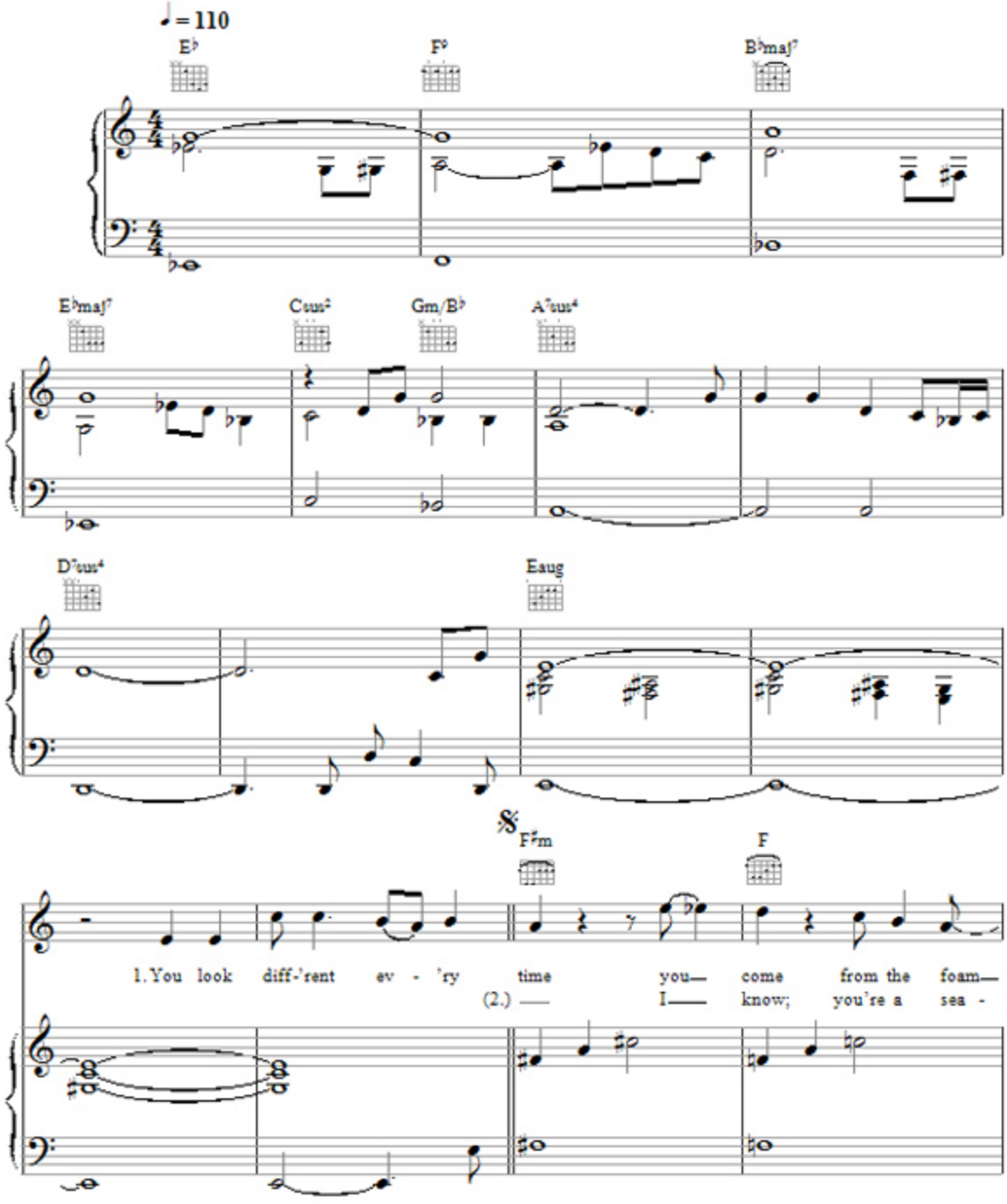
0:00 / 6:56

Sea Song / Crying Song

- Aldo Romano - batterie
- Rémi Vignolo - contrebasse
- Baptiste Trotignon - piano

Sea Song

Words & Music by Robert Wyatt



Robert Wyatt & Alfie Benge - Side by Side

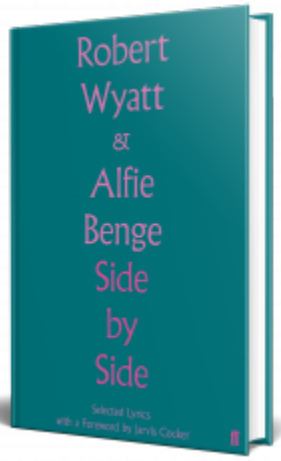
ABÉCÉDAIRE



Robert Wyatt &
Alfie Benge
Side by Side

Selected Lyrics

Faber (2020)



*Alors que je m'appretais à écrire un petit texte sur Side by Side, je découvre celui que **Jean-Jacques Birgé** a rédigé pour son blog et qu'il a intitulé **Robert Wyatt & Alfie Benge, côte à côte**. Je n'aurais pas su mieux exprimer mon admiration pour cet ouvrage qui nous fait revisiter une carrière à quatre mains qui dure depuis plus de quarante ans (Robert Wyatt a annoncé avoir pris sa retraite musicale mais il continue à collaborer à de nombreux projets. En octobre 2020, les albums de **Mary Halvorson's Code Girl** et de **Lo'Jo** bénéficient de sa précieuse collaboration).*



Le recueil de textes de Robert Wyatt et Alfie Benge rend d'abord hommage à tout le travail de la muse du musicien anglais. Si elle est partout présente à commencer par le diptyque Alifib/Alife sur le disque Rock Bottom paru en 1974, Alfie est l'autrice des illustrations de toutes les pochettes et elle a écrit nombreuses paroles des chansons figurant sur la dizaine d'albums qui ont suivi et que nous écoutons

avec des étoiles dans les yeux.

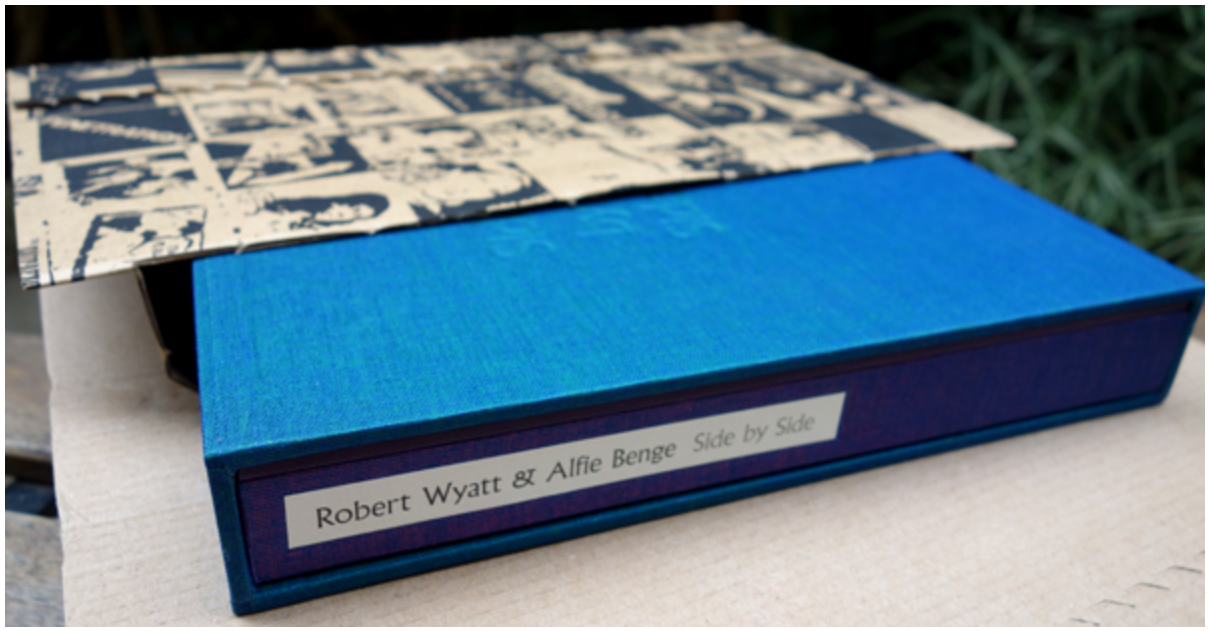
Ses petits croquis, ici en noir et blanc, accompagnent les textes et elle en profite pour commenter les sujets qui l'ont inspirée alors que Robert livre simplement les siens. Il y a dix ans, les paroles de quatre vingt chansons étaient déjà parues avec leur traduction française dans un luxueux ouvrage illustré par Jean-Michel Marchetti et rassemblant 5 tomes publiés depuis 1997. Les selected lyrics qui sortent aujourd'hui en anglais chez Faber sous le titre Side By Side représentent donc réellement le travail du couple, leur vie et leur engagement. Après une introduction de Jarvis Cocker (du groupe Pulp) et les préfaces des deux auteurs, les paroles, tant pataphysiciennes que politiques, de Robert Wyatt sont classées en trois parties, non chronologiques, tandis que celles d'Alfreda Benge s'intitulent Espagne, Oiseaux, Conflit, Amour et perte, Comptines aléatoires. L'ouvrage est donc précieux, les explications d'Alfie permettent de mieux comprendre leur collaboration, leur manière d'avancer ensemble, leur intérêt pour la politique internationale déjà explicite pour qui parle anglais. J'ignore si est prévue une traduction française. Ce n'est certainement pas simple au su de la quantité de jeux de mots, de néologismes et de raccourcis poétiques. Le choix de ne pas renvoyer les textes aux albums souligne l'importance du sens des paroles et des images, débarrassées de la voix bouleversante et sublime, à la fois haut perchée et zozotante, de Robert Wyatt.

Jean-Jacques Birgé

>> Le texte de J.J. Birgé sur Drame.org







Limited edition to 200 copies - signed by R. Wyatt & A. Benge and includes 4 x exclusive art prints.





Two hundred and ten copies of

SIDE BY SIDE

have been specially printed, hand bound and signed by
the authors, and include four exclusive prints of artwork
by Alfie Benge

Two hundred copies numbered 1–200
are for sale

Ten copies numbered i–x
are reserved for the authors

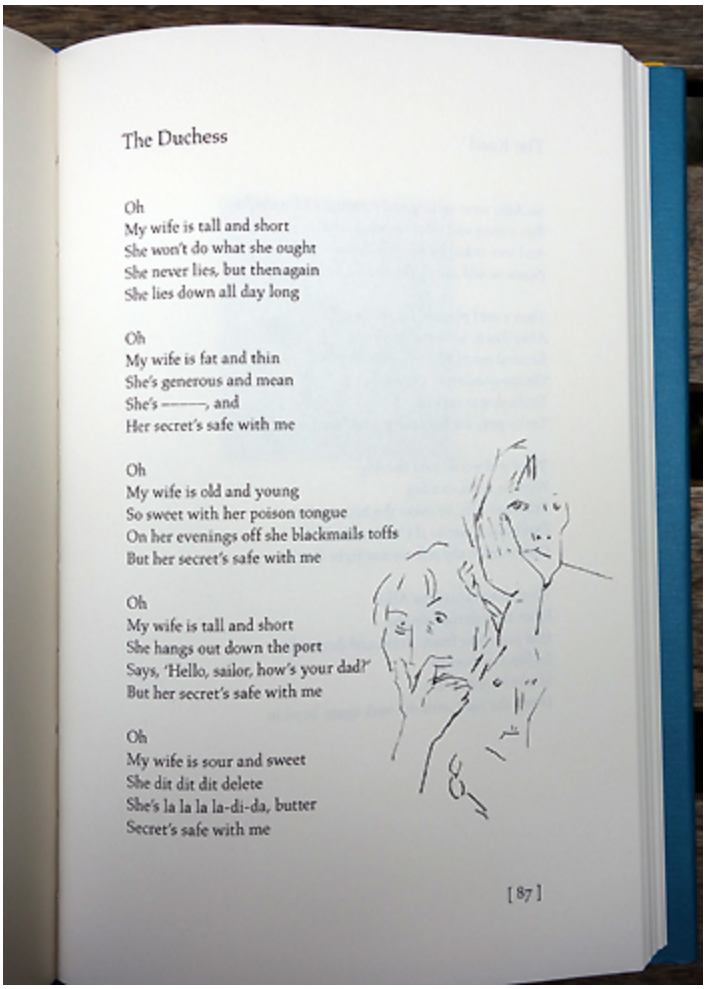
This is number 41

Robert Wyatt

Alfreda Benge

"Whenever an aspiring musician asks me about songwriting I point them towards Robert and Alfie. Their work is so unusual, so perceptive, so playful and so grownup. I don't think there's anyone to compare. If you want songs that touch your mind as well as your heart, these are the best. Wide distribution of this book could improve the state of music dramatically."

Brian Eno



The Duchess

Oh
My wife is tall and short
She won't do what she ought
She never lies, but then again
She lies down all day long

Oh
My wife is fat and thin
She's generous and mean
She's ———, and
Her secret's safe with me

Oh
My wife is old and young
So sweet with her poison tongue
On her evenings off she blackmails toffs
But her secret's safe with me

Oh
My wife is tall and short
She hangs out down the port
Says, 'Hello, sailor, how's your dad?'
But her secret's safe with me

Oh
My wife is sour and sweet
She dit dit dit delete
She's la la la la-di-da, butter
Secret's safe with me

[87]

Print Run

New music books

Side By Side: Selected Lyrics
Robert Wyatt & Alfie Benge
Faber & Faber Hbk 204pp

Side By Side is a beautiful testament to Robert Wyatt and Alfie Benge's relationship, both as husband and wife, and as artistic collaborators. Featuring paintings and sketches alongside the lyrics, this is a much richer experience than your standard lyrics collection. Benge, writes Wyatt in his introduction, is "at the heart of everything I've done since the mid-1970s... We live and work side by side." Her artwork gave Wyatt's solo albums their visual identity, and from 1982 onwards, she contributed many of the lyrics for his songs.

Fittingly, Wyatt's career as a singer-songwriter is bookended by two of the great relationship songs, "Sea Song" and "Just As You Are". The former, from 1974's *Rock Bottom*, is a declaration of love that's all the more moving for its honesty. Wyatt begins with a dreamlike vision of Alfie as a sea creature, "*partly fish, partly porpoise, partly baby sperm whale*". She astonishes him, but a note of uncertainly creeps in as he struggles to reconcile the romantic ideal with the everyday reality of a relationship: "*I can't understand the different you, in the morning when it's time to play at being human for a while*". Yet he knows that their love is worth it, telling Alfie, "*Your madness fits in nicely with my own*".

Benge's "Just As You Are", from 2007's *Comicopera*, was written when Wyatt's drinking had become a serious problem. As she writes, "I was unsure if I could put up with life with a permanent drunk." In her part of the song, voiced on the record by Monica Vasconcelos, Benge wonders whether she should leave Wyatt or accept his flaws. She adds a response from Wyatt's perspective, in which he acknowledges his addiction while reiterating his unconditional love. There's no pat resolution, but Wyatt sought help and has been sober for

many years.



These songs are snapshots of an ongoing conversation. Benge responds to "Sea Song" with a cartoon strip. His "alcodelic dreamscapes" are affectionately transplanted to the domestic realm, with the couple sitting in the bath and staring out of windows. This isn't to suggest that Benge is the realist to Wyatt's surrealist - her *Rock Bottom* artwork realises his aquatic visions in teeming seabeds and swimmers who vibrate with colour. While her lyrics are more observational, they have an imagist charge suggestive of William Carlos Williams at his most empathetic. Take "December", with its Senegalese trinket seller roaming Spanish beaches to make money to send back home. On one level it's a simple human story, yet it's deeply informed by Benge and Wyatt's socialism and internationalism.

Wyatt's political songs of the 1980s remain remarkably pertinent. We're living with the consequences of the neoliberal individualism he skewers in "The Age Of Self", and the American imperialism he depicts in "Amber & The Amberines". His and Benge's War On Terror era songs are equally powerful, from the chilling "Out Of The Blue" to the deeply touching "Lullaby For Hamza". These songs bear witness and express solidarity - they never patronise or hector. They're also beautiful works of art, embodying Brecht's motto: "In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times."

Stewart Smith

WIRE

To order Side by Side on ROUGH TRADE shop.

Soft Machine Family Tree

ABÉCÉDAIRE

On trouve de nombreux arbres généalogiques de la *famille Soft Machine* sur internet...

Tous proviennent, s'inspirent ou copient les arbres de Pete Frame qui publia en 1972 le premier arbre généalogique d'un groupe de rock (Al Kooper).

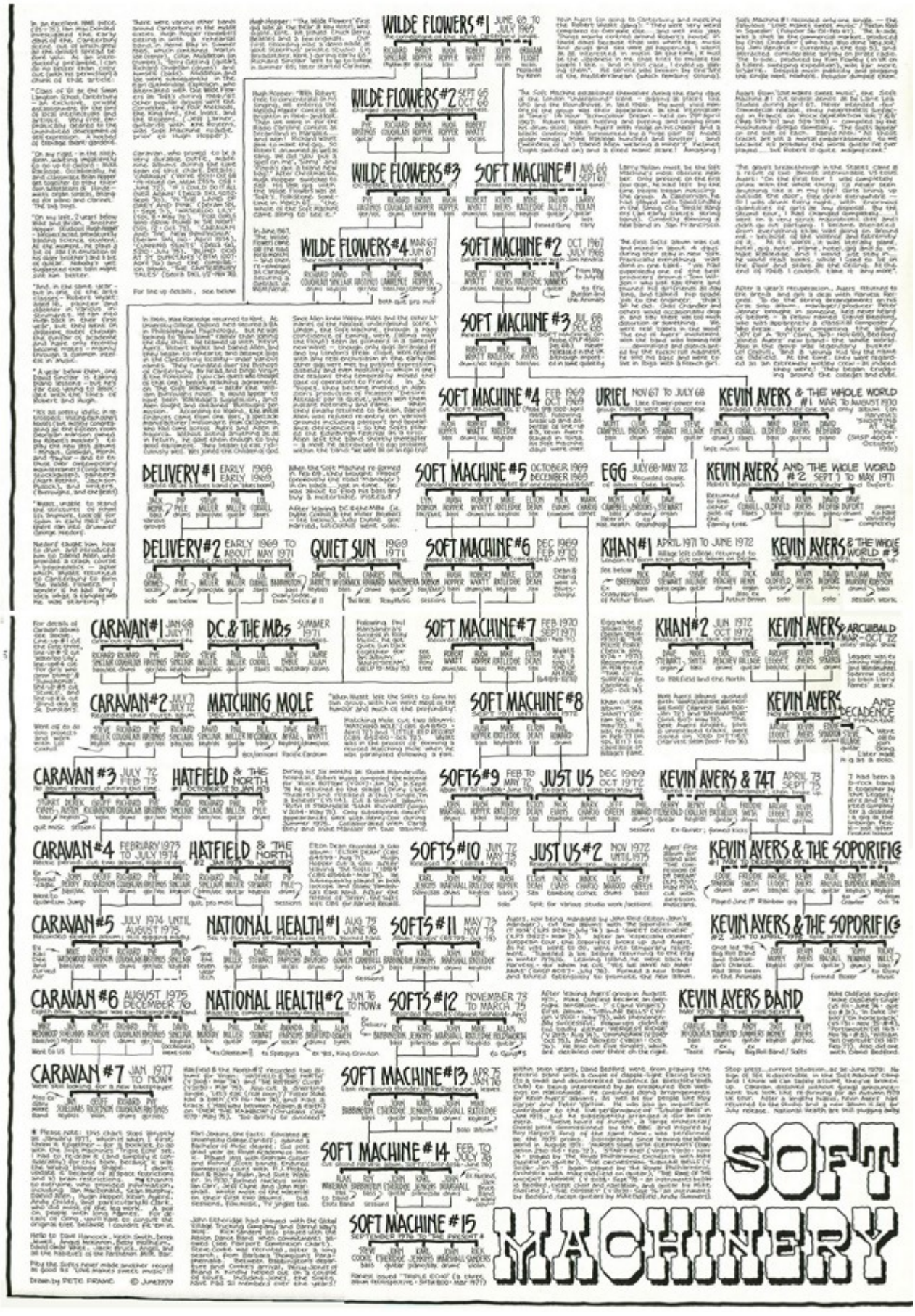
De groupes en groupes, les arbres se sont multipliés, croisés, interpénétrés aux confins du rock, du blues et de la pop...

Trois ouvrages de référence : The Complete Rock Family Trees (Omnibus Press 1993), More Rock Family Trees (Omnibus Press 1998) et Even More Rock Family Trees (Omnibus Press 2011) permettront aux amateurs courageux de retrouver leurs petits dans le labyrinthe de la horde catalytique sans fin du rock'n'roll.

L'arbre généalogique de la famille Soft Machine (que d'aucuns nommeront *Ecole de Canterbury*) est publié dans le premier volume The Complete Rock Family Trees sous le titre bien vu de *Soft Machinery*, juste avant celui de *Crosby Stills Nash and Young* et juste après *Resolving The Faiport Confusion* !

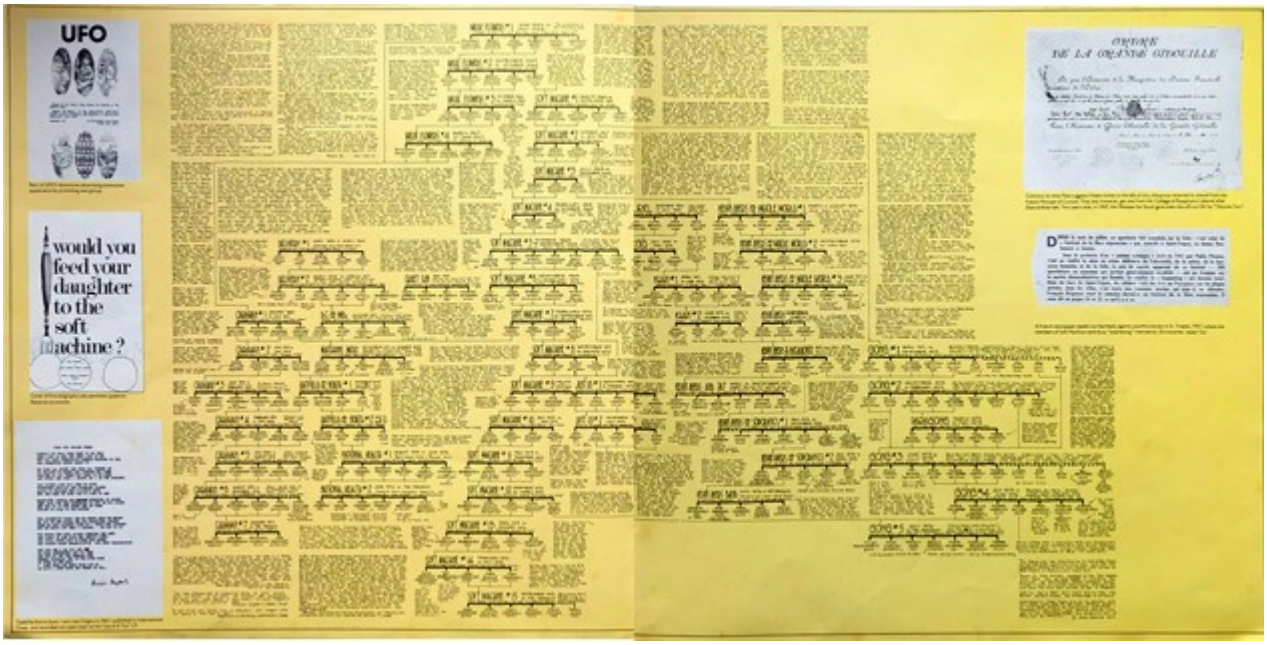
Mais on l'avait découvert en 1977 sous la forme d'un grand poster jaune accompagnant le *Triple Echo* de Soft Machine.

Le troisième arbre ci-dessous a été publié dans le premier numéro du magazine Atem paru en décembre 1975.



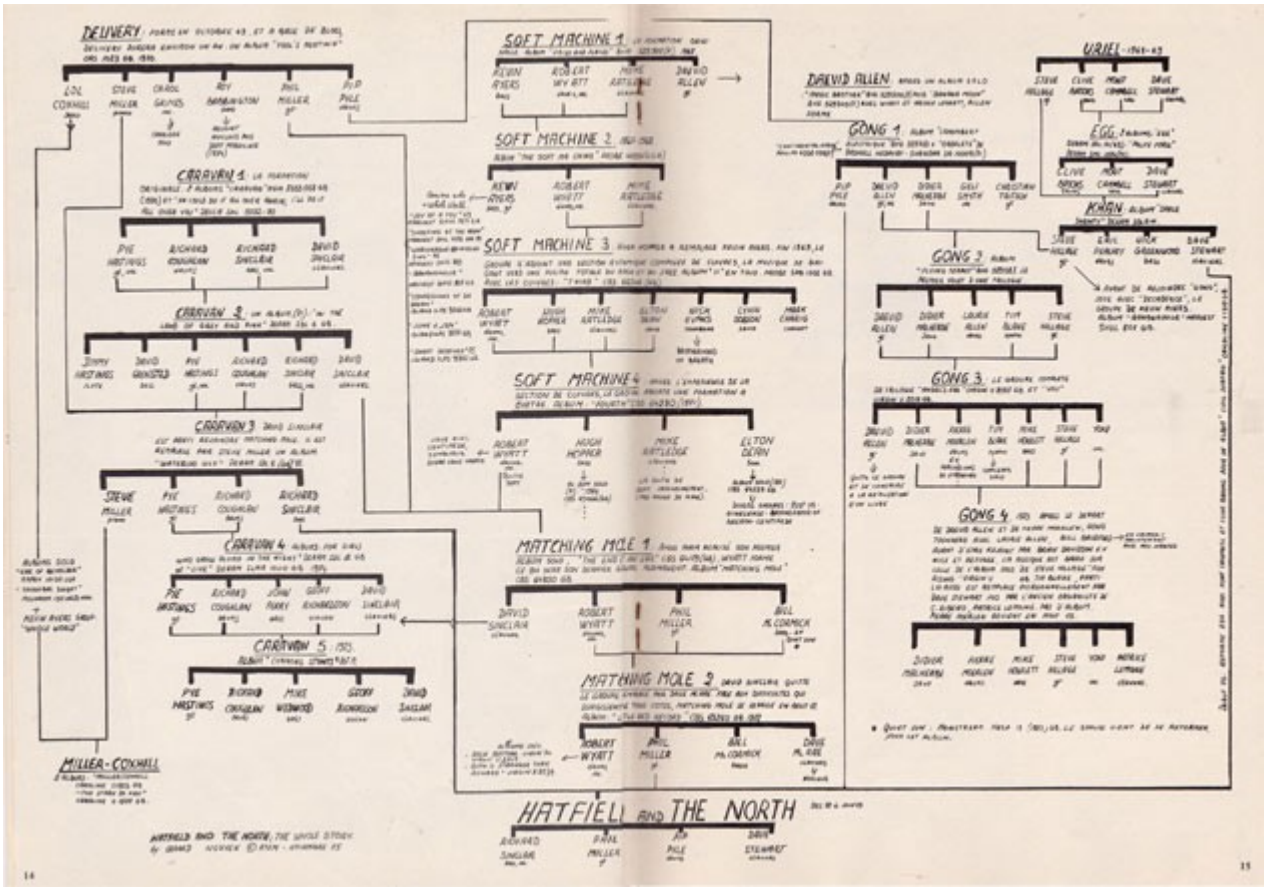
> Zoom

Pete Frame - Soft Machinery (*The Complete Rock Family Trees)*



> Zoom

(*in* Triple Echo - Soft Machine)



> Zoom

Atem n° 1 - 1975

SOFT MACHINE GENERATIONS (1966-1971)

Dans son ouvrage **SOFT MACHINE Out-Bloody-Rageous**, Graham Bennett répertorie les différentes formations du groupe, de ses débuts en 1966 jusqu'à la 24ème version, date de sa fin "officielle" en 1984.

Les tableaux ci-dessous récapitulent les différentes formations jusqu'au départ de Robert Wyatt en août 1971.

Soft Machine 1 August-September 1966				
Mike Ratllege	**Kevin Ayers**	**Robert Wyatt**	**Daevid Allen**	**Larry Nowlin**
Organ	Bass Vocals	Drums Vocals	Guitar Vocals	Guitar

No recordings available

Soft Machine 2 September 1966-August 1967			
Mike Ratllege	**Kevin Ayers**	**Robert Wyatt**	**Daevid Allen**
Organ	Bass Vocals	Drums Vocals	Guitar Vocals

Recordings available on :Triple Echo (demos), Soft Machine (demos), Jet-Propelled Photographs (demos), Soft Machine Turns On Volume 1 (demos & Live)

Soft Machine 3 August 1967-May 1968		
Mike Ratllege	**Kevin Ayers**	**Robert Wyatt**
Organ	Bass Vocals	Drums Vocals

Recordings available on : Soft Machine (live), "Love Makes Sweet Music"/"Feelin' Reelin' Squeelin" (single), Soft Machine Turns On Volume 1 (live), Soft Machine Turns On Volume 2 (live), BBC Radio 1967-1971 (live), The Soft Machine

Soft Machine 4
May-August 1968

Mike Ratllege	Kevin Ayers	Robert Wyatt	Andy Summers
Organ	Bass Vocals	Drums Vocals	Guitar

No recordings available

Soft Machine 5
August-September 1968

Mike Ratllege	Kevin Ayers	Robert Wyatt
Organ	Bass Vocals	Drums Vocals

Recordings available on : Soft Machine Turns On Volume 2 (live)

Soft Machine 6
December 1968-May 1969

Mike Ratllege	Hugh Hopper	Robert Wyatt
Organ	Bass	Drums Vocals

Recordings available on : Volume Two, Soft Machine (live), Backwards (demo)

Soft Machine 7
May-October 1969

Mike Ratllege	Hugh Hopper	Robert Wyatt	Brian Hopper
Organ	Bass	Drums Vocals	Saxes

Recordings available on : Spaced (soundtrack), Triple Echo (live), The Peel Sessions (live), BBC Radio 1967-1971 (live)

Soft Machine 8
October-December 1969

Mike Ratllege	Hugh Hopper	Robert Wyatt	Elton Dean	Lyn Dobson	Marc Charig	Nick Evans
Organ Piano	Bass	Drums Vocals	Alto sax Saxello	Saxes Flute	Cornet	Trombone

Recordings available on : The Peel Sessions (live), Backwards (live), BBC Radio 1967-1971 (live)

Soft Machine 9

December 1969-March 1970				
Mike Ratllege	**Hugh Hopper**	**Robert Wyatt**	**Elton Dean**	**Lyn Dobson**
Organ Piano	Bass Vocals	Drums	Alto sax Saxello	Saxes Flute

Recordings available on : Third (live), Noisette (live), Breda Reactor (live), Live 1970 (live)

Soft Machine 10 March 1970-August 1971			
Mike Ratllege	**Hugh Hopper**	**Robert Wyatt**	**Elton Dean**
Organ Piano	Bass	Drums	Alto sax Saxello & Piano

Recordings available on : Third (live), Somewhere in Soho (live), Facelift (live), The Peel Sessions (live), Backwards (live), Live at the Proms 1970 (live), BBC Radio 1967-1971 (live), Fourth, Virtually (live)

Stampa Alternativa

ABÉCÉDAIRE



> Chairman Mao

Robert Wyatt, édité par Stampa Alternativa en 1987, est une publication italienne de 95 pages, vendue avec un 45T de vinyl rouge enregistré sur une seule face (*Chairman Mao,* une reprise d'un morceau de Charlie Haden paru 1977 sur l'album *Old And New Dreams*).

Biographie et long interview en italien dans lequel R.W. s'explique sur sa démarche créative mais aussi sur ses engagements politiques explicites. Discographie officielle et pirates, lyrics (paroles en anglais avec traduction italienne de plus d'une trentaine de morceaux), illustrations photographiques (portraits d'Alfreda Benge, Robert Wyatt, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, affiche anti-impérialiste...). La rondelle du petit disque rouge est illustrée par un portrait de Mao Ze Dong.





> Zoom 1 2

Sweet Memories - Anaïd

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Sweet Memories [Hugh Hopper/R. Wyatt] - Anaïd at Le Triton - 2024

(*mixé par Alexis Lacaze - enregistré au Triton par Jules Ferroul*)

Lorsque le groupe **Anaïd** enregistre avec **Hugh Hopper** l'album *Belladonna* en 1989 , ses fondateurs - **Emmanuelle Lionet** (chant) et **Jean-Max Delva** (batterie) - ne se doutent sans doute pas qu'ils joueront sur scène 35 ans plus tard le morceau *Sweet Memories* que l'ancien bassiste de Soft Machine leur a confié avec un texte écrit par **Robert Wyatt**. Celui-ci réécrira par la suite un nouveau texte en lui donnant un autre titre : *Was A Friend*.

La composition du groupe qui se présente en septet ce 23 mars 2024 au Triton a bien changé. Lorsque **Anaïd** reprend *Sweet Memories*, c'est avec **Sophia Domancich** au piano Fender et complice des premiers jours qui participa à l'album *Four Years* paru en 1991.

La magie de ce morceau est toujours présente, comme un fil rouge qui nous relie à un temps retrouvé.



Belladonna 1989)



- Emmanuelle Lionet - chant, voix
- Jean-Max Delva - batterie, piano
- Sophia Domancich - piano Fender
- Enguerrand Dufour - trompette, basse
- Alexis Delva : guitare
- Sébastien Husson - basse
- Théo Ferrari - saxophone, batterie

Anaïd - version 2024

- La page Facebook d'Anaïd
- Le site web
- La partition de *Sweet Memories*

Ten songs that saved your life

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Une très belle idée proposée par le site *tensongsthatsavedyourlife.com* aujourd'hui disparu.

ten songs that saved your life

Categories Archives About Search

ROBERT WYATT



01. LES DOUBLE SIX *sweets*
02. LES DOUBLE SIX *naima*
03. LES DOUBLE SIX *westwood walk*
04. LES DOUBLE SIX *a night in tunisia*
05. LES DOUBLE SIX *a ballad*
06. LES DOUBLE SIX *scrapple from the apple*
07. LES DOUBLE SIX *boplicity*
08. LES DOUBLE SIX *moanin'*
09. LES DOUBLE SIX *fascinating ryhtm*
10. LES DOUBLE SIX *walkin' (un tour au bois)*

" to emphasise their importance, i'm suggesting ten tracks from one record: LES DOUBLE SIX (on bmg france/rcaVictor) i leave them in the correct sequence . These are on ac cd re-issue of two original lps. the rhythm sections include daniel humair [drums] and georges avanitas [piano].

mimi perrin and her friends digested what was already great instrumental music and found the human voice inside. it had been done before and has been done since.but les double six,with their comprehensive thoroughness, epitomise this craft at its inspiring (to me) peak.

i know perfectly well that younger people will find my list anachronistic: but it illustrates that fifty years ago, before Lennon et all the cultural cross-traffic between england and the continent was a much more two-way traffic. some of us turned at least as much to paris as to the united states,for example . . . . .(particularly in art and philosophy of course).

(clint eastwood once said the united states had made but two real contributions to world culture: [western] films and jazz.[actually his son kyle is a very good jazz musician i think-] but since other countries have produced films at least as excellent as the u.s., that just leaves jazz ! anyway. . . .i just wanted to remind myself of the brilliant inspiration that was mimi p – - -

it's not just nostalgia[though that's part of it of course]- i am still stunned by 6+6's disciplined chutzpa!

Salam! robert Y@ "

disciplined chutzpa!

The Official Robert Wyatt Fan Club Song

ABÉCÉDAIRE

THE OFFICIAL ROBERT WYATT FAN CLUB SONG

Words & music: Karen Mantler Editions Grog Kill Music

0:00 / 4:16

THE OFFICIAL ROBERT WYATT FAN CLUB SONG (LIVE AT CHARLEVILLE-MEZIERES) [1,70 Mo]

Chanson écrite pour la Création le 8 novembre 2003 de "**Dedicated to You, Variations sur la Musique de Robert Wyatt**" commandée par Charleville Action Jazz à John Greaves, Sylvain Kassap, Hélène Labarrière, Jacques Mahieux, Dominique Pifarély et Karen Mantler.

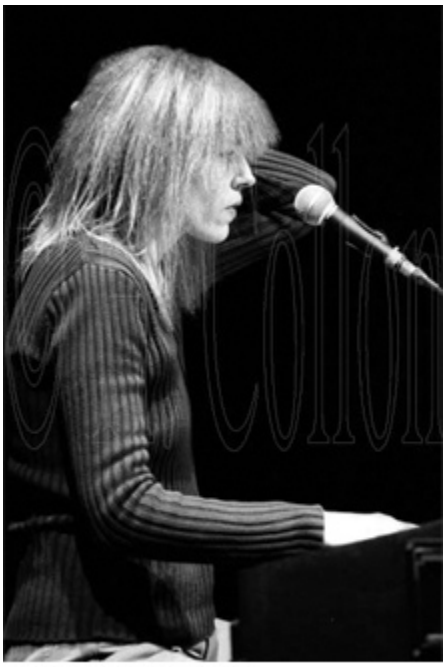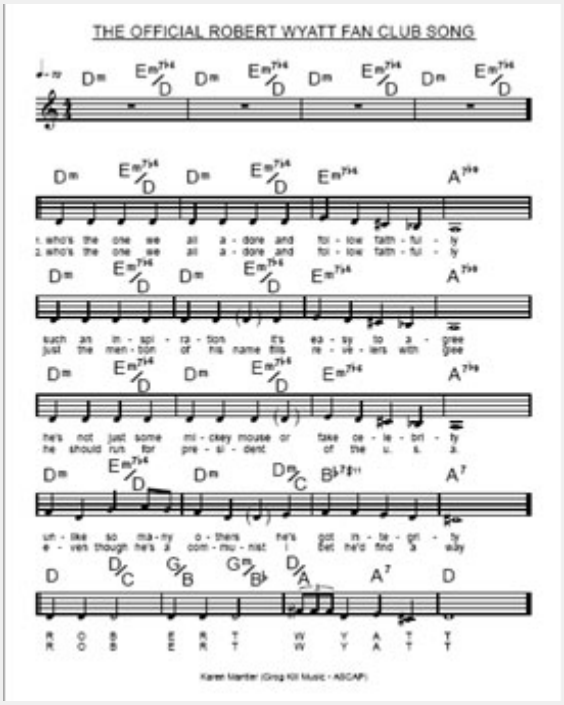


PHOTO © HÉLÈNE COLLON

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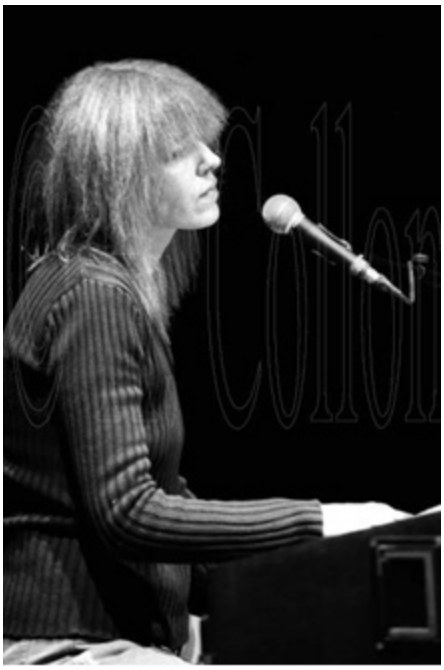


PHOTO © HÉLÈNE COLLON

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PHOTO HÉLÈNE COLLON

> Zoom

Co-production Charleville Action Jazz/Théâtre de Charleville-Mézières/LMD Productions

Enregistré au Théâtre de Charleville-Mézières le 8 Novembre 2003 par Jacques Laville.

Remerciements à :

Karen Mantler pour nous avoir autorisé à mettre en ligne cette superbe chanson, et à en publier la partition.

John Greaves, Sylvain Kassap, Hélène Labarrière, Jacques Mahieux, Dominique Pifarély pour leur accord.

Charleville Action Jazz pour nous avoir communiqué le fichier mp3

Hélène Collon / Vues sur Scènes pour les magnifiques photos du concert de Créteil

Pour plus d'informations sur Karen Mantler: http://www.wattxtrawatt.com

Plus d'infos sur le concert de Charleville-Mézières

LOIN DE LA MER
Stan Cuesta



Stan Cuesta by Guillaume Bonnefon

La musique a gâché ma vie réunit une douzaine de nouvelles de Stan Cuesta sur son enfance et sa jeunesse au prisme de la musique qui envahit peu à peu tout son univers mental. Dans l'une d'elle, *Loin de la mer*, il évoque sa relation passionnelle avec *Rock Bottom*, jusqu'au jour où il rencontrera en personne Robert Wyatt de passage à Paris...

[...] *Rock Bottom*, je ne peux l'écouter que seul. Pour la bonne raison que le premier titre, « Sea Song», me fait pleurer. Réellement. C'est automatique, physique. Dès les premiers mots. À tous les coups. Même longtemps après l'avoir entendu pour la première fois.

Cette « chanson de la mer » est une plongée dans les abysses. Tout l'album, en fait: «*To hit rock bottom*», c'est «*toucher le fond*», «*être au plus bas*». Une étrange déclaration d'amour, probablement écrite pour Alfie, sa femme. C'est elle qui, justement, dessine les fonds sous-marins de la pochette : «You look different every time / You come from the foam crested brine / Your skin shining softly in the Moonlight» (Tu sembles différente à chaque fois / Tu viens de l'écume mousseuse de la mer / Ta peau brillant doucement au / Clair de lune). Il la compare à un animal sous-marin, «*Une bête qui change selon les saisons / Comme l'étoile de mer qui dérive/Avec la marée.*»

Je plonge avec lui dans cette mer sombre et inquiétante. Peut-être que parfois je pense à un autre animal marin, une femme qui nageait pour oublier, sans cesse, partout. Pour oublier son passé, son malheur. Sauf qu'elle ne s'était pas arrêtée de nager pour moi. De la plage, je la regardais aller et venir dans la baie d'une île grecque, un kilomètre, deux, trois... Pour ce que j'en sais, elle nage toujours. Mais je ne suis plus assis sur le sable à l'attendre. Je suis assis dans mon fauteuil défoncé, loin de la mer.

Pourtant, « Sea Song » me bouleversait déjà bien avant, à une époque où je n'en comprenais pas les paroles, où je ne m'en souciais même pas. La seule voix de Robert Wyatt suffisait à me faire toucher le fond.

Je n'avais pas découvert cet album quand il était sorti, mais presque dix ans plus tard, au début des années quatre-vingt. Je faisais des études. Des études chiantes, longues, difficiles et qui ne m'intéressaient pas. C'était une école d'ingénieurs, loin de Paris, sur un plateau désert battu par les vents. Pas de commerces, pas de café, pas de journal, rien. Un parking (je n'avais ni voiture ni permis), des champs de maïs à perte de vue, et l'autoroute à l'horizon. J'étais logé sur place, dans une espèce de cube moche et sale, à cent mètres de l'école.

On était deux par appartement. L'autre, on l'appelait le « copiaule ». Le mien puait des pieds, il était breton. Je ne sais pas si ça a un rapport, je ne pense pas. C'était le mec qui puait le plus des pieds de toute l'école - plusieurs centaines d'élèves. Un cauchemar. Il



n'était pas méchant, juste demeuré, comme la plupart des élèves ingénieurs. Salle de bains commune et cloison en papier entre les deux piaules sinistres. C'était la première année, avant que je ne m'enfuie et que je ne rentre tous les jours à Paris. Plus tard, je n'irai même plus en cours. Mais à l'hiver 1983, je suppose que j'y allais encore. Pour tenir le coup, j'avais ramené un vieil électrophone en ruine, fait de bric et de broc, pièces disjointes récupérées à droite et à gauche. Tout le monde avait des radiocassettes à cette époque. Mais moi, j'avais besoin de vinyle. Ça n'a pas duré longtemps, l'engin a très vite lâché, ou moi, ou les deux... Je ne me souviens que d'un disque, ce *Rock Bottom* que je venais de découvrir, probablement en l'achetant, un peu par hasard, d'occasion, comme souvent.

Les cours commençaient à neuf heures. Il neigeait, il gelait, il fallait se lever dans le froid, puis marcher dans le blizzard pour aller écouter pendant des heures des mecs sinistres en costard nous assommer avec des trucs du genre électrotechnique, électronique, informatique, je ne sais quoi, ça ne m'intéressait pas, ça ne m'a jamais intéressé, je m'en foutais, je trichais aux épreuves. Tout le monde trichait, tout le monde avait la moyenne. Toujours.

Ce qui est dur, c'est de rentrer dans ces écoles. Une fois qu'on y est, on en sort avec le diplôme, même si on n'y a rien fait : j'en suis la preuve vivante. L'élite de la nation. Pour la plupart, une bande de puceaux débiles, laids et ricaneurs. Les futurs dirigeants de la France. Pour se faire virer, ou même pour redoubler, il faut mettre le paquet. Ce qui veut dire, en gros, se droguer (et faire une overdose), être alcoolique au dernier degré, se suicider, mettre le feu à l'école ou assassiner un enseignant. En dessous de ce niveau, ça passe.

Donc, mon réveil sonnait vers huit heures, clic, j'envoyais *Rock Bottom*. Je restais couché, il faisait très froid, sombre, du givre et de la neige par la fenêtre et, en point de mire, la perspective de passer une journée - puis une vie entière - atroce. J'étais totalement démoralisé. Bref, j'étais mûr pour cet album. Je pleurais un bon coup. Ensuite, ça n'allait pas mieux du tout, évidemment. Mais je me sentais un peu moins seul. Le mec qui avait écrit ces chansons, joué cette musique et qui chantait avec cette voix tellement émouvante ne pouvait être qu'un collègue...

De quoi me plaignais-je finalement ? Lui était en chaise roulante pour le restant de ses jours après être tombé d'une fenêtre, dans des circonstances troubles, dix ans plus tôt. D'ailleurs, ces chansons, il les avait écrites sur son lit d'hôpital.

Quelques années plus tard, je traînais avec un groupe vaguement à la mode. On faisait la tournée des plages, boîtes de nuit, play-back complet, la grande arnaque, n'importe quoi. Le chanteur n'était pas très à l'aise dans son rôle d'icône pop à l'assaut du Top 50. En fait, il aimait *Rock Bottom* et plein d'autres choses comme ça. Ça nous rapprochait. Je nous revois, en Corse, au bord de la mer, en plein soleil, complètement décalés, avec en bande-son un truc atroce dégoulinant de synthétiseurs, et lui qui s'esclaffait, comme toujours, en me disant: «Ah ouais, toi t'aimes que la musique triste» (sous-entendu « t'es comme moi »). On parlait de « l'album le plus triste du monde ». On rigolait bien. À notre façon. C'était un code entre nous, comme ça l'a été par la suite avec nombre de musiciens que j'ai connus qui adoraient ce disque, une sorte de mot de passe entre misanthropes, râleurs et autres mauvais coucheurs, de Pascal Comelade à Jean-Louis Murat.

Ce dernier, je l'ai retrouvé un beau jour dans un hôtel chic parisien. Il venait interviewer Robert Wyatt pour un magazine télé catholique de gauche, excité comme un gosse. J'attendais qu'il ait fini, car j'étais le suivant sur la liste, venu moi aussi rencontrer la légende - pour Rock & Folk - et tout aussi heureux de le faire. Un des plus beaux jours de ma vie, probablement, dont le souvenir est à la fois flou et vivace. Il me semble qu'on n'a

quasiment pas parlé de *Rock Bottom*, ni de « Sea Song» ni de chansons tristes. Wyatt était très sympa, très gai, très drôle.

Je m'extrais du fauteuil, allume une autre cigarette, change de disque. Et j'ai un flash. Il n'y avait pas que des cons. Parfois un gars sortait du lot. Un par classe, pas plus. Ça me revient d'un coup, dès les premières notes de cet album que je n'avais pas écouté depuis une éternité : la réédition du premier Matching Mole que je viens enfin d'acheter en CD après l'avoir eu en K7, puis en vinyle, toujours avec une bonne dizaine d'années de retard. Matching Mole, c'était le groupe de Wyatt après Soft Machine - d'où le jeu de mots phonétique en français sur le nom - et avant l'accident.

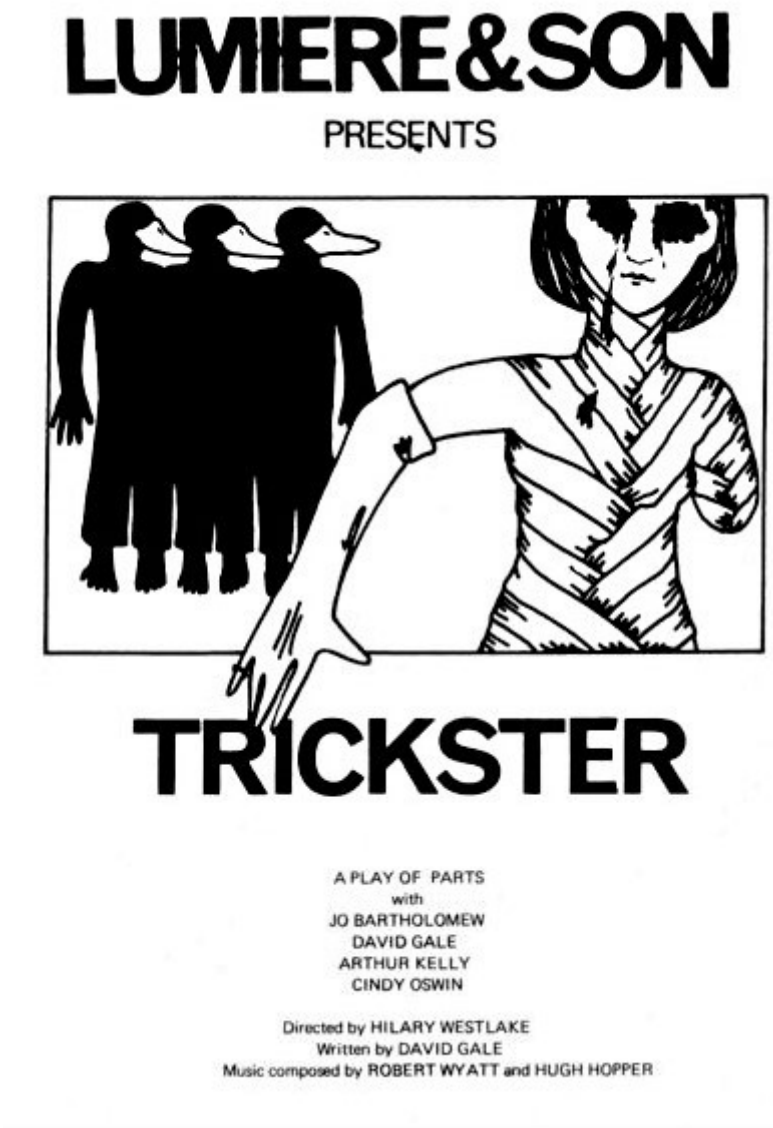
En math sup, la première année de classe préparatoire, la pire, à Jean-Baptiste-Say, il y avait ce mec dont j'ai oublié le nom, une sorte de baba beau gosse. On était en 1979. C'était l'année la plus déprimante parce que j'étais toujours dans le même lycée, et que plein de potes étaient toujours là, un ou deux ans derrière moi, en terminale ou en première, et continuaient à faire ce que je faisais l'année d'avant avec eux, c'est-à-dire de la musique, la seule chose qui m'intéressait vraiment, alors que moi, je ne pouvais plus suivre, à cause de ces études pourries. C'est à ce moment-là que j'ai raté ma vie pour la première fois.

Bref, ce beau mec aux longs cheveux blonds, grand, bronzé, probablement riche, s'est révélé être un fan absolu de Matching Mole et en particulier du bassiste, Bill McCormick. Ça ne s'invente pas... Je ne sais plus comment on en était venus à parler de ça, parce qu'en général, les conversations, c'était plutôt interro de maths, colle de physique, etc. Probablement une neurasthénie commune. Aujourd'hui, en réécoutant la voix déchirante de Wyatt sur « O Caroline » et « Signed Curtain », je repense à lui et je voudrais lui dédier ces quelques lignes... Après des petites vacances, je ne sais plus lesquelles, il n'était plus là. Un prof a fini par nous dire qu'il était mort dans un accident de la route, avec toute sa famille.

Je ne retrouverai jamais son nom, je n'ai aucun autre souvenir de cette époque, je ne m'étais fait aucun autre ami dans cette classe. Même lui, je l'avais oublié. Eh, machin, là-haut, je pense à toi ! Et ouais, Bill McCormick était un sacré bassiste.

Le mystère Trickster

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Cette affiche attire immédiatement l'attention avec cette mention à la dernière ligne qu'aucun biographe ou journaliste n'avait jusqu'à présent relevée : "Music composed by ROBERT WYATT and HUGH HOPPER" !

Nous sommes en 1974, Robert Wyatt travaille encore sur *Rock Bottom* qui sortira le 26 juillet. David Gale invite Robert Wyatt à composer la musique de la prochaine pièce du collectif LUMIERE & SON qui mettra en scène le *Trickster*, figure mythique ancestrale des populations amérindiennes.



David Gale, jeune dramaturge et ami d'Alfie, connait bien Robert Wyatt pour qui il a rédigé le texte délirant du verso de la pochette de *Little Red Record*. De son côté, Robert a vivement apprécié la précédente pièce de LUMIERE & SON **Jack....The Flame!** qu'il est allé voir quelques semaines plus tôt au Bush Theatre.

La troupe a été créée l'année précédente par David Gale et Hilary Westlake et elle a déjà trois pièces à son actif. La critique et le public sont sous le charme : "'*Visually extraordinary, the show presents a collage of surreal images that have the frightening, funny, and inconsequential qualities of forgotten dreams. Lumiere & Son often succeed in finding something new and unique.'* (John Ford on Jack…The Flames! Time Out)"

La toute première pièce fut une performance réalisée le 21 octobre 1973 à l'occasion du concert d'**Henry Cow** au Rainbow Theatre. **Tip Top Condition,** la seconde pièce, fut créée début 1974 avec une bande-son composée par **Lindsay Cooper**.

Trickster sera la quatrième pièce. toujours écrite par David Gale et montée par Hilary Westlake.

"Westlake and Gale found an ideal vehicle for their preoccupation with psychic disinhibition in the folklore of the Trickster figure, a study of which informed the riotous vulgarity of the eponymous play

(1974) featuring the comic performance of the late Eiji Kusuhara as well as an array of characters portraying well known and, in many cultures, normally concealed, body parts".

Directed by HILARY WESTLAKE
Written by DAVID GALE
Music composed by ROBERT WYATT and HUGH HOPPER



Trickster

Dans le communiqué diffusé à la presse, la participation de Robert Wyatt est largement évoquée :

"**Robert Wyatt writes music for Lumiere & Son's new show.**
The Trickster is a figure from ancient North American Indian myth. tales of his exploits were regularly recounted by story-tellers to provide an antidote to the often stiflingly rigid structures of tribal society. Trickster is innocent yet diabolic. His mind is so unformed that his right hand will attack his left hand with a knife. He carries his penis in a box at his back and can change it into useful plants at will. He can assume animal form and converse with trees. While at one moment he is depicted as the protector of his family, the next he will kill off small children in order to satisfy his constant and voracious hunger. He is wild, amoral, bi-sexual and unconscious. Trickster is an old as the hills - he stands as the ancestor of the jester, the fool, the clown and Punch. Jung saw him as : 'an absolutely undifferenciated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level... In picaresque tales, in carnivals and revels, in sacred and magical rites, in man's religious fears and exaltations, the phantom of The Trickster haunts the mythology of all ages... He is both sub-human ad super-human, a bestial and divine being whose chief and most alarming characteristic is in his unconsciousness.' Lumiere & Son have adapted the myth into a flexible performance piece in which the elements of farce, anarchy, absurd sexuality, surreal shape-shifting, clowning, idiocy, malice, benevolence and vulgarity are retained intact. The piece ranges from the burlesque to the ceremonial and clearly demonstrates the continuing relevance of this ambiguous figure to our understanding of our own experience in a society where taboos are still strong and demanding. Lumiere & Son are joined by Robert Wyatt in their new project, Long-time drummer, vocalist, lyricist and composer with the Soft Machine, are honourary member of the College of Pataphysicians, founder of his own band Matching Mole, and currently working on a new solo album for Virgin records, Robert Wyatt is composing a tape score to accompany performance of The Trickster. He became involved with the company after being impressed with their recent appearance at the Bush Theatre. "



Download the press release (pdf)

A ce stade, les questions affluent : que composa Robert Wyatt pour Trickster ? Des traces de ce travail ont-elles été conservées? Quelle fut la participation de Hugh Hopper ?

Malheureusement, l'affaire se corse... Hilary Westlake m'a confirmé la participation de Robert Wyatt au projet mais ne peut guère m'en dire plus:

"I contacted another one of the cast and she recalled Robert doing the music and coming to some rehearsals. In the second version, the programme of which I have, John Mitchell has the music credit but apparently he arranged Roberts.

However, none of us have any recollection about Hugh Hopper or indeed what the music was. "

Un peu plus tard, elle me précisera :

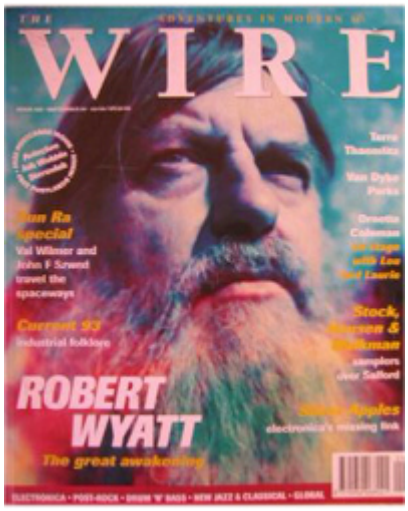
"If anyone had the Trickster tape, it would be me, and I don't have it. John Mitchell, who arranged Robert's music, died a few years ago so I can't ask him what he might have happened to the tape. In the 70s and 80s there wasn't much consciousness about archiving and as we didn't repeat shows, we wouldn't have guarded the tape for future use. That show wasn't videoed so we can't get any inkling of the track from that."

"I could imagine that Robert might not even recall doing the show. It would have been a small job for him probably in a sea of projects."

Le mystère Trickster reste donc presque entier... Peut-être Robert Wyatt pourra-t-il un jour nous éclairer sur cet épisode méconnu de sa carrière ?

A moins que ce ne soit le Trickster lui-même qui veille à ce que le plus grand flou demeure sur cet évènement afin de ne pas provoquer des Dieux trop susceptibles...

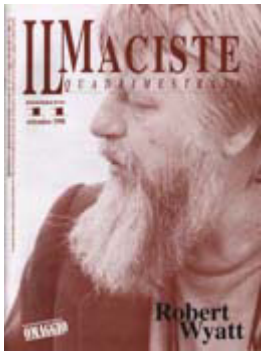
Robert Wyatt à la Une ! Quelques exemples glanés au fil des kiosques...



September 1997

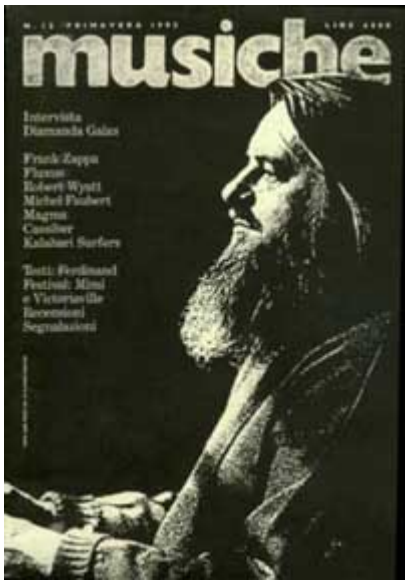


May 1975





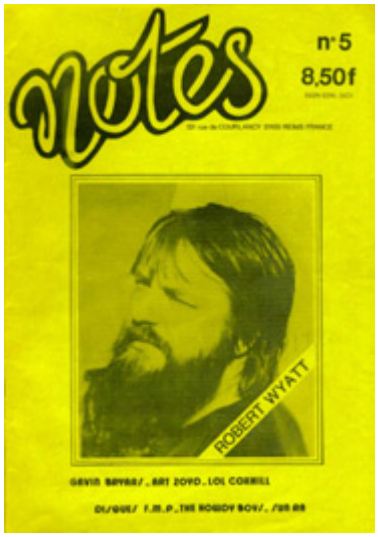
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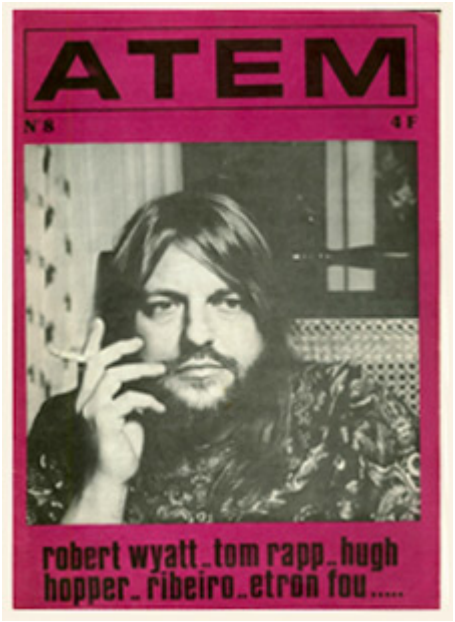
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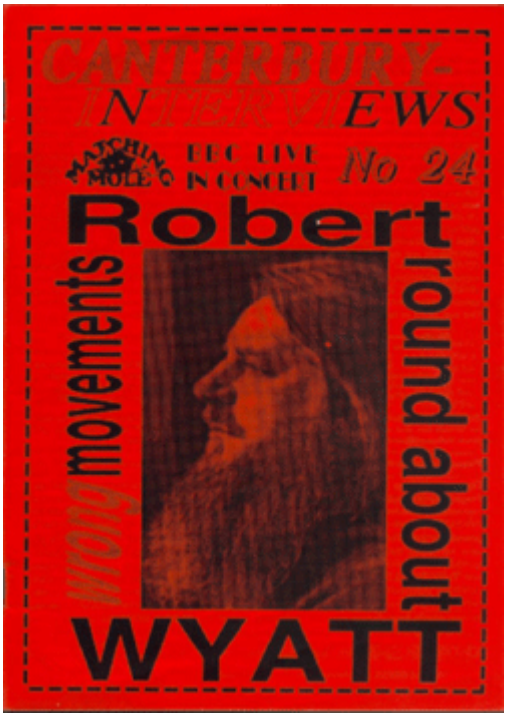
Septembre 1997



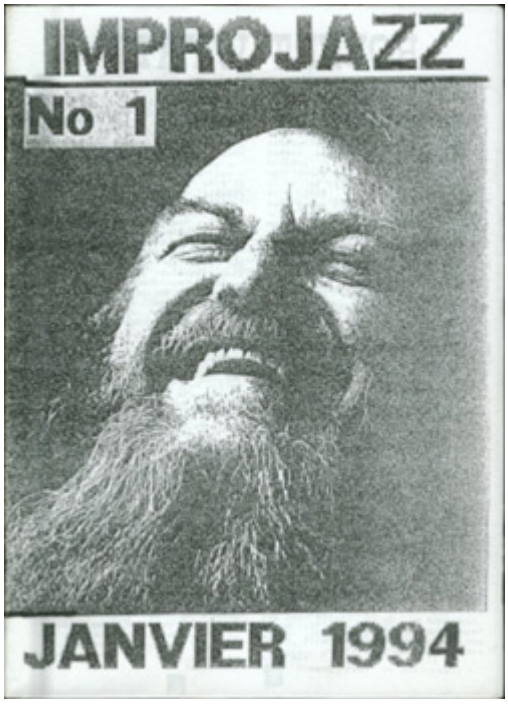
Mars 1982



1977



Août 1994



Janvier 1994



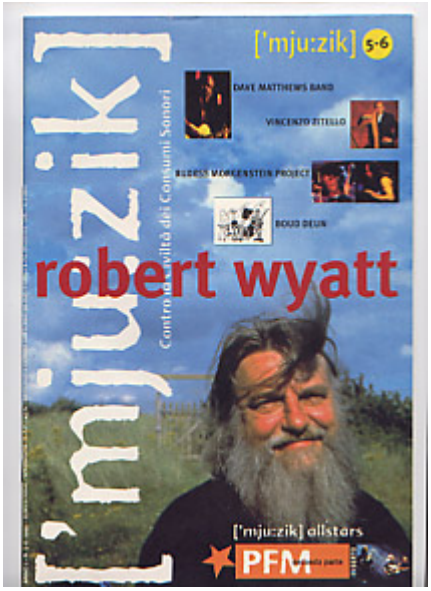
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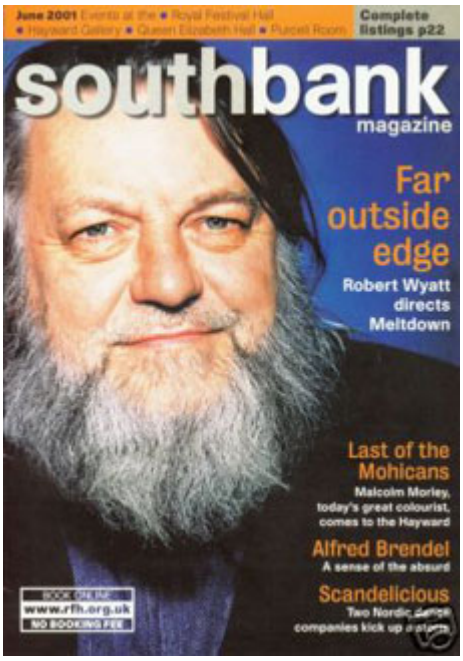


Septembre 1987



Mai 2004





Juin 2001



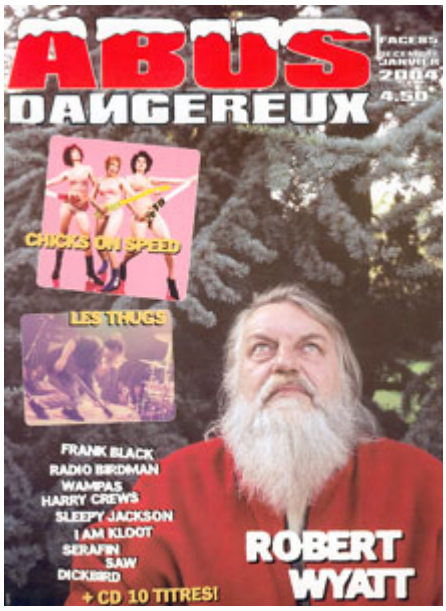
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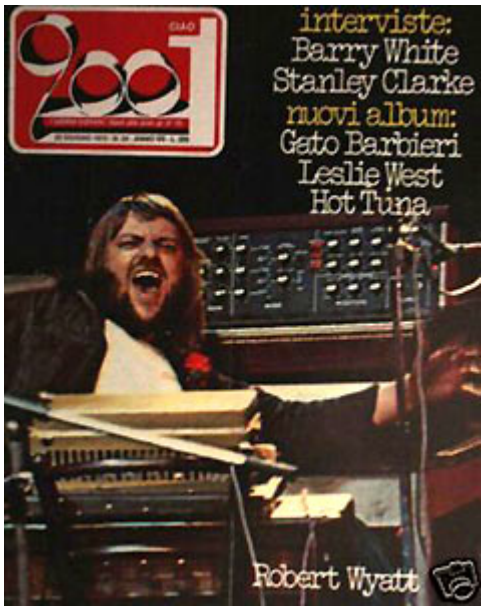
Mai 1998



Novembre 1997



Janvier 2004



22 juin 1975



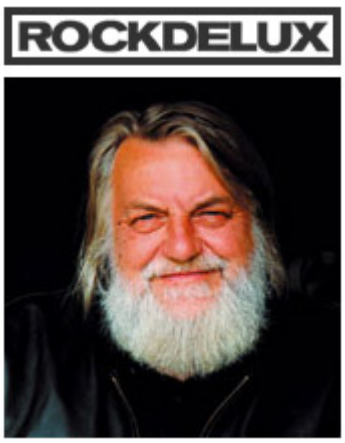
October 2007



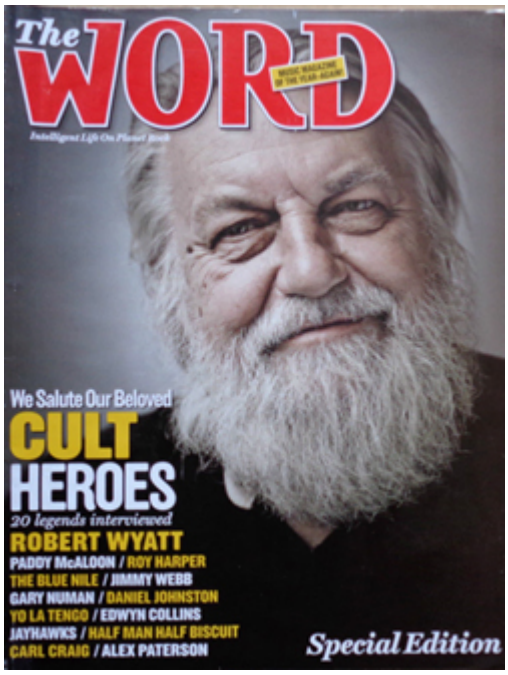
October 2007



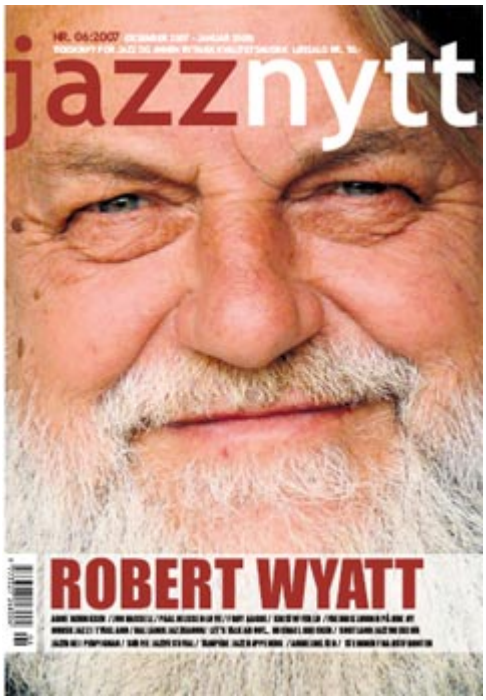
November 2007



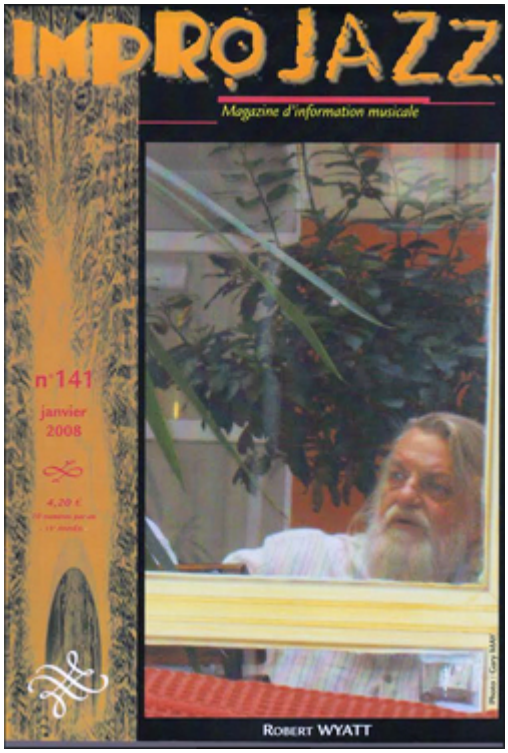
Novembre 2007



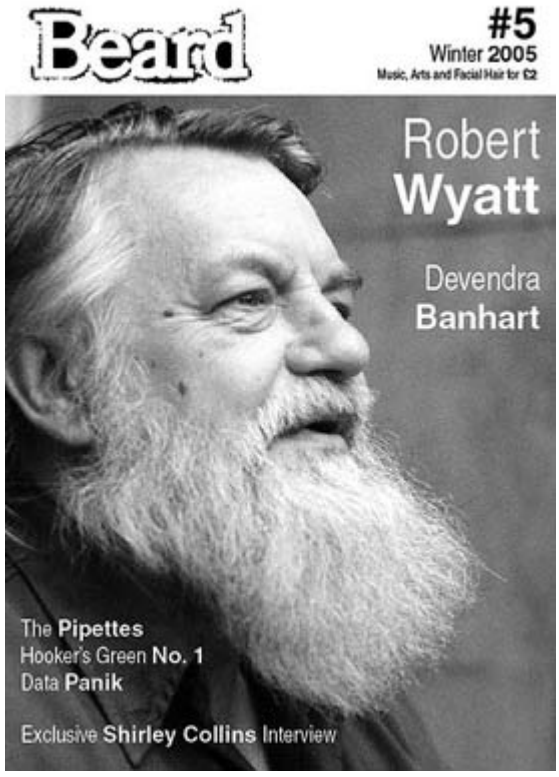
September 2009



Desember 2007 - Januar 2008



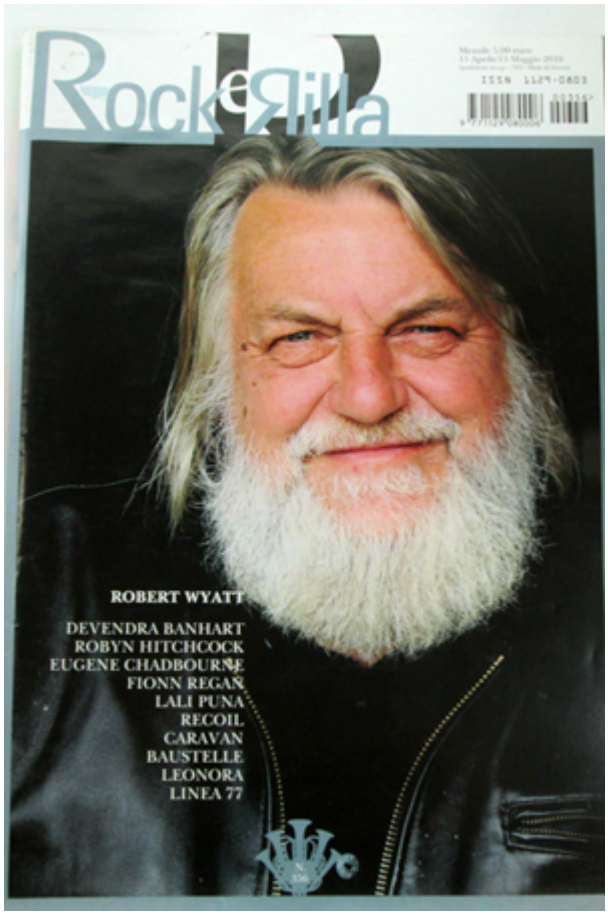
Janvier 2008



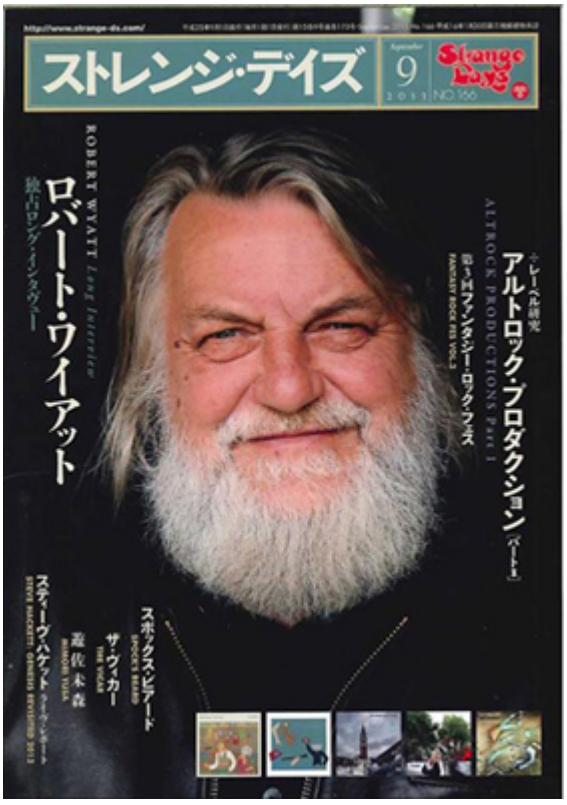
Winter 2005



Octobre 2009



15 Aprile-15 Maggio 2010



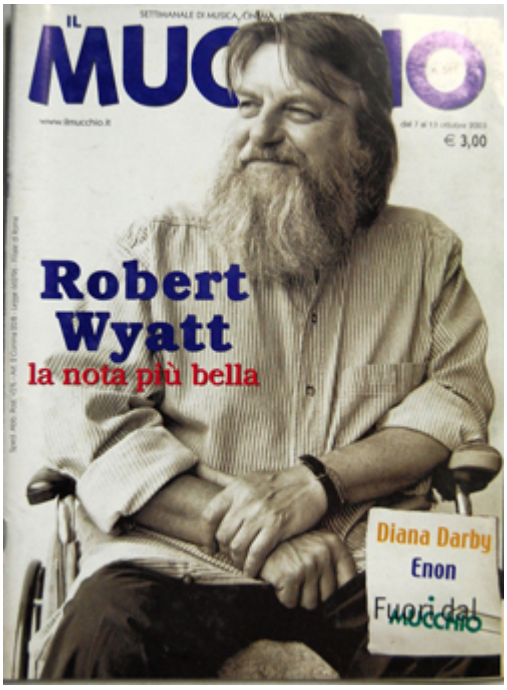
September 2013



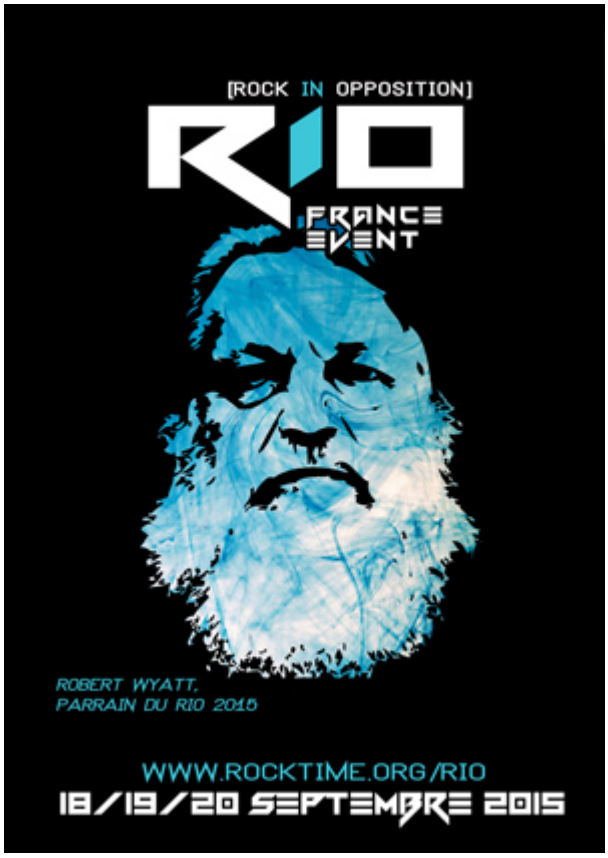
Jan-Feb 2011



Abril 1971



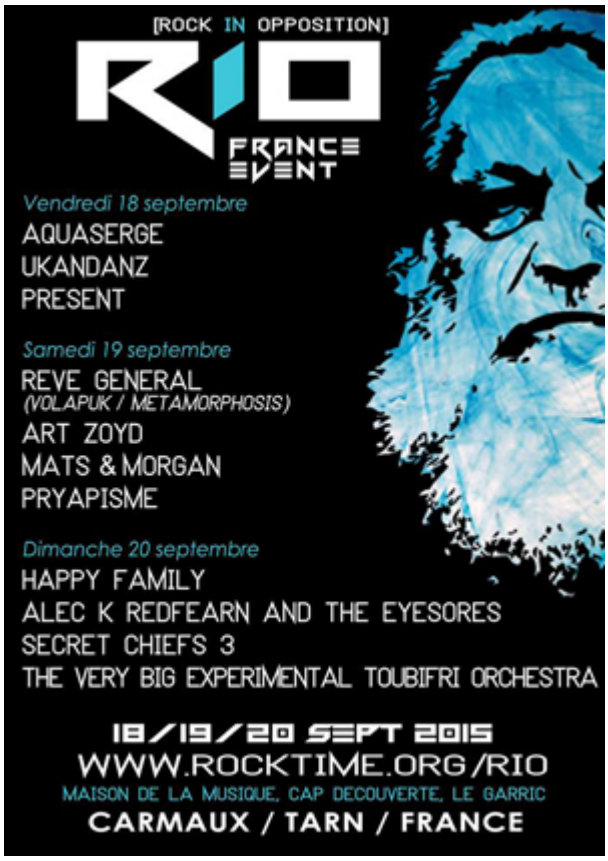
Ottobre 2003



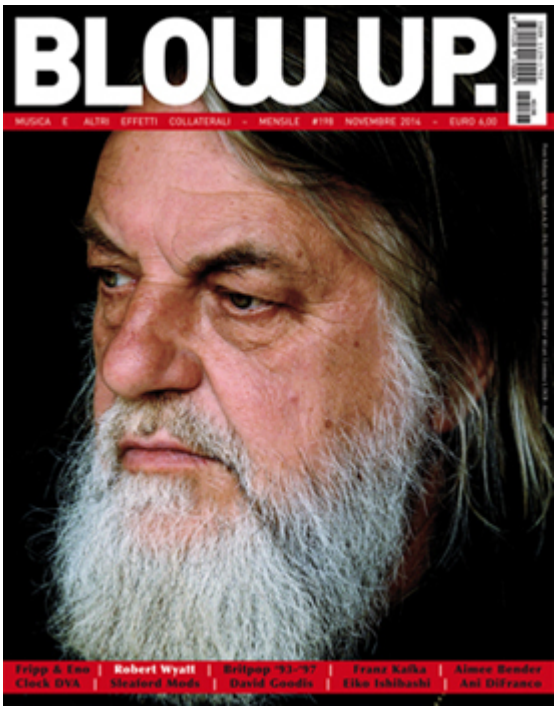
2015 - affiche du festival
Rock In Opposition



2015 - affiche du festival
Rock In Opposition



2015 - affiche du festival
Rock In Opposition



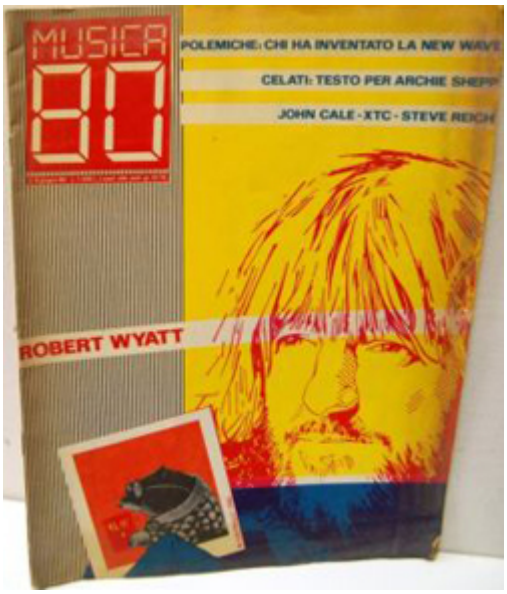
Novembre 2014





November 2010

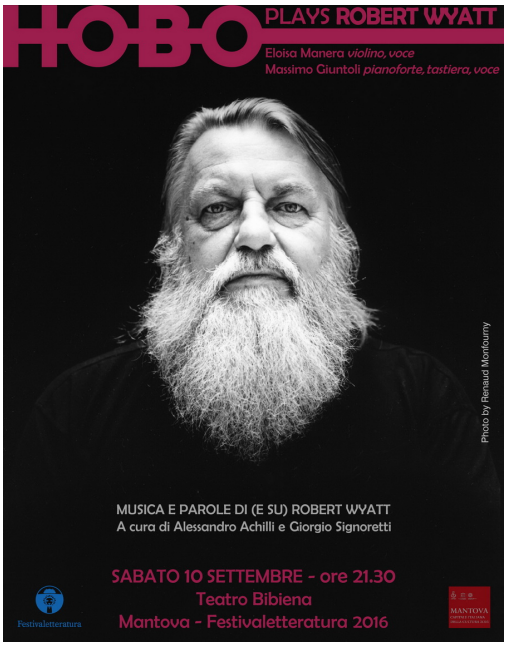
Août 2009



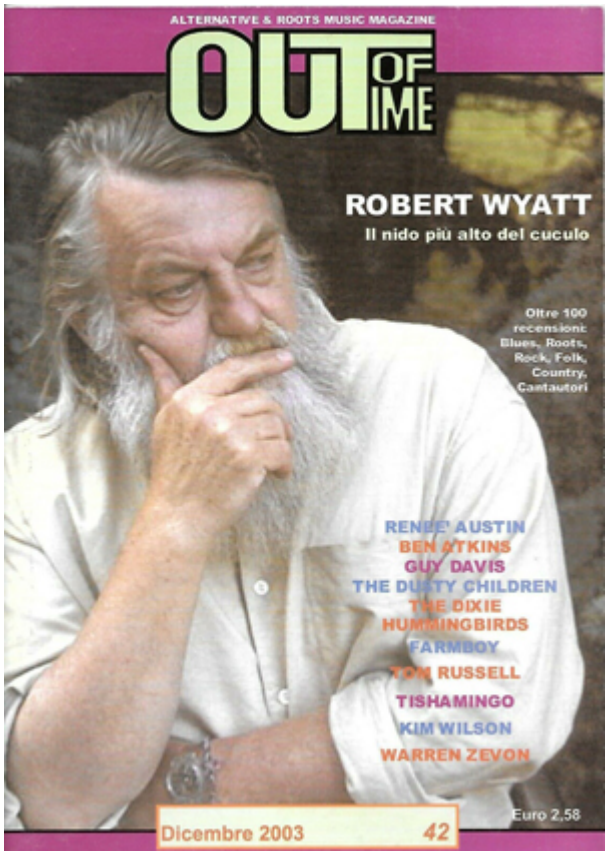
Giugno 1980



Marzo 1995



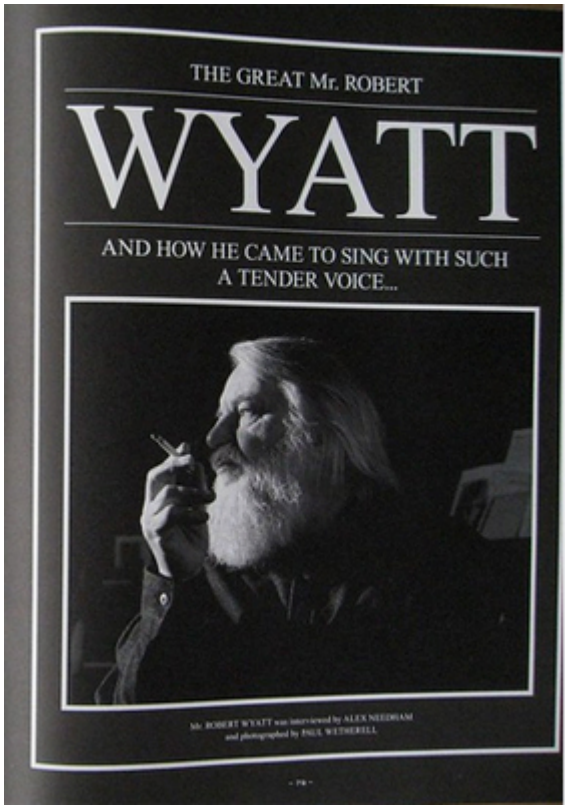
2016 - Affiche Hobo
plays Robert Wyatt



Dicembre 2003



Novembre 2010



?



Prog Italia Ottobre./Novembre. 2024

Vidéos & DVD

ABÉCÉDAIRE



> Zoom

Soft Machine

- Dutch TV 1967 - "We Know What You Mean" & "I Should've Known"

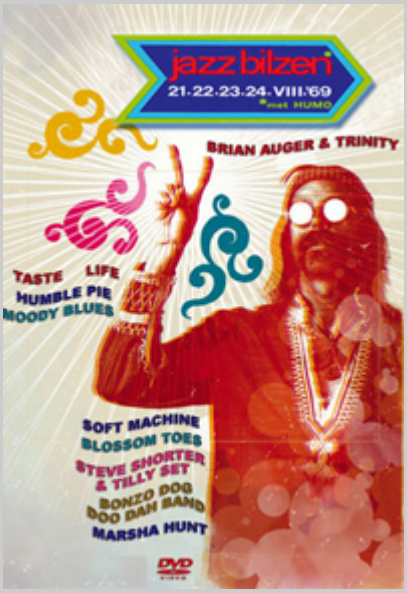
- Some Italian Movie...1968 - "I Should've Known"

- Beat Club 1970 - composition based on three tunes

- Montreux Jazz Festival 1974 - "Hazard Profile 1 - 5"

Running time : about 45'

DVD (bootleg)



> Zoom

Jazz Bilzen - 21.22.23.24. VIII '69

Performances by :

- Moody Blues
- Taste
- Life
- Steve Shorter & Tilly Set
- Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band
- **Soft Machine**
- Blossom Toes
- Marsha Hunter & White Trash
- Brian Auger & The Trinity

plus interviews & other bonus footage from Bilzen 1968.

Running time : 120 mn

DVD
2004

DOUBLE D (DD-17)



> Zoom

Bilzen Jazz and Pop Festival, 1969

21-22-23-24 August 1969

- Shocking Blue August 22, 1969
- Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band August 22, 1969
- Taste - August 22, 1969
- Moody Blues - August 22, 1969
- **Soft Machine August 22, 1969**
  Moon In June + interview
- Marsha Hunt & White Trash August 22, 1969
- Brian Auger & The Trinity August 22, 1969
- Steve Shorter & Tilly Set - August 22 1969
- Deep Purple - August 24 1969
- Humble Pie - August 24 1969
- Life - August 24 1969
- Blossom Toes - August 24 1969

BONUS MATERIAL from Bilzen Jazz 1968:
- The Move - August 24 1968
- Roland and the Bluesworkshop - August 23 1968

Total time : 2h 33mn
Mention : "Not For Sale in Stores"

NO LABEL

Soft Machine Live in Bilzen 1969



> Zoom

The Soft Machine - Live Chronicle

Featuring original Soft Machine with Kevin Ayers

- We Know What You Mean
- I Should've Known

Dutch TV Sep. 1967 - B/W
- Kevin Ayers - bass, vocal
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards, vocal
- Robert Wyatt drums, vocal

- Composition Based On 3 Tunes

Beat Club 1970
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocal
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

- Hazard Profile

Montreux Jazz Festival 4th Jul. 1974
- Karl Jenkins - keyboards, oboe
- John Marshall - drums, percussion
- Roy Babbington - bass
- Mike Ratledge - keyboards, vocal

DVD (bootleg)

FOOTSTOMP (FSVD-066)



> Zoom

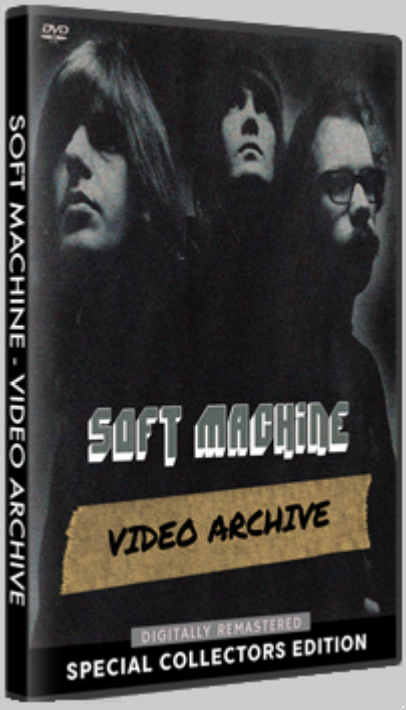
1960's - Digital Video Archives - Volume 1 (Pop, Rock & Prog)

- She's Still A Mystery / Only Pretty (Ed Sullivan 10/15/1967) (Lovin' Spoonful)
- Carrie Anne (Smothers Brothers Show 12/15/1967) (The Hollies)
- Let's Live For Today (1967) (Grassroots)
- Along Comes Mary (Ed Sullivan Show 12/08/1968) (Association)
- I Wonder What's She Doing Tonight (Pat Boone Show 1/30/1968) (Boyce & Hart)
- Proud Mary (Happening 3/1/1969) (Creedence Clearwater Revival)
- California Dreamin' (American Bandstand 2/19/1966) (Mamas And Papas)
- Get Off My Cloud (Hullabaloo 11/15/1965) (The Rolling Stones)
- Mony Mony (Ed Sullivan Show 1/26/1969) (Tommy James & The Shondells)
- The Letter (1967) (Box Tops)
- Mr. Tambourine Man (Drop-In Swedish TV 1967) (The Byrds)
- I Fought The Law (Hullabaloo 3/21/1966) (Bobby Fuller Four)
- California Girls (Kraft Music Hall 2/19/1969) (The Beach Boys)
- Windy (Carol Channing Special 101 Men 2/29/1968) (Association)
- Bend Me, Shape Me (1967) (American Breed)
- Happy Jack (Beat Club 1/21/1967) (The Who)
- People Got To Be Free (10/6/1969) (The Rascals)
- Waterloo Sunset (Beat Club 6/24/1967) (The Kinks)
- Jennifer Berber (Hollywood Palace 3/23/1968) (The Hollies)
- It's Goona Be Alright (Shivaree 6/19/1965) (Gerry & The Pacemakers)
- Do You Believe In Magic (Ed Sullivan Show 3/19/1967) (Lovin' Spoonful)
- Western Uniform (Steve Allen Show 4/16/1968) (Five Americans)
- I Got You Baby (Shindig 7/7/1965) (Sonny & Cher)
- Have You Seen Your Mother Baby (Ed Sullivan 9/11/1966) (Rolling Stones)
- For What It's Worth / Mr. Soul (Hollywood Palace 4/8/1967) (Buffalo Springfield)
- Sunshine Of Your Love (Romp! 4/21/1968) (Cream)
- Revolution (David Frost Show 1969) (The Beatles)
- Jumpin' Jack Flash (Rock & Roll Circus 12/68) (The Rolling Stones)
- Down By The River (Music Scene 9/22/1969) (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young)
- Lot Me (Happenings '69, 5/24/1969) (The Raiders)
- Good Morning Little Schoolgirl (Beat Club

10/25/1969) (Ten Years After)
- My Generation (Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour 9/17/1967) (The Who)
- Summertime Blues (Beat Club 11/16/1968) (Blue Cheer)
- You Keep Me Hangin' On (Ray Anthony Show 1968) (Vanilla Fudge)
- Oh Well (Detroit Tubenders 1969) (Fleetwood Mac)
- 1984 (Music Scene 12/15/1969) (Spirit)
- Rock Me Baby (Beat Club 1969) (Steppenwolf)
- We're Going Wrong (Twice A Forthnight BBC - 1967) (Cream)
- A Quick One While He's Away (Rock & Roll Circus 12/1968) (The Who)
- Voodoo Chile - The Lulu Show, BBC, 1968) Jimi Hendrix Experience
- Tommorow Night (Beat Club, 1971) (Atomic Rooster)
- King Kong (Old Grey Whistle Test, BBC, 1968) (Mother's Of Invention)
- We Know What You Mean (Hoepla Dutch TV 1967) (Soft Machine)
- The Weaver's Answer (Beat Club 1970) (The Family)
- American (BBC 1968) (The Nice)
- Save Me (Beat Club 1970) (Atomic Rooster)

2005
NTSC DVD-R disc
165 minutes

PINKROBERT ED.



> Zoom

Soft Machine - Video Archive - 1967-1976

DVD 1

ITALIAN FILM February 1967 I Should've Known We Did It Again

UFO CLUB June 2, 1967 Poem for John Hopkins

HOOPELA September 22, 1967 We Know What You Mean (Soon Soon Soon) I Should've Known

CAMERA III October 3, 1967 Clarence In Wonderland We Did It Again

DIM DAM DOM October 8, 1967 Hope For Happiness Improv

CE SOIR ON DANSE October 1967 (broadcast August 25, 1968) A Certain Kind Save Yourself Lullaby Letter (Strangest Scene) Hope For Happiness

BOUTON ROUGE November 1967 Clarence In Wonderland Soon Soon Soon

FORUM MUSIQUES May 24, 1969 Esther's Nose Job

TOUS EN SCENE July 25, 1969 Esther's Nosejob

BILZEN FESTIVAL August 22, 1969 interview Moon In June

HYDE PARK FREE FESTIVAL September 20, 1969 Backwards

AMOUGIES FESTIVAL October 28, 1969

L'INVITE DU DIMANCHE December 7, 1969 Hibou, Anemone And Bear Pigling Bland Facelift

EST PANORAMA Strasbourg, France December 1, 1969 Eamonn Andrews Hibou, Anemone & Bear

POP 2 – PARIS, FR March 2, 1970 Facelift Eamonn Andrews Backwards/Mousetrap Reprise Out-Bloody-Rageous Esther's Nosejob

AMOUGIES FESTIVAL May 29, 1970

KRALINGEN FESTIVAL June 28, 1970 Esther's Nosejob

DVD 2

POP 2 Oct-Nov 1970 recording 'Fourth'

ANATOMY OF POP January 10, 1971 Neo-Caliban Grides

STOP POP – BRUSSELS, BE January 15, 1971 Eamonn Andrews Kings And Queens Teeth Pigling Bland / 10:30 Returns to the Bedroom Slightly All The Time / Noisette

BEAT CLUB March 23, 1971 Neo-Caliban Grides Out-Bloody-Rageous Eamonn Andrews / All White

TELE DIMANCHE May 5, 1972 Pigling Bland

HôPITAL MARITIME August 12, 1972 news segment

PRISM August 6, 1972 interview All White

ROCKENSTOCK January 30, 1972 The Soft Weed Factor One Across Gesolreut

FULL HOUSE February 17, 1973 Gesolreut All White / Fanfare

NDR JAZZ WORKSHOP May 17, 1973 Fanfare All White Link 1 The Soft Weed Factor Link 2 37 1/2 Link 3 Riff Stanley Stamp's Gibbon Album Chloe and the Pirates Gesolreut E.P.V. Link 4 Stumble One Across Riff II

DVD 3

POP 2 July 30, 1973 Riff Down The Road interview Gesolreut Chloe And The Pirates

NO-DO October 8, 1973 Scheeßel Rock Festival

MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL July 4, 1974 Hazard Profile The Floating World Ealing Comedy Bundles Land of the Bag Snake Joint The Man Who Waved at Trains Peff The Man Who Waved at Trains (reprise) LBO Riff II Lefty Penny Hitch

RAI TV August 1974 Hazard Profile Part 1

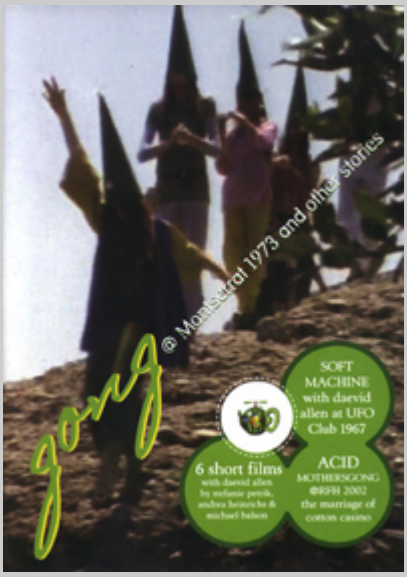
SO IT GOES August 7, 1976 The Tale Of Taliesin

NEWCASTLE JAZZ FESTIVAL November 13, 1976 Out of Season Ban Ban Caliban The Tale of Taliesin One Over the Eight

EXTRA HOME MOVIES 1968 Jimi Hendrix Tour in America

BEYOND IMAGE 1969 film

MUSICLADEN-CLUB - SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION - 2xDVD + DVD-R
536 minutes



> Zoom

Gong @ Montserrat 1973 and Others Stories

- Gong @ Montserrat 73
- Big Tea
- Conscience Strike
- Arrest Me
- Gaïa
- TickOcock
- Garden Song
- Acidmothergong @ rfh2002

- Soft Machine @ UFO 67
Activist & friend : John (Hoppy) Hopkins had been arrested on trumped up charges & this performance by Daevid Allen aimed to hit back at the hypocrisies of the British establishment.

UFO Club London June 2, 1967
Poem for Hoppy by Daevid Allen
Film & lightshow projections : Mark Boyle & Joan Hills

- Daevid Allen - reading
- Robert Wyatt - drum & vocal abstractions
- Kevin Ayers - bass
- Mike Ratledge - organ



> Zoom

This rare footage of the first Soft Machine lineup shot at the UFO Club in London during the swinging sixties shows an early example of performance poetry by an experimental psychedelic rock band.

VOICEPRINT (VPDVD25)

- Soft Machine - UFO Club London June 2, 1967

Soft Machine - Rare Collection (1967-2005)

FRENCH TV 1968 (Black & White)
- A Certain Kind
- Save Yourself
- Priscilla
- Lullabye Letter
- Hope For Happiness

DUTCH TV 1967 (Black & White)
- We Know What You Mean
- I Should've Known

ITALIAN MOVIE (1968)
- I Should've Known

BEAT CLUB (1970)
- Composition Based On Three Tunes

MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL (1974)
- Hazard Profile 1-5 (Featuring 17 year old Allan Holdsworth)

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY
Jazztage Festival 2005 - Germany 11/12/05
- 1,2,1,2
- Kit Runner
- Seven For Lee

Running Length: 107 minutes.
Disc Format: 1 NTSC DVD-R

(KVH168)

Alive In Paris 1970

Filmed 2 March 1970 at Theatre de la Musique, Paris, France - First broadcast on Pop 2 by Maurice Dumay and presented by Patrice Blanc-Francard / Directed by Claude Ventura (copyright INA).

- Facelift
- Eamonn Andrews
- Backwards/Mousetrap Reprise
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Robert Wyatt's vocal improvisation
- Esther's Nosejob



Zoom > 1 2

- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocals
- Mike Ratledge - Lowrey organ & Hohner pianet
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Robert Wyatt - drums & vocal
- Elton Dean - alto sax & saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano sax, flute, voice & harmonica

2008
DVD

VOICEPRINT (VPDVD45)

Soft Machine Alive in Paris 1970



> Zoom

Soft Machine - Dada Was Here - 1967-1971

Italian TV, 1967
- I Should Have Known

UFO Club, June 2, 1967
- Poem For Hoppy

Hoepla TV, September 1967
- We Know What You Mean
- I Should Have Known

Dim-Dam-Dom, French TV, November 1967
- Hope For Happiness
- Esther's Nose Job

Unknown Location, 1968 (?)
- Hope For Happiness
- Lullabye Letter
- Save Yourself
- A Certain Kind

Bouton Rouge, French TV 1969
- Esther's Nose Job

Bilzen Jazz Festival, 1969
- Interview
- Moon In June

Kralingen Pop Festival, 1970
- **Esther's Nose Job**

Live 1970
- Teeth

Soft Machine Music Documentary, 1971

Beat Club, 1971
- Composition Based On Three Tunes
- Grides

Rehearsal For Fourth Album, 1971

NTSC
DVD video - Unofficial Release
Running time : 119 minutes

Note : the 5th sequence "Unknown location" is taken from the program "Ce soir on danse" (ORTF - French TV).

DOUBLE D (DO-130609)



> Zoom

Soft Machine - JazzRock Years - Live in Europe 1969-1976

Live At "Bilzen Jazz Festival", Bilzen, Belgium, 22-Aug-1969
- Moon In June

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ

"Pop 2" France TV, 30-Apr-1970 from Theatre de la Musique, Paris, France, 02-Mar-1970
- Introduction
- Facelift
- Esther's Nose Job

Pop 2" France TV, 23-Jul-1970 from Theatre de la Musique, Paris, France, 02-Mar-1970
- Introduction
- Eamonn Andrews
- Backwards
- Out-Bloody-Rageous

- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Mike Ratledge - electric piano, organ
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - flute, soprano sax

Live at "Newcastle Jazz Festival", on BBC 2 TV, 13-Nov-1976 from Newcastle University Theatre, Newcastle, England, 29-Oct-1976
- Introduction
- Out Of Season
- Ban-Ban Caliban
- The Tale Of Taliesin
- One Over The Eight

- John Etheridge - guitars
- Ric Danders - violin
- Percy Jones - bass
- Karl Jenkins - keyboards
- John Marshall - drums

FOXBERRY (FBVD-043)



> Zoom

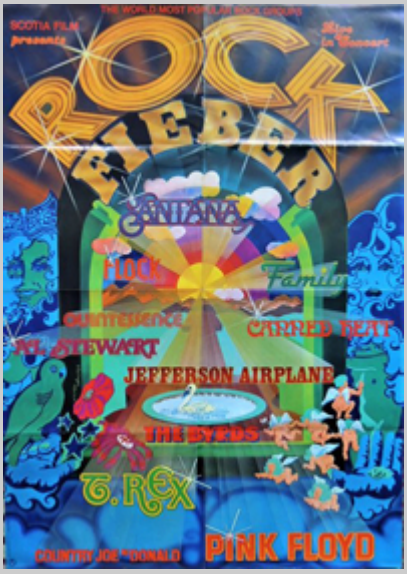
British Rock Viewseum Vol. 6 Age Of Progressive & Jazz Rock 2

- Moon in June (Soft Machine)
- Let the Good Times Roll (Man)
- 7171551 (Man)
- Born With Future (Man)
- Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You (Man)
- C'mon (Man)
- Bananas (Man)
- Pavane (Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- I Just Got Some (Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- Freedom Jazz Dance (Brian Auger & Oblivion Express)
- Self Introduction (Narration) - Just Me, Just You (Brian Auger & Oblivion Express)
- Don't Look Away (Brian Auger & Oblivion Express)
- Truth (Brian Auger & Oblivion Express)
- I Want To Take You Higher (Brian Auger & Oblivion Express)
- Venus (Shocking Blue)

2010
NTSC
DVD - region 2

WHD ENTERTAINMENT INC. (IEBP-10058)

Moon In June played at Bilzen



> Zoom

Rock Fieber

- Gumbo (Santana)
- Zero She Flies (Al Stewart)
- Human Condition / So Sad (Canned Heat)
- Giants (Quintessence)
- Saturday Afternoon (Jefferson Airplane)
- Wasted Union Blues (It's A Beautiful Day)
- Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun (Pink Floyd)
- Freedom Is A Constant (Country Joe McDonald)
- Mardi Gras Day (Dr. John, The Night Trippers)
- Drowned In Wine (Family)
- Open Up Your Hearts (It's A Beautiful Day)
- Pavillions Of Sun (T. Rex)
- Old Blue (The Byrds)
- Big Bird (The Flock)

- Esther's Nose Job (Soft Machine)
- Interviews with Bill Thompson, Paul Kanter & Grace Slick / White Rabbit / The Ballad Of You & Me & Pooneil (Jefferson Airplane)
- Savor / Jingo (Santana)
- A Saucerful Of Secrets (Pink Floyd)
- End Credits (Unknown Artist)

2004
PAL

Location: Kraalinge Bos Rotterdam
Date: 06-28-1970
Running Time: 97 mins
German voice over the interviews

UNIVERSUM FILM (82876 61795 9)



> Zoom

The Soft Machine - Grides

The DVD was recorded on March 23, 1971 at Radio Bremen's TV studio, Bremen, Germany. First broadcast in an abbreviated form on Beat-Club on March 27, 1971.

This DVD was mastered from the original 1971 videotape in the archives of Radio Bremen.

- Neo-Caliban Grides
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Robert Wyatt's vocal improvisation
- Eamonn Andrews
- All White

- Mike Ratledge - keyboards
- Hugh Hopper - bass
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocal
- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello

2006
DVD - NTSC - all region

Also included a CD audio recorded on October 25, 1970 at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam.

CUNEIFORM (RUNE 230/231) CD/DVD

Soft Machine at Radio Bremen's TV studio



> Zoom

The Soft Machine - Facelift France & Holland

The DVD was recorded on March 2, 1970 at Théâtre de la Musique, Paris, France.
Audio bonus material : Entire concert (audience recording), March 2, 1970.

- Eamonn Andrews
- Backwards
- Mousetrap (reprise)
- Out-Bloody-Rageous
- Facelift
- Vocal improvisation
- Esther's Nose/Pigling Bland

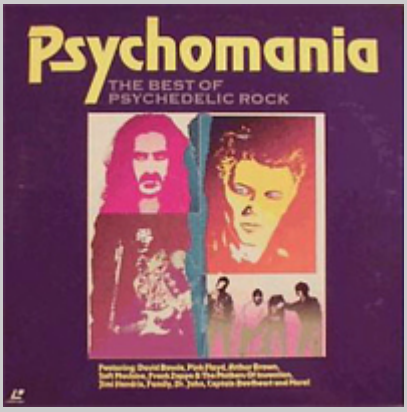
- Robert Wyatt - drums, vocals
- Mike Ratledge - Hohner pianet, Lowrey Holiday Deluxe organ
- Hugh Hopper - bass

- Elton dean - alto sax, saxello
- Lyn Dobson - soprano and tenor sax, flute, harmonica, vocals

2022
DVD - NTSC - all region

Also included 2xCD audio - (or 2xLP) - recorded on March 2, 1970 at the Théâtre de la Musique , Paris, France and on January 17, 1970 at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. The netherlands.

CUNEIFORM (RUNE 495/496/497) 2xCD/DVD
CUNEIFORM (RUNE 495)
2xLP/DVD



> Zoom

Psychomania - The Best Of Psychedelic Rock (Japanese Version)

- Introduction
- Space Oddity (David Bowie)
- His Wheels On Fire(Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity)
- Space Cowboy (Steve Miller Band)
- Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun (Pink Floyd)
- A Saucerful Of Secrets (Pink Floyd)
- Fire (The Crazy World of Arthur Brown)
- Eight Miles High(Byrds)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- **We Know What You Mean (Soon Soon Soon) (Soft Machine)**
- Sugar Magnolia (Grateful Dead)
- The Son Of Suzy Creamcheese (Frank Zappa & the Mothers of Invention)
- Voodoo Chile (Jimi Hendrix Experience)
- **It Wouldn't Last (Soft Machine)**
- Drowned In Wine (Family)
- Mardi Gras Day (Dr. John The Night Tripper)
- Wasted Union Blues (It's A Beautiful Day)
- Upon The My Oh My (Captain Beefheart)

1991
Disc Laser

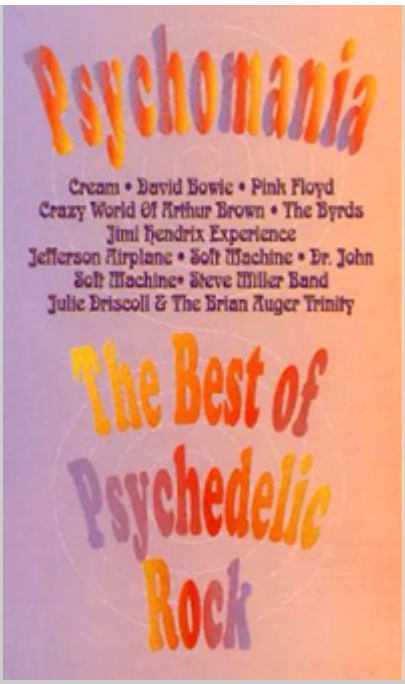
Running time : about 84'

VIDEOARTS (VALJ-3207)

La présente édition japonaise au format Disc-Laser comporte plusieurs morceaux absents des versions VHS et DVD.

Psychomania - The Best Of Psychedelic Rock (UK & US Version)

- Set The Controls/Saucer Of Secrets (Pink Floyd)
- Space Oddity (David Bowie)



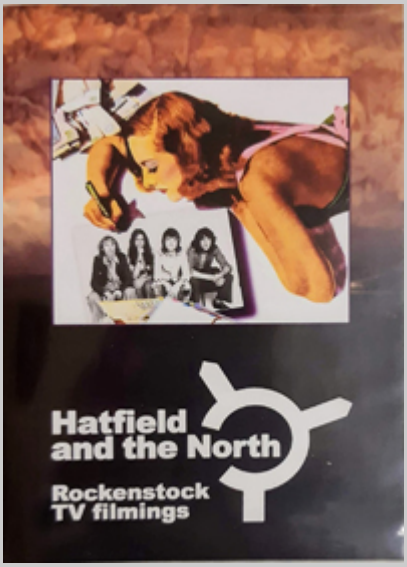
> Zoom

- Fire(Crazy World Of Arthur Brown)
- I Feel Free(Cream)
- Upon The My Oh My (Captain Beefheart)
- Sunshine Of Your Love (Jimi Hendrix Experience)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)
- **We Know What You Mean (Soft Machine)**
- All On A Mighty Fine Day (Dr. John)
- Space Cowboy (Steve Miller Band)
- Eight Miles High (The Byrds)
- This Wheel's On Fire (Julie Driscoll & The Brian Auger Trinity)

1994
VHS (PAL) & DVD

Running time : about 54'

UK Magnum Music Group
MMGV 067



> Zoom

Hatfield And The North - Rockenstock TV Filmings

Studio ORTF Des Buttes-Chaumont, Paris, France January 2nd, 1973 - Broadcast Live
- God Song
- Fol De Rol
- For Robert
- Mewsing

Château D'Hérouville, France September 1973 - Broadcast February 5th, 1974
- Blane / Nan True's Hole / Big Jobs
- Going Up To People And Tinkling / Lobster Extract / Landcrabs

Tracks 1 to 4 :
- Robert Wyatt - vocals
- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Pip Pyle - drums
- David Sinclair- keyboards

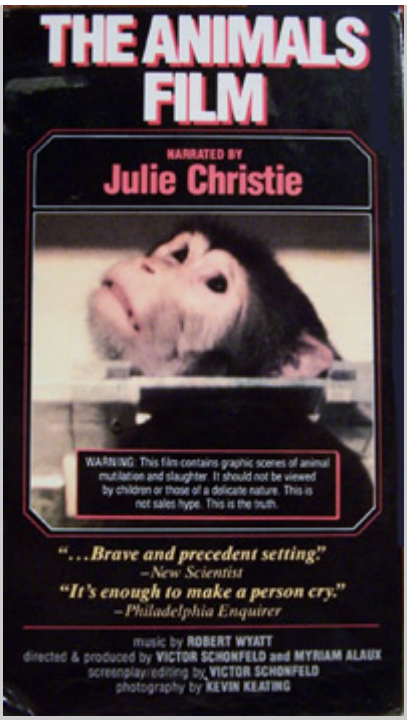
2018
DVD, Unofficial Release

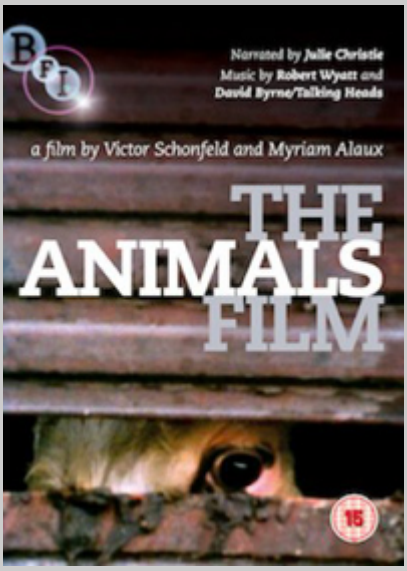
Running time : 38 mn

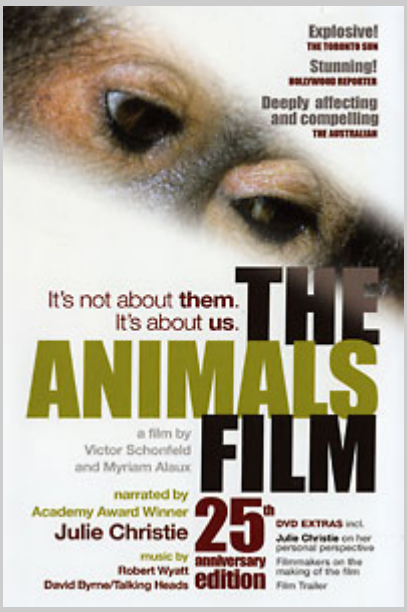
The Animals Film

Narrated by Julie Christie
Music by Robert Wyatt

*"**The Animals Film** takes us inside the slaughterhouse, into the laboratory, and down the food processing line to create a*





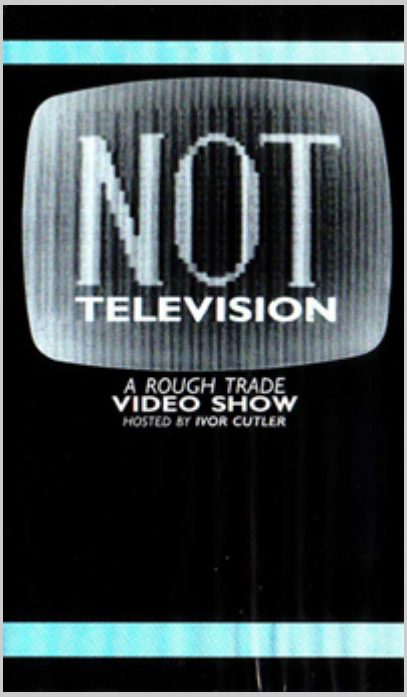


> Zoom

powerful and controversial film. Because of its graphic footage of animal abuse, this film has been banned from television. Sensitively narrated by Julie Christie, this emotionally charged film may well change your life."

1981
VHS
Running time : about 120'
Colour
MPI Home Video
MP 1354

2008
DVD
Running time : about 130'
This release includes both the 1981 original film version and the director's 2007 cut
BFIVD796



> Zoom

Not Television (A Rough Trade Video Show)

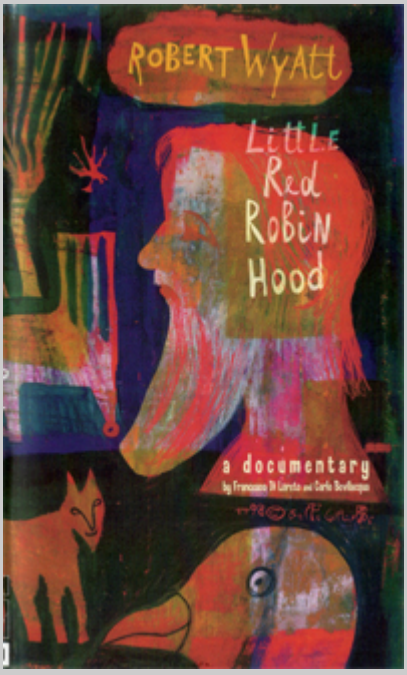
- It Will Come (The Woodentops)
- Kicker Conspiracy (The Fall)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)
- Nag Nag Nag (Cabaret Voltaire)
- Little Dinosaur (Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers)
- Masimba Bele (Unknown Cases)
- Birthday Girl (Microdisney)
- Shoplifters (Ivor Cutler)
- Strike! (The Enemy Within)
- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- The Boy With The Thorn In His Side (The Smiths)

A Rough Trade compilation hosted by Ivor Cutler.

1986
VHS - PAL
Running time : 43'

ROUGH TRADE (RTV 2)

Robert Wyatt - Shipbuilding



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt In Little Red Robin Hood

A documentary by Francesco Di Loreto and Carlo Bevilacqua

1998
VHS

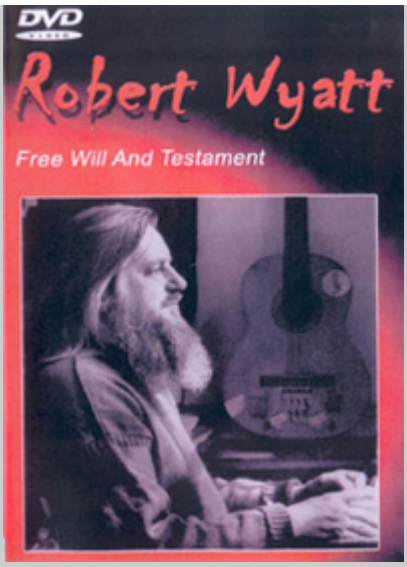
Running time : about 60'
Black and White
Dolby Surround

Consorzio Produttori Indipendenti
RER RWVID

Robert Wyatt In Little Red Robin Hood

Free Will And Testament "A Robert Wyatt Story"

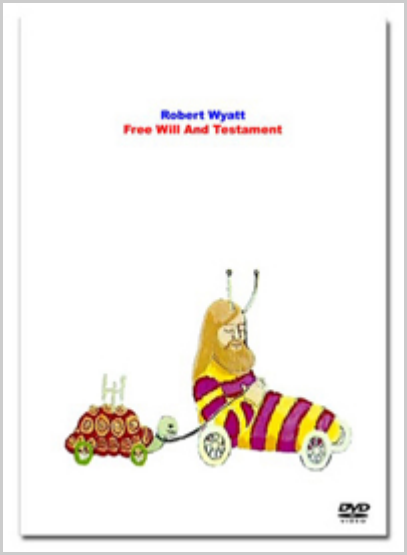
- "The Robert Wyatt Story" documentary of BBC Four (with *Sea Song*, *Left On Man*, *Free*



Zoom > 1 2 3



> Zoom



> Zoom

Will And Testament, *September the Ninth*, *Gharbzadegi*)

- French documentary POP2 with Matching Mole Live in France

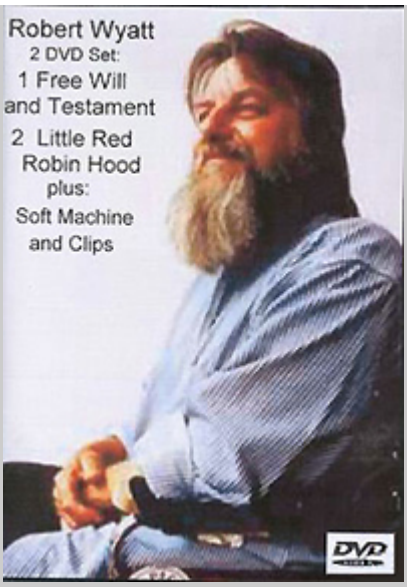
- Promo film for Shipbuilding

2003
DVD

Running time : about 100'
Mono

ELLIE FILMS
EV01

A Robert Wyatt Story



> Zoom



> Zoom

Old Grey Whistle Test

Disc 1
- Under My Wheels - Alice Cooper (1971)
- Tiny Dancer - Elton John (1971)
- We Gotta Have Peace - Curtis Mayfield (1972)
- Political Science - Randy Newman (1972)
- Help Me Make It Through The Night - Kris Kristofferson & Rita Coolidge (1972)
- Ain't No Sunshine - Bill Withers (1972)
- Sylvia / Hocus Pocus - Focus (1972)
- Hands Off - Rory Gallagher (1973)
- May You Never - John Martyn (1973)
- Stir It Up - The Wailers (1973)
- Do The Strand - Roxy Music (1973)
- Frankenstein - The Edgar Winter Group (1973)
- Jet Boy - New York Dolls (1973)
- Dolphins - Tim Buckley (1974)
- Upon The My O My - Captain Beefheart (1974)
- Rock 'N' Roll Doctor - Little Feat (1975)
- Roxette - Dr Feelgood (1975)
- Stand By Me - John Lennon (1975)
- Give My Compliments To The Chef - The Sensational Alex Harvey Band (1975)
- Freebird - Lynyrd Skynyrd (1975)
- Amarillo - Emmylou Harris (1976)
- Too Long At The Fair - Bonnie Raitt (1976)
- Tom Traubert's Blues - Tom Waits (1977)
- Really Free - Otway & Barrett (1977)

+ 5 extra interviews

Disc 2
- Psycho Killer - Talking Heads (1978)
- Statue Of Liberty - XTC (1978)
- (I'm Always Touched By Your) Presence Dear - Blondie (1978)
- Stone Fox Chase - Val Doonican & Charlie McCoy (1978)
- Paradise By The Dashboard Light -

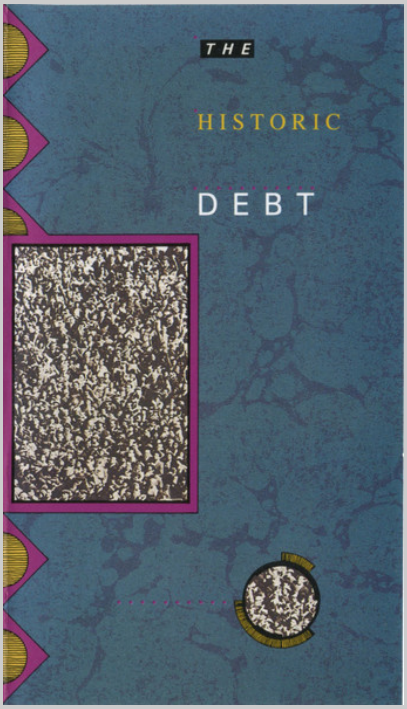
Meatloaf (1978)
- American Girl - Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers (1978)
- Can't Stand Losing You - The Police (1978)
- Rosalita - Bruce Springsteen (1979)
- I'm Bored - Iggy Pop (1979)
- Are Friends Electric? - Tubeway Army (1979)
- Message To You Rudi - The Specials (1979)
- Smash It Up / I Just Can't Be Happy Today - The Damned (1979)
- Rock 'N' Roll High School - The Ramones (1980)
- Careering - PIL (1980)
- Reward - The Teardrop Explodes (1980)
- I Will Follow - U2 (1981)
- Stone Fox Chase - Nine Below Zero (1981)
- Ghosts - Japan (1982)
- Shipbuilding - Robert Wyatt (1983)
- Moon River / Pretty Persuasion - REM (1984)
- Holding Back The Years - Simply Red (1985)
+ 1 extra interview

Running time : 300'

2001
DVDx2

BBC (EBBCDVD1073)

Robert Wyatt - Shipbuilding



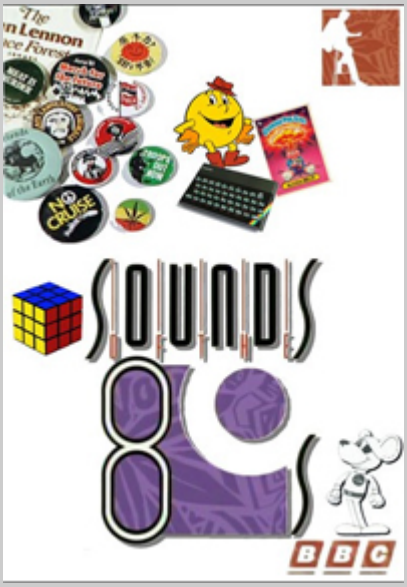
> Zoom

The Historic Debt

-- Police Truck (Dead Kennedys)
- Justice In Freedom (The Hypnotics)
- Try (Starlings)
- Moonchild (Fields Of The Nephilim)
- Arc Light (Loop)
- Shadow Of No Man (Crime & The City Solution)
- I'm Just Beginning To Live (Jonathan Richman)
- Move Me (The Woodentops)
- Enjoy The Silence (Depeche Mode)
- Countdown (Pulp)
- Scratches (In The Sand) (Spin)
- Gang Of One (Bradford)
- Over Rising (The Charlatans)
- Strangely Beautiful (T.V.P.'s)
- Nothing Less Than Brilliant (Sandie Shaw)
- Our Love Is Heavenly (Heavenly)
- Oh Sometime (Erasure)
- Ship Song (Nick Cave)
- Shipbuilding (Robert Wyatt)

1991
VHS-PAL

JETTISOUDZ VIDEO (JE222)



> Zoom

Sounds Of The 80s

Disc 1
Episode 1
- Ant Music (Adam & The Ants)
- Boy Meets Girl (Haircut 100)
- Please Please Tell Me Now (Duran Duran)
- Do You Really Want To Hurt Me? (Culture Club)
- Poison Arrow (ABC)
- Young Guns (Wham!)
- Relax (Frankie Goes To Hollywood)
- Robert De Niro's Waiting (Bananarama)
- I Should Be So Lucky (Kylie Minogue)

Episode 2
- Geno (Dexy's Midnight Runners)
- Never Gonna Cry Again (Eurythmics)
- True 'Spandau Ballet)
- One More Night (Phil Collins)
- Johnny (Come Home) (Fine Young Cannibals)
- Everybody Wants To Rule The World (Tears For Fears)
- Luka (Suzanne Vega)
- Holding Back The Years (Simply Red)

Episode 3
- Celebration (Kool & The Gang)
- Slow Hand (Pointer Sisters)
- Slave To The Rhythm (Grace Jones)
- Word Up (Cameo)
- When The Weekend Comes (Bobby Womack)
- Smooth Operator (Sade)
- Criticize (Alexander O'Neal)
- I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Whitney Houston)

Episode 4
- Just Can't Get Enough (Depeche Mode)
- Love Action (The Human League)
- Only You (Yazoo)
- Say Hello, Wave Goodbye (Soft Cell)
- Blue Monday (New Order)
- Smalltown Boy (Bronski Beat)
- Oppertunities (Pet Shop Boys)
- Sometimes (Erasure)

Episode 5
- Reward (The Teardrop Explodes)
- I Can't Help Myself (Orange Juice)
- Shipbuilding [from Whistle Test `83] (Robert Wyatt)
- Oblivious (Aztec Camera)
- Milkman Of Human Kindness (Billy Bragg)
- Lay Of The Land (The Fall)
- Streams Of Whiskey (The Pogues)
- Brenda's Iron Sledge (Robyn Hitchcock)
- Walls Come Tumbling Down (The Style Council)

Disc 2
Episode 6
- Ace Of Spades (Motörhead)

- Cheap Sunglasses (ZZ Top)
- I Will Follow (U2)
- Born In The USA (Bruce Springsteen)
- In & Out Of Love (Bon Jovi)
- Listen To Thieves (INXS)
- She Sells Sanctuary (The Cult)
- Severina (The Mission)

Episode 7
- Moon River/Pretty Persuasion (R.E.M.)
- In A Hole (The Jesus & Mary Chain)
- Ways To Be Wicked (Lone Justice)
- The Killing Moon (Echo & The Bunnymen)
- Walk Like An Egyptian (The Bangles)
- Inbetween Days (The Cure)
- Monkey Gone To Heaven (The Pixies)
- Bigmouth Strikes Again (The Smiths)

Episode 8
- Good For Thought (UB40)
- Hands Off, She's Mine (The Beat)
- African Children (Aswad)
- You Be Illin' (Run-DMC)
- No Sleep 'Till Brooklyn (Beastie Boys)
- Push It (Salt & Pepa)
- Miuzi Weighs A Ton (Public Enemy)
- Buffalo Stance (Neneh Cherry)

Bonus
The Cars - Rock Goes To College - Brighton University, 1979
Just What I Needed
Intro
Good Times Roll
My Best Friend's Girl
All Mixed Up
Night Sports
Bye Bye Love
Don't Cha Stop
You're All I've Got Tonigh

Eight-part, four hour series featuring vintage 80's rock, pop, reggae, soul, R&B and hip-hop performances from the BBC TV archives.

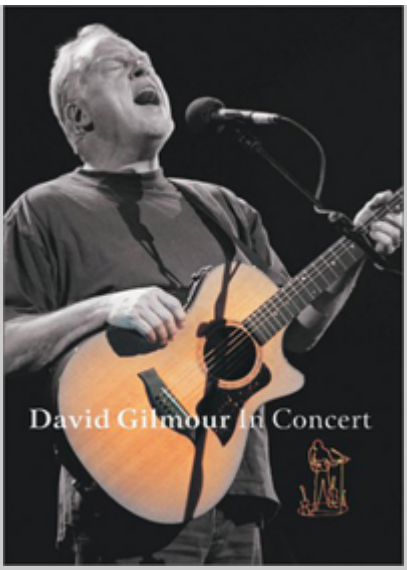
2006
2xDVD

MARK JONES (MJDVD47 & MJDVD48)

David Gilmour In Concert

Meltdown Concert 2001
Royal Festival Hall Concert 2002

The Meltdown Concert, June 2001
- Shine On Your Crazy Diamond Parts I-5
- Terrapin
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- Je Crois Entendre Encore
- Smile
- Wish You Were Here
- Comfortably Numb (version concert



Zoom > 1 2

with Robert Wyatt)
- Dimming Of The Day
- Shine On Your Grazy Diamond Parts 6-8
- A Great Day For Freedom
- Hushabye Mountain

Royal Festival Hall, January 2002
- Dominoes
- Breakthrough
- Comfortably Numb (version répétition)

Bonus
- I put a Spell on You
- Don't
- Sonnet 18

2002
DVD

EMI

Comfortably Numb



> Zoom

Robert Wyatt
Chronicles 1972-2004

- POP 2
  (French TV 1972 Documentary B/W)
- I'm A Believer (Top Of The Pops 1974)
- Shipbuilding (O.G.W.T. 1982)
- Shipbuilding (PV)
- UK TV Documentary 2004 Incl.
  Rare Live Performances & More

Running time : about 87'

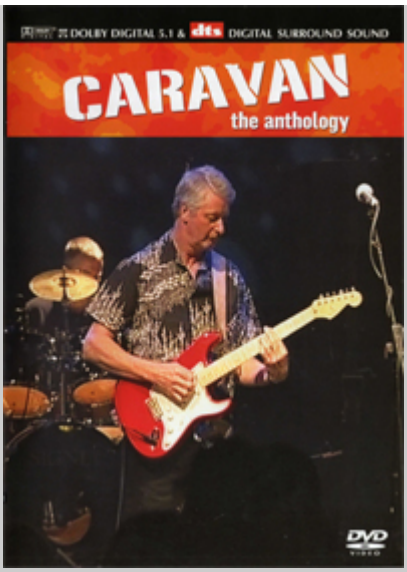
2004
DVD-R (bootleg)

FOOTSTOMP (FSVD-171)

Caravan - The anthology

- Nine Feet Underground
- For Richard
- Caravan Medley
- Nightmare
- All The Way
- A Very Smelly Little Oik
- If I Could Do It Again...
- Liar

Bonus Tracks
- Magic Man
- Place Of My Own
- Golf Girl



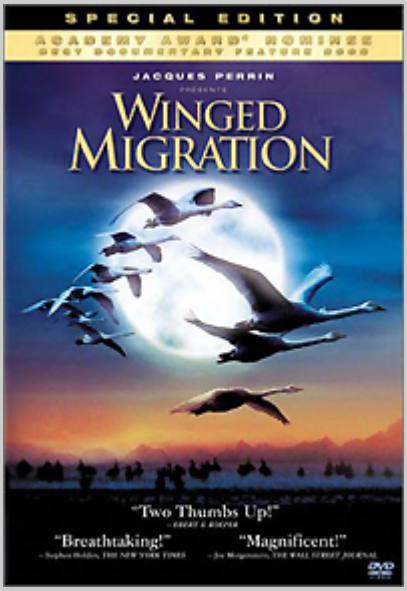
> Zoom

- Pye Hastings - guitar, voice
- Richard Coughlan [uncredited]- drums
- Jim Leverton - bass (on Caravan Medley)
- Doug Boyle [Uncredited] - guitar
- David Sinclair - Keyboards
- Simon Bentall [Uncredited] - percussion
- Geoffrey Richardson [Uncredited] - viola

2004
DVD - NTSC - compilation
Running time : about 82'

Caravan Medley includes covers of *O Caroline* and *Backwards*.

CLASSIC ROCK LEGENDS (CRL1568 NTSC)
RAGNAROCK LTD (DVDL013D)



> Zoom

Winged Migration
Le peuple migrateur (Jacques Perrin)

Robert Wyatt, qui interprète plusieurs morceaux du film, apparaît brièvement dans le bonus.

Robert Wyatt appears briefly in the bonus footage.

2003
DVD

COLUMBIA TRISTAR

nophoto

(The) Elvis Costello TV Collection

Vintage video compilation of TV clips, performances, interviews, etc.

- I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down (BBC - Top Of The Pops (TOTP) (28-Feb-80)
- I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down (ITV Kenny Everett Video Show, '80)
- Watching The Detectives (Erics, Liverpool, 2-Aug-77 (live)
- New Amsterdam + interview (BBC - Fun Factory 31-May-80) (EC solo)
- Alison (Granada TV - What's On, 21-Jul-77) (EC solo live)

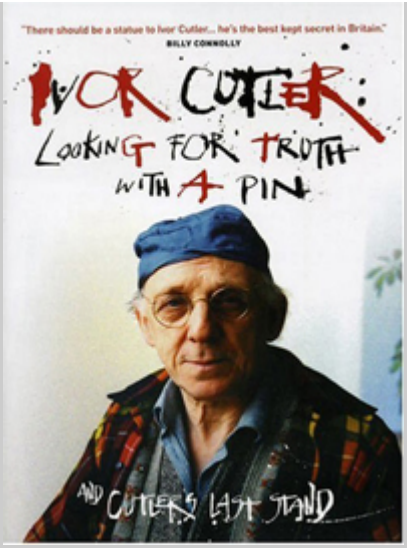
- Let Them All Talk
- Everyday I Write The Book (Channel 4 - Switch, 27-Jul-83?)(live) - TKO (Boxing Day)
- Charm School /
- The Imposter (Concerts For Kampuchea, 29-Dec-79)
- Oliver's Army (BBC - TOTP, 10-Feb-79?)
- I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down (ITV - Whitelight, 13-Feb-80)
- King Horse
- Sweet Dreams (BBC - TOTP, 24-Dec-81)
- Shipbuilding (Granada TV - Reports, 16-Aug-82) (EC + Steve live)
- Everyday I Write The Book (BBC - TOTP, 14-Jul-83) interview
- Shipbuilding
- Everyday I Write The Book > (Channel 4 - The Tube, 9-Mar-84) (live)
- Clubland /
- Clowntime Is Over /
- Gloomy Sunday (Fundamental Frolics, 1-Jun-81) (solo live)
- Shipbuilding (repeat!) (16-Aug-82)
- Nelson Mandela (Channel 4 - The Tube, 9-Mar-84) (live, The Specials AKA with EC replacing Stan Campbell on vocals)
- Interview about Berlin by Muriel Gray (Channel 4 - The Tube, 9-Mar-84)
- Clubland (BBC - Swapshop?, Dec-80)
- From Head To Toe (BBC - Pebble Mill, 13-Sep-92)
- Beyond Belief
- Interview + clips from soundcheck + Let ThemAll Talk (rec: 6-Oct-83 in Glasgow, b.cast: 29-Oct-83, TVAM? - Data Run)
- **Interview with EC & Robert Wyatt + Shipbuilding promo video (Channel 4**
- Loose Talk, 30-May-83)
- Shot With His Own Gun (Granada TV - What's In, 16-Mar-81) (EC + Steve live)
- Radio Radio (BBC - TOTP, 26-Oct-78?)
- Colour Of The Blues
- Interview > (BBC - Russell Harty Show, 3-Nov-81) (live)
- Sweet Dreams
- The Making Of Almost Blue (LWT - The South Bank Show, 8-Nov-81):
- I Wanna Be Loved (BBC - TOTP, 21-Jun-84)

Running time : 180'

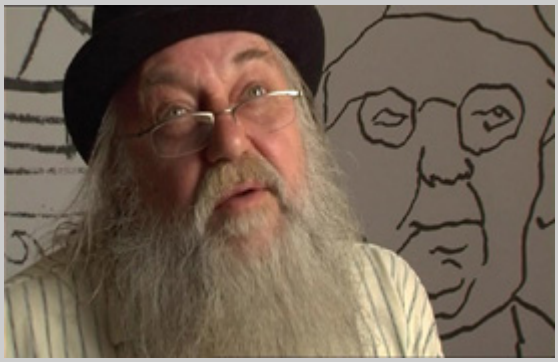
VHS
No label

Ivor Cutler
Looking For Truth With A Pin
And Cutler's Last Stand

"Robert Wyatt and Alfreda Benge pops up several times during the documentary with comments on their friendship and work with Ivor Cutler."



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom



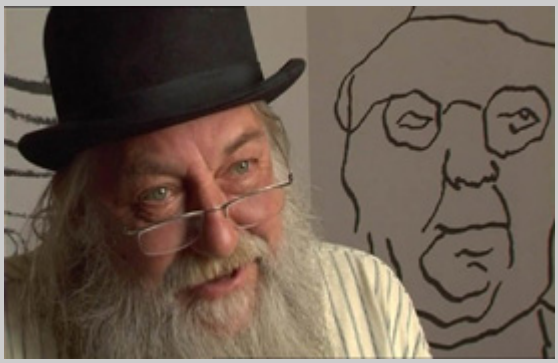
> Zoom

Running time : 96'

2006
DVD
Cherry Red Dvds



> Zoom



> Zoom



> Zoom

Hatfield And The North – Bowery Poetry Club - NYC Jun 25 2006

- Big Jobs
- Going Up To People And Tinkling
- Calyx [P. Miller]
- Share It
- Seven Sisters
- Licks For The Ladies
- Finesse Is For Fairies
- Psychic Warrior
- What's Rattlin' ?
- Take Your Pick
- Rifferama
- Calyx [P. Miller]
- Underdub
- God Song [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]
- Lything And Gracing [P. Miller]
- What In The World
- Halfway Between Heaven And Earth
- Gigantic Land Crabs In Earth Takeover Bid
- Fitter Stoke Has A Bath
- Didn't Matter Anyway
- Part Of The Dance [P. Miller]
- Nan's True Hole [P. Miller/R. Wyatt]

Recorded At The Bowery Poetry Club - New-York City - June 25 2006

- Richard Sinclair - bass, vocals
- Pip Pyle - drums
- Phil Miller - guitar
- Alex Maguire - keyboards



> Zoom



> Zoom

2006
DVD

PUNKCAST (997)

Four Songs from this cocnert

Masters Of The Balloonafon
The Happy Accidents

- It Goes Like This
- Crumpet For Tea (Mandy Wake Up)
- A Weird Old Peaches (bonus track)
- Tales From The Hatbox
- The Unexpergurgated Legend Of Creation
- Masters Of The Balloonafon (I Lay Me Down In The Grotto)
- Somewhere In America
- The Delicate Art Of Chopstick Balance
- Locomotive Train
- **Street Of Desire**

- Robert Wyatt - trumpet on track 10 *Street Of Desire*

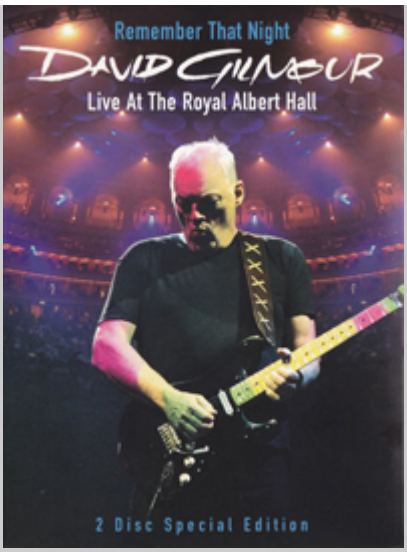
- Mavernie Cunningham - vocals, bagpipes
- Graham Flight - piano, bass, pedal steel guitar, vocals, kaos pad, space organ, balloonafon
- Mick Grierson - guitar, bass, drums, harp, balloonafon
- Justin Mitchell - trumpet, keyboards, accordion, balloonafon
- Will Glanfield - alto sax
- Robert Javis - trombone
- Neil Sloman - tenor sax
- Brian Hopper - tenor & soprano sax
- Matt Williamson - drums, guitar

2006
DVD

HAPAX 001

David Gilmour - Remember That Night (Live At The Royal Albert Hall)

Live At The Royal Albert Hall - Disc 1
- Speak To Me
- Breathe
- Time
- Breathe (Reprise)
- Castellorizon
- On An Island
- The Blue
- Red Sky At Night
- This Heaven
- **Then I Close My Eyes (with Robert Wyatt)**
- Smile



> Zoom

- Take A Breath
- A Pocketful Of Stones
- Where We Start
- Shine On You Crazy Diamond
- Fat Old Sun
- Coming Back To Life
- High Hopes
- Echoes
- Wish You Were Here
- Find The Cost Of Freedom
- Arnold Layne
- Comfortably Numb

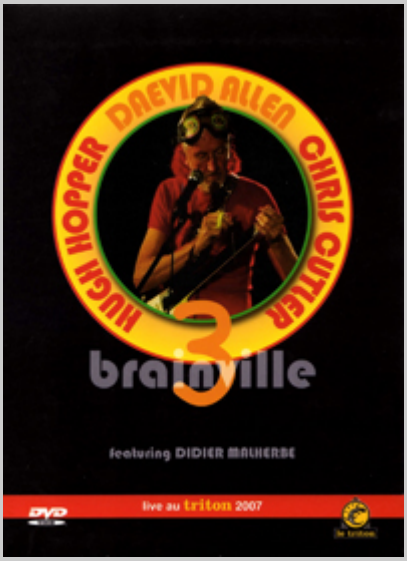
Bonus Features - Disc 2
- Wot's... Uh The Deal
- Dominoes
- Wearing The Inside Out
- Arnold Layne
- Comfortably Numb
- Breaking Bread, Drinking Wine
- Dark Globe
- Astronomy Domine
- This Heaven
- Castellorizon
- On An Island
- The Blue
- Take A Breath
- High Hopes
- The Making Of 'On An Island'
- The West Coast
- On An Island
- Smile
- Island Jam 2007

Robert Wyatt - trumpet on track 10

2006
2xDVD

COLUMBIA MUSIC VIDEO 88697 07424 9

Then I Close My Eyes



Zoom > 1 2

Brainville 3 - Live au triton 2007
Hugh Hopper - Daevid Allen - Chris Cutler

Live at Le Triton, June 8th, 2007.

Concert
- **Hope for Happiness** [Brian Hopper]
- **Dedicated to You but You Weren't Listening** [Hugh Hopper]
- Trial by Headline [Daevid Allen]

Brainville 3 - The Film
Interview by Americ Leroy + extraits du concert au Triton : (Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening, Brainville, Trial by Headline, Hours Gone, Hope for Happiness, Who's Afraid, Dynamite, Ocean Motha).

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals

- Hugh Hopper - bass guitar
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Didier Malherbe - tarogato (sur *Ocean Motha*)

A noter que l'ordre des morceaux du concert est erroné sur la jaquette du DVD.

Durée : 1h30
2007
DVD

LE TRITON (TRI-08514)



> Zoom

University Of Errors - Daevid Allen's University Of Errors Play The Soft Machine

Gong Family Unconventional Gathering. The Melweg, Amsterdam.05/11/06

- That's How Much I Need You Now [R. Wyatt]
- Save Yourself [R. Wyatt]
- Hope For Happiness [B. Hopper]
- She's Gone (K. Ayers]
- When I Don't Want You [H. Hopper]
- You Don't Remember [D. Allen, R. Wyatt]
- Tattoo Internude
- I Should Have Known [H. Hopper]
- Shooting At The Moon [. Ayers]
- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein [D. Allen]
- Fohat Digs Holes In Space [D. Allen, G. Smyth]
- Love Makes Sweet Music [K. Ayers]

Durée : 60 mn
2008
DVD

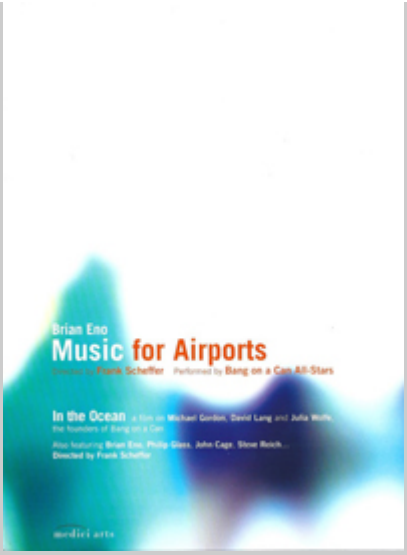
VOICEPRINT (ungongDVD001)

Live at the Gong Family Unconvention

Music For Airports / In The Ocean - Brian Eno - Bang On A Can

- 1/1
- 1/2
- 2/1
- 2/2
- In The Ocean

Reprise par Bang On A Can de l'oeuvre



> Zoom

composée par Brian Eno en 1978.

Durée : 1h47
2008

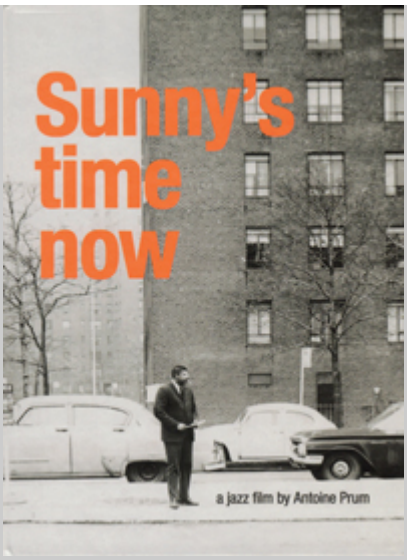
MEDICI ARTS (3077558)

"20 ans après la première version de Music For Airports de Brian Eno, sortie en 1978, le Bang On A Can All Stars a enregistré une version instrumentale pour le label Point Music. On peut parler d'une renaissance. L'œuvre de studio de Brian Eno a été transmuée en une pièce acoustique très proche de l'originale, mais plus bouleversante encore. Cette version fut jouée en 1998 à l'aéroport de Stansted, près de Londres, en présence de Brian Eno et Robert Wyatt (le pianiste de la version initiale). Brian Eno avoua avoir eu lui-même les larmes aux yeux, comme d'autres spectateurs à l'aéroport de Stansted, à l'écoute de cette œuvre qu'il n'avait pas conçue pour être interprêtée "live".

Sur ce DVD Music for Airports est capté à l'occasion du Holland festival de New York en 1999. Le Bang On a Can était alors accompagné par des images filmées par Frank Scheffer dans un hall d'aéroport retravaillées dans un flou artistique vaporeux. Le film se regarde comme Music for Airports s'écoute, avec un certain détachement, d'un œil distrait, l'oreille charmée sans être totalement mobilisée, jusqu'à ce que l'on soit lentement conquis. On ressent alors finalement une certaine fascination pour ces images indéfinissables dont on devine la teneur : des passants dans le grand hall, le mouvement des portes coulissantes, celui des escalators... De la même façon aussi que l'on fut et que l'on continue à être fasciné par la musique, par ces quatre lents mouvement combinant la répétition à l'aléatoire.

La deuxième partie du DVD, In The Ocean, est également un film de Frank Scheffer, de 2001. Ce documentaire est particulièrement limpide, synthétique et complet sur la démarche des trois fondateurs de Bang On A Can, Michael Gordon, David Lang et Julia Wolfe. Il propose un subtil montage d'interviews d'eux et de John Cage, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Elliot Carter et Louis Andriessen ponctué d'extraits d'œuvres sur fonds d'images urbaines. C'est non seulement la trajectoire du Bang On A Can qui est explicitée, mais aussi l'évolution de la musique contemporaine américaine de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, à travers ses compositeurs les plus influents."

NEOSPHERES



Zoom > 1 2 3

Sunny's time now

A jazz film by Antoine Prum

DVD 1
- Sunny' time now - a portrait of jazz drummer Sunny Murray (108', English, French, German)

DVD 2
- Alger '69 (16') a film by Théo Robichet
- Interview Sunny Murray (80', English)
- Interview Daniel Caux (37', French, English s.t.)
-**Interview Robert Wyatt (39', English)**

Robert Wyatt, the drummer and singer of the original *Soft Machine* line-up, evokes the intricate relations between the artistic and the political avant-garde and explains how free jazz radicals like Sunny Murray influenced his own musical development.

2008
DVD

PAUL THILTGES DISTRIBUTIONS/LA BASCULE (PTD-135)

An interview with Robert Wyatt



> Zoom

Going Underground: Paul McCartney, the Beatles and the UK Counterculture

A documentary by Tom O'Dell with Joe Boyd, Mick Farren, Barry Miles, Eddie Prevost and ***Robert Wyatt.***

"Feature-length documentary examining the growth of the UK Counterculture in the mid-1960s, and Paul McCartney's involvement with this movement, which had a significant impact on the Beatles.... "

Duration : 2h33

2013
DVD

PRISM FILMS

Extract with Robert Wyatt



> Zoom

The Story Of Beat-Club Volume 3: 1970-1972

DVD 1
Beat-Club 60 - 24.10.1970
Beat-Club 61 - 28.11.1970
Beat-Club 62 - 31.12.1970

DVD 2
Beat-Club 63 - 31.1.1971
Beat-Club 64 - 27.2.1971

Beat-Club 65 - 27.3.1971

- It Happened Today (Curved Air)
- An Awful Lot Of Woman (Skid Row)
- Showband Blues (Skid Row)
- Composition Based On Three Tunes (The Soft Machine)
- Propositions (Curved Air)
- Vivaldi (Curved Air)

DVD 3
Beat-Club 66 - 24.4.1971
Beat-Club 67 - 22.5.1971
Beat-Club 68 - 26.6.1971

DVD 4
Beat-Club 69 - 24.7.1971
Beat-Club 70 - 7.8.1971
Beat-Club 71 - 25.9.1971

DVD 5
Beat-Club 72 - 30.10.1971
Beat-Club 73 - 27.11.1971
Beat-Club 74 - 26.12.1971

DVD 6
Beat-Club 75 - 29.1.1972
Beat-Club 76 - 26.2.1972
Beat-Club 77 - 25.3.1972

DVD 7
Beat-Club 78 - 27.5.1972
Beat-Club 79 - 24.6.1972
Beat-Club 80 - 30.9.1972

DVD 8
Beat-Club 81 - 28.10.1972
Beat-Club 82 - 25.11.1972
Beat-Club 83 - 9.12.1972

2015
8 x DVD

ARD VIDEO (57452)

Composition Based On Three Tunes

Daevid Allen's University Of Errors - Error Avalonis

- Introduction
- That's How Much I Need You Now



> Zoom

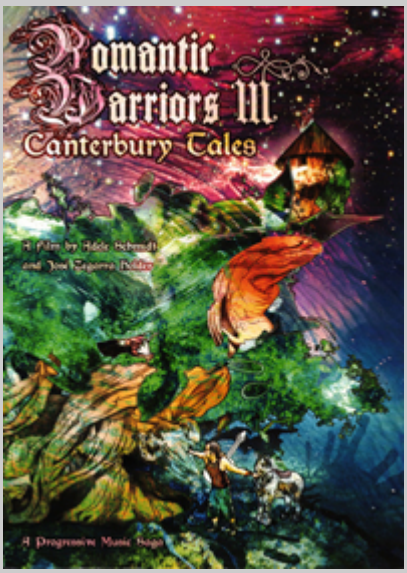
[R. Wyatt]
- Save Yourself [R. Wyatt]
- Memories [H. Hopper]
- Money Doesn't Make It
- **I Should've Known** [H. Hopper]
- When I Don't Want You [H. Hopper]
- Pot Head Pixies
- Hope For Happiness [B. Hopper]
- Rich Men Eat My Voice
- O Caroline [D. Sinclair/R. Wyatt]
- Shooting At The Moon
- Stoned Innocent Frankenstein
- Fohat Digs Holes In Space
- Clarence In Wonderland / We Did It Again [K. Ayers]

Videos
- Errors
- The Professor And The Pixel

Assembly Rooms, Glastonbury 30th May 2008.

2015
DVD

MANOONA MEDIA (ManoonaDVD002)



Zoom > 1 2 3 4

Romantic Warriors III - Canterbury Tales

A progressive Music Saga

An Adele Schmidt and José Zegarra Holder Film..

Featuring :
Caravan, Delivery, Egg, Forgas Band Phenomena, Gilgame, Glass, Gong, Hatfield and The North, In Cahoots, Matching Mole, Moving Gelatine Plates, National Health, Nucleus, Planeta Imaginario, Quiet Sun, Soft Machine, Soft Machine Legacy, Supersister, Syd Arthur, The Muffins, The Wilde Flowers, The Wrong Object.

Total Time : 118'

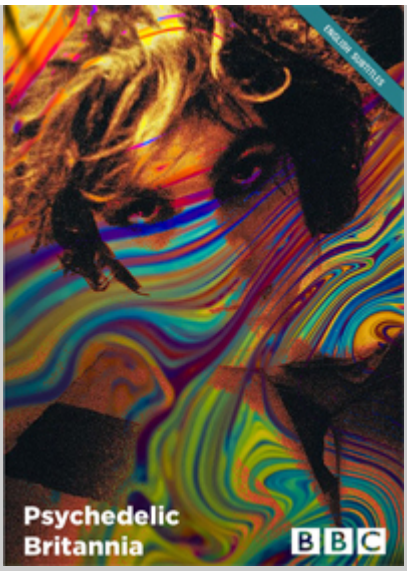
2015
DVD

A ZEITGEIST MEDIA LLC PRODUCTION

Critiques/Reviews

Psychedelic Britannia

"Documentary exploring the rise and fall of the most visionary period in British music



Zoom > 1 2

history: five kaleidoscopic years between 1965 and 1970 when a handful of dreamers reimagined popmusic.

... the psychedelic era produced some of the most ground-breaking music ever made, pioneered by young improvising bands like Soft Machine and Pink Floyd..."

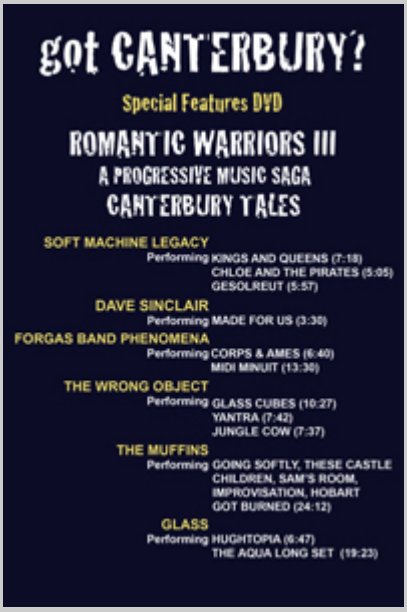
Directed by Sam Bridger with Joe Boyd, Robert wyatt, Arthur Brown, Gary Brooker, Paul Mc Cartney, The Moody Blues etc.

Total Time : 59'

2015
DVD

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION (BBC)

Two extracts with Robert Wyatt



> Zoom

Got Canterbury? Romantic Warriors III Special Features DVD (A Progressive Music Saga / Canterbury Tales)

- Kings and Queens [Soft Machine Legacy]
- Chloe and the Pirates [Soft Machine Legacy]
- Gesolreut [Soft machine Legacy]
- Made For Us [Dave Sinclair]
- Corps & Ames [Forgas Band Phenomena]
- Midi Minuit [Forgas Band Phenomena]
- Glass Cubes [The Wrong Object]
- Yantra [The Wrong Object]
- Jungle Cow [The Wrong Object]

Total Time : 288'

2016
DVD

A ZEITGEIST MEDIA LLC PRODUCTION

Daevid's You, Me & Us

- I Don't, Can't
- Madamme 0
- Statement Heels
- Hopeful Impression Of Happiness
- Da-i-na-ma-i-to/Deta

Hopeful Impression Of Happiness is a *Hope For Hapiness* cover.



> Zoom

- Daevid Allen - guitar, vocals
- Chris Cutler - drums
- Yumi Hara - keyboards, vocals

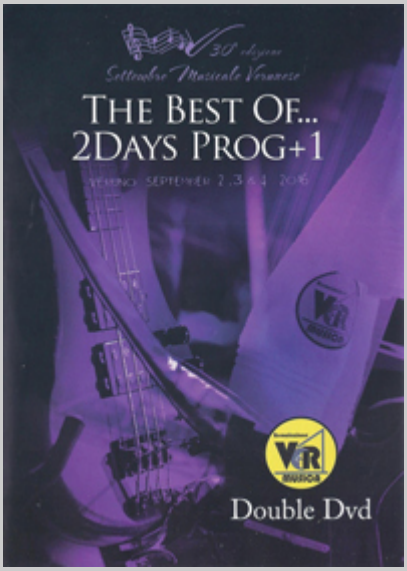
"Limited edition DVD specially made for members of the audience who were given a 'Rain Check' when Daevid was unable to travel to do what became the you me & us 'Get Well Soon, Daevid! Japan tour, in 2014."

Recorded and filmed in October 2013.

Running time : 30'

2018
DVD

BONOBO'S ARK (BAR008)



> Zoom

The Best Of... 2Days Prog+1

Disc 1
- I Cancelli Del Tempo (Ubi Maior)
- Kiss From A Glacier (Special Providence)
- K2 (Special Providence)
- Lazy Boy (Special Providence)
- Delusion Rain (Mystery)
- Shadow Of The Lake (Mystery)
- Look At Yourself (Uriah Heep)
- The Law (Uriah Heep)
- Naughty Boy (Cheeto's Magazine)
- Coma (Nemo)
- Revolu$ion (Nemo)
- Disconnected (Airbag)

Disc 2
- Colours (Airbag)
- Don't Be Late (Saga)
- On The Loose (Saga)
- You're Not Alone (Saga)
- Qinah (Syndone)
- Cielo Di Fuoco (Syndone)
- Sagittarius (Frequency Drift)
- Memory (Frequency Drift)
- Sad Rain (Anekdoten)
- Gravity (Anekdoten)
- **Facelift** / Last Day **(Soft Machine Legacy)**
- **Kings And Queens (Soft Machine Legacy)**
- Gesolreut (Soft Machine Legacy)

2Days Prog+1 Veruno Festival, September 2, 3 & 4 2016.

2017

2xDVD

VER1 MUSICA (VRMUSICA7)



> Zoom

Sunlove - Jean-Jacques Lebel

- Sunlove
- L'état normal
Bonus
- Exprmntl 4 Knokke Claudia Von Alemann
- Exprmntl 1967 - Jud Yalkut

Les happenings organisés en Europe, dans les années précédant mai 68, par mes amis et moi, contrairement à ceux de nos correspondants d'outre-atlantique, se sont soulevés contre l'ordre moral, contre la dictature de la marchandise, contre toute autocensure en matière de sexe et de politique."
J.J. Lebel

Sunlove comporte des extraits de la performance de Soft Machine lors du happening organisé par Jean-Jacques Lebel à Cogolin en août 1967.

'Jean-Jacques Lebel had us playing one of his happenings, around a swimming pool at night. And the only rule was that everybody had to be undressed, including the band. Completely. If you weren't, you had to stay indoors. It was a very nice feeling, on a warm, breezy, Saint-Tropez evening, to be playing without clothes. That's when I realised you could do it. And being behind a drumkit protected what they call your modesty.'
Robert Wyatt in Different Every Time by Marcus O'Dair.

Running time : 136'

2021
DVD avec livret de 56 pages

Ed. RE:VOIR

An extract from Sunlove with Soft Machine

Soft Machine - Other Doors - Tour 23/24

- Burden Of Proof
- The Visitor At The Window
- The Tale Of Talesin
- Whisper Back
- The Stars Apart
- Fourteen Hour Dream
- 10.30 Returns To The Bedroom
[M. Ratledge / H. Hopper / R.Wyatt]
- Middleburn (Drum Solo)
- Hidden Details
- Hazard Profil (Part 1)

- John Etheridge - guitar



> Zoom

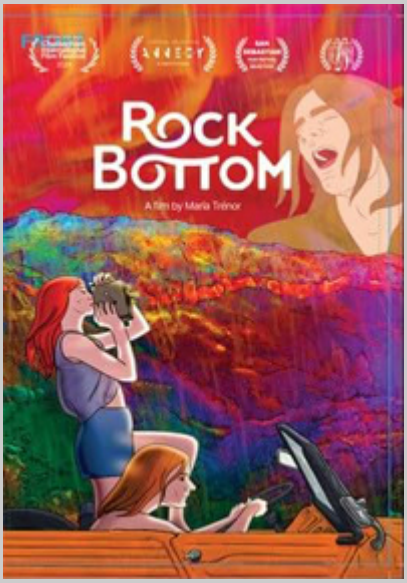
- Asaf Sirkis - batterie
- Theo Travis - saxophones, flute, claviers
- Fred Thelonious Baker - basse

Enregistré au Triton (Les Lilas - France) le 12 avril 2024.

DVD - LE TRITON (TRI24-194)



Zoom > 1 2



Rock Bottom, un film de Maria Trenor

Film d'animation basé sur la genèse de l'album Rock Bottom.

Fermi Delfa (voice), Laura Casana (voice), Miranda Gas (voice), Oriol Pla (voice), Roger Pera (voice).

Supplément : "Con que la lavaré", film de Maria Trénor (2003 - 11mn).

DVD - 2024
Durée : 84 mn

POTEMKINE FILMS (EDV2390)

Plus d'informations 1

Plus d'informations 2

Vinyl et vin/Vinyl and wines

ABÉCÉDAIRE



Musardant sur le net, je découvre ce poème de Nicolas Klotz, qui me réjouit. *Le vin et l'heure tardifs déplient l'évidence*, réécouter Soft Machine et Robert Wyatt c'est tour à tour se coltiner *l'énergie la mélancolie la révolte la beauté - décennie après décennie...*

Samedi soir
Une bouteille de vin rouge sur la table
J'écoutais fort des disques au casque
De ma platine
Pour ne pas embêter le voisin du dessous
Qui frappe dur au plafond avec un balai
Verre de vin après verre de vin
Joy Division New Order Soft Machine
Les paroles d'Ian Curtis
L'orgue de Mike Ratledge
La batterie et la voix de Robert Wyatt
S'infiltrent en profondeur dans l'intimité
Le vin et l'heure tardifs
Déplient l'évidence
La musique est vivante
Décennie après décennie
Rien ne l'arrête
L'énergie la mélancolie la révolte la beauté
Rien ne les arrête
J'aime beaucoup la matière vinyle des disques
On entend le support physique de la musique
La matière dans laquelle elle est gravée
La musique est là
Dans les sillons infinis des 17 minutes environs
Pendant lesquelles l'aiguille fait son travail
Beaucoup plus complexe
Plus subtil
Que le lecteur CD Home Cinéma
VOUS L'AVEZ RÊVÉ SONY L'A FAIT
Le pressage VERVE produit un silence différent du pressage IMPULSE !
Alors que dans le cosmos numérique le silence est partout identique
Et la musique flotte
Sans support
Froideur des chiffres des crédits et du chloroforme
Le support fait partie de la perception
Le hors champ chez les Straub qui mixent en mono
Vient de l'écran
Alors que partout ailleurs
Il vient surtout des installations Dolby
Qui entourent les spectateurs dans les salles
Beaucoup aujourd'hui sont à la recherche des pressages mono
Des premiers Velvet Underground et des Rolling Stones
La perception est conditionnée par le support

En musique comme au cinéma
Les révolutions technologiques
Sont aussi des révolutions de la perception humaine
Le monde devient la manière dont nous le percevons
Ceux qui vivent en dehors du champ de vision de la technologie numérique
Disparaissent
Parce qu'ils ne sont plus détectables par
LE PLUS GRAND NOMBRE
Qui n'est qu'une très petite élite
Une infime petite caste
Apprivoisée par la technique
Et par le confort Haute Définition
Avec qui les grandes fortunes
Veulent construire un monde à leur image
Vidé de toute vie de toute vision de tout avenir
Mais les hommes les femmes et les enfants qui disparaissent
Sont de plus en plus visibles
De mieux en mieux détectés
Par toutes les formes de police qui contrôlent nos frontières
L'époque n'est plus comme je le pensais
Il y a encore quelques mois
Un mai 68 à l'envers
Mais un 1789 à l'envers
Où les guillotines veulent achever les pauvres
Colossale régression humaine
Prise dans la vertigineuse expansion de la finance
Et de la technique
Le disque tourne l'aiguille a terminé sa course
Depuis combien de temps ?
Je plane dans les vapeurs du Bourgogne rouge
En écoutant Soft Machine 4
Surtout pour la batterie de Robert Wyatt
A qui Soft Machine avait coupé le sifflet
Ca me rappelle une étonnante anecdote que Wyatt m'avait raconté
Robert Wyatt et Mike Ratledge étaient dans la même école à Canterbury
Plus âgé que Robert
Mike faisait partie de la « School Patrol »
En charge de la discipline des élèves
Le jeune Robert aimait fumer dans les toilettes
Plusieurs fois Mike l'a dénoncé
Wyatt disait que même dix ans plus tard
La surveillance continuait au sein de Soft Machine
Mike appréciait peu les paroles des chansons de Robert
Qui peu à peu a cessé de chanter
Puis a quitté Soft Machine
Quelques années plus tard Robert est tombé par une fenêtre
Et s'est brisé la colonne vertébrale
« The singer I am » disait-il
« Didn't need the drummer I was anymore »
Depuis il a fait une dizaine d'albums magnifiques
Ecoutez sa reprise de Strange Fruit (Billie Holliday)
Peu de temps après
Mike Ratledge et Hugh Hopper ont quitté Soft Machine eux aussi
Laissant le nom du groupe à d'autres musiciens
Qui après quelques albums médiocres
L'a définitivement enterré
A force de vouloir tout contrôler
On détruit la raison d'être des choses
Comment imaginer qu'une société de contrôle
Puisse générer autre chose que sa propre destruction ?

NICOLAS KLOTZ
02/11/2005 18h38

Nicolas Klotz a réalisé en 1992 "Robert Wyatt part On" - Production Mégamix, France 3.

ROBERT WYATT

[about Keith Tippett in " Keith Tippett - Mujician "de Martin Phillips -Jazz In Britain - 2026]

"Keith was a West Country bloke with a big heart and completely unlike the Old Boy Network jazz mafia that was the London scene at the time. He listened to everybody, was openminded, never put anybody down. And one of his things was to get all these different musicians from different genres together."

YANN GIRAUD

[in Les « oubliés » 2025 de Yann Giraud - Exit Musik - 6 janvier 2026]

"Figurez-vous qu'un jour je me suis retrouvé au téléphone avec Robert Wyatt, qui m'a demandé de lui accorder dix minutes pour se faire un thé… J'ai donc écouté dix minutes de Robert Wyatt manier une bouilloire, souffler sur sa tasse et avaler le liquide — et c'était encore du Robert Wyatt. Je n'oublierai jamais ce sentiment de privilège que j'ai ressenti. "

STUART TROUTMAN

[Email exchanges about this website and Robert Wyatt - October 2025]

"I can readily say that I'm a fan of the site, the newsletter, & especially the discography. Here in the US, there are many releases with Wyatt which we never see, given his international scope. I can say that I became a Wyatt fan when I first heard his voice; I was 14 then, & I'm 72 now. That's a full lifetime! If any contemporary music figure has been a 'hero' for me, it's Robert Wyatt. Yes, I also listen to 'Radio Robert' to explore 'the Sound of Tout'. Thank you for your efforts; I've been enjoying all of this for years. I know I'll cry when he dies, but I'm glad he's alive now. His music is a treasure."

NICOLAS KLOTZ

[in Nicolas Klotz - Derives.tv - 2020]

"Robert était tellement accueillant, aussi timide que moi. On a passé la nuit à discuter, boire, écouter des disques. Vers les 4h du matin, il dansait dans son fauteuil roulant. Le tournage a commencé le lendemain. Juste une nuit de tournage. Avec deux techniciens venant de Londres."

RICHARD SINCLAIR ABOUT MATCHING MOLE AND ROCK BOTTOM

[in Claudio Bustamante Interview - 13 November 2022]

0:00 / 1:14

Matching Mole



0:00 / 4:44

Rock Bottom

MIKE RATLEDGE - A TRIBUTE

[in Facelift - The Canterbury scene(zine) continued…. February 6, 2025]

Jeff Sherman of US progressive trio Glass who witnessed the full glory of the Soft Machine ’s sound in 1968.

“Seattle Center Coliseum was packed with people. This was like Hendrix’s homecoming. We’re in there and before Soft Machine play, they douse the lights – it was pitch black, and we hear this rumble. I mean, it literally was shaking. It was Mike Ratledge doing the bass pedal intro to ‘Why Are We Sleeping’. We can see they had this thing called the revolving stage, a round stage, and it’s backlit, but we can’t see the members. And we see this guy, somebody climbing over the amps to get on the drum set with just a vest and a hat on. And Mike’s playing the bass pedals. And the lights still haven’t come on. And then we hear this voice – Kevin steps up to the mic and says, this is called ‘The Rise and Fall of the American Empire’. Then there’s like a little laughter. And he goes. ‘We’re not kidding’. And then boom, they launched into it. The lights come on. You couldn’t have had more impact on us. They sounded like nobody we would have ever heard before. They looked like nobody we would ever heard before…. They were freaking loud – hell! But where we were sitting it was just perfect – it is not hyperbole to say that moment literally changed our lives…’

ROBERT WYATT - LE CINQUIEME TEMOIGNAGE

[in Pink Floyd en rouge - Michele Mari - Seuil]

Je m'appelle Robert Wyatt, nom d'artiste de Robert Ellidge, né à Bristol le 28 janvier 1945. J'ai été le fondateur, la voix et le batteur des Soft Machine, un groupe qui n'a pas duré longtemps. Le 1er juin 1973, en me penchant à une fenêtre après avoir trop bu, je suis tombé du troisième étage : depuis lors je suis paralysé à partir de la taille. Mais mes amis ne m'ont pas oublié : si dans les concerts de David Bowie ou de David Gilmour vous avez vu sur la scène un petit vieux sur un fauteuil roulant, ce petit vieux c'était moi.

En 1969, pendant plusieurs mois, les Soft Machine enregistrèrent à Abbey Road. À côté de notre studio, il y en avait un plus petit qui n'était presque jamais utilisé, mais un matin je vis que le signal rouge au-dessus de la porte était allumé. Je demandai à un technicien qui était là, et il m'expliqua qu'il y avait Syd Barrett. Je ne pouvais pas y croire, Barrett ! Les jours suivants je vis encore la lumière rouge allumée, mais quand dans un studio encore plus grand que le nôtre il y avait les Pink Floyd, qui en cette période réunissaient les morceaux d'*Ummagumma*, la lumière était éteinte. Au cours



des mois suivants, je constatai qu'il n'y avait pas d'exceptions : soit eux, soit lui. Je demandai à tous les techniciens si avant de venir Barrett se renseignait : il ne se renseignait pas, et d'ailleurs il ne prenait même pas de rendez-vous, il arrivait un point c'est tout, mais comme c'était Barrett personne n'avait le courage de le renvoyer, et, à condition qu'il se passe de techniciens, ils lui laissaient utiliser ce studio à moitié abandonné. Je demandai s'il y avait eu des fois où, arrivant et sachant qu'il y avait ses ex-compagnons, il s'en était allé : ça n'avait jamais eu lieu, Barrett venait seulement lorsque eux n'étaient pas là, comme s'il le savait. Imaginez mon trouble : l'image de ce garçon si maigre, tout seul dans ce petit studio, qui entrait et sortait comme un voleur... Ce garçon qui nous avait inspirés nous aussi, c'était grâce à sa musique que j'avais fondé les Soft Machine... Aussi, dès le premier festival où nous sommes programmés avec les Pink Floyd, je vais chez Roger et je lui raconte tout. Ce ne fut pas beau de voir couler les larmes de ses yeux, grand et gros comme il .était, mais cela me fit aussi plaisir, je ne sais pas si vous me comprenez... En tout cas, une fois remis de son émotion, il me prie de lui accorder une faveur: je dois aider Syd, quel que soit son projet. Je lui demande pourquoi eux ne l'aident pas, il me répond que Nick et Rick y seraient opposés, et qu'il connaît Syd, en les voyant il aurait l'illusion de retravailler avec eux, aussi il valait mieux que je m'en occupe, peut-être qu'en travaillant avec un autre musicien son talent se réveillerait, j'aurais la gratitude de tout le monde, la sienne, celle de Dave, et naturellement celle de Syd et de tous ses fans.

Aussi, je l'ai aidé. J'ai pris avec moi Willie Wilson, qui par une ironie du destin avait été la basse de Dave chez les Jokers Wild. Je l'aidais pour la partie technique, le plus souvent, parce que pour le reste il ne semblait même pas écouter ce qu'on lui disait. Non pas qu'il fût sûr de son affaire, au contraire, je n'ai jamais vu quelqu'un d'aussi indécis, pour chaque chanson il enregistrait au moins une dizaine de versions, quelques-unes presque identiques et d'autres tellement différentes qu'elles en devenaient tout autre chose, et le malheur était qu'il ne se décidait jamais, il les gardait et disait: « Je choisirai plus tard... » Pour réussir à lui faire achever son album, je l'ai convaincu de le remplir de doubles avec le prétexte des bonus... Roger avait eu raison de me faire jouer l'ange gardien, sinon cet album ne serait jamais sorti... Le fait est que toutes ces variantes n'obéissaient pas à des raisons musicales, mais dépendaient exclusivement de l'humeur de Syd : c'est pourquoi il ne se décidait jamais à choisir, parce qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'humeurs momentanées, mais d'états différents de son esprit dissocié, si bien que pour lui choisir signifiait mettre toutes ses personnalités l'une contre l'autre. Quand je me confiai à Roger, il marmonna : « Je sais bien, je sais bien... » Quoi qu'il en soit, nous en sommes venus à bout, parce que Roger et Dave s'offrirent par ailleurs de produire l'album de leur poche, cela a été très beau de leur part, tout ça juste pour vous dire qui était Syd Barrett, toute cette fatigue pour faire un disque et il n'avait pas de producteur ! Et moi qui le découvre seulement à la fin, un miracle si je n'ai pas eu un malaise ! Certes, Syd était resté formellement avec les Blackhill, mais lorsque Jenner et King proposèrent l'album chez EMI on leur rit au nez, vous auriez dû voir Roger ! Il fit irruption comme une furie chez le directeur général en vidant sur sa table un attaché-case plein de liasses de billets de banque, *The Madcap Laughs* devait se faire, et ça se fit !

Je veux conclure ce bref témoignage par une anecdote. Vous voyez la pochette de *Madcap* ? Avec un sol peint à bandes rouges et bleues et Syd recroquevillé dans un coin à côté d'un vase de fleurs fanées ? Eh bien, cette photo de lui avait été prise par Mick Rock, et Syd avait peint le sol exprès pour cette occasion deux jours plus tôt, si ce n'est que, ayant commencé du côté où se trouvait la porte, un coup de pinceau après l'autre, il était resté prisonnier dans le coin opposé, comme dans un dessin humoristique... Il attendit d'abord que le sol sèche, ensuite, au bout de deux heures, il commença à demander de l'aide, et à la fin, voyant que personne n'arrivait, il se décida à marcher sur la peinture fraîche... Je le sais parce que quand Rock est allé là-bas pour la photo, on voyait nettement les empreintes, aussi lui a-t-il demandé ce qui s'était passé : Syd le lui a raconté, en le suppliant de ne pas cadrer ces empreintes parce qu'il ne voulait pas faire mauvaise impression... Pauvre Syd, avec les plantes des pieds barbouillées des couleurs de l'Union Jack !

JACKIE BERROYER

[in Charlie Hebdo N° 528 - 24 décembre 1980]

Autrefois, le rock était le football du mélomane. C'était prolo. Le jazz avait la place du tennis. C'était avant que le tennis se démocratise. L'étudiant écoutait du jazz et l'autre gland du rock. Soft Machine a amené l'étudiant dans le monde du rock. Et s'agissait de rock 'progressiste'. Avec un mot comme ça, il adhérait. Et la maison de disques d'étaler les diplômes universitaires de Ratledge (claviers) et des autres sur la pochette du premier disque. Le côté déconneur de Wyatt lui a valu d'être cité comme flirtant avec la pataphysique. Enfin, toute une légende. En tout cas, aujourd'hui, qu'on ressorte ça ou 'Rock Bottom', ça tient le coup.

YOUNG KNIVES

[in Plan B Magazine - Issue 31 - March 2008. Sharp indie-pop enthusiasts explains why music is their grindstone...]

...to cure insomnia (note: this does not necessarily mean "what is the most boring sleep-inducing record ever", although it could possibly...)?
"'Heaps Of Sheeps' by Robert Wyatt. If I was tossing and turning I could listen to something like this. It's positive, so would stave off the midnight paranoia, and his voice has the sound of your favourite uncle singing you a funny song about not being able to sleep."

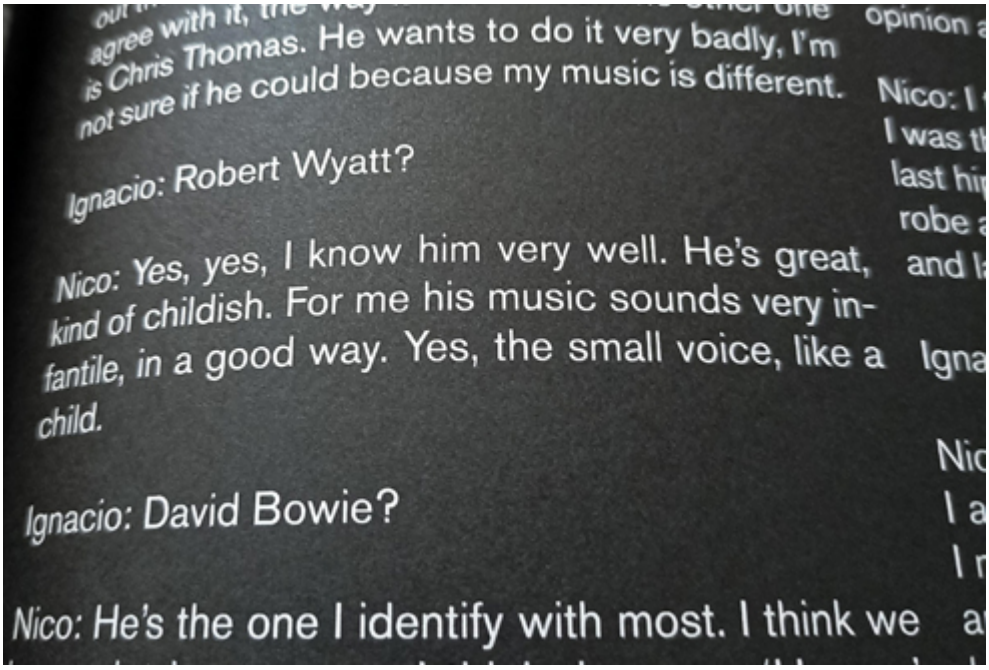
ROBERT WYATT

[extrait de l'article "Pop and the election" publié dans le Melody Maker du 6 juin 1970 donnant la parole à de nombreux musiciens et artistes (Robert Plant, Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, John Peel...) sur leur rapport à la politique et aux élections.]

ROBERT WYATT (Soft Machine): I'm supposed to be doing some things on TV and radio for the Liberal Party, and they seem to me to be the people most amenable to change, and most likely to listen to the younger element. I'm quite impressed by that. Normally I would vote Labour, 'because I come from a staunch Socialist family, but my disillusionment with politicians is the common one: the Government is like the Royal Family, manipulated by business people who don't exactly have the public's interest at heart. I would always vote for the nearest thing to a Communist Party, although once they get into power all systems are pretty bad. Oh, own up ... I'd really like to vote Christian. Any party which would support the Christian ethic, anybody who'd turn the other cheek and love his neighbour a bit would be the one for me.

NICO

[extrait d'un interview de Nico publié dans l'ouvrage "Linger On: the Velvet underground" de Ignacio Julià - Ecstatic Peace Library (2022)]



ROBERT WYATT

[Propos de Robert Wyatt rapportés par Patrice Quef, ingénieur du son du studio de Miraval (Var) in En-Contact Mag - 16/06/2022]

"J'ai écouté un disque de flamenco, juste une vieille guitare et une voix et ça sonne mieux qu'un enregistrement sophistiqué ; donc je me dis que ça doit être possible de vivre sans cette saloperie de technologie coûteuse, c'est une des choses que je suis déterminé à faire. Je ne suis pas radin, j'achète de la très bonne viande pour mon chien, quand c'est important je dépense de l'argent, mais pour une boîte à rythme non".

STEVE DAVIS

[in De Volkskrant - 28 april 2021 - Steve Davis is a famous ex-snookerplayer.]

'Ik kan natuurlijk Magma noemen, mijn favoriete band aller tijden. Maar laat ik het de lezer niet te moeilijk maken. Een plaat die niet te streng voor de oren is en wel een uitstekende introductie van het soort muziek waar ik het meest van houd is Rock Bottom van Robert Wyatt. Toen ik een jaar of zeventien was en net begon als serieus popliefhebber was Soft Machine een van mijn favorieten. Wyatt was de drummer van de band, maar raakte na een val uit het raam levenslang invalide. Ik was in 1974 bij zijn comebackconcert in het Londense Drury Lane theater, dat diepe indruk maakte. Daar zong hij ook Sea Song, het openingsliedje. Ik vind het nog altijd een van de ontroerendste nummers. Je kunt het lied gewoon meezingen, dus zo moeilijk is het niet. Probeer eerst eens dat hele album en ga dan door naar Magma of Gentle Giant.'

ROBERT WYATT

[Foreword to the book Bringing It All Back Home by Ian Clayton.]

What is this you have in your hands? Too wide-ranging to be a simple autobiography, that's for sure.
Imagine a magical roller coaster that unfurled beyond the confines of the fairground, looping and winding and soaring around time barriers, oceans and continents through every kind of weather 'til you realise it's mobius-looped its way back to the familiar patch of the original fairground. Imagine the ride! Hovering here (a moment to adjust the binoculars) then momentarily gliding too fast to focus steadily but still always dizzily vivid.
Now imagine it's a book. That, dear reader, is the book you have in your hands (and thanks Ian, for allowing us glimpses of Heather, Edward and the eternally untarnished

innocence of little Billie Holiday).

ROBERT WYATT

[About Cornelius Cardew - on the back cover of "Piano Music".]

"...if the word 'romantic' should be rescued from the whimsical sentimentalists, it is so that we could then apply it, properly, to Cornelius Cardew: a real fountain of breathtakingly adventurous music. Immense skill and moral discipline, yes, but at the heart of the matter is simply the actual beauty of these hauntingly evocative soundscapes."

CHRIS CUTLER

[Extract from the movie Little Red Robin Hood -1998]



PHILIPPE DUMEZ

[Basse fidélité - Le mot et le reste]

JE ME SOUVIENS, en rachetant Rock Bottom de Robert "Wyatt en vinyle, découvrir des détails auxquels je n'avais jamais prêté attention, ainsi que des crédits que j'avais complètement oubliés (comme la présence d'Ivor Cutler comme récitant). Et pour cause: la version CD (barrée du bandeau « compact price » imprimé à même le livret, chose qui devrait être passible de la peine capitale), outre une pâlotte reproduction de la couverture, ne comporte aucune des notes d'origine.

ROBERT WYATT

[*en réponse à la question "Vous reconnaissez-vous dans le jazz?" in* Jazz Magazine N° 484 - Septembre 1998]

Je me sens le rejeton illégitime né d'une brève rencontre entre Betty Carter et Hans Eisler dans un motel le long de l'Autoroute 61, et qui a été abandonné devant l'Orphelinat du Rock and Roll.

BRUNO COULAIS

[*à propos de Masters Of The Field chanté par Robert Wyatt dans le film Le Peuple migrateur in* le Making-off de la musique du film - 2001 Galatée Films]

C’est un texte qui a été écrit en anglais par Gabriel Yacoub et chanté par Robert Wyatt, qui pour moi est un mythe. Adolescent, j’avais une admiration, une passion pour la voix de Robert Wyatt. Il avait les textes, il avait la musique et donc il a travaillé chez lui pendant un certain temps, une quinzaine de jours je crois. Et puis on s’est retrouvés dans un petit studio au fin fond de l’Angleterre, et on a passé deux ou trois jours… j’avoue que quand on a commencé à appuyer sur le bouton d’enregistrement et que sur une de mes musiques j’ai entendu la voix de Wyatt, j’étais déjà dans un état second… j’étais comme au spectacle… c’était très troublant… c’était une chose totalement irréelle et ça l’est toujours !



LAURIE NANKIVELL (SQUID)

[goldflakepaint.co.uk - "On Robert Wyatt" - 2020]

My first memorable interaction with Robert’s music was hearing ‘At Last I Am Free’ belting out from the car stereo on the way to the Brecon Beacons for a camping trip, my dad loudly proclaiming, “Isn’t this the most jubilant song in the world!” as we passed atop the Welsh hills. From then on Robert’s music has slowly crept its way into my life, informing and educating me as I began my own musical explorations. Robert’s career has been instrumental in shaping a lot of the bands I listen to today, and his continuous musical progression is something I aspire to. His approach as a songwriter is inspiring in a variety of ways. Musically he’s never been afraid to push things in an experimental direction whilst his lyrics and bare falsetto often keep his brand of experimentalism within a very soulful yet political space, something that is oft tricky to navigate. His use of instruments, without ever being too virtuosic, is very musical especially his drumming. Some of my favourites from His Greatest Misses include ‘Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road’; without a doubt one of the most enthralling pieces ever made, along with it’s partner ‘Little Red Riding Hood…’ on Rock Bottom which is a must listen if alone for Mongezi Feza’s palindromic trumpet playing, and ‘Sea Song’; a beautifully aquatic love song. He’s also someone who writes politically, without being too on-the-nose or being known in the mainstream as a political songwriter whilst managing to convey as much meaning across as those writers. Songs such as Robert’s version of ‘Stalin Wasn’t Stallin’’ with its military-style chanting gives a stark look at ‘The Führer and its vermin’; ‘Gharbzadegi’, meaning ‘Westoxification’, ‘Westernitis’ or ‘Occidentosis’, pays homage to antiwar movements (specifically the invasion of Iran), whilst ‘The Age of Self’ reminding us that “If we forget our roots and where we stand, the movement will disintegrate like castles made of sand”, an apt message for current environmental and human rights movements that I try to work hard to remain a part of. At the age of 28, after suffering an accident he became paraplegic and subsequently stopped performing live (apart from a handful of gigs as a performer and only one headline show), and began his career as a solo musician. It seems to me that Robert has managed to turn what could well have been a severe limitation into something capable of giving him even more musical sensitivity. It’s like Eno dealt him a lifelong ‘Oblique Strategy’, with remarkable results.

PASCAL COMELADE

[L'Oreille Absolue n°5 - Mai 1998]

Robert Wyatt est pour moi l'un des rares musiciens qui a un ton aussi... implacable. C'est pas un son, c'est plus que ça. C'est dans son jeu de batterie, sa voix, sa façon de chanter, ses arrangements, ses sons de claviers... C'est un monde unique. C'est l'un des rares types dont on peut dire que je suis fan. Depuis la première heure, depuis les débuts de Soft Machine. Fan jusqu'à la pathologie. Tu sais, le genre de type dont tu vas acheter tous les disques, même celui où il ne sera qu'invité à poser quatre harmonies vocales sur une chanson. Pour moi, un des plus beaux morceaux de ces trente dernières années, c'est Moon in June, sur l'album Third de Soft Machine. C'est le summum, c'est même au-dessus de Rock Bottom, c'est un concentré fantastique de son art. C'est une personne plus que respectable dans l'histoire de la musique, à tous les niveaux. C'est d'ailleurs très bien, ce qui s'est passé au niveau de la presse au moment de la sortie de Shleep. Comme si on avait remis les pendules à l'heure, comme une mise au point nécessaire dans ce monde merveilleux de la musique que nous aimons tous.

ROBERT WYATT

[L'homme de plusieurs vies - France Culture - 24 février 2016 - *A propos de Björk*]

Je ne joue plus maintenant qu'avec de gens que j'apprécie, je veux avoir une ambiance sympa et familiale en studio. Je ne veux plus de ces tensions créatives merdiques de ma jeunesse, ça ne m'intéresse pas. Je ne demande jamais à jouer avec des gens célèbres. Parfois, les gens vous appellent pour participer à un projet, mais je refuse la plupart du temps. Non pas parce que je n'apprécie pas les personnes ou le projet, mais parce que je n'entends rien que je puisse y apporter. Celle qui m'a le plus fasciné, je me sentais comme un ado face à une héroïne, c'est Björk quand elle est venue pour un weekend. Elle était assise là, à votre place, et j'étais si nerveux que je ne pouvais penser à rien. J'étais ébloui, je la trouvais complétement magique en tant que personne et dans ce qu'elle fait. Et avec elle et comme avec d'autres, je me demande pourquoi on me sollicite, puis j'essaye d'être le Robert qu'ils veulent. C'est plus correct, plus respectueux, ce sont des compositeurs, ils savent ce qu'ils veulent et c'est pareil en sens inverse.

BERTRAND LOUTTE

[Section 26 - 45 tours de confinement - 21 mars 2020]

Robert Wyatt, je sais où il vit, et je suis allé lui rentre visite. C'était il y a une douzaine d'années, un jour de novembre. J'avais entrepris, avec en tête ce raccourci sémantique qui n'était pas pour me déplaire, de dépêcher Loutte à Louth (dans le Lincolnshire) pour aller filmer cet homme absolument délicieux. C'est Alfie (Alfreda Benge, son épouse) qui, prévenue de notre arrivée (j'étais accompagné d'un caméraman que je remercie aujourd'hui d'avoir été à ce point précieux et attentif), nous a ouvert. Dans son dos se tenait Robert, avec aux lèvres ce sourire malicieux qui, souvent, masque d'insondables tréfonds. Il nous invita alors à rejoindre cette pièce, la seule avec une fenêtre donnant sur la rue, où il passe l'essentiel de son temps. Notre homme semblait aller bien. Il était sobre depuis quelque mois, ce qui lui évitait de se « mettre dans des situations ridicules », même s'il avouait trouver la vie moins drôle une fois les bouteilles de rouge remisées. Et lui qui avait collé sur sa lampe de bureau l'avertissement qu'idéalement il voulait trouver au dos des paquets, « Life's a drag without a fag » (sans clopes, la vie est une corvée), lui qui rêvait d'une cigarette pipe-line qu'il allumerait au réveil pour l'éteindre au coucher, avait arrêté de fumer du jour au lendemain. Simplement parce qu'Alfie devait bientôt subir une opération de la cornée et que d'ici là, le tabac lui était fortement déconseillé. Un exemple parmi d'autres de ce qui lie ces deux-là, un amour sans conditions, et qu'on devine inextinguible. Interrogé sur son quotidien, Robert Wyatt n'esquivait guère. Il avouait passer ses journées à écouter ses vieux disques de jazz, à étreindre son cornet ou sa trompette comme si c'étaient des ours en peluche, et à balancer d'affectueuses piques (« Good try, bad luck ») au buste en plâtre de Lénine qui trônait dans l'âtre de la cheminée. On se souvient également que cet homme qui ne daignait plus se produire sur scène avait néanmoins accepté sans rechigner de jouer devant la caméra quelques notes de piano, puis de cornet, avant d'empoigner une paire maousse de maracas qu'il avait affectueusement rebaptisé ses « couilles de Sandinistes ». Infini respect.

ROBERT WYATT

[Les Allumés du jazz N°4/ Jean-Jacques Birgé - Parlez-nous d'un disque méconnu… - 2000]

Mack The Knife and other Berlin songs of Kurt Weill arrangé et dirigé par Mike Zwerin pour le Sextet of Orchestra USA, enregistré à New York en 2 sessions, 1964 et 1965

(RCA Victor - BMG France 74321591622)
Je placerais Kurt Weill entre George Gershwin et Leonard Bernstein, dans ce magnifique triumvirat d'auteurs de chansons inspirés par - et inspirant – les musiciens de jazz. Voilà qui garantit la qualité du matériel de base. Mais c'est pour moi un disque de Mike Zwerin, rempli d'idées harmoniques et rythmiques, rehaussé des solos de sa trompette basse. Il est joyeusement assis au milieu des autres musiciens, pas le moins du monde relégué dans l'ombre de gars comme Jerome Richardson, Thad Jones, Richard Davis et bien entendu l'éternel et électrique Eric Dolphy. Je ne me lasse jamais de ce disque et je suis surpris qu'il ne soit pas plus connu.

Jean-Jacques Birgé - Parlez-nous d'un disque méconnu…

DAVID FENECH

[Agitation FrIIte - Témoignages de l'underground français - Avril 2018]

Le disque acheté dans les années 1980 et absolument déterminant a été Rock Bottom de Robert Wyatt, ce chef-d'œuvre absolu. À la première écoute, je me souviens avoir eu une réaction physique : des frissons dans le dos qui se sont très vite propagés dans tout mon corps (je ne suis pas intéressé par les drogues, mais j'imagine que ça doit faire cet effet-là). Je me suis mis à le réécouter de façon compulsive sans qu'il ne dévoile son secret. C'est un disque très complexe, au-delà des genres et de ce que je connaissais par ailleurs. Cette part de mystère, cette polysémie, cet aspect libre, cette précision, cette intimité... C'est une énorme influence ! Rock Bottom m'a donné envie de vivre ma musique comme je l'entendais. Et plus techniquement, ça m'a vraiment ouvert l'esprit sur une façon d'utiliser le studio d'enregistrement de manière créative.

BJÖRK

[L'Oreille Absolue - Propos recueillis en 2004]

Tous les chanteurs qui ont participé à Medúlla [*son sixième album, sorti en 2004 et consacré à la voix humaine*] venaient d'horizons très différents et apportaient des registres et des timbres très variés. Pourtant, alors que le disque semblait achevé, j'ai eu la sensation que quelque chose manquait… Un chanteur plein d'âme, qui aurait à la fois un rôle narratif plus traditionnel et une capacité d'improvisation, une grande souplesse d'expression. J'avais le sentiment que cet aspect essentiel de la folk music manquait cruellement au tableau. J'ai immédiatement pensé à Robert Wyatt, et je l'ai appelé en direct : il a tout de suite répondu présent. Le lendemain de notre conversation, je quittais Londres et me rendais chez lui en voiture, là-haut, dans le Nord de l'Angleterre, dans cette adorable maison où il habite avec sa femme Alfie. Nous avons enregistré sa contribution vocale [sur le titre Submarine] dans leur chambre, tout au long d'une journée où Robert n'a cessé de chanter et d'apporter sa grâce. Au soir de ce premier jour, nous avons pris une bonne cuite en nous racontant mille histoires, c'était un moment incroyablement doux… Le lendemain, nous pensions nous remettre au travail. Mais en réécoutant les enregistrements de la veille, nous nous sommes rendus à l'évidence que tout était déjà là. Robert est l'un des chanteurs les plus spontanés que j'ai eu la chance de rencontrer. Sa pratique est d'une force instinctive et instantanée incroyable.

ROBERT WYATT

[Rock'n'Folk - Spécial Pink Floyd - Août 2018]

La contribution de Rick Wright est sous-estimée. Il a créé un paysage à l'orgue, une atmosphère dans laquelle des choses peuvent arriver. À leurs débuts, les deux guitaristes stars étaient ceux qu'on jugeait les plus spectaculaires, clairement, mais Rick était très modeste. "See-Saw" est un très beau morceau. Si vous l'écoutez, écoutez ensuite ce que j'ai fait depuis, vous entendrez le rôle humble, mais crucial, des claviers. Ce sont de vrais gentlemen. J'étais bouleversé par le split entre le bassiste [Waters] et le guitariste [Gilmour], parce que je leur dois beaucoup en tant qu'amis. C'est comme lorsqu'on connaît un couple qui divorce et qu'on aime les deux. Je pense que David est un géant. Ce qui a sauvé Pink Floyd, c'est la façon dont David s'est affirmé. Quand Syd est parti, David a recomposé le groupe. S'il ne l'avait pas fait, ils seraient restés un groupe culte des sixties de plus. Mais David a pris un moment de cette éthique adolescente fugace, s'y est accroché et en a fait quelque chose avec lequel le groupe pouvait grandir.

MARY HALVORSON

[Wire Playlist: Mary Halvorson - March 2018]

Here is a playlist including several key influences for my newest project, Code Girl, which is my first leader project that features a singer" starts Halvorson. "All of the musicians on this list have a totally unique concept and approach to lyrics and song. I'm starting with Robert Wyatt because his influence probably runs deepest. He is a true individual and innovator and I've spent years with many of his albums on repeat listen. "Sea Song" was the first of his I ever heard, so it holds a special place for me.

FRED FRITH

[Interview de Jean-Jacques Birgé en 2004 pour le n°10 de la revue Les Allumés du Jazz]

Mes relations avec Robert sont toujours pleines de couleurs parce que c'était un vrai héros de ma jeunesse. Je voulais chanter comme lui, écrire des chansons comme lui. J'ai rencontré Ian MacDonald lorsqu'on était étudiants ensemble à Cambridge (c'était devenu un rédacteur et journaliste assez renommé dans le monde pop et rock avant de mourir tragiquement l'année dernière). À Londres il était voisin de Robert dont il m'a donné le numéro de téléphone. À l'âge de 18 ans, j'ai commencé à lui téléphoner pour lui dire que je pensais que Soft Machine avait besoin d'un guitariste, et moi je serai prêt quand ils voudraient... Il était très gentil ! Il m'a enfin invité à le rejoindre dans Matching Mole avec Bill McCormick (le frère de Ian MacDonald) et Francis Monkman. J'étais prêt, mais il a eu son accident. Plus tard, il est devenu un grand défenseur de Henry Cow, ce qui nous a beaucoup aidés à l'époque - c'est grâce à lui et à John Peel, à mon avis, qu'on a réussi à signer avec Virgin. Et c'est toujours un de mes chanteurs préférés !

Interview complet de Fred Frith par Jean-Jacques Birgé pour les Allumés du jazz

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RENAUD MONFOURNY (photographe, auteur du portrait de couverture de la biographie et de l'album "Different Every Time")

[Telerama.fr - Sortir à Paris - 21 février 2016]

"S'il levait les sourcils, il aurait l'air grincheux… Mais Robert Wyatt est une belle personne, généreuse et pas aigrie malgré qu'il soit paralysé des deux jambes après avoir voulu faire comme l'oiseau, au début des années 1970. Après avoir tendu un drap noir pour rendre invisible son fauteuil roulant, j'ai remarqué ses pieds : il portait des baskets, deux pieds gauches sans lacet. Quand je lui ai dit, il m'a rappelé qu'en tant que membre du PC anglais - qui en compte 75 -, il était hors de question qu'il mette une chaussure de droite !"

DAVID STUBBS

[Uncut - July 2000 - Jimi Hendrix: Public Image Unlimited]

Hendrix the black radical. Hendrix the glam dandy. Hendrix the icon. Hendrix the man. As Robert Wyatt says, "Macho was less of a big thing generally in England. The ideology and culture back then was much more hermaphrodite, pre-Raphaelite, boys being like girls and so on. Whereas in America, as Kevin Ayers once pointed out, when they grew their hair long, they immediately grew thick, bushy moustaches as well to show they were real men. Hendrix was very interested in that more English way of looking at things, musically and aesthetically."

BRIAN ENO

[Chris Salewicz - NME - 7 December 1974 - ANNOUNCEMENT: Texans like steak, oil-wells, large hats and Eno…]

That's the way Robert Wyatt listens to records - he's amazing, you know. He is incredible. I was down there the day he was doing NME singles or whatever with a fresh mind on each one, you know. He'd say, 'That's a lovely guitar sound' and I'd think, 'What a shitty record'. He'll read interviews that I'll regard as totally stupid or pretentious and he'll say 'Oh obviously what he meant to say was this but he didn't quite say it right'. So it's a question of making allowances.

RICHARD BRANSON

[Paul Rambali - The Face - June 1984]

I thought we'd be able to consistently sell records by unconventional, difficult people. I indulged my fantasies of being able to make records with heroes of mine, people like Robert Wyatt.

EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL

[Paolo Hewitt, NME, 1 December 1984 - Take The Melancholy Strain]

It limits their music to being 'really good' (which it mainly is) rather than 'great' because they, by their own personal beliefs, shy away from emotions they think are dangerous, such as anger or flippancy. But they have time on their side and talent will be heard. "I think Robert Wyatt is very similar," Tracey says. "He's very melancholy about the world because he's thought about it a lot and I think a lot about the world and it doesn't please me particularly. If it stems from anything it's that. I could quote Keats here, but I won't."

DAVID BYRNE

[Charles Shaar Murray, NME, 8 December 1984 - Cents and Sensibility: Talking Heads]

Are there aspects of Byrne's character which don't surface in the music?

Oh, yeah. My political views are not very… um… so… lately I did some posters for the election and I found that that was a much more comfortable outlet. Maybe each aspect of my character has its own ideal medium for expression.

It's assumed that a lot of musicians are speaking for someone else — speaking for the steelworkers or for the underprivileged — whereas a lot of musicians are privileged people.

"I find that it rarely works, except in the case of someone like Robert Wyatt. When he does it I find it pretty touching in a way. They're definitely political sentiments that he's expressing, but he does it in a way that's so personal. It's an intense personal emotion that's being expressed which happens to be of a political nature.

BRIAN ENO

[Cynthia Rose, NME, 26 July 1980 - Brian Eno: Into The Spirit World]

Robert Wyatt said a smart thing, as he often does. He said, "Well the papers have to come out every day and the headlines always have to be the same size and it's as simple as that." It doesn't matter what the scale of an event is, you have to make it look as though something big is happening every day and of course the really big things, like the drought in the Sudan, rarely happen on a single day! Those events involving huge numbers of people simply aren't like the tube crash last night, with a nice round number of people led whimpering out of the tunnels. The format of newspapers just isn't suited to real news — it isn't suited to giving the background, the present and the possible futures of an event. It's a newspaper thing; I don't know what you can do about it.

HUGH HOPPER

[Gérard Nguyen - ATEM n°8 - 1977]

Tu peux dire quelques mots de Rock Bottom ?

D'abord, c'était bien, parce que c'était la première fois que Robert et moi on se retrouvait depuis Soft Machine. L'enregistrement a été amusant. En premier, Robert a fait les pistes de base chez lui : percussions, clavier, chant. Il m'a envoyé les bandes pour que je travaille dessus chez moi. Je les ai faites avec mon magnéto et je les lui ai renvoyées. Après, nous sommes allés au Manor de Virgin et nous avons joué séparément. Il avait commencé, j'ai mis la basse sur mes morceaux et, un autre jour, Laurie Allen a mis la batterie... En fait, le groupe ne s'est jamais retrouvé au grand complet.

BRIAN ENO

[Ian MacDonald, NME, 3 December 1977 -Eno Part 2: Another False World — How to Make A Modern Record]

I still don't know how pleased I am with what I've done. Robert Wyatt said to me once that you commit yourself to what you're left with ? you know that this is the only thing left that you can do.

EVAN PARKER

[The Quietus - July 17th, 2013 - Complicated Sublimity: Evan Parker Interviewed by Stewart Smith.]

The first recording I did with Robert was for [Canadian jazz-poet] Paul Haine's Darn It [a 1994 album recorded with a host of avant-garde luminaries] where I was just in the studio waiting for my turn to record and Robert suggested I play a solo as a coda to the setting he had done of one of Paul's poems. Later he invited me to play on Schleep. Robert loves the studio so much that he slept there while he was making that. I think he had 48 tracks to work with and there must have been many changes of mind as each layer was added. Robert was a friend from the days when we both lived in Twickenham. My two older sons used to call in on their way home from school to see him because he could play them the music they didn't hear at home. Last time I saw him was backstage at Ornette's Meltdown.

http://thequietus.com/articles/12819-evan-parker-interview

MARY HALVORSON

[Destination-Out - october 6, 2010 - on Robert Wyatt & Indirect Influence]

People who hear my new record, Saturn Sings, might wonder what it has to do with Robert Wyatt. And rightly so– I think it’s safe to say that my music sounds almost nothing like Wyatt’s. That being said, there have been two occasions when, after a gig, I’ve been asked if I’m a Wyatt fan (shout out to Pete Galub and Bernard Lyons). Both astutely zoned in on some intangible element of my music that reminded them of Wyatt. All the years of listening to him must have seeped into my music somehow.

The first time I heard Robert Wyatt was in 2006 when a friend played me Rock Bottom (1974). I still remember the feeling of hearing the first track, “Sea Song.” I was sitting on my living room floor in front of the stereo. It was one of those rare moments when you are so completely bowled over by a piece of music that you don’t know what to think. I wasn’t even sure I liked it; I was just completely freaked out. The music was so beautiful, so strange, incredibly dark, and entirely unlike anything I’d heard. That’s what I love about Wyatt’s music. He’s not weird for the sake of being weird. The music is purely his own.

As I normally do when a record freaks me out that much, I listened to Rock Bottom probably six hundred times that year. That and a few other Wyatt albums. I barely listened to anything else. At one point I thought it would be a good idea to learn “Sea Song” on guitar and try my own version. Two hours later I had managed to suck the life

out of it. Lesson learned– if a song is already perfect, no need to ruin it by creating an inferior rendition.

One thing I admire about Wyatt is that he didn't just make a hit and ride it out for the rest of his life. He is a true artist who is always searching and continues to create new and interesting records today. A recent favorite is Comicopera (2007), an opera in three parts. Love songs turn into political songs which turn into songs with lyrics in Spanish and Italian. Wyatt has explained in interviews that he is so fed up with politics in England and the Western world- most recently with the war in Iraq- that he doesn't want to associate himself with the English language. The album resonates with a feeling of being close to home while gradually lifting away from the world entirely, hence the name of the third act "Away With The Fairies."

My next Robert Wyatt discovery took me back in time to one of his earliest projects. Before his paralysis in 1973, Wyatt was a drummer and vocalist in The Soft Machine. Check out their self-titled 1968 album, particularly the tracks "Hope for Happiness," "Why Am I So Short?" and "A Certain Kind." After listening to so much of Wyatt's solo music, it was interesting to hear his earlier music with it's strikingly brighter energy. I was of course not surprised to discover that I loved his drumming, too.

This brings me to another interesting point about Wyatt– he is known to be a huge jazz fan. Although his music would probably not be categorized as jazz, he has done some covers of standards which he colors with his unique energy and feel. I found a rendition of "'Round Midnight" on a 1999 compilation called EPs, as well as a version of "How Insensitive" on Cuckooland (2003). Thinking about Wyatt's connection to jazz made me wonder how his music relates to my own. In 2008 I mailed Wyatt On and Off, my duo CD with Jessica Pavone. He was nice enough to take the time to respond, which meant more to me than he realized: "I definitely sense a musical empathy- only the dialects differ, I'd say."

GILAD ATZMON

[Jazz Magazine - mai 2013 - entretien "Sans tabou ni trompette"]

Terminons avec un sujet à la croisée de la musique et de la politique: vous jouez avec Robert Wyatt, qui se situe très à gauche. Comment l'avez-vous rencontré?

Sa femme m'a abordé lors d'un festival où je jouais en me disant: "*Mon mari est très timide, il est musicien et il aime beaucoup votre jeu. Accepteriez-vous de le rencontrer?* " Et je découvre ce type en chaise roulante, qui me dit qu'il voudrait enregistrer avec moi. Je dis oui et je prends sa carte sans la regarder, et c'est seulement le lendemain que je réalise qu'il s'agit de Robert Wyatt. J'ai souvent joué avec lui, j'ai même produit un de ses disques. Au début, j'étais un peu sur la défensive car je savais qu'il était communiste. Mais c'est une des personnes les plus adorables que je connaisse. Il y a tant d'innocence et de force chez lui que ça me rend presque jaloux.

CHRIS CUTLER

[Macao - décembre 2005 - propos recueillis par Patrice Boyer]

Peux-tu nous dire ce que représente Robert Wyatt pour toi ?

Robert est l'un des derniers batteurs dont le style a influencé le mien. Exceptionnellement musical, il était à la fois hamonieux et délié – une combinaison rare pour un batteur de rock. C'était un maître des mélodies avec les percussions, il semblait appartenir à un univers situé quelque part entre La Motown et le meilleur du rock, mais avec une flexibilité habituellement liée au jazz. En tand que compositeur et chanteur, "Moon in June" fût un modèle sur la manière de developer la forme des chansons sans la détruire. Je pense qu'un des grands cadeaux de Robert est une forme très complexe de simplicité. J'admire sa constance politique.

Could you tell us what is Robert Wyatt for you ?

Robert was one of the last drummers whose style influenced mine. Exceptionally musical, he was both tuneful and loose - a rare combination for a rock drummer. He was a master of percussion melody, and always surprising, seeming to belong somewhere between Motown, and the best of Rock, but with a flexibility usually associated with Jazz. And as a composer and singer; Moon in June was a model of how to expand the song form without making it collapse. I think one of Robert's great gifts is a very complex form of simplicity. I admire his political consistency.

BJÖRK

[XFM - 25 August 2004]

He lives in Louth, Lincolnshire and he has equipment in his bedroom where he records himself and his albums. We brought a G4 and Pro Tools and recorded it in like one afternoon. He's such an extraordinary singer. Before he left, he insisted to give us a scale of his voice, where he sings all the tones - and he has the most amazing range, like 5 or 6 octaves. What's really interesting about his range is that each octave is of a totally different character. We actually ended up using that later for 'Oceania', we used what he calls the 'Wyattron'.

PASCAL COMELADE

[Les Inrockuptibles - juin 1998]

De qui es-tu réellement fan ?

De Robert Wyatt. Un fan jusqu'à la pathologie - depuis la première heure. Un type qui a une énorme culture musicale, curieux de tout. C'est un des rares, pour moi, qui ait un ton aussi implacable. Le jeu de batterie, la voix, la façon de chanter, les arrangements, son jeu et ses sons de clavier : c'est un monde unique. Pour moi, un des plus beaux morceaux de ces trente dernières années, c'est Moon in June, sur le Third de Soft Machine : un concentré fantastique ... A une époque, on a eu une petite correspondance via des cartes postales - il écrit beaucoup sur ce support. C'est pas bien de parler des choses qui ne se font pas, mais il y a entre nous un projet qui dure depuis longtemps, l'idée de faire au moins une chanson ensemble.

PACÔME THIELLEMENT

[Même les morts sont malades - extrait de la conférence musicale du 22 janvier 2014 dans le cadre de "Satan Trismegiste", résidence au Monte-en-l'air (Paris XXème)]

... Ce qu'on a souvent dit d'Apollinaire, tant pour le glorifier que pour le critiquer, c'est qu'il se comportait comme un brocanteur de la poésie. C'est son invention : le poète brocanteur, à la recherche d'images rares ou désuètes, tapageuses ou délicates, construisant son poème comme l'étal d'un marchand. D'où cette sorte de joie triste qui ressemble plus qu'à tout autre au *Rock Bottom* de Robert Wyatt. Oui, Apollinaire est à Wyatt ce que Jarry est à Zappa. Apollinaire et Wyatt ce sont ces grands mélancoliques sourieurs, ivres d'une virtuosité masquée derrière un apparent bricolage.
La brocante vient nous parler d'autre chose : elle vient nous parler du fait que nous ne pouvons pas vivre dans le décor de la modernité, quand bien même nous voulons marquer le coup de celle-ci. Gertrude Stein l'évoque également à la fin de son livre sur Picasso : elle a remarqué que tous les artistes les plus prophétiques de son époque avaient besoin de vivre entouré de vieux objets fatigués. Si Rilke, dans une lettre célèbre accompagnant l'écriture des *Élegies de Duino*, parle de ces objets manufacturés qui nous viennent d'Amérique, qui n'ont pas la durée des objets des anciens (une chaise devait durer au-delà de la vie d'un homme), mais devront s'éteindre après quelques années et si Baudelaire parle de la forme de la ville qui change plus vite que le cœur d'un mortel, Apollinaire est le premier à chercher la solution dans la « *puissance révolutionnaire du suranné* » comme dirait Walter Benjamin. Si Rilke parle, avant tout le monde, de

l’obsolescence programmée, Apollinaire invente une poésie de fortune – une poésie de troc, de récup, et de bricolage tout à fait représentative de l’économie qui désormais nous échoit. Une poésie de collage. Si vous voulez : Apollinaire est le premier poète décroissant. Il est le premier à se préparer au moment où ne vivrons plus que dans des espaces de fortune. Il est le premier à voir la Terre elle-même comme un lieu d’errance. C’est le mondialisme et le cosmopolitisme – mais du côté des pauvres et des poètes, pas des élites transnationales ! C’est le monde dans lequel nous entrons, vers lequel nous partons. Il faut partir maintenant. Et nous chantons encore avec Apollinaire :

Nous ne sommes que deux ou trois hommes
Libres de tous liens
Donnons-nous la main

Satan, c’est fini.
Voici le temps de la magie.

ROBERT WOOD

[Impro Jazz- janvier 2016]

Il semble que Robert Wyatt soit une de tes idoles, si idole il y a...

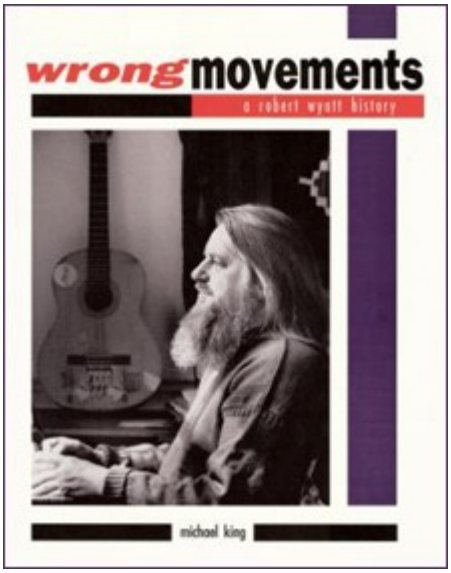
A une époque j'ai adoré le fait que Robert Wyatt ait pu faire Matching Mole, j'adore Rock Bottom, j'adore ses compositions, très sensibles, très riches. C'est un genre musical qu'on retrouve peu dans le monde, c'est essentiel. C'est très anglais (même si je suis à moitié écossais, je suis aussi anglais). Et puis avant, question batterie, c'était quelque chose...

Wrong Movements

ABÉCÉDAIRE

Wrong Movements est à ma connaissance *(article rédigé le 4/06/2006, bien avant la publication de Different Every Time)* la seule biographie de Robert Wyatt. Michael King, son auteur, résume ainsi son intention : "*Faux mouvements n'est ni une analyse, ni une critique de la musique de Robert Wyatt, encore moins une étude du caractère socio-politique qui a baigné sa musique. Les qui, quand, où, quoi et pourquoi sont des panneaux indicateurs, qui balisent un voyage narratif de 30 ans*".

Suivant le fil chronologique, du 28 janvier 1945 - naissance de Robert Wyatt Ellidge - à 1997 (*Shleep*), l'ouvrage est surtout passionnant par sa description des premières rencontres musicales (Mike Ratledge à la chorale de l'école de Canterbury !...) et des premières aventures sonores.

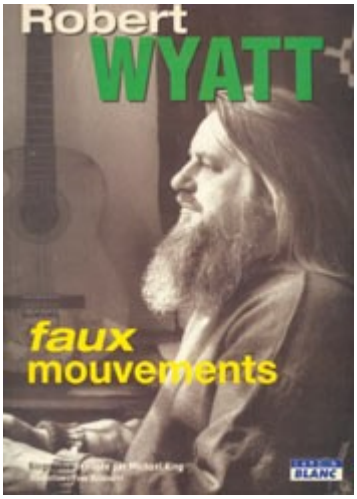


Nous y découvrons la maison d'enfance remplie de toutes les musiques, les encouragements et le soutien des parents, l'attirance initiale vers les arts plastiques...

L'apprentissage de la trompette puis les premiers cours de batterie, les premiers concerts, les premiers groupes...

Habilement entrecoupée de nombreux extraits d'interviews de Robert Wyatt et de la plupart des musiciens et amis qui l'ont croisé un jour ou l'autre sur scène ou en studio, la biographie rend vivement compte de la créativité de l'époque.

Les concerts mythiques - Love Festival UFO, 14 Hour Technicolor Dream, la soirée Caroll Baker sur la Cote d'Azur avec un *We Did It Again* de plus d'une heure, la Fenêtre Rose au Palais des Sports de Paris ou la All-Night Rave au Roundhouse avec Pink Floyd Steel Band - , la tournée américaine avec Jimi Hendrix Experience, les multiples collaborations musicales, le départ de Soft Machine et la création de Matching Mole, l'enregistrement de *The End Of An Ear*, tous ces évènements sont fidèlement retracés par ceux-là mêmes qui les ont vécus. Jusqu'à cette soirée du 1er juin 1973 où "*vin, whisky, Southern Comfort et ensuite la fenêtre*" vont remettre les compteurs à zéro d'une aventure musicale qui aurait bien pu s'arrêter là.

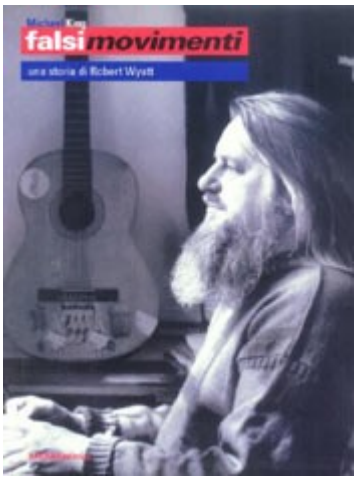


De *Rock Bottom* à *Shleep*, la carrière solo mais pas solitaire de Robert Wyatt est très finement rapportée. L'ouvrage se termine par une discographie détaillée (une des sources d'information du présent site), compilée par le rédacteur en chef de la revue allemande *Canterbury Nachrichten.*

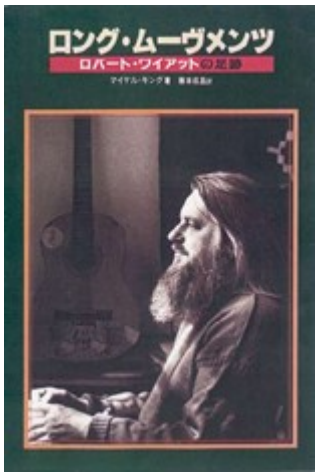
A noter que le livre comporte de très nombreuses photos (dont la plupart circulent aujourd'hui librement sur internet). La plus étonnante : Robert Wyatt, en fauteuil roulant, vendant le *Morning Star* en compagnie de Digby Jacks, délégué du Parti Communiste.

Wrong Movements a été traduit en français par Yves Balandret et a été publié aux éditions Camion Blanc en 1998 sous le titre *Faux mouvements*.

Une version italienne a également été publiée sous le titre *Falsi Movementi, una storia di Robert Wyatt* aux éditions Arcana, traduite par Alessandro Achilli.



La version japonaise parue en 1997 aux éditions Seirindo a été traduite par Narimasa Fujimori.



Advance Information Sheet

WRONG MOVEMENTS

A Robert Wyatt History

by Michael King

160 Pages (US letter size - over 100 photos)

Paperback price: £14.95—ISBN: 0 946719 101

Publication date: April 1994

About the book

Robert Wyatt was a founding member of The Soft Machine, who along with Pink Floyd helped to transform the late sixties psychedelic scene in England into something more lasting. Through successive albums, Soft Machine soon moved toward a more jazz-based fusion with rock music, punctuated by Wyatt's distinctive drumming and vocals, attracting a massive following across Europe. After extensive touring, Wyatt left to pursue a solo career, but instead assembled Matching Mole who released two critically acclaimed LPs before disbanding prematurely.

In 1973, Wyatt fell from a third floor window during a party, leaving him paralysed from the waist downwards. From that day onwards he has concentrated his efforts into solo recordings, mixing simple and effective keyboard melody lines with poignant lyrics, often filled with personal and political references. The results have proved both haunting and reflective, even producing two chart hits – his 1974 re-working of "I'm a Believer", and the 1983 Falklands War indictment "Shipbuilding" written especially for him by Elvis Costello.

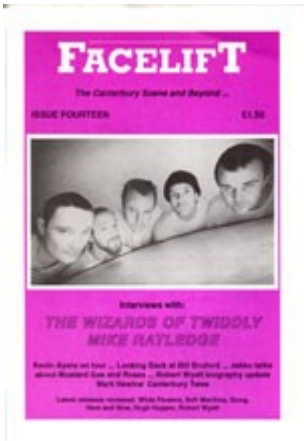
Michael King's meticulous biography pieces together a chronological account of Wyatt's 30 year career and is packed with previously unpublished archive material and rare photographs. Punctuated by commentary from Robert Waytt himself, as well as Alfreda Benge, Kevin Ayers, Daevid Allen, Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge, Keith Tippett, Carla Bley, Fred Frith and many others, *Wrong Movements* paints a fascinating portrait of a highly respected and individual musician.

About the author

Since 1976, Canadian Michael King has been an avid Robert Wyatt and Soft Machine archivist. This collection of material was started as an article for a fanzine but soon grew to book size proportions. The book was then compiled with the help of interviews conducted with Robert Wyatt himself, as well as all the other important contributors to his musical career. Michael King currently lives in Weston, Ontario with his wife and children.

For enquiries about review copies, features or articles based around the book, the acquisition of foreign rights, or distribution details: contact Mick Fish at SAF Publishing on 081 904 6263.

SAF Publishing, 12 Conway Gardens, Wembley, Middx. HA9 8TR. UK.



Dans sa quatorzième édition, la revue Facelift publie en juin 1995 sous la signature de Mike King **More Wrong Moves Robert Wyatt biography update**- quelques précisions biographiques qui courent de 1963 à 1981...

MORE WRONG MOVES

A Robert Wyatt biography update

by Mike King

First I would like to extend my thanks to you who have parted with hard earned culture cash for my labour of love 'Wrong Movements - A Robert Wyatt history' and the kind words for it. Books are certainly expensive these days and had this book been written by someone else I would have had to take a few CDs round to the local second-hand shop to buy one.

As fate had it, though, I undertook this rollercoaster ride of a lifetime and survived its inevitable derailments. Meaning errors, of which an almost embarrassing number appear in my book. There are no excuses, only reasons, but it sure was exhausting to construct and excavate on several levels simultaneously. Research itself involved hundreds of letters, phone calls, doors, false leads, ambiguities, friends, and almost collapsed in 1991.

It seemed I was facing a bottomless pit and could have researched forever, indeed drops of details still emerge, but SAF eventually put a lid on it - no more changes!

What follows is an update for additions and connections learned since the publication of 'Wrong Movements' in April 1994. Not included are the various misspellings of towns, names, punctuation errors etc - rather I've dealt only with event entries. Neither has any attempt been made to correct and add to Manfred Breß' International Discography. I'm not that tedious, and I'm tired. But yes, in fact the first Soft Machine album was issued in the United States on 8 track cassette format. OK, ready? Lights, camera, action!

Mike King





Robert Wyatt and translator Alessandro Achilli at the launch of the Italian translation of 'Wrong Movements', published by Arcana Editrice
Photo: Paolo Chang

Key

* amendment to original entry or additional information

∞ new entry

1963

*June 3 - Daevid Allen Trio, Marquee
Victor Schonfield's tape is labelled June 3, but Melody Maker's gig advert for 'Live New Departures' is Tuesday June 4th. (By the way, Victor Schonfield declined Soft Machine's invitation to manage the group's affairs in 1967. He thought they were too 'pop').

1966

*1 April Wilde Flowers at Toft's, Folkestone. In fact this gig flyer was published in 1967. Robert Wyatt had left the Wilde Flowers by this time.

*June 24 - Wilde Flowers, Margate
(This was Pye Hastings' first gig with the Wilde Flowers).

∞Autumn - Soft Machine demo recordings. The recordings and their details are lost but the group certainly cut demos for their management. Robert remembers a session that included Ron Rubin on double bass that 'must have been very early on because I didn't know that musicians had to be paid for their sessions'.

1967

*(That's Mark Ellidge holding the camera in the mirror in the Speakeasy photo. Note also Robert's trumpet on the stand.)

*March - unnamed collective, ICA, is March 19 (Sunday).

∞March 24 - London School of Economics

∞Spring - 'For Greenwich Theatre', Deptford Boxing Ring, Deptford (augmented by Gilli Smyth, poems/vocals).

∞April 8 - The Electric Poets, Roundhouse (supporting Pink Floyd)



Soft Machine 1969 or 1970: Hugh Hopper, Lyn Dobson, Elton Dean, Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge

*The St Tropez Town Square gig credited as August in fact took place on July 4th.

*December 5 - BBC Top Gear recording. A recently excavated recording confirms that 'Strangest Scene' was the original title of 'Lullabye Letter'. Robert doesn't play any piano on this session.

1968

*January 12 - Drury Lane Arts Lab included dancer Graiella Martinez, her last appearance with the group.

∞June or July - Roundhouse (?). Chris Cutler seems to recall seeing Soft Machine with Andy Summers in facial cast at the Roundhouse, but Barry King couldn't locate any Melody Maker gig advert. Andy couldn't recall any UK gig. Possible but unconfirmed.

1969

∞At some point before autumn the trio were recorded individually by soundman Bob Woolford in his sitting room; Hugh and Mike with bass and keyboard loops, Robert with echoplex. These tracks were mixed together with a gig tape by Bob and played at a multimedia event at the Roundhouse called 'Spaced'.

1970

*September - sessions for Tippett's 'Dedicated To You ...' LP. Robert Wyatt and Keith Tippett, voices on 'Five After Dawn'.

*October 19 - Anatomy of Pop filming includes individual interviews with all group members, and a performance of 'As If'.

1971

∞March (late) - Radio Bremen recording, Bremen. This newly found 'proper' session includes a remarkable bass/drum duet, and an unaccompanied scat vocal minus the usual echoplex treatment. Brilliant!

*November 11 - Kevin Coyne and Gong, Hammersmith Town Hall (delete November 13 entry - it was Louis Moholo drumming).

1972

*The February to March entry for Lol Coxhill, Toverbal, Maashuis is in fact September 14 at Paradiso, Amsterdam.

*The March 20 entry is for Kevin Ayers

*The March 20 entry for the Matching Mole ETV filming should read May 3.

*December Rockenstock TV - note that Pierre Lattes was the series producer.

1975

∞January 8 - Pacific Eardum, The Phoenix. Bob Bertles, Brian Smith (saxes); Big Jim Sullivan (guitar); Dave Macrae (keyboards); Bruce Lynch (bass); Tony Hicks (drums) augmented by Robert Wyatt (percussion) - second set only.

1976

*April - Gary Windo's 'Steam Radio Tapes' sessions. In fact Robert's vocal was recorded at his home as Britannia Row wasn't wheelchair accessible.

1981 (circa)

∞Robert also recorded with the punk group Oxy and the Morons, playing piano and singing on a track entitled 'War'. Further details unknown.

You've read the update ... now check out the book!

'Wrong Movements', the Robert Wyatt biography, is available direct from Facelift

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DEDICATO A ROBERT WYATT

presentazione del libro di Mike King: *Falsi movimenti - una storia di Robert Wyatt*, Arcana editrice (novembre 1994), edizione italiana a cura di Alessandro Achilli, con proiezione di materiali video (1967 - 1991)

Il libro è la biografia di Robert Wyatt - uno dei fondatori dei Soft Machine, il complesso che insieme ai Pink Floyd contribuì a dare un'impronta duratura alla scena psichedelica inglese dei tardi anni '60 - con la cronologia completa di tutti i concerti e le registrazioni con i gruppi da lui fondati (Wilde Flowers, Soft Machine e Matching Mole), con altri artisti e complessi e come titolare. Trent'anni di carriera ricostruiti attraverso le testimonianze e i commenti del protagonista, di Elvis Costello, Fred Frith, Evan Parker, Carla Bley, Chris Cutler, Dave Stewart, Lol Coxhill, Julie e Keith Tippett, Daevid Allen, Gary Windo, Mike Ratledge e di moltissimi altri. Il volume ospita inoltre una discografia completa e dettagliata curata da Manfred Bress comprendente tutti gli LP, CD, EP e 45 giri come titolare, tutti quelli con Soft Machine e Matching Mole, tutte le collaborazioni e tutte le partecipazioni ad antologie e video. L'edizione italiana del libro - che si avvale degli aggiornamenti successivi alla pubblicazione dell'opera in lingua originale e delle precisazioni ricevute dallo stesso Wyatt - sarà presentata dal curatore Alessandro Achilli, redattore della prestigiosa rivista *musiche* e membro fondatore dell'associazione Mongezi Feza di cui Wyatt e Alfreda Benge sono presidenti onorari dall'87.
Nel corso della serata verranno proiettati numerosi materiali video - alcuni rarissimi - relativi a un arco temporale che va dalle esibizioni dei Soft Machine nel 1967 ai più recenti filmati di *Dondestan*.

giovedì 15 dicembre 1994

ORE 21.00